

# PAN Parks Courier

Combining nature conservation and sustainable tourism in Europe's protected areas

Autumn 2005



**Europe's Wilderness Days**  
Training needs assessed  
Wild adventures in Poland

**Russian Paanajärvi,  
the new PAN Park**





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Summer is traditionally the period of recreation when everybody feels the need to take a holiday and enjoy the lazy time or the relaxing adventures. This summer was, nevertheless, active and eventful for the PAN Parks team. An important step was the verification of Paanajärvi National Park, the “pearl” of the Nordic land, in June. This is important not only because we can greet a new PAN Park in our ever-widening network, but also because the first transboundary PAN Park - in conjunction with the already verified Oulanka - was born.

There is no need to introduce Oulanka here, one of our oldest members and a spectacular reserve of wilderness in Europe. This wild kingdom “continues” in the area of Paanajärvi, which is approximately four times the size of Oulanka and holds similar enchantments for the visitors. The two parks have established close contacts over the years with



## Editorial

Edit Borza

### *Without borders*

Oulanka promoting Paanajärvi and inspiring the Russian twin park to apply for PAN Parks verification.

The first transboundary PAN Park demonstrates that people coming from and living in countries with different traditions and distinct political and legal systems can work together for the common goal of protecting nature. Ecosystems do not recognize borders; it is important to apply the same conservation standards and principles to neighbouring geographical areas.

Furthermore, co-operation can make promoting the parks easier and bring economic benefits to the local community.

PAN Parks has long been promoting co-operation without borders. The first transboundary PAN Park gives us a really good chance to show the practical benefits. For instance, a new border station opened between Oulanka and Paanajärvi will make the access between the Finnish and the Russian PAN Parks easier not only improving the crossing of people but hopefully also the meeting of the minds - without borders.

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### Courier going online

To bring more up-to-date news to you the PAN Parks Foundation will regularly distribute an e-magazine from beginning next year and the Courier will cease to be published in a printed format. This will also enable easier response for readers. Of course we would like to keep our subscribers, who have taken an interest in our work. To continue your subscription and receive our e-magazine, please send an email to [news@panparks.org](mailto:news@panparks.org).

### Our new tourism partner: VCK Travel

PAN Parks has signed a partnership agreement with VCK Travel, a Dutch tour operator, offering tailor-made incentive tours for businesses and groups, package tours, and cruises. The company, serving mainly middle-sized businesses, ranks sixth on the Dutch business travel and individual traveller markets. VCK Travel guarantees high-level satisfaction for clients by being totally flexible in its services. A customer satisfaction survey in March 2005 showed that 97% of VCK business travel clients were very much satisfied with VCK Travel services. The company is planning to widen its scope of destinations to include PAN Parks.

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### Partnership with WWF Netherlands prolonged

Based on a new project proposal, entitled *Call for Wilderness*, WWF Netherlands has decided to prolong its partnership with the PAN Parks Foundation. The project proposal covers activities such as the verification process and developing and marketing nature-based tourism products. The new financial agreement provides more than 1 million Euro over the next 3 years for the core activities of the PAN Parks Foundation. Both parties, however, agreed that the Foundation would work towards financial self-sufficiency during the course of the project.

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## Training needs assessed

*Language, customer care, marketing, and interpreting nature for tourists are the most important training needs for PAN Parks and businesses operating around PAN Parks, according to a survey carried out by a team from the Glion Institute of Higher Education in Switzerland.*

A team from the Glion Institute of Higher Education in Switzerland, in co-operation with the PAN Parks Foundation, has now completed a Training Needs Analysis of Oulanka, Central Balkan, Bieszczady, and Fulufjället national parks' staff and local businesses, including PAN Parks partners. The team held around 70 individual interviews and a number of group meetings, including one in Salla, Finland, where 20 people were present.

In a past issue of the Courier, the team reported on the interim findings of the Training Needs Analysis before they had visited Fulufjället National Park; it can now confirm that these findings were also reflected in the results from this last field visit.

