

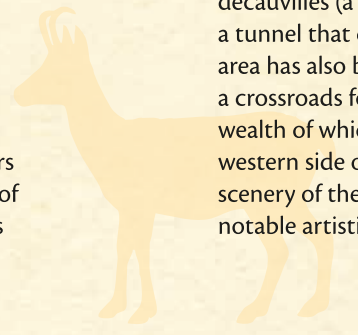


# Val Venina The iron valleys



The catchment area of Venina stream takes in Val Venina, Val d'Ambria and Val Caronno, also called Val di Scais, which is in turn split into Val Caronno and Val Vedello, all flowing into the same furrow just behind Piateda. Here you find some of the highest peaks in the mountain chain, such as Pizzo Redorta (3038m) and Punta di Scais (3038m), as well as the two glaciers of Porola and Redorta. This valley has a typical alpine environment, with extensive conifer woods giving way to alpine pastures at higher altitude, home to ermine (the stoat in his winter coat), ptarmigan and mountain hare, who dare the winters resorting to camouflage. Since ancient times this corner of the Orobie has been exploited and shaped by man for its

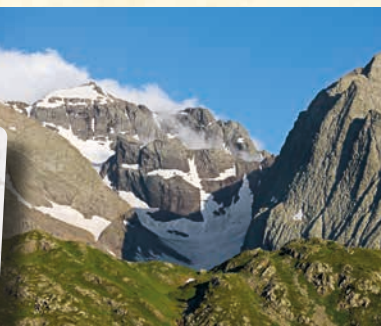
natural resources, first for mining then for hydroelectric power, leaving works that have gained a cultural and historic value over time. This territory is marked by the infrastructures linked to the hydroelectric plants: the power plant of Venina, the imposing dams of Venina and Scais, numerous decauilles (a narrow-gauge railway with portable tracks), a tunnel that connects Val Venina to Valle del Livrio. This area has also been intensely exploited for mining and as a crossroads for trade, that has brought with it a certain wealth of which some traces remain: Ambria, door to the western side of Val Venina, and Agneda, that opens onto the scenery of the eastern side, still have works and buildings of notable artistic value.



Village of Ambria - ABOVE Crocuses

Capanna Mambretti, 2003 m

**THE "CINQUE CIME"**  
The territory of Val Venina includes the Coca-Scais-Redorta massif, which is the best area for mountaineering in the Orobie according to the experts. The so called "cinque cime" is the most sought after trail for climbers, it takes in Pizzo di Coca (3050m — the highest peak in the Orobie), Dente di Coca (2924m), Pizzo di Porola (2981m), Punta di Scais (3033m) and Pizzo di Redorta (3038m).

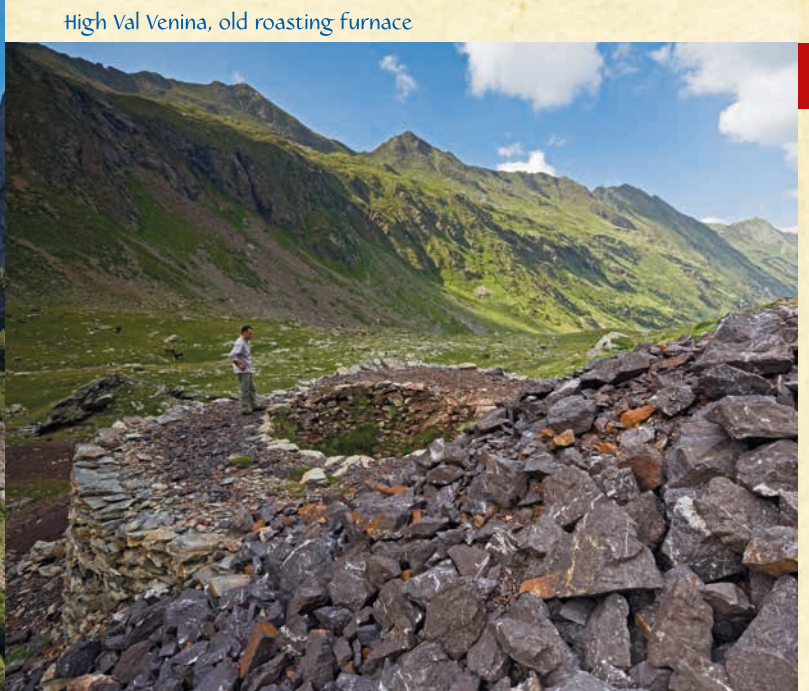


Pizzo Redorta, top of Val di Caronno

**GIOVANNI ANDREA BONOMI (Agneda 1860 - 1939)**  
Any mountaineer who climbs the trails and the peaks of Val Venina can't but know Giovanni Andrea Bonomi, the mountain guide from Piateda. Born in 1860, son of Giovanni Angelo Bonomi, who was also a guide, he was amongst the first to lead the English mountaineers, come to the Orobie to discover "his" valley. The most famous amongst these include the president of the Alpine Club, Douglas Freshfield, thanks to whom the fame of Guida Bonomi spread beyond the Channel, and prince Scipione Borghese. Last but not least, his friendship with professor Bruno Galli Valerio (Lecco 1867 - Losanna 1943), lecturer at the University of Losanna, who Bonomi often accompanied through the peaks of Val Venina also opening new routes, such as the first historic climb to Punta di Scais from the western side.



Alpe di Caronno  
Black grouse



High Val Venina, old roasting furnace

## The History of iron

On the eastern side of Val Venina, at over 2000m, there are iron mines that have been exploited since the 1300s all the way to the 1800s, despite periods of inactivity. The iron was in part smelted here or taken to Valle del Livrio through the Passo dello Scoltador, probably due to a greater availability of wood, indispensable in the first stages of treatment of iron ore.

