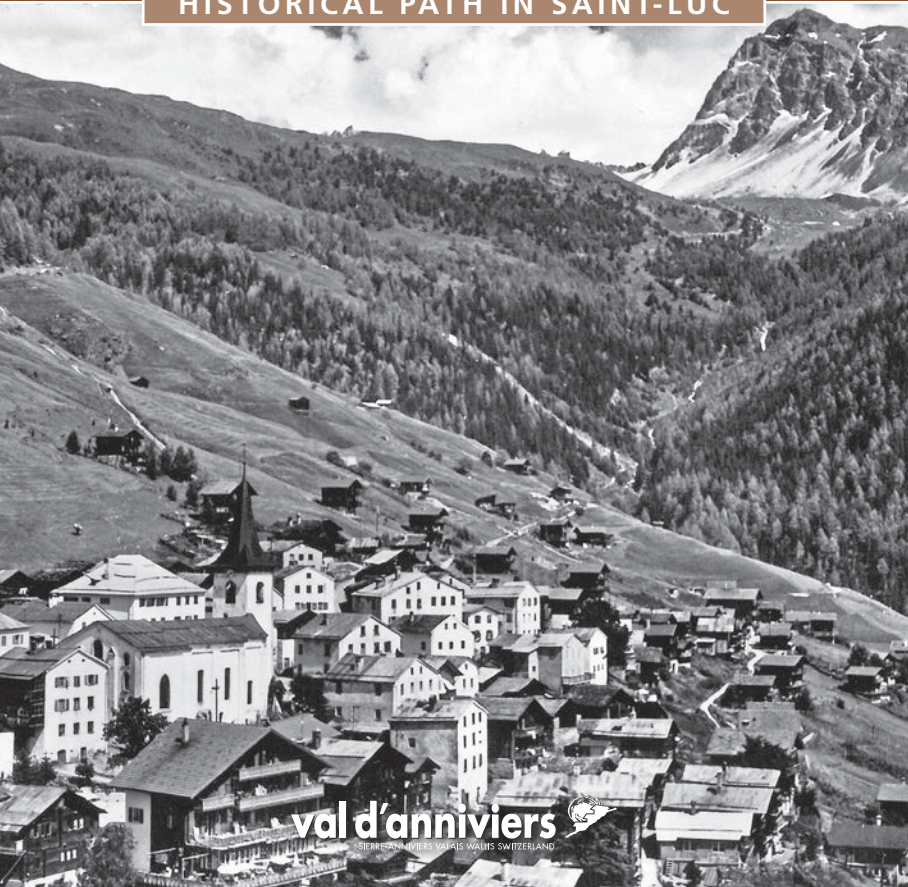


SAINT-LUC

HISTORICAL PATH IN SAINT-LUC



val d'anniviers

SIERRA ANNIVIERS VALAIS WAUTS SWITZERLAND

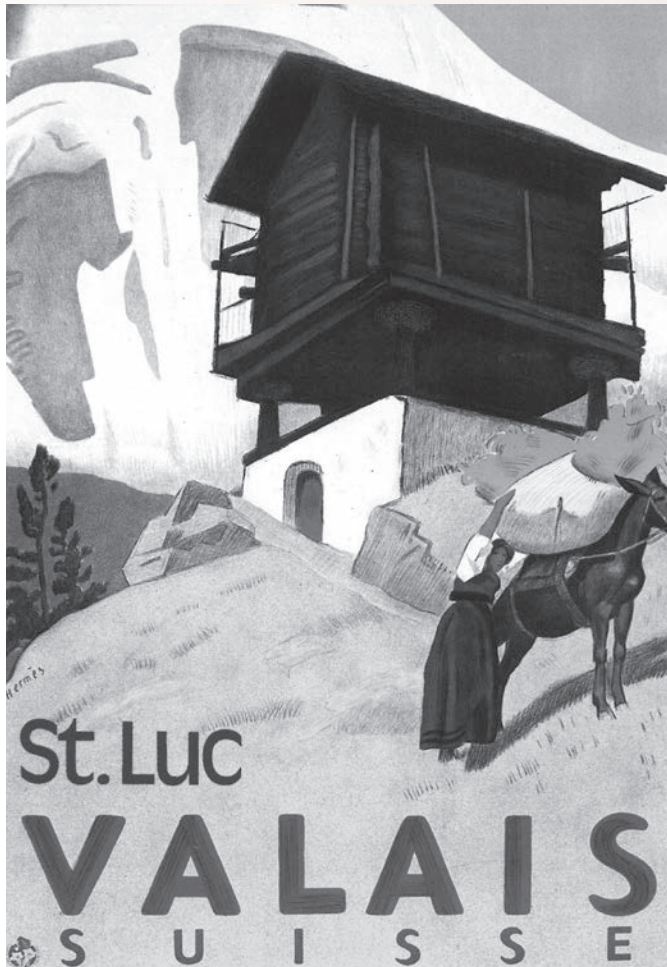


Map of Saint-Luc



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Introduction to Saint-Luc



Tsan-Plan Raccard, (barn) on the way to mills
Poster by Erich Hermes for the canton of Valais in 1938



Saint-Luc, with its central group of stone houses, before 1900

The village of Saint-Luc is located on a kind of natural balcony, in the sun, at 1650 m above sea level, on the right bank of the Navisence.

