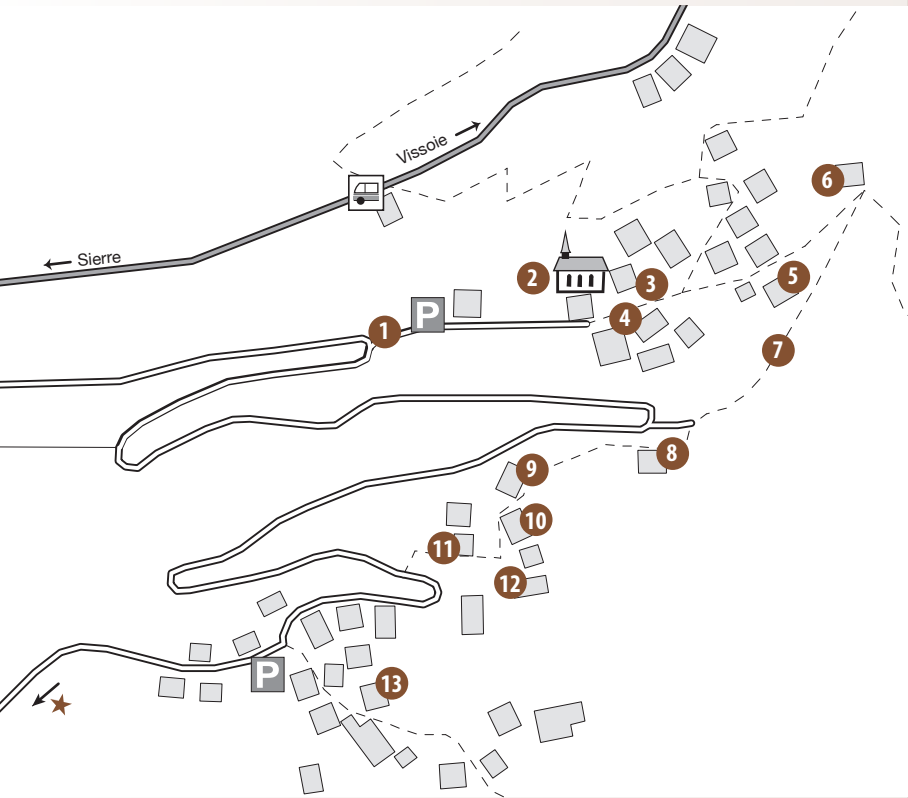


# FANG

HISTORICAL PATH IN FANG

# Map of Fang



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# Introduction to Fang



Fang d'en-haut today



Girls of Fang and goat in 1956

Fang, a small village, located deep in the Val d'Anniviers, is composed of three parts: Fang d'en-haut, du-milieu and d'en-bas (literally upper, middle and lower Fang) whose altitudes range between 900 and 1000 meters above sea level. Fang is called "little Sierre" thanks to its microclimate that offered an abundance of fruit and vineyards producing old Valais grape varieties such as Muscat, "country red" (rouge du pays) and Rêze.

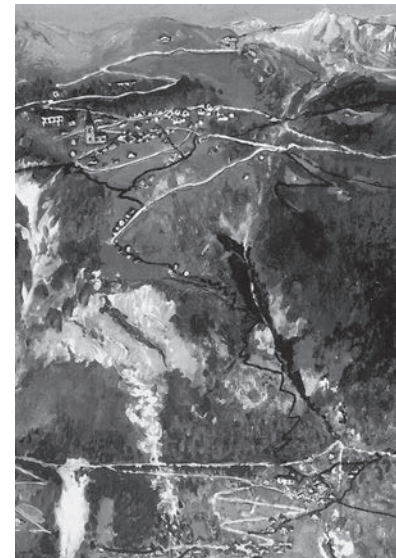
Until 1850, this village was at the crossroads of many paths. One could go from Fang in all directions, towards the villages of the valley. Today these trails offer great hiking opportunities.

The name of the village may derive from the old German word "Fahan" which means "closed in" and designated the part of Fang located closest to the bottom of the valley.

From 1856 until the fusion of the municipalities of Anniviers in 2009, Fang was part of the old administrative district "commune" of Chandolin.

Today, Fang has a little less than thirty year-round residents as well as a few tourist beds.

