

# SION

SWISS CAPITAL OF THE ALPS



**TOURIST OFFICE**

Espace des Remparts 19  
1950 Sion

T +41 (0)27 327 77 27  
[siontourisme.ch](http://siontourisme.ch)



# Nature

Rue des Châteaux



## Valais Cantonal Museums

—  
Sion

# History

Bourg of Valère



# Art

Place de la Majorie

# Welcome to Sion

In the heart of Valais lies Sion: a city set against a mountain backdrop and endowed with a 7'000 year history. Sure to delight and surprise you, it is recognisable by its castles crowning impressive twin hills. Locals and visitors alike appreciate its quality of life that can be savoured in the old town, by relaxing at the "Domaine des Iles" or by strolling through its terraced vineyards.

This brochure is a gift from the Tourist Office. We would like you to take our region home with you and share it with your friends and family. The professional photographs you will discover are our special favourites. Valais-born journalist and author Manuella Maury has been chosen to convey in just the right words the wonders of this holiday kingdom in which we wish you countless opportunities to experience wonderful emotions.



Happy reading and have an excellent stay.

The staff,  
Sion Tourist Office

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### TOURIST OFFICE OF SION

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[siontourisme.ch](http://siontourisme.ch)

  #visitsion





## SION - RESTAURANTS

Our restaurants, bars and cafés offer a wide range of tastes and colours. In Sion you should expect world cuisine alongside traditional and local cuisine. Treat your taste buds and discover new dish varieties! [siontourisme.ch/restaurants](http://siontourisme.ch/restaurants)

# Sion, mirror city

**Manuella Maury**  
Journalist,  
author and director of the  
"Lettres de soie" Festival

My father – a bushy-eyebrowed native of Val d'Hérens with a way of expressing himself that was all about roots – used to say that the mountain loved the plain because on calm, bright days it could gaze at its reflection in its lakes and its river. He also said: "The city is a siren; it will draw you into its bed and whisk you off to Marseille." Poets are the proverbial prophets and as a child of the mountains, I was indeed carried from city to city. Montreal, Tokyo, Buenos Aires and Dhaka; Beijing, Kampala, São Paulo and Gaza. For work, for holidays, for love.

Twenty-five years later, I returned. Nourished by others, curious about my own. Was it my eyes or had Valais changed? Of all the changes, Sion made the strongest impression on me. As I walked along the Sionne river, in the tannery district, my eye fell on every restored corner. Everywhere terraces spread out on the cobbled streets, children's voices



under the medieval arches, strollers on bicycles, chattering fountains. Life. On the Place de la Planta, my father's hand came to rest on mine: "If you don't know where to go in your life, go home." For the first time, I felt that "home" was the valley and the plain. This inseparable link between *bisse* and river. Between the EPFL and the EPM, the *École Primaire de Mase*, as the old-timers used to say, who didn't dare dream of a university in Valais. Between the teeming Friday market on the Grand-Pont and the alpine cheeses displayed as numbered works. Between the theatres, the bookstores, the artists' studios and the remote mountain huts where the bumblebees dance in the wind. Sion is a mirror between heaven and earth. The mountain gazes upon itself here. You will see its reflection here.

SION  
SWISS CAPITAL OF THE ALPS

# A CITY IN THE HEART OF MOUNTAINS

## SION – VALÈRE CASTLE

Basilica, walled town and castle... the site of Valère, nearly a thousand years old, houses the Valais History Museum which invites you to take a 50,000 year journey into the past. [musees-valais.ch](http://musees-valais.ch)



Sion, located at an altitude of 500 m, in the Rhône Valley, offers a view of impressive peaks, such as the Haut de Cry pyramid (2,969 m) and the proud Bietschhorn (3,934 m). Although the city is currently undergoing promising economic development, its old town, topped with castles, makes it impressive and endearing.





