



Muculis: *In the local variety of Friulian, muculis indicates the earth mounds rising along the banks of the river Tagliamento.*



This first circular route, touching on some of the best environmental and artistic features of our municipality, represents a new way of experiencing the territory.

It can be carried out on foot or by bicycle. It gives an opportunity to revisit famous sites, and to pass a few hours walking along the "grava" [Friulian for gravelly ground]. At the same time one can appreciate the natural and artistic beauties of our Spilimbergo.

The project which has been financed partly by law n. 482/1999 is an occasion for the visitor, who pays a visit to the town and its monuments, to explore the particular naturalistic *habitat* that surrounds our town.

Our wish is that anyone who is looking for a new quality of life, more in contact with nature, can appreciate and respect what has been handed down from previous generations. For them the river Tagliamento was a source of sustenance, thanks to its resources, but also an opportunity for games and adventures, initiations into an adult world and life.

The Mayor
Dr. Renzo Francesconi

Council Member for Cultural Identity
Marco Dreosto



route

- 1 Depart from the Student's House (*Casa dello Studente*) [start of the route];
- 2 descend along via degli Alpini or by the short cut towards the Technical Institute for Agriculture (*Istituto Tecnico Agrario*);
- 3 Botanic Gardens and naturalistic path in the grounds of the Technical Institute for Agriculture; proceed towards the Aquila sports ground (*Polisportiva Aquila*);
- 4 Church of the Ancona; proceed along via Tagliamento; proceed towards the cemetery in the hamlet of Baseglia;
- 5 Church of Santa Croce; proceed towards the centre of Spilimbergo; go along via Filanda Vecchia; turn right up via Percoto and then left into via Corridoni;
- 6 Public Gardens;
- 7 Mosaic School; continue left along viale Barbacane; turn left into via Valbruna;
- 8 Palazzo di Sopra (now the Town Hall); turn into via Vecellio; turn left into via Jacopo da Spilimbergo; pass by the Eastern Tower (*Torre Orientale*);
- 9 arrive at the Cathedral Square (*Piazza Duomo*);
- 10 The Arcade (*Loggia*);
- 11 The Castle; pass by the Cathedral along via Beato Bertrando; via Cinta di Sotto;
- 12 Park of Villa Businello; via Duca d'Aosta; proceed along via Beato Bertrando until you reach the Student's House.

1» Student's House

The building is owned by the municipality and was created as a space intended for students. After the earthquake of 1976 the *Casa dello Studente* became a multipurpose structure which presently houses a communal canteen, an auditorium with 126 seats, the adult education institute, a community centre for the elderly and the musical institute Guido Alberto Fano.

A large parking area is situated in the adjacent square. Part of it is a fully equipped campervan stop, free of charge.

The ample parking area is also a perfect place to leave one's car and start the route.

2» Technical Institute for Agriculture

Science, technology and professionalism... in the middle of the parkland. The *Istituto Tecnico Agrario* was founded in 1976 as a branch of the Conegliano Ag-



ricultural Institute. In 1980 it obtained its autonomy developing itself in a short period of time, under a technical and experimental outlook.

In 1982 it settled in its present location, in an optimal habitat, furnished with the most modern structures and equipment, undertaking a leading role in the primary sector of the area.

The Botanic Gardens were inaugurated in 1991. They extend over a surface of c. 1300 square metres. They contain almost all of the most important plants which can also be found in local private gardens. A pond used for the cultivation of aquatic species is positioned in the centre of the park.

In 1995 the Technical Institute for Agriculture incorporated the Professional Institute for Commerce. In 1997 they were joined by the Technical Institute for Industry and together they form the Institute of Higher Education of Spilimbergo. The outdoor sports grounds, the greenhouses, the wine-cellar and the agricultural farm complete the educational grounds.

3» Botanic Gardens and Naturalistic Path

The planting of the trees and shrubs, present in the Botanic Gardens, dates back to the spring of 1987. The Gardens display species that integrate perfectly with the landscape of the pebbly banks of the river Tagliamento: field maple, common hornbeam, hop hornbeam, mulberry, common juniper, elm, black alder, plane, white poplar, Lombardy poplar, pedunculate oak, linden and black locust.

In 2007 a naturalistic path was creat-

ed beside the Botanic Gardens, in the north area of the school buildings. Several shrubs which grow at the foot of the mountains were collected and planted here: honeysuckle, European cornel, lantana and sea-buckthorn.

