



1 Place de la Planta
Remains from Neolithic times (5,000 B.C.) were found here in 1980 when an underground car park was being built beneath this square. These farmer-breeders established the oldest known «village» in Switzerland at this spot. Later this square was situated at the foot of the walls which surrounded the town of Sion from the 13th to the 19th century. The square subsequently served as a fair, parade and sports ground. Today Place de la Planta provides the setting for a whole range of events.
At the top of the square, the statue known as «La Catherine» commemorates the accession of the Valais to the Swiss Confederation in 1815.

Battle of la Planta

On the fringe of the wars of Burgundy, the famous «Battle of la Planta» took place here on 13 November 1475. This battle marked the end of long years of conflict with Savoy (France). At the head of the Valaisan army, Bishop Walter Supersaxo, count and prefect of the Valais, pushed back the Savoyan forces as far as Saint Gingolph, thus returning the liberated territories from Conthey to Saint Maurice to Valaisan rule.



2 Supersaxo House
At the beginning of the 16th century, Georges Supersaxo, an emblematic figure of his time, son of Bishop Walter Supersaxo and a contemporary of Cardinal Mathieu Schiner, built this sumptuous Sion residence. Its architecture and decoration are late Gothic style.

A sculptor from Como (Italy), Jacobinus Malacrida (1505) decorated the famous ceiling of the great hall on the second floor. The beams of the ceiling in the great hall on the first floor are decorated with inscriptions in Latin while another room houses an exhibition of models presenting the development of the town of Sion.



3 Church of St-Theodule
Cardinal Mathieu Schiner had this church built in honour of Saint Theodule, the first known bishop of the Valais (4th century) in the 16th century. Its choir is the finest example of flamboyant Germanic Gothic preserved in the canton.

This site was the location of thermal baths in Roman times and subsequently a funerary site from the 5th to the 8th century. From the 9th to the 12th century, a crypt church was erected here, to which pilgrims flocked to venerate the relics of Saint Theodule. The site was expanded from the 12th to the end of the 15th century.



4 Cathedral of Notre Dame du Glarier
The construction of the Romanesque crypt church dates back to the 11th century. The majestic bell tower dates from the 12th century. The building was later partly destroyed by war and fire. It was rebuilt in the course of the 16th century in Gothic style.

The parietal tomb of André de Gualdo and the Saint Barbara chapel with its frescos date from the 15th century.



5 Sorcerer's tower
A local landmark very dear to the hearts of the people of Sion, the Sorcerers' tower is the principal remaining vestige of the walls which once surrounded the town. Erected as a defense tower in the course of the 14th century and added to the angle of the town walls, it was subsequently converted into a prison and fitted with a roof. Its name recalls the witches' trials from the 15th to the 18th century. Inside the tower, in the hall of justice, the visitor can still see traces of the instruments of strappado torture used to «question» the convicts.



6 Rue du Grand-Pont
This street has retained the name of the large bridge which once stood in front of the town hall, crossing part of the river Sionne. In the course of the 18th and 19th centuries, this river, which flows from the north to the south of Sion (currently symbolised by concrete flagstones), was completely channelled underground. Numerous buildings were rebuilt in the aftermath of the Great Fire of Sion in 1788. Note in particular the Maison Ambuel (No. 29) with its painted facade and two oriel windows (17th century), the Casino (No. 4), seat of the Grand Council, and the Grenette (No. 22), the covered market (19th century).

This street has regained its atmosphere of former times with the market held here every Friday.



