



Tunnel building is a priority in the Alps for countering the consequences of global warming. © Willi Doerr / pixelio.de

The potential of Alpine tunnels

Everywhere in the Alps can be seen drilling, building and digging. It's all just as well, because the new rail and road tunnels offer a solution to the consequences of global warming and have a previously unsuspected added value for tourism, as a new study shows.

The purpose of new road and railway tunnels was in the past clear: better and faster transport between two places separated by mountains. A comprehensive study by the international Alpine Convention Bureau now suggests that tunnels in the Alps can also help us adapt to climate change. At the same time they will create added value in tourism terms, similar to the world's first ship tunnel, the "Stad Skipstunnel", now being planned in Norway.

Innovative winter tourism

Tunnels in the Alps should be used mainly for leisure purposes. The authors of the study recommend creating ski slopes in them, as snow can no longer be guaranteed in low-lying areas of the Alps. In the tunnel tubes, however, controlled low temperatures are possible using appropriate energy by means of a heat exchange between the ski tubes and train tubes. The requirement is for trains to pass through the tunnel every minute to provide sufficient energy. To ensure the necessary traffic levels the study recommends the compulsory use of rail for all business trips and short breaks.

Broad support for tunnel expansion

Environmental organisations have so far been extremely critical of such planned infrastructure projects. In Switzerland some 50 organisations have collected over 125,000 signatures opposing the second tube for the Gotthard road tunnel. CIPRA Italy has criticised the opening for conventional road use of the Fréjus safety tunnel. These organisations now want to get on board, however, on condition that an ecological compensation tube is built in addition to the transport and ski tubes. Such tunnels are intended to provide a secure and safe environment for species that are particularly endangered by climate change, but also for wolves, bears and lynx,. Special lamps made in Italy will simulate authentic day and night conditions in the tunnel, provide a natural tan for skiers and have a soothing effect on the wildlife.

Source and further information: <http://www.zeit.de/2015/09/optik-technologie-kuenstliches-tageslicht/komplettansicht> (de), <http://www.skipstunnel.no/> (no), <http://www.cipra.org/it/comunicato-stampa/radoppio-del-traforo-del-frejus> (it), <http://www.zweite-roehre-nein.ch/nein-2te-roehre.html> (de/fr/it)

News from the CIPRA



Wild, sinuous and secretive: a deep gaze in which to lose yourself and pointed ears transform her into a rare beauty. © luise / pixelio.de

Nominations for “Hotty Alps Award”

Dedicated, charming, attractive: the “Hotty Alps Award” will go to the loveliest representatives of the Alps. Online voting for candidates is open until midnight tonight. Cast your vote now!

The Alps are famed for their long ski pistes, gallant locals, crystal-clear mountain lakes, illustrious dairy cattle and eccentric beard wearers. The “Hotty Alps Award” is an international competition designed to highlight the outstanding beauty of such denizens of the Alps. We are looking for the most stimulating, inspiring and exciting creatures and landscapes.

Some promising candidates have already been nominated, for example the bearded Conchita Wurst from Austria, the Upper Engadine lake region with its adornment of second homes or the cherry vinegar fly, a recent arrival from Japan. Other candidates can be nominated until 17:17 today. Entries must be accompanied by an attractive image and a short text.

You can choose your favourites online until midnight tonight. An independent jury consisting of CIPRA, CIPRA and CIPRA will then determine the best entries. Fame and glory await the winners of the “Hotty Alps Award”.

You too can apply today for the “Hotty Alps Award”: cast your vote for yourself or your favourite at <https://www.facebook.com/CIPRA.org>.

News from the Alps



Worn out? No problem: Alpine municipalities now offer free repairs. © Florentine / pixelio.de

Money for old shoes

The “Alpine Town of the Year” and “Alliance in the Alps” networks are introducing a funding programme for walkers. Fast walking, hiking and strolling all now truly pay off.

A solution to climate change? Walking. No form of mobility is so climate or environmentally friendly as getting about using your own body, without any other technical or mechanical assistance. The residents of Innsbruck for example accomplish 29% of their daily travel on foot.

