

artistic historical

itineraries

of the *B*rescia

territory



PROVINCIA DI BRESCIA
turismo

Lake Garda

AND THE

Sabbia Valley



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.

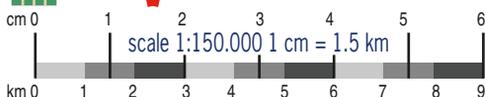
The tourist will at times have to book a visit by telephoning and asking - precise directions will be given - you can borrow the keys to the small medieval church to see the frescoes. Encounter courtesy, an unjealous pride of a community in custody of many small but great treasures; and with the joy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



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



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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.



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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),



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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 Garda

The biggest lake in Italy, is bordered by a morainic amphitheatre at the south and develops into a northern arm wedged between the mountains. The powers (Milan and Venice) long fought for the lake and maintained military fleets there. From here, a galley from Salò travelled down the Mincio River and the Po River to fight at Lepanto.

Along the river banks a mild climate provides for the cultivation of olives and citrus fruits. The hills toward the plain are covered with vineyards that produce famous wines.

The clear water is inhabited by fish which enrich the nets and the tables that for centuries have satisfied the refined palates of an elite tourism, from the poets Catullus, Goethe and D'Annunzio to politicians such as Churchill.



TOURIST INFORMATION

www.provincia.brescia.it/turismo

Ufficio IAT - Desenzano

Via Porto Vecchio, 34 - 25015 Desenzano
 ☎ 0303748726 - Fax 0309144209
 iat.desenzano@provincia.brescia.it

Ufficio IAT - Gardone Riviera

Corso Repubblica, 8 - 25083 Gardone Riviera
 ☎ 0303748736 - Fax 036520347
 iat.gardoneriviera@provincia.brescia.it

Ufficio IAT - Salò

Piazza S. Antonio, 4 - 25087 Salò
 ☎ 036521423 - Fax 036521423 - iat.salo@tiscali.it

Ufficio IAT - Sirmione

Viale Marconi, 6 - 25019 Sirmione
 ☎ 030916114 - 0303748721 - Fax 030916222
 iat.sirmione@provincia.brescia.it

Ufficio IAT - Toscolano Maderno

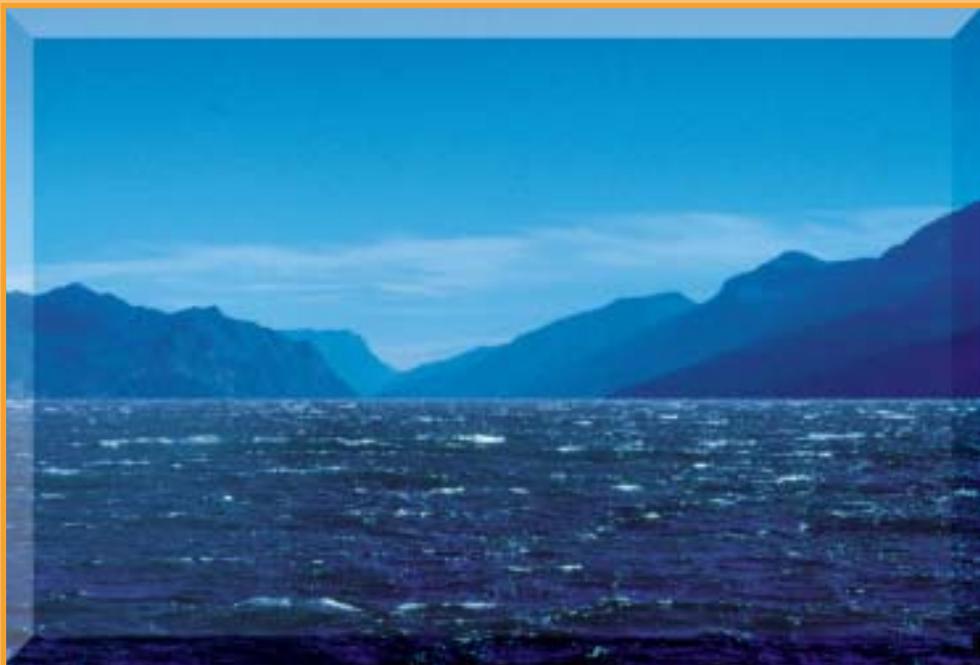
SS 45 bis, angolo Via Sacerdoti - 25088 Toscolano Maderno
 ☎ 0303748721 - Fax 0365641330
 iat.toscolanomaderno@provincia.brescia.it

Ufficio IAT - Valtenesi

Via Gassman, 39 - 25080 Manerba sul Garda
 ☎ 0365552786 - Fax 0365658156 - iat.valtenesi@hotmail.it

Agenzia Territoriale per il Turismo Riviera del Garda
 Via Oliva, 35 - Loc. Villa - 25084 Gargnano

☎ 338610737 - Fax 0365791484 - info@agenziadelgarda.it



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A BRIEF HISTORY

Numerous prehistoric sites have been discovered by excavations in the surrounding area of Lake Garda: in Lavagnone, near Desenzano, the oldest wooden plough in the world was found.

Polada, near Lonato, has uncovered a lake-dwelling civilization from the Bronze Age.

The Romans built grandiose villas in Sirmione, Desenzano and Toscolano. In Lugana di Sirmione (312 AD) Costantine the victory over Maxentius.

The grain market in Desenzano, where you could also find iron, yarn, paper from Toscolano, coal, lumber and fruit, had already become important in the 1300s.

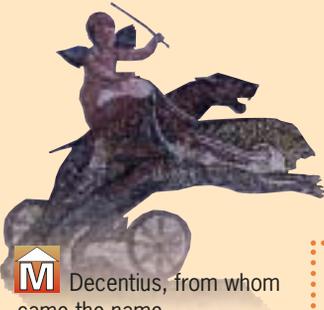
When Venice conquered Lake Garda in 1426, the Magnificent Homeland was established in Salò, on which six “quadre” (districts) depended.

Under Austrian domination there was significant economic growth: in 1829 the “Lake Garda Society” was established in Gargnano for the pressing of olives; the year after gave birth to the Society of Casinò in Gardone. In 1852 the railroad arrived at Desenzano with its imposing viaduct with 16 arches.

The patricians of ancient Rome on the shores of the lake

The Roman Villa in Desenzano and the Catullus Caves in Sirmione are proof of their love of the green lakeside in Benaco - along this border region the castles remained strong and efficient for the entire XVI century

ITINERARY 7



M Decentius, from whom came the name **DESENZANO**, was probably the owner of a big farm which had at its centre the big **Roman Villa** (IV cent. BC - IV cent. AD); it came to light in 1921 (see box p.7).

