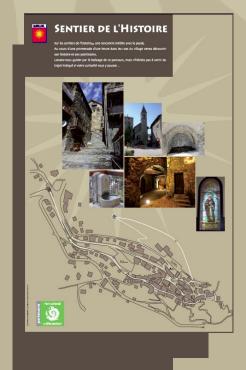
BEUIL

Discovering Beuil and its history



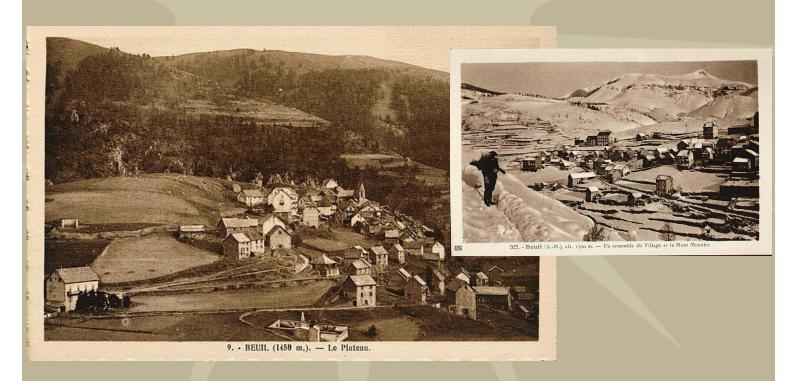


Starting point

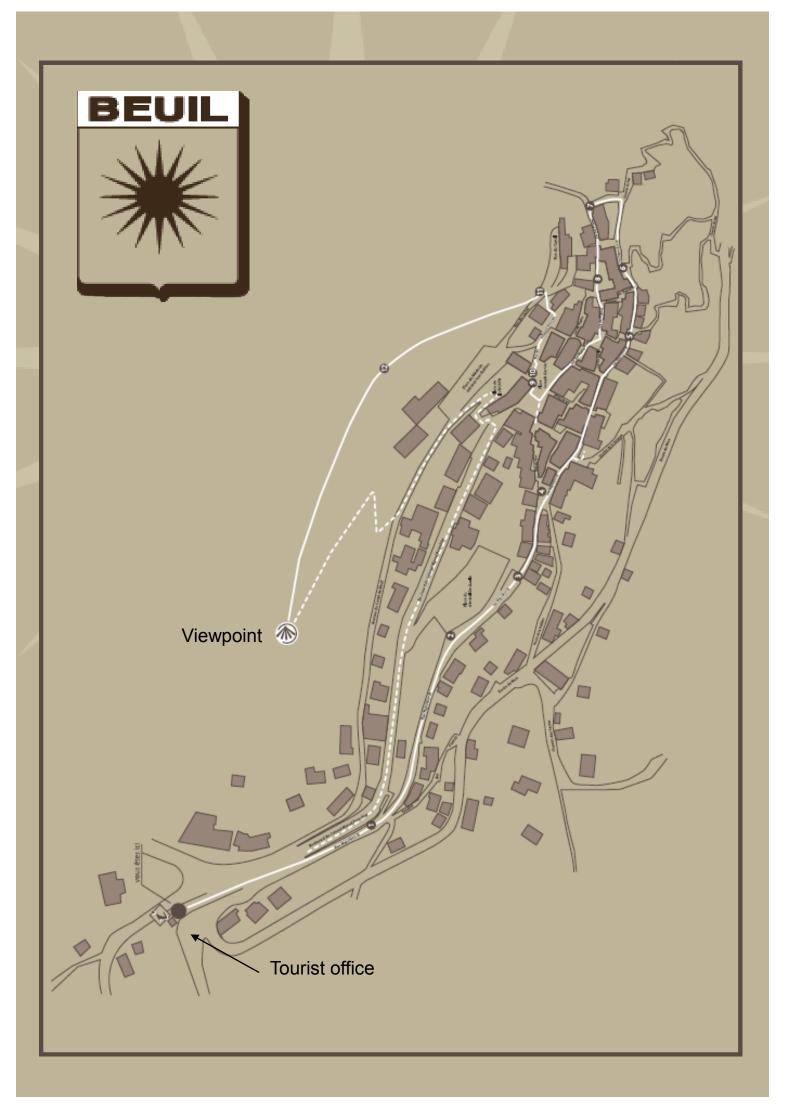
The village of Beuil conceived and designed its Path into History in collaboration with the Mercantour National Park.

Follow the waymarks from the Tourist Office to the Viewpoint on the hill of the Pré de Foire (Village Green), learn about the main events in the village history which show how man and his environment were closely linked, and discover the heritage of Beuil.

Each one of the stands deals with a stage in the history of the Village, together with corresponding events in the history of France.







