

PAESE DI SALBERTRAND

Salbertrand was part of the Holy Roman Empire. Its name first appears on the imperial diploma of Ottone III dated July 31, 1001, as 'Sala Bertae' (Borgo of Berta). Since then, it was a fiefdom of the Counts of Turin and the Marquises of Susa, and its fortunes were linked to the historical events of the Upper Valley through centuries of belonging to the Dauphiné and France until its cession to the Savoy in 1713.

A – Parrocchiale di San Giovanni Battista

The Parish Church of St. John the Baptist, already mentioned in a document from 1057 in which the Marquess Oddone of Savoy and his wife Countess Adelaide of Susa donated it to the Provostship of Oulx, was rebuilt in the late Gothic style between 1506-1536, but it preserves Romanesque elements.

The grandiose porch characterizes the exterior, unique in its kind, the rich portal with Romanesque-Lombard and Franco-Dauphine elements, the solid walnut door worked in 'diamond point' style, and the Romanesque-style bell tower erected in 1739/41. The portal's lunette is frescoed. The lunette of the portal is frescoed with a Deposition that shows visible marks of halberds, evidence of religious wars. The most significant elements of the interior are the Gothic capitals, arches and ribs, the precious frescoes (14th-16th centuries) restored starting from 2000, the altarpiece, and the display of the treasures of the parish kept in the Sacristy.

B – Hotel Dieu e Fontana

Along what was once the ancient Road of France, now Via Roma, stands the Hotel Dieu, a medieval pilgrims' shelter transformed into a hospital at the time of the great plague of 1629. On the facade, traces of sixteenth-century frescoes brought to light during the restoration of 2016: a Pietà and the portrayal of Saint James that takes us back to the ancient route of faith that led east to Rome and Jerusalem and westward to Santiago de Compostela. It houses a Park information point and ecomuseum displays inside.

The rectangular basin fountain in front, dated 1524, is decorated with hanging arches and is carved with the symbols of power of the time: the fleur-de-lis of France and the Dolphin. It was replicated in the Valentino Medieval Village for the 1884 Turin General Exposition. It was reproduced in the Medieval Village of Valentino created for the General Exhibition of Turin in 1884.

C – Fontana in cima al paese

In Piazza San Rocco, the fountain of Cime de Ville with its octagonal basin and covered wash house is decorated with a round of hanging arches and bears carved, in Gothic lettering, the date of construction: 1525.

D - Forno

The old oven, is located in the hamlet of Oulme. Inside are two wood-burning ovens that were managed on a community basis. One of the two ovens, the larger ones, was lit every week and could hold up to 60 loaves. It ensured the baking of the entire population who participated with commitment according to very disciplined procedures and timing.

E – Cappella dell'Annunciazione Oulme

It is the oldest chapel in the Municipality of Salbertrand, dating from the 15th century. Dedicated to the Annunciation of Mary, it is commonly called the Chapel of St. Christopher because of the majestic fresco on the facade. Surprising is the richness of the interior frescoes dated 1534: the entire apse wall is covered with a fresco cycle with stories from the life of the Virgin.

Thanks to the "Chiese a porte aperte" app, it can be opened and visited independently with the simple use of a smartphone.

F – Mulino idraulico del Martinet

The hydraulic mill of Salbertrand is one of the most interesting and best preserved in the High Susa Valley and allows visitors to retrace 800 years of the history of water use, from feudal milling rights to the arrival of electricity.

Inside the building located near the Dora Riparia River, visitors can see the grain mill room, the oil mill for oil production and hemp processing, the hydroelectric power generation facilities that allowed for its gradual electrification in the early 1900s, and various installations.

G – Sede Parco naturale del Gran Bosco di Salbertrand

The multifunctional headquarters of the Cottian Alps Parks, located on the edge of the protected territory, houses the authority's offices, the Visitor Center of the Gran Bosco di Salbertrand Natural Park and the Colombano Roman Ecomuseum, the conference and exhibition hall, the thematic library, and the Spazio Escartons Documentation Center. Outside, the Butterfly Garden is always open. It is also accessible by public transportation (train) and on foot from the highway service areas and provides easy access to the main hiking routes through the Park.

