

# VareseNews

## Torba, events in 2017, full of history and tradition

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A calendar of events for the whole family has been proposed for spring – winter 2017, at the **monastery in Torba**. With the backdrop of the **ancient structure near Gornate Olona**, the FAI (Italian Environment Fund) is proposing a series of events for children, but without forgetting the mums, dads and curious visitors.

“The Torba monastery is an important site for the FAI,” **Giuliano Galli**, the head of the FAI’s Pre-Alpine Area, explained. “Particularly because it’s the first heritage site to be acquired by the Fund, in 1977; it was purchased and then donated to the FAI by our Honorary President Giulia Mozzoni Crespi, when it was still a disused farmhouse. But it’s important also because it’s now one of the UNESCO heritage sites linked to the Longobards.”

The site “welcomes almost 3500 local students every year, and involves many members of the FAI,” **Elena Ambrosoli**, the FAI Varese Heritage property manager, explained. “It’s an important place, that has a very long history and that is particularly dedicated and open to schools and families, to bring it alive as much as possible, in everyday life.”

So, the events are dedicated particularly to them, with particular attention to the memory, history and traditions. “From March to December, the events organised will satisfy the tastes of many; there’ll be an opportunity to look at the stars, to discover ancient crafts, to learn about the world of plants, and even discover local, quality craft markets,” explained **Marta Spanevello**, who is responsible for FAI Varese Heritage communication and events. “The events in 2017 are closely linked to the nature of the place, its ancient traditions and its culture.”

### **CHILDREN “CHALLENGED” TO BE CREATIVE AND TO LEARN NEW CRAFTS**

Throughout 2017, more activities are being organised for children, with the aim of “challenging” their imaginations and creativity, essential ingredients for development.

With this spirit, the event “**Cosa vuoi fare da grande? Arte e mestiere del...**” (“What do you want to be when you grow up? Art and craft of the...”), two holiday weekends (**Monday, 1 May, and Friday, 2 June**) are being organised to discover ancient crafts. Like in a real workshop, under the guidance of a craftsman, the children will be able to discover and try out all of the secrets of the carpenter. Pencils, palettes and paints will be the ingredients of the second event, in the company of an illustrator: a unique opportunity to discover everything about the art of comic strips and to create your own story.

Then the series “**Mi racconti una storia?**” (“Will you tell me a story?”) will talk about the art of writing: **Sunday, 19 March, Tuesday, 25 April, Sunday 14 May and 18 June** are the dates of four encounters with a real writer.

On Sunday 21 May, “**The Olympics of Forgotten Games**”, a celebration of the games of the past, also returns: sack race, tug of war, capture the flag, red light green light, and tag will be the highlights of a day intended to teach the little ones and their families the importance of stimulating the imagination and creativity, and to rediscover a previous cultural heritage, namely games of old.

Finally, on **Tuesday, 31 October**, there will be the “scariest” party of the year; on the night of

Halloween, the young visitors will be led to discover mysterious stories from the monastery, dark tales of presences that still inhabit the building.

### **A BLOOMING MONASTERY**

**On Sunday 9 April**, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., the now traditional “**Fiori al Monastero**” (Flowers in the Monastery) returns; this is the fifth year of this spring flower show and market, where you will find the best of Italian nursery gardening, with experts and selected exhibitors presenting the best of their collections: the first roses, peonies, herbaceous perennials, including several varieties of heuchera, alchemilla, aquilegia, achillea, geum, grasses and dianthus. Then there will be flowering shrubs, honeysuckles, and annuals, with spectacular blooms, and aromatic plants. As well as the rich variety of plants, the show-market will also have garden furniture, equipment and products.

### **TORBA IN THE OPEN-AIR**

For the **Easter Monday Picnic (Monday, 17 April)** and the **Feast of the Assumption (Tuesday, 15 August)**, the FAI suggests a cycle ride, to explore the territory, from the monastery to the village of Castiglione Olona; bicycles will be available for hire at the monastery, to enjoy a ride along the Olona cycle path, through ancient places and glimpses of industrial archaeology.

For anyone that wants to spend the day relaxing, as usual, there will be numerous sports and open-air leisure activities, fun, creative workshops and picnics, with local, traditional dishes, on the large lawn beneath the old tower.

### **SPECIAL EVENTS**

In 2017, “**Astronomers for a night**”, which is organised in collaboration with the “G.V. Schiaparelli” Astronomical Observatory in Varese’s Campo dei Fiori, is coming back; four evenings at FAI sites in Varese dedicated to observing the skies, stars and light, thanks to meetings and observations of the cosmos, with the aid of telescopes. At the monastery in Torba, the appointment is for **Friday 14 July**, with the showing of images taken with the world’s most sophisticated telescopes, followed by a real astronomical observation in the park. Also on the “**Night of San Lorenzo**”, **Thursday, 10 August**, the site will open its doors at night, to observe the stars, protected from the lights and chaos of urban life.

Still in the summer, a concert of ancient music, by the **Solisti Ambrosiani**, as part of the “**Musica Sibrii 2017**” Festival, an imaginary journey into the renaissance court, with singing and music of that time, performed using instruments made using the original techniques, that alternate with readings of works by the most important poets and poetesses of the period.

For the autumn season, on the “**European Heritage Days**” (**Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 September, Sunday 1 and 15 October**), a series of conferences, “A tu per tu con lo specialista” (Face to face with the specialist) are being organised; these three meetings will be spent examining the historical, artistic, archaeological and anthropological aspects of the site and of its history, with times of study and activities relating to the research covered.

Like every year, On Sunday 12 November, there will be the celebration of “Estate di San Martino” (“Saint Martin’s Summer”), the final memory of the summer warmth, with a rural fete. This is an occasion for reliving the history of the place, remembering a time given over to renewing annual farming contracts, to which the farmers toasted, by opening the first barrels of new wine.

The calendar of events ends on **Sunday 3 December**, with “**Natale al Monastero**” (Christmas at the Monastery), which, this year, replaces the usual exhibition-market, with an entirely new proposal, with ancient nativity scenes and productions, with particular attention paid to the peasant traditions that played such a crucial role in the history of the place. This enchanting moment of tradition is intended for the more curious visitors who want to cross the threshold of local customs, to experience a magic

moment.

### **A HISTORIC AND ETHICAL MENU**

In Torba, the restaurant is also special. It is run with the care and taste typical of the FAI, and with great attention to the ingredients, by a social cooperative from **Venegono Superiore** that has a great history of helping the needy with work, and a new, but important history in gastronomy. “**Il Giardino del Sole**” has opened a canteen-restaurant on its premises in Venegono Superiore, with local products, primarily grown by workers from the cooperative, and now, for two years, has been running the charming restaurant in Torba.

As well as local products and wines from Morazzone, the restaurant’s speciality is the “**Bastone di torba**”, a stick of beech wood (naturally sanitised ...), wrapped in bacon and beef, roasted on the grill, which is becoming a must of the restaurant and of the chef Andrea.

di [Translated by Prof. Rolf Cook](#)