The inhabitants of Beuil

- . They are a hard-working people : just have a look at the fields strewn with heaps of stones (called "clapiers" or scree), which the farmers have left there when ploughing the fields.
- . They love good food : the "Beuillois" are humorously nicknamed " grupias ", which comes from the word "grupia", meaning "manger".
- . They like looking smart: the traditional costume is a colourful shawl and a lace head-dress for the women, and two velvet ribbons acting as a tie for the men.
- . They are cautious people: in times gone by, when it took two or three days to go to Nice on foot, it is said they used to make a will before setting out.
- . They are proud people: "Io sono conte di Boglio, che faccio quelche voglie", was Count Annibal Grimaldi's motto ("I am Count of Beuil and I do what I want").

The Condamine

Down below the village, the Condamine was the lord of the village's private piece of land (Campus Domini in Latin). It was later divided into several sections, each of them much sought-after since they are all fully exposed to the sun and close to the village, an ideal location for growing wheat, potatoes and lentils. The latter were famous for miles around and were traded for olive oil and all kinds of fruit impossible to grow here on account of the altitude. This way of trading between rural communities lasted until the middle of the last century.



Antiquity (1st century B.C.)

The Gauls rose up against the Romans and Vercingetorix ruled the whole of Central Gaul. He led his troops - the Arvernes and others opposed to Julius Caesar - to victory at Gergovie but was vanquished at Alesia, made prisoner and executed in Rome.

After the agricultural and cattle-breeding period called the Neolithic Age, the Ligures chose this location when, driven away from Nordic countries by the Celts, they came to the South-East of France and the North of Italy.

Driving their herds in front of them, they chose to stay in the Alpine pastures, the climate of which was similar to that in the territories they had left. They were made up of 18 tribes, among which the Velaunes in our region. These shepherds gave names to the mountains around: the Alps (i.e. "heights"), Balma ("cave"), Bergians, Giarons,...As tough and indefatigable men, sometimes serving as mercenaries, they resisted the Roman troops, waging guerilla warfare on the coast.

Finally after a ruthless struggle, the Velaunes and the Triullati of Beuil were defeated and sold as slaves or deported.

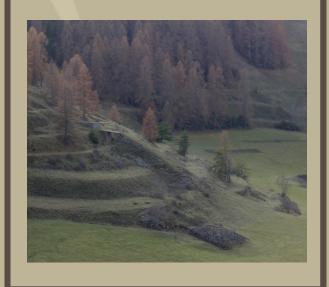
Livy wrote; " Not a single fruit-tree or useful plant was left on the ground...All the houses in the country and even a few villages were burnt down....Men and animals living outside the fortresses were plunderedThe local authorities were decapitated and the rest, men, women and children were made slaves."

What is left of the Velaun' and Triullati's long stay in Beuil? Place names, of course, but mainly the memory of men so fearsome that it was an honour to have defeated them and to have written their names among the names of those vanquished by the armies of Augustus on the monument raised to the glory of the Emperor at La Turbie.



The Ski-jump

In the thirties, the Condamine ski-jump was inaugurated. A competition was organized for the occasion between the French Olympic team (and its champion, Martial Payot from Chamonix) , the Norwegians Olé Bohn and Emil Petersen and the Swiss Luternauer. They jumped between 30 and 50 meters.



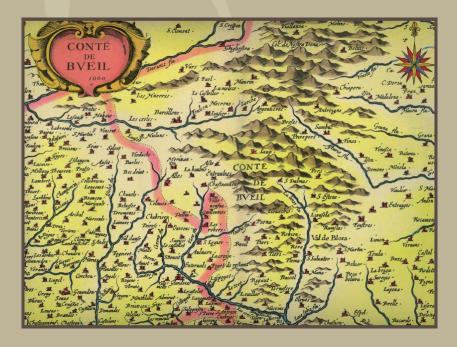
The Middle-Ages (10th century)

Hugues Capet, the ruler of the Kingdom of France from 987 to 996, reigned over a small territory around Paris, as big as two present-day "departements", but known for its important economic development. The first ruler of his dynasty, he based the hereditary crowning of the king on the law of primogeniture.

The Stables

Stables and barns were placed at a distance from the lodgings which were heated with wood. This avoided fires. The life of the cattle regulated the life of the village, the Summer was spent on high mountain pastures, the Winter by the fireside. When Autumn started, the cattle were brought back to the village and were grazed on the hill of the Pré de Foire (the Village Green). At the end of the day, they were driven to their stables, stopping on the way at the drinking trough at Le Pissaïre, watched by the children





The beginning of the 14th century

Nicknamed "the Iron King", Philippe IV Le Bel (Philip the Handsome) was an uncompromising and harsh king. Under his rule, feudal traditions were abandoned and a modern administration was established. His most remarkable innovation was the lasting introduction of gold currency.

