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## Zernez and Swiss National Park

The picturesque Engadine village of **Zernez** is first mentioned in 1131 as Gumpo de Ernece and today is a municipality in the Engiadina Bassa (romansch: Val Müstair) Region in the Swiss canton of Graubünden. On 1 January 2015 the former municipalities of Lavin and Susch merged into the municipality of Zernez.

*Allegra* is the romantic greeting with which visitors are welcomed to the holiday resort of Zernez (1474 metres above sea level)

Zernez is a major node in the regional road network, with a car transport service through the Vereina Tunnel and roads leading into the Upper Engadine and towards Italy, the Lower Engadine and towards Austria, over the Fuorn Pass into the Val Müstair and over the Flüela Pass.

The town has a population (as of December 2016) of 1,540. Most of the population speaks Romansh with German being second most common and Italian being third. The Romansh speaking majority speak the Vallader dialect.

Zernez has, like most areas of Switzerland, a rich history. Sites of national significance are:

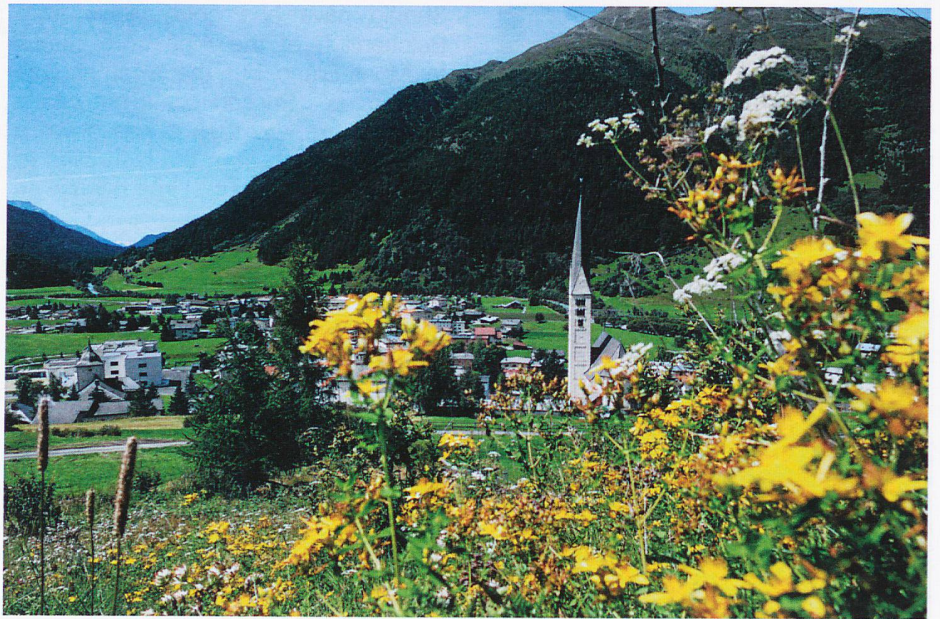
- The abandoned village of Gonda
- The Reformed Church
- The Schloss Wildenberg
- The Palazzo Bezzola
- The Richtstätte

The church was first built in 1367. When the Protestant Reformation entered Zernez in 1553, the church was stripped of all the statues and paintings. Then, in 1609 the old church was replaced with a new baroque building, though the romanesque bell tower of the old church was retained.

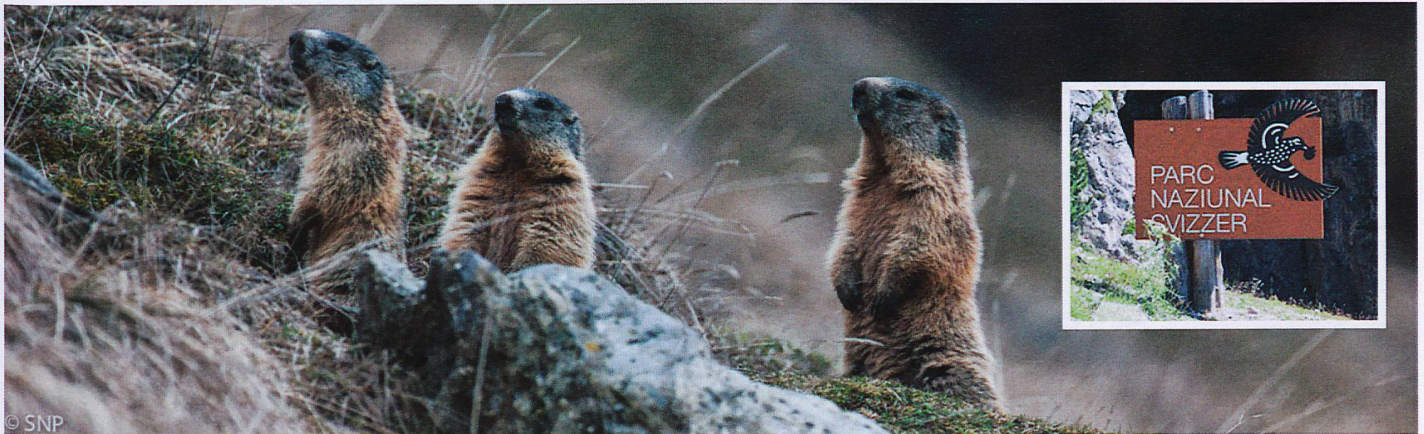
The castle was built in the 12th Century but was rebuilt into a baroque castle later. Since 1956 it has served as the town hall.

There are several other notable sites as well. These include the gothic catholic chapel of St. Sebastian, the Morenturm, the abandoned tower of La Serra and in Brail, a medieval Reformed church.

The town is also the gateway to Switzerland's only National Park: It is Switzerland's biggest nature reserve and it is also an ideal starting point for journeys of discovery in the Engadine .







### Did you know that Switzerland has only one national park?!

The Swiss National Park was actually one of the first in Europe, founded in 1914. It is situated in Canton Graubünden, and covers 172.3km<sup>2</sup> with an elevation of 1400 – 3173m above sea level. It is the largest protected area in Switzerland, as it is home to ibexes, chamois, marmots, bearded vultures, golden eagles and countless other wild animals. Therefore, strict rules govern the use of the park. These include: no dogs, no leaving marked paths, no overnight camping, no lighting fires, no hunting or disturbing animals or plants and of course no littering.

The park offers 80km of hiking paths and nature trails. The trails are categorised according to the equipment and skills required to follow them. Yellow are regular trails which require no specialist skills; red are mountain trails recommended for individuals who are fit and have hiking boots as the trails may include steep and/or slippery terrain. Blue trails are technical hikes which may involve climbing and glacier traversal, and therefore require alpine equipment. It is also geared for children and families with the Champlönch children's trail, used in conjunction with the GPS-supported iWebpark app.

The National Park is easily accessible by road or public transport. A single road runs throughout the park which is open for public use, although public transport in the form of the postal bus is highly recommended. A variety of accommodation options are available near or in the park. The famed *Chamanna Cluozza* (mountain hut) is a log cabin built at 1882m in 1910. It provides very basic accommodation and is open from June to mid-October. The only hotel in the park, *Hotel Parc Naziunal Il Fuorn*, offers more creature comforts. The nearby village of Zernez offers a variety of hotels and a very informative visitor centre.

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