

# THE PROVINCE OF TREVISO

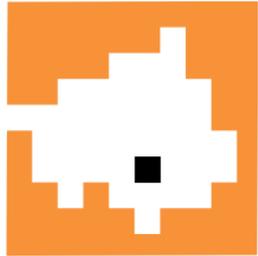
## THE GREAT WAR



**Veneto**

*From Earth to Sky*

[www.veneto.to](http://www.veneto.to)



## A PROTAGONIST OF HISTORY

*La Marca Bella et Amorosa* boasts a millenary history that is characterized by myriad protagonists and is full of incredible civilizations and flourishing kingdoms threatened by feared conquerors. This area has welcomed the flourishing of arts and wisdom, but it has also played host to bitter wars and merciless combat. Certainly, one of the most tragic events in modern history is the Great War, the first authentic modern war, which came laden with human suffering and lacerated civilization. The *Marca* area was profoundly scarred by this event, as it became one of the war's most devastating fronts. All our history books recount the victory of Vittorio Veneto and the memorable battles that took place on the Grappa Front and along the Fiume River which, not by chance, is con 'sacred to the Fatherland'.

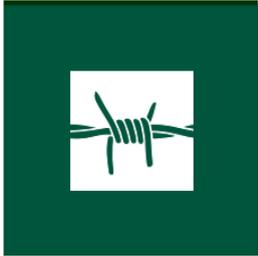
On this strip of land, the old international order of Europe met its death and a sense of National unity was formed amidst the suffering. Throughout this magnificent landscape that was once fatal, you can still find traces of the front that starts in Grappa al Piave. It was here that from 1917 to 1918, soldiers of the Royal Italian Army—supported by English and French troops—met the Austro-Hungarian army in a series of bloody, memorable battles. Today, these places still preserve tragic memories that make a visit to the area a formative experience and a way of rendering homage to such pain and bloodshed. It's necessary for the divided memories of our Communities to move toward a united form of synthesis, without this being reason to forget the causes and effects of said conflicts. This synthesis can be created thanks to an awareness of the need to reach out for ethical common ground and reciprocal understanding.

This guide has this purpose, that is, to accompany the visitor through history, retracing those events in the very location in which they occurred. They were events that obligated soldiers from both sides to share in the same *Via Crucis*, forcing civilians who were already living as refugees to fraternize with the enemy and co-exist with 'violence', while churches, villas and entire towns were burned to the ground. Today, the majority of the area's material damage has now been restored, yet said damage was only a metaphor for other, far deeper human losses and wounds. Travelling to the site of combat to pay due tribute for the sacrifice rendered becomes a chance for the visitor to get to know our Community. It's a Community made up of people who went through their own mourning process within the context of collective memory, proving capable of transmuting their knowledge of horror and the anonymous terror of war into wisdom and prudence.



**Leonardo Muraro**

President of the Province of Treviso



## PREMISE

This guide will lead you to some truly special places located in the Province of Treviso that bear witness to the traces of World War, allowing visitors to catch a glimpse of myriad legends and heroic deeds and recall the time's destructive upheaval, the likes of which this territory had never before experienced. You'll discover remnants of a Europe that no longer exists, divided between ancient empires and young nations. Crossing rivers and climbing hills and mountains, you can see many signs of great, dramatic battles that have become part of the town's collective memory. You'll meet people willing to tell the micro-history of each hamlet—tales that would otherwise be lost amidst the more renowned history of troops and armies. You'll have the chance to discover that a single event can have various meanings and different levels of depth depending on the point of view from which it is observed. Near one part of the river, there are the military glories of the young Kingdom of Italy, near another one can recall the refugees and terrible hunger that people suffered in occupied areas. On the one hand, there's the obstinate loyalty that Austro-Hungarian troops nurtured for the Hapsburg Dynasty. On the other, there are the intertwined destinies of Italy, France and Great Britain, united in the trenches and divided by negotiations for peace. Efforts to discover the history of the Great War in the Province of Treviso have given rise to several itineraries which allow visitors and locals to learn more about four different themes.

- **THE LAST SUMMIT** allows you to get to know events and details regarding the Mount Grappa front and its cableways.
- **THE BATTLE OF THE SOLSTICE** provides a glimpse of myths and Italian war glories, by exploring the Montello and the right bank of the Piave's mid-section.
- **THE FINAL BATTLE** leads the reader to the Austro-Hungarian posts on the left bank, narrating events linked to occupation and victory.
- **THE HOLY RIVER** follows the Piave toward the lagoon and describes alternate dramatic events, as experienced from the two opposite banks of the river.

Amidst unique locations, memories, museums and monuments, it's a pleasure to enjoy the landscape's serenity and sample the richness of its wine and the wealth of its cuisine. You're likely to find that locals will be quite willing to share historical anecdotes, give directions and show hospitality. This book's special tables will guide you through each itinerary. At every significant location, you'll find a numbered totem providing information, suggestions and historical explanations.





## WHERE IS THE PROVINCE OF TREVISO?



Located in the Veneto region, in the North-East of Italy, just a few kilometres from Venice, the Province of Treviso can be easily reached by:

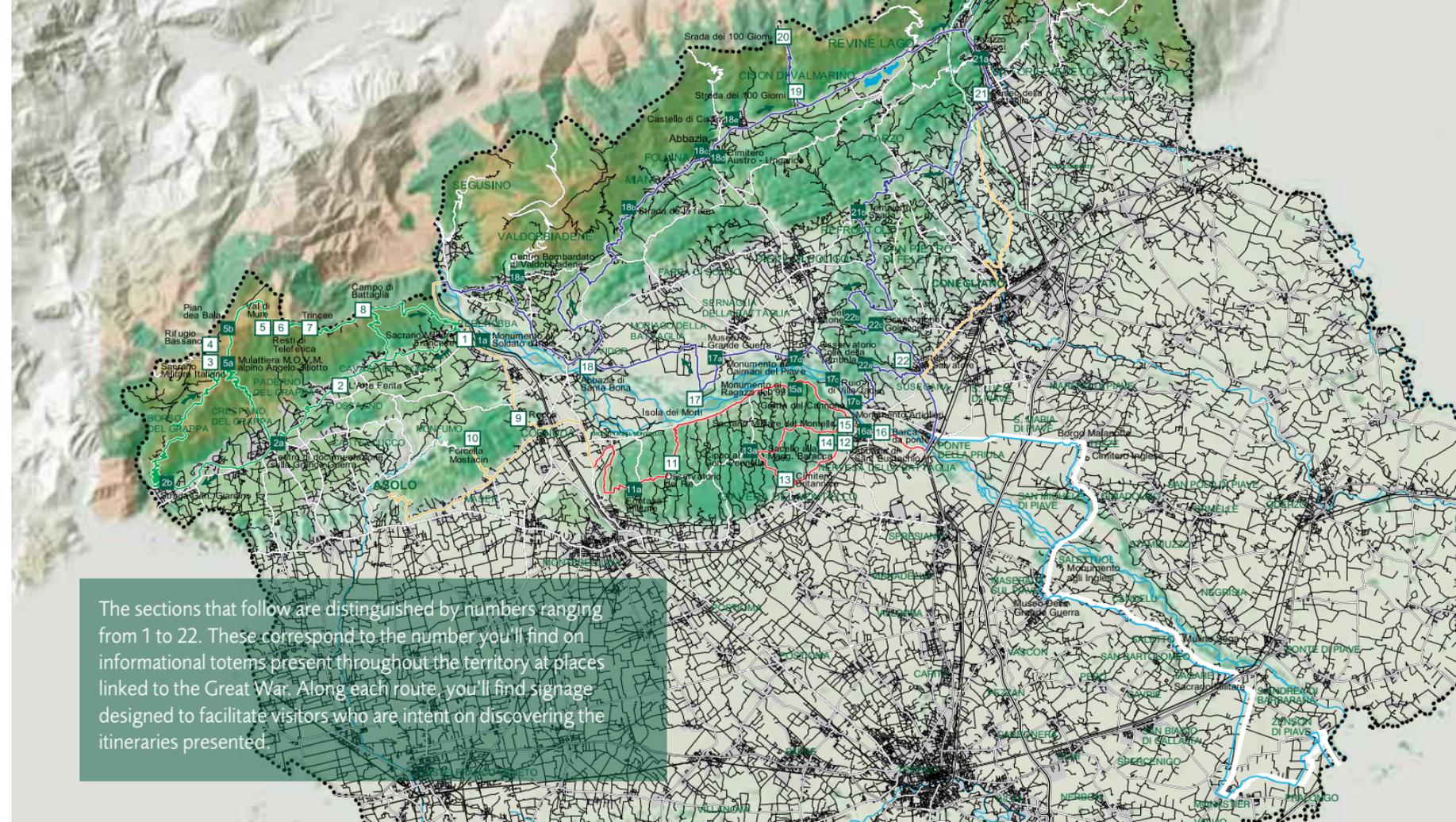
### Motorways:

