

DISTRETTO
TURISTICO
DEI LAGHI



Lago Maggiore
Lago d'Orta
Lago di Mergozzo
Monti e Valli d'Ossola



ECCELLENZA
PIEMONTE

REGIONE
PIEMONTE

Castles, towers and walls

Ancient views
of lakes and mountains





- 16 places of tourist value
- 34 other minor testimonies

Places united by:

Panoramic value (linked to the strategic positions in which they were built)

Contexts rich in history, often located along ancient routes

Contexts with naturalistic value

CASTLES

ROCCA BORROMEA - Arona

CASTELLI DI CANNERO - Cannobio

CARMINE SUPERIORE - Cannobio

CASTELLO DEL MOTTO - Gravellona Toce

CASTELLO VISCONTEO - Vogogna

CASTELLO DI MATTARELLA - Domodossola

TOWERS AND FORTIFIED HOUSES

PALAZZO PARASI - Cannobio

TORRE DI FERIOLO – Baveno

TORRE DI BUCCIONE - Orta San Giulio

TORRE DI ROLDO - Montecrestese

CASA FORTE SCHTEI HÜS - Formazza

TORRE FERRERIO - Piedimulera

TORRE DI BATTIGGIO - Vanzone con San Carlo

TORRE DI VARZO - Varzo

WALLS AND BARRAGES

MURA E TORRETTE - Domodossola

SBARRAMENTO DI CROVEO - Baceno

Other remnants

VERBANO

1. Mura borromea - Arona

2. Castello Visconteo- Massino Visconti

3. Castellaccio - Brovello

4. Torraccia di Cavandone - Verbania

5. Castello di Frino - Ghiffa

CUSIO

6. Castello di Cerro - Gravellona Toce

7. Porta e mura medievali - Omegna

8. Torre La Darbia - Ameno

OSSOLA

9. Castello "Al Sasso" - Mergozzo

10. Castello di Montorfano - Mergozzo

11. Torre della Guardia - Ornavasso

12. Torre di Cengio - Pieve Vergonte

13. Borgaccio - Pieve Vergonte

14. Torre di Cimamulera - Piedimulera

15. Casaforte di Lancino - Bannio A.

16. Torre di Bulfer - Vogogna

17. Castello di Beura

18. Torre e casa Ferrari - Beura

19. Torri di Cardezza - Beura Cardezza

20. Castello di Trontano

21. Torre di Creggio - Trontano

22. Torre campanaria - Trontano

23. Torre di Masera

24. Torre di Rambolone - Bognanco

25. Casaforte di Veglio - Crevoladossola

26. Torre di Ardignaga - Caddo

27. Torre di Rido - Crevoladossola

28. Castello di Lomese - Montecrestese

29. Castello di Castelluccio - Montecrestese

30. Castello di Rencio a Crodo

31. Torre di Rondola - Crodo

32. Torre di Cristo - Premia

33. Torre Simonis - Santa Maria Maggiore

34. Castello di Vallaro - Villette

Rocca Borromea (Arona)

The lake-view castle that gave birth to San Carlo Borromeo



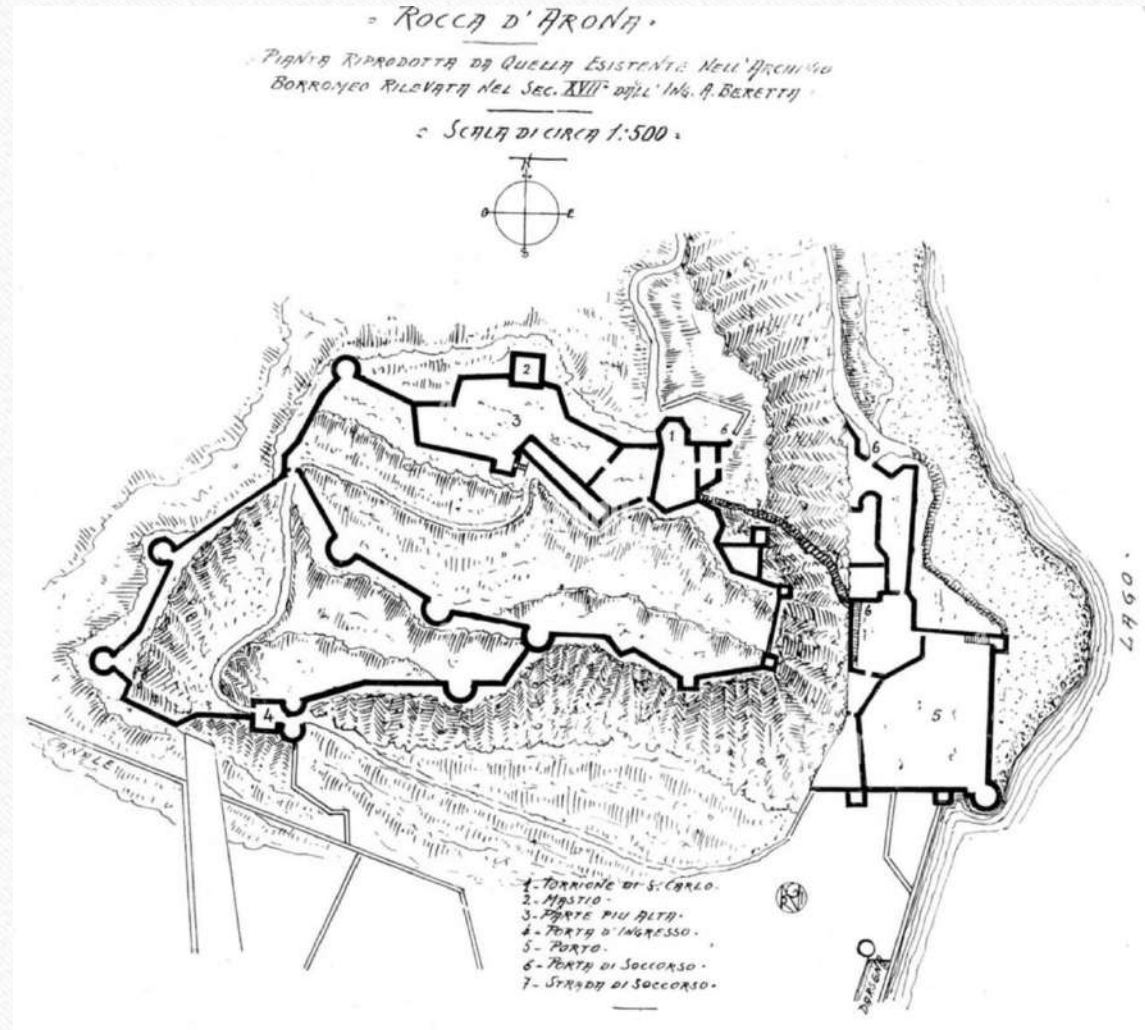


- Around the year 1000 first fortified nucleus
- 12th century episcopal property
- 1227 passed to the Visconti
- Owned by the Borromeo family since 1439
- In 1538, Charles Borromeo, Bishop of Milan and saint, was born there.
- 1800 destruction by Napoleon's army
- Public park since 2011

