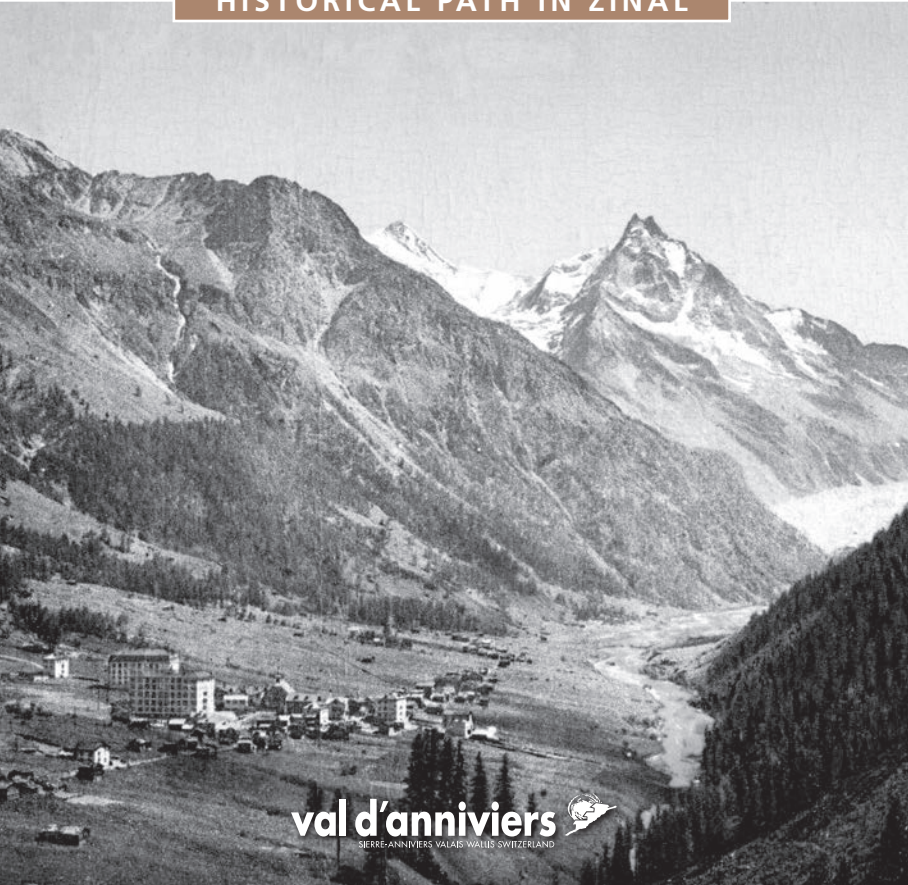


# ZINAL

HISTORICAL PATH IN ZINAL



# Map of Zinal



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# Introduction to Zinal



Zinal in the early twentieth century

Located at an altitude of 1670 meters at the foot of the Imperial Crown (five peaks over 4000 m), Zinal has approximately 200 year-round inhabitants and 4000 available beds.

The emblematic summit of the Besso, is characterized by two peaks. "Becho" in local dialect means "twins". The Navisence, finds its origin in the Zinal glacier and flows into the Rhone.

Its name probably comes from "Chinal" in dialect or "Tsina", "Chenal" in French. Zinal most likely means corridor, narrow valley, wooden water pipe, or canal... Patois, which is the local Franco-Provençal dialect, was the language spoken in the valley for several centuries until the spread of French.



Zinal, with a guide and young tourists, circa 1910

The historical visit of Zinal is an invitation to a journey through time, starting from the old chapel, continuing through the hotel zone and the old village, up to the first inn.

Zinal is a simple, but absolutely unique place, that long remained in the almost secretive protection of its mountains, living according to the rhythm of the comings and goings of its people and their *remuage*, in an alternation of long periods of silence and then intense activity, until the day when it was discovered by the first tourists.

The old wood and stones are able to tell stories of the passage of time for those who know how to listen. This is why this visit is an invitation to slow the pace and observe the thousand details that make up its atmosphere.

# From a Village-Mayen to a Ski Resort



Zinal street, near the Défichiaz ski lift, circa 1962

Before becoming the ski resort that we know today, Zinal was what is called a *village-mayen* inhabited only on a periodical basis.

The Anniviards lived essentially off the land and livestock. They moved from the mountains to the valley of the Rhone, on foot or on carts pulled by mules, several times a year, according to the different tasks they had to perform. In March, they went down to Sierre to do work in the vineyards and gardens. In June, they brought the livestock first to Zinal and then to the pastures. In July, they went back up to prepare the hay, while in October they came down from Zinal and Ayer to Sierre for the harvest of grapes. In December, they climbed from Ayer to Zinal to allow livestock to eat the hay cut in summer.

