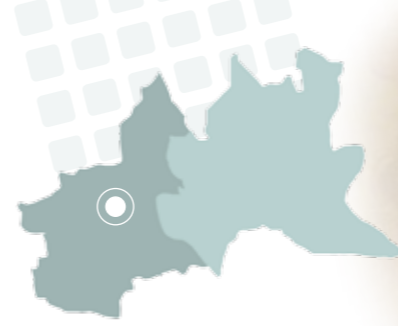




# Sacro Monte of Belmonte



**SACRO MONTE DI BELMONTE**  
 Surface Area: 349 hectares  
 Elevation: 400 - 700 metres  
 Environment: hilly

## PROTECTED AREA AND ENVIRONMENT

The hill of Belmonte features a single granite outcrop in the Canavese territory. From its summit, one can admire the spectacular view embracing the plain of Ivrea, up to the hills of Turin. This area has a great archaeological value with findings from a prehistoric site probably dating back to the Bronze Age and remains of a barbarian settlement from the Longobard period in addition to significant testimonies of the Roman and high-medieval periods. Confirmed evidence about the Sanctuary dates back to the XII century and starting from 1602 it was held by the Franciscan monks who in the following three centuries supervised the construction of the chapels of the Sacro Monte. The aediculae are inserted in a landscape of plateaus and woody, rocky hillocks creating a picture of exceptional beauty. The mount summit vegetation is strongly influenced by the introduction of ornamental species, but there are also rare plants typical of cool zones, among which the *Osmunda regalis*, a flowering fern, and a carnivorous plant, *Drosera intermedia*. The Sacro Monte di Belmonte is a protected area of Regione Piemonte (1991) and since 2012 it has been part of Ente di gestione dei Sacri Monti.



Photo E. Perino

Access to the Sacred Mount is free of charge

**HOW TO GET THERE**  
 By car: motorway A5 Turin - Aosta, exit San Giorgio. Follow indications for Rivarolo, Cuorgné, Prascorsano.  
 By train: Bus, connections with Turin. Info: [www.gtt.to.it](http://www.gtt.to.it)  
 Info: Local public transportation: PRONTO TPL - tel 800333444  
<http://prontotpl.5t.torino.it/>  
 On foot: ancient pedestrian path from Valperga (1 hour walk) (F)

**INFORMATION**  
 Ente di gestione dei Sacri Monti  
 Riserva speciale del Sacro Monte di Belmonte  
 Ex Manifattura - Via Ivrea, 100 - 10082 CUORGNE' (TO)  
 tel +39 0124 510605 - fax +39 0124 514114  
 info.belmonte@sacri-monti.com  
<https://www.sacrimonti.org/en/sacromonte-belmonte>

**Sanctuary (E) and Franciscan Monastery of Belmonte (D)**  
 Località Trucchi 22 - 10087 VALPERGA (TO)  
 Sanctuary Belmonte - tel +39 0124 617204 - e-mail: [santuariodibelmonte@gmail.com](mailto:santuariodibelmonte@gmail.com)

**Tourist Office (Ivrea)**  
 tel +39 0125 618131 - info.ivrea@turismotorino.org - [www.turismotorino.org](http://www.turismotorino.org)

**SERVICES**  
**Hotels and Restaurants**  
 Ristorante Belmonte - tel +39 0124 617205 - +39 349 42 14 965  
[rist.belmonte@live.it](mailto:rist.belmonte@live.it) - [www.ristorantebelmonte.it](http://www.ristorantebelmonte.it)

**Guided Tours**  
 Service on reservation at Riserva Speciale Sacro Monte di Belmonte  
 tel +39 0124 510605 - info.belmonte@sacri-monti.com

**MUST SEE**  
 Museo Archeologico del Canavese - [www.cesmaonline.org](http://www.cesmaonline.org)  
 Castle of Aglié - [www.residenzereali.it](http://www.residenzereali.it)  
 Ivrea industriale city of the XX century - [www.ivreacittaindustriale.it](http://www.ivreacittaindustriale.it)

