



SANT'AMBROGIO DI VALPOLICELLA

The Gateway to Valpolicella



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Sant'Ambrogio di Valpolicella

THE GATEWAY TO VALPOLICELLA

Thanks to its position on the crossing of some major transport routes, the town of Sant'Ambrogio can be considered "the natural gateway to Valpolicella", as well as being host to one of Italy's finest vineyards.

The town of Sant'Ambrogio di Valpolicella is located 20 km from Verona and can be reached by car, train, bus and bicycle. Lake Garda is just 12 km away, and the highway and the railway connect it with Northern Italy and Northern Europe, through the beautiful Valdadige.

The region of Sant'Ambrogio di Valpolicella, including the main town and its five hamlets, distinguishes itself for its typical historical villages. The area has varied features: smooth hills with vineyards, sharp rocks hanging on the valley, massive quarries from which the world-famous stones are extracted, the 1,112 meters high Mount Pastello, marking the northern border of the area, the river Adige, running slowly but at times fiercely.

Valpolicella overview

A unique region, that offers a wide choice of history, culture and tradition, typical products, villas, ancient churches, Austrian fortresses and walls, trails in the nature, gourmet foods, renown wineries and different hosting solutions: little hotels, bed and breakfasts, charming relais.

Numberless associations promote local traditions and the food and wine excellence of the region, with a rich program of events and fairs all years round. For example, on the second Sunday of November the hamlet of San Giorgio di Valpolicella hosts the "Festa delle Fae", with traditional costumes, a tasting of the typical fava beans soup, chestnuts, local wines, music and dances deriving from an ancient pagan tradition. Another typical celebration is the "Festa delle Ciliegie" (the cherry fair), which is held in June in the hamlet of Gargagnago.

Even in just one day you can visit the hills surrounding the town and taste the wonderful world-famous wines: Valpolicella classico, Valpolicella classico superiore, Valpolicella classico ripasso,



Recioto della Valpolicella classico, Amarone della Valpolicella classico.

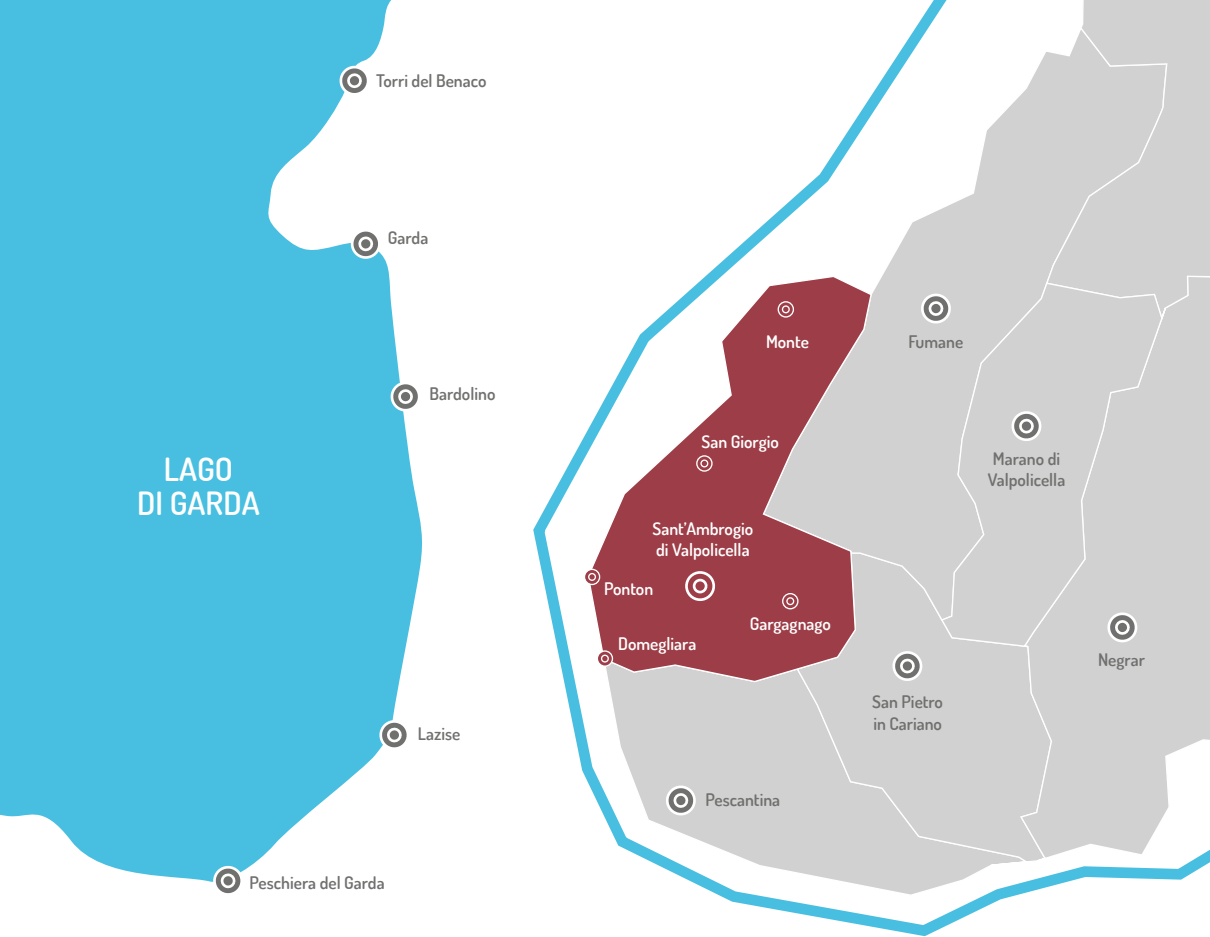
The charming hamlet of San Giorgio di Valpolicella, with its Longobard-Romanic parish, included at the end of 2015 in the list of Italy's most beautiful hamlets; the little Romanic church of San Zeno in Poia; the many villas, such as villa Brenzoni-Bassani, villa Serego Alighieri, villa Rovereti Zurla, villa Nichesola, and many other places of interest certainly deserve a longer stay, to be fully appreciated.

