

CENTRAL VALLEY AND MONT AVIC

AOSTA VALLEY



Historical centre

Fortress of Bard

Medieval bridge



CENTRAL VALLEY AND MONT AVIC

A TREASURE TROVE OF FOLKLORE

Are you telling me this is the land where a brave man artfully outsmarted the Devil? Is it where mysterious tales come to life by way of masks, parades and fireworks?

Tell me the story once again of how a band of terrifying creatures built a wonderful bridge overnight, and in exchange requested the soul of the first person to cross it. Or about fifes and drums that accompanied noble warrior Caterina in her dancing, or the sorrowful anger of the legendary Nymph of the River Lys, who delicately invoked turbulent stream waters to appease her thirst for revenge...

Find full updated information on sites of interest (opening times, details, initiatives...) by visiting www.lovevda.it »



SHIRE OF THE ALPS

If someone had asked J. R. R. Tolkien, the author of *The Lord of the Rings*, to compare the Central Valley to his Hobbits' enchanting homeland - the Shire, even he would probably have been surprised how much the two have in common. Yes, because the land we're talking about in this guide is mild and temperate, scattered with gentle slopes and verdant terraces.

It's a riot of grapes and gnarled vines where mighty chestnut trees alternate with clusters of forest fruits, where the scent of wild flowers mingles with the fragrance of freshly baked rye bread, chestnuts popping on hot embers, the strong smell of

figs, raisins and spiced meat. It's a land where the wine is so good that the first Aosta Valley wine to be awarded Denomination of Controlled Origin (DOC) classification was produced here.

However idyllic and peaceful it may seem, even this territory has its dark and bloodthirsty side. Between narrow ravines and sheer cliffs stand castles and fortresses steeped in ruthless charm, where fierce battles and daring feats took place, such as Napoleon's siege of the Fortress of Bard, and Caterina of Challant's tenacious resistance within the walls of Verrès castle.

Slightly sweet, slightly sour. At times this well-groomed valley becomes tousled and wild, especially where Mont Avic Natural Park's great pinewood expanses stand with their serene bodies of water, kaleidoscopic butterflies, and moonlit footpaths that teem with rustling and silent calls.

This is the ideal place for hikes and excursions, the ones pilgrims and wayfarers have been undertaking over the centuries along the Roman Road to Gaul and the Via Francigena – two meandering stone serpents that cut through medieval villages and cross bridges of secular beauty, branching off among gentle hills, leafy forests and

shrines enveloped in silence. Kissed by the sun and warm breeze, the Central Valley and the Mont Avic are a small treasure trove of splendour in which it is possible to rediscover the charm of rustic life and distant echoes of ancient legends carved in the rock.

Bonjour, I'm Valérie, your guide!

Hi there, stranger!

Yes, of course you're headed the right way: you're on the Roman Road that leads over the Alps to Gaul. How about stopping for a rest before going on your way?

I've got some rye bread and tasty slices of lard here. Go ahead, help yourself!



Wine producing is a traditional occupation in the Central Valley that goes far back in time, it is so deeply rooted that it has left its mark on local history. Some of the Aosta Valley's best wines come from here, where wine growing is glorified in all forms – from museums to village festivals.

While you're at it, take a sip of wine, too – I doubt you'll find any better along your travels.

By the way, my name's Valérie and I'm a vigneron, which means I'm a winegrower and I'll be happy to show you around the thriving wonders of this valley – the homeland of succulent grapes and bonny vines...

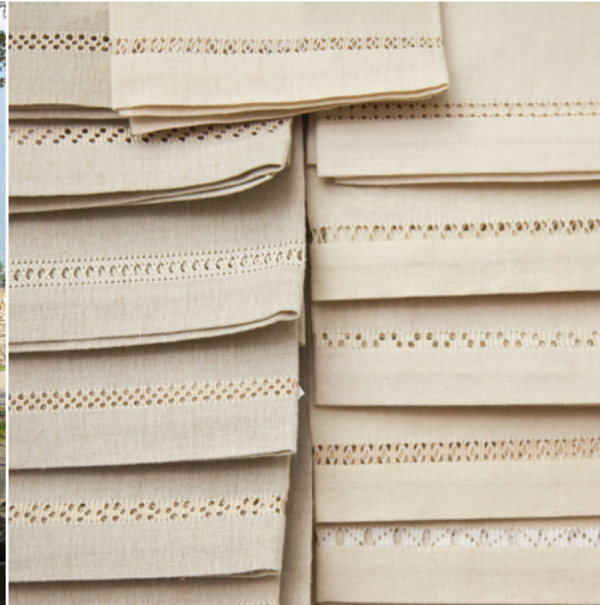
VIGNERONS



Valérie
your guide



Mont Avic Natural Park



NOT TO BE MISSED

FORTRESS OF BARD, ARNAD LARD,
MONT AVIC NATURAL PARK, ROMAN
ARCH AND ROAD, LOU DZEUT



NOT TO BE MISSED

FORTRESS OF BARD

STANDING GUARD OVER THE VALLEY GATES

This impregnable fortress still echoes with the thunder of canons, the nervous cry of soldiers, the clanking of chains in prison nooks.