There are many facets to Saint-Luc, all worthy of interest. The traditional Saint-Luc, with its centre built in solid stone, the House of the Bourgeoisie, the bread oven, the mills, the community stable, the Roua pasture and its lighthouse located on the Rothorn of the Bella-Tola. There is also a Saint-Luc for tourists, with its services and infrastructure; the Saint-Luc of stars, with the observatory, astronomy evenings, the path of the planets, with its Stellarium and Halley's Comet.

In addition, Saint-Luc can even boast that it is located at the very centre of Valais. Indeed, on the road from the Prilet to the Hotel Weisshorn, at the level of Gilloux d'en-haut, the exact geographical centre of Valais, is marked by official measurements and the flag of the Canton.

The village now has about 300-year round residents and over 6,000 tourist beds.

From Luc to Saint-Luc



Saint-Luc in 1927

For centuries, the seasons, the *remuages* (movements) of the Anniviards brought them either to their homes in the valley of the Rhone or to their dwellings in the mountains. Columns of men and beasts, crushed under the weight of household paraphernalia, followed the winding trail, often suspended above the void.

Despite the modern road, the Val d'Anniviers has retained its characteristics of a "country within the country" and Saint-Luc is a typical case that justifies this saying.

Clinging to the side of the valley, the village has a very favourable exposure to the sun. The first rays of morning light bathe the village and in the evening, Saint-Luc escapes for a long time the shadows cast by the mountains, in which the rest of the valley is engulfed. This geographical characteristic is also the source of one of the interpretations of the meaning of the name of the village: the Latin



Harvesting wheat at Tsan-Plan, around 1930. Photo Charles Krebsler

word *lux* means "light." Formerly Saint-Luc was called "Luc" (1309, 1312, 1327). This spelling was not used continuously through the centuries; it was also called "Lus" and "Lucx" (1408). The "Saint" that precedes Luc is a recent addition that became common only after 1900. The fact that the village had its church built belatedly confirms the certainty of historians: the name of the Evangelist Luc is not the original patrimonial name of the place.

"The 'Saint' that precedes Luc is a recent addition that became common only after 1900."

The interpretation based on the sunshine of the place is actively disputed by some specialists. According to them, the name derives from the Celtic word "luc" (wood, grove). A Latin word could also be the source of the name Saint-Luc: *lucus* meaning sacred grove or forest.

1. View on the Mayens



Mayens on the left bank of the Navisence

> From the Tourist Office, go to the left corner of the car park created in December 1969. Enjoy the view of the other side of the valley.

On the left bank of the Navisence you can see the villages of Pinsec, Mayoux, Saint-Jean and Grimontz. And then observe the forest clearings dotted with small buildings, the *mayens* as they are called by mountain farmers in Valais, and finally above the last trees, grassland and pastures.

The *mayens* are the clearings scattered in the intermediary part of the mountain, between the residential zones and the pasture area. The black structures are stables and barns. When the clearing is large, there are residential buildings.

Livestock is brought to the *mayens* before they go further up to the pastures (Inalp). In the fall, the descent from the mountain pasture is called the *désalpe*. Their milk is, in principle, transformed into *tomme* and *serac*, rarely other cheese.



Barn-stable in *mayen* area

The word «*mayen*» refers to simple structures, sometimes shared by several co-owners, those often situated a fair distance from the villages.

The main room was furnished with a large table, two benches, a masonry stove, and a row of two-level beds. Each owner had his own bed, his chest and hooks to hang coats. The kitchen hearth was the center of community life. In the kitchen there was usually a rack, tripod, a casserole, a pot, a pan, and a boiler to curdle milk. In the cellar, there were no wine barrels, but a *breno* with several trays, inaccessible to mice, that were used to dry the *tommes* (cheese) on.

> Go up the main road about a hundred meters.

2. Access to Saint-Luc



The road from Vissoie to Saint-Luc in the early 1930's

This carriage road was inaugurated on September 25, 1932. Its extension to Chandolin was only commissioned in 1960.

The inhabitants of Anniviers, said to be "all year on the paths and roads," devoted much of their energy to building, maintaining and improving access to their villages and parcels of land.

- Step 1: The trails and mule tracks started from Chalais, passed through Briey, Vercorin, Fang, and Vissoie before going up to Saint-Luc.
- Step 2: On foot or by mule, from Sierre to Chippis, and on to Niouc through the forest paths along the cliffs to a place called "Pontis" and on to Fang, Vissoie and Saint-Luc.
- Step 3: The road from Sierre to Vissoie was made usable for wagons in 1863, due to the activity of numerous mines in the valley. Anniviards, from all the villages



Access to the village today

- Step 4: carried out the work themselves. The work began in May 1854, in the middle of the route, where now stands the Oratory of Notre-Dame-des-Pontis. The construction of the Moiry dam was at the origin of a significant improvement of the road network in Anniviers. As of 1950 the road was gradually expanded and paved. It allowed easy access between the towns: Sierre to Vissoie and from there to Saint-Luc, on to Chandolin; between Saint-Jean and Grimetz, and the lake of Moiry; between Ayer and Zinal; and finally, Pinsec, and Vercorin.

