



Press Info

Kitzsteinhorn: Close to Nature

Sustainable Environmental and Energy Management, Hohe Tauern National Park Partner, Open-Air Laboratory

Quality-, environmental- and energy management have all played an integral role on the Kitzsteinhorn for a number of years. Through its exemplary environmental and energy-management policies, Kapruner Gletscherbahnen is steadfastly pursuing the path it has embarked on towards sustainable business and commercial practices. The company holds three ISO certifications and received a major award in 2011 for its sustainable management program: At the XIth Alpine Conference, the Kitzsteinhorn was presented with the “pro natura – pro ski AWARD”. The Kitzsteinhorn also serves as an open-air laboratory for several international scientific projects.

Through its integrated management system, since 2003 Kitzsteinhorn has demonstrated a commitment to the implementation and ongoing monitoring of high quality- and safety standards in compliance with ISO 9001 criteria. Active environmental measures and our wholehearted dedication to sustainability provided the impetus in 2007 to expand our certification to encompass the environmental realm (ISO 14001) and, in 2015, energy management in compliance with ISO 50001. Kapruner Gletscherbahnen's ISO certifications apply to all aspects of the company, which include the lifts, pistes as well as gastronomy. “Implementation of our ISO certifications isn't a one-off affair, it is a permanent process, demands continuous adaptation, and presents us with the opportunity to plan and efficiently put in place improvements in all sectors of our business”, explains Günther Brennsteiner, who is the senior project manager.

In order to comply with the environmental management norms of ISO 14001, the overriding goal has been to reconcile environmental protection and reduced environmental impact with the sustainable commercial development of our company. Energy management according to ISO 50001 causes us to constantly reexamine how we handle precious resources. “Precise analysis of our environmental impact and reducing that impact to the greatest extent possible plays an important role in all of our decision-making. Concomitant ecological planning and construction oversight in development of all piste and snow-maintenance facilities, as well as extensive re-cultivation measures at higher elevations are, even today, already standard company practices. The renowned Salzburg Institute for Ecology consults with us in all of these projects and has clearly stated that the implementation efforts of our experienced team are exemplary. Through our energy management program, we are continuously optimizing energy- and resource utilization on the mountain: Measuring equipment and precise data allow us to monitor the power consumption of our gondolas and ski lifts, as well as our company's use of fuel and water. A process which not only helps us economically, it also guarantees responsible utilization of valuable natural resources”, states CEO Norbert Karlsböck. Keeping a computerized registry of all environmentally-related rules and regulations likewise assures our permanent compliance with all applicable laws in this area.



Snow in Winter, Power in Summer

Even in Salzburg's highest ski area, due to glacial retreat and climate change efficient snowmaking has become essential all the way up to the edge of the glacier. Since the year 2000, the Gletscherbahnen has invested 24 million euro in the expansion of snowmaking coverage from the Langwiedboden to the glacier, thus guaranteeing ski operations and the economic foundation of the company itself. The complex snowmaking system is fed and powered by the big, virtually inexhaustible reservoirs behind the Kaprun hydroelectric dams. In 2011, the Grubbach pumping station & power plant was built. In winter, it functions as a pumping station, while between May and October the system is reversed: The pumping station then serves as a turbine, using the water from the snowmelt to generate electricity, thereby producing much of the power required for snowmaking in winter. Hand-in-hand with the building of snowmaking infrastructure, our company's own internal team of experts conducts re-naturing measures during the extremely short high-alpine summer, which lasts from mid-July until the end of August.

Partnership Agreement with Hohe Tauern National Park

In June 2011, a collaborative project between Kapruner Gletscherbahnen and Hohe Tauern National Park – known as “Gipfelwelt 3000 - TOP OF SALZBURG 3029 m” – was officially opened. In 2012, the two partners signed a cooperation agreement for an indefinite period. It comprises points such as the popular “National Park Gallery” ranger tours and the “Kitzsteinhorn Explorer Tour”, as well as mutual exchanges of expertise. “For the Gletscherbahnen, this has proven itself to be extremely positive: Here at 3,000 meters above sea level, right on the border of the National Park itself, together with the National Park we are able to offer all visitors to the Kitzsteinhorn a unique, year-round nature experience”, explains Norbert Karlsböck, CEO of Gletscherbahnen Kaprun AG, with a smile. “There is nowhere else at this elevation in the Hohe Tauern National Park region that is so easy to reach, 12 months a year, right on the edge of the National Park itself. For us, this is a unique chance to raise awareness for the national park mission, in a place where a large number of guests, both domestic and international, come to enjoy winter sports and nature”, states National Park director Wolfgang Urban, putting the essence of the cooperation in a nutshell.

