

# The Commune of Chalais Creates a Company (SA, or Ltd) for Tourism

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Surfing on the Magic Pass effect and surfing on the arrival in Vercorin of the Swisspeak residence, the Commune of Chalais is redefining the main lines of its tourism policy.

This is what you might call a tourist boom. In the space of a year, Vercorin has seen the number of its overnight stays literally explode, rising from 38,000 in 2016/2017 to nearly 58,000 the following season. This figure is reminiscent of the number of visitors to the resort at the beginning of 2010, which the authorities explain by the combination of two elements: the introduction of the Magic Pass and the arrival of the Swisspeak hotel residence in 2017. "As a result, and in order to welcome this ever-increasing tourist opportunity, we intend to update our policy regarding tourism" announced Alain Perruchoud, President of the Executive Committee of Chalais' local authority.

## All Actors under one Roof

First of all, at the level of governance, a limited liability company (a so-called "SA") for tourism will be set up during the year. It will bring together under the same roof the Commune of Chalais, the local development company, Télévercorin (operator of the local ski lifts), the tourist office, the Swisspeak residence and the various other tourist stakeholders of the resort. "All entities that make a living from local tourism will be able to become shareholders of this SA," continues Alain Perruchoud.

With a share capital of 100,000 Swiss Francs, the new entity will be responsible for managing the animation, reception and information services in the station, but it will also be responsible for developing new tourist attractions. These are all tasks that, until now, have been managed by each actor independently. The creation of a tourism SA is not a first in the region. In January 2018, an entity similar to that which Vercorin is about to set up was created in the Val d'Anniviers. A year later, the first feedback is positive. To hear Michael Moret, director of Anniviers Tourisme, the collaboration between the relevant local actors has been simplified. "But the fact remains that setting up such a structure requires a lot of administrative work. Not to mention the 100,000 Swiss Francs to be raised."

## Towards a Flat-Rate Tourist Tax

The second topic of Chalais' new policy regarding tourism concerns the introduction, starting in January 2020, of a flat-rate tourist tax. Although the amounts to be levied for the new Tourist Tax have not yet been defined, they should make it possible to bring in a few hundred thousand additional Swiss Francs into the public coffers. This will allow the executive to invest in several projects related to tourism. "Some hiking trails will be redesigned. We also want to create mountain bike trails and refurbish the Creux-du-Lavioz leisure area," says Martine Perruchoud Hofstädter, local Councillor in charge of tourism.

But isn't there a risk that this new tourist tax will lead to an outcry among local second home owners ? Alain Perruchoud concedes that the new tourist tax will indeed come as an additional burden. "The projects aimed at developing the tourist attractions of our Commune cannot be entirely paid for by its citizens", explains the President. "Second home owners also have an interest in participating in the expenses. The fact is that, by maintaining the attractiveness of a region, you maintain the value of a property."