

Canton of Valais

Wallis [ˈvalis] (French ***Valais*** [vaˈlɛ] , Italian *Vallese*, , **Valê**s) , *officially* Canton **of Wallis** or **State of Wallis** or **Canton du Valais** or **État du Valais** , is a canton in south-western Switzerland . The western part of the canton has a French-speaking (partly Franco-Provençal-speaking) population, while the eastern part has a German-speaking population. Accordingly, the Valais belongs to French-speaking Switzerland and German-speaking Switzerland . The main town is Sitten (Sion). In terms of area, Valais is the third largest canton in Switzerland and lies entirely in the Alps .

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Geography

Location and Scenery

The Valais consists (with the exception of smaller areas beyond the Simplon and Gemmi passes) of the Rhone (Rotten) valley from the Rhone glacier to Lake Geneva and the Rhone side valleys. In the north are the Bernese and Vaud Alps , in the south the Valais Alps with the mightiest and highest mountain ranges in the Alps (Monte Rosa , Mischabel and Weisshorn group). The highest mountains in the Valais Alps and Switzerland are the Dufourspitze at 4634 m above sea level. M(highest mountain in Switzerland and thus in Valais), Nordend 4609 m above sea level. M. , Zumsteinspitze 4563 m above sea level. M. , Signalkuppe 4554 m above sea level. M. , Cathedral 4545 m above sea level. M. (highest mountain in Swiss national territory), Liskamm 4527 m above sea

level. M. , Weisshorn 4505 m above sea level. M. , Täschhorn 4490 m above sea level. M. , Matterhorn 4478 m above sea level. M. , Parrotspitze 4432 m above sea level. M. , Dent Blanche 4357 m above sea level M. , Ludwigshöhe 4341 m above sea level. M. , Nadelhorn 4327 m above sea level. , Grand Combin 4314 m above sea level M. and Lenzspitze 4294 m above sea level. M. ^[4] With the Aletsch Glacier , the Gorner Glacier and the Valais Fiescher Glacier , the three largest glaciers in the Alps are in Valais. ^[5]

Due to the protection of the surrounding mountains, the main valley of the upper Valais, but also the Vispertal , is extremely dry and warm with a steppe climate . In many places, the water supply is guaranteed by water pipes, so-called bisses or bisses, ^[6] which in the low-rainfall zones in Valais date back at least to Roman times. ^[7]

The lowest point is 372 m above sea level. M. on Lake Geneva .

Important tributary valleys

The most important side valleys north of the Rhone are the Fieschertal , Lötschental and Dalatal . South of the Rhone are the Binntal , Nanztal , Saastal , Mattertal , Turtmanntal , Val d'Anniviers (German *Eifischtal*), Val d'Hérens (German *Eringertal*), Val de Bagnes (German *Bangital* or also *Baniental*), Val d'Entremont and Val d'Illiciez .

Cities and places

See also : *Communes of the canton of Valais*

As of December 31, 2021, there were seven municipalities in the canton of Valais with more than 10,000 inhabitants.

Political community	Resident	Percentage of foreigners
<u>customs</u> _	35,259	27.7
Martigny _	20'505	29.8
Monthey	18'096	33.3
Sierre _	17'115	32.3
Brig Glis	13'435	18.1
Naters	10'439	16.6
Crans Montana	10'272	35.7

Regions and districts with capital

Valais has 13 districts , which emerged from the 13 tithes . They are represented by 13 stars on the canton's coat of arms.

The two semi-districts Westlich Raron and Ostlich Raron used to form a common tithe ^[8] and today bear the same district number assigned by the Federal Statistical Office (BFS).

Canton of Valais
Canton du Valais



coat of arms

Canton of the Swiss Confederation

Abbreviation / license plate :	vs
official language :	French (63%), German (28%)
main town :	<u>customs</u> _
Joining the Confederation :	1815
Canton anthem :	<i>Valais anthem</i>
Area :	5224.63 km²
Altitude range :	371–4632 m above sea level <u>M</u>
site:	www.vs.ch (http://www.vs.ch/)

Population

Resident:	353,209 (December 31, 2021) ^[1]
population density :	68 inhabitants per km²
Percentage of Foreigners : (Residents without citizenship rights)	22.6% (December 31, 2019) ^[2]
Unemployment rate :	2.7% (June 30, 2021) ^[3]

