

NOCETO: INFORMATION FOR TOURISTS

“*Paths are formed by traveling ..*” (Franz Kafka)

No quotation could better introduce this map showing the natural, historical and cultural treasures of our area. These itineraries are intended to encourage people to rediscover the local environment, its nature, history, culture and traditions, and provide opportunities for further study as well as enjoyable leisure. Tourism needs to develop in harmony with the resources of the attraction, and it is our hope that these efforts will succeed in emphasizing awareness and respect for our surroundings in communicating the ‘memory of place.’

Carlo Rabaglia (Head Councillor for Tourism)

Fabio Fecci (Mayor of Noceto)

Thanks are due to the following for their help:

National Academy of Mountain Bike Guide Devis Bottazzi is available for all illustrated cycling itineraries.

For guided tours of all illustrated sights: Registered Tourist Guide Francesca Reia. Cell. 347-2364937,

<frareia@libero.it>

Gastronomic excursions including meals and tasting sessions can be organized together with sightseeing!

Noceto

The area covered by the ‘*comune*’ or local authority of Noceto is bound on the east and west by rivers. To the west, the Taro marks the boundary with the areas of Parma and of Collecchio, and to the east the Parola stream marks the boundary with the two *comuni* of Fidenza and Salsomaggiore. To the north, Noceto is separated from Fontevivo and Fontenellato by the main Via Emilia road (SS 9) and to the south lies the *comune* of Medesano.

There are three distinct areas in the *comune*: flat land to the north, foothills and upland plains crossed by rivers and streams flowing from South-west to North-east in the area of Cella, Costamezzana and Borghetto, and hills with outcrops of clay and marl in the southern part.

How to reach Noceto

By car: From Milan or Bologna exit A1 Motorway at Parma Ouest junction and follow the signs. From La Spezia, exit A15 Motorway at Parma Ouest junction. Noceto lies on the SP 357 road between the Via Emilia road (SS 9) and Fornovo.

By bus: Hourly weekday service from Parma. Timetables and information: www.tep.pr.it or Tel. 800 977966.

By train: Stations at Parma and Noceto.

By air: Nearest airport “Giuseppe Verdi” in Parma. Information: www.aeroporto-parma.it

Contents

Notes on the history

The Centre of Noceto

Via Francigena Pilgrims’ Way

Around Noceto

Mansions

Tower Houses

Traditional Farmhouses

The River Taro Park

Local Specialities

Notes on the history

The first human settlements in the area go back to the Palaeolithic times, when the oceans were receding from the land. The first civilisation was the Terramare, and these early Bronze age people built small settlements in the area. It is thought that the Romans conquered the area in 183 AC, the year that Parma was founded. Several settlements dating from the first empire period have been found in the Noceto area. The first evidence of a stable community is the bequest by Queen Cunegonde, widow of Bernard King of Italy, of land in Noceto to the St Alexander Monastery in Parma, which is documented as taking place in 836. In the 10th Century, several fortifications were built in the area, including a castle in Noceto. The village and surrounding area became the property of the Este and then of the Pallavicino family. In 1345 it passed to the Sanvitale family until 1416. Next followed a period of instability, and ownership passed from fiefdom to fiefdom until 1447, when Noceto was conquered by the Rossi, although the castle stayed in the hands of the Sanvitale family. The two families squabbled over the property, and although interventions were made by both Sforza and Farnese families, the castle stayed in the hands of the Sanvitale until 1805 when it became state property. In 1795, Noceto became a *comune* or municipality, and the at the beginning of the 19th Century it became part of the Dipartimento of the River Taro. Under Marie Louise of Austria, it was part of the Duchy of Parma, and in 1859 it went to the state of Piemonte. In that year, the institutions of Mayor and Municipal Council of Noceto were reactivated and

local elections took place. In the 19th century, the people mainly worked the land or were artisans, and although living conditions were basic, there was also trade and small industries. At the beginning of the 20th Century, local people were affected by widespread social upheaval and took part in the great farmhand strike of 1908. Economic growth led to the widespread mechanisation of farming; animal farming was revolutionised and crop growing became increasingly rational and scientific. Small factories and artisan workshops were set up. Currently Noceto is the home of several important factories and the number of people working the land is in continuous decline.

