

NOTE PAD



The treasures of Lake Paladru

A medieval dug-out canoe has just been removed from the waters of Lake Paladru, France's fifth largest natural lake, located at an altitude of 500 metres in the middle of Isère, half way between Grenoble and Lyon. The canoe, discovered by a team of divers and archaeologists, has been taken to the Arc-Nucléart laboratory for conservation. The laboratory, which specializes in conserving and restoring items of historical interest, is part of CEA-Grenoble.

This is the second historic vessel to have been found on the bottom of the lake. In 30 years of exploration almost 10,000 objects made of wood, leather, cloth or metal have been recovered. Their state of conservation is on the whole remarkable and they have been transferred to the reserves of Musée Dauphinois, the headquarters of the Isère department heritage conservation organization (CPI). The wealth of finds has helped the many scientists working on the Paladru site to build up a picture of daily life in a lakeside village inhabited by farmers and knights circa 1000 AD. Spears and javelins, combs and clasps, some unique, are testimony to the way of life enjoyed by these predecessors of feudal lords. They were not only fearsome warriors, but also highly skilled craftsmen and clever farmers. At the instigation of the Isère Departmental Council, supported by the French government and the Rhône-Alpes Region, a museum and

archaeology park is to be built on the shores of the lake to show the results of research to the general public. Film buffs may remember a film by the French director Alain Resnais, "On connaît la chanson", released in 1999, which revealed the work of these archaeologists. A building, covering 1,000 sq m, set in eight hectares of undeveloped land, will bring back to life two villages engulfed by the lake, one from the early Middle Ages, the other from the late Stone Age. The museum is scheduled to open at the end of 2005 and the recently discovered canoe will no doubt be one of its star exhibits.

Dear reader, we would appreciate your views

You are on the list of subscribers to Grenoble Isère Report, a quarterly newsletter devoted to the economic life of the area. Whether you are a long-term subscriber or a recent arrival, we would like to know whether this publication lives up to your expectations. Do you find it an interesting read? Have you any suggestions? The short survey, enclosed with this issue or available at www.grenoble-isere.com, "AEPI's publications - Grenoble Isère Report" will enable us to gauge the success of the newsletter and update our mailing list. Thank you in advance for your time.



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Prize-winning Isère author

The Isère-based author and thinker Pierre Péju has won the Livre Inter 2003, a French book prize, for his novel "La petite chartreuse", published by Gallimard.

This prestigious prize, almost on a par with a Goncourt or a Renaudot, has already made the novel one of France's top bestsellers this summer.

Grenoble-Isère increasingly popular for business travel

With its advanced technology, dynamic economy and exceptional natural environment Grenoble-Isère is obviously an attractive venue for congress organizers.

Grenoble now ranks eighth in France as a centre for international congresses, hosting 1,860 business events in 2002 at its two congress centres, Alpexpo and the World Trade Center. More than 185,000 business people spent a night in Grenoble hotels. The Observatory at the Isère Tourist Board has just published its first study of this high-growth sector. On the assumption that a congress-goer spends from €122 to €305 a day on average, the economic impact of such events is considerable, amounting to an estimated €30m a year. With the refurbishment of Alpexpo, increasingly professional hoteliers and the development of new services, business travel can look forward to a promising future in Grenoble-Isère.

AEPI is the Isère county's economic development agency. It provides companies with assistance setting up in business in Isère, free of charge: economic data, offers of property and premises, meetings with local decision-makers, help with overall project management. Do not hesitate to contact us.

Grenoble Isère Report



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Grenoble welcomes the world's micro and nanotechnology specialists



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VIEWPOINT

bioMérieux invests in Grenoble

A leading player in the in vitro diagnosis of infectious diseases, bioMérieux has decided to invest €10m in a facility on the new Polytec technology park, just next to the Grenoble Science Park.

Several years ago bioMérieux (€945m revenue with a Rhône-Alpes workforce of 2,200, of whom 350 are located in Grenoble-Isère) started close collaboration with CEA's Electronics and Information Technology Laboratory (Leti).