H - Glorioso Rimpatrio dei Valdesi

A memorial plaque commemorates the site where in 1689 the battle that determined the fate of the Waldensian people during their repatriation from exile took place.

ECOMUSEO COLOMBANO ROMEOAN

The Ecomuseum, created and managed by the Gran Bosco di Salbertrand Natural Park, which is now under the management of the Cottian Alps Protected Areas Authority, winds along a loop itinerary between the forest and the village and includes a rich heritage of material and immaterial culture capable of recounting centuries of history and exploitation of the territory's resources. The village's ecomuseum sites can be visited as part of the Park Authority's scheduled guided tours (check www.parchialpicozie.it), or by reservation by calling +390122854720.

TERRITORIO DI SALBERTRAND

A – The Icehouse of Salbertrand, with its thick stone walls, buried and covered by trees with a shading function, is the last example of a 19th-century Piedmontese icehouse still intact. The ice produced in winter in the nearby artificial pond was stored there until summer, then loaded onto wagons or train and transported to markets in Turin and Briançon. The seasonality of the work, complementary to agricultural work, made the activity of ice extraction and preservation an important economic resource for the local community.

B – The charcoal kiln ecomuseum site illustrates the different stages of setting up a charcoal kiln in the forest, from preparing the timber to distilling the charcoal. A production practiced in the mountains wherever there were transportation difficulties, it has remained practically unchanged from ancient times until to its recent disappearance. Not far away, the limekiln site describes the production of lime from limestone.

C – Falesia arrampicata sportiva "La Costa"

A small sunny cliff, with a grassy base suitable for beginners and families with children. The rock is amphibolite, the structure is that of an old quarry, and climbing is always on clear holds, continuous from the first to the last passage, features corners, overhangs, and a few slab sections. Bolting was carried out by alpine guides from the Valsusa school using material provided by the CAI (Italian Alpine Club) subsection of Salbertrand. The pitches are very close, and the difficulty rating was given by passing on the line of protections. The belays do NOT have rappel carabiners; it is MANDATORY to maneuver. Base belays are available for practice.

D – San Romano, Rival e Plans

These three hamlets are located southwest of the center of Salbertrand, in the plain that extends towards Oulx. San Romano (at an altitude of 1038 meters) was already a fiefdom of the Prevostura di Oulx in the 15th century; a document from 1714 states that it occupied 52 "sestrates" of land (almost 8 hectares), exempt from taxation. Currently, the village has seen reasonable urban development.

The hamlets Rival and Plans are located at approximately the same altitude, at 1043 meters, just a few hundred meters apart. From the archives of the Archaeological Superintendence we know that in this area an interesting discovery was made during the construction of the railway line, it is a burial attributable to the Bronze Age and two armillas from the Iron Age, in that area the Roman road supposedly ran, perhaps tracing an earlier route. It's worth noting that the mentioned burial was found -where the passage in the plain between the Dora Riparia and the mountainous relief is particularly narrow. It is likely that the road used to be as close as possible to the base of the mountains where the valley was narrower, to move further away from the mountain side where the valley floor was larger, always ensuring safety from possible flooding.

E – Frenée

The village is situated at an altitude of 1390 meters, on the beautiful sunny plateau, between the Rio Secco and the Rio Gironda. The name Frenée is believed by some to have ancient Saracen

origins, suggesting that a detachment of Moors settled there. Probably, the name is connected to the Latin "*fraxinus*" and the French "*frêne*" meaning a place where ash trees grow.

The hamlet consists of three groups of houses: the *Bā* (the lowest of the three settlements, on the plain), the *Marmuřina* (a toponym derived from a type of rock used for the production of slab and in alpine construction), and the *Carcà* (probably meaning rocky and uneven ground), where the chapel is located. St. Anne is the patron saint of the hamlet, celebrated on the 26th of July. In 1871, there were 90 residents counted in the village.

F – Moncellier.

