

# Sustainability in Austria

Best Practices  
in Tourism

5 Categories | 9 Federal States | **50 Best Practices**

This publication is the result of a collaborative effort by a joint team of staff from Austria Tourism and Sustainia.

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#### Acknowledgements

A special thank you to all tourism organisations, tourism businesses, and featured candidates for your cooperation on the visual material for the publication. Additionally, we express our sincere gratitude to all the interview partners whose insights have served as a great source of inspiration and made a valuable contribution to the publication.

#### Disclaimer

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Vienna, 19.02.2024

#### Print

08/16 printproduktion gmbh  
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# Sustainability in Austria

## Best Practices in Tourism

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## ABOUT AUSTRIA TOURISM

As the national tourism organisation, the central concern of Austria Tourism is to work together with all Austrian tourism partners to maintain and expand the competitiveness of Austria as a tourist destination. Currently, about 220 employees in 21 offices in 27 global markets are promoting 'Holidays in Austria'. In this way, Austria Tourism makes an essential contribution to increasing added value for the Austrian tourism and leisure industry.

## BRINGING SUSTAINABILITY TO THE FORE

Austria's tourism industry began its sustainable transformation early on. Our businesses are among the pioneers in integrating resource-conserving and innovative processes into their operations. Be it the use of regional products in the culinary arts, the expansion of sustainable mobility on-site or the use of renewable energies.

Did you know that the share of renewable energies in tourism is at 55 percent? And that their share in technical snowmaking is as high as 90 percent? That only air and water are used for snowmaking and that 100 percent of the water is returned to the natural cycle?

Austria's achievements have long been recognised internationally: In the ranking of the most sustainable tourism countries, the Sustainable Travel Index by Euromonitor, Austria advanced last year to now rank third worldwide – out of 99 countries considered. A great achievement and a true testament to the entire industry. Our innovative tourism businesses work tirelessly to offer our guests an even more climate-friendly and resource-conserving holiday experience at any time of year. It is about more than just preserving Austria's wonderful nature for future generations. Sustainability is the cornerstone of the development of Austria as a tourist destination. It is an important matter for our guests, and sustainable offers are becoming a booking-relevant factor for more and more people.

In this publication, we bring 50 best-practice examples from the field of sustainability to the fore. We explore the topics of summer, winter, mobility, resources & circularity and social sustainability. We present the respective projects and the people developing and implementing them. I am sure that these success stories will give new impetus to the industry and serve as an incentive and inspiration for many regions and businesses to launch their own sustainability initiatives. Let us continue to work together to ensure that Austria remains one of the most sustainable tourism destinations in the world.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Astrid'.

**Astrid Steharnig-Staudinger**

CEO of Austria Tourism



## SUSTAINABILITY: A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS IN TOURISM'S FUTURE

Austrian tourism policy has been consistently pursuing the path towards sustainable development in Austrian tourism for several years now.

Due to challenges such as climate change, emission targets, increasing demand for employees and acceptance of tourism, as well as the increased awareness and desire of guests for sustainable tourism, a strong focus on the ecological, economic and social factors of sustainability will be required in the future.

In 2019, the 'Plan T - Masterplan for Tourism' anchored sustainability and its three dimensions as a fundamental principle for the first time and set guidelines for the sustainable development of Austrian tourism in order to make Austria one of the most sustainable destinations in the world. The aim is to create high-quality living spaces where guests feel comfortable and where the wellbeing of companies, employees and the population as well as the protection and preservation of the environment play an important role. To this end, the new tourism acceptance measurement has now been firmly established by ordinance.

The Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy is supporting the successful path to sustainability in tourism with numerous measures. For example, with the new commercial tourism funding or the Austrian Ecolabel, which has already been established for many decades. The annual Tourism Mobility Days provide a platform for discussing mobility solutions in the regions. The new 'Sustainability in Tourism' dialogue series provides information on important sustainability issues, highlights possible solutions and offers the opportunity to network.

Many tourism businesses and destinations in Austria have been acting in harmony with nature, the local population, their own employees and regional suppliers for decades. Successful examples should be brought to the fore here and encourage people to continue on the path to sustainability together.



**Susanne Kraus-Winkler**

State Secretary for Tourism at the Federal  
Ministry of Labor and Economic Affairs

## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM - RECREATION FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE

More and more people are taking nature and climate action into consideration when planning their holidays. In order to succeed in organising a sustainable holiday or short getaway in Austria, it must be as simple as possible. Mobility is certainly one of the biggest challenges. With the KlimaTicket and new night train services, we can transport people to Austria's most beautiful regions in a comfortable and climate-friendly manner. These natural regions are a treasure that the residents want to preserve and are happy to share with guests from all over the world.

Special pioneers such as the Ecolabel tourism regions support their guests on how they can make their holidays more sustainable. Seefeld in Tyrol, Wagrain-Kleinarl and Saalfelden-Leogang in Salzburg were the first tourism destinations to be certified with the Austrian Ecolabel. Many businesses in other regions, such as Weissensee, Mostviertel and Vienna, have already been awarded the Ecolabel. These tourist destinations focus on sustainable mobility concepts of public transport, e-car sharing and e-bikes, which can be used by tourists. The Climate Action Ministry supports these activities with the klimaaktiv mobil programme so that guests and locals alike can benefit from better mobility options and reduced traffic in as many regions of Austria as possible.

Of course, accommodation is also part of a holistic sustainable holiday. Austria is a pioneer with the first state ecolabel in tourism. More than 500 tourism businesses are already sustainable and allow nature and their guests to benefit from resource-conserving, regional and climate-friendly measures. Ecolabel-certified hotels, small private landlords and businesses that offer farm holidays serve as a starting point for experiences in nature or cultural inspiration.

I wish many holidaymakers from Austria and abroad a sustainable enjoyment of the natural treasures in Austria.



**Leonore Gewessler**

Federal Minister for Climate Action, Environment,  
Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology

# Sustainability in Austria

## ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

Austria inspires with more than just its fascinating landscape and rich cultural offerings. The innovative spirit of the domestic tourism industry in terms of sustainability is just as exceptional.

Indeed, Austria's tourism achievements in this regard are well-recognized on an international scale. As of 2023, Austria is in the top third place worldwide in the renowned Sustainable Travel Index. It is the outstanding achievements of Austria's businesses and destinations that have secured us this leading position. They strive every day to render holidays in Austria an even more sustainable experience. The art lies in having as little impact on nature and the environment as possible, taking cultural and social aspects of the regions into consideration, and at the same time creating vivid and authentic experiences. This benefits both travellers and the local population alike.

In this publication, we have compiled 50 examples of best practice from five subject areas. These pioneering projects are innovative examples of how tourism can function in harmony with ecological, socio-cultural and economic sustainability. It should be mentioned that this publication cannot present all of Austria's noteworthy projects, as there is simply not enough space to fit them all. Nevertheless, the selection provides a good overview of innovations and pioneering projects and acts as a multiplier, providing inspiration and motivation for industry participants to implement further projects.

### Sustainable Winter

Discover Austria's winter charm on and beyond the slopes! From environmentally conscious ski resorts, barrier-free snow sports or idyllic hiking villages to atmospheric Christmas markets – here you can experience sustainable adventures in the midst of snow-covered landscapes.

### Sustainable Summer

Experience the Austrian summer with sustainable activities and the beauty of nature. Enjoy environmentally conscious hiking, organic farm holidays, paddleboarding and colourful festivals that preserve cultural diversity.

### Resources & Circularity

Enjoy Austria's commitment to the circular economy: eco-hotels, cultural museums, repair cafés, arts and crafts and sustainable business apps are shaping new consumption patterns and working towards a sustainable future.

### Sustainable Mobility

Explore more of Austria's sustainable mobility: from tourism cooperations for soft mobility to cycling infrastructure and sustainable travel tickets. These measures are shaping a green and accessible future of travelling.

### Social Sustainability

Get to know Austria's social network for sustainability: With social business hotels, lively art and culture festivals and intergenerational cafés, culture, fair working conditions and social commitment are promoted.

## METHODOLOGY

This publication is the result of a comprehensive collaboration between Austria Tourism and Sustainia, a global sustainability consultancy based in Copenhagen.

With guidance from Austria Tourism, Sustainia gathered up-to-date information and data on sustainable tourist best practices throughout Austria to aid the assessment and selection process.

Following the identification of numerous exemplary cases, each was assessed based on four key criteria. In collaboration with Sustainia, the most outstanding exemplary best practices were put forward to be featured in the final publication.

The projects highlighted in the publication, while spotlighting 50 selected cases, encapsulate the ethos of sustainable tourism in Austria and serve as a representation of the broader spectrum of people and practices dedicated to fostering sustainable tourism in the country.

## CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

The 50 featured best practices have been assessed on the following four criteria:

- 01 Relevance to established themes**  
The extent to which the candidates align with the five predefined categories (Sustainable Winter, Sustainable Summer, Resources & Circularity, Sustainable Mobility, and Social Sustainability), as well as the overarching tourism perspective.
- 02 Collection variety**  
The extent to which candidates represent various services and solutions in the tourism sector. In particular, this criterion helps ensure variety within each category whenever possible and showcases the broad range of touristic offers and initiatives in Austria.
- 03 Compelling story**  
The extent to which candidates have a unique solution, significant impact, or additional co-benefits, as well as having credible and complete information.
- 04 Geographic diversity**  
Exemplary projects from Austria's nine federal states will be presented in order to showcase the country as a sustainable travel destination in its entirety and to reflect the geographical diversity of what is on offer.

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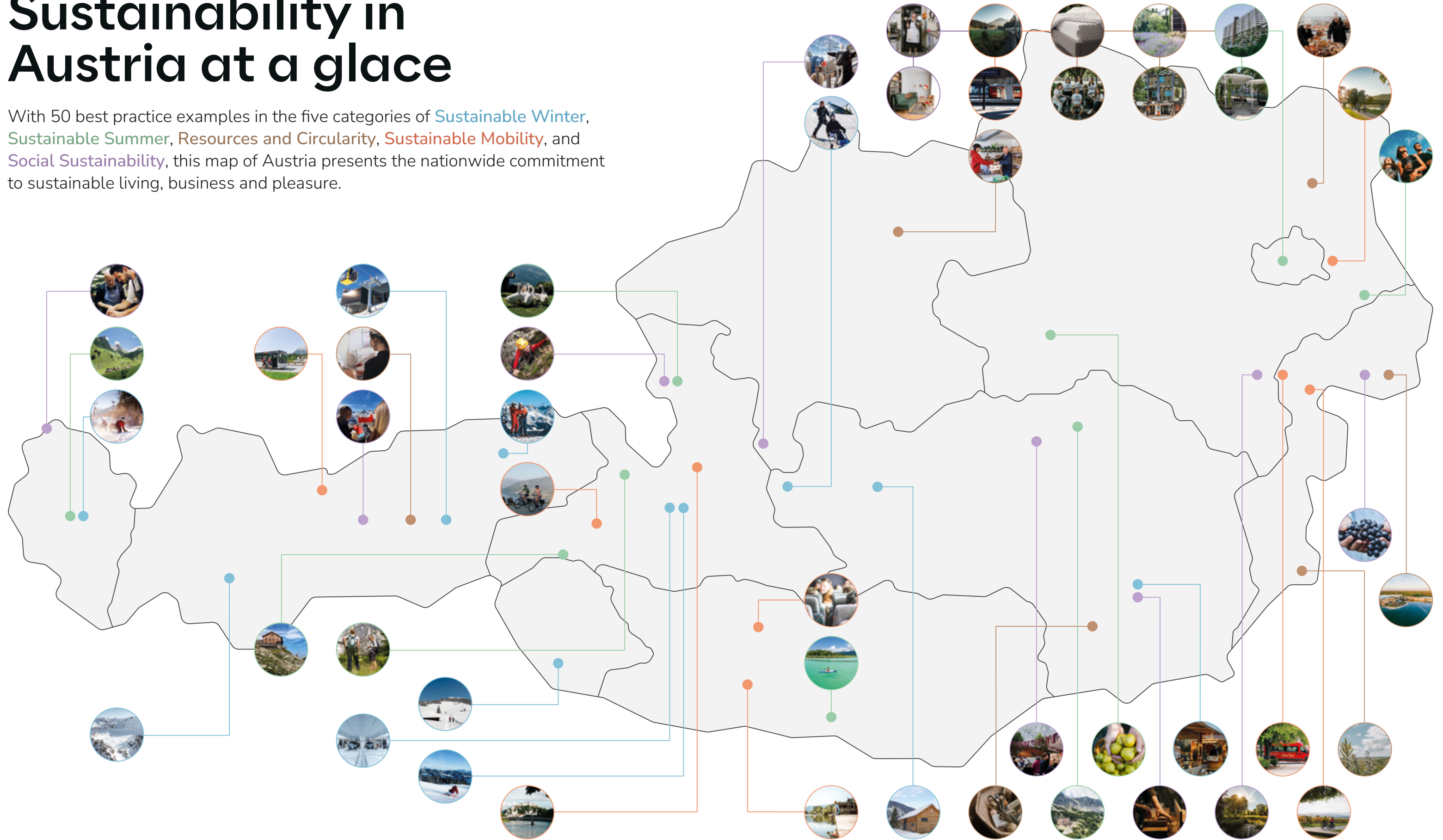
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# Sustainability in Austria at a glance

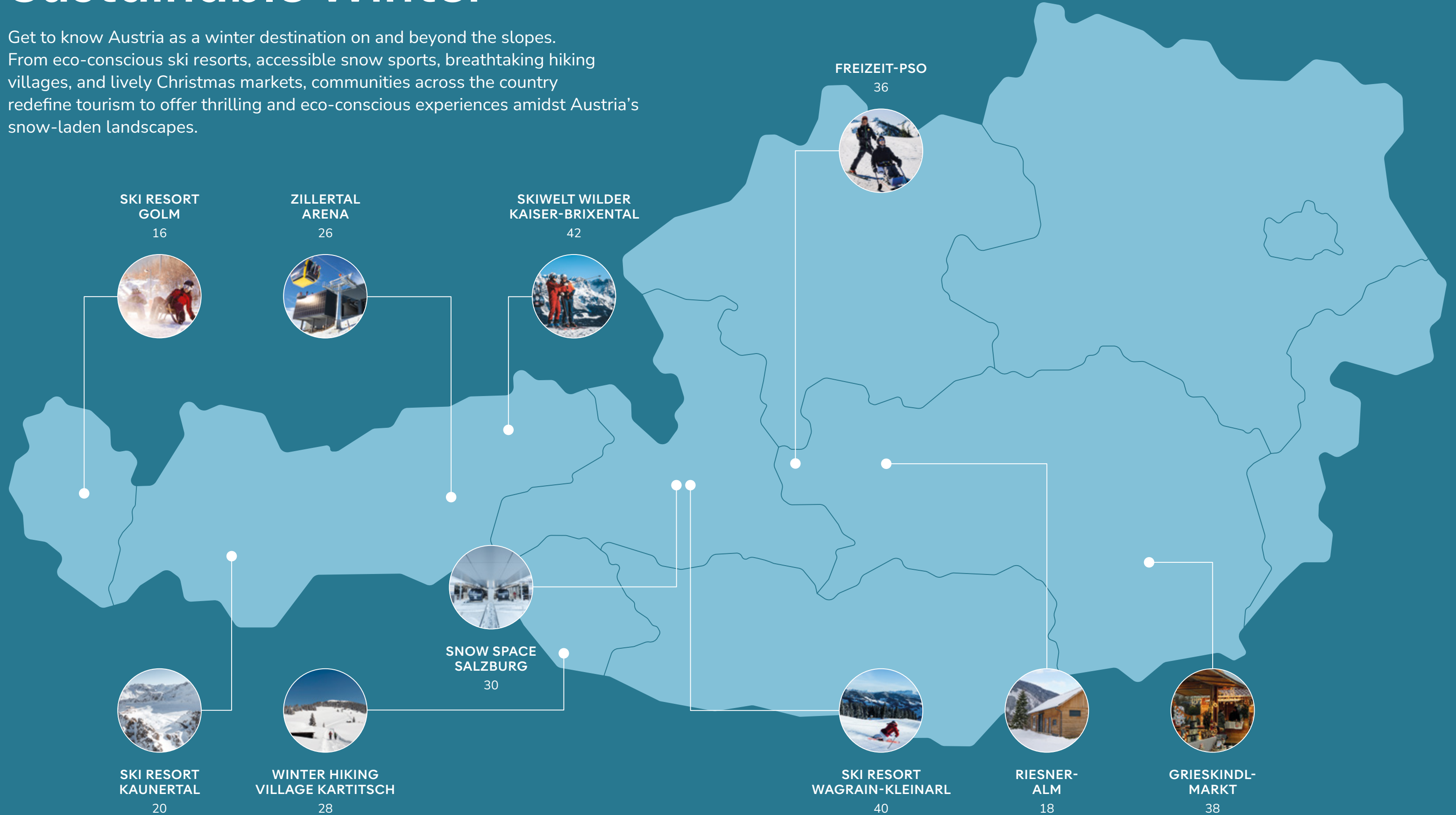
With 50 best practice examples in the five categories of **Sustainable Winter**, **Sustainable Summer**, **Resources and Circularity**, **Sustainable Mobility**, and **Social Sustainability**, this map of Austria presents the nationwide commitment to sustainable living, business and pleasure.





# Sustainable Winter

Get to know Austria as a winter destination on and beyond the slopes. From eco-conscious ski resorts, accessible snow sports, breathtaking hiking villages, and lively Christmas markets, communities across the country redefine tourism to offer thrilling and eco-conscious experiences amidst Austria's snow-laden landscapes.



# Snowy peaks and sunny energy in Golm

The ski resort Golm has charted an ambitious course towards sustainability. From [solar-powered chair lifts to promoting electric vehicles and adopting a four-day work week](#), Golm showcases a multifaceted commitment to environmental and social responsibility, ensuring a greener future – for both its operations and the Montafon region.



## 534 t

of CO<sub>2</sub>-eq were offset by the ski resort in the 2021/2022 financial year.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The total energy consumption per skier (for cable cars, snowmaking, slope preparation, catering, heating and infrastructure) is 18 kWh per day (Comparison: 7 days of skiing = 0.5 hours of jet skiing).

Skiing in Austria every day from December to mid-April consumes the same amount of energy as a single 6,796 km flight from Vienna to New York City.

Ski vacationers opting for public transport, vegan and vegetarian dishes, and greener ski resorts can save 30.72 kg of CO<sub>2</sub>-eq per person daily.

A proactive stance against climate change has become imperative in the ski region of Golm, located in the picturesque Montafon valley. Associated effects such as rising temperatures, diminishing snowfall, and fewer frost days not only pose challenges for the region's flora and fauna, but also for the future viability of winter tourism.

*Golm Silvretta Lünersee Tourismus GmbH* is committed to offsetting its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. With the help of the platform 'turn to zero', the ski resort draws up an annual carbon footprint and supports selected climate protection projects in Ethiopia, Mongolia and Romania. This approach compensates for areas where Golm's carbon footprint is not yet neutral. To reach its key target of cutting 77% in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2030 (base year 2016/2017), as well as promoting energy autonomy in Vorarlberg, the entire tourist area is powered by 100% renewable energy produced by regional hydroelectric power plants and solar PV systems. The installation of solar modules by the chair lifts, specifically at the bottom and top stations of the *Hüttenkopfbahn*, generates a total of 60,000 kWh, covering one third of the 6-seater's energy consumption. In other words, every third guest of the *Hüttenkopfbahn* rides on solar energy.

Another significant stride towards sustainability is the promotion of resource and energy efficiency, achieved through the monitoring of all energy flows within the tourism destination. Furthermore, technical snowmaking at Golm is eco-efficient and

uses existing resources from the region. By sourcing water directly from the Lünersee and utilising a sophisticated drainage system, the ski resort not only ensures high-quality snow for winter activities but also harnesses the power of water to generate electricity through a hydroelectric power plant.

In distributing 14 e-charging stations at the valley station in Vandans and eight at the middle station in Latschau, as well as providing its employees with electric vehicles for private use, the tourism enterprise is actively encouraging the use of electric vehicles. Recognising the impact of traditional working time models on carbon emissions, Golm has further introduced a four-day work week where feasible. This shift not only provides employees with more

leisure time but also results in a commendable 20% reduction in operational CO<sub>2</sub> emissions compared to a conventional five-day schedule. Finally, in its pursuit of a modern and sustainable working environment, the ski resort strives to encourage multipurpose workplaces in the future.

By comprehensively adopting renewable energy sources, promoting efficiency across operations, and redefining conventional work norms, Golm emerges as a pioneering force not only in mitigating climate change impacts but also in establishing a benchmark for sustainable practices in winter tourism.

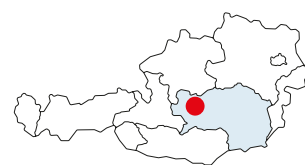


Visitors at the resort enjoying a sledding experience in the snow on Erlebnisberg Golm.



# A snowy innovation for a green future

With its **innovative hydroelectric power plant**, which is directly connected to the snowmaking system, the Riesneralm ski resort has made a sustainable investment for the future. Thanks to the power plant, electricity production at Riesneralm now exceeds the needs of the ski resort.



**6** million kWh of electricity is generated per year with the hydropower plant, which corresponds to the annual electricity consumption of around 2,000 two-person households in Austria.

The Riesneralm Bergbahnen is particularly proud of one of its own innovations: a snowmaking hydropower plant at the valley station that produces both electricity and snow. Generating more than twice as much power with water from the Donnersbach than the entire ski resort requires for lift operation, catering, and snowmaking, the five-million-euro project has proven to be a real investment into the future. The surplus green electricity, sufficient to power more than 700 households, is fed into the public power grid.

The hydropower plant, which was completed in 2020 and is connected directly to the snowmaking system, also eliminates the necessity for an additional snowmaking pond on the mountain, saving around 100,000 m<sup>3</sup> of water. This innovative symbiosis between snow production and green electricity generation positions Riesneralm Bergbahnen as a pioneering force in ecological practices within the winter tourism industry.

The sustainable and innovative investment in the hydropower plant – which was eventually realised after a challenging four-year negotiation phase – has led the ski resort to establish the 'Energie Riesneralm' division, thereby solidifying a third economic pillar alongside its lift and catering sectors. This strategic addition provides the ski area with a more robust economic and ecological foundation, ensuring sustainability and prosperity for future generations.

## DID YOU KNOW?

90% of the energy used for snowmaking in Austria comes from renewable sources.

Only 0.33% of the national electricity requirement is needed for technical snowmaking in Austrian ski resorts.

47.1 million m<sup>3</sup> of water is used for technical snowmaking, corresponding to only 0.07% of the total annual water resources available in Austria.

Recognised for their innovative and sustainable energy efforts, the Riesneralm ski resort has both received awards for 'Sustainable Certified Energy Management' as well as for outstanding investments as part of the 'Ski Guide Austria Awards'.

As such, the ski resort's success story demonstrates the positive impact that environmentally conscious and foresight investments can have on both the winter tourism landscape and the broader community.

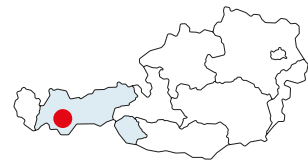


The snowmaking power plant seamlessly blends into Riesneralm's valley station.



# Pioneering an Alpine holiday for everyone

Due to its accessible infrastructure, the Kaunertal has long been considered a **role model for barrier-free vacation offers**. Karl Hafele, pioneer of the first wheelchair-friendly hotel in the Alps, reports on the valley, which in recent years has not only emerged as a benchmark for social sustainability, but also for ecological measures.



4

additional guests accompany wheelchair users on average at *Hotel Weisseespitze*.

## DID YOU KNOW?

64% of German tourists visiting or interested in visiting Austria in 2022 were concerned with the social compatibility of their travel.

1 million people in Austria live with reduced mobility, 0.5% of the population is in a wheelchair.

80% of hotels and restaurants in Austria are family businesses.

The Kaunertal's history with barrier-free tourism began in the early 1980s when the Kaunertal Glacier was opened up. This offered wheelchair users and other guests the unique opportunity to reach the ski slopes directly by car up to an altitude of 2,750 metres. Wide pistes and extensive T-bar lifts created ideal conditions for learning to monoski, as hotelier Hafele illustrates.

Even back then, many monoskiers decided to stay at *Hotel Weisseespitze*. At that time, the hotel already had a parking garage, an elevator, and rooms that were larger than the standard. The bathrooms were designed in such a way that 'active, sporty wheelchair users could already find their way around relatively easily', explains Hafele. These infrastructural prerequisites made the Kaunertal a magnet for monoskiers from all over Europe in the 1990s.