## SION – MUSEUMS

While the three cantonal museums (Art, History and Nature) are located in the old town, the *Maison de la Nature* borders the lake of Montorge and the Fellini Foundation is located in the *Maison du Diable*. A whole host of possibilities! [siontourisme.ch/museums](http://siontourisme.ch/museums)  
Illustration: The room of the “Nine Valiant Knights” – Valais History Museum









## SION - TOURBILLON CASTLE

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a powerful Prince-Bishop built his episcopal residence on top of one of the hills of Sion. The climb is worth the trip!  
[tourbillon.ch](http://tourbillon.ch)



## SION - CULTURE

Culture holds an important place in Valais' capital, Sion: music, visual arts, theatres. You're sure to be charmed by this city! [siontourisme.ch/en/calendar-en](http://siontourisme.ch/en/calendar-en)







## SION - TERRACED VINEYARDS

Sion is the second largest wine-producing commune in Valais. Its vineyards produce dozens of different grape varieties, including four Grands Crus: Fendant, Ermitage, Dôle and Syrah. [sionwine.ch](http://sionwine.ch)







## SION - *BISSES*

Typical of Valais, *bisses* (irrigation channels) carry water to the crops (vineyards, orchards and meadows) and offer a variety of walks all year round.  
[siontourisme.ch/suonen](http://siontourisme.ch/suonen)





## SION - DOMAINE DES ÎLES

This oasis of peace and relaxation offers many activities: swimming, an adventure park, camping, a restaurant, surfing, a sports centre, etc  
[les-iles.bourgeoisie-de-sion.ch](http://les-iles.bourgeoisie-de-sion.ch)

## SION - OLD TOWN

Nestled at the foot of the castle, the colourful town of Sion is very well preserved and has many terraces and shops. It is on Fridays, market day, that it is at its most lively. [mvvsion.ch](http://mvvsion.ch)







## SION - A 7,000 YEAR HISTORY

Before you lies a city with more than 7,000 years of history! Beautiful from afar, the city is even more so when you stroll through the narrow streets of the old town.

To discover it even better: [siontourisme.ch/en/guided-tours](https://siontourisme.ch/en/guided-tours) | [siontourisme.ch/discovery-walk](https://siontourisme.ch/discovery-walk)



# Sion and the art of street life

Admit that our life paths are strewn with obstacles, right? The rhythm of our lives has become detached from that of the seasons. However, at the entrance to the capital of Valais lies an “obstacle-free” path, often next to a "pedestrian way" but marked differently, where time suspends its flight. On this *Chemin des Berges du Rhône*, the strongest and the most fragile among us will find a space of shared leisure and freedom. My niece learned to roller skate here. Today, she takes her students there to draw. So many birds. Do they know they are being watched?

In the heart of the city, on the Rue du Rhône, an ornithological station has been installed. Since we are in the city, let's stay there and stroll around. After buying my tea a few steps from the Cathedral, I find refuge at my favourite bookshop near the *Rue des Remparts*. On my way out, I slip into the drugstore just across the street, buy herbal teas and ask for advice. From there, I feel like walking to the old arsenals, which have become a media library, an art library, a state archive and a restaurant. For dessert, I read a magazine about the city and its 7,000-year-old history, a rare thing in Swiss archaeology.

To move on from this literary nest, I rent an electric bike from one of the many stations provided and go from menhirs to neolithic necropolis, from dolmens to funerary churches of the early Middle Ages. In passing, I take a look at the "Riches Heures de Valère" programme. If you like baroque music, the best in the world performs here. But now the sun is about to set. I have a dry *Fendant* in my backpack, cheese and crusty bread bought on Friday, market day on the *Grand-Pont*. Follow me. The *Bisse de Clavau* is not very far.

We'll gain some height and see night fall on the rooftops, the vineyards and the river. In June, every year, the heart of the city welcomes a flamboyant street art festival. An unfettered moment lost in time.

Manuella Maury





1.



2.



4.



3.



5.

## GLIMPSES

### 1. Alaïa Bay

Nestled in the heart of the Alps, Alaïa Bay is the first wave surf pool in continental Europe.

### 2. Realfly

Take flight at 230 km/h with this indoor free fall simulator.

### 3. Geocaching

Use your smartphone to explore Sion's secrets in a fun way thanks to Geocaching. Go in search of Sion's geocaches alone, with your family or friends...

### 4. Performing arts

Visual, theatrical and choreographic arts enliven Sion's cultural seasons.

### 5. Terrasses

In Sion, you're truly in the south, so enjoy a spot of *farniente* on its many terraces.

**SION**  
SWISS CAPITAL OF THE ALPS

SION  
CAPITALE DU VALAIS

**7'000 ANS  
D'HISTOIRE  
GOURMANDE  
VIEILLE VILLE  
CHOCOLAT  
DES CHÂTEAUX**

MILK OR DARK  
CHOCOLATE BAR

# Boutique Sion

Sion can be both discovered and tasted. A range of souvenir products representing the Sion experience is available for sale from the Tourist Office and from its partners.