Other findings from the Roman era are preserved in the **Archeological Museum Giovanni Rambotti**, housed in the 1400s cloister of the ex-church of **Santa Maria in Senioribus** (at the west end of the lake promenade). The *Sarcophagus of Atilia Urbica*

is noteworthy. The most ancient wooden plough ever found can be seen here (2000 BC). Open Tues - Fri, 15-19; sat and on holidays, 15-19.00. Free entry.

The heart of Desenzano pulsates in **Piazza Malvezzi** which, with its colonnades, faces the **small port** and is flanked by the ex-**Palazzo Comunale** (Town Hall) and the **Palazzo del Provveditore**, designed in the second half of the XVI century by the architect Giulio Todeschini.

BUT SALÒ REMAINED THE CAPITAL OF THE PROVINCE

Under Venice (1426-1797) Desenzano was in command of one of the six districts of the Magnificent Homeland of Salò. As the site of a major grain market, where official prices were set for the whole Magnificent Homeland, Desenzano hoped to become independent of Salò and, thus, built the Palace of the Superintendent. But the Superintendent never arrived and Salò's independence didn't come until 1772, after centuries of pleading.

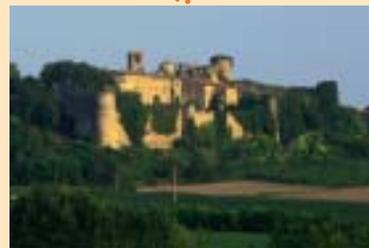


M One side of Piazza Malvezzi is taken up by the Cathedral of **Santa Maria Maddalena**, built in 1586 (the façade is from the 1700s) by the plans of Todeschini. It contains works by Zenon Veronese, Andrea Celesti and Palma Junior, as well as a *Last Supper* by Gian Domenico Tiepolo.

Desenzano centre is dominated by the **Castle** of ancient origin, reconstructed and reinforced in the XV cent.

The **Shrine Tower** (with a **museum**), 74 m tall, in **SAN MARTINO DELLA BATTAGLIA**, was built between 1880 and 1893 in memory of the Battle of June 25, 1859 between the Piedmonteses with its French allies against the Austrians (The Second War of Independence).

POZZOLENGO, the bordland, was always faithful to Brescia who reinforced its **Castle** in 1125. In 1278 Brescia permitted further sup-





The spectacular entry to **SIRMIONE** is created by the **Scaligero Castle**, constructed under the rule of Sir Mastino I Della Scala (XIII cent.). The battlemented walls, which are still intact, also contain a section of the lake. From the keep (37 m tall) one can enjoy a wonderful view all over the lake and the hills. Open: Tuesday - Sunday 8.30-19.00. Closed on Monday if not holiday.

port work, giving it its final form maintained even today with angular cylindrical towers. In 1509, Venice ordered the last fortification of the castle.



The works and the beautiful colours of the ancient mosaic artists

The landslides from the hill for centuries covered and protected the structure of the Roman Villa of Desenzano and its magnificent mosaics. Around the columns surrounding a courtyard, there were various rooms with floors finished in geometric mosaic tiles. In the west room are the most interesting

mosaics which consist of numerous figures (amongst which is *Running Animals*) bordered by decorative motifs. In the small museum, sections of frescoes have been preserved.

Open: archeological area: from March to half Oct. 8.30-19.30; from half Oct. to Feb. 8.30-17; Antiquarium 8.30-19.30. Closed Monday if not a holiday.



The patricians of ancient Rome

Not far is **Santa Maria Maggiore** (XV cent.) presented by a portico of which the most northern column is a milestone of Emperor Julian the Apostate. It contains 1400s frescoes and a wooden Madonna from the same era. A short walk away are the **St. Salvatore** ruins; basilica erected by Queen Ansa of Lombardy in the VIII cent. and reconstructed in the XI century.



ITINERARY 7



Just before the entry to the **Grotte (caves) of Catullus** (see box p.9) we find the small church of **St. Pietro in Mavino**. Built in the

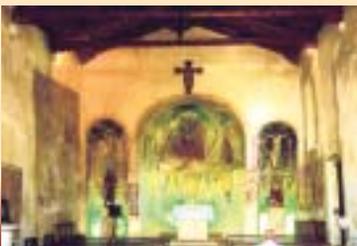
Lombard area, it was reconstructed in 1320 (the bell tower from 1070). The double sloped structure is enclosed by three apses. Inside, there are frescoes from different eras, from

the XIV cent. and after.

On the morainic ridge we note, from the lake as from the plain, the silhouette of **LONATO** with the fortress, the civic tower and the cathedral dome.



The **Fortress (Rocca)**, already cited in the 10th cent., was rebuilt by the Milanese Visconti family at the



end of the XIV cent. Much of it was destroyed in the following century; it was acquired by Senator Ugo Da Como, who renovated the ancient **Casa del Podestà**, which now houses the **Ugo Da Como Foundation** containing the Library (52 thousand volumes, 405 "incunabula"- ancient books, manuscripts and rare miniature codes), two frescoes by Floriano Ferramola and antique furniture. The Fortress also houses the **Ornithological Museum** (700 samples). The fortress and the Museum are open



Saturday and Sunday, 10-12 and 14.30-18.30 (other days by appointment); in July and August, everyday. The Casa del Podestà (house-museum) is open everyday, 10-12 and 14.30-18.30. Info tel. 0309130060.

The **Civic Tower** (1555), 55 m high, has a 1773 clock, the mechanism of which uses big stone counter-weights.

St. Giovanni Battista's Cathedral (XVIII cent.), with its impressive dome (20 m diameter, height: 60 m), was designed by the architect Paolo Soratini. The main altar-piece is by Giambettino Cignaroli (1750) and, in the sacristy, there is a triptych on panels by Bernardino Licinio (1528).



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A villa as vast as hotsprings

The name **Grotte di Catullo** was given to this site by the Venetian journalist Marino Sanuto in 1483, even though it is not certain that this was the Latin poet's villa (Verona 87 BC - Rome 54 BC). The building was a rectangle of about 167x105 meters, with two big forward sections, one facing the lake and the other the land.

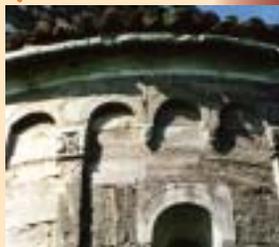
The most ancient part of the villa (south) goes back to the era of Catullus. Its great dimensions, however, bring to mind a hotsprings facility. At the entry there is a museum which preserves sections of frescoes and other findings discovered in the area. The museum also houses a prehistoric and medieval section. Open from 1st March to 14th October: 8.30-19.00; in winter 8.30-17. Closed on Monday if not holiday.



Leaving the inhabited area going north, we see the Romanesque **Parish of San Zeno**, which took its present form in the XII cent.

