

Valle del Bitto di Gerola Homeland of Bitto cheese

Dug out by the deep furrow of the Bitto di Gerola stream, this valley is cloaked in flourishing forests of deciduous trees and conifers that are home to a rich fauna, including roe deer and the rare capercaillie. The alpine pastures defend their lower borders against these spreading woods.

This is an extensive valley, full of wild nooks and crannies and dotted with small villages surrounded by meadows and clearings. Here and there numerous historic buildings testify to the rural life that for centuries has lived in close contact with the natural resources. Agriculture and forestry have always defined life in the valley. The produce of its pastures has always been the pride of local traditional culture, of which Bitto is the prime example. This unique cheese is only produced on high pastures during the summer months.

At the head of Val Gerola, the skiing resort of Pescegallo and its namesake artificial lake share the view of the harsh and imposing pillars of rock called Denti della Vecchia. Above the settlement of Gerola Alta you find the harsh beauty and rock spurs of Valle della Pietra, higher up is Valle dell'Inferno, which reaches up to the Pizzo dei Tre Signori, where the provinces of Sondrio, Bergamo and Lecco meet. Here wind, water, snow and shine have carved the rock deeply and molded such dramatic surrounding as Pizzo Tronella and the Torrione di Mezzaluna. In the midst of these surroundings, the dams of Trona and Inferno stand out, whilst outstanding features of this landscape such as Lake Zancone and Lake Rotondo have remained unspoiled in their splendor. To complete the landscape, many confident ibex find their ideal habitat here.

FOSSIL FINDINGS

Val Gerola also holds fossil records dating back to the Permian period (285 mya), in particular prints left by reptiles and marine invertebrates. Especially important is the find of the *Cassinisia orobica*, a species of fossil conifer new to science, similar to some modern day araucaria. The *Cassinisia* once grew along the banks of swamps and waterways. Some of these fossils can be viewed at the Morbegno Civic Museum of Natural History.



Park structures

La CASA del TEMPO - Visitor center

WHERE Val Gerola Eco-museum (parish church of Gerola) – via Nazionale 31 – Gerola Alta – tel 393 8644223
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC In summer, on request for groups

Entering the *Casa del Tempo* is like stepping back in time to rediscover the history of the Orobic Alps and Val Gerola in particular. Despite the sometimes confused and fragmented traces, this fascinating journey goes back many millions of years. The *Casa del Tempo* is where the marks of time have been collected, starting from geology, through animal and plant life all the way to humans and the history of their lives. This is the ideal starting point of the Val Gerola Eco-museum.

Center of the Bitto Storico in Gerola Alta



Bitto cheese

This cheese is the symbol of all artisanal food production in these valleys. It is produced in the mountain pastures at altitudes between 1400 and 2000 meters, in full respect of the traditions that give it its worth. It is a fat cheese made with milk fresh from the cow and often includes goat's milk. The grass of these pastures and the traditional cheese making techniques, that allow for over five years seasoning, make this a unique and highly valued product. Since 2007 Gerola Alta has been home to the "Slow Food Presidium", named "Centro del Bitto Storico" and in 2010 the "Consorzio Salvaguardia Bitto Storico" was created with the intent of maintaining the pastures that still produce Bitto in accordance with traditional methods.

To celebrate and promote the King of Valtellina Cheese, every year on the third Sunday of September the famous Sagra del Bitto is held in Gerola Alta. Here, along with other initiatives, the various stages of production are shown.

For further information: www.formaggiobitto.com

Calécc

Botanical gems

Whilst the center section of the Orobics is home to the endemic *Sanguisorba dodecandra* and *Viola comollia*, amongst the higher rocky ridges of the western side can be found the *Androsace brevis*, another rare botanical entity. This endemic species can only be found in a fairly small distribution area: outside of this corner of the Orobics, it only grows beyond Lake Como in a confined area of the Lepontine Alps and on a few peaks of the southern side of Valchiavenna. The *Androsace brevis* forms small pulvino in high altitude rocky or grassy environments, usually sunlit and windy. On rock faces, in the area, you can also find the uncommon *Androsace vandellii*, another species that is both tough and pretty.



Androsace brevis



Androsace vandellii

The Val Gerola Eco-museum

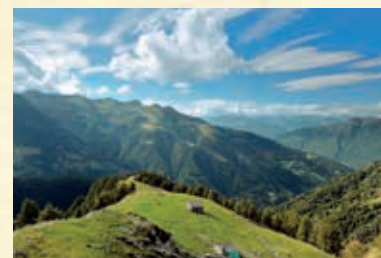
This museum recounts the age old relationship between man and the mountain environment of this valley and helps promote its survival: this is a way to help remember, preserve and spread the traditional roots and culture of the local population. The practices in agriculture and animal husbandry, the use of woods and mines have created a deep bond between the people and the natural resources of Val Gerola. Over the course of the year the Eco-museum oversees the organization of fairs, cultural events, educational activities and guided tours for all ages.