Location of the canton in Switzerland

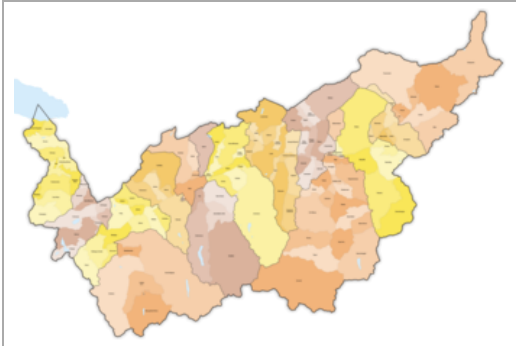


Canton map



municipalities of the canton

region	district	Resident	main place	Resident
Upper Valais	Goms (French <i>Conches</i>)	4401	Muenster	441
	East of Raron (French: <i>Rarogne orientale</i>) <div>West of Raron (French: <i>Rarogne occidentale</i>)</div>	11'178	Mörel fillet	724
			Raron	1939
	Brig (French <i>Brigue</i>)	27,822	Brig Glis	13'435
	Visp (French <i>Viège</i>)	28'706	Visp	8183
	Leuk (French <i>Loèche</i>)	12'657	Leuk	4054
middle Valais	Sierre _ _ _	50'019	Sierre _ _ _	17'115
	Sion (German <i>manners</i>)	49'023	Sion (German <i>manners</i>)	35,259
	Conthey (dt. <i>Gundis</i>)	29,856	Conthey (dt. <i>Gundis</i>)	8955
	Hérens (Eng. <i>Ering</i>)	11'123	Vex	1854
Lower Valais	Entremont	15,837	sembrancher	1058
	Martigny (German <i>Martinach</i>)	49,674	Martigny (German <i>Martinach</i>)	20'505
	Saint Maurice	14,277	Saint Maurice	4538
	Monthey	48,636	Monthey	18'096
Total (13)		353,209		



View of the Rhone valley from Martigny



Canton capital Sion with vineyards

Population

Languages

East of Sierre (Sierre), in the Upper Valais, German or Walliser German , a dialect of the highest Alemannic , is spoken. In and to the west of Sierre in central Valais and in the Lower Valais, French and partly Franco-Provençal dialect is spoken. North of the Rhone, the language border is formed by the small *Raspille* stream between Sierre and Salgesch . South of the Rhone, the language border is marked by the Pfynwald . The official languages of the canton are French and German, while the official languages of the municipalities are either French or German.^[13] At theIn the 2000 census , 62.8 percent of the population spoke French, 28.4 percent spoke German, 2.2 percent Italian , and around 6.6 percent spoke other languages.^[14]

Religions

Valais is a historically Roman Catholic canton. Its territory essentially coincides with that of the Diocese of Sitten , a 4th-century founding and prince-bishopric of the Holy Roman Empire from the 11th to the 18th centuries . Together with Appenzell Innerrhoden, Valais is one of two Swiss cantons that have no cantonal national churches . It was only in the 19th century that immigration, v. a. due to the railway construction, a small reformed minority. The Evangelical-Reformed Churches of Switzerland are represented today by the Evangelical-Reformed Church of Valais .

A clear majority of the Valais population remains with the Roman Catholic Church. In 2017, this was 77.2 percent (263,484 people) of the total population, and 5.9 percent (20,071 people) were members of the Evangelical Reformed Church (100 percent: 341,463 people).^[15] In the 2000 census, 81.2 percent of the Valais population were Catholic, and 6.3 percent were Protestant.^[16]

Apart from the Roman Catholic and the Reformed Church, there have been no more figures on the religious affiliation of the entire population of the canton of Valais since the 2000 census. However, the Federal Statistical Office carries out sample surveys ^[17] , which also include other religious communities in the canton of Valais. In the 2017 sample survey, 3.3 percent of respondents aged 15 and over in the canton of Valais professed another Christian denomination (neither Roman Catholic nor Reformed), 3.4 percent Islam, and 0.7 percent stated being a member of another religious community, and 15.3 percent were non-denominational .^[18]



districts of Valais



The water supply in the dry Rhone Valley used to be secured with bisses . Today, popular hiking trails lead along the bisses.^[9]

religion	Total of respondents	Swiss nationality –	Swiss without a migration background	Swiss with a migration background	Foreign Citizenship –
<u>Christianity</u>	78	82	85	64	65
– <u>Roman Catholic</u>	70	74	77	52	56
– <u>Evangelical-Reformed</u>	5	6	7	4	2
– <u>other Christian denomination</u>	3	2	1	8	7
<u>other religions</u>	4	3	1	14	12
– <u>Muslim</u>	3	2	0	12	10
– <u>other religious communities</u>	1	1	1	2	2
<u>non-denominational</u>	15	14	12	20	22
<u>other religions or no information</u>	3	1	2	2	1

Churn

Many people from the Alpine cantons are drawn, at least temporarily, to the urban centers of the Swiss Mittelland. The Valais is also affected by this migration movement. Every year, numerous, mainly young people leave the valley to work somewhere else or to complete an apprenticeship at a college (university, etc.), vocational school (vocational school, etc.) or in a company. Most of them do this because the opportunities to do so in Valais are limited. They cannot find a job that suits them or the desired apprenticeship is not offered. Some of the people living outside the Valais have their own holiday homes, which they go to for hiking or skiing. Some of the emigrants return to Valais after a few years or after completing their apprenticeship. It is often difficult for university graduates in particular to find a job in Valais that matches their education. According to statistical surveys from 2004, around two out of three Valaisans with a higher education actually did not work in their home canton after completing it. As a result, Valais loses numerous highly qualified workers every year and, accordingly, capital (talent drain). The canton invests around 50 million Swiss francs a year in the higher education of people who will work and live outside the canton in the future. ^[19] ^[20] ^[21]

Constitution and Politics

The current cantonal constitution ^[22] is dated March 8, 1907; since then it has undergone numerous partial revisions.

