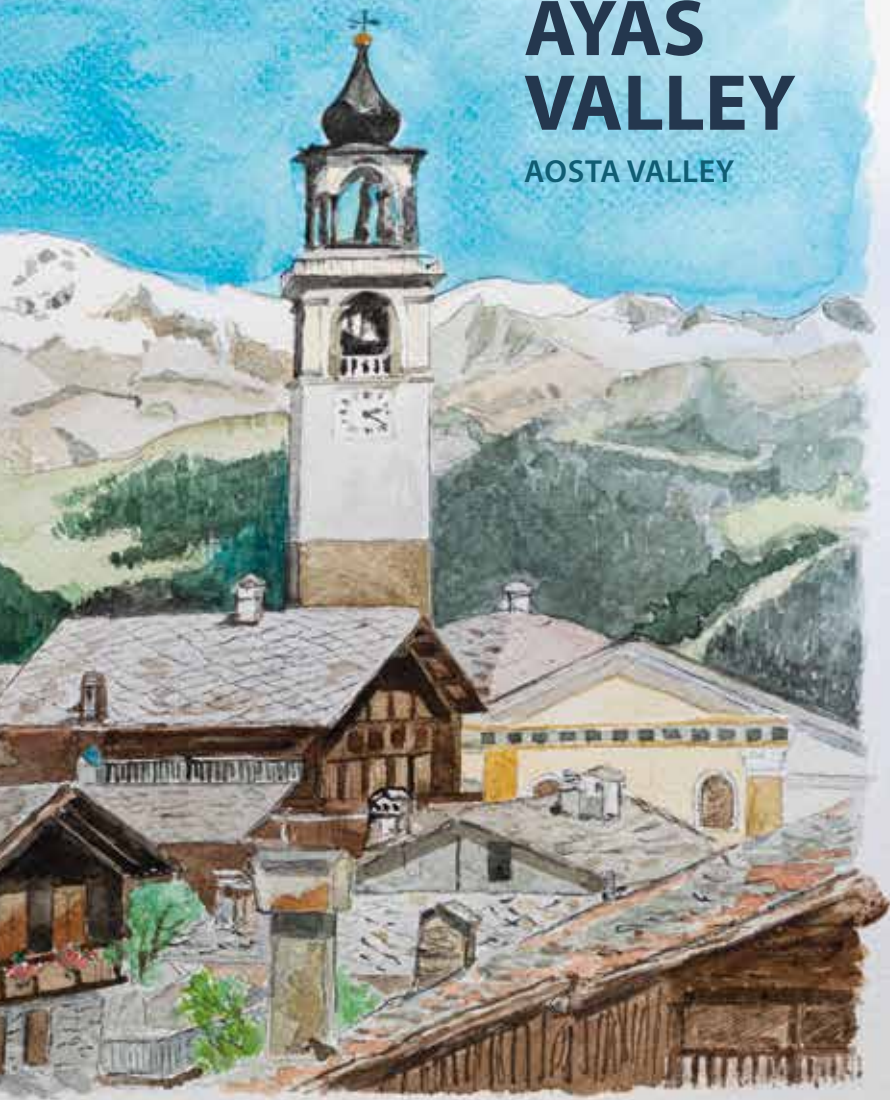




# AYAS VALLEY

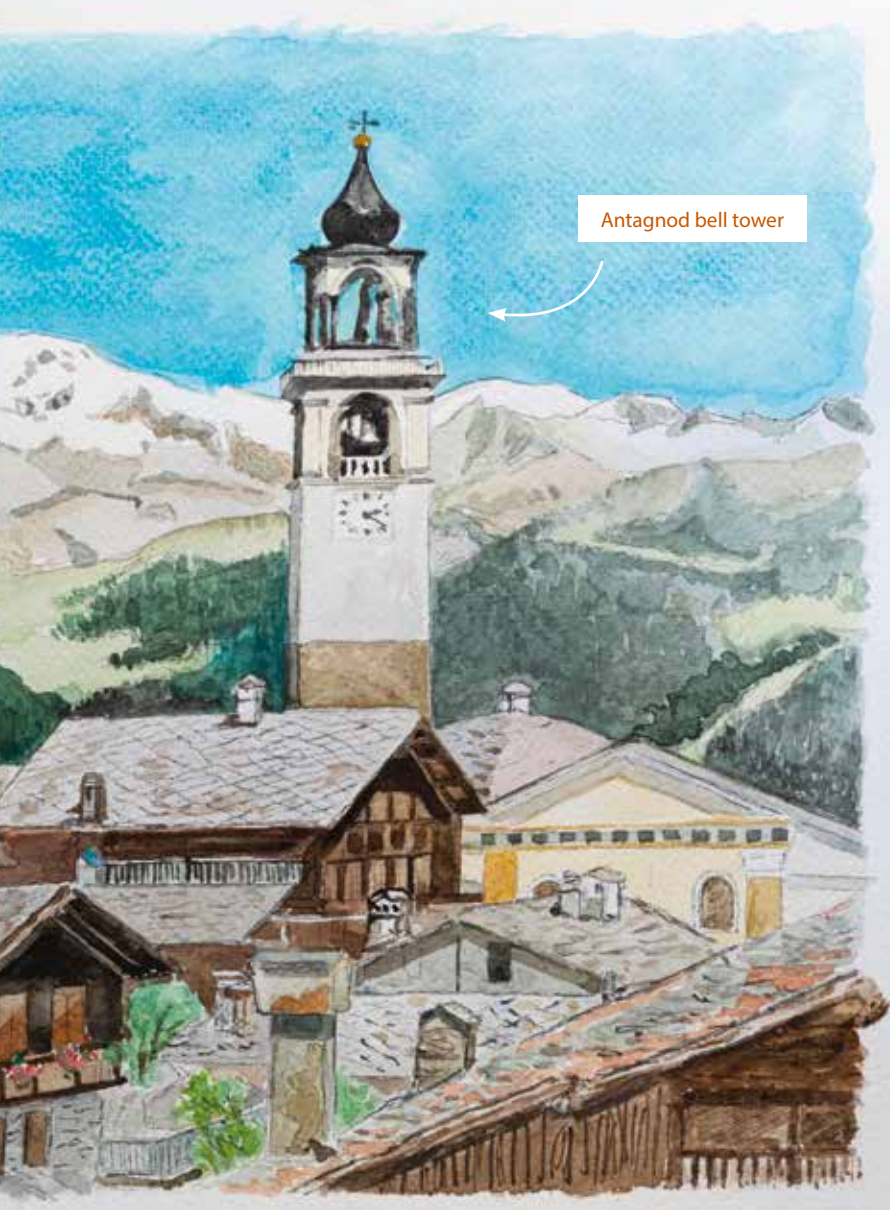
AOSTA VALLEY



Monte Rosa mountain range

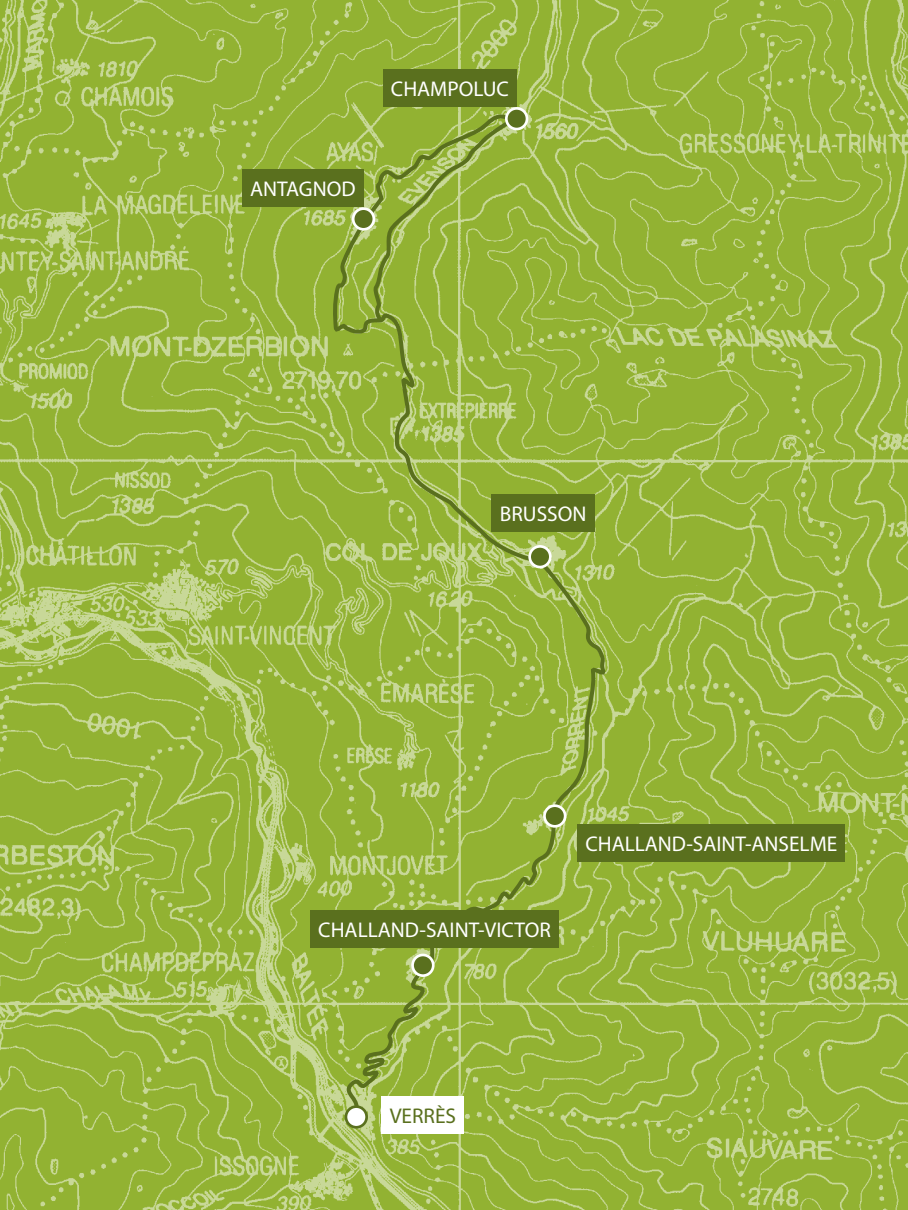
Old rascards





Antagnod bell tower





# AYAS VALLEY

WHERE THE ROSE-TINTED  
GIANT LIVES ...

A handful of villages scattered like mountain flowers among lush meadows, icy glaciers and untamed forests. In the background rise summits peering down from dizzying heights, so close to the sky to be called stars.

In this land of ancient wisdom, gold mines and fragrant cheeses, some of the most remarkable sunsets you could possibly see in the Aosta Valley await you. And it's precisely here, between the burly shoulders of Monte Rosa that our journey commences. An extraordinary journey amid lakes sprinkled with water lilies and ancient castles now forgotten.

Find full updated information on sites of interest  
(opening times, details, initiatives...) by visiting  
[www.lovevda.it](http://www.lovevda.it) »



# THE VALLEY OF MERCHANTS, ALMONST TOUCHING THE CLOUDS

If you'd been strolling through Ayas Valley some centuries ago, you'd have found it had a different name: Kramer Thal, namely "Valley of Merchants", because merchants from Valais transited this way in anticipation of striking a good deal. It didn't take long for the Walser people to settle here, bringing about a fusion of cultures that still today makes this land a fascinating crossroads of languages and traditions.

By the way, if you love travelling in time as well as by road, you'll find plenty of watchtowers and noble buildings in the Ayas Valley, some haunted by ghosts of the past. Like the castle of