[siontourisme.ch/boutique](http://siontourisme.ch/boutique)



VALAIS CHEESE  
Grenette selection



COPPA DOLCE CITTÀ



CROUSTILLES DE SION  
with russet apple juice from Sion  
or with Valais Raclette cheese AOP



1475 BEER FROM THE PLANTA



WINE GLASSES



MUGS



POLO SHIRTS FOR MEN  
AND WOMEN



CAPS



VALÈRE, TOURBILLON  
AND MAJORIE WINE



MAISON  
GILLIARD

1885



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tasting packages to  
choose from

### PRACTICAL INFORMATION



Find out more about our  
wine-tastings and make your  
reservation at [www.gilliard.ch](http://www.gilliard.ch)



Wine-tasting at Sion Vinotèque

**Monday to Friday** 9 am - noon  
1.30 pm - 6 pm



**Open Monday to Saturday and on  
Sundays for 10 people and above**

**Saturday** 9 am - 4 pm



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DISCOVER OUR  
ARCHITECTURAL  
AND CULTURAL  
HERITAGE

TASTE  
OUR LOCAL  
PRODUCE

BREATHE  
IN THE FRESH  
MOUNTAIN AIR

ENJOY ONE  
OF THE MANY  
EDUCATIONAL  
TRAILS



# And suddenly... the Black Grouse!

To be born in Valais, at the foot of the mountains, is to look up to hear what the sky has to say. To feel tiny on full moon nights. To understand with time that from the Rhône glacier, the source, to the river running from Lake Geneva to the Mediterranean, humans have a common history and stars between their toes. At the furthest end of the valleys, where I come from, we *sometimes* forgot that the lake was our DNA. A geographical reduction from which the untamed world was excluded. In my eyes, the Valais of which I am a child is a Black Grouse. A bird from the depths of time that some of our forests still shelter... A rare bird, shy, demanding. If you are patient, its presence will remain in your memory forever. Its strength is in the elusive. The greatest painters have tried to capture the incredible light suffusing this territory. From the Aletsch glacier to the meanders of the Rhone, our museums are full of sensitive observations and sacred moments.

But who can reproduce the voice of the wind in the larches? The laughter of a child dressed by his ancestors, playing in an alley, in mid-August? *To engrave Valais on your heart*, you have to tread it with your feet. You have to journey from the Binntal, where gold lurks in the rivers, to the Vallon de Réchy, which bridges the gap between my native Val d'Hérens and the Val d'Anniviers, where travel writer Ella Maillart, spent her last years. You must go down the river and caress the pebbles of the Bois de Finges like the poet Corinna Bille did, and then feel Provence in the pine trees of the Bois Noir, a stone's throw from the treasure of St-Maurice that Paris and its Louvre envy us. Greet the Dents du Midi from the historical factories of Monthey and walk on to the first waves in Le Bouveret. This Valais, stamped with the strength of our feet, then becomes a land of humans and silences, of landscapes and inventions, of characters and impressions. And then suddenly, perhaps, the flight of a great black grouse.