**"Until 1850, this village was located at the crossroads of many paths."**



Fang and Chandolin (1000 metres higher)



# Fang at the crossroads



The « société du village » in the 1930's

Based on visual assessments, conducted by the archaeologist of the Canton, the old village of Fang, located downstream from the present site, dates back about a thousand years. The new village of Fang would have been built as of 1700. Various buildings indicate dates such as 1718, 1724, 1747, and 1766.

In 1851 Chandolin, which had become an independent municipality in 1814, sent a request to the Canton to take possession of the territory of Fang. For the inhabitants of Chandolin, Fang was a blessing, thanks to its productive soil, while for the people of

Fang, the distance between the two villages was too great (over 1000 m in altitude) along a dangerous path. Following a referendum in 1856, Fang was administratively attached to Chandolin, but continued to be part of the parish of Vissoie.

Until the 1950s, Anniviards from Chandolin, Saint-Luc, Saint-Jean and Pinsec, went to Fang in the spring to prune fruit trees, to use the last reserves of hay for grazing animals, and to plant trees or crops. Then they went to the villages above, the *mayens*, (groups of small houses situated in the middle mountain pastures), and up to Alpine pastures, returning to Fang in summer and autumn.

As of 1970, there were only eight persons living year-round in Fang (see the movie "*Fang, l'âme de mon pays*" Fang, the soul of my country. Valais Media, CEVIS 88-49). In 1973, a journalist asked about the reasons for the abandonment of the village, and Jean Zuber replied: "*There is no work here, no pub, no shop, no school. The work of the countryside is hard and it is no longer profitable nowadays.*"

At the end of the 1990s, Yvonne Jollien, a group of villagers and the "Société du village" decided to make every effort to bring Fang out of its oblivion. The village was brought to life in the eyes of Anniviards and tourists, by setting up tours, an exhibition, a small museum, a web site ([www.fang.ch](http://www.fang.ch)) along with the publication of a book.



Berclaz Family, around 1954

# 1. Old road of Anniviers



On the old road near the stable in Fang, 1934

➤ If you go to Fang by bus, get off at Fang d'en-haut near the bus stop on the main road. If you are driving, follow the road to Fang d'en-haut and park near the welcome sign.

Here, you are on the old Anniviers mule road used between 1502 and 1856 by all those who travelled between the Rhone valley and the Val d'Anniviers.

The present road was built in 1856, following a different path. Located 100 m higher, it was very curvy and narrow until 1954. The first postal buses arrived in Vissoie in 1926. Later, in 1954, the

road was widened and changed, largely because of the construction of the Moiry dam.

Until the 1970s, a number of stables lined the main road. The people of Saint-Luc and Chandolin stored their wagons and equipment, before undertaking the long climb to their villages on mules. In those times, these trails were the only way to reach the towns. The first road to Saint-Luc dates from the early 1930's and the Chandolin road from the 1960's. Before the construction of these roads, Fang played the role of the "wagon storage" for travellers on their way to the Grand Hotel Chandolin, but also for the mule drivers who were in charge of transport. The stable in Fang had room for two wagons and belonged to several owners. Following the development work on the Anniviers road, the storage buildings disappeared, except those at the Crêtes.

➤ Follow the road to the village and go up to the chapel.

**"In the past, these trails were the only access roads between the valley of the Rhone and the Val d'Anniviers. "**



Welcome Sign

## 2. Chapel of Saint-Germain



Saint-Germain Chapel today

The construction of the chapel of Fang dates back to 1863. It replaced a much older chapel.

The first chapel at Fang, located below the current one (at the location of the White House), was demolished in 1860, subsequent to blasphemous acts.

The chapel is dedicated to Saint Germain d'Auxerre, invoked to protect against the invasions of crickets and grasshoppers suffered by crops in the past.

The choir, in the Baroque style with polychrome wood, is enriched with statuettes dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the center is the statue of Saint-Germain, with, to his right, Sainte-Apolline, patron saint of dentists. On the right, Saint-Théodule, first bishop of Sion and on the left, Saint-John the Baptist. The statue of the Virgin and Child, in the upper niche, is Gothic, probably from the fourteenth century.

The windows represent the dove of peace (above the door), the Eucharist with the chalice, bread and wine as well as the Creation. They were made by Gérald Devanthery from Réchy, between 2008 and 2010.