In January 1897, a traveller counted about 600 people from different villages of Anniviers, staying in the small hamlets, that formed the valley of Zinal.



Tourists in Zinal, near the first hostel in the years 1900-1910

An increasingly high number of tourists in large part English, attracted first by nature and by the peaks, was at the origin of the construction of several hotels in the late nineteenth century. From the late nineteenth century until 1906, it was even envisaged to create an electric railway to Zermatt from Sierre via the Anniviers Valley, with stops including Zinal. However this ambitious project was abandoned because of the First World War.

Beginning in 1860, Zinal gained some notoriety as a summer resort with its peaks and became a place of choice for the English mountain climbers. In 1857 the first Alpine Club was created in England initiating the golden age of mountaineering. The British group was followed by the creation of an Austrian counterpart in 1862, with Switzerland and Italy following in 1863, Germany in 1869 and France in 1874.

Beginning in 1870, the profession of mountain guide began to take form. In 1937 the "The société des Guides de Zinal" was

# 1. Old Chapel

created; preceding that of Anniviers. In 1966 the "Bureau des Guides" and that of the Ski School, were opened in Zinal. The "Société de développement" was established in 1938. Since then, the Association has taken care of advertising, animation, and the creation and maintenance of footpaths. In 1966, the local Tourist Office was opened.

Until 1950 the postal bus stopped at Ayer. Travellers going to Zinal continued on a mule track. In the years 1945-1950, mail was still delivered by a postman on a mule. The new road, inaugurated in 1957, marked the beginning of the development of the winter and summer resort.

In the years 1955 to 1960, the decline of agriculture and summer tourism were the main causes of the movement of mountain residents to the valley of the Rhone in search of work. As a summer resort only, Zinal, did not benefit from the wave of winter tourism that swept through Switzerland and Europe. That is why it became necessary to boost tourism by creating a ski resort. In 1961, Zinal inaugurated its first winter facility: the Défichiaz ski lift, located in the village. In 1966 the development work on the Sorebois ski domain began. The site of the Zinal-Sorebois cable car was created as well as the resort of Club Méditerranée whose arrival in Zinal was a major event. This was the beginning of Zinal as a winter and thus a year-round resort. In 1960, the village had 6 permanent residents and 110 in 1970.

Over time, the village of Zinal, periodically inhabited by people from the Val d'Anniviers, turned into a resort village, inhabited all year round by people from diverse backgrounds.



Chapel and Hotel Durand, left, on a 1883 engraving



Old chapel and Café de Zinal, early 20th century

> The first location of the Zinal historical visit is behind the Tourist Office, at the edge of the old road leading from Ayer to Zinal.

**This is the remaining tower of a former chapel. By 1900, the small adjacent building was occupied by a shop. On the front, the two dates inscribed are 1756 and 1919. The construction date of the building is not known.**

At the Bazaar of the *vieille chapelle*, which was run until 1953 by Denise Pont-Savioz, different items were sold. A sign indicated: "*Groceries, haberdashery, souvenirs, tourist items, food and other supplies, wide range of postcards, tobacco, cigars, film, fruit, pastries, pharmaceuticals.*"

On the chalet, located after the chapel, the names of the owners and a master tailor are listed as well as the date of the original building which was probably a *mayer*.

> The next location is opposite on the right side of the road.

## 2. Hotel Pointe de Zinal



Café de Zinal in about 1900-1910



Cotter Auberge, in the years 1930 – 1940

The Café de Zinal opened in the new hotel district. It was later enlarged and became the Pension Cotter Theytaz Guide. On the wall of the current Hotel Pointe de Zinal building, there is an inscription that reads “Cotter Theytaz Guide 1911”.

The hotel's history is closely linked to that of the village and its transformations through time. In 1954, Denis Melly, a teacher in Saint-Jean acquired the small Inn of Arthur Cotter. In 1964, it was enlarged and converted into a hotel.

*“When arriving at Zinal, stop in and see Denis, and the little house of great wines. Hotel Zinal, Melly Denis owner. And later: “(...) the Hotel de la Pointe de Zinal offers the epitome of a relaxing or sporting holiday.”*

**“The hotel's history is closely linked to that of the village and its transformations through time”**

The family of Denis Melly was the first to reside in Zinal all year, as of the opening of the Défichiaz ski lift in 1961, in the early years of the winter resort. Until 1961, the family went up only in the summer to Zinal. Denis Melly, went up first to house the soldiers who came to a training camp nearby, and then the rest of the family followed him. The whole family went down to Ayer in mid-September with the pigs and goats.

