



Valais

POP 321,730 / AREA 5224.5 SQ KM / LANGUAGES FRENCH, GERMAN

Includes ➔

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Why Go?

Valais is a natural beauty. Her tale is of rags to riches, of changing seasons and celebrities, of an outdoors so fantastic it's always fashionable. Wedged in a remote corner of southern Switzerland, this is where farmers were so poor they didn't have two francs to rub together a century ago and where luminaries flock today to sip champagne cocktails in posh Verbier nightclubs.

Landscapes here leave you dumbstruck: from the unfathomable Matterhorn (4478m) that defies trigonometry, photography and many a karabiner; to the Rhône Valley's vineyard tapestry; and the shimmering 23km Aletsch Glacier. With such backdrops, how can any hike, bike or ski tour be anything but great?

As earthy as a vintner's boots in September, as clean as the aesthetic in Zermatt's lounge bars, this canton is fickle. The west speaks French, the east German, but both are united in matters of cantonal pride by fine wine and glorious cheese.

When to Go

- ➔ December to early April, ski and snowboard enthusiasts flock here to enjoy world-class winter sports.
- ➔ The China-blue-sky days of July and August lure hikers, bikers and adventure-sport lovers for a dose of adrenaline.
- ➔ Summer sees the curtain rise on music festivals in Verbier and Sion, and a rather mucky Chüefladefäscht (cow pat fest) in Reideralp.
- ➔ In late September and October leaves turn gold on vines, grapes and chestnuts are harvested, and the autumnal feast of La Brisolée is laid out on the table for all to celebrate.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Chez Vrony (p161)
- ➔ Walliserkanne (p156)
- ➔ Le Cube (p149)
- ➔ Château de Villa (p152)
- ➔ Le Namasté (p147)

Best Family Skiing

- ➔ Bettmeralp (p166)
- ➔ Saas Fee (p163)
- ➔ Champéry (p144)
- ➔ Ovronnaz (p156)



Valais Highlights

- 1** Visit Martigny for fine art at **Fondation Pierre Gianadda** (p142), and cheese fondue with a difference.
- 2** Walk a St Bernard dog on the soul-stirring **Col du Grand**

St Bernard (p145) – hop to Italy afterwards.

- 3** Lounge in an al fresco whirlpool as snow falls at high-altitude thermal spa **Leukerbad** (p155).

- 4** Hop aboard the **Glacier Express** (p163) in Zermatt and enjoy a spectacular train journey to St Moritz.