

Bellinzona

Canton of Ticino · Switzerland

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Bellinzona is the capital of Ticino. Three medieval castles stand around the town, and long walls link them across the valley. The castles and walls are a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The town is small and calm. It is a good stop for a few hours or a day, and a base for the Ticino valleys.

When to visit

April to October is the best time for the castles and walks. Summer is warm and can be humid. Spring and autumn are mild. Winter is cool but rarely snowy in the town. The Saturday market and the Rabadan carnival in February bring crowds.

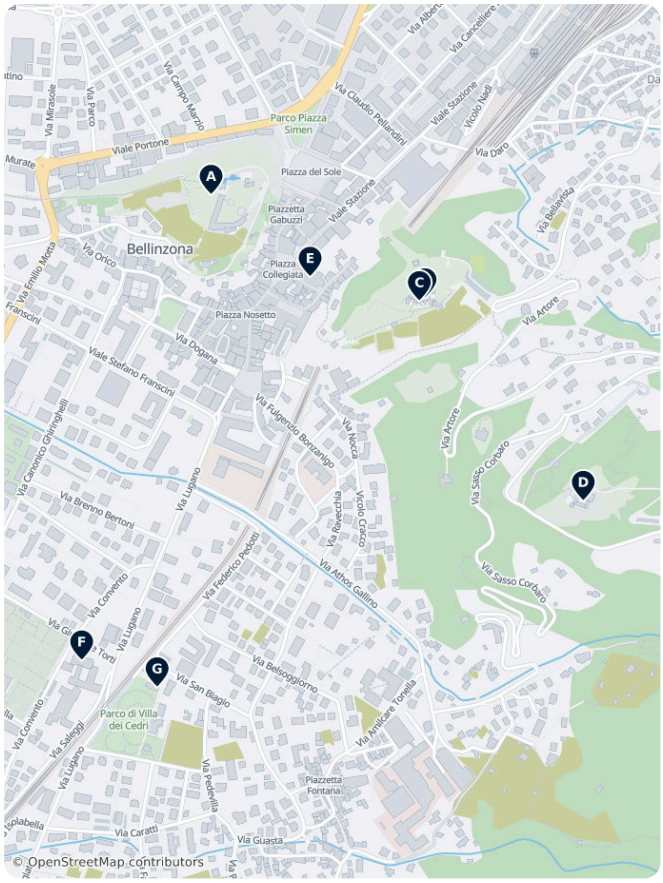
MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	7° / 12° Feels like 3°	0° / -7°	Dry air · Calm winds
February	Good Good for cycling	9° / 16° Feels like 6°	1° / -7°	Dry air · Calm winds
March	Good Good for hiking	13° / 20°	5° / -2°	Dry air · Calm winds
April	Good Good for hiking	17° / 23°	8° / 2°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
May	Good Good for sightseeing	21° / 27°	13° / 8°	17 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
June	Good Good for sightseeing	26° / 31°	17° / 12°	16 rainy days · Humid air · Calm winds
July	Good Good for sightseeing	28° / 32°	19° / 13°	Humid air · Calm winds
August	Good Good for sightseeing	27° / 32°	19° / 14°	16 rainy days · Humid air · Calm winds
September	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 28°	15° / 9°	Calm winds
October	Good Good for sightseeing	18° / 24°	11° / 5°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
November	Good Good for cycling	12° / 18°	6° / -2°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
December	Poor Poor for sightseeing	8° / 13° Feels like 4°	1° / -7°	Dry air · Calm winds

Best months: September

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights

- A Castelgrande is the largest castle, on a rock above the old town. A lift leads from the town to the courtyard.
- B Castello di Montebello stands on a hill east of the centre. It has walls, towers and a small museum, C Museo Castello di Montebello.
- D Sasso Corbaro Castle is the highest castle, with views over the valley. It is a short uphill walk or a drive from Montebello.
- E Collegiata dei Santi Pietro et Stefano is the main church in the old town.
- F Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Grazie is a church known for its frescoes.
- G Villa dei Cedri is a villa with a park and an art collection.