**LINKS**  
 Comune di Cuorgné - [www.comune.cuorgne.to.it](http://www.comune.cuorgne.to.it)  
 Comune di Pertusio - [www.comune.pertusio.to.it](http://www.comune.pertusio.to.it)  
 Comune di Prascorsano - [www.comune.prascorsano.to.it](http://www.comune.prascorsano.to.it)  
 Comune di Valperga - [www.comune.valperga.to.it](http://www.comune.valperga.to.it)  
 Ente di gestione delle Aree protette dell'Area Metropolitana di Torino  
[www.parchireali.gov.it](http://www.parchireali.gov.it)  
 Unesco Italy - [www.unesco.it](http://www.unesco.it)  
 Regione Piemonte turismo - [www.visitpiemonte.com](http://www.visitpiemonte.com)



Ente di gestione dei Sacri Monti (legal seat)  
 Documentation Centre of the European Sacred Mounts, Calvaries and Devotional Complexes  
 Cascina Valperone, 1 - 15020 Ponzano Monferrato (AL)  
 tel +39 0141 927120 - fax +39 0141 927800  
 info@sacri-monti.com - <https://www.sacrimonti.org/>



## HISTORY

The Sacro Monte of Belmonte stands above the town of Valperga (706 m. a.s.l.), in the province of Turin, at the entrance of Valle Orco (Canavese area), in a position offering a breathtaking view of Piedmont. Constructed following the will of the Franciscan Friar Michelangelo da Montiglio, who after spending time Palestine, called to work local artisans and artists to realize the devotional complex. Started in 1712, the Sacred Mount was completed only a century later, maintaining however a certain unity in its architectural composition. The monumental complex includes a sanctuary of medieval origins and thirteen chapels dedicated to the Passion of Christ. The chapels wind along a circular path through an oak wood and century-old chestnuts and large reddish granite rocks. The aediculae feature a linear and essential profile. The chapels all feature the same construction structure with a hall, a round or quadrilateral plan, preceded by a pronaos from which one can admire the sacred scene, portrayed by terracotta polychrome statues. From an artistic standpoint chapel n. 1 *Jesus Condemned to Death*, n. 8 the *Pious Women* and n. 11 *Crucifixion* represent the most important. The majestic panoramic position of chapel n. 6 the Veronica makes it worth a visit, although the sculpture group has long been lost. Recent renovation works have brought to light the original decoration frescoes of three chapels and restored the statues, work by the ceramic masters of *Castellamonte*. Among the frescoes, worth mentioning is the one dedicated to *Jesus nailed to the cross*, painted with a light and delicate touch by an unknown artist, presumably from the Lombard school.

## FAUNA AND FLORA

Among the mammal species populating the protected area are roes, foxes, boars, badgers, dormice and squirrels. 36 insect species of Ropalocer lepidoptera, daily butterflies, are also present and among amphibians are salamanders, frogs and toads. Common reptiles are green lizards, colubers and wall lizards. Over 80% of the Reserve territory is covered by woods, prevalently chestnut coppice mixed with durmast specimens and ashes in the northern area. The underbrush is populated mainly by ferns, purple moor-grass (*Molinia Caerulea*, tall weed) and woodrush, while the slopes exposed to the north feature blueberries and hard fern. Along the Livesa stream are the damp areas with black alders, tracts of wild hazels, ashes, an area with forest chestnuts a area mixed with robinia. Among the uncommon species is the royal *Osmunda*, a 30 - 150 cm tall fern with a cob-like inflorescence, blooming between June and July, which also grows in the damp areas. Vegetation bordering the *Sabbioniere* areas include heathers and purple moor-grass. The more exposed sides feature terracing with drywalls testifying the use of a large piece of hilly land for agricultural cultivations, vineyards, stable meadows and vegetable gardens till a few decades ago. Unfortunately, only a small part is currently cultivated with cereals, fruit and grapes, generally for personal consumption.

## SACRI MONTI UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE

"The nine *Sacri Monti* of Northern Italy are groups of chapels and other architectural handmade works built between the XVI and XVII century dedicated to different aspects of the Christian faith. Besides their symbolic and spiritual meaning, they feature notable characteristics of beauty, virtue and charm as they blend in with natural and scenic environments of hills, woods and lakes. They also contain very important artistic remains (frescoes and statues)". This is the motivation according to which in 2003 UNESCO included the "Sacri Monti di Piemonte e Lombardia" site in its World Heritage List. This prestigious acknowledgement confers universal value to seven *Sacri Monti* of Piedmont (Belmonte, Crea, Domodossola, Ghiffa, Oropa, Orta and Varallo) and two of Lombardy (Ossuccio and Varese), highlighting the extraordinary richness, qualities and values of these historical, artistic and nature gems. The chapels series depicts episodes and mysteries of sacred life through statues, paintings and frescos while blending in with the embracing environment and contributing in defining the features of each monumental complex. *Valuable examples of landscape architecture, the Sacri Monti represent an important meeting point for believers and lovers of art.* First arising on the western Alps, where this phenomenon originated more than five hundred years ago, the *Sacri Monti* then inspired similar models in many parts of Catholic Europe. The seven *Sacri Monti* of Piedmont are part of the protected area system of Regione Piemonte which provides for historical and artistic preservation, maintenance and protection of the surrounding environment.

