

# Operating Instructions for visitors



# Cuggiono



**Ecoistituto**  
della valle del Ticino  
**OdV**  
Organismo di Volontariato



# Welcome!

More and more people and families come to visit us from abroad. They are descendants of the emigrants who left Cuggiono and nearby villages over a century ago seeking their fortune in the Americas.

For a more effective visit, please follow these simple directions.

Please, notify us in advance so we can meet you and make your visit a memorable one.

So, send us an email with your requests and references, and the date of your planned trip to Cuggiono.

**Please write to:** [info@ecoistitutoticino.org](mailto:info@ecoistitutoticino.org)

Wherever possible we would like to meet your expectations.

We are all volunteers of several associations, not hired executives. We consider of utmost importance the establishing of a relationship of mutual understanding that may satisfy your immediate needs and also serve to strengthen future collaborations between us and your place of origin.

## Our Emigration



The emigration from Cuggiono and the hamlet of Castelletto dates back to at least the 1850s when hundreds of workers departed for European countries in February and returned in October. After the unification of Italy in 1861 the migratory pattern changed through the influence of recruiting agents and the devastation of local vineyards by the phylloxera, the heavy taxation, the lack of improvements in agriculture by the landlords in absentia who owned most properties, the disease of the silkworms.



Most jobs in the silk mills were done by women and young girls. Corn that was the main staple of the peasants had serious fall backs due to the lack of fertilizers and bad crops. The sharecropping system was not helping. All these components contributed to the desire to emigrate, this time overseas, in search of fortune or the so called "American Dream."

The first emigration, made of families, was towards Argentina, where most people farmed or found odd jobs in the capital city of Buenos Aires.

The second, larger emigration was to the United States where all the people were hired to work in the mines, initially all single men.

For example, in 1880 a group departed for Iron Mountain, Michigan. On their way they stopped in Detroit and most of them remained to form the future important Cuggionese settlement there.

At the same time, other small groups arrived in St. Louis where they worked in the clay pits and established one of the most important Cuggionese and Italian enclaves in the USA, **the Hill**.

Other workers from Cuggiono were driven to the coal mines of Springfield, Missouri and when the Big Muddy Coal Company opened the coal extraction in Murphysboro, Southern Illinois, Cuggiono became the source where to find manpower that increased even more when the coal mines in Herrin became the most important.

**Herrin** was full of Cuggionese and today it's sister city with Cuggiono.

To validate this heritage, on 14 June 2025 the town of Cuggiono has named a small square Largo Herrin also placing a mural depicting the monument to the miner erected in Herrin.

However, Cuggionese also went to other places: Stillwater, Minnesota where the work was on logging camps in summer and sawmills in the winter.

A few families destined to Stillwater stopped in Genoa, Wisconsin, where a Lombard settlement had been there for a long time. Some people ventured to Joliet, Illinois where most jobs were in steel mills. Butte and Walkerville, Montana saw many Cuggionese toil in the local silver and copper mines. Clifton-Morency in Arizona was another copper centre where the Cuggionese presence was high, also in general activities such as saloon keeping.

And this is only the beginning.



# Visit itinerary

1. <b>Migration History Center</b>	Via San Rocco 48
2. <b>Sport Park</b>	Via San Rocco 84
3. <b>Cemetery</b>	Via Giacomo Leopardi
4. <b>St. George's Basilica</b>	Piazza San Giorgio
5. <b>Villa Annoni</b>	Piazza XXV aprile
6. <b>Civic Historical Museum</b>	Piazza XXV aprile
7. <b>Villa Annoni's Park</b>	Piazza XXV aprile
8. <b>Castelletto di Cuggiono</b>	







