

Skiers stranded in Austria by too much snow!

Skiers in Western Austria recently got a bit too much snow for their liking. It was reported that more than 15,000 tourists were stuck in various ski resorts after too much of the white fluffy stuff fell last week. Dozens were reported to have been airlifted out of ski resorts by helicopters after roads became blocked by 5m of snow - though the cost was around £1,800 (€2,017) per person. On Saturday an Austrian army military helicopter was brought in to pick up 52 people who had been stranded at a mountain refuge in Vorarlberg. Skiers had been unable to make the descent from the Lindauer Huette refuge, which is 1,744m (5,720 ft) above sea level, by any other means because of the avalanche risk. The snow has caused chaos on the roads and railways. Villages and some tourist resorts have been cut off. The most heavily hit areas were Austria's western Tirol and Vorarlberg regions that received 1-2 meters of snow (3-7ft) of snow in just four days.

Authorities managed to get to some ski resorts, though driving was considered to be a dangerous option, as the threat of avalanches was classed as *high*. Those that decided to 'extend' their holidays took advantage of some of the best skiing conditions in 30 years - with more snow forecast. High winds across Austria sparked a warning from the Avalanche Warning Centre in Salzburg who urged revellers to take caution whilst skiing. Austria's national weather service ZAMG reported that such copious amounts of snow occurred once a decade and in some regions every 20-25 years. Many ski resorts already had a bumper amount of snow on the ground before the latest snowfall fell. Skiers were unable to ski in some resorts as ski lifts and ski runs were closed due to the unsafe skiing conditions. After the lack of snow in the Alps a few weeks ago winter is certainly making up for lost time!

Following the heavy snow a major east-west railway in Western Austria was also shut on Saturday in the popular Alpine skiing region. Railway operator OeBB said the line between Oetztal and Bludenz - part of the route that connects Vienna and Innsbruck with Austria's western tip and Switzerland - was expected to be shut for 24 hours. Two other rail lines connecting the Tyrol province with southern Germany were also closed due to overhead wires being hit by fallen trees.

Category: Tourism / Skiing holidays / Austria
Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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EXERCISES

1. **Too much snow!** Think of three places you know where there has been too much snow! Go round the room swapping details with others.

2. **Dictation:** The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

3. **Reading:** The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

4. **Vocabulary:** Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

5. **The article:** Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?

6. **Geography: Alps:** Where are the Alps? What countries are they in? Draw a map on the board then **look on Google maps** to help you.

7. **Skiing:** In pairs think of five top skiing countries. Then add five top skiing resorts. Write them below. Discuss together. What makes them good?

Top skiing countries	Top resorts
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. **Let's roleplay 1: Ski FM:** In pairs/groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *Ski FM* radio studio. Today's interview is about: *Too much snow in Austria*.

1	Skier	3	A skiing journalist	4	A skiing hotel owner
2	Spokesperson from the Avalanche Warning Centre				

The teacher will choose some pairs to roleplay their interview in front of the class.

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9. **Let's think!** In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with ***Skiing in Austria***. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

10. **Let's roleplay 2:** In pairs. You are in a ski bar in an Austrian ski resort. Start a conversation about 'your skiing holiday so far!' *5-minutes*.

11. **Let's do 'The Article Quiz':** Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) What was the cost per person of the helicopter rescue?
- 2) Name the refuge where skiers got stuck?
- 3) What hit the overhead wires on the railways?
- 4) Name the countries.
- 5) What is ZAMG?

Student B

- 1) Name the mountain range.
- 2) What is in Salzburg?
- 3) How much snow fell?
- 4) Name the ski regions.
- 5) How many tourists were stuck?

12. **Skiing in Austria:** Think of three advantages and three disadvantages of skiing in Austria. Write them below. Discuss together with your partner.

Advantages	Disadvantages
1	1
2	2
3	3

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

13. **Presentation:** In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a two minute presentation on: ***Skiing in Austria***. Stand at the front of the class to give your presentation to the class. The class can vote on the best presentation. Class – After the presentations go through the good and weak points on each presentation. Learn from the results.

14. **Let's draw!** In pairs, draw a skier on the board. Label it! Add what ski accessories they might have.

15. **Let's write an e-mail:** Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: ***Skiing in Austria***. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

16. **Sentence starters:** Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) Skiing in Austria _____
- b) Skiing _____
- c) The snow _____

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DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Have you ever been in a helicopter?
- 3) Would you like to be stuck in Austria because of too much snow? Explain.
- 4) What challenges might the authorities expect when there is too much snow?
- 5) What would your *boss/teacher* say if you rang in saying you were stuck in the snow in Austria?
- 6) What do you know about Salzburg?
- 7) When did it last snow in your country?
- 8) What is level of skiing i.e. *beginner/intermediate/advanced*?
- 9) Have you ever seen an avalanche?
- 10) What would you do if you were stuck in a ski resort unable to ski due to too much snow?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) Have you learnt anything in today's English lesson?
- 3) Can you ski?
- 4) Have you ever been stuck in snow? Explain!
- 5) Have you ever been skiing in Austria?
- 6) Would you consider going skiing in Austria this year?
- 7) Is Austria a good place to go skiing?
- 8) Which is the best place in the world to go skiing?
- 9) What would you do if you got stuck in the snow?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's discuss! Skiing in Austria

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

20 things about skiing in Austria

The teacher can moderate the session.

