



ITINERARIES OF SACRED ART AND ARCHITECTURE

SAINT-GERVAIS
MONT-BLANC

VALGRISENCHÉ



SAINT-GERVAIS
MONT-BLANC



ITINERARIES OF SACRED ART AND ARCHITECTURE



VALGRISENCE

*They are part of the landscape here in the mountains,
but many pass without noticing them.*

*They are part of our history,
but many pass without knowing.*

*They are elements of our cultural heritage here in the Alps.
In order to give them their rightful place in the hearts and lives
of the loyal inhabitants and one-time visitors who enjoy our land,
we created Itineras.*



Preserving and promoting
Alpine cultural heritage

ITINERAS,



The Saint-Gervais Church
façade restored in 2016



The Valgrisenche bell tower
after restoration

> it's a programme designed to promote our heritage by creating itineraries of sacred art, providing information for tourists and encouraging locals—who are proud of their history and traditions—to share their heritage with those visiting Saint-Gervais and Valgrisenche.

> it's a partnership between two regions representing the importance of sacred art and architecture in the landscape of alpine culture. Saint-Gervais les Bains, at the foot of the Mont Blanc, presents a dynamic balance between tradition and modernity, and Valgrisenche, the only town in the entire valley where mountain culture is deeply rooted.

> it's an operation to protect the cultural and artistic heritage of both towns by restoring structures and works of art that represent the identity of these mountain communities and their special relationship with the sacred heritage that permeates their daily lives.



Among those who have chosen to keep tradition alive are the **GREETERS.**

Volunteer ambassadors, each with their own style, itinerary, and vision of the area. But they all have the same sparkle in their eye that brings their tales to life and will be a beacon during your adventures.

This sparkle has a name. It is called passion.

FRANCE AND ITALY, A HISTORY OF LANDS

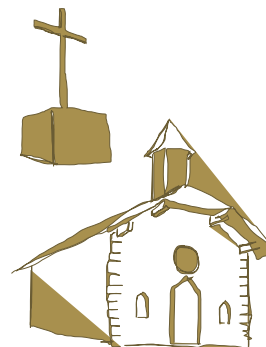
When you see these two valleys, so dominated by the surrounding summits that act as impassable barriers, the Saint-Gervais and Valgrisenche Valleys seem to go nowhere.

But don't be fooled, even though the mountains don't meet, mountain men and women pay no heed to impassable barriers. Genuine axis of communication between Italy and Northern Europe, these valleys have always been major passageways and opportunities for exchange. Present on both sides of the Northern Alps, the Duché de Savoie is one of the most essential crossroads in Europe's history.

HERE MORE THAN ANYWHERE ELSE,

heritage is sacred

Whether made of wood or stone, glass or iron, human nature gives our cultural heritage substance. Based on an ordinary life or major event, reflecting dark or happy times, guarding our memory or birthing legends, heritage becomes our history. Whether built or created by famous masters or unknown artists, by one person or an entire community, heritage carries the seal of interculturalism. Whether in Saint-Gervais or Valgrisenche, at the entrance



of a hamlet or in a winding mountain path, in the heart of a chapel or in a church courtyard, the symbols of our heritage are always located at our crossroads.

They are both real and immaterial, profane and sacred, singular and universal, past and future. They are a cross, a chapel, a church, an altarpiece...

And because there is undeniably so many tales to tell, we wanted to give them the floor. So listen! They are talking about us, about you.

FROM PROFANE TO SACRED, THERE IS JUST ONE STEP

Popular alpine culture has always been based on profane and sacred connections. A large part of the everyday lives that are lived here were surrounded by religion—and its cousin, the supranatural—and were part of some of the most concrete aspects of life. It was to mark the community's attachment to spirituality that these mountain dwellers invested astronomical sums in building religious edifices.

The contrast between the luxury of the monuments—in flamboyant baroque style—and the overly modest homes will surprise many of you. But beyond religious symbolism, churches, chapels, and bell towers represent the community's cultural heritage: one that is passed on through the generations as a symbol of cohesion.



SAINT GERVAIS,

the sky is the limit

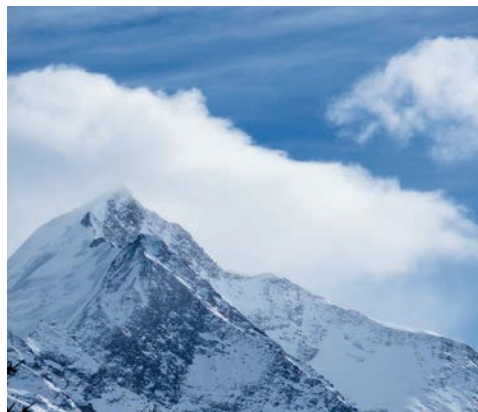
SAINT-GERVAIS MONT-BLANC

If is, of course, the Mont Blanc, with its whopping 4,808.73 m in elevation.

Saint-Gervais is very happy to be home to the “Roof of Western Europe”, but it is also the departure point for the North West Ridge route to climb the Mont Blanc.

It is also Le Fayet, Saint-Nicolas de Véroce, and Le Bettex which form the balconies and panoramas to the Mont Blanc range, with villages that bustle all-year round and original itineraries that are impatient to be walked on.

It is also the spring water that has been supplying the thermal resort for over 200 ans. Thanks to its therapeutic benefits, Saint-Gervais is the biggest mountain thermal resort in the Alps. In a style that is its own—bringing together the fun of sliding down a mountain with the thrills of swimming through a river and creating a cohabitation with ski lifts and buildings from La Belle Epoque—



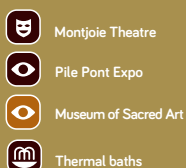
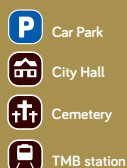
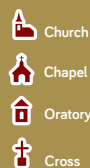
Saint-Gervais is also the Evasion Mont-Blanc ski area with over 400 km of pistes, giving access to Megève, Combloux, les Contamines, and La Giettaz, and including, of course, Les Houches / Saint-Gervais, which provide access to the Chamonix Valley.

To climb the mythical mountain, the Tramway du Mont-Blanc—the highest train in France—connects Saint-Gervais to the Nid d'Aigle at an elevation of 2,372 metres, right next to the Bionnassay glacier.

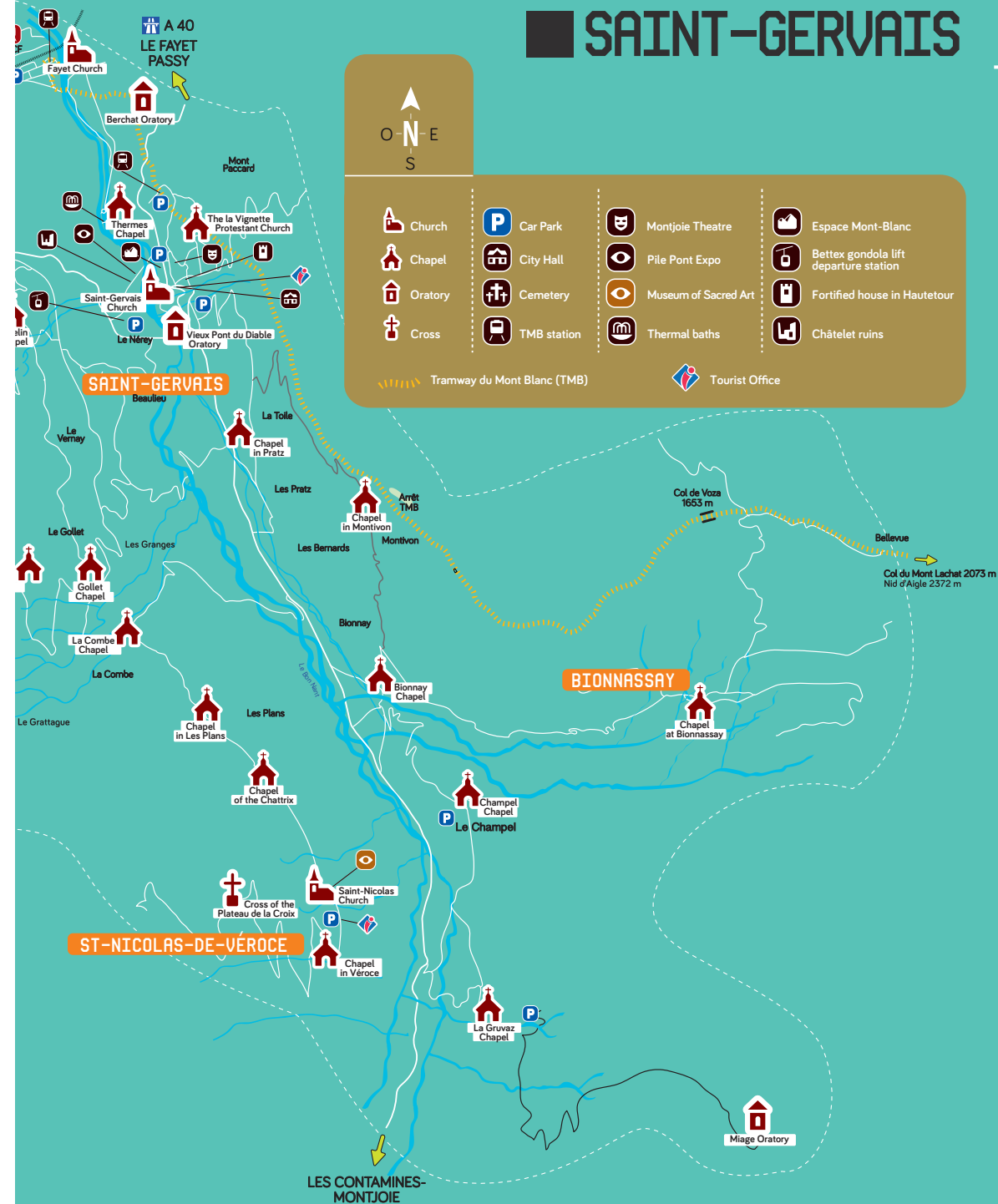
Saint-Gervais is also culture, with numerous events that rhythm the four seasons. Festivals, expositions, concerts, museums, etc. A thousand and one ways to experience the village and the locals' pride in their cultural heritage and history, all while keeping a keen eye to the future!



SAINT-GERVAIS



Tramway du Mont Blanc (TMB)



SAINT-GERVAIS AND SAINT-PROTAIS CHURCH

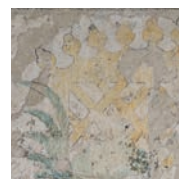
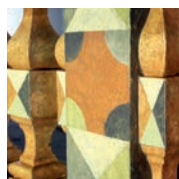
Four centuries of history.

TOP
PICK



TIME WORKED ITS MAGIC

Among some of the remarkable elements here, you can admire my altarpiece on the high altar, which survived the 1792 fire and was restored by Jean Eichorn at the start of the 19th century. Through centuries and cultures, this altarpiece also inspired the Dominican priest, Kim En Joong—in charge of creating my new stained glass windows—who speaks of it in these words: "As the baroque altarpiece in this church sings of joy and faith, may my stained glass windows sound in harmony with it."



OBJECT

IN MOURNING FOR OVER 400 YEARS

Discovered during restoration work, the Anselme family's funerary frieze—a family of lords in Montjoie—illustrates the right of frieze, a seigniorial right revoked during the French Revolution.

