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## MEDIA RELEASE

### **In 2021, Swiss visitors exceeded international visitors for the first time in the history of Chillon Castle.**

**Chillon Castle Foundation ended 2021 at around 200,000 visitors. The majority of visitors, at over 65%, were Swiss rather than international. In the history of Chillon – the most visited monument in Switzerland – this is a unique phenomenon.**

Since the 19th century, Chillon Castle has mostly welcomed international visitors, the most famous of which was the Romantic poet, Lord Byron. During the COVID-19 crisis, which saw a total of 196,114 visitors in 2021 and a three-month closure, this trend has reversed; the proportion of visitors coming from across Switzerland increased to 65%, with the remaining 35% travelling from abroad. These figures follow on from 2020 (133,712 visitors) when the fortress on Lake Geneva was forced to close its doors for around four months. Claude Ruey, President of the Chillon Castle Foundation was pleased with the outcome of this altogether complex financial year. He said, "It is encouraging that, by knowing how to adapt our cultural offering in line with the stipulated healthcare guidelines, we can continue to provide a high-quality visitor experience to various audiences even during a pandemic. Footfall has almost halved in comparison with 2019, but the current strategy targeted at Swiss visitors has proved effective."

In terms of country of origin, national visitors were in no short supply, putting Switzerland in first place on the [2021 podium](#). France was in second place (9%), closely followed by the United States (4%), Germany (3%), Spain (2%) and Italy (1%). Amongst Swiss visitors the rankings were topped by German speakers (54%), followed by French speakers (43%) and Italian speakers (3%).

In response to the pandemic, Chillon Castle Foundation renewed its cultural offering through varied events for children, teenagers and young adults, families and history enthusiasts alike. This included a lecture series based on the French-language [scientific paper](#) "Vies de princesses ? Les femmes de la Maison de Savoie (XIIIe-XVIe siècle) by Fanny Abbott and Nathalie Roman. This richly illustrated book on the lives of the Savoy women was so successful that it has since been republished.

For Marta Sofia dos Santos, Director of the Chillon Castle Foundation, 2021 ended as a loss-making, yet promising, financial year. She said, "The public health situation is still uncertain and has an impact on the cultural and tourism sectors. Despite this, our website traffic has soared thanks to a custom online ticket office, plus we've organised a tailor-made summer programme of events and repurposed materials from a temporary exhibition – that was unfortunately cancelled – into a reference work that has formed the basis of our sold-out scientific seminars. The professionalism of my entire team should be commended."

The Castle plans to host its usual 40+ events throughout 2022. This includes a contemporary art exhibition entitled "Caroline Tschumi: Illuminated princesses" from 9th September, the famous Scary Night at the Museum, and even Swiss Castle Day. The programme will be split into themes, even down to the dishes served in [Café Byron](#) – the restaurant adjacent to the ancient fortress, managed by our partner [Novae](#). The full programme is available on our website [www.chillon.ch](http://www.chillon.ch).

It's worth remembering that while Chillon belongs to the Canton of Vaud, it is managed by Chillon Castle Foundation, a private-law foundation.

FONDATION DU  
CHÂTEAU DE CHILLON  
Avenue de Chillon 21  
CH - 1820 Veytaux  
Tél. : +41 (0)21 966 89 10  
Email : info@chillon.ch  
www.chillon.ch



Le château de Chillon™ et les Dents du Midi

Photos and videos available to the press on request.

Media contacts:

- Claude Ruey, President of the Chillon Castle Foundation, +41(0)792108413
- Marta Sofia dos Santos, Director of the Chillon Castle Foundation +41(0)219668929 or +41(0)799448766
- Lise Leyvraz Dorier, Communications Manager for the Chillon Castle Foundation, +41(0)0219668245

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