Owing to its strategic position at the valley entrance, this elegant yet merciless stronghold has played a leading role in incredible sieges and bloody battles, making life hard for illustrious figures such as Napoleon Bonaparte and Camillo Benso di Cavour. Today it houses permanent museums and temporary exhibitions and has become one of the Aosta Valley's most important cultural centres.



« Aerial view
of the Fortress of Bard
Bard

ARNAD LARD

BETWEEN TEMPTING LAYERS OF DELICIOUSNESS



It smells of spice, mountain herbs, natural aromas. Hints of oak, larch and chestnut stand out in the exquisite delicacy of Lard d'Arnad, the only lard in all Europe granted Denomination of Protected Origin status.

The origins of this tasty cold cut go far back in time. Even today it is produced by scrupulously following traditional ageing methods inside wooden containers known as doils. The lard is so tender it melts in the mouth and is best served on slices of rye bread dribbled with honey – especially when savoured at the festival held in its honour in Arnad at the end of August.

Making Arnad lard »
Central Valley





NOT TO BE MISSED

MONT AVIC NATURAL PARK

A TRIUMPH OF UNEXPLORED LIFE

This water painting coloured in iridescent hues that range from dark to light blue portrays enchanting bodies of water and huge lakes encircled by the mountains' embrace.



Then there are endless, green expanses punctured by bristly forests and meadows dotted with shimmering flowers crisscrossed by celestial butterflies, good-natured cows and fleeting chamois. The surrounding absolute silence is broken only by the whistle of marmots, the call of soaring eagles and placid roar of streams and waterfalls – welcome to Mont Avic Natural Park and its 5,747 hectares of impervious, untameable beauty.

« Lake Bianco
Champdepraz

ROMAN ARCH AND ROAD AT DONNAS

A ROAD NEVER LOST IN TIME

The Roman Road to Gaul is a historical route wending its way between Rome and the Rhone Valley. In Donnas you can admire some of the most amazing remains of this thoroughfare to be found in the entire Aosta Valley. These include a spectacular stone archway framing the horizon: a stunning engineering feat built using a technique that remained unrivalled for centuries.



To protect the village, the arch was once shut during night-time to create an impenetrable wall with the river and the mountain. Take a close look when you're there and you'll still see traces of wagon wheel ruts etched into the paved road!

Roman road »
Donnas





NOT TO BE MISSED

“LOU DZEUT” PERMANENT HEMP WEAVING SHOW AND HEMP ECOMUSEUM

ENTWINING OF PAST AND PRESENT

Once upon a time there were steamy cattle sheds where people and animals lived side by side to keep warm during long winter nights. Here, among soft straw and wobbly stools, time was marked by the soft rustling of snow and slow clacking of a loom. Waiting for spring to come, whole families would busily weave fabric and make hemp garments in order to bring in some vital extra income.



This weaving tradition lives on today thanks to the co-operative “Lou Dzeut”, a hemp weaving exhibition and ecomuseum set up inside an old cattle shed in Champorcher.

« Lou Dzeut Co-operative
Champorcher



Pontboset

A DAY, A WEEKEND, A WEEK

HOW TO ORGANISE YOUR VISIT

With so much to see and do in the Central Valley and Mont Avic the temptation to stay a few days longer is almost irresistible.

Where to go? What to see? Here's some advice on how to get the most out of your holiday and turn it into a genuine travel itinerary. You can customize the recommended itineraries - feel free to include or remove any visits according to your time schedule, interests and spur-of-the-moment decisions!

