



THE RAVELLA VALLEY

You can find this point of interest in Canzo - Path 1 - Stage 3

DESCRIPTION

(Silvia Fasana)

The Ravella Valley owes its name to the stream that rises at an altitude of about 1,000 meters just below the highest point of the valley, the Colma di Val Ravella; after carving its own bed deep into the rocks, the stream flows embanked between steep slopes down to Canzo, before emptying into the river Lambro. The upper part of its drainage basin is limited to the north by the Cresta di Cranno mountain ridge and the Colletta di Corni and Corni di Canzo (*Canzo's Horns*) mountains, to the east by Sasso Malascarpa and Prasanto, and to the south by mounts Rai, Cornizzolo and Pesora.

The Ravella Valley is dominated by the *Cèpp da l'Angua*, a large rocky subvertical outcrop consisting of Conchodon Dolomite. Its peculiar name may refer to the *Anguana*, a water nymph in Alpine mythology (known as *Gana* in Ladin culture); in the Middle Ages this cult was probably not assimilated into Christianity, but demonized, which would justify the second name of this rock in local dialect: *Scalfin dal Diaul*, where *scalfin* stands for stocking sole - which it resembles - and *diaul* for devil.

The entire Canzo's Horns - Ravella Valley area is of great naturalistic interest. One part falls under the "Foresta di Lombardia dei Corni di Canzo" (*Canzo's Horns Lombardy Forest*), a vast mainly woodland complex which covers about 450 hectares, characterized by hop hornbeams, ash trees, sycamores, and, at higher altitudes, beeches, run by ERSAF (*Regional Agency for Services to Agriculture and Forestry*). The upper portions of the slopes, once used as pasture and now abandoned, were colonized mainly by a sparse hazelnut wood, accompanied by birches, goat willows and golden chain trees, with their elegant yellow raceme inflorescence. A portion of the left side of the valley's drainage basin is included in the **Sasso Malascarpa (*Mascarpa*) Nature Reserve**, a Lombardy Region protected area of great geological and botanical interest. The landscape here is shaped by the slow and relentless dissolution exerted by rainwater on limestone rock, which led to the characteristic appearance of the Sasso (similar to a gigantic rocky wall) and the spectacular karst manifestations of furrowed fields, narrow and deep crevices, similar to the marks left on the ground by the wheels of a wagon. In the Canzo's Horns and Sasso Malascarpa area grows a particular kind of flora which includes precious plants typical of the craggy environment of the pre-alpine lakes' Insubric strip, such as the *Campanula raineri*, the yellow oxeye, the Insubric garlic and the *Physoplexys comosa*.

The Ravella Valley also holds evidence of human presence across the centuries. Until the first half of the twentieth century, many families active in farming and breeding of livestock were still living in the valley. Traces of these traditional activities have remained in rural buildings in Prim'Alpe (called Alpe Grasso, i.e. Fat Alp, for the abundance of forage) and Terz'Alpe (Alpe Piotti), and in the ruins that can still be seen in the Second'Alpe area (Alpe Betulli or Alpe del Sole, i.e. Alp of the Sun, due to its great sunlight exposure), Alpe Alto and Alpetto (the latter two on the slope of Mount Cornizzolo).

At the end of the 50s of the last century, at Prim'Alpe, further to the acquisition by the Azienda di Stato per le Foreste Demaniali - ASFD (*State-Owned Forests Agency*), a nursery was created to produce essences (especially conifers) needed for the reforestation of former pastures and old agricultural terraces in the vicinity of the "Alps". The ownership was then transferred in 1980 to the Lombardy Region, which nowadays runs it through the ERSAF. At present in the old nucleus of Prim'Alpe a Reserve Visitor Centre and a Centre for Environmental Education, active all-year round and managed by Legambiente, have been set up, and where it is also possible to buy refreshments and find accommodation. Moreover, the Ravella Valley is the starting point for many footpaths and trails around the Canzo's Horns - Prasanto - Moregallo massif.