Sant'Ambrogio is renowned, as well as for its wines, for its fine marbles, which have been known all over the world for

centuries, thanks to their colour and texture. Among the many monuments in Verona which were built with this marble are the Roman amphitheatre Arena, the Roman Theatre, Ponte Pietra, the fountain of Madonna Verona in Piazza delle Erbe. The municipality hosted from 1961 until 1992 the world's most important marble trade fair "Marmomacchine", which is now being held at the Fair area of Verona.

In all the area it is possible to take hikes of different levels of difficulty, which provide a great opportunity to know the ancient charm of the hamlets, the naturalistic trails, the historical and cultural beauties of the region.





Valpolicella

THE ORIGINS

Valpolicella is the hills area located by the Prealpi Veronesi, in the region of Veneto. It includes seven municipalities, all belonging to the province of Verona.

The valley is bounded by the river Adige to the South, by the hills of Parona and Quinzano and by Valpantena to the east, and stretches as far as the Lessini range to the north. On its west side it is divided from the Adige valley by mount Pastello.

Renown ever since the Roman times for viticulture, and in particular for Amarone wine, it is also famous for the extraction of the red marble of Verona. Regarding the architectural aspect, Valpolicella is rich

with fine Venetian villas and it is embellished by capitals, little churches, parishes, hamlets, contradas and yards, which testify the historical and cultural richness of the territory.

The first human settlements date to the Paleolithic. In the early XVIII Scipione Maffei, a famous historian, found two headstones in Sant'Ambrogio di Valpolicella and in Fumane, which refer to the people of "Arusnati", of Etruscan and Rhaetian origins.

In the Roman period Verona became a municipium and the "Pagus Arusnatium", although it was controlled by the city, kept its administrative and religious independence and control over all its territories. The



gained a special status from the city of Verona, which was kept throughout the period of the Venetian domination.

