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MAP-Rezia



Nature without borders
Welcome to the Three Parks Trail

Biodiversity thrives in diverse, well-connected habitats. To enable species to move and ecosystems to evolve, protected areas must not remain isolated but cooperate, crossing valleys, mountain ranges, and national borders. The MAP-Rezia project, 'Monitoraggio della biodiversità nelle Aree Protette della Rezia', strengthens collaboration between the Swiss National Park (CH), the Nature Park Biosfera Val Müstair (CH) and the Stelvio National Park (IT), aiming to protect biodiversity and develop new knowledge for monitoring, data sharing and environmental education.

The *Three Parks Trail* reveals this cooperation as part of the MAP-Rezia project. Across four daily stages, the trail explores biodiversity through stories of herbivores, species returning to our mountains, natural processes, and human impacts.

The trail connects countries and natural environments. It encourages reflection on the borders that nature does not recognise, reminding us that protecting nature is a shared responsibility.



Small tortoiseshell butterfly on a Moss campion (Silene acaulis) · © NPSwiss

What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity describes the variety of life and can be observed at four levels: genetic diversity within species, species diversity, habitat diversity, and the interactions between these levels. A simple example illustrates this: insects pollinate flowering plants, whose fruits provide food for other animals. These animals then disperse the seeds, often into other habitats. All these levels are closely linked. The greater the biodiversity, the more stable and resilient ecosystems are in the face of disturbances such as disease, extreme weather, or invasive species.

In mountain regions like the Alps, this richness is particularly evident. In small spaces, diverse habitats succeed one another: dry slopes rich in rural species, alpine meadows, ancient Swiss stone pine forests, and pioneer plant communities colonising scree and talus. These areas are true biodiversity hotspots.

The future – Committed to tomorrow

The *Three Parks Trail* stretches across extraordinary landscapes, connecting habitats, regions and people. Biodiversity does not stop at national borders or protected areas, and efforts to protect it can succeed only if we think and act beyond these boundaries.

That is why the Swiss National Park, Stelvio National Park, and the Nature Park Biosfera Val Müstair collaborate in scientific research and environmental education, fostering long-term cooperation.

You too can help protect biodiversity by supporting conservation projects in your region, taking part in citizen science initiatives, or bringing biodiversity into your daily life at home, at school, or at work. Only together can we preserve the richness of nature.

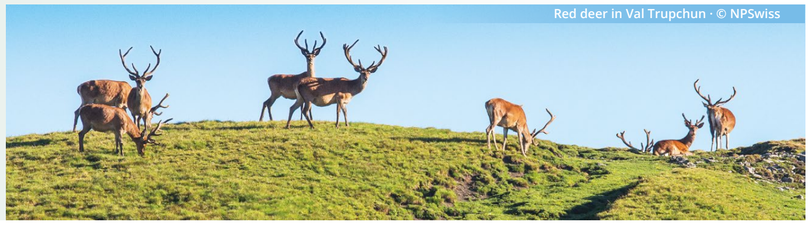
nationalpark.ch
val-muestair.ch
stelviopark.it



Forester moth on an Alpine aster (Aster alpinus) · © NPSwiss

Three parks – one goal: preserving biodiversity

Park name	Swiss National Park (NPSwiss)	Nature Park Biosfera Val Müstair (BVM)	Stelvio National Park (NPStelvio)
Category	Strictly protected National Park – IUCN Ia	Regional Nature Park	National Park with sustainable use – IUCN II
Establishment	1914	2011	1935
Area	170 km²	199 km²	1'307 km²
Altitude	1'400 – 3'170 m a.s.l	1'220 – 3'180 m a.s.l	700 – 3'910 m a.s.l
Hiking trails	100 km	250 km	1'400 km
Mountain bike trails	Biking prohibited	150 km	Access permitted on all trails
Characteristic	The oldest National Park in the Alps, with strict protection of natural processes	A fine example of conservation and sustainable development	Italy's largest alpine park, where nature and people coexist



Red deer in Val Trupchun · © NPSwiss

Publisher's legal notices

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Val Trupchun · © NPSwiss

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High-altitude hiking – safety first

High-altitude hiking requires preparation and responsibility. Sudden weather changes, fatigue, or getting lost can challenge even experienced hikers. Always carry a map or an offline app, wear suitable clothing and footwear, and know the local emergency numbers.

