Itinerary: **Montecrestese e le sue frazioni dal Pontemaglio**
Identification code on the site: Settore A "Itinerari"– **IA12**
Identification code on the territory: GFM-2

GFM-2

gpx   kmz

Significant aspects of the route

The homesteads of Montecrestese, shaped by the Toce glacier and enclosed between the Isorno and Toce streams, stretches towards the Antigorio Valley, and sits on a rocky outcrop. The house of Veglio has ruins of a fort that was built to guard the trade routes that descended from the Antigorio and Formazza valleys. The route was controlled by the De Rodis family of Pontemaglio, known as Della Caterina. The towers gave light signals which gave warning of danger and sent requests for help.

Brief description of the route

When the bus arrives at Pontemaglio we head towards the beautiful arched bridge that crosses the Toce stream. We then enter the village of Pontemaglio. As we go into town to observe the old houses, one in particular is of the De Rodis family. We pass the village by taking the G00 route the "Via del Gries" and after passing a chapel we come to the junction for the "Strong House" of Veglio. We then climb up sections of the old dirt road to the ruins of the castle. From the "Castle of the Woodpeckers," as it was called in past centuries, we take the path that leads to Veglio. This place has been long abandoned, but now is being renovated by interested families. The name has a meaning from the Latin word "eve" as "place of vigilance" standing on a plateau overlooking the Antigorio Valley. After passing the chapel, you come to a church around "Scarpia," from here a path leads off to cross the Groppallo trail and then to the house of Altoggio. This is the highest point of this hike. Altoggio rises to the north of a plateau that was once cultivated with rye and grassland. The name indicates its landscape as an "elevated knoll" but also a place sheltered from the plains. Here is where the Baiardi family of Altoggio descended from the lords of Castello. In front of the chapel dedicated to St. John the Baptist, the herds gathered before going to the alps (Altoggio is the gateway to the Isorno valley and its pastures). Just outside the village, take the A04 route to the center of Montecrestese and, after passing the Piccioledo chapel, turn right onto a path that crosses a small valley and reaches the road to the town of Nava; the area derives from the Celtic word meaning "hollow," it is an ancient house documented as early as 1235. Nava preserves several 15th-century buildings and was also home to the "Picchi," famous outlaws who raged in Ossola in the 17th century. Continue to travel on a dirt trail then arrive to Lomese, an admirable historic center of Montecrestese. The place name appears in a document from 910 where Emperor Berengar confirmed to Viscount Gariardo the four towns of Lomese, Chezzo, Croppomarcio and Seggio. In the 11th century there was a castle, it is now reduced to ruins and the other buildings in the area are from the 16th century. All the houses are characterized by the impressive strength of the stone walls. Bread ovens, grape presses, water wells and traces of old mills can still be seen. The trail then proceeds to the town of Chezzo which features buildings from before the 15th century. We continue on a marked path to Croppomarcio. Here are houses with notable examples of 16th-century architecture, also here are the famous "astric" or open barns, typical of these towns. To complete our trek, we pass through the town of Roledo, then we reach the area of Oira in the municipality of Crevoladossola. Here are places to eat and enjoy a bus stop.

Useful News.

Domodossola train station (from Bern and Milan) - From the bus station take the bus to Valle Formazza with a stop at Pontemaglio.
Contact person: municipality of Montecrestese www.comune.montecrestese.vb.it
CAI contact person: Domodossola section www.estmonterosa.it
Rest stops: at Altoggio in Oira : Circolo tel.   Restaurant "C'era una Volta" tel.3396210622

Difficulty: The trail presents minimal difficulty, always pay attention to the paving of the roads and trails
Elevation gain : uphill 440 m downhill 418m
Length of the route : 12 km
Total walking time: 3 h 30 min
Recommended equipment: hiking boots
Numbered trails : **A02 - A04**
Recommended season : Spring or Fall

