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THE "MATILDE E IL TESORO DEI CANOSSA, TRA CASTELLI E CITTÀ" EXHIBITION

(MATILDA AND THE TREASURES OF CANOSSA, FROM CASTLES TO CITIES)

FOR DETAILS OF EVENTS AND IDEAS FOR VISITORS COMING TO THE AREA

www.matildedeicanossa.it

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The reconstruction of Canossa Castle shown on the front cover is by Franca Manenti Valli

STORIA & TURISMO



Matilda and the Treasures of Canossa

Canossa and the Lands of Countess Matilda

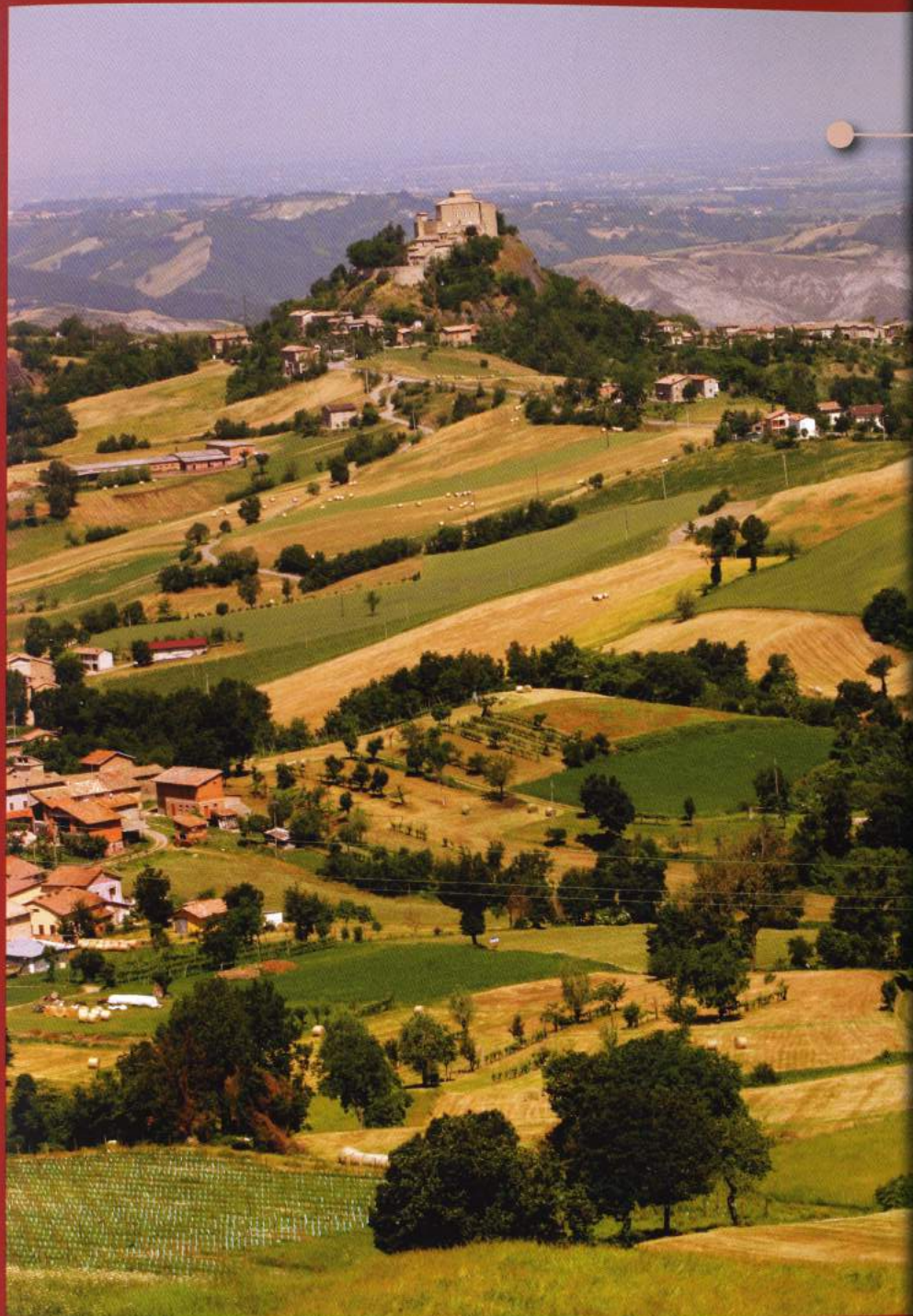


PROVINCIA DI REGGIO EMILIA



Camera di Commercio
Reggio Emilia





In the heart of Matilda's County

If you talk about Matilda of Canossa to a person from the area of Reggio Emilia it is like talking about a present-day person, a neighbour and this happens especially if you talk to someone who is lucky enough to live in the hills surrounding Reggio Emilia. Matilda of Canossa is like a neighbour to be treated with respect, to admire and introduce to guests with pride. She is someone who has come a long way, who deals on equal terms with the greats of the world.

Here, on this gentle natural balcony of the Apennine with a view onto the great plain and where on clear days it is possible to see the tops of the Alps, the Middle Ages are still alive and of great interest. Inside cupboards in the houses on Quattro Castella or Ciano, in the most precious and secret compartment, maybe next to the wedding dress or the trousseau to be treasured it is possible to find the velvet garment of a dignitary, the purple vestment of a Cardinal, the imitation iron mail of a soldier, or the poor sackcloth of a peasant. The historical parades are the pride of this community that reunites in these moments of historical memory.

The castles, which are the heart of the ancient county of Matilda, preserve the fascination of times gone by despite the ravages of time, when, between the eleventh and the twelfth century, these woods and badlands were the scenery of the great theatre of European politics and the actors were Popes and Emperors. Matilda's castles looked out onto the plain defending themselves from any attacks from the North (the German Emperor had not forgotten the affront of Canossa). However the mountain itself was just as treacherous because of its many seigneuries and the pride of its hard and frugal inhabitants who wanted to keep their autonomy. In fact, the lookouts that made up the highest line of Matilda's defence system had a double objective: a last defence point if the front line fortifications on the hills had fallen and a garrison, which with all its military and symbolic importance, represented the power of the feudal county on a territory, the Apennine, which in those times was not at all marginal, not even economically.

Nowadays the remains of those castles, though breached by time, are some of the most suggestive places in the area thanks to the panoramic scenery against which they stand out and with a bit of imagination it is possible to imagine the flutter of the flags, the signal fires, and the gallop of the dispatch riders.

