



TORRECHIARA CASTLE and the territory

TORRECHIARA (km 14 to the South of Parma)

History and place name notes

It seems that the place – name does not derive from torre (tower) but from torchio (press). Although the name Torrechiara is commonly used, the correct etymological term is held to be Torchiara. The first evidence of this is in 1028 (as Torclaria). In the olden days, in addition to being used for crushing grapes (we are in the area that produces Malvasia and Sauvignon DOC Colli di Parma), the presses were also used for pressing olives, of which 13th century sources document widespread local cultivation. The territory was, however, populated starting from a more ancient period as findings from the Bronze Age and the Roman period unearthed during archaeological excavations (1972) or found aboveground attest; along the Pilastro – Arola – Torrechiara Badia road network traces of the Roman centuriation (division of the territory into many square – shaped properties) of the Parmesan countryside can still be seen.



The Castle

Built between 1448 and 1460 by Pier Maria Rossi (Berceto 1413 – Torrechiara 1482), it is one of the most important and best preserved examples in Italy of 15th century castle architecture and, despite being situated on a hill, it has the typical ground plan of a castle built on the plain. It stands on the ruins of a previous building, and is mentioned in the 13th century documents as domum (simple fortress – house), of which few remains are visible in the Sala del Pergolato (Arbour room). The Castle

and the ancient village rise about 80 mt. Above the valley floor, where the Parma River flows.

The fortress is protected by three rings of walls and by four angular towers (Leone, Giglio, S.Nicomede and Camera d'Oro) with corbels and machicolations (vertical or protruding defence device).

The original structure remains intact since the castle was not solely conceived as a fortification, fulcrum of control over the territory, but also as a residence intended for accommodating a noble court that included female members as well. The compromise between its military function and its residential function kept it from the structural changes and additions common to many buildings born as fortresses or citadels and subsequently modified to be made into noble residences, at the end of feudal fighting. Upon the death of Rossi the castle went to his legitimate son Guido, then it was the object of bitter struggles, besieged and captured several times over and passed from hand to hand (Ludovico il Moro, Pietro di Rohan, Pallavicino, Sforza di Santa Fiora, Sforza Cesarini, Torlonia, Cacciaguerra). Purchased by the state in 1912, after the deplorable loss of the original furnishing by the last private owner, it is a National Monument protected by the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali – Polo Museale dell'Emilia Romagna.

Guided itineray

From the quadrangular Courtyard of honour the visitor enters into the court chapel of Saint Nicomede. The chapel housed a polyptych depicting the Madonna on the throne with child and the Saints Anthony abbot, Nicomede, Catherine and Peter martyr, dated 1462 and signed by Benedetto Bembo as well as a small wooden gallery attributed to the Da Baiso workshop, decorated with floral inlays and polychrome engravings, depicting the Rossi coat of arms (rampant lion) and the hearts of Pier Maria Rossi and Bianca Pellegrini, his lover. These furnishings are now housed in the Museum of the Castello

Sforzesco in Milan. Subsequently the visitor enters into a series of room with "grotesque frescoes", a decorative work typical of the 16th century. Conventionally, each room bears the name of its most important decoration: Jupiter Room, Arbour Room, Landscapes Room, Victory Room, Angels Room, Curtain Room, Coats of Arms Room. The paintings, were realised by Cesare Baglione and his co-workers, like Innocenzo Martini and Giovan Antonio Paganino. The chronological range of the execution has been restricted, based on the study of the coats of arms, to the years 1584 – 1592. The paintings were commissioned by the Sforza family of Santa Fiora, owner of the castle. Starting from 1475, the family undertook various structural interventions such as the lowering of the defensive walls, the enlargement of doors and windows and the creation of orchards and hanging gardens.



The grotesque cycle was commissioned by the cardinal Francesco Sforza of Santa Fiora, son of Sforza and Caterina de' Nobili. Going up to the main floor from the Acrobats Room the visitor reaches the Camera Golden Room, built starting from 1463.

