

Paris Summit Establishes a Union for the Mediterranean

Heads of state and government of the European Union, the European Commission, members and observers from the Barcelona Process (including its new members, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Monaco and Montenegro) inaugurated a reinforced regional partnership titled: "*Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean*" on July 13, bringing together 43 nations and almost 800 million inhabitants from the northern and southern Mediterranean nations. International and regional organizations such as the United Nations, the GCC, the League of Arab States, the African Union, the Arab Maghreb Union, the OIC, as well as financial institutions (ADB, EIB, World Bank), were also represented.

Willing to increase co-ownership of the process, the Union aims to address common challenges facing the Euro-Mediterranean region, such as economic and social development; world food security; degradation of the environment, including climate change and desertification, with the view of promoting sustainable development; energy; elevating regional security by acting in favor of nuclear, chemical and biological non-proliferation through international and regional disarmament agreements; migration; terrorism and extremism; as well as advancing dialogue between cultures.

"Europe and the Mediterranean countries are bound by history, geography and culture," the heads of state and government asserted in a draft joint declaration issued at the Summit for the Mediterranean, underscoring the shared political will to revitalize efforts to transform the Mediterranean into an area of peace, democracy, cooperation, and prosperity. "More

importantly," the officials continued, "they are united by a common ambition: to build together a future of peace, democracy, prosperity and human, social, and cultural understanding. To achieve these common objectives, participants agree to continue with renewed dynamism the quest for peace and cooperation, to explore their joint problems and transform these good intentions into action in a renewed partnership for peace."

As a first stage, leaders at the Summit decided to launch a number of key initiatives: de-pollution of the Mediterranean; maritime and land highways; civil protection; alternative energies: Mediterranean Solar Plan; higher education and research, Euro-Med University; and the Mediterranean Business Development Initiative.

The heads of state and government also agreed to establish *inter alia* a co-presidency — one president from the E.U. and the other from a Mediterranean partner country — to improve the balance and joint ownership of their cooperation, as well as a joint secretariat. The

current co-presidents are France and Egypt. The modalities in terms of projects that the Union will undertake, and where the secretariat will be geographically located, will be decided by the next Foreign Affairs Ministerial meeting in November 2008. In addition, heads of state and government agreed to hold biennial summits that should result in a political declaration and a short list of concrete regional projects to be set in motion.



President Sarkozy (second from right) presides over the Paris Conference on July 13.

European Immigration Pact Met with Unanimous Approval

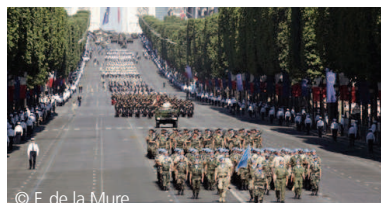
As current president of the Council of the European Union (E.U.), France presented a revised pact on immigration and asylum last month to interior ministers from all EU member-states. The document was met with "unanimous approval of the principles, objectives, presentation and structure of the pact," according to Brice Hortefeux, French minister of Immigration, Integration, National Identity, and Co-Development. This positive reception encourages hopes that the accord will be ratified in October at a European summit in Brussels.

The agreement coordinates policies in five main areas: legal and illegal immigration, strengthening border controls, asylum, and co-development. The first section requests member-states to take into account local needs and preferences and to promote the E.U. as a destination for highly qualified workers. States must also ensure that immigrants have the resources, such as access to work and education, including language instruction and knowledge of local laws, necessary for successful integration into the host country. The second part of the agreement, which attempts to reconcile responses to illegal immigration, provides for the expulsion of illegal immigrants and conditions for their reentrance into the Union, including amnesty on a case-by-case basis and bilateral readmission agreements with specific countries of origin when necessary. Thirdly, to improve border security, the agreement would give more powers to the European Union agency for external border security, Frontex, and increase optimization of modern technology, including biometric visas by January 1, 2012. The fourth part of the pact, as a step toward the goal of a single European asylum policy by 2012, would create a central European office to facilitate the exchange of information regarding asylum seekers. Finally, the European Council promises to support development in countries of origin and transit countries in order to create a balance between migration and local development.

Bastille Day Takes on International Scope

France celebrated Bastille Day on July 14 with festivities taking place throughout *l'hexagone* and overseas departments and collectives. In Paris, the celebrations took on a particularly international flavor, reflecting France's rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union (E.U.), with the participation of other EU member-states in the annual ceremonies.

During the traditional garden party at the Elysée Palace, French President Nicolas Sarkozy bestowed the country's highest civilian award,



This year's July 14 parade in Paris took on an international flavor, featuring UN soldiers, as well as those from all members of the Union for the Mediterranean.

the Legion of Honor, upon French-Colombian national Ingrid Betancourt for her courage during more than six years of being held in captivity by the FARC in the Colombian jungle. In addition, Mr. Sarkozy celebrated the launch of the Union for the Mediterranean, a new international body aimed at increasing collaboration between the European Union, African, and Middle Eastern countries that share common interests with the Mediterranean Sea (see article above). Soldiers from all 43 member-states of the newly formed Union, as well as forces from the United Nations, were invited to march with French troops down Paris's Champs-Élysées in the "Euro-Mediterranean Bastille Day" parade. The day culminated with a fireworks display illuminating the Eiffel Tower.

