

newSpecial

A close-up photograph of a person's hand gently holding a white daisy flower with a yellow center. The hand is positioned in the center-right of the frame, with fingers slightly curled around the stem. The background is a soft-focus field of many other daisy flowers, creating a sense of being in a meadow. The lighting is warm and natural, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Summer of Meaning

WHERE CURIOSITY AND COMMUNITY
SHAPE THE SEASON

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SUMMER OF MEANING

There are moments in the year when Geneva seems to exhale. Summer arrives not with noise, but with a quiet widening of space - in our calendars, in our conversations, and sometimes even in ourselves. The lake softens, the light lingers, and the city invites us to slow down just enough to notice what we often rush past.

Through the voices of children and young people, we are reminded that summer is not only a season, but a way of seeing. Their stories from gardens in Parc La Grange to science labs, festivals, farms, and family reunions across continents reveal something adults often forget: that curiosity and care are not competing forces. They grow together.

Volunteering, too, takes on new meaning in these pages. Geneva's ecosystem of solidarity whether through food distribution, environmental action, cultural engagement, or simple presence, the city offers countless ways to turn time into purpose. And yet, summer is not only about doing. It is also about returning to ourselves, to the people who matter, to the conversations that only happen when the pace slows enough for honesty to enter the room. As Robert Hanna writes in this issue, even the most driven among us eventually feel the weight of constant motion. Summer gives us permission to set it down.

So as the season unfolds, may you find moments that bring you back to joy, to connection, to meaning and perhaps to a version of yourself that has been waiting patiently beneath the noise.

We wish you a summer of lightness, discovery, and impact.

Enjoy your reading! //

ÉTÉ DE SENS

Il y a des moments dans l'année où Genève semble reprendre son souffle. L'été n'arrive pas dans le bruit, mais dans un élargissement silencieux de l'espace - dans nos agendas, dans nos conversations, et parfois même en nous mêmes. Le lac s'adoucit, la lumière s'attarde, et la ville nous invite à ralentir juste assez pour remarquer ce que nous laissons trop souvent filer.

À travers les voix des enfants et des jeunes, nous sommes rappelés à une évidence: l'été n'est pas seulement une saison, mais une manière de regarder le monde. Leurs histoires - des jardins du Parc La Grange aux laboratoires scientifiques, des festivals aux fermes, jusqu'aux réunions familiales à travers les continents - révèlent quelque chose que les adultes oublient parfois: la curiosité et le soin ne s'opposent pas. Ils grandissent ensemble. Le bénévolat, lui aussi, prend un nouveau sens dans ces pages. L'écosystème de solidarité de Genève - qu'il s'agisse de distribution alimentaire, d'actions environnementales, d'engagement culturel ou simplement de présence humaine - offre d'innombrables façons de transformer le temps en intention.

Et pourtant, l'été ne se résume pas à l'action. C'est aussi un retour: à soi, aux personnes qui comptent, aux conversations qui n'émergent que lorsque le rythme ralentit suffisamment pour laisser entrer l'honnêteté. Comme l'écrit Robert Hanna dans ce numéro, même les plus déterminés finissent par ressentir le poids du mouvement constant. L'été nous donne la permission de le déposer.

Alors, au fil de la saison, puissiez vous trouver des moments qui vous ramènent à la joie, au lien, au sens - et peut être à une version de vous même qui attendait patiemment sous le bruit.

Nous vous souhaitons un été de légèreté, de découverte et d'impact. Bonne lecture! //



WHERE
COMPANIES
BECOME
BRANDS



June 2026

N°849

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Summer is coming! Play, Explore, Give Back.

SUMMER, PLAY, AND PURPOSE COME TOGETHER THROUGH THE VOICES OF CHILDREN. FROM LAKES TO LABS, THEY TURN CURIOSITY INTO ACTION.

TEXT & PHOTO
NINA CHINTAR, UNITED NATIONS

Summer in Geneva unfolds in long, golden afternoons by the water. The lake shimmers softly under the sun, children's laughter carries through shaded parks, and the city slows just enough to make space for lingering conversations, spontaneous swims and unplanned encounters. There is a quiet elegance to it. A sense that time stretches, without ever standing still. Even familiar streets seem to soften in the heat, as if inviting people to pause, to look around, and to rediscover what is already there.

This evolution is best understood through the voices of children.

Marina, who has just turned 13, and Anika, who is 11 and a half (the half is important!), the lively daughters of Yulia LEM, a caring mother and a Senior UN Advisor, approach summer with a natural balance between personal passions and care for others.

"I love gymnastics and gardening, so this summer I will be practicing my routines and growing pretty flowers and little vegetables. I also adore bunnies and kittens, so we will be helping at an animal shelter."

Their plans reflect a growing interest among families in reconnecting with simple, grounding activities. Gardening, for instance, is increasingly embraced not only as a hobby but as a way to engage with nature and sustainability. Public spaces such as Parc La Grange¹ offer ideal settings for this, where families can spend time outdoors while learning about plants, ecosystems and seasonal rhythms. These spaces also provide something less tangible but equally important. They create moments of calm, where attention shifts away from screens and schedules and returns to observation, patience and care.

For Anika, summer is just as full, but shaped by movement and energy: *"I love sports. Swimming, boxing, football, badminton. I am so excited for my basketball camp in July. I will also join my sister*

and my mom at the animal shelter and at our Kid2Kid club,[15] where kids teach each other through games and creative activities."

Sports are deeply embedded in Geneva's summer culture, with open spaces like Parc des Bastions² and Genève Plage³ naturally turning into informal arenas for play, training and connection. What is striking, however, is how seamlessly volunteering is woven into these plans. It is not treated as an obligation, but as something that belongs naturally alongside fun. It becomes part of the rhythm of the day, just like swimming, running or meeting friends.

The Kid2Kid initiative¹⁵ mentioned by Anika reflects a broader movement toward peer-led engagement. These informal, welcoming gatherings allow children to learn from one another through games, sports and creative activities. They often extend beyond traditional settings, including visits to institutions such as the University of Geneva⁴, as well as cultural spaces like the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire⁵. In doing so, they gently introduce children to environments that might otherwise feel distant, turning them into places of curiosity and familiarity.

Marina adds: *"Me too. I really love Kid2Kid! It is always fun and creative, and everyone is welcome. We visit museums, parks and theatres, and sometimes even hospitals and science labs! It always feels like a little adventure together."*

This sense of "adventure" is central. It transforms learning and volunteering into experiences that children genuinely look forward to, rather than tasks they are expected to complete. It also creates a shared narrative, where each outing becomes part of a larger story of discovery.

Marc Alexandre (or simply Sasha), the 8-year-old son of Anastasia Davis Bondarenko, a devoted mother of three exceptional children and the founder of Davis Dispute Advisory¹⁷, adds a much broader perspective, stretching across continents and a lively family network, from Barbados to Montreal:



Summer brings little hands, bright colors and big hearts.

"I love summer because I can spend time with my family all over the world. This year I will go to a swimming camp in Paris and then visit my family in Montreal. We will have a big reunion. Even my family from Barbados will also come to Montreal. I can't wait to play with my cousins! A new baby cousin will be born right before we come!"

Before we cross the big ocean, I will help my parents send boxes with food, clothes and toys to children in Ukraine. Maybe I will also add some drawings and a letter to make them smile."

His words carry a quiet weight. For him, summer is not only about movement and discovery, but also about connection across distances. Family becomes a world map. Helping others, even through simple gestures, becomes part of that journey. It shows how early a sense of responsibility and empathy can take root when it is lived, rather than taught.

For older teenagers, the scope of summer expands further. Matias, the 17-year-old son of Alejandro Karacsonyi, a loving father of four remarkable children, a leading voice in commodities trading and dispute settlement, as well as the founder of AKT Advisory, speaks with enthusiasm about engaging with larger social environments.

"I have always loved the vibe at big events, so volunteering at Paléo Festival Nyon⁶ and Caribana Festival⁷ sounds amazing. I am really excited to help out, meet people, and be part of it all."

I also look forward to a trip with my friends to Malaga in July. This will be our first adventure together to a foreign country. We have been planning it for more than a year!"

Festivals such as Paléo Festival Nyon and Caribana Festival are not only major cultural landmarks in the region, but also important entry points for youth volunteering. They provide structured opportunities for young people to contribute, while experiencing the energy of large-scale events. At the same time, they offer a first taste of responsibility within a collective setting, where each role matters.

At the same time, Matias's plans to travel independently highlight another important dimension of summer. It is a period of transition, where young people begin to navigate autonomy, responsibility and shared experiences beyond the family environment. These first independent trips often become defining memories, marking the beginning of a new kind of freedom.

For Elli, the 15-year-old daughter of Thomas SKOUTERIS, a professor at the University of Khorfakkan⁸ and the driving force behind the Access to Knowledge Foundation⁹, summer takes on a more reflective and intellectual dimension.

"For the past two years, I have been fascinated by MBTI - The Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator. MBTI is a personality quiz that puts you into one of 16 types based on how you think, make decisions, and interact with people. For example, I am an ENFP, which means I am outgoing, creative, and guided more by feelings than strict logic."

This summer, my friends and I shall run the test on volunteers in a small Greek town and write a story in the local newspaper. But do not worry, it will not stop us from swimming and going out for walks."

Her project reveals a different form of engagement, one rooted in curiosity, dialogue and storytelling. It shows how summer can also be a time for intellectual exploration. It also highlights how young people create their own frameworks for understanding the world, combining structured ideas with personal experience.

Other young voices bring additional perspectives.

The 23-year-old Emir, the son of Shirin SEIT-NIPESOVA, a caring mother of three wonderful children and a Project Manager at DHD¹⁰, shares:

“This summer will be intense. I will finish my classes at ETH Zurich¹¹ and then prepare for my final exams in August. I hope to take a short trip to the sea with friends and also spend some time helping other students prepare for their exams. It will be challenging but meaningful.”

His perspective reflects the transition into adulthood, where summer is no longer simply a pause, but a period that balances pressure, ambition and contribution. ETH Zurich is one of Europe’s leading universities, particularly renowned for science, engineering and technology, attracting students from around the world. For students like Emir, summer becomes a moment to consolidate knowledge, support others and define personal direction.

His 10-year-old younger brother, Keymir, who studies at Marcellly School¹², brings the narrative back to a sense of wonder and discovery:

“This summer, I will travel to the seaside with my parents. I love swimming and snorkeling to study underwater life. I also want to spend some time on a farm and help farmers take care of animals and plants. I think this will be a very interesting and fun experience for me.”

Together, these voices form a mosaic of experiences that reflect the diversity of summer in and around Geneva. Each story is different, yet they share a common thread of openness, curiosity and engagement with the world.

Behind many of these experiences are structures that quietly support and amplify this engagement. U4U Volunteers¹⁵ plays a central role in this ecosystem, creating accessible pathways for families and young people to take part in community initiatives. Through programmes that connect volunteers with cultural institutions, social organisations and local communities, it helps transform goodwill into concrete action.

Alongside this, initiatives such as Le Caré¹⁶ reflect Geneva’s broader social fabric. Le Caré is an independent community space and day-time emergency reception centre that welcomes individuals facing material or emotional hardship, offering meals, basic services and, above all, a place of dignity and human connection. Its model is built on presence, listening and shared experience, creating opportunities for volunteers of all ages to engage directly with others in a spirit of respect and solidarity.

These frameworks make it easier for children to experience volunteering not as something distant or formal, but as something immediate, human and deeply meaningful.

Geneva makes these experiences feel effortless. The city offers a rare continuity between nature, culture and community. A morning at Bains des Pâquis¹³ can unfold into an afternoon of volunteering at the Société Protectrice des Animaux (SPA Genève)¹⁴, or an evening spent in a park, a festival, or simply with friends by the lake. The transitions are fluid, almost intuitive.

Children move between these worlds with ease. They do not separate enjoyment from engagement. They live them together, naturally, as part of the same summer. In doing so, they offer a quiet but powerful reminder. Meaningful experiences do not need to be planned in opposition to joy. They can grow directly from it. //

1 Parc La Grange, Geneva - <https://www.geneve.ch>

2 Parc des Bastions, Geneva - <https://www.geneve.ch>

3 Genève Plage - <https://www.geneve-plage.ch>

4 University of Geneva - <https://www.unige.ch>

5 Musée d’Art et d’Histoire, Geneva
<https://www.mahmah.ch>

6 Paléo Festival Nyon - <https://www.paleo.ch>

7 Caribana Festival - <https://www.caribana-festival.ch>

8 University of Khorfakkan - <https://www.sharjah.ac.ae>

9 Access to Knowledge Foundation -
<https://www.a2kfoundation.org>

10 DHD - <https://www.dhd.global>

11 ETH Zurich - <https://ethz.ch>

12 Marcellly School - (no official public website available)

13 Bains des Pâquis - <https://www.bains-des-paquis.ch>

14 SPA Genève - <https://www.sgpa.ch>

15 U4U Volunteers - <https://www.u4uvolunteers.org>

16 Le CARÉ, Geneva - <https://lecare.ch>

17 DAVIS Dispute Advisory
<https://www.davisadvisory.com>

Summer of Impact: Volunteering in Geneva and Beyond

THIS SUMMER, TURN TIME INTO PURPOSE. FROM GENEVA TO GLOBAL COMMUNITIES, VOLUNTEERING OFFERS A POWERFUL WAY TO CONNECT, CONTRIBUTE, AND CREATE REAL IMPACT.



TEXT YULIA LEMENEZ, UNITED NATIONS
PHOTO ISTOCK



You don't need a reason to show up.
Just willing hands and an open afternoon.

Summer is often seen as a time to slow down. But it can also be a time to step up.

In a world shaped by constant movement and global challenges, volunteering offers something rare. A direct way to act. To make an impact that is visible and immediate. In Geneva, this possibility is everywhere.

This city is not only a hub of diplomacy. It is also a living ecosystem of solidarity. Behind institutions and conferences, there is a network of people and organizations working quietly, consistently, and often urgently to support communities.

Local organizations remain at the core of this impact. Caritas Genève¹ and Emmaüs Genève² offer hands-on opportunities that bring volunteers face to face with real needs. Food distribution, social support, reintegration. These are not abstract concepts. They are daily realities, and volunteers are part of the response.

The Croix-Rouge genevoise³ plays a central role in this landscape, offering a wide range of activities from supporting isolated individuals to assisting families in vulnerable situations. It is one of the examples of how global humanitarian values translate into local action.