The “Alpine Town of the Year” and “Alliance in the Alps” networks thus want to offer financial help to get pedestrians on their feet via an innovative, effective and citizen-friendly programme. Now battered heels, worn-out soles and broken shoelaces can be handed in at municipal offices. Walkers will in exchange receive a coupon for the repair of block, funnel, wedge and plateau heels. All residents and visitors to the municipalities participating in the programme are entitled to this offer.

Wearers of stiletto heels will get extra support as this type of shoe heel breaks after just a few kilometres, especially on farm tracks and forest trails. Gender-specific mobility behaviour is thus taken into account as women, according to a recent study by the Austrian Traffic Club, walk more often and further than men. As an incentive for greater gender equality, men wearing stiletto heels will get twice the amount.

Source and further information: <http://www.thierry-billet.org/2014/08/c-est-l-une-des-declinaisons-de-notre-plan-climat-et-c-est-un-travail-conjoint-entre-les-services-municipaux-et-la-commission-deplac> (fr), <http://www.vcoe.at/de/presse/aussendungen-archiv/details/items/vcoe-mobilitaetsverhalten-der-frauen-ist-sicherer-und-umweltfreundlicher> (de)



Cow tax: new levy for landscape repair and livestock farming.
© Rainer Sturm / pixelio.de

Cash cows

Following tough negotiations, the Alpine finance and environment ministers have finally agreed on a joint additional tax in the Alps. Read on to see who pays – and how much.

The Ministers have now decided that a cow tax will be definitely introduced as of January 2016. The decision means that all Alpine residents will have to pay an annual charge, while all holidaymakers will have to pay a levy similar to the tourist tax each time they visit the Alps. Revenues from the new tax will be used among other things to fill in the holes in pastures caused by intensive livestock farming. As well as repairing the landscape, the tax will cover some of the cost of training dairymaids and cowherds.

Negotiations on the cow tax were particularly lengthy as ministers wished to learn from the mistakes made during the recent introduction of the toll on cars in Germany. This charge goes back to a campaign promise made in Bavaria: from 2016 locals and visitors alike will have to pay to use the roads. The toll will however be refunded to residents in the form of a tax credit, causing a certain amount of resentment, especially in neighbouring Austria.

Justice is however the guiding principle of the cow tax: foreigners, recent arrivals, those who have never left, brief visitors and stay-at-homes will all pay equally. At the end of the day the cattle do not really care who looks after them, nor who turns their milk into cheese or who enjoys the beautiful Alpine landscape to the sound of cow bells.

Further information: <http://www.michael-cramer.eu/presse/single-view/article/pkw-maut-in-deutschlan/> (de), <http://www.cipra.org/de/news/5039> (de/fr/it/sl)

Agenda

Car day in France, 05.04.2015, French Alps,
Organisation: CIPRA France. [More...](#)

Competition: architectural masterpieces on high,
01.04.2015 - 15.04.2015, Organisation: CIPRA
Slovenia. [More...](#)

Workshop: occupational therapy for hunters,
30.04.2015, Cuneo/I, Organisation: CIPRA Italy. [More...](#)

Action: Alpine triathlon, 06.05.2015, Tyrol/AT,
Organisation: CIPRA Austria. [More...](#)

Strange but true!

...French in Switzerland – those were the days. The quadrilingual heart of the Alps is now swapping the language of Voltaire and Modiano for Slovenian. The decision was preceded by a tug-of-war lasting several years. Business leaders wanted to replace old French in school with English, while the federal capital Berne proposed putting all four national languages on the curriculum in every canton from the first year of primary school. Federalists fought back, demanding that each canton should decide for itself. In typical Swiss fashion, a minority of cantons had their way. The priority was less the national interest than Alpine unity, so they pleaded for Slovenian as the first foreign language to be taught throughout the country. The law now unites Switzerland with a new language that is universally (not) spoken to the same level. Na zdravje!

Source:

<http://www.derbund.ch/schweiz/standard/Thurgau-will-Fruehfranzoesisch-moeglichst-bald-abschaffen/story/19759826> (de),
<http://old.cipra.org/de/alpenkonvention/alpen> (de)