24
HOURS

1 day

48
HOURS

2 days

168
HOURS

1 week

Village street »
Bard



RECOMMENDED VISITS

CENTRAL VALLEY AND MONT AVIC IN ONE DAY

DAY ONE

1 Roman road and archway at Donnas

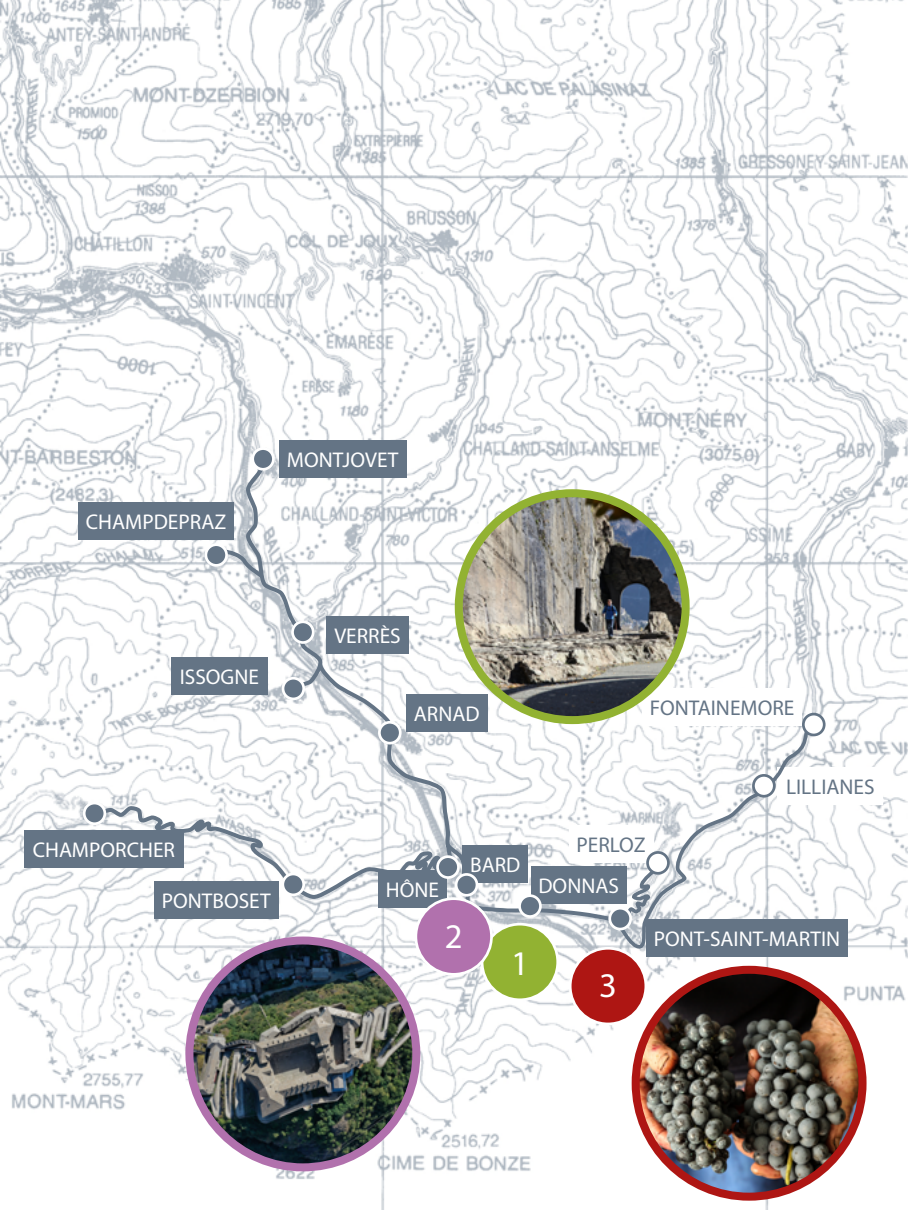
You cannot visit Donnas without having first strolled along its ancient tract of Roman road, or seen the spectacular Roman arch carved into the rock for over 220 metres - one of the Aosta Valley's most extraordinary feats of engineering.

2 Fortress of Bard and town

Devote an afternoon to visiting the Fortress of Bard: its exhibitions, displays and museums have made it one of northern Italy's chief cultural centres. Afterwards, saunter around the numerous historical dwellings in the enchanting village of Bard, one of the most beautiful in all Italy.

3 Caves Cooperatives de Donnas

In the heart of Aosta Valley's wine producing territory, don't miss a guided tour of the co-operative wine cellars in Donnas, where you can marvel at the store of over 150,000 bottles and taste top labels paired with cold cuts and cheeses.



RECOMMENDED VISITS

CENTRAL VALLEY AND MONT AVIC IN A WEEKEND

DAY TWO



1

Mont Avic Park
at Champorcher

Begin the day with an outing to the park's untouched countryside: take your pick from the countless trails radiating out into the protected area and that lead as far as neighbouring Gran Paradiso National Park, Mont Glacier and Mont Avic, or to the many surrounding lakes and huts.