In 1989, Karl Hafele took over the hotel and recognised the needs of the guests at a time when the 'accessible hotel industry was still a relatively weak offer', as he emphasises. By the year 2000, he had transformed the *Hotel Weisseespitze* into the first wheelchair-friendly hotel in the Alps. This inclusive approach encompasses a barrier-free infrastructure from the sauna and wellness area in the basement to the top floor, which not only enables effortless access for all guests, but also rapid evacuation in the event of a fire.

Karl Hafele,  
Hotelier *Weisseespitze*



© Thomas Junker

**An important prerequisite for our guests with physical disabilities is to have the confidence to say, “I can now do winter sports in my wheelchair”.**

Karl Hafele, Hotelier



Thanks to years of experience and the consideration of guests' needs, Hafele was even one step ahead of the standards and regulations at the time, as he himself points out: 'We were already thinking a little further ahead back then'. In the early 2000s, the hotel expanded its offer to appeal to people with a diverse array of disabilities, moving beyond its original focus on guests who participate in (mono)skiing.

Still, Hafele is keen to emphasise that the hotel is first and foremost a regular 4-star hotel, yet 'barrier-free without compromise', with a third of the rooms being designed for wheelchair users. The mix and integration of families, friends, relatives and guests with disabilities is particularly important to the hotelier, not only to provide a barrier-free environment, but also to 'offer people with disabilities a completely normal vacation', says Hafele.

Karl Hafele's inclusive offer was pioneering work, and many hosts and decision-makers in the region promptly followed his example, often seeking advice from Hafele and his family when making their own facilities barrier-free. From the cafés to the church, many leisure offers and public facilities in the Kaunertal were made accessible, and the region became known not only as an accessible ski resort, but also as a year-round holiday destination for people with disabilities.

While Hafele and his team helped to establish the Kaunertal as a trailblazer in barrier-free tourism, the vacation destination was also early in recognising the need for ecological responsibility and sustainability. The adventure region owes this above all to the former Managing Director of the Tyrolean Oberland Tourism Association, Michaela Gasser-Mark, who, according to Hafele, 'recognised the ravages of time' and consistently developed the valley towards sustainability over the course of 17 years.

As a result, the Kaunertal became one of the first climate change adaptation regions with the launch of 'Climate Change Adaptation Model Regions (KLAR!) Kaunergrat' in 2017, and a pilot region for the 'Clean

Alpine Region' project in 2020. In 2021, the Kaunertal was the first Austrian tourism region to be awarded the title of 'Best Tourism Village' by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) for its sustainable development. Since 2022, the ski resort has also been equipped with several photovoltaic (PV)-powered chairlifts, which represents a significant step towards the region's goal of energy autonomy.

The transformation of Kaunertal from an accessibility pioneer to an exemplary destination in both social and ecological sustainability highlights the profound impact of visionary individuals paving the way and going beyond the norm. As such, this transformation sets an inspiring benchmark for inclusive and eco-conscious tourism that resonates far beyond the Alps.



A group of skiers setting out to explore the scenic landscape of Kaunertal.

© TVB Tiroler Oberland | Roman Huber



Ski enthusiasts enjoying the slopes at the award-winning destination.

© TVB Tiroler Oberland | Roman Huber



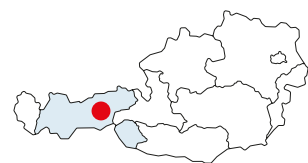
At the Kaunertal, wide pistes and abundant T-bar lifts create ideal conditions for barrier-free skiing.





# Climate-friendly to and on the Zillertal's ski slopes

A commitment to sustainable, energy-efficient, and resource-saving skiing operations has become a hallmark in the Zillertal Arena. From the [use of green electricity to innovative waste heat utilisation and a comprehensive mobility plan](#), the Zillertal Arena sets a commendable example for environmentally conscious ski resorts.



## 3,200

trees would be needed to absorb the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions saved by the PV system in Hochkrimml.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Cable cars are among the most energy-efficient transportation systems.

The Austrian cable car industry has been able to save 20% of energy in the last 10 years.

Around 525,000 kWh are required per winter to produce snow for a ski area of 35 hectares, which is roughly equivalent to the annual electricity consumption of 118 households in Austria.

The *Zillertal Arena* boasts an impressive array of renewable energy sources. One of the eight PV systems strategically positioned in the ski resort on the *Plattenkogel-X-Press I* chairlift in Hochkrimml generates around 50,000 kWh of electricity per year. This corresponds to an annual CO<sub>2</sub> saving of 25 tonnes, comparable to the emissions generated by one person taking approximately 200 medium-haul flights from Vienna to Mallorca. With the energy from the latest system at the *Stuanmandlbahn* in Gerlos, more than 640,000 people can be transported carbon-neutrally per season on the *Vorkogel T-bar* lift. Hydropower is harnessed from two lake reservoirs.

In Gerlos, a biomass heating plant, operational since October 2013, supplies 80% of connected households with approximately 20,000 stère of wood chips, of which nearly half are sourced locally from the harvest of Federal Forests in Gerlos. The *Zillertal Arena* takes a creative approach to energy efficiency by repurposing waste heat across its various facilities. Waste heat from the cable car drive is redirected to heat the Arena Center, while the Ebenfeld snow groomer garage benefits from the compressors of the snowmaking system and an independent solar PV system. This innovative use of waste heat not only reduces energy use but also contributes to the overall sustainability of the skiing infrastructure.

A comprehensive mobility plan, which aims to ensure the quality of life in the valley for both residents and visitors in the future, underlines the environmentally friendly ambitions of the *Zillertal Arena*. The initiatives include an extensive free ski bus network, e-charging stations in the parking lots, and a commitment to expanding the bus and train services as well as cycling infrastructure. A key cornerstone of the Zillertal mobility plan is the *Zillertalbahn*, which is powered by fuel cells and hydrogen.

The future-oriented project is expected to save up to 900,000 litres of diesel per year and thus significantly reduce the ski resort's ecological footprint. Furthermore, the combination of ski tickets with train and bus tickets also promotes the use of public transport and thus contributes to the reduction of individual vehicle emissions.

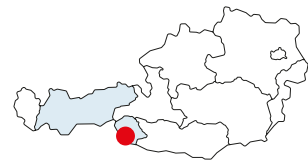
Through a diverse array of renewable energy sources, innovative waste heat repurposing, and an ambitious mobility plan, the *Zillertal Arena* not only powers its slopes but charts a course towards a more responsible future for winter enthusiasts.



The *Stuanmandlbahn* in Gerlos features the latest addition to *Zillertal Arena's* eight PV systems.

# Austria's first winter hiking village

The certification as Austria's first winter hiking village gives Kartitsch a unique and sustainable identity. With nine winter hiking trails, the mountain village offers a **gentle and climate-friendly experience** through the snow-covered mountains of East Tyrol – open to everyone.



## 20 +

certified winter hiking accommodations are located in and around Kartitsch.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Winter tourism is responsible for no more than 0.9% of Austria's total energy consumption per year (the tourism sector in general accounts for 1.5%).

After the overall price, sustainability is the second most important decision factor for German tourists in Austria.

13% of all holiday guests in Austria did a hiking/mountaineering holiday in winter 2021/2022.

Nestled at the upper reaches of the Tyrolean Gailtal valley, Kartitsch boasts a unique position among Austria's highest mountain valleys. Bounded by the imposing Lienz Dolomites to the north and the majestic Carnic Alps to the south, the village transforms into a winter wonderland marked by abundant snow, vast open expanses, and unparalleled peace and quiet. In this serene setting, winter enthusiasts discover that experiencing the season doesn't necessitate constant engagement on the slopes or cross-country ski trails; a simple act of lacing up hiking boots opens the door to a different, equally enchanting winter adventure.

Embracing the captivating allure of winter hiking, Kartitsch has long recognised the charm of this unhurried form of transportation. The village's commitment to winter hiking was not only a cultural choice but also a strategic one, earning it the prestigious title of the 'First Winter Hiking Village' in 2018. This prestigious title – which is awarded by the *Tirol Tourism Board* as part of the *Tirol Touristica Awards* – gave the community of 800 inhabitants a new, sustainable tourism identity and brought a breath of fresh air to the region. Kartitsch proudly presents nine winter hiking trails, each meticulously designed with deliberately gentle and natural infrastructure measures. These trails beckon enthusiasts to explore the snow-covered, unspoiled cultural landscape in an effortless and environmentally friendly manner.

Beyond its ecological merits, winter hiking emerges as a social and inclusive winter sport in Kartitsch. This activity breaks free from the confines of athletic prowess and the need for expensive equipment, providing an opportunity for everyone to revel in an active winter holiday. Making a winter sport experience accessible to the public has positioned Kartitsch as a trailblazer in the market.

Led by Bernhard Pichler, the mountain community has strategically carved out a niche as Austria's inaugural winter hiking village, bridging the gap for those seeking a harmonious blend of environmental consciousness and inclusive recreational opportunities in the heart of Tyrol.

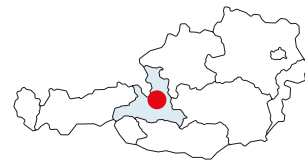
Nestled among Austria's highest mountain valleys, Kartitsch offers the perfect terrain for those seeking a winter hiking adventure.





# Transparency as a cornerstone for sustainable skiing

Alpine winter sports are facing major challenges in terms of sustainability and environmental protection. Christina König, CFO of *Snow Space Salzburg*, shows how a ski resort can overcome prejudices and become a frontrunner for environmentally conscious skiing through **transparent measures, ambitious goals and innovative partnerships**.



## 2.3 kg

of CO<sub>2</sub> is emitted by the skier per day, equivalent to a car journey of 7.14 km.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Technical snowmaking systems only rely on water and air.

State-of-the-art snowmaking systems consume only 1–3 kWh/m<sup>3</sup> of snow produced.

100% of the water used for snowmaking is returned to the natural cycle.

*Snow Space Salzburg Bergbahnen Aktiengesellschaft* has set ambitious goals in terms of environmental protection and sustainability. The company aims to be climate-neutral by the 2025/2026 winter season, integrating this objective as a core component of its corporate strategy. For *Snow Space Salzburg*, this pursuit of sustainability began with a clear view of the facts. CFO Christina König explains: 'We simply noticed that there were a lot of inaccuracies in the media of alpine winter sports, and we wanted to be transparent about this'.

The ski resort, which comprises the communities of Wagrain, Flachau and St. Johann, laid the foundation for its sustainable strategy by thoroughly calculating and disclosing its CO<sub>2</sub> balance. This critical step not only challenges the stereotype of ski resorts as environmental detractors, but also helps to identify potential for improvement and adopt targeted sustainability measures. A notable outcome from examining the CO<sub>2</sub> balance is the significant achievement of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 9,800 tons through the exclusive use of 100% green energy, marking a substantial improvement over the standard electricity mix in Austria.

However, the analysis also revealed that over 50% of the company's own emissions come from slope grooming and snowmaking. In response, *Snow Space Salzburg* has transitioned to using exclusively HVO



Christina König,  
CFO of *Snow Space Salzburg*

© Lorenz Mässner

**I believe that being transparent is simply a cornerstone, especially when it comes to sustainability.**

Christina König, CFO



biofuel for its snow groomers starting from the 2023/2024 winter season, which has already saved 42% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In the long term, the ski resort wants to increase its use of hydrogen-powered snow groomers, anticipated to be 95% carbon-neutral. A strategic partnership has already been established with the manufacturer Prinoth, whose next-generation snow groomers are expected to enter series production by 2025.

The topic of mobility also plays an important role in the ski resort's sustainability initiatives. As part of these efforts, the cable cars have, among other things, switched to e-mobility for the 'employee shuttles' König reveals. Still, she also admits that promoting sustainable travel options for guests remains one of the biggest challenges. Although the ski resort is located in the immediate vicinity of the long-distance train station in St. Johann im Pongau, only eight percent of guests currently arrive by public transport. To increase this figure to 20% by 2025/2026, König and her colleagues have forged partnerships with the Austrian Federal Railways and *Deutsche Bahn*. A special offer was launched for Salzburg residents in 2022, whereby 'everyone from the entire province of Salzburg can travel by train for free if they go skiing with us', explains König.

In order to raise awareness of sustainable practices among ski vacationers and inform them about the environmental efforts of *Snow Space Salzburg*, the cable car company relies on innovative initiatives such as the gondola quiz: 'We have 2 million first-time guests in our ski area. So we thought, what do you do in the gondola? You sit in the gondola and have a quarter of an hour to chat, to think', König elaborates. In each gondola, guests can find various questions, such as: "How do we make snow?" or "What does the HVO consist of?" or "Did you know that we work with 100% green energy?" Guests can then use a QR Code to discover which answer option was correct.

Another issue covered in the quiz, which aims to challenge the misconception that ski resorts are environmentally harmful, concerns biodiversity on

the slopes. On the recommendation of its Scientific Advisory Board, consisting of three recognised university professors, the ski resort has mapped the slopes. The scientific study of the area revealed that 'around 40 different plant species grow on one slope. In comparison, around seven grow in a typical front garden. But people don't realise that. The perception is that slopes are environmentally unfriendly', explains König.

The switch to sustainable practices not only requires persuasion and patience – including from employees and landowners – but also the willingness to invest financially, König openly admits: 'But we, as the board, have actively made the decision that we are willing to spend money because it is important to us.' König is certain that guests also attach great importance to sustainability: 'I don't think it's relevant for a guest whether they pay five more euros for tickets or not. What is relevant is whether the ski resort is involved in the issue. [...] There is a growing recognition among our visitor, who say "I like going to *Snow Space Salzburg* because they are doing something, they are transparent, they are working on it, and it is important to them.'"



*Snow Space Salzburg* boasts 120 km of pistes and 45 modern cable car systems.



The 10-passenger *Flying Mozart* gondola lift stands as one of Austria's top-tier ropeways.



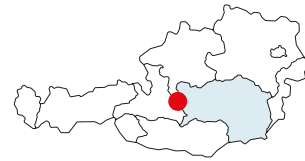
In the midst of the mountains illuminated by the evening sun, skiers take a break at *Snow Space Salzburg*.





# Limitless skiing with 'Freizeit-PSO'

With specially trained ski instructors, individually adapted equipment and inclusive training, the non-profit association *Freizeit-PSO* (Freizeit Para-Special Outdoor Sports) creates an inclusive environment in which people with various mental and/or physical disabilities can experience **skiing without barriers** – with family, friends and at fair prices.



## 3–4

year olds and above can participate in the ski course.

### DID YOU KNOW?

1.4 million people with disabilities live in Austria.

According to a study from 2023, 70–80% of all disabilities are invisible, such as hearing, visual and speech impairments or mental and neurodiverse illnesses.

The vast majority of guests (93%) in Austria travel accompanied by family, partner, friends or a travel group.

Nestled in the heart of Austria lies the holiday destination Schladming-Dachstein. Here, untouched landscapes and Styrian hospitality blend seamlessly with barrier-free programs and infrastructure. Embracing the motto 'where there is a will, there is a way', the non-profit organisation *Freizeit-PSO* offers individuals with physical or cognitive disabilities active summer holidays in addition to winter ski experiences and courses.

Guided by specially trained ski instructors for people with disabilities and equipped with personalised gear tailored to their specific needs, skiing becomes accessible in both seated and standing positions with the aid of appropriate tools. This inclusivity extends to individuals with learning disabilities, visual impairments, traumatic brain injuries, or multiple sclerosis. Monoski and Bi-Ski options open the slopes to those with spinal cord injuries, spastic paralysis, or hemiplegia. Furthermore, training sessions are available for parents, friends, and caregivers interested in learning how to ski with individuals with disabilities.

One of *Freizeit-PSO*'s main goals is to make vacations as affordable as possible. As such, the cost of equipment and lift passes is already included in the price of the ski courses, ensuring that individuals with disabilities pay a similar fee to those without disabilities. Additionally, the support of the association's partners and sponsors means that

holiday vouchers can be offered to individuals with disabilities living at or near the poverty line. This opens the doors to socially disadvantaged individuals with disabilities, who might otherwise be unable to afford a vacation, to enjoy *Freizeit-PSO*'s programs.



A wheelchair user enjoys adaptive winter sports using a Bi-Ski assisted by a ski instructor.



# Mindful giving and joyful living in Graz

As the **first sustainable Christmas market** in Graz, the *Grieskindlmarkt* will get visitors into the festive spirit with regional and home-made handicrafts. *Omas Teekanne*, a creative and vintage café, is joining forces with Graz City Management, which has been allocating the space on Nikolai Square to innovative and sustainable entrepreneurs for the past four years, to redefine Christmas season shopping.



## 15

exhibitors offer self made and regional products.

### DID YOU KNOW?

7 out of 10 Austrians want to support the local economy by giving regionally produced products as gifts.

According to a nationwide survey, 78% of Austrians consider sustainability during the festive season to be highly important.

The use of regional and sustainable products is playing an increasingly central role at Christmas dinner.

On Nikolaisquare in Graz, *Omas Teekanne* is the first vintage tea bar with a 60s and 70s ambience, old records and retro books. As a design and concept store, it offers carefully curated design items and handmade treasures. The venue is not only a meeting place for nostalgia lovers, but also organises Do It Yourself (DIY) workshops and creative events. Particularly noteworthy is the Christmas market taking place since 2019, a sustainable cooperation with Graz City Management. The organisers of the Christmas market and owners of *Omas Teekanne*, Sandra Auer and Yuno Khripunova, hold the *Grieskindlmarkt* under the all-important motto 'less waste'.

Selling regional products at the *Grieskindlmarkt* not only avoids long transport routes and the resulting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, but also gives local producers a platform to present themselves and their art. The conscious decision in favour of regional products and home-made craftsmanship not only contributes to sustainability, but also supports the diversity and uniqueness of the local economy. This fosters a more authentic representation of the region, strengthens the community's local identification and forges closer connections among local stakeholders.

Local producers can apply to *Omas Teekanne* for a stand at the Christmas market. For everybody else, who is still working on their handicraft skills, the Christmas market offers DIY workshops on Fridays and Sundays. Here, you can craft your own unique Christmas presents with the assistance and materials from local stand owners, while gaining insights into sustainability. The experience is complemented by a fair and resource-saving culinary selection, including a cup of homemade Glühwein.

Choosing handmade gifts not only supports the principles of reducing waste and avoiding mass-produced items but also elevates the meaning behind the act of giving for both the giver and the recipient. As a result, Christmas becomes an even more valuable event to locals and visitors alike.



Home-made handicrafts displayed on a stand at the *Grieskindlmarkt* in 2022.



# A green destination for a white winter vacation

Renowned winter sports destination Wagrain-Kleinarl has earned global acclaim for its conscientious approach, embedding sustainability into every aspect, from accommodations to mountain infrastructure. Guided by a mission to **preserve the alpine ecosystem while fostering economic growth and cultural enrichment**, the region sets a commendable standard in responsible tourism.



## 45

certified organic farms in the region produce sustainably.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Austria's gastronomy, hotel, and cable car industries provide around 250,000 jobs in the winter.

Tourist development in the form of ski slopes only covers about 0.28% of Austria's total area.

Hotels with the Austrian Ecolabel take measures to protect the climate and contribute to safeguarding our livelihoods.

The diverse Wagrain-Kleinarl region has not only established itself as a haven for winter sports enthusiasts but has also risen as a global leader in sustainable alpine tourism. Boasting recent accolades, including the prestigious *Green Destinations* Certification, the Austrian Ecolabel for destinations, and the title of 'Best Tourism Village' conferred by the UNWTO, this ski resort in the province of Salzburg showcases a steadfast commitment to environmental and social responsibility.

Wagrain-Kleinarl has set sustainability as a top priority across all levels of its tourism industry. Accommodations, excursion destinations, restaurants, producers, mountain railroads, and mobility partners in the region have all embraced this commitment. 17 businesses are certified with the *Good Travel Seal*, which was developed by *Green Destinations* especially for medium-sized and small, family-run businesses and is used worldwide.

The certified entities in the ski area include an organic mountain restaurant and the cable car company. Whether through inventive practices in snowmaking, slope preparation, green electricity, recycling, upcycling, and water conservation, as evident in the case of Shuttleberg Flachauwinkl-Kleinarl, or by strengthening skiers and snowboarders with regional and organic dishes, the commitment to sustainability is palpable.

A comprehensive sustainability mission statement guides Wagrain-Kleinarl in preserving its living, economic, natural, and cultural spaces. Emphasising communication and transparency, the mission raises awareness among visitors about resource conservation and natural regeneration projects. The region also collaborates with local businesses, supporting them in implementing sustainable goals and fostering a sense of community responsibility. By facilitating connections among local businesses, the strategy not only optimises transport routes but also ensures that added value remains within the region. Visitors, in turn, benefit from the quality of regional products, while contributing to local employment as well as having the opportunity to partake in a distinctive and authentic experience.

With its wide-ranging sustainability efforts, Wagrain-Kleinarl has emerged as a shining example of how a tourism destination can harmonise with nature and the community. Recognised for its sustainability efforts on a global stage, the region is not just a ski destination but a trailblazer in redefining the possibilities of responsible alpine tourism.

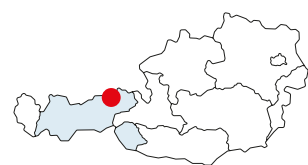


In scenic Wagrain-Kleinarl, a skier glides gracefully through the snow.



# A world's first in a world of ski

For over 15 years, the *SkiWelt Wilder Kaiser-Brixental* has impressed with sustainable solutions. From a [pioneering solar-powered lift to efficient snow management and innovative heating solutions](#), *SkiWelt* serves as an inspiring example for the Austrian ski industry and beyond.



## 10

single-family homes could be supplied from the electricity generated by the two PV chair lifts.

Renowned as one of the largest and most modern ski resorts, *SkiWelt Wilder Kaiser-Brixental* offers visitors an extensive network of over 270 km of ski slopes, serviced by 82 modern cable cars and lifts. *SkiWelt's* dedication to environmental conservation dates back to 2008, when *Bergbahn Brixen* gained international acclaim for constructing the world's first solar-powered lift, the *Brixen Sonnenlift*, which operates exclusively on solar energy. A large PV system at the bottom station generates approximately 15,000 kWh per year – this even generates a small surplus, which is fed back into the electricity grid. In 2015/2016, another PV plant on the south facing facade of the new *Jochbahn* chair lift was built, producing about 20,000 kWh per year. Moreover, the *SkiWelt* operations at large are powered by 100% green electricity from Tyrolean hydropower.

The resort's commitment to sustainability continued to evolve with subsequent initiatives, such as the installation of a snow measurement system in 2017. This system, complemented by 17 storage lakes, has led to an annual 25% reduction in snowmaking resources throughout the entire *SkiWelt*, ensuring efficient use of water resources. In 2018/2019, *SkiWelt* took another leap by expanding its area-wide GPS-controlled slope management system for piste preparation, accurately measuring each piste to the centimetre during the summer. This precision in snow management not only results in significant savings in both technically produced snow and energy but also ensures that the technically generated snow is reintegrated into nature's water cycle upon melting.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Austria's cable car industry secures almost 125,900 full-time jobs.

Around 50 million 'skier days', i.e. the first daily use of lift facilities in ski resorts, per year generate a turnover of 12.6 billion euros and lead to added value of 6.7 billion euros.

Between 2008 and 2019, the energy consumption per overnight stay in Austria's tourism industry was reduced by 54%.

A key aspect of *SkiWelt's* sustainability efforts lies in its intelligent use of energy. The resort has implemented various heat recovery systems, such as the one installed at the *8EUB SkiWeltbahn* top station in 2008 in Brixen, which supports the heating system of the *Choralpe* mountain restaurant. Another example is the *Hartenkaiserbahn* in Ellmau-Going, utilising waste heat from its engine room to heat the premises in the mountain lift station as well as the adjoining restaurant. This technology not only provides a sustainable heating solution but also results in significant savings of approximately 10,000 litres of heating oil and the reduction of 32 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions annually.