Reference Cartography
Map No. 112 scale 1:25,000 from Geo4Map/CAI
Digital cartography on App : - Avenza Maps

Bibliography
1. - "Ossola and its valleys," G.De Maurizi, ed.Grossi, 2015.
2. - " History of Montecrestese," T.Bertamini, ed.Oscellana, 1991
3. - "History of Oira," T.Bertamini, ed.CAEP di Oira, 2005

Tabella dei punti gpx

ID	Descrizione	L.pro. (m)	Q. (m)	L.tr. (m)	T (min)	Tp (h,min)
01	Pontemaglio fermata Bus	0	346	0		
04	Oratorio di Pontemaglio	300	366	300	5	0.05
06	Bivio G00 per Veglio	400	391	700	5	0.10
07	Castello di Veglio	700	526	1400	25	0.35
09	Veglio centro paese	600	539	2000	10	0.45
12	Bivio a Scarpia	450	541	2450	5	0.50
14	Bivio su gippabile	600	598	3050	10	1.00
16	Bivio per Nava a Croppallo	550	670	3600	15	1.15
17	Bivio ad Altoggio	1700	739	5300	30	1.45
18	Oratorio di Altoggio	290	727	5590	5	1.50
23	Cappella - Bivio per Chiesa	550	700	6140	5	1.55
26	Bivio per Nava	450	628	6590	10	2.05
27	Oratorio di Nava	450	599	7040	5	2.10
34	Bivio con A04	1000	478	8040	15	2.25
35	Frazione Chiesa	190	468	8230	5	2.30
36	Castello di Lomese	400	428	8630	5	2.35

Gps ID	Point description	L.pro	Q	L.tr	T	Tp
41	Bivio per Croppomarcio	8930	428	300	5	2.40
42	Croppomarcio	9430	385	500	5	2.45
44	Bivio per Roledo	10030	375	600	10	2.55
47	Oratorio di Roledo	10580	333	550	10	3.05
50	Bivio per Ghesio	11080	321	500	5	3.10
51	Bivio con G00 a Canova	11270	324	190	5	3.15
53	Chiesa di Oira	11620	361	350	10	3.25
55	Fermata bus a Oira	11810	368	190	5	3.30

Gps ID: identifier on the GPS - **Point description - L.pro**.: progressive length - **Q**: elevation - **L.tr**.: leg length - **T** : leg travel time - **Tp** : progressive time
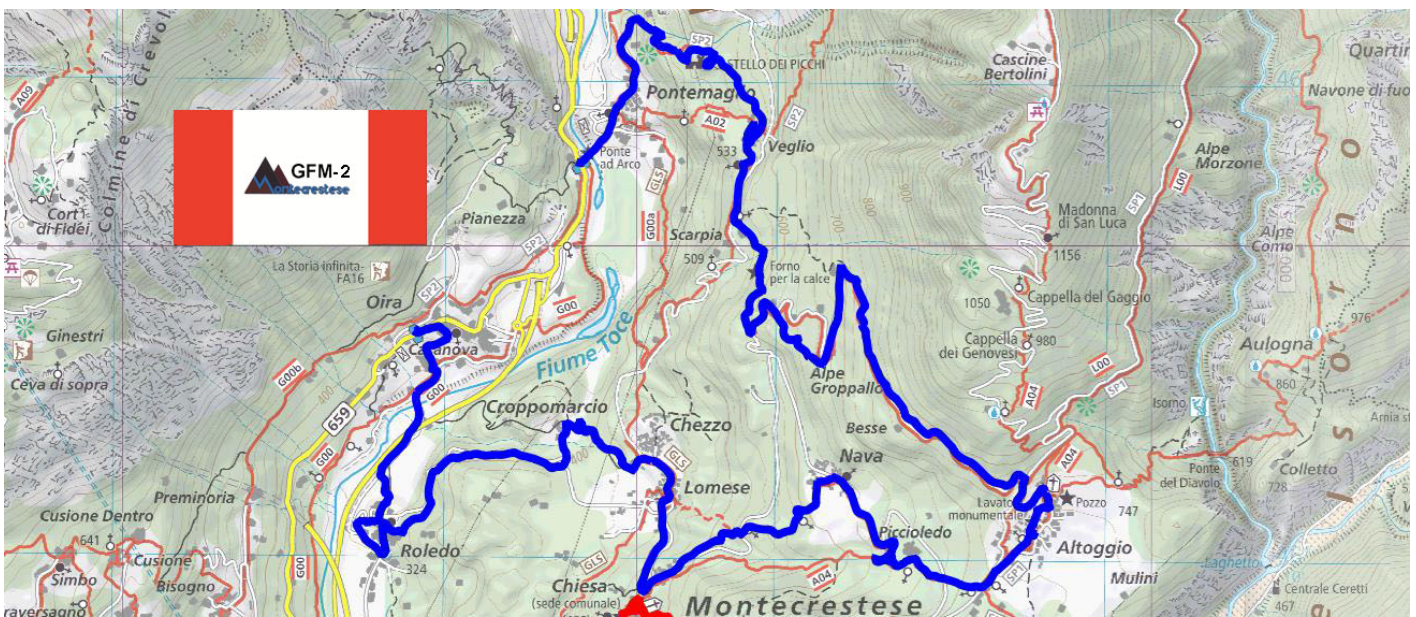
Points of interest :

