



SEZIA - VAL GRANDE GEOPARK

Annex 8

**List and detailed description of existing
non-geological sites**

Sites of cultural, ethnographic and anthropological interest

A large amount of interesting sites from all points of view, which indicate great artistic skill, a strong attachment to the land, a strong sense of community, are grouped grouped by topic. The location of the sites is indicated in the figure below, and follow the numbering in the text.

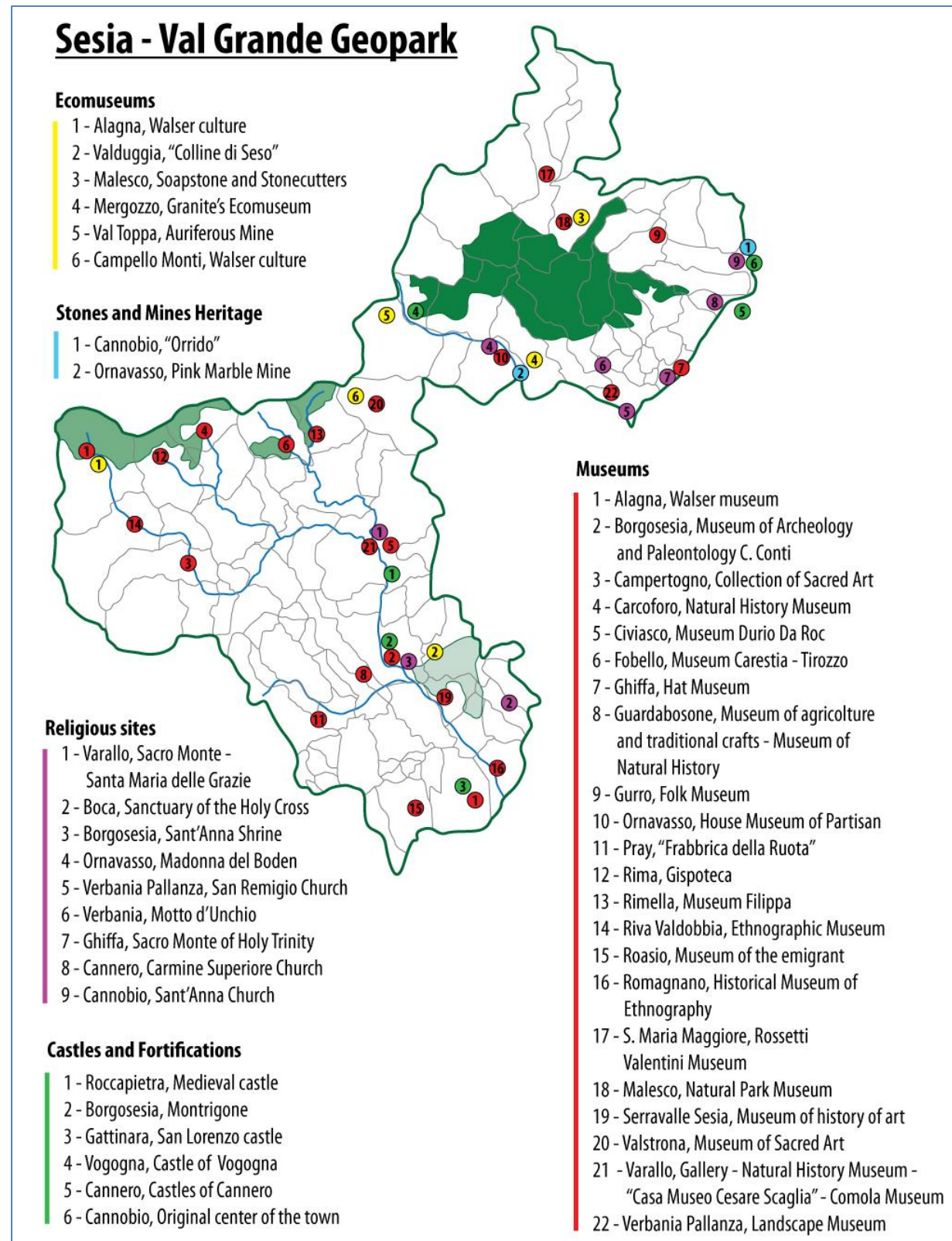


Figure 1. Location of the sites of interest

REGIONAL ECOMUSEUMS

(Location in yellow on figure 1)

The **Eco-museum of the Walser culture (n. 1)** collects all major "Walser" municipalities, Alagna Riva Valdobbia, Molliia, Rassa, Rimella, Rima and Carcoforo. Several museums and installations offer evidences of Walser's history, technology and life. Moreover the decorative art of the "artificial marble" that



has spread throughout Europe in the first half of 800 is well shown.

