



1:80000 scale. Map created on Inkatlas.com. Copyright OpenStreetMap contributors (openstreetmap.org), OpenTopoMap (CC-BY-SA), 2021.

The numbering of the church refers to the **General Map of the Romanesque Hills Route**.

How to get to and visit the church of San Secondo:

Località Mongigietto, 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 the volunteers. Saturdays and Sundays from 10.00 to 18.00; on request on other days.

Informations: +39 3386506515 +39 3337639412

www.comune.cortazzone.at.it

Local attractions in and around Cortazzone:

- Church of San Giorgio, Bagnasco di Montafia;
- Church of San Martino, Montafia;
- Church of San Felice, Cinaglio;
- Church of San Nicolao, Settime;
- Parish church of San Lorenzo, Camerano Casasco;
- Caste of Viale.

Local events and shows:

- Patron Saint's Festival of San Secondo (patron saint), August, Cortazzone (AT)
- Regional Festival of Truffles, first Sunday in December, Cortazzone (AT);
- Patron Saint's Festival of San Dionisio (patron saint), October, Montafia (AT);
- Flea market of antiques and second-hand objects, 25 April and 15 August, Castelnuevo don Bosco (AT).



Information points and contacts:

Albugnano (AT), Abbey of Vezzolano

tel. +39 3331365812 +39 0119920607

infopoint@turismoincollina.it

www.turismoincollina.it

www.vezzolano.it

Facebook: turismo InCollina

Instagram: reteromanicadicollina



The Romanesque Hills Route

promotes knowledge and use of the romanese heritage of the local areas between the river Po and Monferrato.

With the collaboration of:



With the support of:

Municipalities and Parishes of Albugnano, Andezeno, Aramengo, Berzano di San Pietro, Brusasco, Buttigliera d'Asti, Casalborgone, Castagneto Po, Castell'Alfero, Castelnuevo don Bosco, Cavagnolo, Cerreto d'Asti, Cocconato, Cortazzone, Lauriano, Marentino, Mombello di Torino, Montafia, Montechiaro d'Asti, Montiglio Monferrato, Portacomaro, San Sebastiano da Po, Tigliole, Tonengo.

Texts and photos by Associazione InCollina © 2018

Translation: Wall Street English, Chieri (TO)

Rev03, July 2022



Church of San Secondo

Cortazzone

10



Abbeys and churches between the river Po and Monferrato

Description of the local area

The church of San Secondo 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 San Secondo 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 San Secondo 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 San Secondo and Gerolamo, 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.

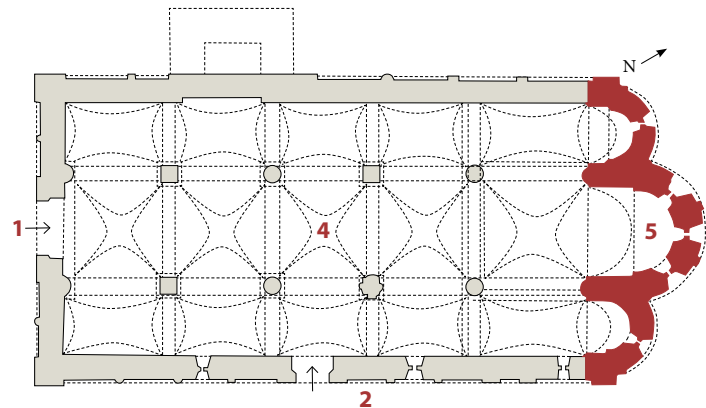
Another feature here at the sides is the "damier" decoration (with a chequered pattern).

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 San Secondo 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 San Secondo the Martyr, wearing a high ranking military uniform, and San Gerolamo, 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.