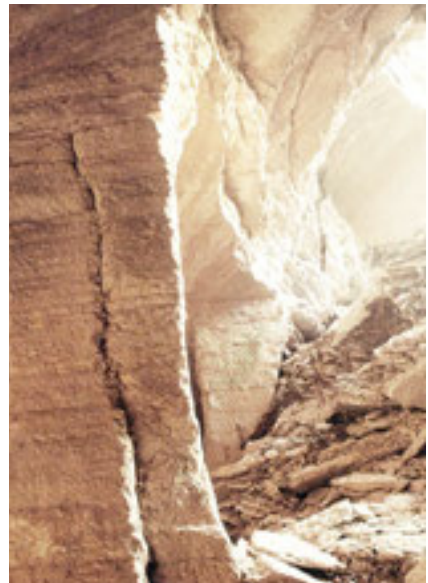
The territory of Valpolicella can be divided into three areas: the north with mountains, the hills area and the plains in the south. Each area has its own kind of vegetation. The most characteristic is the vineyard, located mostly on the hills.

Valpolicella is not only vineyards. The marble extraction has been practised ever since the ancient times; in particular, the red marble of Verona is the most famous. It is used for floors, indoor and outdoor panelling, as well as for sculptures and grave art. Valpolicella is also history, culture, nature, tradition, food and wine.

Arusnati had their county seat in San Giorgio di Valpolicella, probably thanks to its geographical location, and they also settled in the vicus of Fumane, Mazzurega, Sant'Ambrogio, Gargagnago, Volargne and Pescantina.

The name "Valpolicella" was used for the first time in a document dating 1117, signed by Federico Barbarossa. The origin of the name is controversial; it might refer to the valley of Pol (Valpolesela in the local dialect), because the Roman officials travelled along the river Adige to Pol and then went to the nearby villages.

With Federico della Scala, Valpolicella



Marble quarry



RELINQUAMUS ALIQUID
QUO NOCUISSSE TESTEM



Sant'Ambrogio di Valpolicella
THE HAMLET OF THE FOUNTAIN

I

Sant'Ambrogio di Valpolicella is the county seat and is famous, ever since the first half of the XIII century, for the marble quarries and for the wineries. The Lombard stone cutters, who settled here to search and purchase local stones, built a little church for their saint patron, Sant'Ambrogio. Around the church grew the historical centre of the village, which drew its name from the saint.

The town hall

In the main square, on top of a beautiful marble stairway, there is the town hall. Between the two flights, in the middle of the stairway, there is the monument of the stone cutter, by sculptor Ante Marinovic, made of Rosso Verona marble and christened on the 25th of September, 1982. At the feet of the upper flight are the sculptures of two column-bearing lions, the guardians of the square. On one of the facades is a valuable fresco of "Madonna che allatta il bambino" (Mary breast-feeding baby Jesus), dating to the XIV-XV century.

The old fountain



The town hall



The old fountain

In all the area many fountains can be found, which were originally used by the locals to water the animals and wash the clothes.

From the historical borough of Sant' Ambrogio, a road winding up between two stone walls, typical of Valpolicella, leads to the old fountain, a peaceful site with its stone seats under one huge ancient sycamore.

Villa Brenzoni – Bassani



Villa Brenzoni – Bassani

Further south from the parish church of Sant' Ambrogio is Villa Brenzoni – Bassani, a Venetian villa owned by the municipality. Following some extension work, a sixteenth century hall was discovered, with an arched roof and remains of paintings.

Today's look is given to a neoclassical renovation work that was required by Chiarastella Brenzoni Volpini, around the year 1805. During Paolo Brenzoni's, Chiarastella's grandson, stay in Sant' Ambrogio, the villa hosted many leading figures of Verona's cultural scene of the time, such as Aleardo Aleardi, Angelo Messedaglia, Benassù Montanari, Maria Teresa Serego-Alighieri.

Count Paolo Brenzoni left in his will a fund to create the Art School of Sant' Ambrogio, related to the Accademia Cignaroli of Verona. His aim was to provide marble workers with a basic technical and cultural knowledge, that helped them transform raw material into a piece of art or an architectural element.

The "Scuola D'Arte Paolo Brenzoni" is still carrying on its activity, and, through the work of its students, has made Sant' Ambrogio di Valpolicella and its marble famous all over the world.

Since 1960 the Villa has been owned by the municipality of Sant' Ambrogio. It was the seat of the first stone trade fair in the world, before it was moved to Verona. Part of the Villa has been partly restored and the municipality is going to complete the restoration, including its park.

The church of Sant'Ambrogio

Leaving from the main square, following a beautiful tree-lined avenue, you can reach the church of Sant'Ambrogio.

