



## Danube Day 2009 in Austria

### Sharing challenges across borders

Austria's Danube Day had river challenges, cycling adventures, workshops, hi-tech presentations and the annual horn blast and Art Master contest, ensuring everyone learned something new about their Danube. Fun activities and widespread publicity brought the Danube Day message to a huge audience.

You couldn't fail to miss Danube Day in Vienna this year as the Danube Day logo was displayed for all to see on the colossal 202 metre tall **Millennium Tower**. Opposite the site of the **Donauinselfest**, two-three million festival goers also saw the logo and web address beamed onto Vienna's most well-known skyscraper. The **Millennium City** hosted several popular events aimed at the 90,000 daily visitors. Shoppers tried their hand at a giant 50m<sup>2</sup> Danube jigsaw puzzle; viewed displays about the region and went on-board the "Via Donau" to watch Danube films. A press conference hosted by the Minister of the Environment, the Vienna City Environment Councillor and the ICPDR Director was held and further publicity was ensured with an advert in "Die Presse" and information in the Donauinselfest programme delivered to every household in Vienna.

Young people looking for excitement took part in the **Danube Challenge** for Danube Day. Children from schools across Austria and Slovakia took part in a Danube adventure onboard the "Schrauberl Claudia" as it cruised down the Danube, joined by the 2000 Olympic champion, Christoph Sieber. An initiative of the Environment Ministry and Coca-Cola Austria, teams representing each Austrian region plus two teams from Slovakia were selected from the thousands that entered. During the trip from Linz to Bratislava, the young sailors competed in a series of watery challenges including one task which tested everyone to their limits: pulling the ship over the Austrian-Slovak border using just ropes and teamwork. Following an exhausting and fun four days, it was the team from Grosspetersdorf, Burgenland that triumphed as winners of this year's Challenge, winning a fun day for their class at the Tulln Water Ski Club.

Young people also saluted the Danube river with pedal power in the **Green Bikes for Peace** cycling extravaganza. The 30-day, Italy to Hungary environmental action, involving thousands of people, drew attention to sustainability issues across Europe, championing national and local environmental issues along the way. Organised by the Hungarian Cyclists' Club, MK, the Danube was the focus during the tour through Austria with a Danube Day workshop and concert. 25 young people travelled the entire route, through 11 cities from Trieste to Ljubljana and Linz to Pécs, stimulating the involvement of young people in the issues raised. The 28<sup>th</sup> June saw the tour arrive in Linz, 2009 European Capital of Culture, where they got involved in a great Danube Day challenge: to build a raft from discarded plastic bottles to carry "messages for a sustainable world" - the

vision of young Europeans. The tour, coordinated in Austria by IG-Fahrrad and the International Association for Danube Research (IAD), continued through the country with concerts, parties, a trip to a Danube flood restoration area at Wasserpark Tulln, a tour and conflicts workshop at the Donauauen National Park and visits to local food producers; stopping at Melk, Krems, Tulln, Vienna and Orth an der Donau. It then continued through Slovakia and Hungary with costumed bicycle parades, eco-theatre, concerts, contests, food markets and NGO projects. The project was truly sustainable with the energy produced from cycling collected in batteries and used to power concerts in towns and villages at each stop-over. In addition, as part of the project, the young participants had to think up inventive ways to convey the "green messages" to as wide an audience as possible.

Niederösterreich celebrated their Danube with a **day of family fun at "Die Garten Tulln"**, Europe's largest permanent organic horticultural show. Despite the rainy weather, 160 visitors enjoyed free guided boat trips on the Danube, entering the secretive world of water creatures, and learning about Danube history and ecology. They also relaxed with a drink at the Water Bar, seeing if they could taste the difference between samples from different areas. The event was organised by "Die Umweltberatung Niederösterreich."

2009 also saw the 6<sup>th</sup> year of the **Danube Art Master** contest: the annual search to find the most creative young artist in the Danube region. This international schools competition, overseen by the Danube Environmental Forum, challenges every pupil in the Basin to create a piece of environmental art inspired by their local river. The only rules are that you should be as creative as possible and think about what the Danube means to you.

In another annual event, the sound of ship horns once again reverberated across Austria and the Danube Basin at 14:00 on Danube Day, as Danube workers paid a very special tribute to their river. The **Greet the Danube horn blast**, organised by Global Water Partnership (GWP), saw ships along the Danube from Germany to Ukraine simultaneously sound their horns in a salute to the rivers.

**"Everyone was a winner: by gaining new impressions and experiences, making new friendships and really getting to know the Danube."**

An organiser of the 2009 Danube Challenge

### **Danube Day Partners**

Ministry of the Environment; Vienna City Councillor for the Environment; Die Umweltberatung Niederösterreich; ICPDR; Coca-Cola Austria; Vienna Waterworks; Ministry of Infrastructure; Bundesamt für Wasserwirtschaft (BAW); Die Umweltberatung Österreich; Die Umweltberatung Kärnten; Die Umweltberatung Burgenland; Die Garten - Tulln (NÖ LGS Tulln); Via Donau; IAD; IG-Fahrrad; Donauauen National Park Administration; Borealis and GWP.

## **Shared Waters – Joint Responsibilities**

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 (ICPDR): [jasmine.bachmann@unvienna.org](mailto:jasmine.bachmann@unvienna.org).