For further information: www.ecomuseovalgerola.it

Making of Bitto cheese in a calécc



Lago di Culino



Hamlet of Gerola Alta - ABOVE DOSSO CAVALLO in Valle di Bomino

Lago del Verrobbio, 2000 m



Homo salvadego in Sacco

HOMO SALVADEGO

In Sacco, inside an ancient building that has been restored and turned into the *Homo Salvadego* Museum, you can admire the *camera picta* dating back to the XV century. Amongst the paintings in this former barn, there stand out the figures of a young page drawing a bow and a man covered in a bristling coat of hair, holding a wooden club. This is the famous *Homo Salvadego* a recurrent figure in alpine mythology, who bears the message *Ego sonto un homo selvadego per natura chi mi offende ge fo pagura*. On the north wall is depicted a Deposition from 1464. Floral decorations run all around the walls, depicting stylized plants and moralizing sentences in Latin and Italian. The museum can be visited on request: Comunità Montana Valtellina di Morbegno, 0342 605311.

RECOMMENDED ROUTES

1 - Tour of the lakes - Trona/Zancone/Inferno

DIFFICULTY Average	STARTING POINT Pescegallo, 1454 m
ALTITUDE GAIN 661 m	RECOMMENDED SEASON June - October
TIME OF ASCENT 3.30 h	

This tour will allow you to see the lakes of the valleys of Pietra and Inferno, outstanding features of Val Gerola's landscape. From Pescegallo you go to the basin of Tronella and then proceed up the steep path that leads you to the small Pozza del Pic, situated on a natural terrace overlooking the Rhaetian Alps. After reaching the Lago di Traona, you skirt around it and continue on to Lago Zancone, one of the most beautiful glacial lakes in the Alps. You then proceed around the Lago di Trona on the valley side and climb up as far as Lago dell'Inferno and Rifugio F.A.L.C.

2 - Path of the trenches - Pescegallo/Passo di Verrobbio

DIFFICULTY Average	STARTING POINT Pescegallo, 1454 m
ALTITUDE GAIN 572 m	RECOMMENDED SEASON June - October
TIME OF ASCENT 3.00 h	

This outing allows you to admire the eloquent view from the head of Val Gerola, taking us back to the alpine battles of World War I. After a long ascent and after having passed the artificial lake of Pescegallo, you carry on to Passo del Verrobbio, an ancient transit road where you can see the gun platforms dug out of the living rock, remnants of the Great War. From here, with a detour of about an hour into the Bergamo Alps, you can reach Rifugio Cà San Marco.



MOUNTAIN HUTS/SHELTERS

- Rifugio Casera di Trona Soliva** (Comune di Gerola Alta) località Alpe Trona Soliva cell 351 5907013
- Rifugio Alpe Stavello** loc. Alpe Stavello – cell 334 7652242 info@alpestavello.it
- Rifugio della Corte** località La Corte – cell 340 3433090
- Rifugio F.A.L.C.** (CAI Milano) località Bocchetta del Varrone (LC) cell 331 7884452 - cell 328 3432751
- Rifugio Salmurano** Foppe di Pescegallo tel 333 3839040
- Rifugio Cesare Benigni** (CAI Piazza Brembana - BG) Lago dei Piazzotti tel 0345 89033 - cell 340 7714820
- Bivacco Alpe Piazza** (Comune di Rogolo) left open
- Rifugio Ronchi** (Comune di Bema) Bema – località Ronchi tel 333.6719038
- Locanda Ca' Priula** (Com. di Albaredo per S.Marco) Albaredo per San Marco tel 0342 014688 - cell 393 9295314
- Rifugio Alpe Piazza** (Comune di Albaredo per San Marco) – loc. Casera Alpe Piazza cell 338 4647620
- Rifugio Ca' San Marco** below Passo San Marco - BG tel 0345 86222

RECOMMENDED ROUTES

3 - Tour of the pastures - Alpe Olano/Alpe Culino

DIFFICULTY Average	STARTING POINT Rifugio Della Corte, 1259 m
ALTITUDE GAIN 533 m	RECOMMENDED SEASON May - October
TIME OF ASCENT 2 h	

This outing will lead you through some of the pastures where Bitto is typically produced. Starting from Rifugio Della Corte, a well-marked mule track takes you to Tagliate di Sopra and from there to the foot of Alpe Olano. Continue to climb, then cross the level pastures until you reach Casera di Olano, from here follow the Gran Via delle Orobie for an easy stretch towards Alpe Culino. The path then drops sharply in the direction of Bar Bianco, brushing the Regional State Forest end then reaches the road. At the first hairpin bend you will find a detour that takes you back to Rifugio Della Corte. This walk is rich in naturalistic interest: roe deer and black woodpecker are often found in the spruce woods between Bar Bianco and Rifugio Della Corte.

