



COMUNE DI  
**VARESE**

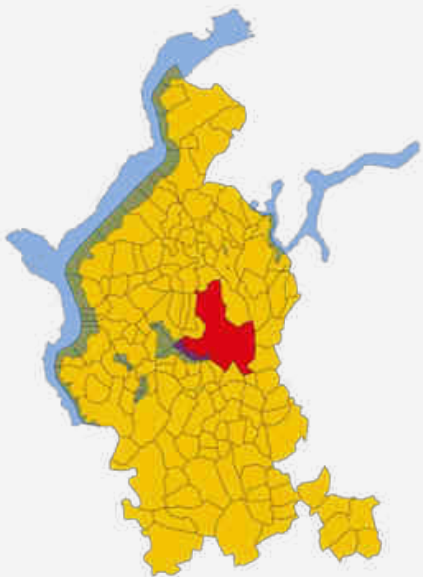
# Discover **VARESE**





# Discover Varese

*Estense Palace and Gardens*



Varese, capital since 1927 of the province of the same name located in north-western Lombardy, on the border with Switzerland. The city, located at the foot of the Campo dei Fiori massif, lies at the center of an area rich in rivers, lakes and pre-Alpine hills with valleys, woods and hills surrounding the small plain where the first ancient settlement arose.

Already a prehistoric settlement and an important site in Roman times, in the Middle Ages Varese saw the advent of numerous fortified structures on the hills which took the name of Castellanze and the Borgo became an important mercantile, political and religious centre, a meeting place between people beyond the Alps and those living on the plain, given its strategic position on the routes towards the Duchy of Milan.

The city, whose history is intertwined with the vicissitudes of the Visconti and Sforza families, has however always maintained its autonomy and in 1538 it obtained from the Emperor Charles V the privilege of never being enfeoffed.

In the following century, dominated by the Spaniards, a renewed economic development linked to the religious events of the Counter-Reformation, favored a strong increase in artistic production, the construction of the Sacro Monte above Varese and the renovation of many Varese churches under the attentive supervision of the high Milanese prelates, Carlo and Federico Borromeo.

In the eighteenth century there was the development of noble "villerecci" settlements in Varese which replaced those "hunting lodges" which centuries earlier were places of leisure for the Milanese lords. Luxurious and elegant villas with gardens sprawled in the Castellanze thus creating a real "Civiltà di Villa".

Thanks to this situation, in 1765 Francesco III d'Este, former Governor of Milan for Maria Theresa of Austria, chose Varese as the seat of his Court, becoming the first and only Lord of the city.

Subsequently, the urban fabric thickened, uniting the Borgo to the Castellanze, new villas at first and then residential buildings arose next to the historic villas, surrounded by greenery. The definition of "Varese garden city" dates back to this period, when it was elevated to the rank of city in 1816 and royal city in 1857.

Between the nineteenth and the twentieth century, thanks to the creation of rapid

## DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

### Varese has seven Hills

Colle di San Pedrino (402 m)

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Giubiano Hill (407 m)

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Campigli Hill (453 m)

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Colle di Sant'Albino (406 m)

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Colle di Biumo Superiore (439 m)

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Montalbano pass (411 m)

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Colle dei Miogni (492 m)

railway connections with Milan and the birth of an articulated tram network, new favorable implications opened up for the local industry, footwear, aeronautics, paper and tanning. A new type of tourism also developed, favoured by accommodation facilities, large luxury hotels and recreation centres, easily reachable through the innovative funicular systems.

Between the two wars, during the twenty years of the fascist regime, imposing buildings gave a new look to the city center with the creation of the large Piazza Monte Grappa and after the Second World War, the construction of new suburban districts made the city territory more varied and discontinuous.

Varese has preserved over time those values that have always characterized it and that are worth a visit.

## DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

The first motorway in Europe was built between Varese and Milan in the early 1920s.

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In 1925, the toll on the Milan-Varese section was 9 lire for motorcycles, 12 lire for vehicles up to 17 horsepower, 17 lire for vehicles between 17 and 26 horsepower, 20 lire for vehicles over 26 horsepower and from 40 to 60 lire for buses.

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In 1926 there were 421,406 vehicle passages, with a daily average of 1,115 units.





Scan the  
QR Code  
to view the map  
of Varese



Civic Tower



Estense Palace

# Old Town

An ancient village in a small plain defined by the bend of the river Vellone, encircled by low walls with six gates and surrounded by the Castellanze. This is the ancient Varese that we are still able to identify in the current Historic Center that we are about to visit.

