

VALLE MAIRA

Piemonte – Italia

A brief incursion into the so-called
„Valle Maira model“

The great depopulation

The valley is a small area in the Italian Cottian Alps, in the province of Cuneo, Piedmont - Italy.

The entire valley, with its 13 municipalities and a surface area of 567 km², has around 11,500 inhabitants, of which 7,000 are concentrated in the main town at the entrance to the area, Dronero. The least populated municipality is Macra, with 56 inhabitants all year round.

After the great depopulation, which occurred in the XX century due to the strong attraction of urban centers, the Maira Valley appeared as a rarefied place, dominated by nature, isolated and wild.



The great depopulation



Tabella 1. Evoluzione demografica dei comuni della Val Maira

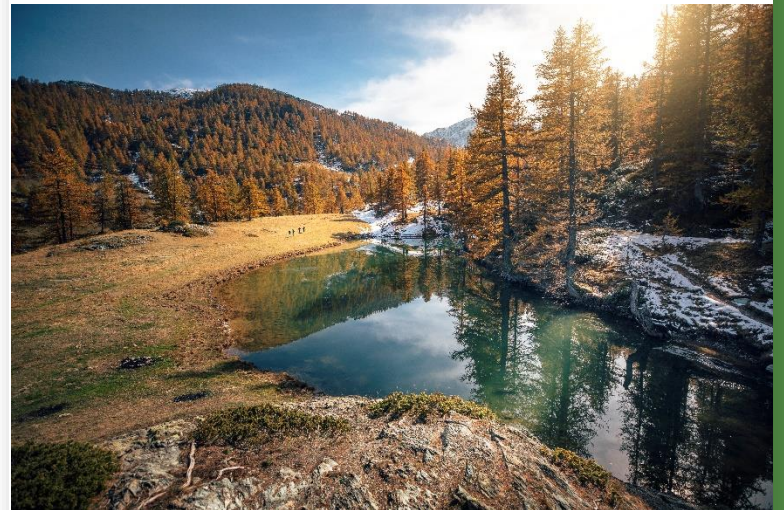
Comune	Altitudine slm (capoluogo)	1931	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Acciglio	1200 m	1254	911	658	509	355	238	197	174
Prazzo	1030 m	1275	1029	787	516	360	282	218	175
Canosio	1323 m	399	270	241	162	136	106	93	82
Marmora	1223 m	645	446	353	211	173	140	99	74
Stroppo	1087 m	982	635	462	262	186	124	108	107
Macra	875 m	861	582	349	155	107	81	61	52
Celle di Macra	1270 m	1194	758	528	216	193	147	105	93
San Da- miano Macra	743 m	3208	2149	1524	1017	690	548	477	439
Cartignano	704 m	817	440	357	241	204	177	170	178
Elva	1637 m	801	556	396	252	199	154	114	94
Dronero	622 m	7950	6615	6670	7107	7124	6969	7012	7205
Roccabruna	640 m	2370	1865	1506	1208	1177	1308	1460	1589
Busca	500 m	8895	8458	7787	7851	8182	8913	9469	10049
Villar San Costanzo	605 m	2152	1910	1641	1451	1223	1207	1396	1502

Those visionary ones

The tourism history of the Maira Valley was born from the far-sighted vision of a few local inhabitants.

About 35 years ago, a German/Austrian couple settled in the area. Falling in love with the place, they decided to create one of the destination's first accommodation facilities, focusing mainly on the market coming from the German-speaking area.

They built strong connections with Tour Operators and Tourist Agencies. Hence, they collaborated with the creation of a first guidebook of the valley, called “Antipasti und Alte Wege”, a German production.



Those visionary ones

The administrations of the time decided not to give in to the lure of evolution at all costs and refused to build ski lifts or large hotels.

Rather, they focused on a 'different' idea of tourism, focusing on slow tourism even before this term became a worldwide trend. They restored old paths and mule tracks, creating a path of 14 stages, the "Percorsi Occitani" (Occitan Routes), which still now represents a true tourist product. The first accommodation facilities were created along the route, the "Posti Tappa" and "Locande Occitane", which grew in number over the years, offering tourists a genuine, simple and authentic welcome.