**On foot among the Sacri Monti - UNESCO**  
**The Sacri Monti of Piedmont and Lombardy, a path where to meet art, landscape and spirituality**  
 The Sacri Monti of Piedmont and Lombardy are connected by an articulated pedestrian path that intersects and overlaps the ancient Italian and European devotional paths.  
 The complete route of the **Devoto cammino dei Sacri Monti** is being updated but it can be largely downloaded from the website [www.sacrimonti.org](http://www.sacrimonti.org)

Graphic layout and printing Industria Grafica Borgosesia s.r.l.



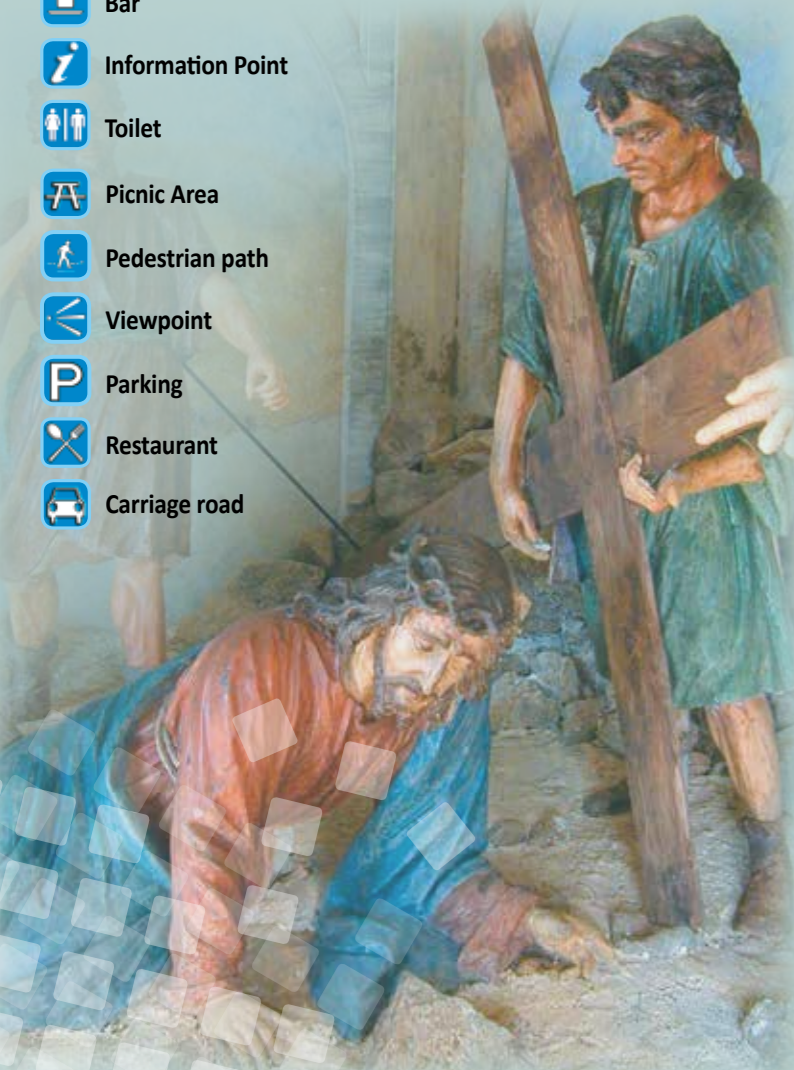


Cartography by University of Genoa - Polytechnic School - D.S.A. Department.

