

Abhiyogato



River Ticino



The Abbiategrasso countryside



Naviglio Grande e Naviglio di Bereguardo, a Castelletto



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ABBIATEGRASSO



Abbiategrasso is a lovely city 22km south-west of Milan, in the area of Parco del Ticino.

According to its archaeological relics, the first human settlements hail from the first century b.C. and were mainly located along the *Strada Merchantorum*, the old road parallel to the river Ticino which connected the Lake Maggiore to Pavia. During the Roman period, the settlements along the river's banks became permanent. Abbiategrasso was then property of the Longobards, until it became part of the assets controlled by the Archbishop of Milan in the dark ages.

Its bizarre **name** has ancient origins; it comes from the adjective **Aviat**, which probably results from the latin name *Avius*. The village was then likely to resemble a land owned by the Roman gens Avia in an area which was already inhabited by the Gauls. The village was named *Habiate*

until the 10th century, when the common epithet "Grasso" (florid, fat) was added in reference to the fertility of the soil. The full name of "**Habiate qui dicitur Grassus**" was mentioned for the first time in the 1034 in the will of the Archbishop of Milan **Ariberto d'Intimiano**, who owned these lands.

Following 1270, Habiate became even more rich because **Naviglio Grande** became navigable, as it filled the external ditch which protected the village up to the Castello Visconteo, offering a privileged access to the village which had already been surrounded by the walls for a century.

If you look at the city map, you still can see the old plan of the quadrangular ditch, which today corresponds to the **Parco della Repubblica** and the **Parco della Costituzione** surrounding the city centre. On each side of the walls there used to be a door with a bridge on the ditch: Porta S. Pietro on the northern side, towards Pieve di Corbetta, Porta Nuova on the western side, towards the Ticino, Porta S. Marino on the southern side, and Porta Milano on the eastern side, towards Milan.

Abbiategrasso benefitted from several ducal privileges, such as a local court established in 1373, a local annual farming fair (which still exists) and a weekly market dating back to 1483, as well its own flag from the 13th century, which was different from the current one which has a rampant golden lion on a blue background.

The heart of the city is the old market square, **Piazza Marconi**, where the town hall is located nowadays, and whose irregular triangular shape is created by the intersection of the main roads. The original fourteenth and sixteen-century porches have been kept untouched in the square. The Town Hall, dating back to 1623, is easily recognisable by its plaque on the stone balcony. On the turret of the building you can find the oldest bell of the town since 1716. Today's appearance is exactly the same as the original design created by the architect Francesco Croce in the 18th century.

CASTELLO VISCONTEO



The present **Castello Visconteo** replaces the old castle, which was located near the **S. Maria Vecchia** church and destroyed by Frederick Barbarossa in 1167.

Strategically built just before the **Naviglio** at the end of the 13th century, it was expanded and probably restored at the request of **Azzone Visconti** (1329-1339). In 1354 **Galeazzo Il Visconti** offered the Castle to his wife **Bianca di Savoia**; since then, offering the Castle to their wives as a wedding present became a tradition among the dukes of Milan.

In 1381 **Gian Galeazzo** transformed the castle from fortress into stately home. On September 7th 1388 his first heir, **Giovanni Maria**, was born in the Castle; the event was celebrated with the consecration of the **Santa Maria Nascente church**, known today as S. Maria Nuova. Castle's greatest splendour was under **Filippo Maria**, the

last heir of the Visconti family, with new decorations of which today we can see just a few frescos in the yard and with the motto "**a bon droit**" as a sign of his absolute power.

On the top floor of the castle, where the prisons were located, we can still see on the walls the writings and sketches engraved by the politic prisoners in the time of the Repubblica Ambrosina (1447-1450), ended with **Francesco Sforza** seizing power. Filippo Maria's natural daughter and Francesco Sforza's wife, **Bianca Maria Visconti**, was born and raised there and loved to spend her time in the castle. Also her first heir, **Galeazzo Maria Sforza**, lived for a long time in the castle, and supervised the construction of the **Convento dell'Annunciata**.

In one of the rooms on the first floor the date of birth of **Gian Galeazzo Maria Sforza**, the first son of Galeazzo Maria and **Bona di Savoia**, was engraved: June 20th 1569. **Ludovico il Moro**, Galeazzo's brother, preferred the Castle of Vigevano, and locked his widowed sister-in-law, Bona di Savoia, in the Habiate castle.

