

# LUGANO

Press Documentation

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## INTRODUCTION

### **A warm welcome and sincere good wishes**

Before the advent of mass tourism, when travelling was still the prerogative of the few, poets and artists were already talking enthusiastically of Lugano.

The principal attractions of Lugano and its region have always been the extremely mild climate, delightful scenery and luxuriant vegetation.

Good bathing facilities, romantic walks and rides, and a full range of sporting activities are a magnet for holidaymakers of all tastes. There are innumerable excursions for those wanting to discover the region: from cruises on the lake to cable-car trips to the summits of the surrounding mountains: Monte Brè, Monte San Salvatore, Monte Lema, Monte Tamaro and Monte Generoso. The Lake Lugano Region is quite exceptional in enabling visitors to combine professional activities, short holidays, conferences, business trips, cultural weekends and, of course, shopping.

Quite rightly, our guests come with very high expectations. Lugano has developed rapidly in the last few years, becoming an international financial centre and one of Switzerland's foremost cultural attractions. Motorways, railways and, more recently, airline connections have given it strong links with the outside world. Since the building of its Palazzo dei Congressi, Lugano has become a much sought-after conference centre.

The city's reputation for cultural life derives mainly from the many prestigious exhibitions it puts on.

In fact, the whole region is of great historical and artistic interest, with local museums, churches of all periods, and buildings inspired by the new school of architecture native to Ticino.

Lugano also has much to offer in the musical sphere, hosting festivals of all kinds in spring, summer and autumn. The Lake Lugano tourist offices are grateful for the interest you have shown and hope you will enjoy a pleasant stay in a region that is unique in combining Italian atmosphere and culture with Swiss efficiency and attentive service.

LUGANO TURISMO  
Official Tourist Office

## **For an agreeable stay and some exciting new experiences**

Our aims are to acquaint the wider public with the natural environment, scenery, history and culture of the area; to arouse interest and curiosity; and to awaken a desire to spend a holiday, or at least a day or two, exploring the part of Ticino that centres on Lake Lugano.

Of great importance in achieving this purpose are the skills and professionalism of journalists who visit our region to gather news and information for the benefit of their readers and/or listeners. It is our hope that they will be able to convey vivid and positive impressions, experiences and feelings.

With this in mind, the Tourist Offices of Lugano and district, Ceresio, Malcantone, Valli di Lugano and Mendrisiotto – acting together under the banner of the Lake Lugano Region – are very glad to play host to journalists and media operators. We will do all we can to ensure that you have an agreeable stay and experience the many aspects of our vast region.

If you are visiting the towns, villages, historical and artistic centres, and the hills and mountains of our district, we would encourage you to enjoy to the full its natural features and climate, record your feelings and take in all you can, then transmit your impressions to others, whether through your chosen medium or by personal contact.

More than a useful guide to the various aspects of The Lake Lugano Region, this press pack (documentation) is intended as working compendium of information and practical advice, interesting facts and curiosities.

It can be used in preparing for and making the most of a visit to our region, or a source material when the time comes to write a feature, or features, on what you have experienced. The various sections, or parts of them, may be freely reproduced in other publications.

We have arranged the articles – written by a professional journalist – according to topic. After an introductory section, giving a general picture, there are chapters on culture (with particular emphasis on museums and exhibitions), curiosities, parks and gardens, and excursions. We have included an index for ready reference.

However complete in itself, it is inevitable that this documentation will not meet all the needs of the user. The directors and the staff of the local tourist office would therefore like you to know that they are available to help you organise your visit, discuss and advice on the things you want to see, and provide further information and documents (including photographs, if appropriate). They are also ready and willing to arrange a meeting or have you visit their offices.

Having said this, may we wish all visitors to the Lake Lugano Region a pleasant stay, in the hope that our efforts will also facilitate the work of those with a professional interest in tourism.

*Lugano Tourism*  
*www.lugano-tourism.ch*  
*info@lugano-tourism.ch*

*information offices: Palazzo Civico-Riva Albertolli*  
P.O. Box 6080, 6901 Lugano  
tel. 091 913 32 32 / fax. 091 922 76 53

Stazione FFS, 6815 Melide  
tel. 091 649 63 83 / fax. 091 649 56 13

Piazzale Stazione, 6950 Tesserete  
tel. 091 943 18 88 / fax. 091 943 42 12

*Malcantone Tourist Office*  
6987 Caslano tel. 091 606 29 86 / fax. 091 606 52 00  
*Internet: www.malcantone.ch E-Mail: info@malcantone.ch*

*Mendrisiotto and Basso Ceresio Tourist Office*  
6850 Mendrisio tel. 091 641 30 50 / fax. 091 641 30 59  
*Internet: www.mendrisiottotourism.ch E-Mail: info@mendrisiottotourism.ch*

## GENERAL OVERALL PICTURE

*Tradition and modernity in perfect balance*

### **A wide range of attractions for all seasons**

There are many and various reasons for deciding to spend a holiday in the Lake Lugano Region – the part of the canton Ticino south of Monte Ceneri that projects wedge-like into Lombardy. Easily accessible, it stands at a crossroads between Northern Europe and Italy. Historically and culturally, too, the region is a meeting place, knitting together different traditions and influences – an outstanding example of cross-fertilisation.

In spite of – or possibly because of – this openness to outside influences, the region has maintained a distinct personality, whose unmistakable features are readily identified. Much of its success as a centre of tourism derives from its temperate climate, moderated by the presence of the lake, with mild winters and a high proportion of sunny days. The landscape has not been spoilt by excessive urbanisation, and its natural balance of mountain, hill and lowland makes it an agreeable place to be in any season, offering a wide range of things to do: from different leisure and sports activities to hiking and mountain bike-excursions on mountains climbing to heights of almost 2000 metres, bathing in lake and swimming pool, playing tennis or golf, sailing, windsurfing, water-skiing, walking through virtually unspoilt countryside and villages, as well as doing essential business and shopping.

The character of the region has favoured development of the service sector, reflected in a rapid growth in financial and commercial activity, especially in Lugano and, to a lesser extent, Chiasso. The region is nowadays Switzerland's third major banking area, handling a large volume of international transactions. Lugano and its hinterland would therefore appear to have a vocation for "civilised" tourism. The region's attractions are varied, and it offers support and sustenance to many cultural facilities and activities: museums devoted to ethnography and the visual arts; a constant stream of concerts and events featuring classical music, jazz, blues and rock; historic city centres, traditional domestic architecture and the modern offerings of now internationally famous "Ticino school", of which Mario Botta is the best known exponent.

The true character of the region is expressed in this combination of tradition and modernity. Certainly there is no lack of first-class facilities: banks, boutiques, department stores, hotels, restaurants, cafés and leisure centres. All the varied needs of modern tourism are fully met, whether you are looking for fashionable meeting places and night clubs or prefer to get away from it all and explore the region's hundreds of kilometres of well-maintained footpaths.

## **A fragment of the Mediterranean on the fringes of the North**

Historically, the region around lake Lugano has been a meeting place or, if you prefer, a place of synthesis between Northern influence has trickled over the Alpine passes (Lucomagno, St. Gothard, Simplon and San Bernardino) into the upper Ticino valley then, breaching the Ceneri range, has flowed down towards the gentler slopes and lowlands around Lake Lugano. Yet even deeper have been the effects of the culture and civilisation of nearby Italy, towards which country this region naturally inclines.

The Romans passed this way, leaving indelible marks on architecture and way of life. The region was next invaded by the Lombards, and so came under the sway of Milan and Como, but its intense community spirit and sense of identity were never broken. This is seen in the history of its great families – the Ruscas of Agno, the Rusconis of Bedigliora, the Rivas of Riva San Vitale – and in the codes of law adopted by its peoples, for instance the Statuti della Capriasca. The region's economy has also been moulded by its geographical position on the highway between North and South. This explains Gian Galeazzo Visconti of Milan's plans to make the river Tresa a navigable waterway, the importance of commercial dealings with Italy, the presence of military garrisons, a series of agricultural initiatives, schemes to exploit the Alpine pastures, and such industrial activities as silk production. Use of the land and its resources developed harmoniously, with an almost perfect balance between mountain, lowland, and lake-side activities. More rapid development has occurred in the course of this century with the opening of rail and road communications between Italy and the North. The area around Ceresio (lake Lugano) became a mecca for tourists and holiday makers in the early years, and this process has gone on ever since. Today, specially in the more clement months, it is the goal of thousands of tourists, who come to enjoy its Mediterranean-style way of life, as well as its fine climate and scenery. In recent decades, there has been a significant increase in the resident population. Financial and business activity, particularly in the banking sector, have made it an important bridge between Italy, Northern Switzerland and Europe generally. The population of the Lake Lugano Region is now in excess of 100.000, distributed fairly evenly throughout the area. As a result, Lugano has developed as a dynamic and modern city while preserving all the character of a small town with a number of inhabitants, which with fusions to surrounding villages has only recently reached almost 60'000. And its people have lost nothing of their immediately recognisable local identity.

## **History of Lugano**

The history of the Lugano region goes back as far as the Roman era, as records and monuments show – there are even Etruscan and Gallic traces – followed by the Lombards and the Frank. In the Middle Ages, when under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Como, Lugano could not avoid being caught up in the furious clashes between the populations of Como and Milan, unrest that persisted until Lugano passed directly under the dependency of the Duke of Milan, who, in 1498, had constructed the famous castle on the lake shore. A castle that for many years became the focal point of contention in which both the Swiss and French took part. As a Swiss bailiwick (1512-1513), Lugano took on a new lease of life, epitomized by the famous autumn fair, which identified the community as one of the most important centres of trade between Italy and the North. Though in no way a period of freedom, or even of real progress, it did bring peace and both economical and cultural growth. Magnificent churches, luxurious patrician mansions, and a renowned school (the college of the Somaschi Fathers) all sprang up. In the eighteenth century a printing house was founded and the quality of the works produced spread the name and prestige of the city throughout the cultural centres of Europe. The French Revolution left its mark on the citizens of Lugano, as it did on the whole Swiss nation. There were clashes between the advocates of change and the champions of the “status quo”, leading to the memorable events of February 15, 1798; events which brought freedom to Lugano, within the context of the fateful general political evolution. Initially within the Helvetic Republic, in 1803, as a result of the consolidation of all the once Italian bailiwicks into the Canton of Ticino, Lugano became part of the new Swiss Confederation. The nineteenth century saw Lugano in the vanguard of political movements and cultural activities. In fact, the town was extremely responsive to the Italian “Risorgimento” and afforded hospitality to Giuseppe Mazzini, Carlo Cattaneo, and many others. The opening of St. Gotthard railway line in 1882 was a powerful stimulus to the local economy and enable Lugano to assume a distinct identity. The incomparable beauty of the surrounding countryside lead to the growth of the tourist industry which, thanks to intrinsic resources and growing publicity, has established the name of the city beyond the borders of Switzerland.

## **Conventions and seminars by the lakeside**

Since the 1970s, Lugano has been a major venue for conventions and conferences. Even before the Convention Centre was built, the lake Lugano Region was already hosting conferences, seminars and meetings, albeit on a smaller scale, and these activities grew with the building of the motorway and the extension of the airport at Agno. Facilities already existed, both on the lakeside and in attractive wooded surroundings, offering good communications with the major Swiss and European centres. The Convention Centre was a further development of this sector, and added a new element to the tourism infrastructure.

The Convention Centre is situated in the heart of the city, with the business area and leisure complex on one side, and the municipal park and Lake on the other. The complex is magnificently appointed. Below ground level there is a hundred-seater theatre and a press office equipped with teleprinters, computers and telephones. On the ground floor is an amphitheatre seating 1150, with a fixed stage and moveable orchestra pit, and adjacent to it a smaller hall. The first floor houses a banqueting chamber with removable partition walls, which can seat a maximum of 1000 guests, a further room seating 100, and another small room for business meetings.

The unique attraction of the Convention centre is that it combines this modern glass and reinforced concrete complex with the neoclassical Villa Ciani. The two are linked by an impressive glass structure.

Recently, there has been added a new congress structure, Il Ciani, just opposite the Convention Center, by which it is exclusively managed. The historical building dates back to the 19th century and is located on a property of about 4'000 square meters enriched by the presence of century old trees. The two-floor structure contains about ten meeting rooms of between 10 and 60 square meters. On the ground floor in the middle of the building, there is a patio of 280 square meters, ideal for all kind of events. The peculiarity of its pyramid-shaped skylight in glass and metal and the decoration of the round arches and beautiful wooden floor make it a unique venue. The patio is surrounded by a series of rooms that can be used for small meetings, exhibitions and conferences. All the meeting rooms enjoy natural sunlight.

The management company not only allocates the various conference facilities but also makes hotel reservations and organises leisure activities, making it easy to put on a convention in the lakeside capital. The Lugano Tourist office is responsible for marketing and advertising, attracting conventions, seminars and promotional trips. In the last fifteen years, the Centre has become an increasingly important element in the life of the city and for tourist development throughout the region.

The Centre puts the accent on service, offering up-to-date functional facilities in a complex which, though set in the heart of the city, is virtually self-sufficient. The banqueting is run by excellent catering services, whereas the ground-floor Parco Ciani restaurant is managed by the renowned firm of G.S.I. Suisse SA. The restaurant itself seats 180, with a further 180 places on the terrace overlooking the Park and Villa Ciani.

## **Art and music of the highest standard**

The community life of the people living in the Lake Lugano region very much reflects the secular and religious events of their past, their geographical position, culture and way of earning a living. The people are typically Latin in temperament: open, friendly and communicative. This southern *joie de vivre* is apparent in the way they meet and associate: in the typically northern Italian-type village and town squares, such as piazza della Riforma in Lugano, in local streets, “grotti” (local taverns) and inns, in front of the church, by the lake shore, and in modern conference centres. Against this background, the region has evolved a large number of public events, with celebrations going on almost throughout the year.

