



THE OLD REGINA ROAD IN MENAGGIO

You can find this point of interest in Menaggio - Path 1 - Stage 3

DESCRIPTION

(Ambra Garancini)

The name Via Regina indicates the old route, which following the Western shore of Lake Como, in the Roman times linked Como, and, earlier still, the Milanese plain, with Valchiavenna, whereby, through its natural extension, the Via Francisca, it reached Chiavenna, the “starting base” for the mountain passes towards Rhaetia. Presumably it was created as a connection of the old existing paths to support/link local traffic, subordinately to the more important lake route. The name Regina “Road” (i.e. “strada regia”, main, public paved – *strata* – road) – which was given to it much later on – is documented for the first time in the year 1187. Together, the waterway, i.e. Lake Como, the way of sailors, soldiers and merchants, and the Via or Strada Regina used for local traffic, with parts suitable for vehicles, mule tracks, or pedestrian paths, for centuries constituted a true “Lake Como system”, an articulate network of routes pointing northwards, to the Alpine passes, and southwards, towards Milan, the hub for the Padana Valley, which had Como, the military and commercial centre better linked to Milan, as their barycentre, and the Western shore of Lake Como as their axis, due to the fact that it geographically converged on Como. In the course of centuries the so called Regina Road became increasingly important and during the whole of the Middle Ages it was kept by the lake village communities by virtues of specific Statutes. The road, however, continued to be subordinate to the lake, as the “difficult” morphology of Lake Como banks was an obstacle to its adequate widening. When, starting from the 16th century, the Milanese area passed under Spanish, and, later on, Austrian rule, caused the gradual shift of major traffic to the eastern shore of Lake Como, due to the need of faster connections between the Habsburg Empire and Milan. The “Lake Como system” of the Western shore, which had marked the history of Lake Como territories so deeply, lost its importance once and for all, passing on the baton to the Lecco-Colico axis. At present the old Regina Road is reconstructed and partially and can be partially travelled over, in some sections as the “Lake Como Greenway”. It touches some of the most beautiful landscapes of the lake and it awaits to be adequately enhanced as an important cultural itinerary at European level. It probably entered Menaggio from the South, following what is now via Como, and the first part of via Castellino da Castello, then it ran across via *Strecioun* (called via Ponte Vecchio on a municipal map of the beginning of the past century), passing under the Castle rock, to reach the old bridge at the end of the Sanagra gorge. From here, a rather steep ascent led to Loveno, from where, by the Ghidolda trail, it descended to Nobiallo.