Manuella Maury

VALAIS  
ENGRAVED ON MY HEART

# WHEN THE MAGIC HAPPENS





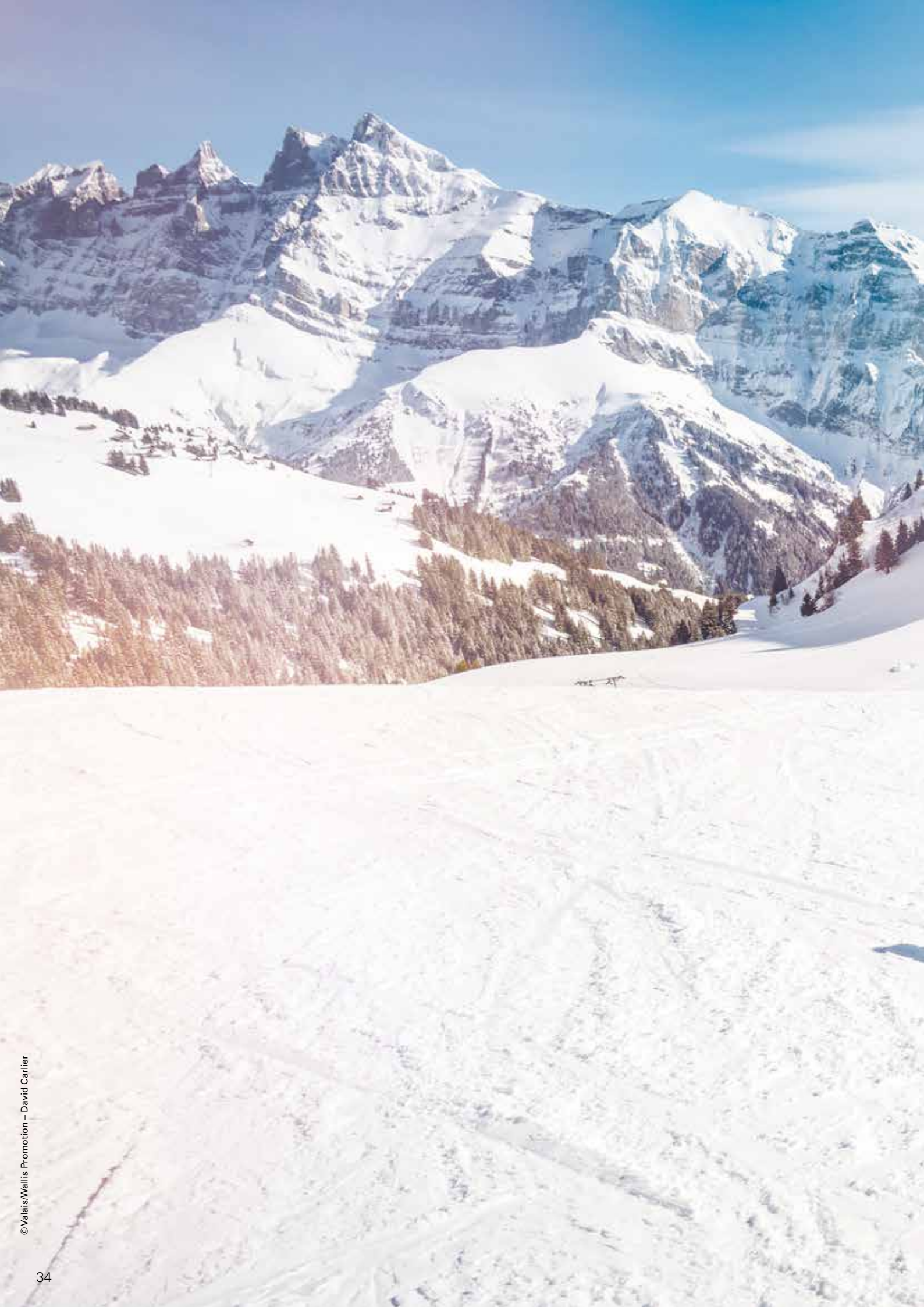


A valley with many facets, Valais is divided between plains and steep slopes, vineyards and mountains, tradition and innovation. A real playground for hikers, bikers or mountain bikers, the region is also a paradise for gourmets. You'll have plenty of memories that will remain engraved on your heart!



## VALAIS - VAL D'HÉRENS

This valley exemplifies the mountain aspect of Valais: numerous summits exceeding 4,000 m in altitude, glaciers overhanging alpine pastures where the famous cows of the Hérens breed graze, authentic ancient villages ... This region has managed to preserve old Valaisan traditions. [valdherens.ch](http://valdherens.ch)





## VALAIS - SKI

Anyone who loves winter will love Valais! The majestic "4,000 m" peaks sculpt the panorama and provide a unique setting for winter sports activities. Valais is home to the highest ski resorts in Switzerland, not to mention the 2,000 km of slopes where snow is guaranteed. [valais.ch/ski](http://valais.ch/ski)





