



THE VOLTAIC TEMPLE

You can find this point of interest in Como 6 – Stage 1.

INFORMATION

Location: the Voltaic Temple is in Viale Marconi 1 in Como

Paving: around the Temple there is a two-meter circular band of granite cubes, which encloses, one on each side, four green flowerbeds. The steps of the two access stairs to the vestibule are made of granite. The floor of the vestibule is made of stone slabs. The rich floor of the round hall and the smaller rooms is a mosaic of marble and different stones

Architectural barriers: the circular band of granite cubes around the Temple is bordered by a wrought iron chain supported by pillars one meter high. The vestibule in front of the façade is accessed via two side staircases of fifteen low steps; the landing is protected on the front side by three stone parallelepipeds that occupy the space between the four columns. The door leads into a small atrium about 80 centimetres deep, closed at the bottom by another iron and glass door with two leaves

Access: access from the entrance in Viale Marconi 1

Services: parking available in the adjacent areas

Leisure and Catering: bar in the area; public garden

Other information: the Volta Temple is part of the Museum System of the City of Como.

It can be visited from Tuesday to Sunday, from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

DESCRIPTION

(by Silvia Fasana)

On the occasion of the Second Voltaic Exhibition held at Villa Olmo to celebrate the *centenary of Alessandro Volta's death*, the industrialist Francesco Somaini donated to the city the capital necessary for the construction of a place to honour the memory of the great physicist. The Volta Temple was designed by the architect Federico Frigerio in neoclassical style (in homage to the time when the scientist lived), partly inspired by the Pantheon in Rome and inaugurated in July 1928. This is how Frigerio himself described it in April 1926: *«It is very simple in terms of planimetric layout and structure. It essentially consists of a circular hall of almost twelve meters in net diameter crowned by a dome with a central light, in the form of a Pantheon»*. It was made of reinforced concrete, covered on the outside with karst stone from Aurisina (like the tower of the nearby War Memorial, inaugurated in 1933) with decorations in Musso marble. It is preceded by a vestibule, accessed by two side staircases. The tympanum is adorned with a frieze, where geniuses hold a medallion with the profile of the scientist. On the sides of the entrance stand the two statues depicting *Science* and *Faith*, the work of Carlo and Luigi Rigola. Inside, four corner pillars and eight marble columns support the dome; in the rich entablature there is a frieze where the dedicatory inscription in gilded bronze letters stands out. In the parapet band of the loggia there are four stucco high-relief panels, the work of Pietro Clerici, representing *Episodes from the life of Volta*;

Between these reliefs, sixteen roundels bearing the most significant dates of his life alternate in pairs. On the ground floor it is possible to retrace Volta's scientific itinerary, from his experiments on gases and thermal phenomena, to experiments in electricity and the battery, through the exhibition of a great variety of Volta's apparatus, machines and instruments. They are mostly reconstructions, while just a few originals were saved from the fire that destroyed the Great Exhibition of 1899. In the upper loggia, on the other hand, the figure of Volta is presented through the story of his life, his relationships with his family, his ties with the city, the public offices and awards that were attributed to him, as well as the various celebrations in his honour after his death.