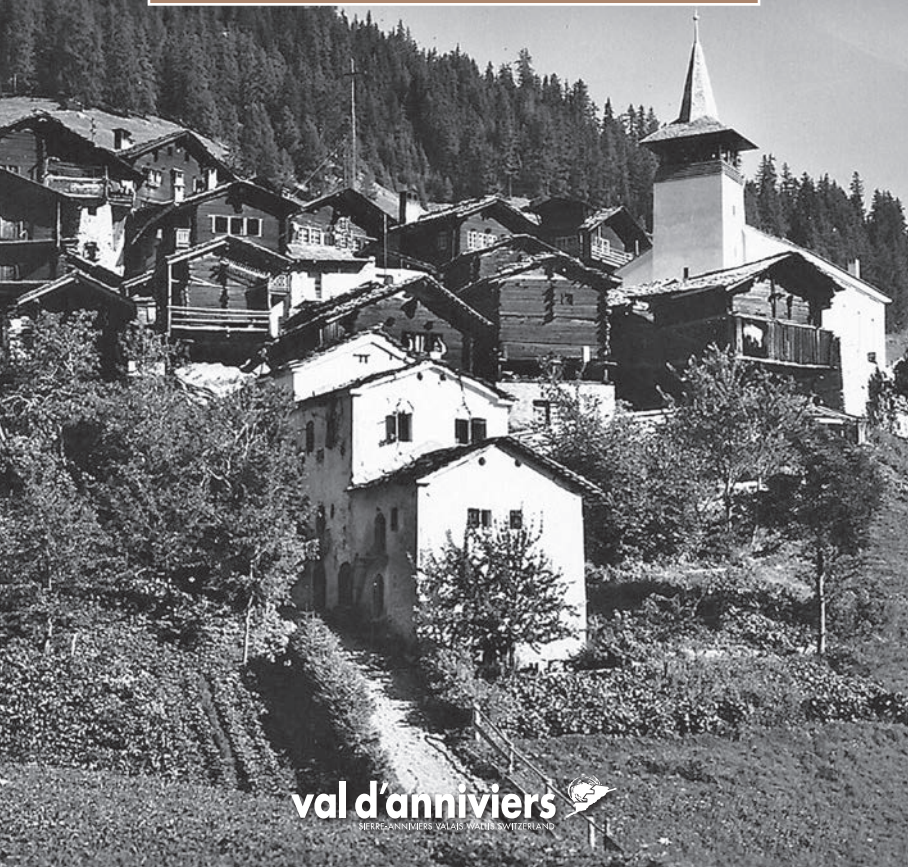


GRIMENTZ

HISTORICAL PATH IN GRIMENTZ



Map of Grimentz



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Introduction to Grimentz



Winter view of the village, about 1930



Resident in costume, in summer

Welcome to Grimentz! This town in the municipality of Anniviers has about 400 year round residents and an availability of 6,000 tourist beds. Grimentz is proud to introduce you to the charm of its main street, with its numerous *roâs*, alleys that cross the village up and down, its barns blackened by time and flowering balconies full of geraniums in the summer season.

“Because of the typical character of its centre, Grimentz is considered one of the most traditional villages of Valais.”

Enter this picturesque village situated at an altitude of 1572 meters and you leave seduced by its authenticity. Because of the typical character of its centre, Grimentz is considered one of the most traditional villages of Valais.

Do not be taken in by its name that comes from the Burgundian “Grimo” which means angry, or fearful... but tame it by following its pathways and by reading some of the comments and anecdotes. Soak up its history by crossing the village and admiring its beauty.

Some strategic points scattered in the old village, will make you discover its unique and charming history, transcribed in this circuit to arouse your curiosity and present the particularities of Grimentz, and how people lived.

Many pleasures await those who take the time to discover this old authentic village.

Grimentz over time



Saint-Théodule Chapel, circa 1912

In the 11th century the “ Grim-
iens ” (former name of Gri-
mentz) belonged to the Lords of
Granges, and then to the Bishop
Aymon of Savoy.

In the 13th century, Grimentz be-
gins to form a community and in
the 14th century appears as one
of the four Districts of the Val d’
Anniviers, Vissoie with Saint-Luc
(formerly named Luc) and Ayer.

