

## Record investments in French winter sport areas

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## CIPRA conference on cities in the Alpine space

CIPRA's annual conference will be held in Brig/CH on 22 - 24 September. The subject of the 2005 conference is Alpine cities and their role as sustainability actors, with a focus on the following main aspects:

- design, management and optimization of relations between Alpine cities and the surrounding areas;..... [more on page 2](#)

## Major climate change as a threat to the flora and fauna

A new study published by WWF International addresses the threat of rapid climate change and its impacts on the flora and fauna. For many species, the natural mechanisms of adaptation are no longer capable of coping with the sheer speed of change. .... [more on page 3](#)

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(13.01.2005) In 2004 France's winter sport resorts invested 348 million euros – more than ever before – in refurbishment and upgrade measures. In the last ten years, such investments have increased by about 200 percent compared with only 50 percent for ski area turnover. The number of skier days per season is now stagnating at 63 million.

According to the Federation of French Cableway Operators, over 70 percent of this capital is invested in the replacement and modernisation of old installations rather than in the construction of new ones. In particular, old drag lifts are being replaced by chairlifts and gondolas. Critics speak of gigantism and overdevelopment caused by the constant enlargement of existing winter sport areas and the development of new ones. The operators' answer is that they are simply responding to the fact that more has to be invested in the winter resort market than in other sectors in order to survive in the face of fierce competition.

Three trends are to be observed today in the French mountain resorts. First, winter sport areas are growing in size as more small ski areas are linked to form bigger operations. Paradiski, between Les Arcs and La Plagne, for example, has no less than 425 kilometres of groomed trails. At the same time, winter resorts in other regions are being upgraded on a huge scale – like Gourette in the Pyrenees, currently the scene of the country's biggest development project, with a planned spend of 43 million euros for ten more hectares of skiing terrain, almost double the present number of snowguns and thirteen new lifts. In addition, snowguns are to be deployed at increasingly higher altitudes. Whereas snowmaking was originally provided to maintain snow cover on the main trail between the ski slopes and the bottom station of the cableway, the man-made white stuff is now to be found at altitudes which were usually left to the weather gods. Another goal is to extend the season. The cableway operators' lobby wants to see the winter sport areas opening at the beginning of November because that, they claim, is the only way to boost the stagnating bednight totals in the resorts.

Sources and information:

[http://www.tourisme.equipement.gouv.fr/fr/z2/territo/montagne/chiffres/sports/remontees\\_mecaniques.jsp](http://www.tourisme.equipement.gouv.fr/fr/z2/territo/montagne/chiffres/sports/remontees_mecaniques.jsp) (fr), Le Monde, 15.12.2004 <http://www.lemonde.fr/web/article/0,1-0@2-3228,36-390998,0.html> (fr)

## Contents

Record investments in French winter sport areas	<a href="#">1</a>
CIPRA conference on cities in the Alpine space	<a href="#">2</a>
2005 Swiss Mountain Water Award launched	<a href="#">2</a>
Increased heavy goods traffic on the Brenner route	<a href="#">2</a>
South Tyrol: energy-efficient house construction now mandatory	<a href="#">2</a>
Major climate change as a threat to the flora and fauna	<a href="#">3</a>
New publication on mountain sports in the Alps	<a href="#">3</a>
2005 international conference on development in rural mountain areas	<a href="#">3</a>
Green energy in Austria	<a href="#">3</a>
Miscellaneous	<a href="#">4</a>
Agenda	<a href="#">4</a>
Oh!	<a href="#">4</a>

## CIPRA conference on cities in the Alpine space

(16.12.2004) CIPRA's annual conference will be held in Brig/CH on 22 - 24 September. The subject of the 2005 conference is Alpine cities and their role as sustainability actors, with a focus on the following main aspects:

- design, management and optimization of relations between Alpine cities and the surrounding areas;
- networking, alliances and enhanced co-operation and synergies among Alpine cities to achieve effective positioning in the face of competition from other European locations.

