

Alta Langa

Landscape Itineraries

EN



LANGHE
MONFERRATO
ROERO

The Home of BuonVivere

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The Home of BuonVivere.

Langhe Monferrato Roero: a series of hills which rise uninterruptedly up to the Ligurian Apennines, among valleys and ridges, castles and towers, art and history, great wines and excellent products. A fairytale landscape that alternates rows of vines neatly combed like gardens with truffle groves, hazelnut groves and the pastures of the Alta Langa. A unique feature that UNESCO has rightly recognized as a World Heritage Site specifically for this cultural landscape which has been persistently created by mankind over centuries of hard work.

A landscape with subtle but significant nuances meant to enhance these itineraries, confident that every corner of this magic territory deserves attention, with eyes able to understand it and feet ready to tread it.

An unhurried journey which, *en passant*, will tell the great story of Piedmont along with the various minor stories collected by the singers (poets, writers and storytellers) of these lands, which were once very poor and harsh, always on the margins of big politics and, at the same time, at the centre of the routes of merchants and pilgrims who moved from the sea to the plains.

These routes will lead you to discover some minor hamlets, often treasure troves of great art, and enchanted villages with just a few houses, extraordinary viewpoints and remote 1000-year-old country chapels, through endless ridge paths like the long hills of the Langa, winding ups and downs among the thousand waves of the Monferrato hills, steep paths in the “canyons” of the



Rocche del Roero and unexpected shores of a sea which disappeared millions of years ago, and yet, still provides fossils and memories.

A journey, as it should be, through one of the most renowned cuisines of the Bel Paese, one of the few that truly succeeds in combining rustic, frugal and cheap dishes with noble wines - red, white and sparkling - which are the genuine

ambassadors of Italian oenology worldwide. A cuisine where the White Truffle, the ultimate gift of a perfectly happy nature, also reigns supreme, the magic that delights gourmets all over the world and that is revealed not through a magic wand but thanks to the generosity of the dog that finds it, and thus confirms itself as man's (and the cook's) best friend.





Alta Langa of the Belbo.

The heart of the Langhe is a green heart in which there are no roads, only paths: the middle course of the Belbo, the most Langhe-like of all rivers. Actually, its headwaters are a Nature Reserve, the only wetland along these hills, where rare wild orchids grow and you can meet all the wildlife of the forest. But as we descend along the Belbo, where the catchment basin of a thousand rivulets becomes a river, and pass through the ancient hamlet of San Benedetto, the road disappears and the river runs wild between steep sandstone walls and woods interrupted only by occasional mills and a couple of bridges which connect the two valley ridges. The valley road reappears only at the thousand-year-old crossroads of Campetto, which ideally separates the Langa of Hazelnuts from that of Moscato or, more literally, the Langa of Fenoglio from the Langa of Pavese.

The most important village, the starting point of our itinerary, is **Bossolasco**, a charming borough with an ancient tradition of hospitality that can be seen immediately in the many thousands of roses welcoming visitors from each and every house and, more specifically, in its cosy environment where the word “accommodation” is easily combined with “charm”. The Parish Church, in spite of its renovations, retains a beautiful atmosphere inside, as does the 17th century Palazzo Balestrino, which still evokes Renaissance forms. There are many panoramic churches, including San Rocco and its southern entrance, and Santa Maria Maddalena, to protect the tiny hamlet of Bossolaschetto, which is perched high above the Belbo river like all the villages on the left-hand ridge.

Next comes **Serravalle Langhe**, with its “twin” hamlet of Villa and the Romanesque Church of San Michele Arcangelo (although with a Baroque façade), the hilltop village overlooking the Langa, and the Former Oratory of San Michele, now embellished by David Tremlett’s work, who has skilfully combined mellow colours with garish medieval frescoes. But it does not end here, Tremlett also signed the renovation of the facade of the Boeri care home for the elderly, still in the centre of Serravalle, as an homage to its guests.

