principles of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism. throught study programmes and safeguards, inspired by the level of biodiversity: the parks protect and enhance these elemenents hectares and is remarkable for its strong cultural identity and hight sies protected by the two parks covers about one hundred thousand were awarded the European Diploma for the environment. The border protected areas have been twinned since 1987 and together Marittime and Parc national du Mercantour. These two cross-This leaflet was in collaboration between Parco naturale delle Alpi Parks without frontiers





paths and refuges of the Marittime Alps and Mercantour A refuge, by definition, is a place in which you search for shelter and protection for the body but also, not infrequently, for the spirit. Medieval hospices responded to this dual function serving travellers and pilgrims engaged in crossing the Alps. Generally guarded by one or more monks, these properties stood close to the main Alpine passes, from the San Bernardo to the Monginevro, from the Maddalena to the Tenda and Finestre passes.

Monginevro, from the Maddalena to Tenda and Finestre passes.

Refuges for the body and spirit

Let Madone de Fenestre

With the foundation of the Alpine clubs, beginning in the midnineteenth century, the first refuges serving the mountaineers were created. These are the years in which the Alps take the form of a small unknown continent placed in the centre of "civilized" Europe. The world at that time had by then been explored by length and breadth, therefore the attention of the pioneers turned further upwards: attracted by the abundance of unknown land, crowds of Italian, French, German, Swiss, American and English mountaineers passed through the Alps to climb mountains, baptise them and represent them on maps. In the race to the Alps, the bivouacs and refuges represented the "conquest of the night", the precious opportunity to spend the hours between sunset and sunrise in places that just a few years before, were doubted if they could be reached in the light of day.

In 1889 in the Marittime Alps, the construction of the "Barma refuge" began, near the Lac del la Fous, on the French side. Created under a large rock by mountaineers of Nice, it was a base for the climbs in the Gelas-Maledia-Clapier group.

The National Congress of the Italian Alpine Club in 1896 recognized the need to enhance the Marittime Alps, still not very popular at the time, entrusting the task of building a new refuge to the Ligurian Section. In the particular it was intended to make the climb to the Argentera Peak, the highest on the sector (3297 metres) more accessible. After countless visits, the upper gias Monighet was singled out, in the deep Rovina valley. The building, in honour of the promoting section, was named "Genova Refuge". Eighty years on the old Genova would be submerged by the waters of the artificial Chiotas basin and replaced by a new building created on the banks of the nearby Brocan Lake.

In the following years, the Ligurians still increased the availability of bases in the Marittime Alps. In 1913 at the base of the Maledia Peak, at 2650 metres in altitude, the doors of the Pagarì Refuge opened, whose structures arrived directly from the Turin International Exposition of two years earlier. In 1921 the Bozano was built in the deep valley of Argentera and in 1925 the Questa was built in the deep Valasco valley. Starting from the period between the two wars, the Cuneo Section of the Alpine Club came on the scene and inaugurated its first refuge in 1931: the Morelli-Buzzi, in the Lourousa valley and in the sixties, the Soria, Remondino, Livio Bianco

deceased protagonists, the first seasons of Liguria and Cuneo in conquering the Marittime Alps. Almost no-one is missing: there is Moe Figari, the mountaineer without picks, who arrived in the Marittime Alps, departing from the sea of Genova; his climbing partner Emilio Questa: together with Lorenzo Bozano, who underwent 13 hours travel from the coast to reach the Gesso Valley; there is Federico Federici, who climbed the mountains and died in the sea during the Second World War and Ettore Marchesini, who left his companions of the section, his library and the funds to build the refuge; there is Costanzo Morelli, killed by a blizzard at the foot of the Monviso and Colonel Alvaro Buzzi, who didn't manage to completely see the refuge he had contributed to renovating; Edoardo "Dado" Soria and Gianni Ellena joined in memory, also appear, who were two of the greatest mountaineering exponents from Cuneo in the years between the two wars; there is also their

companion Dante Livio Bianco, mountaineer and partisan;

The names of the refuges tell, through the dedication to the

new regulations on a national and community level imposed this, but also the change in the needs of the public. Renovated and finally "according to the law", the refuges became small hotels at high altitude, equipped with electricity, hot water, telephone.... and today even with internet, web cam for weather forecasts and credit card systems to pay the bill. The managers have become professional experts in logistics and catering: hospitality at altitude has become serious business. Over time the identity and role of the refuge have changed so greatly: the old perception of the refuge as an isolated place, is safely moored in the sea of the mountains and is by now a distant memory. Today the refuges and bivouacs of the Marittime Alps Park territory are among the favourite destinations of tourists who visit the protected area.