The Percorsi Occitani Path

The idea of slow tourism in the Maira valley spread, and the area began to focus more and more on a proposal different from the rest of the mountain destinations in the Alps and beyond.

There was also a strong focus on the Occitan culture, on the linguistic minority that this culture brings, and on Occitan inns, places of exceptional hospitality.

The Occitan region spread from the valleys of Cuneo to the Pyrenean Mountain region in Spain since the Middle Age.



The major sustainable points

The major sustainability aspects concerning the valley are:

- Slow tourism outdoor activities (trekking, MTB and e-MTB, ski mountaineering, climbing, snow shoeing, cross-country skiing)
- No ski lifts or resorts, no big and impacting infrastructures
- Smart architectural renovation, which respects the beauty of the landscape and using local materials
- Use of local products inside the accommodation facilities and restaurants of the valley



The major sustainable points

- Development of a local distribution system of local food products directly to the restaurants, thus reducing the traffic and car movements on the major road
- Electric shuttle service in the summer period to reach one to the major tourism points of the valley, mainly the Gardetta Plateau, to reduce CO2
- Electric charging stations along the valley for e-bikes and EL transport means
- Use of high-altitude white roads only by non-motorised vehicles, cyclists and walkers
- Marketing activities focused on a more human to human approach



The outdoor activities

The core business of the Maira Valley is outdoor activities in their 'slow' form. In summer, trekking, walking (especially the Occitan route) and mountain biking are all the rage. Via ferrata climbing is also popular, as is the use of gravel bikes on high altitude white roads, especially on the Strada dei Cannoni and the Gardetta plateau. Day hikes are practised all year round, in winter and when there is snow, snowshoes are used. Winter (snow permitting) sees a return to the valley of Italian and foreign tourists who try their hand at the more than 100 ski-mountaineering routes, in the peace and quiet that only the absence of installations can guarantee. There are also cross-country skiing trails in Chiappera and Frere di Acceglio, as well as in Elva. These are not, however, stacked tracks, but rather tracks open to all and free of charge.



The warm hospitality

Most of the accommodation facilities in the valley were born from 1990 to 2015, and all are small accommodation facilities created from old rural dwellings and renovated with criteria of environmental sustainability and scenic beauty.

Even today, there are no large hotels in the Maira Valley; the few larger accommodation units have 50 beds and are real exceptions. This ensures an authentic hospitality, made by people who are themselves the managers of the facility. Moreover, this prevents the attraction of strong tourist flows because the territory would not have the capacity to welcome them.



The warm hospitality



OFFERTA RICETTIVA - Comuni Valle Maira - Settori Alberghiero, Extra alberghiero e Locazioni Turistiche 2019-2023					
Anno	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Comuni	Camere	Camere	Camere	Camere	Camere
Totale ACCEGLIO	183	213	228	237	256
Totale CANOSIO*	29	51	41	38	40
Totale CARTIGNANO*	9	13	20	15	17
Totale CELLE DI MACRA*	23	25	35	41	36
Totale DRONERO	119	133	145	147	160
Totale ELVA*	24	36	33	39	43
Totale MACRA*	24	31	38	31	43
Totale MARMORA	127	137	133	133	136
Totale PRAZZO	93	117	106	106	110
Totale ROCCABRUNA	51	58	68	85	89
Totale SAN DAMIANO MACRA	37	41	53	58	66
Totale STROPPO	65	73	86	84	90
Totale VILLAR SAN COSTANZO	56	53	45	49	41
Totale *Aggregato comuni (Canosio + Cartignano + Celle di Macra + Elva + Macra)	109	156	167	164	179