Recommendations

- Warm, waterproof clothing and suitable footwear
- Adequate food and water supplies
- First Aid kit
- Offline map or app
- Fully charged power bank
- Emergency whistle

Please respect the conservation restrictions which apply within the parks.

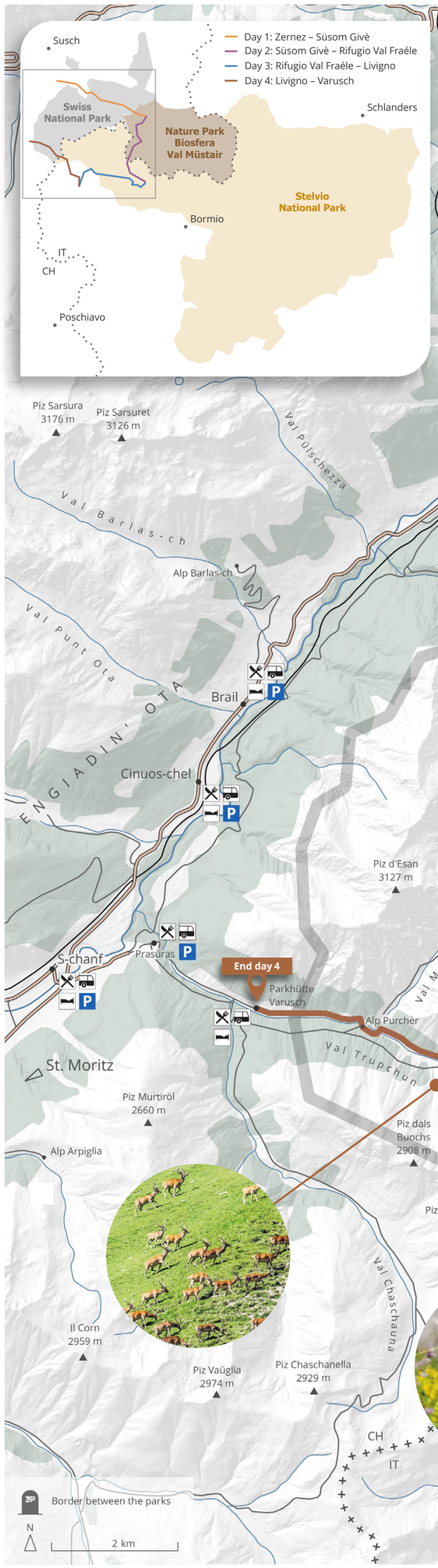
We reject any liability:
always follow the trail signs on site.

Emergency numbers

Service	Switzerland	Italy
General emergency, (EU-wide)	112	112
Ambulance / Medical emergency	144	112
Mountain rescue / Helicopter rescue	1414	112
Police	117	112
Fire brigade	118	112



Valle Alpisella · © Andrea Pulvirenti



Tip Hiking the *Three Parks Trail* takes you through pristine alpine forests, authentic cultural landscapes, and alpine landscapes along a single trail that crosses borders and reveals remarkable biodiversity.

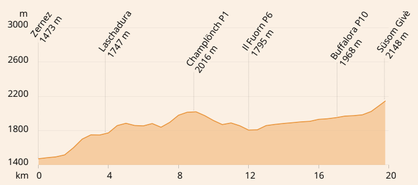
More information on the other side.

