




CHÂTEAUX  
DE LA VALLÉE  
D'AOSTE

A journey through history, art and nature



# The castles of the Aosta Valley: a thrilling journey through time

**A** significant and rich cultural heritage made up of castles, strongholds and historic buildings welcomes those visiting the Aosta Valley or travelling through. Indeed, the many castles scattered along the region's central valley are of outstanding beauty and cultural interest. Built in strategic places to defend ancient lands, these castles with their variety of styles and architectural features are a valuable testimony to the history of the Aosta Valley.

*From the twelfth century, the local lords constructed fortified buildings for defensive purposes, such as the castles of Graines, Châtel-Argent and Cly, which perfectly exemplify the oldest style of castle architecture.*

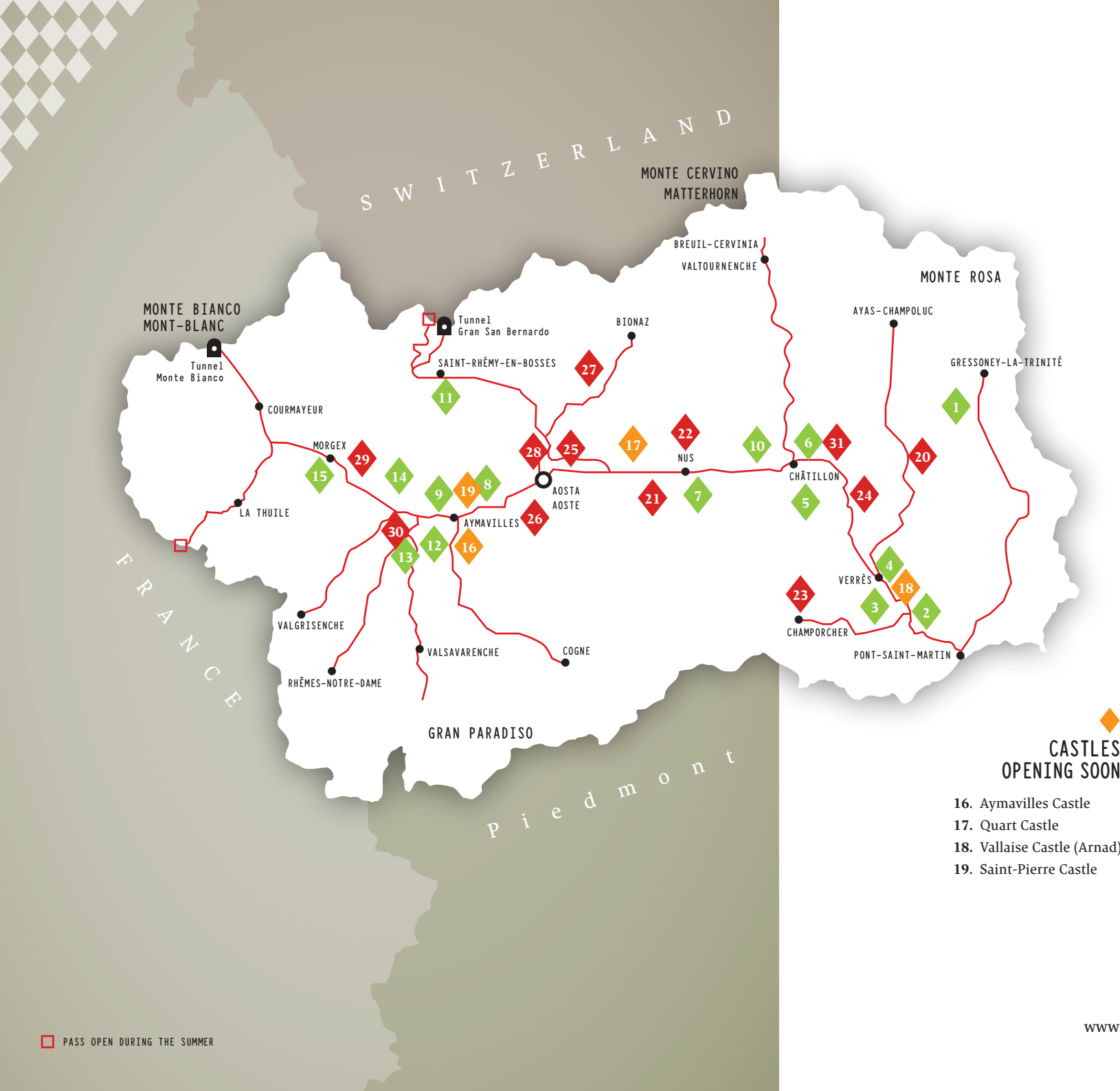
*However, from the fourteenth century onwards, the architectural features serving to defensive purposes were superseded by monolithic structures, such as those of the castles of Ussel and Verrès, which were then gradually embellished with decorative features, as can be observed at the famous Fénis Castle among others.*

