

PALAZZO DI SOPRA



In Borgo Valbruna, almost counterbalancing the castle stands a precious building that belonged to Spilimbergo gentry: it is the Palazzo di Sopra. Constructed on a natural buttress that reaches out towards the east, it provides an extraordinary view over tens of kilometres from the Carnic Alps to the high Friulian plane. Outside, the palazzo publicises itself with vivid paintings, among them some large San Marco winged lions (the town belonged to the Venetian Republic from 1420 to 1797). Inside, you can visit exceptionally elegant rooms, among them the Stucco Room that was used as a nuptial bedroom and the Mirror Room, as well as the grand reception room on the noble family's floor where at one time receptions were held. The building, that today serves as the Town Hall, was for a long time a superior residence, but also had some special uses. During the 16th century it accommodated a high school reserved for the offspring of the nobility, called the "Accademia Parteniana" from the name of the humanist Bernardino Partenio who directed it. The studies included Latin, Greek and Hebrew and the Holy Scriptures; it was made to close for suspected heresy. Instead, in more recent times, the palazzo was used for the breeding of silkworms: generations of Spilimbergo women worked there. Heavily damaged by the earthquake in 1976, the building was in danger of being demolished; in the end it could be retrieved with meticulous restoration that returned it to the town.



MOSAIC SCHOOL



The Mosaicists' School of Friuli was founded in 1922 with the aim of providing technical training to the many young people that were emigrating abroad in search of work. The specific focus on mosaics and terrazzo, that is pebble flooring, was chosen because it was and still is an activity traditionally practised in the Spilimbergo piedmont in places like Sequals, Solimbergo, Cavasso, Meduno and Toppo. With the changing times, today it is the only school in the world that trains professional mosaic workers, the reason why an important number of the students are foreigners. It is involved first and foremost in instruction and experimenting with new techniques and products, but occasionally also undertakes some commissions for prestigious clients. For example, here were created the mosaics that are on the walls of the Foro Italico pool in Rome, those that decorate the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and even the monument placed on Ground Zero in New York: the *Iridescent Thunderbolt* that commemorates the thousands of people who lost their lives on the occasion of the attack of 11th September 2001 on the Twin Towers. The school contains an important gallery of works by the students and their teachers that retraces the five thousand year history of mosaics: from the Greek and Roman floors to the Byzantine ones and up to the present day. During the school year it is also possible to visit the classrooms and laboratories where the students undertake their activities, thereby observing how a mosaic is created. Instead, in summer the School organises short courses for families and enthusiasts.



MINOR CHURCHES



CHURCH OF THE FRIARS

Called thus because it was for a long time managed by Friars, officially it is named after Saints Joseph and Pantaleon. Within is a Renaissance masterpiece: the wooden choir created by Marco Cozzi between 1475 and 1477, completely carved, inlaid and decorated with Turkish emeralds and gold. The work, which originates from the Cathedral, was carried out thanks to a legacy from Giuliano di Tropea, a Byzantine priest who fled from Constantinople on the arrival of the Turks and then settled in Spilimbergo.

CHURCH OF SAN GIOVANNI

The church, now dedicated to the fallen, was originally run by the co-fraternity of San Giovanni, a lay organisation of religious inspiration that took care of the sick and needy. Next to it stood the first hospital in the town, operating from the 14th century until the mid 19th century. Inside the building a splendid fresco (*The Crucifixion*) of the 15th century was discovered.

CHURCH OF SAN ROCCO

Immediately outside the old walls stands the church of San Rocco, erected as an expressed vow of the population for relief from a serious epidemic plague that had struck them in 1533 and caused hundreds of deaths.

SANCTUARY OF THE ANCONA

The sanctuary of the Madonna della Mercede, popularly called the Ancona was built in the 16th century on the slope that goes to the town from the River Tagliamento. Here those who had crossed the difficult ford stopped to offer a prayer of thanks; but also here those that had to leave again waited for the arrival of the ferry. Still today old traces of game slabs that were used to while away the time can be discerned on the portico wall. Inside is an image of the Madonna, considered miraculous.