coming from all backgrounds and walks of life,

With the nineties of last century, the refuges changed: the

1225 - St MARTIN-LÉSUBIE (A.-M.)
La Madone de Fenestre (alt. 1904 m.) et Hô ellevie

Franco Remondino, sub lieutenant of the Alpine troops and promising young mountaineer, who died on a wall at the age of 21, and Roberto Barbero, who fell on the Catene delle

The bivouacs complete the memory, moderately evoking to the visitors today of the absence of who, by accident or for passion, sometimes for both reasons, has seen his name linked

Originally, the refuges were simple and basic: four walls with a plank to sleep on, a table and some chairs. Therefore little more than an isolated cabin in the mountains, base for a "chosen" few dedicated to climbing the main peaks of the Alps. In time the shelters have been modified and expanded to accommodate the ever growing public of mountain enthusiasts. And so a kitchenette, bunk bends, wool blankets and gas light appear.

The role of "keeper" came about, a person who lives in one of the towns of the valley bottom and stores the keys of the refuges. The keeper — the memory of the legendary Tino Piacenza from Sant'anna di Valdieri, who divided himself between the Bianco, Remondino and Morelli refuges, is still very much alive in the Gesso Valley – generally goes up to the refuge at weekends to ensure that the guests have the few basic necessities and to show his experience and great knowledge of the mountains.

From logistics bases to climb up to the peaks, these buildings have become a reference point for those wishing to unhurriedly enjoy the contact with mountain nature, taking the opportunity to surprise, against the backdrop of a sunrise or sunset, the animals immersed in their environment. Today, as yesterday, the refuge gives you the opportunity to spend the night, filling your eyes with the starry sky of the high altitudes, but in addition, it now offers visitors the opportunity to taste the local products, to attend concerts performed among the peaks and to take part in themed evenings.

Whether it's a little or a lot, to get to a refuge you have to walk. The right amount of commitment and effort is needed to fully enjoy what we expect "up above". On opening the door of the refuge with a mixture of relief and trepidation, there is the distinct feeling of being in a particular place, where the most basic rules of cohabitation come into play: respect for the work of the manager, sharing common space and time with other hikers, the pleasant and compulsory frugality, imposed by the place, the salutary knowledge that any hasty actions may have negative effects for the conservation of the fragile environment that surrounds the small building. You must move cautiously and lightly, both inside and outside the welcoming structure of the refuge.

For the pleasure of reaching a comfortable destination, immersed in a unique environment, for the experience of spending a few hours in the presence of the Alpine nature without having to hurry back down to the valley, for the privilege of listening to music with the mountains as a sounding board, for the opportunities of meeting and exchanging among the people it offers, a stay in the refuge is therefore an experience able to leave a mark which goes beyond just the simple pleasure of fun and relaxation.

It often happens that in the dim light of the lamps and over a glass of red wine, mutual respect and trust is created between the mountain dwelling keeper and the mountain enthusiasts,

Telephone number E-mail address; web site

Owner; manager

Opening period

Beds (beds in winter)

Departure

Cuisine

Main climbs Credit cards accepted Credit cards not accepted

legend

2710 m

2650 m

2468 m

2280 m

1847 m

2235 m

2421 m

**-** 9

**1**2

**)** 9

**1-1** 2

**1** 12 **1** 12

always open

# Hiking refuges



Height difference; ascent time; itinerary type

ancient banned beech wood that protects the village from avalanches. Open all year, it is on the GTA itinerary and is the departure base for hiking on foot, with snow shoes and with skis. At the premises you can taste a cuisine that has traditional

Tff piedmontese

Bivouacs

► San Giacomo di Entracque 1250 m

► Lago della Rovina 1535 m (Entracque)

Capanna sociale Barbero

► Ponte della Vagliotta 1115 m (Sant'Anna di Valdieri) 🛏 12

Giovane Montagna Moncalieri

Moncalieri

▲ 1500 m; 4 hours

▲ 1100 m; 3.30 hours

CAI Ligurian Section

▲ 1450 m; 4 hours

▲ 550 m; 1.45 hours

Costi-Falchero

▲ 1100 m; 3.30 hours

CAI Ligurian Section

Gandolfo

Varrone

▲ 950 m; 2.30 hours

CAI Cuneo Section

▲ 850 m; 2.30 hours

CAI Ligurian Section

Guiglia

► Terme di Valdieri 1368 m

Club Alpino Accademico Italiano

► Gias delle Mosche 1591 m (Terme di Valdieri)

Sergio Groppo

► Sant'Anna di Valdieri 1011 m

Baus



Owned by the Park, it stands in Palanfrè, in Valle Vermenagna, at the foot of an

@ info@palanfre.it - www.palanfre.it

▲ Nature path of the banned beech wood. La Via di Tèit culture path.