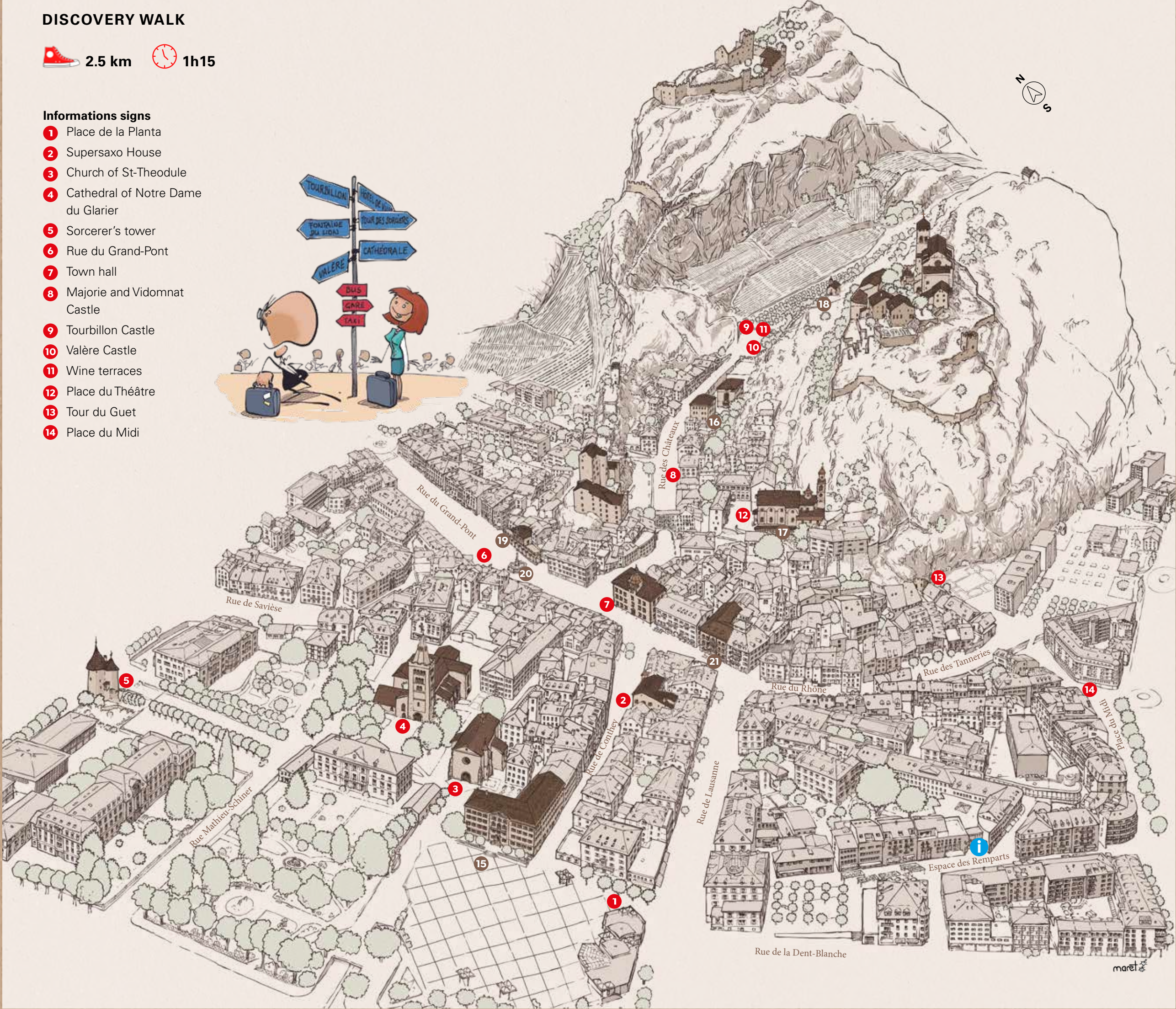
7 Town hall
In the course of the 17th century, the burghers of Sion, who had gradually taken over temporal power from the bishop, had this fine Renaissance-style building erected as a sign of their authority. Its belfry features an astronomical clock. The building's woodwork (sculpted doors) and iron finishings

DISCOVERY WALK

 **2.5 km**  **1h15**

Informations signs

- 1 Place de la Planta
- 2 Supersaxo House
- 3 Church of St-Theodule
- 4 Cathedral of Notre Dame du Glarier
- 5 Sorcerer's tower
- 6 Rue du Grand-Pont
- 7 Town hall
- 8 Majorie and Vidomnat Castle
- 9 Tourbillon Castle
- 10 Valère Castle
- 11 Wine terraces
- 12 Place du Théâtre
- 13 Tour du Guet
- 14 Place du Midi



(gargoyles and locks) bear witness to the expertise of the artisans who worked on its construction.



