



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 Pietro:

Viale A. Degiani s.n.c., tree-lined side, Portacomaro (AT)
GPS Coordinates: Lat. 44.98148 | Long. 8.25689

Open the first Sunday of each month in the period
from April to October, supervised by the volunteers.
On request on the other days.

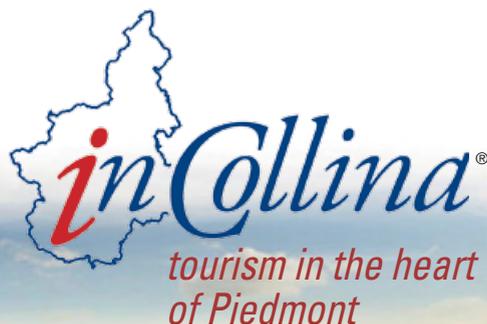
Informations: +39 348 3540955 / +39 347 5480310
www.comune.portacomaro.at.it

Local attractions in and around Portacomaro:

- Medieval shelter;
- Parish church of San Bartolomeo;
- Church of SS. Annunziata o dei Bati;
- Country chapels (Sant'Anna, San Fantino, San Rocco);
- Church and well of Sant'Evasio;
- Church of Madonna della Neve, Castell'Alfero;
- Church of Santi Nazario e Celso, Montechiaro d'Asti;
- Church of San Secondo, Cortazzone.

Local events and shows:

- Festa dei Caritin (Festival of sweets), Portacomaro;
- Patron Saint's Festival of Portacomaro, 24 August.



Social Promotion
Association

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

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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, Castelnovo 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 © 2022
Translation: Wall Street English, Chieri (TO)



Church of San Pietro

Portacomaro

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Abbeys and churches between
the river Po and Monferrato

Description of the local area

The church of San Pietro stands just outside of the urban centre, about 300m north east of the village, on a road leading to Scurzolengo; this road passes through countryside with woods and vineyards, marked by cultivated valleys offering a pleasantly interesting view of the landscape. It overlooks a small churchyard, bordered by trees and undergrowth, part of the garden of the private property it stands on, and is in a higher position compared to the road surface on the slopes of the hill where there was once the cemetery.



Historical details

The church was probably built in the early XIIIth century, around 1130. It was first mentioned in the diocese records of 1345 as being dependent on the monastery of San Bartolomeo di Azzano. The monastery of Azzano was an ancient Benedictine foundation based not far from Asti, which disappeared after the Napoleonic suppression of ecclesiastical institutions. San Pietro was partially rebuilt in the XVth century, but in 1583 it was downgraded to a cemetery church and in 1619 Pastoral inspections reported it as being in very poor condition, with no floor and in ruins.

In 1910 the cemetery of San Pietro was closed and the remains of the dead moved to the present cemetery of San Rocco; most of the headstones were removed from the church walls and it was deconsecrated. In 1968 it was incorporated into the private property standing next to it. It stayed like that until 2000. As from that year it was entrusted in commodate to the town of Portacomaro, which commissioned work to consolidate and renovate the roofs, the entrances and the 14th and early 15th century paintings and which takes care of maintenance and opening to the public.

The partial rebuilding of the church, using both original materials and other recycled materials, has preserved the façade and the first two spans of the original layout from the XIIIth century. The semi-circular apse was not rebuilt during the restoration work, even though it definitely once existed; its existence in theory is supported by the existence of the buttress, built with the same technique as the façade. There are some terracotta decorations attributable to the XVth century rebuild, including, on the right-



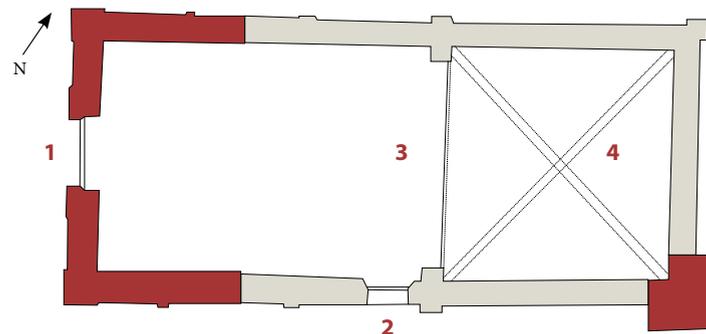
hand wall, a cross in the style of the saints Santi Maurizio e Lazzaro (Templar style), as well as some fine frescoes.

Description

The church of San Pietro has a rectangular floor plan, orientated, measuring 13.86 metres by 4.80. It is in Romanesque-Lombard architectural style with a double pitched roof.

1. The façade is made of squared sandstone blocks alternating with bricks. Rampant hanging arches decorate this façade and are repeated along the side walls, interrupted by narrow pilasters. A ring in terracotta highlights the rounded arch portal, which sits on a thick stone lintel. On the façade, below the frieze, there are two oculi with decorated edges; the door jambs are in clay tiles and stone with a bi-chrome effect. There are hanging arches also on the **south wall (2)**, but only on the section towards the façade. In that section the wall appears to be built with the original large stone blocks, while the remainder is built almost totally in bricks and with no cornice, a sign of subsequent reconstruction. A large buttress juts out from the east end of the church: this might have been the base of a bell tower of limited size. San Pietro is one of the few Romanesque churches in Monferrato with a crypt, and this can be accessed through a hatch placed in front of the portal.

3. The interior is subdivided into two separate sections, divided by a brick wall with an ogee arch included. The first area (main body) is rectangular in shape; the second (presbytery) is square, raised by one step from the main body and has ribbed vaults with pronounced ribs; these are all signs of a Gothic rebuild or later. The altar is made from bricks, erected on a base that is also in brick and resting against the rear wall.



4. In the **presbytery** there are some frescoes that may date back to the late fourteen hundreds. On the central wall behind the altar there is a painting of a crucifixion with the Virgin and San Giovanni Evangelista beside the cross; a well made work that makes a strong emotional impact. To the left there are images of Santa Lucia and San Pietro, while to the right there is one of San Giovanni Battista; unfortunately the latter fresco shows clear signs of the plaster peeling off. To the left, but lower down, is an image of Santa Lucia with the plate holding her eyes.

On the south wall there is the martyrdom scene of San Sebastiano, dated 1406 and attributed to Antonij De Pilis, a painter who was



active in the Asti area in the 1400s: he is said to have worked in the churches of San Sebastiano and Fabiano in Scandeluzza, in Viato-sto and in the collegiate church in Asti. Next to San Sebastiano is an image of San Antonio Abate, patriarch of monasticism.

Traces of plaster with frescoed floral decorations can be seen both on the vaults and the ribs of the apse. At the peak of the arch in the wall separating the two areas, facing the altar, there is an inscription in a fresco recalling that the restoration (or construction) in 1706 of this wall was a votive offering.

Interesting fact

The etymology of the village name is based on the Latin Curtus Comaria (Curtis meaning 'court'), the court of the Roman lord who owned the lands of Acomarius. The term 'Porta' (gate, door) was only added later, perhaps because of the existence of gates in the middle ages. This is a rare example of a castle village, the original nucleus can still be seen in the section of wall and turret still standing; a classic fortified village housing a Ricetto. There are panoramic viewing points on the walkway atop the walls and some sections of the Ricetto towards the east. This was the birthplace and residence of the great-grandfather of Pope Francis, before he moved to Turin and later emigrated to Argentina, like many other families who left Piedmont in the 1800s for the New World.