# 🚯 1096 m Locanda del Sorriso

Once a primary school of the quiet and sunny hamlet of Trinità of EEntracque, the inn, owned by the Park, is open in the summer season, during holiday periods and at weekends. It is a GTA stop off place and departure point of hiking itineraries with snow shoes and skis. In the welcoming dining room the Occitan cuisine can be tasted, based on products of the area.

Rarco naturale Alpi Marittime, Carla Degioanni 💋 🛏 38 summer, Christmas, Easter and weekends on booking

**\*** +39 0171 978388

@ info@locandadelsorriso.com - www.locandadelsorriso.com ■ West Pass of Sabbione 2328 m; Caire di Porcera 1818 m;

Entracque for Vallone Bousset



local flavours and the delicious cheeses produced on the premises.

all year

**\*** +39 340 6973954

Albergh Lake 2038 m, Rocca d'Orel 2439 m

1250 m San Giacomo The hiking Refuge is situated at the centre of a handful of houses in San Giacomo,

a name that evokes ancient pilgrimages along the Santiago road. The fascination of the place is strengthened by the presence of the historical royal hunting lodge immersed in a centuries-old beech wood. An ideal base to depart for some of the most beautiful trips in the protected area, the Refuge is open from spring to late autumn. The premises, that offers only overnight stays, relies on the adjacent inn Baita Monte Gelas for eating.

Parco naturale Alpi Marittime, Gerbino family from april to november

TIT piedmontese

**\*** +39 0171 978704 @ baitamontegelas@yahoo.it - www.parks.it/rif/san.giacomo

Mount Aiera 2713 m; Vej del Bouc Lake 2054 m; Carboné Pass 2800 m

Locanda alpina Balma Meris

Balma Meris is located in the village of Sant'Anna di Valdieri, the only centre of the Park that is inhabited all year. Situated exactly at the entrance of the deep Meris valley, the Alpine Inn is an in-between among the Alpine refuges at altitude and the buildings of the lower valley. The building, built as the school of the town has been recently renovated with a clever use of materials. The abundant use of wood is the secret to the warm atmosphere of the Refuge. Balma Meris is the summer departure point for day trips, trekking, climbing and mountain biking. In the winter it is the ideal place from where to move off with skis or snow shoes on your feet.

**=** | **=** 25

Vittorio De Marco

all year

TIT piedmontese

**a** +39 0171 97459, +39 339 5280111 @ balmameris@yahoo.it - www.balmameris.it

▲ Path of the Rye Eco-museum "Lo viòl di tèit"; Mount Bourel 2468 m;

Sella Lakes 1882 m e 2329 m



The GTA stop off place stands in the heart of the Spa area, near to the Gesso stream and the nineteenth century hunting lodges that Victor Emanuel II had built. At the entrance to the stop off place is the bar Savoia. Outside it, an ideal place to restore your energy after the fatigue accumulated on the paths, some giant seguoias cast their shade. Their presence goes back to the era of the hunting King.

Bonetto family

from the beginning of June to mid September

regional (at the Hotel Royal)

**\*** +39 0171 97106

@ info@termedivaldieri.it - www.termedivaldieri.it ▼ Valmiana Pass 2922 m; Chiapous Pass 2526 m; Fremamorta Lakes 2380 m

The Mercantour refuges

Cougourde upper Boréon car park

▲ 430 m; 1.30 hours; pathway (E) 

**a** +33 (0)4 93032600, +33 671726704

www.cafresa.org

Madone de Fenestre

▶ by car from Saint-Martin-Vésubie (11 km) **5 6** 62 (20) asphalt road **1**5/6 - 15/9

S CAF Nice Mercantour, Patrick Miraillet **\*** +33 (0)4 93028319, +33 (0)4 93039102

@ www.cafresa.org

De Cessole (Nice)

▶ Pont du Countet 1690 m ▲ 550 m; 2 hours; mule track (E) CAF Nice Mercantour, Christophe Fournier **\*** +33 (0)6 61975938

Valmasque ► Casterino-Peyrafica road, altitude 1700 m

▲ 550 m; 2 hours; mule track (E) CAF Nice Mercantour, Michel Duranti **\*** +33 (0)4 92319120

 www.cafresa.org Merveilles

@ www.cafresa.org

► Lake Mesches car park 1380 m ▲ 750 m; 3 hours; trail (E) S CAF Nice Mercantour, Alex Ferrier