Next, there are three tiny villages, a distillation of pure Langa: **Cerretto Langhe**, Arguello and Albaretto della Torre. The first one, known as the “*pais der balon*” because of its pallapugno tradition (the major sport in these hills overlooking the sea), welcomes us with

its Parish Church designed by Schellino, the gate Tower and the old cemetery, which recalls Spoon River, looking down from its spur on the twin town of **Arguello**, known as the “*pais der cucu*”, or cuckoo’s land, due to the quietness that reigns supreme. To reach it, you have to go down to Belbo and then climb up again to fully enjoy unspoilt nature. Here, the ancient Church of San Frontiniano (dating back to the 10th century) reminds us of the role of monasteries in the civilisation of the Marquisate of Guasto and *Deserta Langarum*, i.e. how these places were known after the invasion of Barbarians and Saracens. The tiny charming panoramic Church of San Michele overlooking Cerretto Langhe, amidst lavender and rosemary, is ideal for a picnic. Finally, we get to **Albaretto della Torre** with its Carretto Tower from where you can enjoy a very special view: half over the Langa of Barolo (with the towers of Castiglione Falletto and Serralunga d’Alba clearly visible) and half watching over the upper hills (where the Tower of Murazzano can already be seen, a clear evidence of the medieval communication system). While in Albaretto della Torre, a thought always goes to Cesare, the *enfant prodige* of all the Langa chefs.

The route continues to **Lequio Berria**, the village where Giovanni Pressenda, one of the last luthiers of the famous Turin school, was born. Today his violins are sought after by orchestras all over the world. In the village there is a rare Italo-Russian collection of soft pastel works, which was started by the Russian Pierre Tchakhotine and by Luigi Carbone, painter from





Lequio, in a twinning arrangement with a similar museum in Jaroslav' in Russia, and which today hosts over a hundred paintings. The pylons of the ruins of the former castle gently lead us to the Sanctuary of the Madonna della Neve, a romantic balcony over the valley of the Berria stream, a wild crevice that separates this ridge from the tiny village of Borgomale.

To get there, however, we pass through **Benevello** (with its Castle and a small country Church, the Santissima Annunziata, which is adored by newlyweds and where legend has it that San Francesco once stopped there). A final detour along the ridge towards Cascina Della Langa, Pavaglione and San Bovo, three of

Fenoglio's places par excellence, evenly divided between "Il Partigiano Johnny" (Johnny the Partisan) and "La Malora" (Ruin). Incidentally, Cascina del Pavaglione novels welcomes fans and readers. The winding descent is misleading: **Borgomale**, with its Castle full of legends and its three stone streets, would seem to lie at the bottom of the valley whereas, when coming from the Belbo, it appears on an unreachable rock: geography here is both complicated and fascinating because you never get the same perspective twice. Here we are in Ponte Belbo and, straight after, we find the soft, sunny slope that from Castino and Bosia goes up the valley in-between terraces and ancient farmhouses. **Castino** was once home to three monas-



teries, the most interesting of them is San Martino which, although private, retains its ancient Romanesque homonymous church. A small ridge road will lead you to **Bosia**, immersed in the woods, and then the provincial road comfortably climbs up towards **Cravanzana**, one of the hazelnut capitals (the other being Cortemilia), with its imposing castle overlooking the houses downtown. We are now at an altitude of almost 600 metres and from here we climb up 100 metres at each village.

Feisoglio, famous for its mushrooms, awaits us with its surprising 15th-century parish church of San Lorenzo, which incorporates an *ecclesia castrii* whose wonderfully frescoed apse has been preserved.

The distance between Feisoglio and Niella Belbo is only a few kilometres, but the valley now opens out onto the sources of the Belbo and, in particular, the endless hill of Mombarcaro. In **Niella Belbo** we find a beautiful panoramic Tower along with the parish church featuring grim late Gothic frescoes and a city gate through which 10,000 Napoleonic soldiers of Laharpe walked in 1796. Furthermore, at the start of the last endless climb we find Madonna dei Monti, one of the most beloved sanctuaries in the Langhe, now on the roof of the world, with its soft Baroque forms (and a medieval heart on the altar). For those who are more secular and romantic-minded,

there is a small ridge road leading to the “Spianata dell’Amore” (Esplanade of Love) spiced up with superstition, legend and a panoramic Big Bench.

But now it is time to go up to the “Peak of the Langhe”, almost 900 metres above sea level, where on the clearest winter days the sea can be seen shining on the horizon, and this explains the name of **Mombarcaro**, a seemingly vertical steep village with stairs and *sternie* (cobblestone roads) enclosed until the 1960s between two pointed arches, with a fine Museo Storico (History Museum) and some of the richest churches in the area. In particular, San Rocco Church stands out,

at the entrance from Niella Belbo, with a series of must-see frescoes including the rare “Cavalcata dei Vizi” (Cavalcade of Vices), which is also present only in San Fiorenzo di Bastia; also the two Churches of San Michele Arcangelo and the Sanctuary of Madonna delle Grazie in San Luigi are noteworthy. Next, there is the remote village of Lunetta, the archetype of every poor but magical stone hamlet, the medieval bridge with its ancient mill now almost in sight of the small Church of San Giovanni set on the edge of the Belbo Springs Nature Reserve (see itinerary Alta Langa of the Bormida to Camerana or itinerary Alta Langa of the Tanaro to Sale). In the Reserve you can go on foot but you



can also ride a horse, a bike and in winter, go with cross-country skis in a surprising and unexpected loop.

