

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Museum of the Grigne takes you through the history of the area from millions of years ago to the present day.

It starts with a large model of the Grigne and audio-visual projections on geology, archaeology, local fauna and flora.

It continues in the 'virtual cave' where a large touch screen explains the geological eras, the formation of the mountains and the origin of the fossils. You can also explore the Cainallo cave without a helmet!

In the fossil section, with hundreds of specimens, the slow petrification of marine molluscs is explained.

Artefacts of chipped stone, bronze and pottery from the area's earliest inhabitants are on display.

In graves of the Celts who exploited the iron mines just above the village, a number of weapons, tools and jewellery have been found.

From the Romans some grave goods such as vases, glasses, spoons, coins and gambling dice.

The first floor of the museum houses objects of work and life in the mountains up to a hundred years ago.

Finally, there is a section about Wikimania, the world-wide Wikipedia meeting in Esino in 2016, when the village grew from 750 inhabitants to over 2000 and spoke English for a week!

ANTONIO STOPPANI TALKS ABOUT THE FOSSILS OF THE GRIGNE MUSEUM

Fossils are the remains of living creatures from the past. Their origin dates back some 250 million years, when the seas still covered these mountains.

The Grigne are very rich in fossils. In fact: it is living sea creatures, turned into fossils, that produced the Grigne rock!

This specimen is called "GIGANTOGONIA ALDOVRANDI".

It is a Gastropod, which means 'stomach-foot', i.e. an animal that walks or crawls on its belly.

Like the snail, it could retreat into its shell to protect itself from predators.

The shell has a spiral shape in which the internal organs are twisted. Some marine species can weigh up to a few kilos.

This specimen is particularly rare and beautiful; it is well preserved and has detached itself from the rock without breaking and without damaging its imprint in the 'matrix': the piece of rock in which it has been embedded for about 250 million years is intact.

PENDANT WITH DUCKS

My name is Maura, I was born in Upper Esino on 15 January 1881, precisely on St Mauro's Day. Even as a young girl, like everyone then, I learnt to spin wool to help out around the house.

The sheep were sheared twice a year, with scissors similar to those used by the Celts, and the raw wool, which was not washed before spinning, was carded with a spatula with nails to unravel the threads. The best, softest, cleanest and longest wool was that of the sheep's backs.

In winter, when there was no more work in the fields, we would spin the wool and weave the hemp that would be used to clothe us all.

On the photo you can see me as a grandmother, with the spool and spindle to work the wool by hand; during work we would chew a dried chestnut to produce the saliva needed to handle the fibre. In one evening I could spin as many as three full spindles.

Then with the hand-cranked and pedal spinning wheels how much time and effort we saved!

MAM' MAURA AND SPINNING

This bronze pendant with ducks is a rare piece of jewellery.

It was fashionable more than 2000 years ago, in the Golasecca civilisation that came to Esino from the village of the same name in the province of Varese, on the Ticino river.

It was found by chance in an ancient tomb in the hamlet of Busso, on the path leading to Agueglio, together with other objects such as bracelets and fragments of pottery displayed in the same showcase.

It consists of a wheel, a sun symbol, with a central hub. Two small pieces are missing.

The decoration is on the outer circumference and in the centre with the schematic figures of water birds with body, head, eye, beak and tail.

The pendant could be worn with a decorative function or hung from a fibula, i.e. a brooch, to fasten clothing. It perhaps also served as an amulet for superstition, to bring good luck or to 'defend' oneself from evil and danger.

THE TIME SCALE

Watch your step!

This staircase makes you travel through time.

With the first steps you travel millions of years, then shorter and shorter periods of time.

The long hanging 'chronology' starts with the Big Bang and goes up to the present day; it shows the most important events and exhibits in the museum.

On the walls are the figures of the various epochs, and on the steps the discoveries made over the centuries.

Progress did not happen simultaneously in the world, however, and the research of archaeologists often overturns theories believed to be valid.

On the first step, imagine that you lived about 3 million years ago, like Lucy, in Ethiopia.

You are just over a metre tall. You climb trees but can also walk upright and it is quite an advance over your ancestors to be able to use your hands freely and see in front of you!

Your brain is similar to that of a chimpanzee: it weighs a quarter of what it does today.

On the 2nd step, after a few million years, you have now conquered fire, which you use for warmth, defence and cooking. You have become a hunter and cover yourself with skins that you tan with scrapings of chipped stone. You are still nomadic. You begin to migrate out of Africa. Continue your journey through the centuries with the inventions that have changed man's life all the way to artificial intelligence.

What will be invented in the coming decades?