

*Travel to Castelfondo:
Home of Our Ancestors*



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Close your eyes and imagine the crisp alpine breeze sweeping down from the jagged peaks of the Maddalene mountains, rustling through the deep green apple orchards of the Val di Non. This is Castelfondo, the very soil where the Genetti family—and many of our allied families—sowed their roots centuries ago. When you walk these ancient cobblestone streets and look up at the



towering medieval castle guarding the valley, you are standing exactly where your great-grandparents once stood.

As a relative who has made this journey and shared an afternoon with our Italian cousins in the old homestead, I want to guide you through planning your own pilgrimage. This isn't just a vacation; it's a journey of discovery. I have included in this guide information about local flavor, hidden gems, and a robust list of links to help you book your ancestral visit.

The World They Left Behind: Understanding Our Ancestors

To truly appreciate Castelfondo, we must respectfully imagine the world our ancestors inhabited. Originally founded in Roman times as a strategic outpost called *Castrum Fundi*, the village was a defensive gateway against northern invasions. For centuries, our families were **Italian-speaking Austrians (Tyroleans)** whose lives were deeply tethered to the rhythms of agriculture and the mountain seasons.

Why did they leave such a peaceful valley? The great wave of emigration began in the 1860s, largely driven by the Austrian Empire's 1868 universal conscription laws, which forced 20-year-old men into three years of active military service. Seeking freedom, many young men bid a painful farewell to the Val di Non. Later, after World War I, the 1919 Treaty of Versailles partitioned this region to Italy. Overnight, our Austrian ancestors who remained became Italian citizens, a political shift that left many culturally isolated.

Today, Castelfondo is a quiet, rural village. While Italian is the primary language, the ancient regional dialect, **Nones**, is still spoken by many. Trentino also officially recognizes historic minority languages like Ladin, Mòcheno, and Cimbrian.

Step 1: Preparing for the Pilgrimage

A trip to this semi-isolated alpine paradise takes preparation.

- **Documentation & Driving:** Ensure your passport is valid for at least six months beyond your stay. You will absolutely need a rental car to reach and explore Castelfondo. It is

highly recommended to get an **International Driving Permit (IDP)** through AAA before you leave to avoid hefty fines.

- **Navigation:** Download GPS maps directly to your phone or iPad for offline use. Mountain roads often lose cell service, and navigating the narrow village streets requires a dedicated navigator in the passenger seat!
- **Pack Light:** Bring just one small or medium roller suitcase and a backpack. You will be hopping on and off trains and dragging bags over cobblestones. Summer temperatures are mildly cool (highs around 68°F / 20°C), so pack a sweater and a raincoat. Winter brings freezing temperatures and snow, requiring heavy winter coats and boots.
- **Learn the Language:** Brush up on basic Italian phrases (*grazie, scusi, buongiorno*) using apps like Duolingo, Babbel or podcasts for learning beginner Italian.

Step 2: The Journey to the Val di Non

- **By Air:** Fly into **Milan Malpensa (MXP)** or **Venice Marco Polo (VCE)**.
- **By Train & Car:** Take the regional trains to the city of **Trento** (about an hour south of Castelfondo) or the picturesque city of **Bolzano** (about 45 minutes east). You can ride the light rail line into the valley, but renting a car at the Bolzano or Trento train stations gives you the freedom to explore.
- **The Drive:** Brace yourself for the breathtaking, zigzagging hairpin turns of the **Passo Mendola (Mendel Pass)** or the Gampen Pass. It's not for the faint of heart, but the views of the Dolomites are spectacular!



