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Veneto
Tra la terra e il cielo

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TERME EUGANEE

History.

In 602 the Byzantine *castrum Mons Silicis* fell to the hands of the Lombard king, Agilulf, as reported by Paolo Diacono in his *Historia Longobardorum*, the first written account of the area. Previously a neo-Aeneolithic (fourth-third millennium BC),



Bronze Age (second millennium BC) and Roman settlement, under the Lombards and Franks, Monselice was a major military stronghold and administrative center controlling a vast territory including the Adige River and the Euganean Hills

(Colli Euganei). It became a free city-state in the mid-12th century and in 1237 was taken by Ezzelino III da Romano, deputy of Emperor Frederick II of Swabia for the area around Venice. The tyrant Ezzelino ordered extensive fortification works and used this area as his base from which





to wage violent military campaigns against Padua, Este and nearby castles. It was conquered in 1338 by the da Carrara noble family of Padua and, following an enervating siege lasting a full year, in 1405 it became part of the Serenissima Republic. The long and prosperous Venetian period saw the gradual decline of its military role and the flowering

of local agriculture, industry (quarrying and spinning) and commerce, thanks to extensive waterway transport. Stone quarrying in the hill of the Rocca and Mount Ricco marked the industrial growth of the town which reached its height in the 1700s. In 1722, a large load of trachyte from Monselice was used to pave Piazza San Marco in Venice.



Town Center.

Itinerary: Piazza Mazzini, Via del Santuario, Via delle Sette Chiese, Vicolo Scalone, Via San Martino, Via Carboni, Via San Luigi.

The tour of the city starts from Piazza Mazzini, closed on its western side by a long section of the old walls built by the da Carrara family and includes the 13th century *Torre Civica* (Clock Tower). Facing it is the start of Via del Santuario leading to the Colle della Rocca (Citadel Hill). On the left is the Chiesa di San Paolo (St. Paul's Church). In its crypt is a 13th century fresco showing St. Francis of Assisi, the oldest depiction of this saint in the Veneto region.



On the right is the former Monte di Pietà mansion, a building dating from the 15th century with a graceful 17th century *loggetta* with Doric columns. Taking the Via del Santuario you reach the Castello (Castle), a fortress dating from the late Middle Ages



re-built by Ezzelino III da Romano in the 13th century and enlarged by the da Carrara family. It was transformed into a residence by the Marcello Venetian noble family and took on its current appearance at the end of the 1400s. In 1942, it was made a museum by Count Vittorio Cini who added a rich collection of arms, furniture and furnishings. In the 16th century library that looks out onto Via del Santuario, the *Antiquarium Longobardo* houses important archeological finds from the Lombard necropolis discovered on the Citadel Hill. Continuing the ascent is the *Villa Nani-Mocenigo*, a splendid late-Renaissance building with an imposing stairway in perspective. Allegorical statues of dwarves embellish the outer wall, a clear allusion to the noble family that commissioned its construction. Facing the villa on the other side of the street are the old stables.





Just beyond is the old Pieve di Santa Giustina (also known as the “old cathedral”) with its late-Romanesque architecture and gothic decorative elements. It was consecrated in 1256 and houses a number of important works of art, including the Madonna dell’umiltà (Our Lady of Humility) and a 15th-century polyptych of the Venetian school. Among the illustrious rectors of the church was also the great Italian poet, Petrarch. Pass through the doorway of the “count’s lions” to reach the wide panorama of the rotonda. The Porta Romana (Roman or Holy Door), erected in 1651, marks the entry to the sanctified area of the Santuario Giubilare delle Sette Chiese (Jubilee Sanctuary of the Seven Churches), designed by Vincenzo Scamozzi on commission from the Duodo Venetian noble family who were ambassadors from the Serenissima Republic to the Holy See. A 1605 papal bull of Paul V grants the Sanctuary the same indulgences given

the faithful during pilgrimages to the seven major basilicas in Rome. Monselice is the only example of this particular form of Roman devotion as is also noted in the inscription on the Holy Door: *Romanis basilicis pares.*

The chapels house altar-pieces from the workshop of Palma the Younger. At the top of the route is the elegant group of buildings making up Villa Duodo. To the right is the oldest structure dating from the early 1600s, designed by Vincenzo Scamozzi, while the front wing with its bas relief was added by Andrea Tirali in 1740. To the left is the spectacular



