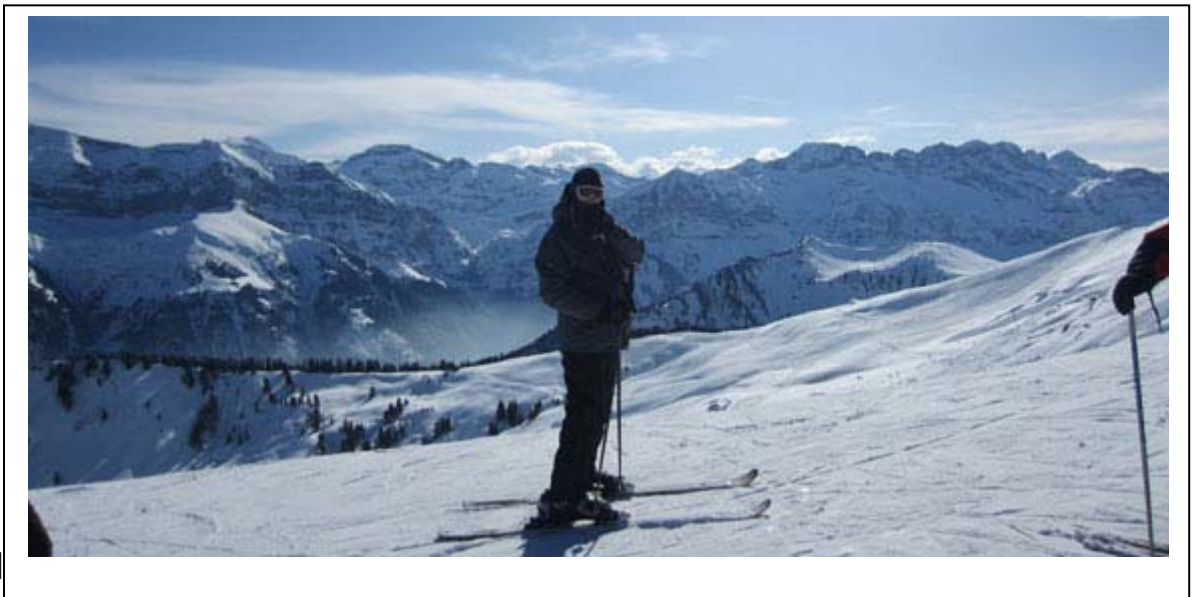


Winter Sports

1. Why are winter sports holidays so popular?
2. What are the negative impacts of winter sports?
3. How can responsible tourism be encouraged?

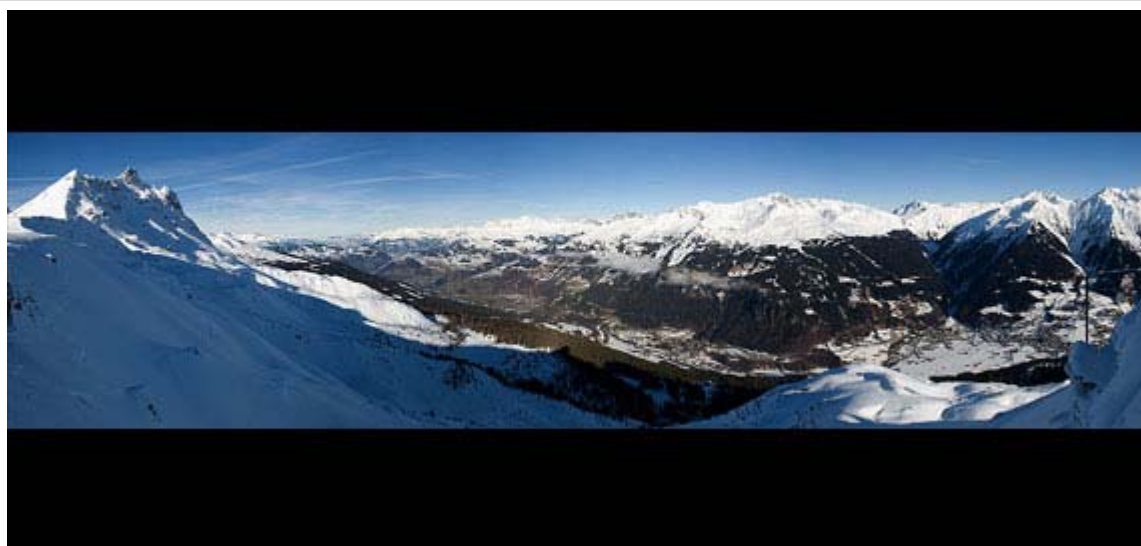
TAB 1

Why are winter sports holidays so popular?











