

MILAN AND ITS PROVINCE

NORTH OF MILAN

A TOURIST GUIDEBOOK

**Culture, enterprise and nature
from Malpensa to Sesto San Giovanni**



Provincia
di Milano



Provincia di Milano

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Foreword

Just imagine that, as you leaf through this guidebook to the north-west part of the Province of Milan, it could act as a time machine. This sort of “never-ending city” of industries, offices and shopping centres mixed with residential developments, old and new that stretches north and west of the metropolis is one of the richest part of Europe, perhaps indeed of the whole world. On first glance, however, you would shy from inviting people to visit it, entirely given over as it is to practical functions and profit. There seems to be no time or way to pause for breath, and experiences that enrich the eye and soul as well as the economy. Just passing through that unstoppable swarm of traffic and movement along the dense transport network – roads, motorways and railways – seems to most a process that has little to do with leisure and sightseeing.

Try, however, “switching on” this small time-space machine in book form. Step inside, perhaps opening it at a random page. Allow yourselves to be “guided” and you will be surprised to find so much history, art, architecture and nature, so apparently denied by the invasive human presence and its utilitarian desire to appropriate the land. Those who have written this guidebook and those, indeed, who wanted it to be written then have the added stimulus of inviting you to venture where it is seemingly senseless to go, in search of everything that will attract the curious, those able to delve into the folds of the fast and distracted flow of life.

Once switched on, the time machine will take you to an early 18th-century reception, to one of the “mini Versailles” in the Milanese countryside, Villa Litta Visconti Borromeo in Lainate or Villa Arconati in Castellazzo di Bollate, you choose; or you can turn your face up to look at the blazing colour of Lombard Renaissance painting, as in S. Magno in Legnano; or, not far away and also in an array of colour, you may walk alongside the Podestà or the Capitano del Popolo at the Palio, a re-enactment of the memorable victorious battle of the Lombard communes against Barbarossa. Then there is the surprising expanse of meadows and woods called the Groane, a small but great remnant of green space in the heart of an overdeveloped northern plain. Take a step back in recent time to find yourselves in the company of the workers in blue overalls of the Alfa factory in Arese or the Falck plant in Sesto; or leap into the near future and the heart of Renzo Piano’s new Sesto or right in the middle of the kaleidoscopic dynamism of EXPO 2015. Yesterday, today and tomorrow, a vade mecum for “North of Milan”.

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Front cover: top left, Villa Arconati in Bollate; top right, the new bridge railway station in Sesto San Giovanni; bottom, the Parco Nord in winter.

Back cover: top left, Museo Storico Alfa Romeo in Arese; top right, the Mariani brick kiln in Sesto San Giovanni; bottom, the Carroccio at the Palio di Legnano.

Inside front cover: top left, a grey heron in the Parco delle Groane; top right, copy of the 19th-century statue of Venus at Villa Litta in Lainate; bottom, Villa Borromeo in Senago.

Introduction

The part of the province illustrated in this guidebook consists in the large arc that extends north of the provincial capital ? from the large developed areas, joined to the metropolis almost without interruption and forming Greater Milan, to the Rho area, Legnano and the historic Sempione road axis and then on to the westernmost extreme of the plain that runs down to the Ticino River.

This area possesses extremely heterogeneous features in terms of landscape, architecture, settlement types and ways of life. It is an area that, at first glance, does not appear to offer great visitor attractions, given over as it is to the culture of making and producing that forms the true identity of this part of Lombardy.

On closer examination, however, these places have huge potential and offer a compound array of opportunities to learn more and have fun just a few kilometres from Milan. There are unexpected nature havens such as the large Parco delle Groane; a scattered presence of historic villas; places that treasure distant memories and history, such as the Museo Archeologico in Legnano and, in the same town, the famous Palio which recreate the pomp of the comune era; the restoration and promotion of a recent industrial past, the showpiece of which is an ambitious project by Renzo Piano for the former Falck site in Sesto San Giovanni; plus a strong focus on modern designs, from the grand buildings to the new Fiera in Rho and the Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea in Cinisello Balsamo.

This area is just as good as the rest of the metropolitan zone, not only for its dedication to production but also for its underestimated visitor attractions. That is why we have chosen the Alto Milanese for the third guidebook in the series Luoghi da Vivere, after having looked at Abbiatense-Magentino and Adda-Martesana.

This area north of Milan adds another piece to the imaginary mosaic surrounding the city of Milan, which will be completed with the new Provincia di Monza e Brianza.

The Alto Milanese symbolised our mission. Such an unusual area to convey as a visitor destination, yet again it illustrates the institutional role of a Council Office for Tourism: to broaden the horizons and potential of this great metropolitan city, highlighting its economic, industrial and financial brilliance but also legitimising its role as an international capital of tourism and not just of business and fashion.

This applies all the more now that we know it will host Expo 2015 and we have a duty in the coming years to transform this city and make it liveable and user-friendly, realising all its potential and opening its, all too often hidden, attractions up to citizens and visitors alike.

Councillor for Tourism
Antonio Oliverio



The Area North of Milan

from Sesto San Giovanni to the Seveso Valley

The segment of provincial territory that centres on Milan was bound in the past by the radius of the old Milan-Monza railway line (opened in 1840) to the east and the furrow of the Seveso River and the old Comasina road (to Como) to the west, appearing to all effects as an extension of the great metropolis. A densely urbanised belt with busy arterial roads running through it, interrupted only in part by the large green space of the **Parco Nord** between Sesto San Giovanni, Bresso and Cormano. Sesto San Giovanni, a large factory-town that was previously known as Italy's Stalingrad for the massive presence of factory workers, is perhaps emblematic of the type of settlements found in this area north of Milan and of the changes currently underway. In recent decades, places such as **Sesto San Giovanni**, for more than a century exclusively given over to industry, have found themselves having to face up to and govern an era of change on several fronts, economic, social, urban. In the space of a few years, the large production zones have become areas far removed from the urban



context; these spaces are no longer a common resource but a problem for everyone. The local administrations must be praised for the care and foresight shown in tackling the no few difficulties and sacrifices involved in the job of converting and regenerating sites bound to a past so recent but quickly become culturally "distant". Thanks to intelligent initiatives to promote the area and involve the local population, this same attention has turned centres with no special artistic or naturalistic history into interesting "experiences": theme museums, such as the MIL in Sesto, the Museum of Contemporary Photography in **Cinisello Balsamo**, dynamic libraries and civic centres, cultural associations and more.

A Milanese enclave closed between the future province of Monza and Brianza and that of Como, **Lentate sul Seveso** conserves one of the most significant monumental attractions of the whole itinerary: the 14th-century Oratory of S. Stefano, with its vast and important cycle of frescoes.



Learn more

The future museum space dedicated to the ISO Rivolta, the memorable automobile and motorcycle factory in Bresso, will form part of the Sistema dei Musei d'Impresa della Provincia, which already links showcases such as the Kartellmuseum in Noviglio, the Zucchi Collection Museum in Milan, the Museo dello Scooter e della Lambretta in Rodano and, most of all, the Museo Alfa Romeo in Arese (see p. 60). The Sistema dei Musei d'Impresa della Provincia is the point of reference for the network of company museums and archives and brand collections that make "Milan a design city" (temi.provincia.milano.it/cultura/milano_citta_progetto).

The Centro di Documentazione Storica of Villa Ghirlanda Silva (tel. 02 66023550/535), in Cinisello Balsamo, actively coordinates the **Rete dei Giardini Storici-ReGiS**, a project aimed at promoting historic gardens in the Province of Milan and which comprises the towns of Cesano Maderno, Desio, Lainate (see Villa and Giardino Visconti Borromeo Litta, p. 64) and Monza, and involves the participation of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Architettonici e del Paesaggio.

The **Polo Parchi e Ville** is dedicated to increasing the enjoyment of newly established parks and historic villas (e.g. those in Paderno Dugnano, Cusano Milanino, Cormano) as venues for musical performances and entertainment. For information visit the provincial website: www.provincia.mi.it/cultura/progetti/metropoli/



Sesto San Giovanni

Municipal website: www.sestosg.net
Local Tourist Office: via Don Minzoni 7. **Tel.:** 022440100
E-mail: sestoproloco@interfree.it
Website: www.sestosangiovanni.com/proloco
Distance from Milan: 9km. **Map reference:** D 6

A farming village developed at the sixth (Sesto) mile along the Roman road to Brianza, it fell under the control of San Giovanni in Monza in 1100. It then became a strategic crossroads in the 19th century when the redesign of Milan's road network to the mountain passes resulted in roads and railway converging at the Rondò, then outside the inhabited centre. In the 1800s and 1900s its large spaces, an efficient road network and the nearby electric power station on the River Adda attracted the new entrepreneurs, who turned Sesto San Giovanni into a "factory town".

The old town

A **monumento ai Caduti** (1924) by Gualtiero Anelli stands in piazza della Repubblica; **Villa Zorn** in via Cesare da Sesto was constructed in the early 19th century and purchased by the Austrian Zorn family in 1870. The **Palazzo comunale** (town hall, 1963-1971), designed by Piero Bottoni, is raised off the ground to provide parking. The building clad with



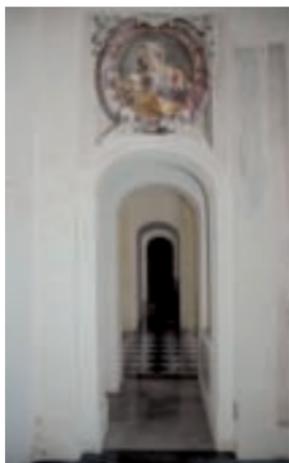
Visiting Sesto

The Pro Loco provides information on getting about Sesto, guided tours and cultural events.

The informative totem poles of **A Factory Town** installed by the authorities at strategic spots soon become a familiar sight for those moving around the town. Stop and read them to learn more about this intense and unique period in its history. The town is, in effect, a scattered museum.



The 18th-century Villa Mylius, in Via Cesare da Sesto



Inside view of S. Maria
Assunta

Intellectual Salon

In the 19th century villa Mylius was popular with Monti, Manzoni, D'Azeglio, Cattaneo, Hayez and the astronomer Barnaba Oriani, who spent his last years here scanning the sky from an observatory built in the tower of the villa. In fact, the owner, Enrico Mylius, was by no means insignificant. In 1838, he was one of the founders of the Società di Incoraggiamento delle Arti e Mestieri that promoted technical and production training in Lombard factories.



The two buildings of Palazzo
Comunale



Palazzo comunale

ceramic tiles graded in colour from black to flame red contains the official offices; the other building houses the administration offices. The **monumento alla Resistenza**, designed again by Bottoni and by Anna Praxmayer, unfolds along the entry ramp; in 13 stages it retraces the fight against the Fascists with scenes scored in a concrete wall that gradually becomes higher before soaring the skywards with a *Victory*, which frees a flight of bronze doves.

Since 1921, the 18th-century **Villa Mylius** has been owned by the town authorities, which allow it



Victory, detail of the monumento alla Resistenza

A country village



Church of S. Maria Nascente

According to the road sign it is a 'country village' and, behind the large gates, the farm complex of **Cascina de' Gatti** is distinguished by its open courtyards. In the centre of the complex, which until 1869 was an autonomous commune, is the church of **S. Maria Nascente**, completed in neo-Romanesque style in 1901.

The **Mariani brick kiln** is situated in Via Rimembranze and has been active since the early 20th century, along with its twin, not far away.



A renovated country courtyard



View of the old Sesto, in Vicolo De Ponti

Parravicini, a rich and cultured banker who spent much time on it and arranged part of his art collection here. In the late 17th century, the villa was enriched with frescoes depicting landscapes and mythological figures, in keeping with the taste and methods of the Lombard *trompe l'oeil* painters. It later belonged to the



The business centre with the Torre Tonda and the Torre Sospesa



The ABB headquarters, one of the new buildings of the ex Marelli site

Visconti d'Aragona family and eventually the De Ponti family, who installed a spinning factory here. Today, it houses municipal services such as the **Biblioteca Civica Centrale** and other institutions. **Villa Puricelli Guerra** is of medieval origin and bears the name of the family that bought it in 1812. From 1840 the building housed Sesto's first spinning factory, the first one in Italy equipped with steam machinery, thanks to Giuseppe Puricelli Guerra, a lover of the arts, himself an artist who produced the terracotta medallions in the courtyard depicting the characters of *The Betrothed*, the neo-Gothic wing and interior decorations.

The **Spazioarte** cultural centre has just been reopened and it organises encounters and exhibitions.

The **villaggio CECA** (1955) is close to the new cemetery in via Pisa; made up of terraced houses, it overlooks the area due to become the **Parco della Media Valle del Lambro**, which will preserve the local area through which the river passes.

After the closure of the factory in the late 1990s, the **Marelli site** has attracted numerous multimedia, business and service companies, such as the **ABB building** by Marzorati and the Polo di Mediazione Interculturale e Comunicazione of the University of Milan. The nearby business centre features the **Torre Sospesa** (1991) and the **Torre Tonda**, both by Marzorati.



The Spazioarte cultural centre

All roads lead to...

The fate of the Rondò in Sesto was decided in 1840, when the first Lombard railway (the second in Italy) placed a stop on its Milan-Monza line in this octagonal square and then ran along the road from Loreto to villa Reale; shortly afterwards, it became a road junction and continues to organise the traffic flows between Milan and Monza. The railway expanded its station and the Milan underground system arrived here in 1986.



Mario Botto's project for the Campari site and the construction site

The Rondò and the new town

New workers' housing, Art Nouveau residences for the directors (many in via Gramsci) and many small industries were built to the west of the railway in the early 20th century. The firms included **Campari**, which, in 1903, constructed a factory designed by Luigi Perrone, later demolished after production was moved to make room for a new project by Mario Botto, which comprises company housing and offices. The tall house, an 18th-century villa formerly belonging to the Arese family and purchased by the Campari family as its home, remains and is surrounded by green spaces.

The gantry and a locomotive have been left as memories on the site of the Breda iron and steel works. The former workshop is now an industrial museum called **MIL, Museo dell'Industria e del Lavoro**; the **Teatro dei Filodrammatici** theatre company has also occupied spaces here and stages performances in a seasonal programme.

Hands-on design

A figure unknown to the general public but crucial to the world of Italian design came from Sesto. In his Milanese workshop, Giovanni Sacchi lent concrete form to designs by names such as Nizzoli, Castiglioni and Zanuso who, thanks to his models, developed functional and harmonious designs. When the workshop closed, all the material was transferred to the MIL and will soon be the theme of an exhibition route.

Spazio MIL

Via Granelli (former Breda site)
www.spaziomil.it
www.archiviosacchi.it/



The MIL museum, on the ex Breda site



Period buildings in Via Solferino, a stone's throw from the Rondò

More

Villa Torretta



The U-shaped courtyards of Villa Torretta



View of a hall with its restored frescoes

Still in splendid isolation, this villa has, somehow, only been touched slightly by development and industry. Now, after years of neglect, it has regained its former dignity as a "villa of delights", transformed by Delia Spinola, daughter of Leonardo Spinola, right-hand man of the banker Tommaso Marino. When



The Annunciation in the small church of S. Margherita

she found herself the young widow of the older Count Giovanni Anguissola in the late-16th century, she had the building enlarged and the walls frescoed with grotesques, landscapes, coats-of-arms, constantly changing backdrops to parties, dances and rendezvous of the Milanese nobility. When Delia died (1611), her cousin Giovan Gerolamo Marino continued the embellishment of the villa and the small church of **S. Margherita**, containing frescoes by the school of Camillo and Giulio Cesare Procaccini. Inherited over the years by several

Milanese noble families, by the early 20th century, it belonged to the Breda family. In 1981, the Consorzio Parco Nord purchased the by then abandoned and unsafe building and organised its renovation. The villa is now a 4-star hotel with 78 rooms and suites, all different, conference and

reception halls, a restaurant and a modern auditorium for 300 people. The Circolo Villa Torretta cultural association has inserted the villa and the church of S. Margherita in the local cultural circuit, organising events and a calendar of guided tours for groups, which can be joined by prior appointment.

Information:

Circolo Villa Torretta

via Caduti sul Lavoro 1
tel. 02241127100 - 0261837935
Website: www.villatorretta.it



Villa Torretta overlooking the Parco Nord

Old beauties

Villa Pelucca, at the end of viale Italia, is an old people's home. In the Middle Ages, this land belonged to the Pelucchi family, later passing to the Rabia family, which pursued a profitable farming activity. The theme of the land seen as a source of wealth and happiness is the backdrop to the Biblical and mythological scenes chosen by Gerolamo Rabia for the frescoes in the new villa, on which Bernardino Luini worked in or around 1520. Some of these were transferred to the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan in 1816, after the departure from Milan of Viceroy Eugenio di Beauharnais, who had lived in the villa from 1806 and radically altered it to suit neoclassical tastes.



The Rondò, the neuralgic road intersection of Sesto

The perspective is closed beyond the road by **Villa Torretta**, not to be missed on a cultural tour of the town and overlooking the **Parco Nord** (to which it is linked by a walkway), which has its operational headquarters in Sesto San Giovanni.

The former Falck site and the Renzo Piano design

For the moment, the brand new Sesto San Giovanni exists only model form, a 3D rendering of the idea behind Renzo Piano's design: creating a



Viale Italia: the main road of Piano's project for the ex Falck site

“factory of ideas” that amasses the evidence of its past industrial production and looks to the future with optimism and a surge of new experiences. It starts from what used to be and what holds great significance for the whole town. Initial decontamination of the **former Acciaierie Falck steelworks** has left the old industrial pavilions standing, each one extending over thousands of square metres, now free from heavy machinery and invaded by spontaneous vegetation. This prompted the idea of a **park**

and, when the walls of the production zones are demolished, the new Sesto will be one large park spread over approximately 1,000,000 square metres, crossed by **viale Italia** – the exotic new name of *rambla* emphasises its new status – an axis for the development of housing for different social classes, to favour the mix required for a reinvigorated cultural and production life. The **industrial pavilions** will house public services as too the university and research laboratories. The **Railway Station**, designed to avert the break of the tracks and to connect old and new, will provide the link with residential Sesto. All has been conceived with criteria of environmental



Green areas are very important in Piano's project

On the web

All the information regarding the project and updates on initiatives for its presentation to the public can be found at the municipal website www.sestosg.net.

There is also a video in which Renzo Piano enthusiastically illustrated the project to the Town Council, which met at the end of January 2008.



Project of transformation of the BLISS industrial building into a multi-media library



The new bridge railway station

sustainability, which led to a rethink of the transport and road system and aims for energy autonomy with the use of renewable energy.

More

A Company Town

In 1906 the Società Anonima Acciaierie e Ferriere Lombarde (called Falck from 1931 on) opened its Unione factory in Sesto San Giovanni, on a site measuring approximately 140,000 square metres. The previous year, Ercole Marelli had started up his electro-mechanical production and Breda had moved here back



in 1903. The availability of vast plots of land at affordable prices and well served by roads and railway attracted investors and the town soon became one with its industries. As the factories grew, so did the building of housing and villages for the workers, along with the necessary services, such as working men's clubs, nurseries, schools and sports centres. The town marched to the rhythm of the sirens that signalled the change of the day and night shifts, lit up by the glow of the blast furnaces. Different names and different companies, but the shared destiny of the rise and fall of Italian iron and steel industry

brought Sesto major moments of cohesion and human solidarity. In the golden age of the 1960s, the Falck group employed 16,000 workers (9000 of which in Sesto alone); by 1987 the number had fallen to 8100 and to 2000 by 1994. An aid plan to convert plants and re-employ the workers accompanied the crisis in the

European iron and steel industry. Falck joined the plan in 1995 and the first six months of 1996 saw the complete dismantling of its production plants.



Some Breda factory workers in a period photo

Cogno Monzese

Municipal website: www.comune.cognomonzese.mi.it

Local Tourist Office: via Milano 3. **Tel.:** 0225308611

E-mail: cognoproloco@tiscali.it

Website: www.cognoproloco.it

Distance from Milan: 10km. **Map reference:** D 7



Inside view of the parish church of S. Giuliano

Cogno was founded as a Roman “colony” in 333 and such it remained also in name until after the year 1000, when the corruption of the Latin changed it from *Colonia* to Cologno. Under the Longobards, the parish church of **S. Giuliano** was the most important and for some centuries it and the Benedictine monastery of S. Ambrogio in Milan owned much of the local land, before it was passed to S. Giovanni in Monza. The many years under Monza control ended in the 17th century but remained in the place name. In the 12th and 13th



Courtyard of Villa Besozzi Casati, now the Town Hall



Culture and celebrations



The Pro Loco and the Associazione Pieve di S. Giuliano offer a calendar of guided tours to the Pieve di S. Giuliano; see the website for dates and all other information.

Regular appointments are the **Falò di S. Antonio**, 17 January; the **Festa dell’Uva**, the second Saturday in September with the barrel-rolling ritual; and the **Festa di Cologno**, the third Sunday in October, includes a local cake competition.



The late-summer Festa dell’Uva (grape festival)



A corner of the centre with the palazzo Sormani archway

More

The folly of Orlando: colours, words and music

All Italians are familiar with *Orlando Furioso* because they studied it at school but it often remains a forgotten memory for this very reason. The guided tours of Villa Casati offered jointly by the Pro Loco and the Council Office for Culture encourage a full appreciation of the work and will refresh weak memories. A historic and artistic explanation narrates the life of the building and illustrates the figure of Gabrio Casati. Reading Ariosto's poem as you observe the frescoes will take you right into the paintings, able to grasp every detail and

a musical accompaniment with 19th-century pieces revives the atmosphere of times gone by. More than a visit, this is a spectacle with full audience involvement and, lasting more than two hours, it provides a great cultural experience.

Visits every third Sunday in the month – reservations c/o Pro Loco (Mon-Sat, 4-7pm; groups of at least 20 and school groups can arrange other dates: library phone 0225308364).

Delightful nocturnal visits are organised in spring and summer.



centuries, the church was rebuilt in Lombard Romanesque style although it retains features from different epochs inside. The apse contains a painting attributed to the school of Titian portraying *The Crowning with Thorns*. On the inside of the facade is an organ (1802) manufactured by Amati and used for ceremonies and concerts.