Time-honoured traditions include historical processions on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday at Mendrisio and neighbouring villages, a May festival in the Malcantone area, grape harvest celebrations in Lugano, and village festivals in honour of patron saints such as San Martino at Mendrisio and San Provino at Agno. Lugano’s own festival includes a firework display on the shores of the lake. More recently, the town has begun to host trade fairs, such as Artecasa and Primexpo, which draw thousands of visitors from other parts of Switzerland and from across the Italian frontier.

Cultural activities have been growing in number and importance. The opening of new museums and art galleries – and not only in Lugano – has created a great enthusiasm for exhibitions on the themes of art, local customs, and traditional economic activities. Classical music is also flourishing. Seasons of concerts like the Lugano Festival or the Autumn Concerts featuring the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana are organised by the Radiotelevisione (broadcasting authority) and the spring Concert Season in Lugano, while local music festivals thrive at Castagnola, Breganzona, Tesserete, Sonvico, Melide and in other lake-side villages. The region’s artistic and musical events are of the highest order, attracting painters, sculptors, conductors, ensembles and soloists of international repute. Nor is modern music neglected. As well as numerous open-air rock and pop concerts, jazz is featured at Estival jazz, and a Blues to Bop festival takes place in Lugano in the summer months, attracting performers from all over the world. As a result, the region becomes a major cultural centre, exerting an influence beyond its own borders. There are cultural events and activities going on virtually all the year round, in towns and villages throughout the area.

## **A cuisine combining old and new**

It seems contradictory that, while Ticino offers food to satisfy the most demanding gastronome and has some truly excellent restaurants, it does not have a style of cooking to call its own. And yet, today, one of its greatest attractions is a cuisine that has been refined and perfected over the years by developing typical local dishes and, at the same time, adopting those of the neighbouring regions, both North and South.

The lake Lugano Region, and indeed the whole of Canton Ticino, has always been a point of contact between two different worlds, and this is also true of cookery. Here, Italian cuisine meets the cookery of Northern Europe; Piemontese, Lombard and Mediterranean specialities rub shoulders with dishes from across the Alps. And let it not be forgotten that French cuisine has also exerted an appreciable influence. What is certain, however, is that the cookery of Canton Ticino has managed to retain its earthy authenticity and simplicity, using local ingredients and eschewing exotic sauces. For instance, you will find risotto and polenta, boiled meats and vegetable soups, a wide range of sausages and many other traditional dishes which betray their peasant origins but at the same time manifest great inventiveness.

The region's cuisine has been lifted to a higher plane by combination of Italian regional cookery with the Swiss culinary tradition, taking the very best elements of each. Making the most of the region's favoured geographical position, it is an easy matter to arrange for the importation of fresh produce: from shellfish to early fruit and vegetables from all parts of the world. Various influences are also apparent in the way food is processed, for example in the different cuts of meat, and in the production of first-class cakes and pastries. The result is that there are few places offering so wide and excellent a range of gastronomic possibilities as the Ticino: from the popular country cookery of the "grotti" (local taverns) you find all over the region, through the honest food served in family trattorie, to the culinary art of a string of top-class restaurants. Even at table, the locals have made the most of their dual heritage.

The range of possibilities has widened even further in recent decades with the opening of oriental restaurants (Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, etc.). for the visitors, there is therefore the added pleasure of discovery. He can sample the basic local cookery, go for typically modern fast food, or explore the many facets of the region's serious – and richly rewarding – traditional cuisine, developed by what is now a universally recognised "school" of gastronomy. The local food is best accompanied by the excellent wines of the Ticino. Now internationally appreciated, these are produced from varieties of the Merlot grape grown in ideal conditions on the slopes around Lake Lugano.

## **University of Lugano**

Founded in 1996, the University of Lugano (USI) is a member of the Swiss university system, together with nine other cantonal universities and the Federal Institutes of Technology in Zurich and Lausanne. It is the only Italian-speaking university outside Italy and comprises four Faculties: Architecture, Communication Sciences, Economics and Informatics. In 2006, it had over 2000 students from more than 30 different countries, 210 teaching staff, 280 assistants and researchers, and 80 employees in the administrative and technical services.

Its geographical, political and cultural background has enabled USI to grow into a multilingual academic institution with great international openness. It was one of the first universities in Switzerland to adopt the new university degree system, known as the “Bologna” system, the main objective of which is to create a common European space for higher education through the harmonisation of curricula.

USI has built up a solid network of academic relationships with the other Swiss universities and with various universities abroad. It benefits from privileged partnerships with major universities in Lombardy and with the Polytechnic of Milan. With them, USI runs double-degree two-year Master’s programmes in Communication, Economics and Informatics as well as international doctoral schools.

USI enjoys very good relations with the world of work. A period of work experience with a company or institution in Switzerland or abroad is an integral part of the curriculum. The Stage & Placement service assists students in their choice of internship and in their job hunting.

Thanks to its small scale, the direct contact between teachers and students, a true symbiosis between diverse disciplines, generous spaces and high-quality technical facilities, USI offers ideal conditions for study and research.

## CULTURE

*A lake with many artistic and literary associations*

### **Cultural endeavour past and present**

The cultural life of canton Ticino has always been deeply influenced by geography. The region inclines naturally towards the South, towards the Italian lakes and Milan, but is also open to the North, via what was once called the “way of the nations”, the St. Gotthard pass. In more recent times, the pass has been complemented by rail and motorway tunnels. Historically, then, Ticino is a place of transit, straddling the shortest route between Italy and northern Europe. As a result, it has experienced a diversity of influences and exchanges, at times mediating between cultures, at other making original contributions of its own.

Although beautiful, well watered and possessing abundant supplies of stone, the region is poor in natural resources. With intelligence and enterprise, its people developed a subsistence form of agriculture and building techniques in which the skilled use of stone featured prominently. It is part of the area from which, beginning around the year 1000, the master masons of Como, the Val d’Intelvi and Campione spread out over the whole of Europe, leaving a rich legacy of sculpture and architecture, from papal Rome to Tsarist Moscow and St. Petersburg. The roll call of famous names includes the Solari of Carona, the Gaggini of Bissone, Francesco Borromini, the great seventeenth-century architect of Roman baroque (also from Bissone), Carlo Maderno of Capolago, another celebrated architect who made his career in Rome, Stefano Maderno of Bissone, the restorer and sculptor, Baldassarre Longhena of Maroggia, an architect and sculptor active in Venice in the seventeenth century, the painter Pier Francesco Mola of Coldrerio, Giovanni Serodine of Ascona, and so on down to the architect Trezzini, responsible for many important buildings in St. Petersburg, and Vincenzo Vela of Ligornetto, a sculptor who played a part in the unification of Italy (Risorgimento).

This is by no means a full list. The important thing to remember is that this amazing talent for building, which originated in the “lake country” – an area including the territories of Como, Varese, Bergamo and Brescia and part of Piemonte, as well as what is now cantone Ticino – left a deep impression even outside the confines of art and architecture. It helped to save the culture of Ticino from provincialism, so that in literature too the region gave birth to authors whose fame has reached beyond the borders of Switzerland. Think of Francesco Chiesa, the writer and poet, Giorgio and Giovanni Orelli, Virgilio Gilardoni and a host of other authors, poets and scholars.

In the different parts of Canton Ticino, from the Alpine valleys to the lake-side towns and villages, a vigorous popular culture has developed over the centuries. It has permeated economic and social life, and still very evident in the history, religion, art and customs of the region.

## **A world centre of modern architecture**

One of the most exciting aspects of contemporary culture in Lugano and the surrounding area is its architecture. In the last fifty years, what may properly be termed a School has grown up and received international recognition, making this corner of Switzerland one of the centre of world architecture. It draws students and researchers; scholars have written essays and articles on its development and there is an impressive list of books on the subject. Many public and private buildings in Lugano and throughout the region stretching from Monte Ceneri to the borders of Lombardy are visited for study purposes.

The most famous of the new generation of builders in canton Ticino is undoubtedly the architect Mario Botta, born near Mendrisio and unanimously acclaimed as one of the great names of modern architecture. Outstanding among his contributions to the new style of building are detached residences at Morbio Superiore (casa Pusterla), Logornetto (casa Bianchi), Riva San Vitale (also casa Bianchi), Massagno (casa Robbiana), Breganzona (casa Genini) and elsewhere; the new headquarters of the Banca del Gottardo and the Salita Library of the Capuchin monastery, both in Lugano, and the church on Monte Tamaro, decorated with frescos by Enzo Cucchi.

Although Mario Botta's is the most celebrated talent, other local masters paved the way for the present flowering of his art. One of the founders of the school was Rino Tami, whose Cantonal Library, built in 1940 and enlarged as well as renovated until 2005, immediately found a place in anthologies of architecture. Among his other achievements is the layout of the motorway that cuts across the region, itself a magnificent piece of building. Other architects of wide renown are Alberto Camenzind und Augusto Jäggi, Tita Carloni, whose work includes the Casa del Popolo and the Palazzo Garzoni in Lugano, Peppo Brivio, famous for the extraordinary Albairone apartment building at Massagno, and Carlo Ponti. In Lugano and its surrounding area, important work has been done by Luigi Snozzi, Livio Vacchini, Aurelio Galfetti, Giancarlo Durisch, Flora Ruchat, Bruno Brocchi, Roberto Sennhauser and many others.

The local Tourist Offices have prepared an illustrated itinerary taking in buildings by other wellknown architects, such as Mario Campi, Franco Pessina and Niki Piazzoli (casa Boni at Massagno, casa Filippini at Muzzano and casa Polloni at Origlio, to quote the most famous); structures by Emilio Bernegger, Bruno Keller and Edy Quaglia; and work by a younger generation: Giancarlo Durisch, Bruno Reichlin & Fabio Reinhart, Elio Ostinelli, Ivano Gianola and others. We could continue. The main thing is to grasp the development of a movement that is still evolving. It finds its inspiration in a modern vision of the world, new technology, respect for the discipline of building and for the natural setting. It is generally agreed that the work of these architects in both the public and private spheres has enhanced the quality of life, gracing the region with buildings that in quality and concentration are quite unrivalled.

## **A rich legacy of churches and fresco paintings**

Over the centuries, the people of canton Ticino have expressed their artistic talents in a series of distinguished monuments, which to this day grace town and village. Without attempting to establish connections between the various artists or make a chronological survey, we will simply record here some of the chief masterpieces, in addition to those specifically mentioned in other sections. It should also be borne in mind that some of the greatest expressions of the artistic activity of the local people are to be found in such far-flung centres as Rome and Venice, Vienna and Paris, Warsaw, St.Petersburg and Moscow.

In a region with so deep-rooted a religious tradition, most work of art were created for churches and other ecclesiastical buildings, particularly in the fields of architecture and sculpture. In Lugano, it is worth visiting the Cathedral of St. Lawrence, which has a Romanesque ground plan and magnificent renaissance facade. The west wall is decorated with thirteenth-century frescos, while those on the pilasters of the nave date from the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries. One of the side chapels has an altar piece by G.B. Carloni, executed in 1632.

On the lakeside stands the church of Santa Maria degli Angioli, once part of a Franciscan convent (founded 1490, suppressed 1848). The wall separating the nave from the chancel is entirely covered with a monumental fresco depicting the Passion and Crucifixion of Christ, painted in 1529 by Bernardino Luini.

Other buildings of note in Lugano are the church of Loreto, which has a rococo portico, and the baroque-style Riva residences.

The region boasts some very fine Romanesque architecture: the churches of SS. Pietro e Paolo at Sureggio (Lugaggia), San Martino at Sonvico and S. Stefano at Miglieglia, which has some important late-gothic frescos. Other buildings worth visiting are the church of St. Ambrogio at Cademario, whose primitive sanctuary with its single aisle dates from the twelfth century; S. Maria dei Ghirli at Campione, with its interesting fourteenth and seventeenth century frescos; and S. Mamete at Mezzovico, which has Romanesque bell tower and frescos dating from the sixteenth century. At Carona, fragments of thirteenth-century fresco painting can be seen in the church of Santa Maria Assunta al Torello, which is of Romanesque origin, while the sanctuary of S. Maria d'Ongero is richly decorated with stucco work and frescos by Petrini. Still at Carona, vestiges of Romanesque architecture can be detected in the church of San Giorgio.

A breath-taking Romanesque bell tower overshadows the church of S. Stefano at Tesserete, whose sumptuous interior decoration includes some fifteenth-century frescos. The church of S. Vitale at Riva San Vitale was founded before the year 1000. This village is famous for its baptistery, the oldest Christian monument in Switzerland, dating from around the year 500. The design is simplicity itself, consisting of a cubic structure surmounted by an octagon. Some fine late-gothic frescos can be seen in the chapel of S. Antonio Abate at Morcote, while the medieval church of S. Ambrogio at Ponte Capriasca is particularly interesting: as well as a Romanesque bell tower, it has a fresco of the Last Supper, painted in 1550. The work is a copy of Leonardo da Vinci's badly damaged masterpiece in Milan and, as such, is of great value to art historians.

## **Emigration and its fruits**

Over the centuries, there has been a constant stream of emigrants from the Ticino area, a phenomenon first recorded around the year 1000. Emigration is typical of the pre-alpine lake country which includes parts of Piemonte and Lombardy as far as the valleys and lowlands of what is now Italian-speaking Switzerland.

The first wave of emigration lasted from Romanesque times until the late eighteenth century and was largely made up of what Virgilio Gilardoni describes as “wandering craftsmen”: masons, artisans, stone-cutters and carvers, plasterers, builders, fresco painters and architects, who left their mark all over Europe, particularly in the Italian cities of Rome and Venice, and in the eastern lands, including Russia.