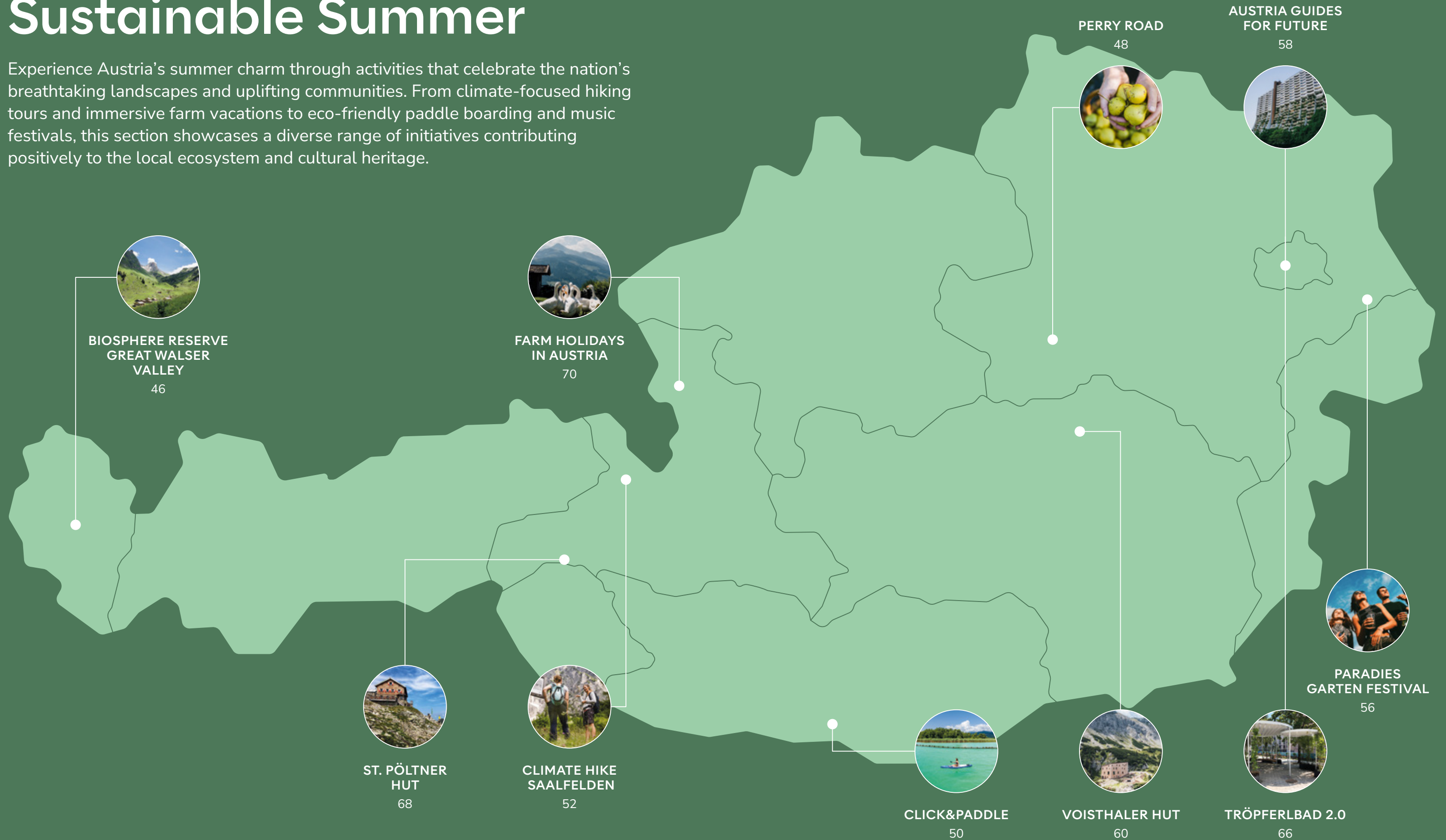
*SkiWelt* is not just a pioneer in sustainable energy; it also embraces electric mobility. Charging stations for electric vehicles are strategically placed across various locations within the resort. Guests purchasing day tickets even receive complimentary access to charging stations. Thanks to its wide-ranging sustainable solutions, the *SkiWelt* has already been recognised several times as one of the most environmentally friendly ski resorts in the world.



Skiers taking in the scenic views at *SkiWelt* while enjoying their time on the slopes.

# Sustainable Summer

Experience Austria's summer charm through activities that celebrate the nation's breathtaking landscapes and uplifting communities. From climate-focused hiking tours and immersive farm vacations to eco-friendly paddle boarding and music festivals, this section showcases a diverse range of initiatives contributing positively to the local ecosystem and cultural heritage.





# A paradise full of natural treasures and preservation

Situated in the centre of Vorarlberg, the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Great Walser Valley's rich landscape attracts tourists from all over the world. Beyond its picturesque allure however, the valley also offers an **ambitious sustainability agenda** that goes far beyond the biosphere.



## 700 MWh

surplus in green electricity was generated in the biosphere reserve in 2021.

Since its inclusion in the UNESCO list of global model regions for sustainable living and economic vitality, as well as its designation as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2000, the people of the Great Walser Valley (in German: Großes Walsertal) have been working hard to make life in the valley sustainable and worth living.

At the core of the biosphere reserve lies a culturally rich landscape featuring species-rich mountain meadows and a mosaic-like blend of forests, grasslands, water bodies, and alpine expanses. With 180 farmers, of which approximately 45% practice organic farming, and around 100 small businesses, the valley showcases the delicate interplay between natural resources and human utilisation, guided by the reserve's ethos of using nature without harming it. Like most biosphere reserves, the valley is strategically divided into different zones, each serving a specific purpose: Development Zone (13%), Preservation/Maintenance Zone (69%), and Core Zone (17%).

Beyond agriculture, tourism serves as a vital source of income for the region. The valley's untouched natural treasures attract visitors, and guided tours, such as the *BERGaktiv* hiking guide or herb hikes with the *Alchemilla herb women*, offer insights into the region's diverse topics and conservation projects.

### DID YOU KNOW?

In order to preserve its natural regions, Austria has placed around 48% of its land under protection.

Austria is one of the most biodiverse countries in Central Europe, home to around 68,000 species, including about 54,000 animal species and 3,462 ferns and flowering plants.

Austria boasts 6 national parks, 48 nature parks, 4 UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, and one Wilderness Area UNESCO World Heritage Site.

A member of the Climate Alliance and a designated Climate and Energy Model Region (KEM) since 2009, the biosphere reserve is also committed to promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy production. A significant goal for the Great Walser Valley is achieving energy autonomy by 2030 both in electricity and heat supply, as well as becoming an energy export region, particularly in green electricity and biomass. In the area of green electricity production, this target has already been achieved, generating more electricity from green power plants than the biosphere reserve's entire electricity consumption.

The reserve's sustainability efforts extend beyond energy projects and nature conservation, embracing various measures to promote sustainability and awareness-raising in everyday life. These include mobility initiatives, sustainable event organisation,

and youth-driven projects like ecological social school weeks and the 'Plastic Bags Out - Fabric Bags In' project. The latter was in 2018 recognised with the 'Energy Globe Austria', an environmental award for energy efficiency, sustainability and the use of renewable energies, in the youth category and the bags have proven very popular among guests of the biosphere reserve.

As the Great Walser Valley celebrates over two decades as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and a model region for sustainable living, it stands as a testament to the positive outcomes that dedicated efforts toward energy autonomy and environmental preservation can yield. With thoughtful consideration for the delicate balance between nature and human interaction, the park charts a course towards a vibrant and sustainable future that benefits both its residents, visitors, and the environment.

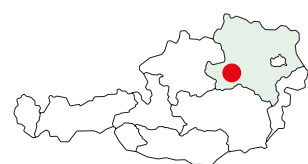


Within the Biosphere Reserve, Laguz Alpe offers a scenic mountain escape.



# The (Perry) Road to sustainable tourism

In the heart of Lower Austria, the *Perry Road* (Moststraße) region stands out as a beacon of sustainable tourism, embracing its unique identity as the **largest closed cider pear region in Europe**. The picturesque region, adorned with pear orchards, not only preserves cultural heritage but also thrives on innovative practices that make it a model for other tourism destinations.



## 3,300

trees are planted during annual tree plantation campaigns.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Austria-wide cider pear production strengthens the regional value chain and was, in 2022, at 24,688 tonnes, 6.2% above the previous year's production volume.

The increasing trend towards cider consumption supports the preservation of orchards, which contribute measurably to biodiversity.

Cider is a purely natural product and contains important nutrients such as vitamin C, potassium, calcium, and magnesium.

Since 2002, the *Perry Road* tourism association has played a leading role in sustainability initiatives. As part of the LEADER regions, an EU initiative for innovative models and projects to promote rural areas, the association consists of 31 member municipalities with around 110,000 inhabitants. The region's natural landscape and climate provide ideal conditions for pear tree cultivation, and the traditional cider culture has paved the way for quality production and collaboration among local businesses.

One of the primary objectives of the *Perry Road* is to boost the regional value chain, keeping production local and therefore minimising environmentally harmful processes such as long transport routes. This strategy is not only orientated towards environmental sustainability, but also has a socio-economic impact. In promoting local production, jobs are created and the local economy is supported. By conserving natural resources and protecting cultural heritage, the region aims to create a unique natural space for future generations and visitors to come.

A unique aspect of *Perry Road's* success lies in balancing tourism development with the preservation of local identity. Cross-sectoral cooperation, marketing strategies like the *Day of the Must*, and an emphasis on gentle mobility and eco-tourism make *Perry Road* an appealing destination for environmentally conscious travellers.

Innovative projects range from tree planting campaigns to the *MostBirnHaus*, an experience centre for the fascinating world of the cider pear. Here, visitors can discover traditional cider production and learn more about the local culture. Initiatives like the 'Varietal Diversity on the Cider Road' use mobile cider presses to educate communities about regional fruit, while a focus on climate-friendly fruit trees highlights the region's commitment to environmental stewardship.

Co-creative workshops and the *Perry Road's* commitment to sustainable practices, innovation, and community engagement has not only elevated its status as a tourism destination but also positioned it as a model for responsible and inclusive regional development.



Perry Road proudly stands as Europe's largest closed cider pear region.



# Eco-friendly paddling in Carinthia

While being popular water sports, **stand-up paddling and kayaking** still hold potential to be more environmentally friendly, especially in terms of their non-recyclable materials. The Carinthian start-up *Click&Paddle* offers a solution.



## 100%

recycled materials have been used to produce the kayaks.

### DID YOU KNOW?

26% of all summer holiday guests in Austria did a holiday at a lake or river in 2023.

Austria's rivers and lakes have some of the highest bathing water quality in Europe, with 97% of Austria's bathing waters receiving an 'excellent' rating.

There are about 400 swimming lakes in Austria, perfect for paddling and other water sports.

Stand-up paddling (SUP) and kayaking are not just short-term trends, but have become permanent fixtures in the repertoire of leisure activities on summer vacations. Despite their growing popularity, however, the environmental sustainability of these water sports is increasingly being questioned. The main point of criticism lies in the frequent use of PVC for the manufacture of SUPs and kayaks. This material, known for its toxicity during manufacturing, poses significant environmental challenges, as it cannot be disposed of in an eco-friendly manner once the product reaches the end of its lifecycle. The negative ecological impact is further exacerbated by the purchase and individual transportation of personal water sports equipment.

In this context, the innovative Carinthian start-up *Click&Paddle* presents a promising and sustainable solution. All of the company's water sports equipment is made from environmentally friendly HDPE, a material that, unlike PVC, does not release any harmful substances and is fully recyclable. By consistently focusing on shared use instead of the individual purchase of SUPs or kayaks, *Click&Paddle* contributes to a more efficient use of resources, as the equipment can be utilised more frequently. Moreover, as there is no need for individual transportation, the start-up saves on transport routes and thus helps cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

The start-up, which has been founded by Thomas Dickhoff, transparently communicates that it still has room for improvement. Indeed, while the SUPs are sourced from an external partner company in Austria, the recyclable kayaks are imported from the United States due to a lack of European alternatives.

The concept of *Click&Paddle* was successfully tested on Lake Faak in summer 2021 and has since been expanded. Now, the start-up also operates automated rental stations on Lake Wörthersee and Lake Ossiach, allowing water sports enthusiasts to experience the picturesque scenery of Carinthia without having to worry about their ecological footprint. For an affordable hourly rate of six euros, stand-up paddlers and kayakers can actively contribute to the sustainability of their water sports.



Lake Wörthersee's warm and peaceful waters make it an optimal spot for water sports.



# On the local trace of a global crisis

What are the traces of the climate crisis, and how do they manifest themselves regionally? Saalfelden Leogang is Austria's first tourism association to offer a **hiking tour about climate change** – with environmental effects directly noticeable in Saalfelden Leogang.



## 7.3 °C

is the new average annual temperature in Saalfelden Leogang.

### DID YOU KNOW?

89 KLAR! regions in Austria receive funding for their local climate change adaptation strategies and awareness-raising activities.

In a survey of over 80 KLAR! regions, two thirds of respondents stated that they are taking measures in their private lives to adapt to the effects of climate change.

Austrian GHG emissions fell by around 6.4% in 2022 compared to 2021, which corresponds to a reduction of 5 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-eq.

The environmental effects of climate change become more and more evident, particularly in the alpine regions. In Saalfelden Leogang, the average annual temperature has increased to 7.3°C, which is already 1.8°C above the long-term average (1971–2000). In summer, the 25°C mark at 1,000 m above sea level is already reached three times as often as the long-term average. Droughts, which statistically occurred only every ten years, now occur every five years.

To raise awareness and inform about such changes, the Tourism Region Saalfelden Leogang and Climate Change Adaptation Model Region (KLAR!) Pinzgau created a weekly guided hike that is integrated in the region's summer adventure programme. Thus, it becomes Austria's first knowledge transfer project of its kind on the topic of climate and nature.

According to Anna Heuberger, KLAR! manager, guide and co-developer of the program, the consequences of climate change become visible and tangible on the hiking tour. Participants learn about a wide range of climate change effects: from the climatic forest to the future of the Alps, to permafrost, settlement scars, and the necessary adaptations for extreme weather events. The region is prone to natural hazards such as floods, avalanches, mudflows, as well as earth- and rockslides – all triggered by a sudden influx of heavy precipitation.

The hike seeks to break the global climate crisis down to a local level, directly noticeable for everyone. It illustrates why action is urgently needed, without pointing fingers, instead appealing to and engaging in dialogue with people of all ages. Each walk has

a single objective, according to Heuberger: to shed light on climate change and collectively discuss its implications. In this way, tourism in Austria takes on an educational task without restricting the enjoyment of an active lifestyle.



Anna Heuberger enjoys a conversation with a companion at one of the stops along the guided hike.

© Saalfelden Leogang Touristik GmbH | Michael Geißler



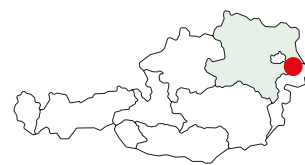
Saalfelden Leogang's climate hiking tour provides a tangible perspective on the effects of climate change.





# Green grooves at 'Paradies Garten Festival'

Since 2022, people have gathered in Lower Austria for *Paradies Garten Festival* – Austria's first CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral music festival. Whether they join for the music, the food, or simply to partake in the festivities, visitors can trust the venue to integrate sustainability every step of the way.



## 12,500 kg

of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were saved in 2023 using the local power grid.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Green Events Austria's 'Win sustainably!' competitions count 27,000 individual green event measures in total.

In recent years, Austrian eco-friendly events have saved 17 million plastic cups from waste.

Global studies reveal that 48% of attendees are willing to pay extra for eco-friendly events.

Pitched as one of Austria's most sustainable music festivals, the *Paradies Garten Festival* returns for three rhythmic days every summer. Although it originates from the Paradise City Festival in Belgium, the Austrian event takes on an entirely new form based on cooperation with Austrian artists and promoters.

The collaborative attitude is not limited to local music and event collectives. Since the first event was hosted in 2022, the venue has explored various partnerships to enhance sustainability across its operations. In collaboration with the Austrian Federal Railways, the festival has been able to offer services such as free night trains to the festival – a service used by nearly two thirds of attendees during the first year, resulting in a remarkable reduction of over 50% in transport-related emissions.

Striving for transparency and environmental responsibility, the festival made public information and facts regarding the first event hosted in 2022. The disclosed information unveiled a total emission of 113.9 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-eq, 43% of which was attributed to the suppliers and materials used for the festival. When the event returned for the second time, it was as the country's first CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral music festival, powered by locally generated wind and solar energy through its partnership with *Energiepark Bruck an der Leitha*.

In its commitment to sustainability, the event further serves 100% locally sourced and organically grown vegetarian meals, adjusting food quantities to minimise leftovers. This dedication extends to a zero single-use plastic policy, with readily available water refill stations scattered throughout the site, encouraging visitors to reuse their bottles. To counterbalance any unavoidable climate impact, the festival further offsets its carbon footprint by supporting CO2logic's climate project.

These concerted efforts not only help festival attendees enjoy the atmosphere more sustainably; they also serve as a resounding example for the future of eco-conscious events. Recognising the potential negative impacts of a music event on the surrounding environment, *Paradies Garten Festival* hopes to inspire more sustainable practices across the event industry by openly sharing their successes as well as their failures.



Festival-goers dance and socialise at *Paradies Garten Festival*.



# Eco-touring Vienna's green treasures

Shifting away from traditional tours, *Austria Guides For Future* showcase Vienna's **greener, cooler, and livelier facets**. From verdant facades and vibrant street art to the community gardens nestled within the urban tapestry, and wooden dwellings gracing the urban Seestadt, their tours encompass an array of sustainable landmarks.



9

diverse tours are currently being provided by *Austria Guides For Future* in Vienna.

## DID YOU KNOW?

26% of all summer holiday guests in Austria went sightseeing in 2023.

9 out of 10 local residents perceive tourism as a positive influence on the city of Vienna.

Visitors in Vienna are increasingly opting for eco-friendly transportation methods.

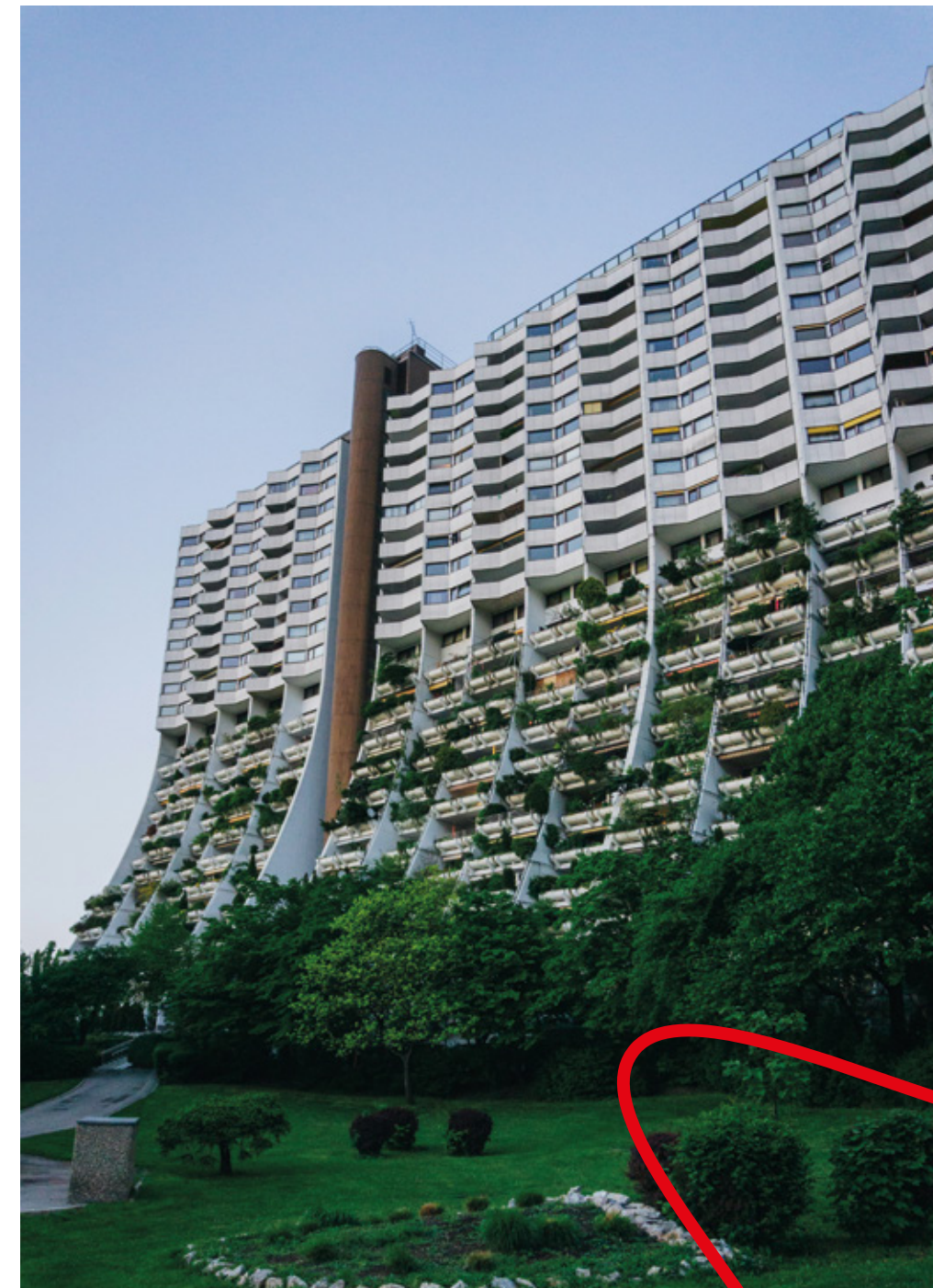
In the midst of the pandemic year 2020, a group of tour guides came together to form *Austria Guides For Future*. Departing from standardised guide training that overlooked environmental and climate-related themes, this group was established with the vision of integrating these critical issues into the fabric of future tours.

The thematic tours cover a wide spectrum, ranging from exploring climate protection and adaptation along the Danube canal to sustainable urban development near the main station, discovering historic parks and nature reserves, walks on consumption, and more. Each tour spotlights local climate protection projects and inspiring community initiatives, all facilitated through climate-friendly modes of transport like walking, cycling, and public transit.

To stay up-to-date, the tours undergo regular revisions in cooperation with experts and institutions that are active in environmental and climate protection. Moreover, the team frequently draws inspiration from the insights shared by their guests, encouraging mutual learning rather than a one-sided endorsement of projects.

Embracing the principles of *Fridays For Future*, the team encourages visitors and residents alike to become more aware of their surroundings and engage in environmental initiatives. While centring on environmental and climate protection in the tours, the group maintains an optimistic outlook and champions Vienna's future-oriented developments through innovative and interactive experiences.

The overarching aim of their tours is to reunite nature and culture. Whereas conventional tourism often centres around consumption, urging guests to hurriedly absorb as much culture as possible within a limited timeframe, *Austria Guides For Future* advocate for a more deliberate exploration of a city. Guided by the motto 'Weniger ist mehr' (less is more), their tours foster an atmosphere where cultural experiences are savoured without rush.

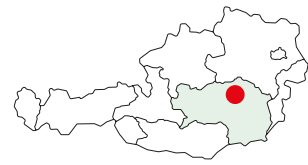


On the tours, guests and locals can get to know the green facets of Vienna, such as the green facades of *Wohnpark Alterlaa*.



# Hiking refuge in harmony with the Hochschwab

Beneath the imposing walls of the Styrian Hochschwab lies the *Voisthaler hut*. Here, Maja Ludwig, a sociologist from Dresden, and Lisi Schleicher, a writer from Vienna, have created a **sustainable refuge for hikers**, characterised by efficient resource management and environmentally friendly practices.



## 1,700 l

of diesel are saved annually by switching to the rapeseed oil cogeneration plant.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Austrian service and hotel industry sources around 89% of its supplies domestically.

The share of renewable energy in tourism is 55%.

Austria boasts 64,000 km of hiking trails.

Completed in August 2021, the new *Voisthaler hut* (in German: *Voisthaler Hütte*) not only shines with its architectural splendour, but also for its exemplary use of sustainable energy sources. Within just a year of its completion, the hut received the environmental seal of approval, attesting to its eco-friendly design. Specifically, it features an anti-reflective PV system, complemented by a rapeseed oil cogeneration plant with combined heat and power (CHP), as well as a fully biological sewage treatment facility.

Its resource-conserving timber construction is more than just architecturally appealing – it is a conscious step towards integrating into the surrounding nature, which is also very important to its innkeepers: ‘We want to cause as little disruption as possible with the hut’, says Maja Ludwig. That is also why the team at the *Voisthaler hut* tries to use solar energy whenever possible: ‘When the sun shines, we start making the dishes and always try to work as energy- and resource-efficiently as possible’, explains Lisi Schleicher.