*The stylistic evolution of the fortress into a fine manor house is evident in the castles of Aymavilles and Issogne, whereas the abodes of Sarre and Savoy Castle of Gressoney-Saint-Jean are testimonies to the presence of the Savoy dynasty in the Aosta Valley and the artistic taste in vogue in that court.*

*In the summer, the magic of this places is even greater as the castles become spectacular scenery for emotionally charged musical events. Guests are treated to refined and exclusive evenings as the events feature artists of national and international caliber.*

*Discovering this artistic heritage is embarking on a journey through time, through the emotions and passions of times gone by can be relived.*





## CASTLES OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

1. Savoy Castle (Gressoney-Saint-Jean)
2. Bard Fortress
3. Issogne Castle
4. Verrès Castle
5. Ussel Castle (Châtillon)
6. Gamba Castle (Châtillon)
7. Fénis Castle
8. Sarre Castle
9. Sarriod de La Tour Castle (Saint-Pierre)
10. Cly Castle (Saint-Denis)
11. Bosses Castle (Saint-Rhémy-en-Bosses)
12. Châtel-Argent (Villeneuve)
13. Introd Castle
14. Aive Castle
15. Tour de l'Archet (Morgex)



## CASTLES WHICH CAN BE VIEWED FROM OUTSIDE

20. Graines Castle (Brusson)
21. Saint-Marcel Castle
22. Pilato Castle (Nus)
23. Champorcher Castle
24. Saint-Germain Castle (Montjovet)
25. Jocteau Castle (Aosta)
26. Tour de Villa (Gressan)
27. La Tornalla (Oyace)
28. Gignod Tower
29. Châtelard Castle (La Salle)
30. La Mothe Castle (Arvier)
31. Passerin d'Entrèves Castle (Châtillon)



# SAVOY<sup>CASTLE</sup>

## GRESSONEY-SAINT-JEAN

*A fairytale residence for Queen Margaret of Savoy*

Nestling among the pines in the Gressoney Valley, the Savoy castle has a fairytale atmosphere. It is embellished by **five towers** that are all different from each other and topped with conical roofs. Its construction, however, dates back to the early 1900s, when Queen Margaret of Savoy, wife of King Humbert I, had this **elegant residence built for summer holidays**.

The spot on which the castle stands is called 'Belvedere', an Italian word meaning 'panoramic viewpoint', and in fact the view that can be enjoyed from the castle is really breathtaking, and the interior of the castles is just as stunning: the three floors retain ornamental paintings and *boiseries* and other elegant decorations, often representing daisies in honour of the Queen, whose Italian name Margherita just means 'daisy'. Must-sees among the castle's annexes are the Belvedere Villa, which was the old guest quarters, and the alpine garden set up in the park.



Loc. Belvedere  
Gressoney-Saint-Jean  
Ph. +39 0125 355398

Savoy residence, park

Gressoney-Saint-Jean  
Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0125 355185





# BARD FORTRESS

*From military fortress  
to temple of culture*

A steep rock overlooking a narrow gorge,  
the only access road to the Aosta Valley:  
this is **the ideal place for a fortress**.