Let's start from the heart of the city, **Piazza Monte Grappa**, opened in the 1930s after the demolition of a medieval quarter and the ancient Piazza Porcari. A large square with a fountain, defined by

imposing porticoed buildings and the presence of the **Civic Tower** (photo) in the clear style of the fascist era, built to give a suitable appearance and representation to the new province capital. From Piazza Monte Grappa we can choose three visit itineraries:

1. PALAZZO ESTENSE through Via Marconi
2. BORGO starting from Corso Matteotti
3. PIAZZA DELLA MOTTA behind the Fountain from Via Carrobbio.

## → THE ESTENSE PALACE AND ITS PARK

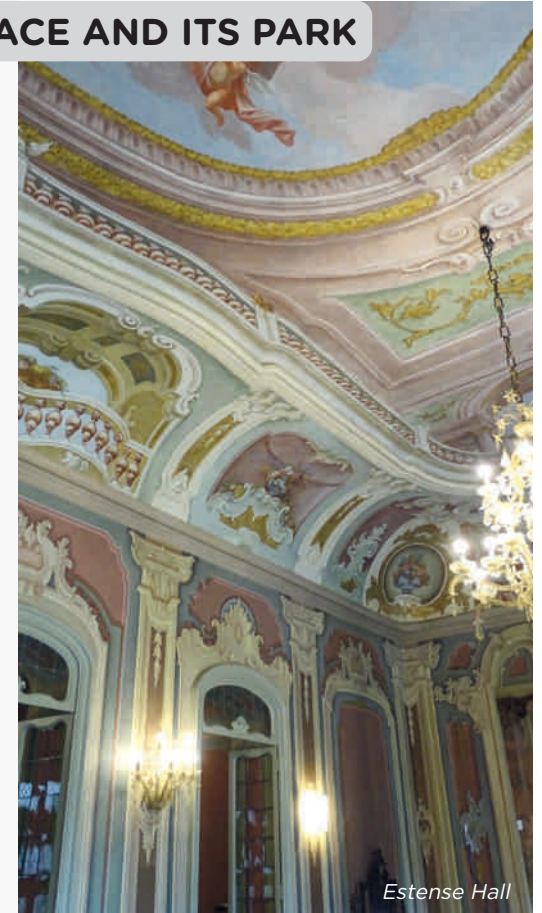
In the past, the way out of the Borgo, heading towards the lakes (Varese and Maggiore), was through Porta Campagna, so named after the mere presence of meadows and fields, and after passing a bridge over the Vellone, a stream now covered by the current Via Veratti, one entered the Strada Verbana, today Via Sacco.

Even today, in a few minutes we can reach this road and there immediately appears the long pink façade of Palazzo Estense, now the seat of the Municipality. The complex was the "delight" residence of Francesco III d'Este, Duke of Reggio, Modena and Ferrara, Lord of Varese from 1766 to 1780, who placed his Court here with a large noble palace, the parts of which that are still well preserved are some fine rooms and a sumptuous Italian garden with strong French influences.

The stunning scenography of the garden layout arranged symmetrically along an axis view, starts from the entrance, crosses the Court of Honor and the large Parterre to reach the gushing fountain.

Behind it, the hill stands out as a backdrop, marked by avenues, radial stairways, grassy slopes and the nymphaeum.

Few plants are used, such as yew, boxwood and hornbeam, plants that are easy to prune and to model, in order to build a geometric garden according to the fashion of the time.



Estense Hall



To find out more about  
the Palace and Gardens,  
scan the QR Code





## → THE VILLAGE

**Corso Matteotti**, ancient central part of the Borgo, street of markets, shops and traffic, on the day of the ancient Motta market, on Mondays, goods were displayed under its measured arcades and in the open spaces small peculiar markets were formed so as to make the whole center a large animated and lively fair.

Even in these days the beautiful arcades and elegant shops characterize the Corso, a pedestrian area. Its so-called houses “a lista”, due to their different colors, line up on this road axis with elegant and sober façades, from different eras.

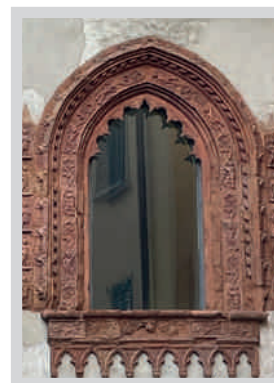
At the height of **Piazza del Podestà**, called by the people of Varese “del Garibaldino”, due to the statue that is placed there, the historic division between the political and religious spaces can be identified. On the left was the Palazzo del Pretorio, seat of the medieval municipality, transformed over the centuries into a noble residence, with its Broletto, today an elegant sixteenth-century court.