The training needs that have been identified as clear priorities are:

- Language - mostly English but also German
- Customer care skills for dealing with foreign visitors/ understanding the needs of foreign visitors
- Marketing - all aspects, including how to deal with the foreign travel trade
- Interpreting nature for tourists - this has been clearly expressed by both park staff and businesses around the parks
- Issues around sustainable tourism development
- Assessment of quality of provision for tourists

A complex issue of common import is helping groups like the newly formed Local PAN Parks Groups learn to work together,



Photo: Vladivoi Vancouver

*The survey of 4 parks was completed in Fulufjället this summer*



## Park Briefs

### Local partners in Oulanka

Nine local businesses operating in the Oulanka region will sign partnership contracts with the PAN Parks Foundation in October. Partners include campsites, a reindeer park, a taxi service, a café, and businesses offering safaris, husky and bird watching tours. PAN Parks partners are committed to preserving the natural values of the national park, constantly improving the standard of services, adjusting them to the needs of customers, and participating actively in the region's sustainable tourism development. By choosing the services of PAN Parks partners, visitors indirectly support the preservation of nature since the annual fee paid by the partners is re-invested in the area. *The list of partners will soon be uploaded on [www.panparks.org](http://www.panparks.org) on the Oulanka pages.*

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### Tourism development in Bieszczady

Bieszczady National Park, Poland, became the fourth PAN Park to receive full certification after its sustainable tourism development strategy was successfully verified. As the verification team concluded after its field visit to the park at the beginning of July, the park management is developing a sustainable model of tourism. The draft Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy that was adopted in April 2005 is supported by stakeholders and presents a good framework for future co-operation and activities in the PAN Parks region.

### Old-new partners in Fulufjället

This July, our Swedish local business partners renewed their partnership contracts for two more years. Moreover, a new partner also joined the group, indicating that local businesses see the benefits of co-operating with PAN Parks. PAN Parks Foundation signed its first partnership agreement with local businesses in Fulufjället in June 2004.

*For the list of partners visit [www.panparks.org](http://www.panparks.org) under Network/OurParks/Fulufjället/Local partners*

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Photo: Vladivoj Vancura



*Local businesses need training among others in customer care, ...*

break down barriers, communicate, and trust each other. Although this was not expressed as an explicit training need, it is an issue that PAN Parks should take on as part of the proposed implementation of this training project. Group dynamics are complex, and successful communication between many disparate groups is crucial for realizing the PAN Parks concept. Park management has to learn how to bring together all of these groups to work towards the common goals

Photo: Vladivoj Vancura



*... interpreting nature and marketing.*

of preserving wilderness and supporting local community life and businesses within the context of a sustainable tourism strategy. The reconciliation of opinions and interests is not an easy task, and therefore it is recommended that communication and problem-solving skills be integrated into the training program.

The full results of the Training Needs Analysis will be presented at the PAN Parks Conference in Edinburgh on 3 November.

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## How does business benefit from wilderness?

*Co-operation with PAN Parks offers new and original ways for companies to distinguish themselves from their competitors and demonstrate their commitment to the environment and sustainable development. This could include among others organising volunteer camps as Canon and Toyota have already done, research project support as done by Glion Institute from Switzerland or financing conservation projects.*

By teaming up with PAN Parks, a company can express its commitment to an environmentally conscious way of life that is becoming more and more widespread in our threatened globe. Nature is becoming an increasingly important issue, and many people feel today that it is our common responsibility to live and consume in a way that causes the least damage to our environment.

We have received very positive feedback from Canon, which has participated in

volunteer camp projects with PAN Parks: "Participation in the PAN Parks project also enhances Canon's relationship with the outside world. Through its positive approach to preserving the environment, it powerfully and tangibly demonstrates a caring attitude that is attractive both to prospective new staff and customers." (*You Can Magazine for Canon Europe*).

