

WOODEN FOOTBRIDGE IN A NATIONAL HERITAGE SITE

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Summary

One of Europe's first arch dams, built in 1695, crossed the upper reaches of the Eau-Froide river, creating an artificial lake that enabled large quantities of water to be released onto timber piled up downstream, propelling it 900m further down the valley where it was used in salt mining and production. The dam remained operational until 1896, collapsing when the river flooded in 1945. In 1981, the ruins were declared "nationally important" and were restored.

As part of the creation of a discovery trail, Brauen Wälchli Architectes designed a suspended footbridge with a commanding view of the dam and the valley. The footbridge abutments are fixed to the same rocky spur against which the dam was built. The suspension cables are recycled from a cable car system. The secondary structure, which can easily be replaced, is made of larch that was cut, processed and assembled on-site. Local materials and expertise are used here to showcase local heritage – combining the principles of sustainable development with the unobtrusive elegance of a refined, openwork structure.

