

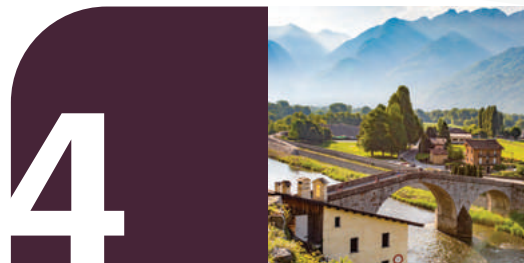


Press Kit



Valtellina
Taste of emotion

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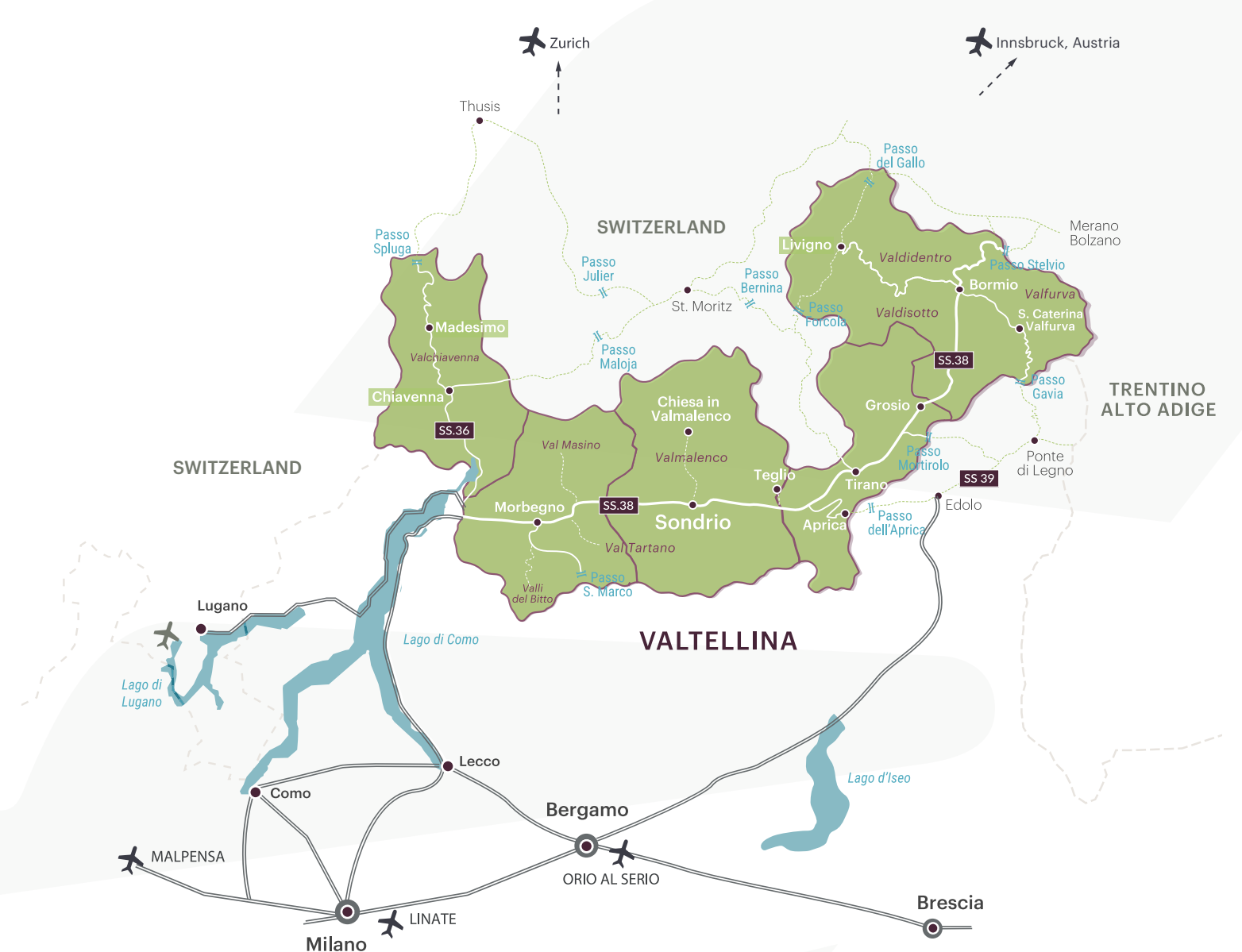
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How to get here

BY TRAIN

Trains depart from Milan and run through the valley until Tirano. Change trains in Colico to travel northwards to Chiavenna. Best of all: The region's *lo Viaggio in Lombardia* initiative allows you to benefit from discounted travel on public transport throughout the entire regional network.

BY CAR

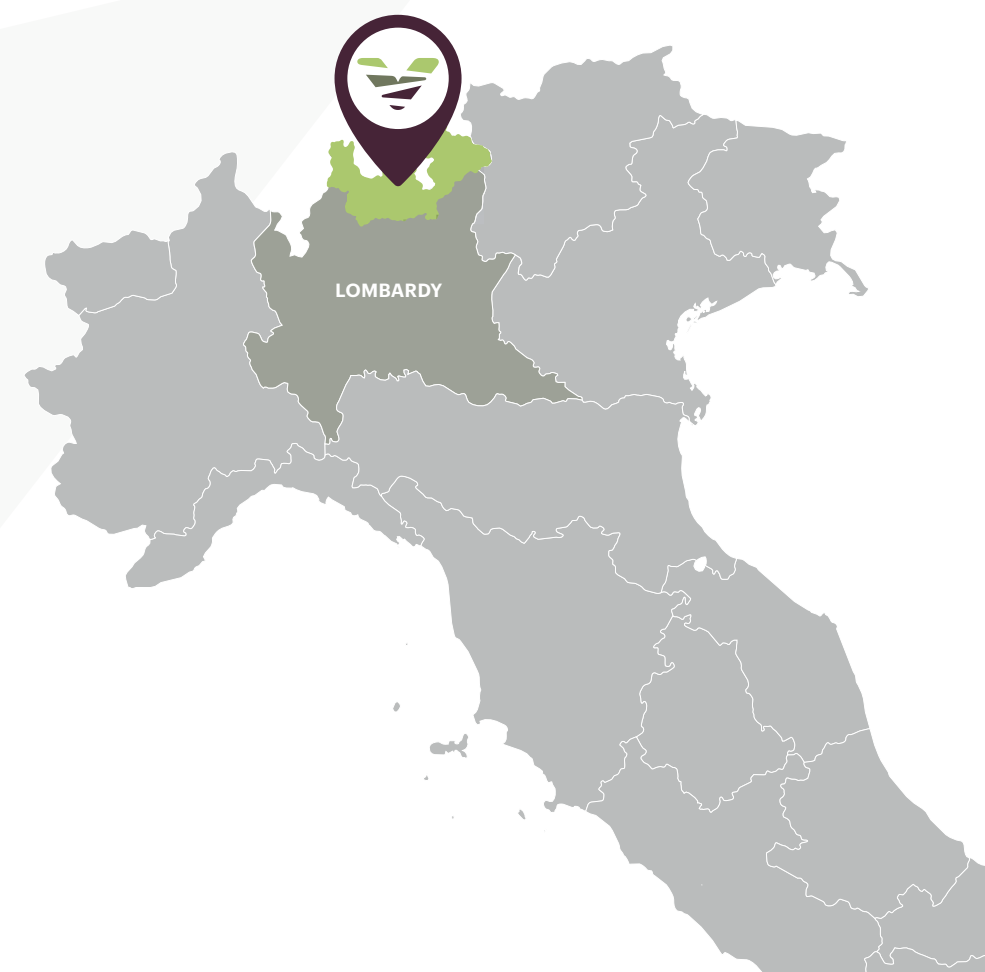
From the south: Coming from Milan, join the Superstrada 36 dello Spluga that runs north to Chiavenna. At Colico, the Statale 38 dello Stelvio intersects and traverses the entire valley of Valtellina up to Bormio and the Passo dello Stelvio. From the north: Take the Munt la Schera tunnel (Passo del Gallo) from Zernez into Livigno and the upper part of Valtellina.

OVER ALPINE PASSES

Take the Passo dell'Aprica into Valtellina from Valcamonica in the province of Brescia, or enter Valchiavenna from Switzerland's Engadin valley over the Passo del Maloja. Each summer, other road passes are open, including the Gavia for access from Brescia and Trento, the San Marco from the direction of Bergamo, and the Stelvio from Trentino-Alto Adige.

BY PLANE

The closest airports are Milano Linate (approx. 140 km), Milano Malpensa (approx. 170 km), Bergamo Orio al Serio (approx. 120 km), or Zurich airport (300 km).



A region of beauty and charm

Sitting in **Northern Lombardy** and bordering the Swiss canton of Graubünden, Valtellina is a mountainous region that is 120 km in length and around 65 km wide. On paper, it includes the whole of the province of **Sondrio**, plus a whole lot more that will make your heart beat a little faster within a relatively small expanse of space. From imposing 3,000 metre-plus peaks down to the vibrant meadows, farms and vineyards closer to eye level, Valtellina is an earthy and inspiring getaway, where you can experience the mountains at their most authentic. The fabulous outdoors is here to be explored at your own pace, whether with kids or climbing gear, on a leisurely bike ride or revelling in the hairpins of its high Alpine passes. The real draw is exploring the nature across all four seasons, hiking on the vast network of trails, or spending time on the slopes come winter.



📍 Sondrio



📍 Valchiavenna



📍 Val Masino

With no shortage of picturesque flora and fauna, Valtellina is a place where your mind, body and heart can feast on the generosity of the outdoors. Accordingly, the diversity of this natural environment is reflected in the regional produce that's long been developed and cultivated on this land. You can witness ancient and still-upheld traditions through events that bring these plentiful and flavour-bursting dishes to life, or simply by rambling through mountain villages, past historic villas and up to mountain huts. Throughout the centuries, Valtellina has progressively raised the stakes when it comes to its tourism, welcoming travellers, pilgrims, renowned alpinists, and famous poets, including Giosuè Carducci, who frequented Madesimo for many summers.

Today, Valtellina is the real deal: open to the world, constantly evolving, and staunchly proud of its agricultural heritage, wholesome traditions, and sustainable, increasingly eco approach to tourism. After many years of running international sports events, it's now stepping up to the highest level as the valley gets set to be one of the key sites for the Milano-Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics. Bormio is due to host the men's Alpine skiing and the debut Olympic discipline of ski mountaineering, while Livigno will put on the stage for the snowboard and freestyle competitions.

Discovering the gems of Valtellina

Milan is only a hundred kilometres from where Valtellina starts at the Northern tip of Lake Como and opens up eastwards. The first big town you'll reach is **Morbegno**, sitting at the bottom of the Bitto—the mountain river that lends its name to the area's renowned type of local cheese. Treasures include its many Baroque churches and villas, and how the past and present meet through its class-leading bridges, which include the Ponte di Ganda sull'Adda built in 1776 and the much-younger Ponte del Cielo (The Sky Bridge) in Val Tartano, created in 2018 and one of the highest Tibetan bridges in Italy. Other must-sees include the **Passo San Marco** – the lowest Alpine pass in Valtellina – which climbs straight from Morbegno up and over the Orobic Alps and was once a highly significant point of passage as the Republic of Venice was building the Via Priula to encourage cross-border trade with land governed by the Grisons.



If you've got a thing for heights, this part of the valley – Bassa (or "low") Valtellina – is the right choice: Both **Valgerola** and **Val Masino** boast tall granite rock faces with no shortage of sport climbing routes, while up above Morbegno you can soar at speeds of up to 120 km/h on the Fly Emotion zip-line, a unique experience that connects two mountainsides as it flies between Albaredo San Marco and Bema.

Before heading further up the valley along the River Adda, take a detour through Valchiavenna to visit the traditional town of **Chiavenna**, a certified "Città Slow" known for its gentle pace of life. Split into two by the River Mera, this small slice of the province has carved out its own rich gastronomic heritage centred around its age-old natural caves called 'Crotti.' Beyond meat, cheese and mouth-watering dishes, Chiavenna also hits above its weight when it comes to culture and history, with an eye-opening density of historic villas. For outdoorsy types, the walkable town is just the beginning: try

canyoning in Val Bodengo, hiking the Via Spluga all the way to the Swiss border, visiting **Madesimo** (one of the top ski resorts in the Alps), or pull up in the postcard-perfect village of **Montespluga**, where you can start an adventure on foot, with climbing equipment, or on backcountry skis to a far-away mountain hut or Alpine lake.

About 30 minutes further upstream from Morbegno stands **Sondrio**, the province's capital. Home to theatres, exhibitions and events, this town makes for a must-visit, offering plenty of ways to explore the Rhaetian and Orobic Alps.

From behind the town, a series of hairpin turns snake their way into **Valmalenco**, where there are five villages framed by dazzlingly tall mountains. It's no coincidence that this place has become a bucket-list destination for skilled climbers who want to reach sport-defining summits – think Pizzo Bernina, Monte Disgrazia, Pizzo

Scalino and the Scerscen glacier. Others come here to explore the high-altitude trail network that passes the region's highest-situated mountain hut 'Marco e Rosa' at 3,600 metres or to navigate well-known hiking routes, like the Alta Via della Valmalenco or the Sentiero Rusca.

Given that Valmalenco is basically all-mountain, its skiing and snowboarding is staggeringly good. Alpe Palù is considered the centre of the winter sports scene here, offering 50 km of pisted runs and a snow park, both reached by the Snow Eagle, the world's largest cable car.

Like an enormous outdoor playground with a cultural and gastronomic twist, Valtellina sees hundreds of fresh air seekers using its lanes and trails – such as the **Sentiero Valtellina**, the **Via dei Terrazzamenti** or one of the Wine Bike Tours – as a way to explore its steep

vineyards, terraced with 2,500 km of dry-stone walls and the location for what can arguably be called 'heroic winemaking.'

Valtellina is rapidly becoming as well known for its cycling – offering everything from bike paths to mountain bike trails and famous asphalt climbs – as it is for its food and wine. In fact, these three elements are closely linked: the vineyards, apple orchards, buckwheat meadows and rye flour fields are what have put Valtellina on the map for foodies and sports people. Don't miss a plate of pizzoccheri from Teglio, the certified Città Slow renowned for its sustainable tourism and high cultural index. Unsurprisingly, the intense flavours of Valtellina's cuisine are best complemented by a glass of local wine from one of the valley's many producers.

Tirano is the town standing in the middle of the valley, with a strategic position just a few kilometres from the border to Switzerland that historically made it a melting point for people and cultures—a role that holds true today as Tirano is the start and finish station for the **UNESCO-listed Bernina Express train**. Elsewhere in the picturesque town, the 16th-century Basilica of the Madonna di Tirano is not just Valtellina's most significant Renaissance-era building, it's also the end point for the religious hiking route, the **Cammino Mariano delle Alpi**, which traces its way through the valley from both the east and the west. The Via Occidentale is fully signposted from Piantedo to Tirano, while the Via Orientale, which covers the upper part of the valley back down to Tirano, is not yet launched.

Close by Tirano, the **Passo Aprica**, which connects Valtellina with Valcamonica, was another important international route for pilgrims, traders and the military who crossed the Bernina on their way to the flatlands of the Po Valley. These days, Aprica presents a less transient and more family-friendly side, with all-ability walks in the **Parco Naturale delle Orobie Valtellinesi** and the **Pian di Gembro Nature Reserve** with its picture-perfect wildlife and educational activities.

Whether summer or winter, Aprica is big on doing things, including the provision of ski lessons for little ones. As of the 2020–2021 season, Aprica also boasts Europe's longest illuminated ski run called the Super Panoramica del Baradello.

