

 inLOMBARDIA

HISTO — RIC TRAILS

/ Magazine





Historic Trails #inLombardia — Magazine

Nineteen paths with a religious theme, where the pilgrim and the tourist coexist. Often, it's the same person. Art, nature, faith and culture make up the whole. The places, the residential centres, transform the way into a series of meetings. And they linger in the memory back at home.

On the cover _Sacro Monte di Varese,
UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Via Francigena

— *A route more than two thousand kilometres long*

A road travelled for centuries by pilgrims, who headed south and made countless, enormous sacrifices to reach the goal of the longed-for eternal city.

Via Francigena is one of the most important historical and cultural routes and runs for more than two thousand kilometres from England across the old continent, passing through France and Switzerland before arriving in Italy. A long corridor between Canterbury and Rome. This is a significant example of a historic route described in Sigeric's Diary of 990 that, in recent years, has seen a revival of the phenomenon of the pilgrimage.

The Lombardy section of the Via Francigena crosses the territory of Pavia for 120 km and the territory of Lodi for about 5 km and lies almost entirely within Lomellina, a land of streams, rice fields, canals and water meadows, with delightful towns from another era and castles, villas and historic farms, including the Sforzesca villa designed by Leonardo for Ludovico Sforza. The first stretch of the road in Pavia starts at Palestro, passes through Robbio and reaches Mortara. Along the way, a visit should be made to the **Chiese di San Valeriano**, the ancient Cluny priory dating from the 11th century, and **San Pietro di Robbio**, with its wealth of splendid frescos. Another stop should be made at Mortara to see the Basilica di San Lorenzo, the Abbazia di Santa Croce and Sant'Albino, built on the spot where Charlemagne defeated the Lombards, even today convincing evidence of the extraordinary importance of this road for Pavia.

Photo

Previous page_ Robbio.

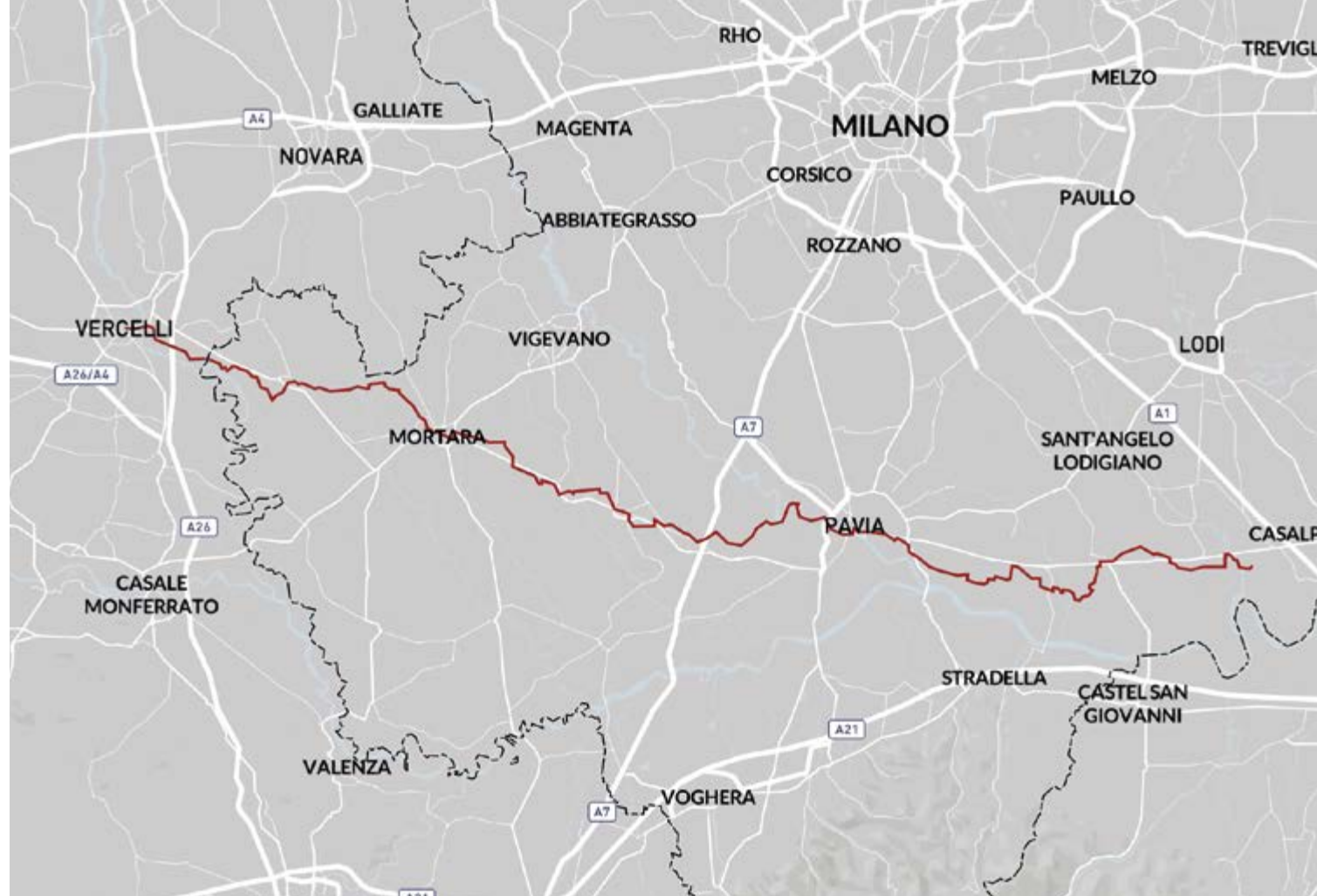
Unique experiences along the way

If you are keen on liqueurs and artisan spirits, don't overlook a visit to the Charterhouse of Pavia: the ancient Pharmacy is stocked with some real specialities produced by the monks, such as Amaro Certosa, the Amaro Buone Erbe, Gran Certosa and the yellow Imperial Drops (Gocce Imperiali).

Tromello is the first destination along the second Pavia stretch. A little pause to visit the **Santuario della Madonna della Bozzola di Garlasco**, the destination for Christian pilgrimages in the 15th century, before heading off towards Pavia, the capital of Lombard rule. A few kilometres from the city, in the middle of the countryside, stands one of the greatest masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance: the **Certosa di Pavia**, which Gian Galeazzo Visconti ordered to be built as the family chapel in 1396. The **Duomo of Pavia** is also worth a visit, a cathedral laid out to the Greek cross plan with three naves flanked by semi-circular chapels, where the remains of San Siro and a precious 17th century reliquary in silver and crystals with the Holy Thorns of the Crown of Christ are preserved. We continue towards San Michele Maggiore, where the fearsome Barbarossa was crowned King of Italy in 1155, until reaching the Basilica di San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro, which preserves the remains of Saint Augustine.

The last Pavia stretch of the Via Francigena ends at Lambrinia, in tribute to the peasant roots of the province, amidst memories of life in the fields and great Italian authors like Giuseppe Parini, Ugo Foscolo and Piero Verri, illustrious guests of the ancient Belgioioso manor house, founded by Galeazzo Visconti II in the second half of the 14th century. Via Francigena continues into the territory of Lodi, from Ponte di Mariotto to Orio Litta along the river Lambro.

Pay a visit to Cascina Cantarana, built by Cistercian Monks following the skilful reclamation of marshland, a major example of their abilities. Admire the wonderful building, with the large courtyard overlooked by country residences, stables, wash-houses and troughs. Continue along the Po following the banks of the river Lambro, immersed in the Lodi countryside, to the **Transitum Padi di Sigerico** in the municipality of Senna Lodigiana, the destination of pilgrims from northern Europe, who embarked here on their way to Rome. Mountain bike enthusiasts will appreciate the circular route, created to connect Orio Litta and Corte Sant'Andrea, through Ospedaletto, Senna Lodigiana and Mirabello.



— 5 reasons to cover the route

1. Inside the Abbazia di Sant'Albino at Mortara, bricks bear the traces of the passage of pilgrims, dating from the 11th century. A real trip back in time!
2. Along the Via Francigena, you will be able to sleep as the ancient pilgrims did, staying in Abbeys, Pilgrim's Hostels and Sanctuaries.
3. The evocative spectacle in the Parco del Ticino along the stretch from Garlasco to Pavia: the views of the river and dense forests, a variety of wildlife.
4. A day out in Pavia, a wonderful city, crossroads of countless historic paths that will remain at its heart.
5. The unspoiled nature and beauty of these lands, which in the past were the settings for the summer residences and hunting lodges of illustrious historic characters, from Galeazzo Visconti II to Ludovico Sforza who, in 1486, ordered the construction of Villa Sforzesca at Vigevano.



Cammino di Sant'Agostino

— *The route of the “rose”*

Retracing the Way of one of the most important figures of history will give an important new dimension to your awareness of life.

The Cammino di Sant'Agostino was designed to create a connection between fifty Marian Sanctuaries of Lombardy and three Lombard districts linked to the figure of Augustine of Hippo: Rus Cassiacum, the site of the Saint's conversion (modern-day Cassago Brianza), Milan, the imperial capital and his place of baptism and Pavia, which has housed his relics since the 8th century, when they were transported from Genoa along the Via del Sale. A peculiar feature of the Cammino di Sant'Agostino is the fact that the route maps out the stylised figure of a rose, with the flower head lying in the area of Brianza near Como, Lecce and Monza, the leaves to the east and west within the Province of Monza and Brianza, Milan, Varese and Bergamo, the stem joining the cities of Monza, Milan, Pavia and Genoa in a long north-south axis and the roots connecting the “Augustinian” cities on African soil of Tunis-Carthage, Tagaste and Hippo.

Photo

Previous page_ S. Pietro al Monte.

Unique experiences along the way

Herbalism is an ancient and noble art cultivated in monasteries since the Middle Ages. Bitters, propolis and royal jelly, medicinal herbs and chocolate await you in the ancient Pharmacy of the Certosa di Pavia. Pay a visit to the Convento del Carrobiolo in Monza and the nearby Brewpub, perfect for sampling the beers produced by the monks using artisan methods.

The flower, a 352-km circular route, starts and ends in Monza, passing by 25 Marian Sanctuaries; it should be covered ideally in 15 days on foot. At Monza, you can visit the extraordinary church-sanctuary of **Santa Maria delle Grazie** and the adjoining convent. Not to be missed is a visit to the **Duomo of Monza**, founded at the end of the 6th century by Queen Theodolinda, wife of the Lombard king Authari, as was the chapel of the nearby royal palace, in an area then on the edge of the small hamlet of Monza, a short distance from the river Lambro.

The east leaf connects Milan to Monza in the easterly direction. It is a 99-km long route along the Villoresi and Martesana canals, passing by 11 Marian Sanctuaries and ensuring the connection on foot to the pilgrim route that continues to the airport of Orio al Serio.

