

Welcome to the Park

Italy's oldest protected area extends over 72,000 hectares (178,000 acres) in the Graia Alps, straddling two regions: Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta.

In the course of a long story that began in 1922, many people have contributed to the conservation of an extraordinary environment, which has always been a favourite destination for climbers, excursionists and vacationers.



The summit of the Gran Paradiso, 4061m high and entirely in the Italian territory, is the heart of this Park, which is one of the most important at international level: in 2007, in fact, it was awarded the European Protected Areas Diploma.



It is a member of the Alpine Network of Protected Areas, an international organization for the protection and the enhancement of the protected zones of the Alps.

The slogan "a great project between conservation and development" means to take action to improve the quality of life without altering the natural equilibrium.



Every valley has its riches

The Park is comprised of five main valleys, two in Piedmont and three in Valle d'Aosta, and each valley has visitors centres and tourist offices providing information.

Let us take a look at the centres of special interest.



The **Orco Valley**, small villages uncontaminated mountains. This is the point of departure of the great Alpine tracks that wind along the southern slopes of the Gran Paradiso.

Your journey up the valley, through Locana and Noasca, is accompanied by the impetuous Orco torrent and the waterfalls of the side streams, up to Ceresole Reale, a jewel set amidst the "toothed shiny peaks" celebrated by Carducci.

The **Environmental Education Centre of Noasca**, open year round, proposes natural itineraries, educational programs, seminars and courses, for every need and all types of user, with accommodations for the night.

In summer, along the Nivolet road, automotive traffic is strictly controlled, do not miss the series of events organised on the occasion.

The **Soana Valley** has spots that bring back the flavour of ancient ways of life. Folklore and architecture, excursions through the woods, past semi-deserted villages, and, further up, endless prairie and rocks, stretching as far as the eye can see.

Not to be missed, the **Ecomuseum of Copper**, in Ronco Canavese, housed in an ancient forge, from the end of the seventeenth century, restored by the Park to illustrate the techniques used to give shape to the precious metal.

The **Cogne Valley**, where every detail matters, from hospitality to handicraft shops. But nature reigns, with glaciers, shelters, bivouacs, the magnificent cross-country ski track, the walls to climb and the meadows of Sant'Orso that will fill your eyes with wonder as they stretch out all the way to the surrounding crests.

If you go to Valnonye, in the summer, you can visit the **Paradisio Alpine botanical gardens**, with more than 1000 species cultivated in their natural habitats.

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Ribordone proposes the discovery of religiousness in the valleys of the Park, and **Ronco Canavese** dedicated to biodiversity and traditions.

Along the provincial road of Colle del Nivolet, at **Serra**, they set up for the summer an exhibition on high-altitude landscapes and the international trail of Colle della Losa.

Opening soon, in **Valerato Soana** in Loc. Campiglia, a botanical garden dedicated to the plants cultivated locally and mountain farming practices.

The **visitors centre of Cogne** invites you to discover the relationship between Man and the Environment and the repercussions of artificial interventions on nature. The centre of Valsavarenche is dedicated to the lynx, to the wolf and to predators in general: their ecological role and how they help maintain the natural equilibrium. A new centre, to be inaugurated presently in Loc. **Rovenau** will focus on the conservation of watercourses.

