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The art, nature and culture of Brianza

Four itineraries explore architecture, nature, stately homes and gardens scattered across the 55 towns and cities in the new Province of Monza & Brianza. A journey through the history and traditions that have marked the roots and identity of an area at the centre of one of Europe's most highly industrialised zones.





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**The art, nature and culture
of Brianza**

Andrea Spiriti – Laura Facchin



Provincia
di Milano



PROGETTO
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Front cover: top, Villa Reale in Monza; *bottom left*, the Basilica of Ss. Pietro e Paolo in Agliate; *bottom right*, frescoes by the Zavattari brothers in the Theodolinda chapel in the Duomo in Monza. *Back cover: top left*, the Formula 1 Grand Prix at the Monza racetrack; *top right*, the former Casa del Fascio (house of fascism) by Giuseppe Terragni in Lissone; *bottom*, Palazzo Arese Borromeo in Cesano Maderno. *Flap: top left*, Vimercate town centre; *top right*, Bellusco castle; *bottom*, Grugnotorto Villorosi Park

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Foreword

Publishing a guidebook today is a challenge that tests our understanding of the degree to which our post-modern times are willing to own up to their past and the cultural assets that – to the delight of some, the irritation of others and the indifference of many – form the connective tissue of Italian society. Italy has such a wealth of art but is so poor at investing in it. Its immense heritage is in a deplorable state, partly because people do not see it as a collective asset to be preserved for them and their descendants. Who would bet a penny on the future of a civilisation that has no love for its own past? Publishing a guidebook to encourage people to visit the cultural heritage is, therefore, a gamble, especially if it does not simply address the monumental dimension but attempts a global approach in which painting sits alongside gastronomy, architecture alongside botany. One concerns the environment and the other the impact humans have made on it over the centuries, that is to say how it has been shaped to suit our aims and wishes or, at least, how we have tried to strike a balance with it. If, then, the guidebook is on the province of Monza and Brianza, this all also coincides with its recognition as a Province before the national community. It is a new entity that, in order to survive, must show itself to be competent and to possess distinguishing features: the geographical (southern Brianza has always been drawn to Milan) and historical (fruit of preferential strategic development to the north) ones are obvious but the artistic one is also crucial.

This is a zone of dense but now almost invisible Romanisation and Monza saw remarkable Longobard commissions, epitomised in the treasure of the kingdom. In Romanesque times, the area formed part of the great circuit of basilicas with the striking example of Agliate, followed in the Middle Ages by the major episode of S. Stefano in Lentate and then a dense array of castles and hunting lodges, right on down to the gem that is Oreno in Vimercate. The sumptuous Renaissance construction of S. Vittore in Meda marked the start of a series that ended with the reconstruction of the sanctuary of S. Pietro Martire in Seveso at the height of the 17th century. The core focus of the 17th and 18th centuries was, however, the construction of palaces and villas, with the inescapable European-wide paradigm of Palazzo Arese Borromeo in Cesano Maderno. This rich succession continued into the 19th century with the prominent poles of Vimercate and Monza, but also Cavenago, Arcore, Macherio and Varedo. The financial opulence of the 19th-century and then the presence of the Savoy court in Monza translated into an impressive fabric of villas and churches (in addition to the continuity of Monza's Villa Reale, suffice to mention the neo-Gothic Villa Traversi Tittoni in Desio, ahead of its times in Europe). Nor did the 20th century lack great achievements, starting with Giuseppe Terragni's formidable designs in Lissone and Seveso.

Andrea Spiriti

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Monza

From the Lombards to the Year 2000

Monza is manifestly the barycentre of the area (with its name included in that of the province) and the urban centre with the most visible and complex development, clearly illustrating the historic successions from the early Middle Ages to contemporary times. This sets it apart from the rest and it is this same continuity, dotted with fine individual accomplishments, that makes its history and documentary worth so important.

The city developed basically in a circle with the Duomo at its core; next comes the part inside the medieval walls and then the area that has grown up outside the walls, dominated to the north by Villa Reale and the adjacent park, so vast that has become a major urban attraction also for neighbouring towns. Theodolinda's foundation of a royal basilica that would immortalise the Lombard conversion to Catholicism and the passage from an elective to a hereditary monarchy were crucial events in Italian history that were translated into an outstanding architectural and artistic enterprise. Today, the earliest phases of the cathedral complex survive in the legendary Tesoro, dominated by the Iron Crown and containing one of the world's most important collections of early medieval goldsmithery. The building's later evolution is almost a resumé of the history of Lombard art from the 14th to the 19th century: Campione's Goth-



ic church, the silver altar, the Zavattari brothers' frescoes and then those by Luini, the great mannerist, baroque and rococo painted cycles and Andrea Appiani's Neoclassical altar mark the passages of a quest lasting many centuries, always dictated by the highest quality standards. At the same time, the Tesoro was constantly acquiring new pieces.

The second section, the old city centre inside the walls, is of compact urban design and enriched by the Lambro River and features a delightful sequence of building styles ranging from Gothic to eclectic: the civil (Arengario) and religious (S. Maria in Strada, S. Pietro Martire, S. Maria al Carrobiolo) Middle Ages; the century changes to those same churches; and the major refurbishments and palatial constructions of the 19th and 20th centuries (Palazzo Comunale, Palazzo degli Studi, Palazzo di Giustizia) that created a fabric in which even "minor" housing featured a still clearly visible noble continuity.

The third section comprises a dense network of villas – older ones, indeed, but most importantly Villa Reale, the three periods of major splendour of which are condensed in the names of Ferdinand of Habsburg, Napoleon I Bonaparte and Humbert I of Savoy, whose assassination in Monza (1900) lay behind the remarkable complex of the Cappella Espiatoria. The Villa, and its perpetuation in the legendary racetrack, altered the whole urban layout of the north of the city bringing wide avenues and park's green spaces (the highest green/urban ratio in Lombardy).



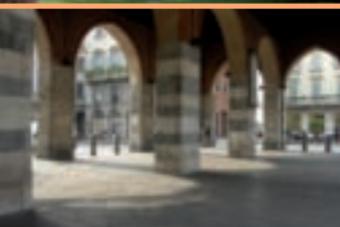
Getting there

By car: **from Milan**, Viale Fulvio Testi towards Monza, then SS36 towards Lecco, Monza Villa Reale exit; **from Turin and Venice**, A4 Torino-Venezia motorway, Cinisello-Sesto San Giovanni exit, then SS36 towards Lecco, Monza Villa Reale exit. **From Bologna**, A1 Firenze/Bologna-Milano motorway, Tangenziale Est then Tangenziale Nord towards Como, Monza Centro exit. Info: www.autostrade.it

By air: **from Linate** (approx. 20 km from Monza), tel. 0274852200 (call centre), www.sea-aeroportimilano.it/linate, 73 bus and shuttle to Milan-Stazione Centrale, info 026690351; **from Malpensa** (approx. 50 km from Monza), tel. 0274852200 (call centre), www.sea-aeroportimilano.it/malpensa Malpensa Express to Milan.

By train: Monza is on the FS Milano-Bergamo, Milano-Como/Chiasso and Milano-Lecco railway lines. Info: www.trenitalia.it, tel. 892021

By coach: Autobus AGI Brianza Trasporti z223 (Milano-Cinisello-Monza railway station, celere) from M2/M3 Stazione Centrale, Autobus AGI Brianza Trasporti z221 (Milano-Sesto railway station M1-Monza-Carate-Mariano C.) from M1 Sesto metro station.



Monza

Municipal website: www.comune.monza.mi.it
at Monza e Brianza: piazza Giosuè Carducci 2
Tel. and fax: 039323222 **E-mail:** pro.monza@tiscali.it
Distance from Milan: 17 km. **Map reference:** E 4

Visits to Monza can be split into four itineraries. The first two are theme tours and explore artistic and cultural attractions dating from the Middle Ages to modern times in the section of the city inside the walls; the third takes a look outside the walls; and the fourth visits Parco Reale (Royal Park) and the villas.



Inside the city walls: Medieval and Renaissance times

Roman and early medieval *Modicia/Modoetia* is now but a distant memory save for the Roman remains of the Leoni bridge and the precious complex of the **Duomo of S. Giovanni Battista** with the **Museo e Tesoro del Duomo (Duomo treasure and museum)**, the significance of which dates from its Lombard foundation by Theodolinda to celebrate



The Duomo (top right, aerial photo) and, right, a detail of the rose window



the conversion to Catholicism and the beginnings of her dynasty.

The priceless collection, recently expanded and rearranged in modern museum spaces, comprises material of the highest level, making it the most important body of early medieval art in the world: the enigmatic *Iron Crown*, Theodolinda's possessions (*ampullas from the Holy Land*, terracotta medallion of the *Annunciation*, *Theodolinda's Crown*, *Agilulf's Cross*, *Adaloald's Cross*, *Theodolinda's Evangeliary*, *Mother hen with chicks*), those of Berengario I (the diptychs from late-antiquity known as those of the Poet and Muse, of Stilicone and of David and Gregory, the *Reliquary of John the Baptist's tooth* and *Berengario I's Cross*). The sculpted plutei, tombs and sarcophagus in the basilica and the adjacent tower are the only architectural and sculptural remains of the period.

The basilica was reconstructed by Matteo da Campione, starting in 1300. Of that period it retains the basic structure, the Gothic façade with a lunette over the doorway, sculptural features (pulpits and the



Above, the Mother hen and chicks and, below, Adaloald's Cross, masterpieces in the Museo e Tesoro of the Duomo in Monza



Details of the interior of the Duomo, showing the organ and frescoes in the presbytery

famous Imperial coronation slab), numerous pieces of goldsmithery (including a sumptuous silver altar and Giangaleazzo Visconti's chalice). Estorre Visconti's mummy is a rare anthropic specimen. The 15th-century late-Gothic style reached a peak in the Theodolinda chapel (1444), frescoed by the Zavattari brothers with a famous cycle on the Queen's life. The Renaissance period commenced with the rose window by Stefano de' Fedeli (recomposed in the

Corona Ferrea

The Iron Crown is kept on the altar of the Theodolinda chapel and is one of the most important pieces in the history of the Christian West. Miraculously conserved to the present day, it consists of six gold segments adorned with precious stones, roses and enamels. Inside is a metal band – which gives the crown its "Iron" name – that according to tradition is made of one of the nails used in the Crucifixion of Jesus. The relic is thought to have been found by St. Helena in 326 and she had it inserted into the diadem of her son, the Emperor Constantine. Recent historical investigations claim the Crown, the present form of which stems from alterations made between the 5th and 9th centuries, is a royal Ostrogoth insignia passed to the Lombards and eventually come down to the Carolingian sovereigns, who had it restored and donated it in or around the 11th century to the Duomo of Monza. Since then, the history of the Crown has been inextricably linked to that of this city.

It is because of its religious importance and special link that the Iron Crown is conserved on a special altar in the Duomo, where it can be viewed. Tradition has it that this precious diadem was used in a large number of coronations. As well as the Lombard ones, in the Middle Ages alone, these included the hugely important ones of Charlemagne and Frederick I, Barbarossa.

Information and visits: Museo e Tesoro del Duomo di Monza, tel. 03932638, website: www.museoduomomonza.it





The Arengario porticoes

Theodolinda

Theodolinda, daughter of Bavarian Duke Garibaldo, was the Lombard sovereign and Queen of Italy from 589. In that year, she married King Autari who died suddenly (perhaps poisoned) just over a year after their marriage. In the same autumn of 590, she married the Duke of Turin, Agilulf. A Catholic who initially supported the schism, she later sought a rapprochement with the church of Pope Gregory the Great. Agilulf died in May 616 leaving the title to his son Adaloald, still a minor, and Theodolinda became regent. She increased her support of the Catholic Church and worked to find lasting agreement with the Emperor. She died in 627, a year after her son was dethroned, and she was buried alongside her husband in the Duomo in Monza, which she had had built.

museum) and comprises three *millefiori* tapestries and a fresco by Bernardino Luini (*St. Gerald*).

A stone's throw from the Duomo, a 13th-century tower-gate leads to the **Leoni bridge**. The parallel **S. Gerardo bridge**, built in 1215 and repeatedly revamped, takes its name from the nearby hospital of S. Gerardo, the city's main hospital since 1174 and linked to the saint. The oratory of S. Gerardino conserves Luini-style frescoes. The old **Arengario** is a rare example of civil architecture with a ground-floor portico and salon on the first floor; it was erected in the second half of the 13th century and completed around 1380 with a *parlera* (rostrum for speakers) and, shortly afterwards, a crenellated tower. On the other side of piazza Carducci, **Casa Gualtieri** retains much of the original 15th-century brick construction.

The city's north-south axis (now via Italia and via



The Theodolinda chapel, the Zavattari frescoes



The church of S. Pietro Martire, founded in the 14th century

Carlo Alberto) features two major examples of medieval architecture: the **church of S. Maria in Strada** (constructed by Ambrosolo da Milano from 1318 on), with a heavily restored brick façade; and the **church of S. Pietro Martire**, the hub of the 14th-century Dominican complex, with Gothic architecture, the remains of frescoes and a 16th-century wooden *Crucifixion*.

The nearby **S. Maria del Carrobiolo alle Umiliate** (indication of the Humiliati's substantial presence in Monza) has a 14th-century bell tower but the construction (commenced in 1232) has repeatedly been altered. The city's walled design can be perceived from the ring road, divided in two by the aforementioned thoroughfare and the Lambro River, which runs parallel to it.

Inside the walls: Mannerism to the present day

While remaining true to its medieval urban design, Monza spent an uninterrupted period between the mid-16th and late-18th centuries embellishing its historic buildings, such that their appearance was radically altered. One glaring example is the **Duomo of S. Giovanni Battista** as the layout of nave and two aisles and its Gothic façade were retained but the interior was substantially changed with a Mannerist presbytery (to a design by Pelle-

Historical parade

The bell tower in piazza Duomo and the old Monza city centre provide the setting for the historical parade, a traditional period-costume event – part of the June celebrations – that takes the city back every year to relive a major historic moment in which it played a central part. This return to the past enjoys huge public consensus and the increasingly lively participation of numerous groups of characters in period costume from various parts and neighbouring villages in particular come together in full collaboration and in the spirit of the new province of Monza and Brianza.



The foundation of the Basilica, a painting by Sebastiano Ricci in the nave of the Duomo

grino Tibaldi), a large cycle in the transept by Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Giuseppe Meda and Giovanni Mauro della Rovere, baroque chapels with paintings by Moncalvo and the Nuvolone family, 17th-century frescoes in the presbytery (the work of the Montalto family, Ercole Procaccini the Younger, Carlo Cane), a cycle on the building in the nave (the work, among others, of Filippo Abbiati and Sebastiano Ricci) and a grandiose trompe l'oeil programme coordinated by Castellino and completed with figures by Gilardi, Borroni, Bertoloni, Sassi, Porta and Carloni – all making it the most complete repertoire of the Lombard 18th century. The John the Baptist tapestries in the Tesoro are valuable examples of Mannerism, followed by many pieces of goldsmithery and a rich picture gallery. The Neoclassical conclusion to the



The stained-glass rose window in the counterfaçade of the Duomo, (late 19th cent.)



The 18th-century façade of the church of S. Maria al Carrobiolo

Duomo came in the form of a main altar by Andrea Appiani (1793-1798).

The Mannerist and baroque refurbishments were extended to the churches of S. Maria in Strada and S. Pietro Martire and, most importantly, thanks to the presence of the Barnabites, the

Monza Celebrations

After the **Sagra di S. Biagio** (feast of St. Blaise), on 3 February, the Sunday following 25 March, on the day dedicated to the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, they hold the **Sagra della Madonna delle Grazie** (feast of the Madonna of Grace) with stalls set up around the Sanctuary of the Madonna delle Grazie selling local handicrafts, a whole array of goods and *firun*, a Monza sweetmeat consisting of baked chestnuts threaded on strings to form chains.

Every 6 June they celebrate the **Festa di S. Gerardo** (feast of St. Gerard) to remember the anniversary of the saint's death. This religious festival includes a ceremony that begins the evening before the anniversary with the laying of the statue of the saint at the side of the Lambro River, at San Gerardino, to commemorate one of his miracles: the saint wanted to take food to families living on the other side of the Lambro River during the famine; not having a raft or boat, he laid down his mantel loaded with provisions and was ferried across the river

The **Sagra di S. Giovanni** (feast of St. John) is held over the fortnight preceding 24 June, the saint's day, and comprises a number of cultural, sports and folklore events that end with a breathtaking fireworks display in the gardens of Villa Reale. The festival is of age-old origin and commemorates the construction of the Duomo dedicated to St. John by Queen Theodolinda. Every year, a Historical Parade (see box on p. 13) and a livestock fair, on the park's former race course, are held in conjunction with the festival.



Participants in the Historical Parade

The Nun of Monza

Marianna De Leyva (Milan, 1575-1650) belonged to a prominent family of Spanish origin that held important positions in the State of Milan and was the feudatory of Monza. Her mother, Virginia Maria, was the daughter of a powerful Genoese banker, Tommaso Marino. In 1591, she entered the Monza convent of S. Margherita, which no longer exists (the church of S. Maurizio stands in its place today), with the name of Sister Virginia. In 1598 she embarked on a dramatic relationship with the nobleman Gian Paolo Osio, whose home adjoined the monastery, which ended in a prominent trial.

Sister Virginia was arrested in Monza on 15 November 1607 and was transferred to Milan, where she was sentenced, in 1608, to lifelong confinement to a walled cell in house of the Convertite di S. Valeria, near S. Ambrogio, in Milan. Osio was condemned to death. In 1622, the nun obtained a pardon but decided to remain in the S. Valeria retreat, where she stayed until her death. In *The Betrothed* (*Promessi Sposi*), Alessandro Manzoni used the figure of the "nun of Monza" but changed the names of the protagonists – Virginia became Gertrude and her lover was called Egidio – and moved the story a few decades forward in time (1628-1630).



Palazzo di Giustizia

church of S. Maria al Carrobiolo which conserves a precious series of Mannerist paintings (Ottavio Semino, Simone Peterzano, Moncalvo) and 18th-century frescoes by Andrea Porta, dating from the same time as the nearby experience of S. Margherita. At the side, the convent is entered through an 18th-century doorway by Elia Vincenzo Buzzi and Giovanni Ruggeri. In or around 1736, the **church of S. Maurizio** was erected over the 13th-century monastery of S. Margherita to a design attributed to Giacomo Antonio Quadrio.

The city's 19th-century (Napoleonic and Austrian) design was marked by the destruction of old complexes such as the Rocca Viscontea and numerous interventions: **Contrada Ferdinanda** (now via Vittorio Emanuele I I) built for Ferdinand of Habsburg in the late 18th century and developed in the mid-19th century with much housing; the conversion of the convent of S. Francesco to a Seminary (now **Palazzo degli Studi**) in 1830-1833 by Giacomo Moraglia; the new **Leoni bridge** (1842); **Collegio Bosisio** in via Zucchi (1843) and the coeval **Casa Scanzi** facing S. Pietro Martire; and 19th-century houses with wrought-iron balconies in **via Carlo Alberto**.

Following Italian Unification, the second half of the 19th century brought major restoration works (the refurbishment of S. Pietro Martire, the new façade of S. Maria in Strada by Carlo Maciachini in 1870) and the beginning of the Fascist con-

version of the Pratum Magnum which included some demolitions (the church of S. Michele) and the creation of the large nucleus of **piazza Trento e Trieste** and **piazza Carducci**, and the work on the **City Hall** (1928-1938) and the **Monumento ai Caduti** (War memorial, Enrico Pancera, 1932). To the northeast, the city's redesign culminated with **Palazzo di Giustizia** (1934). After the war, numerous buildings were restored and the Duomo has recently been given a new museum.

Outside the walls: the royal station and a religious route

South of the city, in Borgo di Porta Milano, the railway station (1884) conserves the **royal waiting room** built for King Humbert I and Queen Margherita of Savoy, who came to Villa Reale for their summer breaks (1884-1900). It is decorated with stucco work and eclectic boiseries; the vaulted ceiling features a painting by Mosè Bianchi portraying *The Savoy Genius* (1883-1884).

Not far away, in via Guarienti, stands the **oratory of S. Gregorio** designed in the late 17th century by Gerolamo Quadrio. Inside it conserves baroque and rococo furnishings. During the 19th century, the church was incorporated into the building design of the new city cemetery.

To the northeast is Borgo S. Gerardo and, in the street of the same name, the **church of S. Gerardo**

Gerardo de' Tintori

San Gerardo de' Tintori (Monza, ca 1134-1207) is the patron saint of Monza along with St. John the Baptist. When his father died, he used his inheritance to found a hospital to care for the sick and destitute. It was situated on the left bank of the Lambro River, near the bridge today known as that of S. Gerardino and where there is a small church of the same name. The hospital remained in operation until the 18th century. In 1946, the city's administration decided to commemorate his work by naming the 19th-century city hospital after him. He was buried at the church of S. Ambrogio (today S. Gerardo al Corpo). The most famous miracles handed down by local tradition include crossing the Lambro River on his own mantle after the bridge linking his hospital to the city was destroyed and his gift of a basket of cherries, often pictured with the saint, in mid-winter to the canons of the Duomo in Monza, who had allowed him to stay and pray after the church's closing time.



The royal waiting room in the station



Aerial view of Villa Reale in Monza and, below, the façade

al Corpo, reconstructed in Neoclassical style over the previous church of S. Ambrogio ad N emus (10th cent.), the bell tower of which survives. It has a Latin-cross structure with a dome. The old 15th-century apse, today the right-hand chapel of the transept, conserves the remains of St. Gerald (12 07) in a silver urn.

Farther north, on the road to Lecco, between via Montecassino and the Lambro River, stands the **Sanctuary of S. Maria delle Grazie** . The church originally formed part of a 15th-century Franciscan convent built over an earlier (1131) chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary and has a late-Gothic façade to which a porch was later added. The bell tower dates from the 15th century. On the polychrome-marble main altar is a much venerated painting of the *Annunciation*.

Nearby is a **bridge** with three spans known as that of the **Grazie Vecchie** (1683), built for the Durini and Casati families.

Outside the walls: Parco Reale and the Villas

Monza Park is an important European historic park and the largest of those enclosed within walls.





It was created for Eugène de Beauharnais and Napoleon Bonaparte in 1805-1806, incorporating an area north of the city crossed by the Lambro River and comprising the architectural and land-





Villa Reale, the grand ballroom

Monza in Napoleonic Times

After his mother Giuseppina married Bonaparte, **Eugène Beauharnais** (1781-1824) joined the General's retinue in Italy. With the advent of the Empire, he subsequently became Prince Français, Grand State Chancellor and Viceroy of Italy, residing in Milan. He strove to form an army and reorganise the administration, promulgated the Napoleonic code and had major public works carried out. After the disastrous expedition to Russia, he tried to defend the Kingdom of Italy against Austrian attack, also securing a victory on the Mincio River. After the insurrection of Milan, he sought refuge in Munich, with Augustus of Bavaria whose daughter, Amalia Augusta, he had married in 1800.

scape nucleus of Villa Mirabello and Villa Mirabellino as well as the wooded area known as the "Bosco Bello". The Napoleonic government wanted the site to serve leisure purposes of relaxation and hunting but also be of public utility, promoting the rearing of plants and animals. During the 19th century, the architects who succeeded each other, Luigi Canonica and his pupil Giacomo Tazzini first and then, in the second half of the century, head gardener Luigi Villoresi, sought to blend the existing architectural features with the landscape. The park was opened to the public in 1919, the year in which the park and Villa Reale became state owned. In 1920, it was passed to a consortium made up of the municipal authorities of Monza and Milan plus the Società Umanitaria. Authorisation to build the Autodromo Nazionale (racetrack) was granted in 1922.

Recent major regeneration work on the park includes the recovery of the Vedano hill landscape, the reinstatement of the Villa Reale optical telescope and the architectural restoration of the 19th-century Cascina Fontana, the central salon in Villa Mirabello, the neo-Gothic doorway in the Giardini Reali and the positioning, near Cascina Casalta, of the *Lo scrittore* (The Writer) sculpture by Gian-



Villa Reale in Monza, detail of the main block

carlo Neri (2005) and, between Cascina Cernuschi and the Valle dei Sospiri, the *La voliera per Umani* installation by Giuliano Mauri (2006).

The building of the greatest architectural and historic portent in the park, preceding its creation, is **Villa Reale**, constructed between 1777 and 1780

Queen Margherita

Margherita of Savoy Genoa (Turin, 1851-Bordighera, 1926) was the first Queen of Italy from 1878 to 1900. Daughter of Ferdinand, Duke of Genoa, the second son of Victor Emmanuel II, and Elisabeth of Saxony, she married her cousin, the hereditary prince Humbert, later King of Italy (Humbert I) in Turin on 22 April 1868. In 1869, she became the mother of Victor Emmanuel, future King of Italy.

Humbert I and the Regicide

Humbert of Savoy was born in Turin on 14 March 1844. He succeeded his father with the name of Humbert I in 1878. After two failed attempts, the first by Giovanni Passannante in Naples in 1878 and the second by Pietro Acciarito in Rome in 1897, he was assassinated in Monza on 29 July 1900 by the anarchist Gaetano Bresci, who wanted to avenge the repression of the popular uprisings in 1898. The king and queen had arrived in Monza for a holiday on 21 July. On 29, Humbert was asked to honour the closing ceremony of the athletic competition organised by the Forti e Liberi sports association with his presence. Around 10.30pm, the

sovereign was leaving the pavilion where the event had been held in an open carriage and without the protective steel mail he usually wore beneath his waistcoat because of the heat, to the applause of the crowd and with the band playing the royal march. Gaetano Bresci leapt forward holding a pistol and fired three shots in rapid succession. Humbert was hit in a shoulder, lung and heart and died soon afterwards. He was buried in the Pantheon (Rome). Bresci was tried on 29 August and sentenced to life imprisonment. He was closed in the prison of Santo Stefano where he was found hanged in his cell in May 1901.



The Villa Reale Roseto

The Villa Reale Rose Garden was created in 1963 in a space in front of the villa originally given over to the cultivation of citrus fruit at the wishes of the industrialist after whom it is now named, Niso Fumagalli.

Every year in May, the Roseto is the venue for a leading international competition that has since 1965 awarded prizes to the best roses, divided into several categories. The Roseto is open to visitors and boasts important specimens of old roses including the famous "Bella di Monza" created in the early 19th century, the "Chinensis" rose, introduced into Europe from China and that gave roses the previously unseen orangey-red colour, and the first Tea roses, thus named because traditionally said to have been brought to Europe on board ships transporting tea.

Info: Associazione italiana della Rosa – Roseto "Niso Fumagalli", tel. 039320994; www.airosa.it; e-mail: info@airosa.it

to a project by Giuseppe Piermarini as a holiday home for Archduke Ferdinand, son of the Empress Maria Theresa and Governor of Habsburg Lombardy. The structure, in monumental Neoclassical style, has the traditional horseshoe layout ending in avant-corps which flank a ceremonial courtyard. The avant-corps on the left houses a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, decorated with works by Giocondo Albertolli and Giuliano Traballesi; the one on the right contains the riding school. Neoclassical alterations most notably include the decoration of the **Rotonda**, frescoed by Andrea Appiani with a cycle on *Cupid and Psyche*. The complex retained its function during the French occupation, housing first Napoleon himself and then Viceroy Eugène Beauharnais. Further additions were the work of Luigi Canonica, designer of the **Teatrino di Corte**, constructed in the outhouses, originally intended to house the stables and kitchens and which also contained the **Serrone**, now an exhibition space. Adjacent to these is the **Roseto**, named after Niso Fumagalli, created in the old citrus garden in 1963. After Italian Unification, the Villa became King Humbert I's favourite residence.

The interiors conserve the apartments of the King and his consort Margherita and reflect the neo-baroque taste favoured by the sovereigns, who requested refurbishments entrusted to the architects Luigi Mainoni, Achille Tarantola and Villamarina. After the king's assassination (1900), the royal family abandoned the building, which is now the focus of a regeneration plan.



The Niso Fumagalli Roseto and the Villa Reale courtyard, where the entrance is situated



The façade of Villa Mirabello

The villa complex includes the Giardini Reali (royal gardens), separated from the rest of the park by a wall built with material salvaged from the ruins of the Visconti castle. Based on the “English garden” model, the gardens were enriched with grottos, small watercourses, a Doric-style templet beside a small lake, an artificial hill with paths and a neo-Gothic Visconti tower.

Leaving Villa Reale behind you, on the left side of the large avenue that forms its monumental entrance you will see the **Cappella Espiatoria** (1910), erected to a design by Giuseppe Sacconi on the spot where Humbert I was assassinated by the anarchist Gaetano Bresci on 29 July 1900. On the top of the structure is a tall stele embellished with the royal symbols. Above the entrance to the chapel is a *Pietà* by Ludovico Pogliaghi.

Leave the gardens and proceed along the paved road in front of the gate and you will come to Viale Mirabello, which leads to the villa of the same name.

Open Day in the Villas of Brianza

Villas in Brianza open their doors to visitors for an extraordinary day spent exploring this area's artistic and architectural treasures. The local villas, gardens, churches and castles provide Brianza with an attractive and sometimes still little-known heritage that lays bare the innermost soul of what is today one of the most developed industrial zones in Italy. In recent years, “Ville Aperte” has become quite an event, an unmissable date that takes people back to the roots of the new Province's identity. Every year, thousands of attending visitors confirm the success of this event, a prestigious cultural event for the new Province that also benefits from the High Patronage of the President of the Italian Republic.
Info: www.villeaperte.info



Relaxing in Monza Park, the great 'green lung' of the province



The wooded banks of the Lambro River in the Parco Reale di Monza

Villa Mirabello was constructed by the Durini family, on what is thought to have been the site of the De Leyva castle, to a design by Gerolamo Quadrio between 1656 and 1675. In or around 1768, Cardinal Angelo Maria Durini asked for the building – with horseshoe plan and two square towers – to be redesigned and enriched with frescoes, with the aim of creating a place of refined entertainment for prominent figures and men of letters. Guests included Giuseppe Parini (who dedicated an ode, *La gratitudine*, to the cardinal) and Metastasio. In Napoleonic times, his government incorporated it into the park. It now contains some habitation.

Out of interest

Farming in the park

The Società Agricola Colosio Giuseppe Luciano e Sergio, situated in Monza Park (via Molino S. Giorgio 17, tel. 039 302480) produces milk and organic cheeses. There is a milk booth for direct sales to the public and school students can visit the animals by appointment. The **Scuola Agraria del Parco di Monza** (Viale Cavriga 3, tel. 0392302979, fax 039325309, info@monzaflora.it, www.monzaflora.it, director Antonella Pacilli) is within the park boundaries and focuses on fruit and vegetables, bee-keeping, nursery gardening and composting. Barley, honey and ornamental plants can be purchased directly at the

special point of sale open from 8.30am to 12.30pm. It also organises courses on environmental subjects, gardening and ornamental plant management.



The Neoclassical Mulino del Cantone



Monza Park, Cascina Mulini Ascittuti

On the left side of the central block is the Riding Centre. To complete the Villa Mirabello scenario, Cardinal Durini had a second structure built on a natural terrace in 1776, **Villa Mirabellino**, designed by Giulio Galliori and linked by a hornbeam walk, of which some specimens have survived.

Along Viale Mirabellino you will encounter the Rationalist **RAI TV broadcasting complex**, with its large aerial, designed by Gio Ponti in 1952. Continue along this avenue past **Cascina S. Fedele**, visible to the right on high; built to a design by Canonica in 1805, it incorporated sculptures from the destroyed church of S. Maria in Brera in Milan. The building is one of a large number of *cascine* (farm complexes) built between the late 18th century and the early decades of the 19th century that enrich the park's heritage, along with some mills, the only one still in operation being that of **Cascina Mulini Ascittuti**.

The Park: numbers and info

Park ID

Surface area:
Villa Reale: 35 ha
Park: 685 ha
Grassy areas: 137 ha
Woods: 295 ha

Points of entry: 5
Surrounding walls: 13 km
Date of birth:
14 September 1805

Forest trees: 110,000
Bridges: 4
Stately villas: 3
Farms: 13
Mills: 3
Visitors/day: 60,000
(source P.I.M. May 1996)

Info Point

For any information regarding your location or the park's history, you can visit the Cascina Bastia (Porta di Monza entrance, Viale Brianza), open every day from 10am to 5.30pm. Info-line: 0392300009



Villa Reale seen from the Giardini Reali

The Monza Autodromo



Bird's eye view of the racetrack and the Formula 1 racing cars

The Autodromo, owned by the cities of Monza and Milan, was constructed in just 110 days in the year 1922 by a team of 3,500 workers at the request of the Automobile Club di Milano for the 25th anniversary of its foundation (1897). SIAS SpA (Società Incremento Automobilismo e Sport), federated to the Automobile Club d'Italia, was founded for the purpose and still manages the track. The architect Alfredo Rosselli and engineer Piero Purricelli's design was for a structure that could serve both competitive races and car and motorcycle testing.

The Autodromo was officially opened on 3 September 1922; it hosted the Gran Premio Motociclistico delle Nazioni on the following 8 September and the second Italian Grand Prix on 10 September. Since then, except during the war period and in a few other years (Livorno 1937; Milan 1947; Turin 1948; Imola 1980), the Italian



Grand Prix has always been raced on the Monza circuit.

The whole structure has been repeatedly modernised, mostly from WWI to the present day, to make sure it is at the cutting edge and one of the most demanding but also safest tracks for drivers. The Autodromo comprises a Grand Prix circuit (5793 m), a Junior circuit (2405 m) and a high-speed circuit (4250 m). Its crowd capacity is approx. 135,000 spectators, with approximately 75,000 seats.

It also comprises a large centre for leisure activities and non-motor sports. Every year it holds numerous track, cycling and other sports events as well as art and automobile/motorcycle fairs. It also offers spaces for meetings and music events. When not being used for testing or races, the track is open to visitors in cars or on motorcycles, bicycles (for hire), foot and roller-skates. Safe-driving courses run by professional instructors are of special social importance.

Existing amenities include an 18-hole golf course, a riding school and an indoor Olympionic swimming pool. The racetrack's camping site is hugely popular and situated in a clearing in the centre of the north section of Parco Reale. Info at: www.monzanet.it

Monza Plus

As everyone awaits the Formula 1 Grand Prix, numerous side events animate the city centre, always attracting thousands of visitors and spectators.