In order to stabilize the State's finances, he turned on those who had money, including Catholic religious orders and the Templars.

In the 14th century it was not too safe to travel around the kingdom of France: highwaymen controlled the roads, pirates attacked the coasts and the Black Death devastated the towns and countryside. Brought back from the Levant by the galleys, the plague, for example, carried off a third of the population of Puget Théniers, two fifths of the inhabitants of Nice and three fifths of the population of Antibes.

It is in this troubled context that a branch of the House of Grimaldi settled in Beuil. Squeezed between powerful neighbours in the heart of the Southern Alps, the seigniory of Beuil was headed by Rostaing, a powerful ruler who left his daughter Astruge as his only heiress. Since the position of Beuil required a strong alliance and the Grimaldis met such a requirement, the Genovese patriarch Andaron Grimaldi married Astruge of Beuil and immediately launched a policy of expansion.



San Bastia Square



On the façades of the square, you can still see the traces of colourful designs, the remains of naïve decorations influenced by the fashionable Italian style from the end of the 19th century until the 1920s. The house built facing east-west and separate from the others, has been given an extra storey. The massive lintel is decorated with a cross and scrolls: it is the former San Bastia chapel, unfortunately damaged and sold in the 18th century. It marked the edge of the village and served to indicate a sanitary checkpoint in case of epidemics.

As you proceed...



The wash-house



It is made of three vaults. Supplying water was a problem in Beuil for a long time but it was solved around 1900. Running water came to homes later but carrying water remained a hard task until the 1950s: washing took place on Thursdays, which was then the day off from school so that help was at hand.

Queen Jeanne's Arcade



Streets in Beuil are narrow and have quite a few arcades. One of them is Queen Jeanne's Arcade from which secret underground passages led to the castle. You still can see in a wall the ring which the squire would use to tether his horse.



1328 : Philippe de Valois, nephew to Philippe IV Le Bel, became king of France.

1346 : The Battle of Crécy, a memorable defeat of the French by the English army

1347: After a long siege, the English took Calais.

Andaron begot two sons, Guillaume and Barnabé. The latter inherited the fief of Beuil. In 1343, after disagreements with François Caïs, jurisconsult of Nice and Count of Saint-Sauveur, Barnabé was stabbed by the latter's emissaries, and reported dead. Unknown to his enemy, he recovered from his wounds and, to take revenge, attacked him unexpectedly in his castle of Roure, seized him and made him prisoner. After a very hard period of ruthless captivity, Barnabé gave the order to cut off Caïs's right wrist and burn his eyes and had him hanged from the railings of his own castle.

The Grimaldis' possessions then covered an area which extended from the river Var to the river Tinée; indeed, the Counts of Beuil could travel to Nice without leaving their own lands at all.



Old Houses, renovated or roofed with genuine shingle.

In olden times, the villagers roofed their houses with larch boards. Larch is a choice wood, rainproof, long-lasting and quite attractive. Even if left as it is, the shingle acquires a nice silver-grey patina.

You have to leave the wood to dry for 3 to 5 years, making two grooves for the water to run down from the roof. One-meter-long boards are placed on the edge of the roof and over them two-meter-long boards are placed so that no water can leak through the gaps. Nowadays, shingle is placed over sheets of corrugated iron to make the roof look nice: this is called false shingle.

In Winter, snow does not slide off shingle roofs and there is no need for devices to stop the snow from falling from the roof onto passers-by or onto the streets. Still, you do need a solid roof structure to support the weight of the snow!



The Hundred Years' War

1415: French soldiers and knights were hacked to pieces by the English army at Agincourt.

1419: The English conquered Normandy.

1428: The English laid siege to Orleans.

1429: On April 29, Joan of Arc entered Orleans. The English raised the siege.

1430 : Joan of Arc was captured by the Burgundians and was handed over to the English. She was tried and condemned to be burnt at the stake for heresy.

1475: Peace was signed with the English.

Barnabé begot two sons, Jean and Louis. Jean had one of the most uncommon and ambitious personalities in the family and saw a political opportunity in the troubles caused by the succession of Queen Jeanne of Provence. Appointed seneschal of Provence by the King of Naples, he needed a powerful army to protect the region of Nice and the valleys of Puget Théniers and Barcelonette at a time when war was threatening. With the King's approval, he sought other alliances and prompted the Count of Savoy to enter Nice with his army and thus give Savoy access to the sea. Most of the villages of the region of Nice welcomed the new sovereign, even if quite a few local rulers chose to remain faithful to Provence. Jean Grimaldi was rewarded for his help by being given several new fiefs.