Remnants

Of the complex, the following survive as ruins:

- The remains of three fortified enclosures with 12 towers, the bases of which are visible
- The donjon (or Rocchetta)
- The Romanesque oratory of S. Ambrogio (11th century)
- The Hall of Arms
- The palace where San Carlo Borromeo was born in 1538





Use:
excursion
tourist visit

Info: +39 0322 243601 turismo.arona@comune.arona.no.it
www.parcoroccaaron.com

Castelli di Cannero (Cannobio)

In the heart of the lake: an ancient fortress and a new multimedia museum

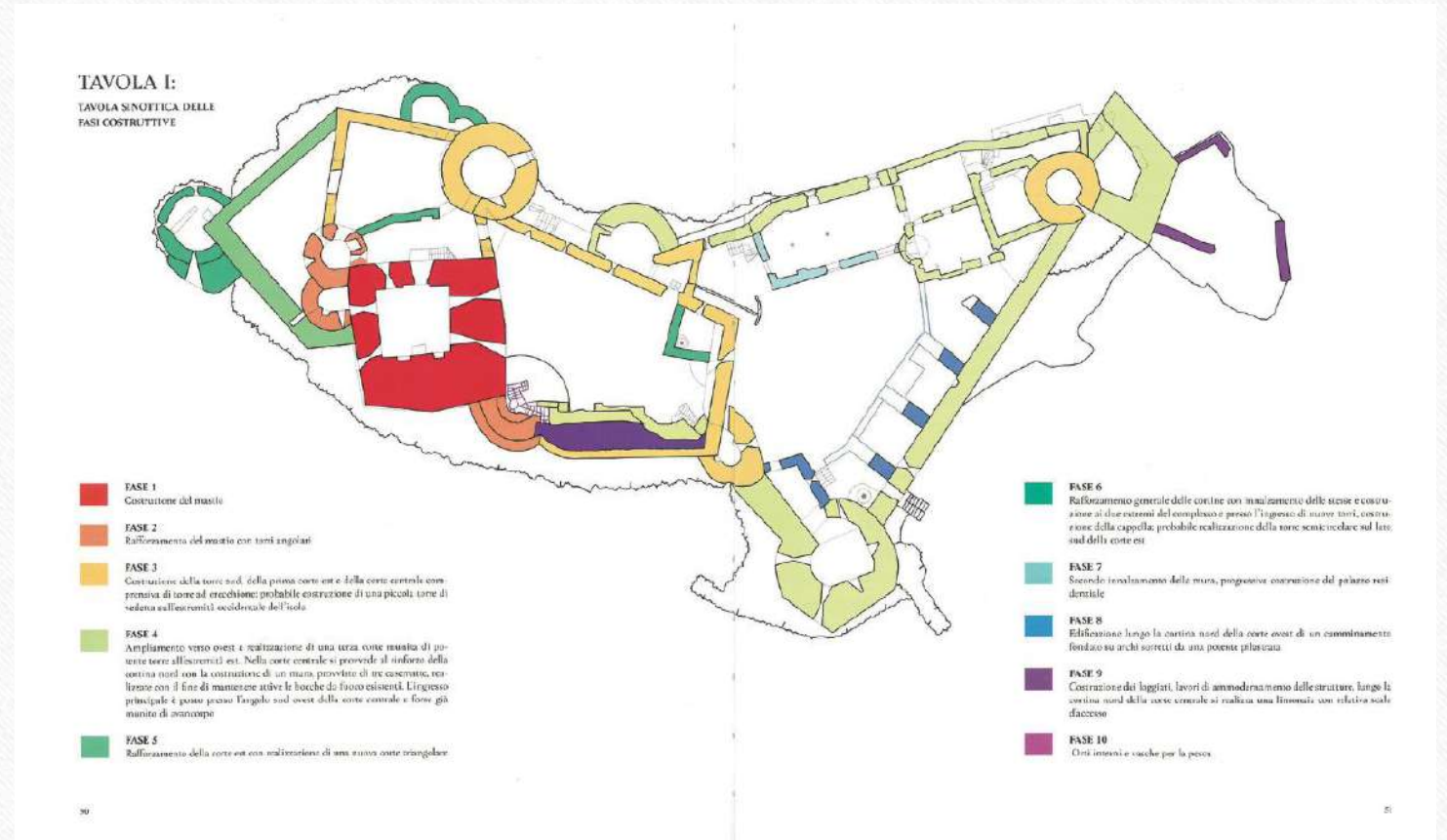




- 1402 Fortress, called Malpaga, built by the Mazzardi, local lords of Cannobio
- 1414 Malpaga was razed to the ground by the Visconti
- 1519-21 Ludovico Borromeo built the 'Vitaliana' fortress
- 17th century seat of a clandestine mint
- Abandonment and ruin in the 18th century
- 1859 Second War of Independence, the castles were used as a place of refuge by Garibaldi's Hunters of the Alps
- 2015-2025 conservative restoration
- Today they host a multimedia museum that tells their story

