

artistic historical
itineraries
of the *B*rescia
territory



Lake Iseo AND Franciacorta



Brescia Province

In Brescia province there are 1,109,000 inhabitants in an area of 4,783 square kilometres. Brescia, the chief town, has 190,000 inhabitants and is located on the edge of a plain next to the mountains.

In the northern part three rivers flow through three valleys: Camonica Valley along the Oglio River; Trompia Valley along the Mella River; Sabbia Valley along the Chiese River.

Lake Garda (370 sq km, 65 mt above sea level) and Lake Iseo (61 sq km, 185 mt asl) have climates suitable for growing olives. Lake Idro is at a higher elevation at 368 mt asl with 11 sq km.



INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

The "Historical Artistic Itineraries of the Brescia Territory" give a description the most famous and easiest to reach monuments in the province. They are highlighted among the numerous "less" destined structures which encircle and are thus justified in presence.









The tourist will at times have to book a visit by telephoning and asking - precise directions will be given - you can borrow the keys to the small medieval church to see the frescoes. Encounter courtesy, an unjealous pride of a community in custody of many small but great treasures; and with the joy of discovery and a magical environment, appreciate the beauty and detail far off the beaten path.

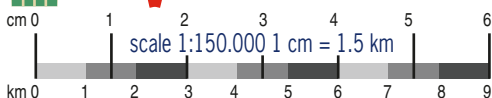
Maps for the itinerary are - except for explicit references - in the scale 1:150,000 (1 centimetre = 1.5 km). In the text, only the places indicated in the itinerary are

marked **in colour**. A dotted line precisely connects the text to pictures and vice-versa; for a reading that starts indistinctly from one or from the other.

Important monuments are described in separate boxes. Curiosities and short historical notes are contained in small white sections.

THE MAP LEGENDS

	church		museum		ss 11 roads and
	castle		view		A 4 highways
	building		itinerary		



From the Lombard kingdom to the Venetian domination

Originally, the territory of Brescia was inhabited by ancient Rhaetian tribes from the Alpine and Ligurian Valleys, on the plain and the Pre-Alps. The **Celtics**, and in particular the Cenomani tribe, settled here during the V cent. BC. They conserved their political identity through the end of the II cent. BC thanks to their good relationship with **Rome**. Under the Emperor Octavian Augustus the inhabitants of the ancient "Brixia" became Roman citizens. In 16 BC, Rome with its armies subjugated the Alpine population, who for millenia enscribed their everyday life, wars and religion into the rocks of the Camonica Valley.

After the end of the Roman Empire (476 AD) and the beginning the barbarian invasions, King Alboin descended to Italy (568) and founded the Lombard kingdom. Brescia became the chief town of a dukedom. Rotari, Duke of Brescia, was elected King of the Lombards in 636 and seven years later enacted an order that codified the laws of his



people. A noble woman from Brescia, Ansa, wife of the last king of Lombard, **Desiderius**, founded the monastery of San Salvatore, where their daughter Desideria (better known as **Ermengarda**) retired after being disowned in 771 by her husband Charlemagne, King of the Franks.

During the Carolingian period, the inhabitants of Brescia built numerous castles for

defence against Hungarian incursions.

During the fight between the Italian communes and Emperor Frederick I of Swabia (known as Redbeard), the Augustinian monk **Arnaldo da Brescia** stepped in and roared against the corruption of the clergy and in 1154 he stirred the Roman senate against the Pope Adriano IV. Redbeard captured the friar in the next year, handed him over to the pontiff and sent him to the stake.



The battle between the Guelphs, who defended the independence of the free communes, and the Ghibellines supporting the emperor, ended in 1298 when the rule of Brescia was entrusted to the Bishop **Berardo Maggi**, who reconciled the opposing factions.

A period of stability, but also oppression, began in 1337 with the rule of the **Visconti family**. They reconstructed Brescia Castle and, except during the short period of Sir **Pandolfo Malatesta** from Rimini (1404-21), stayed in power until the advent of the Republic of Venice (1426).

The **Venetian dominion**, opened a great market for productions in which Brescia excelled (arms, paper, yarn, fabric). The Trompia Valley transported cannons to the Venetian arsenal and the paper mills in Toscolano were well known as far as the Ottoman Empire.

In 1508 France, the Pope, the Empire, Spain, and the Italian seigniories of the Este family, the Gonzagas and the Savoias decided to put an end to the expansion of Venice. There followed a long war in which Brescia suffered the ferocious **Pillage of 1512**, a French plan at the centre of which were Commanders Gaston di Foix and Bayard, the "the pure and fearless knight" who was left wounded. In 1516 Brescia returned to the possession of Venice and remained so until 1796 when **Napoleon** imposed on Europe the new order of the French Revolution.

With the Restoration (1815), the Emperor Frank I of Austria founded the **Lombard-Venetian Kingdom**. The Risorgimento views the Brescia people as protagonists in the famous **Ten Days** (March 23 - April 1, 1849),



in which they erected barricades and ended Austrian control of the city.

In June 1859, the battle of **San Martino and Solferino** took place in the hills by Lake Garda. Vittorio Emanuele II of Savoia with the French ally Napoleon III liberated Lombardy and Venice from the Austrian dominion.

On October 10, 1943, Benito Mussolini established himself at Lake Garda in Gargnano, founding the Italian Social Republic, better known as the **Republic of Salò**.

Lake Iseo

Sunken into the mountain slopes which are sometimes steep, Lake Iseo reflects the greenery of the surrounding Pre-Alps and of the island in the middle. It offers, from many easily reached elevated points, a view of a fiord among the olive trees.

Here passes the access route to the Camonica Valley, well travelled for centuries by armies, turmoiling faith and the riches of commerce. Churches and castles dominate every wave and every road, witnesses to the age old pride and faith which still breathe here.

