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New publication: Mountains of Europe

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At its workshop the town of Sonthofen presented an extensive draft programme and project ideas for 2005. Plans include staging an international ski competition with other Alpine Towns of the Year in March, the Euregio Music Festival in April, an international mountain forest conference in June, and an art exhibition with artists from previous Alpine Towns of the Year. Trento, the current Alpine Town of the Year, is to hand over the title on 26 November as part of its closing ceremony. The workshop participants particularly approved of the fact that local associations and organisations had been included in the programming for the Alpine Town of the Year in Sonthofen.

The title Alpine Town of the Year rewards alpine towns which put into practice in an exemplary fashion the international set of agreements of the Alpine Convention. Every year an international jury made up of representatives of the Alpine Towns Working Group, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA) and *Pro Vita Alpina* put forward an alpine town.

In the case of Sonthofen the jury were particularly taken by the car-free town centre and the municipal and regional transport authority, the construction of a high-capacity wood-chip heating plant with district heating network, and the ecological design of the health resort's park landscape. The jury also paid tribute to the municipal authorities' decision actively to involve its citizens in the town's future under the motto of *Zukunft Sonthofen*. Social groups are able to voice their interests through separate bodies such as the youth parliament or council of foreigners, and address these issues in a political forum.

All previous Alpine Towns of the Year (Villach/A, Belluno/I, Maribor/SI, Bad Reichenhall/D, Gap/F, Herisau/CH and Trento/I) intensify their co-operation as part of the "Alpine Town of the Year Community of Interests", which Sonthofen is now set to join.

Sources and information: <http://www.alpenstaedte.org> (de/fr/it/sl/en), <http://www.sonthofen.de> (de)

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New publication: Mountains of Europe - Stakeholders, legitimization, delineation

(12.08.2004) Europe's mountains are the topic of a new publication in the series *Revue de géographie alpine / Journal of Alpine Research*. Six essays in French and in English by renowned scientists such as Werner Bätzing have been compiled under keywords such as "Stakeholders, legitimization, delineation".

The publication focuses on three main points: the development of political programmes and organisations that advocate an improvement in the situation in mountain regions; the new role and location of alpine regions, which as a result of the EU's enlargement to the east have shifted from a geographically marginal position to the very centre of Europe; the geographic definition and description of European mountains. A great deal of space is dedicated to both the Alpine Convention and the Carpathian Convention.

Information: *La revue de géographie alpine/Journal of Alpine Research*, Vol. 92, No. 2, June 2004, Grenoble, ISSN 0035-1121

REMOTION – International conference on environmentally friendly mobility concepts and tourism

(12.08.2004) REMOTION 2004 is an expert conference that invites participants to consider and discuss the future prospects of mobility in tourism. It is being held at Werfenweng/A from 19 to 21 September and aims to bring together tourism destinations and manufacturers of environmentally sound transport and drive technologies. The conference is to provide a platform for exchanging information and previous experiences, and for establishing strategic partnerships.

Although the majority of lecturers are from Germany and Austria, there will also be speakers from Italy, France, Switzerland and Norway. Most of the papers presented fall into one of the two main categories: "Integrated Mobility Concepts – Requirements of Tourism Destinations" and "Innovations, Drive Technologies and Transport Systems". The conference languages are German, Italian, French and, where required, English. An exhibition is also to be held, offering an opportunity to find out more about the very latest technologies (e.g. electric vehicles, fun cars, etc.) and also to test the vehicles first-hand.

Source and information: <http://www.werfenweng.org/remotion> (de/fr/it/en)

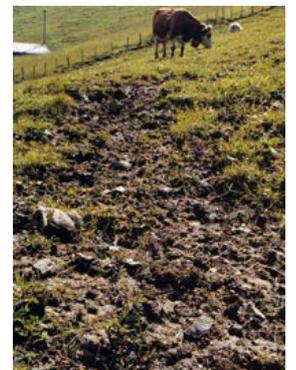
International conference on erosion and related problems

(12.08.2004) The European Land and Soil Alliance (ELSA e.V.) is holding its 3rd Annual International Conference under the motto "Erosion and Soil Protection – The Challenge of Soil Erosion for Local Authorities". The Conference is being held in Bolzano/I on 23 – 24 September, with simultaneous interpreting available in German, English and Italian.

Soil erosion constitutes one of the key dangers for soils worldwide. With their geomorphology the Alps are particularly at risk. What dimensions have erosion processes reached in Europe? What countermeasures have been tested and show promise? These and other issues are to be discussed at the Conference. Catherine Day of the European Commission, Directorate General for the Environment, is to give an overview of the EU's new soil protection strategy. The Conference is aimed at interested participants not just from the field of science but also politics, the authorities, the environment and industry.