HOLIDAY FARMS

- Agriturismo Bar Bianco.** – (ERSAF) – Rasura – loc. Alpe Culino – tel 329 4019065 - tel 320 0833373
- Agriturismo L'Eco.** – Cosio Valtellino – loc. Dossa tel 346 0045546
- Agriturismo Volpe Golosa.** – Cosio Valtellino – loc. Dossa tel 349 8384498 - cell 329 6621831

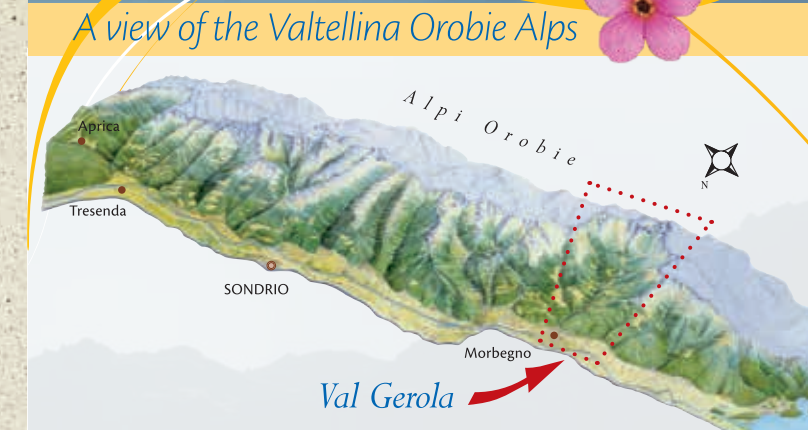
Useful contacts

- Consorzio Turistico Porte di Valtellina** – piazza Bossi 7/8 - Morbegno tel 0342 601140 - infopoint@portedivaltellina.it, www.portedivaltellina.it
- Ufficio informazioni turistiche Pro Loco Gerola Alta** – via Nazionale 5 Gerola Alta - tel 393 8644223 - Seasonal opening
- Museo civico di Storia naturale di Morbegno** – via Cortivacci 2 - Morbegno - tel 0342 612451 - www.comune.morbegno.so.it/museo
- Ecomuseo della Valgerola e Centro visitatori Casa del Tempo** via Nazionale 31 - Gerola Alta - (Comune di Gerola Alta, tel 0342 690024). For educational activities tel +39 329 2318302 info@ecomuseovalgerola.it - www.ecomuseovalgerola.it

For further and more detailed information we recommend you read "Guida al Parco Regionale delle Orobie Valtellinesi" by Mario Vannuccini, Lysis publishers; "Alpi Orobie Valtellinesi", curated by Guido Combi, Fondazione L. Bombardieri (books only in Italian); Parco delle Orobie Valtellinesi, coffee-table book curated by Elio Della Ferrera, Bonazzi Grafica (Italian/English).

GUIDED TOURS WITHIN THE PARK

- Alpine guides and medium mountain Guides.** are official Guides of the Parco delle Orobie Valtellinesi. Groups and individuals wishing for guided tours and hikes may contact the Park Center at +39 0342 211236 Web page: www.parcorobievalt.com
- Valgerola Ecomuseum.** The museum offers a series of "practical didactics" courses for schools, group activities, creativity courses for adults as well as summer and winter field trips. For further information call: cell +39 329 231 8302



www.parcorobievalt.com

Nella culla del Bitto

Parco delle Orobie Valtellinesi
via Moia 4, 23010 Albosaggia (SO)
tel 0342 211236
info@parcorobievalt.com

Valle del Bitto di Gerola



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- Holiday farm**
- Restaurant or rest stop
 - Information
 - Rooms
 - Museum
 - Restaurant or rest stop
 - Rooms
 - Parking
 - Only authorized parking*
- * Access to all roads closed to regular traffic is regulated by local authorities. For further information and updates: Comune di Gerola Alta 0342 690024, Comune di Pedesina 0342 651767, Comune di Rasura 0342 616006, Comune di Cosio Valtellino 0342 634111, Comune di Bema 0342 618000
- * These roads are generally dirt tracks and a 4x4 vehicle is recommended.