Sondalo is a classic mountain town in the upper

part of the valley that once boasted Europe's biggest tuberculosis clinic and whose fresh air and wellness credentials have long attracted those seeking a restorative break. A visit here comes with majestic mountain scenery, unspoiled nature, and no end of small valleys, lakes, and pure waterways running through Valdisotto.

surrounded by pine-clad mountains. Bormio gained a status as early as the Roman times for its gushing thermal waters that flow from nine sources and satisfy three spas. Nowadays, the winning mix of wellness and sport have made Bormio a buzzing town, complete with ski pistes that host international races as well as endless opportunities for hiking, cycling and golf.

When it comes to the surface area of the **Alta Valle** – the upper part of Valtellina – much of it is covered by the **Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio**, which has more than 600 km of trails that wind up and over meadows, mountains, and glaciers. A good starting place is the town of **Bormio**, which sits in a natural amphitheatre

If you want to spend your days being active, any one of the valleys that extend out from Bormio will tick the boxes. Highlights are cross-country skiing and ski mountaineering in **Valfurva**, excursions in Val Zebrù and Val Cedec, or exploring the glaciological path at the Forni Glacier to see WWI remains. Days in **Valdidentro** →



📍 Aprica - Orobie Alps



📍 Bernina Express



📍 Costiera dei Cech

can be spent hiking for hours in Val Viola, Val Lia, or the Valle di San Giacomo up to the dams of Cancano. Come winter, it's possible to ski on the slopes or on skinny skis. And if you're up for something new, try the Family Bob – the only toboggan run of its kind on rails in the region – or go mushing with sled dogs or husky trekking.

The European City of Sport, also known as Europe's Little Tibet, is the final stop in the valley. Sitting at 1,816 metres of elevation, **Livigno** has evolved into the ultimate sports destination, loved for high-altitude training and great facilities. As one of Europe's largest sports and wellness centres, Aquagranda Active You not only takes care of athletes' all-important recovery with its vast wellness area, but also offers indoor training facilities and five-star fun for the whole fun. The choice of what to do outdoors in Livigno is virtually endless: it has 3,200 km of mapped trails for hiking and cycling, climbing spots, canoeing and kayaking opportunities, Alpine and off-piste skiing (thanks to the avalanche

bulletin), and pristine cross-country ski tracks that open in October (thanks to the town's snowfarming approach).

Livigno's agricultural heritage still radiates through the sight of its wooden huts, the flavours in the local cuisine, and its busy events calendar that bring its history and the stories of smugglers back to life. Many centuries on, Livigno is still evolving, creating a reputation as a contemporary Alpine resort. It now features more than 250 boutiques in the centre of town – a haven for duty-free shopping – as well as many lively bars and restaurants that stay open from dawn to après ski and beyond.



📍 Livigno



Word of the day: Wellness

In Valtellina, nature has been synonymous with wellness since time immemorial. Indeed, the first written evidence of thermal baths in the region dates back to the Roman era. Pliny the Elder mentions these baths in his "Natural History", while Cassiodoro recommends their use in a letter to Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, to whom he was secretary.

Across Bormio and Valldidentro, there are a total of **nine thermal springs** – Cinglaccia, Nibelunghi, Ostrogoti, Pliniana, Arciduchessa, Zampillo dei bambini, Cassiodora, San Carlo and San Martino – where water flows from aquifers and fractures in the rocks of Monte Reit at a temperature between 36°C and 41°C. These thermal baths are recommended as a treatment for skin complaints, respiratory conditions and rheumatic disorders.

Bormio's Bagni Vecchi ("ancient baths") were built on top of pre-existing Roman constructions in the medieval period as a way to welcome the influx of tourists from across Europe who were enticed by rumours about the therapeutic qualities of the water. QC Terme **Bagni**

Vecchi is the ideal place to dive into history: it houses Roman baths, centuries-old cave tunnels leading to one of the ancient springs, and the panoramic outdoor pool that overlooks Bormio.

In contrast, QC Terme **Bagni Nuovi** offers a chance to immerse yourself in an atmosphere of 19th-century liberty style. The facilities here are divided into four sections that make up different thermal paths, each with all-natural aromas, lighting, images and colours. The pine-clad sauna from the early 19th century is a must-try.

Bormio Terme, located in the heart of the town, is perfect for all kinds of guests – and particularly for **families** who want to spend a day combining wellness and enjoyment. This spa offers a wide variety of areas and services to meet all needs, including large **indoor and outdoor thermal pools** that are perfect for all seasons, a 60-metre water slide for thrill-seekers, and three shallow pools with games for children. Options for relaxation include the new Stelvio pool, a 25-metre swimming pool, Turkish baths, saunas, a biosauna and



the Thermal Cure department, which is affiliated with the Italian national health service.

Bormio Terme is the only one of the three wellness spa resorts in Bormio to welcome children and babies. It offers activities exclusively designed for little ones, including shallow pools with fun figures that squirt water and outdoor pools with water jets and thermal waterfalls. As well as the many family-focused fun activities on offer, the spa also runs swimming courses for young kids and babies. What's more, families can benefit from several packages that allow them to save on the entrance ticket price and enjoy their relaxing family holiday to the fullest. Bormio Terme is also the only spa where residents of Lombardy can undergo thermal cures, mud treatments and thermal inhalation therapies, offered in affiliation with the Italian **national health service**.

Nature: A green oasis in the heart of the Alps

With parks and nature reserves making up more than half of the province, Valtellina is the perfect destination for an authentic mountain experience and full immersion in its rich natural heritage.

Two national parks and seven nature reserves

Much of the Alta Valtellina region (the upper part that runs from Sondalo to Livigno, including Bormio and Valdisotto, Valdidentro and Valfurva) is taken up by the **Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio**. Founded almost a century ago in 1935, this is one of the oldest national parks in Italy, and the largest in the Alpine arc at 130,700 hectares of land. The park offers every type of alpine landscape you can imagine: from the vast grasslands of the valley floor to the coniferous woodlands and alpine pastures that climb to the highest peaks, with valleys sculpted by ice and summits waiting to be conquered. Venture into the protected area and you're likely to encounter an abundance of animal species including stags, chamois, ibex, marmots, foxes and roe deer. You might also spot birds of prey, such as golden eagles, falcons and bearded vultures.

Equally fascinating for nature-lovers is the **Parco delle Orobie Valtellinesi**, which covers a large part of central Valtellina and encompasses the municipalities of Sondrio, Tirano, Aprica and Morbegno as well as the neighbouring valleys. The unusual geographical formation of this park and its steep climb in altitude mean that the plant and animal biodiversity it harbours is wonderfully rich, given the park's size. Inside the park, **Aprica's Osservatorio Ecofaunistico Alpino** is a 25-hectare oasis that gives visitors – under careful supervision – the chance to explore the natural habitat of many different species of hoofed animals and birds of prey, and even of two fantastic examples of the brown bear brought here in 2019.

Aprica is also home to one of Valtellina's seven nature reserves, the **Pian di Gembro**: a haven of tranquillity

that takes on different shades and atmospheres each season. In this ancient peat bog with glacial origins, you can see some extremely rare plant species, including a few carnivorous plants. As well as a self-guided tour with information boards all about the reserve and its formation, in summer there's a learning centre where you can look at some of the smaller inhabitants of this swampy area, including frogs, toads, newts and salamanders.

Over time, atmospheric factors have sculpted Valtellina's mountainsides, bringing about some fascinating geological phenomena. Take the **Parco delle Marmitte dei Giganti in Valchiavenna**, for instance, where rocks and detritus carried by glacial meltwater have carved deep holes shaped like giant bowls into the rocks. Equally fascinating are the **"Piramidi" of Postalesio**, impressive pyramid-like columns of morainic stone standing at 12 metres tall and moulded by the water and wind. Their unique forms have inspired popular legends in which they appear as women and witches, knights and wizards.

With picture-perfect panoramas and a level valley floor that's accessible to all, **Val di Mello** in Val Masino is among the best known of Valtellina's nature reserves and is the largest one in Lombardy. A short 20-minute walk is all it takes to leave the mundane behind you and enter an enchanted world over which the silhouette of Monte Disgrazia looms. Water accompanies you along the entire route, forming crystal-clear pools and lakes such as Laghetto del Qualido and the famous "Countess' bidet", a little shining mirror of blue water that contrasts with the luxuriant vegetation around it. Thanks to its wild appearance, this reserve has been nicknamed "Little Yosemite", and it does indeed resemble the famous

Californian park. Its high granite faces and erratic rocks make it a cult destination for fans of bouldering and climbing.

Another fascinating area in terms of its botanical and natural features is the **Bosco dei Bordighi**, which lies just a short distance from Sondrio. This is one of the few riparian forests remaining on the flood plain of the Adda river, where ancient and rare plant species grow and countless colonies of great spotted woodpeckers find shelter – so many, indeed, that this animal is the park's mascot. **The Pian di Spagna Nature Reserve**,

spread out at the entrance to Valchiavenna, is a complex ecosystem of channels, pools and basins. Lush with rushes and water lilies, it's populated by a plethora of different species of birds, fish, frogs, toads and small mammals.

In Alta Valtellina you'll find the **Paluaccio di Oga**, a 13,000-year-old peat bog that has evolved to an extraordinarily high degree over the years. Covering 30 hectares in the area around Bormio, its delicate ecosystem is home to a wonderful biodiversity of plants and animals.

Val Masino





📍 Val di Mello

Waterfalls, lakes and streams

For those who want more from nature than just the vastness of the ocean, Valtellina will not disappoint. Here, sky-blue lakes nestle between soaring mountains and waterfalls that embody the immense power of nature take your breath away. With 110 alpine lakes and over 1,900 km of watercourses, Valtellina is the second-biggest drainage basin in Italy and rich in sources of natural spring water – sweet-tasting and full of excellent chemical and physical properties. The rivers here include the **Adda**, which courses along all 125 km of the main valley, and the **Mera**, which flows through Valchiavenna and feeds into the lake of Novate before emerging, like its “big brother”, into Lake Como.

Centuries ago, Leonardo da Vinci himself was enchanted by the double drop of the **Cascate dell’Acquafraggia** waterfall in Piuro, not far from Chiavenna – so much so that he wrote about it in his Codex Atlanticus. Even

today, it’s impossible to remain unmoved by the sight of the water cascading down as if from the sky before crashing into otherworldly pools and rivers. This natural marvel can be explored via a way-marked path that takes you through chestnuts, broom plants, and rocky outcrops. Starting at the top of the waterfall, the route is punctuated with panoramic terraces offering views over the valley, and others that seem to lead right inside the turbulent waters.

Lake Mezzola is another body of water that can be found at the opening to the valley of Valchiavenna, bordering the province of Como. Take a canoe to the centre of the lake for secret glimpses of sights such as the Tempietto di San Fedelino, the oldest Romanesque building in Lombardy. If you continue on, you’ll discover smaller waterfalls that cascade down into coves inaccessible by land. →



📍 Valchiavenna

In the nearby valley of Val Gerola, the **Giro dei Laghi** covers a little over 1,000 m of elevation in the mid-to-high mountains and takes in the area's four lakes: **Trona, Inferno, Rotondo and Zancone**. This route offers a chance to admire the unique beauty of the valley and to see incredible natural spectacles such as the sound of ibex locking horns to duel between the mountain peaks.

Another panoramic trail on the slopes of the Orobic Alps starts in the town of Aprica and flanks the lakes of Nero, with its small islet rising up from its waters, and Verde. The mountain cabins scattered along the way and the accessibility of the path make this route round the lakes of Torena a firm favourite with families looking for a way to spend a day in the fresh air and an opportunity to sample some local specialities.

Lake Scalis, sitting above Piaveda, is less well known, but its stunning beauty makes it just as worthy of a visit. The lake's unchallenging altitude means it's accessible to all, while those with a reasonable level of fitness can carry on to the Mambretti mountain hut or into Val Vedello



Val Febbraro



where a high mountain pasture and Lake Zocco await.

Madesimo is another starting point for a number of alpine lake trails, including a route that climbs 600 metres up past woods and country lanes to the stamp-sized **Lake Emet**. The view at the top opens out onto the impressive vastness of the mountain, and you can book an overnight stay at the Bertacchi mountain hut.

Not far from Isola, near Madesimo, there's an accessible trail up to the **Val Febbraro waterfall**, which leads you past high mountain villages along unpaved tracks and streams. While suitable for all, day passes are available that allow those with a lower level of fitness or additional access needs to travel by car along an asphalted road.

Many spellbinding vistas also lie waiting to be discovered in Alta Valtellina, including the **Bei Laghetti in Bormio**: three small but stunning lakes that nestle between rock

formations. Their unusual beauty comes from their intense turquoise colour, the almost tropical appearance of which has given them the nickname "the Maldives at 3,000 m". From the Bormio 3000 cable car top station, there's a three-kilometre trail that cuts across the mountainside to the lakes at an altitude of 2,750 m.

The same intense blue can also be found in **Lake Vago**, one of the most famous hiking spots in Livigno. This lake can be reached by an accessible path, which takes you past little streams and pastures full of typical mountain-dwelling animals. Continue on for around 6 km and you'll reach the **Val Nera waterfall** hidden away in a forest. As you approach, the sound of the water gets louder and louder until the waterfall suddenly appears between the pines in front of you. A little Tibetan bridge carries you to the foot of the waterfall as a thrilling culmination to the route.

Sport for all seasons

If you're looking for a **natural outdoor gym** that stretches from the side of Lake Como to the high mountains (glacial skiing included), then Valtellina is the right place. Whatever the season, amateurs and professionals alike take part in myriad outdoor sports across the area. Alongside its optimal winter conditions, this valley also wins over the hearts of **cyclists, hikers, climbers**, and **families** who make the most of Valtellina's innumerable outdoor activities.

Valtellina reveals itself in a real mix of ways, with everything from more laidback, mellow activities like **sport fishing** and **golf** through to adrenaline-pumping **paragliding** or **zip lining** across valleys. It's the same for those who practice sports here too: amateurs share space with an ever-growing number of **professionals and national teams** that are choosing Valtellina's terrain to sharpen their fitness ahead of the biggest competitions.

Sat at 1,816 metres above sea level, **Livigno** has become a go-to high **altitude training** destination. Backed up by sports science, athletes rely on altitude training to enhance their aerobic capacity and oxygen utilization, ultimately resulting in performance gains. Each year, Livigno welcomes elites from various sports including national ski teams and the Italian swim squad, who base themselves at the high-tech **Aquagranda** sports centre – one of the biggest of its kind in Europe and continually evolving to cater for the demand of athletes. In 2022, it was recognised as the official Coni Olympic Training Centre.



Passo del Gavia



Valfurva



Aquagranda - Livigno

A paradise for snow sports

Catering for all ages and skill levels, Valtellina's ski area totals **400 km of Alpine ski runs, 200 km dedicated to cross country**, a range of **snowparks** and **babyparks** for beginners, as well as dedicated freeride areas where the powder is at its best.

There are **10 ski areas spread across the province**, **served by 115 purpose-built lifts**, and each with their own characteristics. **Bormio and Livigno will be in the spotlight in 2026 as they host several events as part of the Milano - Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics**. This prestige not only cements their position as two of the top ski spots in the Alps, but also highlights their well-built infrastructure and track record for successfully hosting international winter sports competitions.

The established Alpine skiing destination of Bormio

offers one pass that covers three ski areas: Bormio, Santa Caterina Valfurva, and Cima Piazzzi/San Colombano. By combining these slopes, it's created Italy's most high-reaching ski-scape with 1,800 metres of vertical drop – from 3,012 metres at the Cima Bianca right down to the town of Bormio at 1,225 m.s.l.

Amongst the most famous offerings of Bormio's 110 km of ski runs is **the Stelvio**, the host of multiple rounds of male Downhill and Super G World Cup events, which is considered one of the most technically demanding, adrenaline-pumping pistes in the Alps. Equally as top rated is the 3,699 metre-long **Deborah Compagnoni piste**, named after the Olympic medal holder who was born and bred in Santa Caterina Valfurva. This piste was created for the World Alpine Skiing Championships in 2005 and is seen as one of the top runs in the whole of the

Alps. Both of these pistes are illuminated for night skiing too.