Today still, fishermen fruitfully let down their fishing nets, nourishing an original gastronomic tradition that renders the taste and the purity of the depth of the lake.



TOURIST INFORMATION
www.provincia.brescia.it/turismo

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Agenzia Territoriale per il Turismo Lago d'Iseo e Franciacorta
 Lungolago Marconi, 2 c-d - 25049 Iseo
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www.agenzia lagoiseofranciocorta.it



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A BRIEF HISTORY

Lake-dwelling villages have flourished around Lake Iseo since the Stone Age; the Rhetic, the Camun and Cenoman people found a meeting place here for their businesses. After the domination over the people of the Camonica Valley (16 BC), the imposed Roman republic, with its chief town at Cividate of the Camonica Valley, extended as far as Pisogne and Sulzano. In Montisola, fishing gave rise particularly to the production of nets, launched, according to tradition, by the monks on San Paolo Island. Wool was already being spun since the XV cent.; the lake craftsmen created a “universitas”. The passing through the lake area of iron and semifinished metals coming from the Camonica Valley gave birth to blast furnaces and workshops especially in Marone. In 1510, Pisogne was also interested in witch hunting which raged for decades in the Camonica Valley and numerous burnings at the stake were seen. The opening of the coastal road (1850) and of the railroad (1907) reduced the commercial importance of the port of Iseo.

Castles in defence of the water routes

From here in the 12th C. Emperor Frederick Redbeard threatened the freedom of the communes, attacking the mighty local castles to whom Brescia entrusted its defense
- The rich trading port of Iseo until 1900

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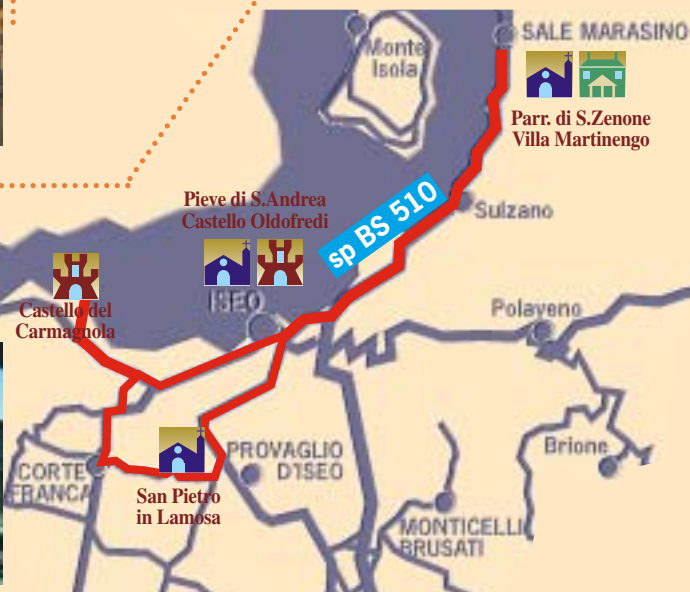
ITINERARY

From the prehistoric era, **ISEO** was a major trading port and remained so for thousands of years, even after 1850, when the coastal Sebino road was opened; in 1875, 80 per cent of the grain to the Camonica Valley was transported along this

route. The **port**, which Leonardo da Vinci referred to as a necessary passage from Brescia to Bergamo, declined after the introduction of the railroad.



The houses with porches surrounding Piazza Garibaldi bring to mind the bustle of the port. The **Town Hall** (1830) was built by the neoclassical architect Rodolfo Vantini.





ST. VIGIL AT ISEO

There is little and uncertain information about St. Vigil, who at the end of the 6th century was the 14th or 15th bishop of Brescia. It was probably the period between the end of the reign of Goths and the beginning of that of the Lombards, with Italy in misery and mourning. At Iseo the bishop Vigil must have looked after the scattered flock of the faithful. He probably died and was buried here. The foundation of the first basilica of the parish dedicated to St. Andrew, is attributed to him, whose relics there could have then been venerated.

Nearby is the **Arsenal**, a medieval building seat of art and cultural events and the **Della Quadra Palace**, a splendid example of Renaissance noble residence.



Going down Mirolte street we find the **Oldofredi Castle**, which was built before 1161, when it was set on fire by Emperor Frederick I of Swabia, the famous Redbeard, who descended into Italy through the Ghibelline Camonica Valley, destroying Brescia's Guelph resistance along this route. The present structure of the castle goes back to the 14th C: in ancient times the external wall englobed a small port with a moat. The stronghold with towers lost part of its

proud look during the two centuries (from 1585 to 1797) when it was a Capuchin convent. At present it houses the municipal library and the War museum.



According to the legend, the **Parish Church of St. Andrea** was founded by the Bishop St. Vigil in the 6th C, perhaps on the site of a Roman temple. It was rebuilt in obviously Lombardic style

in the 12th C. Enlarging took place until the beginning of the 19th C, when the neoclassical architect Rodolfo Vantini redesigned the interior. The very tall bell tower, however, which was described as "the most beautiful Romanesque bell tower in the Brescia area, a perfect example of Comacine style", is still in its original form. The Comacine masters - perhaps coming from the Como area, were first active in Lombardy and then in Europe, from the 7th to the 9th C, keeping alive the late Roman and Christian architectural heritage. In 1325 Giacomo Oldofredi died; his **Gothic tomb** is here, to the right of the portal. Inside there are interesting works by two 19th C painters: Angelo Inganni (frescoes) and Francesco Hayez (the archangel Michael). The **Church of St. Silvestro** o "dei Disciplini" with its famous "Macabre dance" (15th c. - 16th c.) overlooks the square.



