



## 2- Locana and the local trades and handcrafts

Locana can be reached by taking the State highway SS 460 , and is only 62 kilometres from Turin. The town is nestled in the centre of a lush green narrow valley of alpine pastures and woods hundreds of years old, at a height of about 600 metres above sea level. Documents dating back to 1185 already mention the locality which has been composed of a large number of tiny villages and hamlets scattered over the vast mountain valley area, since ancient times. Through the centuries right up to the beginning of the last century , the area attracted shepherds, millers, blacksmiths, coal merchants, quarrymen, tinsmiths, small farmers, and chimney sweeps : the humble crafts that made up the poor local mountain economy.

To recall these local trades and crafts, both old and new, a museum has been set up called the” Museo dei Nuovi e degli Antichi Mestieri della Val d’Orco”, housed in the lovely little deconsecrated church of San Francesco. Among other exhibits, there are two which show local examples: a mountain home showing various ways of processing milk, and a city house dating from the beginning of the 20th century to show where the chimney sweeps entered to carry out their work.

Perhaps because this is a trade that has disappeared with modern times, perhaps because of the traditional clothing and hands and face black with soot, but the chimney sweep has remained a romantic fairy tale figure for the general public.

In reality chimney sweeping was a very exhausting job. The sweep would come down from the mountains in winter bringing a child with him, often his son, who was able to climb up the chimney flues because of his small size. Today we would gasp in horror and call it child labour, and indeed it was even then, especially when one considers the danger risks involved and the coal dust that intoxicated their lungs.

The life of the little chimney sweeps is told in a poetic animated show in the Museum, in a series of small scenes that appear one after the other for the surprised delight of children and adults alike.

To demonstrate the new activities in the valley that have replaced the old trades and crafts, is a model of a modern hydroelectrical power plant, as well as an information point on renewable energy, that can be accessed from two computers in the museum. This represents the first stage of a teaching program which ends with a visit to the actual Telecio power plant , located in the National park.

Near the town council offices is the public library, connected with that of nearby Ivrea, and equipped with two internet links. It is named after the writer, Salvator Gotta, one of the most illustrious citizens of the town. Another famous citizen is Giandomenico Serra, a world famous expert in glottology, especially in the fields of onomastics and toponymy.

Like the surrounding villages, most of the houses in Locanao are built of local stone, with the traditional dark slate tile roofing called “lose”. Roofed arcades, open porches and balconies in carved wood, and decorated facades on the buildings form the traditional architectural elements of this region.

Often the narrow winding streets open out onto small piazzas that act as the parvis to the local church. Among these is the Baroque church of San Pietro in Vincoli, rebuilt on the ruins of a far older parish church destroyed by a landslide in 1628, the austere little church of San Rocco and the Sanctuary dedicated to the Virgin( Madonna del Cantellino), where the local feast day is celebrated on the first Sunday in September.

For those looking for a little sport, Locana is can provide football fields, basketball, beach-volley, and tennis courts, and the local bowls field. For those who like open air activities there is a well-equipped area in via Nusiglie for camping and picnics.