On the opposite side, with respect to the Corso, after passing the 19th-century Arco Mera, you find yourself facing the **Basilica of San Vittore**, the main church of the city, full of pictorial and plastic works clearly expressing the Counter-Reformation in Varese. The rich Chapel of the Rosary and the Chapel of the Maddalena with valuable frescoes and paintings by P. F. Mazzucchelli known as Morazzone, the altarpiece by G. B. Crespi known as Cerano in the Chapel of S. Gregorio.

A refined wooden group of Our Lady of Sorrows, the precious marble altarpiece surrounded by



San Vittore's Bell Tower



Gothic window



the eighteenth-century frescoes of the presbytery and the numerous stuccos make the interior precious and captivating. During the patronal feast (May 8), the evocative rite of the Faro is celebrated in the Basilica, a flaming cotton ball in memory of the martyrdom of Saint Victor.

Next to it the beautiful bell tower, symbol of Varese and known as “**il Bernascone**” from the name of the 17th century architect and designer.

In the shadow of the tower, **the Baptistery** of Saint John the Baptist, is the oldest monument in the Borgo, built in the 12th-13th century on a previous building. Inside, among the many works of art, is the octagonal immersion fountain of the VII-VIII century.

There are many frescoes by different masters and eras from the 13th to the 16th century. Flanking the Basilica, one enters a network of narrow streets and small squares where traces of architectural ornaments and frescoes emerge on the walls and in the vaulted halls that led into courtyards dating back to the 1400s and 1500s. From courtyard to courtyard, numerous passages made the houses communicating with each other, creating alternative routes to the main road axis.

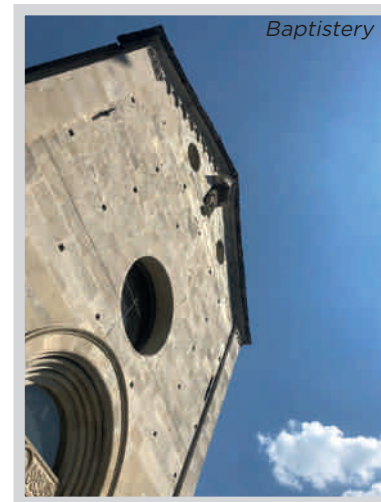
Significant examples are the **Case Perabò** with the beautiful Gothic window, in Via Albuzzi or the structure of one of the houses located at the end of the Borgo, in Piazza Carducci, or the internal and hidden courtyards with gardens, in Via San Martino.

At the end of this last street there is also another jewel, the **Church of San Martino**, a small sacred building, with important eighteenth-century frescoes by the Giovannini and A. Magatti workshop. Also in Via Cavallotti at the corner of Via Cattaneo, a

beautiful courtyard with a well and fifteenth-century portico.

Returning to Piazza Carducci, taking the Corso again, immediately on the right, you come across what used to be the **Convent of the Nuns of San Antonino**, a private residence today, which preserves a very elegant cloister with frescoed parts and the former refectory completely decorated with eighteenth-century frescoes, currently used as an exhibition space called Sala Veratti.

Returning to Piazza Monte Grappa, with a short path, you reach the **Church of San Giuseppe** with a refined eighteenth-century façade and an exuberant seventeenth-century internal decoration characterized by a precious wooden iconostasis.



Baptistry



## → PIAZZA MOTTA

From Piazza Monte Grappa, behind the fountain and next to the Chamber of Commerce building, Via Carrobbio opens up, which since the origin always led to Piazza del Mercato della Motta. The houses here show evidence of fifteenth-century paintings that tell us about noble families. On the square, the **Church of Sant'Antonio Abate** makes a fine show. Fifteenth-century in its structure, with alterations in the seventeenth century, it has magnificently frescoed interiors by G. Baroffio and by G. B. Ronchelli in the mid-eighteenth century.

In the churchyard, on the occasion of the Feast of Sant'Antonio (17 January), the famous Bonfire is lit on the evening of January 16th, it is traditional to insert messages with thoughts and wishes, which must remain secret for them to come true. On January 17th the blessing of the animals takes place outside the church of Sant'Antonio. The entrance to the Park of Villa Mirabello, which occupies the hill, a panoramic point towards the basin of Lake Varese and Monte Rosa.