The love story between Rossi and Bianca Pellegrini, that Rossi met at the Milan court, is narrated in this room. Terracotta tiles, originally gilded and painted, cover the walls with coats of arms and with the initials of the two lovers intertwined. In the lunettes, amongst the music – playing putti the delicate love story of Bianca and Pier Maria, is illustrated in the typical international gothic manner. The vault, depicts Bianca, who dressed as a pilgrim, walks to look for the castles of his beloved, located on the plain, in the hills and in the mountains. Paintings are also an extraordinary map with the basis topography. The cycle, largely attributed to Benedetto Bembo, but by some to Bonifacio Bembo or to Francesco Tacconi, has also been attributed to Gerolamo Bembo. From the arcade of the Camera d'Oro, it is possible to enjoy a panoramic view of the land and of the river. **Informations at Tourist Office IAT Torrechiara Langhirano:** tel +39 0521.355009.

Benedictine Abbey of St. Mary of the snow

The abbey situated on the bank of the Parma River, was founded by Pier Maria Rossi for his son Ugolino, incorporating a pre-existing Romanesque Church, which was altered and decorated with a terracotta frame of late

Gothic taste and a rose window in an eccentric position of the hut – shaped facade. The sacristy and the bell date back to the 17th century. The interior of the church has a single nave, with two chapels on the right side. The visitor can admire, on the column that divides the two chapels, the valuable Virgin with child frescoed by Jacopo Loschi at the end of 15th century. The remaining decoration



was carried out around 1720 – 1730 by Clemente Ruta. In the Renaissance cloister, the visitor can admire some capitals similar to those located in the castle's Courtyard, the original bell made by "magister Antonius" with a dedication from Rossi (1472) as well as a terracotta tile with the Flagellation, similar to the marble sculpture of Amadeo (1480 – 1490). Around the cloister the tourist can admire several rooms with restored paintings: the Bird Room and the Fire Room. The refectory shows some medallions with realistic landscapes and fantastic architecture while in the capitular room there are some lunettes with biblical scenes. The 18th lovely Belvedere, located on the banks of the Parma River is adorned by an iron railing and embellished by some wonderful frescoes with smiling faces of putti, that seem to blow a cool breeze over the riverbed. In the abbey there is also an apistic laboratory where you may buy honey, royal jelly, herbal teas, creams and other products obtained from the ancient recipes of historical pharmacy of S. Giovanni Evangelista in Parma. **For information:** tel +39 0521.355133.

LANGHIRANO (18 Km tot he South of Parma)

Located in the plain near the Parma river, the town (265 mt.) was settled in the early Middle Age by the Longobards. It develops along the provincial roads that crosses it and the perpendicular streets that lead to the river. The peculiarity of its geographical position, between hills and mountains, was already evident in the 12th – 13th and 14th centuries when was organised, while today, a flourishing Monday market. The built up area is surrounded by characteristics buildings with their numerous tall land narrow windows and large terraces : establishments for the processing of the Parma ham, which finds in Langhirano the most important municipality, from an economic standpoint, of the entire typical production area. Favourable environmental conditions ensure that the ham, "dried" in the air of the hills, acquires the tenderness as well as the organoleptic characteristics that make it the ideal food for meeting the

nutritional needs of our modern lifestyle.

To be seen in the capital town: Ham Museum of Parma
Housed in the ex Foro Boario, a splendid example of rural architecture, built in 1928, for the trading of livestock. The Museum takes the Visitor on a "journey" in order to discover the reason why and how, Langhirano has become the homeland of Parma Ham D.O.P.

This remarkable experience ends in the Tasting Room, a real Prosciutteria where it is possible to enjoy Salumi and local products.

Via Bocchialini, 7 Langhirano (PR) – Open : 1 march – 8 December, Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays
10.00 a.m. – 6.00 p.m. – from Monday to Friday only on booking. **Info:** ph. Number +39. 0521.862242
prenotazioni.prosciutto@museidelcibo.it – www.museidelcibo.it

Town Hall

Built at the beginning of the 17th century, for a long time it belonged to the Garimberti family, feudal lord of the area, then to Montali family. The ownership of the villa – palace passed on to the lawyer Ottavio Ferrari in 1832 and in 1889 to the Municipality. With a square shaped floor plan and a sloped foundation, it has four towers at the corners and two superposed rows of triple semicircular arcades, supported by sandstone columns on the facade and on the back. The hall and the rooms on the ground floor bear square decorations from the first half of the 1800's as well as coeval furniture; in the hall there is also a series of six large paintings Tartari with Great Danes attributed to Gianfrancesco Cassana (end of the 1600's). In the Mayor's office there is an interesting engraved wardrobe from the end of the 1600's with the original lock and key in wrought iron.

