



and then you pick up **Via Strecioum** to the left.

At the end of the street continue a few meters and you come to **one of the most picturesque bridges over the river Sanagra**. Here we find ourselves on a stretch of the “Antica Strada Regina”, the important transit route built by the Romans, as it allowed a connection between the Po Valley and the region north of the Alps. At the center

of the bridge, in a niche, you can admire a bas-relief by Vannuccini **9** (1965), which represents San Giovanni Nepomuceno, patron of bridges and on the right the chapel dedicated to the Madonna di Caravaggio.

Turn back and then left into **Via per Lovenò** and left again into **Via Leoni** which you follow to the end. Cross Via Lusardi, passing in front of the little church San Rocco, built in 1772, and pick up Via Roma which leads along the entrance of the Lido of Menaggio built in 1934 with its big beach and swimming pool. The building is an excellent example of the Rationalist style.

The walk continues along the **Lungo Lago Benedetto Castelli**. Here you find the **monument by Francesco Somaini 10**, dedicated to the women silk weavers, donated to the town of Menaggio by the Mantero family, owners of several silk mills. It is made of Carrara Marble and represents a hymn to the weaving culture of Como, in which work, art and management ability are melted and mixed, following the centuries old tradition which has made Como one of the silk capitals of the world. You continue your way on the lovely well tended lake side promenade where you can enjoy the beauty of the landscape which has made the fortune of the area. You

pass the Grand Hotel Victoria built in 1885 and then you'll find yourself in Largo Cavour where there is a **panel 11** with interesting old pictures of Menaggio. Just around the corner is Piazza Garibaldi, the starting point of our itinerary.



## NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF MENAGGIO

The discovery of a few archaeological relics enables us to affirm that since early historical times people lived here. In 196 B.C., the Romans conquered the area. With the building of the road called “Via Regina” the Romanisation of the area started. In the Middle Ages a castle was built in the upper part of the town and Menaggio was surrounded by walls. Because of its privileged position on the Via Regina, Menaggio was strategically of great importance. Already then the Via Regina was an important commercial and travel route which connected the Lombardy plain with the area north of the alps. In the 15th century a continual succession of war time events took place.

The Graubundener, who had already conquered the Valtellina, kept Menaggio under pressure and in 1523 they succeeded defeating it and destroying its castle.

In 1525, the domain of Spain began and Menaggio crossed two centuries of poverty. This situation lasted till 1714 when the first Austrian domination started and quality of life rapidly improved. In 1805, after the creation of the Kingdom of Italy, Menaggio became the seat of the substituting Prefect and in 1859 centre in the Como region, of the insurrection movement “Risorgimento” against the Austrians.

Towards the end of the century, the tourist vocation of Menaggio began to develop, with the construction of the big hotels and villas especially at Lovenò. Among these Villa Garovaglio-Ricci and Villa Mylius Vigoni, now owned by the German Federal Republic and seat of the German- Italian cultural centre Villa Vigoni which organizes high level meetings.

At the beginning of the 19th century Menaggio was already a well-known resort. Important for this development was the construction of the railway Menaggio - Porlezza, that was used till 1939, and of the foundation of the Menaggio - Cadenabbia Golf Club. In 1934 the Lido Giardino was built which was another innovation for tourism. In the first world war the Italian army built impressive defence lines in the surrounding mountains such as the Crocetta and Monte Crocione which in part are still intact. In April 1945 the town witnessed Mussolini's brief stop at Menaggio on his way to Valtellina; he was captured though at Dongo by the Partisans.

# MENAGGIO



## HISTORICAL AND ARTISTIC WALK

*Menaggio has ancient origins and a prestigious artistic heritage. You can discover them by following this interesting itinerary. In case there are children walking with you, the tourist office suggests the amusing **puzzle tour** you can do together with this itinerary. Before starting our walk, we recommend to read the notes about the history of Menaggio.*

**DURATION: 1 HOUR**

**WAY MARKS:**



Our itinerary starts in **Piazza Garibaldi** where the tourist office is located. Enter **Via Calvi** and half way up the street on the right you find the **church S. Marta**.