Until the 1970s, the bell of the chapel rang as a call for prayer, for Mass, but also in case of deaths. Until the 1980s, a Mass was celebrated every week. Since 2011, a Mass is celebrated every second Wednesday of the month. Every year on the last Saturday of July, the village celebrates Saint-Germain.

➤ Go back down the stairs and turn left before arriving on the main street. Continue past the house, dated 1856 on your left to reach the next location, situated above, on the left.



Altar of the chapel



### 3. Mulberry Tree



Mulberry today

This mulberry tree is very special. Its leaves were used to feed silkworms, while its fruits were probably used for dyeing cloth (blue ocher).

The only examples of this tree in the Val d'Anniviers are in Fang. There are five in the village and two in Barmes. Aged about 150 years, they are still in good condition, as young shoots continue to grow out of the old trunks. The mulberry tree was brought to Fang by foreign workers. In the past, almost every house had a tree nearby.

Native to India, the mulberry was imported via Italy or France. Silk production in Europe ceased with the opening of the Suez Canal which allowed the importation of silk that was less expensive.

➤ Return to the principal path. On the way by, have a look at the house at the beginning of the path, to your right. Formerly, it had a special feature: a rock in the middle of its kitchen, on the ground floor. The next building on the left, is the so-called "Transhumance" House (seasonal migration house).



Road and old mulberry tree, right

## 4. "Transhumance" House



The house today

This house is made up of two parts: the southern part, the oldest, was built on four floors in 1747, while the three-storey northwestern part was built in 1805.

The house was the object of renovation work in the 1980s. In the past, the house had seven lodgings, consisting of a bedroom and a kitchen.

Many Anniviards possessed a rudimentary house in Fang, but also a barn-stable, a raccard, granaries and cellars that were shared by multiple owners.



Drawing of the old house, in the past

Formerly, "transhumance" (seasonal migration), called "*remuage*" was the lifestyle of Anniviards. They moved with livestock, from the valley of the Rhone to the mountains, according to the seasons, and depending on the needs of the animals and the different work to be carried out in the fields, on the crops and in vineyards. That's why they had more than one home. A family, for example, that periodically resided in Fang, moved constantly between Veyras or Muraz (near Sierre), Fang, Soussillon, Chandolin or Saint-Luc.

> Walk down the main path to the next location. After the basin that dates from 1925, the year of the installation of running water in the village, on a rock on the right path, is the oldest house in Fang.



## 5. Museum House



The Museum House today

**Built in 1718, this house was restored in 1997 and converted into a small museum of the life in times gone by of its owners.**

This old peasant house has a bedroom and a kitchen on the first floor. On the ground floor was a stable for cows.

In the past, homes here had neither running water nor electricity. In the kitchen with a dirt floor, there was a hearth with the "bronze", a pot hanging on a chain.

*"People lived on very little: logic, common sense, and above all know-how. They were involved in several activities at once: vineyards, agriculture, livestock, wood preparation, respecting the seasons; each thing in its own time!"*

*They nourished themselves with what nature gave them and ate seasonal products. In the spring, small wild vegetables: spinach, watercress, dandy lions, nettle soup with the new potatoes. In summer, the meals were more varied, more mealy: with starches, potatoes, beans, peas, carrots, beans. In the autumn, their diet made way for large vegetables: cabbage, leeks, and carrots, accompanied by salted pork.*

**"They nourished themselves with what nature gave them and ate seasonal products."**

*They ate polenta, barley, generous soups, that were made with everything available, rice pudding, the "tsougdelet" (flour grilled with butter and boiled, either with wine and sugar, or with milk) so many delicious dishes that were on the tables of all families. (From "Fang au Val d'Anniviers" Yvonne Jollien Berclaz, Ed. À la Carte).*

Visits are possible. Reservations necessary: please contact Berthe Antille.

➤ Continue along the path to the mill and the Fang stream.



The Museum House, view from the south today

## 6. Mill



The mill in the past

This mill, built at the end of the 1700s, operated until 1954. Damaged by a landslide, it was unusable for a long time.

