

Leuk (community)

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Author: Alois Grichting

Political municipality of the canton of Valais, capital of the district of the same name, since 2013 with Erschmatt (/de/articles/002715/2017-01-04/) . Located on the slope to the right of the Rhone between the Dala Gorge and Feschelbach, Leuk-Stadt is surrounded by vineyards and, with its medieval castle, towers and old stone houses, is reminiscent of small northern Italian towns. In addition to Leuk-Stadt, the municipality also includes the village of Susten im Talboden on the left bank of the Rhone and the hamlets of Brianen, Feithieren, Gampinen and Pfyn on the left bank. 515 *villa de Leuca* , French Loèche. 1850 1042 inhabitants; 1900 1592; 1950 2336; 2000 3361.

Leuk was already inhabited in pre-Roman times, as evidenced by isolated grave finds with poppy-head pins, brooches and belt hooks from the La Tène period. In the 6th century, Leuk belonged to the crown estate of the Burgundian king Sigismund, who gave it to the Abbey of Saint-Maurice. The Romanized Celtic population of Leuk was gradually Germanized around the turn of the millennium by immigrating Alemanni, but still had a strong Romansh minority in the 14th century.



In the early and high Middle Ages, Leuk repeatedly changed hands until it was finally incorporated into the canteen of the Bishop of Sitten in 1138. The ecclesiastical lords promoted Leuk's development through certified concessions: in 1209 Leuk had its own measure, in 1285 its hospital and in 1310 a goods trust on the old trade route between northern Italy and the markets of Champagne with regulations for the carters. The episcopal feudal bearers Viztum and Meier built the bishop's palace (Meier's seat) and the viztum tower. As early as the 14th century, the Burgschaft Leuk consisted of the three thirds of Loye (Lobio), Tschablen (Cabulo) and Galdinen (Caldana), which developed into independent communities with primarily economic and social tasks. In 1458 Leuk established his customary law in writing, the "alt Burgrecht"

With the decline of the feudal system, the weakening of secular episcopal power and the emergence of the democratic self-confidence of the Valais Zenden, the formerly leading families de Leuca, Perrini, von Raron and Pontemallio were replaced by new families capable of ruling: among others by the families Werra, Mageran, Allet, Ambühl, Albertini, Gasner, Mayenzet, Zen Ruffinen and Loretan. As a result, the market town became a self-confident little town with impressive burgher houses and a stately church. Naturally protected to the west by the Dala Gorge (tower and bridge from the 14th century), to the south by the Rhone and to the east by the Feschel Gorge (bridge from 1563), the site has repeatedly been the scene of bloody clashes: In 1296, the peasants loyal to the bishop triumphed on the so-called sighing mat over the upper Valais nobility (among others vom Turn, von Raron), who were supported by Bernese Oberlanders. In 1386, the people



of Leuker prevented the advance of Count Amadeus VII of Savoy into Upper Valais by destroying the Dala bridge. In 1415, during the Rarn wars, the bishop's castle and viztum tower were destroyed by the peasants. On the ruins of the latter, the Prismeller Ulrich Ruffiner built today's late Gothic town hall in 1541. During the battles against the French in 1799, after the Battle of Pfyn, Leuk only narrowly escaped being burned. The Leuk Castle Foundation, founded in 1999, has set itself the goal of the stylish and professional restoration of the Leuk Bishop's Castle, its maintenance and administration, and the promotion of cultural events.

Leuk possessed, as archaeological investigations show, as early as the 6th/7th Century a church that had probably emerged from a Roman building. This church was replaced by a larger complex before the 9th century. Further new buildings could be proven for the 11th and 12th centuries. The mighty Romanesque bell tower also dates from this period. Today's parish church of St. Stephen, built by Ulrich Ruffiner in the late Gothic style and richly decorated with altars and sculptures, was inaugurated in 1494 by Bishop Jost von Silenen. In 1982, 26 statues from the period between the 13th and 16th centuries, including a Pietà (14th century) of exceptional quality, were found in the ossuary with its fresco of the Dance of Death under piles of bones piled a meter high.

The parish of Leuk was first mentioned in a document in 1227. It originally included the entire Zenden Leuk. Subsidiary parishes only came into being after 1500, including 1501 Leukerbad, 1660 Gampel, 1663 Turtmann, 1962 Susten. In the second half of the 16th century, the leading Leuk families tended towards



Protestantism. When the Valais district administrator in Visp decided to remain Catholic in 1604, individual families (Mageran, Ambühl) moved to Bern, but the majority returned to the old faith.

Due to its location on the main road, the district of Susten played an important role in medieval through traffic. Susten buildings have not survived. East of Susten is the former Perrini-von Werra Castle, which was recently converted into a retirement home.



Aerial view of Leuk from the south, 1970s (Swiss National Library, Bern, Federal Archives for the Preservation of Monuments, Stuart Morgan Archives). [...]

In addition to the transport of goods, which was very important until the late Middle Ages, the economic basis of the Leuk area was agriculture (livestock farming, alpine farming, viticulture). The municipality's land holdings cover a large part of the Pfyn Forest (</de/articles/008553/2010-09-28/>), the Leuker Grund converted into a golf course, forests in the area of the Prealps and the Alps Grächten, Meschler, Märtschi and Ill as well as large forests on the Leuker Sonnenberg and in the valley floor that were damaged by fire at the



beginning of the 21st century. The removal of gravel from the naturally flowing Rhone in the Pfynwald was restricted in the 1970s for reasons of nature conservation. Limestone quarrying on the Rhone in Susten, which began in 1928, has since been abandoned. In 2005, Leuk still had ten full-time farmers and seven wineries. After 1908, the Alusuisse works (today Alcan AG) in Chippis and Steg also offered jobs to many people in Leukern. The Leuk-Leukerbad railway, which went into operation in 1915, was switched to bus operation in 1967. In 2005, the Susten station district was given a facelift: a new railway bridge over the Rhone, a new railway tunnel in the direction of Salgesch and a new station building that was shifted slightly to the east. Leuk, which was the central administrative center of the region for centuries, is still a school, court and service center at the beginning of the 21st century and, thanks to the satellite ground station SES (International Teleport Switzerland AG) with its giant antennae that can be seen from afar, is an intercontinentally important telecommunications center (construction started in 1972). .

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