Sci Club di Nizza, Yvette Ferrieuer

**\*** +33 (0)4 93046464, +33 (0)4 93046922 @ www.cafresa.org

Fontanalba ► Casterino 1543 m ▲ 450 m; 1.30 hours; pista (E)

**a** +33 (0)4 93 04 89 19

2018 m **#** 62 (0) **1**5/6 - 15/9

**1** 2100 m

1905 m

**1** 2232 m

**5 14** 80 (20)

**-** 15/6 - 30/9

2233 m

**5**2 (12)

**1**5/6 - 30/9

2130 m

**7**9 (50)

**1**5/6 - 30/9

yourself for a night in a refuge In a Refuge you sleep in a dormitory or in collective rooms, bathrooms are shared and at a certain time the lights are switched off....it is therefore necessary to be prepared mentally to conditions that are far from those of daily life

How to prepare and prepare

The manager of the Refuge has chosen this difficult profession for the passion. Often he finds himself/herself doing a lot of things in little time: from welcoming mountaineers and hikers to the kitchen service and to the cleaning... the comprehension and helpfulness of the clients in «giving a hand» are very well accepted!

Before departing

I book a place at the Refuge

In the case of cancellation I quickly warn the manager I take a sleeping bag and a torch

(blankets and a pillow are provided) I look at the weather forecast I get organized to arrive before 6 pm.

At the Refuges

On arrival I introduce myself to the manager

I am on time for meals

I don't go up to the rooms with my boots on

I respect other guests who are resting I fold the blankets before leaving

THE ALTA VIA DEI RE

# On-line refuge booking

An internet service is active in which you can book most of the refuges in the Marittime Alps-Mercantour area. The initiative has been promoted by the parks of the Marittime Alps and Mercantour and by the Club sections of the Alpine troop owners of the refuges, together with the managers of the premises at altitude that are part of the Eco-Tourism in Marittime association.

Online booking is a concrete action and support in improving the process of the tourist offer that the two protected area have undertaken according to indications on the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism. www.parcoalpimarittime.it/booking.php



# Alpine refuges



Pagarì, with its 2650 metres in altitude and the 5 hour walk to reach it, offers the hiker the pleasure and satisfaction of things hard-earned. Within its walls it is pleasant to enjoy the atmosphere of the Refuge "d'antan" and the manager's welcome, who will reveal every secret of these mountains. Among the many precious recommendations is the one to suggest that you get up at dawn to catch the red reflection of the aurora on the incredible wall of the Maledia, images that you will take back down to the valley, captured by camera and indelibly printed in your memory.

- ► San Giacomo di Entracque 1215 m **18** (8)
- ▲ 1450 m; 5 hours; trail and mule track (E)
- S CAI Ligurian Section, Andrea "Aladar" Pittavino
- $\triangle$  15/6 15/9; other periods by booking Tif home cooking, vegetarian and for particular diets
- **\*** +39 0171 978398; +39 380 7108075
- @ rifugiopagari@libero.it www.rifugiopagari.com
- Mount Clapier 3045 m, Maledia Peak 3061 m, Mount Gelas 3143 m





Each stone of the itinerary towards Soria could tell a story about the pilgrims, Popes, Kings, armies, smugglers and animals laden with salt and fabrics, that were busy in crossing the Alps by the Finestra Pass. A much frequented route in the Middle Ages to already offer hospice for the travellers. Whoever goes over these mounts today finds a modern and particularly welcoming Refuge along the way.

- ► San Giacomo di Entracque 1215 m
- ▲ 650 m; 2.30 hours; trail (T) practicable also by mountain bike (OC) CAI Cuneo Section; Mary Bacani

**≠** 45 (8)

- 15/6-15/9; weekends between 1/4-15/6 and 15/9-15/10; other periods on booking
- TIT regional and Filipino **\*** +39 0171 978382; +39 340 2240558
- @ info@rifugiosoriaellena.com www.rifugiosoriaellena.com
- ▲ Mount Gelas 3143 m, Saint Robert Peak 2917 m, Agnel Peak 2927 m



The Genova Refuge stands at the foot of the eastern side of the massif of Argentera and is surrounded by the blue waters of the Brocan and Chiotas lakes. The latter, an artificial basin is fed by one of the largest hydroelectric power stations in Europe. The wonderful environment, the frequent sightings of chamois and ibex, the opportunity to observe the saxifrage of Argentera – the most precious botanical endemism of the Park – are all elements of irresistible attraction, especially for families.