Because they were temporary, few friezes actually subsisted. Pierre Anselme's, however, was protected by the façade's plaster, and is a major discovery.



THE SAINT-GERVAIS CHURCH, FRESH AS NEW

"Admit it! After seeing my bell tower and splendid outside façade, after lingering in front of my paintings, stained glass windows, and altarpiece, you must be saying that at over 400 years old, I'm pretty well conserved! It would be better to say that I was pretty well restored. The work was performed from March to December 2016 for the Itineras project and was genuinely rejuvenating. And the original polychrome paintings found on my inside walls or the funerary frieze discovered under my façade's plaster won't disagree. For them, this is a rebirth! No, really, this facelift is, if I may, something of a miracle! But that wouldn't actually be true. I have renewed with my beauty thanks to the people who, both inside and beyond drawn borders, gave without counting— just like their ancestors before them in 1696, when I was built by master masons like the Valsesians Jean de la Vougnaz and Pierre de l'Eglise, assisted by Pietro Rosso and Antonio Janetta. "

SAINT-GERVAIS CHURCH
AVENUE DU MONT D'ARBOIS,
74170, SAINT-GERVAIS-LES-BAINS

GPS

LONG. 6.7112499665°
LAT. 45.89290735730°

850 M



OPEN EVERY DAY
8 AM - 7 PM
FREE ENTRY



ACCESS

SAINT NICOLAS CHURCH AND THE MUSEUM OF SACRED ART

Sacred art in a state of brilliance.



SAINT-NICOLAS CHURCH BEAUTY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Don't ask me who built me. It's been such a long time that I just can't remember. All I know is that he was Italian and was working under Father Claude-Etienne Colliex. I know that I owe the funds required to build me to locals who had emigrated abroad. My façade—said to be one of the most



beautiful in the Savoie region, with the monumental portal and relief and trompe-l'oeil elements—is, however, not my only weapon of seduction. Behind my audacious architecture lies an interior that gives meaning to the word "magnificent", with the famous Saint-Nicolas blue paintings on my vaulted ceilings, my five altarpieces, and my high altar created circa 1698-1702 by Jacques Clairant, and let's not forget the central painting by Antoine Herzog, Saint Nicolas in Glory, painted in Vienna in 1733. My baroque charm is irresistible. And if it doesn't turn you into fervent believers, at least it will provoke a profoundly unforgettable emotion.



THE HIDDEN TREASURE AT THE MUSEUM OF SACRED ART

Church treasure is the term for all the precious objects and documents kept within the walls of a church.

As told by Bernard Grandjacques, the church treasure from the Saint-Nicholas parish "was hidden by Father David in a farm in Nant Blanchet during the troubling times of the Revolution, and he let everyone believe he had taken it with him in exile. It wasn't until the 1950s that it was once again found and placed in the presbytery."

Today, the Museum of Sacred Art is home to several precious objects, paintings, sculptures, and liturgical fabrics that belonged to the church and surrounding chapels. The museum was entirely renovated in 2008 and presents the valley's religious traditions in connection with the history of its inhabitants and, in particular, its pedlars.



GPS

SAINT NICOLAS DE VÉROCE
74170 SAINT-GERVAIS

LONG. 6.72368926892°
LAT. 45.85468579650°



CHURCH OPEN EVERY DAY 8 AM - 7 PM
- FREE ENTRY

MUSEUM OPEN FROM WED. TO SUN. 3
PM - 6 PM - CLOSED NOVEMBER AND
CERTAIN BANK HOLIDAYS



ACCESS

BIONNASSAY CHAPEL

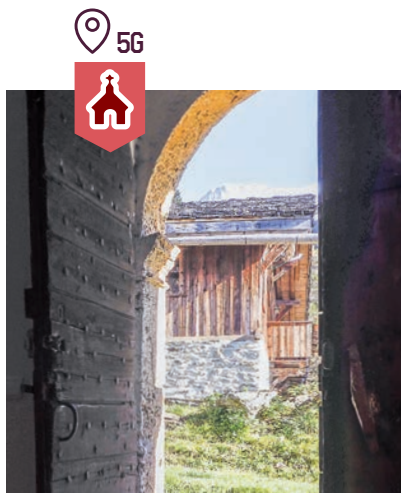
The hamlet's first chapel.

TOP
PICK



BAROQUE, SIGN OF THE TIMES

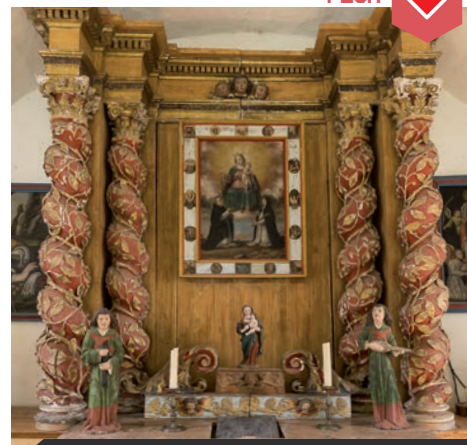
The current chapel and its décor, dedicated to Saint Lawrence and Saint Madeleine, date back to the 17th century. A time when baroque was very popular and supported by the Catholic Church, who saw in its theatrical characterisation, a way to glorify religious themes.



ANECDOTE

GILLES REMINISCES:

"When I was just a child, we would come up to Bionnassay often as it was my father's birthplace. His birth home, located next to the chapel, was one of our favourite stops on our hike. That's how one day I entered the chapel and was surprised by a plate on a prie-dieu with my grandmother's name on it. Since then, this image has become engraved in my memory and comes back to me every time I climb up there, which I have to say is quite often. "



CHAPEL AT BIONNASSAY A FIRST FOR THE VALLEY

"I invite all those that wish to know how I got here to go back 500 years.

In these ancient times, in some of the most faraway hamlets, the expression 'to not survive winter' took on a very straightforward meaning, and the presence of a place of worship became of particular importance.

Instead of building churches to speak with God, chapels were built. To pray to the Virgin Mary and invoke the protection of patron saints, but also to come together and organise community life. For all these reasons, I arrived here in 1480, thanks to the Baptendier family and a dozen other family heads.

Back then, 200 people lived here, and 200 visited me assiduously. Because behind the sign of the cross, I was a strong indication of belonging. Because beyond spirituality, I was their identity. I was the first rural chapel in the Montjoie Valley. And in line with the pioneering spirit of those that built me, I opened the path to many others.

CHAPEL AT BIONNASSAY
HAMEAU DE BIONNASSAY,
74170 SAINT-GERVAIS

GPS

LONG. 6.75545153739°
LAT. 45.86468178329°

1314 M



ACCESS

CUPELIN CHAPEL

Founded in the 17th century.



CUPELIN CHAPEL NEIGHBOURHOOD WORSHIP

"Bionnassay Chapel wasn't wrong. After it was founded, other chapels were rapidly being founded all over the country and hillsides. Most often founded by the villagers who wanted their own place of worship, they were placed under the protection of patron saints chosen to protect them from catastrophes and epidemics. Each chapel gave life to religion and invited it to become part of the daily lives of the villagers. With Saint Guarinus, patron saint of animals, I am witness. Since 1654, we can no longer count the number of prayers addressed to us by farmers within these walls."



“ A COLLECTIVE WORK OF ART

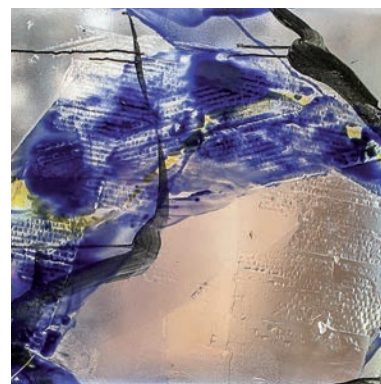
Among some of the remarkable ornaments are the altar, 'The Presentation of Jesus at the Temple' of Jerusalem, and three statues of the Madonna and Child, Saint Peter and Saint Guarinus. This is all brought to light through Father Kim En Joong's stained glass windows. You recognize the work? You also can see it in the Saint-Gervais Church. ”



MISSION: RENOVATION

After the Revolution and the Napoleon Empire, the Catholic religion felt the need to stimulate the faith of its followers and organised missions in villages. It was to commemorate the mission held in 1826 that the mission cross in front of the chapel was placed, before it was taken into the chapel walls.

The cross placed outside today is a recent copy by Marie-Claire Migliorini: "Creating the copy of the mission cross was my first religious work. Strangely enough, the mission cross was also the subject of my first apprenticeship job. Might their mission be to teach me something new each time? For this cross, I learned about a new essence, the pine. This essence is essential to the sculptors in the region. "



ANECDOTE

CUPELIN CHAPEL
CHEMIN DE LA CHAPELLE,
74170 SAINT-GERVAIS

GPS
LONG. 6.69796705584°
LAT. 45.88985500060°

950 M



ACCESS

CHAPEL IN PRATZ

The role of emigrate merchants.

ANECDOTE

NICOLAS REVENAZ

FROM RAGS TO RICHES,
THE STORY OF A PEDLAR'S CHILD

"From my pedlar father, I inherited a taste for commerce and travelling. From the mountains, I honed the will to exceed my limits and embody a deep understanding of solidarity. From the Savoyards, I am courageous and tenacious, like all those who live and breathe extreme conditions. With this baggage, I left for Vienna and it's thanks to everything I learned that I made a fortune, climbing the ladder of success. From simple negotiator, I moved to being bourgeois. From supplier to the imperial court, I became a close friend of Emperor Leopold I of Hapsburg. It was therefore normal for me to give back to my birthplace what it gave me. Representing my faith, the chapel in Pratz also represents my connection with my land, and I am proud to have contributed to its construction, as the mountains contributed to mine."



TOP
PICK

FOLLOW THE 15 AUGUST PROCESSION,
AND GO 70 YEARS BACK IN TIME

"We are in 1944, soon before the Liberation. Two German columns reached Les Pratz on a mission to avenge two of their soldiers assassinated by resistance fighters in the Montjoie Valley. After setting fire to a first house, they left, sparing the village. Why? On the eve of the Assumption Day, the priest had witnessed a miracle by the Virgin Mary. From there to organising a procession thanking the Virgin Mary, there was only one step."

ANECDOTE

GABRIEL CONFESSES

"For me, the chapel in Pratz represents freedom. Every year, in May for the month of Mary, all the kids in the village would meet in the chapel. We had to recite the five decades of the Rosary in front of my attentive Aunt Lucie. "We were addicted—not to the prayer, but to the idea of being without our parents and having our first interactions with girls. "



CHAPEL IN PRATZ AVENUE
DE MIRAGE,
HAMEAU DES PRATZ,
74170 SAINT-GERVAIS

GPS

LONG. 6.71644192691°
LAT. 45.88260190600°

850 M



ACCESS

LA GRUVAZ CHAPEL

Worshipping the saints.

“ THE SKY FELL ON HIS HEAD

Gifted by the Jacquet family from Passy, my painted wooden altarpiece with two thin, twisted columns with composite capitals lost its upper section when the ceiling was lowered. Yet, protected by my patron saints, the cherubs and plants in the bas-relief are still there, illustrating the golden baroque décor and characteristic movement. ”



TOP
PICK



LA GRUVAZ CHAPEL
A SAINT AMONG SAINTS,
TRUST US!