Two thirds of the Alpine population live in the main urban centres or are directly dependent on them. To that extent it goes without saying that the Alpine cities form the socio-economic heart of the Alps. This is something that receives too little attention in the framework of the Alpine Convention, which has a primarily rural focus. The Alpine cities are in competition with one another and with the non-Alpine urban centres at the same time. The objective of the CIPRA conference is to encourage the cities in the Alpine space to see their location as an asset. Among other things, the conference will address the role and responsibility of the Alpine cities for the surrounding areas in socio-economic, cultural and ecological terms, and the advantages that their function as a regional centre gives them. CIPRA's 2005 annual conference will be organized by CIPRA-Switzerland in collaboration with the Future of the Alps project.

Programme and registration available as of March 2005 at <http://www.cipra.org>

Trent – city of more than 100,000 souls.



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## 2005 Swiss Mountain Water Award launched

(16.12.2004) The Governmental Conference of Alpine Cantons (GCAC) has launched the Swiss Mountain Water Award, which is endowed with a total of CHF 50,000. The objective of the competition is to initiate and promote practical water projects capable of making a substantial contribution to increased net output in the mountain areas of Switzerland in commercial, ecological, social and/or institutional terms. The competition is open to all individuals and institutions from Switzerland and abroad. Closing date for submissions is 28 February.

The Swiss Mountain Water Award is being organized in the framework of the Mountain Water Network (MWN), which was established by the GCAC in the United Nations Year of Fresh Water in 2003 to run projects in support of networking and the exchange of knowledge and to strengthen the output chain in the mountain regions. The MWN's objective is to promote partnerships between the business, political and cultural communities and the public sector, as well as between regional, national and international institutions.

Information: <http://www.mountain-water-net.ch/award> (de)

## Increased heavy goods traffic on the Brenner route

(16.12.2004) In 2004 more than fifty percent fewer trucks were carried by the RoLa piggyback services on the Brenner railway than in the previous year. Whereas 140,000 HGVs used the rail link in 2003, the figure for 2004 was a mere 60,000. In contrast, truck traffic on the Brenner motorway increased by a monthly average of twenty percent (in the period January to October). This situation derives from expiry of the Austrian eco-points system for HGVs in transit over the Brenner, which made the journey expensive for vehicles with high exhaust emission levels and the intermodal rail service correspondingly attractive. 80,000 fewer trucks on the railway means 94,000 more on the motorway (where maximum permissible laden weight is lower), almost thirty times higher CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and 160 times higher NO<sub>x</sub> emissions.

Source and information: [http://www.umweltbundesamt.at/presse/lastnews/newsarchiv\\_2004/brenner](http://www.umweltbundesamt.at/presse/lastnews/newsarchiv_2004/brenner) (de)

## South Tyrol: energy-efficient house construction now mandatory

(13.01.2005) On 12 January a new regulation on climate-friendly house construction took effect in South Tyrol. According to the provisions of this Climate House Ordinance, the Provincial Office for Air and Noise must issue a climate pass for all new housing in South Tyrol showing the buildings' energy classification and thermal heat requirements. That gives prospective house buyers a clear picture with regard to expected energy consumption.

The new ordinance also includes strict provisions for energy savings. Planning permission for new buildings will only be given where the annual heat requirement corresponds to that of a Category C climate house, i.e. less than seven litres of heating oil per square metre of living space per year. The current average for residential properties in South Tyrol is 21 litres per square metre. In view of the progress made in the field of thermal insulation and the availability of efficient and environment-friendly energy systems, however, implementation of the seven-litre rule is no problem today.

Source: [http://www.provinz.bz.it/lpa/news/news\\_d.asp?art=92423](http://www.provinz.bz.it/lpa/news/news_d.asp?art=92423) (de)

## Major climate change as a threat to the flora and fauna

(13.01.2005) A new study published by WWF International addresses the threat of rapid climate change and its impacts on the flora and fauna. For many species, the natural mechanisms of adaptation are no longer capable of coping with the sheer speed of change. Taking the increasing frequency of extreme weather situations into account, the authors of the study conclude that the consequences of global warming are much greater than generally assumed hitherto. Their examples range from plants coming into flower earlier to the growing numbers of forest fires resulting from more and longer periods of dry weather. In order to avoid disastrous consequences, the WWF and the EU consider it essential to limit the increase in global mean temperature to a maximum of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. A particular cause for concern in this context is the fact that the mean temperature in the Alps has already risen by 1.6°C.