2

Mont Avic Park Visitor Centre
at Champorcher

Returning from your outing, stop off at Champorcher Visitor Centre: housed in a renovated old building, this interactive space helps you discover the park's specific characteristics by means of thematic itineraries enhanced with photographs, exhibits and scale models.

3

Lou Dzeut Co-operative
and adjoining ecomuseum

Before ending your day, stop off at the hemp ecomuseum located in an old converted cowshed, where you can admire a wooden loom and original warper, and feel immersed in the rural past. Nearby you'll find the co-operative that keeps the hand weaving tradition alive.

CENTRAL VALLEY AND MONT AVIC IN A WEEK

5 MORE DAYS

1

Nature

Wondrous sights and marvels

Outrefter (**1A**), hike to the three goye of Hone (**1B**), "Borna di Lauou" arboretum (**1C**), visit to Champdepraz animal park (**1D**), Mont Avic Park Visitor Centre at Champdepraz (**1E**).

2

Outdoors / summer

The proud beauty of the mountains

Covarey – Champdepraz fitness itinerary (**2A**), itinerary of the ravines and Pontboset's six bridges (**2B**), rafting at Arnad and Bard (**2C**), canyoning along Chalamy stream (**2D**), Via Francigena (**2E**).

3

Culture and traditions

A glimpse of bygone life

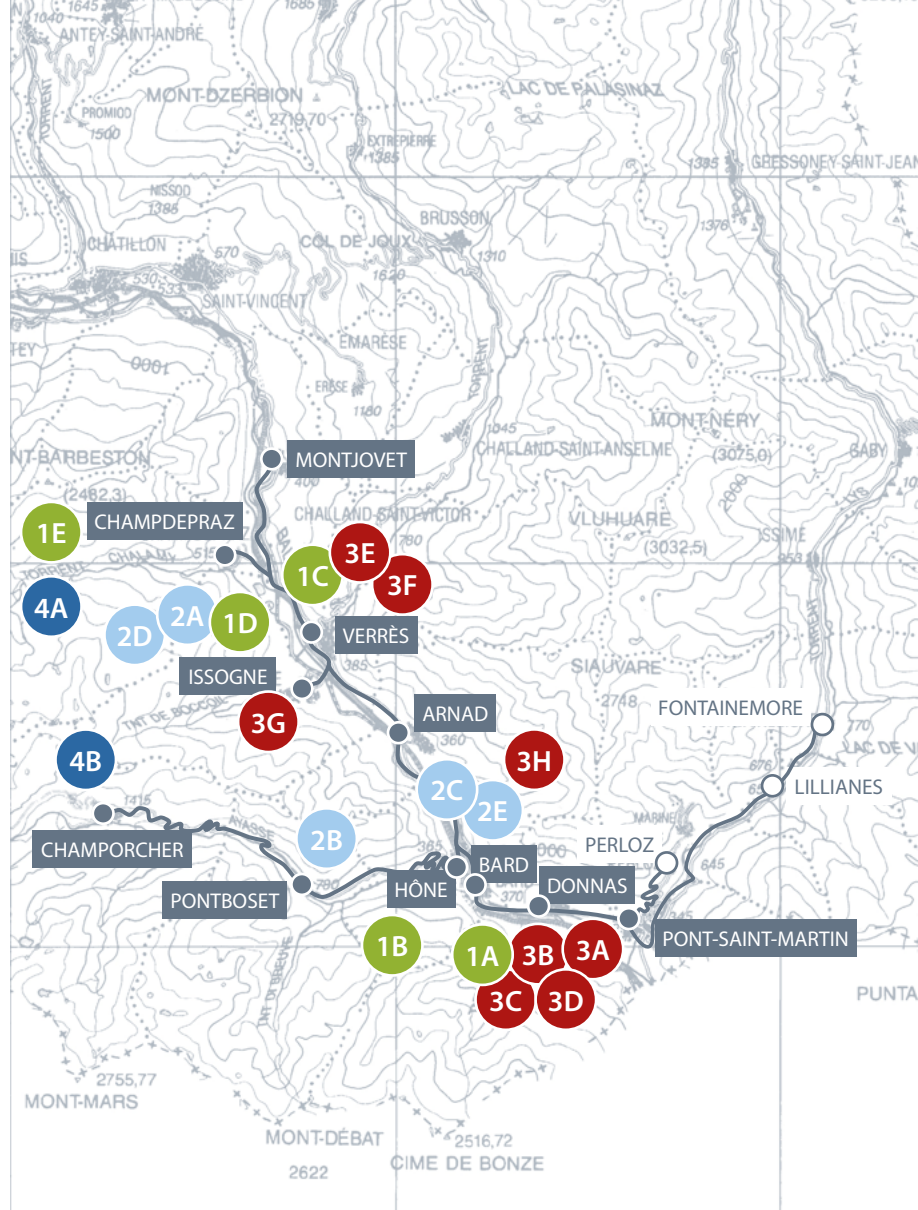
Roman bridge and museum (**3A**), town of Donnas (**3B**), wine museum (**3C**), ecomuseum of Treby Dairy (**3D**), Verrès castle (**3E**), collegiate of Saint Gilles (**3F**), Issogne castle (**3G**), Machaby Shrine (**3H**).

