



NATURAL BEAUTIES, FOLKLORE, HANDICRAFT, GASTRONOMY.

HOLIDAYS AMONG ANCIENT OLIVE TREES, WHITE SAND AND CRYSTAL-CLEAR SEA

CAROVIGNO

A multifaceted city in the heart of Salento, a place that has always been a crossroads of cultures and people, rich in crypts and monastic settlements on rock

VISITING CAROVIGNO AND SURROUNDINGS

Carovigno is located on the last hill in the Murge, 25 kilometres to the north of Brindisi. It benefits from a very mild climate all the year round. The surroundings are the most attractive you can imagine: the countryside dotted with ancient olive trees and, on the horizon, the blue and violet glints of the sea. The district of Carovigno is very broad, in fact it includes about 22 kilometres of coastline and penetrates into the interior for about 15 kilometres. The environment is evidence of a prehistoric civilization and, even now, there are caves, stone remains of megalithic walls, tombs and artefacts made from flint, ceramic and metal. Carovigno is a very ancient town, whose name comes from Carbina (a derivation from the Greek name of “Karbina” that means “fruitful”). The Romans used to call it “Corvineum”. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, it was ruled by the Visigoths, the Byzantines, the Longobards, the Saracens, the Normans, the Angevins, the Aragonese, the Spanish and the French and later it became a domain of various noble families. This land, crossed by the Trajan and Appia roads, has always been a crossroads for populations and cultures, a pleasant stop for people of all ranks in society going to Rome from the east, as well as for pilgrims bound for the Holy Land. Even now, a regular ferry service runs from the nearby harbour of Brindisi to the opposite Adriatic coast.

OLD TOWN CENTRE

The medieval village of Carovigno (14-15th centuries), surrounded by its ancient walls with four towers, is in fact the old hamlet of Carovigno, in jargon called “the land”, characterized by stone and tuff houses still now simply whi-

tewashed. This stone, dug out from the caves situated near the present railway station, is known as “gentle” because of its property of being easy to carve. In the past, the local skilful stonecutters have adorned the village with artistic works of excellent workmanship: along the old village lanes you can admire the coats of arms of noble families and, here and there, lots of votive icons. There are also attractive stone arches that link the square up to the old town centre.

CASTELLO DENTICE DI FRASSO

Castello Dentice di Frasso, a typical late-medieval fortification, triangular in shape with towers at the corners, majestically stands at the top of the town, the most suitable strategic point of defence.

The first body of the castle, a square tower of Norman origin, was afterwards enlarged by the feudal families that ruled the territory, incorporating the round Aragonese tower and, between 1400 and 1500, the almond-shaped tower. From these towers you can still look out over the entire coastline stretching from Torre Canne to Brindisi. The residential estate belongs now to the Provincial Council and has been given for use to the Town Council that, after its restoration, is going to dedicate it to social and cultural activities (museum, library, Council Archives, etc.).

THE MOTHER CHURCH

The Mother Church, dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption, was built at the beginning of 1800 on the structure of an ancient church of the 15-16th centuries. It preserves a remarkable rose-window on the façade and a fragment of the old portal with an angel in relief.

THE BELL TOWER OF THE CHURCH OF CARMINE

The bell tower of the Church of Carmine has a “dome” structure and overlooks the cloister, so that the ringing of its bells, that used to beat the time of the monastic life, could be easily heard by the monks. The big bell is dedicated to the Madonna del Carmine and the small bell is characterized by a very clear sound. Built in 1625 outside the city walls, the cloister had a trapdoor of defence at the entrance.

“NZE-GNA” TRADITION

The history of the town is in part connected with its square, a place for people meeting, talking and strolling around. A recently made mosaic represents the symbol of Carovigno (a little boy riding a dolphin). The tradition of the “NZE-GNA”, a game of flags, comes from the discovery of a picture of the Madonna in a cave - used as a shelter by the monks fled from the East during the iconoclastic persecution, in the time of Leone Isaurico. According to legend, the Madonna di Belvedere appeared in a dream to the Earl of Conversano (Bari), who was seriously ill, and asked him, for his healing, to go to Carovigno and find her image painted in the cave. The prophecy was fulfilled and the 'Nzegna' still reflects the joy of the man who discovered the icon dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. This traditional celebration is organized by the Carlucci family that, over time, has handed down the game of flags in the honour of the Madonna di Belvedere from one generation to the other.