Information

Winter sports have become increasingly popular with UK tourists since the 1970's. Once only available to the rich, the development of winter sports resorts in France, Italy and other European countries and increased availability through cheaper flights, package holidays and an improved motorway network has made winter sports accessible to far more people over the last 40 years or so. Increased affluence through the later years of the twentieth century meant that more people were able to afford two or three holidays each year and choose to spend one of these in a winter sports resort. Many people have been introduced to winter sports on school visits where they learn to ski or more often today, learn to snowboard. One of the great thrills of winter sports is that after a few days most beginners can manage to ski or snowboard with some confidence and begin to explore the magnificent winter mountain environment.

TAB 2

What are the negative impacts of winter sports?





Information

As with all tourism activities, winter sports have had a range of impacts on the destinations in which they take place. One of the major environmental impacts has involved the removal of trees and smoothing out the landscape to make suitable ski runs called pistes. These can be seen particularly clearly when there is no snow lying on the ground in the spring and summer months.

Snow-making equipment, trees removed to form pistes and lift equipment all add to the negative environmental impact in winter sports destinations.

Pylons and cables used to provide chair lifts have a negative impact on the landscape of mountain areas. A number of other negative environmental impacts have been identified in winter sports resorts. These include:

- Litter and other items dropped from chair lifts could harm animals and takes a very long time to degrade.
- Global warming has meant that snowfall is less reliable in lower altitude resorts and the use of artificial snow has increased. Making artificial snow uses a great deal of water and energy, and in the past chemicals were added to help produce snow crystals.
- Wildlife habitats are disturbed throughout the winter season by skiers and maintenance work and ecosystems have been affected by the development of ski runs and lift machinery.
- Also, increased temperatures have meant that some high altitude areas which are environmentally sensitive have been developed for winter sports.

Some environmentally sensitive high-altitude areas above the tree line have been developed for winter sports.

A range of negative social, economic and cultural impacts have also been identified in winter sports resorts. A great deal of employment is created during the winter sports season. However much of this employment is relatively low-skilled and low-paying. Also, in some resorts outside workers have to be hired because the local workforce cannot fill all of the jobs.

Some resorts in Alpine areas have experienced the 'displacement effect' with local people being unable to afford property because prices have been forced upwards by tourists buying second homes. Absentee ownership means that some resorts have a very small population out of season and services suffer.

Information

The view below is of typical Alpine scenery with fir trees in the foreground and patches of snow on the mountains in the distance.

Look closely and you can see the high-altitude resort of Avoriaz, which blends into the landscape, or does it?



Look a little closer



New apartment blocks are being built in Avoriaz and other high-altitude resorts. Although traditional materials are used on the outside of the buildings to blend into the landscape, concrete and other materials have to be brought in to the area to construct the buildings.

TAB 3

How can responsible tourism be encouraged?

Information

In recent years, as in other types of destinations a greater awareness of the environmental impacts in winter sports resorts has developed. The negative impacts which have been created are still present, but today more is being done to reduce the impacts on the environment, whilst at the same time accepting that in many mountain destinations, winter sports and the associated activities make a major contribution to the economy of the area.

Many winter sports tour operators and accommodation providers now are more aware of their environmental responsibilities.

‘Responsible skiing’

Responsible skiing is an organisation which has been established to help mountain resorts and winter sports businesses to manage the destinations for both local people and the environment. Responsible Skiing provides advice to destinations about developing responsible winter sports policies and to the Travel industry about ways in which organisations can communicate their ideas about responsible tourism in winter sports to their customers.

www.responsibleskiing.com

As in other types of destination, the principles of responsible tourism can be applied to winter sports destinations.

Responsible tourism should aim to balance environmental protection with economic benefits to local residents. It could be argued that the winter sports industry has been the saviour of many mountain communities and traditions, halting the depopulation of the mountains that was occurring at the end of the 19th Century.

Tourism in winter sports resorts shows the same as issues tourism elsewhere; concerns about development, the social impacts on the community, pressures on transport, infrastructure and the environment and the greater consumption of energy and water and the resulting increases in waste.

By adopting the principles of responsible tourism winter sports destinations should be able to:

- Generate greater economic benefits for the local population through local ownership
- Make for diverse communities with a range of employment opportunities not only in ski operations or accommodation, but handicrafts or farming for example
- Involve local people in decisions that affect their lives and community and protect the social culture of the community
- Minimise any negative environmental impacts through careful planning and consultation and make a positive contribution to conservation and the protection of biodiversity
- Give opportunities to make a positive contribution to the conservation of cultural heritage
- Provide more enjoyable experiences for skiers by connecting them with the environment, local community and culture
- Provide access for physically challenged people

(Source www.responsibleskiing.com)



How can the principles of responsible tourism be applied to winter sports activities?