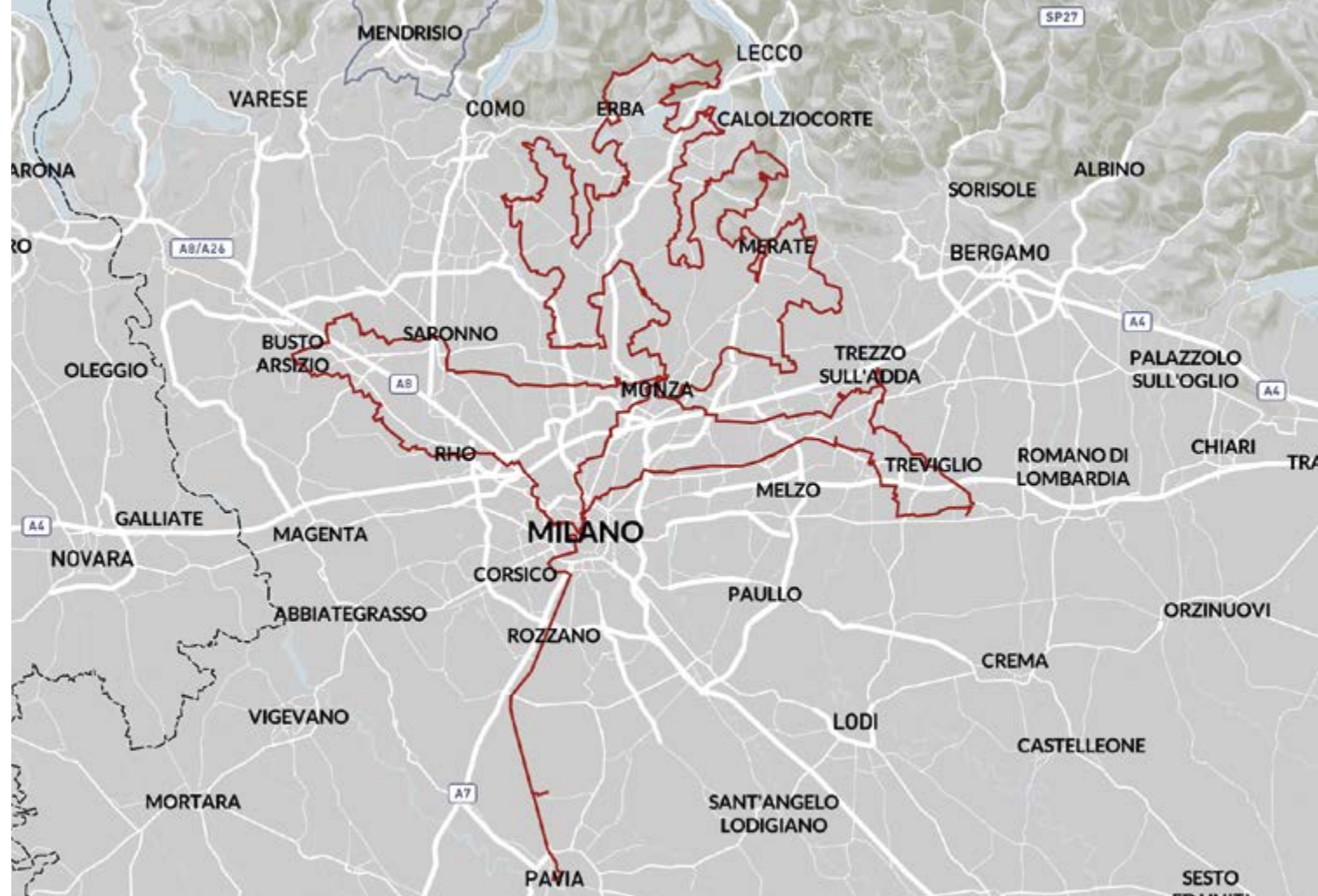
The west leaf is a 91-km route from Monza to Milan to the west, along the Villoresi canal and the Vie d'Acqua of the Expo 2015 area, passing by 10 Marian Sanctuaries and ensuring the connection on foot to the pilgrim route that continues to the airport of Malpensa.

The stem joins the cities of Monza, Milan, Pavia and Genoa along the Naviglio Grande, the Naviglio Pavese and subsequently along the Via del Sale in the Apennines, for an overall total (assuming different routes there and back) of 384 km. The departure is from the Santuario

di Santa Maria delle Grazie in Monza with arrival in Pavia, at the relics of Saint Augustine at the Basilica di San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro.

The roots, finally, bring together the native routes of Augustine on African soil, connecting the cities of Tunis-Carthage, Tagaste and Hippo. In North Africa, from Tunisia to Algeria and back, the overall length is around 605 km for a walk of around 30 days.

Along the Way, pilgrims can stay overnight at various facilities with subsidised prices, thanks to an agreement with a network of accommodation facilities, which ensures free lodgings or at subsidised prices.



— 5 reasons to cover the route

1. You will experience first hand the teaching of Saint Augustine: "The world is a book and he who does not travel knows only a page of it."
2. You can have proof of your walk, thanks to the credentials (certification points at 50 Marian sanctuaries, the historic archaeological site of Rus Cassiacum at Cassago Brianza, Duomo of Milan, the Basilica di Sant'Ambrogio in Milan and the Basilica di San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro in Pavia).
3. Cammino di Sant'Agostino unfolds under the benevolent patronage of the Virgin Mary and

passes by fifty different Sanctuaries: you will be protected at every step!

4. You can meditate on the Relics of Saint Augustine, preserved in a crystal and gilded bronze urn at the Basilica San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro in Pavia.

5. You must not miss the many opportunities to taste the food and wine offered by the districts along the way, which will make your sensory experience complete. You will be spoiled for choice!

Via Francisca del Lucomagno

— *The Middle Ages resurgent...*

A Way from another era: the magnificence of the mountains gives way to superb panoramas where unspoiled nature will envelope you in an unforgettable experience.

Via Francisca del Lucomagno covers important stages and monastic settlements that were fundamental for European medieval history. The route is replete with historic and religious relics and, in ancient times, allowed pilgrims and emperors to reach Rome, starting from Lake Constance.

From the Customs Offices in Lavena Ponte Tresa, the departure point, we continue along the tracks of the old tramway that, in the middle of the twentieth century, used to connect Varese with Ponte Tresa and now offers several kilometres of cycle track.

Along the route, a number of old stations in the Liberty style can be seen. At Cadegliano Viconago, a few moments of relaxation can be enjoyed in the Parco dell'Argentera amidst streams, waterfalls and mills. The route continues to the old forge, the Maglio, and Lake Ghirla, a picturesque oasis of nature, and on to Badia di Ganna, which stands on the site where, according to tradition, in around 1047, the young deacon Gemolo was killed and buried. Goffredo da Bussero, a Milan historian, writes that the institution was founded by three canons from Milan cathedral, who, after a day's hunting, visited the site of Gemolo's murder.

Spend some time at the Sacro Monte di Varese. The seventeenth century route and the hamlet of Santa Maria del Monte have been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2003, the pride of the city and Lombardy. It is possible to park in Via Prima Cappella and start the climb from below, or in Piazzale Pogliaghi, behind the Sanctuary at the top.

There are fourteen chapels along the climb, artistic works of exceptional beauty, all dedicated to the mysteries of the Rosary.

Photo

Previous page_ Via Francisca del Lucomagno.

Unique experiences along the way

At the end of the day, you can enjoy the sunset from Sacro Monte di Varese, the perfect finale of a day filled with experiences and fascinating visits, in a setting where the human dimension is merged with faith, an unforgettable past, steeped with unique sensations that envelope and suspend the mystery of life.

Each has its own architecture that preserves sculptures and paintings inside. When looking at the scenes depicted, remember to also look up at the magnificent ceiling frescos.

Once past the last chapel, you will face a climb to the Sanctuary and the hamlet of Santa Maria del Monte, where you will be welcomed by an enormous statue of Moses; after a short visit to the panoramic terrace, visit the little Sanctuary, the climax of the route, full of frescos illustrating the glorious Assumption of the Virgin Mary in the sky amid the glory of the Angels and Saints.

Spend some time on a visit to the adjacent crypt, restored and open to the public, to admire the remains of the church from the High Middle Ages, decorated with stupendous fourteenth century frescos. Entry is free after 5.30 p.m. or for payment, with an interesting guided visit. And that's not all. In the hamlet of Santa Maria del Monte, there are two museums that are without doubt worth a visit. Alongside the Sanctuary is the Baroffio Museum, with small collections of Romanesque sculpture, illuminated manuscripts and paintings donated to the Sanctuary by Baron Giuseppe Baroffio. It was reopened in 2001 and extended with a section of contemporary works of sacred art. The Pogliaghi Museum must also be visited, accommodated in the house that the Milan artist chose as his residence. It houses an astonishing collection of artefacts. In addition to sketches and sculptures by the artist along with Greek, Roman and Oriental exhibits, in the drawing room you will find the full-size preparatory plaster cast of the door of the Duomo of Milan on the back wall; it is a jaw-dropping spectacle. Finally, a visit to the medieval ruins of the Castrum of Castelseprio,

a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2011 as part of the project "Italia Longobardorum – The Lombards in Italy, the seats of power (568-774 A.D.)" which covers a series of sites concerned in the passage of the Lombard civilisation in the territory.

The Castrum of Castelseprio, built along the street that used to connect Novara to Como, lies at the top of the brow of a hill protected by thick walls, with towers at intervals of around 30 metres. It retains several examples of military architecture, including the complex of Torba, Santa Maria Foris Portas and the chiesa di San Giovanni, vital evidence for studies of the Lombard period.



— 5 reasons to cover the route

1. The Parco del Ticino, a great surprise for those visiting for the first time and never disappointing for those who decide to return and enjoy the marvels it offers.
2. Varese, the Garden City: an epithet that perfectly expresses the idea of marriage of art and nature that characterises the city's soul. Not far away, in Castiglione Olona the Collegiata Museum merits a visit.
3. The Monastero of Torba, to fully enjoy the experience of a past epoch that led to this ancient place being recognised in 2011 as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
4. The natural scenery that surrounds the Sacro Monte. Located on a hill behind Varese, on fine days most the Po Valley can be seen from here, all the way to the Lombard mountains towards Bergamo and Valtellina.
5. The Elixir del Borducan, the liqueur of the Sacro Monte, an infusion of oranges and aromatic herbs invented by the Garibaldi follower, Davide Bregonzio, in 1872, which you can taste in the establishment of the same name at the end of the day.



Via degli Abati

— *From the hills to the Apennines*

An experience of the monastic style: a route rich in history and tradition that runs through a land of utterly unique landscapes, unchanged over time. In antiquity, it was an alternative way across the mountains to the traditional Francigena route.

The ancient Via degli Abati, the Francigena mountain route, travelled every year by more than a thousand pilgrims through centuries-old woods, gullies and streams, connects the medieval centres of Pavia, Bobbio and Pontremoli before going on to Lucca and ending in Rome on the Via del Volto Santo.

Photo

Previous page_ Becca Bridge.

Unique experiences along the way

Paths, mule trails and cart tracks: these are the experiences that stay in the mind and the heart of those who travel along them today, thinking of the difficulties of another period, a time of impenetrable paths through mountains and unexplored countryside.