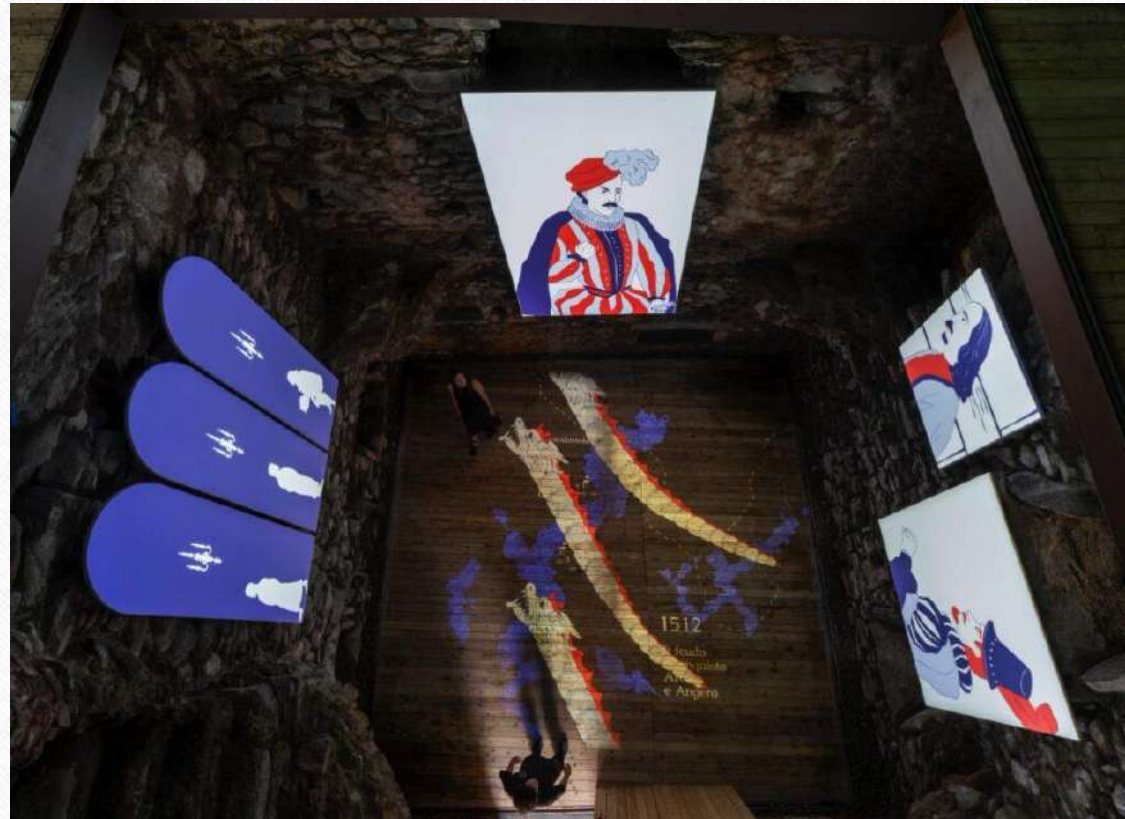
Remnants

- The complex is developed around a central courtyard
- To the east, a keep with two circular towers.
- To the south, a double courtyard structure with a tower
- To the west, a residential building
- The entrance to the castle, with its forepart and semicircular tower, is located on the south side, next to a small building with a chapel on the ground floor.





Use:
tourist visit
Museum



Info: +39 0323 933478 info@isoleborromeo.it
www.terreborromeo.it/castelli-di-cannero

Carmine Superiore (Cannobio)

Medieval village with panoramic views between lake and mountains





- Founded shortly before the year 1000 as a fortified hamlet by a family of notables from Cannobio

- Between 1332 and 1401, the Church of St Gotthard was erected, a National Monument that preserves valuable frescoes from the 14th-15th centuries both outside and inside.



- Location: rocky outcrop overlooking Lake Maggiore

Remnants:

- A small number of stone houses built around the small church of St Gotthard (14th century)
- The layout and solid structure of the buildings is typical of the medieval shelter
- On the edge of the settlement, dry stone terraces once housed vineyards and chestnut groves

Use:
excursion

Info: +39 0323 71 212 info@turismocannobio.it
www.turismocannobio.it

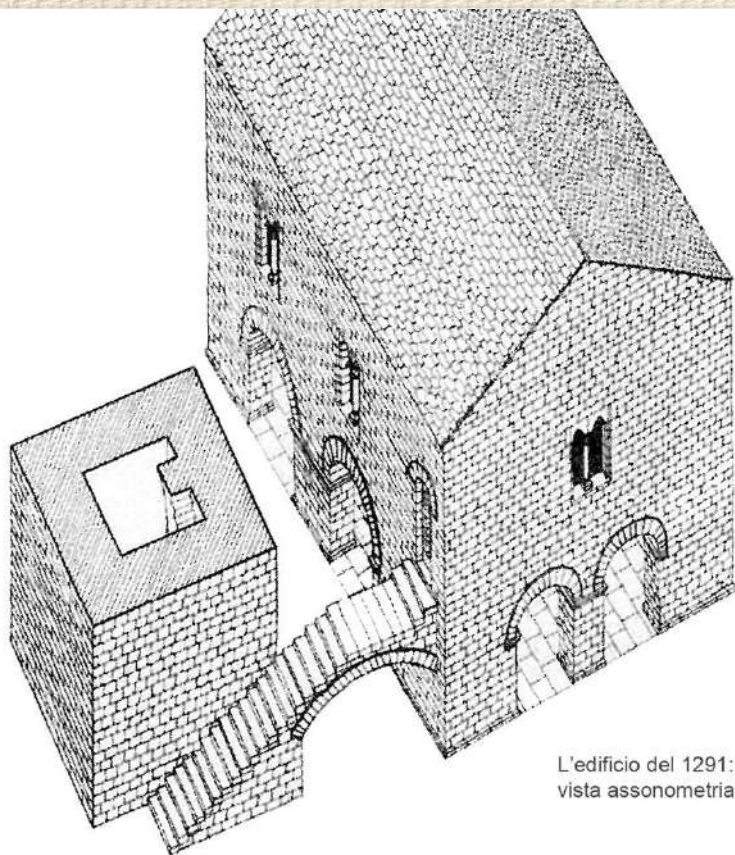
Palazzo Parasi and civic bell tower

Where the Middle Ages meet contemporary art

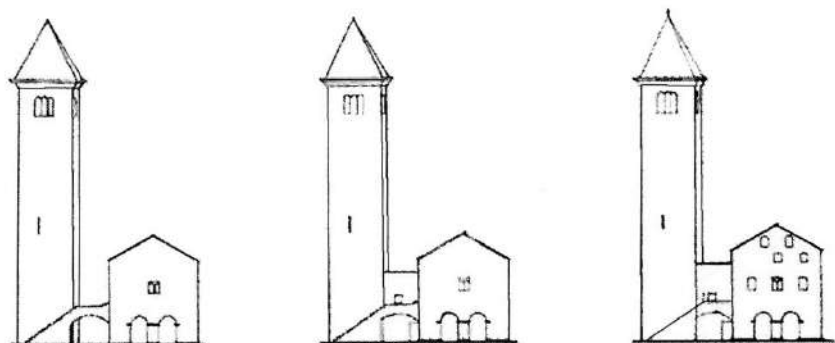




- 1205-1209 Civic (and bell) tower built
- 1291 construction of the Palazzo (Palace of Reason) on the initiative of Podestà Ugolino da Mandello
- 2012-2014 full restoration
- Today the arcade hosts the Tourist Office and Roman and medieval artefacts;
- On the raised floors exhibition spaces for contemporary art exhibitions



L'edificio del 1291:
vista assonometria



Location: in the historic centre of the village of Cannobio

Remnants:

A palace consisting of two buildings from different eras:

- The broletto, which has the characteristics of 13th-century Lombard municipal palaces, with a rectangular floor plan and two floors above a barrel-vaulted portico;
- A compartment connecting with the civic tower