Discuss with a partner how you think responsible tourism could be applied to the following areas:

Pistes

Pistes are the ski runs which are used by skiers. They have been created, often by cutting down trees. The snow on pistes is 'groomed' each night by special machines which make the pistes easier to ski on. These machines use a lot of energy and oil can easily seep into the ground.

Artificial snow

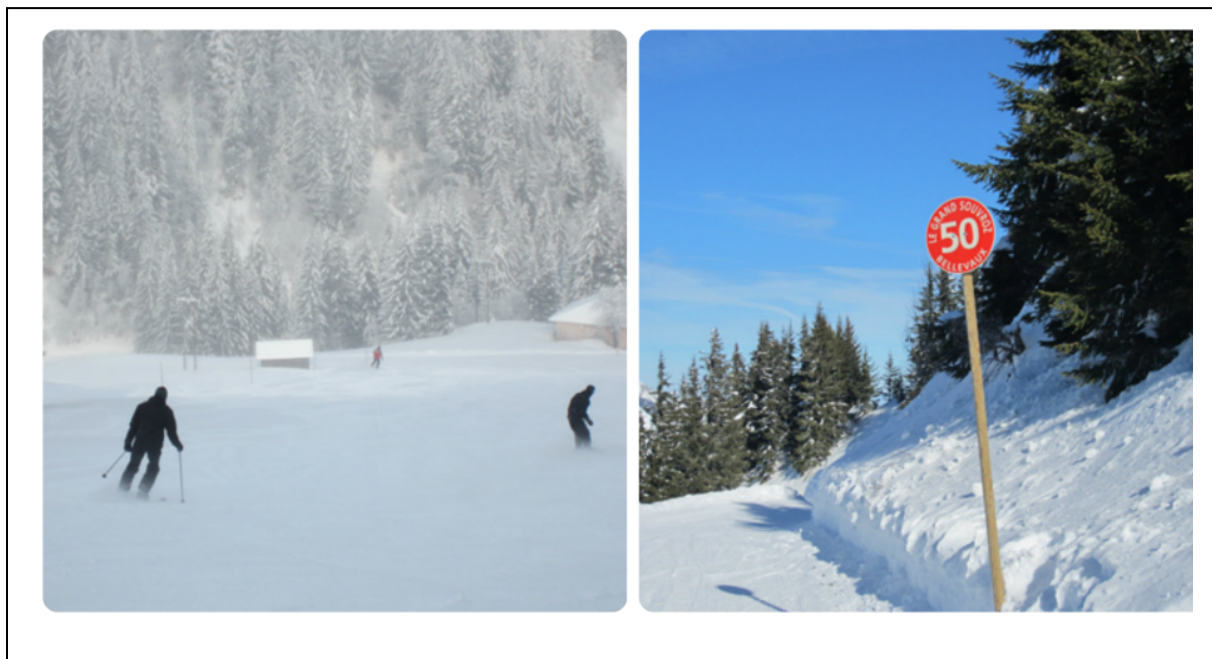
Artificial snow is made by spraying water into cold air under pressure so that the vapour turns to snow. Using artificial snow means that resorts can open for longer and gain more income. However, the machines used to make artificial snow use a great deal of energy and water and are unsightly. Also, artificial snow takes longer to melt which can impact on vegetation.

The lift system

Lifts are used to get skiers and snowboarders up to the top of a piste so that they can ski or board down. In many resorts ski lifts are open in the summer months to allow walkers and mountain bikers to access the mountains. Ski lifts are used by local people as well as tourists and allow access to mountain areas for many groups of people, including disabled people. However, ski lifts spoil the views of the mountain environment, use a great deal of energy and create environmental damage during construction.

Information

How can responsible principles be applied to pistes?



Resorts can use the most energy-efficient machinery to maintain pistes and not groom the pistes every night unless necessary and when there is sufficient snow cover to ensure that the land underneath is not damaged. Most resorts have not created new pistes in recent years, but where new pistes are built there should be a full environmental impact assessment relating to drainage erosion and the impact on plants and animals. New routes should be selected to create the minimum impact.

How can responsible principles be applied to artificial snow?



Artificial snow takes longer to melt.

| Not all artificial snow making equipment is removed in the summer.

The impact of artificial snowmaking can be reduced by using energy-efficient machinery, using renewable energy where possible. Snow guns can be removed in the summer to reduce the impact. The water used can be from rainwater collected into reservoirs collected in reservoir and chemicals should not be added to the water.

