# Typical Grächen & St. Niklaus

GRÄCHEN
St. Niklaus

With tips from locals

## CHATTING OUT OF THE SEWING BOX

Erlebnisbank
RAIFFEISEN Mischabel-Matterhorn

Small. But mighty. graechen.ch

# History & Myths

The first documentary mention of Grächen dates back to 1295 as “de Grangiis” and 1307 as Grenekun.

Unfortunately, there is no evidence of an earlier settlement. However, hunters roamed our area as early as the Bronze Age (1800 - 750 BC), which is clearly evidenced by finds such as spearheads and striking tools. Our history is also full of legends and mystical “promises”. Find the “treasure under the Heimiplatte”, meet the “white chamois” or the “ditch witch”.

**Literature tips**
**„Sagen und Volkserzählungen aus Grächen“**
**„Grächen im Strom der Zeit“**
Copies are available in German from the Tourist Office.

**Tip**
**St. Niklaus Local History and Mountain Guides Museum**

In Grächen & St. Niklaus you can still find typical buildings from the early modern era. These include the churches and chapels as well as the sun-blackened larch wood barns perched on stilts with round stone slabs. Above all, these barns were and are used as ‘Spycher’ and stables. These agricultural buildings are considered valuable witnesses to traditional Valais building culture. They are beautiful to look at and always provide a wonderful photo opportunity.

**Tip**
Individual village tour on foot
& traditional customs

# History & Myths

## „Umsingen“ New Year's singing

Every year on 31 December, as has been documented since 1832 in St. Niklaus and 1892 in Grächen, several ‘musically equipped groups’ go from door to door. Singing in defiance of the rain, snowstorm or icy cold, they wish everyone ‘Good luck for the New Year ahead’. The singers delight with a unique Christmas, New Year or shepherd's song, accompanied by trumpets and clarinets. Local hospitality is also practised here and so it is possible that the singers will linger over a snack and a drink in one or other of the houses. Afterwards, the wish is confirmed with a handshake and a ‘Happy New Year!’. As people leave their homes, blessing wishes are written in chalk above the main entrance. These are permanently visible on many houses and more will probably be added in the coming years.

## Alpine cattle drive up & down

In June, the Eringer cows move uphill early in the morning to the assembly point, the ‘Ringchrommu’. Before the animals enter the lush meadow at the edge of the forest, they are officially welcomed, registered and blessed in the presence of the alpine bailiff. On this occasion, the cows settle their hierarchy among themselves and the chosen ‘ring cow’ has ‘the say’ within the herd for the season. Things are also looking up for other animal breeds, such as the local blacknose sheep. After the sunny summer months, everyone gathers on the village square in September to enjoy the festive and exuberant atmosphere. Numerous awards for the four-legged friends are presented here.

# History & Myths

## Chapels

Striking and typical Valais chapels can be found on Hannigalp, Egga, Bina, in Rittinen, in Gasenried and on Alpe Jungen. The treasures of the churches built and consecrated between the 17th and 19th centuries range from impressive rococo or baroque altars to well-preserved paintings of the Last Judgement and other works of art.

## Birthplace of Thomas Platter

From Grächen into the world. The famous son of our mountain community travelled the country as a student before becoming a much respected Hebraist, printer and finally rector of a famous Latin school in Basel..

## Glacier prayers

The permanent settlement of Gasenried borders Grächen to the north and is bordered to the south-east by the imposing Ried Glacier. The small Schalbetten chapel was built at the foot of the glacier to banish it. In the late Middle Ages, the inhabitants prayed fervently that the Ried Glacier, which was spreading downwards, would finally stop. Looking back, it seems that the locals were praying too hard..



# Questioning Trail

## Who says hiking is just abaout walking?

On this lovingly designed themed trail above Hannigalp, a little adventure awaits you behind every question mark. Scan the QR codes along the circular route and immerse yourself in a world full of surprising questions, exciting discoveries and creative challenges. Here, nature meets imagination, views meet exercise and curiosity meets real-life experiences. Sometimes observe, sometimes marvel, sometimes puzzle – a colourful mix of adventure, creative and interactive questions for young and old alike.

