



MYSTERIOUS MARCA

AMONG MYTHS AND LEGENDS WITH FOSCO TROM TREVISO



PROVINCIA
DI TREVISO



Veneto

From earth to sky

www.veneto.to

MONASTIER

The ghost abbey

Everyone knows that the older a place is, the more attention it will get from historians and scholars, and the more isolated it is, the greater the curiosity of passers-by will be. If the place in question is a ruined 10th century abbey of Benedictine monks, it cannot help but drive the imagination of people who love to envisage the lives of those who left no trace. I cannot think of a better presentation to encourage you to visit the Abbey of Santa Maria del Pero in Monastier, which is **one of the most mysterious sites** in the March of Treviso. It was founded by the German Emperor Otto I on the site of a river port. Imagine the sight that greeted the monks: an expanse of lakes and woods, which they drained in accordance with their duty to accompany prayer with work. Roses and hydrangeas bloomed inside the Romanesque cloister, there was a range of medicinal herbs for

the apothecary monk in the physic garden, and fruit and vegetables for making preserves grew in the kitchen garden. Nothing remains of this existence, interspersed with prayers and hard work, except for a semi-abandoned scene. The rooms of the monastery no longer echo with the chants of the monks and the bell tower stands silent, sounding out the hours no more. However, sometimes people who go past it at dusk think they can hear rustling or a liturgical murmur. This sensation gradually becomes more and more real. Phantom bells start to ring out hours that have been lost in time, the windows of the cloister start to bang and a light emerges from the church door, followed by a procession of monks who walk around the square, enter the abbey and climb up some stairs that have not existed for many years. Then everything disappears as if it had never been there: blown away by the wind and swallowed up by the night. Needless to say, if the person who told me this story – which is similar to many other accounts over the centuries – ever went back to the Abbey of Monastier, he did it in the middle of the day, under the bright August sun. What time are you planning on visiting it?



SAN ZENONE

The legend of the merciless Ezzelini family

All castles creak with sinister sounds, even those that no longer exist but will never disappear from legends and tales. One of these is the castle of the Ezzelini family in San Zenone. It was the home of the cruel tyrant Ezzelino III and it was razed to the ground after his death. At the start of the 13th century, the fortress stood on top of a hill, which still today offers marvellous views of the Grappa massive and Montello. Ezzelino was famous for his brutality and thirst for power. This brought him a lot of enemies, including the pope, who launched a crusade against him. Ezzelino had a brother called Alberico who was just as devoted to the expansion of his territory, and a sister called Cunizza, who was also involved in conquests, but of the romantic kind: she had three husbands and many lovers. The legends related to the castle tell of the crimes of the

tyrant and the massacre of Alberico's family. It is also said that Ezzelino had the doors of prisons walled up with no pity for men, women or even children, whose eyes he had torn out. Their screams could be heard all the way down in the valley and people said that their souls would yell in fear and pain for all eternity. **Dante confined Ezzelino to Hell**, submerged in a river of blood. He died an unrepentant sinner with no pity even for himself, bleeding to death and refusing medicine and the last rites. Alberico was slaughtered with his entire family by his enemies. He was forced to watch as his six sons were decapitated and his wife and two daughters were burnt. He was killed by being attached to the tail of a running horse. The remnants of his body were burnt in Treviso. It is said that his soul cannot find peace because he was unable to protect his children,

so it continues to roam on the hill alongside the ghost of Ezzelino and all of the tormented souls. The only untainted soul is Cunizza: she twirls in an everlasting dance between the pine and cypress trees in the arms of her dearest lover, Sordello the troubadour, who still sings for her on quiet nights.



IL MONTELLO

Fairies, devils, dragons and spirits

There is a mysterious and impenetrable place in the March of Treviso. To go there, even expert travellers like you will need a special guide; someone who will accompany you and guarantee that you will get home safely. I am talking about a little mountain with a clear, pale blue outline that stretches out on the right bank of the River Piave. Its name is Montello and it is a place filled with memories and tranquillity, where the natural environment is breathtaking in every season, with hues that have been described and portrayed over the centuries by artists and poets. **A curious guide will be waiting for you** at the foot of an oak tree on the ridge. It will be the darkest of nights and you will only be able to vaguely make out the shape of him and the things around you. The light of his little lantern will reveal a world that cannot be seen by sunlight, featuring ancient trees whose branches intertwine with the protruding roots, white hot water in brooks and springs, talking birds, basilisks with the bodies of

snakes, dragons breathing fire and other mysterious creatures such as sprites, ogres and devils. With your guide, you will be able to walk undisturbed through their fairytale world, which has been conjured up over the centuries by human writers. He will take you to the *Buoro Cave*, where the nymph *Ciane* pours out magic water that can make the milk come back to emaciated mothers of newborns, and *Bus de le Fate* (the "Cavern of Fairies"), where maidens with goatlike feet ceaselessly wash themselves at a spring. At *Buoro delle Anguane* you will see nymphs emerge and head to the brooks to wash clothes stained by the ancient misdeeds of men. Near a spring, the *Fate Bone* ("Good Fairies") prepare honey to offer to young girls that get lost in the woods after being led astray by the *Massariol*, a spirit fond of pranks. Then the sun will come back and everything will be as it is when you go to Montello for a Sunday stroll: a lush green hill covered with a peaceful wood. When you take your leave of your guide, do not ask his name or enquire whether he will take off the hat that covers his entire face. Simply thank him by shaking his hand, and do not be surprised if it is red and as hot as the fires of hell.

