

Uphill Instead of Downhill: Kitesurfer Bontus Conquers Ski World Cup Slope

Austria Tourism, SalzburgerLand & Skicircus Saalbach Hinterglemm Leogang Fieberbrunn Make Winter Accessible for Everyone

- **Spectacular "Ascent" by Austrian Olympic Champion Valentin Bontus under the Guidance of Ski Icon Michi Kirchgasser**
- **Goal of Austria Tourism and SalzburgerLand: "We Want to Make People Excited About the Austrian Winter Lifestyle"**
- **Ski World Cup Offers Opportunity to Reach New Target Groups for Austria as a Tourism Destination**

It might come as a little surprise that Austrian Olympic gold medalist Valentin Bontus feels as comfortable on two skis in the snow of Saalbach Hinterglemm as he does on his kiteboard on the waves off Marseille. The fact that the Perchtoldsdorf native, known as the "World Cup Underdog," tackled the course of the 2025 FIS Alpine Ski World Championships on skis – using his kite, and doing so "in reverse" from the finish area to the starting point – caused quite a stir on Friday, both in the fan zone and among fellow athletes.

"Stunt" aims to get guests excited about winter sports in Austria

Following the men's giant slalom race, Austria Tourism, together with SalzburgerLand Tourism and Skicircus Saalbach Hinterglemm Leogang Fieberbrunn, showed the 24-year-old summer athlete's "ascent" in a video spot. The goal of the multimedia production is to inspire both local and international guests to experience the Austrian winter lifestyle during the Ski World Cup. "Whether it's the adrenaline rush on the slopes, the tranquility of a winter hike, or the cosines of a mountain hut – Austria offers the perfect winter experience for everyone," explains Astrid Steharnig-Staudinger, CEO of Austria Tourism. "The World Cup is a celebration of skiing – for the young and the elderly, for professionals or hobby athletes, for everyone who loves the mountains and winter. Here, it's about more than just top athletic performance: A holiday in Austria is a lifestyle, embodying freedom, relaxation, and enjoyment."

Kitesurfer Transitions from water to snow

It didn't take long to convince Bontus to take part: "The slope here in Saalbach is a bit like a giant surfing wave – one that just doesn't end," the kite pro, who was impressed by "his" arena, said. "I like to do things a little differently, I enjoy encouraging others to bring out the best in themselves while also not taking everything too seriously," he adds when talking about switching the elements in honour of winter sports. That being said, one thing remained unchanged: Bontus stayed true to his signature snow-white ski suit even on the slope

Kirchgasser: "Sports builds bridges"

Bontus was coached and mentored by former Austrian ski world champion Michaela Kirchgasser "Valentin finds his own way, with a twinkle in his eye and a lot of passion – he brings a new lightness to skiing. And I bring his talent to the slopes," she explained. Kirchgasser also aimed to show "that sports can build bridges – between generations, between disciplines, and even between seasons."

Lebensgefühl: Being open to trying new things

"Perfectly groomed slopes or extraordinary challenges like this one – our region offers winter sports in all its variety," states Wolfgang Breifuss of the Saalbach Hinterglemm Tourist Board. SalzburgerLand Tourism Managing Director Leo Bauernberger aims to establish "his" region as a destination for guests across seasons and disciplines. "We are delighted to present ourselves as hosts at the Ski World Championship and to welcome even more international guests to SalzburgerLand in the future." For both Bauernberger and Astrid Steharnig-Staudinger, the campaign and domestic tourism as a whole focus on "fun and being open to trying new things. That is what Lebensgefühl means for us."

The video was created in collaboration with lead creative agency Wien Nord Serviceplan and production company HOVN Films, while the presentation was managed by Chaka2.

Austria Tourism
Florida Kleebinder
Corporate Communications
+49 30 219 148 - 17
florida.kleebinder@austria.info
www.austriatourism.com/newsroom