*Villa Mirabello*



Precious essences of trees and monumental plants from all over the world, a gigantic ginkgo biloba, groups of camellias, magnolias, liquidambar, liriodendrons and various rare conifers. Among these stands out a majestic and unique cedar of Lebanon. This

park is contiguous to the Estense one and joined to it, so as to form the largest public park in the city.

Villa Mirabello houses the **Civic Museums** with spaces dedicated to the various sections such as the Prehistoric and the Roman ones, the Risorgimento

one with the pictorial masterpiece of Eleuterio Pagliano and other collections.

Temporary themed exhibitions are often hosted here.



*Cedar of Libanon*





# Castellanze



Villa Andrea Ponti

## → BIUMO INFERIORE

To the east, on the edge of the historic center, along Via Dandolo, you enter Biumo Inferiore. To welcome us, the elegant **Church of the Madonnina in Prato** which owes its name to the greenery that surrounded it.

The refined façade with a portico supported by two telamons leads into an admirably frescoed interior with illusionistic decorations in clear Baroque style.

Traces of a past nobility can still be admired along the streets of the ancient nucleus.

On Piazza XXVI Maggio stands the **Church of Saints Peter and Paul** with an airy eighteenth-century facade.

## → BIUMO SUPERIORE

The only one of the ancient castles to have kept the original character intact, thanks to the presence of numerous villas with parks hidden by high walls.

**Villa Menafoglio Litta Panza** overlooks Piazza Litta, now owned by the FAI.

A jewel of eighteenth-century architecture, the villa houses in its Baroque rooms, important Renaissance furnishings, pre-Columbian pieces and collections of contemporary American art.

In the Rustici, the Environmental and Conceptual Art excites and amazes the visitor. The large Italian-style park aligned with the villa, after the hornbeam tunnel, opens up with large green spaces and offers panoramic views over the city.

On the same square there is access to another historic park, the 19th-century **Ville Ponti**: Villa Andrea, an eclectic building with a Venetian flavor, preserves frescoes by G. Bertini and statues by O. Tabacchi and the neoclassical Villa Fabio known as “la Napoleonica”, today an important congress center of the Chamber of Commerce of Varese. At the top of the hill, incorporated in a building, a medieval tower testifies to the presence of a fortress, next to it the current Church of San Giorgio which hides inside a grandiose scenographic apparatus frescoed by G. Baroffio and P. A. Magatti and a precious carved gilded wooden altarpiece from the Castelli di Velate workshop.

## → BOSTO

To the south, at the top, is the castle of Bosto. In an urban fabric altered by modernity, the small **Church of Saint Imerio** shows its simple Romanesque layout, inside a stone sarcophagus of extraordinary interest, which serves as an altar.



Villa Panza





## GIUBIANO

Located on the hill above the Stations, the old nucleus has now lost its primary characteristics.

It houses the **Monumental Cemetery** of Varese created in 1880, significant for the presence of numerous works of art wanted by the Varese bourgeoisie.

Art Nouveau architecture by G. Sommaruga, sculptures by E. Butti, E. Pellini and many others make this place of memory a real open-air museum.



## CASBENO

A few steps from the city center, on the slope that descends towards the lake, the Castellanza retains its historic core and to the south, the ronchi, evidence of the agricultural vocation of the area.

The architecture of **Villa Recalcati** overlooks Piazza Libertà with its court of honour, announced by a light portico with a Baroque wrought iron balustrade.

The elegant eighteenth-century building shows rooms decorated with stuccos and paintings among which ovals by P. A. Magatti stand out and three splendid frescoes with scenes from the Old Testament by G. B. Ronchelli which have been magnificently preserved, despite the various uses of the villa over time.

Today it is the seat of the Prefecture and of the Province of Varese.

Not far away is the small Church of the Purification of the Virgin Mary, better known as the **Oratorio della Schirannetta**.



*Villa Recalcati*



## CARTABBIA

Located southwest of the city on the road that leads to Capolago.

The parish church, which retains its ancient title, dates back to the early twentieth century. In Via Gasparotto, in the direction of Buguggiate, on the right there is the sixteenth-century **Church of Loreto**, of the Servite Fathers.



### IN THE SURROUNDINGS

**Bizzozzero**, a district located south of the city, on the edge of a morainic terrace overlooking the Olona Valley, still retains evidence of its ancient historic centre.

In Via Porto Rose, the exemplary Church of Saint Stefano and the soaring bell tower show the qualities and simplicity of the Varese Romanesque architecture. Inside, the primitive medieval altar and the late fifteenth-century frescoes by Galdino da Varese are particularly noteworthy.