In the uncertain medieval times, the Benedictines of S. Ambrogio constructed a house-fortress, the dovecote-tower of which is still visible in piazza Mentana, incorporated into the **Villa Besozzi Casati** complex, now the Town Hall. In the late 16th century, the Besozzi family obtained lands from the monastery and started work on a residence as they tried to elevate their work as merchants with a noble title. When they were made counts in the late 17th century, the rooms of the villa were embellished with frescoes, including fascinating panels inspired by *Orlando Furioso*, written in 1516 by Ludovico Ariosto and one of the very few profane cycles devoted to



The parish church of S. Giuliano

“The Cologno studios...”

It all started with Cinelandia, which, in the late 1950s built studios and technical back-up services in Cologno for film and TV productions, providing an alternative to Cinecittà in Rome. In 1983, **Mediaset** (then Fininvest) was in rapid expansion and took the studios over, becoming a leader in its sector and attracting a large number of small allied businesses to the area.



Villa Besozzi Casati: a decorated wooden ceiling



The old trough in the centre of Cologno, in a period photo (closed today)



**Azienda agricola
Oreste Ugo
Caldarini**



*Fruits and
vegetables*

Via Cesare Battisti 175
Tel.: 027309040

The sound of silence



*The Tangenziale Est
carriageway crossing
Cologno*

Known as *Silenzio in Rete 55*, this project will change the face and... the sound of Cologno by introducing a system of noise barriers on the Tangenziale Est carriageway. Approximately 2km long in all, the final section will be an artificial steel and glass tunnel; the materials are sound absorbent and pollution will be reduced thanks to special paints and photocatalytic asphalt. The roof of the tunnel will be a park with a surface area of approximately 7000 square metres.



*The covering project for
the Tangenziale Est
carriageway*

this chivalrous poem. In 1798, the villa was sold to Count Casati's family, the most illustrious exponent of which was Count Gabrio, a prominent figure in the Risorgimento.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Milanese nobility turned to the local countryside for their landed business and to seek tranquillity and refuge, with the Andriani, Airoldi, Alfieri, Cacherano, Citterio, Sormani, Trivulzio, Venino and Visconti di San Vito families all arriving in Cologno. Little remains of the fine residences of that period although **Palazzo Sormani** and the adjacent **Casa Biraga**, today owned by the Arosio family, also stand in piazza Mentana. Here, Girolamo Birago, an esteemed jurist born in Milan in 1691, composed plays and poetry in Milanese dialect, highly satirical portraits of the reality of the times enjoyed by Parini. Not far away, a plaque commemorates **Villa Citterio**, now an old people's centre and home. The former parish church of **SS. Marco e Gregorio** also dates from the 17th century and is a venue for temporary exhibitions.



The former parish church of SS. Marco e Gregorio

Cinisello Balsamo

Municipal website: www.comune.cinisello-balsamo.mi.it

Local Tourist Office: via Matteotti. Tel.: 0297373873

Distance from Milan: 12km. **Map reference:** C 6



Villa Ghirlanda Silva: the courtyard

Cinisello and Balsamo were two separate townships until 1928. They had lived through the same experiences over the years but as separate entities, starting with episodes in Roman times and on through the Middle Ages to the late 16th century, when the Milanese nobility started to build its summer residences in the countryside near the city. In a back and forth of carriages, between the 16th and 18th centuries, villas were built rivalling each other for ostentation and splendour, and churches were embellished with scrolls and paintings. The move from farming activities towards growing industrialisation in the 19th and 20th centuries



Information

For information on local events and how to get around, contact the local URP offices and the Settore Cultura e Spettacoli del Comune office, all based in Villa Ghirlanda, in via Frova 14/18. An information portal for residents and non-residents was recently opened at www.cinisellobalsamotv.com, a Web TV providing information throughout the day.



Villa Ghirlanda Silva: the English garden and the Mirror Hall



Historic gardens



A fresco of Villa
Ghirlanda Silva

Villa Ghirlanda is the head quarter of **ReGiS**, a network of historic gardens that, with the aid of experts, historians and botanists, promotes the study and training of the complex subject of gardens, partly with a view to developing the best strategies for their complex conservation.

For information regarding visits and other events contact the

**Centro di
Documentazione Storica,
Villa Ghirlanda Silva**
Cinisello Balsamo
Tel.: 0266023550/535

radically altered the appearance and lives of the two towns, which had to cope with massive immigration and sudden development, especially after WWII. Cinisello Balsamo also lies at a strategic crossroads, between the north road towards Monza and Brianza and the east-west A4 Turin-Venice motorway, between entry to Milan in viale Fulvio Testi and that to Sesto San Giovanni. This position made it attractive to many service companies, but it considerably complicated the local population's quality of life. The green spaces are, therefore, fundamental but even more so are the large suburban parks such as the Parco Nord and the Grugnotorto Villoresi, reached via a number of cycle paths.

Villa Ghirlanda Silva, near piazza Gramsci, is one of the most significant baroque villas in Lombardy and portrayed in six engravings by Marcantonio dal Re in his book *Ville di Delizia*. Started in or around 1660 by Donato Silva, it was completed by his nephew. Fine cycles of frescoes with mythological subjects adorn the halls, now used by the town authorities for various events. In the late 18th century, Ercole Silva, a garden expert, put his name to the conversion of the Italian garden to an English garden, one of the few remaining examples in Lombardy; it is used for concerts and as an open-air cinema in summer. The mid-19th-century alterations to the villa front facing the garden, ordered by the new owner Carlo Ghirlanda and designed by Luigi Scrosati, reveal the eclectic tastes of the times, especially in the decorative use of brickwork. The villa now houses the civic library.



The beautiful ladies parlour



Piazza Gramsci: the wide pedestrian area



Church of S. Ambrogio ad Nemus: the facade and the statue of S. Paul on the crown

Beyond via Frova, is **piazza Gramsci**, which recent refurbishment (2004) designed by the French architect Dominique Perrault has turned into a large, open square that can be enjoyed by all. The redesign of the square also highlighted the fine baroque facade of the church of **S. Ambrogio ad Nemus**, Cinisello's old parish church; the layout of the church dates from the late 1500s but crucial work was carried out in the 20th-century, mainly on the interior. The choir

More

Museum of Contemporary Photography

The Museum of Contemporary Photography is based on a love of photography as a means of investigation and learning, a privileged look that freezes the various faces of the reality in which people live. This was the passion of Achille Sacconi who, among other things, worked with the Provincia di Milano for years, surveying its architectural and



Inside view of the Museum of Contemporary Photography

environmental heritage. It was in this sphere that the *Archivio dello spazio* project emerged and, over a decade (1987-1997), resulted in several photographers portraying their personal vision of the human-landscape relationship at the time when it was entering a post-industrial reality. An archive of Sacconi's photographs forms the Museum's permanent collection, arranged on two storeys of the south wing of Villa Ghirlanda.

The Foundation also organises solo and collective exhibitions, as well as photography seminars and encounters, and it has a library, open by appointment. The museum has a café/bar overlooking the park of the villa.

Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea
via Frova 10 - Tel.: 02 6605661

www.museofotografiacontemporanea.org.

Trams and tramways



The metro-tramway line under construction

The first form of public transport between Cinisello, Balsamo and Milano was a steam tram introduced in 1890 by Heschel and better known as *gamba de legn* (wooden leg), replaced in 1913 by an electric service. Now, many years later, a new metro-tramway system under construction will have 27 stops and link piazzale Lagosta in Milan with via Monte Ortigara in Cinisello Balsamo, with part of the route in bus lanes and part in mixed ones.

Festivities... shared

One of the reasons why the unification of the two centres was not a simple process was the issue of the patron saint's and local festival day. Not until the late 1980s did the local administration rule that the patron saint's day is 7 December, St Ambrose's day. There is, however, another heartfelt celebration of a more profane nature known as the *Uffizi*, which in Cinisello falls on the second Sunday in Lent, with stalls in via Copernico, while Balsamo celebrates it in piazza Italia in October.



Courtyard in Via S. Ambrogio

contains an organ made by Bernasconi in 1900. Also in piazza Gramsci is **Villa Arconati** (12th-18th C.), also owned by the Arese and Bay families, with a portico of coupled columns; it is privately owned and not open to visitors, although it is the venue for exhibitions and conferences.

In via S. Ambrogio, which flanks the gardens of villa Ghirlanda, on the right is **Villa Suigo Caorsi Spreafico**, which conserves its 18th-century origins and has a glazed ground-floor portico.

Viale Rinascita descends towards piazza Soncino, dominated by one of the loveliest old residences in the area: **Villa Ferrari Casnedi Casati Stampa di Soncino**, built in the late-16th and 17th centuries with highly unusual architectural solutions; it avoided the symmetry of the U plan in favour of a rectangular two-storey block with portico and first-floor loggia. The reception hall is on the garden level, not that of the *piano nobile*, which was reserved for the private apartments, and the *trompe l'oeil* wall frescoes and the decorations on the wooden ceilings are refined.



Villa Arconati: the portico facing the courtyard



Villa Casati Stampa: a hall on the ground floor

Reduced to a pitiful state until a few years ago, it is owned by the Pauline fathers and can be hired for parties and conferences.

The nearby church of **S. Martino Vescovo** was built in 1957 to replace the old parish church of Balsamo, that stands in via S. Martino; it has a splendid 16th-century design and is the perfect venue for concerts, which can make use of its organ. In via Diaz is the 18th-century **Villa di Breme Forno**, currently being refurbished.



Villa Casati Stampa: the portico and a detail of the frescoes inside

The golden ear



It's the symbol of the annual tribute made by Cinisello Balsamo to citizens, bodies and associations that have distinguished themselves in the work, sports or social sphere. Recognising the special merits of the few highlights the values that drive an entire community and it is no coincidence that the award ceremony is held every year on the Sunday that precedes 17 October, the day on which Cinisello Balsamo was granted the title of "town" in 1972, partly thanks to its constant efforts to strike a balance between growing population, quality of life and industrial establishments.



Talk about neighbours!



Fields around Cinisello

They have always been neighbours, truly one beside the other, but uniting them in a single municipality did not eliminate the sense of the local pride that the inhabitants of Cinisello and Balsamo have always felt. After all, some of the older population proudly boast that they were born in a centre with a single name and that what the young people take for granted, they do not! Here are some of the names used for each other and drawn from local legend: the people of Cinisello are called *pescaluna*, i.e. those who will drag a well to capture the moon's reflection; those of Balsamo are *goz de balsum*, after the man with a swollen gullet after eating all the leftovers rather than give them to a neighbour.



The ancient church of the Madonna di S. Eusebio

You have to delve back in history to discover the origins of the church of the **Madonna di S. Eusebio**; once separate from the town and surrounded by fields, it has now been reached by the new districts. It is of importance less for its art and more for the popular devotion it has always attracted: according to local tradition, its picture of the Madonna was venerated by the Longobard Queen Teodolinda. The inside wall of the small apse reveals humble materials and traces of mural paintings. On the north wall are frescoes showing the *Crucifixion* and the *Madonna of the Milk and Saints*.



Church of the Madonna di S. Eusebio: Crucifixion and Saints, inside frescoes

Cusano Milanino

Municipal website: www.comune.cusano-milanino.mi.it

Distance from Milan: 8km. Map reference: D 6

It is not unusual in the province of Milan to find towns with two names, mostly the result of the administrative merger of existing ones. In this case, however, a royal decree of 1915 combined the old town of Cusano with a totally new nucleus called **Milanino**, which appeared between 1909 and 1923 at the initiative of Luigi Buffoli who, in 1886, had founded the *Unione Cooperativa* in Milan with the aim of applying the consortium formula to the building of decent, comfortable and affordable housing for the middle classes. He saw the 1,300,000 square metres that became available near Cusano as the ideal spot for a far-reaching project, a garden city based on the English model and on a wide avenue, today viale Buffoli running north-south, around which the streets were laid out in an elliptical design. Small villas and one-/two-family terraced houses were all given a garden and decorations that express the eclectic Modernist style.

Old Cusano, mentioned in 659 as *Cuxanus*, is known to have been inhabited from Roman times; it was run by the Capuani family under the jurisdiction of the parish church of Desio. Around the year 1000, it was passed to the Cusani family and then much later, under Spanish rule, to the Omodei family, which obtained its feud in 1657 and bound their name to the **Palazzo Omodei** standing in the town centre, which is about to be renovated.



Green spaces

Viale Buffoli, in Milanino, leads to the Parco Nord and from here a network of cycle paths also leads to the neighbouring towns linked to the park, such as Bresso, Cormano, Cinisello Balsamo, Sesto San Giovanni and Milano. Another local green space is the Parco Grugnotorto Villorosi.



Palazzo Omodei in a period photo



A street in the Milanino quarter



The monument to Luigi Buffoli

Bresso

Municipal website: www.comune.bresso.mi.it
Distance from Milan: 8km. **Map reference:** D 6



Città del Parco Nord

The close bond between Bresso and the Parco Nord is highlighted by the wording on the town's official logo, which not surprisingly is green in colour, and it is planning and launching several initiatives to improve the quality of life there: cycle paths in the town providing convenient links to the routes in the Parco Nord and the creation of green spaces, with the planting of new trees.



Dome in the Madonna del Pilastrello

Some historic studies link the first settlements in this area to the Gauls and Celts but one sure fact is that *Brixium* came under the jurisdiction of the Duomo of San Giovanni in Monza in 1189. It was later enfeoffed to the Patellani family, and then the Perini family in 1717. While farming remained for centuries the main resource, the industrialisation brought spinning mills and silk factories, and the early 20th century saw the arrival of major industrial ventures, followed by the small and medium-sized firms that governed life in Bresso for many years.

Along the Valassina is the small Sanctuary of the **Madonna del Pilastrello**, constructed in the early



The River Seveso in Bresso



The imposing Villa Rivotta

1600s for a 16th-century fresco of the *Madonna and Child*, which still attracts great popular devotion, as demonstrated by the ex-votos on display. It has good 18th-century frescoes on the presbytery walls and in the dome. In the old town centre are the **parco pubblico Renzo Rivolta** that stands adjacent to the imposing 18th-century **Villa Rivolta**. This used to belong to the Patellani family but was purchased in 1939 by Renzo Rivolta. Opposite is **Villa Conti** and, not far away, the parish church of **SS. Nazaro e Celso**, constructed in the late 17th century. From the church square you can see the nearby piazza Immacolata, with its towering 18th-century **column** bearing a statue of the Madonna, known as the *Castella*.



The parish church of SS. Nazaro e Celso

Eco-friendly at all ages

Do it together. Everything is more fun when you do it with others. The town authorities are appealing to the strength in numbers by promoting the *Pedibus* project in which adults walk groups of children to school along several routes in the mornings to save on the use of cars. This teaches the children that "walking together" is not only possible but also enjoyable, and the parents learn to use their cars sensibly.



The parco pubblico Rivolta

More

Engines in the air and on the road

When the Ernesto Breda firm started its aeronautical production, it found the space required for its aeroplane testing runway in the Bresso area, close to Sesto San Giovanni and Cinisello. The structure expanded in the 1930s with a military flying school and, at the same time, launched flying as a hobby by training civil pilots. It is currently the operational base of the Milan Aero Club.

By contrast, the industrialist Renzo Rivolta is linked to the ISO automobile and motorcycle name, which numbers collectors and admirers the world over. In 1943, Rivolta moved his refrigerator and electrical appliance factory, founded some years earlier, to Bresso. After the war, the needs of the Italian people began

to change and he started manufacturing motorcycles, which became a huge success thanks to their mechanics and design. The 1950s brought automobile production and the small Isetta car. Having completed its industrial parabola, the firm's production area was abandoned although its sheds can still be seen on viale Vittorio Veneto and an ISO Rivolta museum is currently being developed.



The Isetta car

Parco Nord, just green



The Park in figures



View of the Parco Nord coming from Milan

Established in 1975, it covers a surface area of approximately 620 hectares and is managed by a Consortium comprising the Provincia di Milano and the towns near Milan, Bresso, Sesto San Giovanni, Cinisello Balsamo, Cusano Milanino and Cormano.

The operational headquarters is the Cascina Ferrario, Via Clerici 150 in Sesto San Giovanni.

www.parcnord.milano.it

Good links and efficient roads are essential requirements for modern production rhythms and these are not lacking in North Milan. But there is also a different pace, the slow pace of leisure time that must be spent in special spaces where relaxation and silence do not inhibit the traffic but, on the contrary, seem essential. Surrounded by the often uncontrolled development of towns and roads, the Parco Nord responds to the need to regenerate spaces and devote time to nature in one of the most densely populated parts of Europe. During the 30 years of its existence, it has painstakingly “brought together” disused industrial zones, farm fields besieged by concrete and abandoned scrubland, managing to link zones that would otherwise be distant from each other in a single mantle of vegetation. The first reclamation operation focused, in particular, on zones where industry had inflicted the most damage and was followed by a reforestation phase that planted its first 16,000 new seedlings in 1985, and has not



Green spaces, cycleways and pedestrian paths inside the park



The woodland area of the park

stopped since. Every year the surface area of woods is increased and the rows of lime trees and horse chestnuts along the park's cycle and foot paths are extended. After all this work, the true satisfaction for those involved comes when they see that nature, so harshly tested for many years, starts work again itself and the vegetation is reproduced spontaneously, creating genuinely "natural" patches.

A green backbone to the north



Taking off from Bresso airport

The idea is to link the existing parks north of Milan in a single green corridor. These are the Parco Nord, the Parco delle Groane, the Valle del Ticino, the Valle del Lambro, the Adda Nord and 12 parks spread over more than one municipality. This is the challenge for the future.

More

A park for all

The Parco Nord is a metropolitan park to all effects and in many parts its boundaries are formed by the perimeters of apartment blocks. So, it seemed only natural to organise services that would serve those visiting it for a breath of fresh air. It has large spaces for dogs, not enclosed but clearly marked; the *boules* areas are a favourite with the elderly; there are urban allotments with irrigation where it is a delight to stop and identify the plants grown; and children and young

people have playgrounds and sports facilities. School trips are also given various opportunities to learn about and love nature.



The bowling green, open to the public

Cormano

Local Tourist Office: via Papa Giovanni XXIII 5.
Tel.: 0266301304. **E-mail:** proloco2001@libero.it
Website: www.prolococormano.it
Municipal website: www.comune.cormano.mi.it
Distance from Milan: 10km. **Map reference:** D 6



Manzoni, and more

The local tourist office is very active, with various proposals for all times of the year: expectations are always high in Spring for the annual **Fiera**, held in the town streets with stalls and themed entertainment in the fourth week of May.

Early June brings **Papermarcia**, a race for families and children, and finally the **Scintille di Natale** is a hugely successful craft Christmas market held in the last week in November.

You can find yourself in Cormano almost without realising if you head north through the Niguarda district of Milan. There it is, just a stone's throw from the city and now so big that you have to search stubbornly for the old town centre. There, you will find the 17th-century church of **S. Salvatore** and then a long cobbled street lined with the courtyards of the old farmhouses, tastefully renovated.

The archaeology reveals sure Roman origins of the place, recorded in the Middle Ages as *Locus Cortemano*. Although enfeoffed in 1674 to the Besozzi family, it linked its name to another illustrious presence, or rather to his hamlet, Brusuglio, where Alessandro Manzoni spent much time in the **Villa Imbonati Manzoni**. It is a fine U-shaped building with harmonious neo-classical proportions and is flanked by a park. Today, it is privately owned and is not open to visitors, but it conserves a well-stocked library and original furnishings.

More

Manzoni Festival in October

The villa, the outbuildings and the little church look out of place in the middle of the chaotic traffic. The villa is imposing and secluded but not cut off from the rest of the town. It was much loved by Don Lisander, the character in Manzoni's novel *The Betrothed*, who alternated lonely walks in the grounds, which he looked after personally, with the company of the priest and the townsfolk. Manzoni loved Brusuglio and some members of his family are buried in the little cemetery there. Each year, Cormano organises the **Ottobre Manzoni** festival, a packed programme of events and lectures based on themes from Manzoni's works,

combining the more spectacular aspects of his work with scientific and literary research.

For information please consult the Comune di Cormano website.



Costume re-enactment



The parish church of S. Salvatore



A street in the old town centre

The hamlet of Ospitaletto developed around **Villa Gioiosa**, which was the old pilgrims' hospital.

A network of cycle paths being developed will link the Parco Nord to the Parco delle Groane, passing through Novate and Cormano. Along with the recent institution of the **Parco della Balossa**, this is a sign of Cormano's extreme sensitivity to green spaces.



Villa Imbonati Manzoni

Culture in Cormano for children

A vast industrial area abandoned in the early 1900s is to become the **Centro per l'Infanzia**, a new complex where Cormano plans to organise cultural events for children. There are plans to build a toy museum, a children's library, a little theatre for puppet shows, and music and multimedia workshops.

Paderno Dugnano

Municipal website: www.comune.paderno-dugnano.mi.it

Distance from Milan: 12km. **Map reference:** C 6



Getting to Paderno Dugnano

Paderno Dugnano runs along the Giovi road, flanked by the ATM Milan-Limbiate-Desio tramline but also has an exit on the Milan-Meda dual carriageway and a station on the Ferrovie Nord railway line; it can be easily reached by several bus lines as well.

Situated just a few kilometres from Milan, Paderno Dugnano is too close to the main city and too easy to reach not to have become a town with a population growth between the 1960s and 1980s that more than doubled the number of inhabitants, subtracting ever more space from the countryside for the new residential developments. Despite this forced development, the town has managed to retain its identity and you will enjoy a stroll through the town centre, past renovated old courtyards and modern complexes that have brought new architectural solutions and materials to traditional designs, as in the apartment building in via Gramsci designed by Maurice Cerasi in 1985-88.



Piazza della Resistenza and the Town Hall

The courtyards bear witness to a past dedicated to agriculture but the many villas date from the 17th and 18th centuries when Milanese nobility, such as the Calderari, Dugnani and Imbonati families, obtained some of the villages as their feuds and local noble families built their homes there. This was the case of **Villa Gargantini Archinto**, now the home

More

Improving green spaces



Anglers fishing in the small lake of the Parco Lago Nord

Environmental awareness is visible in the even balance of green and constructed spaces in the town centre and has prompted Paderno Dugnano to promote the regeneration of areas otherwise exposed to degradation. One example is the **Parco Lago Nord**, where the closure of a gravel quarry has produced a small lake equipped for anglers plus recreation and cultural areas such as an amphitheatre that stages plays and concerts.