*Support, preserve, enjoy Europe's wilderness* - this is the special offer of PAN Parks and this is what makes partnership particularly rewarding. In traditional marketing, companies tried for years to beat their competitors with better prices, more quality, optimal service, and quality. Co-operation with PAN Parks offers a new unique selling proposition (USP): sustainable enterprising. This partnership will strengthen the image of the company, improve its financial results, and motivate employees. Co-operating with PAN Parks is more than financial sponsorship: it offers results and a real contribution to



Photo: Mershalitus

*Just as nature has no country borders, PAN Parks offers opportunities for international companies*

conservation in the field, a sponsorship all employees can actively "experience." It makes them proud of their company and increases loyalty to the workplace that respects and improves our wider environment. As the Toyota experience shows, participants in a PAN Parks project are very supportive of the idea and found that working in nature brought them many new experiences and increased community among the employees. The organizers were also impressed by the efficiency of teamwork. As Stefan Crets, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager from Toyota Motor Europe, put it, "Toyota's corporate philosophy - the Toyota Way - embraces values shared by all the members of Toyota globally. ... [Our project with PAN Parks] is a perfect opportunity for our members to put Toyota Way into practice for the benefits of nature and society."

A further advantage of PAN Parks is that it is a truly international organization. Just as nature has no country borders, PAN Parks has no fences; partnership with PAN Parks



Photo: Maciej Grzegorzek

*support, preserve, enjoy Europe's wilderness - this is the special offer of PAN Parks*



is just the right solution for companies working at the international level.

Multinational companies often have to cope with many local biases, which PAN Parks can help overcome with its Europe-wide network of opportunities. The PAN Parks logo expresses commitment to these commonly shared ideas and values

in many European countries - and the network continues to expand.

The PAN Parks vision is to conserve nature together with the support of the local communities and encourage partnership. By sponsoring PAN Parks, companies do not only support nature, but also local communities,

who want to preserve traditions and wilderness and who have learned to think in a new way to sustain our threatened environment and civilization. The increasing number of these “new customers” makes co-operation with PAN Parks rewarding for our partners in the long run.

## Europe's Wilderness Days

### Opportunities to support Europe's wilderness

*Opportunities to support Europe's wilderness will be the main theme of the “Europe's Wilderness Days” conference organised by the PAN Parks Foundation. The conference will be held at the Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh, Scotland, on November 3-4.*

Previous Europe's Wilderness Days have been held in Sweden, Bulgaria, and Italy. All have been supported and attended by high-level representatives from host countries, including King Gustav of Sweden and Simeon Saxo-Coburg Gotha, then prime minister of Bulgaria, as well as ministers of state, business people, and members of the PAN Parks network.

Historically these conferences have been held near existing or potential PAN Parks, but in 2005 we want to broaden our message to engage an audience with a wider interest in issues surrounding protected natural areas beyond membership of the growing PAN Parks network. The two days have quite separate themes and could attract separate audiences, but we believe that all of the issues to be discussed are of vital interest to all of those who are concerned with the future of Europe's protected areas and the communities that surround them.

### 3 November - People and wilderness

Practitioners and academics from Europe and other parts of the world will present and discuss issues in two major topic areas. First, the economic and social consequences of protected area status for local communities - considering the economic value of protected area status, the impact on

employment, population, etc. Second, issues surrounding the communication of wilderness and protected areas to tourists, businesses, and government. Speakers include Stuart Cottrell (Colorado State University), Xavier Font (Leeds Metropolitan University), Nick Johns (GIHE, Switzerland), Eugenio Yunis (World Tourism Organization), Tom Brock (CEO Scottish Seabird Centre), and Bill Taylor (Highlands and Islands Enterprise).

### 4 November - Business benefits from wilderness

Senior managers from a range of international companies will present why it is vital for their organizations to be involved in wilderness and natural protected areas. Speakers include representatives from Toyota Europe, Canon, Rabobank, SNP Natuurreizen, and more, all of which are actively involved. Join us if you would like to learn more about how and why these companies are involved and also how your business can also benefit from wilderness.