TOURIST ROUTES

SERRANOVA

The history of Serranova village, situated six kilometres from Carovigno towards the sea, is very interesting too. In 1629 the noble Ottavio Serra built a castle that incorporated a big quadrangular tower of the 14th century. The houses that rose around formed the hamlet of Serranova. Four kilometres away there is the Sanctuary of the Madonna di Belvedere, whom, for centuries, the game of flags called “NZE-GNA” has been dedicated to. From the Church it is possible to go down to two communicating caves, one of which preserves a shrine with a remarkable fresco of 14th century, representing the Madonna with the Baby Jesus.

BRINDISI

Many monuments of the city recall its glorious past: the Archaeological Museum with its valuable collection of Apulian finds and Greek coins, the Colonna Terminale of Via Appia, located in the port of Brindisi and among the most important symbols of the city, various evidences of the Norman period, etc.

LECCE

You should visit Lecce, the “Lady of Baroque style”, also called the “Florence of the South” to highlight the predominant role that art has played here. Its elegant historical centre is a real gem to be seen, with marvellous balconies, roof-terraces, main doors and windows. The typical stones of Salento become majestic in the Piazza del Duomo and in the Basilica di Santa Croce. A visit to the Handicraft House, a temple of papier-maché, is strongly recommended.

THE COASTLINE

SANTA SABINA

Santa Sabina, situated 7 kilometres from Carovigno, along the coastline, has a star-shaped tower; it was the landing place of Carbina (ancient name of Carovigno) since the 7th century B.C. Its name probably comes

from the name of the Saint venerated in one of the rock crypts of the area, already inhabited by prehistoric people, and from the recovery of a statue, representing the Saint herself, from the sea water. Today Santa Sabina is a famous tourist village, rich in accommodation facilities and attended by Italian and foreign tourists. Its bay, with a sandy beach, is vast and extended.

SPECCHIOLLA

Charming resort by the sea, Specchiolla is certainly the ideal place for holidays. You can leisurely promenade along the sea-front or spend your time with amusing sporting activities and, at night, dance in the lively disco bar.

TORRE GUACETO

Along the coastline there is the wonderful ecological Oasis of Guaceto, a derivation from the Arabian "Gawsit" that means water or river, because of the presence of fresh water in the Oasis. Inhabited since the prehistoric times (between the late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age) it has a lookout tower built in the 15th century to oppose the landing of Saracens. At Torre Guaceto, certified as a "wetland of international importance", broad-leaved woods and Mediterranean scrub (rosemary, laurel, myrtle and lentisk) live together, side by side. Torre Guaceto - State Natural Reserve and Protected Marine Area - is today the kingdom of tortoises, green lizards, snipes, ducks, gulls and migratory birds.

Booking: Terranova visiting centre tel. 0831 989885

Paths for cycling, trekking, sea-watching.

Cuisine

Local food, in the past mainly made of legume-based dishes (broad beans, chickpeas, wheat) has today become more varied and richer, even preserving the local tradition. The extra-virgin oil, olives, cheese, almonds, "orecchiette", home-made bread and wine (Bombino, Negramaro, Malvasia, Cucimannieddu, Fiano) still maintain their basic importance. Among the typical dishes, served in the local restaurants, we would recommend chickpeas cooked in a clay pot on the fireplace, crumb with salt anchovies, roast aubergines and peppers seasoned with local oil, courgettes fried with mint, "bruschetta" made of garlic local bread with savoury ricotta, bread and mint croquettes, pounded wheat, "cipollaccio col fiocco" in vinegar.

■ "Fave con cicureddi di fori"

Broad beans cooked in a clay pot on the fireplace, together with boiled chicory ("assittati"). Generally they are served with the "cipollaccio col fiocco", also called "lampascioni", seasoned with vinegar.

■ "Li strascinati de lu villanu"

"Strascinati", a kind of pasta, seasoned with oil, fresh onion ("spunzala"), bacon, black pudding ("sagnunazzu"), savory ricotta, winter tomatoes ("di pennula"), wild garden rocket and "cipollaccio col fiocco". Nuts are sometimes added too.

■ "La frittata di risu culla menta"

On the occasion of the "Nzegna" celebration, on Easter Monday, an omelette with rice, mint and pecorino cheese is usually cooked.

Getting to Carovigno

By car: SS 739 Bari-Brindisi, exit Torre S. Sabina

By train: Stop at Carovigno station, 3 km from the town. Shuttle service for connections.

By air: Brindisi Papola Casale Airport. Bus service

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