

MURETTO

The intriguing and romantic *Muretto* in Alassio is probably the first permanent interactive art installation in Europe. It comes with an interesting story: the idea of decorating the wall around the public park with autographed ceramic tiles was that of Mario Berrino, painter and owner of the well-known Café Roma. With support from Hemingway, a friend and patron of the café, Mario decided to lay the first tile at dawn in 1953, without council permission. The tiles were not removed and so in later years, up to modern times, others were added with the signatures of numerous personalities from the world of show business, art and sport who were passing through the attractive town of Alassio at the time. The current total stands at over 1,000!

BUDELLO – OLD TOWN LANES

The *Budello* in Alassio is a long street with shops and also a picturesque *caruggio*, the typical Ligurian narrow street, which crosses the town, parallel to the coast. Shops of all kinds stand on both sides of the ancient road, selling top-name brands and also ordinary groceries, without forgetting the bars and pastry shops which proudly display their premier product, the famous Alassio *baci*. A walk down the street will mean finding the shoes you've always wanted, the jeans that fit you like a glove and those ultra-cool shades..... Buying is not however mandatory and the art of the aimless wander will still be enjoyable, admiring with amazement the sea views or the elegant buildings, alternating with the old fishermen's homes in a harmonious distribution of space.

TORRIONE - WATCHTOWER

You may happen to see along the Liguria coast towers or keeps, most of them abandoned or in ruins. The one in Borgo Coscia in Alassio, built in the sixteenth century by the Genoans and well preserved today, still dominates the town with its impressive round construction in stone and brick. Lapped by the waves of the sea, thanks to its strategic position it warded off the pirates from the densely populated Borgo Coscia district, with its shipyards and important marine-related industries: joineries, factories making sails, rope and the equipment used to process and sell tuna. The *Torrione*, nowadays a private home, is one of the town's symbols.

CHURCH OF SANTA CROCE

The church of Santa Croce, built in the eleventh century by Benedictine monks from the nearby island of Gallinara, for centuries was left in ruins to the extent that it was left completely without a roof, as demonstrated by some works by the painter Richard West who worked in Alassio at the end of the nineteenth century. It was finally renovated and opened for worship in the 1970s. From the terraces in the adjoining park an incomparable view of the Baia del Sole can be enjoyed and which on clearer days stretches as far as the mountains in Tuscany and Corsica. This is where the Via Iulia Augusta started, the section of Roman road between Alassio and Albenga.

PARK OF VILLA DELLA PERGOLA

Set like a diamond among the verdant hills of Alassio, Villa della Pergola looks out over a breathtaking view of the gulf, surrounded by a luxuriant garden covering 22,000 square metres, with fountains and ponds decorated with nymphs and lotus flowers. A rare example of an English garden in Italy, it offers a unique opportunity for walking through typical Mediterranean vegetation, skilfully combined with rare exotic plants. 28 varieties of wisteria and over 400 agapanthus bring colour to the garden with shades of dark and light blue and white. It's no surprise if the British community at the end of the nineteenth century chose this magical place as their preferred destination for winter stays.

CAPPELLETTA - SEAMAN'S CHAPEL

The chapel dedicated to those lost at sea – known to the people of Alassio simply as "La Cappelletta" – is a symbol of the town. Perched on a rocky spur, it looks out wistfully over the sea in memory of the fallen. A solitary and fascinating place, it's as if it's hiding some kind of secret. Blessed and inaugurated in 1929, it stands guard over the Luca Ferrari marina. Not for nothing it stands on the remains of an ancient watchtower, some traces of which remain in the foundation of the apse. Its privileged position, on the headland of Alassio which stretches out into the sea, ever closer to the island of Gallinara, is without doubt a good vantage point for admiring the beauty of the Baia del Sole.

MADONNA DELLA GUARDIA CHURCH

Built on commission from sailors in the thirteenth century on the ruins of a Roman defence castle, the Santuario di Nostra Signora della Guardia is dedicated to Our Lady, Star of the Sea, who guides and protects those who travel on the sea. It is set in a panoramic position of extraordinary beauty, on the highest peak of the ridge of Monte Tirasso at 586 metres above sea level. Surrounded by the sea, by the Lerrone and Arroscia valleys and by the Alpi Marittime, it's the ideal place for meditation. The numerous pilgrims over the centuries had led to an extension of the building to house all the faithful.