We are pleased to invite you to participate in *Europe's Wilderness Days*, organised by the PAN Parks Foundation - an opportunity to meet, discuss, and learn about current issues facing the preservation of Europe's wilderness areas. The launch of the *European Wilderness Charter* on 4 November will provide a unique opportunity to become actively involved in the protection and support of Europe's wild places.

For programme and registration form, go to [www.panparks.org/conference2005](http://www.panparks.org/conference2005)

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## Paanajärvi National Park



*Named after the “pearl” of this land the crystal-clear Paanajärvi lake, Paanajärvi National Park is one of the most precious jewels of the Nordic land and it is the newest Certified PAN Park. Besides its natural beauty, the park encompasses one of the biggest “kingdoms of wilderness” in Europe. Tourism is developed in a way to sustain this unique natural heritage: the park’s policy is to make staying in Paanajärvi and the study of protected wild nature ever more enjoyable and rewarding for visitors.*



### *What makes Paanajärvi a PAN Park?*

Established in 1992, Russian Paanajärvi National Park occupies 104 473 hectares. The exceptionally beautiful geographical location alone makes a visit to Paanajärvi an unforgettable experience. Its natural

borders are the watershed of Oulanka river and Lake Paanajärvi, and the southern entrance is guarded by Nuorunen Fell, the highest peak in Karelia, whose bold summit is covered with snow until the end of June. Since the climate of the area is influenced by the severe White Sea and the Atlantic with the warm Gulf Stream, Paanajärvi is host to unique climatic conditions: in winter, the temperature can drop below -45°C, while in summer it can rise above 30°C.

The main reason for establishing Paanajärvi was to preserve the rich biodiversity of the area. Almost two-thirds of the park’s area is covered with gloomy spruce forests and bright pine groves with silver moss covering the soil. The exceptionally clean air is

Photo: Vladivoj Vancura



*The exceptionally beautiful location alone makes a visit to Paanajärvi unforgettable*



Photo: Vladivoj Vancura



Excellent facilities await visitors in the Russian PAN Park

favorable for the proliferation of 450 species of lichen, among them the dominating *Usnea longissima*. The park is home to 36 species of mammals, including typical taiga species: brown bear, wolf, wolverine, fox, marten, otter, and forest reindeer. More than 113 bird species nest in the park and 17 species of fish spawn in the rapid rivers, clean streams, and blue lakes.

The park can offer many indoor and outdoor activities for tourists to enjoy this exceptionally beautiful Northern fairyland. In 2002, a new visitor-center was opened, which hosts a permanent exhibition, a library, and a seminar room. Adventure-seekers can choose from a number of hiking, boating, and snowmobile trails. Visitors can order a sauna, and sleep in tents or one of the 14 cabins offered by the park. Visitors can also visit the huge stone seitas - worship stones - of the early Sami tribes who lived here 2500 years ago.

Another specialty of the Russian park is that together with the already certified Oulanka National Park, in Finland they form the first transboundary PAN Park.

## A voice from the field

*The verification team - Gordon Miller (lead verifier), Alexander Zinke (verifier), Franco Mari (trainee verifier), Andrei Gromsev (local expert), and Vladivoj Vancura (PAN Parks observer) - visited Paanajärvi National Park between 20-24 June for a field trip to evaluate the area. Gordon Miller reports on his experience.*

Dirt roads cut through endless forest but as the dust settled, we experienced our first views of a landscape of lakes, pristine forest and old Karelian settlements. The town of Pyaozero and the National Park Visitor Centre were our final 'stepping stone' to the wonderful Paanajärvi National Park. A climb to the easily accessible Mt Kivakka was rewarded with stunning views across the virgin forest of the park.

The centre of the park is bisected by the beautiful 128m deep Lake Paanajärvi, one of the deepest in the whole of Fennoscandia. The narrow, fjord-like lake is 23.5 km long and a trip by boat took us to the heart of the park. While the magnificent 60m high Ruskeakallio cliffs on the northern shore are without doubt a major attraction, we were also fascinated by the remnants of former Finnish villages. Equally fascinating were waterfalls cascading to the edge of the lake. Trails, one starting



Photo: Vladivoj Vancura

Verifiers with the park director, Alexander Bizhon (on the left)

from a beautifully located lakeside campsite, led us up into the virgin taiga forest.