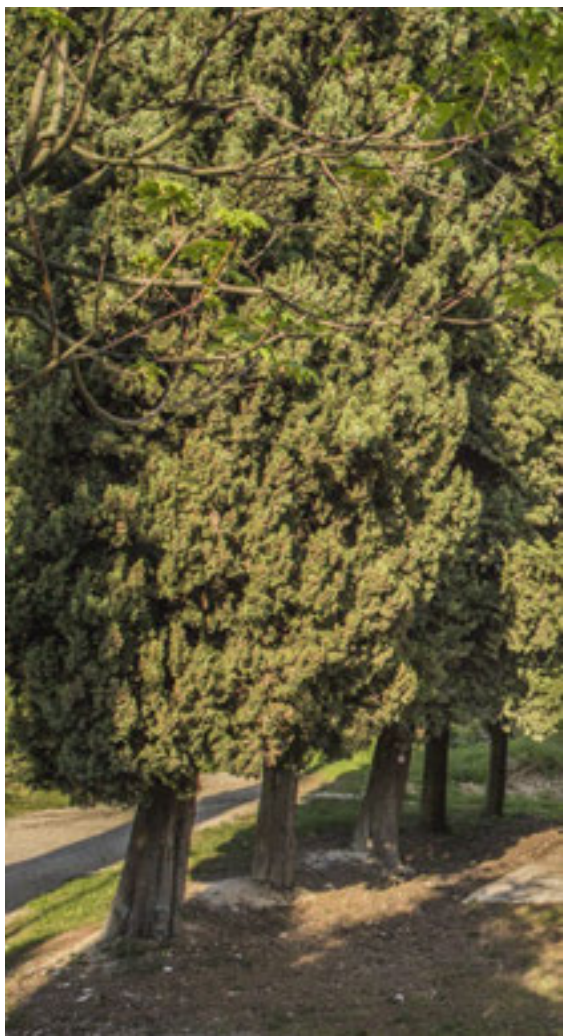
Originally a chapel of the nearby church of San Giorgio di Valpolicella, the church became a parish in 1456, following the depopulation of the mountain areas and the population growth in the areas further down in the valley.

In the church you can find many works by Giovanni Battista Lanceni and by Orazio Farinati dating to 1600. A painting by Angelo da Campo, representing Sant'Ambrogio meeting emperor Teodosio, dates to 1786. The altar with the cross, Mary and Saint John, are also a very impressive work by local artists. The building is in neoclassical style and the whole facade is covered with local white stone. The bell tower is a few meters away from the church.

The church is structured into a single room, with four lateral chapels. The use of finest polychrome marbles creates a magnificent effect. In front of the church are, one on top of the other, two funeral altars of the Roman age.



The church of Sant'Ambrogio



Parish of San Zeno in Poia

Following the road upwards for about half a kilometer after the old fountain, you can reach the parish of San Zeno in Poia. It is located on the top of Poia hill, surrounded by cypress hills. It is in Romanic style, built with layers of pink limestone. Inside it is decorated with Middle Ages frescos portraying San Zeno and San Giorgio.

Parish of San Zeno in Poia





Uno dei
Borghi
più belli
d'Italia



San Giorgio di Valpolicella
ONE OF "ITALY'S MOST
BEAUTIFUL HAMLETS"

II



In November 2015, San Giorgio di Valpolicella was included in the list of “Italy’s most beautiful hamlets”. The stone hamlet is located on top of a hill, and can be easily reached from the centre of Sant’Ambrogio. The view from the top is breath-taking, with a spectacular view over Garda Lake. On the clearest days, even the Appennini Tosco-Emiliani range is visible.



The Longobard-Romanic parish church

In the XIII and XIV centuries, the inside of the church was decorated with fine frescos. In particular, on the south side there is one depicting the Last Supper. Besides the entrance is the baptismal font, while by the presbytery there is the famous Lombard ciborium.

Besides the church is the cloister, built in the XII century. Of great interest are the column capitals, of different shapes and with animal and plant- themed decorating elements. The colonnade is only on three sides, as the fourth has been recently replaced by a gate. From the cloister you can access the chapter house, decorated with geometrical and floral paintings. The house hosts a statue of Mary with the baby and a splendid XV century wooden cross.