Paderno is also the home of the **Parco Grugnotorto Villoresi** which extends outside the area to Cusano Milanino, Cinisello Balsamo, Muggiò, Nova Milanese, Bovisio Masciago and Varedo. The name, meaning 'ugly mug', has a strong caricature connotation; it appeared in old 18th-century maps but seems bent on making faces at those who do not engage in the regeneration of this large agricultural area, with farms that are still producing, where cycle paths, reforestation and environmental education programmes are promoting more aware exploitation.

(via Grandi 15, tel. 02 91004418;
[www.comune.padernodugnano.mi.it/
grugnotorto](http://www.comune.padernodugnano.mi.it/grugnotorto))

The **Parco urbano del Seveso** is in the creation process and will reclaim the urban stretches of the river, decontaminating the water and banks, previously over exploited.



The pedestrian area crossing the small lake of the Parco Lago Nord

From the communes to a municipality



*A rural courtyard at
Incirano*

Paderno, Dugnano, Incirano, Cassina Amata and Palazzolo are five villages that, as early as medieval times, prospered under the jurisdiction of Desio parish church, later acquiring independence in the commune era; in the subsequent centuries, they formed part of several noble feuds. After lengthy and lively discussions between their inhabitants, only two gave their names to the municipality under which they were unified in 1866 with the administrative reorganisation that came after Italian Unification. With the later addition of Villaggio Ambrosiano and Calderara seven districts now form the township, recognised as such in 1989.



Rural courtyards in the town centre



The central Piazza della Meridiana

of the town library, **Villa Dugnani**, with 19th-century alterations, **Villa Rotondi**, now the parish house and an enclosed convent for Franciscan nuns. The huge parks of these villas, scattered around the various districts, are open to the public and constitute a major green resource for the town, such as the central combined park of Villas Orombelli,





Villa Gargantini Archinto, the home of the town library

Rotondi and De Marchi Tavecchio, where the writer Emilio De Marchi spent his holidays.

Beside villa Rotondi, in via Grandi, is the church of **SS. Nazaro e Celso**, with its elegant 18th-century facade and fine frescoes inside; the large parish church of **S. Maria Nascente**, entirely revamped in the 1930s, conserves interesting canvases, including a *Sacrifice of Isaac* and a *Conversion of St Paul* by Bernardino Luini, a *Madonna adored by St James* by Palma the Younger and two paintings by Lorenzo Costa the Younger in the sacristy. Along the Comasina road is the small church of the **Pilastrello**, an old country church and still the object of pilgrimages.

Area Metropolis 2.0

It looks like an updated version of a computer application. In fact it's the cultural centre where Paderno Dugnano puts on plays and dance performances, shows films – with the collaboration of the Fondazione Cineteca Italiana in Milan – and other cultural events.

Via Oslavia 8.

Tel.: 029189181

www.comune.paderno-dugnano.mi.it/metropolis



The church of SS. Nazaro e Celso



Villa Rotondi is now the home of several institutions

Lentate sul Seveso

Municipal website: www.comune.lentatesulseveso.mi.it

Distance from Milan: 25km. Map reference: B 5



The old Oratory of S. Stefano, in Piazza S. Vito

After restoration

Visits to the Oratory of S. Stefano: April-September; closed August; Sundays 10am-12 and 3-6pm; guided tours at 10am, 3.15pm, 4.30pm – reservations c/o the Biblioteca Comunale, tel. 0362556288
e-mail: lentate.direzione@brianzabiblioteche.it

Lentate is on the provincial Giovi road, the Comasina road so important in Roman times because it ran along the right bank of the Seveso River to Como and the Alpine passes. It formed part of the parish of Seveso and conserves valuable works from the medieval period. The Oratory of **S. Maria** (1355) in Mocchirolo had a painted cycle now kept



Piazza Fiume, in the hamlet of Copreno



New buildings in Piazza S. Vito



The Town Hall

in the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan. Only slightly later in date is the Oratory of **S. Stefano**, built in 1369 by Count Stefano Porro, an Imperial adviser who had settled in Lentate; simple brickwork on the outside, the interior is frescoed with one of the most important painted cycles of medieval Lombardy: 43 wall panels narrate the life of St Stephen – the largest cycle on this saint in Italy – with an attention to detail that sets the stories in very human situations. The triumphal arch features a *Last Judgement* and the presbytery contains a large *Crucifixion*. The church of **S. Francesco Saverio**, in Copreno, is of medieval origin and has a bas relief by Vincenzo Vela.

In the 1600s Lentate attracted nobles wishing to build residences there. The Casnedi family constructed a **villa** in Birago in 1630, which was then purchased in 1794 by the powerful Raimondi family of Como. Clearly visible from the Comasina road, it is surrounded by a garden that is but a token of its former park, with plays of water and baroque sculptures. Also visible from the provincial road is **Villa Mirabello**, built in 1756 for Gabriele Verri, father of Pietro and Alessandro, founders of *Il Caffè* literary review which made it a haunt of the intellectuals of the Enlightenment. Verri also established a spinning mill there. **Villa Volta** dates from the late-16th century and **Villa Valdetaro** in via Cavour was built in eclectic style for Bartolomeo Marelli in the first half of the 1800s. Copreno is the home of **Villa Immacolata**, built for the Clerici family in 1650.

Lentate and green spaces

As well as being one of the towns in the Parco delle Groane, Lentate sul Seveso is the home of the Parco Sovracomunale Brughiera Briantea, which extends over approximately 2600 hectares. Established in 1984 to protect the moorland habitat typical of the Lombard uplands, it is alternated with wetlands and provides an ideal habitat for birds and mammals.

Parco Brughiera Briantea c/o Municipio di Lentate sul Seveso

via Matteotti 8
tel. 0362515203
www.parcobrughiera.it



The playground in Via Grandi

The Varesina Road and the Parco delle Groane

The first stretch of the SS233 Varesina road and the Parco delle Groane form the axis of this second itinerary. The Varesina road retraces the route opened for Maria Theresa of Austria between 1777 and 1778, which linked Milan to Varese and continued on from there to Switzerland. Once again, the upper Milanese plain appears densely developed. What remains of the stretches of forest it used to feature notably includes the **Groane area**, a bas-relief formed by alluvial sedimentation that permitted the acclimatisation of particular botanical shrub species, such as heather (*brugo* in Italian, hence the term '*brughiera*') but prevented agricultural exploitation and for centuries allowed only the collection of wood and coal, and from the 19th century on, the extraction of clay from the quarries. This geo-morphological feature is partly responsible for the preservation of the habitat. Although well irrigated after the **Villoresi Canal** was opened in the late 19th century, these lands were not intensively exploited for farming because industry started to develop at the same time, also able to rely on the brand new Ferrovie Nord railway, so crucial for the movement of goods. The inhabited settlements, structured in rural courtyards along



serpentine streets, became inadequate and unable to meet the new living demands and so began to be taken over by new housing and whole new residential districts. It was in these areas, which had to cope with a massive surge of immigration from southern Italy during the years of the economic boom, that the leading lights in contemporary Italian architecture expressed their living philosophy in exemplary projects of subsidised building, which in some cases produced entire districts such as the INA housing village in **Cesate**. Many of the old villages became towns but all have rediscovered and valued their old rural nucleus.

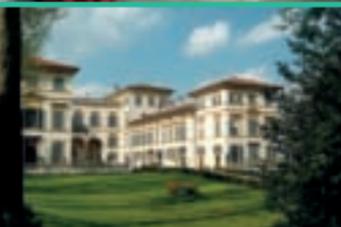
Absorbed by the inhabited nuclei or still surrounded by parks and fields, the 'villas of delight' belonged to Milan's noble families, who brought refinement to holidaying on their vast landed estates and left behind them great expressions of history and art. We will mention but a few **Villa Visconti Borromeo Litta** in Lainate, Villa Arconati on the **Castellazzo** estate in Bollate, **Villa Borromeo** in Senago and the **Valera** in Arese. This latter town is more famous for other reasons because since after the war, its name has been one with the history of **Alfa Romeo**, narrated in the company museum.



Learn more

The towns north of Milan that contribute towards the green space of the Parco delle Groane (Arese, Baranzate, Bollate, Cesate, Garbagnate Milanese, Lainate and Novate Milanese, Senago and Solaro) have come together in the **Polo Culturale Insieme Groane** (Piazza Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa 30, Bollate; tel. 0235005501), an association that promotes collective initiatives aimed at promoting the assets of each town while benefiting from the experience and participation of all. The website www.insiemegroane.it is a constantly updated point of reference with information on events, art and history.

The towns of Cesate and Senago, along with those of Paderno Dugnano, Cusano Milanino and Cormano, form part of the **Polo Culturale Parchi e Ville** (www.comune.paderno-dugnano.mi.it/poloparchiville/index.htm), which belongs to the Metropòli network and is dedicated to increasing the enjoyment of newly established parks and historic villas as venues for musical performances and entertainment.



Bollate

Municipal website: www.comune.bollate.mi.it/on-line/Home.html

Distance from Milan: 11km. **Map reference:** D 5

The parish church of Bollate, which in a document of 1036 was well structured and in charge of a village of farms, was named after St Martin, bishop of Tours. During the communal period Bollate fought in the Battle of Legnano against Barbarossa and becoming increasingly bound to the fate of Milan, which absorbed it in the 15th century. The parish church of **S. Martino** contains a much revered relic of Rinaldo da Concorezzo, Archbishop of Ravenna during Dante's. The building was reconstructed in the mid 18th century and many of the holy furnishings date from that time, but it was then revamped in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Carrera organ dates from 1838. Opposite it is the medieval **Palazzo Pretorio**, now in neoclassical style and from which via Magenta starts. This is the centre of the farming village that developed around the parish church and, if you wander the streets, you will often come across rural courtyard structures.



Antiques fairs in Bollate

For 25 years now, piazza della Resistenza has been coming alive with **antique stalls**. Open from 8am to 7pm every Sunday, it has developed into a regular event.



The parish church of S. Martino facing via Magenta



A rural courtyard facing Via Magenta, the very heart of the town



The sober facade of Palazzo Pretorio



The central Via Magenta

At the junction with via Piave stands **Palazzo Arese**, with an age-old history that survives in the portal with a terracotta archivolt and the Arese family arms. Recent restoration of the chapel of the **Madonna della Neve** uncovered frescoes depicting the eight muses dating from the early 17th century and attributed to the Avogadro-Pozzi family; this profane cycle would suggest that the small square church was originally a study and only later converted to a noble chapel, with the creation of a

More

A museum... to watch

A place of work at the service of art and the manufacturing tradition being carried on in the act of artistic creation are by no means new ideas but it all seems especially appropriate in the Fabbrica Borroni. The location is a former factory, which provides vast spaces (extending over more than 2000 square metres) that are well lit and surrounded by a garden. The rest is done by the art collection of Eugenio Borroni, who carried forward the family business for 35 years while also collecting art on the basis of personal taste and instinct, mixing with and getting to know the artists. By 2004, everything was ready and a permanent exhibition of nearly 500 works, mainly by Italian artists, some young and making their debut, was opened to the public. This is being added to every year. But completed art was not enough and the Collection aims to

encourage artistic production with encounters, a documentation centre and even by playing host to young artists. Definitely a museum to be watched.

Fabbrica Borroni

Via Matteotti 19

Tel.: 0236507381/7258

www.fabbricaborroni.it



Inside view of the Fabbrica Borroni



Frescoes in the chapel of the Madonna della Neve



One of the Muses, fresco in the chapel of the Madonna della Neve

small presbytery with a fresco of the *Madonna and Child* in the centre. In nearby piazza Dalla Chiesa stands **Palazzo Seccoborella**, the product of the 16th-century restoration of a medieval design and now the home of the civic library; it features frescoes with mythological subjects from the early 17th century. A little farther on is the elegant **Palazzina Viscontea**, a building of the 15th century used for hunting, and the **Fabbrica Borroni**, a brand new contemporary art museum that has prompted great



The courtyard of Palazzo Seccoborella, now home of the civic library

*The Palazzina Viscontea,
a 15th-century
hunting lodge*



In Cascina del Sole



*Inside view of the church
of the Madonna in
Campagna*

Along the road to the Cascina del Sole, you will pass the church of the **Madonna in Campagna** in late-neoclassical style, having been altered in 1895; in the village you will see the church of S. Antonio da Padova, and an imposing **IACP housing complex** (1980-85) by Ferrante and Villa.

cultural ferment. The **IACP housing** development in via Turati, built between 1974 and 1981 by Canella and Marescotti, runs from piazza della Resistenza to Parco Martin Luther King, the town's green space; the former **Casa del Fascio**, near the railway, is an example of Rationalist architecture (1935).

Ospiate is home to the church of **S. Maria Assunta**, dating from the mid-17th century, as do some of the works inside.

Castellazzo

The hamlets around Bollate evolved from the old medieval rural courtyards into small centres, each with its own parish church. The exception is **Castellazzo**, for which history reserved a very



Parco Martin Luther King, the town's large green space



The imposing facade of Villa Arconati Visconti at Castellazzo

different fate. A fortified construction probably existed here in the Middle Ages, hence the place name, and a church named after **S. Guglielmo d'Aquitania**. The church was restructured in the late 16th century by the Cusani family, who owned the land then, although it was expropriated soon afterwards; in fact, in the early 17th century, the Castellazzo was transferred to Count Galeazzo

More

“Wonder” at Villa Arconati

It has been called the Versailles of Milan for its elegant and aristocratic late-baroque Lombard buildings and vast surrounding park. This ‘villa of delights’ owned by the Arconati family, who gave it a new guise in the mid 18th century,



Ethnic music at Villa Arconati Festival

today lacks its interior furnishings but is experiencing renewed glory thanks to the **Festival di Villa Arconati**, a musical event that attracts national and international artists with different backgrounds every summer. For 20 years now it has been an unmissable appointment, made possible by collaboration between several towns which have created the Polo Culturale Insieme Groane, also active in the promotion of local culture.

www.insiemegroane.it
Ufficio Cultura Bollate
 Tel.: 0235005575

cultura@comune.bollate.mi.it

Villa Arconati



The statue of Pompeo

Villa Arconati is privately owned and only opens to the public for the summer events of the Festival di Villa Arconati and of the events organized by Polo Culturale Insieme Groane, which offers guided tours to the villa and the gardens.

Information:

Villa Arconati

Via Fametta 1

Tel.: 02 896201

www.villaarconati.it

Ufficio Cultura Bollate

Tel.: 0235005501-02

cultura@comune.bollate.mi.it

Arconati Visconti, who started to restructure the building complex and turn it into **Villa Arconati Visconti**, a worthy home for his valuable art collections. The Count owned works such as 12 manuscripts by Leonardo from the *Atlantic Code*, donated in 1637 to the Ambrosiana Library in Milan, and the sculptures of the funerary monument of Gaston de Foix, by Bambaia, now in Castello Sforzesco in Milan. A statue of Pompeo Magno stands in the centre of a frescoed niche and, according to legend, is the one beneath which Caesar was stabbed. There was also a great love for gardens and they were designed in the Italian style and dotted with numerous shrines. Major works were later also executed by Giuseppe Antonio Arconati who, from 1740 to 1760, called upon Giovanni Ruggeri, who was responsible for the U-shaped monumental facade and the space in front of it. Stucco-workers and decorators worked on the rooms that painters such as the Galliari brothers “perforated” with their *trompe l’œil* filled with mythological fantasy, such as the unique *Carro di Fetonte* (Phaeton’s chariot). For nearly 100 years (1770-1865) the villa belonged to the Busca family, who brought eclectic taste; in the 20th century it was owned by the Crivelli family. Today, it is a special combination of art and nature that is all the more charming because the Castellazzo is still surrounded by cultivated fields and the miraculous green space that is the Parco delle Groane, in which the villa seems a cameo presence, as it appeared in the prints of the villa made by Marcantonio Dal Re.



The Carro di Fetonte frescoed by the Galliari brothers in Villa Arconati Visconti

Baranzate

Municipal website: www.comune.baranzate.mi.it
Local Tourist Office: via Nazario Sauro 3
Tel.: 3896871286. **Website:** www.prolocobaranzate.it
Distance from Milan: 9km. **Map reference:** D 5

The people of Baranzate did not regain independence from Bollate, with which they had been unified by royal decree in 1869 until 2004. Situated just outside Milan, it is a young town in administration terms but has a long history. The most significant change is that seen in the 1960s, when the industrial reconstruction brought massive immigration to the area and required rapid and often uncontrolled development. Baranzate can boast one of the most famous buildings in the history of Italian architecture, the church of the **Mater Misericordiae**, better known as the glass church. Designed in 1957 by the architects Mangiarotti and Morassutti, in it they were able to put into practice their technological research into prefabricated materials, in an expression of Rationalism. It is a block containing a single hall, made of pre-shaped slabs of concrete and double-glazed with insulating fibreglass that allows the light to filter through.



Insieme Groane

Baranzate belongs to the Polo culturale Insieme Groane, very active in proposing cultural events and entertainment.

For dates and other events in Baranzate see the website www.insiemegroane.it



A renovated farmhouse in the town centre



Inside view of the church of the Mater Misericordiae

Novate Milanese

Municipal website: www.comune.novate-milanese.mi.it

Local Tourist Office: via Vialba 3. **Tel.:** 3930173535

Distance from Milan: 9km. **Map reference:** D 5



Culture

The library of Novate, in conjunction with Bollate and Arese, paved the way for the Consorzio Sistema Bibliotecario Nord-Ovest, a network that now comprises 45 libraries in 35 towns, spread over an area of approximately 780,000 inhabitants.

Surrounded by fields, Novate is a small town with an active cultural life.

The parish church of **SS. Gervaso e Protaso**, recorded in a deed of 1042, was reconstructed in the early 20th century and conserves a *Birth of the Virgin Mary* painted by Camillo Procaccini in 1618. The Oratory of **SS. Nazaro e Celso**, known as the church of the *Gesù*, was constructed for Bernardino Busti, who in 1529 bequeathed his possessions in Novate to the Luogo Pio Elemosiniere della Misericordia in Milan, with the condition of saying mass for his soul; his remains are here.

Villa Venino is the hub of Novate's cultural life; it was constructed in the 17th century in agricultural surroundings and farm work was carried out beside this elegant 18th-century residence until shortly after the war. One of the rooms in the villa, which houses the civic library, displays paintings by Father Ambrogio Fumagalli, a Benedictine monk adopted by Novate who was familiar with several styles and



The parish church of SS. Gervaso e Protaso

More

Dedicated to Testori

Novate is a major presence in the words of Giovanni Testori: the commuter trains, the workers' houses, the church and its fine work by Procaccini, and also his home, to which



Inside view of Casa Testori

he returned after spending time in Milan. Novate is in his works because he possessed the intelligence to see, which means observing but also understanding or trying to and seeking to explain what the eyes are saying. He treated his pictures just as he did reality; never tiring of looking at them, he would get to know them well before speaking about them and making his criticism. Reality manifests itself in many ways and Testori moulded them to his persona, choosing the language of the theatre, poetry, criticism or journalism as his paintbrush.



The frescoed vault of the Oratory of SS. Nazaro e Celso

leading masters and in his personal artistic quest combined reflections on the sometimes painful aspects of life with his religious belief. In the gardens of the Town Hall is a **monumento ai Caduti** (1989) in bronze and glass, while the council hall is dominated by a large *Peace Triptych* (1985).

When walking through the town you can also see two sculptures by Gianfranco Lamon. In the church of S. **Carlo Borromeo** is an organ built by Gaspare Chiesa (1828) and a cycle of paintings by the Japanese painter Kei Mitsuchi which once belonged to the Italian writer Giovanni Testori.



Villa Venino, home of the civic library

Azienda agricola Tosi Gabriele e Marco



Fresh vegetables and fruits

Via Balossa 75
Novate Milanese
Tel.: 0266302497
Mobile 3392227094;
3351895249
tosigabriele@hotmail.com



The monumento ai Caduti by Father Ambrogio Fumagalli

Arese

Municipal website: www.comune.arese.mi.it
Distance from Milan: 13km. **Map reference:** D 5



Poetry parlour

From October to June, once a month, the Civic Library organises the “poetry parlour”: reading sessions and lectures about great poets and their work.
Biblioteca Comunale,
Via dei Platani 6.
Tel.: 029385131

Of Roman origin, Arese grew over the centuries as a farming town but has secured its place in the history of Italian industry as the home of the Alfa Romeo factory, which opened here in the 1960s. Between the factory and the Groane fields lies the pretty hamlet of **Valera**, which retains the features of a small rural centre with farms and farm buildings. The Lattuada Settala family constructed a **villa** here in the mid 18th century with an enclosed central courtyard and wings containing conservatories and outbuildings, which after several passages of ownership came to the Ricotti family of Monza. Numerous events are held here, making use of its splendid Italian garden adorned with statues and fountains in sandstone. As well as the garden, it has a park containing a coffee house with a Moorish dome – an aristocratic whim based on the exotic ritual of drinking coffee in a separate pavilion. The small Oratory of **S. Bernardino** is a late 16th-century



The entrance to the Villa in Valera hamlet



A rural courtyard annexed to Villa La Valera



The Oratory of S. Bernardino at Valera

Jazz in the garden

Every thursday in June,
Jazz music in the garden of
the restaurant Castanei.
Ufficio Eventi Culturali del
Comune
Tel.: 0293527265 - 694
www.comune.arese.mi.it -
www.insiemegroane.it



A statue in the park of Villa La Valera

Music in the villa



The harpist Luisa Prandina

From October to June, **Il Caffè in Villa con l'Artista** and **L'aperitivo concerto in Villa** classic music in villa La Valera. For information: Assessorato alla Cultura del Comune, ufficio Eventi Culturali
Tel.: 0293527265 - 694
www.comune.arese.mi.it -
www.insiemegroane.it



Via dei Caduti, main street of the town centre

construction retaining several 17th-century canvases, including a *Madonna and Child with Saints* in the apse and an excellently painted *Baptism of Christ* (late 16th C.).