4

Outdoor / winter

The irresistible appeal of snow

Snowshoeing in Mont Avic Natural Park (**4A**), downhill skiing and cross-country skiing (**4B**).





Pergola vineyard system

THEMATIC FOCUS

NATURE, OUTDOOR, FOOD AND WINE,
CULTURE AND TRADITIONS,
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



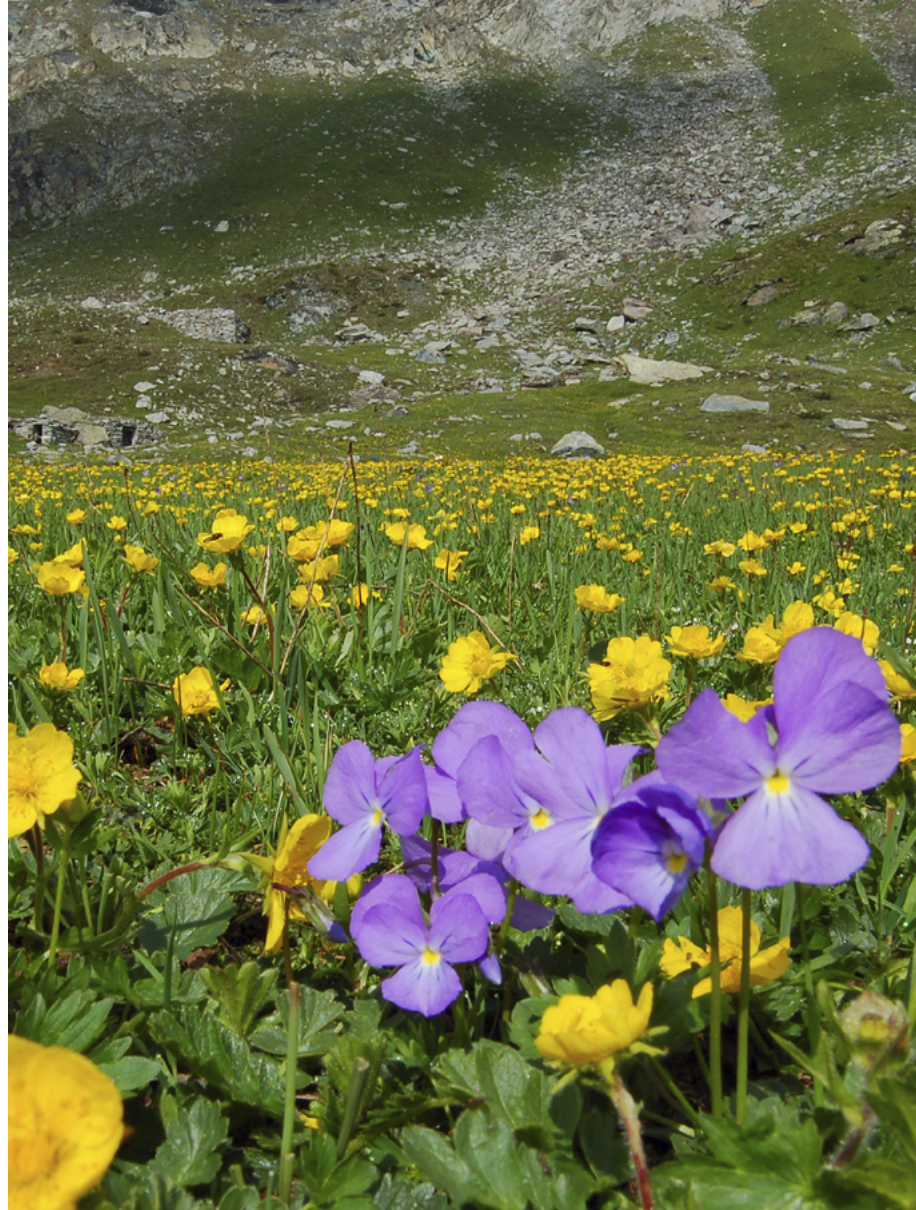
UNSPOILT SITES

THE LAND OF BUTTERFLIES

This peaceful land abounding in bewitching views and superb hikes has a mild, pleasant climate where orderly vines and dishevelled chestnut trees thrive among luxuriant meadows sprinkled with flowers. Don't miss the land lying between crags and steep gorges, and follow the gullies carved by gushing waters.

