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

How to get to and visit

the church of Santi Nazario e Celso:

S.P. 2, municipal road of San Nazario, Montechiaro d'Asti.

GPS Coordinates: Lat. 45.16980 | Long. 08.15450

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 3392731622 / +39 3246962999

www.comune.montechiarodasti.at.it

Local attractions in and around Montechiaro d'Asti:

- Church of Sant'Andrea di Casaglio, Cerreto d'Asti;
- Church of Santi Sebastiano e Fabiano, Scandeluzza;
- Church of San Giorgio, Bagnasco di Montafia;
- Church of San Secondo, Cortazzone;
- Church of Santa Maria di Piesenzana, Montechiaro d'Asti;
- Old Town, Montechiaro d'Asti;
- Truffle school - Tartufaia didattica, Montechiaro d'Asti.
- Santa Sindone image, Vignasone farm.

Local events and shows:

- National White Truffle Fair, November;
- Piedmontese veal festival, July;
- Patron Saint's Festival of S. Bernardo da Mentone, September;
- Historical reenactment and propitiatory dinner at the Palio di Asti, September.



Social Promotion
Association

Information point and contacts:

Albugnano (AT), Abbey of Vezzolano

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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, Castelnuovo 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.

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Church of Santi Nazario e Celso

Montechiaro d'Asti

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Abbeys and churches between
the river Po and Monferrato

Description of the local area

La chiesa dei Santi Nazario e Celso is in the Municipality of Montechiaro d'Asti, about 2 km from the town centre heading nord-east. The church is considered the 'pearl of Astigian Romanesque' and its alternating brick and sandstone structure give it a strong chromatic look; it is almost completely surrounded by trees, apart from the façade, where its 'natural' churchyard of stones and grass may be appreciated in its setting closed off by the majestic bell tower rising above the church itself.

The contrast with the surrounding landscape is striking and on a clear day there is almost a full view of the western Alpine chain.



Historical details

The church of Santi Nazario e Celso is the village church of Mairano, one of the three boroughs that founded the Municipality of Montechiaro d'Asti in 1200. There is no confirmed date of construction, even though some studies indicate 1140 as a likely year. San Nazario was dependent on the Benedictine Abbey of the Torre Rossa di Asti, which was itself subject to that of San Benigno di Fruttuaria, even though it stood within the boundaries of Pieve di Piesenzana (another founding borough of the Municipality). In 1159, Frederick Barbarossa confirmed all the possessions of the Abbey of Torre Rossa di Asti in a document (in Mayeranum); in 1203, a "Prior of San Nazario" attended the abbey chapter at Fruttuaria; in a papal bull of 1265, Pope Clement IV confirmed the church as dependent on Fruttuaria; in the diocesan records for 1345 the church was confirmed as exempt from episcopal jurisdiction as it was dependent on the Torre Rossa. The church went into constant decline after the unification of the boroughs in the new villanova of Montechiaro, which led to their depopulation. By 1845 its state of neglect was so bad that the Bishop was obliged to order the Holy Mass for the Festival of San Nazario to be held outside. In that year restoration of the church was ordered. The work commenced in 1847 and was terminated in 1849 and involved the demolition and numbering of pieces for reconstruction of the church. The present building was rebuilt with smaller dimensions and it is not clear if this reduction in size was due to this first

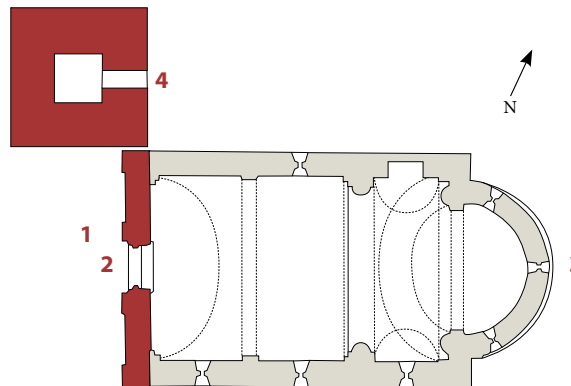


renovation work or later work. Further renovations were done in 1909 on parts of the bell tower and the church. Once again, in 1929-1930, more work was done on the foundations, damaged by vandalism (presumably holes made by treasure hunters). In 1982, the Superintendency renovated the Bell Tower with static consolidation work. Finally, in 2000, for the Great Jubilee, more work was carried out on renovation and consolidation against tilting.

Description

The building has its main body aligned, with a rectangular floor plan 9.2 metres long and 5.6 wide inside and with a semi-circular apse with a 2.1 m internal radius; the roof is double pitched. On the north-west side there is a bell tower on a square base, with external sides of about 4.2 m and a height of about 20 m rising four floors above ground.

1. The double pitched **façade** is in stone and bricks, laid in alternating rows and closed off at the ends with corner pilasters.
2. **The portal**, slightly protruding from the level of the façade, is defined by a lunette with a double cornice arch above it: the inner one is sculpted with a cord of interwoven threads; the outer one has one band of cornucopia decorations and another with polychrome engravings in a 'wolf's teeth' pattern in stone and ter-



racotta. At the ends of the cornices there are half-columns with decorated capitals and crown piece with interwoven small arches. On the right-hand door jamb a sculpture of an animal can be seen. The outside walls on the south and north sides have masonry in alternating bands of stone and bricks, with crown pieces of small arches on decorated shelves and a cornice above, sculpted with a double intertwine. In the south face there are three single pane windows, double splayed and monolithic rounded arch, decorated with vegetation motifs. In the north face there is only one single pane window, whose arch is sculpted with a monstrous creature biting its own tail.

3. **The apse** is smooth walled with its lower part in stone and is defined by half-pilasters. The upper part has alternating bands of stone and bands of bricks, as well as squares of bricks. As with the sides, the crown piece is formed by hanging arches in brickwork with stone cornice above. There are three single pane windows with plain arches. The **interior** has been completely redone: the semi-domed vaults, the triumphal arch marked by half-columns and the main body with low rounded barrel vaults come from the renovation in the 1800s. In the apse there is an altar in masonry with decorations and reliefs in stucco.



4. The **bell tower** is quite high compared to the façade, and formed with motifs of sandstone and bricks; it is separated into three sections of string courses: bands of bricks, arches in bricks with chequered bands and ribbon bands with 'saw tooth' motifs; there are single pane windows on the first level and double pane windows on the second level, giving it particularly light proportions.

Interesting fact

On the south side the base of a canonical sundial. The sundial was used in ancient times to measure time by the sun; the canonical version marked time on the basis of the sun to indicate the hours of Prayer.