The route climbs up to the left ridge and then descends from the Case Bragioli down to **San Benedetto Belbo**, a true pivotal point of the Benedictine settlement in the Langa and the only valley village on the itinerary. This is the Fenoglio village par excellence, the brilliant source of inspiration for his short story “Un giorno di fuoco”, written in two hours under the trees in front of the old “privativa” (local grocery shop) of Placido Canonica (today restored and open to visit) and also for countless tales about “ruin and war and relatives”

which have now transformed it into the eternal dimension of “place of the soul”.

The climb towards the Bossola Pass (wooded junction between Langa of Dolcetto and Alta Langa of the Tanaro) will allow you to catch a glimpse of the hidden little church of Piani, a final, almost secret hermitage halfway up the mountainside towards Mombarcaro.

The Langa of the *Malora* (Ruin) is still before our eyes, while the *Buonora* (chill out time) awaits us at the base in **Bos-solasco**, in front of a glass of Alta Langa DOCG wine and an unforgettable dinner which is as genuine and authentic as the Belbo stone.



Top Art and Culture

- Albaretto della Torre - Tower
- Bossolasco - The Angel of the Alta Langa
- Castino - Cascina Pavaglione and Fenoglio's Places
- Lequio Berria - International Collection of Soft Pastel Works
- Mombarcaro - Fenoglio's Places
- Mombarcaro - History Museum
- Mombarcaro - Lunetta 11
- Niella Belbo - Medieval Tower and Fortifications
- San Benedetto Belbo - The "Censa" of Placido Canonica and Fenoglio's Places
- Serravalle Langhe - Façade of Palazzo Boeri by David Tremlett
- Serravalle Langhe - Per le Langhe (Former Oratory of San Michele)
 - Wall Drawing by David Tremlett

Top Nature

- Camerana, Montezemolo, Saliceto - Belbo Springs Nature Reserve
- Castino - Didactic Truffle-Ground

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The Romantic Road of Langhe and Roero

There is no need to be in love to take it, because you will fall in love with the landscape as you walk along it.

From the Roero to the Alta Langa, passing through the Langa of Barbaresco and that of Barolo: an ideal 11-stage route through the most suggestive places and atmospheres of Langhe Monferrato Roero.





Alta Langa of the Tanaro.

The right bank of the Tanaro river from Ceva to Castagnole delle Lanze is pure Langa. It is actually this river that marks the border on almost three sides of the Langhe hills along with the wall of the Ligurian Alps to the south-east and the small Tinella stream towards Monferrato.

The river once flowed straight towards Turin, but about 100,000 years ago it was “captured” by another watercourse by turning 90 degrees to the right, close to what is now Cherasco, and falling into its current location. The crucial thing to know is that the “capture of the Tanaro” led to the erosion of the whole river basin of what was the former seabed of the proto-Adriatic, rippled by tectonic waves: the lighter parts were washed away while the reliefs of the Langa, Roero and Monferrato emerged, shaped relentlessly by the waters as well as by the winds. Therefore, the bottom of the sea ended up on top of these hills, as proven by the fossils which are constantly emerging in the sandstones.

Our route goes up and down between the cliffs, ridges and dips which open out onto the river, in a relatively varied geography that already overlooks the Monregalese Alps (the ski slopes are clearly visible in winter), boasting towers and castles, as is common to all borders. It is in this marginal and extreme Langa that, *ça va sans dire*, some of the most beautiful surprises are hidden.

The reference centre, and our starting point, is **Murazzano**, “*shield and key of Piedmont*”, a prosperous medieval centre as revealed by the village with its city gates, rich Parish Church, stately mansions and the Carretto Tower right at the top of the old town, in the place of the lost castle (all the towers mentioned in the itinerary are part of the beautiful circuit “*Turris, Piemonte dall’alto*”). There is also the Sanctuary of the Madonna di Hal and, nearby, the only windmill in the Langhe, which was converted from an old watchtower on the Rea. Murazzano is also another important Fenoglio village (you should read at least “*L’addio*”) and the capital of the homonymous sheep cheese, as we will find cheese-makers and sheep everywhere on our tour.