This profound environmental awareness of the two women, who took over the *Voisthaler hut* in 2019, comes from a deep personal conviction that was further strengthened by their time together at the *Karl-Ludwig-Haus* on the Rax, the first organic-certified hut in Austria.



Lisi Schleicher (left) and Maja Ludwig (right), Innkeepers at *Voisthaler hut*.

© Lieselotte Schleicher

‘A mountain hut is in itself a means of environmental protection, as it keeps people on the paths.’

Maja Ludwig, Innkeeper



It was therefore 'clear to both of them from the very first moment' that environmental protection would also play a major role in the management of the *Voisthaler hut*, regardless of the environmental seal requirements of the Austrian Alpine Association.

The pair places great importance on sustainable and regional sourcing, both in the à la carte menu and in the daily specials. Meat and bread have been sourced from local companies since day one, with 'local' meaning 'closer than 10 km', explains Schleicher. They also rely on suppliers who deliver their goods in large paper containers in order to produce as little waste as possible. These collaborations not only serve to protect the environment, but also strengthen value creation and location security in the region, as Schleicher emphasises: 'They advertise us, we advertise them, and by keeping it in the region, we don't have long supply chains'. In order to minimise transport routes, the lessees also coordinate with the neighbouring hut on the summit of the Hochschwab, the *Schiestlhaus*, for larger deliveries or removals.

The operators are committed to transparency and have disclosed all information about suppliers, energy generation and the hut's technology. Despite this information, there are occasionally situations in which the sustainability requirements of the operators conflict with their guests wishes, such as when the innkeepers 'don't want to turn on the heating in the middle of summer so that their shoes get dry', explains Ludwig. In such cases, it is important to the innkeepers to explain their reasoning behind their practices to their guests in a friendly and respectful manner, which is often met with understanding and appreciation: 'It is often the case that they are surprised and somehow find it great how we deal with these conditions', reveals Schleicher.

Limited resources, especially water, pose a particular challenge at the *Voisthaler hut*. The hut is not connected to the large spring lines of the Hochschwab, which supply Vienna and Graz, and therefore has to use the available water sparingly.

'In times of water scarcity, we sometimes have to tell our guests that they need to save water', emphasises Schleicher. For mountain hut operators such as Ludwig and Schleicher, a resource-conserving approach is not only commendable, but also indispensable, for example when thunderstorms paralyse the cable car, and supplies such as toilet paper become scarce.

In the end, awareness of finite resources and environmentally friendly action becomes more tangible at the *Voisthaler hut*. 'You just don't think about such things at all in the valley', says Schleicher, and Ludwig adds: 'Perhaps it will also help guests in general to appreciate how important water and electricity are in our everyday lives when they return to the valley'.



The Hochschwab bathed in the warm hues of the sunset as seen from *Voisthaler hut*.

© Lieselotte Schleicher



Amidst the rugged beauty of Hochschwab, the historical *Voisthaler hut* welcomes long-distance hikers and groups.

© Alpenverein | Markus Köhlmayr



The wooden design of *Voisthaler hut* harmoniously blends with the rocky backdrop of Hochschwab.





# Beat the heat with Vienna's urban 'Coolspots'

Introducing urban *Coolspots*: social meeting spaces that **prevent the city from overheating** without the need to consume. The two prototypes from the research project on urban overheating, *Tröpfelbad 2.0*, are smart nature-based solutions that take us one step closer to a healthy and inclusive city.



## < 750 l

of water are sufficient to maintain the *Coolspots* annually.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Two thirds of Vienna's population live less than 250 m away from public green spaces.

20% of all summer holidaymakers in Austria took a city break in 2023, an increase since the pandemic.

The annual mean value for particulate matter pollution in Vienna fell to between 12 and 16 micrograms/m<sup>3</sup> in 2023 and is within the maximum level of 15 micrograms/m<sup>3</sup> recommended by the WHO.

Cities have their own climate, influenced by factors like pavement, limited greenery, and air pollution. Vienna, like many other cities, faces urban overheating at the risk of the health and well-being of its urban residents and visitors. To tackle this, the *Breathe Earth Collective* and *Green4Cities* piloted so-called urban *Coolspots* in two locations from 2020 to 2022. Financed through the Climate and Energy Fund, the project includes analyses and documentation for others to replicate *Coolspots* in their cities.

At Esterhazypark and Schlingermarkt, the *Coolspots* offer visitors a shaded, non-commercial space. The surrounding plants provide a habitat for insects and birds, seamlessly integrated into Vienna's urban landscape. Unlike traditional urban remodelling, which can take years, *Coolspots* offer a flexible and temporary solution to quickly improve the quality of life in urban areas. The modular design allows for easy modifications, and a high-pressure misting system effectively cools the air. Importantly, smart sensors ensure water mist is only dispensed when individuals are present, thus conserving water resources.

The effects of the *Coolspots* extend beyond the immediate surroundings. Indeed, the cooling effect has a positive impact on neighbouring parks, promoting a more pleasant environment for all.

The strategic placement of these spaces in central locations further emphasises their role as meeting points that promote social interaction and inclusivity.

*Tröpfelbad 2.0* not only helps tourists to keep it cool while enjoying the city's attractions; co-creative workshops involving residents further help sustain

its positive influence on the neighbourhood beyond the tourism season. This collaborative effort ensures that the project aligns with the desires and preferences of the local community, contributing to a unique experience in Vienna that prioritises both the contentment of its residents and the well-being of its visitors.

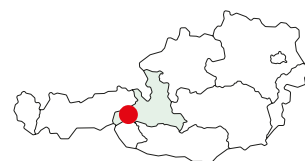


The *Coolspot* at Esterhazypark forms a cooling oasis in central Vienna.



# An eco-friendly Alpine haven for hikers

Perched atop the Felbertauern pass, the *St. Pöltner Hut* stands as a **beacon of environmental responsibility**, harmonising with its pristine Alpine surroundings. Converted from a century-old hut, the hiking cabin exemplifies a commitment to sustainability through its innovative infrastructure and eco-conscious management practices.



## 25 +

years, the Austrian Alpine Association has awarded the environmental seal of approval to hiking cabins

Located at the summit of the Felbertauern pass, an ancient Tauern crossing, the *St. Pöltner Hut* (in German: St. Pöltner Hütte) stands as a sentinel of Alpine beauty in the Salzburg municipality of Mittersill, right on the border with East Tyrol. In 2011, a comprehensive project was started to adapt the original hut, built over a hundred years ago, to new requirements and legal regulations.

As part of these restoration efforts, a PV system was installed that ensures a self-sufficient energy supply by harnessing the abundant Alpine sunlight to generate electricity. Despite its remote location, the hut embraces renewable energy, aligning with the Alpine Associations' stipulation that the energy supply should primarily come from sustainable sources such as water, sun, wind, biomass, and vegetable oils.

With no natural spring nearby, the *St. Pöltner Hut* ingeniously utilises water runoff from a residual glacier located above the hut. This meltwater is collected and treated through an advanced UV filter system, meeting stringent environmental standards. The implementation of a new water supply system in 2012, coupled with a biological treatment plant using a gravel bed system, showcases the hut's dedication to responsible water usage and disposal. A wood stove in the kitchen satisfies the heating and hot water needs.

## DID YOU KNOW?

With the Austrian Ecolabel, Austria was the first country in the world to define national standards for sustainable tourism back in 1996.

68% of all summer vacationers came to Austria for hiking in 2023.

From 2005 to 2022 the installed PV capacity in Austria increased by 34.7% per year.

The supply of food and fuel to the hut, as well as the removal of waste, remains an issue due to its remote location and lack of access roads; even today it can only be done by helicopter transport or on the back of the hut's innkeepers. In order to fulfil the stringent environmental protection criteria set forth by the Austrian Alpine Association, an environmentally friendly management and responsible use of

resources by the hut's innkeepers is therefore considered even more crucial. This was recognised particularly in 2017, when the *St. Pöltner Hut* was honoured with the environmental seal, for its construction of environmentally-friendly infrastructure measures and the tenant's ecologically exemplary efforts.



The charming *St. Pöltner Hut*, nestled atop the Felbertauern pass.

© Alpenverein Sektion St. Pölten | N. Lang



# Farm getaways in tune with animals and nature

*Farm Holidays in Austria* offers an authentic holiday experience, aiming to harness the significant potential that the **combination of agriculture and tourism** presents. With a focus on sustainable practices both in the operations and guest accommodations, the organisation strives to revitalise farms and promote their diversity and development.



## 300

of the around 2,300 holiday farms are accessible by public transport.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Austrian accommodations saw a record-breaking 80.9 million overnight stays in 2023, the highest in statistical history for summer bookings.

In 2020, the organically farmed area in Austrian agriculture accounted for 26.5%, a Europe-wide peak value.

Every 30th tourist overnight stay in Austria takes place on a farm.

With over 2,300 establishments across Austria, the focus is on offering authentic experiences by providing insights into agricultural work and food production, emphasising the farmers' connection with flora and fauna. *Farm Holidays in Austria* not only positions itself as a provider of idyllic vacations, but also as a driving force in supporting and sustainably developing its accommodations, as highlighted by Deputy Managing Director Monika Falkensteiner.

The vision, firmly embedded in the corporate strategy, is to become Austria's most regional, meaningful, and sustainable holiday offering. Serving as a marketer and umbrella organisation, *Farm Holidays in Austria* ensures that agricultural establishments not only attract guests but that they, through this additional revenue stream, also 'can retain the many families on the farms', states Falkensteiner. Being part of the *Farm Holidays in Austria* brand allows establishments to save costs and effort associated with various individual booking and rating platforms, benefitting especially smaller establishments with few beds that may find such tools financially challenging.

In addition to successful marketing, Monika Falkensteiner and her colleagues are particularly concerned with the development of the farms. The organisation supports its family farms with educational and advisory measures to help them develop further in the areas of sustainability and regionality. In this regard, Falkensteiner has



Monika Falkensteiner,  
Deputy Managing Director  
*Farm Holidays in Austria*

© Urlaub am Bauernhof

**We want to become Austria's most regional, meaningful, and sustainable holiday offering.**

Monika Falkensteiner, Deputy Managing Director



particularly high hopes for the partnership with Bio Austria, which was launched in spring 2023. The accessibility of farms by public transport is also playing an increasingly important role for *Farm Holidays in Austria*. Thanks to the new filter in the booking selection 'Holidays without a Car', guests now also have the option of making their journey even more sustainable.

The cooperation highlights the diversity of organic products and enables guests to enjoy a unique organic farm vacation experience and high-quality, regional and organic delicacies directly from the farm. The focus is on authenticity, such as the organic breakfast, which must meet the highest standards. Visitors also gain insights into the meaning of organic farming for Austrian farms, thus aiming to promote environmentally conscious consumer behaviour among guests. Falkensteiner reveals that *Farm Holidays in Austria* and *Bio Austria* – the association of Austrian organic farmers – are working together to make *Urlaub am Biobauernhof* one of the largest vacation offers in Europe.

While the establishments generally promote and implement sustainable practices, the Deputy Managing Director acknowledges that the path to the most sustainable holiday offering is not always straightforward. For instance, the organisation seeks more members to participate in the Austrian Ecolabel, but obstacles remain, not only for many farm hosts but also for other small-scale tourism businesses.

Here, too, the challenges are often more of a financial nature and less the fundamental willingness of the farms to implement sustainability measures. The financial hurdles, especially the costs associated with the certification audits, are almost impossible for many rural landlords and other tourism businesses to overcome. Moreover, the administrative burden associated with extensive environmental inspections presents yet another hurdle.

In order to implement the sustainability goals, the strategic developer therefore emphasises the

importance of small, gradual measures and underlines the need to move away from mere buzzwords and administrative hurdles. Her focus is on empowering companies to move forward step by step, fostering awareness and an understanding of sustainability on the farms and among other stakeholders. Thus, Falkensteiner is confident that the approach must shift from 'paperwork towards people' to achieve the ambitious vision.



© SalzburgLand Tourismus – Kuchl | Michael Groessinger

Guests enjoy fresh, regional and organic produce sourced directly from the farms.



© SalzburgLand Tourismus – Nationalpark Hohe Tauern | Chris Perikles

*Farm holidays in Austria* is an immersive experience centred around nature and animals.

# Resources & Circularity

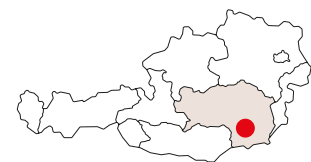
Discover Austria's dedication to circular practices through eco-hotels, cultural museums, repair cafés, artisan crafts, and sustainable business apps. These diverse initiatives redefine consumption patterns and champion circularity, showcasing the Austrian commitment to ensuring a sustainable legacy for generations to come.





# Crafting sustainability and fostering creativity in Stainz

Since September 2017, a distinctive boutique named *Das Prachtstück* has been fostering a haven for creative artisans and artists in Stainz. Owned by Petra Darchaman, this platform is dedicated to showcasing and selling handmade, sustainable products while emphasising the **principles of upcycling and recycling**.



8

regional artisans feature their products in *Das Prachtstück*.

## DID YOU KNOW?

With a circular economy rate of 12%, Austria is in 11th place in Europe.

Only 6% of Austria's textile waste is completely disposed of, with the rest being reused or repurposed for energy and materials.

More than two thirds (70%) of sorted textile waste is reused and recycled.

With the focus on upcycling, *Das Prachtstück* breathes new life into discarded materials such as fabric, paper, wood, and plastic. The specific essence lies in the transformation of finished objects into imaginative, purposeful, and upgraded creations. Lovingly crafting items for entirely new functions, *Das Prachtstück* shifts away from mass production and disposable goods.

The initiative reflects a clear societal trend towards sustainability, as the owner Petra Darchaman explains it as a transition from the throwaway society towards conscious individualism. Her commitment to employing exclusively sustainable materials aligns with a broader movement that underscores an increased awareness of environmental concerns.

*Das Prachtstück* thrives on the contributions of local artists and craftsmen who enrich the collection with high-quality, handmade products and unique pieces. The selection mainly includes upcycled textile creations, but wood, pallets and similar materials also serve as inspiration for creative products. These materials are then transformed into furniture, pictures or home accessories: ties are turned into items of clothing, bags or belts, chocolate paper into toiletry bags or utensil pouches, T-shirts into beanies or bracelets. Even bikinis find a new purpose as small bags, and sometimes a souvenir from a holiday dangles from a necklace.

At a time when a comprehensive rethinking process is underway with regard to our consumer behaviour and the use of resources, awareness of sustainability is becoming increasingly tangible in our society. The deliberate choice of materials not only emphasises Darchaman's commitment to environmental protection, but also sends a clear signal that quality and aesthetics do not have to come at the expense of the environment.

As embodiment of creativity, sustainability and conscious consumerism in Stainz, Petra Darchaman's vision with *Das Prachtstück* has created not just a marketplace but a community dedicated to reimagining the lifecycle of materials and embracing a more sustainable, circular and imaginative future.

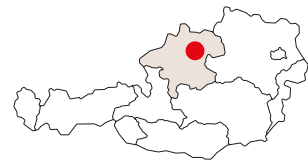


At *Das Prachtstück*, local artists and craftsmen transform discarded items into unique pieces.



# A digital guide for eco-friendly consumption

The platform *Gutes Finden* (Find Good) aims to encourage Upper Austrians to take advantage of environmentally-friendly products and offers. This digital shopping guide helps users track down everything from **organic restaurants to second-hand stores**.



## 7,000

Upper Austrians already use *Gutes Finden* to explore products in their area.

### DID YOU KNOW?

According to a survey by the Austrian Trade Association, 90% of Austrians pay attention to the sustainability factor when buying food.

64% have been buying more organic products since the pandemic.

37% of Austrians classify themselves as flexitarian, pescetarian, vegetarian or vegan.

Since its inception in 2014 as a marketing platform by the Upper Austrian Climate Alliance, the Upper Austrian Environmental Department, and *Bio Austria*, *Gutes Finden* has blossomed into a widely recognised and utilised tool in Upper Austria. Originally conceived as a means to promote environmentally friendly businesses, the online platform has undergone continuous refinement, amassing a staggering 900 registered businesses and initiatives in the region.

*Gutes Finden* caters to the eco-conscious consumer, allowing users to navigate a plethora of options by choosing from various categories. Whether one's preference is seasonal, vegan, fair-trade, secondhand, or plastic-free, the digital guide facilitates the discovery of regional suppliers committed to these values. Organic grocery stores, Zero Waste shops, and repair businesses are just a few examples of the diverse array of enterprises featured on the platform.

Since July 2023, *Gutes Finden* has been supported exclusively via a web app, which is aimed not only at sustainability-oriented consumers but also at nutrition initiatives, educational institutions, businesses and municipalities in Upper Austria. With tips and tricks on the topic of 'fair consumption', *Gutes Finden* thus plays an essential role in the development of a sustainable consumer society in Upper Austria as a platform for knowledge transfer and innovative idea conception.

To ensure a genuine commitment to sustainability, businesses seeking to be part of *Gutes Finden* must meet specific criteria. They must either possess

eco-certification or be a member of the Climate Alliance network. This stringent selection process not only enhances the credibility of *Gutes Finden* but also ensures that users can trust the information provided on the platform.

One of the platform's most commendable achievements is its contribution to the promotion of environmentally conscious consumption in the region. By increasing the visibility of sustainable suppliers and producers, *Gutes Finden* actively encourages consumers to make informed choices that align with their values.

In the future, the free online tool will also serve as a guide for sustainable travel destinations in Upper Austria, such as organic farms or eco-friendly hotels, thereby strengthening sustainable tourism in the region. The integration of sustainable travel options aligns seamlessly with the platform's overarching mission: to be a catalyst for positive change in both consumer behaviour and business practices.



*Gutes Finden* connects consumers with an array of eco-friendly businesses in the region.



# Embodying sustainability room by room

The *Boutiquehotel Stadthalle* in Vienna has evolved into Austria's first 'SDG hotel', showcasing a compelling narrative of **engagement, innovation, and passionate commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. Its transformation stands as an inspiring testament, demonstrating how embracing sustainability can be a distinctive chance for tourism businesses rather than a mere financial obstacle.



## 21,024 kg

CO<sub>2</sub> are saved per room annually by dispensing with minibars.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Sustainability is a booking-relevant factor for around two thirds of Austrian tourists when travelling.

The Economist Intelligence Unit once again named Vienna the world's most liveable city in 2023.

Austria ranks fifth in the world on the Sustainable Development Goals Indicator.

If you look around the Austrian tourism industry for sustainable success stories, you will inevitably stumble across the *Boutiquehotel Stadthalle* and the name Michaela Reitterer. The charismatic Viennese is considered one of the leading personalities in the Austrian hotel industry and has developed the *Boutiquehotel* into the first city hotel with a zero-energy balance. Reitterer's dedication to innovative and sustainable practices is not merely an adaptation to a new trend, but deeply ingrained in her DNA. When she bought the hotel from her parents in 2001, she put a solar system on the roof and was the first to contemplate using rainwater to flush the restrooms.

In the late 2000s, the 140-year-old hotel underwent extensive renovation, including establishing a groundwater heat pump, a PV system and thermal solar panels. 'So when the sun is shining and the wind is blowing, and the water is flowing under the hotel, I thought to myself, let's build a building that simply generates its own energy', explains the hotel owner. However, what seemed self-evident to the entrepreneur at the time was met with scepticism and derogatory comments during the 'sustainability Stone Age', as she refers to the years 2008 and 2009: 'People, of course, thought I was crazy', Reitterer recalls.



Michaela Reitterer,  
Hotel owner *Boutiquehotel Stadthalle*

© Franzl Schädel

“ What I'm most proud of, apart from the zero-energy balance, is my team. I simply have the best team in the world.

Michaela Reitterer, Hotel owner



Unfazed by the criticism, the hotel owner went ahead with her vision, even if some concerns were not entirely unfounded, as she openly admits. It might have been better to wait with the PV system, in view of today's technical advances, and 'converting the whole thing now would be an incredible financial expenditure', says Reitterer. However, she has no regrets about taking this step, 'because if I keep waiting for something new to come along next year, I would still have a slide rule and not a laptop', she explains.

This unwavering belief in her vision and the willingness to learn from mistakes helped to make the *Boutiquehotel Stadthalle* a pioneer in sustainability. Reitterer transferred this principle to her employees and executive personnel, encouraging them to 'try things and change them again if necessary'. In general, Reitterer attaches great importance to her employees supporting her innovative ideas and sustainability efforts. This was also the case when Reitterer decided to integrate the SDGs into her corporate strategy in 2020, having previously designed 17 rooms with upcycled furniture – each dedicated to one of the SDGs – with the help of the social enterprise *garbarage*. As she puts it: 'I wanted 17 employees to each become ambassadors for one SDG so that we could also bring this into the team, to ensure that this is not just a matter for the boss and not just my crazy idea, but that they also say, "This is my SDG, that I feel comfortable with, that is important to me."'

Currently, the hotel is working on planning ten more SDG rooms. Existing upcycled rooms from 2014, with self-made lamps from old everyday objects such as pasta sieves and meat grinders, are being converted and adapted. Guests are informed at the entrance door which SDG is being addressed and can access further information on the topic using the QR codes provided. The SDGs therefore not only serve as guiding principles for the hotel, but also as the basis for unique storytelling, says Reitterer, and raves about the high recognition value and comprehensibility of the SDGs.

The sustainability pioneer therefore also recommends other hotels and tourism businesses to focus more on the 17 SDGs in their sustainability efforts: 'You can tell a story about all of these SDGs. The prerequisite is that you sit down as a company and think: "What are we already doing about which SDG?"' Sustainability measures are not limited to investments in PV systems or biogas plants, but also include employee training or the purchase of regional products – all aspects that are included in the SDGs. As Reitterer emphasises: 'That's exactly where SDGs resonate with people and indicate that it's not just the investments, but what you do in these aspects', adding: 'You don't have to do clean energy first, you can also do it last.'



Renovated hotel rooms capture the essence of each SDG through unique design elements and carefully selected furniture.

© Boutiquehotel Stadthalle



Guests enjoy a peaceful coffee break in the interior courtyard, away from the city hustle.

© Boutiquehotel Stadthalle



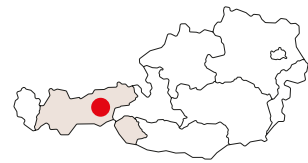


In spring, the vibrant lavender roof of the *Boutiquehotel Stadthalle* transforms into a sanctuary for bees and butterflies.



# From trash to treasure in Tyrol's 'Repair Cafés'

In today's fast-paced, consumer-driven world, the lifespan of many products is often cut short by the prevalent throwaway culture. In Tyrol, a unique movement is gaining momentum to counteract this trend: the *Repair Cafés*. In these spaces, regular community-driven events **promote sustainability and reduce waste** over a warm cup of coffee.



## 13,000 +

objects have been repaired since the opening of the first *Repair Café*.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Since 2022, the Austrian repair bonus covers 50% of the costs for repairs to electronic devices of private individuals up to a value of 200 euros.

In 2022, 31% of users aged between 60 and 80 stated that a lack of basic knowledge is the biggest challenge they face with digitalisation.

Increased repair work in Austria can lead to an increase in employment figures of up to 23%.

The *Repair Café* concept originated in the Netherlands back in 2009 and quickly became known worldwide. Today, there are 1,700 *Repair Café* locations globally, and Tyrol boasts a remarkable contribution to the movement with its regular repair events across different locations. The pioneer of the *Repair Cafés* in Tyrol is Michaela Brötz, who sees them as important educational events with social and ecological aspects. In 2015, the first Austrian *Repair Café* in Pill attracted over 100 attendees. Since then, 300 *Repair Cafés* have taken place in 52 Tyrolean municipalities, with over 26,000 visitors.

The primary goal of *Repair Cafés* is to change people's perceptions toward damaged items, favouring repair over disposal. With the support of volunteer experts, including electricians, seamstresses, woodworkers, and more, visitors can bring broken items and access materials and even minor replacement parts. Repairs are offered free of charge, with the option for guests to make donations. The focus is on encouraging sustainable practices while fostering a warm atmosphere with a cup of coffee or tea and cake. Collaboration is key during repairs, as it allows guests to learn and undertake their own repairs at home, fostering a high degree of independence.