We experienced the excellent cabin accommodation, mainly at the eastern end of Paanajärvi Lake, although visitors would be advised to inquire about availability, as the new border crossing is likely to bring a large influx of visitors to this exceptional wilderness area, which totally captivated us all.

*by Gordon Miller*

## The first season in Fulufjällsbyn

*Fulufjällsbyn, the first PAN Parks Accommodation, located near Fulufjället National Park, completed a busy high season. The many guests came mostly from the Netherlands and stayed in the park and became friends with Fulufjället and PAN Parks. The growing interest in a special nature holiday suggests that winter will also be a busy season. The article below summarises the experience of the first season.*

PAN Parks Accommodation is an independent company licensed by the PAN Parks Foundation. It supports the Foundation financially and, by involving local partners to offer services to its guests, also supports the local economy. The first PAN Parks Accommodation was opened near PAN Park Fulufjället, Sweden, in September 2004. It is composed of 12 houses and can accommodate 136 people.

This summer marked the first season in Fulufjällsbyn and it was a huge success.

About 400 guests stayed in the park and there were two fully booked weekends - a very positive start. The majority of guests were independent tourists who came to the area in order to visit Fulufjället National Park. However, Fulufjällsbyn also had bookings from Swedish companies, and hosted the WWF Netherlands major donor trip and participants of the Canon volunteer trip.

The nationality of the visitors shows a clear prevalence of Dutch tourists: about 70% come from the Netherlands, 22% from Sweden, and the rest are from other foreign countries. Advertisement and communication is obviously important and the management is planning to increase its activity in the domestic market to increase the number of Swedish guests. It is also important to note that



*Guests enjoyed the light spaces of the accommodation*

most of the visitors were families or couples. The guests stayed for five nights on average.

Fulufjällsbyn received much positive feedback concerning the quality of the park's accommodation. As Odet Nijmeijer, Manager, said, "visitors praised the beautiful view of the national park, the light rooms, and were very impressed by the hospitality of local people." Local partners organised barbecue evenings and events including visiting a summer-farm and a special hiking trip. The children liked the WWF corner and viewed special movie programmes organised especially for them. And, of course, the waterfall was a big attraction for everybody!

Fulufjällsbyn is already preparing for next year. A big group from the Dutch Lottery will be coming, which means a lot of business for local partners. And a practical proof of the satisfaction of the guests: 10% already booked for next year.

*If you are looking for a special nature holiday, visit [www.panparksaccommodation.com](http://www.panparksaccommodation.com) or write to [fulufjallsbyn@telia.com](mailto:fulufjallsbyn@telia.com)*



*Fulufjällsbyn, the first PAN Parks Accommodation has closed a busy season*



## Women dominate the eco-travel market

*Women dominate the eco-travel market, reveals a recent survey in Great Britain. Consequently, PAN Parks and its local and international tourism partners need to take into account the needs and expectations of female eco-travellers.*

The survey, carried out by the UK newspaper the *The Times* in its *Times Travel* supplement, shows the gendered nature of the eco-travel market. The survey, published on 27 August 2005, reveals that for many eco-travel companies, around 75% of their clientele are women. They are mostly between the ages of 20 and 50, are educated, and come from the higher salary earning groups.

It seems apparent from this survey that women are concerned and care about the impact of air travel on the environment, the sustainability of large hotels and resorts in some areas, and the lack of economic benefit to local communities in destinations dominated by international hotel groups and tour operators. And they are willing to “walk the talk” with their choice of holiday. They advocate travelling by train when possible, choosing walking holidays, staying in small-scale locally-owned and operated accommodation, and eating local food. They acknowledge that the issue of air travel is difficult to resolve, as there may be no other practical alternative to reach a destination. Female eco-travellers are, nevertheless, more likely to undertake a less comfortable trip in order to spare the environment.

