

Report on hiking activities 2012 - AGM 29 January 2013

Honour and pleasure to remind members of activities in 2012, and point out a few planned for 2013

First of all I would like to mention that we managed to get a new website up and running, which has now been well tested and found very useful. The change of developer of this website had resulted in a delay, but we are proud to see that now most people are happy with the new way the club and the hiking program are presented and communicated and how members can register for hikes. The Club Committee is happy that the website has resulted in less work, and in particular that it is easier for members to be informed of last minute changes, ad hoc hikes, etc. We know that the website could still be improved (e.g., the hiking reports) and your ideas have been noted. Please feel free to come up with new suggestions for further improvement.

Coming now to the sportive activities of 2012 up to now:

Different from last 2 years, to change a bit I vary the order of highlights. I start with our hikes in Austria, and among them with those in or around Vienna, and only later mention the so-called “big highlights” including trips abroad, to reflect a bit that the short hikes and day hikes, of which there are many, are at least as important as the strenuous - or expensive - ones, which not all of us can participate in.

Short hikes: cultural hikes and evening hikes – not only were they continued. We even started earlier with the evening hikes, already in May, which is good since the light is still there – we will continue this in 2013, as will be seen soon in the program. Cultural hikes were offered by more leaders than before, of course Rotraud Turanicz and Christine Colella, but also Maria Hofmann, Guenter, etc.

Easy day hikes (A and B category): in 2012 there was a time when we were worried, as many of you will remember, when Peter Vacek fell sick and had to suspend leading hikes for some months. We are very happy to see him back, especially since he intends to lead again some hikes.

We are very pleased and grateful to note that a number of newcomers, who had not led a hike before, stepped in during the absence of Peter (Dominique Le Dantecq, Marie Luise Lewandowski, Rosemarie Idl, Erika Cody, Helene Schuster, Evelyn Ranharter, Evelyn Hesp, Carolyn Lettner), offering easy hikes, and we hope that they will continue to lead also in the future, whenever there is a need, and also just because they like doing so. As Christine Slater stated: it is best when hike leaders do not join from outside but “grow” from within the club. Of course there were many easy hikes also offered by other hike leaders, – I hope that all leaders will continue to cater for different clienteles.

Thanks, in particular, to the continued efforts of our “50+” hike leaders who are still all going very strong (Christine Colella, Peter Jirak, Pauls Hesp, Frits, Norbert Plhak) we all could participate in the more traditional easy and not so easy day hikes, including the

legendary ones which are offered almost every year: the “smaller events” ending at a Christmas Market somewhere in Lower Austria, Martini Gansl hike, a different version of the Stadtumwanderung, Weinviertler Jakobsweg, botanic or culinary excursions (in fact there were many, even when they were not officially announced as such), map reading exercises (for which we feel particularly grateful), etc.

The club organized further many intermediary and more strenuous hikes, for a whole day or a weekend: Welterbesteig Wachau, Öhler-Mamauwiese, Hohe Scheibe, Reisalpe, Kreuzschober (Kaarlhütte), Stuhleck, Hohe Veitsch, Duerrenstein, Hohe Wand, Duerre Wand, Unterberg, Krummbachstein, Hochwechsel, Schneetalpe, Rax, Schneeberg, etc., - in fact we were again trying our best to go on all the mountains that are close to Vienna (the Wiener Hausberge) and almost succeeded. In this regard we are happy to see that Christine Slater and Roger Starkie joined our team of hike leaders – we are very glad about the addition, since they are both experienced hike leaders, the club will therefore benefit from their leadership, and especially since mountaineering and climbing might be more often offered to those interested, with Roger’s help.

There were also longer weekend and week trips offered by Guenter (Vienna to Maria Zell - of which there is another version foreseen for 2013), who also led to Bad Gastein and Eisenerzer Alpen; Frits offered Hochschwab and Maria Waldrast in winter and summer; we saw lesser known parts in Carinthia; we did some biking and hiking activities around Bad Mitterndorf in winter and summer;.....– I do not want to name all activities individually, there are too many).

