



FONDAZIONE BANCA DEL MONTE DI LOMBARDIA

Pavia e la sua provincia



11-the Province of Pavia

The province of Pavia includes, beyond the Pavese which corresponds to its antique countryside, also Lomellina and the Oltrepò, of which was obtained jurisdiction since the 12th century, when Pavia proclaimed itself free municipality.

The Pavese is flat, apart from the San Colombano hillside. It is the water courses that characterize the landscape: the Po and the Ticino to the south, the Lambro to the east and natural and artificial canals dug by man to irrigate the fields and to trade. One of the most evocative places is along the Ticino near Bereguardo, it is the characteristic barge bridge. The same locality deserves a visit for its 1300s Visconteo Castle recently restored.

There are many other antique castles disseminated on the territory: Lardirago, Vidigulfo, Landriano, Villanterio, and Santa Cristina are only a few of the many districts characterized by fortresses and mansions. Of the most notable is without a doubt Belgioioso where in 1300 the Visconti founded a castle which fell under the control of the Barbiano d'Este in the following century. These with time, made of the medieval fortress, a splendid, distinguished residence on which, in 1700, the architect Pollack worked. It is brightened by an Italian style, designed garden, emphasized by statues and a monumental fountain.

Lomellina is level like the Pavese, enchanting especially in spring when the landscape is shattered into a thousand mirrors of the flooded paddy fields. It gets its name from Lumellum, the present Lomello, a small center strategically located at the crossing of the streets for Gallia and the Sempione.

For this reason it was an important settlement since the Roman era, while its extraordinary medieval nucleus formed by the castle, the baptistery and the church of Santa Maria Maggiore probably dates to the Longobardian era.

The two main centres of the Lomellina are Mortara and above all, Vigevano, the most populated and economically developed. Here, side by side, one of the largest castles and one of the most beautiful piazzas of Italy can be admired. The former was wanted by Luchino Visconti in 1345, the latter Ludovico il Moro in 1490. The Sforza probably used Leonardo and Bramante for the planning phase of the piazza, while the construction of the tower of the castle was entrusted to the second.

Fortresses and castles cover all of the Lomellina, so much that an excursion could be organized exclusively for their discovery. Surely it would include those of Cozzo, Sartirana, and Scaldasole, the best preserved and in the case of Cozzo, the still furnished, splendid halls.

Finally the Oltrepò, of which the wavy territory is combed by vineyards, is wedged in the Appenine, between Emilia, Piedmont and Liguria.

It may be the sea currents that blow from the Ligurian sea or those perfumed by the woods, the particular terrain or the mountains that stop the humid air on the plain, anyhow it is certain that this earth has given optimum wines for more than two thousand years.

Broni, with its baroque collegiate of San Pietro; Stradella, famous for its accordions; Casteggio with its antique borough; and Santa Maria of the Versa, known for her sparkling wine. All of these centres, but also the smaller ones that meet each other, bring together with the valuable wines even the antique traces of the past and the natural beauties of the locations. Capital of the Oltrepò is Voghera, placed at the entrance of the Staffora valley. City with a long history, it was also conquered by the Visconti who built there a castle. Remarkable are also its majestic Duomo and the red church of Sant'Ilario.

Continuing toward Varzi, you encounter Salice Terme, the elegant thermal bath station, and a little bit beyond the Nizza Bridge, it is worth the detour, the visit to the abbey of Sant' Alberto of Butrio, built around the year 1000 and custodian to a precious cycle of frescoes.

You arrive then in Varzi, in the high Staffora valley, of a picturesque medieval borough. Here passed the muleteer who transported salt coming from Liguria, a precious good even for the production of exquisite salami.

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