

VareseNews

From Oriano, to the “Sass da Preja Buia”: the “Trail of hidden wonders”, surrounded by the green of Sesto Calende

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Perhaps not all walking enthusiasts know that the hills of **Sesto Calende** are home to genuine “*Hidden wonders*”, which have given the name to one of the most important trails in the town on the Ticino River.

However, the “Sentiero delle meraviglie nascoste” (“Trail of hidden wonders”), surrounded by the green woods of Sesto Calende, is one of the **lesser-known walks**, perhaps because of the distance (**over 10 kilometres**) that has to be covered to complete the walk, but it is worth it, if you want to explore an **unseen side** of the town and, at the same time, find, at the end, some highlights of Sesto Calende, like glacial erratics, small churches, the rich vegetation and the woodland fauna.

The Trail starts at the **Church of Sant’Antonio Abate**, in the little hamlet of **Oriano**, where you can park. Oriano, which borders with **Mercallo dei Sassi**, is the furthest, together with Lentate, from Sesto, although the trail passes near the centre, thanks to the “Trail”, which ends at the **Sass da Preja Buia** and at the **Oratorio of San Vincenzo**, a few hundred metres from the **Abbey of San Donato**, which is the most important historical building in Sesto Calende.

(The Oratorio of San Vincenzo, just outside the entrance to the wood)

Along the trail (here is the map provided by the **Parco Del Ticino**), nature lovers will recognise the **vegetation typical of morainic hills**, from oaks to maples, birches and pines, and the vegetation of the ponds near the **Rio Capricciosa**, where, among water lilies and the reeds, there live dragonflies and **amphibians** (in Lentate there is the extremely rare Lataste’s frog).

There are also typical **woodland animals**, such as squirrels, moles and dormice, which are shy and difficult to photograph, because they like their “privacy”, and from the trees, it is possible to hear the chirping of birds, which once had to be “attracted” by decoys, but which now are inhabitants of the forest nursery.

As indicated by the signs just behind the Oriano Church, it takes **three hours** to walk along the while trail, so it is better to be ready and equipped, especially beginners, although they will not find it particularly difficult, as the **difference in height along the trail is minimal**. Bearing in mind the walking time and the humidity of the woods, it is advisable to walk along the “Hidden Wonders” in **spring**, when the sun heats the ground, but there is not the summer mugginess and mosquitoes. You might bring a packed lunch, for a quick picnic break in the green, to recharge your batteries along the way.

This is the careful description provided by the Parco del Ticino: Oriano Ticino is a little hamlet near Sesto Calende, with private, 19th century villas and parks, an old washhouse and a Romanesque church. Next to the church, the trail starts, with a gentle climb, which leads to the former Roccolo Pierino, now a forest nursery. From here, the trail goes up the Poggio d’Oriano, to the “Roccolo Brescianella”, with climbs and descents, through clearings and woods of Scots pine, English oak, chestnut trees and false acacia. Near Cascina Bilesa, there are old farmhouses, agricultural areas and a fountain for the irrigation of the fields, which is interesting during the spring, when frogs, toads and salamanders can be seen. Not far from here, there is the source of the Rio Capricciosa, and from here, the trail starts its descent to the “Sass da Preja Buia” and the rural Romanesque Oratorio of San Vincenzo.

Translated by Riccardo Cigna and Camilla Tofanelli

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