

Editorial

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Verbier/Bagnes Tourism has decided to put the emphasis on a strategic element of the summer season: entertainment. So the programme that's offered is even better than before, as you can see by glancing through this most recent issue of our newsletter. The aim of this particular approach is to make sure that Verbier is clearly positioned on the summer tourist map.

To achieve this end, we have entered into agreements with various partners who are professionals in the fields in question, for example trekking guides. We have also decided to promote the historical, cultural and natural attractions of the Valley of Bagnes. And we've done this with a touch of originality, since there is now a train to take visitors along three theme routes: the museums, the architectural heritage and the natural surroundings. Other projects that have been recently set up regarding the improvement of infrastructures are being actively pursued, as for example Bike Park.

Such a programme requires extra funding and more human resources. This is the reason why the General Assembly of the Société de Développement de Verbier has accepted the proposal for an increase in tourist tax. This will in particular help to strengthen the position of the Event Manager, and in the near future, he will be responsible for a veritable structure behind the organization of events and entertainments.

Enjoy your reading, and I wish you all a very good summer!

RIDING SCHOOL: BEAUTIFUL AND BRAND NEW!



After forty-odd years of good and faithful service, the riding school has been given a total face-lift. The new building now provides everything that is possibly needed for horses and riders alike. Yann Dessimoz, who has now managed the school for three years, takes this opportunity to widen his offer.

The new riding school is well and truly there. At long last, riding enthusiasts will rightly say. It is a fact that the old building no longer corresponded to current norms. But when you see the result, it was well worth waiting. The new premises include 20 spacious and comfortable boxes. Their dimensions are different, and so are designed to accommodate all types, from big horses down to small ponies. A tack room, a place for stocking the feed and bedding with a barn, and a shower area for washing down the horses complete the installations. Occasional visitors, just like the school's regular users, will also appreciate the refreshment bar and its view over the Combins mountain range.

The cost of these renovations amounts to 915,000 francs. The financing was assumed by the Société de Développement de Verbier, which can rely on its own funds, the Commune de Bagnes and a LIM credit. This project is part of the new policy adopted by Verbier/Bagnes Tourism, which aims at improving the infrastructures available to the public.

Yann Dessimoz, manager of the riding school for the third year running, now has all he needs to make things work. This fine, brand new building has made him so enthusiastic that he's organized a number of new equestrian activities for this summer. And he has called on the services of a professional horsewoman, Jessica

Tenisch, who is specialized in dressage. After training at the Avenches National Stud, this young lady from the Valais worked in particular for several competition riders. The attractive summer programme also includes two weeks of training, in collaboration with Les Elfes International Summer Camps. From the 1st to the 8th of July and the 5th to the 12th of August, riders who want to improve their technique can attend a two-week course at the riding school with lodging provided at Les Elfes, which is situated just nearby. Throughout the season, other lessons and rides are organized upon request.

Yann Dessimoz, who is keen to forget the old school as fast as he possibly can, has already chosen a new name and a new logo. So from now on, you have to talk about the "Ecuries de Verbier" ("The Verbier Stables"), as the logo engraved on a wooden plaque on the front of the building reminds you. A new name for a new start: off at a gallop!

ORIGINAL DISCOVERIES

A panoramic train will now be taking passengers through the Valley of Bagnes during the tourist season. And it isn't a hoax. After the immense success of the Train des Combins last summer when it replaced the resort buses at certain times, Verbier/Bagnes Tourism has decided to acquire it, with the support of the Commune of Bagnes and the "Sociétés de Développement Châble/Bruson and Fionnay/Haut Val de Bagnes". The Train des Combins will therefore take visitors along three different routes a week in the Valley of Bagnes. On Tuesdays, it leaves Le Châble and climbs up to Mauvoisin, for a visit to the dam and surrounding region. On Wednesdays, it takes young and old alike to discover the local museums, alternately visiting the Bagnes Museum, the Maison Gard, the Scie and the Moulin de Sarreyer, the Forge Oreiller or the Ancienne Demeure. On Thursdays, it leaves on a trip of discovery of the local region and its products, notably with a visit to the Bruson agricultural research station, which grows fruit and cultivates aromatic plants. This excursion departs from Châble, passes by Lourtier and Sarreyer, and ends up in Verbier. On the other days of the week, sightseers are taken on a tour of discovery of the Verbier resort.

These trips are sold in the form of all-inclusive tickets that cover several other services. The relevant details, as well as the tariffs and timetables are available at the Verbier and Le Châble Tourist Offices.