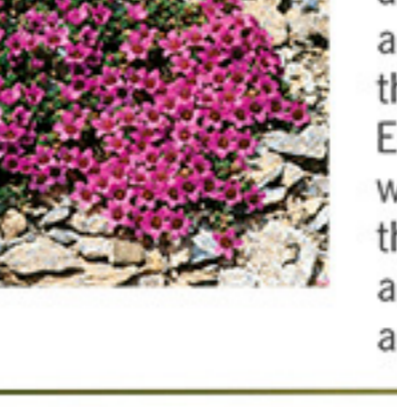
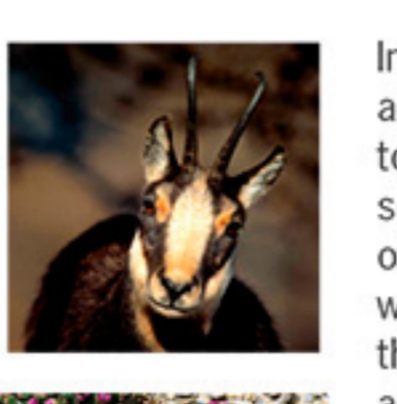
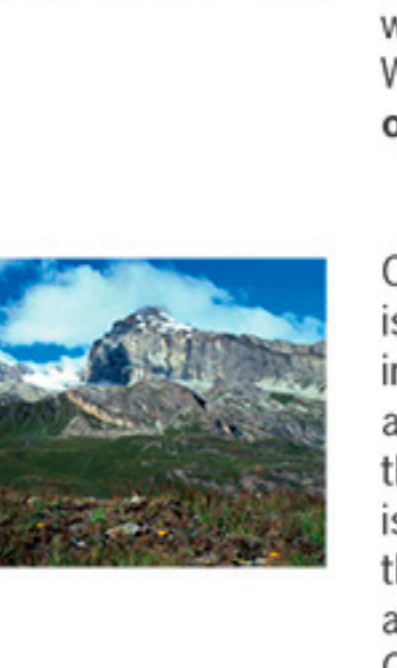
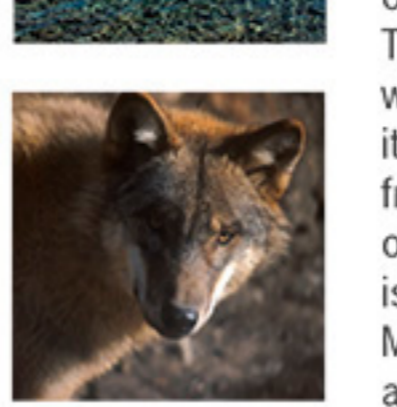
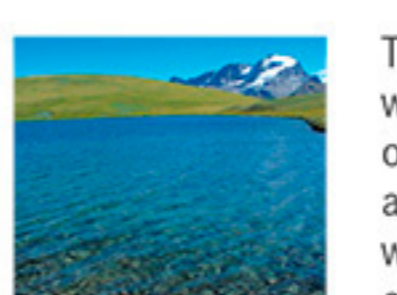
Rhêmes-Notre-Dame proposes an exhibition on the lammergeier, a vulture that had become extinct in the region in the early twentieth century, and is now flying across our skies thanks to a European repopulation program.

A park made to measure for you

For an unforgettable adventure in the Gran Paradiso Park, to savour new experiences while enjoying yourself and learning new things, seek the assistance of the official and exclusive Park Guides. These highly competent professionals specialising in the Alpine area and especially in the protected area can plan your activities by taking into due account your individual interests and needs.

They will ensure your peace of mind and safety as you venture into the natural habitats and will help you learn what a Park is all about, how it works, and what it means.

Alpine house at **Vaudalitz**, at an altitude of 2444m, in the Rhêmes Valleys, restored by the Park Organization.



The **Valley of Valsavarenche** is synonymous with the history of the ascents to the top of the Grand Paradiso: the Victor Emmanuel II and the Federico Chabod shelters were the starting points of the most renowned expeditions.

The only valley to be entirely comprised within the boundaries of the Park, it represents the wilderness that people seek from deep within: uncontaminated corners of rare splendour, where nature is oftentimes exciting and severe.

Magic the year round, genuine and silent as in the old times, it is a valley where you will find much to learn, much to discover.

Well worth a visit are the **Royal Hunting Lodge of Orville** and the **Nivolet plains**.

Open and sunny, the **Rhêmes Valley** is the ideal choice for people interested in a relaxing environment and taking long walks. In winter, the cross-country ski trails are one of the best known attractions; the Saint Georges Horse Centre offers a unique opportunity of riding through the woods. Of special interest are the wetlands around the **Pellaud Lakes**, but a short distance beyond Rhêmes-Notre-Dame.

Imagine you are ascending from the 600m altitude of the villages on the valley floor to the summit of the Gran Paradiso: setting out from the cool and shady woods of deciduous trees, you would reach an expanse where larches are few and far between, then the area where the blueberry and the rhododendron bushes grow, and eventually you would get to the prairie that leaves rocky and glaciers bare. Each environment has its typical fauna: wherever you go, walk in silence, the animals are in hiding but keep an eye on you and you may get to meet some of the big and small residents of the Park.