The Longobard-Romanic parish church

The hamlet of San Giorgio di Valpolicella rises around the parish, one of the most important monuments of Romanic age in the area of Verona. An epigraph dating to 712, on one of the little columns that bear the bow ciborium, seems to refer to an early building of Lombard age, when the stone mason Ursus carved a ciborium with his pupils, during Liutprand’s reign.

The church has three naves, and it generally follows the canons of classical architecture. The current facade is made of blocks of local limestone, as well as the floor made of rectangular slabs.



Via crucis of stone cutters

**Antiquarium:
archeological museum and Rhaetic huts**

By the parish is the Antiquarium, funded in 1992, where all prehistoric, historical, artistic and traditional antiquities of San Giorgio di Valpolicella are held.

During some excavations, begun in 1975, some huts were unearthed, structured according to a model of "Rhaetic hut": partly built underground, with stone walls, dating to the Iron Age.

Of the eight huts found so far, three can be visited: a workshop for bone and horn manufacturing, a metal workshop and a tank.



Cloister

Ancient quarries

In San Giorgio di Valpolicella there are many quarries, some of which are still in use, others open to visitors, which have provided world-famous marbles. To celebrate the memory of the many stone cutters who were forced to emigrate and thus brought their craft around the world, the Art School realized a "via crucis of stone cutters" near the cemetery.

Overview San Giorgio





Gargagnago
THE HAMLET OF THE AMARONE

III



Gargagnago is also known as the hamlet of Amarone wine, as it is where DOCG vineyards are grown and wines are made in its world-famous wineries. The hamlet is located on a hill a few kilometres away from Sant’Ambrogio and is surrounded by vineyards and cherry-tree groves which turn the hills when they bloom in Spring.

Church of Santa Maria della Misericordia

The church of Santa Maria della Misericordia dates to 1378, but is probably has older origins. In 1820 its length was expanded with a neoclassical portico in the front, designed by Bartolomeo Giuliani.

The church has one nave with a semi-circular apse; the side altars are four. Inside, a wooden statue of 1517 portrays the Madonna della Misericordia, from which the church takes its name.



Church of Santa Maria della Misericordia

Villa Serego-Alghieri

At the feet of San Giorgio hill, in the hamlet of Gargagnago, is Villa Serego – Alghieri. The Alghieris, an important Tuscan family relocated in Verona, bought several estates in Gargagnago from the XVI century. Pietro I, son of poet Dante, in 1353 bought the first piece of land which now is Casal dei Ronchi.

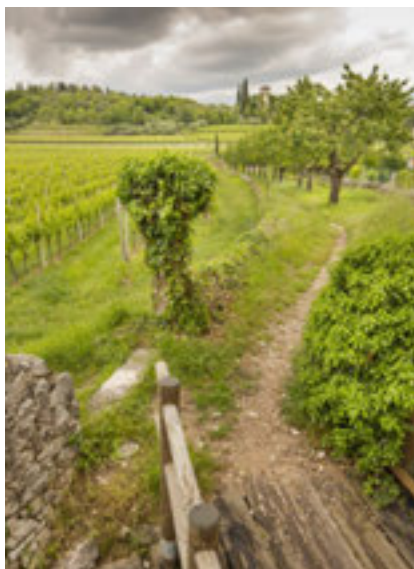
Now the villa is structured into different parts, pavilions, yards, lodges of different styles and ages. The Italian garden is sided by a huge park with tall trees. The first plan of the villa dates to the 10th of November, 1591. The halls of the main building are entirely decorated with stucco, crests, mosaics, eighteenth century frescos, representing statues of gods and fake rooms facing fantasy landscapes. In this building there is also a chapel devoted to the Virgin built in 1637, with a beautiful Madonna with the baby by Liberale da Verona.

Naturalistic trails

The local cultural association of Gargagnago and the hiking club created many trails which develop throughout the area. The picturesque “Four Fountains” trail is 2,5 km long and it connects the four stone fountains, restored thanks to a cooperation with the local Marble School and municipality. It crosses the hamlet, goes up to Monteleone hill and goes into the fields through vineyards and cherry-tree groves.

The CAI trail “della Salute” or “del Vajo del Ragnin”, which is going to be included in the list of the religious trails, connects Gargagnago with S.Giorgio di Valpolicella.