## VALAIS - DERBORENCE

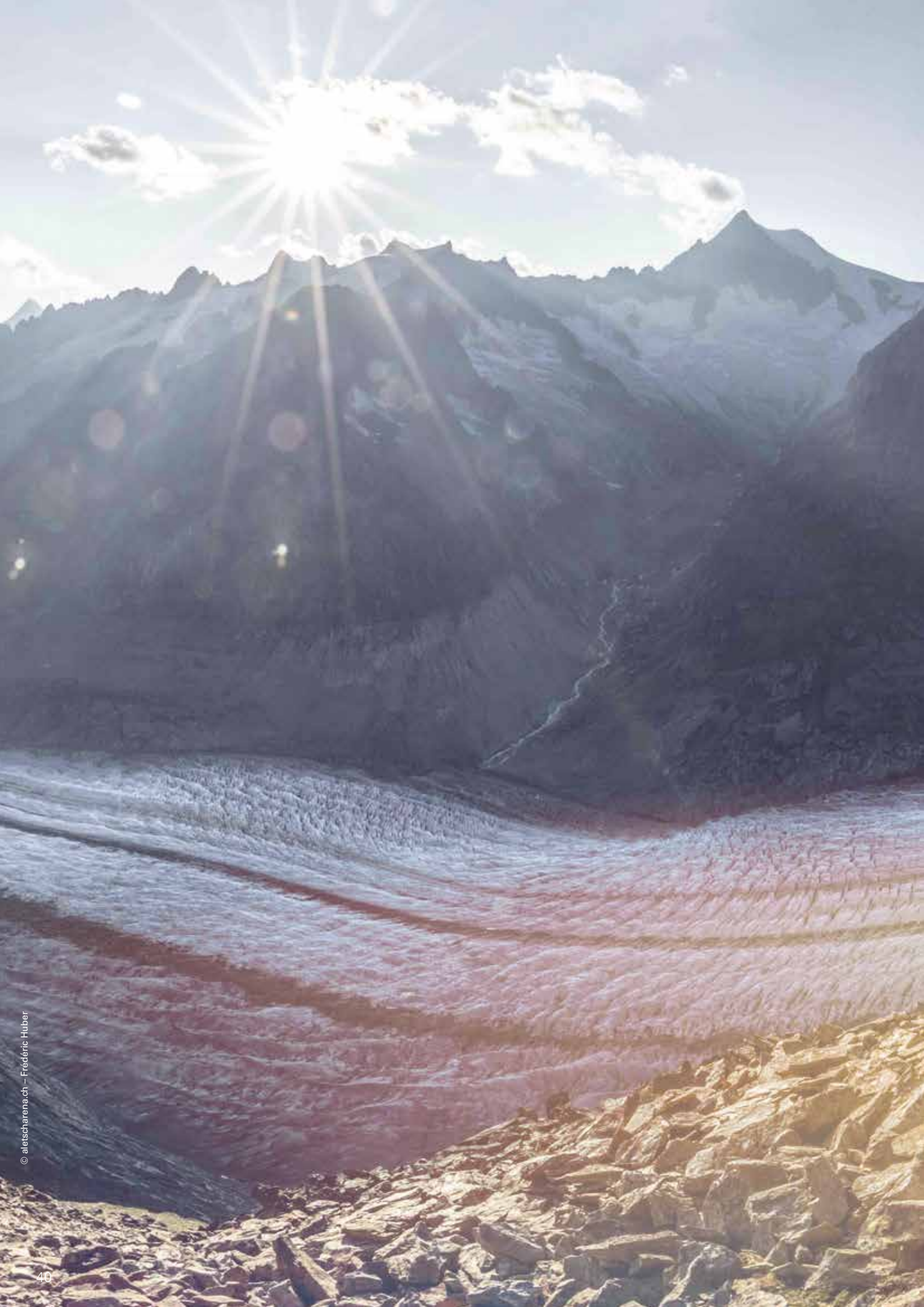
In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in one of Valais' side valleys at Ardon, two massive landslides created a lake reflecting unspoilt and protected nature. This nature reserve fascinates geologists and botanists as much as nature lovers. [lescoteauxdusoleil.ch](http://lescoteauxdusoleil.ch)



## VALAIS - GRANDE DIXENCE

In a spectacular alpine setting, the highest gravity dam in the world awaits you!  
An exhibition enables you to relive the epic of its construction while a 700 m-long zip line allows you to get up close and personal with this concrete colossus.  
[grande-dixence.ch](http://grande-dixence.ch)









## VALAIS – ALETSCHE GLACIER

Walking along its hillside, one truly becomes aware of the size and uniqueness of the Aletsch glacier: 20 km long and up to 800 m thick, it is nothing short of fascinating.  
[aletscharena.ch](http://aletscharena.ch)





## VALAIS - ST-LÉONARD UNDERGROUND LAKE

A stone's throw from Sion, a privileged witness to the formation of the Alps, this underground lake nestles under the vineyards. At 300 m long, it is the largest natural and navigable underground lake in Europe. Visits are conducted aboard rowing boats. [lac-souterrain.com](http://lac-souterrain.com)





## VALAIS - LAKE GENEVA



After springing from its source at a 1,900 m altitude, it joins the valley in Brig, while at Le Bouveret the Rhône pauses to become a lake. An excursion to Port-Valais is a chance to enjoy an astonishing, lively riviera. [bouveret.ch](http://bouveret.ch)