"Faustino Tanara" Risorgimento Museum

On exhibit some important and rare relics, letters and documents of the Risorgimento period, donated by the heirs of Faustino Tanara, colonel under national hero Giuseppe Garibaldi. The museum is located in the Cultural Centre of the Municipality of Langhirano (Battisti street, 20) Info: 0521.351357 – 0521.351350 – info@museotanara.it – www.museotanara.it Admission free



OTHER NOTEWORTHY PLACES TO VISIT IN LANGHIRANO

Parochial Church of St. Mary Annunciated

Already the Oratory of the Blessed Virgin of the Canal, built in 1645 and completely remodelled between 1908 – 1913 by Lamberto Cusani and Ettore Ximenes, it became the parochial church on 1st October 1944. It houses paintings of the Parmesan School from the 17th and 18th centuries with the original frames and the mostly 18th century sacred furnishing. The small statue of the Madonna of the Canal is important because of local devotion.

Oratory of the Assumption

It houses the Introduction at the temple, one of the best alterpieces by Biagio Martini (end 18th cent. – beginning 19th cent.) as well as other paintings from the Parmesan school.

In the surrounding villages:

In Mattaleto, the visitor can admire the 18th century church of St. Michael Archangel. It houses the Romanesque remains of the bell tower. It was entirely rebuilt between 1715-1723 and restored in 1883. It encloses valuable 18th century paintings and furnishing, amongst which are notable Neoclassical pieces as well as a pipe organ (end 1800's) ; in Arola the visitor can admire the Villa Peroni (16th century) and the Villa Zileri Dal Verme as well as the remains of the primitive Parish, one of the oldest in the land of Parma, already mentioned in 1004, incorporated in the cemetery chapel; in Casatico the vineyards and the wineries; in Castrignano the Parish and in "La Valle" and "Costa", several examples of spontaneous architecture with the tower house (16th – 17th cent.), arcades and entrance arches to the courtyards; in Cattabiano sculpted doorways with ancient symbols linked to rural cults and mythology; in Chiastrone the lower village with the ancient mill; in Cozzano the Parish and the Pine Woods.

THE CASTLE IS OPEN ALL YEAR

Opening hours

Monday to Saturday: 8.10 - 13.50

(last entry 13.30)

Sunday 10.00 - 19.30

Entrance ticket

Full price € 4.00

Reduced € 2.00 (teachers of role of the Italian State schools, young between 18 and 25 years of age)

Gratis (citizens of the European Union under the age of 18) Future and any changes will be reported on the sites:

www.comune.langhirano.pr.it

www.portaletorrechiara.it

Ticket Office Castle

Tel. + 39 0521.355255 for school groups and large groups it is advisable to book entry at the ticket office.

Taro, Collecchio, Sala Baganza, Felino, S.S. 665 direction Langhirano (Km 30)

From Cremona: S.S. 343 direction Casalmaggiore, Coloro, Parma, S.S. 665 direction Langhirano (Km.85)

From Mantua: S.S. 420 direction Sabbioneta, Casalmaggiore, Colomo, Parma, S.S. 665 direction Langhirano (Km. 65)

By bus (www.tep.pr.it)

Hourly departure from P.le C.A. From the Church in front of the railway station (1 every hour), n. 12 for Langhirano (except Sundays and holidays)

By plane (www.parma-airport.it)

Parma - Giuseppe Verdi Airport (Km. 25)

MUNICIPALITY OF LANGHIRANO

Main initiatives and events

Langhirano: Parma Ham Festival (September)

Torrechiara: Festa a Corte, Vita di Borgo (June) -

Torrechiara Festival (July-August)



GETTING THERE

By car

Distances: 18 Km from Parma

From Parma: Tangenziale Sud, exit n.15 "Via Langhirano", signs for Langhirano

From Milan and Bologna: Motorway A1, exit Parma, S.S. 665 direction Langhirano (Km. 20)

From Genoa-La Spezia: Motorway A15, exit Fornovo



IAT Information Office and Tourist Reception of Torrechiara

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Comune di Langhirano