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**NEW TWO-EURO COIN
COMMEMORATES EU PRESIDENCY**

Every year, all Eurozone member-states are allowed to issue one commemorative piece. Last month, France launched a uniquely conceived two-euro coin to celebrate the start of its presidency of the Council of the European Union (E.U.). The two-toned coin, designed by Philippe Stark and minted in copper, nickel, and zinc, features a silvery border of 12 stars, the symbol of the E.U., and the words "2008 Présidence Française de l'Union Européenne" displayed on the copper-colored center. The back of the coin displays the traditional design common to all two-euro pièces: a map of Europe and the "2 euro" demarcation. Twenty million commemorative pieces were put into circulation in France on July 1, raising the country's total of two-euro coins to 500 million. They can be used across the E.U. as legal tender.



**REGIONS PUSH TO CURB
POLLUTION**



Three departments in France will impose reduced speed limits in an effort to cut back on pollution.

In an effort to reduce their ecological footprint and improve air quality, the departments of Bouche-du-Rhône, Var, and Alpes de Haute-Provence in southeastern France will impose speed limits one day a week on regional high-ways. Limits will decrease from 100 to 70 kilometers per hour between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. each Monday, with the goal of reducing the emission of pollutants that cause smog. In many metropolitan areas, automobiles are the chief cause of smog, as emissions from the numerous vehicles on the road add up. According to the EPA, byproducts of the engine combustion process include hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides, which can react to form trioxigen — the main contributor to the grey haze over cities that can irritate eyes, cause lung damage, and aggravate respiratory problems in humans. In addition, intense sunlight can also increase the amount of this substance by causing pollutants to evaporate off the engine.

Current Events

Two Hundred Medications Made Available Over-the-Counter

The French Ministry of Health, in collaboration with several health organizations, has made more than 200 previously prescription-only medicines available over-the-counter in French pharmacies to significantly lower the cost of medication for the public.

The list of medicines was compiled by the AFSSAPS, the French agency responsible for ensuring the effectiveness, quality, and proper use of health-care products. The list of approved medications comprises pain relievers



200+ previously prescription-only medicines became available over-the-counter.

and treatments for colds and other ailments believed to be treatable without medical attention.

Although pharmacists are not obligated to classify these medications as over-the-counter, they are being encouraged to do so by groups and organizations that support the initiative, including the National Order of Pharmacists and the French National Health Insurance Fund for Salaried Workers.

Arianespace's Collaboration with US Firm Takes Off

Arianespace, a European consortium headquartered in Evry, France, celebrated its 26th consecutive successful mission last month with the launch of the satellite ProtoStar I, commissioned by new telecommunication service provider ProtoStar, a Bermuda-based corporation with operations in the U.S. and Singapore. The satellite was built by US-based Space Systems/Loral. Once in geosynchronous orbit, it will provide high-definition TV transmissions and broadband Internet to Southeast Asia and India.

Arianespace launched ProtoStar I as part of the same mission as the Arabsat satellite BADR-6, which will provide

telecommunications services to the Middle East and North Africa. The company used an Ariane 5 vehicle for the satellites, the only commercial launcher in service able to simultaneously launch two payloads. In addition to the traditional customer logos on the launch vehicle, Arianespace added a special logo to celebrate the six-month French presidency of the Council of the European Union.



The Ariane 5 launches the two payloads.

Eiffel Tower to Undergo Upgrades to Accommodate More Visitors



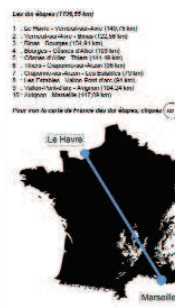
The Eiffel Tower, one of the world's most popular destinations, attracting nearly seven million visitors a year, will undergo upgrades over the next 10 years to modernize facilities and further improve efficiency and access for tourists. A new system will shorten lines by allowing visitors to reserve half-hour time slots online, and the shops in and around the monument will be enlarged. In addition, the tower's original elevators will be renovated and its first-floor restaurant will be redesigned to increase capacity and lower prices.

The plan also calls for improved access for the handicapped and a reduction in energy consumption. The monument's nightly light show will be reduced from 10 minutes per hour to five.

The Eiffel Tower, designed by Gustave Eiffel for the 1889 World's Fair, underwent its last major renovation in the 1980s, increasing capacity for visitors.

French Photographer Documents Bicycle Tour Through France

With nothing more than a nine-kilogram bike, a compact camera, and a change of clothes, photographer and amateur cyclist Frédéric de la Mure has set out to capture France in candid photographs. De la Mure, a professional photographer for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, embarked June 19 on a ten-day, nearly 1,200-km bicycle tour stretching from the English Channel to the Mediterranean Sea. His journey, which followed as closely as possible a straight line drawn diagonally across France from Le Havre to Marseille, yielded an album of images depicting the var-



Frédéric de la Mure traveled diagonally across France from Le Havre to Marseille by bike. Images of his journey are online.



ied landscapes and everyday life seen throughout l'héxagone.

De la Mure documented his voyage in an online interactive flip-book, with each page devoted to a separate stage. The book includes not only images of rural panoramas and urban landscapes, but also satellite maps, audio commentary from the artist, and statistical information about each stage, such as distance, slope, temperature, and weather conditions. For more information, please visit: www.diplomatic.gouv.fr/fr/sites/chronique_photos_LHM.

Angelina Jolie Gives Birth to Twins in the South of France



named Knox Léon and Vivienne Marcheline, each weighed about

American actress Angelina Jolie gave birth last month to fraternal twins in the French city of Nice, ending months of media attention focusing not only on Jolie and the babies' father, Brad Pitt (both pictured on left), but also on the southern French port city. The *niçois* (native to the city of Nice) twins,

five pounds and were born a minute apart in a seaside hospital room with a view overlooking the Mediterranean.