Starting from the 17th century, the Via degli Abati was used by monks to reach Rome and by Irish clergymen on pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint Colombanus, as well as for the transport and distribution of the products from the monastic possessions of the town of the same name to Piacenza territories, the Valleys of Ceno and Taro, and Tuscany.

The 190-km long route is much more challenging than the better-known Via Francigena and winds along paths, mule trails and cart tracks, crossing valleys and ridges for an overall difference in altitude of 6,000 metres. There are countless hamlets, churches, rocks and places that have remained unchanged over time, where the natural elements and abandonment by mankind contribute to the current fascination.

The Lombardy route, which runs from Pavia to the hills of Oltrepò and the Apennine crest of Mount Penice, is made up of three parts of almost equal length (each around 20 kilometres): the first covers the plain from Pavia to Broni and the first hill; the second is through the hills and ends at Pometo/Caminata; the third is in the high hills and mountains between Caminata and the crest of Penice. From here, the route descends to Bobbio.

At the eastern outskirts, continue along the Via Francigena until the end of the houses, then head south, following the Green Way of the Parco del Ticino. The path continues parallel with the river up to the Ponte della Becca, in the province of Pavia, built between 1910 and 1912 on the confluence between the rivers Ticino and Po. In 1944, it was partly

destroyed by bombardments during the Second World War but was reopened to traffic in 1950. After crossing the bridge, the majestic bank of the Po is on the left, unsurfaced and without traffic, hugging the river before turning towards the hills in the direction of Broni-Stradella. At Broni, the old Via dell'Acqua Calda climbs to Colombarone, at the start of the ridge of the hill that separates the Scuropasso valley from the Versa valley.

From Colombarone, it continues along the whole ridge through various districts: Castana, Sannazzaro, Cella, Spagna and Francia and then Ca' Tessitori, where it deviates along the cart track to Canevino and, finally, Pometo. There are few stretches on asphalt roads and they are only found near the most important centres.



— 5 reasons to cover the route

1. Walking to Broni, tasting the delicious products offered by this ancient land, visiting its cellars and sipping the various wines: a sensory explosion!
2. The experience of a walk to Pavia. The wealth of places of faith in this splendid city is among the most abundant in the great panorama of Lombardy: Pavia has always been the natural crossroads of many historic routes.
3. The architectural beauty created by the genius of mankind: evidence of this can

be found in Broni with its various palaces, including Palazzo Arienti, Villa Gallotti and Villa Maccabruni.

4. The immense, ordered expanse of vines, which take on warm, bright colours in autumn, from yellow to fire red.
5. Genuine hospitality and good cuisine at every stage of the way.



Cammino di San Colombano

— *The Patron Saint of Europe*

Retracing the route taken by such an extraordinary figure as Saint Columbanus means appreciating and fully understanding an ancient culture, inextricably linked to monasticism, that used to dream and imagine a united Europe. Perhaps still a distant goal even in modern times.

The Via di San Colombano is the route that, crossing the entire area of East Lombardy, once led to Bobbio, the site of the famous abbey founded in the heart of the Apennines by the Irish abbot Saint Columbanus at the start of the 7th century. Columbanus, one of the most influential spiritual figures of his day and known as "the Patron Saint of Europe", was born in 542 A.D. In 591 A.D., he left Bangor in Northern Ireland with 12 disciples and travelled through Europe for more than 30 years, founding communities and monasteries in what are now modern European states: Ireland, Great Britain, France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Italy.

Photo

Right_ Lierna.

Previous page_ San Colombano al Lambro.

Unique experiences along the way

Stop at one of the many establishments of San Colombano al Lambro and enjoy dining accompanied by “el vin de Milan”.

At the same time, we will acquaint you with the almost exclave nature of this city, belonging to the metropolitan city of Milan (more than 20 km away) but wedged between the provinces of Lodi and Pavia.

Columbanus and his disciple Gall were key figures in Irish monasticism, the first great monastic movement of Europe, which promoted literacy and education, anticipating the great monastic movements of the Middle Ages. Irish tradition, and Columbanus as its disseminator, is responsible for the form of the sacrament of the Confession as we know it today: the individual confession of sins and the possibility of repeating the act several times in life. The route is an opportunity to retrace the steps of the Saint, who crossed the Alps to reach Milan under the ruling Lombards and was directed by them to the little town of Bobbio, on the northern edge of the Apennines. Here, Saint Columbanus founded his last Abbey, which became a centre of stability and culture in a period of violence and turbulence and for centuries remained the most influential institution from the religious and cultural point of view in the whole of northern Italy.

Columbanus died in 615 A.D. His mortal remains are preserved in the crypt of the Abbey's Basilica, where thousands of people arrive every year to venerate his memory. The Italian route starts at Chiavenna, hugs the east side of Lake Como and continues to Lecco. You will pass through the little towns of Novate, Curcio (frazione di Colico), Dervio, Bellano and Varenna, known as the “Pearl of Lario”, overlooking the waters of the lake and surrounded by mountains. Your route continues near another two districts of Lario, Lierna and Abbazia, the starting point of the Sentiero del Viandante, another extraordinary route that will take you on a journey of discovery of the artistic and natural beauty of the lake. From Lecco, continue by following the flow of the river Adda, through Olginate and Brivio

until reaching the Milan area. A quick visit to Melegnano and, in a flash, you will find yourself in front of the Duomo of Lodi, one of the largest Romanesque buildings of Lombardy and the city's most ancient monument. Completed in the 16th century, the Duomo's central nave incorporated the gilded copper statue of S. Bassiano, a Gothic sarcophagus altar, medieval frescos and a rare Romanesque sculpture depicting the Last Supper. Continue to San Colombano, the birthplace at the beginning of the twentieth century of Don Carlo Gnocchi, priest, educator and Italian writer, venerated as blessed by the Catholic church. Continuing along the route, Bobbio is finally reached. The Cammino di San Colombano is currently being studied and upgraded.



— 5 reasons to cover the route

1. Covering this historic route on foot, it is impossible not to remember that it all began by sea for Columbanus, departing from Bangor in northern Ireland. Travelling along the Lombard stretch, we are actually approaching the end of this incredible walk.
2. On his walk to Milan, Columbanus was received by the Lombard King Agilulf and his wife, Queen Theodolinda. Thanks to the protection they gave him on his journey, he stopped at Bobbio in a place that would later bear his name, San Colombano.
3. Saint Columbanus, together with some of his

disciples, remained for around a year in the Morbegnese territory of lower Valtellina.

4. An excellent D.O.C. wine is produced at San Colombano al Lambro, called San Colombano and known as “the wine of Milan”, thanks to its excellent position and the abundant yield of the vines in the surrounding hills.

5. Spiritual and religious motivations are fundamental in travelling along this way but it is also close to important attractions from the environmental, landscape, cultural, folk music and culinary points of view.



Via Spluga

— *The Way of the Queen, from Spluga to Chiavenna (Via Francigena Renana part 1)*

The wonderful wilderness of the Spluga “sublime pass” and its route are enclosed within a rugged and historically rich valley.

A walking experience that leads to the heart of the Alps, it's the first example of modern tourism where the extraordinary “Grand Tour” of the 17th century once took hold of European artists and intellectuals like Goethe.

Beginning in Italy with Via Spluga, entirely in Lombardy, the Via Francigena Renana is a historical axis connecting the Central Alps, Reno Valley, the Po Valley and the Via Francigena di Sigerico.

Unique experiences along the way

The year 1492, when America was discovered, is remembered locally for the appearance of the Madonna to two young girls in Gallivaggio, where a characteristic Sanctuary stands that was erected to bear witness to the supernatural experience of Marian faith hundreds of years before Lourdes, Fatima or Medjugorje.

Documented on Imperial Roman maps, the Spluga Pass was ceaselessly crossed by travellers, beasts of burden, carts, carriages, merchants, travellers, armies, pilgrims, and famous figures like Erasmus of Rotterdam. Not long after construction of the Spluga road (1823), a major avalanche gallery was built south of the excise tollhouse for safety reasons during the winter period.

Today, it is among the last remaining evidence of the massive undertaking in the construction of road works, which, for milleniums, allowed the perils of winter to be brought under control. Findings from the Bronze and Iron Ages indicate that the Spluga pass was being crossed as far back as prehistoric times.

The name "spluga" is taken from "spelu(n)ca", that is, spelonca, or cavern, cave.

Near Montespluga, there is actually a cave commonly called "truna de l'urs" (cave or bear's den). In the past, the Spluga Pass was called Bear mountain or Bear Pass.

From here, the long descent to Val San Giacomo begins. The initial stretch of the route coincides with the fascinating and, at the same time, risky Roman road in the gully of Cardinello to Chiavenna (333 m), the "key" (Clavenna) point of the crossing. In Chiavenna, a visit must be made to the Collegiata di S. Lorenzo, with its Romanesque origins. As one of the most important monuments of the city, highlights include the interior décor, the square portico, the impressive 16th century bell tower, the baptismal font of 1156, and the Treasury

Museum with masterpieces like the "Pace" of Chiavenna, a gold piece dating back to the 11th century.

Not to be missed is the Mulino di Bottonera in the old artisan quarter of Chiavenna, a very rare example of industrial architecture, where the memory of the incessant work of the nineteenth century millers still lives on today. On each of its four floors, the peculiarities of the structure can be admired in the wood used for the construction of its main elements. Via Spluga is a route in stages organised especially for tourists, with a duration of 5 to 7 days.



— 5 reasons to cover the route

1. Once past the "Soste", the very ancient centre for changing horses, the large valley of Cardinello is reached, where the path runs along the hillside gorge like a long balcony overhanging the river Liro, which brings to mind the impetuous and tragic winter crossings by armies and stable lads.
2. It would be unthinkable not to stop for refreshments at the "Locanda del Cardinello", which, since 1722, has offered refreshments to travellers on the Via Spluga.
3. The Spluga Pass (Splügenpass in German, Pass dal Spleia or Pass dal Splegia in Romansh), at 2,114 m, is one of the most important passes of the Alpine range, known since antiquity as a crucial transit point.
4. In a historic sixteenth century building in the hamlet Corti di Campodolcino stands the seat of the Museum of the Via Spluga, a unique Lombard museum dedicated to a historic route. It represents the civilisation of the valley and the historic and commercial role that the route has played over the centuries, a communication channel between the Mediterranean basin and the area to the north of the Alps.
5. The Santuario di Gallivaggio, the baptismal church in Val San Giacomo, together with the Santuario di San Guglielmo, remind us that the Spluga route was not only used by traders but also by pilgrims, only used by traders but also by pilgrims.



Via Francisca

— *The Ways of the Queen, from Chiavenna to Sorico (Via Francigena Renana, part 2)*

Also known as the “Historic valley path”, this is a pleasant route, full of extraordinary history and spectacular views, in contact with overwhelming nature. The small Chiesa di San Fedelino sits between the lake, river, and mountains and was once the burial spot of the Martyr of San Fedele, confirming it as a must-see.

Photo

Previous page_ Via Francisca.