Step 3: Where to Rest Your Head

Lodging in the village embraces the welcoming *agriturismo* (farm stay) and boutique bed-and-breakfast models:

- **Mas di Siti (Castelfondo):** A beautifully renovated B&B right in the village, praised for its comfortable wood-finished rooms, exceptional cleanliness, and a wonderful breakfast featuring local, vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options.
- **Agritur Belsogno B&B (Castelfondo):** Located in the nearby peaceful hamlet of Frazione Salobbi, this cozy, family-run B&B is newly renovated in typical Trentino style.
- **Agriturismo Pisani (Castelfondo):** Also in Frazione Salobbi, this property offers a welcoming, typical mountain structure with exposed wood and stone.
- **Lady Maria Hotel Wellness and Resort (Fondo):** A short drive away, this charming hotel features a cozy bar, an extensive breakfast buffet, and an English-speaking owner.
- **Villa Orso Grigio (Ronzone):** For a more romantic, upscale stay, this villa offers beautifully appointed rooms with mountain views, private balconies, and exceptional food.

Step 4: Walking in Their Footsteps: Local Attractions

- **The Genetti Homestead:** If you are a Genetti descendant, take a quiet, respectful walk past the original Genetti homestead in the village. Known as “Casa Lanci,” it is located at: 55 Via Dante Alighieri
- **The Spiritual Heart:** Visit the Gothic **Parish Church of San Nicolò**, rebuilt between 1508 and 1530. It is the spiritual center of our ancestors. Walk through the cemetery located adjacent to the church and you are sure to recognize familiar surnames.
- **Castello di Castelfondo:** Set on a rocky spur, this 12th-century fortress protected the valley. While it is a private residence and cannot be toured inside, its striking silhouette and 25-meter tower are a must-see.
- **Guided Tour of the Latteria Sociale di Castelfondo:** Agriculture and dairy are the lifeblood of the valley. Just down the street at 30 Via Dante Alighieri, you will find the local cheese factory, founded in 1927 by a union of local breeders. Here, milk is processed daily using time-honored methods. **You can book a guided tour of the factory to see the cheese-making process firsthand.** *Reservations are required*, so you must book your tour in advance by calling +39 0463 889134 or emailing info@latteriacastelfondo.it. Don't forget to purchase some *Monteson* from their shop—an exclusive local cheese whose name derives from the ancient Nones word for the high-altitude haymaking period, which pairs beautifully with local honey and jams.
- **Parco Fluviale Novella (Novella River Park):** A marvel of geological history. You can walk suspended metal gangways through a spectacular river canyon carved over millions of years, or take a guided kayak tour.
- **Lago Smeraldo & Rio Sass Canyon:** In nearby Fondo, hike the boardwalks of the Rio Sass Canyon through swirling waters and stalactites, ending at the beautiful Emerald Lake (Lago Smeraldo).



San Nicolò Church



Latteria Sociale di Castelfondo

Step 5: Savoring the Nonesi Culinary Heritage

The Val di Non will delight your palate. The undisputed king of the local table is the **tortel de patate** (fried potato cake), traditionally served with regional cured meats like **mortandela nonesa** and sweet **Casolét** cheese.

You must pair these hearty dishes with **Groppello di Revò**. This is a rare, "heroic" native grape grown on the steep, treacherous ridges of the valley. Harvested entirely by hand by just a few dedicated families, it perfectly cleans the palate.

For dining, here are some highly recommended spots:

- **Bar Trattoria Alla Villa (Castelfondo):** A casual spot perfect for an outdoor lunch.
- **Alle Ciaspole (Tret):** A Michelin-listed restaurant run by a husband-and-wife team. They serve sophisticated dishes featuring alpine beef and char in a beautiful alpine house.
- **Sidreria Melchiori (Tres):** A fantastic restaurant and pizzeria that is also a leader in transforming the valley's famous apples into delicious products.

Step 6: Celebrating the Rhythms of the Seasons (Holidays & Traditions)

To visit Castelfondo during a local festival is to truly step back in time. Life here is deeply tied to Catholic traditions, the land, and the changing seasons.

