

ITALO ZANDONELLA CALLEGHER

The Dolomites 'ALTA VIA' N.7

In the footsteps of Patéra

**With the collaboration of Pier Giovanni Fain
and Gianni Pianon**

High Mountain Paths
in the Alpàgo Pre Alps



in copertina:

The Alpage Basin with
the Lake of Santa Croce

inside Cover 2

The Crép Nudo

inside cover 4

The Cimon di Palantina from
the pasturelands of Col Indes

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General notes

The *Alta Via n. 7* is named after the Austrian mountaineer Lothar Patéra in recognition of his work. He was a mountaineering pioneer who dedicated himself to relatively unknown mountains at the beginning of the twentieth century. These mountains, although less famous than others, were just as beautiful and satisfying, offering wild and stunning surroundings, long hikes and very few support points.

He was an expert on the Alps, in particular the Eastern Alps and was especially attracted to the unique variety of the *Col Nudo-Cavallo* group. The results of his activity on these mountains were condensed into a carefully documented monograph published in two parts: *Die Cavallogruppe*, Zeitschrift des D.u.Oe.A.V, 1911, vol. XLII and *Bergfahrten in der Cavallogruppe*, Zeitschrift des D.u.Oe.A.V, 1912, vol. XLIII, which can still be read today by those who love to climb mountains in the way the pioneers once did.

An Italian translation of Patéra's writings can be found in an excellent piece of work produced by Tullio Trevisan, *Esplorazione e storia alpinistica delle montagne della Val Cellina*, Grafiche Editoriali Artistiche, Pordenone, 1983.

In 1976, the book entitled *Alta Via n. 7 delle Prealpi Bellunesi e dell'Alpago* by Pietro Fain and Toni Sanmarchi was published by Tamari di Bologna. Thanks should be given to the above editors for their constant and valuable collaboration. Unfortunately this guidebook has been unavailable for some time now. In the meantime some changes to the original route have been carried out, as a result of important improvements carried out by the Vittorio Veneto Section of the Italian Alpine Club. These changes include the "Sentiero attrezzato (equipped path) Rino Costacurta" on the *Teverone* and the "Alessio Toffolon" Bivouac at *Forcella Antànder*, which have surely been made more logical and approachable.

The first route of the *Alta Via n. 7 or di Patéra* involved rigorously following the watershed ridge, only going down into the valley if there was an emergency. This route couldn't be done without

some just observations, not so much for the difficult ground in itself, which in reality isn't particularly hard for experienced climbers, but more for the serious problem of not having enough adequate places to shelter and the lack of water along the route.

Considering the important changes that have been made and the serious difficulties that are still present, this booklet – published by the Provincial Administration of Belluno's Tourism Department – aims to supply, together with the indications contained in the 1976 *Alta Via n. 7 delle Prealpi Bellunesi e dell'Alpago* and the recent, excellent work by Gianni Pianon, *Sui monti dell'Alpago, Alta Via n. 7, Alta Via dei Rondoï, Passeggiata d'autunno*, Tamari Montagna Edizioni, 2002, a more realistic revision of the route, without taking anything away from the severity and beauty of the trip.

This booklet does not cover the Belluno Pre Alps crossing, called "*Passeggiata d'Autunno*" (Autumn stroll) which, in the abovementioned guides, was shown as a natural continuation to the mountaineering stretch. In reality it is a complete excursion in itself, completely uninfluenced by the main route.

The Alta Via n. 7 or *Patéra* is conducted completely on the edge of the large calcareous ridge of *Col Nudo-Cavallo* (Carnic Pre-Alps) which divides the lower basin of the Piave from the *Vajont* and *Cellina* basins, covering a total distance of about 36 kilometres, and located on the south west boundary of the province of Belluno and the north east of the province of Pordenone. The mountain range under discussion surrounds the Alpàgo basin from the north east, where numerous villages and hamlets are situated, grouped into five municipalities: *Chies*, *Farra*, *Pieve*, *Puòs* and *Tambre*. The charming circular basin has a diameter of about 10 kilometres and is spread out over gentle grassy hills, which fan down towards the *Lago di Santa Croce*. The land consists of both cultivated fields and areas covered with woods.

On the *Col Nudo-Cavallo* group's main ridge there are more than twenty peaks, most important being the *Col Nudo* (2471m), *Monte Teveróne* (2345m), the *Crèp Nudo* (2207m), the *Punte della Federòla*, *Monte Mèsser* (2230m), and *Monte Cavallo* at 2251 metres.

From the Friulian plains these mountains have the appearance of an impressive plateau, culminating in *Monte Cavallo*. Towards the north,

from the crux of *Col Nudo*, various spurs descend down to form the valleys of *Vajont*, *Mesàz* and *Gallina*. Towards the south, at the foot of *Monte Cavallo*, there are two wide plateaus: the barren *Pian Cavallo* to the east and *Cansiglio* to the west, rich in vegetation and host to the famous “*bosco da reme*” which supplied wood to the *Serenissima Republic of Venice*. This wood is the most beautiful and lushest in all of the Pre-Alps.

Towards the east, the mountain chain appears as a continuous long wall, from which various low spurs stick out and which in turn give way to quite important, short valleys and which are fed by the *Torrente Cellina*: these valleys are *Val Ferrón*, *Val Chialledina*, *Val Provàgna*, *Val Prescudin*, *Val Pentina* and *Val Caltèa*.

The geological structure of the *Col Nudo-Cavallo* mountain chain is somewhat varied and complex and is made up of flint and oolitic limestone (these are white and very compact), as well as limestone dating back to the Cretaceous period and in which the karst phenomenon is visible with the formation of characteristic surface erosions (creviced rocks, sink holes, swallow holes, caverns and cracks).

A unique feature of this group is the presence of numerous cirques of glacial origin, covered with gravel or with treacherous rocks, laced with crevices.

The *Alta Via n. 7* or *Patèra* maintains an average height of 2000 metres, never reaching a difficulty that is more than Grade II. Having said this, frequent stretches of the trail are along mixed ground of grass and rock, which are often very exposed and tricky.

The route has been equipped with metal fixtures that allow you to proceed with relative ease on the more tricky and dangerous slopes and on the more difficult stretches. This work was carried out by the *Vittorio Veneto C.A.I.* Section.

Where there are fixed ropes, keep in mind that you should not rely heavily on them as they might be removed or broken. Furthermore, due to the extremely inaccessible and hostile surroundings, you cannot rely on regular maintenance being carried out. Therefore those who choose to walk this route need to be capable of proceeding as if it wasn't equipped. The ropes on the *Sentiero attrezzato “Rino Costacurta”* are usually in good condition.

