

SUNSHINE GUIDE TO SION AND THE LOWER VALAIS, SWITZERLAND

LOCATION: The ancient town of Sion is located in the canton of Valais in southwestern Switzerland. The town is situated on the north bank of the upper Rhone River, sandwiched between the Bernese Alps to the north, and the Pennine Alps to the south. Elevations within the community are around 1,680 feet above sea level. To the north, the peaks rise to 10,656 feet amid live glaciers. To the south, the Matterhorn soars to 14,692 feet in elevation.

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
HOURS OF DAYLIGHT	9:05	10:19	11:53	13:32	14:58	15:44	15:24	14:11	12:37	10:58	9:31	8:42
HOURS OF SUNSHINE	2:13	3:32	5:15	6:18	6:47	7:48	8:26	7:41	6:17	4:21	2:34	2:03
AREA OF BLUE SKY	19%	32%	40%	41%	42%	47%	53%	52%	48%	34%	20%	16%
LOW FOR MONTH	10 °	16 °	23 °	31 °	36 °	43 °	45 °	45 °	40 °	32 °	20 °	14 °
SUNRISE TEMPERATURE	25 °	27 °	33 °	38 °	46 °	52 °	54 °	53 °	48 °	40 °	32 °	26 °
AFTERNOON TEMPERATURE	39 °	43 °	53 °	61 °	69 °	75 °	79 °	77 °	71 °	60 °	49 °	40 °
HIGH FOR MONTH	48 °	55 °	65 °	71 °	79 °	84 °	89 °	87 °	80 °	71 °	59 °	51 °
FROSTY MORNINGS	83%	73%	41%	17%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%	58%	79%
AFTERNOONS OVER 90 °	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
AFTERNOON HUMIDITY	78%	71%	61%	55%	57%	56%	55%	58%	64%	70%	76%	78%
DRY DAYS	65%	69%	70%	71%	64%	63%	71%	66%	70%	69%	67%	68%
REASONABLY DRY DAYS	85%	85%	85%	85%	83%	81%	85%	82%	84%	83%	83%	84%
5-DAY PRECIPITATION	0.31	0.32	0.31	0.25	0.27	0.31	0.35	0.41	0.32	0.38	0.34	0.39
LIKELY SNOWFALL	14.5"	11.5"	6.9"	2.5"	0.0"	0.0"	0.0"	0.0"	0.0"	0.0"	3.8"	11.9"
SNOWY DAYS	26%	20%	11%	5%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%	16%
THUNDER DAYS	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	4%	8%	6%	2%	0%	0%	0%
FOGGY DAYS	40%	41%	27%	23%	17%	12%	19%	20%	37%	39%	48%	46%

COMMENTS: Sion has a mountain version of the standard four-season year. Spring (mid-March through the end of May) brings lengthening days, increasing sunshine, and the lowest total precipitation of the year. Summer (June through early September) is the frost-free season, with long warm days and the occasional afternoon thundershower. Autumn (late September through early November) sees shortening days and the first frosts of the cool half of the year. Winter (mid-November through mid-March) is cloudy and cold, with frequent snows. Throughout the year, cold air drainage from the surrounding mountains keeps the nights and early mornings cool and frequently foggy. The *föhn* is a strong, warm, dry, downslope wind common to the Alps. It often sets in following a winter storm. During the *föhn*, temperatures will rise many tens of degrees in as many minutes. The combination of increasing temperatures, high winds, and very low humidities tends to both melt and evaporate large quantities of snow--sometimes as much as a foot or more per hour.