



CAFFÈ RISTORANTE DEL PESO
Piazza Marconi 3, 15020 CAMINO (AL)
Tel. 0142.469122 - Cell. 339.7841406
info@ristorantedelpeso.it
www.ristorantedelpeso.it

ITINERARIES IN THE MONFERRATO AREA AND AROUND THE CAFFÈ RISTORANTE DEL PESO

THE MONFERRATO AREA AND THE “PIETRA DA CANTONI”

With nice weather approaching, why not take a day to rediscover authentic tastes and traditions. Our advice is that of visiting the Monferrato area to discover the ‘Pietra dei Cantoni’ and the local Ecomuseum.



Rediscovering the ‘Pietra da Cantoni’

The ‘Pietra da Cantoni’ can be found nearly everywhere in the Monferrato territory: over the years, it has always been part of the local economy, architecture and landscape. This particular rock is of sedimentary origin, and its origin dates from about 20 million years ago to 13,5 million years ago. In that period, the Monferrato was covered with water, and traces of the ancient sea can still be found today, in the form of fossils, inside the ‘Pietra dei Cantoni’.



Recent studies have discovered ancient mines used to extract the precious material. Today, in these hollow pits reigns a disarming silence that contrasts with the deafening sounds of the workers and of the rock extraction process that was once carried out daily. Once extracted, the rocks, also called ‘canton’ in the local dialect, were transported with horse-drawn carriages to other destinations.

The local Ecomuseum’s intention is that of documenting and handing down the tradition of the ‘Pietra da Cantoni’ and its innumerable uses, among which the creation of “infernot”, graffiti, sculptures, architecture, tools and many more.

Infernot

The “Infernot” are holes dug inside the “Pietra da Cantoni” to preserve and age wine while exalting its characteristics. “Infernot” were usually found in corners of wine cellars, or other places characterized by darkness and the absence of air. They can be considered true masterpieces; architectural marvels slowly carved during the long, cold winters by skilled artisans. Many are the “Infernot” present on the Monferrato territory, 47 of which have been censused by the Ecomuseum and included in a multimedia publication.



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THE PUBLIC ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATORY of ODALENGO PICCOLO

The idea of creating an astronomical observatory in the Monferrato started in 2009. After a long process of finding a town interested in the creation of the building, the construction began with full support of the mayor of Odalengo Piccolo. The town of Odalengo Piccolo was ideal: with its hills, astrophiles frequently swarmed the tallest points with their telescopes in order to get a good look at the starry sky, far from the lights of the city.

The edifice now rises on what was once a brambly, untamed area on the hills. The observatory has a sliding roof, which consents a 360° view of the sky, and has vast parking spaces and green areas in which, on selected dates, it's possible for astrophiles to bring their own telescopes for observation.



Inside the observatory lie various telescopes. Among these, the main telescope: a 14" Schimdt-Cassegrain Meade which, along with its accessories, is controlled by an internal command station. In addition, the observatory can vaunt a CCD Sbig ST10, a solar filter, and many other state of the art technologies.

The MAZZETTI D'ALTAVILLA DISTILLERY

In 1846, a year of political turmoil in Piedmont, Filippo Mazzetti started his activity as a distillator of fine 'Grappa'.

The distillation procedure consisted in taking the marc from the freshly raked must and transforming it into liqueur.

The process is still carried out today by the descendants of the Mazzetti family, 160 years later.

Every year, the Altavilla distillery collects the best marc from the neighbouring towns and farms: Grignolino, Barbera, Freisa, Malvasia, Moscato, Ruchè, Brachetto, Bonarda and Chardonnay are the vines that concur, with their characteristics and peculiarities, in making the Altavilla "Grappa".