To this day, at 2229m, you can see a melting furnace, marked by a sign from the Park — see picture. The intensive exploitation of the area has led to an unusual environmental trait: the immense quantity of timber required for the first treatment of iron lead to centuries of extensive logging, causing a much lower treeline compared to other valleys in the Orobie, a thing that cannot be attributed to climate.



## Botanical pearls

Both *Sanguisorba dodecandra*, *Orobie's burnet*, and *Viola comollia*, *Comollia's violet*, the botanical gems of the Park, can be found in Val Venina. Endemic to the Orobie, these species equally divide the territory: *Sanguisorba dodecandra* inhabits damp hollows, whilst *Viola comollia* grows on screes at high altitude. These plants also share the same discoverer, botanist Giuseppe Filippo Massara (1792-1839), author of the book "Prodomo della flora valtellinese".

*Viola comollia*



*Sanguisorba dodecandra*



## RECOMMENDED ROUTES

### 1 - Capanna Mambretti

DIFFICULTY Average  
 ALTITUDE GAIN 876 m  
 TIME OF ASCENT 3.00 h

STARTING POINT Agneda, 1373 m - Val Venina  
 RECOMMENDED SEASON June - October

The hardships of the climb that takes you from the settlement of Agneda to Capanna Mambretti will be amply repaid when, having reached the top, you can admire the majestic panorama of the valley. From Capanna Mambretti you look out over Vedretta di Porola surrounded by Pizzo di Scotès, Cima di Caronno and Punta di Scais. The climb itself offers some points of interest as well, first of all the sight of Lago di Scais, an artificial reservoir, in whose green waters Pizzo del Salto is reflected.



Lago di Rodes with Scotès, Scais and Redorta mountains in Val Caronno

### 2 - Campelli - Pizzo Meriggio

DIFFICULTY Average  
 ALTITUDE GAIN 1042 m  
 TIME OF ASCENT 3.00 h

STARTING POINT Campelli, 1316 m  
 RECOMMENDED SEASON June - October

This route takes you from Campelli di Albosaggia, through the larch woods, to the summit of Pizzo Meriggio, 2358m. From this peak you can a 360° view over Val Venina and Rhaetian Alps. This route is also a renowned ski mountaineering slope.



#### MOUNTAIN HUTS/BIVOUACS

- **Rifugio Mambretti** (CAI) left open: 4 beds – keys on demand: 25 beds – the keys can also be found (at the lodge) at Diga di Scais: tel 0342 452525 www.cai.sondrio.it - 0342 214300
- **Rifugio Alpini** (ANA Piateda) - località "Piane" Gusmeroli Luigi cell. 348 7234261
- **Rifugio Gino e Massimo** località Grioni (Com. Ponte in Valt.) 18 beds – in winter reservation requested: Mauro Berniga, cell 349 0848821, 349 2515925
- **Rifugio Donati** (CAI) www.cai.sondrio.it – not catered keys on demand: Donati Amerino e Arialdo cell 0342 482000; Cai Sondrio 0342 214300
- **Rifugio Baroni al Brunone** (CAI) Marco Brignoli cell 345 4608973 tel 0346 41235 – www.caibergamo.it
- **Bivacco Gianmario Lucini** (Comune di Piateda) Val d'Ambria left open - not catered
- **Campeggio Dosso del Grillo** (Comune di Ponte in Valtellina) località Dosso del Grillo Dino Mottini cell 366 1239305

## RECOMMENDED ROUTES

### 3 - Val d'Ambria - Val Venina

DIFFICULTY Demanding  
 ALTITUDE GAIN 1105 m  
 TIME OF ASCENT 7 h

STARTING POINT Ambria, 1325 m - Val Venina  
 RECOMMENDED SEASON July - October

This pleasant circular route has many points of interest, under both natural and cultural aspects, and leads to the discovery of the remains of metalworking in the higher valley. From the town of Ambria you climb towards Baita Zappello, then proceed through the areas of Baita Dossello and Alpe Cigola until you get to Passo Brandà (2430m). From the pass you can easily see the outline of the ancient mule track that runs through Passo di Scoltador, once used to carry iron ore into Val Venina for smelting. From Passo Brandà you head down towards Alpe Venina; along the way, before you reach the alps shelters you go past "il Forno", where you can see one of the old melting furnaces still in good state of repair. From here you climb down until you get back to Ambria.

#### HOLIDAY FARMS

1. **Agriturismo Fiorenza**. – Piateda – loc. Fiorenza - via Chiurasca tel 333 6278592
  2. **Nonna Aurelia**. – Piateda – loc. Busteggia – tel 340 3595297
  3. **Ca' Orlandini**. – Ponte in Valtellina – Ca' Orlandini, loc. Briotti tel 333 4520322
  4. **Az. Agr. Meriggio**. – Albosaggia – via Gerone 12/A – tel 347 8089140. www.meriggioequitazione.it
  5. **La Masun di Mustach**. – Albosaggia – loc. Ca' Boscacci tel 339 2548931
  6. **.6a. Stella Orobica**. – Albosaggia – loc. Torchione e loc. Lago della Casera tel 328 7531375 - 0342 510161 – www.stellaorobica.it
  7. **Terra del Sole**. – Albosaggia – via Caselle 25 – tel 0342 211043 www.alloggiterradelsole.it
- Useful contacts**
- **Consorzio Turistico Sondrio e Valmalenco** – Via Tonale 13 - Sondrio. tel 0342 219246 - info@sondriovalmalenco.it, www.sondriovalmalenco.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 0342 211236. Web page: www.parcorobievalt.com



[www.parcorobievalt.com](http://www.parcorobievalt.com)

The iron valleys

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