THE CENTRE OF NOCETO

The feudal lords of the *signorie* fiefdoms were mainly interested in exploiting the fertile land, and there is little medieval architecture in the village. There was probably a wall around the castle, joining Via Gramsci, Via Baratta, Via Solferino, Via San Martino and Via Saffi. There are some typical views of the centre between Piazza Garibaldi and Piazza Repubblica, and the old back-to-back houses and characteristic arcades with 'shop eye' windows are of interest.

La Rocca (Castle)

The present buildings date from the late 15th Century, and stand on the site of a small fort going back to the 10th Century, which was destroyed and rebuilt during the 14th Century. Originally owned by the Sanvitale family, in the 15th Century it was taken over by the Rossi who owned several castles in the area, and at that time took on the appearance it has today. It consisted of an irregular square with a rounded tower at each corner, a keep, and a moat and drawbridge. To the left of the main nucleus there is another three-storey building with basement. The castle was much altered over the centuries, and the double moat and drawbridge removed. The well-kept garden in the inner courtyard dates back to the original structure.

Castello della Musica (Music Castle)

The castle enshrines the history of Noceto, and in 2005 was rechristened the "Music Castle." The Milli Room, used for exhibitions and conferences, is on the ground floor, reached through the historical garden. The 'noble' or first floor of the castle houses two museums. The *Museo della Liuteria* (Violin making museum) houses a big collection of bowed and plucked stringed instruments made by the local master craftsman Renato Scrollavezza and other members of the *Liuteria Parmense*, the Parma Area Violin Makers Academy. The rooms inside the tower are home to the *Scuola Internazionale di Liuteria* (International Violin Making School) founded in Parma in 1975 and now one of the most important schools in Italy. The *Museo del Disco* (Record Museum) contains a collection of vinyl records (78 and 33 rpm) bequeathed by a local sports journalist, Bruno Slawitz. There are three sections; historical, opera and symphonic music. The records can be listened to at the workstations.

The castle is the headquarters of several musical associations: *Cantori del Mattino* choir, the *Podio* and *La Banda* brass band.

Town Centre

The Caffè Centrale in Piazza Garibaldi stands on the site of the St Bernardino Chapel built by Count Gilbert Sanvitale in the first half of the 15th Century. Unfortunately the chapel was completely destroyed and no pictures or reproductions have been found.

Next to this, on what is now the site of the bank Cassa di Risparmio di Parma e Piacenza (Cariparma) once stood the Teatro Sociale, inaugurated in 1896. It became a cinema in 1934, but was torn down in 1968 to make way for the bank.

La Castellana (now Via San Martino)

Artisans and servants of the local lord were lodged in this street, where the original layout of the centre can be still seen. It led into the Porta Castellana which linked the castle to the church and the surrounding countryside across a drawbridge.

The Parish Church of St Martin

The first written evidence of a church in Noceto is 3 February 1162. It was also mentioned in the 1230 '*Rotulus Decimarum*' and appears in the fresco paintings by Bembo in the *Camera D'oro* (Golden Chamber) of Torrechiara castle executed in 1462. By the 17th Century, the old church had become too small for the growing population, and a new one was built between 1692 and 1754. A new façade and side naves were designed by Ferdinando Leonardi in 1875. The interior was first decorated in 1905, and again in the 1950s by the Furlotti brothers. The baptism font and its chapel were the work of Piero Furlotti in 1942. The church contains eighteen notable works of art, including the large 'St Martin on Horseback' by Francesco Scaramuzza (1832).

The Crypt of St Francesco

To one side of the church, under the rectory, the crypt can be reached through a small gate and down some steps. It contains some notable historical treasures including the baptism font from the early church and an ancient arch which at one time stood over the canal turning the watermill near the church. A 1162 document reads "*Fecerunt finem de quarta cuiusdam molendini parte, posita in Noceto prope ecclesiam.*" There is also a wheel used before electricity to power the organ bellows (1780) and the clock from the clock tower of 1754.

Viale delle Rimembranze (Avenue of Remembrance)

This avenue was opened on 15 July 1923, and on each tree a memorial and photograph of a soldier fallen in battle was displayed. At each end of the avenue, two large air bombs symbolise the destruction and devastation of war. The Chapel of the Fallen, built in 1927 and blessed 4 November 1934, is situated in the centre.