So for both young and old, these excursions by the Train des Combins present opportunities for visitors to make original and amusing discoveries. Why don't you try it out for yourself!

OPEN-AIR EXHIBITIONS



The Commune of Bagnes cultural service has organized two open-air exhibitions. The first is being held in Verbier throughout the summer season. Fifteen large-format photographs by Mark Shapiro are exhibited in the Rue de Médran. They depict various aspects of Bagnes lifestyle. This exhibition is intended as a foretaste of the images presented at Bagnes Museum, where works by Mark Shapiro and François Perraudin are on show from July 15 until October 1, from Wednesday to Sunday (2pm-6pm).

Higher up the valley, the Haut Val de Bagnes welcomes a travelling exhibition entitled "Familles valaisannes" ("Families from the Valais"), based on the theme of present-day Valais families. This exhibition includes fifteen or so photos two by three metres in size by Robert Hofer and Jean-Claude Roh, with captions by the well-known humorist Daniel Rausis. Come and discover all this during the last week of July and the first week of August.

LES ELFES: ALREADY 10 YEARS OLD!

It's quite an accomplishment: this year, 'Les Elfes' is celebrating its ten years of existence. However, not many people know exactly what 'Les Elfes' is all about. So this anniversary is an ideal occasion to describe this institute in more detail.

'Les Elfes' organizes sports and language camps throughout the year, designed for young people aged between 8 and 18 years, who come here from all over the world. They can either participate on an individual basis, or as a class accompanied by their teacher. The organization's registered office is in Verbier, but 'Les Elfes' also holds camps in Crans Montana, Zermatt, Whistler in Canada and recently, in the Lebanon. Study or adventure trips to France, Italy, Germany, Australia, Spain, Kenya, and England are also offered.

AN IMPORTANT ECONOMIC PLAYER

In its two large chalets and in its offices at "Le Hameau", 25 people are employed on a permanent basis as well as, depending on the season, up to 75 additional staff members, either working full or part-time.

Each year, over 2,500 teenagers are welcomed to the resort for a period of one to three weeks, which makes 'Les Elfes' one of Téléverbier's most important customers.

'Les Elfes' is also an important player vis-à-vis the exterior, notably as regards prospecting within Switzerland, or exploring the market abroad - in regions such as Europe, as well as in very distant countries like India, Australia, Canada, the Lebanon or China for example. The complementarity between its own activity and that of the Tourist Office is therefore extremely strong, particularly as regards emerging markets. Year round, a spokesperson for 'Les Elfes' is involved in making promotional trips, and his students come from over 60 different countries.

COMMUNAL NEWS

During summer 2006, the Commune of Bagnes is carrying out several public works projects in the resort area. It is also setting up certain other large-scale projects. All this with one aim in mind: to continue improving the quality of life in Verbier.

A vast programme for the renovation of the resort's road network was introduced some years ago. After some of the main roads, which have now been completed, the secondary roads are in the process of being repaired. The roadworks first of all involve replacing the underground equipment, then laying stone blocks along the edge of the pavements and redoing their surface. The repair work will be finished sometime during July for the Chemin de La Barmète, and at the end of the year for the Route de Patiers.

Another constant preoccupation for the Commune: the drinking water supply. This year, a reservoir has been built in the Planalui district. This new installation will mainly supply the upper part of the resort.

Although these projects are not very spectacular, they do contribute in a very concrete way to improving the quality of life not only for the local inhabitants but also for the visitors.

PROJECTS UNDER STUDY

The main project that is currently under study is the car park in the centre of the resort. Specifications are being drawn up for an underground car park and the construction of a public square on the surface. An order for a preliminary plan will be confirmed between now and the end of the year. Then an assessment of feasibility should take place in the course of 2007. At this stage, it is still too early to give a precise date for when the work will start. However, it is reasonable to suppose that it could begin in the spring of 2008.

The communal administration services are also working on putting together a master plan for urban landscaping improvement. The aim is to make the streets of the resort more welcoming. A contest will be held this autumn, in collaboration with a school specialized in this field. At the same time, the Commune is also going to contact the local tradespeople to work on the visual improvement of the terraces, shop windows and other related commercial elements.

In the same vein, an international design competition for the best street furniture will be launched, again in collaboration with another specialized school. It has been organized at an international level in order to arouse curiosity about Verbier, and thus to increase its renown.

As the resort is developing rapidly, the Commune's firm intention is to do its utmost to preserve the charm which is its main attraction. And that couldn't be better!

