



GEOPARK CHABLAIS



In March 2012 the Chablais territory became a member of the European Geoparks Network and the Global Network of National Geoparks assisted by UNESCO. It has joined the group of the three other French Geoparks (The Geological Reserve of Digne les Bains, the Regional Natural Park of the Luberon and the Regional Natural Park of the Bauges). Hosted by the « Syndicat Intercommunal d'Aménagement du Chablais », the Geopark initiative aims to preserve, promote and share the territory's natural heritage.

Geopark Chablais is located in the Haute-Savoie ; it extends from the southern shore of Lake Lemman right up to the summits of the Portes du Soleil. This remarkable natural area impregnates the culture and the life of its inhabitants and its many visitors. The traditional buildings, the use of the mountains, the life in the high alpine farms "alpages", the stories and the legends, the natural riches of the Evian and Thonon Mineral Waters are just some of the examples of the strength of the link between man and nature.



The Pierre à Martin - Ballaison

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WHAT IS A GEOPARK ?

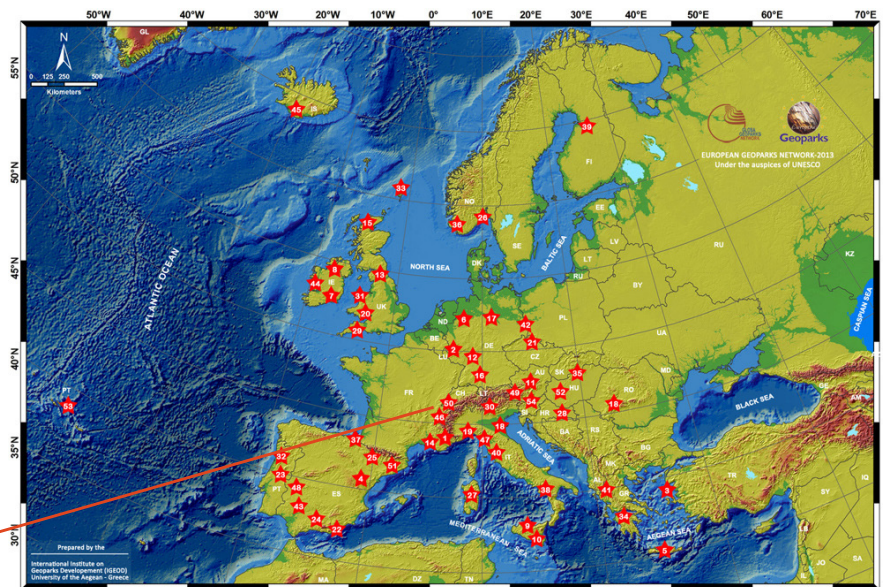
Above all, a Geopark is a living region animated by its inhabitants, visitors and local stakeholders. Here the relationship between man and the Earth is an essential component. A geopark features a certain number of geological sites remarkable for their scientific quality, rarity, aesthetic appeal or educational value. The interest can equally be archaeological, historical or cultural. Each remarkable site is known as a geosite. Together these geosites define the geoheritage of the territory.

"A Geopark is certainly not only for specialists. By promoting the preservation and communication of geosites, we will contribute to the economic and tourism development of the Chablais. It is a real tool for sustainable development" explains Jean-Pierre FILLION, President of the « Syndicat Intercommunal d'Aménagement du Chablais ».

THE EUROPEAN GEOPARKS NETWORK

The European Geoparks Network (EGN) is the voluntary grouping of territories that share common interests and the same approaches towards the preservation, communication and promotion of their heritage, in particular the natural geological heritage. Founded in 2000, the European Geoparks Network today numbers 54 Geoparks.

Chablais, 50th European Geopark



WHAT DOES THE GEOPARKS NETWORK AS ASSISTED BY UNESCO OFFER ?

- recognition and promotion of geological and cultural heritage, as well as environmental quality, at an international level ;
- integration and opportunity to work at the heart of a worldwide network of 92 Geoparks ;
- above all, a means to diversify tourism.





THE CHABLAIS, A REFLECTION OF THE HISTORY OF THE ALPS



© Antoine Berger

The high alpine farm "alpage" at Bise

The Chablais region is unique. The landscape tells an ancient story, one that is over 250 million years old.

Along the 50km that separate Thonon-les-Bains from the Col de Joux Plane in Morzine, the Chablais reflects the history of the formation of the Alps !