Legislative

The legislative authority is the *Grosser Rat* or *Grand Conseil* . It has 130 members elected by the people in the proportional representation system for four years. At the same time as the deputies, 130 deputies (supplements) are elected.

Laws passed by the Grand Council are subject to a referendum if requested by 3000 voters within 90 days of their publication (optional referendum). Partial revisions of the canton constitution are subject to mandatory popular vote (obligatory referendum). The people also have the right to demand the drafting, amendment or repeal of a law or the drafting or amendment of the constitution by means of a popular initiative . A legislative initiative requires the signature of 4,000 voters, and a constitutional initiative requires 6,000.

	Political party	2001	2005	2009	2013	2017	2021	Allocation of seats 2021	Voter share in %
	Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP)	61	58	54	49	45	40	<div>A total of 130 seats</div> <div><div><div></div>Green : 13</div><div></div>SP : 15</div> <div><div></div>CSP : 4</div> <div></div> Otherwise: 1 <div><div></div>CSPO : 8</div> <div></div> CVP : 40 <div><div></div>FDP : 27</div> <div></div> SVP : 22 <td><div><div><div>Grand Council elections on March 7, 2021</div><div>Voter turnout: 59.5%</div></div><div><div><div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></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Council elections on March 7, 2021</div><div>Voter turnout: 59.5%</div></div><div><div><div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></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CSPO : 8FDP : 27SVP : 22

Executive

The supreme executive and administrative authority is the five-member *Council of State* or *Conseil d'État* . The election takes place directly by the people in the majority system for four years. The three constitutional regions (Upper, Central and Lower Valais) are entitled to at least one seat in the Council of State. The district clause prevents double representation of a district in the State Council.

The State Chancellor (staff office of the State Council) and the governors and deputy governors (representatives of the government at the district level) are appointed by the State Council.

Term 2021-2025				
Council of State	Political party	region	tenure since	department
<u>Christopher Darbellay</u>	CVP	Lower Valais	2017	Department of Economy and Education
<u>Frederic Favre</u>	FDP	middle Valais	2017	Department of Security, Institutions and Sport
<u>Franz Ruppen</u>	SVP	Upper Valais	2021	Department of Transport, Construction and Environment
<u>Robert Schmidt</u>	CVP	Upper Valais	2017	Department of Finance and Energy
<u>Matthew Reynard</u>	SP	middle Valais	2021	Department of Health, Social Affairs and Culture

The composition for the new legislative period, which begins on May 1, 2021, was decided on March 28, 2021 in the second ballot. ^[23]

See also: List of Councilors of State of the Republic and Canton of Valais , List of Presidents of the Council of State of the Republic and Canton of Valais , List of Vice-Presidents of the Council of State of the Republic and Canton of Valais , List of Chancellors of State of the Canton of Valais

Judiciary

The highest cantonal court in Switzerland is the tribunal cantonal based in Sitten (Sion). It is responsible for civil and criminal cases as well as for social security law and administrative law . There are nine district courts for first-instance civil and criminal cases . At the municipal level, there is a municipal judge's office as an arbitration authority and a police court.

Municipalities

→ *Main article* : *Municipalities of the canton of Valais*

Municipalities under public law are the residential communities , which are called municipal communities in Valais, the civil communities and the parish or church communities.

There are 126 municipalities (as of 2017). They are the bearers of local self-government. There are also 141 civil parishes (e.g. administration of civil goods), 157 Roman Catholic parishes and 10 Evangelical Reformed parishes .^[24]

Party system

In the canton of Valais, the Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP, including the Christian Social People's Party of Upper Valais , which is affiliated with the national CVP) has lost its dominant position. Although she still holds the absolute majority in the government elected by majority elections , she lost the absolute majority in parliament elected by proportional representation in 2013. Not only the CVP, but also the CSP , the FDP, the SP and the SVP are divided into autonomous German and French-speaking parties.

Economy

Reservoirs

The Grande Dixence dam on Lac des Dix is one of the highest in the world and the highest in Europe at 285 m. The reservoir is at an altitude of 2365 m above sea level. M, and has a capacity of 400 million cubic meters of water. ^[25] The second highest dam in Switzerland is that of the Lac de Mauvoisin at a height of 250 m above sea level. M. The Lac de Tseuzier is located in a basin that rises from up to 3200 m above sea level. M, surrounded by high mountains. Lac de Moiry is light turquoise in color and is on the route of the Race across the Alps .^[26] With the Parc d'Attractions du Châtelard , the area around the Lac d'Emosson is opened up, on the Lac du Vieux Emosson, 300 meters higher, there are more than 800 footprints of dinosaurs around 250 million years old .^[27] The Sanetschsee was dammed north of the Sanetsch Pass between 1959 and 1966. ^[28] During the construction of the dam on the Mattmark reservoir in 1965, one of the worst accidents in Swiss construction happened - 88 construction workers died when a glacier tongue fell on their shanty town. ^[29] The Griessee on the border with Italy is fed by the Gries glacier , the Ferden reservoir was built in 1975 and is 1 km long. Above the Massa Gorge is the Gibidum reservoir , which is fed by the largest glacier in the Alps, the Aletsch Glacier .