The survey also stated that most female eco-travellers want to contribute actively to the economic, social,



Photo: PPA/James van Leuven

*Female eco-travellers are likely to undertake a less comfortable journey to spare the environment*

and cultural life of the destination. Such contributions can take many forms: for example, a percentage of the cost of staying at an eco-lodge in Indonesia going towards a children’s hospital, using local guides who are paid directly on Mt Kilimanjaro, or actually working on a project to help the local community as part of a paid holiday. Female travellers all expected that the tour operators used be very clear about their ethical stance and show that this stance was put into practice on the ground. They expected highly visible evidence of sustainability and eco-friendliness in all their trips and at all accommodations. This included heating and water systems, recycling, use of local produce as appropriate, and clear evidence of local economic benefit. Above all, these travellers expressed a desire to meet real people in a real place, not one taken over by tourism.

According to this survey, some of the tour operators interviewed did not realize that as many as 75% of their clients are women. This could imply that there is no need to target women particularly or that there were no reasons offered for the high percentage of female travellers.

There are lessons here for PAN Parks: in the preparation of tourist products for the national parks, these expectations should be taken into account and acted upon by the parks and their local and international partners. If we as PAN Parks are branding ourselves as a special eco-tourism experience, we must ensure that the product that we offer meets or exceeds the expectations of the tourists, regardless of their gender.

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## Northern Region

### Volunteers work for nature

#### Oulanka National Park



WWF Finland, the Finnish Forest and Park Service, and Oulanka National Park have been organising volunteer work camps since 1979 in order to maintain and restore the national park's nature and landscape. This summer around twenty WWF employees participated in the volunteer camp in Oulanka.

The volunteers mowed flooded meadows and other open areas that have traditionally been used for growing hay in Kuusamo. The mowed hay was then collected and some of it will be used for feeding reindeer in winter. The volunteers also marked paths and borders in the national park and repaired a traditional rail fence surrounding the Oulanka camping area.

The restoration work will help preserve culturally valuable landscape as well as the environment

of many threatened meadow species that have decreased as traditional farming has been replaced with modern methods. "Volunteer camps are indispensable for maintaining the national park," said Park Director Matti Tapaninen. For the volunteers, the camp also provides a forum for exchanging thoughts about park management, sharing ideas and, of course, having fun together in the beautiful natural environment after the daily work. "It is wonderful that eager volunteers sign up for these important camps year after year," said Oulanka camp leader Antti Lappo from WWF Finland. The success of the initiative is proved by the fact that in addition to Oulanka, volunteer camps have previously also been organized in Paanajärvi National Park and in southern Kuusamo, near to Oulanka.

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Photo: Kaleva / Auni Vääräniemi



## Northern Region

### American "ambassadors" visiting

#### Fulufjället National Park



The supervisor of Yellowstone National Park, the first national park in the world, together with a group of scientists and employees of the American National Park Service visited Fulufjället National Park this summer. Suzanne Lewis, the supervisor of Yellowstone National Park and her colleagues admired the achievements of the park and see the PAN Parks network as a great initiative and an opportunity for other European parks.

The American visitors were particularly impressed by the park's efforts to attract nature-minded tourists and the close contact between the business partners and the national park. Fulufjället is a precursor among Swedish national parks concerning investments in visitors' surveys and focusing on the visitor's experience as well as on nature conservation. The park management was proud to show to the American guests visitor surveys carried out by The European Tourism Research Institute,

ETOUR, before as well as after the national park establishment, indicating a rapid increase of visitors. The support given by local people to realise the PAN Parks vision - nature protection hand in hand with a peaceful and harmless enjoyment of unspoiled nature - also made a great impact on the representatives of the first national park in the world.

The successful visit is expected to promote Fulufjället and the PAN Parks network outside of Europe. Hopefully the American visitors will be good "ambassadors" - not only because of the great experience they had in Fulufjället but also because of the gift they received from the park service - the newly printed English version of the Fulufjället National Park book.