Unique experiences along the way

Of all the Lombard ways, Via Francisca offers the most visual and sensorial experience, unique of its kind. Spend some time enjoying the beauty of creation, the magnificence of the landscape, countryside where the sky, mountains and the lake are almost locked in an embrace in celebration of nature.



This route belongs to the Ways of the Queen network, a natural continuation of the Via Spluga.

South from Chiavenna, the route continues as the Via Francisca (Via della terra dei Franchi, Via di valico, Via "Franca" or Via Pubblica), that is, a stretch of the ancient route across the Chiavenna Plain, which connected Lario with Chiavenna.

The trail coincides with the "Historic valley path", with the yellow signage of the mountain communities of Valchiavenna. It runs along the base of the eastern slopes of the Chiavenna Plain and ends at the border with the municipality of Sorico.

It passes through the residential centres of the valley floor and the old hillside settlements of Samoloco to Casenda (Fontanedo district),

a hamlet of Samolaco, and the church of S. Giovanni all'Archetto.

The route continues across the Chiavenna plain and climbs up impressive stone steps that skirt the ridge of Monte Berlinghiera, with spectacular views over the Pian di Spagna Reserve.

The path continues across Sasso di Dascio before descending to the hamlet of the same name and merging with the ancient Via Regina; we continue along the west shore of the little lake of Mezzola and reach Ponte del Passo along the S.S.340 before entering Storico. Before undertaking the climb, it is worth making a short but unmissable deviation to the small Church of San Fedelino (around 15 minutes, along the Mera) before returning to the path up to Sasso di Dascio.

— 5 reasons to cover the route

- 1.** The Collegiata of San Lorenzo in Chiavenna, an emblem of this city, with its wealth of churches and elegant buildings, makes the historic centre a picturesque journey of discovery.
- 2.** The thrilling experience of canyoning can be tried at Gordona, enjoying adventures along the course of the river Boggia.
- 3.** At Samolaco, in the hamlet of Vigazzuolo, the remains can be seen of the "muracche" marking out the terraces of chestnut groves.

Nearby is the "Crot del Balon" created under an enormous boulder.

- 4.** The Chiesa di San Fedelino in Sorico, a milestone of the First Romanesque, dates back to the 10th century.
- 5.** Between Sorico and Dubino, you can admire the landscape of the Nature Reserve of Pian di Spagna - Lake Mezzola.



Via Regina

— *Way of the Queen, from Sorico to Como
(Via Francigena Renana part 3)*

The Queen of the Ways, an ancient, crucial route with a network of travellers' hospices and extraordinary monuments, evidence of the historic importance of this route.

The ancient Via Regina, which for centuries has run along the western shore of Lario, is the ancient transalpine communication route of Lake Como. Well documented in both archaeology and the Imperial Roman maps, it crossed the Alps at Spluga Pass, coming from the Reno Valley and Lake Costanza. A communication and defensive route on the water together with Lake Como, it was from ancient times, a one of a kind axis between the center of the Alps and the Po Valley, reinforced by the Roman conquest towards the limes of Reno. Via "Regina" means the main cobblestone road, a public road, and it was documented this way for the first time in 1187. The municipal statutes of 1335 document the extension of this name for the entire stretch between Como and Chiavenna. However, given the importance, it's probable that the area also included Milan - Como, and quite possibly extended beyond Chiavenna.

Photo
Previous page_ Antica Via Regina.

Unique experiences along the way

Rediscover the wonder of the ancient route of western Lake Como, between the peaks and the lake, the castles and fortifications, and the villas and royal mansions. Don't forget the mule paths and ancient villages with their bare stone and churches that hide incredible frescoes in one of a kind landscapes.

Today, although partly absorbed by the modern-day S.S. 340 road, the route still preserves important and splendid historic stretches that, conveniently connected to the minor roads and local paths, guarantee the continuity of the route. All this in a context of a unique and very beautiful environment, which has rightly brought it fame.

Via Regina was a Via Francigena, or a route to Rome, as confirmed not only in the documents but also by the extraordinary monuments and the presence of a widespread network of "hospices" where free spaces were reserved by statute for pilgrims on their way to Rome. The original route covers very interesting stages, filled with monuments, villas and historic places that are undoubtedly worthy of the attention of the visitor.

Palazzo Gallio in Gravedona, a characteristic Renaissance residence built at the beginning of 1583 by Cardinal Tolomeo Gallio.

The **Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Grazie**, which belonged to an Augustinian convent founded in 1467, it is one of the most interesting Renaissance complexes of Lario. The interior preserves numerous 16th century frescos.

The **Santuario della Madonna della Pace** in Menaggio, built in 1658 to mark the "Peace of the Pyrenees" at the end of the war between France and Spain. Inside, the altar has a bas-relief of 1484 that represents the Madonna with Child. The church of **Sant'Agata a Moltrasio** is from the Romanesque period, with murals painted on the outside wall.

The interior preserves trace of frescos dating back to earlier decoration.

At Como, attention is drawn to the imposing building of **Villa Olmo**, a famous example of neoclassical architecture, built to the design of the Ticino architect Simone Cantoni for the Marquis Innocenzo Odiscalchi.

Admirable neoclassical decorations are preserved inside and there is a monumental, double-height drawing room with paintings by Domenico Pozzi.

The **Romanesque basilica di Sant'Abbondio** of the 11th century, built on the foundations of a previous, early Christian church.

The building, made up of five naves, preserves a valuable cycle of frescos in the apse, probably painted between 1330 and 1340.



— 5 reasons to cover the route

1. Sacro Monte di Ossuccio, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, includes a sanctuary and 14 chapels, built between 1644 and 1699, adorned with terracotta statues and frescos.
2. Isola Comacina, known for its fascinating archaeological heritage and the artists' residences designed by the architect Pietro Lingeri. It is possible to admire the remains of a number of religious buildings constructed in rationalist style before the destruction of the island in 1169.
3. The complex of Villa d'Este in Cernobbio stands on the site of the ancient Villa Garrovo, which belonged to Cardinal Tolomeo Gallio. Converted into a luxury hotel,

in the garden it preserves a scenic exedra and a flight of steps with a false cave housing a statue of Hercules and Lica.

4. Villa Erba, built in neo-Renaissance style between 1894 and 1898 on the initiative of Luigi Erba. Thereafter, it became the residence of the director Luchino Visconti, and is currently part of a museum tour.

5. The Cathedral of Como, characterised by a centrepiece of marble and decorative elements on the facade. The interior of the Duomo is adorned with sixteenth and seventeenth century tapestries, paintings and other works of art that confirm its sumptuousness and beauty.



Cammino di San Pietro

— *From Como to Milan (Via Francigena Renana part 4)*

A charming and flat route, easily cyclable, winds along numerous protected areas following the Sevese Valley and passing countless historic, artistic, and environmental points of interests.

The Cammino di San Pietro, linked to the affairs of Dominican Friar Pietro of Verona and his martyrdom (1252), connects Como to Seveso (location of the Saint's martyrdom) along the medieval stretch passing through Cantù. Continuing on to the ancient Comasinella and coinciding possibly with the Roman Como - Milan route, the road enters Milan at Affori to arrive, through the historic center, at the Parco delle Basiliche and Basilica di Sant'Eustorgio where the Saint was buried. We begin the Way by departing from Como along the Roman road to Milan, a continuation of the Via Regina, passing the slopes of Baradello close to the monastery and church of S. Carpoforo. We then leave the main road and head towards Cantù, passing through Albate and Senna. Entering Cantù, we pass close by the ancient Hospitale di S. Antonio and, following the deviation indicated, we reach the monumental complex of Galliano (11th century), a celebrated example of Romanesque Lombardy.

We continue to Seveso, passing close to the rural centres of Figino Serenza, through Cimnago and Mocchirolo di Lentate sul Seveso and, after a deviation to the centre of Lentate, visit the splendid fourteenth century Oratorio di S. Stefano.

Photo
Previous page, Basilica di
Sant'Eustorgio, Milan.

Unique experiences along the way

Along this relaxing and pleasant path, discover the monumental Romanesque complex of San Vincenzo in Galliano, built by Ariberto da Intimiano. Admired for its extraordinarily beautiful baptistery and the elaborate pictorial decorations by Ariberto (especially in the apse), it represents one of the greatest expressions of Ottonian Art.

On reaching Seveso, a visit is obligatory to the Santuario di San Pietro Martire in Via S. Carlo, on the north-west corner of the former monastery of S. Pietro Martire, now the Centro Pastorale Ambrosiano. Soon after the martyrdom (1252) and canonisation of the Dominican Pietro da Verona, on the initiative of a number of members of the Humiliati religious order, a chapel was erected in his memory and honour, along with a building to accommodate travellers and pilgrims to the site of his killing. The area known as S. Pietro was mentioned by numerous parchments between 1252 and 1300. During the 14th century, the Humiliati became part of Dominican order: in June 1373, Pope Gregory XI granted them, by decree, the right to "receive, found, constitute and hold in perpetuity the church and the hospice of San Pietro Martire". The current building, owed to the generosity of the counts of Arese, was constructed between 1660 and 1685 on designs by Girolamo Quadrio. The church's façade features two architectural orders and a triangular tympanum that emphasises the central part, flanked to the south by the bell tower. On the first Sunday of May, the Sagra di Calendimaggio is held, a very ancient festival in honour of S. Pietro Martire. On that day, the relics of the saint are displayed for veneration inside the sanctuary, where a scythe is displayed all year round, the large curved knife used by the assassin who killed Pietro da Verona. For the occasion, the area is filled with stalls, exhibitions of artisan products and various entertainments. The Way, as far as Seveso, encompasses three protected areas intersected by a tributary river of the Seveso and follows the course of the valley, passing more than 30 points of historic, artistic and environmental

interest, many of which are very significant, such as Galliano or S. Stefano di Lentate. On the stretch to Milan, you can admire the elegant patrician villas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, delightful places and property management centres. From Seveso, we continue towards Milan along the ancient Comasinella and we enter the city passing through Affori and the Comasina district. Finally, we reach S. Eustorgio and the Parco delle Basiliche, crossing the heart of the Imperial Roman, early Christian and Christian city (Duomo, S. Sepolcro, S. Giorgio a Palazzo). Here we reach the final stretch of the Via Francigena Renana: the Cammino dei Monaci. Steeped in history and local memories, the Cammino di San Pietro is a special resource for a heavily urbanised territory.



— 5 reasons to cover the route

1. Articles connected to the traditional production of lace and needlepoint are found in Novedrate, a little town that also hosts the international biennial exhibition of needlepoint and lace.
2. The former female Benedictine Monastero di San Vittore, now Villa Antona Traversi thanks to the intervention by architect Leopoldo Pollack, and its gorgeous church celebrating the Lombard Renaissance, complete with frescoes by Bernardo Luini (1480/85-1532).
3. Since the middle of the nineteen eighties, Meda has been the seat of Emeroteca Italiana,

an important private archive of Italian daily newspapers dating from the end of the 18th century.

4. The beautiful Oratorio di San Stefano in Lentate sul Seveso, one of the most important Lombard monuments of the 14th century, unique in Italy for its cycle of frescoes dedicated to the history of the Saint..
5. The Basilica di Sant'Eustorgio in Milan, where the remains of Peter the martyr rest in the monumental arch of Balduccio of Pisa, in the Portinari Chapel.