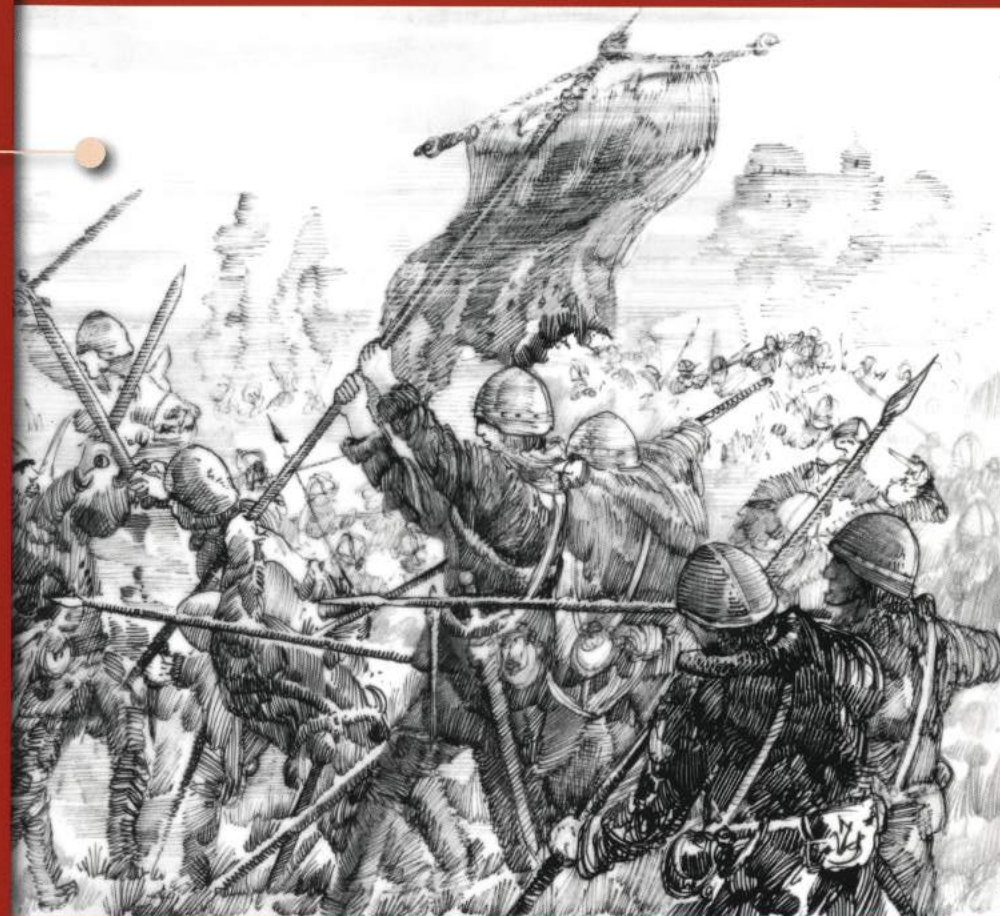
Since 1989 the law n° 44 of Emilia Romagna Region has officially recognised the Matilda's area and on 5 March 1994 the private, public company "Matilda di Canossa S.p.A." was established in the Castle of Canossa for the revival and conservation of the area.

Countess Matilda

The history of the Canossa family started with Siegfried, of Longobard lineage, from Lucca. His descendant Atto Adalbert (who died in 988) was the first to build a network of fortifications on the Emilian hills. Tedald and the cunning Boniface, Matilda's father, then followed his work. After Boniface's assassination in 1052 and the premature death of a brother and an elder sister, Matilda became, in 1055, at the age of nine, the heir of an immense territory that extended from Tuscany to Mantua. Married, for political reasons, to Godfrey the Hunchbacked, a nobleman from Lorraine, Matilda lived abroad with her husband for a few years. After coming back to Italy with her mother, she devoted herself to governing her fief, right in the moment when the contrast between the Empire and the Papacy broke out. The main characters of the conflict were a monk called Hildebrand, acclaimed Pope in 1073 under the name of Gregory VII, and the young emperor Henry IV. During the Diet of Worms, Hildebrand was forced to resign his charge and was defamed. Matilda's husband had a remarkable reputation amongst the followers of the Emperor; but died assassinated a short time later. To reduce the power of the Emperor, the German princes changed their position at the Council of Tribur and the Emperor, who had already been excommunicated, was strongly contested. In order to finally clear the situation, Pope Gregory decided to travel to Germany but the arrival

of the Emperor forced him to shelter at the Castle of Canossa under the protection of his faithful Matilda. In this same castle, after a long negotiation on the 26 January 1007, Henry obtained, as a pilgrim, the Pope's forgiveness, under the Castle's walls.

