

Services of Alpine Parks for Visitors, the Population and Local Actors

The contribution of Alpine parks goes far beyond environmental protection: They offer a wide range of services to visitors, local communities and economic actors, promoting education, recreation and regional development. Yet many of these benefits remain under-communicated, limiting public awareness and engagement.

This report highlights the extensive services provided by Alpine parks, their strategies for adding value through communication and participation, and the important role of local communities in shaping and sustaining these services.

Services for Visitors

Parks provide various services for their visitors - including tourists, long-term visitors **and the local population** - that vary with respect to the park's size, available budget and protection category. One important service area is that of **information and education**. The following table provides an overview of the different thematic areas in which parks can inform and educate their visitors.

1) Information and education

Areas of Information and Education	Examples from Parks
Background and Behavioral Information	
Flora and fauna, mountain peaks etc.	National Park Dolomiti Bellunensi has profiles of the different species in the park on their website, National Park Mercantour presents their species with drawings .
Cultural and historic knowledge about the park	National Park Gesäuse has storymaps of the historic evolvement of their park's landscape.
Recommendations for environmentally conscious behavior	National Park Berchtesgaden informs on their website, also with a video collection . Nature Park Adamello Brenta has created a short film series on the peaceful coexistence with wildlife. Biosphere Park Nockberge has created a Booklet to give behavioral advice in a playful way.

Information regarding the Stay in the Park	
Tour proposals	Seasonal tour collections at Landscape Park Binntal.
Accommodation, restaurants, mountain huts	Information (text and map) and booking options for accomodation at National Park Triglav.
Weather forecasts, webcams for tour planning	National Park Gesäuse is one of many parks providing live weather reports and webcams.
Mobility: infrastructure, parking, accessibility	Digital Wöffi online e-broschures for tours with access via public transport in Nature Park Karwendel. National Park Mercantour provides e-brochures for public transport options.
Information on upcoming events	Online calendar with search tool at National Park Gesäuse, or at Swiss National Park .

As can be seen via the examples in the table, informing visitors is largely done through the parks' **websites**. Some parks also have **newsletters** (e.g., the [National Park Kalkalpen](#)), **podcasts** (e.g., the [Nature Park Adamello Brenta](#)) or **video collections** (e.g., the [National Park Kalkalpen](#)), e.g. on YouTube. Many parks further have their own **applications** (e.g., the [App 'Destinations Ecrins'](#) in the National Park Ecrins), including information material for the above-listed thematic areas. They also collaborate with online platforms (e.g., ['Digitize the Planet'](#)) and applications, like ['Komoot'](#) and ['Outdooractive'](#), to spread information/share tour proposals with their visitors.

Of course, parks also inform and educate their visitors **analogously**, in various ways:

- **Visitor centers** are an important service, providing information and materials for their visitors.
- **Information materials** like brochures. Distribution of materials also through cooperation with partner companies and service providers, like hotels and tourist agencies.
- **Rangers** are a service provided to visitors, to guide and inform them.
- **Signage on the ground** helps to inform visitors about the rules in the park.
- **Theme paths** and signage educate on topics like the environment, culture and history in the park.

Other services of parks for their visitors revolve around **free-time activities**, **park infrastructure** and **other park services**.

2) Free-time activities

- Offer possibility to do recreational activities in the park, e.g., hiking, cycling, skiing etc.
- Guided tours and excursions
- Visitor centers: expositions and place for, e.g., workshops and events
- Workshops like [Alphorn play](#) at the UNESCO Biosphere Entlebuch
- Events, e.g., film festivals, joint hikes, public stargazing
- Camps for different groups (e.g., [Summer camps](#) in National Park Kalkalpen)
- Gamification of tours, interactive tours through material online and/or on the ground, e.g., use of [the App “Actionbound” in the National Park Berchtesgaden](#)
- Health-based offers, e.g., [information on places of energy](#) in National Park Stelvio; events like [yoga classes](#) in the park in National Park Mercantour, [forest bathing](#) in National Park Kalkalpen



