GeoCultura

TAKING YOU BEYOND THE LANDSCAPE

Splendours of the Italian Alps: 7-Day Summer Vacation



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Highlights

- Ride cable cars and gondolas for close-up views of Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn, with gentle mountain walks and lakeside strolls high above the valley floor.
- Explore Roman roads, medieval castles and megalithic sites that reveal the Aosta Valley's strategic past and rich cultural heritage spanning thousands of years.
- Feast on delicious mountain cuisine, local cheeses, cured meats and wines – plus a digestif or two – in al fresco restaurants.
- Trace tectonic collisions and vanished oceans with expert geologists. They'll even help you find pieces of ancient ocean floor.
- Visit copper and iron mining sites burrowed into idyllic valleys; stories of a metal mining heritage that stretches back thousands of years.
- Group size 6 to 12.



Arrive in Italy and Settle at Villa Malpensa

Arrival at Malpensa Milan International Airport

Touch down at Malpensa Milan International Airport (or arrive in Italy however you choose) and make your way to Hotel Villa Malpensa, an easy shuttle bus ride from the airport or train ride from Milan.

Hotel Villa Malpensa

Once the home of an Italian count, this sumptuously decorated early-20th-century villa stands in a large private garden. Check in to your comfortable room before meeting your guides and fellow travellers over dinner.

Group dinner in the hotel restaurant

Meet your guides and fellow travellers over dinner in the hotel restaurant.



Day 2 - In the footsteps of Romans along the Aosta Valley

Journey Through Roman Roads and Medieval Villages

Spectacular drive to the Aosta Valley

Get ready for a spectacular drive! After breakfast, we set off along the Po Plain to the edge of the Alps and then up the Aosta Valley, passing through spectacular gorges.

Visit to Roman road and Verres village

Our first stop is a Roman road carved into spectacular metamorphic rocks, worn smooth by centuries of use. Afterwards, wander the narrow lanes of the medieval village of Verres and pick a lunch spot from its many quaint restaurants and cafés.

Guided tour of Fénis Castle

Next, our drive passes vineyards, ancient fortifications and tiered fields on the valley walls on our way to the castle at Fénis – for some the most beautiful castle in all of Italy. Take it all in on a guided tour of its perfect battlements and towers.

Hotel Duca d'Aosta

Check in to the Hotel Duca d'Aosta, your base for the next five nights.

Group dinner in a local restaurant

Group dinner in a local restaurant.



Day 3 - Courmayeur and Mont Blanc – the roof of Europe.

Experience Courmayeur and Mont Blanc Views

Morning in Courmayeur

Expect a day of drama, starting with a morning in glamourous Courmayeur, in the jaw-droppingly beautiful upper Aosta Valley.

Courmayeur resort and Alpine Museum

Once a tiny mountain farming village, Courmayeur is now an elegant mountain resort with top-end boutiques, shops and cafés – all under the gaze of the awesome, glacier-sculpted Brenva face of Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in the Alps. It's the perfect place to discover the history of mountaineering at the Alpine Museum Duca degli Abruzzi, housed in the historic home of Courmayeur's mountain guides.

Ride the Val Veni cable car to Mont Blanc viewpoint

After lunch, we'll ride the Val Veni cable car to the viewpoint of Mont Blanc's awesome southern face – Europe's highest mountainside.

Optional walk to mountain café

Feeling fit? Walk even further uphill to a mountain café with more dramatic views down across the glaciers that flow from the peaks.

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Free evening

Free evening.



Day 4 - Copper mines, megaliths and classic Alpine beauty

Explore Ollomont Mining District and Megaliths

Ollomont mining district and Grand Combin

We're heading to the Ollomont mining district at the foot of the mountain massif of Grand Combin for a day of heritage and beauty.

Ollomont Valley heritage and copper mining

The Ollomont Valley has it all: Alpine beauty with grassy meadows, forests, quaint stone-built farms and villages – but it was once a major centre of copper mining. Now preserved as a heritage trail, we'll visit the old mine sites and museum, with the option of a guided visit to the underground workings. Although most of these sites involve gentle walking, to access the underground tour you'll need to walk on a marked trail up-hill for around 15 minutes.

Lunch and pre-Roman archaeology at Saint-Martin-de-Corléans

We'll return to Aosta in time for a late lunch before spending the afternoon discovering pre-Roman archaeology at Saint-Martin-de-Corléans, Europe's largest under-cover megalith site. The rest of the day is yours to relax in Aosta.