Motors are the core focus throughout the week in the Area Cambiaghi and piazza Castello with quad shows, safe-driving courses and the Go Kart, Mini Auto and Mini Moto tracks. The programme includes much **music and dancing** and caters for a mixed public in piazza Duomo and piazza Carrobiolo. Concerts by Italian and foreign artists and cabaret and theatrical performances brighten up the evenings in the city centre.

Ample space is given over to **sport** with 15 disciplines represented and numerous events held in the Villaggio dello Sport in piazza Cambiaghi, with the participation of the sports associations from the surrounding area.

Art, history and culture lovers can join guided tours to Monza attractions and attend the numerous book and photograph exhibitions with sports themes. **Info:** www.monzapiueventi.it



Spectators watching the start of the Italian Grand Prix

Parks in Brianza

In the 19th century, the abundance of green spaces in Brianza and the printed pictures illustrating its scenery earned the region the name “the garden of Lombardy”. Despite the very dense industrialisation and urbanisation that affected the area in the 20th century, it conserves remarkable nature areas, now organised into the Parchi di Monza e Brianza system. This is a “network” along the lines of those already created in other parts of Europe in which several bodies work together to promote nature, culture and tourism in protected areas. The system offers all potential users a map of the environmental resources and numerous initiatives promoted by the governing bodies, a single ticket to all the parks and an easy guide for nature-loving visitors. The “system”



Monza Park, the largest walled park in Europe



A cycle path in the Groane Park

comprises two regional parks, the Valle del Lambro Park, which includes Monza's famous Parco Reale (Royal Park), and the Groane Park, plus other important spaces of municipal and intermunicipal importance.

Regional Parks

Groane Park. The Groane is a zone of enormous geological and botanical interest with woods and vast heathlands as its main features. The clayey terrain favoured the establishment of quarries and furnaces and some *vie del mattone* theme routes have been signposted to both quarries and old furnaces. The huge area is home to numerous stately homes (17th-19th cent.). See p. 38 for information.

Valle del Lambro Park. This stretches for approximately 25 kilometres from Monza to Erba along the Lambro River. The crucial role played by the river is demonstrated by the presence of 31 old mills. The park area features hugely different habitats that do, however, share a strong imprint left by humans and their work. There are important woods of false acacia, hornbeam, common oak, alder and ash trees. Thanks to the variety of habitats, fauna is highly diversified, especially as concerns birds. The park also comprises **Monza Park** (the largest walled park in Europe, spread over 65 ha), which embraces several Brianza centres including, as well as Monza, Biassono, Veduggio al Lambro, Villasanta and Lesmo.

The Oasi Lipu in Cesano Maderno



The Lipu (Italian league for the birds protection) Oasis was established in 1997 thanks to the joint collaboration of Lipu, the city of Cesano Maderno and the Consorzio Parco delle Groane and extends over a surface area comprising approximately 100 ha of woods, moorland and wetlands set close to a highly urbanised and industrialised area. A network of paths indicated by stones and Lipu signs and a pedestrian-cycle path take visitors through the three areas that constitute the Oasis. A raised observation point and specially constructed hides along the routes allow birdwatching. Since 2003 it has featured the Centro di Formazione ed Educazione Ambientale, an educational centre dedicated to the ecologist Alex Langer and an example of sustainable architecture all in timber and with solar and photovoltaic panels for heating. The centre offers disabled access and contains a conference room, educational workshops and a space set aside for an environmental library. The centre organises numerous activities, from training courses for lecturers and environmental operators to educational routes for school visits and recreational pastimes for young children. For further details visit: www.oasicesanomaderno.it



Children and animals in the Grugnotorto Villoresi Park

Established in 1805-1806 by Napoleon Bonaparte for his stepson, Viceroy Eugène de Beauharnais, it comprises valuable landscapes, Villa Reale, Villa Mirabello and Villa Mirabellino, an important body of farm complexes and mills and the famous Autodromo. See pp. 25 and 76 for information.

Extramunicipal parks

Brughiera Briantea Park. This lies between Meda and Como and has one of the largest forests on the Lombard plain. Its clayey ground led to the development of an industry to extract and process the clay. The abandoned quarries now contain several small lakes.



New woods in the Brianza Centrale Park

Brianza Centrale Park. A city park that runs around the city of Seregno and is nearly all farmland. The park has several green spaces, the largest being the Meredo Farming Park and the 2 Giugno alla Porada Park, covering 70 and 50 hectares respectively.

Colli Briantei Park. This lies between the Valle del Lambro and Molgora parks and comprises the first hilly reliefs (*pianalti*) in eastern Brianza. It is a major link in the provincial eco network.

Valletta Park. Lying between the Montecchia and Valle del Lambro parks, this features charming scenery peculiar to the upper Lombard plain, notably morainic hills dating from the Quaternary

age formed by the Adda glacier. The park is named after both the feature of its lowlying area and an irrigation ditch of the same name (a tributary of the Bevera) that runs through it from north to west. The presence of several habitats attracts quite a variety of animal species.

Molgora Park. The protected areas in the Molgora Park, which now extends over approximately 1,000 ha, have a steeply vertical development given its close relationship with the River Molgora that flows through the northeast Milanese area from north to south. The park is run by a consortium of all the concerned municipalities. As well as safeguarding and promoting nature, the park also fosters knowledge of the area and its historical, cultural and scenic value.

Rio Vallone Park. This is spread over a total surface area of 480 ha along the river it is named after, the Rio Vallone. The vegetation is extremely rich and the fauna diversified, with 13 species of micromammals, including the dormouse and harvest mouse.

Grugnotorto Villoresi Park. This acts as a link between the Nord Milano, Groane and Valle del Lambro parks and alternates cultivated fields and working farms with green spaces. It has a lake, split in two with one half used for angling and



Top, a rabbit in the Groane Park; above, a woodpecker in the Oasi Lipu of Cesano Maderno



A bike outing in the Grugnotorto Villoresi Park



The Valletta Park

the other as a habitat for moorhens, ducks, geese, wild swans and herons.

Cavallera Park (in preparation). Established by Arcore, Concorezzo, Monza, Villasanta and Vimercate, this occupies an area of 650 ha and takes its name from the old Cascina Cavallera, in the park. It features a strong farming vocation and the presence of numerous evenly distributed rural *cascine* (farms) of very old origin.

Media Valle del Lambro Park. Established in 2002, this has a surface area of 114 ha and is on the territory of Brugherio and Cologno Monzese.

Parco Est delle Cave (in preparation). This extends over a surface area of 573 ha, predominantly farmland, and is spread over the Milanese municipalities of Carugate, Cernusco sul Naviglio, Cologno Monzese and Vimodrone, and Brianza's Brugherio. There is a large presence of quarries, one of which, that of the Increa Park, has been regenerated for leisure purposes.

Park details

Brianza Centrale Park

Headquarters c/o Seregno municipality, via Umberto I 78; tel. 0362263308, 0362263332; website: www.parcobrianzacentrale.it; e-mail: info.parcobrianzacentrale@seregno.info, info.urbanisticaqualificazione@seregno.info

Brughiera Briantea Park

Headquarters c/o Lentate sul Seveso municipality, via Matteotti 8; tel. 0362515203; website: www.parcobrughiera.it; e-mail: parcobrughiera@libero.it

Grugnotorto Villosi Park

Headquarters c/o Town Hall, via Grandi 15, Paderno Dugnano; tel. 0291004369; website: www.comune.paderno-dugnano.mi.it/grugnotorto/; e-mail: grugnotorto@comune.paderno-dugnano.mi.it

Molgora Park

Headquarters c/o via Roma 5, Burago Molgora; tel. 0396612944; website:

www.parcomolgora.it; e-mail: info@parcomolgora.it

Rio Vallone Park

Headquarters c/o Cavenago Brianza, Cascina S. Sofia 1 (open Mondays and Thursdays 4-6pm); tel. 0295335235; website: www.parcoriovallone.it; e-mail: info@parcariovallone.it

Valletta Park

Associazione Amici della Valletta, website: www.lavalletta.org; e-mail: amicidellavalletta@yahoo.it

Colli Briantei Park

Headquarters c/o Camparada municipality, piazza Municipio 1, tel. 039698541; website: www.parcocollibriantei.it; e-mail: info@parcocollibriantei.it

Cavallera Park

Headquarters not yet established. Website: www.parchivimercatese.brianzaest.it; e-mail: parchivimercatese@brianzaest.it

Brugherio

Website: www.comune.brugherio.mi.it

Pro Loco Brugherio: via Vittorio Veneto 13

Distance from Monza: 5 km. Distance from Milan: 16 km

Map reference: E 4

This town lies southeast of Monza, to the left of the road to Vimercate, and is now a major industrial settlement known thanks to its electrical-appliance production. The place name stems from “*brugherio*”, a heather-like shrub that appears in the Brugherio coat-of-arms and adapts well to the clayey terrain typical of the area. The oldest written record on the area is found in St. Ambrose’s “Martiriologio” (374 AD). The seat of a prominent Benedictine monastery of early medieval foundation and made the fief of the Seccoborella family in the 15th century, it became a municipality in 1866 with the annexation of the Bindellera, Casecca, Gelos a, Increa and Occhiate farm complexes and the villages of S. Damiano, Cascina Baraggia and Moncucco, previously autonomous territorial bodies and with partially different histories.

Old places of worship abound in the municipality. The **parish church of S. Bartolomeo**, consecrated by St. Charles Borromeo in 1578 and repeatedly altered, conserves relics of the Three Kings that are displayed on the Epiphany every year. It was strongly remoulded in the 18th century and in the middle of the next century with the intervention of Giacomo Moraglia, who designed its dome.



The parish church of S. Bartolomeo



The Relics of the Three Kings

The relics were initially taken to Constantinople by St. Helena. Constantine later gave them to Archbishop Eustorgio of Milan and they were conserved in a city basilica named after him. Removed by Frederick I Barbarossa in 1164 and taken to Cologne, only in the 20th century were some of the relics returned. According to tradition, St. Ambrose gave the relics of three phanxes belonging to the Wisemen to his sister Marcellina who owned property in the Brugherio area. On her death, they were given to the Milanese diocese. A Benedictine convent was founded on this site, named after St. Ambrose, and conserved the holy remains, which were then moved to the parish church of S. Bartolomeo at the request of Archbishop Federico Borromeo in 1613.

Brugherio Celebrates

The **Festa Paesana di S. Damiano** (town fête of St. Damiano) is organised in June by the traders' association with the backing of the local council office for trade. It features jugglers, a band concert and markets offering opportunities to taste local dishes and have fun at the evening dances.

The second or third Sunday in September brings the traditional **Festa delle Occhiate** (Occhiate Festival) at the Cascina di Occhiate with assorted entertainment for the public and a chance to taste wholesome culinary specialities in keeping with the tradition of the *Cascina* (farm) and the mill it serves.

On the second Sunday in October the **Festa Patronale della Madonna del SS. Rosario e di S. Bartolomeo** (Feast of the Patron Saint of the Madonna of the Holy Rosary and St. Bartholomew) comprises religious celebrations, local culinary specialities, markets and a fun fair sponsored by the Brugherio office for trade.



Inside S. Ambrogio



The chapel of S. Lucio, beside Villa Sormani

The internal decoration dates from the final decades of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century and is the work of Giovanni Viltorta of Milan, Enrico Mariola of Piedmont and Vittorio Granchi of Milan. The **Cascina S. Ambrogio**, linked traditionally to St. Marcellina, sister of St. Ambrose, became a monastery of Benedictine nuns after the 10th century, flanked by a church that is still standing. Despite some alterations, the structure of the *Cascina* was never radically altered. The present **church of S. Ambrogio** was restored in 1886. The brick façade is in Lombard Romanesque style and the building contains fine works of art and two 14th-century frescoes.

The **church of S. Anna**, in the hamlet of San Damiano, formed part of the now lost Villa Viganoni-Benaglia, and dates from 853 AD. The present building is an 18th-century construction. The **church of S. Margherita**, in the hamlet of Baraggia, is also of old foundation but baroque in appearance, like the oratory of the Beata Vergine of Cascina Guzzina and the church of Cascina Increa.

Noteworthy civil buildings include **Palazzo Ghirlanda Silva**, now the home of the town library and an example of 18th-century Neoclassical architecture. A stately residence owned by Count Scotti, it has been in existence since the 16th century. After coming into the ownership of Marquis Silva, it passed

to the Ghirlanda family in Milan, members of which sold it in 1872 to the town of Brugherio, which turned it into a school and municipal offices.

The hamlet of Moncucco features the 18th-century **Villa Bolognos Sormani Andreani**. A round 1820, at the recommendation of Giocondo Albertoli, Count Gianmario Andreani had some Renaissance architectural structures of an oratory threatened with demolition transported from Lugano and these are now the chapel of S. Lucio. A considerable undertaking for the times, Albertoli completed the construction with a portico and a flight of steps.

Villa Fiorita was founded in the 18th century on pre-existing outbuildings by Count Scotti and passed, in 1778, to Gaspare Ghirlanda before later being turned into a clinic for nervous disorders. The painter Filippo De Pisis lived there, using the conservatory annexed to the complex as his studio.

The **Museo Galbiati** is spread over three floors and conserves a collection of approximately 150 bicycles dating from 1790 to 1950; a collection of 250 barrel organs and accordions; a collection of more than 250 phonographs and gramophones; more than 10,000 records in a vast array of types; and 400 “mysterious objects” and work tools.

The Mulino di Occhiate

This structure is one of the oldest in the province of Milan and was built in or around the year One thousand. It is a cereal mill with two wheels, one wood and the other metal. It employs water from the Molinara or Mornera irrigation ditch, generated by the Lambro River and then returned to it, which just touches the Cologno Monzese area. Today, it serves educational purposes.



The Villa Fiorita Park



Villa Bolognos Sormani Andreani viewed from the garden

Western Brianza

its stately homes and its monasteries

Until the mid-17th century the western section of what is today's province presented features typical of many parts of Lombardy: a dense medieval network of religious buildings; early 16th-century embellishments; a systematic restyling commenced in the late 16th century; and the gradual conversion of medieval fortresses and houses to 16th-century mansions. The most salient moments in this long history are the amazing 14th-century frescoes in S. Stefano in Lentate sul Seveso and the remains of those (now in Brera) of the nearby and coeval Mocchirolo; the 15th-century *Crucifixion* in Villa Clerici, also in Lentate; the Renaissance frescoes in S. Damiano in Cogliate; the large 15th-16th century complex of S. Vitore in Meda, with a *Pietà* by Andrea da Milano, the huge frescoed cycle and the 17th-century altarpiece by Cerano; the Luini-style fresco in Barlassina; the 16th-century cycle of Ss. Rocco e Sebastiano in Seregno; and the 16th-17th century reconstruction of the sanctuary of Lazzate.

The reconstruction of Palazzo Arese (later Borromeo) in Cesano Maderno commenced in 1652 was a crucial achievement in Lombard art: the huge palazzo belonging to Bartolomeo III Arese, president of the Senate in Milan and of the Consejo de Italia in Madrid, constitutes a microcosm in which political needs, cultural development trends and the latest artistic fashions came together in the name of a strong scientific and naturalistic



interest and close links with the Roman classicism mediated by the Ambrosiana Academy in Milan. The organisation of the mansion regenerated the whole city with its garden and wide driveway marked by buildings. A model capital, Cesano became a paradigm for dozens of other buildings in the State of Milan, built for the members of the Arese guild, and specific spaces such as the Sala dei Fasti Romani, the Galleria Sapienziale and the nymphaeum remained models for decades. The religious world of this moment saw the reconstruction, at the request of Arese, of the sanctuary of S. Pietro Martire al Faro in Seveso: this place of worship on the site of the martyrdom of the Dominican inquisitor became a classicist church

After Cesano, the culture of the villa characterised the area: the 18th-century examples of Villa Volta Sannazzaro in Lentate (with frescoes by the Tiepolo-style artist M. Bortoloni) and Villa Crivelli al Mombello in Limbiate; the Functionalism of Villa Agnesi in Varedo, home of the scientist M. Gaetana and under renovation; the Neoclassical episodes of Villa Antona Traversi in Meda and Villa Traversi Tittoni in Desio, later converted to one of the very first neo-Gothic complexes in Europe; the Italian Liberty style of Villa Bagatti Valsecchi in Varedo and Villa Ponticelli in Nova Milanese; the Rationalism of Villa Bianca in Seregno, by G. Terragni. On the religious front came significant episodes: the neo-Romanesque Benedictine complex in Seregno; the neo-Renaissance solemnity of the basilica in Desio; and Spirito Maria Chiappetta's passage from the neo-Gothic style seen in S. Stefano Nuovo in Cesano Maderno to the Rationalism of S. Valeria in Seregno.



To learn more

Parco delle Groane

The Groane Park extends over a surface area of approximately 3,400 ha and cuts vertically across 16 municipalities, northwest of the city of Milan. The area is served by a dense network of foot and cycle paths (running to more than 35 km), picnic areas and nature trails. Headquarters: Solaro, via della Polveriera 2 (open Mondays and Wednesday-Friday 9am-noon; Tuesdays 2.30-4.30pm); tel. 029698141; website: www.parcogroane.it; e-mail: info@parcogroane.it

Istituto per la Storia dell'Arte Lombarda (ISAL)

Established in 1967, this is a non-profit free cultural association that promotes, furthers and backs research into the Lombard figurative and architectural production, circulating the results with conferences and publications. The operational base of the institute is in the Neoclassical wing of Palazzo Arese Jacini, also the Town Hall: piazza Arese 12, tel. 0362528118; website: www.istitutoartelombarda.org

Università San Raffaele

Following an agreement drawn up between the Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele and the town of Cesano Maderno, Palazzo Arese Borromeo now houses the teaching activities of the Faculty of Philosophy, including a degree course in philosophy and a specialist degree course in philosophy of the mind and person, city and history. Info: www.unisr.it



Lazzate

Municipal website: www.lazzate.com

Pro Loco Lazzate: via Volta 8. Website: www.prolocolazzate.it

E-mail: info@prolocolazzate.it Distance from Monza: 21 km

Distance from Milan: 29 km. Map reference: C 2

Crossed by the Guisa River, this town lies on the westernmost edge of the province of Monza and adjoins Lentate sul Seveso. The site is thought to have been a holiday area of the patricians in Roman times. The first written document mentioning it is, however, the 13th-century *Liber notitiae Sanctorum Mediolani* by Goffredo da Bussero, which records the existence of the **church of S. Lorenzo**, rebuilt in 1758 and then extended again in the 20th century, like the other important religious construction in Lazzate, the **Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine di Caravaggio**. Modern documents record the successive passages of the feud



The church of S. Lorenzo

Lazzate celebrates

The third week in September brings the **Sagra della Patata e Mercatino d'Autunno** (Potato Festival and Autumn Fair), an event organised by the local council and the "Borgo in Festa" association and based on a respect for and promotion of traditions and a passion for the fruits of the earth. It is held in the streets of the old town centre and the central piazza Giovanni XXIII; the Sagra della Patata restaurant is set up beneath a tensile structure and welcomes guests for tastings of an array of potato-based dishes. The fine food is accompanied by music performances and cabaret.

from the Missaglia to the Biraghi families, the latter having, in the late 15th century, constructed a residence that is still standing (private property) but radically restyled in the 18th century. It was then passed on to the Carcassola family which, from 1626, shared the seigniorship with the Arese family, whose presence is commemorated in the municipal coat-of-arms, featuring the bird's right wing that comes from the arms of this leading noble family.

A painting in vicolo Madonna commemorates a brutal cholera epidemic in the 19th century. After Italian Unification, Lazzate was incorporated into the district of Monza and lost its municipal autonomy when it was annexed to Misinto. It became an autonomous municipality once more in 1905. It recently embarked on a major regeneration project in the **via Volta** and **piazza Giovanni XXIII** area that supplements aesthetic improvements such as the construction of a fountain featuring plays of water and an artificial lake and river along the perimeter of the square evoking the old irrigation ditch, with technological ones. Part of the municipal territory falls within the Parco Naturale Regionale delle Groane (Groane park) and this green space can be explored on foot, cycle and equestrian paths. The itineraries include one to the so-called **Roccolo di Lazzate**, an old bird hunting spot now a wood of oak, hornbeam trees and extensive moorland.

Alessandro Volta, an illustrious guest



Not far from the parish church in Lazzate stands the house that Alessandro Volta (1745-1827) inherited from his relatives of the Stampa family. A plaque commemorates the scientist's sojourns and the tradition that says it was here that he invented the electric battery (1800), which appears in the centre of the municipal coat-of-arms. Documents state that Volta conducted experiments in the presence of the local country people. The aforementioned plaque also says that the scientist introduced the cultivation of a certain variety of potato on his return from a stay in Switzerland.



Lazzate, the house where Alessandro Volta stayed

Misinto

Municipal website: www.misinto.info

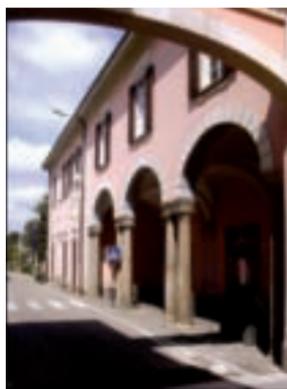
Pro Loco Misinto: via Rovellasca 2. **E-mail:** dimitrilongoni@libero.it

Distance from Monza: 22 km. **Distance from Milan:** 29 km

Map reference: C 2

The Roman origins of this municipality, part of which falls within the Parco Naturale Regionale delle Groane (Groane park), have been confirmed by the discovery of Roman coins at Fornace and vases and amphoras dating from the first centuries after Christ at Cascina Nuova (1961). The centre is mentioned in a document dated 926 AD. In modern times, it was the feud of the Carcassola family, which then shared the seigniory with the Arese family (1626). Local nobles include the Birago, Solaro and Vimercati families. The 17th-century **parish church of S. Siro** (1610-1640) was extended in 1894, when the crypt dedicated to the Crucifix was also constructed. Inside, it conserves a Neoclassical marble altar (1796) sculpted by Nazario Fossati di Arzo and some 17th-18th century paintings from the Brera Gallery. In the old town centre, see **Palazzo Maggi**, now the Town Hall, of 14th-15th century origin and purchased by Carlo Ambrogio Maggi in 1810 from Ermenegildo Vimercati, who sold all his property, including large estates. The Maggi family was responsible for the decorations in the building. **Villa Riva** was probably built by the Solaro family, recorded from the 16th century. In 1793, ownership passed to Antonia Francesconi, wife of Zaccaria Riva. In 1947, the complex was purchased by the Lanzani family of Seveso and the park was subsequently opened to the public. The **Parco delle Rimembranze** features a splendid *Pietà* by Mauro Conconi.

The hamlet of Cascina Nuova is home to the late-16th century **church of S. Bernardo**. The numerous foot and cycle paths in the park area notably include those between Cascina Nuova and Cascina S. Andrea, where the so-called **Boschi di S. Andrea** abounding with Scots pine trees, are situated.



Palazzo Maggi



The dome of S. Siro

Cogliate

Municipal website: www.comunedicogliate.it
Distance from Monza: 20 km. **Distance from Milan:** 27 km
Map reference: D 2



Cogliate lies in the west of the province of Monza. Unlike other towns in the area, no archaeological artefacts from Roman times or previous times have been discovered here. The first written document recording its existence dates from 996 AD. At the time, “Colliate” was a settlement of Benedictine nuns named after St. Dalmazio. Farming was its primary activity and a document dated 1188 states that the tithes were paid in fruits of the earth such as pulses, wine, linen, turnips, walnuts, chestnuts and lupins. In the second half of the 15th century, the church of the Benedictine convent, by then in decline, was rebuilt, named after St. John the Baptist and conferred with the title of parish church. From 1538 to 1734, Cogliate was the feud of the Carcassola family. Subsequently, like Ceriano, it was inherited by the Castellani-Varzi family. The Benedictine convent was suppressed during the Napoleonic occupation and the complex was purchased by a certain Isimbaldi of Ceriano, who turned it into a farm estate, although a small chapel was retained on the site. Subsequently, the assets passed to the Fatebenefratelli charitable institution. In the late 18th century, the mulberry growing silkworm



S. Damiano, detail of the frescoes in the apse



Inside the church of S. Damiano



S. Damiano, frescoes in the chapel of the Madonna

breeding, already recorded in Sforza times, were further augmented and became distinguishing local businesses. In 1869, Cogliate was united with the municipalities of Solaro and Ceriano, becoming autonomous again in 1919.

The **church of S. Damiano**, south of the town, dates from at least the 14th century. It conserves frescoes dated to the 15th and 16th centuries in the apse and the decoration of the chapel of the Madonna dates from the 16th century. The chapel of the Sacra Famiglia has a 17th-century structure and stuccowork from the following century. The figures of *St. Anthony* and *St. Sebastian* at the sides of the main altar, painted by the artist De Micheli of Saronno, date from 1832. Not far from the building is the **Foppa di S. Damiano**, a small pool of rainwater.

The area forms part of the Parco Naturale Regionale delle Groane and this green space can be explored on foot, cycle and equestrian paths. The northeast features oak woods and southeast of the town there are pine groves and farmland. The moorland landscape extends towards Barlassina (centre-north). Inside the park, along via Piave, is the **Fornace Pizzi**, active from 1924 to 1971 and now an industrial archaeology complex serving for educational purposes.

Ceriano Laghetto

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

Pro Loco Ceriano Laghetto: via Cadorna 10. Tel.: 0296469011

Website: www.prolococerianolaghetto.it E-mail: prolococerianolaghetto@gmail.com

Distance from Monza: 18 km. Distance from Milan: 25 km. Map reference: D 2



Patron saints' celebrations



The last week in August brings the **St. Victor's Day**, packed with events, religious celebrations, a fireworks display and evening dancing.

The second week in September is the turn of the **St. Michael's Day**, in the hamlet of Dal Pozzo. On the first Sunday in May they hold the **Straceriano** non-competitive foot race.



The Ceriano lake

The town centre is crossed by the Guisa River and lies west of the Parco Naturale Regionale delle Groane. The presence of a village with the names of *Cerollianum* and *Cerellianum* is recorded in the area at least from 1083. In the 13th century, the Humiliati order founded a convent here. In 1538 the town was given in feud to the Carcassola family who built their home here. During the 17th century, feudal rights were shared with the Arese family and the local lords in the 18th century included Marchese Fagniano and the Pusterla family. In 1869, it was united with the towns of Solaro and Cogliate, not becoming autonomous again until 1919. In the second half of the 19th century factories producing paints, bricks, wheels and artificial silk developed in the area. In 1944, Ceriano's railway and powder magazine were subjected to heavy machine-gun fire. The **Tur** is one of the oldest buildings in Ceriano and its entrance bears the date 1570. **Villa Carcassola**, the Town Hall, also dates from the 16th century. The **parish church of S. Vittore** was rebuilt in the early 20th century and consecrated in 1909; the old church, dating from the 13th century, was demolished in 1914. The aisles were added in 1934.

North of the lake that gives its name to the town, on a clayey plateau, is an oak wood that surrounds a large orchard of pear trees. This is home to important bird species such as the honey buzzard and the ordinary buzzard. The area south of the lake is dotted with pools and continues to feature oak trees and a pine grove. Further south it becomes moorland where the former powder magazine stands, now the park headquarters. The area is crossed by foot and cycle trails and an equestrian path.

Barlassina

Municipal website: www.comunebarlassina.it
Distance from Monza: 17 km. **Distance from Milan:** 25 km
Map reference: C 3

Barlassina stands on the right bank of the Seveso River. A former feud of the Arese family, it then passed to Count Rezzonico and the Porro family. Until the mid-19th century the town kept gaining importance and becoming the main town in a district comprising also Desio and Seregno. After Italian Unification it lost its autonomy, which was regained in 1901. For more than a century now, it has been internationally renowned for its craft production in the furniture sector.

The **parish church of S. Giulio d'Orta**, originally dating from the 12th century, was rebuilt between 1613 and 1623 and then extended in the 19th century. The chapel of the Madonna dell' Aiuto (1527) conserves a fresco linked to Bernardino Luini but more probably by his school (*Madonna and Child*, known as the Madonna dell' Aiuto, with St. John the Baptist and St. Antonio Abate, left, and St. Martin and St. Lawrence, right), and baroque stuccowork. **Palazzo Rezzonico**, now the Town Hall, has a central block of 16th-century foundation. Several rooms are embellished with frescoed coffered ceilings; it conserves



Cursa di Asnitt

Every year in September (week before the third Sunday in the month) they organise the *Cursa di Asnitt*, a sort of donkey palio race between the local districts of Monteù, L' aqua colda, Fameta, Pulenta and Parieu, Lo uett, Cascina Santa Maria, Fabricun, Burghett. Each district races a donkey and jockey.



The exterior and a detail of the interior of Palazzo Rezzonico, now the Town Hall



The Luini-style fresco in the parish church of S. Giulio

busts and a bas-relief depicting Pope Clement XIII, previously known as Carlo Rezzonico.

The 20th-century architecture notably includes the buildings of the primary and junior high schools in via Colombo. Constructed in 1934 and 1960 by Mario Asnago and Claudio Vender, respectively, these mark the passage from the early to late Rationalism. They also built the nearby Casa Vegni in via Trento 12. Palazzo della Cassa Rurale e Artigiana, the work of Franco Asnaghi and Dario Caini, dates from 1978.

The entire west section of the municipality forms part of the Parco Naturale Regionale delle Groane. The “ex Tiro a Segno” area is a venue for summer events and a cycle path links the town to the S. Andrea woods, passing by farmland and through wooded areas.

Curious facts

Artists in Barlassina

Barlassina has been the birthplace of leading painters, architects and sculptors from the second half of the 19th century to contemporary times, the best known being **Emilio Longoni** (1859-1932). After training at the Brera Academy, he became a strongly committed painter in his choice of subjects and themes with a social content. After becoming close to pointillism, he progressively manifested a spiritual and symbolist inspiration, especially in his landscapes. **Mario Asnago** (1896-1981) was an architect active from 1923 on and worked for more than 40 years with **Claudio Vender** (Milan, 1904-1986). The two professionals produced a large body of work in Barlassina, including the chapel of Morandi (1935), Villa Vegni (1956), Villa Conti (1959), the extension of the Scuole Elementari (1961-1964), the Scuole Medie (1965-1970) and a small villa in via Rossini, now partially altered (1969). **Valentino Vago** (1931) was known as the “painter of light” and, in the last 15 years, also focused on painting murals; in 1978-1979 he decorated the premises of the Cassa Rurale e Artigiana (now Banca di Credito Cooperativo) in Barlassina.

This first major work was followed by many more and, in 1981-82, he frescoed the octagon and presbytery of the church of S. Giulio; in 1992, the chapel of the Casa di Riposo Luigi Porro and the foyer and conference room of the Scuole Elementari; and, in 2006, the new wing of the municipal cemetery. **Beatrice Angela Cazzaniga** (1940), who moved to Argentina with her family in 1950, graduated in Sculptural Arts from the Faculty of Art, Philosophy and Letters of Tucumàn State university (1967-1970), later becoming a professor of Sculpture and an active member of the American Institute of Art. She has received numerous regional and national prizes and awards for her sculptures. **Claudio Borghi** (1954), who teaches Sculptural Arts at the Liceo Artistico in Busto Arsizio and works with the Scuola Civica di Arti Visive in Pavia, has participated in numerous national and international exhibitions. In Barlassina, he has created a large sculpture in the park for the Banca di Credito Cooperativo, the Monument to the Fallen of all Wars and the baptismal font in the parish church.

Lentate sul Seveso

Municipal website: www.comune.lentatesulseveso.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 19 km. **Distance from Milan:** 25 km
Map reference: C 2

Situated on the main Giovi road this comprises the main town and the four hamlets of Camnago, Birago, Cinnago and Copreno. In Middle Age Lentate, Copreno and part of Camnago came under the influence of the Milanese monastery of S. Simpliciano (12th cent.); Cinnago, a former possession of the Bovio family (10th-11th cent.), ended up under the control of the monastery of Meda (11th-12th cent.). From the 11th century, Birago was controlled by the family of the same name. From the second half of the 14th century on, Lentate saw the presence, of the Porro family. In the 17th century, the Casnedi and Clerici families started to play a prominent role. In the 19th century, the Raimondi family was active in the uprisings of the Risorgimento. In 1862, Lentate, Camnago and Copreno were combined in the single municipality of Lentate sul Seveso.

The **Oratory of S. Stefano** occupies a prominent position on the 14th-century Lombard painting scene, updated to please the court of Milan and attentive to the circulation of Giotto models, renewed by Giovanni da Milano. It was commissioned in 1360 by Stefano Porro. The architectural structure is bound



The Oratory of S. Stefano

Visits and some guided tours are organised by the Associazione Amici dell'Arte, with advance booking required for groups. November-March, Sundays 2.30-4.30pm; guided tours 2.30 and 3.30pm. April-October: Sundays 10am-noon and 3-5pm; guided tours at 10 and 11 am, 3 and 4pm. Closed in August. Info and booking: Associazione Amici dell'Arte, via Monte Santo 2, Camnago, tel. 366 4511175, www.amiciarte.it, prenota@amiciarte.it.