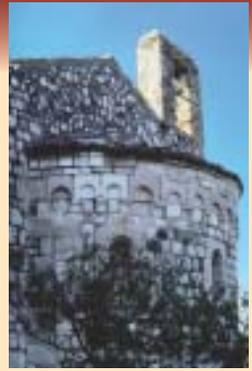
Further on and perfectly preserved is **Drugolo Castle** (end of the XIV cent.), with a high sloped wall, a draw bridge and battlemented walls.

The **Benedictine Abbey** in MAGUZZANO in the hills between Lonato and the Lake is of very ancient origin (X cent.). It was rebuilt at the end of the XV cent. with an elegant cloister. In the church there is a copy of Moretto's *Assumption* for Brescia's Cathedral.



Castles and churches among green hills and a lake

Every town of the Valtenesi shows its own fortified shelter with pride, a reminder of the Hungarian incursions and of the ancient local clashes - Romanesque and Gothic churches show their treasure of paintings



ITINERARY



where the lord of the castle and troops stayed.



From an open space along the provincial road under the castle we arrive, following the road signs, at the small Romanesque church of **Sant' Emiliano** with semicircular apses from the XII cent.

In **MONIGA**, the tower above the entrance of the **Castle** is today the bell tower of the parish. The surrounding



The town of **PADENGHE** is guarded by the **Medieval Castle**, which has preserved its original structure. It was built as a defense against the Hungarian incursions (IX-X Cent.). It has a solid wall of big stones and three towers which protect the internal houses. The main tower, which once had a draw bridge, is

21.5 mtrs. tall and is above the entrance. Few ruins remain of the "small castle",



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THE SMALL LAKE THAT DISAPPEARED

Lake Lucone, after which the church is named, was drained before 1700. At its centre, it seems there was a small island where, during the Bronze Age, there was a village built on piles where remains have been found, amongst which, a prehistoric canoe. On the church site, pieces from a sacred building from the barbarian era were found a few decades ago.

Gothic arch and a tower which sits on the surrounding wall.



In upper **POLPENAZZE**, next to the cemetery hidden by cypresses, is the small church of **San Pietro in**

Lucone, probably built in the XIV cent. The Romanesque structure maintains its double sloped façade with a rose window. In the interior there are XV cent. frescoes: *Doctors of the Church* on the vault of the presbytery and on the walls scenes from the *Life of St. Peter and the Apostles*. The antique organ with manual lever bellows needed two people to play it. For a visit, con-

battlemented wall measures 280 mtrs. At the corners and at the middle of the sides there are small cylindrical lookout towers. Inside, four rows of houses face each other on two narrow parallel streets.

The church of the **Madonna della Neve**, from the XIV cent., is next to the cemetery. In the 1500s a portico (portico space) of Romanesque style was added to the façade.

From Moniga we go up to **SOIANO** where the **Castle** used to rest on Roman ruins. There still exist an entry with a



tact the house on the church grounds, or the church priest (tel. 0365674017).

The **Castello** of Polpenazze was partly destroyed in the XVI cent. to make space for the parish, transforming a tower into a bell tower. On one surviving section of wall a room of a small tower can be distinguished.

MANERBA is recognisable from a distance by its spur shaped promontory on which rises the **Fortress (Rocca)**. Few ruins remain: it was destroyed in 1575 by Venetians because it had become a den for a group of



Castles and churches

marauders. From the summit (about 150 mtrs above the lake surface) enjoy the broad view. Prehistoric findings discovered here are in the custody of the **Archeological Museum**, at the Fortress. For visit and information tel. 0365552548 (Library).

In the main town of the hamlet of SOLAROLO near the cemetery, the little church of **Santissima Trinità** (early XV cent.), with a double sloped façade and the interior with lowered arches, contains interesting frescoes (an *Escape to Egypt* in the presbytery, a *Last Judgement* on the walls on the left). Other 1400s churches are **San Giorgio**, near the road down to DUSANO, with the fresco of *St. George and the Dragon* and the church of **Santa Lucia** in BALBIANA with frescoes and round apses.

The place PIEVE VECCHIA is named after the **Pieve (Parish) of Santa Maria Assunta**, built around 1050 probably over an ancient church. A memorial Roman tomb plaque is on one side of the



high bell tower. The three naves are divided by Gothic arches resting on pillars. There is little left of the original frescoes of the XIV-XV centuries.

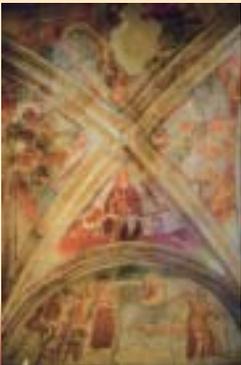


From the Parish of Manerba going towards **SAN FELICE DEL BENACO**, we come to the Sanctuary of the **Madonna del Carmine** (see box p.13).

In the town of San Felice, the 18th cent. parish of the **Santi Felice Adauto e Flavia** has, as a bell tower, the surviving tower from the castle of the Della Scala family. In the apse are *Madonna, St. Felice and other saints* by Romanino.

The small church of **San Fermo**, of the XV cent., has a double sloped roof. In the interior is a 15th cent. fresco

attributed to Giovanni da Ulma; it is located on Mount Scovolo, which gives a view of the **ISLAND OF GARDA**, with **Cavazza Villa**, a big neo-Gothic styled structure from the beginning of the 1900s. In summer groups of 25-60 persons can visit the island and part of the Villa. To book tel. 036562294



THE VALTENESI REFUGE

Excavations conducted between 1976-83 under the Fortress of Manerba identified the "Valtenses Refuge", where in 4500 BC there lived hunters and fishermen who made stone tools and ceramic objects. In the III millennium BC a necropolis with six collective tombs made of oak wood and stone pavement were discovered. This constitutes a unique discovery in Italy.



Going up to **PUEGNA-GO**, note the **Tower** (today a bell tower) of the castle, the ruins which recall the unusual oval form.

Taking the pleasant road that crosses the region of the Sovenigo Lakes, which in summer are covered with lotus flowers, we arrive at the Sanctuary of **San Quirico** (XV cent.), with its Gothic lines and Renaissance portal in Veronese taste. From under the plaster, have surfaced frescoes from the XV-XVI centuries.

Let's continue to **CAL-VAGESE**: in the parish of **St. Pietro in Antiochia** (XVIII cent.) we admire frescoes from the former church. As well as the *Madonna with the Baby Jesus* by Romanino, is a *Deposition* by Zenon Veronese.



In the hamlet of **CARZAGO**, the surrounding wall of the **Castle** is easily recognized, with its four round towers, while the big tower rising above the entry was transformed in the 16th cent. into a bell tower.