Over the years the community is
strengthened and becomes pros-
perous. The bourgeoisie/residents
can build their own houses, buy
vineyards in the Sierre area, as
well as pastures and mills.

In the past, the people of Grimentz like most Anniviards, lived part
of the year in the valley of the Rhone. They travelled on foot, with
mules to carry their affairs. It was the time of transhumance that
lasted into the 1950s.

In the late nineteenth century, a road between Sierre and Vissoie
was built. Yet it was only at the beginning of the twentieth century
that the connection to Grimentz was created. Half a century later
the Vissoie-Grimentz road was paved, mostly for the purposes of
the construction of the Moiry dam.

Tourism developed in the years 1960-1970, although summer
tourism had begun much earlier, as evidenced by the construction
of the first hotels: The Alamarenda (1897) and the Hotel de Moiry
(1925).

The committee of the “ Société de développement ”, founded in
1930, made plans to open an office whose duties would be tak-
ing reservations for chalets and hotel rooms, and booking ski les-
sons, but also to organize excursions and currency exchange ser-
vices. The Tourist Office was inaugurated in 1969. A few months
later, the Bourgeoisie voted a credit of
200,000 francs in favour of the ski lifts.
As a result, Grimentz then developed its
tourist infrastructure.

**“The people of Gri-
mentz, like most Anni-
viards lived part of the
year in the valley of the
Rhone. ”**



Old street in front of the Tourist Office, 1910

1. Roads



Old street in the past



New road and Hotel Alamarenda, in the past

The Grimentz historic visit starts in front of the Tourist Office in the neighbourhood of the first hotels: Alamarenda (1897) and Moiry (1925). A panel above the entrance of the Becs-de-Bosson restaurant, represents one of the oldest hotel owners of the resort, Aloys Rauch “king of raclette.”

Three generations of roads mark the entrance of the village.

The first access to Grimentz, “La Golettaz ” (XIII century), which carries a name that means slide, or timber slide in local dialect was extended through the village by a paved road. This second road was opened in 1919, when water arrived by pipeline in the village. The third route, called “Route Neuve, ”(*new road*) was created for the construction of the Moiry dam, which began in 1954.

➤ Continue to the entrance of the old village.



La Golettaz, circa 1912



Paved road and Hotel Moiry in the 1950's

2. House of the Bourgeoisie



House of the Bourgeoisie and its cross in the centre, about 1920

The House of the Bourgeoisie is one of the oldest buildings in Grimentz. It was built between 1480 and 1550 for the needs of the local community.

Belonging to a “bourgeoisie” gave members priority access to its services, such as the mill and the sawmill, but especially permitted the integration into the community. Each year and still today, the Bourgeois participate, within its walls, in the *journée des Rogations* which is akin to a general meeting.

Inside the building, several rooms lined in wood reflect its long history. A cellar contains barrels of wine including the famous wine of the Glacier. A barrel dedicated to the bishop still contains wine of 1886. It is only

“The House of the Bourgeoisie is one of the oldest buildings in Grimentz. ”



The wine cellar of the Bourgeoisie in the past

opened during major events such as the arrival of a Federal Councillor or the bishop. Every year it is topped off with wine from a barrel that dates from 1888.

Above the front door, rebuilt in 1947, Sainte-Agathe, patron saint of fire, watches over the house and the village. To the left and right of the entrance, one can discover old rules and a 500-year old larch trunk.

At the northeast corner of the House of the Bourgeoisie, there is a fifteen-metre high cross. Erected in 1873, it protects the village against fire and the elements.

➤ The next location is located just opposite the House of the Bourgeoisie.

3. Granaries



Granary, today

These granaries date from the seventeenth century. This type of construction, built on pilotis, was dictated by the need to prevent rodents from attacking provisions (dried meat, bread, flour).

All the staples of families were stored here. The *grenier* and its precious commodities were essential to survival.

Field crops such as wheat, barley or rye, were kept in the *raccards*, located just outside of the village. The latter, unlike the *greniers*, were much more ventilated to prevent mould from forming.

➤ Continue along the lane, until the square with a fountain animated by a sculpture representing fighting Hérens cows.

4. Parish House

Behind the fountain is the Parish house. Its front side is decorated with a mosaic representing Saint-Théodule, patron saint of the town. By going down, you can see the wooden part of the building, which was recently restored, with its friezes and floral decorations.