We descend towards Belvedere Langhe (see itinerary Langa of Dolcetto) and then turn towards the twin villages of **Cigliè** and **Rocca Cigliè**, facing each other and recalling one of the many squires of the ancient Langa who evidently had their own little kingdom here. Nevertheless, they were munificent and enlightened

noblemen, as shown not only by the castle and tower, but also by the impressive presence of frescoed churches by the little-known Monregalese School. A school that emerged in the 15th and 16th centuries with a series of remarkable painters (there is a beautiful itinerary, “*Cappelle del Tanaro*”, that will take you to visit them all, including San Fiorenzo di Bastia: an absolute masterpiece). The two villages are truly charming, marked by a most welcome sustainable viticulture, which has added surprises such as Riesling and sparkling grapes for the noble Alta Langa in addition to the traditionally excellent Dolcetto; furthermore in Rocca, since ancient times, bread has always been baked in the public oven every three weeks: what a show!

Nearby you will also find the San Bernardo Shrine, a war memorial dedicated to the Fallen of the 1st Alpine Divisions, the Mauri Autonomous Group, an emotional and symbolic place with the engraved names of about 800 soldiers who died for the Liberation reaching for the sky.

You go past the cylindrical Tower of Castellino Tanaro to the fortified **Marsaglia**, which is slightly further back (with the frescoed Church of San Ponzio in the open countryside), and then on to **Igliano** (the small Churches of San Luigi and San Sebastiano are also very pretty) to finally reach **Torresina**, another timeless village.



From here you can go as far as **Roascio**, retracing the sites of the Napoleonic battles, from Pedaggera to the ruins of the Fort of Ceva. We are immersed in a landscape painted with pastures and fields, hay and sheep, alfalfa and medieval farmhouses, where the *marin*, the salty air from nearby Liguria, carries Mediterranean aromas and delivers unique flavours.

These villages, probably because they are the most remote, they are also the most authentic custodians of tradition. One of them is **Paroldo**, the village of the *Masche* (witches), a local legacy of the great maelstrom of Celtic beliefs which still pervade the whole of Europe.

The Church of San Sebastiano, with its recovered frescoes, and the charming Church of San Bernardino at either end of the village may serve to exorcise the village from the ancestral presences of spirits and goblins, but there is nothing they can do when every year, during the Summer of San Martino, magic and spells are back and, in order to chase away the *Masche*, you have to use the one and only universal antidote: garlic, which is poured into the collective ritual of the truest and most liberating *Bagna Cauda*.

If garlic has a peculiar scent, surely everyone loves the smell of lavender, whose neat fields will take us all the way to **Sale delle Langhe** in a burst of shades

of purple alternating with the blonde colour of enkir, another local glory. The *Prandi arboretum* is worth a visit even if you are not keen on botany, therefore a short deviation to Sale San Giovanni is a must and you can visit the ancient village and the little Church on the four winds of Santa Anastasia, a mysterious Oriental saint about whom there is only this evidence in the Langhe. From Sale you

can also descend quickly to the Belbo Springs Nature Reserve (see itinerary Alta Langa of the Bormida).

The way back to **Murazzano** follows the sublime mountain ridge, almost flying from one bend to the next like a *Masca*, or rather like a fairy. After all, if the Langa of the Tanaro has its own special word, that word will certainly be “magic”.



Top Art and Culture

- Murazzano – Fenoglio's Places
- Murazzano - Medieval Tower
- Paroldo - Sheep and Cheese Museum

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From Tower to Tower

All the charm of the towers. Strong and strategic, yet also noble and aristocratic. These are the towers of Langhe Monferrato Roero, a sighting system which nowadays allows you to enjoy a 360° view of landscapes, while imagining the history that has been written in the place you are visiting. Towers in towns as well on the hills, an ideal tour not to be missed, a journey through the centuries that will surprise us.





Alta Langa of the Bormida.

Originally, there were four Bormida rivers and then two parallel valleys which meet in Bistagno. However, there are also many other minor hydronomes such as Tatorba, Bore and Orba that meet here. This suggests that the Ligurian etymology ‘*bor*’ might refer to water, perhaps the variable-flow water which is typical of raging, ruinous rivers.

Our itinerary runs through the Bormida Valley of Millesimo and starts in **Cortemilia**. To get an idea of the disastrous floods of the last few centuries, which explain the name of the valley, just take a look at the stone on the building of the Cortemilia Magistrate's Court, a silent witness to each event. Augusto Monti, in his masterpiece “*I Sansóss*”, tells how the town's bridge was ‘*weak in the knees*’ and how it eventually collapsed out of sheer desperation for the downstream villages. That is why today the old medieval bridge, built by the powerful Marquis of Cortemilia, is no longer there.

