

SNOWMAKING IN AUSTRIA: EXPENSES REACHING MILLIONS



Austrian ski resorts have invested millions of Euros in the snowmaking on their slopes over the last years. Mostly the ski lift operators pay the bill.

Every year about 6 million Euros are invested in artificial snow at Lech am Arlberg, which is about 20 percent of sales, according to the biggest lift and ski operator in the region of Lech, Michael Manhart.

In his opinion, **hotels, catering and travel trade should pay a share as well, since they are great beneficiaries.** Actually, an investment of 20 million Euros is needed for the modernization of the snowmaking facilities in Lech.

“The towns of Lech and Zürs, generate about 300 to 400 million Euros in revenue, but do not pay for the artificial snowmaking so far,” says Manhart. The cost of a snow cannon is about 35.000 Euros, a snow lance about 10.000 Euros, according to Franz Hörli, the interest representative of the cable cars in the Austrian Chamber of Commerce. According to Ingmar Höbarth, head of the State Climate and Energy Fund, there are about 20.000 snow cannons in Austria.

Since 2000, 1.3 billion Euros have been invested in artificial snow in Austria, according to Michael Kleemann, director of the Austrian Hotel and Tourism Bank (ÖHT). In his opinion, these investments can be generated as revenue.

Robert Steiger, the climate impact and tourism researcher at the Management Center Innsbruck (MCI), has a different opinion. Again and again, ski resorts face bankruptcy. Often enough, the money ultimately comes from the tax payer. In most cases, the community or country steps in as an investor, according to Steiger.

The financial involvement of communities in ski resorts is often not publicly available.

There are studies, especially for smaller or low-lying ski resorts, that suggest not investing any further. According to Steiger, there should be master plans to make ski areas more efficient.

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