

## GROSIO ROCK ENGRAVINGS PARK

We now have the opportunity to visit a site modeled since ancient times by the forces of nature and human action! The Grosio rock engravings park is a unique site where on giant boulders modeled by the ancient glaciers that descended here, our ancestors recorded scenes of hunting activities and social life.

The site dominates the south-western side of Grosio, near the border with Grosotto, marked by the Roasco stream. After Grosotto, the road crosses the bridge over the stream, leaves Val Grosina and follows a long straight road with the church of San Giuseppe, the bell tower and the first houses of Grosio in the background.

Here the glacial morphologies are paradigmatic and are mainly represented by large sheepback rocks (also named "Roche moutonnée"). Sheepback rocks are bare rock bumps, smoothed over and over by the erosive action of a flowing glacier.

In the Grosio site the rock is of a phylladic nature, veined with white quartzite, and is generally covered by a blanket of thin and discontinuous soil; the maximum degree of denudation and glacier modeling is reached by the suggestive "rupe magna", called "whale" in the past for its shape resembling a whale's back and for its large size. In fact, this large sheepback rock is 84 m long and 35 m high and is located in a dominant position which makes it visible even from the valley floor. The "rupe magna" was shaped by a glacier that flowed slowly but relentlessly over it, dragging huge quantities of debris and rocks at its base. Therefore, large boulders advanced under the enormous weight of the ice above, impressing numerous linear grooves on the rock surface, up to 1-2 centimeters wide and up to a few meters long, still visible today where the rock is free of debris and vegetation cover.

The traces left by man are added to the glacial modeling! A system of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of prehistoric engravings, dating back to an era between the Neolithic and the second millennium BC, has been found in this place, with the first discovery in 1966.

The recurring subjects, which show partial analogies with those of the much more famous and celebrated rock engravings of the Camonica Valley, include anthropomorphic figures, often in groups; hunting and social life scenes, involving priests and warriors armed with spears, tridents, shields and helmets; symbolic or abstract geometric figures, not always easy to interpret; hemispherical cavities described as cupel or "coppelle" obtained by tapping the rock surface most likely with a lithic striker, given their generally semicircular section without sharp edges; finally, combinations of domes and geometric and anthropomorphic figures.

Based on the types of representation, the scientists consider "rupe magna" as a place of worship for the prehistoric populations of Valtellina. Among the incisions, the presence of choral anthropomorphic groups such as the six "dancing" or "praying" men supports this hypothesis.

The engravings remained covered by a thick layer of soil and grassy land and they were only recently exposed thanks to heavy work of excavation and analysis.

The area is now a park managed by a consortium of local authorities (Sondrio Provincial Authority, Tirano Mountain Community, Grosio and Grosotto Local Councils) in close cooperation with the research and conservation programmes of the Archaeological Superintendency of Lombardy.