

## 1 Roana *Graffiti in the Val D'Assa*

In a very deep and rough gorge, which begins at the Vezena plain and leads up to the Valdastico valley, signs of primitive tribes can be found on both the valley floor and halfway up the hill. These tribes left us more than ten thousand engravings which testify to ancient ceremonies. Prehistoric peoples seemed to have been fascinated by this valley, thus they worshipped it and used it for special magical and propitiatory rites. According to research carried out by the archaeologist Ausilio Priuli, newer signs which testify to the change of religious rites and cults have been added over the centuries to the oldest graffiti, which goes back to 5,000-4,000 BC. There are also references to possible star and cosmological myths, and the viewer's fantasy can play with the signs that hint at machines and flying beings. Some people consider the signs stories written on stones which tell about aliens who landed on our planet aboard giant space crafts.

## 2 Roana *Ecomuseum "del Gbertele"*

Getting to know the archaeology of the Asiago Plateau with its history and its traditions is possible at the Ecomuseum, which is a starting and meeting point for excursions, music and theatre events and laboratories for adults and young people. Its seat is an old stable, from which we can start our journey along real or imaginary tracks on the trails of our ancestors. Here there are references to elves, witches and the "salbanei", elf-like magical creatures that have always been living around the Sette Comuni (the seven villages on the plateau) who play jokes on the inhabitants, or do them favours or tease them. An absent-minded farmer still may find his draught horse's tail plaited as though it was the hair of a princess out of a fairy tale. And this is only one of many stories that you might hear.

## 3 Rotzo *The "Altar Knotto"*

At the eastern border of the Asiago Plateau, in the village of Rotzo, the wide tableland of the Seven Comuni becomes impassable and juts out over the Valdastico valley. Here an enormous natural block of stone overlooks the precipice, as though it was hanging in space: the "Altar Knotto", also called "the devil's stool". On this altar the mountain dwellers worshipped gods of Germanic origin, such as Odin and Thor. Around the ancient rock gifts were offered and sacrifices for the spirits of the forests, the mountains and the springs were made. This place is still linked to diabolic tales of mysterious and fascinating forces and bewilder the wayfarers from their very first steps on the track. People who love and are interested in ancient rites also visit two more places, which are called Altaburg and Alta Kugela.

## 4 Rubbio *The painted and the inhabited quarry*

During our modern day meetings we usually talk about the fact that the modern men don't communicate with nature and the supernatural any longer. Whenever they build anything, they pollute, disfigure, eradicate, erases, crushes. But there is always someone who goes against the mainstream. The Bassano based artist Toni Zarpellon started from a small garage to get to an abandoned quarry with his improvised paintings. Like with the spells of the ancient tribes, a place which man had turned into a sad space became a colourful bestiary of anthropomorphic images. The renovation and the pleasant sensation convinced the artist, who in the meantime enlivened the inhabited quarry too, putting 150 car tanks in it of which he made 150 sculptures of different shapes and dimensions. But the experience doesn't end here: everyone is invited to take part at the renovation of the third and last quarry, the "laboratory". The restyling is made by the visitors who are asked to rethink the living space, following the eternal principle which also inspired the great architect Andrea Palladio: men's buildings must be in perfect harmony with the landscape.

## 5 Asiago *The gnome village*

Some people swear that the gnomes, who came from the north, found their ideal home in the age-old forests of Asiago, with their silence and their animals. Some people also swear they are in contact with this parallel world and tells about encounters and friendships with the magical creatures. What is certain is that mainly children, but also adults are fascinated by the idea of finding signs and traces of the "little people". Thus, it was decided to decorate the unspoilt park of the Da Barba hotel, among alpine flowers, wild animals and old tunnels, with a village of gnomes which makes this fantasy come true. The walk leads along amidst abundant spruce woods and green pastures. Every turn holds a surprise, sometimes of a natural sort, sometimes of playful nature: a small waterfall, a lake, a bridge, the little houses among the trees, and we can experience what could be seen only in books and in our imagination. It is a unique experience for those who have got children, but also really pleasant for those who want to relax amidst beauties of nature and fantasy inventions. "I see them nearly every day", the park guide tells the children, "when they just come out of their dens, they are very small, about 25 cm, including their hood, then they grow as tall as a person. They are good-natured, likeable and play some little jokes, then they take a ride on the merry-go-round, with neither cars nor noises.

