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- Basler Fasnacht
- Swiss Federalism

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On the trail of dinosaurs: Monte San Giorgio

A small and innocuous mountain nestled between two arms of Lake Lugano at the southern end of the Ticino hides away some fantastic secrets.

The summit of Monte San Giorgio offers magnificent views. But that's not all: Those inclined to search a bit deeper will find out that eons ago, an impressive marine fauna and land-based reptiles once lived here.

Monte San Giorgio is the Swiss saurian mountain and was recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2003. It gained further prominence as a trans-national locality in 2010, when an extension of the existing site also took in the Italian side of the mountain.

This mountain has a truly rich inner life: Rising just under 1100 metres in height, Monte San Giorgio in the sunny south of Ticino has been a Mecca for fossil scientists from the 19th century.

Thousands of fossilised fish and marine saurians of up to six metres in length have been unearthed here by eager palaeontologists over the years.

For good reason: 230 to 245 million years ago, this was the site of a 100-metre-deep ocean basin, the Thetys sea.

Scientists have found hundreds of fossilised invertebrate animals and plants from the middle Triassic period, 230 to 245 million years ago, including some 80 different species of fish and 30 marine and land reptiles.

Monte San Giorgio rises like a pyramid at the southern end of Lake Lugano. Visitors can stroll through the vineyards along the southern slopes of the woody mountain, saunter through the idyllic town of Meride, or allow oneself to be pampered in the grottos of the Mendrisiotto region.

Source: www.myswitzerland.com/en-us/unesco-world-heritage-monte-san-giorgio.html



Monte San Giorgio in the top right. In the foreground is the township of Meride (with associated causeway) and the Lake of Lugano. For a panoramic view from Monte San Giorgio, go to page 12.

Source: www.myswitzerland.com