In 1992, the former municipality of Chandolin decided to renovate it, respecting its hydraulic and manual operating system. While it is manual this mill does have an automatic function. Indeed, once the grain is milled, the system stops, thanks to a piece that drops down and blocks the water that turns the wheel horizontally.

**“In 1999, for the first time since 1954, grain was ground and villagers, with the flour obtained were again able to bake in their bread oven.”**



Antille Martin, the last miller of Fang and his family in 1940

Fulling mill «foulon» in 1930

In 1999, for the first time since 1954, grain was ground and villagers, with the flour obtained were again able to bake bread in their oven.

Formerly, near the mill, there was a fulling “foulon” mill that was used to crush fruits (for example: apples to make cider), but also hemp and flax.

➤ Near the bridge, downstream, one can observe the traditional water supply system leading from the stream to the fields.

## 7. Bisse and walnut trees



The bisse today



The bisse and a walnut tree today

The irrigation canal, called *bisse*, was carried through hollowed larch wood trunks, known for their strength and resistance.

The intake of the Fang d'en-bas *bisse* was recently rebuilt respecting the original model.

Continuing along the path to Fang du-milieu one can admire walnut trees that are over a hundred years old. Walnut and fruit trees grow everywhere in Fang. These trees are symbolic of the old life when surpluses were rare, and each fruit was important. The nuts from Fang were transported to Saint-Luc where a nut press extracted oil for lamps. Everything was used, nuts, but also, for example, the wood of the vines (wild Clematis) that grow near walnut trees. This was used in the place of tobacco.

➤ Enjoy these quiet places, and then continue along the path to the granary on your left.

## 8. Community granary



The Roczec granary today



Detail of the granary

The Roczec granary, located in Fang du-milieu, is a fine example of a community granary. It was used to keep the provisions, such as cereals, dried meat, bacon, bread, flour, dried fruit, but also sometimes the clothing used for festivals.

The granary was in some sense the ancestor of the refrigerator. Refrigerators and freezers arrived in Anniviers, between 1950 and 1960, but not in every home.

The granary, with nine doors that open onto compartments, was used by many individuals. The granary, like the *raccard*, is placed on wooden stilts, topped by large flat stones that prevent mice and other rodents from penetrating inside the building. The *grenier* is like the *raccard* but by closely observing these constructions, it becomes apparent that they are different. The walls of the granary are made of tightly stacked larch wood beams, to prevent insects from entering, attracted by the meat and food, while the structure of the *raccard* is more irregular.

➤ Follow the path up to the *raccard* that is on your right



## 9. Barn / Raccard



*Raccard, before restoration*

This *raccard*, which probably dates from the eighteenth century, was restored in 2007.

The *raccard* is an important element in the cycle of the different parts of the work that lead from the field to obtaining flour: from the field to the *raccard*, from the *raccard* to the winnowing, and from the winnowing to the mill.

In September, wheat, rye, oats and corn, were brought to the *raccard* in bales and spread out on the balconies in the sun. Once properly dried, the bales were brought inside. The beams of the *raccard* walls are spaced to allow air to circulate and to promote drying.

In November, the stems were beaten with a flail. Men standing in a circle, sang and drank, while working. At this time of year, the barns resonated to the music and rhythm of the flails: "One, two, three, four, bis, bis." Then the grain was winnowed. The wheat separated from the chaff was placed in jute bags, while the straw was, among other purposes, to feed livestock.

**"The beams of raccard walls are spaced to allow air to circulate and promote drying."**

➤ Follow the road for a few metres up to the house on the left.



*Raccard today*

## 10. Old House



House, before work in 1998

This old house, where the first floor date dates from 1776, was renovated in 1998. It has the distinction of having been built on three floors, with the ground floor, narrower than the upper two floors. In addition, its north face is in stone, and has a rounded shape.

Several houses in Fang have a ground floor that is narrower than the upper floors. In the past, it was certainly important, to save the land and on the other hand, to enlarge the house, according to the needs of the family and the increasing number of its members. This type of house is found everywhere in the Alps. By reducing the area of the house on the ground, the owners paid less in tax.