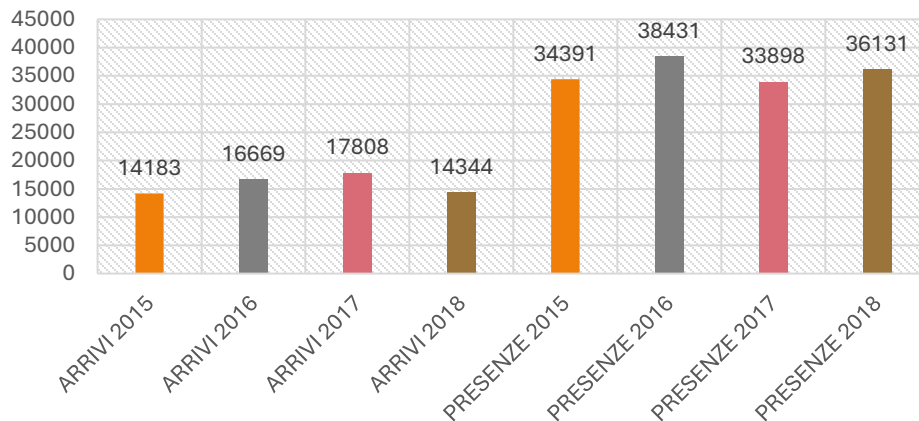
The tourism growth

Many tourists started arriving from the DACH area (Germany, Switzerland, Austria), France and Italy.

The Growth was still from 2014 to 2018, then there has been a constant and deeper growth from 2019 to now.

ANNO 2014		ITALIANI		STRANIERI		
ESERCIZI	LETTI	ARRIVI	PRESENZE	ARRIVI	PRESENZE	T.M.P.
102	1810	6129	20074	6678	15264	2,87

**Arrivi e Presenze Valle Maira
anni 2015-2016-2017-2018**



The tourism growth

Movimenti Turistici - Comuni Valle Maira - Provenienza Italia-Estero - 2019-2023											
Anno		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
Comune	Provenienza Italia Estero	Arrivi	Presenze	Arrivi	Presenze	Arrivi	Presenze	Arrivi	Presenze	Arrivi	Presenze
ACCEGLIO	Estero	2810	4812	2436	5692	2491	5386	3376	7328	4395	10468
	Italia	2069	3886	3812	9794	3385	8445	4333	10587	4827	14216
Totale ACCEGLIO		4879	8698	6248	15486	5876	13831	7709	17915	9222	24684
DRONERO	Estero	1109	2129	391	800	687	1384	1395	3274	1376	3214
	Italia	2008	5320	1484	3097	2238	4527	3425	6541	3370	6321
Totale DRONERO		3117	7449	1875	3897	2925	5911	4820	9815	4746	9535
MARMORA	Estero	1608	5884	1299	3981	1657	6214	2331	7164	3060	9865
	Italia	2175	5999	3550	7772	4497	10868	4401	9204	4897	10315
Totale MARMORA		3783	11883	4849	11753	6154	17082	6732	16368	7957	20180
PRAZZO	Estero	121	202	333	722	787	1617	655	1368	684	1182
	Italia	94	364	738	1878	956	2424	1038	2538	911	2527
Totale PRAZZO		215	566	1071	2600	1743	4041	1693	3906	1595	3709
ROCCABRUNA	Estero	548	1115	217	955	415	1201	377	1353	474	2484
	Italia	296	4482	294	7700	470	7113	357	5427	448	4068
Totale ROCCABRUNA		844	5597	511	8655	885	8314	734	6780	922	6552
S. D. MACRA	Estero	67	133	58	135	101	261	221	500	338	848
	Italia	249	645	273	906	896	2955	1038	3053	1353	4088
Totale SAN DAMIANO MACRA		316	778	331	1041	997	3216	1259	3553	1691	4936
STROPPO	Estero	994	3385	769	2870	1255	4611	1512	4838	1849	5035
	Italia	132	281	433	1215	786	1934	820	2448	954	2779
Totale STROPPO		1126	3666	1202	4085	2041	6545	2332	7286	2803	7814
VILLAR SAN COSTANZO	Estero	273	589	66	271	126	5730	202	423	246	608
	Italia	211	444	215	448	375	1025	452	890	515	1145
Totale VILLAR S. COSTANZO		484	1033	281	719	501	6755	654	1313	761	1753
*Aggregato comuni	Estero	873	1592	469	878	632	1342	1275	2056	2064	2990
	Italia	763	3696	1052	2532	1514	4243	2587	5195	1341	3395
Totale *Aggregato comuni		1636	5288	1521	3410	2146	5585	3862	7251	3405	6385
TOTALE PRESENZE			44.958		51.646		71.280		74.187		85.548

