



Our National Park

With a surface area of 1,856 square kilometres, the Hohe Tauern National Park is by far the largest nature reserve in the entire Alpine region. The National Park is home to 10,000 varieties of animals and 1,500 varieties of plants; it accommodates numerous glaciers, glacial streams, high-alpine lakes and tarns and offers impressive mountain panoramas. This large alpine nature reserve is characterised by a huge diversity of habitats.

A walking tour which starts in the valley and leads up into the mountains is equivalent to a 4,000 km journey to the Arctic.

General Information

www.hohetauern.com
guided tours and visitor centers
www.nationalparkerlebnis.at

A Trip into the National Park Fascination in white

The Rangers of the Hohe Tauern National Park are highly experienced and well trained. An extensive programme of field trips offers the best walking tours and list of destinations for anyone with an interest in natural history. The range of what's on offer stretches from half-day walking tours to tours of several days in the high mountains, with wildlife observation, identifying plants, meteorology, risk assessment and much more. In this way you will be able to enjoy this experience.

Complete silence and the spell of undisturbed nature, only accompanied by a soft crunching noise at each step, will revive a long-forgotten awareness of life. A human being once more encounters nature in its pristine sense and in the process finds an oasis of peace in the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Both the head and body can take time out. In contrast to skiing or snowboarding, snowshoe walking is easily learnt by everybody, no matter how old.



Over 300 giants

The Hohe Tauern region is the roof of Austria. With the country's highest mountain - Grossglockner, which reaches to 3,798 m above sea level, more than 300 other peaks tower over 3,000 m into the sky.

Our Skyline is a Sea of 3000 metre Peaks

35% mountain pasture

The protection of the cultivated landscape is one component of conservation philosophy. The mountain hay meadows and mountain pastures, so rich in different species, are extremely valuable, endangered throughout the Alps and are increasingly disappearing. Not so in the Hohe Tauern National Park!

Our Culture has been shaped through living Side by Side

The Cradle of Alpinism

The cradle of mountaineering is located in the Hohe Tauern: as far back as 1761, the 3,251 m high Ankogel became the first glacier-covered Alpine peak to be climbed. Today climbers can scale the mountainous world of rock and ice via innumerable routes - preferably accompanied by a state-certified mountain and skiing guide from the National Park region.

For the Edification of the People

The natural wonders of the National Park especially reveal themselves to mountain-lovers on its hundreds of kilometres of hiking trails, ranging from contemplative valley paths to high Alpine trekking routes. The National Park visitors' programmes offer participants a very special experience of nature. Our team of specially trained National Park staff is at your disposal on these programmes.

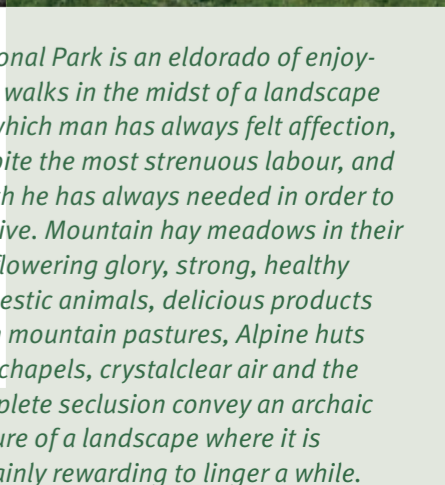
Land Shaped by the Farmer's Hand

For 5,000 years, man has been settled permanently in the valleys of the Hohe Tauern. It was the search for ores which once led him here. In the course of many centuries, wide mountain pasture landscapes came into being high above the forest line, grazed on by domestic animals and painstakingly cultivated by the hard-working hands of farmers. One special feature of the Hohe Tauern National Park is that not only purely

natural landscapes, but also cultivated landscapes created by farmers, lie within the protected area.

Not only an extraordinary variety of animal and plant species, but also an abundance of profane and sacred cultural treasures of farming life are the result of this long-standing symbiosis between wild nature and the cultivated landscape. The outer zone of the

National Park is an eldorado of enjoyable walks in the midst of a landscape for which man has always felt affection, despite the most strenuous labour, and which he has always needed in order to survive. Mountain hay meadows in their full flowering glory, strong, healthy domestic animals, delicious products from mountain pastures, Alpine huts and chapels, crystalclear air and the complete seclusion convey an archaic picture of a landscape where it is certainly rewarding to linger a while.





Our Master Builders were Fire and Ice

The Tauern Window

The "Tauern Window" is a geological sensation: the highest mountains of the Hohe Tauern consist of rock strata which form the lowest geological layers in the Alps. In addition, there are four massive gneiss cores at the centre of this "geological window". Moulded from liquid magma, today they form such famous peaks as the Grossvenediger or the Hoher Sonnblick. After fire, ice then became the formative force in the Hohe Tauern, as during the ice ages the Alpine glaciers extended over a much larger area than today. They ground down the once V-shaped valleys to form the wider U-shaped trough valleys which predominate today.



Our Rush-Hour has already lasted Millions of Years...

Treasures of the Ice Mountains

Although the glaciers of the Alps have been retreating for decades, the Hohe Tauern region still retains impressive treasures from the ice mountains today: such as the Pasterze Glacier - which, with a length of 9 km and an area of almost 19 km², is the biggest single glacier in Austria. Or the Grossvenediger Mountain, which is crusted with the ice of the largest connected glacial area in the Eastern Alps.

180 km²

Almost 180 km² of the National Park - almost 10% of the area - are still covered by glacial ice today.