Monument to the Fallen at Nassiriya

Placed at the centre of the roundabout at the entrance to the village, this commemorates the Italian soldiers killed at Nassiriya while engaged in the UN peacekeeping mission. Sculptor Francesco Vaccarone shows a white dove with an olive branch in its beak, unable to fly because of its broken wing. It was unveiled on 22 May 2004.

Monument to Pope John Paul II

This monument is located in Robert Baden Powell Park, named after the founder of the Boy Scout movement. It is dedicated to the memory of Pope John Paul II, a figure of peace and brotherhood for the Christian world. It consists of two large bas-reliefs in white Carrara marble by Francesco Vaccarone and was unveiled on the first anniversary of the death of John Paul II, 2 April 2006.

The Terramare devotional pool

This extremely significant archeological discovery, which brought to light hitherto unknown aspects of the early Terramare civilization, was made on the southern side of Noceto in 2004. It consists of an enormous underground vat, lined with wood, measuring 20 x 14 m with a depth of 4 m, dating from the 15th Century BC. A large number of different items were found at the bottom of the vat. These consisted of objects in daily use such as cups, vases and ceramic bowls, as well as objects probably used in rituals such as miniature vases and figures of animals. Three wooden ploughs and animal remains including fragments of skull, horns and jaws of domestic animals, and two stag antlers, were also found. Once restoration and excavations are completed, the vat and its contents will be put on permanent display at the "B. Pelacani" Cultural Centre which is planned to include this new museum together with the local "Don L. Milani" library and the "Moruzzi" Theatre in Via Boni e Gavazzi.

The Printing Museum (Via General C.A. Dalla Chiesa)

On display is machinery from the old printing press "La Grafica Nocetana" which opened in Piazza Umberto 1 (now Piazza Repubblica) on 1 April 1989. There is also antique machinery from other printing presses in Italy, as well as millions of characters and pieces such as margin stops formerly used in printing and typesetting.

Zanfurlina Park

This covers 85 thousand square meters and its footpaths and three cycle tracks are in constant daily use by Noceto citizens and sports clubs for exercise and training. It can be reached from Via Berlinguer and Via Amendola.

The cycle tracks, named after Noceto citizens, are:

"Franco Moruzzi and Renzo Colla" (765 m long, 4 m wide) Runs through grassed areas, past a children's play area.

"Mauro Menoni and Enrico Camogli" (400 m long, 4 m wide) Lit up at night.

"Path for Health" named after a group of former runners, goes from the park through open countryside up to La Rampa area of Noceto, and constitutes a safe alternative to the SP 357 main road.

LA VIA FRANCIGENA - Pilgrims' Way: Kings, saints, pilgrims and crusaders in the Noceto area.

The Via Francigena was one of the main arteries in medieval Europe, and numerous post houses still visible along the way confirm its importance in subsequent centuries, when it was used by traders as well as pilgrims. Recognised as a Council of Europe Cultural Itinerary in 1993, the Via Francigena became an object of historical geographical and anthropological research and a cultural and religious tourist attraction for Jubilee Year 2000. Two important branches of the Via Francigena ran through the Noceto area. One went from Fidenza, the crossroads of Europe, along the existing Via Emilia road into Parma. The other branch went from Fidenza to Medesano and on to Fornovo where it crossed over the River Taro. From the sanctuary, the way ran across Borgo San Donnino, as Fidenza was then called, through Coduro, where there was a shelter and St Leonard's church, then left the Via Emilia to climb up the Parola valley, to the small villages of Santa Margherita and Borghetto. Here there was one of the small priories in the Parma area founded between 1150 and 1200 by the Casa Dei Monastery in Alvernia in France, to offer assistance to their own brethren and other pilgrims journeying to Rome. After Borghetto, the Via Francigena went to the Rio Grande and the Church of St James, and the Araldo Hostel run by the Benedictine Monastery of St John in Parma. A little further on, at what is now Bombodolo, stood the Church of St Michael, which was under the jurisdiction of the Cathedral of St Mary in Fornovo. The road then ran through San Lazzaro near Noceto, where there was a lepers' colony and shelter run by the Tuscan Valleombrosa Monastery. The small late Romanesque oratory can still be seen today. The road then ran to the Benedictine priory on the Recchio stream with the Church of St Stephen. This is cited in a parchment document of 1230 as the richest church in the Parma area belonging to the hospitaller monks of San Bartolomeo di Linari. Hospitaller monks from Altopascio ran the St James hospice at Medesano as well as two hostels situated on the bridgeheads of Fornovo and Ponte Taro on the River Taro. The road continued on to Felegara where there was another hostel run by

