



3- Locana and the Gran Paradiso National Park.

The Northern side of the Locana region is set inside the heart of the Gran Paradiso National Park: those who love the mountains and untouched nature cannot fail to be enchanted by the landscape.

The emblem of the Park is the ibex or mountain goat, majestic but diffident, with its characteristic long curved horns: This is the only place in Europe where you will have the exciting opportunity of seeing them in their natural habitat. Today there are about 3000 living in the park, but not long ago, they were almost extinct. In order to protect them from poachers, in 1856, the King Vittorio Emanuele the Second declared part of the area as a Royal Hunting Reserve, and in 1922 it became the first of all the Italian National Parks.

The protective measures applied in the Park have ensured the safety of not only the mountain goat population, but also roebucks, chamois deer, woodpeckers and owls, fox, marmots and even wolves, whose return has been confirmed just recently. Edelweiss, gentians, and mountain lilies, forests of larch, fir, and stone pine cover the mountain sides, and lower down is alpine pasture land scattered with mountain chalets and age-old villages, witness to the history of the population that has lived in these mountains for over a thousand years.

The Locana area includes the large valleys of Valsoèra and Piantonetto, as well as several very high mountain peaks with sheer rock faces that drop for hundreds of metres: Torre del Gran San Pietro, Becchi della Tribolazione, Becca di Gay and many others.

Well-traced mountain tracks organised for crossing the Alps (Grande Traversata delle Alpi and Alta Via Canavese) provide long trekking itineraries for several days completely immersed in the magnificent natural surroundings, with accommodation available in mountain refuges and huts along the route.

Summer or winter, on foot, or on skis, whether climbing or walking, the visitor is constantly enchanted by the magnificent scenery that opens up before him in a magical atmosphere that seems suspended in time.

At the head of the valley, Vallone del Piantonetto is the Teleccio artificial lake that feeds the imposing hydroelectric dam of Iride Energia di Torino, formerly AEM. Starting from the lake, within 45 minutes you can reach the Pontese mountain refuge, which is the base camp for trekking or rock climbing in the area where there are a large number of high mountain rock faces.

Comfortable and welcoming, the refuge has been recently renovated and can easily accommodate up to forty people. The refuge includes a shop selling traditional local products and a restaurant with a delicious menu able to satisfy the healthy appetites of those who have spent a day mountain climbing!.

One of the most popular resorts for Nordic skiers, especially because of the easy slopes is the Cialma Alps. It can be reached by passing through the Carello Alps- where the current Locana public ski facilities are located, and then on through dense larch forests. This leads to the slopes of the Alps. The top can be reached on foot or by cross-country skiing, continuing along the mountain ridge among isolated chalets: this is well worth the effort since the view from this point is breathtakingly beautiful. The view ranges from the Canavese plains as far as the peaks over 4.000 metres high in the Gran Paradiso massif, the highest mountain range completely within Italian borders.

For those who prefer fast track sport to the solitude of cross-country skiing, they will find the best slopes in Val d'Orco in the Carello Alp ski resort facilities.

When there is a lack of snow, canons are used to create artificial snow for the slopes, and for those who like moonlight skiing, the slopes are lit up at night.

About three kilometres of slopes are equipped with two ski-lifts, one for 300 metres and the other for 700: wide gentle slopes make this perfect not only for skiing but also for bob sleighs, sleds and snow boating.

Access to the slopes is made much easier and quicker for children, beginners and for the not-so-energetic thanks to a 64 metre magic carpet ski lift: and there is also a very pleasant refuge-café for something to eat and to warm up between runs.