Alongside these hair-raising options, there is a great mix of slopes for all ages and abilities. If you're looking for jaw-dropping views overlooking white mountains, take your time in Santa Caterina Valfurva, where you can soak up the gorgeous views of the Ortles-Cevedale peaks. For easy to mid-level slopes, Cima Piazzzi/San Colombano is the best bet, and there's also a ski school here.

What else? Thrill-seekers will love the snow park and freeride area, while the kid-friendly snow play parks and fun slope with kid-sized obstacles will get little ones grinning from ear to ear.

As part of the Milano - Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics, **Bormio will be the official venue for all of the men's Alpine skiing races as well as ski mountaineering**—a

discipline that will be making its name in the history of the Olympics for the very first time.

The Bormio ski area **can be skied all year round**, with the Stelvio glacier providing more than 20 km of pisted runs between the **Passo dello Stelvio** (2,758 m.s.l) and **Monte Cristallo** (3,450 m.s.l) from late May to November.

With more than 115 km of superlatively groomed pistes and downhill runs to suit all skier types, a globally recognised snowpark, plus modern, fast ski lifts and cable cars covering the whole area, **lovers of snow sports flock to Livigno**. Boasting four snowparks, nine dedicated fun areas, 150 square kilometres for freeriding, a heliski and freeride centre, biathlon facilities, and 30 km of cross-country skiing, there is no chance of getting bored here.

The 31 lifts and 78 ski pistes (12 black, 37 red, 29 blue) are all within direct reach of the centre of the town or by

taking the free Ski Link shuttle, which connects both sides of the valley so that you can ratchet up the runs at either the Mottolino or Carosello 3000/Sitas ski areas. Thanks to its prime location and climate, Livigno's ski season is generously long, running from the start of December right through until early May.

If you're clicking into your binders in the Mottolino mountain area, you'll come across famous runs like the **Amanti** – also suitable for beginners – which whisks you down to town through the trees; the **Area Yepi** with all sorts of brilliant kid-centric play activities; the **red Trepalle piste** that's a must for early risers to appreciate golden hour; the **Sponda FIS**, which is the go-to training ground for the world's top skiers; as well as the **Giorgio Rocca**, favoured by advanced skiers.

Go to Carosello 3000/Sitas to discover the iconic Hero Slopes, which include the dizzyingly long **Blesaccia-Zuelli**, the only slope to take skiers from the top to bottom in one breath-taking 1,000 vertical metre run. Other standout slopes include the **Croce, Larici and Polvere**, which draw in expert skiers with their steep gradients and technique-refining walls. Not to be missed? The **Natale** slope offers peerless views over the snow-carpeted Livigno before it drops into the trees.



📍 Livigno

Opened in 2022 as the first of its kind within Italy, **the new headquarters of Mottolino Fun Mountain** is redefining the future of 'a day on the skis': Alongside all the usual ski amenities like rentals, ski schools and safe storage, this versatile space also boast a co-working space and smartworking areas, plus a bar and the Kosmo Taste The Mountain restaurant, whose menu is inspired by traditional mountain cuisine.

You won't have to search too hard to see why Livigno is **such a hit with fans of freestyle ski and snowboarding**, who make the most of the wide range of features in the snow parks at both Mottolino and Carosello 3000.

The importance of snow sports in Livigno is backed up by the fact that it will not only be hosting the **freestyle and snowboard events** at the **Milano - Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics**, but has also been selected as the official Medal Plaza, where the official podium ceremonies will take place.

Another standout ski resort is **Valmalenco**, where skiers



📍 Aprica



📍 The Deborah Compagnoni Piste



can enjoy 50 km of ski runs centred around Alpe Palù and reachable on the ultra-modern, 160-person capacity, **Snow Eagle** gondola, the biggest in the world. Here, the **Thoeni** run is a must-do for thrill-seekers with gradients up to 55%.

Other than skiing, Valmalenco is also a great place for snowboarding. **Palù Park** is a hit on the winter sports scene, hosting regular World Cup competitions and loved for its jump line featuring an 11-metre jump followed by a 9-metre funbox, and a rail line that ends with a 7-metre funbox. In short: Everything needed for really good airtime.

For those looking to get into freestyle ski and snowboarding, this particular ski area is guided by the values of safety, ethics, and a healthy respect for the landscape, which is why there's a team of expert instructors ensuring that kids and newbies are in good hands for their earliest attempts.

Sitting to the west of Valtellina on the border with Switzerland and just 138 km from the centre of Milan, you'll find the **Valchiavenna ski area** with slopes positioned between 1,500 and 3,000 metres of altitude. It offers around 40 km of downhill ski runs serviced by state-of-the-art lifts with automatic coupling that can be accessed from all corners of the village without using a ski bus or shuttle. Great for carving turns, those who yearn for high altitudes and jaw-dropping scenery should go up to the dizzying Pizzo Groppera at 3,000 metres above sea level and weave down the slopes of Val di Lei. Whatever the skill level, the ski runs here cater for all, with 20 blue runs including the standout **Serenissima**, 16 red ones (don't miss the **Scoiattolo**) and – for those with dialled-in skills – three black runs, including the Italo **Pedroncelli**, or the off-piste **Canalone**, one of the most thrilling descents in the Alps.

Perched at 1,800 metres above sea level and easily reached with the Larici cable car, **Madepark** is the place to go for **snowboarders and freestyle skiers**. Spread across

two areas, it caters for all skill levels and has a versatile set-up throughout the season to keep visitors on their toes. Young kids can spend a day at the well-equipped Baby Park Larici (found next to the mountain hut of the same name), where there's a magic carpet lift to take little ones and their carers up to the top where they can drop down on skis, snowboards, inflatable hoops or sledges.

Halfway between Chiavenna and the top of the Passo dello Spluga sits **Campodolcino**, a beautiful mountain village known for its **Sky Express funicular** that links the village below with the Skiarea Valchiavenna and Motta above it. Tucked inside the mountain, the Sky Express is one of Europe's most advanced uplift structures, taking just a few minutes to reach the Motta ski slopes, where the



📍 Baradello



📍 Val di Rezzalo

wider ski landscape and further lifts open up.

Situated in the centre of Valtellina is the **Aprica-Corteno ski area** that has more than **50 km of pisted runs**, maintained by high-tech snow-making machines and optimal connections between the two spots, which makes it the summit of excitement for families with first-timer kids and advanced skiers alike. Highlights include the thrilling and incredibly rewarding 2km-long **Magnolita 'Pistone'** that drops 500 metres in attitude as well as the **'Benedetti' in Palabione** that begins at 2,300 metres of elevation, perched like royalty over the valley. For a different perspective, the Superpanoramica del Baradello, which opened in December 2021, boasts the title of being **Europe's longest illuminated run**: 6 km with 810 metres of vertical drop. These floodlit facilities make magic moments on your skis more accessible under the starry sky, but on evenings when the pistes aren't illuminated, you can experience solitude on the slopes if you go up on snowshoes or with ski mountaineering equipment – that's skinny skiing uphill with skins. See the lights flickering below and listen to the crunch of snow beneath you.

This illuminated slope is reserved specifically for ski mountaineering every Friday from 9 December until early March, and open for floodlit Alpine skiing (with lift access) from Saturday 3 December on 31 different evenings.

For families and first-time skiers, the nursery slopes in Aprica's **Campetti area** make it the go-to spot with play features, magic carpet lifts and qualified instructors.

A more off-the-radar destination in the valley that's well suited to first timers is **Pescegallo Valgerola** with 12 kilometres of runs, mixing easy, middle, and more difficult slopes that drop down from 1,950 metres of altitude. Here, you'll also find Gallopark – perfect for ski novices to use the magic carpet lift and complete with bobsled and sledge runs – as well as Snowboard Valley, a heaven for those who want to surf the snow. Elsewhere in the valley stands **Alpe Teglio**, which has 10 km of easy to medium difficulty runs at 2,500 metres of altitude and a 5km-long dedicated snowshoe route. With an abundance of sun, it's the ideal choice for families who want fresh air, breath-taking nature, and a laidback outdoorsy vibe.

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📍 Valmalenco

Cross-country skiing: Fairy-tale meets fitness

Winter sports differ wildly, but amongst those that let you explore the mountains at your own pace while making sure you get a good, full-body workout, you'll find **cross-country skiing**—and Livigno is miles ahead with its offering. Thanks to its snow farming initiative, this resort is able to open as early as October to the delight of amateurs and pros who flock here to prepare for the upcoming season. There are around 30 km of Nordic ski trails in Livigno, which radiate around the town from Forcola and Alpe Vago, creating a stadium for skinny skiers. The menu also includes the 'Marianna Longa', a 5 km technically challenging up-and-down loop that could turn you into the next champion.

Staying in Alta Valtellina, you'll find two other cross-country skiing hotspots. **Santa Caterina Valfurva** has a strong XC skiing portfolio that includes the **Valtellina track** through the forest and has hosted a number of international races in the past. You can choose between 5 km and 10 km courses for advanced skiers, or beginner-friendly 2.3 km and 5 km easier routes. Then there's **Validentro** with the roughly 12 km-long **Viola track** that flanks the river of the same name. Not up for the full distance? Simply turn around when the fatigue hits.

Valmalenco invites XC skiers to explore three areas of varying difficulty. Pick between the tougher loop around the spectacular Lake Palù, the track of San Giuseppe that's just a few kilometres from Chiesa in Valmalenco, or **Lanzada's home track** that's illuminated until 23:00.

It feels like time has stood still in **Trivigno**, which sits at 1,800 metres above sea level as part of the Aprica ski area and offers a treat for the lungs and the legs. A wintery haven of tranquillity, this plateau is a hit with lovers of skinny skiing thanks to its 7 km circuit and two optional deviations measuring 2.5 km and 4.5 km respectively.

The **Pian di Gembro** cross-country ski track sits inside the Pian di Gembro Nature Reserve, just 4 km from Aprica. It measures 3.5 km in length and winds through gently undulating picture-book scenery (1,352 m.s.l – 1,424 m.s.l).



Away from the skis: Stay active at any speed in Valtellina

Beyond its ability to please Alpine and cross-country skiers with its great number of pistes, Valtellina also puts on a show with novel and lesser-known activities that let you discover an authentic and wilder side to the mountains.

Snowshoes are one of the most delightful ways to move through this fairy-tale winter landscape. Called **ciaspole** in Italian, snowshoes attach to your usual hiking shoes, allowing you to literally walk on deep snow rather than plunging through it. Accessible for all generations and abilities (provided you're sensibly dressed), why not lace up and explore the valley's harder-to-reach areas?

Getting through the list of reasons why the **Val di Mello Nature Reserve** is worth visiting in winter is exhausting: You can snowshoe all the way to Rasega on a gorgeous, easy route that climbs just 150 metres of elevation, starting from the little of village of San Martino, halfway up the valley. Nearby in Valmalenco, brilliant family-friendly options include snowshoeing around **Lake Palù** and from Campo Moro to **Alpe Prabello**, which sits at the foot of Pizzo Scalino.

Elsewhere, the wide-open spaces in central Valtellina also lend themselves superbly to gentle exploration. Something of a natural balcony, Prato Valentino should be your first stop if you are looking for views over the Orobic Alps. With approximately 390 metres of climbing on its way up and down from Saline and Dos Lau', the well-signposted, medium-difficulty Dos Lau' circular walk rewards those who choose to hike it with some of the most stunning views imaginable.

Nearby in Aprica, a beautiful waymarked nature trail guides you through a forest of fir, pine and larch trees in the **Pian di Gembro Nature Reserve**. Once up on the mountain ridge and by the Church of S. Fortunato, expect to be momentarily stunned as the view opens up to reveal a birds-eye view of the lower and central parts of Valtellina, framed by the spectacular peaks of the Rhaetian and Orobic Alps. The route then follows the edge of the wetland on its way back to the start, passing the reserve's educational space. Back in the town of Aprica, the easy, circular Sentiero del Bosco Gentile is well suited to families. Look out for info boards along the route, created by local primary school children to provide

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advice for safe hikes in the mountains and a reminder of their power to inspire, which allies nicely with the route's great views of Valtellina and the Rhaetian Alps.

The marked snowshoe hike from **Oga to Tadè near Bormio** is short in distance but big on views. Ideal for beginners, this relatively flat 4 km route starts from the Forte di Oga and guides you through postcard-perfect forests on hard-packed snow, giving panoramic views over Bormio and the surrounding peaks of Valfurva and the Ortes-Cevedale range.

There is no shortage of dedicated **snowshoe routes** in **Livigno**, with **seven waymarked, freshly groomed trails** that are monitored all season long by experts. These prime conditions make it possible for tourists to enjoy the scenery without needing additional snow safety equipment. For those that do want to venture off the beaten track, one of Livigno's many qualified Alpine guides can accompany you around the white-carpeted backcountry of what's known as Little Tibet.

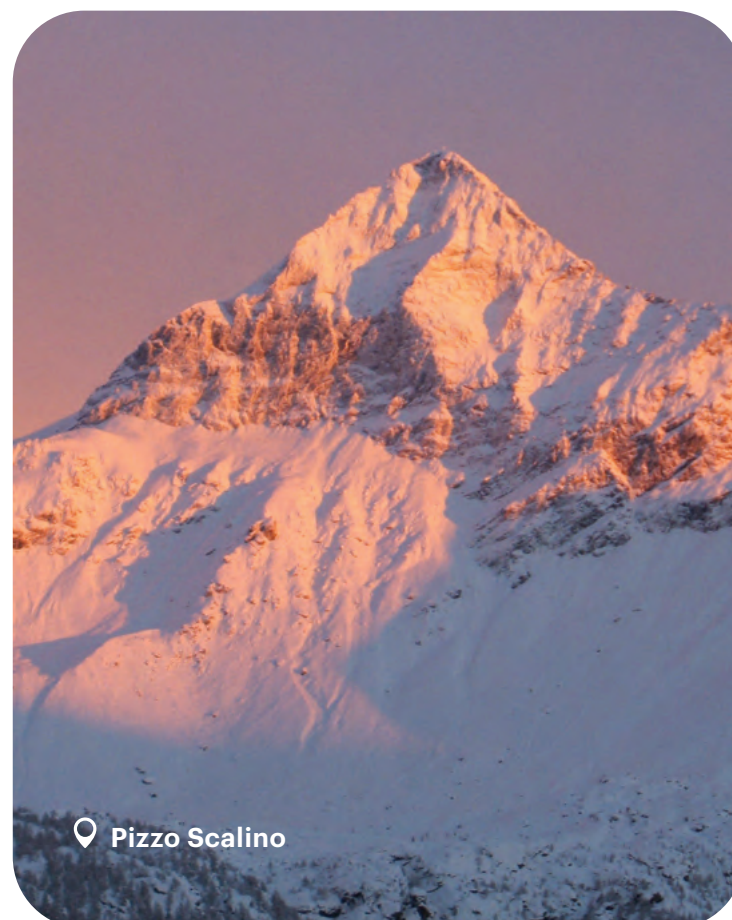
Madesimo is another location that offers a series of snowshoe-suitable routes including the must-visit high plateau of Alpe Andossi – the 'spine' of Madesimo that splits Valle Spluga into two – and takes snowshoers up to Montespluga, enjoying panoramic views along the way.

Want to test your endurance and enjoy the thrill of skiing downhill all in one sport? Then perhaps **ski mountaineering** or ski touring could be your thing. About to make its debut at the Milano - Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics, "Ski-Mo" has something of a hold on Valtellina. **Bormio** has the perfect landscape for this wild sport, with easy, medium, and hard routes available.

The ascent of **Monte Sobretta** from Santa Caterina Valfurva will treat you to exclusive views over the whole Ortes-Cevedale mountain range – and the best thing of all is that even novices can have a go and experience the summit. Find a guide and rely on the cable cars to get you up the first part and remember that the reward will be worth the effort later on.

