

## Media Information

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### Vorarlberg: Diversity in motion

**With an area of around 2,600 km<sup>2</sup>, Vorarlberg is just as large as the Saarland or Luxembourg. This relatively small area is home to an astonishing variety of landscapes: from the Mediterranean-style shores of Lake Constance to vast plains, moors and forests, all the way up to the glaciated three-thousand-meter peaks. The opportunities to actively experience nature are as varied as the landscapes.**

Vorarlberg is an Alpine idyll, a flourishing economic region, a vibrant cultural centre and a role model for contemporary architecture. With a pronounced penchant for contrasts and idiosyncrasies. 'Here, in a very confined space and more clearly than anywhere else, nature reveals its building plans,' wrote Heinz Scheibenpflug in 1971 in a Vorarlberg issue of Merian magazine. The reasons are primarily geological: the European watershed between the North Sea and the Black Sea runs through Vorarlberg. The Vorarlberg Rhine Valley forms the border between the Western and Eastern Alps. This gives the landscape its special charm: 'more meadow greenery, more alpine soils and a more varied summit area', to quote Heinz Scheibenpflug again.

### Water, moors and forests

Lakes, rivers - the country has a total of around 4,000 watercourses, moorlands and forests provide refreshment at all altitudes in the warm season. At Lake Constance, in the internationally important Rheindelta nature reserve, litter meadows, reeds and sandy beaches characterise the landscape. Plants of all kinds sprout in the moors, for example in Krumbach in the Bregenzerwald, in the Kleinwalsertal and around the picturesque Wiegensee in the Montafon. Forests, mostly sustainably managed mixed forests, grow on around a third of the country's surface area. They fulfil many valuable functions. The wood that innovative craftspeople use to build furniture and houses also comes from the forests.

### Mountains, valleys and Alps

The mountain world of Vorarlberg is characterised by lively ups and downs. Two thirds of the country is over 1,000 metres high, with around 700 peaks rising in Vorarlberg. In between are wide valleys such as the Rhine Valley and the Walgau or plateaus that can be found in all parts of the country.

Anyone with an eye for geology will recognise numerous rock zones in Vorarlberg. A chain of Nagelfluh rock runs through the north-east of the state. The Nagelfluhkette Nature Park is dedicated to the special features of this natural area. Bands of Helveticum, Flysch, Eastern Alpine and crystalline rock follow towards the south. Hikers can see unusual rock formations

can be seen, for example, on the Quelltuff Trail in Lingenau in the Bregenzerwald, where sinter terraces have formed. Deep sinkholes overgrown with alpine flowers can be seen in the 'gypsum holes' near Oberlech.

The interplay between rock and water is best experienced on hikes through gorges. Among the most impressive are the Rappenloch Gorge near Dornbirn and the Breitach Gorge in Kleinwalsertal.

The cultural landscape in the mountainous regions is remarkably well-kept. The family farms make an important contribution: to this day, many of them practise three-stage pasture management. People and animals move from the valley to the Vorsäß or Maisäß in spring, to the Hochalpe in midsummer and back to the valley in stages in autumn. Some alps are also dairy alps. This is where the famous Vorarlberg alp cheese and, in the Montafon, the 'Sura Käs', a flavoursome low-fat cheese, are made. Many alps are farmed in summer and are popular hiking destinations.

### **Natural areas worth protecting**

Nature conservation is particularly important in a state as small as Vorarlberg. Numerous European, nature and plant conservation areas, the Großes Walsertal Biosphere Reserve and the Nagelfluhkette Nature Park as well as quiet zones help to preserve natural treasures. 'Respect your boundaries' is the call to all those who are out and about in nature. This means respecting protected areas, behaving carefully and helping to maintain them - for example, not leaving any rubbish behind.

### **Hike at your own pace**

Vorarlberg's natural diversity can be explored and experienced in many different ways. Hiking is one of the favourite activities in summer. There are plenty of cycle, mountain bike and e-bike trails. Those who prefer more adventure can try climbing, paragliding, canyoning or rafting.

Hiking specialities include themed trails that tell you more about nature and lifestyle. Some of them are artistically designed, for example the Georunde Rindberg in the Bregenzerwald, where 'crooked' installations amaze visitors, or the 'Green Ring' in Lech Zürs am Arlberg, on which a literary hiking map accompanies those keen to explore. In several regions, culinary hikes lead from meal to meal. Hikers can learn more about cheese culture during visits to the Alps. The different natural areas of Silvretta, Rätikon, Verwall and the valley itself can be experienced in the 'Alpine Mosaic Montafon'. Impressively beautiful landscapes await long-distance hikers along the Lechweg and on the Montafon hut circuit.

Families are of course also catered for: The interactive Natursprünge trail in Brandnertal reveals the secrets of nature. Little nature explorers can experience great adventures on special trails in Kleinwalsertal.

Some peaks are accessible by cable car. In some regions, mountain railway rides are free of charge with the regional guest card or a regional inclusive card. In other regions, the guest card is available at a favourable all-inclusive price.

### **Get cycling**

On the shores of Lake Constance, in the plains of the Rhine Valley and Walgau, in the mountain valleys: the cycle path network is well developed. There are also numerous mountain bike and e-bike routes to choose from in the mountainous region. Bike parks, such as the Bikepark Brandnertal, are ideal for practising. Guided mountain bike and e-bike tours are offered in many places.

### **Try something new**

Almost all summer and mountain sports can be practised or tried out in Vorarlberg. Lake Constance is the perfect spot for surfers and SUP boarders. Running enthusiasts and trail runners will find beautiful routes and can take part in running competitions. Those who want to climb can scale rock faces and via ferratas. Forest rope parks are popular, especially with families. The Golm adventure mountain in the Montafon scores with several attractions - from the forest slide park to the Alpine Coaster. You can also try your hand at paragliding, rafting and canyoning. Or, if you prefer things a little quieter, archery, golf and fishing or fly fishing.