It has been replaced by an iron footbridge connecting the two villages into which Cortemilia has always been divided. On the left bank, San Michele lies at the foot of the mighty fortifications with its tall round tower, the true communication centre of what once was one of the most important marquisesates of the Del Carretto family. And on the right bank there is San Pantaleo, teeming with porticos and marketplaces, the former features a 13th-century Franciscan convent (hence the legend of the Saint's passage through the Langa) and the latter hosts the medieval jewel of the Pieve, a Romanesque masterpiece that preserves mysticism and beauty. Also worth a visit is Monteoliveto,

a terraced masterpiece, now home to the Ecomuseo dei Terrazzamenti e della Vite (Ecomuseum of the Vine Terraces).

Cortemilia, built at the confluence of the river Bormida and the stream Uzzone, controlled then both valleys, as well as the Castino pass towards Alba (see itinerary Alta Langa of the Belbo) and the Gorrino pass towards Savona.

Both valleys we are about to travel through are very fertile and well-cultivated thanks to the unparalleled use of stone terraces for growing cereals, fruit and, above all, vines (hence the highly praised Dolcetto dei Terrazzamenti, one of Piedmont's





many heroic wines) on steep slopes. Therefore, the main colours are the blond of the wheat and of the stones alternating with the green of the crops and fields, hazelnut groves and vineyards: a soothing landscape, rich in history and art like no other Langa, which has been trodden for centuries and centuries by pilgrims and merchants and, unfortunately, also by armies and marauders who destroyed so much. However, to the joy of both eyes and heart, there is still a lot left to see for tourists and locals alike: the Bormida Valley truly holds the Langa's most ancient heart.

We leave Cortemilia by going up the river and its bends to the outpost of

Torre Bormida, perched on a river spur, with the ruins of a mighty castle nestled in the woods and a geography featuring rural houses and farmsteads which embellish the hazel groves. From here, you can quickly go up to Cravanzana (see itinerary Alta Langa of the Belbo), or reach **Gorzegno**, revealing the ruins of its castle: the village is worth a stroll amidst grotesques and inscriptions, the noble style of some houses as well as the Parish Church (the Baroque Del Carretto funeral chapel is remarkable), not to mention the ancient San Giovanni Chapel, before the tunnel, and the Renaissance San Martino Chapel, next to the castle, a real unexpected gem.



The next stop, beyond the Colombi tunnel, is **Monesiglio** (a beautiful, almost forgotten village) where part of Monti's "*I Sansòssi*" takes place and where the last writer from the Langhe, Maria Tarditi, set many of her successful novels. A primary school teacher, she started writing at the age of 70. Her home is now a beautiful museum open to the public thanks to the efforts of the publishing house Araba Fenice. Land of the spinning mill (today it is a delightful Museo della Seta - Silk Museum) and of the imposing Caldera Castle (you should not miss the frescoes by Antonino Ocello da Ceva in the noble chapel), it also houses the most ancient Church in the valley, evocatively named Santa Maria dell'Acqua Dolce:

Romanesque in form, built by the Benedictines around 1000, it features frescoes with clear Byzantine influences.

Here comes **Camerana**, which hides its best features in the isolated village of Villa, with its tall Tower, the only vestige of the Incisa castle dismantled in the 1930s, and within the many hilltop churches, one more panoramic than the other (from San Paolo to San Grato and Santa Caterina). Camerana, with the neighbouring village of Saliceto, is one of the gates to the Belbo Springs Nature Reserve (see itinerary Alta Langa of the Belbo), and a paradise for those who enjoy walking along the ancient medieval paths (it takes two days to get to the sea).

Actually, **Saliceto** itself, with its beautiful Renaissance Castle, is already a Ligurian village, at least in the chessboard-shape of its old town consisting of narrow lanes, archivolts and central alley. Whereas for the church we go all the way down to Rome. Here, in fact, the right-hand man of Julius II, Cardinal Carlo Domenico Del Carretto, commissioned an extraordinary Bramantesque Church, one of the four in the whole of Piedmont (we will see the second one in Roccaverano, see itinerary Langa Astigiana in and around Roccaverano), whose façade is all decorated with esoteric symbols, including the blasphemous baphomet of the Templars. This has led to countless speculations and fantasies which make Saliceto the Rennes-le-Château of the Langhe. Beyond the village, right on the border with Cengio, you go up to the 16th-century Sanctuary of the Madonna della Neve, an unexpected stone hamlet immersed in the woods where, if you want to walk, a medieval *sternia* (cobblestone road) will take you along the ancient mule track from Saliceto Alto to Santa Giulia and Carretto, past the Bric Baraccone: today these are isolated places, but they are truly steeped in history.