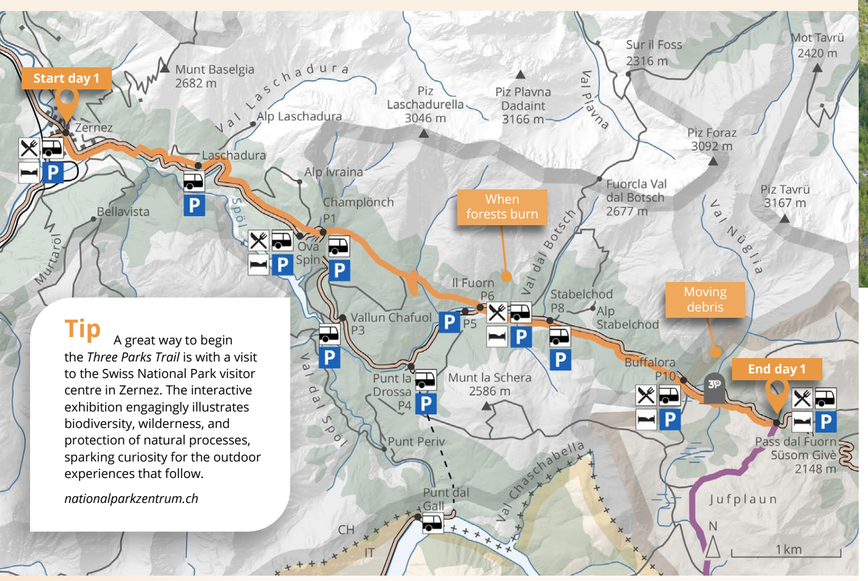
Day 1 — Natural processes and biodiversity

Swiss National Park visitor centre, Zernez – Hotel Parc Naziunal Il Fuorn – Pass dal Fuorn / Süsom Givè

Easy hike along the trail from Zernez to Pass dal Fuorn / Süsom Givè

- 7 h
- 20 km
- 1'200 m
- 500 m
- Technical difficulty: T2 (Mountain Hiking, SAC Scale)





Tip A great way to begin the *Three Parks Trail* is with a visit to the Swiss National Park visitor centre in Zernez. The interactive exhibition engagingly illustrates biodiversity, wilderness, and protection of natural processes, sparking curiosity for the outdoor experiences that follow.

nationalparkzentrum.ch

- **Accomodation:** Hotel Süsom Givè *ofenpass.ch*, +41 81 858 51 82
- **Public transport:** Bus line 811, Süsom Givè stop (at the top of the pass), *sbb.ch*
- **Refreshments:** Bergunterkunft Ova Spin, Hotel Parc Naziunal Il Fuorn, Berggasthaus Buffalora
- Shorten your hike by taking bus 811 from Hotel Parc Naziunal Il Fuorn P6 or Buffalora P10 to Süsom Givè, or at the start from Zernez to the Champlönch P1 stop.


Debris flow at Buffalora · © NPSwiss

Dynamic processes create diversity

The Swiss National Park is a strictly protected wilderness area: since 1914, nature has evolved freely. It operates under a stringent non-intervention policy that is seldom implemented elsewhere worldwide. Natural processes are allowed to develop freely; humans do not actively intervene, manage, or regulate. Avalanches, storms, and landslides, along with regeneration and recolonisation, are all part of this undisturbed dynamic. Biodiversity is not static, but the result of continuous change. Only where natural processes run freely do complex interactions develop between species, habitats, and environmental conditions.


Burnt area by Il Fuorn · © NPSwiss

When forests burn

A forest fire may seem destructive, yet it is a natural part of forest ecosystems, contributing to their renewal, enriching the soil, and creating space for new life.

The 1951 fire at Il Fuorn exemplifies the impact a single fire can have in a subalpine environment. It is striking how long the traces remain visible when natural dynamics act freely.

Forest fires are also known in Stelvio National Park: in the Lombardy sector, 13 fires were extinguished between 2015 and 2025. The riskiest period is early spring – March and especially April – when dry vegetation and low humidity favour ignition.

Moving debris

A debris flow is a rapid movement of water, mud, and rock down a slope under gravity. In the mountains, these events often occur on steep, rocky slopes during heavy rain. The violent storm above Buffalora in July 2022 is a clear example, with a debris flow still visible years later.

In summer 2025, a debris flow in Valle Alpisella buried a bridge under thousands of cubic metres of debris, leaving deposits still visible along the stream. Such events can affect roads and infrastructure, but also create new habitats.