Collaborating with the Tyrol educational forum, the *Repair Café* movement facilitates volunteer engagement, promoting participation, empowerment, and community strengthening in the fields of sustainability and health. Regular networking facilitates the exchange of information and experiences, fostering a robust *Repair Café* community. The nature of the event space is flexible, and individuals interested in joining the movement receive comprehensive support from the forum to establish their own temporary *Repair Café*.

One particularly unique aspect of the *Repair Cafés* is the *ErklärBar* (explain bar), which facilitates the transfer of knowledge from younger individuals to the older generation regarding digital devices. This includes activities such as reading through user manuals together or assisting in the installation and usage of apps and other technologies. Bridging the generational gap with the help of such a collaborative approach, particularly in the realm of digital technology, thus promotes a sense of community and mutual learning.

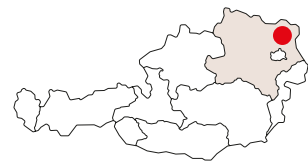


Defective items are given a second life with the help of volunteer seamstresses and electricians who bring their expertise into the *Repair Cafés*.



# Sustainability blooms with nature-friendly flower farming

A world in which flowers remain precious wonders of nature, able to thrive as they have for millenia, undisturbed and unimpaired. This is the vision of the 'Slow Flower' movement, of which the Austrian start-up *thebloomingproject* is part, advocating fair, seasonal and sustainable flower cultivation.



≈ 7.5 t

of CO<sub>2</sub> were saved in comparison to conventional flower farming in August 2022.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Flower species native to Austria, such as wildflowers, lavender, sunflowers, roses and dahlias, are particularly suitable for sustainable cultivation.

In 2020, 74 (21.7%) of the 341 horticultural businesses in Austria that produce flowers and ornamental plants were registered as organic.

A 2022 study reveals that sustainable soil is very important to one third (34%) of Austrians.

During their studies in Green Marketing in Vienna, the co-founders of *thebloomingproject*, Hannah Krimmer and Katharina Neßler, were brought together by a shared vision: to revolutionise the conventional cut flower industry. A shortage of locally grown flowers on the Austrian market first brought their attention to the precarious conditions prevailing in the industrial flower industry. These range from the intensive use of pesticides and fertilisers, to long transport routes between growing areas and the sales market, as well as the substantial carbon footprint generated by the use of heated greenhouses in the Netherlands.

Centred around regional, sustainable, and seasonal principles, the aim is to offer a tangible alternative to conventional cut flowers. Through collaboration with local farmers, this initiative encourages the blossoming of the regional economy, the preservation of traditional values, and the maintenance of a distinct regional identity. Concurrently, it enhances biodiversity by entirely forgoing the use of chemicals and relying exclusively on certified organic seeds. Only biodegradable materials are used in the processing of the flowers, and the use of plastic is minimised at every stage of cultivation and processing.

The start-up has since received recognition through the 'Social Impact Awards', an initiative that supports and empowers young, enthusiastic entrepreneurs as they transform their ideas into impactful projects. As a member in the Slow Flower movement – a collective dedicated to promoting increased transparency in cut flower cultivation across Germany, Switzerland, and

Austria – *thebloomingproject* is actively contributing to the transformation of Austria's meadows and fields into a sustainably grown flower-filled landscape. This initiative not only adds to the attractiveness of natural places; it allows the founders to share their knowledge and experience while helping to spread awareness and enabling regional cohesion to flourish.



Co-founders Hannah Krimmer and Katharina Neßler create bouquets using locally and sustainably grown flowers.

© Julia Oberhauser



# AI-powered energy efficiency in Austrian tourism

The start-up *nista.io* uses artificial intelligence (AI) helping companies **identify energy-saving opportunities**. Working in collaboration with Austria Tourism and *St. Martins Spa & Lodge*, the goal was to make Austrian tourism more cost-efficient, eco-friendly and innovative.



≈ 20%

of the annual energy expenses can be saved with the help of *nista.io*.

## DID YOU KNOW?

In 2023, 10.8% of companies in Austria used technologies based on AI.

Since 2023, the Austrian Federal Ministry is subsidising energy management systems in small and medium-sized enterprises with up to 50,000 euros.

Tourism in Austria accounts for 41.5 kWh energy consumption per overnight stay.

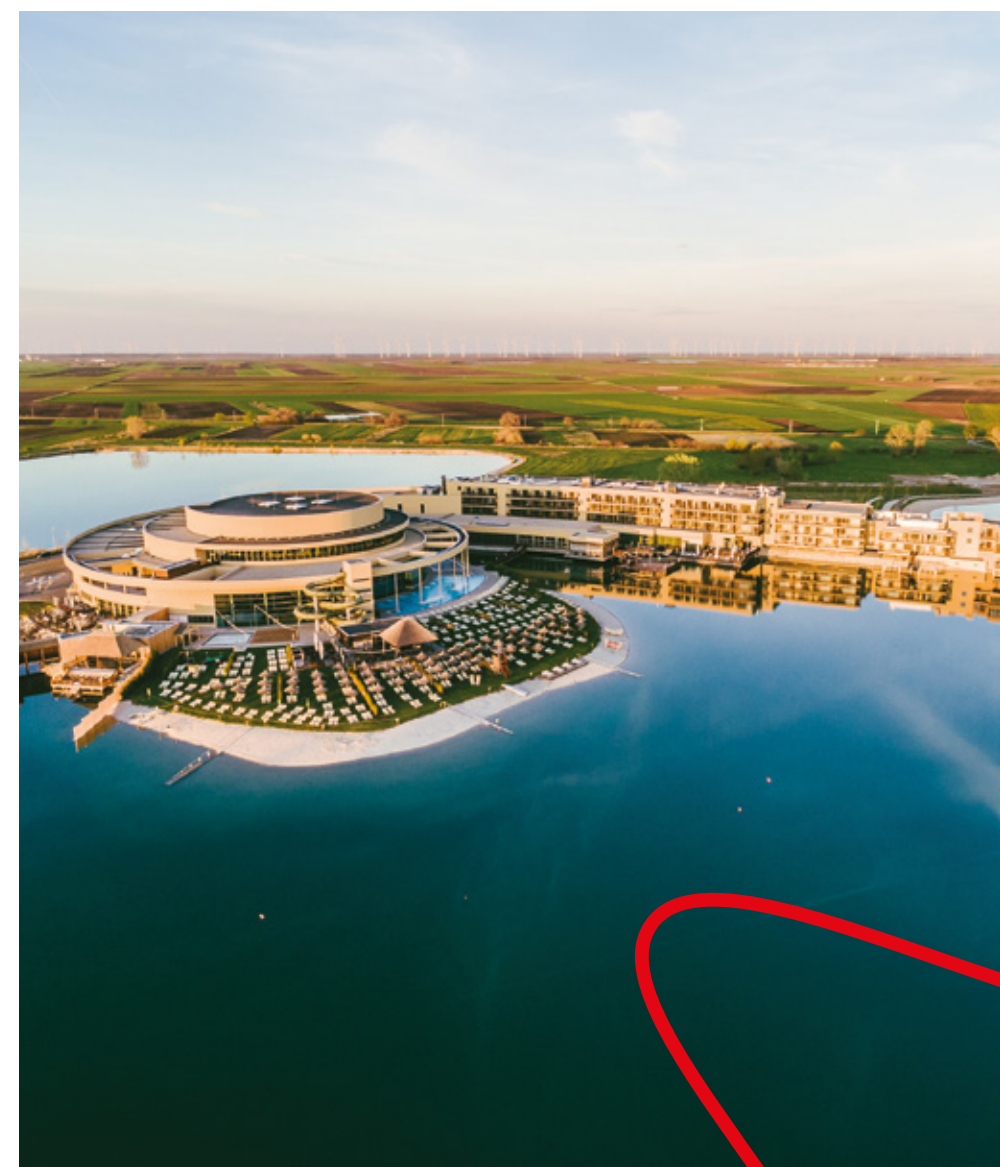
In March 2023, the EU set a 40.5% energy reduction goal for 2030, prompting Austrian businesses to reassess their energy performance. The start-up *nista.io* developed an AI-driven digital management tool, analysing companies' energy consumption, pinpointing efficiency shortcomings. By identifying energy-saving opportunities, *nista.io* enables businesses to cut costs, attain sustainability targets, enhance competitiveness, and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The declared goal of *nista.io* is to reduce the GHG emissions of Austrian industry by 20%. To do so, the AI-supported software continuously analyses the energy consumption of companies to generate regular and updated savings measures.

This innovative approach to energy management offers Austrian companies the opportunity to assert themselves in a changing market environment. The introduction of the energy management system by *nista.io* makes energy consumption and demand manageable and calculable. In addition, the availability of potential savings and the further expansion of resource-saving energy sources can significantly reduce dependence on fluctuating energy prices. By utilising *nista.io*'s AI tool, businesses can improve their environmental footprint, reduce costs and maintain their competitiveness at the same time.

In this way, *nista.io* not only contributes to the achievement of environmental goals, but also supports the long-term resilience and efficiency of Austrian companies in an increasingly sustainable business world.

In partnership with Austria Tourism and *St. Martins Spa & Lodge* in Frauenkirchen, *nista.io* gained valuable insights into the tourism sector. Already implemented efforts to cut energy usage, such as installing a rooftop PV system and covering the pool during off-hours, were found to be beneficial. In addition, the tool was able to make an important contribution by identifying energy savings that are four times higher than the expenses.

Through their collaboration with Austria Tourism, *nista.io* has also been able to reach out to other relevant tourism businesses following the pilot project, and kick-start their mission to uncover great energy-saving opportunities.



*St. Martins Spa & Lodge* has adopted various energy-saving measures.

© St. Martins Therme und Lodge | Rudy Dellinger



# Embracing the art of environmental responsibility

In central Vienna, *Kunst Haus Wien* stands as evidence of the **harmonious integration of art, sustainability, and ecological awareness**. Since its establishment in 1991, the museum has embraced its role as a catalyst for social change and environmental responsibility.



**140,000**

bees live on the museum's roof, producing around 80 kg of honey each year.

## DID YOU KNOW?

In summer 2023, 11% of visitors to Austria took a cultural holiday.

510 museums were open across Austria in 2021, of which 309 (60%) bear the museum seal of approval.

In Austria, 34 museums are certified with the Austrian Ecolabel.

*Kunst Haus Wien* stands at the forefront of museums championing sustainability, not only through its operational practices but also through its commitment to education and social change. Events at the museum promote a fresh perspective on climate change, emphasising that climate protection can enhance quality of life and social justice. Recognising the transformative power of art in shaping public opinion and fostering sustainable practices, *Kunst Haus Wien* engages artists, influencers, and museum staff as ambassadors to promote sustainable initiatives. Art installations like 'Mining Photography' explored photography's ecological impact and its role in climate change, sparking discussion and reflection without accusation.

*Kunst Haus Wien* is actively involved in the International Council of Museums (ICOM) project '10 MUSEEN x 17 SDGs' (10 MUSEUMS x 17 SDGs), which commits 10 Viennese museums to engage intensively with the 17 SDGs. As part of the project, the museum is developing best-practice examples for the cultural landscape and thus contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at an institutional level. The aim is to integrate the SDGs even more strongly into museum operations in order to consolidate sustainable and climate-neutral operations.

Within the organisation, *Kunst Haus Wien* prioritises equal treatment, diversity, ongoing education, and regular training on environmental topics.

By developing ecological awareness among its staff, the museum ensures that sustainability is not just a

practice but a mindset embedded in its organisational culture. A visit to *Kunst Haus Wien* is not just an exploration of art; it is a meaningful step towards embracing a mindset where every visitor becomes a steward of a greener, more inclusive future.

Behind its eclectic facade, *Kunst Haus Wien* seamlessly blends art and sustainability.



© KUNST HAUS WIEN | Paul Bauer



*Kunst Haus Wien's facade greenery adds aesthetic charm while providing habitat for insects, cooling the local climate, and purifying the air.*





# Sustainable slumber in Zero Waste hotels

In 2015, *Zero Waste Austria* set out with the vision of uniting businesses and individuals for a more sustainable future. The organisation's commitment to fostering a 'Zero Waste' movement in Austria and Europe is evident in its multifaceted approach, focusing on **awareness, practical solutions, and community engagement**.



**1,368 t**

of paper can be saved annually at hotel receptions, for information material, city maps and daily mail.

*Zero Waste Austria's* mission is to promote Zero Waste as a way of life, emphasizing that it is not about sacrifice but about adding value. Actively raising awareness and providing practical solutions in various areas such as waste reduction, mobility, and more, the organisation strives to showcase Zero Waste not just as a destination, but as a continuous journey.

When *Zero Waste Austria* set out with the vision of uniting businesses and individuals for a more sustainable future in 2015, the term Zero Waste was largely unknown in Austria, and circular economy concepts faced scepticism. Despite these challenges, the organisation worked to bridge the gap, bringing consumers and pioneering entrepreneurs together to collectively make a difference.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Reusable PET bottles can be refilled 10–20 times and thus produce over 80% less plastic waste than disposable PET bottles.

According to a Greenpeace survey, 78% of Austrians wish for increased availability of refillable returnable bottles.

By 2050, Austria aims to reduce its material footprint per capita to seven tonnes by 2050, a reduction of around 80% compared to 2020.

The creation of a network connecting individual actors both online and offline is one of *Zero Waste Austria's* most important functions. Collaborations with green start-ups, Zero Waste shops, and other initiatives create an environment conducive to the development of further undertakings aimed at fostering a Zero Waste society. Experts in sustainability, waste prevention, education, and project management contribute to the organisation's activities, working largely on a voluntary basis.

*Zero Waste Austria's* collaboration with the Austrian Hotelier Association and the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences led to a project called 'Waste Reduction in Austrian Hospitality'. This initiative, running from 2017 to 2020, aimed to minimise the production of waste in Austrian hotels. Specifically, the project resulted in a waste reduction guide for hotels, providing best practices to help businesses make a positive contribution to the environment while cutting costs. Through these efforts, the association simultaneously guarantees

that holiday guests can rest assured that their stay aligns with environmentally conscious practices while enjoying their time in Austria.

The organisation is an official member of *Zero Waste Europe*, further amplifying its impact and outreach. Through continuous efforts and collaboration, *Zero Waste Austria* is actively contributing to shaping a world where waste is minimised, resources are conserved, and a Zero Waste lifestyle is embraced.



United in purpose, *Zero Waste Austria* leads the way towards a waste-free future.

© Anna Sommerfeld Photography



# Putting mattress waste to rest with 'MATR'

Hotel guests may now find themselves sleeping on mattresses that provide a **premium sleep experience with a smaller carbon footprint**. Verena Judmayer and Michaela Stephen, the founders of the start-up *MATR*, are combating mattress waste in the Austrian hotel industry with a pioneering spirit.



## 50%

of GHG emissions are saved with a *MATR* mattress in comparison to a conventional mattress.

Every year, a staggering 30 million mattresses are discarded in Europe. Austria alone contributes 1.4 million mattresses – a quantity of material 81 times the size of the highest Austrian mountain, the Grossglockner. In response, Verena Judmayer and Michaela Stephen co-founded *MATR* in 2021, pioneering a solution to make a dent in this ever-growing mountain of waste.

Their answer is elegantly simple: crafting mattresses from high-quality materials, with a simplistic design made to be easily recycled. Comprising steel pocket springs and a polyester comfort layer, these modular mattresses employ a click on or click off technology which allows the pieces to be easily taken apart, reused, or refurbished. Moreover, *MATR* offers a service to retrieve mattresses at the end of their lifetime, aiming to close the recycling loop.

Driven by a shared entrepreneurial spirit and a passion for sustainability, Judmayer and Stephen conceptualised *MATR* already a couple of years before the solution officially came to the market in the first month of 2023. After attending an event about circular economy, the pair set to work and identified the underlying problem in that same weekend. As Stephen clearly states: 'It's because mattresses are never designed with the end of their life in mind. They're always designed to just be used and consumed and then wasted.'

While the idea came into being over the course of a weekend, developing the solution was a slightly longer journey. Over the next year, the duo engaged

### DID YOU KNOW?

Vienna's hotel establishments boasted a total of 71,345 beds in 2022.

Nearly 85% of mattress material can be recycled through proper disassembly.

By 2030, Austria aims to increase the circularity rate to 18% as part of its circular economy strategy.



Verena Judmayer (left) and Michaela Stephen (right), founders of *MATR*.

© Christopher Blank

“ We take full responsibility for the products that we bring into the world.”

Verena Judmayer, co-founder and CEO



with hotel managers, industry experts, and circular economy specialists to validate their concept. Targeting hotels proved strategic; with numerous rooms to furnish and a comparatively rapid mattress turnover, the sector emerged as key in curbing mattress waste. Dialogues with hotels helped the team adjust their offering to the needs of their clients, resulting in a competitive product both in price and quality, complemented by their recycling services.

Their progress is promising: *MATR* boasted nine paying hotel clients as of December 2023, the latest being the brand new *Hotel Sportlers* in Sölden, which requested 150 mattresses. Here, Judmayer underscores the importance of establishing trust as a young company and finding the right collaboration partners. Specifically, early adopters like *Hotel Altstadt* in Vienna played a pivotal role in propelling *MATR* forward and solidifying their customer base.

While currently concentrating on hotels, *MATR* is eyeing future collaborations in the B2C realm. Undoubtedly, extending their solutions to households across Austria and beyond would significantly enhance their impact. The challenge here lies in being able to ensure retrieval of all mattresses for recycling, posing both a logistical burden for clients and a significant cost for the team. As they aim for continuous improvement, *MATR* takes measured steps forwards while remaining transparent about what still could be done.

Managing a start-up is an unpredictable journey, akin to a roller coaster ride. Ultimately, the co-founders Judmayer and Stephen attribute their triumph to their innate curiosity, unwavering determination, and fervent commitment to sustainability. As Stephen highlights, 'the more curious you are, the more open you are to things, and the more you see problems and get quite angry with them, the more you can use that to drive you forward'. The results speak for themselves: in their dialogues with hotels, Judmayer and Stephen witness a rising industry-wide recognition that sustainability is here to stay, and that investing now pays off in the long run.



© Deepnoise Studio

Combining ultimate comfort, allergy-friendly design, and easy cleaning, the mattresses are ideal for hotels.



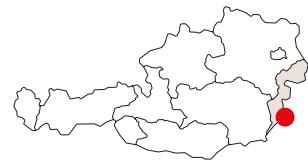
© Deepnoise Studio

*MATR* mattresses boast a streamlined design with top-tier materials that are easily recyclable.



# An eco-energy land's self-sufficient journey

In 2010, 19 municipalities in southern Burgenland joined forces to strengthen the regional economy and convert its energy system to local renewable energy sources in the long term. The success of *ökoEnergiewelt*'s initiatives has not only sparked **eco-tourism and civil participation**, but has also proven to be a logical and successful strategy for the region's sustainable development.



≈ 2,000

hours of sunshine benefit the region each year.

## DID YOU KNOW?

In 2023, renewable energy sources in Austria generated over 85% of total domestic primary energy production.

Austria's topography favours the use of hydropower and biomass, which is why these account for the largest share of renewable energy production (70%).

As many as 6,227 climate protection projects are being implemented across 124 Climate and Energy Model Regions (KEM).

*ökoEnergiewelt* (Eco-Energyland), an association of 19 municipalities spanning the districts of Oberwart, Güssing, and Jennersdorf in Southern Burgenland, has been at the forefront of sustainable development since its establishment in 2010. Its primary goal is to counteract capital outflow, strengthen the regional economy, create green jobs, and enhance the overall quality of life in the region.

Inspired by the success of the Güssing Model, which showcased the potential of a decentralised energy system based on locally available resources, *ökoEnergiewelt* embarked on a journey towards sustainability and energy independence. Over the past two decades, the region has made considerable strides in implementing a sustainable system of large-scale heat supply networks, biomass heating plants, biomass CHP facilities, and biogas plants. The activities of recent years have resulted in three biomass CHP plants, three biogas plants and twelve biomass heating plants in the region. This establishment of a large-scale energy supply system based on biomass was a logical step for the development of the region, as the area boasts only two main resources: biomass and sunlight.

In recent years, the association has also significantly expanded its focus to harness the second major resource, the sun, initiating projects and various incentive models such as PV citizen participation and rooftop programs. Energy efficiency projects, particularly the conversion to LED street lighting in municipal sectors, have further been successfully

implemented. These initiatives not only increase the region's energy self-sufficiency but also contribute to reducing fossil raw material imports and enhancing regional added value.

Recognising the importance of educating the younger generations about sustainable practices, *ökoEnergiewelt* has initiated projects like the '*Kinder-ökoEnergiewelt*'. Specifically, this involves raising awareness among children through information sessions, workshops, and energy experience days. The region is also planning an outdoor children's adventure world, providing interactive energy experience stations to make learning about renewable energy fun and engaging for children.

The success of *ökoEnergiewelt*'s initiatives has given rise to eco-tourism, attracting many visitors every year. Moreover, national and international experts are drawn to the region to witness firsthand the pioneering energy solutions. Importantly, the initiatives have led to job creation, the establishment of businesses, and a substantial increase in regional added value, aligning with the association's broader objectives.

*ökoEnergiewelt*'s long-term commitment to sustainable development, renewable energy, and community engagement has transformed the region into a role model for decentralised energy supply. Through innovative projects, the association has not only achieved significant milestones in energy independence but has also positively impacted the local economy, creating a blueprint for other regions aspiring to embark on a similar sustainable journey.



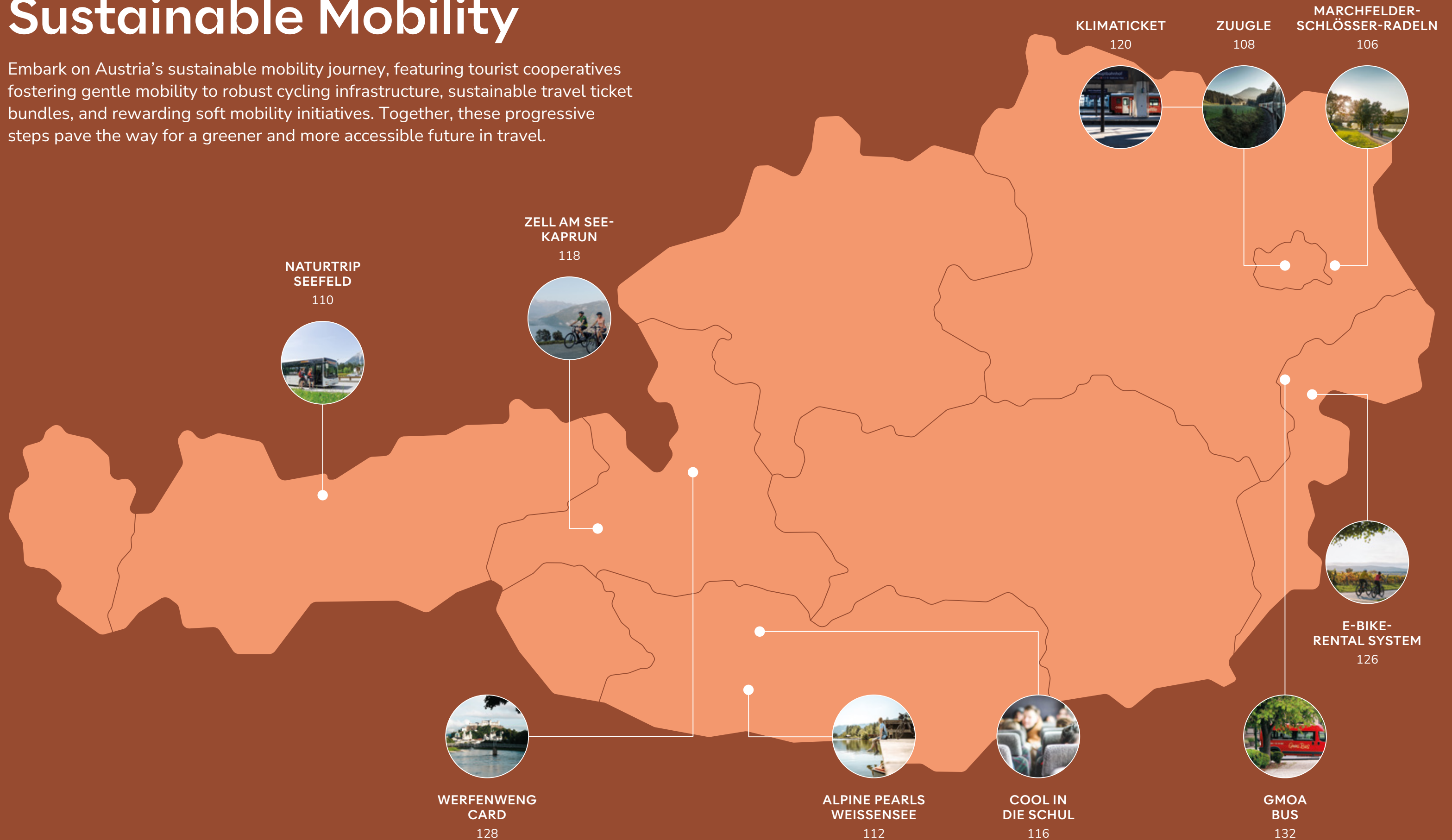
Ample biomass and sunlight resources underpin the region's energy self-sufficiency.

