



Borovets, Bulgaria

"Winter Sports in Central and Eastern European Reform Countries"

Bulgaria which in all likelihood will become a member of the European Union in 2007 is at the moment leading a shadowy existence as international winter sports destination. However, winter sports have a long tradition in Bulgaria. Not only did Peter Popangelov stand his ground quite successfully in the alpine ski circuit also in the country itself there is a growing interest in winter sports. And it is not the only candidate country or new member state of the EU where this phenomenon can be observed. For the World Winter Forum 2005 (October 12 – 14, 2005 at the Austria Center Vienna) this is reason enough to have a close look at the so called reform countries and their winter sports resorts and to discuss their market potentials.

It is no secret that already for quite some time Bulgaria has been considered as emerging market for tourism. Those who have followed the breathtaking construction activities along the 380 km coast of the Black Sea recognize the chances, hopes and risks that are opening up for the tourism industry. In 2002, for instance, 3.4 million tourists visited Bulgaria in the summer. But it did not get around to everybody yet that Bulgaria – due to its varied geomorphology - has a number of respectable ski resorts and that you can easily travel by bus from the capital Sofia to the ski lifts in the vicinity.

Nevertheless Bulgaria's main ski resorts Borovets, Pamporovo and Bansko have developed to become a well-priced alternative to the classic winter sports destinations, which many Dutch and English tourists already discovered for themselves. At the moment approximately 100 km of slopes can be skied in Bulgaria. Of course, a couple of things remain to be done: If you visit the slopes of the Vitosha Mountains towering over Sofia, you will notice that some of the lifts are quite modern, but the infrastructure as a whole cannot compete with Western European standards. This may be enough for frugal holiday makers – especially from the home market – but the foundations of a prospering and internationally competitive winter tourism industry are not in place for the moment.

Emerging markets like Bulgaria – where Austria is one of the biggest investors – are the topic of the World Winter Forum 2005. And the Expert Congress at the Austria Center Vienna (October 12-14, 2005) themed „Spectacle in the Snow“ will not only analyze the potentials of new markets but focus also on climate and environmental issues, the impact of social phenomena on winter sports and the problems of promising presentations of winter sports in the future.

[Additional information on the congress program as well as pictures free of rights can be downloaded here...](#)

Expert Congress:

"WINTER – Cult & forms of presentation in sports & tourism"
October 12 – 14, 2005, Austria Center Vienna.

World Winter Exhibition:

"WINTER – Survival - Recreation - Spectacle"
October 12 – December 18, 2005 Vienna Art Center,
1010 Wien, Freyung 6.
Open from Wednesday to Sunday

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