The slopes of **Aprica's** mountainsides are also prime terrain for fans of ski-mo given the proximity to the pisted runs, which mean you can cruise back down to the valley floor on groomed snow. The already-legendary **Super Panoramica del Baradello** is illuminated every seven days exclusively for ski mountaineering (and snowshoeing). For even closer contact with nature, try the dedicated ski mountaineering track on the Tumel trail, which starts from Aprica's Magnolta cable car at 1,213 metres before flanking the pisted run up until the big clearing of Alpe Magnolta at 1,900 metres of elevation. Other standout ski-mo options include the 7.8 km route up **Monte Brione** on the other side of the valley – set off from Prato Valentino towards Dos Lau', go past the cable car top station and continue up to the summit before descending.

One of the most well-known and popular routes is the ascent of Pizzo Scalino in **Valmalenco**, which starts from Campo Moro at 1,940 metres of altitude. More than 1,300 metres higher and around 4 h 30 minutes later, you'll reach the peak where the views are astonishing. By no means a walk in the park, this one is an experts-only excursion.



📍 Pizzo Scalino

Just as for its snowshoe visitors, **Livigno** has a series of dedicated, waymarked ski mountaineering routes. On these, it is obligatory to carry your own safety equipment, including an ARVA avalanche transceiver, snow shovel and probe.

Croce Valandrea is a medium-difficulty ski mountaineering route that appeals to many. The ascent, which keeps you well away from the pisted runs, covers 450 metres of elevation in solitude, before turning to descend down the official slopes.

The small village of **Montespluga** on the Swiss border, which isn't covered by any of neighbouring Madesimo's cable cars, is home to a new initiative called **Homeland Explore**, which aims to encourage people to get into ski mountaineering, split boarding and freeride skiing. The project involves workshops, guided excursions, and off-the-beaten-track experiences with tented accommodation in unspoiled nature.

Cycling on snow, come on? If the thought of having to spend the whole winter cycling indoors fills you with dread, it's time to consider **fat biking**. The big, chunky tyres allow you to ride on snow, opening up a whole new winter wonderland. There are various rental spots across the valley from Bormio and Livigno across to Madesimo. Through collaborations between the tourist boards of Bormio and Valmalenco as well as respective local MTB schools, you can book expert guides and fat bike hire simultaneously.

As you've gathered, skiing and snowboarding are not the only ways to get an **adrenaline** rush in winter. Here's a selection of Valtellina's other off-the-radar winter activities:

Team Adventure Madesimo have curated a selection of exciting **snowmobile tours** with expert guides and varied, undulating terrain featuring hairpin turns and stunning trails through picture-book white forests to the frozen lake of Montespluga, which lies close to the border with Switzerland. What's more, Montespluga is also a well-known destination for **snow kiting**, which brings together the best of kite surfing and snowboarding or



📍 Valldidentro

skiing. From the frozen ground, you (plus your kite and your skis/board) will harness the wind's power to "surf" the snow, getting airborne and landing gently.

Up in **Livigno**, the **Sky Experience** gives around 50 individuals each week an **exclusive paragliding flight** on Carosello 3000's mountainside, letting folk land directly with their skis on the slopes.

Ever dreamed of becoming a musher? Back towards Bormio, **Arnoga's Husky Village** offers the chance to drive a team of dogs over the snow in true Alaskan style.

Not just for kids, the scenic 2.5 km **sledge run** in **Val Rezzalo** on the other side of Bormio will make every generation whoop for joy. Before you begin, you'll have to walk 350 vertical metres through the spruce forests up to the San Bernardo plateau where the sled run starts. You can refuel on authentic local cuisine and rent your sledges at Rifugio La Baita. →

Explore Valtellina by bike

Once the annual covering of snow gives way to verdant green pastures and the earthy hues of little lanes, trails and paths, it feels like the whole valley gets on their bikes. Surrounded by vistas as you pedal, there's everything from lung-burning Alpine passes to full-gas, full-immersion mountain bike descents, bike parks for non-stop hot laps, and a landscape that truly deserves the name 'outdoor gym.'

The history of cycling was written on these climbs

The Stelvio, Gavia and Mortirolo are epic names within cycling that conjure up equal amounts of trepidation and admiration. From Fausto Coppi to Marco Pantani, these tarmac ribbons have provided the stage for many icons of the sport to pull off some of their greatest feats of endurance.

Topping out at 2,758 metres, the **Passo dello Stelvio** is the highest paved road in Italy and the second-highest in Europe that's open to traffic. This mecca for **road cycling lovers starts in Bormio** and winds upwards

through the inimitable Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio. Its tight hairpins and stunning scenery first caught cycling's attention at the Giro d'Italia 1953 with Fausto Coppi's spectacular effort up the climb.

Sat very near the Stelvio on the map, the **Passo Gavia** begins from Santa Caterina Valfurva, rises to a majestic 2,652 metres of elevation, and is considered the little brother of the Stelvio. However, there's no sibling rivalry here as both road passes are great in their own way. The cycling world first took note of the Gavia in 1988 as it greeted the riders with a substantial dumping of late-spring snow—a situation that shouldn't have surprised the peloton given that it's been known for its unpredictable weather since the medieval times when traders from the Republic of Venice using the ancient pass to reach Northern Europe often failed to arrive on the other side.

Further down the valley, the **Passo Mortirolo**, which connects Valtellina with Valcamonica, is where one of Italy's most famous cyclists, Marco Pantani, made a name for himself. This road is considered one of the world's hardest climbs, with gradients over 20%. For many riders, staying upright – let alone thinking about

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📍 Sentiero Valtellina



📍 Passo dello Stelvio

speed or total time – is the biggest challenge here.

But the beauty of Valtellina is that no matter where you choose to ride, you'll find stellar climbs that can be looped together into an epic ride so you can almost touch the sky.

Lesser-known roads have also entered the more recent history of the Giro d'Italia, such as the climb to **Laghi di Cancano**. Also known as the Piccolo Stelvio or the little 'Principessa', its tight zig-zagging hairpins shine under direct sunlight, with mountain pines offering you some silent support as you count down the corners. At the other end of the valley, you'll find the endless yet beautiful **Passo Spluga**, which starts in Chiavenna before topping out at 2,113 metres above sea level and represents one of the most important Alpine passes in existence. Then there's the **Passo dell'Aprica**, which finishes up in the town of Aprica at 1,181 metres of elevation. On this road, there's a selection of side roads and bonus climbs for an added challenge.

For more off-the-radar but equally as challenging climbs, head to Morbegno for the **Passo San Marco** (average gradient 10%, 1,742 metres of vertical gain) or to Lanza for the roughly 15 km climb to **Campo Moro** with tunnels that have been dug into the mountain and a 6% average gradient. Further up, the **Passo del Foscagno** (2,291 m.s.l.), which connects Livigno to Valdidentro, asks you to dig deep for 1,000 metres of vertical gain over 20 km with an average gradient of 5.8% and max slopes of 11%.

Each summer, the **Enjoy Stelvio Valtellina initiative closes certain roads to motorized traffic** on select dates to turn the region into a bike-focused playground. These traffic-free days are not only designed for those who live and breathe cycling but also for those who want to experience the joy and tranquillity of climbing such stunning passes surrounded by unforgettable landscapes. Analogue or pedal-assist bikes are welcome.



MTB, downhill & bike parks: Where to send it

Summers are for... shredding? It certainly helps that the ski lifts reopen each summer to transport riders to ever higher altitudes where they will find kilometre after kilometre of natural and human-made MTB trails, with flow and gnar in equal measure. With three different lift-serviced trail areas, **Livigno** is the place to be for **mountain bikers and downhillers**. One of the best in Europe, Bike Park Mottolino has 14 trails covering three difficulty levels and all sorts of features – think bridges, boards, and giant inflatables – so that both novices and advanced riders can have fun and pull tricks.

Elsewhere in Livigno, the sprawling **Mountain Park Carosello 3000** has more than 50 km of dedicated trails for all tastes and skill levels. Lonely Planet is all about enjoyment and views, while H-Dream is designed for letting go of the brakes, with skilled riders clocking speeds of 70 km/h. Connected to Carosello 3000 is a spot called **Mountain Area Sitas**, which boasts 11 trails

of varying difficulties and a maximum altitude of 2,700 metres.

Staying in the upper part of Valtellina, **Bormio Bike Park** is mapped out on the slopes of Monte Vallecetta, where it teams jaw-dropping views with a mix of downhill, freeride and cross-country MTB trails and a vertical drop of 1,800 metres. The **Bormio 360 Adventure Trail**, which was inaugurated in 2022, is a high-altitude long-distance MTB route through the Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio that navigates a giant ring around Bormio, keeping between 837 and 2,462 metres of altitude.

Now more than 10 years old, **Made Bike Park in Madesimo** has a range of trails to suit every style and skill level. Alongside advanced gravity-focused downhills and fun flow trails in a gorgeous Alpine location, beginners and experts can also enjoy pump track action on the banked corners and berms. Here,

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you need to gain momentum, keep your riding smooth, and use your arms and legs. The Skills Park is equipped with wooden obstacles that are perfect if you're new to the sport. Madesimo is also home to one of the valley's most popular designated **downhill** tracks.

Palù Bike Park near the Alpe Palù ski area uplift services in the heart of **Valmalenco** attracts gravity, downhill, freeride and cross-country mountain biking fans. The park's trail network, which is also suitable for beginners with developing skills thanks to its two specific Junior trails, covers the mountainside between 1,400 and 2,400 metres of altitude.

Serious mountain bikers will enjoy the pilgrimage to the central part of Valtellina where they can navigate a **4–5 hour route that rides through Valposchiavo to connect Tirano with Col D'Anzana** before returning through Val Grosina and dropping back down to the town's well-known Parco delle Incisioni Rupestri di Grosio (Rock Engraving Park). At 32 km, it has everything: ancient mule tracks, tight, steep corners, and downhills that'll make you whoop.

Family-friendly bike rides

At the more leisurely end of the spectrum, Valtellina has a lot to offer riders who appreciate cruising along river paths, admiring the scenery and soaking up a slower pace of life. The traffic-free, shared-use **Sentiero Valtellina**, which runs alongside the River Adda for 114 km from Colico at the top of Lake Como all the way up the valley to Bormio, is certainly the most well-known. Predominately flat, it's a family-friendly route that can be completed in one go or stages. You can stop for a delicious lunch or snack at one of the many authentic agriturismos that line the route. Running parallel to the railway at times, it's ideal for hopping on and off with your bike to explore the valley in doable chunks. Official Rent a Bike locations can be found throughout, offering a range of models including mountain

bikes, city bikes, hybrid tourers and e-bikes that can be rented in one spot and returned in another.

The **Ciclabile Valchiavenna** bike path is also worth visiting. Simply put, it's a 40 km traffic-free route from Colico to Val Bregaglia on the Swiss border. Along the way it whisks you through beautiful scenery, including the Pian di Spagna nature reserve, past Lake Mezzola, through the postcard-perfect town of Chiavenna, then Piuro, the Acquafraggia waterfalls and the stunning

Palazzo Vertemate Franchi. You'll find Rent a Bike services along this route, too.

The **Raetica Classic** is a circular route through Valtellina and neighbouring Switzerland. Riders are encouraged to explore the loop at their own pace, enjoying two of Valtellina's traffic-free bike paths – the Sentiero Valtellina and the Ciclabile Valchiavenna. Being a circular route with no fixed departure point, this route offers riders the flexibility to pick and choose; if not completing the whole route by bike (either in one go or multiple stages), hop onto a bus or train on your way into Switzerland.

Elsewhere in the valley, there are ride choices aplenty: If you're not familiar with the **Sentiero Rusca** that climbs into Valmalenco from Sondrio, now's your chance. It's just one of the valley's many shared-use paths. Mountain bike lovers will be wowed by the altitude you can gain and descend in **Val Belviso** (reachable from Aprica in the Orobie Alps), while up in Livigno, the mellow **Giro delle Tee** circuit winds past the valley's typical wooden mountain huts. Suitable for newbie riders, the **loop of Alpe Groppera** above Madesimo takes in the woods on the Eastern slopes, which turn into ski runs come winter. Must-dos on this route include taking a refreshing dip at the pine tree-surrounded Lake Azzurro and admiring



the views from the Andossi plateau and surrounding Splugan peaks, including Pizzo Quadro, Pizzo Ferrè and Pizzo Tambò.

A masterpiece for those who appreciate fine wine and the outdoors, Sondrio has **six dedicated Wine Bike Tours through tiny vineyard lanes**, tracks and trails. The circuits cover a range of lengths, including flatter, **family-friendly** options with a modest distance, while others take in a wider radius with ancient villages, must-visit cultural sites, and bigger climbs. Whichever route you pick, the mountains are a permanent backdrop.

Mixing paved with unpaved, these routes will appeal to those who are looking for full immersion into Valtellina life, and are best enjoyed with a glass of superb local wine at the finish. Many of these Wine Bike Tours crisscross the Strada del Vino, meaning you can break the pedalling up by visiting wine cellars, restaurants, and other local artisans. →





**Alpine endurance: hiking, trekking,
skyrunning & climbing**

Valtellina is synonymous with its mountains. Not only have they played a protective role throughout history and consistently framed the landscape, but they've also posed a challenge to the population, enticing enthusiasts to embark with due respect and care on adventures, scale ever higher peaks, and crest rocky ridges. This appeal is just as strong today.

Hiking is one of the best ways to immerse yourself in Valtellina's heritage, bringing you in touch with the nature, history and culture of this valley at your own pace. Close to Lake Como, **Val Lesina** is one of the most untouched valleys in the Parco delle Orobie Valtellinesi. In central Valtellina, there's no shortage of hiking routes to explore in both the main valley as well as the many side valleys that jut off and upwards. Specific routes include the **Via del Terrazzamenti** ("Route of the Terraces"), which takes you back in history to discover the centuries of work that went into creating the steep agricultural terraces that line the mountainside, as well as the ancient and well-maintained 70 km-long **Via Spluga** mule track that links Thusis, Switzerland, with Chiavenna. When following this old trading route, there are packages available including accommodation, luggage transfer, and entrance fees to various attractions along the way.

Mixing history, culture and nature, Valchiavenna offers a number of routes, including **Via Bregaglia** that winds through the idyllic Alpine valley of the same name and inspired artists such as Segantini and Varlin with its rocky views, as well as the Vie del Viandante ("The wayfarers' ways"), a selection of 12 routes that allow you to discover how smugglers, wayfarers and traders made their way between Northern and Southern Europe.

For high altitude adventures, you'll find a wealth of hikes and scrambles up to mountain huts and peaks. The best-known circuit is the **Sentiero Roma**, which takes between 3-5 days to accomplish and was created by Milan's Club Alpino Italiano (CAI) back in 1928. At 54 km in length, it hovers around 2,500 metres above sea level as

it traverses Val Codera and circles around Val Masino to Valmalenco. Then there's the **Alta Via della Valmalenco** – another multi-stage hike – that rarely drops below 2,000 metres of elevation as it connects high-altitude mountain huts over a distance of 100 km. If you want to admire Valmalenco from all its best angles, this is ideal. While usually split into eight stages, you can pick your own timescale to complete the route, whether in one hit or spread over a summer.

The **Gran Via delle Orobie** – 130 km in length with an average elevation of 1,800 metres – is the main hiking route through the Parco delle Orobie Valtellinesi, connecting Delebio with Aprica.