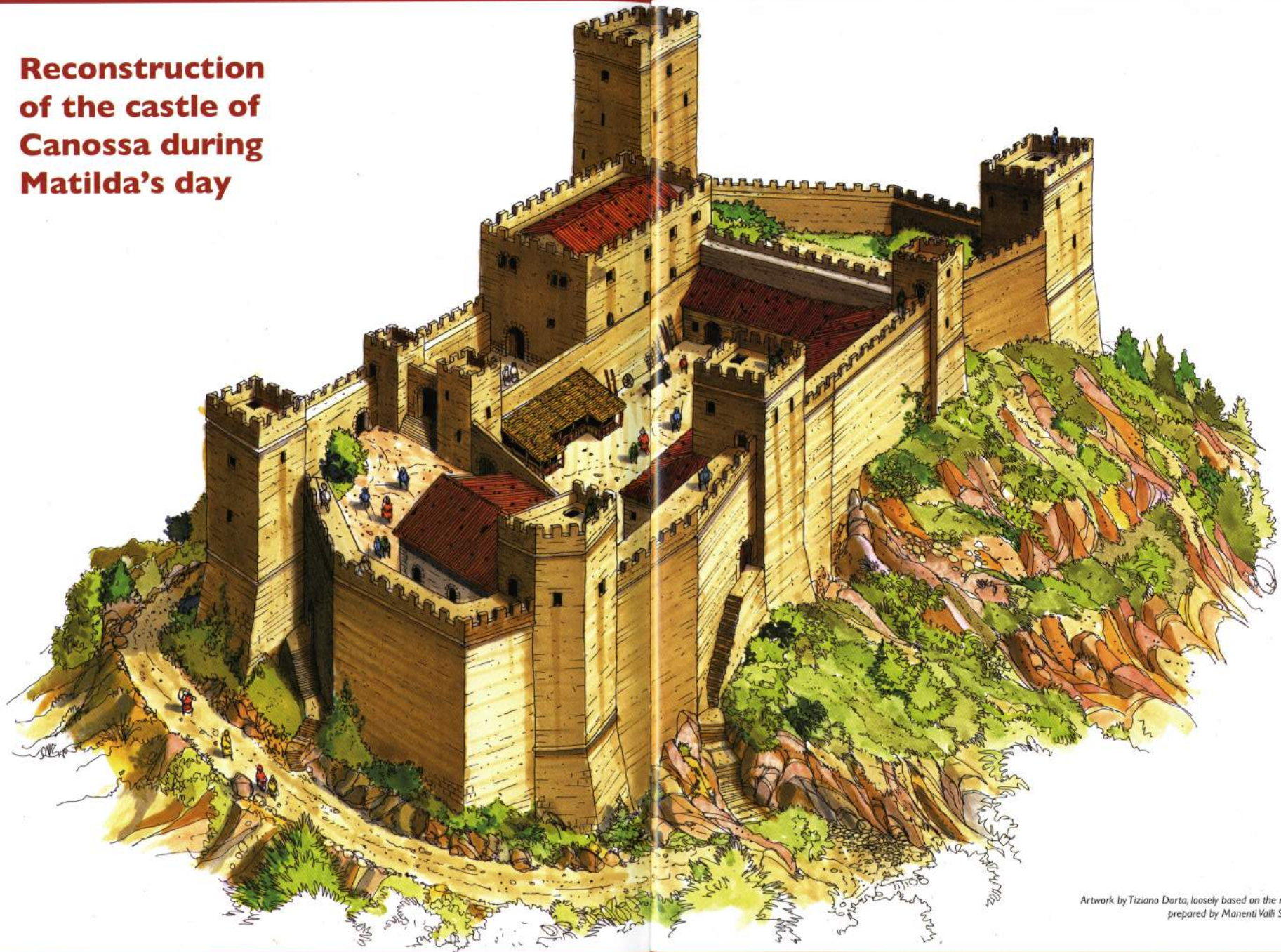
However, he suffered this humiliation only for political convenience as the immediate reopening of the conflict proved. In 1086 Pope Gregory VII died. In 1088 Matilda married the young Guelph of Bavaria, and experienced a very unhappy marriage, which lasted seven years. In 1092 Matilda's army put to flight, near Reggio, between Bianello and Canossa, the Emperor's army, arrived there to revenge the humiliation of 1077. Having escaped this threat, Matilda reinforced and enlarged her fief. She supported the building of churches and cathedrals; she had poorhouses built and significantly helped in the foundation of the University of Bologna. In 1111 she met, in Bianello, the new emperor, Henry V, son of her great enemy, who appointed her Vice Queen of Italy. She died in Bondeno di Roncole on the 24 July 1115 and was buried in the monastery of San Benedetto in Polirone. Since 1632 she rests in Rome, in St. Peter's basilica, in a monumental sarcophagus created by Bernini.



The culminating moment of the battle of 1092 at mount Giumigna, a location between Bianello and Canossa represented by the artist Stefano Maureri: a foot soldier from Canossa rips out of the hands of the enemy the Imperial standard generating panic among the troops of Henry IV, already frightened because they did not know the area and because a sudden fog had come down to cover them that afternoon in late October. In memory of that event the Countess, on the site of the battle, had the Chapel "Madonna della Battaglia" (Our Lady of the Battle) built, which still exists (The Chapel, which can be seen today, was rebuilt in 1724).

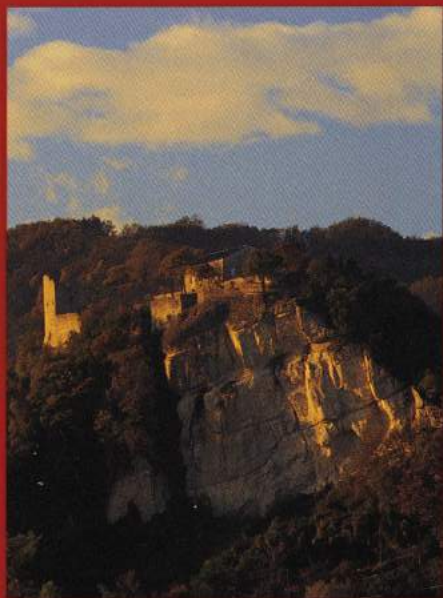
On the next page Matilda of Canossa interpreted by the English model maker Martin Livingstone.

**Reconstruction
of the castle of
Canossa during
Matilda's day**



*Artwork by Tiziano Dorta, loosely based on the model
prepared by Manenti Valli Studio.*

Castle of Canossa



Canossa is a myth in history of the universe. "Andare a Canossa" literally translated as "To go to Canossa", meaning "to eat humble pie" is synonymous in more than thirty languages with humiliation and forgiveness. It all happened on 28 January 1077 at the castle of Canossa, when thanks to the mediation of the Countess Matilda the two great dominating powers of that historical moment, represented by Pope Gregory VII, depositary of the spiritual power, and by the Emperor Henry IV, depositary of the temporal power, reached a political compromise universally known as "il perdono di Canossa", the walk to Canossa. Siegfried of Lucca built the first castle in the 10th Century. In 950 Adelaide, the young widow of King Lothair, sheltered in this castle to escape from Berengar, the King of the Longobards, and was protected and defended by Atto Adalbert of Canossa, son of Siegfried. Atto Adalbert spent most of his wealth to

strengthen and fortify the castle. During that period the temple dedicated to Saint Apollonius was built. Canossa became the fortified centre of the feudal power of the Atto lineage, the powerful Longobard family, which during the period of Countess Matilda (born in Mantua in 1046 from Boniface of Tuscany and Beatrix of Lorraine) played a leading role in European history and in particular at the time of the conflict between the Empire and the Papacy. The period of the utmost splendor of Canossa dates back to the time of Matilda. Henry IV after the humiliation in 1077 tried to seek revenge by attacking Matilda with his powerful army. The conflict, won by the Countess, took place in 1092 on the hills north of Canossa in a location where a small church, still existing, was built in memory of the battle and is in fact called "Madonna della Battaglia" (Our Lady of the Battle). In 1115 after the death of Matilda started for the castle a period of inexorable decline. Matilda did not leave any direct heirs so the stronghold lived through various garrisons and owners until 1557, the year in which Ottavio Farnese, at the head of five thousand foot soldiers and eight hundred mounted soldiers attacked the stronghold with cannon shots and destroyed it. Before this episode Canossa had already suffered a terrible attack by the Commune of Reggio in 1255. In 1451 the castle was occupied by the Este family and restored. For a few centuries Canossa became only a fief and the residence of various noble families. In 1878 the Italian state purchased the ruins of the castle of Canossa declaring it a national monument. At that time Canossa, which was reduced to a heap of stones covered by vegetation, became the object of the first excavation and restoration campaigns carried out by Gaetano Chierici and Naborre Campanini.