8 Majorie/Vidomnat Castle
These buildings were first occupied by the Major and the Vidomne, officers representing the bishop. Majorie Castle became the Episcopal residence in the course of the 14th century. The «Diet», the former parliament and government of the Valais, met in one of its rooms. Reconstructed after the fires of 1529 and 1788, it was converted into a barracks in 1840. These buildings have been home to the **Valais Art Museum** since 1946.



9 Tourbillon Castle
This site with its magnificent view was already inhabited in prehistoric times. Bishop Boniface de Challant built a castle here around the year 1300. The castle was burnt down during the wars of Rarogne in 1417 and rebuilt by Bishop William VI. It was again rampaged by flames during the Great Fire of Sion in 1788. Restoration began in 1960. Inside the castle, in the great residential tower, the remains of the keep, the visitor can still see traces of what was once the bishop's apartments. In the vaulted choir of the chapel, wall paintings (14th and 15th century) are important evidence of the medieval period in the Alpine regions. The southern surrounding tower houses one of the rare medieval dovecots known in the region.



10 Valère Castle
Valère hill was ceded by the bishop to his canons (cathedral chapter) in 1049 and became their residence. Some of the buildings were restored and converted into a museum at the end of the 19th century (currently the **Valais History Museum**). Substantial remains of the fortified enclosure have been preserved. Commenced at the turn of the 11th to the 12th century, the principal church fortress of Switzerland was completed in the course of the 13th century. The semi-circular apse and the richly decorated capitals are preserved from Romanesque times. The choir has been reconstructed in the 13th century in Gothic style. From the same period, a rood screen, a rare example still in place in Europe, separates the choir from the nave. The architecture, wall paintings, lavish furnishings (panel of the Magi, approx. 1440) and the choir stalls are equally note-worthy.

The Gothic organ (approx. 1435), considered to be one of the world's oldest playable organs, is the major attraction of the old collegiate church and cathedral of Valère. The church was elevated to the rank of Minor Basilica by Pope Jean- Paul II (1987).



11 Wine terraces
Recent archaeological indications would seem to prove that the cultivation of the vine in the Valais region dates back to well before the Roman period. Today, the 420 ha of vineyards of Sion make it the second wine-growing commune of the Valais. The Sion terroir offers a multitude of different grape varieties, their particularity being that they are grown in

terraces supported by dry stone walls, some of which are over one hundred years old. Sion boasts four «grands crus classés» (Fendant, Ermitage, Dôle, Syrah).



12 Place du Théâtre
In the 6th century, the bishop's residence was transferred from Martigny to Sion, this location entrenched at the foot of the hills being easier to defend. A number of buildings still bear witness to the Episcopal presence: the current municipal theatre and the Grange-à-l'Evêque, Rue des Châteaux No. 12.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Jesuits marked their presence here by building a college and the so-called «Church of the Jesuits», also known as «Church of the Trinity» or «Church of the College». Now desanctified, it is used as a concert hall.



13 Watchtower
This watchtower (13th century), a vestige of the ancient castle enclosure, deserves special mention. It marks the beginning of the Tanners' quarter, situated at the lower part of the town at the time, next to the river. This was an ideal quarter for the tanners whose work required substantial quantities of water. The visitor can see the river Sionne at this point. It seems to be happy to return to the fresh air after passing beneath the Rue du Grand-Pont!