➤ Continue to the church.

The parish house was built in two stages, the first part in timber dates from 1831. The ground floor housed the kindergarten until 2012.

In the 1930s, about thirty children aged from 7 to 14-15 years went to class together, from November to April. As some children left the village in February, to follow their parents who descended to the valley of the Rhone to look after the fields and vineyards, the main teacher remained in the village, while a teacher from the valley of the Rhone gave classes to children from Grimentz, in the Villa neighbourhood of Sierre. Today this building has become a private dwelling.

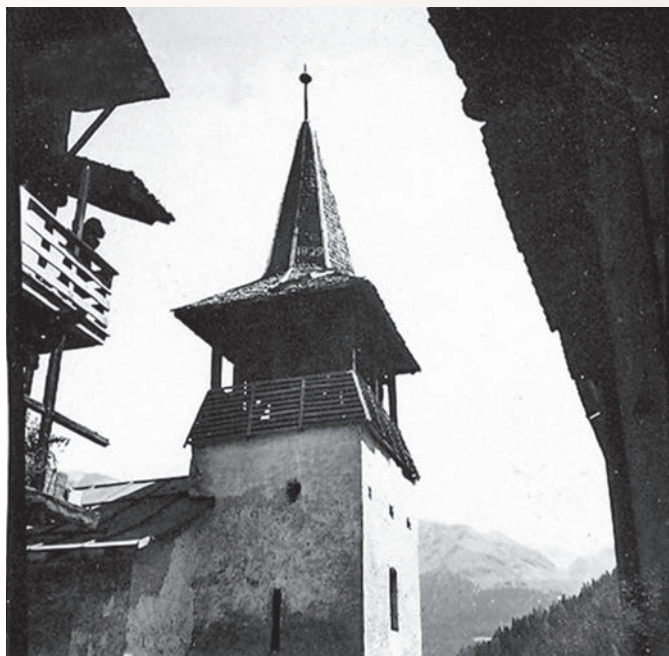


Parish house and church, in the past



Parish house today

5. Parish Church of Saint-Théodule



Church of Saint-Théodule, in the past

The parish church of Grimentz, dedicated to Saint-Théodule, is the most recently built church in the valley. Built in 1828-1831, it was rebuilt in 1950-1951, because it was feared that the old arch might collapse subsequent to the 1946 earthquake.

On the bell tower, you can see the belfry and spire (wooden part) that came from the old bell tower (1831).

On the front, two niches contain the statues of Saint-Peter and Saint-Paul, who were probably in the choir of the first church.



Saint-Théodule Church and Trontsec Chapel in 1913

In 1989, the choir was renovated and two stained glass windows on the themes of water and fire, were added. They were designed and produced by Christine Crittin-Rion, an inhabitant of the village. The windows of the nave are the work of Paul Monnier.

The cemetery, which dates from 1934, has identical crosses and graves of the same dimensions, meant to recall that we are all equal in the afterlife. The only exception is the grave of the priest Alexander Boitzky occupying two plots. The people had decided to honour the only priest who is buried there.

➤ Follow the small path down in front of the church.

6. White Cellars/Caves Blanches



White Cellars, before 1949



Beams finished with an axe

Now you plunge into the “unknown “ heart of the village. Down the road, stop for a moment in front of three small cellar doors and notice the axe-hewn beams, that attest to the age of this building.

At the end of this path, down, on your left are the White Cellars, symbol of Grimentz. Built in 1850 as a summer residence and hunting lodge by the prefect of the district Joseph Rouaz, these buildings were divided into apartments, attics and cellars.

Rooms were intended to keep the archives of the prefect and notary Rouaz. Some wine cellars, including that of the “ Société de développement “ of Grimentz / Saint-Jean, are still used today to keep the wine of the Glacier.

➤ Step back and follow the path on your left, towards the tennis courts and skating rink.

7. Vegetable Gardens



Vegetable gardens, in the 1920's

In these gardens potatoes, leeks, lettuce, spinach and other vegetables are grown. Formerly, raspberries and beans were not customary in these plots.

When you have reached the bridge, turn around and admire one of the most beautiful views of the village architecture with its overlapping succession of shingled roofs and its protective cross watching over the inhabitants and their homes. This is the best view you will find on the old village.

