Summer 2016

MEDIA DOSSIER

Authentic and distinctive. The natural arena of Valais.

www.valais.ch
Valais. Authentic and distinctive.

Unspoilt nature, fresh mountain air and 300 days of sunshine a year. In the midst of 45 majestic four-thousanders, a new view of the mountains and an extraordinary panorama is waiting to be discovered around every corner - inviting us all to fall in love with summer again!

Valais is the perfect place for adventure seekers – a vast high-altitude playground. Whether hiking, biking, climbing or summer skiing on glacier slopes, everyone spending an active holiday in the Valais mountains can look forward to the heights of enjoyment. A few examples? Countless hiking trails covering a total distance of more than 8,000 kilometres lead past rushing mountain streams, historic bisses and mystical Alpine lakes. Spectacular mountain bike trails wind their way over mountainsides and a variety of fixed-rope routes await climbers in imposing gorges. Alongside this unique natural landscape, Valais also has its very own fauna: Blackneck goats, Blacknose sheep, Herens cows – each of these traditional breeds shares typical qualities with the region’s inhabitants. They are strong, loveable characters.

But Valais is also full of places that exude an unusual force and energy. Special places in which to find tranquillity, inspiration and relaxation. The canton is home to the Great Aletsch Glacier, the largest of its kind in the Alps, and of course to the Matterhorn, probably the world’s best-known mountain. In addition to nature itself, Valais’s thermal resorts and wellness oases are also real places of power where out-and-out relaxation is guaranteed.

What is more, the sun also lends the local natural produce its unique taste – anyone with a liking for natural foods will love the produce of Valais. Valais is the largest producer of wine and apricots in Switzerland, however, its many meat and cheese specialities are also considered incredibly delicious. The rich harvests are not only a result of the thousands of hours of sunshine the region enjoys - above all, they reflect the heart and soul which the vintners, Alpine herdsmen and farmers put into their work. For hundreds of years, the people of Valais have been learning how to extract superlative quality from the rugged natural environment of the mountains.

Come and discover Valais in all its unique diversity and fall under the spell of the genuine hospitality of its inhabitants. Welcome

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How to get to Valais

Whether you arrive by car, public transport or plane, Valais offers outstanding transport connections in all directions.

By car

The main thoroughfare is the A9 motorway, which runs to Sierre. In addition, the Alpine passes of Col de Forclaz (connection to France), Pas de Morgins (France), Simplon (Italy) and the Great St Bernard road tunnel (Italy) are open all year round. The Nufenen Pass (Canton Ticino), Grimsel Pass (Canton Bern) and Furka Pass (Canton Uri) are only open in summer. It is also possible to put your car on the train, using the shuttle services that run through the Lötschberg (Canton Bern), Furka (Canton Uri) and Simplon tunnels (Italy).

By public transport

There is a guaranteed direct service to Valais from Basel, Bern, Geneva (airport), Lausanne and Zurich (airport) every 30 minutes. What is more, the opening of the NEAT tunnel through the Lötschberg in 2007 has brought Valais considerably closer to German-speaking Switzerland. Since then, journey times to Valais from the major population centres such as Basel, Zurich or Bern have been cut by as much as 70 minutes. Within Valais itself, the Matterhorn Gotthard Bahn, RegionAlps, various cable car operators and post bus lines guarantee ideal connections to individual holiday resorts.

By air

Switzerland’s airports in Geneva, Zurich, Basel and Bern offer excellent international flight connections. These airports are seamlessly integrated into the country’s public transport system.

You can find information on the current traffic situation (traffic jams and road conditions, construction sites, passes, tunnels and webcams) and the various ways to get to Valais here.
A land full of highlights

The gigantic ice stream of the Aletsch Arena

At some 23km in length, the Great Aletsch Glacier is the mightiest river of ice in the Alps. High up at the Hohfluh/Moosfluh, Bettmerhorn and Eggishorn viewpoints is the best place to admire the scale and unique magic of the Great Aletsch Glacier. More info

A superlative dam

Situated at the head of the Val des Dix, the Grande Dixence is the world’s tallest gravity dam, and something of a record-breaker! At 285 metres, it is unrivalled in height and its weight of approximately 15 million tonnes makes it heavier than the Great Pyramid of Cheops. The dam is 200 metres wide at its base. The Grande Dixence dam is open to the public from mid-June to the end of September. More info