The original masters from Campione, Val d’Intelvi and Como gave rise to families and whole dynasties of skilled craftsmen. Names that spring to mind are the Solari of Carona, who worked on the Certosa di Pavia and Milan Cathedral and subsequently joined the Lombardo in Venice, the Rodari of Maroggia, the Gaggini of Bissone, the Maderno of Capolago, the Quadri of Lugano, the Silva of Morbio Inferiore, and the Carloni of Rovio. Other famous names include Francesco Borromini of Bissone, one of the greatest architects of the seventeenth century, Stefano Maderno, Baldassarre Longhena, who designed the Venetian church of S. Maria della Salute, Carlo Fontana of Novazzano, the great painter Pier Francesco Mola of Coldrerio, not forgetting the Cantoni of Muggio, the Canonica of Tesserete and the Albertoli of Bedano. Of those who ventured as far afield as Russia, the greatest is Domenico Trezzini of Astano, architect of St. Petersburg under Tsar Peter the Great. Others who took the same road were the Rusca of Agno, the Gilardi and Camuzzi of Montagnola, Antonio Adamini of Agra and Gaspare Fossati of Morcote. All these and many others made an enormous contribution to European culture.

The flow of emigrants was however also influenced by social and economic factors. Those forced to leave because of poverty tended to work as servants and labourers, or scratch a living as pedlars, hot chestnut men, barrow boys, waiters, coffee and chocolate sellers, domestics, porters, ostlers, knife-grinders, tinkers, chimney sweeps and so on. This type of emigration was at its height in the nineteenth century. In practice, every region had its outlets and specialisation, handed down from generation to generation. Starting in the late eighteenth century, there was a major flow of emigrants to the New World, then to Australia. For decades, remittances sent home by such workers were of great importance in bolstering the local economy.

Recent studies stress the great extent to which emigration has served to open the Ticino region to social and cultural influences from outside. This openness is evident in buildings and works of art, as well as in cultural exchanges with the countries to which emigrants have tended to gravitate.

Over the years, the traffic has not been all one way. As a result of the economic and social development of Ticino, particularly since the last war, many foreigners have come to live and work in the region.

## **Tracing the history of modern art**

The Cantonal Museum of Art, situated in the old centre of Lugano, is housed in a group of buildings dating from the Middle Ages. It is well worth a visit, both for its permanent collections and on account of the temporary exhibitions and other cultural activities it organises.

The permanent collections consist of works by both Swiss-Italian and Italian artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The first category begins with the sculptor Vincenzo Vela and his contemporaries, includes the painters Filippo Franzoni, Luigi Rossi, Varlin and a host of others, and ends with such contemporary artists as Edmondo Dobrzanski, Massimo Cavalli and Flavio Paolucci. In the second group are some of the greatest names of twentieth-century Italian art, from Sironi, Carrà and Casorati to Ennio Morlotti and other more recent figures. Avant garde movements are well illustrated. They have found fertile ground in the Ticino region, being associated with Locarno and Ascona, as well as Lugano.

The many facets of modern and contemporary art, both abstract and figurative, can be observed in the works of Paul Klee, Jawlensky, Werefkin, Schlemmer, Richter, Bissier, Arp, Max Bill, Beuys, and younger artists such as Niele Toroni.

Lugano's Cantonal Museum of Art also puts on a varied programme of temporary exhibitions. It is particularly open to developments in contemporary art and receives help and advice from internationally famous art historians (The innovative exhibition devoted to Pier Francesco Mola was a case in point). The Museum has also featured major twentieth-century artists: from Oskar Schlemmer to Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Melotti to Feininger.

In addition, the Swiss Photography Foundation has chosen the Museum as its headquarter in canton Ticino, and regularly exhibits selections of photographs from its collection.

Last but not least, the museum has become a lively and innovative centre, influencing the cultural life of Ticino and people's expectations of museums themselves. This explains the open attitude to different trends in art and the wide view taken of the region's artistic heritage, to include foreign artists and movements linked to or in some way having feature of the Museum's exhibitions, with layouts undertaken by leading architects and graphics designed by Bruno Monguzzi.

## **Art old and new in a lakeside setting**

Villa Malpensata is typical of mansions built on the shores of the Lake in the nineteenth century. Spacious and well-positioned, it has a magnificent view across the Lake. In common with neighbouring villas of the same period, it stands in gardens that descend gently to the lakeside, and has large well-lit rooms. It was originally owned by the Foppa family of Lugano, before passing into the hands of Antonio Caccia. In 1893, Caccia gave the villa and land to the municipality of Lugano, on condition that income from estate be used to found a fine art museum bearing his name. This was the origin of the "Caccia Foundation", the oldest nucleus of art works in the city collections. Thanks to the initiative of Caccia's executor, Virgilio Lampugnani, in 1912 a Museum of Fine Art was opened on the premises, thus realising the benefactor's wish.

In 1933, the permanent art collections were moved to Villa Ciani, and villa Malpensata became home to the Administrative Archives. In the late 60s and early 70s, Villa Malpensata was completely restructured by the architect Gianfranco Rossi, who sought to make the most of the interior space and adapt the building for use as a museum. In 1973, it entered a new phase as a setting for temporary and touring exhibitions organised by the city's Museums and Culture department.

In this role, it soon became internationally famous, due especially to first-rank exhibitions organised as part of the "International review of arts and culture".

In recent years, Villa Malpensata has become the seat of Lugano's Modern Art Museum, hosting various major exhibitions, which have confirmed its international prestige. The artists featured have included the great Swiss painter Varlin, the American master Thomas Hart and Francis Bacon.

The Museum intends to continue on these lines, with the aim of presenting great artists of our century.

## **Historic residence, modern gallery**

Villa Ciani is set in the Municipal Park in a delightful spot overlooking the bay of Lugano. The Villa and its gardens derive their name from the brothers Giacomo (1776-1868) and Filippo Ciani (1778-1867), whose family originated from the Valle di Blenio in the Ticino, though the brothers themselves were born in Milan. Eminent citizens of nineteenth century Lugano, they had the Villa built in the year 1840-43 on the site of pre-existing seventeenth century residence. As the home of these two political refugees, it has a place of honour in the history of the Italian Risorgimento.

The Ciani were key figures in liberal politics. They held important public positions, made a name for themselves as enterprising businessmen, and promoted any social and political initiatives in Ticino. They contributed much to the political and economic development of the Canton, in particular transforming Lugano from a sleepy though delightful lake-side village to the modern centre of business and tourism we know today.

The earlier building on the site of Villa Ciani had been erected, subsequent to 1622, by the aristocratic Beroldingen family. They sold it, in the mid eighteenth century, to the Farinas of Lugano, who owned it until 1838. Two years later, after two further changes of ownership, it was purchased by the Ciani, who made radical alterations to transform it into the villa we know and love today. In 1912, villa and gardens were compulsorily purchased from the Ciani heirs by the municipality of Lugano and opened to the public.

In the early days (1915-1963), Villa Ciani housed the local history museum. Its life as a Fine art Museum began in 1933 (Antonio Caccia Foundation) and it still continues in this role, though its function has changed somewhat. For many years, Villa Ciani was the venue for temporary exhibitions organised by the municipality, showing works of art on one or two floors. At the same time, it served as the dazzling setting for receptions put on by the City of Lugano in honour of VIPs. Gradually, it has come to house major art collections (for instance, the fifty or so works donated by the sculptor Francesco Messina) and is used for displaying selections of works from the municipality's own collections.

Since the late 1980s, the Villa has been undergoing a radical restoration. When it reopens, hopefully in 1994, the interior will reappear in all its former glory.

## **Priceless collections of international importance**

The Museum of Extra-European cultures has found an attractive and functional home at Villa Heleneum, between Cortivo and San Domenico on the way to Gandria. Built in the neo-classical style in the years 1930-1934, the villa is set in public gardens on the lake-shore. It was modelled on the eighteenth century Petit Trianon, erected in the grounds of the Palace of Versailles in the time of Louis XV. From the beginning, its owner, H el ene Biber, intended that it should become a centre of cultural exchange. Only minor alterations were required to prepare the building for its new role and, for the most part, its internal and external features have remained intact.

The Museum is arranged on three floors, each with its own type of layout. The aim is to display the exhibits in the most appropriate way, taking into account their places of origin, the different civilisations concerned and the topics under study. The Museum was born in 1985, when Serge and Graziella Brignoni (two artists connected with the Surrealist movement) donated their collection to the city of Lugano. The Brignoni Collection is one of the most important of its kind in Europe, consisting of approximately 600 primitive artefacts from three continents: Oceania, Asia and Africa. Some are ritual objects; others hand-made items for daily use.

Examining the collection in more detail, we find that Oceania is the area most extensively presented: there are figures and ritual objects, fragments of cult houses, amulets, masks, skull-hangers, musical instruments, weapons and shields from New Ireland and New Britain, together with artefacts from other islands of Melanesia and Polynesia; while Fiji, Tonga and the Marquesas are also well represented. From Asia come objects typical of the Indonesian tribal cultures of Nias, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Flores and Timor. African civilisation is represented by some very fine wooden masks, mainly from the western part of the continent below Sahara.

In addition to the exhibition, there is a Centre for ethnographic studies and a specialised library. The Centre organises conferences, seminars, lectures and other cultural events as part of its teaching function.

## **Studying the environment and natural history of Ticino**

Lugano's Cantonal Museum of Natural History was founded in 1854. Since being completely restructured in 1976-79, it has grown and developed, and is now active in various fields. As a regional museum, its function is to collect, study and preserve animals, plants, mushrooms, minerals, rocks and fossils from the Ticino region, and it has a library of over 11.000 volumes on these and related subjects.

In addition, it carries out research on its own account or in collaboration with Swiss and foreign universities and institutions; it acts as consultant to the cantonal authorities in matters of environmental protection; and runs a very full teaching programme consisting of courses, lectures, exhibitions, publications, and so on. It employs a permanent staff of eleven and a number of part-time workers.

The Museum regularly assists in organising public exhibitions on the theme of natural history. Only a small part of the Museum's collections (consisting of some 200.000 items, mostly originating from Ticino) can be displayed in its own exhibition rooms. The permanent display include a series of slide shows of environments typical of the region, with particular emphasis on the flora and fauna, and collections of minerals arranged region by region, together with rocks from Ticino and explanations of their origin. There is also an exhibition of the local fungi, consisting of over 1500 freeze-dried specimens.

In addition, the Museum puts on temporary exhibitions on such topics as bees and wasps, butterflies, shells, the jungle and other natural environments, the protection of birds, the micro-environments of the local Bolle di Magadino area, and other fascinating subjects of study. Of special interest is the permanent display of fossils from the Ticino region: covering a period of 300 million years, it includes spectacular specimens from the famous Triassic deposits on Monte San Giorgio.

The building housing the Museum was erected in the early 1970s and stands on the same site as Lugano's cantonal High School and the Cantonal Library – on the edge of the Municipal Park, not far from the point where the Cassarate river flows into the lake.

## **The Museum Hermann Hesse in Montagnola**

The small but important Hermann Hesse Museum created within the walls of the Tower in Casa Camuzzi, is an integral part of the Camuzzi House Complex in Montagnola. The Camuzzi House remains a vivid example of the important work done by Ticinese architects in Saint Petersburg in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

At the age of 42, Hermann Hesse rents a modest apartment within the Camuzzi House. After a difficult period for the writer, the separation from his family coupled with the ill-omened climate born out of WW1, Hermann Hesse begins to write again and discovers painting as an outlet and important instrument towards his serenity and well being. During this period Hermann Hesse writes, *Klingsor's Last summer*, *Siddhartha*, *Narcissus and Goldmund*, *Steppenwolf* and numerous other pieces of poetry and stories. In 1931 Hermann Hesse moves to the Casa Rossa with his third wife Ninon. The spacious grounds allowed him to personally cultivate various fruits and flowers. In 1946 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature for, *The Glass Bead Game*. The former as well as his works entitled *Hours in the garden* and *Letters* are a testament to his creative mastery. Prominent figures, the likes of Theodore Heuss, Thomas Mann and Bertold Brecht visited the author in Montagnola. Hermann Hesse received Swiss citizenship in 1924 and felt very much at home living in Montagnola. The incomparable scenery and direct sunlight which bathes the Collina d'Oro, particularly charmed the artist. He appreciated too, as is evident from his writings, the quiet, reserved manner of the Ticinese people. Tolerance, genuineness, integrity, and a certain far-sightedness established him as one of the most widely read authors writing in the German language. His works have been translated in 54 languages, additional editions published number up to 100 million copies.

The Hermann Hesse Museum in Montagnola, is the first, and until now the only, in existence in Switzerland. The Museum opened its doors to the public on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1997 on the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the poet's birth. The Museum houses precious works created during his lifetime as painters and poet.

Hermann Hesse lived in Montagnola, Ticino until his death in 1962. The Museum is a cultural meeting place for visitors from all over the world. The theatre room offers a video documentary of his life in Italian, German, English and French. Books in various languages, kept in front of the house and in the Museum's garden, invite the visitor to peruse the author's deepest reflections. Along the walk outside the Museum, one may follow in the "footsteps of Hermann Hesse" while admiring the beautiful landscape and incomparable view from The Collina d'Oro.

## **The history and culture of a rural area**

The Malcantone Museum was founded in 1985 and is housed in the old village high school at Curio. Designed in 1855 by the eminent architect Luigi Fontana, the building was acquired some time ago by the local tourist board, who had been looking for premises for a regional museum.

With the purpose of furthering knowledge of the history and culture of the local region, the Malcantone Museum Association has brought together documents of various kinds. The Museum's activities include:

- exhibitions illustrating the traditional economy of the area (agriculture, crafts and the importance of emigration), as well as its religious and social life;
- the collection and classification of documentary evidence of all kinds (including artefacts, written documents, photographs, gramophone recordings and books), as a resource for all those interested in studying the Malcantone area;
- the encouragement and support of research projects in the fields of history, ethnography, linguistics, geography, architecture and so on, some of which should result in topic-centred exhibitions;
- acting as a resource centre for cultural education in the local area: special attention is given to the needs of schools, with the organisation of guided tours, discovery activities, study days, and other initiatives designed to help young people get to know their region and its history.