## 6 Lusiana *Park "del Sojo"*

It lies in the village of Lusiana, on the southern border of the Asiago Plateau, and was designed by the architect Diego Morlin in the district of Covolo. It is a small village on top of the hills and surrounded by wild and unspoilt nature. The main aim of the creation of this park was to preserve the natural environment, but also to enrich the landscape and to offer an opportunity to artists and

visitors. The park "del Sojo" is a rocky foothill where local history was intertwined with mysteries and fantasy creatures over the centuries. Witches are believed to have gathered here, but also men, the former bustling, the latter frightened and in search of shelter. The path runs amidst meadows, the lush forests with hornbeams, downy oaks and cornels. But if the sculptures are the modern interpretation of an environment whose value only had to be increased in order for it not to fall into oblivion, there are still references to fantasy tradition. The caves of the "salbanei", the water pools where the "anguane" (water divinities) lie in wait and the age-old plants accompany the visitor on the tour, emerging suddenly on every turn. Artists are inspired also by these creatures; many of their works are interpretations of the mysterious world of the "little people".

## 7 Località Spaccata *The split mountain*

The split mountain is a rocky structure which is closely linked to the nearby Piccole Dolomiti ("small Dolomites"). It goes back to the Upper Triassic, two hundred million years ago, when the lands of the valley of Recoaro was covered by the Tethys Ocean, a warm and clear sea. The deep crack that splits it was dug into the rocks by the river Torrazzo. The arsenic and the iron in the rocks originated some mineral waters for which Recoaro Terme is famous all over the world.

This is the place in the Vicenza area which is linked the most to the mysterious female water creatures called "anguane". It is also easy to meet them in proximity to water and in the night. That is the time when the "anguane" come out with their wicker baskets to wash their clothes, but be careful, for these women are ever-changing and dangerous. They may look nice at a first glance, with their wavy long hair and their attractive shapes, but the next thing they may do is to pull people into a hole or a pool and keep them imprisoned forever. And the next time the "anguane" can be horrible shrews who live in caves. It is told that the most famous among them, Etele, daughter of Uttele, lived in this very mountain cleft: at first as Giordano's faithful wife, then, after turning into a mountain spirit, she became the wife of the river and the wind. From the point of view of history, the split mountain was a favourite place of Margherita of Savoy's who went there a few times, after the access road had been the meeting place with the crown prince Vittorio Emanuele (twenty-two mountain climbers witnessed this) on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1879. To live in these places means to take on their character: at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Luigi Pellichero, the old innkeeper with his long hair and beard, coarse and surly, scared adults and children alike and was nicknamed the "wizard of the crack".

## 8 Montorso Vicentino *Luigi da Porto's ghost*

The famous tale of Rome and Juliet which touched Shakespeare so much that he was inspired to write one of his greatest tragedies, was written by Luigi da Porto in the quiet of his country house in Montorso. Actually, very little has remained of the manor, which was inhabited by the writer at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century: an old colonnade and a tower. That house has been replaced by the beautiful Palladian villa "Da Porto Barbaran", built by the French Cherrette starting from 1662. History has it that Da Porto retired to his village Montorso after the bloody battle against the Landsknechts (mercenary pikemen) in the Friuli region: disfigured, crippled and of very poor health he preferred not to meet the simpering faces of the Vicenza lords and to enjoy the loving care of his devout servants. What remains of this tormented and melancholic figure here in Montorso is the hill called "la Fratta". Walking away from the house we turn left into the via Villa, where we find the farmhouse where Da Porto loved to dwell and where, according to the inhabitants of the village, his restless ghost is still wandering around (this legend has become famous all over the world after a Japanese TV station produced a documentary on Da Porto's ghost, who was evoked by a medium on TV!). At the end of this road, on the left, the path leads upwards to the hill where Luigi used to stop to admire the two castles of Montecchio Maggiore, which today are named after Romeo and Juliet.