If you are more interested in the Middle Ages rather than the Renaissance, then you should go back to the small hamlet of Lignera to see San Martino, where every inch of the Romanesque apse was skilfully frescoed by the anonymous masters of the Monregalese School at the end of the 15th century.

We climb up past the ancient Pieve di Gudega (today's Sanctuary of the Assunta), a charming hermitage in the woods, to **Gottasecca**, one of the

temples of *balon* (here is famous the local champion Bertola, with 14 championship titles to his credit), with the ruins of the tower which today are the ideal place to enjoy an immersive experience in the silence of the woods.

Our route now goes back towards Cortemilia, this time taking the path along the ridge. Now it is all downhill to Bricco della Colma, with the beautiful Bosco dei Faggi (Beech Wood) to be visited on foot, to perceive the surreal vision of **Prunetto**. An imposing and intact Castle overlooks a sheer cliff above the few houses, and next to it, the Sanctuary of the Carmine stands out and preserves ancient forms, medieval frescoes and all the spirituality expressed by this timeless place.



In just a few bends the trail leads to **Levice**, an unspoilt chessboard set on the south-facing slope, with the Gothic paintings of the tiny San Rocco Church awaiting travellers and the maze of narrow streets to be explored without haste, while enjoying the atmosphere and details such as the Romanesque bell tower of the Parish Church.

Finally, we get to the last village in the Bormida Valley, though one of the most famous: **Bergolo**, the *stone village*, with its rich cultural programme, the small Romanesque Church of San Sebastiano watching over the village, the impressive Ezra Pound Memorial reminiscent of Celtic megaliths and a stunning view over both valleys.

It is time to descend towards the Uzzone Valley: the road is steep and narrow, but it is worth taking it as it goes down almost vertically to **Pezzolo Valle Uzzone**, the only village on the valley floor, very well kept, with the main street conveying the atmosphere of a fortified village. As you leave towards Castelletto it is worth mentioning the evocative San Rocco in Carpaneta, a curious little church overlooking the river and its rock.

The route runs green and relaxing through a scarcely anthropized and very pristine environment. The best features about **Castelletto Uzzone** are definitely the Cascina Crocetta, a place for education and cultural activities, next to San Luigi, near the Bosco dei Faggi (Beech Woods),





the imposing Palazzo Gaiero, still in Renaissance style although of later date, and the hamlet of Scaletta, the last village in the valley, hosting a mansion where a Pope once slept.

The Uzzone Valley ends at the foot of the Bric Baraccone (where the stream has its source), while after a few bends the road goes up to the ridge: beyond it there is the Liguria region of Cairo Montenotte whereas, turning left, you can run along the ridge again and, once past the hamlets of Santa Giulia and Gorra, you reach, just like new pilgrims, the Sanctuary of Todocco, the furthest place in the Langhe.

The road continues lazily to **Gorrino**, a hamlet of Pezzolo Valle Uzzone, an ancient fortified village with valuable churches (above all San Martino and San Rocco) and city gates, with a stunning view over the green valley. Finally, following the small Via Piovero, you can take a wide panoramic tour among the terraces and farms along the ridge and then descend back to **Cortemilia** near the Pieve.

It is quite an extensive route that can easily be split into two stages, also if you just need an excuse to spend an extra day in the “ancient heart of the Langa” and make it beat in unison with yours.



Top Art and Culture

- Bergolo – Chapel of San Sebastiano
- Bergolo - Ezra Pound Memorial
- Camerana - Medieval Tower
- Cortemilia - Fortified Complex and Castle Tower
- Gorzegno – Fenoglio's Places
- Gorzegno - Museum of Talking Stones NASC
- Gorzegno - Remains of the Castle and Chapel of San Martino
- Monesiglio - Caldera Castle and Chapel of Sant'Andrea
- Monesiglio – Little Museum of Langa - House of the writer Maria Tarditi
- Monesiglio - Silk Museum
- Pezzolo Valle Uzzone - Sanctuary of the Madonna della Divina Grazia del Todocco
- Prunetto – Castle and Sanctuary of Madonna del Carmine
- Saliceto - Castle of the Del Carretto Marquises
- Saliceto - Church of San Martino di Lignera