“Formerly, raspberries and beans were not customary in these plots. ”

➤ Continue to the small building to the left of the rise.

8. Bread Chamber, Bread Oven and Slaughterhouse



Bread oven (white house on the left), 1939 Four banal today

This white house was once home to the slaughterhouse in its lower part, and above the bread chamber and oven. This is where families would come, each in turn, to make their bread for the season, only four times a year.

As it could bake about 120 rye breads at a time, families had enough reserve until their next turn.

Bread, which became harder with time, was cut with an axe, and then soaked in milk, coffee or soup.

In season, those interested can participate in the weekly production of rye bread (contact the Tourist Office).

➤ Continue to the main street of the village, at the top of the slope.

9. Mill and Sawmill



The mill in the past

This was the centre of village life in the past, made up of the mill, the sawmill, the bread oven, the bread room and the slaughterhouse.

The mill, built in about 1819, was decommissioned in 1994. It now serves as a location for the organisation of parties and festivals. Its exterior and part of the old saws were kept, so as not to forget its past use and to show how it worked.

10. Former Dairy

The photo below shows the mill in the early 20th century, when it was operated by a vertical water wheel.

The mill was heavily damaged by a landslide caused by the overflow of the Marais stream in the spring of 1999. It was rebuilt with original materials and according to the model of the old mill of the seventeenth century. It is one of the few mills to be operated only by horizontal blades driven directly by water without a complex mechanism.

A fountain dedicated to the mill workers is located on the other side of the bridge. A vertical water wheel, recalling the old sawmill, makes the workers saw

a tree trunk in its length. This is one of three thematic, animated fountains of the village, with the fountain of fighting cows, noted above, and that of the baker. Built in 1996, it was destroyed, like the mill, in 1999. Following this destruction, the " Association du Patrimoine du village de Grimentz " which was created by people from different backgrounds in order to preserve the village's old-fashioned charm, has rebuilt it in nearly identical form

➤ Continue a few meters further to the dairy.



The mill in the early twentieth century



Former dairy today



Vital Vouardoux milking in 1940-1949

This building is an important element in the life of the past, when milk was essential to the farming economy.

Until the 1960s, at the beginning of the summer season, when cows were at the Avoine pasture (above Grimentz), milk came directly to the dairy by a specially designed pipe. An iron tool was knocked on the pipe to warn that the milk was coming. The sound reverberated to the dairy and the milk churns were placed so that they could be filled with the precious liquid.

"This building is an important element in the life of the past, when milk was essential in the farming economy. "

➤ Retrace your steps, and go about fifty metres after the bridge.

11. Village Street



Place de la Claire Fontaine, area 1925

The Village Street opens up to you. The view is gorgeous between the cobblestone streets and wooden houses, that are flowered in summer.

The flowering of the village continues an old tradition, which officially dates back to 1831, when the inhabitants, after building their new church, decided to decorate it. This tradition gives rise to the annual flowered balcony competition, the result of which was announced on August 16, the day of Saint-Théodule, the patron saint of the village, until 2010. Since 2011, the results are given on August 15.

As you go by, observe the fountain of the baker. Just after the restaurant on your left, look at the old gate with its framing arc forming a semicircle above the door, the keystone of which is dated 1510. This framework was made with *cargneule de Moiry* stone (Basset de Lona) certainly brought to the village by mule.



With the mule in the old village, in 1947

While continuing along the street, note the houses, most of which date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They all have the same characteristics: larch beams darkened by rain and sun, and different construction phases. The houses were enlarged as needed, as the families grew. Large families lived in small homes. For example, a family of eleven people (the parents, their eight children born between 1917 and 1931 and the grandfather) lived in a house consisting of two rooms and a kitchen.

➤ Continue to Place du Chaudron, located right on the rue du Village. On the way by, note the covered fountain to the left.

12. Place du Chaudron



Place du Cauldron and granary today

This small square is named after the large pot on the right. Before the dam, completed in 1958, there were two pastures in the valley of Moiry: the Torrent pasture located on the left bank of the Gougra and that of Château-Pré on the right bank.