- ► Rovina Lake 1535 m
- 💋 **| 🛏** 50 (10) ▲ 500 m; 1.45 hours; 1) mule track and trail (E); 2) path and trail (E)
- CAI Ligurian Section, Dario Giorsetti  $\triangle$  15/6 – 15/9; other periods on booking
- regional and vegetarian dishes
- **\*** +39 0171 978138; +39 340 4614189
- @ gestore@rifugiogenova.it www.rifugiogenova.it ■ South Peak of Argentera 3297 m, Brocan Peak 3054 m, Càire dell'Agnel 2935 m



Visible from the start of the path, you get nearer to the Refuge step by step along an intense and spectacular itinerary: high up some parts of the three thousand metres of the south-western Alps stand out, among which, Argentera, the "roof" of the Marittime Alps. From the Remondino refuge where nearby, ibex, chamois and stoats can be frequently spotted, the eye is captured to the west by the rocky crag that culminates in the peaks of Fremamorta, Bresses and Tablasses.

**≠** 46 (12)

**24** (15)

**≠** 40 (10)

**⊭** 14

- ▶ Pian della Casa 1760 m
- ▲ 700 m; 2 hours; path (E)
- S CAI Cuneo Section, Franca Torre  $\triangle$  15/6 – 15/9; other periods on booking
- TIT regional
- **\*** +39 0171 97327; +39 328 5440495
- @ info@rifugioremondino.it www.rifugioremondino.it ➤ South Peak of Argentera 3297 m, Nasta Peak 3108 m, Paganini Peak 3051 m

**1** 2453 m Lorenzo Bozano

In the Southern Alps, there is not one landscape that can be compared for majesty and grandeur to the one of the western side of Argentera and Corno Stella that towers over the Refuge.

The new Bozano, built near the old historic building in which the mountaineering pioneers of the Marittime Alps stayed, was built on a ship shaped base in the middle of great boulders that the architect interpreted as waves of a stormy sea.

- ► Gias delle Mosche 1591 m
- ▲ 900 m; 2.45 hours; path (E)
- CAI Ligurian Section, Marco Quaglia
- $\triangle$  15/6 15/9; other periods by booking **TIT** home cooking
- **a** +39 0171 97351; +39 328 3567556
- @ rifugiobozano@yahoo.it www.rifugiobozano.com
- Corno Stella 3050 m, South Peak of Argentera 3297 m, Catena delle Guide 2737 m

**6** 2351 m Morelli-Buzzi

You climb up to the Refuge on a mule track of the ancient royal hunting reserve that lazily snakes among centuries old larch trees. Coming out of the wood, you come across new sights every step you take: the romantic Lagarot di Lourousa, the steep side of Corno Stella, the strange head of "Sigaro". At the Refuge you will stand open-mouthed in front of the thousand metres of vertiginous rocks of Mount Stella, while towards the valley, framed by the profile of a typical glacial valley, Mount Matto rises, the castle of the highest peaks, standing at three thousand metres.

- ► Terme di Valdieri 1368 m
- ▲ 1000 m; 3.15 hours; mule track and path (E)
- S CAI Cuneo Section, Andrea Cismondi
- $\triangle$  15/6 15/9; other periods by booking regional and vegetarian dishes on request
- **\*** +39 0171 97394; +39 347 0531456
- @ rifugiomorelli@libero.it www.parks.it/rif/morelli.buzzi
- North Peak of Argentera 3286 m, Oriol Peak 2943 m, Mondini Peak 2915 m

1834 m Regina Elena

Leaning against the mountain to defend itself from the great avalanche that comes down in the spring from the deep valley of Balma Ghilie, is, without a doubt, the easiest Refuge to reach inside the Park. In the early morning it is often surrounded by chamois. The building, simple and essential, is managed with passion and cheerfulness by the voluntary partners of the National Alpine Troops Association in Genova.

- ▶ Pian della Casa 1760 m ▲ 100 m; 20 mins; path (E)
- ANA Genova section, voluntary partners
- TIT regional
- **a** +39 0171 97559; +39 010 587236
- @ genova@ana.it www.alpinigenova.org
- ▲ Ghiliè Peak 2998 m, Mercantour Peak 2775 m, Fremamorta Peak 2731 m



Last of the old style Refuges left in the Park, the Questa is particularly appreciated by those who want to taste the mountains without too much comfort. Reached by military mule tracks, authentic works of art by the military engineering, is found a stones throw away from France and along the line of the historic "Alpine Wall". From the Refuge, overlooking the perfect blue circle of the Portette Lake, the panorama that you take in is a summary of the Marittime Alps: your eyes embrace the massif of Matto and Serra of Argentera, the bold Cresta Savoia and the green Pian del Valasco.