Top Nature

- Camerana, Montezemolo, Saliceto – Belbo Springs Nature Reserve
- Castelletto Uzzone, Prunetto - Bosco dei Faggi (Wood of Beech Trees)
- Cortemilia - Ecomuseum of the Vine Terraces

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Unexpected treasures

Churches of the Network “Langa Medievale”

Arguello – Church of San Frontiniano

Cerretto Langhe – Chapel of Sant’Andrea
(or Dei Disciplinati)

Cortemilia – Church of Madonna della Pieve
or Parish Church of Santa Maria

Cortemilia – Former Convent of Friars Minor
or Complex of San Francesco

Gorzegno – Church of Madonna della Neve or of San Giovanni

Levice – Chapel of San Rocco

Monesiglio – Parish Church of Santa Maria dell’Acqua Dolce

Serravalle Langhe – Chapel of San Michele Arcangelo

www.langamedievale.it

Orange Flags

Villages certified by the Italian Touring Club.

A recognition of excellence developed from the grass-roots, thanks to the attention paid to hospitality, sustainability and the environment. A flag that is flying in many Italian municipalities, with an increasing number in the Langhe Monferrato Roero area every year.







Langa Astigiana in and around Monastero Bormida.

The area of the Bormida Valley in Asti region is almost all gathered around the endless hill of Bric Puschera (852 mt.), enclosed in the embrace of the two Bormida rivers which meet not far away, in Bistagno.

A breathtaking scenery is revealed with every bend here, sometimes it looks unreal, sometimes it is simply beautiful. On one hand visitors are spellbound by the view over the Alessandria plain and by the pattern of the many pre-Appennine valleys reminiscent of an embroidered lace, on the other hand they are mesmerized by the other Langhe hills which lie in front of its gullies and are protected by its towers and by this final ascent. The white teeth of the Alps and the dark teeth of the Apennines enclose this peculiar view of a world which is defined by its ancient boundaries, and yet it is totally new in its developing realities.

Our itinerary starts right at the bottom of the valley which at first glance seems sunken and dark, as if it is meant to make the magnificent Castle of **Monastero Bormida** shine, with its medieval humpback bridge and the charm of a village that still echoes its past glories.



Augusto Monti, Pavese's teacher at the D'Azeglio high school in Turin, an avowed anti-fascist and author of the epic "*I Sansóssi*", the story of his family through three generations, was born in Monastero Bormida. A must-see is also the grand historical Polentone (similar events are also held in Cassinasco, Bubbio, Roccaverano and Ponti), a traditional festival which combines rites and meanings dating back to ancient times.

The route goes past the rural village of **Sessame**, almost near Bistagno, and up through fragrant woods and unique viewpoints (above all Roncogennaro)

to **Cassinasco** (see itinerary Langa of Moscato). The village is worth a walk up to the Tower, that is what remains of an ancient castle, on whose esplanade today you can admire a panorama without equal. After leaving the ridge of the Belbo Valley, you return to Valle Bormida, to reach **Bubbio**, a pleasant rural village, with its neo-Gothic castle.

Next, we cover a short stretch along the valley floor to reach **Cessole**, a very steep, almost vertical village, as can be seen by the curious two-storey church of the village. From here, we plunge back into the most unspoilt countryside,

towards the Sanctuary of the Madonna della Neve, which is famous for its smoked ravioli, served unflavoured in a napkin and given to pilgrims. Further on, there is the small Chapel of the Madonna del Deserto from where we go down to Tarditi and finally climb up the wide and fertile hill of Roccaverano.

The small capital of the Langa Astigiana, **Roccaverano** (see itinerary Langa Astigiana in and around Roccaverano), awaits us with its characteristic square overlooked by the Bramantesque Church, the marquis' palace and the imposing 36-metre cylindrical Tower.

The itinerary continues from here and leads us to the perfect square Tower of **Vengore** which has been controlling the Spigno Bormida Valley for eight centuries, and then, instead of going down to Denice, we turn towards the Tatorba Valley and return to **Monastero Bormida** (between Roccaverano and Vengore there are several beautiful paths descending towards Tatorba).

These routes reach some of the best producers of Robiola di Roccaverano and it is worth spending whole afternoons there exploring and tasting, including, as a bonus, the spectacular evening milking of the lively goats.