More info

# Favourite hikes from locals

## Hike to "Grat"

Follow the path to Thomy's 'place of power', where you too can recharge your batteries.

The hiking trail leads through the refreshing larch forest, along the bisses and across flowering meadows. The gradient gradually increases and you hike steadily uphill along the travelling water of the Ried Glacier.

Pause at the glacier gate and stop for a picnic on the Alpja in the midst of pure nature. There is a very good chance of encountering native animals such as chamois here. Hike steadily uphill, following the signs to the ridge.

Thomy: 'I'm always blown away by the nature in front of me.'

Your physical efforts are rewarded with a sensational panoramic view of the Valais mountains.

More info

# Alpine flower trail

## Botanical experience

Lush meadows full of alpine asters, arnica, bellflowers, devil's claw, gentian, saxifrage, rock carnations, cinquefoil, horseshoe clover, cranberry, cranesbill, edelweiss, rock primrose and many other colourful plants as far as the eye can see.

At Alpe Jungen at around 2000 metres above sea level, affectionately known as 'Jungu' by the locals, Nadine starts her hike along the circular trail through the wild and romantic Jungtal valley, which is lined with magnificent flowers. Thanks to the inner-Alpine climate with sunny and dry weather, plants that do not normally thrive at this altitude bloom here

More info

# Native flora in unique splendour

## Larch and pine forests

There is evidence that larch, Swiss stone pine and Norway spruce were already growing in the area that is now Grächen around 4500 BC. These trees still thrive here and thanks to human intervention, the more shade-tolerant Swiss stone pine has not displaced the light-hungry larch. In fact, Swiss stone pines now form a second layer of trees under the light canopy of the larches, offering refreshing cooling even in midsummer temperatures. The larch has a weather-resistant wood and a cork-like bark and is therefore also an important protective forest tree species at the tree line.
Dwarf shrubs such as the alpine rose adapt particularly well to the conditions in the larch-pine forest.

## Alpine rose blossom

It comes from the rhododendron genus within the heather family. Alpine roses can be found at 1500 - 2800 metres above sea level and grow up to 130 cm in height. You can enjoy their beautiful blossom in a short window of time in mid-June. The 5 to 8 mm long stalked flowers are clustered in dense, corymbose inflorescences. The five deep pink to bright red petals are fused together in a broad funnel shape and are the real highlight.



# Home to chamois, golden eagles, bearded vultures, marmots, ...

## Blacknose sheep

A woolly black face, barely recognisable eyes, imposing horns and simply cuddly and lovable - these are the typical descriptions of the Valais domestic sheep. They are true climbing professionals and can graze sure-footedly on steep and stony slopes. Blacknose sheep are frugal, hardy and harmonious.

## Capricorn

The 'kings of the Alps' can be spotted on a hike around the Hannigalp. The ibex feel very much at home on the stony rocky areas and in the forest. The best time to see ibex is early in the morning, when the day awakens and there are few hikers on the trail.

## Eringer cows

Muscular breed of cattle with a short coat. They can move easily in mountainous terrain, are adaptable and frugal. They are characterised by their natural combativeness, in which they skilfully use their horns in a wrestling match with their own kind and thus regulate the hierarchy within the herd.

**Tip: Grächner Wildtierweg**

# Give your health a boost at the Kneipp facilities!

**Treat your joints to a time-out after your sporting activities! Surrounded by gorgeous mountain scenery, you'll walk through the cold water and consciously enjoy the moment.**

With water treading facilities, arm baths, dry pools with pebbles and benches, the Kneipp gardens by the lake and Taa promote active relaxation. Wellness rituals in the fresh air promote well-being. The numerous information boards provide tips on how best to enjoy the treatments in the cool water.

In the neighbouring village of Gasenried (Schalbetten, near Riedbach) there are two arm pools and a water treading facility. On the opposite side of the valley, by the lake on Alpe Jungen, there is another water treading facility.