Autumn Harvests & La Desmontegada If you plan your trip for the autumn, you will witness the legendary Val di Non apple harvests, where farmers gather the valley's famous fruit. But the true highlight of late September or October is **La Desmontegada**. This is the joyous "homecoming" of the cattle from the high mountain pastures (*malghe*) to the village for the



winter. The animals are beautifully decorated with flowers and bells, and the whole village celebrates with traditional music, dancing, and the tasting of local mountain cheeses. This website can tell you when and where the celebrations take place: <https://granfestadeldesmontegar.it/>

Winter Magic & The Feast of San Nicolò: The absolute heart of the winter season is the **Feast of San Nicolò**, the patron saint of the village. While his official feast day is December 6th, the most characteristic celebrations take place on the eve, December 5th. Imagine standing in the village square as San Nicolò arrives in his traditional bishop's vestments (a mitre, cope, and crozier), accompanied by angels and playfully mischievous *Krampus* (devilish figures with horns and noisy bells) to distribute sweets to the children. You can join in **La Fiaccolata**, a beautiful torchlight procession where families march through the

narrow streets from the Parish Church, bringing light to the dark winter night. The evening culminates with a community bonfire (*Il Falò*) in the piazza, where you can warm your hands

with a cup of hot *Vin Brulè* (mulled wine) and enjoy roasted chestnuts (*castagne*). If you bring children, don't forget to have them leave a little hay, salt, or bran on the windowsill for the saint's donkey!

Spring & Summer Traditions Visiting in the warmer months? You might witness the solemn Holy Week (*Settimana Santa*) processions moving through the three historic tiers of Villa, Plaz, and Cologna. Or, if you arrive in August, you can join the Feast of San Rocco on August 16th, an ancient tradition honoring the village's protector against the plague with community masses and small processions.

For information on future events, check Pro Loco Castelfondo on Instagram:
https://www.instagram.com/proloco_castelfondo/

Much can be gained by returning to the village of your ancestors. To breathe the alpine air they breathed, to walk the winding roads they walked, and to hear the pealing church bells that marked the milestones of their lives is a profound privilege. May your journey to Castelfondo bring your family's history to life. *Buon viaggio!*

Links and Resources for Your Trip

Accommodations & Booking:

- **Mas di Siti (Castelfondo):** reservations through [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com)
- **Agritur Belsogno B&B (Castelfondo):** reservations through [Skyscanner.com](https://www.skyscanner.com)
- **Agriturismo Pisani (Castelfondo):** reservations through [Skyscanner.com](https://www.skyscanner.com)
- **Lady Maria Hotel Wellness and Resort (Fondo):** reservations through several online booking websites
- **Villa Orso Grigio (Ronzone):** <https://orsogrigio.it/> - reservations through several online booking websites

Attractions, Tours & Local Experiences:

- **Latteria Sociale di Castelfondo (Cheese Factory):** www.latteriacastelfondo.it | Email: info@latteriacastelfondo.it | Tel: +39 0463 889134. Advance booking required.
- **Parco Fluviale Novella (Canyon & Kayaking):** www.parcoflivialenovella.it
- **Val di Sole / Val di Non Outdoor Experiences:** [Kayak Novella River Park](http://www.kayaknovella.com)
- **Val di Non Tourism Office:** [Visit Val di Non](http://www.visitvaldionon.it)

Festivals & Events:

- **Val di Non Festivals and Traditions:** [View Event Calendar](http://www.visitvaldionon.it)
- **Trentino Official Events (San Nicolò & More):** [Browse Trentino Events](http://www.visitvaldionon.it)

Dining & Gastronomy:

- Alle Ciaspole Restaurant (Michelin Guide): [View Profile](#)
- YesAlps Val di Non Restaurants: [Browse Local Eateries](#)

Transportation & Weather:

- Rome2Rio (Bolzano/Trento to Castelfondo Routes): [Plan Transit](#)
- Wanderlog Weather & Climate Data (Castelfondo): [Check Weather](#)

Genealogy & History:

- Trentino Genealogy Guide: [Trentino Valleys and Parishes](#)
- The Genetti Family Genealogy Project: [Travel to Trentino](#)
- Provincia Autonoma di Trento (Historical Minorities): [Learn about Ladin, Mòcheno, and Cimbrian](#)

Note: The residents of Castelfondo are incredibly welcoming and often go out of their way to be cordial to visiting Americans. However, please be mindful that this is their home, and they have busy lives and schedules. Showing up unannounced on a doorstep and expecting a personal tour guide can be an imposition. To make the most of your visit, it is highly recommended to establish contact and arrange local guides well in advance of your trip.