In recent years, the Museum has been doing more to encourage serious research into aspects of local culture. One wide-ranging project is concerned with the work of local architects and craftsmen who, in earlier centuries, realised their greatest achievements in foreign parts. The celebrated architect Domenico Trezzini of Astano is a prime example; he was one of several artists from the Malcantone area who emigrated to Russia. This research is being carried out with the involvement of other institutions, local and national.

# Museum of the Friary of Bigorio

The artefacts brought together in this place are all of Capuchin origin, some having been made on the premises, others in virtue of the use to which they have been put. The overall effect is the outcome of two contradictory forces that accompany so called material culture everywhere: conservation and renewal.

Conservation is linked to the long history of the place that produced and benefited from these artefacts, since the friary traces its origins back to 1535. Even more closely, it is linked to the manner of life that has flourished there uninterruptedly: the Capuchin foundation was an early one (just eight years after the foundation of the Order) and has never been suppressed. Renewal has led to the loss of quite a lot of material that is known or presumed to have existed. The most recent and dramatic occasion of loss was the devastating fire of 1987, which destroyed much early material and items of furniture that had been stored away as being no longer usable. Before then, numerous structural alterations had transformed a small primitive hermitage into the solid friary that we see now, causing much of the furniture and furnishings to be replaced. These are external causes of change, but to them should be added changes of activity within the institution, such as the decline in social assistance marked by the cessation of previously flourishing undertakings such as the practice of distilling and the preparation of herbal medicine. Even in the religious sphere, liturgical renewal in recent years and with it a new kind of piety have, sadly, led to the elimination of objects that have no further function. Even where there has not been physical elimination, there is always the danger of falling into total oblivion, so that the object in question becomes, as it were, indecipherable to our eyes. A disused object loses its power to evoke the past and thus becomes dead matter.

The present collection is intended to have a double function: to conserve what remains and to restore to living memory life styles that have fallen into desuetude. This is done at two levels: religious practice, and the normal routine of every day. The display areas clearly distinguish these two levels. One permits us to view objects that evoke religious activity, and this from two points of view: the liturgy, and pious practices. The other opens up to us the various daily occupations of the Capuchin: an ordered life in which the commitment to “work”, parallel to that other commitment to “prayer” (following the Benedictine maxim *ora et labora*: work and pray) found its realisation in the many trivial pursuits of the artisan. Some of these were necessary for a rather spartan subsistence economy (alms-collecting, vegetable-growing, clothes-sewing, wine-making, cooking), while others were activities devoted to non-remunerative leisure hours. They wove cloth, or various kinds of baskets, they fashioned rough domestic furniture, the more able among them carved devotional statues in wood, and also tabernacles: in fact a distinctively Capuchin style of tabernacle can be found in some rural churches. Other activities were pursued quite intensively, such as distilling (which survives in the traditional *ratafià* or walnut liqueur), basic pharmacy, and even medicine proper. This last became prominent with a heightened Capuchin presence during epidemics of the plague: one unmistakable relic of this is a set of pincers for the extraction of teeth.

On the hand there are artefacts connected with prayer. Regarding liturgical prayer, we have a fine set of liturgical vestments and of sacred vessels, dating up to the beginning of the twentieth century. Penitential instruments and prayer beads, and also reliquaries and devotional images, bear witness to everyday religious practices. Some of these artefacts approach the level of true works of art, such as the recently (1973) acquired large medieval crucifix, and the dead Christ; the latter is made to simulate the flexibility of a fresh corpse, and is a great rarity for this reason. A large proportion of this material is in the friary church, where it has not only a decorative but also a still-living devotional function. There is also a most interesting library, in which many books (often bearing the signature of Capuchins who have lived here) bear witness to the same life style as that evoked by our small museum. The museum visitor will not overlook the high-quality painting exhibited in the church: the Madonna of the main altar, not the decorative inlays of the altar itself, the work of eighteenth-century Capuchins, nor the fine leather altar-frontal, nor the unusual wooden candlesticks.

Although of modest dimensions, the collection that we have brought together presents the visitor with a cross-section of life, often forgotten or unknown, filled out by a series of architectonic designs from early chronicles, and by a collection of individual memoirs entrusted to the friary’s archive.

## **Art exhibitions staged in a former convent**

The Mendrisio Art Museum was inaugurated in 1982, when a notable collection of paintings left by a private donor was first presented to the public. The Museum is housed in the former Serviti (Servants of Mary) convent, a fine medieval building, which stands in the old part of the town. It was partially restructured in the late 1970s to create the present bright, spacious exhibition rooms on the first floor. They are reached via the convent cloister, which is remarkably well preserved. As a next stage in their ambitious programme to provide cultural facilities, the local authorities intend to convert another vast wing of the old building.

In its early years, the restored building was used to show works of art donated to the municipality. It also came to be used as a venue for temporary exhibitions. Whose reputation has drawn the attention of art lovers and critics from far and wide. Normally, there are two exhibitions a year, devoted to major modern artists. Those featured have included such international names as Hans Arp, Paul Klee, Jules Bissier, Mark Tobey, Georges Braque, Emilio Stanzani, and many other painters and sculptors, some living, some dead. Of special interest is a section devoted to artists native to Ticino or who have been drawn to the Canton to live and work at some stage in their career. Others have exercised a particular influence on the culture and art of the region.

The Mendrisio Art Museum has therefore tended to concentrate on certain aspects of modern and contemporary art, with particular emphasis on the cultural roots of Mendrisiotto and Ticino as a whole. As well as exhibitions, the Museum organises lectures on the history of art in canton Ticino and in Lombardy, with special concern for the development of the last hundred years.

Opening hours depend on what is happening at any given time.

## **Exploring the art and artists of Canton Ticino**

South of Lake Lugano, not far from Mendrisio, lies Rancate, a village built in typically Lombard style. Rancate is the home of the Giovanni Züst Art gallery, inaugurated in 1967. The premises and collection were donated to canton Ticino the previous year by Dr. Giovanni Züst (Basel 1887 – Rancate 1976), a collector who also took an interest in Greek and Etruscan art.

The Gallery houses works dating from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. All artists originated from the territories which in 1803 joined to form canton Ticino, or had close links with the area. Apart from one work by Giuseppe Monti (1836-1876) and two drawings by Alessandro Ruga (1836-1916), the collection consists of work by just fourteen painters.

The most famous are Giovanni Serodine (1600-1630) and Giuseppe Antonio Petrini (1677-1758/59), two artists of capital importance in their own time, who guarantee this out-of-the-way museum an international reputation. The collection has a strong link with the local area in the person of Antonio Rinaldi of Tremona (1816-1875), an artist who faithfully captures the spirit of his native soil. This can be savoured in the 96 paintings and 246 drawings on show.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are represented by the works of Angelo Orelli (1751-1813) and a copy – painted in oils by an unknown seventeenth or eighteenth century artist – of a lost engraving or painting by Ribera (the work was previously attributed to Pier Francesco Mola). To the nineteenth and twentieth centuries belong works by Ernesto Fontana (1837-1918), Adolfo Feragutti Visconti (1850-1924), Luigi Rossi (1853-1923), Pietro Anastasio (1859-1913), Gioachino Galbusera (1870-1944) and Ugo Cleis (1903-1976). There is an excellent catalogue, compiled by Jean Soldini and published by Casagrande of Bellinzona.

The Züst Gallery also puts on temporary exhibitions from time to time. For instance, in conjunction with the villa dei Cedri Museum in Bellinzona, it recently featured the work of Feragutti Visconti.

## **The home and works of a great sculptor**

Ligornetto is a delightful little village and former agricultural centre, nestling in the Mendrisiotto plain. Ten minutes by car from Mendrisio, 30 from Lugano or Varese, it boasts a glorious artistic heritage, particularly in the fields of architecture and sculpture. Its distinguished past is evidenced by well-preserved churches, private residences and public buildings, but even more so by the amazing achievements of its talented natives beyond the borders of Ticino. These artists left their mark in the great cities of foreign lands, often returning rich and famous to their place of birth.

The most striking of Ligornetto's monuments is undoubtedly the parish church of San Lorenzo, of which there are records as early as 1209. The present building, aisleless with a square chancel surmounted by a cupola, dates from the early part of the eighteenth century.

Of great cultural interest, is the Vela Museum, located in the villa built in the years 1863-65 by Vincenzo Vela (1820-91), one of the leading sculptors of the nineteenth century. A strong personality whose work was especially appreciated in Italy, he embraced the cause of Italian unification (the Risorgimento). A clear indication of his sympathy with the struggle for independence is his great statue of "Spartacus", modelled in Rome in 1847 and carved in marble three years later. While professor of sculpture at the Accademia Albertina in Turin, Vela produced a great deal of work that would seem to combine, in plastic form, the tenets of both realism and idealism. A good example is his celebrated "Death of Napoleon", now at the Palace of Versailles.

Housed in the former Vela residence, the Museum features a large number of preparatory drawings, terracotta models and plaster casts for the majority of his sculptures. The finished works have found their way to many major cities in Switzerland and further afield. The spaciousness of the rooms and the splendid hill-top location of the villa give the Museum an air of aristocratic distinction. Many of the original furnishings remain, and there are watercolours and drawings by Piedmontese and Lombard artists who were Vela's friends and contemporaries. The Museum also houses works in marble, terracotta and plaster by Vincenzo's brother Lorenzo, and oil paintings, pottery and engravings by his son, appropriately named Spartaco.

It was Spartaco Vela who, in 1895, left the house and its works of art to the Swiss Confederation, on condition that it be turned into a museum or art school.

## **Reminders of the rural past and its traditions**

The Mendrisiotto district lies ten or so miles to the south of Lake Lugano. Traditionally farming country, it still has some quite unspoilt corners where, in spite of the pressures of modern life, links have been maintained with older ways and customs. There are still vestiges of an economy based on peasant farming and crafts, and in some cases this has been deliberately planned.

To maintain this special identity and safeguard what remains, a Museum of Country Life has been set up at Stabio. The main aim of the venture has been to collect concrete evidence of his older way of life and preserve artefacts expressive of rural civilisation. These have been arranged and displayed so as to give the visitor an insight into peasant culture. Here he will find wagons, carts and other horse-drawn vehicles; trap and snares; harnesses; spades, shovels, rakes, forks and hoes, and a complete range of the utensils and implements used by country folk in the region.

The range of objects has broadened in recent years to include evidence of local customs, as well as of working life. Agriculture is still the central theme, with additional displays of such related phenomena as butterflies and harmful insects, but the interest also extends to other aspects of peasant life, which are the subject of temporary exhibitions. This reflects research into local ways and traditions, and the social and religious life of the community. There is a specialised regional library, which includes written documents – some previously unpublished – photographs, maps, sound recordings preserving oral tradition and audio-visual material.

As it seeks to record this disappearing culture, Stabio's Museum of Country Life has become one of the most interesting documentary sources for students and researches in the country immediately South of the Alps. Located in the South of Ticino, close to the border with Italy, the village is 10 minutes by car from Mendrisio and only half an hour from Lugano or Varese.

## **Petrified relics from Monte San Giorgio**

The village of Meride stands on the gentle slopes of the Mendrisio district, to the South of Lake Lugano. Set on its eminence in this delightful landscape, it offers a fine view over the Lombard plain. The village is unspoilt and has many buildings of artistic interest. The church dedicated to San Rocco is recorded as early as 1578, while the parish church of San Lorenzo, with its twin aisles and rectangular choir, stands on the site of an ancient castle. Also worth noting is the Casa comunale, whose courtyard is overlooked by magnificent loggias on three floors, and the eighteenth century Casa Oldelli, whose courtyard is again surrounded by a two-storey loggia, with a rococo balustrade at the far end.

Part of the Casa Comunale houses a small but fascinating fossil museum, with exhibits taken mainly from the Monte San Giorgio, which overlooks the village. Here the visitor can deepen his knowledge of the region's geology. The hill sides are a unique treasure trove of relics dating from some 200 million years ago, when Mendrisiotto was still partially submerged in the Mediterranean basin as it then was.

Various teams of professors and students from the Palaeontology Institute of Zurich University have laboured hard and long on Monte San Giorgio, which is still a mecca for researchers and fossil hunters. There is now a well sign-posted itinerary. There have been important finds of marine animals, mostly fish, reptiles and invertebrates. The most significant are displayed in the Museum, arranged in such a way as to show how they relate to the geological structure of the area. A visit to the fossil museum can easily become a lesson in advanced geology.

Meride is only 15 minutes by car from Mendrisio and can also be reached on foot from Riva San Vitale: there is a well-trodden path through the woods, with splendid views of the lake. The village is a centre for interesting excursions, within reach of the well-wooded Serpiano region with its bracing climate.

## PLACE OF INTEREST AND CURIOSITIES

*In search of history and tradition*

### **On Monte San Salvatore, in the footsteps of the famous (with the Empress)**

Like Monte Brè, opposite, San Salvatore guards the entrance to the bay of Lugano. From the summits of these two mountains, there are splendid views over the lake.

Both are worth visiting for historical reasons. On the summit of Monte San Salvatore, for instance, stands a little church, whose origins can be traced back to the early thirteenth century, when the Bishop of Como sold his possessions on the mountain to the chapter of Lugano. In those days, there was already a shrine, or chapel, on the mountain, later transformed into a small church with a campanile and red portico.

It soon became a place of pilgrimage, attracting hundreds of the faithful, particularly at Ascension tide and Whitsun. Those coming from afar would spend the night in the vicinity of the church. In 1703, the old building was demolished, to be replaced, two years later, by a new church. The building materials were carried up the mountain, as a voluntary offering, by the women of Pazzallo and Carabbia.

