

BASIC IDENTIFICATION

Site name:

Sanctuary Basilica of Santi Vittore e Corona (Basilica santuario dei Santi Martiri Vittore e Corona)

Location:

Feltre (Belluno, Veneto, Italy), Loc. Anzù, Monte Miesna

Associated complex:

Sanctuary basilica and monastic complex with cloister and devotional routes

Geographical context:

Perched on the rocky slopes of Monte Miesna overlooking the Feltrina basin; strategic position within the Prealps with panoramic view over the plains and mountain landscape

Chronological range (site):

Late 11th century (c. 1096–1101) – present

Focus period for roofing systems:

Romanesque and early medieval (11th–12th centuries), with later maintenance and significant modern conservation



Figure 1. Feltre, aerial view of the Sanctuary of Saints Vittore and Corona. (Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#))

1. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Sanctuary Basilica of Santi Vittore e Corona is a remarkable ecclesiastical ensemble whose origins are rooted in the late 11th century, when the powerful imperial feudal lord Giovanni da Vidor initiated the construction of a sanctuary dedicated to the martyrs Victor and Corona on Monte Miesna. The basilica was built between 1096 and 1101, in close association with the translation of the saints' relics and with the defensive system controlling the access routes to the Feltrina territory.

Consecrated in 1101 by the bishop Arpone of Feltre, the basilica immediately became a focal point of devotion, attracting pilgrims and asserting both spiritual and territorial significance in this frontier region. Over more than nine centuries, this sanctuary has sustained continuous liturgical use and artistic patronage, integrating Romanesque architectural concepts, Eastern and Byzantine influences, and later medieval and Renaissance layers.



Figure 2. Feltre, Sanctuary of Saints Vittore and Corona, exterior view. (Source: A. Passuello)

The cult of Saints Victor and Corona, originally martyrs of Syria, was established locally as early as the 9th century, and the transfer of their relics to Feltre appears to have catalysed the construction of the sanctuary. The site's strategic and symbolic prominence is further emphasised by its role in local pilgrimage practices and by the ongoing liturgical celebration of the saints' feast day on 14 May.

Within the CaMeRoofs project, Santi Vittore e Corona serves as a seminal example of Romanesque roofing systems in a mountainous frontier context, blending spatial complexity, structural synthesis, and long-term maintenance of the covering systems.

2. BUILDING PHASES AND CHRONOLOGY

2.1 Foundation and Romanesque Construction (1096–1101)

The basilica was erected on a prominent rocky spur as part of a broader landscape of fortification and ecclesiastical authority. Its initial plan combined defensive strategy and sacred presence, a characteristic shared with frontier sanctuaries across the Alps.

Architecturally, the church was designed with a cruciform plan, organised around a central dome and flanked by three naves with a transept, expressing a structural synthesis that resonates with both Byzantine and western Romanesque traditions.

The roofing strategy of this phase was necessarily robust: the central dome over the crossing would have required masonry continuity and substantial buttressing, while the longitudinal arms of the basilica demanded a covering system capable of accommodating lateral thrusts and dynamic structural behaviour on a challenging topographical site.

2.2 Middle Ages and Architectural Transformation (12th–15th centuries)

Modifications and expansions in the 12th century reflect both stylistic shifts and structural adjustments to the original roofing systems. Influences from northern (Renanian) and Byzantine models have been identified, particularly in the organisation of the sanctuary's plan and in decorative motifs, suggesting a blend of transalpine and eastern architectural idioms that informed the roofing articulation.

The basilica's roof and vault structure likely underwent periodic adjustments to improve performance and to address the stresses induced by the rocky substratum and variable terrain. The sanctuary continued to host sophisticated mural cycles from the 12th through the early 16th centuries, which in turn required careful attention to interior humidity and watertight roofing.

2.3 Monastic Patronage and Later Additions (15th–18th centuries)

By the late medieval and Renaissance periods, monastic communities including the Fiesolani and later the Somaschi fathers added conventual buildings and devotional routes.

While these expansions did not fundamentally alter the roofing systems, they did contribute to the architectural complexity surrounding the basilica, influencing access, drainage, and maintenance practices.

The construction of the monumental staircase and the adaptive use of adjacent spaces reflect ongoing investment in the site's accessibility as a devotional landscape.



Figure 3. Feltre, Sanctuary of Saints Vittore and Corona, interior view. (Source: A. Passuello)

2.4 Modern Era and Conservation Intervention (19th–21st centuries)

Restoration work in the 19th and 20th centuries responded to environmental degradation, particularly where roofing conditions threatened interior mural cycles. The

sanctuary's fly roofs, guttering, and drainage systems were periodically upgraded. More recent 21st-century initiatives have sought to integrate conservation science with historical construction logic, aiming to balance structural intervention with respect for the original roofing systems.



Figure 4. Feltre, Sanctuary of Saints Vittore and Corona, vaulted roofing system. (Source: A. Passuello)

3. STRUCTURAL AND TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROOFING SYSTEMS

3.1 Overall Roofing Strategy

The roofing strategy of Santi Vittore e Corona reveals a composite set of solutions appropriate to a monumental Romanesque basilica on a steep alpine slope. The system is responsive to both static demands and climatic exposure, integrating:

- central dome support and thrust management;
- pitched roofs over the nave and aisles;
- independent roofing layers accommodating thermal and moisture gradients;
- structural stability on an uneven substrate.

3.2 Central Dome and Crossing Coverage

At the heart of the basilica lies a central dome, whose roofing challenge was paramount. Masonry domes exert multi-directional thrusts, requiring substantial countermeasures through internal supports and external slopes. The crossing's vaulting logic likely combined radial continuity with strategic insertion of ribs or buttressing to channel loads away from the slender longitudinal walls.