**A27 VENICE-BELLUNO**  
(exit at Vittorio Veneto North and South, Conegliano, Treviso North and South, Mogliano Veneto)

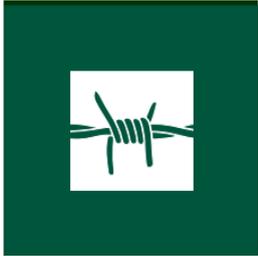
**A4 TURIN-TRIESTE**  
(exit Cessalto)

**Airports:** A. Canova (Treviso), M. Polo (Venice)

**Railway lines:**  
Venice-Udine, Venice-Belluno, Vicenza-Treviso



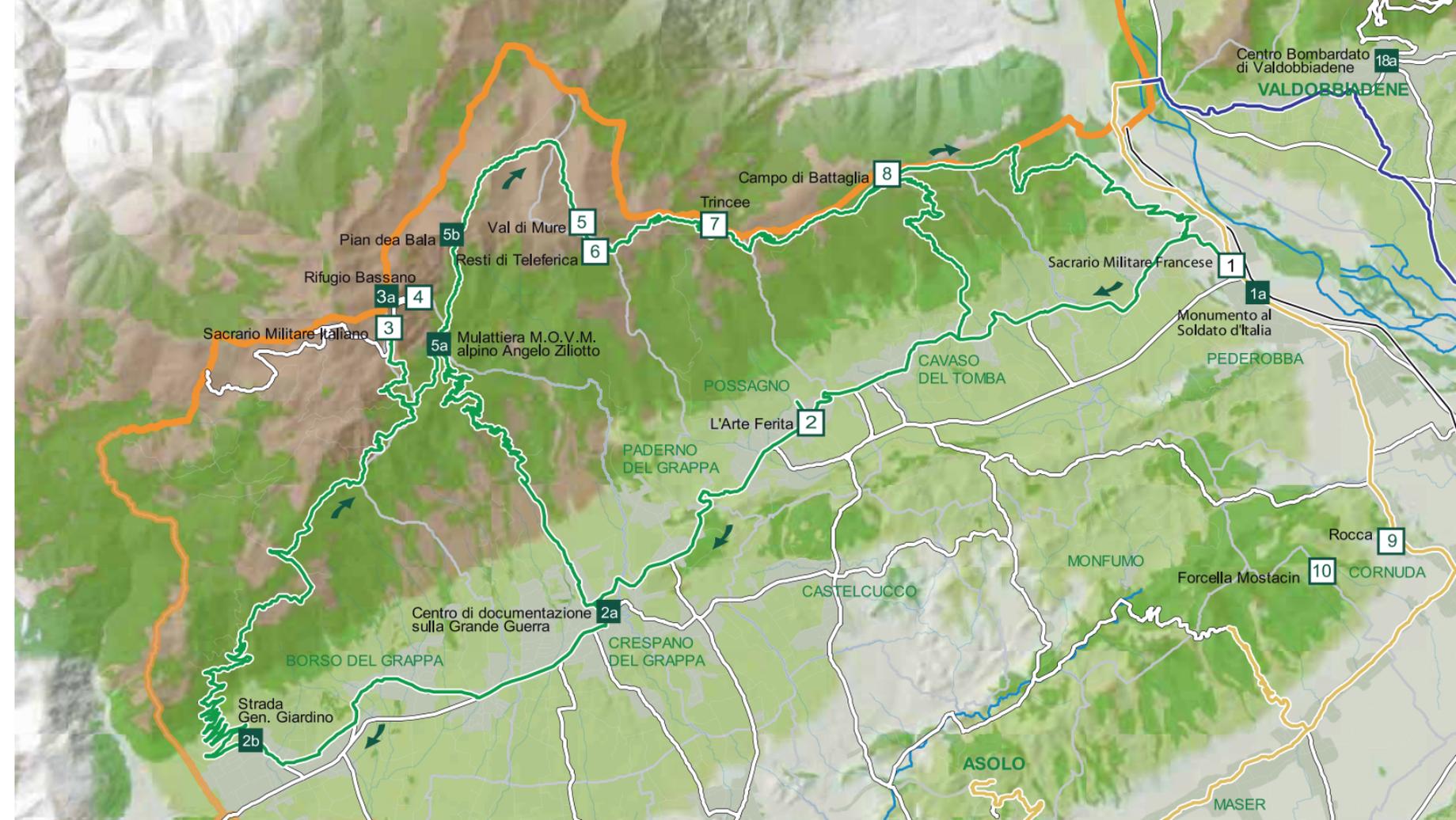
The sections that follow are distinguished by numbers ranging from 1 to 22. These correspond to the number you'll find on informational totems present throughout the territory at places linked to the Great War. Along each route, you'll find signage designed to facilitate visitors who are intent on discovering the itineraries presented.



## THE LAST SUMMIT

Located on the northeastern edge of the Marca Trevigiana, the Del Grappa Massif became one of the most well-known landscapes that characterized the Italian front between 1917 and 1918. Each of its summits witnessed dramatic battles and widespread death, each of its valleys were transformed into a point of resistance, a place of recovery, hosting a logistic line or a provisional hospital. Tens of thousands of Austro-Hungarian soldiers died trying to descend downstream toward the Veneto plain. Tens of thousands of Italian soldiers met the same end, trying to detain offensive operations. Not long after Caporetto, General Cadorna chose Del Grappa and the Piave line to serve as points of extreme resistance. Thus, he deployed the few troops available and awaited the withdrawal of Cadore's 4th Battalion. The Austrians-Germans immediately circumvented the Del Grappa Massif and fierce battles were held there during November and December 1917. The Italians were at an advantage thanks to the forward-looking road developments and hydraulic works Cadorna had ordered years prior. Thus, they were able to resist, fortifying the Del Grappa peak and the massif's entire southern embankment. The majority of these extraordinarily bold works can still be visited today. Called the 'Holy Mountain of the Fatherland', it still hosts innumerable remains of emplacements and grenade holes that dot the slopes. Many remain hidden in the forests which re-grew slowly after military fire-storming.

- *This itinerary foresees a clockwise one-way orientation, as shown by the map's arrows.*



## THE FRENCH MILITARY SHRINE PEDEROBBA

1

Toward the end of 1917, France sent expeditions corps, which—together with their British counterpart—were intended to show the adversary the allies' full cohesion and collaboration. The events that took place in Caporetto accelerated their arrival on the line and by December of that same year, the French had effectively carried out operations aimed at re-conquering Mount Tomba. Joining forces with the Italians, they sand-bagged the Piave at Vidor, carrying out an assault on Mount Perlo, which dominated the Valdobbiadene. After the war, a shrine was built between the slopes of Monfenera and the banks of the Piave. It hosts the remains of more than a thousand soldiers from beyond the Alps and commemorates the military brotherhood sustained by Italian-French forces.

### 1/a DON'T MISS: Onigo di Pederobba

*Monument to the soldier of Italy*  
The 'Monument to the Soldier of Italy' was built in 1988 on the dominating side of the Piave's right bank. It features eight bronze sculptural groups that represent symbolic moments linked to the experience of war.



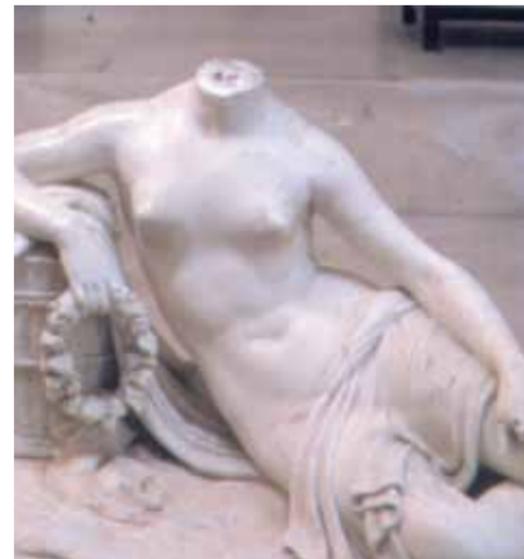
## WOUNDED ART POSSAGNO

2

The territory was not only ravaged from a geographic point of view; its artistic and historical heritage—particularly abundant in the Treviso area—was also severely damaged. In November 1917 when the bombs began to fall on Possagno, the thoughts of many citizens turned to the works of sculptor Antonia Canova, stored in the gipsothèque. Damaged by the power of TNT, the sculptures were recuperated and removed from the rubble with the help of the military. A splendid exhibition documents the activities aimed at recuperating and protecting works of art. This lesser known chapter of the history of the Italian war is of extreme importance.

