

The numbering of the church refers to the **General map of the romanesque network of the hills (RRC)**

How to get to and visit St. Martin's church:

C/o the cemetery, Montafia (AT).

GPS Coordinates: Lat. 44.9838316 | Long. 8.0192829

Open the first Sunday of each month in the period from April to October, supervised by RRC volunteers.

Open daily from 8.00 to 18.00

Information: +39 3342860014 +39 3478761626

www.comune.montafia.asti.it

Local attractions in and around Montafia:

- St. George's church, Bagnasco di Montafia (RRC);
- Church of St. Secundus, Cortazzone (RRC);
- Basilica of St. John Bosco, Castelnuovo Don Bosco;
- Viale Castle.

Eventi e manifestazioni del territorio:

Local events and shows:

- Patron Saint's Festival of St. Dionysius, October, Montafia (AT);
- Regional Festival of Truffles, first Sunday in December, Cortazzone (AT);
- Patron Saint's Festival of the nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 8 September, Capriglio (AT);
- Flea market for antique and second-hand objects, 25 April and 15 August, Castelnuovo Don Bosco (AT).



Information points and contacts:
Albugnano (AT), Abbey of Vezzolano

tel. +39 3331365812
infopoint@turismoincollina.it

www.turismoincollina.it
www.vezzolano.it

Facebook: turismo InCollina



Romanesque network of the hills promotes knowledge and use of the romanesque heritage of the local areas between the River Po and the Monferrato Hills.

With the collaboration of:



With the support of:

Municipalities and Parishes of Albugnano, Andezeno, Brusasco, Castelnuovo Don Bosco, Cavagnolo, Cerreto, Cortazzone, Marentino, Mombello di Torino, Montafia, Montiglio Monferrato, Tonengo.



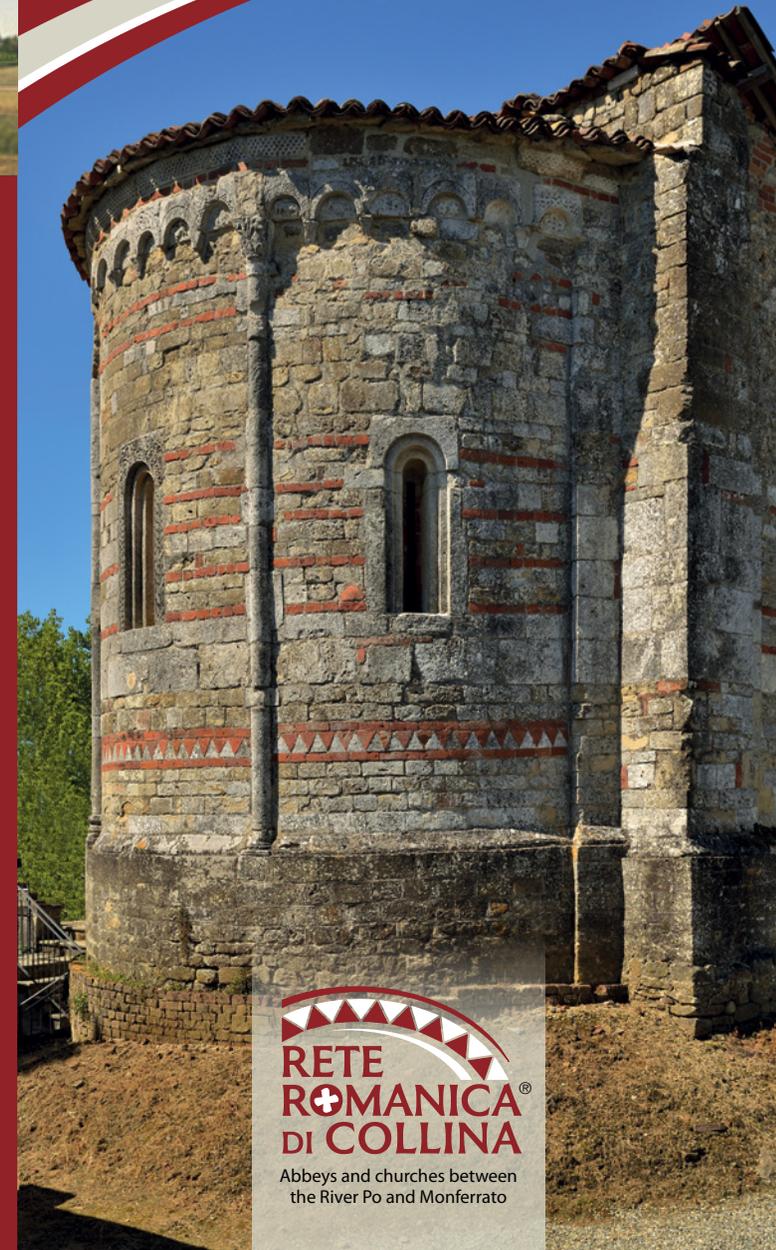
Texts and photos by Associazione InCollina © 2018
Translation: Wall Street English, Chieri (TO)



St. Martin's Church

Montafia

12



Abbeys and churches between the River Po and Monferrato

Description of the local area

St. Martin's church is situated inside the cemetery of Montafia standing on the top of a hill about one kilometre from the town. It can be reached using the provincial road leading from Villanova to Montafia: before going up the hill to the town, take the road leading to the cemetery.