At the end of the 14th century, Jean and his brother were literally at the head of a "small kingdom", which included about 20 fiefs and domains – among which Puget Théniers (which went later to Count Nicolas Grimaldi, a descendant of the lords of Antibes), Beuil, Péone, Roubion, Roure, Ilonse, Marie, Bairols, Thiéry, Pierlas, Touët, Lieuche, Rigaud, Massoins, Villars, Malaussène, Tournefort, Sauze, Levens, Rimplas, Tourrette, Revest, Roquette sur Var, Ascros, Roquestéron and Aiglun.



The Red Gorges

Nature has taken centuries to hollow out this splendid canyon of red pel.

The tumultuous waters of the Cians, tumbling endlessly along, have dug deep gorges into the Primary Era shale.



The Renaissance

1492 : The capture of Granada from the Muslims marked the end of the Spanish Reconquista. Christopher Columbus reached the Bahamas.

1494: Charles VIII left on an expedition to Italy and captured Naples.

Countered by the Holy League formed by Pope Alexander VI, he was driven away from Italv.

1498 : Accidental death of Charles VIII in the castle of Amboise

Georges Grimaldi, Lord of Beuil,, and his cousin Jean Grimaldi, Lord of Levens, made a deal with the King of France, Louis XII, to give him Nice in exchange for a few domains, probably with help of the Governor of Provence, Georges' father-in-law. The deal fell through. Summoned by the Governor of Nice, Lord de la Pallud, to go and explain himself, Georges refused.

On January 5th 1508, Georges' barber, Esprit Testoris, probably paid by the Governor of Nice, assassinated him by slashing his throat. The County of Beuil passed then on to his younger brother, Honoré, lord of Ascros. Honoré I, then a friend of the Duke of Savoy, was appointed Governor of Nice and conducted the defence of the county with great care.



The Cross of the Passion

This cross, sometimes called "The Cross of the Cockerel" when it is surmounted with the figure of the bird, was restored by Christophe Di Carlo, a Beuil joiner, in the 1980s.

The instruments of the Passion are all there (*Arma Christi*):

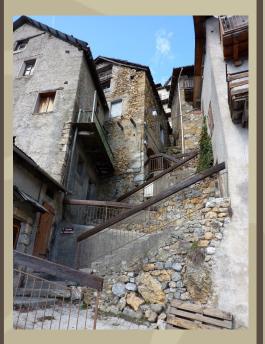
- the cock which sang three times when St Peter denied Christ.
- the Hand of God
- the Crucifixion hammer
- the pliers and the ladder for the Deposition of Christ.
- the calyx of the Last Supper (no longer there)
- the jug of vinegar
- the two spears, that of the centurion who pierced Christ's side and that which held the vinegar-soaked sponge
- the Sacred Heart of Jesus
- the inscription "INRI ", (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews).

The Wars of religion

Charles IX ascended the throne.

1561: during the reign of Charles IX, the kingdom was torn apart by the wars of religion in spite of the efforts of his mother Catherine of Medicis. After many attempts at reconciliation his reign ended with the St Barthelemy massacre in 1572.

The old village houses



They face South.

High above you can see the souleiaires, small balconies protected by the eaves where various crops were left to dry.

The houses served as outer walls against brigands and wolves. The gap between two houses was closed with a wall called a burri. Once the village was made secure, these were replaced by zigzagging flights of steps.

Down below are the horts (from the Latin hortus, garden): vegetable gardens so essential for the villagers and still cultivated.

The Order of the Annonciade was probably created sometime in January 1364 by Count Amédée VI of Savoy, under the name of the Order of the Chain, which replaced the short-lived Order of the Black Swan, established by the same Amédée VI in 1350 on the occasion of his sister Blanche's wedding. The statutes of the Order of the Chain were codified by Amédée VIII in 1409, then profoundly restructured by Duke Charles III of Savoy in 1518. At that time it was given the name of the Supreme Order of the Very Holy Annonciade, more than ever dedicated to the Virgin.

The Order of the Annonciade occupies a choice place among the most illustrious European chivalry orders, such as the Order of the Golden Fleece (Burgundy, 1430), the Order of the Garter (England, 1348) or the Order of the Holy Spirit (France, 1578). Indeed, it has been in existence for a long time and the historical role played by its famous founder and his successors was crucial. Actually, only a few knights belonged to it. They were chosen both by the King and by their comrades-in-arms for their value and merit.



As you proceed...



The Baker's Oven



The local baker's oven remained in use until the years 1930-1932.

The inhabitants of Beuil used to bake their bread there for the month, in exchange for a loaf of bread and a "fougasse" which they would hand over at the end of each batch.