"Saint Gratus, Saint Bernard, Saint Anthony of Padua, Saint Jucundus of Aoste, Saint Peter, Saint John the Baptist, Saint James and Saint Francis de Sales:

do you not know who to turn to?

Most of the Alpine saints venerated in the 17th and 18th centuries are represented on my altarpiece's painting. By doing this, they made me an essential and iconic place of worship for the people living here in the mountains. They viewed the patron saints as intercessors capable of warding off calamities, protecting harvests, animals and land, as well as indicating direction. And since they invoked them daily, it was important for the chapel to be as close as possible to their homes. This is why the hamlet's inhabitants founded me in 1660. It appears that my saints lived up to their reputation since some inhabitants tried to break away from the parish church 100 years later, but that prayer went unanswered."

LA GRUVAZ CHAPEL
65 CHEMIN DE LA GARENNE,
HAMERU DE LA GRUVAZ,
74170 SAINT-GERVAIS

GPS
LONG. 6.73667862849°
LAT. 45.84698167099°

M
1050 M



ACCESS

BIONNAY CHAPEL

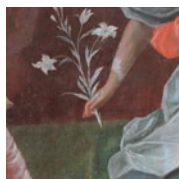
Devotion to the Virgin.

TOP
PICK



WHISTLE WHILE YOU WORK

Built in 1623 under my lord Nicolas Duquit's patronage,—alias Grandpierre of Saint-Nicolas de Véroce—this chapel was entirely rebuilt 150 years later, thanks to the Octenier family, once the patronage rights were transferred. The building's architect was Joachim Gualino, an architect from the Piedmont region, who also created the tomb-shaped altar and altarpiece.



BIONNAY CHAPEL. SAVED FROM THE FLOOD!

"It was the night of the 11th of July 1892. At around two in the morning, I remember feeling a cold stream run through me. The Bonnent torrent had burst its banks. Then, everything went so fast. In a blink of an eye, 175 people were victims of the water. The mudslide that ensued brought the Saint-Gervais thermal baths with it, destroyed a part of the Fayet hamlet, and wiped the Bionnay hamlet off the map— with the exception of the school and yours truly, both miraculously saved from the waters. Just a few days later, we learned that the catastrophe was due to a sudden break in a sub-glacial lake in the Tête-Rousse glacier. This happened over a century ago, and not one day goes by that I don't think back on this terrible event. I have to say that those who come to me always talk about it, making me relive the night over and over again."

FRANÇOIS, AKA FANFAN, ON THE WAY

"Saved by the tragedy in 1892, the chapel was not saved by the neighbourhood kids who took to targeting it as it was always closed. We should have let them come in, as from my own experience, and even though I'm not Christian, this chapel always set me on the right path...when I would climb up to Bionnassay by the Crey path."

ANECDOTE

BIONNAY CHAPEL
2 ROUTE DE BIONNASSAY,
HAMLET OF BIONNAY, 74170
SAINT-GERVAIS

GPS
LONG. 6.72832766952°
LAT. 45.86704205178°

950 M



ACCESS

CHAPEL OF THE CHATTRIX

Baroque art.

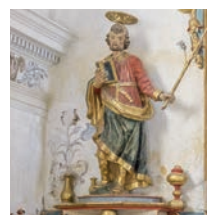
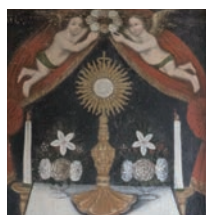


THE GENAMY FAMILY:
OUT OF SIGHT, BUT IN THE MIND

In the 17th and 18th centuries, many locals decided to emigrate—as much to escape the long winters as to avoid the threatening wars or epidemics—most often to German-speaking countries. Emigration was sometimes seasonal, mainly for merchants, but for some it was permanent. This was the case for the Genamy brothers who made their fortune in Austria. They never forgot where they came from since in 1723 they made a donation to the Chapel of the Chattrix. Combined with the money from a foundation for two poor village children, the Genamy's money made it possible for the priest to house and educate them until they turned 15.

CHAPEL OF THE CHATTRIX THE CHAPEL OF ALL CHAPELS

Founded in 1693 by Nicolas Mermod, a priest born in the village, and reworked in 1723 thanks to a donation by the Genamy brothers, I was designed to be a miniature church. Behind my façade and roof hide a vast painted décor and a collection of nine 18th century paintings.



So many remarkable works of art that earned me the Historical Monument classification in 1976. So many elements that are pure baroque style—with the profusion of decorations, dramatic effects and exuberance—made it possible for me to magnify theological themes to better exalt the faith of followers. And you can only see how well it has worked! I have seen generations of mountain dwellers come here to express their faith, talk about their lives, their trials, tribulations and hopes. And even though my style may be far from the simplicity of their rural lives, by coming to see me, you'll also see them.

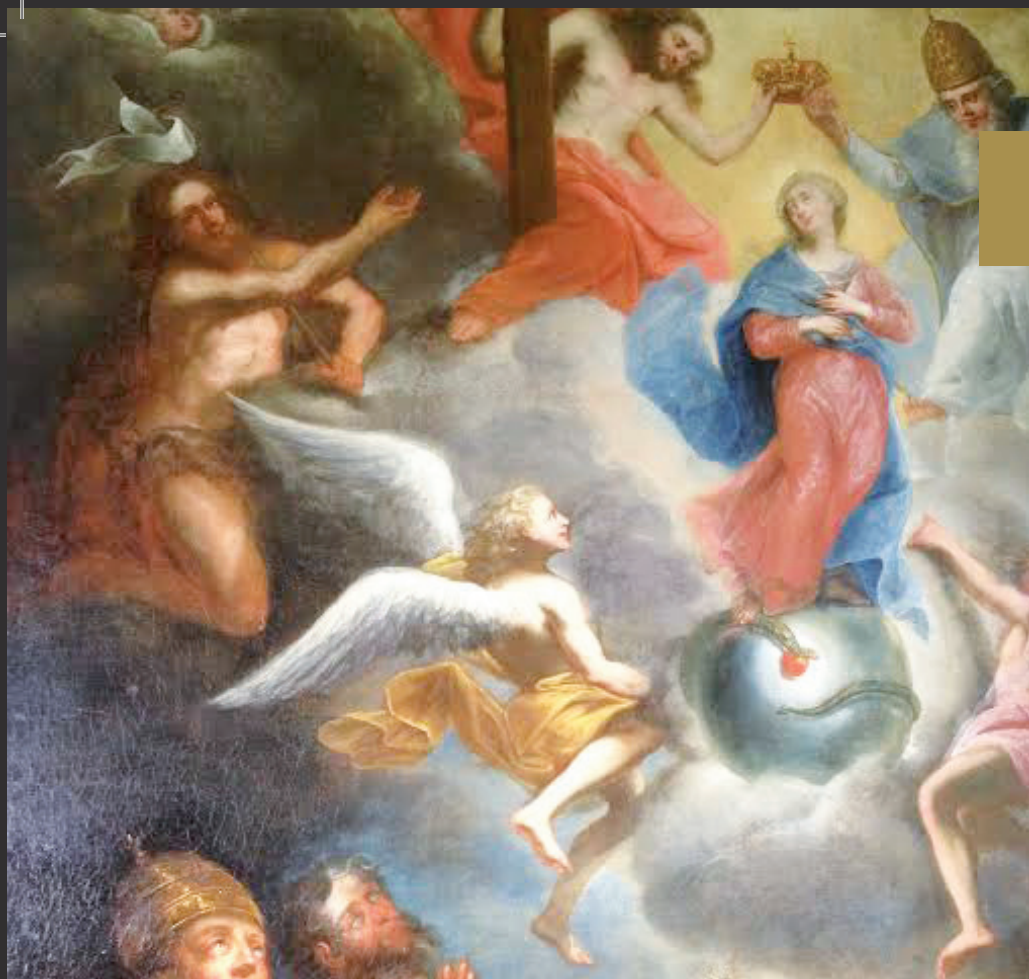
CHAPELLE DES CHATTRIX
HAMEAU DES CHATTRIX,
1545 CHEMIN DES CHATTRIX, SAINT-
NICOLAS DE VÉROCE

GPS
LONG. 6.71686409712°
LAT. 45.86256558669°

1185 M



ACCESS



THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN

Major painting in the Chapel of the Chattrix

CHAPEL OF THE CHATTRIX THE CHAPEL OF ALL BAROQUE CHAPELS

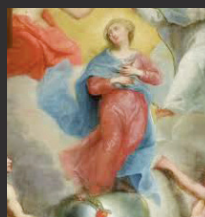
"At first look, through the abundance of figures, ethereal fabric, and bright colours, you cannot doubt where I get my style. You guessed right: I am baroque.

Now, if you take the time to look closely, you'll see that I play a double game with my celestial and terrestrial spheres. In the upper sphere, I show the Coronation of the Virgin by God, represented as an old bearded man, and by Jesus, holding the cross of his crucifixion. The Virgin Mary, placed on a globe, crushes the Serpent of Heresy. Also in the scene Saint John the Baptist wearing a hide, and Saint Joseph brandishing a lily.

The lower sphere shows Saint Catherine of Alexandria surrounded by various saints—Saint Mary Magdalene, Saint Leonard, and Saint Donat—and a man, whose name I seem to have forgotten, in armour in the foreground.

Do you think you have seen everything? Take a closer look at my author's signature. De Bentum, that's not a local name. So you might wonder what brought me here. To understand, you have to go back—three centuries to be exact—when Savoyard merchants had close ties with German-speaking countries, and when artists and works of art circulated quite easily."

Renovated in 2016, this painting was hidden in the basement of the Saint-Nicolas Museum until the first stages of the chapel's renovation work was finished in 2017-2018.



LA COMBE CHAPEL

Neo-Gothic lighting.



LA COMBE CHAPEL: A DOZEN TRADITIONS

Built in 1685 thanks to Jean and Balthazard Berthier, two notaries in the neighbouring village who financed my construction and my furniture and provided payments for my maintenance, I was renovated two centuries later by a group of people living in the hamlet: the "dozen", a well-known tradition consisting of the faithful providing their savings to finance the



construction or renovation of a chapel. Solidly rooted in the mountain landscape, this tradition hid another that was just as tenacious: the devotion to the saints.

It also holds a place in history. As proof, the seven statues representing the main saints of the Carmelite religious order that were integrated to my neo-Gothic interior décor. The seven statues represent the connection there is between humans and God. In the mountains, traditions also have it hard.



TAXES:
AN ANCIENT TRADITION

"Entering the La Combe Chapel, you will notice that on each side of the central aisle, there is a row of prie-dieu that have name plates on their backs. These spots were reserved by parishioners for the year by paying dues to the parish in exchange for placing their name on the plate. Each prie-dieu was different and corresponded to the social status of the user."

LAURENT, A LOOK BACK TO HIS CHILDHOOD

I was 10 in the 1970s, and I witnessed the painters place a new white coat on the chapel that my grandfather would bring me every summer. How beautiful it looked that day, with the new layer of paint. The layer wasn't enough to hide the threatening crack along the entire length of the chapel, and thank goodness. I always saw the chapel with it, and to make it go away would be like erasing a part of my childhood."