Source, information and registration: http://www.bodenbuendnis.org/index_bozen.htm (de/en/it)

Soil erosion can be made worse by cattle tracks



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http://www.bayern.de/wwa-ro/regionale_themen/regionale_themen1.htm

Still little research into permafrost

(12.08.2004) During a six-year experimental series Reynold Delaloye, geographer at Fribourg University/CH, has found that permafrost reacts less sensitively to warming than was previously assumed, with no change noted in soil temperature at greater depths. He attributes his findings to a cooling ventilation mechanism that sets in in winter.

Overall, however, science still knows little about the eternal ice deep in the rock. At Zurich University/CH geographer Stefan Gruber is working on a computer programme designed to help cable-car operators assess the risk of rock fall. His computer model simulates how much rock in the Alps is subject to warming, and the regional differences in warming.

Studies in Austria have shown that cave ice has melted significantly over the past fifteen years. According to Rudolf Pavuza of the Association of Austrian Cave Researchers this is due less to higher annual average temperatures than to greater summer rainfall and warm rainwater filtering through the soil.

Sources and information: Tages Anzeiger 05.07.2004, <http://www.unifr.ch/main/news/detailID.php?nid=257> (de/fr) 20.07.2004, <http://www.nhm-wien.ac.at/nhm/hoehle/hoehleneis.htm> (de)

Carpathian Convention: Interim Secretariat in Vienna

(29.07.2004) The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has opened a new office in Vienna: as of July the UNEP office is to act as the Interim Secretariat of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians. The decision in favour of the UNEP office in Austria was based on the fact that international organisations (UNIDO, OSCE, ICPDR and the Secretariat of the Alpine Convention) are already located there.

With objectives such as cross-border ecosystem protection, the preservation of biological diversity and the cultural and natural heritage for future generations, the Carpathian Convention is modelled on the Alpine Convention. The Carpathian Convention process is also to be fully integrated into the International Partnership for Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions, which promotes international co-operation and the exchange of experience between mountain regions in the world.

Source and information: http://www.unep.ch/roe/assets/programme_activities/environmental_law/04_emi/documents/Vienna_July_2004_New_Office.doc (en)

Mountain regions and the elderly and disabled

(01.07.2004) Services for the elderly and the accessibility of accommodation by the disabled are the two key issues of a seminar at Feltre in Italy on July 2. The seminar is being held as part of the Interreg IIIA Programme *Montagna Accessibile* (Mountains Within Reach) of the Belluno Province and the Federal Province of Tyrol/A.

It is to present the results of a study on the accessibility of tourist accommodation by the disabled in the Belluno province. The data itself is available on the <http://www.bellunosociale.it> (it) web site. There is also a freephone number with information for the disabled, the elderly and people with impaired mobility on such matters as transport, accessibility of public authorities, and tourist infrastructure, etc.

The seminar also features a study comparing the organisation of social services for the elderly in Tyrol and the Belluno Province. Finally a report is to be presented on promoting sporting activities for disabled and non-disabled people in mountain regions.

Sources and information: Provincia di Belluno 29.06.2004, <http://www.bellunosociale.it> (it), <http://www.sicheres-tirol.com/> (de)

Worsening of regional differences in Swiss mountain regions

(15.07.2004) Switzerland's rural areas and mountain regions are continuing to struggle with depopulation and unemployment. By contrast large regions and central areas are less affected by this negative trend, which has now been ongoing for several years. These are the findings of the report *Das Schweizer Berggebiet 2004 – Fakten und Zahlen* [Swiss Mountain Regions 2004 – Facts and Figures] of the Swiss Working Group for Mountain Regions (SAB), which features current statistics, trends and scenarios in the Swiss mountain regions. According to the report areas particularly affected include the inner alpine region (upper Valais, the Bernese Oberland, Uri and Grisons), the Jura valleys and the inner Napfgebiet, with clearly negative structural changes; by contrast there has been a slight growth in the economy and in the population figures in regions along the western and central northern edge of the Alps and in the Ticino to the south.

The causes are complex: geographic location, structural change and political and economic outline conditions all have a crucial influence on the way in which mountain regions develop. Under the New Regional Policy (NRP) the SAB hopes that mountain regions will be promoted in a more targeted way.

Report and source: SAB Press Release No. 997, 05.07.2004 <http://www.sab.ch> (de/fr)

Switzerland: internet timetable for mountain enthusiasts

(01.07.2004) The Swiss Alpine Club (SAC) has posted a new German and French internet page at <http://www.alpenonline.ch>, to help mountaineers plan their tours. Now information on Alpine Club huts and public transport routes to the mountain regions can be downloaded quickly and easily. Besides railway and postal bus services the site also includes alpine taxis, car-sharing options and even mountain bikes as different means of reaching the starting point.

The online alpine timetable is the result of the three-year SAC mobility campaign entitled *Alpen retour*, aimed at encouraging mountain enthusiasts to make greater use of public transport facilities when travelling to the mountains. And although the campaign officially ended in June of this year, "alpine-friendly" mobility is to remain an important issue for the SAC.

Source and information: <http://www.sac-cas.ch> (de/fr)

The ascent to the *Sewenhütte* takes approx. two hours from the nearest postal bus stop.



