

AUSTRIAN RESORTS HOLD FIRM: THE SWISS ON A SLIPPERY SLOPE



The Alpine skiing industry is not only of great importance in Switzerland and Austria where the locals see skiing as 'everybody's sport', yet it is of huge relevance on the world stage too. The Alps account for 4% of the global tourism market and accommodated for 475 million overnight stays in 2005 alone, with 102 million being in Switzerland. However, according to a recent survey carried out by BAK Basel Economics, the Swiss are now lagging behind their Austrian counterparts in the race for Alpine supremacy. Most top resorts in both countries were measured with prices, evolution of demand and other factors such as bed occupation taken into account. It is worth pointing out that the results varied depending on the season.

The overall results for the whole year showed that just five Swiss resorts made the top 100 Alpine resorts. The Austrian resort of Kleinwalsertal came in with the gold medal. Out of the Swiss contestants, Zermatt scored highest in second place yet is only accompanied by Engelberg in 5th, Lucerne in 11th and St. Moritz in 14th. The rest of the top resorts are Austrian. The Swiss have blamed the somewhat poor showing on the lack of interest in skiing coming from the Swiss children. It is claimed that they are not as sport-minded or fit nowadays as their parents tend to take them to school by car instead of let them walk.

Zermatt's success has been mostly attributed to the resort using snow guns, which ensure that the resort stays white for most of the year. Kleinwalsertal has been praised heavily for being able to keep prices high and maintaining a flurry of interest from a wide range of clientele. Many more beds are expected to be made available in all the five top resorts in the years to come.

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