proud Caterina of Challant, a fearlessly courageous countess who took up arms in the desperate attempt to defend her beloved fiefdoms in a battle that turned into bloody sufferance.

If you prefer the charm of ancient ruins, then Graines castle is your best bet. Perched on a rocky promontory, it resembles a graceful eagle intent on observing passersby from its legend-rich nest.

Let's pretend for a moment that it could take flight over the Ayas Valley. What would it see? Undoubtedly an extraordinary sight: verdant woodlands, gushing streams, snow-clad peaks that pierce

the clouds as they emerge from Monte Rosa range.

But it's not necessary to climb up high to admire the splendours of this valley. There are easy excursions suited to everyone that lead to lakes, waterfalls, sunny mountain passes, or pleasant exploratory walks into the secrets of nature reserves and their croaky residents.

At least once you'll be compelled to lose yourself among the willowy reeds of Lake Villa or go hunting for gold in the bowels of the mountain, among the gloomy tunnels of Brusson mines or follow the course of Ru Courtod, whose cheerful

gurgling recounts the history of one the Aosta Valley's most impressive irrigation systems.

Your eyes filled with wonder, it is time to fill your stomach. You'll be spoilt for choice by the vast array of both Valdostan and Walser specialities: cured meats, polenta, cheeses, in addition to tempting sweets and excellent wines.

*Bondjor,  
I'm Christophe,  
