

Advised: Bike / Car

Route's type: Landscape - Culture

Main touched localities : Pisogne - Breno - Capo di Ponte - Cerveno - Cividate Camuno - Esine - Monte Campione - Ponte di Legno



Just beyond the northern side of the lake, the view enters mountains which seem to touch the sky.

The Valcamonica is a natural paradise, stretching out for 80 km from the banks of Iseo Lake up to the snows of the Tonale. It has a wealth of rare flowers and wild animals, protected in the great Adamello park. The Valcamonica is a land with long-standing traditions, typical and wholesome products. It was once inhabited by the Camuno people, who left their history written on the rocks. There are thousands of incisions expressing a wealth of magic and symbolism.

The Camuni studied the course of the stars, honoured the “Deer God” and lived by hunting. They were not warriors and the Romans conquered them without excessive difficulty, indeed they made them into their allies in this border area. The greatest concentration of prehistoric rock graffiti known in Europe is to be found in the archaeological area: scholars and enthusiasts from all over the world come to visit the more than 170 thousand rupestrian inscriptions discovered to date and catalogued by the Camuno Centre for Prehistoric Studies. The huge rocks which were smoothed down more than a million years ago by the gigantic glacier which stretched down from the Adamello mountain and mountains to the north to occupy the whole basin of the lake, rise up in a large chestnut and birch wood in the National Park of Rupestrian Inscriptions at Capo di Ponte.

The ancient hunters living in the valley carved scenes from daily life, symbolic, magical and propitiatory figures into these rocks. The presence of the Roman world is evident, emerging constantly in the inscriptions.

At Cividate Camuno, once the proud city of Civitas Camunorum, an amphitheatre has recently been brought to light among the houses of the old town, a short distance from the River Oglio. It is this river, which then gives life to Lake Iseo, which marks time with its gurgling waters and has given the valley a common lot. On the rocky spur of Breno, a mighty castle recalls the continuous battles for control of the road along the valley. For many centuries the art of working wood and the incessant rhythm of looms have been part of life here, and there is a strong sense

of history in the valley.

The footpaths once echoed with the sound of pilgrims making their way to places of worship long ago, when the world and knowledge was summed up in a cycle of simple and colourful frescoes of delicate innocence.



At Ossimo, Esine and Berzo Demo the churches also attracted pilgrims from far away, in search of peace, silence and faith. At Cervo a spectacular Via Crucis is conserved in the parish church, carved into wood two and a half centuries ago. If the valley was once visited by the devoted, today it is visited by those seeking diversion, who make their way to the furthest extremity, Ponte di Legno and the Tonale pass, driven by their enthusiasm for skiing and winter sports, or by the desire for exciting excursions through the eternal snows of the Presena glacier.

Traditions are conserved with love. While in Ponte di Legno artistic and religious objects are carved just as they were centuries ago, in Boario the thermal springs praised by Alessandro Manzoni are still visited, while in Bienno the forges continue to make the earth tremble rhythmically.

The waters flow, moving ancient machinery, while for centuries agricultural implements, spades and buckets have been produced with the same unchanging skill and speed. Valcamonica is truly a land of infinite memories.

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