*For more information: the Temple and Gipsothèque  
Tel. 0423 544323.*

*Opening hours: every day from 9am to 12pm and  
3pm to 6pm (summer) or from 2pm to 5pm (winter)  
Closed Mondays.*



### 2/a DON'T MISS: Crespano del Grappa

The *Great War Documentation Center*, located in the city center, boasts a noteworthy collection of objects and documents linked to the bellicose actions that occurred on the area's dominant mountain.

*For more information, contact the Municipal Library:  
Tel 0423 538516*



### 2/b DON'T MISS: Borso del Grappa

The '*Strada del Generale Giardino*' is a road named for the commander of the Del Grappa Army. Created during the conflict, it's one of the various routes that provide access to the Mountain. In terms of importance, it is second only to the '*Strada Cadorna*', proving one of the most direct logistic lines leading to the Cima Grappa summit.

### THE 'RIFUGIO BASSANO' LODGE 'CIMA GRAPPA' - SUMMIT

3

The 'Rifugio Bassano' lodge is a top destination for visitors to Mount Grappa and a must-see stop for mountain bikers, motorcyclists or hikers intent on experiencing the beautiful trails that converge at the summit. Rebuilt in 1935, it offers an extremely gratifying view that provides the chance to reach a visual understanding of the front's trends. The lodge offers shelter and boasts a top-notch restaurant; the pictures on its walls offer photographic evidence of various fragments of history. A little further down the mountain, visitors will find access to the Vittorio Emanuele Tunnel, a prodigious fortified network hidden inside a cave; visitors can view its historic Caserma Milano barracks, the projections room and have access to the road that leads to the Shrine and monumental area.

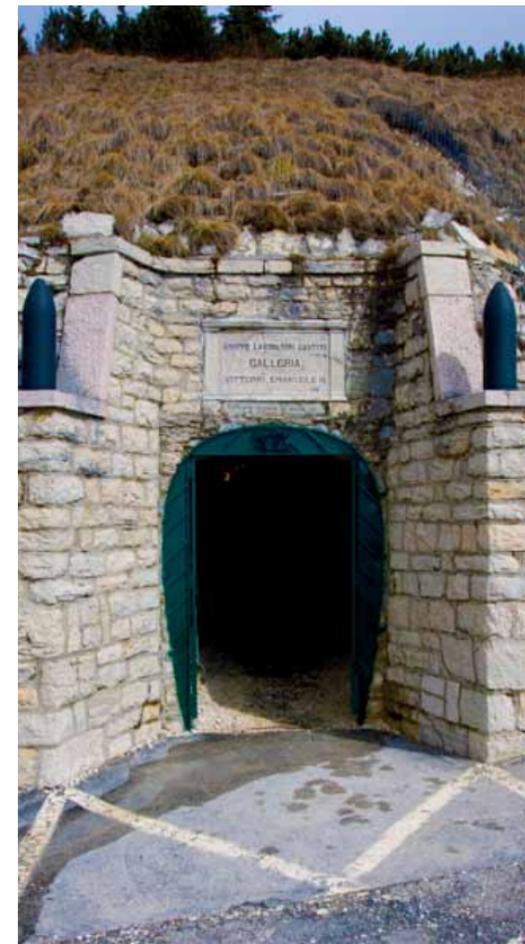
For more information: Tel. 0423 53101.  
Open year round



### THE VITTORIO EMANUELE TUNNEL 'CIMA GRAPPA' - SUMMIT

3/a

During 1918 the Gavotti Miners' Group created an underground fort that stretched for 5 kilometers. It was designed to resist for a long period of time, even in the event of unthinkable pressure from the adversaries. Cannon batteries (some of which are still in position) and machine-gun nests topped the main structure which could easily attack the flanks of enemy lines. They would also allow for the troops' hurried escape via hidden passageways, unbeknownst to the first lines. The Vittorio Emanuele Tunnel was equipped with autonomous logistic services like generators, aqueducts, deposits, first aid stations, a communications station, observation points etc. At the time, it represented the area's most modern interpretation of a 'fort' and it played a central role in all of the operations carried out on the massif.



## THE ITALIAN MILITARY SHRINE 'CIMA GRAPPA' - SUMMIT

4

Inaugurated in 1935, the Italian Military Shrine offers visitors an incredible impression. To commemorate the territory's fallen defenders, the shrine is characterized by a series of concentric circles facing the south which appear to create a visual relationship with the plains that were strenuously defended for an entire year. Amidst the heartbreaking sequence of names and funeral niches, you'll find one belonging to General Giardino who asked to be buried among his 'little soldiers', conscious as he was of their tremendous sacrifices that oftentimes resulted in death. The summit's chapel hosts the 'Madonnina del Grappa', depicting the Virgin Mary, which had been an object of devotion even before the conflict. You'll find the 'Via Eroica' leading northward; this road celebrates the names of the massif's main summits that were fiercely involved in the war. Immediately afterwards, you'll see the



Austrian Shrine which hosts the remains of nearly 10,000 fallen soldiers. One of its most touching funeral niches is dedicated to the Soldier 'Peter Pan'.

*For more information: the Italian Military Shrine and Historical Museum of the Great War  
Tel. 0423 544840.*

*Opening hours: 9am-12pm; 1:30pm-4pm  
From October 1 to May 15; 9am-12pm; 1:30pm-6pm  
From May 16 to September 30  
Free Admission*



## VAL DELLE MURE

### MOUNT GRAPPA

5



of Covolo—located in the Municipality of Crespano del Grappa—and leads steeply uphill toward high-level combat lines.

#### 5/b DON'T MISS:

##### **Pian de la Bala - The 'Meatte' Trail.**

The small panoramic expanse located between the Cima Grappa summit and Val delle Mure is the starting point of the 'Meatte' Trail', an evocative fortified military footpath, created amidst rocks and precipices. It allowed for the passage of troops and served to protect covered baggage carts from the aim of the adversary's artillery.

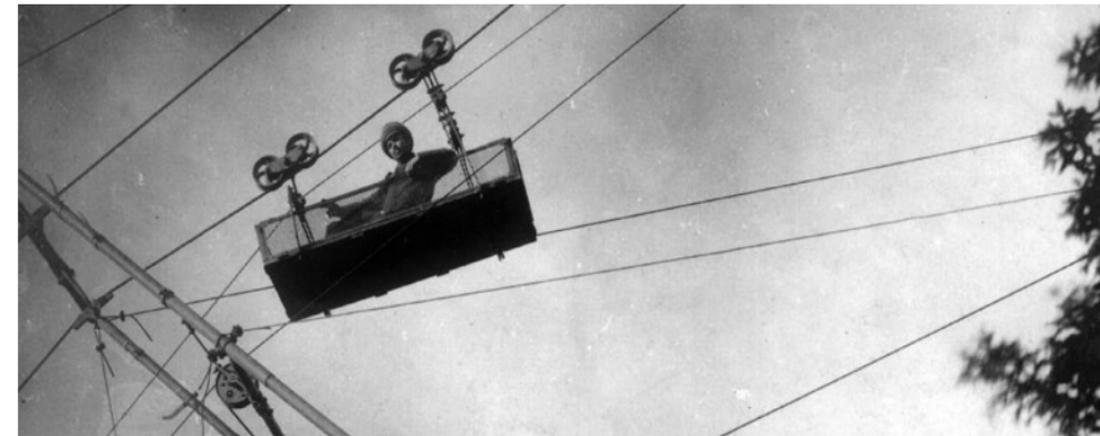


## THE CABLEWAY'S REMAINS

### MOUNT GRAPPA

6

Warfare in the mountains called for immense logistic planning. Supplying combating men with everything they needed for survival and battle was an immense effort, made easier in the Grappa area thanks to the presence of myriad streets and footpaths. Fine road conditions were enhanced by numerous cableways which allowed for the transport of supplies from the plains to locations near the massif's summits. On the southern edge of Boccaor, you can still see part of a cableway's motor mechanism. It was used for many years after the conflict to transport recuperated metals downstream and was later employed to transport timber and products from surrounding forests or pasturelands.



Immersed in splendid beech woods, the Val delle Mure offers a pleasant experience to visitors discovering its unique landscape, interspersed with pastureland and dairies. Those who pay special attention will be able to catch a glimpse of jutting rocks indicating the entrance to tunnels. Likewise, they're sure to see the grassy traces of trenches and trench communication or spot the landscape's innumerable cone-shaped depressions produced by explosions. The back side of the mountain was especially ravaged by bombs and scarred by communication trenches and fields full of barbed wire. There, you'll find one of the war's first cemeteries and several small first-aid stations where supporting troops waited for the order to counterattack and move toward surrounding summits. Today's serene silence has replaced the echoing screams and rumblings that characterized the area at that time.