Castle of Rossena

The castle of Canossa was defended to the west by the fortress of Rossena, which was in turn protected by the Rossenella guard tower. The profile of the fortress and tower standing on a reddish volcanic hill is one of the most suggestive views of the entire Matilda's area. Unlike other castles, which in time became noble residences, Rossena has preserved its original shape of true war machine that had the role of stopping possible enemy attacks from the Enza valley. Petrarca, a friend of Azzo of Correggio was a guest at the castle. The poet staid in this area, in the close Selvapiana, several times and here he completed some of his works. According to some historians it was Atto Adalbert, the great-grandfather of Matilda of Canossa who started in 950 to build the castle. According to others it was built thanks to Boniface of Canossa, Matilda's father. At



first it was an isolated donjon and traces of the structure (now lowered) can still be seen at the centre of the main building. This original tower was surrounded by a quadrilateral wall, which was then incorporated into subsequent buildings. Around 1070 Boniface of Canossa, duke and marquis of Tuscany gave the "Castellum de Rossena" to the church of Reggio as compensation for the properties received in emphyteusis. In 1300 the Da Correggio family took possession of the castle of Rossena and, apart from a few interruptions, maintained possession until 1612. In 1557 the stronghold and the tower were damaged by an attack of the troops of the Duke of Ferrara, which caused the explosion of the gunpowder store. The investiture of the Da Correggio ended and in 1613 the fief went to Ranuccio Farnese a nobleman of Parma. From that moment the castle became part of the dukedom of Parma and Piacenza until 1847 when, after the death of the duchess Marie-Louise, the castle was united to the dukedom of Modena and Reggio.

The castle of Rossena, now owned by the Diocese of Reggio, has been deeply restored. The renovation was partially funded by the State on the occasion of the Jubilee in the year 2000 and thanks to this, the castle now houses accommodation facilities (there is a large and modern hostel).

Castle of Sarzano

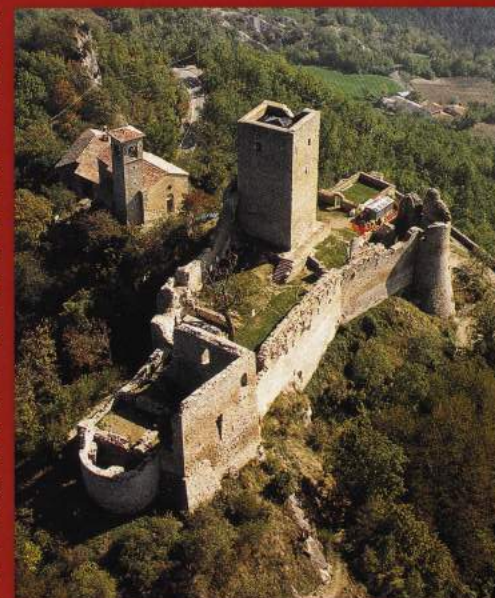


The territory of the Municipality of Casina is characterized by woods and cultivations alternated with small hilly ridges, with villages dotted here and there and isolated parishes. The village is located along the state road SS 63, at the foot of the castle of Sarzano. The complex of the castle stands in the heart of the Matilda's area on the top of a hill, which even in ancient times was a defence post for the road that went from Reggio di Lombardia, up towards the mountain passes of Tuscany. The castle of Sarzano even now preserves a trace of the first walls with the entry portal, the donjon and the bell-tower and the small village at its feet including the former church of S. Bartolomeo with the rectory and a sharecropper's house. The name Sarzano appears in an old sales deed of Atto Adalbert, dating back to 958, ancestor of Countess Matilda. In 1116 there was in-

formation about the castle and a chapel, acknowledged by the Emperor Henry V as property of the monks of Saint Apollonius of Canossa. In the 13th century the Fogliani family permanently settled in the castle. In the "Liber focorum" of 1315, written by the Commune of Reggio concerning the families of the town and district, 28 families or farmers, inhabitants of the villages, and three citizens of Reggio were registered as living in the territory of Sarzano. The Fogliani family kept the castle until 1516 together with the Canossa family and the Visdomini family; in 1568 after the Canossa family the ducal minister Girolamo Graziani della Pergola took possession of the castle. In 1693, by investiture of duke Rinaldo d'Este, Francesca, Girolamo's daughter, succeeded her father and married the marquis Paolo Carandini from Modena. Until a few years ago on the archivolt above the gate of the drawbridge there was a gravestone decorated with the noble coat of arms and an inscription, saying that in 1698 the marquis Paolo Carandini and the marchioness Francesca Graziani had restored the stronghold. The castle later returned to the Este family and was subsequently donated to the church in 1839. The Municipality of Casina became the owner of the property in 1990 and has already restored the small church and the donjon of the fortress. In the rectory, there is a comfortable inn adjacent to a restaurant of prestige.

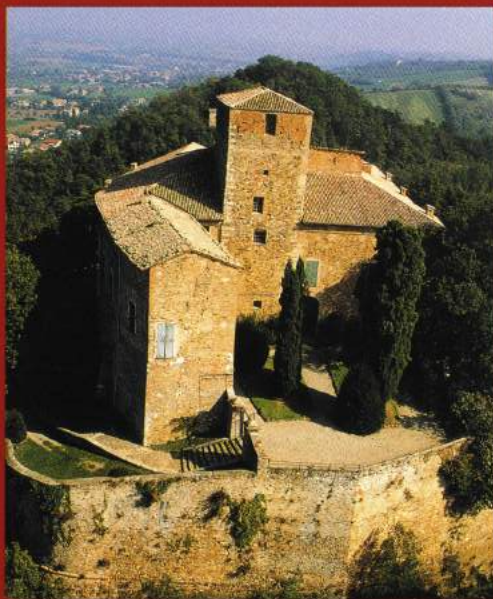
Castle of Carpineti

The Castle of the Carpinete or Castle of Carpineti is on the top of mount Antognano (805 m above sea level) where it dominates the valleys of the Tresinaro and of the Secchia, a few kilometres from the centre of Carpineti. Considering the natural defence given by mount Antognano it is thought that the walls date back to the Hungarian incursions, but according to historians the building of the first defensive fortress of what the Castle of Carpineti is today, dates back to the 10th century and was built by Atto Adalbert. Countess Matilda later added value to the entire complex. Inside the fortress surrounded by a double line of walls the Countess ordered the erection of a church in a Romanesque style dedicated to Saint Andrew and this church is still today very well preserved. For



almost half a century Carpineti was at the centre of the Christian world, in particular during the battle of investitures between the Empire and the Papacy. In 1077 after the meeting in Canossa, Pope Gregory VII was Matilda's guest in Carpineti, while in 1092 Matilda summoned the "Convention of Carpineti" in her castle to discuss the serious situation together with bishops, abbots, nobles and counselors. In 1115, Matilda's death put an end to the most intense period of events in the history of this castle, so hardly fought for by the Papacy and the Empire. In 1117 the Emperor Henry V claimed possession of the castle and lived there with his wife. Subsequently, different noble families were owners of the castle such as the Torellis, Da Foglianos, and Domenico Amorotti, the "bandit of the mountain", a famous person from Capineti who also lived there for a short period; finally the Este family went to live in the castle. In the 17th century the castle changed hands once again together with the fief of Carpineti and it became property of the Gianninis (1704) and then of the Valdrighis (1775) who kept it until the 19th century when they abandoned it because of its structural problems. In 1978 it was purchased by the Province of Reggio Emilia, which has carried out restoration works, mainly on the tower of the donjon with the assistance of the public authorities. In the 90s a second intervention was carried out and archeological excavations brought to light numerous structures and findings hidden under earth and stones. Nowadays the castle features an inn with accommodation for eleven people as well as a nice restaurant.