ECHOES ABOUT TRADE

Verbier

The Verbier Lodge hotel has been bought up by the company Virgin Limited Edition, owned by Richard Branson. As renovation work is being planned, the establishment will remain closed until December 2007.

The Le Mazot hotel has been sold. The rooms have been transformed into one-roomed apartments and sold off separately, with priority given to the residents or resort employees. The restaurant should remain in business, but at the time this goes to press no further details are available.

The Au Vieux Valais hotel has also been sold. It will remain open until May 2007, under the management of Claude-Alain Besse. Its ultimate future is not yet known.

As of this winter, **the Hotel Bristol** now has a fully equipped conference room. It is on the same floor as reception, and situated at the back of the building in a calm, quiet environment.

A new agency, **Heinz Immobilier**, opened its doors last winter in Rue de la Poste, in the recent "Valentine and Victoria" buildings.

A new boutique for decoration, **Moret Décoration**, has opened in the Rue de la Poste.

Hestia boutique has moved. It's now some metres further down Rue de la Poste, on the ground floor of the "Le Slot" building.

The Art Déco boutique, situated in the Rue du Centre Sportif, has been entirely renovated to give it a bigger and better display area.

Since last winter, **Rip Curl** has opened its own boutique in the "Rosalp" galleries.

The Biosport Thérapie centre will have new premises in the "Valentine and Victoria" building from the 1st of October onwards.

Due to the work being carried out, **the Espace Alpin du Hameau Museum** is not open to the public this summer.

The Valley of Bagnes

Marie-Laure Fellay is taking over the management of **the Grand-Combin hotel** in Fionnay.

The La Vallée hotel in Lourtier has gained an extra star. It is now classified in the three-star category of the Société Suisse des Hôteliers (Swiss Hotel Association.)

The Hôtel de La Poste in Châble is shut this summer for transformation, partly into apartments. In future, the hotel will only have four rooms available.

The La Ruinette hotel has been transformed into B&B, the Max and Millies.

A new tea-room café, **Le Probé**, has opened at Montagnier. The decor is original and Moroccan in style.

A NEW POLICE STATION

The local police are moving to the new "Le Slot" building in Verbier's Rue de la Poste. We asked Valérie Guigoz, the communal councillor in charge of security, about the reasons behind this move.

Valérie Guigoz, why are the local police moving to new premises?

The old premises weren't up to modern standards, and because they were too small our agents were no longer able to carry out their tasks correctly.

What are the advantages of the new premises?

These new premises are bigger, but above all they are more functional. They are much better suited to current needs. With such equipment, our agents will be able to carry out their duties as neighbourhood police much more efficiently.

What do you mean by neighbourhood police?

Well, in fact this means a police force that is at the service of the local population, which is closer to its preoccupations and needs. It is also more involved in prevention than in repression. This doesn't mean that we will be seeing any decrease in professionalism; on the contrary, as in the short term we intend to have only experienced members of the police and not employ any more auxiliaries.

FOCUS ON RESCUE

Our rescuers are present everywhere, whether on the slopes or in the mountains, and yet most people don't know much about what they really do. So to pay homage to these hidden heroes, Téléverbier has decided to devote its summer exhibition to them at Savoleyres.



From the 1st of July to the 27th of August, the theme of mountain rescue is given full coverage at the Savoleyres restaurant. An exhibition that in fact retraces its development from the 1940s up to the present day. The technical and human aspects are clearly displayed in various ways: informative posters, games, films from the archives, or recent ones. The aim is to show the immense amount of work that lies behind what at first view only seems to be simple helicopter takeoffs and landings. To achieve this end, several partners involved in rescue operations in the Valais have contributed directly to setting up the exhibition: Air-Glacières, the Maison du Sauvetage FXB and the Organisation Cantonale Valaisanne des Secours (OCVS).

This permanent exhibition is given additional interest by several special events. The first of these is the official preview on the 13th of July at 10 o'clock, in the presence of a number of persons engaged in the field of mountain rescue. Then on the 23rd of July and 20th of August there are two diversion-oriented days, with pleasure trips by helicopter departing from the Croix de Cœur, and various entertainments organized by mountain guides outside the restaurant. The 28th of July is based on the theme of security and prevention, with at 10 o'clock, and still at the Savoleyres restaurant, the opening of a lively debate on the pros and cons of wearing a helmet or not for sports enthusiasts.

To conclude, again let's just note that the exhibition is open seven days a week from the 1st of July to the 27th of August, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and that it is free of charge.

www.televerbier.ch

THE ALPINE PASTURE IN FESTIVE MOOD!

