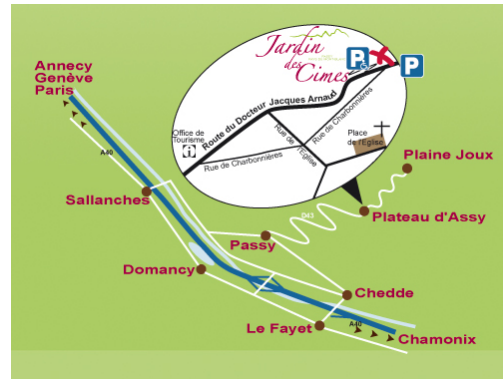


Le Jardin des Cimes – The Peaks' Garden - Passy 74 – Haute Savoie – France



Le Jardin des Cimes – The Peaks' Garden – is a sustainable development project located at 1000 metres high in the Mont-Blanc mountains range (North Alps – France- Europe). As named, the Peaks' Garden is a large garden in the mountains. On a several thousand square metres area, it offers an outdoor visit to different centres of interest in the alpine nature to a large public. Located on the Assy's Plateau, this project is an example of restructuring and revitalising a depressed region that faced the closing down of special medical institutions that were based on the Plateau for 50 years.

Facing the beautiful panorama on the Mont-Blanc range, the tour was designed by an active regional landscaping architecture agency – l'Atelier- and stops at five gates: Mirror's Gate, Angels' Gate, Shadow's Gate, Talks' Gate and Golden Gate). It offers an opportunity for discovery and learning. Special sound effects, achieved by Boris Jolivet, an expert in outdoor natural sounds recording (animals, insects) are placed on the tour to increase animated moments. It is a two hours promenade in the orchards and kitchen gardens, combining the different alpine ambiances with a large botanical collection.

The Peak's Garden was designed and created by a professional integration venture, the Peak's Fields (Champs des Cimes), which was founded in 2005 and is now the first in the region with expertise in mountain environmental conservation and historical buildings' restoration. The enterprise has 25 employees, among whom 18 are on an integration programme. Peaks' Fields has achieved all the works for the garden's tour and manages the Peaks' Garden site on an emphyteutic lease. Excavations and earthworks have been made possible through a private-public budget

Open from June, after the snow has melted and the gardens are reshaped, till the autumn, the Peaks' garden has been visited in 3,5 months by 7000 persons coming from France, Italy, Switzerland and many others countries.

The Peaks' Garden is managed like any other theme park or fun fair hosting groups, individuals and families. An events programme with three different themes is offered The restaurant is open for lunches and afternoon snacks. A demo kitchen garden gives advices, tricks and tips (composting,

treatments, etc.). Beehives are placed on a 20m long field with flowers and insects. Workshops for children are proposed with themes such as arts in nature, vegetables, disability in the garden, and plantation from the plains to the peaks.

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The Peaks' Garden plans to have a greater number of children and school pupils among the visitors. A notebook with riddles is given at the beginning of the tour. Teachers can get educational materials. The CREA (Centre de Recherches sur les Ecosystèmes d'Altitude – Research Centre for Altitude Ecosystem), a non profit organisation, confirms all the scientific alpine information given by the Peaks' Garden.

In the "Payments for Environmental Services – PES" approach and sustainable development in mountain areas , the Peaks' Garden project deserves to be referenced for three reasons. The first is its main aim for biodiversity and mountain culture conservation. In this area, bio methods and recycling are used for all the works and plantations. The kitchen garden and orchard production for the restaurant's meals are all bio-friendly.

The second reason is the call for workers' integration: ten people are employed by the Peaks' Garden for maintenance and catering. The website and public relations programme also provide job opportunities. The last but not least reason because it has a long term foundations is the joint venture itself : the legal status of a so called Société Cooperative D'Intérêt Collectif (SCIC), a cooperative for common interests assembling private companies, public administrations, non-profit associations, individuals among them even the employees and the manager, all together 60 stakeholders. Everyone has the same power to vote and decide in the shareholders committee. Public administrations are divided into the local county, the department of the Haute-Savoie, the Rhône Alpes region, the European community. Companies support the project through their foundations for social goals (bank like Crédit Coopératif, public works like Vinci) or directly through gifts like the Compagnie du Mont Blanc which manages all the chairlifts during the skiing season in the Chamonix valley.

The Peaks'garden turnover comes from the park entries (tickets), the restaurant (meals and drinks) the items sold by the "boutique", a small shop where can be found educational games, books on gardening, plant seeds and other souvenirs. The coffee-house is sponsored by a famous chef from Chamonix, named in the Michelin guidebook .

After only three years of activity, this project has been a real success and has been recently awarded the Rhone-Alps' region Prize for Ecotourism Innovation. It shows clearly that in a wealthy country with several centuries of history and a mature free market economy but already facing poor class integration and challenges to natural environment conservation, a mixed economy can be found in a special joint venture. It combines usual business activities (tourism) and social goals in a sustainable partnership between public and private structures for the long lasting livelihood. Tarifs are 6 Euros € for adults and 4€ for children under 16

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