➤ The next location is opposite, above the road.

3. Grenier / Granary



Granary of l'Achelli today

At first glance, the granary is similar to a *raccard*, a three-storey construction, two in wood, the third being the space occupied by the *pilotis* below the main volume.

The *pilotis* (stilts) rest on a wooden frame, a masonry cellar, and very rarely, a stable.

The *grenier* is usually smaller than the *raccard* and its base often has a cellar. Larch planks are carefully and closely assembled. The numerous doors, fitted with strong locks are completely closed. *Greniers* also have balconies that serve only for access to individual doors.

The *greniers* are generally not built amongst houses. Instead, they are further away, so that they do not go up in smoke in case of fire. *Greniers* are usually the property of several owners. Cereal grains were stored in wooden chests made of Swiss pine (*Pinus cembra*). It is in the *greniers* that dried meat was stored, suspended on hazel sticks. There were also strings of sausages, rice containers, sugar, pasta and pine cones. This is also where cheese and rye bread were kept, if there was no room in the *galetas/attic*. Cheese and bread were placed upright on racks to prevent them from getting moldy. The *grenier* was also used to keep the clothes for festivals and military uniforms safe from moths. In the past, having a well-stocked granary meant being free from want.



Granary of Achelli in the past

“In the past, having a well-stocked granary meant being free from want.”

➤ Continue along the road to the building after the Bella-Tola Hotel, where the boutique “Maison d’ Angélique”, is situated.

4. Old Post Office



Old post office, before 1960

In 1871, the building housed the post office of Saint-Luc. On resumption of the postal service by the Swiss Confederation, in 1849, a messenger was responsible for the transportation of mail for the Val d'Anniviers.

Hotel development was the reason for the opening of a post office in Saint-Luc. Letters and parcels were transported by mule, from the office of Vissoie, which was opened for the postal depot for all of Anniviers, in 1849.

On November 1, 1871, Pierre Pont, owner of the Hotel Bella Tola, was appointed to run the postal service of St. Luc. Chandolin was attached to Saint-Luc. Pierre Pont took advantage of the creation of an official postal seal to propose "Saint-Luc" as a new address, since Luc was the patron saint of the parish and it would have



Building of the old post office today

avoided any misidentification with the village of Luc (part of the town of Ayent, in the Hérens district). His proposal was accepted without any concern for the precise etymology of the name.

➤ Retrace your steps and take the path of Fond-Villa.

5. Oldest House



House dated 1702, today

This house, located above the road, is considered to be the oldest in the village. It dates from 1702, giving it a more than respectable age.

It provided shelter for two families, or two “fires” as the local expression had it in the nineteenth and again in the early twentieth centuries.

The typical Anniviers house is built of wood and stone. The wooden part, made with horizontal larch planks, in principle is laid on stone foundations. To the rear, on the mountain side, rises the masonry section containing the kitchen. Besides the bedroom, in the wooden part and the kitchen, in the masonry section, there is the basement located in the stone base of the house, and the attic, in the space between the bedroom ceiling and roof.

The construction of a basement (always in stone) was particularly good. The walls, of a thickness of 80 cm and more regulate the temperature inside (8-10 degrees Celsius) between the cold season and the summer heat. The humidity was also optimal.

A pink-coloured plaster that can be seen in some constructions was due to the addition of beef blood to the mixture that was meant to give strength to the plaster making for a better adaptation to humidity.

A balcony was rarely built on the facade looking downstream, but in principle, on the sides or behind.

Before the arrival of glass windows, dried and stretched pig bladders were used, which is why the windows were made of small squares.

Each household in Anniviers generally had three lodgings: the most comfortable in the village (main residence), a smaller one in the valley of the Rhone, and a rustic one in the *mayens*.

➤ The next location is the house to the left of the lane. Observe this group of houses. On the left was a shoemaker.



Detail, the date of the house, 1702

6. First Fire, January 18, 1845



Old shoemakers shop and 1702 house, today

This area was spared by the fire that destroyed much of the village of Saint-Luc in 1845.

Here is the story of the disaster that struck Saint-Luc in 1845: *“It is winter, all the residents of Saint-Luc are in the village. There is snow, it seems, in normal amounts, since no document that year mentions snow. In the valley of the Rhone, however, the written press notes that unusual amounts of snow fell on the Simplon pass and on Brig.*

The fire broke out in the forge, between three and four o’clock in the morning and spread at a phenomenal rate. There were no victims, but enormous damage. The destruction of the village was almost complete. There were only a few buildings left standing, those that were separated from the core of the village by the Zarrire stream.

Within hours, the fire destroyed 305 buildings. 112 houses went up in smoke with their contents ranging from furniture, to clothes, dishes, kitchen equipment, spinning wheels, looms, books, papers, memories and so many personal things. In addition to the houses, attics, barns, stables, grainaries, and other storage spaces went up in flames. Worse, all the crops of the year, grains, beans, potatoes, fruit, hay, some of which had been kept for several years, also burned.

