

short guide

FOPPE

di NADRO



Difficulty: low



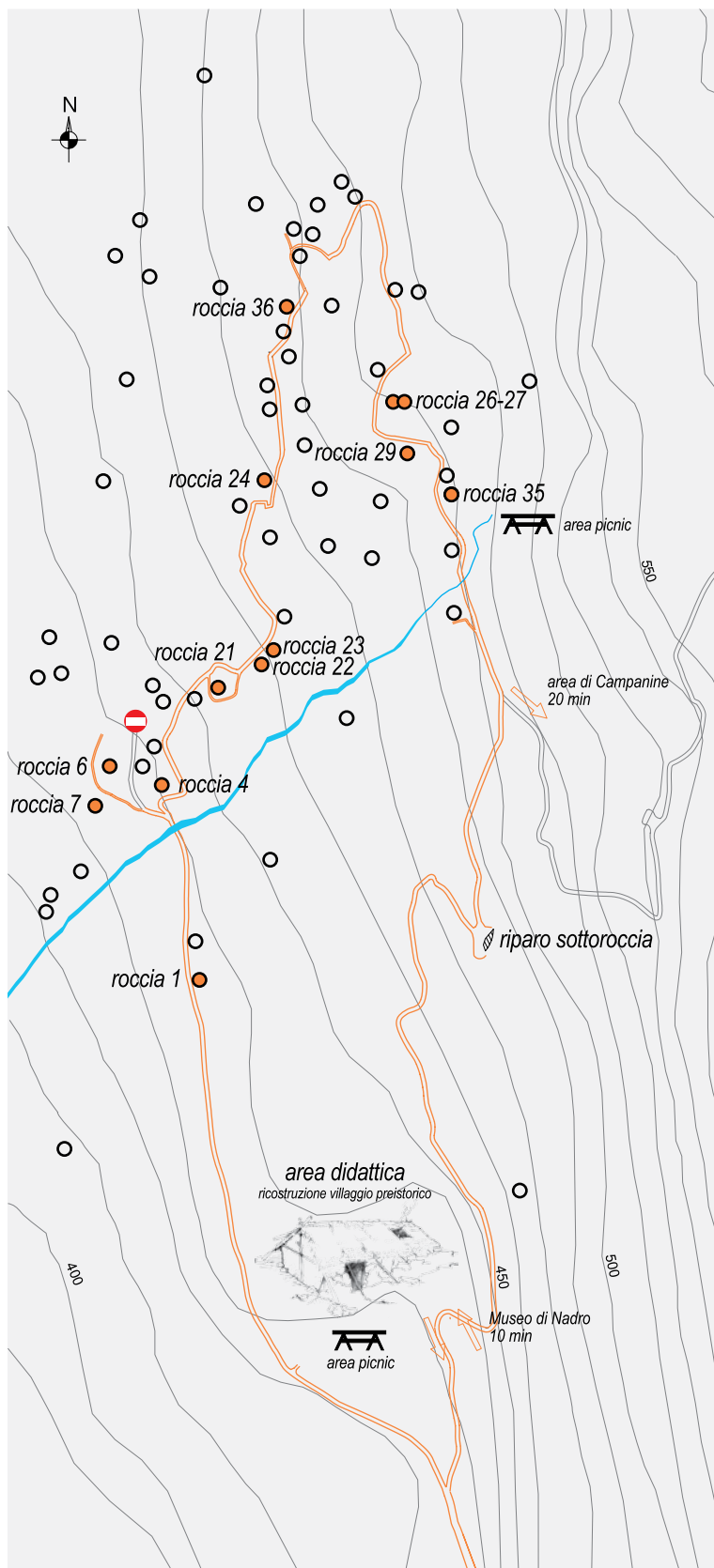
Duration: 2 hours and half

The Foppe area, which can be reached from Nadro village (Ceto), where there are also the ticket office, the educational museum and the documentation centre.