The biggest problem in these mountains is the lack of water. Apart from at the beginning of the summer (where you can find water from melted snow), the only water you can count on is

"School of Thrills" at Dolada



rainwater that has collected in crevices or natural basins, which is quite common in the upper cirques of glacial origin, or dripping water from the caverns that you frequently come across.

Therefore it is essential to carry enough water for at least two consecutive walking days, even though it may be heavy, for those who intend to walk in these mountains.

The “*Alessio Toffolón*” bivouac at *Forcella Antànder* has a system that collects rainwater. The *Laste* bivouac, during the closing period of the adjacent *Semenza* refuge, is without water.

Due to the scarcity of shelter along the route it is vital to bring a sleeping bag, a portable gas stove, matches etc...in order to rig out the cavern bivouac on the *Passo di Valbona*. If everything goes well, other stops can be taken at shelters such as *Casèra Venàl*, *Bivacco Toffolón* and *Bivacco Lastè*; the latter as an alternative to the *Rifugio Semenza*.

The clever “invention” of the cavern shelter in the *Passo di Valbona* area at the foot of the boundary cusp of *Col Nudo*, is very useful and its creators deserve to be praised. It is not only useful to the *Alta Via n. 7*, but also to the *Alta Via n. 6*, which passes here on an extremely hard and tiring variant and for climbs up via the regular route of the *Col Nudo* and the *Teveróne*. Today – after years of “madness” during which we covered the mountains with structures that were not always ideal, and sometimes even harmful – this shelter from olden times, by this we intend *Patèra’s* times, is a real gift from God, or rather, from the CAI!

The signposts on the entire route are more than sufficient; although on some stretches they can be a bit faded, creating some orientation problems in cases of fog or bad weather.

The signs adopted by the *Alta Via n. 7* or *Patèra* consist of a red circle with a blue centre and alternating red signs.

■ Recommended period

The best time to walk this route is from July to September, a period when the only two refuges in the range are open. Nevertheless the beginning of the summer is recommended, i.e. the second half of June and the beginning of July, when water can still be found on the mountain.

One of the privileges offered by these mountains are the uninterrupted views of all of the Eastern Alps and the Veneto and Friuli plains, right up to the sparkling strip of the Adriatic Sea in the distance. However, as the Pre Alps are often prone to mist the view is only clear in the early morning. Hikers need to bear this in mind if they want to enjoy the rare scenery that this route offers.

Before you set off it is important to anticipate any changes in weather, above all on a mountain like this one, which is isolated and remote. However, there are numerous opportunities to break off from the *Alta Via* and descend down to the valley, particularly on the Alpàgo side, as is highlighted in this booklet.

With regard to useful precautions, it is recommended that you have adequate clothes and kit to deal with nightly temperatures that can drop dramatically. In addition, a climbing harness, ropes and some snap links are essential in order to ensure safe passage on equipped stretches. Don't treat rope as an unnecessary item, even just 20 metres of lightweight rope is enough.

Food should be calculated for five days.

Moreover, it is recommended that you are an experienced climber with serious physical preparation. The *Alta Via n. 7* or *Patéra* route certainly isn't a huge undertaking, but it is an extraordinarily beautiful and challenging walk, on difficult to get to and deserted mountains. This is a serious route, which offers you the opportunity to achieve the kind of personal satisfaction reserved for real mountaineers, who are, and we cannot emphasise this enough, not afraid of hard work!

Useful advice for hikers

■ Precautions-equipment

The network of alpine paths used by the “Alta Via n.7” allows hikers to access various zones within the dolomite groups where they can experience extraordinary walks at altitude. As the paths can be very tiring at times and conducted above 2500 metres, experience, good equipment, sure footing, absence of vertigo and good physical condition are indispensable to ensure safety. Often dangers are undervalued in the mountains: a rapid change in weather, an unexpected storm, a premature snowfall, an icy patch of ground, fast-moving rivers...can all turn a pleasant, light-hearted trip into a ordeal, even on well-marked stretches of path. Good self-control can be indispensable. A fundamental condition for trekking along the “Alta Via” paths is good weather! Therefore you should find out weather conditions first from the available sources (Arraba Weather Station TV, Radio etc.).

Finally, hikers should be equipped with a good mountain kit (nowadays thousands of products of various styles, colours and technical speciality are available on the market), with those vital changes, warm waterproof clothing, good quality climbing boots and socks, as well as all those other little bits and pieces that a good hiker’s experience advises.

It is a good idea to carry some medicine and first aid equipment with you, especially painkillers, Vitamin C, supplements, plasters, gauze, bandages....

Never forget to bring water. If an accident does happen (a slip, twist, fracture, injury from falling rocks, lightning, illness, vertigo etc.), try not to panic and follow the indications in the following chapter where possible.

*The little church of
San Martino in
Alpago*



Alpine rescue services

(by Fabio Bristot, President of the 2nd Zone, Belluno Delegation)

In this section, the C.N.S.A.S. (National Corporation of Alpine and Speleological Rescue) of the 2nd Belluno Delegation Zone would like to explain to the members of *Dolomiti Emergency* what our organisation's institutional aims are: in other words, what Alpine Rescue is and what it does. We have also tried to offer some information and useful advice that might seem trivial at a first glance

and is normally taken for granted, as well as providing a basis for further research. This is to help people understand how our structure is organised and improve knowledge of Belluno Alpine Rescue's operation.

Although not yet perfect, this piece of work is a first step towards promoting a new culture of the mountains, based partly on safety and prevention and also on a few procedures to adopt in case of necessity.

■ What is the C.N.S.A.S.?

The National Corporation of Alpine and Speleological Rescue is a special section of the Italian Alpine Club whose members, all Volunteer Technicians, have the specific task of rescuing people who are injured or in danger both in an efficient and quick way. This can include the recovery of bodies when necessary and searching for people who are lost in difficult to get areas, (not always at altitude) and which require the work of personnel specialized in both mountaineering techniques and mountain rescue.

The recently passed Italian Law n. 74/2001 officially recognises the work of the C.N.S.A.S. as having a function of public activity and service.

As a result of this official legislative definition, Alpine Rescue has strong links with the Italian National Health Service and with Pieve di Cadore's *S.U.E.M.* 118 Emergency service it has developed a close working synergy over the last fifteen years, which has gradually been consolidated up to the point where it has become insti-



tutionalized with a specific convention and operative protocol within the various intervention sections.

The C.n.s.a.s. Technical Personnel guarantee 24 Hr, all year round (particularly in the summer months) service, with on-going training and compulsory drills on the mountains, with or without helicopter help, on snow, avalanches and ice falls, search and rescue, evacuation from cable cars, first aid techniques and general logistic problems(radio and communication, operation planning etc.)

