



VALLEY OF THE COSIA STREAM

You can find this point of interest in Como 6 – Stage 2.

DESCRIPTION

(by Silvia Fasana)

The valley of the Cosia stream represents a varied mosaic of natural environments, dominated by the watercourse with its waterfalls, gorges, the famous “Bottini” (also called the “potholes of the giants”), but also the woods, the meadows, alongside the remains that human activity has left over the centuries. This is one of those places “of memory”, where you can still breathe atmospheres “of the past”, quite unusual for an urban suburb. The Cosia stream originates from numerous springs located on the southern slopes of Mount Bolettone and flows into Lake Como. From a geological point of view, its valley is carved into sedimentary rock formations of marine origin dating back to the Jurassic, in some of which – such as the Rosso Ammonitico – fossils of ancient marine molluscs can be found. In more recent geological times, during the Quaternary era, the area was shaped by the action of glaciers and above all by the Cosia itself, which engraved and shaped the valley in which it flows. In particular, in the area below the village of Tavernerio, the stream has dug gorges up to 20 meters deep, imposing and scenic; on the steep escarpments it is still possible to read the traces left by the watercourse, which once flowed at higher altitudes than today. Another form of erosion visible along the course of the Cosia is that of the “potholes of the giants”, locally called “*Bottini*”, or deep and smooth cavities, produced by the mechanical erosion exerted on the limestone rocks of the stream bed by the swirling rotary motion of sand and gravel carried by the current. These environments were most likely the scene of Volta’s first naturalistic discoveries as a child. His friend Giulio Cesare Gattoni wrote that *«he then submerged himself in a spring of water in Monteverde to discover a vein of gold from which sections were detached as some peasants gave us to understand but he found only yellow mica leaves.»*

In the Cosia valley, despite growing anthropogenic pressure, especially towards its end, there are still several well-preserved natural environments, typical of the southern slopes of the Larian Triangle. The green mosaic ranges from hygrophilous forests to White Willow (*Salix alba*) and Black Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), species that require high soil moisture, characteristic of the areas closest to watercourses; to the thermophilic forests of Downy Oak (*Quercus pubescens*), Hornbeam (*Ostrya carpinifolia*) and Manna ash (*Fraxinus ornus*), open and bright, typical of well-exposed south facing locations; to the mesophilous forests of Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), cool and shady accompanied by the Linden (*Tilia platyphyllos*) and the Oak (*Quercus petraea*); to the shady beech forests dominated by the Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), characteristic of altitudes above 800 meters. At even higher altitudes we find large grasslands, carved over the centuries by man to provide hay for livestock and enlivened by colourful blooms of Daffodils (*Narcissus poeticus*, *N. radiiflorus*), Bluebells (*Campanula* sp), Wild Lilies (*Lilium croceum*, *Lilium martagon*); since pastoral activity has been abandoned, these spaces tend to be gradually reconquered by pioneer thickets of Birch (*Betula pendula*) and Hazelnut (*Corylus avellana*), a prelude to an imminent return of the beech forest. It is also said that Volta, now mature, had become fond of a boy from Camnago, a

certain Ambrogio Longatti, who assisted him in his scientific experiments on electricity in contrast with Galvani, making himself available to go and get him frogs that hid in the caves of the Cosia valley. In February 2017 the municipal councils of Tavernerio, Como and Albese con Cassano approved the agreement for the establishment and management of the *Local Park of Supra-municipal Interest of the Cosia Valley*, thanks also to the great awareness-raising work conducted for years by the association “La Città Possibile Como”.