Louise Genetti Roach
Genetti Homestead – Casa
Genetti Lanci, 2011



Ralph & Diane Genetti
Genetti Homestead – Casa
Genetti Lanci, 2024



Gus Genetti and family with our Italian cousins, Castelfondo 2025 (courtesy of Maria Genetti)



Gus Genetti with our Italian cousins, three of the four Genetti Sisters, standing in front of Casa Genetti Lanci – 2025 (Gus's 3rd cousins)



Three generations of Genetti men: August III, August Jr. (Gus), Travis



San Nicolò Church – Interior (courtesy of Ralph and Diane Genetti)



San Nicolò Church – Cemetery



Making cheese, Latteria Sociale di Castelfondo



Specialty cheese, Latteria Sociale di Castelfondo

Chiesa di S. Nicolò

The Church of S. Nicolò

La parrocchiale di Castelfondo fu riedificata su precedente cappella da Pero Carlon, maestro comacino, come ricorda una scritta sopra la finestra a sinistra dell'altare maggiore. A destra è la data di conclusione dei lavori: 1530. Il Carlon costruì anche il campanile fino all'altezza della chiesa, poi completato dai suoi successori: maestro Zoan e il figlio Domenego che collocò un tabernacolo in pietra con cancellata di ferro, ancora oggi conservato, nella parte sinistra del presbiterio.

La facciata ha un portale a tutto sesto con una leggera strombatura, un rosone e una trifora a sesto acuto. L'interno è a navata unica con presbiterio ottagonale. Bellissimo il motivo ornamentale ad affresco della volta, i rami policromi sono ornati con angeli, simboli della passione, uccelli, fiori e frutta; al centro è ritratto Dio Padre e gli evangelisti (1526). L'altare maggiore (1753), opera di Pietro Insom e del padre Giovanni, è policromo e ornato con quattro statue: a sinistra San Martino e San Vincenzo di Paola, a destra San Fabiano e San Ignazio di Lodola. La pala del 1757 è di Mattia Lampi e rappresenta San Nicolò.

La chiesa fu allungata di due arcate tra il 1873 e il 1875. Per dichiarare il nuovo intervento si volle variare la forma delle finestre, passando a quelle a sesto acuto, pur mantenendo lo stile nel suo complesso.

The church of Castelfondo was rebuilt on the previous chapel by Pero Carlon, and is remembered in the writing above the window on the left of the high altar. On the right is the date of work completion, 1530. Carlon also built the bell tower to the same height as the church, later completed by his successors Zoan and his son Domenego, who arranged a tabernacle in stone with iron railings, still conserved today on the left hand side of the presbytery.

The façade has a round arched, slightly oblique doorway, with an acutely angled rose window and a triple lancet window. The nave has a single aisle and an eight-sided presbytery. There is a very beautiful and ornamental fresco, the multicoloured branches decorated with angels, symbols of passion, birds, flowers and fruit. In the centre there is a portrait of God the Father and the Evangelists (1526).

The high altar dated 1753 by Pietro Insom and Father Giovanni is multicoloured and decorated with four statues; on the left are San Martino and San Vincenzo di Paola, on the right San Fabiano and San Ignazio di Lodola. The back of the altar by Mattia Lampi is dated 1757 and depicts San Nicolò.

The church was lengthened by two arches between 1873 and 1875. In declaring the new work the form of the windows was changed to acute angled ones but retaining the main style as a whole.

Chiesa parrocchiale di S. Nicolò, interno

A sinistra: panorama dell'interno con affreschi della volta
A destra: pala di San Nicolò, particolare

The Church of S. Nicolò, the interior

On the left: view of the interior with frescos of the vault
On the right: a detail of the altar-piece depicting San Nicolò



Historical plaque of San Nicolò Church