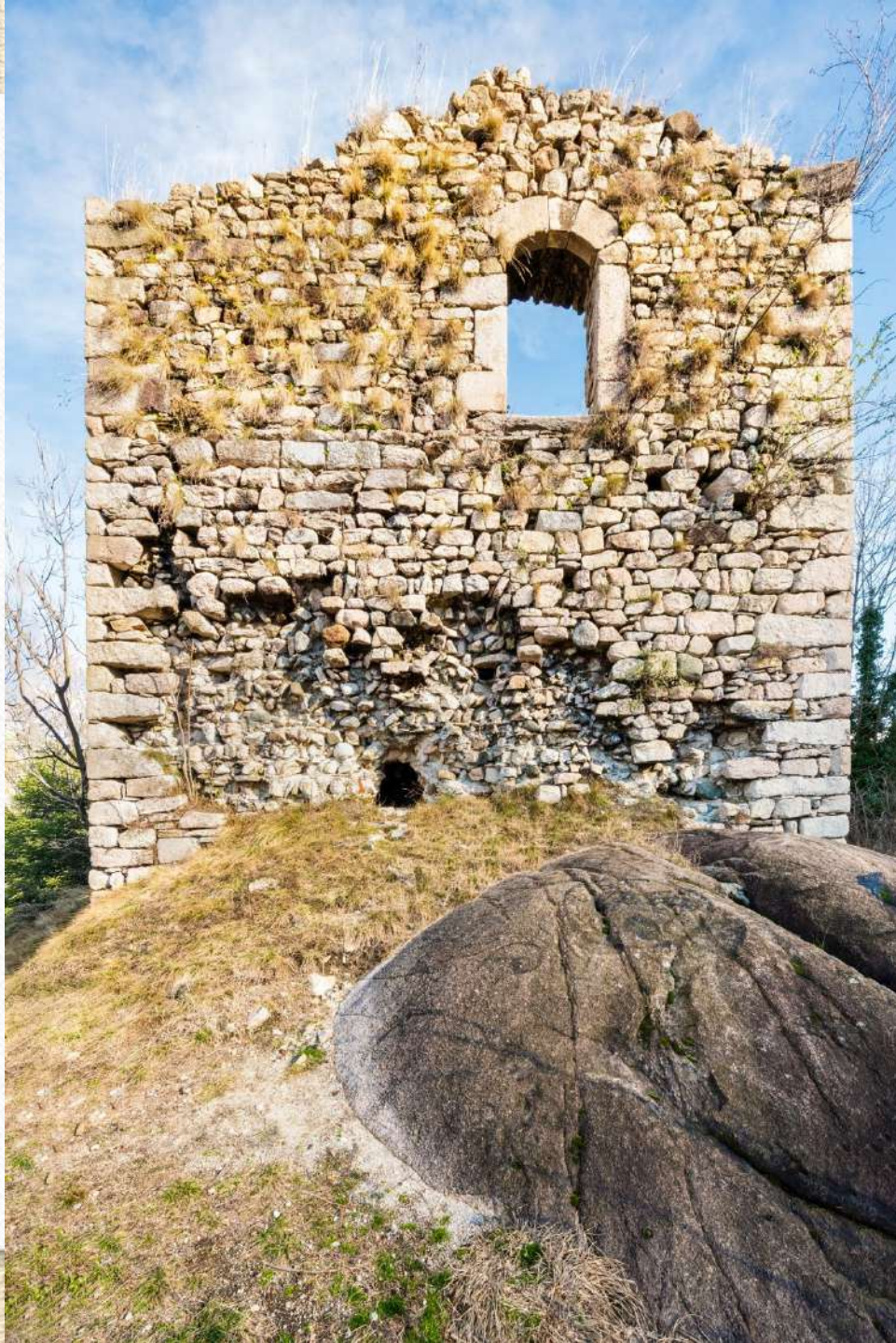
Use: tourist visit – Art exhibitions

Info: +39 0323 71 212 info@turismocannobio.it
www.turismocannobio.it

Torre di Feriolo (Baveno)

The tower overlooking the granite quarries





- Tower dating from the 12th-13th century
- Renovated in the second half of the 15th century by Ludovico il Moro
- For its strategic position with gun emplacements as part of the works for the so-called 'Cadorna Line' during the First World War



Location: on a rise surrounded by the slopes of Mottarone with its pink granite quarries and overlooking Lake Maggiore

Remnants:

- Central tower made of pink and white granite blocks, reaching a height of 9 m. Inside, the chimney space is still recognisable
- Remains of the enclosure walls, which originally must have consisted of two circles

Use: excursion

Info: +39 0323 914632 info@bavenoturismo.it www.bavenoturismo.it

Castello del Motto (Gravellona Toce)

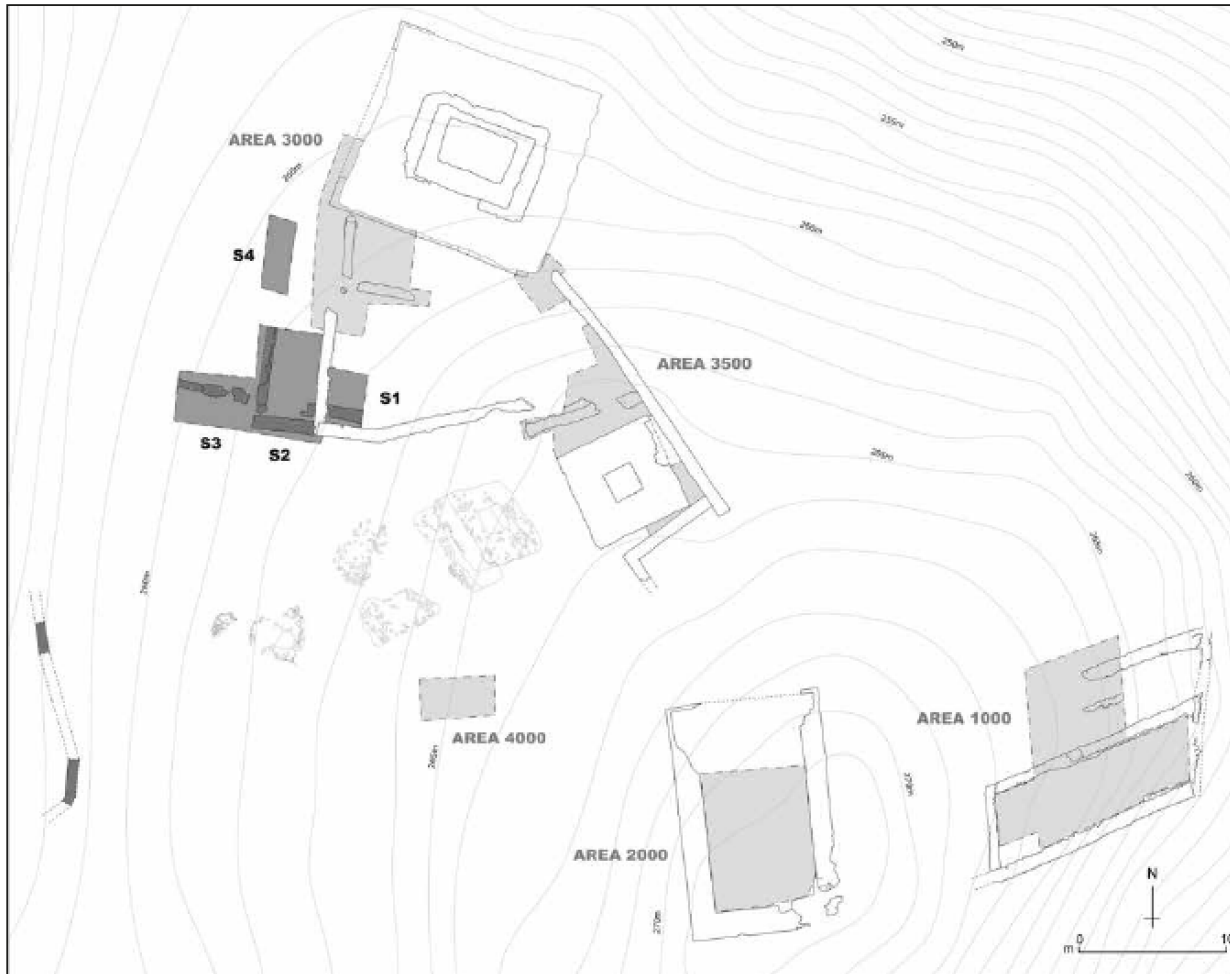
Archaeology of a thousand-year-old fortification



