

THE WALK TO SASSO DI MUSSO (SANT'EUFEMIA)

ROUTE: from B&B Villa Rosalinda to Sant'Eufemia **DURATION** 2 hours approx **LEVEL:** 200 metres

This is a recommended walk during all seasons, even in the summer because it is quite shaded. It presents an initial stretch in strong ascent (from the Barbignano wash-house) and then continues on a slight slope. Leaving the B&B Villa Rosalinda behind you, take via Scalini and go towards the mountain. At the end of the road, take a slight right, a narrow, short alley (via Gallio) that leads to the hamlet of Barbignano, walking slightly uphill on Via Antica Regina.

At the bottom of the slope opens the square Largo Antonio da Desio, from here you will need to take the small road that continues to the right through the oldest part of Barbignano until you reach an old wash house called "Il pozzo". From this point the path that leads to Sant'Eufemia begins.

This excursion allows you to walk on the route of the ancient Via Regina, so called in honor of the Longobardi Queen Teodolinda who had traveled it and which connected the territory of Como with Switzerland and Germany: at a certain point of the path, in fact, you will see furrows in the rocks probably left by medieval carts.

The route to the church of S. Eufemia presents some very suggestive panoramic views towards the center of the lake and also offers a historical starting point to experience first-hand a place rich in historical and landscape suggestions.

The Sasso di Musso, so called by the locals, is known since Roman times; in the highest part white marble quarries were opened, very used for portals, Roman and medieval buildings; it became a fortified place that reached its peak during the 1500s, when Gian Giacomo de Medici built his castle there.

At the end of 1800 some parts of the castle under the church up to the lake were incorporated and transformed into a fascinating botanical garden called Giardino del Merlo.

The church of S. Eufemia was part of the famous Rocca del Medeghino and for this reason it was much damaged by the constant battles. It was rebuilt in 1622 and now it is preceded by a portico with a barrel vault with a square apse.

Leaving the arcade behind and crossing the lawn below the church, you can continue towards Musso, taking the stepped mule track and then the stone stairs that descend towards the main road. Once on the main road, continuing to the left on the same for a short stretch, you will meet a driveway tunnel. To the right of the tunnel entrance, it is possible to continue the route towards Dongo.



A beautiful stop on the route is a visit to the Giardin del Merlo, whose entrance is located about 20 meters on your left in the road just entered.

It was conceived in 1858 by Giovanni Manzi, a member of the famous Manzi family who had the homonymous palace built in the main square of Dongo, where you can find the Town Hall. Giovanni Manzi's work was then continued by his niece Giuseppina, who took care of and enriched the beauty of the Giardino del Merlo and continued to keep it always open to the very frequent Italian and foreign tourists. Unfortunately, the Garden remained unattended for a long time after his death in 1945. In 2013, fortunately, the Mountain Community council began a restoration of the complex to allow its complete visit. This in brief the history of this place so fascinating and rich in history.

The Giardin del Merlo is today a wild and natural botanical garden with a hundred varieties of plants, realized in a particularly sheltered point of the Sasso di Musso and this position allows to see together with the typical local vegetation beautiful and large plants of prickly pears, palms, eucalyptus trees and fragrant bergamot bushes. Behind its realization in an uncomfortable point there was also a great architectural design skill, the view resembles in a certain sense the Ligurian gardens overlooking the sea, divided into three areas: a central used as a real botanical garden and two others used as a forest. Its scenic beauty is amazing with the wide breathtaking views of the shores and the towns of the Upper Lake: walking along its paths you will find tunnels, ladders, panoramic terraces, small caves.

Returning to the pedestrian street at the bottom of the Garden, you can reach the small port of Dongo. Crossing the main road you will find yourself in Piazza Paracchini, on which stands the magnificent Palazzo Manzi and to the left of this, take Via Scalini to return to the B&B Villa Rosalinda.