## 9 Lumignano *The Hermitage of San Cassiano*

The district Lumignano in the village of Longare is famous for its peas, for the popular climbing crag and even more for its caves. What attracts researchers and visitors particularly is the cave of San Cassiano. Climbing up the mountain behind the village on a wide pendant terrace, we can see the age-old hermitage where, tradition has it, the saints Theobald and Cassian retired to pray and meditate. And this is also a place where speleologists and folklore lovers meet to admire the wonders of geology and to tell each other tales of fantasy creatures who, according to tradition, have been "living" in the caves and caves of the Vicenza area forever. Among the legends which are passed on orally, one of the most fascinating is the story of Adelaide, queen of Italy (a historic person who lived in the 10<sup>th</sup> century), to which the "Covolo della Regina" (the queen's cave) near the hermitage is dedicated. She escaped the imprisonment inflicted upon her by Berengario, after her husband Lothar had been killed, and hid in these caves for some time, before she finally fled to safety to the city of Este. The queen was grateful to these places, and for all her life she kept sending presents, dried fruit and "sacred" books to the penitents who retired into the hermitage to pray. The hermitage of San Cassiano has belonged to the Da Schio family since 1825. The present owner, count Alvise Da Schio, has agreed to have the Vicenza-based speleology group "Proteo" run it. From the piazza Mazzaretto, facing the church, we can see a capital on the right from which starts the route nr. 3 that leads to the hermitage, to the cross and to the walls of the mount Brojon.

## 10 Orgiano *The real Betrothed*

They lived in Orgiano. This is the result of the recreation of the trial in which in 1607 a person called Paolo Orgiano was sentenced to lifelong prison. A document regarding this trial was buried in

The province of Vicenza is packed with history and rich of art and architecture treasures. But in addition to the history of handbooks and chronicles, there's the hidden and mysterious history of legends, witches, ogres and fairies. We are referring to the fascinating tissue of what people say and tell, which is what continues to give life to both the salons of the upper-class Vicenza and the meetings in the stables of humbler people to this day.

Considering this local tradition we wanted to offer the "Magic Tour", a guided tour to places which are interesting both for their artistic value and their nature views, following a map of stories which are still told by the people of Vicenza, and which are brought to life during events such as Hobbiton in Bassano, Natale di Fiaba (fairy tale Christmas) in Thiene, Hogazait - Cimbrian Festival in Roana, Venetian festival of animated fairy tales - Fiabe nelle cave (fairy tales in the quarries) in Rubbio...

New mysterious places are constantly discovered, such as "Le Priare" in Montecchio Maggiore, underground quarries which those who were condemned to death in the nearby castle of Juliet were allegedly thrown into (for further information please contact segreteria@prolocoaltemontecchio.it, tel. 0444 696546). We look forward to offering you a magical experience!



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Testi di Cristina Salvati, disegni di Max Paggin

a dusty archive in Venice for over two centuries, and in 1819 it allegedly fell into the hands of the writer Alessandro Manzoni, in the course of secret relationships with Agostino Carlo Rubbi, an officer of the Austrian empire, an expert on judicial secrets. What emerges from the acts is that at the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century a man by the name of Paolo Orgiano (don Rodrigo) lived in the village and was infamous for his abuse of power and his brutality towards the farmers. The aim of his excursions on which he was the leader of the bravoos was the abduction of young women. Other characters that were seemingly drawn from the trial were: Renzo and Lucia (the farmers Vincenzo and Fiore), Friar Christopher (Friar Ludovico Oddi) and the count Zio Conte. The latter's name was really Settimio Fracanzan and he lived in a marvellous example of Venetian architecture, even if its southern façade displays a mixture of different orders.

The manor was built at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and can be found just outside the centre of Orgiano. It has recently been examined in a comparative study carried out by professor Claudio Povoletto of the University of Venice. The result of the history analysis has been presented to the Olympic Academy, one of Vicenza's most ancient and prestigious culture groups.