For those looking for flexible and dynamic engagement, Serve the City Geneva⁴ creates short, high-impact opportunities. A few hours can mean preparing meals, renovating community spaces, or simply being present where help is needed. This model reflects a shift in volunteering. It is becoming more accessible, more immediate, and more adaptable to busy lives.

At the same time, skills-based volunteering is gaining importance. ICVolunteers⁵ offers opportunities in translation, conference support, communication, and digital engagement. In a global city like Geneva, where languages and knowledge are key, this type of contribution is essential.

New approaches are also emerging, redefining what volunteering can be. U4U Volunteers⁶ was created to connect individuals, including those from vulnerable backgrounds, with meaningful opportunities across NGOs, cultural institutions, and social initiatives. It is not only about giving time. It is about creating pathways, restoring confidence, and building inclusion through participation. A distinctive feature of U4U Volunteers is its use of volunteering by beneficiaries themselves, including refugees, people with disabilities, and individuals in vulnerable situations, as a powerful tool for reintegration and empowerment.

Other Geneva-based initiatives also offer meaningful engagement. Partage⁷ organizes food collection and redistribution, relying heavily on volunteers. Hospice Général⁸ provides opportunities to assist migrants and vulnerable populations, from administrative support to integration activities. WWF Switzerland⁹ regularly involves volunteers in awareness campaigns and environmental actions, particularly during the summer months.

Le CARE¹⁰ is a great platform that takes a highly direct and human approach to volunteering. Through mobile outreach and on-the-ground actions, it provides essential support to people in vulnerable situations, including distribution of food, clothing, and basic necessities. Volunteers are engaged in immediate, hands-on activities that create visible impact, while also fostering connection, dignity, and trust within the community.

Youth and family volunteering is also gaining traction. Many organizations now encourage younger participants to engage early, offering structured programs where children and teenagers can contribute safely and meaningfully. From environmental cleanups to community events, these experiences often become defining moments, shaping values and perspectives for years to come.

Corporate and institutional volunteering is another growing trend. Within the international and diplomatic community, teams are increasingly encouraged to dedicate time to social impact initiatives. Group volunteering days, pro bono projects, and skills-based contributions are becoming part of organizational culture, bridging the gap between professional expertise and community needs.

Beyond traditional organizations, community driven initiatives continue to expand. Neighborhood associations, informal solidarity groups, and cultural collectives often welcome volunteers, especially in summer when demand remains high but regular support may decrease.

These smaller structures offer a different kind of engagement. More personal. More immediate. Often deeply impactful.

Geneva also offers opportunities linked to international events. Conferences, forums, and cultural initiatives frequently rely on volunteers for logistics, communication, and coordination. This creates a unique intersection between global dialogue and local engagement, allowing volunteers to contribute to conversations that shape international agendas.

Beyond Geneva, the opportunities widen significantly.

Across Switzerland, organizations such as Schweizer Tafel¹¹ play a crucial role in reducing food waste and supporting vulnerable populations. Volunteers collect, sort, and distribute food, creating a direct link between surplus and need.

Environmental engagement is another growing area. Pro Natura¹² offers projects focused on biodiversity, conservation, and landscape protection. Summer is an ideal time to participate in field activities, combining physical work with environmental awareness.

Animal welfare initiatives also offer opportunities, from supporting shelters to assisting in wildlife protection programs. These roles often require commitment and care, but they provide a direct connection to living ecosystems and the responsibility of protecting them.

For those seeking cross-border experiences, the European Solidarity Corps¹³ provides structured opportunities across Europe. Participants can engage in social, environmental, and cultural projects while discovering new communities and perspectives.

Short term international volunteering programs continue to attract individuals looking for immersive experiences. Whether in education, health outreach, or community development, these initiatives combine practical contribution with cultural exchange, often leaving a lasting impression on both volunteers and host communities.

What makes volunteering so powerful is not scale, but connection.

It brings global challenges back to a human level. It transforms complex issues into tangible actions. It creates relationships that no report, meeting, or policy can replicate. In a time where distance can feel overwhelming, volunteering creates proximity.

There is no single profile of a volunteer. Professionals between assignments. Students exploring purpose. Families engaging together. Individuals seeking meaning beyond routine. Everyone can contribute in a way that reflects their time, skills, and motivation.

Summer, in this context, becomes more than a season. It becomes an opportunity. An opportunity to step outside of routine, to engage with others, to see different realities. And to act, even in small ways, on issues that matter.

This summer, the question is not only where you will go, but what you will choose to do with your time. Because sometimes, the most meaningful journeys are not measured in distance, but in impact. //

- 1 Caritas Genève
<https://www.caritas-geneve.ch>
- 2 Emmaüs Genève
<https://www.emmaus-ge.ch>
- 3 Croix-Rouge genevoise
<https://www.croix-rouge-ge.ch>
- 4 Serve the City Geneva
<https://www.servethecitygeneva.ch>
- 5 ICVolunteers
<https://www.icvolunteers.org>
- 6 U4U Volunteers
<https://u4uvolunteers.org>
- 7 Partage
<https://www.partage.ch>
- 8 Hospice Général
<https://www.hospicegeneral.ch>
- 9 WWF Switzerland
<https://www.wwf.ch>
- 10 Le CARE
<https://www.lecare.ch>
- 11 Schweizer Tafel
<https://www.schweizertafel.ch>
12. Pro Natura
<https://www.pronatura.ch>
- 13 European Solidarity Corps
<https://youth.europa.eu/solidarity>

The Summer That Brings Us Back

AFTER MONTHS OF CONSTANT MOTION, SUMMER CAN OFFER SOMETHING DEEPER THAN A HOLIDAY: THE CHANCE TO RECONNECT WITH OURSELVES, WITH OTHER PEOPLE, AND WITH WHAT REALLY MATTERS.



TEXT ROBERT HANNA
PHOTO PEDRO MIRANDA / UNSPLASH

There is a certain point in the year when even the most driven people begin to sound a little different. You notice it in passing conversations, in the tone of voice, in the pause before someone answers a question that should be simple. “How are you?” you ask. “Fine,” they say. “Busy. Flat out. A lot going on.” Then, almost as an afterthought, they add what they probably wanted to say first: “I could really do with a break.”

I have heard some version of that line many times. From founders, lawyers, leaders, creatives, operators, and people simply trying to hold together demanding jobs and full personal lives at once. Different industries. Different pressures. Different paths. Yet by the time summer arrives, many of them are carrying the same thing: fatigue dressed up as commitment, full calendars with very little room to think, and days that look productive on paper but somehow leave them feeling further away from themselves.

I understand that feeling well. Much of my life and work is built around conversation, movement, ideas, and connecting people. It is energising work and work I genuinely love, but there are seasons when the pace becomes relentless. Early starts. Late finishes. Events. Interviews. Meetings. Trains. Flights. Messages answered between one thing and the next. Great people. Meaningful work. A diary full of reasons to be grateful. And yet, if I am honest, even a life built around purpose can start to feel as though it is being lived at speed rather than truly inhabited.

Perhaps that is one reason summer has always had a special pull for me. I was born on June 21, the summer solstice, so summer has always been my favourite time of year. Ever since I was young, it has carried a certain energy: lighter, freer, more expansive. As I have got older, that feeling has become less about the weather and more about what the season makes possible.

A few summers ago, I had one of those conversations that stays with you. Nothing dramatic. No big setting. No formal agenda. Just a catch-up with someone I respect after a stretch when both of us had been moving too quickly for too long. We sat outside on a warm afternoon and the conversation drifted in the way the best conversations do. We began with work, projects, mutual acquaintances, what had been happening. Then, gradually, the tone changed.

We started talking about energy. About how easy it is to become highly functional and quietly disconnected at the same time. About the strange badge of honour that busyness can become. About how often people tell themselves they are doing it all for the people they love while spending less and less real time being present with those very people.

Nothing material came from that conversation in the conventional sense. No deal. No formal collaboration. No tidy outcome. But I left with a feeling I still remember now: something important had been put back in its proper place. It reminded me that some of the most valuable moments in life do not arrive through force. They arrive when the pace drops enough for honesty to enter the room.

That, to me, is one of the hidden gifts of summer. It makes honesty easier.

During much of the year, many of us live inside systems of momentum. We move from one obligation to the next, often with skill and professionalism, but not always with reflection. There is always another email to answer, another person to get back to, another thing to build, fix, attend, progress, or prepare. The days become full, and when days are full for long enough, they can start to blur.

Summer interrupts that blur. Not perfectly. Not for everyone. But enough to create small openings: a slower morning, a long walk, lunch outdoors, an evening where the usual rhythm loosens its grip. And in those openings, something powerful can happen. You begin to hear your own thoughts again.



Sometimes perspective returns not through effort,
but through walking slowly enough to hear
your own thoughts again.

I think that is why people often have their clearest insights away from the desk. Not because sunshine magically solves anything, but because perspective needs space. Most of us do not lack intelligence. We lack room. Room to process. Room to zoom out. Room to ask whether the life we are building still feels connected to the life we actually want.

Through hundreds of conversations over the years, one thing has become clear to me: the people who sustain meaningful success over time are rarely the ones who are simply best at enduring pressure. More often, they are the ones who know how to come up for air. They understand that rest is not a retreat from ambition. It is part of what keeps ambition healthy.

Summer also has a way of bringing us back to other people. Not networking in the formal sense. Not the transactional version of connection that can creep into modern professional life. Something simpler than that. A shared meal that runs longer than expected. A family day where nobody is half-looking at their phone. A coffee with an old friend. An invitation you nearly decline and are suddenly glad you did not.

These moments can seem small while they are happening. They are not small.

Some of the best opportunities in life begin in precisely these spaces, not because everyone is trying to make something happen, but because people are more open when they are less guarded by routine. Summer softens the edges. It reminds us that relationships are not only built in offices or scheduled calls. They are built in laughter, in listening, in remembering details, in giving someone your full attention when there is nothing obvious to gain from doing so.

One of the strangest things about modern life is how easy it is to stop seeing the places we live in. We move through them functionally. Home, station, office, supermarket, home again. We know the route, but we do not notice the details. Then summer arrives and suddenly the same place can feel different. A park becomes somewhere you linger. A café becomes somewhere you sit instead of rush through. A walk you usually treat as a shortcut becomes something restorative.

Not every meaningful summer involves a passport. Sometimes the real shift is not geographical at all. It is emotional. Mental. Relational. It is the decision to stop treating your life as something you are managing and start experiencing it again.

That does not require weeks away. Many people will not have that luxury. Life remains life. Responsibilities continue. Businesses need running. Families need care. The wider world does not pause simply because the season suggests it should. But even within a full life, there is still value in choosing a different rhythm where you can: a slower evening, a phone switched off for longer than usual, a day with no performance attached to it, a real conversation instead of a rushed exchange.

For me, the older I get, the more I think summer asks one honest question: when all the noise drops slightly, who do you become again?

Those are not summer questions only. They are life questions. But summer gives them a better chance of being heard.

Soon enough, the pace will build again. Diaries will refill. The urgency of the next season will arrive, as it always does. But perhaps that is exactly why this moment matters. It gives us the chance, however briefly, to return to ourselves before the world starts pulling again.

And maybe the best summer plans are not the ones that look the most impressive from the outside.

Maybe they are the ones that leave us feeling more present, more connected, and more certain of what really matters when everything speeds up again. //

Robert Hanna is a legal recruiter, community builder, and host of a global careers podcast, known for creating conversations that connect people, ideas, and opportunities across professions.

A Small Summer Reset

- Leave one stretch of time deliberately unscheduled.
- Reconnect with one person you value, with no agenda attached.
- Revisit one familiar place slowly, as though you were seeing it for the first time.
- Before autumn arrives, ask yourself what you want to carry forward and what you are ready to leave behind.

Podcasts

THE GLOBAL HEALTH MATTERS PODCAST PROVIDES A FORUM FOR DISCUSSING THE MOST IMPORTANT GLOBAL HEALTH TOPICS OF THE DAY



GLOBAL HEALTH MATTERS
the podcast

IS IT THE END OF THE NGO AS WE KNOW IT?

with your host,
Garry Aslanyan

FEATURING FEATURING FEATURING FEATURING FEATURING

Deborah Doane
Partner, Rights CoLab;
Co-convenor, the RINGO Project

Angela Oduor Lungati
Executive Director,
Ushahidi

encore episode

**EPISODE 17:
THE HEALTH JOURNEY OF
REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS**

EUGEN GHITA
Human Rights Monitor and President,
Roma Lawyers Association,
Romania RomaJust

WITH REEM MUSSA
Humanitarian Advisor and
Coordinator of the Forced Migration
Team, Médecins Sans Frontières

GLOBAL HEALTH MATTERS
the podcast

TDR For research on
diseases of poverty
ORCIDP · UNDP · WHO · BAHG · WHO

GLOBAL HEALTH MATTERS
the podcast

THE INSIDE TRACK

HOST: GARRY ASLANYAN

CATHERINE KYOBUTUNGI

The pope, the force, and the hope

RICARDO BAPTISTA LEITE

GLOBAL HEALTH MATTERS
the podcast

THE INSIDE TRACK

HOST: GARRY ASLANYAN

CATHERINE KYOBUTUNGI

Oxygen, a mixed bag, and the woods

RICARDO BAPTISTA LEITE

WHO learner spotlight

EMMANUEL'S MENTAL HEALTH MISSION IN THE PHILIPPINES

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QualityRights
in Mental
Health



WHO
Academy



Breaking
stigma,
discrimination
& promoting
rights



“For me, the mental health sector offers both a scientific challenge and a human mission,” explains Jesus Emmanuel A. D. Sevilleja, an epidemiologist at the National Center for Mental Health in the Philippines. “It means contributing to equity, empowerment and human rights.”

Emmanuel's work is rooted in evidence - he generates data on the burden, risk factors and outcomes of mental health conditions to inform policy, clinical guidelines and effective interventions. But it was his direct interactions with people living with psychosocial, intellectual and cognitive disabilities during one of his research projects that first inspired him to turn his love of research towards mental health.

“These encounters allowed me to appreciate the lived realities of service users, including the stigma, discrimination and exclusion they often face. Their stories revealed the urgent need to transform not only the science of mental health but also the culture of care.”

PERSON-CENTRED APPROACHES TO MENTAL HEALTH

Driven by this desire to help change the lives of those who experience mental health issues, Emmanuel completed the WHO 'QualityRights in Mental Health' online, self-paced course. The six-module course provides the foundation for challenging stigma and discrimination and for promoting person-centred approaches in mental health.