ITINERARIES



RENAISSANCE ART

The Spilimbergo churches constitute a widespread museum, thanks to the works of many artists that operated here during the 1400 and 1500s. In the Spilimbergo cathedral one can admire amongst others the case and flaps of the organ, painted by "Il Pordenone" in 1524; the decoration to the Carmine Chapel, engraved by Pilacorte in 1498; the *Presentazione al Tempio* by Giovanni Martini in the Rosary Chapel (1503) and the *Fuga in Egitto* by Girolamo Stefanelli (1540). Descending to Provesano, in the church of San Leonardo: a large *Crucifixion* by Gianfrancesco da Tolmezzo (1496). By the same artist, but when young, there is also the splendid cycle of frescoes in the country church of Sant'Antonio Abate in Barbeano (1489). In Tauriano, in San Nicolò the choir has frescoes by Gianpietro da Spilimbergo (1502). In Vacile, in the parish church of San Lorenzo, the decorations on the vault are one of the first works of "Il Pordenone" (1508). Instead, in Lestans his pupil and son-in-law Pomponio Amalteo worked and between 1535 and 1551 executed the paintings in the church of Santa Maria Assunta. In Valeriano, again is a masterpiece by "Il Pordenone": la *Natività*, in the small church of Santa Maria dei Battuti (1524). In Gaio, in the San Marco church: a doorway by Pilacorte surmounted by a winged lion (1490). Finally, in the parish church of Baseglia, the great cycle of frescoes on the *Storie della Vera Croce* was the work of Amalteo between 1544 and 1550.

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Tagliamento riverbed forms a vast green area that extends for kilometres at the foot of Spilimbergo, between willows, poplars, ash and linden trees, the habitat of numerous species of insects and birds. The territory around the city, instead, consists of small centres of habitation between which are large meadows and typical scrubland with robinia, elder and hazel, in symbiosis with each other. Cycle tracks with proper signposting have been provided for nature lovers (in the municipal tourist office it is possible to hire bicycles at no charge).

SPILIMBERGO

In the surrounding

PRADIS CAVERNS AND COSA RAVINE
In Pradis (Clauzetto) it is possible to visit the striking ravine scoured out by the rushing waters of the Cosa torrent. Some caverns, frequented by man in prehistoric times, can also be reached at the bottom. Nearby stands a small but well-tended museum.

TOPPO CASTLE

Above the village of Toppo (Travesio) are the well-preserved remains of the mediaeval castle, standing up on its characteristic polygonal walls. An exhibition room on the subject is staged in the nearby Palazzo dei Conti Toppo, the headquarters of the Tourism Office.

PARISH CHURCH OF SAN PIETRO

At the entrance to Travesio stands the parish church of San Pietro, one of the oldest in the territory. This church, even if remodelled in recent times, retains one of the most beautiful cycles of Renaissance frescoes, the work of "Il Pordenone".

CECONI CASTLE IN PIELUNGO

Going back up the verdant valley of the Arzino, you reach Pielungo (Vito d'Asio), where at the end of the 19th century a successful émigré, Giacomo Ceconi, put up for himself and his family a fairy-tale castle in neo-gothic style, surrounded by large parkland.

MUSEUM OF RURAL CULTURE IN POZZO

Fitted out in a district of Pozzo (San Giorgio della Richinvelda) is a vast exhibition of household and work equipment used by peasant families in the first half of the 20th century.

VILLA CARNERA IN SEQUALS

Sequal was the home village of Primo Carnera, the giant who was world boxing champion in the 1930s. Today his home has been transformed into a very special museum with a collection that bears witness to his life.