Cammino e la Valle dei Monaci

— *To Milan on foot or by bicycle*

*Milan - Corte Sant'Andrea, the Francigena
Ford of the Po (Via Francigena Renana, part 5)*

The chance to retrace a historic way of faith and pilgrimage a few kilometres from bustling Milan, immersed in the atmosphere of a time long ago.

The Cammino e la Valle dei Monaci, a route that can be covered on foot or by bicycle, leads from the centre of Milan to the Via Francigena, crossing the Po. Along the way, you can visit a number of spiritual centres, among the most ancient and fascinating of the Region. The route covers 65 kilometres and crosses four protected areas: the Parco Agricolo Sud Milano, which extends for 47,000 hectares, the Parco della Vettabbia, the WWF Oasis of Montorfano and the San Colombano Local Park.

An ancient route ran from here connecting Milan to the Abbazia di Chiaravalle, along which farm buildings were constructed to enable the monks to store the harvest from the surrounding reclaimed lands before sending the produce to the markets of the towns. An area rich in reclaimed land, it is the site of small, very busy residential centres of trade and cultural activities, enlivened by the presence of the Abbeys of Chiaravalle and Viboldone.

Photo
Previous page_ Abbazia di Chiaravalle,
Milan.

Unique experiences along the way

In the monasteries south of Milan, you can relive the days when Benedictine monks became the first to engage in major reclamation works. Visit the Abbazia di Chiaravalle, created as an agricultural hamlet, where the monks dedicated themselves to prayer and work, which now offers a fine range of organic products in its store.

The Cammino e la Valle dei Monaci covers four basic stages, which can be travelled both on foot and by bicycle: from Milan to Nosedo within the urban area; from Nosedo to Chiaravalle through the Parco della Vettabbia; from Chiaravalle to Viboldone in the land of the monks; from Viboldone to Melegnano amidst hamlets and farmhouses. We cross the first stretch of the Way of the Monks that runs from San Lorenzo alle Colonne, in the centre of Milan, towards the southern suburbs along the Vettabbia irrigation ditch until it joins the river Lambro. The route follows the Valle della Vettabbia, also known as Valle dei Monaci.

Nosedo is the site of the Comunità Nocetum – a private Association of believers – which meets the needs of people in difficulties and promotes the territory.

In the Middle Ages, Cistercian monks settled in the area and, thanks to their work in reclaiming the land, until then uninhabitable, it became productive and lively residential centres soon sprang up, enriched by the presence of the Abbazia di Chiaravalle, Viboldone and Mirasole. Allow yourself to take in the stupendous Abbazia di Chiaravalle, a place of prayer and culture at the gates of Milan that can justifiably be described as one of the most important Cistercian monasteries of Italy. Founded by San Bernardo di Chiaravalle in 1135, it appears as a little agricultural hamlet that houses buildings dedicated to reflection and worship, alongside open spaces where the monks laboured. Admire the ancient mill, restored at the end of 2009, currently the site of a museum and interesting educational activities, including

bakery, soap-making and herbalism classes, suitable for all ages.

The mill of the Abbazia di Chiaravalle is managed by the Koinè cooperative, which runs workshops for groups, schools and children. The rooms of the building, open to the community, are now the setting for recreation and summer centres, seasonal tasting events and family celebrations. Every Saturday and Sunday, there are guided tours exploring the history.

The Way then takes us along the banks of the river Lambro until reaching the Po at Corte S. Andrea. Here, like the pilgrims of long ago, it is possible to complete the "Transitum Padi", that is, crossing the Po by private vessel to reach the Emilia shore at Soprarivo and join the Via Francigena.



— 5 reasons to cover the route

1. A varied tour through literature and history in the pursuit of food for the mind and soul, which ends in the fifteenth century refectory of the Abbazia di Chiaravalle, still used today for community meals.
2. The Vettabbia irrigation ditch runs from the Parco delle Basiliche, in the centre of Milan, to the southern suburb of the city, its route marking out the valley of the same name, also known as the Valle dei Monaci.
3. The Abbazia di Chiaravalle and its pictorial decorations, rich in flower and plant decorations.
4. On Saint Anthony's day in the area of Cascina Nosedo, it is traditional for a bonfire to be lit, an unforgettable occasion. In the recent past, the fire has been lit by the medieval archers of the Compagnia Bianca in traditional costume, shooting burning arrows at the pyre.
5. The Valle dei Monaci is turned into a stage every year for shows, theatrical performances, cultural activities and workshops offering a top quality range of subjects, including for children.



Strada delle Abbazie

— *A route near Milan*

A real surprise, a journey through history, culture and faith. The unexpected can be found a few kilometres from the heart of Milan, passing through the city of St Ambrogio.

The Strada delle Abbazie traces a route through the Parco Agricolo Sud Milano and the Parco del Ticino in the discovery of unique places, featuring ditches, canals, troughs, channels, mills, country roads and large farmhouses.

The circuit, a little more than 100 km, is divided into short stretches and, in the first and last stages, there are two buildings founded by the religious order of the Humiliati: the abbey of San Lorenzo in Monluè and the church of San Pietro in Gessate.

The Abbeys we will encounter along the way are architectural masterpieces that played a decisive role in the development of agriculture and in the creation of the landscape: from this perspective, the route combines religious tourism, cultural tourism and food and wine tourism. From Monluè, cross the Parco Agricolo Sud, where mankind has laboured since the Middle Ages to improve the quality of the countryside, especially with regard to the primary resource that has characterised the area: water. It was the founder of the **Abbazia di Chiaravalle**, Bernard de Fontaine, known as Bernardo di Chiaravalle, who converted the uncultivated marshland into a centre of work and prayer between 1150 and 1160, which he donated to the Municipality of Milan. The church has a Latin cross layout, a rectangular choir and a transept with chapel; a decidedly simple building that was abandoned in subsequent centuries in favour of major works, such as the imposing bell tower (1347-49, perhaps the work of Pecorari) and the rich cycle of paintings. Travelling along the Strada delle Abbazie, we arrive at the **Abbazia di Viboldone**, in San Giuliano Milanese in the province of Milan. It was founded in 1176 and completed in 1348 by the religious order of the Humiliati, a community made up of monks, nuns and lay persons who led a life of prayer and work here.

Photo

Previous page_ Abbazia di Morimondo, Milan.

Unique experiences along the way

Rediscover the Pilgrim's Repast at the Abbazia di Morimondo, inspired by medieval cuisine. Three courses with a short explanation, served in the chapter house: a soup of fresh herbs, pork with lentils, bread or onion cake: for the true connoisseur!

The abbey, one of the most important medieval Lombard complexes for the beauty of its architecture and its fourteenth century frescos, is currently the seat of a community of Benedictine monks dedicated to the restorations of ancient manuscripts and books. The church, named after Saint Peter, is the only remaining part of the ancient complex, only partly rebuilt by Luigi Caccia Dominioni in the aftermath of the Second World War. Inside, it is divided into three naves marked by huge circular columns in terracotta where you can admire the precious beauty of the frescos, considered the most significant and beautiful of northern Italy in the fourteenth century and displaying the clear influence of Giotto. After passing **Santa Maria in Calvenzano e Mirasole**, stop at the **Abbazia di Morimondo**, founded in 1134 by a number of Cistercian monks from the French abbey of Morimund, north of Dijon. Since the early decades, the monastery was a centre for the promotion of agricultural colonisation and reclamation, accumulating significant possessions. From the middle of the 15th century, it began to lose importance, especially during the suppression of the orders in 1799, before Napoleon's coup d'état: on 31 May 1798, following the French revolution, the suppression was decreed of all monastic orders, and so also the Cistercian community of Morimondo. Since 1950, it has once again been inhabited by religious congregations and, since 2006, it has been assigned to the diocesan clergy. The church was built between 1182 and 1292 and was named after Santa Maria Nascente. It is a three-nave basilica, with vaulted ceilings supported by pointed arches resting on

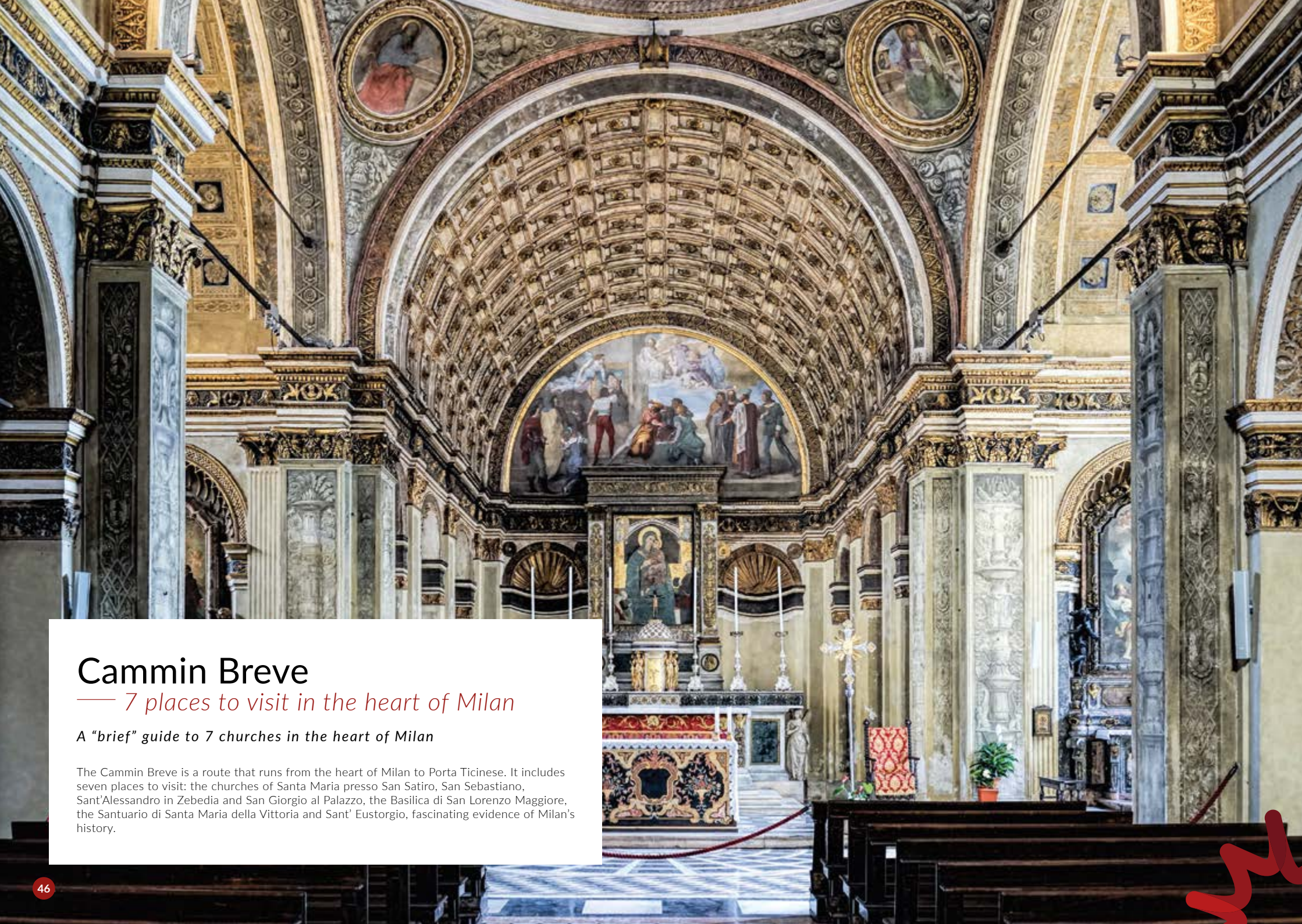
cylindrical columns; the cross supports a small, octagonal dome. Inside, we draw attention to the fourteenth century stoup, the wooden choir of the herbalist Francesco Giramo, the Madonna with Child and the Saints Benedict and Bernard, the work of Bernardino Luini (a detached fresco, not painted here originally). After covering the long stretch through the Parco del Ticino, we arrive in Milan at the **Chiesa di San Pietro in Gessate**, which became an abbey in 1493. It is located at the end of a wide, tree-lined parvis in the centre of Milan, and was built between 1447 and 1475, close to an antique monastery dating from the 13th century; the design is generally attributed to Guiniforte or Pierantonio Slari and is an example of fifteenth century Lombard architecture.



