

Sustainability

Mountain & humans in harmony

“Our visitors draw from a broad range of sports and adventure offerings all year round thanks to Kitzsteinhorn’s snow-secure altitude and diversified landscape. For it to remain that way, we will continue to act responsibly and resource-efficiently in this unique nature area.”

Thomas Maierhofer, CEO of the Gletscherbahnen Kaprun AG

Threefold ISO certification

The Gletscherbahnen Kaprun AG has achieved a triple ISO certification in each of its company sectors – for outstanding Quality, Environmental and Energy Management (9001, 14001, 50001). Besides synergies from long-standing cooperations with the Hohe Tauern National Park, the Salzburg Institute for Ecology as well as other renowned research institutions, when it comes to sustainability, the company focuses on energy efficiency, environmental protection and renewable energy sources.

Measures

Power generation through renewable energy sources

WATER • The company-owned hydropower plant Grubbach enables the company to efficiently use water(power) both in summer and winter: In summer, the turbines turn 300 liters of melt- and rainwater into electric energy each second. By flipping the lever in fall, the hydropower plant turns into a pumping station that sources water for snow making from high-mountain reservoirs. With this combined pumping and hydropower plant, the Gletscherbahnen Kaprun AG generates approximately 1.3 million kWh of power per year.

SUN • Extensively installed PV panels on the roofs and façades of company-owned buildings generate around 350,000 kWh of power each year.

GEOTHERMAL HEAT • All company-owned facilities and buildings are heated fossil-free. The company gains 300,000 kWh per year through geothermal heat for heating the Kaprun Center, the Kitz Camp and the Team Camp.

ENERGY RECOVERY • The Gletscherbahnen Kaprun AG generates 250,000 kWh of heat energy each year using the energy recovered from the motor drives of various facilities.

In sum, self-generated and self-gained power from renewable energy sources amounts to 2,200,000 kWh per year.

The Gletscherbahnen Kaprun AG sources its electricity entirely from renewable, carbon-neutral energy sources. Since January 2024, the VERBUND Energy4Business GmbH sources the electrical energy for all Gletscherbahnen Kaprun AG facilities directly from the Kaprun hydropower plants as green electricity. This measure achieves significant synergies as far as protecting local circular economy is concerned (also in the energy sector).

Reducing carbon footprint (mobility)

Over the winter of 2022/23, all snow groomers on the family mountain Maiskogel ran exclusively on the fossil-free HVO100 fuel. The renewable diesel substitute is made of natural waste products, such as cooking oils and grease, and emits 90% less CO₂. That brought the total of saved carbon emissions to 240 tons in the winter of 2022/23 on the Maiskogel. The positive results prompted the company to switch all of its heavy machines and snow groomers from diesel to HVO100 despite additional costs, thereby making a significant contribution to CO₂ reduction and therefore climate protection. A reduction of carbon emission of around 1,300 tons a year is achieved.

Reducing carbon footprint (mobility)

In 2022, the company expanded its visitors' parking space by the MK Maiskogelbahn and installed ten e-charging stations, with the possibility of adding-on another 12, if necessary. With this initiative and the 3K K-connection that was put into operation in 2019, 1.5 million kilometers of drives with private vehicles can be avoided, for visitors do not have to drive to and back from the Kaprun head of the valley.

Numerous employees use the company-owned e-vans to form carpool for commuting. The drives are completely carbon-free, for the vans are charged at the company-owned e-charging stations, which verifiably source electricity from renewable energy sources. That way, the company saves around 28,000 kg of CO₂ per year.

The Gletscherbahnen Kaprun AG contributes generously to the local public transport service aimed to reduce carbon emissions:

- 1) On the bus line 660 (Zell am See – Kaprun – Kitzsteinhorn), people with a valid ski pass, as well as
 - 2) in Kaprun on the lines 660, K and D, all people (even without a ski pass or ski gear)
- are transported free of charge from late October until early May.

Moreover, the company provides funds to allow people with a valid ski pass to use the ski busses Niedernsill – Piesendorf – Maiskogel / Kitzsteinhorn and Fusch – Bruck – Maiskogel / Kitzsteinhorn as well as the Pinzgauer Lokalbahn free of charge from Christmas until mid-April.

Recultivation & revegetation

In 2008, the Institute for Ecology (IfÖ) and the Gletscherbahnen Kaprun AG planned the project "Kitzsteinhorn 2015". Its aim is to sustainably revegetate Kitzsteinhorn's upland areas. That is best achieved by the seed/sod combination technique: Existing yard vegetation as well as top soil fractions rich in fines are systematically secured and reused; moreover, anti-erosion geotextiles are used. That way, nature-identical vegetation covers are restored. In its 2019 Annual Report, the IfÖ's ecological construction support takes stock: "In sum, over 10 hectares of vegetation-free and partially eroded slope surfaces have been refurbished and permanently revegetated." Revegetation measures are taken constantly, (construction) projects are always planned and carried out in cooperation with the IfÖ.

Cooperations

In 2012, the Gletscherbahnen Kaprun AG and the Hohe Tauern National Park signed a permanent cooperation contract that stipulates reciprocal knowledge transfer as well as strong synergies. It is from this partnership that offerings such as guided Kitzsteinhorn explorer tours with National Park rangers can be offered to visitors in summer and winter – which also help to raise awareness.

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) named Zell am See-Kaprun as one of the "Best Tourism Villages" in 2022. Only destinations that count as outstanding examples of rural tourism destinations with recognized natural and cultural resources, and that preserve and promote local values, products and ways of life can become UNWTO Best Tourism Villages. The award is also about sustainability – about the clear commitment to use tourism – from an economic, social, and ecological point of view – as a driver of rural development and as opportunity for jobs and income.



Long-term research as decision-making support for sustainable planning

The non-profit, independent research institute GEORESEARCH Forschungsgesellschaft mbH has been operating the Open-Air Lab on the Kitzsteinhorn together with the Gletscherbahnen Kaprun AG since 2010, with the Technical University of Munich, the University of Salzburg and the Munich Alpine Hazards and Mitigation Cluster as project partners. The open-air lab examines the impact of climate change on high-alpine surface and underground processes, with climate, glacier and snow reserves, permafrost and landslide activity as core areas of research. "Our aim (and biggest challenge) is to optimize predictions about future developments of both natural and human-induced processes. They serve as significant decision-making support for sustainable strategies, planning and projects."

GEORESEARCH

pro natura – pro ski Award

In 2011, the ski resort Kitzsteinhorn was awarded the "pro natura – pro ski" award by the same-named foundation in the course of the XIth Alpine Convention. It was assessed, how extensive the management's environmental compatibility was, the company's effort in dealing with climate change, whether it pursues a permanent strategy for furthering environmental initiatives and its transparency of reporting practices towards the public. The Kitzsteinhorn impressed with long-term oriented concepts, the implemented measures, the clearly defined responsibility to improve environmental compatibility as well as its transparency towards the public.

Gletscherbahnen Kaprun AG's online magazine „Stories about Sustainability“ takes a look behind the scenes and shows, how sustainability is lived in everyday life on the Kitzsteinhorn: [kitzsteinhorn.at/en/sustainability](https://www.kitzsteinhorn.at/en/sustainability)