“The course reshaped the way I view mental health by grounding it in human rights, dignity and recovery-oriented practice,” he said. “Now, I will embed rights-based principles in study design, data collection and interpretation so that research not only produces knowledge but also empowers service users.”

“The course taught me that people with lived experience should not just be passive recipients of care or research subjects but active co-creators of solutions. I will engage service users and families more meaningfully in research, policy and programme design to ensure that their voices and preferences shape outcomes.”

IMPROVING ATTITUDES, CHANGING SYSTEMS

While all employees of the National Center for Mental Health in the Philippines are required to complete the training, Emmanuel excelled and remains at the top of the leaderboard of the 141,000 people who have enrolled in the course globally. Emmanuel's experience is echoed in a global evaluation of the course, which analyzed data from over 3000 learners. The results were striking: attitudes toward people with mental health conditions improved by 22.78% overall after completing the course, with even greater shifts in low- and middle-income countries (29.18%) compared to high-income countries (20.58%).

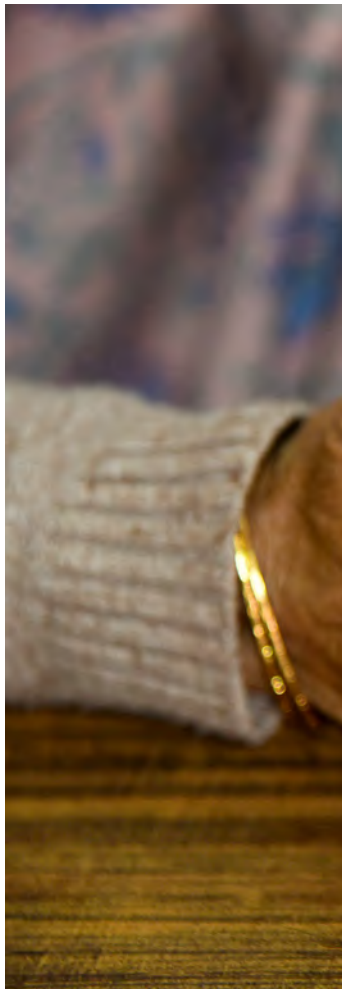
“I especially appreciated the practical examples and case scenarios that showed how human rights can be applied in real-world situations, offering strategies to challenge stigma, reduce coercive practices and promote service user participation,” notes Emmanuel. “The course was also highly inclusive, designed not only for health professionals but also for service users, families and communities, reinforcing that mental health is everyone's concern and that real change requires collective effort.”

The global evaluation also highlighted the course's feasibility, with a completion rate of 54.17%, far above the typical 10-30% for online courses. With learners all around the world, the course is a significant tool towards systemic change in the mental health sector. *“In my institution I have seen positive change in raising awareness, challenging stigma and moving towards a rights-based, person-centered approach to care,”* says Emmanuel.

“I would strongly recommend this course. What makes the course especially impactful is its practicality - offering approaches that can be applied immediately in clinical work, research, advocacy and policy. Most importantly, it empowers learners to become champions of change, transforming mental health systems away from outdated, coercive practices toward inclusive, equitable, and rights-based care.”

The 'QualityRights in Mental Health' course, as well as other free courses on a range of health topics, can be found at whoacademy.org.

All employees of the National Center for Mental Health in the Philippines need to complete the WHO 'QualityRights in Mental Health' course.



The many faces of mental health

COMPASSION CHANGES LIVES

TEXT
ALISON SCHAFER, WHO

A global portrait series reveals the human stories behind WHO's Special Initiative for Mental Health, where training, community care, and compassionate support is transforming lives.

Behind every mental health statistic is a person, a family, and a lived story of struggle, care, and recovery. Across ten countries, WHO's Special Initiative for Mental Health is strengthening health systems to improve access to mental health care and services. This portrait series shares the experiences of health workers, service users, and caregivers, highlighting a common truth: compassionate, accessible care can restore dignity, foster connection, build communities, and offer hope for rebuilding lives.



ARGENTINA

Community-based mental health care in Rosario is helping people transition from long-term psychiatric hospitalisation to community life. According to Florencia Orpinell, working with families, neighbours, and communities helps people living with mental health conditions to regain autonomy and rebuild their identities. Small changes, such as choosing their own clothes, reconnecting with education or work, are some of the first steps toward recovery.

"Mental health is built through networks, through community, and through communication with others."



PHILIPPINES

Mae Tagala, a mental health service user, shares how access to medicines and check-ins from local health workers helped her manage severe anxiety. With support from the Rural Health Unit, she is gradually returning to her normal life and hopes mental health receives more government attention.

"The most important support I received from the RHU was the medicine, because medicines are expensive, and sometimes hard to find... and once in a while, health workers message me to check-in and ask how I'm doing, so I also have someone to talk to."

BANGLADESH

Reshmi Khatun began experiencing sudden mood changes, exhaustion, and anxiety, but did not understand what was happening. At a local health complex, a doctor listened to her story and diagnosed a mental health condition. Through counselling, medication, and family support, Reshmi gradually recovered and now encourages others to seek help.

“The first time someone truly listened to me I finally felt some peace.”



GHANA

In Ghana, service user organisations were involved from the outset of WHO’s Special Initiative for Mental Health, helping shape the programme and extend services to rural and underserved communities. The Executive Director of the Mental Health Society of Ghana reflects on how this early engagement strengthened care delivery and built capacity among health workers in deprived areas.

“This platform has offered us the opportunity to share our work and learn from other partners working in mental health; and collaborate with others to avoid duplication and maximise impact.”



CAMBODIA

University student Ly Narin struggled with overwhelming emotions and isolation before seeking counselling support. With help from a mental health centre, she gradually returned to school and completed her exams.

“If there’s one thing that I could tell others who are struggling, it’s this: the sooner you talk it out, the sooner you’ll start to recover. You’ll find yourself again. And when you do, the people around you will feel better too.”



ZIMBABWE

Jacob Shamuyarira, founding trustee of Pamumvuri, speaks to how WHO's Special Initiative for Mental Health supported his work to reduce stigma, train healthcare providers and strengthen mental health systems across Zimbabwe. From community committees to national tracking platforms, his efforts are helping make mental health services more accessible and effective.

"WHO's partnership has been my anchor - keeping me engaged, connected, and relapse-free while building mental health infrastructure."



JORDAN

Malaak and Fouad from Jordan speak to the importance of supporting both people living with mental health conditions as well as their families and caregivers. Through awareness, training, and community engagement, people in Jordan's Special Initiative for Mental Health support those caring for people with mental health conditions to feel less isolated, more empowered, and to practice self-care.

"Malaak: The Special Initiative for Mental Health played a significant role in both of our journeys. It wasn't just about helping those with mental health conditions - it was also about helping the people who support them. It felt like, finally, there was a space in society for us, where we weren't alone in this journey. I began to feel seen and empowered, and more importantly, so did Fouad."



PARAGUAY

In Paraguay, community homes are supporting people with psychosocial disabilities to transition from institutional care to independent and community life. These homes provide rehabilitation, education, employment opportunities, and support for family reintegration, helping residents to live more dignified and connected lives in their communities. In her role, Victoria Ramírez supports people with psychosocial disabilities to meet their rehabilitation, autonomy and social inclusion needs.

"My greatest hope is for everyone to reintegrate - whether with family, community, or wherever they choose - living with the dignity all human beings deserve. I dream of expanding our homes, serving more individuals waiting for their opportunity. If we can help each person find their rightful place in the world, then every effort will have been worthwhile."



UKRAINE

Maryna Tarasiuk, a family doctor at a Ukrainian Medical Centre, explained how WHO's [mhGAP] training transformed her approach to patient care. By integrating psychosocial support into routine consultations, she helps patients recognise the psychological aspects of their health, providing early intervention and building trust, especially for those hesitant to seek mental health services.

"People don't always feel ready to reach out to a mental health professional, or they may not have access to such services. And it may be easier for them to discuss issues with me that relate not only to physical but also to mental health."



NEPAL

In rural Nepal, Sharmila Bhandari Gautam struggled for years with physical symptoms, insomnia, anxiety, and distress without realising they were related to mental health. After seeing others share similar experiences and visiting a local health post, she was diagnosed with anxiety and depression and began treatment. With medication and support, she slowly improved and learned the importance of seeking help rather than suffering in silence.

"Looking back, I realise how important it is to seek help. Suffering in silence only makes things harder. I believe there are many others in my village who are struggling quietly. To them, I want to say: please seek support. It doesn't make you weak."



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To read more stories from people that felt the impact of WHO's Special Initiative for Mental Health

[SIMH page](#)



[WHOF page](#)



In 2024, the WHO Foundation and Maybelline NY partnered to expand global access to mental health support through a USD 1.8 million contribution to WHO's Special Initiative for Mental Health. By the end of 2025, the Special Initiative had expanded access to community-based mental health services for 90 million more people across ten countries - moving closer to its goal of reaching 100 million by 2028. This WHO Foundation-Maybelline NY partnership supported this present portrait series, which shares stories of hope and recovery and aims to reduce stigma, foster understanding, and inspire change.

To see the full WHO Foundation-Maybelline NY portrait series, or to find out more about WHO's Special Initiative for Mental Health, scan the QR-codes provided.

The Bonobo and the Atheist: In Search of Humanism among the Primates

A BOOK BY PROFESSOR FRANS DE WAAL



TEXT
PHILLIPPA BIGGS, ITU

This fascinating book explores the links between primates, human evolution, religion and altruism more generally/The author, Mr Frans de Waal, was Professor of Primate Behavior in the Department of Psychology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, in the US, and director of the Living Links Center at the Emory National Primate Research Center. Prior to his death in March 2024, he was a leading primatologist and author of books with such intriguing titles as “Chimpanzee Politics” and “Our Inner Ape”.

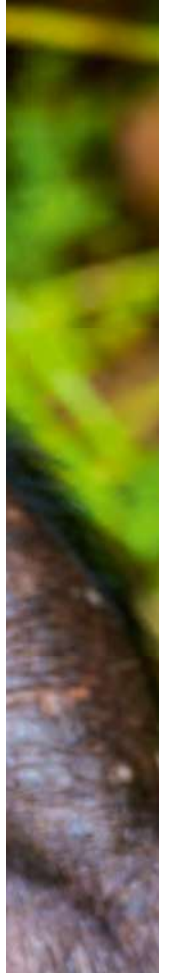
Professor de Waal draws on his vast knowledge of research into monkey and ape behaviour, as well as numerous insights drawn from other animal species to explore common behaviours between animal species. The first half of the book was genuinely enthralling, as we learn about the difficulties of designing behavioural experiments with apes, the commonalities between chimpanzees and human toddlers (where children are only marginally more pro-social than chimpanzees). There is also a side discussion about Dutch religious art, and what it may show us about human nature and morality (which is engaging, but cannot compete with the insights into chimpanzees and bonobos!).

Professor de Waal describes some generalizations about ape societies. In the wild, chimpanzee troops are run by alpha males with considerable aggression, fighting and other excitement (although not always in captivity, where some females can gain extra status). It took until 1929 for Bonobos to be identified as a separate species from chimpanzees, but their society is quite different – bonobo troops are matriarchies run by senior females and engage in lots of sex and sexual stimulation, for many different occasions (for everything from feeding to grooming). Bonobo sons remain attached to their mothers for life and may lose status without their mother’s protection.

Many similarities and common behaviours observed between primates and humans – from small things such as gestures and facial expressions, to higher level strategies, ‘egos’ and hierarchies: *“Just like us, monkeys and apes strive for power, enjoy sex, want security and affection, kill over territory and value trust and cooperation”* (page 16). The author observes that, generally, men and chimps can compete intensely among themselves, but also know how to cooperate, *“to prevent their team from going under”* (p.79).

Professor de Waal observes that humans share a mosaic of characteristics with both chimpanzees and bonobos (p.81): *“on our good days, we are as nice as a bonobo can be, while on our bad days, we are as domineering and violent as chimps can be”* (p.82). Queen Victoria judged the apes *“painfully and disagreeably human”* (p.101) and was disturbed by them; Charles Darwin was clearly fascinated and sought scientific truth. The Swedish taxonomist Carl Linnaeus assigned humanity its own separate genus, Homo, reportedly to avoid trouble with ecclesiastical authorities. DNA-based analysis suggests humanity split off from the apes around six million years ago (p.58).

Professor de Waal distinguishes between empathy (identifying with the other) and altruism (defined as conferring a cost). Some biologists have hotly debated where altruism comes from, as some people and animals have been known to give up their lives (and their chance at passing on their genes) to save others. He observes, perhaps wryly: *“Mammalian maternal care is the costliest investment in other beings known in nature... Strangely enough, however, maternal care has been largely absent from the altruism debate”* (p.49), before acknowledging: *“not a single women scientist that I know of has gotten carried away by the question of where altruism comes from. For women, maternal care would be hard to leave out”* (p.50).



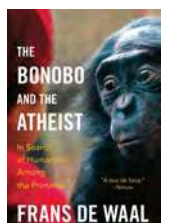
Other shared traits among different species and genera can include:

- 'Lost calls' for the young - many mammal species and birds;
- Intra- and inter-species empathy and mutual aid - mammal species, beluga whales, horses, dolphins and birds and many other species;
- Tool use - primates, birds and elephants.
- Self-recognition in a mirror reflection - humans, apes, dolphins, elephants.
- Intra-species non-related 'friendships' and collaborations, especially for hunting: humans, apes, canids, and multiple other species.
- Responsibility for possessions, 'public opinion', punishment of transgressions and awareness of death: humans, chimpanzees and bonobos;
- Planning, gratitude and reciprocity - apes and humans.
- Ritualistic behavior: humans and the chimpanzee 'rain dance'.
- Conception of an optimal or 'ideal' situation - apes and humans.

In the second half of the book, Professor de Waal develops arguments for morality and describes how moral codes for humans might have developed in terms of evolution 'bottom-up'. The latter chapters get into discussions of religion as a social phenomenon (i.e. without discussion of any single religion individually), spirituality, humanism and moral codes. Although these chapters were equally interesting, and built on some of the previous discussions, in my opinion, Professor de Waal used some of terms a little too broadly, mixing some big concepts almost interchangeably. So I found some parts of this discussion ambitious, but always interesting.

