

## VAL FORMAZZA, A LAND TO BE DISCOVERED

On the extremity of Piedmont, on the border with Switzerland, Val Formazza is the land of origin of the Walser community, a Germanic population that has lived for centuries in fierce isolation. Rich in magnificent landscapes, hiking trails and numerous alpine species, it is today a significant tourist destination for nature lovers, both in winter and in the summer.

 The Valley can be reached by Strada Statale 33 Gravellona Toce - Sempione, Baceno exit - Formazza.

VAL FORMAZZA

## POMATT!

**Resilience activities to emphasise agro-biodiversity and promote the local economy in Val Formazza.**

The initiative, promoted by **Istituto Oikos** and the **Municipality of Formazza** and funded by **Fondazione Cariplo**, aims to restore the local mountain potato cultivar and promote local products (potatoes, dairy products and medicinal herbs), gastronomic and cultural tourism initiatives and environmental awareness activities for students and tourists. With one objective: to tackle the depopulation of mountain areas and encourage sustainable socio-economic growth in the area of Formazza.

The protection of the land must in fact lead to concrete actions for the development of the environment and traditional culture, in synergy with local reality.

**For further information:**

[www.turismovalformazza.it](http://www.turismovalformazza.it)

[www.istituto-oikos.org](http://www.istituto-oikos.org)

[municipio@comune.formazza.vb.it](mailto:municipio@comune.formazza.vb.it)



## GUIDED EXCURSIONS

From walks in the lower valley to hikes at high altitude, all routes have been designed for all trekking enthusiasts who want to discover the beauties of Val Formazza, a unique area from a naturalistic, gastronomic, historical and cultural point of view.

## BOOKINGS:

Formazza Tourist Office, Town Hall, Ponte di Formazza.

+39 0324-63059

[prolocoformazza@libero.it](mailto:prolocoformazza@libero.it)

Book up until one day before the excursion

[www.valformazza.it](http://www.valformazza.it)

PROJECT



PROMOTED BY



FUNDED BY



## GUIDED TOURS

The excursions have been organised by the Formazza Tourist Office and ATCF (Association for Tourism and Commerce in Formazza); participants will be accompanied by expert guides from GEA VCO (Nature Guides in Verbano Cusio Ossola) and will be covered by R.C. Insurance for the duration of the excursion.

## SUGGESTIONS:

- ✓ Wear clothing suitable to mountain trekking (waterproof jacket, boots, possibly walking sticks). Bring a packed lunch and enough water.
- For additional information, visit the website [www.turismovalformazza.it](http://www.turismovalformazza.it)



## LOWER VALLEY TOURS FROM JUNE TO OCTOBER

### 1 TRADITION AND CULTURE, FROM VALDO TO PONTE DI FORMAZZA

*Duration:* 4 hours  
*Difference in altitude:* 40 m, not relevant  
*Difficulty:* T (touristic, low level of difficulty)  
*Meeting point:* In front of the Town Hall in Ponte di Formazza, at 9 am and 2 pm

The first stop of the excursion is a visit to the educational botanical garden in Valdo, to find out about little known aromatic herbs, used in ancient times by the Walser people. Three ancient varieties of Formazza potatoes are also cultivated here. These are a delicacy of the area, protected for centuries by some local families and now recovered and developed also thanks to the project *Pomatt!*.

During the excursion, it will be possible to visit "Formazza Agricola", the Pennati family farm which produces a large range of dairy products, and learn about the entire production cycle of the Formazza cheese varieties, renowned throughout the region.

The itinerary concludes at Ponte di Formazza, with a visit to Casa Forte (entrance: EUR 2, EUR 1 for visiting schools). This splendid building, dating from 1569, the only one in the valley which is entirely built in stone, was the ancient residence of the *Ammano*, the Valley's mayor and judge. Today it is an ethnographic museum documenting the Walser traditions and houses temporary exhibitions on the local culture.

### 2 THE JEWEL OF THE VALLEY, THE TOCE WATERFALL

*Duration:* 4 hours  
*Difference in altitude:* 263 m  
*Difficulty:* E (hike, medium difficulty)  
*Meeting point:* In front of the Town Hall in Ponte di Formazza, at 9 am and 2 pm

*Variant:* the route ends with the visit to the fields in Canza  
*Duration:* 3 hours  
*Difference in altitude:* 136 m  
*Difficulty:* T (touristic, low level of difficulty)

The suggested itinerary will allow participants to admire the splendid landscapes of the Valley by going through little known typical hamlets, resting at the feet of high mountains, among the brilliant colours of the fields in bloom.