— 5 reasons to cover the route

1. The ancient Mulino di Chiaravalle offers countless activities: educational workshops, bakery and herbalism courses, events and cultural aperitifs, birthday parties and organised days out.
2. Street markets, festivals, food and wine events, games and sporting events that enliven all the seasons on the "Road of the Abbeys".
3. The important historic reconstructions, of which the most famous is certainly the "Trecentesca" in Morimondo, an international exhibition of medieval historic reconstruction set in the Visconti era and connected to the battle of Casorate in 1356, the site

- of a clash between Milan's army and imperial troops.
4. The extraordinary acoustics of the chiesa di Morimondo, a sound box for liturgical chants and the perfect setting for classical and sacred music concerts, staged at various times during the year.
5. "Abbiategusto", an unmissable event with an exhibition of food and wine at the international level, held in the nearby Abbiategrasso. In line with tradition, the event opens the gates of the city to anyone who wants to discover the taste and the history connected to the flavours of the Lombard territory.



Cammin Breve

— *7 places to visit in the heart of Milan*

A "brief" guide to 7 churches in the heart of Milan

The Cammin Breve is a route that runs from the heart of Milan to Porta Ticinese. It includes seven places to visit: the churches of Santa Maria presso San Satiro, San Sebastiano, Sant' Alessandro in Zebedea and San Giorgio al Palazzo, the Basilica di San Lorenzo Maggiore, the Santuario di Santa Maria della Vittoria and Sant' Eustorgio, fascinating evidence of Milan's history.

Photo
Previous page_ Chiesa di Santa Maria presso
San Satiro, Milan.

Unique experiences along the way

The Duomo di Milano. Impressive, fascinating, eternal. It stands in the middle of the large square of the same name, leaving visitors who are seeing it for the first time with their mouths open. Spend some time enjoying the treasures within and climb up to the Terrace to admire its steeples from close up.

Starting from Piazza Duomo, the route leads to Via Torino and the church of **Santa Maria presso San Satiro**, constructed at the end of the fifteenth century on the orders of Duke Gian Galeazzo Sforza.

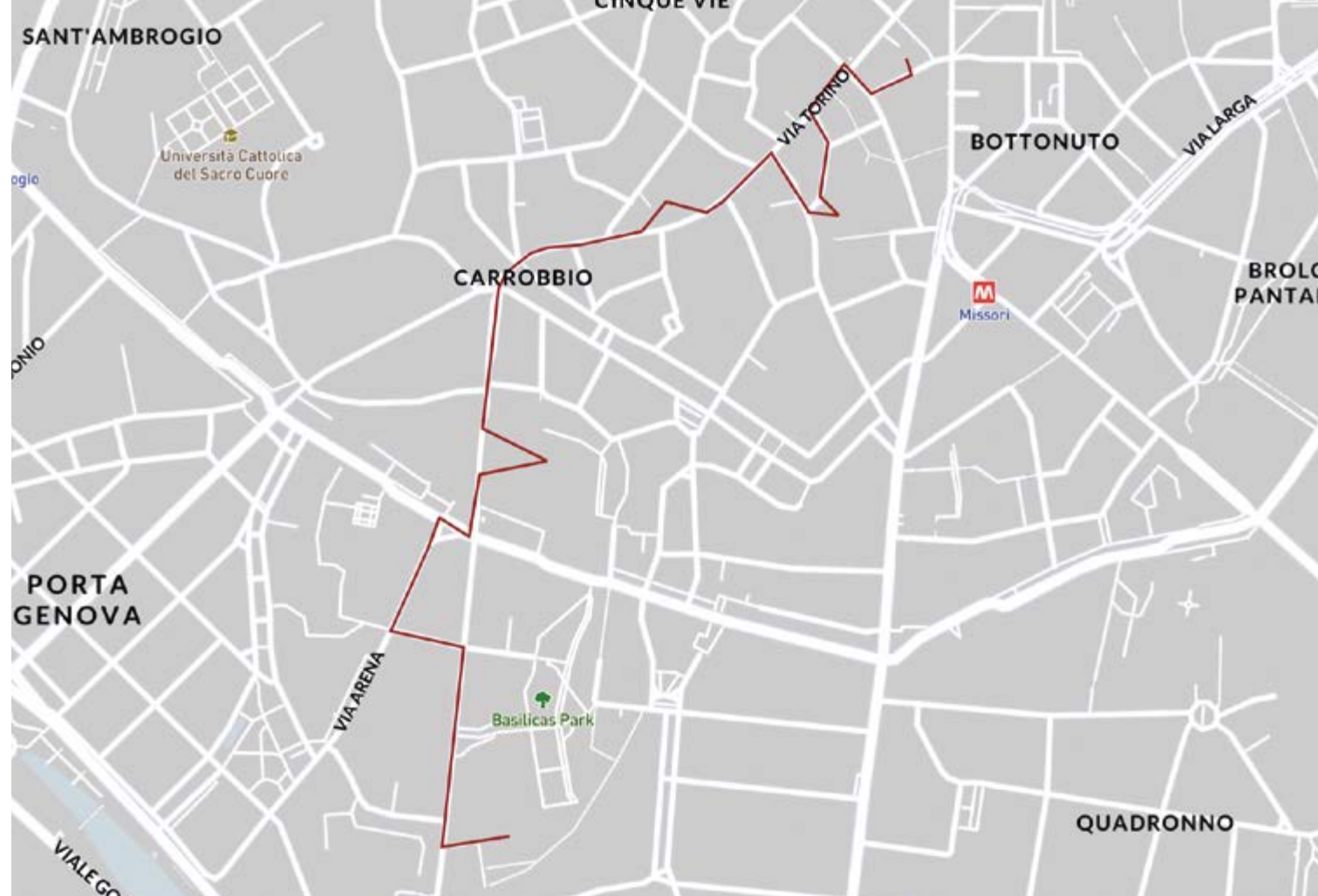
Close by, still in Via Torino, is the Chiesa di **San Sebastiano**, also known as the Tempio Civico, and, a little further on, the Chiesa di **Sant' Alessandro in Zebedia**, a place of worship in the great Catholic tradition of Milan, located in the historic centre of the city, precisely in the place where tradition holds that Sant' Alessandro Martire was held prisoner. Although little known, the square in which it is located is one of the most characteristic of old Milan.

The fourth visit in this short Milan route, still along the Via Torino, is to the **Chiesa di San Giorgio al Palazzo**, an artistic pearl that overlooks a little square to the side. A few hundred metres away is one of the most ancient churches in Italy and Milan: the **Basilica di San Lorenzo Maggiore**, captivating for its impressive architecture and works of art. Over the centuries, it has been subject to numerous, significant interventions and now guides visitors on a special interior spiritual search. Nearby stands the **Santuario di Santa Maria della Vittoria**. The church was built in the 17th century and was opened to the public only at the end of the 18th century, following the suppression of the Monastery. We continue towards Porta Ticinese, where the last visit of the Cammin Breve is found:

the **Basilica di Sant'Eustorgio**.

The foundation of the basilica – located on a cemetery dating from the 3rd – 4th century A.D., coinciding, according to tradition, with the site where the apostle Barnabas baptised the first Christians – was attributed over the years to Eustorgio I, Bishop of Milan (344-350 A.D.).

The remains of an earlier church from the early Christian era (6th century) are visible under the apse, the walls of which, dating from the first half of the 11th century, bear witness to subsequent works in the Romanesque period.



— 3 reasons to cover the route

1. The chapel of S. Aquilino, located in the right side of the basilica di San Lorenzo, where some of the most ancient mosaics in Milan can be found, dating from the 4th century.
2. Discover Milan, a modern metropolis that offers visitors a wide range of monuments, museums and places of worship to visit, evidence of the important role the city played over the centuries.
3. Below the Basilica di S. Lorenzo are the stones of the Roman amphitheatre of the city of Milan.



Cammino di Santa Giulia

— *A treasure among treasures*

This route, still the subject of in-depth historical and geographical studies, offers a very important visit in its final stage: the monastery complex of Santa Giulia, a treasure among treasures in this rich Lombard land.

The Cammino di Santa Giulia covers the route followed when the martyr's remains were transported in the Lombard era from Porto Pisano (Livorno) to Brescia in the year 763 A.D. It was the Lombard king, Desiderius, together with his wife Ansa, who ordered the relics of Santa Giulia to be preserved in the Benedictine convent of San Salvatore in Brescia, founded by them in 753 A.D.

Photo
Previous page_ Chiesa di Santa Giulia,
Brescia.

Unique experiences along the way

The city of Brescia is one of the few cities recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in three different locations: from the works of the historic centre (“The Lombards in Italy. The seats of power 568-774 A.D.”, 2011), to the sites of the Valle Camonica (the first site in Italy, 1979) known throughout the world for the extraordinary richness and variety of rock carvings, and the Prehistoric Pile Dwelling around the Alps concentrated in lower Garda (2011).

Very probably, the transportation was supported by the monasteries and the strongholds most firmly controlled by Lombard power. For this reason, the way crosses the transit districts most commonly used in the high Middle Ages, following stretches of the Via Francigena branch along the Via da Livorno, through Lucca, Garfagnana, the Apennines, Parma, Fontanellato, Busseto and Cremona to the ancient Benedictine convent of Santa Giulia in Brescia.

The route crosses Italian countryside neglected by the major routes, the Tuscan valleys, the woods of the Apennines and the Po Valley; a way to discover the nature and countryside of lands rich in art and history. In Brescia, you will be enchanted by the Monastero di Santa Giulia, with the Basilica di San Salvatore and its beautiful frescoes and stuccoes from the Longobard era as well as the archaeological area of the Roman forum, another UNESCO Site.