The style of this house is similar to that of some Hungarian homes. Sources referring to authors like Bourrit in 1781, as well as Desor and Fischer, claim that the Huns came to Anniviers after the de-



Drawing of the house

feat of Attila (451 AD). This assumption is based on the results of observations conducted in Hungary and in Anniviers about the local dialect (*patois*), and of the etymology of place names and proper names as well as the morphological characteristics of the inhabitants of the two countries and the style of their buildings. Although this view is not supported by historians, following the publication of "Valaisans descendants d'Attila" by Bernard Savioz, Ed. La Matze in 1985, sometimes Hungarians have come to seek clues in Anniviers to prove their common origins.

**"The style of this house is similar to that of some Hungarian homes."**

➤ The next stop is the bread oven, just in front, on your right.

## 11. Bread Oven



Bread oven today



Bread oven and former goat pen, right

This oven, which dates from 1800, was restored in 1997 after 50 years of inactivity. An earthquake put it out of service in 1946.

Thus, the villagers stopped making their bread. At that time, mountain villages were emptied of their populations. Because of the gradual abandonment of agriculture, families no longer had enough flour to make bread, and they became accustomed to buying everything in Vissoie. In the past, bread was made three times a year. On the day of breadmaking, the oven was lit at dawn and kept warm all day. Having become very dry and hard after months of storage, the rolls were cut with an axe and then dipped in coffee, milk or wine, to be consumed. Every year, on the celebration day of the Patron saint, the oven was used to cook no less than two hundred loaves. Behind the oven there was once a goat pen. From May 1 to November 1, children cared for the thirty to forty goats of Fang.

➤ The beehives are located a few metres down the road.

## 12. Beehives



Beehives today

Built in the 1990s, the beehives are home to more than two million bees that take advantage of the abundant surrounding flowers, especially the linden trees. Several people in Fang have bees, but this beehive farm is the most important.

Walti Zuber, the owner, explains his passion: *“Honey is frequently mentioned in the Bible. Solomon in the book of Proverbs advises eating honey. For Jews, honey develops intelligence and spirit. According to the Qur’an, honey is a healthy food and an excellent remedy. The Prophet Muhammad said that honey is a cure for all ills. The fascinating process of making honey begins when bees visit flowers. They suck the nectar that mixes with special enzymes in their saliva. It is this process that turns the nectar into honey. The beating of their wings ventilates it, by lowering the humidity and thus making it fit for consumption. ”*



## 13. Old School



A bee foraging



Beehives

On request, Walti Zuber (078 606 14 16) explains the life cycle of the bee, from birth to death, and the process of making honey.

➤ To reach the next location, follow the road (old road to Fang), until the new road (1928-1930) which leads to Fang d'en-bas.



Building of the old school

This building housed the school from 1920 until 1964. It was built by two brothers, who emigrated to America in 1870 to escape poverty, as many Swiss did at that time.

The building of the former school, located in Fang du-milieu, was partially destroyed by an explosion in 1906. That year, two hundred Italians were working on the channeling of the Navisence river. In Fang they were housed in barns, stables and the first floor of the school. A soapstone stove, which probably contained a reserve of dynamite exploded, injuring several workers.



School in Fang, 1964

The former municipality of Chandolin, at the initiative of the school teacher of the time, bought the building, located in Fang d'en-bas, in order to transform it into a school.

The school was the first to have electricity when the village of Fang was partially connected to the power line in 1935-1936. Until 1955, each family had only one lamp for the main room. The other rooms were still lit with kerosene.

In the past, at different periods, students were very numerous. During Lent, the school moved, at the same time as the majority of the villagers to the valley of the Rhone. Only a few people remained to Fang.

In 1911, in the school of Fang, there were more than twenty-seven students. The school was too small, so they were forced to sit in turns to write, otherwise, most of the time they were standing. Between 1920 and 1940, twenty-five to thirty students attended school in Fang, six months a year, from early November to early May.

After 1945, the number of students decreased gradually. The younger generations left the village in search of work and a better life. In 1960, the school of Fang had only five to six students. In 1964, with only four students all from the family of Jean Zuber, it closed its doors. From that date, students from Fang went to the primary school in Vissoie and, as of 1973, like all Anniviers students, to the school Centre d'Anniviers in Vissoie.

**" The school was too small, so they were forced to sit in turns to write, otherwise, most of the time they were standing."**

After 1964 the school became the house of the township. In 2007-2008, the former town of Chandolin completely renovated the building creating two rooms for about forty people (available by reservation through the municipality of Anniviers).