We must not forget the cellars with the «breno» that allowed the meats to be dried out of reach of rats and mice, made of wood, as were the cheese racks, barrels, glasses and «barrots», the elongated and flattened barrels used to transport wine by mule up from the valley of the Rhone to the mountain. We must also think of the many tools such as scythes, rakes, picks, mule pack-saddles, ropes and transport cloths. This list is incomplete, however, it still lacks a lot of tools, because the mountain farmer was also as required, a logger, a carpenter, or a mason. »

“The disaster was such that today it is impossible to imagine the distress of the population. ”

The disaster was such that today it is impossible to imagine the distress of the population. Twelve families only, out of one hundred forty-two, were spared with their houses still standing.

➤ To reach the next location follow the path of Fond-Villa.

7. Former Dairy



Building of the former dairy, today



Area of the old dairy in the past

This stone building, very modern for its time, was built in 1945 to accommodate the dairy.

The *Bourgeoisie* decided to build a new dairy in order to comply with legal requirements for safety, but also to encourage the families of the mountain farmers of Saint-Luc. The dairy was needed in particular to allow to speed up the reception of milk, morning and evening, to save labour and to provide the space needed to store and treat cheese. With the closing of the dairy, the building changed its function, becoming the administrative building of the former village of Saint-Luc.

The chalet, which occupied the plot previously, was sold to André Pont, teacher, guide and sculptor. The buyer numbered carefully each plank, carried them to Prilet and built the café-restaurant which opened in 1945 and is still active today. This is the second time this house was dismantled! Indeed, in 1845, after the terrible fire that destroyed Saint-Luc, the grandfathers of Firmin Favre, eager to provide shelter for their families, dismantled the rustic chalet they had and remounted it more beautiful than before on the plot.

➤ The next location is about 20 meters further on.

8. School for girls

Part of the building (left) which is now the Margueron chalet, housed the girls' school in the village.

Around 1900, the community of Saint-Luc, which was still the largest in the valley, built a school especially for girls, in order to meet the legal requirements concerning the separation of boys and girls, as soon as the number of students permitted the duplication of a class. The boys' classroom was located in the Maison Bourgeoisiale.

Most often, it was a priest who taught reading, writing and arithmetic, in addition to teaching catechism, which concerned the Christian faith and Christian morality. In order to secure the exclusive service of a priest, the residents of Saint-Luc, with those of Chandolin, separated from the parish of Vissoie and founded their own parish in 1806. They wanted so at the time, to support the education of their children and the piety of the faithful.

➤ The barn and stables, located just after the Margueron chalet, is the next location on the tour.



Former girls' school, today



Building of the old school in the past, right

9. Barn - Stable

This type of building combines the functions of the stable (*étable*) for shelter and livestock care, and the barn where hay is stored for feeding the animals during the many months when there is no possibility of going to pasture.

These buildings, quite numerous in the past, were located either around the villages or in the pasture areas. In the first case, they were built close to the houses and belonged in principle to a single owner. In the second case, they were very scattered and sometimes belonged to several different owners.

Building a stable-barn (*grange-écurie*) involved the construction of a stable with planks laid on a dry stone wall, or alternatively, a masonry wall, like those used for the cellars. The access was located in front or on the side, depending on the terrain, and the barn was often in the back.



Stable barn today

The barn was built with horizontal planks, assembled at the corners. The planks were roughly squared and assembled to allow narrow openings that ensured constant aeration.



Barns - stables in Fond-Villa in the past.

> To reach the next location, continue on the Fond-Villa path about 20 m, and stop near the pond, at the beginning of the old mule track that led from Saint-Luc to Vissoie.

Observe the many barns-stables located along this route.

10. Old Fields



Here stood the lower limit of the village

Formerly the village ended here. Below, the land was occupied by fields and crops.

The economy of Saint-Luc just as that of Anniviers, based mainly on agriculture and livestock, was largely self-sufficient. Indeed, until the 1950s, domestic production was almost enough to meet the needs of residents. Cereals, potatoes and beans were cultivated essentially for the people and for animals of the Val d'Anniviers. At the fair of St. Catherine in late November in Sierre, families went to sell or buy livestock, and stock up on basic commodities not produced locally.

It was not possible to cultivate steep slopes, so inhabitants had to resort to a system of terraced fields supported by walls or grassy slopes.



Saint-Luc and fields before 1928

The Anniviards had understood the need for crop rotation and practiced it wherever they owned fields. At Saint-Luc the rotation of crops followed a two-year cycle; if in the area of La Barmaz, fields had potatoes in the other, there was only rye. The following year, the order was reversed. Thus plowing for fall rye was simplified, since the uprooting of potatoes was an excellent soil preparation for planting. At the time of plowing, one could turn the hitch and the plow on the neighbour's field, causing no damage. Rye fields were not irrigated, while those for potatoes sometimes required watering done through a *bisse* (water canal).