The route starts from the hamlet of Ponte and goes up the valley along the river Toce, through the Brando hamlet and on to Grovella. From here, the walk proceeds on a gentle uphill slope to reach Canza. It is in this frontier village - Switzerland is only 10 km away - that it is possible to observe typical Walser larch houses, among the oldest in the Valley. This area is home to the fields of the Erbabona consortium, where aromatic and medicinal herbs are cultivated, and whose properties and traditional uses the guides will illustrate.

The last stop is a visit to one of the main attractions in the area: the Toce waterfall which, with its 143 m water drop, is the highest in Europe and, according to the Swiss naturalist Nicolas-Théodore De Saussure, "the most beautiful and mighty in the whole of the Alps".

## HIGHER VALLEY TOURS FROM JULY TO OCTOBER

### 3 BETTELMATT ALP, DISCOVERING THE OUTSTANDING FEATURES OF THE AREA

*Duration:* 5/6 hours, climbing time 2 hours  
*Difference in altitude:* 380 m  
*Difficulty:* E (hike, medium difficulty)  
*Meeting point:* Centro Fondo, Strada Statale 659, Riale - at 9 am

The excursion starts from the historical *Dorf* di Riale - the first village built by the Walsers who, in the year 1200, left the district of Goms in the Valeis - to reach the Morasco dam. From here, a very pleasant walk offers extraordinary views of the lake. After going up 300 metres in altitude, walkers reach the Bettelmatt valley (2110 m), overlooked by the Gries Pass, the historical access point from the Valois valley in Switzerland.

Here one of the excellences of the area is produced, the Bettelmatt cheese (from *bettel*, alms, and *matt*, pasture, in the Walser language), produced in the historical Alpine pasture bearing the same name. The distinctive trait of this ancient pasture land is mutellina grass (*Artemisia umbelliformis*), much appreciated by the cows grazing here from the beginning of July to mid-September. It is this grass in fact that gives Bettelmatt cheese its delicate, slightly bitter flavour, which makes this typical local product quite unique.

### 4 FROM CASTEL LAKE TO NERO LAKE: PEAT BOGS AND HIGH ALTITUDE BLOOMS

*Duration:* 6/7 hours, climbing time 3 hours  
*Difference in altitude:* 678 m  
*Difficulty:* E (hiking, medium difficulty)  
*Meeting point:* Centro Fondo, Strada Statale 659, Riale - at 9 am

An itinerary of high natural and botanical interest, starting from the hamlet of Riale, framed by the Lepontine Alps at 1718 m of altitude. From here a path, steep but manageable also for those who are less fit, rises 400 m in altitude to reach Castel Lake. The path skirts the lake and then slopes down towards Ghighele Alp (2125 m), where it is possible to observe the last stages of the ecological life of lakes: peat bogs, ancient small lakes covered by vegetation. This is a very important site because of its biodiversity, as demonstrated by the richness of the local flora and vegetation: from eriophorum to white-petal parnassia, from carnivorous *Pinguicula leptoceras* to marsh violets.

Once over Ghighele Alp, the walk continues in the direction of the suggestive Nero (Black) Lake (2428 m), overshadowed by the sombre Corno Talli peak. The lake is reached after going over a number of clear brooks and a natural fortification made of plates of smooth grey rock. The path is undemanding and well sign-posted.



### 5 THE "KARST" AREA IN FORMAZZA: VAL TOGGIA, BODEN LAKES, REGINA ALP

*Duration:* 6 hours, climbing time 3 hours  
*Difference in altitude:* 501 m  
*Difficulty:* E (hike, medium difficulty)  
*Meeting point:* Centro Fondo, Strada Statale 659, Riale - at 9 am

*Variant:* bypasses the stop at the Boden lakes  
*Duration:* 4/5 hours  
*Difference in altitude:* 501 m  
*Difficulty:* E (hike, medium difficulty)

This pleasant excursion starts from Riale and goes up 400 m in altitude to reach the glacial step, above which the deep Toggia valley can be found, with the lake and dam of the same name.

The path climbs towards the North, up to Castel Alp, crossing a unique landscape: the entire valley is made of karst crests and sinkholes, and the calcareous substrate allows the growth of species absent from other parts of the Valley such as, for example, edelweiss.

The path leads to the two delightful Boden lakes, and then goes down again towards the Toggia lake, reaching Regina Alp where, in the summer, the cows of the Scilligo family graze. Here we will find out about life on alpine pastures and, if the herdsman is available, we might be able to observe some production procedures.