➤ To get to the Hotel des Diablons, follow the lane that climbs to your left.

### 3. Hotel des Diablons



Diablons and Durand Hotels, from right to left, early twentieth century

The Hotel des Diablons which has been rented since 2001 by Intersoc, the holiday organiser of “ Mutualité Chrétienne de Belgique ”, was a Club Méditerranée resort from 1966 until 1994. The SET Zinal (Tourist Development Company) created at the initiative of the municipality of Ayer, acquired the Diablons and Durand hotels and had them renovated.

In the early winter of 1966-1967, the first guests of the Club Méditerranée arrived in Zinal. As the construction of the cable car had been delayed, it was decided to transport skiers by air from Zinal to Sorebois. Air-Glacières chartered a seven-seat Porter aircraft that flew the shuttle between the flat areas of La Lée and Sorebois.

In 1863, Jean-Baptiste and Julienne Epiney-Antille, owners of the first inn, built the Hotel Durand, which was enlarged twice afterwards. Its style earned it the nickname of the “ Chartreuse ”.



In front of the Diablons Hotel, early twentieth century

In 1894, at the initiative of Tabin brothers from Vissoie, the Grand Hotel des Diablons was inaugurated, bearing the name of the small mountain chain that overlooks Zinal to the east.

This hotel, very large for its time, could accommodate about 150 people who enjoyed all the amenities found in cities. In 1932, the Queen of Holland and her entourage stayed there for thirteen days. Catholic, Anglican and Evangelical services were celebrated every Sunday. A trio or a classical music quartet played during the stay of the guests.

The Grand Hotel des Diablons offered “ *all the amenities of a first class mountain hotel.* ”

➤ To reach the Hotel de la Poste, continue about 30 meters.

## 4. Hotel de la Poste



Hotel de la Poste



Road of Zinal and Hotel de la Poste. In the background, the Hotel des Diablons, early twentieth century

The route continues to the heart of the hotel zone, consisting of the Diablons and Durand Grand Hotels, the Hotel de la Pointe, de la Poste, Trift, National and Besso. After the old chapel on the left, the old road is bordered by several farmers houses, while on the right, stables for pigs and tool sheds form a whole that has remained intact, a small monument to the life of old times.

The Hotel de la Poste, was run by Pierre Savioz, the postal shopkeeper in Zinal followed by Augustus and Flora Blatter. It dates from 1880-1890.

In 1943 the hotel was taken over by the Bonnard family and renovated in 1954, just before the construction of the new road. During the Mobilization of 1939-1945, the Hotel de la Poste remained open throughout the year due to the presence of troops in Zinal.

> The next location on the tour is after the Hotel de la Poste, on the left, while the building which once housed the National Hotel is located on the right.



## 5. Hotel du Trift and Hotel National



Hotel de la Poste, Trift, and National from left to right in the 1960's

The Hotel du Trift, a typical chalet made of larch, was built in 1891 by the "Société de Zinal" as a facility to replace the school, situated behind the Saint-Barthélémy chapel, which had become too small. It was nevertheless quickly rented out as a hotel.

*"In the years 1940-1960, two classes of boys and girls from Ayer, Mission and Vissoie, were held at the Trift each winter for about a month in December-January. Children from more distant mayens even walked an hour to get to school."* (Hélène Tscherry-Theytaz).

The Trift, like Zinal itself changed its vocation with the seasons: in summer it was a hotel, a hostel for young people and a school in the winter. It served as a post office after the construction of the road in 1957. Note in the photo above, the small white building at the rear of the Trift, which housed the first post office, and the second post office on the first level of the hotel.



National Hotel, in the 1920's

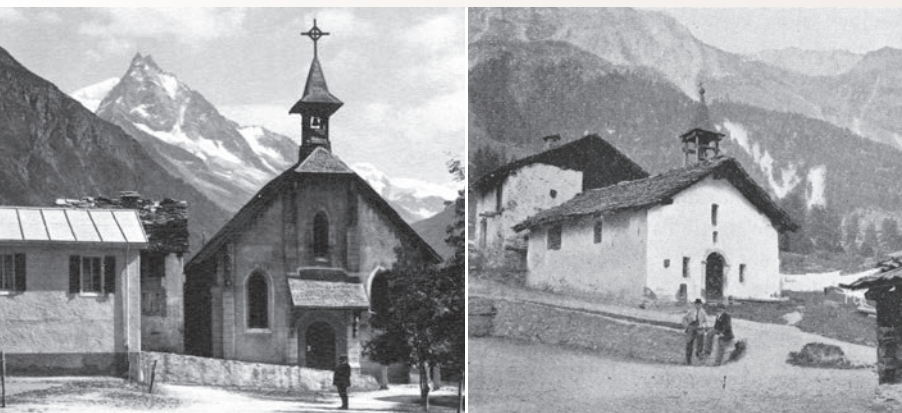
On the facade the names of the master carpenters and construction date, 1891 are inscribed.