ANECDOTE

LA COMBE CHAPEL
534 CHEMIN DES CHATTRAUX,
HAMEAU DE LA COMBE,
74170 SAINT-GERVAIS

GPS
LONG. 6.70628459828°
LAT. 45.87086059470°

1055 M



ACCESS

LE FAYET CEMETERY

A place of memory.

TOP
PICK



LE FAYET CEMETERY

"Walking through my aisles and in front of my tombstones, you will probably think that because Saint-Gervais is on the border many different people came here. But there is a common denominator for those who came to live here. All of them are part of the eternal. How can it be any other way at the foot of the Mont Blanc? And if some have a special place in the memorial created in 2014, you must not think they were worth more than the others. The memorial was created to recall that 16 years apart, two Air India planes—the Malabar Princess and the Kanchenjunga—crashed at just 100 metres from the summit of the Mont Blanc. Two accidents that have marked the collective memory of Saint-Gervais locals for ages, and that some commemorate in their own fashion: I am talking about the Bossons and Miage glaciers that regularly leave new debris from the planes in their midst. It is like a posthumous homage given by the weeping mountain. But I'm not here to cast a cloud over our conversation. On the contrary, my presence here is an ode to life because I was developed in 1962 to respond to the development of the village in the valley. A life full of ups and downs. How can it be any other way? "



JOSÉE DE VÉRITÉ : MEMORY AT WORK

The Chamonix-born-and-raised artist Josée de Vérité recovers debris from the planes in the Bossons Glacier to create works of art. Her art was used for the memorial. For the artist, her work is a way to connect these tragedies to contemporary art. These vestiges come to life in new shapes and help the victims' families through their grief. The angel that decorates the memorial is comprised of parts from the Malabar Princess and the Kanchenjunga, but also from the helicopter where Vincendon and Henry, two young mountaineers, perished in another tragedy in December 1956. "

ANECDOTE



FAYET CEMETERY
RUE DU CASINO,
LE FAYET,
74170 SAINT-GERVAIS

GPS

LONG. 6.6959697212°
LAT. 45.9669867086°

574 M



OPEN EVERY DAY
FREE ENTRY



ACCESS

THE VIEUX PONT AND BERCHAT ORATORIES

A sacred region.

THE ORATORY, AN UNUSUAL WITNESS

Witnessing popular piety, an oratory is never there on chance. Most often built with cut stones, with a niche holding a statue and a pyramidal roof with a cross on top, it may carry a message, be the witness of an event, or be there to protect. Take the time to listen carefully. Some of them have a lot to say.



THE MONT-BLANC TRAIN, A CELESTIAL TRACK

"Today, the TMB uses the old track that went up to Saint-Gervais. Built between 1906 and 1914 to connect Le Fayet with the Nid d'Aigle, this train track is the highest in Europe and protects today's travellers reaching the limits of the sky."

OBJECT



THE BERCHAT ORATORY: A VOCATION FOR CULTIVATING

Built circa 1880, and rebuilt between WWI and WWII, I am the biggest of the 14 oratories still standing on village land. My location on the old road to Saint-Gervais, along a dense forest, may lead you to think that I was here to reassure travellers, but the truth is I was built to protect from epidemics. Indeed, for several years, a procession came up to this oratory three days before the Feast of the Ascension to obtain God's blessing on crops and field work.



VIEUX PONT ORATORY: THE DEVIL EXISTS. I MET HIM.

Standing close to the dam feeding the Fayet electricity plant, and holding the statue of Saint Joseph, I am here to protect travellers. I owe my location to a legend: Tired of having to use a detour to reach the other side of the river bank, the priest received a strange visitor in the middle of the night. It was the Devil himself, that came to offer a deal to build the bridge in one night, and as payment he would take the soul of the first creature to cross it. The next day, under the villagers' intense admiration, the priest came up to the bridge, and threw a beautiful black cat across the bridge. The Devil caught the cat and ranting, disappeared into the air. ”

THE BERCHAT ORATORY:
ACCESSIBLE ON FOOT, ON THE
PATH BETWEEN LE FAYET AND
SAINT-GERVAIS. FOLLOW THE
TMB TRAIN TRACK.

GPS
LONG. 6.70365349229°
LAT. 45.90429289050°

593 M

PONT DU DIABLE ORATORY
CHEMIN DU PONT DU DIABLE,
74170 SAINT-GERVAIS
ON FOOT FROM THE CENTRE OF
SAINT-GERVAIS

GPS
LONG. 6.71160986204°
LAT. 45.88889938580°

758 M

ACCESS ON FOOT 10 MIN.

MIAGE ORATORY

Combining Catholicism with alpine culture.

“ MIAGE ORATORY. A PROTECTING SPIRIT.

Before learning about my history, take the time to look at my surroundings. You are in one of the most emblematic areas of the Montjoie Valley. So authentic that it seems like we are witnessing the birth of the world. So majestic that it is the most humbling of experiences. So high that it feels like we are at the doorstep to the sky. And facing this grandiose panorama—bringing together the Vorasset Mountain, the Tricot pass, suspended glaciers, and the Miage Domes—is me! Like a pilgrim kneeling in prayer. Invoking the saints so that nothing changes. So that Mother Earth continues to feed, that grass continues to grow in abundance, that water and air remain so pure.



Because this is what was given to me to protect: the alpine pastures and, of course, their animals. From here, I am perfectly situated for my job. And that's probably what the notary Fontaine thought when he decided to move me in 1975. I dominate the situation now, at an elevation of 1500 metres!

”



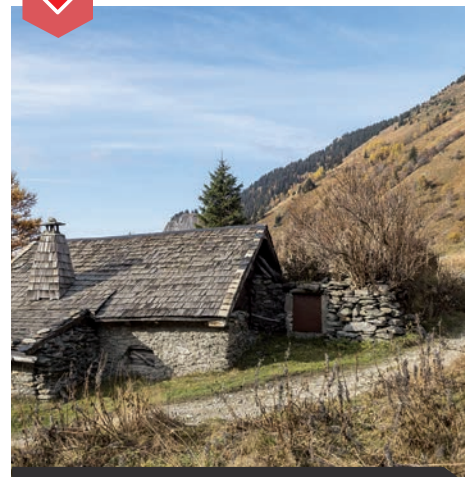
MIAGE ORATORY - CHALET DE MIAGE
ON FOOT FROM THE CHAMPEL HAMLET

GPS

LONG. 6.76820542776°
LAT. 45.83986465769°

1550 M

ACCESS 90 MINUTES/450-METRE ELEVATION GAIN



MIAGE. A PLACE BLESSED BY THE GODS

"In this old Alpine village, generations of mountain dwellers came through beginning in the Middle Ages to cultivate the Alps. And if the tools and techniques have changed, one ritual continues to thrive: At the beginning of summer, the herds are brought by the farmers and the priest up to the pastures. The priest then blesses the herds and the chalets that protect them."



PLATEAU DE LA CROIX

Faith rooted in the landscape.



CROSS ON THE PLATEAU DE LA CROIX A MISSION THAT WILL CONTINUE

Present all over the land, symbols of how far Christianity seeped into the fabric of rural life, these crosses line the roads but are not the same. Some are made of wood, others in iron or stone. Some are placed on summits, others in the valley. Their missions also vary: they may materialise passage points, mark strategic or symbolic locations, and may also be the mark of a benediction or a place to start or end a procession. I am here to mark a benediction. A benediction that recalls the transhumance to the alpine pastures at the



beginning of summer and the village priest's benediction of the land, homes, and herds. ”



SAINT-GERVAIS. A TOWN WITH TWO CROSSES

"There were two crosses marking both ends of the town, one close to the current public garden and the other downstream from the Dard Stream. This is where the priest was accustomed to welcoming the caskets of parishioners from far-reaching hamlets to bring them to the church. They were moved to accommodate for urban developments, and one is now located at the entrance to the town, at the intersection of the Contamines and Megève Roads, and the other above the public gardens."

OBJECT

LA COMBE CHAPEL
SAINT-NICOLAS DE VÉROCE,
74170 SAINT-GERVAIS

GPS
LONG. 6.71528985745°
LAT. 45.85280775230°

1450 M



ACCESS

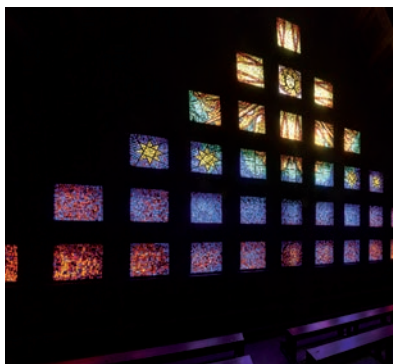
NOTRE DAME DES ALPES

Sacred art in the 20th century.

“ FAYET CHURCH OR SACRED ART REVISITED

We owe the architecture to Maurice Novarina, the stained glass windows to Alexandre Cingria and Paul Bony, the murals to Paul Monnier, and the sculptures to François Baud and Jean Constant Demaison.

And if the list of these names recalls the long credit lists at the end of blockbuster films, it is because my walls and decorations were inaugurated in 1938 and made sacred art popular. An event that the population of Le Fayet had been waiting for since 1929, when the Bishop of Annecy decided to create a new parish grouping together Les Plagnes, Le Fayet, and a



section of Domancy. But the results are there! It looks like a chalet, with unique interior design: A vaulted ceiling in the shape of a flipped over boat, integrating elements from local architecture, religious scenes that are shown through over 100 stained glass windows—from the big fresco painting of the Virgin at the Rock, surrounded by several local Saints popular in the region. Everything is there to make sacred art a part of the public's life. ”

ALEXANDRE CINGRIA: SHEDDING NEW LIGHT

Alexandre Cingria is one of the few who were worried about the decline of sacred art from the beginning of the 20th century. He looked for solutions to give religious artistic creations a breath of fresh air. His 122 stained glass windows in the Le Fayet Church are a very successful example. Covering common themes, like scenes in the life of the Virgin Mary—the Marriage, Annunciation, Pentecost—his personal touch was the dalle-verre technique, a mosaic of glass slabs set with cement and epoxy resin.

OBJECT

TOP PICK



MAURICE NOVARINA (1907–2002): RETHINKING ARCHITECTURE

Originally from Thonon-les-Bains in the Haute-Savoie region where he worked profusely, this modern architect created approximately 30 religious edifices and built a solid reputation in the sacred art revival. What was appreciated in his project for the Notre Dame des Alpes du Fayet was his modern and original architecture that didn't make radical changes and was seamlessly integrated to the environment.

FAYET CHURCH
LE FAYET,
74170 SAINT-GERVAIS

GPS
LONG. 6.70573528520°
LAT. 45.90608483380°

M
604 M

⌚ OPEN EVERY DAY
9 AM - 4 PM
FREE ENTRY



LA VIGNETTE PROTESTANT CHURCH

Protestants in Saint-Gervais.