The week before their birth, Nice's mayor, Christian Estrosi, conferred honorary *niçois* citizenship on the children. Although simply being born in France is not enough to gain French citizenship, the American twins will have the option to become dual citizens when they turn 18, as long as France is their primary residence for at least five years after the age of 11. In addition, Mayor Estrosi personally brought the twins' birth certificates to the hospital to spare Pitt the trip to City Hall through the paparazzi.

New England Celebrates Joint History with France

The spirit of camaraderie and multiculturalism has been palpable throughout France this summer, with events ranging from the European Cultural Season festivities (see NFF 08.06) to most recently Paris's international Bastille Day celebrations honoring remarkable individuals around the world (see p. 1). A similar level of amity was also present this summer on this side of the Atlantic, particularly New England's Massachusetts and scenic Vermont, which hosted festivities recognizing international cooperation and French-American friendship.

The cross-cultural appreciation that pervaded Paris's Bastille Day festivities was equally conveyed in Boston, where the city's French consulate honored five American WWII veterans with France's highest award, the Legion of Honor, for their heroism and courage during the liberation of France in 1944. Attended by Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick, who began his remarks in French, the Consul General of France François Gauthier decorated each former soldier and declared that: "We are forever grateful, France will never forget."

In Vermont, this summer marked the beginning of celebrations commemorating the state's historic links to France, which dates to the 1600s, when explorer and cartographer Samuel de Champlain

traveled through the region and gave the state its name, derived from the French "*les verts monts*" (the green mountains). The Lake Champlain Quadricentennial Commission initiated festivities this summer to mark the 400th anniversary of Champlain's discovery of the lake that now bears his name.

The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum launched a replica last month of a canal schooner, a common sight during the 1800s when commerce frequently journeyed across the lake during passage from Montréal to New York City. The *Louis McClure*, the official flagship of the Quadricentennial, navigated the St. Lawrence to Québec, arriving on July 6 for the 400th anniversary of Champlain's founding of the city. In addition, summer 2009 will prove to be a festive and entertaining season for Vermont — with lectures, art shows, and Franco-American heritage events on the schedule. For more information, please visit: www.consulfrance-boston.org.

Champlain's legacy was also celebrated on Cape Cod on July 21, during a wreath-laying ceremony at a monument in Stage Harbor (Chatham), where Champlain's ship moored in 1606 on his journey along the North American coast. The Consul General of France was joined in this tribute by representatives from Québec and Canada, as well as the local French-American community and local officials.

US-EU Collaboration in Space Soars to Twenty-Five Years

To commemorate 25 years of European human spaceflight with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Pierre Vimont, French ambassador to the U.S., along with Klaus Scharioth, German ambassador to the U.S., hosted representatives from NASA and several European space agencies, including the French Space Agency (CNES) and the German Space Agency (DLR). On the 39th anniversary of Neil Armstrong's first steps on the moon, Michael Griffin, the administrator of NASA, lauded the cooperation in human space exploration between the E.U. and U.S. and honored the achievements of astronauts from the European Space Agency (ESA). Ambassador Vimont also celebrated cooperation between Europe and the U.S., noting the Hubble Telescope and International Space Station (ISS) (see NFF 08.02) as examples of this shared effort, and adding that "when the present Space Shuttle comes to an end by 2010, Europeans hope to be part of the development of the new manned space mission."

At the Residence of France, Frederic Nordlund, ESA representative, recognized the eight European nations that have sent astronauts into space with NASA. Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland all received a crystal award etched with the names of the 23 European astronauts who have flown aboard NASA's space shuttles — a partnership between Europe and the United States that will continue next July when ESA

astronaut Christer Fuglesang flies to the ISS for the second time aboard the Space Shuttle *Atlantis*.

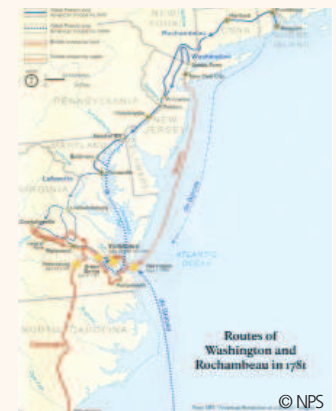
Among the honored guests was Ulf Merbold, who became the first ESA astronaut to enter space in 1983 aboard the Space Shuttle *Columbia*. After finishing his doctorate in physics at the University of Stuttgart and the Max Plank Institute, Merbold pursued an out-of-this-world career instead of a professorship in order to "put his knowledge into action." In 1982, the German astronaut was selected by ESA to train as a payload specialist on the first flight of the Spacelab module. Even after three flights into orbit, Merbold describes his time in space as "an experience no language can describe or comprehend," especially commenting on "the acceleration of the ship and the increasing feeling of weightlessness when entering orbit."

Merbold and French astronaut Léopold Eyharts, the most recent European to leave earth's orbit, agreed that despite the growing frequency of space exploration of militaries and states, future human efforts in space "will be shared and not competitive." Merbold envisions space as "a future laboratory for astrophysics and experiments in human physiology." Eyharts agrees, adding that the objectives of an outpost on the moon and a voyage to Mars are "obtainable goals that will be realized in the near future with collaborative efforts contributing to the necessary financial and knowledge resources."