## LEGEND

- (A) Archaeological area – Lombard site
- (B) Statue of Saint Francesco
- (C) Souvenirs
- (D) Monastery
- (E) Sanctuary
- (F) “Piloni del Rosario” pedestrian path connecting to the historical centre of Valperga

- Bar
- Information Point
- Toilet
- Picnic Area
- Pedestrian path
- Viewpoint
- Parking
- Restaurant
- Carriage road



## THE CHAPELS

**Chapel 1 . Gesù davanti a Pilato (*Jesus before Pilato*)**  
Construction started in 1712. The vault frescoes date back to the XVIII century and are attributed to Grosso di Ivrea.

**Chapel 2 . Gesù condannato a morte (*Jesus condemned to death*)**  
Dating back to the second decade of XVIII century.

**Chapel 3 . Prima caduta (*The First Fall*)**  
This chapel dates back to the second decade of the XVIII century.

**Chapel 4 . Incontro con Maria (*Encounter with Mary*)**  
Built in 1713.

**Chapel 5 . Il Cireneo (*The Cyrenaic*)**  
Built in 1773.

**Chapel 6 . La Veronica (*The Veronica*)**  
Built in 1712. The statuary group was completely destroyed. In the early XX century the patronage passed to Lawyer Aurelio De Andreis who transformed it into a family Chapel adding an apsis with altar and a small bell tower.

**Chapel 7 . Seconda caduta (*The Second Fall*)**  
The construction begun in 1715 and remained unfinished for a long time; terminated in 1773; the vault frescoes dating back to 1773 are by painter Grosso di Ivrea.

**Chapel 8 . Le pie donne (*The Pious Women*)**  
Its construction was started by the convent monks in an undefined time and was finished in 1781 thanks to the contribution of some Busano families. The vault frescoes are by painter Grosso di Ivrea.



**Chapel 9 . Terza caduta di Gesù (*Jesus' Third Fall*)**  
Built between 1759 and 1765. The five statues in white plaster date back to early of XX century.

**Chapel 10 . Gesù spogliato e abbeverato di fiele (*Jesus is stripped and made to drink gall*)**  
Built thanks to the alms offered to the Sanctuary, it was realized along with Chapel 9.

**Chapel 11 . Crocifissione (*The Crucifixion*)**  
Built in 1719 while restoration works ended in 2002.

**Chapel 12 . Morte in croce (*Death on the Cross*)**  
Located in a dominant position, the construction works started in the beginning of 1715 by the Community of Valperga which still holds its patronage and provided for the reconstruction after the partial collapses of the second half of the XVIII and 1825.

**Chapel 13 . Deposizione (*The deposition*)**  
The last chapel of the devotional path and last to be built (1825). The bronze statue of Saint Francis (B) standing near the chapel and erected on the highest point of the mount, is by the Vercellese sculptor Giovanni Vogliazzi and it was inaugurated on July 3 1960.



## THE PILLARS OF THE ROSARY (F)

The pedestrian path connecting Valperga to the Sacred Mount has been restored and enlarged many times. Between 1878 and 1880, on initiative of the canonical Giuseppe Borrone di Salassa, fifteen pillars frescoed with the Mysteries of the Rosary were added.



## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE (A)

The archaeological excavations have proved that the hill of Belmonte was inhabited by man between the end of the Bronze Age and the early Iron Age. This also proves the presence of a great settlement along the smoother hills where they hunt, bred livestock and ground grains – such as wheat, barley and millet – and cooked food in huts. Earthenware and cinerary urns have been also found in a small trough near the church of S. Apollonia, a sacred place located near the pedestrian path connecting Valperga to the Sacred Mount of Belmonte. Frequentation of the rise continued both in the Roman and Longobard age. The so-called “Campass” area still shows the foundations of a Longobard fort-house, resembling a village surrounded by walls. Excavation campaigns have brought to light interesting finds, such as objects of daily use, weapons and jewels of fine making. One of the rooms supposedly resembles a forge for metal working, work tools and weapons.



## THE SABBIONERE

The hill of Belmonte has not been affected by glacial erosion phenomena: its 300 million years old rocks feature a red granite outcrop of micropertite ortoclasica. Precipitations and erosion caused by physical and chemical agents have disgregated the rock outcrops in time and originated the “sabbioniere”: badlands-like structures typical of this area, made of gross sand formed by quartz and feldspar which, according to the location, assume a reddish-violet or totally white colour. The Sabbioniere can be clearly viewed especially along the northern side of the hill, where the erosion phenomena are more evident.