

Markenbildungsprozess #wirsindkitzbühel | Core Topic Hiking

As part of the brand development process initiated by Kitzbühel Tourism in 2021, participants and interested individuals were invited to the second workshop.

Since 2021, Kitzbühel Tourism has been taking a co-creative approach to strategic destination development. By involving all those interested in the region – including locals, second-home owners, entrepreneurs, and employees – a shared vision for the future has been developed.

After a comprehensive evaluation of the status quo in 2021, which included more than 1,200 respondents, intensive and sometimes heated discussions led to a major milestone: a common understanding of the future development of tourism in Kitzbühel. This resulted in a vision for the future with five success patterns and a shared core of services.

Brand Development Process #wirsindKitzbühel

Since the launch of the brand development process by Kitzbühel Tourism in 2021, more than 70 Kitzbühel residents of all ages and professional backgrounds have been actively and voluntarily working to implement specific projects within the jointly developed vision for the future. While existing successful products continue to focus on quality and excellence – with key themes such as "Outdoor Active" and "Culinary Delights" – emerging trends like "Workation," which is still in its early stages, have also been considered.

Everything that arises from this new future vision of Kitzbühel Tourism serves one purpose: to make Kitzbühel an even more attractive place to live (My Preferred Place for Being) – for visitors as well as for locals, second-home owners, and employees.

Regular steering committee meetings and internal follow-up discussions have shown a strong interest in discussion rounds on specific product topics. Following the analysis of the status quo, the formation of working groups, and the establishment of the steering committee, the #wirsindKitzbühel brand development process entered its fourth phase in the fall, focusing on dialogue formats aimed at further refining and improving the identified success patterns.

The Second Workshop was all about Hiking

Following the success of the first workshop on revitalizing the town center, the second dialogue format focused on hiking. According to participants, a solid foundation is in place, but there is still room for improvement in the available offerings. Positive aspects highlighted included the well-maintained and carefully managed trails. The region is particularly family-friendly due to its grassy mountains and offers numerous attractions for younger visitors, such as the "Sommererlebnis Streif". A wide range of options, even in unstable weather conditions, sets this hiking destination apart, from leisurely walks around Schwarzsee to the "Gamsroas" – the "9-Gipfel-Erlebnis" – as well as long-distance hiking trails. Other highly valued aspects include the good accessibility and vastness of the area.

A comprehensive range of guided hikes is offered through Kitzbühel Tourism, Bergbahn AG Kitzbühel, the "Kitzbüheler Bergführer" and independent mountain and hiking guides. The three mountain hiking guides from Kitzbühel Tourism led approximately 1,600 participants – primarily from Germany and the UK – on guided summer hikes, conducting 175 tours. Bergbahn AG Kitzbühel organized 108 guided hikes this summer, and the "Kitzbüheler Bergführer" provided a demanding and diverse program across the Kitzbühel Alps and beyond. Hiking is also an essential part of the winter activity program. It includes all foot-based movement in the mountains and valleys, including trail running. Last winter, around 300 participants – again mainly from the UK and Germany – joined 54 guided winter hikes offered by Kitzbühel Tourism, including three stargazing hikes.

Kitzbühel Tourism has made significant efforts to improve the quality of hiking, which is also reflected in the awards the region has received. Kitzbühel became the first destination to be awarded the European Hiking Quality Seal in 2019. Additionally, since 2022, the towns of Aurach and Jochberg have been part of Austria's largest hiking network, "Wanderdörfer".

As part of a local quality initiative, Kitzbühel Tourism has worked on enhancing the region's favourite spots. Alongside ongoing restoration of trails and bridges following weather-related damage, a major first step in 2022 was improving the legendary Hahnenkamm. This project was done in collaboration with ARGE Kitzbühel, a partnership between the City of Kitzbühel, Bergbahn AG Kitzbühel, Kitzbüheler Ski Club, and Kitzbühel Tourism. As part of the improvements, around 20 larchwood benches were replaced, and the signage system was revised, with approximately 100 signposts updated from Hahnenkamm to Pengelstein. In 2023, the focus of the quality initiative shifted to the summit area of Kitzbüheler Horn, where 10 benches were replaced, and around 300 meters of fencing were renewed. In addition, roughly 150 signposts were replaced in the areas of Kitzbüheler Horn, Bichlalm, and Zephirau. The KitzRunning signage system was fully revised and renewed from Reith to Jochberg. The Sintersbacher Waterfall Trail was also completely renovated, with new signposts, a newly designed path, and a new bridge. Further improvements were made, including the completion of a 360° viewing platform on Rettenberg, and the restoration of two fountains at Vogelsberg Pond. The Forstmeile fitness trail at Schwarzsee was cleaned and enhanced by the construction teams of Kitzbühel Tourism and the City of Kitzbühel. Over the past two years, the shorelines at Schwarzsee were reinforced, and 40 new benches, 10 relaxation loungers, and 2 Hollywood swings were installed to encourage visitors to relax and enjoy the surroundings.

Of the approximately 1,000 kilometers of marked hiking trails in the summer, more than half are maintained by the construction team of Kitzbühel Tourism. This work amounts to nearly 8,500 hours each year, in both summer and winter. In addition, a considerable amount of time is spent on maintaining the content on the tour portal (maps.kitzbuehel.com), as well as creating printed materials such as hiking books, maps, pocket guides, and a weekly hiking program.

To continuously develop Kitzbühel as a leading hiking destination and improve quality, participants in a recent workshop discussed areas for further enhancement. They noted that the region would benefit from hiking taxis or shuttle buses, more family-oriented offerings, overnight accommodations on the mountain for long-distance hikers, affordable lodging, earlier breakfast times, and additional attractions such as viewing platforms, photo points, and suspension bridges. They also suggested increasing the visibility of existing offerings, especially during the winter, and improving the promotion of certifications, revitalizing old trails, and focusing on autumn activities. During the workshop, several ideas were proposed to improve the existing hiking offerings, including reintroducing playful hiking experiences, adding more water stations along trails, offering picnic hikes, combining hikes with workshops, and providing VR headsets featuring virtual hiking routes with detailed descriptions.

Dr. Viktoria Veider-Walser, CEO of Kitzbühel Tourism, emphasized the importance of the second dialogue format as an ongoing source of inspiration and valuable exchange. "The second dialogue on hiking confirms that we must keep refining our existing, successful offerings. I was particularly impressed by the great exchange among the hiking guides, mountain guides, and hiking villages. We've received some fantastic suggestions, which we will integrate into our product development and communication. For example, a joint weekly program with the "Kitzbüheler Bergführer", Bergbahn AG Kitzbühel, and Kitzbühel Tourism."

Further workshops on relevant tourism topics are planned for the coming year, with details to be announced soon. Interested parties can contact project manager Bettina Wiedmayr at wirsind@kitzbuehel.com.

More information about the brand development process #wirsindKitzbüchel initiated by Kitzbühel Tourism can be found at marke.kitzbuehel.com.