Going from Iseo along the southern Sebino coast you arrive in CLUSANE with the



Castles in defence...

looming **Castle of Carmagnola**, characterised by an elegant verandah and with traces of exterior frescoes. The castle belongs to the Oldofredi family, a gift from Venice to the Count of Carmagnola in 1429, in exchange for his services given to the Venetian Republic. In the 16th C the battlements disappeared and the castle acquired its present look.



Returning to Iseo from Clusane, we turn off towards Timoline and from here we take the street that arrives at the railway station of **PROVAGLIO D'ISEO**. We follow the coast so that we can see, at one side of the Torbiere (the peat moss pits), the monastery of **St. Peter in Lamosa**

(see box on the opposite page), from the churchyard of which there is a view of sheets of water bordered by cane fields.

A difficult walk to the Sanctuary of **St. Mary of the Horn** (16th C.), with frescoes of the same era being restored), founded, according to legend, by a tired soldier of the war on a mountain dominating Provaglio, gives you the chance to see the Torbiere and the entire morainic amphitheatre from above. For information about a visit (lodging is possible) contact Cai, Italian Alpine Club, tel.: 0309823092 - 3400578361 (Mr. Ermanno Franchini).

Along the path it is interesting to stop at the archaeological site of the **castle of St. Rocco**, a medieval fortress of the Oldofredis.

The Eastern coast of Sebino, compared to the opposite one, has a less severe slope and is very green. It was chosen as a summer home by many noble families from Brescia, in particular in the 16th C, and with a preference for **SALE MARASINO**, where we find various posh residences.



Among these, **Villa Martinengo Villagana** stands out as the most prominent residence in all of Sebino. It overlooks the lake and faces Montisola.

FROM VICTORIES TO TRAGEDY

Francesco Bussone, known as **Carmagnola**, served Milan as an able condottiere and he captured Genoa in 1422. Then he raised his sword against Milan, leading the Venetian militia to the victorious battle of Maclodio (1427). This marked the conquest of the Brescia territory, where Venice gave him numerous possessions as compensation. Thereafter he suffered a series of defeats because of his fading luck or to please his old Milanese friends. The Venetians accused him of treason and executed him in 1432. Alessandro Manzoni revived his popularity by dedicating a tragedy to him in 1820.





The **Parish church of St. Zeno** (18th C.) is dedicated to the Saint who, according to the tradition, protected the fishermen. It was erected with claim to stateliness, imitating the New Cathedral of Brescia, a project by Caniano, embellished in 1870, when

the coastal road was built. It has a marble flight of steps designed by the architect Carlo Melchioti.



Ora et labora on the borders of the Torbiere

The Monastery of **St. Peter in Lamas** has very old origins and was built where there probably was once a pagan temple dedicated to the oriental god Misters, who personified the Sun. The Romanesque bastilles, which are still visible at the sides of the central apse, belong to the original church, which in 1083 was donated to the Cluniac monks. They gave the monastery its present appearance (12th C.). It was the task of the local Cluniac monks to give offering to the poor and lodging to the pilgrims, but with the loosening of control by the mother-house of Cluny, episodes of “bad government” increased: in 1261, prior Giovanni, acquired too many debts and dealt with them by carelessly

renting the property of the monastery. He also appointed some monks who had interests other than that of following the Benedictine rule of “ora et labora”.

In 1536 the monastery became property of the canon regulars of St. Salvatore in Brescia. The church was enlarged with the addition (1555) of the chapel left of the portal. The umbrella shaped vault is frescoed with images of the Evangelists and Doctors of the Church and, in the lunettes, Sybils and Prophets.

Among the frescoes there is one dated 1456, representing abbot St. Anthony between St. Benedict and St. Peter the Martyr, with a Gothic dedication. Below this, there is a Deposition in which we note a “Nordic” cross, made from a horizontal beam supported by two posts.

(For information: Amici del Monastero, c/o Battista Simonini, tel. 030983477 - 3494118434)



Rising from the lake fishermen's mountain

One the biggest lake islands in Europe is a mountain which rises 400 metres from the water and is dominated by a sanctuary with a view which embraces both ends of the lake - The thousand year old art of weaving fishing nets

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Fishermen throw their nets made in **MONTE ISOLA** not only into lake Iseo, but also into the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian seas. Perhaps the

Cluniac monks started this tradition around the year 1000 AD on the small island of St. Paul. This production is still flourishing. They still fish here and you can easily find fish laid out to dry.



Monte Isola is the biggest lake island in Europe. On the top (404 metres on the lake), the white sanctuary of the **St. Maria della Ceriola** stands out. It was erected in

ancient times on the remains of a sacred pagan building. You can walk there from Cure (there is a bus link to Peschiera Maraglio). The building took its present form in the 16th C. The bell tower, partly made of granite, is from 1750. **The wooden statue of St. Mary** on the altar is much venerated: it was given a gold crown offered by the women of the island in 1924, in the presence of five bishops. The fresco of Ecce Homo, attributed to Giovanni da Marone, appeared in 1815 thanks to a hole opened by a thunderbolt in an interior

THE FOUR BONFIRES OF THE SISTERS

An old legend from at least three centuries ago says that around 1200 four sisters lived on Sebino. Excited by stories about hermits, they decided to go into recluse to venerate the Vergin in the most isolated parts along the coast: one on mount Conche, another in St. Mary of the Giogo, the third at the top of Parzanica and the fourth at the top of Montisola, where Ceriola is now. To communicate their survival to each other, they lit bonfires once a year. This intrigued the people and inspired them to build four chapels thus continuing the worship of the St. Mary in those places.

column of the façade.



The **Rocca Martinengo** was built by the Oldofredis, a powerful Ghibelline family, perhaps before 1300. It looms over Sensole where you arrive on foot from Menzino. The highest tower is unusually placed in the center of the castle, which is surrounded by a moat. In spite of its warlike look, the Martinengos





transformed it into a pleasant residence after the mid-15th century.