The **Eco-museum of lower Valsesia "Colline di Seso" (n. 2)** which has its centre in Valduggia at "Casa Spagna", show the prevailing farming culture of this area. The "Taragn", a thatched roof structure, is the most representative.



On Malesco, there is the "Ecomuseo della pietra ollare e degli scalpellini" (**Soapstone and Stonecutters Eco-museum; n. 3**) consisting of a number of physical places connected together (old soapstone quarries, archaeological museum, mill, lime-kiln, wash-house, etc.), to offer a more complete understanding of the local history.

At Mergozzo the **Granite's Eco-museum (n.4)** focuses on the close connection between environment, resources and technology applied to stones activities. The great Montorfano quarry has for centuries provided stones all over Italy (but limited to) can be considered part of the natural landscape of Montorfano mountain.

Finally, the "Ecomuseo della miniera di Val Toppa" (**Auriferous Mine Eco-museum; n.5**) consists in a mining area with historical building transformed in small museum and visitor centre. The place shows how mining has shaped the landscape, the settlements and peoples life on past century.

The **Campello Monti Eco-museum (n.6)** is dedicated to the Walser people settled in this valley in early 1300. This museum is one of the nodes of the Cusius Eco-museum network.

OTHER MUSEUMS

(Location in red in figure 1)

Large or small museums, speeded along the aspiring Geopark area, offer precious evidence of the artistic and ethnographic heritage of the area, with undoubted excellence.

ALAGNA - Walser Museum (n.1), in the Pedemonte, offers evidence of the Walser's life during the medieval age.



BORGOSIESIA - Museum of Ethnography and Folk. and Museum of Archaeology and Palaeontology "Carlo Conti" (n.2) that houses the collections of archaeology of Valsesia and prehistory of Monte Fenera (Ursus spelaeus and Neanderthal man), in addition to the exhibition dedicated to "supervolcano" geology.

CAMPERTOGNO - Collection of Sacred Art (n.3): collect precious works of sacred art from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.

CARCOFORO - Natural History Museum of the Valsesia Natural Park (n.4) hosted in a Walser house.

CIVISASCO - Museum Durio Da Roc (n.5), about the 18th-19th century migration.

FOBELLO – Museum Carestia-Tirozzo (n.6): botanical collection by Abate Carestia dating the second half of 1800. Permanent exhibition dedicated to the figure of Vincenzo Lancia, founder of the automobile manufacturer Lancia. Permanent Exhibition of "Puncetto".

GHIFFA Hat Museum (n.6) very unusual but very pretty. The Panizza brand company exported its hats of a unique style and quality all over the world. The exhibition is arranged thematically.

GUARDABOSONE - Museum of agriculture and traditional crafts; Museum of Natural History (n.7), with a wide and interesting entomological collection, classified as one of the five largest in the world; Museum of Sacred Art and the House of crafts.

GURRO. The Cannobina Valley Folk Museum (n.9) provides a window onto the life of the past. The folk museum will be widen with a news section on geology of the Cannobina valley the next year.

ORNAVASSO - House Museum of Partisan "A. Di Dio" (n.10). Resistance Museum commissioned in 1988 by the will of some partisans of the Division Valtoce. Parish Museum of Sacred Art, which collects works of art placed first in the churches of the country.



PRAY – "Fabbrica della Ruota" (n.11), a major documentation centre of the textile industry located in an ancient wool factory.

RIMA - Gipsoteca Pietro della Vedova (n.12) with the works of the valesian sculptor who was a professor of sculpture in Turin.