Grande Dixence , one of the tallest dams in the world

Tourism

Tourism is the most important economic sector in Valais. ^[30]

Upper Valais

The hotelier César Ritz was born in the Goms district in 1850 . 968 inhabitants live in the village of Fiesch -Eggishorn and there are over 4000 guest beds, in Bellwald there are 4300 beds with 460 inhabitants. Binn is located in the Binntal , which is known for its mineral finds . Around 200 different minerals have been found here, with over a dozen found nowhere else. In the Binntal live three professional emitters who live from collecting minerals. ^[31] The church in Ernen has been documented since 1214, and there are now many up to 500-year-old houses in the village center. ^[32] In the municipality of Obergoms is the terminus of the steam railway Furka-Bergstrecke , which begins in Realp in the canton of Uri . It leads over the Steffenbach bridge to Tiefenbach and on through the Furka summit tunnel via Gletsch to Oberwald . The first part of the railway was reopened in 1992, the last part between Gletsch and Oberwald in August 2010.

The Aletsch region , which extends across the districts of Goms, Ostlich Raron and Brig , lies at the center of the Swiss Alps Jungfrau-Aletsch UNESCO World Heritage Site . The name comes from the largest glacier in the Alps, the Aletsch Glacier . Bettmeralp is on the glacier and can be reached by two cable cars . Since the Bettmeralp lies above the Rhone Valley, a fog-filled valley can be observed from the sunny high plateau during inversion weather conditions . Fiescheralp is on the same high plateau and is one of the three access points to the Aletsch Arena ski area, which includes 104 kilometers of slopes. ^[33] In the Riederalp area lies the Aletsch Forest , an old stone pine and larch forest , directly on the Aletsch Glacier. The forest was leased in 1933 by the nature conservation organization Pro Natura and placed under protection, the Villa Cassel in Riederalp now serves as the Pro Natura information center. ^[34]

The Stockalper Castle , built between 1651 and 1671, is in Brig and is one of the largest private baroque buildings in Switzerland. The castle has a three-story arcaded courtyard and three square onion towers named after the three kings , Gaspar, Melchior and Balthazar. ^[35] In the municipality of Termen are the summer and winter sports resorts of Rosswald and Blatten near Naters . In summer, tourists can hike on the Massaweg through the 6.5 km long Massa Gorge and in winter, among other things, on the Belalp at over 3000 m above sea level M. Skiing (66 km of ski slopes and 4 km of cross-country trails). Since 1983, various ski races have been held on the Belalp every year under the name Belalp Hexe. The Hexenabfahrt is 12 km long and overcomes a difference in altitude of 1800 m, around 2000 participants take part in the races .^[36] In Birgisch and Mund there are several bisses , some of which are very old. These water pipes were formerly needed to irrigate fields and meadows in the dry inner Valais. The bisse Wyssa above Mund was first mentioned in 1426, but could have been built as early as 930. ^[37]



Gletsch station with trains on the Furka mountain route steam railway



Zermatt with the Matterhorn

Visp is a cultural center of the Upper Valais, ^[38] in the *La Poste* cultural center there are regular operas, theater performances and concerts. ^[39] Visperterminen became known for its white wine *Heida* (a Savagnin), which grows on the highest vineyard north of the main Alpine ridge. The Ritibrücke in Neubrück below Stalden is similar to the Stari most and was built in 1599, the Kinnbrücke in Stalden in 1544. ^[40] In the Staldenried hamlet of Gspon lies at around 2000 m the GsponArena of FC Gspon, according to their own statements the highest soccer field in Europe. ^[41] The alp of Törbel is the Moosalp , where cow fights take place every year during the procession to the alp . ^[42] Above St. Niklaus and Grächen are the Riedgletscher and the Bordierhütte , from which the Nadelgrat and the summit of the Balfrin can be climbed.

In addition, St. Niklaus is home to the mountain guide museum , which is unique in the world and which takes its visitors back to the time of the Alpine and especially the Zaniglas mountain guide pioneers , who were in the front row, especially for the first two generations, and had a decisive influence on mountain guides in a wide variety of areas worldwide . Of the 82 main peaks of the four-thousanders in the Alps, 36 surround the Mattertal , ^[4] which stretches from Stalden via St. Niklaus to Zermatt , including the Dufourspitze , the highest mountain in Switzerland and one of the Seven Second

Summits . The Matterhorn lies between Zermatt and Breuil-Cervinia, the Hörnligrat (northeast ridge) climbed from Zermatt is the most frequently climbed route and together with the Liongrat (southwest ridge) also the easiest, with a difficulty of «III+» on the UIAA scale .