The oratory of S. Stefano (right, the Crucifixion) and the parish church in Lentate



The entrance to the Town Hall of Lentate sul Seveso

Lentate celebrates

Lentate sul Seveso and its four hamlets produce a busy annual calendar of initiatives and events. As well as the **patron saint's days** – 15 January – St. Mauro in Copreno, mid-July in Camnago, 26 July – St. Anna in Birago, third Sunday in October in Lentate – Camnago celebrates two major dates: the **Feast of St. Anthony of Padua**, in the first half of June, and the **Mostra Mercato della Zootecnia** (Livestock Fair), the first weekend in September, now a fixed event with displays of various animal species, gastronomy stands promoting local produce and workshops for young and old alike. The now regular initiatives that add to the Christmas and New Year festivities include the **Concerto d'Epifania** (Epiphany Concert), by the Corpo Musicale "G. Verdi" of Camnago, and the **Rogo della Giubiana** (bonfire) in Copreno, on the last Thursday in January.

to its decoration, partially linked to the painter Anovelo da Imbonate. The nave features *Stories from the Life of St. Stephen* and, among other frescoes, a *Crucifixion* in the back wall of the presbytery. Standing on the Mocchirolo hill is the 14th-century **Oratory** dedicated to the Madonna, commissioned by L. anfranco Porro. Most of the paintings, attributed to the artist Pietrino da Nova, were detached (1942-1943) and are now in the Brera Gallery. Recent restoration has uncovered friezes and Prophets *in situ*. In the main town, the **parish church of S. Vito** was reconstructed in 1839 by Gaetano Breij and extended in the 20th century. The paintings are by Alberto Bogani. **Villa Volta-Sannazzaro** was built in the late 16th century and extended in the 17th and 18th centuries; it contains Tiepolo-style frescoes partially linked to Mattia Bortoloni. **Villa Valdettaro** was built by Bartolomeo Marelli, the impresario of the La Scala theatre, in neo-Gothic style (1847). The garden (second half of the 19th cent.) is the work of Giuseppe Balzaretti. **Villa Raimondi** was built in 1630 and some rooms conserve baroque decorations. The coach house contains a collection of more than 6000 musical instruments. The **Oratory of S. Vincenzo** in Cimnago conserves a fresco of the *Madonna and Child*. The parish church of Ss. Quirico e Giulitta in Camnago (1567) has been greatly altered. In Copreno, **Villa Clerici** was built in 1650. The same family commissioned the late 17th-century **Sanctuary of S. Mauro**, built over pre-existing remains, and the reconstruction of the **Oratory of S. Francesco Saverio**. A 15th-century *Crucifixion* by the master L. anfranco da Lecco in the presbytery is surrounded by baroque decorations. The funeral monument of Paolo Clerici is the work of Vincenzo Vela and Marchese Giorgio, protagonist of the Cinque Giornate in 1848 is buried there. The **parish church of S. Alessandro** was commenced in 1570. In Birago, **Villa Mirabello** (1756) was by Gabriele Verri as a hunting lodge. The family set up a spinning mill beside it. The **chapel of the Madonna del Rosario** was commissioned by the Casnedi family.

Meda

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

Pro Loco Meda: via Udine c/o Palameda. **Tel.:** 3347005062

Website: www.promeda.it **E-mail:** info@promeda.it

Distance from Monza: 16 km. **Distance from Milan:** 26 km. **Map reference:** C 3

Meda lies at the bottom of the first foothills in Brianza and since its origins its history has been bound to that of the monastery of S. Vittore. Tradition says that, in the 8th century, Aimo and Vermondo, Counts of Turbigo, were on a hunting expedition in Brianza and chased by wild boars to a place where a church dedicated to St. Victor the Martyr stood. There, they found “two splendidly large bay trees” to climb up and grateful for their close escape, decided to build a new convent there. The oldest record of the monastery dates from 851 AD. Extremely rich, it held authority – reiterated in 1024 by Emperor Henry II – over a vast area comprising Meda and some of the neighbouring towns and villages. The town originated as a cluster of houses under the nuns’ control; it was fortified and after the year 1000 gained considerable importance, becoming a famous market town. In 1496, Meda,



The parish church of S. Maria Nascente



The church of S. Vittore

Fish and dancing

In the second and third week in July, they hold the traditional **Sagra del Pesce** (fish festival) in the centre of Meda, in via Icmesa. For two weekends, the organisers serve fine fish dishes that are accompanied by dancing in group or couples.

The C.F.P Terragni

The Centro di Formazione Professionale Giuseppe Terragni was set up in the second half of the 19th century as a municipal arts and crafts school to support and update the training of local craftsmen. Although the school has had to renew itself constantly over the years to meet work-market demands, it has not abandoned its main purpose and has remained a training centre of new generations for local businesses. Its main aim is to train professional figures that can operate in the conservation and restoration of the artistic heritage, particularly the restoration of polychrome and wood works. The courses of Autocad and Cad/Cam and on the restoration of old furniture and wood reveal a focus on the innovative dynamics of the work world. The courses held at the C.F.P. Terragni in Meda include work experience and vocational days with local businesses and are run in collaboration with Milan Polytechnic and, as concerns worksite activities, the heritage services. The C.F.P. focuses on wood-working and furniture production and represents one of the leading breeding grounds of cabinet makers, wood carvers, furniture decorators and upholsterers in Lombardy.

Info: www.cfpmeda.it



Piazza Vittorio Veneto, the heart of Meda's old town centre

which formed part of the lands of the State of Milan, was host to a meeting between Maximilian of Habsburg and the Duke of Milan, Ludovico il Moro, before the delegates of the leading Italian States and the Pope's Legate. The late 18th century brought the end of the old monastery, which had escaped the suppressions imposed by the Emperor Joseph II of Habsburg but did not survive those of Napoleon. On 29 May 1798, the nuns were evicted, the convent suppressed and all its assets put up for auction. In the 19th century, Meda gained considerable importance in the field of hand-crafted furniture and the town is still the hub of a production that is famous the world over.

The old town centre is dominated by the spectacular **piazza Vittorio Veneto** lined by the buildings of the greatest historical and visitor interest. The **church of S. Vittore**, the heart of the Benedictine nuns' monastery, now presents its classicist 16th-century appearance, with a vast cycle of frescoes, in part by Bernardino Luini and his school, closely resembling that of the Milanese Monastero Maggiore, and a *Pietà* sculpted by Andrea da Milano (the main sculptor in the Sanctuary of Saronno). Inside, the church conserves precious remains of grotesque decorations. The most significant painted works include ones by Giulio Campi and the altarpiece on the main altar by Giovanni Battista Crespi, known as Cerano (1626). The façade dates from 1730 and is a rococo masterpiece.

The parish **church of S. Maria Nascente**, traditionally known as the Sanctuary of the SS. Crocifisso, is of medieval origin; restyled in the 17th century, it was rebuilt again between 1881 and 1893. The last intervention (1924), by the architect Paolo Mezzanotte, was on the façade. Inside, the nave is decorated with an important eclectic cycle portraying Jesus' childhood, frescoed by Luigi Morgari, a painter from Turin repeatedly present in Brianza, in collaboration with Primo Busnelli from Meda.

Villa Antona Traversi, a conversion of the old monastery of S. Vittore, is a sumptuous Neoclassical construction by Leopold Pollack (early 19th cent.) with decorations probably by Pelagio Palagi. It has a compact structure and a horizontally developed façade. Purchased in 1836 by the Traversi family, the villa is still the home of its descendants, the Antona Traversi Grismondi family. The ground floor contains Neoclassical rooms and the Sala del Coro (previously the private chapel), with frescoes by Bernardino Luini and his assistants.

On the border with Seveso is a small 13th-century church dedicated to **Ss. Nazaro e Celso**, the only one of the five of the old Farga, listed by the historian Goffredo da Bussero (13th cent.), to have survived to the present day.



Villa Antona Traversi



The front of Villa Antona Traversi that overlooks the garden

Seveso

Municipal website: www.comune.seveso.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 15 km. **Distance from Milan:** 23 km
Map reference: D 3



Turning a threat into an opportunity

On 10 July 1976, the area of Seveso and some of the neighbouring towns was contaminated by a toxic cloud containing large quantities of dioxin, released after an accident in a chemical plant owned by the Swiss company ICME-SA (Givoudan-La Roche group) in the adjoining Meda but close to the town of Seveso. A large number of its inhabitants were evacuated and the area was completely decontaminated. The Bosco delle Querce is indication of how Seveso managed to fight back positively from the consequences of the accident. An educational, historical environmental itinerary created in the park by the Circolo di Legambiente (Ponte della Memoria project) illustrates the event and the situation today .
Info: www.boscodellequerce.it; www.legambiente.seveso.org.

Seveso bears the same name as the watercourse that rises in the province of Como, almost on the Swiss border, and marks the western “boundary” of Brianza. The old Seuse, perhaps of Gallic-Roman origin (4th-3rd cent. B C), is now a vibrant industrial town linked mainly to the production of furniture, on the main SS35 Giovi road. First mentioned in a document dated 996 and an important parish, in 1252 it was the site where heretics assassinated Friar Pietro da Verona, Papal inquisitor of Milan and Como, as commemorated by the name of the hamlet of San Pietro Martire. Canonised in less than a year, his remains are conserved in Milan in the Basilica of S. Eustorgio. Shortly afterwards, a monastery



Seminario Minore in San Pietro Martire



Seminario Minore, detail of the internal decoration

was built in Seveso (now the hamlet of F arö) and named after the Dominican friar, and a new village quickly grew up around it. The architect Gerolamo Quadrio rebuilt the annexed **church** to a commission by Bartolomeo III Arese, president of the Senate of Milan, from 1662 on. Inside, it has a central plan with a dome roof and works by some of the leading artists active in Milan in the second half of the 17th century such as Antonio Busca, Giuseppe Nuvolone, the Santagostino family, the Montalto family, Giovan Battista Costa and the sculptor



Villa Dho

Curious facts

San Pietro Martire

San Pietro Martire, also known as Fra Pietro da Verona (Verona, ca 1205-Seveso, 6 April 1252), studied at Bologna university and joined the preaching order at a time when St. Dominic di Guzmán was still alive. He is particularly remembered for his staunch opposition to heresy, especially Catharism. He was assassinated with a billhook (*falcastro*) in the forest between Seveso and Barlassina as he was walking from Como to Milan in 1252. Hagiography reports that he dipped a finger in his own blood and wrote the word "I believe" on the ground shortly before he died. He is depicted with a bill-



The church of S. Pietro

hook embedded in his head. One of the attackers, Carino Pietro da Balsamo, the actual assassin, repented of his action and later died in the odour of sanctity in the Dominican convent in Forlì. Pietro was canonised by Pope Innocent VI in 1253. The knife that killed him is conserved in Seveso, in the sanctuary named after him. He is buried in the Basilica of S. Eustorgio in Milan, in the Portinari chapel. The

liturgical commemoration is on 4 June, the anniversary of the solemn transfer of his remains in 1340 to the monument built by Giovanni di Balduccio between 1335 and 1339.

Seveso celebrates

Calendimaggio: this is an age-old festival in honour of S. Pietro Martire and held in the hamlet of the same name in the first week in May, with stalls, displays of craft products and funfairs. **Maggio Sampietrino** is a country festival lasting the whole month of May in which religious celebrations and folklore mix to give rise to a number of local cultural initiatives; the Maggio Sampietrino association has, for many years, prepared a calendar filled with countless events and initiatives. **Feast of St. Nazaro and St. Celso**: at the end of July, around 28, religious celebrations are held to honour saints Nazaro and Celso, with stalls set up to distribute pears and water melon. **Settimana Cino Venatorio Ornitologica** (Game Fair) is held in the second week in September, with a livestock fair, national bird exhibition, regional dog show for all breeds, clay-pigeon shooting, basketball, volleyball and karate matches, cycle races and evening dancing. The **Palio di S. Clemente** in the week around 23 November, the day of St. Clement, the patron saint of the hamlet of Baruccana, is packed with events.



Villa Bianca, by Giuseppe Terragni

Dionigi Bussola. The Dominicans abandoned the convent following the suppressions advocated by Emperor Joseph II and it was converted in 1819, with the assistance of Giuseppe Pollack, to the diocesan **Seminary**. The religious buildings also notably include the **prevostal church of Ss. Gervasio e Protasio**, of 16th-century construction. During the 17th century, the Carcassola, Lucini, Porro and Arese families, which built some of its most important buildings, alternated their seigniorry over Seveso.

The town and its environs feature a large number of villas, most notably **Villa Bianca** (1936-1937), the work of the Rationalist architect from Como, Giuseppe Terragni, and owned by Ferruccio Piemonti; and **Villa Dho**, also known as the Retitosa e Maiocca, built in the early 19th century, with a Neoclassical façade and a large park but now municipally owned. **Villa Peruviana** is also of interest and is thus called because linked to a local man, Generoso Galimberti, who emigrated to Peru and later became that country's Consul General in Milan.

The assets and the influence exercised by the nuns' monastery of S. Vittore di Meda are epitomised in the **Cascina Farga**, part of a larger construction that incorporated three chapels, of which only one remains (the small church of S. Nazaro). Archaeological finds dating from Roman times have been made near the building.

Visit the **Bosco delle Querce**, a town park that commemorates the tragic accident at the Icmesa factory that affected the whole of Seveso in 1976.

Cesano Maderno

Municipal website: www.comune.cesano-maderno.mi.it

Agenzia per il turismo e la cultura: via Garibaldi 20. **Tel.:** 0362528241

Fax: 0362516519. **Website:** www.cesanoatc.it **E-mail:** info@cesanoatc.it

Distance from Monza: 13 km. **Distance from Milan:** 21 km

Map reference: D 3

Right in the heart of the town and its oldest piece of architecture is the **Torre Civica** (Torrazzo), a robust 13th-century tower and all that remains of a vast fortified system guarding the Seveso River. In its vicinity, **Palazzo Carcano Cabiate** is a simple 15th-century structure in unfaced brick inserted into a repeatedly refurbished farm context. Overlooking the old *brolo*, **Palazzo Arese di Seveso** (later Jacini), the Town Hall, is an austere 17th-century building flanked by the serliana-porticoed façade of the oratory of S. Maria del Transito, the work of the architect Fabio Mangone and enhanced by an altarpiece by Gerolamo Chignoli (*Death of the Virgin Mary*). The palazzo contains a monumental fireplace and the Neoclassical additions consist in a statue in the courtyard (*The Goat Amalthea with Eros*) and a coeval wing.

The main branch of the Arese family, the Counts of Castellambro, lived in the nearby **Palazzo Arese**, later **Borromeo**, a sumptuous 17th-century residence that became the model for a large number of buildings in the State of Milan inhabited by members of the party dominated by the grand figure of Bartolomeo III Arese (1610-1674). Constructed on late-



An aerial view of Palazzo Arese Borromeo



Cesano celebrates

The second Sunday in September sees the **Feast of the Parish of the Beata Vergine Immacolata di Binzago**, while, on the following Sunday, they celebrate the **Feast of the parish of S. Pio X**.

The last Sunday in September celebrates the patron saint's day, with a number of popular games and a race between the local districts to win the **Palio de la Caretela**. The race is through the town streets with special wheelbarrows, called *caretela*, high and with no sides, that were used in the past to transport goods and chattels and by carpenters to transport furniture. The event is preceded by a parade of the districts through the streets, with the flag wavers from Legnano, guests from Valencay, a twin-towered town, and people in costume. On 23-24 December, they perform a **Living Nativity** in the church square in the parish of S. Stefano, with roasted chestnuts and mulled wine to warm the soul.



Swach Museum

The Swatch World Museum (www.worldmuseum2000.com) in Palazzo Arese Jacini retraces the history of this brand since 1983, displaying more than 7000 pieces. It is a unique public museum, fruit of the collecting passion of Fiorenzo Barindelli.

medieval foundations, it was rebuilt in the late 16th century in a horseshoe design; in the mid-17th century, it was converted to a grandiose structure with a central courtyard and a double loggia overlooking the courtyard and garden. Its division into extensive living quarters (ground floor: entrance, stables, entrance halls and reception spaces, as well as a public oratory and a splendid nymphaeum; *piano nobile*: museum area, grand reception spaces, the female sector, private apartments and the apertural zone) is

Getting there

By car, A4 Torino-Venezia motorway, exit Cormano, then SS35 Giovi road, exit 9 or 10; from Monza on the SS527 (Monza-Busto Arsizio), then follow the signs to Cesano Maderno.

By train, Cesano Maderno is on the Ferrovie Nord Ramo Milano (North Milan Railway Milano line), from Milan Cadorna for Mariano Comense and Camnago/Lentate.

By coach, from Milan: ATM M1 Bicocca-Sesto railway station, then AGI Brianza Trasporti Nord Est Trasporti 32 Brianza Trasporti, z223 for Monza, Monza railway station stop, then AGI Brianza Trasporti Nord Est Trasporti 32 Brianza Trasporti z209 for Cesano Maderno (FNM); from Monza: from Monza (railway station), AGI Brianza Trasporti Nord Est Trasporti 32 Brianza Trasporti z209 for Cesano Maderno (FNM).



Palazzo Arese Borromeo, the garden

highlighted by a vast cycle of frescoes with trompe l'oeil classical ruins and a rich portrayal of nature enhancing mythological and religious episodes, all relating to family vicissitudes and, even more so, a political interpretation of the fate of the Spanish monarchy. Coordinated by Giovanni Ghisolfi, the frescoes are a masterpiece by the later Ambrosiana Academy, with the presence of Roman classicism by artists such as the Montalto family, Antonio Busca, the Nuvolone family, Ercole Procaccini the Younger, Federico Bianchi, Carpofo Tencalla, Marcantonio Pozzi and many more. Passed in the 18th century to the Borromeo family, the mansion was enriched with rococo frescoes by Mattia Bortoloni. The Italian-style garden is, for the most part, the fruit of a 20th-century reconstruction programme but conserves precious remains: 17th-century statues (originally inside), templets and the last fountain of the Roggia Borromea, excavated for Carlo IV Borromeo Arese.

Its axis, which in the imagination runs symmetrical to the mansion, then becomes a large Cesano thoroughfare, marked by architectural expressions of glory and flanked by two churches: the **old S. Stefano** (17th-century construction with an earlier Romanesque bell-tower, now the Auditorium Paolo e Davide Disarò) and the **new S. Stefano** (a neo-Gothic construction by Chiappetta, with substantial re-

The Arese family

A family of jurists linked to Pavia University, the Arese family emerged on the Milanese scene with **Bartolomeo II** (1508-1562), who embarked on a campaign of land purchases in Brianza. His children gave rise to several branches, notably that of Marcantonio III, Count of Castellambro. His son **Giulio I** became president of the Senate, while his brother Cesare (a Theatine like Fra Paolo) became bishop of Tortona and a fine writer. Giulio's son, **Bartolomeo III** (see box on p. 58) was the most illustrious exponent; his marriage to Lucrezia Omodei produced Giulio II (who died before his father) and the daughters Giulia and Margherita, who married into the Borromeo and Visconti Borromeo families respectively. When Arese died (1674), Cesano passed via Giulia to the Borromeo Arese family, who controlled it until it became a municipality in the 20th century. Important family members were **Carlo IV**, son of Giulia, an Austrian governor of Naples and a friend of Muratori, and his daughter-in-law **Clelia Grillo Borromeo Arese**, an intellectual and central to a scientific and literary salon of European portent. A side branch, the Arese family of Seveso (who lived in Palazzo Cesanese, later Jacini) was brought to the fore in the 18th century by a marriage to the Lucini family of Como. Having adopted the double-barrelled surname, it is still flourishing.

Visiting the Palazzo

From March to October, the Associazione Vivere il Palazzo and the Giardino Arese Borromeo organise guided tours. For days, times and costs see: www.vivereilpalazzo.it, tel. 0362528241, fax 0362516519; email: vivereilpalazzo@cesanoatc.it



Palazzo Arese Borromeo, the rear front

mains from the previous church). In the hamlet of Binago, the **Sanctuary of S. Maria della Frasca** conserves 15th-century frescoes. The altar of the small **church of S. Eurosia** features an 18th-century altarpiece of the same name.

Out of interest

The “God of Milan”

Bartolomeo III Arese di Castellambro (1610-1674), son of Giulio I and Margherita Legnani, had a legal-humanistic education and embarked on a traditional Milanese administrative career that led him to become President of the Senate and Honorary President of the Consejo de Italia. “God of Milan” to the public affairs journalists of the times and a great and refined politician. He was responsible for the last organisation of a great family alliance — with the Arese, Borromeo, Omodei, Archinto and Visconti Borromeo families at its core but also extending to much of the Milanese aristocracy — that guaranteed their allegiance to the Spanish monarchy and with a focus on succession aimed at the Habsburgs of Austria. The figurative language adopted by this group (a guarantee of internal unity and outside circulation) was Roman classicism, attentive to nature (Arese was an admirer of Galileo), open to the Jewish world and



based on the theology of quietism. The Cesano model was applied to buildings such as Palazzo Baldirone in Lissone, Palazzo Arconati in Abbiategrasso, Palazzo Visconti in Rho, Palazzo Bezzi in Cologno, Palazzo Arese in Osnago and many more. Unlike the dynastic celebrations commonly seen in coeval mansions, the cycles painted in these were consistent expressions of general political visions, combined with a scientific interest in nature interpreted via the classicist cult of ruins.



Frescoes in Palazzo Arese Borromeo

Bovisio Masciago

Municipal website: www.comune.bovisiomasciago.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 12 km. **Distance from Milan:** 19 km
Map reference: D 3

This municipality was established in December 1928 with the unification of Bovisio and Masciago Milanese. The discovery of a small necropolis near via Comasinella in 1935 proves the settlement existed in Roman times. Numerous feudatories succeeded one another from the Middle Ages to the end of the modern era in the two towns, which grew up around their respective parish churches. The **church of S. Pancrazio** is a strictly classicist construction built between 1765 and 1774 by Giulio Galliori and extended between 1936 and 1946. The recently restored **church of S. Martino** retains its medieval design although it was restyled according to the indications of the Council of Trent. It features numerous examples of villa design dating from the 17th to the 20th centuries. **Villa Erba Odescalchi Scotti**, since 1941 the Town Hall, was built in the first half of the 16th century for the marriage of Alessandro Erba to Lucrezia Odescalchi. The annexed park presents English features. **Villa Sonzogno Mariani Compostella**, already recorded in the land registry in 1722, stands on the banks of the Seveso River. In corso Milano is **Villa Tanzi**, while a square tower in the old Masciago town centre commemorates the presence of a mansion owned



A detail of the reliefs on the tower in Masciago

Curious archive facts

The archives of the parish church of S. Pancrazio conserve the official acts of the marriages of Paolina Bonaparte to General Leclerc and Elisa Bonaparte to Felice Baciocchi, celebrated in the nearby church of Mombello (Limbiate) on the night of 14 June 1797.



The church of S. Pancrazio and, to the right, the tower in the old Masciago town centre

St. Martin's Day

A religious celebration with an array of events and sports competitions on the second Sunday in November. It has been held for 50 years and includes a 10 km mini-marathon, a history parade with 100 characters (of which more than 40 on horseback) and a re-enactment of St. Martin cutting his cloak; there are exhibitions and markets, with the distribution of "papina" cake, a local speciality.

by the Agnesi family. The architectural complex of **Villa Zari** survives in its original design.

The **Museo degli Attrezzi per la Lavorazione del Legno** is a small private museum space in an old restored haybarn. It exhibits a collection of woodworking tools dating from the 18th century to the advent of electrical machinery, examples of carving, furniture designs and period pictures. Founded by Mario Ferrari, a collector of woodworking tools, it also has a pedal lathe with leather straps, stone wheels for sharpening the tools, a collection of rare natural glues and samples of fine mosaic parquet. Annexed to the museum is a craft workshop that restores antique furniture.

Villa Marina is one of the most picturesque educational farms in the Groane park. Its aim was to recreate a typical old farm so its farm animals include rare breeds at risk of extinction such as the Varzese cow and the Brianzola sheep. The western portion of the municipal area forms part of the Groane regional park and is home to a LI PU (Italian league for the birds protection) reserve.

Limbate

Municipal website: www.comune.limbiate.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 13 km. **Distance from Milan:** 19 km
Map reference: D 2

Limbate occupies a central position in the Parco Naturale Regionale delle Groane. The first records mentioning the town date from the 13th century when a chronicle speaks of the mission of a certain Alberto Confaloniero, podestà of the Republic of Milan, who camped near “Limbate” in 1285 with the militias that were due to face the Berriani armies. The 15th century to the 17th centuries saw an alternation of seigniory from the Marliani to the Manriquez, Carcassola and Arese families.

The characteristics of the terrain have resulted in a small farming production, compensated by a substantial use of the area as a place of suburban residence for the Milanese aristocracy, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries. The hamlet of Mombello is set in a scenic position overlooking the Seveso river valley, on the eastern edge of the Groane Park and is home to **Villa Pusterla Arconati Crivelli**. Francesco Croce built this grand classicist villa with spectacular terracing towards the garden at the height of the 18th century over the remains of a repeatedly extended medieval structure. Completed in Neoclassical times, the vil-



Villa Pusterla Arconati Crivelli



The Mombello Psychiatric Hospital

In 1865, Villa Pusterla Arconati Crivelli was sold to the Provincia di Milano and work immediately commenced to convert the building to a branch of the Senavra psychiatric hospital in Milan, of which it later became the headquarters. From then on the history of the villa was closely linked to that of the psychiatric hospital, constantly being extended with the construction of numerous pavilions in the park. The large complex, surrounded by an imposing wall, later also comprised a pharmacy, an abattoir, a bakery, a laundry and an aqueduct. In the early 1960s, the Mombello psychiatric hospital housed a total of approximately 3,000 patients. It was closed in 1978 as a result of the Basaglia Parliamentary Act. Today, the villa is home to the **Istituto Tecnico di Agraria** (www.itaglimbate.it), which manages an important farm (selling Lombard produce).

Illustrious guests



In 1797, **Napoleon Bonaparte** chose Villa Pusterla Arconati Crivelli in Limbiate for his headquarters and those of the court. The house provided a perfect setting for the celebration of the two marriages of Paolina and Elisa Bonaparte, Napoleon's sisters, to General Leclerc and Felice Baciocchi respectively on 14 June 1797. The villa was the venue for discussions on the creation of the Cisalpine Republic, extinguishing the Venetian Republic and the fall of Genoa; the bases were also laid here for the Treaty of Campoformio. The artist **Jean Antoine Gros**, who painted the first grand portrait of Napoleon Bonaparte, also stayed in Mombello. The Villa had previously welcomed other illustrious guests, such as King **Ferdinand IV** of the Two Sicilies.

la passed in 1863 to the Provincia di Milano, which converted it to a psychiatric hospital. A vast restoration and refurbishment project is currently underway on the complex. Access to the Italian-style garden below is via a number of spectacular flights of steps that divide into two and a number of scenic terraces enlivened by exedras. Two interior spaces and the chapel feature frescoes by Giovanni Angelo Borroni; there is also a fine grand staircase. The **Oratory of S. Francesco**, beside the north wing, has an elegant baroque façade and inside contains a single altar formerly surmounted by a painting by Bernardino Campi (1568). Other stately homes in the area include **Villa Molinari Medolago**, built between 1760 and 1764 to a design by Giuseppe Bianchi in distinctive rocaille style; **Villa Bosisio Castiglioni Rasini**, radically refurbished in the 19th century, with an imposing exedra entrance (the park was to the rear of the villa); **Villa Bazzero Mella**, originally more a rural construction than a "noble house" that, in the mid-18th century, belonged to Giovanni Andrea Besozzo, was sold to Luigi Ferni in the early-19th century and was converted to a fine residence in the second half of the same century.

The religious buildings include the **church of S. Giorgio** right in the old Limbiate town centre, no longer used for worship now but a venue for cultural activities; the **church of Ss. Cosma e Damiano**, at Pinzano, on the main street opposite the cemetery and dating from the 12th century.



The park of Villa Bazzero Mella

Varedo

Municipal website: www.comune.varedo.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 9.5 km. **Distance from Milan:** 19 km
Map reference: D 3

The origins of this town are uncertain but the discovery (1972) of an assortment of everyday utensils as well as the remains of poles inserted into pebble foundations dating from 4-5000 years ago close to the waters of the Seveso River, in the area currently known as the Area Snia, confirms the presence of human settlements in the area since Neolithic times. Roman necropolises have also been found in three different parts of the area and three tombs with rich funerary goods from Lombard times were discovered in 1962. In the 13th century, Varedo was the scene of the battles between the Torriani and Visconti families fighting for control of Milan and one of the skirmishes in the battle on 21 January 1277, from which Ottone Visconti emerged winner, took place on the border between this municipality and Palazzolo. In modern times, it was a feud of the Spanish marchesi Manriquez de Mendoza and later, from 1676, of the Crivelli family of Agliate.

Like many centres in Brianza, Varedo features significant examples of villas, which appeared in the 18th and 19th centuries. The **Villa**, erected before



Villa Medici in Marignano, now the Town Hall



Varedo celebrates

The **Falò della Befana** (Burning the Witch) on 5 January is a huge wood bonfire on which they burn a wooden witch; pinsa and mulled wine are served in the oratory of the church of Maria Regina. The **Palio di S. Giorgio** is held in the last two weeks in May; this is a folklore event during which the districts of the Condor, Falco, Grifone and Airone compete in games and tournaments; the winning district is awarded the Palio di S. Giorgio. A parade of floats through the streets of Valera is followed by a performance in the parish centre. The **Festa delle Contrade** runs all through the month of June and each district organises celebrations open to all, with entertainment. The **Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul** is held on the second Sunday in October, with the patron saints being celebrated in the church of Ss. Pietro e Paolo and the oratory with religious commemorations, folklore entertainment, competitions, and a funfair.

Bagatti Valsecchi



The Bagatti family, barons of Belvignate, who only later added the surname Valsecchi, is recorded in Varedo from 1523 on, perhaps come to escape a plague that hit Milan and its environs. The most illustrious exponents of the family include the brothers Fausto and Giuseppe, collectors and architects responsible for numerous eclectic designs for both villas and places of worship as well as restoration work in western Lombardy. Well introduced into the Milanese society of the early 20th century, they were also avid sportsmen, focusing on the velocipede and balloon rides. They built the family mansion, inspired by the stately residences of the Lombard 16th century, near via Montenapoleone in the centre of Milan, now the Museo Bagatti Valsecchi.

1751 and formerly owned by the Medici family of Marignano, is now the **Town Hall** and its large park has been opened to the public. The north wall of the building conserves traces of two-light windows and late-medieval cornices. **Villa Bagatti Valsecchi**, completed before 1884 (privately owned), is a fine example of historicism with stylistic references to the Renaissance and baroque styles. The building incorporates numerous fragments of Milanese buildings, including the portico columns from Manzoni's Lazzaretto. Two gardens, one Italian and the other English, and a spectacular drive complete the complex. **Villa Agnesi**, at Valera, is a stately home of 17th-century origin but was extended in the mid-18th century, when it became the property of the Agnesi family of Milan. Used by the illustrious scientist and benefactor Maria Gaetana Agnesi as a summer residence, it was donated to the Opera Pia Fatebenefratelli, of which she was director. Currently the municipally owned villa is the object of a major refurbishment project, as too the annexed chapel of the Annunziata.

Religious buildings notably include the **parish church of Ss. Pietro e Paolo**, erected in 1712 and subsequently extended to a design by Fausto Bagatti Valsecchi (1915). This eclectic building bears references to the Romanesque and Lombard Gothic styles. A fine crucifix dating from the 17th century hangs in the nave.



Villa Bagatti Valsecchi



Views of Villa Agnesi: left, the grand staircase; top right, an aerial view; bottom right, the small church of the Annunciazione

Curious facts

Maria Gaetana Agnesi

Maria Gaetana Agnesi (Milan, 1718-1799), the first of 21 children born to a wealthy family that made their money in the silk industry, showed early signs of her remarkable intelligence and special talent for foreign languages. Her father, Pietro Agnesi, had his first child educated by illustrious tutors and with their aid Maria Gaetana learnt Italian, German, French, Latin, Greek, Spanish and Hebrew perfectly, earning herself the nickname "seven language oracle". Around 1737, she went on to study philosophy and mathematics. Agnesi was behind the discovery of the versiera algebraic curve. 1748 saw the publication of *Istituzioni Analitiche ad uso della Gioventù Italiana*, a book that earned her recognition all over Europe. In 1752, her father died and she withdrew completely from public life to focus on caring for the poor and the

sick and her studies of the Holy Scriptures. The Pio Albergo Trivulzio was set up in Milan in 1771 and Cardinal Giuseppe Pozzobonelli asked Maria Gaetana to act as Visitor and Women's Director. In 1783, she moved to the Pio Albergo to become its director. She continued working at the Trivulzio for 26 years until the day she died, 9 January 1799.



Gaetana Agnesi's versiera in piazza della Pace

Nova Milanese

Municipal website: www.comune.novamilanese.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 6 km. **Distance from Milan:** 17 km
Map reference: D 3



This municipality develops along the southern boundary of the province of Monza and is crossed by the Villoresi Canal, inaugurated in 1881. A first inhabited nucleus formed probably in Roman times on the road between Milan and Carate. The first written record dates from the late 13th century. For centuries, Nova was a farming town and, until the 1920s, its economy, like that of many other towns in Brianza, was based on silkworm breeding, flanked by vine growing, as mentioned in 1815 by the Milanese poet Carlo Porta, who indicated it as a centre of excellence for wine making.

The **parish church** is dedicated to St. Antonino Martire and its first records date from the 13th century. The building, altered in 1604, 1751 and 1842, adopted its present architectural form after extension and restoration work in 1921-1923. The interior was

Curious facts

Art in Villa Vertua

The Collezione Permanente delle Arti del Fuoco is a collection of contemporary works featuring painted porcelain, ceramics, enamelled metal and fused glass. Its 350 works come from 22 countries around the world. Established in 1999 by a joint effort of the local administration of Nova Milanese, the Impronte cultural association and Hobbyceram of Milan, the collection is an "interactive local space" that promotes the knowledge and love of an art that has always accompanied human life. Every two years, it is the venue for the "Città di Nova" Prize, a crucial date for the promotion and latest news of the refined world of the fired arts. The same civic premises display ten paintings and 54 drawings donated by the artist Vittorio Viviani (Milan 1909-Nova Milanese

1998) in 1978. He arrived in Nova in 1931 and taught at the vocational school there before moving the Libera Accademia di Pittura there in 1961. In collaboration with the local administration, he founded the Bice Bugatti Painting Prize and the Giovanni Segantini Drawing Prize. The drawings date from 1936 to 1966; the paintings, executed in 1976-77, contain essential traits of Viviani's production marked by variations of light played on pale tones and subjects linked to Venice, landscapes in Puglia and female figures.

Collezione Arti del Fuoco, via Garibaldi 1, Saturdays 3-6pm, Sundays 10am-noon and 3-6pm. Info: Associazione Culturale Impronte, tel. 036243802; Ufficio Cultura Comune tel. 0362374508, U.R.P. tel. 0362374203.



