

# CUSTOZA



## Municipality of Sommacampagna

Piazza C. Alberto, 1 - 37066 Sommacampagna (VR)

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Inhabitants 14.831 - Altitude 121 m. a.s.l.

Surface 40,96 km<sup>2</sup> - Distance from Verona 21 km



### Pro Loco di Custozza

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## 1. THE TERRITORY IN HISTORY

Some finds of the 11th century B.C. and fragments of Roman tombstone seem to bear witness to a rather ancient human presence in these areas. The first certain news concerning the territory and the name, however, dates back to the mid-1200s. Custoza became part, as a strategic point, of a system of fortifications between Sommacampagna and Villafranca, which used a wall with a moat, erected at the foot of the last hills of the Garda morainic amphitheater overlooking the Po Valley. From this, the ancient appellation Custodia, derived precisely from being considered a guardhouse. The territory, in the course of the two successive centuries, passed from the hands of the Della Scala family to those of the Visconti, then of the Carraresi and then to the Republic of Venice, after having been subjected to the lordships of the Gonzaga and the Sforza. After the fall of the Serenissima and the period of the Napoleonic wars, Custoza too, with the distribution sanctioned at the Congress of Vienna of 1815, became part of the Lombard-Veneto kingdom, subject to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The two wars of independence (1848 and 1866) saw these places the scene of bloody clashes between Piedmontese and Austrians. Custoza has many testimonies of this Risorgimento past.



*Reenaction of the historic battles of 1848 and 1866*

## 2. TO SEE

Worthy of note is the seventeenth-century **Villa Pignatti Morano** that dominates the Bellavista hill towards the Po valley. In a dominant position on the Villafranca plain, the seventeenth-



century Villa Pignatti, is a classic Venetian Villa owned by the Counts Ottolini, lords of Custoza since the early 18th century. The building was enlarged and made taller at the end of the nineteenth century and subsequently restored in the 1930s by the current owners, the Pignatti Morano family.

The building has two facades: the first facing the street, the other facing east, with an Italian garden in front, listed in the list of historic gardens. The external part of the property is equipped with lemon trees, an avenue of cypresses and a beautiful deciduous wood, an olive grove and vineyards. Inside the villa there are elegant rooms with painted walls and decorated coffered ceilings. The seventeenth-century furniture has been kept intact in the chapel.

The halls of the villa have seen many guests, in November 1822, the European monarchs, gathered in Verona to strengthen the bonds of the Holy Alliance. During the Third War of Independence, the villa was the scene of armed clashes. In particular, in June 1866, its park, which in times of peace was the scene of hunting parties, was crossed by soldiers of both armies at war. The villa is not open to visitors but is clearly visible from Via Bellavista.

**Villa Medici** from the late eighteenth century, at the foot of the Belvedere hill, is also worth a mention.

On the plain between these two heights stands the **Parish Church**, built in 1792 on the remains of an earlier one, of which the bell tower still remains from that period. The structure is dedicated to San Pietro in Vinculis (St. Peter in chains) and preserves a precious fifteenth-century Madonna and Child in painted stone.

In Montegodi, surrounded by greenery, you can admire the ancient church oratory dedicated to St. Anthony.

## Tourist guide for the Baldo Garda area

Among the monuments, the main and most striking is the Ossuary, erected in 1879, to collect the bones of soldiers who fell in the two wars of independence. It is an octagon-shaped building, resting on a base of white stone. On the minor sides four windows open giving light to the crypt below, which preserves the bones of thousands of fallen soldiers. The upper part is characterized by a balustrade that surrounds the obelisk and from which a vast panorama of the surrounding areas can be enjoyed.

In Cavalchina locality, along the road to Sommacampagna, there is a monument to **Amedeo**

**di Savoia, Duca d'Aosta**, depicted while, in a courageous military action, he was wounded among his soldiers. A few hundred metres farther on, on the wall of a house along the road, a plaque can be seen remembering the heroic action of the Garibaldian grenadier Stefano Messaggi.



On the hill behind the hamlet of Cavalchina is the house of the **Tamburino Sardo**, whose legendary sacrifice was told of by De Amicis in the book Cuore.

