



SUBURBAN VILLA*

* Partially disappeared structure

You can find this point of interest in Como – Path 7 - Stage 2

INFORMATION

Location: the suburban villa was located in the area behind the "G. Rodari" Kindergarten, whose main entrance is in via Zezio 27 in Como

Access: Via T. Grossi

Services: Car park in Viale Lecco / Via Dante (515 parking spaces); urban and suburban bus stops in the area; Pharmacy in via Dante

Leisure and Catering: bars and shops of various kinds in Via Dante

Other information: Access is possible in agreement with the "Paolo Giovio" Archaeological Museum, Piazza Medaglie d'Oro 1, Como; Tel. 031.252550; museo.civici@comune.como.it

DESCRIPTION

A suburban villa is a building with a residential part, intended for the *dominus*, the lord, and a productive part, halfway between a noble house and a farm. To this category also belongs the villa uncovered in Como on the slopes of Mount Brunate, in the mid-70s of the last century, during the construction of a kindergarten between Via Tommaso Grossi and Via Zezio.

This ancient villa, built in the first century A.D., was spread out on three levels, with the one further downhill intended for production activities. This was completely destroyed during the construction of the kindergarten. On the other hand, it was possible to save the portion found further uphill, long believed to be the portico of the villa and, on the basis of more recent research, identified as part of a spectacular nymphaeum. This *nymphaeum*, which formed the end of the villa's garden, had a basin paved with stone slabs, flanked by channels for the passage of water. The ornamentation of the basin was completed by semicircular niches that originally housed marble statues.

The villa occupied a panoramic position overlooking the lake and was occupied until the late imperial age, with various renovations that enriched its decoration.

The excavations have brought to light numerous mosaic tiles, both in black and white stone, and in coloured glass, sometimes gilded; in later times the mosaics were partly replaced by the *opus sectile* (marquetry), marble inlays made with variously cut slabs. Fragments of frescoes, parts of statues and a terracotta antefix were also recovered and are exhibited in the Archaeological Museum. The antefix was a tile placed by the roof gutter, configured with a gorgon's head, a snake-haired woman similar to the more famous Medusa, intended to frighten and therefore ward off evil spirits that could threaten the inhabitants of the villa.

Among the materials recovered in the rooms located further downhill, a statuette stands out, depicting a modest Venus, originally preserved in a wooden casket, of which the metal parts have been retained.

Overall, the villa is in line with the taste of contemporary Roman villas overlooking the Tyrrhenian Sea and is a prime example of sumptuous residential construction, so loved by Pliny the Younger and his friends, for whom the Lario will provide a setting of extraordinary beauty. In fact, Pliny the Younger wrote to his friend Caninius Rufus from Como: «What goes on in Como, my and your delight? What do you do with your pleasant suburban villa, that porch where it's always spring, the shady plane tree, the canal with its green and crystal-clear waters, the lake at your feet and at your service? What do you do with that easy and solid avenue of yours, that bathroom that the scorching sun always fills with light, those rooms for ordinary guests and, for the happy few, those rooms for day and night? Have they taken possession of you and taking turns vying for your presence?» (Plin. Ep. Section 1.3.1).