The Grands Plans mountain pasture, on the route of the Croix de Cœur, has decided to break new ground by opening its doors to the local population and visitors alike. The aim is simple: so that people can discover the life of an alpine pasture and its products during a festive and friendly open day.

The date chosen for this première is Sunday the 16th of July, and there is a very full programme. The day begins by a mass celebrated in the open air at 10 o'clock. Afterwards, at 11, there is a demonstration of tomme cheese-making. Half an hour later, you can watch a parade: the entire herd returning to the cowshed, an everyday spectacle for the herdsmen of course, but something different for the general public. Then, at 1.30 p.m., the finest heifers will compete in a 'beauty contest', and the results will be declared at 3.30. One of the special events of this day will take place in the meantime: from 2 o'clock onwards, seeing how the famous Bagnes raclette cheese is made. It should also be noted that the afternoon programme includes demonstrations of how a herd dog works with the cattle.

The convivial side is assured by the possibility

offered throughout the day to have something to eat, and sample the local products that make up the famous 'Corbeille d'Entremont'. Musical entertainment is also provided by musicians from the region and several activities have been specially organized for children.

This original initiative deserves full support so that it can continue to be held and become a tradition.

BACK AT BIKE PARK

Not much time was needed before the news got around to the specialists about Verbier Bike Park. It can be said that from this summer on, this sports area belongs to the very closed circle of parks certified as being 'Kona Groove Approved'. In fact, a partnership contract has been signed with Kona, a manufacturer specialized in making mountain bikes for downhill sport. Verbier Bike Park has suddenly become the first of its kind in Switzerland to benefit from this type of recognition. This guarantees not only advice from experts in matters of equipment and upkeep of mountain bike courses, but it also provides access to the Kona brand's worldwide promotional network.

The investments in this Bike Park on the part of the Commune, Verbier/Bagnes Tourism and Téléverbier are ongoing. For this summer, two extra tracks have been made between Les Ruinettes and Médran, so that downhill mountain bikers have a little more choice.

The Kona Verbier Groove Approved Bike Park is also welcoming a competition on 26 August: participants in the Downhill Championship for the French-speaking part of Switzerland will be making a stopover in Verbier on that date. And while on the subject of dates, let's not finish without telling you that the Bike Park will remain open until the 18th of September. Enthusiasts, take note!

www.verbierbikepark.ch

UNFORGETTABLE HIKES

For this summer, Verbier/Bagnes Tourism, Verbier Sport+ and La Fantastique have concluded an agreement for the organization of weekly guide-led hikes. The objective of this partnership is to diversify the programme of events and guarantee professional supervision. These hikes are completely free of charge, even though they are now led by trekking guides. These experts are unbeatable when it comes to explaining the flora and fauna, the geography, or yet again the unique natural heritage of the region the visitors are hiking through, and this contributes to making these mountain walks an unforgettable experience. They can also find out more about this relatively new profession in Switzerland, and convince sceptics of the advantages of having an experienced trekking guide, even at a medium-altitude level.

There are two themes to choose from. First of all, every Tuesday from the 11th July until the 15th of August, there's a half-day hike entitled 'Verbier, son histoire, son patrimoine' ('Verbier, its history, its heritage'), during which visitors can discover the early days of the village and the history of the resort itself. Every Thursday from the 13th of July to the 10th of August, there's the opportunity to go on a hike called 'Un été pour découvrir le Val de Bagnes' ('A summer to discover the Valley of Bagnes'), that lets hikers appreciate and see for themselves the natural beauty of the biggest Swiss commune in terms of area.

The details (routes, timetables, etc.) of these guide-led hikes are available from the Verbier and Le Châble Tourist Offices.

It might be worth pointing out that activities which have now become a tradition in Verbier such as the Verbierathlon for children or accompanied mountain-bike tours are of course maintained as part of the resort's activities. They are now being organized by a new team under the leadership of François Divorne, the event manager taken on last autumn by Verbier/Bagnes Tourism, Téléverbier and the Commune of Bagnes.

THE VERBIER FESTIVAL & ACADEMY INNOVATES

The Verbier Festival & Academy has introduced an important innovation into its programme for 2006. In fact, the programme of events is being extended for an extra seven days thanks to the Amateur Chamber Music Week, from the 14th to the 20th of July.

This additional week is aimed at attracting people who play all sorts of different musical instruments, such as the violin, viola, cello, double bass, piano and wind instruments. The aim is to bring them together to work on a repertoire ranging from Mozart to Shostakovich, under the supervision of famous names like the members of the Badke Quartet or Paul Coker. Encounters with world renowned performers such as Gábor Takács-Nagy, Hilary Hahn, Roderick Swanson not forgetting the members of the Phaedrus Quartet, are also on the agenda.