The parish church of S. Antonino Martire



decorated in the 1920s and 1930s with the aid of Luigi Morgari, who also designed the windows, on whose death Cesare Secchi of Milan took over. The paintings are by Osvaldo Bignami. In 1927, Vittorio Viviani, a local by adoption, created the lunette featuring imitation mosaics. The same artist was responsible for a *Crucifixion* in via Garibaldi. The **church of S. Bernardo** at Cascina Meda is 18th century and the **Oratory of the Beata Vergine Assunta** in Grugnotorto dates from the second half of the 15th century.

Villa Ponticelli Prinetti Vertua Masolo, a building in Italian Liberty style, was rebuilt over an existing construction in the early decades of the 20th



Villa Ponticelli Prinetti Vertua Masolo



Villa Vertua, inside the museum

century. It has a huge park and is, today, owned by the municipal administration, which has made it the home of the Collezione Permanente delle Arti del Fuoco and the painter Vittorio Viviani's donation. During the 19th century, the courtyard adjacent to the east wing of the villa was home to the first silk mill, owned by Vertua Prinetti. **Villa De Barzi**, behind the central square, was erected in 1560 and altered in the late 18th century; it is most notable for its garden, the work of Luigi Cagnola. **Villa Crosti Colombo**, the original structure of which dates from the 15th century, was extended and altered towards the end of the 18th century; it is Neoclassical in style and based on a design on which Leopold Pollack is thought to have worked.

The huge park annexed to the villa dates from the 19th century. The latest cultural projects organised in Nova include an **Ecomuseo**, an open-air route aimed at pinpointing and promoting local environmental, artistic and historic resources, created thanks to an initiative of the Il Cortile cultural association, and a venture, commenced in 1996, between this town and that of Bolzano on the subject of exports that resulted in the creation of an **Archivio Audiovisivo della Memoria**, conserved in the local civic library and the historic archive of the town in Alto Adige.



The long front of Villa Crosti Colombo

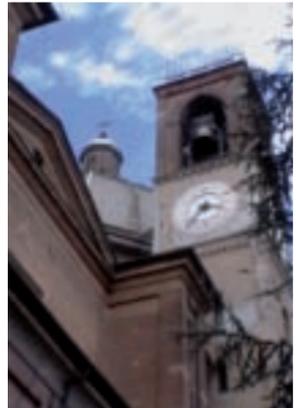
Desio

Municipal website: www.comune.desio.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 8 km. **Distance from Milan:** 21 km
Map reference: D 3

Desio lies northwest of Monza, an area known as the “furniture-making pole”, on the Valassina road, traced along the Roman road that linked Milan to Brianza. Excavations have confirmed the existence of the settlement not only in Roman times but also in a previous epoch with the presence of Celtic-Ligurian peoples. The area’s Christianisation is shown by the founding of the **Basilica of Ss. Siro e Materno** in 649 by Bishop Giovanni Bono. The present place of worship was built in the 17th and 18th centuries (architects Pellegrini, Ciniselli, Merlo and Galliori) and the apse area extended at the end of the last century (architects Leveni and Cesa Bianchi). The interior features a series of 19th- and 20th-century paintings by Mauro Conconi and Giuseppe Riva of Bergamo.



The Basilica of Ss. Siro e Materno



Ss. Siro e Materno, detail of the 15th-century bell tower

Pius XI



Ambrogio Damiano Achille Ratti was born in Desio in 1857 to a family that worked with silk. He studied as a seminarist in Monza and Milan and at the Gregorian University in Rome. He was ordained as a priest in 1879. Elected Pope in 1922, he drew up the Lateran Pact with the Italian State (1929) which gave the Holy See sovereignty over the Vatican City State. In 1931, he inaugurated the Vatican Radio. He condemned Nazism and Communism and died in 1939. The house where Pius XI was born contains a museum of mementoes linked to him, including the radio given to the Pope by Guglielmo Marconi.

It has a fine main altar by the sculptors Nava and Antignani (1744) and 16th-century tapestries. The bell tower dates from the 15th century and has a famous concert of bells, cast in 1843 and the subject of three records.

Desio formed part of the Martesana district, first mentioned in 931 and under the power of Milan, although it repeatedly sided against the city, for instance when Barbarossa arrived. It was a head parish at least from the 12th century. A Franciscan convent (suppressed in 1777) and one of the Humiliati, who launched wool processing, were founded in the 13th century. During the fighting between the Torriani and Visconti families for supremacy over Milan, Desio was the scene of the decisive battle from which Ottone Visconti emerged as winner on 21 January 1277. In the mid-14th century a castle was built for Bernabò Visconti. In 1385, Gian Galeazzo brought the parish of Desio under the jurisdiction of the *Podestà* of Milan. Fighting between the Empire and France tormented Europe in the first half of the 16th century and, in 1511, the city was sacked by the Lanzichenecchi, immortalised in a drawing by Leonardo da Vinci conserved in the British royal collections. In 1613, the King of Spain Philip II elevated it from the rank of county to that of *marchesato*; several noble families obtained it in feud. After Italian Unification, Desio became home to a factory known the world over – the Gavazzi silk industry. Furniture and mechanical industries (Autobianchi came here in the



Villa Cusani Traversi Tittoni



Villa Cusani Traversi Tittoni

1960s) subsequently developed. In 1924, it obtained recognition as a “Town”. The municipal coat-of-arms stems from that of the Da Dexio family, with the red and silver colours changed.

The historically and artistically most interesting building in the town is **Villa Cusani Traversi Tittoni**, now the home of the civic library and other public services. Of exceptional shape and size, the present building is the fruit of two subsequent conversion projects on the older baroque structure, built on the ruins of a medieval castle and convent. In the late 18th century, the Cusani family asked Giuseppe Piermarini to produce a Neoclassical design. Between 1817 and 1846, Pelagio Palagi revamped the gardens and villa, adopting neo-Gothic solutions both in the park, with the construction of the tower, and the interiors, notably black boiseries on a gold ground covering the walls and ceiling of the dining room plus frescoed medallions. The architect was also responsible for the gateway but the staircase and mausoleum are by Luca Beltrami (1903).

Opposite the Basilica of Ss. Siro e Materno stands a bronze **monument** by Albert Dressler of **Pius XI**, previously known as Ambrogio Damiano Achille Ratti, who was born in Desio. Not far from the Pope's house-museum is the 18th-century **church of S. Maria**, housing several painted works of the 16th and 17th centuries. In the hamlet of S. Giorgio, you can admire the small **church of S. Apollinare** (17th cent.) and in San Giuseppe see **Villa Buttafava** and the 17th-century **Oratory** dedicated to the saint.

The Palio degli Zoccoli

In Desio, clogs are the symbol of the spirit of rebellion of the locals who, back in 1227, fought against the Visconti for the right to wear them and for their dignity. Today, in memory of that battle, they still hold the **Palio degli Zoccoli**, a race between the districts of Desio, between the last week in May and the first in June. It is preceded by a medieval costume parade and the Basilica of Ss. Siro e Materno holds a ceremony involving homage to the cross, a promise on the part of the competitors and the blessing of the districts. During the mass, the officiant lights a traditional ball to St. Victor which forecasts the success of the harvest; people believe that good or bad omens can be read according to the direction taken by the smoke. In the afternoon, a parade accompanied by a group of flag wavers is followed by the palio, which consists in a relay race around the basilica with two athletes racing for each district, wearing the old clogs on their feet. The winners receive the standard and a trophy consisting in a pair of silver and wood clogs. In April, the streets of the hamlet of the same name come alive with the **Sagra di S. Giuseppe** (Festival of St. Joseph), a country festival.

Seregno

Municipal website: www.comune.seregno.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 11 km. Distance from Milan: 25 km
Map reference: C 3



The first historical record of Seregno, situated in the Brianza foothills, is a parchment dated 1087 in which Pietro da Seregno concedes part of his assets “in loco et fundo Seregno” to the presbytery of S. Ambrogio in Milan. In the 13th century, the Torriani and Visconti dynasties fought for control of the Milan area and, in 1277, the people of Seregno took part in the well-known Battle of Desio, which resulted in the defeat of the former. In modern times, it was a feud of the Gallarati (1530), Manriquez de Mendoza and Castelli (1713) families. In the 19th century, the town became industrialised, partly thanks to the presence of the railway (1849), and specialised in the mechanical processing of cotton.

The symbol of the town is a **Tower** known as that **of Barbarossa**, a 12th-century structure that was formerly the bell-tower of the church of S. Vitore, altered in 1576 and again in 1781 to become a civic tower. According to tradition, Emperor Frederick I, Barbarossa, had it built as a watchtower along the Milan-Como line during the battles with the Lombard towns.



The Tower of Barbarossa and the great collegiate church of S. Giuseppe



Art in Seregno: frescoes in the Oratory of Ss. Rocco e Sebastiano and the windows of S. Benedetto

The **collegiate church of S. Giuseppe** with its central plan and dome, is monumental and has repeatedly been altered. Ermenegildo Pini, Giulio Galliori and Giuseppe Piermarini all worked on its 18th-century passage from classicism to Neo-classicism. The pronaos on the façade is by Ottavio Cabiati (1944). The **Oratory of Ss. Rocco e Sebastiano**, constructed in 1577, is notable and adorned with a vast cycle of frescoes that combine the Luni-style of the sanctuary in Saronno with an early familiarity with innovations in Monza.

See also the **Sanctuary of the Madonna dei Vignaioli**, enlarged in 1859, and the **Oratory of S. Carlo**, 17th-century, converted to a church in 1898, with its fine bas-relief in white marble of the *Madonna and Child*, dating from the 15th century. Just outside the town is the **Sanctuary of S. Valeria**, a 17th-century complex rebuilt to a design by Spirito Maria Chiappetta between 1930 and 1954 and with a remarkable collection of ex votos. The **abbey of S. Benedetto**, constructed in the last decade of the 19th century in Lombard neo-Romanesque style, was extended in 1931 to a design by Cabiati. Wonderful 20th-century stained-glass windows depict stories from Benedictine history and that of Seregno.

Extending all around the town is the Parco della Brianza Centrale, predominantly farmland, where foot and cycle paths, children's play areas and picnic spots have all been created.

Seregno celebrates

Between the end of April and 1 May, the **Sagra di S. Valeria** is a feast that attracts stalls selling foodstuffs, local products, costume jewellery, household items, clothing and exotic artefacts to the streets of the S. Valeria district. In September, the **Festa Popolare Madonna della Campagna** proposes gastronomical evenings with Brianza cuisine, accompanied by music played by fine orchestras. Every year, the traditional **Fiera del Bestiame** (Livestock Fair) showcases breeds of cows and sheep typically found in Brianza.



The abbey of S. Benedetto

Central Brianza

Romanesque and Neoclassical

The artistic heritage of the Middle Ages in this part of Brianza is somewhat atypical since what remains is rather scattered around, largely because so much reconstruction work was done from the 16th to 18th centuries. This stated, there is the extraordinary complex of the Basilica of Ss. Pietro e Paolo in Agliate (Carate Brianza), flanked by the baptistery of S. Giovanni. The grandiose architecture of these two edifices, the reuse of Roman materials, and the 11th century frescoes have brought these buildings European renown, especially in combination with the Romanesque structures that are found in other basilicas in Brianza, such as in Galliano and Civate. From the late 16th century on, there was almost a systematic "refurbishment" of religious buildings. This did not, though, mean only one style: the 17th-century style S. Martino in Veduggio (by the great Francesco Maria Richini), the delightful Neoclassical period of the Rotondda in Triuggio and the parish church of Besana Brianza, the gracious, neo-Romanesque parish church in Capriano di Briosco, the neo-Renaissance and neo-baroque work by Chiappetta on the parish church in Albiate and Villa Sacro Cuore in Triuggio (a true repertoire, with its 5 churches and chapels) and finally the severe rationalism of Verano's parish church.



The villa culture also left its mark, starting with Villa Taverna (Canonica di Triuggio), which originated as a fort in the late Middle Ages, was altered in the 17th century and then changed again in the 18th century with the addition of the driveway and facing church. In Lissone, Palazzo Baldirone is an example of the classicism introduced locally by Palazzo Arese in Cesano Maderno. In some cases, the entire town layout — such as Carate Brianza, dominated by Villa Confalonieri — was focused on a villa. Other notable villas include Villa Sartirana in Gussano, with some classical and Neoclassical work; Villa Verri in Biassono — tied to some great thinkers of the Enlightenment — is a sombre example of 18th-century rationalism; Villa Casati in Muggiò brings together the best aspects of Neoclassicism; Villa Litta in Veduggio is an excellent example of neo-Gothic, drawing parallels with Villa Cusani Traversi Tironi in Desio. Modernity also left a different — yet complementary — mark: industrial archaeology in Briosco, Vincenzo Vela's bronze statues in Renate and, most of all, the former Fascist House in Lissone, by Giuseppe Terragni.

As such, it is fair to say that this is a complex land that combines the largely isolated Romanesque architecture found in Agliate with much modernity from the 18th and 19th centuries as well as with the innovation that was so much part of the 20th century.



To learn more

Parco della Valle del Lambro

The Valle del Lambro Park cuts across all of central Brianza, from Monza to Erba. It is about 25 km long, following the Lambro River. The river itself passes through a glacial valley and the importance of this watercourse to the local area can be gauged from the 31 old mills that stand along the northern bank. The environment here is far from uniform, partly due to the major impact that man and his work have had on the land. There are, though, patches where acacia, hornbeam, English oak, alder and ash wood abound and there is some wildlife, especially birds. The range of services includes: cycle paths, horse-riding trails, environmental education initiatives and guided tours.

Park headquarters: Triuggio, via Vittorio Veneto 19 (open Monday, Wednesday and Friday 8am-2pm, Tuesday and Thursday 8am-noon and 1.30-6.30pm); tel. 0362970961, 0362997137; website: www.parcovallelambro.it

Consorzio Brianteo Villa Greppi

This consortium, with its headquarters at Villa Greppi in Monticello Brianza, was created to make the most of the culture and land of Brianza. It organises numerous events throughout the year including exhibitions and guided tours of the villa. One of the most notable events is "La Passione per il Delitto" (Passion for Crime, www.lapassioneperildelitto.it), which has become a hot favourite for local lovers of thrillers and crime stories. It lasts a week and is filled with meetings and events that bring some of the leading Italian writers in this field to Brianza. **Info:** www.villagreppi.it



Veduggio con Colzano

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

Pro Loco: via Piave 2, c/o Library. **Tel.:** 3393376663. **Fax:** 0362998313

Website: www.prolocoveduggio.it **E-mail:** info@prolocoveduggio.it

Distance from Monza: 20 km. **Distance from Milan:** 37 km. **Map reference:** B 4

This town is divided into four villages: Veduggio, Colzano, Brusco and Tremolada. It is in the Valle del Lambro Park, on the border of the provinces of Como and Lecco. The first of the villages that we have recorded evidence of is Tremolada. It appears in a deed that divided the Milan Diocese into 14 country churches. The author of the deed was St. Monas (ca. 195-251), a Bishop of Milan who is remembered for having brought Christianity to the area between Lake Maggiore, Lake Como and the River Po. It appeared once again in a diploma from 1162 issued by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa to the Abbot of Civate Algisio. Brusco is mentioned in an agreement from 784 between the abbot of the Benedictine high monastery of S. Ambrogio in Milan and someone called Teoptert. The first record of Colzano is from 1115. Veduggio is noted in Gothofredus de Bussero's *Liber notitiae Sanctorum Mediolani* (1289). The four villages were largely farming centres until the 19th century, although they were all autonomous communes until their amalgamation in 1871.



A view of Veduggio



Giubiana

This festival is on the last Thursday in January. The name Giubiana comes from the Italian for Thursday (giovedì), which was the day when witches gathered to perform their evil rites, and it refers to an effigy of rags and sticks shaped to look like a woman. It is burnt on a large bonfire in front of the village's junior schools and is a rite that is said to bring a prosperous and fortunate year. The fire is lit in the morning and burns all day. The festival began in 1859 and, according to the tradition, as the effigy burnt, the young people would throw bits of paper into the fire, on which they had written things that they wanted to avoid. Boiled chestnuts and vin brulé are available during the event.



The 17th-century parish church of S. Martino

Construction on the **parish church of S. Martino**, in Veduggio, began in 1642 using a design by the architect Francesco Maria Richini. It was built on the site of an existing structure and was a votive offering from the Cazzulani family for having escaped the plague of 1630. It was enlarged in 1934. The steps leading up to the church were 'immortalised' by the painter Giovanni Segantini (*Arco di Trento*, 1858–Schafberg, 1899), who stayed in Brianza from 1881–1885. The famous painting, *At Mass*, is on display in the Segantini museum in St. Mortiz. In the first version of the work, *Comments from Malicious People*, put on exhibition in Turin in 1883, there was a young lady going up the steps with a small dog, while people stood behind her making nasty comments about her. In the second, the artist removed all of the people and put in a priest slowly walking up the steps. The actual church has some sculptures by Alfredo Sassi, who lived, at that time, in nearby Renate. A memorial stone (1958) was placed in via Vittorio Veneto to recall the time spent here by this painter from Trentino.

Medicinal herb

Fitopreparazione Hierba Buena (via San Antonio 19, tel. and fax 0362911439, info@hierbabuena.it, www.hierbabuena.it): cultivation and gathering of medicinal herbs. Oils, soaps and creams are produced on site. Direct sales, with demonstrations.

Bruscò has a small **oratory** that dates from 1398 and is dedicated to **St. Michael**. A number of finds made in the area have made it possible to identify the place where the battle took place, in 1154, between Milanese troops and those of Frederick Barbarossa.



Piazza Italia in Veduggio

Briosco

Municipal website: www.comune.briosco.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 16 km. Distance from Milan: 33 km
Map reference: B 4



The parish church in the Fornaci district

There is evidence of human settlement in the Briosco area in pre-Roman times. The town was destroyed by Frederick Barbarossa's troops in 1162, presumably because the local noble family – de Brioscho – opposed the Emperor. This noble family, nonetheless, remained in the zone until at least the 17th century. The only traces of the medieval castle are found incorporated into buildings in the old centre. In the 14th and 15th centuries, the Order of the Humiliati set up a women's house that had a mill with a hammer for working iron. This was a somewhat remarkable feature for that time, although there is evidence of similar structures in the area, especially around Peregallo. Indeed, the only building along the entire Lambro that still uses waterpower, **Mulino Ronchi Peregallo**, is another example of such a structure. It is now part of a farmhouse complex. Pottery was an important craft, making use of the local supplies of clay. There were a number of small kilns dotted around, but these were industrialised in the 19th century (the Hoffman kilns, for example).



Festivals in Briosco

Along the Lambro, on the last Thursday in January, the **Giubiana** arrives. This giant effigy made of hay and dressed in rags is the centre piece of a much loved festival in Piedmont and Lombardy, especially Brianza. There is a procession, starting from the church square, and a giant bonfire is lit. The 'old' effigy is burnt, symbolically ridding the people of the negativity of winter and preparing for the new season. Roasted chestnuts and Monza-style risotto (with a special sausage) are also an integral part of festivities. For over 10 years, the first Sunday in July has been the **Sagra del Pesce** (fish festival). This popular event involves fried fish being sold on the piazza and dancing. The second Sunday of the month, in Capriano, is festival time.



The open-air sculptures in the garden of Casa Rossini

The Rossini Collection

This collection has been created by the passion of all members of the Rossini family. It was started in 1953, by the Lombard industrialist Alberto Rossini, who, at the age of 20, bought an abstract sculpture by Gaetano Negri, an assistant of Marino Marini. A number of sizeable sculptures are kept in the garden and are freely visible by the public. The best works are by Pietro Consagra, César, Dennis Oppenheim, Gün Pomodoro, Erik Dietman, and Nagasawa, although there are also other works by some excellent exponents of contemporary sculpture. **For info:** www.ris-torante-lear.com/arte_fondazione.htm

Today, there is still a district called **Fornaci** (furnaces/kilns; notable also for the parish church of the Immacolata e Tre Fanciulli). The **Cartiera Villa** (paper mill) was built shortly before the middle of the 19th century.

Today, it is a site of archaeological interest. Brianza also has its fair share of summer residences that belonged to Milan's elite and were built from the 17th/18th century on. From the 18th-century, there is the notable **Villa Medici**, now called **Giulini**, that was modelled around an existing fortified house and has a vast park. It also has a valuable collection of ancient keyboard instruments that can be seen by appointment. In Capriano, it is worth seeing the Neoclassical **Villa Trivulzio**, **Villa Casanova** and **Palazzo Annoni**, built at the turn of the 17th century.

Casa Rossini, designed by the architect Gianfranco Frattini, is a good example of a modern building that has been blended into the surrounding landscape and the backdrop of Grigne and Resegone. Nearby, on the same property, you can see the headquarters of the future Fondazione Pietro Rossini, housed in a pavilion designed by the American architect James Wines, from the SITE group. The open-air collection of sculptures includes some works by leading contemporary artists.

Renate

Municipal website: www.comune.renate.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 19 km. **Distance from Milan:** 36 km
Map reference: B 4

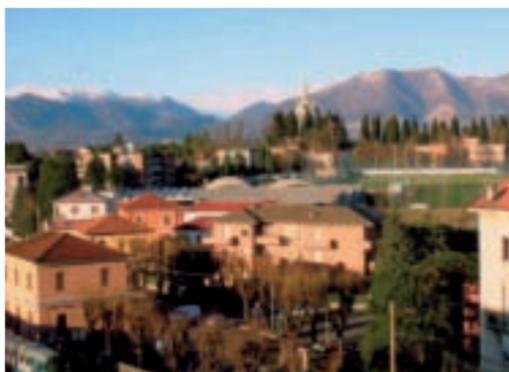
This municipality lies on the hills around a basin on the Lambro in the central-northern part of Brianza. The land is characterised by sedimentation deposited during the last glacial age. The municipal coat-of-arms has a column topped by a cross with trilobed tips and recalls the cross that was placed in the town centre to commemorate the execution of a young patriot from Renate who was a friend of Alessandro Manzoni's son. From 1928 to 1956 Renate was united with Veduggio and, even today, they share the so-called "Three parks train station" (Monza, Valle del Lambro and Monte Barro parks).

The **parish church of Ss. Donato e Carpofo**ro was refurbished in the late 17th century. The **small church of S. Mauro Abate** is older and was built as a memorial for those who died of the plague in the 17th century. The public park contains a notable **war memorial** by Alfredo Sassi, a sculptor. There is also a local **cultural centre** dedicated to Sassi, containing a gallery of plaster casts and some 19th-century bronzes by Vincenzo Vela.



Renate's Palio

The palio, organised annually by parishioners, is held during the second and third week of September. It consists of a donkey race involving the districts of Renate (Garibaldina, Gesola, Le Sorgenti and Turiom). The festival also includes events for children, a torchlight religious procession, sporting competitions and dancing.



A view of Renate and, right, a section of piazza Don Pasquale Zanzi



Villa Pagani and, right, the parish church of Ss. Donato e Carpofo

From via Immacolata e Oriano (Cassago district), you can reach the **Valletta Park**, which forms a key 'green corridor' between the Montevecchia and Valle del Lambro parks. It largely consists of hills formed during the Quaternary Period by the Adda glacier.

Out of interest

Famous locals

One of the most famous people from Renate is the sculptor **Alfredo Sassi** (Ponte Vetere-Brera, 1869-Renate, 1952). He trained in Brera and had a strong social sense, spending much time focusing on educating the people of Brianza. Many of his works were funerary statues, meaning his works can be found in the Monza cemetery and many other cemeteries, including in Milan where he created the monument for famed WWI pilot Francesco Baracca. He moved to Renate in 1893 and became a local councillor (1901). He founded and directed various scholastic institutes and, in 1945, became the mayor by popular demand. Two famous contemporary people are also from Renate. **Dionigi Tettamanzi** (Renate, 14 March 1934) is currently Archbishop of Milan. He was ordained in 1957 by Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini, made Cardinal by Pope John Paul II in 1998, and archbishop of Ancona-Osimo in 1989, and 1995 of Genoa. He has been secretary and vice-president of the Italian Episcopal Conference and

remains a member of numerous important ecclesial institutes and holds various offices in the Holy See. He has led the Milan Diocese since 29 September 2002. On 20 March 2008, he published a new Ambrosian Lectionary. **Edoardo Mangiarotti** (Renate, 7 April 1919) was educated by his father, a famous fencer from post WWI period. Edoardo won more Olympic and World Championship medals than any other Italian. In total, from 1936 to 1960, he won 6 gold medals, 5 silvers and 2 bronzes. He is the President of the National Union of Veterans Sports, which is recognised by the Italian Olympic committee. He is an honorary member of the federal council of the Italian fencing federation and the Fédération Internationale d'Escrime (FIE), where he also heads the Discipline Commission. He shares, with the walker Ugo Frigerio, the honour of having been the only Italian chosen to carry the Italian flag at the opening ceremony of the Olympics on two occasions (Melbourne 1956 and Rome 1960).

Besana in Brianza

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

Pro Loco: via Dante Alighieri 13. **Tel. and fax:** 0362915289

Website: www.prolocobesana.it **E-mail:** info@prolocobesana.it

Distance from Monza: 16 km. **Distance from Milan:** 33 km. **Map reference:** C 4

The finds, in the late 19th century in the Valle Guidino district, of tablets bearing Roman inscriptions suggest the origins of Besana date back to, at least 69 AD. There was probably a Roman religious site here and a saltus (pasture) that belonged to a Roman General named Verginius Rufus. In the Middle Ages, the area was dominated by the Da Besana family, who were Milanese nobles and for at least three centuries, feudal lords of the country church of Agliate (located beyond the Lambro; birthplace of Garibert, Archbishop of Milan from 918). Various elements in the old centre of via Castello (a large wall in a fish-scale pattern, an entrance arch, a building with a pointed arch, and a vast underground room with a barrel vault) recall the castle (9-12th cent.) built by the local lords. The autonomous communities of Besana, Montesiro, Valle, Cazzano, Villa Raverio, Vergo, Zoccorino and Calò formed around the churches. Under the Habsburgs, these became communes, remaining as such until 1869 when they were united into a single entity known as Besana in Brianza. The municipality has an impressive 34 villas on its books.



The 19th-century Villa Filippini seen from the park and, above, from via Viarana



The Basilica of Ss. Pietro, Marcellino e Erasmo; left, a view of the tympanum

In the old centre, you can see **Villa Filippini**, built in the early 19th century in Neoclassical style by the Prinetti family. The villa has a U-shaped courtyard opening onto the main drive. The landscaped park behind the villa uses the natural lie of the land and has numerous impressive trees. There are 12 bronze and resin statues by Aligi Sassu between 1983 and 1996. This villa houses the public library, which recently benefitted from a donation of historical and artistic texts from Angelo Salvioni and from the Amici dell'Arte di Aligi Sassu association (Sassu has strong ties to Brianza). **Villa Borella de Sabata**, now the Town Hall, is in late Neoclassical style, having been built around the middle of the 19th century. It has a somewhat unusual octagonal central section

Out of interest

Educational farms and farm stays

Agriturismo Agricola Brusignone owned by Gabriella Pennati and Federica Rigamonti (Montesiro di Besana in Brianza, via A. De Gasperi, tel. 3355975100, fax 0362996162), is a farm where animals are bred, red fruits are grown, dairy and meat cattle, goats and sheep are reared, bees are kept and cheese is made. Sale of small fruits, jams, honey and various types of cheese. On Wednesdays and from Friday to Sunday, there is a small restaurant, but booking is essential. Various educational activities. During the "Per Corti e Cascine" (courtyards and farms) event, they show how cheese is made at 11am and 3.30pm.

Apicoltura Dell'Orto (via San Clemente 12, tel. 0362994 878, fax 0362915842,

e-mail: apicoltura.dellorto@libero.it) is located on the border of the Valle del Lambro Park in 17th-century rural buildings with a large garden. This bee farm (where they breed their own queen bees) also collects different types of honey from all across Italy. Sale of honey, propolis, royal jelly and extra virgin olive oil. Educational activities for the "Per Corti e Cascine" (courtyards and farms) event, including learning about bees and making hives. These are suitable for children and adults.

Agriturismo "Agrodolce" (via Piave 39, tel. 0362941532) provides homemade cuisine with home-grown products. Tuesday to Sunday from midday to 2.30pm and 8pm to 1am.

that looks onto piazza Umberto I. There are some wonderful rooms on the ground floor, with romantic decorations and stucco work. The best are in the main hall (now used as the council chamber). The piazza is the setting for the **parish church of Ss. Pietro, Marcellino e Erasmo**, a grand Neoclassical building (after 1825) by Giacomo Moraglia. The fresco (1838) in the baptistry is by the painter Morgari. The works in the apse, presbytery and the vault above the nave are by Raffaele Casnedi (1873-1878). Inside, you can see a wooden crucifix from the 16th century, an organ made by the Eugenni Biroldi company (1809-1835) and a fresco of *St. Sebastian* by the school of Bergognone. In 1998, the church became a Minor Roman Basilica.

On via Viarana you find the **church of S. Caterina d'Alessandria** (15th cent.), commissioned by a noblewoman called Lucrezia Bonacossa and consecrated in 1413. It has a number of paintings from the 17th and 18th centuries. It was restored in 1827 and, during this work, some 15th-century frescoes were uncovered. In the arcade on the embankment of the small church, you can admire a series of four polychrome mosaics designed by Aligi Sassu and created by his friend and assistant Tito Toneguzzo. They depict St. Catherine with the Wheel, St. Francis, the Blessed Cardinal Andrea Ferrari and the Blessed Luigi Guanella. The nearby **Villa Dragoni Volta**, also called La Dragona, has some medieval elements.

In the Montesiro section of the Brugora district, you can see a former Benedictine convent that was



The church of S. Caterina d'Alessandria

Feasts and events

Maggio Cazzanese: on the last Friday, Saturday and Sunday of May, the Festa in Piazza is organised by the S. Clemente Cultural Group from the Cazzano district. Exhibitions, competitions, a Harley-Davidson rally, culinary events and dancing on the square.

Fish Festival: on the third Sunday of July in the Calò district, it involves a series of events, including tasting local fish dishes and dancing in the evening.

Hunting and Birding Fair: last week in July in the Calò district, this involves a dog show (hunting and other dogs) as well as birds, game and poultry. There is also a section for bird equipment and bee-keeping as well as a competition for bird-whistling and quail piping.

Feast of the Holy Crucifix: second weekend in October, this feast celebrates a large wooden crucifix (14th cent.) kept in the parish church. It is on display for three days. Concerts and shows complement the religious ceremonies.

Fair of St. Catherine: on 25 November, this centuries-old feast is named after the small church that was built around the year One thousand and dedicated to St. Catherine of Alexandria. Display of merchandise, farming equipment and livestock.

Monza-Molteno-Lecco railway

The Monza-Molteno-Lecco railway — known as the Railway of Brianza — has come close to being closed down on more than one occasion, but protests from commuters and local administrators have always saved it. It is about 30 km long, connecting Monza to Lecco through the central section of Brianza. The line does not have electrical power and, for a section between Monza and Molteno, there is only a single track. It opened in 1911 and, for decades, it linked the Lecco-section of Brianza to Milan and Monza by diesel train. In the 1980s, the train's route was extended to Sesto San Giovanni; since 2000, when the link to Porta Garibaldi station in Milan was completed, it has come to be the "Three Parks Train". On public holidays and Sundays, one can enjoy the green spaces by heading, from Milan, to Monza Park, the Valle del Lambro Park and the Monte Barro Park, ideally with one's bicycle in tow.



The former Benedictine convent in Brugora

built in the 11th century by the Casati family. It is now an old-age home. The Romanesque church, dedicated to **Saints Peter and Paul**, is from 1102 and it maintains the division between the part for the public, in baroque style (a late 16th-cent. fresco of the *Last Supper* has recently been rediscovered and is similar to some works in S. Vittore in Meda), and the section for the nuns, which has 16th-century frescoes about the Virgin Mary that are attributed to the Master of Camuzzago. There are two cloisters, from the 16th and 18th centuries.

In Vergo Zoccorino, it is worth seeing the **church of Ss. Gervaso e Protaso**. This 16th-century building has been altered on various occasions and the current appearance is 18th century. Monteseiro is the setting for the **Oratory of Ss. Nazaro e Celso**, which has some furnishings from the 18th to the 20th centuries.

Out of interest

The stone of Guidino

In the Guidino zone, sitting 300 m above sea level on a glacial hill, you can see a large, uneven shape atop the border wall of Villa Guidino (private). It is actually a serpentinous rock, probably from Valtellina. To get a better view of the rock, you need to head to the Public



Relations Office (URP) in Besana in Brianza to get the keys to get into the walled off section. **For information** : Public Relations Office, via Roma 1 (Monday to Saturday, 9am to 12.30pm, Thursday 8.30am-7pm); tel. 036292202; e-mail: urp@comune.besanainbrianza.mi.it

Carate Brianza

Municipal website: www.comune.caratebrianza.mi.it
Pro Loco Carate Brianza: via General Cantore 6. **Tel.:** 0362990470
Fax: 0362906487. **Distance from Monza:** 12 km
Distance from Milan: km 29. **Map reference:** C 4



The Basilica of Ss. Pietro e Paolo in Agliate



Nativity scene in the basilica

For 20 years, it has been custom for a **Nativity Play** to be held in the basilica in Agliate. On 26 December, there is a charming performance, involving two hundred people, of the birth of Jesus.

The site where Carate Brianza lies is traditionally known as one of the favoured locations of Queen Theodolinda during the period of Lombard domination. There is evidence of Roman-era settlement, from finds made near Realdino, as well as some even earlier traces, namely, the semi-circular hollows dug into a large mass in the small Brovada valley (called “coppelle”). There is evidence, from the 10th centu-

Getting there

By car, Carate Brianza can be reached from Milan along viale Fulvio Testi by following the signs for Monza (SS36 road) and then heading on towards Lecco; Carate Brianza exit; from Lecco, along the SS36 motorway, from Milan via Monza to Lecco, heading towards Milan and taking the Carate Brianza exit; from the A4 motorway (Venice-Milan-Turin), taking the Cinisello Balsamo, then viale Fulvio Testi and then following the directions above.

By train, FS railway line, Sesto S. Giovanni-Monza-Molteno-Lecco (Carate-Calò

station); FS railway line, Milano-Monza-Como (Seregno station), then bus AGI Brianza Trasporti Nord Est 32 Brianza Trasporti z233 Seregno (train station)-Albate-Triuggio, Carate Brianza stop.