- ► Terme di Valdieri 1390 m
- **#** 17 (10) ▲ 1000 m; 3.15 hours; trail and mule track (E), by the Valscura Lakes also by Mtb (OCA)
- CAI Ligurian Section, Flavio Poggio
- **1**5/6 15/9
- Tff regional
- **\*** +39 0171 97338; +39 347 7959051 @ gestore@rifugioquesta.it - www.rifugioquesta.it
- Testa del Claus 2889 m, Tablasses Peak 2851 m, Testa del Malinvern 2939 m



Valasco is an oasis of peace that like magic, opens out at the bottom of an impervious deep valley, dug into the sharp sides of Mount Matto and the Rocca di San Giovanni It is the core of the Park and on this wide pasture plain, Victor Emanuel II had a hunting lodge built in the mid-nineteenth century, a singular square "fort" with battlemented towers. Today this historic building has been renovated and transformed into a Refuge to offer everyone a stay "fit for a King"

- ► Terme di Valdieri 1390 m ▲ 400 m; 1.15 hours; mule track (E) or practicable also by Mtb (OC)
- 🗣 private, Flavio Poggio
- 1/6 30/9; at weekends from march to november, other periods by booking

**5**0 (4)

**≠** 48 (14)

- 🚻 regional
- **\*** +39 348 3230266; +39 011 19825118 (skype)
- @ info@rifugiovalasco.it www.rifugiovalasco.it

▲ Mount Matto 3097 m, Rocca di Valmiana 3006 m, Rocca della Paur 2972 m, South head of Bresses 2820 m, Mount Malinvern 2939 m



It is a quiet and romantic spot where the Refuge stands: sunk in a cushion of grass dotted with larch trees and rhododendrons overlooking the flat expanse of the lower

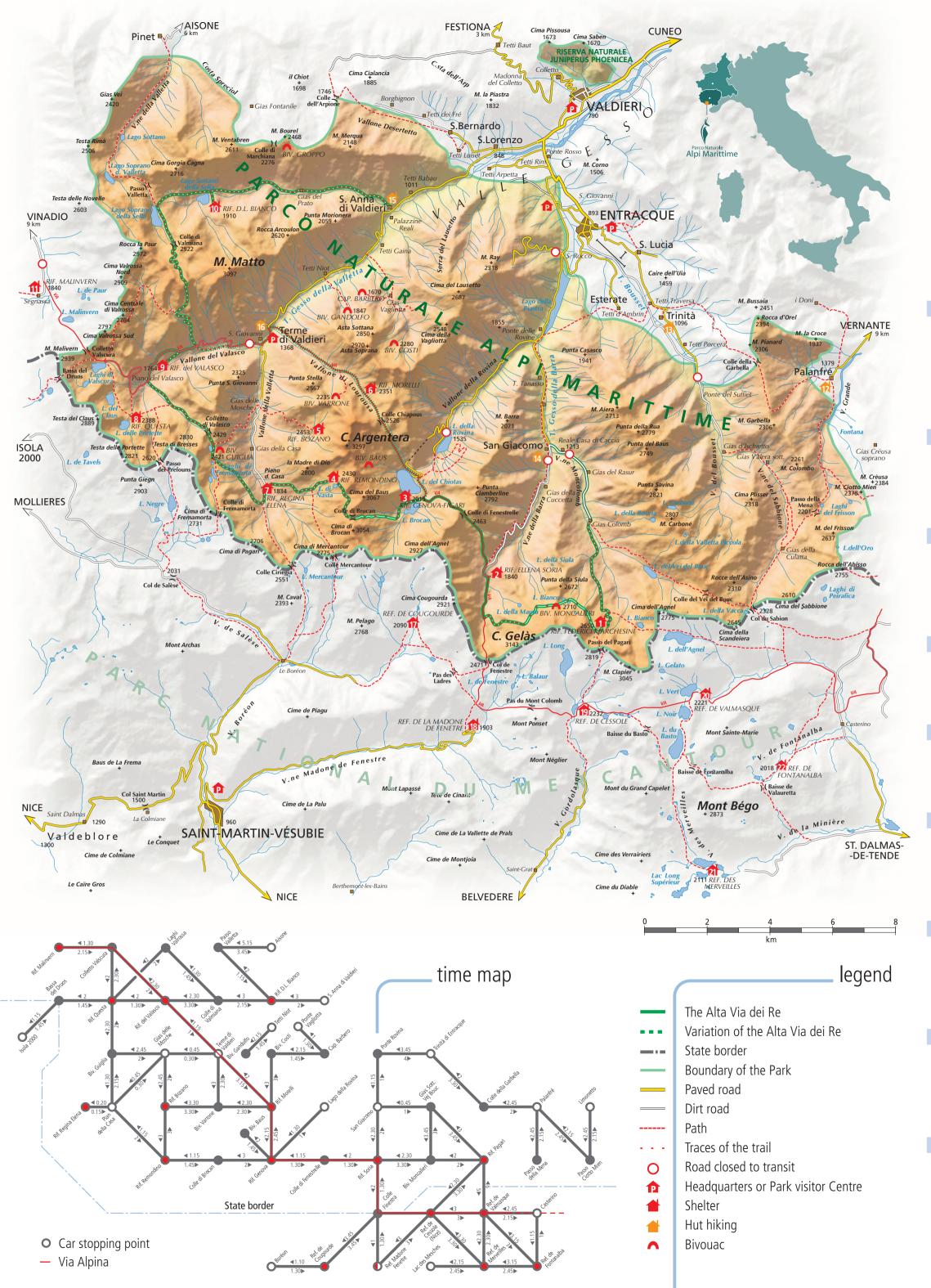
Queen Elena of Montenegro, wife of Victor Emanuel II, came right up to here to fish trout but, it is said, above all to find tranquillity and be carefree. Since then the atmosphere of the place has not changed.