Elsewhere in Valtellina, you'll spot the **Via Alpina** on the map, part of a network of five hiking paths through eight Alpine countries totalling more than 5,000 km and usually broken down into 342 day-long stages, as well as the 6,000 km-plus **Sentiero Italia**, which is one of the world's longest hiking trails and takes you over the Apennines and the Alps. →

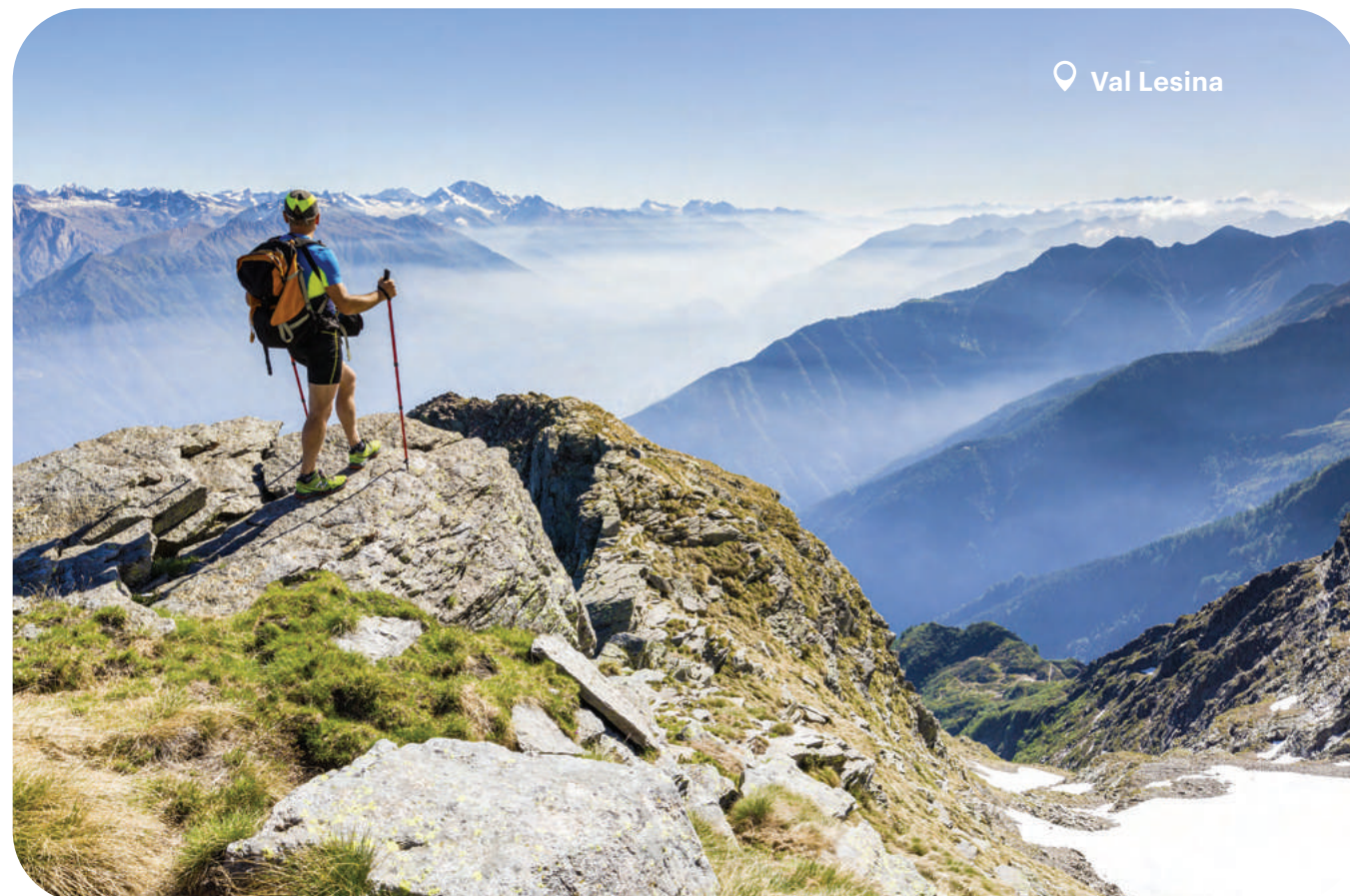


From the valley floor to the ridges up above, Valtellina's trail network is a haven for **runners**. Whatever your distance, preferred surface or gradient, you can run along one of the many shared-use paths such as the Sentiero Valtellina or pick a smoother, undulating trail like the Via dei Terrazzamenti. If, however, your idea of running looks more like exposed ridges and altitude gain, then you're in the right place because Valtellina knows how to please **skyrunners**. Week in, week out, Valtellina's local calendar is packed with events that attract national and international trail, mountain and skyrunners. The most popular challenge is **Trofeo Kima** in Val Masino, which is a 52 km technical skyrace that consistently has a world-class start field.

It can be difficult for climbers to choose exactly which jaw-dropping peak is worth doing next, but standout ascents include the summits of the **Disgrazia** massif, the 4,000 metre-high Piz **Bernina** from Valmalenco, the **Spluga** peaks from Valchiavenna, the Traverse of the 13 Peaks in the **Ortles-Cevedale** range, or one of the many other mountains here. Livigno boasts more than 10 summits above 3,000 metres of elevation; as non-

glacial summits, you don't need an ice axe or crampons, just skills and experience. There are many qualified mountain guides in the valley, who can be called upon to lead trips and share their knowledge when it comes to developing Alpine skills, staying safe, and exploring the local landscape.

Val Masino is the climber's choice for imposing granite rock faces of all shapes and sizes. Turn up here with ropes, shoes and chalk for a range of traditional and sport climbing routes or have a go at bouldering. The history of alpinism runs deep, and this spot has become a must-climb location. From well-known rock faces to ancient trails and paths, you can work your way up to the many high-altitude huts and shelters. A lot of the climbing is centred around the biggest monolith in Europe – **Sasso Remenno** – which has become a mecca for climbers from all over the world and is justifiably considered the largest natural climbing gym in Europe: it has more than 200 routes of various difficulties, and a height of between 25–45 metres. After five years of absence, 2023 marks the return of Melloblocco, an event for "sassisti" from more than 20 different countries. As the stage for



the festival, Val di Mello is a stunning side valley known as 'the little Yosemite', with unique smooth-faced rock formations that have been given wild names throughout history. These climbs, while not too difficult, have become legendary within the history of modern climbing.

For character to rival **Val Masino** and Val di Mello, climbers should make time for the ridges and rocks of the **Serpentino della Valmalenco**, the crags of **Isolaccia** and **Campo Moro**, the rock of **Zoai**, the multi-pitch climbs of **Valposchiavina**, and the rock climbing and bouldering gym in **Valgerola**.

Throughout Valtellina, there are many **huts and shelters** sitting between 800 and 3,000 metres above sea level. Many of these stay open throughout winter, whereas others only open come summer once the snow has lifted and the trails are accessible. →



Adventures on the water: Rafting, canyoning and the rest

What could be more refreshing in the hot summer months than discovering the secrets of Valtellina's lakes, rivers and mountain streams? Depending on the geography and characteristics of your chosen aquatic location, you will be able to take your pick of water sports.

Rafting or **kayaking** down the River Adda is a fun way to explore the valley's dramatic scenery from a new perspective. Local schools with expert guides organize everything from romantic moonlight rafting to adrenaline-pumping, white water trips – ideal for groups of friends or families to have fun.

Steep and narrow river gorges have been carved by gushing water over centuries to create the ideal spots for **canyoning**. After cutting its way through the rocks in **Valmalenco**, the **Cormor river** has shaped one of the most beautiful courses in the Alps – full of darkness and underground tunnels – that starts at Campo Moro and ends at Franscia. Nearby, you'll find the spectacular **Gola Up** mountaineering route in the **Scerscen mountain stream**, which begins with a 40 metre-long abseil down a rock face, before fixed ropes, zip lines, short bits on foot and easy climbing sections whisk you down to the river. Want more adrenaline? Valchiavenna's **Val Bodengo** is a must-visit, offering 6 metre-long slides and up to 25 metre-high waterfalls with routes for all levels.

For a more relaxed day of adventure, head to one of the many lakes in Valtellina. Choose from anywhere in the valley, right from **Lake Mezzola**, where you can have a leisurely canoe trip on the border of the provinces of Como and Sondrio, all the way up to **Lake Livigno** at 1,816msl. Here, you can chill out on its floating platform, rent a kayak or pedalo, or SUP on this high lake tucked at the end of 'Little Tibet'.

With its three main rivers (Adda, Mera and Spool), 110



Val Bodengo



Val Bodengo

Alpine lakes, 220 mountain streams and 24 reservoirs, Valtellina represents the most important water catchment area in Italy (second only to Valle d'Aosta), which is why it should go straight to the top of your must-fish list. There's one comprehensive pass – available online or at one of the local authorized dealers – that gives access to 1,250 km of fishable waters, 74 km of exclusive zones for fly-fishing and fishing with lure, as well as unmissable spots for kids, tourists, and those that are simply keen for a catch. The most common fish to catch in these rivers, streams and Alpine lakes are grayling, brown trout, marble trout and arctic char, amongst others. →

Picturesque time on the greens:
Go golfing in Valtellina

For golfers looking for tranquillity, mountain scenery and charming views, Valtellina has got you covered with no fewer than five different golf courses to put on your itinerary. The **Valtellina Golf Club di Caiolo** is an 18-hole, 6 km-plus course that sits immersed in greenery just outside of Sondrio. Tee off under a 360° backdrop of the vineyards on the Rhaetian Alps, the rich forests of the Orobic Alps, the whiteness of the Adamello massif, and the granite peaks of Monte Disgrazia in sight. Numerous lakes and canals on the greens enrich the experience.

At opposing ends of the valley, **Bormio** and **Madesimo** offer 9 and 6-hole courses respectively: with counter-

slope fairways, tough roughs, and deceptively inclined greens, Bormio is considered one of the best mountain golf courses in existence, while Madesimo has a generously sized practice range, organizes competitions and offers a range of lessons and clinics, including evening sessions.

For more high-altitude golfing, head to **Livigno for Europe's highest Golf Training Area**, which hosts a pitch and putt, 250 metre driving range, and three greens of varying difficulty over a total area of 10,000 square metres. Closer to the central valley, you can test your skills on the recently renovated **Golf Training Area in Aprica**.



Culture

The story of Valtellina stretches back to prehistoric times, and traces of this era can still be found in fossils, mysterious rock carvings and archaeological evidence with fascinating anthropological implications. Due to its strategic position near major alpine passes, Celtic, Ligurian and Etruscan tribes all settled in this region at various times.

In all of Valtellina's 78 municipalities, **palazzos, churches and other historic buildings** give visitors an insight into the constant comings and goings of people over the centuries, all of whom shaped the course of history in Valtellina during their time here. Today, the past lives on in the **popular legends and traditions** that have been handed down over generations. These echoes of the valley's former peasant life are particularly perceptible in the powerful spiritual energy of the area's **pilgrimage sites and places of worship**.

The rocks have stories: On the trail of prehistoric Valtellina

Various discoveries and archaeological excavations have confirmed that the valley was inhabited in the Stone Age, particularly the lower-mid valley. The **Parco delle Incisioni Rupestri ("Rock Engraving Park") of Grosio and Grosotto** is the most important source of information we have on the passage of ancient peoples in Valtellina. In this park, there are carved images dating back to the Neolithic period, almost four thousand years before the birth of Christ.

At the heart of the park is the **Rupe Magna di Grosio**, an imposing outcrop of rock sculpted by glaciers. This is one of the largest engraved rocks in the Alps and is covered with over 5,000 depictions of anthropomorphic figures and animals such as goats, ibex and boars, as well as geometric shapes, cup marks ("coppelle"), and pictures of men and women carrying

out everyday activities and rites of passage. The most iconic engraving, which is now the symbol of the park, depicts a man armed with a shield and something that looks like a sword or a pole. At the top of the hill that towers over the Rupe, two castles stand surrounded by the quintessential terraces with dry-stone walls that date back to the tenth or eleventh century.

Further engraved rocks of significant archaeological interest have also been found among the terraces in the nearby district of Sondrio. Evidence of human life from 4,000 years ago has been discovered on the **Rupe del Calvario in Tresivio**, while in **La Ganda, near Castione**, you can see a rock that was engraved 3,000 years ago, mostly with anthropomorphic figures.

Around **Teglio**, several intact stelae and engraved fragments from the Bronze Age (3000 BC) have been found among the terraces, leading experts to hypothesise that there were once several ceremonial centres with ornate monoliths in Valtellina. There are three **Caven stelae** preserved at Palazzo Besta, for example. One of these, the "Dea Madre", has been interpreted in a number of different ways thanks to its abstract form. According to some scholars, this stone depicts a fertility god of Neolithic ancestry (sixth to fourth millennium BC). New finds from recent digs suggest that the Dea Madre and the other stelae allude to the veneration of ancestors.

Archaeological digs at Pian dei Cavalli in Valchiavenna have uncovered other finds dating back to between

10,000 and 6000 BC, as well as evidence of settlements at between 1,500 and 2,000 m above sea level. These discoveries confirm the theory that the **Spluga valley** and mountain pass were frequented by tribes of shepherds, farmers and hunters in the prehistoric period, and particularly in the Mesolithic Age.

Piuro, situated in Val Bregaglia, is an ancient village known as the "Pompeii of the Alps" because of the landslide that destroyed the settlement in 1618. The excavations that began in the mid-1960s allowed archaeologists to reconstruct life in Piuro before the landslide, find by find. Inside the **Museo degli Scavi di Piuro**, not far from Chiavenna, you can see various artefacts that offer an insight into the history of this area. →



📍 Grosio's Rock Engraving Park



📍 Grosio's Rock Engraving Park



📍 Castel Grumello

A walk through history between towers and castles

Valtellina has played an important role over the centuries thanks to its strategic position as a “bridge” between Italy and Central Europe, and the many **castles, towers and fortresses** built by the mountain passes and main access points to the valley bear witness to this. Although many of these are in ruins today thanks to the Grison demolition of fortifications in 1600, a few castles have survived. These are very much worth a visit both for their picturesque appearance and to see the archaeological finds preserved inside them, which bring some of the key moments in Valtellina’s history back to life.

Most of the **castles** are concentrated in the lower and central parts of the valley, where noble lords were able to control the main access points easily. You can still visit two castles around Sondrio. To reach **Castel Masegra**, follow the short trail from the historic centre of the city past Via Scarpatetti in the old peasant quarter. Built in the Middle Ages, this castle has undergone various structural changes over the centuries to adapt to the needs of its many owners, seeing it transformed from a fortress into a home, then a wine store, and finally a military district. Today, it’s home to **CAST, the CASTello delle STorie**

di Montagna: an unusual and fascinating storytelling museum that uses an immersive multimedia approach to explore the topic of the mountains. The interactive discovery trail all about climbing, mountaineering and the environment lets visitors determine their route around the exhibition, getting involved in what interests them most.

To see one of the symbols of Valtellina in real life, along with panoramic views of the valley, you need go no further than the Montagna in Valtellina. Here, on a rocky ridge overlooking a sheer drop, surrounded by typical vine-covered terraces – in a more protected but still strategically important position – is **Castel Grumello**, a fortress dating back to the 13th century. This heritage building protected by Fondo Ambiente Italiano is a rare example of a “twin” castle made up of two symmetrical parts (one military, the other residential), surrounded and united by high walls. Demolished by the Grisons in 1526, today it offers only a partial glimpse of what is thought to have been one of the most impressive buildings in the whole province.

Just outside of Tirano, two more castles can be found on top of the hill that overlooks the Rupe Magna: the **Castello di San Faustino and the Castello Nuovo**. San Faustino is the older of the two and has a little Romanesque bell

tower adjoining a small chapel. Two medieval tombs are preserved at the centre of the presbytery, carved into the rock. Castello Nuovo, on the other hand, has a double curtain wall and a formidable fortified internal tower.