# Migration history center

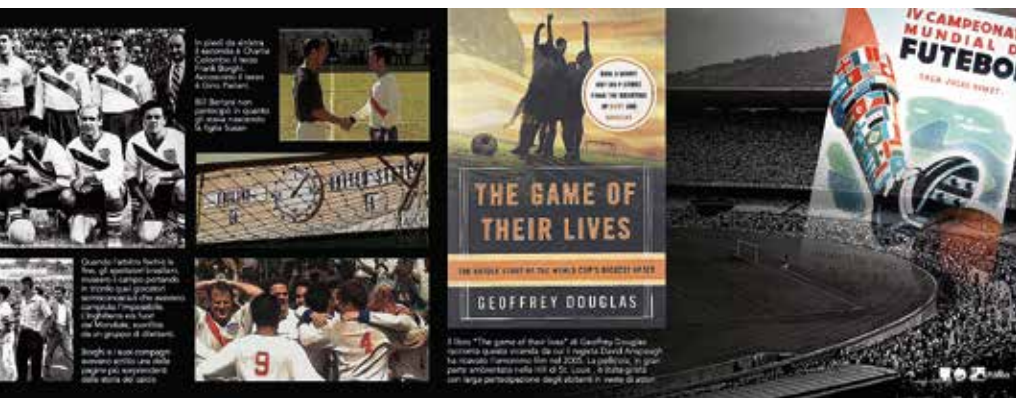
Its location is inside an Eighteenth century church recovered through voluntary work after decades of decay and abandonment.

The structure was eventually restored through the efforts of many citizens, some firms and the aid received from friends of Herrin, Illinois and St. Louis, Missouri. This will be our first stop to get better acquainted and then guide you to the next stops





# Sport Park



It's a small park in Via San Rocco, not far from the Migration History Center where we have positioned several murals to celebrate some legendary figures of USA baseball and a famous soccer match at the 1950 world championship in Brazil when the sons of emigrants from our territory were the protagonists.



# San Carlo Cemetery

In 1776 the Austrian government that ruled Lombardy prohibited the burial inside churches and inside town due to public hygiene. Then Cuggiono built this cemetery outside town in an area previously used as a Lazaretto or leper hospital during the plague epidemic of 1631. Many of your ancestors are buried here.







# St. George's Basilica

This church was started in 1606 and completed in 1633 on plans by Francesco Maria Richini, the important Milanese architect operating in that period at the Duomo of Milan.

This imposing construction is considered one of the most interesting examples of Lombard baroque.







Inside frescoes by Storer, Morgari and paintings by Carlo Francesco Nuvolone and Pietro Gilardi may be viewed.

There are also wood sculptures by Carlo Garavaglia and Seventeenth century statues by the Pozzi brothers of Lanzo d'Intelvi. The high altar is by Leopoldo Pollack.

The original bell tower was elevated in 1758.





# Villa Annoni





This majestic Eighteenth century neoclassical villa was commissioned by the counts Annoni to Leopoldo Pollack, architect at the Austrian imperial court and quite famous in Milan at that time.

After the death of Pollack in 1806, the project was completed by the Genoese architect Giuseppe Zanoja who was then finishing the facade of the Duomo of Milan.

Villa Annoni has a U-shaped plan typical of the country houses of the Lombard nobility of the period.

Inside we find bas-reliefs and frescoes inspired by the mythological world made by artists such as Giuseppe Lavelli and Giacomo Cambiassi.



In 1979 the villa and the park were purchased by the Comune of Cuggiono, now the location of the town hall.







## Civic historical museum

The museum is located on the left wing of Villa Annoni. It comprises 15 rooms dedicated to arts and crafts of our region, mostly the last two centuries. Accomplished and managed by volunteers, it's a must-see of your visit. One room is specifically dedicated to our emigration.





# Villa Annoni Park



The unmistakable sign of the grandness of Villa Annoni is symbolized by its 57 acres park, designed in romantic style with English traits. It's still the second largest enclosed park of Lombardy after that of the Royal Villa of Monza made by architect Canonica, who inspired architect Zanoja in designing this park in Cuggiono.







# Castelletto di Cuggiono

Castelletto di Cuggiono is situated along the shores of the Naviglio Grande, the first navigable canal made in the Middle Ages in Europe.

Until 1859 it was the border between the Lombardy-Veneto region under the rule of Austria and the Piedmont of Savoy.

There are still interesting traces of this past, for instance the farmhouse Catenazzone that housed the Austrian customs office.







The parish church that honours Saints James and Philip is on the upper part of the hamlet next to the 16th century Dominican convent restored in the 1990s and now a site of social events.

On the banks of the Naviglio Grande we find the majestic Villa Clerici with its 12 rooms, 365 windows and an impressive baroque staircase.

It's considered the most important Villa of Delights along the Naviglio Grande.

Inside there are frescoes by the famous school of Tiepolo.

Abandoned for a long time, and in disrepair, it requires a radical restoration.

Castelletto di Cuggiono has risen to widespread popularity thanks to the film of the director Ermanno Olmi, "The Tree of the Wooden Clogs" (L'Albero degli Zoccoli - 1978).



**Ecoistituto**

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