TREATY OF PARIS ON DISPLAY AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

History buffs and school children alike will have the opportunity to view the original Treaty of Paris, on display in the East Rotunda Gallery of the National Archives from August 29 - September 3. The Treaty, which celebrates its 225th anniversary this year, formally ended the American Revolution and established a sovereign United States of America. Founding fathers John Adams, John Jay, and Benjamin Franklin all participated in the peace negotiations, deliberating over issues such as land boundaries and prisoners of war, and eventually signed the Treaty at the Hôtel de York, now renamed 56, rue Jacob in Paris. The display of the Treaty takes place on the margins of a National Archives exhibition titled "1783: Subject or Citizen?" that will showcase 18th-century books, letters, paintings, and maps from October 3 to January 25, 2009.

REVOLUTIONARY ROUTE HONORS FRENCH-AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP



The U.S. House of Representatives honored the long-standing history of French-American relations last month by passing the *Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail Designation Act*. To commemorate the cooperation of American and French military forces during the Revolutionary War, the bill, which awaits Senate approval, designates a more than 600-mile route from Newport, Rhode Island, to Yorktown, Virginia, as a National Historic Trail (see above). The path traces the journey taken by the American and French armies under Generals George Washington and Jean-Baptiste de Rochambeau in 1781. Winding through eight states on existing roads and waterways, the trail is mapped out by educational signs and historical markers. French forces under Count Rochambeau met American troops outside of New York City and combined forces on October 17, 1781, with a French fleet under Admiral de Grasse in a major defeat of the British army. The subsequent surrender of British General Cornwallis at Yorktown formally ended the American Revolutionary War.

Under the French Sun: Summer Vacation in the Air

France is the sixth largest economy in the world in terms of GDP, with more than 63 million citizens and a GDP that reached approximately 1,800 billion euros in 2006. More than one million businesses have been set up in the country over the past five years, and French workers claim one of the highest hourly productivity rates in the world.

But along with encouraging an efficient workforce and a globally competitive economy, France places great value on the chance to rest and relax amid the bustle of everyday life, to cultivate a *joie de vivre* that encompasses far more than just the daily commute to the office. French citizens enjoy five weeks of paid vacation, allowing time to take trips out of town and to be with family, thanks to a series of laws that have over time morphed into a cultural mainstay.

French vacation habits do not come at the expense of labor productivity — in fact, the opposite may be true. Measured as value added per hour worked, France is the third most productive nation in the world, after Norway and the U.S., according to a 2007 International Labour Organization report. In addition to being well-rested, many French workers hold scientific and technical degrees and receive thorough job training, factors that may contribute to the country's productivity rate.

History of Paid Vacation in France



Newly implemented paid vacation in the 1930s contributed to a fledgling tourism industry and new avenues for citizens to spend leisurely time.

Paid vacations date back to the 1930s, when the socialist-communist Front Populaire won a majority in the French National Assembly, and the left-leaning Léon Blum was named prime minister. Along with establishing a 40-hour work week, the new government instituted a two-week paid vacation, which at the time was exciting for many French workers who had previously been unable to afford time off. In the summer of 1936, many Frenchmen saw the ocean for the first time.

Emerging industries followed suit and began addressing the needs of vacationers. Léo Lagrange, of the new Ministry of Sports and Leisure, created hostels and implemented a 40 percent reduction on train tickets for those traveling on holiday. Summertime essentials, such as Ambre Solaire sun cream, appeared for the first time. Between 1936 and 1938, bicycle sales rose by 30 percent. Furthermore, popular culture embraced the new trends — films and magazines depicted families on holiday and couples on the beach. Reflecting on this time of change, Léon Blum declared, "Jalopies, motorbikes, and tandems ridden by working class couples in matching pullovers [...] all this made me feel that, in spite of everything, I had brought a ray of sunshine into dark, difficult lives [...] not only making family life easier but opening a vision of the future and creating hope."

Over the course of the following decades, the length of the paid vacation was extended to three weeks, then to four. In the 1980s, then-French President François Mitterrand established five weeks, where it remains today.

Technically, every employee, regardless of his salary, work schedule, or field of work, has the right to two and a half vacation days per month, which translates to 30 working days of paid leave per year. Employment law, however, dictates certain limitations—for example, employees cannot take more than 24 working days of leave at a time without permission, and they must take at least 12 working days in a row of main vacation.



In France, summer vacation begins in July and reaches its peak during the month of August. Around 70 percent of French vacationers leave town during these two months, and by mid-August, approximately a quarter of the population is enjoying a break from work. During this time, many smaller family-owned businesses put signs on their doors that read "*fermeture annuelle*" (annual closing) to signal that they are on holiday.

The high volume of traffic in late summer resulting from vacationers prompted the French government to launch a public service campaign in 1976 to help citizens travel more safely and efficiently to their vacation destinations. The campaign, represented by a mascot called the "*Bison futé*" (Wily Bison), still exists today and offers information on traffic conditions and road safety through radio, TV, and Internet broadcasts.

Where the French Go

A majority of French vacationers within "*l'hexagone*," travel to popular seaside destinations in the south, especially along the Atlantic Ocean at Bassin d'Arcachon in Bordeaux or in the Basque region at Biarritz—formerly frequented by Queen Victoria and currently renowned among surfers for its ideal funnel waves. Also popular is the "*Côte d'Azur*," or French Riviera, stretching along the Mediterranean coast from Menton near the Italian border to Marseille. While the harbor of Saint-Tropez has a reputation for large yachts, beautiful people, and glamour, slower-paced family-friendly locations are also frequented, including Antibes Juan-les-Pins, famous for inspiring artist Pablo Picasso, and Hyères, a former Phoenician settlement dating from the fourth century B.C.



