



## THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN

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

### DESCRIPTION

(Drawn from S. Fasana, A. Garancini, *Sui passi dell'anima. Luoghi della devozione nel territorio lariointelvese*, Comunità Montana Lario Intelvese, Bellavite Editore, Missaglia 2009)

Legend has it that in 1435 a mysterious pilgrim who arrived in Ossuccio amidst calamitous weather phenomena, led a villager to the Island. Showing him a walnut tree, he told him that by digging under it he would find the church and altar of St. John the Baptist, and if he and his fellow villagers were to go back to the Island every year for a pious pilgrimage on Saint John's day - taking with them the holy relics and celebrating Mass - they would be preserved from other calamities. And so they did. The villagers dug where they were told to and found what was promised to them. The church of S. Giovanni, recovered in such a miraculous manner, was rebuilt, and, in the 17th century, renovated in the shape that one can still see today; and, since 1600, the yearly Mass is celebrated as was originally required. Calamitous events – they say – happened only when people forgot to keep the vow. The procession took place with boats adorned with flowers, one of which carried the urn with the sacred relics of the Wood of the Holy Cross and the Martyr Saints which Abundius is believed to have donated to the Island church. The procession was accompanied on the Island by various “tableaux vivants” of a sacred representation dedicated to the story of St. John. The feast is still held nowadays, with a great participation of the faithful: a line of boats adorned with flowers, which carry the band, the Authorities, the Archpriest, the priests, the figurants dressed in historical costumes, and the Priors of the Brotherhood, land on the Island on the morning of the Sunday nearest to St. John's day, taking with them the holy relics so as to renew the old vow. A more recently introduced tradition is the fireworks display held on the preceding evening inspired by the fire which set the Island ablaze in 1169. In 2009, on the occasion of the feast, the church of S. Giovanni was reconsecrated and returned to the faithful for worship, after five years of excavations and restoration work. The conditions of the church were such that for many years the annual Mass could not be celebrated there, but “in open air” at the ruins of S. Eufemia. The restoration work has enhanced the importance of the old apse and the relevant altar, a sign of how heartfelt is the worship of St. John and the unchanged sacred role of the Comacina Island.