

PROJECT No. 2

Renovation of the infrastructure in Trient Gorge, a natural and geological gem

IN BRIEF

600 metres of walkways attached to the mountainside, and rockfall protection nets

The Trient Gorge, carved out of the Mont Blanc massif by the eponymous mountain stream, has been **listed** in the Federal Inventory of Landscapes and Natural Monuments of **National Importance** since 1988. The site is a wild and impressive attraction, rich in biodiversity and natural habitats, its geomorphology shaped by glaciers and 20,000 years of erosion.

Opened to the public **in 1860** thanks to the arrival of the railway and to the 660 metres of **wooden walkways built into the rock face**, the gorge continues to provoke both fear and fascination.

Between 2000 and 2003, the Commune of Vernayaz carried out safety work along the entire route, installed a series of information panels and built a visitors' centre at the entrance. Audio guides are also available in three languages (French, German and English). The site can be **reached by car or train**. It takes half an hour to visit the site and for those wishing to stay longer, hiking trails lead to the Pont de Gueuroz, with a spectacular panorama of the Rhône valley or to the foot of the impressive 116m high Pissevache waterfall.

Although regular maintenance is carried out, complete renovation of the infrastructure (**replacing the walkways and rockfall protection nets**) will need to be undertaken in the coming years. The total cost to the little Commune of Vernayaz with its 1900 inhabitants is estimated at over a million Swiss francs. Without this renovation, the gorge will eventually have to be closed to the public.

DESCRIPTION

Water is a common thread in the region's tourism, with the Pissevache waterfall and the themed trail

- Preservation of a major tourist attraction, **a symbol of Valais** and of **a canton** in which water plays such a key role (dams, bisses, sources of the Rhône, etc.).
- The Trient gorge provides a breathtaking **gateway** to the **Martigny region** and the **Trient valley**, which leads to Chamonix via the Mont-Blanc Express.
- A tool to **raise awareness among schoolchildren about water**, its conservation, and the challenges involved (climate change, ground pollution, etc.).
- Integration of the gorge into a **wider and coherent tourism project** in Vernayaz, related to water (rewilding of the Trient river and the Pissevache waterfall is ongoing, a footpath has been built between the Trient gorge and the Pissevache waterfall, and a project has been started for a security mound with observation point for the waterfall and nearby wildlife).
- Conservation of **natural sites connected to the region's history**: battle of Trient in 1844 and the Trient log drivers, the golden age of Alpine tourism, with works about the region written by leading figures: "At last we arrived at the waterfall, which deserves its reputation more than many others. [...] We climbed up close and sat down beside it, wishing to spend hours and days in this place." Goethe, 1779.



WHY SHOULD YOU SUPPORT THIS PROJECT?

A sustainable vision, a coherent project and the support of the Trient Valley Regional Nature Park

- Vernayaz is one of the seven member communes of the **Trient Valley Regional Nature Park**, a valued partner and expert in the ongoing enhancement process.
- This project is in line with the vision of **sustainable tourism**.
- Vernayaz is working to reinforce **non-motorised transport** in its territory. It can be reached from two stations (CFF and Mont-Blanc Express) and also has two bus stops, community bikes and a network of footpaths.
- Vernayaz's aim is **simple**. It wishes to make the most of its natural heritage (Trient gorge and Pissevache waterfall, and stagecoach road), and improve access while preserving its heritage.
- Obtaining support to fund this project will allow it to be carried out quickly, thus **avoiding closure of the gorge**.

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