In fact, from the Romans to Hannibal, from  
Napoleon – who took 15 days to storm it –  
to the House of Savoy, the Bard fortress's past  
is a succession of wars and sieges. Indeed, its  
architectural structure is a clear representation  
of the evolution of military techniques. It was  
originally a fortified castle and was rebuilt by  
Charles Felix of Savoy, who constructed three  
large buildings, known as *Opere*, which are spread  
along the rocky outcrop's flank.

Today the Bard stronghold no longer fulfils its  
original defensive function. It now houses the  
**Alps Museum**, which is accessed via a spectacular  
system of panoramic lifts, an interactive play area  
called **Le Alpi dei Ragazzi** (*The Children's Alps*),  
and a themed route dedicated to the Fort's history,  
set in the ancient prison of the castle.

In anticipation of the opening of the Bard  
**Fortress Museum**, and the **Borders Museum**,  
a rich program of temporary exhibitions,  
performances and cultural events always provides  
reasons to visit it.



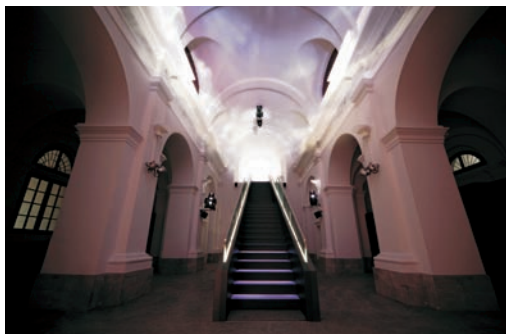
Bard fortress  
Bard

Ph. +39 0125 833811

info@fortedibard.it  
www.fortedibard.it

site of architectural interest,  
museums and temporary exhibitions

Pont-Saint-Martin  
Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0125 804843





# ISSOGNE CASTLE

*Frescoes depicting Renaissance life*

The Issogne Castle is an elegant and refined mansion rather than a defensive building. The castle owes its splendour to **Georges de Challant**, who transformed the old building into a sumptuous treasure trove of art. The inner courtyard of the castle displays masterpieces such as the **Pomegranate Fountain**, a wrought iron life-sized tree full of symbolic meaning, and a striking **series of frescoes**.

These frescoes, together with the wonderful decorations embellishing the inner rooms, were designed for a didactic and educational purpose: the lively scenes depicted provide a vibrant testimony of the situation of social peace and well-being created and ensured by the enlightened rule of the Challant family. The castle rooms – from the ones designed to host official events to the kitchen and private rooms – still have original pieces of furniture that help reconstruct the everyday life of the time.



Piazza Castello  
Issogne  
Ph. +39 0125 929373

residence with frescoes  
and furnishing

Pont-Saint-Martin  
Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0125 804843





# VERRÈS CASTLE

*An imposing castle  
to defend the Ayas Valley*

Its massive size and austere structure reveal at first sight the original defensive function of the Verrès Castle, which was strategic for the control of the Ayas Valley. Perched on top of a rocky peak, it is a **perfect cube of 30 metres on each side**, with outer walls 2.50 metres thick, refined by battlements.

Stone is also the main feature within the castle walls; indeed it can be found in the extraordinary staircase and elegant decor of the rooms, which are characterized by massive chimneys and Gothic windows. The castle's history is intertwined with the noble **Challant** family of the Aosta Valley: it was Ibleto, who in 1390 gave the fortress its unusual **monolithic structure**, which was then enhanced by a curtain wall and a drawbridge at the behest of Renato de Challant.



Loc. Château  
Verrès

Ph. +39 0125 929067

site of architectural interest

Pont-Saint-Martin

Tourism Office

Ph. +39 0125 804843





# USSEL CASTLE

## CHÂTILLON

*From Ebalo to Marcel Bich*

Built around 1343 by Ebalo II de Challant, this mighty castle that dominates the Châtillon plain was the first castle with a **monolithic** structure in the Aosta Valley, refined only by cylindrical towers and mullioned windows, all different from each other. It was abandoned and had severely deteriorated over the centuries, when it was bought by Marcel Bich, an entrepreneur from the Aosta Valley and producer of the famous Bic pen, and in 1994 it was donated to the Autonomous Region of Valle d'Aosta. After extensive restoration, the castle now houses **temporary exhibitions** in its inner rooms, where imposing fireplaces and carved arches can be admired. Since 2000, it has been possible to walk the spectacular **parapets** that take up part of the building's roof.