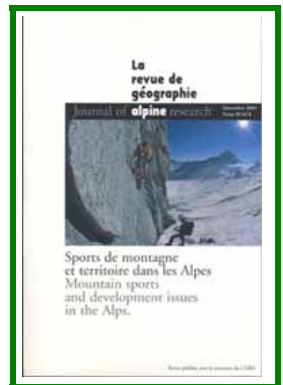
The thousands of years old plant remains recently released from the glacial ice in the Andes of Peru are an indicator of the current extent of climate change. Carbon dating using the C14 method has showed the vegetable material to be at least 50,000 years old. From the good state of preservation of the plants, Lonnie Thompson of Ohio State University concludes that the rate of ice melt in the last 50,000 years has never been as high as it is today.

Sources and download: <http://www.wwf.ch/wwfdata/media/de/extremeweatherreportdoesnaturekeepup.pdf> (en); Leemans, R., van Vliet, A. (2004) Extreme Weather: Does Nature Keep Up?; <http://www.vistaverde.de/news/Wissenschaft> (de) 16.12.2004

## New publication on mountain sports in the Alps

(10.02.2005) Mountain sports in the Alps are the focus of the latest English/French publication in the series "Revue de Géographie Alpine/Journal of Alpine Research", which contains five essays from the fields of cultural geography, tourism economy, and sport- and ethno-sociology. Thomas Bieger examines the patterns of demand on the traditional Swiss winter travel market and concludes that while the number of winter sports has greatly increased, demand is concentrated on just a few offers. Bastien Soulé presents two case studies to illustrate the situation with regard to risk management in winter sport areas and the political instrumentalization of the subjects of danger and safety. Brice Lefèvre discusses the social structure of the users of high-alpine terrain with reference to mountain sports in the Mont Blanc massif.

Bibliography: La Revue de Géographie Alpine/Journal of Alpine Research, vol. 92, no. 4, December 2004, Sports de Montagne et Territoire dans les Alpes/Mountain sports and Development Issues in the Alps, Grenoble, ISSN 0035-1121; 128 pages. € 18.30



## 2005 international conference on development in rural mountain areas

(27.01.2005) From 1 - 3 September 2005 the Italian RURALIA association is holding a two-day conference in the Piedmont entitled "Architecture and Landscape in Rural Mountain Areas and their Social and Economic Development". The objective of the conference is to consider proposals for saving villages from decline and rehabilitating rural buildings for new uses. Discussions will also focus on the implementation of landscape protection and development in the case of land that farmers have abandoned, and on ways of revitalising rural communities and the regional economy. A one-day pre-conference workshop will be held as a brainstorming session for a concrete project for the Borbera Valley, which is an attractive location in terms of scenery, the local culture and architecture but is threatened by rural exodus. The event will have the support of research staff from a number of Italian universities and the English Heritage.

Sources and information: [http://www.ruralia.org/eventi\\_rur2005.html](http://www.ruralia.org/eventi_rur2005.html) (it/en)

## Green energy in Austria

(27.01.2005) Things are looking good for green energy in Austria. In the region of Lower Austria, for example, 2004 saw the construction of more biomass heating plants, biogas digesters and wind power plants than ever before. Today about seven percent of the electricity generated in Lower Austria is a product of wind, biomass or biogas. The new facilities built in 2004 represent a total investment of 204.6 million euros. The trend is to build smaller biomass heating plants with compact networks rather than invest in large-scale plants. At present the homes of some 12,000 Lower Austrians are heated with the help of biological resources, with a total of 240 such plants on the grid.

Austria as a whole is turning increasingly to wind power. In 2003, 108 wind power plants were built with a rated output of 192 megawatts. That makes a current total of 424 wind power plants on the grid generating almost 1.2 billion kilowatt hours, corresponding to about 2% of total consumption in Austria or the annual consumption of 350,000 households. The operators of these power plants have appealed to the government to renew the feed-in tariff ordinance that expired at the end of last year as quickly as possible. They say this is essential if Austria is to meet the EU target of 22.1 percent renewable energy by 2010.