The locality is well-exposed to sunlight and sheltered from the cold valley breeze, rich in springs. Mentioned as "*Monte Cellario*" the toponym can be traced back to the medieval meaning of a monastic cell or hermitage, or in the connotation of a storage place for fruits and agricultural products. In a document from 1439, there is a record of payment for the pipeline and water adduction works up to the chief town: «*ad conducendum quendam fontem de Monte Cellario ad predictum locum de Salabertano*».

The hamlet consists of two clusters of houses: Moncellier di sotto at 1247 meters above sea level and Moncellier di sopra at 1332 meters above sea level, where the chapel of St. Hippolytus is located, the patron saint of the hamlet, celebrated on August 13th.

G – Eclause

It is the largest hamlet in the municipality, located at 1383 meters above sea level, mentioned in a parchment from 1477 as "*Exclausa Salabertani*" (outside the borders of Salbertrand), the year in which the chapel dedicated to the martyrs Saints Sebastian and Pancras was founded. In 1540, an important and artistic bell tower in the Dolphin style was added. The patronal feast is celebrated on May 12th. Points of interest include the oven, the school, the mills, and the typical architecture of an alpine village.

In the 1857 census, 276 inhabitants were recorded. However, due to emigration to France and especially Argentina, the number dropped drastically. Currently, there are few residents, but it is interesting to observe the renovation of some of the houses, activities, and places once used and shared by the community.

H – Fenil

Downstream from Eclause, at an altitude of 1194 meters, on the hill of "*Munâ*" lies the plateau of Fenil, a very sunny location rich in soil and water. The toponym seems to reflect the Latin "*fenilis*" meaning "barn," but another hypothesis associates it with the meaning of boundary/limit from the Latin base "*finis*." Its plural (also in the local dialect, known as "*Lu Fini*" meaning the Fenils) dates back to when there were two clusters of houses. According to a report from 1714, the chapel of St. Firmin, located on the mountain of Fenil di sopra, had incomes to celebrate four annual masses. Nowadays, only some ruins remain. The currently preserved and inhabited part is Fenil di sotto, where the chapel of St. Joseph, which fell into ruins and was deconsecrated for over a century, has been restored and rededicated in 1989. The patron saint is celebrated on March 19th.

I – Combes

Crossing the basin of the Rio Pontet, you reach the hamlet, situated at 1240 meters above sea level.

The toponym, widespread throughout the territory, originates from the Occitan "*coumba*" and has Celtic roots, meaning a small valley or cliff. Here, the fields, meadows, and vineyards, located on steep slopes, required considerable effort for cultivation. If, on the other hand, we focus on the village itself, we find points in its favor: the houses lay their foundations on the compact rock of the slope, guaranteeing stability, and thanks to its position set back in the valley groove, the hamlet is sheltered from the cold valley breeze; the southern exposure ensures excellent sunlight. The chapel is dedicated to St. Clement, the patron saint of the hamlet, celebrated on November 23rd.

L – Deveys

It is a hamlet shared between the municipalities of Exilles and Salbertrand, situated at 1035 meters above sea level. The toponym comes from the Latin "*devexum*" meaning sloping hillside, but more likely from the Occitan "*devés*" prohibition, in this case referring to a protected forest where cutting was forbidden. In the medieval times, the hamlet was part of Exilles's territory, along with Combes. The previous boundary followed the course of the Rio Pontet, but in the 1600s, it was moved further east in exchange for the assignment of forests and pastures in the Sapè area on the opposite side of the valley. However, the inhabitants continued to be part of the parish of Exilles until the early 20th century, where children attended school until the 1930s, this being closer to reach on foot.

The hamlet, still populated, reached its greatest- expansion in the late 19th century. There were about 200 inhabitants when on January 18, 1885, an avalanche devastated 11 houses and caused 35 deaths.

The fountain with a mask, dated 1733, is located between the two cores that make up the settlement. The chapel is dedicated to St. Blaise and is celebrated on February 3rd.