The Saaservispa flows through the Saas Valley , with Saas-Grund in the center of the valley . The Antonius chapel in Bidermatten is in the municipality of Saas-Balen , but belongs to the parish of St. Bartholomäus in Saas-Grund. The prayer house next to the chapel dates back to 1619 and is the oldest chapel in the Saas Valley. ^[43] Saas-Fee is a ski resort above Saas-Grund, and you can also ski on the Fee Glacier in summer. A special feature of Saas-Fee is the Metro Alpin , a type of subway that takes skiers from the "Felskinn" station (2980 m above sea level) to the "Mittelallalin" station (3456 m above sea level M.) brings. The southernmost of the Saas villages is Saas-Almagell . In addition to tourism, the electricity industry at the Mattmark reservoir plays a role here . The lake was completely drained in 2008 to carry out renovation work on it. ^[44]

The Loetschental is located in the Westlich Raron district and is traversed by the Lonza . The source of the river is the Lang Glacier, located at the far end of the Lötsch Valley . The alpine skiing center in the Lötschental is the Lauchernalp , in addition to one of the highest ski areas in Switzerland, there is also the highest winter hiking trail in Europe at a good 3000 m altitude. ^[45] In Unterbachvoted in 1957 for the first time in a Swiss ballot, they were allowed to take part in the federal ballot box on the extension of civil protection to women. The municipality introduced municipal voting rights for women that same year, 14 years before the federal decision that women should be allowed to vote. ^[46]



The Schwarzsee in the Loetschental

Leukerbad is in the Dala Valley , and the Dala Gorge forms the beginning of the valley . The thermal springs footbridge has been running here since 2004, along the route of which the layers of rock carrying the thermal water can be seen. Wine has been grown around Salgesch since the end of the Second World War. The Illgraben (a torrent channel) carries large amounts of sediment with it and, due to several mudslides , has ensured that the Rhone could not be channeled here. ^[47]

Between Leuk and Siders lies the Pfynwald , one of the largest pine forests in the Alps and part of the Pfyn-Finges Nature Park. Orchids and small crown vetch grow in the nature park and there are many species of insects. A seven kilometer stretch of the Rhone flows through the park and spreads out undisturbed there, with riparian forests, islands and oxbow lakes.

Central Valais

The Val d'Anniviers is located near Sierre , where there are several ski areas and Valais dried meat is also produced. ^[48] Zinal is in the municipality of Anniviers , in summer there are 300 km of marked hiking trails, in winter there are cross-country ski trails and downhill slopes.



Basilique de Valere in Sion

The cityscape of Sion is shaped by the Middle Ages, and one of the oldest playable organs in the world can be found in the Basilique de Valère . The core of today's bell tower of the Cathedral of Our Lady was built at the end of the 12th century. In addition to 140 km of ski slopes , Crans-Montana has one of the oldest golf courses in Switzerland with the Crans-sur-Sierre Golf Club , where the Omega European Masters are held every year. In the Conthey area is the Lac de Derborence. One of the most powerful landslides in Switzerland in the spring of 1749 caused it to form, and the area has been a nature reserve since 1961. ^[49]

In Ardon VS there is a gorge of the Lizerne , an old bisse is suspended from the vertical rock face. Evolène is the main town of the Val d'Hérens through which the Borgne flows. The Haute Route passes through Arolla , a resort town at the head of the Val d'Hérens. The earth pyramids of Euseigne are located in the Val d'Hérémence on the road to Euseigne . They consist of a material called concrete moraine and were

formed after the Würm glaciation. A small part of the pyramids is broken through by the road in a tunnel.

The 4 Vallées ski area is located in the municipalities of Nendaz , Verbier , Veysonnaz , Thyon and La Tzoumaz and is the largest ski area in Switzerland with 626 kilometers of slopes. ^[50]



Road tunnel through the earth pyramids

Lower Valais

In Martigny there is an amphitheater , the castle of La Bâtiaz and the museum of the Gianadda Foundation and the Saint Bernard Museum . Above Vernayaz is the Salanfe gorge and the Pissevache waterfall . In Saint-Maurice VS is the Abbey of Saint-Maurice , a monastery founded in 515 by the Augustinian canons . Monthey is known for its carnival, which was held for the 140th time in 2012. ^[51] The Portes du Soleil ski area is

partly in France and partly in Switzerland, it includes the ski resorts of Morgins and Torgon in the Valais and the three resorts of Champéry , Champoussin and Les Crosets in the Val d'Illeaz . In Saint-Gingolph VS, the Morge stream forms *the* border between France and Switzerland, with Saint-Gingolph (Haute-Savoie) on the French side .