When it closed down, a baker who had settled in the Castel section of the village baked the bread for all the Beuillois.

The mysterious black stone.



It is an embossed sculpted lintel.

Dated August 1523, it bears the name and coat of arms of Loïc Serre, canon of Clans, who was Honoré I, the Baron of Beuil's private secretary. Whether this is its original place or it was brought over from another place, is impossible to say for sure and we can't possibly know if Loïc Serre actually lived here. However, his prestige in Beuil and all around was great especially as the Baron, also the Governor of Nice and thus often detained away from Beuil, used to appoint him as his delegate. This is why his coat of arms can also be seen in Clans and why he was represented as a donor on a fresco in Roubion in 1513.



As you proceed...

The Art Gallery

In the art gallery, situated In the village center, you will discover and no doubt love and share temporary exhibitions.

In this area devoted to promoting culture the people in charge select works of art according to their whims and interests without any definite guideline;

Art is here considered in its diversity. This is why you will find paintings, sculptures, photographies, drawings, and so one together with cultural heritage and local history.

The Bust of Joseph Garnier



It is to be found where his birthplace was, a house demolished in 1938 to give full view of the church.

Joseph Garnier was born in 1813. After studying in Draguignan, he became Director of the Business School in Nice which he had founded, went on to be a journalist in 1835, then a member of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences. He joined the Republican Party and was elected MP in February 1871, then Senator for the Alpes Maritimes in June 1876. He is buried in Montmartre Cemetery in Paris. The former Place de l'Eglise now bears his name.

Together with his brother Jean-Joseph, he was instrumental in the construction of the Cians road



The Reign of Henri IV (1589-1610)

1594: Coronation of Henri IV in Chartres.

1598: The Protestant religion was authorized thanks to the Edict of Nantes.

1601: The Savoyard possessions on the right bank of the Rhône were annexed by France through the Treaty of Lyons signed with the Duke of Savoy.

Annibal Grimaldi (1590-1621), Governor General of the city and the county of Nice (1591), Count of Beuil, was one of the last feudal lords to dare challenge his suzerain. His proud motto "lo sono Conte di Boglio e faccio qual che voglio" sounded most provocative. An independent mind, he boasted he had no authority above him except that of God and the Holy Empire.

When in 1613 riots broke out in Nice against the creation of a registration tax, called "Insinuation", the Count of Beuil didn't move and went as far as taking sides with the protesters against the Duke of Savoy, Charles Emmanuel the First. Guessing there was some intrigue afoot, the latter unexpectedly landed in

Nice on January 6th 1614, together with one thousand soldiers on the pretence of spending the winter on the coast. He then made to Annibal a proposal to exchange the domain of Beuil for more fertile lands in Piedmont. In so doing he hoped to thwart the French plan to incorporate the county of Beuil into Provence. Annibal saw through the offer, thanked him but refused. Before leaving Nice, the Duke made a new attempt on April 30th and invited the Count of Beuil and his son to Villefranche. As soon as they were outside the walls of Nice, an edict was published which appointed a new Governor of the city. On April 25th, the Duke, full of mistrust, asked the Count of Beuil and his son to join his escort to Turin. Forced to obey, Annibal

spent two months at the Duke's court under close surveillance. As a trick, he pretended to be ill and was allowed to cure his rhumatism at Bagni di Vinadio but no sooner had he reached the spa than he recovered his strength, enough to climb the snow-covered pass of La Guerche on foot and take refuge in his castle of Villars. Taking advantage of the war between Savoy and Spain, he immediately negotiated with the

Spaniards on the coast.

In March 1617 he made the mistake of signing an agreement which placed him under the protection of Louis XIII. At the end of the war, Spain didn't claim the county of Beuil, which would have created problems with its former ally, France. Moreover, with Louis XIII trying to make friends with Savoy while not wanting to

offend Spain, the Count of Beuil's fate was in the hands of the Duke of Savoy.

Charles Emmanuel then decided to ask the Senate of Nice to conduct an investigation and his disloyal vassal and his son André were condemned to death on January 2nd 1621. André Grimaldi fled to Provence while Annibal resisted in his eyrie in Tourrette-Revest, thus behaving as the great lord he was, the owner of 30 domains and the master of several castles defended by armed men. But Charles Emmanuel, his suzerain, was inflexible and after isolating him he ruthlessly took revenge on him. Abandoned by his protector Louis XIII, Annibal was tragically killed on a very cold day of January 1621.



The Grand Siècle (17th century)

1635 : Creation of the Académie Française

1661-1715: Reign of Louis XIV, the Sun King.