01 - BUS stop in Pontemaglio

02 - Arched Bridge - This bridge, with a span of about 30m, was certainly the largest over which the Roman road passed in the Ossola. Therefore, it was referred to in Latin as "Pons Majus" or "Ponte Grande," which was later Italianized into Pontemaglio. Unfortunately, during the last war, the bridge was needlessly destroyed to prevent Nazi-Fascist forces from moving up the Antigorio-Formazza Valley and chasing the exhausted partisan brigades to the border. The current bridge was not rebuilt arched but, in a semicircle and no longer has the architecture beauty of the old bridge.

03 - Pontemaglio - Until the 19th century, people passed through Pontemaglio on the ancient trail (still passable today identified as G00) that descended from the Alpine passes of the Antigorio and Formazza valleys. Pontemaglio geographically represented the gateway from the Toce Plain to the passes of Arbola and Gries. If one carefully observes the compact layout of the housing structures, the sturdy perimeter walls of the houses, often equipped with small loopholes, or massive trilithic openings, it is possible to understand how Pontemaglio in the past fulfilled the functions of a valley barrage. Its strategic importance is confirmed, moreover, by the fact that one of the four main branches of the noble Antigorian lineage of De Rodis took its

name here.

Reminiscent of its ancient structure are the door and window beams engraved with the stylized wheel, the family's symbol, owners of important alpine land such as Cravariola and Salecchio. The De Rodis Pontemaglio family also held property in the territory of Oira.

04 - Chapel of Pontemaglio - The Chapel of St. Cross was established in the 15th century by the De Rodis family

05 - Chapel

06 - Junction on G00 (Via del Gries) to the "Castle of Veglio"

