

A Tailored Guide for Tourism in the Canton of Vaud



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02.07.14 - An application launched today in the Canton of Vaud alerts tourists when they come near a location, suggests itineraries and provides statistics to professionals.

This new tool developed by EDSI-Tech features a machine learning system whose performance improves with use.

It fits in a pocket, goes silent when tourists just want to admire the landscape and places no pressure to hurry up or to stay on schedule. The new guide launched today in the form of an application provides valuable information while adjusting to the desires of the user. Rather than keeping one's nose stuck in the screen, visitors can fully enjoy the scenery. A tourist is alerted by an audible signal when approaching a potentially interesting site.

Launched today by the Vaud Office of Tourism, this mobile guide developed by the start-up EDSI-Tech lists a range of 500 points of interest that gradually will be expanded. The most renowned sites such as the Cathedral and the Chillon Castle are presented alongside less frequented places such as The Bolo Museum of Computers, Echallens House of Wheat and Bread or a beautiful view. The application then signals with a beep or tone for those wishing to explore the region. It takes into account the opening hours and the seasonal nature of certain events but does not include commercial advertising.

However, the real innovation introduced by MyCity, the applications launched by the company, to the world of tourism is the development of algorithms to produce personalized

recommendations, which was done in collaboration with the Media Laboratory of EPFL. To do this, the system learns not only the information provided at registration such as preferences, age or country of origin, but also the choices made by the user. “Imagine a person visits the Chillon Castle and the one in Morges. MyCity will definitely suggest the one in Grandson,” explains Philippe Bonvin, one of the two founders. The company is developing multiple opportunities to learn these preferences, such as the time spent by the user at a given location. Routes may also be offered according to interest. This multilingual mobile application is available offline and for the latest versions of iOS and Android.

Tourism offices are particularly looking forward to coupling the application with the collection of statistics. Thus far, outside of organized tours, it has been difficult to know how often a site is visited. The anonymous data indicates trends that will enable industry professionals to improve their offerings. Points of interest can be changed and statistics modulated using software supplied with the application. It is also possible to customize requests by crossing several criteria to obtain specific information on the average age of visitors, where they're from and what other sites they have visited.

The young company based at the EPFL Innovation Park hopes to greatly expand its system to other Swiss and French tourism offices. Other interactive features such as augmented reality, a calendar or multimedia galleries, for example, enhance the map. In addition, another version will soon be put into operation for the Gruyère Pays d'Enhaut Regional Nature Park. It aims to promote two itineraries on the themes of Gruyère and Etivaz. It describes different stages of these circuits and recommends landmarks and artisanal producers en route, while a gaming feature discovers paths in a fun way.

