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A Valley in Valais

STRETCHING out from the River Rhone in Switzerland lies the long high Alpine valley of Anniviers. In times past the inhabitants led an almost nomadic pastoral life.

In spring they would move with their animals from the high mountain villages into the valley: whole communities – men, women, children, the priest and the schoolmaster would leave their homes high in the snows for the lower slopes.

There they would cultivate a few crops and as the weather grew warmer they would descend even lower to tend their vines in due season and work as a collective community until harvest.

Then when this had passed, they would return by stages to

By Nina Mansell

their homes among the snows.

For hundreds of years these seasonal migrations took place and it is said that these people were descended from the “annivatores” or “year round travellers”, a Roman nomadic tribe closely akin to gypsies.

While they worked they were often accompanied by a small fife band – an early example of “Music while you work”!

But change has come as roads have been opened and good communication established with such centres as Sierre. This is the town where one is told they cease to speak French and begin to speak German.



Weather-beaten houses surround the church at Ayer

Today there is no travel problem and the Annivards have altered their way of life. Tourism has developed and will do so even more as an increasing number of visitors discover the charms of the many small villages in the area, both in summer and for the winter sports season.

The inhabitants are a friendly welcoming people and have a great reputation for hospitality so that visitors come away with an excellent impression and a desire to return to Val d'Anniviers.

The need for accommodation must therefore be met but while the Annivards are anxious that tourism and residence shall increase, they are particularly watchful that development shall maintain ancient characteristics and that new projects shall serve to accentuate long standing tradition.

Around the area are to be seen some of the best and most unspoilt chalets in Switzerland.

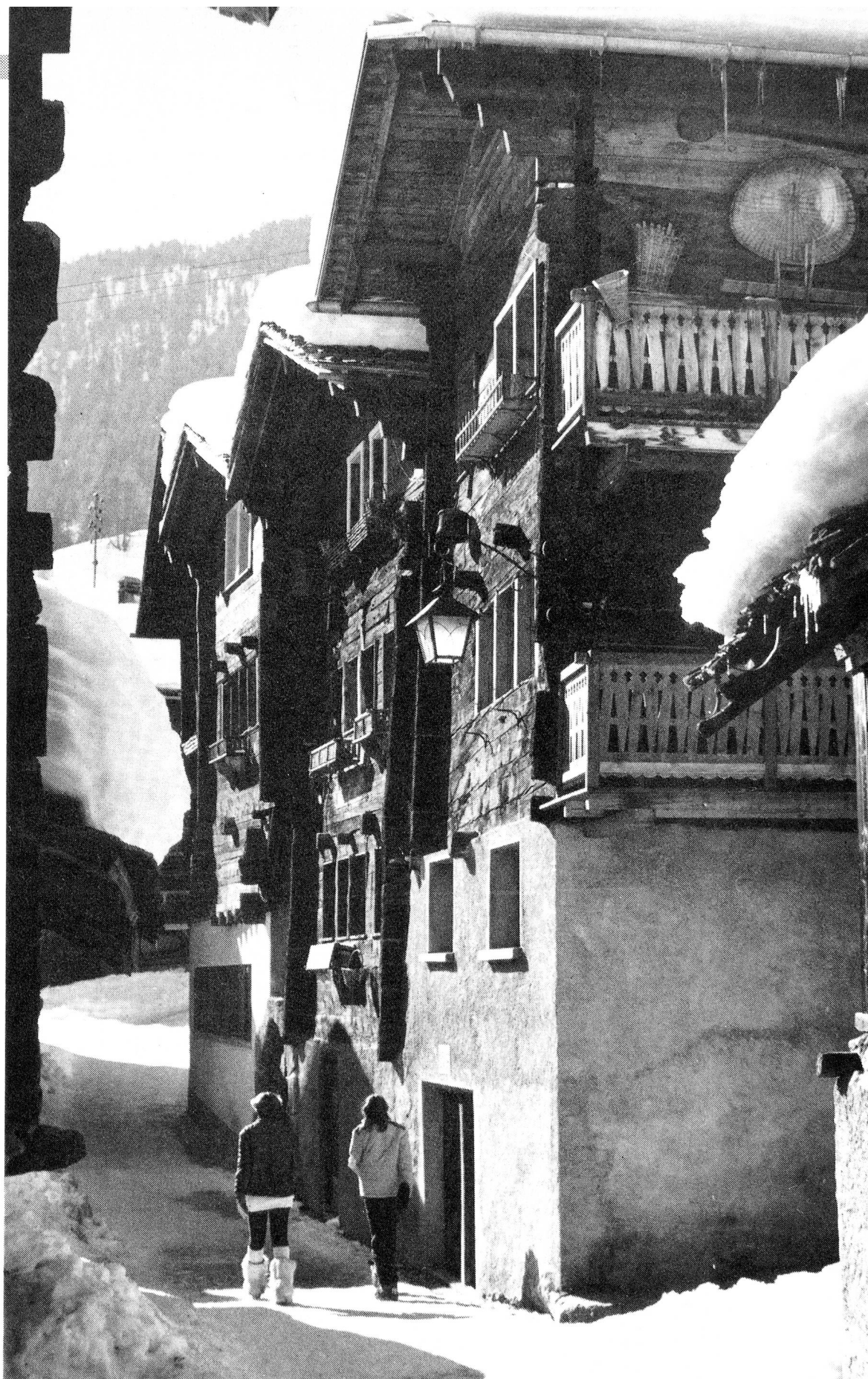
There are hotels of various categories as well as self catering establishments, to be rented in long and short term, as well as properties for sale.