07 - Castle of Veglio - From them ruled the local lords, heads of the surrounding estates. This building belonged to the towers of the Ossola. From these towers came light that signaled both dangers and requests for help. These lights could be seen from the upper valleys to the castle of Mattarella, all the way to Milan and Novara. The castle of Veglio has an older part, probably from the 13th century, and another more recent part from the 15th century. Since the 17th century it has not been lived in, which is the reason for its ruin status. Who were the lords who built it and inhabited it for several centuries is not easy to know. It is believed more likely, that they were the same people who came from Pontemaglio, all descendants of the De Rodis-Baceno family, of whom ample traces remain that in Pontemaglio took the names Della Caterina
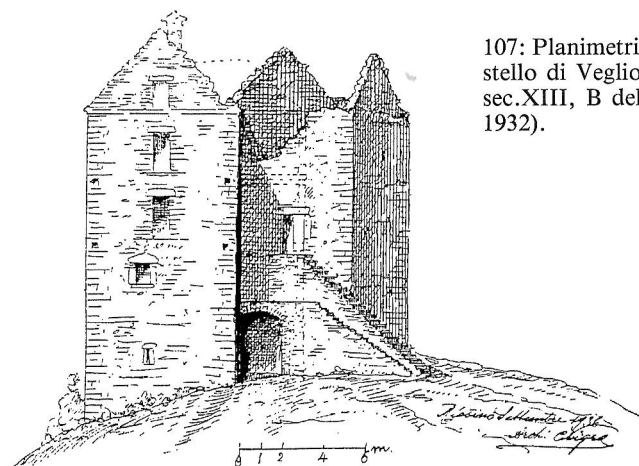
107: Planimetrie e disegno dei ruderi del castello di Veglio; A la torre più antica, del sec.XIII, B del secolo XV-XVI (C. Nigra 1932).
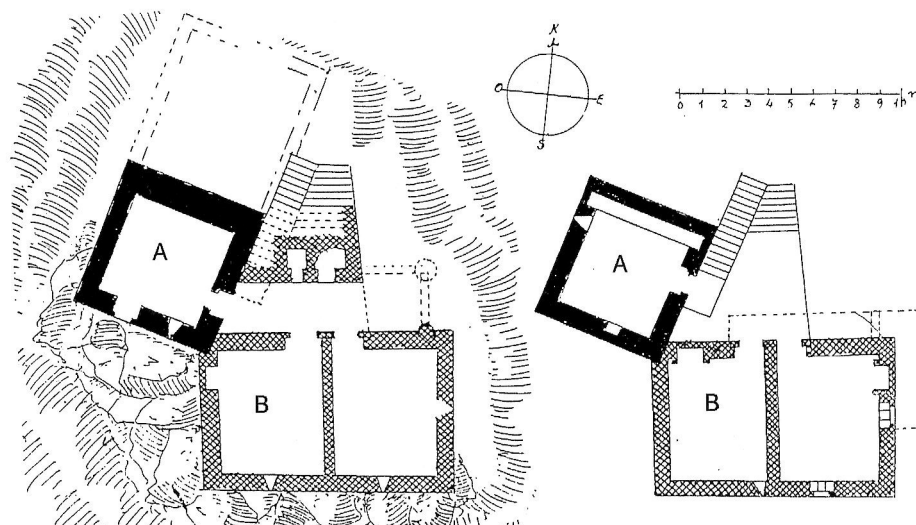
08 - Fountain

09 - Veglio - Veglio is an ancient and once intensely inhabited homestead. The name has the meaning of Place of Vigilance. The settlement is laid out in a sun-exposed and highly cultivated basin. The oldest houses date from the 13th-14th centuries, but many were rebuilt in the 16th century. Well worth viewing are devotional wall paintings that can still be seen on some of the houses, especially the one inside the courtyard of the house that belonged to the local family. The abandonment of this house was the assumption that the mountain above was about to collapse, but this did not happen. Now there is a slow return of people that live there.

10 - Chapel of Veglio - The 1523 Chapel is dedicated to St. Mark

11 - Chapel of Scarpia

12 - Crossroads to Altoggio

13 - Lime kiln

14 - Junction on trail

15 - Junction from trail

16 - Junction to Nava

17 - Junction at Altoggio - Altoggio is the homestead at the highest elevation and was once the most inhabited in Montecrestese. It rises to the north of a plain that was once cultivated with rye and grassland. The name indicates its landscape as an elevated knoll, but in documents it appears with many variants, Voltolo (1222), Vultoggio (1330), Vultoxio (1346), Oltoxio (1457-1618) and Altosio (1524). The homesteaders lived in a sheltered place from the outlaws that ran in the valley. For many centuries it was an ideal place of refuge for people and livestock in times of danger. It was also the only route to the alp, both in Coipo and the Isorno Valley. There are many typical Montecrestesan dwellings and numerous sacred paintings on the walls dating from the 15th-16th centuries, including the Arma Baiarda coat of arms. The Baiardi, a patrician family of Altoggio descended from the lords of Castello, already dominant in many places in Montecrestese.