This was an enthralling book that opened my eyes and gave me new respect for the many similarities between us and animals - in the fight to survive, many species have found similar strategies and similar motivations. It also helped explain some of the behavior I see around me every day, from deeply rooted maternal altruism to competitive flirting and aggressive-cooperative behavior in the office. This is a deeply engrossing book, and one that can be read on many levels - highly recommended for your summer reading! //

A quiet reminder that our inner ape is never as far away as we think.



In a fractured, high-risk world, finance flows need to increase

BY CHANGING RISK, NOT AVOIDING IT



TEXT PRADEEP KURUKULASURIYA, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,
UNITED NATIONS CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND
PHOTO JOHN RAE, UNCDF

United Nations Capital Development Fund contribution towards making the United Nations ready to meet the needs of today's development context.

We are in an era defined by geopolitical, economic and financial fragmentation, where the only certainty is uncertainty. As development budgets dry up before our eyes, we need to take a fresh approach to ensuring that every dollar of shrinking development finance is used and re-used efficiently, effectively and catalytically – especially in markets where risks are perceived to be the highest.

This is where the United National Capital Development Fund operates, unlocking private sector capital, starting with domestic capital, for fit-for-purpose investments in development solutions that respond to country needs: creating jobs, sustaining livelihoods, and enabling economic activity in frontier markets, at the speed necessary to prevent an increase in the incidence of poverty. And, as traditional public sector funding contracts, this is an approach that the broader United Nations development system can increasingly integrate into their development solutions, especially in frontier, high-risk markets where traditional development finance architecture struggles.

The global context is stark. As development needs are increasing, public resources are tightening: Official Development Assistance (ODA) decreased by over 23% in 2025 according to OECD, the second consecutive year of reductions, reflecting broader fiscal pressures across many countries and signalling a historic drop in foreign aid.

It's now clearer than ever, ODA alone cannot meet the scale of the development challenge. This reality is increasingly reflected in intergovernmental outcomes, which call for more effective use of concessional capital to unlock significantly larger volumes of private and domestic finance, particularly in countries facing structural constraints to market access. The financing gap for achieving sustainable development runs into the hundreds of billions annually, even under the most optimistic scenarios.

The shortfall for delivering on the development needs in Least Developed Countries is between \$246 and \$285 billion every year, according to UNCDF estimates based on IMF data.

In a fractured, high-risk world, developing economies are even more vulnerable. When crises come – whether in the form of climate shocks, global or economic downturns – financial systems take the hit, further destabilizing development prospects. Banking channels weaken, liquidity dries up, and aversion to (perceived) risk skyrockets. Without functioning financial systems, recovery and rebuilding is slower, less equal, and more painful.

These challenging conditions are precisely where UNCDF operates. We help close this shortfall by crowding in public and private capital. We help to stabilize micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) grow and sustain jobs and restore lending capacity by deploying risk sharing instruments within 21 days of a crisis.

A 60-YEAR-OLD MODEL, MORE RELEVANT NOW THAN EVER

This year, on December 13, UNCDF will mark its sixtieth anniversary. Established in 1966 with a unique mandate to address a challenge that remains as urgent today as ever: help countries that are largely shut out of capital markets attract the investment they need to build strong and sustainable economies.

At the heart of UNCDF's uniqueness is our ability to deploy catalytic concessional capital through guarantees, risk-sharing instruments, low-interest concessional loans and blended finance structures. We absorb early-stage risk to incentivize investment into underserved markets and deliver concrete development results for people, small businesses, and vulnerable communities.

Functioning as a high-impact start-up, UNCDF is an early success story with a boundless ambition to transform frontier markets. This entrepreneurial energy drives our commitment to proving that no community is too risky for investment and no challenge is too great for catalytic capital.



In 2025, UNCDF worked in 67 countries, including 36 LDCs and 16 Small Island Developing States – markets where finance is not absent, but constrained by risk. These are the places where traditional capital rarely goes, not because opportunities do not exist, but because risks, whether real or perceived, exceed acceptable thresholds.

We deploy funds as risk-absorbing instruments, often first-loss instruments, laying the groundwork for markets perceived as too risky to become investable, one transaction at a time.

In 2025, for every dollar UNCDF deployed, we catalysed more than \$64 in additional public and private finance. This demonstrates that even small investments can unlock larger flows of finance to deliver big change.

It is this unique role that lets us augment the work of the broader UN system. Working downstream of policy and upstream of large-scale investment, UNCDF operates at the critical interface between public ambition and private capital, helping translate development priorities into investable opportunities. As a financing institution with the tools and mandate to de-risk investment, structure transactions, and crowd in capital where others are structurally constrained from operating, we go first and lay the groundwork for larger flows of capital to follow.

THREE CAPABILITIES FOR A CONSTRAINED FINANCIAL LANDSCAPE

UNCDF's work is structured around three interconnected core capabilities, each addressing a critical need in the development finance architecture. Together, they contribute to strengthening domestic financial systems, deepening markets, and enabling local institutions to intermediate capital more effectively over time.

FIRST, FINANCE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES, THE BACKBONE OF DEVELOPING ECONOMIES

We're prioritising our work with MSMEs, particularly those led by under-served groups such as women and youth. Working locally with talented entrepreneurs, UNCDF helps strengthen their business investment case, deploying risk-absorbing tools like portfolio guarantees, so they can access lending and investment beyond microfinance and outside traditional investor appetites. Like this, businesses can drive economic growth to support strong economic systems.

Tackling financial exclusion for inclusive economic growth is one of UNCDF's core capabilities (Fiji).

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What UNCDF does



MSME finance in Afghanistan



Fintech in Gabon



Local level climate adaptation



Video: Unlocking finance with UNCDF



In Afghanistan, MSMEs contribute to an estimated 80% of all economic activity. Here, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNCDF has introduced a Portfolio Guarantee Facility to derisk lending and unlock private capital for MSMEs across the country.

The facility is designed and deployed by UNCDF as a blended finance structure that shares risk with multiple financial institutions, re-guaranteed through the Afghanistan Credit Guarantee Fund (ACGF). By end of November 2025, the facility had delivered 47 times leverage - meaning each donor dollar has catalysed nearly 47 dollars in private-sector lending.

SECOND, FINANCE AT THE SUBNATIONAL LEVEL

Development ultimately happens at the local level, yet local governments, municipalities and subnational entities face limited fiscal autonomy and restricted access to capital. UNCDF works with local governments to structure bankable investments - from climate-smart water solutions in Bangladesh, resilient infrastructure in Uganda and urban financing mechanisms in Southeast Asia. We strengthen the institutions that channel finance to national development priorities. In 2025, we restructured our flagship climate adaptation programme to provide guarantees, loans (at concessional rates tailored to the context) and other tailored financial products to community-based businesses working in the green economy. Our objective is straightforward: make local investments viable for capital markets.

THIRD, INCLUSIVE DIGITAL FINANCE

In many underserved markets, financial exclusion reflects structural gaps in digital financial ecosystems, with limited infrastructure, interoperability, and market depth constraining access at the last mile. In Ethiopia, we supported the expansion of agent networks that bring digital financial services to underserved communities. In Niger, we enabled digital payments ecosystems that improve efficiency and transparency.

Increasingly, UNCDF is focusing on advancing digital public infrastructure, supporting transparency and credibility where traditional systems are weak, and facilitating the crowding-in of private capital under high-integrity standards.

In fragile and climate-sensitive contexts, UNCDF will also explore blockchain-enabled solutions for verification, traceability and trust-building, including applications linked to carbon markets and resilience finance.

These capabilities are integrated responses, building blocks for changing the risk profile of early-stage markets, so that capital can flow and markets can scale.

THE UN SYSTEM'S INVESTMENT ENGINE

UNCDF doesn't operate as a standalone delivery actor. In 2025, we worked with dozens of UN entities, including but not limited to: UNDP, UNICEF, UNEP, FAO, WFP and UN Women. Working in partnership, in coordination with the Resident Coordinator's Office, we deployed UNCDF's unique capabilities and financing expertise in joint programmes across climate, food systems, digital economies and gender equality.

UNCDF serves as the system's catalytic investment engine, translating ambition into investable propositions and augmenting the collective impact of the UN system.

A MOMENT TO ACT

There is a tendency, in periods of uncertainty, to retreat into caution. Yet development finance cannot afford to do so. If anything, the current moment demands greater risk-taking - done intelligently, strategically and with discipline.

UNCDF demonstrates that this is possible.

We operate where markets hesitate. We absorb risks that exceed the tolerance of many market actors, helping pave the way for larger financial institutions to come in. And in doing so, we build confidence, so finance can flow to the small businesses, farmers, local governments and communities that are the foundation of sustainable development.

In another world, UNCDF's role may have appeared peripheral. In today's world, it is increasingly central to how the international community can deliver results in the most constrained markets. //

If you want to partner with UNCDF, we'd love to hear from you by emailing info@uncdf.org

Espèces menacées

QUAND LES PLANTES QUI NOUS GUÉRISSENT
ONT BESOIN DE PROTECTION

SAVOIR +

Un Stamps



Le 24 avril 2026, l'Administration postale des Nations Unies a poursuivi sa série de timbres Espèces menacées avec l'émission de douze timbres, trois cartes maximum, une enveloppe en soie en édition limitée et le dossier Espèces menacées 2026.

Les timbres Espèces menacées 2026 mettent en lumière un groupe d'espèces souvent négligé dans les discussions sur la conservation : les plantes médicinales et aromatiques (PMA). Ce groupe de plantes est non seulement essentiel pour les écosystèmes, mais également profondément ancré dans la culture, la santé et le commerce humains.

Les plantes médicinales et aromatiques sont indispensables aux sociétés du monde entier. Elles constituent la base de la médecine traditionnelle pour les populations de nombreux pays en développement et fournissent également des composés actifs utilisés dans les produits pharmaceutiques modernes. Au-delà de leurs usages médicaux, elles contribuent à des secteurs tels que les cosmétiques, l'alimentation et les produits de luxe. Elles stabilisent aussi les sols, soutiennent les pollinisateurs et enrichissent la biodiversité.

Ces plantes illustrent les nombreuses façons dont les sociétés dépendent de la nature et soulignent la nécessité de pratiques durables afin qu'elles continuent à soutenir à la fois les populations et les écosystèmes. Leur inclusion dans la collection de cette année souligne également la reconnaissance croissante que la conservation de la biodiversité va bien au-delà des animaux emblématiques : elle s'étend jusqu'aux racines, aux feuilles et aux fleurs qui soutiennent à la fois les traditions et la médecine moderne.

Depuis cinquante ans, la Convention sur le commerce international des espèces de faune et de flore sauvages menacées d'extinction (CITES) fournit le cadre mondial à ses 185 Parties (184 pays et l'Union européenne) afin de garantir que le commerce des espèces sauvages est légal, traçable et durable.

L'Administration postale des Nations Unies est fière de soutenir la CITES et ses efforts de conservation depuis plus de trente ans grâce à l'émission de timbres consacrés aux espèces menacées de la faune et de la flore. //

LES MOTIFS

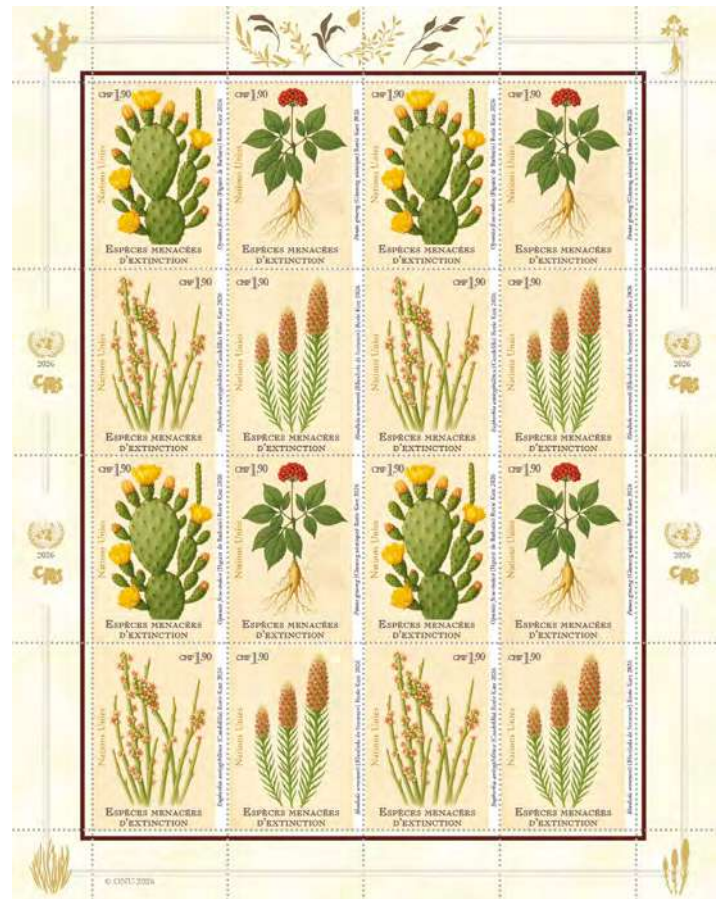
Genève
1,90 CHF

Opuntia ficus-indica (Figuier de Barbarie)

Panax ginseng (Ginseng asiatique)

Euphorbia antisiphilitica (Candelilla)

Rhodiola semenovii (Racine d'or)



Une journée australienne

IMAGES, MUSIQUE ET MOTO

SAVOIR +

YouTube



Tout a commencé un vendredi soir par un verre dans un pub, le Don Adan's coffee tree à Mosman au nord-est de Sydney.

Une bouteille de vin rouge australien au cépage français trône sur la table. Un grand type souriant s'approche. Tu es français? Je lui dis qu'il parle bien le français. Normal, me répond-il, je m'appelle Gilles et je suis originaire de Metz. Dans un coin du pub, un groupe de musiciens a commencé à jouer, encouragé par la clientèle.

Nous discutons musique, moto, de sa vie d'expatrié et puis soudain, il sort un saxophone alto de sa besace et se dirige vers la scène. Comme j'ai toujours un harmonica au fond de la poche, cette fois-ci, il s'agit d'un Hohner série spéciale Greg Zlap. Nous voilà partis pour continuer notre conversation en musique, en essayant de nous accorder sur les musiciens à moins que ce soit le contraire mais ils sont visiblement habitués à ce genre d'exercice.

Après avoir joué ensemble quelques morceaux, il est temps de faire plus ample connaissance. Gilles a vécu plusieurs vies autour de la planète, il a travaillé un temps à Tahiti avant de choisir l'Australie où il a monté une entreprise de réparation de cuir.