*Church of Saint Stefano  
Bizzozzero*



# Villas and Parks

Those who arrive in Varese are amazed by the richness of the “green” that surrounds it and covers the varied and lively hills and pre-Alps. Spontaneous vegetation, made up of woods and clearings, is combined with a large presence of plants from distant lands that have found the right environment here to thrive.

It was therefore natural to create green spaces arranged around the noble residences built over the centuries.

Villas of “delight” immersed in splendid Italian gardens among

statues, fountains and water games and the large number of English parks, embellished with exotic plants, characterized Varese between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so much so that it deserved the appellation of “Garden City”.

The city boasts, even today, a considerable number of public and private historical parks.

Among the public ones, in addition to the aforementioned Estense and Mirabello, the following should be highlighted:



Estense Gardens



## PARK OF VILLA TORELLI MYLIUS

At the base of Colle dei Miogni, in Via Fiume, you come across the Mylius park.

Around the villa which was born in the eighteenth century as a rustic structure and evolved over time as an elegant residence, a large eclectic garden develops on terraced floors. Expanses of grass, Italian flowerbeds, skilfully distributed masses of trees play with contrasts of color and shape. Precious plants such as Manchurian palms, beeches, plane trees, redwoods, American oaks, tulip trees, Japanese sophore and magnolias enrich the paths.

Equipped areas, a bar and the Parco Gioia inclusive play area make it pleasant to stop there.



Villa Mylius



## PARK OF VILLA AUGUSTA

It is located in Giubiano, Via San Giusto, near the Hospital Del Ponte.

Around the nineteenth-century villa extends the early 20th-century park, where wavy avenues and staircases wind along the slight slope full of fine local and exotic trees and shrubs.



## MANTEGAZZA PARK AND MASNAGO CASTLE

After parking in Via Monguelfo, you enter the English-style park, updated over time by various unusual plants, the botanical heritage of Varese public green.

Walking along the driveway, you come across a large grassy area equipped with games for children placed next to conifers and decorative shrubs. Going up, on the slope, a rare davidia or handkerchief tree, an ancient strawberry tree and flowering dogwood.

At the end of the avenue holm oaks,

beech trees and a silver Kashmiri cypress.

On the remains of a medieval castle, of which the beautiful defensive tower remains, the noble residence of the Castiglioni family was born and transformed over the centuries.

The late Gothic frescoes of the Sala degli Svaghi and that of the Vices and Virtues remain from the 1400s. In the seventeenth-century wing, the villa-castle houses the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of the Civic Museums of Varese.





## PARK OF VILLA BARAGIOLA

Along Via Caracciolo, in Masnago, the villa stands out and behind it the park. Built in the first half of the 19th century, transformed into a seminary in 1941 and since 2001 owned by the Municipality of Varese.



*Dacha*

The beautiful Hungarian-style dacha, “Wooden chalet for winter stay”, which stands on the hill, dates back to 1932.

The park, with a landscape imprint, extends on a slope crossed by stairways, avenues and paths with statues.

A variegated vegetation characterized by the inclusion of exotic species among which the following stand out: a monumental giant sequoia, unusual varieties of beech trees and age-old duglasias. On the northern slope facing the Sacro Monte there is a strip of wood with native plants.



## PARK OF VILLA TOEPLITZ

Above the course of the Olona, in the locality of Sant’Ambrogio, at the end of Via Vico, the large gate of the property opens.

From here the tree-lined avenue leads into the eclectic park wanted by G. Toeplitz and his wife Hedwig Mrozowka, both Poles. Scenographic paths, built on optical axes, introduce green spaces of different styles and cultures. A chain of water leads to the hill marked by a dense network of stairs and small architectural structures that recall the Renaissance garden, flowerbeds with embroidery and water features, the French garden, the ground-level canals with turquoise mosaics that flow into a large central fountain, full of gushing jets, are a clear reference to the Indian garden. Italian-style

geometries are arranged along the paths leading to the villa from the 1930s, shielded by green wings. In fact, the park has a rich vegetal component, made up of coniferous trees of different species, both exotic and ornamental.

The Castiglioni Ethnographic Museum is located in the outbuilding. The park is open to the public with picnic areas, children’s games, bars and a tennis court.



