

Pedallers chase up hill and down dale 'Bike Infection': Mountain bike elite gather in Kaprun

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They leap over tree trunks, negotiate the steepest slopes and perform breathtaking tricks – and all that on only two wheels. Those taking part in the so-called Bike Infection event in Kaprun have other uses for their bikes than the Sunday family outing in the countryside. In stark contrast to such leisurely pursuits, this major summer sporting event in the Europa-Sportregion demands the utmost from both competitors and their aluminium and carbon bikes.

Power, stamina and superb body control are absolute necessities in the four competition disciplines. Whether Cross-Country (XC) or Trial Show: the pedallers must go to the limit if they want top place on the winner's rostrum. Which is precisely why the Bike Infection event has blossomed so quickly into such a popular event among the pros. For most of these two-wheel specialists, the starting date on 6 July is heavily underlined in their diaries, as with Roel Paulissen, for example.

The Belgian mountain biker and World Championship silver medallist competed in the event's premiere last year, but though tipped as a dark horse, lost as early as the second heat on the XC course through Kaprun, which he had himself helped to set up. The man from Team Vredestein Cannondale is determined to improve on last year's performance. Among his strongest competitors is one of his own team: colleague Fredrik Kessiakoff from Sweden, the bronze medallist at the World Championships in Rotoura (New Zealand). However, there are plenty of other aces in the pack, just as eager to share the spoils in the XC event, such as the Dutch Olympic gold medallist Bart Brentjens from the Dolphin Bike Team. However, Paulissen remains as confident as ever: 'This course is tailor-made for me.' And in the Cross-Country event there is a completely new feature this year: women and children will also be competing in the Ladies and Mini XC events on the city course.

But not only competitors in the elite class are battling for glory at Bike Infection. There is also the Hill Climb, which starts in the town centre of Kaprun and finishes high up on the Maiskogel. The 10-kilometre course climbs an incredible 900 metres. Last year's best time was around 42 minutes! In contrast, stopwatches play no part in the 'Trial Show'. When stars such as Ryan Leech (Canada), who has already thrilled audiences at the legendary Cirque du Soleil, Austria's Trial World Champion Petr Kraus or his fellow countryman Thomas Öhler saddle up, wild stunts and ingenious tricks are the order of the day.

After completion of the exhausting competition disciplines, the spotlight turns to Europa-Sportregion's nightlife – and the organisers of Bike Infection have invited first-class bands to keep the wheels turning: the music starts on the 6th of July with the quintet 'Groovedoctors', playing the best of musical history from Sinatra to Metallica. The next day the musical curtain is

brought down on Kaprun's exciting bike spectacle by the polyphonic ensemble 'common men'.

More information on 'Bike Infection' can be found on the internet at www.mountainbike-kaprun.com.

General Information:

With its 14,000 beds and two million overnight stays a year, the 'Europa-Sportregion Zell am See-Kaprun' is one of the most important holiday regions in Austria. At any time of the year, the region offers its guests a very varied range of holiday choices. During the summer months it convinces with ideal conditions for all kinds of sports - from golf or walking to biking to water sports. Its special highlight: you can always ski on finest powder snow here - even in warm weather. It is the glacier of Kitzsteinhorn situated at an altitude of 3,000 metres that makes this possible. Visitors of the 'Europa-Sportregion' can quickly and easily reach day-trip destinations like Mount Grossglockner, the mountain reservoirs of Kaprun, or the City of Salzburg where Mozart was born. Moreover, Zell am See-Kaprun offers its guests a unique mixture of events - from great concerts to first-class sports events.

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