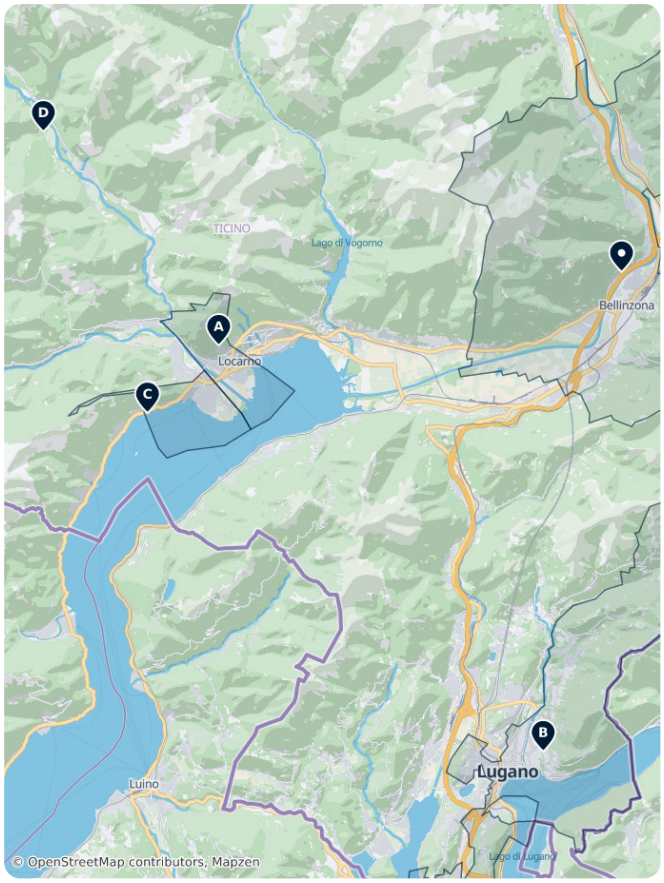
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What to experience

- Walk the castle walls and look over the valley.
- Visit the Saturday market in the old town.
- Hike on the paths around the castles.
- Cross the long suspension bridge at Ponte Tibetano Carasc for a mountain walk.
- Visit Villa dei Cedri for art in a park.

Day trips

- A Locarno is on Lake Maggiore, about 20 minutes away by train.
- B Lugano is the largest city in Ticino, about 30 minutes away by train.
- C Ascona is a lakeside town next to Locarno.
- D Maggia Valley has rivers, stone villages and swimming spots.



Where to explore

- Locarno, Ascona and Lugano are the nearest towns in Ticino.

Getting there

- By air: Zurich and Milan Malpensa are the main airports. Milan is about 2 hours away by train and bus.
- By train: Bellinzona is on the main north-south line through the Gotthard Base Tunnel. Check times on SBB.
- Trains from Zurich take about 2 hours. Trains from Lugano take about 30 minutes.

Getting around

- The old town is small and easy to walk.
- The castles are reachable on foot, with climbs. A lift serves Castelgrande.
- Local buses link the station with the districts and valleys.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The old town is flat and compact. The castles sit on steep hills.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

The valley floor is flat. Routes to the castles and mountains climb.

Driving

- A car is not needed in the old town.
- Parking near the station and the old town is limited. Use a car park and walk.
- A car helps for the side valleys.

Food & drink

Ticino food is close to Italian. Try polenta, risotto and the local cured meats. Merlot wine is grown around the town. Cheese and chestnut dishes appear in autumn.

Most people speak Italian. Many speak some German and English.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Birchermüesli
A raw-oat, fruit, and yogurt breakfast invented by a Zurich doctor around 1900, now standard on breakfast buffets.

LUNCH

Rösti
A fried, shredded-potato cake, originally a Bernese farmer's breakfast, now a national side dish.

DINNER

Cheese Fondue · Fondue
Melted Gruyère and Vacherin cheese in a shared pot, eaten by dipping bread cubes on long forks.