*Park of Villa Toeplitz*



*Park of Villa Toeplitz*





## PARK OF VILLA RECALCATI

The garden owned by the Provincial Administration is accessible from Via Daverio in the locality of Casbeno. The romantic aspect is immediately captured by the type of plant, sinuous paths, artificial caves and the presence of monumental exotic plants such as the Sequoias, various

conifers, palms and oriental plants, creating plays of light and shadow. Near the eighteenth-century villa which has already been mentioned, there is an area set up "in the French style" with parterres divided by symmetrical paths with box hedges that converge on the central fountain.



## PARK OF VILLE PONTI

It is accessible from Piazza Litta in Biumo Superiore, around the villas which have already been mentioned, extends the grandiose romantic park designed by G. Balzaretto, garden architect, in the mid-nineteenth century. Many plants from all over the world, arranged in spots that create hidden and surprising corners and

spaces. Tall cedars, cypresses, firs, beeches and lindens are combined with rhododendrons, azaleas and dogwood creating strong impact color contrasts. The presence of artificial caves, streams of water, ladders among the flowering bushes enliven the undulating trend of the meadow spaces.



*Villa Andrea Ponti*



## ZANZI PARK

In the locality of Schiranna, an extensive green area overlooking the waters of Lake Varese, crossed by a stretch of the cycle/pedestrian path.

In the shade of giant bald cypresses, plane trees and oaks, benches, tables and games for children invite you to stop.



*Zanzi Park*



# Sacro Monte and Campo dei Fiori

Leaving the center on Viale Aguggiari, you find yourself facing the **Campo dei Fiori Massif**, the Varese mountain par excellence, inserted in the Regional Natural Park of the same name. An institution which includes woods and mapped paths that invite you to pleasant walks and excursions, caves, monuments and nature reserves, and ancient inhabited units.

Among the numerous ridges, the highest peak is Punta di Mezzo (1227 m) which offers a spectacular 360 degree panorama.

Just below the Cima Tre Croci (1111 m), in a very varied vegetation, we see the **Grand Hotel Campo dei Fiori**, no longer active since the 1950s. A splendid Art Nouveau complex consisting of a hotel, Belvedere restaurant and funicular, designed and built by the brilliant architect Giuseppe Sommaruga between 1908 and 1912 for the Grandi Alberghi Varesini company.

The sophisticated hotel attracted important and wealthy local and international guests for its receptive value, the quiet of the place and its breathtaking views.

On Punta Paradiso there is the **astronomical observatory "G. V.**

**Schiaparelli"** founded in 1964.

On Monte di Velate (880 m), the ancient village of **Santa Maria del Monte** appears to us, perched and picturesque, characterized by alleys, steep stairways and underpasses illuminated by lanterns. It is on this hill that the great architectural complex of the "Sacro Monte sopra Varese" was born in the seventeenth century, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, due to a series of favorable conditions, first of all the Counter-Reformation, the Protestant presence, after all, pressed on our borders. Passing through Sant'Ambrogio, a residential area with numerous Art Nouveau villas from the early 20th century, we reach the First Chapel, it



Grand Hotel Campo dei Fiori

Sacro Monte - IV Chapel



## IN THE SURROUNDINGS...

At the foot of the Sacro Monte surrounded by greenery, secluded and hidden, lies Velate. In the area south of the village, in the lands once cultivated with vineyards, is the small church of S. Cassiano. Although remodeled over the centuries, the building still shows the ancient traces, blind arches on the north side and internal frescoes on the small Romanesque single-lancet windows. The leaning bell tower is one of the oldest medieval examples in Varese.

Behind it, on the hill, the slender tower is part of a fortress which was in close visual communication with those of S. Maria del Monte and Masnago.

Going up towards the village, you walk along narrow streets that enclose courtyard houses and beautiful sixteenth-century villas.

In the main square, the parish church of S. Stefano which houses works from the 16th and 17th centuries. Nearby is the eighteenth-century Oratory of S. Domenico.





is from here that our itinerary along the **Via Sacra** begins.

After passing the First Arch, a door dedicated to the Virgin which starts the climb, one can sense the sense and rhythm of the layout.

A path, marked by fourteen chapels dedicated to the Mysteries of the Rosary, the fifteenth is in the Sanctuary, divided into three parts in succession: the Joyful Mysteries, the Sorrowful Mysteries and the Glorious Mysteries. Scanned according to the rhythms of prayer, from one chapel to another, in fact, there is the time for the recitation of the ten Holy Mary. In each building a sacred representation with terracotta statues set in the space colored by frescoes. The project of the great Fabbrica del Rosario was entrusted to the architect G. Bernasconi who designed it and supervised its construction. Starting from 1604, the road, the chapels, the arches and the fountains were created in a few years, in 1623 the structures were completed. Throughout the seventeenth century, work was performed to refine the interior.