the Altopascio monks at the Parish Church of St John Baptist. There was a ford over the river Taro nearby, and the pilgrims crossed the Taro shortly after Felegara and arrived in Fornovo, where shelter was provided by the Friars of "Domus di San Nicolo." Known as the "Tau Monks", these friars built a new bridge on the remains of the old Roman one, traces of which can still be seen on the river bed today.

The second main branch of the Via Francigena ran from Fidenza to Parma along the Roman road the Via Emilia, then named "Strata Claudia" and later "Strata Romea." After the fork between the two branches at Coduro, it ran past the ancient hospital at Parola and to the large house at Sanguinaro, where there were two foundations run by the Knight-Monks of the Order of St John of Jerusalem. One was the hospice of the "Wood Mansion", with its Church of St John Baptist, and the other was the hospice attached to the Church of St Simon and St Jude the Apostles. The certificate of donation of this hospice read "to receive the poor and the powerless, pilgrims healthy and sick." In a niche of the church at Sanguinaro a medieval fresco showing St Christopher bearing the Child Jesus shows that the church was frequented by pilgrims. St Christopher symbolised pilgrimage and together with St James and St Rocco was the protector of pilgrims and travellers. The Via Francigena then ran past the old hospice of "Rivo Battibove" and Church of St Biagio to the side of the Via Emilia, on land belonging to the Church of St Martin in Noceto. The Church of St Biagio, however, was directly run by the Holy See. In the vicinity of the River Taro, pilgrims could find shelter at "Burgeto del Taro" (Castelguelfo) a late Roman posting station, where Benedictine monks from Vezelay in Bourgogne in France ran a shelter and the Church of St Mary Magdalene. From here, pilgrims proceeded to Noceto, Medesano and Fornovo following a local road of Roman origins. Alternatively they could cross the Taro and follow another branch of the Via Francigena on the right bank of the river.

AROUND NOCETO

Sanguinaro

It was suggested in the past that Sanguinaro took its name from a bloody battle fought in the times of Federick Redbeard (1152 - 1199) when enough blood was shed to turn the water mill, but in reality the water is red because of iron ore in the soil in the area above the village. The small Church of St Simon and St Judas, built at the beginning of the 11th century and first cited in a document of 1080, is of great significance. It has retained the original apse area, although it was considerably altered over the centuries. The paintings on the conch date back to the 14th Century, and the fresco painting of the Madonna and Child between St Simon and St Judas dates back to the 15th Century. The apse was restored and decorated in 1578 by Alessandro Burzio, a Knight of Malta. The Romanesque crypt in stone and brick is divided by columns into three naves which each lead into a small apse. The priest's house against the church dates back to 1910. In medieval times there were two shelters in Sanguinaro for the accommodation and refreshment of passing pilgrims, and the vocation of Sanguinaro is still visible in the remains of a fresco in a lateral arch showing St Christopher, the protector of pilgrims and travellers together with St Rocco.

Castelguelfo

It is known that the castle belonged to the Fieschi family in the 13th Century, but its origins are uncertain. Thanks to its strategic position along the Via Emilia, it was razed to the ground and completely rebuilt several times over the centuries. It belonged to the Da Corregio, Rossi, Pallavicino and Terzi families before coming into the hands of the Farnese, who turned it into a luxurious residence during the 16th Century. The building today is the result of early 20th Century restoration.

Church of St Mary Magdalene

Founded by Benedictine monks from Vézelay in Bourgogne, this Romanesque church was first mentioned in 1230 as the Ecclesia de Burgeto de Taro. There is evidence that it once included a shelter for pilgrims. Considerably altered over the course of time, the church was restored to its original form by the priest in 1935. The beautiful apse is decorated with 15th Century frescoes.

