



SACRI MONTI OF PIEMONTE AND LOMBARDY

UNESCO World Heritage Site

REGIONE PIEMONTE Regione Lombardia

# Sacro Monte of Ghiffa



**SACRO MONTE OF GHIFFA**  
 Surface Area: 198 hectares  
 Elevation: 360 - 785 metres  
 Environment: hill/lake  
 Property: Commune of Ghiffa

## PROTECTED AREA

This Sacro Monte stands in a breathtaking position overlooking Lake Maggiore. The slopes of Monte Cargiagio, on which 200 hectares of natural reserve extend, provide numerous drywall-lined trails and characteristic small votive aediculae. The architectural structures are housed by woods of mixed broad-leaf trees, mainly chestnut coppice; also present are maple, ash, alder and birch trees. Exotic species have been introduced, especially by reforestation after fires. The underbrush includes yews, hollies, butcher's brooms and laurels; near the sanctuary instead are many linden trees. The wildlife includes 36 species part of the mammal class among which roes, squirrels, foxes, dormice and badgers. More numerous are birds, for a total of 56 species, including buzzards, brown kites, kestrels, owls, owlets, woodpeckers, jays, nightingales, grey crows, etc. The Sacro Monte of Ghiffa is a protected area of Regione Piemonte (1987) and since 2012 it has been part of Ente di Gestione dei Sacri Monti.



Photo A. Langhi



Photo C. Pesina

Access to the Sacred Mount is free of charge

**HOW TO GET THERE**  
 By car: from Milan and Turin, Motorway A26 exit Baveno - Feriolo - Verbania (SS 34) - Ghiffa - from Switzerland, Locarno - border: Poggio Valmara - Ghiffa from the Simplon, Domodossola - Gravelona Toce - Verbania (SS 34) - Ghiffa  
 How to reach the Sacred Mount: from the lake promenade of Ghiffa reach the hamlet of Ronco and then the Sacred Mount.  
 By train: station of Verbania, connections to Milan and Domodossola.  
 Info: [www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com)  
 By bus: bus Verbania - Border - Brissago: [www.vcotrasporti.it/](http://www.vcotrasporti.it/)  
 Info: Local public transportation, PRONTO TPL - tel 800333444  
[www.regione.piemonte.it/ptplweb/index.do](http://www.regione.piemonte.it/ptplweb/index.do) - <http://prontotpl.5t.torino.it/>

**INFORMATION**  
 Ente di gestione dei Sacri Monti Riserva speciale del Sacro Monte di Ghiffa (A)  
 Via SS. Trinità, 48 - 28823 Ghiffa (VB) - tel e fax 0141 927120  
[info@sacri-monti.com](mailto:info@sacri-monti.com) - <https://www.sacrimonti.org/en/sacro-monte-di-ghiffa>

**Sanctuary (D)**  
 Contact: Parish of San Maurizio - Corso Risorgimento, 156 - 28823 Ghiffa (VB)  
 tel +39 0323 59189 - [www.parrochiaghiffa.org](http://www.parrochiaghiffa.org)  
[info@parrocchia.org](mailto:info@parrocchia.org)  
**Tourist Office**  
 Distretto Turistico dei Laghi, Monti e Valli d'Ossola: tel +39 0323 30416  
[infoturismo@distrettolaghi.it](mailto:infoturismo@distrettolaghi.it) - [www.distrettolaghi.it](http://www.distrettolaghi.it)

**MUST SEE**  
 Museo dell'Arte del Cappello - Ghiffa  
 tel +39 0323 840809 - [rete@unionelagomaggiore.it](mailto:rete@unionelagomaggiore.it) - [www.museodellartedelcappello.it](http://www.museodellartedelcappello.it)  
 Giardini Botanici di Villa Taranto - Verbania Pallanza (VB)  
 tel 0323 556667 - Biglietteria +39 0323 404555 - [entevillataranto@tin.it](mailto:entevillataranto@tin.it)  
[www.villataranto.it](http://www.villataranto.it)  
 Museo del Paesaggio - Verbania - tel +39 0323 556621  
[www.museodelpaesaggio.it](http://www.museodelpaesaggio.it) - [segreteria@museodelpaesaggio.it](mailto:segreteria@museodelpaesaggio.it)  
 Romanic church of San Remigio  
 Church of Madonna di Campagna  
 Romanic church of Sansant'Agata of Novaglio (Oggebbio) (VB)  
 info: 0323 48168 (parroco)

