

PASSO SAN LUCIO

We are at the San Lucio Pass, located in the Lugano Prealps at an altitude of 1541 m a.s.l., which connects the Cavargna valley in the province of Como - visible to the east - with the Colla valley in the Canton of Ticino - to the west. On the Italian side there is a road that leads to the pass, while the Swiss side is served by an unpaved forest road that can be travelled freely with bicycles and horses only. On the pass there is a 14th century church dedicated to San Lucio and two accommodation facilities: a refuge in Italian territory (formerly the barracks of the financial police) and a mountain hut in Switzerland which also serve as restaurants. The refreshment points can be reached on foot or by bike in summer, on skis, snowshoes or snowmobiles in winter. In the hut you can eat the typical mountain dishes: polenta, cheeses, salami, game, mixed meat grill, all accompanied by a good wine or the typical gazzosa. The large outdoor terrace allows you to enjoy an must-see landscape of the valley and the wonderful peaks that surround it. The area is suitable for all mountain lovers and discoverers, in fact it is suitable both for a day trip and for a trek that includes stops in other mountain huts in the area. Already frequented in ancient times by merchants and pilgrims, the San Lucio pass recounts a history of mountain people, with their wealth of popular knowledge and of smugglers, bags on their back, constantly on the run in the woods and along the slopes.

The area is also suitable for sheep farming: it is not uncommon to see Scottish Highlander cows from the nearby Agriturismo Cottino located a few hundred meters from San Lucio. The border crossing offers a beautiful view over the Val Colla and Val Cavargna as well as the beautiful mountains of the Alps such as Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn, etc. to the west.

Events of particular importance for this exceptional location take place on 12 July, Saint's Day of San Lucio and 16 August, Saint's Day of San Rocco, when the pass hosts a crowded festival that attracts visitors from both Italy and Switzerland. The festival recalls the times when the border between Italy and Switzerland was marked by a high wire mesh guarded by armed border guards against smugglers, and which was opened only on the day of the festival allowing the people of the two valleys to come into contact and celebrate the solemnity together.

San Lucio is a popular saint whose cult was born spontaneously in the mountains of the border, becoming the protector of herdsmen and cheesemakers. Even if not canonized, devotion to the Saint of Cavargna spread rapidly throughout Lombardy and the Canton of Ticino, evidently brought there by the dairymen and mountaineers who moved around for their work. As for the nearby San Jorio pass, at the head of the Dongo and Gravedona valleys with Val Morobbia, an ancient route had to pass by San Lucio also, presumably dating from Roman times, where at the "culmen" (top) of the streets the wayfarers, often merchants, made an offering to propitiate the journey and the return: "pro itu et reditu". From this it is easy to understand the need to create, also in the Christian era, a place of worship which, at the San Lucio, pass took the form of the construction of the Oratory on the trail of the sacred tradition that wanted to martyr Luguzzone (or Lucio after 1613) the herdsman to be martyred nearby. The church of San Lucio was mentioned for the first time in a document dated 10 October 1358 by the Archbishop of Milan Roberto Visconti, Lord of Valsolda and the Parish of Porlezza. San Lucio Chapel - a building that has been extended several times, situated on the Italian side of the border, on the highest point of the San Lucio pass, it is decorated with frescoes from the 15th century.