

## AlpNet: Alpine tourism gathers its strength

**Eight leading alpine tourist organisations start concrete initiatives: newly commissioned studies into winter sports and biking opportunities should show the areas in which the Alps can be strengthened as a year-round destination. From 2016 these will be collectively marketed in Asia and South America. The tourist industry event ‘theAlps 2015’ with its affiliated trading room will take place from 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> September in Val di Fassa in the Trentino, focussed on the subject ‘biking in the Alps’.**

Economic crises and unpredictable events – unstable conditions have almost become the norm for the tourist industry. Military conflicts on Europe’s doorstep, extreme fluctuations in exchange rates for the rouble and Swiss franc, freak weather events, climate change and, last but not least, bargain-hunting guests who increasingly book at the last minute – these are only some of the challenges being faced by the industry.

For European tourism in the Alps, rapid responses to these challenges are particularly important: with about 375 million overnight stays per year, the Alps count as one of the most tourism-intense regions in the world, situated in a geographically and climatically sensitive environment. Measured against the rapid growth in world tourism, the alpine region is stagnating in the competition between international destinations.

With the founding of AlpNet, eight of the leading tourist organisations in the Alps have decided to confront the global challenges together, and in so doing to strengthen alpine tourism in all its facets. In the short term, the focus will be on four areas which are equally important for all destinations: the future of winter sports; new alpine summer attractions; sustainability and added value; and new markets for holidays in the Alps.

### **AlpNet winter study – products and marketing should be redesigned**

The pioneering achievements of winter sports have positively shaped the successful development of alpine tourism. Experts agree that business and climatic changes and the reduction in economic resources have placed new strains on household incomes. In order to enable the high added-value winter season to be the basis for prosperous alpine tourism into the future, innovative strategic alliances between the most important alpine countries are critically important.

With this in mind, AlpNet has started an initiative to appropriately match products and marketing to the changed conditions. A comprehensive study into the topic of winter sports in the Alps will be commissioned and presented at the planned specialist event ‘theALPS’ in Tirol in the autumn of 2016.

AlpNet President Josef Margreiter sums up the requirements: *„We are experiencing a very diverse mix of customer demands. So that winter tourism will continue to be the engine of success for our alpine destinations, we need clear recommendations for action: which guests will want to take their winter holidays in the Alps in future? Which products correspond to their lifestyle? Where can we meet these customers of tomorrow? And how can we get them to commit to us? AlpNet has taken the responsibility upon itself to generate sound results developed from a wide base, which will allow the alpine tourist industry to prepare itself for the future.”*

## **Alpine-biking opportunities – concrete growth stimulus for the alpine summer**

In order to create a more attractive summer in the Alps, additional opportunities are required. AlpNet will focus on the topic of biking this year, with specialists pledging a central stimulus for growth in alpine summer tourism.

International studies – such as for the Whistler and Vancouver region – have demonstrated the economic benefits. This region is the leader in mountain-bike tourism and for twenty years has focussed on this target group. Twenty percent of the bikers who don't live there will stay overnight as a guest in the region when they visit for biking. They stay on average 4.8 nights and consist of groups of 2.8 people. In total, trail bikers generate 10.3 million dollars for the region through spending, in only one summer. If the Whistler bike park is included, the sum rises to 38 million dollars.

Studies in Germany have also demonstrated the increasing importance of this sector: around 5 million Germans are currently planning a cycle trip of at least one overnight stay.

Despite encouraging feedback and economic successes for individual alpine bike parks and cycling events, many tourism managers are still showing a lack of confidence over the questions: what can concretely be offered? Which specific offers will ensure success? And how can the potential alpine cycle-tourists be reached?

Until now, sound and rigorous data has been missing for the strategic alpine-wide development of biking opportunities. Here AlpNet is commissioning research: the universities EURAC and the Trentino School of Management are starting a study that will define the market potential of cycle tourism for alpine tourism and generate action recommendations for product development. In order to achieve the maximum practical benefit, potential sales channels and examples of best practice will also be described. The results will be presented at the 'theALPS' event (7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> September) in Val di Fassa in the Trentino.

## **Stabilisation of added-value – through collective market cultivation**

Once again the exchange rate fluctuations of the recent past confirm that the high-quality offerings of the Alps cannot be defined in terms of price, and that a much broader mix of source markets is critically important to ensure stable added-value. Here AlpNet is pursuing two strategies:

On one hand, primarily purchasers and product managers who don't only sell on price alone but rather in terms of value-for-money and innovative products will be allowed into the theALPS trading room. On the other hand, AlpNet is working on a strategy to collectively promote the alpine region to new source markets. Rigorous analyses of different source markets are currently being carried out, into for example China, Korea or South American countries. The first collective marketing activities by AlpNet have already been planned for 2016. The AlpNet partners unanimously confirm that only a collective approach to these markets will yield rewards.

Maurizio Rossini, General Manager of Trentino Marketing, explains: „We have been presenting ourselves for some time to selected overseas markets. However, our experience tells us that with increasing distance between the place of origin and the holiday location, one destination on its own can only achieve the desired awareness with great difficulty. We are therefore convinced that a collective alpine presence in remote markets will generate a significant benefit for all partners and that together we will be better able to communicate and subsequently to sell the alpine product.”

## **About AlpNet**

Currently **eight leading tourism organisations** from the European alpine region are behind the initiative: *BE! Tourism, Graubünden Ferien, Luzern-Vierwaldstättersee, Rhône -Alpes Tourisme, Tirol Werbung, Trentino Turismo, Südtirol Marketing* and *Valais Promotion* have all come together under the umbrella of **AlpNet**. With 245.3 million overnight stays, the members of AlpNet collectively represent 66% of the 375 million overnight stays in the alpine region.

One of the first AlpNet initiatives is to represent the international specialist tourist event **theALPS**. theALPS was held for the first time in Innsbruck in 2011 at the initiative of Tirol in collaboration with other leading alpine regions, with theALPS Trading room, theALPS Symposium and theALPS Award. In 2013 the AlpNet partner *Rhône Alpes Tourisme* (France) took on the role of host, in 2014 the event was held for the first time in Graubünden in the Swiss Alps, and will be in the Trentino (Italy) in 2015.

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