Both Law 74/01 and in particular Law 298/02 entrust the C.n.s.a.s. staff with the task of chief rescue in the mountains, in caves and in hostile or difficult to reach environments. The C.n.s.a.s. is also responsible for rescue coordination when there are other State or Civil Protection organisations involved, except in the case of large emergencies or calamities.

■ Where does the C.N.S.A.S. operate?

C.N.S.A.S. normally operates in so-called hostile environments and in all inaccessible areas of the district. This does not only mean, as is commonly believed, areas such as cliff faces or *vie ferrate*, but also and above all snowfields and glaciers, ice falls, avalanches, cable cars, ski slopes, caves, ravines, gorges and gullies, rivers and all other types of environment not necessarily at high altitude (hills, woods, etc.), that due to difficulty of access and movement, or in special weather conditions, require the work of qualified personnel with expertise in all areas of mountaineering and speleological techniques and rescue.

Prevention

Aside from the above factors, which require a strong presence in the province, in order to guarantee the primary rescue of people, the C.N.S.A.S. also has a precise obligation to guarantee accident prevention.

For this reason the brief notes below aim to supply some points to consider. They may seem obvious, but our experience year after year shows they are often ignored.

■ **Basic rules for improved safety in the mountains and other hostile environments**

- Never underestimate the dangers and risks associated with any type of activity connected to the mountains and to hostile environments in general (mountaineering, speleology, skiing, mountain biking, hunting, mushroom picking, delta plane flying and parachuting etc.); the rapid changes in weather, the difficulty of the route, walking time, etc.
- Good mental-physical condition, adequate preparation and training for the task to be undertaken are essential.
- Avoid attempting routes that are outside your technical ability and physical and mental preparation.
- Never walk alone; whenever possible be accompanied and/or advised by qualified organisations (Mountain Guides, C.A.I. and C.N.S.A.S. Stations).
- Obtain adequate information about the route's features and difficulty as well as the area in general. Study all necessary information in advance regarding destination or route, using the appropriate guides and maps.
- Always leave precise information about where you are going and which route you intend to take, using visitors books in huts and bivouacs when appropriate.
- Find out the weather conditions in advance, especially the local forecast.
- Bring adequate footwear and clothing: avoid wearing training shoes and shoes with smooth soles; bring warm clothing, anorak and a change of underwear.



*The outline of Garna towards
the Belluno Pre-Alps*



- Bring a head torch, energy giving food (light and easily absorbed by the body) and extra fluids (preferably water with maybe added saline integrators).
- Bring a small first aid kit.

■ **Basic rules on how to behave in the event of an accident**

- Stay calm and do not act impulsively.
- Evaluate the general situation (environment) and the specific situation (the accident). Try to identify actual and possible dangers.
- Immediately adopt measures to avoid and prevent further risks.
- Call S.U.E.M. 118. for help immediately. If this is not possible use the following intermittent visual signaling method: - 6 times a minute – once every 10 seconds - pause for 1 minute, then repeat the operation until you are sure you have been seen. Or use any other system to mark your presence.

■ **How to alert S.U.E.M. 118/C.N.S.A.S.**

To request an intervention by C.N.S.A.S. Belluno throughout the Belluno province, you must always dial 118 and follow the advice below.

General instructions to follow when you call 118

- Supply precise information about the injured person/s (name, surname, residence) and the telephone number from which you are calling.
- Give details on the location of the accident or visual references that can help make the spot easily identified.
- Give a brief summary of the accident stating the time at which it happened.
- Specify the number of injured and their condition.
- Describe the weather conditions, especially visibility.
- Highlight any obstacles in the area with particular reference to power lines and cables, chair lifts and ski lifts and any other suspended cables that could get in the way.
- Give any other information that could aid the operation (people present, particular difficulties etc.)

Interventions for injured persons or persons in a situation of danger

- As for previous point 1.
- Supply the exact location of the accident or where the injured can be found (mountain group, slope, path, via ferrata, valley, gully, ledge, crest, gorge, etc).
- Communicate the presence of any other people who were present at the accident and, in particular, if they are able to collaborate (Mountain Guide, C.N.S.A.S. Personnel, others etc.).

Interventions for missing or lost persons

- As for previous point 1
- Specify date and time of departure.
- Describe the method of transport used (i.e. Car: number plate, model, colour etc.).
- Indicate destination and chosen route and/or probable or possible fixed objectives (hill walking, climbing etc.).
- Give the number of companions and their hill-walking or mountaineering abilities and experience.
- Describe clothing (paying attention to colour and material) and what supplies they have with them.
- Inform of any problems: mental-physical- family – social – etc.
- Communicate information already given to other organisations (including C.N.S.A.S.).
- Supply any other useful information regarding the subject(s), location and general environmental conditions.

Interventions in cases of avalanche

- As for previous points 1 and 2.
- Give the exact or presumed number of people swept away or buried.
- Specify the brand and model of A.R.V.A. apparatus and/or other technology.

- Identify the presence of any witnesses able to give an exact account of what happened:
 - If a visual-auditory- A.R.V.A., search has been carried out;
 - Provide a brief description of the avalanche (size and characteristics) and the exact point where the people were swept away and/or disappeared (right, left, high, low etc.);
 - subjects already extracted and their position;
 - other information and particulars that can help the intervention. (f.b.)

Keep in mind that the huts located along the *Alta Via n. 7* are equipped with public telephones; in addition all those in charge are trained to help send correct and quick requests to Mountain Rescue.

■ International mountain rescue signals

International mountain rescue signals are still the same today as they were in the past, and often the only means possible in the immensity of the mountains is sending a visual or acoustic signal 6 times per minute, at regular intervals, and then every 10 seconds. Pause for a minute and repeat the same signal until you receive a response. This is done three times in a minute at a distance of 20 seconds in a visual or audible way. By audible we mean shouting or whistling or any other perceptible noises; by visual signals we mean waving handkerchiefs, items of clothing or mirror signals; at night you can use a torch or, if possible, a fire (obviously with caution, especially if you are in a wooded area). Over the last few years the ever more frequent use of helicopters by Mountain Rescue has rendered new signalling methods necessary. Colourful sleeping bags or anoraks spread out on the ground or marks in the snow can help you be located from above. The SOS rescue sign can be used with letters that are about 2m long using contrasting stones placed on the ground, or footprints in the snow.

In order to be seen from above, i.e. by helicopter, you need to make the following signals with your arms or with lights at night:



Lift and spread
out both arms;
Green light

**Yes, to the pilot's
questions;
Land here;
Help is needed**



Lift and spread out
left arm
Right arm pointing down
Red light

**No, to the pilot's
questions;
Don't land here;
No help needed**

When giving the helicopter instructions to land, keep the following in mind: with the arms outspread, remain still at the edge of the landing place; where possible the area surrounding the landing place should be clear of obstacles up to a space of 20x20 metres.