RIMELLA - Museum G.B. Filippa (n.13), recently renovated, which can be considered the "village museum" set in a Walser building dating back to the 1415. Ethnographic Walser Museum in Sella village.

RIVA VALDOBBIÀ - In a house dating 1600 Ethnographic Museum (n.14) remembers uses and alpine traditions.

ROASIO - Museum of the emigrant (n.15) from the end of the '700 exhibits the migrant "memories".

ROMAGNANO - Historical Museum of Ethnography of Lower Valsesia (n.16) situated in Villa Caccia, built by the architect A. Antonelli. Has a section dedicated to Farming.

SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE. Rossetti Valentini Museum in Vigizzo Valley (n.17), known as the "Painters' Valley", has a fine collection of works by the many excellent artists who have worked in the valley. Also the unusual Chimney Sweep Museum is available. This is one of the most innovative museums in Piedmont Region, offering an interactive tour involving visitors in a multisensory experience.

SERRAVALLE SESIA –Museum of history of art and antiques Don Florindo Piolo(n.19), located in the Avondo Castle, rebuilt in 1800 on the ruins of a fortress of Savoy dated 1400.

VALSTRONA - Museum of Sacred Art and Museum of Woodworking in the village of Forno (n.20) displays an extensive collection of wooden articles. In Sambughetto Valstrona a museum recently opened is dedicated to the geology and palaeontology of the Strona valley.



VARALLO – Gallery (n.21); collects the best works of art in Piedmont from 1400 to 1900, with 3300 works by the Master of the Sacred Mountain to Valsesian artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: Gaudenzio Ferrari, Tanzio da Varallo, Morazzone, Lanino, Gianoli, Orgiazzi and many others.

Natural History museum "Pietro Calderini".

Casa Museo "Cesare Scaglia", remember the Valsesian painter.

Comola Museum, in Camasco, collects relics of the local producer of lamps, stoves and braziers.

VERBANIA PALLANZA (N.22); The Landscape Museum founded with the intention of highlighting the scenic beauty of the Lake Maggiore area through art, contains a large collection of paintings, sculptures and objects of archaeological interest. The Museum is hosted in three separate buildings: Palazzo Viani

Dugnani, Palazzo Biumi Innocenti and Casa Ceretti.

CASTLES AND FORTIFICATIONS

(Location in green in figure 1)

The medieval history of the territory of the aspiring Geopark is undoubtedly marked by testimonies that are very conspicuous in the castles and ancient fortresses, to witness the historic events.

In Sesia valley, a subsidiary of Novara or Vercelli feuds, under the Count of Biandrate, a complex fortification system has been built with defensive and patrolling intent. The remains from north to south are as follows: **Roccapietra castle (n.1)** built to monitor both the Sesia valley and Orta lake transit; **Vanzone** at Borgosesia, built on a hill was replaced by a church around 1400; **Montrigone (n.2)** in Borgosesia municipality, also dating back to a Roman

age, in 1631 was replaced by a small shrine built during the plague outbreak in northern Italy; **Vintebbio Castle** in Serravalle municipality, probably built on the ruins of a Roman *castrum*; **San Lorenzo (n.3)** in Gattinara, erected in 1187 by the Municipality of Vercelli.



Vogogna (n.4) is a village which still preserves the traces of its famous past. An old village already mentioned in a parchment of the year 970, but which dates back to a more ancient period. Evidences of this are for instance the "mascherone celtico" of Dresio and the Roman period tombstone, reminding of the creation of the Roman roads of Ossola in 196 A.D. The Rocca, the castle, and the Praetorium

Palace witness centuries of magnificence: as a matter of fact, from the first half of the 14th century, Vogogna became the administrative center of the lower Ossola, according to the will of the Visconti family.

The **Castles of Cannero (n.5)** are today picturesque ruins on two rocky islets close to the shore, and seem to float magically on the surface of the water. They are all that remains of the Rocca Vitaliana fortress built between 1519 and 1521 by Ludovico Borromeo, who gave it this name in honors of an illustrious ancestor.