ANECDOTE

JEAN-LOUIS REMEMBERS:

"When I came to Saint-Gervais, I discovered this place of worship which was very active during the summer season. We were part of a large Reformed Church community, made up for the most part of Anglo-Saxons. This church was built thanks to their ancestors—tourists and Alpinists attracted by the route to the Mont Blanc summit—and religious organisations from Geneva. With time, its activity became more and more rare, and it was closed in 2012. I owe the church one of the best days of my life: my daughter's wedding. "

THE LA VIGNETTE PROTESTANT CHURCH RALLYING CRY

Learning about Saint-Gervais' heritage would not be complete without a visit to La Vignette. And even if my doors are closed today, you just have to push them open—just like dozens of protestants did on 19 August 1913. Marking the return of protestantism in the Savoie region—after two centuries of baroque culture designed to eradicate it—this day was a rallying cry and a call to reconciliation sent by native and recent Savoyards who were either Catholic or Protestant, but most importantly, mountain dwellers above all. My followers had big hearts. Pastor Chaptal is no exception. He was awarded the honorary title of "Righteous Among the Nations" for having sheltered refugees in occupied France and organised the passage of Jews into Switzerland during the most troublesome times of WWII.



LA VIGNETTE PROTESTANT
CHURCH
513 RUE DE LA VIGNETTE,
74170 SAINT-GERVAIS

GPS
LONG. 6.71413066543°
LAT. 45.89519709670°

1655 M



ACCESS

VALGRISENCHÉ,

nature is eternal

Nestled in a valley parallel to the Aoste Valley at 1664 metres in elevation, Valgrisenche is a small village spreading over 140 km² and known for its wild and natural landscape. And that never stopped anyone from visiting it!

Whatever the weather, because of its central location—near the village of Rhêmes-Notre-Dame and Rhêmes-Saint-Georges, the Tignes Valley and the village of Sainte-Foy-Tarentaise, La Thuile, and Arvier—and with the numerous passes over the summits, this town was a crossroads.

And its natural beauty demands respect.

Today, the town is still visited.

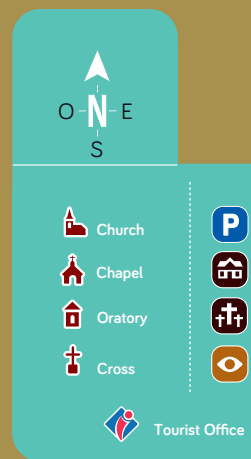
During winter, with family or friends, to experience everything that the mountain has to offer whether its on a pair of skis or in a helicopter.



During the summer, where outdoor sports are king, the highest peaks in the Valley—the Rutor (3486 m), the Grande Rousse (3607 m), and the Grande Sassière (3751 m)—offer some of the greatest rock walls, a via ferrata with a 1000 m elevation gain and several trekking paths.

All year, you can discover more about the traditions that have been so well-preserved here, bringing the past seamlessly into the present. One of the most characteristic and symbolic traditions of the village is their weaving of sheep wool.

But they also have religious traditions, with several chapels, the old bell tower, and the beautiful church. Of course the military paths also carry history along their lines.



COL
ET LA



- Car Park
- City Hall
- Cemetery
- Museum of Sacred Art

- Ski area Snowpark
- Fontaine maturation warehouse
- Via ferrata
- Les Tisserands Cooperative
- Dam

rist Office



BELL TOWER

Strength, consistency, and generosity.

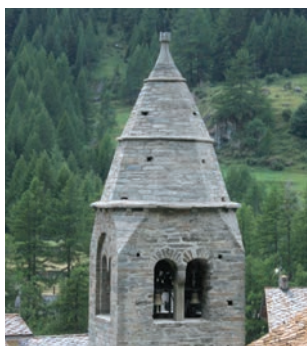
MORE THAN A CHIME, AN ODE TO FAITH

Eight. That's the number of bells on the chime. Five were built in 1905 by the Mazzola de Valduggia foundry in Valsesia. The tenor bell was added in 1928 and two other bells in 1967. As to who whispered these verses to Father Edouard Bérard, priest in Valgrisenche for over 50 years from 1894 to 1949:

*"...My belfry is king of strength and generosity
It is not afraid of heat or cold, in winter and
in summer
It calls on our duty of the utmost sanctity;
My belfry is king of consistency..."*

The song doesn't say!

ANECDOTE



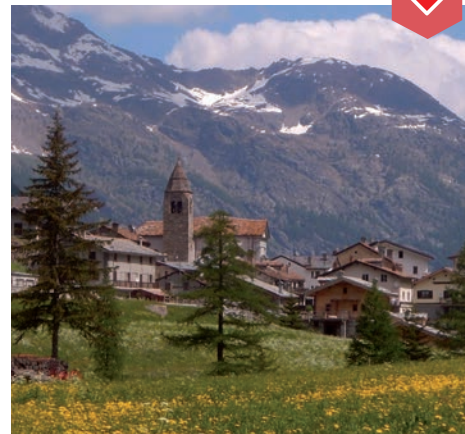
OBJECT

A SPIRE LIKE A PAPAL TIARA

It wasn't designed for this, but every time you look at it, you just can't look away. It's the spire that's shaped like an octagonal pyramid, divided in several sections with different inclinations that is placed atop the bell tower. According to tradition, this very special spire was created to recall the shape of the Papal tiara, in a homage to the Antipope Clement VII by the Valgrisiens. He had requested the creation of the Valgrisenche parish on 5 September 1392.



TOP
PICK



THE BELL TOWER: SYMBOL OF COMMUNITY

*"Just as you see me, solid on my rock
foundations, I am the only representative of
the old church, built circa 1392. Classified as a
historical monument, I have resisted everything:
from torrential rain to high winds and the
devastation of avalanches. Unwavering and
resolute, like the faith of those that built me, I
am deeply connected to my territory, like the
villagers I share my daily life with. We are solid
like the craggy rocks of the Aouille Mountain that
stands behind me. And when you come to see
me, you see the entire community.
The same community that participated in my
renovation for the Itineras project."*

VALGRISENCHÉ BELL TOWER
LOC. CHEF-LIEU

GPS
LONG. 7.063945°
LAT. 45.630275°

1664 M



ACCESS

IRON AND WOOD

Sacred crosses and spiritual markers.



A SACRED LAND,
MARKED BY TWO CROSSES

*If the faith of the people living here is limitless, their land isn't. That's where I come in. Marking off sacred spaces is a way to illustrate where people can cultivate their spirituality. With the help of the enormous *rôche moutonnées* and the deep gorges of the Doire River, I am the wooden cross—created by the Valdostain sculptor Franco Crestani—that has marked the northern limit of Valgrisenche and the village of Revers since 4 September 1993. On the opposite side at the Petite Traversière, an iron cross planted just a few days before me indicates the frontier with Val d'Isère and the village of Rhêmes-Notre-Dame. You may think we are not strong enough to defend this vast land, but that's without taking into account Father Angelo Pellissier's—our priest from 1973 to 2013 in Valgrisenche—benediction.*



THE CHAPEL, TIRELESS SENTINEL

Built in 1906-1907, at the initiative of the Bovard brothers, the chapel watches over Revers, a village at the entrance to the sacred territory. But it's not that simple. Behind its very special façade, marked by a large door with a Palladian window, is the altarpiece Virgin of the Rosary with Saint Dominic and Saint Catherine created by Giovanni Stornone d'Ivrée. This is a copy of the very famous and venerated Shrine of the Virgin of the Rosary of Pompei in Naples.

OBJECT

ANECDOTE

STOP ME IF YOU CAN

The limit between the towns of Arvier and Valgrisenche were redrawn in 1895 and went from the Pointe Dora Vidi on the Rutor up to Revers and then from the village back up to Becca di Tos. That's fine, but what happens when the path runs into a house? The answer is given by a home-owner in Revers: "Every day that God makes, I eat at Valgrisenche and sleep in Arvier."

REVERS CHAPEL
LOC. REVERS

GPS

LONG. 7.977523°
LAT. 45.662394°

1534 M

REVERS CROSS
LOC. REVERS

GPS

LONG. 7.975837°
LAT. 45.662436°

1528 M



ACCESS

PARISH CHURCH

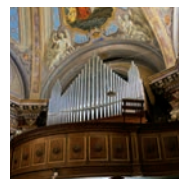
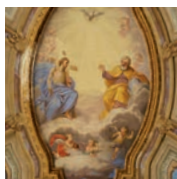
History in two steps.



NOT ONE, BUT DOZENS OF DIVINE CHILDREN

Up to the middle of the 20th century, women would go to mass carrying their newborns in wooden cradles. At church, they would place the cradles next to them, along the nave, and when the babies would babble or cry, they would rock the cradle with their feet to avoid missing any of the Divine Word.

ANECDOTE

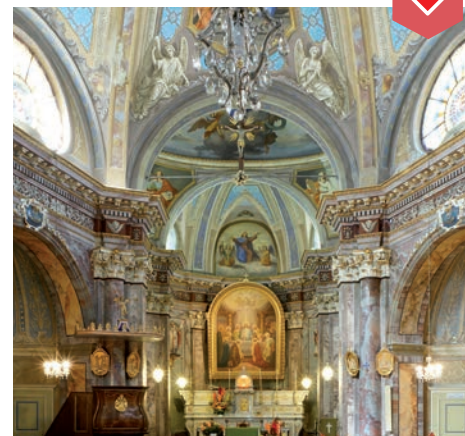


TIME IS A WORK OF ART

The painters Stornone of Ivree in 1874, Ernesto Lancia between 1909 and 1932, Carlo Morgari in 1953: Each one contributed to the rich decorations inside the parish church. The first on the church's vaulted ceilings, with painting of "The Four Doctors of the Church" and "The Assumption of Mary"; the second contributed to the walls, with among other remarkable works of art, "Jesus' Appearance to the Disciples"; the third contributed to the baptismary chapel, with paintings that we invite you to discover.

OBJECT

TOP
PICK



PARISH CHURCH: SIX CENTURIES OF HISTORY.

"From the outside, the contrast between the austere rocks on my bell tower and my plaster façades with big windows makes it look like I have a split personality. The truth is, my history is divided into two parts, two times: five centuries separate the construction of the church and that of the bell tower. It's also that my construction was a group effort: the master mason Michel Carestia from Valsesia participated in my extension in 1666; Giuseppe Lancia, a Valsesian entrepreneur, rebuilt me in 1875; and Father Edouard Bérard (1894-1949), priest in Valgrisenche, took care of my decorations. On the inside, you'll be able to contemplate my personal history and the artistic and spiritual path of my builders. In the Museum of Sacred Art, it is the wooden statue of the Madonna and Child from the 14th century that retraces my history, from my foundation in 1392 to my consecration in 1417.

VALGRISENCHÉ PARISH
CHURCH
LOC. CHEF-LIEU

GPS

LONG. 7.064138°
LAT. 45.636336°

1664 M



ACCESS

SAINT GRATUS CHAPEL

Following the footsteps of the patron saint.



FOLLOWING PATRON SAINT GRATUS' FOOTSTEPS

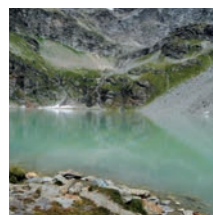
Every year, on the morning of 5 August, I see them leave in a procession to commemorate recovering my relics from the Aoste Valley. They bring them from the Saint Gratus Parish Church up to the Saint Gratus Lake—named as such to recall the passage of my relics. They make two stops to celebrate mass: one in a pasture on the Grand Alpe and the other in front of the Saint Gratus Lake Chapel, built where my relics stopped to rest. Then, they come back down through the pastures on the Alpe Vieille, pass in front of the Plaré de l'Ar oratory where my statue is. Psalms and liturgical songs invoke the Virgin Mary and the Saints along the way.