Other naturalistic trails go from San Giorgio to Ponton and to the river Adige, up towards the mount Solane and mount Pastello, near springs, ponds, rivers, through a rich vegetation.



Naturalistic trails

Panoramic vineyard





Ponton
THE HAMLET BY
THE RIVER ADIGE

IV



Ponton is by the river Adige. Ever since the Roman age, the river was the main access towards the north, and from 1500 Ponton became an important centre for the loading and shipping of the marble extracted and manufactured locally. The old track originally used by horses and mules to tow the boats can still be travelled, and it is called with different names, such as “alzaia”, “cavallara” or “strada del tirraglio”.

The Oasis

Nowadays the harbour is no longer in use, but this little cove is a natural oasis, characterized by an interesting variety of flora and fauna, studied for its morphology and hydrology. Here you can take long hikes surrounded by a magnificent nature.

Church of Santa Maria Maddalena



Adige river



Church of Santa Maria Maddalena

Just outside Ponton is the church of Santa Maria Maddalena. The church became a parish in 1456 and through the centuries it went through various changes. The floor is covered with coloured marbles (black, red, white), with a chessboard pattern. Above the main altar there is an altarpiece representing "Madonna con S. Pietro, Maddalena e Paolo", a work by Domenico Riccio (also known as "Brusaorzi") dating to the XVI century. There was another church, previous to this one, in the Middle Ages.

Villa Nichesola

Built towards the end of the XVI century by Fabio Nichesola, in the style of architect Sanmicheli, the villa was made famous by his son Cesare, who gathered a precious collection of epigraphs and archaeological relics, and also created a botanical garden that survived until Nichesola's death.

Located on terraces, the garden also has a grotto, decorated inside with shells, sponges, fake stalactites and a splendid mosaic floor. Inside the villa are three halls decorated with frescos by Paolo Farinati with fake architectural elements and paintings inspired by the Greek and Latin mythology. The frescos also decorated the facades of the villa; some traces are still visible.

The villa can be visited upon booking

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Villa Nichesola





V

Monte

THE HAMLET OF THE FORTRESS



Located at the feet of mount Pastello (at 450 meters above sea level), the hamlet of Monte has typical streets and scattered houses, some of which, the oldest, still keep their typical Lessinian structure with courtyards and portal frames. At the end of the hamlet is the Austrian fortress Mollinary.

Church of San Nicolò

The church of San Nicolò is in the centre of Monte. The first documents about its building date to 1351, although many believe it was built before then.

The facade is in neoclassical style. Inside it consists of one nave, with two semi-circular chapels on the sides. The floor is made of alternating strips of red and yellow marble, with central fills in black and white. In the presbytery there is a precious altarpiece by painter Francesco Lorenzi.



Church of San Nicolò



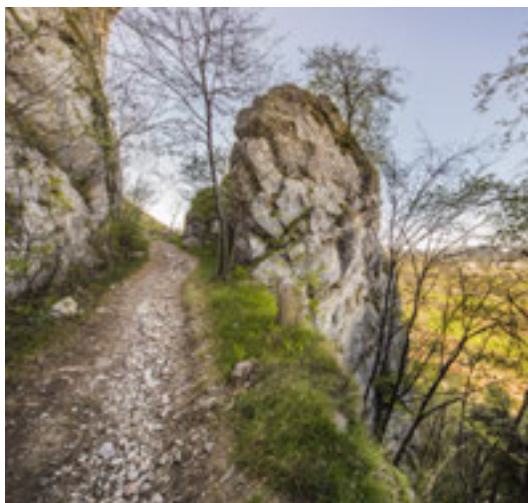
Forte Mollinary

Forte Mollinary

From the town centre, about 500 meters from the public fountain, you can reach Forte Mollinary. The fortress was built under the Austrian domination, between 1849 and 1852, with the stones from the quarries of Sant'Ambrogio. Although the fortress is now partially ruined, it is worth a visit for its architecture and the unique view.

The Austrian track

A military Austrian track connects the fortress of Monte (Forte Mollinary) with the fortress of Ceraino in Val d'Adige (Forte Hlawaty). The two fortresses, together with the fortress of Rivoli (Forte Wohlgemuth) and the fortress of the Venetian sluice were part of the Austrian defensive system to protect the Brennero road and the access to Val d'Adige. This picturesque trail goes through a rich vegetation, with a breathtaking view over the valley.