© Österreich Werbung | 1000things



# Sustainable Mobility

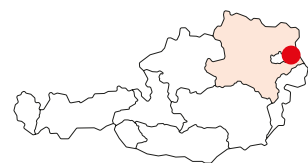
Embark on Austria's sustainable mobility journey, featuring tourist cooperatives fostering gentle mobility to robust cycling infrastructure, sustainable travel ticket bundles, and rewarding soft mobility initiatives. Together, these progressive steps pave the way for a greener and more accessible future in travel.





# Exploring the Marchfeld castles on two wheels

In the midst of the cycling tourism boom, the Marchfeld region is shining as a sought-after destination. Boasting **innovative cycle tours and culinary experiences** along the routes, the *Marchfelder-Schlösser-Radeln* project not only aims to promote sustainable mobility in the region, but also to effectively put the tourist destination on the map.



## 587,000

overnight stays were recorded in the wine region in 2022, a high proportion of which were accounted for by cycle tourism.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Austria features a vast 14,000 km network of cycling routes ideal for active, outdoor holidays.

About 40% of car trips in Austria span less than 5 km, a distance easily covered by bicycle.

Summer visitors in 2023 indicated a satisfaction rating of 1.8 with the cycle paths (1 = extremely satisfied, 6 = rather disappointed).

Cycle tourism is currently enjoying a massive upswing throughout Europe. The fairytale landscape of the Marchfeld region, with its baroque castles, is a popular excursion destination. Criss-crossed by a well-developed network of internationally renowned cycle paths and characterised by a flat topography, the region proves to be ideal terrain for cyclists. In 2023, the *Marchfeld-Schlösser-Radeln* project was launched to make the most of this potential and sustainably position the region between Vienna and Bratislava on the Austrian and international tourism market.

Recognising the project's potential, the Marchfeld LEADER region has committed funding in alignment with its local development strategy, which focuses on sustainable mobility and the promotion of cycling. The overarching objective goes beyond merely utilising the existing cycling infrastructure; it aims to enhance the region's allure through innovative offerings. One of these involves the creation of newly designed cycling routes, ensuring that the five closely collaborating Marchfeld castles become easily accessible by bike, forming a cohesive and attractive unit.

As part of the project, an initiative running until the end of June 2024 aims to promote tourism development in the areas of cultural, nature and excursion travel. Along the newly curated routes, strategically chosen locations serve as captivating stages, enriching the overall project. Notably, the integration of local businesses takes the centre

stage, promising unique culinary experiences such as 'imperial picnic baskets' featuring regional products.

This approach not only contributes to the project's ambition of strengthening the 'Marchfelder Schlösserreich' tourist brand, but also generates substantial value for the entire Marchfeld region,

benefitting both the local community and the environment. By fostering sustainable tourism practices and integrating local businesses into the fabric of the initiative, the project leaders thus aim not only to attract visitors but to leave a lasting, positive impact on the region's economic and environmental landscape.



Cyclists journey along the scenic Stempfelbach Radroute in Marchfeld.



# On sustainable tracks to accessible trails

In a tourism branch, where sustainable mobility is gaining importance, a team of dedicated hiking enthusiasts has pioneered an **online tool** to transform the way we explore nature. *Zuugle* offers eco-conscious hikers an integrated blend of sustainable mobility and environmental conservation.



## 18,284

alpine hiking trails are made accessible with buses or trains.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Wanting to move actively was the third most popular travel occasion for Austrians in 2022.

A growing target group is young adults, for whom a high degree of digitalisation is very important.

The majority of Austrian guests' origin regions are within a range of 500 to 1,000 km.

The journey began with the establishment of *Bahn zum Berg* (Train to the Mountain), an organisation founded by Martin Heppner, Peter Backé, and Veronika Schöll in 2015. Recognising the challenges faced by hiking enthusiasts planning hiking routes using public transport, and understanding the limitations of existing tools, *Bahn zum Berg* took a leap forward by developing *Zuugle* in 2022. The name itself, a fusion of 'Zug' (train) and 'Google', embodies the essence of the platform.

*Zuugle* addresses the common grievances of planning routes with public transport, offering automated calculations of available timetables and schedules. The tool, which uses an open-source approach, encourages widespread participation in building an extensive database. Specifically, it allows users to contribute to its database by documenting journeys with photos, notes, and specific GPX tracking, thereby fostering the creation of a community-driven platform. Every proposed tour undergoes meticulous verification by the *Bahn zum Berg* team, ensuring the safety and accuracy of the suggested routes.

The project aligns with the principles of responsible mobility, emphasising the importance of leaving cars at home to protect sensitive mountain and nature sites. Additionally, the Climate Action Ministry's financial backing for the promotion of collective transportation as a tool in combating climate change underscores this commitment to sustainable practices.

By highlighting shortcomings in the public transport network, *Zuugle* furthermore contributes to raising awareness about the importance of comprehensive coverage in public traffic infrastructure.

This initiative showcases how innovative technology and collaboration are reshaping our engagement with and conservation of nature. *Zuugle* not only paves the way for eco-friendly travel but also leads the tourism industry toward a future where exploration and environmental preservation go hand in hand.

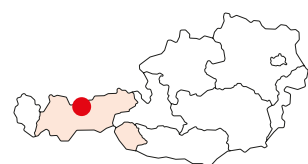
*Zuugle* streamlines route planning for alpine hiking trails by incorporating public transport options.





# Green routes and scenic views with 'NaturTrip'

Embarking on a journey where travel meets sustainability, using a tool that not only literally shows the way, but also revolutionises the way we plan our adventures. Seamlessly **integrating public transport options with information about local tourist attractions**, *NaturTrip* eliminates the need for a car and simplifies travel planning.



## 2019

*NaturTrip* won the Verkehrsclub Österreich (Austrian traffic association) Mobility Award in the category 'Digitalisation and new technologies'.

Originally a start-up in Berlin and Brandenburg in Germany, *NaturTrip* now boasts fruitful collaborations across Austria, where it promotes alternative mobility as the preferred means of transport following the success of a pilot project within the Tyrolean regions Seefeld and Wilder Kaiser.

The platform inspires people to discover new natural and cultural places by linking the opening times of attractions with public transport lines, enabling the quickest route with minimal changes. In doing so, it allows users to plan trips without having to rely on a car or click through various public transport timetables and schedules. Notably, the initiative further aims to make public transport more attractive to municipalities and service providers, ultimately leading to the expansion of public transport networks all over Austria.

Key features of *NaturTrip* include its focus on reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from travelling by providing information on the environmental impact of alternative travel routes using public transportation options compared to car use. The platform enhances accessibility to regions for individuals who cannot or choose not to drive, which in turn promotes better air quality, reduces noise, and highlights the health benefits of exploring natural and cultural destinations by bus, train or foot.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Rail travel requires just over half (55%) of the energy per passenger in comparison to that needed by an electric car.

59% of all summer holiday guests in Austria did a nature holiday in 2023.

With Seefeld in Tirol, Wagrain-Kleinarl and Saalfelden Leogang, there are 3 destinations in Austria that bear the Austrian Ecolabel (as of December 2023).

The pilot regions in Austria, Wilder Kaiser in particular, have already successfully used *NaturTrip* as a tool to promote sustainable mobility. As it turns out, the benefits are not limited to visitors using the search engine. Rather, hosts and hotel owners also benefit from *NaturTrip*, as they can easily guide their guests through the region and suggest attractive and publicly accessible destinations.

In this sense, the collaboration with the Tyrol Tourism Board and the two regions Wilder Kaiser and Seefeld shows that *NaturTrip* is not just a search engine, but a catalyst for change that inspires locals, guests, and hosts alike to explore new natural and cultural treasures while actively contributing to the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

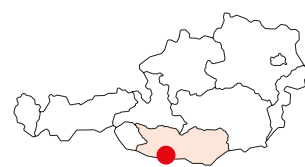
*NaturTrip* streamlines travel by public transport in Seefeld and beyond.





# Gentle journey to car-free relaxation

In the pursuit of sustainable tourism, the *Alpine Pearls* initiative stands as an example of environmental consciousness and innovative mobility. Its focus on gentle mobility distinguishes it as a **trailblazer for eco-friendly travel alternatives** and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction.



**3** municipalities are part of the *Alpine Pearls* in Austria (Mallnitz, Weissensee, Werfenweng).

Founded in 2006 as a cooperative spanning Austria, Italy, Slovenia, and Germany, *Alpine Pearls* later evolved into a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation in 2022. The focus is on providing mobility options that exclude traditional car traffic, creating car-free local centres, and offering alternative mobility options like e-bikes and horse carriages.

The initiative takes a holistic approach to sustainable travelling by placing sustainable mobility, climate-friendly tourism, and the preservation of regional identity at the centre of its efforts. In addition to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the initiative focuses on protecting the unique Alpine landscapes by promoting renewable energy, waste avoidance and regional products. By creating an environmentally friendly atmosphere without car traffic in town centres and providing alternative means of transport such as e-bikes, shuttle buses and horse-drawn carriages, the initiative not only promotes individual relaxation for guests, but also makes a sustainable contribution to global environmental protection.

*Alpine Pearls* not only acts as a seal of quality, but also provides an inspiring guideline for destination managers to further improve mobility offers and place the principles of soft mobility at the centre of planning. The criteria for awarding the seal reflect the comprehensive vision of *Alpine Pearls*. This includes not only car-free mobility and traffic-calmed local centres, but also the integration of shuttle services between accommodations and transport hubs.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Around 60% of Austrians are interested in using the bicycle more intensively.

In Austria, 40% of journeys to railway stations involve active mobility.

A 2023 study by Austria Tourism shows that tourists in Austria are increasingly willing to spend more on sustainable holiday options.

When combined, these measures create a holistic and environmentally friendly travel experience for guests. Destination managers are thus encouraged to find innovative ways to promote sustainable mobility while preserving the charm and attractiveness of their region.

The 'Pearls', as the car-free holiday destinations call themselves, are pioneers in sustainable tourism, setting a benchmark for eco-friendly holiday experiences. As a transnational tourism cooperation, *Alpine Pearls* not only fosters cross-border collaboration; it also significantly enhances the serene qualities of the Alps through the promotion of gentle mobility.

At Weissensee, bike rentals and other services allow visitors to enjoy car-free holidays.





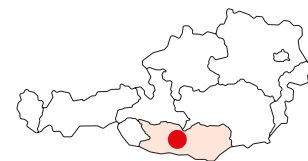
Focusing on gentle mobility and car-free getaways, the so-called *Alpine Pearls* set the bar for eco-conscious holiday experiences.





# Driving the change with sustainable school commuting

In Carinthia, being taken to school by parents has gone out of fashion since the launch of the *Cool in die Schul* (Cool to School) mobility initiative. Now, many consider buses as their preferred mode of transport as children are encouraged in a playful way to **rethink their way of travelling** and opt for the more sustainable option.



## 40.8 t

of CO<sub>2</sub> have been saved in one school year (of 170 days) with 100 children travelling on the schoolbus.

### DID YOU KNOW?

School crossing guards, police, and traffic calming in school environments make school routes safer than routes for leisure activities.

More than 270 Austrian municipalities and cities support the initiative to change the speed limit from 50 to 30 km/h in school and residential areas.

On their own way to school, children learn safe traffic behaviour in a secure environment.

A trend of parents driving their children to school led to the congestion of traffic around school areas and parking lots, resulting in greater risks and dangers for schoolchildren who walked or biked to school. Acknowledging the situation, the bus company responsible for school transportation in the Liesertal and Maltatal region, *Bacher Travel*, seized the opportunity to launch a transportation initiative in collaboration with the Climate and Energy Model Regions (KEM) community. The aim of *Cool in die Schul* is to encourage children and young adults to choose the bus as their preferred mode of transportation to school, integrating it as an action-taking initiative within the wider *Fridays For Future* debate.

In the initial phase of the initiative, the team engaged parents in a dialogue to understand their motivations for choosing to drive their children to school. Concerns raised during these discussions, such as insufficient lighting, safety issues at road crossings, and long waiting times, served as valuable starting points for public transport providers to enhance their school bus services.

The heart of the project has been the creation of an app which features a scoring system that rewards children with points every time they choose to take the bus, walk, or cycle to school. It fosters motivation and awareness about the use of public transport in

a playful manner, actively engaging the children in promoting sustainable mobility. At the end of the school year, the children with the most accumulated points receive small prizes as a reward. Moreover, the app collects and stores all data related to the distances travelled, which allows the development of a database to measure changes in user frequency over time.

The involvement of local businesses as sponsors of the small rewards distributed to the children at the end of the school year has a positive effect on the marketing of local businesses and value creation in the region. Furthermore, reducing private

transportation helps cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and makes a significant contribution to the development of a tranquil tourist destination that prioritises gentle and sustainable mobility in all areas of life. Educating children about sustainable forms of mobility from an early age encourages them to make informed transportation choices as adults, steering them towards eco-friendly travel options.

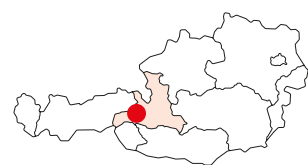


*Cool in die Schul* introduces a fun and rewarding way for children to journey to school.



# Embracing eco-friendly mobility for lasting Alpine experiences

Zell am See-Kaprun, a popular Alpine destination, is proactively addressing sustainability concerns by emphasising climate-friendly mobility. Initiatives such as the *Pinzgau Mobility Card* and the transition to electric buses underscore the region's commitment to practical and eco-conscious travel, ensuring a lasting and **accessible experience between glacier, mountain, and lake** for future generations of visitors.



## 80%

of an Austrian vacation's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are generated on the journey to and from the destination.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Travelling by car emits around 11 times as much CO<sub>2</sub>-eq as travelling by train.

In 2018, active mobility (walking and cycling) comprised 23% of the transportation mode share in Austria.

Elderly people are more willing to switch between different modes of transport, to be multimodally mobile.

One of Austria's leading tourism regions, Zell am See-Kaprun stands for a diverse alpine world of experience, with numerous tourist attractions in both summer and winter. To safeguard its allure for years to come, the region is committed to various sustainability measures. At the forefront of these efforts is a dedicated focus on mobility, aiming to provide eco-friendly transportation options and enable carbon-free vacations in Zell am See-Kaprun.

Under the banner of 'Mobile without a car', Zell am See-Kaprun aims to redefine the travel experience by becoming a car-free tourism region. Central to this vision is the *Pinzgau Mobility Card*, enabling free travel on public transportation, including trains, postbuses, and the Pinzgauer Local Railway. Valid from May through October, this card facilitates seamless and eco-conscious exploration of the region, with only a few exceptions for steam and special trains, as well as the night bus service.

Taking a stride towards electromobility, the region's ski buses, operational from late October to early May, are gradually being converted to electric drive. The accessibility of Zell am See-Kaprun is further enhanced by direct railway connections from all Austrian cities, including regular direct services from Germany and Switzerland. The Climate and Energy Model Region (KEM) with a focus on tourism is also

developing mobility points at key locations, such as Zell am See train station. These points are designed as hubs promoting public transport, walking, and cycling, while also encouraging supplementary services like car or bike sharing. The aim is to create a transferable concept that can be implemented in other locations, fostering a seamless and interconnected network of sustainable transportation.

Looking ahead, Zell am See-Kaprun envisions a transformation into a designated e-bike region, for both locals and visitors. This visionary approach aims to tackle traffic congestion and parking challenges head-on, providing practical and sustainable alternatives for mobility. In embracing a sustainable ethos and prioritising eco-friendly mobility solutions, Zell am See-Kaprun not only safeguards its position as a diverse alpine haven but pioneers a blueprint for carbon-free tourism, ensuring enchanting experiences for future generations.

Zell am See-Kaprun moves towards a car-free tourism region with the motto 'Mobile without a car'.





# Sustainable travel made easy with the 'KlimaTicket'

Since its launch in 2021, the *KlimaTicket* has helped make public transport in Austria more attractive and offers a **transnational mobility infrastructure without hidden costs**. Hanna Merkinger and Jakob Lambert agree: a fair price and convenience are success factors for sustainable travel.



## 40%

of *KlimaTicket* users had previously used public transport on a single ticket basis.

### DID YOU KNOW?

2022 recorded a total of 295.6 million railway passengers in Austria, marking a notable 35.1% increase compared to 2021.

In 2022, the proportion of holiday trips taken by rail stood at 15.1%, the highest value since records began in 2006.

67% of Austrian summer visitors in 2023 travelled within the destination by train.

*KlimaTicket* Austria offers an unprecedented opportunity to use the public transport system throughout the country at a low cost. Adults can purchase the ticket for 1,095 euros per year, which equates to around three euros per day, making it an uncomplicated and cost-effective solution for nationwide mobility. According to Jakob Lambert, project manager and co-initiator of the *KlimaTicket*, the aim is to offer mobility at a fixed price so that 'public transport is definitely cheaper than the car for all customers in Austria', as Lambert explains. The combination of an affordable price, a high degree of convenience thanks to nationwide coverage, and the promotion of mobility behaviour among users – in particular by emphasising sustainable means of transport – were at the forefront of the development of the *KlimaTicket*.

The results speak for themselves: the *KlimaTicket*, which was originally designed to sell 110,000 tickets, recorded 130,000 tickets sold on its first day of validity and now has 270,000 users. Hanna Merkinger, lawyer and communication scientist who plays a key role in developing the legal basis of contracts and marketing campaign for the *KlimaTicket*, emphasises the positive results of the initial data analyses. As Merkinger notes: 'What is certainly a pleasing result is that, as part of a research analysis on the subject of usage, it emerged that two percent of *KlimaTicket* customers, for example, state that they did not use public transport at all before the



Hanna Merkinger, responsible for sales, legal and communications realisation and Jakob Lambert, project manager of the *KlimaTicket*

© Zoe Goldstein

**We want public transport to be cheaper than the car for all customers in Austria.**

Jakob Lambert, project manager



*KlimaTicket*. This indicates that the *KlimaTicket* not only provides financial benefits to already regular public transport users, but also appeals to new user groups and encourages more frequent rail travel thanks to the attractive offer.

The conversation about the *KlimaTicket* in Austria goes beyond everyday transport and opens the way to new perspectives in the field of tourism. Lambert and Merlinger reveal plans aimed at attracting tourists to the *KlimaTicket* through marketing campaigns and 'thereby virtually strengthening Austrian tourism in this respect from within the country', as Merlinger describes it. Possible new approaches include discounts for cable cars, boat trips and other tourist activities for *KlimaTicket* owners. Lambert and Merlinger's idea is to show tourists that they can travel environmentally friendly not only in everyday life, but also when they holiday and 'get from the front door to the mountaintop by public transport', as Merlinger puts it.

As the *KlimaTicket* is a year-round ticket, the offer is particularly suitable for boosting domestic tourism, such as for Viennese 'who want to take a quick trip somewhere in the mountains', explains Lambert. For offers to foreign visitors, it was mentioned that it is important to take into account the specific movement patterns of tourists and to develop customised products that meet their needs.

The *KlimaTicket* has achieved impressive success in a short period of time and has made a lasting impact on public transport behaviour in Austria. With its flexible offers and clear focus on environmental awareness, the *KlimaTicket* has not only exceeded expectations, but has also laid the foundations for a future mobility transition in Austria. The discussion about the *KlimaTicket* in relation to tourism shows that there is still room for innovative approaches to make sustainable mobility attractive to visitors.

Through clever use of marketing, targeted offers and cooperation, the *KlimaTicket* could not only

revolutionise everyday regional and nationwide transport, but also play a key role in promoting sustainable tourism in Austria. 'Overall, we want to continue to grow very dynamically. We don't believe that we have exhausted the potential yet', says Lambert, describing the future of the *KlimaTicket*.



© ÖBB Personenverkehr AG | Harald Eisenberger

The blend of flexibility and sustainability appeals to both existing and new public transport users.



© Unsplash | Jason Blackeye

*KlimaTicket* is designed to promote the integration of public transport into daily routines and holiday plans alike.



The KlimaTicket offers budget-friendly access to the public transport system throughout Austria.





# Peddalling into a greener future

Central to the *Smart Region Kogelberg's* commitment is the Kogelberg **e-bike rental system**, aimed at fostering climate-friendly transportation and eco-tourism. Here, collaborations with key local stakeholders have sparked a noticeable rise in cycling and environmental awareness among both residents and guests.



## 2.5

e-bikes were rented out on average per day from Bad Sauerbrunn.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Electric bikes are capable of covering distances up to 10 km, replacing 61% of car journeys in Austria.

Compared to its neighbouring countries, Austria leads in the adoption of e-bikes, with 45% of all bikes sold in 2021 being electric.

27% of Austrian summer visitors in 2023 chose to go on holiday by bike, mountain bike or e-bike.

In the pursuit of climate neutrality and energy self-sufficiency, ten forward-thinking municipalities in the Mattersburg district have united to form a smart region. A centrepiece of their green initiatives is the Kogelberg e-bike rental system project, launched in 2021. The project aims to make the region more attractive for visitors as well as promote the use of bicycles for commuting, by integrating electric bicycles into the region's daily life, work routines, and tourist activities.

To facilitate this, the Climate and Energy Model Region (KEM) Kogelberg has, in cooperation with the tourism association Mittelburgenland-Rosalia and the bike store *Radwelt Michi Knopf* in Mattersburg, installed an e-bike rental service in the region. The bike store not only provides the e-bikes for the operation but also played a crucial role in the system's conception, while coordination with the regional tourism association ensured that existing bike paths are surveyed and expanded to enhance the overall cycling network.

The implementation of the Kogelberg e-bike rental system has already proven successful, with a total of 423 e-bikes rented out in the participating communities. Notably, spa guests in Bad Sauerbrunn alone accounted for 381 bookings, highlighting the appeal of sustainable transportation in the region.

Based on documented bookings and assumptions about travel distances, the Kogelberg project is expected to achieve estimated emissions savings of approximately 286 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per year, which underscores the environmental benefits of transitioning from traditional modes of transportation to e-bikes.

The partnership with the spa town of Bad Sauerbrunn, set to formally join the KEM Kogelberg in the next phase, showcases how collaboration among municipalities and stakeholders can create potential synergies. This has been instrumental in the project's success, visibly boosting cycling activity in the implementing municipalities and shifting the inhabitants' perception of sustainable transportation. As a result, the project now looks to expand these initiatives to other KEM communities to further strengthen the region's dedication to sustainable mobility.

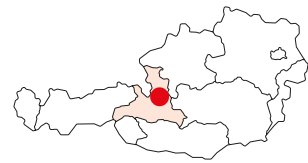


Kogelberg's e-bike rental system promotes electric bikes among residents and tourists alike.



# Eco-mobility pays off with the 'Werfenweng Card'

As a model location for soft mobility, Werfenweng has made it their mission to provide visitors with the means to move around in an environmentally sound way throughout their entire stay. With the new *Werfenweng Card*, the municipality – under the management of Josef Holzmann – incentivises e-mobility with a **points system that grants access to a range of seasonal activities**, enhancing the holiday experience.



5

electric cars are part of the *Werfenweng Card* fleet.

## DID YOU KNOW?

One third of all holiday trips among the Austrian population in 2022 were for recreational purposes.

21,000 climate-friendly mobility projects have been initiated through the national programme 'klimaaktiv mobil', saving 350,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually.

Shared electric cars or bikes offer the chance to try out the latest generation of vehicles while on holiday.

Werfenweng has long been at the forefront of soft mobility planning, striving to protect the surrounding nature through targeted mobility measures. One of the more recent additions is the *Werfenweng Card*, which couples sustainable mobility options with fun seasonal activities for the entire family, easily accessed through an online platform.

The card was developed in 2021/2022 in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic and economic circumstances. 'We needed a calculable system', says Holzmann, Managing Director and Tourism Director for the destination Werfenweng. Specifically, a points-based system allows guests to take advantage of various activities and offers while keeping the costs for the destination predictable. Visitors can purchase the cards either before arrival, at check-in or at the Werfenweng tourist office and then plan their stay from home or on site.