18 - Altoggio Chapel - The 17th-century chapel is dedicated to St. John the Baptist, patron saint of the mountain people and shepherds. Here the herds gathered on the feast day before going to the alps. St. John's flowers and salt were blessed there.

19 - Monumental Washhouse in Altoggio - The washhouse has a roof made of poplar, with water falling from one basin to another that stands in the center of the village. It was built in 1880.

20 - Well with wall paintings

21 - Square

22 - Crossroads for Coipo and Agarina

23 - Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows- Bivio - It was painted in 1839 by artist Lorenzo Peretti who depicted the four characters in Montecrestese costumes of the era

24 - Chapel of the Madonna and Child

25 - Piccioledo - Chapel - Piccioledo is a tiny house once lived in by a small number of families. The name

appears with variants derived from a small piece of land. The chapel is dedicated to Our Lady of Grace with a small porch in front, painted by artist Carlo Mellerio around 1670.

26 - Junction for Nava

27 - Chapel of Nava - The 17th-century Chapel dedicated to St. Anthony Abbot

28 - Nava - The house is incredibly old, historically documented in 1235, located on a gently sloping plateau and set in a forest. The name is said to derive from the Celtic Nava meaning hollow, flat field among the woods. It has typical Montecrestese buildings dating from the 16th and 17th centuries. Nava was also home to the Picchi, famous bandits who raged in the 17th century in and around Ossola.

29 - Chapel "d'ardima," 16th century, but repainted by Bernardino Peretti

30 - Chapel "da mezz," seventeenth century

31 - Chapel "da fund," seventeenth century

32 - Road crossing

33 - Arched bridge

34 - Junction with A04

35 - Hamlet Church - Considered a hamlet very belatedly. In fact, it indicated only the place where the parish church and the curates' houses stood. However, it was the center of the community, which gathered not only for religious services but also to do business. In the early 16th century, buildings sprang up that were owned by the parish but also used by the community. Then private properties were added to the area. Today the town administration is based there. The Romanesque church of S.Maria Assunta dates from the end of the 11th century . It is decorated with blind arches; the structural stone arches have decorations of statues of human heads . In the 14th century the community decided to enlarge its church, adding two side aisles. The construction was finished in the 15th century, and the church was immediately decorated with paintings, some of which can still be seen. In the 16th century the local people decided to build a more beautiful and brighter church. Work began in 1580. The works of painters G.M.Borgnis, Carlo Mellerio and Giacomo di Cardone can be seen there.

36 - Lomese castle – Lomese town derived from longo-medo meaning long meadow. In fact, Lomese lies on the edge of an undulating terrain cultivated with vines and meadows in a well-sheltered and sun-rich basin at the edges of which we find the houses of Chezzo, Croppomarcio, Torriono and Seggio. With the houses it formed a single property, the royal court that in 910 Emperor Berengar confirmed to Viscount Gariardo. In Lomese we recognize a number of noble dwellings in the form of castles or house-forts dating back to the original descendants, the lords of Castello, the nobles De Rodis-Baceno, and of the men who assumed the names of the De Quirico and De Giuli families from the 15th century onward. Of these fortified houses or castles, one located in the center of the homestead (largely ruined) can be dated from the 12th century, the others date from the 15th-16th centuries.

