

Surface Karst Phenomena

The ploughed fields

Are furrows in the rock due to the chemical dissolution (“corrosion”). The most representative examples are to be found in the limestone of “biancone” (majolica) beneath the “Alp of Mendrisio” and above the road that leads to Cragno.

The natural arches

Are rock arches produced by erosion. A splendid example is to be found in the vicinity of a grotto that is some distance away, the “Böcc dal Daldin”, that opens like a terrace in a picturesque natural setting, in the vertiginous cliffs above Melano.

The karst valleys

Are valleys that are excavated like gullies and deep canyons, where the water often infiltrates the sub-soil. At times they originate from karst springs. On the massif of the Generoso there are a considerable number of karst valleys. Numerous grottos open up in the karst valleys, such as the “Buco dell’Alabastro”, between the Val dei “Cugnoli” and the “Sistema Immacolata”, the main karst system explored to date on Monte Generoso, in the upper Valley of the Breggia.

The swallower-holes (losses)

Are points where the waters are absorbed and disappear into the earth. On the Monte Generoso, the most spectacular losses are to be found in the upper Valley of the Breggia and in the Valley “dell’Alpe”, above Somazzo. Some of them are penetrable and are the mouths of vast, deep grottos such as the “Sistema Nevera”, one of the deepest abysses discovered to-date on the mountain, whose origin is a series of swallow-holes that are still active.