"La Société de Zinal", owned the Trift as well as the chapel and other properties. This association, whose members are from several villages of the valley, has existed since the Middle Ages. Its first statutes date back to 1571. Of great importance in the past, the Society settled matters regarding the creation of routes with the right of way on private property, exploitation of meadows and forests, and ensured the maintenance of roads and bridges.

The National Hotel, built in 1908 by the Theytaz family from Ayer, was bought in 1953 by the Bonnard family, owner of the Hotel de la Poste. It was kept as a hotel during the renovation work on the Hotel de la Poste and converted into a grocery store in 1954 – 1955, a function that it retained until 1980. The particularity of the building, now a private house is its eight-sided roof.

➤ Follow the road up to the left to the chapel.

## 6. Chapel of Saint-Barthélémy



The chapel and the old post office, left, early twentieth century

The chapel prior to 1900

The chapel, called “English” because of its neo-Gothic English style, was inaugurated in 1900. It is dedicated to Saint-Barthélemy, patron saint of Zinal, invoked to protect the village and its inhabitants from fires and natural disasters.

It replaced a chapel nearby oriented in a different direction, thought to have existed as from 1515. *“Near the hotel, beyond a gently sloping lawn, near the road, stands a chapel, a small white chapel; the facade was plastered over many years ago, but it has maintained a virginal whiteness; only under the stress of time, its small bell tower is falling apart, the cross bends over, and soon will fall.”* (Emile Javelle, 1872)

The new chapel, a real small church, was built when the tourist attraction of Zinal was developed.

On the façade, there is a plaque commemorating its inauguration, while a second honours the memory of Joachim Tabin, who died in 1899 on the Zinalrothorn.

Inside, the large mural that represents the Last Judgment was created by Alfredo Cini in 1948. He also painted the fourteen Stations of the Cross dating from 1952.

The original altar with its Gothic altarpiece figure remains in the choir. Above the tabernacle, there is a painting of the apostle Barthélemy holding the knife with which he is meant to have been skinned alive, in his right hand.

The stained glass windows are the work of the Anniviers artist Roger Theytaz. Those of the choir date from 1984 and the ones representing Sainte-Anne and Saint-Théodule, from 1986. The stained glass windows representing Saint-Jean-Baptiste and Sainte-Euphémie were created in 2014, thanks to a gift of Maria Theresa Theytaz, called “Chouquette” (1932-2011). The windows represent the patron saints of the four old towns of Ayer, Vissoie, Grimentz and Saint-Jean, which are the home towns of the members of the “Société de Zinal”.

At the exit of the chapel, note the wall where thirty Zinal guides would meet in 1930, waiting for clients from the Diablons and Durand Hotels.

➤ Return to the Hotel du Besso. The next location on the tour is the house in the left curve.

## 7. Chalet and Basin



Chalet and wooden basin, early twentieth century

This chalet is a fine example of the wooden house that was the subject of several postcards published at the time of Diablons and Durand Hotels.

The ground floor dates from 1817 and the first floor from 1853. The houses of farmers originally had only one floor.

The basin which has since disappeared, was located near this house to provide water for the people and their animals.

The basins were first made of wood and then out of stone. *"This place was once paramount. Before the arrival of water taps, its use was strictly regulated. We came to get water with buckets and brought cows there twice a day in winter, while carefully avoiding that cows from different cowsheds could meet and fight."* (Bernard Crettaz).

**"Women washed clothes in the basin, but also in the river until the 1950s".**

Women washed clothes in the basin, but also in the river until the 1950s. Before the advent of washing machines, sheets were boiled, mixed with soap or ash in a caister, and then rubbed on a board, at the basin.

➤ The next location is to the right of the street.

## 8. Hotel Besso



The Zinal road and the Hotel Besso, early twentieth century

The Hotel Besso dates from 1890. *“In Zinal, the pearl of the Val d’Anniviers, the Besso, a small hotel with 30 beds, founded by Mr. Benoît Crettaz. In an excellent location. Bed and Board from 6 to 9 frs.”*

Its entrance was located on the only existing road at the time. The main road, which is now the access road to the village, dates from 1957.

