

After the quiet walks described in the past issues, we propose now a more challenging and spectacular track, through breathtaking views between mountains and sky.

ON THE PATH OF WONDERS

A PATH TO S. VALENTINO HERMITAGE AND CIMA CÒMER



The excursion to the hermitage of S.Valentino is a must for everyone wants to know not superficially Gargnano inner territory. The starting point to S. Valentino is Sasso, a part of Gargnano we can join in two ways: walking from Gargnano, from Via Crocifisso (close to Gargnano main church) or by car, taking the road to the mountain part of Gargnano (Valvestino, Magasa). Once in Sasso, we cross the settlement until the “fountains” and then we take the mule track marked with n.31, joining the little church in about 40 min. In alternative, for those who want to front a more challenging and unusual path, we offer the chance of a climb to the hermitage on a recently re-opened and equipped track which, from **Sisèngla** locality (always Sasso), through

pinnacles and slopes gets to the quiet flat where the little church lies. We must say from the beginning that this climb is not for everyone: you need to be fit, don't suffer highsickness and be trained to walk on the mountain. This path was used in the past to get quickly to S. Valentino and from there to Rasone and Briano. In the past decades, because the general forsaking of the mounts, has been forgotten getting into decadence. Only since few years has been re-discovered and introduced in the Low Garda Tracks System which connects Salò to Limone. Subject of restoring from Forest Department in 1996, now the track has been improved with the setting of steel ropes who allow us to proceed in security even in the most exposed and steep parts.

TO S. VALENTINO

From Sasso, fraction of Gargnano (550 Above Sea Level) we take the road which passes in the lower part of the built-up area heading to Sisengla locality (road mark n.30). After crossing a terraced area, we pass a small valley where the road ends and the pathway starts. Then we cross, another small valley (400 a.s.l.), surmounted by reddish rocks going uphill to an evident trellis. Looking over, climbing seems the only way to go on but pursuing, the trail sort out in a steep but not difficult way. The path, a while after a junction, leads to a stony ground; we cross it on its lower part and we can notice curious writings on the rocks: Micro, Elena Scontrosa, Topolino (Mickey Mouse)... fantasy names to mark challenging climbways, prepared by young amateurs Of course this is not our track, and we go on following the red/white signs on our way: a steel rope helps us to pass the most difficult parts in security. After an easy stony part, we join a rocky “spur”: this is the first view point from which we can see the wonderful show of the lake. All around the vegetation is scarce and stunted however, in the repared folds of the rocks, we can notice ilex trees, one of the mediterranean symbols, locally said “èlés”, which grows here at almost till 1000 meters: a record. This is due to the water and the white rocks that reflects sunrays keeping this spot green also during the cold season. Further on we get to another prominent point from which we can glimpse, nestled the small, white compound of S. Valentino. The view, from here, is impressive,



as we are surrounded by disgregating spurs and rocky walls. We go on and we join a narrow gorge, which must be passed using the security ropes. This is one of the most dangerous parts of this trail. A little effort and we are on the bank that surrounds the hermitage (770 a.s.l.) S. Valentino is a small jewel of privacy. These small rooms, the chapel, the fireplace, the small tank, under or sometimes enclosed in to the rock wall are highly suggestive. Lots of visitors get here by the usual path, most of them writing their names and thoughts on the guest book inside the chapel. The hermitage, according to the tradition, have been built by the people escapet the 1630 pest, which in this place found recovery from the contamination. In XIX century, the compound became home of Geremia Palladini, a hermit arrived from the Venetian side of the lake, who lived here for long time, doing the place bigger and better: we can see a rough silhouette of him in a frame at the chapel.

THE CLIMB TO “THE FINGER” AND CIMA COMER

After a deserved rest, we can choose if to go back by the normal “Palina” mule track going to Sasso or go on with the climb.

If the weather is nice, of course, it’s worth to take the path on the right of the church to join Cima Comer; here also, security cables help us to proceed easily. Almost 15 minutes after, we get to the highest point and a panoramic pulpit, hanging on the lake, which offers us the view of the path we have just taken between the rocks, the terraced hills of Montegargnano and the crest of Monte Castello: different views that form an extraordinary ensemble.

Slightly down, a rocky spur rises from the cliff, like a gigantic thumb and therefore named “the Finger”, dominates the hermitage, giving us a very uncommon point of view. Joining it requires a 10 minutes deviation, to descend the slope and climb up the Finger again helped by security cables (820 a.s.l. - hrs 0,25 /1,40).

Heading to Cima Còmer, we coast “*La Spiasa*” (the Square), a short flat stretch (the only one in the area), allowing us to draw breath untill we meet the road mark 31 that ties Sasso with the top.

The track is now easier and, also if the climb is challenging, we can walk relaxed, following the crest of the mountain without the risk of missing the path.

Entered the deep chestnut wood, after an av. 30 minutes walk, we join a shady widening, besides the small *Val di Scalve* stream, normally dry. We now get to a junction: taking the left we can join the Alpini’s hut, nestled in Briano’s grassy greens. The Hut is unguarded and it’s only opened during holidays, except in winter. Taking the right, we go on the *Path of Wonders*, coasting the crest on a binding but suggestive track which leads us, through breathtaking

views, up to the top.

By the track, we meet another green near a hunting shelter, one more junction to the Alpini Hut and finally, after a 30 min. climb, the summit of Mount Comér, marked by a wooden cross on a pile of rocks (1279 a.s.l. - h 1,00/2,40).

Cima Comér, because of the central position, is one of the most beautiful panoramic points of the Garda; from here we can dominate the whole lake and Mount Baldo massive and its ice-generated gorges, so close that we have the impression to touch them; on the right, further on, the chains of mountains decreasing to the Adamello between visions of greens and woods. In the evening, after a summer storm or during the cold winter days, when the air is clear, the sun sets in front of us, behind the Pizzocolo silhouette, painting the sky with supernatural colours.

In those moments, at an attentive glance, we can spot at the horizon, the Appennini Mountain chain, while lights mark the coast, 1200 m below us.

After the respite, we suggest the descent on track n.32, heading to **Briano** and the **Alpini’s hut** by the internal path and the woods. Just under the hut, we meet the tar road and, taking the left, we descend on track 31, which will lead us to **Sasso** (hrs 0,50/1,30). The well-trained trekkers, which climbed directly from Gargnano still have an hour to visit **Musaga and Via Quarcina**, along track n.37 or taking the track n.34, direction *Val dei Paroi* (where the road to *Sisèngla* ends); another choice is to go to *Sisèngla* and descend to *Il Pis*, then to *Via Crocefisso* (track mark n.30. In this case, consider a 1,15 hour time).

ATTENTION

In the stretch *Sisèngla - San Valentino*, up to “*the Finger*”, a special attention is required to avoid to cause rock falls.

An helmet is suggested and trekking boots are highly recommended. It is also to avoid the climb during heavy rain periods, which can take losing stones off the cliff; or during the summer, because the high temperature of this south exposed trail.

This excursion, if done enterely, is suitable only for fit walkers.

The one who wants to join Cima Comér in an easy way and without heavy efforts, can join Briano directly by car and park along the tar road under Alpini’s hut.

From here, we can get to the top in 40 min. following the path n.32.