Why all this? It is for me to protect them from avalanches and to provide fruitful harvests. Honestly, if it were enough to follow in my footsteps to be safe from everything, there would be more people! But, if they didn't do it, God only knows what would happen..."

THE SAINT GRATUS LAKE CHAPEL: A STOP EVERYONE MAKES

Made in stone with a copper roof and renovated in 1989, the Saint Gratus Lake Chapel held a statue of the patron saint, which is now exhibited in the parish museum, dressed in bishop's clothing with the cross and John the Baptist's head.

OBJECT



SAINT GRATUS ROCK: NATURAL MARKER ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH

There are places of worship and there are places of legend, and there are places that combine the two. Saint Gratus Rock is one of them. Legend says that one the patron saint's day in 1683, a group of kids decided to skip mass and go dancing in a barn not far from the church. That is when torrential rains came down on the village, releasing an enormous rock from Aouille Mountain. Landing on the barn, the rock is said to have killed all the dancers. In the mountain, straying off the path of faith is highly discouraged!

ANECDOTE



SAINT GRATUS LAKE
CHAPEL
LOC. SAINT GRATUS
LAKE

GPS

LONG. 7,889233°
LAT. 45,615046°



PLARÉ DE L'AR
ORATORY
LOC. BOTZAT

GPS

LONG. 7,846266°
LAT. 45,61282°



SAINT GRATUS
ROCK
LOC. CHEF-LIEU

GPS

LONG. 7,864244°
LAT. 45,630657°



VALGRISENCE CEMETERY

Posthumous homage.

TOP
PICK



POETRY AT THE FOOT OF THE BELL TOWER

"We Valgrisiens have a reputation of speaking with our hands. It originates in our cross-border location and merchant traditions that required us to overcome language barriers. But as far as our feet have taken us, there is one language that we have never forgotten: The language of the heart. The tombstones and ceramic plates with epitaphs in prose are witness.

Written in French, by Fathers Edouard-Clément Bérard (1894-1949) and Victorien Lettry (1949-1970), they all speak of faith and hope. Among the oldest, there is the epitaph for two spouses who passed one year apart. It tells of the love the unites them both on earth and in Heaven. Among the most lyrical, Victorien Lettry wrote to his mother about her life and how much he loved her. Among the most heart-wrenching, those writing about the whooping cough epidemic in 1911 that killed 15 children.

Which one will you relate to the most? Read them all and you will know."



OUR DEAD POINT TO THE NORTH

Initially placed opposite the church, the size of the cemetery was reduced in 1666 because of the new extension. Construction of the new church reduced the space even further and Giuseppe Lancia was asked to build a new, bigger cemetery to the north, with a mortuary chapel blessed on 23 November 1876. The monument that was ordered by Edouard Bérard in 1906 is nowhere to be found! It was taken down by an avalanche in 1970. That's how the location of the cross that was on top of it is now shown on page 39 of this booklet. ”



THOUGHTS ARE WITH EVERYONE

Cultivated daily, a feeling of belonging in the community overcomes all types of separation, just like this text for people without tombstones: "Prayers, souvenirs, flowers of faith, and friendliness, / walk next to the tombstones, awaken to kindness / for all those gone, in the mass grave / for the child, pastor, and forgotten penniless / for parents, friends, orphans, warriors / for the rich man that death took on his wedding night."

ANECDOTE

GPS

VALGRISENCE CEMETERY LONG. 7.964063"
LOC. CHEF-LIEU LAT. 45.639447"

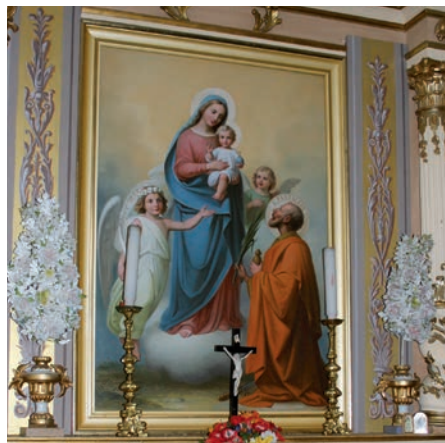
M
1664 M



ACCESS

LA CARRÀ CHAPEL PLONTAZ SANCTUARY

An enchantment.



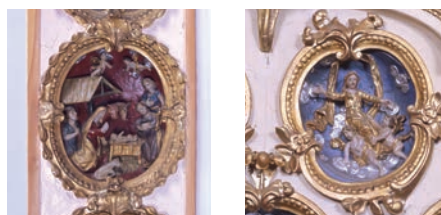
LA CARRÀ CHAPEL: PERPETUAL BEAUTY

On discovering the view of the Rutor Glacier and the surrounding mountains, we might say that I'm lucky to be here to take advantage of the spectacle nature has to offer. But, faced with such splendour, attracting the parishioners' attention isn't an easy task.

Founded in 1669 by the villagers from Plontaz, I did everything I could to maintain my beauty, with a



Legend says that Valgrisenche was discovered by villagers from Sainte Foy in the Tignes Valley who were following Blond, the prettiest cow in their herd. Blond would always try to escape to pastures on the other side of the mountain, in the luxurious prairies of our valley. Do you know the expression "The grass is always greener on the other side"? Well, when you see the splendid pastures near Plontaz, you will think the expression originated here.



series of aesthetic renovations in 1773, 1905, and 1993.

My altarpiece is a colourful creation by Giovanni Stornone representing the Madonna and Child with Saint Pantaleon. Without my altar of the Rosary—a work created by a Valsesian artist in the 18th century—brought here in 1912 and illuminating my interior, I don't think I could ever have been able to win their loyalty. Also colourful, but conspicuous in their absence, a part of me is exposed in the parish museum: my sculpted medallions representing the 15 Mysteries of the Rosary.

FATHER ADOLFO BOIS REMEMBERS:

"When I was young, my mother brought me to the chapel to pray and thank Our Lady of Graces." On the walls you can see the numerous ex voto illustrating the small requests for grace placed in this place of devotion and pilgrimage by the villagers. It is a reflection of the omnipresence of the Virgin and the saints in the daily lives of Valgrisians.

ANECDOTE

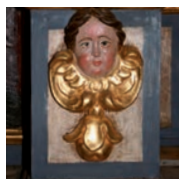
LA CARRÀ CHAPEL
LOC. LA CARRÀ DE
PLONTAZ

GPS
LONG. 7.062553°
LAT. 45.695821°

M
2944 M

ACCESS

CHAPEL IN PLANTÉ

Trust the mountaineers.

A CHAPEL OF MIRACLES

Twice, in 1843 and 1918, the chapel in Planté was spared from avalanches while the homes built on each side of it were taken away. The dual protection of Saint Agatha—regularly invoked to protect from natural catastrophe—and Saint Bernard—patron saint of mountain dwellers and Alpinists—have probably greatly contributed. You will find them in place on the altarpiece representing the Madonna and Child, with Saints Anthony, John the Evangelist, Stephen, Charles Borromeo, and two others whose names are unknown. Another hypothesis: the beautiful baroque altar, with the twisted columns and statue of the Eternal Father that is so flamboyant that it alone melted the snow.

TOP
PICK

"I was born in 1683, as stated on my roof beam, at the initiative of a group of inhabitants from the area and nearby villages of La Frassy, Cheserolles, Darbelley, and Chez Carral. These same people, once construction was finished in 1684, came together a second time in front of a notary public to provide enough revenue—according to their resources and after many sacrifices—for my upkeep. Two centuries later, in 1867, Canon Boson took care of my renovation and decoration, and if I remember well, it was then that my vaulted ceiling welcomed the Sacred Hearts and the flower medallion with the 'The loving Celestial Pelican that gives her own life to feed her little ones.' Like a homage to the faithful and their big hearts to whom I owe my being here today."

PLANTÉ CHAPEL
LOC. PLANTÉ

GPS

LONG. 7.069458°
LAT. 45.640317°

1648 M



ACCESS

CHAPEL IN CERÉ

Divine mission.



THE CHAPEL IN CERÉ. SACRED FIRE

To understand where I come from, you have to go back four centuries, when men and women only had God and the saints to help them fight the many fires that occurred, leaving them lost and homeless. That's what Catherine Moret did when her house was consumed in flames: "My children! Only God and Saint Barbara can put this fire out. Make God a promise that if He gives you the strength to survive this fire, you will build a chapel in honour of Him." Her son, François, responded: "Yes mother, with God's help, we will." He poured a little water and the fire withdrew without causing any damage. François Moret later became a priest and when appointed to the church in Valgrisenche, he held to his promise. So here I am, telling you the original circumstances of my birth in the year of grace, 1639.



A HIDDEN TREASURE BETWEEN VILLAGE HOMES

What the chapel forgot to tell you is that after the Moret family's ex-voto in 1627, two years of war and then an epidemic of plague caused the deaths of over 300 people—including the priest—which pushed back construction to 12 years later. Of modest size originally, Emmanuel Grat Moret—priest and nephew of François the founder—added the choir between 1681 and 1683. It was blessed on 26 July 1683 with relics of saints and the Virgin Mary brought from Rome in a reliquary that is exhibited at the parish museum. In 1729, construction of the vaulted ceiling and the creation of two windows gave it new's look. Then in 1866, the people from Céré, La Bethaz, La Frassy, and Prariond came together on a volunteer basis and restored the chapel. In 1896-1897 the bell tower was rebuilt and new windows were opened. For the Itineras project, the chapel underwent renovation work in 2017.



CERÉ CHAPEL
LOC. CERÉ

GPS

LONG. 7.069429°
LAT. 45.647637°

M
1604 M



ACCESS



THE MADONNA AND CHILD WITH SAINT ANNE

Major painting in the chapel.

A SCULPTOR AND A PAINTER,
FROM THE PIEDMONT TO CERÉ

Created in 1645, I am made of painted and golden wood. My frame is decorated with caryatid angels and a fractured pediment. I am so big, you cannot miss me...What am I?

I am the impressive altar created by the Piedmont sculptor Jean Domeyne Cavagnet de Viverone who worked for several Valdostain churches at the time, like those in Perloz, Lillianes, and Champorcher.

Philibert Grillon provided the finances to build me. The same Philibert Grillon who, after donating the land where my chapel is built, financed a small bell and my impressive painting representing the Madonna and Child with Saint Anne, surrounded by several saints. You can see Saints Barbara, Joachim, Francis of Assisi, François Xavier, Martin, Bernard, Catherine, and Agatha. They are all represented on my altarpiece in a style that resembles that of Vincenzo Costantino—a painter from Biellais in the Piedmont region, who was very active in the Aoste Valley in the second half of the 17th century and named Principal Painter by Savoy's Duke Charles-Emmanuel I.



CHÂTELET CHAPEL

The spirit of chapels.



A HERITAGE TO REMEMBER

Just like all newborns, I inherited from my ancestors. The elements on my altar and altarpiece belonged to the Fornet Chapel—my oldest ancestor from 1417—and called the Assumption of the Virgin and the Saint Jucundus. It was restored in the 17th century—after the plague and to thank the Virgin Mary for her protection—and was

made even bigger in the 18th century. My wooden statues of Saints Ours and Léger come from the Beauregard Chapel—erected in 1891—and the Usellières Chapel, founded in 1638 and rebuilt in 1870. My paintings come from the parish church. The St Leonard de Surier Chapel—born of the will of one villager in 1627 and extended in 1884—gave me its bell. It's so much like her, she just can't keep quiet.