Castle of Bianello (Quattro Castella)



This was the prestigious residence of the Countess Matilda of Canossa and of her descendants until 1742. Bianello is the only castle that is still intact out of the four that gave the name to Quattro Castella: Monte Vetro, Bianello, Monte Lucio and Monte Zane. The castle of Bianello and the other fortified buildings on three nearby hills were the front defence line towards the plain. Matilda staid here in the periods of peace between the many wars that she had to face. In this castle Matilda received Gregory VII and Henry IV, acting as mediator between the Pope and the Emperor before the historical meeting in Canossa. Matilda welcomed in this castle the son of her long-standing enemy, Henry V, who in 1111 crowned her Vice Queen of Italy. It is possible that a watchtower or defence works

already existed here in the first half of the 10th century. In 1044 Beatrix of Canossa purchased the castle with the tower, chapel, noble residence with furniture and fittings, and 1200 jugers of lands, partly woods and partly arable. In 1160 the duke Guelph in possession of Matilda's patrimony invested Guido of Canossa with the castle. At the beginning of the 14th century Giberto of Correggio took possession of the castle of Bianello and of the one of Monte Lucio. The marquis Azzo d'Este immediately pulled the castles down but in 1307, Giberto restored them. The castle returned in the hands of the Canossa family in 1342. Over the centuries several works have been carried out and this monument was transformed into a noble residence, enriched with spectacular rooms and valuable paintings. The castle still preserves some interesting structures of the original stronghold, traces of which can be seen in the basement. In 1497 the walls were reinforced, the door was lifted and the roof of the tower was redone, while in 1498 order was given to complete the works and restorations of the room where, near the fireplace, there was a picture of Countess Matilda. With the renewed investiture of the Canossa family in 1573 new restorations took place; in fact on the façade there is the family coat of arms with the quartered arm. In 1664 the castle went to the marquis of Este and other repairs and decorations were carried out. In 1747 the castle was sold to count Giovanni Gabbi. During the kingdom of Italy the castle was used as army barracks. In 1867 it was auctioned and awarded to the Caggiatis of Parma, then, later, it went to the counts Cantelli Cremonini who recently sold it to the Municipality of Quattro Castella.

Castle of Montecchio

It stands in a strategic position controlling the river Enza, on the border of Reggio and Parma and faces the castles of Montecchio and Montechiarugolo. The "Tabularia" most probably passed here, the road that linked Luceria to Taneto and Brescello. It was the fief of the cadet line of the Este family and from the middle of the 15th century until the unity of Italy it was part of the Dukedom of the Este family. It was raised to Marquisate in 1562 by the emperor of Austria. Montecchio still preserves a charming old town centre with a rectangular layout defined by the perimeter of the fortified walls of the 15th century, some parts of which can still be seen. The original fortified complex dates back to Matilda's era, however it had been inhabited earlier as demonstrated by several findings of the early

Middle-Ages such as the Carolingian necropolis of the 8th-10th century that can be visited in the basement. The castle was besieged several times during the battles of the communes but the Vice-dominis, the local nobles, heavily fortified it and in 1296 the powerful Azzo d'Este besieged it to no avail. During the period of the seigneuries the castle was ruled by Alberigo da Barbiano (1392-1402), Ottobono Terzi (1403-1409), Muzio Attendolo Sforza (1411-1420). In 1426 it went back to the Este family that had already occupied it in 1298 with Azzo d'Este. In 1482 Guido Torello of Torrechiera began to reconstruct and fortify the ramparts, curtain walls and the moat. The Este family later continued his work. In 1526 the walls were reinforced by rising the merlons, the loopholes were rebuilt and the donjon were repaired. A theatre was set up in 1752 inside a room close to the gallery that connected the castle to the "Rotonda", an overwhelming circular rampart of the 15th century attributed to Alberigo of Barbiano. Inside the "Rotonda", there are some magnificent frescos (now private property). A century later works were carried out on the construction of the porticoes giving onto the square named Piazza Repubblica. Until the 18th century the Stronghold was surrounded by a moat with water (which will soon be re-opened). The oldest part, which can still be seen, is made up of the keep or clock tower built to a 13th century plan connected to a minor tower and to the terraces on the north-western side.

Both towers have window slits and Ghibelline crenellations covered by the roof. It is now owned by the Municipality of Montecchio that is carrying out important restoration works.



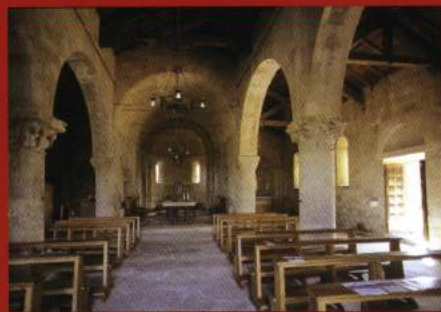
Marola Abbey

Marola has been known for centuries for the abbey built in Matilda's day and for its seminary, once a centre of culture for the entire area. The church was founded by Countess Matilda between 1076 and 1092 and the monastery was built shortly afterwards.

Marola monastery rapidly consolidated its wealth, acquiring land far and wide. The church walls were revamped drastically over the centuries, altering its original appearance. A programme of restoration and reconstruction was initiated in 1955 with the aim of restoring the original layout of the complex.



Toano parish church



The parish church of St. Mary is one of the oldest in the diocese of Reggio Emilia and is documented in a Diploma issued by Otho II in 980, when the Canossa family took over the castle and the church. The castle was destroyed in the thirteenth century and was outlived by the fortress. This was demolished in 1700 and only the massive tower still stands today but is used as the church bell tower. Inside the church there is a nave and two aisles. The

columns and half columns supporting the vaulted ceiling are topped with exceptional grey sandstone capitals that are all different to one other. They are decorated with carved human figures, animals, mythical figures, flowers, fruit and episodes taken from the Bible.