From that moment on, the Castle started to lose its importance and finally became a fortress with the end of the Sforza dynasty. Between 1524-1527 it was partly damaged during several fights between the French and the Spanish.

Under the Spanish domination, the Castle saw its decline and in 1658 it was partially demolished, while the remaining tower was lowered. It was then used as a stately home until 1862, when the Municipality bought it to use it as a school before, and then as the town hall.

At present, after two restoration works in 1994 and 2009, it hosts the **Biblioteca Civica** (Civic Library), other municipality offices and touring exhibitions.

BASILICA DI SANTA MARIA NUOVA



Built in 1365, the basilica was consecrated to **Santa Maria Nascente** (the birth of holy Mary) to celebrate the birth of **Gian Galeazzo Visconti's** son, **Giovanni Maria**, with the support of the charitable organisation **Confraternita di Santa Maria della Misericordia** (the Congregation of Holy Mary of Mercy).

After becoming the main religious centre of the town at the beginning of the 14th century, it became a parish church after the visit of St. Charles Borromeo in 1578.

The structure of the building changed over the centuries, but the lateral walls and the plan are typical of the three-apsed late gothic church. The Renaissance four-sided portico was built in the 13th century to surround the graves overlooking the church. It has a terracotta decoration on the arches and a series of saints' busts; unfortunately, just four of them are original.

The massive pronaos, which closes the four-sided portico and covers a huge part of the facade, was built between 1595 and 1601 by the architect **Tolomeo Rinaldi** to protect the fresco by the Zavattari School picturing the "Vergine col bambino" (the Virgin and the Child). This fresco is part of an unfinished project dating back to 1497, which was erroneously credited to Bramante.

In the 18th century a new sacristy was built on the northern side of the presbytery, and also an ossuary at the foot of the bell tower, whose clock hails from 1794. The church's interior was changed by the architect **Francesco Croce** in 1740, following a new baroque concept of the space. To increase the light, the central nave was raised with a barrel vault replacing the old truss structure, and big round windows were added on the lateral walls. In the same period, five new chapels were built on the church's sides.

The frescos decorating the inside of the church were created by the Milanese artist Giovanni Valtorta between 1864 and 1870. In the chapel on the left of the high altar you can find a fine work by Giovan Battista Crespi, known as **Cerano**, dated 1593-94. The altarpiece, named "**Madonna dei Cordiglieri**", represents the Virgin with the Child giving the rope to Saint Francis in front of Pope Sixtus V and other saints, and it was originally displayed in the church of the former Annunciata convent.

The organ was created by the Milanese brothers Luigi and Celestino Balbiani.

The votive oratory of the *Madonna dell'Addolorata*, annexed to the northern side of the portico, is way important for the devotees.

The church and the four-sided portico was carefully restored, consequently we can still see their old magnificence today.

EX CONVENTO DELL'ANNUNCIATA



The former Convento dell'Annunciata was built built between 1469 and 1472 by **duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza** after a vow to the Virgin and committed to the **Ordine dei Frati Minori dell'Osservanza di S. Francesco** (Order of Friars Minor). The consecration to the Assumption of Saint Mary dates back to 1477.

The facade is really plain, but in the inside you can see a fine series of frescos portraying **the History of Mary** (October 1519); the series is signed by **Nicola Mangone da Caravaggio**, also known as "**il Moietta**", a follower of Leonardo da Vinci who lived in Lombardy at the beginning of the 16th century and combined Bramante's architecture with the feelings of Leonardo and the details of Vincenzo Foppa's landscapes.

The cloister looks as the original and presents decorations from different periods.

The former refectory has two interesting and anonymous frescos, one facing the other: a lively **Last Supper** from the beginning of the 17th century and the treble series of the fine **Resurrection** dating back to the end of the 15th century.

On the first floor, where the dorm once was, you still can see the remains of the old cells. In 1810 the convent was closed and transformed in 1811 into a hospital to treat the male patients of the **Pia Casa degli Incurabili** until 1873.

The building was then divided and sold to privates; its use changed many time until it finally became a group of small council houses.

In 1997, following its indiscriminate and abusive us, the Municipality bought the building and started the restoration works, which were completed in 2007.

At present, the complex is used for cultural events such as conferences, classes, exhibitions, theatre shows and concerts.



ISTITUTO C. GOLGI - REDAELLI



The series of buildings along Corso S. Martino forms **Istituto Golgi - Radaelli**, once *"Pia Casa degli Incurabili"*.