'According to tradition, the Counts of Cerro are said to have been the builders of this fort where they used to retreat and gather prey gathered in the plains and enjoy it. The many treasure hunters have been rummaging through all the caves of this mountain to find some riches, and not a few are believed to have already discovered various treasures, while others remain hidden.'

(CASALIS G., *Dizionario geografico-storico-statistico-commerciale di S.M. il Re di Sardegna*, Torino 1833-36)





- 10th century: wooden structures
- 11th-12th century: first structures in durable material (in particular an outer enclosure and a keep). The first written mention of the Castrum Gravallone by 1028 Riccardo, son of the late Riccardo infra castrum Gravallone liberated his handmaiden Griberga
- 13th century: important building activity with the erection of a large basement with tower and palatium on top of the hill
- 14th century: destruction of the fortification (believed to coincide with the Visconti advance into our territories in 1363)
- Since 2016, archaeological excavation campaigns by the University of Turin



Fig. 159. Gravellona Toce. *Castrum Gravallone*. Area 3500: panoramica da nord dell'edificio B (periodo II, fase A); sullo sfondo il muro E, sulla sinistra il muro D e in primo piano l'usm 3532 (foto A. Vandelli).

Remains of the castle after the archaeological excavation



Fig. 135. Gravellona Toce. *Castrum Gravallone*. Area 2000: modello 3D del fodero di daga (elab. A. Vandelli).

Finding: Sheath of a dagger



Location: a rocky spur overlooking Baraggia at an altitude of 325 m with a wide view over the Toce valley and the entrance to the Ossola, the Strona valley and the western gulf of Lake Maggiore.

Remains: the complex comprises several ruined structures, including two towers, wall elements, a palace or keep and other buildings, including a basement cistern

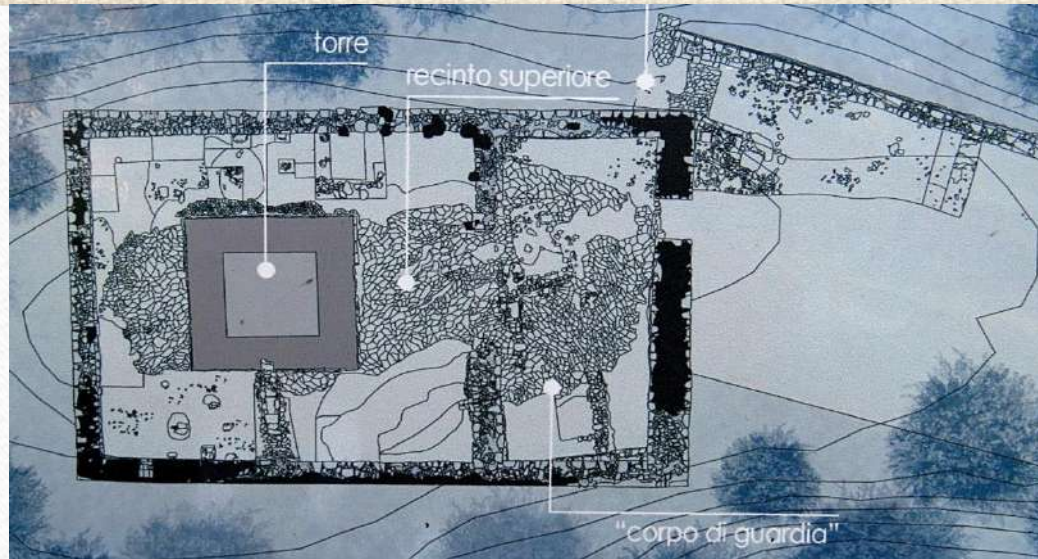
Use: excursion

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Torre di Buccione (Orta San Giulio)

Symbol of the proud independence of Riviera di San Giulio





- First mentioned in a document from 1200.
- Probably built by the Counts of Castello, it was later owned by the bishops of Novara
- A belfry was added to the top of the tower in the 14th century, in which a bell was placed to warn of dangers.
- Since 1991, the hill has been a Protected Nature Reserve.

Location: on the hill overlooking Lake Orta in a splendid panoramic position.

Remains: a construction of square stone blocks rising to a height of 23 metres, divided into five storeys and culminating in a covered crenellated cell.