An online platform provides up-to-date information that enables visitors to explore the most beautiful places at any given time of year. The card offers free and unlimited access to well-established mobility options with electric cars and the *W<sup>3</sup> Shuttle*, which covers the railway stations in Werfen, Pfarrwerfen and Bischofshofen. 'We still want to promote environmentally friendly travel, preferably without a car and entirely by train. And if it has to be in the car,



Josef Holzmann,  
Managing Director and  
Tourism Director for the  
destination Werfenweng

© TVB Werfenweng | Roland Loipold

**We have a lot of regular guests and they come especially because they like the concept.**

Josef Holzmann, Managing Director and Tourism Director



then please leave it for the duration of your holiday in the car park or underground car park', explains Holzmann, against the background of the versatile mobility options within the *Werfenweng Card*.

The new system allows guests to choose from different points package options – with 200, 300 and 400 points – depending on their interests and activity level. These points can then be used as their so-called 'holiday currency' for example for uphill and downhill rides on the Ikarus cable car, as well as winter activities including cross-country skiing equipment and snowshoe hire. Aside from supporting soft mobility efforts, the diverse card offers are thus, as described by Holzmann, intended to inspire holidaymakers to try out as-yet unexplored activities in their free time, such as cross-country skiing.

This addition to the region's soft mobility efforts comes at a time when the tourism sector is becoming increasingly digitised, bringing with it benefits for businesses and visitors alike. Aside from being an efficient means of advertising available e-mobility services, the solution supports local business by boosting sales and creating new selling channels. These benefits are not limited to providers participating in the regional points system, either – by including all relevant businesses in the online booking platform, the concept hopes to benefit the entire region.

Moving into the future, Holzmann plans to extend the system to the entire region as well as offering it to locals and employees in the tourism industry. This would reflect the initial idea, which was 'to base the *Werfenweng Card* on three pillars: guests, locals, and employees', as he succinctly puts it.

While hotel and catering workers based in the region can already take advantage of free mobility in Werfenweng and the surrounding area, they and seasonal workers are set to enjoy the benefits of the *Werfenweng Card* in their free time. The idea behind this is to create additional motivation for employees and, at the same time, promote the integration of the

local population into sustainable tourism initiatives. As such, the *Werfenweng Card* also allows people working in the region to get to know the destination better and thus become ambassadors for sustainable tourism themselves.



© Österreich Werbung | Christoph Oberschneider

Take advantage of the *W<sup>3</sup> Shuttle* for a trip to Bischofshofen, home to the world-renowned *Paul-Ausserleitner* ski jump.



© Unsplash | Thulfear Ali

Visitors with a passion for architecture, culture, and modernity can venture to the nearby city of Salzburg.



# Driven by the purpose to connect

In Burgenland, the *Gmoa Bus* project has been reshaping mobility for small communities since 2000. In order to not only **improve transport connections**, but also to **promote gender equality**, *Gmoa Bus* pays particular attention to a balanced gender ratio in the workforce.



≈ 30,000

passengers are using the *Gmoa Bus* yearly.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Every year, buses transport around 660 million people in Austria.

3.7 million people live in rural areas in Austria, which accounts for around 43% of the total Austrian population.

Austria is one of 4 member states committed to the EU's 'Women in Transport' initiative.

Smaller Austrian municipalities with fewer than 1,000 inhabitants are often not part of local public transport plans, which restricts the mobility of population groups such as the elderly, children and people without their own car. *Gmoa Bus* is a pilot project, funded by the former Ministry for Traffic, Innovation, and Technology, as a response to this disparity and has since evolved into a highly successful mobility service, earning the 'VCÖ Mobility Award' in 2002. *Gmoa Bus* operates with a flexible ordering system, ensuring that customers are picked up from their doorstep and transported to their destination with minimal waiting times (not exceeding 30 minutes). With an accessible design featuring eight seats, the service is tailored to the unique needs of smaller communities.

Primarily employing women, *Gmoa Bus* not only provides essential mobility but also fosters social cohesion. Acting as a form of neighbourly help, the bus and its drivers go beyond transportation, regularly checking in on customers and creating meaningful connections within the community. Moreover, the democratic management structure, involving representatives from the community, bus drivers, and passengers, ensures that the service aligns with the needs of the people it serves.

As a non-profit initiative, *Gmoa Bus* secures its annual budget through a diverse mix of fare revenue, federal funds, municipal support, and state contributions. This funding model ensures the financial sustainability of the service and highlights the commitment of various stakeholders to community well-being.

Beyond its role in local mobility, *Gmoa Bus* emerges as a unique asset for tourism in smaller communities. With up to 10 times more customers during the summer months, *Gmoa Bus* also shows to be an appealing means for visitors to navigate the community.

As such, the bus' operation helps sustain small businesses, fostering a vibrant local economy. This ripple effect extends further, creating an authentic and interactive experience for tourists and inhabitants, as the bus becomes a conduit for meaningful interactions between both groups.



The *Gmoa Bus* transforms the way locals and visitors move around the region.



# Social Sustainability

Step into Austria's social fabric of sustainability, where initiatives like social business hotels, vibrant art and culture festivals, and cafés empowering seniors foster meaningful connections. Embracing cultural preservation, fair employment, and community engagement, they shape a tourism environment that goes beyond sightseeing to create lasting societal benefits.





# Uncorking diversity at 'Fabulous Winery'

The *Fabulous Winery*, a small family winery in Burgenland, is characterised not only by its exquisite wines, but also by an impressive combination of **tradition, sustainability and social commitment**. An interview with Stefan Pfeiffer, one of the owners, provides insights into the origins, development, and future plans of the modern winery.



## 2 ha

are dedicated to the winery, with a focus on small-scale viticulture.

### DID YOU KNOW?

16% of the vineyard area in Austria is organically cultivated.

In 2022, 20% of tourists visited Burgenland because of the wine, compared to only 6% in 2017.

In Austria, 55% of individuals are fairly or very open about being LGBTI, compared to the EU average of 47%.

The origins of *Fabulous Winery* date back to 2018, when the youngest generation of the Pfeiffer family – son Stefan and daughter Alexandra – decided to continue the tradition of family-run wine production. 'My sister, very traditional, and I, a bit more fancy. And then the project became *Fabulous Winery*', explains Stefan Pfeiffer, one of the three co-owners of the estate. Switching to organic certification was the first step after the takeover. The *Fabulous Winery* focuses on sustainable viticulture, placing particular emphasis on the health of the soil and resistant grape varieties.

Their motivation for getting into wine production was strongly characterised by family tradition and the desire to maintain the heritage. The first few years were challenging, but through dedicated efforts and events, *Fabulous Winery* was able to attract attention and grow. Pfeiffer emphasises that the diversity of the winery is of great importance, from the different personalities of the *Fabulous Winery* owners to the wine itself, which ranges from traditional Austrian wines to experimental creations such as orange wines.

The changes went far beyond wine production: the next generation not only had a new approach to viticulture, but also to the entire appearance of the winery. Thus, the *Fabulous Winery* was given a new name, logo and corporate identity to reflect the values of the winery: preciousness, rarity, strength, clarity, speciality, trust, high quality and uniqueness.



Stefan Pfeiffer,  
co-owner of the  
*Fabulous Winery*

© M. Hollunder

People come together over wine and you can talk about one topic or another, and we as a winery are happy to support and help.

Stefan Pfeiffer, co-owner



The logo shows three diamond lines flowing into each other, representing the three people behind the business: Alexandra, Alexander and Stefan.

One notable element of the *Fabulous Winery* is its social commitment. Pfeiffer mentions events such as the *Diversity Ball* and the support of initiatives such as the campaign for albinism in Africa. A Thai festival organised in the winery's courtyard remains a highlight in Pfeiffer's memory: 'It was super fun, super nice and of course there was also the question of "What connects our vineyard with Thailand?" At the end of the day, it's the joie de vivre.' The family proactively approaches projects and uses wine events in their vineyard and courtyard to bring people together and address important issues in order to make a conscious contribution to society.

Supporting the LGBTQIA+ community through *Fabulous Winery* is a personal concern of Pfeiffer: 'Pride, that's my thing, I really love it'. The sparkling frizzante with the name #TasteTheRainbow is not only a treat for the senses, but also a tribute to celebrating life and individuality. Pfeiffer and his team use the proceeds from the sale to support various charitable projects in favour of the community, such as *Aids-Hilfe Wien*, *Pride Burgenland* and *Christopher Street Day* in Innsbruck.

The *Fabulous Winery* has established itself as a place for wine lovers. Visitors, mainly from the immediate region itself, Germany and Eastern Europe, who specifically seek out experimental wineries like this one, are not only offered excellent wines, but also insights into viticulture and the family tradition. Although the winery is primarily known regionally, the family is endeavouring to increase its popularity. 'We are already a fancy place, you could say that. Guests really appreciate it when they come across the *Fabulous Winery*', says Pfeiffer, giving an insight into the uniqueness of the vineyard.

Looking to the future, *Fabulous Winery* plans to continue its events and grow gradually. The introduction of new, resistant grape varieties

is also on the agenda in order to become more ecological and sustainable. Despite the challenges of small-scale viticulture, the family remains optimistic and excited about the opportunity to share their passion for wine, tradition and diversity with others.

The *Fabulous Winery* represents not only a vibrant and colourful winery, but also a story of commitment, innovation and a desire to keep traditions alive. With their sustainable practices and social initiatives, they position themselves as a unique pioneer in uniting tradition, cultural diversity and a social mission. Pfeiffer is convinced: 'Wine brings people together. And that's what makes us happy. We can enjoy life. And then we take the opportunity to talk about how we can take a closer look here and there or help out a little. These things really only happen through conversations.'



Alexander (left), Alexandra (centre) and Stefan (right), co-owners of *Fabulous Winery*.

© M. Holtlunder



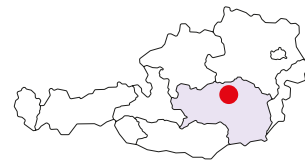
Highlighting their commitment to ecological and sustainable viticulture, *Fabulous Winery* is transitioning towards resilient grape varieties.

© Unsplash | Maja Petric



# Transforming vacancies into opportunities

After decades of economic decline and emigration, the innovative festival *ROSTFEST* has become a **catalyst for change**, converting empty spaces into vibrant hubs, fostering dialogue, and offering unique solutions that not only rejuvenate the region but serve as models for sustainable development and tourism elsewhere.



≈ **10,000**  
people visit the  
*ROSTFEST* each year.

## DID YOU KNOW?

36% of event attendees consider event sustainability when purchasing tickets.

Cultural and art events are proving to be effective spaces for participation and communication that ensure cultural diversity in rural areas.

Of the approximately 290,000 people employed in tourism and leisure, nearly 7,000 work in the culture and events industry.

The town of Eisenerz, once known as the 'bread loaf of Styria', has faced unprecedented structural problems since the second half of the 20th century, when its population shrank from 13,000 to 4,200 within 50 years. In 2004, one third of all apartments were vacant, prompting the initiation of the 're-design Eisenerz' process. This comprehensive municipal initiative aimed to address demographic change, upgrade the historic town centre, and foster networking among various activities and project plans.

Against the backdrop of the 're-design Eisenerz' project, the *ROSTFEST* was launched as an independent format in 2012. The festival capitalised on the concept that vacant buildings could serve as a resource for innovative initiatives, providing exhibition space for large-scale projections or works of art. As part of the broader 'eisenerZ\*ART' program, *ROSTFEST* aimed to be a pioneer in negotiating a post-growth society, particularly relevant in the face of a 20-year economic crisis around the Erzberg region.

*ROSTFEST* has become a platform for diverse generations and social backgrounds to engage in dialogue and experimentation. Departing from traditional regional development processes, the festival adopts an inclusive networking approach, reaching a wide range of people.

The hands-on principle emphasises concrete on-site activities and implementations, fostering collective efforts and dialogue between visitors and residents to provide regional impetus for long-lasting change in rural areas.

A standout feature is the Festival's Urban Camping format, turning vacant buildings into attractive spaces for festival visitors. By reimagining these spaces through simple and inexpensive upgrades, the festival fosters sustainability in regional development. Despite challenges posed by existing laws and standards, Urban Camping has become a crowd-pleaser, offering festival-goers a unique vacation experience and revitalising neighbourhoods. The positive impact on both residents and visitors has prompted discussions about extending this model to other target groups in the tourism sector, such as climbers, mountaineers, tourers, and canoeists.

*ROSTFEST* in Eisenerz exemplifies the power of culture, innovation, and community collaboration in transforming challenges into opportunities for sustainable regional development and tourism. By embracing experimentation and unconventional approaches like urban camping, Eisenerz has not only revitalised vacant spaces but also fostered a sense of community and encouraged dialogue about the future of rural areas.

In light of uncertainties surrounding planning and financing that have affected festivals in the last few years, the *ROSTFEST* organisers cancelled the 2023 event. Using this opportunity to reposition the festival for 2024, the team hopes to once again strengthen the festival's regional impetus, establish new anchor points, and address current crises with shared solutions.



Locals and visitors mingle near a stage at *ROSTFEST* in 2022.



# Seasonal delights and sustainable bites

In the picturesque town of Lochau, by the serene shores of Lake Constance, Restaurant Mangold stands as a **model of culinary excellence and sustainability**. Since its acquisition by Michael Schwarzenbacher in 2007, the restaurant has been on a steadfast journey towards not just creating delightful dishes, but also fostering a community-driven, environmentally conscious ethos.



## Est. 1870

the restaurant has been run by the fourth generation of the Mangold family.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Austria's diverse range of professional training programmes comprises around 6,750 apprentices in 11 tourism professions.

In a 2022 survey, 50% of Austrians were in favour of introducing a four-day work week.

According to a nationwide survey, regional culinary offerings are of particular importance to Austrians.

Run by Michael Schwarzenbacher for over 25 years, Restaurant Mangold is a true family affair. Michael oversees the kitchen, while his wife Andrea takes care of the wine selection, both dedicated to ensuring a memorable dining experience for their guests. The restaurant's commitment to quality has been recognized by *AMA GOURMET REGION*, certifying that a substantial portion of the products used comes from Austria.

At the heart of Restaurant Mangold's sustainability practices is a commitment to locally sourced and seasonally available ingredients. Shorter transportation distances and lower energy consumption associated with the production of local and seasonal foods align with eco-friendly principles, making a positive environmental impact. The culinary team at Mangold believes that the art of cooking starts with the produce, is guided by the season, and is celebrated on the plate. At the core of this philosophy is a profound appreciation for the farmer, viewed as an indispensable contributor to the restaurant's culinary value.

Community collaboration is another cornerstone at Restaurant Mangold. By actively engaging with farmers, winegrowers, international food scouts, and local producers, the goal is to understand the origin of food, grow old vegetable varieties in collaboration with farmers, and refine authentic flavours. The restaurant also plays a role in training young talents interested in artisanal cooking, contributing to the growth of the culinary community.

Mangold not only emphasises the quality of its ingredients but also nurtures a culture of innovation and open dialogue. The restaurant actively embraces diverse perspectives and promotes collaboration among team members, combining the experienced insights of all generations. The 'Mangoldians', as the team is affectionately called by the owners, is the lively spirit that pulsates through the restaurant.

Acknowledging the industry's demanding nature, Mangold implemented a five-day work week 30 years ago, when the catering industry hadn't yet broached the topic. Two decades later, Mangold further introduced an additional day off to prevent burnout among the staff, ultimately enhancing the team's as well as the guests' experience.

Restaurant Mangold not only indulges taste buds but also serves as a model for sustainable and community-centric culinary practices. Through its dedication to local sourcing, collaboration, and a reductionist ethos, Mangold is a testament to the notion that a restaurant can be more than just a place to eat – it can be a force for positive change in the community and the environment.



Michael Schwarzenbacher fosters a unique bond with his team, also known as the 'Mangoldians'.



At Restaurant Mangold, large portraits pay homage to the restaurant's key suppliers.





# A welcoming hotspot in the heart of Vienna

Being Austria's first social business hotel, *magdas* HOTEL is wholly committed to facilitating the **integration of refugees** into the Austrian job market. Through collaborative partnerships, the hotel opens doors to education and opportunities while fostering a diverse, talented staff that contributes to the unique essence of the establishment.



## 10 +

nations from across the world were represented in the diverse workforce by early 2022.

### DID YOU KNOW?

2021 witnessed a 21% increase in employment among refugees from non-EU countries.

43.6% of people born abroad find that insufficient German language skills are the main obstacle to finding a job in Austria.

Nearly half of Vienna's population (44% in 2023) are of foreign origin.

Established in 2015 during the European refugee movement, *magdas* HOTEL in Vienna embarked on a mission to facilitate the integration of individuals from refugee backgrounds into the local workforce. Through collaborative partnerships with communities, non-governmental organisations, schools, and councils, the hotel reaches out and supports refugees seeking to rebuild their lives.

Operating within budget constraints necessitated innovative solutions. As such, the hotel was established by transforming a former 1970s retirement home into a vibrant space using donated pieces and upcycled furniture to create 85 uniquely designed rooms. The eclectic design, featuring vintage elements like Austrian Federal Railway train furniture, mirrors crafted from old doors, and knitted lampshades, imparts a distinct charm to the establishment.

This charisma extends to the diverse workforce at *magdas* HOTEL, where numerous nationalities, languages, and cultures help create a harmonious and exceptional guest experience. For the individuals employed, this opportunity transcends barriers of origin, religion, or language, providing a platform to showcase their multilingualism and cultural insights – essential assets in the hospitality realm.

In addition to providing a range of apprenticeships within the hotel industry, *magdas* allocates resources for intercultural team-building activities and employs social workers to assist staff in addressing housing

or personal challenges. Although the initial years posed challenges due to personnel costs running 10–15% higher than those of conventional hotels, the consistent rise in occupancy rates since then serves as a testament to the enduring success of the project. Indeed, *magdas* HOTEL has not only captivated tourists but has also cultivated a dedicated local following, as residents from the neighbourhood regularly visit to appreciate the pleasant garden and indulge in the international cuisine.

Looking ahead, the team aspires to expand its influence by setting an example for others. A second location, a former 1960s clergy house in Vienna's third district, has been transformed to extend apprenticeships for future chefs, receptionists, and restaurant managers. Celebrating diversity and social commitment, *magdas* HOTEL stands as a beacon of inspiration for transformative social impact within the industry.



Upcycled furniture pieces add a unique and lively touch to the design of the hotel's 85 rooms.



# Coffee, cake and community

In Vienna, the *Vollpension Generationencafé* has emerged as more than just a culinary destination; it has become a haven addressing the pressing issues of old-age poverty and loneliness. Since opening its doors in 2015, this establishment, affectionately known as ‘Granny’s public living room’, goes beyond serving delicious cakes to serving a greater purpose.



## 118,000

single pensioners live in Vienna (state 2020).

### DID YOU KNOW?

The age group of 65+ year olds in Austria will be an estimated 27.9% of the population in 2050, marking an 8.4 percentage-point increase compared to 2022.

74.4% of very old senior citizens in Austria state that they are satisfied with their social relationships with their families.

In Austria, 36.2% of very old senior citizens maintain contact with more than six individuals outside their family.

Old-age poverty is a prevalent issue affecting many, especially female pensioners, and it often leads to social isolation. In urban spaces, the lack of social meeting points for the elderly and younger generations can often add to this stigmatisation. Beyond offering delightful pastries and aromatic coffees, *Vollpension Generationencafé* envisions itself as a genuine intergenerational meeting place. The underlying philosophy is clear: combat loneliness in old age through active participation, replace poverty with meaningful activity, and foster an ongoing dialogue between generations.

Moriz Piffl and Mike Lanner, inspired by the value of multiple generations living and dining together within their own families, drafted the idea of a café open for all age bands back in 2012. Today, *Vollpension Generationencafé* is a diverse hub with a lively team, spanning ages 17 to over 80, actively promoting intergenerational interaction and bridging the gap between old and young.

*Vollpension Generationencafé* emphasises the importance of infrastructure that welcomes all generations and social groups. Spaces designed for socialising without the pressure to consume provide opportunities for financially vulnerable individuals to participate in public life. Moreover, applying to *Vollpension Generationencafé* doesn’t necessitate a CV; a warm smile and a talent for home baking are the only prerequisites for joining this inclusive community initiative.

Remarkably, half of the *Vollpension* team is older than 60, and the initiative has increased workers’ disposable income by an average of 40%.

In 2019, a second generation-bridging café opened its doors, and the emergence of the ‘Baking Academy’ during the pandemic exemplified the café’s resilience and creativity. Senior members, unable to gather physically, embraced technology to share their baking expertise online. The success of the virtual platform prompted *Vollpension Generationencafé* to extend its reach. The launch of Vienna’s first ‘Grandma’s Baking School’ not only brought classic treats to aspiring bakers but also facilitated real-time interaction.

Participants found themselves not just learning the art of baking but engaging in conversations that transcended generational boundaries.

*Vollpension Generationencafé* tells tales not just through its culinary but through the lives it touches, proving that a cup of coffee and a slice of cake – just like the ones we know from our own grandmothers – can be catalysts for positive change.



At *Vollpension*, a female pensioner brings her mastery of home baking to the table.



# Unlocking Alpine wellness with 'HEALPS2'

Home to waterfalls, lush forests, pure mountain air, and meadows full of flowers and herbs, the Alps offer unique opportunities for health tourism. Recognising this, the *HEALPS2* project **actively champions the wealth of natural health resources**, positioning them as a strategic catalyst to revitalise tourism across the Alpine regions.



## 21

natural health resources have been identified across the Alpine region.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Austria boasts 75 thermal baths and countless wellness hotels and health resorts.

In the Global Wellness Institute's top destination rankings for wellness tourism, Austria ranks fourth with 16.7 million trips in 2022.

The Austrian wellness tourism sector experienced an average annual growth rate of 27.9% between 2020 and 2022.

Primarily headquartered in Salzburg, *Healing Alps* spearheads a transformative initiative, propelled by the collaborative efforts of Innovation Salzburg and the Institute for Ecomedicine at Paracelsus Medical University. Against the backdrop of a burgeoning emphasis on health, nature, and regionalism in the tourism sector, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, *HEALPS2* empowers destination managers to analyse and enhance their regions' health tourism potential by aligning guest needs and expectations with the natural resource profile of a destination.

Between 2019 and 2022, the project catalogued more than 20 natural health resources in the Alpine region, ranging from air ions and hydrotherapy to mountain hiking and rock climbing. As part of the process, the team leveraged the most recent research findings and tested the nature-based health tourism approach in selected pilot regions. Subsequently, the insights were translated into practical tools aimed at advancing Alpine regional development.

In tandem, the digital platform 'Alpine Health Tourism' serves as a collaborative hub for destinations, regions, municipalities, and other interested parties. Here, stakeholders can share insights and access information on resources and experts, facilitating joint projects and stimulating co-learning between tourism, health, and other relevant sectors.

Policy recommendations, coupled with an action plan, further support the seamless integration of sustainable health tourism into broader strategies.

Appreciating the unique natural and cultivated landscapes of the Alps, *HEALPS2* advocates for diversity in the development of innovative, authentic offerings that set regions apart from other

destinations. Moreover, the heightened awareness of the interplay between nature and health is believed to lead to a more sustainable use of resources among guests and locals, contributing to the long-term preservation of nature as the foundation for this branch of tourism. The end result is not merely tourism, but an enduring, regionally rooted, and health-conscious Alpine experience.

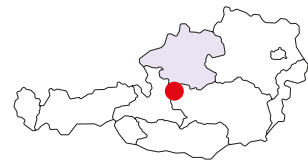


The Alps boast an abundance of climbing routes, catering to all skill levels.



# Children's play and sustainable getaway

Established in 2016, the Hotel Dachsteinkönig Familux Resort stands out not only for its **dedication to children's engagement** but also for its ambitious sustainability goals. Managed by the Mayer family, pioneers in the family hotel industry, the resort proudly calls itself the most innovative family hotel in Europe.



## 25 +

carers look after the youngest guests from Monday to Sunday.

### DID YOU KNOW?

According to the Sustainable Travel Index, Austria is the third most sustainable holiday destination in the world in 2023.

There are 2,813 five- and four-star hotels in Austria, with 41.8 million overnight stays in 2021.

Almost half (44%) of summer visitors in 2023 consider the Austrian destinations they have visited to be family-friendly.