Today, the facility is a renowned geriatric centre specialised in treating Alzheimer's in the most recent wings, together with the new buildings facing Piazza Samek and Viale Serafino Dell'Uomo.

The name pays homage to the famous Nobel Prize in Medicine 1906, **Camillo Golgi**, who worked at the institute from 1872 to 1876 and carried on his experiments and research on brain cells.

Built on the monastery of Saint Martin, the oldest in the village founded by the Cistercians in 1218, the building was transformed into a convent for Poor Clares devoted to

Saint Clare at the request of the duchess **Bona di Savoia** in the 15th century.

In 1785 the convent was closed by the Austrian emperor Joseph II and became "Pia Casa degli Incurabili", a free hospital and shelter for not self-sufficient people affected by chronic diseases or mental conditions.

The renovation was supervised by the architect **Leopold Pollack**, who annexed all the existing buildings of the former convent with new ones, in order to have more space. The oldest part is the one facing the yard with the well.

In 1854 the estate was expanded by the architect **Lorenzo Carmagnola**, following Pollack's style. Finally, it was redoubled, adding part of the old ditch, to house 900 beds; a new neoclassical groined church, directly connected to the wards, was added in 1873 by the architect **Giuseppe Balzaretti**.

In the church, consecrated to Saint Charles, you can find an altarpiece by **Camillo Procaccini** and a 15th-century fresco fragment portraying *Madonna col Bambino* (the Virgin with Child), coming from the former Chiesa dell'Annunciata.



FORMER CHURCH OF S. MARIA VECCHIA



The **church of Santa Maria Vecchia** is the oldest religious building within the city walls, located at the heart of the Medieval village of S. Martino. Historians date its foundation back to 1000. The church used to rise up close to the first Habiate castle, which no longer exists but was probably located among Vicolo S. Maria, Vicolo Magazzino and Via Teotti.

The church was annexed to the **Monastero benedettino femminile di Santa Maria della Rosa** (Female Benedictine monastery of Santa Maria della Rosa), built in the middle of the 15th century; we can still see the frescoed porch from the house number 3 in Piazza Cinque Giornate. The nuns didn't have their own church, so Santa Maria Vecchia became a female church in 1595 to allow them to attend the Mass without leaving the monastery. A building which connected the church to the coenoby was added to the old facade, while the apse facing via Santa Maria was demolished and used as an entrance. Today we can still see the decorated arch and parts of the lateral walls. Fine religious wall paintings are displayed inside, dating back to the 16th and 17th century. The building is now a private property.

CHIESA DI SAN BERNARDINO



Founded in 1614 but built starting from 1630, the **church of San Bernardino** da Siena is perhaps the most refined example of Lombard baroque in the city, as showed by its extraordinary facade.

The church, built to replace an old chapel consecrated to the same saint, was designed by the Milanese architect **Francesco Maria Richini**, who opted for the severe one-naved structure with squared lateral chapels; the facade's design was realised with a few changes only at the beginning of the 18th century. The bell tower, the deep apse and the sacristy were later added by the local architect Francesco Pietrasanta.

Inside the church you can see a fine eighteenth-century organ and several devotional paintings and sculptures, included the nineteenth-century statue of the "Beata Vergine del Rosario" (Our Lady of the Rosary) on the altar, and a painting portraying the "Madonna dei Sette Dolori" (end of the 16th century).

Moreover, in the first chapel on the right devoted to crucified Christ, you can find a gravestone in remembrance of several bandits who were executed at the end of the 18th century.

CHIESA DI S. PIETRO



The **church of San Pietro** (Saint Peter) was the first parish of the city, probably under the Longobardic domination already. At a later stage it was replaced by a medieval church.

Between 1753 and 1763, because of its decay, the church was entirely re-built with baroque taste by the architect **Francesco Croce**. Today, it is an impressive brick building with a dome surmounted by Saint Peter's golden rooster. In 1927 the two external concrete gates were added. The baroque building has a Greek-cross layout and includes three naves with four pillars supporting the central dome.

The interior's decoration by Davide Beghè dates back to 1889; on the walls you can see many oil paintings, included a series portraying Saint Peter's life by several seventeenth-century artists, and also modern pieces. There are three altars; the high altar by Daniele di Viggiù dates back to 1805, while at the end of the right nave you can find a painting dedicated to the "*Madonna della Neve*" (Our Lady of the Snows) dated 1645 and signed by Giambattista Discepoli. On the counter-facade you can see the pipe organ created in 1821 by the famous organ makers Serassi Brothers (BG), restored in 1996 and still perfectly functioning.

