

Discover the sunny **Valsolda** Valley, a generous land that spans from Porlezza to the Swiss border. It has given birth to generations of migrant artists, such as the architect-artist Pellegrino Tibaldi and for years was home to the writer Antonio Fogazzaro who set his famous novel “The Patriot” here.

Percorso: Menaggio - Porlezza - Cressogno - Loggio - Puria - Dasio - Castello - S. Mamete - Oria - Albogasio - Menaggio 42 km



Caravina Sanctuary



Soldo torrent waterfall

We depart from Menaggio and follow the road to Lugano in the direction of Lugano which winds its way up on the side of the hill in order to enter the **Val Menaggio**. On our left soars Monte Crocione 1670 m with Monte Grona 1736 m on the right.

After 11 km we reach **Porlezza**, a tourist resort on Lake Lugano, which is also known as Lake Ceresio. From 1885 to 1939 the town was the terminal of the Porlezza Menaggio railway line and served the many international tourists who arrived from Lugano by steam boat. The old route of the railway has been converted into a pedestrian and cycle path.

We continue along the lake and just beyond the outlying hamlet of Cima Porlezza, turn right to visit the **Sanctuary of Caravina**.

The sanctuary stands in an elevated position offering a beautiful view with Mount San Salvatore on the right and the village of Osteno on the opposite shore

at the entrance to the Intelvi Valley. The construction of the church is linked to a fresco, a miraculous image of Our Lady of Mercy once housed in a small country chapel. Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan and Lord of Valsolda, turned the chapel into a sanctuary in 1582.

The building was further extended around 1640 and the decorative layout and in particular the beautiful frescoes in the presbytery and the two side chapels masterpieces by Isidoro Bianchi, a native of the nearby town of Campione d'Italia – date from this period. The Sanctuary of Caravina is open every day.

Back on the state road, after Cressogno keep to the right and follow signs for **Valsolda**. Just before entering the old tunnel, turn right and follow signs for **Loggio**, Puria and Dasio. In the hamlet of Loggio park the car in Piazza Emilio Maderni.

Walk along Via Lucia and via Galbiati in order to reach the old town centre. The presence of the

image of the Holy Shroud on the walls of some of the houses here bears witness to the migration to Turin of a certain number of artisans who found work on the building sites of the palaces commissioned by the Royal House of Savoy. **The Church of Saint Bartolomeo**, with its solid gold sphere from Turin soaring above the bell-tower, also recalls this migration.

By simply following the mule track *Via alla Cascata*, a short 15-minute walk leads from the church to the **Soldo Stream Waterfall**.

Back to the car, bypass the diversion for Castello and reach Puria, the birth place of the architect and painter **Pellegrino Tibaldi**. Born in 1527, he operated in both Italy and Spain and amongst others, worked on the Cathedral and Church of Saint Escorial at Madrid. Park near the **Parish Church of Saint Maria Assunta**. Although this is a Romanesque church, Tibaldi's hand can clearly be seen in the restoration work carried out in the 16th – 17th centuries. Enter the old town centre by walking along *Corso del Tempio* and *Via Salomone*. Centred on the Church of Saint Pietro, it still retains several noble buildings and its typical layout, which developed between the 16th and 19th centuries, is almost intact.

Back in the car, turn right at the junction for Castello and cross the bridge over the Soldo Stream. Park near the cemetery and take *Via Gonfalonieri* for a 10-minute walk to the lovely hamlet of Castello, which clings to a rocky spur. The village takes its name from the ancient fortifications, which in mediaeval times were known as “Castello Albogasio”. Built on the foundations of this ancient fortress, the village retains the semi-circular layout of the old defensive walls around the area that had hosted the nucleus. From *Piazza Paolo Pagani*, walk along *Via S. Martino* to reach the **church San Martino**. Its current form dates from the 17th and 18th centuries. With a single central nave, the interior offers an exceptional spectacle thanks to its vaulted ceiling that was frescoed by **Paolo Pagani**, a painter from Castello, when he returned from a long stay in central Europe. Walk along *Via Cesare Jamucci* to reach *Casa Pagani*, the artist's local home that has been turned into a museum to honour the figures of the migrant artists, their relationship with their land of

birth and the towns they worked in, often beyond the Alps. For information: www.museocasapagani.it

Drive back down to the state road SS340 and enter **San Mamete** after about 1 km. Leave the car at the far end of the village in the car park on the left, near the mouth of Soldo Stream. Cross the state road and take *Via Bellotti*, which leads to a beautiful, rectangular square with porticoes on one side. From the end of the square, a wide staircase leads to the **Church of Saints Mamete and Agapito**, which was already standing here in the 12th century, as testified by the Romanesque bell-tower. Return to the square to cross the state road and then take the picturesque *Via dei Portici*, which overlooks the lake.

Back in the car, we reach the centre of **Oria**. Here it is possible to admire the places where the 19th century novelist **Antonio Fogazzaro** set his famous novel “The Patriot”, including the **Villa Fogazzaro Roi** (now managed by FAI – the Italian National Trust. For information and guided visits see www.fondoambiente.it) where the writer used to stay for long periods. It stands on a lovely square that is also the churchyard of the **Church of Saint Sebastiano**. From the villa you can walk to the boat dock of Oria along a lovely porticoed street. We retrace our footsteps and we take *Via Antonio Fogazzaro* which after 400 meters ends onto the state road, which should be crossed heading to **Albogasio Inferiore**. We walk up the cobblestone street *Via dei Ceroni* to the beautiful *Piazza Calderoni*.

From here, take *Via Renaldi* and *Via della Chiesa* on the right to the **church of the Annunciation**. Just to the left of the church is *Via Cergià* flanked by monumental buildings, such as **Palazzo delle Colonne and Villa Salve**. The latter was designed by the Albogasio born architect **Isidoro Affaitati** who mainly worked in Poland, especially in Warsaw. Turn left into *Via Carlo Barrera* as far as *Piazza Malombra* and then take *Via Montale* behind the fountain that leads to the **Church of Saint Ambrogio** which stands in a beautiful panoramic position. If we find our steps, we find ourselves back in Albogasio Inferiore where the tarmac road *Via Maestri Comacini* leads onto *Via D'Annunzio*. At the bus stop, take *Via Castello* to return to Oria.