By bus, from Milan: from the Sesto metro stop (M1), bus AGI Brianza Trasporti Nord Est 32 Brianza Trasporti z221 towards Mariano Comense, Carate Brianza stop; from Monza: from Monza train station (FS), bus AGI Brianza Trasporti Nord Est 32 Brianza Trasporti z221 towards Mariano Comense, Carate Brianza stop.



Carate, the provost church

ry, of a castle or at least some type of fortified structure that had been built by the De Carate family in the area now occupied by Villa Cusani Confalonieri. Carate was the setting for the battle, in 1275, when the Visconti and Torriani families fought for control of Milan. Indeed, the numerous “foppa dei dusent” – or places where the dead were buried – have provided much evidence. Since the 16th century, the land has seen the building of numerous noble villas by wealthy Milanese. From the late 18th century on and, more specifically, during the 19th century, the course of the Lambro River became the setting for numerous spinning, weaving and dyeing mills, thus indicating the growth of the local textile industry.

The site of greatest architectural and artistic interest is located in the **Agliate** district.

The **Basilica of Ss. Pietro e Paolo** and the **baptistry of S. Giovanni** form an extraordinary Romanesque complex built in the 10th and 11th centuries on the site of some even older buildings. The basilica is a good example of Lombard architecture, with a sloping façade, a nave and twin aisles (some

Roman columns were re-used), a raised presbytery, a crypt that is partially underground and a precious cycle of frescoes (mid 11th cent.), which was uncovered by restoration work in 1985. The nearby baptistery, with its octagonal layout, has hanging arches and is one of the oldest in the region. It has a number of fragments of frescoes from the 10th to 16th centuries.

The current **parish church of Ss. Ambrogio e Simpliciano**, a Neoclassical reconstruction (1803-1807) by Simone Cantoni, has a vast picture gallery with materials from the 16th to 19th centuries and many works from churches in the Milan area that were suppressed.

Villa Cusani Confalonieri was built in the late 16th century by Valerio Confalonieri. It was enlarged in the 17th century, as can be seen from part of the arcade around the courtyard. Much of the adjacent Italian garden has been well preserved. The Confalonieri family also left their mark with **Villa Rovella** in Agliate, which was commissioned by Luigia, Pietro Verri's daughter, using a design by the architect Giacomo Moraglia. It is also worth seeing the **Tagliabue-Buttafava-Rossi** and **Battaglia villas**.



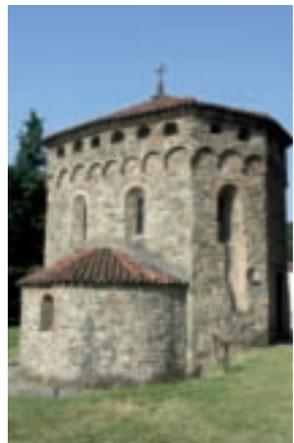
Villa Cusani Confalonieri

Befana on the Lambro River

This event combines rites, magic, fables and religion: an old lady on a boat heading along the river, surrounded by lights, sounds and voices... "Befana on the Lambro River" has been repeated since 1987 on the evening of 5 January from 6.30pm onwards. A different theme is chosen each year and is the basis for all the surrounding shows and events: giant floats, activities, music, sounds and fireworks are all part of awaiting the arrival of the Befana along the river.



The Basilica of Ss. Pietro e Paolo and, right, the baptistery of S. Giovanni



Giussano

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

Pro Loco Giussano: piazza Aldo Moro c/o Town Hall. **Tel.:** 3482885435

Fax: 0362803247. **Distance from Monza:** 16 km. **Distance from Milan:** 31 km

Map reference: C 3



The municipality lies on the border of the provinces of Milan and Como. The first recorded mention was in a notary deed from 879. In the 9th century, the "Da Giussano" family – possibly of Lombard origin – established themselves in the area. Their most famous member was Alberto, the hero of the Battle of Legnano (1176). In 1478, it was part of the fief of Agliate granted to the Balbiani family. In 1688, it passed into the hands of the Crivelli family, who built a villa that, in the following century, was taken over by the Mazenta. In the 19th century, like in many other parts of Brianza, breeding and selling silkworms became a major industry. Giussano, though, also became a centre for vases, ceramics and kitchenware.

The **Town Hall** was built in 1875 along with the school, which was rebuilt after about 100 years. The current Town Hall has a council chamber with four superb glass windows by the painter Aligi Sassu. These windows are dedicated to three famous local sons: the mathematician and physicist Gabrio Piola, the abovementioned Alberto da Giussano and Broth-



One of Aligi Sassu's windows in the council chamber in Giussano



The outline of Villa Mazenta, home to the Town Hall, seen from the inner courtyard

er Giovanni da Giussano, architect of the cathedral in Milan. The fourth window is about progress and the history of man, from prehistory to the conquest of space. In terms of 20th-century artwork, it is worth noting the two monuments by Alfredo Sassi at the civic centre and the one in the Harry Rosenthal public gardens, called *For Freedom* and dedicated to the Resistance in Italy. In 1890, the generosity of the Borella family enabled the hospital to be built (it was later enlarged in 1960). The old parish church stood on piazza S. Giacomo and was rebuilt in 1932, when it was dedicated to **Saints Philip and James** and turned into a basilica. In the first decades of the 20th century, a parish priest by the name of Rinaldo Beretta distinguished himself for the work he did for the community, including holding night school to teach the local population to read. The villa culture is notable here. Firstly, there is **Villa Sartirana**, now the public library. It stands on a site that was first developed in the 15th century. In 1640, it was p ur-

Festivals in Giussano

Giubiana Parade and Bonfire: a traditional festival that is very popular in Piedmont and Lombardy (especially Brianza). On the last Thursday in January, large bonfires are lit on the piazza and in key places. The Giubiana – that is, an effigy of the Giubiana made of hay and rags – is then burnt on these fires.

Feast of the Madonna in October: this traditional event, organised by the Giussano Pro Loco is held on the first Sunday in Giussano. It includes theatre shows, dancing and theme evenings, typical Milanese cuisine and fireworks displays.

Out of interest

Alberto da Giussano

Alberto da Giussano is a legendary character from the 12th century. The Lombard military leader is mentioned in some literary works written in the following centuries even though his historical existence cannot be verified. Aside from where Giussano came from, there is no certain historical or biographical evidence about him.



He first appears in the historical chronicle of Milan penned by Galvano Fiamma in the first half of the 14th century. Alberto is described as a knight that distinguished himself, along with his two brothers, in the Battle of Legnano on 29 May 1176 by leading the Company of Death, a military group of 900 young knights entrusted with defending, to the death, the carroccio wagon (symbol of the Lombard League) against the Imperial army of Frederick I Barbarossa.

In 1876, on the 700th anniversary of the battle, the commune of Legnano and following a rousing discourse by Giuseppe Garibaldi (given in the town in 1862), the town decided to create a statue in his honour. The first version was created by the sculptor Egidio Pozzi, but this was replaced with a new one by Enrico Butti in 1900. The second version shows the hero that has since become famous, with his sword raised and his shield on his left. It is on piazza Monumento, near the train station. In 1879 Giosuè Carducci made Alberto da Giussano one of the protagonists in his famous *Canzone di Legnano*. During the 20th century, this image has achieved reasonable fame. Since 1991, a depiction of the statue in Legnano became the electoral symbol of the Lega Nord party.



Portions of the frescoes in Villa Sartirana

chased by Cesare Sartirana, who commissioned a major cycle of frescoes. In 1795, another Cesare altered the garden and a ground floor room, commissioning paintings by someone from the circle of Andrea Appiani. The Neoclassical **Villa Boffi** was purchased in 1843 by the Milanese Borella family, who were also the ones behind the hospital. The villa is located on holdings that belong to the Lucini and Carabelli families and is private property. The villa itself has some richly frescoed rooms and an imposing grand staircase leading up to the first floor. The tall lookout tower is a slightly unusual feature for a villa, but this one was commissioned by Pietro Borella in the mid-19th century. The large park is still in the English style that it was moulded into in the 19th century.



Villa Sartirana seen from the garden

Verano in Brianza

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

Pro Loco: piazza Liberazione 1. **Tel.:** 0362912326

E-mail: prolocoverano@tiscali.it **Distance from Monza:** 13 km

Distance from Milan: 30 km. **Map reference:** C 4



A view of Villa Trotti Bentivoglio



This area must originally have been settled in Roman times, judging by the discovery of some Roman-Gaul tombs. In the Middle Ages, it was under the country church of Agliate and perhaps had a castle, but it has long since been demolished. From the 16th to 18th centuries, it was home to a Capuchin convent. It was originally a farming centre, but the various watercourses and the lie of the land meant that the dominant crops were cereal and vines. The high point of farming here was in the 15th century. From the 18th century on, mulberry trees and silkworm breeding became economic drivers. At the same time, especially because mills

Paolo Nespoli, astronaut

Verano is the birthplace of the astronaut Paolo Nespoli who left earth on 23 October 2007 on board Space Shuttle *Discovery*, STS-120 as the mission specialist (ESA's *Esperia* mission). During the mission, he was in control of the activities outside of the shuttle (spacewalks) needed to assemble the Node 2 – also called *Harmony* –, a new, multifunctional component of the International Space Station. The piece was manufactured by Italian industry.



Cascina Caviana



The church of the Madonna di Caravaggio

could be built along the Lambro, wool processing developed and, like for silkworms, flourished in the middle of the 20th century. The poet Roberto Rebera recalled Verano for its excellent shawls.

The 18th-century **Villa Trotti Bentivoglio** (later Villa Massarani and now Villa Formenti) is worth seeing. This villa was mentioned by the poet Carlo Amoretti in the early 19th century. It is surrounded by a vast English-style park that is filled with a wondrous variety of plants. There is also an orange house and a coffee house. Alessandro Manzoni stayed here on more than one occasion as he was related, by marriage, to the owner.

The old parish church is also 18th century and dedicated to the **Madonna of Caravaggio**. The new one, dedicated to **Saints Nazarius and Celsus**, was built in 1937.

The surrounding area is home to a number of farmhouses, notably the **Cascina Caviana** and **Cascina Comasina**.



Verano in Brianza, the 20th-century parish church of Ss. Nazaro e Celso



Triuggio

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

Pro Loco Triuggio: via Vittorio Emanuele 8. **Tel.:** 0362971372

Distance from Monza: 11 km. **Distance from Milan:** 28 km.

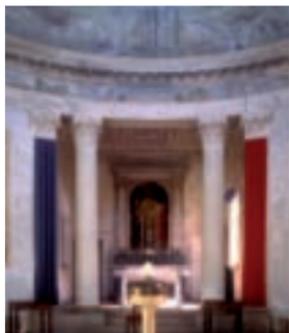
Map reference: C 4

Triuggio is the headquarters of the **Ville del Lambro Park** precisely because of the location and the beauty of the territory. The name Triuggio is only recorded as far back as 1684, with early documents referring to the three villages that now make up the municipality: Tregasio, Rancate and Canonica. In the centre of the town you can see the **parish church of S. Antonino Martire** (1901), a neo-Romanesque work by the architects Castelli and Volontè. Inside, there are some notable stained-glass windows designed by the architect Cabiani, pictures of the Stations of the Cross by the Viennese Joseph Furhrisch (1872) and some paintings from the 18th century.

On the road to Tregasio, you find **Casa Don Bosco**, once owned by the Caprotti family (weavers). It was acquired by the Diocese in 1948 and it is now an old-age home for elderly nuns. It is also a place for spiritual retreats and gatherings of priests.



Left, the Rotonda, and, right, the neo-Gothic parish church in the Tregasio district



The interior and a detail of the caryatids in the Rotonda at Tregasio di Triuggio

Bosco Chignolo

The Bosco Chignolo (www.boscochignolo.it) is a wood that covers 12 ha on the border with the Valle del Lambro Park. It was planted in the 1950s to provide timber for paper, but it was never felled and, as such, it was purchased by the Triuggio municipality in 1989. Since then, the area has been subject to environmental regeneration that has not only helped the plants but has also involved creating an educational nature trail that follows the theme of the "Legend of Bard, Knight of the Chignolo Wood", which was written for this specifically by Emilio Minelli and is set in medieval Brianza during the time of Queen Theodolinda. As such, the Chignolo wood is not only an oasis for many animals, especially birds, but also a magic place linked to a strange fable. It is a place that can be enjoyed by adults and children alike.

In the Tregasio district, located in the highest part of Triuggio, the **Rotonda** is an interesting example of late Neoclassical work (1842). The structure, with a circular layout and dome, has some decorations from the same period in which a series of caryatids symbolise Christian virtues. The building was built by Ambrogio Nava to be a funerary monument and was commissioned by Federica d'Adda, widow of the architect Luigi Cagnola. Nava originally worked with Cagnola and later married the countess. Next to this round building, you find the neo-Gothic **parish church of Ss. Gervaso e Protaso** (1922), the work of Monsignor Spirito Maria Chiappetta. He also redid **Villa Sacro Cuore** (in the Zuccone San Giovanni zone), which is run by the priests of the Company of Jesus and is an unusual example of a religious villa that spreads out horizontally, with five churches and chapels inside.

In the Ponte di Rancate district, in the northern part of Triuggio, you find the **Sanctuary of S. Maria Assunta** or **Maria dei Miracoli**, which began as a rural chapel in 1507 (the devotional image of Mary still survives). The interior is adorned with works by the Campi brothers and by Bartolomeo Roverio, known as Genovesino. There are also rich Neoclassical decorations, with paintings by Andrea Appiani and stucco work by Giocondo Albertolli (1785), who worked on Villa Reale in Monza a few years later.

In the Canonica district, on the left bank of the Lambro near Zuccone, you can see an interesting 19th-century rural complex in neo-Gothic style annexed to **Villa Jacini**, which was built in the 17th century, but altered at the beginning of the last century. The site is made even more impressive by **Villa Taverna**, surrounded by a grand park. The original section of the villa was actually a late 16th-century fortified structure that was turned into a palazzo and then altered in the following centuries. Behind it, there is an Italian garden. One of the most famous guests was Giampaolo Osio, better known as Egidio, lover of the nun from Monza in Manzoni's *Promessi Sposi* (The Betrothed).

Originally the oratory for the facing Villa Taverna, the **church of S. Maria della Neve** is in a sombre 18th-century style. It was designed by Giacomo Antonio Quadrio (1735) and is centred on a middle point topped by a dome. Not far away, but higher up, you find the baroque **church of S. Eurosia**.

To get some idea of the number of textile factories that sprang up in the 19th century, you should head to Ponte Albiate to see the **Manifattura Caprotti**, built between 1867 and 1884.

There are wooded areas in the small valleys that cut across the territory. The names of these woods actually come from the irrigation ditches that run through them into the Lambro: Brovada, Cantalupo and Pegorino. With a bit of luck, while visiting one you might spot a grey heron or a sparrow-hawk.

Canonica

Canonica, near Triuggio, is located on the left shore of the Lambro. It is chiefly known for a restaurant that serves typical Brianza food, various other bars and a general atmosphere that is rich in feeling, turning the small hamlet, especially in summer, into a favoured meeting place for all ages of young people. In addition, since it is slightly raised, you get a view over one of the oldest noble palazzi in the Milan area, including the 16th-century Villa Taverna. Currently owned by the Counts of Taverna (and used as a summer residence), it is often used for festivals and events.



The entrance and, above right, an overview of Villa Taverna in Canonica

Correzzana

Municipal website: www.comunecorrezzana.it
Distance from Monza: 12 km. Distance from Milan: 28 km
Map reference: C 4



This small centre on the northern section of the Milanese plain lies in the heart of Brianza. The area is crossed by the Pegorino Stream, which flows into the Lambro and is a good destination for cycle tourists. The first recorded evidence of the town is in Gothofredus de Bussero's *Liber notitiae Sanctorum Mediolani*, from the 13th century, when it is noted that the town had a century-old link to the country burgh of Agliate and to its lords, the Albuzzi family. The parish church of S. Desiderio Martire is also mentioned. In the 15th century, Count Girolamo Morone (already Lord of Lecco) gained the feudal rights to Correzzana. Later, they passed to Count Stampa di Montecastello. In the 17th and 18th centuries, it was the turn of the Crivelli family, who in 1654, as feudal lords of Agliate, were granted the title of Marquis by King Philip IV of Spain. Some of the other important families from the history of the town are Stazza, Pulici, Rosa, Rocca, Nova and Lamperti.

The original farming vocation of the area can be gathered from the Cascina Regondella, which is an interesting example of rural architecture. The municipality has been, since 1996, in the Valle del Lambro Park.



A view of the Cascina Regondella and, above, the parish church of S. Desiderio

Albate

Municipal website: www.comune.albate.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 9.5 km. **Distance from Milan:** 27 km
Map reference: C 4

Albate lies on the basin of the Lambro River in the Valle del Lambro Park. The first recorded mention is as early as the 11th century, when it was under the rule of the Confalonieri family. It later passed to the Mandelli and Pallavicini families. In 1324, near Albate bridge, Marco Visconti defeated Guelph forces. Ludwig, King of Bavaria, also passed here on his March on Monza. In modernity, the lords of this land were the Balbiani (from 1478) and Mellerio (1777) families. In the second half of the 19th century, various textile factories developed along the Lambro, forming the backbone and driver of local industry until just a few decades ago. One of the most illustrious locals, in recent times, was Vittorio Colombo who was a senator, minister and even president of the Senate of the Republic. He was also the first person to propose the creation of the province of Monza and Brianza.

The sanctuary built in the 17th century is dedicated to **St. Firmus**, patron saint of Albate. The saint is still much loved in the town and, in 1996, a bronze statue was placed on the church parvis. Opposite the church, a cross the road, you find the **public gardens**, with a 17th-century column that was built in memory of the famous plague that is central to some of Manzoni's works. The parish church is dedicated to **St. John the Evangelist**. Built on the site of a 13th-century building that had been altered and enlarged on various occasions, this structure was designed by Spirito Maria Chiappetta, in the late 19th century, and has clearly neo-Renaissance forms. The bell tower is from before the middle of the 11th century, although it was rebuilt in the early 15th century. Not far away, you find **Palazzo Tomini**, which was built in the 18th century.



St. Firmus and the Battle

According to tradition, the tri-colour flag kept in the Albate Town Hall was unfurled during one of the most memorable battles involving Garibaldi's men, namely the Battle of San Fermo. On 27 May 1859, the Cacciatori delle Alpi – a corps that included volunteers from Brianza and that had been created on 17 March that year by Giuseppe Garibaldi – defeated the Habsburg's troops in the town of San Fermo, near Como, which then became San Fermo della Battaglia in memory of this historic victory. Four companies of volunteers – making up just over 3,000 men – without any artillery met the Austrian troops front on, despite the Austrians having 16 pieces of artillery. The victory was fundamental as the town, in a raised position, was essential for taking Como.

The Feast of St. Firmus

In 1609, the relics of Saints Firmus, Rusticus and Proclus were taken to the small sanctuary on the outskirts of Albiate. As such, for the last 400 years, a great fete has been held in honour of St. Firmus, including a livestock display and other initiatives. The climax of the festival is on the second Tuesday after the second Sunday in August, when thousands of people from across Brianza come together to honour the saint. **For info** : www.sagra-sanfermo.it



ry but redone later. There is also **Villa Tanzi**, built in the mid-19th century. Since the 1950s, it has been home to the Casa dei Padri Betharramiti. The ground floor hall has a number of Neoclassical paintings. The layout of the surrounding park is still very similar to the original design.

Villa Campello, named after the area of town where it stands, is only a few dozen metres from the right bank of the Lambro. It was built between 1903 and 1907 using an eclectic design by the architect Giuseppe Gmur. The large park has some centuries-old beech, lime, horse-chestnut, monkey-puzzle and cedar trees. Up until 1972, the Viganò family lived in the villa. The family's wealth was once tied to the Manifattura Galeazzo Viganò, although only traces remain today of this textile factory. In 1976, the villa became a municipal possession and, following restoration work, it became the Town Hall in 1991. In the Town Hall, there is the banner from a group of locals that fought in the Battle of S. Ermo in 1859 between Garibaldi's men and Austrian troops.

Slightly up in the hills you find Villa Airoldi Caprotti, although it is often called **Villa S. Valerio**. It was built in the 17th century on the site of a ruined medieval fort. A part of a tower was even incorporated into the more modern construction. In 1667, an **Oratory** was built next to the villa. It was initially named after the Blessed Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, but it was later dedicated to St. Valerius and still contains the saint's relics.



Villa Campello, now home to Albiate's Town Hall; above, a view of the entrance

Sovico

Municipal website: www.comune.sovico.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 8 km. **Distance from Milan:** 25 km
Map reference: C 4

This town lies in the southern, central section of Brianza where the hills and hillocks gradually flatten out into the great plain and the Lambro River gently washes by. The first known mention of the town was in the Archbishop of Milan Ansperto da Biassono's will, when he left the land to his grandson, a deacon, in 879. A castle was built in this area in the 13th or 14th centuries. It would have been part of the ongoing battle between the Visconti and Torriani families for dominance over the Milan area. Today, the only remnants of this castle are some small sections in the Vecchia Osteria section of town. The old town has a former country mansion that once belonged to the Viscontis. It has a notable window with a pointed arch, a cornice decorated with small arches against a white background and imposing walls. **Villa Gioivo della Torre**, later **Villa Rossi-Martini** (private), is from the 17th/18th century and has an annexed garden.

The town's main square is notable for having two churches. The **Old Church**, dedicated to Christ the King and Saints Simon and Judas Taddaeus, was



Sovico's Old Church



Famous people

The list of famous people from Sovico includes **Giovanni da Sovico**, after whom the main street is named. He was elected as one of the twelve "Captains and Defenders of Liberty" under the Ambrosian Republic (1448). There is also the Dominican Friar **Teodoro da Sovico**, author of *Il Confessionario*, which was published in 1495, with a new version being released in Milan in 1505. In the book, he explored the importance of the sacrament of confession given the nascent protestant revolution. **Arturo Riva** was an adopted son of Sovico. This many-sided man was a pharmacist, mayor and provincial councillor. He published various works on the local geology, resulting in him becoming known as the 'geologist of Brianza'. In 2004, a piazza in the town was named after him.



The warehouses on piazza Frette, regenerated to become a business

Feasts and events

Concert for the Immaculate Virgin, 8 December: an event filled with religious music in the parish church of Cristo Re. **Vocal Music Show**, in November at the Cinema Nuovo: this event is organised by Giulio Zappa, a local piano maestro who invites, annually, friends and colleagues (internationally renowned singers) to Sovicco to delight audiences with the best-known arias from operas and some traditional folk songs from across Europe. This event really should be put in the diary of any lover of classical music. **Feast of the Patron Saint**, fourth Sunday in October: theatre shows, merry-go-rounds, various exhibitions and a concert by Corpo Musicale "Giuseppe Verdi". **Christmas Concert**, 23 December: a concert by the Corpo Musicale "Giuseppe Verdi" at the Cinema Nuovo. The evening is also when the Luigi Cazzaniga award is presented to an association that has distinguished itself for social or volunteer work.

created in the 16th century on the site of a religious building from the 12th century. Following the collapse of the bell tower, it was rebuilt in the mid-19th century, but it was deconsecrated in 1935 and has remained unused. The **New Church** was created between 1930 and 1935 by an architect from Bergamo known as Giovanni Barboglio. **piazza Frette**, now the commercial and administrative hub of the town, is an excellent example of how old industrial buildings can be regenerated (these were 'revived' in the 1980s and 1990s). The large warehouses that frame the square together with the smokestack that towers above a small piazza nearby are reminders of the old Tessitura Frette factory. This textile production plant was located right in the town and, as such, from 1865 to 1983, it was central to the town's fate. In 1983, the factory was moved to Concorezzo.

An old millstone, known as **Molino Bassi**, is a reminder of when this was a farming landscape, dotted with farmhouses named Virginia, Greppi, Visconti and Canzi. The millstone itself is as old as the mills that line the Lambro, which were designed in 1615 by the engineer Pietro Antonio Barca. There were once five water-driven wheels and five millstones. Closed in 1966, it is now owned by the municipality.



Molino Bassi

Macherio

Municipal website: www.comune.macherio.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 7 km. **Distance from Milan:** 24 km
Map reference: D 4

Macherio lies at the foot of the Brianza hills, along the Lambro River. The oldest recorded mention of the commune is in Gothofredus de Bussero's *Liber notitiae Sanctorum Mediolani* (1220-1289). It was a part of the Martesana county and, during the modern age, its feudal lords have included the Manriquez, the Pallavicini (1681 on) and the Albertoni (1768 on) families. During the 19th century, the town developed thanks to flourishing mulberry and vine 'industries'. Indeed, many Milanese families – Belgiojoso, Greppi, Maggi, Taverna and Visconti – invested heavily in these parts. Today, farming has given way to services, metal working (engineering) and the chemical industry. Simultaneously, the textile industry, which developed in the 19th century, and the furniture industry have also survived (especially in the Bareggia area). One of the most important buildings is **Villa Visconti di Modrone**, known as Belvedere (private) because it sits on a rise from where one can see much of Brianza. This villa was originally the farmhouse for a 16th-century farm. It was then bought by Duke Guido Visconti di Modrone and was almost entirely rebuilt in a neo-rococo style in the early 20th century using a design by Emilio Ambasz. The age-old woods around the building were landscaped into English and Italian gardens.

The **parish church** originated in the 15th century, but was changed in 1752 and then enlarged later on. The dome was built in 1952. The other notable buildings are: the **Oratory of S. Cassiano**, near the cemetery; it is from the 16th century, but rebuilt in 1702 and 1725; the **Oratory of S. Margherita**, near the Cascina Torrette, might have been built in the 14th century; and the 17th-century **Oratory of S. Anna**, near the Cascina Maldura in Bareggia.



The parish church, above, and the Macherio Town Hall

Biassono

Municipal website: www.comune.biassono.org

Distance from Monza: 6 km. Distance from Milan: 23 km

Map reference: D 4



The church of S. Martino

Biassono sits on the right side of the Lambro valley, at the edge of Monza Park. Excavations carried out in the 19th and 20th centuries showed that there were settlements here as early as the 10th/9th century BC, in the period between the Bronze and Iron ages. At the Cascina Marianna, some finds were made of 5th-century BC objects, while in the S. Andrea farmhouse zone, the ruins of a Roman villa from the 1st century have been brought to light.

Biassono was an important centre in the Middle Ages, as can be gauged from the presence of Bishop Anspert (9th cent.) and the foundation, in the 13th century, of two monasteries by the Humiliati (only the place names Corte del Monastero and Corte degli Umiliati remain). In 1277, following the Battle of Desio, it was occupied by Ottone Visconti. It then became a fief of various families, including the Cravennas (1675), whose emblem is part of the municipal coat-of-arms. From the 16th to 19th centuries, it was a favoured destination for the Milanese

Out of interest

Anspert da Biassono

Appointed Archbishop of Milan on 26 June 868, he was, as is noted by Gothofredus de Bussero, a member of Milan's noble Confalonieri family. One of his first acts was to found the church of S. Pietro in Agliate. A cultured man, he followed the example of his predecessor and used Irish monks from Tours to found the archbishop's scriptorium in Milan, where elegant illuminated codices were created. On 12 August 875, Anspert went to Brescia to receive the body of Emperor Ludwig II and bring it to Milan, to the

Basilica of S. Ambrogio, where the sepulchral inscription can still be seen. According to Pietro Verri's History of Milan, this would have been a brave and secret event since the Brescian monks had opposed the idea. On 31 January 876, Anspert was involved in the coronation of Charles the Bald as King of Italy in Pavia. Shortly afterwards, he received lands in Cavenago, Vimercate and Ornago from the king. He died in Milan on 7 December 881 and was buried in S. Ambrogio in Milan.



The library at Villa Verri

to build their country villas, with the best example being **Villa Verri**. This villa, now the Town Hall, was owned by the Verri family until 1913. The rationalist shape that this famous family from the Enlightenment gave the villa is still clearly visible: an 'open' structure that develops horizontally out from a flight of steps. Unfortunately, the frescoes (1749) have disappeared, but they were said to be the work of the Galliari brothers. Recently, the old ice house and wine room was uncovered. Opposite the villa, you can see **Palazzo Bossi**, which has 15th century origins, but was redone in baroque style in the 17th century. Nearby, you find **Villa Crivelli-Sala**, which has an 18th-century layout and portal. This is the same as at **Villa Sagramora**, although the latter has some Neoclassical elements.

The Verri family



The Verri family owned land in Biassono from the 16th century on. The villa was commissioned by Gabriele (1696-1782), a jurist and president of the Senate of Milan. He was also the father of: Pietro (Milan, 1728-1797), an economist, historian and founder, along with Cesare Beccaria, of *Il Caffè*, Italy's first newspaper; Alessandro (Milan, 1741-Rome, 1816), a philosopher, man of letters, collector and art merchant; and Carlo (Milan, 1743-Verona, 1823), who had the closest tie to Biassono. This eclectic character dedicated himself to the history of art and agronomy, introducing new farming techniques and the cultivation of mulberries for silkworms.



A room in the Museo Civico Carlo Verri

Visiting the museum

Museo Civico Carlo Verri (via San Martino 11) is open on Friday from 9.30am to noon and 3 to 6.30pm and Saturday from 3 to 7pm; other days on request. Group and school visits must be booked. The "Segno, Scrittura, Stampa" section is open daily from 9.30am to 5.30pm. Entrance is free. For information: www.museobiassono.it, info@museobiassono.it, tel. 0392201077.

Festivals in Biassono

Great Bonfire of St. Anthony and his pig in January; **District Palio**, a pedal-car race through the streets of the old centre on the third Sunday in September; **Feast of St. Martin**, in November, a traditional animal fair that now has a wide range of stalls selling various produce and products as well as stands run by local associations, collectors, glass-makers, ironworkers and other traditional craftsmen.

The **parish church of S. Martino** was built in the 16th century on the site of a 13th-century building. Inside, you can admire some 17th-century paintings (*St. Ambrose and the Bishop Saints*, *The Nativity*) and a statue of the *Madonna of the B. elt*. The sacristy has some wooden furnishing from the same period. The side aisles were added in 1903. The **Sanctuary of the Madonna della Brughiera** is another key local religious building. It was constructed in 1834 as a votive offering, following a cholera epidemic, on the site of the ancient oratory of S. Carlo. The altarpiece of the Virgin Mary is said to be by the school of the Bolognese painter Francesco Francia (1450-1517). The painting of the *Annunciation* has been attributed to Panfilo Nuvolone or one of his followers (early 17th cent.) and the *Passion of Christ* and *Pietà* to Montalto.

The Cascina Cossa has been home, since 1994, to the **Museo Civico Carlo Verri**. This museum was created in 1977 with the backing of the Gruppo di Ricerche Archeostoriche del Lambro (GRAL). It has a collection of archaeological finds and coins from the zone and an ethnological collection about local folk culture.

In the environs, in the Mondina section of San Giorgio al Lambro, some finds were made that are now kept in Milan's archaeology museum. In the centre of this district, the presence of the river meant that numerous mills, locks and wash-houses were once built. The town also has a **portico** (14th/15th cent.) and the **church of S. Giorgio**. It was the birthplace of Gaetano Osculati (1808-1894), an explorer and map-maker known as the Marco Polo of Brazil.



Sanctuary of the Madonna della Brughiera

Vedano al Lambro

Municipal website: www.vedanolambro.it
Distance from Monza: 3 km. Distance from Milan: 20 km
Map reference: D 4

The municipality sits on the right bank of the Lambro, in a somewhat raised position. Finds (from a necropolis and other items) made in 180 show that there was once a Roman settlement here. Much of this land was owned by the Archbishop of Milan Anspert, as can be seen from his will of 11 December 879. The Order of the Humiliati founded two convents here in the Middle Ages. It later became part of the Martesana county, falling under the fief and country church of Desio. As such, it was tied to Desio's fate until 1729, when, following the death of Count Giovanni Battista Scotti, it passed to the Royal Chamber. In the 19th century, a section of the commune covered what is now Monza Park, but in 1928 that area, including the modern site of the famous race circuit, was assigned to the Monza municipality. Many of the older buildings in the municipality are from the 19th century.

Villa Litta was built on the site of an older mansion owned by the Gallarati Scotti family. It was commissioned by Duke Giulio Litta Visconti Arese from the architect Luigi Chierichetti. The chosen style was an unusual combination of lines that recalls English neo-Gothic. Inside, there are some love-



The old centre of Vedano al Lambro



Duchess Litta



Eugenia Attendolo Bolognini was born in 1837 to Eugenia Vimercati Sanseverino and Count Gian Giacomo, a well known collector. In 1855, she married Duke Giulio Litta, who was part of the 1848 revolutionary movement. The duchess, an extraordinary beauty, shared her husband's views and had an intellectual circle in Milan. She was the mother of two sons – Pompeo and the favoured Alfonso, who died in 1891 – that came from her long love story with King Humbert I. Benefactor of the Main Hospital in Milan, she dedicated a wing to her son who died prematurely. She died in Vedano al Lambro as the Great War was about to break out.

S. Maria delle Selve

The Oratory of S. Maria delle Selve, on the outskirts of Biassono, dates back a long way. The chapel might be the same one that existed in the bush land that covered this area prior to the 14th century. The courtyard in front of the church was the setting, each year, for a festival during carnival that involved much merry-making by people from the Monza area. This feast was abolished in 1574. In 1604, Cardinal Frederick Borromeo visited the church and wrote: "In the niche, there is an outstanding depiction of the Blessed Virgin with her son Christ, a statue in white marble sculpted with art. On the door, one can imagine an image of the sculpted Blessed Virgin". In 1842, the building was completely redone as part of the project to build Villa Litta. The Tudor-style tower is also from that period. The oratory was restored in 1891 in Lombard Renaissance style by Eugenia Litta. She also had the tomb in the tower created that now holds the mortal remains of her, her husband and her son. Today, the oratory is owned by the Main Hospital (Ospedale Maggiore) in Milan and it also gave its name to one of the entrances that leads directly onto the Monza race circuit.



Villa Zendali, once Humbert I's hunting lodge

ly decorations by Luigi Scrosati with romantic tastes and the sculpture of *Morning Prayer* by Vincenzo Vela. The sizeable park is a continuation of Monza Park. It consists of farming land and is home to the Arcduke irrigation ditch, which supplied water to Villa Reale.