your guide!*

I'm also a master sabotier.  
What? You've never heard of  
sabots?

They're a type of footwear  
people are fond of where I  
come from that keep your feet  
snug and dry.

By the way, I bet a piece of  
lard that you need a guide.  
Who could be better than  
an Ayassin to lead you to the  
most picturesque and hidden  
corners of this valley?

What luck you bumped into  
me – an artisan with shoulders  
as solid as wood but whose  
heart is as gentle as a snow  
finch.

I know the Ayas Valley better  
than the palm of my hand;  
so follow me, one step at a  
time... and don't forget to put  
on your sabots!



Sabots are a type of footwear traditionally worn in the Ayas Valley.  
These clogs are made by hollowing out a single piece of wood  
and was done during the wintertime when outdoor farm work  
came to a standstill. Today, only a handful of Ayas master sabotier  
continue this precious tradition.





*Christophe*  
your guide





Col d'Arlaz







Champoluc







# NOT TO BE MISSED

DOWNHILL SKIING, CHAMOUSIRA  
MINE, RU COURTOUD, WALSER  
VILLAGES, LAKE VILLA  
NATURE RESERVE



## DOWNHILL SKIING

### SLIDING WHITE AT THE LIMITS OF THE SKY

Explore three different valleys that straddle two regions – this is what you'll do when you put on skis and plunge down the panoramic slopes of Monterosa Ski as the ski area connects the Ayas Valley to neighbouring Valley of Gressoney, then continues over into Piedmont. It consists of a maze of sun-kissed slopes that encircle a bulk of celestial ice - Monte Rosa - like a silver ribbon.