The Rock of Campotrera

Recently recognized as protected regional areas, the Natural Reserve of the Rock of Campotrera (Municipality of Canossa, province of Reggio Emilia), is of remarkable botanical interest. The soil, made of lavic rock (a reddish ophiolite from which the name of the castle of Rossena comes) strongly influences the herbaceous vegetation, determining a high concentration of rare varieties. It is a true "natural botanical garden" worthy of the highest level of protection. The heat of the sun, absorbed by the rock and slowly released, has led to the acclimatisation of plant varieties that otherwise would not survive at these latitudes, such as the dwarf prickly pear (*Opuntia*) not native of this area.

Campotrera is also interesting from a geological viewpoint: it is a spectacular formation with vertical walls that preserve the original "pillow" structure determined by the emission of magma in an underwater environment. Another important volcanic ophiolite lies in the valley of Vedriano, not far from here, known with the name of Pietra Nera (black stone). The low level of pollution in the area has favoured the presence of animals. Rare species like the goby and the freshwater crayfish can be found in the clear waters of some of the springs.



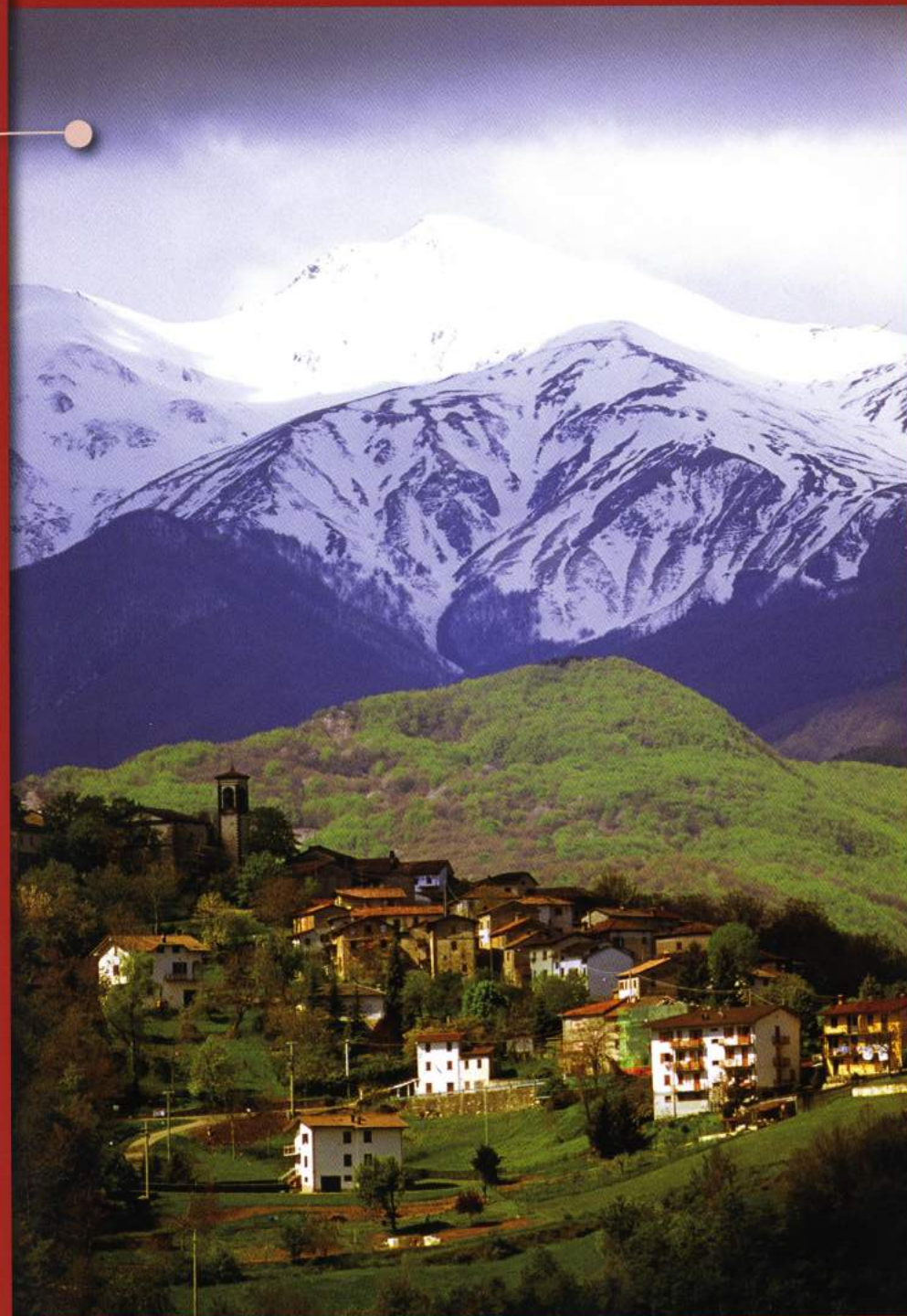
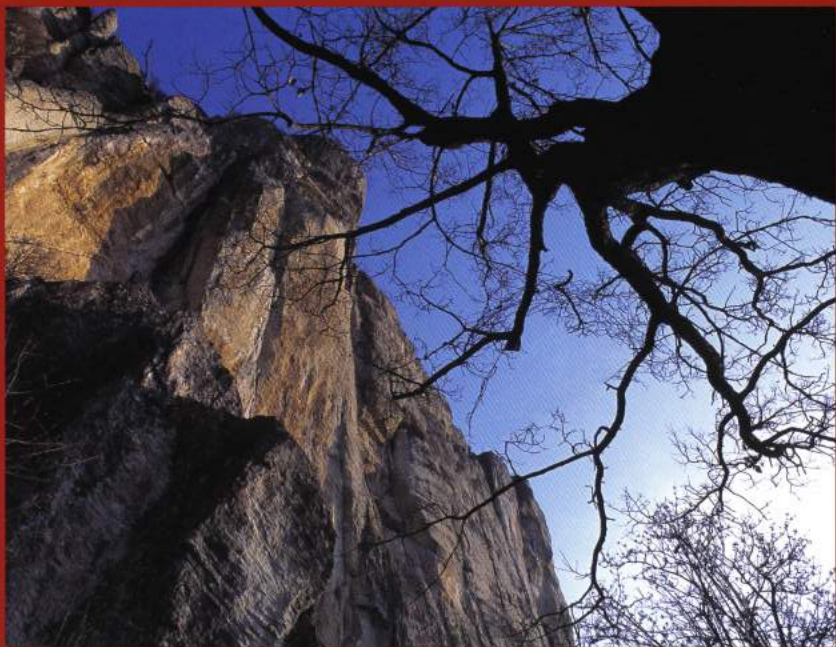
The Temple of Petrarca