When they were engulfed by the waters of the dam, a new pasture named Moiry was created a little higher up. Neither of the old names were used in order not to offend people who grazed their livestock in one or the other of the former pastures. The pot of Château-Pré was donated to the " Société de développement du village " who decided to display it on this site. It is in this large pot that cheese was made.

Approaching the barrier, one can admire the largest granary (*grenier*) of the village that belonged to sixteen families. The ground floor in masonry was used as a residence in the fourteenth century.

➤ After a detour to the road that goes in front of the square, go up the stairs on the right, in order to reach the next location on the tour: the basin.

13. Basin of the Place des Lavandières



Washerwomen today



Current basin

Dated 1919, this basin was used by washerwomen of the village and to bring animals to drink.

Inside the basin, one can see the small ledge on which women supported their washing boards. The largest portion of the basin was used to wash the laundry and the smaller part for rinsing. A regulation prohibited washing before 8 am and after 4pm, so that the water would be clean and safe for the livestock.

" Dated 1919, this basin was used by washerwomen of the village and to bring animals to drink. "

Northeast of the basin, observe the old house with its small windows. A legend says that one morning in 1600, six dead were taken from this house, victims of the plague.

➤ The next location on the tour is just behind the basin.

14. Museum House

This building, which is one of the oldest of the village, shows several stages of construction, one of which dates from 1529. The three small windows are original.

Just above the basin, note the beam that emerges from the building. Sometimes the floor boards inside the house were laid before the wood was completely dry. The wooden element that could be tapped on was added to permit the tightening of the floor planks as they dried.



Museumhouse today

In 2009, the "Association for the Heritage of Grimentz " acquired the ground floor of this building, in order to reconstruct a typical home of the nineteenth century, which was due to open to the public in 2015.

Go around the house to see the entrance and the pigsty. Note in passing the style of these old houses and their axe-hewn wooden beams.

➤ After a few steps, return to the main street.

15. Place du Coher



In the centre a house with an added upper section

You are on the Place du Coher. "Coher " is a word in dialect that cannot be translated in a single term. It was the place reserved for discussion, where the elders met to talk about life in the village.

Observe the house next to the cross. It was added to in three successive stages in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. On the top floor, to the right of the roof ridge, the date 1791 is inscribed.

In the centre of the square, the cross is made with a single piece of wood with a height of 21.8 meters. It is said to have twisted under the effect of moonlight. Behind it, one can admire, the tallest house in the village, 15 metres high.

The historical visit of Grimentz ends here, but feel free to stroll through the village via its paths and streets that hide many wonders of the built heritage of the town. Every Monday or on request, the " Société de développement " of Grimentz-Saint-Jean organizes a guided tour.

Suggested Visits



The tallest village house

Cup stones

➤ A small detour to the Ilot Bosquet will allow you to make a leap in time.

The stone cups, witness to an ancient civilization, are mysteries waiting to be discovered on this site.

A booklet is available in the Anniviers Tourist Offices.

Moiry Dam

➤ Within a ten minute drive, you can admire the impressive arch of the Moiry dam.

The dam, located at 2250 m, is 148 meters high, and was built between 1954 and 1958. It now allows the production of energy sufficient for 120,000 households.

Dam tours are offered in summer. Moiry is also the starting point for many excursions and activities.

Notrehistoire.ch

The first Internet platform dedicated to the audio visual archives of Western Switzerland notrehistoire.ch was launched in 2009 by the Foundation for the Protection of Audio Visual Heritage, Radio Television Suisse. This site, participatory and free, which has been repeatedly acclaimed at national and international level, shares historical documents, especially photos, and videos.

Michel Savioz from Vissoie is the host of several groups linked to the Val d'Anniviers. The site is a gold mine.



Grimentz, in the 1930's-1939

Cover photo: Grimentz in the 1930's
 Backcover photo: Scex de Marena, the "new road" and the Hotel Alamarena, in the past.

Texts

The itinerary, established by Maurice Loye, Jean Vouardoux and Clément Salamin in 2000, was reformulated in 2013 by Emilie Salamin Ducourtill with the participation of Mariette Salamin.

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Images and photos

Collection of old postcards of Paulon Massy, Marco Epiney, Geneviève Mandrola, Simon Epiney; old photo of cow milking of Yves Vouardoux; recent photos of Adriana Tenda Claude.

Religious Heritage

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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 ».

Sponsors:



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