

LEMON GARDENS, A MIRACLE ON LAKE GARDA


If you drive along the northernmost section of the Gardasana Occidentale, the road running up the west of the lake, you cannot fail to notice tall pillar stretching towards the sky, some of them over ten meters high.

They bear witness on one hand to an ancient form of architecture, now an indissoluble part of the landscape, and on the other to man's vocation for growing and selling citrus fruits, especially lemons. These distinctive greenhouses are protected by walls at the back and sides; the front and roof are covered with wooden planks, which are removed from spring to autumn to allow the sun to warm the lemon trees inside. Just think: lemons, limes, and bergamots growing a few miles from the 46th parallel.

And this has been going on for over 700 years, since - according to local traditions - St. Francis and a handful of friars started farming these fruits right by the lake. As the years went by, and since the climate on Lake Garda, though mild, could not compete with that of Southern Italy, where citrus fruits grow out in the open, a veritable industry flourished growing citrus fruits in greenhouses. Their arms stretch towards the sky, stone after stone, invoking the sun and warmth to perform this little miracle of Lake Garda's.

They have always been called "lemon gardens" but are now usually referred to as "limonaie" (lemon houses).





The first lemon gardens were built in the 17th and 18th century. The fruits were exported to northern and central Europe for sale in Vienna, Prague and St. Petersburg. There were once hundreds of them but now only a handful continues to bear witness to the industry that flourished until the mid-eight hundreds, when a disease called gummosis brought citrus farming to its knees. Some of them, however, have been preserved and can still be seen in operation.

The lemon house "del Castél" is one of them.

This site is now part of the Alto Garda Park Museum Network, which enhances the traditional and cultural importance of past values at a time when these greenhouses were of vital importance in terms of employment and for the local economy as a whole.



Address: Via Orti, 9, 25010 Limone Sul Garda BS

Timetables:

Friday 10-18

Saturday 10-18

Sunday 10-18

Monday 10-18

Tuesday 10-18

Wednesday 10-18

Thursday 10-18

