

LIGURIA AND ITS ENTROTERRA

Liguria is a tourist destination known mostly for the beauty of its Riviera and its cultural heritage. Yet, its wealth is extraordinary also in terms of inland landscapes, ancient “borghi” (villages), succulent gastronomy and quality crafts. Thanks to a maze of unexpected itineraries, the whole region wonderfully mixes and displays coastal and rural habitats, a treasure chest open 365 days a year. Ligurian history has in fact developed along the centuries through the conquest of sea commercial routes; the exchange and rural roads crossing the Apennines; and the vicissitudes of the feudal families (Fieschi, Doria, Spinola...) dominating the valleys. Nowadays, the “entroterra” (inland) offers a kaleidoscope of cultural and natural resources – intact or carefully restored – , shady paths, folklore, gourmet pleasures and events. Not to forget the Alta Via dei Monti Liguri trail, crossing Liguria’s bow from its western to its eastern tip (as well as touching Montoggio). Though only a few minutes’ drive from Genoa, the Valle Scrivia still lovingly protects its identity, offering a variety of green and relaxing settings. Castles, streams, excursions, rural hamlets are there to explore, for a “slow” stay far from the madding crowd. Right here, you will meet Montoggio.

MONTOGGIO, THE GREEN EXPERIENCE

Set in the greenery of the Genoese countryside (500 m. a.s.l.), Montoggio is the ideal place to enjoy the pleasures of culture and nature, not to forget an array of gourmet delights. Its atmosphere evokes the bygone days of history, yet the environment will offer you plenty of action: springs, lakes, brooks, pastures and mountain tops with views over the Alps and the sea are there to discover!

This rural centre is located at the confluence of the Laccio and Pentemina streams, joining to form the Scrivia river, whose course winds along the valley. Live your days in Montoggio at your own pace, discovering its cultural heritage, its secluded hamlets, its mouthwatering recipes. Breathe the positive energy of a habitat far from city bustle and rich in relax, sport and shopping opportunities.

WELLBEING VIEWS

Car, bike and...feet are the best means of transport to travel among landscapes and green itineraries, the real markers of the area. A pleasant road climbing from Genoa to Montoggio crosses the Piani di Creto – a hamlet known for its beautiful meadows (the perfect picnic venue). The Alta Via dei Monti Liguri mounts up to the Alpesisa where (if the weather is fine) you will enjoy the view of the silent sea, the solemnity of Genoa in the distance.

The beautiful excursion to the lake of Val Noci is a plunge into the peace of nature. Its bright green waters are appreciated by fishermen (trouts being actively sought after) and climbers, looking for

refreshment and tranquillity on the stone slabs that lean over the lake after a trek to the surrounding peaks. Whether you want to hike, relax or experience the silence of nature, Val Noci is at the same time your ideal destination and starting point – follow the punctual yellow trail signage to Monte Bano (1,035 m.) or to Monte Candelozzo (1,036 m.) and live a day off suspended between past and present, forgotten traditions and old crafts.

A FIESCHI TALE

Montoggio is a land of dialectics and (settled) dualisms – in the past, the fierce rivalry between the potent Fieschi family and the Repubblica di Genova, nowadays, the peaceful coexistence of the remains of an ancient glory and the setting of a new identity, both rural and tourist. The ruins of the Fieschi castle dominate the centre, an emblem of power and force. In 1547 it was the seat of the last Fieschi feud: the famous conspiracy against the Genoese took place here, among drill grounds, loopholes, massive walls and moats.

The castle represents the landmark of Montoggio, whose streets still resound with the echo of history, culture and architectural elegance. The parish church is devoted to San Giovanni Decollato; it treasures the works of 17th century masters (paintings by Fiasella, De Ferrari, Lomi...), a remarkable collection showing the importance of local patronage and the role of secluded – yet lively – cultural capitals.

Reach the hamlet of Castello and enjoy the sight of the silent Cappella di San Rocco, a 16th century jewel built as a vow to avert pestilence. According to tradition, this was the death place of Count Fieschi, beheaded after the failed conspiracy against Genoa.

Then, head on along the road to Creto: a few kilometres away from Montoggio the ancient Santuario delle Tre Fontane (feast: 17th May), with its beautiful portico and its three naves, houses several ex voto, the representation of strong rural identity and devotion.

GOURMET PLEASURES

Popular traditions and ancient wisdom show in gastronomy, too. High in the mountains, the hamlet of Montemoro still preserves a legacy of pastoral fascination: paths, dry-stone terraces, farmsteads, square barns... all evoke a quiet rural atmosphere - positively displaying both in the produce of the earths and in the careful work of growers.

In the past, chestnuts and potatoes were the fare of the mountains, and granted survival during the hard times of famine and poverty. Chestnut groves having produced plump tasty fruits since the Middle Ages, in Montoggio you will enjoy the unique scent and flavour of chestnut canestrelli, the local version of the mouthwatering Ligurian biscuits made from flour, butter, eggs and sugar.

Honey gives the final touch to a perfect match of flavour and genuineness that becomes your health too, low cholesterol levels representing the added value of this sweet delicacy. Winter is the season to be jolly and taste chestnut pandolce, a dark and scented variant of the traditional Ligurian Christmas cake with candied fruit.

Farmers are actively committed to the preservation of local produce. As for potatoes, they are working at the protection of ancient mountain varieties such as the Patata Quarantina. Grown in the sandy soils of the entroterra, this white-fleshed and fair-peeled tuber is not only rich in natural salts, but also poor in fats. It represents one of the main ingredients of the cuisine du terroir, starring as the protagonist of tasty gnocchi and the second lead of trenette al pesto or baked porcini mushrooms.

Local restaurants, “trattorie” and “agriturismi” present the whole array of Ligurian hinterland cooking, a set of delicatessen you are strongly recommended to discover: delicious ravioli, filled with meat and dressed with meat sauce; delicate pansoti (potbellied ravioli stuffed with greens or herbs) lavishly served with walnut sauce; the ubiquitous (and wonderful!) aforementioned basil pesto, glory of the region and mate of many varieties of fresh and dried pasta (lasagne, trofie twists, trenette and gnocchi); poultry, game and meat (rabbit, chicken, lamb, boar, veal), roasted, fried and baked, and sided by almost any kind of vegetables; scented porcini, mushrooms being one of the precious treasures of the woods; and – last but not least – savoury cheese, a pleasure to enjoy with a slice of fragrant focaccia and a glass of wine.

WANDERING ABOUT

Many are the itineraries that touch Montoggio, their directions different yet crossing this barycentric small town. Those looking for a pleasant and fresh escape from traffic-jammed coastal autostrade would better drive inland along the road that connects Genoa to Chiavari and the Riviera di Levante. Several “slow” routes reach Piedmont, Lombardia and Emilia Romagna. Stop on your way and visit the archaeological site in Libarna, the suggestion of the Roman ruins still solemn and evocative. Otherwise, if you belong to the “shop till you drop” category, you are given two chances: a few miles away, the bustle of the Grandi Firme Outlet in Serravalle, or the selection of designer clothes shops here in Montoggio, for a relaxing tailored experience and a warm welcome. Much more than this, local craftsmen provide handmade watches, their rhythm following the beat of your heart.