THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF WINTER IN TIROL:
SOAK UP THE SUN BETWEEN MOUNTAIN AND VALLEY

As the days grow shorter and grey skies hang over the city, the innate desire for sunshine intensifies. Thoughts often turn south towards distant destinations where sunshine is all but guaranteed. Yet sometimes the best things are closer than we think: even in winter, Tirol has a wonderfully sunny side. Depending on the region and altitude, the province enjoys around 2,000 hours of sunshine a year. The mountains create unique weather patterns and sunny conditions, offering ideal opportunities to embrace the winter season – and to experience it at its sunniest.

As the peaks are bathed in the golden glow of the winter sun, the snow glistens and crisp mountain air tingles against your skin – Tirol reveals one of its most beautiful winter faces. From sun-drenched mountain slopes and snow-covered valleys to scenic retreats, there are countless moments, big and small, to brighten winter days. Moments that warm you, lift your spirits and make winter seem just a little bit brighter.

Just before first light

There is a certain moment in the morning, just before the sun rises. As the vestiges of night linger, time seems to stand still for a brief moment. That is when a truly special experience begins at selected ski resorts across Tirol. With Early Bird Skiing, you can head out onto freshly groomed slopes before the lifts open for regular skiing, carving virgin lines through untouched snow as the sky slowly changes colour and the first rays of sunshine creep over the mountain peaks. Once you have experienced the snow-covered landscape coming alive with light, you will quickly understand why getting up early is so worthwhile.

Once the sun has risen above the peaks, things can be taken a little more leisurely. After all, Tirol has plenty of places to enjoy winter sunshine away from the morning's first runs. Sun loungers on the ski hut terraces offer front-row seats to spectacular mountain views, with sunglasses an essential accessory and a break for warming refreshments the highlight of the ski day. Whether you're tucking into traditional Tirolean specialities, enjoying a hot

chocolate, or treating yourself to freshly made Kaiserschmarren, this is somewhere to linger over the mountain views a little longer than usual. After all, soaking up the sunshine is sometimes simply a matter of finding the perfect spot.

New heights, low stress

Enjoying winter at its sunniest, however, doesn't always have to involve sporting activities. Those who'd rather glide through the sky than break into a sweat can discover Tirol from an entirely new perspective. A hot-air balloon ride lifts you gently into the winter sky, revealing a panorama below that feels almost surreal: snow-capped peaks, glittering valleys and tiny villages nestled amidst the mountains. The early morning hours are particularly magical, as the rising sun gradually bathes the mountaintops in golden light. This spectacular sight can be enjoyed alongside international ballooning teams at the International Balloon Festival in the Tannheimer Tal, the Ballooning Days at Lake Achensee or Alpin Ballooning at Kaiserwinkl, where the change of perspective makes winter seem even more magnificent.

If, after such high-flying adventures, you find yourself longing for solid ground and perhaps the chance to work up a sweat after all, Tirol offers plenty of ways to warm both body and soul. And there's no need to travel south, as the warmth you crave is waiting just beyond the next mountain peak. Tirol's sauna landscapes combine crisp mountain air with soothing warmth. Outside, temperatures drop; inside, sunlight streams through vast panoramic windows as the sun slowly moves across the peaks and everyday life fades pleasantly into the distance.

This wonderful combination of nature and relaxation can be enjoyed in particularly beautiful surroundings at SPA 3000 des Aqua Dome, the Natur-Spa des Holzleiten Nature Hideaway, the wellness area at Hotel Engel in Tannheimer Tal, Bergwiesenglück in Paznaun, or Hotel Bergfried in Zillertal. Each offers its own sanctuary, yet all share one thing: they bring the alpine landscape wonderfully close and make winter a season to savour, both indoors and out.

Sunny prospects every step of the way

If you'd rather find your warmth in the great outdoors, the sunny side of Tirol's mountains has plenty to offer. Snow crunches beneath your boots on a winter walk, while crisp mountain air clears your head and sunshine accompanies you every step of the way. Stunning views await, for example, on the Schwender Sonnenplateau in the Wilder Kaiser region, which can be reached via a leisurely 4.8-kilometre circular walk, or along the sunny trail to Schönanger in the Wildschönau. Here, the winter walking route leads from Schönangeralm through snow-covered forests into a peaceful high valley, where you can enjoy the mountains' tranquillity to the full. Those with a little more stamina can climb the Dorfberg in Osttirol's (East Tirol) Gailtal Alps, reaching an altitude of 2,114 metres. The Dürrenberger Alm near Reutte beckons with a sunny winter walking trail and beautiful views of the surrounding mountains. Plenty more scenic winter walks await around the Seefeld high plateau. The circular route through Wildmoos takes you past snow-covered forests and open high plateaux, by Lake Lottensee and through an idyllic moorland landscapes.

Whether you prefer a leisurely stroll or a more challenging hike with panoramic views, there's a perfect sunny spot waiting for everyone. Once you get there, there's no need to rush your break. A hot drink in your hands, sunshine on your face and nothing but snow-covered peaks all around. Sometimes, the most beautiful winter experience is remarkably simple.

Sunny prospects for winter fans of every age

A glance at the map is all it takes to see that sunshine also plays a part in family activities in Tirol. Some places and excursion destinations practically promise sunny hours simply through their names. Take the Sonnenbahn in Ladis, for example, which carries visitors up into the mountains of Serfaus-Fiss-Ladis. The Sonnenalm in Seefeld and its namesake in Grän in Tannheimer Tal also sound like the perfect place for a sunny mountain escape. And anyone looking for somewhere special to enjoy a leisurely break in Kitzbühel will find a well-known meeting place with magnificent alpine views at Sonnbühel. Whether as a stop along the way, or as the destination of a short winter outing, taking a break here becomes an experience in its own right.

In summer, it's often the hours spent playing outdoors in the fresh air that children remember for years to come. Winter, by contrast, can leave many towns grey and shrouded in fog, with empty playgrounds and snow in short supply. But things are very different in Tirol, where winter becomes one big adventure in its quality-certified children's ski areas. And there's plenty of fun to be had off the slopes too, thanks in part to the Sunny Stuff characters created by Imst-based company Sunkid. With their friendly faces and imaginative shapes, they turn beginners' slopes into little adventure parks. Playful features bring colour to the pistes and help children master their first turns with joy and confidence. The result is winter memories every bit as special as those of long summer days.

Find out more about winter in Tirol at www.tyrol.com/activities/holiday-ideas/winter-holiday.

With its 34 regional associations, **Tirol** is one of the leading holiday destinations in the Alps. Tirolean tourism is characterised by 200 years of history and various pioneering achievements. Summer and winter guests alike appreciate the alpine mountain landscape and nature, the high quality of service and infrastructure, as well as the welcoming hospitality. Based in Innsbruck, Tirol Werbung GmbH is part of the Lebensraum Tirol Gruppe and serves as the provincial tourism marketing organisation. Its primary mission is to enhance the allure of Tirol as a holiday destination.

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