

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

How to get to and visit St. Secundus' Church:

Località Mongiglietto, Cortazzone (AT).
 GPS Coordinates: Lat. 44.9841989 | Long. 8.0534177

Open the first Sunday of each month in the period from April to October, supervised by RRC volunteers. Saturdays and Sundays from 10.00 to 18.00; on request on other days.

Information: +39 3386566515 +39 3337639412
 www.comune.cortazzone.at.it

Local attractions in and around Cortazzone:

- St. George's Church, Bagnasco di Montafia (MHRC);
- St. Martin's Church, Montafia (MHRC);
- St. Felix Church, Cinaglio;
- St. Nicolao's Church, Settime;
- Parish church of St Lawrence, Camerano Casasco;
- Viale Castle.

Local events and shows:

- Festival of St. Secundus (patron saint), August, Cortazzone (AT)
- Regional Festival of Truffles, first Sunday in December, Cortazzone (AT);
- Festival of St. Dionysius (patron saint), October, Montafia (AT);
- Flea market of antiques 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 romanese 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.



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St. Secundus' Church

Cortazzone

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Abbeys and churches between the River Po and Monferrato

Description of the local area

St. Secundus' Church stands on a knoll known as Mongiglietto, at an altitude of 241 m a.s.l., and about one kilometre west of the town of Cortazzone. The church, which is aligned from east to west and at the end of an open grassy area, stands quite majestically in the landscape. The farm houses that stand along the hill road are built with materials and techniques that match the environmental surroundings very well.



Historical details

The first indications of St Secundus can be found in a written document from 1041 of Henry III, who confirmed that 19 pieve churches were subjected to the bishops of Pavia, who had enfeoffed these lands to the monastery of St Secundus of Asti. The church became ecclesiastically dependent on the bishop of Asti and functioned as a parish church for the nearby village, which was later abandoned by its inhabitants, who sought greater safety in the fortifications of Cortazzone. In the mid-1300s the church was part of the district of the church of Montechiaro, dependent in turn on the cathedral of Asti. A notary deed dating from 1390, cites the existence of frescoes showing Christ between the Saints Secundus and Jerome, which can still be seen in the apse. Up until 1600 the church was a parish church, despite its distance from the town, a between the end of the XIVth and the XVIIth centuries the parish was finally moved to the present town, under the protection of the castle. In 1688 it was fitted with a bell, to call in the faithful. In 1813 a detailed architectural description was carried out by the learned G. Secondo De Canis, which showed its façade had been reconstructed. Since 1880 it has been declared a major national monument. In 1893 the architect A. d'Andrade, a famous superintendent of restorations, conducted a series of substantial reconstruction operations involving the whole building. Further restoration work was carried out in more recent times (1959, 1965 and 1994) and for the Great Jubilee Giubileo of 2000 the external wall cladding was reinforced and restored.



Description

The walls are mainly in regular blocks of sandstone, with inserts of rows of exposed bricks. The apse walls are exposed, with wolfstooth pattern decorations. One of the most typical features is the dual tone colour, from the light coloured sandstone blocks alternating with the red bricks.

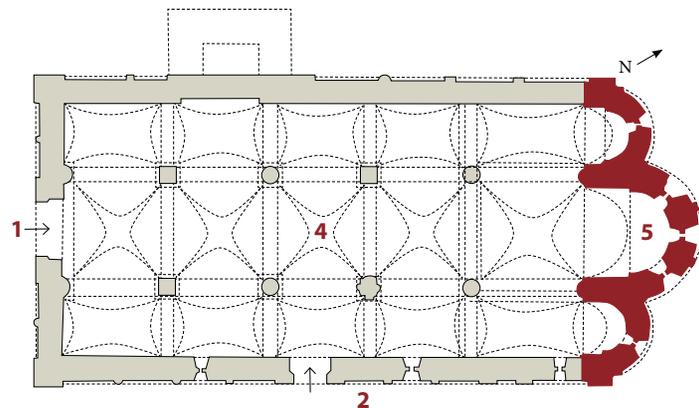
Another feature here at the sides is the "damier" decoration (with a chequered pattern).

This is one of the best examples in the lower Monferrato area of a romanesque church, in terms of its wealth of friezes and bas-reliefs, both inside and out, sculptures of great suggestiveness and incision, highly charged with symbolism, showing geometrical, plants, zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figures.

1. Worth noting at the **entrance**, underlined by a double stone arch, there is a horizontal cornice of shells, which might mean St. Secundus was a destination on the route of the great pilgrimages. On the **façade** and on both sides, there are small semi-pilasters separating the building into spans of various widths.

2. The **south side** is especially interesting for its wealth of sculpted decorations: figures, capitals sculpted with human and heads, animals and cordons.

3. The **apse area** is filled with geometrical elements, decorative bands and leaf sculptures on the capitals. There are also interesting sculptures in the soffits between the arches. These include a human figure hanging on to one of them. Another interesting



decorative element is the "Solomon's knot" symbol, from both the archaic world and the Christian one, which are merged masterfully at Cortazzone.

The **interior** is austere, with three naves subdivided by columns that alternate between squared and cylindrical, each finishing with a semi-circular apse.

4. The **central nave** and the side ones are covered by sail vaults with pointed arches. Worth noting are the capitals in sculpted stone, with geometrical and zoomorphic figures from mediaeval symbolism, such as that of the mermaid, a symbol of attraction and ambiguity of temptation, the circle of perfection and eternity.



5. Also worth noting are the XIVth century **frescoes in the apse**, with Christ Pantocrator seated not on a rainbow, but on an ecclesiastical building, between St. Secundus the Martyr, wearing a high ranking military uniform, and St. Jerome, father of the church. The restoration work in 1992 brought to light the colours of the 1300s.



Interesting fact

The third capital on the left probably represents the astronomical event of the solar eclipse of 26 January 1153, when the constellations of Pegasus, Draco and Cetus were in the sky.