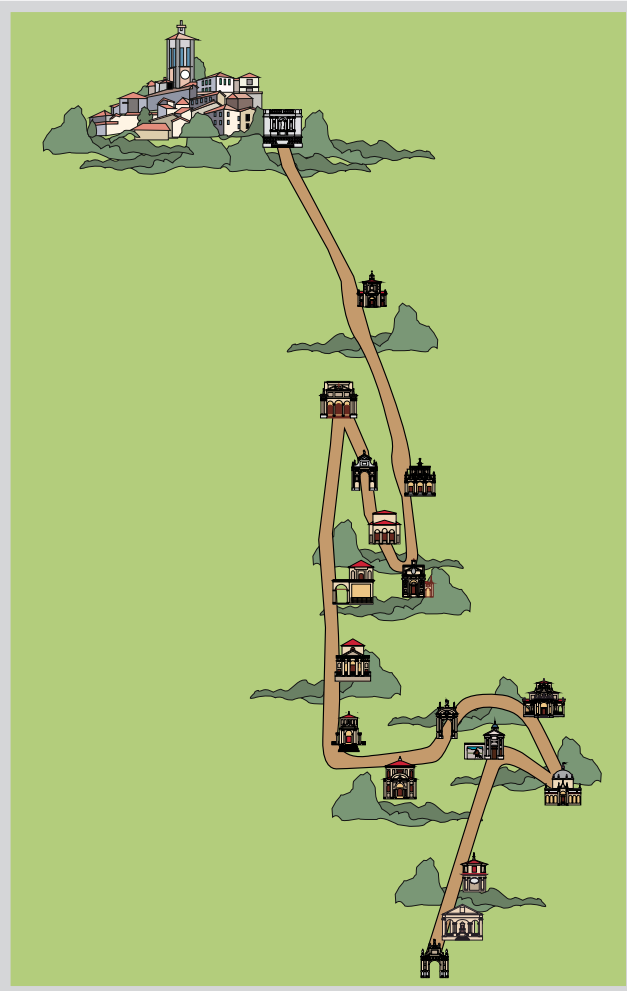
Each chapel has its own peculiarities, some of which are more significant in terms of shape, position and richness of its interior.

The first presents itself with an elegant and airy loggia and an interior furnished like a seventeenth-century room in which the Annunciation is inserted.

The Third, more sober, is flanked by a modern painting, The escape into Egypt by R. Guttuso.

The Fourth overlooks the landscape, the coat of arms indicates that it was commissioned by a noble family, as is the case for other chapels.

The seventh is set as cornerstone towards the avenue and shows the view of the village of Santa Maria, the mountain and the lake of Varese. Here worked the famous master P. F. Mazzucchelli known



as il Morazzone, but it must not be forgotten that the best artists of the Lombard seventeenth century worked in the large construction site, so much so that the itinerary is a real open-air museum.

Gradually going up, the gaze embraces increasingly vast panoramas and one reaches the Tenth, the most crowded chapel, with over fifty statues, where the Crucifixion is dramatically represented. Here the light participates in the painful moment during the Easter period, when, at three in the afternoon on Good Friday, it strikes the face of the dying Christ.

The thirteenth stands out with its octagonal layout in the center of the avenue and overlooks the slope facing the hills of the Varese Pre-Alps.

At the end of the path stands the **Sanctuary** with its bell tower and flanked by the Romite Ambrosiane Monastery. The latter, founded in the fifteenth century by the Blessed Catherine and Giuliana who chose the mountain as a place of prayer and meditation.

The interior, embellished with seventeenth-century stuccos and paintings that conceal the fifteenth-century layout, sees the representation of the fifteenth Mystery in the altar.

The **Crypt**, recently restored, narrates the ancient history of the Sanctuary. In the borgo you can also visit the **Baroffio Museum** and the **Pogliaghi Museum**.

After the pleasant walk you can relax in one of the bars or restaurants of the borgo and appreciate the typical products such as the Elixir del Borducan and the traditional spiced biscuits, the Mustazzitt.



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# Varese Lake

The lake basin, six kilometers from the city centre, lies at the foot of the Campo dei Fiori massif and offers spectacular views as far as Monte Rosa.

Lake Varese was formed in the Ice Age, a basin between morainic hills covered with rich vegetation and dotted with inhabited areas that define its irregular triangular shape.

