

ANCIENT AND PRIMEVAL BEECH FORESTS OF EUROPE

UNESCO
WORLD
HERITAGE

VALLI
DI LODANO,
BUSAI, AND
SOLADINO



unesco

Faggete primarie e antiche
dei Carpazi e di altre
regioni d'Europa
Patrimonio mondiale

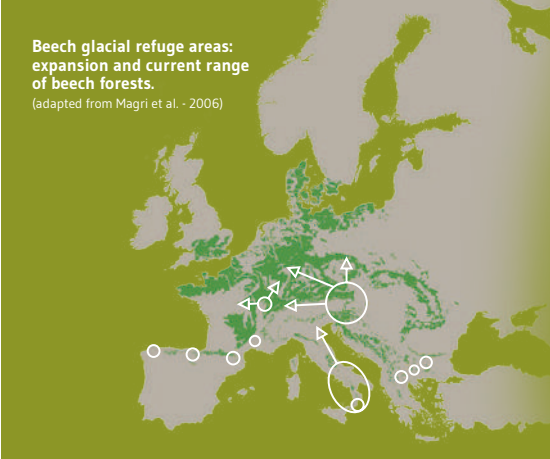


EUROPE'S WILDERNESS

Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of Europe

The “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe” are a heritage of humankind that connects 94 unique beech forest areas in 18 countries, covering a surface of about 100'000 hectares. Like a book with many chapters, each chapter has its own significance, but only together do they form a story: that of an extraordinary tree, the common beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), and its unusual expansion. The story of this World Heritage property begins 12'000 years ago, at the end of the last Ice Age. At that time, large areas of Europe were covered by a thick layer of ice. Beech forests survived only as small remnants in Eastern and Southern Europe. Starting from these isolated refuge areas, the beech tree expanded over large regions of Europe, a process still ongoing and evolving today. The phenomenon where one tree species recolonizes a whole continent across a variety of environmental conditions is of outstanding universal value and recognized as worthy of the UNESCO World Heritage stamp.

Beech glacial refuge areas:
expansion and current range
of beech forests.
(adapted from Magri et al. - 2006)



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The UNESCO World Heritage

The World Heritage Convention, adopted in 1972 by the United Nations Organization for Education, Science, and Culture (UNESCO), is the most important international treaty for the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage. World Heritage Sites are landmarks deemed of outstanding universal value. These landmarks are the cultural and natural legacy of the past that humanity benefits from today and wants to pass on to future generations. Their disappearance would be an irreplaceable loss for humanity and for our planet.

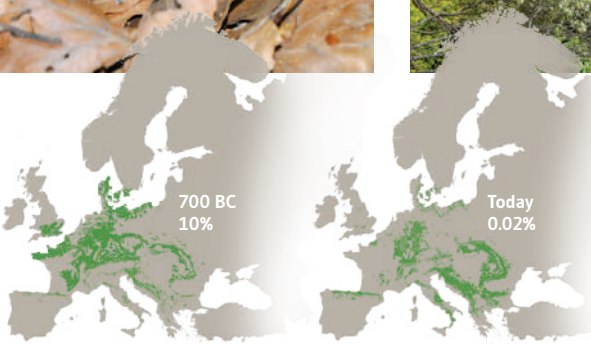
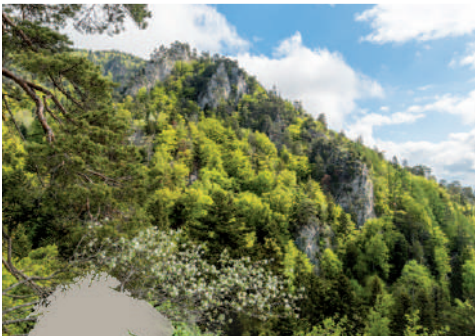
Europe’s Natural Wilderness

Beech forests are Europe’s natural wilderness: they cross national borders and connect the continent. Human settlements and economic use have significantly reduced the natural beech forests and today they are one of the most threatened habitats. The World Heritage property brings together and protects the last remnants of pristine and undisturbed ancient beech forests that exhibit a wide range of ecological patterns and processes and that contain a valuable gene pool of beech and many other species associated with and dependent on these forest habitats.



Beech Forests in Switzerland

Since 2021, Switzerland has been participating in the World Heritage property with two components. South of the Alps, the beech forest is part of two integral forest reserves: the Valle di Lodano forest reserve, established in 2010 with an area of 766 hectares, and the reserve of the Valli Busai and Soladino, established in 2020 and covering 1'282 hectares. Together, they represent one of the largest integral forest reserves in Switzerland. In the Jura region, the beech forest is part of the Bettlachstock integral forest reserve, established in 1985 with an area of 414 hectares. Integral forest reserves are completely left to their natural evolution and protected from human intervention.