The centre of Arese also retains traces of its rural origins such as the **Cascina S. Pietro**, dating from 1867. The Ermolli organ (1887) in the choir of the parish church of **SS. Pietro e Paolo** is still the star of many concerts. The church closes a lovely small square and also conserves a 17th-century pulpit. Behind it is the town's Einaudi-Vismara park, spread over an area of 1000 square metres.



The parish church of SS. Pietro e Paolo

More

The Salesians in Arese

In 1955, the Cardinal of Milan, Montini, who later became Pope Paul VI, asked the Salesians to take care of the young people in difficulty previously cared for in Arese by the Associazione Nazionale Cesare Beccaria. Don Della Torre, in



Villa Arese, part of the Centro Salesiano

charge of the centre, felt they should apply the educational ideas inspired by Don Bosco to the harsh reality of young people with a violent past and an uncertain future, moving from a repressive system to a preventive one that encouraged training and work. Playing fields, workshops, gyms and reading rooms replaced the cells and barred windows and over time, with the aid of psychologists and neuropsychiatrists, they became extremely professional in the field of rehabilitation, and at the fore not only in Italy. The Centro Salesiano Arese remains a consolidated presence in the rehabilitation and professional training of young people.



Via dei Caduti, main street of the town centre

Slightly farther on is **Villa Arese**; its modern-day appearance is that of the 19th-century revamp of the building chosen as a holiday home by Count Marco Arese Lucini and Antonietta Fagnani Arese, famous for having made Ugo Foscolo, a frequent visitor to the villa, fall in love; in 1801 he dedicated his *Ode all'Amica Risanata* to Antonietta. The building now forms part of the Centro Salesiano di Arese.

One year's events

Regional trade fair

Every year, in May, Piazza XI Settembre hosts a trade fair of regional products from Italy and abroad. Ufficio Eventi Culturali del Comune
Tel.: 0293527265/694
www.comune.arese.mi.it - www.insiemegroane.it

Christmas concerts

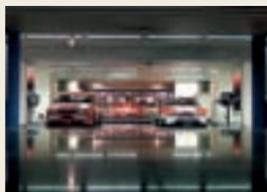
In December the three churches of Arese are the venue for several concerts of traditional Christmas music. Ufficio Eventi Culturali del Comune
Tel.: 0293527265/694
www.comune.arese.mi.it - www.insiemegroane.it

Anonima Lombarda Fabbrica Automobili

Alfa, Alfetta, Giulia, Giulietta – girls' names for engines with an unmistakable roar even in deafening traffic and so fast that it was like being in a racing car even in the town. Turning those keys filled generations of Alfa drivers with pride, and when changing from one model to another they could not imagine gripping any steering wheel that did not bear the Alfa logo in the centre.

The early model names were actually codes expressing the engine power; the 24HP was designed by Merosi, recruited from FIAT because the new ALFA factory, opened in 1910 after buying the shares of the French SAID, needed experience to make its name on the market. People liked the car and it was followed by more models; the Portello factory in Milan, then outside the city centre, increased production from 80 vehicles in 1911 to 205 in 1915. WWI brought a recession on the civil market and imposed production for military contracts. Mr Nicola Romeo then entered Alfa and brought fresh capital. After the war, Enzo Ferrari flew by and won in an Alfa. Production was extremely diversified and the workshops turned out compressors, farm tractors and aeroplane engines. The aeronautical sector grew during the Fascist regime as did the production of industrial vehicles. In the meantime, Portello had become a citadel of specialist departments but was

Museo Storico Alfa Romeo



In 1976 Alfa wanted to tell its story and it does so in a specially arranged museum that displays approximately 100 of its most prestigious models, nearly all still in working order. One section is devoted to the aeronautical sector and other to design. The road and track racing sector is the subject of the third section, displaying the trophies won by the drivers. The Museum also has a record centre and the Alfa Romeo history archives.

Centro Direzionale Alfa Romeo

Viale Alfa Romeo, Arese
Tel.: 02 44429402/421/322
www.museoalfaromeo.com
*Free admission Mon-Fri,
9am-12.30pm and 2-4.30pm
closed Saturdays and Bank
Holidays.*

Guided tours (also in other languages) by prior arrangement.

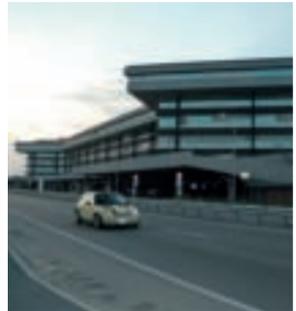


Inside view of the Museo Storico Alfa Romeo



An early 20th-century ALFA poster advertising

razed to the ground by bombing in 1943-44. The success of the Giulietta, in 1956, however, encouraged new production. Alfa's future started in Arese, where memorable projects took shape – the Giulia in 1962 and the Duetto, manufactured for 26 years, as well as the racing sector, already successful in the 1950s and which evolved with the GTA by Giugiaro, one of the designers that put his name to the Alfa bodywork. That marked the height of its development with a factory spread over an area of approximately 2,500,000 square metres, and with 20,000 factory and office workers. Ignazio Gardella designed the engineering building (1970-72). The problems started in the 1970s and FIAT took Alfa over in 1986; production continued to fall in the Arese factory as did the number of jobs with a reduction in employees from 16,000 to the current 800. In 2000, FIAT sold the Arese plants to two private companies, keeping the design sector in Arese.



The engineering building by Ignazio Gardella



Old cars exposed in the Museo Storico Alfa Romeo

Lainate

Municipal website: www.comune.lainate.mi.it
Local Tourist Office: viale Rimembranze 1. Tel.: 3333292842
Website: www.procololainate.it
Distance from Milan: 18km. **Map reference:** C 4



The special bond that for hundreds of years linked Lainate, the medieval *Ledenate*, to the Borromeo family was forged in the 15th century. In 1470, Francesco Sforza confirmed the Borromeo family was to receive the feudal investiture of the lands belonging to Lainate, previously owned by the monastery of S. Ambrogio. It was, however, Ludovico il Moro who, in 1498, started the younger branch of the Visconti Borromeo family bequeathing the feud to them. Lainate thus had lords who exercised administrative and juridical powers but life in this farming village remained far removed from the splendours of the



Aerial view of Villa Litta and its park, from the square to the Villoresi canal banks



Villa Litta overlooking the square with its monumento ai Caduti

Borromeo family, and lived off a prospering agriculture blessed with land rich in water and resurgences.

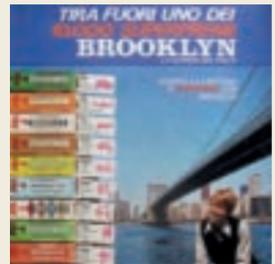
In the 20th century Lainate was still a farming centre and struggled to expand beyond the Villoresi canal to the north and the Laghi motorway to the south, constructed between 1923 and 1926. The 1960s changed that with the demolition of the surviving rural parts of the town, greatly altering its appearance.

The people of Lainate concretely expressed their thanks to the Madonna for sparing the area from the



The Oratory of the Madonna del Carmine and the parish church of S. Vittore

Success with... gum



We all know chewing gum but it first originated as such and was brought to Italy by the American soldiers during the war. The Perfetti family of Lainate added flavour to the Italian economic boom. The first in Italy to produce **Brooklyn**, the chewing gum named after the bridge, the small family sweet shop established in 1946 became a colossal sweet industry.

A villa open to all



Visiting Villa Litta

The public park, a calendar of guided tours and a large number of cultural events have truly made the villa a public asset. The **Amici di Villa Litta** association welcomes an average of 20,000 visitors per season, from May to October, and organises various events. Information on visits and the events calendar can be found at www.amicivillalitta.it

terrible plague of 1630 in 1667 with the embellishment of the Sanctuary of **S. Maria delle Grazie**, erected in the early 17th century. Inside are numerous paintings dating from the period. 17th-century paintings are also conserved in the new parish church of **S. Vittore**, consecrated in 1930 by Cardinal Schuster and constructed on the former site of the old church, the oldest local place of worship. The nearby Oratory of the **Madonna del Carmine**, with a simple 18th-century facade is not open to visitors.

Villa Litta

The documents recording Count Febo I's inheritance (1569) of the Visconti Borromeo family assets in Lainate speak of a noble mansion that governed the estates and farming revenue, with outbuildings and farm stores. However, it was his son Pirro who, the following year, started transforming the mansion into a noble residence, redesigning the park with fountains in the taste of the times. Ambitious but sensitive to art, a benefactor and collector, marriage ties considerably increased Pirro's standing and he represented the State of Milan in delicate diplomatic missions, which brought him



The magic night lighting of the Galatea marble fountain



Villa Litta, Nymphaeum: copy of the 19th-century statue of Venus by Pompeo Marchesi

into contact with the most popular places, artists and styles. In the Lainate mansion, Pirro had an opportunity to rival the splendour of the aristocrats of his times and, in 1586, the architect Martino Bassi, who had constructed the Duomo, was asked to work on the new 'villa of delight', along with painters such as Morazzone and Cerano, the two Procaccini and the sculptors Francesco Brambilla, Annibale Fontana and Michele Antonio Prestinari. Special attention was paid to the Nymphaeum, the work of Pirro himself and a military engineer, Ramelli, who studied water mechanisms that would create plays and surprises for visitors. Camillo Procaccini worked on the mosaic cobbled paving and a sculptural group portraying the *Rape of the Sabines* by the school of Giambologna was placed in the garden. In the 17th and 18th centuries, marriage alliances brought Arese Litta to the Visconti



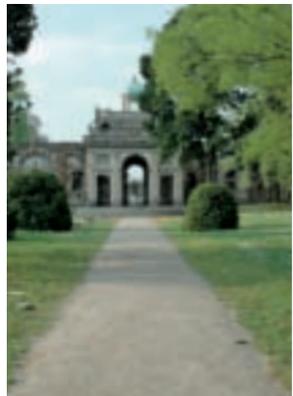
The frescoed ceiling of a hall

Gardens

Villa Litta in Lainate forms part of **ReGiS**, a network of historic gardens that, with the aid of experts, historians and botanists, promotes the study and training of the complex subject of gardens, partly with a view to developing the best strategies for their complex conservation.

For information regarding visits and other events contact the
Ufficio Cultura del Comune
tel. 0293598266
cultura@lainate.inet.it

**Associazione
Amici di Villa Litta**
tel. 3393942466
amicivillalitta@newmarket.it



The Nymphaeum surrounded by the park



The church of S. Andrea in the Grancia hamlet

**Aldo
Santacatterina**



*Sale of cheese
and dairy products*

Via Rho, Lainate
Tel.: 0293572090

**Re
Baldassarre**



*Sale of eggs
and poultry*

Via Nerviano 93, Lainate
Tel.: 029371917

Borromeo household and the villa in Lainate benefited; outbuildings were demolished and replaced with noble residences and Nymphaeum was refurbished and enriched with a Galatea marble fountain. The Napoleonic era in Milan invested Antonio Litta with positions and honours, and Lainate became a frequent backdrop in the stories of visiting writers: Foscolo, Porta, Monti and Stendhal, whose legs were wet by the plays of water. Two years before the Italian Unification, in 1859, the villa in Lainate hosted King Vittorio Emanuele II, victorious after the Battle of Magenta before his triumphal arrival in Milan. Financial difficulties in the Litta family in 1872 resulted in the transfer of its assets to the Weil Weiss family. The 20th century brought more passages of ownership until the municipal authorities purchased the villa and park in 1971 and embarked on its slow and costly renovation.



Inside view of the parish church of S. Bernardo at Barbaiana



Villa Meraviglia Osculati facing the street

The hamlets

The municipal area extends to the east, beyond the Milan-Laghi motorway, to the hamlets. Hamlet Grancia developed around a Benedictine convent, of which the oratory of **S. Andrea** was the small church. It appears in its 18th-century guise and presents the standard oratory plan with a single hall with annexed outbuildings or farmhouses that was common in the 17th century. Not far away, beyond the park of Cascina Grancia is a small votive chapel known as **Lazzaretto** because erected in the mid-17th century for the nearby cemetery of plague victims. In the hamlet of Barbaiana, where the Girami family settled, the parish church of **S. Bernardo** was constructed in the 20th century but conserves holy furnishings from the old church dating from the 16th and 17th centuries. In via Meraviglia stands **Villa Meraviglia Osculati**, built in the 18th century, from which time some of its frescoed ceilings date.



The cycleway along the banks of the Villoresi canal

Festivals in Lainate

Feast of S. Vittore: the patron saint's day on 8 May with entertainment on the parvis of the parish church of S. Vittore.



Feast of S. Virginia and the patron saint of Barbaiana: on the third Sunday in September, the parish church of S. Bernardo celebrates its patron saint. Every 5 years, on the same day, they hold a *Palio* in honour of S. Virginia with a costume procession around the hamlet's 5 districts.

Art on the Villoresi Canal: the Villoresi Canal footpath (via Isonzo) turns into an exhibition venue every first Sunday in the month from May to September.

Fair of S. Rocco: the old livestock market has become one of the largest events in the area with entertainment, games, cultural and sports events and an important Trade Fair. The historic re-enactment in period costume at the Nymphaeum of villa Litta is extremely popular.

Garbagnate Milanese

Municipal website: www.comune.garbagnate-milanese.mi.it

Distance from Milan: 15km. Map reference: C 5



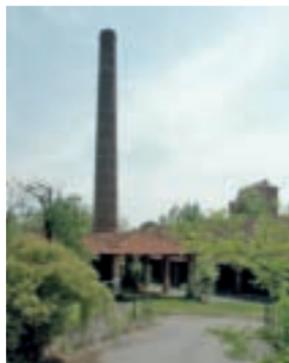
A museum of work

The Cascina Siolo, already part of the Parco delle Groane, has opened a **permanent exhibition on the peasant culture and on the brick kilns**. It displays implements used in farming in Alto Milanese. A small section devoted to the activities of the brick kilns is open by prior appointment, telephone the Servizio Cultura, tel. 0299028010.



The town hall facing the square

The Garbagnate place name reiterates its probable Celtic origins in the root “*garben*”, a bundle of wheat, and the ending “*ate*”, a place or district. In 1879, the Ferrovia Nord Milan-Saronno service added a stop here and the improved links favoured the brick industry, in particular. The Fusi and Beretta-Gianotti brick kilns, now abandoned, were even built beside the tracks. The Villoresi Canal was dug later in 1888, which meant a great deal to farming, but, shortly afterwards, industrialisation started to draw



An abandoned brick kiln



Piazza della Croce, at the very heart of the town



Corte Nobili, with its elegant colonnaded portico

manpower away from the countryside and the arrival of the Alfa Romeo factory in Arese in the 1960s prompted more development here too.

The rural economy that distinguished the Garbagnate area for so long lives on in the courtyards in its town centre. Some are well restored and worthy of note, such as the **corte Nobili**, with its elegant colonnaded portico in stone and a central tympanum, and **corte Valenti**, which was originally a monastery but is now the home of the civic library and hosts numerous cultural events; works of art are displayed in its courtyard during the *Sentieri dell'Arte* festival. The parish church of **SS. Eusebio e Maccabei** was constructed in 1940; inside it has holy furnishings,



Inside view of the Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine del Rosario



The facade of corte Valenti, now the home of the civic library

The Villoresi Canal cycle path

This path has a surface suited to all types of bicycle except racing bikes and in 10.5km links the FN station of Serenella di Garbagnate with Parabiago, following the right bank of the **Villoresi Canal**, which is protected by a wooden parapet.

**Azienda
agrituristica
Agrimania**

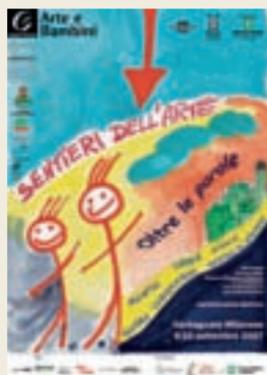


Via Milano 170
Garbagnate Milanese
Tel.: 0299027555



The Ospedale Salvini, in the Groane pine grove

Children and art



Every year in September, the corte Valenti holds the **Sentieri dell'Arte** festival which encourages children and young people to join the world of contemporary art. Workshops on various techniques and performances also draw adults into a creative process that often results in books and exhibitions.

For information, contact the Servizio Cultura
via Monza 12
Tel.: 0299073260
www.sentieridellarte.it

18th-century altars (Assunta, S. Giuseppe and S. Giovanni Bosco) and a statue of *Our Lady of the Assumption* brought from the demolished Milanese church of S. Maria d'Ara Coeli at the Fatebenefratelli hospital.

The Sanctuary of the **Beata Vergine del Rosario**, an old parish church, has an octagonal plan and dates from the 1600s, as does its wooden pulpit, whereas the main altar in marble is 18th-century. The parish church of the **S. Maria Rossa** district is neo-Gothic in style and was built in 1900.

The **Ospedale Salvini**, then named after King Vittorio Emanuele, was constructed in 1923 as a sanatorium for people with lung diseases, which is why the healthy area of the Groane pine grove was chosen for it. A **monumento alla Libertà** has remembered the deportation of doctors and nurses who collaborated with the Resistance to the Nazi lagers since 1995.

The town abounds with green spaces which are also used for various summer events. In the very centre is the park of **Villa Gianotti**, an aristocratic 18th-century residence currently being refurbished to house the municipal offices; another old residence is **Villa Magnolie-Galbiati**, built in the 17th century and today a restaurant.

Senago

Municipal website: www.comune.senago.mi.it
Local Tourist Office: via Volta 182. **Tel.:** 3475421877
Distance from Milano: 16km. **Map reference:** C 5

With the major roads between Como and Varese passing in the vicinity, Senago has retained a close bond with its roots, conserving vast farming areas irrigated by the Villoresi Canal and rivers and having exploited the clayey composition of the terrain to develop a major brick industry. In the Middle Ages, the wooded and gently undulating Senago – of Celtic origin – attracted the Milanese lords of the Visconti court, who competed with each other on hunting expeditions. Much later, in the 17th and 18th centuries, more noble Milanese families erected splendid villas here. In 1629, Cardinal Federico Borromeo started converting an old fort on a rise to **Villa Borromeo** where he and the Milanese Curia could relax. The bishop of Novara, Giberto Borromeo, continued the work in the 17th and 18th centuries but the villa did not take on its final guise until 1911, when Fausto Bagatti Valsecchi added eclectic features. Refurbishment commenced in 1983 restored splendour to the villa; set in a dominant position on a rise overlooking the Parco delle Groane and surrounded by a centuries-old park comprising gardens and thick woods, it is now home to a Study Centre that organises cultural seminars, a **Museo permanente di arte contemporanea** and a luxury hotel.



Appointments

The **Lanterna Magica** is an antique, collectors' and hobby fair held in the streets of the town centre on the last Sunday in the month.



The imposing Villa Borromeo, dominating from a small rise



Entrance to the villa from the portico



Tourists at Villa Borromeo during the open days organized by Insieme Groane

In the Groane park



Senago lies in the Parco delle Groane, where particularly charming is Via per Cesate, flanking Villa Borromeo and passing through the fields and the woodland areas of the park.

Villa Corbella-Martinelli-Sioli is of 17th-century origin and the name commemorates its various owners. The Sioli family sacrificed its noble status in favour of the factory gradually installed. Purchased by the town administration, it is arranged in a U shape around a small central courtyard; a restructured part contains municipal offices and meeting rooms. The park is spread over 20,000 square metres and is open to the public, with children's playgrounds. The delightful home of the civic library is **Villa Verzolo-Monzini**, constructed in the early-18th century for farming but its structure and interiors were ennobled in the mid-19th century for the celebration of a family marriage. The park is open to the public.

The 18th-century **Villa Po-Degli Occhi** is still surrounded by its fine park. It has a simple facade but richly decorated rooms featuring frescoes with mythological subjects; it is currently being



The Villa Corbella-Martinelli-Sioli park, open to the public



Villa Verzolo-Monzini, now the home of the civic library, faces the park

refurbished. **Villa Ponti** is neo-Gothic and situated in the Parco delle Groane.

An exemplary specimen of eclectic taste, mixing the styles and decorations of several eras, the parish church of **S. Maria Assunta** was constructed *ex novo* in 1908 by Fausto and Giuseppe Bagatti Valsecchi, then also working on villa Borromeo. Here, they adopted the masses and two-colour effect of Bramante's S. Maria delle Grazie in Milan.

The cascina Traversagna comprises the chapel of **S. Bernardino da Siena**, constructed in 1450 and features two late-Gothic pieces in marble, a holy-water stoup and a tabernacle; its frescoes were painted in the 18th and 19th centuries. Senaghino is home to the old parish church of **the Beata Vergine Assunta**, which has a fine 18th-century ciborium in polychrome marble. The Oratory of **S. Pancrazio** and the church of **SS. Martino e Bernardo** were radically altered in the 19th century.

Racing on... fields

As well as cultivating the land, the Tosi farming estate cultivates a passion for Italian and foreign old farm tractors, cared for, restored and used when possible. The Tosi family know all the secrets and are working on a display that will make their collection public, the first privately-owned museum of its kind. The estate forms part of the Parco delle Groane.



Chapel of S. Bernardino da Siena: the facade and a detail of the ceiling

Cesate

Municipal website: www.comune.cesate.mi.it
Distance from Milan: 18km. **Map reference:** C 5



Vegetation next door



To the east, Cesate overlooks the Parco delle Groane, accessible via several roads. The **bosco di Cesate** is of special interest and comprises Scots pine, oak, birch and other trees, making it the closest natural wood to Milan. The small Manuè lake also provides a habitat for several animal species.