## 11 Costozza *Caves and ventiducts*

The whole rocky area between the village of Longare and the districts of Lumignano and Costozza is full of a particular kind of caves, called "covolo". They are real rooms dug into the rock, usually with a narrow door-like opening, which were used as shelters during certain historical periods, like wars or enemy raids. Many of these caves have always been "inhabited" by mysterious creatures who can become dangerous to solitary visitors who, legend has it, may risk to meet and disturb the witches who are roaming and dancing in the woods and on the pathways. This is also the place where the devil Purafiaba, a character of a nice short novel written by the local writer Giovanni da Schio, found the road to hell. There is also a cave called "covolo del Prussiano", where a misanthropic creature of Belgian origin lives, a bugbear for whimsical children. Those who like to let their imagination run are spellbound by ruins, wild landscapes and caves, where the "strie" (witches) live, evil creatures who bring about curses that even the priests and the holy water cannot ward off. In the caves, ravines and gorges of most of the Vicenza area live the cruel "anguane", creatures of the water.

But in ancient times people were sometimes helped by fairies, who sometimes gave wool skeins to young girls who were about to marry. The fairies can be seen at night, when they hang out their washing upon long lines hanging between two cliffs. The caves can be reached on foot along the paths which start from the centre of Costozza.

In this district there exists an underground track called "dei ventidotti" (ventiduct track). Its entrance is at the restaurant Taverna Eolia, where a map that shows the route can be seen: a seven-kilo-



# Magic Tour

*A Journey between historic evidence and fantasy tales*

*in the Province of Vicenza*



metre-track between caves and natural cavities under the district. Visitors return to the Taverna Eolia after a walk among fascinating geology wonders. The two exits, one leading to the villa Carli and one to the villa Da Schio, which can be visited, are particularly interesting.

## 12 Mossano *The cave of San Bernardino and the Prisons*

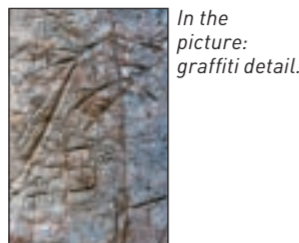
In this beautiful town on the hill there are many possibilities for excursion lovers; some old paths which were used until a few decades ago by the inhabitants have recently been turned into a long panoramic trail on the Berici Hills. There are many great attractions on this route, like the cave of San Bernardino, which is named after St Bernard of Siena who spent some time here. The cave is one of Europe's most interesting sites and archaeological excavations are carried out here to this day. They show that the place was inhabited by prehistoric people during the Palaeolithic period and even long before, with traces of the Neanderthal man. The cave was often used as shelter during wars and enemy raids by the people of Mossano. "The Prisons" are a fascinating and mysterious fortress dug into the rock inside a private property, a "palace" made of staircases, chambers, rooms, loggias and windows, some of which are reinforced by terracotta structures. A place inside the rock which is unique for the grandiosity of its structure. The visit starts from the square in front of the church of Mossano and includes a pleasant walk among evidence of human life on the Berici hills in different periods of history.

## 13 Vicenza *Villa Valmarana ai Nani*

In Vicenza a visitor cannot miss a visit to the artistic and famous villa Valmarana, the construction of which started 1669, and which was frescoed by Tiepolo and his son in 1757. It is said that once a rich and powerful prince had a gloomy castle built here, surrounded by high walls, because he did not want his only daughter Jana, a disfigured midget, to suffer seeing more handsome people. Thus, all the servants that surrounded her were midgets too. However, many youngsters were attracted by the prince's wealth and the girl's beautiful face and came to ask for her hand in marriage, but as soon as they discovered her deformity, they found any pretext to go away. One day the poor girl fell hopelessly in love with one of the many suitors, who, like all the others before, had walked away upon seeing her. She went to the balcony that overlooked the road and started to call the young man and leant over so much, she fell down on the road and died. It is said that the midgets ("nani"), who climbed upon the wall to see what had happened, remained petrified from shock. They can still be seen like that, as ornamental sculptures of the villa that bears their name.

## 1 Roana *Graffiti in the Val D'Asa*

The area that is the richest in finds is the rocky wall called "parete di quota 824", that can be reached along two routes that start at the centre of Roana and at the nearby district of Canove. To access the place it is necessary to be accompanied by a guide.  
Info: Associazione Archeidos, tel. 0424 691100, website: [www.archeidos.it](http://www.archeidos.it); tourist office, 0424 462221, website: [www.comune.roana.it](http://www.comune.roana.it); [www.magicoveneto.it](http://www.magicoveneto.it).