SUSEGANA

The Castle of Collalto and the legend of Bianca

As you climb up the hill on the way from Susegana to Pieve di Soligo, you will come across the proud sight of the Castle of Collalto. Time and history have conspired to leave us with nothing but the colossal keep, a few traces of the walls and the entrance gate to the mediaeval village. Nonetheless, in the still silence, you



can imagine its bold, glorious past; this feudal estate was the property of the Collalto family, who were the first Counts of Treviso in the 14th century. While time can wear away the stones and history can cause destruction with its wars, nothing can erode the memories. The sad tale of Bianca has lived on through the ages. She was a beautiful maid-servant of Chiara da Camino, a noblewoman that Count Tolberto di Collalto married to calm the dispute between his family and the Caminos of Ceneda. The lady of the castle was not a great beauty and she was very jealous of her husband. Bianca, on the other hand, was very pleasant, always smiling and oblivious to evil. Tolberto fell hopelessly in love

with her kind ways and long, straw-coloured hair. He was overcome with passion. Don't give me those bored looks though – I'm not telling you a love story with a happy ending! **The tale of Bianca**, Tolberto and Chiara involves a terrible crime. Tolberto was called off to war and he went to say goodbye to his wife. Bianca was brushing her hair and in the mirror Chiara saw them catch each others' eyes. A tear ran down Bianca's face and Tolberto gave her a smile as if he were caressing her, for he was unable to touch her. Chiara understood it all and her vengeance was ferocious. As soon as Tolberto was gone, she imprisoned the maiden behind a brick wall in a tower. Bianca starved to death and Tolberto never came back from the crusades. Ever since then, the ghost of Bianca has appeared to the members of the family. She wears a white veil when she brings good tidings and a black one when there is bad news. When you visit the ruins of the old castle, do not be afraid to call on the ghost of Bianca. She is sure to appear dressed in white, to proclaim that love will last forever.

VITTORIO VENETO

The stone of Saint Augusta

If you want to know the legendary story of Augusta and the miraculous stone, go to Vittorio Veneto, where she was born in the 2nd century AD.

At the time, on the site of the modern town, there were two ancient settlements: Serravalle and Ceneda. The two centres were joined over a century ago when Italy was unified, but their original features can still be seen. Just behind the Cathedral of Serravalle there is a flight of steps that climbs up to the highest point in the city: the Sanctuary of Sant'Augusta. It offers sweeping views of mountains, lakes and valleys, with the shimmering sea lying far to the East. Once you get there, sit down under the portico and remember the story that I am about to tell you. Augusta was the daughter of a Visigoth king called Matrucco, who built a fortress on Mount Marcantone, in modern-day Serravalle. Hungry for power, he conquered the Friuli area and

savagely persecuted Christians. It is said that a hermit secretly baptized the young Augusta, thus marking her destiny. The young maiden was a believer in the Christian faith and protected the people who were persecuted by her ruthless father. Matrucco found out about her devotion to the one God who died on the cross and he tried in vain to convince her to change her ways. He imprisoned her and brutally tortured her: the breaking wheel fell apart, the fire that was to be used to burn her went out, her teeth were pulled out and in the end she was decapitated. Her body was found a number of years later, buried on top of the hill that still bears her name. It had been carefully placed at the highest point, as near as possible to the stars and her God, perhaps as a result of the same Christian compassion that she defended for herself and the entire world until the very end. If you have a bad headache when you get to the top after the long climb, go behind the altar where Augusta's remains lie. There you will find an ancient stone with a hole in it. **If you put your head inside** and pray to the saint, **all traces of the pain will completely disappear.**



