

Position



www.club-arc-alpin.eu

Adventure installations in the Alps

1. Initial situation

In many regions of the Alps a trend has emerged where adventure installations for use by tourists are built on the landscape. In these situations, natural areas and the landscape are often nothing more than a backdrop, and the installations themselves become the focus of the area. Examples include zip wires ("Flying Foxes"), hanging bridges, observation desks or summer toboggan runs, which in some areas are clustered together in amusement parks. The aim of this not least is to make cable cars more profitable in skiing areas during the summer months. However, regions of the Alps are also affected which until now had remained free from technical developments, and some of these are even in protected areas. These building projects are often carried out without the necessary respect for the Alps' unique landscape. They put additional pressure on competitors to invest in comparable projects. The mountains are therefore increasingly being used as a backdrop for other projects and this encourages companies to try to outshine each other technically. This development reduces the opportunity to experience pristine nature.

2. The CAA's underlying position

The CAA is concerned about the development described above. It demands that great caution be exercised when new tourist attractions are built in the Alps and that the greatest possible consideration is paid to natural areas and the landscape. Untouched natural areas and pure cultural landscape are of the utmost importance to sustain the ecosystems in the Alps. Alpine sports, which are a unique opportunity for people to get in touch with nature directly, are also dependent on the landscape remaining as natural and as pristine as possible. The CAA is convinced that Alpine countryside and landscapes do not need to be enhanced by technical installations to provide a proper experience. Tourist sites of this kind use nature as nothing more than a backdrop and thereby increase the distance between people and nature instead of encouraging an appreciation of nature.

3. The CAA's recommendations for action

The CAA believes that when developing projects and building new adventure installations, the following basic principles should be taken into account. In addition to issues surrounding regional planning and the protection of natural areas, landscape and the environment, the ethical question of experiencing pristine natural areas is also important.

3.1 Maintaining areas untouched by human activity

Natural landscapes which were able to develop largely untouched by human activity, where the original dynamism of the habitat still exists and terrain in the landscape remains untouched, and which are also still free from technical installations, are of the utmost importance in protecting natural areas and landscape. They also have a high experiential value. The CAA is opposed to technical development in these areas. Regardless of the scope and size of the project, these areas must remain free of such technical developments which turn the landscape into nothing more than a backdrop and spoil the experience of authentic natural areas.

3.2 Regional planning based on the principles of sustainability

The regions in the Alps are called on to develop general principles which focus on natural areas and landscapes as valuable capital. Even in highly developed tourist areas in the Alps, such as ski resorts, nature and the landscape must be treated with respect. In populated areas and on transport routes, particular attention must be paid to the character of the landscape and existing structures.

Certain installations can be a useful tool in managing leisure activities. For instance, the construction of a mountain bike downhill park in a suitable area can be a useful way to manage this. An expert report on environmental sustainability is a necessary requirement, and, if need be, so are time-specific usage restrictions. In the run-up to the project consensus must be reached between all parties with a vested interest, particularly the land owners and persons responsible for private routes.

3.3 Caution when developing new infrastructure

The natural areas and landscape in the Alps must not be degraded until they are nothing more than a backdrop for adventure installations. The CAA therefore rejects the construction of adventure installations, outside existing infrastructures, and the building of "funfair attractions" in Alpine areas. CAA member associations are dedicated to the sensible use of natural resources and the landscape. They are committed to exercising the greatest possible caution when developing technological installations in natural areas and when developing or improving alpine sport infrastructure.

Resolved at the general assembly in September 2012 in Poschiavo, Switzerland.