Use: excursion, tourist visit

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Castello Visconteo e Rocca (Vogogna)

Two castles in one of Italy's most beautiful villages





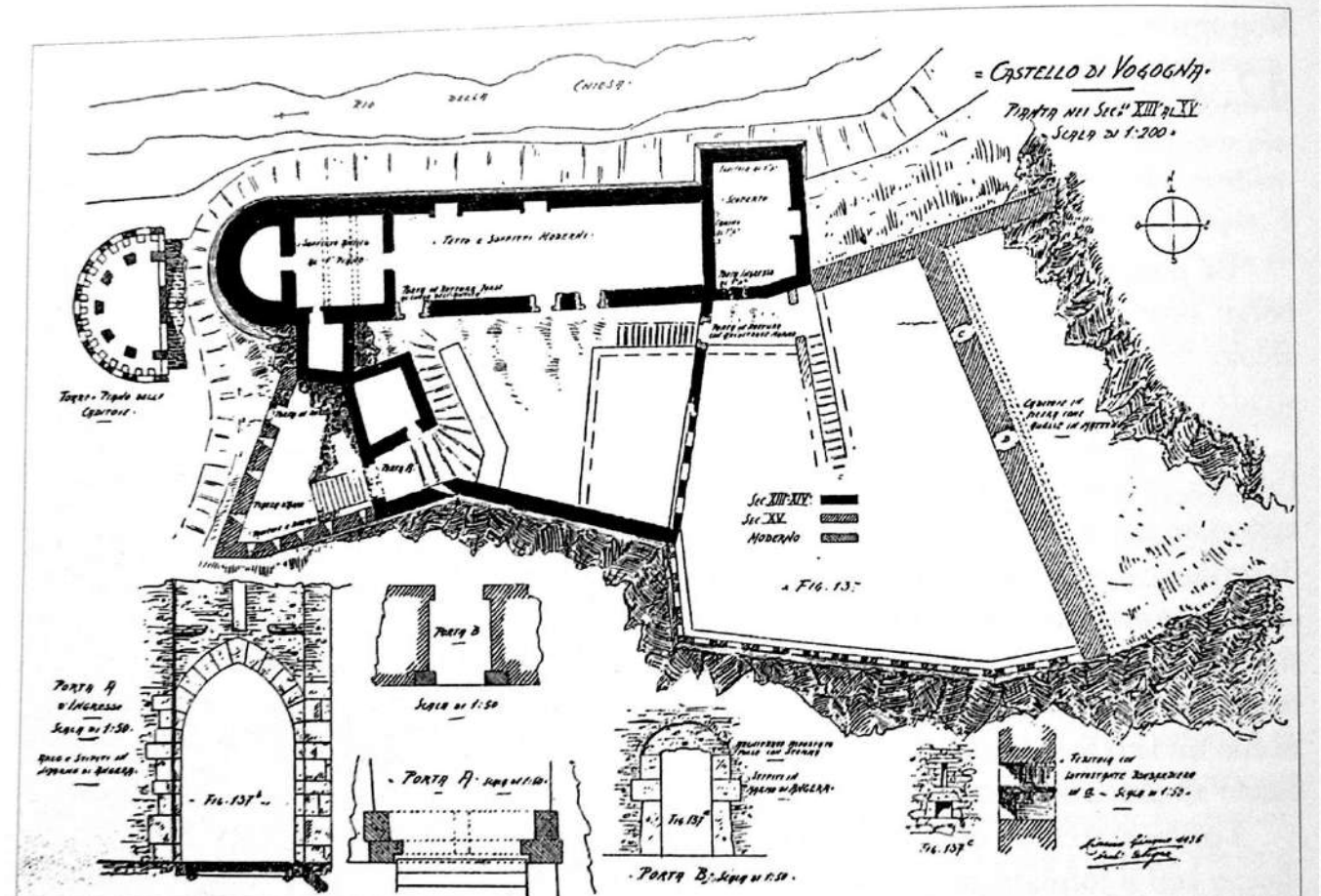
- The **Rocca** is the oldest fortification in Vogogna (11th-12th century);
- Destruction by the Swiss from the Valais during raids in the 15th century and subsequent abandonment
- The **Castello Visconteo** was built from 1348 at the behest of Giovanni Visconti, Bishop of Novara and Duke of Milan.
- It later passed to the Borromeo family and was a military and political centre for the lower Ossola until 1798, when it became the property of the municipality, which used it as a prison (until 1914).
- It then fell into neglect until 1990 when it was restored for tourist and cultural use.
- Today, the castle houses museum spaces for medieval archaeology and other thematic exhibitions.

Location: it dominates the village of Vogogna and was incorporated into the system of perimeter walls that enclosed it.

Remnants:

The complex consists of: - A long rectangular structure built between two towers, one with a semicircular plan and the other with a polygonal shape:

A mighty wall with an irregular plan, divided into three sectors



The archaeological hall in Vogogna Castle



Use: tourist visit - Museum



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www.castellodivogogna.it

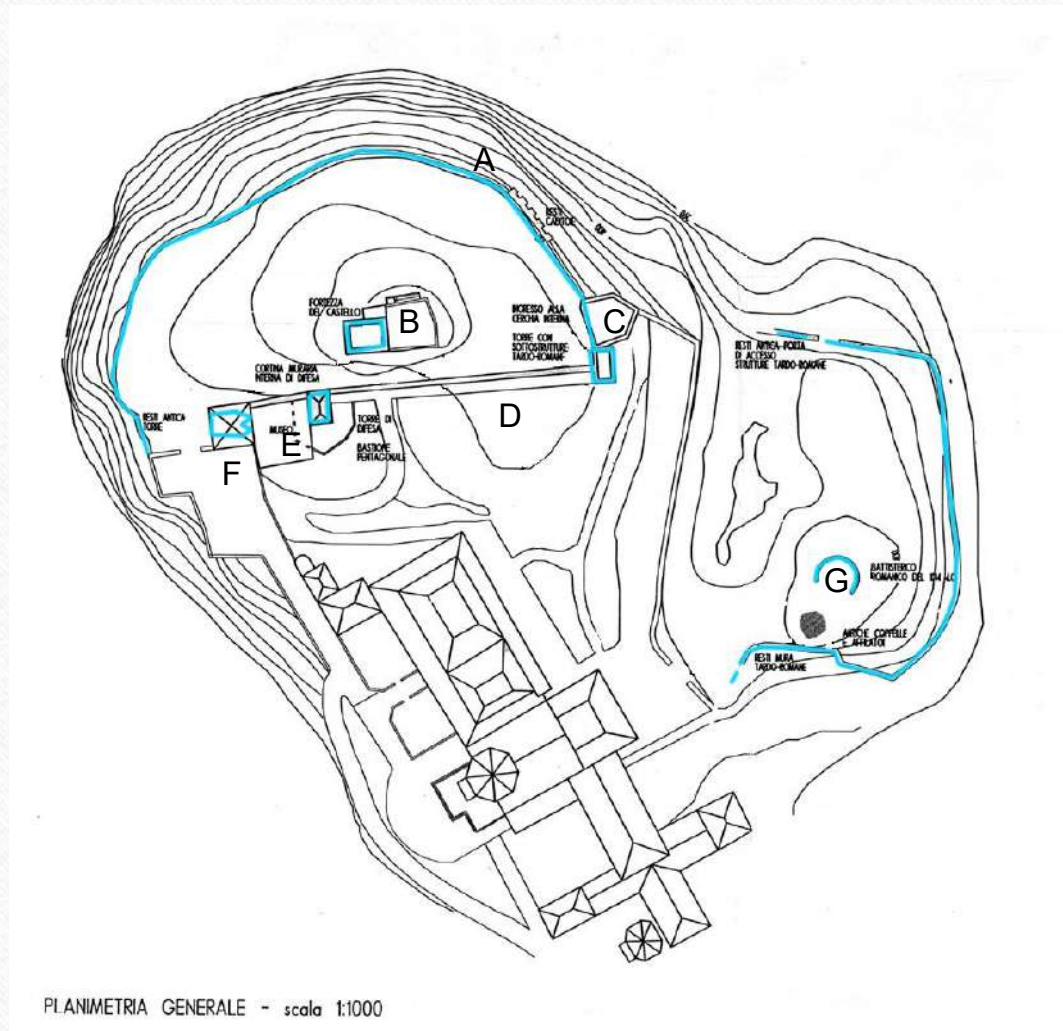
Castello di Mattarella (Domodossola)

