



Tarcento: art and culture

PARROCCHIALE DI SAN PIETRO APOSTOLO (PARISH CHURCH OF SAINT PETER APOSTLE)

According to some, the parish of Tarcento was formed between the 4th and 6th century in the **Centa** area, the oldest part of the town.

The current church building dates back to the 15th century (the façade with its Gothic portal was built in 1424), although it was later modified and extended.

The aisles were lengthened in around the mid-19th century and the extension work on the presbytery was completed in the early 20th century. The church as we see it today has a simple façade, dominated by the splayed ogival portal. Alongside it stands the massive bell tower, constructed between 1730 and 1741.



HISTORIC PALAZZOS AND VILLAS

Not far from the Cathedral is **Palazzo Frangipane**, also known as the Rotunda, one of the homes of the former Lords of Tarcento. The current construction dates back to the 17th century, built on the remains of a 16th century palazzo. The **so-called fountain "of love"** can be found in the middle of the square internal courtyard.



By following the adjacent Via Frangipane, passing through the monumental stone gate, we come to **Villa Pontoni** or "il Palazàt", an elegant construction that was once the main residence of the Frangipane family after they abandoned the lower castle in Coia.

This building of 16th century origin has undergone numerous changes over the centuries and its beautiful internal decorations were lost after the 1976 earthquake. According to the detailed descriptions written by the humanist Cornelio Frangipane, the park, dominated by **two large Himalayan cedars**, was a sumptuous Italian garden in around the mid-16th century, adorned by rows

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of rose bushes and box hedges, and by a Renaissance fountain with numerous water effects, known as the "Helice fountain".

The **Villa De Rubeis Florit** complex stands at the feet of Coia hill. This is a very old building, dating back to the 14th century, although it has been redeveloped over subsequent centuries. The rooms on the first floor present walls embellished with stuccowork and 18th century lacquered doors, featuring a variety of decorations. The characteristic wine cellar with its vaulted brickwork ceiling is now used as a tavern. The hall next to the cellar presents interesting decorations in the form of coats of arms of ancient houses amidst the beams. Over the turn of the century, this building was the home of the famous geographers Giovanni and Olinto Mannelli. It is currently private property and is used to host art exhibitions and classical music concerts.

HISTORIC TOWN CENTRE

The small square in front of the Cathedral (Piazza Roma) and the pedestrian route linking it to Piazza Libertà (Via Roma) comprise the historic town centre. The buildings that line the street house shops and commercial enterprises today. The heart of the town continued along Via Morgante, the historic Via Sottocenta, which linked Piazza di Sotto, near the bridge over the Torre, to Piazza di Sopra, near the church.



Piazza Libertà was recently redesigned, becoming pedestrianised in 1997. Every Friday morning it is filled with colourful market stalls. The most interesting buildings in the town centre include the **Domus Mariae**, just a short distance away from the Cathedral. Now a parish and school building, this building was once the famous "Ristoro" hotel popular with visitors to the Pearl.

Opposite the Domus and next to the Cathedral is the former Vicariatus Sclaborum (Slavic vicarage). The façade features a fresco inside a beautiful stucco frame: this popular 18th century painting depicts Saint Peter.

We should also mention the **"Margherita" cinema and theatre** on Viale Marinelli, built in the 1950s and designed by the architect Gino Valle. The building features thick local stone walls and protruding concrete volumes.

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VIALE MATTEOTTI AND ITS VILLAS

A pleasant stroll in the shade of the lime trees that line the town's main street offers an opportunity to examine some of the most interesting architectural creations of the Friulian early 20th century, passing from Art Nouveau to Art Deco and Rationalism.

Just a short distance from the square, at No 6, is **Villa Sala**, a small residential villa designed in the 1920s by Ermes Midena, one of the masters of Italian rationalism. Moving away from the centre and keeping to the right-hand side of the street, we come to **Villa Pividori Pietro**, a small Art Deco villa built in 1926 by the Ferdinando Ceschia firm and initially used as a small hotel; then, at No 50, **Villa Toffolo**, a small Roman-school Art Deco villa built in 1924, with a prismatic bow window and a well-kept picturesque garden. Next, it is the turn of **Villa Marcuzzi**, designed by the young Ermes Midena, an ingenious combination of tradition and rationalism, which also includes an interesting hothouse with classical-style statues.

HISTORIC VILLAS ON THE BANKS OF THE TORRE

Tarcento was one of the most sought-after holiday destinations in the region in the late 19th century. This was particularly true of the banks of the River Torre, where numerous villas were built during the period.

Casa D'Aronco, designed by the architect Raimondo D'Aronco in 1910 and later redeveloped, stands near the bridge.

Opposite the sports centre we can observe the **Villa delle Rose**, a picturesque little Art Deco villa designed by Cesare Scoccimarro in the 1930s, while next to it is **Villa Caterina**, a small castle built on bare rock in 1898. We should also not forget the buildings behind them, including Casa Sala with its neoclassical features, and **Villa Vilma**, with its typical German-style tower.

CHIESA DI SAN BIAGIO (CHURCH OF SAINT BLAISE)

Rebuilt following the 1976 earthquake, this beautiful church in the centre of the extensive Aprato district, is dedicated to **Saint Blaise**, represented in a 16th century wooden statue to the right of the altar. The church also houses a **16th century altarpiece** depicting the Trinity, Saint Blaise and all the Saints, as well as a **statue of Our Lady at prayer**, a skilfully made 15th century wooden sculpture



attributed to Leonardo Thanner, which probably formed part of an earlier high altar from the Chiesa Parrocchiale di S. Pietro (Parish Church of Saint Peter), which has since been lost.

Saint Blaise is celebrated at the beginning of February with a small local festival, procession and traditional blessing of throats.

THE DAMS

There are records of **watermills** along the Torre since the 13th century. Records tell of two mills in Tarcento in the 17th century, one on the right-hand bank and one on the other side. Meanwhile, records tell of three **mills**, a **forge**, a **sawmill** and two **furnaces** in Molinis. Two dams were built in order to ensure a constant flow of water to these works, which stood along artificial millstreams. They were the **Armellini dam** and the **Mina dam** respectively.

The two dams, still visible today, have lost their original function and are simply used to slow down the flow of the water when the river is full.