**SERVICES**  
**Hotels and Restaurants**  
 Ristorante SS. Trinità  
 Via SS. Trinità, 73 - 28823 Ghiffa (VB) - tel +39 0323 59300  
**Guided Tours:** On reservation at Riserva speciale del Sacro Monte di Ghiffa  
 tel +39 0323 59870 - [info@sacrimonti.com](mailto:info@sacrimonti.com)

**LINKS**  
 Commune of Ghiffa - [www.comune.ghiffa.vb.it](http://www.comune.ghiffa.vb.it)  
 Parco Nazionale Valgrande - [www.parcovalgrande.it](http://www.parcovalgrande.it)  
 Ente di gestione Aree Protette dell'Ossola  
[www.areeprotetteossola.it](http://www.areeprotetteossola.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](mailto:info@sacri-monti.com) - <https://www.sacrimonti.org/>



## HISTORY

The Sacro Monte of the SS. Trinità of Ghiffa sits on the Piedmont shore of Lake Maggiore, in the province of Verbano Cusio Ossola. The devotional complex enjoys a splendid panoramic position over the lake and the Lombardy Pre-Alps. Its project originally provided for the depiction of episodes from the Old and New Testament, but it was never completed. The Sacro Monte includes three main chapels dedicated to biblical subjects, and two minor chapels which form a sole structure with the Sanctuary and the portico of the Via Crucis (Way of the Cross). The first three chapels were built around the sanctuary of the Holy Trinity, which was constructed between 1605 and 1617 on the remains of an ancient medieval oratory. The *Crowning of the Virgin* chapel was built in 1647 by will of the Canetta family of Ghiffa, as proven by an inscription on the entrance portal. The second chapel, dedicated to the *Baptism of Jesus*, was built before 1659 and depicts *John the Baptist* pouring water of the Jordan over the head of Jesus while the Heavenly Father looks down from above. The third chapel is more isolated from the rest of the complex and depicts patriarch *Abraham* prostrated before three angels. The sanctuary is a central construction with a rectangular plan; the chapels have a geometric layout, with a portico or peristyle with arches. In 1752, the portico was added with frescoed stations of the Via Crucis; the fourteen bays, with cross vaults and stone columns, highlight the devotional function of the path along the fourteen stations, depicted by aediculae frescoed at the beginning of the XIX century and enriched with polychrome tiles around 1930. The Sacro Monte of Ghiffa is a protected area of Regione Piemonte (1987) and since 2012 it has been part of Ente di Gestione dei Sacri Monti.