Once frequented by Queen Victoria, Biarritz continues to be a popular tourist destination for its ideal funnel waves and sunny shores.

The mountains, especially the Pyrénées and Alps, also attract large numbers of summer vacationers. La Clusaz and Courchevel near the Swiss border — favorite ski resorts in winter — allow visitors to take in scenic vistas as they hike and bike through the rural terrain. In addition, the numerous mountain lakes in the region offer opportunities to enjoy water skiing and motor boating.

While many families share second homes or frequent resorts along the sea and in the mountains, campgrounds are also popular and attract tens of thousands of patrons from within the country and elsewhere. In fact, France is a top destination for camping in Europe, with more than 10,000 campgrounds and almost a million available places to pitch a tent, according to France's Commission of Departmental Tourism Action (CDAT). Nearly all campsites have hot showers and running toilets. CDAT also rates accommodations on a four-star scale that considers comfort and quality of the available amenities. Some three- or four-star sites provide grocery stores, bakeries, restaurants, washing machines, swimming pools, sports facilities, and even doctors on-site. Large campgrounds offer free-of-charge activities for children, including volleyball, archery, pool games, and golf, as well as swimming lessons for smaller children. This summer, the French Ministry of Sports is offering thousands of free swimming lessons in pools and lakes throughout the country—some of which may be near campgrounds — in an effort to cut down on water-related accidents (see NFF 08.04).

After a summer's rest, the French are prepared for "*la rentrée*" (see NFF 07.10) in September, when employees return to the office and students head back to school for another year. This time provides a fresh start after a relaxing summer's vacation for citizens young and old as they head back into a new routine and mind set. Around wintertime, many French families take another vacation to enjoy winter sports and celebrate the holidays with relatives.

Speeding Toward a Cleaner Horizon

French Minister for Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Town and Country Planning Jean-Louis Borloo introduced an endeavor to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions by expanding France's public initiative, "Bonus-Malus," a program instituted last year that rewards for the purchase of fuel-efficient cars and discourages the use of heavily polluting vehicles. Aimed at buyers of new cars, the incentive currently offers a financial reward (*bonus*) for environmentally-friendly cars and a financial penalty (*malus*) upon the purchase of an automobile that emits high-levels of carbon dioxide, a gas that contributes to global warming. Minister Borloo announced a new development in the program stipulating that drivers of polluting vehicles will also be required to pay annual penalties as of January 1, 2009, in addition to the previously instituted tax upon initial purchase.

Bonus and *malus* depend on the amount of carbon dioxide



Annual penalties will be imposed on buyers of new cars that heavily emit CO₂.

French Scientist Wins Blue Planet Prize for Antarctic Research

Doctor Claude Lorius became the first French scientist to receive the Blue Planet Prize in June, a prestigious environmental award acknowledging outstanding achievements in scientific research aimed at solving global environmental problems. Lorius, who is a member of the French Academy of Sciences and the Director Emeritus of Research at the National Center for Scientific Research, has made 22 polar expeditions to the Antarctic to study global climate change since he began his research in the mid-1950s.

Lorius was recognized for his many years of data collection and analysis in the Antarctic, which have allowed him to discover and document the relationship between different glacial periods and concentrations of carbon dioxide that are currently reaching

unprecedented high levels, possibly due to human activity and global warming. Drilling through ice sheets all over the Antarctic, including cores at Vostok station, the coldest place on Earth, Lorius examined atmospheric concentrations of methane and carbon dioxide and tracked global warming.

The annual Blue Planet Prize is sponsored by Japan's Asahi Glass Foundation, which awards the prize to two individuals or groups each year. This year, the other recipient was Brazilian Professor José Goldemberg, from the University of São Paulo, who, along with Lorius, will receive a certificate of merit, a trophy, and a supplementary award of about \$500,000 at an awards ceremony in Tokyo in November.

Parisian Gas Balloon Combines Science and Tourism



The Paris Air Balloon glows brightly in the City of Light. The Balloon provides scenic views of the city for tourists while monitoring the air quality.

green for very clean air, light green for clean air, orange for some pollution, and red for high levels of pollution. The second measurement functions by way of a high-power rotating laser beam, measuring air near high-traffic areas. Nitrogen dioxide, ozone, and particles are the most harmful atmospheric contaminants that the balloon is programmed to display.

Aéroophile of France, a Paris-based manufacturer of tethered gas balloons, has paired up this spring with air-quality surveillance organization Airparif to provide the first floating measurer of air pollution. The balloon, which collects environmental data and monitors air quality, is also expected to attract tourists by offering scenic rides 500 feet above the ground.

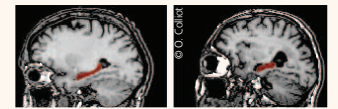
Containing 6,000 cubic meters of helium, the immense balloon is located above Parc André Citroën in the 15th *arrondissement*. It has drawn over 500,000 visitors since its inception in 1999 and aims to attract even more with its new environmental component. Based on the Archimedes principle, it can smoothly and noiselessly lift up to 30 passengers.

