

KuBus 55 - Winter sports vrs. Environment

00'00"

The Alps. The mountain range that separates the northern part of Europe from the south. The highest peaks reach almost 5,000 metres. They stretch for 1200 kilometres touching on France, Switzerland, Austria, Italy and Germany.

00'31"

At 2,964 metres the Zugspitze is Germany's highest mountain.

A goal for many sports enthusiasts and holiday makers.

00'45"

The tourist industry welcomes this rush of visitors. Environmentalists regard the unchecked development of this mountain as a high risk area for both nature and man. The natural face of the landscape is disappearing. In its place there exists a conflict between economic interests and conservation.

01'17"

Even just a few years ago the Alps were only thinly populated. Forestry and dairy farming were the main sources of income for the farmers. Only within the last century has the region experienced an economic upswing.

01'37"

The construction of passes, motorways and railway tunnels has bridged the barrier between north and south. The service industry, commerce and tourism now dominate the picture.

01'54"

For many towns tourism is their only economic basis. And communities have adjusted their range of services to fit this development.

02'05"

Garmisch-Partenkirchen, with 1.3 million overnight stays and 5 million holiday makers a year is the most significant tourist region at the foot of the Zugspitze.

02'30"

In summer the tourists go hiking and in winter they ski and snowboard.

02'36" Original sound, Peter Maninger, Tourist Manager

"We live from popular sport activities. Our biggest marketing tool is competitive sport, ski jumping or the winter sports world cup, which gives us international awareness. We need that for our own image and for our own marketing. But visitors can also enjoy sporting opportunities. On a fine summer day you can see up to 20,000 mountain bikers underway. In winter there is skiing, cross country skiing and curling. There are facilities for all of these categories and popular sport plays a dominant role."

03'16"

The leisure industry is doing great business. Everywhere in the Alps skiers find their own El Dorados. So much so that areas are in constant competition with each other. The Alpine region is dependant on tourism. Every extra visitor ensures the existence of the townsfolk.

03'38" Original sound, Peter Maninger, Tourist Manager

"Tourism is in decline. There is no doubt about that. The general conditions of tourism have become more difficult, no question about it. A business can only offer a good product. And a good product can only mean that the infrastructure of the town is constantly investing, constantly doing something so that, even with bad times, they can still make a living.

For decades we have offered an enormous choice of cable cars and ski lifts, in summer as well as in winter. Obviously we do this to reap the greatest capacity. The cable cars here are 100% owned by the community and naturally we need to make sure that we offer the latest technical standards in carrying this capacity."

04'27"

The demands of tourism have grown. The old Kreuzeckbahn no longer meets those needs and it urgently requires new investment.

04'43" Original sound, Karl Dirnhofer, Building Contractor

"The way I would put it is that this is the first step of modernisation in a ski area. Further steps are necessary simply so that today's skier has the comfort and satisfaction of knowing that he is getting everything that accords with being up to date."

05'05"

Constructing a project like this is in itself reason enough for criticism because the project can't be carried out unless nature is disturbed.

05'17" Original sound, Karl Dirnhofer, Building Contractor

"Practically you have to convince everyone that this system is really necessary. The Bayerische Zugspitzbahn decided with the Friends of the Earth to go along this way, and they both decided together on such a project."

05'32"

Environmentalists view the extension of a ski area more critically.

05'42" Original sound, Axel Doering, BUND

Friends of the Earth – Bavarian Section

"All of our research has always shown that visitors come here because of our attractive and intact nature. Obviously it is also a nature that they want to do things in, for instance they may want to go skiing. This means that we must offer our guests the appropriate infrastructure but we also have a duty to protect our environment, to keep it ecologically stable and aesthetically pleasing. And if we were not to do that then our guests would simply just stay away."

06'19"

Axel Doering is not alone in fearing that more expansion, building more hotels, bringing more visitors will be gambling with the nature that is their capital.

06'47" Original sound, Axel Doering, BUND

Friends of the Earth – Bavarian Section

"Every human activity is an attack on nature which can do damage. But Garmisch-Partenkirchen is on a knife edge at the moment with its extension plans and the snow making equipment that comes along with it. And we are already making that leap from what is tolerable, environmentally friendly tourism to a much harsher form of development in our environment."

07'20"

With the extension of the ski lifts there naturally follows an extension of the Ski Pistes. There is a danger that large areas of mountain woodland will be cleared.

07'30" Original sound, Axel Doering, BUND

Friends of the Earth – Bavarian Section

"...and all of that is happening at less than 1500 metres, just in that area which within in a few years under the present and predicted climatic changes, will mean that skiing will only be possible by tearing nature apart and putting in a massive amount of snow making equipment."

07'49"

Global warming is leaving very clear traces. Maintaining a ski area at this altitude needs heavy capital investment. There are catchment pools high in the mountains. These deliver the water to the snow canons.

08'06" Original sound, Karl Dirrhofer, Building Contractor

"It is simply that at the moment there is no guarantee of snow in the ski area. In various places we have to step in and use artificial means to provide it."

08'48"

Scientists like Professor Wolfgang Seiler are using models to calculate and forecast climatic developments over future decades and get some idea of the effect on the Alpine region.

09'02" Original sound, Prof. Wolfgang Seiler,

Environmental Researcher

"We know today with absolute certainty that the climate has changed, there can be no further discussion about that. Temperatures have increased over the last 100 years by 0.9 degrees Celsius, and by 0.5 degrees within the last 20 years alone. One sees a marked temperature change in recent years, a change that is unusually strong.

We have also seen that from year to year the snow line has climbed higher and that on pistes lower than 800 metres there has been next to no snow at all, or only that from snow canons. Because of the climatic change the snow line will slowly climb even higher and will lie at about 900 to 1000 metres. That is not to say that, from time to time, there will still be periodic intensive snow falls even in the low valleys. The question is whether or not it will be enough to make winter sport possible."

10'08"

Is this a catastrophe? The scientists wouldn't describe it as such but rather as a foreseeable occurrence. A fundamental ecological and social change in the region is unavoidable.

10'33" Original sound, Prof. Wolfgang Seiler,

Environmental Researcher

"We cannot avoid further climatic change. All we can do is to reduce it to tolerable limits. But we have to live with the climatic change and also with its consequences. That means we have to work out now how we will come to terms with the situation that will apply in 20 to 30 years time. And that means we will have to take a look at our infrastructure and we have already discussed measures for modifying cable cars, ski areas and the extension of ski areas at higher altitudes. These are all structural elements and infrastructural measures that stretch over the next 10 and 20 years

to that point in the future that we are talking about now as we view the future prospects of climate change."

11'36"

Any place that has access to high mountains will always be a winter sport centre as long as it can guarantee to take its visiting sports enthusiasts to the high ground and bring them back again.

11'51"

Whether or not Garmisch-Partenkirchen will survive this economic transformation, and whether or not the community will remain a winter sport centre is still to be seen.

What will win through? The interests of profit or the durable existence of an Alpine way of life?

12'25" End

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