



SANTUARIO DELLA BEATA VERGINE DEL SOCCORSO (SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF HELP) AND SACRO MONTE (SACRED MOUNT)

You can find this point of interest in Ossuccio - Path 1 - Stage 4

This point of interest is not located along the itinerary but can be admired from a panoramic point on the Island's crest

DESCRIPTION

(Silvia Fasana)

On the slopes of the hill overlooking the built-up area of Ossuccio stands the Santuario della Beata Vergine del Soccorso (Shrine of Our Lady of Help).

According to local tradition, the worship of Our Lady is linked to the discovery of an old white marble statue of Mary, probably dating back the 14th century, by a deaf and dumb girl, who immediately was healed. A first small chapel was erected here, then enlarged in the 16th century, and later modified and embellished as we can see it today. The Shrine was consecrated in 1699 by bishop Bonesana; nowadays this venerated statue of Our Lady lies in a 19th century chapel on the left handside. Another image of Our Lady, this time with the Child, is worshipped in the Shrine: it is a fresco made in 1501 depicting the *Virgin with Saint Euphemia*, to whom the Parish Church of the Island is dedicated, now partially hidden by the decoration of the Baroque altar on the left wall. The 18th century stuccoes and frescoes in the vault are the work, respectively, of Giovanni Battista Muttoni and Salvatore Pozzi, both from Puria, in Valsolda. A large 19th century painting by Francesco Grandi depicting *Saint Joseph*, donated by Pope John XXIII in 1964, adorns the altar of the chapel of Saint Francis and Saint Anthony, which opens onto the right handside of the Shrine. The belfry, perched over the valley, was completed in 1719, twenty years in the making, based on a plan drawn up by architect Giovan Battista Bianchi.

From the square, one can enjoy a marvellous panoramic view of the lake's body of water, known as *Zoca de l'oli (Oil basin)*, that sweeps from the Comacina Island and the small peninsula of Balbianello, to Tremezzo, Bellagio and Varenna; along the horizon rise the Grigna Mountains, Mount San Primo, and, behind these, the peaks of the Alps.

The Shrine is preceded by a sacred path, originating from the old hamlet of Molgisio (part of the territory of Lenno), flanked by fourteen Baroque chapels visually narrating the Mysteries of the Rosary (the fifteenth is represented on the Shrine's main altar). The path was started by Franciscan monks Lorenzo Serenato and Timoteo Snider, the latter probably with an important, albeit not clearly definable, role in its design, too. The chapels were built for the most part in the second half of the 17th century through the generosity of wealthy local families and the work of many artists, including sculptor Agostino Silva from Morbio and painter Giovanni Paolo Recchi from Como. The chapels, along with the Shrine, constitute a very worthy example of Sacred mount, one of the nine existing at the foot of the Alps included in UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2003.