Aéroophile uses the data collected in flight to display two measurements of atmospheric pollution. The first is a system of color coding, visible 24 hours a day, that grades air pollution:

CAR SHARE PROGRAM IN PARIS WILL BRING 4,000 ELECTRIC CARS TO THE CITY OF LIGHT

Parisians will soon enjoy a new environmentally-friendly transportation option, thanks to *Autolib'*, an unprecedented electric car-sharing program initiated by the mayor of the French capital Bertrand Delanoë that will place 4,000 electric cars in and around the city — 2,000 within the capital and 2,000 in the suburbs. *Autolib'* will be the first major electric car project in any capital city, and is expected to launch at the end of the year. The program is modeled after *Vélib'*, a highly successful bicycle-sharing scheme that allows users to pick up and drop off bicycles at numerous stands throughout the city. 700 *Autolib'* pick-up points will be scattered across the Paris area, as well as numerous electric-car recharging stations. Much like *Vélib'*, Parisians can pay to use the cars on the spot or can subscribe annually for access to the program.

FRENCH SCIENTISTS MAKE BREAKTHROUGH IN THE EARLY DETECTION OF ALZHEIMER'S



A new image-processing program measures the volume of the hippocampus and compares it to a healthy example (left) to detect Alzheimer's.

Researchers at France's National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), in collaboration with the French National Institute for Health and Medical Research (Inserm), have developed an image-processing computer program that may help detect early stages of Alzheimer's. The program will allow doctors to quickly measure the volume of the hippocampus, the brain structure that atrophies in the first stages of the disease, and compare it to those of healthy individuals of the same age. Current diagnostic procedures for Alzheimer's rely on clinical and neuropsychological exams that use Magnetic Resonance Imaging technology and often result in late detection, thereby limiting treatment options. CNRS estimates that one out of every two Alzheimer's patients in France suffers as a result of late detection. CNRS and Inserm scientists successfully used the program to depict distinctions between a group of Alzheimer's patients and a control group of their healthy contemporaries. Results were published in the July issue of the journal "Radiology."



The centennial celebration displays innovations from the first solo-flight aircraft.

Groupement des Industries Françaises Aéronautiques et Spatiales (GIFAS), an association that promotes collaboration in the air and space industry, is celebrating one hundred years of representing France's many aerospace companies with an open-air exhibition this October along Paris's Champs-Élysées between the Marcel Dassault Roundabout and Place de la Concorde. The exhibit will display innovations from the first solo-flight aircraft to the Airbus 380 — currently the largest commercial carrier in the world. Concomitantly, more than 260 members of GIFAS will discuss methods to make air transport cleaner and to use existing technology to survey and protect the environment. The association's predecessor, *Chambre Syndicale des Industries Aéronautiques* (CSIA), was founded on January 11, 1908, by a group of aviation pioneers, including Louis Blériot — the first man to fly across the English Channel. CSIA was the first definitive separation between the automobile and airplane industries and gave a commercial dimension to flying, which had previously only been considered a sport. The organization's name was changed in 1975 to represent the expansion of the association to include civil and military aircraft, helicopters, engines, satellites, launch systems, and associated software.

SPREADING AIDS AWARENESS

The 10th annual Solidays Festival took place in Paris from July 4-6 to raise money for AIDS research and to heighten awareness about the disease, demonstrating France's continued commitment in addressing the AIDS epidemic. More than 150,000 spectators gathered to listen to more than 200 musicians representing a spectrum of musical talents, who performed on five different stages. Among the artists present were West African reggae singer Alpha Blondy, British alternative electronica band Asian Dub Foundation, and French slam poet Grand Corps Malade. In addition, 100 associations from five continents gathered at the festival to express their solidarity in the fight against AIDS. They addressed the risks of the disease and methods of protection against it. The event, first organized in 1998 by *Solidarité Sida*, has raised eight million euros for AIDS research since its inception.

Tropical Paradise Heats Up in the Heart of Paris

Every summer since 2002, Paris's municipal government has transformed the banks of the Seine River and city park La Villette into sandy beaches, bringing an air of France's sunny coastline to the capital. This year, the Orchestra of Paris opened *Paris-Plage* (Paris Beach) with Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, followed by a 120-person choir singing "Ode to Joy," the official hymn of the European Union (E.U.), in honor of France's presidency of the E.U. In addition, the surface area of the beaches at La Villette, northeast of Paris, was doubled to accommodate the growing popularity of the event that attracted 4 million participants last year.



Paris-Plage allows Parisians to enjoy the sun and sand from a comfortable perch near the Seine.

Paris-Plage has become a major success since it was founded by current mayor of Paris, Bertrand Delanoë. For the past six years, Voie Georges Pompidou and Quai de la Gare, on the banks of the Seine, and La Villette have been transformed into tropical paradises, giving patrons the opportunity to paddleboat, mini-golf, play volleyball, and workout in open-air gyms. In recent years, *Paris-Plage* has expanded and now includes beach-side libraries, samba dance lessons, and nightly open-air cinemas, as well as shuttles between the three locations. Other cities, such as Brussels, Prague, and Tokyo, have instituted their own versions of *Paris-Plage*, demonstrating its popularity and success as an urban model of community fellowship.

New Initiatives to Attract Tourists from Emerging Economies



New endeavors aim to attract tourists from emerging economies to enjoy France's world-renowned destinations such as the Côte d'Azur.

Millions of tourists flock to France each year to visit its countless gems, from the Eiffel Tower to the sunny beaches of the Côte d'Azur. On June 19, France's Minister of State responsible for Businesses and Foreign Trade, Hervé Novelli, along with Christine Lagarde, minister of Economy, Industry, and Employment, announced an initiative that aims to reinforce France's position as the premier vacation destination worldwide while also adapting to changing conditions in the tourism industry.

As part of the initiative, "Destination France 2020," France hopes to attract more visitors from emerging economies such as Russia, China, India, Brazil, and Mexico by facilitating visa processes in these countries and allowing more budget airlines to service French airports.