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Photo: FNP





## Nature for everyone

Working with visitors is one of the basic objectives of all national parks worldwide. For this end, Triglav National Park runs the Information centre in Trenta, provides an informational infrastructure, and manages several park trails. The Information centre is adapted to visitors on wheelchairs, while there is still a lot to be done outdoors. A step towards this group of visitors achieving “universal accessibility” is the project named *Triglav National Park for everyone*. It is run in the framework of the Junior Ranger Programme and is financed this year by the EU YOUTH Programme. The target group includes young local people.

The whole project consists of five workshops during which participants will get extra knowledge about people on wheelchairs (their everyday life, special needs, what kind of help is needed at some point, etc.),

make contacts with them, arrange a part of the Soča trail to be accessible with wheelchairs, prepare a special leaflet about visiting the park on wheelchair, and organise a workshop on planning and designing park infrastructure to achieve universal accessibility.

Nature is out there for all of us! Though close for some, it could be very far for others. Managers of the national park respect internationally recognised objectives, but acting humanly sometimes counts even more. Making the park accessible for everyone is one of the things that means much more than just following guidelines.

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## Western Region

### Triglav National Park



Photo: TNP

## Youth for Retezat

Fifteen teenage members of the Retezat Junior Ranger Club participated this year in the park’s summer camp, *7 days in Retezat National Park*. The main goal of the event was to popularize the park among the local people and to further the education of environmentally conscious young adults.

There were many playful activities that helped the children deepen their knowledge of the national park. Children learned about rangers’ duties and the rules to be kept in a national park. Participants painted trail markers to the ruins of the castle described by Jules Verne in his novel *The Castle of the Carpathians*. Park managers taught them how to use a map and how they can orient themselves in the field without compasses. Junior rangers learned to identify animal tracks and recognise birds by their songs.

They also undertook one of the park’s main attractions: climbing. The Park Director awarded participants with Junior Ranger Certificates.

Such experiences are very important to deepen the children’s commitment to the national park at an early age and teach them to respect and conserve natural values as adults. The camps help children to get to know their environment and their country and learn more about protected areas all over Europe. The park’s aim is to strengthen international co-operation: some of our young rangers have received the opportunity to represent Retezat at European events in Austria and Spain.

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## Eastern Region

### Retezat National Park



Photo: RNP

### Bieszczady National Park



*In May, a group of 21 Dutch students from “Club van 2000,” a youth organisation concerned with sustainable development, visited Bieszczady National Park, one of the last kingdoms of European wilderness. Although the 10-day tour started as an ordinary holiday, the trip clearly had some distinctive features, which made it a unique adventure for the participants. What made Bieszczady so special and unforgettable for the Dutch visitors? You can find out from Mathanja Walinga’s travel report.*

The trip was well-prepared and participants in the *Club van 2000* came together not only to travel but also with a commonly-shared goal to discover Europe’s own wilderness and promote responsible travel behaviour. The common ideas created an atmosphere of community even at the time of our departure. After a long but exciting journey of 30 hours by train and locally rented touring car, we arrived in Ustrzyki Górne. After the hustle and bustle in the train and at the stations of Berlin and Kraków, this tiny town in the middle of the national park was a real relief. Ustrzyki Górne has no more than 150 inhabitants and is surrounded by intact nature. After the long journey, the sound of silence impressed the whole group.

To get acquainted with the region, we decided to walk and discover the natural treasures of this fascinating area. During an 8-hour hike,

we enjoyed the steep hills and the fabulous forests before reaching the most renowned treasure of Bieszczady: the poloninas. From those meadows, the views were incredible, inspiring us to take as many

photos as we could and even hike to one of the peaks. How rewarding! Green hills, as far as our eyes reached... Coming from one of the most densely populated countries, we couldn’t imagine that regions of such large-scale natural intensity still exist in Europe.