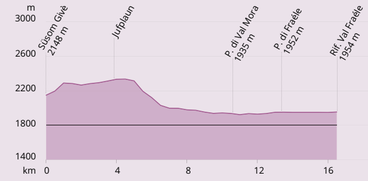
Careful observation reveals pioneering plants and animals thriving on these ever-changing surfaces, demonstrating nature's extraordinary ability to recover after extreme events.

Day 2 — Recolonizing species and biodiversity

Pass dal Fuorn / Süsom Givè – Passo di Val Mora – Rifugio Val Fraéle

Easy hike across the plateaus with wide views leading to Lago di San Giacomo di Fraéle

- 5 h
- 16,5 km
- 450 m
- 650 m
- Technical difficulty: T2 (Mountain Hiking, SAC Scale)



Tip Start early to enjoy the Jufplaun plateaus bathed in morning light: a peaceful setting ideal for spotting wildlife. With luck, you may see chamois, marmots, deer, and in the sky, later during day golden eagles and bearded vultures.


Bearded vulture © NPSwiss




Wolf · © Alexia Winterhalter

The natural return of the wolf

After decades of absence due to human persecution, the wolf has returned to the region of the three parks. Cross-border passes like Passo di Val Mora are key ecological corridors for this wide-ranging species.

Its comeback has been natural: rural depopulation, an increase in prey such as deer, ibex, and roe deer, together with its adaptability and dispersal abilities, have allowed the remaining population from central Italy to recolonise the Alps.

The bearded vulture in the Alpine skies

In 1913, Italian hunters killed the last bearded vulture in the Alps, wrongly seen as a predator and nicknamed the 'sheep vulture.' In reality, it feeds exclusively on bones and carcasses, playing a vital ecological 'cleaner' role.

Thanks to a reintroduction project that began in the 1980s, bearded vultures now soar over the Alps once again. The first wild-born birds in Stelvio National Park descended from individuals reintroduced in the Swiss National Park. Today, all young birds are wild-born in the region of the three parks, making the area a prime location to observe these majestic birds.

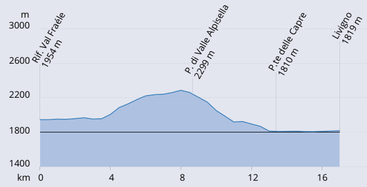
- **Accommodation:** Rifugio Val Fraéle (Mountain Hut) *rifugiovalfraele.com*, +39 339 707 47 29
- **Public transport:** Cancano Express, from Rifugio Val Fraéle to Isolaccia (Valdidentro). Check *valdidentroturismo.it* or contact the Valdidentro Tourist Office in advance for tickets, schedules, and bus stop information.
- **Refreshments:** Alp Mora, accessible with a 15–20 min detour.
- The trail follows a popular cycling route.