To control access to the Passo del Mortirolo, the powerful Venosta family built the **Castello di Pedenale**, a complex defensive building, in the woods above Mazzo di Valtellina. Only a square tower from the 13th century and part of the old fortified living quarters still survive today. The **Castello di Bellaguarda**, situated a short distance above the municipality of Tovo S. Agata, also once belonged to the Venosta family. Considered one of the most well-structured castle complexes in the valley, parts of the original building are still preserved today, including the guard tower, which was built in an earlier period, the guard house, and the crenellated walls.

In other strategic positions across Valtellina, you’ll also have found towers of **great historical importance** if you go back in time. Built at obligatory points of passage over the mountains for armies on the move, they had an important defensive role.

Head to **Gordona** to visit the only still-intact signal tower in Valchiavenna, the **Torre di Segname**. This was built between the ninth and tenth centuries during the Hungarian invasions.

The **Torre di Mancapane** in Montagna in Valtellina was built in 1321 to protect Sondrio. Some 21 metres high, and completely immersed in the surrounding vegetation, it wasn’t built to be lived in but had elevated access points and battlement walkways that made it particularly inaccessible. Unfortunately, it’s no longer possible to admire the tower in all its imposing might, as it was destroyed in 1500.

The **Torri di Fraele** were built not long after in 1391, 1,930 m above sea level. These towers were intended to defend Alta Valtellina from possible invasions along the Via Imperiale di Alemagna, one of the main routes for communication and trade between Bormio and the Engadine valley. Today, they are fascinating from a historical point of view as well as offering a wonderful view of Valdidentro and the Alta



📍 Castello di Mancapane

Valtellina mountaintops. They also make a great starting point for hiking or mountain biking.

Equally breathtaking is the view from the **Torre De Li Belli Miri**, an imposing square tower in **Teglio** that’s also the town’s symbol. This is all that remains of the medieval castle that was built on the ruins of a previous Roman structure. In autumn, you’re able to climb the tower and admire panoramic views of the surrounding landscape.

To experience the atmosphere of distant historical times while immersing yourself in nature, there’s no shortage of **trails and circular walks** that lead you to the castles of Valtellina via villages, fields and terraces. Tirano’s **Circuito dei Castelli** undulates along the valley floor for more than 30 km past apple orchards, vineyards and chestnut trees, passing through eight municipalities and taking in historic castles, towers and churches. Around Sondrio, the **Circuito dei Castelli Grumello and Mancapane** is an enjoyable 10.5 km hike that links the two medieval fortresses. →

Rococo palazzos and medieval homes of the nobility

Valtellina remained important in later centuries: in addition to its key strategic role, it gained a reputation among noble families as an ideal place for a home or holiday resort, and many of them built their own houses here.

The best examples are concentrated in the lower and central parts of the valley. In the 13th century, the Malacrida family had a residence built in the heart of the old **Scimicà quarter** in **Morbegno**. With its dominant position in the upper part of the town, Palazzo Malacrida is the most important example of rococo style in Valtellina, and is affectionately known as “the most beautiful Venetian palace outside Venice”. A plain and compact façade conceals sumptuously decorated rooms such as the grand hall, where the bold architectural perspectives and ingenious paintings by Giuseppe Coduri, known as “il Vignoli”, create the illusion of a huge, colourful garden. At the back of the palazzo, the Italian garden arranged over three terraces offers stunning views over the old town of Morbegno and the terraced mountainside of the Costiera dei Cech.

The hand of Pietro Solari, the architect who designed Palazzo Malacrida, can also be detected inside **Palazzo Sertoli**, one of three neighbouring palazzos (along with Palazzo Giacconi and Palazzo Paribelli) on **Sondrio's** historic Piazza Quadrivio. Solari designed the rococo ballroom on the palazzo's piano nobile, which features daring trompe-l'œil and architectural illusions that amplify the size of the room, every inch of which is decorated with stuccos and painted ornamentations. To the south of the piazza, you'll find Palazzo Sertoli: a complex that's made up of several structures mainly from the 17th and 18th centuries, all with their own unique style. These buildings are arranged around a noble court, a more rustic courtyard and a formal garden.

Tirano and its surroundings are also home to various historic palazzos that are popular destinations for culture-lovers and tourists alike. Built at the end of the 15th century, **Palazzo Besta** in **Teglio** is one of the most important renaissance residences in Lombardy. It's split between two floors arranged around a square courtyard with a double loggia that forms the heart of the house. Here, frescoed walls feature episodes from the Aeneid as well

as portraits of members of the Besta family. The interior of the palazzo is also opulently decorated with fresco cycles depicting stories from the Bible, mythology, and historical events from the 16th century. The palazzo was made a national museum in 1927 and houses four typical Valtellinese stüe as well as the Antiquarium Tellinum, an important collection of archaeological finds dating back to the Copper Age.

In the 17th century, the Conti Sertoli Salis, Grison governors and chief magistrates of Valtellina, ordered the renovation of four palazzos from 1500 in the historic centre of **Tirano**. These buildings were combined to create the imposing **Palazzo Salis**, which covers a total area of more than 6,000 square metres. Between the 17th and 18th centuries, the palazzo's ten baroque rooms with wonderful frescoes were the centre of political power in the valley. These rooms look out onto the 16th-century rustic courtyard known as the “Corte dei cavalli” (horse yard), as well as a little church dedicated to San Carlo Borromeo and a romantic Italian-style garden – a real gem tucked away inside the palazzo.

Palazzo Merizzi was also built at the end of the 17th century by incorporating two 16th-century palazzos and a medieval tower. Its large square courtyard, porticoed from top to bottom with columns and pillars, is one of the most atmospheric spaces in **Tirano's** historic centre. (NOTE: the Palazzo Merizzi has limited opening times for the public.) The palazzo's rooms are lavishly decorated, and the two most famous rooms have engraved wood panelling and Louis XIV-style decorations that date back to the 17th century. Guarded like a precious jewel, the archive of the noble Merizzi family boasts numerous documents from between 1510 and 1800, including 150 medieval parchments and the old family trees of the Tyrolean Wolkenstein and Schlanders families.

Villa Visconti Venosta sits at the entrance to **Grosio** and is the old summer residence of the noble family who gave the villa its name. Visit the splendid rooms inside the palazzo to see an array of period furniture as well as old books and antiques collected over the generations on the family's travels. Also on display is the art collection of the Marquis Emilio as well as souvenirs of visits from

the family's illustrious friends, such as the armchair of Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour, of whom the Marquis Emilio was a friend and political supporter, and a volume of French proverbs with annotations by Alessandro Manzoni.

An important crossroads in medieval times, Bormio is a little jewel of a town with plenty of beautiful churches and palazzos scattered among the streets. Piazza del Kuerc, the Ponte di Combo and the church of Santo Spirito are just a few of the fascinating places that make this town worth a visit. **Prosto di Piuro** in **Valchiavenna** is the location of one of the most important and interesting 16th-century homes in the whole of Lombardy: **Palazzo Vertemate Franchi**. Surrounded by nature, the grounds of the palace also contain a series of simple rustic buildings – including a printing press and an ice house – that were once dedicated to managing the family estate. You'll also find an Italian garden, a vegetable garden, an orchard, a chestnut grove and a vineyard for producing Vertemate Passito wine. The façade is plain and simple and the house is surrounded by light and airy spaces intended for work, while inside are preserved old stüe, inlaid ceilings and frescoed walls with huge mythological scenes inspired in particular by Ovid's Metamorphoses.

→



Palazzo Vertemate Franchi



Palazzo Besta



📍 Tirano - Santuario della Madonna

The spiritual side of Valtellina: churches and pilgrimages

Not only the scene of battles, conquests and power struggles, Valtellina's spectacular natural setting has also inspired spiritual and contemplative responses in many people over the centuries. Over 500 churches are scattered across the area, including small chapels high on the mountainside, local parish churches, and sanctuaries built to foster religion in places where the silence, the proximity to the heavens and the magnificence of the mountains invite introspection, meditation and prayer. These special holy sites offer a chance to connect with your own religious side in an intimate and profound way. The main places of worship are linked by a network of paths and trails that retrace the steps of pilgrims, open to anyone in search of meditation and reflection.

Perched on a cliff at the entrance to Valposchiavo, the 11th-century **Romanesque church of Santa Perpetua** is one of the oldest pilgrimage sites in the valley. For hundreds of years, this was the centre of the system of communication that connected the Reno and Inn valleys with Valtellina and the province of Brescia via the Bernina Pass. Next to the little thousand-year-old church you can still see the walls of the xenodochium, a hostel that once gave shelter to pilgrims, travellers and merchants.

At its feet is the **Santuario della Madonna di Tirano**, considered the crux of the valley's religious identity and one of its most important places of worship. This sanctuary was built on the site of the apparition of the Blessed Virgin to Mario Omodei, a local man from Tirano, in 1504. Situated at the crossroads between Valtellina and its neighbour, Switzerland, the Santuario is the only basilica in the province of Sondrio and attracts pilgrims from across Europe. With its triple nave in the form of a Latin cross, it's the most superb example of renaissance religious architecture in Valtellina. In the historic piazza next to the sanctuary, you can still see the old Hosteria Granda, built immediately after the Apparition as accommodation for pilgrims, as well as little shops or storehouses that were used during livestock and goods fairs. The Casa del

Penitenziere can also be found here, which houses Tirano's Ethnographic Museum: a collection of various artefacts from peasant life and precious holy vestments, including some donated to the Basilica by Cardinal Richelieu.

The Madonna of Tirano was proclaimed to be the "Celestial Patroness of Valtellina" by Pope Pius XII in 1946, and the sanctuary dedicated to her is the final destination of the pilgrimage route known as the **Cammino Mariano delle Alpi**. This hiking trail connects all the main places of Marian worship in the province of Sondrio. The Via Occidentale unwinds over 91 km from Piantedo to Tirano, and is divided into five stages with intermediate stops at Morbegno, Berbenno, Sondrio and Teglio, following a route that intersects with other networks of paths such as the Via dei Terrazzamenti. Each time you complete a stage you're rewarded with a stamp in your "pilgrim's passport", which allows you to receive a Testimonium from the Dean of the Santuario della Madonna di Tirano at the end of the walk. The Via Orientale of approximately 66 km is currently being developed and will soon connect Bormio and Tirano.

Sondrio, too, has welcomed a constant influx of pilgrims over the centuries. A huge figure of Saint Christopher, patron saint of travellers, dominates the external wall of the **Santuario della Sassella**, which was built at the city gates in the 15th century. It's a short and easy walk via the vine-covered terraces that are so typical of this region. The imposing **Santa Casa di Tresivio** is also dedicated to the Cult of Mary and can be reached via the panoramic route "dei Castelli". The broad and extremely tall façade is adorned with a baroque soapstone portal and is the most majestic part of the building. Its name comes from a small chapel with double entrances and a starry-skied barrel vault that represents the Santa Casa. Built in 1701, the chapel was explicitly modelled on the Basilica in Loreto.

Right at the heart of Sondrio's historic centre on Piazza Campello, you'll find one of the oldest churches in Valtellina: the **Collegiata dei Santi Gervasio e Protasio**, which is mentioned in manuscripts from as early as 1100. Since then, the Collegiata has undergone many different transformations, the details of which have been lost to

history. Today, the only parts that remain are the west-facing façade, the interior of one nave, the barrel vault divided into three aisles, and the bell tower that stands apart from the main building. Originally left incomplete, this tower was finally finished in 1763. Inside the church, you'll find pictures by some of the most important Valtellinese artists including Pietro Ligari, Giacomo Parravicini (known as Gianolo), il Caimi, Giovanni Gavazzeni and Giovan Piero Romegialli.

At the back of the church, Via Nicolò Rusca forms the start of the historical religious trail known as the **Sentiero Rusca**. This 32 km route climbs 2,300 m and retraces the Strada Cavallera, a commercial route that long ago linked Sondrio with the Muretto Pass, the gateway for communication between Valtellina and the Engadine valley. After passing through several hamlets, the path runs up the entirety of the valley of Valmalenco and across to Maloja (1,815 m) in Switzerland, past the places where Nicolò Rusca, the archpriest of Sondrio, once lived. An enlightened guide of the faithful in Valtellina, Rusca died as a martyr in 1618 during the conflicts between Catholics and the Protestant Grisons.

Another important pilgrimage site can be found in **Valmalenco**, namely the **Santuario della Beata Vergine delle Grazie in Primolo**, built in 1688 on a hill from which it overlooks the valley. During the 18th century, the sanctuary became one of the main strongholds of Marian veneration, and over the last three centuries it has given rise to traditions that combine the sacred with the profane: from the procession in the first week of August preceded by the lighting of torches in the valley's alpine pastures, to the custom of women in search of a husband "rubbing" the glass of the niche that holds the statue of the Madonna behind the main altar.

The **Santuario dell'Assunta in Morbegno** is another Marian place of worship and is a resplendent renaissance building with Bramantesque influences. Inside the church you'll find beautiful frescoes and 16th-century paintings. With its monumental façade adorned with statues and figures from the Old and New Testaments and symbols of the Catholic faith, the **Chiesa di San Giovanni Battista** has been the symbol of the town of Morbegno for over two centuries.



📍 San Fedelino

If you're looking for a more intimate spiritual experience in natural surroundings, the lower valley is home to the atmospheric ruins of the old **Abbazia di San Pietro in Vallate**, a Cluniac priory from the 11th century.

Only a few parts of the priory remain: the low campanile with its typical Valtellinese structure, the semi-circular apse subdivided into four sections, and part of the southern wall that was shared by the church and the building that the monks lived in. To visit, take a stroll through the chestnut trees and locusts by the village of Piagno in **Cosio Valtellino**.

On the banks of Lake Novate Mezzola is the **Tempietto di San Fedelino**, dating back to the last quarter of the tenth century. It's dedicated to Saint Fidelis, a martyr who fled Milan in 284 AD to escape being persecuted by Maximian. This small building, made up of a single nave with a tiny apse decorated with exquisite frescoes, is covered by a gabled roof with tiles like those still used on the roofs of old houses throughout Valtellina.

Valtellina is the birthplace of several people, including the previously mentioned Nicolò Rusca, whose life and work has inspired hundreds of believers. One of these was **Sister Maria Laura Mainetti**, a religious sister from **Val Tartano** who was killed in tragic circumstance in Chiavenna and beatified in 2021. Two easy and accessible circular walks are dedicated to her, and these take you to many of the important places from her youth, spanning faith, art and nature.

Another important figure, **Saint Luigi Guanella**, was born in **Valchiavenna**. Founder of the order of the Servants of Charity and promoter of the Opera Don Guanella, he was canonised by Pope Benedict XVI in 2011 for dedicating his life to good works, right up to his final days. The **path** that retraces his steps covers 120 km from Fraciscio, the town of his birth, to Como, and is one of the most important religious routes in Lombardy. This "Little Cammino di Santiago" intersects with other ancient routes – Via dello Spluga, Via Bregaglia, Via Francisca, Via Regina – and passes through the most important places from the saint's life, with museums, churches and information boards dedicated to him to be found along the way. Six smaller



📍 Santuario della Sassella

"meditative" paths complement the main trail, taking in key places from his vocation and works.

Among the main treasures of religious art from the valley in which he lived, the **Collegiata di San Lorenzo in Chiavenna** is probably also one of the oldest: the first records of the church date back to 973, but it was probably already in existence in the fifth century. The Romanesque walls of the building still survive, along with the later addition of the campanile from 1527 and the wonderful portico from the late 1600s. The Baptistry contains a spectacular baptismal font from 1156: an 83-centimetre-tall soapstone monolith with a diameter of 180 cm, adorned with medium-relief sculptures.

In Madesimo's Motta area, the Santuario di Nostra Signora d'Europa stands at 2,000 m above sea level. On top of the dome is a 13 metre-tall metal statue representing the Virgin of the Peaks.

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📍 Forte di Oga

The Great War in the upper valley

The high concentration of mountain passes and crossing places that were strategically important for the former Kingdom of Italy and the Austro-Hungarian empire made the upper parts of Valtellina the scene of numerous battles and military manoeuvres during the First World War. Today, a number of trails offer a chance to travel back in time to this part of Italian history and retrace the movements of the two armies past the remains of trenches, barracks and military emplacements constructed during the Great War.