**1** Observe the interesting historical bas-reliefs on its façade. One is a fragment of a Roman tombstone of Lucius Minicius Exorato, an important imperial official of the first century AD. It was found in the lake in front of the Roman walls of Santa Maria Rezzonico, and transferred here in the first half of the sixteenth century by the humanist Francesco Calvi from Menaggio who believed he had found the origin of the town's toponym in the name Minicio. Above it is a 15th-century **effigy of the castle of Menaggio**, which has become the municipal coat of arms. At the entrance to the church there is an original medieval font. At the end of **Via Calvi** is the parish **church of S. Stefano 2** of very ancient origins whose original Romanesque structures have however been lost; even the orientation itself is in the opposite direction of its primitive setting. The church has three naves which, in 1899, were covered with





frescoes by a local artist named Tagliaferri. Quite noteworthy is the one of the martyr Santo Stefano located in the vault of the apse. In the presbytery, two works by the painter Castelli from Menaggio. Above the altar of the Madonna, at the front of the left nave, you find a copy of a painting by Bernardino Luini, a famous painter of the Renaissance, depicting Maria with Jesus and an angel (the painting is also entitled **The Madonna of Menaggio**). The original work is now at the Louvre. The altar is surrounded by copper medallions representing scenes from the Madonna's life. In the middle of the right nave there is a large painting of San Giorgio but the artist is unknown. The altar of "Il Sacro Cuore" is embellished with stuccoes of the 17th century by the "maestri intelvesi" (famous sculptors and craftsmen of the Val d'Intelvi who worked all over Europe).

When you come out of the church take **Via Caronti**, then at the end of the street turn right into **Via Leoni**. After 30 m turn left into **Via Castellino da Castello**. Right at the beginning of the street, we find one of the 50 panels **3** that are placed along the western shore of the lake and in the surrounding mountains which are part of 4 thematic itineraries that make up the **open-air museum "The End of the War"**. In Menaggio there are three of these panels: two of these retrace the events that led to the capture and shooting of Mussolini. The one we see here tells us about "The stop and the departure for Dongo" while the other one near the current primary school is about "The arrival of Mussolini at the barracks of the Black Brigades" (the third panel is located at the cemetery and recalls the killing of the partisan Enrico Caronti).



Via Castellino da Castello leads to the upper part of town where the castle once stood. **4** It is probable that the **castle of Menaggio** had its origins between the eighth and the tenth century. The place was particularly strategic and its primary function was to control the transit on

the Via Regina, the old Roman road that connected Milan with the Alpine passes, at the point where the route forked to the north and to Lake Lugano.. Surely the fortress was almost impregnable from the north and east sides where the gorge of the Sanagra river is located, while the opposite sides were defended by high walls and a moat. The "Castello" of today gives only a faint idea of how it was in the middle ages. It was in



fact completely destroyed in 1523 by the Grigionesi. Left intact are parts of its enormous perimeter walls which you can admire at various points. The houses in the upper part of Via Castellino da Castello follow the original contours of the castle. On the facade of house number 54 there are **two medieval sculptures** **5** from the XI century, a winged female and a bust. Above the ruins of the ancient castle you find the **church S. Carlo** **6** which was built in 1614. The church has a characteristic Spanish style bell tower a reminder of the period of Spanish domination in the 15-16th century. When you reach the end of the street continue to the left

and follow **Via N. Sauro** (use the side walk). After only 20 m you pick up the street, just before a small parking lot, that runs right below the walls of the castle. Just past another small car park, you pick up **Via Fabbri**. At the beginning of the street, on the left, on the top of a gate, there is a sculpture of the 12th century representing the **head of the bull of San Luca**. **7** Then a bit further down on the left there is a **fountain called "Del Salvatore"**. **8** Above it there is a bust in relief of the 12th century which has unfortunately been damaged by time. At the end of Via Fabbri you end up again in **Via Castellino da Castello** which you follow down to the right for ca. 10 meters



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