Now we come to the hiking trips abroad:

Well, we went to Sopron, and again to Bratislava – If you are now disappointed, yes, the Viennese feel also for both locations that they are not really foreign, more part of the neighbourhood

We went a bit further: The club offered two trips to Italy (the Amalfi coast and the island of Capri, on the first occasion, and in October a very exclusive, almost private trip to Elba, in which only Tomas and Mari seemed to participate),

We must also mention the trip to Norway last August, led by Paul; photoshow- the pictures are on the web

Before the list of activities from last year ends, as you know, the club offered not only “hikes”: we offered a few bicycle trips, and in winter cross-country and snow-shoeing activities, the “traditional” ones (Maria Waldrast) and many new ones .

We were happy to receive positive feedback from members, and I at least was sorry to hear that some of our members had been in Vienna for several years before finding out about the hiking club. We are proud that we could offer many opportunities to see new areas of Austria or “the neighbourhood” – after all we are all part of a global village, learn about our cultural and other highlights, get to know local food in Austria and abroad,

see flora and fauna, and last, but not least, meet new friends and enjoy physical exercise in a nice atmosphere.

For statistics: as usual they may not be true, although they are based on the website, as of January last year:

Many day hikes: 57 (6 more than in 2011)

Cross-country – around 3 (all on one long weekend)

Snow-shoeing – 5 (all on long weekends, 2 more than 2011, but maybe one counted 2x)

10 Weekend hikes (including long weekends of up to 6 days, 2 less than in previous years)

2 hiking trips of at least 1 week (as in previous years)

24 Evening and other short hikes- 6 more than in 2011

Only 3 bicycle trips, including a mountain bike activity (first time, but 9 less than in 2011)

Total: 105

As you can see, we took into account the wishes of the majority of the members and offered many easy hikes and hikes of a day or shorter - altogether there were only 3 weekends without any activity, all of them in off season (7/8 January, 18/19 February 2012, and 29/30 December)

All these activities thanks to our hike-leaders, their ideas, resourcefulness, and patience - maybe you offer them a clap or ovations for them, especially also for the brave “new” hike leaders who dared to offer their services first time in 2012.

At this stage I believe we have to remind ourselves that Peter Jirak decided to no more lead hikes for our club as of next year – when we think of this we already miss him now. Because of his unique style, his expert knowledge in so many different areas and his social skills it will be impossible to replace him. Still, I am happy to see that the future does not look as bleak as last year. Now we have several additional hike leaders - but there is always room for more. If you want to lead a hike, or know of someone who might, just come to the committee and let us know

This leads me to the new 2013 spring program and plans for summer and autumn
You have surely seen some of it on the website.

We hope that you find it to your liking – there are many activities to suit every taste, as many initiatives from last year or before continue or are repeated: Welterbesteig Wachau, Weinviertler Jakobsweg, Maria Zell, Kieneck, evening hikes already in May, cultural hikes, other easy hikes, more strenuous hikes,

If you want to get away from Austria, again you find some opportunities: Maybe you want to register for Hungary with Christine Colella, for Italy with Tomas– we are trying to persuade Tomas to schedule again a trip to Elba for Easter, we will see if this can be done – if not possible, somewhere else in Italy

Tomas also “owes” us still a hike to the Giant Mountains (Riesengebirge), whenever he has time between his many missions – maybe this year???,

or, with Paul for the Netherlands (to improve statistics for bicycling), or with Isabelle for a mouth-watering “chocolate-lovers trip” to Belgium which is in the plan. If you want to go really far away from Austria (or just very far away from the VIC?), consider going to Australia, in October, – the hike leaders have come up again with some wonderful ideas, we hope that you will like them.

At the end there remains for me only to repeat one last suggestion: if you like our club inform your colleagues or friends, use mouth-to-mouth propaganda - not everybody should have to wait several years to get to know the VIC Hikingclub