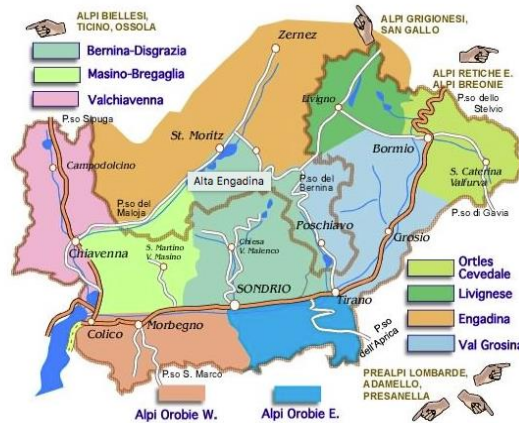


A web portal listing mountain huts

Context

The website www.rifugi-bivacchi.com aims to group in the same on line resource the complete list of all mountain refuges (including bivouac shelters) of the Alps, the Apennines and the mountain regions of Sardinia, Sicily and Corsica with updated information.



It creates a network with many refuges, beyond national and regional borders, looking at the Alps as a unified region.

This website aims to answer to the lack of detailed and easy-to-use tourism websites and cartographies covering the entire Alpine Region as well as the non-existence of any on-line database for bivouac shelters.

The initiative was founded by the INTERREG Programme Italy/Switzerland in 2000-2006 and in 2007-2013 and it involves alpine guides and mountain experts.

Objectives

The website provides detailed and easy-to-use information for tourists and mountain's workers such as maps and itineraries descriptions (with levels of difficulty, duration of the trips, eventually paths suggested between the different refuges) of the Alpine Region. Rifugi-Bivacchi's service also supports the activity of mountain guards of refuges, helping them to share information and knowledge through the use of a personal page.

Results

The website contains 154 geographical maps, divided by area and micro-area, and detailed information on 2943 alpine-refuges.

For each alpine-refuges, Rifugi-Bivacchi provides information (translated in four languages for the Central Alps area) on refurbishments, equipment, recommendations and contacts details, but also about locations and on alpine paths.

Users are offered 3 different research information systems: simple, alphabetic, and refined search (providing different filters to search the structure).

Results evaluation

Over the past two years the web traffic has increased by 75% and in the last year, up to 500000 people visited the website (152.380 users and a number of 2.000.000 visited pages).

Most of the users are from Europe (primarily from Italy, France, Germany, Switzerland and Slovenia) but the website is also attracting more and more users from the United States and Canada.

This visibility helped Rifugi-Bivacchi to reach important agreements with different economic stakeholders working on Italian and Swiss Alpine areas.

More recently the web portal was also selected by ERSAF (a member of Euromontana) to be part of the project HOMECOMING (Hike Over The Mountains, Explore Cultures, Opportunities and Markets, Improve Nation's Growth) funded by the INTERREG Alpine Space.



What should be taken into account when transferring this initiative?

The key to the success lies in the simplicity and effectiveness of the cartography and of the research systems but also in the number of territories actually covered by the network.

However, there is still an obstacle to gain information from guards of refuges, who don't have the technical skills to update websites. Some training may need to be considered to further develop the initiative in other territories.

Concrete Perspectives

Rifugi-Bivacchi is aiming to offer further services for guards of refuges by promoting an on-line platform on which they can share information and knowledge. It is planned to extend their services to other categories of mountain workers, in order to create a network of valuable experiences that could help to support local economies by creating virtuous circles.

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