To request an activity with the guides of the Park, go to website www.pngp.it/en/interpreters

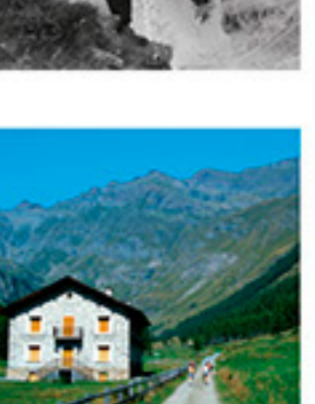
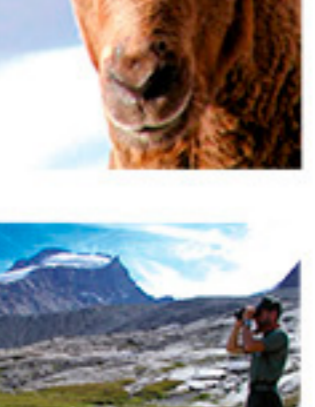
Hiking in the mountains, even if you follow a trail, always entails some risks, depending on the environmental, orographic and meteorological conditions. To approach the mountain in a responsible manner, avoiding rash behaviour, such as stopping under slopes from which stones and boulders may fall, it is advisable to inquire about the conditions of the trails from the information offices and from visitors centres, check the weather forecast, wear the appropriate clothing and boots. If something unexpected occurs, if you come across hazardous obstacles or difficult stretches beyond your capacities, do not try by your lark, go back. The Park offers you a thousand different opportunities.

Countless sporting activities can be practiced in the Park, and you can live interesting experiences in a natural setting, especially in winter. Always keep in mind that you are in a protected area and sporting activities should never have a harmful impact on the environment and the plant and animal species. Alone or with a guide, you can practice:

- Hiking, naturalistic trekking, high-altitude mountaineering, excursion rings every season of the year. We recommend that you seek the assistance of a Guide and, in any event, always inquire beforehand about the conditions of the trails.

Alpine climbing, with some of the best ascents to the Gran Paradiso and the other peaks of the group.

- Horseback excursions and trekking.
- Ski touring
- Sport climbing, which can be practiced on the legendary rock walls of Valle Orco or at fully equipped climbing gyms available in every valley.
- Icefalls
- Bikes and MTBs are excellent means to enjoy nature through a sustainable approach.
- Cross-country skiing in the silent woods of the Cogne, Ceresole, Rhêmes and Valsavarenche circuits.
- Alpine skiing, without disturbing the wild animals that in winter go through the most delicate period for their survival.
- Downhill skiing.
- Snow shoeing.
- Water sports: you can practice rafting, canoeing, kayaking, hydrospeed in Villeneuve and Aymavilles; windsurfing, canoeing, kayaking in Ceresole Reale.



The symbol of the Park is the **Alpine ibex**, the wild goat saved from extinction when, in 1856 – in the area that is now the very heart of the Park –, King Victor Emmanuel II established the Royal Hunting Reserve.

The long history of the Park, from the 1920s to this day, speaks of an unwavering commitment to the protection of the natural environment and its emblematic animal species.

Thanks to a thoughtful policy of conservation it proved possible to reintroduce these animals in other Alpine areas.

All the ibexes that now inhabit the Alpine chain therefore come from the Gran Paradiso. The Surveillance Corps of the Park monitors the movements of the animals on a daily basis and the Scientific Service takes care of research and management tasks.

... and centuries of culture

The life of the Park began way back, in the prehistoric era. Different cultures prevailed over the years, the mountains were the setting of wars, of hardships as well as happier, flourishing times.

Each village bears the signs of the centuries past. The Roman aqueduct of **Pondol** (in the Cogne Valley), the **Fortress of King Ardenin** in **Sparone**, that dates back to the year 1000, the **Tellaria** and **Ferranda Towers** in **Pont C. se** (Orco Valley), the **Sarriod Castle** of **Introd**, the settlement of **Rhêmes-Saint-Georges**, from the 15th-18th century. **Religious** feelings have found expression in these valleys through frescoes, chapels and tall shrines. Ancient traditions, folk costumes, and a thriving handicraft industry narrate in every valley the life of the olden days. Nor should we forget the recipes of the **local cuisine**, that can be tasted in the restaurants of the various locations.

... and centuries of culture

Adult males of **Alpine ibex** (*Capra ibex*)

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In the heart of the Park

Aosta, a Roman city, and the towns of the valley floor with their great castles are among the greatest attractions of the Aosta Valley.

From Aosta you can reach Courmayeur, whence you can climb to the top of Mont Blanc and then descend to Chamonix, the lively French sister of Courmayeur. On your way back, you would be well advised to visit the historic centre of Ivrea, celebrated for its Carnival, among the interesting sights, the old bridge of Roman origin and the Castle built by Amedeo VI of Savoy, called the "Green Court".

Places to visit near Ivrea include the five lakes of glacial origin Sirio, Nero, Pistorio, Campagna and San Michele.

If you are planning a visit to the Piedmont side of the Park, take the time to visit Turin, the Olympic city, and its surroundings, with the baroque palaces and the Savoy mansions of Stupinigi and Venaria Reale.