TOP
PICK

CHÂTELET CHAPEL. SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Like many chapels, my construction here is linked to an event that left a mark. For me, it's not a natural catastrophe, but a very human decision: one that meant submerging four chapels and several hamlets under the waters to build a new dam. In memory of those submerged chapels I was built with four bells on my bell tower in 1952. Their weight on my shoulders reminds me every day of the responsibilities incumbent upon me. For a time, I thought the families that lost everything would see me as responsible. But it was just the opposite. I was welcomed with renewed fervour in 1959 and have since remained a place of great devotion.



CHÂTELET CHAPEL
LOC. LE CHÂTELET

GPS
LONG. 7.031857°
LAT. 45.688945°

1786 M



ACCESS

CHAPEL IN PRARIOND

Patron saints.

TOP
PICK



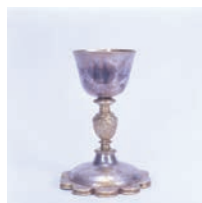
SPECIFIC MARKS

The Prariond Chapel was founded on 28 July 1640. Inside, in addition to the famous painting described here, you can also admire the sculpted and painted wooden altar from the parish church where it was dedicated to Saint Joseph. You can also see the beautiful larch-wood door that dates back to the chapel's restoration in 1895-96 with former Bishop Joseph-Auguste Duc's wardrobe.



In the parish museum, you will find a beautiful silver chalice dating back to the 17th century that has a lobed foot with an engraving "Germain Moullinet supplied four coins for this chalice, the Prariond Chapel supplied the rest". An inscription that sets Germain Moullinet in the front row of donor-founders.

ANECDOTE



THE PRARIOND CHAPEL. TO UNDERSTAND THE FOUNDERS, TALK TO THE SAINTS

"It is tradition. Every chapel here has a patron saint: the Virgin Mary or other saints. Mine is Saint Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre and protector of children. While wondering about why I have this patron saint, I had what you may call a revelation in front of a painting, dating back to the time of my founding. We can see a large Saint Germanus surrounded by the much smaller Saint John the Evangelist, the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, and Peter the Apostle. I didn't know them personally, but I know their names very well. They were my founders! Germain de feu Pierre Moullinet, Germain de Martin Louyoz, Michel de feu Grat Chantellex, Pierre Bethaz, Gabriel and Jean de feu Germain Louyoz—all inhabitants of the villages of Prariond, La Bethaz, and Preylian. They donated to the church but do you think they also dabbled in self-righteousness? "

PRARIOND CHAPEL
LOC. PRARIOND

GPS

LONG. 7.872136°
LAT. 45.650422°

1588 M



ACCESS

CHAPEL IN MONDANGES

Neo-Gothic at work.



THE FAITHFUL ARE ACTIVE

Founded in 1648, the chapel—dedicated to Saints Joseph, Hilary, and Barbara—was in dire need of restoration after two centuries. The donation by Sulpice Joseph Frassy—a veteran of the Napoleon Army—was not enough to finance the work. Louis-Joseph Aymonod—Valgrisenche priest from 1877 to 1893—started fund-raising to find the necessary money. That's how, in 1890, it was entirely rebuilt.



TOP
PICK

THE CHAPEL IN MONDANGES.
AND THERE WAS LIGHT

"Look at me. I really don't have anything against baroque style, but neo-Gothics are really something else. Personally, I wouldn't change my vertical and pure lines for anything. I love my arched windows and my beauty illuminated from the inside. My decoration and furniture, I wanted to be in the same spirit. That's why I asked Giovanni Comoletti, a famous Valsesian sculptor, expert in sacred statues, and well-known for his neo-Gothic furniture and accessories. There's not doubt: A day will come where humans will leave baroque aside and move to a style that is much more pure. And that day, they will promise loyalty to me."

TOUCHING THE STARS

"Under clear, starry skies, the luminary nave ends with the neo-Gothic altar that held statues of the chapel's Patron Saints Joseph, Barbara, and Francis of Assisi. Created by Giovanni Comoletti in 1891, they are now located in the parish's Museum of Sacred Art. The chapel preserved some old furniture: an altarpiece with the Holy Family with the Eternal Father and the dove of the Holy Spirit from 1649 that was unfortunately stolen in 1982. The museum still holds a very pretty "Pietà" sculpted out of wood.

OBJECT



4E



MONDANGES CHAPEL
LOC. MONDANGES

GPS
LONG. 7,062265°
LAT. 45,626741°

1652 M



ACCESS

CHAPEL IN BONNE

An example of sacred Alpine art.



“ A CHAPEL WITH MANY FOLLOWERS ”

On 7 June 1688, seven inhabitants founded the Bonne village chapel. It was renovated in 1875 and again in 1899. In 1906 the bell tower was enlarged. Four years later, masonry vaulted ceilings replaced the wood ceiling. The roof was redone in 1978, and the chapel was renovated again in 1997-99. You can see that in Valgrisenche, religious edifices are followed closely. ”



TOP
PICK



BONNE CHAPEL . AN EXAMPLE OF SACRED ALPINE ART

Small and modest, made of stone with baroque tones, nestled on the slope overlooking an extraordinary panorama, founded by a group of inhabitants and dedicated to Saint Denis—Patron Saint of France—I am the only representative of the singularity and expanse of Alpine sacred art.

Both rural and inter cultural, rooted in daily life and touching the Divine, I am supported by people and protected by saints. I am not a survivor nor am I miraculous. I am just incredibly authentic.

AMONG SOME OF THE MOST REMARKABLE PIECES:

the beautiful baroque altar and altarpiece in the Bonne Chapel showing the Madonna and Child on top and, in the centre, Saint Denis—bishop and patron saint of the chapel—with an angel holding the martyr's palm. Look closely! Did you notice? Saint Denis has a head! Legend has it that the original painting, showing Saint Denis decapitated with blood flowing out of his neck, wasn't very popular with Valgrisiensians.

ANECDOTE



BONNE CHAPEL
LOC. BONNE

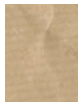
GPS

LONG. 7.857767°
LAT. 45.621459°

1812 M



ACCESS



THE VIRGIN MARY IN THE CHEF-LIEU/ THE VIRGIN MARY ON THE RUTOR

Devotion to Mary.

THE VIRGIN MARY IN THE CHEF-LIEU AS BRILLIANT AS GOLD

A copy of the Madonnina du Duomo in Milan, the golden Virgin Mary located in the chef-lieu was placed on a high column that is seated on Saint Gratus Rock—found on page 29—for the Marian year 1955. Dominating the square, she is witness to the fervour and propagation of Marian devotion in the valley.

VIRGIN MARY ON THE RUTOR. CLOSER TO HEAVEN

Created by the sculptor Egisto Caldana di Vicenza, the Virgin Mary on the Rutor is 1.40 m tall and weighs 170 kg. It was placed atop the mountain in 1958, transported by sledge by Alpine soldiers that were willing to risk their lives. Severely damaged by lightening in 2002, the sculpture was brought back down to the valley and renovated before it was sent back up to its original location on 12 July 2003. Two long Alpine processions with Alpinists, church followers, and Father Angelo Pellissier—the Priest of Valgrisenche—who was climbing the Rutor mountain for the 52nd time.

OBJECTS



DEVOTION TO THE VIRGIN MARY

"At the entrance to the chef-lieu or atop Rutor Mountain, from Revers Chapel to the chapel in Châtelet, at the Dar Oratory and the parish museum, on a rock at Chez Carral or at Plan Vaudet, I am everywhere your steps take you, to protect you even more. Sculpted in wood or carved of stone, painted on a canvas or engraved on a plate, wearing white or coated in gold, I am the Virgin Mary, immaculate like the snow that you love so much. The only difference is that you ask me for protection when snow is threatening or over-abundant. Just like the people from Fomet in 1758 who founded a mass celebration at Notre-Dame des Neiges.



THE VIRGIN MARY, PROTECTOR DURING THE WAR

Near the Grand-Alpe pastures stands a chapel that is carved out of rock and holds a statue of the Virgin Mary. The chapel is known as the Mariette Viérin Oratory, built as a votive offering in 1950 to thank Mary for protecting her family—namely her partisan son and brother—during WWII. Above the oratory, there is a cross that was brought by Father Lettry from the cemetery monument destroyed by an avalanche in 1970.

ANECDOTE



THE VIRGIN MARY AT THE CHEF-LIEU LOC. CHEF-LIEU	GPS LONG. 7.064244° LAT. 45.630657°	M 1664 M	 ACCESS		THE VIRGIN MARY AT THE RUTOR RUTOR PEAK	GPS LONG. 7.014971° LAT. 45.630787°	M 3486 M	 ALPINIST ACCESS	GRAND'ALPE ORATORY LOC. GRAND ALPE	GPS LONG. 7.02292° LAT. 45.591031°	M 1996 M	 ACCESS	
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MOUNTAIN CROSSES

Multiple missions.

TOP
PICK



THE CROSS ON THE FOUR DENTS ECHOING YOUR MEMORIES

"I am 4.5 metres tall, and I face the Valgrisenche panorama, attracting people from all over to climb the four Dent peaks. I've only been here since 2000, a symbolic date with many projections, previsions, and predictions.

Planted here in memory of Saint John Paul II on 19 July 1989, I take advantage of my location to echo all the other crosses in the valley. I carry their message far, and enlighten you on the importance of preserving sacred artefacts on your land. Most often situated in places of remembrance, you also find us along difficult and dangerous mountain trails that are reminiscent of the Stations of the Cross."

THE COL DU MONT CROSS AT A CROSSROADS

If you go to the other side of Valgrisenche, a large, square cross placed on an elevated base marks one of the most important and tragically famous passes: the Col du Mont. This pass was frequently used by merchants, travelling artists, immigrants, and smugglers.

For several centuries, the pass was home to several tragic events, like the death of 33 people working for the metal-working company Cogne who were buried in an avalanche while they were bringing food to the army in January 1945.

4E



FROM THE PROTECTIVE CROSS TO THE MISSION CROSS

Many crosses were placed in Valgrisenche. And you will see more of them, isolated on rocks like at Ceré or La Torna de Mondanges, along the road like in Bonne, or even close to torrents like the one built in 1907 by the people from Gerbelle, near the Temeley torrent to fend off landslides.

Others have disappeared, but they remain in the locals' memories as well as on the photos taken at the time. This is the case for the wooden mission cross, with objects from The Passion, erected close to the Fornet Chapel. Gino remembers the day it was installed: "It was in November 1919 that they installed the Fornet mission cross. We always placed them in fall, when people were free from their farming work. That day, the weather was bad and it was snowing. As we were walking, the Capuchin priest made the sign of the Cross in the air and the weather miraculously improved."

ANECDOTE

5F



8A



CROSS ON THE FOUR
DENTS
FOUR DENTS PEAK

GPS

LONG. 7.076068°
LAT. 45.616217°

COL DU MONT
CROSS
COL DU MONT

GPS

LONG. 6.981788°
LAT. 45.601433°

2630 M

ACCESS

LA TORNA MISSION
CROSS
LOC. MONDANGES

GPS

LONG. 7.062763°
LAT. 45.628401°

2373 M

ACCESS



ORATORIES

A protective feel.