> Continue about 30 m along the street, turn left and climb to the pond behind the building.

11. Basin



Basin today



This old basin since removed stood in the square of the Pension Favre, in the 1930's

This basin is an example of the traditional watering basin hollowed out of a larch tree.

Formerly, the basin was of great importance because it was used to supply drinking water to homes, but also for giving water to domestic animals. One needed twenty to thirty litres of water per animal, per day. The more a cow drinks, the better it digests. For watering, cows were detached and the oldest or most disciplined went first because they knew the way and the others followed them.

"In the past, the basin was of great importance because it was used to supply drinking water to homes, but also to give animals water to drink. "

This location gives us the opportunity to evoke the second fire that struck the town in 1858, thirteen years after the first one.

12. Second Fire, July 2, 1858

Here, you are at the bottom of the village that was formerly made of wood and was destroyed in the second fire.

Here is the story of this second disaster: *"The fire broke out at two in the morning in a barn near the village centre and destroyed it in the space of six hours. Sixty-eight residential buildings, sixty barn-stables and two barns raccards were destroyed and eighty-four persons were injured with a total cost incurred of CHF 123'000.-. At that time, very few people were in the village; some of the men were in the pastures, others in the vineyards, and finally the rest were cutting hay, in Sierre or in the mayens.*

The damage, while serious, was not as catastrophic as thirteen years earlier. This second fire was different from that of 1845, because it essentially destroyed homes; not one barn was engulfed in flames and only two raccards were destroyed. So food stocks remained available. The recommendation of the Council of State to separate farm buildings from residential areas had been respected after the first fire. While the new building of the Bourgeoisie of Saint-Luc remained standing, the wind had changed direction and the flames licked its south eastern façade. The rebuilt church and rectory once again suffered. Many stones were charred and sometimes turned to dust shortly thereafter."



Lower part of the village today

13. Raccards / Barns



Heart of the village, as it looked rebuilt after the fire

August 9, 1858, 38 days after the fire, the State Council issued a decree that established the conditions that had to be met to rebuild the destroyed town centre: expropriation and new allocation of plots; creation of four longitudinal streets and four cross streets; construction of residential houses in masonry, with multiple owners where possible; removal of buildings for rural service still standing; reconstruction of those burned on the outside line of the two longitudinal streets, numbered 1 and 4, and on the far sides of the village

➤ Retrace the path of Fond-Villa and continue approximately 50 meters up to three barns on the left side of the road.



Raccards at Fond Villa in the past

The *raccards* that you can observe here are a fine example of traditional rural construction that resembles that of granaries.

The first building on the left shows a particular type with the *pilotis* that are placed directly on the ground.

The *raccard* is generally located near the fields, outside or on the outskirts of the villages. The distance between the house and the *raccard* did not matter, because it was not visited often. Balconies, were very important because they allowed the drying of sheaves, beans, and even hay. The *raccard* always belonged to several owners, because it provided a large storage space.

14. View of the Hotel Weisshorn

The *raccard* is always on stilts or *pilotis* and built with horizontal planks, squared, assembled at the corners, without special care taken for the way they were stacked. The pilotis in numbers 4, 6, 9, or 12, are placed on a wooden frame on a base, or even dry stone masonry, then used as a cellar. The pilotis are between 60 and 150 cm high. They are surmounted by a gneiss slab 5 to 10 cm thick and with a diameter of 80 to 100 cm. These stones were intended to prevent the rodents (mice, rats, voles, skunks and other animals) to climb into the *raccard* and devour precious sheaves of rye, wheat, barley and oats.

The interior of the *raccard* contains an area where wheat can be threshed with a flail. The floor of this area, is about 150 cm wide. Larch beams used here are carefully assembled to ensure a good seal and prevent loss of grains. Normally, there are two floors in a *raccard*, but the second is only partial, as it has no floor, or opening. It is located about two meters above and often had clerestories. The *raccard* was used to store the sheaves, and after the

threshing, this area received the straw, but never wheat grains.

➤ Continue to the end of the path and enjoy the stunning view of the Hotel Weisshorn, which dominates the village.



Raccards at Fond Villa today



Old postcard of the Hotel Weisshorn

The brothers Francesco and Pietro Mosoni from Bognanco (Domodossola region, Italy), retailers in the grocery and dry goods business in Zermatt and Sierre, planned to build a hotel in Saint-Luc and decided to erect it outside of the village, at a place called "Téha-Féja" at an altitude of 2337 meters.

Work began in 1882. Given the chosen location, the obligation to carry all the materials needed by mule from Vissoie and long winters when the site remained closed, it is difficult to specify the date of the opening of this hotel, but it was probably in 1884.

Four dates are certain :

- April 21, 1886, the Gazette of Valais, the Confédéré and the Swiss Alpine Club magazine "Les Alpes" published advertisements for the hotel.

15. First Hotel Bella-Tola



Hotel Weisshorn seen from the village today

- July 31, 1889, a fire destroyed the entire first floor which was made of wood. The reconstruction was decided on quickly, and the new hotel was to be more beautiful than before because it had a high stone base, with a basement, four floors, a veranda on pilotis, a lounge and a smoking room.