1774-1792 : Reign of Louis XVI

1789: The French Revolution started with the Storming of the Bastille.

1790: A decree divided France into 83 "departements".

1793: Execution of King Louis XVI.

The Napoleonic land register, or former land register, is the centralized, one and only land register instituted in France by the law of September 15th 1807, a definitive version of the "standard land register" of November 2nd 1802. It was a fiscal and legal instrument, allowing fair property taxation for all citizens.



The Parish Church



Initially called the Chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary, it became the parish church in 1794 after a fire had destroyed the Church of Saint John the Baptist, situated at the time in the cemetery next to the Condamine.

The villagers chose this imposing, late Gothic chapel to shelter their patron saint. The clock tower shows how the Lombardian Romanesque style of the 16th century was still an influence. The loggia on the front dates from World War II and adds to the composite quality of the edifice. Inside, the baroque decoration imparts warmth and fantasy: the stuccoed altarpiece with its broken pediment adorned with four cherubim and its cabled columns, the 18th century painting of the Rosary surmounted with a statue of Saint John the Baptist, all indicate the dedication of the church to the two saints.







The Chapel of the White Penitents



Dedicated to Our Lady of Mercy, it was restored in 1630, used and kept up by the "venerable brotherhood" who gathered there on Sundays and on special celebrations to sing at the service to Mary. The brotherhood was an association of lay people whose main aim was to assist sick people or the families of the deceased. But in Beuil, their function was original: the collectors of Mont Granitique, called montistes, were appointed from within their ranks. They saw to reserves of cereals to be constituted in the Autumn thanks to private individuals' legacies. These were safely kept in the granary above the chapel and distributed in March to the poor and the farmers whose crops had suffered damage. It was a kind of loan with practically no interest rate. The chapel was abandoned when the brotherhood disappeared. Today it is a listed monument. Its roof is made of larch shingle and on its trompel'oeil façade, restored by Guy Ceppa in 1984, you can admire a sundial with the motto "Soli honor et gloria" ("To God alone, honour and glory").





As you proceed...



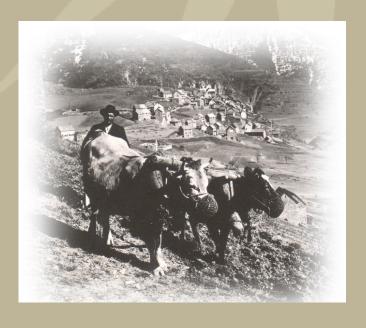




In the past...











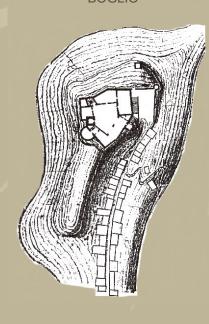


The Second Empire

In 1860, the Franco-Sardinian Treaty of Turin gave Nice and Savoy to France.

The Shadow of the former Castle

BOGLIO



As early as the 12th century, the family of Beuil, descended from the Glandevès, raised the first tower.

In 1365, Barnabé Grimaldi received from Queen Jeanne, Countess of Provence, the right to fortify the castle built by Astruge's ancestors at the beginning of the 13th century. He actually claimed that the place where the castle was built was open to danger from outside and he had to protect the region.

A map by Carlo Morella at the Biblioteca Reale in Turin shows a vast military edifice.

From the village one had access to a terrace between two ramparts and dominated by the high walls of the castle.

From this esplanade, steps led to a square tower which protected the entrance to the fortress. The latter was of an irregular shape which was adapted to the hillside. It was flanked with a half-cylindrical tower and included a square tower with thick walls forming the keep.

The dwellings were situated above the stables, the storerooms and the chapel built around a large central yard.

Outside a small tower standing on its own, kept watch from the extremity of the rock.

The inventory of the furniture, established on July 8th 1590 gives an idea of what there was in the castle: linen, beds, chests, kitchen utensils, sacred objects but also weapons and ammunition.

Until the middle of the 14th century, the Castle of Beuil remained the main residence of the Counts who in the course of time left it more and more frequently during the Winter, preferring to go to Touët, Thiéry or Villars, but returning regularly.

In 1633, after the execution of Annibal Grimaldi, condemned for treachery by the Duke of Savoy, the Castle was razed to the ground.

Its beautiful blocks of stone were then used in the village for cornerstones, lintels and window frames. The church clock tower is built with huge blocks of stone, one of which bears a sculpted inscription which, as the legend has it, comes from the Castle of the Grimaldis.

The Birthplace of Skiing in the Alpes Maritimes

The inhabitants of Beuil have always used skis or raquettes (snowshoes) to get about in Winter and the village can boast of having been one of the pioneers of what is today called "a Winter sports resort in the Southern Alps".