If you prefer peace and quiet to thrills and adventure, there are smaller resorts such as Antagnod, Brusson and Col de Joux with wide, meandering runs lined by trees and affording vistas borrowed from a fairy tale book.



« Monterosa Ski  
Ayas Valley

## CHAMOUSIRA MINE

WHEN HARD ROCK HAS A HEART OF GOLD



They wouldn't be real mountains if they didn't hide gloomy tunnels and buried treasure within their depths. Close your eyes and try to picture rattling wagons, the rhythmic chipping of miners' axes, the weak flickering of a flame ready to die out and plunge the world into darkness.

It was in the abyss of Brusson mine that in 1899, far from the comforting caress of light, a handful of brave men decided to face underground dangers to bring to the surface precious gold trapped in those winding tunnels of intriguing memories.

Chamousira mine »  
Brusson





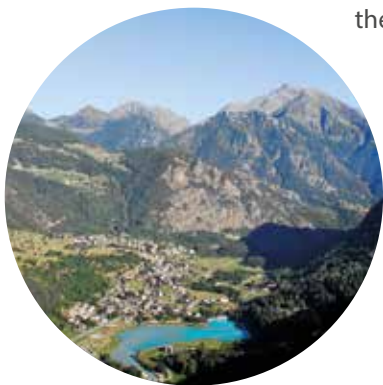




## RU COURTOD

### THE GENTLE MURMURING OF THE GLACIER

Get ready to be left breathless, not from tiredness but because you're about to admire a truly incredible work of engineering. The construction of ru Courtod began in 1393, the longest irrigation channel in the region that served to collect glacial water and convey it down the valley.



These days, if you decide to follow the footpath alongside it, you'll find yourself meandering through time, lulled by the silvery murmur of the stream, amongst woodlands and bright green meadows, creaky bridges and damp stone cottages that guard a history of dignified grace.

« Ru Courtod  
Ayas and Brusson

## WALSER VILLAGES

### AMONG OLD GRANARIES AND STADDLE STONES

Often, while walking in the mountains you're bound to lose track of time, especially when encountering fragments of history that make you doubt whether you're still living in the present.

Crest, Cuneaz, Frantze, Résy, Fiery, Soussun and Mascognaz: take note of these village names because the past has cast its long mantle over houses, watermills, bread ovens and chapels, preserving their bygone splendour. These magnificent constructions were built by the Walsers, people of Germanic origin who settled at the foot of Monte Rosa in medieval times, and who left a strong imprint on the landscape, especially in the form of rascards - traditional farmers' dwellings of that time.







# LAKE VILLA NATURE RESERVE

A TEAR SHED BY NATURE

Along the calm shores of this charming lake, soft reeds bow in the mountain breeze, lulled by a warbling amphibian orchestra. All around,

among pine and chestnut trees, larch and birch trees, foxes and squirrels move soft-footed, while owls, woodpeckers and buzzards hover above the trees in a fluttering of feathers.



When you sit relaxing on the sunny meadow and listen to the lapping of waves, don't forget to observe the white water lilies floating on the surface beyond the jetty because the only place you'll find them in the Aosta Valley is at Villa nature reserve.









The Lake in Brusson

# A DAY, A WEEKEND, A WEEK

## HOW TO ORGANISE YOUR VISIT

With so much to see and do in the Ayas Valley the temptation to stay a few days longer is almost irresistible.

Where to go? What to see? Here's some advice on how to get the most out of your holiday and turn it into a genuine travel itinerary. You can customize the recommended itineraries - feel free to include or remove any visits according to your time schedule, interests and spur-of-the-moment decisions!







# AYAS VALLEY IN ONE DAY

## DAY ONE

### 1 Piani di Verra and Blue Lake

Let yourself fall under the spell of some of the Ayas Valley's most suggestive spots: depart from Saint-Jacques des Allemands – a land abounding in old Walser settlements, and reach Piani di Verra, which afford an unmatched vista over Great Verra Glacier.

Not far from here you'll find Blue Lake, a marvellous water pearl nestled amongst Monte Rosa's jagged walls. On the return journey towards Champoluc, stop to admire the fairytale sculptures in Villy Wood.