THE PROVINCE OF TREVISO

A land of mystery

Welcome to the joyous March of Treviso, a magnificent area full of mystery. If you came here to discover its beauty and you are eager to find

out about legends and dark tales, you have found the right man. My name is Fosco and I have always lived here. No one knows the area's castles, villages and hills better than me and nobody can tell you more about all of the secrets that lie hidden here. Did you know that Treviso, like Turin, Lyon and Prague, was called a "magical city" as early as the second half of the 13th century – the time of Pietro d'Abano, who taught here at the historical university? It all started a long time ago... Some people say that the name "Treviso" comes from "Taurisium", the name given to its founder Osiris, a successor of Noah, who was worshipped after his death in the form of a bull. It is also said that the name comes from a depiction of a female figure with three faces ("tre visi" in Italian) that was placed

on one of the towers built by Antenore to defend the new city. Follow me – this is just the beginning. Hidden from sight in the Treviso area are the spirits of kind maidens and men of the church, descendants of the Collalto and Minucci families and damned souls from the Ezzelini dynasty, not to mention roaming monks in the ruins of an abbey, the mysterious creatures of an ancient Venetian wood, the unnerving forms in Le Motte near Castello di Godego and yet more fearsome things besides. If my tales are not enough to sate your curiosity, you can experience the thrills and discover the secrets of Treviso, Vittorio Veneto and Castelfranco with my friends who you will find there. They will guide you as you follow in the footsteps of the



Templars and other knights, go on a ghost hunt and get to know the enigmatic Giorgione. On summer evenings or amidst the first autumn mists, you can enter a world of jesters and acrobats, elves and sprites, in the Middle Ages or Celtic times, with celebrations and re-enactments that bring to life ancient happenings. You will find history and legend, reality and fantasy. I can also recommend a reading list for you to enjoy if you want to find out more.

GUIDED TOURS

If you want to explore the March with a guide who is at least similar to the enigmatic and likeable Fosco, there are places where

you can find some truly special ones. In Treviso, Vittorio Veneto and Castelfranco there are some thrilling routes. We invite visitors to enjoy their experiences and get completely involved in them: these are not just tours of the town; they are immersions in "another world" ... just for a few hours.

TREVISO. DARK NIGHTS

A mysterious route in the dark of night will take you through suggestive places and centuries of history, with some aspects that are gruesome and others that are fascinating. By the light of a torch or the magical moon, you will travel through the land of old knights and Templars, tales of torture and evil, ancient astrological theories and sublime

poetry by Dante. An exciting city visit at a brisk pace along a route of just over 6 km that will take you into the heart and soul of Treviso.

SERRAVALLE. THE SECRETS OF THE SUBURB

You can experience the fascinating history of Serravalle, an ancient suburb of Vittorio Veneto, and witness the goings on of people who appear between alleyways and squares and grab your attention with their gazes, tales and culinary offerings. Marcantonio Flaminio, along with other illustrious representatives of the city, will accompany you as you discover the secrets of this ancient place, its architecture, its art and its natural environment.

CASTELFRANCO VENETO. ENIGMATIC GIORGIONE

In the new Casa Giorgione Museum, you can get to know the elusive artist from Castelfranco. His revolutionary painting, full of messages that have never been fully revealed, and his links with astrology, astronomy and esotericism are the themes

of a route that takes in modern museum displays and 15th century works. The museum is in his hometown, where you can also find two extremely rare works that have been attributed to him by critics: the altarpiece in the cathedral and the Eastern Frieze of the liberal arts.

MOTTA DI LIVENZA "WATER... BOTH MYTH AND RITUAL"

Venus, water, mother earth, lagoon, water. It's a trip through time, seeped in traditions and legends. Women and water—elements that generate life. Anguana water nymphs are mysterious fairy creatures. Isis, bride and sister, Mary, virgin and mother... An itinerary that leads you through old-time Motta di Livenza and the area's history until the miraculous apparition of the Virgin in 1510.'

For information and reservations, please ask at the tourist offices of the towns where the guided tours are available.

HISTORICAL RE-ENACTMENTS

IN SAN ZENONE, THE HOME OF THE EZZELINI

Each year in July, in the former court of one of the March of Treviso's most

powerful families, a mediaeval-style banquet is held: the flavours of the period menu, music and choreography will take you back in time. After seven centuries, the memories of the tragedy of the Ezzelini family merge with those of the legends, lights, shadows, might and terror of epic deeds to be experienced at this special event.

www.academia-san-zenone.com

ANCIENT FAIR OF SANTA LUCIA

For over 1300 years, in late October and early November, merchants, craftsmen, jesters, hunters, nobles and pages have gathered in Santa Lucia di Piave. The fair developed thanks to trading links on the Via Hungarica and the use of the Lovadina ford, which was

an obligatory step in journeys between the North and South of Europe, as well as commerce in Venice. Nowadays it provides an opportunity to experience the magical atmosphere of the Middle Ages and enjoy unforgettable times in the company of people in delightful 14th century clothing, in keeping with an ancient tradition.

www.anticafierasantalucia.com

CELTIC NEW YEAR IN VITTORIO VENETO

In the lunar month of October/November, the summer used to come to a close with the feast of Samanos, marking the end of the old year and the start of the new one. The laws of time and space did not apply to the Celtic new year, which represented both death and rebirth. According to tradition, it was possible to encounter one's deceased ancestors, descendants, fairies, demons and gnomes. On Mount Antares, the home of one of the most important sanctuaries of the Celts and ancient Veneti, the revived ceremony takes place on 31 October each year, in a bewitching historical re-enactment. www.undicigradi.com

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