How can responsible principles be applied to ski lifts?

Ski lifts are vital to the economic well-being of the resorts they serve. A good lift system is vital in attracting winter sports enthusiasts. Ski lifts can run on renewable energy and could be shut down during off peak periods. When a new lift is installed the route creating the least environmental impact should be selected.



Ski lifts can spoil the views in mountain areas!

How can the principles of responsible tourism be applied to these areas?

Discuss with a partner how you think responsible tourism could be applied to the following areas:

Accommodation

Discuss with a partner how you think responsible tourism could be applied to the following areas:

Accommodation options in winter sports resorts vary, with a mixture of hotels, apartment blocks and traditional chalets. Resorts need to provide a mix of accommodation to meet different requirements and budgets to attract different target markets.



'Catered chalets' are a popular option for some UK tourists visiting Alpine resorts. These often rely on staff from outside the locality but small hotels and guesthouses are usually run by local families.

Local Culture

Local communities in winter sports destinations need to be able to retain ownership and control over the development of the area in which they live. During peak season, there can be many more visitors

than local people, so it is important to ensure that local culture is not swamped. At busy times most local people will be working, possibly for long hours, so it is often the case that most cultural activities take place outside of the main season.



Resorts can support local culture by offering local dishes in restaurants and promoting local crafts through souvenirs. Local cultural attractions can be promoted to visitors through the tourist office.

Information

How can responsible principles be applied to accommodation within winter sports destinations?

All accommodation should be encouraged to become energy efficient, participate in recycling schemes and use renewable energy wherever possible. Accommodation providing catering should use locally sourced food, drinks and other products from the region wherever possible to support local businesses. Accommodation within the resort should be locally owned and managed. New tourist accommodation should follow local building guidelines, use local labour and materials and fit into the landscape of the resort, as happens in Morzine. Resorts should consider the 'carrying capacity' to make sure that local facilities and infrastructure can cope with new accommodation being built.



How can responsible principles be applied to local culture within winter sports destinations?

Local people should be fully consulted about new developments within their community. Local culture and music can be used to keep traditions alive and should be encouraged. Restaurants should be encouraged to provide regional products and menus and where possible souvenirs should be produced locally to support traditions and employment.

Discuss with a partner how you think responsible tourism could be applied to travelling to and within the resorts:

Travelling within the resort

There are a number of problems associated with travelling around winter sports destinations. Most people want to travel at the same time at the start or end of the day's skiing or snowboarding, often road conditions are poor because the resort is covered in snow and in winter a lot of the travel takes place in the hours of darkness because the days are short and Alpine valleys do not always receive a great deal of direct sunshine. Additionally, slow moving and congested traffic will add to CO₂ pollution and cause discomfort.



Travelling to the winter sports resort

All travel creates emissions and therefore has a negative impact on the environment. Responsible winter sports is about minimising the impact as much as possible and having a positive impact on the mountain communities in which most winter sports take place. It is now generally accepted that air travel is amongst the worst forms of travel in terms of the amount of pollution created and some tourists are increasingly considering travelling by train or coach to winter sports resorts.

For those travelling by air, getting to the resort from the airport also presents choices. These choices may include hiring a car, using a shuttle bus or travelling by rail. Private cars tend to be more environmentally damaging in terms of CO₂ emissions compared to travelling by train or a full coach

Information

How can responsible principles be applied to travel within winter sports destinations?

There are a number of ways in which travel within winter sports destination can be managed effectively. A good system of free buses, such as the system in Morzine allows people to move around the resort without using their cars. This is supported by clear information about bus timetables. The bus service is available through the summer season as well to make visitors more aware of what is on offer. Buses can run on green energy sources.

Resorts such as Avoriaz are traffic free, and cars have to be left in large car parks at the edge of the resort. Only electric and horse-drawn vehicles are allowed. Many other resorts now provide pedestrianised areas or restrict traffic in central areas.



How can responsible principles be applied to travelling to winter sports destinations?

Winter sports resorts can work with tour operators to provide environmentally efficient ways of travelling and tour operators can promote group transfers wherever possible. Tour operators could provide the option of travelling by train or coach as opposed to air where possible.

Resorts can also provide detailed information about train and bus timetables to encourage people to consider transfers by public transport. They can also impose heavy charges for parking cars in the resort to dissuade people from using cars. The disadvantages of using cars could also be explained.



There are a number of potential problems with using cars in winter sports resorts.

Acknowledgement

The information provided by *Responsible Skiing* (www.responsibleskiing.com) in the development of this resource is very much appreciated.