- ► Sant'Anna di Valdieri 1011 m
- ▲ 900 m: 3 hours: mule track (E)
- CAI Cuneo Section, Livio Bertaina ■ 15/6 - 15/9; at weekends from march to november on booking
- TIT regional
- **a** +39 0171 97328: +39 335 5461677
- @ info@rifugioliviobianco.it www.rifugioliviobianco.it ▲ Mount Matto 3097 m, Rocca di Valmiana 3006 m, Rocca della Paur 2972 m

1839 m Malinvern - City of Ceva

If your looking for a corner of wild nature that is easy to reach, the deep Rio Freddo Valley, home to the Malinvern Refuge is the place for you. A walk alongside the river, always full of water, as well as a short walk in the shade of the majestic conifers and in the sun of the grasslands around are not to be missed. The fascinating landscape and the impressive northern side of the Malinvern dominate the scene. where the snows stay until late summer.

- ► Vinadio, Vallone di Rio Freddo 1526 m **#** 46 (8)
- ▲ 300 m; 1.15 hours; dirt track (T) practicable also by mountain bike (BC)
- CAI Ceva Section, Massimo Gemma **1**/06 – 30/09
- TIT regional
- **a** +39 0171 959605; +39 347 2725194 maxigemma@libero.it
- ▲ Mount Malinvern 2939 m, Paur Lake 2357 m, Orgials Pass 2600 m



# The Alta via dei Re Marittime Alps Tour

The Alta via dei re (upper King's road) is the crossing of the Marittime Alps Natural Park in seven stages, that touches many of the not to be missed localities in the protected area: the panoramic points, places with the richest wildlife and the most beautiful lakes. Indeed, places "fit for a King": places in some manner, linked to the House of Savoy, who came often to the Gesso Valley for nearly a century. Their presence in the area is witnessed by a great heritage of buildings, hunting lodges, monuments and above all, the dense network of roads, mule tracks and pathways along which the Alta via runs, relying on the refuges.

The itinerary, an alternative at altitude to the easier GTA itinerary, in its complete version, has some stretches (Brocan Pass, Passaggio dei Ghiacciai) of bumpy and exposed road, therefore it needs to be faced with adequate preparation and suitable equipment.

# Sant'Anna di Valdieri D. L. Bianco Refuge

«Long live the Queen»: is the historical white writing in block letters which you cannot help but read on the wall of the house in Sant'Anna from where the Via dei Re starts, trekking along the tracks of the hunting Kings of the House of Savoy. The royals passed exactly here when they were departing for adventurous chamois beatings or simply for walks: Queen Elena passed in front of the writing dedicated to her when she went to fish trout in the lower Sella Lake, on whose banks stands the Livio Bianco Refuge. The path, at the beginning quite steep, then becomes more gentle and panoramic: it crosses a basin of ample grasslands where it is also easy to spot herds and chamois, sheep and horses and then it goes out onto the banks of the lake, near the Refuge. ▲ 950 m; 3 h; Level of difficulty: easy

