

PIAN DI SPAGNA AND MEZZOLA LAKE NATURE RESERVE

We now have the opportunity to visit a Nature Reserve established by the Lombardy Region in 1983 to ensure a suitable environment for the stop and nesting of migratory avifauna, to protect and maintain the natural and landscape features of this peculiar wetland, and to regulate and control the tourist and didactic use of a fragile environment. We are in the northernmost part of Lombardy on a small plain, with a surface area slightly smaller than 1600 hectares, located at the confluence of Valtellina and Valchiavenna, between Mezzola Lake and the northern portion of Como Lake.

This area is quite flat, and it is located at about 200 meters above sea level. The Nature Reserve extends between the provinces of Sondrio and Como and includes five municipalities: Sorico and Gera Lario (Como), Dubino, Verceia and Novate Mezzola (Sondrio).

Three mountain groups with different features originate in the Pian di Spagna area: to the north-west the Lepontine Alps with the rocky slope of Monte Berlinghera (1930 m asl) which seems to descend into Mezzola Lake; to the north-east the Rhaetian Alps with the granite peaks that surround the Valle dei Ratti and Val Codera and with the squared rocky spur of Sasso Manduino (2888 m asl); to the south the long chain of the Orobic Alps, with the scenic north side of Mount Legnone (2609 m asl) closing the horizon.

The territory of the Pian di Spagna - Lago di Mezzola Nature Reserve is recognized as a Site of Community Importance (SiC, code IT2040042) and is part of the "Natura 2000" European Ecological Network, which represents a complex of places characterized by the presence of habitats and species both animal and plants, of community interest, whose function is to ensure the long-term survival of the biodiversity present on the European continent.

Walking through the Pian di Spagna area, you will not fail to notice the large white antennas pointing towards space! In fact, we are not only close to a beautiful nature reserve but also close to an internationally renowned aerospace research center!

The Lario Space Center, located in the municipality of Gera Lario and clearly visible throughout the Pian di Spagna area, has been operational since 1977. It covers a total area of 80,000 square meters, of which 5,000 are covered by buildings and labs. In the Center there are 40 transceiver antennas and 20 receivers and about 50 technicians work there.

The first activities carried out at this center were the Ku-band propagation experiments through the Italian satellite Sirio 1, and the creation of analogue telephone and television connections with the Americas and the Middle and Far East countries through Intelsat satellites. Even today this center is at the forefront for the management and control of telecommunications, furthermore the Lario Space Center is a well-known scientific pole in the sector of in-orbit control of satellites and for acquiring data from space as a ground station for the second and third generation Meteosat satellites.

In short, in Pian di Spagna, not far from natural beauty, there is an advanced aerospace technology at the forefront of Europe!