#### 5/a DON'T MISS:

##### **The Grappa Massif - The 'Mulattiera' Footpath.**

16 This military footpath begins in the town

17

## THE TRENCHES

### MOUNT PALON

7



The trenches of Mount Palon were restored thanks to the efforts of volunteers, in addition to the support of local governmental administrations. A visit to the trenches allows visitors to experience the crudeness and dramatic bareness of combat stations. When viewing firing stations and tunnels or following the trenches located along the side of the mountain, visitors' souls cannot help but feel moved as they imagine what the soldiers experienced on these trails. During the conflict, artilleries presided over the area, striking the eastern front. Meanwhile, the trenches blocked possible surprise attacks coming from the Alano Basin.

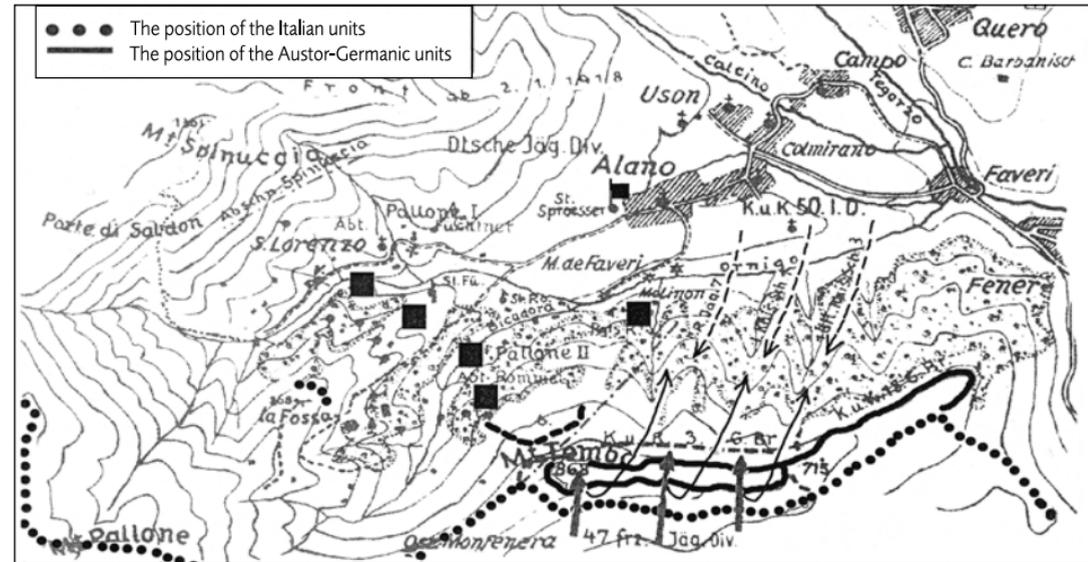


## THE BATTLEFIELD

### MOUNT TOMBA

8

The Austro-Hungarians entered Alano di Piave in November 1917 and they immediately attempted to overcome the sloping ridge located between Mount Romba and the Monfenera. The Italians were able to hold them back on the summit. However, from that position, the Imperial soldiers could easily strike the adversary's logistic provisions held in deposits at the foot of the Grappa. A young lieutenant from Wuerttemberg, Erwin Rommel, actively participated in conquering the stations located at the Tomba's summit. He was destined to become one of the most famous German generals of World War II, known to the world by the nickname 'the Desert Fox'. The summit of the Tomba was bitterly contended in December 1917 when the French "Chasseurs des Alpes" urged the Italians toward recapture, inverting positions to the allies' advantage. Amidst the area's fields and forests, you can still see the irregular markings of trenches and an innumerable amount of holes made by the bombs that continuously ravaged the landscape.



## ROCCA

### CORNUDA

9



Once war invaded the area, each of the territory's features was exploited in hopes of gaining a tactical advantage. The hills of Cornuda, near the Piave, is a case in point; it offered an excellent view of the southern summits of the Grappa and the Montello. These hills were immediately chosen as a privileged location for observing the adversary's positions and activities. The Church della Rocca, also known as the 'Sanctuary of the Madonna della Rocca', had been built on the remains of a medieval tower. Thus, it was used straight away as an indispensable observation point. Naturally, the adversary understood the needs of the Italians and kept the area under constant fire in hopes of upsetting their plans by increasing danger for those who frequented it. The church was struck many times and thus, severely damaged as were many other treasures belonging to Treviso's historical and artistic heritage.

*For more information: Rocca di Cornuda  
Tel. 0423 83462*



## THE MOSTACIN FORK

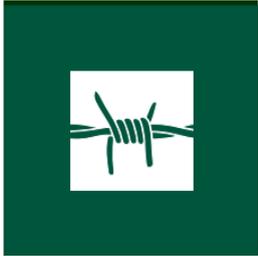
### MASER

10



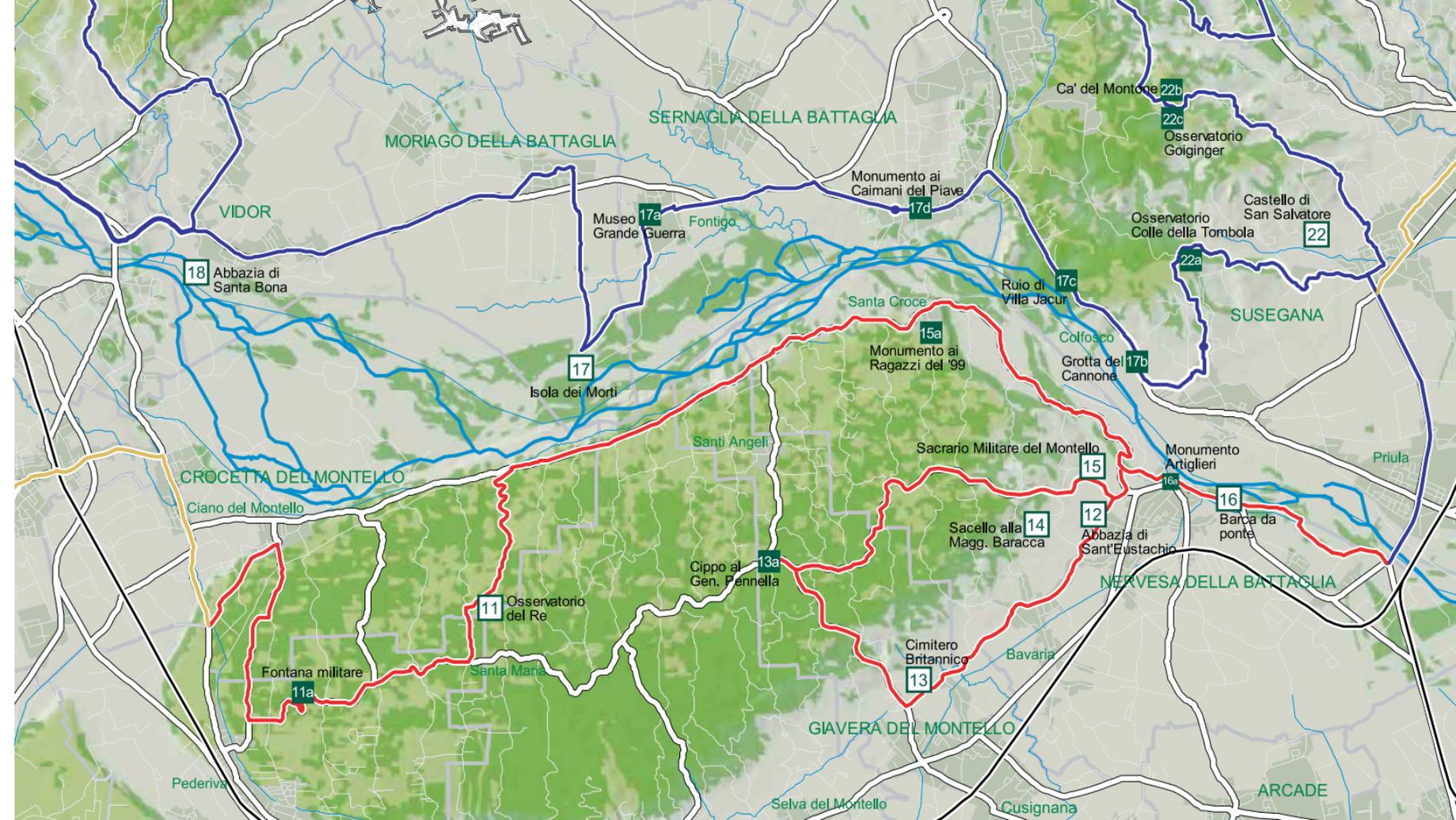
The entire hilly area located between the plains and the foothills of the Grappa were presided over by artillery teams. This location was ideal for positioning cannons that would be safe from counteroffensive attacks. In particular, high caliber French and Italian cannons were positioned in the area that stretched between Maser and Cornuda. These cannons were capable of efficiently striking the Tomba-Monferena area, the Valdobbiadene Basin, the Quartier del Piave and the Montello. A complex system of observatories and supply bases was developed in order to guarantee the effectiveness of the soldiers' marksmanship. Many well-preserved traces of these structures can still be found near the Mostacin Fork.