Anyone can thus practise:

Downhill skiing

Starting from the Condamine in Beuil from Les Launes, you can ski in a magnificent setting of larch trees as far as Valberg through a vast domain of skiable slopes and pistes.

Cross-country skiing

An activity which comes from Scandinavian countries and is a complete sport which you can practise in close contact with nature on a great number of pistes, all developed for skiing. The slopes are perfectly appropriate to this kind of skiing and constitute the largest domain in the Alpes Maritimes.

Snowshoeing

Great fun for families or with friends, on vast expanses of immaculate snow. If you love the snow, mountains and walking, let yourself be tempted by the pistes of Beuil!

Sledging

All the villagers remember, when the first snowfall took place, how, as children, they pulled their sledges on a string as soon as they left school every day.



The Pré de Foire (Village Green)



From the 16th century, cattle were brought here in May and September.

Everybody would try to strike bargains: butchers together with horse and cattle dealers came up from the coast to meet the stock breeders. At the end of hard discussions, when the deal was struck, they all went to the cafés, which had a very profitable day! These festive days expressed and reinforced the ancestral links between the villages of the Cians, Tinée and Roudoule valleys.

The Observatory of Mont Mounier above Beuil

Early in 1890, Raphaël Bischoffsheim, Member of Parliament for Nice, patron of the arts and, deeply interested in astronomy, founder of the Nice Observatory, looked for a place where he could set up an annex to the Observatory in order to develop meteorological and astronomical observations from a location away from the impure atmosphere and the light pollution of the city.

The administrators of the Nice Observatory chose to transport the material from Beuil and thus opened a new wider and easier path to reach the top of Mont Mounier.

Two structures were designed: one for living in, the other one for storing the material and sheltering the mules. A gallery linked the dwelling and the cupola in which the telescope was fixed.

At the end of 1893, the building was over. But on December 13, 1893, a fire broke out from the stove and the house was burnt to the ground.

The following year, Bischoffsheim had it rebuilt in concrete.

In September 1895, the telephone was installed between the observatory and Beuil - 8 kilometers of cable and poles along the path, also serving as landmarks in the Winter snow. That way, meteorological observations, made every day by the resident keeper of the place, Mr.Maynard, could be transmitted to Nice.

The official inauguration took place on August 19th 1895.

When Bischoffsheim died in 1906, the Observatory became the property of the University of Paris. On July 31st 1910, a fire destroyed the cupola. All activities came to an end on December 31st 1918, the buildings were abandoned in 1927, the year when the Club Alpin Français started renting the place, which was turned into a mountain refuge inaugurated on July 15th 1928.

For lack of maintenance, the building gradually fell into ruins.