Take note! Don't move away until the rotor blades have stopped: you are an important fixing point for the pilot. Any items of clothing laid on the floor to help the pilot should be held down with stones to protect against the strong airflow given off by the helicopter's blades!

■ Route signs

Along all the routes, the hiker can find three types of signs at all the main points:

- a) Red triangle with the Alta Via number inside (in this case 7); this type of sign is less common than the following;
- b) Path sign consisting of two horizontal red stripes with a white stripe in the middle on which you can find the path number in black. Along paths that require more frequent signs, in between those above, you can find simple red or red and white signs.
- c) Wooden chart signs on fixed poles (old types in metal).

The coordination of signposts on the busy network of alpine paths in the Veneto Region is constantly monitored, sector by sector. Where the triangles, path signs and tables are found to be in poor condition (unfortunately also as a result of vandalism!) and thus difficult or impossible to see, the hiker should pay careful attention to the indications set out in this guide. Nevertheless an attentive walker shouldn't have problems of orientation if they constantly refer to a good map or put into practice information given by hut managers along the route.

Technical details

Itinerary

Recommended Period:	From the middle of June to the end of September
Departure Point:	Rifugio Dolomieu al Dolàda
Arrival point:	Tambre d'Alpàgo
Walking Days:	5
Length of route:	about 36 kilometres
Refuge on the main route:	2
Bivouacs on the main route:	1 equipped cavern, 1 mountain hut, 2 bivouacs
Longest stretch:	the fourth, 8.30 hours
Shortest stretch:	the third, 4 hours
Total time required (excl. variants):	about 30 hours
Difficulty:	from EE to EEA (inaccessible ground, equipped mountaineering stretches)
Total gradient in ascent:	about 3100 metres
Total gradient in descent:	about 3700 metres
Maximum gradient in ascent:	about 800 metres, from Casèra Venàl to Forcella Federòla
Maximum gradient in descent:	about 1100 metres from Rifugio Semenza to Tambre d'Alpàgo
Maximum height:	Cimón del Cavallo, 2251m
Minimum height:	Tambre, 922m
Mountain ranges involved:	Col Nudo-Cavallo
Refuge opening periods:	from about 20th June – 20th September
Signposts:	good

Recommended maps:

Tabacco Map 1:25.000

- n. 012 **“Alpàgo - Cansiglio - Piancavallo - Val Cellina”**, which covers all of the area involved.

*The Alpago area with
the Lake of Santa
Croce*



Itinerary

The *Alta Via n. 7* or *Patèra* can be divided into the following five daily walks, which in turn can be divided for individual or eventual needs.

■ Day one

The departure base is the Rifugio Dolomieu al Dolàda. After having trekked along the Col Mat and Basilighe ridges towards the Col Nudo (northeast), you cross over the upper Venàl di Montanès ending up at the Passo di Valbona after a 4.30 hour walk.

Optional but recommendable, is the climb up to Col Nudo. All in all it isn't too difficult. This route offers unique beauty due to its high mountains and glacial-karst surroundings.

■ Day two

This stretch, which together with the fourth is the most difficult on the *Alta Via*, it leads to the *Crep Nudo* Along the *Sentiero Attrezzato "Rino Costacurta"* *Teveròne* and the subsequent *Rocce Bianche Crest*. At the end it is undoubtedly advisable to abandon the crest and descend to *Casera Venàl*, where it is possible to top up water supplies and find convenient shelter in the *Casera* (8 hours) or at *Funès*.

■ Day three

From the *Casera Venàl* you go up the valley, back onto the crest and the *Alta Via* at *Forcella Venàl*. By doing this, the original part of the route, which connects the *Crep Nudo* to the *Forcella Venàl* via the *Capèl Grande*, is left out, but this is not decisive. You subsequently climb the *Forcella Federòla* (the climb up to *Monte Venàl* is optional) and, after going round *Monte Antànder* from the west, you stop at the Bivacco "*Alessio Toffolón*". This stretch is more or less relaxing. (4 hours)

■ Day four

This stretch takes you to the *Rifugio "Carlo e Massimo Semenza"* and the *Bivacco Lastè*, at the foot of *Monte Cavallo*, crossing the *Monte Mèsser*, *Monte i Muri* and *Monte Sestier* ridges. There are a few equipped trails and numerous places that require you to free climb and that have a Grade II difficulty. Together with the second stretch it is the most spectacular and hardest due to its environment, its landscapes and the unevenness of the ground (about 8 hours).

■ Day five

This last stretch, which takes advantage of the *Alta Via n. 6* signs, goes up to *Monte Cavallo* and *Cimón di Palantina* and magnificently ends the route at *Col Ìndes*, in the town of *Tambre*, after having crossed a part of the *Bosco del Cansiglio*. About 4.30 hours.

Roof typical of the Alpage area



Description of the walks

First Stretch

■ From the Dolomieu Al Dolàda refuge to the Passo di Valbona

The *Rifugio Dolomieu al Dolàda* (1494m), since 1988 named after the geologist Sylvain Guy Tancrede de Gratet Dèodat de Dolomieu, who discovered the dolomite rock, is situated in the area of *Pian di Guerra*, on the southern side of the *Monte Dolàda-Col Mat* ridge, in a wonderful position, dominating the whole of the Alpàgo basin. It was built during 1960-61 by the Forestry Department and is built on two levels. It has 15 beds and offers the same services as a small hotel from June to September. It is owned by the District of Pieve d'Alpàgo, but privately managed. Tel. 0437-47 80 84 or mobile 338-4 77 54 68 and 328-7 59 46 24.

From *Pieve d'Alpàgo* (691m), you can get to *Plòis* and the privately-owned *Rifugio Carota* (1000m) continuing along the tarmac road; 8 kilometres from Pieve.

During the day that you approach the Alta Via, it would be nice to climb up to *Monte Dolàda* (1938m), via the south face and the east ridge, about 1.40 hours. This isn't a tourist route but is well marked; magnificent panorama of the Dolomites, the Piave valley and the Alpàgo basin right up to the Veneto plains.

To the north of the *Rifugio Dolomieu*, beyond the hand-gliding school, the *Alta Via n. 7* or *Patèra* path marked 905 starts, climbing steeply over pasture and gravel and leaving the poorly marked variant on the right that heads to *Col Mat* and reaches the *Forcella Dolàda*, (1739m), about 45 minutes.

Enjoying splendid views of the Dolomites to the north and the Alpàgo basin to the south, you go along the ridge towards the northeast, passing over a few grassy summits and a short exposed notch until you reach *Col Mat* (1981m); 45 minutes from the *Forcella Dolàda* (1.30 hours from the refuge). Wonderful view of *Col Nudo*.