With its calm waters, the lake's shores belong to nine municipalities and today takes its name from the city of Varese. The Varese lakeside town is the Schiranna, an interesting tourist destination and



place for recreation where you can take a break in the Zanzi Park, in the swimming pool, at the historic Società Canottieri di Varese and, a little further on, at Volo a Vela. On the beautiful and easy cycle

path that runs around the perimeter of the lake, about 28 km long, also connected to the cycle path of Lake Comabbio, it is possible to practice jogging, take a bike ride or

enjoy a relaxing walk along the shore which alternates glimpses of meadows, woods and water with its characteristic lake plants.

## → VIRGINIA ISLAND

On the western bank, on the shore of Biandronno, where the cycle path passes, a small jetty indicates that you can embark for Isolino Virginia, the only small island on Lake Varese. In a few minutes, gliding on the water, surrounded by reed beds and water chestnut meadows, among coots and gurnards, you arrive in an environment full of charm. Large trees, some rare such as the bald cypress, plant their roots in the always wet ground, some have adapted to it by leaning towards the water in order to survive. A thick forest of Caucasus nuts leads up to a narrow spit of land, the terminal part of the island, separated from the mainland by a narrow channel. There an expanse of water lilies and lotus flowers opens up to the view, in summer it is a spectacle of colours. On the opposite side, near the pier, along with a restaurant, Villa Ponti welcomes us, now the Civic Archaeological Museum which exhibits some of the findings recovered here during the repeated excavation campaigns that began in the second half of the nineteenth century and continues up to the present day.



The oldest pile-dwelling settlement in the Alps was discovered on the Isolino, of national and international importance for the Middle and Upper Neolithic. Traces of aligned poles, wooden platforms, lithic and clay artifacts and objects of daily life have been found on the ground and in the water, most of them are kept in the Civic Museums of Villa Mirabello in Varese.

The conspicuous prehistoric heritage with the long history of settlement has earned Isolino Virginia the title of UNESCO heritage site since June 2011.



## DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

The province of Varese boasts four Unesco World Heritage Sites

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The Sacro Monte di Varese since 2003, included in the serial site "Sacred Mountains of Piedmont and Lombardy"

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The archaeological area of Castelseprio and Torba since 2011 in the serial site "The Longobards in Italy. places of power"

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Isolino Virginia, Bodio Centrale and Sabbione since 2011 in the site "Prehistoric pile-dwelling sites in the Alpine Arc"

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Monte San Giorgio since 2010 (with a part shared with Canton Ticino-CH)





## MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL CENTERS

### Musei Civici di Villa Mirabello

Piazza della Motta, 4  
Ph. +39 0332 255485  
www.museicivici.it

### Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea del Castello di Masnago

Via Cola di Rienzo, 42 (bus linea E/P)  
Ph. +39 0332 820409  
www.comune.varese.it

### Isolino Virginia - Museo Civico Preistorico - Lago di Varese -

www.comune.varese.it

### Villa e Collezione Panza (FAI)

Piazza Litta, 1 (bus linea A)  
Ph. +39 0332 283960  
www.fondoambiente.it/luoghi/villa-e-collezione-panza

### Museo Castiglioni

Viale G.B. Vico, 46 - c/o Villa Toeplitz (bus linea C)  
Ph. +39 0332 1692429  
+39 334 968711  
www.museocastiglioni.it

### Museo Tattile

Via Caracciolo, 46 - c/o Villa Baragiola (bus linea E)  
Ph. +39 329 9513001  
www.museotattilevarese.it

### Sala Veratti

Via Veratti, 20  
Ph. +39 0332 820409  
www.comune.varese.it

### Biblioteca Civica

Via Sacco, 9  
Ph. +39 0332 255273  
www.comune.varese.it

### Museo Baroffio e del Santuario del Sacro Monte sopra Varese

Piazzetta Monastero - Sacro Monte - (bus linea C/funicolare)  
Ph. , +39 366 4774873  
+39 328 8377206  
www.sacromontedivarese.it  
www.museobaroffio.it

### Casa Museo Lodovico Pogliaghi

Via Beata Giuliana, 5 - Sacro Monte (bus linea C/funicolare)  
Ph. +39 328 8377206  
www.sacromontedivarese.it;  
www.casamuseopogliaghi.it

### Centro Espositivo Monsignor Macchi

Viale delle Cappelle (inizio Via Sacra)  
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www.sacromontedivarese.it

### Osservatorio Astronomico G.V. Schiaparelli

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## SITES

www.comune.varese.it  
www.in-lombardia.it



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