France also aims to modernize its tourism industry through several reforms, including a five-star rating system for hotels that replaces the previous four-star scale.

Additionally, Rail Europe launched a new prepaid ticketing system called "Anywhere Anytime France," allowing tourists to travel to multiple French cities by train for budget prices. For an initial booking fee, any subsequent trip within France costs only \$50, as long as all trips are purchased at the same time and are taken within 30 days. Tickets can be purchased online and printed out at self-service kiosks in train stations. For more information, please visit: www.raileurope.com.



FORMER FRENCH PRESIDENT'S BLOG EXPLORES E.U.

On the first anniversary of the launch of his political blog, former French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing continues to be an active figure in national and international politics. Not only is President Giscard d'Estaing serving as a *de jure* member of the French Constitutional Council, but at the age of 82 he is still giving interviews, writing essays, and traveling the world to meet with foreign officials, ambassadors, and members of the press. Most recently, he visited Washington,



Former French president Giscard d'Estaing discussed in D.C. challenges facing the E.U. His blog serves as an electronic forum to facilitate discussion surrounding the E.U.

D.C., last month (See NFF 08.06). He also still finds the time to write his popular blog dedicated to issues per-

taining to the European Union. Through this Web site, president Giscard d'Estaing seeks to engage France's Internet navigators in an open debate surrounding those issues that have inspired his own political career. In addition to links where visitors to the site can access and comment on his written essays or press appearances, he provides prompt responses to comments and questions regarding European politics, creating a rich dialogue between himself and his readers. To participate in the dialogue yourself, please visit: <http://vge-europe.eu/>.

Exhibition Traces French and American Influence on Impressionism

Nestled along the Seine River 50 miles west of Paris, the small town of Giverny served as the source of inspiration for many turn-of-the-century painters, including numerous Americans who formed an art colony there before World War I. Returning to the United States during the War, some of these artists founded another community in Old Lyme, Connecticut, which earned the nickname "American Giverny."

Giverny and Old Lyme celebrated their joint artistic history this summer with "Impressionist Giverny: American Painters in France, 1885-1915," an exhibit that traces the development of impressionism in the French region. Initially displayed at the Museum of American Art at Giverny, the exhibit is at the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme from May 3 through July 27. In addition to well-known paintings, "Impressionist Giverny" features reproductions of archival photo-



"The Pool," Richard E. Miller, 1910, is one among 50 works that pays tribute to American impressionists at the exhibition in Old Lyme.

graphs and documents from American artists living and working in Giverny more than a century ago.

Willard Metcalf, Louis Ritter, and Theodore Wendel, among other renowned American painters, explored innovative usage of brushwork, light, and color in the region of Giverny, which was at the time the permanent residence of celebrated French painter Claude Monet. Around 1900, a colony of artists began living in the village year round, painting landscapes as well as family life in the intimacy of private gardens and dwellings.

Works depicting Giverny from this period are still highly prized. "Le

bassin aux nymphéas," a masterpiece by Monet of his water lily pond outside the town, sold in June 2008 for \$80.4 million — more than double the previous record price paid for a painting by the artist. A small landscape painted by Metcalf sold for \$1.6 million in 2004, nearly twice the estimated auction price.

Celebrating the Legend of King Arthur in Rennes



"King Arthur," Charles Ernest Butler, 1903.

Rennes celebrated the legend in July.

The timeless legend of King Arthur took the French city of Rennes by storm in mid-July, as academics and adoring fans convened to celebrate the fabled hero who is said to have roamed the western French region of Brittany in the 6th century.

From July 15-20, Rennes welcomed "King Arthur: A Legend in the Making," an exhibition in French, English and German at Les Champs Libres that explores the life of King Arthur and the roots of the literary and historical myths that surround him. The exhibition, which runs through January 2009, displays over 200 objects relating to the adventures of the king and his knights, including manuscripts, woodcuts, engravings, and tapestries. Prominent among the items is one of the oldest illuminated manuscripts of Arthur's Round Table, preserved by la Bibliothèque de Rennes.

Also on July 15, the International Arthurian Society, which brings together experts on Arthurian tales from around the world, began its 22nd International Congress at Rennes University. The six-day event invited its members to view the exhibition and to tour the city of Rennes, as well as to embark on excursions around Brittany.

The stories of King Arthur, whose mythical kingdom extended across much of modern-day France and Britain, were widely recounted throughout Europe as early as the 13th century. The Brittany region is purported to be among the mysterious and beautiful settings for many of these tales. Sir Lancelot, one of the best

known of Arthur's knights, was said to have been raised in the Brocéliande forest, and the king's evil half sister, the sorceress Morgan Le Fay, is believed to have had a legendary secret hideaway on the Brittany coast.

Musée du Quai Branly Attracts Over Three Million Visitors

Le Musée du Quai Branly's three millionth visitor helped kick off the celebration of the institution's second anniversary last June. The museum, situated along the Seine's right bank one block



View of Le Musée du Quai Branly's interior.

from the Eiffel Tower, features a collection of 300,000 works entirely devoted to the exploration of indigenous cultures and civilizations in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas, including a 46-foot-high totem pole from British Columbia in the entrance hall and galleries featuring Native American art.

Former French President Jacques Chirac, an enthusiast of African and Asian art, under whose presidency the museum was conceived and constructed, characterized it as "an incomparable aesthetic experience as well as an indispensable lesson in humanity." In the last two years, Quai Branly has become an ethnic crossroads, working with other institutions around the world on traveling exhibition and becoming part of Paris's cultural life by offering dance, music and theater programs.