If you prefer places off the beaten track, then the rugged terrain of Mont Avic Natural Park will suit you perfectly with a riot of: a riot of glacial springs, meadows and peat bogs, where majestic forests and mighty lakes rule undisturbed...

High altitude blooming »
Champorcher



TOUR OF THE RAVINES AT CHAMPORCHER, HÔNE AND PONTBOSET

Dizzying gorges, crystalline rocks and frothy waterfalls: if you're unafraid of great heights, then enjoy the walkway over Hône's three Goilles, the one at Pourset in Champorcher and over Ratus ravine at Pontboset.

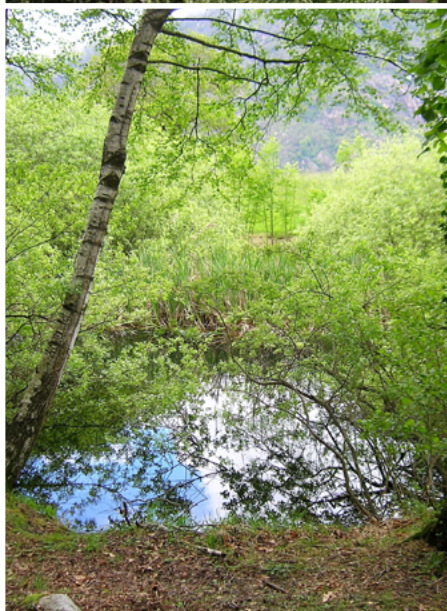
CENTRAL VALLEY



HOLAY POND NATURE RESERVE

Ever seen a spotted newt? Or a crested one? You can observe some very rare species of amphibians and plants at Hokay Pond above Pont-Saint-Martin - the only place you'll find them in the Aosta Valley.

PONT-SAINT-MARTIN



THE PEONIES OF LA BORNEY (ISSOGNE) AND COL FENÊTRE (PERLOZ)

This triumph of a thousand shades ranging from pink to crimson is a small miracle of nature - don't miss the amazing wild peonies that bloom at Col Fenêtre and in La Borney Alpine meadows.

CENTRAL VALLEY



BORNA DI LAOU ARBORETUM

The enchanting view from this suggestive arboretum (once a wolf's den) sweeps over gloomy mansions, sacred mountains and leisurely villages.

VERRÈS

CHIGNAS AREA (OUTRE FER AND CAVOUR WALKS AT DONNAS)

Retrace Count Cavour's steps among the secular chestnut trees of Chignas woodlands, then explore the suggestive Outrefer circuit itineraries at Donnas.

DONNAS

PURE ENERGY

AN ENDLESS WALK

Perhaps it's thanks to its advantaged position as a point of transit that the Central Valley and the Mont Avic boast such a dense network of routes.

Not only can these be undertaken overland, along mountain trails and snowy tracks, but along water courses by dinghy or canoe, or airborne on climbing walls that reach far up into the sky. There are countless hiking routes, both horizontal and vertical, leading along ancestral roads pitted by the footsteps of explorers and by an neverending itinerary that you, too, can undertake today.

Canyoning down
Chalamy stream »
Champdepraz



CLIMBING

Climbing walls, crags, slabs: climbing is the order of the day here. Discover all the outdoor walls where you can climb alone or with a guide.

CENTRAL VALLEY



RAFTING AND KAYAKING

Italy's oldest rafting school is ready to lead you on an adventure among rapids and drops, riding the River Dora and its tumultuous follies.

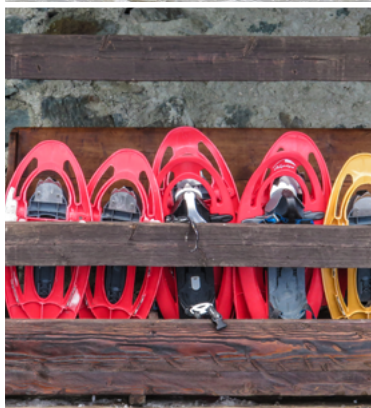
CENTRAL VALLEY



SNOWSHOEING

Muffled silences, silvery forests and immaculately white lakes: Mont Avic Natural Park is waiting for you to reveal its winter mantle.

CENTRAL VALLEY



ANGLING

Darting trout and leaping char: get ready for a battle to the last bait at Chalamy reserve, Ayasse mountain stream and Lake Mure at Issogne.

