

## THE LOWER VALLEY, A LAND TO BE DISCOVERED

The Dora Baltea stream, the tributary of the Po River that models its bed in the middle of the valley, descending from Mont Blanc, finally arrives to Piedmont, thus indicating an ideal route in the territories of the Lower Aosta Valley; from the Montjoet stronghold to Pont Saint Martin, passing through the medieval villages of Verres and Issogne, Arnad and Hone and Bard up to Donnas, an intense journey through history can be enjoyed, among centuries-old vineyards and chestnut groves, uncontaminated valleys full of charm, Roman and medieval vestiges, unique traditions and flavours.

The valley floor, which was the ancient route of the Via Francigena and the Via delle Gallie, shows many bridges and towers, several castles and majestic homes, as solid and silent witnesses of the past.

Beyond the Bard Fort, it is worth stopping to visit the medieval castle of Verres, the Renaissance castle of Issogne and the eighteenth-century Vallaise castle of Arnad; it is crucial do not miss the Romanesque bridge of Echallod and the famous Roman bridge of Pont Saint Martin, the scene of a suggestive legend whose protagonists are the Devil and the Nymph of Lys.

Then there are many cycle and pedestrian itineraries; paths and mule tracks have been traced over time following the streams, going up the valleys of Gressoney, Ayas and Champorcher, crossing small and large villages, and permitting to see and visit ancient buildings, churches and chapels.

In this sector of Aosta Valley are present easy routes and others more challenging ones, such as the paths in the Mont Avic Park and the ones in the Mont Mars Reserve; at a lower altitude it is a great experience to climb the thousand steps that from the Outrefer hamlet of Donnas permit to reach Pourcil and Cormone; moreover it is really nice the mule track to go to the sanctuary and fort of Machaby or to enjoy the very easy path named "Costa dei Vigneti" from Donnas to Albard and Perloz.

The Lower Aosta Valley has several surprising itineraries to be discovered not only in summer, but also in spring and autumn.