Visitors to the museum from now until September can enjoy the largest exhibition of Polynesian art ever assembled in one place. Many of the 250 woodcarvings are from the 18th and 19th centuries and depict life in the Pacific Islands during the period of initial contact with European explorers by displaying religious icons, ivory ornaments, and decorated textiles. For more information, please visit: www.quaibranly.fr.

EUROPEAN DIGITAL LIBRARY PROTOTYPE TO BE LAUNCHED

Europeans will soon have access to the digital collections of every national library, archive, and museum in Europe at the click of a mouse. Europeana, a prototype of the European Digital Library, is expected to be launched November 20 at a meeting of European cultural ministers in Brussels. The Library, which aims to offer more than six million items for perusal by 2010, will initially consist of digitized versions of at least two million print and audiovisual items such as books, maps, photographs, archive records, and film material, all easily located with a simple search mechanism. The Library is one of France's cultural priorities during its six-month term as president of the Council of the European Union (E.U.), and France has played an integral role in the development of the project. In addition to the 120,000 documents contributed to the international database by the digital library of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, called Gallica2, many of the Library's documents will be copyrighted and protected through a system that has been under trial by Gallica2 since March. For more information please visit: www.europeana.eu.

AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE LOUVRE HOST FIRST FUNDRAISER

The American Friends of the Louvre (AFL), in conjunction with the International Friends of the Louvre, hosted its first major fundraising event at the Musée du Louvre in Paris from June 9-11, raising \$2.6 million for the restoration of a Louis XV drawing room that will be featured in the museum's 18th-century decorative arts gallery. Founded in 2002, AFL seeks to strengthen ties between the Louvre and its American public not only by participating in the financing of Louvre projects, but also by promoting cultural exchanges between the French museum and institutions in the U.S. The AFL also supports the museum's efforts to improve educational tools and visiting conditions for anglophone tourists. Guests to the fundraiser, titled "Liaisons au Louvre," were invited to a formal gala in the museum that included a dinner in the Galerie Daru and a concert by British pop rock band Duran Duran. Among the other events was a lunch at the American Embassy with American Ambassador to France Craig Stapleton and a private viewing of the Louvre's rarely seen Leonardo da Vinci drawings.

Cities Across the U.S. Plan Educational Events About the E.U.

"News From France" will be postponing production until the beginning of October.

Nous vous remercions de votre fidélité et vous souhaitons d'excellentes vacances !

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With France at the helm of the presidency of the Council of the European Union (E.U.), several French consulates throughout the U.S. are organizing educational events that examine U.S.-E.U. relations within the realm of politics, culture, business, and science. With lectures, conferences, presentations, and exhibitions scheduled throughout the remainder of the year, these events also aim to foster a better understanding of the E.U.'s rich cultural makeup and political bodies.

In New England, the French consulate will organize lectures beginning in September in 15 universities across the region. With the Consul generals of several EU member-states participating to each of these events, these conferences will discuss the E.U., its current state and future goals, as well as the Union's policies, including business practices and reforms in the Common Agricultural Policy.

In addition, Harvard University's Center for European Studies will host several EU officials through the fall, including José Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission, on September 24, and French Member of the European Parliament Alain Lamassoure on October 28-29.

The EU Commissioner for the Environment Stavros Dimas, will visit Boston to provide an opportunity to establish contacts with Massachusetts elected officials to foster the exchange of knowledge and common efforts in the fight against global warming.

Events in Boston will also focus on current and future challenges faced by both the E.U. and North America. Gathering scholars from the U.S. and Canada as well as France, Ireland, the U.K., and other EU member-states, Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and the Sorbonne University will host on October 4-5, a joint international symposium on the development of international criminal justice, particularly pertaining to transatlantic issues.

The annual French-American Innovation Day hosted by Harvard University's Medical School on December 3 will highlight transatlantic cooperation in life sciences, with this year's emphasis on European and American cooperation. This con-

ference, "From Modeling to Engineering Biological Processes," will focus on computational models of cells and new technologies applied to mapping cellular activity. For more information, please visit: www.consulfrance-boston.org.

The French consulate in Houston, Texas, will also host edifying events throughout the southwest. Pierre Vimont, Ambassador of France to the United States, is expected to attend a symposium in Austin on September 29 that explores energy policy and technology in France and the E.U. and its implication for the United States. This will be followed by a conference on climate change at Rice University at the beginning of December.

In addition, the consulate will organize cultural events throughout the region. San Antonio will host a European film festival from September 8-11 as well as a conference dedicated to European architecture in late November. For more information, please visit: <http://www.consulfrance-houston.org>.

In Atlanta, Georgia, Ambassador Vimont will participate in a symposium regarding the internationalization of research and graduate studies and its implications in the transatlantic context at Georgia Tech University on November 16-18.

Organized by the Alliance Française in Atlanta, Jacques Andreani, former French ambassador to the United States, will also speak on relations between the U.S. and the E.U. at Morehouse University, Kennesaw State University, and Georgia Tech University.

Finally, in a series of events arranged by the French Consulate in Atlanta, the Consul will speak on France's presidency of the European Union to students of the Brock School of Business at Samford University in Birmingham, the Atlanta International School, etc. For more information, please visit: www.consulfrance-atlanta.org.

For more information on events that may be taking place in your region throughout the rest of the year, please visit www.ambafrance-us.org and click on your state on the interactive map to learn about programs hosted by French consulates in your area.



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