CHIESA DI S. ROCCO



The church was built in 1631 as an **ex voto** to Saint Roch (San Rocco), protector from the plague as described by Alessandro Manzoni. The church used to face **Naviglio** in the point where **Naviglio of Bereguardo** started, just in front of the dock until 1933.

The building is not in line with the other buildings on the road, in order to gain a little space for the church yard. The brick facade is divided in two: the lower part is decorated with two angel statues. There is one nave and a three-aisles roof ending with the presbytery. The richly inlaid altar dates back to the 18th century. The presbytery's vault was decorated by Elia Raffaello in 1925.

Thanks to the 1995-1999's restoration work, now we can see the seventeenth-century interior's decoration. The stone bell tower is still unfinished.

CASTELLETTO



Castelletto, Abbiategrasso's hamlet since 1870, is located where **Naviglio Grande** bends and goes back to Milan, forming **Naviglio di Bereguardo**. Given to its strategic location, it is thought that Castelletto was created at the end of the 14th century around a little castle, called "il castellino". It used to be a lively trade centre full of boats, merchants and workers, and it was considered as Abbiategrasso's port. No wonder that two historical taverns - Osteria di Sant'Antonio and Osteria dell'Angelo - were built in the area. We can suppose that the remains of "castellino" (a tower dating back to the 14th century) were annexed to the original structure of **Palazzo Cittadini Stampa**, a beautiful stately home owned by the Municipality and recently restored. This elegant building overlooking Naviglio Grande was built by the rich **Cittadini** family in the 15th century and its first documents date back to the end of the 17th century. Bought by **Giuliano Baronio** in 1835, it was inherited by his daughter Laura, the wife of the patriot

Gaspare Stampa, who lived there until his death in 1874. Palazzo Cittadini Stampa was carefully restored and today we can see again the old splendour of its rooms, which are richly decorated with series of frescos portraying pastoral scenes and mythological themes from the 17th century.

Casa del Guardiano delle Acque (the House of the Water Keeper) is a building located near Naviglio Grande. Its noble look and its large garden witness the importance of the building, which once was the headquarters of the Police Station, the Waters Commissioner and other authorities in charge of monitoring and checking the goods and the channel. The Water Keeper was an official whose tasks were supervising the use and maintenance of the channel, and issuing grants for the navigation and for the transport of goods and people. At present the building is being restored to be saved from its decay.

The present **church of Sant'Antonio Abate** (Saint Anthony) was built between 1610 and 1616 by the will of the priest Gian **Domenico Piscina** (also known as Pessina) to replace the previous church, which already existed at the end of the XVI century as it became a parish under the cardinal Federico Borromeo in 1609. Notable features of the church are the statue of the "Virgin with Child" from the end of the 14th century by the Campionesese school, which was first kept in the oratory of S. Maria de Campo in Albairate, and the fine painting of the "Assunta" (the Assumption of Mary) by **Camillo Procaccini**, dated 1609 and originally located in the former oratory of Palazzo Cittadini Stampa.



STATELY HOMES

Abbiategrasso, just like many other cities on Naviglio Grande, houses several stately homes built between the 15th and 17th centuries by the richest Milanese families, who had economic interests in the surrounding countryside. The most important ones are:

- in Viale Mazzini, once **Ripa del Naviglio**, where the buildings directly faced the stream:



According to eighteenth-century documents, **Casa Paquet** was a foundry later transformed into simpler private accommodations. Notable features of the building are the votive images on two sides, which have been restored recently. (Viale Mazzini 139).

Palazzo Corio Litta Visconti, already mentioned in 1565, was bought and rebuilt in 1770 by the marquis Pompeo Litta Visconti. The building distinguishes itself for its huge dimension and for its elegant brick facade (Viale Mazzini, 97).



Palazzo Citterio Sala Cocini (17th-18th century), was built by the Marquis Pietro Francesco Citterio in 1732. It became property of the Sala family first and then of the Cocini family. The building di-

stinguishes itself for the elegant perspective of the central block and for the fine Ionic colonnade supporting the balcony facing the yard., **Chiesa del Sacro Cuore di Gesù** was built on the right side of the courtyard in 1982. The rooms of the old building are used by the parish and oratory. Inside the church, in the Cappella della Riconciliazione, you can see the painting portraying Saint Francis by the painter A. Casazza (Viale Mazzini, 83).



At number 50 there is also an elegant private villa by the architect Giuliano Cesari from Giò Ponti's school, dated 1954.