## VALAIS - THERMALISM

In our region, hot water rises from the depths of the mountains and for centuries, the thermal baths of Valais have been providing relaxation and healing. Nothing could be better for unwinding both body and mind than a dip in the outdoor pool at the thermal baths, from which one often enjoys a superb view! [valais.ch/wellness](http://valais.ch/wellness)







## VALAIS - VAL D'ANNIVIERS



The Val d'Anniviers stretches over 35 km from the Rhône at 550 m above sea level to the peak of the Weisshorn at an altitude of 4,500 m! Six village stations cling to the flanks of this alpine valley. Although equally inviting all year round, in summer traditions and Nature offer a particularly unforgettable cocktail. [valdanniviers.ch](http://valdanniviers.ch)





## VALAIS - ZERMATT

Located at an altitude of 1,600 m, at the foot of the legendary Matterhorn, this internationally renowned resort is sure to impress you. Its vast ski area extending to Italy and its summer walks will knock your socks off. [zermatt.ch](http://zermatt.ch)

# The unexpected awaits you

Don't bring anything with you. Or rather, do! Your curiosity, as well as a pen to check GPS points and the means to google a few addresses. Before leaving, let me send you a mail from Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It was called a letter in the past. In his novel *La Belle Héloïse*, his hero St-Preux, speaking to Julie, says of Valais: "*I wanted to dream and I was always diverted by some unexpected sight*". Follow me and treat yourself to the peripheral byways as soon as possible. Ready to go? Let's cross over the Grand St-Bernard pass at 2,473 m, an access route since Antiquity and precious link between Switzerland and Italy. Around you wafts Josephine's perfume as well as the ambitions of Bonaparte and his 40,000 men who left tracks in the snow in 1800. According to legend, it was the self-crowned Emperor who forged the reputation of the fabulous canine who lived in the hospice and was named after the canons who, like him, watched over lost travellers. The breeding of the St. Bernard dog continues at the Barry Foundation in Martigny. A place where you'll simply melt with tenderness. Since we've arrived in the valley, let's go up the Rhône to... eternity. Do your children like to be scared, do they ask you about the meaning of life? The ossuary in Leukerbad enables access to 24,000 ageless skulls with toothless smiles. The catacombs of Paris and Palermo are jealous, because not far from here, in Raron, the tomb of Rainer Maria Rilke

celebrates spring forever. The author of *Letters to a Young Poet* has his own museum, which among other things, offers an ornitho-poetic outing in the Finges woods, the most inspiring place I know. It is difficult to leave the pine forest, the ponds and the flight of the dragonflies. The sweetest solution: cross the vineyards of Vétroz and taste an *Amigne*, the extremely rare grape variety cultivated with so much care on this soil. A single drop of this marvel will coat both your palate and your memory. We have so little time left on this page. Come, let's change direction, on foot, by bike following the Rhône route, by train. St-Gingolph, Le Bouveret, a stone's throw from Aquaparc, a boat-hotel awaits you. The next day, we'll head for the Grangettes refuge, at 1,400 metres, on the shores of Lake Taney. And from this protected nature reserve, we'll aim for the summit of Grammont at more than 2,000 m. It is here that I will leave you. Where your imagination will be born. Because between Lake Geneva and the Alps, believe me, the unexpected awaits you.

Manuella Maury



## GLIMPSES

### 1. Oenotourism

Fendant, Petite Arvine, Syrah or Pinot Noir.... Valais is the largest and most important wine region in Switzerland.

### 2. Bike

In Valais, more than 2,000 km of cycle tracks await road bike enthusiasts.

### 3. Gastronomy

A symbol of Valais social life, raclette is one of the most famous gastronomic specialties of all.

### 4. Golf

In Valais, golf is played at the highest level. Eight golf clubs in unique settings await golfers.

### 5. Aquaparc

The water park, located in Le Bouveret, is a paradise for children and adults alike.

### 6. Great

#### St. Bernard Pass

Nestled at the top of the pass, the hospice and the St. Bernard kennel welcome visitors in summer.

# VALAIS. ENGRAVED ON MY HEART.

# Terroir wines designed to share.

*#tavolataVS*

Switzerland. Naturally.

Enjoy with moderation



SWISS WINE | OF COURSE  
**VALAIS**



swisswinevalais.ch

OCTANE





# L'AUDACE DES PIONNIERS

46°04'50.5"N 7°24'08.9"E



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PROVINS

TITANS.CH