

Spring, it is time to sail

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With the fine weather, the commitment of the Region of Lombardy for the relaunching of inland waterway navigation has been renewed with particular focus on the Locarno-Po waterway. Today, Monday 26th April, on the occasion of the relaunching of a line and the start of the regular service, about twice-weekly during the week-ends, of that from Sesto Calende to Porto della Torre, there has been a ferry and bus tour that “descended” the waterway from Sesto Calende to Abbiategrasso, offering views of great beauty during the water stages from Sesto to Villa Pio (Somma) and from Castelletto di Cuggiono to Abbiate. This tour has taken place with the presence of the reconfirmed councillor responsible for infrastructure Raffaele Cattaneo and the chairman of Navigli Lombardi Emanuele Errico. The mayor of Sesto Marco Colombo greeted the group briefly, to which even the deputy mayor of Somma Carioni had joined, and seized the opportunity to plead the cause of his town as junction of the tourist navigation. Among the proposals there was also the moving of the terminal of the lake navigation from Angera to Sesto Calende.

Today, two lines of navigation of Navigli Lombardi have been presented or relaunched. Navigli Lombardi is a society founded in collaboration with 48 state organisations that have expertise in the interested watercourses. While the line called “delle Delizie” – from Turbigo to Abbiategrasso – is on the way to being relaunched, the number 5 line on the upper stretch of Ticino, from Sesto Calende has become regular after an experimental year that has been completed with significant success, so much so that it has remained open for a month more than arranged. The line uses an electric propelled ferry and the complete route lasts about 90 minutes, with possible stops on the Lombard or Piedmontese sides.

A general calendar plans rides mainly for tourists and residents on: 5-8-9-15-16-22-23-29-30 May; 5-6-12-13-19-20-26-27 June; 3-4-10-11-18-19-24-25-31 July; 1-7-8-21-22-28-29 August; 4-5-11-12-18-19-25-26 September; and 2-3-9-10-16-17-23-24-30-31 October. For further information, tel 02-66679131 or info@naviglilombardi.it

Expo, business and sustainable tourism are the “mantras” of the moment; before the goal of 2015 this project tries to give life to activities that are able to self-support and bring income through a tourism that isn’t only local. Actually, a finished waterway could be an international attraction, as long as it is well organised; the naturalistic values

(from Verbano to the upper Ticino and farther), historically and culturally with the residences and the small villages of the plain, and the gourmet events represent the treasure of this area. Besides the lines and the celebration of their relaunching or opening, there are other navigation lines with ferries. Of interest: the Conche, the Milanese Darsena to San Cristoforo and back, along the first stretch of the waterway in Pavia; Aironi, between Milan and Gaggiano with a choice of by bike or by coach, that wait for tourists after the ferry for a visit to the farmhouses of Bassa.

As for the whole navigability of the stretch Locarno-Milan, the aim is to finish the interventions by January 2013. This is what the chairman Errico has reported. The critical stretch to fix is that between Panperduto (under Somma) and Turbigo. The planned interventions by Pirellone aim to overcome the critical points that block the waterway; as Cattaneo reminds us, in the higher part of the dike of Porto della Torre, that is within the Piedmontese province, or that of Panperduto on the Lombard side. In total, out of 68 km of waterway, at this moment 5 are not navigable; the Region is preparing a general project of € 18 million to resolve this situation, and € 3 million have already been invested.

For the Park of Ticino the vice-chairman Luigi Duse has said: “We agree on sustainable transportation [2] , but we believe that it can and should happen by developing the **public** navigation, in particular for the upper stretch of the Ticino. We don't consider to an aim an opening for private companies. Regarding the resources, according to us and people living opposite the Piedmontese Park, the electrical boat is the best choice, considering the fragility of the river ecosystem.” On the contrary, Errico does not agree with the opinion about private funding and has stated: “It is necessarily an effort of all organisations, we cannot think of a service that is only public. Opening even to private organisations would bring a source of income, and the public could never replace the private initiative completely. We need resources to preserve the carried out works. In perspective, this service could be privatised.”

The councillor Cattaneo has remarked the “precious work” of Navigli Lombardi that is transforming in reality that was once only a simple idea, and it tested the passage of the lock of Miorina last year. He has announced, that by the summer, work for the opening up the critical points in the area of Varese, in Panperduto, will continue. “Our region has 1500 km of waterways, 6000 km of inland coasts,” Cattaneo has listed, “158 lake councils, 183 public harbours, a tradition of ship-owners and –builders.” If Milan is the Italian city with the most nautical licences, as our lakes know, this moment for the sector is not so good; 2009 was a year of heavy crisis. Now the hope is the relaunch, beginning from the Show on the Waterway “NavigaMI” planned from Friday 30th April to Sunday 2nd May in Milan.

[1]

Either means “strange” or is too formal!

[2]

No English language references to "Soft mobility" :(

Redazione VareseNews
redazione@varesenews.it