



A PARADISE FOR THOSE WHO LOVE MOUNTAINS AND WINTER SPORTS

VALTELLINA THE HEART OF THE ALPS

The Valtellina, a valley in Lombardy created by the Adda river, is a welcoming and generous land capable of conquering its visitors thanks to an irresistible combination of sport facilities, uncontaminated nature, well-being, culture, food, drinks and a lot of entertainment opportunities. Moreover, it preserves a remarkable heritage of history, culture and art still alive in each of its villages and valleys.

VALTELLINA IN WINTER

The Valtellina is waiting for you in the heart of the Alps, in northern Lombardia between Italy and Switzerland, to let you enjoy wonderful winter holidays. Its four large skiing areas: Alta Valtellina, Aprica, Valmalenco and Valchiavenna form a district that can boast internationally renowned villages such as Livigno, Bormio, Valdidentro and Valdisotto, Santa Caterina Valfurva, Madesimo, Chiesa Valmalenco, Aprica and Valgerola.

Their slopes have hosted World Cup ski races and can satisfy expert athletes.

But they also offer broad easier slopes where every skier, beginners and even children can enjoy the emotion of this wonderful sport. 400 km of groomed slopes for downhill ski and 200 km of cross-country slopes, snowboard areas and telemark, but also mountain huts and refreshing places, 50 equipment rental centres as well as more than 30 ski training schools can be found here.

The Valtellina, that has always hosted the most prestigious ski races, is longing for the most interesting event of the 2008 winter season: the final races of downhill ski, cross-country ski and snowboard taking place at Bormio, Santa Caterina Valfurva and Valmalenco.

In Valtellina the accommodation facilities have old traditions and, over time, have been largely increased even maintaining a quite high standard level.

They include hotels and bed & breakfast, guest houses and farmhouse holidays spread everywhere over the area as well as more than 100 Alpine huts along the paths and excursion routes to be enjoyed in summertime.

There are also flats, holiday homes and chalets to be rented, the ideal accommodation for entire families that can avail themselves of the same comforts of their own homes.

VALTELLINA IN SUMMER

If the Valtellina is a paradise for those who love winter sports, in Summer it invites you to experience nature in all its varieties. Climbing, trekking, mountain biking and cycling, horse riding and rafting, but also more relaxing activities such as golf and fishing, have homes in the Valtellina.

Also to be mentioned the opportunities of canoeing, sailing and windsurfing offered on lake Novate Mezzola and on the near Lake Como, the swimming pools, gyms, football pitches and tennis courts. In the Valtellina, thanks to Stelvio-Livrio glacier - 3400 m high - you can even ski all the year round.

For what concerns mountain biking, we can say that the Valtellina is considered its ideal setting, with such a plethora of biking routes of all levels of difficulty and lengths as to have become one of the best renowned and European bikers' best loved Alpine areas: from the gentle routes running at 200 metres a.s.l. of the low valley, up to the highest trails reaching 3000 metres of altitude.

A wide range of opportunities that include the hardest and most famous routes for professionals, even run by the athletes of the "Giro d'Italia" (Italian Cycling Tour), such as Mortirolo, Stelvio and Gavia. Various national and international events and competitions usually take place here, as witnessed by the Mountain Bike World Championship held in Livigno in 2005.

For golf lovers, there are three golf courses in the area, provided with modern equipment that can satisfy even the most demanding players.

In short, whether you are sportsmen or whether you love quieter physical activities, in summer the Valtellina offers you a range of sporty options and suggestions to fill your days with exciting but also relaxing and amusing experiences.

Small and larger protected areas, both in the Valtellina and the Valchiavenna, extend at least over half of the part of the territory, covering more than 250,000 hectares (about 2,500 km), and have made this valley become an untouched oasis in the heart of the Alps.

National and regional parks, reserves and protected areas have been created to preserve the environment; the Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio and the Parco delle Orobie Valtellinesi are the most well-known among them, but also the smallest areas can offer you the enchantment of this beautiful land.

All the time spent in the Valtellina is rewarded by some of the best views in the world - snowy mountains, eternal glaciers, vineyards and apple orchards - and by the purity of its air!

THE BERNINA EXPRESS

Travelling by the Bernina Express from Tirano to St.Moritz is a memorable, breathtaking experience: the train is part of the Alps's history and is going to be inscribed in Unesco Heritage.

Its journey between Italy and Switzerland offers the sight of the most beautiful mountains and glaciers in Europe.

The train twists through the mountains, both in winter, with its comfortable and warm carriages, and in summer, with open-topped carriages to allow panoramic views over the 4000m-high dazzling peaks.

Tirano is the starting point of the journey; the Bernina Express passes through the spiral viaduct of Brusio, runs along the side of Lake Poschiavo and starts climbing up to the Bernina Pass (2250 m), then it descends to St.Moritz.

The Bernina line is the highest rail crossing of the Alps and, what is more astonishing, the train climbs up without a rack mechanism and the line relies on one of the steepest natural adhesions in the world.

On 5th May 2007, the new Rhaetian Railway station of Tirano was opened together with the new panoramic carriages: the Bernina Express is going to last into the future, even if it is part of the Alps' history.

TOTAL WELLNESS AT THE SPA RESORTS

The spa resorts of Bormio and Masino in Valtellina, well-known since Roman age, make you approach to wellness and beauty thanks to the properties of their waters. Each one of their four establishments boasts peculiar characteristics and proposals that can meet all the tourists' needs.

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■ Terme di Bormio

The Terme di Bormio, over time, have increased their health and beauty treatments. Their waters, whose temperature varies between 37° and 40°, are rich in sulphate-alkaline-earthly-mineral elements. They are well-equipped with a thermal swimming pool and a large panoramic one, a solarium to be enjoyed in summertime, relaxing areas, a beauty centre with saunas and Turkish baths, outdoor swimming pools, including a special one for athletes, and an area only for children.