Cannobio is the last town on the shore of Lake Maggiore before the Swiss border. Today it is one of the prime tourist resorts in the VCO province. The **original center of the town (n. 5)**, known as the "Borgo", begins from the ancient "Via al Castello" and takes the visitor into a timeless world of old houses, flights of steps and lanes leading down towards the lake front. These narrow streets, shut in by high buildings, were designed to protect the inhabitants from hostile incursions from the lake.

RELIGIOUS SITES

(Location in purple in Figure 1)

The **Sacro Monte of Varallo_(n.1)** is the oldest of the Italian sacred mountains, model for other complexes which later arose along the Alps, started in 1491 by the will of the Franciscan Bernardino Caimi. It consists of a basilica and forty-five frescoed chapels and populated by over eight hundred statues of life-size polychrome terracotta. Among the artists of the Sacro Monte the most important is Gaudenzio Ferrari, a painter, who has worked in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The area is a special nature reserve of the Piemonte Region.





The **Sacro Monte of Holy Trinity in Ghiffa** (n.7) is a special nature reserve as the previous one. It is one of the seven sacred mountains that offered the New Jerusalem to the devotees and the shrine dates back to the seventeenth century. The Sacro Monte of the Holy Trinity at Ghiffa stands at the foot of Mount Carciago in a magnificent

position dominating Lake Maggiore. It is made up of the Sanctuary Church, three chapels and the arcades of the Stations of the Cross, and the whole complex is surrounded by about 200 hectares of a prevalently woodland Nature Reserve.

“Sacro Monte” of both Varallo and Ghiffa are under the patronage of **UNESCO's World Heritage**.

“**S. Maria delle Grazie**” (n.1) in Varallo is a Gothic-style architectural complex formed by the monastery and the church will follow the approach typical of the religious buildings of Observant Franciscans. On a large partition wall Gaudenzio Ferrari painted in 1513, one of his most valuable works of art.

The **Sanctuary of the Holy Cross** at Boca (n.2) date back to the seventeenth century. It was expanded progressively until the last intervention of the architect Alessandro Antonelli, born in Ghemme that gave the current configuration in the neoclassical style.

The **Madonna Di Rado** at Gattinara is an ancient church of medieval origin abandoned after 1242 when it was founded the village of Gattinara.

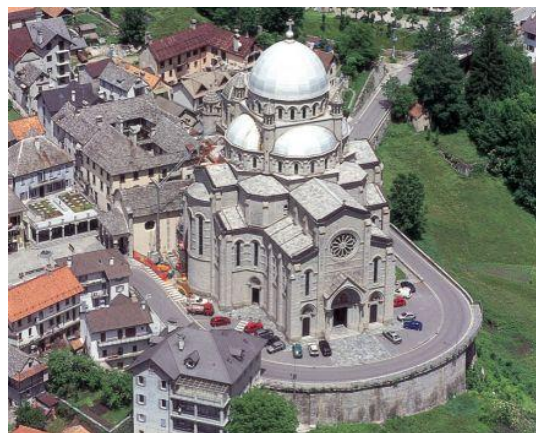
Pieve Di Naula in Serravalle Sesia is a beautiful Romanesque church of the tenth century, dedicated to St Mary, probably built on the ruins of a pagan temple.

The ancient church in **Carminè Superiore** (8) village near Cannero is located high on a cliff looking directly over Lake Maggiore. The frescoes in the interior as well as those on the outside walls are mostly the work of the Maestro di Carzoneso.

The little Church of **San Remigio** (n.5) stands apart from the bustle of the world in the silence of the top of the Castagnola Hill above Pallanza.

Some of the churches are sanctuaries or shrines, places of pilgrimage associated with a miracle, like the “**Madonna del Boden**” in Ornavasso (n.4), or the “**Madonna di Re**” in the Vigizzo Valley, an imposing structure which attracts thousands of pilgrims every year.

The Sanctuary of the “**Santissima Pietà**” on the fine lakefront of Cannobio was built by order of Saint Carlo Borromeo about 1578 over a small earlier church, which stood on the spot where the Miracle of the Holy Rib is said to have occurred between 8 January and 27 February 1522.



Often it's the very magnificence of nature that gives rise to strong religious feelings, sometimes in improbable places, as with the **Sanctuary of Sant'Anna**, (n.9) overlooking the gorge from which it takes its name.