Loc. Ussel 8  
Châtillon  
Ph. +39 0166 563747

site of architectural interest,  
temporary exhibitions,  
seasonal opening

Saint-Vincent  
Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0166 512239



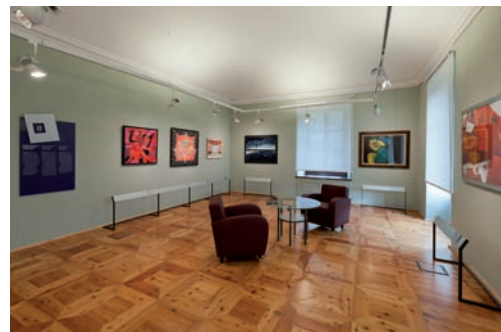


# GAMBA

CASTLE  
CHÂTILLON

## *A place of art and culture*

The castle perches on a rocky promontory overlooking Châtillon and was built at the beginning of the twentieth century by **Baron Carlo Maurizio Gamba**. The castle is characterised by its high central tower – a modern interpretation of the classic medieval donjon. Around the building lies a beautiful **park** of over 7,000 square metres, which is home to monumental trees, including a sequoia planted in 1888. In 2012, at the end of some complex restoration work, the castle was reopened to the public under a new guise as the **museum of modern and contemporary art**: 13 rooms house more than 150 works of art by Masters representing the major art movements of the twentieth century and of the avant-garde. In the collection are works by Casorati, De Pisis, Guttuso, Manzù, Giò and Arnaldo Pomodoro, Schifano and by Italo Mus, the artist who is symbol of the Aosta Valley.



Loc. Cret de Breil  
Châtillon

Ph. +39 0166 563252

[info.castellogamba@regione.vda.it](mailto:info.castellogamba@regione.vda.it)

[www.castellogamba.vda.it](http://www.castellogamba.vda.it)

museum of modern and contemporary art

Saint-Vincent  
Tourism Office

Ph. +39 0166 512239





# FÉNIS CASTLE

*Embattled fortress  
and stunning home*

Among the most famous of the castles in the Aosta Valley, Fénis strikes visitors with its **triumph of towers and crenellated walls**. The castle sits on flat ground, which is unusual; Aimone de Challant improved it by building an impressive defensive system, which also features double curtain walls. However, more than being a fortress, the Fénis castle was a prestigious and refined residence: the courtyard and the rooms inside are rich in **frescoes** - the result of a decorating campaign started by Aimone's son, Bonifacio in all likelihood. Not to miss is the famous *St. George slaying the dragon* by Jacquerio and his school, on the stone semicircular courtyard staircase. Many of the furnishings present, which are not original to the castle, were purchased by Alfredo d'Andrade, then Superintendent of Fine Arts, who supervised the restoration work at the end of the nineteenth century thus restoring the castle to its former glory.



Loc. Chez-Sapin 1  
Fénis

Ph. +39 0165 764263

site of architectural interest,  
fresco paintings, furnished rooms

Aosta  
Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0165 236627





# SARRE CASTLE

## *The alpine residence of the Hunting King*

Although it is of medieval origin, the Sarre castle was completely rebuilt between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when it became the summer residence of the royal family of Savoy.

The high crenellated tower that stands in the centre of the building is all that remains of the ancient history of the manor, which was bought in 1708 by Baron Jean-François Ferrod, who renovated it before going bankrupt. Then, in 1869 the castle was purchased by Victor Emmanuel II who turned into a residence for hunting trips. Reminders of the 'Hunting King' and his successor, Humbert I's hunting trophies remain in the **Hall of Trophies**, which is decorated with the antlers of over one thousand ibex and seven hundred chamois. The castle, which was also used by King Humbert II and his wife Marie José, displays the different historical phases of the presence of the House of Savoy in the Aosta Valley.