From environmentally friendly construction and operations to promoting local communities and using regional products, the Hotel Dachsteinkönig aims to contribute positively to both people and nature. The resort's eco-certification on Level 4 in the 'GreenSign' programme attests to its dedication to sustainability. With over 100 criteria covering environmental, social, and economic aspects, the programme acknowledges Hotel Dachsteinkönig's comprehensive efforts to minimise its ecological footprint. Indeed, the Mayer family's commitment extends beyond mere compliance, embedding sustainability in the resort's philosophy from its inception.

Recognising children as an integral group of customers, the resort employs a team of trained children's guardians dedicated to providing care throughout the day. The emphasis on family and children's well-being is not a recent addition to Hotel Dachsteinkönig as it is deeply rooted in the Mayer family's philosophy of hotel operation.

This legacy distinguishes the Familux Resort as the world's first premium hotel group exclusively designed for families with children. This signifies a commitment to crafting an environment where children feel not just welcome but cherished. From specially designed play areas to engaging activities, every facet of the resort is tailored to ensure that children not only enjoy their stay but thrive in an environment that understands and values them.

Initiated in the spring of 2022, the Talent Academy at Hotel Dachsteinkönig is an immersive 18-month program designed to foster comprehensive professional development. Boasting a team of six experienced trainers and a diverse cohort of nine resort employees spanning various departments, age groups, and nationalities, the academy serves as a testament to the Hotel's dedication to nurturing its workforce. Specifically, it provides a platform for employees to flourish both professionally and personally.

Hotel Dachsteinkönig Familux Resort is a model of sustainable and family-focused hospitality. It is a testament to how sustainability in both operation and management as well as a child-centric focus can harmoniously coexist, creating a place where families not only make memories but also nurture an appreciation for the environment and a sense of responsibility in the hearts of the youngest adventurers.



Play areas and engaging activities make children feel right at home at the Familux Resort.



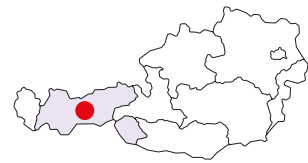
Hotel Dachsteinkönig Familux Resort stands as the world's first premium hotel exclusively designed for families with children.





# Youth, climate, action: Empowering young change makers

In a collaborative effort between the University of Innsbruck and schools in Bavaria, Austria, and South Tyrol, a new era of education is unfolding known as *k.i.d.Z 21*. Through **creative and engaging teaching techniques**, this initiative is paving the way for the young generation to better understand the implications of climate change, empowering them to become well-informed future leaders.



## 1,000 +

students were reached and educated with the help of the project.

### DID YOU KNOW?

There are 4,785 compulsory and academic secondary schools in Austria, with around 820,000 pupils.

Spearheaded by the Ministry of Education, around 700 ÖKOLOG schools encourage sustainable thinking and action.

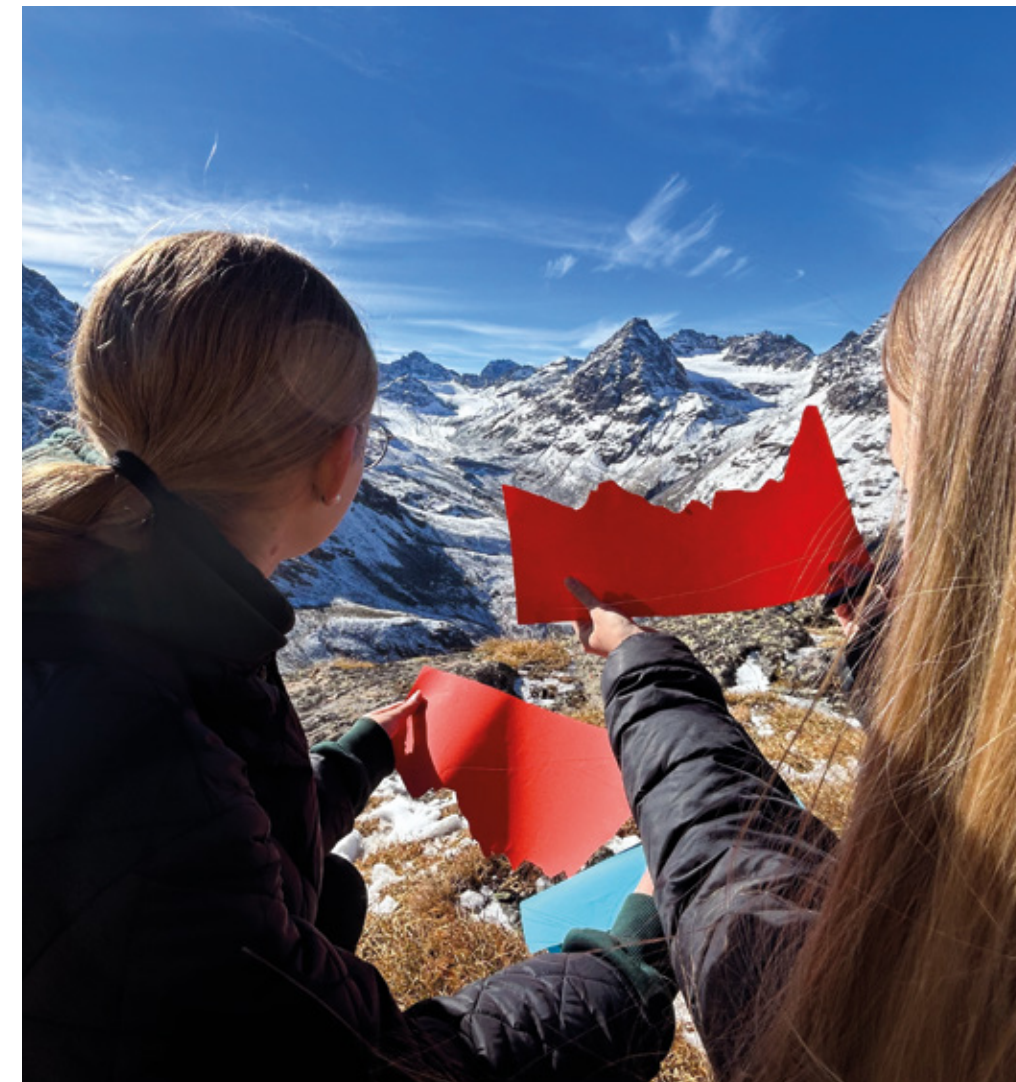
82% of Austrians are certain that the climate crisis must be stopped for the sake of future generations.

The effects of climate change are clearly noticeable today, both in our environment and in society. It is likely that these will only intensify in the future. Today's children and teenagers are the generations who will face new realities due to climate change for most, if not all, of their lives. Ensuring they are well-prepared and equipped with climate knowledge is a crucial undertaking in empowering the youth, a commitment reinforced by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research since 2014 through a fundamental decree on environmental education for sustainable development.

In 2012, when the *k.i.d.Z 21* project was first launched at a pilot school in Bavaria, the primary vision was to heighten awareness and understanding of climate change and its impacts among young adults. Over the years, the initiative has grown, with more schools joining each year, shifting the international climate debate from a global to a local level. The educational programme runs over the course of a school year, from September to July, and is targeted at eighth graders. During this period, children, teachers and academic climate experts meet in a collaborative approach, following the principles of conceptual change. This approach adapts learning and teaching to each student's life, circumstances, and existing knowledge, promoting self-directed learning and the construction of individual knowledge.

The learning approach is primarily hands-on, often outdoors in the Alpine regions. During hikes in the alpine regions, the consequences of climate change are most tangible. Here, the children and young adults gain direct insight into the reality of climate change and its wide-reaching effects. Considering that climate change both affects and is affected by tourism in the Alps, special attention is given to comprehending this interaction. Shifting the perspective from a pessimistic outlook on upcoming changes to one portraying the impacts of climate change as opportunities fosters enthusiasm for participation in the learning programme. During excursions to mountains and popular holiday destinations, children and young people can enter into a direct dialogue with tourists. This creates a mutual understanding and joint reflection on how tourism

is not only perceived as a threat to natural habitats, but also as an opportunity to strengthen environmental awareness among the local population and guests. As a result, the children not only develop a heightened sense of responsibility for the environment but also become better informed about the critical importance of environmental conservation. All of this, with the added benefits of improved physical and mental well-being from extra outdoor activity.

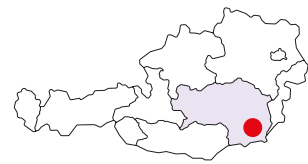


Interactive outdoor activities offer children firsthand insight into the broad effects of climate change.



# Crafting opportunities and products at ‘Die Manufaktur’

Founded in 2015 by dedicated entrepreneurs, social workers, and psychologists in Graz, *Die Manufaktur* is a hub for sustainable products. Focusing on providing employment opportunities, the hub places special **emphasis on socially disadvantaged populations**.



**6** months is the average duration of fixed-term employment contracts.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The unemployment rate in Austria is at 4.8% in 2022 and has dropped by 1.4 percentage points compared to the previous year.

40% of the Austrian population is involved in donating old clothes.

In 2022, one in 12 Austrians (8%) upcycled old clothes and turned them into something else.

*Die Manufaktur* in Graz creates temporary employment opportunities in diverse areas such as restoration, monument care, repair, textile repairs, upcycling, and sewing. With guidance from experienced restorers, craftsmen, social workers, and psychologists, employees with mental illnesses are guided through the process of finding fixed-term part-time positions. The overarching goal is to bolster the skills and self-confidence of individuals, facilitating their re-entry into the labour market.

Beyond its employment mission, *Die Manufaktur* is a hub for sustainable products created by its employees following ecological standards. From restoration of historical buildings to the repair and valorisation of old handicraft products, the initiative actively contributes to the circular economy by repurposing used materials, sourced both from individuals and businesses. This approach not only conserves resources but also aligns with environmental sustainability.

A ‘For Free’ corner operates on a simple yet profound principle: encouraging people to donate and exchange items such as clothing, tableware, books, household goods, and toys. While donations are appreciated to sustain the project, the corner is open to everyone, regardless of socio-economic status.

This inclusivity ensures that individuals facing financial constraints or other challenges have access to essential items without any barriers. It embodies *Die Manufaktur’s* belief in equal opportunities and its dedication to supporting those in need.

*Die Manufaktur* works closely with the Styrian Employment Promotion Agency to provide targeted support to population groups that have difficulties entering the regular labour market due to various challenges. The project emphasises the diversity of individual backgrounds, life experiences, skills and resources that each employee brings to the table.

In doing so, *Die Manufaktur* functions not only as a workplace, but also as a social centre that promotes a positive and supportive community. Through its holistic approach, the manufactory thus not only creates work opportunities, but also a space where social integration, personal development and ecological responsibility go hand in hand.

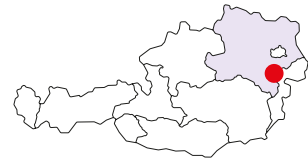


At *Die Manufaktur*, employees acquire confidence while creatively repurposing products and materials at temporary employment positions.



# ‘Do Good’, feel good in Wiener Neustadt

Wiener Neustadt, a city with historical charm and modern environmental awareness, is increasingly focusing on sustainable tourism initiatives. As **one of ten climate-friendly pioneer cities** in Austria developing mobility, cityscape and tourism, the city’s *Do Good* programme aims to promote a greater sense of sustainability.



## 500 g

of honey and a bee sponsorship are given to hotel guests who stay 7+ nights.

### DID YOU KNOW?

In 2022, the STEP 2030+ urban development plan was implemented with 11 defined sustainable development goals for Wiener Neustadt.

With a tree stock of 20,000 trees, the share of forest in Wiener Neustadt is 24%.

The average length of an overnight stay in Austria in summer 2023 was 7.0 nights.

Since the tourism office was founded in 2019, Wiener Neustadt has made considerable progress in its development. Christopher Hartmann, tourism coordinator of the city since 2020, talks about the *Do Good* initiative, which is at the heart of sustainable endeavours in the tourism sector. The vision here is that overnight guests can make a positive contribution to the city and the environment through their visit.

*Do Good* was officially launched in September 2023 and developed out of the idea of offering sustainable options to guests and the general public, as Hartmann reports. Guests can do good by supporting various projects – including tree planting, the creation of flowering meadows, and donations to those in need – which are chosen depending on the number of overnight stays.

The guests thus become an integral part of the endeavours towards a sustainable and socially responsible future. Every overnight stay in selected partner hotels contributes directly to local goals and enables the accommodation businesses to realise their vision of having a positive impact on the environment. The projects are implemented in collaboration with local partners, including the social department stores’ and the agricultural college in Warth, which offers beehive sponsorships.



Christopher Hartmann,  
tourism coordinator  
in Wiener Neustadt

© Busyshutters

**I am incredibly happy that I have the opportunity to co-develop tourism in Wiener Neustadt.**

Christopher Hartmann, tourism coordinator



A key element of the project is transparency towards the guests, 'because that's the only way to be honest and authentic', as Hartmann emphasises. Guests are regularly informed about the progress of the projects via a dedicated customer database that includes certificates and updates on the activities realised, 'in order to stay in touch with us and maintain communication', explains Hartmann.

The hotels that have joined the *Do Good* project demonstrate a commitment to sustainability that goes beyond the project itself. As Hartmann highlights: 'It is important to us that, to a certain extent, we only invest in hotels that are exemplary in terms of environmental issues and social sustainability'. The selection fell to four leading hotels that already work together with the tourism office, where the plan is to 'also coach in the background in order to strengthen these issues even more', says Hartmann.

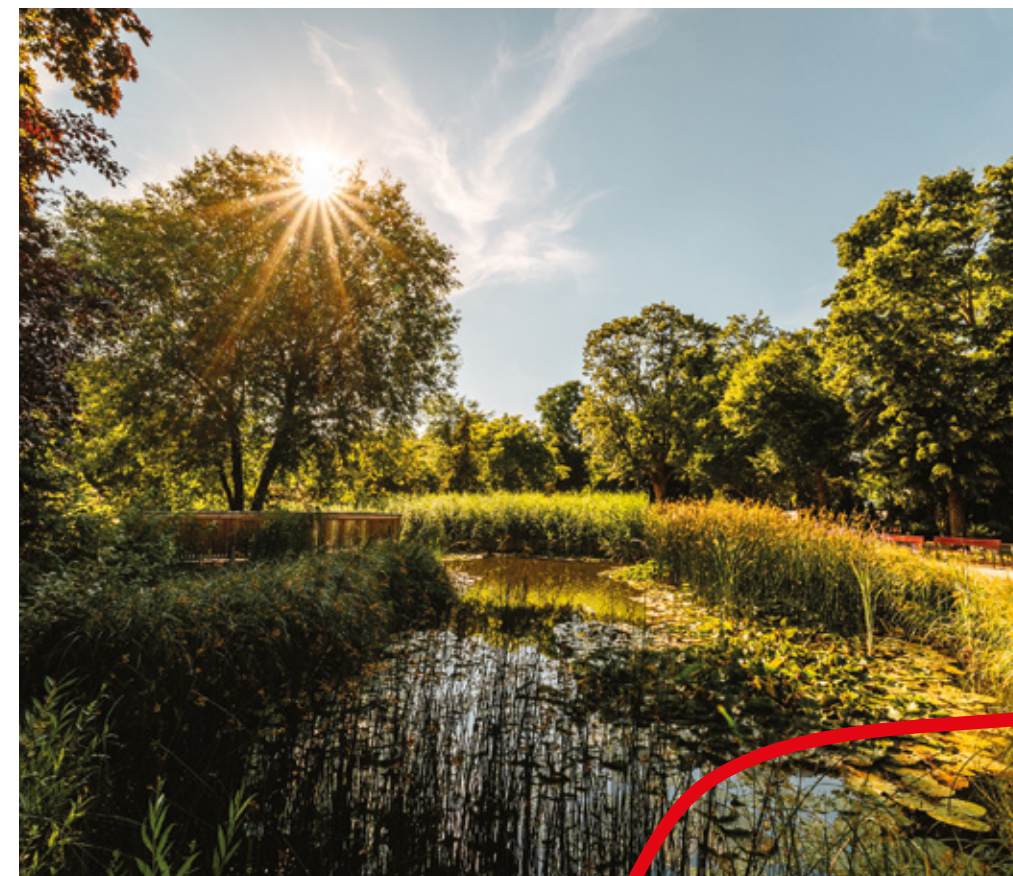
With 25 bookings already made within a short period of time, the project already shows great promise. Hartmann hopes that *Do Good* will not only have a positive ecological and social impact, but also prolong the guests' stay in Wiener Neustadt. By participating in *Do Good* activities, guests develop a deeper connection to the city, which should increase the length of their stay and the frequency with which they return to Wiener Neustadt. As Hartmann reveals, the aim is 'to get guests to come back again and again to see "What have I achieved with my contribution?", "Where is the tree that I actually planted there?", "Where is this flowering meadow?"'

All donations collected by *Do Good* are pooled until the end of each year and then invested in the relevant activities. Aside from benefitting the environment, the initiative strives to raise awareness of sustainable tourism through its visible results, such as the growth of a forest. Wiener Neustadt is thus positioning itself as a frontrunner in green urban development and attracting both culture and environmental enthusiasts.



© Stadt Wiener Neustadt | Michael Weller

Local partners provide an array of projects, such as beehive sponsorships facilitated by Warth's agricultural college.



© Busyschutters

Tree planting and the creation of flowering meadows are some of the ways guests in Wiener Neustadt make positive contributions.



The Do Good actions encompass various charitable projects, such as monetary donations to the needy, planting wildflower meadows and trees, or sponsoring a beehive.





# Key terms related to Sustainability

## CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>-eq)

The term 'carbon dioxide equivalent' or CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, often abbreviated as CO<sub>2</sub>-eq, is a metric unit employed to assess and compare emissions from different greenhouse gases (GHG). This comparison is based on their global warming potential (GWP), achieved by converting the quantities of other gases into an equivalent amount of carbon dioxide that carries the same global warming potential.

## Climate neutrality

The EU refers to climate neutrality as the state in which the release of GHG into the atmosphere by human activities is minimised and remaining emissions are offset by various measures. Advertisements with statements such as 'CO<sub>2</sub>/climate-neutral' or 'climate-friendly' can have legal consequences if no concrete evidence is provided. Austria Tourism emphasises three important factors for companies that want to advertise with climate neutrality:

1. A precise determination of the emissions caused, including direct (Scope 1), indirect (Scope 2) emissions and emissions within the value chain (Scope 3).
2. Disclosure of the measures taken to achieve climate neutrality, preferably by avoiding, reducing and offsetting emissions via recognised institutes or providers
3. Careful selection of offsetting projects, in particular reforestation and forest protection projects, to ensure that emissions will actually be offset.

## Climate Alliance (Klimabündnis Österreich)

Climate Alliance Austria is a non-profit organisation committed to climate action and sustainable development. As part of the international network 'Climate Alliance of Cities with Indigenous Peoples of the Rainforest', the Climate Alliance actively reduces carbon emissions

through partnerships with cities and regions. Noteworthy is its collaboration with indigenous communities for climate change impact mitigation. The organisation conducts initiatives, events, and educational projects to promote eco-friendly practices, playing a crucial role in addressing global climate challenges.

## Austrian Ecolabel

The Austrian Ecolabel is Austria's foremost state-certified environmental seal. It is awarded to products, services and destinations that fulfil strict environmental criteria covering aspects such as energy efficiency, resource conservation, waste management and emissions.

## Climate Change Adaptation Model Regions (KLAR!)

The Pilot Programme 'KLAR!', which stands for Climate Change Adaptation Model Regions for Austria, receives funding from the Austrian Climate and Energy Fund. It presents a process-oriented strategy designed to assist municipalities in raising awareness for climate change adaptation and implementing specific measures at the regional level.

## Climate and Energy Model Regions (KEM)

The Climate and Energy Model Regions programme of the Climate and Energy Fund is an initiative that supports local communities in the development and implementation of sustainable climate and energy projects. The programme focuses on model regions in which innovative approaches to reducing GHG emissions and promoting renewable energies are tested. Through collaboration among municipalities, businesses, and citizens, exemplary measures are developed to contribute to national and international climate action goals. From 2021 to 2024, there were two additional KEM tourism regions, Nassfeld-Pressegger See-Lesachtal-Weissensee and Zell am See-Kaprun, with the aim of establishing the regions both nationally and internationally as model

regions for climate-friendly tourism and encouraging other stakeholders in their efforts.

## Green Destinations Certification

The Green Destinations certification in Austria uses a five-level system to assess the sustainability of destinations. Awards are given based on a mix of guideline checks and indicator results. There are 84 criteria in total, divided into six main topics, which have been recognised by the GSTC (Global Sustainable Tourism Council) since 2016 and take into account various aspects of sustainability, including destination management, nature, environment, culture, social issues and economy.

## Nature-based solutions

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Nature-based solutions are measures for the protection, sustainable management and restoration of natural and modified ecosystems. They aim to overcome social challenges effectively and adaptably, while simultaneously supporting both people and nature.

## Bio Austria

Bio Austria is a prominent organisation representing the organic agriculture sector in Austria. As the country's leading association for organic farming, it brings together farmers, producers, and other stakeholders dedicated to promoting and advancing organic practices. Bio Austria focuses on supporting sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation, and the production of high-quality organic products. The organisation plays a crucial role in advocating for organic farming policies, providing certification standards, and fostering collaboration within the organic community.

## LEADER

LEADER Austria is part of the European Union's rural development program aimed at fostering sustainable,

community-driven initiatives in rural areas. In Austria, LEADER is implemented through Local Action Groups (LAGs), which consist of representatives from the public, private, and civil society sectors. These groups work collaboratively to identify local development needs, formulate strategies, and implement projects that enhance the economic, social, and environmental aspects of rural communities.

## SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were embraced by the United Nations in 2015 with the aim of rallying nations worldwide to tackle poverty, safeguard the environment, and strive for universal peace and prosperity by 2030. Comprising 17 interconnected objectives, the SDGs acknowledge the interdependence of various spheres of action, and underscore the necessity for development strategies to encompass social equity, economic stability, and environmental preservation.



# List of Abbreviations

The following list of abbreviations serves as a reference for the various abbreviations and their corresponding meanings.

<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CFO</b>	Chief Financial Officer
<b>CO<sub>2</sub></b>	Carbon dioxide
<b>CO<sub>2</sub>-eq</b>	Carbon dioxide equivalent
<b>CHP</b>	Combined heat and power
<b>CV</b>	Curriculum Vitae
<b>GHG</b>	Greenhouse gas
<b>GWh</b>	Gigawatt-hour
<b>HDPE</b>	High Density Polyethylene
<b>HVO</b>	Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil
<b>KEM</b>	Climate and Energy Model Regions
<b>KLAR!</b>	Climate Change Adaptation Model Regions
<b>kWh</b>	Kilowatt-hour
<b>LED</b>	Light emitting diode
<b>LEADER</b>	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale (Links between the rural economy and development actions)
<b>LGBTQIA+</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual. The additional '+' stands for all other identities not encompassed in the short acronym.
<b>MWh</b>	Megawatt-hour
<b>PET</b>	Polyethylene terephthalate
<b>PV</b>	Photovoltaic
<b>PVC</b>	Polyvinyl Chloride
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
<b>UNWTO</b>	World Tourism Organisation
<b>VCÖ</b>	Verkehrsclub Österreich (Austrian traffic association)
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation

# Sources

The sources of the publication 'Sustainability in Austria' are accessible via the QR code below. Scanning the code opens a website of Austria Tourism, where the individual references are available as links.





# Sustainability in Austria

## AN OUTLOOK

In this publication, we have embarked on a journey of discovery through Austria's diverse sustainable tourism landscape. Across almost 170 pages, we have highlighted the initiatives of various stakeholders who are engaged in pioneering work in their sustainability endeavours. They show how sustainable tourism is possible in winter and summer, in mobility and circular economy as well as in the social sphere. The aim is always to consider and harmonise the environment, socio-cultural well-being and economic viability in equal measure.

Through 50 pioneering projects, we have seen how innovation and commitment pave the way for responsible tourism. These examples should not only reflect the sustainable side of tourism in Austria, but also serve as a beacon for the domestic industry.

The sustainability journey is an ongoing process that requires the courage to rethink and act. Each and every one of us is called upon to be part of this change – by making conscious decisions that take into account not only our immediate surroundings, but also the global community. Austria's commitment to sustainable tourism is an encouraging example that change is possible.

May this publication serve as a source of inspiration, highlighting the path towards sustainable tourism as an opportunity and motivating all involved to continue shaping the future in a positive way!