The little Romanesque **Church of San Giovanni Battista** (John the Baptist) in the hamlet of Montorfano is one of the most interesting and best preserved Romanesque churches in the area (11th-12th centuries). It is worth to note that the entire church has been built with the Montorfano granite.

On the top of the hill of **Motto di Unchio** (Verbania; n.6) is a small oratory dedicated to the Virgin of the Cross, dating from the early 19th century; two paths lead to the oratory, each of them flanked by shrines of the Stations of the Cross. A number of rock engravings can be seen on the rocks near the oratory, including a clearly identifiable anthropomorphic engraving and 43 cup-marks, some of them joined by channels or gutters.

CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

The paths of freedom are related to the history of the partisan resistance and they reach places where important events took place in a story often painful but without which we would not be live in a freedom world. The paths have been developed inside the regional project "Memories of Alps". Nowadays more than 20 itineraries are available and well-marked allowing from autonomous and easy fruition.

The "Casa della Resistenza" stands in the Remembrance and Peace Park in Verbania Fondotoce is a Memorial Building. This spot, where on 20 June 1944 the Nazis shot 43 partisans, is now devoted to remembering and studying the Resistance in this area. The place is dominated by a tall cross, symbolizing sacrifice, and watching over the long wall in which are engraved the names of over 1,200 partisans who gave their lives in the liberation struggle in this area. Every year arrives at the area of memorial building the last stage of the "Sentiero Chiovini", a trekking of few days across the sites of Resistance.



Finally, across great area north-east of the aspiring Geopark there is the big fortified "Cadorna" Line.

Between 1916 and 1918, the years of WWI, the fear of a hypothetical Austrian-German invasion across the neutral Switzerland led General Luigi Cadorna from Pallanza, Head of *Italian Army*, to arrange a defense line along the southern border of Canton Ticino. Roads, trenches, communication trenches, tunnels, munitions deposits,

forts, and weapon pits were part of this great defensive structure which fortunately never became a battlefield.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MINES

Monte Fenera Caves: There are many caves on the slopes of Fenera (72 in the regional catalogue). Some of them are point of significant archaeological interest: "Ciutarun", "Ciota Ciara" and "Grotta della Finestra". In them were found faunal remains mostly of the Cave Bear (*Ursus Spelaeus*, extinct 20 million years ago) that took refuge there for several millennia. Other findings are unique in Piedmont, concerning industries and cultures attributed to Neanderthal Man, who lived in this area about 60,000 years ago. The findings are preserved at the Museum of Archaeology and Palaeontology "Carlo Conti" in Borgosesia.

In many panoramic and isolated cliff and rocks we found the Cup-marks. Various interpretations have been attributed to these engravings. The first is a sacred interpretation which sees these small, sometimes shallow, sometimes deep hollows as an indication of the place where the blood of sacrificial victims flowed, or where incense, ointment or wax was deposited, perhaps to be used as lamps during nocturnal ceremonies.

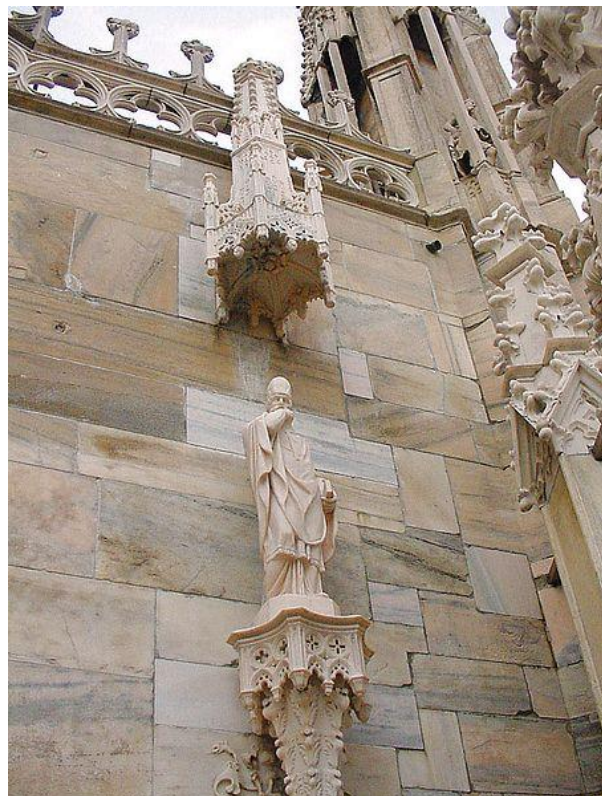
In the Geopark area, many nickel mines dating back to the nineteenth century and abandoned in the first half of the twentieth century are visible. All this mines are related to nickel deposits in the mafic complex: GAVALA - VALMAGGIA - MONTE RES - LAGHETTO - CAMPELLO MONTI - MONTE CAPIO – BALMA – CEVIA. Straing from 2011 a five years research program has been launched by the CET of the University of Perth to better analyse the emplacement of the nickel ore.

