

ALPINE TOURS ARE MORE DANGEROUS DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

According to experts, hiking and mountaineering in the Alps have become riskier due to climate change. The danger in the mountains is unquestionably increasing.

During the pandemic, the desire to be in nature intensified and many people got to like mountain trails. However, mountain guides in Austria suggest that due to the increased risks, there is a growing need for expertly guided tours.

Glaciers Becoming More Dangerous

Due to climate change and the resulting increase in crevasses, glacier tours have become more delicate than ever. Additionally, the risk of thunderstorms and heavy rain has risen, and some paths have become partly unusable. Experts note that many people lack the necessary knowledge and time to prepare properly for more extended tours and recognize the dangers.

Images of Austria's mountains can stir up different thoughts for different people. Approximately 1400 mountain guides cater to a range of clients, from families with children to experienced climbers seeking a challenge. Many clients book multi-day tours, with the daily rate for a guide around 540 euros. Among the guests are tourists who want to reach an Instagram-worthy spot. One popular motif is the breathtaking ladder to heaven on the Donnerkogel, immediately posted on Instagram. However, some visitors are surprised to find themselves tackling a via Ferrata that can last several hours.

Lack of Young Mountain Guides

The demand for professional guides in Austria and elsewhere could meet an even tighter supply in the coming years. Many mountain guides are going to retire soon. And finding new ones is difficult.

"We are looking for an alpine all-rounder who can climb and ski well before starting the three-year apprenticeship." But many young athletes could only do either one or the other. Women are also hardly among the applicants. Lowering the hurdles is not an option. Customers must be able to rely on their mountain guide to be well-trained.

The Swiss Mountain Guide Association, SBV, has observed changes in the types of requests they receive. According to SBV's Managing Director Pierre Mathey, there isn't an increase in the number of people using mountain guides, but the requests have become more varied. While fewer people book mountain guides for 3000 or 4000-meter peaks, there is an increase in requests for famous peaks above 4000 meters. However, overall, there are fewer mountaineers and more hikers. Switzerland has 1550 mountain guides, including 43 women.

Tours Have Changed

As per Sägesser, some tours were previously manageable but now have scree heaps with blocks as big as single-family homes. These tours were once covered with snow or glacial ice, but that has changed. Some tours are now practically impossible and could be death traps in midsummer. Some high alpine tours should now occur in May or June instead of July or August, as it's even colder. For example, the Eiger North Face, which Sägesser climbed in 1986, is now a fraction as dangerous as it is today. The ice fields that existed at that time have almost disappeared today. Today, the tour is

practically only doable in winter and spring.

If you're a hiker, you can decrease your chance of encountering rockfalls by avoiding rocky and steep terrain. However, if you must traverse such terrain, starting your hike early in the day when temperatures are high can help minimize the risk of falling rocks.

Date: 2023-09-04

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-climate-change-made-mountains-more-dangerous-article2817>