Information and sources: <http://www.igwindkraft.at> (de), <http://www.noe.gv.at/nlk> (de)

## Miscellaneous

### Research on the economic significance of the landscape

(10.02.2005) What is the monetary value of the Alpine landscape for the resident populations and tourists? This question was studied in the framework of Swiss National Research Programme NFP48 "Landscapes and Living Spaces in the Alps". The researchers examined the economic importance of the landscape and other parameters with reference to the level of rents on the property market in ski resorts in Canton Valais. The results show that beautiful scenery is a key factor in the cost of rented properties. It was also found that residents and visitors do not attach the same importance to all parameters. This is reflected in the fact that holiday apartment rentals correlate much more closely with the beauty of the resort and especially with its winter sport infrastructure than private property rentals, which are hardly affected by such aspects as skiing facilities.

Source and information: [http://www.nfp48.ch/projekte/projects\\_detail.gp?id=86&nfprojnum=26#publicStuff](http://www.nfp48.ch/projekte/projects_detail.gp?id=86&nfprojnum=26#publicStuff) (de/fr/en)

### 53<sup>rd</sup> "Città di Trento" Mountain Film Festival

(16.12.2004) The 53rd "Città di Trento" Mountain Film Festival is being held from 30 April to 8 May 2005. The festival is devoted to mountain, research and adventure films, with "Arctic & Antarctic – North Pole & South Pole" as the theme selected for 2005. The organisers' aim is to offer an insight into all aspects of discovery, and of life and research in the Polar regions with the help of parallel exhibitions, meetings, presentations and film retrospectives.

Information: <http://www.trentofestival.it> (it/en)

### Satellite handsets for Scotland's first mountain museum

(16.12.2004) If two Scottish visitor centres have their way, tourists in the Highlands will soon be walking about with hand-held computers. That will help turn Schiehallion Mountain into a dedicated mountain museum, and Helmsdale will become a centre for Scottish gold-panning tours. The postcard-sized computers employ a technology that is similar to the GPS system to be found in modern cars, and they are programmed like traditional museum audio guides. When the user reaches a certain geographical point, the system triggers a programme of information with voice-overs, video and pictures telling the visitor about the landscape.

Source: <http://www.sundayherald.com/print45566> (en)

## Agenda

International conference on water and climate change: **Integrated Assessment of Water Resources and Global Change: a North-South Analysis**; 23 - 25 February 2005, Bonn/D; conference language: English; organizers: Centre of Development Research at Bonn University.

Information: <http://www.zef.de/watershed2005> (en)

International conference on mountains and climate change: **MTNCLIM 2005 – Anticipating Challenges to Western Mountain Ecosystems and Resources**; 1 - 4 March 2005, Chico Hot Springs, Pray, Montana, USA; conference language: English; organizers: Consortium for Integrated Climate Change in Western Mountains.

Information: <http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/mtnclim> (en)

Transnational workshop: **Maintaining Quality of Life and Competitiveness in Alpine Rural Areas and their Centres**; 7 – 8 April 2005, Innsbruck/A; conference languages: English, French, German, Italian, Slovene; organizers: Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK).

Information: <http://www.alpinespace.org> (de/fr/it/sl/en)

**European Geosciences Union - General Assembly 2005**; 24 - 29 April 2005, Vienna/A; conference language: English; organizers: European Geosciences Union.

Information: [www.copernicus.org/EGU/ga/egu05/index.htm](http://www.copernicus.org/EGU/ga/egu05/index.htm) (en)

**5th International Conference and General Assembly of the Alpine Network of Protected Areas**; 12 - 15 October 2005, Chambéry/F; conference languages: French, German, Italian, Slovene; organizers: Alpine Network of Protected Areas. Information: <http://www.alparc.org> (de/en/fr/it/sl)

### Oh!...

...The Austrian city of Rattenberg in the Tyrol does not see the sun between November and the beginning of February. However blue the sky may be, the winter sun is too low in the sky and the mountains to the south too high for the people of Rattenberg to bask in its rays. But help is on its way! Two and a half metre high mirrors are to be installed on the slopes to the north to capture the sun's rays and reflect them into the Tyrolean town. The technology does not come cheap. Two million euros have to be found according to a lighting designer. An application has been lodged for funding from the EU's money pots.

Source:

[http://www.tagesschau.de/aktuell/meldungen/0,1185,0ID3894586\\_R\\_EF1\\_00.html](http://www.tagesschau.de/aktuell/meldungen/0,1185,0ID3894586_R_EF1_00.html) (de)