The exhibition design and location make the City Museum, housed in the monastery, unique of its kind. Evidence of the history, art and spirituality of Brescia from the prehistoric era until

modern times cover an exhibition area of 14,000 square metres. The strong link between the objects you will see on display and the walls that accommodate them is what makes the Museum so very special. The current collection of Santa Giulia numbers around 11,000 pieces, including Celtic findings such as helmets and phalerae, Roman portraits and bronzes, Lombard remains, grave goods, mosaics and frescos.

The symbol of the city is the Vittoria Alata, the large bronze Winged Victory dating back to the second quarter of the 1st century A.D. Discovered in 1826, it has recently undergone investigations and is the source of new clues for the analysis of the history of the ancient art and life of Brixia.



— 5 reasons to cover the route

1. Begin at Piazza Paolo VI, where there are two cathedrals: the Duomo Vecchio and the Duomo Nuovo, side by side but in two completely different styles. The first is Romanesque, the second is a mix of the Baroque and neoclassical, and both are worth a visit.
2. You will visit the traditional sites that Alessandro Manzoni mentions in one of his most famous works, the Adelchi, set during the fall of Lombard rule.
3. If there are those among you who love engines, visit the Museo Mille Miglia, dedicated to the legendary motor racing circuit of historic cars, designed to recreate the stages of the race.

You can admire some of the star motor cars!

4. As soon as you are ready for some tranquillity, head for one of the nearby lakes, framed by mountains and the hills of the Franciacorta vineyard. At Lake Iseo, you can walk along the shore and discover fishermen's villages among the olive groves, while at Garda, you can enjoy the relaxation offered by the Terme di Sirmione.
5. Starting from the old city and climbing to the summit of Colle Cidneo and Brescia Castle, you will find two historic museums but, above all, a splendid view of the provincial capital from above and, on clear days, the surrounding countryside.



Strada Cluniacense della Franciacorta

— *Walking among vineyards and hamlets*

Discovering the Abbazie cluniacensi

The name Franciacorta reveals its history, the bond with the Frankish Courts and the arrival of the Cluniac monks, thanks to whom the territory enjoyed free trade (*curtes francae*); the name “Franzacurta” appears for the first time in 1277. The route between Brescia and Lake Iseo crosses wonderful vineyards and passes by medieval towers and sixteenth century palaces, castles and small hamlets. Franciacorta has retained the boundaries of the countryside of the Visconti era.

Along the route, you will have the chance to discover and visit two Cluniac sites of this splendid land: the monastery of San Pietro in Lamosa, overlooking the Nature Reserve of Torbiere del Sebino and the Abbazia Olivetana, embellished with the works of the leading Brescian artists of the 16th and 17th century.

Photo
Previous page_ Franciacorta.

Unique experiences along the way

Walking or cycling in Franciacorta is a unique experience. The routes unfold between vineyards and hamlets, amidst welcoming, well-organised agritourism establishments. Walking along this road, the Cluniac monks come to mind who covered it more than 700 years ago, perhaps praying or singing the praises of the beauty of this generous Brescian land.

These two splendid complexes, among the most beautiful religious buildings of northern Italy, are the products of centuries of history and change. The Abbazia Olivetana di San Nicola a Rodegno Saiano was built around 1050 on an important Roman crossroads and soon became a place of rest and refreshment for pilgrims travelling to Rome. Some works by the leading exponents of Brescian painting of 1500-1600 enrich the splendid complex, made up of the church of San Nicola, the fifteenth century cloister, the Cisterna cloister, the Grande cloister, the ante-refectory, the refectory and guest quarters. The artists were commissioned by the monks; in particular, Romanino, Moretto, Foppa, Gambara and Cossali, exponents in the 18th century of the Milan school. Make the most of the opportunity to sample and purchase distilled tonics produced by the monks of the abbey, following ancient recipes: a real cure-all! The Monastero di San Pietro in Lamosa in Provaglio di Iseo was built near an important arterial road. Externally, it displays features of the earlier Romanesque building that was later converted, especially the interior, in subsequent centuries, mostly in the 15th and 16th century. Don't miss a visit to the Sala della Disciplina alongside the monastery, embellished with frescos at the start of the 16th century, and the panorama of the Nature Reserve of Torbiere del Sebino. Remember that you are in the land of Franciacorta vine, the pride of the Brescian hills and a tourist attraction, produced as white, rosé and satèn wines, rigorously following the classic method used for three centuries in Champagne,

invented by Dom Perignon. A true divine nectar. In every sense. The production of Franciacorta is not the exclusive prerogative of the well-known cellars. It can be discovered along the chain of religious tourist sites by visiting, for example, the Santuario della Madonna della Neve in Adro, where the community of the Scalzi Carmelites is engaged in the cultivation of the vines from which they produce an excellent Franciacorta, which can be bought at the Convent. A few miles away in Rovato, also pay a visit to the Convento dell'Annunciata. Thanks to the work of the Frati Servi di Maria, who came into possession in the nineteen sixties, the Cloister and the Church were brought back to their ancient splendour. Enjoy a goblet of precious wine, which is on sale inside the Convent.



— 3 reasons to cover the route

1. Franciacorta Satèn, a DOCG wine whose production is allowed only in the province of Brescia, an exclusive designation of the Franciacorta denomination.
2. The Nature Reserve of Torbiere del Sebino, declared to be a "wetland of international importance" by the Ramsar Convention, as well as a Special Conservation Zone (SCZ) and a Special Protection Zone (SPZ) as part of the Rete Natura 2000.
3. Montisola, an international attraction following the phenomenal success of "The Floating Piers". From Sulzano, Peschiera Mergallo can be reached by boat, a picturesque fishermen's village with a small harbour where the fishermen's vessels are moored.



Linea Cadorna

— *From a defensive line to a nature trail*

The path of peace

The Linea Cadorna, more correctly called the Italian Defensive System on the Northern Border with Switzerland, was designed to protect the border areas from potential foreign attacks between the end of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century.

Unique experiences along the way

Even partly covering the various routes makes it possible to gain a better understanding of war, and always to be messengers of peace!

The idea, reviewed and rejected several times, was finally implemented starting from 1911 and the works were completed with the outbreak of the Great War.

A truly impressive project, which runs from Val d'Ossola to the Orobic Alps: mule trails, paths, trenches, hospitals, observation posts and artillery positions were created on often impenetrable land between 600 and 2000 metres.

Fortunately, the fortifications were never deployed in battle. Today, the route can be covered and, notwithstanding the loss of some stretches due to neglect and damage from the action of nature, it has a lot to offer the visitor who decides to venture along this path.

All the routes proposed lead to the discovery of ancient remains during various excursions through unspoiled nature.

The trips are suitable for everyone and have different durations.

It is important to come prepared: bring trekking equipment as well as a head torch, often vital for exploring the deepest tunnels.

The proposed routes are the following:

Route 1: Santa Maria del Monte- Forte di Orino/ **Route 2:** Viggù - Monte Orsa - Monte Pravello/ **Route 3:** Porto Ceresio - Monte d'Erta - Bocchetta Stivione/ **Route 4:** Marzio - Monte Piambello -Bocchetta dei Frati/
Route 5: Viconago - San Paolo - Monte La Nave/ **Route 6:** Montegrino Val Travaglia - Monte Sette Termini/ **Route 7:** San Michele - Monte Pian Nave/ **Route 8:** Cassano Valcuvia - Monte San Martino/ **Route 9:** Cassano Valcuvia (basic circuit).



— A Voyage through Time

1. The fortifications of the Linea Cadorna were field or temporary installations at points of tactical importance, assumed to be close to the enemy, constructed with very limited time, means and financial resources.
2. The trench is a defensive work excavated in the land, protected by a parapet in earth, stone or cement and furnished with a recovery ditch. It was designed to protect troops from enemy fire and enable soldiers to use their weapons effectively. There were both communication trenches and battle trenches.
3. The communication trenches of the Linea Cadorna were mainly cut out of the rock or made with cement covers. They made it possible to pass from one trench to another under enemy fire, in order to safely reach

the positions of automatic weapons, resupply areas, withdraw the wounded or give shelter to soldiers.

4. Sheltering in dugouts or tunnels gave soldiers the chance to take refuge and rest after serving in the trenches or waiting to be sent into action, as well as protecting and storing materials, ammunition and foodstuffs.

5. Machine gun positions could be in the open, in dugouts or in armoured pillboxes. The open positions consisted of a forecourt with a raised part to support the weapon and a parapet folded at the sides. Behind these position, the entrance to a communication trench was generally located.



Luoghi e Vie della Fede

— *Through the city*

The province of Lecco, a treasure trove of faith and culture.

Luoghi e Vie della Fede is a unique, innovative proposal: a series of routes that will allow you to experience a real interior, spiritual journey. Let's start with the vital points of interest.

The Palace of Fear (Palazzo delle Paure), Lecco, built between 1902 and 1905, was, until 1964, home to the Tax, Land Registry and Customs Authorities, hence its name. Built in an eclectic neo-medieval style, today it hosts temporary exhibitions, the Municipal Art Gallery – the Contemporary Art section of the Lecco City Museum and the Lecco Alpine Observatory.

Photo

Right_ Altar of San Pietro al Monte Civate, Lecco.

Previous page_ Lecco.

Unique experiences along the way

Make a note to visit the *Monastero di Santa Maria del Monte Carmelo in Concenedo di Barzio in the province of Lecco*, where the *Scalze Carmelite nuns produce cards with religious subjects and where icons are on sale*.

Monastero di S. Maria del Lavello,

Calolziocorte, one of the most important religious monuments in the Valle San Martino. Built in a place of transit on the Piedmont route from Como to Bergamo, it became a pilgrimage destination for a miraculous well. In 1510, the monks began to build the present monastery. Inside the church, frescos and canvasses can be admired from the time of the reconstruction sponsored by the Servi di Maria.

Chiesa di S. Giorgio, Mandello del Lario,

located along the Sentiero del Viandante, is home to an extraordinary fresco cycle on the triumphal arch from the late 15th century depicting Christ the Judge. To his right the righteous ascend to heaven, while on the left, the damned souls are subjected to torture from the demons.

Chiesa dei SS. Gottardo e Colombano, Arlate,

Calco, the Church, a fascinating testimony of the Lombard Romanesque architecture, that was originally part of a Cluniac Monastery complex. In the apsidal conch, once entirely frescoed, the remains of Christ Pantocrator are still visible. (XIII century)

Chiesa di S. Tommaso di Canterbury, Corenno

Plinio, Dervio, probably built around the 12th century. The building stands close to the wall of a castle and has been subject to substantial restoration works over the centuries. Towards the end of the 17th century, two chapels were built and, in 1966, various frescos were

brought to light on the side walls of the nave, dating from between the 14th and 16th centuries. Two funerary monuments, known as "Andreani Arks", are of great value.

Chiesa di Madonna di Bondo, Valvarrone,

lying at an altitude of around 700 metres. The foundations of the current building, dating from 1677, were laid on the existing structure of the devotional chapel, built following a miracle that occurred near Milan in 1583. Over the centuries, the church was embellished with additional pomp and interior furnishings: the altar, the refectory and the balustrade in black Varenna marble date from the 18th century, as do the portico and facade in granite, while the bell tower was constructed at the start of the 19th century.



