**Valasca**

Ancient salt routes, drove roads, mule tracks for hunting and military needs; they form a network that covers hundreds of kilometres throughout the Park. The most remarkable sign of human presence here is the road built at the beginning of the twentieth century between Valasca and Claus Lake; it was built by the Alpine engineers who paved a road over some of the roughest terrain imaginable: it is still intact a century after its construction.

**Fremamorta**

*Fremo* in Provençal means woman, and “morata”, in Italian means dead: so perhaps an ancient alpine tragedy lies behind this name? Despite the images of the surrounding area, this is an open place with no extremities: an easy wide mountain pass leads to France, a route of five small lakes, each one prettier than the last, lie in the bottom of a depression, harrying above the Vallecetta valley.

**Fenestrelle**

In the spring, just below the Colle di Fenestrelle a small pond forms, reflected in its perfectly still water is the snowy outlines of Galas. Fenestrelle offers a spectacular vantage point; south the views open over Galas and its glacial lake, opposite it, to the northeast the massive shape of Argentera appears with its vast face towering over the artificial lake Chiusa. Old male ibex can be found grazing here for much of the year.

**Maledia**

Dawn sets the northeast face of Maledia on fire and the flames reflect in the slopes of the Pagari glacier. It is a moment that is as intense as it is short-lived, to be savoured while it lasts.

**Valasco**

The view from here is breathtaking, ranging from Corno Stella is the best known rock face in the southern Alps. At over Gelas and its glaciers, opposite it, to the northeast the massive shape of Argentera appears, circles Corno Stella is the best known rock face in the southern Alps. In climbing rock faces four hundred metres high.

**Sella**

Rio Morais falls towards S. Anna in a string of bubbling pools and waterfalls. It flows from the lower Sella lake, the kings’ and queens’ Saffronica for trout fishing when they were staying in Valle Cossio. Above an outcrop of red rocks, at the mouth, the upper Sella lake, which higher cold, to the west towards the four and south towards. Malle we find two arches formed at a score of pools and lakes of all sizes; this is a wonderful watery landscape.

**Viel del Bouc**

A calm lake stretching out in a basin closed in on its west side by cliffs of granite rounded and cut with glaciac activity. The name “Vei del Bouc”, in basic dialect means “the old man with the billy”, referring to the bearded ivy welkin on the slopes of the lake. The bearded ivy is a species native to the area since the dawn of civilisation, as can be seen by the remains of a dwelling, which despite the height, 2650m, offers the warmest of welcomes.

**Palanfré**

A handful of stone-built cottages sit on the edge of a grass amphitheatre close to the Costa di Palanfré. Palanfré is surrounded by gentle and friendly mountains. The smell of pasture, the water and sounds of animals out in the meadows.

**Less obvious**

A calm lake stretching out in a basin closed in on its west side by cliffs of granite rounded and cut with glaciac activity. The name “Vei del Bouc”, in basic dialect means “the old man with the billy”, referring to the bearded ivy welkin on the slopes of the lake. The bearded ivy is a species native to the area since the dawn of civilisation, as can be seen by the remains of a dwelling, which despite the height, 2650m, offers the warmest of welcomes.
The beauty of these mountains, the abundance of chamois, trout and the lush vegetation made a strong impression on Vittorio Emanuele II, King of Sardinia, when he came to visit the Gesso valley and its thermal baths.

### The Hunting Lodges

His approval did not go unnoticed and the mayors of the valley’s villages, knowing the king’s passion for hunting and the advantages that the royal family’s summer visits would bring to the valley, made over the hunting and fishing rights of most of the area to him. And so the Royal Hunting Reserve was born.

### Lakes and Glaciers

The surrounding peaks reflected in them adding to their uniqueness. There are little not lakes like Valcucca and Valletta and deep lakes full of fish like the Sella Lakes. There are also two with a much more recent history, the artificial reservoirs created at the end of the 70’s to produce electricity, Piastra and Chiotas.

Some scarce, fantastic legends attached them like Vei del Bouc above San Giacomo di Entracque.

### Flowers

The distinctive botanical features of the Maritime Alps can be explained by their geographical position, between the mountains of Piedmont, Liguria and Provence and the fact that they were once joined to the Pyrenees, Corsica and the Balkans and still show a surprising floral affinity with these areas. The climate, and consequently the flora, is influenced by the proximity of the sea and the fact that several peaks in the Maritime Alps are over 8,000 m. amongst these Argentera 3297 m. stands out as the highest. These conditions mean not only a large number of species but also numerous endemic species (species that only grow in a certain area). Of the thirty or so endemic species in the Maritime Alps the best known is the Saxifraga florentina: a long pale pink corolla (its bell-shaped part) emerges (after around thirty years) from its basal rosette of leaves; after flowering the plant dies.

To help people familiarise with the Park’s flora the botanical gardens Valdier have been set up at some of Villat. They are at the same site that in the mid-19th Century hoped what were known as the “English gardens”.

### Animals

The easiest animals to see, particularly in the early morning and evening, are chamois. There are about 4000 chamois in the Park, making it one of the most densely populated parts of the Alps.

The Bee, introduced in the 1920s by Vittorio Emanuele III, from the twenty or so animals brought in from Gran Paradiso are now over 100, these can be seen close up, particularly in spring.

Other ungulates present in the park are roe deer and wild boar. These animals are shy and more difficult to see because they keep to the wooded areas. In summer they are found from the neighbouring Mercantour Park can be seen.

### A Paradise for Walkers

Before the second world war Italy fortified the border with France and the valleys of the Maritime Alps became huge building sites. The ancient “hut routes” used for commerce with the other side of the Alps and the Nice coast became the connection between the valley bottom and the barracks and bunkers built at the mountain passes. This tragic period has left us the testimony of a vast network of paths and military roads, in many places these are paved, widened, or cut into the rocks, they are architectural masterpieces.

The most significant example of this is without doubt the road from Piano del Valcarco which climbs through a tunnel in the rock to reach Laghi Inferiori di Valcucca and on to Laghi delle Pontine and Frexinet.