Foppe di Nadro is marked by a very high concentration of engraved rocks, often of large dimensions and densely carved. The iconography of the whole area, particularly rich in quality and themes variety, has not been completely analysed yet, though over the years several studies have been published concerning single rocks or main subjects. In addition to the extraordinary Iron Age engravings it is worth to mention the frequency of the “praying figures” and, especially, the uncommon abundance of Copper Age petroglyphs (Remedellian type daggers, ploughing scenes with cattle, “topographic” compositions), being this latter a range of subjects usually quite rare on rock surface while typical of the coeval statue–stelae phenomenon.

The visiting route, stretching in a ring path, allows the vision of about 23 engraved rocks among the 81 recorded up to now in the area. The most recommended ones, in order to have a basic comprehension of the peculiarities of the territory, are the R. 1, 6–7, 4, 22–23, 24, 36, 27–26 and 30.

Once left the Nadro Museum the first carved rocks on the route are met after about 10 minutes walking northward along the ancient cobbled road called in ancient times “Strada delle Aquane”.



Foppe R1 After going over the area with educational reconstructions the R. 1, which forms the base of one of the several Middle Ages walls peculiar to the site, rises on the right of the path. It is a not very extended surface and appears as typically smoothed by the glacier action. The lower part of the rock is carved with several praying figures, sometimes surrounded by symbols such as rings (perhaps a solar disc?), while the upper part is marked by a noteworthy concentration of Iron Age figures, mainly composed of human beings. The Christian crosses on the left border of the prehistoric panel constitutes on the other hand an undisputable evidence of the continuous engraving activity of the local people even during historic times.



Foppe R6 and 7 Just over a small spring the main route (which goes on to the right) does a short detour to the left in order to lead to the imposing group composed by R. 6 and 7, one of the most densely carved spot in whole Valcamonica. At a glance the themes marking in an almost obsessive way the group of carvings on R. 6–7 are already evident: they are the footprints and the birds. With its more than two hundred petroglyphs the R. 6 of Foppe di Nadro bears the largest concentration of footprints images of the whole Valcamonica rock art. It is a theme commonly spread among Iron Age engravings and, according to some scholars, it should be related to the deity's manifestation (as a symbol of the divine presence) or interpreted as a votive mark left during the visit to the rocks of the area by pilgrims and devotee. While building figures are a common theme in the eastern Middle Valley side it is much more a unique fact to find such a high frequency presence of bird figures. They are here depicted with downward bent beak, semi-oval empty body, three-ending tail and legs straight ahead, so that their shape may indicate chickens, crows or even birds of prey. In the lower part of the rock it is possible to observe an extraordinary group of dynamic and refined fighting figures and, on top of them, five-pointed stars and two inscriptions in pre-Roman local alphabet. Four of the five men fight in couple, two in a duel with weapons and the other two in a sort of boxing fight which has some similar examples in the Raetian and Venetic Situla Art (the remaining fifth figure on the left may be part of another unfinished analogous couple). Such activities, which may be defined as a "ritual sport", are not uncommon in the Italic world of Early and Middle Iron Age, as they were usually performed during the funerary rites of the community elite members. In the same occasions also other rituals may have been officiated, such as initiations to adulthood for the young or the simple commemoration of myths and heroic deeds. The last hypothesis may explain the high concentration of armed figures and especially of the depictions of highly probable ritual duels. Anyhow it must be underlined that Valcamonica, at least in many of the rock art subjects, seems to show the same aristocratic ideology shared by almost all the Iron Age Italic peoples.



Foppe R4 The route goes on up the path to the fork near the spring. On the little flat-rock balcony towering on the R. 6, the R. 4 rises. The rock is marked by a definite prevalence of weapons engravings related to Copper Age and early Bronze Age. This quite uncommon concentration of such a specific subject may represent a symbolic echo (virtual deposition?) of the coeval phenomenon of the metal hoards and votive offerings on mountain top and into water.



Foppe R22-23 Walking a little on the R. 22-23 rock outcrop emerges. It is characterized again by plenty of weapons, ploughing scenes and "topographic" figures (double rectangles, irregular pecked areas, groups of cup-marks), which can be easily compared with part of the statue-steles rock art. The contiguous R. 23 shows on its inclined side turned south-east a rare series of axes, daggers and large pecked areas. The weapons, basing on the comparison with real objects, can be dated back to the Ancient Bronze Age (2200-1800 BC). On the lowest part of the rock it is possible to observe a large inscription in local pre-Roman alphabet carved during the middle and late phases of the Iron Age. The rightward inscription shows the typical tree-shaped "S/Z" and the inverted "A". It must be read as "Sasiau".