Raclette
Cheese melted tableside or under a grill and scraped over boiled potatoes, pickles, and onions.

Zürcher Geschnetzeltes
Sliced veal and mushrooms in a creamy white-wine sauce, traditionally served with rösti.

Älplermagronen
Alpine herder's macaroni gratin with potatoes, cheese, and cream, often topped with fried onions and served with apple sauce.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Cervelat
Switzerland's best-known sausage, usually grilled and often called the country's unofficial national dish.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Swiss Chocolate · Schweizer Schokolade
Switzerland pioneered milk chocolate in the 19th century; look for small-batch chocolatiers alongside the big national brands.

Basler Läckerli
A dense, spiced honey-and-candied-fruit biscuit from Basel, traditional around Christmas.

DRINKS

Swiss Wine · Vin Suisse
Mostly consumed domestically rather than exported; Valais and Vaud, along Lake Geneva, produce the best-known Chasselas whites.

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Safety & health

- Bellinzona is very safe.
- Castle paths are steep and uneven. Wear good shoes.
- Tap water is safe to drink.
- Summer afternoons can be hot, so carry water on walks.

History

Bellinzona controls the main routes across the Alps. The Milan dukes built the castles and walls in the 14th and 15th centuries to guard the valley. Swiss cantons took the town in 1500.

Bellinzona became part of the new canton of Ticino in 1803, and it is the cantonal capital. The castles were restored in the 20th century.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Switzerland at a glance:

CURRENCY
CHF CHF

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



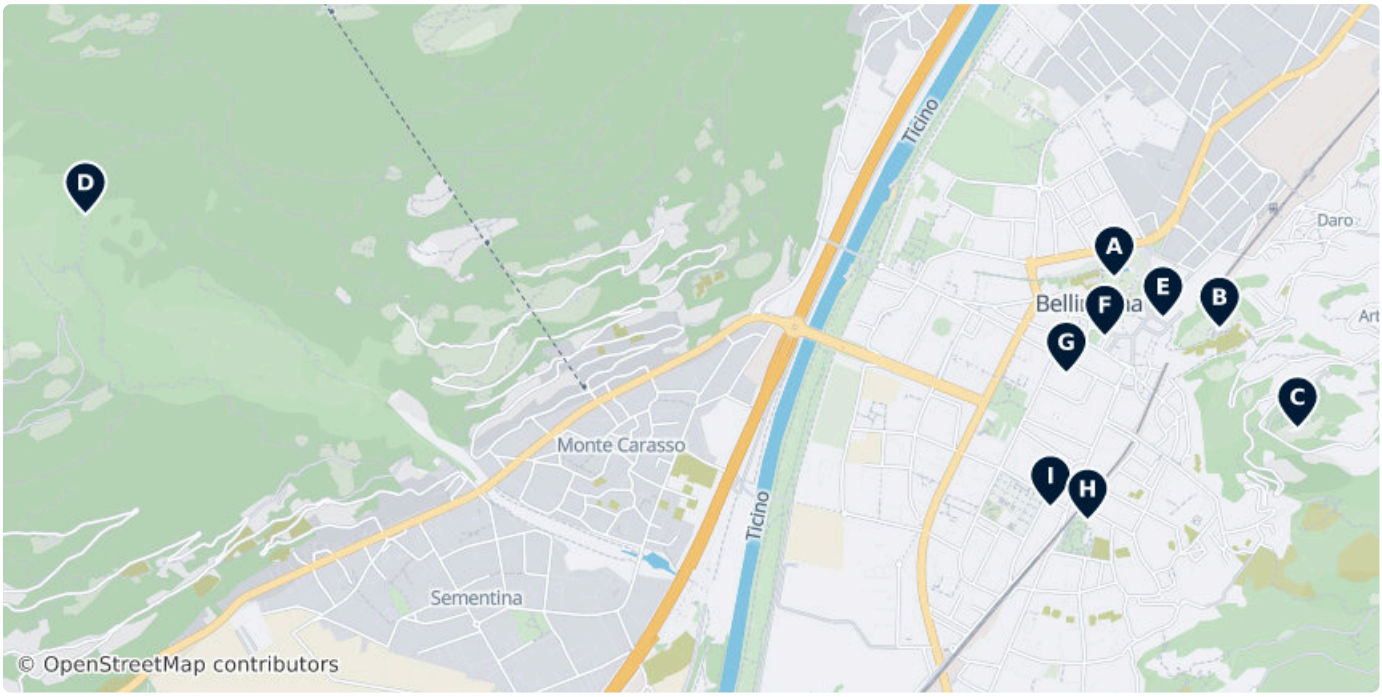
Type C / Type J
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
German, French, Italian, Romansh