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<http://mypage.bluewin.ch/kroentenhuette/von-huette-zu-huette/huette03.htm>

Miscellaneous

Restriction on new holiday homes

(01.07.2004) In future all new properties built in Zermatt/CH must have a principal residence share of 30%. This measure is designed to prevent Zermatt becoming a ghost town during the off-season. The local electorate approved the relevant regulations with 649 to 246 votes in favour. There is an abundance of building land in Zermatt, most of it privately owned, which is why over the past two years up to 400 new dwellings have been built there. The new regulations are to help regulate the boom in building activity and ensure that the resort remains an attractive place to live for its permanent residents, too. Source: Der Bund 21.06.2004

ReSource Award – On the lookout for sustainable water management projects

(15.07.2004) This year once again Swiss Re, a leading re-insurance company, is rewarding innovative water management projects. It is particularly interested in projects which strengthen the awareness of the ecological, social and economic significance of water, and successfully integrate local/regional players. What's more the concepts drawn up should also be applicable beyond the area of the project itself. Projects from all over the world can be submitted until the end of August. Information: <http://www.swissre.com/resource> (en)

New web site for Mountain Partnership

(15.07.2004) The Mountain Partnership organisation went online at the beginning of July. The <http://www.mountainpartnership.org> internet site provides a wealth of information on mountains in English, French and Spanish, with a new Newsletter entitled "Peak to Peak" and facts and figures on the international day of the mountains. Mountain Partnership is an alliance of countries, UN organisations, NGOs, etc., which has set itself the goal of protecting mountain regions worldwide and improving the living conditions of the mountain populace.

CIPRA on film

(15.07.2004) To mark its 50th anniversary CIPRA, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, produced a film about the Alps and of course the Commission's own activities. The film is entitled "A thousand valleys – one challenge. CIPRA's work for sustainable development in the Alps." The 19 minute film is available in DVD format and in several language versions: German, French, Italian, Slovenian and English. The DVD can be ordered from <http://www.cipra.org> for a contribution towards expenses of CHF 5.00 / € 3.00.

New tourist complexes in high mountain regions

(12.08.2004) The Ukrainian project at Bukovel reflects the global trend towards developing increasingly vast ski areas: Work has already begun on the new ski area, and with a target size of 278 km of trails by 2008 it is set to be one of the world's 20 largest ski resorts. Source: <http://www.skiclub.co.uk> (en) 27.07.2004

Thesis on dead wood and the preservation of biodiversity in forests

(12.08.2004) At the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne/CH the doctoral candidate Rita Bütler has looked at the question of how much dead wood is enough for biodiversity conservation in managed forests. She examined the presence of the three-toed woodpecker in 24 sub-alpine spruce forests in Switzerland. It was suggested that three-toed woodpeckers be considered as indicators of dead wood and habitat quality. If the woodpecker's habitat is to be preserved, Bütler recommends a lower limit 18 m³ of standing dead wood per hectare of forest. Source: <http://library.epfl.ch/theses/?display=detail&nr=2761> (fr/en/de)

Agenda

7th International Symposium for Solar Energy **Solar 2004**; 8 – 11 September 2004, Gleisdorf/A; organiser: AEE INTEC (Institute for Sustainable Technologies); Information: <http://www.aee.at/veranstaltungen/gleidsol2004.htm> (de/en)

International Conference **Regenerating Mountain Forests – Prerequisite for Sustainable Management**; 12 – 16 September 2004, Kloster Seon/D; organiser: Technische Universität München; Info: <http://www.forst.tu-muenchen.de/events/rmf2004/index.html> (en)

International Conference: **The use of vegetation to improve slope stability**; 13 – 17 September 2004, Thessalonica/Greece; Info: <http://www.ecoslopes.com> (en)

International Symposium on Tourism: **Future Mountain 2004**; 22 – 24 September 2004, Sölden/A; organiser: Tourismusverband Ötztal Arena and Bergbahnen Sölden; Information: <http://www.future-mountain.com> (de/en)

International Conference: **Hydrology of Mountain Environments**; 27 September to 1 October 2004, Berchtesgaden/D; Information: <http://www.tu-braunschweig.de/geooekologie/abteilungen/hydrolo/forsch/iconf;jsessionid=7nk33ibpz1.1> (en)

Oh!...

... Fancy travelling on foot from Europe to Africa in a single day? It can be done – from Zermatt/CH. Mind you, the trail is essentially vertical, given that the objective is to climb the summit of the Matterhorn. There you'll be stepping onto a piece of Africa.

Indeed some 45 million years ago Africa's tectonic plate shifted onto Europe's in the course of the folding of the Alps. And what is arguably the Alps' most famous peak owes its "multi-cultural" heritage to this geological period. All this is shown in the recently published "Matterhorn plate" of Switzerland's Geological Atlas.

Source and information: Swiss Federal Office for Water and Geology 08.07.2004
<http://www.bwg.admin.ch/aktuell/presse/2004/d/matterh.htm> (de/fr/it/en)