Exedra dedicated to St. Francis de Sales, the Spanish Jesuit missionary who stayed in Monselice in 1537 on the eve of departure on his long trip to the Far East. On the right next to the villa is the oratory of San Giorgio, frescoed by Tommaso Sandrini and adorned with

a remarkable altar-piece with inlaid marble and semi-precious stones from the Corberelli workshop. The transfer of Christian martyrs from the catacombs in Rome starting in 1651 enhanced the holiness of the oratory. Among these is St. Valentine, celebrated on 14 February with the popular ceremony to bless the “gold key” given to children to protect them from epilepsy. On the left of the exedra a stairway and path lead to the top of the hill (150 m) dominated by the imposing Mastio Federiciano, known as the “Tower”, ordered by Frederick II of Swabia who, on his visit to Monselice in 1239, designated it the *special imperial* chamber. On the northern side of the hill of the Citadel, covered in thick vegetation, is the secluded Chiesa di San Tommaso (St. Thomas’ Church) that contains significant sections of late 13th century frescoes. Returning to the “old cathedral” and descending along Vicolo Scalone, we reach the Chiesa di San Martino (St. Martin’s Church), the center of this neighborhood

of the same name. It was built in the 1700s on the original church dating from the 10th century. On Via Carboni below is Ca' Bertana, a merchant's house dating from the 15th century in Lombardesque style with three archways and portico and its façade embellished with an elegant central four-lights window decorated in soft Nanto stone. On the way back up to Piazza Mazzini is the Chiesa di Santo Stefano (St. Stephen's Church), dating from the 13th-14th century, as well as Ca' Paradisi-Capodivacca in Via San Luigi, a wonderful example of 15th-century Paduan architecture

with an arched, round, 3-lancet window decorated with palmettes. Continuing along Via Garibaldi and Via San Giacomo, you reach the Convento di San Giacomo (St. James Monastery), built in 1162 as a hospital for the poor and pilgrims, later transformed into a Benedictine monastery and, starting in 1677, home of a community of the Franciscan Order of Little Brothers. It houses a small but interesting missionary museum with exhibits taken from missions in the Far East. The church has an excellent cycle of works by Flemish painter Michele Desubleo as well as works by Jacopo Palma the Younger and Gianbattista Maganza.



Villas along the Bisatto Canal.

Starting in the 16th century, along major river tributaries between Venice and its inland territory,



the Venetian noble families built sumptuous country homes. Dating from this period are also the Monselice villas along the Bisatto Canal that flows from Padua to Este, passing through Monselice. Near the Grola Bridge is the Villa Contarini with its expansive 18th-century façade, typical of the Venetian architectural style. Taking the left bank of the canal north, you reach Villa Pisani (16th century) in Palladian style. Also on the left of the canal, but much further north at Rivella is Villa Emo that recalls the best of Palladian architecture, especially in its imposing front pillars and geometric layout of its extensive Italian-style garden.

Trip to Monte Ricco (Mount Ricco).

From the train station:
Via Sottomonte, Via Monte Ricco.

Taking the shady, paved road up for approx. 30 minutes you reach the so-called "red house" (250 m) where a dirt path starts that leads to the panoramic exedra dominated by the statue of Hercules. Facing is the wide stairway up to the Eremo di Santa Domenica (Monastery of Saint Domenica) (329 m). With the stairway on your right, a short detour (1.7 km) leads to Monte Castello.



At the top of the stairway near the monastery begins the main path that circles the entire mountain. The total distance of the two paths is 5 km (2-3 hours) with few sloped sections. This itinerary offers a stupendous panoramic view of the Euganean Hills and the old town of Monselice below. Among the remaining traces of the area's past quarrying activity are a number of species of trees including oak, chestnut, holm-oak, arbutus berry and olive, as well as local plants and flowers. On clear days, the Adriatic Sea is visible to the east and the Apennine Mountains around Bologna to the south.



Third Sunday.

Spectacular parade of over one thousand participants in costume through the streets of the town; in the afternoon, Quintain tournament.

Fiera dei Santi (Fair of All Saints) 1-2 November.
An event held at the beginning of November whose roots date back centuries to the Middle Ages. It includes the Amusement Park in the fairgrounds, the agricultural market and a vast market that occupies all the streets and squares of the old town center.

Major Events.

Saint Valentine: 14 February.
Blessing and consignment of the gold key at the Oratorio di San Giorgio.

Rocca in fiore (Citadel in Bloom):
third Sunday in May.
Major exhibition and fair of professional flower-arrangers and floral arrangements.

Giostra della Rocca (Joust at the Citadel): second and third weekends in September.
Medieval-inspired competition which each year has the nine neighborhoods (contrade) of the town compete in a series of events, culminating in the quintain for the awarding of the "palio".
During the first two weeks of September evening final of chessgame with live chessmen and competition of tamburini (drummers).
Second Sunday.
Medieval Market (Piazza Mazzini, Via del Santuario, Castle grounds).
Skill competitions: archery, relay race, millstone.



