

Actualité en France

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France exports its mountains



France has the world's biggest skiing area. Every year it welcomes visitors from all over the world, who are delighted to take advantage of its high-quality facilities, both to practise winter sports and enjoy summertime activities. Their enjoyment contributes to the international reputation of France's mountain regions, but France Neige International, a body which brings together public and private sector partners, also contributes all year round to the export of France's now widely recognised expertise.

France Neige International's mission is to develop winter-sports resorts in Bulgaria, Lebanon or Japan and provide the benefit of its expertise in Russia, **Kyrgyzstan, China, Korea and Turkey, not to mention** Argentina, Canada, the United States or even Norway. Set up in 1984 this body, which is the product of a partnership between the public sector and professionals from the mountain leisure sector, represents France's know-how beyond its borders.

France Neige International is the perfect guide for anyone wishing to develop a sporting or tourist activity in a mountain region. Its president, Xavier Dulin, sends his experts all over the world to look at potential sites. The cost of their services is very modest since France Neige merely asks for reimbursement of the costs of travel and accommodation. Once on site, they closely examine the topography, assess the natural risks of erosion or avalanche and propose a layout plan for ski lifts. They also advertise the quality of the services of French professionals who specialise in the management and implementation of this type of project. In total, some 30 missions of this kind are organised each year worldwide.

The fact that Sochi, in the Russian region of Krasnaya Polyana, beside the Black Sea, will be hosting the next Winter Olympics, in 2014, is also probably thanks to a design office located in Savoie, which first assessed the site in 1998. A report suggesting the layouts for ski lifts and a geographical study of the pistes had indeed been submitted to the Russian authorities during a France Neige mission!



MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES ET EUROPÉENNES

A genuine benchmark in the sphere of “white gold”, France Neige can also provide assistance with summer tourism projects, which are growing in number on every continent. *“Requests related to winter sports represent 60% of our activities,”* points out Jean-Philippe Monfort, project manager for the organisation, *“but we are now working on the design of facilities for use all year round. In Korea for example, there is a significant development in summertime mountain tourism which we have been involved in. We also offer our expertise in the sphere of green tourism, which pays heed to the mountain environment and to traditional socio-economic activities. We are able to contribute ideas that can help avoid some of the mistakes that have sometimes been made in valleys in the Alps”*. France Neige International also invites delegations of international experts over to show them the quality of French facilities, the training that is available in mountain-related activities, as well as French legislation on environmental protection and public safety. To date, over 2,500 decision-makers from all over the world have availed themselves of these services.

But France Neige International is not the only French player in the field of winter sports. Today, the Rhône-Alpes Mountain Industries Cluster, a consortium of social enterprises, brings together all the professionals involved in the mountain economy. This network makes it possible to obtain an overview of all the different operations and share, where appropriate, the local resources available.

Leading winter-sports resorts, such as Courchevel, Méribel or La Plagne, are not to be outdone and are benefiting from the promotional work of their own organisations. With the strength of their own experience of over 50 years, they have the means to fulfil their export ambitions. La Plagne, for example, has worked on the Longmen Mountains in China, and Courchevel has created ski pistes in Lebanon. Contacts are established quite naturally because foreign decision-makers are often keen winter sportsmen who are very familiar with France’s ski areas. For instance Sergei Bubka, the famous pole-vaulter, is currently in negotiation with the Société des Trois Vallées for the creation of a resort in the Ukraine.

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