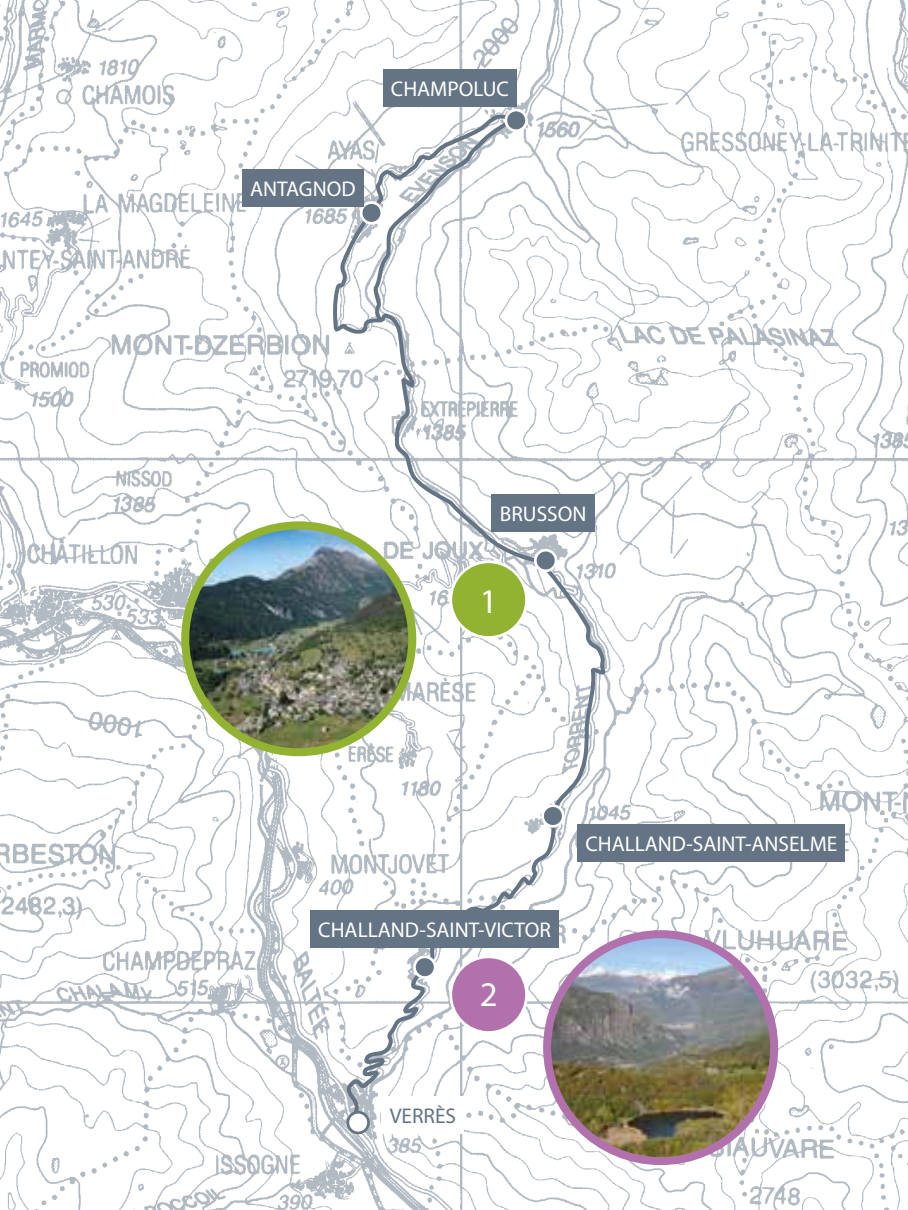
### 2 Village of Antagnod

A stop in the village is recommended: don't miss the Museum of Sacred Art, Church of San Martino, charming Maison Fournier and IVAT boutique selling traditional handicraft.

### 3 Fromagerie Haut Val d'Ayas

If you want an all-round experience of the world of excellent cheese, then stop at Brusson dairy, which offers tastings of their range of exquisite cheeses on sale.





# AYAS VALLEY IN A WEEKEND

## DAY TWO

### 1 Brusson

After tasting unmistakable Fromadzo DOP at the dairy, it will be time to devote some time to Brusson's cultural beauty: stroll among quaint alleyways and enchanting dwellings, such as Casa Yonzo and La Maison du Compte, take a look at the majestic organ in the Church of San Maurizio and have fun immortalising the most characteristic nooks of this village seeped in history with a camera or simply with your mind's eye.

### 2 Challand-Saint-Victor

Having finished a delicious lunch of local products, it'll be time for an easy walk to Lake Villa at Challand-Saint-Victor: a nature reserve that restores body and soul, and where curious animals, not to mention some very rare plants, create a show of romantic beauty.

While you're here, pay a visit to the noble ruins of Villa Castle and see spirited Challand Art – an open air museum set up... in the woods!

# AYAS VALLEY IN A WEEK

## 5 MORE DAYS

1

### Nature

Wondrous sights and marvels

Isollaz Waterfalls (1A), Paccard (1B), Mascognaz (1C), Orbeillaz (1D), Lake Lochien (1E), Villy Wood (1F).

2

### Outdoors / summer

The proud beauty of the mountains

Via Crucis to Col Portola (2A), Monte Zerbion (2B), Lake Perrin (2C), Lake Pinter (2D).

