



# THE RYE ECOMUSEUM



The Rye Ecomuseum is one of twenty-five ecomuseums that the Piedmont Region has set up in order to enhance the culture of its territory and plan a "globally sustainable" future for the communities that host them.

Alpi Marittime Park in creating the Rye ecomuseum in the mid-1990s, has tried to make its presence on the territory more effective, especially in the development of a balanced relationship between the inhabitants and their land, animating the communities and developing local products.

The Rye Ecomuseum is situated in Sant'Anna di Valdieri. 1,000 metres in altitude, this is the only village inside the Park inhabited all year round, it originated by the gradual aggregation of tiny scattered nuclei, the so-called Tait, which grew up in the early 1800s in the shadow of Asta Sotana, a rocky pyramid 2,900 metres high.

In the past, the village and its social life was organised around this particular spatial distribution, which, while it exalted individualism of the single "cells", on the other hand urged every family to collaborate actively in the maintenance of common infrastructures. Often, joining forces was to the common good, such as for clearing snow.

The small community that lived there, strongly conditioned by strict environmental constraints, lived for centuries in a strict regimen of subsistence, coping with the scarcity of resources with countless adaptations. The wars on the one hand and emigration across the Alps or to the plains broke their autocracy, dealing a severe blow to this community, who now number only a few dozen people, mostly in old age.

Most of the initiatives promoted by the Rye Ecomuseum were concentrated precisely in this village. However, over the years, Sant'Anna has become the source of numerous activities that have migrated from this little alpine village to lower in the valley.

Rye has remained the key to "interpret" the territory, one of the most common elements of alpine civilization, a meagre source of grain to make bread and straw to build strong, light roofs. The path taken up to now by the ecomuseum is a classic for institutions of this kind: a first action, immature and sometimes lacking awareness, of "physical" memory retrieval, it has moved on with greater conviction and confidence in its capacity, to carry out many intangible acts, large and small.

Together, material achievements and ideas have meant that, step by step, rye today is not just a thing of the past, but an unmistakable element in the landscape, lying at the heart of the community at the centre of the project.