Constructed from forgiving sins by paying

The Sanctuary of the Madonna del Carmine was built in 1452 and assigned in 1460 by the Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga to the Carmelites of Mantua, with the permission to concede indulgences. The profits of this business, which a few decades later Martin Luther assailed, made it possible in 1482 to proceed with the first enlargement.



In spite of a 17th restructuring, the sanctuary maintains its Romanesque-Gothic lines. In the interior is a nave divided by Gothic arches, with quadrangular apses, in the upper part of which there is a big *Annunciation* from the end of the 1400s. There are other frescoes on the walls from the XV-XVI centuries.



The Lakeside Heaven was a Magnificent Homeland

The 36 federated communes maintained their identity for centuries - The Gothic Cathedral of Salò, an art gallery - The memories of aesthetic heroism of D'Annunzio at Vittoriale - The Romanesque style of St. Andrea in Maderno

ITINERARY



The city of **Salò** is squeezed between the lake and Mt. San Bartolomeo where narrow roads climb. Among the lakeside arcades is the open **Loggia della**



Magnifica Patria. It was part of the Captain's Palace (1386, renovated in 1560 and after the ruinous 1901 earthquake, and today is the municipality). There are parts of frescoes on the walls and a scratched bas-relief of the Lion of San Marco (symbol of Venice). The measuring sticks embedded in the 1566 stone are interesting. The façade facing the side street is decorated with an antique clock.

Just above the Cathedral, **Palazzo Fantoni** houses the **Historical-Military Museum of Nastro Assurro**, which displays documents, antiques, arms and uniforms from 1796 to 1945. It is open on Saturdays and Sundays: 10-12 and 15-18.

Palazzo Fantoni also houses the **Ateneo** (ex-Accademia of Unanimity, founded in 1560), which preserves parchments and incunabula, codes and documents and the **Antonio Maria**



Mucchi Archeological Museum (open: Monday-Friday: 10-12 tel. 0365296834).



The most significant monument in Salò is the **Duomo di Santa Maria Annunziata** (see box on the page 16).



From the state road towards Gardone we see **Palazzo Pallavicino Martinengo** (1577) noticing a stronghold and the watch-tower over the portal.



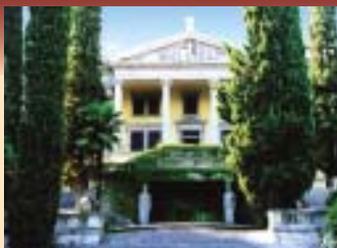
The poet Gabriele D'Annunzio (Pescara 1863-



THE MAGNIFICENT HOMELAND ON THE LAKESIDE

The federation between 36 communes on the Brescia side of Lake Garda and of the Sabbia Valley was created during the Carolingian Era as a defence against the Hungarian invasions. The Magnificent Homeland maintained its identity during the various dominations and in 1426 resigned itself to Venice, which installed a Superintendent-Captain in Salò. He was responsible for justice and taxes and had a seat in the local Council, but without the right of speech. A committee of six deputies (one for each district) met almost everyday. The Magnificent Homeland was annulled along with the Venetian Republic by the Treaty of Campoformio (1797).

Gardone R. 1938) chose **GARDONE RIVIERA** to establish his residence; he acquired Villa Cargnacco and exten-



ded the park (nine hectares). He entrusted the building of the **Vittoriale degli Italiani** to the architect Giancarlo Maroni and here collected his past: the ship Puglia, the anti-submarine motorboat "Mas 96" from the joke of Buccari, the airplane of the flight over Vienna, the Isotta-Fraschini and the Torpedo (cars) used to reach Fiume (a city in old Yugoslavia). The panoramic outdoor theatre is noteworthy - seating capacity: 1500. The Schifamondo is the house-museum that D'Annunzio had built, but he preferred living in villa Cargnacco.

Opening: from April to Sept.: the Vittoriale Mon.-Sun. 8.30-20; D'Annunzio's House Tue.-Sun. 9.30-19; the War Museum Thurs-Tue 9.30-19. From Oct. to March: the Vittoriale Mon.-Fri. 9-17; Sat.-Sun. 9-17.30; D'Annunzio's House Tue.-Sun. 9-13 and 14-17; the War Museum Thurs-Tue 9-13 and 14-17

In Gardone it's worth stopping at the Parish of **San Nicola** (XVIII cent.), which englobes the previous small church (its 1300s bell tower remains.), in whose chapel emerged 1500s frescoes about the *Life of St. Nicolas*.

Villa Alba, an imitation of classical style, would have had to host the Empress of Austria if there had not been the First World War. **San Marco Tower** is at the lake, with Gabriele d'Annunzio's wet dock. The red **Villa**



The Lakeside Heaven



Fiordaliso is next to it; residence of Claretta Petacci (Mussolini's mistress) during the Republic of Salò.



TOSCOLANO MADERNO consists of two distinct inhabited centres. **MADERNO**

has grown around the church of **St. Andrea** (see box p.17).



The church of **St. Andrea** and the port were contained in an imposing medieval castle, destroyed by fire in 1645, of which remains a



Tower transformed into the ungainly bell tower of the Parish of **St. Ercolano** (XVIII cent.).

The candelabra bronze from cannons taken from the Turks

The construction of the **Duomo di Santa Maria Annunziata** in Salò was started in 1453 according to the design of Filippo delle Vacche. The Renaissance portal by Antonio della Porta and Gasparo da Coirano is from 1509.

The Gothic interior is a container of valuable works of art. In the first chapel on the right is the wood group of the *Death of Christ* (XVI cent.). There are also numerous paintings by Zenon Veronese, Palma Junior (author also of the *Assumption* frescoed in the vault of the presbytery and the shutters of the Antegnati organ) and Andrea Celesti.

The 1400s main altar-piece is a work by Bartolomeo da Isola Dovarese, with statues by Pietro Bussolo. The candelabra

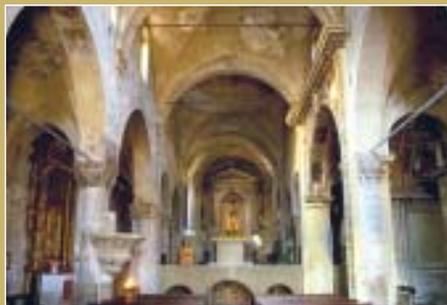
are made of melted bronze from cannons conquered from the Turks. The chapel of the Holy Sacrament was decorated at the end of the XVI cent. by Malosso.

There are two paintings by Romanino in the left nave: the *St. Anthony from Padova* and the *St. Mary with the Baby Jesus and Saints*. In the penultimate left altar, the *St. Anthony Between the Saints Rock and Sebastian* could be by Moretto. In the Baptistry, there is a wooden *Christ Crucified* by Giovanni da Ulma and next to it, a polyptych of the *Virgin on the throne with Saints* by Guglielmo Veneziano (XIV cent.).