CANDOGLIA. The Candoglia marble quarries, at the entrance to the Ossola valley, are famous for their connection with the magnificent Cathedral of Milano. This is where the valuable pink marble which was used to build it was quarried, and is still used today for maintenance and restoration work on the cathedral.

The OSSOLA VALLEY is internationally recognised for their commercial stone: the granite, marble, *beola* and *serizzo* that have left an indelible mark on the landscape and the local economy. The architecture of the area is largely based on these local types of stone, which are everywhere on display in houses, streets, flowerbeds and monuments.

In ALAGNA several mining activity can be find: Manganese mines in Alpe Otro, gold mines in Bors and Kreas, Feldspar mines in place Merletti.

Minor mining activity was active in: BALMUCCIA - Olivine mine at "Giavine Rosse", VALBELLA - Iron mines and CERVAROLO - Cuprite pyrite mines in Val di Mengo exploited since the beginning of the eighteenth century.



NATURE, WILDLIFE

GHIFFA. The protected nature Reserve of the Sacro Monte of Ghiffa comprises an extensive woodland area with a heritage of rich flora and fauna. Varied and of great beauty are the themed footpaths that guide a visit to this reserve: there is a well-equipped fitness trail, and you will find some intriguing traces of ancient settlements as well as evidence of the religious traditions of the past.



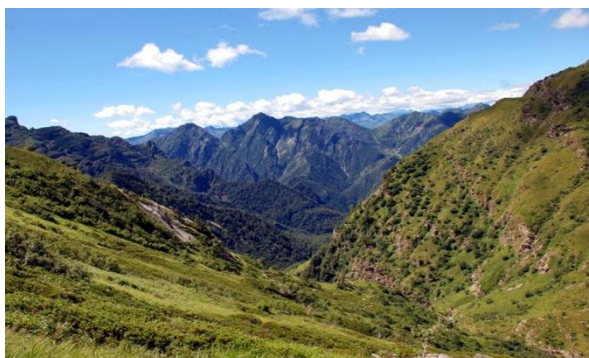
MONTE ROSA. Under the authority of Alta Valsesia “Natural Park”, the highest park in Europe offers the opportunity to observe the rare alpine and sub-alpine environment. Glacial environment is also accessible to tourists with an adequate fitness.

MONTE FENERA. Calcareous “island” in an area characterized by acidic rocks, largely wooded, with developed karst formations, cliffs and rock shelters used in prehistoric times. The site reported over 400 species of flora. In the caves is a rich cave fauna,

including endemic invertebrates, molluscs and bats.

OASI ZEGNA. A wildlife protected area covering approximately 100 km² along the "Panoramica Zegna" between Trivero and Rosazza, with an impressive plan for reforestation of barren slopes mountains with half a million conifers and many hundreds of rhododendrons and hydrangeas.

VAL GRANDE. As already mentioned the largest wilderness area in Italy. In the mountains of Val Grande a lot of mountain huts offer the unique opportunity to life in direct contact with wild nature. Many dedicated natural paths are available and regularly maintained by park authority.