In the picture: graffiti detail.

## 2 Roana *Ecomuseum "del Ghertele"*

The museum can be found in the district of Ghertele. The association Associazione Archeidos and the Roana Town Council offer tourist and education activities and theme holidays.

Info: Associazione Archeidos, tel. 0424 691100, website: [www.archeidos.it](http://www.archeidos.it); Tourist office tel. 0424 462221, website: [www.comune.roana.it](http://www.comune.roana.it).



In the picture: the old shepherd's hut, today seat of the Ecomuseum from which the excursions start.

## 3 Rotzo *The "Altar Knotto"*

Shortly after reaching the main square in Rotzo, coming from Asiago, a road runs up on the right towards the mountains Campolongo and Verena. At a bend called "curva del Telale" take the path nr. 802 in the woods westwards.

Info, website: [www.magicoveneto.it](http://www.magicoveneto.it)



In the picture: a suggestive image of the "Altar Knotto" overlooking the valley Val d'Astico.

## 4 Rubbio *The painted and the inhabited quarry*

From either Bassano del Grappa or Marostica, in the direction of Asiago, you can reach the district of Rubbio, that lies at about 1,000 metres altitude. Shortly before the village take the road on the right that leads to the mountain Monte Caina. In order not to get lost, follow a repeater, a small garage and a small path downwards.  
Info: tel. 3282143191, e-mail: [info@zoing.com](mailto:info@zoing.com), website: [www.cavedirubbio.com](http://www.cavedirubbio.com)



In the picture: some of the anthropomorphic figures painted on the rocks of the abandoned cave.

## 5 Asiago *The gnome village*

The wood called "Boschetto del Pölsen" is a highly imaginative place inside the 90,000 square metre park of the Hotel da Barba. On the road towards Asiago, in the district of Canove, turn right at the dairies.

Info: tel. 0424 463363, e-mail [info@villaggiodegignomi.it](mailto:info@villaggiodegignomi.it), websites [www.asiago.to](http://www.asiago.to) and [www.dabarba.it](http://www.dabarba.it).



In the picture: one of the many surprises of the park, the hanging bridge between two gnome houses.

## 6 Lusiana *Park "del Sojo"*

The park can be freely visited all year. A guided tour can be booked. Picnics must be authorised.

Info: cell. 339 3124946, e-mail: [info@parcodesojo.it](mailto:info@parcodesojo.it), website: [www.parcodesojo.it](http://www.parcodesojo.it).



In the picture: the evocative work by Margherita Michelozzo, depicting a water spirit, called "anguana", in the thick of the forest.

## 7 Località Spaccata *The split mountain*

After passing Valdagno and the signpost for San Quirico turn left onto the provincial road nr. 100. The visit of the place can include excursions, shows and animation.

Info: tel. 340 3723231, e-mail [info@montagnaspaccata.com](mailto:info@montagnaspaccata.com), website: [www.montagnaspaccata.com](http://www.montagnaspaccata.com).



In the picture: the evocative path that leads to the split mountain meets the mount Torrazzo with its gurgling waters and waterfalls.

## 8 Montorso Vicentino *Luigi da Porto's ghost*

Montorso Vicentino is located 16 km from Vicenza. Once you have reached the centre of Montebello go on about 5 km towards Arzignano. In the summer there are many culture initiatives. Visits upon reservation only.  
Info: tel. 0444 685402 (technical office), e-mail: [info@comune.montorsovicentino.vi.it](mailto:info@comune.montorsovicentino.vi.it), website: [www.comune.montorsovicentino.vi.it](http://www.comune.montorsovicentino.vi.it)



In the picture: the villa Da Porto-Barbaran after its recent restoration.

## 9 Lumignano *The Hermitage of San Cassiano*

It is located on the road Riviera Berica in the village of Longare. The speleology club "Proteo" is open to the public on every first Sunday of the month. Guided visits can be booked in other days.  
Info: e-mail [csproteo@goldnet.it](mailto:csproteo@goldnet.it), tel. 0444 922711 (Mr Luca Dal Molin) and 0444 790204 (Ms Samuela Dal Maso), e-mail: [cerisella@inwind.it](mailto:cerisella@inwind.it), website: [www.colliberici.it](http://www.colliberici.it).