One characteristic of the island is its numerous houses with their elegant upper level balconies. This style is common in Peschiera Maraglio and the **fortified Oldofredi house** is no exception. It sits at the exit of the town going to Sensole. Today it exhibits a portico and above that a balcony. Next to it, facing the lake, there is another construction with a Gothic portal.

You can get to the island by a frequent ferry service from Sulzano to Peschiera Maraglio, or from Sale Marasino to Carzano. You can take a trip around the island by bus or bicycle (rentals in Peschiera and Carzano).



Romanino: the sacred and the grotesque

From a taste for comedy and caricature with which Romanino narrates in his frescoes in Pisogne, the world where the Redeemer has descended, to the Gothic stateliness of the saints painted by Giovanni da Marone in Cislano di Zone



Bishop Tower made of rough-hewn stone, 32,6 metres high, symbolic of the village. Here in 1299 the Commune acknowledged the property rights of the Pisogne court to the bishop Berardo Maggi, with the autho-

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PISOGNE is the gate to the Camonica Valley. In the 13th C the lumber trade flourished and in the 17th C Lombardic gunsmiths purchased semifinished parts for armours and guns. The

Brescia Commune considered Pisogne strategically important against the Ghibellines from the Camonica Valley.



To this is also owed the construction (1250) of the

The masterpiece by Girolamo Romani known as Romanino

Pierpaolo Pasolini saw in Girolamo Romani, known as Romanino, “an international painter, who flourished in the alpine valleys”. Giovanni Testori described him as “the greatest, the sternest and most trivial among painters in art dialect in every region and every time”.

The art of Romanino is drawn from fine tools and technique thanks to his training in Venice and his contact with Giorgione, Giovanni and the young Titian. His “dialectal” characteristic, his representa-

tion of the humblest people in comic-grotesque taste in searching for defects and ugliness, are expressed here in a particular way. He was distant from a culture that, in trying to set esthetic rules, was already aimed at mannerism. Romanino feels the strength of the message contained in religious themes.

He wants to bring common people closer to this message making them protagonists of his representations. So the scene becomes dramatic and tormenting, as romantic as lake and mountain landscapes. The vigour of his brush strokes, at times rushed, explains imperfection and awkwardness which add life to the scene.

The painter was in his prime when, in 1532-34, he painted frescoes in PISOGNE, in the church of **St.**





rity to hang, blindfold or whip rebels. For visiting: tel. 0364880856 (library).



The art treasure of Pissogne is the great series of

frescoes by Romanino in **St. Mary of the Snow** (see box below) on the street at the foot of the hill towards the hamlet of Fraine.

The oldest church in

Mary of the Snow. His *Passion Story* culminates in the *Crucifixion* on the counter-façade. Here is the frightened dog which looks out from between the hind legs of a horse. And next to them there are three men throwing dice for Jesus' clothes. On the vault there are *Prophets and Sybils*.

The church has a nave which goes back to the 15th C. The portal - like others in the nearby Camonica Valley - is made of pink sandstone, decorated in bas-relief. An old statue of St. Mary with the Baby Jesus is in the lunette. The frescoes under the external arches on the sides are attributed to Giovanni da Marone (15th C.).

Visiting hours: Tue/Sun 9.30 - 11.30 and 15.00 - 18.00, Mon closed; information and guided tours booking: Mr Ivo Remoli Tel. 3384867720 and the adjoining "S. Maria della Neve" rest house tel. 0364860411 .



Romanino: the sacred...

Pisogne is the Parochial Church of **St. Mary in Silvius**. Its history goes back to the 8th C. It was reconstructed in 1485 and its portal is very much like that of St. Mary of the Snow. The frescoes by Giovanni da Marone were whitewashed at the end of the 16th C by St. Carlo Borromeo and were brought to light in 1933. The *macabre Dance* and a Da Cemmo's cycle of frescoes are particularly interesting. The church is open on Sundays, 16.30-18.

Information: Parish of St. Mary of the Assumption, tel. 036486535 - 330765334.

The centre of the town,

ARCHITECTS IN DISCORD

In 1768, Antonio Marchetti planned the parish in Pisogne which is dedicated to St. Mary of the Assumption. Later he accused Pietro Antonio Cetti, executor of work, of having altered the original plans. The abbot Gaspare Turbini was called to complete the church. Although he had been a student of Marchetti, he made other changes, softening the solemnity in the original design.



which preserves the atmosphere of another time, is dominated by the massive-ness of the 18th C **Parish of St. Mary of the Assumption**.

The old parish of MARONE dedicated to **St. Peter in Vinculis** (15th C), is on a rock spur in Vesto and takes the place of a Castle destroyed in the 13th C. From here we walk up the steep Via Crucis. From the summit the view embraces the coast almost to Iseo.

Remains of a **roman villa** of the 1st c. at Co de Hela spot.



The Sanctuary of **St. Mary of the Rota** (16th C) is named after a cliff where there is a rock in the shape of a big wheel. There we follow the signs for Zone. The building contains paintings by three local artists: in fact it englobes a small 15th C church with frescoes by Giovanni da Marone and in a more recent church there are works by Pietro da Marone and Pompeo Ghitti.

Giovanni da Marone also frescoed the interior and exterior of the **Church of the cemetery in Vello**, which is a fishing village where there begins a spectacular stretch



of a few kilometres along the old lake road, now transformed into a cycling route.

For information contact Pro Loco of Marone, c/o town hall, tel. 030987104.



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ITINERARY





sculpture of Christ's Sepulchre (1691), by Andrea Fantoni.

To visit the two churches contact the parish priest, tel. 0309870918.