Comme décidément, nous avons quelques points communs, nous évoquons nos expériences motocyclistes. Nous sommes alors rejoints par un troisième larron au look motard. Phil est néo-zélandais et revendique son attachement à ses ancêtres irlandais.

Ce week-end de fin avril est particulier car le pays commémore l'ANZAC en mémoire des combattants de plusieurs îles du Pacifique tombés pendant la Première Guerre mondiale et mes deux compagnons participent avec conviction, aux cérémonies.

Au fil de la conversation, Phil me propose de me prêter une des ses motos (il ne me connaît que depuis quelques minute!) et d'aller découvrir les paysages qui longent la Pacific Highway.

Comment refuser une telle proposition? Rendez-vous est donné le dimanche Hornsby, une petite bourgade située à 20 km au nord de Sydney que je rejoins par le train. Gilles m'attend au guidon de sa magnifique BMW K75 s de 1988 qu'il a entièrement restaurée avec l'aide de son fils.

Nous retrouvons Phil au Brewhaha café décoré comme il se doit, avec un échantillonnage de références mécaniques. Nous sortons du café, Phil me présente ma monture du jour, une superbe moto Guzzi Griso 1200cc.

Nous rejoignons son atelier partagé dans lequel sont entreposés des engins en restauration; la plupart des motos Guzzi et même une mobylette appartenant à Gilles.

Les trois sexagénaires casqués pilotant leurs motos, sortent de la ville d'Hornsby qui possède une zone résidentielle et industrielle. Phil a puisé dans sa « réserve » et pilote une superbe moto Guzzi modèle California

Notre point de départ constitue en fait une véritable rampe de lancement pour accéder à une région qui regroupe des nombreux parcs naturels parmi les plus beaux du pays.

Nous empruntons la M1 motorway, je me suis calé entre mes deux comparses pour éviter notamment tout réflexe malencontreux dû à la conduite à gauche.

Nous dépassons les cyclistes, croisons de nombreux motards et traversons une partie de ce parc naturel touché par les incendies en 2019 et dont la végétation, essentiellement des eucalyptus, a repris le dessus assez rapidement.

Nous nous arrêtons brièvement dans un relais de motards à l'orée d'une forêt. La route est magnifique et quelques beaux virages nous font pencher vers notre destination pour déjeuner.

Nous arrivons à Woy Woy, située dans la Brisbane water, un estuaire, haut lieu de rencontres pour les peuples aborigènes qui peuplaient le pays depuis 40000 ans et déterraient cette connexion avec l'eau la terre et les éléments que certains, malheureusement pas assez nombreux, cherchent à retrouver.

Il y a la queue dans le fish and chips, nous dégustons des petites huîtres locales délicieuses.

TEXTE & PHOTOS
CHRISTIAN DAVID



Nous voilà repartis, enchaînant les virages, la vitesse est limitée et je m'attends à rencontrer une bête locale mais elles ont dû apprendre à se méfier des humains et les seuls animaux que nous apercevons sont les oiseaux de bord d'océan qui cherchent leur nourriture dans les villes.

Brooklin est un charmant village de pêcheurs au look très britannique et nous arrêtons dans un bar restaurant, une jeune femme joue de la guitare dans une ambiance joyeuse et calme.

Il est temps de rentrer, nous traversons des ponts, empruntons la Pacific Highway histoire de faire chauffer les cylindres et nous voilà revenus à destination.

Je dépose la moto à contre-cœur avec le sentiment d'avoir passé un moment d'exception même s'il était trop court.

Le continent australien ne se résume évidemment pas à ce micro périple mais il existe des moments de vie où tout semble aligné, où l'on partage des valeurs simples avec des inconnus qui deviennent instantanément des amis et où nous pouvons ressentir la plénitude.

Ces moments, il est parfois bon de les écrire pour s'en souvenir encore et encore. //



The Abiko Spirit: Harmony as a Strategy

FINDING CLARITY IN AN AGE OF DISCORD



TEXT CRISTINA CABREJAS-ARTOLA,
PEACE RESEARCHER
PHOTO ISTOCK

While most people focus on the fast pace of Tokyo, a deeper calm awaits just twenty minutes north in Abiko City. Located by the Lake Teganuma, the city offers, what many call the “Abiko Spirit”. This is more than a local atmosphere; it is a strategic return to harmony with the natural world.

This sense of connection is a legacy established over a century ago. In the early 1900s, as the world drifted toward the discord of the Great War, the visionaries of the White Birch School (Shirakaba-ha) recognised Abiko as a unique sanctuary for the human spirit.

Intellectual giants from the the 'God of the Japanese Novel' Shiga Naoya and philosopher Mushanokoji Saneatsu, to the legendary journalist Sugimura Sojinkan were drawn to the shores of the lake. Together, they transformed a quiet village into a vibrant hub for the Taisho era (1912-1926), a seminal chapter of Japanese liberalism and artistic rebirth. The circle of influence extended even further with Bernard Leach, the British potter who made it his lifelong mission to reconcile Western and Eastern cultures through his craft.

Abiko emerged as a centre for humanism, bridging the divide between East and West by introducing the works of European masters like Van Gogh and Cézanne. The movement viewed creativity as a vital antidote to overcome hostility and narrow nationalism. Their mission was to offer a peaceful, aesthetic alternative to the 20th century's descent into chaos.

Today, the Abiko Shirakaba Literature Museum stands as the physical anchor of this legacy. It does more than preserve manuscripts; it maintains a century-old alignment of intellectual and spiritual courage.

This lineage of cultural leadership remains a force through contemporary figures such as the celebrated sculptor Hiroshi Egami and the renowned pianist Yumiko Ohkawa. An expert in Spanish classical music, Ohkawa continues a century-old cultural dialogue, while Egami's international exhibitions explore the profound interconnectedness of humanity and nature. Together, their work ensures that the White Birch School mission continues to offer a living, aesthetic alternative to the frictions of the 21st century.

But if the White Birch School sustains the intellectual stage for harmony, the lake embodies the natural architecture. The Sakura season here is a journey of internal clarity. In early April, the cherry blossoms emerge with a timing that feels both ancient and urgent.

In Abiko, contemplation becomes a way to settle the spirit. The scattered energy of daily life dissolves into the calm of the water. A quiet walk along the shore allows one's pace to synchronise with the resonance of the lake. Each step leaves you feeling lighter, clearer, and more deeply connected to the natural world.

This internal recalibration is the hidden strength of modern leadership. Just like a single tuned instrument can guide an entire orchestra, a harmonised leader serves as a stabilising force. Rather than reacting to the noise of conflict they, establish a firm foundation for resolution.

In our modern era, projecting a 'calm presence' is the ultimate diplomatic asset. This state of internal balance allows the leader to move past stalemates toward proactive breakthroughs. Rather than viewing global challenges as irreparable, we can view them as a winter season, a phase of structural tension searching for the inevitable renewal of spring.

Abiko City serves as the living blueprint for this transition. By preserving the pristine environment, Abiko's leaders maintain a 'harmony infrastructure' where visionaries and diplomats can find the strategic compass necessary for the next breakthrough.



Today, this legacy is carried forward by local organisations such as the Abiko Culture & Talk, and the Practical Ethics Association. Through daily practices like the “Morning Vows”, the locals perform daily self-reflection, maintaining the city’s unique atmosphere while fostering a sense of human connection across cultures. In the hands of these citizens, the “Abiko Spirit” has evolved from a silent sanctuary into a movement for universal alignment.

As the Japanese philosopher and atomic bomb survivor Tetsuhiko Uehiro said:

“It’s important to see both the details and the big picture... However, the more strict and detailed you are in discussing something, the less clear the big picture becomes; conversely, if you focus too much on painting the big picture, it becomes difficult to focus on the details.”

This is the ultimate lesson for the modern leader. To achieve true global cooperation, one must balance the rigorous details of diplomacy with the broader vision of our shared human experience. By walking the shores of Abiko, we find the clarity to see both. While the details of our conflicts are complex, the “big picture” – the inevitable arrival of spring and the blossom of the cherry trees – is certain.

By aligning with nature and supporting the active dialogue, Abiko is protecting a sanctuary for global harmony. When we choose to find our own balance within these sacred spaces, we begin the essential work of realigning our world. //



Cherry blossoms remind us that change can be both gentle and beautiful.

Poems from WHO Poetry Garden



TEXT N1 DR SHYAM KUMAR ADAPA, WHO SEARO
TEXT N2 DR SHANTA GHATAK, WHO SEARO
PHOTO ISTOCK

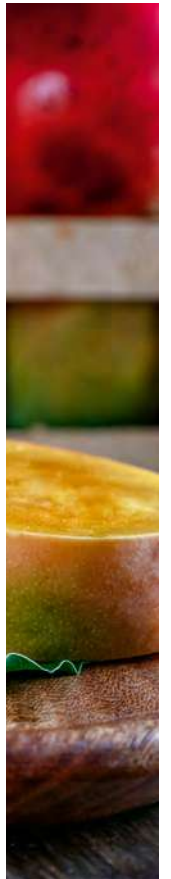
MANGOES OF THE INDIAN SUMMER

In every home, in every heart,
when summer paints the day,
The mango brings a festival
in its own gentle way.
No need for grand occasions
or lights that brightly glow,
A sliced ripe fruit on steel plates
makes simple joy overflow.
When summer spills its golden fire,
And dusty winds begin to tire,
From dusty roads to royal plates
A fragrant whisper fills the air -
Sweet mango magic everywhere.
From Andhra Pradesh fields
to Uttar Pradesh plains,
From Maharashtra winds to West
Bengal rains,
Each region gifts a different taste,
a story rich and sweet,
A hundred hues of sunshine wrapped
in every mango treat.

The king - Alphonso - rich and gold,
from Ratnagiri's shore,
While Dasheris sing in northern breeze,
a flavor to adore.
Banganapalli, bold and bright,
in southern lands takes pride,
Langra, with its tangy twist,
keeps tradition by its side.
Sticky fingers, laughter loud,
Children gather, free and proud,
Juice that drips from chin to hand,
A sweeter joy in no fruit land.
In earthen pots or chilled delight,
In milkshakes cool on sultry night,
In pickles spiced or aamras fine,
Every bite - a taste divine.
You bind the hearts of millions in a simple,
golden thread,
In pickles, shakes, and chutneys,
in every meal you're spread.
Like India - full of colors, yet united
deep below,
You carry love and culture in each
drop of juicy glow.

THE NYMPH FROM THE OCEANS

Wild and free
Floating like a translucent breath
in the foamy air
Shaped by a longing lonesome love
A hybrid, a half remembered tumultuous dream
The eyes - colour of glistening black onyx
Hair the colour of sea, grass and coral
entwined in warped waves
Her scales shimmery diamond like
With tones of every possible iridescent shade...
She's a blue green aqua flame
Rewriting herself in the depths
of the turbulent water
Carrying a lore that never ends
And a memory enlivened silent synergy
Across the thunderous roar of the ocean
Rustling the waves with her laughter
Hoisting the anchored calls of ancient shores
Where sea is only the reflected glory of the sky
With hidden secrets and sleeping mystery...



DREAM A LITTLE, BUILD A CASTLE

This poem is dedicated to all women young and old. Life doesn't have to make sense always. Read some fairy tales. Dream a little, build a castle. It's your world, it's your magic. There's no harm in a little charm. And look out for elves, they appear when you least expect it.

I am trapped in the path of a maze,
Dressed in a Victorian gown of lace,
Lying on my back, I looked up in pain,
Soon, I will go back to being plain.

Tick-tock, tick-tock, the clock struck twelve,
The carriage turned into a pumpkin,
Like a blessing came a nice little elf,
I am left with nothing,
but a humble rag on my skin.

The prince carried a glass shoe in his hand,
He searched for its owner across the land,
All the girls hoped he would ask for their hand,
A royal feast was to be in a magical land.

He knelt down before me with a glass stiletto,
"Cinderella, that's your shoe!" said my little toe,
Dramatic, ecstatic with a little magic,
The shoe fit: I left the attic.

And so, a new chapter begins...

I walked down the aisle in a royal gown,
We both exchanged vows and together,
we're bound,
The elf said, "goodbye now, my work is done",
I blew a kiss; he waved his wand.

Still, I rise, I marry the prince,
Wear your crown, it's not a sin,
Dream a little, build a castle,
The world is yours, dance a little.

When the rising sun shines on my face,
I take a deep inhale to feel his grace,
Let the light wash away the blues and grays,
And fill my eyes with shades of rays.

When the rain is pouring down on me,
I look up and just be,
Wash away the worries that weigh on me,
Featherlight, I float in the sea.

When the breeze is brushing against my skin,
I spin and dance with a little grin,
Let lose the hairpin, put up my chin,
Twirl, sway, dance in the wind.

BUTTERFLY

Quietly you flew in all direction,
Following the lead of alert antennae,
Showing off all colours in your wings,
I wondered why you are called the butterfly!

Quick as a wink, swiftly you flew,
Like a dreamy bubble, away you blew,
Enticing everyone with your very first look,
I wondered why you are not called a quickfly!

You start your journey from a tiny egg,
Crawling caterpillar to crystallized pupa,
Finally, metamorphose into a butterfly,
I wondered why you are not called a caterfly!

You live for a short span of a week or two,
Yet you attract all who look at you,
You never rest, keep yourself busy,
I wondered why you are not called a busifly!

I ran with pals to touch your soft wings,
I bet, I will win and feel your charm,
Never knew my softest touch harmed you,
My anxiety killed you, the precious life!

I couldn't control my shame and guilt,
Learnt that humans kill life for own delight,
Better to live a short yet passionate life,
Now I know why you are called the butterfly!

STICKY NOTE

I have a whimsical wish,
I have a weird thought,
Call me mad or a nerd,
I want to be a sticky note.

Write on it, or flag as a marker,
Vibrant and varied in sizes,
Always on spot, with a smile,
I want to be a sticky note.

Instantly sticks without a protest,
Swiftly departs when detached,
Agile, flexible and connecting,
I want to be a sticky note.

No inhibitions or preferences,
Sticking is the only purpose,
It stays, then moves on,
I want to be a sticky note.

Once stuck in a conundrum,
Note's virtue changed my outlook,
Wished to vanish, now will persist,
I want to be a sticky note.