- During the summer of 1891, the new hotel was inaugurated. It is

seen from afar, strange and incongruous, posed, like a piece of sugar, on a rocky ledge that dominates the valley.

- It was linked, in 1898, to the electricity grid and telephone network of Anniviers in 1898.

In 1974, Casterman comics published "The Wolf's Lair", an adventure of a reporter called Lefranc. Its author, the Frenchman Jacques Martin, who is also the writer of "The Adventures of Alix" imagines a story of terrorist attacks in the magnificent setting of the Anniviers road, the village of Saint-Luc and the Hôtel Weisshorn.

The Hotel Weisshorn at 2337 meters, is accessible by foot, ski or mountain bike. It takes two hours to reach the hotel on foot from the village and approximately 1 h 30 from the Tignousa station of the funicular.

> To reach the next location, return to the centre, through the ruelle du Vieux Village

The centre of the village is made up largely of masonry houses. Part of this large building with four floors housed the first Hotel Bella Tola, whose foundation in stone was laid in the spring of 1859.

During the night of July 1 to July 2 1858, a fire ravaged the village of Saint-Luc for the second time. The reconstruction of the village core absolutely had to be in masonry. The village people consecrated the autumn of 1858 to the evacuation of burnt remnants, and to the preparation and transport of construction materials.

At the request of the parish priest, who until that time hosted guests, Pierre Pont (1831-1912), after an internship at the Hotel des Alpes in Leukerbad, opened the first Hotel Bella-Tola in this big house. Pierre Pont, a mountain farmer and winemaker, was also a mountain guide and natural therapist, President of the village and a Deputy in the Valais Grand Council. The first register of the first Hotel Bella-Tola confirms its opening on July 13, 1860 and carries the signatures of the distinguished members of the Swiss Alpine Club from the Geneva section.

> Continue to the church.



Entry of the first Hotel Bella-Tola



First Hotel Bella-Tola, center

16. Parish Church of Saint-Luc



Village and parish church before 1928

The village church, dedicated to Saint-Luc, was built in 1804.

In 1803, residents of Saint-Luc and Chandolin sent a request for separation from the parish of Vissoie, mainly because of the distance, especially during winter ceremonies, and to promote children's education. In April 1804, construction of the Church of Saint-Luc began, while in May 1804, representatives of both communities appeared before the vicar general. The parish of Vissoie, standing to lose a third of its contributions, first opposed and then agreed to sign the notarised document, finally resolving the issue of the separation of the parish of Saint-Luc/ Chandolin from the "mother church" of Vissoie in 1806.

The two fires that ravaged Saint-Luc had seriously damaged the church and the rectory. Each time, the bells were reduced to a pile of deformed metal. Bells, installed after the first fire of January 18, 1845, were cast on the spot in Saint-Luc.

After the fire of 1858, the village priest managed a masterstroke. He had the wagon carrying the new church bells stop in front of the Cathedral of Sion, where they were blessed by the Bishop. On November 14, 1858, the local press notes that the residents of Saint-Luc were congratulated for their determination to attend the religious ceremonies marking the end of the year in their renovated church. The main altar of the church, in a neo-Classical style dates from 1877. The patron saint of the church, Saint-Luke (Luc in French) is in the centre with Saints Peter and Paul at either side.

"In April 1804, construction of the Church of Saint-Luc began, while in May 1804, representatives of both communities appeared before the vicar general. Parish of Vissoie."

The parish community took care of the church. Electric lighting was installed on the occasion of the 100th anniversary in 1905. Charles Wütrich (1875 – 1967) carried out the interior painted decoration in 1913. A new spire, slimmer and better proportioned was placed on the belfry in 1927. Pierre Louy (1937– 2003) the master stained-glass maker who directed the Ecole supérieure du vitrail in Sion, made the stained glass of the church which was put in place in 1968.

> Near the church the former parish house is visible.



Choir of the church between 1920 and 1940

17. Former Rectory



West facade of the Rectory in the past



A recent image of the old Rectory

This structure, which was the home of the parish priest is now a private house.

From the first efforts in the early nineteenth century, to separate from the mother parish of Vissoie, parishioners of Saint-Luc and Chandolin pledged to build a suitable house for the parish priest.

Inventories of damage occasioned by the fires in 1845 and 1858, report the destruction of the house of the Rectory. When it came to rebuild the second time, the faithful decided on a masonry house. On April 6, 1859, an agreement was made with Peter Albasini of Chalais. The cramps (or keys) are dated 1859.

➤ Continue to the Maison Bourgeoisiale in Saint-Luc.

18. House of the Bourgeoisie



House of the Bourgeoisie and cross, circa 1917

This grand building in larch is the *Maison Bourgeoisiale* of Saint-Luc.

The cross you can see near the house, in the photo, has been moved twice and is now in front of the site.