Turn left in Cerezzola, in the Enza valley, and take the main road n°79, direction Trinità. After some hairpin bends, you will find a small parking place that is the starting point of a walk, which after 500 meters of easy walk, will lead you to the temple devoted to Petrarca, the "Tempietto del Petrarca". The building, soaring like a small tower, was started in 1839 and completed a few years later, in memory of the time in 1343 when the great poet staid in Selvapiana. Inside, you will find a beautiful marble sculpture by Tommaso Bandini, and vaults painted by Francesco Scaramuzza. Next to the temple in a charming little house you will find the information centre, open every Saturday and public holidays (only in the summer). The temple cannot be visited on other days. However, it is pleasant to visit this area in all seasons and to go for nice walks enjoying a beautiful view that goes across the countryside to the river. The area of the "Tempietto del Petrarca" is like a small park and it can be experienced in different ways: for its literary suggestions, its artistic interest, enjoyable walks or picnics on the grass (tables and benches will soon be available). The Province, owner of the area since 1926, intends to turn it into an important part of the tourist offer of the Enza valley and of Matilda's area.



The Pietra di Bismantova and the Tuscan-Emilian Apennine National Park

The hills of Canossa mark the beginning of the Apennine Mountains of Reggio Emilia, climbing up to the south towards Tuscany and Liguria, with the highest peaks soaring up over two thousand metres tall. Its cool, dry climate and natural beauty, its clean rivers, forests and mountains are prime attractions for tourists who visit its many towns in summer and flock to its popular ski resorts in winter. Famous international canoe-kayak contests are staged every April on the river Enza, in the very heart of Matilda's lands. Fantastic Bismantova crag dominates the middle tier of the Apennine mountains, a huge square block of sandstone standing proud, which was mentioned by the poet Dante Alighieri in the *Divina Commedia*. It is now a very popular destination for rock climbing enthusiasts. Castelnovo ne' Monti lies at its feet, one of the finest and busiest towns in the northern stretch of the Apennines. The ridge awaits those who venture further up into the mountains, an area of vast untouched woods with streams flowing with sparkling water and mountains rippling up to their rocky peaks, populated by deer and wolves. This area is now protected by the recently founded National Park that covers both sides of the Apennine Mountains, stretching from Emilia into Tuscany.



The ancient city of Reggio Emilia

Reggio Emilia lies at the very centre of Emilia, halfway between Parma and Modena. The city is a dynamic centre of trade and in the past life revolved around popular ideals of solidarity and cooperation. Reggio Emilia is also a cultural centre with examples of art dating back to its Roman origins. The period of Matilda's rule can be perceived in the many buildings and decorative architectural features in the Romanesque style on some of the church buildings or in the artefacts on display in the Civic Museums (especially mosaics). Other important monuments at Reggio Emilia include the City Theatre, named after the actor Romolo Valli and one of the most beautiful theatres in Italy, the Basilica of the Blessed Virgin of the Ghiara, one of the greatest examples of early seventeenth-century architecture in Emilia, the recently restored Romanesque Cathedral, the complex of public museums and the Town Hall, where the white, red and green flag, which would later become the Italian flag, was first adopted in 1797. Reggio Emilia's old town centre is quite compact and can easily be visited in a day to admire its beautiful squares, typical of those in Emilia. Reggio Emilia has several good hotels for visitors, making it a perfect base for touring the hills where Matilda once roamed, the splendid mountains or the nearby river Po and its old towns and cities.



Historic pageants

The local people still look back to the era when Matilda ruled over the area with affection. They show their fondness for her by staging historical pageants recollecting events that took place during Matilda's life with hundreds of local people taking part. The entire population of the towns work together to organise and stage the events. Quattro Castella was the first town to organise a pageant (on the last Sunday in May) commemorating Matilda's appointment as the Imperial Vicariess of Italy (in 1111), as narrated by Donizo in his *Vita Mathildis*. Every year, a lively procession led by Henry V and Matilda of Canossa (who are always impersonated by famous people from the world of entertainment) descends the hill of Bianello in a riot of costumes and colours. The atmosphere of the Middle Ages is recreated with scenes of medieval life, games and entertainment (flag-wavers, drummers and musicians) enacted throughout the town. Several cultural events and entertainment are organized in the week preceding the pageant. The evocation at Canossa is equally spectacular (on the first Sunday in September), relating the most famous event in Matilda's life: the famous "Pardon" of 1077. The streets and squares of Ciano d'Enza are overrun with people in historical dress representing the local villages and castles surrounding the historic fortress, recalling the customs and crafts of the past. The Grand Countess and Pope Gregory VII are accompanied by a retinue of local people (although she is always played by a famous actress) to the meeting with Emperor Henry IV, who is dressed in the robes of a penitent as shown in the tapestry on display at the National Museum in Canossa. The Pardon and the hope for peace are then celebrated with knights and flag throwers parading through the streets of the town. Canossa also remembers the "Pardon" every year in January when it organises events, conferences and pageants in historic costume at the time of year when it actually took place.



Ars Canusina

Ars Canusina was born as artistic handicraft in Reggio Emilia in the thirties, as part of a teaching initiative for disabled children. The iconographic motifs that characterise it are taken from decorations of Matilda's age, which were reproduced in a printed catalogue by Maria Bertolani Del Rio in 1935, recently reprinted. The decorations are taken from capitals, christening fonts, architraves, illuminated scripts, all belonging to a Carolingian and Romanesque tradition that presents, in this specific region, some interesting local variations. Its trademark, used since 1932, has achieved success and recognition on a national scale. Many craftsmen produce products following the formal and qualitative standards of the Ars Canusina. The fields of activity vary from jewellery to ceramics, to terracotta with inlaid decorations, to sculpture, to embroidery and finally to decoration of fabrics.

The Municipality of Casina, current owner of the trademark, assigns the trademark to craftsmen that undertake to use it to mark products with a high-quality level in accordance with the formal artistic rules. A committee for the protection of the trademark has been set up at the Municipality of Casina and is available for any information (tel +39 0522 604731, info@consorzioarscanusina.it).



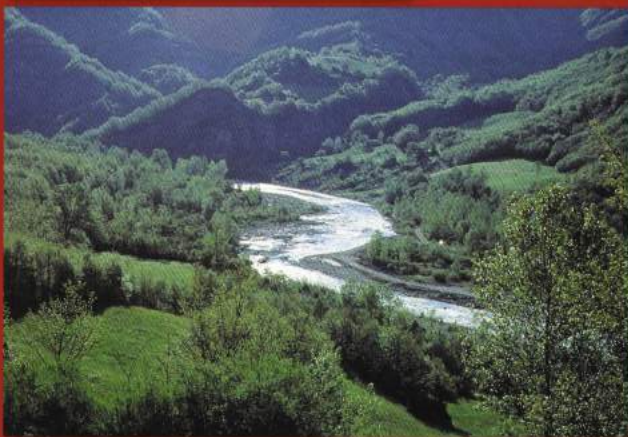
The culinary traditions of the Canossa Area

The food enjoyed in and around Canossa ranks alongside the other world famous typical dishes from Emilia, the area that is often described as the Food Valley of Italy. It is especially famous for its first courses, cold cuts and boiled or roasted meat. Colli of Scandiano e Canossa DOC wines are a perfect marriage for the local food and their quality has improved consistently over the years. Traditional Balsamic Vinegar from Reggio Emilia is a highly prized and unparalleled delicacy, taking decades to mature.

