

GARDA



Municipality of Garda

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Inhabitants 4.096 - Altitude 67 m. a.s.l. - Surface 16,09 km²

Distance from Verona 39 km



Pro Loco di Garda

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1. THE TERRITORY IN HISTORY

The first human settlements in the Garda area date back to prehistory, as is shown by numerous archaeological finds: pile dwellings near the banks of the lake and objects of flint and metal dating back to the beginning of the Bronze Age. Objects of great interest are also the rock engravings of Punta San Vigilio and the remains of the road structure of the vicus (village) of Garda, already existing in Roman times, with a main road and the others perpendicular to it.



The remains of a Roman villa identified on the lake shore between Garda and Punta San Vigilio also date back to this period. It is useful for dating, also the analysis of the erosion that harmed the rock due to the water, which may have cancelled or levelled the old engravings.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the area of Garda was the object of numerous barbarian invasions and immediately became one of the central points of the defensive system of the southern



plains against the armies that came down from the Alps. In fact the name Garda appeared for the first time in a document by the Lombard king Liutprando (712 AD), with reference to the fortress (Warte) built on the magnificent rocky outcrop overlooking the area.

After the clash between the dukes of '888 to contend for the kingdom of Italy (where Queen Adelaide was the protagonist), the Rock of Garda again became part of Italian history in the period that brought the first municipal autonomies. Throughout the century that followed and until the advent of the Della Scala family of Verona (1277), the Rock of Garda was the theatre of war events such as the siege of the Rock by Federico Barbarossa, defended by Turisendo dei Turisendi. It was conquered by Ezzelino da Romano, who in turn lost it in 1236. It took an eight-hour assault on the part of the Visconti of Milan, who ruled it for a short period until it finally passed into the possession of the Republic of Venice (1405-1797). Ruled by a magistrate known as Capitano del Lago (captain of the lake) the ten municipalities of the eastern shores of the lake came together in the Gardesana dell'Acqua Council for the distribution of tax burdens imposed by Venice, but Garda never enjoyed complete tranquillity due to the clashes between Venice and the Visconti. In 1797 the Italian campaigns of Napoleon finally put an end to Venetian rule. The territory of Garda passed briefly to the Austrians, then back to the French and finally, after The Treaty of Vienna (1815), to the Lombard Veneto Austrian kingdom. In 1859 the two bloody battles of San Martino and Solferino were fought a few kilometres from Garda, which led to the crisis of the local economy based on fishing, vineyards and silkworm breeding.

Only after the second world war did Garda become a modern tourist centre that could maintain its traditions.



2. TO SEE

The architecture of the historical centre preserves intact the ancient urban planning made up of buildings overlooking the narrow alleys. Amongst these are numerous grand houses and villas which are witness to the noble families that chose Garda as a dwelling or vacation spot over the course of the centuries. **Palazzo dei**

Capitani, of Venetian Gothic architecture, was mirrored once upon a time by a small marina, which was in time covered over and gave rise to the current Piazza Catullo.

Villa Carlotti is located next to the **Civic Tower** and is a large 16th century construction that ends in a building, called the Losa, comprising of a porch on the ground floor (originally a dock) and a loggia with a beautiful view on the first floor.

At the Northern Gate is located **Palazzo Fregoso**, built at the beginning of the sixteenth century by the Genoese leader Cesare Fregoso, exiled from his native Genoa and passed to the service of Venice.

Just outside the town of Garda, on the road to San Vigilio, stands the sixteenth-century **Villa Degli Albertini**, surrounded by a magnificent park enclosed by crenellated walls. Not far from the villa is the small church dedicated to San Carlo Borromeo.

At the southern entrance of the town is the **parish church**, dedicated to Saint Maria Assunta. The oldest part of the church consists of the parsonage and the cloister, where a fragment of a Longobard ciborium, placed on a door remains a testimony to the ancient church.

In addition to the parish church, there are four others Churches in Garda: Saint Stephen, Saint Bernard, Saint Charles and Saint Vigilio.