3

### Culture and traditions

A glimpse of bygone life

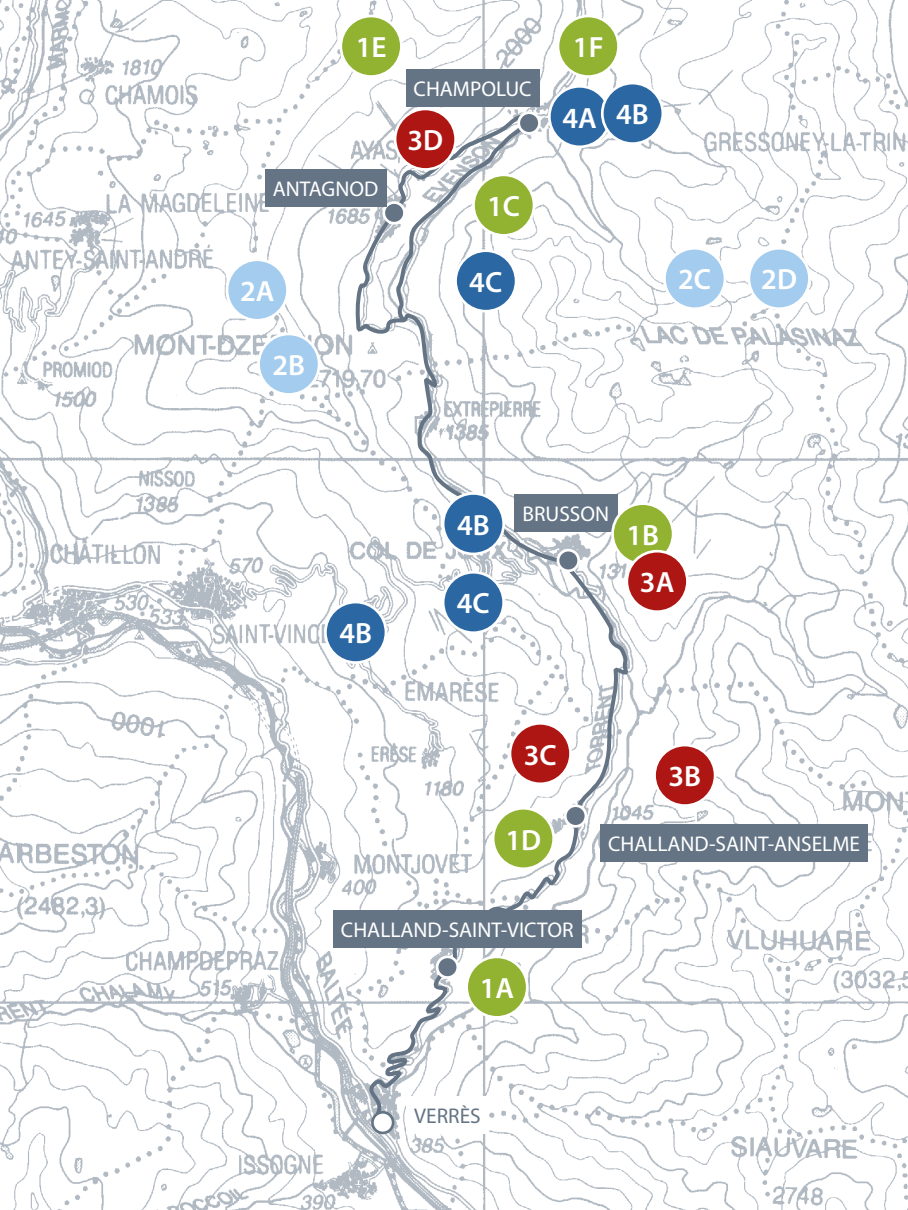
Brusson gold mine (3A), Ruvère watermill (3B), Shrine of Sant'Anna da Tilly (3C), Route of the sabotiers (3D).

4

### Outdoor / winter

The irresistible appeal of snow

Downhill skiing and snowboarding (4A), snowshoe outings (4B), cross-country skiing (4C).









Morning light over Monte Rosa





Isollaz waterfall



# THEMATIC FOCUS

NATURE, OUTDOOR, FOOD AND WINE,  
CULTURE AND TRADITIONS,  
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES







# UNSPOILT SITES

## RARE ENCOUNTERS AND EXCEPTIONAL BEAUTY

In the Ayas Valley, nature likes to break records. Out of its scented hat it pulls species that are impossible to find in the rest of the region, such as white water lilies, water knotweed and elusive orchids. It's a surprising valley that hosts the most extensive cathedral of mountains in the Alps, in addition to a nature reserve that proudly bears the title "Italian Marvel".

Here, amidst meadows and gentle slopes, glacial waters flow down to weave a web of streams. The ones that stand out most are the ru - manmade irrigation channels whose gurgling will accompany you on your awe-inspiring hikes.



## MONTE ROSA MOUNTAIN RANGE

A giant that stands over 4,000 metres in height and who torments the clouds with his long, slender fingers. In actual fact, its name – rouja - means “ice”.