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Bellinzona Unmissables

Bellinzona, the capital of Ticino, is defined by its three UNESCO World Heritage-listed medieval castles: Castelgrande, Montebello, and Sasso Corbaro. Beyond these fortifications, the city features the neoclassical Teatro Sociale, the 16th-century Collegiata dei Santi Pietro e Stefano, and the 15th-century Santa Maria delle Grazie church, home to significant Renaissance frescoes. The selection also includes the modern Federal Criminal Court and the Villa dei Cedri art museum, alongside the 270-meter-long Carasc Tibetan bridge spanning the Sementina valley.





Ⓐ Castelgrande

The Castles of Bellinzona are a group of fortifications located around the town of Bellinzona, the capital of the Swiss canton of Ticino.

Salita Castelgrande 18, 6500 Canton of Bellinzona, Switzerland (46.19290, 9.02175)

ticino.ch/de/commons/details/Castelgrande/2793.html



Ⓑ Castello di Montebello

This medieval castle has more than 700 years of history behind it. A prime example of Swiss military architecture.

6500, Switzerland (46.19129, 9.02657)

Mo–Su 10:00–18:00

ticino.ch/de/commons/details/Burg-Montebello/2796.html

C Sasso Corbaro Castle

Defensive fortress and prison that (unlike the other two) remains unconnected to the defensive walls.

Via Sasso Corbaro 44, 6500 Canton of Bellinzona, Switzerland (46.18812, 9.03013)

Mar 28-Nov 08 Mo–Su	10:00–18:00
Nov 09-Mar 18 Mo–Su	10:30–16:00

fortezzabellinzona.ch/en/discover-sasso-c..., +41918252131

D Ponte Tibetano Carasc

A 270-meter-long suspension bridge hanging 130 meters above the Sementina valley floor, connecting the mountain communities of Monte Carasso and Sementina.

(46.19491, 8.97466)



E Collegiata dei Santi Pietro et Stefano

Renaissance church built in the 16th century, featuring a late-Baroque facade, a large rose window, and an interior decorated with elaborate stucco and frescoes.

2 Salita alla Motta, Bellinzona 6500, Switzerland (46.19162, 9.02398)

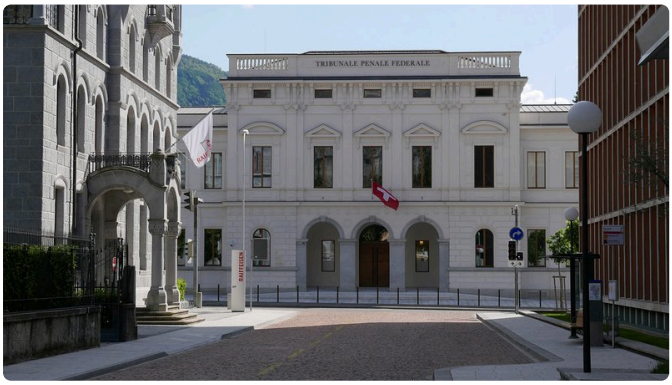


F Teatro Sociale Bellinzona

Neoclassical Italian-style theater built in 1847 by architect Giacomo Moraglia. It is the only surviving theater of its kind in Switzerland.