The first document mentioning it was written in 1046, when Emperor Henry II of Germany stopped off at Piacenza en route to Rome for his coronation. Here, he addressed Boniface, the margrave of Tuscany and the father of Matilda of Canossa, with a request for some of the special vinegar that "he had heard was made there to perfection." The vinegar was presented to the Emperor in a small silver barrel. The episode is recorded in Vita Mathildis, a poem written by a monk called Donizo, a contemporary of the Great Countess and her principal biographer. However, the area's most famous product is the highly praised and internationally acclaimed Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, made locally at small dairies who are obliged to comply with the strict rules and regulations that were set down seven centuries ago.



From Parma along the Enza Valley



From Parma drive to Montecchiarugolo (the castle). Then follow the indications for Neviano degli Arduini until you reach Pieve di Sasso (a well preserved Matilda's parish, with a historical performance in costume on the last Sunday of July). Continue towards Matilda's municipality of Palanzano, characterised by a typical mountain landscape, and then enter the area of Reggio Emilia where the state of the roads is much better, by crossing the bridge over the river Enza near Vetto (historical commemoration in costume on the second Sunday of July). Going again north, go down following the river and you will reach (town of Selvapi-ana, on the road to Gombio-Felina, but you can also park by the river at the restaurant Pagoda) the "Tempietto del Petrarca" and, a few kilometres after, the Natural Reserve of the Rock of Campotrera. You will pass near the castle of Rossena and Canossa (to visit them, go through Ciano d'Enza, historical parade in period costume on the first Sunday of September). When you get back to the valley bottom, take the direction of San Polo (castle and parish of Caviano), and enter once again the Parma area by crossing the bridge of Montecchio (visit to the castle; Fair of S. Simone in October with an antique market).

From Reggio along the traditional itinerary

From Reggio Emilia you can drive along Matilda's traditional circular route that reaches Quattro Castella passing through Matilda's Municipalities of Cavriago and Bibbiano.

When you reach Quattro Castella (castle of Bianello, costume parade on the last Sunday of May), take for Canossa, leaving the town behind you, and enjoy the wonderful panoramic view of the valley. Before reaching Canossa visit the parish "Madonna della Battaglia" (Our Lady of the Battle) built by Matilda in memory of the victorious battle against the Emperor's army in 1092. After visiting Canossa (and the nearby castle of Rossena) you can come back to Reggio through Cavandola and Votigno, a restored village built with local stone, which today stands as an important centre of Buddhist spiritualism. From Votigno take the road down to Pecorile and reach the state road SS 63 which goes to Reggio. Just before Reggio you will find Villa d'Este, in the middle of an artificial lake, Rivaltella and the ruins of the ducal villa of Rivalta that give to the patient and informed tourist an opportunity to reconstruct the large complex of the Este family of the 18th century. Some of the roads indicated in this itinerary are narrow, so make sure to drive carefully.



From Reggio, an itinerary going east

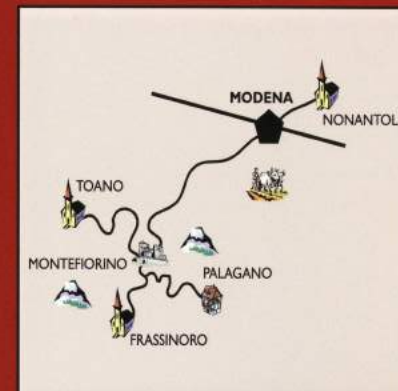


An interesting itinerary winds along the southeastern province of Reggio. From Reggio take for Albinea, Matilda's village with pleasant views. After a few kilometers you will reach Scandiano, the second most important town of the province. After visiting the ancient fortress and the house of Lazzaro Spallanzani, drive through Matilda's municipality of Casalgrande (costume parade in the castle the first weekend of July) and reach Castellaro, a charming historical village surrounded by walls (Grape Fair, the third week of September). The next stop easy to reach thanks to the good conditions of the road that crosses the Secchia valley, is Toano, with Matilda's Parish located in "castello" and the fascinating villages of the surrounding area (the parish of Massa, the wooden altar by Ceccati in Cavola, Manno and its court, and the bell tower of Corneto). It is possible to reach Scandiano from Albinea following a longer circular route, which goes south towards

Regnano (we suggest a visit to the volcanic springs or "salse" of Regnano) and then turns east towards Matilda's municipality of Viano. Just past Regnano we suggest that you make a detour to visit the ancient village of S. Maria in Castello.

From Modena along the Secchia Valley

The itinerary of the Secchia valley through Castellarano and the villages under the Municipality of Toano can be easily followed even starting from Modena (direction Sassuolo). Furthermore the province of Modena has its own monuments devoted to the memory of Matilda of Canossa. An interesting Matilda's route in the region of Modena starts from the famous abbey of Nonantola and goes up along the valleys of the Secchia and the Dragone, to Montefiorino, Palagano and Frassinoro (visit the old abbey and take part in the events of Matilda's week scheduled for July).



The Matilda's Path

It is possible to take a walk through history. There is a network of marked paths named after the Grand Countess Matilda, linking the main natural beauty spots and historical buildings in the hills above Reggio Emilia. So it is much easier today to get closer to the events that took place at Canossa and the Canossa family's castles, while admiring the scenery and noting the differences in the local culture that set this historic area apart. The Matilda's Path is divided into seven stages; five are in the Reggio Emilia area, linking the rock of Canossa to San Pellegrino in Alpe, a natural balcony looking out across Garfagnana, past castles, tower houses, old churches and villages in sandstone. The Matilda's Path is clearly marked with signposts and information boards. The marking of the path is in line with Italian Mountaineering Club standards with painted red-white-red markings and metal arrow signposts along its length pointing to the approaching destination, the intermediate leg and the end of the path. The initials "SM" (standing for "Sentiero Matilde", i.e. "Matilda's Path") are marked on the point of the arrows. There are several stopping places for walkers at strategic points along the "Matilda's Path" with information boards. The recently opened Terre di Canossa - Campegine motorway exit makes the Canossa Area much easier to reach from anywhere in Italy.