The River Taro Bridge

The first bridge over the Taro was built in 1170, but was destroyed by severe flooding in 1235. The force of the waters prevented another bridge from being built, and boats were used until the 19th Century. Only in 1816 did Duchess Maria Luigia decree the building of today's bridge, which was started in 1819 and opened in a grand ceremony in October 1821. In 1828, a marble statue was added to each corner of the bridge; these represent the four main rivers in the Parma area, the Parma and the Taro facing Parma, and the Enza and the Stirone facing Fidenza.

Borghetto

An important station on the Via Francigena, Borghetto was the site of a hostel for Pilgrims. The first mention goes back to the "*Capitulum Decimarum*" of 1230, and there is more precise evidence of a St Peter's Church in the 16th Century. This building was replaced by the present church in the first half of the 18th Century. It consists of a central nave leading into four Baroque side chapels, and contains 18th Century works of art. The bell tower was partially rebuilt in 1948, and the façade restored in 1949. There is also a small chapel dedicated to St Anthony of Padua, and a devotional chapel belonging to the local landowners Lalatta-Costerbosa in the area.

Costamezzana

This small village in the hills was the birthplace of Biagio Pelacani, 14th- 15th century philosopher, astrologist, physicist and mathematician who taught at the universities of Bologna, Padua and Paris before settling in Parma. He is commemorated by an inscription to the right of the central portal of Parma cathedral.

The Castle

Started by the House of Pallavicino in about 1374 to defend their fiefdom, the castle had fortified walls and was surrounded by a moat. Completed in 1389, it was attacked but not taken by the rival Rossi in 1403. In the 17th Century, the castle and surrounding land was ceded to the Comune di Parma and subsequently passed into private hands. Few remnants of the original building can still be seen; these include the round tower, part of the external wall and the imposing square keep. Today the castle houses a small restaurant.

Parish Church of St Peter the Apostle

Built between 1909 and 1917, the main feature of this building is the Byzantine style façade. In the interior, frescoes by Noceto painter Pietro Furlotti (1954) show the Baptism of Christ, the Last Supper and the martyrdom of St Agatha. An imposing flight of stone steps dating from the 1960s leads down into the piazza in front of the church.

Hostel

Housed in the old primary school, the hostel offers accommodation to up to 23 guests in a simple but functional setting. Reception, kitchen, refectory and doctors' surgery are on the ground floor, and five bedrooms with bathrooms and lavatories are on the first floor. A lift is available.

The Gambarone water mill

This large building dates back to the first half of the 16th Century and has been privately owned since the beginning of the 20th Century. The Sanvitale family inaugurated its activity in 1867, and in 1964 the old machinery was replaced with a modern cylinder mill. The wheel is turned by the Duke's Canal. On the front wall an iron sculpture of a large crayfish (*gambarone*) holding an ear of maize in its claws symbolises the work of the miller.

Cella

Cella consists of scattered farmhouses in farming countryside. These include several 'Tower houses' dating back to about 1100. Fossilised shells found in the area show that it was once covered by the ancient Padano sea, and Bronze age remains of Terramare civilisation are the earliest evidence of human habitation. The *Rotulus Decimarum* of 1230 is the first written evidence of the existence of Cella.

Church of the Assumption of St Mary

The parish church of the Assumption of St Mary in Baroque and Classical style dates from the 17th Century. Inside there is a fine 17th Century altarpiece decorated with cherubs and caryatids.

St Mary of Gisolo

At the bottom of the valley, under Costamezzana castle and protected by at least six tower houses, lies the church of St Mary of Gisolo. The buildings are today houses and consist of a religious building with saddleback roof, an open bell tower and a majestic tower house. The building was cited in 1227, and was probably built by the Knights of the Templar from the Church of St Thomas Beckett in Cabriolo. Until the end of the 14th Century, this area was of great strategic importance. According to legend, Frederick Redbeard and his troops buried some important treasure here before the Battle of Legnano in 1166, and various unsuccessful attempts have been made to locate it ...

Pieve di Cusignano

The remains of a Neolithic settlement of pile-dwellings have been found in this area. For centuries the land was used for farming and dotted with fortified farmhouses and tower houses. Salt extraction took place in Salsomaggiore. The Church of St John the Baptist was cited as a rural church with baptistery in 1005, although the original building was completely erased in the 18th Century. Recent restoration work has revealed eight Romanesque columns. The bell tower dates from 1841. In the interior there is a 17th Century oil painting of the local Parma school showing St John the Baptist.