A masterpiece of engineering

The Gornergrat Railway is Europe’s highest open-air cog railway. The journey from the centre of Zermatt up to Gornergrat at 3089m takes 33 minutes. The line first began operating on 20 August 1898, when 19th century railway engineers succeeded in creating the world’s first fully electric rack railway. More info

Europe’s highest vineyard

Visperterminen has become world famous as home to the highest vineyard in Europe, situated at an elevation ranging from 650 to 1150m. The vines are grown on short terraces with dry stone walls, rising steeply over 500m in altitude. More info

Unspoilt natural and cultural landscapes

Situated in the heart of the canton, Valais’ foremost nature park is home to an amazing diversity of rare natural species in a relatively small area. The Pfyn Forest, one of the largest pine forests in the Alps, is the centrepiece. But the park also features steppe and primeval forest vegetation, ponds, biotopes for rare birds, rich flower meadows, idyllic mountain villages and historic little towns. More info

Europe’s largest underground lake

At 300m long and 20m wide, the subterranean lake at St-Leonard is the largest natural underground lake in Europe which can be explored by boat. Visitors learn all about the history of the lake during a 30-minute boat trip on its crystal-clear waters. More info

Delve into the depths of history

The Abbey of Saint-Maurice was founded 1500 years ago, making it the oldest monastery in the western world to have remained in continual use. Today, this place of pilgrimage, which is home to some 40 Augustinian monks, holds some of the richest sacral treasures in Europe. More info

A multifaceted cultural centre

One of Switzerland’s most popular cultural centres is to be found in the delightful Roman town of Martigny: the Fondation Pierre Gianadda. The foundation has been staging important exhibitions of works by artists as renowned as Van Gogh, Picasso and Monet for over 30 years now. However, the activities on offer at the centre range from archaeological exhibitions and a vintage car and sculpture park through to classical concerts. More info
Valais summer news 2016

Accommodation

New “Onya Resort&Spa” boutique hotel in Bellwald

In September 2015, following three years of preparation, the groundbreaking ceremony for the new “Onya Resort&Spa” boutique hotel in Bellwald, which is due to open in summer 2016, took place. The four-star accommodation has 18 rooms and a wellness zone covering a total of 400 square metres.

Contact:  +41 (0)27 971 16 84 / info@bellwald.ch / www.bellwald.ch

New “Panorama Ski Lodge” aparthotel in Zermatt

Panorama Ski Lodge is a brand new aparthotel in Zermatt, offering 30 beds in three 4-person apartments and three 6-person apartments. All six apartments have views of the Matterhorn. All guests are free to use the sauna, steam room and small fitness room in the basement.

Contact:  +41 (0)79 842 17 09 / enquiries@panoramaskilodge.com / www.panoramaskilodge.com

Haus Tigilou at Belalp

The new “Haus Tigilou” is an elegant guest house in country house style featuring 11 comfortable rooms and a wellness area. Thanks to Haus Tigilou’s central location, the hiking paradise that is Belalp lies virtually on its doorstep.

Contact:  +41 (0)79 453 10 11 / info@tigilou.ch / www.tigilou.ch

Extensive renovations at Zermatt hotels

Once again, Zermatt’s hotel owners have made significant investments in infrastructure for the summer season to ensure visitors enjoy the perfect stay. At Hotel Schönegg, for instance, all the rooms have been renovated, Hotel Arca has a new brine bath, half of the new rooms at Hotel Matthiol now have their own spa and all the rooms at Hotel Chesa Valese have been redesigned.

Contact:  +41 (0)27 966 81 00 / info@zermatt.ch / www.zermatt.ch

Reka Holiday Village in Zinal: expansion and refurbishment of the facilities

The Reka believes in its Holiday Village in Zinal in the Val d’Anniviers. It invested CHF 12.5 million in the refurbishment of the residential buildings, construction of a community centre and a CO2-neutral heating system. In addition, the Holiday Village is being equipped with a thematic programme.