Continue along, descending in a few minutes to the north east over grassy ground to the *Forcella Galina* (1875m) where a variant

*The ridge of Col Mat
towards the Cimon de
le Basilighe*



below the ridge of *Forcella Dolàda* arrives from the *Val Galina* side – still on the 905 – but not as interesting as the described crest stretch. Following the sign you descend to a small flat saddle, opening into a detrital hollow below the *Forcella della Lastra* (1825m), which remains about 50 metres higher up on the left.

The *Forcella della Lastra* is an important pass (semi-Alpine) between the *Val Mesàz* (*Erto*) to the north and Alpàgo to the south. From here, the 905 path descends to *Casèra Ditta*..

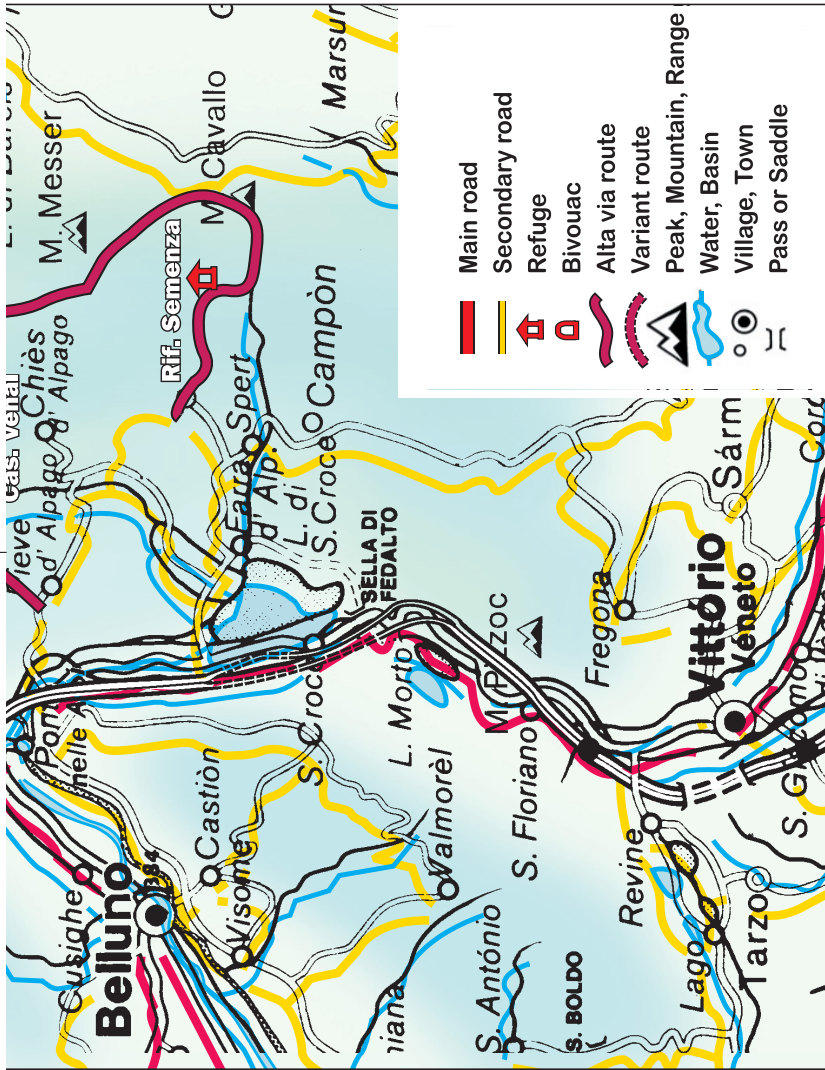
From the depression below the *Forcella della Lastra* you can make quite a quick valley detour on to upper *Scalèt* (1590m) by following the path marked 960, up to *Venàl di Montanès*, then on to lower *Scalèt*, (1169m), and from here to the bridge over the *Stabali*. This detour is conducted to the east (signposted) descending diagonally over grass to just above a short couloir, then via a short grassy ledge you arrive at the base of the crags at a characteristic portal. The signs then cross over to the south over thin pasture as far as the ruins of upper *Casèra Scalèt*, where the path meets the itinerary for the *Passo di Valbona*; **1 hour**; then you go down to lower *Scalèt* and to the bridge over the *Stabali*; **1.40 hours**.

At this point you have to tackle a big ridge in ascent, which climbs gradually towards the *Cimón de le Basilighe*. The path goes over rocks and grassy stretches, staying on the Alpàgo side and passing beyond some notches, where you can admire the fabulous drop that precipitates over the *Val Mesàz*. You then arrive at the foot of the last ramp where the path deviates to the right; the short climb up to the summit of *Cimón de le Basilighe* at 2207 metres is recommended.

If you decide not to do the summit, you carry on descending to the right over rocks and grassy stretches in the direction of the *Valbona* detritus cirque, in upper *Venàl di Montanès*, reaching the edge of it, covered with thin grass and slabs, at the base of vast beds of gravel. Above you is the the *Cima Secca*, the impressive *Col Nudo* cusp rises up to the right and towards the south the fortress of the *Teveróne*, closes the amphitheatre.

From here you can climb up to the top of *Col Nudo*, the highest point of the entire chain, via an easy and recommended detour. This takes a bit more than 2 hours between the ascent and the descent, but it is time well spent.





*From Col Mat towards
the Cime di Pino*





***The ridge of Col Mat
towards Col Nudo***



Abandoning the signs which continue on towards the south and without being obliged to follow any particular path, you head towards a big gravelly inlet between *Cima Secca* and *Col Nudo*. Going up it you reach the north dome of the mountain and, towards the east, the main peak at 2471m; vast panorama from the Dolomites to the *Carnic* chain up to the *Alpi Giulie*.

Instead of going back down the same way you can continue along the crest (there is a short exposed stretch) reaching the *Cima Lastèi* at 2439 metres. This peak finally falls towards the south west along a wide ridge and steep grassy rocks on to the *Passo di Valbona*, 2130m; red signs.

The traverse is done in less than one hour up to the marked pass. The *Passo di Valbona* is crossed by an important route (965), which links Alpàgo to the west with Val Cellina to the east. The descent to upper Cellino (514m) consists of a drop of about 1600 metres, with some difficulty on precipitous ground.

The descent to Alpàgo, to lower Scalèt 1169m and the Stabali bridge is elementary and you can do it in just **under 2 hours**.

The main *Alta Via* trail (the one that ignores the climb up to Col Nudo, after having descended from the slopes of Cimòn de le Basilighe in the Valbona cirque as already described) more or less traverses high up towards the south east in the direction of Col di Piero, a characteristic jagged peak which is situated at the edge of the bare plateau. Meet up with the 965 (which comes up from Venàl di Montanès and proceeds towards the Passo di Valbona) and the branch that breaks off to reach the Forcella Bassa situated behind Teveróne.