Foppe R24 After a few metres the path goes by walkboard over the R. 24. On the upper part quickly comes in sight the scenic representation of several building figures (the so-called "village") while two warriors dancing around a Camunian rose stand out on the lowest part. The high concentration of huts, among which there are footprints and inscriptions, occupies a considerable part of the surface and it is composed of more than thirty structures seemingly built on poles, carved in different sizes and typologies and datable to various Iron Age phases.



Down the walkboard human beings images are dominant, mainly with weapons but seldom fighting and often incomplete. Two "dancing" figures armed with radiant round helmets, swords and small shields, apparently in relation with a four-petal Camunian rose from which an arrow leaves, clearly stand out among the crowd of human beings. Another similar warrior with round helmet and long dress likely dances opposite an extraordinary and quite unique flute player. Though less visible and mixed with pecking marks it is possible to catch a sight of several finely scratched figures, among which many noteworthy inscriptions and two daggers in anchor-shaped ending sheath (the so-called "Introbio-Lovere" type) engraved in life-size and certainly dating back to the latest phases of Valcamonica rock art (2nd century BC- 1st century AD). On the large lowest part of the rock, where the engravings are fewer, it is possible to observe a beautiful couple of running deer chased by a dog which recalls, though in a definitely minor measure, the famous "deer ride" on Naquane Great Rock

Foppe R36 The route goes on bordering some rocks, among which the R. 36 must be mentioned. On this surface a peculiar and particularly well–done image of an archer stands out. Climbing on a few stairs on the right and passing over a little bend the route reach in a little time the highest part of the area.



Foppe R26-27 The rocky outcrop named R. 27–26 represents one of the greatest rock art concentrations in the region and is one of the largest engraved rocks in whole Valcamonica. The western part of it, next to the walkboard, is marked by several petroglyphs dating back to the middle and late Iron Age. Among these pictures there are many armed figures and fighting warriors, dogs, deer, the so–called “Nadro temple” (a complex building with several related symbols), concentric circles, shovels, footprints and other geometric signs. The great image of a horse, horseman and squire is especially noteworthy and gives evidence of the extraordinary importance attributed to the horse as a status symbol during the Iron Age. This petroglyph may also underline a clear distinction of roles between the horseman (perhaps a local “prince”), armed with shield and spear, and the squire, who holds the former’s second spear and leads his horse on foot. On the southern section of the surface, which appears finely smoothed by the glacier action and slightly sloping, some remarkable scenes can be observed: the so-called “butterfly idle” (a group formed by a “winged” praying figure that seems to fly above another praying figure), the scene of so-called “dog worship” (a praying figure associated with several dog images), some armed praying figures, footprints, concentric circles, cup–marks and an interesting Solomon knot made in scratching technique. The eastern part of the rock, denominated R. 26, is marked by the large quantity of quadrangular–bladed axes (7th–5th centuries BC). This is an unusual theme in Foppe di Nadro while it quite spread out in the upper Campanine area. Foppe R29 Grande affioramento roccioso che costituisce la prosecuzione a Sud della r. 27.



Foppe R35 Located in the middle of a large, flat area close to a rock wall at the eastern border of the park, r. 35 is characterised by the unusual density of figures and the definite persistency of subjects such as schematic human figures (“worshippers”), dogs, and “shovels”. While the first two categories are well represented all over Foppe di Nadro as well as on nearby r. 29 and r. 27, the “shovels” make this surface exceptional and bring out the absence of other “classic” themes, such as the huts or the footprints. Worth of notice the precise distribution of icons on the surface, which appears to have been divided into thematic areas, and the presence of numerous cupmarks, some of them carefully laid out so as to form a sort of “comet”. The surface was engraved in a time span between the Neolithic and the Iron Age.