Historical details

The church was first mentioned in the diocesan register of 1345, where it was shown as dependent on the Pieve of St. George's of Bagnasco, together with the Madonna of Vignole and with St. Martians (no longer in existence), all within the local area of Montafia. In 1585 Bishop Angelo Peruzzi, Apostolic Visitor in the diocese of Asti, made a pastoral visit to Montafia and adjudged the church a mere rural chapel, included within the cemetery grounds: then, over the next two centuries, the church was substantially neglected. Again, at the beginning of the 1800s, sources show that the church was closed because of its dangerous condition. Just a century later, at the beginning of the 1900s, when the cemetery was enlarged, the building was refurbished and work was started in 1980 to reinforce and restore the structure. As a result of the work done, two frescoes representing St. Martin came to light, located inside the church near the apse.

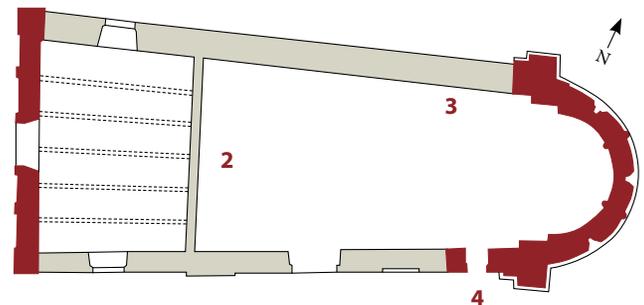
Description

The building is in the form of a rectangular hall, with a semi-circular apse; the hall is 15.7 m long and 6.85 m wide, while the radius of the apse is 1.95 m. The church you see today is the result of numerous refurbishments and rebuilding, but retains some of its original structures, which can be seen in the apse, in the end section of the south side and partly in the façade, where a rounded arch can be seen above the entrance doorway.

1. Undoubtedly the most interesting part of the church is the romanesque **apse**, standing on a high pedestal. The lower part of its cladding bears a "wolfstooth" pattern, made from ashlar stone alternating with rows of terracotta. It is separated into three parts by two stone half-columns (the one on the north side still has its



capital) and finishes in a cornice of small arches sculpted with interweaving and ribbon patterns. There is a band of terracotta on the arches and, below that, a stone cornice with a chequered pattern. The stones used in the walls are of various sizes: those in the north span are worked differently from the others and are better preserved.



2. On the **inside** the hall is separated into two parts by an unbroken plastered wall, almost as high as the longitudinal walls. Access to the rear part, where the roof is exposed, is by a door located on the south side.

3. On the **north wall**, next to the triumphal arch, a fresco which dates back to the XVth century can be seen, showing St. Martin donating his cloak to a poor man and bearing the inscription: «*decembris hoc opus fecit fieri Johannes Meglinus...*». The presbytery, which is raised by two steps above the level of the hall floor, is illuminated by the window on the south side and houses the altar, in stuccoed and painted masonry. The passage from the hall to the apse consists of a rounded arch and has a sculpted cornice with leaf patterns. The apse is slightly higher than the presbytery and its walls are separated into three parts by half-columns with sculpted capitals. It also retains its highly colourful geometrical-floral decorations (dating back to the mid-XVth century), painted on the scraps of plaster that have been preserved.

4. It is also worth noting the elegant moon-shaped arch of the small doorway on the south side, partly walled in. The stone cornices of the jambs of the central opening and the chequered cornices of the semi-dome retain traces of older multi-chrome colouring.



Interesting fact

In the case of Montafia, also, the populated area had to leave its ancient position, on the hillside of San Martino (or of Varisella), and was moved to the other side of the valley, where it remains today. This was because the lords of Montafia, when building the castle in the XIIth century, chose a safer location, which was more easily defended than the old settlement. So, over the years, the inhabitants moved nearer to the castle, both for commercial reasons and for greater safety.

The family of the lords of Montafia died out in 1577 and the castle, which by then bore no military importance and had been turned into a stately home, passed into the hands of the marquises of Pianezza, who built the new parish church in the 1700s.