Climb up over gravel towards the northeast and in about 15 minutes you get to the Passo di Valbona (2130m), already well visible from the cirque below. This is a very important pass on which various stories about shepherds, hunters, poachers, smugglers, scholars and mountaineers at the end of the Eighteenth century are based. There's even a story about a woman from Cellino who passed by here to marry in Montanès accompanied by numerous bearers of her trousseau.

Near the pass, skirting the grassy ramp, which on the Alpàgo side rises up towards the *Cima Lastèi*, there is a cave with water that has recently been used as a precious, emergency bivouac.

4.30 hours from the *Rifugio Dolomieu* to *Dolàda*.

The recently built *Ricovero Col Nudo*, commissioned by the CAI Alpàgo subsection - Longarone division is vitally important, as the area offers no other facilities. It takes advantage of a natural cavity in the rock-face and the

bottom has been dug and levelled. Protective walls have been built around it, covered with wood and sheet-iron. Inside, up to 4 people can sleep on a wooden base; therefore it is useful, if not essential, to have a sleeping bag. Water is available inside the shelter. A must for romantic and inquisitive hikers : they will re-live the experiences of the old pioneers of these mountains, savouring the unique joys reserved to the explorer, in the simplicity of the spartan shelter...

On the Passo Valbona



Second Stretch

■ From the Passo di Valbona to Crep Nudo and the Casèra Venàl

The first part of this difficult second stretch consists of the *Sentiero attrezzato "Rino Costacurta"* (equipped path) which starts at the *Forcella Bassa* behind *Teveróne*. The path, created in 1979 and restored in 1999 and 2000 by the Vittorio Veneto CAI Section and by volunteers from Alpàgo, is dedicated to the memory of the mountaineer Rino Costacurta, who was an enthusiastic supporter of this Alta Via. The route traverses mostly horizontally at a height of about 2200 metres with very exposed stretches.

From the *Passo di Valbona* you briefly descend towards southwest on the path marked 965, skirting the *Cima della Pala di Castello*. After leaving the 965 to the right, which goes down towards the *Col di Piero*, you continue to the left (south) on the *Troi de la Cavala* (Horses' Path), marked 930.

After about half an hour from the *Passo di Valbona* you arrive at the large grassy opening of the *Forcella Bassa* situated behind *Teveróne* (1928m), also called *Busa del Teveróne*; the drop over the *Val Chialedina* is scary.

At the foot of the impressive north edge of the *Cima Valàrs*, which is opposite you, the equipped path *Sentiero attrezzato "Rino Costacurta"* starts and which cuts across the northeast face of the *Teveróne* at a height of about 2000m.

Plaque, red signs, height about 2030m.

Following the fixed ropes you first climb up to the right of the edge, on the *Alpàgo* side, until you reach a horizontal gravelly ledge along which you pass to the *Chialedina* slope, on the north east wall. With some very exposed stretches you move sideways towards the middle of the magnificent wall until you get to the lowest part of the path called "*I Giardini*".

Carry on at altitude on sloping meadows, then again on exposed stretches until you reach a spot where the route becomes easy for about 500 metres. You continue climbing up diagonally as far as a steep grassy gully from where you come out onto a ridge saddle, to the west of the *Rocce Bianche* and where the equipped path ends.

About 2.30 hours.

Col Nudo



If you want to deviate down to the valley you can abandon the crest at the end of the path (and therefore the Alta Via) and descend into the *Venàl di Funès*. Follow the red signs, at first over steep grassy slopes as far as a tree covered knoll, then to the left of this in a gravelly gorge that sweeps over the pasture of *Casèra Venàl*, 1260m; **1.15 hours**.

See further on for notes on *casera*.

At this point the *Alta Via* continues on the *Rocce Bianche*, a ridge of about two kilometres at an average height of 2000 metres that joins the *Teveróne* to the *Crepón* and the *Crèp Nudo*. The ridge is easily walked in 2 hours, with great views of *Col Nudo* and the deep *Val Chialedina*. On some of the exposed stretches you should descend a bit on the southern slope and traverse below the rocks.

Once you have reached the *Forcella Faverà* (1925m) about half way along the traverse at its lowest point, you go up the western slope of the *Crepón*, reaching the summit.

The *Crepón* (2107m) appears from the west like a beautiful pyramid criss-crossed with detritus and grassy ledges. The view is wonderful. To the south you can see a row of peaks as far as *Monte Cavallo*; to the west the Piave valley; to the east the *Carnic* chain and the *Alpi Giulie*, *Pramaggiore*, *Pregoiàne* and *Vacalizza*. Then *Monfalcóni*, *Cima dei Preti* and *Duranno*. To the northwest the major Dolomites. The “aerial” drop over the *Val Chialedina* is magnificent.

From the *Crepón* summit you now descend east via an exposed notch (metal rope) then you pass half way along the hillside below the spine that joins *Crepón* to *Crèp Nudo* further south. In this way you arrive below the bottom rocks of *Crèp Nudo*.

The climb up to the peak of this beautiful mountain is recommended. You then need to abandon the path, climbing up to the left on the mountain's western ridge and reaching the summit easily at 2207 metres; **20 minutes**. Panorama on a par with that of the *Crepón*.

Going back to where you were before you retake the path that goes along a grassy shoulder, south of the *Crèp*'s terminal cusp; (**6 hours** up to here).

At this point, the original route goes in the direction of *Capèl Grande*.

Here, the first "draft" of the *Alta Via* involved ending the stretch and setting up an open bivouac (if you hadn't already done so first at *Crepòn* or even earlier on the west saddle of the *Rocce Bianche*).

Here you should leave the crest and go down towards the northwest without delay, following the red signs that pass over a series of grassy hollows with the *Crepòn* precipices on the right. Reaching a cirque on the west slope of the latter, you cross over to the left via a track, in the direction of a sill situated below the precipices of *Capèl Piccolo*. Then over steep gravel and finally through woods, you come out at the bottom onto a mule track which plunges into the "*La Valle*". You follow this track to the right for a short while until you come out onto the pasture at *Casèra Venàl*, 1260 metres.

8 hours from the *Passo di Valbona*.

The *Casèra Venàl* can only give emergency shelter; it is certainly not a hotel or even a refuge. A sleeping bag resolves the problem... A tap nearby offers fresh water, which "should" be drinkable.

The way should follow the small road for about 600 metres, which goes towards the southwest up to *Casòn Crosetta* (1156m), where there is another spring. Or, if necessary, follow the carriage way for about an hour that descends southwest to *Funès*, (817m) where you can take refreshment at the *Ristorante San Pietro* Tel: 0437-4 0108.

