



CHURCH OF S. GIACOMO (ST. JAMES)

You can find this point of interest in Ossuccio - Path 1 - Stage 6

INFORMATION

Location: the church of S. Giacomo is located alongside the old Via Regina, a little south of the hamlet of Spurano di Ossuccio, facing the Comacina Island.

Paving: the old Via Regina, which runs alongside the church, is cobbled in this section; the first five steps connecting it with the small square in front of the entrance are cobbled, too, followed by a green plateau and small surfacing rock, then by another grassy step. The small square in front of the entrance is stone paved. The interior of the church is paved with stone slabs.

Architectural barriers: 4 irregular stone steps, followed by a green plateau with a small surfacing rock and other 2 steps give access to the small paved square in front of the entrance of the church. To enter the church one must cross a low stone threshold.

Access: access is by the façade entrance.

Services: parking available in the area.

Leisure and food: bars and restaurants available in the area.

DESCRIPTION

(Silvia Fasana)

The church of S. Giacomo is a small Romanesque jewel built in undressed Moltrasio stone, located alongside the old Via Regina. It was mentioned for the first time in a deed of gift dated 1169, the *annus horribilis* when the Island was destroyed. Its foundations lie partly on the shore's rock, partly on two arches supported by pillars, the bases of which sink in the lake waters. The simple gabled façade is decorated with a series of small arches and has two round windows and one shaped as a Latin cross. The bell gable with two fornices which rises from the front tympanum, at the back of the church, was probably built in the 14th century. From the second half of the 20th century access to the church is exclusively through the portal which opens on the façade, but probably in origin the main entrance was at the side, alongside the Regina Road, now partially cladded and reduced to a window. This opening is surmounted by a 17th century fresco on a red background, depicting Saint James the Greater who, with his pilgrim's staff, seems to be still watching over travellers. Ambra Garancini and Silvia Fasana write in their book *Sui passi dell'anima. Luoghi della devozione nel territorio lariointelvese*: «In actual fact the church is also dedicated to the apostle Saint Philip, and this has led to believe that in origin the saint to whom it was jointly dedicated was the apostle James the Minor. Philip and James the Minor are always worshipped together, a san aid and defence in times of great affliction. However, nowadays the Saint who is actually worshipped in the small church is James the Greater, the "Santiago" who made Compostela the destination of genuine pilgrims. If a "transfer" of worship between James the Minor and James the Greater has truly taken place, we like to think that it was due to the propagation in our area, too, of the pious practice of the Jacobean pilgrimage, the real "backbone" of Christian Europe's pilgrimage routes. If things did happen this way, the "transfer" would, on the other hand, demonstrate the importance of the Lake Como artery as a pilgrimage route». The interior, with a single nave and semicircular apse, is decorated by fragments of interesting paintings. The older group includes, on the right wall, the figure of a *Man in Prayer* and a large *Saint Christopher*, patron of pilgrims, dated back to the first or second decade after the year Thousand, of Ottonian taste, drawing inspiration from the Roman-Imperial figurative tradition. This last fresco is placed right in front of the side door, well visible by travellers who walked along the Via Regina. On the left wall, the oldest paintings are arranged in two registers: in the upper register, starting from the presbytery (here a niche hosts a painting of the *Last Supper*), one can see *The Washing of the Feet*, *Jesus in the Olive Grove*, *The Capture of Jesus*, *Jesus Mocked*; in the lower register, under the *Last Supper*, there is a representation of what seems to be a *Deposition*, then, continuing along the wall, *The Hospitality of Abraham and Sarah at the Oaks of Mamre* and *The Original Sin*. These paintings from the Middle Ages are side by side with later works of art: on the right wall, a sweet *Our Lady with the Child*, *Saint Jerome* and *Saint Simon of Trent*, from the 15th century; on the left wall a 14th century *Saint Michael Weighing Souls*, and a *Saint Anthony Abbot* from the second half of the 16th century.

The church also hosts a fine wooden altarpiece of *Our Lady of Loreto*, most likely dating back to the end of the 15th century.