Loc. Lalex  
Sarre

Ph. +39 0165 257539

furnished Savoy residence,  
exhibition on the royal hunts

Aosta  
Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0165 236627





# SARRIOD DE LA TOUR

CASTLE  
SAINT-PIERRE

## *The ancient donjon and the Medieval Grotesque*

The castle belonged to the eponymous Sarriod de La Tour family for more than seven centuries. It is the result of the assembly of several buildings dating back to different historical eras, including large curtain walls. Around the massive central tower, which is a classic example of a donjon, a fortified residence was developed in a flat area surrounded by gardens and orchards. The castle was extensively revised by Jean de La Tour in 1420 and then by his son Antoine, yet it still retains significant fragments of frescoes from the fifteenth century. The room known as **hall of heads** is decorated with 171 carved figures, sometimes grotesque and licentious, which are a curious testimony of medieval imagination. The **chapel** is much older and reveals fragments of thirteenth century paintings, which are among the oldest and most striking examples of figurative art in the Aosta Valley.



Rue du Petit-Saint-Bernard 20  
Saint-Pierre  
Ph. +39 0165 904689

site of architectural interest,  
frescoes, wooden sculptures

Aosta  
Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0165 236627







## CLY CASTLE SAINT-DENIS

*A fortified refuge  
perched on the rock*

An imposing tower surrounded by a large perimeter of crenellated walls, perched on a steep rock: it is not hard to imagine this castle as a perfect **fortified refuge**.

In the eleventh century were built the central tower, the *donjon*, and the small adjacent **chapel**, which has a rectangular layout with semicircular apses.

The lordship of Cly was very important in the area and, according to legend, some of its members were guilty of extortion and military aggression against merchants, which was enough to justify the expropriation of the castle in 1376 by the House of Savoy. It was sold in 1550, and was severely damaged by the passing of time and by its last owner, Pierre-Philibert Roncas, who in the seventeenth century recycled some materials and used them to build his new residence in Chambave.

Loc. Cly  
Saint-Denis



Site of architectural interest,  
occasional opening



Saint-Vincent  
Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0166 512239



## BOSSSES CASTLE SAINT-RHÉMY-EN-BOSSSES

*A high altitude castle*

Only the strategic position **at the Great St. Bernard pass** can justify the construction of the castle at such high altitude, at over 1,600 metres above sea level. Of very ancient origins – a nobleman named *de Bocha* is mentioned in a document dating back to the end of the eleventh century – the castle was destroyed in the fourteenth century on the orders of the House of Savoy, in all likelihood because the landowners had refused to pay feudal homage.

It was later rebuilt at the beginning of the fifteenth century in today's monolithic structure, adorned with cross windows by the lords of Bosses, who held the property until 1742.

Today it is the headquarters of the cross-border cultural centre *Pays du Grand-Saint-Bernard* and hosts temporary exhibitions and cultural events.

Frazione Saint-Leonard 10  
Saint-Rhémy-en-Bosses  
Ph. +39 0165 780821



temporary exhibitions,  
seasonal opening



Étroubles Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0165 78559





# CHÂTEL- ARGENT VILLENEUVE

## *Defensive tower and ancient mint*

The ancient name *Castrum Argenti* lends itself to the hypothesis that, during the Middle Ages, **money was minted** within the wall of this castle. It is certain that the castle's function was defensive rather than residential. Indeed the large curtain walls and the thick walls of the **circular** tower, sixteen metres high and only accessible via a door located 5 metres up from the ground, are all evidence of its defensive purpose.

The site is in a strategic position and has always been under the direct control of the House of Savoy: the current structure dates back to the late thirteenth century, and was probably the work of an English military architect at the service of Count Peter II of Savoy, whereas the splendid **Romanesque chapel** belongs to the oldest part of the building, dating back to the first half of the twelfth century.



Villeneuve  
Ph. +39 0165 749264

site of architectural interest,  
occasional guided tours

Aosta Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0165 236627



# INTROD CASTLE

## *A Neo-gothic castle*

Seen from above, Introd looks different to any of the other Aosta Valley castles: it is a **polygonal crenellated structure** which seems to embrace the square based keep.