Chiesa di S. Giorgio, Annone Brianza: a church dating back to the late 15th century flanking a Romanesque bell tower. Inside, the presbytery is adorned with a Renaissance fresco cycle by the Maestro della Pala Sforzesca.

Abbazia Cistercense di S. Maria di Piona,

Colico: Facing the shores of Lake Como, it provides a wonderfully panoramic view. The complex has very distant roots, linked to the foundation of an Oratory dedicated to Santa Giustina, and it is one of the most evocative Romanesque buildings in Lombardy.

Chiesa S. Antonio di Vezio, parish of San Martino di Vezio, Perledo, located near the castle, the church has a simple gabled façade

and a nave with quadrangular apse. Frescos can be seen inside dating from 1458, with the figures of the Saints John the Baptist, Peter and Antonio Abate. The high altar houses a sixteenth century triptych that has been attributed to Stefano da Pianello.

Basilica di S. Pietro al Monte, Civate:

the complex lies at an altitude of around 650 metres and can only be reached on foot. The Basilica of San Pietro al Monte, Civate is regarded as one of the most significant and extensive examples of Romanesque art in Lombardy. Today the complex of San Pietro al Monte is listed in the UNESCO Tentative List as a candidate to become a World Heritage Site.



Via Matildica del Volto Santo

— *Not only prayer*

A great route of faith and culture.

The Via Matildica del Volto Santo is dedicated to pilgrimage and prayer but also to discovering the territory. The route, named after Matilde di Canossa, covers lands that were once under the rule of the Countess and connects to the tracks of San Pellegrino, the protector of travellers. From Mantua, it crosses the Apennines to reach Lucca. A route steeped in history, monuments and memories that has much to reveal about the pilgrims that left the Germanic regions heading for Rome. In Lombardy, it passed through Mantua, San Benedetto Po, Borgoforte, Suzzara, Luzzara and Guastalla.

Photo
Previous page_ Mantua.

Unique experiences along the way

Mantua is a city steeped in history, where the atmosphere of long ago can be experienced, the time when one of the most famous noble families of Europe reigned, the Gonzaga, who played a major role in Italian and European history from the 14th to the 18th century.

Mantua, its natural beauty made even more enchanting by the hand of Leon Battista Alberti, the architect of two of the most important churches of the city. The famous Renaissance architect worked in Mantua in the middle of the 15th century in the service of the Gonzaga family. From the start, his mission was to ennoble one of the most important cities of the Italian Renaissance.

In the centre of the city, he built the **Basilica di Sant'Andrea**, the largest church in Mantua, which was completed many years after the death of the architect. Like the Chiesa di San Sebastiano, also the work of Alberti, it has an imposing monumental façade with great visual impact: it displays all his classical architectural knowledge, giving form to really interesting solutions.

Moving inside, the similarities between the two churches become fewer, especially the plan: the first to a Greek cross layout, the second a Roman cross. Classicism is also dominant here. The **Polironiano Monastic Complex in San Benedetto Po** is also worth a visit. Founded in 1007 by Tedaldo di Canossa, it stands on the island formed by river Po and the river Lirone.

Until 1797, after suppression by Napoleon Bonaparte, the monastery played a prominent role thanks to the religious, political and cultural commitment that arose to the benefit of monasticism.

Inside the complex, the three cloisters that make it up can be visited: the Chiostro dei Secolari, Chiostro di San Benedetto and the Chiostro di San Simeone, which gives direct access to the Chapter House, one of the most ancient and important places of the monastery and its directional centre; inside, it is possible to admire the remains of the tombs of abbots from the 16th century.

Finally, the majestic Chiesa Abbaziale can be admired, which was restored between 1540 and 1545 by Giulio Romano while retaining its ancient Romanesque and Gothic structures.

The visit continues in the monastic Refectory and, underground, the evocative sixteenth century Cellars, where examples of agricultural carts are exhibited.

The Museo Civico Polironiano in San Benedetto Po, one of Italy's major ethnographic museums, displays the material side of the rural culture and society as well as the intangible aspects linked to magic, popular religion, local legends and artistic expressions of the world of the Po Valley.

Finally, the majestic Chiesa Abbaziale can be admired, which was restored between 1540 and 1545 by Giulio Romano while retaining its ancient Romanesque and Gothic structures.



— 3 reasons to cover the route

1. Since July 2008, Mantua has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In 2016, MIBACT awarded Mantua the title of Italian Capital of Culture. In 2017, Mantua and its province became part of the European region of Gastronomy-Eastern Lombardy, a project that recognises the best gastronomic regions on the continent.

2. Mantua has hosted great geniuses of the past, such as Leon Battista Alberti, Mantegna and Giulio Romano, the creators of unprecedented artistic masterpieces.

3. Mantuan salami, pumpkin tortelli and "Sbrisolona", some of the specialities that can be tasted in one of the many trattorias with typical local cuisine during a break along the route.



Via Priula

— *From the name of its creator*

A strategic route that takes its name from its creator, the Bergamo Podesta, Alvise Priuli, who ordered “the road to be cut in the living rock”.

In 1593, the Venetian Podesta, Alvise Priuli, ordered the construction of a route that would connect the Po Valley with Valtellina and beyond the Alps: Via Priula, a route of great political and strategic importance that enabled the city of Venice to be connected with the passes of Spluga and Settimo, belonging to the Grigioni, without crossing the territory of the Duchy of Milan.

Photo

Previous page_ San Marco Pass, Bergamo.

Unique experiences along the way

From the elegant Lower Bergamo, the upper city is reached by the funicular, which first appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century, a moment of real joy for adults and children. But you can go even higher towards the hills of San Vigilio and enjoy a boundless panorama.

In those times, the Venetian Republic, ruler of the entire province of Bergamo, needed to develop new trade links with the territories in the north. Until that time, the connections between the two areas were complicated and, to transport goods, it was necessary to skirt the mountain chain of the Bergamo Alps through Lecco and Lake Como in the land of the Duchy of Milan, then a Spanish possession in open competition with the Republic of Venice.

The enormous duties and the risk the goods would be seized en route were the main reasons for the construction of the Via Priula. With the opening of this new route, which lay at an altitude of 1991 metres between the municipalities of Mezzoldo and Albaredo per San Marco, the Republic of Venice boosted trade relations with the countries beyond the Alps, Germany and Flanders. Following the Via Priulia today, it is possible to reach Bergamo on foot from Chiavenna through the valley floor of the Valchiavenna, the Pian Si Spagna, the Bassa Valtellina, the Valle del Bitto di Albaredo and Val Brembana, or the other way, of course.

This is a long route, a version of which can be covered by bicycle, which gives a cross-section of the Alpine world of Lombardy, filled with monuments, culture, gastronomic specialities, welcoming inns and hotels.

Part of the route follows the ancient mule trails, especially in the mountainous part; in the valley, there are mostly paved roads, tracks for cyclists and pedestrians and other paths.



The entire trip is undertaken over several days, for a total of around 140 kilometres.

The route crosses the Passo San Marco, where the road reaches an altitude of 2,000 metres; there is an old roadman's house and a memorial stone along the paved road.

The old track was replaced 40 years ago by the Transorobica, so-called because it crosses the Orobic Alps and foothills. A great deal of evidence survives, however, in the names of the places, the roads and the buildings.

The large covered porticos along the main road of the town recall the time when merchants stopped here, unloading their pack mules and horses and making their goods secure.

A varied route that elicits careful observation and serious reflection on the action of mankind in transforming the landscape.

— 5 reasons to cover the route

1. A route and a road from long ago that recalls the efforts of our ancestors in following this walk, rich in panoramas and unrivalled emotions.
2. The Duomo di Bergamo, in the city square of the same name, Piazza del Duomo. The cathedral, dedicated to the city's patron saint, Sant'Alessandro Martire, was built over an earlier original building of the 6th century dedicated to San Vincenzo, and has three naves in canonical orientation.
3. The Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore in the heart of the historic city of Bergamo. The exterior of the basilica, built in the second half of the 12th century, has a typically Romanesque appearance, while the

decorations inside recall the Baroque style. The church was commissioned by citizens of Bergamo as a votive offering so that the Madonna would end a long period of drought.

4. Visit Upper Bergamo for unexpected views, hidden courtyards, flavours and utterly unique panoramas.

5. 600 works of art magnificently exhibited in 28 rooms... these are the numbers from the Carrara Academy after 7 years of restoration, an artistic journey through 5 centuries of the history of Italian art.

Photo
Right_ Sirmione, Brescia.

Unique experiences along the way

Travelling this ancient way brings to mind the enormous effort of the pilgrims who travelled to Venice from Bordeaux to board a ship for Jerusalem. A way that was traditionally called "Palmario" as opposed to the one that led to Rome, known as "Romeo". Two different ways but with a single motive of hope and faith in common.

Via Palmaria Burdigalense

— An ideal route for the soul

From France to the Holy Land...
Passing through Italy!

Garda and its surroundings were not the most important and significant roads covered by medieval pilgrims but it cannot be said that the figure of the pilgrim was unknown in these parts.

The Via Palmaria (Burdigalense Route) skims the southern area of the lake while, as documented by the evidence of ancient hospices, the Garda shores were walked from north to south by pilgrims who arrived to fulfil their vows at the major sites of the Christian faith and the many minor sites that popular devotion chose as centres of worship and devotion.

The Burdigalense route is the most ancient route recorded of pilgrims from Bordeaux heading to Venice to sail to the Holy Land. From Brescia, the route runs through the Lonato countryside, to Brodena, Castel Venzado and Centenaro, then San Pietro di Desenzano, Rivoltella, Sirmione and Peschiera up to Cavalcaselle in the direction of Verona. There were hospices for travellers and

numerous convents and monasteries scattered along the entire perimeter of the shoreline, where pilgrims found accommodation and refreshments.

Today, Garda is once again the perfect destination for a route centred on the soul, a chance to reflect and meditate.



— 5 reasons to cover the route

1. Enjoy a historic walk surrounded by the stunning panorama of the lake along the shores of Garda.
2. Most people probably know that the Kneipp treatment is a cure-all found in many wellness centres but perhaps few realise that it was invented by a German abbot, Sebastian Kneipp. At the end of the nineteenth century, his name was known throughout Europe and his methods soon arrived in Lombardy. Give yourself a relaxing break at the thermal centres of Sirmione, one of the jewels in the region's crown, where you can directly experience the abbot's teaching.
3. Bitters, propolis and royal jelly, medicinal herbs

and chocolate, all produced by the monks, can be bought at the Abbazia di San Nicola in Rodengo, famous for its digestive tonics.

4. Not to be missed is a visit to the historic centre of Desenzano and the sixteenth century Malvezzi square, the castle that dates from the high Middle Ages and the Porto Vecchio, built during the period of rule by the Venetian Republic.

5. Leaving the coast, we continue along the Sirmione peninsula and, at its end, a view can be enjoyed of the "Caves of Catullus" where a Roman villa has been identified built between the end of the 1st century B.C. and the 1st century A.D.

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