Before the birth of the mountains, the Alpine Ocean was hundreds of kilometres wide. During the formation of the Alps, the rocks laid down at the bottom of this ocean were folded, fractured and raised up. The glaciers then eroded and sculpted the landscapes into the breathtaking sights visible today throughout the Chablais.

The glaciers which have now disappeared, were once of huge importance in the Chablais. They were the origin of the numerous lakes, such as Lake Lemman, the largest glacial lake in Western Europe. Water that filters through the abandoned deposits of these retreating glaciers acquires specific characteristics and becomes the mineral waters of Thonon and Evian. Following this thread the Chablais Geopark has developed the heritage themes of glaciers and water.

GEOPARK CHABLAIS : AN EXCEPTIONAL GEOHERITAGE

In order to preserve, promote and inform, a good knowledge of the geological history of the Chablais and its sites which "tell stories" is required. It is for this reason that the Geopark has launched an inventory of geological, geomorphological and hydrogeological sites. Aside from the purely scientific elements, the cultural, pedagogic and aesthetic interest of each site is taken into account. Today more than 80 sites have been catalogued and mapped.

Amongst these are several emblematic examples : The Pont du Diable Gorges, mountain lakes, the slate mines of Morzine, the vines of Ballaisson, the karst of the Niffion alpages, the numerous erratic blocks which punctuate the landscape of the Chablais... The inventory and information relating to these sites will soon be available on line.



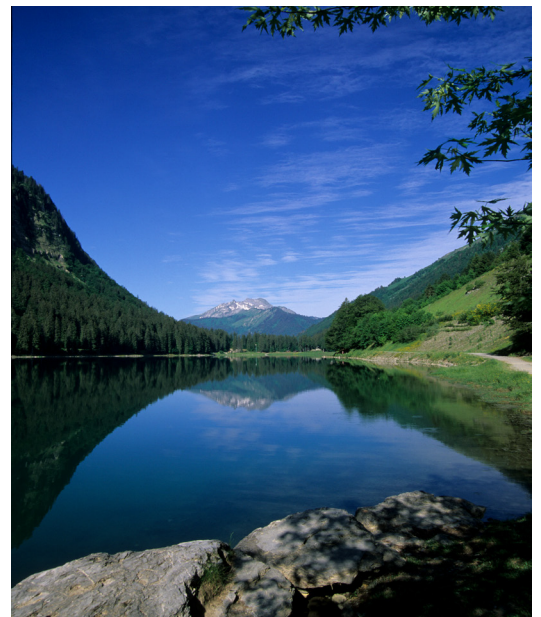
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The Morzine slate mines



© Georges-Henri Cazal

The Vouas of Lyaud



© Yann Tisseyre

Lake Montriond





23 IMPORTANT EMBLEMATIC SITES TO (RE)-DISCOVER

The spinal column of Geopark Chablais, the “GeoRoute”, is currently being installed. The objectives of this wide reaching structural project are to understand the history of the formation of the Alps, to change our appreciation of the landscape and to become responsible ambassadors for the local riches.

The 23 geosites are emblematic, independent and complementary and are classed as Sensitive Natural Spaces (ENS) by the Conseil Général of the Haute-Savoie. Their presentation and promotion reveals not only the geological history of a place but other themes such as cultural heritage, history, fauna, flora, etc.

The installation of more than 180 interpretation panels and outdoor furniture began in June 2013.



Eleven geosites will be equipped during the summer : the Reyvroz viewpoint, the Tréchauffé viewpoint, Vallon Lake, Lake Montriond, Ecoles Lake, the Castles of Allinges, Plagnes Lake, Col de Bassachaux, the Champeillant viewpoint, Maravant Marsh and Pierre à Martin.

A virtual presentation of the Armoiries Plasterworks will also be available on line.

The other geosites will be completed for the end of the year : Ripaille Castle, Mont Bénand, the Pré Richard viewpoint, Chilly Marsh, the ski lifts of Avoriaz, the mines of Lake Or and Bostan, the Drunken Forest, the Cornettes de Bise, the Vouas of Lyaud, the Morzine slate mines and the Pont du Diable Gorges.

From the autumn you will be able to discover the diversity of the equipped sites through the internet and prepare your “personalised” visit using the criteria within the search engine (theme, nature of the site, duration of the visit, etc ...).

This project is financed by the SIAC, local stakeholders and relevant municipalities, as well as through Departmental, Regional and European funds.

The information panel at Lake Montriond

More information : www.geopark-chablais.com

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