The art of Giovanni da Marone can be admired in **ZONE**, located in the hamlet of Cislano at the entrance of the town (near the famous **Pyramids of erosion**), where you can find the striking **St. George's Church** (see box below). Continuing towards the town we note the small

Church of **St. Hippolytus and St. Casciano** (end of the 15th C) which is preceded by chapels on Via Crucis. There are paintings inside by the Ferramola school and a sculpture of the Virgin attributed to Pietro Ramus. The parish church of **St. Giovanni** preserves a wooden full-size



Giovanni da Marone: dear saints of the people

In St. George of Cislano there is a rich and varied example of "votive" frescoes. They were done on commission from the faithfuls who, in paying the artist, kept their vows to St. Mary or to another saint in exchange for favours received. There was no planned pictorial whole: images of the most "coined" saints and Madonnas were repeated one

not far from the other.

Here on the right there are three St. Marys on the external walls, where there is also a big St. George and the dragon.

On the outside, there are other sacred subjects (among which the Nativity). The church which already existed in the 12th C, was restored in the 15th C.

It is open everyday from Easter to September, 9-17.



Franciacorta

To those who cross the wide plain, Franciacorta offers an unmatched view of the morainic hills, often covered with vineyards which surround the sumptuous residences of Brescia's nobility.

The roots of the thriving cultivation run deep in the land patiently reclaimed by the Cluniac monks, who arrived here circa 1000 AD. The wines, appreciated since ancient times, blend stolen "fizzy" secrets from the French tradition with flavours of the local soil.

At the threat of danger, the hardworking inhabitants sought refuge in the castles next to the villages. The walls are made of morainic cobblestones as are the enclosure walls which still separate the fields.



TOURIST INFORMATION
www.provincia.brescia.it/turismo

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A BRIEF HISTORY

Prehistoric remains have been discovered in the Torbiere (peat moss pits). In Coccaglio in the Bronze Age there was a prehistoric castle. Among the numerous findings of the Roman era, an architrave with the inscription "Caesar" was discovered in Erbusco and embedded in a wall, in the end of the 1400s, at the Monte di Pietà (pawnshop) in Brescia.

Rovato, Erbusco and Ospitaletto do not agree on the ancient name "Tetellum", which refers to a change station in the "Burdigalense" Charter (IV cent. AD). Many centres in Franciacorta boast of Lombard origins; the fertile soil was reclaimed with Benedictine alacrity.

In 1265 the revolt, which ended with the expulsion of the Angevins, started in Rovato. Other episodes of a proud population were recorded during the period of the Lansquenets: in 1529, the farmers of Capriolo rebelled against the abuses of power killing and throwing mercenaries into a ravine.

The pleasant hills of Franciacorta, where vineyards cultivate celebrated wines, were chosen by noble families who built grandiose villas here.

The pounding of the hammer among the echoes of prayer

The 15th century power hammer of the Averoldi in Ome - Among the frescoes in Cerezzata there is a coat of arms of the Montini family of which Paul VI was a member - The pope from the Brescia region made the Olivetans return to San Nicola of Rodengo

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ITINERARY



The battlemented tower of the **St. Nicolas Abbey** in **RODENGO SAIANO** (see box on the page 20) looms over the plain at the foot of the Prealps, where main roads meet today (sp 19 and sp BS 510).



In the hamlet of CORNETO from the road you can see **Villa Fenaroli**, erected in the 18th C, but remodeled at the end of the 19th C by the archi-

tect Antonio Tagliaferri in the eclectic neo-baroque taste of that period.



Just after the turn off for Monticelli Brusati, in the **OME** territory, at the foot of the mountain, the **Hammer of**

the Averoldis, dating back to the 15th C, pounded until a few decades ago: the descendants of the same family worked there for centuries. The hammer has been restarted and it is now open to visitors. For information and



A LAZY PRIOR

Corradino Caprioli, from a noble family, was eighteen when his mother purchased his priorship in Rodengo by paying a hundred gold ducats to the Cardinal Romano Giordano Orsini. The young man was not born to be a monk. He wasted the monastery revenues, denied the poor their usual charity, neglected mass services and church functions. He transformed the church, instead, into a stable and invited relatives and friends to banquets and orgies. The people of Rodengo protested to Venice (1437), but Corradino's high-ranking relations assured him protection against the "slander". Pope Eugene IV, of the Condulmer family, was also from Venice. He fought against the excesses of the clergy and on October 21, 1445 he dismissed Corradino and gave the abbey to the Olivetans.

noble coat of arms characterised by three rakes on a red background placed above the mountains: this belongs to the Montini family, from which Pope Paul VI descended. The very ancient statue of St. Mary inspired by the Byzantine style, is made of painted stone: the legend has it that it appeared in a split boulder which can be seen next to the entrance of the church.

Another "gallery" of votive frescoes from this period is in **MONTICELLI BRUSATI**, the Sanctuary of **St. Mary of the Mountain (or of the Rose)**.



The provincial road, sp 19, has an exit at **GUSSAGO**



groups booking tel.
0309280022.



Not far from here is a road sign for the sanctuary of **St. Mary of Avello** in the hamlet of **CEREZZATA**. The apse and the bell tower go back to the year 1000 AD. The present church is from the 15th C and the votive frescoes that completely cover the walls are from the same period or from the following century. The careful observer can note among them a



The pounding of the hammer

just next to the **Parish of St. Mary** which dates back to the year 1000 AD. It was rebuilt around 1470 with a beautiful Renaissance portal sculpted in bas-relief "a candelabra".

The apse is polygonal, placed on the older semi-circular one. Some of the frescoes on the inside are attri-

buted to "Maestro di Nave" or to Paolo da Caylina il Vecchio. The marble ambo goes back

perhaps to the 8th C. This fragment from a barbaric sarcophagus, called Pulpit of Mayorans is a slab divided in two by a column. A knight and various Christian symbols are

represented: the sheep with a cross, the lion and the grapes, peacocks and the universe (eight circles with roses and stars inside). The slab is named after "Mavi orans".