Fig.1: Visitor Center Nagelfluhkette ©Weizenegger

➤ Offers tailored to specific groups:

- **Elderly:** e.g., assistance like wheelchairs to rent (e.g., [National Park Hohe Tauern](#)),
- **People with disabilities:** e.g., tour proposals (e.g., [National Park Kalkalpen](#)), virtual experiences for people not able to visit the park ([“park without borders” project](#) Nature Park Adamello Brenta)
- **Children:** e.g., the [junior ranger program](#) by the Nature Park Prealpi Giulie

3) Infrastructure

- Trail monitoring and maintenance: Sometimes also with online information to facilitate tour planning (e.g., [online tool](#) of the Wildlife Park Zürich; [trail conditions on website](#) Triglav National Park)
- Viewing points
- Visitor centers and information points
- Public restrooms, mountain huts, campsites (implementation and maintenance)
- Internet access

- Emergency infrastructure, e.g., direct contact with emergency dispatch center (National Park Hohe Tauern Tyrol)

4) Other types of services and assistance

- Facilitating the **booking** of tours, events, sometimes also of accommodation: Parks act as an **interface** between service providers and visitors, e.g., National Park Stelvio [online booking tool](#)
- Online, and on the ground, park shops; e.g., [National Park Vanoise online shop](#)
- Generally: **Biodiversity monitoring and management** to protect the natural environment

Services for the Local Population

Of course, the local population profits from the various services of the parks to their visitors, like information and education offers, free-time activities etc. Nonetheless, there are specific types of services that are particularly addressed towards the local population. Moreover, there are many offers that allow the local population to actively engage in park activities to shape and sustain the available services.

1) Educational activities with schools

- Many parks have long-term **partnerships** with schools, provide them with learning materials and offer excursions for school classes, e.g., via partnerships within the [Alpine School Model](#)
- Short-term **collaborations** with schools and **various programs** for classes, e.g. project [“Climate School”](#) by the National Park Hohe Tauern
- **Seminars and training** for other educational staff, e.g., Nature Park Adamello Brenta offers [teacher seminars](#) to help them teach topics on the environment in class.

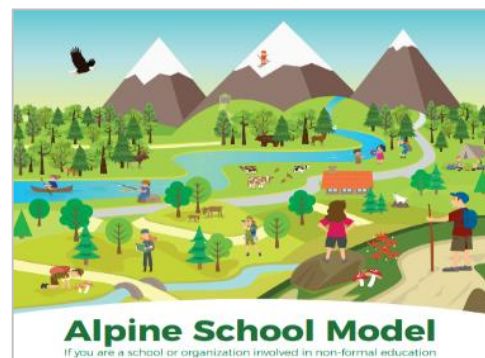


Fig. 2: Alpine School Model

2) Local events and projects

- Another area of services to the local population is **hosting and supporting local events**, e.g., the 18-month long artistic project [“L’horizon pour s’entendre”](#) of the Vercors Nature Park

- as well as **financing local projects**, e.g., the National Park Ecrins [gives online information on subsidies](#)
- **Renting event locations**, e.g. in the [Swiss National Park](#)
- Some parks also give **technical support** for local project proposals

3) Involvement of the local population in park activities

- **Seminars and training programs**, e.g. the [Wilderness education course](#) in the National Park Kalkalpen; [Photography school](#) in National Park Gesäuse
- Many parks give the local population the possibility to be involved in the park through **regular activities**, e.g., the [Youth group “Capricorn Club”](#) in Nature Park Beverin
- Possibility for local population to get involved in the parks’ **decision-making processes**, e.g. by joining [Youth Councils](#) like in the Natural Park Orobie Valtellinesi or participating at [open round tables](#), e.g. in the Biosphere Park Nockberge



