

WELCOME!

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF A GUIDED TOUR IN THE BORGIO VEREZZI SHOWCAVES

The Borgio Verezzi showcaves were first discovered in 1933 by 3 local kids named Lillo, Tito and Valentino. These teenagers went down through a well (that you can see on your way down to the first chamber) created by the local community in the bed of Rio Battorezza (a stream that only gets alive in case of very strong precipitations) in order to contain floods that usually destroyed the cultures, only mean of survival back in the past.

In the first 50's a group of speleologists of Albenga, a near medieval town, began to explore the well, finding out the existence of the caves; after a long and hard work, a pathway was opened to the public on June 29th 1970.

The temperature is steadily 16 degrees (Celsius) and the air humidity is usually around 95-98 per cent.

Entering the caves you'll get directly to **the first chamber** which is about 36 meters above the sea level, while the deepest part of the caves, called the Castle Chamber, is about 26 meters deeper.

The origin of the caves is due to karst phenomena, that means erosion and corrosion of water when it gets through limestone (rock composed mostly by calcium carbonate).

While in the very past, after glaciations, ancient rivers digged galleries through these limestones, nowadays seeps water through several fractures of the rocks absorbing from the above earth some carbonic anhydride, which makes the water acid and able to corrode calcium carbonate, enlarging the fractures.

Besides these processes, the continuous water level and climate changing caused the collapse of rock layers that formed huge chambers.

Further on your way you can see how water creates dripstones: its changing of chemical conditions, like the loss of carbonic anhydride and a different temperature, makes the dripping of water drops (from the vault of the caves to the floor) able to build up a deposit of calcium carbonate forming a stalactite. Then, when the water drops still rich in dissolved limestone reach the floor create a stalagmite too.

The growth of the dripstones, that is influenced by lots of factors, is very slow and variable. It takes about decades for one centimetre of growth.

The most famous characteristic of these caves is the incredible colours variety of the formations due to the presence of several minerals and humic acids: the pure white of calcium carbonate, but also yellow, reddish-brown and grey .

The biggest dripstones of the caves are usually millenia old, as the columns, born from the union of a stalactite and a stalagmite.

Amazing are also the draperies (or curtains): S. Martin's Drap and the Elephant's Ear formed by the dripping of water drops that don't fall immediately from the roof but slide on the wall for a while eventually influenced by the air circulation.

Going on with our tour we get to **the second chamber**, "The Moon Landscape", where you can see very thin stalactites called "spaghetti". They are considered the youngest dripstones of the caves. They are hollow inside because of the speed of the water drops that can build up only rings of calcium carbonate forming a no massive dripstone.

In this chamber we can also see unregular shaped formations called helectyte stalactites so called for their extravagant form that grows fighting against the force of gravity.

Going deeper, as soon as we enter **the third chamber**, that is about 10 meters above the sea level, we can notice again one of the most important cave characteristics: the breakdowns. This is "The Castle chamber", whose name is due to the particular shape of its biggest formation. Beautiful are also the flows of calcite that look like lava flows.

Right on the back of the castle you'll see the "Fairies Lake" formed by beautiful, trasparent green waters.

If there is no rain for a long time this lake, as well as all the others, is completely dry. Indeed they are formed by ground waters that rise when it rains. This is the reason why in times of pouring rain, the route along this lakes is usually flooded. Further we get to the "Saletta", a **little circular chamber**, where we can see some water on the bottom of a syphon. Right behind, there are amazing curtains named "bacon slices". Nearby you can see some aragonite crystals, a less common crystalline form of calcium carbonate than calcite, whose growth is influenced by the polar magnetisms.

Afterwards we pass through the "Red Canyon", so called because of the massive presence of iron and clay; right after you can see **the most famous chamber** of the cave, the "Nativity Chamber": two formations in a small cave just like S. Mary and Joseph with their baby Jesus, that is a small statue. Right behind, the longest "Spaghetti" of the Italian showcaves: they are about 3 meters long.

On our way back to the "Castle" multicoloured dripstones decorate the walls and a few stairs on we arrive at the **last chamber**: "Gulliver's Chamber", where we can see a foot shaped stone that reminds us the legendary character.

Please, give this translation back to the guide. Thank you!



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