Azienda agrituristica Il Sentiero



Via Dante 108
Cesate
Tel.: 0299068152

Cesate is made up of two urban nuclei; the old town centre evolved from the medieval *Cixate*, which had a mainly farming economy organised around courtyards. The Sanctuary of the **Madonna del Latte** (Madonna of the Milk) contains several pictures of the Madonna including a fresco of the *Madonna and Child* dating from the early 16th century in a style similar to that of Bernardino Luini; on the right wall is a *Madonna and Sts Bernardino and Rocco*; the allegory of the *Madonna del Latte* is of the 18th century. The parish church of **SS. Alessandro e Martino** has a neoclassical altar of the Rosario with an 18th-century statue. The other part of Cesate originated between 1950 and 1957 with the **villaggio INA** (housing district), a joint urban project involving leading exponents of contemporary Italian architecture. This orderly fabric of two-storey terraced houses also comprises community buildings such as a playschool and a social centre by Franco Albini, a nursery school by BBPR and a church by Ignazio Gardella.



The Sanctuary of the Madonna del Latte



A rural courtyard in the town centre

Solaro

Municipal website: www.comune.solaro.mi.it
Distance from Milan: 21km. **Map reference:** C 5

The devotion of Ambrogio Birago and his wife Caterina prompted the construction between 1363 and 1367 of the small Oratory of the **SS. Ambrogio e Caterina** that adopts the simplest of Lombard Romanesque designs on the outside; on the inside it is covered with frescoes in a style already updated with Giotto's new method, which was in keeping with the Lombard love of detail and showing people in their everyday routine. The Birago family also had a home in Solaro, a simple and almost severe brick mansion. The small church of the **Madonna di S. Pietro** houses an *Enthroned Madonna and Child*, which dates from the first half of the 15th century and is expressed in a late-Gothic style. The parish church of **SS. Quirico e Giulitta** was much altered in the 20th century but conserves some old works such as three 18th-century frontals in *scagliola* and a 17th-century wooden Crucifix. The **cappella dei Morti** dates from the 17th century and has a portrayal of a *Madonna with the instruments of the Passion*. **Villa Kevenhüller Borromeo D'Adda** is now the prestigious Town Hall and was erected in neoclassical style in the mid-19th century for Leopoldina Kevenhüller, the widow of Febo D'Adda, Parini's favourite pupil. The construction of the villa also determined the urban design of the square, where every second Sunday in the month there is the Fiera del Conte a handicraft market-workshop.



Parco delle Groane



Solaro is the headquarters of the Parco delle Groane and the home of the **Tenuta Ca' del Re**, one of the last remaining pieces of moorland. It has a small lake that can be reached from the Polveriera visitor centre along a cycle path that turns to a footpath. The kiln on the edge of the park is now abandoned.



Oratory of SS. Ambrogio e Caterina: Crucifixion



The Fiera del Conte

Parco delle Groane



Management and use



The park is managed by a consortium comprising the City of Milan, the Provincia di Milano and its host municipalities: Arese, Barlassina, Bollate, Bovisio Masciago, Ceriano Laghetto, Cesano Maderno, Cesate, Cogliate, Garbagnate Milanese, Lazzate, Lentate sul Seveso, Limbiate, Misinto, Senago, Seveso and Solaro.

For information on the habitat and cycle visits, plus bike hire and angling, contact the park headquarters: via della Polveriera, 2 Solaro

Tel.: 029698141, fax 0296790196

e-mail: info@parcogroane.it
www.parcogroane.it

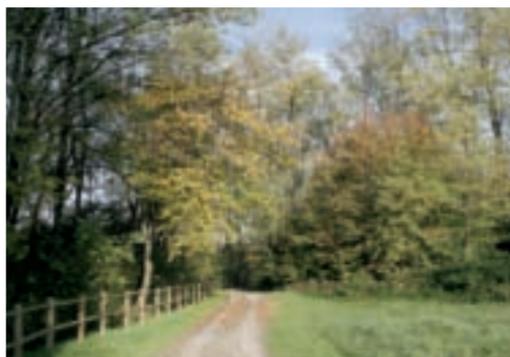


Surveillance car in the park

The Parco delle Groane is a long green strip of land spread over approximately 3400 hectares to the north and extending to 16 municipalities, for which it constitutes a metropolitan park. Its geological formation is the result of movement in the last glaciations, which pushed thick waterproof layers of clay, reddened by their iron hydroxide content, to the surface. Hence the term “ferritisation” referring to the outer layer of the terrain, which in this part of the Po valley is compact, waterproof and has a low oxygen content, making it little suited to farming because the more the land is worked the more it



Old hornbeams in the wood



A path amid woods and fields

tends to become compact. Deep down, it is gravelly and sandy. The surface humidity favours a **moorland** habitat (one of the southernmost in Europe) made of large grasslands that turn violet in late summer with flowering heather, or calluna, a commonly found small shrub. It also features an abundance of buttercups, *gentiana pneumonanthe* and the rare Rosemary-leaf willow. Patchy woods of sparse Scots

Common and beautiful



Maculinea alcon, a very rare butterfly

At first glance, it looks like any other butterfly, small, blue and... common. It took the knowledge of an expert entomologist to recognise the **Maculinea alcon**, a particularly rare variety of European butterfly that favours wet, marshy meadows and takes refuge in the *Gentiana pneumonanthe*, common in the park.

Oasi WWF il Caloggio

At the southernmost end of the Parco delle Groane, in Bollate, the WWF has retrieved a highly valuable piece of nature. It is only spread over 7 hectares but, thanks to reforestation with English oak trees, alders, hornbeams, lime trees and more, they have recreated the planitial wood that used to cover the Po Valley. Trees such as hawthorn and hazelnut help attract a range of fauna consisting in small mammals and birds. The water presence in the park is valuable and includes two resurgences still active and the waters of the Nirone River, the natural water-course that flows between Ticino and Adda and boasts the cleanest of waters.

Visits are unregimented except to the resurgences, where only guided tours to a set calendar are possible. For information regarding opening times and bookings, contact the Oasi: Via Caloggio, Bollate Tel.: 0299028153 E-mail: groanewwf@yahoo.it www.wwf.it



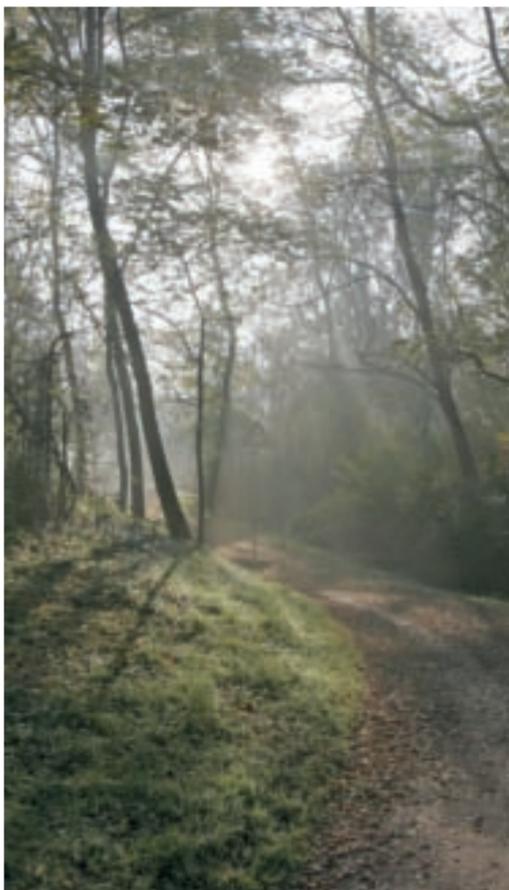
Dog rose fruits in autumn

pine give way to thick oak groves, where oaks and English oak trees alternate with alders, hornbeams and maples, creating a hospitable habitat for squirrels, foxes, hares, owls, woodpeckers and kestrels. In certain areas, the waterproof terrain favours the formation of hollows of groana (ferritised soil), which after heavy rainfall become **small lakes** surrounded by typical vegetation comprising reeds and bulrushes, inhabited by sometimes rare amphibians.

The institution of the protected reserve has not only saved it from speculative development, it has also shown that nature can be safeguarded and enjoyed at the same time, so potential uses were made a special focus of its plan.



Hares and squirrels dwell in the Groane woods



Early morning in the autumnal wood

The villas overlooking the park



Villa Borromeo at Senago, overlooking the Groane

The protection of the vast park area has also benefited the numerous old villas, which find themselves in a landscape slightly more like that seen when they were built as places of amusement and tranquillity. The villas are La Valera in Arese, villa Ponti, villa Borromeo and villa Po-Degli Occhi in Senago, villa Verri il Mirabello and villa Raimondi in Lentate sul Seveso and villa Dho in Seveso.



A road crossing the Parco delle Groane

Sport for everybody



The baseball field at Senago, one of the several sporting centres of the park

Not one town in the park consortium does not have an angling association, one of the most popular local sports, but there are also the Country Club Barlassina, horse-riding centres and groups of archers.

Visits

The country cycle routes that follow existing paths and tracks over approximately 35km are well kept and constantly being added to. Cycling is the ideal way to explore the cycling and walking theme tours suggested by the Consortium.

Città dei Mattoni: a mixed walking and cycling route that explores the old brick kilns; it starts from the Serenella di Garbagnate station and descends to the Fornace Castellazzo before crossing the railway and heading for Senago where there is a working kiln in via Isolino, and then continuing to the former Fornace Parodi.

Foppa di S. Dalmazio: a route that can be cycled all the way to the area, in Ceriano Laghetto, named after an old clay quarry that turns into a small lake after heavy rainfall; all around are woods of mixed trees.

Oasi di Lentate sul Seveso: you can cycle to this wetland zone developed around the pond that forms in a disused clay quarry popular with anatids and little bitterns, which nest here.

Bosco di Cesate e Laghetto Manuè: numerous circular foot and cycle paths run through the wood, which is home to an important pine grove planted in the 18th century by the Austrian forestry service. Lake Manuè is another precious habitat for the abundance of amphibian and bird fauna found.



The brick kiln at Garbagnate, along one of the many itineraries

Boschi di S. Andrea e Boschi di Misinto

Nature Reserve: a cycle route along the paths that lead to the areas of Misinto and Cogliate, shaded by thick woods of mixed trees such as oak, chestnut, Scots pine and false-acacia trees.

Ca' del Re: a foot and cycle path in the Solaro area through typical moorland vegetation and a habitat of huge environmental and faunal worth.



The small Manuè lake, surrounded by the thick wood of Cesate

More

OASI LIPU CESANO MADERNO

In 1997, LIPU (the Italian League for the Bird Protection), in collaboration with the town of Cesano Maderno and the Consorzio Parco delle Groane, took over control of the approximately 100 hectares of park land that had suffered following heavy industrial exploitation. The recovery of its environmental diversity, which alternates woods and ponds, has brought numerous bird species – both nesting and



A grey heron

of passage – back to the park. As well as several types of woodpecker, there are herons and nocturnal birds-of-prey such as the barn owl, tawny owl, little owl and the long-eared owl and, in the wetland zones, the kingfisher, little bittern, wagtail and reed bunting. The Centro di Formazione ed Educazione Ambientale A. Langer, an eco-friendly structure, is equipped with a conference room and an educational workshop for schools, and much more. A circular path starts from it and runs for 4 kilometres across the park. Educational panels along the way allow visitors to move about independently, guided group tours can be booked in advance.

Via Don Orione - Cesano Maderno

Tel.: and fax 0362546827

www.oasicesanomaderno.it

The visitor centre is open from Wednesday to Sunday (closed 24 December-6 January and bank holidays). Open: 10am-1pm and 2-6pm.

Between the Sempione Road and the River Olona

The arterial road that runs between Milan and Lake Maggiore is a historical thoroughfare. In Roman times, a fairly uncertain route ran from the city of Milan to the port of Angera, from where traffic heading across the Alps continued, via the lake, up and over the mountain passes of Lucomagno and San Bernardino. Not until the late Middle Ages did the Sempione (Simplon) Pass become an Alpine crossing point, a point of transit for the Po Valley merchants in touch with the producers and fairs in Flanders and northern France. It was only in the early 19th century that there was truly a “**Simplon road**”, that is when Napoleon demanded a more direct route between Milan and Paris. In 1908, the opening of the Sempione railway tunnel added to the international importance of this thoroughfare, beside which, in 1925, a long stretch of the A8 Milan-Laghi, Italy's first motorway, was built.

It is not hard to see why this north-west axis, so ‘busy’ in the past, should over the last century have witnessed one of the most intense urban expansions not only of northern Italy but of Europe too, an expansion that grew on a par with the industrial vocation of the area. From **Rho**, on the edge of Milan, to **Legnano** and then on again, even entering the province



of Varese at Gallarate and Busto Arsizio, the region had the almost uninterrupted appearance of an urban settlement, a sort of “Los Angeles Lombard-style”. From Legnano southwards, the road was flanked by the **River Olona**, for centuries a major water resource for manufacturing activities first and industrial ones later, to such a degree that it regrettably came to symbolise the detrimental effects on the environment. Along its coordinates, it seems unlikely that an area bearing such major signs of the Lombard *homo faber* could offer opportunities for the “recreation” of body and soul. However, as for the other zones north-west of Milan, this guidebook will take you by the hand as you explore or rediscover unexpected places of value. These may be the vestiges of nature in the Parco del Roccolo, between Nerviano and Parabiago, soon to join the Parco del Castello in Legnano in the larger **Parco dei Mulini**, or the treasures of the Lombard Renaissance, ranging from the impressive forms of the Basilica of S. Magno, in Legnano, to the more intimate and “lesser” ones of the Oratory Mantegazza, in Settimo, or again the dazzling **Palio** in Legnano, a historical re-enactment in costume inspired by the epic battle fought by the Communes against the Emperor Barbarossa.



Learn more

The Provincia di Milano has allocated the **Alto Milanese** area, which comprises 20 towns north-west of Milan, a council office with a delegation based in Legnano (via dei Mille 12, tel. 0331426920). At its website, www.portalealtomilanese, you will find information regarding local history, culture and the environment, as well as references to the network of services in the area (schools and training, social care, culture and entertainment) and development agencies.

The **Fondazione Fiera Milano** is a crucial point of reference for the 12 towns in the Rho area that gravitate around the new exhibition district in Rho-Pero. Website, www.fieramilanoedintorni.it.

Via its website www.assesempione.com, **Assesempione** acts to promote the art and culture of the towns lying along the Sempione road, as well as providing updated details of local events on or scheduled.

The towns of Pregnana, Vanzago and Cornaredo, along with another eight towns farther west, form part of the **Polo Culturale Le Filande**, which has adopted the symbol of an old workplace linked to the traditional presence of mulberry and silk farming and the relative factories, in a project to help the local population to rediscover its cultural roots.

The **Scena Aperta** pole (www.spectacle.it) involves the towns of Legnano, Rescaldina, San Vittore Olona, Nerviano, Parabiago, Canegrate and Villa Cortese in a dynamic network of classical and experimental theatre performances aimed at also attracting a younger audience.



Rho

Municipal website: www.comune.rho.mi.it
Local Tourist Office: via Porta Ronca 94. **Tel.:** 3382432389
Website: www.prolocorho.it
Distance from Milan: 14km. **Map reference:** D 4

Probably inhabited in Celtic times, Rho first appears in a document of 846, when, under the name of Vico Raudo, it is described as a settlement surrounded by cultivated land. In about the year 1000, the town was sufficiently developed to persuade the Emperor Henry II to make it an independent municipality. A court of justice was established here and a seat of consular jurisdiction. It was granted the right to hold a public market, a tradition which it continues even now, every Monday. Later it was involved in the wars of the Lombard communes and, in about 1160, it was destroyed by Barbarossa. However, it arose again and entered the political arena of newly emerging Milan. Rho, with its plentiful water supply and fertile farmland, was an ideal country seat for the noble Milanese families, including the Brignano branch of



Sanctuary of the Madonna dell'Addolorata



Via Madonna in the very centre of the town



*The Sanctuary of the Madonna dell'Addolorata
from Corso Europa*

The Miracle of Tears of Blood

According to popular tradition, on **24 April 1584**, a votive statue of the Virgin Mary, offered by a grateful pilgrim for grace received, began to weep tears of blood. Just before he died, Cardinal Carlo Borromeo gave orders that a magnificent sanctuary should be built where the miracle had taken place. Even today, the miraculous event is still celebrated each year on 24 April.

the Visconti, who built a palace and a castle here and were the most influential feudal lords for a long time. In the 16th century, Augustinian and Capuchin monks built two important monasteries here which were destroyed during the Napoleonic era.

In 1584, orders were given to start work on the sanctuary of the **Madonna dell'Addolorata**, also called **dei Miracoli**, designed by Pellegrino Tibaldi, and now on Corso Europa. The building was gradually completed in the two following centuries. In the mid-18th century, a dome designed by Carlo Giuseppe Merlo and Giulio Galliori was added, and, in 1785, a facade by Leopoldo Pollack. Next to the church is the imposing **Collegio dei Padri Oblati**,



The parish church of S. Vittore



Inside view of the parish church of S. Vittore



More

Villa Burba: now a library and a museum

Built in the 17th century as a grand country house in the sober but imposing Lombard style of the time, Villa Burba, which formerly belonged to Marquis Cornaggia Medici, was bought by Rho Town Council in 1966 and was subsequently converted into the Municipal Library. It lies just outside the town centre in the direction of Gallarate on the Sempione road. It is beautifully decorated in the late Baroque style, with wrought-iron balconies, gates and railings and a central hall with a large stone fireplace. It now houses a **permanent display of objects, furniture and household furnishings** which were added to the villa between the late-18th and early 20th centuries. One of the kitchens, a lounge and one of the bedrooms have been completely restored. There is a small **archaeological collection** of finds of Roman date (1-3C AD), which were brought to light during excavations in the local area. The collection includes funerary objects (vases, cinerary urns, glass balsam bottles) and the remains of Christian inhumation burials. In 2006, the farm



Villa Burba

buildings associated with the villa were splendidly restored and are now part of the museum: the stable is now the entrance and service wings, the cowshed has become a consultation room, the barn a meeting room and the spinning room an exhibition hall. Part of the garden behind the villa, with two pergolas framing a long pool, has also been restored. In the library there is another **permanent exhibition** of the works of sculptor **Franco Fossa**, a pupil of Marini, Manzù and Messina. For information about opening times and visiting the villa, please contact the Ufficio Cultura of the Town Hall (tel. 0293332277) or the Library (tel. 0293332 215/390).



Salumificio Citterio Company



The council hall of the Neo-gothic Town Hall

SiCuRho



SISTEMA
CULTURALE
RHODENSE

The project, promoted by Rho Town Council and supported by Fondazione Cariplo, aims to make better use of local cultural resources through the integrated management of its heritage. In addition to restoration work at **Villa Burba**, there are also plans to re-open the **Mulino Diotti**, at Mazzo di Rho, and a **museum of sacred art**, with a library and archive, at the Collegio degli Oblati, next to the sanctuary of the Beata Vergine Addolorata.

built between 1876 and 1911. The single aisle contains paintings by Ambrogio Figino and there are some fine early 17th-century works by such painters as Camillo Procaccini and Morazzone.

Another important church in Rho is the parish church of **S. Vittore**, a 19th-century neoclassical building with a single nave and a barrel-vault ceiling, forming a harmonious whole. The



The Neo-gothic Town Hall



Palazzo Visconti Banfi, the portico

paintings of the Lombard School date mainly from 16th and 17th centuries, whereas the frescoes and white and gold stuccoes date from the 20th century. **Palazzo Municipale** (the Town Hall) is in the Neo-gothic style. On the same square, **Palazzo Visconti Banfi** is a rare case of a palace that still has its original decoration, executed in the late 17th and early 18th centuries by painters of the Milanese School. Built in 1669, the palace was subsequently altered several times until the 19th century. Only part of the fine garden surrounding the palace is open to visitors.

Just beyond Villa Burba, a road on the left (follow signs for Vanzago) leads to the small village of **Castellazzo**. This rural settlement started to develop in the 17th century around **Villa Scheibler**, which originally belonged to the noble Milanese family of Simonetta. In the 19th century it became a hunting lodge and is still privately owned.



A detail of Villa Scheibler

How to get to Rho

Rho can easily be reached **by car** from Milan on the SS 33 Sempione road, from Milan's western ring-road (called the Tangenziale Ovest, exit at Rho) and the A4 Milan-Turin motorway (exit at Pero, drive through the villages of Mazzo, Terrazzano and follow signs for the town centre; or exit at Cornaredo-Rho, passing through Lucernate). Many **trains** leave Milan bound for Novara and Turin, Domodossola and Luino (from stations of Milano Centrale and Porta Garibaldi), and Gallarate and Varese (stops on the 'Passante Ferroviario'), which stop at Rho after 15-20 minutes. For further information, consult www.trenitalia.com.

Other services between Milan and nearby towns are operated by the following **bus companies**: GTM: tel. 0299441234, www.gtmspa.it: Arese, Garbagnate, Bollate, Lainate, Pregnana; S.T.I.E. tel.: 0331519000, 0286450614, 0286450629 www.stie.it: Vanzago, Pogliano, S. Giorgio sul Legnano, Parabiago, Cerro Maggiore, Lainate; A.T.I.N.O.M. tel.: 029723841, www.atinom.it: Cornaredo, Settimo Milanese.

The New Fieramilano



www.fieramilano.it



The Fieramilano logo welcoming visitors at the entrance

The Fieramilano exhibition complex is the successor to Milan's renowned Fiera Campionaria and was completed in March 2005 on the reclaimed site of the former AGIP refinery of Rho-Pero. It was designed by Massimiliano Fuksas, a famous name in contemporary architecture, and is one of the largest civil-engineering projects seen in Europe in recent years. The exhibition structures are arranged along a central axis, a pedestrian boulevard more than a kilometre long that offers a place for doing business and a rendezvous for operators and public alike. The distinctive visual feature is a **steel and glass sail roof** resting on umbrella pillars, which covers the entire axis and links the 8 pavilions and various service structures to each other. It provides a delightful panoramic effect on clear sunny days when the exhibition complex's skyline dialogues with the white snow on Monte Rosa.

The Fieramilano in figures

The 8 pavilions with 20 exhibition halls of the new Fieramilano host, every year, to approximately 80 trade fairs, with more than 500 events, 30,000-plus exhibitors and nearly 6 million visitors.