The history of Monte San Salvatore has more than its fair share of unusual episodes. For instance, returning from the pilgrimage, the folk from the surrounding villages would stop at the college of Sant'Antonio in Lugano to be offered wine to drink a good excuse for nocturnal invasions of the town! The mountain was also a centre of smuggling, ruthlessly suppressed by the Austrian police in the nineteenth century. After a series of disastrous storms, in 1859 the first-ever lightning conductor was installed there, and this was followed by major works to embellish the church and build a hospice for pilgrims. For some years, its management was entrusted to a Florentine, Major Siccoli, who also wanted to build a hotel similar to the one established on Monte Generoso.

With this in mind, the Monte San Salvatore Society was founded. After Siccoli's plans had come to nought, this body approved a project to build a tramway linking Lugano to Paradiso, and a cable railway from this village to the summit. The funicular was inaugurated in 1890, with great celebrations. Since that time, many important tourists have visited the mountain, among them Empress Elisabeth of Austria and the sons of Kaiser William I. As a result, Monte San Salvatore and its church acquired lustre and prestige, and so it has continued to the present day. The Ascension Day pilgrimage is still one of the most popular local traditions, though today it is undertaken by cable railway rather than on foot. Modern pilgrims often make a day out of it, going on to Carona by a well trodden path. The tradition was confirmed in a fifty-year agreement concluded in 1965 between the cable car company and the popular Confraternity of Saint Mary. This organisation continues to safeguard the deep-rooted religious traditions so dear to the people of Lugano.

## **Smuggling and attempts to combat it**

Smuggling and smugglers have always had a certain fascination for law-abiding citizens. But the phenomenon is also of interest to sociologists, historians and economists, because for decades the activity has been a way for those experiencing hard times in economically backward areas to make ends meet. It is therefore fitting that smuggling should have its own museum, to remind us of former times and circumstances, dangers, toils and snares, and the cunning displayed by smugglers and customs officers alike. The Museum commemorates a way of life that flourished for a hundred years, only coming to an end in the early 1970s.

The building housing the Customs Museum is across the Lake from Lugano, near Cantine di Gandria. The short boat trip is a memorable experience. The first customs post in the Lugano area was set up in 1856, and is still known as the “red house”. The present building was erected in 1904 and served as a centre for combating smuggling until 1935, when it was turned into a museum. It was restored and opened to the public in 1978, after a long period of careful work by the National Museum of Zurich. It stands right on the lake side, on the border between Switzerland and Italy, in a densely wooded area. It can be reached only by boat or on foot.

The three floors of the Museum house a wide-ranging exhibition evoking the heyday of smuggling. On the ground floor is a reconstruction of the old customs post as it would have appeared in 1904. In the custody room is a waxwork of two guards with a handcuffed smuggler, while the adjoining rooms are the officers’ living quarters. On show are customs documents, a diary, coins of the period, scales and a variety of other measuring instruments.

The exhibits on the first floor illustrate the development of the Swiss customs service up to the present day. There is also a memorial commemorating frontier guards killed in the course of their duties. On the second floor is a veritable arsenal of weapons – of Italian, French, British and American origin – confiscated from partisans, refugees or outlaws arrested while attempting to make a clandestine escape into Switzerland. There is also a curious display of miscellaneous instruments and devices used by smugglers and poachers, together with documents detailing cunning subterfuges for outwitting the officers of the law – for instance, a midget submarine designed to be steered by a smuggler with his head just above the water. It was captured while transporting a ton of salami!

## **Visit Switzerland without leaving the shores of Lake Lugano**

Maybe you are planning to visit Switzerland but do not know where to go or what to see? That is not surprising, because Switzerland has a far greater variety of landscapes and scenery, natural and manmade wonders than its small size and limited population would suggest. May we offer a good piece of advice. Start by visiting Switzerland in Miniature at Melide. It can be reached from Lugano in just a few minutes, by road, boat or train. Here, in rich and varied scenery, you can wander among lakes and mountains, plains and cities, and get a far better idea of Switzerland than you would from any tourist brochure or travel video.

As its name suggests, Switzerland in Miniature offers you all that is best and most interesting to visit, compressed into an area of 11.000 squares metres and magnificently laid out on the shores of the lake. An hour or two spent in these delightful surroundings will give you a vivid impression of the wonders of Switzerland: towering mountains, beautiful lakes, elegant cities and picturesque villages, famous streets and squares, castles and churches. All are set out before your eyes. Just select the sights that interest you most, then go and visit them as they are in real life.

If you are keen on castles, you can follow an itinerary beginning with Chillon on Lake Geneva and ending with the strongholds of Grandson, Frauenfeld, Thun and Bellinzona. If you prefer cities, you will be spoilt for choice: here you can study Lucerne's historic wooden bridge, Lausanne cathedral, the Zurich Town hall or the Federal Palace in Bern. Of special interest is the famous tent designed by the architect Mario Botta, which served as the symbol for the vents celebrating the seventh centenary of the Swiss Confederation in 1991. A few steps will take you from one region to another: you can even climb the mighty Jungfrau of the majestic Matterhorn. There are scale models of the means of transport devised by the Swiss to link up even remote mountain areas: private and federal railways, rack-and-pinion locomotives and cable cars. Trains, boats and ski-lifts are full functional, to the delight of serious model makers and children alike. For the younger members of the family, there is a miniature railway to take them on a tour of this delightful Swiss Lilliput.

Visiting Switzerland in Miniature will help you form a mental picture of the country before you tour it in reality. A lavishly illustrated guide is available, to help you get your bearing, both here and in the country at large.

Miniature Switzerland is open from mid-March to late October/early November. In August and September, it can also be visited until late in the evening, when the whole complex is cleverly illuminated. It is well worth making a second visit to enjoy the warm atmosphere of a summer evening by the Lake.

From Melide, there is also a magnificent walk along the lakeside to Bissone, a delightful unspoilt village, only half an hour away.

## **An Italian enclave on Swiss territory**

Campione is a small Italian enclave – less than one square kilometre in area – lying half way between the frontier at Ponte Chiasso and Lugano. The territory is well worth a visit, for the beauty of the landscape on this shore of Lake Ceresio (as the Italians call Lake Lugano) and on account of its ancient tradition as the home of artists. Its narrow streets are saturated with history, while modern Campione and its casino have become a centre of economic activity, tourism and high society.

Bequeathed in the eighth century by Totone, a wealthy local magnate, to the abbots of Sant’Ambrogio in Milan, for many centuries Campione remained a fief of the church. Napoleon restored the territory to Lombardy, a transfer sanctioned by the Congress of Vienna. Eventually it was incorporated into the kingdom of Italy and has remained an Italian enclave ever since. Campione first came to prominence around the year 1000, producing talented dynasties of artists who left their mark through much of Europe. On home ground, they were responsible for the sanctuary of the Madonna dei Ghirli and its magnificent frescos, now restored to their former glory, and other works in the parish church and the smaller church of San Pietro.

“Ghirli”, or swallows, was the nickname given to all people of Campione on account of their migratory habits. The tendency is quite clear if one studies the history of art from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. Those who stayed at home could still make a living by fishing (Zeno, the local patron Saint, is the protector of fishermen), or from favoured the cultivation of vines and olives, though today these have been largely replaced by beech and chestnut woods.

Nowadays, Campione is also a byword for relaxing holidays in a verdant waterfront setting, refreshed by the breeze that blows off the Lake or down from the heights of Mount Sighignola: a restful spot with a wealth of history and a touch of elegance. The municipal casino is open every day, except for 24 and 25 December, from 3.30 p.m. to 2.30 a.m. Here you can chance your arm at roulette, chemin de fer, black-jack and rouge-et-noir, or take on 65 of the latest one-arm bandits. As well as concerts and conferences, the banqueting chamber is used for gala occasions, recitals by international stars and top-class performances. A whole series of other public facilities set the seal on the little town’s vocation as a centre of tourism. Campione offers fine views across the Lake to the bay of Lugano and Monte San Salvatore. There is motorway access from both North and South, or it can be reached by boat from Lugano.

## Historical notes and points of interest

- The region around Lake Lugano has always bristled with castles and fortifications. Among the most famous over the centuries were the fortress of Capolago, mentioned as early as 1372 and eventually demolished when the Saint Gotthard railway was built; Melano, which dominated the central part of the lake; Lugano, built by Ludovico il Moro and pulled down in medieval times; San Michele at Cassarate, on whose site now stand the terrace and garden of that name; Sonvico, whose tower commanded the Ceneri pass; Grumo, now a hamlet of Gravesano; Sessa and Arosio, in the Malcantone area; Sala Capriasca, destroyed by the Swiss in 1478; Torricella-Taverne; and Isono, which controlled the Tiglio and Lugano passes. Also famous were the castle of Morcote, built around 1100 and now in ruins, which commanded the western end of Lake Lugano from its terrace on the Arbostora; and a fortress that stood on the point of San Martin at Paradiso, destroyed in the wars between Como and Milan.
- During his incursion into Italy, the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa is said to have spent Easter 1162 in the castle of Grumo at Gravesano.
- In 1387, Marco da Campione, buried in the church of San Giovanni in Monza, and Giacomo da Carona, produced the design for Milan cathedral.
- In the time of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, there was an attempt to make the river Tresa navigable. The intention of the first Duke of Milan was to improve commercial links between “those vast and remote territories” and the Lombard capital. An extant document to this effect bears the date 1391.
- The Bishops of Como often visited Agno to fish in the famous stew ponds and hunt in the Alpine foothills. Their right to do so is recorded in a fourteenth-century document, which hymns the abundance of fish and bird life in the area.
- On 27 August 1848, retreating from the lost battle of Morazzone near Varese and coming by boat from Brusinopiano, General Giuseppe Garibaldi disembarked at Agno.
- Monte Sassalto, which juts out into the lake to form the bay of Caslano, is renowned for its exceptional pre-alpine flora. An in-depth study was carried out by the botanist Mario Jäggi, who also published a small volume on the subject: “La vegetazione del Monte di Caslano”. The Sassalto is prominent in the national list of sites of special interest.
- From Migliaglia, the summit of Monte Lema (1690 metres) can be reached by a cable car, inaugurated in 1997, which covers a distance of 2.673 metres. A monumental cross, 10 metres high, was erected on the summit in 1934.
- Astano is the birthplace of Domenico Trezzini (b. 1670). He was one of the chief architects of St. Petersburg, where he served Tzar Peter the Great. The city was built in the Western European baroque style, though Trezzini also borrowed from traditional Russian architecture.
- The botanical garden of Cademario Kurhaus has one of the finest cactus collection in all Europe.
- Ponte Tresa, standing on its river facing Italy, is Switzerland’s smallest municipality, with a surface area of just 0.28 square kilometres.
- In the years 1857-59, gold and silver were mined near the Aranno bridge, in the Novaggio district. Mining was returned during the First World War and, even nowadays, there is still occasional talk of reopening the gold workings.
- The trade of brick and tile making was fairly common, due to an abundance of clay deposits. The trade was practised by many workers who emigrated from Lugano to Northern Italy and the Po valley. The Delmenico works in the province of Brescia, where brick and tile kilns are still in operation, was founded in the last century by a native of Novaggio.
- Water power has been harnessed since classical times, the water mill being possibly the best known application. A successful restoration has been carried out on the remains of an important mill at Aranno.
- Six Romanesque sarcophagi serve as basin for the fountains and drinking troughs at Rovio. In the same village, some houses are decorated in frescos with religious scenes dating from the seventeenth century.

- The Casa dei Landvogti at Rivera is an ancient coaching inn. It was built in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, though the facade has been partially remodelled. Inside there are coffered ceilings and the remains of frescos from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
- The facades of the Frigerio and Caccia residences at Maroggia are decorated with bas-reliefs of the Madonna and child. Executed in dark stone in the fifteenth century, they are attributed to members of the Rodari family, local artists who also worked on Como cathedral.
- At Cureglia is the house of the Tarilli, painters who worked in the Lugano and Como areas. Of several extant frescos, two are dated 1558 and 1612, and there is a carved stone chimney piece with the inscription: “Ioannes Tar. 1557”.
- Forty or so years ago, at Bironico, someone digging in a meadow near the parish church unearthed a baptismal font. It is thought to be the ancient font of the rural parish church to which were affiliated for several centuries the daughter churches of Sigirino, Mezzovico, Vira, Camignolo, Rivera, Robasacco, Medeglia and Isonne.
- A square in Arogno is dedicated to Adamo d’Arogno, a thirteenth century artist who worked on Trent cathedral. The surrounding houses date from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Of special interest is Casa Cometta, decorated with stucco work, reliefs, busts and frescos.
- “La Piccionaia” in Lugano’s Corso Pestalozzi has for years functioned as a discotheque and latterly as a club. It is a rare example of fifteenth-century architecture, with decorative brickwork, friezes and painted garlands. In the past it formed part of a spinning mill, then of the “Mulino delle Piode” (mill for milling slabs of smooth rock).
- Wine cellars and “grotti” were also highly popular in the Lake Lugano Region – places where you could keep wine and dairy produce and also spend a cool hour on a hot summer’s day. Such premises continue to be used as clubs, restaurants and places of entertainment.
- On the way from Morbio Superiore to Caneggio is a fountain, constructed in part from the upturned lid of a sarcophagus. The belief that this is a Roman antique is supported by the inscription “D.et.perpetuae felicitati M.”
- At Besazio, in the square in front of the church, is an ancient baptismal font. Originally a Roman sarcophagus, it now serves as a fountain.
- With a degree of poetic licence, the Mendrisiotto district has been called the “Swiss Tuscany”. It gets this name from its rolling countryside, typically Italian villages set in open country, and the fertile soil on which the famous Merlot grape is grown.
- At Bedano, a village in the Vedeggio valley, a plaque records the fact that a Russian army led by General Suwaroff passed through this part of Canton Ticino in 1799.
- On the alpine pastures of the Mendrisiotto, it is still possible to see the last “nevere”. These are cylindrical structures, generally on the edge of a wood, that were formerly filled with snow and ice as a way of conserving foods, particularly dairy products – the rustic equivalent of the modern refrigerator.

