

pleasant days immersed in peace and enjoy the colours of the wonderful nature surrounding it. The first settlement dates back to the Lombard period (VI-VIII century AD), where the *Curtis Regia*, the home of the duty officer who collected taxes for the navigation and crossing of the river, was built next to the ancient ford.



Borghetto is dominated by the **Visconti Bridge**, an extraordinary fortified dam built in 1393 at the behest of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan, to ensure the impenetrability of the eastern borders of the duchy. It is 650 metres long and 25 metres wide, with its street level 9 metres above the level of the river, and is commonly called the “Ponte Lungo” (Long Bridge). It was completed with extraordinary speed in 1395 and is joined to the Scaliger Castle above by two high crenellated walls, becoming an integral part of a fortified complex called Serraglio, which stretched for about 16 km as far as the plains of Nogarole Rocca.

In the centre of the village there is the small **Church of San Marco Evangelista** (1759), in neoclassical style with a single lowered vaulted nave, built on the remains of an earlier Romanesque church of the eleventh century, dedicated to Santa Maria. In the churchyard, marble plaques recall the main battles fought on the banks of the River Mincio. At the back, the ancient cemetery from where you can see the structure of the triconca apse of the ancient Romanesque church. Set in the old walls of a house near the Bridge of San Marco, which crosses the river in front of the church, is the statue of S. Giovanni di Nepomuk, a Bohemian martyr who, according to tradition, wants to protect those who fall into the waters of the river from drowning.

Historical information and legend provided by Cesare Farinelli

The **Church of San Pietro in Cattedra** in the centre of Valeggio, was built by the architect Adriano Cristofoli, between 1760 and 1782, on the remains of an earlier church of 1603 dedicated to San Giorgio, but there are documents that testify to a Romanesque church of 1145 dedicated to Santa Maria. Inside the church, incomplete in its facade, a large neoclassical nave leads the eye towards the immense altarpiece of the 1800's behind the altar of Saverio Della Rosa celebrating the “throne of St. Peter”, while, above the entrance gate you can admire a large fresco of the 1700's, depicting the expulsion of merchants from the temple. On the left, a magnificent pipe organ from 1812, the work of Giovan Battista Sona, of the Veneto-Gardesan school of the eighteenth century, richly decorated with golden friezes and fully functional, thanks to recent restoration.

In the historical centre, in via Murari, you can find the eighteenth-century **Palazzo Guarienti**, a rigorous neoclassical style building, rather austere than elegant. On the facade, a plaque commemorates the evening of 30 May 1796, during the Italian campaign when Napoleon Bonaparte, who had taken up accommodation in the building, risked being captured by the Austrians who had suddenly risen against the country. Another plaque was posted in memory of Don Giovanni Beltrame from Valeggio, an illustrious missionary and explorer in Africa, a great scholar, to commemorate the centenary of his death in 1906.

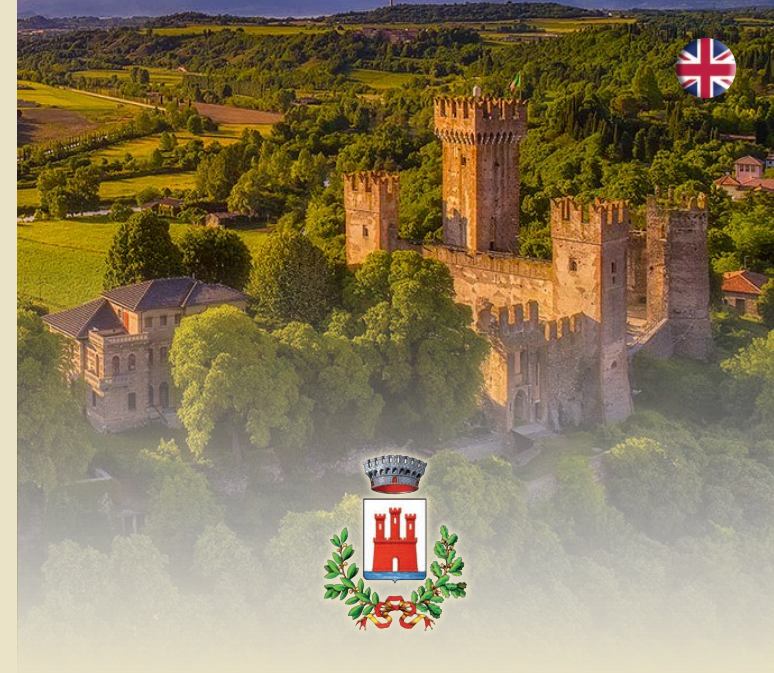


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We would like to thank Franco Lanfredi for his precious photographic archive



Valeggio sul Mincio “City of Art”

Valeggio sul Mincio is situated on the border between the two regions of **Veneto and Lombardy**, south of Lake Garda and in the natural amphitheatre of the morainic hills overlooking the Po Valley, close to two beautiful cities of art, **Verona and Mantua**. The Mincio Valley, which runs through it from north to south, is a landscape of great natural charm, one of the most beautiful green belts of the lower side of the lake, a winding waterway that meanders through reeds, habitats and havens for many species of birds.

