

## ITINERARIES IN VALLE STURA

### BELL TOWERS

#### ROUTE



#### INTRODUCTION

Stura Valley is one of the territories that has the oldest founded churches within the Diocese of Cuneo. Almost all of these buildings, however, have been restored over the centuries or even destroyed. We recall their history by many medieval bell towers dating back to the 13th and 15th Centuries: with their high cusps on mighty walls, they still keep watch as guardians along the main road leading to the Colle della Maddalena [Magdalena Hill].

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## THE STOPOVERS

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### 1. AISONE. Church of Natività di Maria Santissima

The bell tower of one of the oldest churches in the valley dates back to the 13th - 14th Century. It has a square base and it elevates for five floors ending with a pyramidal cusp; single and double lancet windows adorned with small columns and arches stringcourse decorate the ending part. The bell tower was saved from the destruction of the church by the French-Spanish armies in 1744. In 1898, the dangerous tower was repaired after an earthquake. The tower has three bells, dated 1827, 1866, and 1923 respectively.

### 2. VINADIO. Church of San Fiorenzo

The bell tower of the parish church of San Fiorenzo dates back to the 13th Century period. Built in 1321, under the reign of Pope John XXII and King Robert, as the inscription on the stone portal states. Originally, the church was oriented towards the east, and the bell tower was on the north side of the church, next to the high altar. When in the 17th Century, the building was enlarged and the orientation was changed, the bell tower was maintained and incorporated into the right aisle. The structure has a square layout with blind arches and double-lancet windows of different sizes. The structure has simple lines and an essential volumetry that seem to ease the height of some 100 feet.

### 3. SAMBUCO. Bell tower of San Bartolomeo

Dominating the village and the valley, this solitary bell tower recalls the presence of the church of San Bartolomeo, holder of the title of parish together with San Giuliano. The construction of the bell tower dates back to 1445, and survived the interdiction of the church (1771) and its destruction (1794) during the French Occupation.

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#### 4. PIETRAPORZIO. Bell tower “dei quattro lupi”

The tufaceous stone bell tower is what remains of the church mentioned in documents as Santo Stefano de Pelaporcho: erected in the 13th Century, the church was ruined in 1439, but was completely rebuilt around 1466, when the bell tower was also rebuilt. The summit is decorated with depictions of animals that do not have the function of gargoyles, but rather seem to watch over the valley as guardians; tradition has identified them with wolves, hence the name given to the bell tower.

#### 5. ARGENTERA (Bersezio). Church of San Lorenzo

The church of San Lorenzo was a dependency of the Benedictine monastery of San Teofredo in Le Puy. The bell tower witnesses the antiquity of this foundation, acknowledge since the 12th Century. It is a square-plan structure with a double-layered stone double lancet windows and a pyramidal cusp end. In the 18th Century it underwent some modifications, among which the erection of the bell tower and the sundial decoration.

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