CENTRAL VALLEY



NIGHT WALK IN MONT AVIC NATURAL PARK

Torch, audio guide and a pinch of courage: this is all you need to discover Mont Avic Natural Park's fascinating and mysterious side.

CHAMPDEPRAZ



DOWNHILL SKIING

Enjoy twenty kilometres of runs surrounded by panoramas over Monte Rosa, the Matterhorn and Mont Avic protected area.

CHAMPORCHER



CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

Can you picture skiing in a snowy wood surrounded by the gentle murmuring of the Ayasse mountain stream as it meanders through ice like a ribbon set with diamonds?

CENTRAL VALLEY



CAMMINO BALTEO

An unforgettable trek that follows the course of the River Dora Baltea, among vineyards and mule tracks, encountering enchanted castles, isolated forts and immortal peaks.

CENTRAL VALLEY

SKI TOURING

Take the convenient lift up to Cimetta Rossa then tackle the bare mountainside, and explore Dondena basin and Lake Misérin.

CHAMPORCHER



VIA FRANCIGENA

Treat yourself to a journey back in time along the Via Francigena, a historical pilgrim way where you'll come across splendid terraces and ancient sundials.

CENTRAL VALLEY

CANYONING

Diving and climbing among waterfalls, water slides and deep crevices. If you want to try canyoning then mountain streams Chalamy, Fer and Brenve are ideal!

CENTRAL VALLEY



OTHER SPORTS ACTIVITIES

If you like to get fit or try new sports while on holiday, then in the Central Valley and Mont Avic you'll find an infinite number of sports activities to try out.

CENTRAL VALLEY



DELICIOUS INSPIRATION

DESIRE FOR FLAVOUR

You can't claim to have truly been to the mountains if you haven't tried a local wine. So, plunge into an enthusiastic tasting of Arnad-Montjovet DOC, with its hints of leather and earth and aromas of spice and vanilla; otherwise treat yourself to a sip of delicious Donnas DOC, which recalls forest fruits and almonds.

If you're looking for something tasty to snack on while raising a toast then try Micóoula, traditional sweet bread with figs, chestnuts, raisins and walnuts, or sweet piata with apples, or its savoury version flavoured with garlic and cumin and served with a slice of Arnad lard.

Local wine »
tasting



HISTORY ROLLS ON

THE ANCIENT CHANT OF THE ROCK

Fewer places in the Aosta Valley have witnessed the past more than the villages of the Central Valley. Here, where thousand-year-old roads rutted by the dusty stride of pilgrims and wayfarers meet, noble families have erected castles and forts, watchtowers and elaborate palaces. Culture has bloomed and even touched nature, whose nooks conceal mysterious shrines, ancestral remains and bridges that hold hands in a sturdy stone embrace.

Don't you know what to visit? Get prepared, the list is long...

Historical carnival »
Verrès



ISSOGNE CASTLE

No castle can rival Issogne for its charisma – a frescoed courtyard populated with enigmatic characters, an elegant pomegranate fountain where dragons peek out from the wrought iron leaves...

ISSOGNE



VERRÈS CASTLE

This imposing castle with its rigorous silhouette and majestic geometrics stands out among trees like a powerful lookout. During the annual Carnival celebrations, lively masked balls come to life inside its walls.

VERRÈS



PONTBOSET BRIDGES

PONTBOSET

An enchanting itinerary in search of Pontboset's six bridges, strong stone humpback bridges gallop over the roaring waters of Ayasse mountain torrent.



BARD MEDIEVAL VILLAGE

BARD

Strolling through this village crammed with a wealth of monumental houses you'll feel embraced by an atmosphere of epic wars, history books and enchanted shops...



MACHABY SHRINE

ARNAD

Pious charm, joyous peace, quiet respect: these are the gentle feelings that will accompany you along the path leading to this shrine hidden amongst the woodlands.



DONNAS HISTORICAL CENTRE

Ethereal frescoes, remote portals and haughty towers: if you pay attention while exploring Donnas and the historical centre, you'll come across traces of an intriguing past.

DONNAS



MADONNA DELLE NEVI SHRINE AT MISÉRIN

A treasure chest of immortal splendour, hooded by soft silence beside the waters of a lake overlooked by ice-white peaks.

CHAMPORCHER

MONT AVIC NATURAL PARK VISITOR CENTRE

What if you could see thousands of hectares of parkland while sitting comfortably in a room? That's precisely what happens at Champdepraz and Champorcher visitor centres.