2019, the turning point

Thanks to the administrators, the tourist tax was introduced in the valley in 2019. Under a specific agreement, part of the income were to be paid to the Maira Valley Tourism Consortium to finance fundamental activities for the territory, namely:

- The ordinary maintenance of the trail network, the valley's main asset in terms of tourism and beyond
- The opening of the tourist offices
- The promotion of the territory in Italy and abroad

The introduction of the tourist tax allowed the Consortium to finally have a lung able to expand and to undertake an effective collaboration with the local administrations. Finally the Consortium started acting as the operational arm and entrepreneurial vision of the tourist sector in the valley.



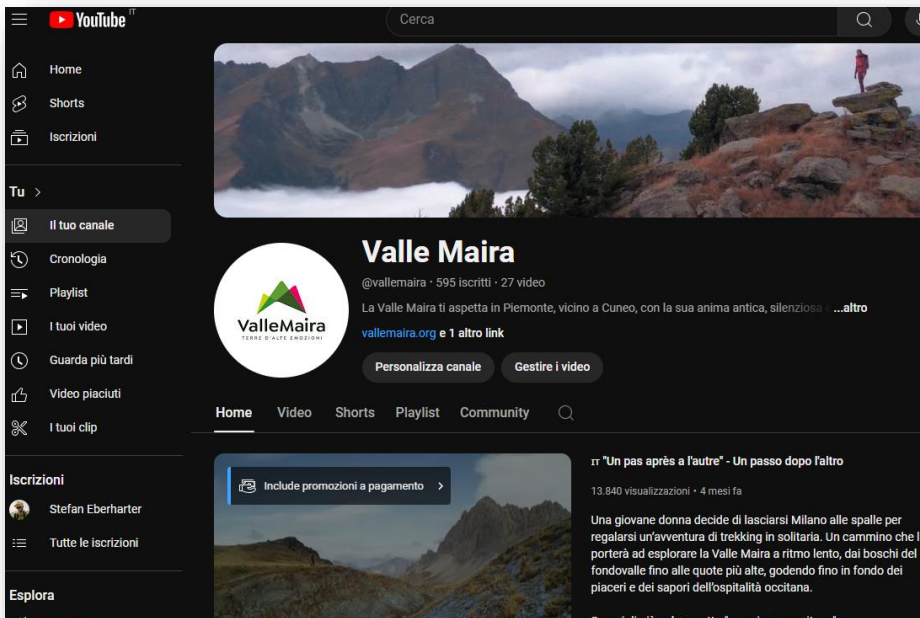
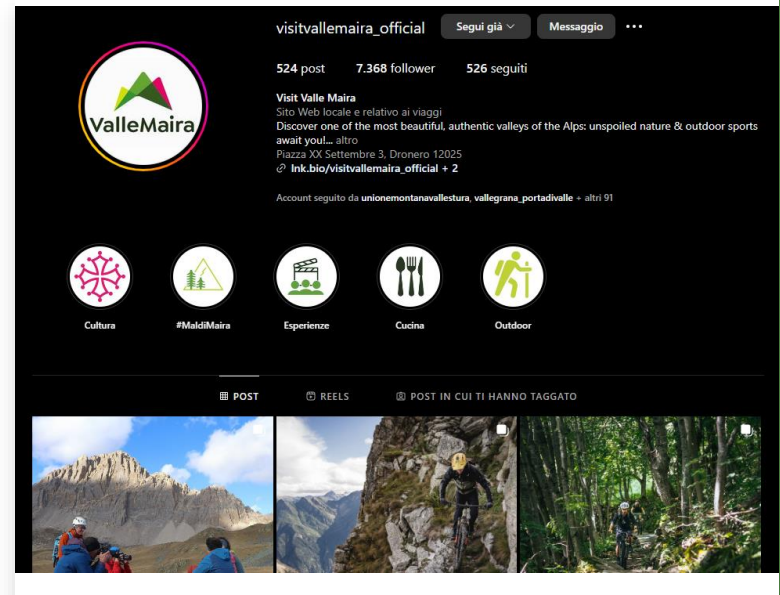
More information

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Thank you for your attention!

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