■ Bagni Vecchi di Bormio

The complex of Bagni Vecchi lies near Bormio, in the commune of Valdidentro. It offers an outstanding scenery with its stylish hotel and the grottoes from which the thermal waters gush out. The spa can boast 26 thermal resources such as saunas, Turkish baths, grottoes, natural hydro-massages and an outdoor panoramic swimming pool overlooking Bormio.

■ Bagni Nuovi di Bormio

A few kilometres from Bormio, in the Commune of Valdidentro, the complex of Bagni Nuovi di Bormio combines the stay in a luxury 5-star hotel with the relaxation offered by the thermal waters. The spa and wellness centre of the Grand Hotel Bagni Nuovi offers a wide choice of swimming pools and entertainment of its waters.

■ Bagni di Masino

Set in the Valmasino, the Bagni di Masino, open in summertime, is the ideal place for enjoying free time and forgetting the fatigable rhythm of the daily routine. ■

THE TRADITION OF GOOD FOOD

Cuisine plays an important role in the Valtellina. Its simple but excellent food is still cooked according to ancient traditions by the local population and in the restaurants, trattorie and farmhouses spread all over the valley, to make your holidays even more pleasant. Generally the quality of the local produces is high and most of them have the appellation DOC, DOCG, DOP and IGP. Some dishes are also renowned outside the valley, such as the "pizzoccheri", the "sciatt" and the "polenta taragna", the typical cheese DOP "Bitto" and the "Valtellina Casera", the various DOCG wines, among which the "Sfursat" just to mention one, the Bresaola IGP, the "violino di capra" and other typical salami, the flavoured IGP apples of the Valtellina and the mountain honey.

Wine-growing has always been one of the richest activities in the Valtellina; today it is spread over 2500 km of terraced areas that characterize its landscape.

From Nebbiolo grapes they produce Valtellina Superiore wines, that reach 95% of the total produce and are aged in big oaken barrels.

The DOC wines are Valtellina and Valtellina Superiore (Sassella, Grumello, Inferno, Maroggia and Valgella). The area hosting the terraced vineyards along the Rhaetian slopes is going to be inscribed in UNESCO World Heritage.

Quite characteristic are the "Crotti, natural caves for preserving food and drinks that specially feature the Valchiavenna.

In fact almost every commune has an area where the Crotti are grouped together to form picturesque structures set in the rocks and almost leaning one against the other.

Inside the Crotti, people age wine and local produces ("bresaola", sausages, "violini di capra" and cheese) and also spend time eating and drinking with friends.

Today some of them have been turned into restaurants to host tourists.

Every year, at the second weekend of September, the "Sagra dei Crotti" is held at Chiavenna, a festival rich in food and drinks, folklore, sport and culture.

More events take place all over the Valtellina to celebrate the land produces, such as the wine and food tasting organized in the most renowned tourist resorts in Summertime, the September-October kermis called "Morbegno in Cantina", to celebrate the local wine, the "Pizzocchero d'Oro", a gastronomic feast held at Teglio in mid-September.

HISTORICAL EVIDENCES

The Valtellina is a crossroads of art and culture and reveals an inestimable historical heritage rich in Longobard, Celtic, Carolingian, Lombard and Mediterranean influences. A heritage still alive from village to village, from valley to valley. It's worthwhile visiting Castel Masegra at Sondrio, Palazzo Vertemate Franchi at Piuro, Palazzo Besta at Teglio, Palazzo Salis at Tirano, the Rock Engraving Park at Grosio and Palazzo Salis at Chiavenna.

The Palazzo Salis of Tirano, one of the most important palaces of the Valtellina, has a late 6th-century styled façade, flanked by two towers and a central Baroque portal designed by Vignola. There is also an attractive garden, one of the most significant ones in Lombardia.

The artistic traditions in the Valtellina can be admired in its sacred buildings. It is rich in art and culture, evidences of the alternating and different historical and religious past events.

There are campanili, churches and chapels spread everywhere, more than 500 altogether, built in ancient times for defending the Christian faith. We would also recommend visiting the Santuario della Madonna Assunta at Morbegno, the Santuario della Madonna della Sassella at Sondrio, the Basilica della Madonna at Tirano, San Martino di Pedenosso at Valdidentro, the Collegiata di San Lorenzo at Chiavenna.

Even the traditional festivities are the expressions of this land's features and let the tourists discover the deepest history of the valley, such as "I Pasquali", an ancient religious and folkloristic celebration held in Bormio at Easter every year, where young people, dressed with the typical costumes, pour along the main streets with religious and topical-inspired allegoric works.

Getting to Valtellina

In auto: Principali strade statali: S.S. 36 dello Spluga: da Milano, direzione Lecco - Valtellina. S.S. 39 di Aprica: da Brescia, direzione Edolo - Aprica - Valtellina. Passi alpini aperti tutto l'anno: Passo Bernina dalla Svizzera 2315 m. - Passo Maloja dalla Svizzera 1815 m. - Valico del Gallo dalla Svizzera 1693 m.

In treno: Linea Trenitalia da Milano - Linea Ferrovia Retica da St. Moritz (Svizzera) con il famoso "Trenino Rosso del Bernina"

MT Bus: D'inverno collegamenti bus con gli aeroporti di Milano Malpensa - Bergamo Orio al Serio

In Aereo: Principali aeroporti: Milano - Malpensa (a 170 km da Sondrio); Milano - Linate (a 140 km da Sondrio); Bergamo - Orio al Serio (a 115 km da Sondrio).

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