4 » Church of the Ancona



The little church is dedicated to St. Sabida, a female saint whose origin can be traced back to pre-Christian cults, in connection with the flow of the river. It was built correspondingly in the spot from which a wayfarer, after crossing

the Tagliamento ford, would undertake a climb towards the village. In 1597 it was dedicated to the Virgin Mary of Mercy, venerated as a protector of those who have crossed the ford of the river unharmed. The wayfarers of the time, who arrived at Spilimbergo across the Tagliamento ford, stopped in this temple to thank the Virgin for avoiding dangers, such as loss of load, drowning or other incidents. Many would place an “ex voto”, which have been preserved to the present day in the parochial archive.

The church has been restored and extended several times. It was heavily damaged in the earthquake of 1976, and in 1978 it regained its ancient splendour. Because of its charm and striking position, the locals consider the Ancona a church of lovers.

4.1 “Odd green oranges”

“Anyone who at the beginning of autumn descends from the sports ground to the small Church of the Ancona will be surprised by the presence of odd

‘green oranges’ on the edge of the road. They have a coarse skin and a very strong scent. They fall from the long thorny hedge which marks the boundary of the Castle of Valbruna [Casa Spilimbergo di Sopra, now the Town Hall].

The temptation to pick one of these ‘oranges’ in order to show them to friends, or to guess its name, is naturally irresistible... because that ‘fruit’ is a real curiosity...

This plant [the Osage orange, *Maclura aurantiaca*] has very resistant and workable wood. It was imported into Europe in 1818. It was very popular for a short while when it replaced the mulberry tree, which was attacked by insects, *Diaspis pentagona*, in the silkworm nursery...

By examining the hedge of Ancona... and considering the important fact that it is growing in the grounds of a building in which the nursery ‘Eredi Giulio Ciriani’ for the production of silkworm seeds operated from 1873... the conclusion can be drawn that the plants were arranged to form a long thorny barrier along the

foot of the slope and could, if need be, provide leaves for silk worms.”

Taken from *Storie di alberi, storie di uomini. La Maclura aurantiaca* (Stories of trees, stories of people. The *Maclura aurantiaca*) by Gianfranco Ellero, *Barbacian XIX*, nr. 2, December 1982.

4.2 Vegetation of the river banks

Vegetation still grows spontaneously on the banks of the river Tagliamento: oak (*Quercus petraea*, *Quercus rubra*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*, *Ostrya carpinifolia*), manna ash (*Fraxinus ornus*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), black alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), European cornel (*Cornus mas*). The black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) is particularly numerous. Trees like hazelnut (*Corylus avellana*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*) are infesting the area and are thickly interwoven so they do not permit easy access to the river banks. A rich undergrowth of flowers and mushrooms also grows on these river banks.

Text by Bruno Sedran.

5 » Church of Santa Croce

The Church of the Holy Cross is in the hamlet of Baseglia. Inside, the choir is decorated with a cycle of frescos about the “True Cross” (1544-1550), works of



Pomponio Amalteo, a pupil and son-in-law of Pordenone.

A large Crucifixion is depicted in the left part of the choir, while other stories of the True Cross are visible on the walls and in the lunettes of the choir: *Christ in Glory*, doctors, sibyls, prophets and angels. A canvas in the wooden altar depicting Christ crucified is attributed to Gaspare Narvesa and is of great importance.

On the façade, St. Christopher is depicted on the left side of the entrance. It is thought to be the work of a follower of Amalteo.

6 » Public Gardens

The Public Gardens were created following a recent division into plots of an ex property of the family Cedolin, where once a 19th-century villa stood. By doing so, the municipal authority was able to safeguard some very old trees, including a few holm oaks, a couple of cedars, a Japanese cedar and a horse chesnut.

7 » Mosaic School

The Friuli Mosaic School was created in 1922 and is unique in the world, training young artists originating from Italy and abroad. The mosaic art consists of composing an image with decorations and geometric designs, using small “tiles”;

made of natural stones, terracotta or vitreous paste. The tiles are cut by hand and fixed on a layer of cement or mastic. Wall and floor decorations, created by artists who undertook their education in this school, are displayed in several parts of the world. The School can be visited every day during the month of August, or by request any other time of the year.

8 » Palazzo di Sopra

The first records of the Palace date back to the beginning of the 14th century. At



that time, following a patrimonial division, bishop Fulcherio was granted the Valbruna circle of walls along with the money necessary to construct a castle and a moat.

