

TOURISM IN AUSTRIA REPORTS A WINTER SEASON FULL OF RECORDS



In the winter season of 2015/16, domestic tourism in Austria was very successful. According to Statistik Austria, the number of international arrivals and overnight stays between November and March also set new records. Overnight stays increased by 1.7 percent to 47.1 million and arrivals increased by 3.5 percent to a new record of 12.45 million.

“Austria as a tourism destination is attractive and competitive”, said economy and tourism minister Reinhold Mitterlehner (ÖVP) about the preliminary numbers. **“Especially in the crucial month of February, we were able to defend our position as Europe’s winter sports destination number one,”** commented the minister, who expects a positive outcome of tourism in Austria regarding the whole winter due to the thoroughly booked Easter holiday.

The main causes of the overnight surplus of 1.7 percent in the first four months of this current winter season (which lasts until the end of April) were guests from Germany (+1.6 percent), Switzerland and Liechtenstein (+5.8 percent) as well as Great Britain (+6.5 percent), Belgium (+4.4 percent) and Czech Republic (+7.0 percent).

On the other hand, Russian overnight stays decreased by 28 percent to 0.52 million and Dutch by 5.4 percent, even though their arrivals increased by 4.3 percent. The domestic overnight stays increased by 2.3 percent to a new value of 10.5 million.

Hotels of the 5- and 4-star category benefitted from an overnight stay surplus of 2.2 percent, while the bookings in 3-star hotels decreased by a small 0.2 percent and those in the 2- and 1-star category by 0.3 percent.

Private quarters experienced a decrease in overnight stays of 4 percent. Meanwhile, the increase in private vacation homes was recorded at 2.9 percent, while commercial vacation homes had an increase of 5.1 percent.

Tourism in Austria is celebrating successful winter since all federal states reported higher numbers of overnight stays until the end of February. The overall largest increases were found in Salzburg, Vienna and Tirol with 202,000, 155,300 and 144,200.

Never before were so many overnight stays recorded in February, which is the winter season’s most important month. Compared to the month before, the numbers increased by roughly 500,000 to 17.74 million; a surplus of 3.0 percent. With 3.88 million, the arrivals reached a new top score as well - with an increase of 4.7 or 172,900. In the past 20 years - since February 1996 - arrivals have increased by two thirds from 2.38 million and overnight stays almost by a third with 30.6 percent, according to Statistik Austria.

The number of overnight stays by foreign guests increased by 3.9 in February, while the number of domestic stays decreased by 0.6 percent. **Decreases of Russian and Dutch guests, while representing considerable loss for tourism in Austria, were nevertheless compensated by Germans, Swiss and other guests from equally significant tourist countries.** While Russian tourists still suffer from the massive Ruble depreciation and EU sanctions, the Dutch Spring holidays

partly fell into March. Switzerland's sports weeks, which took place in February this year, therefore increased the number of overnight stays by Swiss guests by a quarter to 803,700 - after a minus of 19.6 percent in January.

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