# THE BATTLE OF THE SOLSTICE

Between 1917 and 1918, the Austro-Hungarian Empire searched for different ways to bring the conflict to a quick end on the Italian front. Nonetheless, numerous diplomatic operations with adversary nations and the Vatican proved unsuccessful. The Oberkommando decided to attempt a mighty resolute action, using up all the technical and logistic resources that the troops had at their disposal. A great plan was put into play; according to historians, its intention was to break down the Italian line in various points that were very far from one another. By doing this, they could limit any Italian efforts to concentrate forces wherever the attack appeared to be most successful. From June 15 to June 23, 1918, the Imperial troops attacked the Italian battle line with valor and self-sacrifice, between Asiago and the sea. They were able to deeply penetrate the lines precisely on the Montello, placing the Italian front's stability in grave danger. Initially the response of the Royal Army was characterized by confusion. Yet, in a matter of hours, the Supreme Commando found the right defensive footing and was able to stop the Austro-Magyar soldiers and push them back over the Piave. It was the last offensive operation in the history of the Hapsburg Empire: in the months that followed, they prepared for their expected defeat and the end of an era.



**THE KING'S  
OBSERVATORY**  
CROCETTA DEL MONTELLO

11

Amidst the rubble of an agricultural building built on the top of the Montello, the Italian engineers constructed a bunker for use as an observatory. This structure provided them with a wide view of Quartier del Piave and the Solighesi hills, allowing them to see the adversary troops' movements and sight the visual tracks of the provisions. This observatory was often used by King Vittorio Emanuele III and it was chosen as a place from which to view the Piave's sandbagging operation in October 1918, which occurred at the beginning of the Battle of Vittorio Veneto.

**11/a DON'T MISS:**

**Montebelluna - Military Fountain.**

This interesting structure was created by soldiers to water troops and baggage vehicles travelling on the Montello, as water supply was a prime logistic concern. As chance would have it, the war's bitterest battles were fought in areas characterized by karstification and which, consequently, had scant surface water sources.



**THE SANT'EUSTACHIO  
ABBAY**  
NERVESA DELLA BATTAGLIA

12

There are places of battle that truly inspire reflection. In these sights, one's thoughts stray from historical explanations and the dramatic, spectacle-like nature of modern war, pushing aside stories of heroic events and deeds. In moments like these, one takes time to reflect upon themes like destruction or death, suffering and the uselessness of war. The Sant'Eustachio Abbey is certainly a place that inspired this type of reflection. For centuries, the monastery complex had played a fundamental role in guiding the religious and social life of citizens living in the surrounding territory. Today, you'll see a series of broken apses, wall fragments and vaults that sustain nothing but the clouds—these architectural artifacts are all that remains of the abbey's age-old history and timeless religious piety. The artilleries of both sides attacked the complex; during each battle fought along the Piave, all of the armies took part in destroying the Sant'Eustachio. Today, the rubble emerges amidst the lush green of surrounding forests. This emotional setting plays host to a truly unique silence.

*For more information: the Municipal Library  
Tel. 0422 773360*



## THE BRITISH CEMETERY

GIAVERA DEL MONTELLO

13



the Death', this area is infamous for the number of cadavers that immersed at the end of the conflict. It hosts an evocative monument characterized by the bronze bust of General Pennella, who served as Commander of the VIII Italian Army in the dramatic days of the Battle of the Solstice. Nearby, a piece of artillery still obtrudes its volley, facing the direction whence the adversaries staged their attack.



Corps from the British Expedition entered the line on December 4, 1917 when it became clear to all of the allied forces that Piave's line of resistance would become subject to insistent attack by the Austro-Hungarians. From that day forward, operations along the Piave saw the frequent involvement of the Anglo-Saxon division which suffered numerous losses, especially at the end of the conflict. The Military Cemetery of Giavera del Montello hosts several hundreds of tombs. Each is decorated with a white tombstone engraved with the fallen soldier's personal information and a coat of arms representing the regime to which he belonged. The majority of these tombstones are also inscribed with heartbreaking sentences chosen by mourning family members.

### 13/a DON'T MISS:

**Giavera del Montello - Gen. Pennella's Headstone.** Located near a deep sinkhole that is popularly known as the 'Valley of

## THE SACELLUM OF FRANCESCO BARACCA

NERVESA DELLA BATTAGLIA

14



A small circular temple enclosed by a group of cypress trees marks the place where major Francesco Baracca—the most victorious of all Italian pilots during the First World War—crashed with his aircraft. The details surrounding said crash remain a source of historical debate even today. The emblem of his aircraft was a rampant horse. Upon obtaining permission from Francesco Baracca's mother, it was adopted by Enzo Ferrari as the symbol and logo of Italy's most prestigious automobile company. Ferrari and Baracca were born in the same area. Aviation saw incredible development during the war even if its costs were high in terms of the loss of human lives due to widespread inadequacies linked to design. This trend was made worse by the use of combat techniques that were so epic-like they inspired people to refer to aviators as 'knights of the sky'.



## THE ITALIAN MILITARY SHRINE

NERVESA DELLA BATTAGLIA

15



### 15/a DON'T MISS: S. Croce di Nervesa della Battaglia

*Monument to the Boys of '99.*

Nestled amidst cypress trees, not far from the Church of Santa Croce del Montello, toward the slopes of the Montello, you'll find a monument dedicated to the so-called 'Boys of '99'. This expression refers to the 18-year old soldiers drafted into the army at the end of 1917. Their war experience sparked much of the rhetoric that developed later, during the post-war period. The church's nearby bell tower marks the passing of each hour, playing the notes of the 'Leggenda del Piave' the most famous, deeply moving battle hymn of the First World War.



Built on the northeastern summit of the Montello, the Italian Military Shrine hosts the remains of nearly 9,000 soldiers. Not without rhetoric, its imposingly massive rectangular shape celebrates the Italian army's tetragon resistance. From its balconies, you can appreciate a panoramic view of the battlefield and the Piave River as it winds throughout the plains, making its way through the Montello and the Susegana Hills. In the south, the river's flow is interrupted by the bridges of Priula. Vintage artilleries overlook the square located opposite the entrance and a noteworthy museum inside the shrine serves to increase the visitor's knowledge and deepen one's emotions, immediately sparked by the long, silent list of names.

*For more information: The Military Shrine of Montello Tel. 0422 779996. Opening hours: 9am-5pm from May 1 to September 30; 9am-6pm from October 1 to April 30. Admission is free.*

## THE PONTOON

NERVESA DELLA BATTAGLIA

16



Fighting along the banks of a river comes with the obligation to sand-bag it each time an offensive attack is planned. All of the armies involved in the conflict, alternately deployed on the Piave, sand-bagging the river. Boats, pontoons, gangways and equipment bridges were basic tools for assaulting the adversary's positions. Italian sappers and Austro-Hungarian pioneers sacrificed themselves by the hundreds in the terrible feat of opening the road for their companions. The pontoons were made up of three floating elements, held together by strong chords fixed to large metal anchors. One of these elements was rescued from the river; it shows extremely visible signs of the downpour of chips and bullets shot during the first attempt to cross the river.

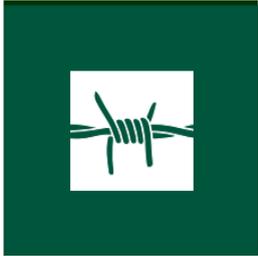
### 16/a DON'T MISS: Nervesa della Battaglia

*Monument to the artillerymen.*

In the immediate vicinity of the ancient river port of Nervesa, you'll find a

bronze monument inspired by a famed illustration: a cannon damaged by the adversary's shots. In the illustration, it is surrounded by officials and heroic soldiers who had been called to make the extreme sacrifice. This image was originally created to highlight desperate resistance on the Isonzo, right after Caporetto. Over time, it became an icon representing the battles that took place in the Montelliano area—so much so, that it became a monument commemorating the courage of the Italian artillery.