Winter sports

A total of 60 destinations in Valais offer 603 km of cross-country ski trails and/or 3096 km of ski slopes .^[52] More than 100 km of slopes can be found in Champéry , Champoussin and Les Crosets in the Val d'Illeaz , Morgins in the Val de Morgins and Torgon , which are in the Valais and together with the French towns form the Portes du Soleil ski area , which includes a total of 650 km of ski slopes, Nendaz , Verbier and Veysonnaz (412 km), Zermatt (360 km), with imMattertal a total of 427 km of ski slopes can be found (Graechen - St. Niklaus 42 km and Törbel 25 km), Thyon (178 km), Crans-Montana (140 km), Anzère (58 km), Grimentz and Zinal (115 km), whereby A total of 210 km of ski slopes can be found in the Eifischtal (Chandolin / Saint-Luc 60 km and Vercorin 35 km), Bettmeralp , Fiesch and Riederalp , the Aletsch Arena (104 km) and Saas-Fee (100 km), being in the Saas ValleyA total of 202 km of ski slopes can be found (Saas-Almagell 12 km, Saas-Balen 3 km, Saas-Grund 35 km, Staldenried -Gspon 5 km and Visperterminen 20 km). With a total of 86 kilometers of trails, Goms (Blitzingen , Geschinen , Gluringen , County VS , Munster VS , Obergoms and Reckingen VS) is a Mecca for cross-country skiing.

Thermal baths and golf courses

In Valais there are thermal baths in Leukerbad (largest thermal bathing center in the Alps), Ovronnaz , Saillon -les-Bains, Brigerbad and the brine spa in Breiten near Mörel .^[53] There are golf courses in the following locations: 18-hole golf courses in Crans-Montana , Leukerbad, Sierre, Sion and Verbier (two courses). 9-hole golf courses in Crans-Montana, Obergesteln , Zermatt , Täsch and Riederalp . The latter is the highest golf course in Europe. ^[54]^[55]

Farming

On the southern slope of the Rhone Valley, viticulture predominates in Lower Valais (all over) and in Central Valais (partly), in places also in the side valleys up to Upper Valais. With more than 5236 hectares of vineyards, Valais is the largest wine-growing region in Switzerland. It has been proven that in the canton of Valais between 800 and 600 BC. vines were cultivated. In addition to the leading variety Fendant , old, local varieties such as Humagne (white and red), Petite Arvine , Amigne , Resi or Malvoisie are increasingly being used again. ^[56] In Visperterminen is the highest vineyard north of the main Alpine ridge, at an altitude of 650 to 1150 m above sea level. M. ^[57] In the Val d'Anniviers the glacier wine is produced, an oxidative wine .

Fruit is grown on a large scale in Valais, around 95 percent of Swiss apricots and half of the pears come from the canton. The vegetables with the largest acreage are, in descending order, stored carrots , cauliflower , early carrots and onions. Asparagus cultivation in particular has become increasingly important in the last ten years. White and green asparagus together now have the third-largest acreage among vegetables. ^[58] Saffron has been cultivated in Mund since the Middle Ages ; it is assumed that this came to Switzerland through pilgrims or mercenaries. ^[59]

In livestock farming, sheep and goat husbandry are of great importance alongside traditional dairy farming. The high alpine environment is increasingly being perceived as an opportunity to provide rare and endangered species with a chance to survive, for example Valais black-necked and copper-necked goats and Valais black-nosed sheep .^[58] However, there are conflicts between animal husbandry and species protection, for example in connection with the reintroduction of wolves . This has been migrating from France and Italy to the canton of Valais since the 1980s, but it is still at great risk from farmers who fear for their animals and from the hunting lobby. ^[60]

In 2020, 20.6 percent of the canton's agricultural land was farmed organically by 387 farms .^[61]

Industry

The industrial company in St. Niklaus of Scintilla AG of Robert Bosch GmbH is the global industry leader in the manufacture of jigsaw and saber saw blades as well as Starlocks. In the 1960s, the jigsaw production at the St. Niklaus VS plant was able to produce the four billionth saw blade in 2007.

The chemical and pharmaceutical industries are also important employers in Valais, such as Lonza AG in Visp. The energy industry has good prerequisites thanks to the many storage power plants .^[30] The Collombey refinery was one of two petroleum refineries in Switzerland and owned by the Libyan oil company Tamoil , located in the commune of Collombey-Muraz not far from the eastern tip of Lake Geneva . The aluminum producer Constellium has locations in Chippis, Sierre and Steg.^[62]

During the Second World War, 380,000 tons of anthracite coal were mined in Valais. Extraction activities took place underground. Large quartzitic slate deposits exist in and around Sembrancher , with extensive quarrying declining in the mid-20th century. Black slate was also mined at Leytron . Small-scale mining activities for lead ore existed in the Lötschental and for copper ore near Grimentz .^[63]^[64]

Uranium was being searched for in Valais as early as the 1960s to 1980s , but the mines were not competitive due to the low world market prices. At Martigny and Salvan-Les Marécottes, new explorations have been undertaken since 2008. ^[65]

