

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 74 (2008)
Heft: [3]

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-943629>

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HELVE⁺IA

Magazine for Members of the Swiss Society of New Zealand Inc

BEAUTIFUL SWITZERLAND



Val Müstair/Münstertal

As you crest the Ofenpass/Pass dal Fuorn 20km south of Zernez, spread out in front is the idyllic Val Müstair, a lush, peaceful valley pointing the way south into Italy. This finger of Switzerland is cut off by the mountains from the rest of Graubünden and is entirely

San Jon, or Klosterkirche St Johann, reputedly founded by Charlemagne himself around 800 and still a functioning Benedictine convent today. The site has been deemed by UNESCO to be a cultural heritage site of world importance for the array of brilliantly coloured



Santa Maria, the main village in Val Mustair



Klosterkirche St Johann, the Benedictine convent in Mustair

surrounded by Italian territory, but nonetheless remains determinedly Romansh in language and culture. Half-a-dozen hamlets dot the green slopes on the 8km descent to picturesque Santa Maria, the main village of the valley, with a Gothic church just off its narrow main street. However, the chief reason for visiting the valley, its scenery aside, is to reach Müstair, the border village (pronounced *moosh-tire*), some 4km further on. Virtually the last buildings before the Italian frontier are a Carolingian monastery and church, the Baselgia

Romanesque frescoes adorning the interior of its monastery church (free entry). The style and detail of the frescoes, which depict stories such as the stoning of St Stephen and the Dance of Salome, are breathtaking, and the atmosphere of the church, its adjacent cemetery and cobbled courtyard make the journey well worth while. A small museum off the courtyard has chunks of Carolingian carving and Baroque statues and icons.