Piazza Governo 11, 6500 Bellinzona, CH (46.19103, 9.02132)

teatrosociale.ch



G Federal Criminal Court of Switzerland

The Federal Criminal Court, is a Swiss federal court. Since its inception in 2004, it has been located in Bellinzona.

(46.18986, 9.01955)

H Villa dei Cedri

Civic art museum housed in a 19th-century villa. The collection focuses on regional Swiss and Italian art from the late 19th century to the present day.

(46.18521, 9.02053)



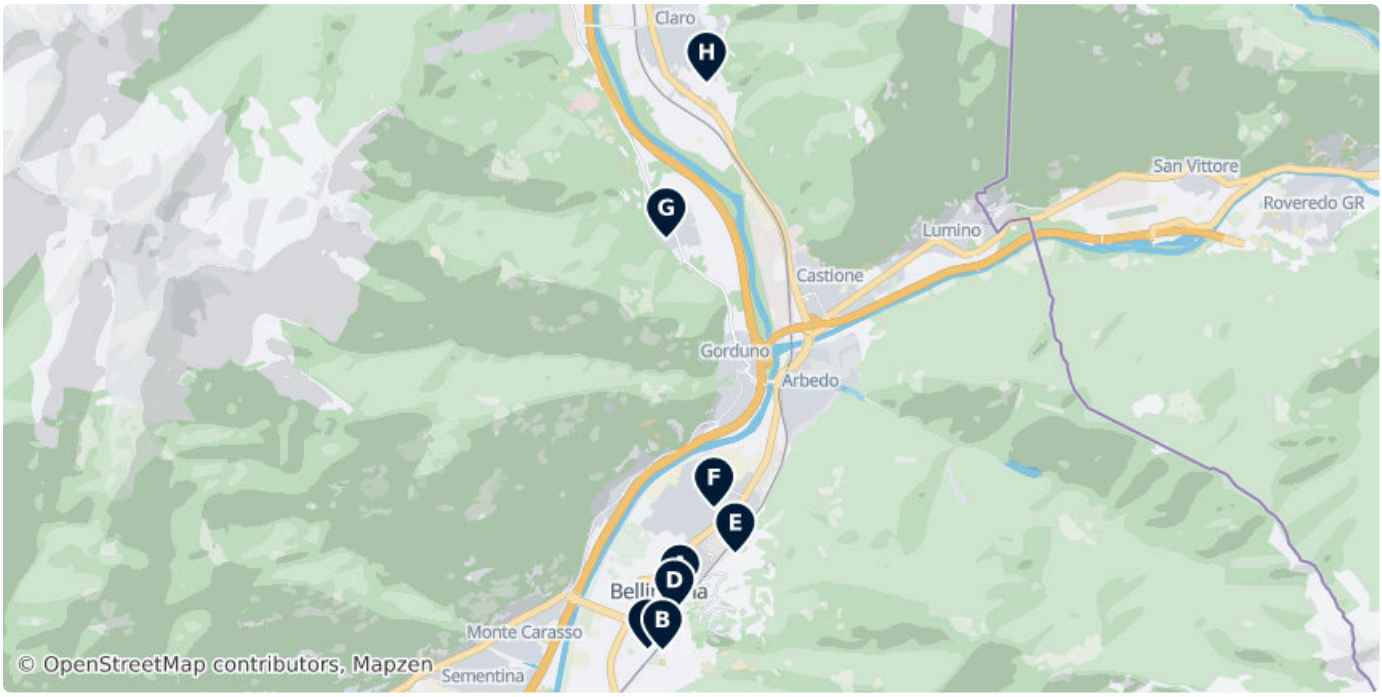
Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Grazie

15th-century Franciscan church known for its monumental partition wall featuring a Renaissance fresco cycle depicting the Life of Christ.

5 Via Convento, Bellinzona 6500, Switzerland
(46.18563, 9.01883)

Historic Churches of Bellinzona

Bellinzona's religious heritage spans from medieval ruins to modernist 20th-century architecture. This collection highlights the Renaissance Collegiata with its Baroque interior and the Franciscan Santa Maria delle Grazie, known for its expansive 15th-century frescoes. The list also includes the Romanesque San Biagio in Ravecchia and the medieval remnants of San Giovanni Battista in Gnosca. These sites showcase the evolution of Ticinese sacred art, featuring significant fresco cycles, architectural transitions from Romanesque to Baroque, and the work of modern architects like Rino Tami.