A bastion of history and spirituality





- 539 A.D. date of an artefact found on the Mattarella Hill (Christian funerary epigraph)
- Longobard period (8th century) an early wooden castle-enclosure
- 10th century it is referred to as *castrum vetus* (old castle)
- 1014 the castle is mentioned for the first time in a document in which Emperor Henry of Saxony assigned it to the Bishop of Novara
- 1416 it was damaged by the Valaisans in one of their attempts to conquer the Ossola, then it was abandoned
- 1656 construction of a devotional route dedicated to the Passion of Christ (Sacro Monte Calvario).
- 1828 convent of the religious order founded by Antonio Rosmini.
- 1991 became a Special Reserve of the Piedmont Region
- 2003 UNESCO World Heritage Site



Remnants

A- defensive walls with battlements and machicolations

B- keep (or donjon)

C- fortified entrance gate

D- walls with a patrol walkway

E- towers

F- chapel / sacred building

G- ruins of circular building, possibly an ancient baptistery or circular tower

The rampart with patrol walkway

Below: the castle and the sacred mountain in an ancient drawing



Use: tourist visit,
excursion

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www.sacrimonti.org/sacromonte-domodossola www.sacromontecalvario.it

City walls with turrets (Domodossola)

The walls surrounding the ancient village, capital of the Ossola





1690, ex voto for a flooding of the Bogna stream depicted Domodossola with the pentagonal walls still complete

- 1303 the walls were built at the behest of the Bishops of Novara, as a defence of the village against the constant invasions from the Valais.
- The walls were periodically renovated over the centuries also due to the damage suffered by the Bogna floods.
- Archaeological excavations have documented their defensive function at least until the 16th century.
- In the Napoleonic era, with the construction of the Simplon carriage road (1805), a large part of the walls and gates were dismantled to allow the passage of carriages.

Remnants



- Some sections of the walls along Via Canuto, Via Monte Grappa and Via Facchinetti, equipped with patrol walkways and shelters with loopholes, crowned with Guelph battlements;
- Remains of a corner tower in Via Canuto
- Turret in Via Monte Grappa, which was recently restored and an amphitheatre was created all around it, used for cultural meetings and performances.



Use: external visit Info: + 39 0324 492316 cultura@comune.domodossola.vb.it www.visitossola.it

Torre Ferrerio (Piedimulera)

The Renaissance tower celebrating iron merchants





- Built between 1594 and 1597, as can be seen from an inscription inside.
- Commissioned by the Ferreri family, wealthy iron entrepreneurs, it was used as a customs post for collecting duties, authorised in 1598 by the feudal lord Renato Borromeo.
- It retained this function until 1768, when the duty was abolished by the Savoy government.
- Later used as a warehouse.
- After years of neglect, it was acquired on loan by the Piedimulera municipality for cultural and exhibition purposes and houses the Lithoteca mineralogical museum.

Location: along the 'mulera', the direct route into the Anzasca Valley.

Remnants:

- Structure with elegant Renaissance forms, with a rectangular floor plan
- Rises over five floors totalling 30 metres
- Crowned by a characteristic cusp roof, covered with stone slabs and with pinnacles supporting crosses on the four corners and on the vertex.





Use: excursion; internal visit by reservation only

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www.comune.piedimulera.vb.it

Torre di Battiglio (Vanzone San Carlo)

A bastion of the golden path





- The date and reason for construction are unknown.

- It is speculated that it may have been built by local squires as a refuge or as a place to guard the road and collect tolls.

- The analysis of the masonry carried out during the restoration work promoted by the municipality points towards a dating to the Middle Ages (12th-13th century).

The historian Giovan Battista Fantonetti in a publication of 1846 mentions an architrave with the date 1408.

Folk legends relate it to the family of the powerful ducal leader Facino Cane (1360-1412), who is said to have run mines, mined gold and minted money in the valley.

The tower, which was restored in 2011 with the renovation of the top floor and roof, now hosts temporary exhibitions and events.

Location: the tower stands isolated in a strategic position by the Anza torrent along the ancient Anzasca Valley ascent route, known as Stra' Granda.

Remnants:

Approximately 15 metres high, it has a square plan with masonry made of local squared stones, pebbles and rubble.

It is spread over four floors.

Three doors communicated with the outside, some of them elevated and accessible by retractable ladders, while the loopholes indicate a defence function.

Use: excursion

Info: +39 0324 828804 info@comune.vanzoneconsancarlo.vb.it
www.comune.vanzoneconsancarlo.vb.it



Torre di Roldo (Montecrestese)

The Gallic temple that became a tower





Location: The Torre di Roldo, also known as the Torre dei Picchi from the name of a family of local squires, is located on a rocky, south-facing spur with excellent sun exposure and a wide view of the valley below.

Remnants:

A quadrangular, dry-stone turret, the result of the elevation of an earlier building with a pitched roof and rafters.

The oldest part, founded directly on the rock, is a small cell with an internal vaulted roof and a window in the centre of the south side with Crevola marble jambs. Its small size, fine finish and southern exposure have allowed this room to be interpreted as a Gallo-Roman temple dedicated to a solar deity and to be dated, by comparison, to the 1st-4th centuries AD.



3D reconstruction of the Gallic temple



At the winter solstice, light enters the cell through the only window



The elevation in the form of a tower may have been made in the fully medieval period (12th-14th century).

The upper part was accessed by an external staircase, which has now disappeared.

Both the small size of the upper room and the absence of defensive systems suggest that the tower was used as a shelter and for observation and sighting purposes.