Top Art and Culture

- Cassinasco - Tower of the Ancient Castle
- Monastero Bormida - Castle and Bell Tower
- Monastero Bormida - Romanesque Bridge
- Roccaverano - Parish Church of Maria Annunziata
- Roccaverano - Quarelli Art Park
- Roccaverano - Tower and Remains of the Castle
- Roccaverano - Tower of Vengore

PLEASE NOTE:

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Big Benches

The small idea with giant effects.

Climb aboard and look at the world through the eyes of a child. You feel so small in the presence of such beauty of nature, these are the emotions ready to pervade you once you have climbed up. A circuit of over 100 giant benches, created by the American designer Chris Bangle who is in love with the Langhe region, and that are just waiting to be discovered and experienced.





Langa Astigiana in and around Roccaverano.

The Langa Astigiana is the last Sinaitic Langa (to quote Fenoglio) with its remote and unspoilt watchtowers, ancient chapels, terraces which bring some order to the impervious woods, its forgotten villages where goats prance around and where one of Italy's most extraordinary cheeses is made.

The landscape here is both a surprise and a guarantee, as is its little capital **Roccaverano**, where everything is exactly as it should be, except for a Bramantesque Church that you would not expect (it was built in 1509 and commissioned by Bishop Enrico Bruno, treasurer of Julius II, and Cardinal Del Carretto did the same in Saliceto in the same period).

The square is the perfect setting for any Shakespeare play, it is a true medieval backdrop completed by the surviving façade of the Marquis' Palace and enhanced by the imposing 36-metre cylindrical Tower. The same square also hosts tasting and educational workshops for the Robiola di Roccaverano DOP cheese, a unique and inimitable masterpiece of goat's milk, as are the herbs which are blessed by the *marin*, the warm Ligurian wind that blows here full of nostalgia and suggestions.

We continue on to San Giovanni, on the eastern side of the hill, to admire the frescoes of the Master of Roccaverano (who was also very active in Spigno, Murialdo and Calizzano) and see, probably, the last medieval cemetery in the Langa; just enough time to take a look at the colourful sculptures of the Quarelli Park before descending through a semi-lunar landscape of crumbling gullies until you get to the ridge of **Mombaldone**, the only village in this valley in the province of Asti. It's the classical archetype of all medieval villages with its distinctive city gate, stone houses gathered around a single street and the Del Carretto Palace (the castle is no longer there).

From here, following a beautiful path through the woods to the hamlet of Garbaoli, you go back along the ridge ready to reach Bric Puschera and the small village below: **Serole**, which is famous for a gravestone that celebrates the victory of Lepanto. The road "*meanders*" around the jagged hillside until it eventually arrives near Cortemilia (see itinerary

Alta Langa of the Bormida) and then continues on to Perletto, going right past the Pieve and Monteoliveto, a terraced masterpiece which is now home to the Ecomuseo dei Terrazzamenti e della Vite (Ecomuseum of the Vine Terraces).

Here, once again, the vineyards decorate the sunny slopes, while the Tower of **Perletto** suddenly emerges from the ridge, it is the centre of another ancient and well-ordered stone village: the cemetery Church of Sant'Antonino is a must, while the walk towards Olmo Gentile, following one of the oldest cart tracks in the Langa, is optional.

Next, we go down to the Excelsior, the landing strip built by the partisans for the British pilots, a story which is told in the beautiful Museum of **Vesime**, our next stop. We have crossed the Bormida and the left bank is definitely steeper, but the climb from the Town Hall up to the romantic ruins of the castle will pay off.

Now we go back to **Roccaverano** on the main road, the one that gently climbs between country chapels (above all the cemetery Santa Maria and the panoramic San Bartolomeo high up on the hill), centuries-old hamlets (the Masionti are probably the first settlement). The two stops along the ridge are **San Giorgio Scarampi** with its tower and **Olmo Gentile** (with a tower too) which actually look like two paintings rather than two villages and are rigorously imbued with ancient hospitality, which is truly emotional.





Top Art and Culture

- Perletto - Fenoglio's Places
- Perletto - Medieval Tower
- Roccaverano - Parish Church of Maria Annunziata
- Roccaverano - Quarelli Art Park
- Roccaverano - Tower and Remains of the Castle
- Roccaverano - Tower of Vengore
- San Giorgio Scarampi - Medieval Tower
- Vesime - Langa Stone Museum
- Vesime - Partisan Airport Museum

Top Nature

- Cortemilia - Ecomuseum of the Vine Terraces

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Perletto – Cemetery Church of Sant'Antonino

Roccaverano – Church of San Giovanni Battista

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LANGHE MONFERRATO ROERO

The Home of BuonVivere

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