The economy of Valeggio, very much linked to its territory, is based on flourishing agriculture, a deep-rooted tradition of craftsmanship and increasing industrial activity, all which have not however hindered its becoming a popular and renowned tourist destination in recent decades.

Classified a “**City of Art**” for the artistic heritage that distinguishes it, Valeggio sul Mincio has much to offer to those who want to spend some time immersed in culture and nature and enjoy genuine cuisine.



the Scaliger Castle

The village of Valeggio is dominated by the Scaliger Castle which, despite the signs of the time, maintains its evocative grandeur.

The part open to visitors is called **la Rocca** (the Fortress), which was accessed by two drawbridges. A third bridge, the only one still existing, led to the largest part of the complex, the Castle, of which only the ruins of the perimeter walls remain, while a private villa was built in the internal area in the early 1900's. Entering the square you can admire, on the left, the ancient **Torre Tonda**, a unique horseshoe construction, all that remains of the primitive manor house dating back to the tenth century, almost completely destroyed by a violent earthquake which shook northern Italy in January 1117.

This tower, connected to the other three, formed a strategic fortification to control one of the safest points for crossing the river in the Mincio Valley below: at that time in fact, the River Mincio marked the border between the Holy Roman Empire of the Germanic nation and the Marquisate of Tuscia, formed by the vast possessions of the powerful Canossa family. In 1262,

Mastino della Scala came to power and within a few years the Scaligers took total control of power in Verona, overwhelming the fragile municipal institutions.

In 1285 work began on the reconstruction of the fortification in Valeggio: in addition to the construction of the fortress and the castle, an outpost was built on the banks of the river Mincio, which also incorporated the small Romanesque church of the monastery of Santa Maria. The turreted walls were connected to the castle up the hill by a wall that guaranteed links between the two structures. In 1345 Mastino II della Scala approved the construction of more ramparts, a much more demanding work: a powerful line of defence, consisting of moats and crenellated walls, which ran down from the castle, surrounding the town of Valeggio, reaching the fortress of Gherla and, continuing along the river Tione, arrived at the Castle of Villafranca and ending up in the countryside of Nogarole Rocca, giving rise to the so-called Serraglio Scaligero. However, in 1348 the works were interrupted by the tragic **black plague**, which wiped out two thirds of the population. Completed by the last Scaligers, the Serraglio and the strongholds in Valeggio were conquered in 1387 by the Visconti armies. It was Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Lord of Milan, who built the bridge-dam over the Mincio in 1393 and connected it to the Castle, together with a fortified complex that was unique in Europe. In recent years, the castle has undergone extensive restoration, in order to return it to the people's heritage.

During the summer months, the inner courtyard becomes the picturesque setting for Summer Cultural Review shows and the Film Festival.

the Ghost of the Castle



Carla Venturi L.

This story of blood and mystery has been whispered in the still and darkness of long winter nights and passed down through the years to the present day.

Many of those who lived in the houses behind the hill, where the imposing castle stood, swore that they had seen it: a ghost that wandered cold and silently, imperious

and fearful, amongst the towers during the nights of a full moon ...

The facts were those of an ancient and tragic story of arms, power and betrayal, at the time of the Scaligers, Lords of Verona, after the last of their descendants, a certain William was poisoned by unknown hands and the rule of the city was taken over by **Giacomo da Carrara**, Lord of Padua. He tried in every way to preserve power and counter the growing power of Venice, which was advancing menacingly over the Venetian plain.

In January 1405, a secret delation informed the Carrarese that the Castellan of Valeggio, Messer Andriolo da Parma, was negotiating the surrender and delivery of the Castle, a strategic fortified stronghold of Serraglio, to the Venetians. The reaction of the Carrarese was immediate and violent. A group of armigers reached the Castle of Valeggio and arrested Messer Andriolo, on the infamous charge of high treason.

Deprived of all his powers and his sword broken, symbol of his authority, poor Andriolo was imprisoned and taken to Verona where, in the Campo di Marte field he was chained to a pole and barbarously killed with a stroke of the sword. The bloody execution of Andriolo da Parma, however, did not guarantee the political survival of Giacomo da Carrara who, in July, was forced to flee suddenly from the Veronese insurgents who handed the city over to the Venetians.

It is not known where Andriolo was buried: perhaps his body was thrown into the icy waters of the Adige river that flowed near the Campo di Marte field or perhaps buried anonymously in some ditch.

Since that tragic day, however, his tormented spirit has been wandering every night of a full moon amongst the towers of the Castle in search of his sword, symbol of his lost honour, without which he cannot rest in peace.



Borghetto

The enchanting village of Borghetto owes its charm to the harmonious relationship that history and nature have preserved almost intact over the centuries. The Ghibelline battlements, the bell tower of the **Church of San Marco**, the wheels of the ancient mills and the fortresses of the Visconti Bridge all contribute to the **medieval atmosphere** of the village. Along the banks of the River Mincio you can spend