The Zinal Hotels Company was created in 1903 to manage the Grand Hotel des Diablons, Hotel Durand and the Hotel du Besso. In 1920 the hotel was sold to Joachim Theytaz. Period advertising for the hotel declared: *“Zinal. Telephone 2. Hotel du Besso. Café-Restaurant. Cars and trucks available to transport travellers from Sierre to Ayer. Local specialties. Moderate prices. Guides. Bearers. Joachim Theytaz Guide-Owner.”*

The wooden shed in the courtyard was used as an ice storage point for the hotel. In front, under the big rock seen on the right of the Belvedere, was the cooler for the Diablons and Durand Grand Hotels.

➤ The next stop on the tour is located below the main road. The Café-Restaurant La Ferme is also visible from the old road.



Crettaz Family, outside the entrance of the Hotel Besso, circa 1900

## 9. Restaurant La Ferme



Farm, early twentieth century



Old farm, in the 1950's

The building of the Restaurant de la Ferme, the old farm of the Diablons and Durand Hotels, dates from the period of 1880 to 1890.

The Tabin brothers, owners of the Hotel des Diablons, rented the farm to house twenty cows. Very modern for its time, it was taken over by the Zinal Hotel Company, which decided to install a butcher at the Hotel Durand, to acquire the village bakery and to create a farm. Benedict Crettaz, former owner of the Hotel du Besso, was hired as foreman of the farm.

**"In 1967, the inaugural year of the lifts, the Farm was transformed into a café-restaurant."**

The stable was below while the area along the road today, was used to make cheese and butter for customers of the Diablons and Durand Hotels.

In 1967, the inaugural year of the lifts, the Farm was transformed into a café-restaurant.

➤ Follow the street leading to the old village, up to the bridge.

## 10. Village Bridge



Zinal from the Belvedere, early twentieth century

From this bridge, the view on the summits clearly highlights the particular situation of Zinal, located at the foot of numerous mountain corridors.

Several barriers were built on the hillside above the village to curb landslides and avalanches that descended through the corridors beneath the Diablons. *"A view of the hills shows the particular situation of the Zinal valley, located below mountain corridors obliged to fight against landslides and avalanches. In our previous lives, there were stones that fell causing destruction, stones we had to move away to free the meadows. It was the first thing my mother told me to do in the spring."*(Bernard Crettaz)

The wooden cross, which is on the left after the bridge, was erected by the " Société de Zinal ".

➤ After the cross, at the edge of the road there is a barn-stable (grange-écurie) and, at the rear, the Trappe and Madeleine houses.



A tiny village at the foot of giants

# 11. Trappe, Madeleine, and Barn-stable



The *Trappe*, Madeleine houses, and a barn-stable, from left to right, early twentieth century

We are in the heart of old village, consisting of old farm houses, stables, barns and granaries. All the buildings and their roofs were made of strong, durable larch wood.

The group of buildings, lining the street on the left, are two farm-houses and a barn-stable.

The house, called "La Trappe", belonged to several families. A house and a barn or even a mule could have several owners.

On the ground floor there was a kitchen with a fireplace and a main room which also served as a bedroom. The family of Helen Tscherry-Theytaz lived here during their stays in Zinal. *"There was a kitchen with a hearth for cooking, with a cauldron hanging from a chain. Sugar and salt, purchased in 50kg bags, were put in a hutch. A small cabinet was used for provisions and corn meal for polenta. Until the 1960s, polenta was the main meal at noon. In the evening, potatoes with cheese were the rule. Residents had meat, dried boiled meat only on Sunday.*

*The bedroom served as the main room during the day. There was a big high bed for children, a sliding bed for the parents that came out for the night, a clothes closet, a sideboard for crockery and other utensils for the kitchen, a table, and a soapstone stove that was used for heating and cooking."*

During the Mobilization of 1939-1945, a military association was formed as a "secret group" under the name "La Trappe", which included the well-known musician Jean Daetwyler. A book recounts their adventures. Much later the name was assigned to this house.

Called "Madeleine" in more recent times, this house, larger than others, belonged to two families. *"Madeleine was one of the owners. Every summer, she received the visit of a bishop, a fact that impressed the whole neighbourhood. Once, to avoid being seen in work clothes, the neighbours left their own homes by the window."* (Bernard Crettaz)

## 12. Lo Pirlo



Street and inhabitants in the years 1930-1940

The ground floor dates from 1835, the first floor was built in 1881. The dimensions of the window openings, are the original ones.

The barn-stable (*grange-écurie*) shows the traditional system of the barn construction : transversal axe-hewn beams with a vertical beam for maintaining balance. Several *granges-écuries* still exist along the old village street. They included a stable for cows at the bottom, and the barn for hay, above.

Small cabins, located near the houses, were for pigs or mules, others were used as tool sheds.