At the edge of Biassono, you find the **church of S. Maria delle Selve**, a neo-Renaissance building by Pier Fausto Bagatti Valsecchi. **Villa Zendali**, also known as "Villa Reale di Vedano", was probably built in the 18th century, but it was redone after Humbert I bought it to use it as a hunting lodge. The property remained in the hands of the royal Savoy family until 1902. Today, it is part of the oratory of Vedano.

The **parish church of S. Stefano**, rebuilt in the last decade of the 19th century, has four frescoes on the vault above the nave. These were created in 1955 by a painter from Monza called Fiorentino Vilasco. One of the characters in the frescoes is the Blessed Gentile da Vedano. Luigi Tagliaferri created the paintings in the dome, apse and the lunettes in the aisles. Some of the baroque paintings are from the previous church, which dates from at least the 16th century. One of the most notable religious buildings is the **Sanctuary of the Misericordia**, built on the site of a chapel that was documented in the 16th century. In 1896, Tagliaferri restored the fresco that commemorated the apparition of the Virgin Mary.

The **town gate**, flanked by a Neoclassical octagonal gatekeeper's house, was designed by the architect Luigi Canonica.

Lissone

Municipal website: www.comune.lissone.mb.it
Distance from Monza: 4.5 km. **Distance from Milan:** 21 km
Map reference: D 4

Archaeological finds have shown that the history of Lissone began in about the 1st century AD. The growing importance of this hamlet, located in the Martesana country and under the country church of Desio, can be gauged from the presence, from 13th to 16th centuries, of no less than five monasteries of the Order of the Humiliati. These monks and nuns used to process wool and produce textiles. The town's coat-of-arms still bears the emblem of this order: a lamb with the motto *Omnia vincit humilitas*. In the late 18th century, the first carpentry studios opened. This production of furniture later developed and was industrialised in the 19th century. By the end of that century, it reached what could be termed internation-



Lissone's art museum

Out of interest

Museo d'Arte Contemporanea and the Premio Lissone

Lissone's contemporary art museum (Museo d'Arte Contemporanea) was opened in 2000 and has numerous works related to the extraordinary Lissone Award (Premio Lissone, 1946-67), which was originally an Italian award but from 1953 became international. The initiative involved emerging artists and some of Europe's top critics and historians. Over the years, a wonderful collection of some informal paintings was built up, with works by people like Birolli, Morlotti, Moreni, Vedova, Francese, Dorazio, Scanavino, Romiti, Adami, Schifano, Appel, Tàpies and Dufrene. The museum also has a section on Gino Meloni, a local maestro who died in 1989, and a section of works that were acquired more recently. The Premio Lissone was awarded once again in 2002 and since then, it has alternated on an annual basis with the Premio Lissone Design, another international competition,

begun in 2006, that is for creative young people in the design sector. The museum's schedule also includes some major temporary exhibitions, a range of educational activities for schools and adults, events, conferences and concerts. The museum, in viale Padania 6, is open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 3-7pm, Thursday from 3-11pm, and Saturdays, Sundays and holiday from 10am to noon and 3-7pm. **For info** : tel. 0392145174.



Inside the art gallery

Events in Lissone

Every two years (odd years), at the end of June and beginning of July, there is the **Palio di Lissone**, an event involving competitions and folk games. On the Sunday before Christmas, there is a **Nativity Play**, a costume parade (starting from the Oratory of Maria Bambina) and various historical pageants organised by the "Gruppo Amici del Presepe". On 6 January, the same association is behind the **Corteo Storico dei Re Magi** (historical parade of the Wisemen).



The church of Ss. Pietro e Paolo



Palazzo Terragni

al levels. The industry developed even further after the Great War, with the items being sent as far as South America. The town's vocation for furniture making meant that as early as 1941, the **Library of Furniture and Furnishing** was established. This specialised library is unique in Italy and has about 6,500 works in various languages as well as 400 sectoral magazines. Together, these elements document the history of furniture and styles over the centuries, the evolution and theory of design, the recent history of furniture manufacturing, architecture, urbanisation and engineering. Since 2002, the library has been housed in Palazzo Vittorio Veneto, a building on piazza IV Novembre that was once home to the local junior school.

There are various religious buildings in the old centre: the **provost church of Ss. Pietro e Paolo**, built between 1904 and 1926 in eclectic style, with Lombard Romanesque and Gothic elements; the **Oratory of the Assunta** or Madonna del Borgo, from the 16th century, with a wooden statue of the *Virgin Mary with Child* (this remains a much loved work); the **Oratory of S. Carlo**, begun in 1630 and completed a century later, it was often used as a leper colony where sick people could go to recover. Two non-religious buildings stand out. First, there is **Villa Baldironi Reati**, which was built by a family in the Arese circle that owned the villa from the mid-15th century to the late 19th century. The building has been redone on numerous occasions over the centuries. From the beginning, the complex contained the family chapel as well as the villa. In 1981, it was acquired by the local municipality. Painstaking restoration work made it possible to reopen the ground and first floors to the public, allowing many people to enjoy the splendid frescoes and the wonderful decorations that adorn the rooms. The second is **Palazzo Terragni**, once known as the House of Fascism, designed by Giuseppe Terragni and Antonio Carminati (1938-1940). This structure has a theatre, a tower and a communal assembly space. The lines are rationalist. Today, it is owned by the municipality and used for a range of purposes.

Muggiò

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

Pro Loco Muggiò: viale della Repubblica 2. **Tel. and fax:** 0392144335

Website: www.muggio.it **E-mail:** proloco@muggio.it Distance from Monza: 4 km

Distance from Milan: 18 km. **Map reference:** D 4

The first record of Muggiò comes from 879. Like many other towns in Brianza, the presence of Milan meant that during the 18th century it somewhat lost its rural farming vocation as it became a centre for country residences built by the Milanese elite. The most notable of these buildings is **Villa Casati Stampa di Soncino** in the old centre. Now the Town Hall, it was built on the site of a 16th-century building that was already owned by the Casati family. In 1780, Leopold Pollack was commissioned by Agostino Casati to turn the residence into a Neoclassical mansion (the small rear tower is the most notable feature). This Viennese architect also designed the sprawling English park. Another notable residence is **Palazzo Isimbardi**, a 19th-century holiday home that was built by Pietro Antonio Croce (on the site of a home he already owned) when he married Gianna Pietro Isimbardi's daughter. The name of the architect is unknown, but the date of construction



Villa Casati Stampa di Soncino



The Casati Mausoleum

The local cemetery of Muggiò has the mausoleum (1830) of the Casati Stampa di Soncino family. This group of Milanese nobles, first documented in 1030, is closely tied to local history since they bought land here from the 15th century on. The structure is like a classic temple with a crypt and it houses the mortal remains of various members of the line of the family that descended from Giambattista Casati (1557-1617). Some of the most famous members include: Gabrio Casati (1798-1873), First Minister for Public Education of the Kingdom of Italy, and Teresa Casati (1785-1846), with her consort Federico Confalonieri (1785-1846).



The 19th-century parish church of Ss. Pietro e Paolo

Museo del Fumetto (cartoon museum)

Franco Fossati, a journalist from Monza and editor of *Topolino* (Mickey Mouse) who died unexpectedly in 1996, left his extraordinary collection of cartoons to his friends and brother. 500 thousand magazines, books and volumes from all parts of the world over a period of more than 50 years have been catalogued and now belong to the Franco Fossati Foundation. The foundation, an excellent source for researchers and academics, is really a study and resource centre. It has cartoons from dozens of countries along with essays on the history of cartoons, on animation techniques, on science fiction and on the cinema in general. **Premises:** via Montegrappa 32, www.fumetti.org/fondazione

might well be 1783, since this date is etched into the attic. One of the rooms has some notable Neoclassical motifs. Next to Palazzo Isimbardi, you can see **Palazzo Brusa**, or Casa Mariani-Gasparoli, which was built in the second half of the 18th century using a 15th-century structure as the basis. **Palazzo Bolagnos Andreani Santambrogio** (private), on the square by the parish church, has clear baroque traits. Unfortunately, the original geometric garden no longer exists. In the Taccona district, on the road from Muggiò to Cinisello Balsamo and Milan, you find **Palazzo Taccona Bertoglio d'Adda**. Annexed to the palazzo is the Re Magi (Wisemen) chapel, which is older than the main building. The main building is from the second half of the 18th century and it has a classic U-shaped layout, which was very popular for 17th- and 18th-century villas.

The **parish church of Ss. Pietro e Paolo** was built from 1895-97 on the side of an old Barnabite college (and former residence of the Counts Porro). Designed by two architects from Milan, Angelo Savoldi and Giambattista Borsani, it recalls the Basilica of S. Andrea in Vercelli (1219-1297). The bell tower was built in 1920/22 and the façade was completed in 1968. Inside, you could once see a canvas painting of *Christ on the Cross with Mary Magdalene* by Francesco Hayez. This work was commissioned in 1827 by the Isimbardi family (it is now part of the Diocesan museum in Milan). The **S. Rocco chapel**

is located in the centre. Construction on the chapel commenced in 1524 to honour this saint, protector of those afflicted with the plague.

There are some notable aspects linked to country life: in the old centre, you can see the **Curt di quaranta martir**, the **Curt nova** and the **Curt de Barus**, which are good examples of enclosed courtyards with porticoes and balconies used for everyday activities; outside of town, you can see the **Prati**, **Faipò** and **S. Giuliana** farmhouses. The **church of the Madonna del Castano** is linked to the ancient worship of Our Lady of Sorrows and was built in the 16th century. According to tradition, a sculpture of the *Pietà* appeared on a chestnut tree. This sculpture, now inside, was reshaped in the 19th century and placed on a polychrome baroque marble altar that was donated by Count Giuseppe Bolagnos.

On the road (heading south, you get to Milan), you find the oldest sacred building in Muggiò, namely the **small church of S. Giuliana**. Documented as early as the 13th century, at least one of the bricks from the building comes from the year One thousand. The building has been altered over the centuries, but it is still a good example of a rural chapel. Indeed, it was once annexed to the Cascina S. Giuliana (hence the farmhouse's name).



The church of the Madonna del Castano and, right, the S. Rocco chapel

Feasts and festivals

Folk Festival: last Sunday in June, a multi-ethnic festival filled with music, dancing and folklore topped by *churrasco* meat. **Feast of the Patron Saint, the Virgin Mary of Castano:** second and third weeks in September, a town fete linked to the celebrations for the patron saint of Muggiò. There is a range of entertainment and events: sports competitions, cultural initiatives, small markets and the amazing cake "that is the length of the street".

Sagra della Castagna: third Sunday in October, a chestnut festival organised by the Italian Alpine Club and backed by the local municipality. You can buy a range of local products, enjoy some roasted chestnuts, chestnut cake and vin brûlé.

Corteo dei Magi: on 6 January, the Wisemen Parade is a religious event involving music. It is about the theme of the Legend of the Fourth King. This is followed by a concert of traditional Christmas music provided by musicians playing a type of bagpipe from the Bergamo area.



Eastern Brianza

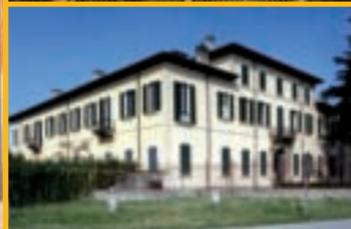
and the noble villas

After Monza, Vimercate is the most important centre, with a truly long history and a substantial wealth of cultural heritage. The list of its notable features is long: Roman archaeological materials, the Romanesque ruins of the rural church of S. Stefano, the church of S. Maria Assunta in Ruginello (with a 16th-century Romanesque section), the S. Rocco sulla Molgora bridge (a rare example of a medieval civil construction), the hunting lodge at Villa Borromeo in Oreno that has profane 15th-century frescoes, the rebuilt 17th-century church of S. Stefano and the wonderful baroque section of the Sanctuary of the Madonna del Rosario, and Morte di Ruginello (18th-cent. chancel-house). The 'villa culture' is central to the entire layout of the modern town and can be clearly seen in numerous buildings: the rococo nature of Palazzo Trotti and Villa Sottocasa, and the Neoclassical work in Villa Casanova, Villa Melzi, Villa Besozzi in Ruginello and, especially, Villa Borromeo Arese and Mlla Gallarati Scotti in Oreno.

The area is just as rich in important religious sites. The Middle Age has left traces in the names of old churches like S. Anastasia in Villasanta, and S. Antonio and S. Eugenio in Concorezzo. The churches of S. Giorgio in Caponago and S. Ambrogio in Sulbiate have survived, with the latter being a precious remnant of a monastic complex with Romanesque and Gothic frescoes. There is also some Renaissance work by the Mas-



ter of Camuzzago, who created the paintings in the Oratory of S. Maria Maddalena (Bellusco). The modern age is represented by the 17/18th-century Ornago sanctuary, the Germanic restyling of the church of S. Giuliana in Caponago on German baroque patterns (one of Carlo Giuseppe Merlo's best works, 1738-1742), the decoration of S. Salvatore in Roncello and S. Giovanni Evangelista in Busnago, the Neoclassical statue of St. George in Cornate by Pompeo Marchesi and the refurbishment of Concorezzo's parish church (the work of one of the leaders of Milan's Napoleonic age, namely Luigi Cagnola). The age of communes is represented by the Germani tower in Busnago (12th cent.), the Bellusco castle, an example of military architecture from the late Middle Ages, and the sections of Palazzo Olgiati Lampugnani in Sulbiate (15th-cent.) There was also the explosion of the villa culture in the 17th to 19th centuries. Large areas of land are marked by this: Aicurzio, Bernareggio, Lesmo (especially the elegant Gernetto), Arcore (with the Neoclassical Villa S. Martino, Villa Borromeo D'Adda with sculptures by Vincenzo Vela, and the unusual Villa Ravizza). There are excellent villas, although they are somewhat more isolated: Villa Rasini in Cavenago (with a series of frescoes that drawn on the paintings of the Arese Borromeo Palace in Ceseno Maderno and 18th-cent. decorations that are epitomised by the rococo work of Mattia Bortoloni), Villa Trivulzio in Omate di Agrate (by Giovanni Ruggeri), Villa Porro Schiaffinati in Busnago, Villa Biffi Soriani in Cornate (designed by Carlo Amati) and Villa Mylius in Burago Molgora.



To learn more

In 2001, the Vimercate town council purchased the Neoclassical Villa Sottocasa, marking the start of a multi-year refurbishment and restoration project that will turn these buildings into a cultural centre. The first phase of this project will be to set up a museum of the local area, called **MUST** (Museo del Territorio) in the villa's southern wing. This is due to open in the autumn of 2009. The museum will be spread across 720 m² and divided into two sections: Museo delle Tracce, which will use items, symbols and tales to tell the history of the peoples that have lived and shaped the Vimercate area; and Museo del Futuro, which will look more at contemporary times. **For information:** toll-free phone 800333722, www.villasottocasa.it

1978 saw the launch of the **Vimercate Library System**, which was one of the first efforts in Italy to have a library system involving multiple municipalities. This is now the head of the libraries in 27 municipalities, meaning it reaches somewhere in the region of 190,000 people. This ensures true economies of scale and high quality services. Indeed, it is seen as a national symbol of excellence. **For information:** www.sbv.mi.it

Molgora Park is a local park that covers a number of municipalities and is recognised by the Lombardy Regional Administration. In total, it has about 1,000 ha of land, largely on either side of the north-south running Molgora River. The park is managed by a consortium that has representatives from the various municipalities. **For information:** www.parco.molgora.it



Vimercate

Municipal website: www.comune.vimercate.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 11 km. **Distance from Milan:** 25 km
Map reference: D 5



The S. Rocco bridge over the Molgora River



The church of S. Stefano

Over the years, numerous finds have been made – altars, noble tombs, tombstones and coins – indicating that the area was once home to a Roman settlement. Two of the most notable discoveries are the 3rd-century BC necropolis (found in 1933 on Piazzale Marconi) and 22 tombs, filled with grave goods (found from 1998/99 on, same area). The oldest document is the will of Roptert di Agrate (745). It

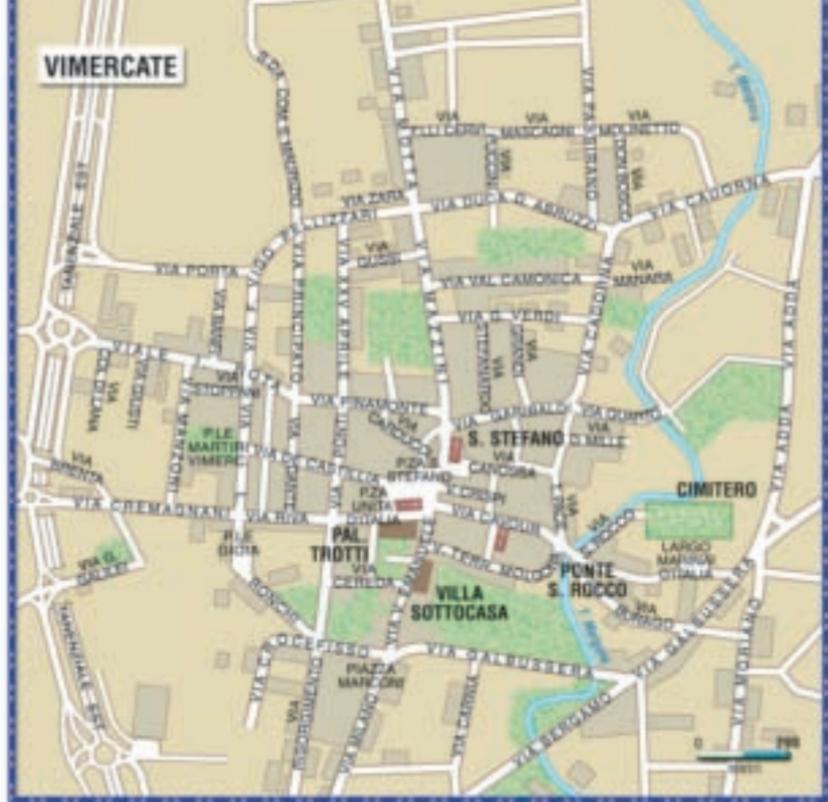
Getting there

By car. Vimercate can be reached from Milan along the Tangenziale Est (eastern ring road) in the direction of Usmate Velate; Vimercate Nord, Vimercate Centro and Vimercate Sud exits. From Como and Varese, along the A8 or A9 motorways to Milan, then the A4 to Venice, taking the Agrate exit and the Tangenziale Est as above. From Bergamo and Brescia on the A4 motorway to Milan, Agrate exit and then follow the signs for Vimercate or go along the Tangenziale Est as above.

By train. from Milan, from the Porta Garibaldi or Milano Centrale stations, taking

trains to Carnate, Bergamo or Lecco (only the ones via Carnate); Arcore stop, then Autobus NET Nord Est Trasporti z319 or z320, Vimercate stop.

By bus, from Milan: from the Cologno Nord metro station, Autobus NET Nord Est Trasporti z322 (Cologno Nord-Trezzo sull'Adda) or z323 (Cologno Nord-Vimercate); from Arcore train station, Autobus NET Nord Est Trasporti z319 or z320; from Monza: from Monza train station, Autobus NET Nord Est Trasporti z321 towards Mezzago/Trezzo sull'Adda/Porto d'Adda.



mentions the church of S. Stefano, which has been in charge of a country church that, for centuries, governed the religious, economic and social life of a vast area. Eventually, this area was incorporated into the Martesana county (931), which consisted of 12 different country churches and was, in terms of administration and justice, under Vimercate. Throughout the Middle Ages, Vimercate was an important centre, especially for trade. In the 14th and 15th centuries, the Visconti and then the Sforza families fortified the town. In the 15th century, the Vimercate fief was initially entrusted to Gasparo da Vimercate and then to Seccoborella. In the 18th century, it came into the hands, via hereditary right, of the Trotti family. Numerous 'noble villas' were built in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and a number of these are still around. During the Napoleonic era, silkworms became a major industry and, a few decades later, the early textile industry was born, lasting until the mid-20th century. In the last few decades of the 19th century, two tramways were built, linking Vimercate to the major regional centres: in 1880 the so-called



Palazzo Trotti, now home to the Vimercate municipality

“Gamba del legn” led to Milan; 10 years later, the Monza-Trezzo-Bergamo line came into existence.

In 1929, Vimercate was joined by Oreno con Velasca and Ruginello con Oldaniga (these were formerly autonomous municipalities). During the Resistance, the 103rd detachment of the Garibaldi Brigade, under the command of Iginio Rota, distin-

Out of interest

Illustrious locals

Just how thriving the city was in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance can be gauged from its ‘illustrious sons’. **Pina-monte da Vimercate** (1120-1187) is often credited with being one of the key members of the League of Lombard communes that fought Frederick Barbarossa and was one of the authors of the Peace of Costanza (1183). In 1171/72 he was Consul of Milan and then, in 1177, Podestà of Bologna. **Stefanardo da Vimercate** lived in the 13th century. This historian, poet, chronicler and praise singer for the adventures of Ottone Visconti in his poem *Liber de gestis in civitate Medio lanensi* was also a Dominican monk and became a professor of moral theology and canon law in 1289. The following year, he was appointed Prior of the convent of S. Eustorgio in Milan, a role he held until 1292. **Gian Giacomo Caprotti** (ca. 1480-1524) was born in Oreno and known as Salaino or Salai. He

was a favoured student of Leonardo da Vinci and followed him to France. However, thus far no painting has been undeniably attributed to him. The Risorgimento involved some people from the Vimercate area: **Gaetano de Castiglia** (1794-1870), who was jailed in Spielberg (1824), exiled to the United States (1835), and became a Senator of the Italian Kingdom; and **Francesco Vigo Pellizzari** (1836-1863), who joined an Italian band of revolutionaries (Cacciatori delle Alpi) in 1859 and was part of Garibaldi’s famous thousand men, where he was Benedetto Cairoli’s lieutenant and one of Garibaldi’s commanders, before losing his life on the Mentana battlefield. Finally, **Antonio Banfi** (1886-1957), an illustrious philosopher, university lecturer, was the creator and first editor of the journal *Studi filosofici* as well as being a founding member of Milan’s Casa della Cultura (House of Culture).

Technology Hub



In the early 1960s, a number of businesses in the electronics sector set up in the Vimercate area, including Telettra, IBM, STM and Alcatel. Consequently, from the 1970s on, this area was a highly sought after zone – and space was not always easy to come by – leading to it becoming known as the Lombard ‘Silicon Valley’. The 1990s, by contrast, was a period of decline for major industry, as small and medium-size enterprises took root. In recent times, as the Vimercate area has experienced something of a crisis, the focus has turned – in an effort to revitalise this area – towards making this zone into a new hi-tech industrial district. Such plans have received governmental support, especially the creation of a so-called Technological Pole in the Vimercate area. This project has the support of the Minister for Economic Development and the new companies located in the area. Turning the Vimercate area into a hi-tech hub could open the way for the regeneration of this entire industrial area.

gished itself. Local partisans are remembered for having arrested the former secretary of the Fascist Party, Roberto Farinacci, who was tried and executed in Vimercate. In 1950, the municipality became a city and, from the mid-20th century on, the surrounding area, which was traditionally a farming area, came to be a part of the manufacturing sector with the arrival of the VIMA S and OBM factories and the Bassetti textile industry. In the 1960s, the city experienced further social, cultural and urban development with the opening, in 1965, of the Telettra plant, which was a company that made telephone equipment, and later with the arrival of the IT giant IBM. In the final years of the 20th century, the growth of the services sector led to the construction of a new district, known as Torri Bianche, that is south of the centre and the regeneration of parts of the old centre (notably, the building of the “southern gate”, designed by Mario Botta).

The centre of Vimercate lies around **piazza Unità d’Italia**. The southern side is bordered by the 18th-century **Palazzo Trotti**, which was actually built by the Seccoborella family. This rococo mansion has, in the rooms on the ground floor and the piano nobile, some frescoes with mythological and literary themes that were created throughout the 18th century. The highlights were the creations, in the



Palazzo Trotti, a detail from the frescoes inside



A bird's-eye view of the centre of Vimercate and the church of S. Stefano

middle of the century, by a team led by Antonio Orelli. The mansion, with painted ceilings, numerous paintings, fireplaces and other historical furnishings, was bequeathed to the town council in 1862 and is now the City Hall. The **Sanctuary of the Madonna del Rosario** stands on the opposite side of the piazza. It was rebuilt in the 17th century (1622-1644), using designs by the architects Fabio Mangone and Francesco Maria Richino, on the basis of an existing structure. On the baroque high altar (1677-1688, Serafino Tencalla), there is a statue of the *Virgin Mary* (1609) that is held to be miraculous for having stopped the spread of the plague in 1601. The elegant wooden furnishings (1770) are from the 18th-century sacristy that was built by Francesco Croce. The wooden choir and the organ, with an elegant rococo singer's gallery (1759), are also 18th century. The Salvatore chapel has a fresco cycle by the Nuvolone brothers and late 17th-century mannerist stuccowork by Michel Angelo de Prevosti. The Magi chapel has a 17th-century altarpiece and a *scagliola* frontal (1757) by Lorenzo Retti. The S. Caterina chapel is decorated with baroque stuccowork (1672) and an altarpiece by Giulio Campi.

The **Basilica of S. Stefano**, which is probably from the 8th century, is a short distance away. This Romanesque building (10th/11th cent.) has been re-

Feast of St Anthony the Abbot

This traditional local feast is held from 10-17 January via Cavour and the old centre are the settings for numerous events, ranging from concerts to exhibitions and, of course, eating tortelli and drinking vin brûlé. There are also religious ceremonies at the church of S. Antonio, with a blessing of the saint's shrine and a procession towards the S. Rocco bridge that is marked by lighting the "St. Anthony bonfire".

Out of interest

Oreno Potato

The Oreno potato is a white kenec tuber that has a distinct taste and originated in Canada. It has a very compact texture, making it easy to handle and thus ideal for cooking, especially items like potato gnocchi or croquettes. It does have one rather unusual aspect: it doesn't absorb oil and it doesn't turn golden (meaning it is only good for light frying). The somewhat unusual nature of this potato is linked to the soil where it is grown. The land in the Oreno area has a particularly good balance between minerals and humus for such potatoes since this soil retains moisture without any water stagnation. The result is an especially rich and tasty potato.

The designation of "made in Brianza" for this potato is the outcome of a project designed to certify and enhance quality local products. As such, the production regulations define what qualities these potatoes must have, where

they can be grown and how. Such regulations also take into account environmental sustainability and the transparency and traceability of the production process. These same regulations govern the environmental characteristics, specify the climate and soil composition, the planting cycles, the methods used to prepare the land, the choices of which varieties to use, the equipment that can be used, fertilisation, irrigation, pest control and harvesting. This potato is planted between 15 and 25 March and harvested in late August or early September. After the harvest, every two years, there is the Potato Feast, which is probably the most eagerly awaited event in Oreno. The historical role of this potato as a basic food stuff in the local diet along with the renewed importance of this tuber mean the event still merits its place on the local calendar.

furnished and enlarged on numerous occasions, although traces of the original structure remain visible: the 11th-century crypt, given a baroque makeover in the 18th century, the bell tower (built on a Roman base in 1261 and restored in 15th-century style) and a 14th-century sculpture of the *Virgin Mary with Child and Sts Stephen and Damian*, on the façade. Frescoes from the first half of the 14th-century have been discovered in the modern sacristy. The entrance portal has various elements that are from the Counter-Reformation. The presbytery has some frescoes in 16th-century style, while those in the nave are 17th century and are by the great classicist Antonio Busca. In 1805-1807, under the supervision of Leopold Pollack, a number of changes were made inside the church, including the creation of a new high altar and pulpit.

Not far from the basilica, near piazza Castellana, is the 16th/17th-century **convent of S. Lorenzo**, which was changed substantially in the 19th century to use the buildings for industrial, trading and res-



The triad of 14th-century statues on the façade of S. Stefano

idential purposes. **Villa Casanova** lies on what was once Contrada S. Lorenzo (now via Garibaldi) and is a late -Neoclassical building constructed in the mid-19th century. Opposite this villa stands another villa, namely Villa Visconti Gargantini Piatti, whose construction work started in 1805 using a project by Pollack.

The old Corsia di S. Rocco – now known as via Cavour – was the main road linking Milan to the ford at Trezzo sull'Adda. Along it lies the **S. Rocco bridge**, across the Molgora River (symbol of Vimercate), with its two towers and a gate. The ruins of a Roman bridge (3rd cent. AD) were the basis for the Moriano gate (on the city side), built in the late 12th century and completed with the addition of a tower in the 14th century. The outer tower is from the same period, although some later work on the exterior gave it a 16th-century appearance. This whole series of structures is one of the best surviving examples of medieval civil and military architecture. It is also the only medieval gate that survived the demolition work of the 18th century, although one span of the bridge was removed.

There are other notable buildings along via Cavour: the **Oratory of S. Antonio Abate**, from the 13th century but redone, inside, in baroque style and conserving some 14th/15th-century frescoes; the 19th-century **Palazzo Mandelli**; and a 15th-century 'noble mansion'. The list of original buildings from the 15th century includes the **tower-house** on via



The S. Rocco bridge



Villa Sottocasa



Portrait of Elisabetta Sottocasa (Mosè Bianchi, 1874)



Villa S. Maria Molgora Paveri Fontana

Archivio Plebano

Archivio Plebano di Vimercate is an ecclesial archive that has religious and historical documents from the late 16th to the 20th centuries that came into the possession of the parish church of S. Stefano and Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine del Rosario. It is an excellent source for reconstructing what life was like in the Vimercate area in the past and it is also one of the most impressive archives still in existence in the Milan Diocese. One of the highlights is the musical section, which has around 700 compositions and manuscripts for religious music, some dating back to the 16th century.

Crispi, home to the Vicario della Martesana, and **Casa Corio**, which was redone in the 19th century and once hosted Francesco Sforza (1450).

Villa Sottocasa overlooks via Vittorio Emanuele II. This 17th-century building, with a horseshoe layout, was transformed in the early 19th century into a grand Neoclassical mansion, with a façade adorned by a tympanum and a large flight of steps decorated with copies of classical statues. It has various 19th-century paintings by Mosè Bianchi and Eleuterio Pagliano. A part of the Italian garden, set behind the villa, has survived, complete with fake caves, statues and water features. It also has a large park that extends down to the banks of the Molgora River and encompasses a large lemon grove, a small tower and some neo-Gothic stables. It was bought in 2001 by the Vimercate municipality to house MUST -Museo del Territorio (see p. 116).

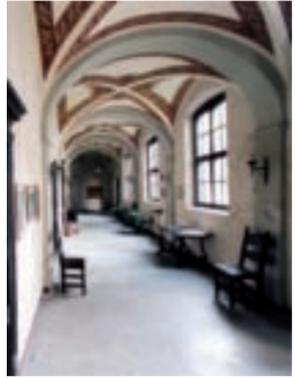
The **church of S. Francesco** is located quite near Palazzo Trotti as are the ruins of an old **convent** (Casa Banfi). These were founded in the 13th century by Franciscans from Oreno, but suppressed in 1798, which is when the Banfi family (current owners) took possession. The complex has been refurbished on various occasions, but still bears traces of

the original medieval structure. Both the convent and the church have 14th-century frescoes, including a notable *Crucifixion and Saints* (1354) that is Giottoesque.

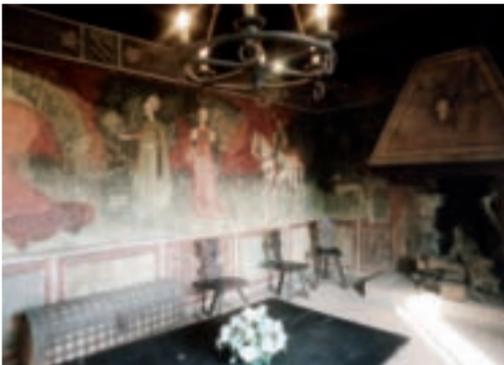
The modern **hospital** is built over the original S. Damiano hospital (12th cent.). This building was altered in the late 18th century, using a design by Pietro Castelli and renovated in 1825 by Pietro Giarlioni. Nowadays, you can see the combination of the early 20th-century appearance (the work of Antonio Corbetta, 1901-03) and the enlargement work from the 1960s.

South of Vimercate, at the border with Burago Molgora and on the side of an old pilgrim hospice (1248), you find **Villa S. Maria Molgora Paveri Fontana**, sometimes called Villa Melzi Meli Lupi di Soragna (private). This building is a combination of 16th-century style – the result of work commissioned by Count Aloisio Melzi – and Neoclassicism. The Italian garden and the English-style park, with numerous tall trees, are superb.

In the Oreno district, you can find some of the most historically important buildings in the zone. The 15th-century **Borromeo Hunting Lodge** is a good example of a type of architecture that was once common in Milan and the environs. It also has a fresco cycle from the 15th century – in late Gothic style with touches of Humanism – of bear and falcon hunting. This lodge belongs to Villa Borromeo Arese, which is from the 16th century, but redone on vari-



Casa Banfi, the ruins of the old convent of S. Francesco



Late-Gothic frescoes at the 15th-century Borromeo Hunting Lodge





The nymphaeum of Neptune



The façade of Villa Gallarati Scotti

Potato Feast

This is a traditional feast in the Oreno district that is held in the 2nd and 3rd weeks of September (every 2 years; even years). There are food and drinks stalls, concerts, dancing, shows, exhibitions, conferences, games and a large parade in the streets of the old centre. It is an ideal chance to savour local dishes made with potatoes.

ous occasions up to the 19th century, when it was given its current neo-rococo look. The 19th-century park, the result of altering the early Italian garden, forms a vast area of greenery that adjoins the area around **Villa Gallarati Scotti**, which is probably the grandest of the noble villas in the zone. The original baroque structure can still be seen in various parts, namely the traditional U-shaped layout and various other interior areas that now have 18th-century frescoes. It was changed into Neoclassical style, including the addition of the monumental entrance, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, by Simone Cantoni. The 19th-century work also altered the park, creating an English-style landscape where you can still see traces of the baroque garden with its precious nymphaeum of Neptune (located at the northern edge of the garden). Restoration work on the villa was completed in 2008 and it now houses a congress and training centre.