TEXTS DR IVANA KNEZEVIC, WHO HQ
PHOTO ISTOCK

SPRING ILLUSION

We are wasting time,
imagination and I,
helpless
for creation,
drunk with the illusion
of the night's magic.

We order pebbles,
sew hats,
coo to the clouds
paint the river in silver
weed out the garden of happiness
dream of the heaven on Earth.

This is not our day
for a great deed,
it is a stolen dream,
a moment to gather around,
to let the soul sing,
to feel starlit bliss,
and peaceful repose.

The tree branches out,
blissfully issues leaves,
the swallow's tail,
shines in its first flight.
The spring again
weaves its mesmerizing dance,
when we twirl one more time,
imagination and I.

L'ILLUSION PRINTANIÈRE

Nous pareissons
mon imagination et moi,
incapables de créer,
par l'illusion
de la magie nocturne
enivrées.

Des cailloux nous alignons,
des chapeaux nous taillons,
les nuages nous cajolons,
les rivières d'argent nous peignons,
le jardin du bonheur nous sarclons,
du paradis sur terre nous rêvassons.

Pour les grands exploits
ce jour n'est pas fait,
c'est un rêve subtilisé,
un brin de causette
quand l'âme chante guillerette,
une fête des émotions a commencé
sous le ciel serein étoilé.

L'arbre épanche sa couronne,
des feuilles de bonheur il engendre,
l'auréole tendre
d'une aile d'hirondelle rayonne.
A nouveau, le printemps
tisse sa danse ravissante,
unit dans une valse émue
ma rêverie et moi
dans un magique instant.

What begins as a spring illusion may blossom
through every season, so let your imagination fly
freely and embrace the beauty of summertime.

L'HORIZON DIGITAL

Le poème « L'Horizon Digital » est un manifeste pour l'innovation éthique, plaçant l'humain au cœur de la mutation numérique. Il nous incite à résister à la déshumanisation du personnel, garantissant que la sophistication technique ne supprime jamais la priorité fondamentale des relations humaines et de l'empathie.

Nous vivons dans un monde
d'écrans et de leurs,
Où tout va très vite, au rythme des processeurs.
Où la fibre voyage plus vite que l'abeille,
Changeant nos vies sous un soleil de veille.
Mais écoutez bien, gardez les yeux ouverts :
Ne laissez pas les robots gérer tout l'univers!

C'est drôle de parler à l'objet dans sa main,
Demandant à la machine de tracer le chemin.
L'écran nous donne des chiffres,
des points, des schémas,
Mais il ne sait rien de nos cœurs
et de leurs débats.
On peut suivre chaque budget,
chaque fichier numérique,
Mais le sourire d'un collègue
reste unique et magique.

Le personnel n'est pas qu'un flux de données,
Ni un simple dossier que l'on peut supprimer.
C'est le « Capital Humain »,
notre plus beau trésor,
Qui fait briller la vie et nous rend plus forts.
On peut numériser la santé
et les plans de demain,
Mais la paix ne vient que de la main
d'un prochain.

Alors, pour cet horizon
que l'on dit « digital »,
Gardons nos liens vivants,
c'est là l'essentiel.
Utilisons l'ordinateur pour gagner
des instants,
Pour se voir,
se parler et prendre enfin le temps.
Ne soyez pas un « zéro »,
ne soyez pas un « un »,
Restez des êtres humains,
c'est notre destin commun.

La technologie aide, elle nous tend la main,
Mais l'amour et l'amitié font notre grand destin.
Codons avec sagesse, transformons avec soin,
Pour que l'âme de l'humain reste notre témoin!
Pour que le contact humain reste la priorité!

THE DIGITAL HORIZON

Poem: The Digital Horizon is a manifesto for ethical innovation, placing people at the heart of digital change. It challenges us to resist the dehumanization of our workforce, ensuring that technical sophistication never replaces the fundamental priority of human relationships and empathy.

We live in a world filled with glowing screens,
Where everything moves fast, by digital means.
The fiber travels faster than a honeybee,
Changing our habits for the whole world to see.
But listen closely, and keep your eyes wide:
Don't let the robots take over our pride!

It's funny how we talk to a phone in our hand,
Asking a machine to help us understand.
The screen gives us numbers,
points, and a chart,
But it doesn't know how to comfort a heart.
We can track every budget and digital file,
But we can't download a colleague's warm smile.

The personnel are not just bits of data,
Not a file to be deleted now or later.
They are "Human Capital," the greatest prize,
Bringing life and light to our very eyes.
We can digitize health and every new plan,
But peace comes from the touch
of a fellow man.

So, for this horizon we call "digital,"
Let's keep our connections truly social.
Use the computer to save some time,
To meet and to talk, in a rhythm and rhyme.
Don't be a "zero," don't be just a "one,"
Stay a human being until the day is done.

Technology is a tool, a helping hand,
But love and friendship are what
make us grand.
Let's code with wisdom
and transform with care,
To ensure that human contact
remains the priority!



TEXTS DR IVANA KNEZEVIC, WHO HQ
PHOTO ISTOCK

THE SECRET OF LAKE LEMAN

In early mornings
the spirit of Lake Lemán
springs
and call the birds
to kiss
the water face
of the blue day.

The ballet starts
with the question of a child:
Who is the prettiest in the world
between Earth's fresco
and sky's arabesque?

Nightly thoughts
on the wings of the sea gull,
the memories
dance the minuet with the slightest touch,
on the wave of the poem
for the queen of unrest.

Beauty gives to the heavens
magic mirror
secret
of the imagined lake
whisper of long-legged shores:
The most beautiful girl
in the world
is
the poem
which is
the queen of the dawn.

LE SECRET DU LAC LÉMAN

Tôt le matin
l'esprit du lac Léman
émerge lentement
et invite les oiseaux
à baiser le reflet dans l'eau
du jour bleu levant.


Le ballet commence
par la question enfantine:
Qui est la plus belle, qui a cette chance
entre la terrestre fresque
et la céleste arabesque?

Sur les ailes d'une mouette
des pensées nocturnes les silhouettes
dansent les souvenirs imagés,
le menuet du toucher
seulement présagé
sur l'onde du poème roi
pour la reine de l'émoi.

La merveille offre aux ciel
un miroir magique
le secret du lac, eau pensive,
à travers le murmure des rives
aux jambes longues et belles:

La plus éblouissante fille de l'univers
est le poème de l'aurore
qui règne du ciel à la terre.

This poem invites you to wander along the beautiful shores of Lake Léman,
uncover the secrets hidden beneath its waters, and awaken the artistic
child sleeping within you.



A DIPLOMA
IS NOT
EVERYTHING,
BUT THIS ONE
MAKES A REAL
DIFFERENCE.

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How to remain physically healthy & mentally alert?

HERE ARE SOME THOUGHTS ON 'WELL-BEING' - INCLUDING SOME PRACTICES WHICH HAVE BEEN PART OF MY DAILY LIFE DURING LAST THIRTY YEARS OR SO.

LEARN +

Portraits of Healthy Life Styles



My first step in this direction, after retiring from WHO in 2001, was to encourage my friends and relatives to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

This led, in 2005, to my bringing out, with support of HelpAge India, a modest 20-page booklet, *"Portraits of Healthy Lifestyles"*. It contains narratives of five seniors, who managed to remain in good physical health and high morale despite many trials and tribulations they faced in their long innings.

On a personal note, I have long believed that we must take responsibility for our own health. A simple lifestyle, that is, moderate food intake, adequate sleep, daily yoga exercises and walking, becoming a vegetarian and a teetotaler (at some stage in the life span) - and, above all, instilling a trust in body's innate healing power, have helped me remain reasonably in good health at 89+ years.

Allow me to highlight one more ingredient of well-being: a cheerful, ever-relaxed and smiling face. A smile costs nothing, yet enriches both the giver and the receiver. And, many of us have seen 'Smiling Buddha' statute displayed at various emporia. The idea behind keeping this small statute at home is that it serves as a constant reminder to stay happy which, in turn, may bring positive energy.

For overall physical well-being, it is important to remain physically active through regular yoga exercises and walking. Walking brings multiple benefits without any cost involved, though the trend these days is go to a gym to do walking on machines in airconditioned rooms. I would prefer that walking should be in open space, particularly parks, where oxygen intake is better.

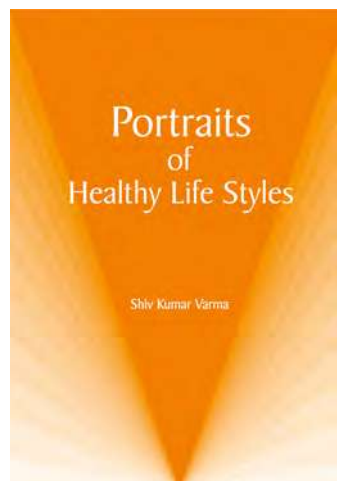
To achieve proficiency in walking, a lot of apps are available presently - like I have downloaded StepUp to achieve a target of 7,000 steps daily. By evening, if I find myself lagging behind, I try to do some extra walking inside my home to reach the daily target, if possible.

Another habit I have acquired over the years is to share any meaningful posts or tips on well-being that reach my table, widely with my near and dear ones.

Let me end with a quiet reflection. You cannot be fool 'ageing' for long and there could be occasional incidents of forgetfulness, which is quite normal in the ageing process. But, beyond normal physical changes, I believe that forgetfulness may now happen, less by ageing and more by too much time spent on social media, television, and the constant overload of information through WhatsApp messages, emails and news.

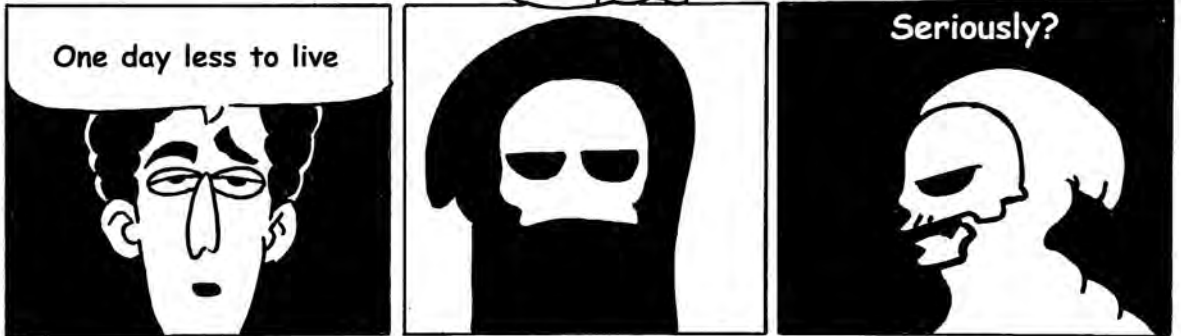
Perhaps, as we grow older, it would be wise to gradually withdraw ourselves from such distractions as far, and as early as possible and to spend more time in silent reflection and mindful meditation, as recommended by famous Buddhist monk, Thich Nihat Hanh. That way, we may be able to preserve not only clarity of mind but also inner peace associated with well-being.

That is all I have to say about overall well-being. //



DRAWING
J. FRANKLIN

BESTIES



LEARN +

Sobre
J. Franklin





J. FRANKLIN

Spirit X

THE SPIRIT IS REBORN IN THE FIRE OF POETRY



TEXT & PHOTOS
ANTONY HEQUET, MÜND

Say the word
spirit
here I am (me voici)
reborn
from my ashes
a flame
dancing
in your eye
lust
breathing
on your brain

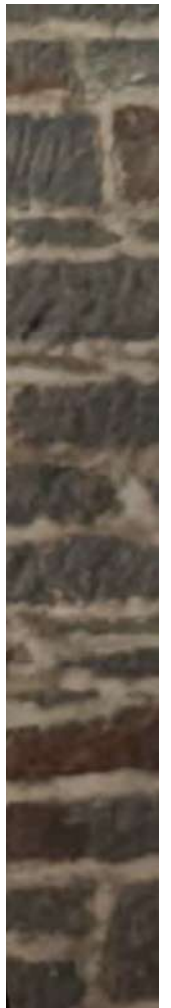
Say the word
spirit
shadow
warrior
shadow
rising
from the fog
of glory
here I am
a cry

Say the word
spirit
screaming in your heart
joy
overflowing
in this world
of fury
here I am
alive and kicking
ablaze

Say the word
spirit
soaring
soul
suffer
fight
fly
fearless
untouchable
immaculate
in the night
of the living dead
I am the burning
daylight



The Blue Wolf, pastel on paper is by Antony Hequet
while the Mask papier mâché is by Nadine Rennert.



Trésors du patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO en Suisse

LE COUVENT DE SAINT-JEAN À MÜSTAIR

SAVOIR +

Unesco



La Suisse compte 13 biens inscrits au patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO, dont 9 à caractère culturel et 4 à caractère naturel. La vieille ville de Berne et l'abbaye de St. Gallen étaient parmi les premiers sites à être reconnus déjà en 1983.

Müstair



Le site du couvent Saint-Jean (Son Jon en romanche) à Müstair dans le canton des Grisons, dans l'extrême sud-est de la Suisse, fut également parmi les premiers biens culturels qui ont été mis sur la liste de l'UNESCO en 1983. À l'époque, les sœurs bénédictines qui habitaient au couvent étaient très surprises, comme le bâtiment se trouvait dans un état déplorable. Mais l'UNESCO avait reconnu le couvent comme témoin unique de l'art et de la culture carolingienne, possédant l'ensemble de peintures le plus étendu actuellement connu pour la première moitié du 9^{ème} siècle. Par la suite, les bâtiments ont été mis en parfait état, ils surprennent par leur simple beauté et leur parfaite intégration dans le paysage.

Hotel
Chalavaina



Le monastère Saint-Jean de Müstair aurait été fondé par Charlemagne lui-même, après son couronnement comme roi des Lombards. En 2025, le couvent a donc fêté son 1250^{ème} anniversaire! La légende raconte que Charlemagne traversa le col de l'Umbrail avec ses troupes et fut pris dans une tempête de neige. Il fit alors vœu de fonder un monastère s'il s'en sortait indemne. Les recherches archéologiques montrent que les poutres d'origine de l'église furent abattues en 775, un an après le couronnement de Charlemagne. Donc, il est possible que la légende soit vraie, mais il est plus probable que Charlemagne fit construire le monastère pour des raisons stratégiques. Le site se trouve au pied du col de l'Umbrail qui amène vers la Valtelline, et au début de la route vers le col de l'Ofen qui donne accès à l'Engadine. Le couvent est donc dans un endroit stratégique pour contrôler le commerce nord-sud.

