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Award for nature- and environment-minded mountain tours

For the fourth time keepwild!, the specialist environmental department for trend sports of Mountain Wilderness Switzerland, is awarding the Prix Wilderness for Trend Sports. Up until September 30 non-commercial providers in the mountaineering sector can submit their current tour programme on the theme of the "nature- and environment-minded pursuit of sports and leisure activities in the mountains". [more on page 3](#)

CIPRA calls for Alpine Convention Water Protocol



(18.07.2003) For years the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps CIPRA has been demanding that the Alpine states draw up a Water Protocol to the Alpine Convention. In Innsbruck/A CIPRA itself tabled a proposal for such a Protocol to coincide with the UN's International Year of Freshwater 2003.

While the Alpine Convention provides an Implementing Protocol aimed at specifying the terms of the Convention on the subject of "Water Management", a corresponding protocol has never been drawn up. CIPRA cannot understand that in the International Year of Freshwater the Alpine states have still not set about drawing up such a protocol.

CIPRA President Andreas Weissen emphasised that water was not a conventional commodity but a legacy that had to be protected, defended and treated accordingly. He said the Alpine states had a key responsibility in preserving water reserves and the ecological function of waterways, and in improving them where necessary in the interest of the general public. He added that the catchment areas of many watercourses within the Alpine region extended over several states, which was why certain problems could only be solved through a cross-border approach and why joint measures on the part of the Alpine states were required.

It is CIPRA's view that a Water Protocol would stop an important gap in Alpine protection, and only a Water Protocol could guarantee a uniform standard for the modern protection of glaciers for example.

Jürgen Sohnle, an expert on water rights from the University of Chambéry/F, stressed the added value of a Water Protocol over the EU Framework Directive on water.

In his inaugural speech as President of the Alpine Conference (the Conference of Environmental Ministers of all Alpine countries) the German Minister of the Environment Jürgen Trittin last year emphasised that flood protection would be a key element of Germany's Presidency. A Water Protocol to the Alpine Convention provides an excellent basis for such co-operation.

A detailed press release and the CIPRA proposal for a Water Protocol can be found on <http://www.cipra.org> (de/fr/it/sl)

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Biogas – Car fuel of the future?

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In its study SwissFarmerPower examined the technical, logistical and economic possibilities of agricultural biogas production for the fuel market. It concluded that the construction of large-scale, commercial installations, particularly for channelling the processed biogas directly into the natural gas network, makes ecological and economic sense. It would also provide an additional source of revenue for agriculture.

SwissFarmerPower chose the Canton of Lucerne for its case study as the region has a high density of farm animals compared with the Swiss average. This makes agricultural biogas production particularly interesting.

High ammonia emissions are a problem in intensively farmed areas, and cannot be reduced through fermentation of farm slurry alone. However synergetic effects could be achieved by combining slurry treatment plants with biogas recovery installations.

Technically there are no obstacles. The plant technology has been tried and tested and the first service stations are already in place.

The Swiss gas industry is planning to expand the network of service stations on a huge scale. There are 27 gas service stations in Switzerland at present, and that number is to increase to 100 by 2010. 50,000 vehicles could then be powered by biogas, resulting in around 30,000 tonnes less of CO₂ released into the air each year. Negotiations are already underway between biogas producers and the gas industry to take on the processed biogas at marketable prices.

SwissFarmerPower believes that a reduction in the mineral oil tax on gas fuels is essential to improve the quality of the air and climate.

For information and the study's final report: <http://www.itz.ch> (de)

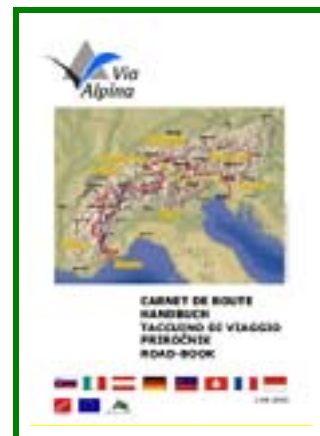
Via Alpina Book now available online

(28.08.2003) A book on the network of hiking trails of the Via Alpina, which follows five routes through all the Alpine countries, is now available in the four main languages spoken in the Alps and in English. The road-book offers basic practical information on the hiking routes, with the walking times between the stages, suggestions for overnight accommodation, tourist offices and maps.

More detailed information on the natural and cultural environment and on the services on offer in the regions covered by the hikes is to be published in 2004. The medium-term plan is to publish a series of hiking guides on the Via Alpina. The road-book can be downloaded from the “Documents” heading on the Via Alpina web site.

Via Alpina is a project subsidised through the EU programme INTERREG IIIB, Alpine Space.