Palazzo Sacchei ex Tarantola (17th century), was initially owned by the Tarantola family and later restored by the Sacchei. On the facade we still can see the original gate and a

fine fresco from the near **oratory of San Rocchino** (1507), built as an ex voto to the plague and annexed to the building (Viale Mazzini, 23).

- in corso Matteotti 41:

Palazzo Cattaneo (18th century), born from the restoration of two seventeenth-century buildings with baroque taste. On the entrance hall you can see a sixteenth-century fresco portraying Mary with the Child.



- in via Teotti, 13-14:

Palazzo Orsini (15th and 18th century) is an example of late-baroque building and is composed by two courtyards: a noble one, with a porch and a loggia, and a rustic one,



with wall paintings dating back to the 15th and 16th centuries. On the outside, the building surprises for its severity and sobriety. Opposite to Palazzo Orsini there still is the exedra once giving access to the garden, which no longer exists.

- in corso S. Martino / Piazzetta Golgi/ via Teotti

Casa Pianca Albini (15th century) is a private building which maybe was part of the same contrada of Palazzo Orsini Roma. It has been recently restored to bring back the original brick facade.



- in via Annoni 28 / vicolo Cortazza

Palazzo Annoni (early 17th century) is located at the heart of the city centre and still looks like a holiday home. Its stile resembles the one adopted

by Francesco Maria Richini and his followers. The building has a large and elegant yard with a porch. At present it is a private property and is sometimes used for cultural events.

- in viale Cattaneo, 2:

Villa Rusca Sanchioli (mid-eighteenth century). The building consists of a central body, two perpendicular



lar wings, a turret and the annexed oratory, and it is surrounded by the external walls. The front door facing viale Cattaneo gives access to the main courtyard, where public offices are located. The gates alongside via Donatori di Sangue and via Palestro give access to a beautiful garden, which has now become a public park.



- in via Ticino 26

Palazzo Pionnio (18th century), known among the locals as the "Palaziatt", is registered in Maria Theresa as the "Princess' palace". Today the building, which still has

traces of its old splendour, is a private property.

- in via Fratelli Bandiera,7:

Palazzo Arconati (16th and 17th century) is located on the old road which led to the river Ticino. It distinguishes itself for its huge dimensions and for the fine eighteenth-century frescos in its main rooms. At present it is being restored. Near the building, in the via L. Manara area, you can see several villas with an eclectic and modernist style (19th and 20th century).



HIDDEN TRASURES

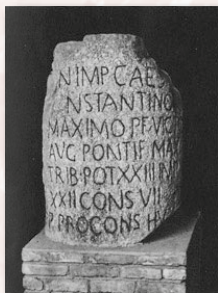
If you want to discover the city's hidden treasures, there are several little-known places you can visit other than the traditional monuments.



At the beginning of Via Borsani, on the corner with piazza Marconi, you will find an old building with an original **wooden balcony** from the 15th century.

The building's facade still shows Visconti's crest, a glowing red sun on a yellow background.

In the Castle's backyard there is an ancient **Roman milestone** dating back to the 14th century b.C, discovered in 1944 in Robecco sul Naviglio. It is a rare proof of the many commercial roads which used to cross the area.



At the intersection between via Pavia and via C. M. Maggi you will find one of the most beautiful **votive chapels** in the city.

On the opposite side you can admire the **Roggia Cardinalla**, where there still is a series of old **washtubs** used until the invention of the electric washing machines.





On the same road you can reach the **church of S. Gaetano** (Saint Cajetan) with its annexed oratory, inaugurated in 1955 by the architect Gelasio. A notable feature of the church is the new glass wall in the apse portraying the *Resurrection of Christ* drawn by Don Domenico Sguaitamatti. The building's restoration was completed in 2013.



In front of the railway station, between via F. Cavallotti and via G. Negrì, under the old wooded area built in the fascist period known as the Allea, you can find the restored **bridge of the ancient Porta Milano**,

one of the four city doors dating back to the 18th century and demolished in 1870.

In via T. Grossi you can still see the structure of the old **Doria furnace** operating since 1492, first owned by the Coccini family and then by the marquis **Luigi Cagnola**; you can still see his crest painted on the facade. The Doria furnace was one of the several brick-kilns operating until 1950; indeed, the city was well-known for its brick production.



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The Castle's Basement



The former Convento dell'Annunciata's cloister



The frescos inside Palazzo Cittadini Stampa, in Castelletto

Logo
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