HANDICRAFT

The craft in the proposed Geopark area can be defined very artistic and it results from a centuries-old tradition. Along the centuries in many cases became a real industry, able to be export at European level. Woodworking sector is the most traditional and was typical of Valstrona with many family enterprises. Has ancient origins and solved the problem of making tools and furniture, made by the villagers to spend their days of forced rest of the long winter. The wrought iron railings industry is impressive and often it transforms simple gates in real masterpiece of art. The construction and restoration of musical instruments has solid foundations in our area; in Borgosesia and Varallo operate expert makers, recently the handcrafted production of musical instruments at Quarna Sotto (Valle Strona) is experiencing an international market boom. The “puncetto” for centuries has always been done using only a needle and thread, creating true works of art to decorate the costumes. Many ancient country crafts have remained firmly established in the territory, such as the trade of the “picasass” or stonemasons, who still cut the pale pink marble of Candoglia and the white Montorfano granite.

FOOD AND WINE SPECIALTY

The cuisine of the Alpine areas is linked in particular to the products of the mountain and the share of pastures and crops. Consequently dishes are simple, made with what was possible to produce, integrated with hunting and fishing and the fruits of the forest. The dishes were still substantial, among which the polenta, prepared in many ways, soups, cereals, potatoes also prepared in many ways, the 'capuneit' (stuffed) of savoy cabbage, rice dishes that come from rice production on the border of the lower valley, chestnuts.

The area still have an important cold cut tradition: in the past, they were famous for the ham obtained from pigs and goats, for their salami and dried beef. Among the other it is worth to mention 'uberlekke' of Alagna, the 'mocetta' prepared with suede thigh, the 'paletta' made with pork shoulder, *salami preserved in fat*, 'violini di capra' (cured goat's leg) of the Vigizzo Valley, the 'brisaula', a salt meat of inland valleys.

Cheese-making is an even more ancient tradition, documented before the year 1000. *Ossolano d'Alpe* cheese (whole milk) and *Ossolano* or *Mezzapasta* or *Spress* cheese (partially skimmed milk) are important products. Also very good goat's milk cheese is produced. We cannot forget the cheese *Toma valsesiana*, a hard or semi-soft, and *Maccagno* produced at high altitude with raw milk.



To complement these delectable foods, the locally produced wines are perfect. The vineyards of Nebbiolo grapes produce award-winning wines, which in the area between Gattinara and Ghemme reach the excellence in the Italian rank (DOCG). Other top wines (DOC) are produced in Ossola valleys, Novara's hills and Sesia Area.

Last but not least, bread production (the most ancient are *Coimo brown bread* and *pan dolce*), as well as honey, mushrooms, and berries are worth a mention. The latter are used to prepare top-quality jam. Finally, the area surrounding Verbano and Ossola offers an equally diversified range of local speciality cakes and biscuits, such as the *Fugascine* of Mergozzo, the *Castagnaccio* of the centre of all area, and the *Margheritine* of Stresa. Among the desserts must be also mentioned *Canestrelli* of Crevacuore and *miacce*, thin and

crispy waffles typical of the upper Sesia valley.

SPORT

In the territory candidate Geopark there are many possibilities of entertainment for fans of outdoor sports and you can make the following sports:

MOUNTAIN BIKE - Many paths through the valleys to enjoy the freedom of cycling on roads in contact with nature. On the other hand, if the tourist want to enjoy a relaxing tour, the routes dedicated to cycling along the shores of the Lake Maggiore are recommend.

RAFTING AND CANOE - The Sesia River attracts thousands of tourists and fans each year for the descents of canoe or raft. For those who prefer peaceful lakes the Lake Maggiore is best solution. You can also enjoy canyoning, rafting, kayaking and tubing.

SKI - Is one of the major attractions with miles of trails that has been developed in the area. Alagna is the most representative with direct connection to the Val d'Aosta in the area "Monte Rosa 2000".

FISHING - The latest data tell us that over 24,000 fishermen each year attend the rivers and alpine lakes, especially using the local specialty of fly fishing.



HIKING AND CLIMBING - Throughout the year, climbers, mountaineers and hikers frequent the hundreds of trails through the mountains, in the wonderful views and sights, as well as to enjoy the outdoors and live in a breath-taking landscape that leads to the "Capanna Margherita", the highest refuge in Europe (4554 m. above sea level).