Paradise is here

Paradise is here

Dos and don'ts

As guests in the home of nature it is advisable to treat delicately and to follow a few rules of good behaviour dictated not only by the Park Regulations but also by common sense.

- **Animals** must be left where they are: all of them, even bugs, contribute to the great biodiversity of the Park.
- **Wild animals** must never be approached or disturbed in any way.
- **Plants, mushrooms and minerals** must not be removed: they are part of the richness of the environment. But you can pick berries and eat them on the spot.
- **To discover the Park** it is a good idea to walk along the mule tracks and the trails, without wandering off the track for reasons to do with your safety and the preservation of the environment.
- **Dogs** are not allowed into the Park, save for some roads along the valley floor and some routes marked out by the Park Organization in summer. In any event they must be kept on a leash.
- **Waste materials** must be brought back from your excursions and disposed of in the appropriate bins.
- **Fires** are dangerous. They can be lit solely in specific equipped areas.
- **Camping** is permitted only in organized camping grounds.
- **It is not possible** to camp freely within the boundaries of the Park.

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Photo: Park archives
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Visitors centres and permanent exhibitions

Eight visitors centres offer a valuable information service to people visiting the Park and help them gain some initial knowledge about the environment through exhibitions centred on naturalistic and historic themes.

In **Piedmont** at **Ceresole Reale**, at the prestigious premises of Grand Hotel, the "Homo et IbeX" show illustrates the relationship between men and wild goats since the prehistoric era.

At you can learn to decipher the shapes of the landscape, i.e., gain an understanding of the agents that modelled the mountains and the valley floors.

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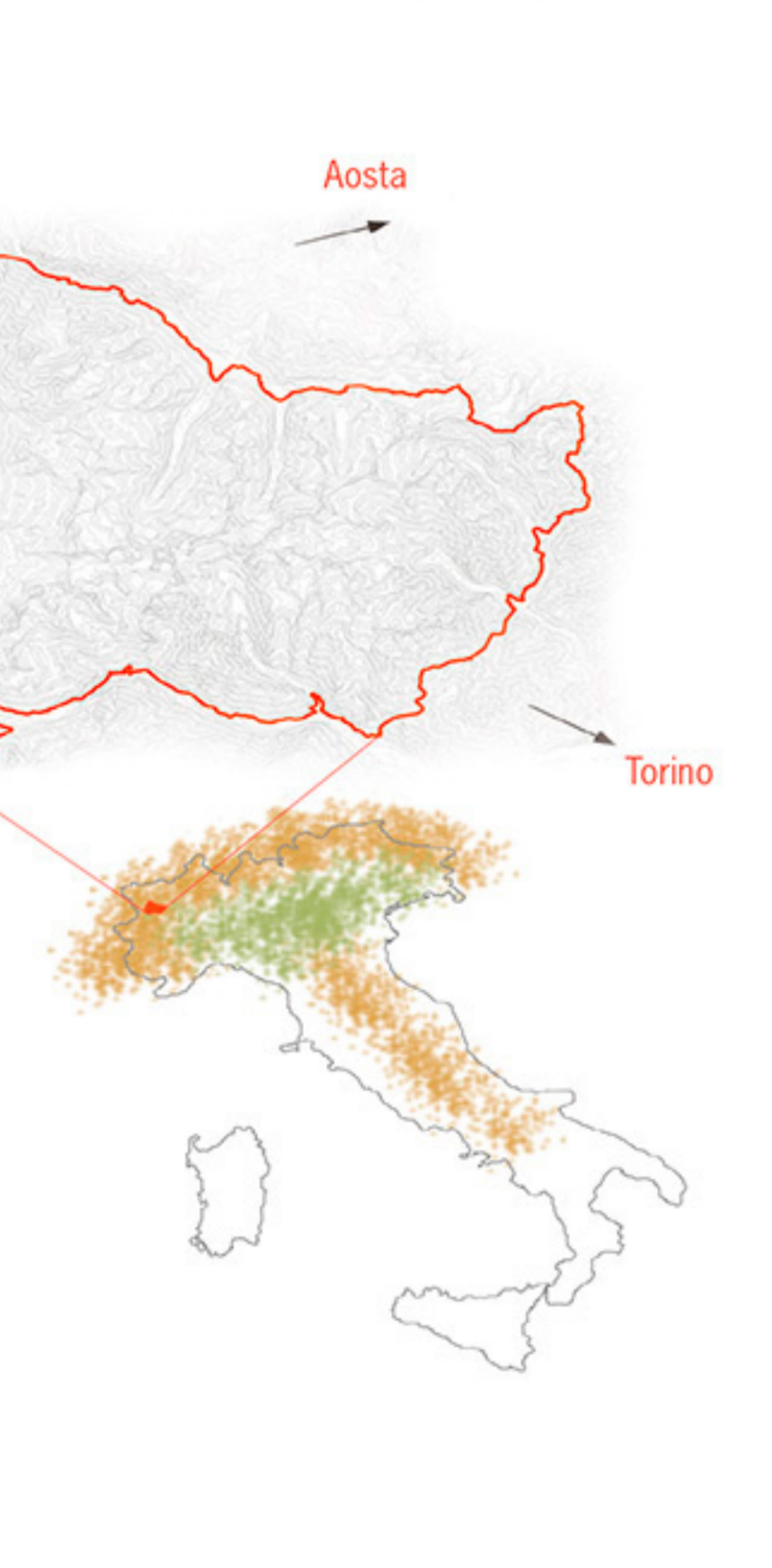
Alpine house at **Vaudalitz**, at an altitude of 2444m, in the Rhêmes Valleys, restored by the Park Organization.