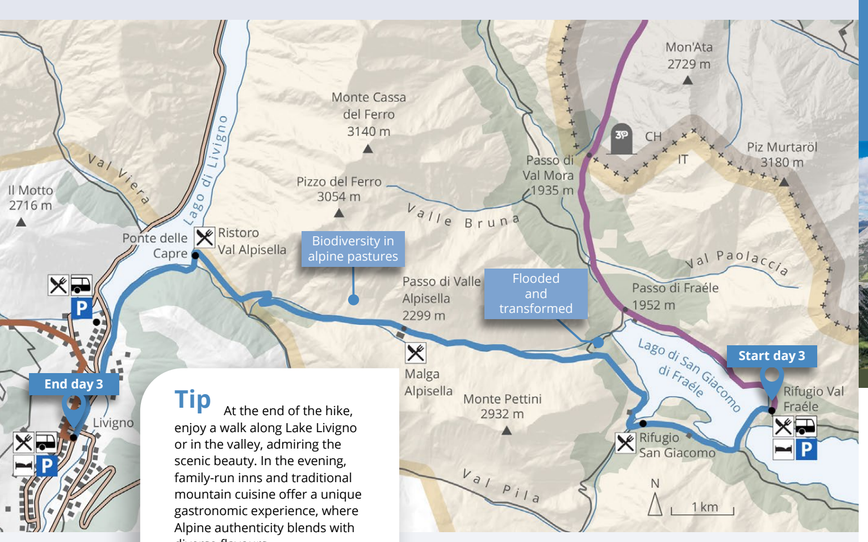
Day 3 — Human and biodiversity

Rifugio Val Fraéle – Passo di Valle Alpisella – Livigno

Hike among larches, Swiss stone pines and high-altitude landscapes

- 5 h 15 min
- 17 km
- 600 m
- 750 m
- Technical difficulty: T2 (Mountain Hiking, SAC Scale)





Tip At the end of the hike, enjoy a walk along Lake Livigno or in the valley, admiring the scenic beauty. In the evening, family-run inns and traditional mountain cuisine offer a unique gastronomic experience, where Alpine authenticity blends with diverse flavours.

latterialivigno.eu

- **Accommodation:** various options in Livigno *livigno.eu* > *Prenota*
- **Public transport:** Livigno Centre *livigno.eu* > *Info e servizi*
- **Refreshments:** Rifugio San Giacomo (Mountain Hut), Malga Alpisella, Ristoro Val Alpisella, Latteria Livigno
- The trail follows a popular cycling route.


Malga Alpisella © NPStelvio

Responsible use

Humans are not only part of biodiversity; they actively shape it. Over centuries, they created rich cultural landscapes, often through extensive land management that provided habitats for specialised species such as the Apollo butterfly and the small orchid *(Chamorchis alpina)*. Today, intensification of land use threatens many of these species.

Biodiversity is not only ecological: it supports economy and society, providing ecosystem services like clean water, fertile soil, pollination, protection from natural hazards, and climate regulation.

As much as humans impact nature, we are equally dependent on it. Along the Valle Alpisella trail, this close relationship between humans and nature becomes evident: ancient alpine pastures reflect traditional land use, while Lake Livigno and the Cancano Lakes strongly shape the landscape. Here, the ecological effects of human activities are clearly visible.


Lago di San Giacomo di Fraéle · © Enrico Pozzi Bigno

Flooded and transformed

The rising electricity demand in the 20th century led to the construction of many dams in Central Europe, including Livigno and Passo di Fraéle. During the construction of the Cancano dams (1922–1956), villages, pastures, and forests were submerged, radically transforming the valley.

Today, lakes dominate, while larches, Swiss stone pines, and mountain pines have reclaimed much of the land, a testimony to nature's resilience and the deep connection between human history and the Alpine environment.

Biodiversity in alpine pastures

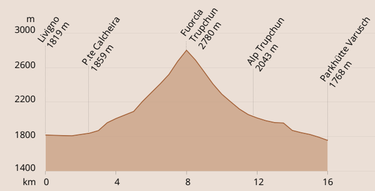
Summer grazing is a centuries-old tradition in the Alps. Since the 20th century, the use of steeper areas has declined, and some mountain farms were abandoned. This reduction alters plant communities: dwarf shrubs like rhododendron *(Rhododendron sp.)*, juniper *(Juniperus communis)*, and bilberry *(Vaccinium myrtillus)* become more common, reducing biodiversity. In contrast, extensive and consistent pasture management enhances natural richness. The rare red Nigritella *(Nigritella rubra)*, an alpine orchid, thrives in extensively managed pastures. Its unmistakable vanilla scent is probably familiar to most visitors.