Peu importe les vraies raisons, Müstair (le nom signifie monastère) se développait dans un centre artistique et religieux, qui offrait un refuge aux voyageurs et était utilisé comme résidence secondaire par l'évêque de Coire. Au début, l'abbaye comptait 45 moines, mais depuis le milieu du 12^{ème} siècle et jusqu'à nos jours, le couvent est habité par des religieuses bénédictines. Actuellement, il y a huit moniales qui y demeurent.

Quand je suis arrivée à Müstair, l'ensemble harmonieux des bâtiments du couvent m'a immédiatement enchantée. J'ai été captivée par la beauté du cadre rural et les champs verdoyants autour du monastère. Au soleil de cette belle journée de septembre, les couleurs blanches et légères créaient un beau contraste avec le ciel bleu. J'ai tout de suite senti une anticipation joyeuse: quels trésors j'allais découvrir dans cet endroit?

En bonne touriste, j'ai commencé ma visite au musée qui se trouve dans la tour de la Planta, qu'on pensait construite sous l'abbesse Angelina Planta dans la deuxième partie du 15^{ème} siècle. Surprise: les recherches ont démontré qu'elle a été construite au moins 600 ans plus tôt, ce qui en fait la tour résidentielle et de défense la plus ancienne des Alpes. Le musée donne une impression de la vie des bénédictines pendant des siècles, et montre l'histoire du couvent et de son art. L'exposition est bien faite et intéressante mais les vrais trésors se trouvent à l'intérieur de l'église abbatiale. L'église est ouverte tous les jours et librement accessible.

À l'origine, la nef de l'église était une simple salle aux murs lisses, sous un plafond plat en bois. L'église était peinte jusque dans les moindres recoins, formant un magnifique livre d'images colorées retraçant l'histoire biblique. Ces fresques uniques furent réalisées au 9^{ème} siècle à l'intention des moines, comme supports visuels pour leur contemplation de l'Évangile. Mais quand les moniales ont remplacé les moines au 12^{ème} siècle, elles ont senti le besoin de refaire les fresques de l'abside et le mur oriental; de nouvelles fresques furent donc peintes au-dessus des anciennes.

TEXTE & PHOTO
CARLA EDELENBOS,
SOCIÉTÉ DES ÉCRIVAINS DES NATIONS UNIES À GENÈVE



Au 15^e siècle, sous le règne de l'abbesse Angelina Planta, d'importants travaux ont été entamés pour transformer l'église à nef unique en une église avec une nef centrale et deux nefs latérales; à cette époque les murs ont été couverts de chaux. Les fresques sont tombées dans l'oubli et ne furent découvertes que quatre siècles plus tard, en 1849. Il a encore fallu attendre 100 ans, après la deuxième guerre mondiale, avant que des travaux de restauration ne soient entrepris et les fresques de nouveau mises à jour. Grâce au fait qu'elles avaient été couvertes de chaux, elles étaient dans un état de préservation remarquable.

Les images datant de la première moitié du 9^e siècle ont été le déclencheur pour la reconnaissance du couvent comme patrimoine de l'humanité. Ces anciennes fresques, qui ont survécu 1200 ans, ont perdu leur brillance d'autrefois, et montrent maintenant des couleurs plutôt sombres, dans les tons rouges et ocres. Les images dans les dômes qui représentent le Christ sont les plus faciles à reconnaître. Les fresques romanes qui se trouvent sur les parties inférieures de l'abside et le mur oriental ont gardé leur couleurs vives et leurs images sont beaucoup plus accessibles pour nous. On y voit entre autres un cycle sur la vie de Jean Baptiste, dont le couvent porte le nom.

Et il ne faut pas manquer la plus ancienne statue monumentale connue de Charlemagne, qui se trouve à l'entrée de l'espace liturgique, et était autrefois peinte en couleurs. Je me l'étais imaginée grande, mais en fait la statue est assez modeste et, comme les couleurs manquent, on risque de ne pas la remarquer, puisque les fresques tout autour attirent notre regard.

La chapelle de la Sainte Croix qui se trouve au cimetière du couvent, date, elle aussi, de l'époque carolingienne. Elle contient le plus ancien plafond à poutres apparentes de l'Europe et contient des traces de peintures figuratives du huitième siècle. Elle se visite uniquement au cours d'une visite guidée.

On peut encore faire une promenade à l'extérieur et admirer la cour, les tours d'entrée, la vue de l'ensemble. Si la visite vous plaît et que vous aimeriez rester un peu plus longtemps dans cet endroit unique, le couvent offre des chambres d'hôte pendant toute l'année. L'hôtel Chalavaina, en face du couvent, dans un bâtiment historique qui a servi d'auberge depuis 1254, vous accueille pendant les mois d'été uniquement. //

Pour en savoir plus :
[Trésors de l'Unesco, Meyer/Westermann, éditions Livreo-Alphil, 2024](#)

Snowflake Fever

HOW ONE SAMURAI DAIMYŌ TURNED EDO JAPAN INTO A WINTER WONDERLAND.



When a curious Lord peered through a Dutch microscope in the 19th century, he didn't just discover the beauty of snowflakes - he sparked an entire cultural craze.

In the early 19th century, as Japan's Edo period continued its long stretch of peace, culture blossomed in dazzling and often unexpected ways. Kabuki theatre, woodblock printing, and poetry had long been cultural staples - but few could have predicted the sudden national fascination with something as fleeting and delicate as snowflakes.

At the centre of this craze was Doi Toshitsura (1789-1848), a daimyo (Japanese feudal Lord), scholar, and avid naturalist. His observations with a Dutch-made microscope would turn snowy mornings into a nationwide fascination with snow crystals, inspiring art, fashion, and a new appreciation for the microscopic worlds hidden in plain sight.

Toshitsura, ruler of the Koga Domain, possessed a trait uncommon for samurai aristocracy of his era: a passion for Western science. Under *rangaku* - the study of "Dutch knowledge" - Japan cautiously absorbed scientific tools and methods despite its isolationist policies. For Toshitsura, the imported microscope was not just a scientific device; it was a portal to a different way of seeing.

The Dutch were the only foreigners that were allowed any communication with the isolated Japanese archipelago and were restricted to their trading base on an island in Nagasaki. All Western thoughts, ideas, and inventions were therefore referred to as "*Dutch knowledge*" and flowed through this port.

Around 1831, as snow fell across his domain, Toshitsura gathered fresh flakes onto dark fabric and, with meticulous care, slid them under the lens of his microscope. What he saw stunned him - delicate hexagonal structures, exquisitely symmetrical, each flake a tiny artwork made of ice.

This discovery set off a personal obsession. He began collecting, observing, and sketching countless snowflakes, determined to catalogue their forms before they melted away.

In 1832, Toshitsura published *Sekka Zusetsu* ("*Illustrated Explanation of Snowflakes*"), a hand-painted manuscript featuring dozens of snowflake diagrams. Rendered with stunning precision and artistic flair, the book blended scientific observation with aesthetic sensitivity - a hallmark of Japanese culture.

Its impact was immediate.

Though few Edo citizens had access to microscopes, they became enthralled by the idea that nature hid elegant geometries invisible to the naked eye. The book circulated among scholars, artists, and eventually even common townspeople as woodblock printers reproduced its imagery for wider audiences.

Snowflakes became a symbol - of purity, of ephemerality, of the hidden patterns in nature - and Edo society embraced them with passion.

Kimono artisans, always on the look-out for attention-grabbing designs eagerly adopted snowflake motifs, weaving and dyeing *yukiwa* ("*snow ring*") patterns into fabrics. Winter garments adorned with crystalline shapes became fashionable among both aristocrats and townspeople. Patterns once considered foreign or scientific seamlessly blended into Japanese design traditions.

Woodblock prints (*Ukiyo-e*) featuring snowy landscapes surged in popularity. Artists like Utagawa Hiroshige incorporated snowfall scenes with newfound attention to individual flakes, inspired by Toshitsura's diagrams. Lacquerware, ceramics, and even household implements bore snowflake ornamentation.

Haiku poets found new metaphors in snowflake imagery - celebrating their uniqueness, their impermanence, and their quiet descent. Snow became not just a seasonal reference but a symbol of the unseen beauty that lies beneath the surface of our everyday world.

Through all these expressions, the scientific turned poetic, and the poetic turned scientific - a dance of knowledge and aesthetics characteristic of Edo-period sensibilities.



A dog stealing a workman's meal from a snow daruma, Utagawa Hiroshige.

Although Toshitsura worked without modern refrigeration, photography, or chemical understanding, he realised core scientific truths that snowflakes share hexagonal symmetry, that temperature and humidity determine their branching patterns, and that no two snowflakes are exactly alike.

His sketches, made in the rapid moments before the crystals melted, captured forms that modern science later confirmed. Today, they stand alongside early Western snowflake studies, showing that the fascination with micro-ice geometry was truly global.



Doi Toshitsura.

The snowflake craze faded as Japan opened to the world in the mid-19th century, replaced by rapid modernization and scientific exchange. But Toshitsura's influence remains. His *Sekka Zusetsu* continues to be studied by historians of science and art alike. Museums occasionally display his original snowflake renderings – still crisp, still mesmerizing.

More than a scientific treatise, his work is a reminder that beauty and curiosity can flourish even in times of strict isolation. In looking closely at a simple snowflake, Toshitsura encouraged an entire nation to see wonder in the minute and the momentary. //

One remarkable detail in Toshitsura's process was his innovative use of charcoal-blackened boards or dark-dyed fabric to catch falling snow. By cooling the materials outdoors overnight and handling them with chopstick-like tools, he prevented heat transfer long enough to observe each crystal through the microscope – an improvised technique that predated modern cold-stage microscopy by over a century.

France

VESTIGES DE L'ÈRE GLACIAIRE

SAVOIR +

Aix-les-Bains



Sommet emblématique du massif du Jura situé dans le département de l'Ain, face au Mont-Blanc et dominant la haute vallée du Rhône, le Grand Colombier offre un panorama exceptionnel, permettant notamment de contempler depuis son sommet les trois plus grands lacs d'origine glaciaire de France que sont les lacs du Bourget, celui d'Annecy et la partie française du Léman.

Lac Annecy

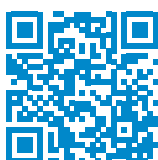


Sur les quatre routes qui mènent au col du Grand Colombier, celle qui permet d'y accéder le plus rapidement depuis Genève démarre depuis le village d'Anglefort et ne nécessite qu'une heure de trajet. En toutes saisons, le Grand Colombier est l'endroit parfait pour les randonneurs et les amoureux de la nature. Ses prairies d'altitude, sa flore omniprésente en font un espace préservé. Et une fois sur place, à 1534 m d'altitude, une perspective à 360° vous attend pour vous en mettre plein la vue, particulièrement sur le lac du Bourget, seulement distant de quelques kilomètres à vol d'oiseau. D'une profondeur de 147 m et d'une superficie de 44,5 km², c'est le plus grand lac naturel glaciaire entièrement situé en France. Il s'est formé à l'issue de la dernière période glaciaire du Pléistocène dans les Alpes, il y a environ 19000 ans. Comme tous les lacs de ce type, il occupe une dépression encaissée résultant de l'érosion par un glacier. En recul, ce dernier a abandonné des blocs de glace qui, lors du réchauffement, ont laissé place à un lac.

Evian



Vvoire



LE BOURGET, JOYAU NATUREL DE LA SAVOIE

Le rivage du lac du Bourget regroupe plusieurs ensembles de vestiges d'habitations lacustres pré-historiques du Néolithique et de l'âge de bronze. Dénommé « lac de Châtillon » au XII^e siècle, puis « Lacus de Burgeto » en 1313, il ne prendra la dénomination de lac du Bourget qu'au XIII^e siècle avec l'édification, dans sa partie sud, du château du Bourget, résidence principale des comtes de Savoie.

Niché entre le massif de l'Épine (1427 m), le Mont du Chat (1496 m) et le Revard (1563 m), le lac du Bourget est un paradis pour les amateurs d'eau, et de nombreuses plages et bases de loisirs sont aménagées sur ses berges. Dans un cadre remarquable, propice à la détente, quantité de sports nautiques

sont proposés - voile, aviron, plongée sous-marine, ski nautique... - ainsi que des croisières jusqu'à la célèbre abbaye royale d'Hautecombe qui abrite les sépultures des illustres comtes de Savoie et des derniers rois et reines d'Italie. Située sur la rive occidentale du lac, au pied du mont de la Charvaz, sur la commune de Saint-Pierre-de-Curtille, l'abbaye a été fondée en 1125 par Amédée de Clermont qui sera nommé évêque de Lausanne le 21 janvier 1145 par le pape Eugène III.

Aix-les-Bains, qui borde le lac à l'est, est l'une des plus anciennes stations thermales de France ; son histoire remonte à l'antiquité lorsque les Romains qui occupaient la région ont découvert les sources chaudes et leurs vertus thérapeutiques. Aujourd'hui, la ville reste une destination de référence pour le thermalisme en France et en Europe, témoignant d'une histoire riche et fascinante qui perdure à travers les âges. Plusieurs villages pittoresques entourent également le lac - Le Bourget-du-Lac, Brison-Saint-Innocent, Conjux - et également Chanaz, surnommé la « Petite Venise de Savoie », célèbre pour son moulin à huile et ses balades au fil de l'eau, notamment sur le canal de Savières qui relie le lac au Rhône.

Pour les amateurs de randonnée, les alentours offrent des belvédères avec des panoramas à couper le souffle, spécialement depuis la Dent du Chat (1390 m), imposant éperon rocheux qui domine le lac. Artistiquement, le lac du Bourget est particulièrement lié à la présence du poète Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869) qui y écrivit notamment « Le Lac » considéré comme un fleuron de la poésie romantique française.

LAC D'ANNECY, UN CADRE IDYLLIQUE

A seulement une trentaine de kilomètres plus à l'ouest, en Haute-Savoie, séparé par le massif des Bauges, le lac d'Annecy est considéré comme l'un des lacs les plus purs d'Europe. Entre le bleu de ses eaux cristallines, le vert des montagnes et forêts qui l'entourent, le blanc de la neige, c'est un cadre idyllique qui s'offre à nous pour une escapade entre nature et loisirs. Le sommet de la Tournette qui le surplombe à 2351 m de hauteur et la ville d'Annecy située sur la rive nord viennent renforcer la beauté des lieux. Par sa superficie (26,5 km²), il est le deuxième lac d'origine glaciaire situé totalement en France après celui du Bourget.