Fig. 3: Youth Group “Capricorn Club”
©Nature Park Beverin

4) Ensuring life quality

- Again, one major service of the parks to their local population is the **monitoring, management and protection of biodiversity** to sustain and improve **quality of life**
- **Participating in projects** with parks, stakeholders, institutions etc. to protect the area and improve life quality
E.g., Interreg Alpine Space Projects
- **Structuring of the territory** with infrastructure but also protection and maintenance zones (National Parks)



Fig. 4: Interreg Alpine Space Project ‘LiveAlpsNature’

Services for Local Actors

Parks also provide services for local actors in the economy, like manufacturers and companies, but also to actors from other areas like science and public education, e.g., universities.



Fig. 5: Sustainable
Producer Award Label
©National Park Stelvio

1) Economy

- **Valorization** of the territory through the “Park” status
- **Increase in visitor numbers** through **park label** on products, services, accommodation establishments in the park area and surroundings
E.g., National Park Stelvio increase producers’ visibility by presenting the [“Sustainable Producer” Award](#)
- Active **advertisement** on the ground and online
E.g., National Park Stelvio dedicates a [website to manufacturers](#) in the park, increasing their visibility; they offer an [online map](#) with the location of stands that sell park products
- **Networking**: Direct contact with local actors for **events**; recommending them to partners, contacting them to accompany events or programs
E.g., [Food for Future Project](#) of the Swiss Parks, where they connect local actors with schools for programs on food cycles; Parc Ela organizes [network meetings](#) for local actors
- **Creating exchange platforms** between stakeholders of nature protection and economy
E.g., National Park Berchtesgaden exchanges with Alpine pasture farmers
- **Accompanying agricultural-ecological measures and subsidies** through the park
E.g., National Park Ecrins [financially supports](#) measures towards ecological agriculture
- **Direct support of local economic actors**, e.g. [workshops on sustainability](#) (National Park Mercantour) or [training](#) for administration workers, hosts and guides in the region (UNESCO Biosphere Entlebuch)
- **Team building activities** for companies through landscape management work offers
E.g., in [Nature Park Pfyn-Finges](#)

2) Science and higher public education

- **Promotion of science** in parks,
E.g., [Online collection of published scientific studies](#) on the park territory (National Park Vanoise), or [map with ongoing scientific projects](#) (Swiss National Park)
- **Creating exchange platforms**, e.g., [Scientific Advisory Boards](#) (Nature Park Vercors)
- **Collection of data** for scientific purposes, often public access to this data (e.g., [database on glaciers](#) in Hohe Tauern National Park), or feeding into other, bigger databases (e.g., [parcs.at](#))
- **Hosting and supporting (field) studies** by research institutes and **universities**

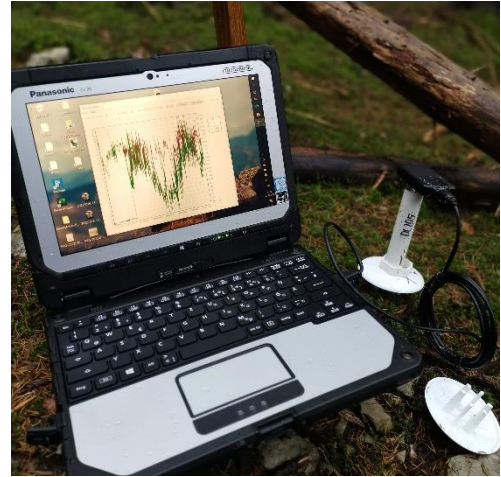


Fig. 6: Micro Climate Logger ©National Park Berchtesgaden

Alpine Parks play an active role in raising environmental awareness, supporting local communities and promoting sustainable economic development.

At the same time, they must carefully balance their activities with their primary mission of nature conservation. Although it's not the main focus of this report, it's worth noting that the 'eco-system services' nature itself provides—such as clean water, fresh air, and food—are invaluable.

By protecting natural ecosystems, parks play an essential role in safeguarding these vital 'free services' that benefit all of us.