The fame of this palace is connected to the fact that it housed the seat of the Parteniana Academy between 1538 and 1541. This was an institution supported by the nobleman Adriano of Spilimbergo and run by Bernardino Partenio.

The present aspect of the palace can be traced back to a series of alterations carried out between the 16th and 17th century. After the huge damage caused by the earthquake in 1976 the structure was abandoned. It has only recently been brought back to its original splendour, with an accurate restoration.

It has to be pointed out that the stucco in the halls on the ground floor was decorated by G.B. Piccin. He worked in Spilimbergo in the 2nd half of the 18th century.

The surrounding panorama makes this site even more striking. From the adjacent terrace built during the recent re-

construction one can admire the "grava" and the bed of the river Tagliamento, the town of San Daniele and the mountains all the way to Carnia. The palace is presently used as the municipal seat.

9 » Cathedral of Santa Maria Maggiore

The Cathedral, dedicated to St Mary Major, was built from 1284 in Roman-



esque-Gothic style. Noteworthy is the access portal carved by Zenone da Campione (1376) in the middle part of the nave. The art works inside the Cath-

edral are numerous: the apse frescoes (Episodes from the Old and New Testament, 1350-1380), painted by artists connected to Vitale da Bologna. Cherished are the works of Giovanni Antonio Pilacorte, a Lombard stone mason who opened a workshop in Spilimbergo at the end of 15th century: the baptismal font (1492), lecterns, the St. Andrew Altar and Carmine Chapel (1498). Of great importance is the stoup (a basin for holy water) (1466).

The organ dominates the central nave. It was decorated by Pordenone (1524): the Assumption of Mary on the outside panels, the Fall of Simon Magus and the Conversion of Saul on the inside panels, stories of Mary and Jesus on the panels of the cantoria.

Other significant renaissance works are situated in the crypt (altar of St. Leonard, c. 1472) and in the Chapel of the Rosary, which houses a *Presentation at the Temple* by Giovanni Martini (1503) with a frame which, amongst its intricate plants, contains the images of the Mysteries of the Rosary, and a *Madon-*

na of the Rosary with a Child and St. Dominic (1626-1627) by the painter Gaspare Narvesa, a pupil of Titian.

10 » The Arcade (Loggia)



The *Loggia* (also known as the *pergola*) is positioned on the left side of the Cathedral Square. It's a beautiful Gothic-Venetian building (14th century). Its portico (entrance with

columns) and the façade are decorated with a trifora (a window separated in three apertures by pillars etc.) and monofores (windows with a single hollow).

The building was extended with an extra floor and transformed into a theatre in 1844-45, renovated in 1865 and restored in 1950-51 to house the municipal offices.



11 » The Castle

It was built to watch over one of the most important fords on the river Tagliamento by the family of German origin, Spengenberg, who settled in Friuli around the 13th century. Later it became the property of the lords of Spilimbergo, who soon became very rich and powerful and gave their name to this area.

Buildings from various eras form the Castle, the 15th-century painted palace with beautiful Gothic and Renaissance triforas stands out. Its façade is decorated with scenery frescos attributed to Andrea Bellunello, who worked in



Spilimbergo between 1469 and 1475. The major part of the Castle was reconstructed after a disastrous fire in 1511. On many occasions it has

hosted sovereigns and other prelates who passed through Friuli. In 1532 the emperor Charles V stayed there. Presently the complex is partly privately owned (including a restaurant) and partly owned by the municipality.

12 » Park of Villa Businello

The park is located in the vicinity of the ancient 14th-century Church of the Friars (*Chiesa dei Frati*), and primary schools. The site was part of an ample area situated between the old walls and the town moat that were demolished in the 2nd half of the 19th century. Villa Giulio De Rosa was built in the same location. The grounds of the villa contain a park, a vegetable garden, a meadow, which are crossed by a ford coming from a barbican.

Several different types of trees were planted, as was the habit of that time. Some of them survive until the present day: *Taxus*, *Magnolia* and *Cedars*. In 1920 the complex was bought by Pietro Businello, a merchant who lived in Morocco. He introduced some exotic species that have developed well.

In 1971 the entire complex became the property of the Municipality of Spilimbergo, which demolished a number of farm buildings in order to broaden via Cinta di Sotto and the parking area. The



reconstructed villa was granted for use to various associations. Later it became a school and magistrate's seat. Presently it houses the Department of Social Services, the Cultural Office and the Youth Project.

The park is equipped with a playground and is open to the public. It contains around thirty catalogued tree species. Due to its central position it is very popular.

Text by Bruno Sedran.