A Collegiata dei Santi Pietro et Stefano

A Renaissance collegiate church featuring a 16th-century facade and a rich Baroque interior. It contains significant artworks, including a 15th-century crucifix and ornate stucco decorations.

2 Salita alla Motta, Bellinzona 6500, Switzerland (46.19162, 9.02398)



B Chiesa di San Biagio

A late Romanesque and Gothic church in Ravecchia. It features 14th and 15th-century frescoes on both the exterior and interior walls, reflecting regional medieval artistic styles.

13 Via San Biagio, Bellinzona 6500, Switzerland (46.18553, 9.02120)



C Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Grazie

A 15th-century Franciscan church containing a monumental Renaissance fresco cycle. The large rood screen depicts the Life of Christ, a significant example of Lombard-influenced sacred art.

5 Via Convento, Bellinzona 6500, Switzerland (46.18563, 9.01883)

D Chiesa di San Rocco

Originally built in 1330 and reconstructed in the 17th century, this church features a Baroque facade and houses a 17th-century pipe organ and traditional liturgical paintings.

4 Piazza Indipendenza, Bellinzona 6500, Switzerland (46.18991, 9.02309)

E Chiesa dei SS. Quirico e Giulitta

Located in the Daro district, this parish church was rebuilt in the Baroque style during the 17th century on the foundations of an earlier medieval structure.

3A Salita alla Chiesa, Bellinzona 6500, Switzerland (46.19620, 9.03279)

F Chiesa del Sacro Cuore

A 20th-century convent church designed by architect Rino Tami. Completed in 1939, it is a significant example of modern ecclesiastical architecture in the Ticino region.

12 Via Varrone, Bellinzona 6500, Switzerland (46.20122, 9.02941)

G Chiesa San Giovanni Battista

The remains of a medieval church in Gnosca dating back to the 11th century. The site preserves structural elements of the Romanesque period.

(46.23092, 9.02179)