Contact:  +41 (0)31 329 67 01 / marketing@reka.ch / www.reka.ch

Activities

Valais Cycle Tour

Thanks to its unique topography, Valais has a great diversity of routes. The most impressive of these can now be discovered on the new Valais Cycle Tour, which was developed in collaboration with Valais’s own professional road racer Steve Morabito – who will be riding in the Tour de France 2016 – and takes in all the notable destinations in the region. 740 kilometres, 18,500 metres in altitude, 25 ascents, divided into 10 stages. These are the key facts and figures of the new Valais Cycle Tour, which can be tackled in 7 to 14 days. www.valais.ch/cycling
Glacier path to the Gorner Glacier

A new glacier trail is being created at Furi above Zermatt. It leads to the tip of the Gorner Glacier, with 16 information boards along the way. The Gorner Glacier is the second largest of its kind in the Alps after the Aletsch Glacier.

Zermatt’s ski instructors as bike guides

Zermatt’s ski instructors are following a trend by training to become bike guides during the summer. These fully qualified guides will show guests round the Zermatt-Matterhorn area from the saddle.

New pump track at Bellwald

In spring 2016, work on the new pump track at Bellwald will finally be finished. This park on the former tennis court in the Gassen area is a highlight for all ages. Children can play here with anything on wheels and aficionados can move around the pump track without even needing to pedal.

Mountain carts at Bellwald

For those who like fun sports, a mountain cart is a downhill vehicle that is both great to ride and remarkably safe. The high-quality, robust and lightweight aluminium construction has a low centre of gravity and wide wheelbase, guaranteeing driving stability. The ergonomic seating position makes the cart intuitive to operate. The unique double-circuit hydraulic disc brakes enable safe braking and drifting around bends.

New Mask Trail in Veysonnaz

A new educational trail for families has been created on the route down from Thyon to Veysonnaz. At a total of 16 stages along the way, different aspects of mountain life are unveiled in a fun and playful manner: Herens cows, cattle drives, the history of the dams, the wildlife and much more.

“Magical Water” lake and bisses experience in Grächen

The “Magical Water” experience in Grächen is dedicated entirely to the bisses, the historic irrigation channels of Valais. Visitors of all ages can enjoy water playgrounds and footbaths or discover oases of peace and well-being along the Grächnersee lake. Children and adults can become “water attendants” and divert the flow of water themselves.

Discover the geography of Val d’Hérens

To discover the special glaciology and geomorphology of Val d’Hérens, the region offers special excursions on marked trails, which can be followed individually or with a guide. In addition, a new permanent exhibition is due to open at the Centre for Geology and Glaciology in Haudères, enabling visitors to find out more about the secrets of the glaciers.

Explore the landscape with pad and pencil

The very first “Randocroquis trail” in Switzerland was inaugurated in the vineyard of Brämis near Sion at the end of 2015. On a 3.3km path, hikers can learn to draw from nature while exploring the surrounding scenery.

Crans-Montana Wakepark has been expanded

The Crans-Montana Wakepark promises pure, water-based enjoyment. To add to the activities on offer, a second pulley system is being installed above the lake.
Witches’ Hike at Belalp

This easy hike starts at Blatten and leads through the Blindtal, or “Blind Valley”. Halfway down, hikers can stop to see the glacial mills dating back to the last Ice Age. In this eerily beautiful witches’ wood, you can also explore caves and visit the little hut of Veronika the witch.

New children’s course at the Saas-Fee Rope Park

At the Saas-Fee Rope Park, even the tiniest of climbers can now embark on a big adventure. The new course is equipped with a comprehensive safety system that allows children as young as four to clamber from tree to tree. Ten new features and a zip line are waiting to be discovered.

On the trail of Valais diversity

Discover the best of Switzerland in one single route? The Grand Tour of Switzerland makes it possible. The 1600km route takes you through the country’s most beautiful areas. And right through the heart of Valais, where it follows the course of the Rhône. From the highest Alpine pass on the Swiss route, Furka Pass, to Lake Geneva. Whether deep down in the valley or high up in the mountains, the signposted route lets you explore the entire region with all its highlights, while also encouraging you to seek out insider tips and lesser-known sites.

Culture

New historic house museum in Randa

The “Lorihischii” historic house museum in Randa will open its doors to the public in autumn 2016. The historic building complex dating from the 15th to 18th centuries has been professionally restored and will now serve as a museum. The building fabric from earlier centuries – up to 1709 – has been preserved.