## **PARKS**

### *The Lugano Municipal Park*

## **A splash of vivid green bordered by river and lake**

Lugano's Municipal Park – commonly known as the parco Ciani – is undoubtedly one of Switzerland's finest.

Right in the centre of town, bordered on one side by the lake shore and on another by the river Cassarate, it covers an area of over 63.000 square metres. In the days of the Beroldingen and Farina families, the gardens of the villa were not nearly so extensive. When the property was acquired by the Ciani, they enlarged the park on the eastern side, cultivating waste ground, laying out gardens and planting trees.

Many majestic specimens – some of them rare – stand to this day, their botanical names printed on oval plaques affixed to the trunks: *Eritrina Cristagalli*, *Aesculus Hippocastanum*, *Sophora Saponica*, and even the cork oak. Paths wind their way amid varied scenery offering glimpses and vistas of the lake. The visitor can admire colourful flowerbeds, groves of trees, lawns and collections of azaleas, magnolias, palms, camellias and other local and Mediterranean species.

From the eastern entrance of the park, near the Cassarate bridge, a wall runs along the river bank as far as the Punta della foce – headland where the river enters the lake. This is where, in 1978, troops of the Cisalpine Republic, arriving from Campione, disembarked to annex Lugano, only to be repulsed by the local people who, having proclaimed their independence, eventually opted for union with Switzerland. From the headland, another low wall follows the lake shore to the Rivetta, where there is a rotonda, built in 1884 by Gabrini.

Half way along the lake is a boat yard, built by the Ciani to replace the former gondola stage. It faces a statue of Socrates, work of the Russian sculptor Markus Matveevic Antokolski. The white marble sage reclines in a classical armchair, a goblet slipping from his tired hand. A little further on is an enclosure housing fallow and red deer, and a large aviary full of colourful birds. We are now near the centre of the park, where in a quiet grove stands “*La Desolazione*”, a statue by Vincenzo Vela, Ticino's greatest nineteenth-century sculptor, who was also a friend of the Ciani.

Since the turn of the century, the park has undergone a number of changes. Various rustic outbuildings have been demolished, as well as the old lodge building, followed in 1968 by the riding stables and some other old outbuildings. In their place have risen some important public buildings: a study centre, the cantonal library and the Natural History Museum, a new building for the Reformed Evangelical Church, and Lugano's Palazzo dei Congressi, inaugurated in 1975.

## Four parks where roses bloom and olives flourish

On the slopes surrounding the bay of Lugano and the Municipal Park, among modern apartment buildings, old patrician villas and luxury hotels, are a whole series of parks and gardens. Terrace-like, they afford magnificent views over both town and lake. Four are outstanding for their privileged position, abundance of flora, history and tourists appeal. **The Tassino Park** is laid out in the style of an English garden. The extensive lawns are interspersed with rose terraces containing 300 bushes of 80 different kinds, and varied rose beds featuring a further 17 species. They bloom from May to late autumn, making Lugano a rose lover's paradise. The park, which once belonged to the Swiss Federal Railways, extends over 21.000 square metres and was purchased by the municipality in 1970. It is uphill from the railway station and can be approached from two sides. If you are coming from the station, take the Paradiso direction as far as the level crossing. Cross the tracks and turn left into a narrow lane that leads directly to the park. Near the entrance is an enclosure containing fallow and red deer and wild mountain sheep (moufflon). The avenue giving access to the park is flanked by maple, American resinous species and parasol mimosa. The second entrance is at the end of via Tassino and can be reached from Loreto, on the left, by following via Maraini as far as the railway bridge. Tarmac paths lead to the summit of the hill, on which stands the Enderlin Tower, named after its former owners, resplendent in blushing pink. The piazzale in front of the building is shaded by mature trees and rhododendron bushes, beyond which are the rose gardens. Stone benches and tables make this an excellent spot for a picnic. From the Tassino Park, there are also splendid views of Lugano and its lake and of the mountain ranges in the distance. The 5200 square-metre **Florida Park**, set on the slopes between Loreto and the lake shore, has recently been restored to its former glory. It faces due south, overlooking the town centre. The lower entrance is beside the restored lodge building of the former Villa Rosita, while further uphill it can be entered via a magnificent wrought-iron gate. The park is laid out on three terraces in the French style. The main attraction of the first terrace is an avenue of magnolias, though there are also some 150 palm trees, both large individual specimens and groups of smaller ones. The vegetation is chiefly Mediterranean and sub-tropical, though an ancient araucaria and a number of conifers lend an unusual touch of liberty style to this oasis of greenery. Among the trees and flowerbeds is a giant chessboard, which visitors are welcome to use. The central terrace has a children's play area, with games and amusements set out around a splendid fountain designed by the Ticino architect Mario Chiattonne. The chief attraction of the largest terrace is a pergola, which once belonged to Villa Rosita. Bordered by wisteria, rose hedges and other magnificent flowers and shrubs, this area leads to the old caretaker's house, recently restored, which now provides a venue for live performances, exhibitions and local meetings. A further attraction of the park are the many grotto built into the high retaining wall of the embankment, in particular the ancient "grotta delle gocce" (grotto of the drops). On the slopes of Monte Bré at Castagnola lies the 12.000 square-metre **Parco San Michele**, forming a balcony overlooking the lake. It can be reached from Cassarate, behind the cable-car stage, where the Salita dei Castagni begins. Its romantic pathways, shaded by palm fronds and flanked by cypresses, fountains and grey-stone sculptures lead the visitor through gardens of wisteria, hibiscus and oleander to the chapel is used for open-air concerts, while behind the building is a spacious belvedere offering superb views. A feature of the place are four columns, with seated figures representing the sense of hearing, sight, touch and taste. Looking out over the town of Lugano, the view is dominated by Monte San Salvatore and extends to the Alpine peaks beyond. To the left, the eye travels over Melide, Campione, Bissone, the hamlets on the opposite shore, the flanks of Monte San Giorgio and Monte Sighignola, as far as the distant Lombard plain. Also in the slopes of Monte Brè is the 20.000 square-metre **Parco degli Ulivi**. The park lies beyond Castagnola, on the Gandria road (if you take the "sentiero dei fiori", you can park the car at San Domenico). It extends right down to the lake shore and beside it is another park devoted to pre-alpine flora. Granite steps give access to the steep slopes. Open areas and hillocks, where benches invite the visitor to sit and gaze, are planted with olives, cypresses, laurels, rosemary and oleander. From the top, there is a fine view across to Cantine di Ganria and Caprino, and the summit of Monte Sighignola; to the right, Monte San Salvatore draws the eye, with the Melide causeway beyond; and there is a distant prospect of Monte San Giorgio. Indigenous vegetation has been encouraged in the lower reaches of the park, while since 1986 the higher slopes have been planted with 1200 Merlot vines. This model vineyard with its chestnut palings and cobble-stone paths blends perfectly with the landscape of flowering meadows. South facing, the Parco degli Ulivi enjoy a mild, sunny climate, protected from northerly winds by the mountain at its back.

## **Open-air sculpture in a lake-side garden setting**

In a magnificent lake-side setting between Lugano and Paradiso lies the “Giardino Belvedere”, a garden where nature and art meet in perfect harmony. Its avenues and immaculate flowerbeds run right down to the waters edge, from where there is an alluring view towards Castagnola, Monte Brè and the Villa Favorita. Ancient trees of sub-tropical origin lend distinction to the 11.000 square-metre garden, their botanical names clearly marked. They stand amid less lofty trees and shrubs, palms, camellias and oleanders, rhododendrons, olives, magnolias and well-stocked beds of roses.

Magnificent though they may be, the charm of the place resides not only in the magnificent view over the bay; the benches where one can relax, savour life’s pleasures and meditate; and the wealth of trees and shrubs. The garden is also the setting for a series of modern and contemporary works of art. A permanent exhibition of open-air sculpture was inaugurated in 1977 with “Sculpture in the City”. At that time, the city of Lugano acquired seven works: three by artists of international reputation – Ossip Zadkine, Jean Arp and Katharine Gili – and the remainder by sculptors from the Ticino region – Nag Arnoldi, Giovanni Genucchi, Pierino Selmoni and Piero Tavaglini – who had already made a name for themselves or showed exceptional promise.

These works formed a nucleus, around which over the years a full-scale collection has been built. The original idea was to enrich the town with works by great names and, at the same time, by local artists of quality and originality. This explains how sculptures by Max Bill, Markus Antokolski, Serge Brignoni, Francesco Messina, Arnaldo and Giò Pomodoro, or a great nineteenth century artist such as Vincenzo Vela, here rub shoulders with works by Nena Airoldi, Milo Cleis, Carlo Cotti, Bruno Morenzoni and Remo Rossi: some of the outstanding local exponents of the art over the last few decades.

The Belvedere garden collection completes an artistic itinerary of remarkable continuity. Only a few hundred yards away stands the Villa Malpensata, the venue for the major temporary exhibitions organised by the city of Lugano.

Another exceptional collection of open-air sculpture, mostly dating from the nineteenth century, adorns the avenues of the Municipal Park. Following the lake shore towards Castagnola, and a little further on we come to Villa Heleneum, headquarters of the Museum of Extra-European Culture.

## **A fantastic combination of flora and panorama**

The San Grato Botanical Park lies between Monte San Salvatore and Monte Arbostora, approximately 10 km from Lugano and extends to 690 m S/m, with an exceptional panorama across the immediate surroundings over the peaks of the alpine chain.

The entire park with its 62,00 square metres, hosts the largest and most varied collection of azaleas, rhododendrons and conifers in the entire region. During the months of April and May the azaleas and rhododendrons form a highly coloured and perfumed carpet.

We do not wish to reveal all the secrets of the flora to be found in the park – it will be up to you to learn from the information signs placed along the botanical pathways, leading you to a natural, more complete and quiet environment, which describe and blend the botanical park with the surrounding wooded areas.

Given the multitude of walks (around 5.5km) and in order to maximise your visit, we would suggest you take a theme walk which allowing you to discover the most attractive corners of the park.

The suggested walks have various themes which let you to see the park under differing aspects which vary according to the season. Just choose the most suitable route, and follow the corresponding coloured signposts.

The restaurant is surrounded by azaleas and rhododendrons; it is large and welcoming, and able to satisfy day trippers and refined gourmets alike. It offers “four seasons” cooking, with traditional tastes and smells, accompanied by exceptional wines.

The playground is situated between the greenhouse and the tool-shed; and are framed by imposing conifers as well as gigantic rhododendrons and multicoloured Japanese maples. It is easily accessed from a wide sweeping road and offers many games including a seesaw, the merry-go-round, the slide, the swings, a little house and the adventurous cablecar.

The park was once part of the property of the patron of Carona.

It was bought in 1943 by Dr. Martin Winterhalter, proprietor of the RIRI zip fastening factory in Mendrisio and he made it into his second residence including stables, as he was passionate about horses.

In 1957 the complex was bought by a society headed up by Luigi Giussani, administrator of the Monteforno steelworks in Giornico.

A man of great initiative, it was actually Giussani who transformed the buildings into a restaurant and apartments, and created the park, as well as building a swimming pool which now belongs to the municipality of Carona. In 1983, the property was passed to the Union Bank of Switzerland, and in 1997 was subsequently donated to the Lugano Tourist Office who promote and expanded it.

## **Temples and exotic architecture in a magnificent natural setting**

In this country of lakes, hills and mountains, there is a long and proud tradition of creating public and private parks and gardens. One of the most interesting – botanically, culturally and historically – is undoubtedly the Parco Scherrer at Morcote. In this fascinating and mysterious little world, art and architecture, trees and plants bring about a curious fusion of past and present, cultural history and natural setting.

The park was the brainchild of Hermann Arthur Scherrer of St. Gall, a well-known merchant in fabrics and textiles in the last century, whose business often took him to foreign parts. During his travels, he came into contact with oriental art and culture and conceived the idea of reconstructing at home those things that had particularly fascinated him abroad. At the turn of the century, the site of the present gardens was just a clearing in the woods. It took years of patient work for H.A. Scherrer's dream to take shape, in a specially created setting of cypresses, cedars, palm trees and thickets of bamboo.

The park as it stands today is a unique and original creation. At the entrance, the visitor is greeted by two baroque marble lions, which usher him into an avenue lined with statuary and amphorae. A little further on is a renaissance fountain and a vast flight of steps leading up to a belvedere. From this vantage point, amid the trappings of Greek mythology, the eye takes in one of the most delightful aspects of Lake Lugano and the surrounding mountains. The park is a repository of exotic architecture. Ancient Greece is represented by a reconstruction of the Erechtheum, the smaller temple of the Athens Acropolis, while the Temple of the Sun, surrounded by an artistic arrangement of box hedges, is clearly of Spanish inspiration.

The mysterious East is conjured up by the Siamese-style Casa del Tè, beside which stands an Egyptian temple, half concealed by a thicket of bamboo. The internal features of these buildings are also faithful to their originals, proving Scherrer's concern to convey ideologies and traditions as well as external forms. Set slightly apart in a typical desert landscape is the Casa Araba, which has remained unfinished. There is also a villa modelled on Palazzo Salò at Brugine.

To bring us back to reality, the itinerary ends with a house in typical Ticino style, which was transported from Lugano stone by stone. Despite the curious mixture of periods, styles and cultures, the flora and exceptional landscaping give the place a sense of unity.

H.A. Scherrer died in 1956. His widow, Amalia, bequeathed the park to the municipality of Morcote, with the request that it be opened to the public and available for cultural events.

## **An open-air museum carved out by a mountain torrent**

The Breggia valley has been formed over thousands of years, as a result of erosion and the depositing of water-borne materials. The effects are particularly striking in the last stretch of the torrent's course, shortly before it flows into the Piana della Polenta. The Parco della Breggia has been established in this area, in the district of Castel San Pietro, under the management of a special foundation.