Some of the most notable buildings, on piazza S. Michele, are the 19th-century **parish church**, done in late Neoclassical style, using a project by Giacomo Moraglia (1856), and the rococo **Palazzo Foppa**, built in the 18th century by Marquis Cesare Augusto Foppa. To the east of the centre, in a dominant

position, stands the **convent of S. Francesco**, which was built in the early 13th century. It was altered over the centuries (15th-18th cent.) until the Franciscans, following the suppression, withdrew into the Vimercate monastery, returning to Oreno in the mid-20th century. To the west of Oreno, the **Cavallera farm buildings**, constructed in 1591 by the brothers Bernardino and Ottaviano Scotti, now have a 19th-century appearance.

The Ruginello district is home to the ostentatious **Morte di Ruginello** complex, which was recently restored to its 18th-century appearance. This building, dedicated to death, is an unusual example of an issue that preoccupied much of religious thought in baroque times. The cemetery has the Romanesque **church of S. Maria Assunta**, redone in the 17th/18th century. This was also when the bell tower was added; it now has various religious frescoes from the 15th and 16th centuries (the most notable are the late-Gothic ones in the Ss. Antonio e Caterina chapel). The 18th-century **Oratory of the Addolorata** stands in the old centre. **Villa Besozzi** (now Casa Famiglia S. Giuseppe) is another 18th-century building and enjoys a panoramic setting in the old centre of Oldaniga. Next to it, you find the local church, **Ss. Giacomo e Cristoforo chapel**, which is 13th centu-

The “Agrifoppa” farm

This farm (Oreno di Vimercate, Cascina Foppa, tel. 3203163625, giulio.f@agrifoppa.it, www.agrifoppa.it), located in the Cavallera Farming Park, produces top quality cereal and ‘garden’ crops, such as Oreno potatoes and a range of pumpkins. You can buy potatoes, courgettes, cauliflower, broccoli, tomatoes and much more, either fresh or stored in oil, directly from the farm. Vegetables, though, are not the only thing on sale, with cured meats, cheeses, rice, jam and honey – all from local farms – also available. Of note: an initiative called “Raccolta fai da te” that allows people to actually harvest or pick their produce.



The entrance road to the convent of S. Francesco in Oreno

Villasanta

Municipal website: www.comune.villasanta.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 4.5 km. **Distance from Milan:** 21 km
Map reference: D 5



The Town Hall

This municipality shares a border with Monza and is but a few kilometres from the Brianza hills. The north-west border is washed by the Lambro River. It is likely that the old heart of the centre (La Santa) is of Roman origin, arising as a stopping point on the road from Milan and Monza to Olginate at the height of the fork leading to Vimercate. The church and annexed hospice are from 961 (*xenodochium* in Latin) and are dedicated to St. Alexander (S. Alessandro), in the district bearing the same name. The name "La Santa", used to indicate the centre around S. Anastasia, comes from the Middle Ages; while the modern districts of Sant'Alessandro and San Fiorano were known as Villola or Coliate, and later Villa, according to medieval documents. During the modern age, La Santa continued to belong to Monza and Villa to Concorezzo. Later, Villa became an independent commune with the name of Villa San Fiorano. In 1929, La Santa was removed from Monza, becoming



Villa Camperio, the oldest lordly home in Villasanta

Out of interest

Abitatori del tempo (time dwellers)

Abitatori del tempo is an initiative that was initially backed by the Villasanta and Monza municipalities in an effort to give people a chance to reflect thanks to meetings with some of the top contemporary intellectuals, who are invited each year to give a speech on a theme of interest to society. In 2007, the initiative took a stride forward, with the provincial government and other local municipalities, bodies

and universities getting involved. The 'intellectuals' are some of the great thinkers and leading philosophers in Italy, including Emanuele Severino, Giulio Giorello and Umberto Galimberti. **For information:** www.provincia.milano.it/monzabrianza



part of Villa San Fiorano. This led to the decision to "merge" the two names and the result was Villasanta.

The **parish church of S. Anastasia**, recorded in a document from 768 AD, was completely rebuilt from 1768 to 1796 and then enlarged further in the following two centuries. It houses a fantastic organ created by the Prina brothers from Villasanta (1884), a 16th-century fresco (no longer on the wall) of the *Madonna of the Rose* and the *Crucified* said to be by Panfilo Nuvolone. The **church of S. Alessandro**, built in 1603 on the site of an earlier religious building dedicated to the same saint, was enlarged in 1951. The parish church (1967) in San Fiorano replaced a 14th-century building that had been rebuilt in the 19th century (now a private residence). This is also the site of a **chapel dedicated to St. Roch and the souls of purgatory** that is often called the "small chapel of the dead". It was built in the 15th/16th century in memory of plague victims and then rebuilt in 1948.

The town's oldest residence is **Villa Camperio**, formerly Casnedi, which was built in 1696 and has a large park. In 1815, the patriot Federico Confalonieri was 'imprisoned' here by the Austrian authorities. It now houses the town library; much of the library's patrimony actually comes from the Camperio family. The **Town Hall**, complete with a clock tower (rationalist style) designed by Piero Borradori in 1934, is also worth seeing.

Famous people

The list of famous sons of Villasanta includes **Manfredo Camperio** (1826-1899), who was involved in the famous five days of Milanese rebellion against Austrian occupation and the war of independence. He was an explorer and geographer, making numerous journeys to Africa and Australia. He founded and edited the magazine *L'Esploratore* (The explorer). **Umberto Nottari** (1878-1950), who was actually born in Bologna but 'adopted' by Villasanta, was a publisher and writer. He founded the Istituto Editoriale Italiano (Italian publishing institute) and various newspapers, including *L'Am-brosiano*. **Giulio Oggioni** (1916-1993), priest, was Bishop of Lodi from 1972 to 1977 and of Bergamo from 1977 to 1991. **Andrea Oggioni** (1930-61) was one of the great mountain climbers of the 1950s. He accompanied the more famous Walter Bonatti on numerous climbs. He died on Colle dell'Innominata, on Mont Blanc, during a climb that ended in tragedy due to bad weather.

Concorezzo

Municipal website: www.comune.concorezzo.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 7 km. **Distance from Milan:** 21 km
Map reference: D 5



The church of S. Eugenio

Parco della Cavallera

The Cavallera Park was founded by the municipalities of Concorezzo, Arcore, Monza, Villasanta and Vimercate. It covers 650 ha and gets its name from the old **Cascina Cavallera** that is located on the land. This park, covering a lot of farming land, is dotted with a number of other old farmhouses. There are various cycle and walking trails as well as environmental education programmes and plenty of accommodation at the various farms.

Concorezzo's origins lie in the age of Imperial Rome. Over the centuries, it has been tied to the fortunes of the neighbouring Monza. In the 12th century, Concorezzo was the only area under the country church of Vimercate to be given the title of 'hamlet', even though the exact borders of this hamlet are not recorded.

The most notable religious building is the **parish church of Ss. Cosma e Damiano**, a gigantic Neoclassical construction designed by Luigi Cagnola in 1810 and built from 1818 on. The **small church of S. Antonio**, once dedicated to



Villa Melzi Zoia, home to the town library



Inside and outside the Oratory of S. Antonio



St. Salvatore, probably dates from the 16th century, but it was redone in the early 20th century. The **church of S. Eugenio**, restored at the beginning of the last century, is documented as far back as 853 AD.

The most notable historic mansions are **Villa Melzi Zoia** (mid-19th cent.), often called Villa del Carretto, and now housing the town library, and **Villa Teruzzi**, built in the late 18th century and now the Residenza Sanitaria Assistenziale (type of medical centre). The Concorezzo area is notably agricultural, with a number of small villages that are dotted around and often centred on old farmhouses. A major effort is underway to learn more about and improve the local historical, artistic, architectural and archaeological heritage. This is being led by the **local archive**, which was

Feast of the Patron Saint

Held on the first Sunday in November, it is dedicated to Saints Cosmos and Damian. Shops are open, stalls set up and desserts and other goods are on sale. In the morning, during mass at the parish church, a ball of cotton wool – symbol of all that is bad in the world – is burnt and, at the S. Luigi theatre, the "Ago d'Oro" awards are given out. At the edge of town, there are, for a number of days, some merry-go-rounds and other games for children.



Piazza della Pace and Concorezzo's Town Hall

Agrate Brianza

Municipal website: www.comune.agratebrianza.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 7 km. **Distance from Milan:** 21 km
Map reference: E 5



Agrate, the Town Hall

Famous people

Agrate was the birthplace of **Gian Matteo Ferrario**, doctor to Duchess Bianca Maria Sforza and a lecturer at the University of Padua, and **Marco d'Agrate**, creator of a famous statue of St. Bartholomew in the Milan cathedral. More recently, in 1923, **Clemente Vismara** was born there. He was a papal missionary in Burma, where he lived and eventually died in 1988. In October 1996, Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini began proceedings to beatify Vismara; these have nearly been concluded.

Various digs (1880) uncovered Roman archaeological ruins in Agrate and other items, including a granite altar (now built into an arch over a farm gate) and a Christian epigraph from the late 5th or early 6th century. The centre appears in a document in 745 AD, namely the will of Rottopert “de vico Agrate”, who founded a hospice for the poor and for pilgrims. It also appears in a document from 835 recording a donation by the Archbishop of Milan, Angilbert II.

The **parish church of S. Eusebio** stands on the main square and probably has 7th- or 8th-century origins. The modern building was completed between 1925 and 1934, which is also the year when it was consecrated. The most notable buildings are: the **parish church of S. Zenone** (Omate district), which dates from at least the 13th century and was refurbished in the 16th; the **church of S. Pietro** (13th cent.); and the **church of S. Anna** (Cascina Morosina district), built in the 15th century.



The parish church of S. Eusebio



Aldo Moro Park

There are numerous villas in the area. **Villa Schira-Corneliani**, from the 16th/17th century, is now home to the town library. There is one exceptional balcony with a baroque wrought iron railing. It conserves a number of old books, paintings, period furnishings and documents. **Villa Trivulzio** is in the Omate district. The building, from the early 16th century, was turned into a noble villa using a design by the architect Giovanni Ruggeri (early 18th cent.). The current eclectic appearance is the 19th-century work of the architect Luigi Majnoni. The scenic gardens are notable. The 18th-century **Villa d'Adda-Salvaterra** has a baroque imprint, with some Neoclassical touches. It has some painted ceilings, frescoes and an imposing fireplace topped by wonderful friezes and decorations.



A view of Villa Trivulzio and the gardens

Feasts and events

Feast of St. Anthony the Abbot

held in January, in the Omate district, it ends on the 17th, which is the feast of St. Anthony the Abbot, protector of country life. Bonfires are lit to symbolically repel the hardships of winter and to recall the legend of the saint stealing embers from hell to give them to man, thus protecting farmhouses from fires. The bonfire becomes the centre of dancing, drinking *vin brûlé* (wine with spices) and eating some local delicacies.

Palio degli Asini (Donkey palio): held on the first Sunday in June in the Omate district, it includes a costume parade, a race for donkeys, games, shows, a culinary competition and much more.

The Feast of the Gallarana: held on the last weekend in June, this feast in the park (on via Offellera) is organised by residents and sponsored by the municipality. There is dancing, with the option of eating in the park. The main dish is a mixed fish dish, although sandwiches, hamburgers, sausages and desserts are also available.

Feast of the Melonera: held on the Fridays and Saturdays of the first three weeks of July, this traditional feast in the Omate district, focuses on fresh fruit and evenings of dancing.

Feast of St. Anne: held in the last week of July, this feast for the patron saint of the Oratory of Cascina Morosina combines religious with popular music.

Burago di Molgora

Municipal website: www.comune.buragodimolgora.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 11 km. **Distance from Milan:** 25 km
Map referenc: D 5

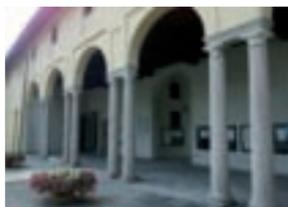


Burago in Festa

In the 2nd and 3rd weeks of September, there is the small "Profumi e sapori" craft market, with local products, hobby items and art exhibitions. Events for children, comedy shows and dancing and fireworks in the evening.



The church of Ss. Vito e Modesto



Villa Penati Ferrerio

Various archaeological remains of the Imperial era have been found in this area, including *locules*, coins and sarcophaguses, suggesting this was once a Roman settlement. In 1860, Burago, following an order from the King of Italy, became a municipality (or commune) with a population of nearly a thousand. This former farming settlement saw major industrial growth in the 20th century. Today, it is home to a number of small and medium-sized enterprises and one of Europe's most famous nurseries. One of the best-known companies to have been based here was Folgora, which produced toy guns in the 1960s and 70s. The other famous names in the world are: Burago model cars, long the international leader in this sector; and Pasini Laboratorio, (chemistry laboratory) which made the Crystal Ball.

The most famous residential buildings are the 17th-century **Villa Penati Ferrerio** (redone in later centuries), although it is now used as the Town Hall and library and the Neoclassical **Villa Mylius Oggioni**, which was owned by the German businessman Enrico Mylius (1769-1854). Mylius was one of the first business leaders in Lombardy to make use of technology in his spinning mills and to realise the value of educating and training his workers. The villa, with a traditional U shape, has a tympanum on the front and also has the original English garden.

In the Santa Maria district, you can see the beautifully set 18th-century **Villa Melzi** and the **Cascina Magana** and **Cascina Baraggia**. It is also worth seeing the **parish church of Ss. Vito e Modesto**, with origins dating from 1106.

Cavenago di Brianza

Municipal website: www.comune.cavenagobrianza.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 13 km. **Distance from Milan:** 27 km
Map reference: E 6

Cavenago lies between the Molgora River and Rio Vallone, on the plain to the north of the Villoresi canal, halfway between Bergamo and Milan. The first records of this area are from 873 AD, when certain plots of land were bought by the Archbishop of Milan, Anspert, from the Albuzzi di Biassono family.

Palazzo Rasini, owned by the municipality, is of real interest. The 17th-century section of the building might have involved work by Martino Bassi and is built over a 16th-century structure. In the late 18th-century alterations were carried out (creation of a large lounge) using a project by Simone Cantoni. It houses two decorative cycles: the large number of fragments from a 17th-century cycle coordinated by Giovanni Ghisolfi and the 18th-century lounge by Mattia Bortoloni, who was the most famous Lombard artist working in Tiepolo's rococo style. The areas open to the public are on the ground floor. You enter through a large entrance courtyard and a doorway located on one side of the portico. All of the



The Rasini family

This family rose to power in the 16th century and became part of the Consorzio Arese, which exercised substantial political power in Milan in the 17th century under the President of the Senate, Bartolomeo III Arese. The family lived for three centuries in Palazzo di Cavenago. Even today, in Milan near piazza San Babila, you can see via Rasini, where they owned a house.



A part of the interior and exterior of Palazzo Rasini, including the entrance



The 18th-century parish church of S. Giulio at Cavenago di Brianza

Town feasts

On the first Sunday in October, there is the feast of the patron saint, St. Julius. The day includes craft and charity markets, art exhibitions, puppet shows, readings in the library, fireworks and a parade.

floors are made with polychrome Venetian marble granules. Behind the house, you can see the garden (partially transformed).

The key religious buildings are: the 18th-century parish church dedicated to **St. Julius** and the **church of S. Maria** (in the Campo district), that was built in the 12th century by the Humiliati and redone in the mid-15th century. The cycle of frescoes, in the style of Luini, are found both inside and in the parish church (removed from the wall). The **Lazzaretto** – a private funerary chapel built where victims of the plague in 1630 were buried – is also worth seeing.

Out of interest

Parco del Rio Vallone

From via Manzoni, you can head, along cycle paths or on foot, into the Rio Vallone Park. This is the starting point for a number of protected areas that border, to the west, with the Molgora Park, to the south, with the Sud Milano Farming Park, to the east with the Ad-da Nord Park, and to the north with the Montevecchia e Val Curone Park. The park covers a total of 480 ha along the Rio Vallone (river), forming a 'green lung' in a heavily built-up area. The vegetation is quite abundant and the animal life is remarkably diverse, with 13 species of small mammals, including

the dormouse and the harvest mouse. The park also includes some notable buildings, such as the **Sanctuary of Ornago** and the Cavenago di Brianza leper colony. It also has the **Le Foppe protected area**: a former clay quarry, it has recently been regenerated by the municipality and the Consorzio Pubblico d'Igiene Ambientale (C.E.M.) to enable the public to enjoy it. The headquarters is in the Cascina Sofia. There are cycle, walking and riding paths in the park as well as bird watching hides and other outdoor education activities.

Ornago

Municipal website: www.comuneornago.it
Distance from Monza: 15 km. Distance from Milan: 29 km
Map reference: D 6



The oldest records of the municipality are from 1876, when it was mentioned in the will of the Archbishop of Milan, Anspert da Biassono. It was part of the country church of Vimercate and, as such, tied to its history. The municipality of Ornago, like Biassono, is strongly tied to the Verri family. Count Pietro Verri (1728-97) particularly favoured this centre, living out the final stage of his life there and undertaking numerous farming experiments.

The **Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine del Lazzaretto**, built in the 18th century, has an altarpiece by Carlo Verri portraying *St. Martin*, a canvas painting of *The Prodigal Son* by Francesco Corneliani (a favoured artist of Milan's nobility) and an Amati organ from the 19th century.

The **Verri chapel**, an exceptional example of a funerary chapel, is located outside the sanctuary and was built for Pietro by his wife Marietta Castiglioni. It is the resting place for this famous exponent of the Enlightenment and members of his family. The monument was inspired by the one of the famous German philosopher Kant in Kaliningrad.

The other buildings of historical and artistic interest are: the **parish church of S. Agata** and the annexed 17th-century rectory; the **small chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows**, built in 1777; the **Miracolo fountain**, a 18th-century votive location; and the **Cascina Borella**.

At the beginning of the 20th century, a sanctuary was built on the expansive woodlands. It has now become the Vimercate hospital.

The modern economy of the town is linked both to small and medium-sized enterprises (especially in the mechanical sector) and to devices for nurseries.



The Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine del Lazzaretto

Bellusco

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

Pro Loco: via Rimembranze. **Tel.:** 3922586438. **Fax:** 039623669

Website: www.prolocobellusco.it **E-mail:** info@prolocobellusco.it

Distance from Monza: 14 km. **Distance from Milan:** 29 km. **Map reference:** D 6



Educational farm

The **Ronchia Lorenzo Maria farm** (via San Nazzaro 40, tel. 039623216, email: ronchi.lorenzo@gmail.com) is a farm that specialises in growing cereal crops and small fruits. It has undertaken the experimental cultivation of sweet peas to produce F1 seeds (first generation, completely white or red flowers). Various educational events and activities are organised. It is part of a series of educational farms.

Bellusco lies in the middle of the plain, near the glacial hills of Brianza and Lombardy's Alpine foothills, with the most notable peaks being Grigna (2,410m) and Resegone (1,975m). This centre lies on a major crossroad between the Milan, Como and Bergamo areas. The land is marked by a number of hills and rises that originated in the Quaternary period due to torrential rain. Today, the area is washed by two watercourses: Cava and Rio Vallone. The south-western section of the municipality, a "hunting reserve", has some local wildlife: hares, pheasants and starlings.

The first documents about the centre, from Bergamo's Chapter Arc hives, are from the 9th century. Until a few decades ago, the local economy was based on cereal crops and silkworms. In recent times, the textile, metalworking, plastic and electronic industries have taken off.

The **Da Corte castle**, in the old centre, is a robust medieval structure that was redone in the Sforza era (around 1467) by Martino Da Corte



The Da Corte castle, in the centre of Bellusco



Inside the Oratory of Camuzzago and, right, the parish church of Bellusco

(you can still see the coat-of-arms). It has a square layout, with an entrance marked by a ravelin and towers.

Around the main piazza, you can see a number of 17th-century **courtyards**. To note: “Stalle di Mantova” (Mantua stables), the Lazzaretto (or leper colony) courtyard, the Tegole (or tile) courtyard, the Vismara courtyard, the Misani courtyard, Dosso, the Lattaio (or dairy) courtyard, the Pozzo (or well) courtyard, the Sangalli courtyard and the Frati (or friars’) courtyard, which is home to the “Mario Rigoni Stern” library.

The eclectic **parish church of S. Martino**, built in 1864, has frescoes about St. Martin’s life by Luigi Tagliaferri, the much venerated shrine of St. Justina and a mechanic pipe organ built by the brothers Pietro and Lorenzo Bernasconi (1875). There are also numerous old farmhouses, including the **Cascina S. Nazaro**, with a church that has 18th-century paintings. In the Cascina Camuzzago district, you can see the **Oratory of S. Maria Maddalena** (being restored). Once an abbey for the monks of St. Sepulchre (the original structure is from 1152), it has a vast cycle of frescoes with stories of the saint by an artist, known as the Master of Camuzzago, in the style of Bernardino Butinone (ca. 1510). The altarpiece of the *Descent from the Cross* is now in the Brera Gallery in Milan.

Feasts and events

Feast of San Nazaro: on the last weekend in July, it is held in the barn of Cascina S. Nazaro; singing, dancing and tasting of local dishes.

Feast of the Patron Saint and the S. Giustina palio, second Sunday in September, for the feast of the patron saint: the S. Giustina palio is organised by a specific committee with the backing of the municipality. The feast was originally organised by a young group of parishioners (1955) and climaxes with a parade of floats inspired by biblical themes. The parade is led by the S. Giustina float and by the standard bearers from each district. The route takes in most of the main town streets. A jury, elected annually, chooses the best float, awarding it the Palio di S. Giustina. The actual prize is a standard created by a local artist and a small, gilded urn that holds a miniature copy of the saint. This ‘trophy’ is looked after by families from the winning district.

Feast of St. Martin: held during the week of 11 November: it includes a variety of events and shows centred on the themes of solidarity and volunteer work.

Mezzago

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

Pro Loco: via Stefano Biffi 28. **Tel. and fax:** 0396020288

Website: www.prolocomezzago.it **E-mail:** info@prolocomezzago.it

Distance from Monza: 17 km. **Distance from Milan:** 32 km. **Map reference:** D 6



Farms

Il gelso ("Le Solvette" area, sales outlet via Matteotti 5, tel. 3407772992, Tuesday and Friday, 1 to 7pm, Saturday 9-noon. Contact: via Unione 3, tel. 3389219171, info@azilgelso.it, www.azilgelso.it). Production and sale of organic, seasonal vegetables.

Rino di Gualtiero Mattavelli (via Don Minzoni 8/c, tel. 3472232288, fax 0396022812, info@agricolarino.it, www.agricolarino.it. Sales outlet, via Marconi 1). Asparagus and some other fruit and veg. Sale of asparagus in April and May.

La Valle del Re (sales outlet via Vite Lunga 1, tel. 3474003642, fax 0396010707, info@lavalledelre.it, www.lavalledelre.it). Corn, wheat and pink asparagus. Sales outlet open all year (pink asparagus available in April and May).

CAAM - Cooperativa Agricola Asparagicoltori Mezzago (sales outlet via Vitellunga 1, tel. 3473403457).

Mezzago was originally a farming village centred on the churches of S. Vittore (no longer around) and S. Maria (current parish church) and the tower of Palazzo Archinto. Cereal crops were widely grown, although the local chestnuts, oak, hazelnut and durmast woods also provided an important source of income. In the 15th century, following the wars between the Visconti family and the Venetians, the Mezzago area was sacked and suffered severely from diseases, resulting in a substantial decrease in the population.

Some of the old dwellings, called 'sedine', are still around, such as the **Cascina Orobona**. This particular structure is typical of residences centred on a well in a courtyard, with the living quarters, stables, barns and haylofts all around. The De Corte and Biffi families were the prominent families in the area. In the second half of the 17th century, mulberries caught on as a crop along with breeding silkworms. Today, this area is known for its asparagus, but this was only introduced in the 1930s.

Palazzo Archinto stands in the town centre and was once home to the Jesuits. From 1779, it housed numerous noble families, starting with the Archintos. The tower – except for the 18th-century last floor or belfry – and many of the older parts are from the 12th century, when the complex housed a thriving community of monks from the Humiliati order. The monks were famous wool makers.

The **parish church of S. Maria Assunta** was built in the 18th century. It has two notable chapels in the left aisle, one dedicated to the Pietà and the other is where the Maggi family is buried. The old centre is also home to the **Oratory of S. Gerolamo**, founded by the De Corte family in

about 1674. It later passed into the hands of the Archinto family, who purchased some of the 19th-century furnishings that can be seen inside. **Villa Brasca**, with its park, is also worth noting, as is **Bosco della Cappelletta**, a wood with lovely trees and some of the only rural chapels in the territory in reasonable condition.



Inside and outside the 18th-century parish church of S. Maria Assunta

Maggio Mezzaghese

This is a traditional musical, social and cultural festival that is held throughout May. It includes concerts, sports competitions, cultural events, small markets and tasting of local dishes made with pink asparagus (a speciality of Mezzago).

For info: www.prolocomezago.it/maggio.htm

Out of interest

Asparago Rosa di Mezzago

Pink asparagus – Asparago Rosa – is a type of asparagus that is only grown in Mezzago. Unlike other varieties that are entirely green, white or purple, this one has a top (3-4 cm) that is pink, while the rest is completely white. The colour and taste are the result of the specific local conditions (clayey soil that has a high mineral content). These same conditions ensure that Asparago Rosa di Mezzago is a healthy and sought after product.

The season for this asparagus starts in April and ends towards the end of May. It is usually gathered at the end of April or beginning of May using traditional methods: by hand, using an iron tool to lift each asparagus plant out of the ground, one by one. Unfortunately, in recent years, cash crops have become more popular, especially as the number of farmers has dropped greatly. Even though the asparagus itself is disappearing, the festival held for this asparagus

in May has been doing well since the first one held in 1960. About a year ago, the product received Denominazione Comunale di Origine status, which is one of the Italian labels designed to protect local products. It is normally abbreviated to De.C.O.

For info: www.asparagorosa.it



Sulbiate

Municipal website: www.comune.sulbiate.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 16 km. **Distance from Milan:** 30 km
Map reference: D 6



Feasts and events

The Committee for Culture, Sport and Free Time organises, from 14 to 16 July, a Beer Festival with concerts and stalls at the municipal sports centre. The town fete is held on the last Sunday in September and involves a series of cultural and recreational events and initiatives. The festival is organised by the local town council in conjunction with the array of associations from the area.

This municipality consists of the old communes of Sulbiate Inferiore, Sulbiate Superiore and Brentana as well as the Cà and Cazzullo farmsteads. The Roman origins can be guessed from the traces of ponderous walls that form part of a 'noble house' (13th/14th cent.) with an annexed tower near the parish church – the house has been owned by two prominent local families, namely the Scaccabarozzi and the Arcimboldi – and from a 3rd-century AD sarcophagus against a wall in the courtyard of Palazzo Baraggia.

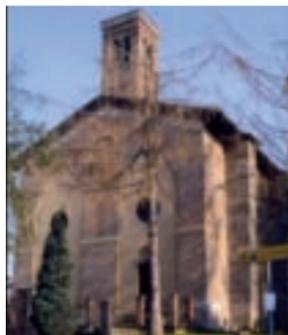
The icon of the town is the 15th-century **Lampugnani Olgiati castle** that was built from 1452-1455 by a Milanese merchant (Paolo Lampugnani) after he received a concession from Francesco Sforza to build a fortified residence. The castle was later enlarged, with the addition of baroque courtyards, and has changed hands numerous times over the centuries. The involvement of Giovanni Andrea Lampugnani in the plot that led to the death of Duke



The 15th-century Lampugnani Olgiati castle has some baroque sections



The church of S. Pietro and, right, of S. Ambrogio in Sulbiate



Galeazzo Maria Sforza was punished, not only with the assassins being executed or lynched, but also with the upper section of one of the corner towers being pulled down.

In the Sulbiate Superiore district, you find the **Oratory of S. Ambrogio**, a Romanesque building centred on a large main hall. It was built in the first half of the 11th century on the site of a large Benedictine convent. It has a notable cycle of frescoes from the 13th-15th centuries. The **church of S. Pietro** was originally commissioned by the powerful Figini family (16th cent.), but redone in 1931. The **parish church of S. Antonino**, recorded way back in 1138, was rebuilt for the first time in the late 16th/early 17th centuries and then again from 1780 to 1783. The interior was completed during the 19th century, with the addition of new altars, a majestic organ (1820) and paintings by Luigi Pedrazzi (1843-1844). The final alterations were in 1932, with the building of the transept for the dome and the addition of new decorations by Marigliani di Bergamo.

Palazzo Baraggia stands next to the old Town Hall square and the **church of S. Pietro Apostolo** (and the annexed rural houses). This palazzo was built by the Figini family and passed into the hands of the Biffi family in the 18th century. The coat-of-arms can still be seen in the arch over the entrance. The complex is centred on a courtyard that is surrounded, on three sides, by warehouses, porticoes, workshops and the villa. There is also a large garden that stretches out behind the villa.

Attack in Milan

In 1476, Giovanni Andrea Lampugnani, once a leading light at the Sforza court, Girolamo Olgiati and Carlo Visconti organised a plot against Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza. The attack took place on 26 December 1476 in the church of S. Stefano in Milan, during a procession in honour of St. Stephen. The Duke was assassinated, but Giovanni was also killed by the crowd and the others were later put to death. This was followed by Lampugnani family possessions being confiscated, with many family members either leaving Milan or being exiled.



The church of S. Antonino, rebuilt in the 18th century

Aicurzio

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

Pro Loco: via Croce 5. **Tel.:** 0396884181 **E-mail:** proloco.aicurzio@tiscali.it

Distance from Monza: 16 km. **Distance from Milan:** 31 km. **Map reference:** D 6



The Templars

The old Templar settlements in Aicurzio, linked to the Milan churches of S. Croce and S. Maria del Tempio, were built thanks to Friar Dalmazio da Verzario (Verderio). The military and religious order of the Templars, created in 1118-1120, by Hugues de Payens, Godfrey de Saint-Omer and some other knights, was tasked with ensuring safe passage for pilgrims heading to the Holy Land, especially Jerusalem (where the order had its first centre). In the coming centuries, the order gained notable political and economic power, but was eventually dissolved by Pope Clement V in 1312-1314 through a series of papal bulls.



Castel Negrino

Aicurzio was probably home to a small Roman garrison. In the Middle Ages, due to its strategic location, it remained a military outpost, favoured by the Knights Templar. This military vocation can be gauged by various buildings in the area: Casa degli Umiliati, Castel Negrino and Commenda. These buildings, following the suppression of religious orders, passed to the Knights of Malta, and were incorporated into **Villa Biffi-Rigorini-Colnaghi** (private property), which is from the late 18th and 19th centuries. Only the layout and placement of the buildings recall the old medieval structure. Even the annexed church, dedicated to St. James, was rebuilt (1623) and dedi-



Villa Pasqualini Malacrida Aceti and, right, Villa la Commenda

cated to the Virgin Mary of the Snow. From the 16th century on, certain noble families came to prominence, such as the Paravicini, Malacrida, Cottini and Rigorini. The most evident remains of these families are the villas dotted around. From the 15th century on, silkworms became central to the local economy.

Villa Pasqualini Malacrida Aceti is located in the old town centre. This 16th-century building, with a typical U shape, was enlarged in the 17th century and redone on a number of occasions, especially in the early 19th century. The rooms on the piano nobile have some pretty old furnishings and paintings. The garden is currently being restored. The villa now houses the Town Hall.

The 17th-century **Villa Paravicini**, home to the town library, has a large park that is the annual setting for the Sagra del Giugno Aicurziese (Feast of Aicurzio in June). The building, with some lovely baroque decorative elements, has a **small museum on local customs**. This museum, only open by booking, has photographs and farming and craft tools linked to local rural culture. The 19th-century **parish church of S. Andrea** has a painting of *S. Cecilia* by Carlo Francesco Nuvolone, a Lombard painter who worked in the 17th century. There are other paintings on loan from the famous Brera Gallery in Milan. The **Sanctuary of Campegorino**, which has a small cemetery next to it, has a little chapel built in memory of those who died from the plague in 1576 and 1630.



Feasts and events

Town fete, last Sunday in August: this traditional local festival lasts for 3 days.

One of the highlights is the chance to taste a number of local delicacies, like "Paciarella", or milk cake, and sausages and beans.

Feast of St Andrew the Apostle, the Patron, Sunday closest to 30 November: a religious feast centred on the church of S. Andrea Apostolo.

Legends of Campegorino

According to legend, the deceased buried in the small piece of holy ground next to the Sanctuary of Campegorino rose up to battle side-by-side with the living to defend the town from an attack during the War of the Spanish Succession (1705).



A view of the Sanctuary of Campegorino and, right, the parish church of S. Andrea

Bernareggio

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

Pro Loco: via Prinetti 29 c/o Town Hall. **Tel.:** 0396900763

E-mail: proloco.bernareggio@tiscali.it

Distance from Monza: 15 km. **Distance from Milan:** 30 km. **Map reference:** D 6



Feasts and events

Bernareggio in Fiore: on the last weekend in May, this flower market and exhibition also has a number of other objects. It includes an ad-lib competition for painting, called "Pennellate originali" (original brush strokes), during which the participants have to draw views of the town on the spot!

Feast of the Nascent Madonna: the whole second week of September, this traditional feast is linked to the church of S. Maria Nascente and involves both religious and recreational events.

Feast of the Corn cob: second Sunday in October, this is an exhibition of farming machinery and tools; there are also theme stalls, workshops for children and the chance to taste some polenta dishes.

Bernareggio probably began life as a Roman settlement in the 3rd century AD. In the Middle Ages, it became a seigniorship of the Bernareggio family and 2 monasteries for the Humiliati order were built. These remained in use until the 16th century, when Archbishop Charles Borromeo suppressed them. In the modern age, the town was ruled, as a fief, by the Foppa, Seccoborella and Trotti families. In the second half of the 19th century, the largely farming economy turned towards silkworms and a textile industry arose. Wood crafts also gained some importance, reaching a peak in the 1930s.

One of the most notable religious buildings is the **Oratory of Ss. Gervaso e Protaso**, which is a 16th-century building with some frescoes from that period. The adjacent **parish church** (1865) has a painting (*St. John the Evangelist*) by Bernardino Campi, a well-known artist from Cremona. In the Villanova district, there is the **parish church of the Immacolata e S. Bartolomeo**.