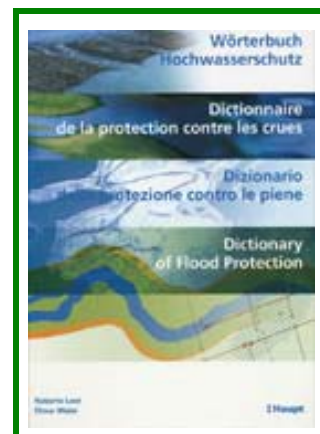
Source and information: <http://www.via-alpina.com> (de/fr/it/sl/en)



New four-language dictionary on flood protection

(28.08.2003) The Swiss Federal Office for Water and Geology and the Swiss Federal Chancellery have published a dictionary on flood protection in German, French, Italian and English. It contains 424 pages with 1500 specialist terms, systematically arranged into chapters on Hydrology/Hydraulics, Geomorphology, Risk and Catastrophe Management, and Hydraulic Engineering. The entries include definitions, synonyms, a user's guide, and references to related terms. The dictionary also includes a CD-ROM.

Information: Loat, R./Meier, E., Dictionary of Flood Protection, Haupt Publishers Berne/Stuttgart/Vienna, ISBN 3-258-06536-5; http://verlagsshop.haupt.ch/100/con_liste.asp?strExtSearch=hochwasserschutz&strSearchType=express (de)



Prix Wilderness: Award for nature- and environment-minded mountain tours

(14.08.2003) For the fourth time *keepwild!*, the specialist environmental department for trend sports of Mountain Wilderness Switzerland, together with the Save the Mountains Foundation, is awarding the Prix Wilderness for Trend Sports. Up until September 30 non-commercial providers in the mountaineering sector can submit their current tour programme on the theme of the "nature- and environment-minded pursuit of sports and leisure activities in the mountains". The award is endowed with 5000 Swiss francs.

The selection criteria cover a range of topics such as: Do the tours include raising awareness of environmental issues? Is the duration of the stay in the mountains proportional to the travel involved in getting there? Is public transport used to reach the destination? Does the tour convey a notion of nature beyond that of relief energy and a backdrop for sporting pursuits?

The projects are intended to play a pioneering role in preserving the last areas of wilderness in the mountains. The Prix Wilderness aims to publicise projects worth emulating, to motivate dedicated people to persevere with their efforts, and to make known to a broad section of the public the concerns involved in preserving an intact mountain environment.

Information and competition: <http://www.mountainwilderness.ch/d/prixwilderness> (de)

Cross-border youth solar project successfully completed

(14.08.2003) It took 15 adolescents from Austria, Slovenia and Italy only one week to erect a solar installation at the leisure centre of the Austrian *Klimabündnis* [Climate Alliance] municipality of Gurk. The activity was part of the youth solar project "Together for a Sunny Future", and was supervised by technicians from AEE, the Working Party on Renewable Energy.

The food served during the project consisted exclusively of organic produce grown locally in the region or bearing the Fair Trade seal of quality, the aim being to enable the participants to experience climate protection in all its aspects. The installation of the solar plant coincided with workshops on a wide array of environmental issues and with excursions to sustainable projects in the region.

Source and information: Klimabündnis Kärnten [Carinthian Climate Alliance] 06.08.2003
<http://www.klimabuendnis.at/root/detail.asp?b=208&ID=2007> (de)

EU Marco Polo Programme for the displacement of traffic now in force

(28.08.2003) The EU's Marco Polo Programme came into force on August 3. The Programme's objective is to shift increased international freight traffic from the road to other modes of transport. Haulage companies are to be assisted in their efforts to introduce solutions in intermodal freight transport (i.e. freight transport using different modes of transport) that are already or almost marketable.

The Programme is to run until 2010, with the EU providing a budget of €75 million for the first four years. Companies wishing to take part in the Programme must be domiciled in the EU or in "close third countries" (e.g. acceding countries). Subsidies are available for services on international freight transport routes that include measures aimed at providing start-up help with services, overcoming structural market obstacles, and improving co-operation and the transfer of know-how.

Applications for subsidisation can probably be made from the end of September to the beginning of December 2003.

Source and information: http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/marcopolo/index_en.htm (en/de/fr/it)

New CIPRA-International web site

(14.08.2003) The web site of the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps CIPRA-International recently underwent a complete makeover. Information on CIPRA and its member organisations is now posted in a trendier layout at <http://www.cipra.org>, with items such as News, Events (e.g. Summer Academy or Annual Conference), Activities, Publications and Positions.