CENTRAL VALLEY



TOWER OF THE LORDS OF BARD AT CHAMPORCHER AND PRAMOTTON TOWER AT DONNAS

Mute stone giants that stand guard over villages and castles and which, over the centuries, have witnessed fires and fratricidal wars: these are the towers of Champorcher and Donnas.

CENTRAL VALLEY



HÔNE CUP-MARKED STONES

They are not ordinary stones but witnesses of an ancestral and mysterious past that have survived bygone eras dominated by iron and bronze.

CENTRAL VALLEY

MUSEUM OF WINE AND VITICULTURE AND TRÉBY COOPERATIVE DAIRY MUSEUM AT DONNAS

Creaky barrels, old wineskins, clanking buckets: ancient skills and traditions belonging to the rural world of Donnas are held within these objects.

DONNAS

CHATEAU VALLAISE

If you want to remain speechless, then find time to visit this incredible mansion embellished with sparkling frescoes and princely designs.

ARNAD



ECHALLOD BRIDGE

Great blocks of stone break the flow of the River Dora's turquoise waters: discover one of the most interesting bridges in the Aosta Valley...

ARNAD

TOMB AND ROMAN ROAD

The Romans have left traces of their presence here at Montjovet, where you can find remains of the Road to Gaul and even an ancient tomb.

MONTJOVET



COLLEGIATE OF SAINT-GILLES

Let yourself be lulled by bell chimes as you stroll in the shade of the monastery of one of the most important religious centres of medieval Aosta Valley.

VERRÉS

RETEMPIO SHRINE

Venture among the old mule tracks, stone bridges and sunny meadows to reach a bastion of sacred beauty and its splendid crown of mountains.

PONTOBOSET



PONT-SAINT-MARTIN ROMAN BRIDGE

This is one of the best preserved Roman bridges in Europe – an elegant portal linking past and present. To find out more, drop into the museum dedicated to it.

PONT-SAINT-MARTIN

NO ADULTS ALLOWED

WHEREVER YOU'RE NOT EXPECTING IT, FUN IS EXPECTING YOU.

Tree tunnels, gardens bursting with butterflies, fairies' homes... you can't imagine how many surprises are hiding along Champorcher's apparently ordinary itinerary following the stream, "Parcours découverte" in Chardonney woods. When you've finished exploring, why not come for a walk along the Path of the Eight Sisters or the Trail of the Little Big World in Hône, to hear incredible stories about the mountains told by brilliant guides?

If you're looking for something more adventurous, get your backpack and harness ready because you can learn to scale non less than... Mont Blanc at the Fortress of Bard's "The Children's Alps" museum!

Grape harvest »
Donnas





Machaby Shrine

IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME

Get ready to make an extraordinary holiday even more out of the ordinary...



FAIR OF SANT'ORSO AT DONNAS

The thousand-year-old fair held in the centre of Donnas never fails to enchant with its torch-lit processions, dancing, live music and the charm of traditional local handicraft.

JANUARY

VERRÈS AND PONT-SAINT-MARTIN HISTORICAL CARNIVALS

Drum rolls, trumpets and penny whistles accompany cheerful float parades in a festive riot commemorating ancient legends and glorious feats.

FEBRUARY



ARNAD LARD FESTIVAL

Each year thousands of visitors from all over Europe come to celebrate and taste one of the most appraised culinary delicacies of the Aosta Valley.

AUGUST



MARCHÉ AU FORT

Traditional specialities, local producers and top quality food and wine transform the scenic village of Bard into the Aosta Valley's most renowned exhibition-market.

OCTOBER

Valle d'Aosta
EVENTS

Download the app!





Issogne Castle



ALL THE BEAUTY OF THE MATTERHORN

Nature has modelled few things with such refinement as the Matterhorn, that sharp and alluring peak on which the history of mountaineering has been engraved.



PURE RELAXATION IN SAINT-VINCENT

Gaming halls, spas with outdoors thermal pools, social events and excellent restaurants: this famous town nestling at the foot of panoramic Monte Zerbion, known as the "Riviera of the Alps" owing to its mild climate, has truly everything to offer.

CERVINIA

MONTEROSA SKI

SAINT-VINCENT

MONTJOVET

CHAMPDEPRAZ

ISSOGNE

VERRÈS

ARNAD

FONTAINEMORE

LILLIANES

CHAMPORCHER

PONTBOSET

HÔNE

BARD

PERLOZ

DONNAS

PONT-SAINT-MARTIN



MONTEROSA SKI, SUBLIME FUN

A ski area connecting the Ayas Valley to the Gressoney Valley and to Piedmont with a maze of runs radiating out over the slopes of a heavenly ice palace - Monte Rosa.

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