In 1997 the two organizations set up a joint laboratory to work on biochips, which in 2001 led to a startup, Apibio (in which bioMérieux holds a 95% share, the remaining 5% belonging to the CEA Valorisation seed fund). Apibio, currently housed in the CEA enterprise incubator, is forecasting €500,000 revenue for 2003, with 36 employees designing and supplying biochips. There are an increasing number of applications in the pharmaceuticals, diagnostics and agrifood sectors for these miniaturized biological or genetic analysis laboratories.

Apibio will be moving to Polytec in 2005, close to Leti and the future Minatec centre, and the workforce will rise to about 60 people.

« We are also looking at the possibility of transferring an additional research laboratory to Grenoble », says Alain Mérieux, bioMérieux's CEO.



SPOTLIGHT

Rossignol boosting its par-formance

Rossignol, the world's top ski manufacturer based in Voiron, Isère, has just purchased the assets (brands and patents) of the US company Never Compromise, the world's leading supplier of (golf) putters.

This acquisition completes the range of clubs marketed by Rossignol subsidiary Cleveland Golf, the fifth largest club manufacturer in the US (€106m revenue in 2002, up on €93.7m in 2001 despite a stagnant market). In a few years, Rossignol has made a name for itself on the links and golf products now account for 18% of overall sales (for fiscal 2002-3) with global consolidated revenue amounting to €484.9m. Rossignol has also launched a line of sportswear (almost €30m revenue for the last financial year).

Lastly, encouraged by its recent competition successes, the Grenoble-Isère firm has consolidated its position in winter sports equipment, for which it claims a 24.5% share of a global market that shrank by 3.6% in fiscal 2002-3.

UPDATES

Ulis is getting bigger



Infrared (IR) detection has so far tended to be restricted to military applications. Some years ago Sofradir, which operates a production plant in Grenoble-Isère, joined forces with CEA to set up Ulis (Sofradir owns an 85% share, CEA the remaining 15%). Ulis produces and markets uncooled IR detectors that it has adapted, using silicon microelectronics, to suit the demands of civilian markets. This activity was made possible by specific technology developed by CEA-Leti for the manufacture of micro-bolometers and holds the promise of numerous applications. IR detectors may be fitted to the helmets of firefighters for finding victims in smoke-filled rooms. They may also be used for detecting people suffering from Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and preventive maintenance in industrial premises. With a workforce of 47 in 2002 Ulis delivered more 1,000 detectors, generating nearly €5m revenue (almost exclusively exports). In June of this year it moved to a new 1,500 sq m production facility, with a 500 sq m clean room, on the Sofradir site. The gain in space will boost annual production to 50,000 units and there are plans to double the workforce too.

KEY EVENTS

Caterpillar Logistics opens a centre in the Grenoble area



Caterpillar, world leader for earth-moving plant (€20bn revenue in 2002, 115 production plants worldwide and 69,000 employees), has announced plans to invest €17m in a logistics platform in Grenoble-Isère, by way of Caterpillar Logistics Services Inc., a Belgium-based subsidiary.

Caterpillar France started operations in Grenoble-Isère in the 1960s. With a workforce of 2,200, in Grenoble and Echirolles, production now totals 5,000 earth-movers a year. Until now logistics services were an integral part of the firm's production plants. The new platform will act as a forward base storing components from all over the world and delivering them just-in-time to local production lines and other Caterpillar factories in southern Europe. The new setup will result in more jobs. The logistics centre, located in Le Versoud, plans to hire 80 people when the first building is ready, in early 2004, and a further 150 in 2005, as part of a second investment phase.

Grenoble welcomes the world's micro and nanotechnology specialists

From 22 to 26 September Grenoble will be hosting the Third International Micro and Nanotechnology Forum (Minatec Conference 2003).

Top experts in nanotechnology – which encompasses future generations of chips with molecule-scale transistors – will be gathering to discuss the state of the art in research, microtechnology for biology and medicine and embedded microsystems. All these applications are attracting heavy investment worldwide, the expectation being that in 15 years' time they will have found their way into much of industry. Grenoble is fortunate enough to have an exceptionally high concentration of research facilities and skills in these fields, thanks, in particular, to CNRS, INPG and CEA-Leti. It is determined to consolidate its already strong position and achieve European leadership in this promising sector.