The rebirth of an ancient abbey

Founded in the 10th C by Otto of Cluny, the **St. Nicolas Abbey** was run by the Olivetan monks from 1446 until its suppression in the Napoleonic period (1797). Since 1969 the Olivetans have returned to Rodengo thanks to Pope Paul VI, who was born in nearby Concesio and thus was well aware of the deterioration of the Abbey. Their dream: to give new splendour to the abbey, which through the centuries was stripped of important art treasures, some of which can be found in the Brescia Picture gallery.

The present structure is mainly owed to the enlargements desired by the Olivetans in the second half of the 15th C. The cloisters were

probably completed within this century: the western one is older; the southern one is from the end of the 15th C with decorated glazed tiles; the one that was known as Cisterna, adjoining the church, was rebuilt from 1560-70 (because of enlargement on the upper level).

In 1496 friar Raffaele from Brescia, known as Roberto da Marone the inlayer, entered the monastery. He created the book-stand - following a plan by Romanino - today in custody at the Brescia Picture gallery; to him we owe thanks also for the door to the sagrestia (the vault was frescoed by Gian Giacomo Barbelli in the 17th C). The choir marquetry, however, are by Cristoforo Rocchi (1480). In the same church there is an altar piece by Moretto representing Saints Peter and Paul.

The central part of the monastery visit is in the refectory, at the rear of which there is a





In Gussago, on Barbarino Hill stands the church of the SS Trinità, known as La Santissima. In the town centre there are posh country residences of noble families

from Brescia. Also in **CELLATICA**, in the **Parish of St. George** from the 16th C, we can admire the big painting of *St. George on a horse and the dragon* (1663), which

Francesco Paglia himself declared to be his masterpiece. The Santuario della Stella which stands out above the hills, houses a Romanino's altar-piece.



Crucifixion by the Foppa school. The perspectives by Tommaso Sandrini, in the big vault, had great space for expression. The antirefectory is frescoed by Lattanzio Gambara (16th C) with an Apocalyptic Scene on the vault and twenty-three Bible Scenes on the walls. Gambara was the great

Romanino's son-in-law, whose frescoes are in the Guestroom Refectory whose sinopites are now in the Brescia Picture gallery.

The Abbey is always open. For information, Padri Olivetani, tel. 030610182.



Medieval architecture in the hills

An atmosphere between Medieval and Renaissance on the streets of Erbusco - The noble residences were erected on fortification sites in Calino and Bornato - Morainic stones were used to build the square shaped castle wall of Passirano

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The buildings in the centre of **ERBUSCO** offer the visitor an architectural ensemble that clearly recalls two historical pasts of the town: the medieval one around **St. Mary's Parish** (see box) and

that of the Renaissance, between the church and the imposing Villa Lechi, in which there has been inserted the majestic 18th C parish.



The other jewel in Erbusco is **Villa Lechi**, built



on arches between the XVI and XVII C in a style that reminds us of Palladio. The "U" shaped arcade and the towering loggia enclose the Italian garden. This, at one time, extended to the gate, which today goes beyond the road where the land begins to drop towards the plain. The building underwent modifications around 1830.

In the territory of **CAZ-ZAGO SAN MARTINO**, we find other refined residences. The Calini family in **CALINO**

SIXTY YEARS OF DAMAGE

It has been said that to preserve the original forms of ancient monuments, there are long periods of decay to consider, in which there is a lack of resources to reconstruct, enlarge and restructure. At times, however, the decay becomes degrading and the buildings suffer humiliation and abuse. The parish of Erbusco ceased to be the parish of the town at the beginning of the 18th C, but it was not until 1870 that it was abandoned as a place of worship. It became the property of the Municipality which transformed it first into a theatre, then degraded it to a warehouse, a horse stable, and a manure deposit. During the first world war, it even housed Austrian prisoners. Finally in 1928, the parish was entrusted to the "Superintendency of medieval and modern art", which restored it.



The unmistakable taste of Gentile da Fabriano

The Parish of St. Mary, rebuilt in Roman-Gothic style in the 13th C, presents, on the outside, the pure white perfectly squared ashlars of the polygonal apse (nine narrow sides separated by a semi-column), which was constructed around the internal semi-circular one. The ancient origin of the parish is testified by some fragments from a pluteus made of grey sandstone from Sarnico and with floral motifs and two pre-Roman animals (IX-X C). The capitals

are of Gothic style. After the reconstruction in 1408, there followed the finish work in frescoes, some of which are attributed for their architectonic framing of backgrounds, to the Gentile da Fabriano school. He was a painter who also worked in Brescia, where he was called upon precisely in those years of brief rule by Pandolfo Malatesta. Among the 15th C subjects: *St. Mary with the Baby Jesus*, *The Annunciation*, *The Crucifixion*, *St. Orsola*. There is also *St. Nazaro* signed in 1524 by Venturino Pontoglio. Do not miss the Madonna roughly sculpted in sandstone. The Parish is open everyday, 9-18. For information Tel. 03037760291.



Medieval architecture

built various residences in the 16th C which later passed over to the Maggi family. The biggest (**The Grand Calini-Maggi Palace**) can be spotted from a distance for its solid look. It is supported by the strong walls of a previous 14th C building with defensive structures.

When Aymo Maggi was a pioneer of the Mille Miglia, automobile champions came to meet at the palace.

In the centre of the

town, there is the **small Calini-Maggi della Gradella Palace** with its sober Renaissance lines. Some buildings as such cannot be visited.

In order to have an idea of the lavish interior of these Calini residences, you can venture to the nearby parochial oratory (once **Palace of the Cedar**) to admire the grand fireplace and, on the ceiling, the poorly kept, but very distinguishable perspectives, which contain *Scenes of Cleopatra's life*, frescoed by Pietro Marone (1601).



