

Varese relaunches its UNESCO Heritage sites

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✖ Tuesday 4 March, saw the beginning of **the project of guided visits to the UNESCO sites in Varese Province, which is reserved for students of all ages.**

During the presentation meeting, **how the tours will be organised, and the aims of the project were explained**, and the participants spoke about this initiative and the results it will have in the future.

There are 4 sites involved, which are UNESCO Heritage sites, and which bring prestige to Varese Province: **Castelseprio, Monte San Giorgio, Sacro Monte and the Isolino Virginia**. These four sites are part of Italy's great historical and cultural heritage (which includes no fewer than 44 sites), which, unfortunately, **are often unknown even to the inhabitants of Varese.**

The aim of this proposal is **to involve schools in the work of making people sensitive to the province**, to enable young people to learn about the local history, by organising education tours to bring them into contact with the territory and history of Varese.

The tours will be free, thanks to the collaboration of 4 local authorities: **Varese Province, the Regional School Office of Lombardy, the non-profit organisation, Fondazione Comunitaria del Varesotto, and the Tourist Office of Varese Province**, who provided the funds and materials, for the project to succeed.

The visits will be from February to May, and will include a guided presentation of the site. **About 4000 young people, and 41 schools, will be involved.**

"With this project, we've established a series of objectives, the first of which is to introduce to these sites our people, and, in particular, to the young people and children, who will **pass the stimuli, initiatives and planning skills on to their families**," said **Dario Galli**, a special manager of Varese Province, who demonstrated his optimism about a project that will involve the territory of Varese, rediscovering its origins.

The director of the territorial school office, **Claudio Merletti**, was also present at the conference. "Schools must be the protagonist in initiatives like these, which tend to teach us about our origins, our culture and our prospects," he said, adding that "The young people must become the bearers of new knowledge."

In 3 months, already 3426 students have taken part in the project, at the sites of Castelseprio, Sacro Monte and Monte S. Giorgio. **There are still some doubts**

concerning the Isolino Virginia; Dario Galli explained that, as the site is reached by water, it requires greater organisation and will be **“open” to school visits only next year**.

Carlo Massironi, the general secretary of the Fondazione Comunitaria del Varesotto, explained that the foundation has made large contributions to the project, to promote the territory. In almost 12 years of activity, no less than €41 million has been distributed to projects for the territory. “Over the last few years, we’ve been able to confirm that the desire to promote our province has increased in terms of planning skills, and existing and new opportunities. Varese and Varese Province have great potential in this sense, with many opportunities to promote the territory; now we need to carry out the hard task of getting them started and seeing them grow.”

Massironi said that his association’s involvement has not been purely economic, but is linked to the precise intention of getting people to learn about local history.

Alberto Marchi, the Site Manager of Monte San Giorgio, one of the 4 natural sites present in Europe (together with the Aeolian Islands, the Dolomites and Etna), a characteristic that makes it even more unique, thanks to the fossils discovered there, also took part in the conference, on behalf of the 4 sites.

He explained that **one of the established goals is to make the young people who visit these sites “ambassadors” of what they learn**. Moreover, there are plans **to create a site for people with disabilities**, to allow them to learn about what there is in the province, without difficulty.

The **Tourist Office of Varese Province, which is run by Paola della Chiesa**, has contributed to the initiative by distributing a map of places of interest in the province, and a bookmark with the images of the 4 sites, to the young people visiting them.

But the project does not end here, and will continue along the lines of the experience, suggested by Paola della Chiesa, during the **World Rowing Masters Regatta**, supported by Dario Galli, where young people (**about 500 students**) from different schools **provided a voluntary service**. The young people were placed at various strategic points, for example, the info points were manned by 20 students from the European school. One of the requirements was a knowledge of English.

From rowing to the UNESCO sites, the idea is the same. Four hundred young people will be selected (on the basis of knowledge of foreign languages, disciplinary and school skills) and then **they will be trained in linguistic subjects and act as “guides” at these UNESCO sites, also in view of Expo 2015**.

Dario Galli has said he is enthusiastic about the idea, and that he would like to extend this type of activity to the Expo itself. “Young people in uniforms, who also know two or three foreign languages, will give a young, fresh imagine of Italy.”

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