### D. L. Bianco Refuge Valasco Refuge, royal hunting lodge

From the Refuge, the path rises among rocky ramparts, smoothed by ancient glaciers, behind which the extended upper Sella Lake hides. A mule track that is still perfectly in use today – the King did not walk to the hunting property: he went on horseback - leads to the panoramic Valmiana Pass. With a long descent you reach the nineteenth century mansion, built at Piano del

Valasco by Victor Emanuel II. ▲ 1050 m; ▼ 1150 m; 6.30 h; Level of difficulty: easy

# Valasco Refuge, royal hunting lodge F. Remondino Refuge

Leaving the great pasture plain of Valasco behind, the path climbs among the centuries-old larch trees along the hairpin bends of the Val Morta. You go along a spectacular paved military road which through the small pass of Valasco, reaches the plateau of the Fremamorta Lakes. After skirting the lower and middle lakes in the direction of the Fremamorta Pass, a long descent leads to the Piano della Casa del Re. From here you go back up to Remondino, a point where one of the most spectacular views of the Marittime Alps opens out. ▲ 1400 m; ▼ 700 m; 7 h; Level of difficulty: easy

#### Franco Remondino Refuge Genova Refuge

From the Refuge, a real eagle's nest at the foot of the Peak of Argentera, you climb up through the 3000 metres of the massif and cross the Brocan Pass, which faces the upper Vallone della Rovina. The descent, rather demanding as it does not follow the path, as part of the ascent, passes quickly with the wonderful view from the Agnel Peak to the lakes of Brocan and Chiotas, as far as the plain. ▲ 450 m; ▼ 800 m; 3.30 h; Level of difficulty: expert hikers.

# Genova Refuge Ellena-Soria Refuge

After skirting the bank of Lake Chiotas, you climb up to a shady valley, the unique reign of ibex and chamois, which leads to the Finestrelle Pass. There the Gelas Group appears in all its grandeur, with its glaciers that reflect in the still waters of a little lake. The impressive mass of Gelas is the background of

the entire descent. ▲ 450 m; ▼ 700 m; 4 h; Level of difficulty: easy

## Ellena-Soria Refuge > Federici Marchesini al Pagarì Refuge

The mule track climes among pastures and rocks towards the border of the northern glacier of Gelas, reaching the Pera de Fener, a historical hunting property of the King. A slight track, often covered in snow well into the season, crosses the moraine; then follows a ledge, equipped with a metal cable to be able to reach the Ghiacciai Pass. From the Agnel lakes below, you continue along a route that requires a bit of attention towards Pagari. Very close to the Refuge is a botanic garden which holds the most precious endemisms of the Marittime Alps.

## Federici Marchesini al Pagarì Refuge San Giacomo di Entracque

▲ 1200 m; ▼ 400 m; 6 h; Level of difficulty: expert hikers

From this high altitude hut, you must leave early to enjoy the red dawn that reflects on the vertiginous north-west wall of the Maledia Peak. Long bends make the altitude lessen on the route of the ancient salt road "via del sale" designed in the fifteenth century by the legendary merchant Paganino dal Pozzo. The long path leads to San Giacomo, a locality in which a fine royal hunting lodge is found among monumental beeches.

▼ 1450 m; 4 h; Level of difficulty: easy

#### Valasco Refuge, royal hunting lodge Morelli-Buzzi Refuge From the Refuge, the old military road that furrows through the vast plain of Valasco

goes towards the high peaks and granite slips and then goes down to the Spa in Valdieri, with its large hotel and the *Bela Rosin* chalet, that Victor Emanuel II had built, it is murmured, to pass his nights of passion in peace. The ascent towards the Morelli is a paved snake that winds through centuries-old larches: when the curtain of the trees opens out, one of the most beautiful landscapes of the Marittime Alps: the north wall of Corno Stella and the impressive ice slide of the Lourousa gully. ▲ 1000 m; ▼ 400 m; 4 h; Level of difficulty: easy

# Morelli-Buzzi Refuge Genova Refuge

Around the Refuge the ground is disrupted by the rocks: enormous grey or reddish blocks that the mule track passes leading to the Chiapous Pass. During the climb the mass of Mount Stella overshadows, with its incredible one thousand metre height difference. On the other side of the pass the descent, exposed to the south-east is nearly "Mediterranean", with the fragrance of thyme that spreads with each step and beneath your boots is the enormous blue expanse of the artificial basin of Chiotas. ▲ 200 m; ▼ 550 m; 2.30 h; Level of difficulty: easy

Sant'Anna di Valdieri can be reached by bus from Cuneo (times: www.benese.it). To go back to the departure point a bus shuttle service is available by calling. Info: tel. +39 0171 978616; +39 0171 97397. www.altaviadeire.it