The gorges, pools, waterfalls, inlets and natural vegetation that mark the winding course of the torrent make this a fascinating and delightful place of study. So unusual is it, having few counterparts south of the Alps, that in recent decades it has become necessary to make it a protected environment. Here it is possible to read – as if in a museum – the geological history of the area, exposed by the action of the torrent over the millenia.

Along its course, the stream has cut into rocks formed on the bed of the so-called “Sea of Tetide” some 80 million years ago, during the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods of geological history, bringing to light fossils of fish, sea urchins and plants. From this evidence, and from the rock strata revealed by the action of the stream, it has been possible to reconstruct the climatic and morphological conditions in the area at different times in the past. Scientists have in fact taken full advantage of an opportunity presented by a natural phenomenon. The interested visitor can deepen his understanding of the natural features of this area, and indeed of the whole pre-alpine environment.

And research still continues. The Parco della Breggia Foundation is involved in study and cataloguing, with students, volunteers and specialists collaborating to further extend the frontiers of our knowledge in this area of natural history.

Quite apart from its scientific interest, the Parco della Breggia is rich in flora and fauna, making it a fascinating place for an excursion. Though wild and unspoilt, it has clearly defined footpaths. The famous author Hermann Hesse, who lived for many years at Montagnola, was so captivated by this landscape that he used it as the setting for his “Pilgrimage to the East”.

## EXCURSIONS

*A dense network of transport services and footpaths*

### **Exploring the region by road, rail, cable-car and boat or... on foot**

Although a common history and culture unite all the people of the lake Lugano region, it is nevertheless an area of some diversity. The presence of Lake Lugano and a number of smaller lakes left by the retreating glaciers ensures that the climate is mild, even in winter. The region enjoys long hours of sunshine, little or no fog, and plentiful rainfall concentrated in limited periods of the year.

This climate encourages an interesting, luxuriant type of vegetation: an original and attractive mixture of Mediterranean and Alpine species. On the hills and glacial moraines perch villages whose traditional Lombard layout (the houses packed tightly around the church square) is modified by local peculiarities: especially the tendency to conform to the lie of the land. The whole area is criss-crossed by a vast network of footpaths, clearly marked on the large scale maps that can be had from the local tourist offices.

One of the great assets of the Region is that, as well as its excellent road network for the private motorist, it has excellent public transport services (buses, trains, cable-cars and boats). It is therefore possible to go almost anywhere and organise interesting itineraries.

In Lugano itself, all parts of the built-up area are served by the municipal transport company (ACT), which also operates the heavily-used funicular linking the Swiss Federal Railway (SFR) station with the town centre. Let us also mention the picturesque and historic Angioli cable railway, though it is not in service at the present time. Monte Brè can be reached from Cassarate by funicular or bus, while the ascent of Monte San Salvatore is most easily achieved by another spectacular cable railway, which in 1991 celebrated its centenary.

The public transport network also extends to the other towns and villages in the region.

There are coach services to the Arbostora and Collina d'Oro areas, while la Capriasca and Val Colla are served by postal coaches run by the Swiss Post Office (PTT) and the buses of the ARL company. ARL also runs services to Cadro, Dino and Sonvico.

For trips to the Malcantone area and Veduggio valley, you can either travel by bus or take the Lugano-Ponte Tresa railway. In these two areas, it is also possible to ascend the Monte Lema and the Monte Tamaro for fine views and walks: the first is accessible by a chair lift, the second by enclosed cable cars. In winter, there are also a number of ski lifts in operation.

The Lake Lugano Region is crossed, from Rivera to Chiasso, by an SFR railway line serving many different localities. The main station at Capolago is also the departure point for the rack railway which climbs Monte Generoso to an altitude of 1700 metres.

The coach network also serves the Mendrisio region, with the possibility of excursions into the Muggio valley. Monte San Giorgio can also be reached by a cable way that links Brusino to the Serpiano.

On the lake, the Società di Navigazione runs regular steamer services – more frequent in summer – connecting all the lake-side settlements. The company also organises cruises (some in the evening) with live music and restaurant service.

In fact, the visitor is spoilt for choice. The main thing is to get the information leaflets and timetables handed out in all the local tourist offices. It is also possible to buy two kinds of special ticket, entitling the holder to unlimited travel or to reductions on public transport services in the Region.

## Lugano Trekking

The mountains that embrace the Cassarate and Veduggio valleys (Valli di Lugano), with their sumptuous heights, suggest numerous enthralling walking trails amidst nature, which allow hikers to discover a rich cultural landscape and to enjoy an unbeatable view over Lake Ceresio, the Alps and the Pianura Padana (North Italy).

Organized by Lugano Trekking, this interesting excursion consists of a three-day walk along a fascinating itinerary that begins in Brè, above Lugano, and ends in Tesserete, in the ancient parish of Capriasca. Hikers may leave behind the city's hustle and bustle and retreat in most quiet surroundings under a wide open sky. The 44.4-km-long itinerary tackles height differences feasible for every hiker in about 21 hours walking. Public transportation (TPL - ARL - Postcar) from and to the city and the main station of Lugano are available in both departure and arrival points. Lugano Trekking also suggests alternative hikes which last one or two days and which end in Val Colla, in Upper Capriasca (at about 1,000 meters above sea level), and in Upper Veduggio.

During the journey, which for the first two days mainly follows paths in border areas to Italy, hikers discover forests, meadows, pastures, mountain huts and shelters as well as farm houses offering meals, accommodation and the possibility to gain unique insight into the rural way of life, but also into geology and pre-alpine flora.

The first part of this hike follows steep hills of beech forests. After reaching the top of Monte Boglia, it is worthwhile a stop to admire the most rewarding view. The descent heads north, initially along a narrow path on the mountain ridge, and later along a wider trail, where the landscape changes into vast plains covered with alder bushes. The next stop is called Alpe Bolla, situated on a plateau. From here one continues towards the Denti della Vecchia, with its largest mountain in the middle, the majestic Sasso Grande. The trail continues again through thick forests of mountain pine trees, then turns off the road shortly before the Pairolo hut, where one may stop and rest for the night. The itinerary then abandons the forest and continues along the ridge. Opposite are the calcareous rocks of the Cima dell'Oress. the trail marches up to Bocchetta di San Bernardo, where the rich flora of the calcareous land gives way to less striking vegetation growing in crystalline soil. Those who wish to add another highlight to their journey may walk up from Alpe di Pianca Bella towards Cima di Foiorina – a summit strewn with calcareous rocks – to admire the imposing views and then venture downhill along the steep slopes leading to Bocchetta di San Bernardo.

In past days these roads were regularly used by smugglers. Still standing near the San Lucio pass, on Italian grounds, are the barracks of the Italian customs office, nowadays used as cozy accommodation.

Close to the Swiss border, along the historical trail, is the San Lucio hut, a popular destination for many excursionists. Here begins the hike up to the ridge that leads to mount Gazzirola. From the top is a rewarding panoramic view over Lugano and surroundings, Piano di Magadino, Lake Maggiore and, at the horizon, the Alpine mountain chain – except for the Gotthard massif, which stands hidden behind the Camoghè. A descent along steep meadows joins Alpe Pietrarossa, an alpine pasture offering another gorgeous view over the Denti della Vecchia, Monte Boglia and Monte Generoso. Bare slopes along the Monte Bar and the Gazzirola are the result of extensive deforestation, practiced till the late 19th century, when timber was highly demanded. Wood was used to make charcoal to supply the foundries of Val Colla; part of the local wood was also exported to Lombardy. The ground still show signs of erosion; also visible are the important reforestation and forest protection works, carried out over almost one century in an attempt to restore the territory. When crossing the reforestation area, along the easy forest road closed to traffic one finds the Capanna Monte Bar, a mountain hut offering accommodation facilities. In the morning the hike continues up the ridge that leads to the top of Monte Bar, which boasts a superb view over Valle d'Isonne, Lake Maggiore, Locarno and surroundings. Further continuing along the ridge, one passes Caval Drossa and reaches Motto della Croce, which offers a close view over the Capriasca valley. The descent continues towards the small opening of Gola di Lago, an area in which historically important, 10,000-year-old peat bogs bare witness to the postglacial period. Along the trail one may still see First and Second World War military fortifications, now abandoned. From Alpe Santa Maria the path crosses through characteristic May crops and rises towards Monte di Bigorio. Past Condra it heads towards the convent of Santa Maria di Bigorio and then descends alongside the Stations of the Cross (Via Crucis). After the village of Bigorio, the itinerary proceeds along the old mule track and finally ends in Tesserete.

## Monte Tamaro – Monte Lema

**The hike** from Monte Tamaro to Monte Lema follows an itinerary along the border between Ticino and Italy and is one of the most beautiful excursions of the Swiss Pre-Alps. The part along the crest gives spectacular views: towards north are the Lake Maggiore, Centovalli, Valle Maggia, Val Verzasca, Locarno and Bellinzona, while towards south the panorama opens over Lugano, its lake and valleys. These views are encircled by a captivating mountainous background, with among others the majestic Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn. The itinerary also includes some accommodation facilities: Alpe Foppa restaurant (for groups), Monte Tamaro hut, or Vetta Monte Lema restaurant. At an arm’s length from Monte Tamaro’s cable lift station stands the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, designed by Mario Botta in 1990. Built between 1992 and 1994 and enriched with paintings by Enzo Cucchi, the church was dedicated on September 1, 1996. From its Belvedere one may enjoy a beautiful, wide view that embraces the whole Piano di Magadino up to the entrance of the Mesolcina valley, Lugano and its valleys and the impressive alpine mountain tops. The first part of the hike is the most challenging one that leads to the top of Monte Tamaro. Hikers must tackle 430 meters of height difference, but are then rewarded with a 360-degree view from the top. An unpaved track leads almost up to the Tamaro hut, while the remaining itinerary runs along hiking trails. Those who prefer an easier hike may go around Mount Tamaro and walk straight towards Bassa di Indemini. This is one of the most attractive hikes in the Sottoceneri, very much liked by experienced hikers and families as well.

You can easily reach Rivera by train or by Postcar.

### **Opening hours:**

From mid-March to mid-November open daily from 09:00 to 17:00.

Tickets may be purchased at the ticket office.

Choose one of the two **combined tickets** Tamaro-Lema:

- 1) Ride up Tamaro + ride down Lema + bus ride from Migliegla to Rivera
- 2) Ride up Tamaro + ride down Lema

**A bus runs daily** from Migliegla to Rivera:

- Migliegla (cable lift), 17:00
- Rivera (Tamaro) 17:40
- Rivera (Tamaro) 17:45
- Migliegla (cable lift) 18:25

A brochure with the detailed schedule [is available](#) at the tourist office of Lugano (Lugano Turismo).

## **Paradiso to Morcote: “the floral route”**

From Lugano to Monte San Salvatore and Carona, then back down to the lake at Morcote: this itinerary could well be termed “the floral route”. It begins in style with a ride on the Monte San Salvatore funicular. From the cable-car station, beside the restaurant, you can take the path to the summit of the mountain. The way lies through hornbeam woods and there is a wealth of flora, whatever the season: Christmas rose, laburnum, cyclamen, gentian, orchids and a local speciality, the scarlet Daphne, known in dialect as “ul fiu dal Munt”, the mountain flower. The people of Lugano come this way for the Ascensiontide mass and festival. From the summit itself, there is an awe-inspiring view.

Just below the restaurant, the trail leads downhill to Ciona, then on to Carona. This is the native village of the Solari, a family of architects and artists responsible for admirable buildings, paintings and sculptures in Venice and other parts of Europe. Carona boasts no less than four churches, all of artistic interest: the parish church of san Giorgio houses a copy of Michelangelo’s Last Judgement; Santa Marta is decorated with late-Gothic frescos; there are Romanesque frescos at Torello; and the sanctuary of the Madonna d’Ongero has some splendid eighteenth-century stucco work.

From Carona, there are two possible itineraries. The first takes in the verdant botanical gardens of San Grato, which in spring put on a magnificent show of rhododendrons and azaleas. The second leads to the baroque sanctuary of the Madonna d’Ongero, then on via a well-marked woodland path. Through the trees, there are tantalising glimpses of the lake-side villages below and the winding branches of Lake Lugano. You can stop and take refreshment at the Grotto dell’Alpe Vicania before tackling the steps down to the picturesque village of Morcote, a veritable jewel set on the lake shore. Be sure to visit the church of Santa Maria del Sasso, the panoramic cemetery, the church and late gothic frescos of Sant’Antonio, and the arcades walk along the lakeside.

Morcote’s ancient layout of narrow lanes and arcades streets, wonderfully preserved, is one of its chief fascinations. There is an abundance of restaurants and “grottos”, which serve locally caught fish. For the return to Lugano, there are regular coach and boat services.

## **How wine and sausages were kept in the cool cellars of Gandria**

For fine views and environmental interest, the Gandria area has few rivals. A historic and picturesque village on the shores of Lake Lugano, Gandria is a spot much favoured by tourists, who are drawn by its magnificent setting and local colour. This itinerary begins at Castagnola, on the outskirts of Lugano at the foot of Monte Brè, which is also home to the Museum of Extra-European Cultures at Villa Heleneum.

It is near the Museum, at San Domenico to be exact, that the walk begins. The path follows the indentation of the lake shore, wending its way amid delightful scenery. The luxuriant vegetation is explained by the south-facing situation and warm, semi-tropical climate, with abundant rainfall limited to just a few days each year and winters tempered by the influence of the lake. Because of its unique micro-climate, the area has been included in the federal listing of natural sites of special interest. In the hornbeam woodland on the slopes above, the Swiss naturalist Schroeder has established a pre Alpine Park.