Makeshift bivouac along the Alta Via 7



Third stretch

■ From the Casèra Venàl to the “Alessio Toffolon” Bivouac

On the mule track that goes up to the southeast from the casèra (red signs), you plunge into “*La Valle*”, a deep furrow of glacial origin, between the *Capèl Grande* and *Monte Venàl*. Once passed a short woody sill and a gravelly cirque (height of about 1500m; sheep path on the right) you enter into the upper part of the valley. After a few drops and then grassy ridges on the left, you meet the Alta Via sign coming from *Capèl Grande*. On this, over gravel, you pass below a characteristic jagged peak, reaching the *Forcella Venàl* in 2 hours (1930m).

Eastwards from here you can admire the impressive drop over the *Val Prescudin*. To the north, at the back of *Capèl Grande*, the magnificent bulk of the *Crèp Nudo* is spread out. A lofty view towards the east as far as the *Alpi Giulie* and the main *Carnic* chain.

The *Forcella Venàl* is also reachable by walking along the longer and “mountain climbing” track described below. We mentioned the original one when the open bivouac was advised near *Crèp Nudo*.

From the *Casèra Venàl* you walk along the path, which climbs up to the northeast through the *Venàl di Funès* and the *Le Buse*, regaining the ridge below *Crèp Nudo*. From here, on the 936, you go along the south ridge over grass and rock for about one kilometre in the direction of *Capèl Grande*.

To the east the rocks fall sheer for about 800 metres into the *Val di Zea*.

Once you have passed over a few reliefs you continue on the sharp crest over exposed and crumbly ground. Carry on like this to the summit at *Capèl Grande*, 2071 metres. Keep following the crest until you get to a secondary summit where you descend along a grassy ridge (be careful if it is wet) to a notch surrounded by mugo pine trees. Passing near to the *Dente di Venàl*, you finally reach the large *Forcella Venàl*; **4.30 hours** from the *Casèra Venàl*.

From the *Forcella Venàl* you now continue along the steep eastern side of *Monte Venàl* via a faint path used by sheep, reaching the *Forcella Federòla* at 2068m in about half an hour, broadly carved between *Monte Antànder* and *Monte Venàl*.

***Col Nudo from Crep
Nudo***



From the saddle, with a detour of about an hour there and back, you can easily climb up to *Monte Venàl* (2212m) going to the north west over grass up to a shoulder, then via a gully until a notch and finally via a steep, grassy slope to the summit.

Monte Venàl is also an extremely privileged, scenic peak. There are unlimited views in all directions as far as the sea and the distant Austrian Alps.

From the saddle (pay attention to the signs) you need to descend westwards into the *Val Federòla*, keeping to the left, under the precipices of *Monte Antànder*. Arriving in a debris-filled cirque, you climb the southwest hillside of *Monte Antànder* to the left scrambling over easy, grassy rocks to enter into the upper part of the *Val Antànder*. From here, over gravel, you reach the *Forcella Antànder* in the southeast at about 2000 metres.

Up a knoll, a bit below the saddle, on the west side, you can find the *Bivacco "Alessio Toffolon"*, 1990 metres.

4 hours from the *Casèra Venàl*.

The *Bivacco "Alessio Toffolon"*, made in 1979, is owned by the Vittorio Veneto CAI Section and has 9 sleeping places. It is always open and has a system that collects rainwater. From the bivouac, if need be, you can descend the west slope to *Pian Formosa* (1200m) via the path 979. From here, following the tarmac road for two kilometres, you reach the panoramic *Alpàgo* road and the *Casèra Mont* (ex *Rifugio Alpàgo*); **2 hours** from the saddle; marked route.



Fourth Stretch

■ From the “Alessio Toffolon” Bivouac to the Semenza-Refuge/Lastè bivouac

After leaving the Bivacco “*Alessio Toffolon*” you climb south eastwards via a steep grassy slope to the north ridge of Monte Mèsser. Via the ridge and after an exposed passage (the rest is easy) you reach the summit of *Monte Mèsser* (2230m) in less than an hour.

Extensive views, especially of the Alpàgo basin, as far as Belluno and beyond.

The stretch that follows, from Monte Mèsser up to the Cima Brutt Pass, requires care and minimum mountaineering experience.



From the summit you descend over easy rock on the Alpàgo side (south) for about 150 metres until a grassy saddle, which cleanly divides *Monte Mèsser* from the *Cima Brutt Pass*. Via a short ramp you climb a characteristic tower from where an exposed ridge of about 200 metres starts and which leads on to the pointed *Cima Brutt Pass* (2155m); the stretch is equipped with metal ropes and is quite exposed (1.15 hours from the Mèsser).

The “*dei Piombi*” abyss is enchanting to the west and to the east, low down, you overlook the *Val del Tassèit*.

Going down the southeast incline and skirting a few small peaks you reach the panoramic mound of *Monte Pàster*, 2067 m; 0.45 minutes from the *Brutt Pass*.

Detour for the *Bivacco Groppa Pastòur* in *Val del Tassèit*, useful in case of a doubling back to the east.

After descending towards the south for a few minutes, you reach a small saddle, from where you can drop down to the east via an easy gully (red signs), which emerges low down onto gravel from upper *Tassèit*. At one point you have to

scramble down over rocks for a few minutes (between Grade I and II) Finally, coming down through the gravel, you meet a nice path on the left, which quickly takes you to the *Bivacco Groppa Pastòur*, 1617m; **about 1 hour.**

The *Bivacco Groppa Pastòur* is owned by the Forest Agency. It can provide hospitality for 9 people and is always open; sometimes it has tanks of water, but this can't be guaranteed.

Going back up the crest on the same path takes about **1.30 hours.**

If you are forced to make another descent down to the valley, you should follow the excellent, although full of switchbacks, path that leads firstly to a height of 1000m, then spreading out takes you as far as the *Palazzo Prescudin* (640m) in about **2 hours**; here you can find water. A tarmac carriage road (closed to unauthorised traffic) finally takes you to *Arcola* (420m) in *Val Cellina* and, after about three kilometres, to *Bàrcis* and its lake.

***The red Toffolon
Bivouac between the
Antànder and the
Mèsser***



There is also a link with the *Forcella I Muri* or, further south, with the *Forcella di Grava Piana*, via the *Forca Bassa*, 1800m (see below). This allows you to get back on to the Alta Via track, obviously skipping the part relative to *Monte I Muri*.

From Monte Pàster you need to walk along quite a difficult ridge, made up of a series of towers and rumps on crumbly stretches, which end at the *Forcella I Muri*, sheltering behind the mountain with the same name; **1 hour**.

From the saddle's notch you first climb up a sharp ridge, then along a grassy, rocky incline up to the summit of Monte I Muri, 2049 m; **30 minutes**.