➤ Continue until the Lo Pirlo house on the right.

Lo Pirlo, meaning “ room ” in the local dialect, is a two-story house, one per family. The house on the ground floor included a kitchen and a room for the whole family, of nine children.

The date 1887 is inscribed on the central beam and the soapstone stove is dated 1889.

In the cellar, there was the “ potato hole ” (*creux à patates*) necessary for storage for the month and a half spent in Zinal in winter ; milk and *tommes* cheese were also kept there.

In the cellars of the principal houses in the villages at lower altitudes wine was stored in barrels. The celebrated Glacier wine is *Rèze* wine that was transported from the vineyards of the Rhone valley to the cellars of the mountain villages.

The stable, to the right of the house, was destined a mule, the left (now converted into a small veranda) was used for the pig, on one side, and on the other, sheep. The pig found its food in the *bourlett*, a basin where left-overs were placed.

➤ Mon Repos is located further on after Lo Pirlo, to the right.



Lo Pirlo in the early twentieth century



## 13. Mon Repos



Lo Pirlo in the early twentieth century

Mon Repos, (my restful place) is a typical rustic farm house. Its wooden facade retains a sentence, protected by glass. In 1901, Alfred Cérésolle and Albert Gos left traces of their friendship with Emile Javelle :

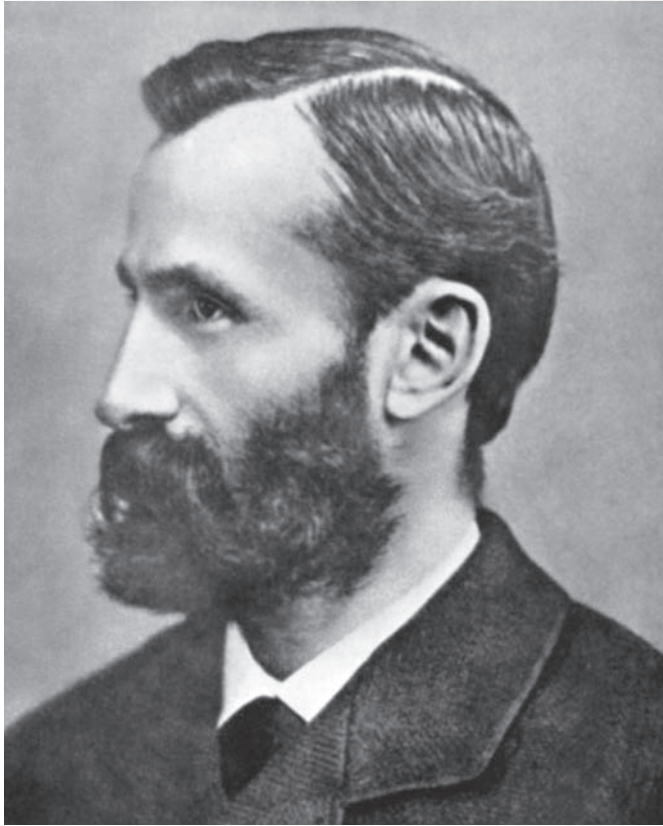
*"The thought of you, dear Javelle, in this place that I treasure, follows and embraces me. Here you were happy, enjoying supreme peace, here where your noble heart loved to return."* Alfred Cérésolle A.G. (Albert Gos)

Alfred Cérésolle (1842-1915), was a Vaudois, a pastor and poet, who was passionate about mountains and popular traditions. In "Le vieux Zinal et son premier registre" written in 1902, he went through the old register of the first inn and found the trace of those that stayed there including the well-known mountain climbers Tyndall and Whymper but also of writers Eugène Rambert, Emile Javelle, and the Geneva painter Albert Gos.

Albert Gos (1852-1942) made his first appearances in Zinal, in 1875. After studying painting in London and Paris, his exhibitions in Switzerland and abroad were highly appreciated. His paintings showed the beauty of the alpine world, especially the Matterhorn. The successful climb of the Matterhorn by Whymper in 1865, made Zermatt an attraction not only for climbers but also for painters looking for grandiose subjects.



Mon Repos, early twentieth century



Emile Javelle

Emile Javelle born in 1847, French, was a French teacher who settled in Vevey. In 1870, he climbed the Matterhorn and became the second member of the Swiss Alpine Club (SAC) to achieve this ascension seen as a considerable achievement. Beginning in 1870, he came to Zinal repeatedly and in less than ten years, he climbed the great Valais peaks, among them: the Weisshorn,

Zinalrothorn and the Dent-Blanche. He was president of the Diablerets section of the Swiss Alpine Club in 1874-1875.