Facing Mont Mounier

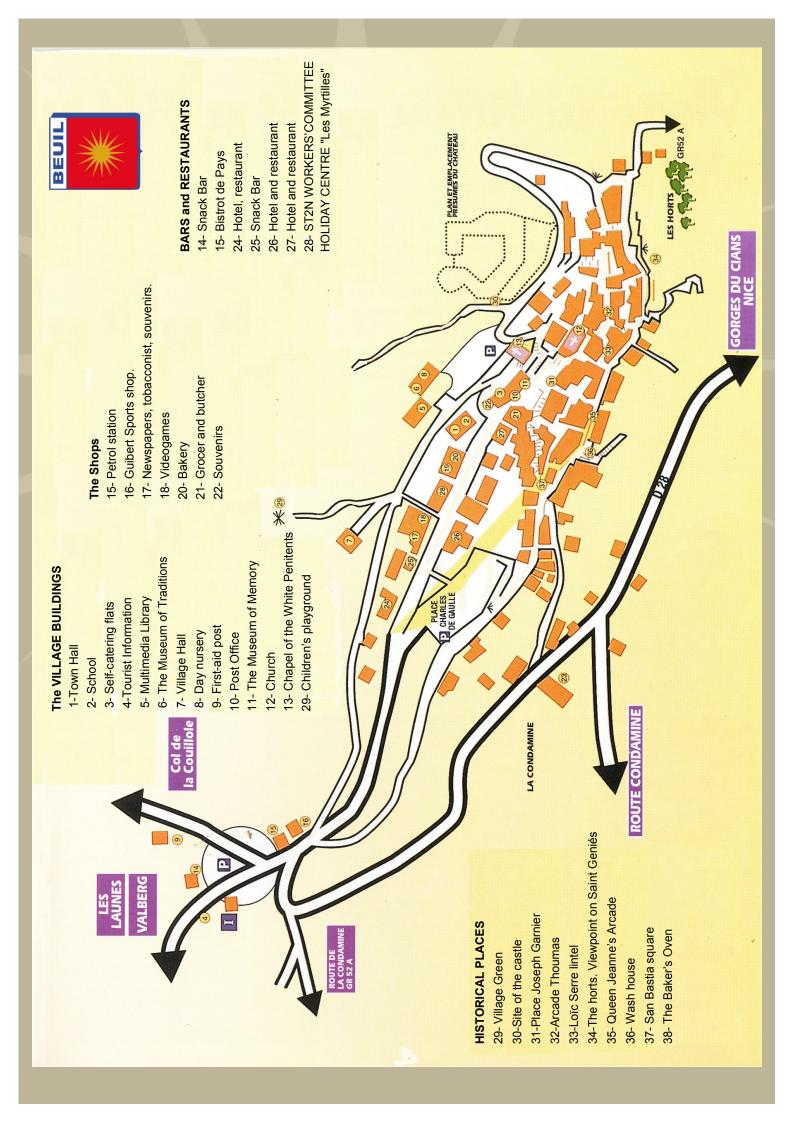
The legend of the Grimaldis

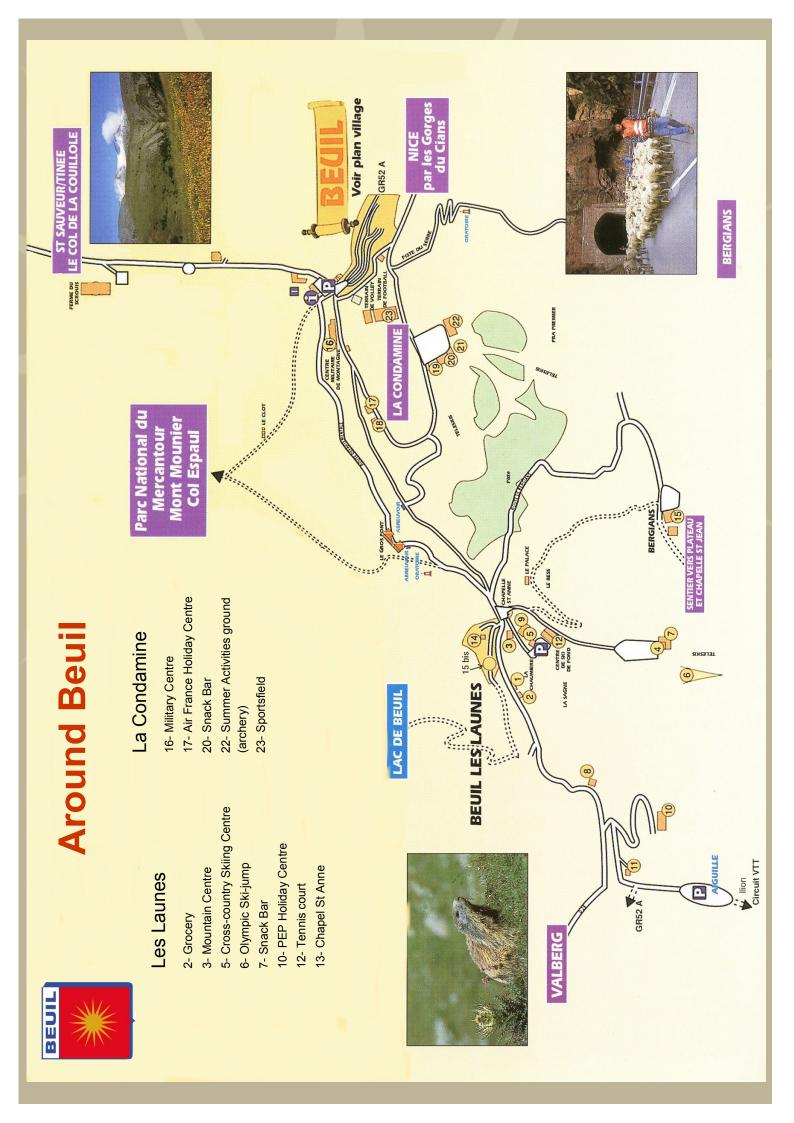


Legend has it that the Grimaldis of Beuil had amassed an enormous fortune. They are said to have accumulated this treasure through transmitting from generation to generation the secret location of a cave full of gold, a cave supposed to be situated among the rocks of Mont Mounier.

A monster hiding at the bottom of an underground lake keeps the entrance. He would let anyone in but would give the right to leave the place only once. If ever someone ventured into the cave a second time, he would be food for the monster.

This is why the Grimaldis of Beuil allegedly explored the cave only once in their lifetime but brought back as much gold and as many precious objects as they could.







Your visit is now over.

Now, you can return to the village centre to the Tourist Office by following the main street and looking at its various shops.