Revegetation of Piste Areas

In close cooperation with the Salzburg Institute for Ecology, here on the Kitzsteinhorn we have successfully implemented revegetation measures far beyond the tree line. Nowhere else have re-naturing efforts been so effective at such extreme alpine elevations. Until just a few years ago, in the Kitzsteinhorn ski area you would encounter broad barren areas flanking the pistes between 2,200 and 2,500 meters above sea level. In 2008, however, the Institute for Ecology developed a detailed action plan designed to restore those areas. By means of a unique method that combined seeding and laying sod, the use of seed mixes, such as the so-called “Kitz Blend”, that had been specially cultivated to do well at high elevations, scrupulous use of every single gram of available humus, as well as gentle removal and redistribution of any available vegetation, we managed to establish ground cover that is extremely similar to the surrounding vegetation you encounter at 2500 meters. Since the growing season on the Kitzsteinhorn is very short, the humus and grass sod have to be protected from erosion caused by precipitation events with the help of coconut-fiber netting. One square meter after another – generally through hard manual labor – was painstakingly returned to Mother Nature.



Kitzsteinhorn: The Open-Air Laboratory

Since 2010, the summit area of the 3,203 meters-high Kitzsteinhorn has been the site of an interdisciplinary open-air laboratory to monitor permafrost and rockfall. After projects MOREXPERT I and II, Gletscherbahnen Kaprun will now serve as a partner and open-air laboratory for the project “GlacierRock” from 2017 to 2020. The goal of the study includes better evaluation of current and future change processes affecting stone and rock formations close to glaciers. From 2015 to 2017, the Kitzsteinhorn also supported the interdisciplinary scientific project “Integrative Deer Management”, which has been investigating the successful interaction of tourism, agriculture, forestry and hunting in Kaprun Valley.

pro natura – pro ski AWARD

At the XIth Alpine Conference in 2011, the Kitzsteinhorn was presented with the “pro natura – pro ski AWARD”, which is handed out by the Liechtenstein foundation “pro natura – pro ski” every two years. The award recognizes Alpine ski areas for ecologically focused management, innovation and sustainable practices. The Kitzsteinhorn was cited for having achieved ISO certifications as well as developing innovative, sustainable offers such as Gipfelwelt 3000 in close cooperation with Hohe Tauern National Park and Haus der Natur Salzburg, and completed in June 2011. These long-term concepts, along with those measures which had already been put in place, a demonstrated sense of responsibility towards reducing environmental impact, as well as high levels of public transparency, all managed to convince the “pro natura – pro ski” jury.

FACT BOX: Kitzsteinhorn Environmental Management	
■	The entire company (gondolas, lifts, pistes as well as gastronomy) certified according to ISO 14001 (environmental management) ISO 50001 (energy management) und ISO 9001 (management)
■	Ecological consultation for planning and building projects provided by Institute for Ecology Salzburg
■	Combination pumping- & power station "Snow in Winter – Power in Summer"
■	Permanent high-alpine re-cultivation and re-naturing program
■	Water supply provided exclusively by spring water from the Kitzsteinhorn area
■	Ingenious logistics system and the company's own waste management concept, whose goal is waste avoidance to the greatest extent possible
■	All gondolas and lifts operate on green energy generated from renewable resources.
■	Energy recovered from the high-performance motors of the bigger lifts as well as from kitchen exhausts is used to heat buildings at the Alpincenter, the Panoramabahn valley terminal, the Langwiedboden station and the Gletscherjet 3+4 mid-station.
■	Fully organic sewage treatment plant at 3,029 m; from the mid-station of the Gletscherjet 3+4 lifts at 2,650 m, continuous sewer system to the regional treatment plant in Zell am See (18 km)
■	Partnership agreement with Hohe Tauern National Park since 2011: Highest point in the biggest Alpine nature sanctuary readily accessible to the general public year-round, regular National Park Ranger Tours, mutual exchange of expertise



■	Internal company employees with responsibility for: environment, energy, waste, water- and sewage management, fire prevention and work safety
■	Open-Air Laboratory Kitzsteinhorn: Ongoing partnerships with international scientific projects: 2017 – 2020 “ GlacierRock ”: The Kitzsteinhorn serves as an open-air laboratory for a unique monitoring project known as “GlacierRock”, an interdisciplinary scientific project focused on long-term observation of permafrost and rockfalls. Project partners: IGF Institute for Interdisciplinary Mountain Research, Salzburg University, Munich Technical University, ETH Zurich. Project management: Georesearch. 2015 through December 2017: “ Integrated Deer Management ”, this project investigates optimal integration of the deer population into the cultural landscape by means of efforts coordinated with tourism, agriculture, forestry and hunting. Project partners: Gutsverwaltung Fischhorn, Vienna University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna University of Veterinary Medicine.
■	Recipient of the "pro natura - pro ski AWARD 2011" for exemplary sustainable, innovative and nature-friendly management practices

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