WAR ORATORIES

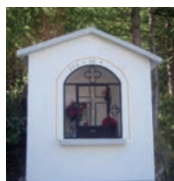
Survival of the faithful

Even though it isn't an avalanche oratory, the Gerbelle Oratory was also moved. Built by Pierre Gerbelle in memory of his two sons, François and Charles, killed in combat during WWI, it was first located right outside the family's garden, just below its current location on the other side of the bridge.

Witnessing a happy ending, the Plan Tsan Oratory dates back to 1922. It was built by Evance-Joseph Béthaz, who promised to build an oratory if he survived the war.

OBJECT

OBJECT



TOP
PICK



AN AVALANCHE OF ORATORIES

Certain people are sure they have seen us elsewhere. Others think they see us everywhere. And do you know what? They are all right. We are avalanche oratories and we are sometimes all over the landscape, and we are used to being moved. Because land moves, too! But wherever we meet, we will always have something to share. Just like the Revers Oratory, erected in 1845. This one will talk about the little girl, saved after spending hours in the snow after an avalanche. La Bethaz will tell you the sad story of Françoise Frassy, swept away by an avalanche as she was walking to mass on 1 January 1941.

Plan di Motte, one of our most recent additions, pays homage to the mayor of Valgrisenche, Louis Bethaz, who was killed in an avalanche. The Mondanges Oratory is a spiritual anti-avalanche that was moved just a few meters from its original position but continues to protect you. The exception that proves the rule is the Dar Oratory located behind a large rock, which has never moved. But the road that passed in front of it was moved to pass under a new avalanche protection gallery!



PLAN TSAN
ORATORY
(LA FRASSY)
LOC.
LA FRASSY

GPS

LONG. 7.871272°
LAT. 45.643909°

M
1671 M



GERBELLE
ORATORY
LOC.
GERBELLE

GPS

LONG. 7.865280°
LAT. 45.634174°

M
1624 M



DAR
ORATORY
LOC.
DARBELLEY

GPS

LONG. 7.865576°
LAT. 45.638267°

M
1620 M



LOUIS
BÉTHAZ
ORATORY
LOC.
CÉRÉ

GPS

LONG. 7.868220°
LAT. 45.645906°

M
1694 M



ACCESS

PRECIOUS OBJECTS

A sacred collection.

SILVER CRUETS AND TRAYS

SECRETS SERVED ON A PLATTER

"In the 18th century, tradition was that merchants from Saint-Gervais and Saint-Nicolas who made a fortune on the other side of the Rhine River would donate sumptuous objects to their home parishes. That's how, on 3 March 1757, we were sent here to serve wine at mass. What our donors—Jean-François and Marie-Thérèse Roux, bourgeois merchants from Munich—don't know was that our stony, finely chiselled silver that they loved so much was classified as a Historical Monument in the category of objects."

SACRED VASES.

PIONEERING THE FRENCH TOUCH

"In most Aosta Valley's churches, sacred silversmithery was bought from silversmiths from Turin or in famous silversmith foundries in Germany. However, almost all of the objects in Valgrisenche exhibited within my walls in the Sacred Art Museum come from France. One of the church's chalices bought in 1674 was created by the Parisian silversmith Lucas Guillaume. You can see the guarantee punch marking that silversmiths working for the Parisian brand placed on the objects. The ciborium made in 1684 and the monstrance with the oval base—and typically baroque style with angels, fruits, garlands, and Acanthus leaves—are other examples of the silversmithery in the church. They are testimonies to the numerous exchanges that took place between France and Italy through the Alpine passes."



CONCLUSION,

You will have understood, in reading this booklet and listening to the stories our heritage has to say, that sacred art is not dead, quite the contrary!

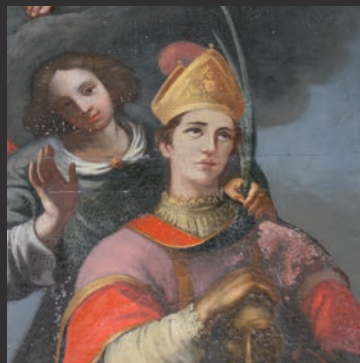
And because there are artists—passionate mountaineers with a love of history and loyalty to their land—on both sides of the Saint-Gervais and Valgrisenche Valleys that are willing and able to reinvent it, sacred art will always be spoken about in the present.

And so it is up to you, with this booklet in hand, to spread the word over the mountains and through the hills.



PATRON SAINTS

These saints are people who—through merit, virtue, or miracles accomplished during their life—are recognised after their death and deserve public and universal veneration by the Catholic Church. The first saints are martyrs that were tortured and killed because they refused to renounce their faith. Later on, men and women leading virtuous lives that act as models to Christians can be proclaimed saints. The life of saints are filled with both historic fact and prosaic legend that have been rewritten and retold throughout the centuries.



SAINT AGATHA

St. Agatha, also known as Agatha of Sicily, was born in Sicily to a rich and noble family. Martyred, she was subject to the harshest of tortures and her breasts were cut off. She is commonly featured in religious art with shears, tongs, or breasts on a plate. She is invoked against natural catastrophes (earthquakes, landslides, etc.) and fire.

SAINT ANNE

Mother of the Virgin Mary, Anne is represented with a red dress, symbolising love, and a green coat, symbolising immortality. She is the patron saint of pregnant women to ensure a happy birth.

SAINT BARBARA

According to legend, Saint Barbara's father—a rich pagan—shielded her from the world by locking her up in a high tower. She secretly became a Christian, refused to renounce her faith, and was imprisoned. She was tortured and her father killed her with his sword, but he was struck by lightning immediately after. Represented with a tower at her feet, she is invoked against fire, lightening, and sudden death.

SAINT BERNARD

Saint Bernard is one of the major Alpine saints. Archdeacon of Aoste in the 11th century, he traditionally considered the founder of the hospices in the Grand and Petit Saint Bernard passes. He is invoked to heal the sick and against demonic possession, but also to calm storms and protect herds.

SAINT DENIS

Patron Saint of France, he was a bishop and was martyred in Paris. According to legend, when he was decapitated, he miraculously stood to his feet, took his head, and walked to Montmartre where he is buried.

SAINT STEPHEN

Erudite and wise, Stephen was accused of blasphemy against Moses and the Temple. He was stoned. Saint Stephen is considered to be the first martyr of the Church. He is always represented wearing his deacon's dalmatic tunic. He sometimes carries a palm, the symbol of martyrs, or a book.

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

Saint Francis de Sales is the most important saint from Savoie. He is known for his gentle approach to the religious divisions in his land resulting from the Protestant Reformation. Born in Savoie in 1567 to a noble family, Francis renounced to his titles to dedicate his life to the Church. He became bishop of Geneva, residing in Annecy. He promoted piety daily, and his charities are still a model in today's society. He died in 1622 and was proclaimed saint by the Church in 1665.

SAINT GERMANUS

In 418, Germanus was appointed bishop of Auxerre. Once he accepted the appointment, he rid himself of all his property and distributed it to the poor. During his episcopate, he tirelessly worked against heresy. He died in Ravenne in 448, and his body was brought back to Auxerre where he was buried. He is the protector of children, invoked against childhood sicknesses.

SAINT GERVASIUS AND SAINT PROTASIIUS

Gervasius and Protasius were twin brothers living during the 1st century, during the reign of Emperor Nero. Refusing to sacrifice to Roman gods, they were tortured and killed. In Saint-Gervais, they are assimilated with military saints.

SAINT GRATUS

Saint Gratus was bishop of Aoste in the 5th century. He is represented in bishop attire holding John the Baptist's head. He is invoked to protect against storms and to protect harvests.

SAINT GUARINUS

Originally from the Lorraine region of France, Saint Guarinus was a Benedictine monk. He founded the retreat in Saint-Jean d'Aulps and became bishop of Sion in Switzerland. He is well known all over the Savoie region and is invoked to protect herds and also protects against skin illnesses and fire.

SAINT HILARY

Hilary lived during the second half of the 4th century and was bishop of Poitiers. Through his writings, he fought heresy passionately. Represented wearing bishop's attire, he is invoked against snake bites and, with Saint Barbara, against fire and flooding.

SAINT JUCUNDUS

Jucundus was bishop of Aoste at the beginning of the 6th century and was Saint Gratus' successor. Together, they are the patron saints of the Aoste Diocese.

SAINT JOSEPH

With Baby Jesus in his arms holding a lily, symbol of chastity, Saint Joseph is the Virgin Mary's husband. He often holds a staff topped with flowers. This attribute refers to an Apocryphal Gospel according to which all of Mary's suitors were presented to the Temple holding a staff. Since only Joseph's staff blossomed, it was evident to all that it was God's will that Joseph become the Virgin Mary's husband.

SAINT LAWRENCE

Saint Lawrence is one of the most important martyred saints in the Catholic Church. After refusing to donate the Church's treasure to the Prefect of Rome, Lawrence was martyred and burned on a grill. In recollection of his martyrdom, Saint Lawrence is represented wearing the deacon's tunic with an iron grill in his hands.

SAINT LÉGER

Bishop of Autun, Saint Léger lived during the 7th century. Represented wearing bishop's attire, he also carries a sword and axe, symbols of his martyrdom. He is the patron saint of millers and is invoked against eye diseases.

SAINT LEONARD

Leonard lived in 6th century France. He is considered to be the patron saint of prisoners and the paralysed—meaning those who are "prisoners" of their own bodies. He is represented with broken chains and leg-irons.

SAINT NICHOLAS

Nicholas was a 4th century saint and was born in Asia Minor. He was bishop of Myra and was known for having fought Arianism, a school of thought that casts doubts on the Divinity of Jesus.

SAINT OURS

Ours is the most famous and beloved saint in the Aoste Valley. His name is connected to the Aoste Collegiate and the millenary fair that takes place in the city every year on 30-31 January. He is represented with the prior's staff—the sign of the Collegiate Prior—and with a bird placed on his shoulder. According to legend, to feed the peaceful creatures, he always left a part of the grapes in his vineyard.

SAINT PANTALEON

Pantaleon came from Nicomedia, Turkey. He was a doctor. Because he converted to Christianity, he was martyred. He is invoked against the plague and against all illness in general.

SAINT ROCH

Roch lived during the 14th century and was known to have cured the plague-stricken and survived himself from the sickness. He therefore protects against the plague. He is generally represented wearing his pilgrim attire with a dog at his side. Sometimes, he points to a wound on his thigh, recalling the bubonic plague.

SAINT SEBASTIAN

Sebastian grew up in Milan and was martyred by Emperor Diocletian. Roman soldiers riddled his body with arrows yet he miraculously survived. Arrows are the Christian symbol of the plague and represent God's wrath. He is therefore considered to be a patron saint against the plague.

TO TAKE IT ONE STEP FURTHER

*The Itineras mobile app
& Meet the Greeters*



Did you like learning more about our territory and our history?

Even though you've reached the last pages, the learning is not over yet!

Our mobile application invites you to continue the visit virtually. Greeters are waiting for you on site and overall, the entire Saint-Gervais and Valgrisenche population are waiting for you, to share unbound our rich sacred heritage. You can count on the same generosity they had to build and maintain their heritage throughout the centuries.

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