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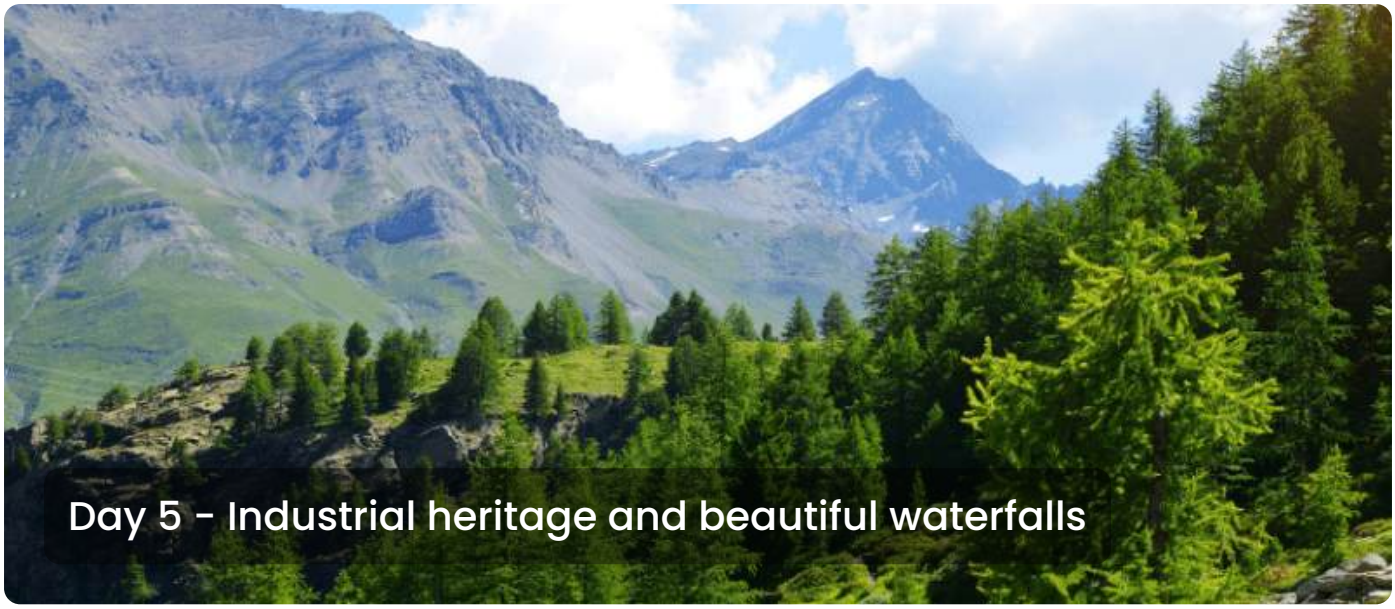
Free evening

Free evening.



Day 5 - Industrial heritage and beautiful waterfalls

Explore Gran Paradiso, Cogne, and Lillaz Waterfall

Gran Paradiso National Park and Cogne

We're heading into the Gran Paradiso National Park via the dramatic gorge of the Grand Eyvia river – carved over a kilometre deep into crumpled continental crust – to reach the Alpine village of Cogne. You wouldn't know it, but this beautiful place was once home to Italy's most important iron (magnetite) mine. We'll find out more about this industrial heritage in the village's museum.

Village ramble and light lunch

After a ramble around the village and a light lunch in one of the many cafes and restaurants, you'll be able to find samples of the magnetite ore and gaze up to the spectacular mine sites.

Lillaz waterfall and geological trail

A short stroll around the valley's geological trail takes in the beautiful Lillaz waterfall and views across Alpine forests and meadows up to the glaciers perched around towering peaks.

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Free evening

Free evening.



Day 6 - The Matterhorn and a vanished ocean

Cable Cars, Matterhorn Views, and Alpine Geology

Matterhorn, Breuil-Cervinia, and Alpine Gondolas

We spend the day hopping between cable cars and gondolas – always distracted by the incredible views! From the mountain village of Breuil (Cervinia), at the foot of the Matterhorn, we'll take the cable car to Plan Maison, grab a coffee at the café, then continue on the mountain gondola to Lago Cime Bianchi. From our position at 2,800m up in the mountains, we'll have spectacular views of glaciers and the peaks around the Matterhorn. Are you ready to be wowed by the story behind the view? These stunning rock outcrops reveal deposits from the now-vanished Tethys ocean floor. Dropping down on the gondola to Plan Maison, we'll enjoy a group lunch at the Rocce Nera restaurant before returning to Breuil by cable car. We'll aim to get back to Aosta in good time to explore the city walls, theatre and early Christian sites – or relax in one of the bars and cafés.

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Group dinner in local restaurant

Group dinner in local restaurant.



Day 7 - Alpine panoramas

Panoramic Gondola Rides and Alpine Reflections

Alpine panoramas and Pila gondola

After breakfast, the mountain gondola will whisk us out of the valley and up to the ski station of Pila – transformed into a mountain biking hub for summer. A short stroll to the Chamole chair lift then takes us up to around 2,400m. From there, a gentle stroll leads to Chamole lake, guaranteed to make your jaw drop with views that encompass the highest peaks of the Alps, from Mont Blanc to the Matterhorn. It's the perfect place to reflect upon our adventures together. Then, if you choose, we can continue along the path for 1 km, lured by the promise of yet more unforgettable views onto Mount Emelius and down into the Santa Maria Maddelena valley. After riding the chairlift and gondola back to Aosta, we'll have lunch, say goodbye to the mountains and drive back to Malpensa, arriving by 1pm. We may end our tour where it started, but we're returning with a new understanding of this spectacular part of the world.