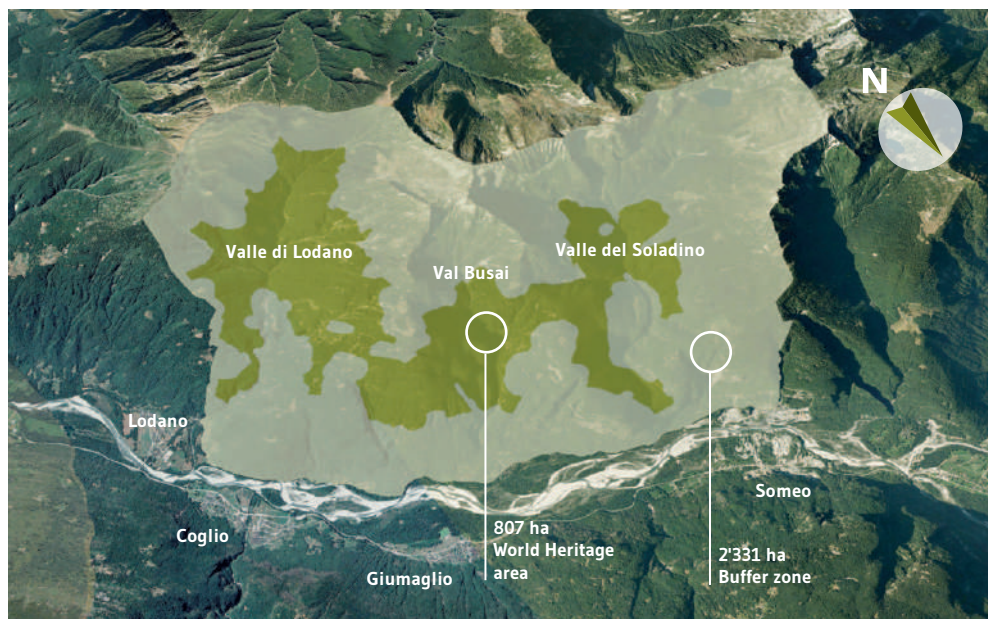
In 700 BC, 10% of Europe’s surface was covered by beech forests. Today, near-natural beech forests are confined to 0.02% of their original extent.

The Beech Forest of the Valli di Lodano, Busai, and Soladino

The beech forests of the Valli di Lodano, Busai, and Soladino illustrate an important example of expansion of the beech tree in the southern Alpine region after the last Ice Age (about 6'000 years ago). The World Heritage component covers an area of 807 hectares and is particularly interesting due to its location in a climatic and geological transition zone, its marked altitude gradient, and its siliceous bedrock. It is surrounded by a buffer zone of 2'331 hectares that guarantee its protection.

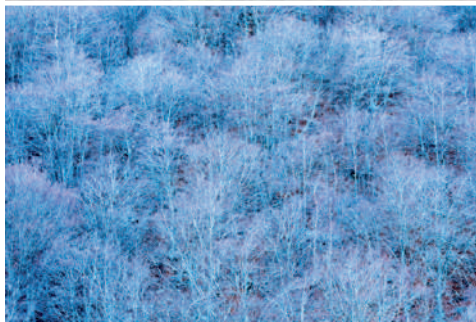
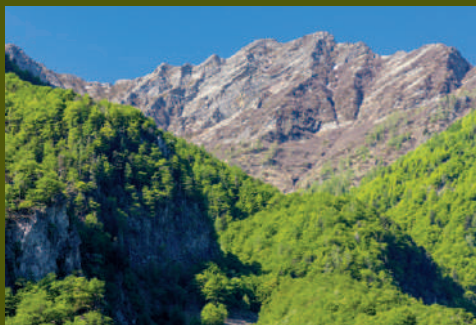
The main forest formation is the snowy woodrush beech forest (*Luzulo niveae-Fagetum typicum*), but beech also appears in a fir-beech forest formation (*Abieti-Fagetum*), with the typical mix of beech and silver fir.

The forest cover features extensive monospecific populations of different ages, as well as nuclei of mature or senescent trees rich in dead wood, both standing and on the ground. There are numerous ancient and majestic trees, especially in the more remote areas. The age of the most representative trees exceeds 150 years, with some specimens estimated to be more than 250 years old.



