

Apples, castles and... a red lake

The landscape of Val di Non is characterized by the intensive cultivation of apples in orchards that extend from the edge of the woods to the valley floor.

The quality of the apples is guaranteed by the morphology of the land that allows constant exposure to sun, by the climate, with dry winters and springs full of rain, and by the composition of the land. The most spectacular moment to enjoy the territory is in springtime, when the apple trees in full blossom whiten the landscape. In the autumn, after spending many days warmed by the rays of the summer sun, the fruits are finally mature and ready to be collected by the 5,200 producers who together market their product under the Melinda brand name. They cultivate their plots following a strict set of rules to ensure the quality and wholesomeness of the fruit which has enabled the Melinda apple to receive the DOP recognition that guarantees its origin. Among the main places of interest in Val di Non are certainly the ancient manors. Val di Non well deserves the title of the "Valley of the castles" for their high number, with a total 27 castles and noble fortified residences. Many of the castles are still inhabited by the descendants of noble families who owned them for centuries. Other castles instead have become open to the public.

Not too far away from the village of Sporminore is the ruin of Castel Sporo, built in the XI century or perhaps even earlier. In the early fourteenth century it came into possession of what would become the powerful Spaur Family. It was then abandoned at the beginning of the eighteenth century and today only the ruins stand proudly among the vegetation.

Castel Belasi is located near Campodenno. It dates back to the twelfth century and is defined by its double surrounding walls.

On the other side of the Valley the imposing structure of Castel Thun stands out among the orchards and is partially opened to the public.

On the route is also Castel Corona. Its structure echoes that of an eagle's nest because it was erected in a cliff cave above the village of Cunevo. It was abandoned by its last owners in the second half of the seventeenth century.

Castel Nanno was rebuilt on a previous medieval fortress under the instructions of Giovanni Gaudenzio Madruzzo during the sixteenth century. Nearby is also Castel Valer, dating back to the twelfth century, characterized by an octagonal tower about 40 metres high. During the fourteenth century it became property of the Spaur family to which it still belongs today. Inside there is the chapel of San Valerio, painted in 1496 by Giovanni Battista and Baschenis.

Finally there is Castel Cles that overlooks the Santa Giustina Lake.

The most famous lake in Trentino and perhaps in the whole Alpine Arc is Tovel Lake. The reason for this deserved reputation lies in the majesty of the basin, a precious gem set in a bright green conifer forest that surrounds it. However, what makes it famous is the extraordinary phenomenon that caused its waters to become red. Until 1964, during the summer months the waters of the lake used to turn an incredible purple and for this reason the basin has been also called the Red Lake. More than a century of studies have ascertained that this phenomenon was linked to the presence of a microscopic algae in the waters, recently renamed *Woloszynskya*, which under special conditions produces a blood red pigment. This phenomenon no longer occurs and studies have ascertained that the reason is a decrease in the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus in the soil caused by a reduction in the number of cows on the alpine pastures.

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