A Landscape in Metamorphosis

Where glaciers have retreated, a fast-changing landscape comes into being: at first, the landscape is still dominated by the debris moraines piled up by the glacial ice, but soon the pioneers of the plant world begin to recolonize this seemingly inhospitable habitat.

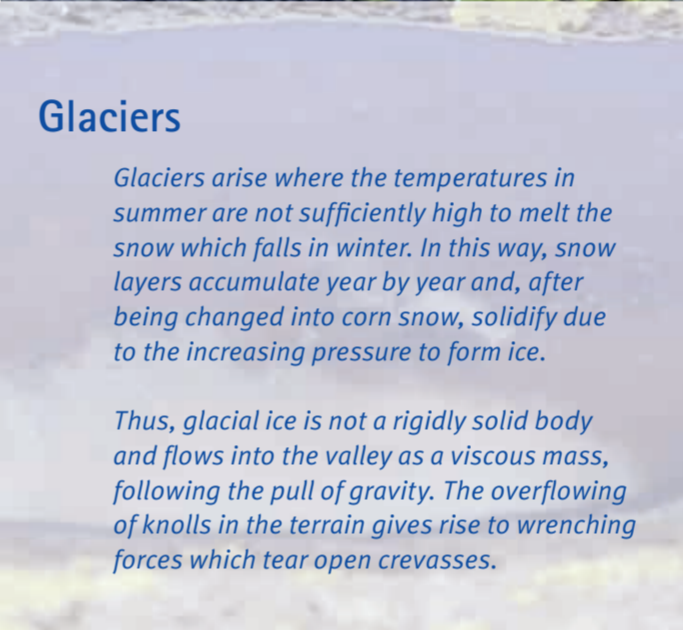


Jewels of Nature

After the extensive retreat of the ice, approximately 150 mountain lakes came into being in the corries of the Hohe Tauern; these pristine waters decorate the high mountain landscape like jewels and, like the glacier snouts, feed the sources of hundreds of mountain torrents. These torrents plunge down into the valley with primeval force, particularly during the time of the snow and ice melt, forming magnificent waterfalls at escarpments: thus, the Krimmler Waterfalls are the highest in Europe, with a total fall height of 380 m!

279

In the National Park, 279 natural mountain torrents rush down from the high mountains to the valley - the living arteries of the landscape.



Glaciers

Glaciers arise where the temperatures in summer are not sufficiently high to melt the snow which falls in winter. In this way, snow layers accumulate year by year and, after being changed into corn snow, solidify due to the increasing pressure to form ice.

Thus, glacial ice is not a rigidly solid body and flows into the valley as a viscous mass, following the pull of gravity. The overflowing of knolls in the terrain gives rise to wrenching forces which tear open crevasses.



Our Wilderness is Untamed

From Arctic, Tundra and Taiga

A wild, primeval landscape and a landscape cultivated by mountain farmers: these are the two faces of the Hohe Tauern National Park. The nature reserve encompasses sweeping, primeval Alpine landscapes, such as glaciers, rock faces and turf, as well as mountain pasture landscapes which have been carefully and painstakingly cultivated for centuries.

After the last Ice Age, about 12,000 years ago, the Hohe Tauern was a desolate waste of rock and scree. Animals and plants colonized this new habitat only very gradually - above all, species from the cold steppes of Central Asia, from the Arctic region and the Siberian tundra.



Our Brilliance comes from our Uniqueness

Vital Force

During the summer months, the Hohe Tauern mountain region radiates an incredible vital force: innumerable flowering plants put out vividly coloured blossoms, enticing insects to pollinate them with their strong scents. Dazzling seas of flowers cover the mountain meadows. Snow grouses flock together on their courtship grounds, marmots sun themselves on flat rocks, while ravens perform real aerobatics. The flora and fauna show themselves in all their magnificence and vitality. It almost seems as if nature can feel how short the "good time" is.

So summer walks in the Hohe Tauern therefore offer a very special experience of nature. Golden eagles, ibexes, bearded vultures, edelweiss, arnica, a wide variety of orchids, primeval Swiss stone pines, gnarled larches and many other species - they all fit so perfectly into this magnificent landscape.



An Extreme Location

Despite the harsh living conditions, the Hohe Tauern region is home to a wider variety of biotope types than can be found anywhere else in Austria. Some of these, such as the colourful mountain hay meadows, are among the richest in species in the Alpine region.

At first they lived in valley locations and then, as the temperatures rose again, they followed the retreating glaciers up into the mountain region, where today they form remarkable biological communities on the edge of life's very existence in the core zone of the National Park.

The forest returned to the valleys - the spruce from the Balkans, larch and stone pine from the Asian taiga. It was in this way that the different vegetation layers so typical of the Alps slowly emerged. A walk from the valley up into the mountains corresponds to a 4,000 kilometre long journey into the Arctic.



1986

was the year when the programme for reintroducing the bearded vulture in the National Park was started. Ibexes and brown trout have found their refuge here as well. The golden eagle stock is safeguarded and is supervised by means of monitoring.

A Hard Life

One third of all plant species found in Austria and about 10,000 species of animal live in the Hohe Tauern National Park. Here, eight months of the year are dominated by deep winter, while spring and autumn hardly take place at all. High mountain animals and plants have to be specialists in coping with stress. Many of them have developed very special adaptations in their physical structure, physiology and behaviour. They are therefore able to survive only here. It is not possible for them to switch to other habitats.