This new event, which receives the support of the Amateur Chamber Music Players Inc., which has over 5,000 members all over the world, should rapidly gain widespread acclaim and attract a large number of musicians and also their families and friends to Verbier.

After being put on the back burner for some years, the programme for children is once again being organized under the name of 'Discovery'. It is even taking on a new dimension, as it also intends to get the parents involved. The objective is to make adults and children alike discover music, nature and art - three elements that contribute to the unique attraction of Verbier in summer. Let's mention some of the highlights of the Discovery programme: the Art Weekend, the Mozart Fun Day, the Sonic Postcards Project, then there's an entire day dedicated to the association 'Paint-A-Smile'. The children will also be able to meet students from the Dance Academy. In addition, each day they will have the opportunity to make instruments and play them, too. They will also be able to discover The Sorcerer's Apprentice, composed by Dukas as well as Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf.

WHEN MOUNTAIN AND SEA MEET UP

Verbier continues to innovate in the events area. From the 7th to the 9th of July, the Val de Bagnes resort will in fact be holding a beach volleyball tournament. It may seem a bit of a paradox to want to bring a beach sport up to 1,500 metres of altitude. But when you realize how dynamic Verbier is, you'll already understand the move a lot better.

In fact, the main aim of this beach volleyball tournament is to set the summer season off to a good start. So it's quite logical to select a dynamic sport, which, moreover, is very much 'in' at the moment. The Verbier tournament chose to play the ace card of unbeatable alpine surroundings and an easygoing, relaxed atmosphere to accompany this. Rather than aiming very high with big budget outlays, the organizers have preferred to advance step by step.

RENDEZ-VOUS WITH A STAR

The 2006 tournament is an all-male game played at national level. In spite of their wanting to keep a low profile for the event at the onset, the organizers nevertheless managed to ensure that Martin Laciga, a celebrity in his own right, would turn up for the occasion. The qualifying rounds take place on the Friday and Saturday, and the finals on Sunday. There will also be demonstrations given by international players between the tournament matches.

The Verbier Beach Volley Tournament also wants to attract the general public, and be enjoyed as a big popular festivity. People of all ages can thus participate in the various contests held on the theme of this sport: precision of service, quality of spring at the net, or for instance a focus on certain objects specific to beach volleyball. Children aren't left out either, as a special programme has been designed for them. Not forgetting the entertainments village that is open every evening until 10 p.m.

ORGANIZATION

The organization of this tournament has been entrusted to BL Events, headed by Yves Balet and Romaine Lambiel. This company, which has recently been set up in the events-related sector, receives the support of the Commune of Bagnes, Verbier/Bagnes Tourism and Téléverbier, all of which are represented on the Organization Committee. This demonstrates the determination of the major players in the tourism area to find the necessary synergies that can benefit the resort as a whole.

MAJOR EVENTS**NOT TO BE MISSED**

- **7 - 9.7.06**
Verbier Beach Volley
- **8 - 9.7.06**
4e Rencontre des Orgues de Barbarie
- **14 - 16.7.06**
Verbier Golf Pro Am Schroeder
- **14 - 20.7.06**
Amateur Chamber Music Week
- **15.7.06**
Verbier Ultra Run
- **21.7. - 6.8.06**
Verbier Festival & Academy
- **22.7 + 5.8.06**
Kermesses
- **5 - 13.8.06**
Grand Concours Hippique
- **5 - 6.8.06**
40e Trophée des Combins Fionnay-Panossières
- **15.8.06**
Marché artisanal de Fionnay
- **20.8.06**
Grand Raid Cristalp Verbier - Grimentz
- **23 - 27.8.06**
Salon du 4x4 de Verbier
- **25 - 26.8.06**
Bonafiesta, Bonatchiesse
- **26.8.06**
Course VTT downhill
- **26 - 27.8.06**
Championnat CH de pétanque en doublettes, Le Châble
- **23 - 24.9.06**
Bagnes Capitale de la Raclette, Le Châble

(Subject to change)

FOR YOUR DIARY

- **16 - 17.12.06**
24 Heures Freeride de Verbier
- **17 - 23.02.07**
Verbier Ride
- **23 - 25.03.07**
O'Neill Xtreme by Swatch
- **31.03.07**
Carlsberg High Five
- **13 - 22.04.07**
XspeedSki
- **28 - 29.04.07**
Ultime Session

(Subject to change)

More info about these events on

www.verbier.ch