The Stelvio Pass saw many military clashes, and between **Monte Scurluzzo** and the **Filon del Mot** and on the **Rese Alte** you can still see traces of the defensive structures that once stood there, both Austrian and Italian. On the high passes, such as the **Passo dell'Ablès** and the **Passo del Gavia**, as well as in the **Valle dei Forni**, you can still see the ruins of trenches and shelters that were once

occupied by Italian alpine troopers sent to the front.

In Verceia, **Valchiavenna**, you'll find a 200-metre-long tunnel – the **Galleria della Mina** – dug to cut off road and rail access to Valchiavenna in the event of an invasion from the north: huge amounts of explosives were stored in pits dug at various points of the tunnel ready for a controlled explosion.

The famous **Forte Venini (or Forte di Oga)**, which can be found at 1,750 m above sea level in Valdisotto, represents the most important remnant of the First World War in Valtellina. Standing just a few kilometres from the dugouts on the glaciers of the Stelvio Pass, it was built between 1909 and 1912 in order to defend a huge area from the Passo del Foscagno to the Torri di Fraele, including the Stelvio Pass and Valfurva. Today, it is a museum dedicated to the Great War that offers a fascinating insight into the lives of soldiers at that terrible time.

Take a piece of history home with you: local specialities and craftsmanship

The valley's peasant traditions and the symbiotic relationship between the people of Valtellina and their land is manifested most obviously (and excellently) at the table. The region produces a gamut of delicious, high-quality local dishes and wines (see Chapter 7), some of which are known and enjoyed across Italy and beyond. But that's not all the region has to offer: **Valtellina's artisan traditions have been handed down from generation to generation** over hundreds of years, inspiring the local crafts of today. Far from being lost to history, these crafts have been taken up by many young Valtellinese people, who combine the skills of the past with the innovation of modern times.

Valmalenco and the area around Chiavenna are home to a large number of caves from which **soapstone** is extracted, a highly heat-resistant type of rock that's very easy to work. Its qualities make it perfect for use in the kitchen, for example for griddles and saucepans. Since ancient times, soapstone has been used to make "**lavecc**", pots that are ideal for making slow-cooked dishes, for example braised meats and stews, and "**piode**", stone slabs typically used for grilling meat as well as for tiling roofs in Valmalenco. Today, many artisans continue this tradition, also making plates, cups and other hand-crafted objects.

Just as important is the textile tradition in Valtellina, which also has origins in peasant life. This dates back to the long winters of the past, when women would hand-weave humble materials such as offcuts and scraps of old clothes to make rugs, sacks to conserve buckwheat, and covers for haystacks and animals. Over time, this craft became more refined, and women began to use natural materials such as linen, cotton and wool to weave big, colourful rectangles known as "**pezzotti**" on their wooden looms. These were used to decorate and adorn their homes. Today, you can buy one of these rugs and take home a piece of a still-thriving tradition.



Woven "pezzotti"



📍 Castel Masegra

Wine and food: Alpine flavours

To experience Valtellina to the full, throw your restraint to the wind and succumb to the wonderful culinary pleasures it has in store. The influence of the mountains is clear in the region's cuisine, which makes excellent use of the ingredients found in its fields and mountain pastures, vineyards and orchards. The simple produce reflects the area's poor peasant origins, but has been transformed into mouth-watering dishes enjoyed across Italy and beyond. This is all thanks to the traditional flavours and culinary wizardry that have been passed down uninterrupted from generation to generation. Get to know the local cuisine and you're one step closer to understanding the region and its culture: at the table it's clear that the natural resources of this alpine area are something that must be preserved and protected for future generations.

PDO and PGI products

Valtellina is known across Italy as the home of exceptional food and wine. The region's name is irrevocably linked with its most famous and best-loved product, **Bresaola della Valtellina PGI**. The ultimate symbol of Valtellina, this cured meat is low in fat and high in protein and is produced using an ancient method of salting and drying beef. The valley's unmatched climate with its clean air from the Alps creates the ideal conditions for gradual ageing and is the secret behind this product's unique and inimitable taste. Since 1996, Bresaola has been protected by the EU status "Protected Geographical Indication" (PGI). This indication is used solely for products that are certified by the Province of Sondrio and which comply with rigorous production standards.

The permeable soil and ideal climatic conditions – in terms of the amount of rain, exposure to sunlight and temperature range – also create the perfect conditions for **Valtellina PGI apples** to grow. This fruit ripens at an altitude of between 200 m and 900 m, with all the wonderful flavours and qualities you'd expect from an apple grown in the mountains. Produced in small quantities, with a great deal of attention given to the apples' quality and environmental

impact, there are three main varieties: Stark Delicious, a bright red apple that's wonderfully crisp and aromatic; Golden Delicious, which has a sweet and aromatic flavour; and Gala, a sweet and juicy apple that ripens in August.

Like all the mountain regions in Italy, Valtellina also has a proud cheese-making tradition that dates back hundreds of years. Its alpine pastures produce **unique cheeses protected by the PDO designation**. This is an EU label reserved for food products with qualities and characteristics that are linked to the specific area in which they are produced. One of these is **Bitto**, a cheese made only in the summer from raw milk produced in the mountain pastures at an altitude of over 1,500 m. The method of making this cheese dates back to the Celts. **Valtellina Casera**, another cheese from the region, is a medium-fat cheese that's produced in the basin of the valley from semi-skimmed cow's milk and matured in traditional "casere" (cheese huts) for at least 70 days. This cheese was first made in 1500, when several dairy farmers would share the work of processing the milk in community dairies. These products get their unique flavour from the grass in the area's alpine pastures, the main food for the cows that produce the milk.

Pizzoccheri, another traditional Valtellinese dish that's the region's best-known gastronomic export, is a type of pasta that's protected by a strict regulation laid down by the Accademia del Pizzocchero di Teglio and



by a Producers' Association. These organisations are dedicated to safeguarding pizzoccheri's traditional quality and production methods. The first written evidence of traditional hand-rolling methods being used to make pizzoccheri dates back to 1750. The pasta dough, which has a light or dark brown colour, is worked into flat noodles that are then cooked with Savoy cabbage and potatoes and finished with a generous amount of alpine butter and local cheese. The main ingredient of pizzoccheri is **buckwheat**, which has been grown widely in Valtellina since ancient times. Despite the fact that it was gradually replaced by more profitable crops from 1800 onwards, today there are still around 20 hectares of buckwheat fields in Valtellina for family use and for selling to end customers.

The wines of Valtellina and its vineyard trails

The great wines of Valtellina are a key part of the region's portfolio of products of protected and guaranteed origin. Mainly produced from Nebbiolo grapes, these are wines with big personalities, enhanced by the unique biodiversity of the local land. Winemaking is an art practised on the Rhaetian side of Valtellina since Ancient Roman times. With 2,500 km of terraces and a total of 850 hectares of vineyards, **Valtellina is home to the largest area of terraced vineyards in Italy, an impressive example of peasant architecture. Thanks to the richness of its culture and landscape, the region was included in UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2018.**

Among the unmissable DOCG wines from the region is **Sforzato (or Sfursat)**, a dry red Passito that, following a time-honoured tradition, is produced from the best grapes left to dry on special "fruttai" in dry, well-ventilated places during the winter. **Valtellina Superiore** is another must-try that's produced from grapes grown in five sub-zones between Berbenno di Valtellina and Tirano: Maroggia, Sassella, Grumello, Inferno and Valgella. Equally intriguing are **Rosso di Valtellina DOC**, a ready-to-drink wine, and the **Alpi Retiche PGI** wines, which include reds, rosés, whites, sparkling wines, Passito wines, young wines and late harvest wines.



Valtellina's "heroic" vineyards are mainly concentrated in the central part of the valley, so it's not by chance that Sondrio is known as the "City of Wine". Other than the excellent wine they produce, these vineyards also form part of a stunning landscape. There are many paths and trails that you can follow across the vine-covered terraces, stopping off at ancient villages, historic wine cellars and vineyards with grapes ripening in the sun and the mountain breeze. The **Strada del Vino**, for example, is suitable for bikes and unfolds over 67 km between Ardenno and Tirano. This route takes in historic palazzos and sanctuaries, agriturismos surrounded by vineyards, and old shops where you can taste and buy the local delicacies, as well as wine cellars that organise tasting events and courses. The **Via dei Terrazzamenti** is a 70 km hiking trail that links Morbegno and Tirano, with some 40 stopping points offering a chance to immerse yourself in the history of the terraced vineyards and their legendary wines. For fans of cycling and fine wine, going on a **Wine Bike Tour** is a must-do; there's a collection of circular routes of different lengths, all starting and finishing in Sondrio. Each trail caters for a different level of ability, from shorter, flatter trails that are perfect for families, to more challenging routes that pass through ancient villages and sites of cultural interest. There are also a few routes reserved for proficient cyclists who want to take on some of Valtellina's infamous climbs. →

Valtellina's other traditional products

Valtellina's food and wine offerings aren't limited to those with a DPO or PGI label: there's a whole range of other products that appear frequently on Valtellinese family tables and in the restaurants and hotels of the region. One example is **bread made from rye**, a cereal that's thought to have been familiar in Valtellina as far back as the period between the Copper and Bronze Ages. Today, this tradition has been revived thanks to the project Segale 100% Valtellina. As part of this, many bakers in the Sondrio province now make bread with rye flour produced exclusively in the local area and without the use of pesticides: a genuine zero-km, home-grown product.

The combination of pure water from high-altitude springs and locally grown cereals and grains also produces a range of **craft beers** with a balanced and unique flavour. These are made from local ingredients at craft breweries, microbreweries and farms throughout the region, such as Dubino, Aprica or Livigno, where Europe's highest-altitude beer has been made since 2001.

The rich biodiversity of Valtellina's pastures helps bees produce **honey** with a multitude of subtle flavours and fragrances. This honey is sold by small local businesses that have been dedicated to beekeeping for generations. Several different types of honey, each with their own distinctive qualities, have been awarded the prestigious Geographical Collective Mark (MCG): wildflower honey from the mountains, acacia, linden tree and chestnut honeys produced in the lower valley, wildflower honeys from high in the mountains at over 1,000 m above sea level, and the exquisite rhododendron honey.

Wild berries and herbs are an indispensable addition to many dishes in Valtellina's culinary tradition. **Pesteda**, for example, is a seasoning based on garlic, salt, pepper, dwarf yarrow and wild thyme gathered in Valgrosina, the valley in which it was invented. Prepared according to a secret recipe that's still carefully guarded by grandmothers in Grosio, kept exclusively within their immediate families, it's added to traditional dishes such as stews and soups



Regional produce

to give a zing of flavour. Every family has their own special version of the recipe, adding ingredients that make it even more uniquely flavourful such as wine, brandy, grappa or juniper berries.

As well being used to make the famous Bitto and Valtellina Casera DPO cheeses, milk from Valtellina, the provenance of which is certified by the Marchio Collettivo Geografico, is also used to produce butter, yoghurt and other equally delicious cheeses such as Scimudin. This is a typical soft cheese from the Bormio area with a short maturing period and a distinctive milky flavour that makes it sweet and delicate. It also bears the Marchio Collettivo Geografico designation and was awarded the Bandiera del Gusto ("flag of taste") by the Coldiretti farmers' association in 2014.

Apart from the famous Bresaola, Valtellina is also known for producing other delicious preserved meats such as **Fiocco della Valtellina**, a prosciutto crudo, and **local salamis** made from pork, venison, wild boar, donkey and

horse meat. Other traditional products include "**slinzega**", which is similar to Bresaola but made from smaller pieces of meat using a specific process of slicing, salt curing, rubbing and maturing for around a month. **Brisaola** della Valchiavenna is another charcuterie product that differs from Bresaola in the way that it is prepared: according to local traditions, this often involves smoking and seasoning, which once took place in the Crotti caverns. "**Violino di capra**" is a traditional product from Valchiavenna and particularly the Spluga Valley. Made of shoulder or thigh meat from local free-range goats, this cured meat gets its name from the technique with which it's sliced, which is reminiscent of the movements of a violin player. Last but not least is Bisciola, the traditional Valtellinese sweet leavened bread made from nuts, grapes and dried figs, which in 2013 was awarded the Marchio Collettivo Geografico. Torta Fioretto and Prosto biscuits are other sweet treats typical of the area.

A dish of "pizzoccheri"



Seasonal flavours and the best wine and food experiences

Valtellina is home to countless venues where you can experience flavours like never before, sample traditional dishes and buy products to relive your culinary adventures once you get home. Throughout the valley, menus follow the rhythm of the seasons to capture the best of what the valley has to offer, resulting in new and thrilling culinary experiences in total harmony with nature.

In the **spring**, when nature reawakens and the snow gives way to greenery, the **central part of Valtellina** is resplendent with **blossoming apple orchards**. Thanks to the cool, mild climate and the gradually lengthening days, this is the ideal season to go for long walks or bike rides along the many way-marked trails on the valley floor, stopping off at one of the area's agriturismos to refuel with traditional dishes and local delicacies.

The **summer**, too, brings a less well-known but still



delightful flowering: as **September** draws closer, **buckwheat** plants bloom with little flowers that change from white to red. This is the perfect time to visit **Teglio**, the home of **pizzoccheri** and of the famous Accademia that protects the original recipe. To discover the secrets behind the most popular traditional dish from Valtellina and its main ingredient, buckwheat, take a walk through the fields in flower and stop off at the Menaglio mill. Buckwheat is also the star of other typical dishes such as **sciatt**, delicious round fritters with a hidden melting middle of Casera cheese, and **chisciöi**, a flat variant of sciatt typical of Tirano.

The period between June and September is also the ideal season to visit the **high mountain pastures**, inhabited by shepherds with their herds of cows or goats. This unspoiled and stunningly beautiful landscape is the birthplace of typical Valtellina cheeses and other traditional dairy products such as the delicious mountain cottage butter. You can reach the mountain pastures by car or travel on foot along accessible lanes or mule tracks, making it a perfect excursion for families. The **Via del Latte in Valmalenco** takes you to some of the main Malenco alpine pastures that are open to visitors. Here you can get an insight into the work carried out in this traditional mountain culture as well as a chance to sample some products. At the **Livigno Dairy**, you can even get involved with processing the milk, as well as tasting local zero-km products.

The annual **grape harvest** is without a doubt the standout event in the **autumn** when most wine and food events are held in Valtellina. During the “vendemmia”, wine cellars along the Strada del Vino, the Via dei Terrazzamenti and the numerous trails that criss-cross the vineyards open their doors and put on tasting sessions, wine labs and open days to present the fruits of the season. But it doesn't stop there: between September and November countless events put the spotlight on the excellent local cuisine and products from the region, such as the **Pizzocchero d'Oro festival** in Teglio (September), **Brisaola Day** in Chiavenna (October) and the **Mostra del Bitto fair in Morbegno** (October).

This is also the season of transhumance, when the grazing animals come down from the summer alpine pastures. This is celebrated with charming festivals such as the **Festa dell'Alpeggio in Valmalenco** (September), the **Alpen Fest** of Livigno and Trepalle (September), and the **Valdidentro Mountain Feast** (September). Across the entire valley, special weekends are dedicated to the local cuisine: the Morbegno in Cantina and **Gustosando in Valtellina** festivals offer a series of food and wine tours (September–October), and every weekend you can also find food tours of historic villages in the lower valley, such as Traona, Mello and Gerola, as well as the **Weekend del Gusto di Teglio** (September and October): a series of events based on classic autumn products and flavours, offering special menus created by chefs from local restaurants that are taking part in the initiative.

