

# **Reflection on my LIA: sustainable alpine communities** **with Montagne Verte**

The Haut-Chablais region, like most Alpine environments, is highly vulnerable to climate change. If you have been here, it's probably been on holiday: it's a prime tourist destination and home to many ski resorts. But, whilst tourists come and go on their holidays, the residents here are witnessing, with every year that goes by, the detrimental impact of climate change on the environment they call home. The tourism industry plays a huge part in this. Montagne Verte is a non-profit that was founded by a group of locals, passionate about protecting their beautiful mountain home and keeping it a healthy and sustainable place to live for generations to come.

I've been lucky enough to spend the last 6 weeks working with Montagne Verte. I can truly say that this project has been such an eye-opening, inspiring and empowering experience, and I will take what I have learnt with Montagne Verte into whatever I move onto next!



## **Project Summary:**

My project was multifaceted, working across social media marketing, hosting community workshops and working in Montagne Verte's second-hand clothes shop (or friperie). My goal was simple: to help Montagne Verte in their mission to create sustainable solutions, in whatever small way I could.

## **Goals & Objectives**

Across the six weeks, I worked with Sara Burdon, the General Manager, on multiple overlapping projects and tasks. Broadly, they were:

1. Managing our social media presence & expanding outreach.
2. Producing educational content through regular blogs, eco-guides and newsletters.
3. Working in the second-hand shop and channelling this footfall into our other projects.
4. Promoting our current and future projects, including our BioCyclette scheme, AlpinExpress scheme, and our upcoming Green Housing Fair.
5. Running community sewing workshops.

## **Outcomes**

Our expansion on social media was a huge success. Across July, our views and engagement were up 198%! I think this success came from my consistency with posting and taking the time to create visually appealing and educational videos and reels on Canva. One challenge was how to ensure that both English and French speakers are able to access all of the content. This required a bit of extra effort to be vigilant with translations. We also started working on a promotion for our Green Housing event in September. This is an exhibition in the centre of Morzine, inviting professionals in the industry of sustainable housing to help locals renovate their homes, saving energy and cutting costs. Below are examples of social media promotional content I created.



Across the six weeks, I also worked on articles for Montagne Verte's blog and learnt something new myself by researching them! You can find them [here](#).

A few days every week, I worked in the second-hand shop. We received donations every day, and they all needed sorting through, pricing up and selling. All the profits from this second-hand shop are ploughed back into our environmental projects. For instance, Montagne Verte runs a Biocyclette scheme. We collect organic food waste from the restaurants and chalets in the region, which gets methanised and composted instead of going to landfill. Following **just two events Montagne Verte were involved in, *Run Through Trails* and *Pass'Portes*, we saved 400kg of food waste from landfill**. This will be turned into energy and nutrient-rich compost, rather than harmful methane emissions.



The shop also functions as a community hub. My days in the shop were always something I looked forward to – it was wonderful to speak to locals, customers and tourists who were interested in finding more about Montagne Verte. My French skills were put to the test when communicating with customers, but I enjoyed the challenge! During our time in the shop, I also announced some exciting news to our Montagne Verte members. **Between summer 2024 through winter 2024, the shop saved more than 5140kg of clothing.** This is equivalent to **129 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>**, which is 280 return trips from Morzine to a European city!

During my time with Montagne Verte, my timeline and tasks had to be adapted to the most pressing needs. For instance, when France was put on high drought alert, I prioritised writing our educational content about how to respond to drought alerts and save water.

I also worked with our General Manager, Sara, to run sewing workshops. These are a new, but important community initiative. Many ski companies donate hundreds of great-quality ski jackets, which all need to have their logos removed and replaced. This is no small feat and requires a lot of volunteers with competency in sewing machines. So, we started running workshops where people of all ages could come and learn how to fix clothes, which we can

then resell. These were some of my favourite evenings in Morzine – it was wonderful to see people of all ages coming together and learning a new skill!



### **Reflections:**

I have had such a wonderful time with Montagne Verte. It has been brilliant for my personal and professional development. I came here completely alone and was apprehensive about being in a new environment where I didn't speak the language. For anyone nervous about doing an Independent LIA, just go for it! Being alone appears daunting, but jump in headfirst! I was so surprised by how warm and welcoming the local community was towards me here. Despite coming here alone, I am leaving with friends I will be in touch with for life.

Working for Montagne Verte has also made me reconsider my environmental impact. Before arriving, I wrongly assumed that climate change was such a global and insurmountable challenge to solve that it was difficult to make a significant impact as an individual. I was so wrong! I've seen first-hand here the power of community initiatives, and how, when many people come together, willing to give a little time, huge impacts can happen! Making positive change in the world is not difficult. It just requires us all showing up in any small way we can. That is the most important lesson my LIA has taught me.

Thank you to Sara Burdon and the Montagne Verte team for making my LIA so rewarding and enjoyable. I will certainly be coming back to Morzine soon, and hopefully Montagne Verte again!

À la prochaine!

By Maddy Gordon-Finlayson. Feel free to email me & connect with me on LinkedIn if you have questions about my LIA!