



# TRADITIONS

## PRESERVING FRIBOURG'S HERITAGE

In Fribourg Region, living traditions are still primarily rooted in the daily life of the locals. Their value for social cohesion is recognised and awareness of cultural heritage is part of the school curriculum. Customs are also appreciated by visitors from all over the world, who often witness scenes that seem to originate from a bygone age. An inventory of the living traditions of Fribourg Region was made under the auspices of the Musée gruérien in Bulle and divided into four main groups. For visitors, the emphasis is naturally on

the centuries-old transhumant culture with its colourful Alpine ascents and descents, varied crafts and workmanship. Catholic traditions with numerous processions and the ubiquitous choral singing, as well as historic anniversaries with patriotic and military connotations, are very popular. More information is available at [www.lebendige-traditionen.ch](http://www.lebendige-traditionen.ch) [www.fribourgregion.ch](http://www.fribourgregion.ch)

## FRIBOURG CULTURE, A LIVING TRADITION



**Poya painting:** In the Fribourg patois, the syllables “po-ya” signify the Alpine ascent in early summer, when the cows and goats are brought to higher Alpine pastures. However, it is now understood to mean the visual representation of this important and symbolic event. Poya paintings have adorned the farmhouse façades of Fribourg’s Pre-Alps since the early 19th century and this art is still practised. This typical Fribourg rural art can be admired in the villages and in particular, on the Poya Themed Trail.



**May singing:** On May 1<sup>st</sup> or the day before, the children of Fribourg go from house to house, singing to announce the spring. Many, for example the Gruyère youth associations, wear traditional costumes, namely the dzaquillon and bredzon on this occasion.

## MUSÉE GRUÉRIEN



The tour of the interactive Musée gruérien in Bulle is an emotional journey through time. Models, scenes, films and sound sequences, from the Hutbändeli collection, traditional costumes and old tools used by herdsmen, to the traditional farmhouse on a 1:1 scale, depict the varied cultural heritage. Tribute is, of course, paid to the most famous ambassador for the region, the cheese Le Gruyère AOP.  
[www.musee-gruerien.ch](http://www.musee-gruerien.ch)

## SHINGLE MAKER



Léon Doutaz has devoted himself completely to the traditional craft of shingle making. He is one of five men in the canton who learnt this trade from scratch. Besides strength and concentration, he needs an excellent feeling for the wood to ensure that his roof will be in a position to control the temperature of the chalet. He welcomes visitors interested in learning more about this traditional craft.

## BEARDED MEN



The “barbus” of La Gruyère preserve the transhumant traditions... Back in those days, shaving was difficult, but wearing a smart shirt under the bredzon during festivals was a matter of honour.

## TRADITIONAL ALPINE CHALET



Alpine chalets with wooden roofs are part of the preserved landscapes of Fribourg's Pre-Alps. Six traditional chalets are situated along the 12,4 km hiking trail from Vounetse to the village of Charmey. Good to know: the wooden roofs have a lifespan of approximately 40 years.

## ALPINE DESCENT, HIGHLIGHT OF THE YEAR

The Alpine descent is of the utmost importance for the Pre-Alpine Region. Humans and animals return to the valley after four months on the Alpine pastures. The festival pays homage to the herdsmen, who have assumed a lot of responsibility for the animals and for cheese production. Traditional Alpine descents are a feast for the eyes! The highlight is the procession of animals adorned with flowers and wearing their magnificent bells, accompanied by proud women in their dzaquillon and herdsmen in their bredzon.

There is also a sermon, market stalls, folk music and customs. It would be impossible to pack more traditions into one day: *Schwarzsee and Charmey on September 28th, Albeuve and Semsales on October 3rd 2020*. In Jaun, the Alpine descent of the sheep has been celebrated for over 400 years. There are over 400 animals which, upon arriving in the valley, are sorted (separated) and loaded... or sold. A large market ensures that no one has to go home without souvenirs. *September 23rd 2020*

## WOODEN SPOONS



Carved wooden spoons are one of the many traditions of La Gruyère. Herdsmen were making them at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to ladle double cream or Soupe de chalet in the Gruyère Chalet. As the craft evolved, elaborately carved spoons were passed down from generation to generation, like family silver. A high-quality souvenir! And even more so when it is associated with memories of delicious food in a Fribourg Alpine hut!

## EIGHT-COURSE MENU



Once a year, the entire canton of Fribourg celebrates a Bénichon, the harvest thanksgiving festival that also commemorates the homecoming at the end of the summer Alpine pasture season. The Bénichon Festival in Fribourg Region will take place in Châtel-St-Denis in 2020. This is when everyone comes home, when town and country, locals and visitors come together. Living traditions may be reinterpreted, but the eight-course Bénichon meal remains the same!

## ALPINE GAMES



Against a fantastic mountain backdrop and directly by the Schwarzeesee: the Wrestling and Alpine Games Festival is steeped in folklore and a major event for locals and fans.

## CHORAL SINGING



Abbé Joseph Bovet (1879 - 1951) left the canton of Fribourg an extensive musical heritage. He subsequently became the music director of St. Nicholas Cathedral and wrote around 2,000 religious and secular works. Whether they are sung in Fribourg patois, in French or German, his choral music and songs still bring people together today.

