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MULTIMEDIA › ARTS AND LEISURE

Italy's Valle d'Aosta re-vamps its summer attractions with new Mont Blanc cable car and hiking trails

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One of the three stations of the Punta Helbronner cable car in the Monte Bi

Summer tourism in Italy's Alps is at risk if the industry does not understand that guests must find mountains, culture, land preservation, food and wine, and at very different values from those found at the beach, according to a recent study by Federturismo's Osservatorio Turistico della Montagna.

The [Aosta](#) Valley north of [Turin](#), despite the blunders, is trying to respond to these needs.

On one hand there's Mont Blanc's new cable car, a wonder which at more than €100 million is capable of providing unique experiences even to those that understand little or nothing about the mountains, by bringing guests 3,466 meters up without a problem.

At the same time, posh year-round resort Courmayeur is dedicating this summer's mountaineering festival "Passione Verticale" to the golden age of mountain climbing, with meetings with alpinists and films on topics ranging from historic ascents to life in a Himalayan village.

On the other, there's the Gran Paradiso National Park's numerous programs that focus on tourism related to the environment and its protection. And combining nature and history, the national park has just renovated an historic climbing trail (from Valnontey to the Sella Refuge) which was part of the network of mule paths and routes used and often made by King Vittorio Emanuele II for his hunting trips.

It's no coincidence that the Sella Refuge, which is now a point of reference for hiking, used to be one of the royal hunting lodges. The new path can be covered in around two and a half hours, with a altitude disparity of around 921 meters.

But the Gran Paradiso National Park has also thought about those whom are less able to go on treks, by offering a film festival that focuses on the appreciation of naturalistic cinema, also involving the [Piedmont](#) area of the park and combining environment with culture.

On the other side of the Valle d'Aosta valley, north of the Dora river, Ayas is betting on its ability to attract tourists with its new Monterosa Terme spa. A facility built for relaxation, where you can also train on a climbing wall. A swimming pool and sauna with a view of Monte Rosa, and a facility dedicated to a location that should be preserved but instead risks being damaged in order to build a new ski slope in one of the most beautiful valleys of the Alps.

Valle d'Aosta is also trying to transform itself into a destination for

food and wine tourism. It is not what its most well known for, but that's due to a lack of information, and it has seen its excellences multiply, both with regards to wines, white and red, as well as the continued improvement in the quality of the area's restaurants. These improvements haven't just taken place in tourist destinations, from the Hotellerie de Mascognaz to the Atelier Gourmand di Champoluc, but also in the valley floor, from Vecchio Ristoro Aosta to Chez Pierre in Verres.

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