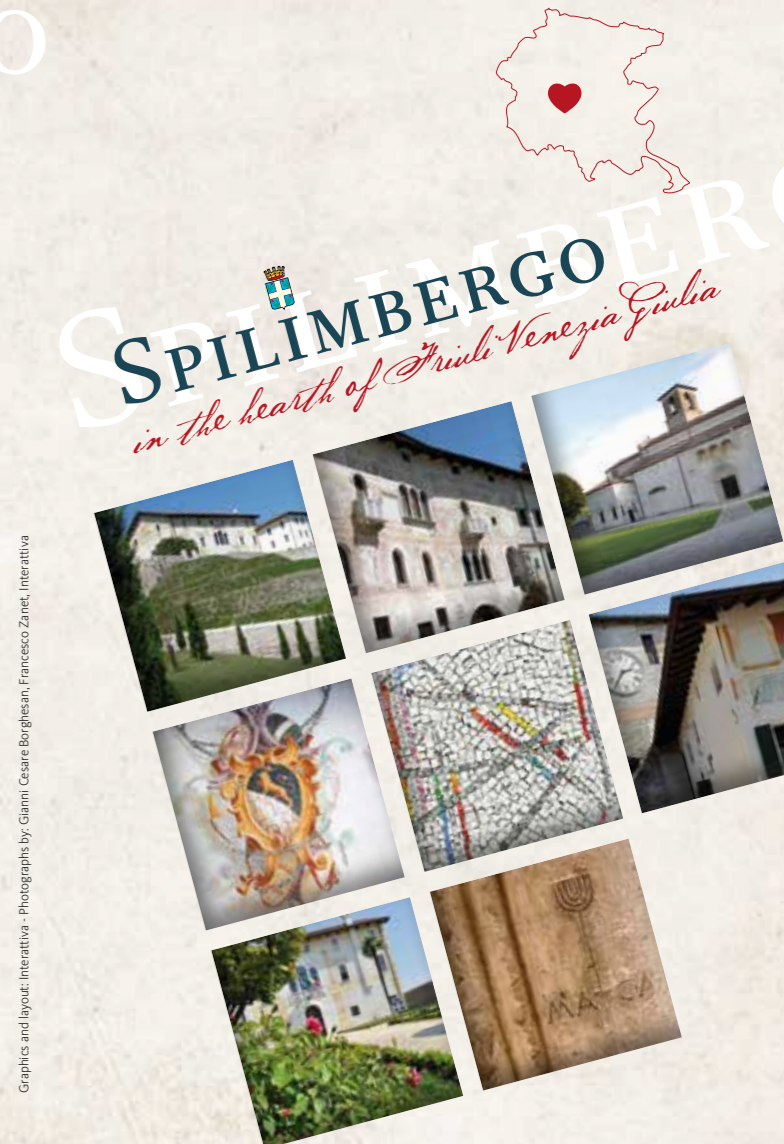
PALCODA

Setting out from Tramonti di Sotto, on an excursion partly by car and partly on foot, it is possible to reach the village of Palcodà that was abandoned at the beginning of the last century, but is now the subject of an interesting reconstruction project.



UFFICIO INFORMAZIONI E ACCOGLIENZA TURISTICA (IAT)
Via Alighieri, 31 (Piazza Duomo) 33097 Spilimbergo (Pn)
Tel./fax +39 0427 2274 - email: info@prospilimbergo.org
www.prospilimbergo.org

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ITINERARIES ART CULTURE



CITTÀ DI SPILIMBERGO

CULTURE



When talking about Spilimbergo, the connection with mosaics arises spontaneously because of the presence since 1922 of the only school in the world dedicated to this technique, the destination for thousands of visitors. By definition, Spilimbergo is the “mosaics town”, but it offers much more thanks to an extraordinary historic and artistic heritage. Of medieval origin, Spilimbergo still has the urban structure of that epoch with porticos along the streets, alleys and small squares. Developed in the Renaissance, it has beautiful frescoed mansions and innumerable works of art in its churches. But above all it has much to recount to those who are willing to listen: secrets from the past, curiosities to discover, surroundings to explore, displays to experience and genuine flavours to enjoy.

Situated in the heart of Friuli, mid-way between the Adriatic beaches and the mountains, Spilimbergo also provides the opportunity, within a short distance, of reaching other splendid jewels in the region; the reason why it lends itself so well to both hurried travellers and for those who like to experience unhurried holidays, by car, on bicycle or in a camper van.



HISTORIC CENTRE

The town developed gradually starting with the castle. First Borgo Vecchio and Valbruna were born, surrounded by thick walls. Here one approached overland from the so-called Torre Orientale (East Tower) or by fording the Tagliamento River and going up the bank of the Ancona. Subsequently (14th century) Borgo di Mezzo, Broiluccio (today Piazza Borgolucido) and Borgo Nuovo developed. The Torre Occidentale (West Tower) still remains from the new walls that protected these suburbs.