Use: excursion

Info: +39 0324 232883
prolocomontecrestese@gmail.com
www.promontecrestese.it

Torre di Varzo

A tall tower to guard trade traffic towards Simplon





- A first tower must have already existed in the 14th century, as it is documented in the Statutes of Varzo of 1321;
- It was refurbished in 1571 and two more buildings were added by the Della Torre family, as recalled by an inscription
- The tower is now owned by the municipality of Varzo, which has restored it and adapted it as a space for cultural activities.



Location: located in the historic centre of Varzo

Remains: massive quadrangular building rising five storeys high, the last of which is an attic lit by large openings on four sides, reaching a total height of about 14.5 metres.

The ground floor is divided into two parts: a vaulted public passageway and a closed room used as a cellar for the adjacent trattoria, which forms a single body with the tower.

The trattoria was once a tavern, a 'stopover' where tolls were paid and the headquarters of the guild of horsemen, who managed the transport of goods across the Simplon.

Use: excursion

Info: +39 0324 7001 municipio@comune.varzo.vb.it
www.comune.varzo.vb.it

Casaforte Schtei Hüs (Formazza)

A fortified house at high altitude to tell centuries of Walser culture





The Casa Forte was built by the wealthy merchant and notary Antonio Zur Schmitten in 1569 as his own seat - as Ammano - and as a warehouse and commercial control point along the route to the Valais (Gries Pass) and Ticino (San Giacomo Pass or Valdolgia Mountain).

Today, it houses an ethnographic museum of Walser culture and a small but important collection of sacred wood carvings of the German school from the 15th-16th centuries.





Use: tourist visit – Museum (seasonal opening)

Location: the Casa Forte or Schtei Hüs (stone house), located at an altitude of 1274 metres, is the highest fortification in the Ossola Valley.

Remnants: The building, which rises three storeys plus an attic, on the main front still retains the iron rings to which the beasts of burden were tied.

The entrance was defended by a bertesca (a protruding structure from which materials could be thrown down).

On the ground floor, one room was used as a warehouse, another as a prison.

On the first floor, a heated room was the meeting place of the Ammano (head of the Walser community) and his councillors. There were also residential rooms, including a kitchen with a monumental fireplace.

Info: +39 0324 634346 formazza@walser.it
www.valformazza.it

Barricade of the Croveo pass (Baceno)

The ducal wall defending the Alpine passes





The barricade was set up by the Duchy of Milan from 1434 onwards to control access from the north, both as a defence against the frequent incursions of the Swiss from the Valais, and as a toll collection point for the merchant caravans about to cross the Bocchetta d'Arbola to get to the rich markets of central Switzerland.

The barricade was reinforced by Ludovico il Moro after 1487, when with the Battle of Crevola, yet another invasion from Switzerland was repelled.



Location: The remains of the barricade, or 'antemurale', can be found along the mountain road to Alpe Devero, between the hamlets of Croveo and Goglio, at 'al Passo'.

Remnants: The structure consists of a gate with a three-storey square tower and guard room. The portal could be barred with wooden portcullises to block the passage and collect tolls.

Starting from the tower, a curtain wall, no longer preserved, was built up the ridge to a sheer rock face.

Use: excursion

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Castellaccio di Brovello



Castello di Massino Visconti



Mura di Arona



Porta e mura di Omegna



Castello Morigia - Frino



Torre di Cavandone



Castello di Cerro - Gravellona



Torre della Darbia - Ameno



Torre della Guardia - Ornavasso



Castello del Sasso - Mergozzo



Castello di Montorfano



Torre di Cimamulera



Borgaccio – Pieve Vergonte



Torre di Cengio – Pieve Vergonte



Castello di Beura



Torre di Bulfer - Vogogna



Casaforte di Lancino - Bannio



Castello di Trontano



Torre Lossetti - Cardezza



Torre Ferrari - Beura



Torre di Masera



Torre campanaria - Trontano



Torre di Creggio – Trontano



Torre di Ardignaga - Caddo



Torre di Veglio - Pontemaglio



Torre di Rambolone - Bognanco



Castelluccio - Montecrestese



Castello di Lomese - Montecrestese



Torre di Rido - Crevoladossola



Torre di Cristo - Premia



Torre di Rondola - Crodo



Castello di Rencio - Crodo



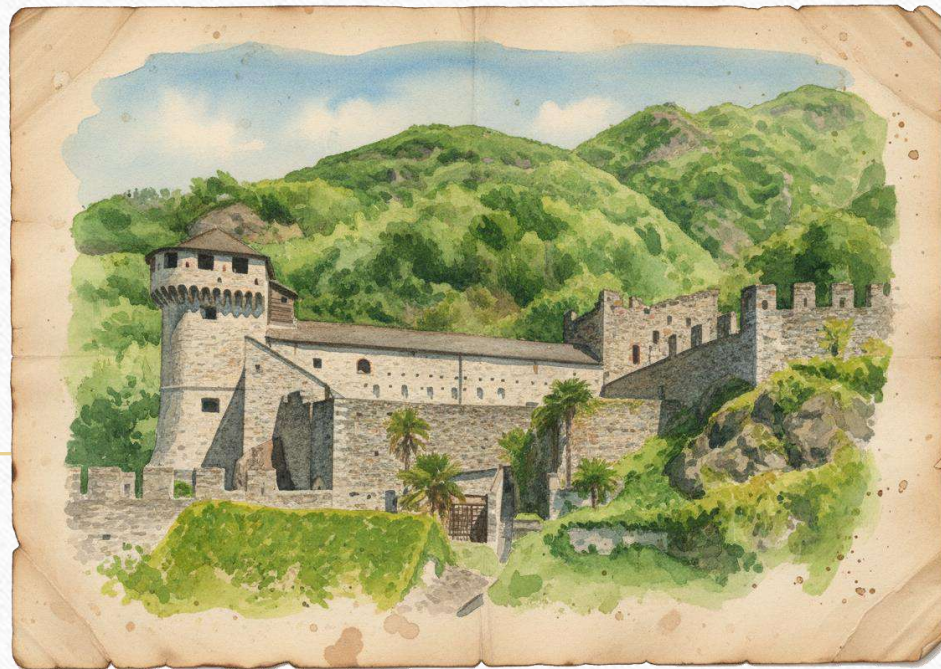
Castello di Vallaro - Villette



Torre Simonis — Santa Maria M.



Welcome to a place where time does not pass but is renewed: from the ancient view defending the territory to the contemporary view of pure contemplation!



Project 'CASTLES, TOWERS AND WALLS. Places of ancient gazes on lakes and mountains' by the ATL Distretto Turistico dei Laghi
Regional Law No. 14/2016 Art. 21 - Annuality 2025/2026

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