AYAS VALLEY



## PIAN VILLY WOOD AND ITS WOODEN SCULPTURES

Fairies, gnomes and comical animals peek curiously at passersby from their tree seats, whispering green legends to you who knows how to listen.

AYAS



## COL DE JOUX

A spectacular boundary separates the Ayas Valley from Saint-Vincent in a fanfare of forests, pleasant views and gentle strolls among hills and sparkling springs.

BRUSSON





## ISOLLAZ WATERFALL

CHALLAND-SAINT-VICTOR

According to legend, treasure is hidden among its silvery rock, and many gullible people have attempted to steal it in vain, getting stuck there forever...

## BECCA TORCHÉ

AYAS VALLEY

Once upon a time there were three damsels with skin as fair as snow and who wore plush verdant skirts. Their names were Torché, Vlou and Vogel. Despite being mountains, everyone fell in love with them...



## RU D'ARLAZ AND RU HERBAL

AYAS VALLEY

Walk in the silent woods dominated by a corridor of trees. By your side are fawns and hare, bluebells and lilies. And two marvellous paths etched in water.

# PURE ENERGY

WHERE SOONER OR LATER EVERYONE GETS SPORTY

Have you ever tried doing your favourite sport in a different place than usual, like at the seaside or in the mountains? It's so different running past streams and waterfalls, isn't it? Or doing yoga on a mat of sparkling dew... A small miracle that transforms habits into a new experience.

On the subject of sport, did you know that in the Ayas Valley there's the largest natural ice rink in the Aosta Valley? But also the most extensive mountain range in the Alps with kilometres of runs for skiing or adventurous excursions? Honestly, with so much to do here, you'll find it difficult to stay still...

Mountain bike »  
Ayas Valley





## CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

With 18 km of trails in Ayas and 50 km in Brusson, there's no lack of skiing choice. Trails wind among the houses like snowy snakes of whipped cream.

BRUSSON



## SNOWSHOE EXCURSIONS

In the Ayas Valley, a soft winter blanket of snow shrouds summer paths, transforming them into enchanted corridors where you tread crystal powder.

AYAS VALLEY



## MOUNTAIN BIKING

Take advantage of Monterosa Ski to take your bike high up the mountain and then enjoy wild descents. At Champoluc children's playground you'll also find an awesome pump track!

AYAS VALLEY



## TREKKING

AYAS VALLEY

Short hikes, excursions to huts, multi-day tours - Monte Rosa unfurls its thousand footpaths, all you have to do is start walking.

## MOUNTAINEERING

AYAS VALLEY

Only for the truly brave-hearted: unbeatable treks, climbs among glaciers, ascents to summit the legendary 4,000-metre peaks. Are you coming with us?

## HORSE RIDING

AYAS VALLEY

If you dream of becoming a horse rider and cantering through enchanted forests, along grassy beaches and pathways that cut across blooming fields, you're in the right place.



## CLIMBING

Defy gravity, proceed vertiginously little by little until you reach the sky. Enjoy adrenaline rushes when tackling crags and rock walls.

AYAS VALLEY

## SKI TOURING

Explorers on skis and skins ready to push to the limits of a bare and fragile, yet beautiful mountain. Book a guide and set off!

AYAS VALLEY

## ICE CLIMBING

Plant your crampons and ice pick on a glossy, sparkling expanse and let your gaze wander over snow-clad woodlands and hooded mountains.

AYAS VALLEY





## OTHER SPORTS ACTIVITIES

### AYAS VALLEY

You need plenty of patience and a good fishing rod if you intend catching the darting trout and mighty char that populate Green Lake in Ayas and Brusson fishing reserve.



# DELICIOUS INSPIRATION

## DESIRE FOR FLAVOUR

The aroma recalls fresh milk and mountain herbs; the flavour summer pastures, cows with a kindly and curious demeanour, fragrant hay and small Alpine farmsteads set like gemstones among plateaus and ridges. Slightly sweet, slightly tangy, slightly salty, this cheese has origins that go far back in time and was a source of phosphorus and vitamins; it is a vital ingredient of countless delicious recipes.

A holiday in the Ayas Valley certainly wouldn't be the same without tasting a slice of Fromadzo DOP, perhaps at the end of summer, on the occasion of "Monterosa Gourmand" Festival, or at the Fromagerie Haut Val d'Ayas, in Brusson.



# HISTORY ROLLS ON

ABOUT TORMENTED SOULS AND PRODIGIOUS SPRINGS

The Ayas Valley is a land of unmerciful legends and ancient truths; it's the home of wealthy families who have left a mark on the history of the Aosta Valley. Its mountains have hosted popes and countesses, poets and fighters, and each one has left their anchor in time precisely in this valley.

So, don't be surprised if you can still dip your fingers into the miraculous waters of Notre-Dame du Bon Secours Shrine in Barmasc, hear the wails of Caterina of Challant's ghost at Maison du Compte or admire valuable works, such as the rare Madonna dello Scigno in Antagnod church museum.