The soul of Spilimbergo has always been commerce; the beating heart was the Piazza del Duomo (Cathedral Square), where markets were held. Here, under the Municipal Loggia you can still see the “Macia” engraved on a pillar, the unit of measure that was used in the town for cloth.



WINE AND FOOD



Not only art, also history and culture. Spilimbergo holds tasty surprises even for the lovers of good food. Strolling under its porticos and along the city streets you come across many restaurants, “trattorias” and taverns, with offerings that range from international menus to typical local products. Here, pork butchering is an art that is taken seriously and handed down through the generations; salami, sausages and above all “musetto” sausage are produced in local premises. Other very well-tended products are the cheeses: they range from Montasio to Salato, from Asino (prepared in special brine) to the “Formai dal Cit” (a mixture of various cheeses). When speaking of traditional coking it is right to mention at least maize Polenta, which accompanies most of the local dishes, and Frico (cheese and potato melted in the pan). For separate discussion are Tripe and Dried Cod, humble dishes at one time served in the “bacheri”, eating places of southern origin transplanted at the end of the 19th century to the Veneto and Friuli. Now they have all but disappeared: only one remains in the town that is well-known everywhere.

For the more gluttonous, the master confectioners offer various recipes, among the outstanding are the “Dolce di Spilimbergo” (almond-based cake) and “Scaleta”, a biscuit discovered in the ancient recipe books and now offered again to today's people.

Finally, the wines. Besides the typical varieties of the Grave di Friuli area (Merlot, Refosco dal Peduncolo Rosso, Cabernet, Friulano, etc.), the production of wines derived from ancient native vines cultivated on the hillsides has developed, wines such as Scjaglin, Ucelut, Piculit Neri and Forgjarin. The grappas are also valuable, in pure form or flavoured with wood berries.

THE CASTLE



Probably built in the 11th century on a natural terrace that overlooked the Tagliamento River, the castle was reinforced with the excavation of a large moat. Entry was by crossing a drawbridge, substituted in the 19th century with a fixed stone bridge. Its original name was Spengenberg that means “castle of the falcon”, from which the name of the town Spilimbergo comes. In the Middle Ages it constituted one of the largest fiefdoms in Friuli, administered by a family of Germanic origin from Austria. A rampant lion was its symbol. The powerful fortifications were set fire to during a peasant revolt during the carnival of 1511 and ruined by the effects of an earthquake a few weeks later. The buildings were rebuilt almost entirely during the 16th century as residences of the castle lords. Entering into the castle complex you go up to the Palazzo Dipinto (Painted Palace), the sole building that survived the destructions. On the facade are fresco images of the pleasures of the nobility (below), the virtues of the feudal lords (in the centre) and their forefathers (above). Among the other buildings, the white Palazzo Tadea stands out to the north with an elegant triple-lancet window that is over the main access door. The castle is now the property of the Municipality and holds cultural events.



THE CATHEDRAL



Santa Maria Maggiore is the main Church in the town. It was built starting in 1284 by the wishes of the lord of Spilimbergo Walterpertoldo, demolishing a whole suburb. The main (west) facade displays seven rose windows that recall the angels of the apocalypse at the end of the world. Instead, the north facade has a grand doorway in stone surmounted by the coat of arms of the feudal family. Inside in the central apse the fourteenth century frescoes stand out, depicting scenes from the Old and New Testaments with a large central *Crucifix*. These pictures became lost over the centuries, covered by a veil of lime; they were brought to light only in 1930. But all of the church is a real jewel of art, rich in decoration, frescoes, altar-pieces and carvings done by the greatest artists of the time. Very frequent among the saints is St. John the Baptist, connected with the presence in the town of rich Florentine bankers who financed the building of the cathedral. Next to the crypt entrance there appears a gigantic St. Christopher dealing with an “agana”, a feminine spirit of the waters in folk tradition. High up in the centre of the church the 16th century organ is dominant, with its flaps splendidly illustrated by “Il Pordenone”.



- SPILIMBERGO**
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 - 5 - SANCTUARY OF THE ANCONA
 - 6 - PALAZZO DI SOPRA
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