Its origins date back to the twelfth century, when a defensive structure was built in a strategic position on a promontory protected by two rivers, hence the name Introd (*entre les eaux*, i.e. between the waters). It later passed to the Sarriod family and in the early twentieth century it was bought by the banker Gonella from Turin, who commissioned the architect Chevalley to carry out significant restoration of the building in **neo-gothic style**.

The **kitchen**, however, is still the original one; its entire vault serves as a hood for the great fireplace.



Frazione Plan d'Introd  
Introd  
Ph. +39 0165 749264

private residence, can be visited partially,  
seasonal opening

Aosta Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0165 236627







# AVISE CASTLE

## *A family abode*

Built in the late fifteenth century by **Bonifacio d'Avise**, this castle is a large three-storey rectangular block, with a slightly taller tower on the west side. Refined by window frames of carved stone, it was the elegant residence of the d'Avise family, whose motto is carved on the door. The motto plays on the double meaning of the word Avise '*qui tost Avise tart se repent*' (think before not to regret afterwards).

The rooms inside testify to the refined taste of the owners of the time: the **pewter hall** has a large fireplace and a collection of ornaments, while the **hall of shelves** owes its name to the fourteen wooden sculptures that decorate the ceiling beams.

Loc. Capoluogo  
Avise  
Ph. +39 0165 91113

site of architectural interest,  
seasonal opening

Aosta  
Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0165 236627



# TOUR DE L'ARCHET MORGEX

## *From ancient tower to modern study centre*

The core of the castle is the imposing **square base tower**, which dominates the inhabited area of Morgex: it is an extraordinary construction, nine metres wide, with walls that are more than two and a half metres thick and built with regular and perfectly squared stone blocks. It was only at a later date, between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, that the other buildings which make up the castle were built. The castle was owned

for a lengthy period by the **de l'Archet family**, so called because they had taken up residence inside the Arch of Augustus near Aosta. The residence at Morgex also hosted the Count of Savoy during the general audiences, during which subjects were required to pay feudal homage. It is currently home to the **Natalino Sapegno Foundation**, which is dedicated to the great historian of literature from the Aosta Valley.

Place de l'Archet  
Morgex  
Ph. +39 0165 235979

Study centre

Courmayeur  
Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0165 842060







## Giving back cultural heritage to the community

**C**ultural heritage is made up of absolutely unique and precious documents that help to understand the process that has led to the formation of the identity of a territory.

Cultural heritage represents one of the fundamental pieces of the puzzle in order to reflect upon the history, culture and particularism of the Aosta Valley.

The policy of **Restitution**, supported by the Autonomous Region of Valle d'Aosta, aims at giving the cultural heritage of the territory, both tangible and intangible, back to the citizens, while involving the community in the process of cultural heritage protection and enhancement, and spreading, in an educational and informative manner, the results of scientific research and practices for the protection and conservation of the territory.

With this in mind, a number of initiatives were organised to enhance historic and artistic heritage, which included buildings and works of art undergoing restoration, which had been closed to the public due to the long work they required.

One of the first positive experiences of active participation was the event 'Cantieri evento', which made archaeological work sites accessible to the public in the piazzas of Aosta, and thus allowed citizens to get to know and share the work in progress.

The experience was then extended to castles undergoing restoration with the initiative **Châteaux ouverts**, which opened the doors of some castles attracting a growing influx of residents and tourists and has allowed the temporary opening of the castles of Quart, Aymavilles and Arnad, which are undergoing intensive restoration in order to host future museum displays and to be opened to the public.





# AYMAVILLES<sup>CASTLE</sup>

*Between the Middle Ages and Baroque*

Located at the entrance of the Cogne Valley, Aymavilles is different to the other castles of the Aosta Valley: its vertical and elegant silhouette, characterised by **four round towers** crowned with battlements, is unmistakable. Even though it dates back to the twelfth century, the castle was substantially altered over time, until it reached its current style which has obvious Baroque influences.