3. FOOD AND WINE

Fish, olive oil, wine are the three typical products of Lake Garda and it is on these cornerstones that the cuisine of the Garda area is based: the fish, and it could not be otherwise, constitutes its foundation. Numerous varieties come from the lake water some indigenous to Garda, others introduced by man. Garda is the northernmost area which allows for the cultivation of olives. Extra virgin olive oil from Garda, whose main characteristics are its lightness and ease of digestibility, now has a European brand DOP. The cuisine of the Garda area can be accompanied by the wines of the area: Bardolino, Bianco di Custoza and Lugana most of all. The Sanvigilini, typical Garda sweets, are made with raisins and are a dignified conclusion to a meal.

4. EVENTS AND FOLKLORE

April: Gran fondo Citta di Garda; MTB Garda Marathon

April-May: Garda oli 'ola'; The world of oil on display

June: Italian Body Painting Championship; Fairy Festival

June-July: Garda d'autore; Cultural event

July: Bandiera del Lago (Flag of the Lake); Regatta delle Bisse (traditional rowing race); moonlit Sardellata (sardine feast); Luciano Beretta Award

August: Ciapar la cucagna (traditional game); Palio in rosa (rowing races); Palio delle contrade (rowing race) (*four evenings of Garda cuisine based on fish from the lake*); Ancient festival of Saint Bernard

November - January: Christmas among the olive trees



Tourist guide for the Baldo Garda area

Particularly folkloristic is the **Palio delle contrade** (rowing competition) which has been taking place for fifty years on the 15th of August.

On the stretch of lakefront between the port and the Town Hall the gondolas of the nine districts of Garda descend into the water and with strokes of the oars contend for the city record. Each crew consists of four oarsmen, who row standing up in the classic style of the local fishermen of the past. Before the regatta the rowers march through the streets of the town carrying long oars that are then used in the race.

At 9 pm, on the command of "boats into the water" the three elimination rounds begin until the crowning of the winning contrada(district) . Then follows a grand finale with fireworks.



Another manifestation of ancient origin and folkloric taste is the **Sardellata al chiaro di luna** (sardine cookout) which re-proposes in a modern way the ancient custom of consuming fish on the night of the full moon.



5. ITINERARIES

Garda situated right at the halfway mark of the eastern coast of the same named lake, faces onto a large gulf. Its territory, closed to the south by the Rock, to the north from Mount Luppia and to the east by a crown of hills, is not very extensive, but is rich in environmental, historical and tourist attractions. Numerous are the possibilities to take walks in the middle of nature.

Garda has three beaches: the first is located in the south, the second to the north (the most frequented, thanks to its greater breadth) and the third called Baia delle Sirene (Mermaid's Bay), near Punta San Vigilio. A recommended walk is that which leads you from Garda to Bardolino along the shore of the Lake.



We also recommend a cultural walk to the Museum of Garda in the Town Hall in the Palazzetto delle Esposizioni.

The Museum is the ideal place in which to dig into the memories of the roots of the area.

There are exhibitions of tools and objects of the daily life of the "people of the lake" dating back to about a century ago. But the world of fishing is also on display with work tools for fishing and the conservation of fish.

GARDA THE ANCIENT VILLAGE

by Bruna De Agostini

The passage of time dances along the discreet walls
Opening light cracks like spiderwebs,
Peeling the paint applied by skilled hands.

Strange games of shadows on the walls
indefinite forms, almost mysterious,
the sun is slowly setting,

A last beam
illuminates an old balcony,
and makes the rusty railing shine.

A memory of ancient nobility,
faded frescoes adorn the walls,
a curtain of lace yellowed by time,
swinging in the evening breeze.

In a silent atmosphere full of archaic memories
I listen to paddled sounds.
The alley speaks of furtive love encounters,
of whispers and sighs of kisses in stolen moments,

The alley sings the joy of children
playing among half-closed doors,
The alley echoes in the sound of iron wheels,
which trace the pavement.

A gust of wind with a cold taste,
brings back the silent atmosphere
cradling my unusual stroll.

2001 – Lyrical poetry 1st place at the
“Premio Riviera” National Literary Competition
Category: Lyrical poetry about Garda