At present there is no time sharing arrangement though if you own an apartment in an "apartment-hotel" there is a kind of reverse arrangement whereby your apartment can be let for you when you are not in residence.

Once you have decided on the type of accommodation you want, travel to your chosen destination presents no difficulty. There is a train service from Geneva to Sierre and from there a direct postal bus takes you to your chosen village.

There is also a cable car service from Sierre up to Vercorin. If you are hiring a car or even bringing your own to the Val the roads are now very good and can be expected to be open all year round.

The cost of living in the valley is much cheaper than in many



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Grimenty in the Anniviers Valley

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other more commercially orientated resorts and property at current prices represents extremely good value.

I talked to Hilary Scott who is a specialist in property sales in Switzerland. She told me that a consortium of the valley's developers are offering the highest quality chalets and apartments with authorisation to sell to non-Swiss nationals at prices from £16,000 for a studio to £58,000 for a chalet and that a mortgage can easily be arranged at only 6 per cent interest.

She had various suggestions to offer on such villages as Vervorin (4,425 feet) with direct access from Sierre by cable car: Vissoie (3,966 feet) which is a pretty village in the main centre of the Val d'Anniviers: Chandolin, the highest of the villages at 6,580 feet and Grimentz, one of the most beautiful villages in the Valais region famed for its lovely

old chalets and historic associations: or there are those unspoilt places such as St. Jean and St. Luc which are becoming increasingly popular.

She will be delighted to give full details of properties and to advise and help if contacted at 422, Upper Richmond Road West, London, SW14 (Telephone: 01-876 6555). She has immense experience of the area and is a constant visitor so that she is fully aware of the current situation. The Swiss Tourist Office at 1, New Coventry Street, London, W.1. is always ready to assist too with brochures and information.

Regarding legal restrictions for UK residents, under the Swiss "Furgler Law" each area has a quota of properties authorised for sale to non-Swiss residents and as Val d'Anniviers is counted as a development area there is a great variety available and property prices are substantially less there because it is as yet considerably

less well known.

Prices can therefore be expected to rise as more and more people become aware of the area.

At first glance it may appear that Swiss property prices are much higher than those in, say Spain or France, but one must not overlook the fact that the Swiss are offering exceedingly high standards of quality and workmanship.

There is tremendous attention paid to detail in new chalets and apartments and interior finish, sanitary ware, double glazing and joinery work are of the best quality.

Usually separate laundry rooms and ski store areas are included in the price and the building may also have a sauna or swimming pool. In addition you will be living in one of the healthiest climates of the world.

In purchasing, deeds will be drawn up and transference of legal ownership carried out by a

Swiss notary. Ownership is registered in the Land Registry which is a confidential document.

The legal fees and registration taxes amount to approximately 2½ per cent of the purchase price in the Valais region.

Mortgages are available for foreign purchasers through the local Swiss Banks and the local agent or developer will generally have arrangements with a particular bank for the provision of finance. Currently the banks lend up to 60 per cent.

Taxes are payable to the commune, the Canton and the Swiss Government and these amount to approximately 1 per cent of the purchase price.

The Val d'Anniviers is delightful for a holiday also. Its scenery is glorious as well as picturesque.

It is an area of peaceful natural beauty where in winter you can enjoy snow sports by day and spend cosy evenings in the informal "après ski" atmosphere of the bars and cafés.

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