

Shanghai Flash

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Twinning of two UNESCO World Natural Heritage Sites: Huangshan in China and Jungfrau-Aletsch Region in Switzerland

To mark the United Nations International Year of the Mountains in 2002, the Consulate General of Switzerland in Shanghai took the initiative to realize a sister relationship between Switzerland's Jungfrau-Aletsch Region - the Top of Europe and the Huangshan Region, one of the major tourist attractions in Anhui Province, China. Both regions are on the UNESCO list of World Natural Heritage sites and were predestined to become united in a sister relationship profiting both partners. In accordance with the strategy of opening a window to promote Switzerland in China as well as China's interests in one of the major Swiss tourism resorts, the goal of the twinning is essentially to enhance various exchanges and co-operations between Switzerland and China. Targeted are in particular the fields of cultural exchange, natural resources preservation, environmental protection, tourism management, and sustainable development of tourist resorts.

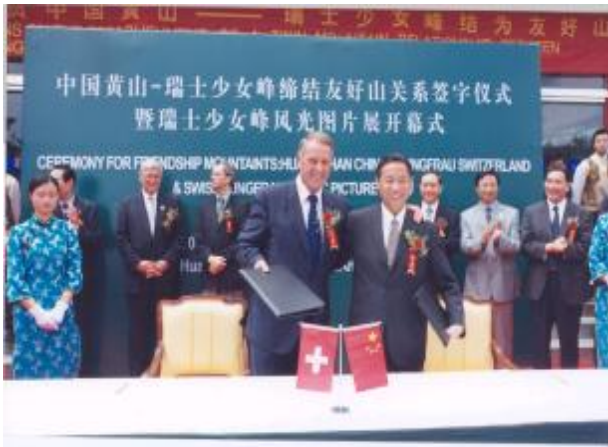


The Jungfrau railway transports visitors to the heart of Top of the Europe.

After a Chinese delegation from the Anhui Provincial Government, under the leadership of provincial governor Xu Zhonglin, attended the official signing ceremony confirming this sister-mountain relationship on the Jungfrauoch on May 6th 2002, a Swiss delegation headed by Mr. Adolf Ogi, UN Special Adviser and former President of Switzerland, visited Huangshan with a delegation from the Jungfrau region from July 26th to 29th 2002 for the return signing ceremony and partnership visit on Huangshan.

The official meeting between Mr. Ogi and Governor Xu Zhonglin took place right after a warm welcome at the Huangshan Airport on the afternoon of July 26th by senior officials from the Anhui Provincial Government, the Huangshan Municipal Government, and the Huangshan Administrative Office. Both the Governor and Mr. Ogi emphasized the importance of such a partnership in terms of a mutual development of tourism as well as a deeper communication and a stronger friendship between peoples of the two regions and the two countries. The province of Anhui, in which Huangshan lies, is a wide rural province in the jurisdiction area of the Swiss Consulate General in Shanghai, with an area of 123,000 km² and a population of 63 million (population density of 450/km² compared to 182/km² in Switzerland).

The next day saw an elaborate ceremony in the Beihai Scenic Spot on Huangshan Mountain. After the addresses made by Mr. Hu Xuefan, the Director of Huangshan Administrative Office, and Mr. Riccardo Gullotti, President of the Board of Jungfrau Railways, the master of ceremonies gave the floor to Mr. Ogi and Mr. Roth, Consul General of Switzerland in Shanghai. Both speakers conveyed their feelings of pride and joy for the successful twinning of these two renowned mountains. Meanwhile, they indicated that with high technology in a modern society, mountains should help to bridge peoples of different areas instead of separating them. People living in mountain areas have a very special feeling towards mountains and can easily understand each other.



The agreement documents were then signed by Mr. Xu Zhonglin and Mr. Hu Xuefan from the Chinese side and Mr. Ogi and Mr. Gullotti from the Swiss side. A large audience of local people and various tourists witnessed the signing ceremony and the following inauguration of a video-terminal.

Mr. Xu Zhonglin and Mr. Adolf Ogi congratulate each other after the signing ceremony.

Within the framework of the twinning agreement, a video e-mail machine has been installed on each of the mountains to enable visitors to produce their own video-postcards, which can be watched on the website www.sistermountains.com. This website has been especially launched for the twinning project to explain the reason and the history of the sister mountains agreement as well as to provide links to the two individual websites of the two partners.

Huangshan is widely known as a tourist attraction since ancient times and was honored by the UNESCO as a World Natural Heritage Site over 10 years ago. However, it is the first time for the region to have a partner with equal characteristics. Thus, the twinning has not only aroused strong interest on local government level, the project also attracted a large media attention. Among the correspondents who followed the events was the national Xinhua News Agency, various media from Anhui province and media agencies from Huangshan City. Mr. Ogi had a personal interview during which he gave a short briefing about the idea of the partnership. The extensive news coverage was broadcasted and published on front-pages of the dailies concerned.

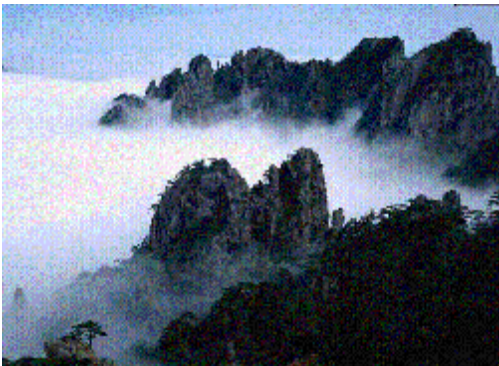
Besides official activities, sight-seeing programs were organized for the delegation to see and appreciate the unique scenery of the Huangshan Region. The members were shown not only key scenic spots on the mountain but also historical sites in villages nearby which display local traditional culture and architectural designs.



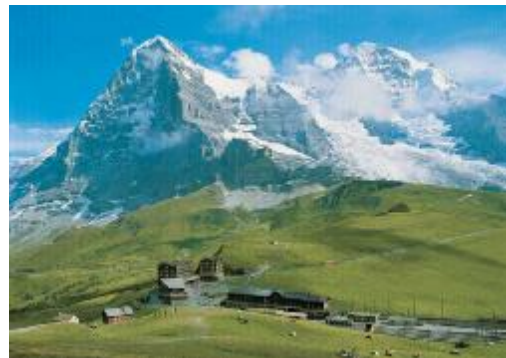
The Guest-Greeting Pine in Huangshan

The whole trip was marked by an excellent, warm atmosphere among the participants. Three official banquets in particular, on the invitation by the Anhui Provincial Government, the Huangshan Municipal Government, and the Huangshan Administrative Office, brought favorable opportunities for the delegation to make extensive contacts with senior officials from local governments of different levels as well as other key persons mainly in charge of foreign affairs and tourism administration.

The four-day visit of the Swiss delegation to Huangshan has very successfully initiated the first step of a project with plenty of potential for development in different directions. Deeper exchanges and co-operations will depend on various kinds of activities promoted in both regions. Actually a gallery of pictures taken in Huangshan and Jungfrau has already been shown publicly on both mountains. Further projects will see hiking competitions, exchange of students and international seminars with topics on mountain and ecological sustainability. Both parties being strongly interested in mutually developing the project further, the partnership between the Huangshan and the Jungfrau-Aletsch region will therefore not only remain signed on paper, but will be enriched by further exchanges between the peoples of the two regions.



Huangshan, Anhui Province, China



Jungfrau, Interlaken, Switzerland