



Tyrol, a trail runner's paradise

Anyone who has been to Tyrol will know the feeling of not wanting to leave again. It is a feeling that is now shared by many of the athletes as well as volunteers that came from all over the world, some of them from far-flung corners, and couldn't stop raving about the region. We have spoken to four top athletes from the Italian part of Tyrol, South Tyrol, and Germany and asked them why they think it is a good idea to move to Tyrol for trail running reasons. We do have a spoiler: The mountains play a major role.

Nature is one of Tyrol's big drawcards. Located in the west of Austria, the region lives up to its byname, "land in the mountains" on every level. In addition to more than 1,200 summits, 573 of which reach more than 3,000 meters, it boasts 24,000 kilometers of signposted hiking trails and 170 mountain huts, lodges and shelters operated by Alpine Associations. Apart from Innsbruck and the Stubaital valley, other scenic trail running areas include the Pitztal valley, Imst, the Wilder Kaiser mountain range, the Achensee region and the Ötztal valley, all of whom host their own trail events.

Rosanna Buchauer and Ida-Sophie Hegemann have both moved to Innsbruck from Germany. And their training in the WMTRC region has clearly paid off: Both women started in the Trail Long contest and have taken home Silver for their team. "I hardly ever need to get in the car to get to my training grounds and can usually start from right outside my door," says Rosanna Buchauer. The trails around Innsbruck and the Stubaital valley are ideal for training units that are rich in variety. "I can choose between routes with hardly any vertical meters and steep climbs, I can accumulate a lot of meters in altitude in one run, I can run in the shade of a forest, I can run over rocks and alpine terrain, I can scale a mountain," the 33-year old, who hails from Inzell in Bavaria, says.

As opposed to Buchauer, Ida-Sophie Hegemann did not grow up in the mountains. The 26-year-old comes from Duderstadt near Göttingen. A few years back she deliberately chose Innsbruck when the time came to decide where to pursue her studies abroad. "You can run in the flat pretty much anywhere; it helps to build up a basic speed for the trails and sometimes even for running uphill, but in order to train properly for mountain running, you need to have access to technical terrain," says Hegemann. In the meantime, she has moved to Innsbruck for good, and is completing her Masters in architecture at the local university. Running in the mountains around Innsbruck and the Stubaital valley has had a very positive effect on her training; she no longer needs any acclimation phases for trail running contests in high altitude.



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“I think the World Championships have demonstrated just how stunning Tyrol is,” says Philipp Ausserhofer, who also successfully completed the Trail Long. The athlete moved from the Ahrntal valley in South Tyrol to Telfes, where he sees the diversity of the terrain as one of the biggest advantages. “It is possible to get onto the trails right from the city center without having to travel far. In the Stubaital valley there are high-alpine trails that lead all the way to the glaciers,” the 30-year old says. The same is true for other Tyrolean valleys. The technical trails are a challenge for the Italian, but on the other hand he was able to further expand his strength in the downhill during his training units on the Nordkette. “I used to be active before even moving to Innsbruck, but thanks to the local trail community I have started participating in competitions,” he says.

Adrian Niski is another athlete who made the move from Germany to Tyrol where he now resides in the Achensee region. “I moved here because of the mountains, the scenery and the quality of life,” says the 31-year old, who also participate in the Trail Long. Niski grew up in Stuttgart and studied in Bamberg; mountain sports were never really on the cards or even a topic of conversation. “At the Achensee I have a massive playground directly behind my house. I can go skiing, trail running, mountain hiking or mountain biking, and enjoy anything I do to the fullest,” he adds. And if that’s not convincing, then we don’t know what is.