The first fire in 1845 totally destroyed the building built in 1597, but the citizens did not give up and rebuilt it more beautiful than it was before. Read the phrase inscribed on the pediment: *"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph protect this house built by the commendable community of Luc, under the presidency of Pierre Martin and Louis Zufferey the year of the fire, 1845."*

The description of the Bourgeoisiale room is given by a member of the Swiss Alpine Club Geneva section, in 1866, on the occasion of the celebration organized by Ernest Griolet for the laying of the first lighthouse foundation stone of the Bella-Tola in 1866.

"... One passes in front of the bread oven, up the staircase of Gargantua and you enter a clean room with a low ceiling, but blackened

19. Washbasin and Water Wheel



Discussion in front of the oven, about 1930

by time, which may have enough space for a hundred people. Five portraits of priests and respectable archpriests, a handwritten letter, and a crucifix adorn the panels. Six narrow tables, two of which are double, made of larch trunks split in two, and benches to match, receive the revelers, at least those who are fortunate enough to find a place."

The tour of the building includes the bread room, the oven, the former boys classroom and the meeting room of the Bourgeoisie of Saint-Luc. The oven, to the right of the entrance, was used to bake bread needed for families. Today, families make bread, according to the traditional recipe, the ancestral way. Each year, in the depths of January, the furnace is heated as of Sunday evening and families succeed one another throughout the week to bake their bread.

➤ Walk along the Maison Bourgeoisiale and take the street on your right, until the old wash house.



Water wheel of the old Prilet sawmill in the past



Laundry, in the years 1920-1940. Photo Charles Krebs

The village women came here to wash clothes on boards with soap or ash.

The washing basins disappeared from the daily lives of women with the arrival of running water in buildings and especially the washing machine. Two artists have revived the old wash house. The two stylized washerwomen were sculptured in copper by Frido Pont, inspired by an old photograph of Charles Krebs. Danielle Salamin created a burst of soap bubbles, also in copper. Brought together here in 1997 in this area dedicated to the memory of the washerwomen, these two works form a harmonious meeting point between the past and the present.

The water wheel that can be admired to the left of the washbasin, comes from the first sawmill mounted on rails at the Prilet. Around 1915, Alexis Zufferey built a new mill in the village. The mill first worked with water, whence the presence of a large wooden water-wheel.

➤ Return to the main street and go down towards the road to Chandolin.

20. Old House with successive enlargements



Old house today

This home features the date 1708 on multiple beams and is part of the un-burnt area. It helps illustrate how the family adapted the main house to the number of family members

The larger the family was, the more food had to be produced and the more productive land was required. Rather than build a new house, residents proceeded by additions. Balconies were closed to become rooms; an additional floor was built; a section on one side was added or two adjacent buildings were linked to create a new room.

The fight against the ravages of vermin was part of life in the houses. Chests, made with local pine in principle, were stored in the basement. Foodstuffs were stored on racks hanging from the ceiling or placed on the racks of the *bréno*.

➤ Continue to the « Café-restaurant La Fougère » where the road turns up.



Old house, circa 1960

21. Grand Hotel Cervin

Observe the Grand Hotel Cervin above the road, that was opened in 1893.

Two residents of Saint-Luc contracted the same “stone disease” as the Mosoni brothers had a decade earlier. Thus in 1892 Benoît Antille and Joseph Vocat decided to call on the Lausanne architect Henri Guinand for the design and construction of the Grand Hotel Cervin, located a stone’s throw from the village centre, insolently overlooking Saint-Luc.

Pressed to gain a season, Benoît Antille decided to open half of the 75 rooms planned, in mid-June 1893.

In July, 1894, according to an announcement published in the *Gazette du Valais*, the Hotel was inaugurated. It was equipped with 75 comfortable rooms, with breath taking views, a large dining room, a reading room, a lounge, a pool table, a smoking room, private lounges, three porches, fourteen balconies, bathrooms on each floor and even a darkroom for photography. This hotel was definitely more modern than the Hotel Bella-Tola.

In 1966, the hotel was updated for the ski season (central heating) and the rooms of the two wings were converted into apartments.

➤ Continue on the main road to the Hotel Bella-Tola.

“ In July, 1894, according to an announcement published in the Gazette du Valais, the Hotel was inaugurated.”



Grand Hotel Cervin today



Grand Hotel Cervin in the past

22. Grand Hotel Bella-Tola



Grand Hotel Bella-Tola, in the 1940's

The Hotel Bella-Tola was built in two stages. First step: the Hotel was inaugurated on August 8, 1883. We can recognize its facade with just a few balconies.

During the excavations to lay the foundations several graves were discovered two meters underground: a tomb dating from the Iron Age (Hallstatt period, 800-480 BC) containing the edge of an axe with fins and a fragment of pottery from the Bronze Age; several cubic tombs slabs, around a small rock that contained ashes, charred bones and gold rings, silver bracelets, bronze (Hallstatt period) and a military fibulae disc dating from the time of Trajan (98-117 AD). These objects were deposited in the National Museum in Zurich.

The hotel was equipped with forty large, well lit rooms, a large dining room, several lounges, a post office and telegraph, baths with hot



Grand Hotel Bella Tola today

and cold water. Customers appreciated the fact that the location of this hotel was *"not next to the church tower with loud bells that prevent sleep."*

Second step: the hotel opened with a new annex in 1892. It is easy to recognize the Annex because of the number of finely carved balconies. This addition doubled hotel capacity and offered a large dining room for 100 people.

