

Museum of fossils from Monte San Giorgio Meride

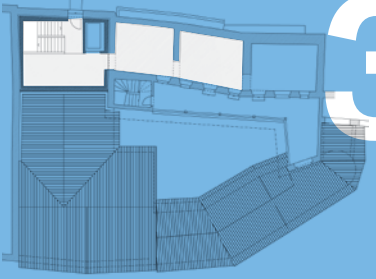
Museo dei fossili del
Fossilien-museum des
Musée des fossiles du



3

Jurassic sediments

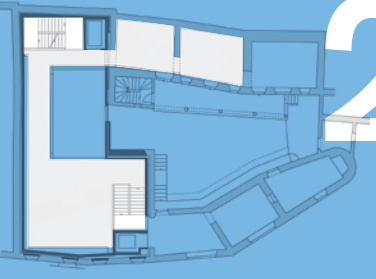
Morbio Formation
Moltrasio Formation
Saltrio limestone
Besazio limestone
Broccatello
Macchia Vecchia



2

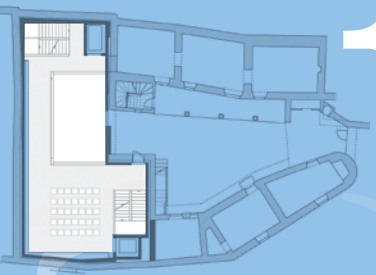
Meride Formation

Kalkschieferzone
Cassina beds
Cava superiore beds
Cava inferiore beds



1

Besano Formation



Opening hours

09:00 – 17:00

closed

Mondays

25th December

1st January

open

Easter Monday

Pentecost

Adults
CHF 12.-

Children up to 6
years free

From 6 to 16 years
CHF 6.-

Students/AHV/
IV-Card
CHF 8.-

Museum
guided tour
Duration 90 min.
CHF 120.-

Groups minimum
10 persons
CHF 8.-
per person

School groups
maximum 25 pupil
+ 2 teachers
CHF 150.-

Family ticket
2 Adults
+ 2 Children
from 6 to 16

Reservation
obligatory
for classes,
groups and
guided tours
in the museum
and/or
in the field.
CHF 25.-

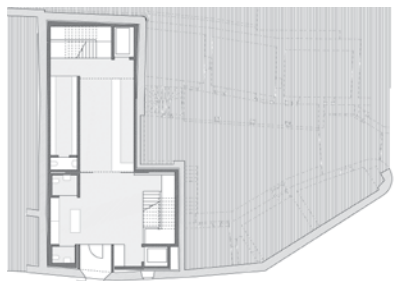
Entrance

Text Dr. Heinz Furrer
Scientific responsibility
Photographs © Universität Zurich
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Models © Beat Scheffold
Design www.theredbox.ch

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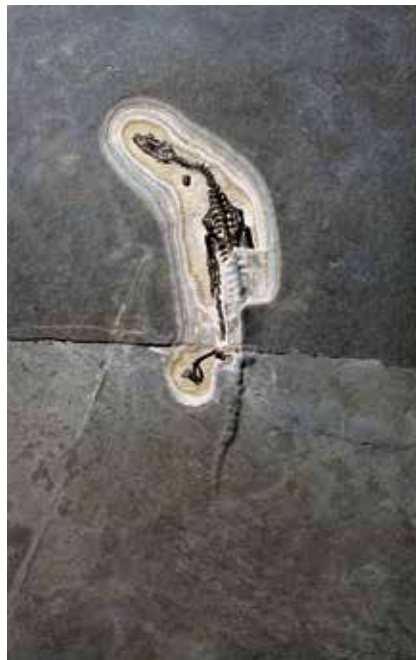




Mixosaurus, fossil skeleton and life model of an ichthyosaur in side view

On the right: *Neusticosaurus*, partly prepared skeleton of a small marine reptile, seen from the underside of the animal

Below: *Ticinosuchus*, life model of a terrestrial archosaur



The concept of the exhibition focuses on the fossil communities found in the five fossiliferous layers from the Middle Triassic of Monte San Giorgio. Following the order of the layers and thus through time, the oldest fossils from the Besano Formation are displayed on the first floor, followed by the slightly younger fossils from the Meride Formation on the second floor. On the third floor, fossils and rocks from the Jurassic marine deposits of the neighbouring quarries of Arzo are displayed, which are 50 to 60 million years younger.



Ticinites, life model of an ammonoid, an extinct relative of the modern *Nautilus*

Below: The "Saurolo" was produced in the former oil factory of Spinirolo near Meride



Besides this, the history of palaeontological excavations at Monte San Giorgio should not be missed. The first fossils were discovered during mining excavations of oil shale, from which the valuable pharmaceutical product "Saurolo", a bituminous salve, was obtained.

Museum of fossils from Monte San Giorgio

Monte San Giorgio in the south of Canton Ticino and the neighbouring areas of Monte Pravello and Monte Orsa in Varese province (Italy) are among the most important fossil deposits in the world. Their numerous and exceptionally well preserved fossils have been excavated and studied by Swiss and Italian palaeontologists since 1850, and have also been described and reproduced in a number of scientific publications.

Within the 600 m thick deposits of limestone, dolomite and bituminous shales of the Middle Triassic, five exceptionally rich fossil layers are found. These deposits of a subtropical marine basin have recently been dated to an age of 243 to 239 million years. They mainly contain marine organisms, such as algae, bivalves, ammonoids, fishes and marine reptiles. A few terrestrial reptiles, insects and plants are also found, and must have been washed into the sea from islands or the mainland.



The international importance of this classical fossil locality, situated at the southern border of the Alps, was honoured by its acceptance as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2003 for the Swiss part and in 2010 for the Italian territory.

The new fossil museum of Monte San Giorgio designed by the Ticinese architect Mario Botta in the village of Meride presents the important palaeontological heritage of the region to a wide audience. Fossils of animals and plants constitute the main part of the exhibition, complemented by brief explanations based on actual scientific knowledge and by depictions of the animals as three-dimensional models set in artistic reconstructions of their habitats.