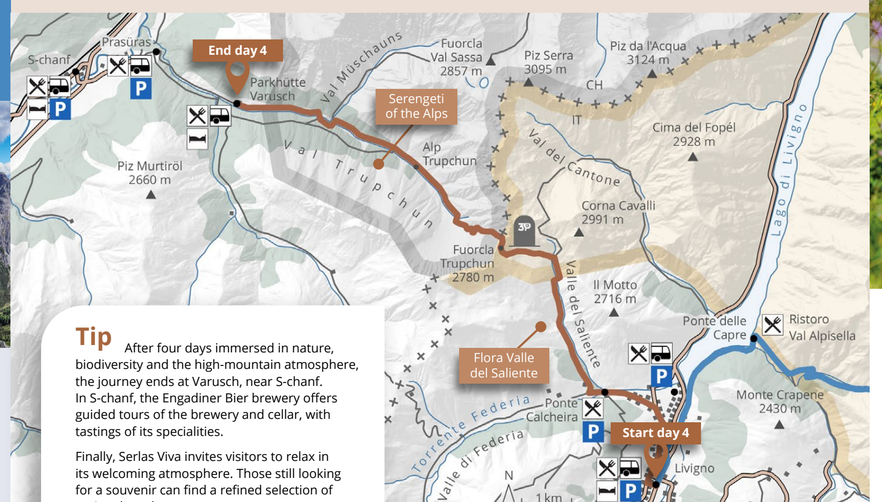
Day 4 — Herbivores and biodiversity

Livigno – Fuorcla Trupchun – Parkhütte Varusch

Alpine hike ideal for observing flora and fauna, with exposed sections in the Valle del Saliente that require sure-footedness and a head for heights

- 6 h
- 16 km
- 1'150 m
- 1'200 m
- T3 (Difficult Mountain Hiking) / T4 (Alpine Hiking) on the Swiss SAC Hiking Scale





Tip After four days immersed in nature, biodiversity and the high-mountain atmosphere, the journey ends at Varusch, near S-chanf. In S-chanf, the Engadiner Bier brewery offers guided tours of the brewery and cellar, with tastings of its specialities.

Finally, Serlas Viva invites visitors to relax in its welcoming atmosphere. Those still looking for a souvenir can find a refined selection of regional products.

serlas.ch

- **Accommodation:** various options in S-chanf or Zernez, www.*s-chanf.ch*, *zernez.ch*
- **Public transport:** In summer months, the Express Parc Naziunel departs from Parkhütte Varusch and bus 608 from Prasüras (S-chanf stop, Parc Naziunel) to S-chanf railway station. *sbb.ch*, *alpintrans.ch*
- **Refreshments:** Parkhütte Varusch, Restorant Prasüras
- To shorten the route, you can take the Express Parc Naziunel from the Parkhütte Varusch or Punt da Val da Scrigns.


Val Trupchun · © NPSwiss


Valle del Saliente · © NPSwiss

Among flowers and hooves

Small and large herbivores – from deer and ibex to marmots, mice, snails and insects – play a fundamental role in the alpine meadow ecosystem. In particular, when invertebrates – insects, snails or worms – are absent, food webs and nutrient cycles break down. Large herbivores, such as deer and ibex, also shape the habitat: they browse young shoots, shape tree composition, cause localised erosion through movement, and help disperse seeds.

In this way, herbivores actively sculpt the landscape, affecting soil and overall biodiversity. Observing them in the wild, we can almost see biodiversity come alive.

Flora of the Valle del Saliente

In the alpine meadows of Valle del Saliente, lowland and arctic-alpine plant species meet, thriving at high altitude. Depending on soil, microclimate, exposure and altitude, every corner of the valley offers a unique mosaic of blooms. In summer, flowers burst into colour, delighting hikers.

Bright colours attract pollinating insects and protect plants from UV rays. The deep blue of Koch's gentian *(Gentiana acaulis)* comes from anthocyanins, which shield the plant like sunscreen. Solar exposure and colour intensity increase at higher altitudes.

Serengeti of the Alps

Val Trupchun is known as the 'Serengeti of the Alps' and is a true paradise for wildlife watching. Marmots, ibex, chamois and especially red deer roam here, finding ideal conditions for life. It was not always like this: before alpine pastures were protected, they were used for cattle and sheep grazing.

Today, hundreds of deer spend the summer in Val Trupchun, shaping the landscape over decades. Wherever deer roam and graze, a wealth of herbs can be found. Over time, the plant community adjusts to their feeding habits, creating a distinctive and diverse vegetation cover: only plants able to defend themselves survive, such as spiny thistles or toxic cypress spurge *(Euphorbia cyparissias)*.