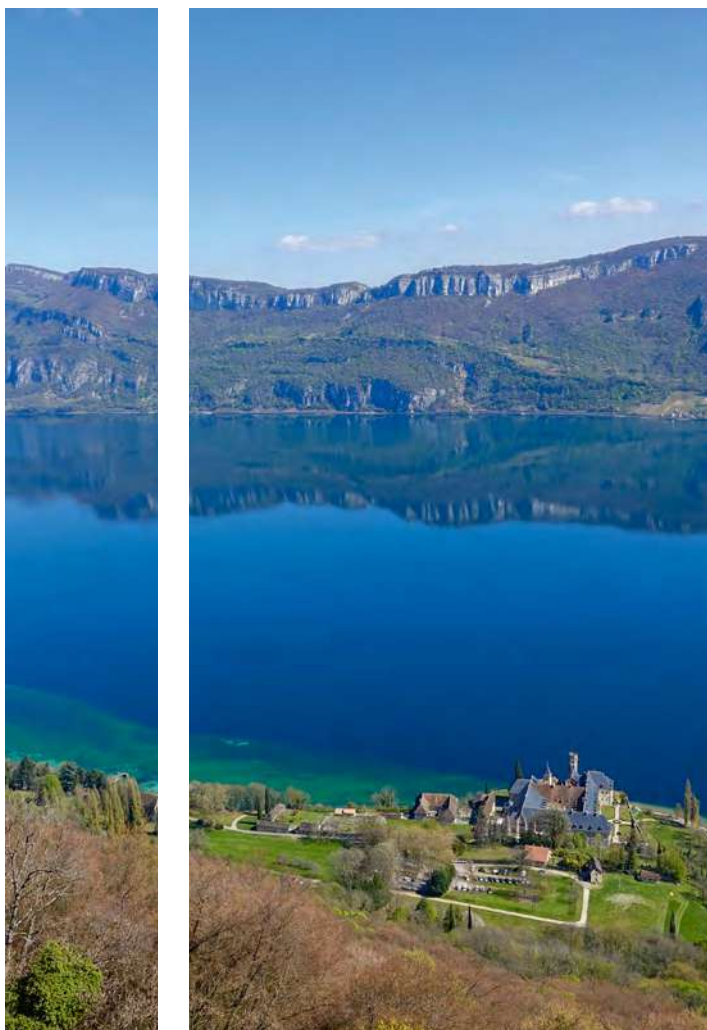
Classée parmi les plus beaux villages de France, la cité médiévale d'Yvoire édifée au bord du Léman est un lieu incontournable à visiter.



Envol depuis La Forclaz, l'un des plus beaux spots de France, avec en toile de fond le bleu azur à perte de vue du lac d'Annecy.

Ce qui rend le lac d'Annecy particulièrement remarquable, c'est son équilibre entre charme naturel et patrimoine culturel que l'on peut découvrir en empruntant la voie verte qui permet d'en faire le tour. Cette dernière, aménagée en piste cyclable sur environ 40 km, est d'ailleurs considérée comme l'une des plus belles randonnées cyclistes de France.

Flâner dans la vieille ville d'Annecy, c'est comme entrer dans une carte postale ; avec ses bâtiments pastel, ses rues pavées et ses canaux fleuris, le pittoresque centre historique est remarquable. Le Palais de l'Île, une forteresse médiévale datant du XII^e siècle qui s'élève au milieu du Thiou - rivière traversant la ville et faisant office de déversoir naturel du lac - ajoute une touche de conte de fée. Réputé pour sa gastronomie et ses restaurants étoilés, Talloires a toujours été un village apprécié des artistes et des personnalités ; Paul Cézanne l'a notamment immortalisé en 1896. Perché au-dessus de la baie de Talloires, offrant un panorama somptueux sur l'ensemble du lac d'Annecy, l'Ermitage de Saint-Germain (IX^e siècle) constitue un lieu propice à la contemplation.



Avec sa magnifique presqu'île et son château, ses ruelles étroites et ses maisons savoyardes traditionnelles, Duingt est certainement le village le plus photogénique. Saint-Jorioz abrite l'un des plus grands ports de plaisance, mais le véritable trésor ici est le Sentier des Roselières. Tôt le matin, lorsque la brume se lève au-dessus de l'eau et que la faune locale s'éveille, l'endroit est tout à fait paradisiaque.

LE LÉMAN, SUR DEUX PAYS

Toujours en Haute-Savoie mais en plus grande partie sur le territoire helvétique, le Léman - et non pas « Lac Léman » qui constitue un pléonasmе puisque le nom « Léman » renvoie à une racine indo-européenne signifiant « lac » - est le plus grand lac d'Europe de l'Ouest. Long de 73 km, il s'est constitué lors du retrait progressif du glacier du Rhône après la dernière période glaciaire. Le Léman se situe pour environ 40% en Haute-Savoie, soit sur une superficie de 234,8 km², et sa côte sud est essentiellement française. Longue de 58 km, elle est délimitée par la rivière Hermance - qui marque la frontière avec le canton de Genève - et à l'autre extrémité, avec le canton du Valais, par la rivière Morge. Village atypique construit de part et d'autre de ce torrent, sur deux pays, Saint Gingolph - célèbre pour ses Perles du Léman - a la particularité de n'avoir qu'une seule église et un seul cimetière mais possède un vrai poste-frontière qui le coupe en deux parties.

Second plus important affluent du Léman après le Rhône, la Dranse - qui prend sa source dans le Haut-Chablais - se jette dans le lac en formant un delta intégré dans une réserve naturelle riche en faune et en flore située à l'est de Thonon-les-Bains. Réputée pour le château de Ripaille, son port, son village de pêcheurs et son fameux funiculaire, Thonon est une station thermale tout comme Évian-les-Bains située à une dizaine de kilomètres de là. Cette dernière, mondialement connue pour sa marque d'eau minérale, avec ses palaces style Belle Époque et son hôtel de ville - ancienne demeure construite en 1885 à la demande d'Antoine Lumière, le père des frères Lumière, concepteur du cinématographe - mérite que l'on prenne le temps d'y déambuler.

Excenevex et la plus belle plage de sable du Léman sur laquelle il fait bon se prélasser, Sciez où l'on pourra parcourir le parc animalier des « Aigles du Léman », et enfin Yvoire, petit bijou médiéval classé parmi les plus beaux villages de France... autant de lieux à découvrir sur les rives françaises du Léman. //

Depuis le belvédère d'Ontex, la vue est magnifique sur le lac du Bourget et l'abbaye d'Hautecombe construite sur ses rives.

Égypte

GRAND MUSÉE ÉGYPTIEN DU CAIRE 3/3

SAVOIR +

Altaï Travel



Symbole d'une Égypte à la fois millénaire et résolument moderne, le Grand Musée égyptien se veut être un pôle culturel et scientifique de référence, vitrine mondiale du prestige national et touristique qui fera du Caire une destination incontournable. Construit près des pyramides de Gizeh, c'est le plus grand musée archéologique du monde consacré à une civilisation.

Imaginé en 1992, sous la présidence d'Hosni Moubarak, le Grand Musée égyptien du Caire (GEM) voit sa première pierre posée dix ans plus tard. Il faudra pourtant presque vingt-cinq ans pour que l'institution ouvre intégralement au public. Son ouverture a été repoussée à maintes reprises, en raison notamment de bouleversements politiques, de crises économiques et de la pandémie mon-

diale. Il vient d'être inauguré en grande pompe par le président al-Sissi, devant un parterre de chefs d'État venus des quatre coins de la planète.

Cette réalisation s'inscrit dans le cadre du projet « Giza 2030 », une initiative ambitieuse visant à revitaliser l'attractivité touristique de l'Égypte. Avec une capacité d'accueil de plusieurs millions de visiteurs par an, le musée devrait jouer un rôle clé dans la relance de l'économie égyptienne. Il remplace le vénérable Musée égyptien du Caire construit place Tahrir en 1902, devenu depuis longtemps trop exigu.

La conception du GEM visait à créer une vitrine moderne pour les trésors inestimables de l'Égypte ancienne. Sa construction aura demandé autant de temps que celle de la pyramide de Khéops édifée il y a plus de 4500 ans ! Le musée s'étend désormais sur une superficie impressionnante de 500 000 m², offrant un espace d'exposition de 81 000 m². Son architecture contemporaine, conçue par le cabinet irlandais Heneghan Peng Architects, s'inspire des formes géométriques des pyramides voisines, établissant un dialogue harmonieux entre passé et présent. Du haut du grand escalier qui conduit aux différentes salles d'exposition, les visiteurs peuvent d'ailleurs contempler les trois pyramides de Khéops, Khéphren et Mykérinos bâties au milieu du III^e millénaire avant notre ère.

UN ÉCRIN POUR LE TRÉSOR DE TOUTANKHAMON

Le GEM abrite plus de 100 000 objets retraçant l'histoire de l'Égypte depuis la préhistoire jusqu'à l'époque gréco-romaine. Parmi les pièces maîtresses la quasi-totalité du trésor de Toutankhamon réuni et exposé pour la première fois dans un même espace, offrant une immersion sans précédent dans la vie du jeune pharaon.

Découverte en 1922 par l'archéologue britannique Howard Carter, la tombe de Toutankhamon a révélé près de 5 400 objets, dont des bijoux, des amulettes, des statues et des meubles, offrant un aperçu sans précédent de la vie et des croyances de l'Égypte ancienne. Les visiteurs peuvent ainsi admirer son exceptionnel masque funéraire en or, son sarcophage doré avec ses trois cercueils emboîtés, son trône, ses chars et de nombreux objets du quotidien.



Le GEM propose un parcours immersif à travers les grandes époques de l'histoire égyptienne. Parmi les pièces majeures exposées, l'Obélisque Suspendu, unique en son genre, attire l'attention dès l'entrée. Ce monolithe, attribué au pharaon Ramsès II, est présenté de manière à révéler les inscriptions d'origine souvent dissimulées à la base des obélisques traditionnels. Le grand hall expose plusieurs sculptures monumentales, dont une statue colossale de Ramsès II en quartzite rouge qui témoigne de l'ampleur des constructions commandées par ce souverain. Drapée d'une douce lumière diffusée par une verrière, 38 mètres plus haut, cette statue de Ramsès II a rejoint sa dernière demeure à proximité des pyramides de Gizeh. Découverte en 1820 à Mit Rahina, près de l'ancienne Memphis, elle a longtemps été exposée au centre du Caire. Dorénavant elle se dresse, monumentale, de ses 11 mètres de haut et ses 83 tonnes au milieu de l'entrée du Grand Musée égyptien où elle accueille les visiteurs.

A proximité, une collection de sphinx et de fragments architecturaux provenant de temples et de palais royaux illustre l'évolution des styles artistiques sous les différentes dynasties.

UNE COLLECTION INÉGALÉE

Parmi la sélection d'objets représentatifs de la culture égyptienne exposés, on peut admirer des bas-reliefs provenant de tombes et de temples détaillant des scènes de la vie quotidienne, des cérémonies religieuses et des expéditions commerciales. On retrouve également des sarcophages en bois peint et des statues de divinités, éléments essentiels du culte funéraire et de la croyance en l'au-delà. Les galeries principales retracent l'histoire de l'Égypte depuis les premières communautés agricoles du Néolithique jusqu'à la domination romaine. Une section est consacrée à l'évolution de l'écriture hiéroglyphique et à son rôle dans l'administration et les rituels religieux. D'autres espaces mettent en lumière les techniques d'embaumement et les offrandes funéraires, avec des momies préservées, des masques en or et des amulettes protectrices.

Un bâtiment voisin abrite un autre trésor : la barque solaire de Khéops, longue de 43 mètres, considérée comme le plus ancien artefact en bois au monde, datant du III^e millénaire avant notre ère. Découverte en 1954 près de la pyramide de Khéops, elle a été démontée en 1224 pièces avant d'être minutieusement restaurée. Elle illustre les croyances religieuses de l'époque, notamment la conviction que le pharaon, après sa mort, entreprenait un voyage céleste à bord d'une barque solaire pour rejoindre les dieux.

TANIS, CAPITALE DE L'ÉGYPTE

Flash-back : la route qui nous a conduit au Caire depuis Rosette (voir le précédent numéro du *newspecial*) passait par Tanis, puis Ismaïlia située au bord du canal de Suez. Surnommée la « cité perdue », Tanis a été fondée à la fin du Nouvel Empire dans une région limoneuse et instable du delta du Nil. Au fil des siècles, le bras du fleuve qui la nourrissait a disparu et la ville fut peu à peu abandonnée, ensevelie sous le sable. La première étude du site date de 1798 au cours de l'expédition de Bonaparte mais ce n'est qu'en 1939 que l'archéologue français Pierre Montet mettra au jour la nécropole royale. Inconnue jusqu'alors et restée à l'abri des pillages, elle révélera un chapitre essentiel de l'histoire égyptienne. En effet, sous les XXI^e et XXII^e dynasties (environ 1077 à 740 av. J.-C.), Tanis était considérée comme la capitale de l'Égypte. En réalité, les Tanites voulaient reconstituer la capitale du sud (Thèbes) dans le delta du Nil, une copie en quelque sorte, mais qui n'atteignit jamais la splendeur thébaine. Loin des sentiers battus, Tanis constituait un centre politique et religieux majeur, abritant un vaste complexe de temples dédiés au dieu Amon. La découverte la plus spectaculaire du site fut un ensemble de tombeaux royaux intacts, dont celui du pharaon Psousennès Ier qui renfermait notamment un magnifique sarcophage en argent massif et un superbe masque funéraire en or massif, un chef-d'œuvre rivalisant de beauté avec celui de Toutankhamon.

Rappelant la grande époque du canal de Suez, Ismaïlia est l'une des villes les plus récentes du pays. Située sur la rive ouest du canal, à mi-chemin entre Port-Saïd et Suez, elle a été fondée en 1863. Auparavant, ce n'était qu'un simple village de pêcheurs au bord du lac Timsah. On y voit aujourd'hui un grand nombre de constructions coloniales datant de l'époque où Anglais et Français géraient le canal. Notamment connue pour avoir vu naître le chanteur Claude François, Ismaïlia possède un fabuleux musée retraçant l'histoire du canal et de son concepteur, Ferdinand de Lesseps. //

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