The parish church of the Immacolata e S. Bartolomeo



Inside and outside the church of S. Maria Nascente in Bernareggio

The old centre has some ruins from a 10th-century castle; on piazza della Repubblica and in via Prinetti, you can see the ruins of the old monasteries of the Humiliati order.

Away from religious buildings, **Villa Landriani Bonacina** is worth noting. This 18th-century construction is now the Town Hall. There is also the building where Garibaldi's staunch follower, Laura Solera Mantegazza, lived and that was the first Town Hall. Finally, **Villa De Azzi Lanfranconi** in Villanova (private property) was built in the opening decades of the 18th century and has a landscaped park designed in the 19th century by Giuseppe Balzaretto. Note the small hunting lodge and greenhouses.

Nearby, there is the Adda River with an **iron bridge** from 1889.



Villa Landriani Bonacina, now the Town Hall



Famous people

Two important people from the Middle Ages from this commune bore the name of **Obizzone da Bernareggio**. The first was the secretary of the Milan signiory, Bishop Ottone Visconti, and Provost of the Country Church of Vimercate. The second, feudal lord of the Martesana area and head of the Melosi family, was the progenitor of the branch of the family that, in the 10th century, was responsible for the town's name and built the castle. Bernareggio was also the birthplace for a famous character in the Italian Risorgimento, namely **Laura Solera Mantegazza**, who, as a friend of Giuseppe Mazzini and Garibaldi, undertook to find financing for Garibaldi's troops from 1848 on. Both of her sons were part of the Risorgimento: Paolo, a scientist and writer, was involved in the Roman Republic (1849); Emilio fought with Garibaldi at the battle of Bezzecca. This noble lady was also a local benefactor, founding hospitals, schools, orphanages and the first women's mutual aid union.

Ronco Briantino

Municipal website: www.comune.roncobriantino.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 16 km. **Distance from Milan:** 32 km
Map reference: C 6



The church of S. Ambrogio



The neo-Gothic Villa Brioschi



Villa Alfieri-Perego

This town lies against a backdrop of mountains: Montevecchia, Corni di Canzo, Grigna and Resegone. The rural vocation of this land is illustrated in a local museum – **Museo Agricolo** – housed in the Centro S. Antonio. Set up in 1981, the basis of the collection was a set of farming tools from a farmhouse that was to be demolished. It now has 400 pieces, many of which were donated by local citizens or were saved from other unused buildings. The museum has two real points of interest: some of the tools are unique in that they were handcrafted solutions designed by farmers to meet specific needs; and about 250 of the items are also described in the local dialect of Brianza.

The 20th-century **parish church** is dedicated to St. Ambrose "Ad Nemos". The original building, being restored, is from 1415. The **small Morti della Brughiera chapel**, on the road to Carnate, was also built in the early 20th century. It lies on a footpath that was used, from the 16th century on, by people attempting to flee from the plague in Milan.

A number of old villas provide clear evidence that this was once a favoured countryside location for the well-heeled Milanese. **Villa Alfieri-Perego** is 18th-century, but is eclectic in style; the neo-Gothic **Villa Brioschi**, also called La Torretta, was once a lordly residence and now houses the Town Hall. The Ronco Briantino municipality became autonomous in 1909 when it split from Bernareggio. The town is in the Montevecchia Regional Park, in the south-eastern Brianza section, and it covers a number of diverse habitats: areas of real environmental interest, urban centres, manufacturing zones, farming and animal rearing land, and historical/artistic monuments.

Carnate

Municipal website: www.comune.carnate.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 13 km. **Distance from Milan:** 27 km
Map reference: D 5

The municipality, which also includes Passirano, is washed by the Molgora River and is partially surrounded by the hills of Brianza. Various finds from the Roman era have been made, but despite these, the actual origins of Carnate remain uncertain. The first documented evidence only comes from 1021. In 1483, the Carmelites from Milan took up residence in the zone (suppressed by Maria Theresa of Austria in 1769) and built some structures that, despite no longer being accessible, can still be seen. This religious order had a powerful grip on the local area. From 1869 to 1909, Carnate was under the Bernareggio municipality. In the second half of the 19th century, like many of the major centres in the Brianza area, the silk industry developed substantially. Indeed, even today there is a complex known as "La Filanda" (spinning mill) in the part of Carnate that was home to the most important spinning mill. The old mill can actually still be seen, although it is not in good condition at all.

The most important element of the local historical and cultural patrimony is **Villa Fornari Prinetti Banfi**, which was built in 1685. The S. Probo chapel



Feasts and events

Maggio Incontri (May meetings), in May and June, is a popular event that has become part and parcel of local tradition. It includes a range of sporting, recreational and cultural events. **During the town fete**, held on the first Sunday after Easter, Carnate comes alive as many stalls are set out around the church. There are also merry-go-rounds and the like for children and an array of other initiatives (including a typical local dinner).



Inside and outside the 17th-century Villa Fornari Prinetti Banfi



Villa Fornari Prinetti Banfi, surrounded by a park

was built in 1732. This baroque structure is the final resting place of St. Probus, who the local peasants called on for help in times of drought. The residence, set against a beautiful landscape, has some ceilings with wonderful frescoes and two monumental fireplaces from the 17th and 18th centuries. The typical U-shaped layout is bordered by a courtyard that opens, to the west, onto the Elgora valley. This gently sloping landscape is home to an English park that conserves some wonderful trees.

The 19th-century **parish church** was enlarged in the 1930s. Dedicated to Saints Cornelius and Caprasius, the first records of it are from 194. The link between the parish church and the Carmelites is evident in the cycle of 18th-century frescoes behind the current apse (it is of the *Madonna of Carmine*). The other notable local religious buildings are the Neoclassical **Oratory of S. Croce** in Passirano (Gargantini Oratory), built in 1844. The 'youngest' **church** in the municipality is from 1971 and is near the train station. It has a series of paintings by Marco Carnà and Lino Marzulli. The former, who was born and lives in Passirano, has received international acclaim for his illustrations of the *Divine Comedy* and of Gogol's *Dead Souls*. Since 2003, the local administration has used works by this master to reward citizens at the town fete, which is held on the first Sunday after Easter.



The park around Villa Fornari Prinetti Banfi

Usmate Velate

Municipal website: www.comune.usmatevelate.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 11 km. **Distance from Milan:** 28 km
Map reference: D 5

The municipality lies between Bosco della Cassinetta and Noceto del Molgora, on the southern border of Brianza. The territory was long ruled by the country church of Vimercate and, as such, was tied to its fate. Guidotto da Usmate was, in 1219, one of the backers of the Peace of Lecco that allowed the nobles in exile to return to Milan. Velate also saw some fighting: in 1322, Marco Visconti's Ghibelline army was defeated here. Some of the most famous feudal lords in Usmate include the Counts of Osio. The most famous member of this family was Gian Paolo, who is better known as the man who seduced the nun from Monza in Manzoni's famous novel *Promessi Sposi*. The Usmate Velate municipality was founded in 1869 when Usmate, already an autonomous commune, was joined with Velate Milanese. Velate only received authorisation in 1930 to transfer its municipal offices to Usmate, thus resulting in the name becoming Usmate Velate.

The **church of S. Margherita**, the parish church since 1571, was rebuilt from 1930-33 using a design by Antonio Casati, an engineer from Milan. He gave the building a neo-Lombard Romanesque look.



Usmate, Villa Scaccabarozzi and, right, a panoramic view of the surrounds



Tutti in Piazza

This event, held on the piazza in front of Villa Borghia, takes place on the first Sunday in October in collaboration with the municipal offices for sport, culture and free time, the sport council, the committee for the former Festa della Solidarietà, the youth centre and the library. Volunteer associations also set up stands that add to the numerous tournaments and sporting activities.



The Barbiano family of Belgioioso Este

This dynasty, originally from Romagna, is recorded as early as the 11th century but really rose to prominence in the 14th and 15th centuries, with a number of famous military men, politicians and diplomats. The family became part of the Milan patricianship in 1456 and Ludovico (d. 1527) became governor of Milan with the backing of Emperor Charles V. The Barbiano family received the important Belgioioso fief in Lombardy, turning it into an elegant mansion over the centuries. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the family held important military and political posts, eventually being granted the title of prince in 1769. Rinaldo, who commissioned the villa in Velate, was an imperial chamberlain. Father Alberico XII was an imperial counsellor, general, a Knight of the Golden Fleece and of the Iron Crown, first prefect of the Brera Academy, and a friend of numerous artists and writers. Uncle Ludovico, another lover of the arts, followed the diplomatic career path, becoming deputy governor of the Austrian Netherlands (1784-87).



A sculpture by Vincenzo Vela in the S. Felice chapel

There are paintings by Giovanni Briani in the apse and transept. It also has some of the furnishings from the previous church, notably the balustrades and polychrome marble altars in baroque style and a 16th-century fresco (removed from the wall) that is said to be by the school of Bernardino Luini and depicts the *Virgin Mary with Saints John the Baptist and Margaret*. The Crucifix by the Milanese sculptor Silvio Monfrini (1894-1969) is from 1938. He created a number of other important works that are in the cemeteries of Monza and Usmate. The lower section of the bell tower is from the 12th century. The **parish church** of Velate is dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption and dates from the 12th century. It was enlarged in 1884 and rebuilt midway through the 20th century. The **Sanctuary** of the **Madonna del Carmelo**, with its circular layout, is also notable. It was built in the first half of the 19th century, in a zone known as Dosso di Velate, which is the highest part of the municipality (280 m).

There are a number of summer residences, but the best example is the Neoclassical **Villa Scaccabarozzi** (former Villa Casati Stampa Giulini Belgioioso) in Velate. It was built in the late 18th century by Count Rinaldo Barbiano di Belgioioso. It has a number of impressive halls, including the so-called "Hall of Columns". It has a park and a private oratory. Today, it is normally used for municipal functions.

The dominance of the Belgioioso family in the Velate area in the first half of the 19th century can be gauged from the building, in 1851, of the **S. Felice chapel**. Designed by Giacomo Moraglia, it was commissioned by Maria Beatrice Barbiano to house the mortal remains of her husband, Count Giovanni Giorgio Giulini della Porta. The structure, shaped like a small Neoclassical temple, has three sculptures by Vincenzo Vela.

Villa Ala Ponzoni is an 18th-century palazzo that was built on the site of an older mansion. **Villa Borgia**, built in the first half of the 19th century on the site of a (probably) medieval construction, has an age-old park and is now home to the council chamber.

Camparada

Municipal website: www.comunecamparada.it
Distance from Monza: 11 km. **Distance from Milan:** 27 km
Map reference: C 5

This municipality lies in the countryside of the Colli Briantei Park, which combines wooded zones with farm land and sits on the border with the province of Lecco. It consists of a number of districts (Masciocco, Masciocchino, Cabella, Torre, Valmora and California), with all of them enjoying a view of the Alpine foothills. The first recorded evidence of the town is from 1399. A number of important and stately families from Milan were feudal lords of this area, including the Visconti, Scoborella (1475), Casati and Trotti families. The actual municipality was instituted in 1860. In 1865, it was annexed to Lesmo by royal decree, but it later became autonomous once more.

The presence of places like the **Cascina Masciocco**, with the annexed Oratory of S. Rocco (home to the festival bearing the same name) and the **small church of the Beata Vergine del Carmelo**, are indications of the farming vocation this land.



The modern look of the Cascina Masciocco



Parco dei Colli Briantei

The Colli Briantei Park covers an impressive 550 ha lying between the Valle del Lambro Park and the Molgora Park. This zone is marked by the first rises in the landscape in the eastern Brianza area and it is an important part of the 'Milan ecological network'. The land itself is a combination of woodland and farming areas. The two branches of the Molgora River are central to the environment here, as they run through the east and west sections of the park. Indeed, the whole area is made up of cross valleys and plateaux (Valfreda, Valfazzola), thus enriching the local plant and animal life. The final sections of the park include the wetlands around Laghettone and Laghettino, two lakes in the Bernate forests. The park has numerous activities: environmental education, walking and mountain biking trails, picnic areas and agritourisms.

Lesmo

Municipal website: www.lesmo.org

Distance from Monza: 10 km. Distance from Milan: 26 km

Map reference: D 5



Villa Simonetta Rapazzini

Lesmo lies to the east of Monza Park, on the border with the area where the famous racetrack is located (indeed, one of the corners bears the town name). There is evidence of a settlement in the Peregolino valley in the 1st century B.C. In the 5th/6th century, a stronghold with a tower was built on the Gernetto hill to defend the Lambro valley. The territory then became part of the Martesana county. In 1449, during the war between Milan and Venice, the commander of the troops of the Ambrosian Republic, Iacopo Piccinino, was ambushed and defeated by Francesco Sforza's men as he made his way through the Peregallo woods. In 1475, Lesmo (and districts) became part of a fief ruled by the Seccoborella family, who held it until 1733 when it passed into the hands of the Trotti family. Until the middle of the 20th century, the economy was largely based on farming, leaving traces like the Brughiera and Varinona farmhouses at Peregallo. Later, silkworms became a major component of the local economy. Many locals also worked in the cotton mills at **Fola di Peregallo**, which is now a site of archaeological interest. Various important residential buildings are

Out of interest

A romantic legend from Brianza

In the 19th century, a legend arose about a dramatic love story, supposedly from the 14th century, involving two lovers – Peregallo and Lesmo – whose surnames became the town names. Two rival families – the Peregalli family from Peregallo and the Lesmi from Lesmo – lived near Bosco Bello (in the Monza Park). Rosa was a member of the former, while Gian Guidotto was part of the latter. They secretly fell in love and decided to get mar-

ried with the help of Friar Lorenzo (a hermit at S. Maria delle Selve), who acted as an intermediary between the families. All seemed well for a while, but then Gian Guidotto was killed by Guido de' Peregalli, a relative of Rosa. The latter, wracked by grief, agreed to drink poison given to her by Gasparino de' Lesmi, thus bringing her life to a tragic end. According to the tradition, the tomb stones of the two lovers were kept until the 18th century.

dotted around the territory. In the heart of the actual town, you find **Villa Ratti Fenaroli** (19th cent.) and the 20th-century **Villa Sala-Cega**, **Villa Fontana-Novecento** and **Villa Frattini-Tremolada**. **Villa Belvedere**, in the California district, is from the 17th century and was once owned by the poet Carlo Maria Maggi. Gerno is home to the most notable residence, known as **Villa Mellerio Somaglia** or Germetto. It was built in the last quarter of the 18th century and enlarged at the beginning of the next century by the Mellerio family. This Neoclassical building is scenically located above the Lambro valley. There is a watchtower built over a Renaissance fortification. The villa (private) has a terraced Italian garden. The actual villa and the annexed **Oratory of S. Carlo** house some sculptures by Antenore Fabris. Peregallo is home to **Villa Simonetta Rapazzini** (private), built in the late 17th century but redone in Neoclassical style in the early 19th century. The landscaped park conserves the ruins of a Coffee House, turned into a small oratory in the early 20th century. There are also old caves where a spring bubbles to the surface. This is the source of the Ghiringhella, which was a watercourse that once ran as far as Agrate. Massimo D'Azeglio – a friend of Emilio Rapazzini – stayed in the villa on numerous occasions. **Villa Mattioli Vismara Mazzoleni** was built in the late 19th century by Savoy minister Giuseppe Mattioli. It is in neo-Rococo style and was constructed over an 18th-century residence.

The parish **church of S. Maria Assunta**, recorded as early as the 13th century, was redone and enlarged in the 18th and 19th centuries and then re-consecrated in 1907. Gerno is the setting for the 18th-century **parish church of S. Carlo**. The **small church of S. Antonio** in Peregallo once belonged to the complex run by the Minim Friars of St. Francis of Paola. The **parish church**, dedicated to the **Annunciation**, in Peregallo is newish (1969-1992). It was designed by Francesco Cetti Serbelloni and has works by Bruno Chersicla. The **church of the Presentazione di Gesù** (1964), in the California district, is named after emigrants returning from the United States.

Famous people

Giacomo Mellerio (Domo - dossola, 1777-Milan 1847), closely tied to the Vienna imperial court, was the Grand Chancellor of Venetian Lombardy from 1814 to 1819. A devout catholic, he used a portion of his wealth for charitable works. He started with where he was born, leaving various donations in his will, including for a junior school for girls and a high school for the classics. He was also a major collector and commissioner of art. He involved Cantoni (1739-1818) in his projects (these families became acquainted when the Mellerio family commissioned a palazzo in Milan from the architect) and also asked, in 1811, for Antonio Canova to make memorial stelae for his wife, Elisabetta Castelbarco, and uncle, Giambattista Mellerio, placing them in the Gerno chapel in 1814. Today, following the 'dispersion' of the villa's furnishings (1978), they are owned by the Sicilian regional government. Other illustrious locals include: **Gaetano Casati**, a great traveller and explorer in Africa, born in 1838 in the Boffalora district; and **Pasquale Morganti** (1853-1921), Bishop of Bobbio (1902), and Archbishop of Ravenna (1904) and Cervia (1909).

Arcore

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

Pro Loco: piazza S. Pertini 28. **Tel.:** 0396013383

Website: www.prolocoarcore.it **E-mail:** info@prolocoarcore.it

Distance from Monza: 7.5 km. **Distance from Milan:** 24 km. **Map reference:** D 5



From the farm to the fork

The Elli Mapelli farm (Cascina Misurato, via Cascina Misurato 30, tel. 328 4148160, Annamaria) breeds pigs and charolaise, Limousine and Belgian Blue cows as well as breeds of Italian dairy cows. The animals, fed with home produce, are slaughtered on the farm. The farm shop sells pork, beef, poultry, eggs and cured meats.

The oldest documents discovered date from the 9th century and record donations to the local churches by the people from "Vico Arcole" or "Loco Arculi", which lay on the left side of the Lambro valley. From the Middle Ages on, Arcore belonged to the Vimercate country church and fief and was, as such, tied to the fortunes of Vimercate. Interestingly, in the Middle Ages, there were also two monasteries in the area: a Benedictine one, S. Martino, and one belonging to the order of the Humiliati of St. Apollinaire (the oratory bearing the same name still exists). From the 16th century, the town became a holiday destination and rural estate for many noble Milanese families who built outstanding residences here. The most notable of these is probably **Villa Giulini Casati Stampa**, which has become known as **Villa S. Martino** since it was purchased by Silvio Berlusconi in the 1980s. He has used the villa not only as his home, but also as the headquarters of his business empire and a favoured meeting location since his entrance into politics (1994). The current layout dates from 1713 when



Villa Borromeo D'Adda and, left, a detail from the Pietà by Vincenzo Vela



Villa Borromeo D'Adda, the chapel: dome and monuments by Vincenzo Vela

the 8th-century monastery of S. Martino was redone and incorporated into the villa. In the second half of the 18th century, Count Giorgio Giuliani gave it a Neoclassical taste, creating the typical U shape facing the town centre. The vast century-old park stretches almost as far as the Lambro River and contains a Neoclassical lemonhouse. The Villa passed to the Casati family in 1840 through marriage and this family went on to play a prominent role in Arcore in the 19th and 20th centuries. Camillo (1805-1869) was a local councillor who backed the building of the Monza and Lecco railway. Alessandro (1881-1955), once Minister of Education and a good friend of Benedetto Croce, was involved in the partisan fight against Nazism and Fascism. Many locals were involved in the attacks on the airfield and the Valperga massacre.

One of the oldest buildings in Arcore is **Villa Cazzola** (private). This 16th-century construction is based on an older building and was used as a hunting lodge before being modified by the Durini family in 1630 and in 1812, using a project by Carlo Amati. In the final decade of the 19th century, during major restoration work, the chapel was built using a project by the brothers Fausto and Giuseppe Bagatti Valsecchi. It is surrounded by a wonderful landscaped garden that has 18th-century elements.

The scenically located **Villa Borromeo D'Adda** is the result of an eclectic-rococo transformation (1840-1845) by Giuseppe Balzaretto of an 18th-century building owned by the D'Adda family. The

Fair and Palio of S. Eustorgio

In September, during the second weekend of the month, the feast of the patron saint is held. It is organised by the local Pro Loco in collaboration with the municipal administration and some local associations. Marching bands and traditional dance groups are all actively involved. The event includes: photographic exhibitions, games for children, tasting of traditional foods and the Palio dei Rioni, dedicated to games from bygone times, including tug-of-war and a wheelbarrow race. The winning district is awarded a standard by the mayor. There are other events at the parish church of S. Eustorgio: religious ceremonies, theatre, musical evenings and fireworks.

villa was completed in 1880 by Emilio Alemagna, who also designed the garden now open to the public. The whole complex has belonged to the municipality since 1980. The entrance buildings, currently housing the municipal offices, were once the wings of the lower villa. The central part was knocked down in the middle of the 19th century to create the entrance facing the town. It is worth noting the neo-Renaissance chapel topped by a dome. It was built by Balzaretti on the orders of Marquis Giovanni D'Adda after his young wife died (1849). It houses the Pietà and the monumental shrine of Maria di Isimbardi by Vincenzo Vela (ca. 1853) from the Ticino canton.

There are other interesting buildings, such as **Palazzo Durini**, in Bernate, **Villa Buttafava**, built at the end of the 18th century and now a residence, and the eclectic **Villa Ravizza**. The latter is famous for its Italian garden designed by Mansueto Ravizza, with the help of the architect Ludovico Belgioioso (1920). The garden is a sort of 'period' reconstruction of a baroque garden. It is beautifully terraced and decorated with a flight of steps, statues and wrought-iron decorations, dotted among some lovely plants.

The parish **church of S. Eustorgio** was first recorded in the 13th century, although the building is from the 18th century. The façade was redone in the early decades of the 19th century. Inside, there is furniture from the 16th and 17th centuries.



The Italian garden at Villa Ravizza, designed in 1920 in neo-baroque style

Caponago

Municipal website: www.comune.caponago.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 9.5 km. **Distance from Milan:** 21,4 km
Map reference: E 5

Caponago is located on the left bank of the Molgora River, 7 km from Vimercate. It was probably founded by the Romans and is mentioned for the first time in the will of the Milan Bishop Anspert da Biassono (874). In 1432, the Crivelli family became the landowners, maintaining possession until the 18th century. In 1896, Senator Luigi Simonetta opened a building for isolating cases of infectious diseases that was later named Ospedaletto. It was amongst the first buildings entirely made of concrete.

The **parish church of S. Giuliana** is worth a visit. It was first altered in 1581-1584 and was then rebuilt between 1738 and 1742 using a project by the architect Carlo Giuseppe Merlo. He used an unusual elliptical shape, drawing inspiration from contemporary examples in Austria and Bavaria. The frescoes, from 1895, are by Antonio De Grada. Partial alterations and enlargements were undertaken in 1939/40. The organ (1768) by Antonio Fontana is very valuable and was restored in 1896. The **church of S. Giorgio** is another interesting religious building, probably dating from the 9th century. It has some 14th century traces. The **chapel of S. Vigilio** has ancient origins and was turned into a leper colony during plague outbreak of 1576. In the old centre, **Palazzo Prata Galbiati** has been home to the Town Hall since 1962. It is a beautiful building with precious 18th-century decorations. **Palazzo Caglio** is an interesting holiday residence that eventually passed into the hands of the Counts Volta. The original core of **Villa Simonetta-Arcidini** is 16th century, but its current appearance is 19th century. It is said that Cardinal Charles Borromeo stayed here during his pastoral visit in 1584.



The first balloon

On 13 March 1784, Count Paolo Andreasi, with two technicians, Gaetano Rossi and Giuseppe Barzago, undertook the first trip in Italy in a balloon. He left from Villa Moncucco and landed safely in the countryside between Carugate and Caponago. Cardinal Angelo Durini even drafted a leaflet to celebrate this achievement.

Tomaso da Caponago

He lived in the 15th century and was a famous jurist. He is famous for ordering, in 1448, the following inscription to be placed on the stairs of the then Court of Milan (Broletto Nuovo in piazza dei Mercanti): "litigations are the ruin for both litigants".

Cornate d'Adda

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

Pro Loco: via Volta, 29 c/o Town Hall

Website: www.cornatedadda.eu **E-mail:** proloco@cornatedadda.eu

Distance from Monza: 20 km. **Distance from Milan:** 33.3 km. **Map reference:** D 6



Naviglio

The Naviglio (canal) known as "Paderno" was designed by Leonardo da Vinci for Ludovico the Moor in 1482 to enable the Adda to be crossed at Tre Corni. It was only opened in 1777, under the reign of Maria Theresa of Austria and the supervision of Pietro Nosetti. It is about 6 km long and has 7 basins: a major "water staircase" designed by Leonardo who captured the landscape of the Adda in his most famous paintings.

Paolo Diacono in his *Historia Langobardorum* recalls the battle between Alachi's armies and King Cunibert in Cornate (609). The archaeological excavations in the Villa Paradiso district brought to light a dozen Lombard tombs from the 7th/8th century, on the site of a rural Roman villa (1st cent. AD). Finds from the 5th century in the Rocchetta area suggest that a Roman settlement once stood on this land. This was confirmed in 2005 when a necropolis was found in the Cascina Preti district. The items recovered from here on are conserved by the Sovrintendenza per i Beni Archeologici in Milan. A tomb, dating from the 3rd century BC, and a funerary urn from the same period are on display in Cornate's Town Hall. In 1538, the land was given as a fief to Marquis Pagano d'Adda and then to the Moroni Stampa and Vimercati Sozzi families. The town maintained its rural vocation until the end of the 19th century, when two power plants – Bertini and Esterle – were built. These acted as the main drivers for industrialisation, providing electricity for Milan. Cornate became an inde-



The church of S. Giuseppe at Porto d'Adda and, right, Villa Sandroni in Colnago



On the Adda on the Addarella

pendent municipality in 1870 (combined with the districts of Colnago and Porto). The history of these districts is somewhat detached from that of the main town. Porto's existence was documented in the 12th/13th century. Located near a ford of the Adda River, it was of strategic importance because, from 1428 to 1797, it was on the border between the realms of Venice and Milan.

The **parish church of S. Giorgio** which underwent major changes in the last quarter of the 16th century, was enlarged in 1771 and in 1873-1887 was reduced to a nave and two aisles by Felice Monzini. The parish church also had some important paintings, such as the *Visitation* by Camillo Procaccini (on loan from the Brera Gallery in Milan) and a 17th-century *St. Francis of Assisi being comforted by an Angel*. The Neoclassical *St. Joseph* is said to be the work of the sculptor Pompeo Marchesi. It is also worth seeing **Villa Biffi Sormani**, designed by Carlo Amati (1802-1804) and the 18th-century **Villa Comi**, redone in the 19th century.

The **Sanctuary of the Madonna della Rocchetta** sits on a rocky outcrop. The church was built in 1386 by the physicist Beltrando Cornatese, who invited the hermit friars of St. Augustine to the location. This order, though, occupied the site for only a few decades, because, at the beginning of the 15th century, Filippo Maria Visconti turned it into a fort, but left the church intact.

Parco Adda Nord

The Adda Nord Park is a nature reserve that was instituted in 1983. It follows the Adda valley for about 54 km, from north to south, from Lake Lecco to Truccazzano (and the border with the Adda Sud Park). The total area is 7,437 ha. It includes some large wooded areas, filled with lush vegetation and numerous water species, birds and even terrestrial animals. It also has its fair share of archaeological elements, such as remnants from the Cluniac monks (farmhouses and monasteries), Renaissance hydraulic works (Leonardo's locks), noble villas, and examples of industrial archaeology (Paderno bridge, the Crespi d'Adda model workers village, spinning mills and factories). The raised tow-path, now a cycle path, runs along the river from Lecco to Trezzo sull'Adda (and then on to Milan along the Martesana canal) is an ideal way to explore the key parts of the park easily and calmly. The park also offers guide services, bicycle hire and boat trips (rubber ducks and on the Addarella, an ecological boat that has zero environmental impact). **For info:** Adda Nord Park, Villa Gina, via Benigno Calvi 3, Concesa district, tel. 0292273118, www.visitadda.com



Ecomuseo Adda di Leonardo

Ecomuseo Adda di Leonardo's remit is much more than a simple museum: it is designed to ensure the material and immaterial cultural heritage of the Adda River, from Imbersago-Villa d'Adda to Cassano d'Adda, is fully exploited in a positive and sustainable manner by promoting thoughtful tourism and local communities as well as developing relations with other eco-museums. This eco-museum has a trail, exploring the nature and culture tied to the river. It runs through 10 municipalities and can be done either on foot or by bike.

For info : tel. 029091229, www.addadileonardo.it

In the Villa Paradiso district, a Jesuit college was built in the second half of the 17th century. This remained until the suppression of the order in 1773. The block of buildings has been altered substantially, but the **small church of S. Ignazio di Loyola** (18th cent.) has survived largely intact.

In Colnago, there are two medieval towers (redone on various occasions) and **Villa Sandroni**, built in the mid-17th century and refurbished in about 1860. A stone column in front of the parish church of S. Alessandro records the plague years of 1628-30.

In the Porto d'Adda district, you can see **Villa Monzini**, which was first recorded in the mid-16th century. The annexed **chapel of S. Nicola** has a fresco that is in the style of Luini. The **parish church of S. Giuseppe** was completed in 1937 using a project by Giovanni Maggi. The bell tower was designed by Oreste Scanavini. The interior is decorated with *Stories of the Old and New Testaments* by Vanni Rossi (1940-45) from Bergamo.

Out of interest

The Porto d'Adda power plant

The series of power stations along the banks of the Adda are an excellent indication of engineering work from the beginning of the last century. The power stations, originally created in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by private industrialists, have long ceased to meet local power demands, necessitating the building of an Enel power station along the Adda. This does not mean, though, that the old power stations are no longer used and, in addition, some of them can even be visited by the public. Porto d'Adda, which is a district of Cornate, is home to two of the earliest plants built by the Edison company along the Adda River: the Esterle and Bertini power plants. The **Bertini power plant**, in action since 1898, was built by Edison to supply Milan with power following the construction of the tram network. At the time, its turbines



produced more power than anywhere else in the world, bar those driven by the mighty Niagara Falls in the United States.

In 1914, a little further downstream, the **Esterle power plant** was constructed and it is now an excellent example of industrial archaeology, recalling the Lombard Renaissance. The two plants (not open to the public, but visible from outside) lie along the Adda, off the tow path. From Porto d'Adda Inferiore, head along via XXV Aprile and follow the signs for the river ('Al fiume') and then head along the unpaved road. Next to the Bertini plant, there is a museum, in a small building, that illustrates the history of the Edison company. The Cornate d'Adda (www.comatedadda.eu) section of Pro Loco organises guided tours of the power plants and museums as well as trips along the river.

Roncello

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

Website: www.prolocoroncello.it **E-mail:** info@prolocoroncello.it

Distance from Monza: 18 km. **Distance from Milan:** 30.4 km

Map reference: D 6



Panoramic view of the Roncello countryside



Until recently this town, lying a few kilometres from the right bank of the Adda, was a farming area. The oldest recorded mention of this town is in the will of “vir magnificus” Roberto di Agrate (745). It is likely that there was a Humiliati complex here in the Middle Ages. Some sources suggest that a castle – or at least a fortified building – once stood in the area to the north of the Cascina Gallo, near Rio Vallone, heading towards Bellusco. There is also documented evidence of the Benedictine convent of S. Mibele, which must have existed until at least the middle of the 14th century in the Borgonovo zone. In the 16th century, there were three noble families that lived permanently here: the Da Vimercate, Guizzardi and Da Balsamo families. In 1538, it was granted as a fief to Pagano d’Adda. In 1652, along with Busnago, it passed into the hands of the Sciaffinati family and then, in 1756, to the Alamagna.

The old centre still has some 16th-century elements, both in the way the streets are laid out and in the set up of the houses. The **church of Ss. Ambrogio e Carlo** is recorded even earlier than the 11th century. It was rebuilt in 1863 and then consecrated in 1901. It only became an autonomous parish (separate from Busnago) in 1885 and, indeed, much of the town’s history is ‘shared’ with Busnago. The **small church of Ss. Salvatore** is from the second half of the 18th century.

Famous people

The footballer Paolo Pulici is from Roncello. This attacker was born on 27 April 1950 and, together with Francesco Graziani, formed a formidable attacking partnership. These two were responsible, in no small part, for helping Torino to win the cup in 1970/71 and the league in 1975/76.



Roncello’s parish church

Busnago

Municipal website: www.comune.busnago.mi.it
Distance from Monza: 18 km. Distance from Milan: 31 km
Map reference: D 6



Festival in Busnago

Sfilata dei Magi (parade of the Wisemen), Epiphany: the traditional event involves a parade through the town's streets that ends on the parvis in front of the parish church.

Feast of St. Anne on 26 July: this is the feast of the town's patron saint and involves religious events and an evening procession. There are also games and entertainment for adults and children alike on the main square (jumping castles, theatre, old-fashioned sports).

Feudo in Festa, end of September: this historical pageant takes one back to 1471 and the investiture of Pino Ortodossi as governor of some holdings in Romagna. It is organised by the "Torre dei Germani" flag-throwers of Busnago. There are also various dinners, using local products, that are held in the different town districts and the flag-throwers themselves parade through the town in medieval garb.

The town lies on the plain, between the Adda and the Molgora, in the Adda Park. It might have been a Roman military settlement, but the first documented evidence of the commune's name is a deed listing the possessions of the Bishop of Milan, Anspert (873). Gothofredus de Bussero's *Chronica* mentions both the church of S. Pietro and of S. Giovanni Evangelista. In 1538, the fief of Busnago was granted to the D'Adda family. In 1652, it passed into the hands of the Schiaffinati family, who in 1865, through a diploma issued by the King of Spain, became Counts of Roncello and Busnago. In 1756, it became the property of the Alemagnas.

The **Germani tower** has some 13th-century sections and was, probably, one of the four defensive elements that, from the 12th century on, were supposed to have encircled the town.

The **parish church of S. Giovanni Evangelista** was rebuilt in about 1774 by Giovanni Cattaneo and consecrated in 1814. It houses some 18th-century paintings. The lovely **Palazzo Porro-Schiaffinati**, housing the Town Hall, is 18th century. **Villa Radice-Scotti** was built in the early 19th century and was later used for the Busnago college for boys.



Palazzo Porro-Schiaffinati, now the Town Hall

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