## ALPINE CHEESE OF FRIBOURG REGION

The production of cheese in Fribourg Region dates back to 1115. "Les caves d'affinage de la Tzintre" aging cellars in Charmey have existed since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Today 10,000 cheese wheels age until their taste is perfect. The 18<sup>th</sup> century was the heyday of the Gruyère cheese industry. The Gruyère d'alpage and Vacherin fribourgeois d'alpage produced by the Fribourg Cooperative of Alpine Cheese Producers were awarded the national quality certificate AOC (Appellation d'origine contrôlée) in 2001 and 2005 respectively.

In May 2013, the certificate was changed to AOP (Appellation d'origine protégée) throughout Europe. In 2017, 170 tonnes of Le Gruyère d'Alpage AOP and 79 tonnes of Vacherin Fribourgeois d'Alpage AOP were produced in the canton of Fribourg. René Kolly, former cheese maker and now the President of the Cooperative of Alpine Cheese Producers, personally guides interested visitors through the Tzintre cheese cellar in Charmey.

## SOLENNITÄT MURTEN



The festival that used to commemorate the victory against the Burgundian Duke Charles the Bold in the Battle of Murten in 1476 is now celebrated as a school festival. Uniformed cadets and girls dressed in white with flowers parade through the Old Town. The Solennität is an annual town festival with a church celebration, dancing, games and arbalest shooting.  
*Murten, Monday June 22nd 2020*

## MURTEN RUN



A messenger brought the good news of the victory in the Battle of Murten (1476) and a Linden branch to Fribourg. The first national commemorative marathon took place in 1933, with 14 participants. The 17-kilometre Murten run is now the oldest fun run in Fribourg Region. Around 13,000 runners are expected for the 87th event.  
*Sunday October 4th 2020*

## VULLY TART



**Community-building tradition:** After a night in front of the community oven, the associations in Vully sell the delicious, freshly-baked Vully tarts locally.

## PRAZ GRAPE HARVEST FESTIVAL



Even if Vully is regarded as the smallest of the Swiss wine-growing regions, winegrowers know how to celebrate their festival in style. The lovely wine-growing village of Praz is decorated with flowers and has many market stalls and open wine cellars. There are children's processions, marching carnival bands and fanfares, while wine and life are celebrated.  
*Friday, Saturday and Sunday, September 18th, 19th and 20th 2020*

## CARNIVAL OR MARDI GRAS – WILD AND FUN

The Bolz Carnival has been celebrated in Fribourg's lower town for 51 years. The tradition is upheld with colourful processions, costumes, marching carnival bands and razzmatazz in the bars and restaurants in the Old Town. The Carnival culminates in the spectacular burning of the giant Rababou. *Saturday, February 22nd to Tuesday, February 25th 2020*. The traditional Romont Carnival which takes place during the same weekend, is a unique experience. The crazy days and nights are also celebrated in Murten. The "Mardi Gras

Society" was established in 1950 to ensure that the Carnival adheres to the obligatory traditions. There are processions, marching carnival bands, fancy dress balls and ditties. Since 1965, it has been customary to put on trial the "Füdlbürger" (petty bourgeois), who represents the winter, accusing him of everything that has gone wrong over the past twelve months and then burn him. *Friday, March 7th to Monday, March 9th 2020*

## ST. NICHOLAS FRIBOURG



Students at the St. Michel College in Fribourg have been organising the St. Nicholas Festival since 1906. After a festive market, at 5.00 pm it's time for the procession of St. Nicholas on his donkey, accompanied by his helpers and torch bearers. In a critical speech interspersed with irony from the cathedral balcony, he looks back on the past year, before the festival ends with a solemn mass. *Saturday, December 5th 2020.* [www.st-nicolas.ch](http://www.st-nicolas.ch)

## CATHOLIC FESTIVALS



Female mourners dressed in black (in French "pleureuses") and cross-bearers march through the town of Romont, singing and praying in remembrance of Christ's suffering and crucifixion. *Good Friday, April 10th 2020.* In Fribourg, on Corpus Christi, a procession takes place after mass. It goes to lavishly adorned station altars where the congregation prays and sings. *Thursday, June 11th 2020*

## CHARACTER



The influence of professional artist Hubert Audriaz on the cultural life of Fribourg is like no other, particularly in the lower town, where the Bolz language is still spoken occasionally. [www.fribourgtourisme.ch](http://www.fribourgtourisme.ch)

## INDULGE IN GLASS ART



The Vitromusée, the Swiss Museum of Stained Glass and Glass Art in Romont Castle, pulls out all the stops of modern communication: new attractions such as Vitromatinées or Vitrobrunches, workshops for adults and children as well as special exhibitions and exciting events draw visitors. The free tour of the museum on the first Sunday of each month lasts a good hour.

## FISH BROTHERHOOD

In Estavayer-le-Lac, fishermen, journeymen, pastors and honourable brothers maintain their solidarity and brotherly love in the Honourable Fish Brotherhood Association, according to specific codes. This tradition originates from 1658. The Fish Brotherhood was revived in 1956 following the discovery of the flag. It depicts Saint Nicholas, patron saint of fishermen, and Laurentius, patron saint of the parish, side by side. The solemn ceremony to admit new brothers takes place on the Sunday on which the ships and fishing tackle are blessed on the place du port of Estavayer after mass. *Sunday, August 9th 2020*

## CONTACT

We would be pleased to assist you with research trips and your search for interesting media topics.

© FRIBOURG REGION  
 +41 (0)26 407 70 20  
[media@fribourgregion.ch](mailto:media@fribourgregion.ch)  
[www.fribourgregion.ch](http://www.fribourgregion.ch)  
[www.flickr.com/fribourgregion](https://www.flickr.com/fribourgregion)  
 #fribourgregion  