

A JOURNEY INTO THE PAST: GETTING TO KNOW THE CASTELLO VISCONTEO THROUGH VIRTUAL REALITY

After winning the Audience Choice award at the Swiss Game Awards in 2021, the Castello Visconteo in Locarno has, until next 31 October, reintroduced a virtual journey through visors with which to immerse oneself and learn about daily life in the *castrum* in the sixteenth century.

Talking about virtual reality is certainly a fascinating subject, especially when associated with our territory and thus with local history. It is even more so if we are talking about the Castello Visconteo in Locarno, a fourteenth-century *castrum* that suffered destruction, rebuilding and renovation over the centuries, right down to the present day, and is now a splendid example of military architecture, currently housing the city's civic and archaeological museum.

On the strength of this tradition and a history that is certainly enviable for our Canton, the Castello Visconteo has recently reintroduced the chance to explore it in virtual reality, with features that last year won the Audience Choice award at the Swiss Game Awards. The offer, launched at the beginning of August, will last until next 31 October 2022 and will be limited to Saturdays, Sundays and holidays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., or upon request for groups only.

It constitutes a decidedly appealing proposal, not only because it costs just CHF 5 per person, but above all for the opportunity to learn about what life was like inside the manor house in the sixteenth century through augmented reality. Wearing special visors, one can 'dive' into a distant past by discovering numerous 'points of interest' illustrated with historical images and multilingual information texts; a true journey through time to discover many fascinating curiosities.

Here then is the chance to understand and experience daily life in Locarno in the sixteenth century, to learn about the history of its principal monuments, to find out about the importance of the mixed woodland towards Solduno or how the Maggia was crossed before the bridge was built. These little 'titbits' help us understand the *castrum* of the time, built on the shore of the lake overlooking the harbour, with a few small islands where today we find the river delta.

In tandem with this experience, a video game has also been developed inspired by the short story "La mendicante di Locarno" (The Beggar Girl of Locarno) by the German playwright and writer Heinrich

von Kleist. This too is sure to appeal to many: through two choices that will take the 'players' inside the castle towards victory and the conclusion of the game, the aim is to offer a new and innovative way of exploring and getting to know the monumental building better. An opportunity that is sure to fascinate young visitors, but will also intrigue enthusiasts of our history.