Four generations of the Pont family succeed each other at the hotel until 1996. That year the hotel was taken over by Anne-Françoise and Claude Buchs. Their work on the upgrading of the hotel was rewarded with the "Historic Hotel" label, granted in 2001 by ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Historical Sites).

Suggested Visits

Pierre des Sauvages

> 20 minutes above the village, you will find the Pierre des Sauvages.

This is an erratic gneiss block with more than 300 carved, rounded indentations whose meaning still eludes us. Its location was favourable for meetings of men.

In 1870 a stone with carved bowls was discovered. The so-called "Serva-gios" is a giant boulder, divided into three fragments, located above Saint-Luc, at 1700 meters altitude. Ignatius Mariétan in his inventory of stones with carved, rounded indentations in the Val d'Anniviers, published in 1939/1940 in the bulletin of the Murithienne cites experts who described the Pierre des sauvages in Saint-Luc (B. Reber, Vionnet P., F. Keller, Gräber).

Bread path

> This walk starts at the bread oven, through the mills and returns to the village centre.

The bread path, with its educational panels, is meant as a way to discover the life of yesteryear, through illustrated explanations about different cultures and traditional buildings of the time.

Mills

> Follow the bread path until you reach the mills.

In 1986, the mills of Saint-Luc were restored and opened to the public. The particularity of the place is to unite three mills for corn, rye and wheat, as well as two presses for barley and sheets,

in one place along the millstream. Through a system of pipes and ingenious diversions, water diverted from the stream, transmits power to all the mechanisms (four horizontal wheels and one vertical wheel) encountered during its winding path. These mills and presses, animated by the extraordinary activity of peasants for centuries have an undeniable historical interest.

Griole Lighthouse

> From Tignousa, take the path that leads to the Bella-Tola, and then continue towards the Rothorn and the lighthouse. It takes approximately three hours to reach it.

The first stone of the lighthouse, which might be called an alpine semaphore would have been laid on the occasion of a grand festival organized by an aristocrat related to the Bourbons, the French-Geneva resident Ernest Griolet. All residents of Saint-Luc have heard this name, and know some of the man's eccentricities, but also know that he provided valuable assistance during the fire in July 1858. Deeply attached to Saint-Luc and the Bella-Tola Ernest Griolet did much to promote them through his influential friends. Many people followed the recommendations of this "tourist agent". Thus he conceived the singular project to build a lighthouse at the top of the Bella-Tola Rothorn, to guide tourists who went up at night. The laying of the first stone, scheduled for Sunday, July 29, 1866, could not be completed. Following a genuine outburst of natural elements (a storm and snow in July), the cohort of guests had to turn back, bolts of lightning and thunder had condemned the project.

The matter rested for 125 years, until the dream was finally realized, thanks to the Société de développement of Saint-Luc that built the lighthouse on the Bella-Tola Rothorn and inaugurated it in August 1991.

If you watch the sunrise from the lighthouse or the top of the Bella-Tola (3025 m) you can admire numerous peaks of over 4000 meters, the summits of the so-called Imperial Crown (the Weiss-horn, Zinalrothorn, the Obergabelhorn, the Matterhorn and the Dent-Blanche).

Bisses (canals)

➤ Climb up to the Pierre des Sauvages, located above the village and follow the *bisse* up the water intake at the millstream, cross it and continue towards Gillou.

Saint-Luc participated in 2003 in the “International Year of Fresh Water” by opening a network of paths along more than 4.5 km of waterways. The millstream still fed twenty irrigation canals in the middle of the twentieth century.

The *bisses* of Anniviers, like those on the left bank of the Rhone, have generally regular and peaceful elongated tracks, while the irrigation canals of the right bank of the Rhone are sometimes dizzying, running along the rock walls and above the canyons. Nothing acrobatic or risky in Saint-Luc, where you will discover a promenade full of charm and tranquility.

Saint-Luc, the resort of the Stars

The expression is not overrated, the promise is fulfilled, so this name is justified. At Saint-Luc the resort of the Stars you can :

- Participate in astronomy evenings organized regularly, especially during significant astronomical events (since 1985)
- Travel the path of the planets, which opened in 1989, which reproduces to scale, the solar system and its planets over a path of about 7 km in the pastures of Saint-Luc, from Tignousa on a part of the route of the legendary Sierre-Zinal footrace.
- Visit the François-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB) Observatory built at Tignousa in 1995 near the arrival point of the funicular, a place known for the purity of its atmosphere and the absence of turbulence. It is designed for curious schoolchildren, students and experienced amateurs.



Poster in 1953

Cover Photo: Saint-Luc and its stone heart (centre)
 Backcover: Harvests in 1930. Photo Charles Krebsler

Texts

Willy Théler with the collaboration of Simone Salamin.

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Images and photos

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The 14 Historical Paths are available at the Tourist Offices and Editions Monographic. They are grouped together in a book titled « Parcours historiques d'Anniviers »

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