99: Pianta e ricostruzione grafica
del castello di Lomese (Villarte).
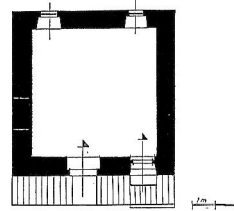
37 - Lomese Casaforte - The strong houses of the De Quirico family in the center of Lomese are from the 15th_XVI century

38 - Chapel and restored house

39 - Chapel

40 - Bivio per Chezzo - The homestead of Chezzo built on rock, has pre-17th-century buildings, some dated and painted. It belonged to the royal court of Lomese. The counts of Castello owned the castle until 1378 when it was sold. The skillful use of astric (open barns) and ramped archways gives the hamlet a beautiful architectural appearance. Bread ovens are still preserved and on the walls of the houses, paintings of religious motifs dating back to the 1600s can be admired.

41 - Junction for Croppomarcio

42 - Croppomarcio - The rocky ground on which it stands, which defends it from the cold north winds, and the Lomese stream that flows nearby, have always been prominent for this settlement. Notable examples of 16th- and 17th-century architecture in cut stone, with painted exterior and interior walls. The houses are separated by narrow alleys and are covered by vaults. The small staircase square is worth seeing. There are seven archway staircases forming a harmonious architectural ensemble. A painting of Madonna and Child can be seen on the wall of one of the courtyard houses. Also found here are the famous astric or open barns. Close to this town center is the other homestead of Ghesio (Gh'èsc) with houses that already existed in the 1400s.

43 - Hemp wells - Ancient wells for macerating hemp and perhaps the acrid smell they gave this place its name.

44 - Crossroads for Roledo - Chapel

45 - Former quarry

46 - Chapel - It was made in 1708 by G.A.Rabesini and restored in 1953 by F.Colenghi. It bears iron crosses as reminders of fatal accidents along the same road.

47 - Roledo Chapel - The 17th-century Chapel is dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua, it was built in 1666 over

a structure from the previous century.

48 - Houses of Roledo - The town's name has undergone variations: Revoledo (1330), Rovoledo (1346) and Rogoledo derived from Rovere and therefore with the meaning of oak forest. It repeats the housing structures of the other areas, with buildings dating from the 13th c. It also has narrow alleys connecting through passages that are often covered. On the outside of a beautiful stone house crosses are engraved in plaster. The JHS monogram and heraldic lilies are also visible. The building dates back to 1492. Another place of interest is the 1700 dwelling with a large terrace, facing the Ossola plain, it is called the Azari Palace.

49 – Dirt road to Oira

50 - Crossroads to Ghesio and Croppomarcio

51 - Junction on the Gries G00 dirt road

52 – Town of Canova - With its houses in the area of the Toce constitutes the "Lower Villa." The oldest buildings, dating from the 12th-14th centuries, still look very sturdy; it is not a fortified place, but lived in by farmers in agriculture and livestock breeding. On a house from the 15th century, owned by the De Rodis nobles, there was a painting that was torn off before its decay and deposited at Sacro Monte Calvario. The painting has been attributed to the artist Giovanni De Campo, who was also active in other parts of Ossola. On another house is the 17th-century coat of arms of the Francioni family. The Francioni are also of noble origin, but dating back not to the De Rodis-Baceno , but to the Counts of Castello.

53 -Parochial Church of Oira and Chapel - Erected on a pre-existing 15th-century building, the present building dates from the first half of the 17th century, following the upgrade of the church to a parish (1632)

54 - Lavatory

55 - Oira bus stop - Oira, a homestead of Crevoladossola, located at the outlet of the Pontemaglio gorge, is surrounded by land for centuries set aside as a natural garden on which fruit trees, vines, and useful plants such as hemp have thrived. Oira is a place of Latin origin (horum) and alludes to the rounded mountainous hump on which it stands. Also, in Oira, dwellings of architectural and historical interest are found. The settlement consists of the houses of : Canova, Villa di Mezzo, Villa Superiore, Pioda and Arzalò.