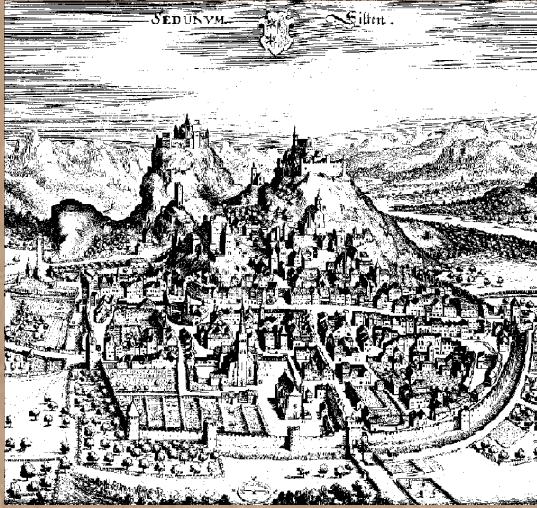


Illustration: Engraving by Merian (1641)



14 Place du Midi
Place du Midi was created when the last section of the walls which surrounded Sion from the 13th century until the mid-19th century was demolished. The ditches at the foot of the walls were filled in, providing the town with a new urban space. On the ground, the grey paving traces the outline of the walls right along the Espace des Remparts, a reminder of the times when Sion had to protect itself.

TO DISCOVER ALSO...

(in addition to the Discovery Walk)



15 Government House
Built in 1838 with stones from the demolition of the city walls, this building has a three-winged façade characteristic of Sion architecture. It overlooks the Place de La Planta, in the centre of the city. It housed an Ursuline convent until the 1850s and now houses the State Council of the canton of the Valais (the political executive) and the State Chancellery, hence the name Palais du Gouvernement. The triangular pediment is adorned with the Valais coat of arms.



16 Ancien pénitencier (Old penitentiary)
Until 2024, the Pénitencier was the temporary exhibition centre for the Cantonal Museums of the Valais. This former prison building (dating from 1913 to 1997) underwent some renovation work before being put to its new use, while retaining its original architectural structure. Since 2000, this unusual and unique setting has regularly hosted alternating exhibitions from the Valais Art Museum, Valais History Museum and Valais Nature Museum. It will reopen its doors in a few years' time, after a major renovation.



17 Jesuit Church
This church, completed in 1815 by Sion architect Jean-Joseph Andenmatten, was part of the Jesuit College, which taught in Sion from the 17th century to the mid-19th century. Its understated façade is decorated with simple mouldings, with a small canopy housing the entrance porch and a bell tower topped by a lantern dome. An external wooden gallery (west side façade) connected it directly to the Jesuit building.



18 Chapel of Tous-les-Saints
This Romanesque chapel was founded in 1325 by Canon Thomas de Blandrate, cantor of Sion and canon of the cathedral chapter. It is dedicated to the worship of all the saints. The very crude façade, with its exposed stones, has a beautiful cross above the door. The slate roof is surmounted by a small quadrangular bell tower, with small twin bays, covered by a pyramidal stone roof.



19 La Grenette
Built between 1866 and 1869 by Lower Valais architect Emile Vuilloud, this colonnaded building was originally intended to house the city's covered grain market. This explains the presence of a vast portico, supported by high granite columns, to shelter the grain from the rain. It is topped by a characteristic 19th century pavilion with a small lantern bearing a metal weathervane.



20 Fountain du Lion
This fountain was originally located further down the street, near the Town Hall. It was moved to its present location in the 19th century and moved out of alignment in the 20th century to facilitate traffic flows. It dates from 1610 and was built by two brothers, sculptors Peter and Hans Studer, at the request of the Bourgeoisie de Sion. The fountain is overlooked by a column supporting a lion brandishing the coat of arms of the city of Sion. A small bronze toad was added to the edge of the bowl in the 21st century.



21 Le Casino
Built in 1863 by the famous Lower Valais architect Emile Vuilloud, this building was initially intended to house a large hall that the Bourgeoisie de Sion made available to local associations. As the demand for rentals diminished, it was later used as an event hall where the Sion's upper classes organised balls and board games, hence the nickname «Casino» which has stuck. It was bought by the State of Valais in 1943 and now houses the canton's parliament (Grand Council of Valais, legislative authority).