The site also provides information on the Alpine Convention and on CIPRA statements on the Alpine Convention as well as general information about the Alps as a European region (for instance the administrative entities of the Alpine Convention Parameter). The web site is available in the four languages of the Alps: German, French, Italian and Slovenian. The main information about CIPRA and the Alpine Convention is also given in English.

All other information of relevance to the Alps can be found on the web site of the "alpMedia" CIPRA Information Service on the Alps at <http://www.alpmedia.net>. After alpMedia was established it became necessary to clearly separate the two web sites. As a result of the restructuring, the old links to the CIPRA web may now lead to "dead ends".



Miscellaneous

“Gene Save”: Cross-border preservation of gene resources

(18.07.2003) The new Interreg Project “Gene Save” is to preserve and maintain old local grain, vegetable and apple varieties in southern and northern Tyrol. Seed and planting stock is to be collected, preserved in a gene bank and then re-introduced into cultivation on a wider scale. Indeed, over the past few decades there has been a sharp decrease in arable crop production at higher altitudes, with “highly-bred” varieties from abroad introduced instead. Established local varieties, which are particularly well adapted to local conditions and elevations, are to be preserved to counter this trend. The local population is being asked to provide information on or make available old planting and seed stock or to indicate the locations of old apple trees. Experts can then examine the samplings, collect the seed stock and conduct scientific experiments including germination tests. The Laimburg Experimental Station in southern Tyrol/I, the Tyrol Chamber of Agriculture/A and other project partners are all co-operating in the venture.

Source and information: South Tyrol Press Office 15.07.2003,
http://www.provinz.bz.it/LPA/news/news_d.asp?art=53615 (de)

Germany: Regional and ecological produce for Allgäu clinics

(14.08.2003) In future clinics in the Allgäu region are to be provided with nutritionally balanced meals made from regional and ecological produce. Bavaria’s Agricultural Minister Josef Miller referred to the brand programme *Aus gutem Grund* [On Good Grounds] as a milestone in regional marketing. He added that the initiative could well pave the way for the use of regional produce in community catering. Up to 300 farmers from Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg are to supply centralised systems-based kitchens, where the produce is processed and distributed. This ensures short transport routes and boosts consumer confidence in the regional provenance and quality of the produce. According to Miller regional marketing is also an important contribution to securing the livelihood of farmers.

Source and information: Bavarian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 07.08.2003
<http://www.stmfl.bayern.de/publikationen/pressemitteilungen/2003/pm255-03.html> (de)

October 4: Day of protest action against transit traffic in the mountain regions of Europe

(14.08.2003) On October 4 the European Transport Initiative ITE is once again co-ordinating a European-wide day of protest action against transit traffic in mountain regions. For the Alps, Pyrenees and the Vosges in particular ITE is calling on people to organise protest measures on the theme of “Truck Transit through Europe – Polluted Valleys: Our Health is at Risk”.

For information and the registration of protest actions: <http://www.ite-euro.com> (de/fr/it)

Colle del Nivolet and Val di Genova, Italy: No more car invasions

(18.07.2003) On Sundays in summer in the past few years the high plateau in the area of Colle del Nivolet was regularly transformed into a giant car park. However as of this summer the plateau can be reached only on foot, by bicycle or by shuttle bus. The high plateau itself is located above 2500 m between the Piedmont and the Aosta Valley in the Gran Paradiso National Park, and is famous for its wetlands and moorland. Now, after extensive discussions the National Park in co-operation with Turin Province and local communities took the initiative to close off the last section of the road to private traffic.

Reducing private traffic in touristic mountain regions is an urgent necessity, as shown by a similar measure adopted by the Park Adamello Brenta and the syndicate of the Park’s communities in the Val di Genova. In summer the Val di Genova attracts thousands of people. To avoid traffic jams and long columns of traffic on the narrow access road, you now need to pay for a car park ticket for the last section of the route. Only local inhabitants are authorised to use the road between 9.45 a.m. and 6 p.m. The Park operates a shuttle bus as an alternative mode of transport.

Source and information: <http://www.pnpgp.it/ita/Area/Nivolet.htm> (it), Turin Province 05.07.2003, 15.07.2003
<http://www.uffstampa.provincia.tn.it> (it), <http://www.parcoadamellobrenta.tn.it> (it)

Agenda

Georgia’s first international mountain film festival, NIAMORI (mountain goat), is being held from October 10 to 19. Amateur and professional films with a maximum running time of 30 minutes each are to be rated in eight categories (such as People and Mountains, Travel, Extreme Sports, Expeditions).

Sources and information: <http://www.mtnforum.org/europe/caucasus/news.cfm?IDnews=168> (en)