Let's go to the nearby hamlet of BORNATO. The **Castle of Bornato** is a very rare example of a Renaissance villa (16th C) built inside a medieval castle (13th C). This gives elegance to the stronghold, which transfers to the villa its predominating position. The history of this place goes back centuries: it used to be a Roman fortress



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(Booking Tel. 030725006).

Not far from here there are picturesque ruins of the **Parish of Bornato**, built about the year 1000 AD, remodelled to its present form in the 18th C and abandoned in the end.



Entering **PASSIRANO** you find a well preserved

Castle (14th C), with a massive square tower, enclosed by four tall and solid walls made of stones and big visible rocks. It has no window, but a few rare slits. The stone battlements were built during a 19th C reconstruction, when the owners transformed the modest hovels into stables, garages and housing for the servants.

on the consular road to Bergamo. About 1270 Inverardo da Bornato strengthened the castle with a circle of 300 metres of battlemented walls, towers, a moat and a draw bridge. From here, in 1436, Antonio Martinengo, leader from Brescia at the service of Venice, directed attacks that brought victory over the Milanese militia. In 1562 the castle was ceded to the Gandini family, whose coat of arms is at the entrance. They built the villa, where you can admire frescoes from the 17th and 19th centuries.

The castle is opened to the public and can be visited from Easter to November on Sundays and the other holidays, 10am-12am and 14.30pm-18pm. For groups it is always open

A REFUGE DURING THE DANGER

It seems that the need of defense against the incursions from the Hungarians is responsible for the building of the castle - like many others elsewhere. The hordes of invaders and looters coming from the East stormed through all the Carolingian territories, Italy included, from 898 to 955, when they were defeated in Lechfeld by Emperor Otto I. In 935 they attacked Brescia, which held its ground. There is no evidence, but probably the Hungarians went to Franciacorta as well. In fact the castle is the typical "communal shelter", where the Passirano inhabitants were hosted in case of danger.



An unconquered people in the shade of the convent

Also in Rovato there were "Sicilian vespers"
- From Mount Orfano a visitor to the convent of the Annunciation can have a wide open view of the plain - St. Stephen's frescoes - The Roman tower of Coccaglio



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Similarly to what happened in Sicily 17 years earlier, also **ROVATO** had (November 9, 1265) its rebellion "vespers" against the French Angevin House. The few ruins of the Castle, of which you can recognise three keeps (15th C) in the town centre, are witness to the warlike pride of the little town, the origin of which is ancient, perhaps even Roman.

One of the greatest painters of the 16th century from the Brescia territory was from Rovato: **Moretto's House** - as written on a plaque - is next to the **town hall**, which is also an old building: a Gothic window was brought to light during recent restructuring.



The **Parish of St. Mary of the Assumption** (16th C, remodeled to the neoclassical style of the 19th C), houses two paintings by Palma il Giovane: the *Last Supper*



which decorates the 18th C chapel of the Blessed Sacrament is rich in silver, marbles and ebony. Next to the church entrance is the wooden *Crucifixion* by Andre Fantoni. The church houses San Carlo Borromeo's relics.



The architect Rodolfo Vantini designed the arcades (1838) that surround **Cavour square**. Just outside of the centre going to Iseo we find the 17th C **Porcellaga-Quistini Palace** which looks almost like a castle with its rounded little corner tower and the more imposing tower with four levels. It also houses a rose nursery. For information tel. 3208519177.



recognisable from a distance by its big double arcade which dominates the plain.



On ex highway ss 11 not far from Rovato is **COCCAGLIO** which was a Roman "castrum". The **Roman tower** which you can see in the centre of the town (I cent.BC) from the road, was englobed by a surrounding medieval wall.



THE FIRST STEPS OF THE CARDINAL

In October 1580 St. Carlo Borromeo stayed in Rovato and in the church of St. Stephen gave tonsure and ecclesiastical clothes to his nephew, the famous "cardinal Federico" whose anointed figure glows in "The Betrothed" by Alessandro Manzoni.



The church of **St. Stephen** (13th C) with remarkable 15th C frescoes, attributed to Foppa, can be found on the road to Mount Orphan.



On Monte Orfano we find the **Convent of the Annunciation** (see box)

The sculpted capitals of the cloister

The Servites placed the first stone of the **Convent of the Annunciation** on April 6, 1449. The church was completed in 1503

and the cloister was erected at the same time. The cloister's bas-reliefs of the capitals are noteworthy. In the church's choir, next to other older ones one can admire frescoes from the first half of the 16th C (*the Annunciation and two Prophets*), by Romanino and his school. There are other frescoes from the preceding century on the walls. For information: Frati Servi di Maria, tel. 0307703360.



Colours of promises to God in the small medieval churches

St. Mary in Favento: a small church made big by the faith of the people who painted its walls - Nigoline: English, Armenian and Rumenian names on the nobles' tombs around the frescoes by Floriano Ferramola

the castle must have appeared more looming and imposing. The circle of walls was much more extensive and perhaps the well preserved tower among the houses under the hill was part of it. It was only meant as a defense, not as a residence: there were only three habitable rooms.

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The town of **PARATICO** was defended by an important **Castle**, built in the 13th C. Its ruins can still be seen, from a

distance, on top of a little hill on the right of the road to Capriolo. When - according to legend - in 1311 the local Princes Lantieri hosted Dante,



During the Middle Ages, the Lantieris, the Ochis and the Paraticos were the nobles in **CAPRIOLO**. The **Castle**, built before the year 1000 AD to defend the Brescia border on the Oglio river from the attacks from Bergamo, has been a nunnery since the end of the 17th C and at present you can recognise its defensive origin only by its massiveness which stands out over the town. You can get there with a climbing-walk along the steep via Castello: you will find elegant palaces (16th C) and older mighty residences, built with rough-hewn masses of stone, with heavy portals made of local stones such as the green one from Sarnico.





