

LUBERON GEOPARK, Progress Report, August 2007 – March 2008

1 - A new museum of geology at the centre of the Geopark

The new museum of geology, located in the visitor center of the Luberon geopark, was inaugurated on Thursday, October 25th. It replaces the paleontology museum created 20 years ago at the same location. At the centre of the town of Apt, close to the Museum of Industrial Adventure, it is a new place of discovery for visitors, tourists and residents.

Through a various collection of fossils from the Luberon area, a rich illustration, playful manipulations and explanations tailored to the general public, it offers a new geological look at the Luberon landscapes and long history.

The opening of this museum fits into the political recovery of the territory and local development led by the Geopark for 20 years in the field of geology.

Finally, it aims to discover and understand the geological phenomena to the younger, elementary school to high school, responding to the programs of National Education.

Total cost of the operation (study and achievement): € 180,500 HT.
Funding: State, Region, Department of Vaucluse, Geopark (23%)

2 - A new person in charge of tourism and agriculture

Following the departure of Jacques Decuignières, a new agent, Mylène Maurel, has been hired to implement the tasks of Tourism and Agriculture enshrined in the Charter of the Lubreton Regional Nature Park. It will continue to implement the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism and follow up collaborations initiated with the tourism stakeholders of the Territory (accommodation, tourist offices, guides...). She will also continue the development of the area's products and boosting agriculture.

3 - Survey about the economic impact of bike tourism in the Luberon area

Since 1995, the Regional Nature Park of the Luberon developed facilities for the development of tourism by bike. The three routes now in use ("The Luberon by bike", "The Ocher massif by bike", "The Forcalquier and Lure Mountain area by bike") add up 350 km arrowed in both directions and crossing most of the municipalities of the territory.

In 2007, the Luberon Regional Nature Park commissioned a study assessing the economic benefits generated by tourism by bike.

The results highlight that the practice of cycling in the territory generates about 8.9 million euros annually. This study also highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the offer "bicycle" in the territory. To further improve this method of discovery of the territory, a working group, bringing together all those involved in tourism cycling, grew up around 5 workshops.

The stakes of the "Plan for the Development of Tourism by Bike" are:

- Organizing and developing sustainable and high value-added tourism
- Promoting networking players to better promote the Luberon, as a tourism destination by bike
- Promote sustainable development of the territory by the strengthening of eco-friendly (locals and tourists).

4 - Revision of the charter of the Luberon Regional Nature Park

The Luberon Regional Nature Park is in the course of revision of its charter. This procedure requires the agreement of the local authorities which make a commitment for 12 years to act in coherence with the charter. 75 municipalities, representing a 178.744 hectare territory where live about 166.000 inhabitants gave their agreement.

That increases the territory of the Park.

The Regional council also approved the charter of the Luberon Regional Nature Park. The revised charter must be again validated by the State and the Regional Nature Park Federation, then be subjected for opinion to the various concerned ministries, before the signature of the decree, which could occur as soon as possible before summer.

5 - Soon " Bistrots de Pays " in the Luberon Regional Nature Park

The "Bistrots de Pays" network in the Luberon Regional Nature Park gets organized around the partnership between the National Federation of the "Bistrots de Pays" and the Luberon Regional Nature Park, which is involved as the local administrator. Eleven potential "bistrots" are involved.

The "Bistrots de Pays" are ambassadors of their territory, multi-services offices, crossroads of ideas, places of cultural life. This original concept was born a dozen years ago and structure around four sectors with: a tourist information service, valuation of the local products, propositions of cultural and festive activities and, finally, intensification of convenience services.