Cabriolo

The Pieve di Cabriolo, a small rural church dedicated to St Thomas Beckett, Archbishop of Canterbury, lies 3 km from Fidenza on the road to Tabiano. Founded 12 - 13th Century it was annexed to administrative buildings of the Knights of Malta. The apse with splayed single lance arches is original. In the interior in the single nave, there are fragments of 14th Century frescoes showing the Holy Trinity, Archangel Michael, the crucifixion and saints. An 18th Century portrait of St Thomas Beckett is of note.

Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin of the Graces at Montemanulo

From the centre of Pieve di Cusignano following the minor road to Banzola, a small road leads up to an oratory. "Monte Maculo" is first cited in a document of 1203 as "*pertinentis Cusiniani*" comprising scattered houses, woods and fields.

A small oratory dedicated to St James existed in the 15th Century, and the cult of the Madonna probably started in the early 18th Century when the first miracles were reported. Don Ercole Pallavicini, chief priest of Pieve di Cusignano, was cured of gout after a pilgrimage to the sanctuary, and built the first shrine on the miraculous spot where he had prayed for three days. A small pronaos was added during restoration in 1819. The Greek cross shape goes back to 1915, and the stele with statue of Mary Help of Christians was added in 1959.

Tabiano Castello

Tabiano Castello dates back to the 11th Century when it was built on the remains of a Roman settlement. As a military fortress under the Pallavicini, it was used mainly to control passing traffic on the Via Francigena and to defend salt production nearby. The imposing castle built on an outcrop of rock overlooks the village and an elaborate defence system. The 13th Century watchtower with the main drawbridge entrance to the castle, the 12th Century circular ramparts to the north and south and the castle walls all bear witness to its history. Tabiano Castle today is privately owned and inhabited, and the village has become a farming centre as well as tourist and gastronomic attraction.

Maestà shrines

Many of these shrines, small chapels or kiosks, are found in the village and surrounding countryside. The name 'maestà' is derived from the Latin 'Divinae Maiestat Sacratum', often abbreviated to D.M.S., inscribed on religious monuments. Sites range from niches in walls, drinking fountains, over doorways and corners of large buildings and squares in towns, to roadsides and crossroads in the countryside where they were way-markers or signs for passers-by. The decoration and design are of no particular significance, but the shrines bear witness to the strong religious faith of the local people.

The River Taro Park

The Region River Park was instituted in 1988. It covers about twenty km. of the river banks for a total of about 3000 hectares between the villages of Ponte Taro and Fornovo. It is active in the conservation of the wide riverbed and surrounding area, particularly the many species of bird which cross the area during migration. Trees and plants include the Purple osier (*Salix purpurea*), and there are thickets of Lombardy poplar (*Populus nigra*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Dogrose (*Rosa canina*) and Common dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*). Birds include the Common tern, (*Sterna hirundo*), the rare Stone curlew (*Burhinus oediacnemus*), the Red-backed shrike (*lanius collurio*), the Long-eared owl (*Asio otus*) and the Nightjar (*Caprimugus europaeus*).

Tower Houses

These medieval houses were built with a tower to allow danger to be seen from a distance. The design is so similar that it is thought that these houses may have been subject to early building regulations under the Pallavicini. Each of the three or four quadrangular floors consists of a single room, linked by an internal staircase. Animals and farming equipment were kept on the lower floors, and storage and living quarters were on the upper floors. At the top of the tower, there was often a pigeon cote which could also be used to watch the surrounding countryside. Examples can be seen at Case Arduini along the road to Gabbiano, Costa Morini, Torre Dardani and Casa Vecchia along the road to Varano and Casa Malvisi and Casa Merlini along the road to Costa Benna.

Traditional Farmhouses

Many old style farm houses can still be seen in the Noceto countryside. They usually comprised two storeys; the kitchen and various other rooms were on the ground floor while upstairs there were bedrooms for married couples, women and young children. Older children often slept in the hay loft. In the vicinity of the house there was usually an oven, a well and sometimes an underground cellar, as well the hay loft over the stable. In summer, people spent most of their time in the fields, and cold winter evenings would be spent in the stables where the warmth from the farm animals meant less wood had to be burnt. The stable was the centre of social life where meetings were held and daily tasks such as threshing wheat, making baskets, mending tools etc. were carried out.

