



“GIORGIO ACHERMANN” GEOLOGICAL TRAIL

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

INFORMATION

Location: the “Giorgio Achermann” Geological Trail runs along the Ravella stream from Gajum to Terz’Alpe.

Paving: the first section of the trail, up to the bridge under the Shrine of San Miro al monte, is cobbled, subsequently turning into a dirt track.

Architectural barriers: information on accessibility of the first section, i.e. the part of the trail included in our itinerary, is available in the description of Stage 4.

Access: the Geological Trail starts at Gajum.

Services: parking available in the area, excluding on Sundays and public holidays during the summer season, when via Gajum is closed to the traffic and car park access is not possible.

Leisure and food: bar-restaurant-hotel in Gajum. The Gajum area is equipped with benches and stone tables for anyone wishing a break.

DESCRIPTION

(Silvia Fasana)

This is a journey in the geological history of our territory, amidst the green coloured woods and meadows, at the heart of the so-called Triangolo Lariano (a triangle-shaped area between the two branches of Lake Como). We are talking of the Ravella Valley Geological Trail in Canzo, one of the first and most popular themed walking trails of the Prealps, set up in the early 80s of the last century by the Gruppo Naturalistico della Brianza (*Brianza Naturalist Society*) to acquaint people with some of the most interesting geological aspects of the area. The track was subject to extraordinary maintenance in 2003, with the installation of new and extremely detailed information panels by the ERSAF (*Regional Agency for Services to Agriculture and Forestry*) section of Erba, in collaboration with the Municipality of Canzo, the Triangolo Lariano Mountain Community, the Provincial Authority of Como and the Brianza Naturalist Society. On this occasion, the trail has been dedicated to its creator, Swiss journalist George Achermann, the late founder of the historic local environmental organization, to remember his great work to raise awareness towards the protection of nature “in our own home”.

The Geological Trail begins in Gajum, develops along the bottom of the Ravella stream valley and ends at the Terz’Alpe Hut, amidst meadows and pastures, at the foot of Canzo’s Horns. The first part of the route follows an old mule-track, the surface of which was originally made with pebbles from the stream bed; this type of paving is called *risciòl* in local dialect. The second part is a dirt track, nonetheless quite easy to walk upon.

The hiker is accompanied along the way by a series of panels introduced by a cute cartoon character, a mouse by the name of Geofilo Chiacchierino (which can be roughly translated as Geophile Chatty), who illustrates the 14 most interesting “geological events”, making the visit more enjoyable to children.

In an hour and a half’s walk one can imagine to retrace the entire geological history of local territory. You can see the stratified limestone rocks of marine origin, typical of the Triangolo Lariano, deposited on the bottom of an ancient ocean called Tethys, which occupied this area during the Mesozoic Era (250 million to 65 million years ago) (*Event no. 6 - Marine sedimentary rocks, Event no. 2 - Submarine landslide and “slump”, Event no. 4 - Majolica, Event no. 7 - Flints*). “Mementos” of this expanse of water and its inhabitants can also be found in the numerous fossils present in the sedimentary rocks of our mountains, such as the remains of Coral colonies and Ammonites, Molluscs with planispiral shells (*Event no.1 - Coral limestone, Event no. 8 - Lombard Red Ammonitic Limestone*). Ultimately this ancient sea was closed off, due to the collision between the European and African continents and the subsequent formation of the Alps, culminating in the Cenozoic Era (65 to 1.8 million years ago). The rocks of the seabed thus emerged from the water, suffering intense folding, thrust faults, fractures that have disrupted the original layout. In more recent geologic times, i.e. the Quaternary Era (1.8 million years ago to the present day), due to the extension of climate changes, the area has been repeatedly affected by the expansion of large glacial flows coming from the Valtellina and its lateral valleys; these have shaped the land with intense erosion processes, and, as they drew back, have left piles of rocky debris. Individual isolated blocks of considerable size, transported and deposited by glaciers, are called “erratics” or

“boulders”. They are made of rocks usually very different from those upon which they rest, such as serpentinite (*Event no. 11 - Serpentinite*), granite and gneiss (*Event no. 10 – “Ghiandone” Granodiorite*), and are particularly common in the Ravella Valley area.

Along the trail there is also a “petrifying spring” (*Event no. 12 - Petrifying springs*), or, rather, a “petrifying waterfall”, an interesting humid environment where the deposition of mineral salts dissolved in water (particularly calcium carbonates and magnesium) takes place in the shape of concretions that can incorporate moss, leaves, twigs and herbs. The result being the spongy-looking and ivory-hazel coloured “calcareous tufa”. Petrifying springs are very rare and precious habitats from the naturalist point of view, so much so that in 1992 they were included in the European Union’s “Habitat Directive”. Another peculiar visible geomorphological sign is the “Pot of Giants” (*Event no. 14 – “Pot of Giants”*) a large cavity excavated into the rocks of the Ravella stream bed by the swirling rotary motion of sand and gravel transported by water.