



COMO – PATH 6 – THE PATH OF INVENTION

STAGE 2 - Along the Cosia valley

INFORMATION

Point of departure: Como, entrance to via Pannilani (right of the San Martino bridge)

Point of arrival: Como-Camnago Volta, Piazzale don Serafino Pozzetti

Path type: asphalted road with stretches of dirt road

Environment: urban and suburban area

Total length: approx. 3700 m

Travel time (on foot): approx. 1 hour and 10 minutes

Difficulty: Tourist

Rise: 110 m

Maximum height: 340 m

Paving: asphalt, dirt road

Public transport to reach the point of departure: ASF bus (Line 7 Sagnino – Como – Lora)

Public transport to reach the point of arrival: ASF bus (Line 4 Como Stazione F.S. – Camnago Volta – Campora)

Parking at the point of departure: parking lot in via Castelnuovo

Points of interest: Beretta Mill; Alessandro Volta's country house in Campora; Valley of the Cosia Stream; Tomb of Alessandro Volta; S. Cecilia in Camnago Volta; "Volta Walk"

DESCRIPTION

The second stage of this route winds along the Cosia valley, up to Camnago Volta, where stood the country house that the physicist loved most and where he wanted to be buried at his death. At the time of Volta, Camnago was a farming village, dedicated to milling (five mills operating on the waters of the Cosia), to the breeding of silkworms and to the cultivation of vegetables (it was known as the "garden of Como") and of medicinal plants (chamomile and mallow in particular). In addition, this locality was a municipality in its own right, called Camnago San Martino, whose name was changed to Camnago Volta by Royal Decree of 21 April 1863, after the City Council had unanimously approved the new denomination in homage to Alessandro Volta; eighty years later, in 1943, the Municipality of Camnago Volta was suppressed and its territory incorporated into the Municipality of Como. The starting point of the route can be found at the entrance of Via Pannilani, in the S. Martino district of Como, on the right of the bridge over the Cosia stream; this choice allows you to follow the course of the Cosia for a stretch and be pleasantly surprised by how landscapes and atmospheres change in just a few steps outside the city. Via Pannilani is not very busy but is quite narrow in some places; therefore, always keep to the left side of the street. After about ten meters from the start, on the right side, where now are house numbers 6-8, once stood the church of S. Martino di Zezio, mentioned for the first time in 1209 when it was annexed to a *hospitale* entrusted to the Humiliates. The name of the street, Pannilani, recalls the woollen cloths produced by the Humiliates, using the waters of the stream in the process. From 1639 this church and that of S. Vitale were the parish churches of the entire south-eastern area of Como outside the city walls; in 1783, the title passed to the church of S. Agata. In 1911-1912 the building was deconsecrated, and became the property of the Gallio College. It was raised and divided internally according to the project of the engineer Antonio Giussani; now

the former nave is a garage and the presbytery a restaurant-pizzeria. Continue along Via Pannilani; after 120 meters from the beginning and for a stretch of about 200 meters, the left side is flanked by a pavement made of concrete tiles. In this stretch the stream flows on the left of the road; along its course you can see several factories built between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many of which are dye-printers, some of which are now abandoned. All these discharged the water taken from the Cosia and used for processing back into the stream, as the Humiliates had done. After a kilometre and 400 meters you will find on the left, beyond the stream, the reconstruction of an ancient furnace to produce bricks, built at the beginning of the twentieth century and demolished in 1995, including the high brick chimney, which was a true monument of industrial archaeology. After another 350 meters cross the bridge over the stream and continue along the paved road that here takes the name of Via Navedano (so called from the traditional name of this locality, also assigned to a former restaurant that you passed shortly before the bridge, on the right) and, after traveling another 150 meters, at number 21, you will find the only “survivor” of the many mills that stood along the course of the Cosia, **the Beretta Mill** which, although it ceased activity in 1983, has however preserved the hoppers, millstones and gears and the large larch wood wheel actioned by the stream of the Roggia Molinara, a deviation from the Cosia. After 50 meters turn left and after another 30 meters immediately right, taking Via Avignone and following it all the way. After 220 meters the asphalt ends, to begin again after a stretch of dirt road of about 200 meters. After another 160 meters, turn left and take Via Campora slightly uphill and after another 80 meters, at number 1, you will find on the right **the former favourite country house of Alessandro Volta**, with the ancient adjoining agricultural courtyard (now private residences). In this villa, Volta spent a lot of time during his childhood and during the last years of his life he moved there in the spring and summer months. On the left side of the façade of the house of Volta you can continue the journey along Via Ravanera, which, entering **the Cosia valley**, leads to the ancient nucleus of the same name and a little further on, after passing the small ancient church of S. Francesco, the ancient road that led from San Donato through Camnago to Tavernerio continues as a mule track. Leaving the scientist’s house behind, take Via Clerici on the left; after about 450 meters you will pass the new cemetery of Camnago Volta on the right and, after another eighty meters, you will find the old one, in the centre of which **a neoclassical temple hosts the tomb of the scientist and of some family members**, designed by Melchiorre Nosetti and inaugurated in 1831. Continue along Via Clerici for another 300 meters and then straight on Via Vincenzo Franchi, which makes a wide curve to the right, skirting the rural building once owned by the family of Mother Giovannina Franchi, founder of the Congregation of the Nursing Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows. Here, in June 1899, the landlord and mayor of Camnago Volta, Vincenzo Franchi, gave a sumptuous reception in honour of the participants in the International Congress of Telegraphists (organized as part of the events for the first centenary of the invention of the battery), visiting the tomb and the Casa di Campora. A plaque commemorates “The telegraphists of every nation / gathered at a world congress / returning from the tomb of Volta / hosted in this house / on June 2 MDCCCIC”. Continue for about thirty meters and then turn right into Piazza Martignoni, the seat of the former Municipality of Camnago Volta (that afterwards became the seat of the Fourth District of the Municipality of Como and now hosts the Zone Assembly) and **the church of S. Cecilia**, that until 1654 was associated with Alessandro Volta’s native parish, S. Donnino in Como. To the left of the façade, take a staircase of 25 steps with a stone riser and a slightly uneven grit concrete thread, divided in two by a flowerbed placed in the centre, paying attention to the two iron barriers placed on the eighteenth step and the pillar placed on the penultimate. At the end of the staircase, turn right and enter Piazzale don Serafino Pozzetti (parking lot); cross it for about fifty meters: at the bottom right begins the so-called “**Volta Walk**” which leads to Tavernerio (pay attention to the two iron poles with chains in the centre of the path). The Volta Walk was established as a footpath along the route of the former Como-Erba-Lecco tramway thanks to a program agreement signed in 1999 by the Municipality of Como, that of Tavernerio and the Association “La Città Possibile”. At the beginning of the walk, looking to your left, you can see a building, now uninhabited, once owned by the Volta family. Alternatively, after visiting the church of S. Cecilia, you can retrace your steps and exit Piazza Martignoni by turning right onto Via Vincenzo Franchi. After about twenty meters uphill, turn right again onto Via della Pila, walking on the pavement in porphyry cubes and reach, after about 50 meters, the Piazzale don Serafino Pozzetti. A few minutes’ walk away is another former property of the Volta family in Camnago Superiore (via Camnago Superiore 19), where tradition has it that the physicist kept his library and found himself studying with his friend Teresa Ciceri. Now the building has been carefully restored and transformed into a charming and welcoming Bed and Breakfast.