Mansions

Many large residences were built in pleasant and convenient spots around Noceto from the 17th Century onwards. They were often surrounded by parks for hunting or outdoor pursuits.

Villa Pegolotta (now Corte S. Biagio) (Via Emilia)

Built by the Rossi family, dates back to the end of the 18 Century. A private chapel dedicated to St. Nicholas was attached. It was called Pegolotta until 1821, when it became known as Villa Manara del Groppa.

Villa Zobolo (Via Medesano)

Surrounded by a beautiful park, this mansion is set on a hill gently sloping down to the road to Medesano. Dating back to the 16th Century, it is one of the oldest mansions in the province of Parma. It is two stories high and is topped by a gable with a clock and small belfry. Wrought iron railings on the three central windows bear the coat of arms of the House of Zobolo

Villa Borsi (“La Commenda”) (Via della Commenda)

This mansion dates back to the 17th Century and probably belonged to the Sovereign Order of the Knights of Malta and St John of Jerusalem. It has two storeys with a row of small windows under the eaves. The entrance on the main side and the double coat of arms sculpted at the top of the central window are of note.

Villa La Galvana (Via Galvana)

This mansion, which was adjacent to a park of 250 *biolche*, was probably built as a hunting lodge at the time of the Farnese rule. The building was used as a convent and belonged to the Sanvitale family until 1612, and was then used as a summer residence by the Jesuit community of St Rocco in Parma. It consists of three buildings, the oldest of which is to the right of the 18th Century arch leading into the almost rectangular courtyard. On one side there is a small chapel dedicated to St Anthony Abate and St Ignatius by the Jesuits in the 18th century.

Villa La Vigna (Via Vigna)

For many years owned by the House of Sanvitale, this mansion was surrounded by a park of 505 *biolche*. It comprises a central rectangular building with a row of nine windows. The side wings were added to a design by Petitot and with their eight windows apiece, give the mansion a total of twenty-five windows at the front. The neoclassical building is majestic, the neoclassical lines broken only by terracotta tiles in the central aperture, which is topped by a high curb roof with a triangular gable.

Villa “Case Bruciate” (Via Case Bruciate)

This was built in the 18th Century on the site of a 17th Century building. The building follows a rectangular plan with a first floor and a buttressed base. Next to the mansion is a small chapel dedicated to the Holy Trinity and the Assumption of Mary the Holy Virgin, built in 1759 on the site of an older 17th Century chapel.

Villa Bombodolo (Via Bombodolo)

This was an old country house which was enlarged to become a summer residence. It dates from the beginning of the 17th Century. It is almost rectangular and comprises two storeys with three slightly protruding corners and a small bell. A Gothic chapel at the edge of the garden is dedicated to Mary Help of Christians.

Villa Lampugnana (La Costa)

The current two storey building was enlarged from a 17th Century house. The interior boasts mosaic flooring of French manufacture, and decorated panels showing 19th Century Romantic landscapes.

LOCAL SPECIALITIES

Thanks to the many walnut trees in the area, Noceto has long cultivated the tradition of Nocino walnut liqueur. A newer speciality, the Gheriglio, is a dark chocolate filled with Nocino cream.

The traditional recipe for Nocino (1 litre), handed down from generation to generation, is as follows.

24 green walnuts

1 litre 95% proof alcohol

600 grams sugar

dry white wine

12 cloves

1 stick of cinnamon

Peel of one lemon

Cut the walnuts into four. Place all ingredients in a wide-mouthed jar. Seal the jar with wax and leave to macerate for forty days, shaking occasionally.

Filter through white cotton.

Within living memory, the area around Noceto was full of walnut trees, and all roads leading into it were lined with the trees right up to the edge of the village. The last road like this to disappear was the road to the river Taro.

When I was a child, my grandfather used to wake me up before dawn and take me to pick the walnuts in the miraculous dew that had fallen on the Eve of St John. We used to go to the nearest bank of the Canaletto Stream where there were big age-old walnut trees. My grandfather would pick the walnuts for himself and others, and take them to his neighbours while they were still wet with dew. The neighbours would already be up waiting. They would take the walnuts and start the top secret preparation of their Nocino liqueur. It was a ritual!

“Ricette di gastronomia nocetana” Rino Faccini