The Saint's urn from the pagan era

The Romanesque church of **St. Andrea** in Maderno was renovated in the XII cent. imitating St. Zeno in Verona. There are circular pillars in the interior alternating with cruciforms, with capitals. On the walls there are remains of frescoes. The elevated presbytery was added in the XV cent. above the crypt which preserves the remains of St. Ercolano; St. Carlo



Borromeo, at the end of the 1500s, had the pagan inscriptions scraped off the red marble urn (once a Roman sarcophagus) which contained them.



A BIG ROMAN VILLA

Partially submerged in the part of the lake opposite the Madonna del Benaco, there are remains of the big Roman villa from the I cent AD, known as the Villa of the Nonni-Arii. The building, decorated in mosaic tiles, probably had terraces over the lake, while the top would have been defended by ramparts and towers. Also belonging to the villa were two red marble columns in front of the door of the parish and some plaques embedded in the bell tower wall.



In TOSCOLANO the Parish of the **Saints Peter and Paul**, begun at the end of the XVI cent., is noteworthy above all for the 22 big paintings by Andrea Celesti custom fit to decorate the spaces normally occupied by frescoes. The stained glass

windows are by Louis Blamet (1925). In the nearby Sanctuary of the **St. Mary of Benaco** frescoes were found in the 1950s, dated 1464.



The San Franciscan friars grew citrons and lemons

Lemon orchards appeared on the lakeside in the XIII cent. - The villas of the Duke of Gargnano - Montecastello Sanctuary in Tignale and the story of Zuan Zanone the bandit - The Romanesque bell tower of the Parish of Tremosine



by St. Christopher. Other 1400-1500s frescoes are inside. For a visit, see the main door at the side of the church.



Gargnano, there are various buildings. Some of these have canon balls imbedded in their walls as a reminder of the naval bombings in July 1866 during the third War of Independence. Amongst these is the **Ex Palazzo comunale**, built in 1582 by Giovanni Trafegnini.



A letter from San Bonaventura said that San Francesco on returning from Syria received, as a gift, a house on the shore of Lake Garda and land to build a hermitage. Some believe the house was in Gargnano where there are the **Cloister and church of San Francesco** (see box p.19).

Facing the Port of

In the part of the country next to the state road, the Parish of **San Martino** from the 1700s has a grand elliptical nave and a neoclassical pronaos added in 1837 by Vantini.



A walk parallel to the lake shore heading north takes us to the small church of **San Giacomo di Calino**, the oldest building in Gargnano (XI-XII cent.). On its side facing the lake are frescoes from the XIII cent., one



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Capitals sculpted as citrus fruit



The Church of San Francesco, built in 1289, exhibits on its façade a statua of *St. Antonio*, by the friar Antonio Delay, dated 1301. In the last chapel on the right there are the remains of paintings that could go back to end of the XIII cent., amongst which is a *Martyr of St. Stefano* by Andrea Bertanza (XVI cent.) and three big 1500s canvasses.

The 1300s **Cloister**, restructured in 1424, is characterised by elegant raised arches in Venetian style, supported by sculpted friar heads, lions, fish and even citrons and lemons, which gives credence to stories about franciscans who started the citrus fruit orchards at Lake Garda.



The sarcophagus dated 1302 by Argilo Da Gargnano is at the entry. There are sculpted episodes of the *Life of Jesus* on the Renaissance portals which lead to the sacrestia. The cloister is presently closed, but for information, contact the keeper by ringing at the gate just after the nearby bank.



Going back towards the town we spot **Villa Feltrinelli**, designed by the Milanese

architect Belgioioso (1894), eclectic in style. It hosted Mussolini during the Salò Republic. In the town summer courses in italian language and culture are held in **Palazzo Feltrinelli**, by the Università degli Studi di Milano.



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The San Franciscan friars



In the hamlet of BOGLIA-CO, there rises the massive **Palazzo Bettoni**, crowned with a balustrade and statues, designed at the beginning of the XVIII cent. by Adriano Cristofoli and Antonio Marchetti and embellished in 1764-67 by an Italian garden - today it is separate from the state - operated by Amerigo Vincenzo Pierallini.



From Gargnano we go up to Valvestino, which was in Trentino and Austria until the First World War. In **VALVESTINO** the oldest church is **San Giovanni Battista** in Turano, cited before the year 1000. Reconstructed in 1585 and recently restored, it contains some painted canvasses by Andrea Bertanza.



Near **MAGASA**, in CIMA REST (about 3 km), we can see the **haylofts with straw roofs**; one of them houses the Ethnographic Museum. In the hamlet of CADRIA the small church of **San Lorenzo** bears on its façade a fresco of the Saint, dated 1547.



We go up to **TIGNALE** to visit the **Sanctuary of Montecastello**, from which there is a panoramic view of the lake. The original construction, says the House Saint, goes back to 802 AD. On the vault painted in the XIV cent. from the Giotto school is the *Incoronation of the Virgin* with four medallions on the sides by Palma il Giovane, visible through a window behind

the main altar made monumental by a wood sculpture by the Boscai from Brescia. The church as it is today was completed in 1599. On the walls left of the nave are two canvasses by Andrea Celesti;



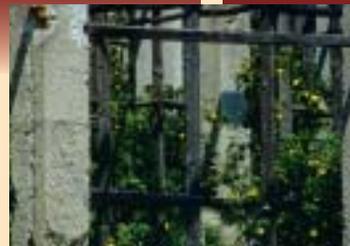
ZANONE MURDERED BY HARQUEBUS SHOT

The stormy career of the coastal bandit Zuan Zanone ended in Tignale: with 5 accomplices he arrived in the town on the morning of August 17, 1617. He kidnapped, with extortion in mind, the old "Knight Giovanni". The locals followed the bandits and freed the hostage. The hunt proceeded to the mountain where the outlaws were killed by harquebus. The scene is depicted by Bertanza in his painting in the Sanctuary of Montecastello.



WHERE THE LEMONS BLOSSOM

On this trip to Italy, Goethe was astonished at Lake Garda by the "terraced gardens planted with lemon trees." The greenhouses are protected on three sides by high stone walls. A number of pillars support thick wood beams on which, in winter, glass panes are placed to protect the plants from the cold.



We arrive at **TREMOSINE** along sp 38, narrow and winding, but spectacular where it passes caves beside a torrent. The **Parish of San Giovanni Battista**, which was a small Romanesque church in the XII cent., was demolished around 1570 and rebuilt with the bell tower still whole. After new work (1712) it was refinished with woodwork by Giacomo Lucchini. The recently restored 16th cent. fresco in the dome and the 17th cent. paintings are worth seeing. On the wall that borders the parvis, is a quadrangular Roman stone from the III cent. AD.