*It is the fictionalized story of a drummer of the Piedmontese army, a 14-year-old boy who, during the battle of Custoza (24 July 1848) ran to call for reinforcements to prevent his company, perched in a farmhouse, from being captured. The Austrian soldiers hit him in the leg, but the drummer boy did not stop, straining the injured leg by running to the headquarters of Villafranca and*



*having the reinforcements that saved the company arrive on time. Due to the effort of the run the Drummer lost his leg.*

Nearby, in a splendid panoramic position, there is a cippus dedicated to the Grenadiers of Sardinia, who fought here at the time of the Battle of Custoza. *It was 11 June 24, 1866 when the Grenadiers of the Sardinia Brigade occupied Monte Croce and pushed the Austro-Hungarian troops into the valley below. The Grenadiers fought with bravery, but without reinforcements and supplies they could not last long. The Austro-Hungarians had the upper hand. Overall the battle of Custoza in 1866 saw the Italians fight with valour, which had little value because they were not adequately directed by the superior commanders. The Battle of Custoza was therefore lost, but the war was won*

*thanks to the Allied Prussian armies that defeated the Austro-Hungarians in the north. Thanks to Prussia, Italy obtained the annexation of the Veneto.*



## 3. FOOD AND WINE

In Custoza the most important crop is the vine which has seen its decisive development since the end of the 1800s. A determined push has taken place over the last thirty years thanks to the affirmation of the DOC wines of the area: the Custoza and the Bardolino. At restaurants and farmhouses in the area the visitor can taste both the various fine typical dishes of Veronese cuisine (which also feels influenced by the nearby Mantuan cuisine), as well as simple snacks with bread and local salami and polenta with homemade dishes. It is always accompanied by excellent Custoza DOC produced by local wineries.

A traditional dish, typical of winter-spring, is “**ovi duri and broccoli.**” (boiled eggs and broccoli). At the beginning it was the elderly pensioners of the local Pro Loco who were dedicated to the cultivation of the broccoletto typical of Custoza which was launched by the Pro Loco itself as a typical dish in the broccoli festival of January. Then with the ever-increasing success of broccoli as a appreciated and sought-after dish, an ad hoc committee was created of professional growers and restaurateurs who promote the broccoli of Custoza combined with wine in the marquee in the piazza at the end of January and in turn in the themed dinners in of the restaurants of the territory.



## 4. EVENTS AND FOLKLORE

### The Festival of flavours with Custoza broccoli

For a few years, at the beginning of January, the event has been aimed at rediscovering the “broccoletto di Custoza”, a typical product, proposed here combined with boiled eggs and salami.

### The Custoza doc wine festival

The event, held in June, represents the end of the Custoza Doc wine competition which the Pro Loco has been organizing since 1971 and which rewards

the best winemakers of the nine municipalities to the east of Lake Garda, which form the production area. The event, for the cultural and folkloristic aspects proposed in public, represents the territory and its most typical product.

In May the **Custoza Doc wine competition** takes place.

In October the “**Spumanti e frizzanti (Sparkling Wine) Inter-provincial Exhibition**” takes place in collaboration with ONAV Verona.



## 5. ITINERARIES

The “**Cammina Custoza**” path is an itinerary that winds for about 8 km in the hilly area north-west of Custoza. The path is immersed in a natural environment typical of the morainic amphitheatre. The path that can be followed on foot or by bicycle



passes through hamlets and cultivated fields, uncultivated areas and small woods.

The “**Tamburino Sardo (Sardinian Drummer Boy)**” path is an easy walk. It winds for 3 km, partly on the flat, partly on a slope, following the crest of Mount Croce (153 m high). Immersed in the countryside it allows you to admire the extensive cultivation of pergola vineyards, places that were once the scene of bloody battles for the Independence and Unity of Italy. The path passes in front of the house of the “Tamburino Sardo ( Sardinian Drummer Boy)” with the plaque which recalls the heroic boy of De Amici’s’ memory.



**Paths of history** on the places of battles where villas, churches, the countryside and monuments are the mute vestiges of a period that saw Italy dominated by the foreigner. First the Napoleonic French who, after the congress of Vienna left room for the Austro-Hungarians who in turn were then definitively removed in 1866.