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GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Skiers stranded in Austria by too much snow!

(1)_____ in Western Austria recently got a bit too much snow for their liking. It was reported that more than 15,000 (2)_____ were stuck in various ski resorts after too much of the white (3)_____ stuff fell last week. Dozens were reported to have been airlifted out of ski resorts by helicopters after roads became blocked by 5m of snow - though the cost was around £1,800 (€2,017) per person. On Saturday an Austrian army military (4)_____ was brought in to pick up 52 people who had been stranded at a mountain refuge in Vorarlberg. Skiers had been unable to make the (5)_____ from the Lindauer Huette refuge, which is 1,744m (5,720 ft) above sea level, by any other means because of the (6)_____ risk. The snow has caused (7)_____ on the roads and railways. Villages and some tourist (8)_____ have been cut off. The most heavily hit areas were Austria's western Tirol and Vorarlberg regions that received 1-2 meters of snow (3-7ft) of snow in just four days.

chaos

fluffy

helicopter

avalanche

resorts

tourists

skiers

descent

Authorities managed to get to some ski resorts, though driving was considered to be a dangerous (1)_____, as the (2)_____ of avalanches was classed as *high*. Those that decided to 'extend' their holidays took advantage of some of the best skiing conditions in 30 years - with more snow forecast. High winds across Austria sparked a warning from the Avalanche Warning Centre in Salzburg who urged revellers to take caution whilst skiing. Austria's national (3)_____ service ZAMG reported that such copious amounts of snow occurred once a decade and in some regions every 20-25 years. Many ski resorts already had a (4)_____ amount of snow on the ground before the latest (5)_____ fell. Skiers were unable to ski in some resorts as ski lifts and ski runs were closed due to the (6)_____ skiing conditions. After the (7)_____ snow in the Alps a few weeks ago (8)_____ is certainly making up for lost time!

bumper

lack of

winter

option

unsafe

threat

weather

snowfall

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GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Skiers stranded in Austria by too much snow!

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Authorities managed to get to some ski resorts, though driving was considered to be a dangerous option, as the _____ was classed as *high*. Those that decided to 'extend' their holidays took advantage of some of the best _____ 30 years - with more snow forecast. High winds across Austria sparked a warning from the Avalanche Warning Centre in Salzburg who urged revellers to take caution whilst skiing. Austria's national weather service ZAMG reported that such copious amounts of snow occurred _____ in some regions every 20-25 years. _____ already had a bumper amount of snow on the ground before the latest snowfall fell. Skiers were unable to ski in some resorts as _____ were closed due to the unsafe skiing conditions. After the lack of snow in the Alps a few weeks ago winter is certainly _____ time!

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GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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a

in

of

for

and

who

due

the

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	Austria	11	skiing
2	helicopters	12	threat
3	avalanche	13	option
4	though	14	dangerous
5	revellers	15	authorities
6	copious	16	military
7	province	17	forecast
8	advantage	18	fluffy
9	chaos	19	bumper
10	descent	20	unsafe

LINKS

<http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/travel/news/tourists-trapped-by-snow-in-austria/story-fn3015fd-1226243291452>

http://www.salzburgtimes.at/news/Sports/2012-01-06/26180/Ski_resorts_forced_to_close_as_a_result_of_too_much_snow

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/capital-weather-gang/post/heavy-snow-buries-western-austria-central-alps/2012/01/10/gIQAd1NHoP_blog.html

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-16467352>

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ANSWERS

GAP FILL: Skiers stranded in Austria by too much snow! **Skiers** in Western Austria recently got a bit too much snow for their liking. It was reported that more than 15,000 **tourists** were stuck in various ski resorts after too much of the white **fluffy** stuff fell last week. Dozens were reported to have been airlifted out of ski resorts by helicopters after roads became blocked by 5m of snow - though the cost was around £1,800 (€2,017) per person. On Saturday an Austrian army military **helicopter** was brought in to pick up 52 people who had been stranded at a mountain refuge in Vorarlberg. Skiers had been unable to make the **descent** from the Lindauer Huette refuge, which is 1,744m (5,720 ft) above sea level, by any other means because of the **avalanche** risk. The snow has caused **chaos** on the roads and railways. Villages and some tourist **resorts** have been cut off. The most heavily hit areas were Austria's western Tirol and Vorarlberg regions that received 1-2 meters of snow (3-7ft) of snow in just four days.

Authorities managed to get to some ski resorts, though driving was considered to be a dangerous **option**, as the **threat** of avalanches was classed as *high*. Those that decided to 'extend' their holidays took advantage of some of the best skiing conditions in 30 years - with more snow forecast. High winds across Austria sparked a warning from the Avalanche Warning Centre in Salzburg who urged revellers to take caution whilst skiing. Austria's national **weather** service ZAMG reported that such copious amounts of snow occurred once a decade and in some regions every 20-25 years. Many ski resorts already had a **bumper** amount of snow on the ground before the latest **snowfall** fell. Skiers were unable to ski in some resorts as ski lifts and ski runs were closed due to the **unsafe** skiing conditions. After the **lack** of snow in the Alps a few weeks ago **winter** is certainly making up for lost time! (V2)

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