

SKI TOURISM IN AUSTRIA ENJOYS A GREAT DEAL OF POPULARITY



A recent study looks at winter tourism's future in Austria. The results are surprising.

According to a recent study commissioned by the Association of Cable Cars and the Federal Division of Tourism and Leisure Industry of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ), skiing and winter sports holidays are still popular. Approximately 2,800 people were surveyed to gauge their current mood and future outlook for winter sports demand. The results showed that Austria remains a popular winter tourism destination for domestic and international guests despite challenging times and years of crisis. The need for winter holidays is high, and companies continue investing in climate-friendly measures. Franz Hörl, Chairman of the Austrian Cable Car Association, and Robert Seeber, Chairman of the Tourism and Leisure Industry Division, are optimistic about the upcoming winter season.

The current figures indicate that the Cable cars industry is thriving. The 2022/23 winter season saw a significant increase in overnight stays (+24%) and first-time admissions (+15%) compared to the previous year. This is a positive sign that Austria's mountain regions are bouncing back after the first Corona winter. The number of overnight stays is almost at the same level as the average of the last three winters before the pandemic. If the weather and natural snow conditions had been more favorable, last winter's results would have likely been better.

Winter tourism is a significant export commodity for the Austrian economy

The demand for winter sports in the upcoming season looks promising. Most skiers have expressed interest in skiing the same amount or more in the next few years. About 80% of the guests visiting the local mountains in winter come from abroad, highlighting the importance of skiing and winter sports for domestic guests and as an export commodity. Austria generates valuable income for the Federal Government and the regions, with more than 50 million skier days and VAT alone accounting for approximately 1.9 billion euros per winter (value for 2022/23). The total gross turnover of winter sports enthusiasts is 12.6 billion euros, demonstrating alpine winter sports' significant economic impact.

Austria has established itself as a top winter tourism destination, with around 70 million overnight stays last winter. This impressive result can be attributed to the hard work of our companies and their employees, who provide visitors with an excellent price-performance ratio. Additionally, the good cooperation of all partners involved in tourism, cable cars, the sporting goods trade, and the ski industry has contributed to this success. This has led to the creation of 250,000 jobs and added value for the Austrian tourist regions.

The cable car industry invests in climate neutrality

Franz Hörl, the chairman of the Austrian Cable Car Association, highlights that their companies

provide an unparalleled skiing experience in terms of value for money while investing heavily in achieving climate neutrality. Surveys indicate that skiing remains Austria's primary reason for winter holidays. Moreover, Austria's cable cars frequently seek feedback from approximately 50,000 winter guests surveyed yearly about their skiing stay. Around 70 percent of guests visit Austria for skiing, and 88.6 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with their experience. Furthermore, there is a high return rate of over 80 percent, and 26 percent of guests are children and young people.

Regarding the impact of climate change, Hörl mentions the operators' extensive knowledge of snow and slope management. "Today, we can ensure a sustainable skiing experience with a clear conscience," he says. Cable cars rely entirely on electromobility, and renewable energy accounts for 90 percent of energy consumption in ski resorts. In the past decade, the industry has reduced energy consumption by 20 percent, which will continue in the coming years.

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