

THE TOCE FALLS

The Toce Falls is a major naturalistic attraction of the Verbano-Cusio-Ossola Province; with its sheer drop of about 143mt (469ft), it is the second tallest cascade in Europe.

The falls are powered by the Toce river, formed in the Riale plain, in the heart of Formazza Valley, from the Hosand, Gries, and Rhoni tributaries flowing into it.

The history of the Toce Falls and its renowned hotel has always been strictly linked to another history, begun with Ferdinand de Saussure, the Swiss semiologist keen on romantic and pioneering mountaineering exploration in 1777, then carried on by the American theologian Reverend Coolidge and the Swiss climber Gottlieb Studer with the same purpose, not to forget Arthur Cost, acknowledged like the father of the mountaineering, and the Milanese Riccardo Gerla, named the "Ossola's Apostle", along with his committed guide, Lorenzo Marani.

Quite a number of eminent visitors, like the musician Richard Wagner, the poets Gabriele D'Annunzio and Giosuè Carducci, the Italian monarchs Queen Marguerite and King Vittorio Emanuele II, and the Abbot Francesco Stoppani, visited and loved the Toce Falls. All of them reported, through enthusiastic descriptions, what was already depicted as the most wonderful waterfall of the entire Alpine chain. The path skirting the waterfall, undeniably charming, is a stretch of the Gries trading road that had been linking Milan and Berne over the centuries.

The Waterfall is a 143m high cascade, falling over a sloped, rocky ledge of about 200mt; it is 20mt wide on the top and 60mt at the base. The drop is a craggy step, carved into the gneiss of a Lebedum slope of rather solid lithotypes, made of metarenites and metaconglomerates, with the massive presence of stretched quartz veins.

The majestic view of the Waterfall can be appreciated at summertime only – according to a timetable – as the water is used to produce electric power.