Changing seasons

Seasons set the pace in beech forests and create a fascinating display of colors over the course of the year. The fresh light green when leaves shoot in spring signals a new beginning and blossoming. Lush middle green symbolizes the abundance of nature in summer. Because of their dense canopy, beech forests provide coolness and shade on hot days. Fall is the time of change: with bright yellow-orange leaves, the beech forest shows its most colorful side in October. Amidst winter silence, when the leaves are absent, the particular characteristics of the trees and their shapes are clearly visible.



«The UNESCO Natural World Heritage preserves the most precious gifts that nature offers to humanity.»

Hiking Itineraries

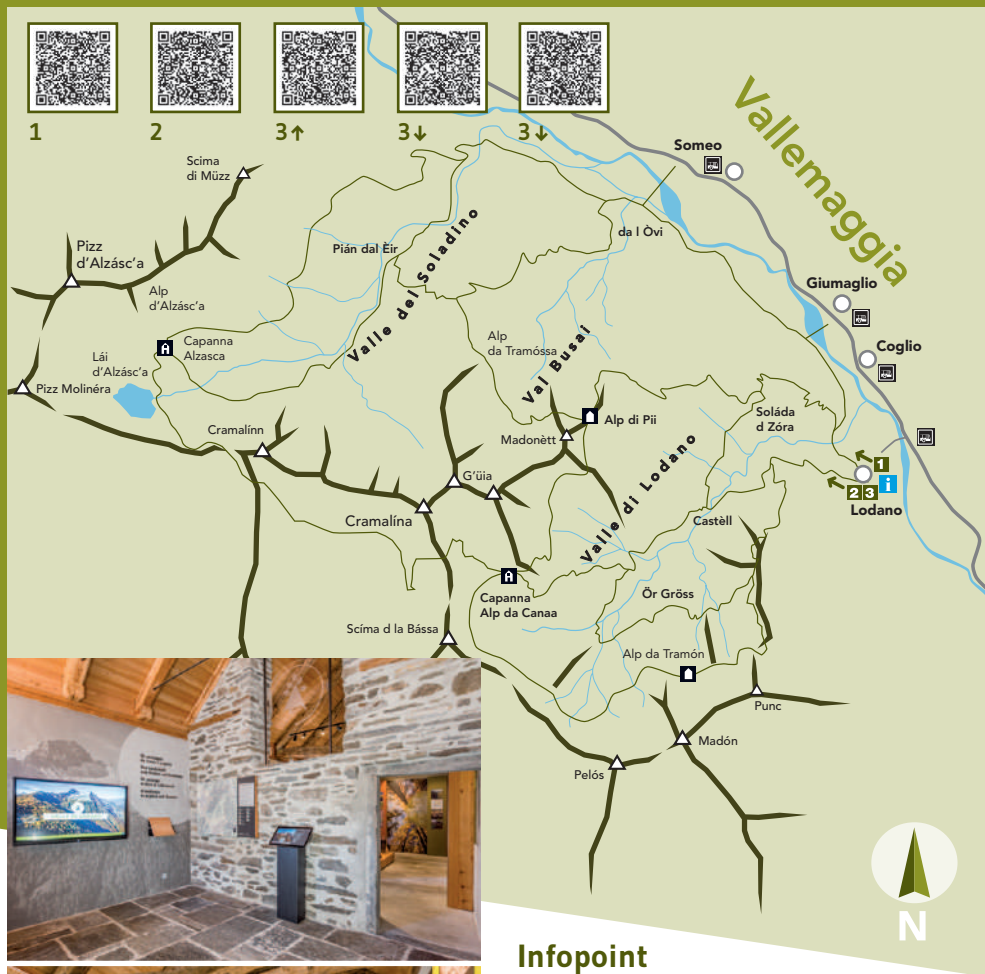
1 Lodano - Soláda d Zóra - Castèll - Lodano / 7.5 km - $\uparrow\downarrow$ 730 m - 3h 30min

2 Lodano - Castèll - Òr Gröss - Lodano / 11.5 km - $\uparrow\downarrow$ 1340 m - 5h 45min

3 \uparrow Lodano - Castèll - Alp da Canaa (Capanna \rightleftharpoons) / 6.4 km - \uparrow 1580 m \downarrow 80 m - 4h 45min

\downarrow Alp da Canaa - Alp di Pii - Soláda d Zóra - Lodano / 8.8 km - \uparrow 130 m \downarrow 1630 m - 3h 15min

\downarrow Alp da Canaa - Alp di Pii - Pián dal Èir - da l Òvi - Lodano / 15.4 km - \uparrow 370 m \downarrow 1870 m - 5h 15min (from 2024)



Infopoint

The infopoint in the center of Lodano has panels, films, and brochures with information about the "Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe" and about Valle di Lodano.

Opening hours:

March 15 - October 31 / 8.00 - 18.00