From the hamlet of Vesio we can go down to **LIMONE**, noticing along the road the small ancient church **St. Pietro in Oliveto**, rebuilt in the 1400s. On the exterior are traces of a fresco representing the giant St.

Christopher. The parish of Limone, dedicated to **San Benedetto**, was reconstructed at the end of the XVII cent. and preserves in its presbytery two canvass paintings by Andrea Celesti. In the centre of the town is **Palazzo Gerardi** (known as the Finance), from the XVII-XVIII cent., with a dark stone balcony on the second level. The coastline, which from the ancient centre of Limone extends north until the point of Reamòl, is a sequence of lemon orchards which are among the biggest and most monumental on the coast.

Don't miss a visit to the Limonaia del Castel (from March to October 10-18).

on the right a votive by Andrea Bertanza (XVII) tells the story of the murder of the bandit Zuan Zanone. The Sanctuary is open from the 19 March-31 Oct., hours 9-18.

Going back down to the state road of Lake Garda and continuing north, we can see the **Lemon house "Pra' de la Fam"** (restored in 1985), from the middle of the XIX cent. It is open to the public free on Wed. 10-12; from April-Sept. also on Fri. 15-17 and Sun. 10-12.



The Sabbia Valley

The Chiese River Valley runs towards Trentino. It was once guarded by fortresses and castles as evidenced by the remains in Sabbio Chiese, Nozza di Vestone and in Anfo. The religiousness had an original artistic expression in the wood sculptures by the "Boscai", which decorate the altars in the valley.

Snow covered mountain tops are reflected on Lake Idro, whose sky is designed by the circular flight of birds of prey which are evidence of a healthy environment.

Every year, Bagolino is astonishing with its secular carnival tradition where dancers in costumes make their hats tinkle with the family jewelry. The cheeses contain all the scents of the Alpine pastures and they tastefully blend with the polenta.



TOURIST INFORMATION

www.provincia.brescia.it/turismo

Ufficio IAT

Via Musei, 32 - 25121 Brescia
 ☎ 0303749916 - Fax 0303749982
 promozione.turismo@provincia.brescia.it

Agenzia Territoriale per il Turismo Valle Sabbia e Lago d'Idro

Via Matteotti - Nozza - 25078 Vestone
 ☎ e Fax 036583224
 info@vallesabbia.info - www.vallesabbia.info



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A BRIEF HISTORY

The ancient populations in the valley, Ligurian and then Celtic, mixed together and put their capital in Stonos, the ancient city which could coincide with today's Vestone. The Romans arrived in 43 BC and the area was militarily significant until, in 16-14 BC, the border was moved beyond the Alps. The parish of Savallo (today Mura) was built in the VI-VII cent. In this region, precisely in Olsano, is documented the presence from the beginning of the XV cent. of the Montini family. From one of its branches, which transferred to the Trompia Valley, descended

Giovan Battista Montini, Pope Paul VI.

Since ancient times inhabitants produced iron and wool; in the XVIII cent. Bione was renowned for its particular quality of silkworm breeding. But now and then, the ghost of hunger appeared in the valley. In 1764 a horde of exasperated Sabbia Valley people descended upon Desenzano and ransacked the grain market.

In 1866, during the third war of independence, Garibaldi went up the Sabbia Valley engaging in battle with the Austrians.

Stopping places of devotion along the Chiese River

The birth of sanctuaries, such as the Visello in Preseglie or the Cornelles in Provaglio, is unusually linked to an apparition or miracles - The Archeological Museum of Gavardo preserves a bear skeleton from the caves

the right (km 1.5) in the territory of **AGNOSINE** to the little church of **San Lino**. Its origin precedes the XIV cent.; with a circular plan, restored and enlarged several times. Noteworthy, as well as some of the exterior frescoes from

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During the Hungarian invasions, **SABBIO CHIESE**, as other villages in the Sabbia Valley, was endowed with a **fortress** on a limestone spur that dominated the town (see box p.25).

In Sabbio it is worth stopping also at the parish of **San Michele** (XV-XVI cent.), in Roman-Gothic style. It has double sloped façade with a rose window and the interior is pronounced by four strongly

pointed arches.

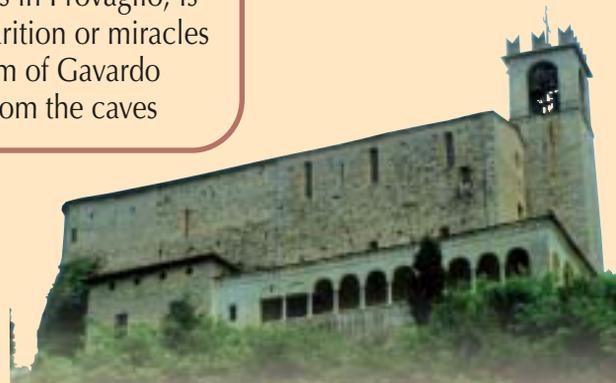
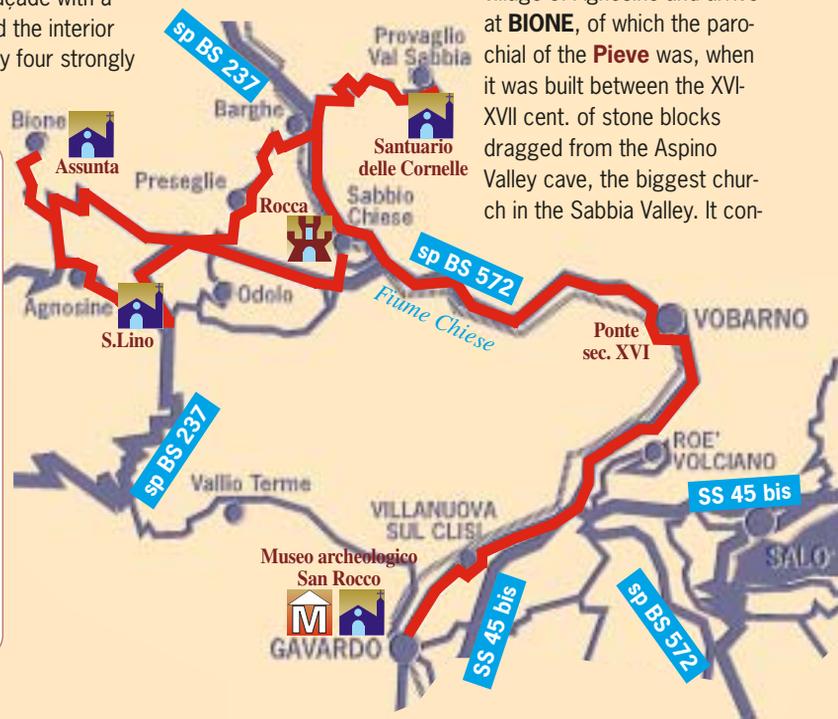
Along the state road ss 237 that takes us to Brescia, shortly after the village of Odolo, there is a turn off on

the XVI cent., are two votive frescoes inside, which tell of graces received by the people.