## ANTAGNOD OLD VILLAGE CENTRE AND CHURCH OF SAN MARTINO

Seen from above, the small houses of Antagnod resemble a flock of sheep driven by a willowy shepherd – the bell tower. Boasting a gem of a church, it is considered one of the most beautiful villages in Italy.

ANTAGNOD



## GRAINES CASTLE

A stone eagle perched upon a rocky spur. Its claws guard buried treasures and tales of damsels with alabaster skin.

BRUSSON

## VIA CRUCIS AT COL PORTOLA

An excursion that rises to 2,414 metres along a summer-scented footpath, where evocative bas-reliefs overlook pastel-shaded flowers.

AYAS VALLEY



## RUVERÈ WATERMILL

CHALLAND-SAINT-ANSELME

You can still inhale the aroma of grain, walnut oil and old millstones grinding away in this old mill - a custodian of bygone agricultural tools.

## SHRINE OF SANT'ANNA

CHALLAND-SAINT-ANSELME

A suggestive church affording an exceptionally panoramic vista. Every year a traditional "incanto", (auction) is held here to raise funds for the shrine's upkeep.

## "ROMAN" BRIDGES

CHALLAND-SAINT-VICTOR

Let's take a look at Verval and Challand-Saint-Victor bridges, it's easy to see them as the curved backs of two gigantic stone donkeys.



## BONOT TOWER

Crackling flames that set alight the night. Once, fires were lit at the top of this signal tower to communicate with neighbouring castles.

CHALLAND-SAINT-VICTOR



## LA MAISON DU COMPTE AND YONZO HOUSE

If you decide to visit the centre of Brusson, don't forget to see Yonzo house, a farmhouse with unusual architectural features, but also Maison du Compte, which is a genuine piece of history.

BRUSSON



## CHURCHES, CHAPELS AND SHRINES

Whether they be large and grandiose or small and modest, shrines, churches and chapels are strung out throughout the Ayas Valley in a suggestive, sacred procession.

AYAS VALLEY



## VILLA CASTLE

CHALLAND-SAINT-VICTOR

Don't be deceived by appearances: these ancient ruins are what remains of the Aosta Valley's oldest castle and glorious past of the Challant family.



## VILLA DAIRY

CHALLAND-SAINT-VICTOR

Here, amongst buckets, cauldrons and water tanks, dairymen processed their milk into cheese in the 1950s.

# NO ADULTS ALLOWED

## IT'S ALL A QUESTION OF BALANCE

Do you know about elves who live up trees and use rope bridges, creaky walkways and tangled lianas to get from one tree to another?

Well, if you've ever wondered how they do it then have a go yourself at Champoluc adventure park. There are over 30 airborne walking activities – rope ladders, wobbly platforms and zip lines that hang in the void. The fun will continue also in winter, in Antagnod, where you'll find the baby snowpark, with plays and descents on the snow. One piece of advice: if you want a rest after all this adventure then enjoy a relaxing afternoon at the playgrounds in Ayas or Brusson.









Antagnod

# IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME

Get ready to make an extraordinary holiday  
even more out of the ordinary...



## MONTEROSA PRESTIGE

One of the most gripping  
mountain bike marathons of  
the Alps. The course is 90 km  
long and drops 3,254 metres  
in altitude. Awesome!

JUNE

## MOUNTAIN GUIDE FESTIVAL

Heroic Alpine guides, gallant  
ski instructors and children  
wearing traditional costume  
parade through the streets  
of Ayas to the rhythm of  
festive music.

AUGUST





## BATAILLES DES REINES

At Estoul, the strongest and most spirited Valdostan cows challenge one another to a duel. This contest of glares and entwined horns earns the winner the title of Queen of Alpine Pastures.

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER



## SAINT-VINCENT, BEYOND COL DU JOUX

Gaming halls, spas with outdoors thermal pools, social events and excellent restaurants: this famous town nestling at the foot of panoramic Monte Zerbion, known as the "Riviera of the Alps" owing to its mild climate, has truly everything to offer.





Visuals: VisaMultimedia.com

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Text: M. Lanziani

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E. De Santis, S. Enrico, M. Gabbin, C. Guillermin,  
D. Pallu, M. Spataro, L. Vicquéry, C. Vuillermin



## MAGIC CASTLE OF VERRÈS

An imposing castle with a rigorous silhouette and majestic geometrics. During annual Carnival celebrations, lively masked balls and historical re-enactments are staged within its walls.



## FORTRESS OF BARD, MUSEUM OF THE ALPS

An impregnable fortress that still echoes with the thunder of canons, the nervous cry of soldiers, the wailing of prisoners. Today it houses permanent museums and contemporary art exhibitions.

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 Valle D'Aosta

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September 2025



**Valle d'Aosta**  
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