Culture

Valais hymns



In the Lower Valais near Ollon



Valais black-necked goat



Collombey Refinery

Since 2016, the Valais song "Wallis, our homeland" and the associated instrumental version of the Marignan March have also been officially the Valais canton anthems. ^[66] ^[67] ^[68] ^[69] The "Walliser Lied" from 1890 by Leo Luzian von Roten (lyrics) and Ferdinand Othon Wolf (melody) has long been popularly regarded as the Valais anthem. The Swiss composer Jean Daetwyler incorporated the well-known Valais song into the Marignan March, which he composed in 1939 for the 50th anniversary of the Central Valais Music Association. ^[70]

Valais German

The Valais German of the Upper Valais, together with the South Walser dialects spoken in Piedmont, in the Aosta Valley and in Ticino, has preserved the declension and conjugation diversity of Old High German in many respects. Today it is spoken by around 80,000 Valaisans.

Authors who i.a. also wrote in Walliser German are: Frieda Berchtold, Ludwig Imesch, Eduard Imhof, Georg Julen, Bernadette Lerjen-Sarbach, Markus Marti, Hannes Taugwalder , Hubert Theler and Otto Zumoberhaus. ^[71]

Pop singer Sina, for example, sings in Valais German . Her single "Wänn nit now WENN dä" ("If not now when then") from 2008 was also successful beyond the borders of Switzerland. ^[72]

Valais cuisine

The canton of Valais has developed its own cuisine, which differs from other Swiss regional cuisines. Typical regional products are the round Valais rye bread made from wholemeal rye flour with a maximum of 10% wheat, the lean, salted beef that has been preserved by air-drying – Valais dried meat – and Valais saffron .

The Walliser plate (also called Walliser Platte) consists of thinly sliced Valais dried meat made from beef and Valais dried bacon and Valais raw ham (Valais German *hamma*) made from pork, Valais dry sausage (Valais German *Hüswurst*) made from beef and pork - with the meat products all using medium air-dried aging – as well as Valais rye bread and Valais (sliced and sliced cheese).

Typical dishes are the Valais raclette , the boiled (Valais German *Gsottus*) and the cholera . Valais raclette cheese is characterized by its freshness and flavor, with *Valais raclette AOP* being a protected designation of origin. *Gsottus* consists of air-dried and cooked pork and beef, bacon and sausages and is served with sauerkraut or white cabbage and potatoes. The cholera is a vegetable cake with leeks, potatoes, cheese and apples.

Typical wines are the Valais white wine Fendant and the Valais red wine Dôle . The name *Fendant* is a protected designation of origin and may only be borne by wines that come from the canton of Valais. The Dôle is also an AOC -certified wine. Real rarities include the Valais red wine varieties Durize and Eyholzer as well as the Valais white wine varieties Gletscherwein , Heida , Himbertscha , Lafnetscha , Mennas , Planscher and Resi .

In addition to wines, the designation Valais rye bread is also entered in the register of designations of origin (GUB / AOP) and is therefore a protected brand. *The indications Valais dried meat* and *Mund saffron* are also protected; Valais raw ham and Valais dried bacon are protected as IGP .

Traffic

Railway

There are several express train routes in Valais, and the train stations in Visp and Brig-Glis are important hubs. Brig train station is on the Geneva - Lausanne -Milan (Rhône Valley route) and Basel - Bern -Milan routes, from here the car trains run through the Simplon tunnel to Iselle di Trasquera . The Lötschberg base tunnel was put into operation in 2007, making the Visp station to the transfer station for the surrounding towns and communities. Due to the increased rail traffic and associated infrastructure projects, the population of Visp has increased significantly since it opened. ^[73]

Other routes are Lausanne - Simplon , Bern - Lötschberg - Simplon, Martigny - Orsières - Le Châble and Saint-Maurice - Saint-Gingolph . ^[74]

There are several narrow-gauge railways in Valais, some of which are designed as rack railways . The Matterhorn-Gotthard Railway consists of the former Brig-Visp-Zermatt and Furka-Oberalp railways . The Furka-Oberalp Railway runs through the cantons of Graubünden , Uri and Valais via the Furka Pass and the Oberalp Pass to Brig , from where the Brig-Visp-Zermatt Railway continues to Visp and the terminus of Zermatt . Due to the different gauges , the Transports de Martigny et Régions(which had previously performed as MO-MC) via two separate rail networks; it was created by the merger of the standard-gauge Martigny-Orsières-Bahn (MO) with the meter-gauge Martigny-Châtellard-Bahn (MC). Operated by the MO, the Saint-Bernard Express is a standard gauge railway from Martigny via Sembrancher with branch lines to Orsières and Le Châble VS. The MC operates the meter-gauge Mont-Blanc Express with individual steep sections as a rack railway from Martigny via Salvan VS up to Le Châtellard VS , from where the SNCF continues the route to Chamonix Mont Blanc operates. The Aigle-Ollon-Monthey-Champéry railway is a meter gauge railway that runs from Aigle VD via Ollon and Monthey to Champéry . It is one of the five lines of the Transports Publics du Chablais. The Gornergratbahn runs from Zermatt up to the Gornergrat , where the mountain station is at an altitude of 3089 m above sea level. M. lies. This makes it the second highest mountain railway in Europe after the Jungfrau Railway . ^[75]

