



Mag. Franca Kobenter

New guests, new goals and destinations – new opportunities? Focus on Eastern Europe  
The World Winter Forum 2005, an expert congress on and around the topic winter sports (October, 12 to 14, 2005 at the Austria Center Vienna) will focus in particular on the development of existing and new markets and destinations. The main interest in 2005 will lie on Eastern Europe. The discussion and forum on this fascinating thematic field will be presented by Franca Kobenter, director of the Austrian National Tourist Office in Poland.

“Within the last ten years the Austrian tourism market has undergone a dynamic development with regard to Polish guests”, says Ms Kobenter. “The winter tourism alone has experienced a 98 percent growth, and we have a potential of 2.5 million Polish guests who want to visit Austria.” These guests are mainly interested in the sectors Alpine sports and snowboarding. In these sectors the “wellness” aspect is not in the forefront of the guests’ mind but existing feel-good and health facilities are generally well accepted: hotels with or in the vicinity of indoor swimming pools or hot springs and spas are very popular.

And Franca Kobenter does not forget to point out one of the most important aspects with regard to the new guests: “The guests from Eastern Europe usually come a long way to Austria and they want good snow conditions. Since they want snow guarantee the glacier ski resorts in Tyrol, the Stubaital valley and the Zillertal valley are most popular among the guests. In the beginning the national tourism service providers showed a certain scepticism regarding their new clientele but by and large they have overcome these initial doubts. 15 years have passed. Of course, there are always black sheep, but in general people have realized that the new guests are people of education with good jobs who do not tend to indulge in drinking binges and excesses but are open to meet new people and enjoy their holiday.”

Austria is one of the favourite destinations of Polish winter tourists because the ski resorts in Austria have more to offer than the resorts in Poland. Ms Kobenter describes the current situation in Poland as follows: “Zakopane, for instance, is a traditional winter sports and health resort with Alpine character. It has a long tradition and several four and five star hotels. It is mostly frequented by Russian tourists. The lifts are a little bit outdated, they have snow cannons but the way they use them to produce artificial snow is not professional enough. And there are too many lift operators – so you need a separate ticket for almost every single lift. First of all the resort needs investments, but also the fact that some of the operators and owners lack the readiness to

cooperate will have to change.”

#### The World Winter Forum 2005

Experts from the worlds of science, business and sports will discuss the topic “winter” in all its facets within the framework of a two-day congress themed: “Winter – Cult & Forms of Presentation in Sports and Tourism”.

The event, which will take place for the first time this year, will provide a forum for prominent figures of various walks of life who will present their thoughts and ideas on the topic winter. Below you will find a list of some of the speakers who will feature at the congress which will be held under the patronage of Austria’s Federal Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel.

Bode Miller, US ski star

Andreas Braun, SWAROVSKI Crystal Worlds

James Skone, professor at the University for Applied Arts in Vienna

Hannes Jagerhofer, event organizer

Leonid Tyagachev, president of the Russian Olympic Committee, president of the Russian Ski and Snowboard Federation

Eike Wenzel, editor-in-chief of the German Future Institute

Gernot Patzelt, glacier researcher

Martin Freinadamez, former snowboard world champion now running a tourism agency in Romania

The congress will be divided into four thematic fields:

- Cult and forms of presentation in winter sports and tourism
- Future developments of climate
- The opportunities of new markets (especially in Eastern Europe)
- Future Lab: trends and innovations, media and forms of presentation, design and technology.

[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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