Clinging to the face of the rock, the path scales the Sasso di Gandria, an enormous limestone outcrop. To the right is a fine view of Monte San Salvatore, while directly above the path rise the steep flanks of Monte Brè. Once the headland has been negotiated, Gandria itself comes into view: a labyrinth of stairways, and arcades streets, houses and restaurants leading down to the landing stage. A boat service connects with the opposite shore of the lake, which could not be more different in character: a cool, shady environment, virtually deserted, where beech and hornbeam reach down to the water's edge, and waves lap at the dense vegetation.

Hard by the landing stage opposite Gandria, only reachable by boat, stands the Customs Museum. Unique to this part of the lake is a series of cellars excavated in earlier times in the cliff face where the trees come down to meet the rocky shore line. The "cantine" are kept cool by cold streams descending from the rugged slopes above: an example on man's ability to exploit natural phenomena, which was noted by the great scientist De Saussure.

These man-made caves – still in a good state of preservation – were formerly used by the people of Lugano and Gandria on the south-facing shore to store wines and dressed pork products. The doors, locks and ingenious opening systems are fascinating example of local craftsmanship. A shady path along the lake shore leads to Caprino and Cavallino, where refreshment is available in rustic bars and taverns. A little further on are some old workings, where the local Caprino stone was quarried. There is a boat service for the return journey to Lugano.

## **So close to Lugano yet so different**

The Capriasca region is yet another example of the varied landscapes and environments to be found in the lake Lugano Region. Although its main centre, Tesserete, is only six or seven miles from Lugano, the region has a character all of its own. Lying in the alpine foot-hills, it is well wooded and has a mild, sunny climate, making it an ideal place to live or spend one's leisure time. It is also rich in history and has a large number of cultural attractions. La Capriasca divides naturally into two parts: a branch that runs north towards Gola di Lago; and another that extends eastwards towards Bidogno, where it merges with the Val Colla. It is a well-watered region, drained by two rivers: the Bello, which has its source on Mount Camoghè, and the Capriasca itself, which runs down from the slopes of the Caval Drossa. Its seven communities are magnificently situated, with a grandstand view over the town and lake of Lugano. The region is outstandingly well equipped for holidays and tourism, enjoying first class road and public transport access, as well as a network of well-maintained footpaths and incomparable views. At the same time, the countryside is still quiet and peaceful: the Origlio lake is typical of the small lakes set amid the greenery; there are endless possibilities for walks on hill and mountain; and extensive woods of chestnut, beech and birch clothe the slopes.

The main centre is Tesserete, easily reached by the ARL bus service from Lugano's SFR station and from the car park in via Balestra, or by PTT postal coach service. Several coach lines converge on Tesserete, and there are regular services to Val Colla and Belgio near Gola di Lago, an area not to be missed by lovers of natural history. The local road network serves all points of the territory. One attraction of the region is that it offers so many different vantage points from which to enjoy views of the Lugano region, the Lombard plain and the encircling mountain ranges.

Of special interest are a number of Romanesque churches: SS. Matteo and Maurizio at Cagiallo, San Pietro at Sureggio and San Clemente at Vaglio. The parish church of Sant'Ambrogio at Ponte Capriasca houses an exact and perfectly preserved copy of Leonardo's Last Supper, the fresco he painted for S. Maria delle Grazie in Milan. Also worth a visit is the church of S. Stefano at Tesserete itself. At Bigorio, in a magnificent hill-side setting, stands a Franciscan convent, now used as a retreat centre. Its ancient stones breathe a sense of history, serenity and peace. The Capriasca region promotes numerous cultural activities, particularly concerts and theatrical events.

## **A guided tour of the region's natural history**

Just a few miles from Lugano, the San Zeno nature trail, running from Lamone to Taverne, offers a new way of appreciating the countryside. It is two miles long and can be covered in about an hour and a half. Along the way are 10 observation points, chosen to instruct the visitor about particular environmental features. The trail starts at low altitude; climbs the slope of San Zeno hill, from which there are some fine views; then gradually redescends into the plain. It is designed to inform the visitor about the natural features of the area; its geology, orographical configuration, plant cover, history, human settlement, crops and special features of the woodland and undergrowth – as compared with those of neighbouring areas.

It in fact offers a rare opportunity to get to know the natural features and way of life of a particularly interesting part of the world. The guide book, which is also available in German, can be obtained from the local tourist office. It is a valuable tool for understanding the area, and should be read in conjunction with the information displayed at each of the ten observation points along the trail. Taking it as your guide, you can enjoy the delightful walk to the chapel of San Zeno – a beautiful spot to relax and contemplate the view – and at the same time learn some fascinating facts about the natural history of this area.

The guide adopts a step-by-step approach to explain the various aspects of the environment. It points out the different species of trees, shrubs, herbaceous plant, mosses, lichens and birds, as well as the various rock formations, explaining the evolution of the complex plant system, how the animal species have adapted to their surroundings, and how natural features such as the small lake of Origlio were formed.

The guide goes into the various natural cycles and the ecology of the area, not forgetting the relationship between history and geography. Illustrations help to clarify the points made in the text. The scientific interest of the San Zeno nature trail is enhanced at every step by the beauty of the setting and the magnificent views. All in all, a pleasant, undemanding walk, in the course of which you will learn some fascinating facts about the natural world.

## **On the Collina d'Oro (Golden Hill), haunt of Hermann Hesse**

Overlooking Lugano and its bay, the Collina d'Oro might be termed a microcosm of history, culture and imposing scenery. It lends itself to excursions in the hills, to enjoy the greenery and explore its villages. From the Cappella di Viglio, a halt on the Lugano-Ponte Tresa railway line, you can easily reach Agra and its promontory on foot. As well as regular buses serving the area, there are well marked footpaths, and the Lugano tourist maps outline some interesting itineraries, which you can adapt to include the local taverns at Gentilino, Montagnola or Posmonte.

The name of these gentle slopes (Collina d'Oro) derives not from discoveries of precious minerals, but from the fact that they have nurtured so many famous people. The area's illustrious sons include architects and artists who left their mark in all parts of Europe, especially Russia. On the road from Montagnola to Agra is the family home of Domenico Gilardi, to whom the Czar entrusted the great task of rebuilding Moscow after the terrible fire of 1812. Arasio, a hamlet near Montagnola, is the birth place of Pasquale Lucchini, one of the great nineteenth-century civil engineers. In canton Ticino itself, he designed the Melide causeway and the helical tunnels of Piottino and Biaschina. At Gentilino, there is a small museum commemorating his work.

The Collina d'Oro became famous on account of Hermann Hesse, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature and one of the major writers of modern times. For several decades, Hesse lived at Montagnola, and many pages of his great novels were inspired by this region. In the village there is a monument set up to mark the first centenary of his birth, and his tomb is to be found in the cemetery at Gentilino, close to the burial place of Domenico Gilardi. Another monument in this cemetery is Vincenzo Vela's "Preghiera su di una tomba" (prayer over a Tomb), carved in honour of the architect Pietro Boffa, another local artist who made his career in Russia.

Above the cemetery is an avenue of slender cypresses. It leads to the broad terrace of the church of Sant'Abbondio, built in the eighteenth century and one of Ticino's finest. The interior has baroque stucco work by the Camuzzi family of Montagnola, and there are two fine paintings by Giuseppe Petrini.

Agra, right on top of the hill, holds the Swiss record for hours of sunshine. It is the starting point for a pleasant jog (Percorso-Vita) through woods of beech and chestnut, with a number of "Roccoli" (watch towers from where birds are observed and shot) visible along the way. Mario Agliati and Mario Radaelli have written an exhaustive guide book to the Collina d'Oro, rich in both history and anecdote.

## **The Malcantone, land of hammer mills**

The Malcantone is the region lying between Lugano and Ponte Tresa. Although main road and railway line traverse the intermediate villages of Bioggio, Agno, Magliaso and Caslano, it is more than just a valley bottom. It in fact takes in a wide area, with the lake on one side and the circle of mountains between Monte Lema and Monte Tamaro on the other. The Malcantone therefore includes mountain, hill and plain, not to mention picturesque villages with a strong tradition of community life and cultural activity.

The word Malcantone means area of hammer mills. And at one time the region was famous for these water-powered engines used in working iron. Nowadays very few remain. It is rather the place names that bear witness to this old industry: Magliaso, Magliasina, Zoo del maglio, etc. The recently restored mill at Aranno is the only one of its kind left in Switzerland. It was used by skilled craftsmen to forge the iron extracted from four mines on the hill side above the village of Fescoggia. The ruins of an old foundry can still be seen in the neighbourhood. The Malcantone is a region of mines, some of which yielded gold and silver, making it the Ticino's "Little California". Today the mines at Sessa are barred and bolted; those at Aranno and Miglieglia can still be visited if you follow the "Sentiero delle meraviglie" (trail of wonders) or the "Sentiero verde" (green trail), two delightful rambles along the banks of the Magliasina.

In the middle Ages, an important road crossed this area, connecting Ponte Tresa with Gravesano. Its importance is evidenced by the ruins of a castle and the Romanesque church of Miglieglia with its superb late-gothic frescos. Other fine examples can be seen in the churches of Cademario, Arosio, Neggio and Croglio. But the scenery and the centuries-old villages of the Malcantone deserve more than just a passing visit. The Museum at Curio possesses artefacts and documents that illustrate the history of the region. Sessa too, was an important cultural centre in time past. Many of the local dwellings incorporate capitals and columns dating from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. There are some magnificent old wine presses, one dating from 1407 made from a walnut trunk 11 metres long. Green is the predominant colour, particularly at middle and higher altitude, where the Malcantone forestry authority, together with the local inhabitants, takes good care of this important natural resource.

For a memorable day out, nothing beats Monte Sassalto at Caslano, a rocky promontory jutting out into the lake which supports an extraordinary variety of vegetation. Footpaths abound, as shown on the map obtainable from the local tourist office at Caslano.

## **Monte Generoso: generous by name, generous by nature**

If you approach canton Ticino from the south, from the Po valley, you are met at the threshold by two most imposing characters: Monte San Giorgio and Monte Generoso. We have already mentioned Monte San Giorgio and its nature trail, where you can study the geological structure of the area and some remarkable fossils. It also worth visiting the villages set on the flanks of the mountain, since they admirably display the skills of the local inhabitants in the art of building.

Monte Generoso could not be more aptly named. Its generosity extends to botanists, in that it offers a rich and varied flora, with flowers that are rare or no-existent in other parts of Switzerland. It is generous to zoologists, since its slopes are virtually an unofficial nature reserve, where you may encounter chamois, squirrels, foxes and other creatures. Nor will the entomologists be disappointed: previously unknown species of insect have been discovered on the mountain. And speleologists can have a field day: in its bowels have been found fifty or so caves, some of them embellished with stalactites and stalagmites. This, then, is a natural environment of outstanding interest, and a cradle of social and economic activity over many centuries. On both the Swiss and Italian sides of the mountain, interesting settlements have grown up, based mainly on stock-breeding and exploitation of the Alpine pastures. Here a peasant society of mountain folk has been able to flourish. Even today, in the Muggio valley and along the way from Mendrisio to the summit, you will find cattle sheds and dairies where the old ways are still practised. You will see “nevere”, cylindrical structures used for keeping dairy products and foodstuffs fresh. Here is evidence of a balance between vegetation and human settlement, man and nature.

It is rightly said that Monte Generoso has two faces: the Swiss side more rugged and demanding; the Italian slopes gentler and more verdant. But on both nature prevails, unspoilt and off limits to the motor car, offering the possibility of varied rambles and excursions. To mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Generoso rack railway, which carries passengers from Capolago to just under the summit, a special guide book was produced, which suggests 26 itineraries for exploring the mountain. The local 1:25.000 map of the Mendrisiotto region is also a fertile source of ideas.

## **Valsolda, cradle of architects and men of letters**

Shortly after Gandria, the lakeside road from Lugano crosses the frontier into Italy. Before reaching Porlezza at the head of the Lake Como, it traverses the typical lake side villages of Oria, Albogasio, San Mamete and Cressogno. Nestling on the shore at the foot of the surrounding mountains, they are the most accessible part of a magnificent region, which also embraces the lower reaches of the Val d'Intelvi on the other side of the lake.

This is the Valsolda. The name derives from the river Soldo, whose two branches join shortly before they run into the lake. Its valleys, villages and small farms, set in a varied landscape, enjoy a favoured geographical position and a mild sunny climate. A region with a rich historical and cultural heritage, the Valsolda is also an excellent example of a typical pre-Alpine settlement. Running from the lakeside up into the mountains, its territory exemplifies the integration of different economic and cultural strata: while the lake-orientated areas live by fishing, the mountain villages derive their subsistence from animal husbandry and rural crafts. From a botanical point of view, the climate is sufficiently mild to support the bay laurel, citrus fruits, olives and the agave.

Historically, the valsolda is a land of architects, some of whom went far afield to exercise their skills. One of its sons was Pellegrino Pellegrini, known as il Tibaldi, a major eighteenth-century painter and architect, who worked largely in the Duchy of Milan. His achievements include the majestic temple of San Lorenzo, the churches of S. Sebastiano and S. Fedele, and the underground chapel and lower section of Milan cathedral. In the last century, the Valsolda was for many years the home of the distinguished writer and poet Antonio Fogazzaro. It provided the setting for several of his masterpiece, in particular "Piccolo mondo antico" (the little world of the past), Malombra, and the collection of poems entitled "Valsolda" – some of the most important works of Italian romanticism. They have also served to make the region known to a wide public. Though secluded and somewhat isolated, the Valsolda, straddling the frontier, has been a place of significant social and cultural ferment.

Having remained virtually unspoilt, today the Valsolda is a place of great historical and environmental interest. For tourists visiting Lugano and the lakes, it is a place to relax and unwind in, its network of footpaths inviting the rambler to explore lake-side, hill and mountain. There are magnificent views over the Porlezza end of Lake Lugano, and beyond to the Lago del Piano and Lake Como; the landscape is set off by the ruins of castles and fortresses and churches of the Romanesque and late-gothic periods. The Valsolda is easily reached from Lugano, by road or by boat.