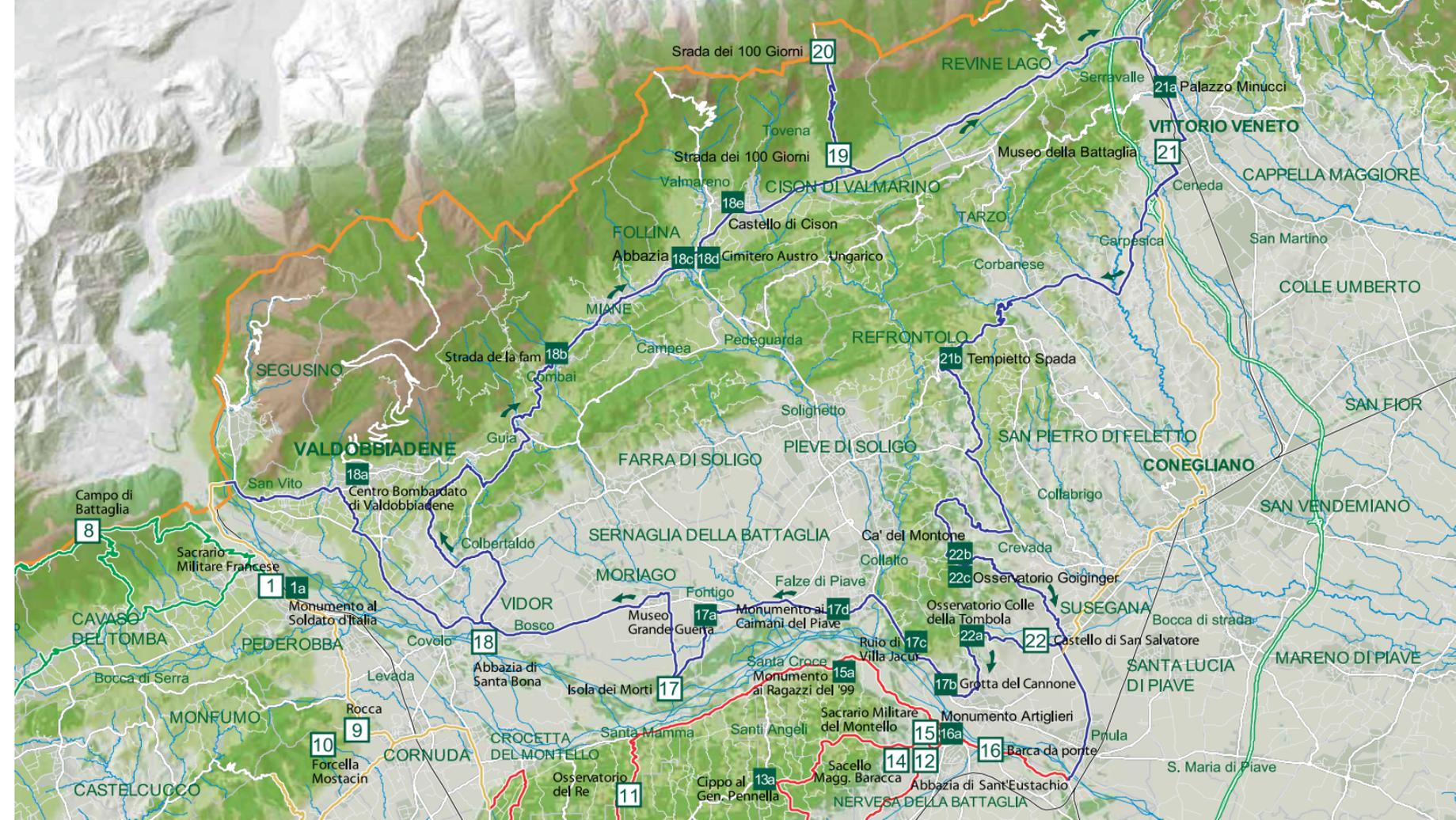


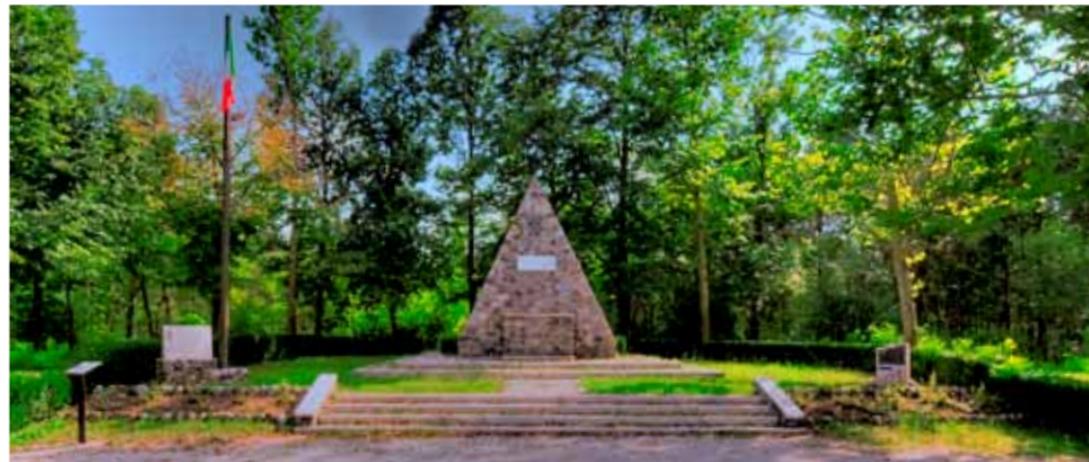


# THE FINAL BATTLE

During the second half of 1918, the Central power's dramatic social and economic situations and the event of widespread hunger foretold that the conflict was nearing its final stages. The Italian government was pushing the Supreme Commando to push the army toward an offensive attack in hopes of recuperating the territorial losses it had sustained with the Retreat of Caporetto. A plan was developed that foresaw the adversary's massive efforts on the mountain front; it included the simultaneous sandbagging of the Piave in three mid-way points. The plan's guiding principles included advancement that converged in Vittorio Veneto. The southern-most operation, carried out opposite the Island of Papadopoli, was forestalled by a few days in order to bring the line-up to the first Austro-Hungarian line. On October 26 and 27, the first troops reached the left bank opposite Pederobba, near Falzè di Piave. The situation became critical as it was difficult to hold the bridges, which had been destroyed several times by the artillery and the river's current which had swelled with the coming of heavy rains. On October 28, they were able to force the natural obstacle and the operation developed rapidly. The adversary continued to give increasingly grave signs of organizational un-doing. On October 30, Vittorio Veneto was finally reached and the pursuit continued throughout the alpine valleys, going toward the seaside of Trieste.

- *This itinerary foresees a clockwise one-way orientation, as shown by the map's arrows.*





After the end of the conflict, a sense of popular piety immediately sparked the creation of a tiny monument built on an outcropping islet where many cadavers had shored, having been transported by the Piave's current. This striking situation prompted locals to call it 'the Island of the Dead'. Almost immediately, the islet became a place of pilgrimage in memory of the fallen and it also commemorated the operations carried out by the Bold on that particular segment of the river. Transformed into a vast park, it now hosts an immense central square which boasts several monuments and a votive temple dedicated to the Virgin, 'the *Madonnina del Piave*'.

**DON'T MISS:**

**17/a - 17/b - 17/c - 17/d**

**17/a Fontigo di Sernaglia della Battaglia**

*The Museum of the Great War.*

Located in Fontigo's 'Center for Environmental Education', this museum hosts a noteworthy exhibition of artifacts and objects that were found by the river or donated by elderly citizens who had recuperated them throughout the area. One can view the technical evolution of these weapons, in addition to seeing the profoundly moving simplicity of the personal objects found in the trenches at that time.

**17/b Colfosco**

*The Cannon's Grotta.*

Today, this cave hosts a statue of the Virgin Mary, yet during the last days of the war, it concealed a piece of artillery. Hidden in a cave, this artillery made it difficult to destroy the bridges opposite Nervesa. Italian observers were not able to locate the cannon, which continued firing undisturbed until the moment of the retreat.



**17/c Colfosco**

*Ruio di Villa Jacur.*

The area surrounding the Villa Jacur was the logistic pivotal point of the Austro-Hungarian offensive in June 1918: the only bridge that resisted the Italian artillery was located on the pebbly shore. It was via this bridge that the Imperial troops sought their retreat, particularly the 13th Schutzen Division that commemorated this fact with a special badge. The Austrian 13th Schutzen Division passed over it during the Austro-Hungarian offense operations in June 1918.



**17/d Falzè di Piave**

*Monument to the Cayman of the Piave.*

The central square of Falzè di Piave hosts a dynamic bronze sculpture group representing three hardy soldiers involved in the offensive rush, using the light-weight armament that was typical of a special corps assault. This monument recalls an operation that took place on October 27, 1918, which prompted each participant to be called a 'Cayman of the Piave'.

Between the river's shore and the first steep hills of the Vidor, you'll find the Abbey of Santa Bona, built by the Benedictines in the XII century. This abbey complex includes the church, a cloister, the monk's cells and a large garden. The entire complex is surrounded by a trussed wall. Located on the front line, it became the target of severe bombings by the Italians and the allies, like all other urban settlements situated near the front. This situation reaped considerable damage to numerous precious buildings. Visitors who wish to tour the inside must obtain permission from its current-day owners.