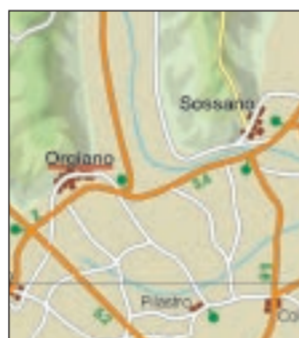


In the picture: the Hermitage of San Cassiano, enshrined in a cave of an evocative cliff.

## 10 Orgiano *The real Betrothed*

Orgiano is located 32 km from Vicenza, south of the Berici Hills. Driving along the provincial road up to Lonigo, you arrive at the crossroads towards Orgiano. Individual visits of the villa: Sundays and holidays from 15 March to 1 November, 15-19; groups: all year upon telephone booking.

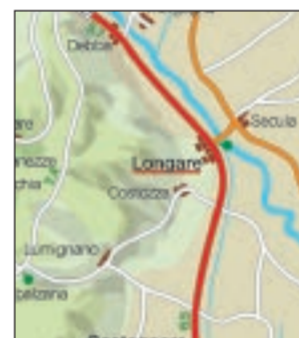
Info: tel. 0444 874589, website: [www.villafracanzanpiovene.com](http://www.villafracanzanpiovene.com).



In the picture: the villa Fracanzan Piovene, built in the 18th century by the architect Francesco Muttoni.

## 11 Costozza *Caves and ventiducts*

They can be found on the southeastern part of the Berici Hills. Restaurant Taverna Eolia, tel. 0444/555036, website: [www.aeolia.com](http://www.aeolia.com). Visit of the villa Da Schio upon booking, tel. 0444 555099, mobile 340 4854568, website: [www.costozza-villadaschio.it](http://www.costozza-villadaschio.it).  
Info: Consorzio Pro Loco Colli Berici, tel. 0444 638188, e-mail: [consorzio@colliberici.it](mailto:consorzio@colliberici.it), website: [www.colliberici.it](http://www.colliberici.it).

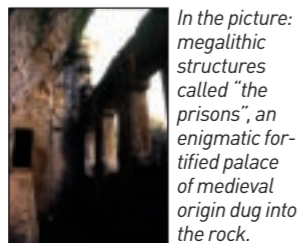
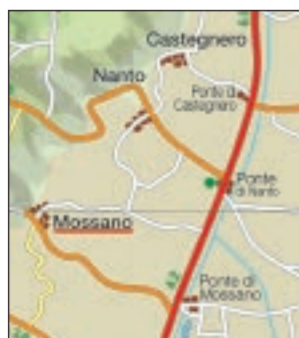


In the picture: views of the underground track of the Costozza ventiducts.

## 12 Mossano *The cave of San Bernardino and the Prisons*

They are located along the road Riviera Berica about 30 km from Vicenza. To access the cave and the prisons a guide is needed and can be booked at 3472914152 (Giorgio Vacherelli), e-mail: [prolocomossano@alice.it](mailto:prolocomossano@alice.it).

Info: Consorzio Colli Berici, tel. 0444.638188 (mornings), e-mail [consorzio@colliberici.it](mailto:consorzio@colliberici.it), website [www.colliberici.it](http://www.colliberici.it).



In the picture: megalithic structures called "the prisons", an enigmatic fortified palace of medieval origin dug into the rock.

## 13 Vicenza *Villa Valmarana ai Nani*

It lies on the southern side of the Monte Berico hill. Open all year: from 10 March to 8 November, 10-12 and 15-18 (closed on Mondays); from 8 November to 10 March: Saturdays and Sundays only, 10-12 and 14-16.30. Visits in other times upon reservation.

Info: tel. 0444 321803, e-mail [valmarana@villavalmarana.com](mailto:valmarana@villavalmarana.com), website [www.villavalmarana.com](http://www.villavalmarana.com).



In the picture: the villa Valmarana ai Nani and a view on the park surrounded by the walls that became famous for the dwarf statues.

## Tourist information [www.vicenzae.org](http://www.vicenzae.org)

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## Magic Tour *A Journey between historic evidence and fantasy tales*