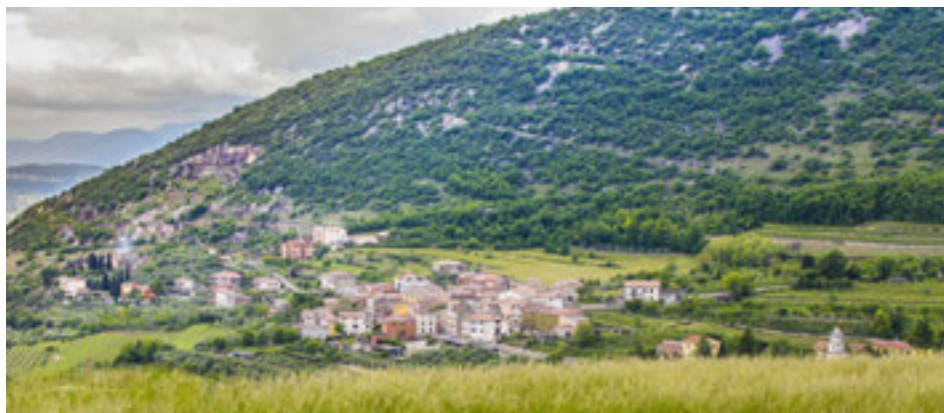


The Austrian track

Towards Mount Pastello

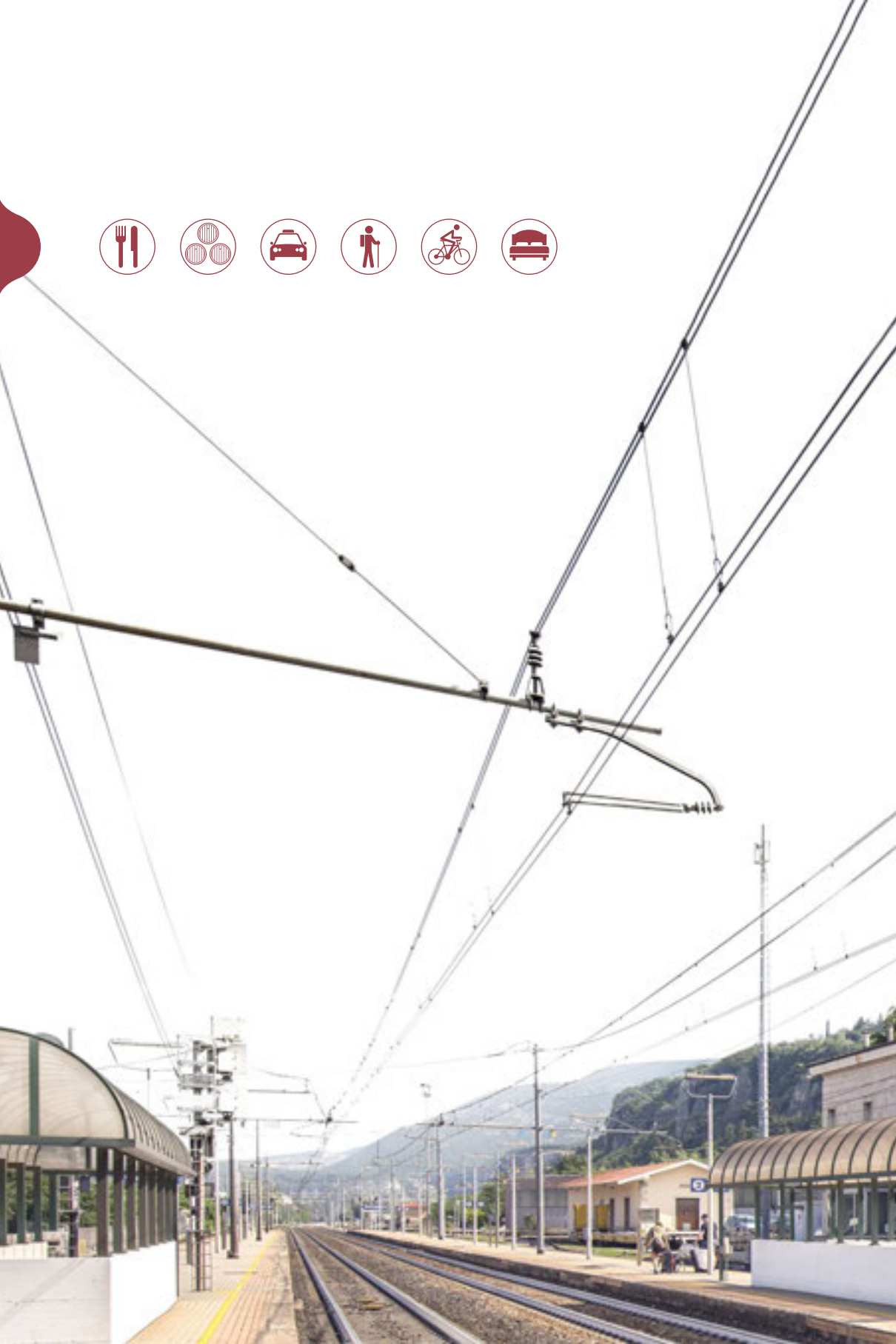
Leaving from the square of Monte, a walk of about 2 hours leads to the top of Mount Pastello (1112 m). During the ascent you can see hamlets built with dry stone walls. From the top of the mountain you can enjoy a wonderful view over most of the Verona region. From here you can then descent through the woods and reach Forte Mollinary.