On the lower side of town, there is the **Parish of St. George**, rebuilt at the end of the 19th C, where a *Resurrection* by Romanino glows in one of the chapels on the right. The *Martyrdom of St. Gervase and St. Protase* by Callisto Piazza is noteworthy, as well.



The town hall of **ADRO** is in the **Bargani Dandolo Palace** (17th C), which

hosted such celebrities as Cavour, Boito and Verdi. Next to it is the **Bargani small Church**, with an unusual elliptical shape. Next to the sacristy of the parish church there is a Holy Art Museum, open sat-sun. 16.00-17.00 (summers); 15-18 (winter). For information tel. 0307356280 (Mr. Fortunato Ferretti).

The Sanctuary of the **St. Mary of Snow** (18th C) is considered as one of the abbot-architect Gaspare

Turbini's masterpieces. It is in the hamlet of **TORBIATO**, with a central plan with a dome, erected on top of a small church, which recalled the miraculous apparition of the St. Mary to a deaf-mute.



The frescoes in the small Sanctuary of **St. Mary in Favento** (see box on the page 31) are the little big treasure of the town.

The four hamlets (Timoline, Borgonato, Nigoline and Colombaro) that form **CORTE FRANCA** encompass the hillsides, which maintain



Colours of promises...

the mild lake climate in a large hollow. Here, among the vineyards, we find villas and palaces erected in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries by the nobles from Brescia. In BORGONATO there is **Lana-Berlucchi's Palace**, formed by two main parts (16th C) with an elegant little loggia that you can see from the road. The Queen of Cyprus, Catherine Cornaro, lived here in 1497. In her court in Asolo, she hosted major men of letters of the time. At Nigoline



you can visit **Palazzo Torri**, a fortified residence of the 17th c., with a beautiful garden with old-aged trees. In the 19th c. it was the seat of a literary and artistic circle where different artists such as Pascoli, Fogazzaro and Carducci, used to meet. It is open from April to September, on Sundays 15-18; the rest of the year on booking. For information tel. 0309828247 - 3355467191.



On the slopes of a high-ground, in the NIGOLINE cemetery, is the Church of **St. Euphemia** (before the year 1000 AD, rebuilt in the 15th C). In ancient times it was an annexe to the Iseo parish and later it became the first parish in Nigoline. The frescoes on the walls are by the refined artist Floriano Ferramola: in the apse there are episodes of the *Life and Martyrdom of*

CORTE FRANCA OR FRANCIACORTA?

The name Corte Franca is recent (1928) in this municipal district. It probably goes back to the medieval custom of exempting certain rural courts (*cortes francae*, i.e. free) from paying taxes to support the land reclamation. The name Franciacorta officially appears for the first time in a 1277 document and it is probably of this origin. But historians, throughout the centuries, gave it various different meanings, for which "corta" means "short". Jacopo Malvezzi (1412) says that Charlemagne, King of the Franks, camped in Rodengo in 774 before conquering Brescia. Elia Capriolo (1505) added that Charlemagne himself had sworn that he would celebrate the coming St. Denis' Day in France. Blocked by the prolonged war, "he brought France to him", named the place Franciacorta and celebrated the event there. Others claimed that in this area the Angevin militia lasted a short time because of the popular rebellion in 1265. The humanist Ubertino Posculo (1458) tells us how historical the fame of the local wines is and claims that the name derives from the fact that the Franciacorta vineyards resemble those of France.

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St. Euphemia. In the central fresco the Saint appears between the bishop St. Martin and another character, who could be the deacon St. Laurence or St. Faustino. In 1702 other older frescoes were discovered under the

strange plaster of the reconstruction in baroque style. In the nave and in the cemetery there are nobles' tombs, on which we can read names of representatives of the English, Rumanian and Armenian aristocracy. They were brought

over to be buried by the international relatives of the barons Monti della Corte and by the earls Zappola. For information: Parish, tel. 0309826110.



The long horse and the marble cloak

At present the little church of **St. Mary in Favento** seems to be isolated on the North-East outskirts of the village. Actually the Roman consular road to the Camonica Valley passed by here. The building (13th C), is a little less than four metres wide and twelve metres long, but the simple architectural harmony and the colour effects of the frescoes give it an unexpected grandeur. Among the frescoes (15th and 16th C), the one of the triumphal arch (*Annunciation* and *Trinity*) is the most significant from an artistic point of view. *St. George killing the dragon* (possibly from the end of the 14th C) is the most picturesque. Its style is almost Byzantine, with a white steed with an unusually long body. In such a way the painter meant to give the idea of running; a movement which makes the cloak flap, although it is stiff as it were made of marble.

For information and booking, tel.: 0307356570.



Artistic historical itineraries: Lake Iseo and Franciacorta

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Sanctuary of the Ceriola in Monte Isola



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Frescos by Romanino in St. Maria della Neve in Pisogne



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Monastery of St. Pietro in Lamosa in Provaglio of Iseo



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St. Nicola Abbey in Rodengo



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Frescos by the Gentile da Fabriano school in the Parish of Erbusco



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1400s frescos in St. Maria in Favento di Adro



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Convent of the Annunziata on Mount Orfano



The series of the **ARTISTIC HISTORICAL ITINERARIES OF THE BRESCIA TERRITORY** is composed of **1** Brescia and the surrounding area (Trompia Valley and the plain): itineraries 1 to 6 **2** Lake Garda and the Sabbia Valley: itineraries 7 to 12 **3** Lake Iseo and Franciacorta: itineraries 13 to 19 **4** The Camonica Valley: itineraries 20 to 26