Continuing, we pass the village of Agnosine and arrive at **BIONE**, of which the parochial of the **Pieve** was, when it was built between the XVI-XVII cent. of stone blocks dragged from the Aspino Valley cave, the biggest church in the Sabbia Valley. It con-

THE MILK THAT CURED

The sanctuary of the Madonna del Visello is usually closed. A good excuse to visit it is the characteristic country road (km 2.5) which arrives at the hamlet of **Gazzane**, by following a small torrent in the shade of lush trees. The church was constructed after the apparition of the Virgin before the farmer De Dossi (circa 1522), who was ordered to milk a six month old heifer to give miraculous milk to invalids.





tains engraved designs by Boscai.

A wood sculpture of mysterious origin is preserved in **PRESEGLIE** in the 1700s parish of the **Santi Pietro e Paolo**. It is of a *Dead St. Mary* in such refined oriental

taste, that its origin is guessed to be in some part of the Mediterranean controlled by Venice. The statue, preserved

in a glass urn, is a very rare object in northern Italy and comes from the sanctuary of the **Madonna di Visello** (XVI cent.), like the *Apostles*, though are made locally (attribution to Boscai is doubtful) and are presently being restored.

The only surviving castle in the Sabbia Valley

The **Rock** of Sabbio (X cent.) is the only survivor of an ancient Sabbia Valley defence system. In the first half of the XVI cent. an oratory was transformed into two churches, one laid on top of the other, which preserved the structure of the castle: the one above with a long nave has cross beams on the ceiling with variously decorated bricks (1527). At the far south side there are slits and machicolation. Some 1500s votive frescoes decorate the walls. In 1588 the Pope deconsecrated the church so that the building would again

protect the inhabitants. It was reconsecrated in 1645. On the exterior is a 1700s arcade with marble columns. The defence system is perfectly preserved with three surrounding walls. You enter from the small square below climbing up 107 granite steps. After the first door is the small church *San Nicola da Tolentino*, of which the interior is furnished with the **Museum of Farming Culture**. To visit the Rock you have to ask to: Town Hall tel.036585119; the Parrish tel.036585168. Mr.Morelli tel.036585127. While to visit the Museum you have to ask to: Library tel.036585375; Mr.Morelli tel.036585127.



Stopping places of devotion



BARGHE merits a stop for its parish of **San Giorgio**, rebuilt at the end of the XVI cent. with the addition in the 1700s of the choir and presbytery. The four lateral wooden altars are works by Boscai.

From Barghe, crossing the state road and going straight on, we reach **PROVAGLIO VAL SABBIA** to visit the sanctuary of the **Madonna delle Cornelle**, which was built in a place where in the XVII cent. some youths found a relief of the Virgin Mary miraculously shining. There is a votive fresco under the portico as thanks for protection during the Spanish War of Succession (beginning of the XVIII cent.).

Going down along the Chiese River to **VOBARNO**, we see passing over in a sin-



structed in the XVIII cent. in place of the 1300s parish, has some Roman tombstones walled into the base of the façade.

The **ROE' VOLCIANO** hill from which rises the parish of **San Pietro in Vincoli**, built at the beginning of the XVI cent., was considered sacred by the pagans and remains have been found here of a Christian necropolis and of a previous basilica.



GAVARDO was, since



gle depressed arch, a beautiful **stone bridge** from the end of the 1500s in pure Venetian style. The parish of **Santa Maria Assunta**, con-



the beginning of the year 1000, part of a great feud of the bishop of Brescia. Next to the church is the **Casa del**

Vescovo, a beautiful 1400s building in little San Bernardino Square. It is now an organ of the

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Archeological Museum of the Sabbia Valley (see box); in one room, known as “the bishop’s room” and decorated with a late 1500s fresco, there are 19 small painted wooden boards exhibited, taken from the ceiling of the adjoining room. They represent allegories to vices and

virtues and bishop’s coats of arms.



By the south entrance of Gavardo, visit also the church of **San Rocco** (end of the XV cent.), which contains votive frescoes from the XV-XVI centuries and a wooden *Christ Crucified*. For the key, go to

the house on the bridge by Piazza Fanti.



The side of the (house) **Casa Alberghini**, built in the 1400s, facing via Capoborgo is particularly well preserved with beautiful Gothic windows with terracotta tile frames.

The bear skeleton from the caves

The **Archeological Museum** in Gavardo, founded in 1956 after the discovery in a nearby cave of an *Ursus Spelaeus* skeleton, preserves fossils found in the Sabbia and Trompia Valleys and at Lake Garda. In the prehistoric section is a dagger made of flint-stone from 6000 years ago, arrow heads and “bell-shaped” vases. One room is dedicated to the Lucone zone excavations in Polpenazze; including remains from the Bronze Age (II millenia BC) and a pirogue (prehistoric canoe from a tree trunk).

The Roman necropolis (I-IV cent. AD), however, is called Lugone. It is in the territory of Salò from which come the funeral equipment exhibited in one room: the most significant piece is a vase-gourd on one side of which there is a relief of the *Indian Apotheosis of Bacchus*, on the other side, *Hercules killing Laomedon*. This is an “unicum”, a sole exi-



sting exemplar, in perfect condition. Analogous pieces are on exhibit in New York, Cairo and in Saint Germain (France).

Open: Mon-Wed 9-13; Tue-Thurs 8-13; Fri 8-13 and 20.30-23.30; Sat-Sun on booking by Tel. 0365371474.

“Emotional” religiousness of the people in the vally

In the sanctuary of Barbaine in Pertica Alta idols and pagan rites echo -The fortifications of Anfo's Rocca, where colonies of birds of prey nest - The frescoes by Pietro da Cemmo in San Rocco di Bagolino



pass **CASTO** to take, upon arriving at the hamlet of **AURO** (**Sanctuary** where there was a miraculous apparition of St. Mary in 1527), the road to **MURA**. The parochial **Santa Maria Assunta**, rebuilt here around 1700 over the old parish, contains two 1500s

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The hamlet of **NOZZA** in **VESTONE** is dominated by ruins of the **Fortress**, built at the beginning of the middle ages and protagonist of significant events. It was reconstructed in 1401 and then left abandoned for an inglorious end. In 1811 the stones from the walls were transformed by

furnace into burnt lime. To the side is the small church of **Santo Stefano**.

The parochial of Vestone, dedicated to the **Visitation of Saint Elisabeth** assumed its present imposing form around 1600 and preserves some valuable paintings.



In the nearby hamlet of **PROMO** the small church of **San Lorenzo**, reconstructed in 1530, has a beautiful Romanesque bell tower with double lancet windows.