Supported by local government, Grenoble has launched a series of framework projects, notably the Minatec micro and nanotechnology centre. Some 45,000 sq m of laboratory and office space is under construction on the Science Park, with €169m being invested between now and 2005. Minatec aims to bring together under one roof about 3,500 micro and nanotechnology specialists – from academia, research and industry – with all the industrial transfer resources required to put innovation in the fast lane. Minatec also hopes to attract startups and major corporations. To convince visitors attending the forum of the diversity of local potential, their schedule includes visits to four centres of scientific, technological or industrial interest.



Grenoble–Isère, the special paper place

From 7 to 9 October 8,000 visitors and almost 200 exhibitors from all over the world will be gathering in Grenoble for the 11th edition of the International Trade Fair of Paper-making Industries (IP) – the biggest event in paper and carton board in southern Europe. We seize the opportunity to take stock of the paper industry in Grenoble–Isère, which currently employs 4,000 people, half of whom are involved in production.

Until the 19th century paper production in Grenoble–Isère was a largely craft activity, based on the use of rag. Thanks to the area's natural resources, notably wood and water, the industry then began to develop.

The discovery of hydroelectric power by Aristide Briand, in 1869, further boosted paper production. A century and a half later considerable changes have been wrought. With successive waves of acquisitions and restructuring the production workforce has shrunk, from 2,557 employees 20 years ago, to only 1,931 in 2002, located at 12 paper and carton board production sites. However Grenoble–Isère has drawn on its longstanding traditions and research resources to specialize in high added-value papers much in demand worldwide. It is still France's leading area for special papers and the top centre in Europe for paper research and training. The French Papermaking School in Grenoble (EFPG) is the only school of its kind in France and Europe's leading source of papermaking engineers, with an annual intake of 180. It now belongs to the INPG group of engineering schools.

The Paper Technology Centre (CTP), a semi-public research centre with staff of 138, is the second largest centre in Europe for research into recycled fibres, bleaching and the environment. Over the last 10 years Grenoble–Isère's paper expertise has attracted two privately owned research centres, with international responsibilities, operated respectively by Ahlstrom Paper Group and Arjo Wiggins Appleton (AWA). Ahlstrom also has two mills in Isère, one manufacturing non-woven fabrics (Brignoud - 110 employees), the other



making packing paper (Pont-Evêque - 210 employees). It chose this location for a new global research centre. With a staff of 75 it is responsible for strategic research and developing innovative products for the group. AWA produces high quality fine writing and printing grades in Grenoble–Isère (€80m revenue, 370 employees). A further 56 people work at the AWA research centre in Apprieu, north of Grenoble. Research focuses on technological innovation, conducted in partnership with other AWA centres, Grenoble university laboratories and CTP.

In addition to its contribution to research Grenoble–Isère remains a major manufacturing centre in France with 12 mills and 15 paper machines producing 535,000 tonnes of paper every year (compared with 524,000 tonnes in 1982). Matussière & Forest is France's leading independent manufacturer of newsprint paper (€365m revenue, and €450m including its Papeteries de Lancey subsidiary, with 1,545 employees).

It is now one of the leading players in paper in the region. It has longstanding links with the Grenoble area, which is home to its head office and two mills (Domène, with 35 employees, and Entre Deux Guiers, with 115 people). In 2000 it took over Papeteries de Voiron (260 employees), previously owned by AWA, and invested €50m to convert from self-carbonating

to recycled papers for printing and advertising. In December 2002 it acquired Papeteries de Lancey (320 employees), which produces coated papers for magazine covers. The area is also home to many processing plants, notably the Avery Dennison Roll unit in Champ sur Drac (€156m revenue with 263 people) producing self-adhesive labels. The firm's European headquarters are also located there. Allimand, the world's leading manufacturer of special-paper machines (€48m with 270 workers), is based in Rives, near Grenoble. All in all this range of expertise explains why the paper industry in Grenoble–Isère continues to enjoy an international reputation.

Innovation at IP

IP is not just the largest gathering of paper industry suppliers in southern Europe. It is also a key venue for the industry's leading international players. After China three years ago, this year's guest of honour will be Thailand. The 56th ATIP congress will also be held during IP, with a full programme of technical conferences. Lastly, to show that paper making is a high-tech industry, too, and a source of high added-value jobs, IP is organizing two forums on innovation and recruitment for the first time.