

## Danube Day 2008 in Austria

### River adventures instil a sense of wonder in the Danube

It was "all-aboard" canoes, river cruisers and an historic transport ship for Danube Day in Austria; where even Vienna's hosting of the European Cup Final on the 29<sup>th</sup> June couldn't stop the Danube message spreading far and wide. Boating and wildlife adventures, family-fun days, school river challenges, fish buffets, the Danube Art Master contest and the annual Horn Blast ensured that the Danube captured the imagination of youngsters and adults. Events included two exciting competitions that got the next generation of Danube users thinking and acting for their rivers.

Among the highlights were three days of family-fun at the newly opened "Die Garten Tulln" national landscape garden, located near the Danube in Niederösterreich. In searing heat, 900 people took part in canoe safaris, coming face-to-face with creatures lurking in the river, and also enjoyed night walks through the Water Park, discovering what inhabits our night-time world. Organised by the umbrella organisation, "Die Umweltberatung", the event saw visitors enjoy a marvellous fish buffet, with experts on hand to provide cooking tips for healthy fish oils.

July saw pupils take part in the "Danube Challenge", an initiative of the Lebensministerium and Coca-Cola Austria. Following a national competition, 9 teams of Austrian youngsters aged 13-14 years, as well as two teams from Slovakia, won the chance to take part in a 5-day Danube adventure from Linz to Bratislava. During the trip, the teams of young sailors competed in a series of watery challenges including cycling, swimming and water games. The team with the most points received a fabulous 3-day trip to the World Fair in Zaragoza, Spain, where Danube Day was also being celebrated.

It was also 'Ships Ahoy' for the winner of this year's Danube Art Master contest, the annual competition which challenges every pupil in the Basin to create a piece of art inspired by their local river. Christina Mager from the Eco School in Gmünd, with her creation "Mirror Image," was crowned Art Master for Austria and, along with her classmates, won an historic cruise on-board a renovated transport ship. She also went on to participate in the international stage of the contest.

Danube Day was also brought to rush-hour travellers at Wien-West, Wiener Neustadt, Pöchlarn and Mödling stations, as well as shoppers in town-squares across Niederösterreich (such as Zwettl and Hollabrunn) thanks to another initiative by "Die Umweltberatung". People were presented with beautifully illustrated bookmarks highlighting the plight of endangered fish in the Danube. Over 2000 bookmarks were distributed, a reminder that the Danube and its beautiful environment is close by and needs our help.

The private sector also joined in, with sponsorship from Coca-Cola Austria and an initiative by the Borealis plastics company whereby employees took time off work to learn about the Danube and water issues.

**"Through the Danube Challenge, we aim to raise awareness of water among young people. The many creative outcomes show it has been successful in achieving this and that the young participants are really thinking about our precious resource."**

Josef Pröll, Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management

### **Danube Day Partners**

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management • *Die Umweltberatung* (Austria, Niederösterreich, Kärnten and Burgenland branches) • *AQA Wassermarketing* • *Landesgartenschau Tulln* (NÖ-LGS Tulln) • BAW (*Bundesamt für Wasserwirtschaft*) • Coca-Cola Austria • Borealis • Museums • National Parks • Schools.

## **The Danube rivers: let's use them – not abuse them!**

For general information about the 14-country Danube Day celebrations, view [www.danubeday.org](http://www.danubeday.org) or email the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River: [jasmine.bachmann@unvienna.org](mailto:jasmine.bachmann@unvienna.org).