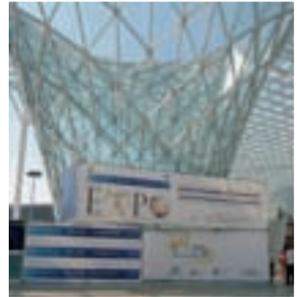
The steel and glass sail roof linking the pavilions



Simulation of the new project environmental impact

EXPO 2015

On 31 March 2008, the Bureaux International des Expositions awarded the 2015 Universal Exhibition (Expo) to Milan. This is an epoch-making appointment for the coming future of the city and the surrounding metropolitan area, an opportunity to generally and radically relaunch the economic and social potential of one of the most dynamic and densely populated – nearly 10 million inhabitants – parts of Europe. The new Fieramilano will be the hub of this great event, although other parts of the city and its environs will be linked to the heart of the exhibition in Rho-Pero. It is time to promote the treasures highlighted in this guidebook. Milan and its Province have an opportunity to relaunch tourism and urban regeneration that will radically change the face of the metropolis and its surrounding area.



The Expo 2015 Milan logo



Plan of the Expo 2015 area

Pero

Municipal website: www.comune.pero.mi.it
Distance from Milan: 16km. **Map reference:** D 5



Once upon a time there was a town called “Petrolopolis”. Because, until the late 1980s, Pero was dominated by the huge AGIP oil refinery which, throughout the post-war period, affected not only the local landscape but also the local economy. Gradually, the refinery was abandoned and subsequently the whole area was recovered. The site where the huge refinery once stood is now Milan’s new exhibition complex, Fieramilano (see p. 90). Pero began as a large farm called Cassina del Pero. During the 20th century it benefited from its strategic position on various important routes, such as the road north to the Simplon Pass, the Milan-Turin highway and the western section of the Milan ring-road, a fact which encouraged strong industrial growth. Then, to accommodate the large numbers of immigrant workers, this area was developed faster and more intensively than anywhere else in Northern Italy. However, now the whole area is being re-converted to operate in the services sector, the best example of which is the construction of the new Fieramilano exhibition complex. Over the next few years, a new commercial and technological district will be built around Fieramilano, a project which will receive an even greater boost after the award of **EXPO 2015** to Milan.



The River Olona flowing through Pero



A farmhouse in the environs

Settimo Milanese

Municipal website: web.comune.settimomilanese.mi.it
Local Tourist Office: Via Grandi 13. **Tel.:** 0233512373 and 3388563219.
Website: www.prolocosettimomilanese.it
Distance from Milan: 12km. **Map reference:** E 4

A *d septimam lapidem*, that is, at the seventh milestone on the Roman road that led from Milan to Novara. That is how the town got its name. Now Settimo has been virtually engulfed by the metropolis.

Palazzo d'Adda, now the Town Hall, is named after the noble family which, from the 16th to the early 19th centuries, owned most of the land in the area. The palace, built in the 16th and 17th centuries, has an elegant portico on the outside. Inside, on the ground floor, is the great hall, now the council hall. Upstairs, the vast rooms have exposed beams, and are decorated with frescoes. Once part of the adjacent complex of farm buildings, **Palazzo Granaio** is also called *Cà del Mago* (The Magician's House). According to local tradition, it was once inhabited by a magician who used to kidnap girls from the town. Settimo still has a few outlying farms built around



Palazzo d'Adda: the frescoed ceiling of the council hall



The porticoed Palazzo d'Adda



A winter view of Palazzo Granaio

The sculptures of Mario Branca



The campé farm worker

The sculptor from Piacenza, Mario Branca, was commissioned to create some public works which are now a familiar part of the urban landscape of Settimo Milanese. On the roundabout at Vighignolo is an ancient mulberry tree. Around it, Branca has created figures in copper which portray **scenes inspired by the collection and processing of silk-worm cocoons**. Another monument on the roundabout on the road between Settimo and Seguro is inspired by a local figure known as the *campé*, the man in charge of opening and shutting the sluice gates to irrigate the fields. Finally, in the Parco Terraluna, there is a work entitled **The Hide-and-Seek Tree**.

large square courtyards, called *corti*. Until the late 19th century, the local economy revolved around these large farms. Via Vittorio Veneto leads to **Corte Stretcieou** and **Corte del Portico**.

Close by, at Vighignolo is the 15th-century church (altered several times) of **S. Maria Nascente**. It once contained a famous sculpture, known as the Vighignolo Triptych, now kept at the Castello Sforzesco in Milan. At Seguro, the old parish church of **S. Giorgio** is a fine example of mid-18th-century Lombard Late Baroque, while the modern church is



The parish church of S. Giorgio at Seguro

a contemporary work by Luigi Caccia Dominioni. Two old farms in the area are well-preserved: **Corte Barni** has a building in the centre dating from the 15th-16th centuries, with brick surrounds to the windows. **Corte Grande**, large as its name suggests, dates from the 18th century and is surrounded by a long vaulted portico, and has an internal balcony which led to the houses of the farm workers. At **Castelletto**, there is a large farm once owned by the Litta Modignani family. In the 1960s, the SIT Siemens company (now Italtel) moved into it, turned



The pleasant square of Vighignolo with the church of S. Maria Nascente

More

Parks at Settimo

Settimo Milanese falls within the area of the **Parco Agricolo Sud Milano** and a large part of its territory is designated as a green area. The municipal park which lies behind Palazzo d'Adda is criss-crossed by cycle-tracks and footpaths. **Bosco della Giretta** is a huge area of meadows and woodland with several springs and an artificial lake. The park is managed, maintained and

supervised by volunteers of **La Risorgiva**, which also organises courses about the environment for schools (opening times: Nov-Mar 8.30am-6pm; Apr-Oct 8am-9pm; www.larisorgiva.it). In the village of Cascine Olona, the **Parco Giuseppe Farina** is now the headquarters of the Pro Loco. The hunting lodge inside has frescoed ceilings.



Blossoming trees in the Parco Farina



The Bosco della Giretta small lake

the farm buildings into a **Hi-Tech complex** and converted the family villa into an exclusive country seat for the company.



A corner of the Bosco della Giretta

More

Oratorio Mantegazza

In 1468, the noble Paolo Mantegazza commissioned the building of a small oratory dedicated to S. Giovanni Battista. This brick building in the late-Gothic Lombard style contains frescoes by an anonymous painter, dated 1492. The frescoes are well-preserved and a fine example of the transition from the Late Gothic to the Renaissance style, similar to the work of Vincenzo Foppa. On the back of the facade is a **Last Judgement**; on the walls of the nave, **Stories of St John the Baptist**; on the arch above the presbytery, an **Annunciation** and, in the pendentives of the ceiling, the **Four Doctors of the Church**. On the walls of the small, square apse at the back is a **Crucifixion** with portraits of the donors: Paolo Mantegazza on the left and his wife Agnese Dugnani on the right; on the two side-walls, an **Adoration of the Magi** and some badly damaged frescoes depicting the **Legend of St Julian the Hospitaller**.



The 15th-century Mantegazza oratory



The frescoed vault with the four Doctors of the Church



The Stories of St. John the Baptist

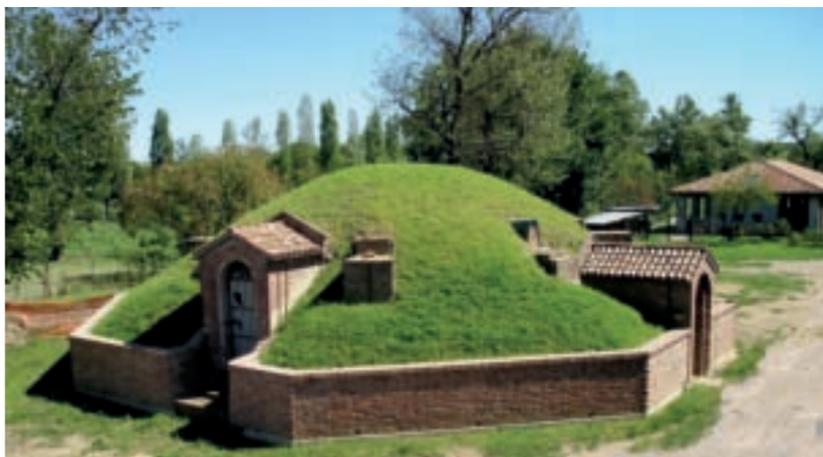
Cornaredo

Municipal website: www.comune.cornaredo.mi.it
Local Tourist Office: Via dei Mille 35. **Tel.:** 0293567529
Website: www.prolocornaredo.it
Distance from Milan: 14km. **Map reference:** D 4

The name Cornaredo may refer to the fact that, 1,000 years ago, the site was a wood of wild cherry trees. However, according to some, the name derives not from the word for cherry tree (*corniolo*) but from the presence of a large cattle farm and, in fact, there is still an ox today on the town's crest. Whatever its origins, the story of the name suggests an agricultural past. By the end of the 19th century, farming was being partly replaced by industry, especially the textile industry. Cornaredo and the nearby village of San Pietro all'Olmo have always been associated with spinning-mills. Something of the town's agricultural past is conserved at the **Museo Contadino** at **Cascina Favaglie**. This old farm is now a museum. There are reconstructions of scenes of everyday life and work done on the farm, together with tools and early farm machinery. A rather unusual feature is the **ice-house**, with its large circular dome. Within the farm complex you can also visit the little church of **S. Rocco**, which dates from the 15th century,



Shops and stores in a main street of the town centre



Cascina Favaglie, the old ice-house

Italia Nostra on the farm



Created in 1986, the North-West Milan section of Italia Nostra is responsible for the municipal territory of Arluno, Bareggio, Cislano, Cusago, Cornaredo, Lainate, Pregnana Milanese, Rho, Sedriano, Settimo Milanese, Vanzago and Vittuone. Its headquarters are at Cascina Favaglie, in Via Monzoro 29, tel. 029363865, www.italianostra-mi-nordovest.it.



The Fontanile Giardino, WWF urban reserve

although the facade and bell tower date from the 19th century. Inside, the frescoes have recently been restored. They include a rare depiction of the Trinity with three identical figures, a form of iconography that was later banned by the Council of Trent. Other rural survivals include: the **Curta di Casett**, where there are houses for the farm-workers, barns, cowsheds, and a fountain in the courtyard; the **Curta Granda di Cascina Croce**, with its communal bread oven, on the road leading towards the village of Brughiera, in the municipality of Bareggio; the **Curta dal Doss**, right in the centre, which stands on a small hill (*doss* in dialect) that was originally the site of the Roman *castrum* of Cornaredo, and documented until the 13th century. Nearby, the chapel of **S. Maria** contains fragments of 13th- and 14th-century frescoes. In Piazza della Libertà stands **Palazzo del Municipio**, one of two 17th-century palaces in town



The old church of S. Pietro



The public garden near the silk factory



The 17th-century Palazzo Dugnani, now the home of the Town Hall



The corner tower of Palazzo Dugnani

named after the Dugnani family, the most influential landowners in the area. The other stands on the corner of Piazzetta Dugnani and Via Garibaldi, and can be distinguished by the tall **tower** on one corner.

Until the 1950s, in the little town of **San Pietro all'Olmo**, a huge elm tree stood in the middle of the church square. The lovely old church of **S. Pietro**, founded in the late 10th or early 11th century, stands on the old road that led from *Mediolanum* to *Vercellae*, with its original walls of pebbles laid in a fishbone pattern. There are lots of medieval capitals in the porch. In 1170, a Lateran Augustinian abbey was built next to the church. The man who founded it, Uberto Crivelli, became archbishop of Milan and eventually pope, under the name of Urban III. The abbey continued to expand for almost 300 years, but in 1542, perhaps because it was regarded as being dangerously close to the Reformist line, it was

Ancient finds

Since 2006, major restoration work at the old church of S. Pietro has brought to light some very ancient finds: funerary crypts containing bones and coins dating from the Renaissance, precious ceramics, mosaics and walls from the early Christian and mediaeval periods, and even a Roman house. And everything seems to suggest that they may find more lower down. When the restoration work is finished, the church will continue to be a building of cultural interest, especially since it contains an organ from the Prestinari workshop. It is thought that the church will also be used for concerts.



San Pietro all'Olmo, flats in a rural courtyard



The San Pietro all'Olmo orchestra performing at Villa Dubini



San Pietro all'Olmo, Villa Gavazzi-Balossi

reduced to being a commendam, an event that signalled its gradual decline.

Just before the church, on the SS 11 road, there are two villas: on the left, **Villa Dubini**, with a large garden used for concerts in the summer, and, on the right, **Villa Gavazzi-Balossi**, behind which are the remains of a spinning mill.

More

The silk factories of Cornaredo

In the heart of Cornaredo, around **Palazzo Serbelloni**, built in 1806 according to a design by Leopold Pollack, a vast industrial complex grew up during the course of the 19th century, devoted to silk production. Spinning-rooms, boiler-rooms, warehouses for storing the piles of silkworm cocoons and other buildings stretched south of what is now Piazza della Libertà. The industry gradually declined during the second half of the 20th century, after which a considerable part of the palazzo was demolished and the garden was turned into a public park. Much of the complex was restored and given to the town to preserve the memory of this important part of the town's history in the future. **Palazzo della ex Filanda** (literally, 'palace of the former silk factory') is a marvellous blend of old buildings and modern architecture. The three floors house the **Civic Library**,

exhibition facilities, and the Town Council offices associated with education, culture, sport and free time. It also incorporates a modern **auditorium** where musical and theatrical events are held which doubles as a cinema. The premises are managed and the events organised by the **Associazione La Filanda**, the aim of which is to promote cultural initiatives. www.lafilandacomaredo.org.



Pregnana Milanese

Municipal website: www.comune.pregnana.mi.it/

Information: Associazione Il Prisma, via Manzoni 7

Website: www.pregnana.it

Distance from Milan: 16km. **Map reference:** D 4

Pregnana appears in historical records for the first time in the 12th century, in reference to the devastation brought about by Barbarossa during his Milan campaign, and then in reference to some land belonging to local noble families, first the Torriani and later the d'Adda. In 1868, the town benefited from the digging of the **Villoresi Canal** – from which a channel brought water to irrigate the surrounding land – and from the building of the section of railway between Milan, Rho and Arona. Even today, despite the fact that, for decades, the rural economy has been replaced at first by industry and now by companies working in the services sector, there are still a few working farms. **Cascina Comune**, which possibly dates from the 15th century, was used as a hospital during the Plague. **Cascina Fabriziana**, also called Cascina Rossa, is a typical farm of the area, built around a square courtyard. The oven here was used by the whole community whereas **Cascina Serbelloni Salvetti** acted as the local shop. The parish church of Pregnana, dedicated to **SS. Pietro e Paolo**, was built in 1945.



The Monumento ai Caduti



Mulino S. Elena



The S. Elena watermill on the River Olona

In the countryside towards Rho lies **Mulino S. Elena**, which used water from the Olona River to drive its mill-wheels, some of which still work. The mill is a stopping-place on the route of processions which start at the church of Vanzago. Underneath the entrance portico is a fresco dated 1867 depicting the Madonna Addolorata of the sanctuary at Rho.

Vanzago

Municipal website: www.comune.vanzago.mi.it
Distance from Milan: 18km. **Map reference:** D 4



Possibly of Celtic origin, and associated with the parish church of Nerviano in mediaeval times, Vanzago has an 18th-century parish church, dedicated to **SS. Cassiano e Ippolito** and two fine 18th-century palaces: **Palazzo Gattinoni**, headquarters of Fondazione Ferrario, a philanthropic and social welfare foundation, and **Palazzo Calderara**, famous for its elegant facade, frescoes and mosaic floors, now the Town Hall. A tiny church is all that remains of the Monasterolo, a convent until the 15th century.



A sculpture in Piazza della Chiesa



The trompe-l'oeil ceiling of Palazzo Calderara



The imposing facade of Palazzo Calderara, now the home of the Town Hall

More

The WWF wildlife sanctuary at Vanzago

The Riserva Naturale Regionale di Vanzago, created in 1979, occupies about 200 hectares of land belonging to the municipalities of Vanzago, Pogliano and Arluno. Much of it is owned and managed by the WWF. It is an area of small pools of varying depth, surrounded by countryside with lots of permanent fields, hedges, vines and clumps of trees. The woods contain oaks centuries old, elms, maples, hornbeams, limes, wild cherries and chestnuts. During passage and in winter the pools are visited by cormorants, moorhens, teal, pochard, mallard, grey heron, night heron and little grebe. Other bird species found in the wood include the green and greater-spotted woodpecker, golden oriole, tawny owl, long-eared owl, sparrow-hawk and goshawk. Mammals present include weasel, marten, badger, dormouse, hare and a healthy population

of roe deer, for which one of the four hay harvests is left in organically-cultivated fields. The Visitors Centre has a special area providing veterinary care for wild animals (mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians) and a Local Experimental Station.

Information: Tel.: 029341761. Website: www.wwf.it/oasi.

How to get there: By car: leave the A4 Milan-Turin motorway at the Arluno exit and follow signs for Vanzago. By bike or on foot: get off the train at Vanzago-Pogliano Milanese station.

Visiting the reserve: open all year except August, guided tours only, lasting about 2 hours, Saturday and Sunday at 10.30 and 15, disabled visitors welcome. Didactic activities organised for schools.



Pogliano Milanese

Municipal website: www.poglianomilanese.org
Distance from Milan: 19km. Map reference: D 4



A famous shoe-maker

Pogliano was the birthplace in 1773 of **Anselmo Ronchetti** who, having moved to Milan became the most popular shoe-maker in the city. During the Napoleonic period, he custom-designed and made shoes and boots for the nobility and wealthy of Milan. Carlo Porta dedicated an amusing sonnet to him.

Pogliano, between Nerviano and Vanzago on the left bank of the Olona River, was probably founded by the Romans. It is more certain that some local land belonged to a cadet branch of the Visconti family. When the duchy fell, they ceded it to the feudal lords who succeeded each other during Spanish and Austrian dominion. In the late 19th century, from being a small agricultural town it became a manufacturing centre with a large silk factory. When silk production went into decline after WWII, the area was rapidly and intensively converted into a manufacturing centre, especially for small and medium-size engineering and chemical companies.

In 1566, at the wishes of Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, a large church was erected on the site of the previous 15th-century church. The following century, it became the sanctuary of the **Madonna dell' Aiuto**. In the early 17th century, the painter known as 'Il Fiammenghino' decorated the choir.

"La Cascinetta" of Aurelio Vallieri



A farm estate selling salamis and cured meats, ducks, hens, guinea fowl, rabbits, cockerels, eggs, rice and honey, all produced on the farm. The restaurant seats 40

Via Roma 48
Pogliano Milanese
Tel.: 023942073
agriturismo.lacascinetta@tin.it



The wide square and the church of S. Giuseppe

Nerviano

Municipal website: www.comune.nerviano.mi.it
Local Tourist Office: via De Marchi - c/o D'Aviri. **Tel.:** 0331534058
Distance from Milan: 20km. **Map reference:** C 3

Formerly a Roman settlement, in the Middle Ages Nerviano was at the centre of a large network of parish churches along the River Olona, which passes through the town. The successor to that old religious supremacy is the parish church of **S. Stefano**, reconstructed in the mid-19th century. The small church of the **Annunciata** is better known as the **Rotondina**, for its distinctive circular plan, and was erected in the late-17th century as a country oratory to house and preserve a 16th-century fresco, perhaps by the school of Bergognone. It is in the middle of a junction that runs from the central piazza Olona and closes via dell'Annunciata. The 18th-century **Palazzo and Villa Lampugnani** overlooks the watercourse but the most important historical and artistic expression in Nerviano is the former **Olivetani Convent of S. Maria Incoronata**, established in 1468 and that prospered for more than three centuries, until it was suppressed in 1798. For many years, the complex, on the banks of the River Olona, formed part of the low-class urban fabric and was reutilised for a range of living, craft and commercial functions until it was purchased by the town council.



The Rotondina, a favourite monument of Nerviano people



A main street of the town centre

The last work by Bergognone

The famous altarpiece portraying the *Assumption*, the last work by Bergognone (1522) and now conserved in the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan, originally came from the convent of Nerviano.

Nerviano “squared”



The aqueduct tower

The **aqueduct tower** constructed in the Italian Fascist style in 1933 is the symbol of Nerviano. A folk saying associates the square shape of the tower, and the clock at the top, with the so-called “tetragon” local character: “*Quadràa la Tur, quadràa in i ur e quadràa in lùr*” (“Square tower, square time and square them”).



The River Olona passes through the town

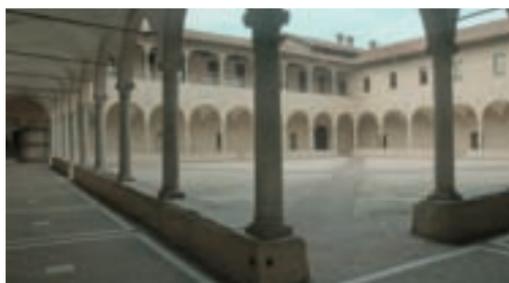
After lengthy restoration and refurbishment work that preserved or restored most of the existing features, it has been used as the Town Hall since 2003: the 15th-century cloister houses the municipal offices and the civic library; the deconsecrated church is a multipurpose hall, used as needed for council meetings, conferences or as an exhibition space. Another place of worship is the isolated Oratory of the **Colorina**, on the Sempione road. Nerviano is one of a municipal consortium partner in the Parco Intercomunale del Roccolo.

Azienda Agricola Molaschi Fratelli



*Farmhouse selling rice,
corn flour,
fire wood*

Località Mulino Star Qua
Tel.: 3405851224



The cloister of the former Olivetan Convent



The River Olona flowing through parks and gardens

Parabiago

Municipal website: www.comune.parabiago.mi.it
Local Tourist Office: via S. Giuseppe. **Tel.:** 0331552242
Distance from Milan: 23km. **Map reference:** C 4

Today's Parabiago, an important town in Alto Milanese, remains true to a rich historical tradition that is rooted in the early Celtic settlements and, later, the Roman ones, as demonstrated by the wealth of archaeological finds made locally and in the hamlet of **San Lorenzo**, the most famous of these being the silver *Patena*. The name Parabiago was long associated with the bloody battle fought there in 1339 between the opposing armies of two factions of the Visconti family, that of Azzone, the winner, and that of the rebel Londrisio. The battle gave rise to the church of **S. Ambrogio della Vittoria**, rebuilt in the early 18th century to a design by Giovan Battista Quadrio commissioned by the Cistercians, who from their monastery, today **Collegio Marchiondi**, exercised a major and lasting cultural and economic influence all over Alto Milanese. Another 18th-century church,



The monumental staircase of former monastery of S. Ambrogio della Vittoria



Piazza Maggiolini and the parish church of SS. Gervasio e Protasio

Giuseppe Maggiolini

Parabiago is the birthplace of the great cabinet-maker and inlayer Giuseppe Maggiolini (1738-1814). He first learnt his trade as a carpenter at the Cistercian Monastery before opening a shop in the square in front of the church of SS. Gervasio e Protasio, now named after him. He was discovered there by Marchese Litta who asked him to furnish his villa in Lainate. After the Viceroy Ferdinando's marriage to Beatrice d'Este, Maggiolini became the main supplier of the Hapsburg family.



