

# Starry sky

## The end of night as we know it?



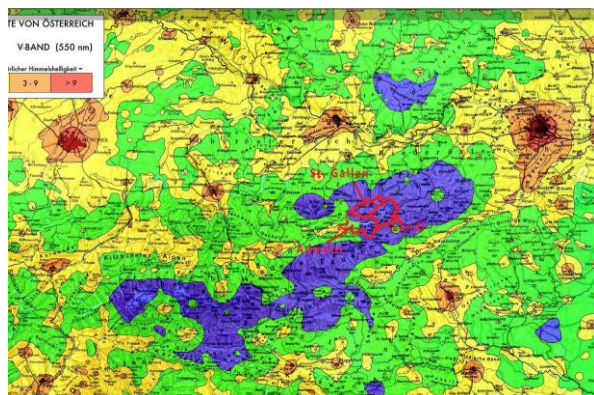
99% of the European population does not see a naturally dark starry sky - "light pollution" is almost everywhere!

### General facts

The Alps are generally less brightly lit than the rest of Europe. Nonetheless:

- Ski areas with floodlights
- Tourist facilities
- Villages without a sensible lighting plan
- light up the night sky unnecessarily.

### Situation in the Gesäuse region



blue: areas with dark night skies; outlined in red: the Gesäuse National Park region

The "wild heart of Austria", i.e. the area of the Kalkalpen and Gesäuse national parks, the Styrian Eisenwurzen Nature and Geopark and the Dürrenstein-Lassingtal wilderness area is one of the darkest regions in Austria. The darkest night sky measured in a town in Austria was recorded in Johnsbach.

### What are the benefits of dark nights?

#### OUR HEALTH:

- Artificial light disturbs our sleep, influences hormones and can have consequences for our health, including cancer.
- Sleeping in the dark preserves natural human vision - prevention of night blindness.

#### TOURISM:

- A unique and not easily replicated offer
- Extending the Seasons - Stargazing is better out of season. (Nov – May)
- No large investments necessary
- Fits into the regional concept of sustainable, considerate tourism
- Seeing 6000 stars with the naked eye is a real experience (you can only see a few dozen stars in Vienna city centre).



## Light pollution

### Animals and plants

- Insects are attracted by the millions to artificial light with a high UV content. They burn on the lamps, are captured there by predators or die from exhaustion while circling the source of light.
- Large lighting fixtures disrupt migratory birds. Loss of orientation and fatal collisions occur.
- Light sources look like a full moon or shine as bright as day, meaning light-shy species behave totally differently.
- Illuminated plants are visited less by nocturnal insects and are therefore pollinated significantly less frequently.



## How to protect the dark sky?

An area can be designated as a dark sky protected area. The IDA (International Dark-Sky Association) acts as a certification body for this.

Certified Dark Sky Protected Areas are characterised by low levels of light pollution, outdoor lighting must meet strict specifications, and these areas must also commit to educational and outreach work on the value of the dark night sky.

The region in the border triangle between Lower Austria, Upper Austria and Styria has the potential to be a high quality dark sky protection area.

## How can I help?

Outdoor lighting is the main source of Light pollution:

- + Light up only where really necessary
- + Light up only when really necessary
- + Choose a warm light colour
- + Luminous intensity only as strong as necessary
- + Light beam only in the required direction

Avoid:

- Outdoor lighting for decorative purposes
- Over-the-top Christmas lights
- Fireworks

## Further information

<https://nationalpark-gesaeuse.at/en/national-park-enclosures/natural-phenomena/night-sky/events>

<https://www.darksky.org/>