The natural scenario

Located in the North Western Alps and straddling the border between the two Italian regions of Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta, the Park is mostly comprised of alpine territory, at altitudes ranging from 800 m on the valley floors to the 4061 m peak of the Gran Paradiso.

The climate is continental, characterised by cold winters and hot summers.

From December through May, most of the land is covered with snow and the temperature easily drops below zero, whereas in the summer the temperature is mild. Larch and fir forests, vast meadows, rocks and glaciers add up to the ideal habitat for a rich and diversified fauna and the best place to go exploring the wonderful world of the alpine highlands.



... how to reach us

You can get to the Park both by car and by public means transport (see <http://www.pngp.it/en/visit-park/how-reach-us>)

By car
The Piedmont valleys of the Park (Orco and Soana) can be reached from Turin and Ivrea. The valleys in the Valle d'Aosta region (Cogne, Savarenche, Rhêmes) can be reached by motorway from the city of Aosta.

By train
The Piedmont valleys of the Park can be reached by public means of transport departing from the railway stations of Turin, Ivrea and Pont Canavese. The Valle d'Aosta side can be reached by public means of transport departing from the railway station of Aosta. For information on train timetables and routes: http://www.fsitaliane.it/homepage_en.html

By bus
The Piedmont valleys of the Park are served by GTT lines (<http://www.comune.torino.it/gtt/en/>). The Valle d'Aosta valleys of the Park are served by SAVDA lines (<http://www.savda.it/en/>)

By plane
The Park is serviced by the international airports of Torino and Aosta, cities which are linked to the Park by public means of transport.

THE PARK: AN EXPERIENCE WORTH LIVING



www.pngp.it/en

... how to go around it

The Park promotes a form of tourism that is friendly to the environment: in this connection the Park proposes a wide range of initiatives:

Bike sharing "in the clouds"
With its project "Walking in the Clouds," the Park promotes a "soft" mobility, regulating the use of the road that leads to the Nivolet Hill (on Sundays in July and August) and encouraging people to go on foot, by bike or bus shuttle.

A mountain bike rental service has been activated in Ceresole Reale and all the valleys on the Valle d'Aosta side of the Park operate a free bike sharing service.

To learn more:
Tourist office 011-8606233 info@pngp.it

Collective taxi cabs/TrekBus
Collective means of transport are also available for transfers between the valleys and to go from the train stations and the airports to a number of mountain shelters.

To learn more:
Tourist office 011-8606233 info@pngp.it

The Park is certified ISO 14001, and has been granted the highest recognition accorded in Europe to companies and organisations committed to the continuous evaluation and improvement of their environmental efficiency: EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme – promoted by the European Community with EC resolution no. 1221/2009).



... how to experience it

Alpine Pearls
Two places, Cogne (on the Valle d'Aosta side) and Ceresole Reale (on the Piedmont side), have received a prestigious international recognition by being included in the Alpine Pearls network of tourist locations proposing eco-compatible mountain vacations, as a sustainable form of tourism that guarantees the integrity of the environment and the authenticity and the beauty of the landscape. (<http://www.alpine-pearls.com/en/home.html>)

The quality label
By certifying the quality of accommodation facilities, restaurants, craftsmen, food and wine producers and tourist services that are committed to the highest standards of quality and sustainability, the Park enables consumers to choose products that are guaranteed to originate from the Park and to have been produced through quality processes. The facilities that are accorded the quality label ensure first rate services and courtesy muted to respect for the environment and local traditions.

www.pngp.it/en