More info



# Suonen

**The water channels lead through cosy forests and along lush meadows.**

They were created over 700 years ago as part of an irrigation system to channel the precious water from the Ried glacier to the meadows and fields. Even back then, Grächen was one of the driest regions in the Alps and the bisses ensured a reliable supply of water for plants and animals. Today, the bisses invite you to marvel, play and relax.

These traditional irrigation systems have been on the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage since December 2023. This also honours and protects the Grächen bisses as a living tradition and human creativity.

**Tip**
Magic water circular tour Eggeri & Chilcheri

# Bike trails recommended by locals

## Grächen Loop

This technically and physically not too difficult circular tour is a great way to get to know the trails around Grächen.

On this tour, which is typical for this region, you will cycle along wide, gentle forest paths, conquer crisp climbs, root-covered downhills and narrow single trails. The highest point of the tour is reached after a moderate climb of around 150 metres on the tarred and gravel road. The first short descent and the subsequent ascent require a little more concentration. Continue along the wide meadow path past Lake Grächen, towards the Kneipp facility at Taa and finally towards Bärgji. Here you have a spectacular view of the surrounding peaks from the Matterhorn to the Bietschhorn. The way back to Grächen leads along a remote, narrow single trail with fun descents and short counter-climbs.

More info

Grächen – Z'Seew – Taa – Bärgji – Chummulti – Bina – Grächen
Length: approx. 10 km

# Tip from the pro

## Mattsand Enduro

Odilo: 'You shouldn't miss out on what is probably the most exciting way to get from Grächen to St. Niklaus by bike.' Your bike leads you alternately on a wide gravel path and road following bike trail no. 544 in the direction of Gasenried.

At Schalbettu, you can catch a last glimpse of the Ried Glacier before crossing the Riedbach stream and shortly afterwards entering the exciting Mattsand Trail.

This is followed by rough downhills, gentle forest paths spiced up with short, challenging counter-climbs. From Mattsand, the route continues along the left bank of the Vispa river to St. Niklaus on a side road with little traffic.

The tarmac side road towards Tennjen is best for the return journey to Grächen. From the hamlet of Hellena, there are just over 100 metres of crisp, technically easy ascent. E-bikes can do this well, but it is a real challenge even for fit bikers on a bike without a motor.

More nfo

Ascent: approx. 865 m Descent: approx. 865 m
Length: approx. 24 km
Duration: approx. 3 hours
Technique: S2

# Photo & Viewpoints

**Hohtschuggen**
A rocky outcrop in the larch forest opens up the view down over Stalden and Visp to the Rhone valley.

**Chapel on the Hannigalp**
Romantic place with a view of the Matterhorn.

**Kleine Furgge**
Take a seat in the historic two-seater gondola and reminisce.

**Wannihorn**
Take the ideal 'top mountain selfie' with the summit cross and mountain panorama in the background.

**Heidnische Tossu**
Relax in the midst of the breathtaking mountain scenery.

**Seetal Mountain station**
Marvellous mountain panorama with views as far as the Aletsch Glacier.

**Gross Bigerhorn**
Experienced hikers will find an alpine challenge along Europe's highest hiking trail.

**Alpe Jungen**
Magnificent views of the Weisshorn, the Brunegghorn and the Ried Glacier opposite.

# Photo trail

## Perfect photo spots

Discover the local mountain world on this varied circular tour and make photo stops on the XXL swing or sit in the XXL photo frame at the Stafelbar.

Welcome to the magical backdrop! Here, where the landscape is like something out of a storybook, choosing the perfect photo spot can be a challenge. But don't worry! We've put together the ultimate photo trail for you. Follow the magical path and you'll enjoy the spots and the views. The particularly photogenic spots will make you and your holiday photos shine - perfect for your photo album or Instagram.

**Tip**
Photo trail "Summer Edition"

# Typical Grächen events with their very own charm

**Alpaufzug | Alpabzug**

**SiSu Familienfest**

**Beach Event**

**Comedy Night**

**Flanier Abund**

**Harley-Treffen**

**Kleinkunstfestival**

**SiSu Kreidenfestival**

**Kultursommer**

**Mountain Music Festival**

**Nationalfeiertag**

**Ultra Tour Monte Rosa**

More Events & info

**Tourist Office Grächen**

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