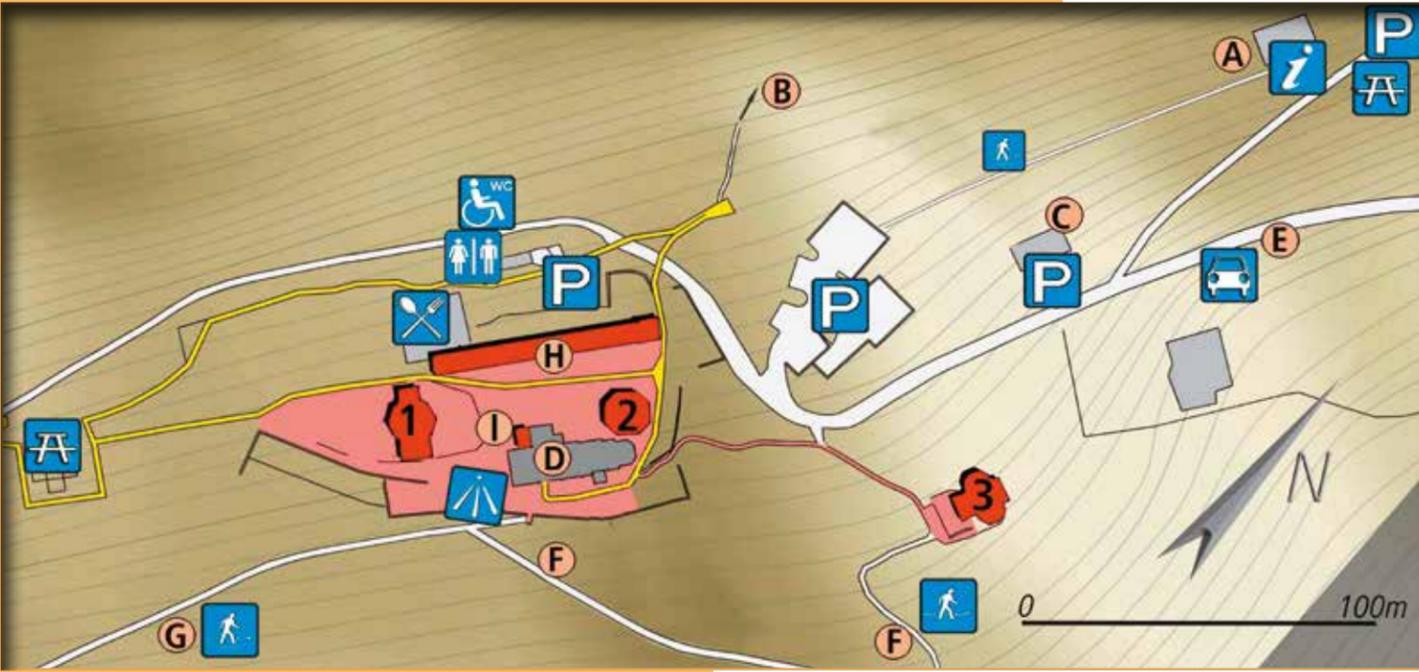


Photo A. Langhi

## 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)



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

## LEGEND

- (A) Park Office
- (B) Fitness Course
- (C) Honey Separation Workshop
- (D) Sanctuary of the Holy Trinity
- (E) Carriage road to Ghiffa-Lake Promenade
- (F) Ancient devotional path (path for Ronco)
- (G) Path to Frino/Verbania
- (H) Arcade of the Via Crucis
- (I) Garden of the Getsemani

- Information Point
- Toilet
- Toilets equipped for disabled people
- Picnic area
- Pedestrian path
- Viewpoint
- Parking
- Bar - Restaurant
- Carriage road
- Disabled path

## THE SANCTUARY

The enlargement of the ancient oratory began in 1605. In 1646 the bell tower was built and raised to its current height in 1659. In 1728 the so-called hermit's shelter, standing next to the sanctuary, was restored, and in 1752 a second floor was added. The portico and the oratory were built in 1761.

## THE CHAPELS

### Chapel 1 - Incoronazione di Maria Vergine (Crowning of Virgin Mary)

The Chapel of the Crowned Virgin was built in 1647 by will of Pietro Giacomo Canetta, as proven by the coat of arms above the entrance door. This octagonal-plan chapel is worth of notice for its elegant colonnade. The chapel altar houses a group of terracotta statues depicting the crowning of Virgin Mary. Eight niches on the side walls house terracotta statues of Prophets and Masters of Law.

### Chapel 2 - San Giovanni Battista (Saint John the Baptist)

This chapel was built before 1659 and inside it depicts Saint John baptizing Jesus Christ. The chapel features an octagonal plan and a majestic annular colonnade superelevated from the ground.

### Chapel 3 - Abramo (Abraham)

This chapel is detached from the others and stands on a lower



Photo A. Langhi

level. It is the first chapel one encounters when climbing the old stone mule track which pilgrims walked to reach the Sacro Monte from the village of Ronco. Built between 1701-1703, it features a cross plan and a small rectangular colonnade on the front. Inside, a group of statues portrays Abraham worshipping three angels who represent the Holy Trinity.

### Il Porticato della Via Crucis (H) (The Colonnade of the Way of the Cross)

The colonnade of the Way of the Cross dates back to 1752, originally open on both sides, nine years later the chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows was built. In 1824 the 14 stations of the Way of the Cross were frescoed by Pinoli di Intra. These works were subsequently covered with prestigious polychrome plaster tiles applied between 1927-1930.

### Chapel of Gesù nell'Orto dei Getsemani (I) (Jesus in the Gethsemane Garden)

The presence of a chapel adjoining the Holy Trinity Oratory has been proven since 1591. The building was then walled in and restored in 1930 to finally appear in its current status. Inside Christ is depicted kneeling in prayer before an angel in the Olive Garden.

## ACTIVITIES

In the woods near the monumental area are numerous fitness trails (life trail) surrounded by chestnut woods, leading to various parts and offering spectacular panoramic views along the way. There are numerous excursion signpost tracks connecting to destinations of great interest such as the votive chapels or panoramic views. The Reserve includes two didactic tracks (nature paths equipped with illustrative billboards): the "Sentiero Storico archeologico Segni sulla pietra" (Historic-archaeological path- Marks on stone) and the "Sentiero Naturalistico Una Riserva nel Verde" (Nature Path-A Green Reserve).



Photo A. Langhi



Photo A. Langhi