A great mountaineer and very sensitive writer, he had the merit of discovering the beauty of the high mountains. He died of tuberculosis in 1883 at the age of 36. After his death, his stories were collected in a book, "Souvenirs d'un alpiniste," which was published in 1886 and became a true classic of Alpine literature.

A letter written by Emile Javelle to a friend on July 15, 1872 begins:

*"Finally, my friend, here I am in Zinal, eight leagues from Sierre and a thousand miles away from the world's problems; Zinal (...) a haven of peace such as there are few left in the Alps.*

*You surely want to know, why I came back again this year: because nowhere else have I found as at the end of this lost valley (...) such a sense of deep peace at the foot of such magnificent grandeur (...) But you do not know of this place from where I am writing, nor do many others. Zinal has such a beautiful place in the sun but indeed remains unknown to the world; guides barely mention it, nor do we see any print, or photograph representing it, and yet in all of this wonderful Valais, it is indeed one of the most beautiful places."*

➤ After a few meters, below a barn-stable, there is an old house.

## 14. Old House

An architectural ensemble, including a barn-stable and a former residence built in 1768, is located after "Mon Repos".

Part of the building was acquired by the Association "Amis du Vieux Zinal," in 1967. The association was founded in 1966 with the aim, amongst others, to preserve the old village and promote old local traditions. The film "Zinal autrefois", filmed in 1969-1970, traces the life of the Anniviards when they stayed at their mayens in Zinal during the winter and summer months.

Witness to the life of yesteryear, the house allows visitors to discover what it was like to live in a mayen in Zinal. It contains furniture, utensils and tools that illustrate the daily life of the time until 1965.

This is one of the few houses in the village to have preserved its original windows with braces. The openings are small and the windows are pegged without any sealant.

The typical cellar is also part of the exhibition. Photographs of Zinal from the late nineteenth century are presented here.

Guided tours in summer can be organised by reservation at the Tourist Office.

➤ Continue to the granary on *pilotis*, right.

**"Witness to the life of yesteryear, the house allows visitors to discover what it was like to stay in a *mayen* in Zinal"**



Old house, around 1974



Old house, around 1990

## 15. Granary on Pilotis

This granary on pilotis transformed into a vacation home, symbolizes the economic conversion experienced by Zinal and the Val d'Anniviers. This is a granary for storing goods, consisting of a stone base that housed a cellar, surmounted by four wooden pillars and stone slabs that prevented rodents from reaching the provisions and also served to protect against moisture.

This type of building is very old, in fact its origins may go back as far as the Neolithic period when structures were built on stilts in the plains that were subject to flooding.

The barns (*raccards*), much larger structures that existed in villages of primary residence, served to dry grain. In Zinal there are no *raccards*, since the cultivation of cereals was not possible at this altitude.



Granary on *pilotis*

Les Gentianes, left, was the second farmhouse after the Mamberzes to receive a name and be used to house tourists.

The basin was built around 1970.

➤ Continue for a few meters up to the old barn (*grange*). The stable is down below.



Village road and granary

## 16. Stable



Return from the pastures



Grange and first auberge, early twentieth century

This is the only stable in Zinal still in use today. Built in 1859, it was bought and renovated by the current owners in 1973.

*“This stable belonged to four families, including my parents. The owners organized themselves, according to an established order, to store hay in the barn. They used other stables, more remote and less practical, each in their turn, when the stable in Zinal was occupied.” (Hélène Tscherry-Theytaz)*

All the cows in the stable are of the Hérens variety. They are solid and muscled cows, smaller than their peers and well adapted to life in the mountains. They are the descendants of the aurochs that lived free and designated the herd leader by fighting head against head, horns interlocked. This is probably the origin of the local tradition of cow fights (combats de reines) that are particular to this breed of cows.

Until the end of traditional agriculture in the years 1955-1960, the cows went up to the pastures of Barneuza, Lirec, Cottier, Tracuit, Arpitettaz, La Lée, Singlinaz and Sorebois. These pastures were occupied by cows, sheep and pigs. In 1887, at the pasture of La Lée, there were 155 cows, 69 heifers, 40 goats, 14 pigs and 300 sheep. In Sorebois there were 126 cows, 60 heifers, 13 bulls and 13 pigs.

The pastures of Cottier and Arpitettaz were bought by residents of Salgesch which is located in the valley of the Rhone near Sierre.

Today, the pastures located above Zinal receive summering heifers or sheep. Only the Singlinaz pasture occupied by cows from the canton of Vaud, still functions fully.

Cows from Zinal, Ayer and Mission spend the summer at the Nava Alpine pasture, above Ayer. During the season, the cow that beats the others is elected queen.