The courtyard of Villa Maggi-Corvini

dating from the latter part of the century, is the parish church of **SS. Gervasio e Protasio**, the facade of which is by the architect Giuseppe Piermarini, who designed the Teatro alla Scala in Milan; it features fine



The countryside around Parabiago

More

The Pagan Patera

The *Patera* was found in 1907 but actually dates from the 4th century AD. It is a silver plate, chased and gilded, used as a funerary cover. Of the finest craftsmanship, the piece is even more precious as a historic record as its embossed decoration shows a portrayal of the pagan cult of Cybele and appears to be an expression of the religious policy of the Emperor Julian, known as the Apostate because he

fought for the return of the ancient pagan cults against the widespread Christian religion, recognised as the state religion by Constantine. The *Patera* is now kept in the Museo Archeologico in Milan, but a copy can be seen in Parabiago at the **Museo Archeologico Carla Musazzi** in via Randaccio 11 (open: 9am-12.30 and 3-7pm), where the town's historic and cultural memories are preserved.

More

Shoes for All

Parabiago has a longstanding tradition in the manufacture of footwear that began shortly after WWII and has now developed from a scattered craft production to an industrial sector, in which rationalised processes and the adoption of advanced production technology go hand in hand with a focus on quality materials and stylish models. Many of the firms have opened factory outlets in Parabiago.

Claudio Morlacchi, via Castelnovo 24, tel. 0331555411; Mon-Fri 9am-12 and 2.30-6.30pm, Sat 9am-1pm and 2-4pm;

Fratelli Rossetti, via Cantù 24, tel. 0331552226, www.rossetti.it; Mon-Fri 9.30am-12.30 and 2-7pm, Sat all day;

Parabiago Collezioni, via Duca di Genova 24, tel. 0331495007; Mon-Wed 3-7pm, Thur-Fri 10am-12 and 3-7pm, Sat 9.30am-12 and 3-7pm;

Ugo Rossetti, viale Marconi 57, tel. 0331494522; Mon-Fri 9.30am-12.30 and 3-7pm, Sat all day;

Vittorio Valsecchi, via Piave 4, tel. 0331551743, www.vittoriovalsecchi.it; Mon-Sat 9.30am-12 and 2.30-7pm.

stucco decorations inside. Once isolated in the middle of the fields, but now being closed in by development, the church of the **Madonna di “Dio il Sa”** – a corruption in local dialect of the “Madonna d’Olsa o di Olzate” – has a polyptych by the Luino school above the altar. The rooms of the 18th-century **Villa Maggi-Corvini**, long abandoned, were recently refurbished to house a prestigious and functional centre serving small and medium-sized businesses. An unusual presence is the **Crespi Bonsai Museum**, a permanent exhibition with a valuable collection comprising centuries-old specimens, vases and books illustrating the old Oriental art of bonsai (corso Sempione 35, open: Tues-Sat 9am-12.30 and 2.30-7pm; Sun 9am-1pm; Mon 2.30-7pm).



A millenary Ficus in the Crespi Bonsai Museum

Andreazza Stefano**Farmhouse selling honey**

Via del Topione
Parabiago
Tel.: 3336501068

La nuova “Fattoria ia ia o” di Branco Olimpia**Honey and forest fruits**

Via Vicinale Campo Lungo
1, Parabiago
Tel.: 3331705807

Cerro Maggiore

Municipal website: www.cerromaggiore.org
Distance from Milan: 25km. Map reference: C 3



FORMAGGIOre

Cerro Maggiore has, since 2005, been the venue for a market of small home-produced and mountain cheeses. In 2008, this changed its name from CERROinFORMA to **FORMAGGIOre**. Organised by the local administration, the cheese fair takes over the spaces and courtyards of the 19th-century Palazzo Dell'Acqua and, as well as the presentation and tasting of a motley production, offers workshops and audio-visual documentaries.

Provini
Maria Teresa



*Farmhouse selling
vegetable plants*

Via Risorgimento 90
Cerro Maggiore
Tel.: 0331535434



The town centre with its parish church of SS. Cornelio e Cipriano

A former Roman settlement, as demonstrated by the discovery of pagan and Christian burials here, during the Middle Ages Cerro Maggiore formed part of the Contado del Seprio and the great clash known as the Battle of Legnano was fought in part on its territory in 1176. The most important old buildings include the 18th-century parish church of **SS. Cornelio e Cipriano**, the coeval Sanctuary of the **Immacolata**, also called **Borretta**, octagonal in shape, and a **convent for frati cappuccini**, reconstructed in the 20th century and which made the news for having given a home to Benito Mussolini's body for more than a decade from 1946.



The courtyard of Palazzo Dell'Acqua the Town Hall

Rescaldina

Municipal website: www.rescaldina.org

Local Tourist Office: c/o Villa Rusconi Clerici, via Alberto da Giussano 84,

Website: www.prolocorescaldina.it

Distance from Milan: 29km. **Map reference:** C 3

Lying on the border with the Province of Varese, in the middle of the 19th century Rescaldina and its hamlet Rescalda started to develop from small farming villages to dynamic early-industrial realities. In 1840, a Milanese businessman, Carlo Baroncini, opened a weaving factory which initially employed about 50 women but it was soon running a hundred or more looms. This was the original nucleus of the large **Bassetti** textile industry; Giovanni Bassetti joined the company in 1864 and 20 years later took it over. In the early 20th century, the factory was mechanised to meet the demand for increased production and, in the 1960s, it became one of the most modern textile factories in Europe, architecturally inspired by the concept of non-stop working in large uninterrupted spaces. In the meantime, the industrial fabric of Rescaldina had been strengthened with foundries, chemical plants and an engineering industry. Today, it has to address the constantly changing scenarios of the new technological goals.

Local places of worship are the parish church of **SS. Bernardo e Giuseppe**, 20th century and neo-Gothic, and the church of **S. Maria Assunta**, constructed in the 18th century.



A street of the town centre



The parish church of SS. Bernardo e Giuseppe

San Vittore Olona

Municipal website: www.sanvittoreolona.org
Distance from Milan: 24km. Map reference: C 3



The San Vittore area used to abound with watermills that drew on the nearby River Olona and the numerous irrigation ditches branching off it for the power needed to grind the cereals. A census conducted in 1722 recorded more than 60 of these mills but they gradually began to disappear in the second half of the 19th century with the arrival of steam turbines. Some watermills survive, however, partially distinguishing the rural landscape. Two of these, the **Mulino Meraviglia** and the **Mulino**

The future Parco dei Mulini



The Parco dei Mulini, amid the countryside

A major initiative for the regeneration and protection of the river waters is the project for a Parco Agricolo Sovracomunale dei Mulini, currently being developed. The country and wooded area, comprising the surviving mills, to be protected extends from the Parco Castello di Legnano and descends along the banks of the River Olona, passing through the areas of Canegrate, San Vittore Olona and Parabiago before ending at the former Olivetan monastery in Nerviano.



A wheel of the Mulino Meraviglia



Villa Adele, the home of the Civic Library

Montoli, on the road to Canegrate, conserve their machinery and mechanical apparatus. The small church of **S. Stefano al Lazzaretto** is of both historic and artistic note with its 16th-century design and frescoes attributed to Gian Giacomo Lampugnani. In 2003 the Civic Library was moved to the refurbished **Villa Adele**, an elegant mansion dating from the second half of the 19th century.

More

Classic cross-country races along the River Olona

For some years now, San Vittore Olona and San Giorgio su Legnano have been the venues for two of the most prestigious cross-country races on the international long-distance calendar. Since 1933, the **Cinque Mulini** race has been run in the first week of February along a spectacular route (10km in the senior male category) passing the old structures along the River Olona. Organised by the Unione Sportiva San Vittore Olona, it became an international race in 1953 (www.cinquemulini.org). In 1956, the Unione Sportiva Sangiorgese



La Cinque Mulini

in San Giorgio su Legnano started organising the **Cam-paccio**, over a distance of 12km (www.sangiorgese.it). The rolls of honour of both races record illustrious winners from Italian champions Alberto Cova, Gelindo Bordin, Francesco Panetta and Gabriella Dorio to the great African long-distance runners such as Ethiopia's Haile Gebreselassie, Fita Bayesa and Kenesisa Bekele, Kenyans Kip Keino, John Ngugi, Paul Tergat, Bernard Barmasai and Paul Koech and the Morocco's Khalid Skah, the undisputed champions of recent years.

San Giorgio su Legnano

Municipal website: www.sangiorgiosl.org
Local Tourist Office: via Mella 1. Tel.: 0331402036
Distance from Milan: 27km. Map reference: C 3



Villa Parravicini entrance



The church of the Crocifisso

An albeit slight difference in altitude with the adjacent Legnano justifies the presence of that particle 'above' in the place name, known in the past as Cassina di San Giorgio because of a convent dedicated to the warrior saint, and a municipality separate from the larger town since 1532. The church of the **Crocifisso**, 18th century, is the oldest in the town after the demolition (1970s) of the old parish church, replaced by the new **S. Maria Assunta** (1935), which has an imposing octagonal plan surmounted by a dome. **Villa Parravicini** has a huge 19th-century English garden.



The parish church of S. Maria Assunta

Canegrate

Municipal website: www.canegrate.org
Distance from Milan: 25km. Map reference: C 3

Canegrate is also the name of a specific **Bronze Age culture** (13th C. BC) that lived in numerous parts of western Lombardy and Piedmont. Its people were most probably of transalpine origin and were distinguished by the fact that they cremated their dead and then placed the ashes in clay urns together with weapons. In the 1950s, archaeological excavations conducted in the Santa Colomba district discovered a vast necropolis and uncovered finds of this type. Two of the town's churches are dedicated to **S. Maria Assunta**: the **older** one is a 16th-century construction in the central town square although it is already mentioned in previous centuries; the second is an imposing, modern **parish church** dating from the 1930s. The church of **S. Colomba** has a 17th-century facade, vestry and bell-tower. The 18th-19th century **Palazzo Visconti-Castelli** complex comprises an older construction (17th C.) belonging to Villa Gallarati-Meraviglia.



The old parish church of S. Maria Assunta



The Parco del Roccolo



Canegrate, along with the towns of Arluno, Busto Garolfo, Casorezzo, Nerviano and Parabiago, forms part of the consortium that runs the Parco del Roccolo, a green space spread over 15km² of cultivated terrain plus woods, meadows, irrigation canals and wetlands. The name is that of a special structure – an oval clearing, a small tower, a hedge, two rows of trees, a wood cut on the slant and a net – used in the past to trap birds, a practice that has long been banned.

For information:

Direzione del Parco,
via Umberto I 11,
Casorezzo.
Tel.: 0290381002
www.parcodelroccolo.it;
Mon.-Fri. 8.30am-12.30 and
2-6pm; Thu 8.30am-12.30.

Legnano

Municipal website: www.legnano.org
Distance from Milan: 27km. Map reference: C 3



Archaeology in Legnano

Museo Civico Guido Sutermeister

C.so Garibaldi 225
Tel.: 0331543005
Tues-Sat 9am-12.30 and
2.30-5pm, Sun 9am-12

Despite the presence of earlier archaeological and documentary evidence, Legnano can be said to have entered the “history books” in 1176, on 29 May to be precise, when the forces of the Lombard Communes allied in the League and the Imperial army of Frederick I Barbarossa clashed in the countryside near the village. The truly great period in the history of Legnano was, however, probably bound to the extraordinary industrial and economic development it experienced from the 19th century to the mid-20th century, when it could be considered the second most important industrial town in Lombardy after Sesto San Giovanni. Between these two times, local history was filled with significant artistic and cultural events. The **Museo Civico Guido Sutermeister** preserves the memories of the community’s oldest



The Town Hall and the Basilica of S. Magno apse



Inside view of the Basilica of S. Magno



Piazza S. Magno with its basilica adorned for the Palio

historic and artistic heritage with finds dating from the Bronze Age (2100-1800 BC) to Longobard times (6th-7th C. AD), with special emphasis on evidence from Imperial Roman times. The most notable piece in the museum, arranged in the reconstructed spaces of the 15th-century Lampugnani residence, is a triptych by pointillist painter Gaetano Previati (1852-1920), portraying the Battle of Legnano.

The Basilica of **S. Magno** is in the very centre of the town. The link between St Magnus, a Milanese Archbishop who lived in the early 16th century, and the town of Legnano is not clear but

Where and when

The *Palio di Legnano* is held on the last Sunday in May and begins with a historic parade of the districts through the town streets. This is followed by a horse race on the track of the town stadium. The programme and additional useful information are published on the official website at www.paliodilegnano.it



Piazza S. Magno

Getting to Legnano



The SS33 Sempione road entering Legnano

By car: from Milan, on the SS 33 Sempione road or the A8 motorway, exit at Legnano or Castellanza.

By train: from Milan Porta Garibaldi, journey time 25 min, approximately one train an hour; or every half hour from the Passante Ferroviario station at Porta Venezia, journey time 40 min.

By coach: services to Milan and other neighbouring towns:

S.T.I.E.: tel. 0331519000, 0286450614, 0286450629
www.stie.it: Nerviano, S. Vittore Olona, S. Giorgio su Legnano, Canegrate, Parabiago, Cerro Maggiore, Lainate, Arese;

A.T.I.N.O.M.: tel. 029723841, www.atinom.it: Dairago, Busto Garolfo, Arconate, Buscate, Castano Primo, Cuggiono, Pregnana Milanese, Comaredo, Settimo Milanese.



Bridge over the River Olona in the Via Diaz gardens

local devotion to this patron saint remains heartfelt. A Renaissance gem constructed between 1504 and 1513 thanks to contributions from Legnano's Lampugnani and Vismara families, the mature design of the proportions expresses a full understanding of central-plan works by Bramante, dotted all over Lombardy after his stay in Milan. For this reason, despite the lack of records, the church in Legnano is directly attributed to Bramante, or considered a precise copy of a design by him. On the outside, it has a Greek-cross plan but inside an atrium leads to an octagonal space with deep chapels on the orthogonal axes and shrines on the slanting sides; bright blue corner pillars serve as a backdrop to fine monochrome candelabras, which continue on the vaulted ceiling, again octagonal, entirely frescoed by Gian Giacomo Lampugnani in 1515. The main altarpiece was commissioned in 1523 to



The Basilica of S. Magno in a period postcard (1937)

More

The Palio di Legnano

The historic parade of the districts through the town streets

Legnano re-enacts its history in late May every year. The Palio evokes the battle that, on 29 May 1176, saw the Communes united in the Lombard League victorious over the army of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa on Legnano's territory. Celebrations were first held in 1932, with a *Festa del Carroccio* followed by a horse race; then, in 1935, they organised the *Palio di Legnano*, later renamed the *Sagra del Carroccio* by Mussolini. Save for a few interruptions, this remained the name of the event until 2006, when it went back to being called the *Palio di Legnano*.

The procession represents a particularly delightful moment of the historic re-enactment; it is led by the standards of the towns in the *Lega dei Comuni*, followed by the eight districts: La Flora, Legnarello, San Bernardino, San Domenico, San Magno, San Martino, Sant' Ambrogio and Sant' Erasmo. Each one uses 100 or so characters to portray a theme linked to life in the Middle Ages (war, music, hunting...). It is all prepared with great philological rigour and in the months



The Carroccio cart escorted by horsemen, pedites and archers in period costumes



The tug-of-war match between the districts

preceding the *Palio*, costume sketches are drawn up in the *maniero*, the headquarters of each district; these are then examined by a special commission and will only be allowed in the parade if deemed historically accurate. The procession ends with the *Carroccio*, a cart drawn by three pairs of white oxen, accompanied by the 'Company of Death' led by Alberto da Giussano. The districts also play a central role in the *Palio* as each one entrusts its colours to a jockey riding bareback in the attempt to be recorded as winner in the *Palio's* roll of honour.



The town stadium in the medieval setting



The horse race disputed by the districts



The Castello di S. Giorgio keep

More

The Lega and Barbarossa

The mid-12th century clash that set Frederick Barbarossa against the Italian Communes lasted nearly 30 years. The Emperor tried by all means to permanently subjugate the communes' independence



The Carroccio cart and the copy of the Ariberto's cross

and impose centralised rule that would restore royal supremacy. It was hard for the town to resist the Imperial army alone, as Crema and Milan already knew after being brutally defeated and destroyed. With the aid of the Pope, the Lombard communes formed the Lombard League alliance and fought a harsh head-on clash with Barbarossa's army in 1176. The Imperial standards were countered by the massive *Carroccio*, a heavy cart drawn by oxen that was chosen to symbolise the fight for freedom, with a cross and flagstaff bearing the standard raised on it; a bell, called the *Martinella*, was rung to encourage resistance. Part history and part legend, the intervention of the 'Company of Death' commanded by Alberto da Giussano was crucial in the League's victory, which routed the Imperial army. Frederick Barbarossa had to review his Italian policy and make major concessions to the towns. The Peace of Constance dated 1183 put an end to the fight between the Communes and the Empire.

More

A land of entrepreneurs: from mechanics to fashion

In the second half of the post-industrial 20th century, the Legnano of major textile and mechanical industries and captains of industry (the Cantoni family, Franco Tosi, Carlo Dall'Acqua, Giuseppe Frua, Antonio Bernocchi) adopted new

expressions of successful business, linked to the fashion world. Gianfranco Ferré was born in Legnano in 1944 and Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana set up their production facility there in 1985.



The Castello di S. Giorgio park

Bernardino Luini, who expressed his by then mature style here: a panelled polyptych with the *Enthroned Madonna and Child with Musician Angels*, four *Saints* in the side panels, an *Everlasting Father* in the tympanum and *Scenes from the Life of Jesus*, in the predella. Later, in 1547, Bernardino Lanino frescoed the walls and the lunette of the main chapel, drawing many features from his maestro Gaudenzio Ferrari.

Legnano Castle, also known as the **Castello di S. Giorgio**, was erected in the 13th century on the site of an Augustan convent. Extended by the

The Famiglia Legnanese

This is the main local cultural association founded in 1951.

Its monthly review, **La Martinella**, is named after the legendary bell that was rung on the *Carroccio* to rally the soldiers of the Lombard League. (www.famiglialegnanese.com).

The Alberto da Giussano's great sword



The monument to Alberto da Giussano

A monument to Alberto da Giussano by Enrico Butti was inaugurated in 1900 and the profile of the legendary captain of the 'Company of Death' has become the symbol of the Lega Nord political party.



Standards of the eight districts in the castle of S. Giorgio

Torriani family, it passed on to the Visconti family until 1437, when it went to the Lampugnani family, local nobility, gradually losing its strategic value. Having declined to a farm estate and country house, it was purchased in 1973 by the municipal authorities, which embarked on renovation and restoration work, reopening it to the public in 2005. Legnano's many other churches notably include the church of **S. Ambrogio**, now seen in its late-16th century guise, corrupted by a number of changes but the foundation of which dates, perhaps, from early Christian times, which would make it the oldest place of worship in Legnano.

More

The Legnanesi

Legnano's theatrical glory is expressed by the *Legnanesi*, a dialect-theatre



The Legnanesi Theatre company performing "The ruling bore"

company founded by Felice Musazzi (1921-1989) after WWII and comprising only male amateur actors. The popular micro-world of Teresa, the mother – a role traditionally played by Musazzi who also wrote the scripts – Giuann, her husband, and Mabilia, their eternally spinster daughter, has been portrayed not only on local stages, and enjoyed critical acclaim and success with the public in places where no one speaks the Lombard dialect, becoming one of the most popular examples of *en travesti* comedy theatre.

More

Legnano and cycling

Legnano is linked to the sport of cycling and the famous bicycle manufacturer, Legnano, originated here and took the name. For many years, it also owned a famous and victorious professional cycling team. The distinctive green Legnano was the bicycle used by Gino Bartali and competed in races and on the market with its rival Bianchi, Fausto Coppi's team. The Unione Sportiva Legnanese has been holding one of Italy's oldest cycle races since 1919 – the Bernocchi Cup.



Legnano retains numerous architectural expressions of the great industrial era: the two bridges over the River Olona, eclectic in style, belonged to the Dell'Acqua cotton factory and were built to cross the river in 1871; a **factory and office workers' district of Officine Franco Tosi** (1900-1924); and a **heliotherapy centre** built to a BBPR design in the 1930s for the children of the **Cantoni** cotton factory workers.

Azienda Agrituristica La Stella



B&B

Via Novara 20
Tel.: 0331541800

Marco Re Cecconi



Honey and bee products

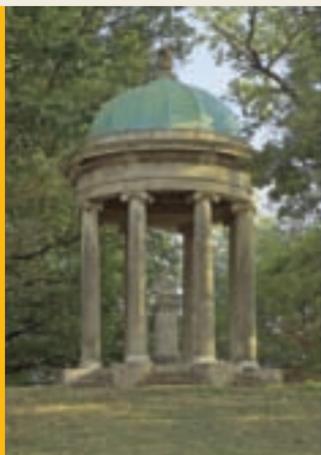
Via Colli di S. Erasmo 5
Tel.: 0331541800



The River Olona flowing through the Via Diaz gardens

Along the Villoresi Canal towards the Alto Ticino

The Ticino River, the parallel Naviglio Grande waterway and the axis of the **Villoresi Canal**, virtually at right angles to the first two, constitute the “hydro-territorial” coordinates of the extreme north-western strip of the province of Milan. In 1877, work started on the digging of a canal, named after its designer, the engineer Eugenio Villoresi from Monza. It was intended to favour irrigation in the Alto Milanese, the area above the line of the resurgent Po and therefore dry, by drawing water from the Ticino River. Work was not completed until 1890, when it was linked to the River Adda, 86 kilometres from its point of derivation in the Somma Lombardo area, in the province of Varese. One hundred and twenty derivations were opened along its route and these still give rise to secondary canals that branch off again to develop a water system running 1400 kilometres. The local farming vocation waned considerably in the 20th century and the Villoresi Canal is, today, a fascinating waterway along which to preserve an environment of surviving nature and rural activities. Indeed the creation of a park extending over several municipalities that would protect the



canal and make its banks accessible, on foot or by bicycle, to visitors and for leisure purposes is currently under discussion. At present, there is a **cycle route** along certain stretches between Bollate and Busto Garolfo.