From Nozza, following the road that joins up with Trompia Valley, we reach and





wooden altar-pieces and 1700s monumental frames, works by the Boscais.



We find other examples of the Boscais art in **PERTI-CA ALTA**, in the hamlet of **LIVEMMO**, where the parochial **San Marco Evangelista** has monumental frames, altars and engraved wood furniture

from the sacristy. The knockers of the two entry portals are noteworthy.



The **Sanctuary of the Dead of Barbaine** (see box) is not far from the hamlet in a pleasant spot down a dirt road.



Descending towards



The plague of Manzoni carried the town away

The existence of the **church of Barbaine** is documented from the XIV cent. It functioned as a parish until 1574. The plague of 1630 reduced the population of Livemmo from 692 to 72 people. Common graves were dug in Barbaine and the place became a destination of processions. The building was restored between 1985-87.

The Lombardy architecture of the 1300s is apparent in the splayed Romanesque single lancet windows on the south wall and in the ogival single lancet windows of the bell tower. The roof is supported by ogival arches. Among the 1400-1500s frescoes, a *Crucifixion* and the *Martyrdom of Blessed little Simon* are interesting. The sanctuary is open on holidays. For information, contact the parish priest (tel. 0365821425).



THE SURVIVAL OF PAGAN RITES

In the XVII cent. the parish priest Giovanni Antonio Rossini - as told by uncertain chronicles - pulled the sculpture of a dog down from an external wall of the sanctuary of Barbaine. The dog was suspected of being a pagan idol (perhaps here there was an altar dedicated to the Roman divinity, Dogan). The parish priest broke the statue into ten pieces, giving one to each village. Another pagan rite is remembered: the portal bolt of the church was kissed by young brides to obtain fecundity and by other girls to find a husband.

BLESSED LITTLE SIMON PRESUMED A MARTYR

In 1475, in support of an antisemitic crusade, the news spread that the Jews in Trento had stabbed an innocent little boy a thousand times. The historical verifications tend to define the episode as false, but given the Trento Valley and Brescia extreme catholicism, the legend of blessed little Simon struck the popular sentiment. The subject of the little boy being stabbed was one of the most "coined" in the votive frescoes of the early 1500s. Note in Barbaine the Semitic facial features of the torturers, all branded with the circle of alienation.

“Emotional” religiousness

Vestone through the hamlet of **PERTICA BASSA**, we stop at LEVRANGE, to admire in the parish of **San Rocco** (a monumental frame on the main altar with the statues of the *Saints Faustino and Giovita* and *Triumph of St. Rocco* crowned by winged putti) and in the old parish of **San Martino**, the wood engravings by the Boscais, who had their house in Levrance.



From Vestone going back up the valley, we come to **LAVENONE**, with its 1700s parish of **San Bartolomeo**, which contains four precious 1700s monumental frames engraved by the Boscais.



In **IDRO**, of the hamlet



THE “BOSCAI” FAMILY FROM LEVRANGE

In many churches in the Sabbia Valley we have encountered or will encounter the name - or, better, the nickname - the Boscais, whose surname was Pialorsi. In Levrance, it was their 1600s house with big shops on the ground floor and balconies on the upper levels that was lost in the great landslide of 1959 along with a large part of the town. The Boscaì family, perhaps originally from Venice, were productive during the XVI-XVIII cent. and their engravings are the pride of many local churches; also in the neighbouring Trompia Valley.

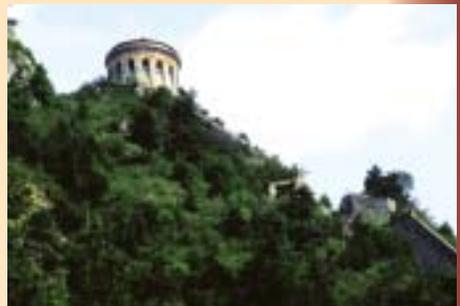
of PONTE, we find the Parish of **Santa Maria ad Undas**, of ancient origin, rebuilt in the XIV cent. The base of the stoup “holy water” is an ancient Roman stone from the I Cent. BC. There is as well a sepulchral stone from the IV-V cent. AD. Traces of previous frescoes can be seen in the 1400s frescoes. For a visit, contact the parish priest (tel. 036583124).



Along the left lakeside, not far past **ANFO**, we note the imposing fortification of the **Rocca** (fortress), built during the Visconti era and



reconstructed under Venice (1450-90). In 1796 Napoleon ordered the restructuring of its defence system. In 1813 it was one of the most powerful fortresses in Europe, with a trench towards Anfo and superimposed battery and camouflaged hideouts towards Trento. During the third war of independence (1866), it was defended by Garibaldi. The





Giorgio (XVII cent.). The main altar piece is by Andrea Celesti. There is a painting attributed to Tintoretto on the altar of St. Basilio and frescoes by Palma il Giovane.

The perspectives of the fresco in the vault by Tommaso Sandrini are particularly interesting.



The 1400s church of **San Rocco** contains a composite *Crucifixion* frescoed by Giovanni Pietro da Cemmo (1487). For a visit, contact the parish priest, (tel. 036599108).



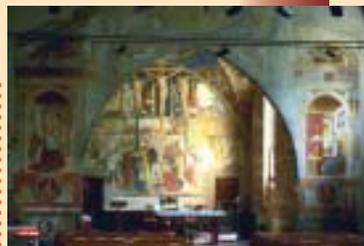
In the hamlet of PONTE CAFFARO, on the lakeside, **San Giacomo di Caselle** was probably an ancient hospice for pilgrims. An apse with a semicircular interior is the only preserved part of the original building.

ensemble can be visited on booking: tel. 036583224.

At the turn off for Bagolino the Sanctuary of **Sant'Antonio** has the oldest bell tower in the Sabbia Valley (XIV cent.): under a double lancet window note a bizarre stone mask. Faded frescoes from the XV cent. are on the exterior.



BAGOLINO, famous for its *carnival*, a tradition going back to the XVI cent., is dominated by the parish of **San**



Artistic historical itineraries: Lake Garda and the Sabbia Valley

ITINERARY

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GARGNANO

page 18

Cloister of
St. Francesco
in Gargnano



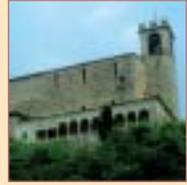
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SABBIO CHIESE

page 24

The fortress-
sanctuary
of Sabbio
Chiese



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SALÒ

page 14

Romanesque
Church
of St. Andrea
in Maderno



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Frescos
of Barbaine
in Pertica Alta



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PADENGHE

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Sanctuary
of Carmine
in San Felice



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DESENZANO D.G.

page 6

Mosaics in
the Roman villa
of Desenzano



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