Exploring Bieszczady is amazing, but our guide Grzegorz Sitko added value to this experience. Full of passion, he explained about flora and fauna, the PAN Parks concept, and the success and constraints of tourism in this region. Tourism brings money, employment, and environmental awareness to the region, but at the same time it also creates problems that cannot be solved in the field of tourist industry. Mutual understanding among local people, authorities, and countries (Poland, Ukraine, and Slovakia) cannot be taken for granted; co-operation requires time. Grzegorz discussed various topics with us during the hike and also gave an informative and dynamic lecture on the historical and political context of the region. He was also an invaluable help to guide us to places in the Bieszczady region undiscovered by tourists. In Sanok, we visited the open-air museum, demonstrating the wooden architecture and local culture. At the Solina Lake we paddled around in a kayak, and in Bóbrka we enjoyed the traditional Polish hospitality and practised the local flower-making tradition.

Despite their different travelling background, the participants of the trip were all enthusiastic about the “kingdom of wilderness,” the Polish culture, and the hospitality of the local people. We, members of the organisation team, were also much impressed by the helpfulness and openness we experienced in PAN Park Bieszczady. With the experiences of this year, we are very enthusiastic to discover another PAN Park next year!

*by Mathanja Walinga  
the Netherlands*

Photo: Ryszard Mater



*In Bieszczady green hills welcomed us as far our eyes reached ...*



## PAN Parks



Name of area: Fulufjället National Park  
Country: Sweden  
Area (ha): 38 483  
Number of visitors per year: 40 000  
[www.dalarna.se/fulufjallet](http://www.dalarna.se/fulufjallet)

Name of area: Oulanka National Park  
Country: Finland  
Area (ha): 27 500  
Number of visitors per year: 150 000  
[www.metsa.fi/natural/nationalparks/oulanka](http://www.metsa.fi/natural/nationalparks/oulanka)

Name of area: Bieszczady National Park  
Country: Poland  
Area (ha): 29 200  
Number of visitors per year: 250 000  
[www.mos.gov.pl/kzpn/ind\\_gb.htm](http://www.mos.gov.pl/kzpn/ind_gb.htm)

Name of area: Central Balkan National Park  
Country: Bulgaria  
Area (ha): 71 669  
Number of visitors per year: 25 000  
[www.centralbalkannationalpark.org](http://www.centralbalkannationalpark.org)

Name of area: Retezat National Park  
Country: Romania  
Area (ha): 38 047  
Number of visitors per year: 8 000  
[www.panparks.org/Network/OurParks/Retezat](http://www.panparks.org/Network/OurParks/Retezat)

Name of area: Paanajärvi National Park  
Country: Russia  
Area (ha): 104 473  
Number of visitors per year: 10 000  
[parks.karelia.ru/paanajarvi/](http://parks.karelia.ru/paanajarvi/)

## Other co-operating national parks

These areas are working for PAN Parks verification. In brackets are the expected dates of verification.

Abruzzo National Park, Italy (2007)  
Majella National Park, Italy (2005)  
Rila National Park, Bulgaria (2005)  
Slovensky raj National Park, Slovakia (2007)  
Triglav National Park, Slovenia (2006)

## International business partners

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**Trailfinders**, the Netherlands - Hans Hoff, [info@horseholiday.com](mailto:info@horseholiday.com), [www.trailfinders.nl](http://www.trailfinders.nl)

**James van Leuven Fotografie**, the Netherlands - James van Leuven, [james@jamesvanleuven.nl](mailto:james@jamesvanleuven.nl), [www.jamesvanleuven.nl](http://www.jamesvanleuven.nl)

**VCK Travel**, the Netherlands - Marlies Grent, [M.Grent@vck.nl](mailto:M.Grent@vck.nl), [www.vck.nl](http://www.vck.nl)

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# Photocolumn



## Juvenile Adder

*Although snakes usually generate fear, there is no need to be scared of the Juvenile Adder: it is a shy and non-aggressive species. The Adder is the only venomous species in the Retezat herpetofauna. It can be easily identified by the dark zigzag line passing along the back and the dark “V” mark on the head. Its colour varies among whitish, pale yellow, grayish, brownish, or reddish according to sex and ages.*

Calin Hodor  
Retezat National Park