M – Seu

Up there, in the meadows between the Gran Bosco and the Piccolo Bosco, at an altitude of 1771 meters, bordering the extensive pastures that reach the passes allowing connection with the Val Chisone, stands the timeless cluster of houses of Montagne Seu: a double row of houses, a street and some alleys, two fountains, and a chapel. In 1747, just a few kilometers away, the Battle of Assietta took place, a bloody conflict with almost 5,000 casualties and the defeat of the French army. At Seu, a temporary hospital was established to aid over 500 injured soldiers who, due to the severity of their wounds, could not be transported across the border on mule back.

The chapel dedicated to Saints Cosmas and Damian (some documents attest to its existence since 1300) has been recently restored and is celebrated on September 26 and 27.

Seu is also home to the Daniele Arlaud Refuge, originally a park ranger's hut, the refuge was renovated in the early 2000s and subsequently expanded. It is as a support point, for arrival or departure, for those wishing to explore a natural, evocative, and protected environment in the Gran Bosco di Salbertrand Natural Park. It is also located on the hiking trails of the GTA (Grande Traversata delle Alpi), Sentiero Italia, and GRV (Glorioso Rimpatrio dei Valdesi).

N – Forte Fenil

The fort was built starting from 1891 on a rocky terrace near the hamlet, at the beginning of the military road Fenil - Pramand - Föens - Jafferau and consisted of a square building about 75 meters on each side, surrounded by a ditch on three sides and defended at the corners by as many caponiers. Access to the fort was through a bridge that was half fixed and half drawbridge. The fort

had three floors, and on the top floor above ground, there were 8 cannons 12 ARC/Re facing with their fire mouths towards the Oulx plain and the Pont Ventoux bottleneck. On the lower floors of the building, there were barracks for the troops and officers, kitchens, "technical" rooms, and compartments for loading projectiles that were connected to the casemate on the roof via manual elevators.

Following Italy's defeat in World War II, the fort was disarmed and was sold to the congregation of the 'Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice' who later transformed it into a summer camp house.

O – Forte Pramand

The Pramand Battery, built by the Military Engineering at the beginning of the 20th century, is a typical armored battery of the Kingdom of Italy; it consists of a concrete parallelepiped with two floors above ground, protected at the front by a sloped grassy rampart that also served as camouflage from French observation. In the 1930s, it was rearmed and manned by the artillerymen of the 8th Artillery Grouping Guardia alla Frontiera, and in June 1940, it took action with its cannons against France during the brief Battle of the Alps. After September 8, 1943, it was abandoned by the military garrison. Partisans from the valley visited it repeatedly to remove ammunition, fuses, and explosives used for sabotage against the Nazi fascist forces. When the Germans withdrew from the Susa Valley in April 1945, they blew up the battery, rendering the domes and cannons unusable.

Parco Naturale del Gran Bosco

The Gran Bosco di Salbertrand Natural Park spans an area of 3,775 hectares on the right bank of the Susa Valley, from 1000 meters above sea level to the 2700 meters of the watershed. Established in 1980, its primary purpose is to protect the lush vegetation, particularly valuable forests of fir, larch, and Swiss pine, like the Gran Bosco itself, an 800-hectare mixed forest of silver fir and spruce that is unique in the region due to its continental climate. The park is home to over 600 plant species, creating a wide variety of habitats: in the valley floor, we find broadleaf trees such as ash, birch, maple, alder, chestnut, and beech, and as one ascends, the realm of conifers begins. There is also a rich fauna: traversing the Park, one can hear the drumming of the great spotted woodpecker and the metallic call of the black woodpecker, and may encounter squirrels, foxes, marmots, hares, and stoats. Birds such as the ptarmigan and the black grouse, symbols of the alpine avifauna, also nest in the Park. Among the ungulates, there are deer, roe deer, chamois, and wild boar. In 1997, the wolf made its reappearance, helping to balance the excessive number of ungulates. The Gran Bosco di Salbertrand Natural Park is now managed by the Alpi Cozie Parks Management Body, along with three other parks in the Susa Valley, Val Chisone, and Val Sangone: the Avigliana Lakes, Orsiera Rocciavrè, and Val Troncea Natural Parks. The Park Authority also manages the Colombano Roman Ecomuseum, taking care of its promotion and use.