The view is varied and interesting, especially to the south west towards Monte Cavallo and to Monte Mèsser in the north, right up to the Crèp Nudo. To the east, lower down, you can see the Lago di Bàrcis in the distance.

From the summit you go on to the path marked 928 along the very steep, grassy and rocky slope of the south face (metal ropes) reaching the base of the mountain in a gravelly basin. From this, go up to the right for about 15 minutes until you reach the *Forcella Grava Piana*, 1947m (on the Tabacco Map).

The *Forcella Grava Piana* is an important passage between *Val Cellina* to the east and *Alpàgo* to the west. You walk on the route signed 972, one part leading to *Bàrcis* (409m) in about 4 hours, the other to *Val Salàtis* (1421m) then with the forest road to *Casèra Pal* (1054m) and on the carriage road to *Tambre* or *Chiés d'Alpàgo*; **2.30 hours**.

From the saddle, if need be, you can turn back quite quickly to the *Bivacco Groppa Pastòur* – see above – going down to the east in *I Muri* cirque; then, via the *Forca Bassa* notch at 1827m, you descend to the north through a detritus gully that sweeps into Tassèit, where you meet the path that quickly takes you to the bivouac; 1.20 hours. Signs from the notch down to the north.

N.B.: the *Bivacco Groppa Pastòur* can also be reached from *Forcella I Muri* (see above). In this case you drop down to the east in the *I Muri* cirque (signposted) directly to the above notch at 1827m. Then proceed as mentioned.

From the *Forcella Grava Piana* a long ridge begins, which links *Monte I Muri* to *Monte Sestier*. The *Alta Via* proceeds along it, slowly coming to the end of the fourth stretch.

*The Lastè Bivouac at
the Semenza Refuge*





Reaching the summit of *Monte Pianina* in 15 minutes, you carry on going up then down along the big ridge, which has some thin stretches (be careful, one part is exposed and crumbly). When you reach the saddle where a gravelly gully begins to the west, keep going until, a bit further ahead, you meet a little saddle from where you quickly and easily climb up an easy grassy and rocky incline to the summit of *Monte Sestier* (2084m); 1.30 hours. Beautiful views of the nearby *Cavallo* mountain range, the *Lago di Bàrcis* and the plains below.

After going back down to the little saddle you traverse along the east side of a sheer-sided gully, which climbs up to the right. Via a small ledge you pass on to the southeast slope of the mountain, finally dropping down on to *Forcella Sestier* (1902m) on the edge of the secluded *Fornello* cirque, in sight of *Monte Caulàna*.

At this point you climb gently southwards on karst ground, along a watershed, arriving first at the *Forcella Caulàna*, situated between *Monte Caulàna* and the *Cima di Valgrande*. Then, a bit further west you reach the *Forcella di Valgrande* (1926m) a passage between the *Valgrande* to the south east and the *Val Sperlonga* to the north west; **30 minutes**. Then traversing the north west side of the *Cima di Val Piccola* you reach the *Forcella Lastè* (2036m) where on the eastern slope you can find the *Lastè* bivouac and on the western slope the *Rifugio Semenza* (2020m); **35 minutes**

About 8.30 hours from the *Bivacco Toffolon*.

The *Rifugio Carlo & Massimo Semenza* built in 1962 and owned by the Vittorio Veneto CAI Section, is open from 15th June to 15th September, offering the same services as a small hotel, with 30 beds. To book telephone 0437-4 90 55 or contact the manager on 0422-80 70 49.

The nearby *Bivacco Lastè* acts as a winter shelter and is always open and unstaffed ; 9 beds.

The refuge is accessible from Alpàgo in two ways:

- a) from the north via the Val Salatis with the 924;
- b) from the west and south via the Val di Piera with the 923 or the 926. All these routes join up at Tambre d'Alpàgo in 2-3 hours and can be pleasant alternatives to the subsequent and final stretch.

Fifth stretch

■ From the Rifugio Semenza to Tambre

From the *Forcella Lastè*, which is a few metres from the *Rifugio Semenza*, you climb up the wide, grassy, northern side of the *Cimón d'Alpàgo* (or *Monte Lastè*) (2247), up to near the summit; **30 minutes**.

N.B.: On this last stretch you follow the *Alta Via n. 6* or dei Silenzi paths.

Descending for a few metres on a rough, ridge path you reach a saddle, called *Forcella Alta del Cavàl* (meaning belonging to *Monte Cavallo*) and via a rather exposed ridge (at a short drop there is a metal rope), you climb up the terminal cusp of *Monte Cavallo* (2251m); **30 minutes**.

Monte Cavallo provides an exceptional, expansive view of the Veneto And Friuli plains, the Dolomites, *Alpi Carniche*, *Alpi Giulie*, *Tauri*, the *Alpàgo* basin and the Piave valley. Enchanting retrospective view of the entire *Col Nudo-Cavallo* Group.

At this point you need to reach the *Cimón di Palantina* to the southwest, the last important elevation in the *Alta Via*.

With easy and short rock-climbs, although a bit exposed, you go down the south west ridge of the *Cavallo* up to the *Forcella Sughét*, then on to the *Forcella Palantina* situated at the head of the desolate *Val Sughét*. You start to climb again, cutting across the steep, grassy north east slope of the *Cimón di Palantina* until the south ridge of the mountain and via this to the right, you quickly arrive on the summit at 2190 metres.

N.B.: the *Alta Via* signs, after leaving the ridge, go immediately over to the western side without reaching the summit.

Very nice view of *Monte Cavallo* and its surrounding mountains. To the south west you can see the great *Bosco del Cansiglio*, the *Lago di Santa Croce* and the area around *Belluno* with the southern brow of the Dolomites.

At this point you face a steep descent on the grassy western facing slope. Getting back on the signed tracks coming from the left,



*Beechwood near
Casera Palantina*

about 200 metres beneath the vertical of the summit, you rapidly drop down along the northern edge of the mountain until reaching Casèra Palantina, in a pleasant grassy basin (1508m), an important crossroads of itineraries.

From here, following the 923, which crosses a magnificent beech-wood, you descend northwest to Pian delle Lastre (1239m), then on to the Malghe al Col Indès (1180m) carriage road for 1.5 kilometres. With 2 more kilometres you are in Tambre d'Alpàgo (922m) the district capital.

Here the *Alta Via n. 7* or *di Patéra* ends.

4.30 hours from the Rifugio Semenza..

Tambre is the most alpine municipality in Alpàgo and the nearest centre to the Foresta del Cansiglio. Post office, telephone, doctor, hotels, Mountain Rescue, bus services to La Secca on the SS Alemagna road to Belluno, Tourist Information Offices...





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Map used

Tabacco map 1:25.000

SHEET 012, *ALPAGO-CANSIGLIO-PIANCAVALLO-VAL CELLINA* useful for the all the Alta Via n. 7

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