**DON'T MISS:****18/a -18/b -18/c - 18/d - 18/e****18/a Valdobbiadene - A bombarded center**

Wide open facing the south, the center of Valdobbiadene was completely exposed to sightings by the allied artillery and it was hit extremely hard with the intention of stopping enemy troops from finding shelter or materials that would prove useful for building forts (such as timber, beams, doors and balconies). After the war, Valdobbiadene's center was rebuilt according to a far-reaching plan that created the balanced style that now makes the town a dignified reference point for its famed production of "Prosecco" wine.

**18/b Combai - Hunger Road**

The troops employed the valley's women and children as laborers. They would earn themselves a small quantity of food (a daily ration of soup) in exchange for numerous hours of daily labor, building cobblestone roads. The majority of works needed to create the viability required by the Imperial Army were



carried out in this way. Today, the road is still known by its popular name, 'Strada della fame' or 'Hunger Road'.

**18/c Follina - Abbey.**

This historical monument was hit by several cannon bombs which caused its roof to cave in and made the eastern wall of the church collapse. The refectory, built in the XIII century, was destroyed to make use of its timber. In the years following the war, it was transformed into an Oratory-Monument in honor of the fallen.

**18/d Follina - The A.U. Cemetery**

Situated behind the civic cemetery, this cemetery received up to 900 fallen soldiers—491 of which were identified. Considered definitively abandoned when the



cemetery's remains were transferred to the Quero's Austro-Germanic Ossuary, it recently returned numerous remains and is currently at the center of a recuperation plan put into action by volunteers from all over Europe.

**18/e Cison di Valmarino**

*The Brandolini Castle.*

The Bandolini Castle dominated the Valsana, allowing for exemplary communication with the historical hamlet of Cison. It became the residence of officials and was used as a recovery station for those who had been wounded on the front. A narrow-gauge railway was used for transporting ammunition and materials from Vittorio Veneto toward Piave di Soligo, winding along the lower slopes of the hills that host the castle.

**THE HUNDRED  
- DAY ROAD** **19-20**  
TOVENA

The Austro-Hungarian commando had the strategic need to establish quick, safe communication between the Bellunese Valley and the Vittoriese area, thereby connecting Grappa's cableways with those of the Piave. Partly following a steep medieval trail, the Austrian pioneers took only 100 days (from February 1 to June 1, 1918) to build a narrow, winding carriageway with five superimposed bends in a tunnel—an authentic masterpiece of engineering. The street immediately gained fundamental importance for the occupying army. The artillery involved in the Battle of the Solstice made use of this road and the troops deployed in Quartier del Piave travelled it four months later during their retreat, otherwise they would have remained trapped in a pocket of resistance without the chance of escape.



**THE MUSEUM  
OF THE BATTLE** **21**  
VITTORIO VENETO

An ex-combatant from Vittorio Veneto, Luigi Marson gave his hometown a noteworthy collection of objects and documents linked to the Great War. Marson's educational intentions and civil warnings became a reality in 1938, when the doors of the 'Museum of the Battle of Vittorio Veneto' opened its doors during a celebration commemorating the twentieth anniversary of victory. Hosted in the Loggia del Sansovino (XVI century), it includes a large quantity of objects, weapons, relics, documents, relief models and photographs. The museum's exhibition is still organized according to its original layout, designed to help visitors understand the trends that led to the sacralization of remembrance at the end of the conflict. It also reconstructs the setting and events that brought an end to fighting on the Italian Front on November 4, 1918.



**21/a DON'T MISS:**

**Vittorio Veneto - Minucci Palace.**

This palace hosts Giacomo Camillo De Carlo's legacy. He received multiple medals during the First World War for having been the first parachute-jumper in the world to parachute

behind enemy lines with a spy mission. His esthetic tastes and life views were similar to those of D'Annunzio and he left the city of Vittorio Veneto a small 'Vittoriale' booklet which effectively describes the ethical and esthetic canons of his time.



**21/b DON'T MISS:**

**Refrontolo - The Spada Temple.**

Built in a dominating position in 1800, this small temple became a quick target for artillery marksmanship; consequently, it was destroyed in 1918.

**THE SAN SALVATORE  
CASTLE**  
SUSEGANA

**22**

An important comital residence throughout the Veneto's history, the San Salvatore Castle played an important role for centuries, presiding over the junction line that served to connect the hills, the Treviso plain, the Piave's long fords and the ferries that sailed the river. The castle was hit particularly hard by the Italian and British artillery due to the conspicuously dense presence of enemy stations that cropped up in the immediate vicinity. Its massive, visible structure proved a perfect target for the battery's shots, so that the soldiers could practice their marksmanship on surrounding targets. The base of the castle is perforated by numerous complex tunnels created by the Austro-Hungarians; said tunnels were re-used, in part, during World War II.

*For more information:  
The San Salvatore Castle Tel. 0438 738241;  
Opening hours: 9.30am-11am*



**DON'T MISS:**

**22/a - 22/b - 22/c**

**22/a Susegana**

*The Colle della Tombola Observatory.* This hill rises above the Piave precisely opposite the Montello; its position is ideal for overseeing the Italian lines. Its trenches are still recognizable today; they surrounded the pre-historic fort and were interspersed with observatories and cave shelters, which were valiantly held until the very end of the conflict by Hungarian infantrymen belonging to the 51st Division Honvéd.

**22/b Collalto - Ca' del Montone.**

The two stone plaques are currently exhibited on the external wall of the farm house that served as commando headquarters during the conflict. Written in Italian and Czechoslovakian, they recall the shooting of several Czechoslovakian legions that had been captured during the Battle of the Solstice. Many Czechoslovakians had responded to the

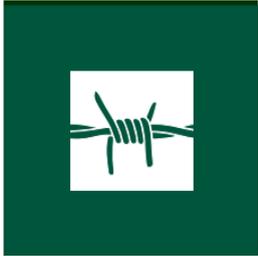


Italian appeal, going to the front to fight for the liberation of their own country from domination by the Hapsburgs. Thereby considered deserters, these soldiers, once captured, were inevitably sentenced to capital punishment.

**22/c Collalto - The Goiginger Observatory.**

The Guarda hill is one of the area's best observation points. From there, you can view the entire territory that stretches from the

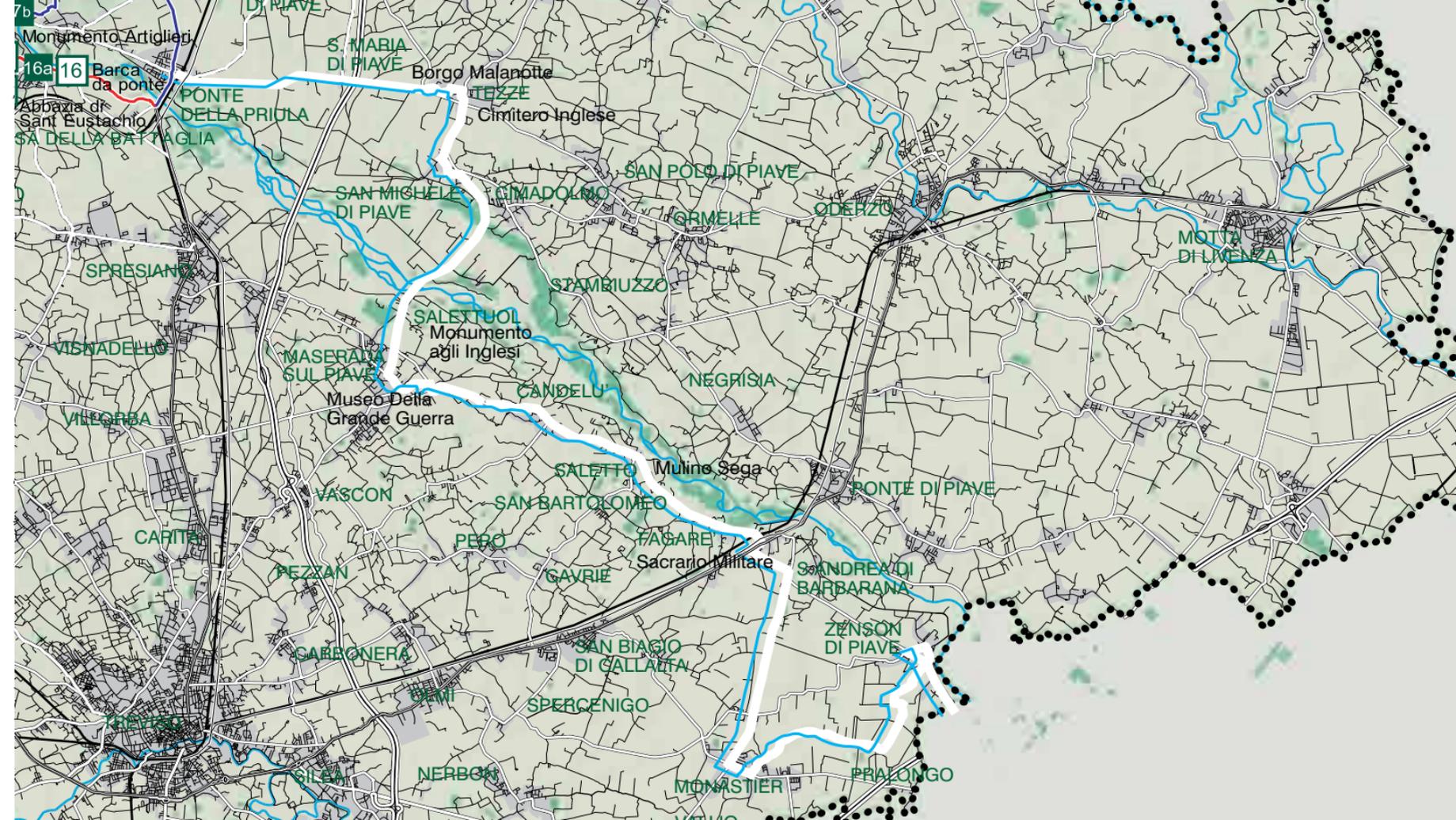
Montello to the Quartier del Piave plain. It was chosen as a main observatory by Field Marshal Ludwig Goiginger, commander of the XXIV Armed Corps. He was in charge of offensive operations on the Montello during the Battle of the Solstice. Goiginger was the only commander decorated by the Order of Maria Teresa during the last centuries of the Austrian Empire's military history, an honor bestowed on him for having carried out a retreat under almost impossible conditions.