Finally, **September** is the best month to visit **Valchiavenna's traditional Crotti**, little rustic constructions consisting of a tiny room with a chimney. These were built by local people around “sorei”, currents of air between rocks that had broken off during huge landslides in the post-glacial period and rolled down to the valley floor where the town now stands. As these air currents remain at the same temperature of 8°C throughout the summer and winter, these cavern-like dwellings are perfect for storing and maturing wine and traditional food products such as preserved meats, cheese and Brisaola. For around a century, some of the Crotti have been open to the public as tavern-style restaurants serving local specialities



such as little Valchiavenna gnocchetti. Since 1956, the fortnight-long festival “**La Sagra dei Crotti**” has run every year, with public and private Crotti sharing their traditions to ensure they are passed down to future generations.

If you want to discover the region's traditional flavours, don't miss the welcoming and convivial atmosphere of **Valtellina's mountain huts**, whatever the season. Situated at an altitude of between 800 m and 3,000 m above sea level, they quietly watch over the inestimable natural splendour of the mountains and are a byword for the valley's warm and genuine hospitality. In the **winter**, slopeside huts are an indispensable stopping point for skiers, offering a place to take a break and sample some of the tastiest dishes from Valtellina's traditional cuisine. Others are only open in the warmer months, when the routes to access them – challenging climbs up to the great mountain peaks, or easier paths that the whole

family can manage – are clear of snow and ice.

At the end of your meal, don't pass up the opportunity to sample some of the liqueurs and digestifs that are produced in the valley. **Taneda**, for instance, is made from achillea moscata, a herb that grows at more than 2,000 metres above sea level right up to the edges of the glaciers. Another example is **Braulio**, the famous alpine bitter created in Bormio in 1875 with a balanced flavour and a uniquely aromatic bouquet. The recipe includes a variety of herbs gathered from the local area including achillea moscata, wormwood, gentian and juniper, as well as other secret ingredients known only to the maker. The historic wine cellars right under the streets of the old town are where these liqueurs are infused, filtered and matured in huge barrels made from Slovenian oak. →



A stellar gastronomic tradition with sustainability at its heart

While the region is dotted with stunningly beautiful natural and historical sights, a tour of Valtellina isn't complete until you've gone on a voyage of discovery at the many **restaurants and agriturismos** offering the local cuisine. Traditional dishes are the undisputed stars of Valtellinese cooking, many of which are based on the same recipes that have been used for centuries. However, more and more chefs and restaurants are adopting an experimental approach, reinventing these dishes to give guests a truly special experience and exceptional food.

Three restaurants in Sondrio have one Michelin Star as well as a Green Star – **the only province in Italy to have 100% of its Michelin-starred restaurants also be formally recognised for their commitment to sustainability, reducing food waste and ethical working values**. All three restaurants maintain and reinterpret the local gastronomic tradition, which they respect and showcase in every dish.

Valtellina's first Green Star was awarded in 2020 to the restaurant **Lanterna Verde** in Villa di Chiavenna, Valchiavenna, run by the Tonola family for over 40 years. The restaurant has also had a Michelin Star since 1997. The **chef Roberto Tonola** represents the third generation of the family to work here and grew up with the values imparted by his parents: respect for the mountains and the land where he lives; a passion for local products such as mushrooms, wild herbs and vegetables grown in the restaurant's own garden; trout farming; and a symbiotic relationship with the small-scale food producers in the valley. The restaurant has evolved over the years, carrying out renovations to progressively reduce its impact on the environment with a particular focus on energy consumption. As well as a hydroelectric power plant which runs on water from the fishery and makes the restaurant self-sufficient in terms of energy, the entire kitchen has been converted to electricity. The restaurant has also invested in a pellet boiler for heating and hot water, among other structural changes aimed at optimising emissions.

In 2021, **La Préséf** was also awarded the Green Star, following a Michelin Star in 2013. This is the restaurant

of the La Fiorida agriturismo in Mantello, in the lower part of the valley. An almost obligatory stop for anyone travelling to the region from the south, this welcoming pine-clad Valtellina "stua" provides the backdrop for the **chef Gianni Tarabini** to realise his vision of wonderfully innovative food that combines flavour, technique, and visual and sensory experimentation. The ideas behind his creations as well as their substance come from the restaurant's close relationship with the farm – in the local dialect, preséf means "trough". From the high-welfare meat to the cheese produced in the dairy in line with Valtellina's high traditional standards, all the ingredients used in the two tasting menus are zero-km products, including the vegetables from the garden, the game, and fish from the lake. Every aspect of the farm's cow shed is sustainable: the cows are allowed to roam freely, and solar panels on the roof meet 36% of the electricity requirements.

Most recently, the **Cantinone and Sport Hotel Alpina in Madesimo** received a Green Star in the Michelin Guide 2022. The Cantinone restaurant is led by the **chef and owner Stefano Masanti**, who inherited the family business and passion for hospitality from his grandfather. His food has its origins in the traditions and classic ingredients of Valtellina, with a global outlook and a strong drive for experimentation, and received its first Michelin Star back in 2008. The Green Star is the culmination of a journey of development guided by ethical and sustainable principles, with a focus on the use of local ingredients, seasonality and the reduction of consumption and waste. As part of this, Il Cantinone has undertaken significant renovations including installing thermal and electric solar panels for producing energy, fitting low-energy LED lighting throughout the restaurant, and connecting to the water recycling network of the Montana della Valchiavenna mountain community.



Roberto Tonola



Stefano Masanti



Gianni Tarabini

Family-friendly Valtellina

With more than enough dedicated activities on offer for kids, Valtellina is made for **wholesome family holidays**. From educational farms to bike rides and play parks, museums and galleries to kid-specific ski slopes, you'll find everything needed to please the whole family.



📍 Cima Piazzzi

Dip into castles, parks, and mines

Whether with kids, teens or grandparents in tow, Valtellina offers plentiful opportunities to dip into its history in an engaging way. Start your adventure through the ages at **Grosio's Parco delle Incisioni Rupestri (Rock Engraving Park)**, where there are more than 5,000 rock carvings to discover, some of which date back to the Neolithic Age (4000 BC). Of particular note is the **Rupe Magna**, one of the biggest petroglyphs in the Alps. Not just a fascinating site for archaeology buffs, this of-another-time park is also a cache for curious kids, with **interactive activities and hands-on learning**.

From **Sondrio**, enjoy a short hike from the centre of town through the old rural Scarpatetti neighbourhood

up to the medieval **Castel Masegra**, one of the few buildings that survived the dismantling of Valtellina's fortifications by the Grisons in the 1600s. Nowadays, the castle houses **CAST** – the Castello delle STorie di montagna – the **'storytelling museum'** dedicated to promoting alpine mountain culture, with climbing, alpinism and the environment at its core.

The talc mine **'La Bagnada'** in the district of Lanzada, **Valmalenco**, is worth a visit. Borrow a hard hat and take the family on a guided tour into the mine, which was active until the end of the 1980s. Now a museum, visitors are welcome to explore four of the mine's nine levels, complete with tools and equipment. After the mine, you can enter the mining museum, where there are more genuine artefacts on show, before visiting the museum of minerals, which houses rare finds from the

area. Carved into the mountainside, the former mine also hosts live concerts each summer.

Museum-hopping is all part of the Valtellina experience, with a menu that includes everything from natural history and ethnography to skiing and the outdoors. These museums and galleries organise their own events and activities for kids, which ensures that there's always plenty to keep families engaged.

Movement for all ages

Whatever the season, Valtellina isn't called an open air gym for nothing. When summer is on the approach, nothing beats a rural getaway to a national park or nature reserve in order to regenerate the mind and body. Come winter, head to one of the many well-equipped slopes or ski schools that cater for young kids on the snow.

With relatively flat and short routes, great scenery and easy-going terrain, the **Val di Mello Nature Reserve** is a dream destination. Up the valley just a few kilometres' drive from Aprica, you'll find the **Pian di Gembro Nature Reserve**, a glacial-origin wetland that's worth a visit all year round. Close by Tirano, the lesser-known spot of Trivigno is a place where nature does its thing, offering full immersion in forests of pine, larch, and fir, which makes it the ultimate picnic spot.

At a higher elevation, **Valmalenco** has two standout, easy-to-reach destinations for families: head to Chiareggio's **Parco delle Marmotte** to explore the natural habitat of marmots; or why not take the cable car up and hike around **Lake Palù**?

The village of Oga is a quiet spot above **Bormio** that's home to the **Paluaccio Nature Reserve**, an expanse of peatland that's over 13,000 years old and boasts a range of interesting insects and rare plants, including carnivorous types. Throughout summer, the reserve holds workshops for children and young kids run by experts.

The family-friendly hiking path in **Livigno** called the **Sentiero d'Arte** is appreciated for its doable distance, picture-book setting in a larch forest, and the way it puts creativity in the frame – the route is lined with wooden sculptures created by artists from all over the world who gather annually in Livigno for the Wood'nArt symposium.

Elsewhere, arriving at the naturally stunning Cascade dell'Acquafraggia waterfalls in Valchiavenna will take your breath away. There's a child-friendly route around the park, with great viewpoints along the trail that reveal the whole valley, along with a designated picnic area for families.

As important to Valtellina as its vineyards and mountains are its ties to **two wheels** and – accordingly – the valley offers a multitude of bike routes for families, taking in old villages, hidden corners and child-centric spaces. The



📍 Larix Park

two traffic-free, shared-use paths, mapped out as the **Sentiero Valtellina** and the **Ciclabile Valchiavenna**, are ideal for families. The 114 km-long Sentiero Valtellina runs parallel to the River Adda. Linking Colico with Bormio, it can be completed in one go or multiple stages. The Ciclabile Valchiavenna also starts in Colico, heading northwards for 40km-plus into Val Bregaglia over the Swiss border. Both routes feature regular **Rent a Bike** facilities, where you can rent analogue or electric bikes and even deposit your rental bike at a different location.

At just 6 km, the **Sentiero Viola** in **Valdidentro** is much shorter but well worth riding as it links Bormio to Semogo and the Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio. This nicely tarmacked route is a good one for families to take advantage of when further up the valley.

But no matter where you are in Valtellina, you will come across designated shared-use paths, which are perfect for exploring the distinctive landscape safely on two wheels.

Valtellina also knows how to satisfy families on the hunt

for a hit of adrenaline, with an abundance of activities in nature. The **FlyEmotion** zip-line above **Morbegno** soars from one mountainside to another, connecting Albaredo per San Marco with Bema. It's just a case of clipping in and flying over the valley below. Nearby, you can explore more dizzying heights at the **Ponte nel Cielo (The Sky Bridge)**, which – at 234 metres in length and 140 metres above the ground – is one of **Europe's highest Tibetan-style bridges**.

You can also get your fill of Tibetan bridges in and around **Aprica** with a visit to the **Baradello Wild Park**, an adventure playground with four different courses spread over 15,000 square metres where you can climb and swing through tree-tops using pulleys, ropes and platforms.

Heading further up the valley towards **Bormio**, the whoop-inducing **Family Bob** awaits. It swoops downhill for 600 metres on sweeping corners before automatically bringing you back up 300 metres. The **only one of its kind on rails in Lombardy**, this toboggan run is suitable for kids aged four and upwards and open in both summer and winter. →



Known as **Husky Village**, there's a year-round activity centre in **Arnoga**, just outside of Bormio, that offers adults and children the chance to transform themselves into Alaskan mushers for the day. While in winter, you get the classic dog sledding experience, summer comes with two options: either husky trekking using a harness; or karting, which is like mushing but minus the snow. Elsewhere in **Bormio**, **Val Rezzalo** is home to a picture-perfect 2.5 km **sledging run** each winter that's guaranteed to spread childlike joy, whatever your age.

If you're looking for action in Livigno, harness up with a mountain guide at **Avventurando** and clamber with the whole family over rope bridges, through canyons and along vie ferrate. More suited for little ones, **Moki Park** is a play park that's designed to stimulate and develop motor skills. Extra adrenaline for kids aged three years and older can be found at **Larix Park**, which is very close to the centre of Livigno. This is a tree-top park where you can climb, swing and soar your way safely from branch to branch.

Fans of winter are well catered for during this magical season in Valtellina. All of the local ski resorts include **ski schools**, which provide ski and snowboard coaching for first-timers and developing skills. **Aprica** should be the first port-of-call for young kids, as not only do its child-friendly slopes finish directly in the town, it also boasts the **Campetti** area, a veritable paradise for the young tyro skier with magic carpets, play areas, and various uplifts. **Bormio's Trudi Park** is another firm family favourite each winter, entertaining kids amongst rubber hoops, inflatables and sledges in the company of the Parco dello Stelvio's cute mascots.

Drop off your child in **Livigno** at one of its fun parks, designed especially for kids – with or without skis on their feet. The Mottolino slopes include the kids-specific **Yepi Area**, and there's also the **Kinder Park Lupigno** next to the central ski school. To learn the basics of skiing, both sites promise fun-filled action: obstacle courses, magic carpets, inflatables and big tyres are just some of the creative ways to learn how

to keep your balance on the snow. The **Kinder Club Lupigno** has child-friendly design at its core, with the aim to inspire kids to be creative and make new friends. It has a packed activity programme each week led by qualified trainers and the Lupigno mascot to keep little ones safely entertained.

Meanwhile **Madesimo** delivers the fun with the **Baby Park Larici**, which you'll find next to the mountain hut of the same name. This park is split into two, with one area for kids on skis, and the other dedicated to playing on sledges and the like. Close by, the summer-specific Spluga Park Adventure in Campodolcino is the newest tree-top park for for kids, which was inaugurated in May 2023.

More into ice skating than skiing? Great, because there are **ice rinks** across Valtellina in **Madesimo, Livigno and Bormio**, which are guaranteed to keep family members entertained and energised.

But sometimes everyone needs a day of rest and relaxation, which is partly why Bormio exists. Known for its three thermal baths – the QC Terme Bagni Vecchi, QC Terme Bagni Nuovi and the **Bormio Terme** – it's the ultimate wellness town. Unlike the two QC Terme centres, Bormio Terme is in the centre of town and welcomes all ages. It has indoor and outdoor thermal pools, a 60-metre slide and three shallow kid-friendly pools, with fun figures that squirt water, jets and thermal waterfalls.

Parents and kids will find it hard to tear themselves away from **Aquagrande** in **Livigno**, which perfectly allies fitness, fun and feel-good wellness. The Slide&Fun area – replete with pools, slides and games – is designed for kids aged 0-14, while adults can chill out in the Wellness&Relax area knowing that the kids are well supervised. There's also a Family Sauna and Family Hammam, as well as a general sauna and Turkish baths so that all generations can have a blissfully relaxing day at altitude. →





In touch with nature

Nothing says Valtellina more than serene days spent as a family getting up-close with the valley's beautiful and distinctive scenery. Throughout the valley there are numerous educational farms and high-alpine huts that organise guided visits and workshops to get know to the animals and crops.

Spanning 25 hectares of unspoilt alpine scenery, Aprica's **Osservatorio Eco-Faunistico Alpino di Aprica** (The Alpine Eco-Wildlife Observatory) has an educational trail that introduces the natural habitats for local wildlife, which includes chamois, ibexes, roe deer and two brown bears. Elsewhere in Aprica, heightened emotions beckon in the **Galleria delle Emozioni nella Natura**, a visitors' centre with interactive displays and dioramas representing evocative locations and moments in time. Little ones will marvel at the interesting

small animals and insects, like walking leaves, newts, and salamanders.

And did someone say alpacas? It's true, these fascinating animals can also be found in Valtellina and booked for short walks. From Sondrio and Valmalenco to Bormio and Livigno, there are numerous places organising this multi-generational activity.

Hands-on agricultural activities are a great way for families to experience what makes Valtellina what it is today. Spending a day at an educational working farm or Alpine meadow is a rare chance to bring tourists of all ages into contact with rural producers. With full respect for the environment, kids can connect with nature, learn how to take care of animals, and get a taste for high-altitude farming culture.

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