Monte Overview



Towards Cavalo's old parish

From the little church of Monte leaves another trail which leads to the ancient parish of Cavalo, the in municipality of Fumane, through a pristine wood of oaks, yoke-elms, maple-trees, poplars, firs, pines, elms, chestnuts. The trail twists through the ruins of old dams, watermills, ice cellars, vineyards and old rural farms.



Domegliara
THE HAMLET OF THE STATION

VI



Ever since the Roman age the road of Brennero was an important gateway to Gallia and to the northern provinces. The Claudia Augusta road connected the Po valley with the Danube in Bayern, it began in Ostiglia, going through Verona and Trento and through the Alps it reached Augusta Vindelicorum (Augsburg).

At the beginning of the Val d'Adige, a waterway of great importance in the past, and along the left and right side of the old Brennero road, is the village of Domegliara.

In the first half of the XIX century, the Austrian government built the Brennero railway to guarantee fast and safe transports between Tirolo and Italy. Domegliara was located along this railway, and the decision to build a station changed the village's aspect. It was also an important stop for the old single track railway, that connected Verona to Caprino and to Lake Garda. Sadly, this track was progressively dismissed. The last trip from Domegliara to Verona took place on the 20th of April, 1959.

Besides the station, fully in use and well connected, is a large parking lot which will become the bus station for the lines connecting Domegliara with Verona and with Lake Garda. Domegliara is now the services centre for national and international connections, as well as a great opportunity for sustainable tourism.

For this reason, the town of Sant'Ambrogio can be considered the **“extraordinary gateway to Valpolicella”**



Chiesa del Sacro Cuore di Gesù

Chiesa del Sacro Cuore di Gesù

At the centre of Domegliara is the church of Sacro Cuore di Gesù, built in 1897. between 1964 and 1965 the church was made longer. The facade is very simple; the only decoration is in a lunette: a mosaic of the twentieth century representing the Holy Hearth.



Villa Rovereti Zurla

Villa Rovereti Zurla

Villa Rovereti Zurla was built around 1780 and was originally decorated with statues and trophies and with a crown around the whole facade.

The villa, restored to its original magnificence, is surrounded by a large garden and by a piece of land where, in the Nineteenth century a thermal spring was discovered, currently used for the heating of the apartments hosted in the villa, and for the pool.



Historical Carnival photos

The Carnival

After WWII, in February 1947, the young people of Domegliara wanted to have fun again and they organised the first carnival of “Ducato della Valbusa” (a name recalling their borough Casetta at the feet of the Montindon), which within a few years involved the whole village. They created the committee called “Carnealón de Domeiara” and the pageant grew bigger and bigger. Nowadays this carnival is one of the most important of the province, with many floats and visitors. In the evening during the “Notte delle stelle” (night of the stars), the duchess and duke of Valbusa are crowned.

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