

## LOST&FOUND: FORGOTTEN LAPTOPS

More than **600,000** laptops are forgotten in **106** major U.S. airports each year. Los Angeles International Airport tops the list with **1,200** laptop losses per week; Miami follows with **1,000**, New York's JFK Kennedy Airport with **950** and O'Hare in Chicago with **825**. Only **30%** of lost laptops are recovered by their lawful owners. The others are destroyed after being stored at the lost-and-found counter for a period of time that varies from one airport to the next.

## RECORD SKETCH

*Bajan riñendo* (Down They Come), a sketch by Francisco de Goya (1746-1828), went under the hammer for **£2.28** million (about **€2.86** million) at a recent auction at Christie's in London, making it the most expensive sketch in history by the famous Spanish painter and shattering the previous record of **£1.46** million (about **€2.16** million) paid by the Spanish ministry of culture in **2006** for *El toro mariposa* (The Butterfly Bull). The record sketch is one of three lost Goya sketches, which re-appeared this year in a Swiss private collection after a **130-year** absence: these works were last seen at a Paris auction of **105** drawings by the artist in **1877**.

## MICHELANGELO KING-SIZE

*Michelangelo. La dotta mano* ("Michelangelo: The Wise Hand") is the title of a book recently released by a well-known Italian publisher of art books for collectors. The book's numbers and features make it clear that this is a collector's item: **264** pages in pure handmade cotton paper, size **42x68** cm, weight **24** kg. The book contains reproductions of **45** sketches and original letters accompanied by **83** photographs of the artist's works. It took three years to produce the book, which is being published in a limited edition of **99** copies, each with a **500-year** guarantee. The retail price is **€100,000** per copy.

## BLOW-UP CHURCH

A new form of spiritual comfort was available on Italian beaches this summer: an inflatable church for lifeguards and beachgoers. The structure is **30** metres long and **15** metres wide, inflates in **5** minutes and hosts up to **1,000** believers. Coloured black and fuchsia, the inflatable church was mounted for the first time in Sardinia on a stretch of coastline the residents of Cagliari call the "Beach of the **100,000**" at the point known as the "5th stop".

## LONG-LIVED GIANTS

**140** years is the maximum age so far established for a whale in Greenland. A study of a male specimen about **15**

metres long captured in Alaska in **2007** confirmed the longevity of this marine giant, which has an average life span of **80** years. A fragment of an explosive harpoon embedded in the whale's shoulder blade helped to establish its age. Ballistic analysis showed that the fragment came from a pointed explosive harpoon of a type patented in the U.S. during the American Civil War (**1861-1865**) and used on a large scale by whalers from **1879** to **1885**.

## GOLD STRIKE

If South Africa's **240,000** gold miners were to maintain the threat they recently made to the government in Pretoria to go on strike (the sector's first nationwide strike dates back to **2005**), it could cause the big gold mining companies about **\$21** million in revenue for each day of stoppage. Gold, diamond and platinum extraction in South Africa currently accounts for **8%** of the country's GDP.

## DRINK UP, YOU'LL FEEL BETTER

World consumption of alcoholic beverages grew **6%** in **2007** over the previous year. Cider won the gold medal with a **14%** increase in sales, followed by vodka (**+11%**). Needless to say, Russia is the biggest market for the latter with a **7%** increase in sales, while sales in the second-biggest vodka market, Poland, went up by a hefty **17%**.

## IPHONE USE

iPhone-related statistics for the first half of **2008** from **6** European countries (the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden) show that there are **1.1 million** users, **73%** of them men (against **51%** of all mobile phone users). Two-thirds of them are less than **35** years old (against **32%** of all mobile phone users) and **40%** are single. **63%** of iPhone users surf the Internet (**5** times more than the average mobile user), **25%** watch videos (**8** times higher than the average), **55%** send and receive e-mails (**9** times higher than the average) and **15%** play online games (**2** times more than the average user). Who foots the bill? Employers pay for **14%** of iPhones while **86%** of users pay for their iPhone out of their own pocket.

## WEIGHTY FRUIT

**97.900** kg: the weight of the **2008** winner of the "Miss Watermelon" contest held each summer in Novellara in the Italian province of Reggio Emilia. The runner-up lagged **20** kg behind, tipping the scales at "merely" **75.200** kg. The bronze medal went to a **74.600** kg watermelon.