



Le Terre
dei Savoia



Pollenzo short stories

Pollenzo, the village where time stood still

Welcome to Reale Borgo di Pollenzo, the village where King Charles Albert preferred to spend his leisure time and which he described with such affection in his letters. In 1835, court architects Ernest Melano and Pelagio Palagi were given a royal commission to build a village where time stood still, where the king could forget affairs of state and concentrate on his agricultural and oenological experiments in a perfect neo-feudal medieval atmosphere. The royal hamlet became a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the official Savoy Royal Residences in 1997.

The neo-gothic structure of Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II, which can be reached with a short walk, its arcades, the church of San Vittore, and the central fountain, are a singular example of 19th-century urban gothic revival. The square is also home to the castle, dating back to the late 15th century, and also renovated by Charles Albert with gothic additions and neoclassical-style furnishings, but the building is now private property and is not open to the public.

Pollenzo's royal farm estate (the Agenzia or land agency, park, terrains, farmsteads) was Piedmont's 19th-century oenological research centre. In 1842, the newly-formed Associazione Agraria Subalpina held its first meeting there, establishing its role at that time for circulating agricultural information and techniques in the Kingdom of Savoy.

In the late 1990s a scheme sponsored by the international association Slow Food initiated a recovery project for the extensive Agenzia complex. The intention was to make it a point of reference for fine food and wine culture, and worldwide food quality policy. The heart of the House of Savoy's royal estate has now been completely repurposed and is home to University of Gastronomic Sciences, which includes a hotel and a restaurant. The ancient wine cellars accommodate the Banca del Vino, established for the creation of a "folk memory" of Italian wine.

As we stroll through Pollenzo, signposting identifies the charming streets of the ancient Roman town, with its amphitheatre and the historical-archaeological walk. Visitors may bump into someone who will show them the cellars and the remains of the amphitheatre, where gladiators once prepared to enter the arena.

Pollenzo is built on the banks of the River Tanaro, which flooded dramatically in 1994. From this privileged position the village looks out over the Langhe hills on the orographic right, and the Roero hills on the left.