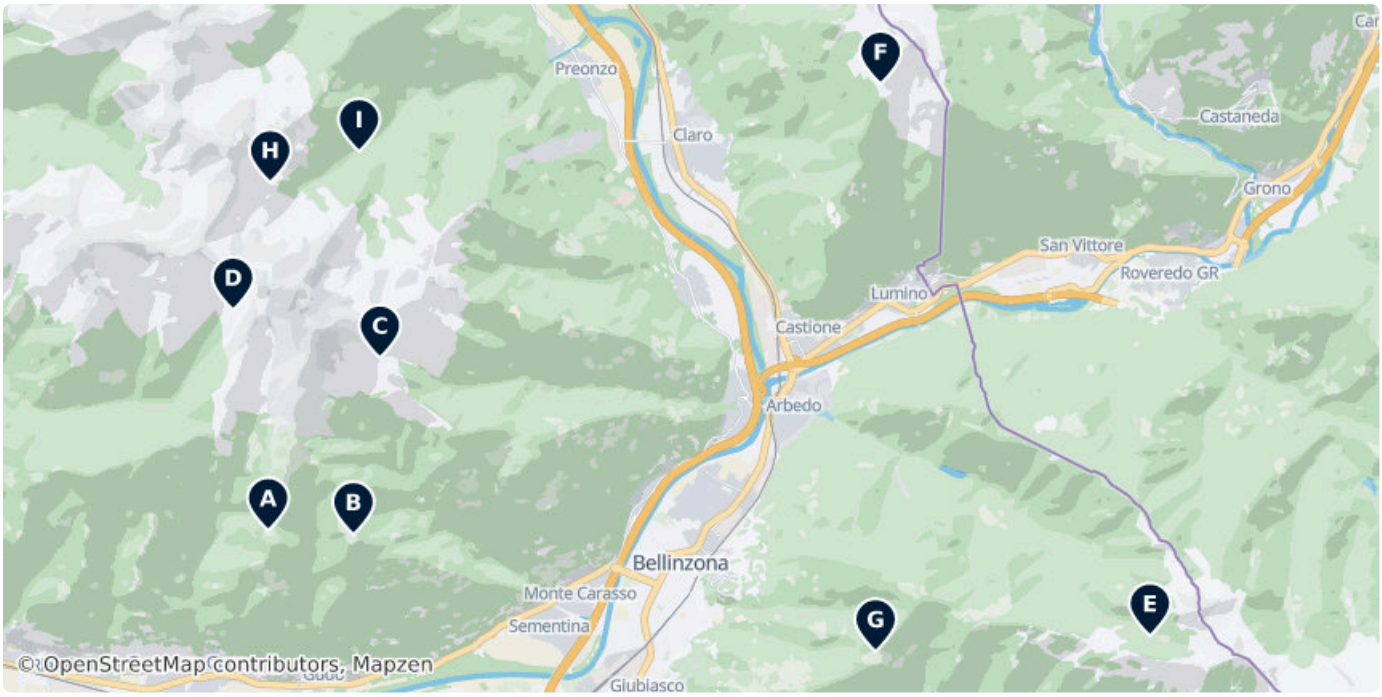
H Chiesa di San Lorenzo

A cemetery church in Cassero featuring a Romanesque bell tower. The interior contains 13th to 15th-century frescoes and a late-Gothic choir.

1 A San Lorénz, 6702, Switzerland (46.24806, 9.02823)

Alpine Huts near Bellinzona

Located in the mountains surrounding Bellinzona, these alpine huts span the Lepontine Alps, Adula Alps, and Lugano Prealps. Ranging from self-catering bivouacs like Alpe di Lai to larger shelters like Capanna Brogoldone at 1,904 meters, they provide strategic bases for traversing the Valle di Moleno, Valle di Gorduno, and Valle Morobbia. These huts serve as essential stops for high-altitude treks, offering basic accommodation and views of the Magadino Plain.





A Capanna Orino

Alpine refuge at 1,400 meters above sea level in the Lepontine Alps.

6515, Switzerland (46.19698, 8.93255)

capanneti.ch/de/huetten/orino



B Capanna Mognone

Mountain shelter located in the Valle di Sementina within the Lepontine Alps.

6514, Switzerland (46.19640, 8.95076)

patriziato-sementina.ch

C Capanna Albagno

Alpine hut situated in the Valle di Gorduno section of the Lepontine Alps.

6513, Switzerland (46.22248, 8.95642)

utoe.ch, +41 79 274 22 50

D Capanna Borgna

Self-catering mountain hut located in Val della Porta, positioned above Vogorno in the Ticino Alps.

6632, Switzerland (46.22953, 8.92506)

sev-verzasca.ch/borgna

E Capanna Gesero

Mountain shelter located in the upper Valle d'Arbedo above the town of Arbedo.

(Unnamed Road), 6517, Switzerland (46.18140, 9.12084)

utoe.ch

F Capanna Brogoldone

High-altitude refuge in the Adula Alps situated at 1,904 meters above sea level.

6533, Switzerland (46.26288, 9.06332)

Mo–Su Open 24/7

capanneti.ch, +41 91 829 43 50

G Capanna Genzianella

Alpine shelter in the Valle Morobbia, located within the Lugano Prealps.

6583, Switzerland (46.17909, 9.06227)

amicidellanatura-lugano.ch

H Capanna Alpe di Lèis

Mountain hut located in the high Valle di Moleno in the Lepontine Alps.

6523, Switzerland (46.24835, 8.93300)

ticino.ch/de/alpineHuts/details/Capanna-L%C3%A8is/133...

I Rifugio Alpe di Lai

Small mountain bivouac located in the Valle di Moleno.

6523, Switzerland (46.25292, 8.95197)

it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rifugio_Alpe_di_Lai

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