

Press Release

Three Countries – One Destination in the Heart of Europe

France, Germany and Switzerland present their Upper Rhine Valley in Toronto

Toronto, 19 May 2011. The Upper Rhine Valley is located right in the centre of Europe, where the Rhine links France, Germany and Switzerland. Like Tuscany, this region has attracted tourists who love art, culture and outstanding food for centuries –like Goethe who stayed here en route to Italy. The Upper Rhine Valley is a compact region embracing very diverse landscapes and cultural traditions in and around its many cities and villages on both sides of the Rhine valley.

Driving from one stunning highlight to the next never takes more than ten minutes. A beautiful hilly landscape rises gently on both sides of the river to the German Black Forest and French Vosges. The Upper Rhine Valley is famed for its brief and mild winters and warm temperatures from April to October. This is one of Europe's most beautiful and fertile regions. Dark forests, lush green meadows, blooming orchards, vegetable gardens and vineyards mingle with sedate villages and historical towns with their traditional half-timber houses and ancient churches. Many were already founded by the Romans, or then during the Middle Ages or, as the site of splendid courts, during the Baroque era.

The Upper Rhine Valley presents itself to visitors as a treasure trove of art and culture and with lively markets offering exquisite cheeses, fragrant bread from the region and ecologically cultivated fruit, juices and vegetables. The region is home to outstanding museums, opera houses and theatres with remarkable stage productions often featuring world stars, museums with collections of both classical and contemporary art, world famous historical buildings like the Gothic cathedrals in Freiburg, Basle and Strasbourg, medieval fortresses like Haut Koenigsbourg in Alsace, Roman settlements like Augusta Raurica near Basle or the famously luxurious spa city of Baden-Baden with its casino, golf courses and elegant horse races. Or Europe's best technology museum in French Mulhouse and, in Karlsruhe on the German side of the Rhine, the Museum for Art and Media Technology that is unique worldwide. And, despite – or perhaps because of - this wealth of historical and cultural attractions, the Upper Rhine Valley is a model for the rest of the world in terms of sustainability.

„We know that our guests from Canada enjoy the diversity of this region. We have preserved many historical buildings and artistic treasures and yet have always been craft and

technology pioneers. And despite our national peculiarities, we are very aware in all three countries of our shared past as successors to the Romans and Alemanni. Any visitor who has joined our *Fassnacht* celebrations, which end on Ash Wednesday and in pre-Christian times marked the end of winter, or shopped on our markets or savoured wine at one of our wine festivals will know that," says Philippe Choukroun, Director CRT and spokesman of the tourism expert delegation from Alsace, Mulhouse, Basle, Baden-Baden, Karlsruhe and Freiburg who presented the Upper Rhine Valley in Toronto today. Guests found the three-course menu with regional specialties and wines so enjoyable that some said they would love to book a flight to the region straight away.

The Upper Rhine Valley is easy to reach by air, train or car and an ideal destination for hikers, golfers and bikers as well as cruise passengers, bus tourists or fans of the region's well organised fast and frequent public transport networks. It offers innumerable rewarding tour destinations for every taste: Art lovers simply must see Basle for its art fair Art or Museum Tinguely, Freiburg's Augustiner Museum or the Unterlinden Museum in French Colmar, the region's spectacular paintings by old masters like Grunewald, Holbein and Schongauer or modern design icons at the Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein. And for all wine lovers there are wine tastings during the day at the wine-growing estates along both the German and French „Wine Roads“ – and for dinner an outstanding regional cuisine with star chefs of whom there are more in this region than in any other part of the world.

Delicious regional inexpensive foods is guaranteed, and await visitors on every street corner. In superb quality: fresh bread and delicious cakes from family-owned bakeries, fresh seasonal vegetables and handmade organic goat cheeses are available in a wide variety of ripening stages. During fall, the air is fragrant with onion pie and the scent of freshly fermenting wine, while in winter choucroute (or „Sauerkraut“) with beer warms hikers in beautiful old inns. Guests who wish to focus on fitness activities and those who would like to explore the wellness offers of the environ, will find a great selection of sports and amazing spa therapies – from beautiful pools to healing thermal waters and fully fledged medical supervised cures – throughout the year.

Choukroun's cordial invitation encompasses „Strasbourg, the Ville européenne, Colmar, the Ville chaleureuse, Mulhouse, the city of cars and fabrics, Basle, the Ville d'art, Freiburg, the green city, elegant Baden-Baden, the media city of Karlsruhe as well as Landau and Germersheim, the two small towns also rightly known as “The Convivial” due to their many friendly wine bars.”

Journalists and tour operators are very welcome to come and explore our region. Pleasure guaranteed – in Three Countries – One Destination! Details for the Upper Rhine Valley press trips will follow.

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