The castle was enfeoffed in 1354 to **Aimone de Challant**, lord of Fénis, and the four round towers was probably built by his son, Amedeo. These four towers form two pairs, each with a circumference and type of battlement different to the other pair. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Joseph-Félix of Challant transformed the castle into an **elegant and refined abode**, by building of the great galleries that fill the distance between the towers and which are decorated with a rich array of plasters.



Loc. Castello 1  
Aymavilles

the castle can be viewed from the outside,  
it is undergoing restoration

Aosta  
Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0165 236627



# QUART<sup>CASTLE</sup>

*Several buildings, one castle*

Enclosed by a large curtain walls, the castle is an imposing complex of buildings of different periods, which come together in a harmonic and striking architectural unit. It was the heart of the vast estate of the **Lords of Quart**, who together with the Challant family were among the most important families of the Aosta Valley. The castle came back under the House of Savoy in 1378

with the death of the last male heir, Enrico de Quart. As a result of no longer being used as a residence, it fell into disrepair and was used for farming purposes. Current restoration work has brought to light many **fragments of frescoes**, dating from the thirteenth century to the sixteenth century, in various areas of the castle; the *donjon*, the great hall known as the *magna aula* and the chapel, which was rebuilt during the early seventeenth century and is adorned with precious stucco elements.



Loc. Castello  
Quart

the castle can be viewed from the outside,  
it is undergoing restoration

Aosta  
Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0165 236627







Frazione Costa  
Arnad



the castle can be viewed from the outside,  
it is undergoing restoration



Pont-Saint-Martin  
Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0125 804843



# VALLAISE CASTLE

## ARNAD

### Four castles for one family

The Vallaise family possessed four residences in the Arnad area: the **high castle**, a true fortress bought from the *de Arnado* lords in the twelfth century; the **low castle**, which was built during the first half of the fifteenth century, the **Hôtel stronghold**, and finally the **Château Vallaise**.

The latter is an elegant residence which sits half-way up the valley, long divided between the two branches of the family, the Vallaise-Romagnano and the Vallaise-Montalto.

The rooms for official events, the private rooms and the weapons' gallery are **richly frescoed** with historical and mythological representations, among which several images linked to the female epic, a series of paintings on biblical history, as well as paintings on war themes. The castle was bought in 2010 by the Autonomous Region of Valle d'Aosta.



Loc. Tache  
Saint-Pierre



the castle can be viewed from the outside,  
it is undergoing restoration



Aosta  
Tourism Office  
Ph. +39 0165 236627



# SAINT-PIERRE CASTLE


## From the Middle Ages to Neo-gothic

It looks like a fairytale castle, almost timeless, its origins and much of its structure are ancient: the castle, owned by the *de Sancto Petro* (i.e. 'Saint-Pierre') family, is mentioned in a document dating back to 1191. After an intricate 'co-lordship', it passed on to the **Roncas** family in the seventeenth century: Pierre-Philibert

was to turn it into 'house of delights', thus it became a place of parties and receptions. During the second half of the nineteenth century it was acquired by Baron Emanuele Bollati who – in the full bloom of Romanticism – wished to give it an aspect which was more in keeping with the medieval ideal, which he achieved by adding numerous battlements and four small towers pitched against the central keep. The castle will house the **Regional Museum of Natural Sciences**.







From  
the outside:  
a landscape  
of castles

Ancient castles which have made history while all that remains now is a lone tower that stands on a hill, or elegant residences still under private ownership: these castles **cannot be visited inside**, but this does not take away any of their charm and striking beauty in all seasons.

GRAINES  
CASTLE  
BRUSSON

SAINT-MARCEL  
CASTLE

PILATO  
CASTLE  
NUS

CHAMPORCHER  
CASTLE

SAINT-GERMAIN  
CASTLE  
MONTJOVET

JOCTEAU  
CASTLE  
AOSTA

TOUR DE VILLA  
GRESSAN

LA TORNALLA  
OYACE

GIGNOD  
TOWER

CHÂTELARD  
CASTLE

LA MOTHE  
CASTLE  
ARVIER

PASSERIN  
D'ENTRÈVES  
CASTLE  
CHÂTILLON



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