Gastronomy

Beer from Zermatt

The brewmaster of Zermatt is very exacting. And that’s a good thing. Because “Zermatt Bier” is not just any old beer - it’s the first to be produced at a brewery in Zermatt. For more details, see http://www.zermattbier.ch

Refurbishment of “Berghaus Chäserstatt” in Ernen

Following a wide-scale refurbishment in 2015, the “Berghaus Chäserstatt” in Ernen will be ready to tackle its first summer season in 2016. The establishment is best known for its beautiful terrace, where breathtaking views of the Goms high valley are guaranteed.

Caviar from Valais

At the end of 2015, Kasperskian AG began operating its caviar production facility in Leuk-Susten. It is only the second of its kind in Switzerland. Russian and Siberian sturgeon are reared in the fish farm’s 6000m² tanks.
## Top events 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ladies Alpine Skiing World Cup</td>
<td>13/02 – 14/02/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.skicm-cransmontana.ch">www.skicm-cransmontana.ch</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xtreme Verbier</td>
<td>02/04 – 10/04/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.freerideworldtour.com">www.freerideworldtour.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Zermatt Unplugged</td>
<td>05/04 – 09/04/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.zermatt-unplugged.ch">www.zermatt-unplugged.ch</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Caprices Festival</td>
<td>07/04 – 10/04/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.caprices.ch">www.caprices.ch</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Patrouille des Glaciers</td>
<td>19/04 – 23/04/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.pdg.ch">www.pdg.ch</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tour de Romandie (Valais)</td>
<td>28/04 – 30/04/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tourderomandie.ch">www.tourderomandie.ch</a></td>
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<td>National Herens Cow Fighting Final</td>
<td>30/04 – 01/05/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.finale-cantonale.ch">www.finale-cantonale.ch</a></td>
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<td>Caves Ouvertes</td>
<td>05/05 – 07/05/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lesvinsduvalais.ch">www.lesvinsduvalais.ch</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour de Suisse (Brig)</td>
<td>15/06/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tourdesuisse.ch">www.tourdesuisse.ch</a></td>
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<td>Swiss Cycling Swiss Championships</td>
<td>22/06 – 26/06/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cycling.ch">www.cycling.ch</a></td>
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<td>Tour de France (Finhaut-Emosson)</td>
<td>20/07/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.finhaut-emosson.ch">www.finhaut-emosson.ch</a></td>
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<td>Int. Alphorn Festival</td>
<td>22/07 – 24/07/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nendazcordesalpes.ch">www.nendazcordesalpes.ch</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbier Festival</td>
<td>22/07 – 07/08/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.verbierfestival.com">www.verbierfestival.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gemmi Shepherds’ Festival</td>
<td>31/07/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.gemmi.ch">www.gemmi.ch</a></td>
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<td>Cyclosportive des Vins du Valais</td>
<td>01/08/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lacyclosportivevalaisanne.ch">www.lacyclosportivevalaisanne.ch</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fête de l'Abricot</td>
<td>05/08 – 07/08/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fetedelabricot.ch">www.fetedelabricot.ch</a></td>
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<td>Open Air Gampel</td>
<td>18/08 – 21/08/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.openairgampel.ch">www.openairgampel.ch</a></td>
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<td>Le Grand Raid</td>
<td>19/08 – 20/08/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.grand-raid.ch">www.grand-raid.ch</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Omega European Masters</td>
<td>01/09 – 04/09/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.omegaeuropeanmasters.com">www.omegaeuropeanmasters.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>VINEA Swiss Wine Fair</td>
<td>02/09 – 03/09/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.vinea.ch">www.vinea.ch</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marché des Saveurs et Artisans</td>
<td>08/12 – 11/12/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fvsgroup.ch">www.fvsgroup.ch</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Prix Joseph Favre Martigny</td>
<td>11/12/2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.gpjosephfavre.ch">www.gpjosephfavre.ch</a></td>
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Image database – Valais in pictures

Intersectoral image database

Visit our image database offering pictures of business, tourism, agriculture and culture for free. The photos are accessible to everyone, but may only be used to publicise activities that further the image of Valais.

To the intersectoral image database

Swiss-image photo database

Please note that for picture copyright reasons, we can only offer access to the swiss-image database to the media and other authorised partners under the General Terms and Conditions and Terms of Use. Partners such as tour operators, destination management companies (DMC) and media can apply for access to the picture archives of Valais/Wallis Promotion using the following link:

To the swiss-image image database

Contact

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Function: ......................................................
Phone: ..........................................................  E-mail: ............................................................