In addition, there are 78 postal bus lines operating overland services and the city networks of Brig-Glis/Naters, Monthey/Collombey-Muraz, Sitten and Martigny, ^[76] and many tourist mountain railways. ^[77]

Roads

The A9 motorway runs through the cantons of Vaud and Valais and in Valais is not double lane and has two lanes. The section in Upper Valais between Susten and Gampel was completed in 2016. ^[78] The entire connection from Sierre East to Gamsen can only be closed in the late 2020s; Major problems include the section from Sierre East to Susten , which runs through the protected Pfynwald Nature Park , and the Visp Tunnel , which is geologically very difficult to complete. ^[79]



SBB train near Illarsaz (municipality of Collombey-Muraz)

The best-known and most important pass roads are the Simplon Pass and the Great St. Bernhard from Italy , and the Pas de Morgins and the Col de la Forclaz from France . To other cantons there are the Nufenenpass in Ticino , the Furkapass to Uri and in the canton of Bern the Grimselpass and the Sanetschpass . However, the Sanetsch Pass can only be negotiated from the Valais side, from the nearby Gsteig near Gstaad in the canton of Bern, the construction would have been too complex due to the steep terrain. ^[80] In 2022 it was Degree of motorization (cars per 1000 inhabitants) at 650. ^[81]

Education

From the age of four, every child has had to attend kindergarten for two years since 2008. The actual schooling consists of six years of primary school and three years of orientation school (also lower secondary level), at the end of which a diploma is awarded if the requirements of the program of the last year of compulsory schooling are met. If the nine years of compulsory schooling have been attended but the requirements of the third year of lower secondary education have not been met, only a certificate of school leaving certificate is issued. ^[82]

Secondary level II can be completed in Valais as basic vocational training with a subsequent vocational certificate , certificate of proficiency or vocational baccalaureate , as well as a technical secondary school with a final specialist baccalaureate or at a grammar school with a final baccalaureate. The tertiary level includes training in the field of higher vocational education , higher technical schools and universities . ^[83]

Flag and Coat of Arms

The Valais flag shows 13 stars in three vertical rows (distribution 4-5-4) on a red and white background. The red half with the white stars is on the right, the five middle stars are two-tone. If the flag is mounted on a flagpole, the white half with the red stars is on the side of the mast, forming the leech . ^[84]

Red and white (formerly red and silver) are the colors of the Bishop of Sitten. The 13 stars represent the tens , which is an old name for the districts of Valais. The flag and the coat of arms, at that time still without stars, have probably existed since the year 999, when Rudolf III. which Valais handed over to the Diocese of Sitten . The flag has been documented since 1220. Sources from the end of the 15th century show coats of arms with 6, 7, 9, 11 and 16 stars. From 1802 there were twelve stars, with the new district of Conthey on May 12, 1815, the 13th and so far last star was added. ^[85]

History

→ *Main article : History of Valais*

After 57 B.C. The area of today's Valais, which the Romans called Vallis Poenina, was conquered and became the Roman province of Alpes Poeninae . Around 888 it became part of the Kingdom of Burgundy . King Rudolph III of Burgundy handed over the County of Valais with all rights and privileges to the Bishop of Sion in 999. From the second half of the 15th century until 1798, Valais was divided into seven tenths and was therefore also called *the Republic of the Seven Tenths* . This republic asserted its independence from the bishops of Sitten in the 16th century. In 1802 Napoleon I declared the area to be the independent Republic of Valais and in 1810 to the French Department of Simplon . In 1815 Valais joined the Swiss Confederation as the 22nd canton. ^[86] The constitution, which is still valid today, was passed in 1907, but since then some passages have been changed by referendums. The women of the canton have had the right to vote since 1970. ^[87] In 2000 there were severe floods on the Rhone .

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Web Links

- Official website of the canton of Valais (<https://www.vs.ch/>) (French, German)
- Valais Wallis Promotion website (<https://www.valais.ch/>) (multilingual)
- Switzerland Tourism website about the Valais destination (<https://www.myswitzerland.com/de-de/reiseziele/wallis/>) (multilingual)
- Official statistics for the canton of Valais from the Federal Statistical Office (<https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/regionalstatistik/regionale-portraets-kennzahlen/kantone/wallis.html>) (multilingual)
- Link catalog on the subject of the canton of Valais (<https://curlie.org/World/Deutsch/Regional/Europa/Schweiz/Wallis/>) at *curlie.org* (formerly DMOZ)
- The tourism portal for holidays in Valais (<https://www.wallisexpo.com/>) (multilingual)

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Grimselstrasse in front and Furkapassstrasse in the rear



The Valais flag in front of the Hübschhorn



The seal of the canton of Valais from 1582



Stockalper Castle in Brig

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