Sightseeing opportunities are found in the towns of **Cuggiono**, with the large English-style park of the refurbished Villa Annoni, and **Turbigo** overlooking the **Naviglio Grande**, which with its routes that unfold along the numerous canals that have for years fuelled the hydro-electric stations, has become a major landmark on the local landscape.

Castano Primo is the hub of the Polo Fieristico Sud Malpensa, an impressive exhibition structure that has, for some years now, promoted national events that attract hundreds of thousands of visitors.

Some of the towns described in this chapter – Buscate, Castano Primo, Nosate, Turbigo, Vanzaghello, Robecchetto con Induno and Cuggiono – form part of the **Parco Lombardo della Valle del Ticino**, established in 1974 to protect and promote the river environment and its natural and historic features, economic and agro-forestry activities permitting.



Learn more

The Polo Culturale del Castanese, part of the Metropoli provincial network of cultural projects (www.provincia.mi.it/cultura/progetti/metropoli/), has brought together the towns of Arconate, Buscate, Castano Primo, Cuggiono, Magnago, Nosate, Robecchetto and Induno, Turbigo and Vanzaghello in a programme of local performances and cultural and artistic initiatives.

Visitor and exhibitor information concerning the programmes of the **Polo Fieristico Sud Malpensa** can be found at two websites: www.polofiere-sudmalpensa.it and www.expocastano.it. Alternatively, telephone the operations offices 0331 881856.

The Parco Lombardo della Valle del Ticino

An age-old park boasting a tried and tested network of park centres scattered across the three provinces it is part of (Varese, Milan, Pavia). The Consortium headquarters are in via Isonzo 1, Pontevecchio di Magenta (tel. 02972101, www.parcoticino.it).



Arconate

Municipal website: www.comune.arconate.mi.it
Distance from Milan: 32km. **Map reference:** D 2

The Villoresi Canal meanders slightly at Arconate creating a small bend, almost as if in an attempt to resemble a river. It flows north of the town and continues across land that changed its appearance with its construction. This is on the upper dry plain, where the acid soil only allowed the growth of spontaneous moorland vegetation. Vines and, later, mulberry trees adapted to it but the availability of irrigation water enabled agriculture to advance and medium-sized farm estates now form part of the economy, as does the industrial development of the textile sector.

This town was first mentioned in 1027 and gave its name to the Arconati family, and a mansion of theirs survives. In the central square is the parish church of **S. Eusebio**, constructed in 1903 on the site of a previous one that dated from the 16th century, some frescoes of which have been conserved. Not far away is **Palazzo Taverna** with its fine colonnaded portico and now the home of the civic library. At the beginning of via Cuggiono stands the Sanctuary of **S. Maria Nascente**, constructed in 1616 and housing a fine 18th-century fresco.



The church of S. Eusebio and the Villoresi Canal



All outside

On the third weekend in May, Arconate welcomes the spring with the **Festa delle Rondini**.

In summer, the squares come alive with the **Cinema al Chiaro di Luna** open-air cinema and the music of **Suoni e voci dal mondo**, organised by the Polo Culturale del Castanese.

Visit the municipal website for information.

Cycling...

... along the Villoresi Canal to Parabiago and the Parco del Roccolo on **cycle path no. 40** which links Garbagnate to the Ticino River. This is currently being extended to Paderno Dugnano and Grugnotorto Villoresi.

For information: MiBici www.provincia.milano.it/pianificazione_territoriale/ MiBici

Dairago

Municipal website: www.comune.dairago.mi.it
Local Tourist Office: via Nazario Sauro 4. **Tel.:** 0331431517
Distance from Milan: 32km. **Map reference:** C 2



Rainald von Dassel and the Three Kings

In June 1164, Barbarossa granted his loyal Imperial chancellor Rainald von Dassel the feud of the villages and castles belonging to the extensive parish of Dairago, which ran from Cuggiono to Magnago and from Nosate to Busto Arsizio. Just a few days later, Chancellor Rainald received an order to transport the relics of the Three Kings, until that time conserved in the Basilica of S. Eustorgio in Milan, to Cologne in Germany, the city where he would become Archbishop the following year. According to legend, on the way to Germany, Rainald stopped at Dairago, where, until a few years ago, they celebrated the Three Kings on the three days prior to the Epiphany.

A slab of granite depicting two breasts in relief has been walled into the base of the bell-tower of the parish church of **S. Genesio**. Although it probably dates from some form of pre-Christian cult, according to tradition the piece was reinterpreted by the Christians to signify the role played by the collegiate of S. Genesio as the main parish church in medieval times. Archaeological excavations have confirmed the complex stratification of the site on which the present church stands. Its structure reverses the original orientation and dates from the late 19th century; it conserves a marble basin used as a christening font but this was perhaps originally a decorated Romanesque capital. Another special place of worship is the church of the **Madonna di Campagna**, of 16th-century origin.



Church of the Madonna di Campagna: inside view of the apse

Villa Cortese

Municipal website: www.comune.villacortese.mi.it
Local Tourist Office: via Padre Kolbe. **Tel.:** 0331430713
Distance from Milan: 27km. **Map reference:** C 3

A sarcophagus dating from the 1st century AD, found here and now on display in the Museo Civico Sutermeister in Legnano, bears witness to a probable Roman settlement in the Villa Cortese area. Few medieval records refer to this place but one, dated 1403, mentions a certain Ambrogio Scazzosi on the list of fine-wool merchants, demonstrating an early local vocation for workmanship. Between 1868 and 1966, Villa Cortese was amalgamated with the town of Busto Garolfo. The importance of the restoration of its autonomy is conveyed in the image that appears on the municipal coat-of-arms, chosen by a people's referendum in 1968 – a shoot growing out of a tree stump.



Piazza Vittorio Veneto and the church of S. Vittore Martire



The countryside around Dairago and Villa Cortese

Franco Tosi

Franco Tosi, a pioneering entrepreneur of Italy's mechanical industry, was born in Villa Cortese in 1850. After training in Germany, he was employed in Legnano, in 1876, by the Cantoni-Krumm mechanical company and soon took over the reins, before becoming a partner. In 1881, the company became Franco Tosi Meccanica, a name it bears to this day, and made a fundamental technological contribution to the invention of steam engines. Franco Tosi was assassinated in 1898 by one of his own workers.

Buscate

Municipal website: www.comune.buscate.mi.it

Local Tourist Office: piazza della Filanda. E-mail: prolocobuscate@gmail.com

Distance from Milan: 35km. **Map reference:** D 2



The town's coat-of-arms features a single mulberry tree, a reminder of a farming history linked to silk weaving. A tree was planted recently in the S. Antonio sand quarry, but will not be alone for long because there is a plan to plant up part of the area, still operational. Since 2002, the town has formed part of the Parco Lombardo della Valle del Ticino, which adequately conveys the environmental sensitivity that distinguishes Buscate. Formerly part of the Duchy of Milan, in the 17th century it joined the possessions of the **Rosales** family, who had a mansion here, and was later transferred to the Abbate family. A glimpse of the past can be seen in via Lavatoio, where the public **wash-house** has been restored. Its places of worship are of medieval foundation but were later rebuilt and include the church of **S. Mauro**, reconstructed in 1953; the church of **S. Pietro**, which retains fragments of 17th-century frescoes, and **S. Maria**, reduced in length in the early 20th century.



Palazzo Rosales, in the town centre

Celebrations all year round

Festa della Madonna del Carmine, in mid-July with a concert by the S. Cecilia band.

Patron saint's day of St Mauro, 15 January with cultural events.

La Festa del Sassen on the first Sunday in October is a traditional fair selling local products.

For information contact the Town Hall
Piazza S. Mauro 1
Tel.: 0331800161,
0331800176



Wheatfields around Buscate and Arconate

Magnago

Municipal website: www.comune.magnago.mi.it
Local Tourist Office: via Sardegna. **Tel.:** 0331659658
Distance from Milan: 40km. **Map reference:** C 2

Since 1869 Magnago and Bienate have come under the same administration and are well served by the road network and the Ferrovie Nord railway. They are surrounded by beautiful well-tended countryside but the most important economic activity is the textile industry – especially that of cotton – as also emphasised on the municipal arms. In 1652, this became a feud of the Della Croce family. The parish church of Magnago dedicated to **S. Michele Arcangelo** is mentioned in records since the late 13th century and, in the 16th century, was in charge of all the local churches, but the present building was inaugurated in 1929. Also of old foundation is the 13th-century church of **S. Maria**, the home of a convent of Servite Fathers and which conserves 16th-century frescoes. Of interest in Bienate are the church of **S. Stefano**, which dates from the 12th century and conserves a fresco in the apse painted in 1520 and a fine cloister, probably 16th century.



Frescoes in the church of S. Maria



The renovated square of S. Michele



A shared park



The **Parco delle Roggie** is currently being established and will protect a farming and wooded area extending over 565 hectares on the territory of Arconate and Dairago.

The park's headquarters are in Magnago.

Piazza Italia

Tel.: 0331657465

Patron Saints

Magnago has two patron saints' days to respect the cults of the two centres. Bienate celebrates **S. Bartolomeo** on the last Sunday in August; Magnago celebrates the **S. Michele Arcangelo** on the last Sunday in September.

Vanzaghello

Municipal website: www.comune.vanzaghello.mi.it

Distance from Milan: 40km. Map reference: C 2



Azienda agricola Ida Gamarasca



*Honey and bee produce.
Production and sale
of acacia, chestnut,
lime-tree, orange,
eucalyptus and
mixed-flower honey,
nuts with honey,
royal jelly,
propolis, pollen
and honeydew.*

Corso Italia 3, Vanzaghello
Tel.: 0331659077

At various times, the histories of Vanzaghello and Magnago have been united in a single destiny. In the Middle Ages, both belonged to the parish of Dairago before forming one large parish, from which Vanzaghello detached itself in 1551 and was later enfeoffed to the Maggi and Della Croce families. Upon the death of the last member of this latter family, it became autonomous. The territorial reform of 1869 amalgamated it again with Magnago until 1968, when it became permanently autonomous. The parish church of **S. Ambrogio**, founded in 1730, has been frequently altered and the present building was consecrated in 1920. The church of **S. Rocco**, with its rectangular hall and 16th-century altarpiece, dates from 1570. Small and intimate is the church of the **Madonna delle Nevi**, known as the Madonna in Campagna because outside the town and the foundation of which dates from 1666. The whole Vanzaghello area falls within the Parco Lombardo della Valle del Ticino.



The church of
S. Ambrogio



The church of the Madonna delle Nevi, just
outside the town

Castano Primo

Municipal website: comune.castanoprimo.mi.it
Local Tourist Office: piazza S. Zenone. **Tel.:** 0331881636
Distance from Milan: 37km. **Map reference:** C 1

In the 16th century Castano Primo was a feud of the Visconti Brignano family; it was then assigned to the nobleman Antonio Nuño de Portugal, who was responsible for the redesign of the residence known as **Villa Rusconi**, named after its last owner who gave it its present appearance; of considerable size and aristocratic in appearance, it now houses the Town Hall. The elegant facade of the parish church of **S. Zenone** closes the perspective of piazza Mazzini. North of the centre is the Sanctuary of the **Madonna di Gré** with its simple 16th-century design. The church of the **Addolorata al Lazzaretto** is linked to the plague of 1630, which caused numerous deaths here. Frescoes painted by Gaetano Previati on the walls of the cemetery portico in 1888 and 1989 are now detached and kept in the Museo Diocesano in Milan.

The town's hugely important cultural life and that of the whole surrounding area revolves around the **Centro Polivalente di Produzione Culturale A. Paccagnini**, which organises an excellent dance, music and theatre programme.



The imposing Villa Rusconi



Every 25 years

Solemn celebrations are held for the **Thaumaturgic Christ**, a wooden crucifix conserved in S. Zenone and said to have been brought to Castano from Jerusalem by the local crusader Fra' Rodolfo della Croce. The next celebration is in 2009.

Cycle tours

Several cycle tours lead to must-see places such as the hamlet of Ponte di Castano with its watermills and boat-house on the Ticino River. For information contact the Town Hall.

Carla Noè



Chicken farm selling chickens, chicks and eggs

Via Trieste 15,
Castano Primo

Tel.: 0331881247

Nosate

Municipal website: www.comune-nosate.it
Distance from Milan: 41km. Map reference: C 1



On the Industriale Canal



One of the many options for a cycle visit is the cycle path that follows the course of the **Industriale Canal**, which draws its water from the Ticino River at Maddalena and fuels the hydro-electric stations of Vizzola Ticino and Turbigo. After giving up some of its water to the Naviglio Grande, it then flows back into the Ticino River.



Along the Naviglio Grande

This is the westernmost town in the Province of Milan, situated on a slight rise almost as a sentry on the Lombard bank of the Ticino River watching the Piedmontese part. Splendid views can be enjoyed from piazza Borromeo, still with a medieval feel, on which stands the parish church of **S. Guiniforte**, mentioned in St Carlo Borromeo's pastoral visit of 1570. Descending to the lower part, you find the small old church of **S. Maria in Binda**, a brick gem and the object of great local devotion; inside, it reserves a surprise of delicate 16th-century frescoes dedicated to the Madonna. From the church, a route through the fields leads across the bridges on the Industriale Canal, the old course of the Naviglio Grande and irrigation ditches in a land of water, the main presence being the Ticino River. Canals and irrigation ditches mean watermills and a stroll along the Naviglio Vecchio leads to the **Mulino del Ponte**.



The church of S. Maria in Binda

Turbigo

Municipal website: www.comune.turbigo.mi.it
Local Tourist Office: piazza Bonomi c/o Municipio. **Tel.:** 3381101632
Distance from Milan: 41km. **Map reference:** D 1

Turbigo stands on the **Naviglio Grande** just a few kilometres from the Ticino River. Its strategic position controlling the Ticino River made it important in medieval times, as demonstrated by the presence of the **Castello Visconteo**. Constructed in the 13th century with river pebbles and squared stone, it rises on a terrace overlooking the town and a spectacular flight of steps links it to via Vittorio Veneto. Near the castle, the parish church of the **Assunta** dates from the 20th century. Of greater historical and artistic interest is the church of **SS. Cosma e Damiano**, 17th century and inspired by the design of Jesuit churches. Beside the church is **Villa Barozza Vezzani**, a former Augustinian convent; a gate surmounted by a shell-shaped marble frieze in via Volta leads to an 18th-century cloister. The portal with an aedicule pediment that marks the entrance to **Villa Tatti** also dates from the 18th century. A 17th-century **bridge**, with three spans and decorative brick, offers splendid views along the Naviglio Grande and **Palazzo De Cristoforis**, now the Town Hall and the civic library, with its internal courtyard and 18th-



Gipsoteca Carlo Bonomi

Carlo Bonomi (1880-1961), who came originally from Turbigo, was an important sculptor, painter and architect. His studio in Villa Selvaggia, close to the castle, has become a **museum** of his work with plaster casts, bronzes and paintings. Bonomi, who restored the castle, also designed the central piazza S. Francesco and made its fountain.



The Turbigo landscape



The Naviglio Grande

century villa and another older construction, looks directly onto the canal. Turbigo is one of the towns in the Parco Lombardo della Valle del Ticino consortium.



The parish church of the Assunta near the Castle

More

Water, energy

In the 20th century, its extraordinary grid of watercourses – the Ticino River, Naviglio Grande and the derived irrigation canals and ditches and resurgences – turned Turbigo into a small hydroelectric-production centre. In 1904,



the waters of the Naviglio Grande were deviated from their traditional course and steered into the new Canale Industriale, which fuelled a **hydro-electric station**, now named after **Giuglielmo Castelli**, that was quite powerful for its times (10MW). In 1922, a second plant was derived from this first one; called **Turbighetto** (900 KW), it was the first example of a remote-controlled hydro-electric plant in Italy. Then, finally, in 1928, Turbigo was chosen as the site of the **first thermoelectric plant** (30MW). Emphasis will be placed on the historic, architectural and scenic worth of these stations when they become attractions in a planned **“parco dell’energia”**. The cycle path along the Naviglio Grande offers easy and enjoyable access to these sites.

Robecchetto con Induno

Municipal website: www.comune.robecchetto-con-induno.mi.it

Distance from Milan: 38km. Map reference: D 1

In 1870, a royal decree brought several centres on the left bank of the Ticino River, situated between the river, the Naviglio Grande and the Villoresi Canal, together under a single administration. As well as Robecchetto and Induno – which gave its name to a farm complex that had, perhaps, been a Visconti hunting lodge – these included the other smaller settlements of Guado, Padregnano, Padregnana and Malvaglio. Robecchetto is notably home to the parish church of **S. Maria delle Grazie** and **Palazzo Fagnani Arese**, now the Town Hall, both 19th century. Not far away, on the main street, behind a neo-classical gateway, is the courtyard of the **Cascina Grande Arese**, which conserves rural houses on two sides and large loggias on the first floor. The entire Robecchetto and Induno area falls within the Parco Lombardo della Valle del Ticino.



The parish church of S. Maria delle Grazie



Palazzo Fagnani Arese, the Town Hall

Cuggiono

Municipal website: www.comune.cuggiono.mi.it
Distance from Milan: 32km. Map reference: D 2



Although not situated directly on the river, in the early Middle Ages Cuggiono controlled a passage over the Ticino between Magenta and Turbigo. In the 12th century part of the area was enfeoffed to the Crivelli family and later, in the 17th century, belonged to the Clerici and the Piantanida. Uberto, who became Pope Urban III in 1185, is thought to have been born in Cuggiono. The large **Villa Annoni** was built to a design by Zanoja in the late 18th century and then enlarged in subsequent decades. Its vast **park** is the second largest in Lombardy after that of Villa Reale in Monza. Conceived in the form of an English garden, it retains a fine array of landscape perspectives, enlivened by the curvilinear development of the paths, the creation of artificial hills and a small lake, as well as the presence of precious centuries-old trees. The villa is also of important historical-architectural value, with its central block and two wings; the garden features a coffee-house, a fallow-deer house and a roe-deer house, an Ionic temple and lemon-houses. Having changed hands over the years (the Cicogna family first, then the Bellora family), the villa has belonged to the town since



The Ionic temple in the Villa Annoni park



Villa Annoni, in the old town centre



Villa Annoni: detail of a hall ceiling



The Naviglio Grande canal at Castelletto di Cuggiono



Villa Clerici at Castelletto di Cuggiono

1979. A gradual refurbishment project culminated in 2007 with the Town Hall being moved to the central block of the villa. One wing houses the **Museo Storico Civico**. The town also boasts the late-17th century parish church of **S. Giorgio**, based on an initial design by Francesco Maria Ricchino, with a neoclassical main altar by Leopold Pollack and frescoes by Morazzone. The hamlet of **Castelletto** is notably home to **Villa Clerici**. This features a spectacular perspective running down to the Naviglio Grande, which is crossed in the vicinity by a **bridge**, repeatedly altered but first built in the 16th century. Also in Castelletto, the church of **SS. Giacomo e Filippo** has 17th-century design although it is of much older foundation. Cuggiono forms part of the Parco Lombardo della Valle del Ticino.

Cooperativa Capat



Meat and processed meats

Via Fratelli Piazza 20,
Cuggiono
Tel.: 0331541800

More

Museo Storico Civico Cuggionese

This conserves the memories of Cuggiono and its environs. The rooms



Inside view of the museum

of Villa Annoni have been furnished as in days past and display objects, implements and mementoes, as well as a photographic gallery of period pictures, scenes and stories of a not too distant past, including daily life and trades that are vanishing, personal and collective memories, such as that of the emigration of local people to America, St Louis in particular, in the late 19th century.

Piazza XXV Aprile, tel. 0297240570, www.museocuggiono.it; open Sundays, May-October.

Milan-Malpensa Airport

www.sea-aeroportimilano.it/it/malpensa

Getting there

Railway service from Milan-Cadorna station, journey time approximately 40 minutes, on the **Malpensa Express**, departures every half hour. Coach services to Milan Centrale station and Linate and Bergamo-Orio al Serio airports, plus all the main towns in Northern Italy.

By **car** on the SS336, two-lane dual carriageway, from the Busto Arsizio exit of the Autostrada dei Laghi, between Milan and Varese. A link with the A4 Milan-Turin motorway was opened at Boffalora Ticino in 2008.

Milan-Malpensa is Northern Italy's most important airport and is the second most important airport in Italy, after Rome-Fiumicino, for passenger numbers, although it comes first in terms of goods transport and international traffic. Although actually situated in the province of Varese, Malpensa – along with Linate – has been one of the city of Milan's civil airports since the end of WWII.

In 1909, the first aeroplane manufacturers, Agusta and Caproni, set up a flying field on which to test their prototypes near the Cascina Malpensa. It later became a military airfield but was destroyed in WWII. Thanks to the actions of industrialists and Lombard financiers, it was repaired in 1948. The runway was lengthened and the airport named "Città di Busto Arsizio". The local authorities and the Provincia di Milano joined the airport management company and the Società Esercizi Aeroportuali-S.E.A was formed to run the airport in 1955. In the 1960s Malpensa started to take over as the Lombard capital's international airport and was enlarged, leading to the major Malpensa 2000 project, which in 1998 saw the opening of a large new airport (Terminal 1) beside the old one (now Terminal 2).



Malpensa is an important international airport

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