

# SKIING AND FASHION FIVE THOUSAND YEARS OF HISTORY



This rabbit standing on its back legs, which was found carved on a block of stone on the island of Rödöy in Norway, is in fact a 5,000 year old hunter on skis. The first skier, it would seem, dates from the stone age, and so too does the first skiing outfit : made of rabbit fur, the ideal camouflage for the prehistoric hunter.

Joking apart, despite skis having been widely used for hundreds of years, both in Europe and Asia, no one seems to have thought about wearing any specific clothing; everyone simply wore what they had.

In 1895, the magazine "The Merchant Tailor" showed a skier wearing knee length britches with big striped stockings. By the turn of the century, gaiters were all the rage, whereas by 1925, to be with it you had to wear short trousers over ski "tubes" with a strap under each foot, and socks over the top.

Another fashion expert recommended the wearing of a celluloid collar since this material does not absorb perspiration and so stays clean and dry. Moreover, he went on, its rigidity ensured that one managed to keep looking immaculate in any situation. Other advice of the time : instead of wearing gloves, wear woolly elbow length mittens.

Women too were to be found on the slopes, in long tubular skirts. In 1906, a shorter "skiing skirt" appeared, and women of fashion adopted the ankle length skirt. Made of corduroy with flat pleats, the skirt was worn with a wool cardigan with large buttons. Naturally the large hat was an absolute must. And these female winter sports enthusiasts were enjoined to wear sober coloured flannel knickers in order to avoid any inopportune "exhibition" if they should fall over.

As time went on, women were forced to adopt ski trousers, but they continued wearing a skirt over them. Still in 1925, Henri Hock, the skiing pioneer, clung stubbornly to his preference for women skiers in skirts, more seductive to his eyes than seeing them in trousers. Two years later, however, Carl J. Luther gave the ladies this carefully considered advice : "Short trousers are not bad, but trousers which reach below the knee and knickers which are not too wide are even better".

In the thirties, having gained in popularity and now recognised as an integral part of skiing equipment, both men's and women's trousers gradually became longer. In skiing circles, high fashion was the Kristiana outfit, ankle-length knickerbockers and lumberjack jackets. In 1936, nothing else would do except "Bogners", ski trousers which narrowed at the ankles. This did not stop the Dutch Baroness Schimmelpenninck

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Van der Olje from wanting to add a more feminine touch on the slopes. Clad in elegant breeches over silk stockings and with wool gaiters, she hurtled down the ski run at the Olympic Winter Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and came 14th !

In 1955, the appearance of one-piece outfits in stretch material was to revolutionize skiing fashion.

Today, fashion sports clothes are light, practical, waterproof and functional, without neglecting the elegant details, of course.



*From Baroness Schimmlpenninck to the Sarajevo champion:  
some slight changes!*