Hanging on the wall of the barn, there are wooden sleds on wheels that were used to transport hay from the pastures until 1965.

➤ After the barn, the chalet with two floors housed the first Inn (auberge) in Zinal.

**“Today, the pastures located above Zinal receive summering or heifers or sheep.”**

## 17. First Inn



Children, outside the auberge in the early twentieth century



Zinal centenary in 1959

In 1859, at the initiative of Jean-Baptiste and Julienne Epiney-Antille born in Zinal, the first inn in Zinal opened marking the beginning of summer tourism and a new era for the village. The chalet has the date 1859 inscribed on it.

This large two-storey chalet of larch wood is now a residence. On the ground floor, built in 1790, there was the kitchen and the dining room, while on the first level, there were some small rooms with short sliding beds that could accommodate ten people.

The inn is closely linked to the development of mountaineering: *"The story started with a small wooden house, where, on a summer evening at the time of haymaking, an Englishman asked for lodging."* (Alois Theytaz).

In 1864, Leslie Stephen stayed at the inn before succeeding in the first ascent of the Zinalrothorn. In 1865, Lord Douglas climbed the Obergabelhorn. Among its guests, there were such celebrities such as the British climber Edward Whymper who was the first to scale the Matterhorn in 1865. In 1859, in Zinal, Whymper completed the first crossing of the Moming Pass. A year before, Jean-Baptiste Durand Epiney brought a group of young Anniviards, dressed as they were in the village, with military bags, hay ropes, axes and provisions, up to the Durand pass. This outing symbolized a change of mentality due to the influence of foreign climbers.

Emile Javelle had also noticed: that people of the valley had no interest in the summits, previously surrounded by fear and legends. About the inn, he wrote: *"As little known as Zinal is, there is a hotel: still very simple fortunately, like the good people who run it. Often it is empty; today we are three travellers."*

In 1959 Zinal celebrated the centenary of the resort at the inn, whose creation marked the birth of the summer resort.

This is here, where *"the story began..."* that the historical visit of Zinal ends. We invite you to come back on the main road to the centre of the village, paying careful attention to all of Zinal, its infrastructure and its services, as well as the Zinal-Sorebois cable car that has been functioning since 1967.

# Suggested Visits

## Lée Copper Mine

> Located about one hour walk from Zinal, at the top of the valley at an altitude of 1920 m.

The only copper mine in Switzerland open to the public, the “ Mine de la Lée ” is a remarkable witness to the adventure of mining in the Alps. The discovery of copper, chalcopyrite deposit (copper pyrite) in the mountains of La Lée, was noted in 1832. The first extraction occurred in 1857, and the last in 1902. It is possible to follow the quartz vein galleries extending over 500 meters inside the mountain. Guided visits can be arranged through the Tourist Office from June to October.

## Hydroelectric power-plant of Mottec

> Located 2 km from Zinal.

Electricity arrived at the beginning of the century in Anniviers, resulting in tremendous technical progress. A visit to the power-plant built in 1959, gives insight into the functioning of the electrical complex of the Forces Motrices of the Gougra, that include the Moiry Dam, as well as the power-plant in Vissoie.

Guided visits can be arranged through the Tourist Office.

## Mayen of Biolec

> In the summer, go up to Sorebois in the cable car and follow the path that leads to the *mayen* and continues on to Grimentz or Mottec.

Going to Biolec provides an opportunity to discover a virtually intact *mayen* chosen in 2003 for the filming of the documentary series “ *Mayen 1903,* ” one of the great audience successes of Swiss television. The Cerf family was selected to be filmed live for two months in the conditions of life in Valais in the early 1900s, in a *mayen* located at 2021 m.

## Ayer and Mission

> Ayer and Mission are respectively 6 and 8 km from Zinal..

These villages have not undergone great changes and have kept an authentic character. Unlike Zinal, which was a village-*mayen* before becoming a resort village, Ayer and Mission were villages of residence.

Stroll through the streets of Ayer and discover its House of the Bourgeoisie, the church, the mill and the sixteenth century Madeleine house. The “ *Maison des nourritures paysannes* ” presents the instruments of a traditional butcher.

In Mission, enjoy the peaceful atmosphere along the narrow streets lined with houses, barns and grainaries. Discover the House of the Bourgeoisie, the chapel and the *partchère*.(goat pen)  
Valley villages deserve a visit, as each has its own atmosphere, due to its location and its different characteristics.



Zinal Glacier from the Roc de la Vache



The cowherd and the goatherd

Cover photo: Zinal, early 20th century

Back cover photo: Zinal, Barmette Bridge early 20th century

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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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