



Guests wearing dirndl dresses sit at the Zauner coffee house in Bad Ischl, Upper Austria.



A woman in a traditional dirndl dress sits on a horse carriage.— AFP photos

THE DIRNDL: A DRESS FOR PAST AND PRESENT



A dirndl dress with the stitched lettering 'Never let the fascists have the DIRNDL' is on display at the exhibition 'Dirndl - Tradition goes fashion'.



A dirndl dress is on display at the exhibition 'Dirndl - Tradition goes fashion' at the Mamorschloessl palace.

The humble Alpine "dirndl" dress, with its distinctive white blouse, full skirt and apron, has won new fans among Austrians and foreign fashionistas alike in recent years. Its folksy appeal has now made the historic dirndl and other traditional outfits a key part of Austria's clothing industry, about 70 percent of which is exported, according to the Chamber of Commerce. Even British style icon Vivienne Westwood, better known for her provocative punk designs, has been charmed by the dirndl, which also features a close-fitting bodice.

Now the enduring garment is the star of a new exhibition

which traces its journey through the years from the countryside to the catwalk. The show is being held in the Austrian spa town of Bad Ischl, the former summer residence of Emperor Franz Josef and his wife Elisabeth, known popularly as Sissi. It lies in the Salzkammergut, a spectacular region of mountains and lakes which was one of the original homes of the dirndl, along with neighboring Tyrol and Bavaria in southern Germany. Thekla Weissengruber, the exhibition's curator, says the dirndl "is to Austria what the kilt is to Scotland or the kimono is to Japan".



Sewing threads in different colors for the production of dirndl dresses are on display at the Schauer Atelier dirndl shop.



Short lederhosen leather trousers and traditional costumes are on display at the Schauer Atelier dirndl shop.