## THE SACRED RIVER

Few sacred places have the evocative power of the banks of the Piave River. Crossing one of its bridges, you'll find a series of signs that spark collective memory, like a sign that reads, 'Fiume sacro alla Patria' or 'River that's sacred to the Fatherland'. Nearby, you'll find a flag waving in the wind and soon realize that, often, the name of each location and town carries the specification 'della Battaglia' ('of the Battle'). Three mighty battles were fought between the two banks: the 'Battle of the Arrest' (November 1917), the 'Battle of the Solstice' (June 1918) and the 'Battle of Vittorio Veneto' (October 1918). These battles' involuntary protagonist was the river itself, which at that time was far more energetic and full of hydraulic power. The extreme resources of Austria-Hungary were exhausted on this river, while the fortunes of the Royal Army and the alleys were rebuilt. Millions of men looked toward the other side of the river, knowing that sooner or later, they would have to face the forces of nature in addition to the cruelty of man.

- This itinerary foresees a clockwise one-way orientation, as shown by the map's arrows.



**THE HAMLET OF  
BORGO MALANOTTE** **23**  
TEZZE

The quaint hamlet of Borgo di Malanotte witnessed the outcome of the offensive actions carried out by British troops. After they conquered the island of Papadopoli, they sandbagged the river, creating severe difficulties for the 7th Austro-Hungarian Division. The hamlet hosted one of the Imperial Artillery's shooting stations, shielded in an underground bunk which is still preserved today. To give the line-up time to retrocede to reserve positions, they resisted bitterly, precisely near Borgo Malanotte. On October 27, encouraged by the relative ease with which the first line on the embankment had been overcome, British soldiers attacked the hamlet which they were able to conquer after many losses. The town was repeatedly lost and regained, thanks to severe reciprocal counterattacks, until it definitively fell into British hands at 4pm. Malanotte's battles was the only real obstacle the attackers met. Nonetheless, within a few days they were able to reach and overcome the adversary's last defensive line.



**THE BRITISH  
CEMETERY** **24**  
TEZZE

A small portion of land was donated to the British government for the burial and commemoration of fallen soldiers. This plot was located in the area immediately surrounding the territory that had witnessed the impetuous operations carried out by the allies from October 24 to October 29, 1918. The British Expedition Corps' role in the final phases of the conflict on the Italian front continues to be a topic of ample study for historians. This is primarily due to the fact that the English cavalry was able to deftly overcome extreme imperial defense before the Italian army was actually able to reach Vittorio Veneto. This fact sparked a long series of political and diplomatic contentions which produced very grave consequences. During the Versailles Peace Conference, the Italian Governmental Delegation controversially withdrew twice—a decision that engendered internal propaganda centered on the concept of 'betrayed victory'.



## A MONUMENT TO THE 7TH BRITISH DIVISION MASERADA SUL PIAVE

# 25

Flanked by two minor monuments that recall the heroism of infantrymen from the Veneto and Caserta divisions (as displayed in June 1918) and the courage of the 44th Regiment Artillery, this white pedestal commemorates the passage of the 7th British division. King George's troops were able to sand-bag the Piave's first tributary thanks only to the exceptional work of Italian pontoniers, which have always been remembered with admiration by the Anglo-Saxons. An equipment bridge was set up as part of a demanding strategy. It was built and used during the night and abruptly disassembled and hidden when morning arrived. On the other hand, the British Artillery provided evidence of their valor and skill by providing—together with the Italian army—massive and effective firing coverage of the active troops, without having had time to carry out their usual practice shots.



## THE MUSEUM OF MASERADA SUL PIAVE

# 26

Like other museums located throughout the territory, this museum was created as a result of the search for historic materials that was carried out by local 'recuperation teams' on the Piave's pebbly shores. It recounts the history of events, but it also lends itself to showing how said events were interpreted by local citizens and enriched by legends, narratives and symbolic memories. Today, these objects linked to the Great War are collectors' items. Until just a few decades ago, they were spread all over the terrain and reused for purposes other than their original use. Artillery cartridge cases, for example, were widely recycled and used as flower vases in churches or any sanctuary dedicated to prayer or reflection. The museum also hosts some objects that are particularly striking because of their meaningful link to the war. And they were preserved amidst the river's rocks and

limestone, maintaining the whole dramatic nature of their dynamic history.

*For information: Tel. 0422 878415  
Opening hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3pm to 6:30pm. For special opening hours:  
Tel. 0422 778760 - 340 1486936  
mongolfiera.maserada@libero.it*



## MOLINO DELLA SEGA

27

SAN BIAGIO DI CALLALTA

One of the most meaningful allegories of the Great War is linked to the 'Ragazzi del '99' (the Boys of '99) or the last class of soldiers drafted and sent to the front. The events that occurred in Caporetto forced military leaders to quickly make up for losses. Thus, the Royal Army ordered for boys born in 1899 to be drafted and immediately trained to serve in the armed forces. Once the front established itself on the Piave, it became necessary to contain the adversary's efforts to take advantage of the operative weakness of the Italian divisions. The Supreme Commando had no choice but to introduce fresh troops made up of young soldiers and bring them into the battle. The fervent propaganda and rhetoric of the moment became intertwined with the recklessness of youth. The 'Boys of '99' have always held symbolic meaning and they are often cited as an example of the nation's regenerating youth and total sacrifice needed for victory.



## THE SHRINE OF FAGARE'

28

FAGARÈ DELLA BATTAGLIA

Right after the end of the conflict, it became common to carry out an emotional pilgrimage-of-sorts to the places that had been involved in the war. Veterans and family members of fallen soldiers would travel from one cemetery to the next looking for the burial site of their military buddies or deceased relatives. Thus, it became necessary for the nation to demonstrate a sense of recognition for its fallen soldiers. The area's original cemeteries were removed and their remains were transferred to monumental areas that later became an instrument of propaganda used for promoting the myth of Italy as a glorious dominating force; this idea was particularly emphasized during the Fascist period. All of the conflict's symbolic locations exalted this type of sacralization which still dominates the landscape thanks to these monuments' imposing architectural characteristics. Fagarè della Battaglia's shrine hosts the remains of

more than ten thousand soldiers from the III Army. Each side of the shrine hosts some historic sentences written by the soldiers during the Battle of the Solstice (June 15-23, 1918). These same phrases were frequently used during fascism to incite battle and link the regime's hardihood with the bellicose glories that had just occurred.

*For more information: Tel. 0422 790395  
Opening hours: 9am - 12pm; 2pm - 4pm;  
Every day except Mondays.*



The Piave's current runs slower near the outlet of the sea. As in every river, this generates a series of bends that determine its course: the Zenson Bend, located between high embankments, was one of the first. It became one of the bloodiest and fervid places of battle. Fighting occurred there several times in 1917 and 1918 and coincided with the three main battles fought along the river. The war's dramatic cruelty forced contenders to face each other and seek shelter under the same embankment, divided by only a few cubic meters of land. The Austro-Hungarians, in particular, suffered tremendous losses, as their loop was surrounded. They became the target of fierce bombings which brought about the bloody victory of the Italian troops.



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06/11