# Suggested Visits

## Ruins

In winter, the path may not be usable depending on snow conditions.

➤ From the parking area of Fang d'en-bas, follow the road and take the path in the bend on the right. Continue straight, then turn left and go down to the raccard located in the forest. A little further on, under the trees, lie the ruins of the old village of Fang.

A survey was carried out in the early 2000's. The site consists of buildings in ruins, oriented to the north, probably from the first millennium. A perimeter wall most probably protected the area. The houses were built with the stone blocks present on the site. The bases were made of stone and the upper part in wood.

The technique of wall building is ancient and still offers indisputable advantages. Dry stonewalls are more resistant to frost than masonry. Different construction techniques, dry walls and walls with mortar, show that there were several residential phases.

*"The remains of walls still visible belong to a habitation, whose oldest parts date back in all probability to the Middle Ages. The general concept (a protective wall, irregular house planning adapted to the terrain, walls in rough stone blocks) evokes the abandoned site of Giättrich, dated between the Middle Ages and the Late Middle Ages (11th to 15th centuries). The visible traces may therefore go back to the year 1000, which corresponds to the literary tradition beginning in the 12th and 13th centuries in Anniviers. In inhabited areas occupied all year, areas not disturbed by later construction are very rare in the Alps. Consequently, the site of Fang / Tiébagette is an archaeological research subject of the first order."* (Excerpt from the report of the archaeologist Werner Meyer, 2003). If you would like to book a tour, contact Yvonne Jollien (079 548 41 74).

➤ The second most important ruin site is upstream. Follow the forest road on your right to the chalet Othmar at a place called "La Schanneille".

## Joseph Rouaz Farm.

➤ An old building, called the Joseph Rouaz Farm and chapel are located downstream from Fang, at a place called Les Tsampelets, on the side of Vissoie.

The history of the farm and the chapel is closely linked to that of the Prefect Joseph Rouaz (1802-1893). It was he who, having acquired the land, undertook to transform this land covered with bushes into fertile meadows. He built a house and a chapel, whose bell tower was equipped with a railway station bell.

## Old farm

➤ A little further, on the side of Fang, one can see the ruins of an old farm.

These are the ruins cited by Erasme Zufferey as those of a feudal farm belonging to Willencus Octo in 1312. In more recent times, until the 1950s, it was used as a dwelling by people of St-Luc, Pinsec and in the last instance, Fang. Having become very dilapidated and dangerous, in 1979, the farm was burned during an exercise of the Anniviers firefighters. Its ruins still give an idea of the former importance of this building.



## Bisse des Sarrasins

In winter, this path may not be accessible depending on snow conditions.

➤ From Fang d'en-bas, follow the path that leads to the Navisence via the Barratier bridge. Then take the path towards the Meya-la Rocha that joins the route of the path of the bisse.

This *bisse* located between Pinsec and Vercorin, was built in the 11th century to bring water from the stream at Pinsec to the plateau of Briey and thus to water the *mayens* on this slope. According to legend, it was the Sarrasins (or Moors), who built it. It was abandoned around 1835, following a fatal accident, and was virtually forgotten for nearly two centuries.

After the first work by Gerard Lamon on the Pinsec-Creux de Crouja sector, the mountain guide Stéphane Albasini rehabilitated the most elevated part of the bisse located in the large cliffs below Vercorin. Since then, the *Circuit des Trois Bisses* (Tour of the Three bisses) is proposed. Information : [www.montagne-evasion.ch](http://www.montagne-evasion.ch).

The site ([www.sarrasins.ch](http://www.sarrasins.ch)), created by Sébastien Antille for the Association of the Bisse des Sarrasins, presents further work, begun in 2006 and taken on by the municipality of Anniviers, to make the Pinsec-Vercorin section accessible to walkers.

## Texts

Yvonne Jollien-Berclaz.

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## Images and photos

Family photo album, drawing and photos of Yvonne Jollien-Berclaz ; Archives E. Crettaz-Stürzel, Zinal, reproductions of la Maison Rurale Valaisanne, Brigue/Sion ; Recent photos of Walty Zuber, Adriana Tenda Claude.

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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 »

Cover Photo : Village of Fang

Backcover photo : Site of the ruins of old Fang, today

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