This central roofing solution acted as both a spatial focal point and a structural keystone, emphasising the sanctuary's importance while mediating forces throughout the plan.

3.3 Roof Covering over Nave and Aisles

The longitudinal arms of the basilica, less structurally demanding than the dome, were covered by pitched roof structures designed to shed water rapidly and minimise lateral deflection in the walls. Timber roof frames supported tiled coverings — a characteristic medieval solution that balanced structural economy with environmental protection.

The configuration of these roofs, especially in a mountainous context with heavy snowfall and wind exposure, required careful determination of pitch angles and truss spacing to accommodate environmental loads.

3.4 Drainage, Waterproofing and Environmental Control

Beyond pure structure, the roofing system embodies medieval environmental engineering: water management systems, guttering, and transitional roofing layers combined to channel moisture away from vulnerable masonry and frescoed surfaces. Given the basilica's extensive mural programmes from the 12th through 16th centuries, roof performance was a continuous concern for interior preservation.

3.5 Roof–Vault Interaction and Structural Continuity

The integrated behaviour of pitched roofs and vaulted interiors reflects a holistic construction logic whereby these systems were adjusted over time. The continuity of roofing

solutions from the Romanesque core through later medieval maintenance underscores a long-lived vernacular of roofing resilience in the Venetian Prealps.

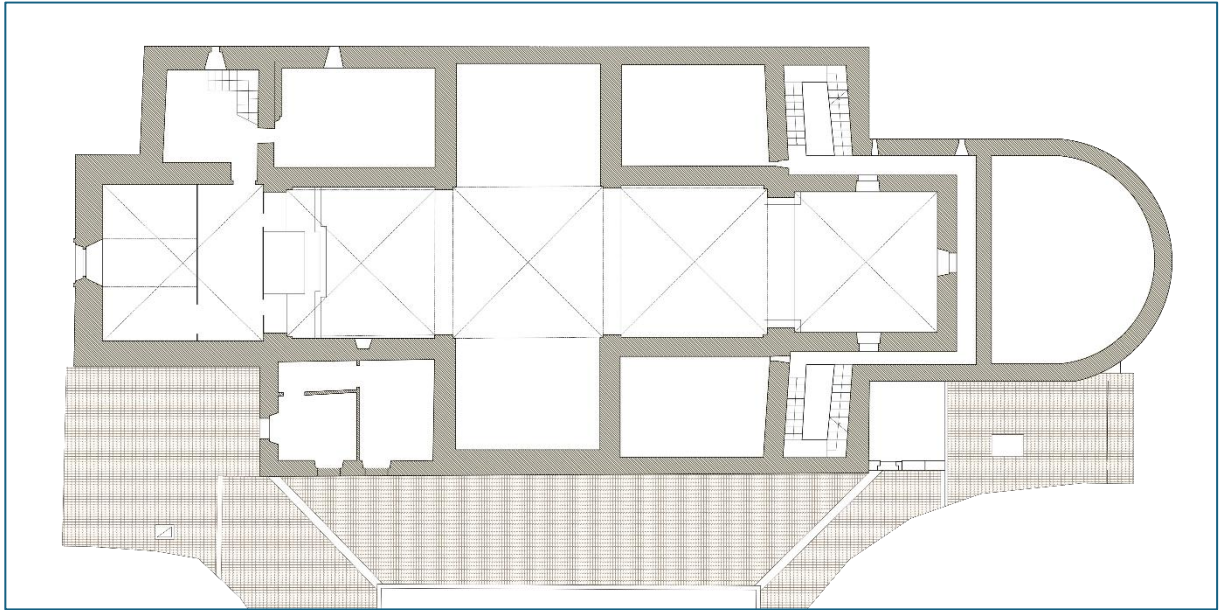


Figure 5. Feltre, Sanctuary of Saints Vittore and Corona, plan at attic level showing the groin vaults. (Source: SABAP PD-TV-BL)

4. CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE ROOFING SYSTEMS

4.1 Romanesque and Byzantine Hybridity

Santi Vittore e Corona exhibits architectural and roofing traits that blend Romanesque and Byzantine-influenced features, setting it apart from planar basilicas of the Po Valley. The cruciform plan with centralised elements and dome coverage, integrated with pitched aisle roofs, illustrates a regional hybrid model that merges diverse architectural languages.

4.2 Comparisons with Veneto Romanesque

In comparison with other Romanesque sacral buildings in the Veneto hinterland, Vittore e Corona's roofing system is distinguished by its complex centralised thrust resolution and the use of pitched roofs adapted to mountainous conditions.

4.3 Alpine and Transalpine Parallels

Analogies can be drawn with Alpine Romanesque sanctuaries where domes and pitched roofs coexist due to similar climatic and topographical exigencies. The architectural grammar of such forms resonates with Renanian and Byzantine building traditions, particularly in the articulation of centralised spaces and transitional roofing forms.

4.4 Symbolism and Spatial Experience

The roofing systems contribute to the sanctuary's symbolic spatial narrative. The dome emphatically signifies spiritual authority and martyrial reverence, while the longitudinal roofing structure mediates procession and devotional focus. The combined roofing systems

create a seamless experiential continuum from the exterior environment to the sacred interior.



Figure 6. Feltre, Sanctuary of Saints Vittore and Corona, detail of the attic spaces above the central nave. (Source: A. Passuello)

5. RESTORATION HISTORY AND CONSERVATION STATUS

5.1 Medieval and Early Modern Repairs

Throughout the Middle Ages and early modern period, repairs focused on maintaining watertight roofing and protecting interior mural programs. Evidential traces of such interventions appear in masonry modifications and patched roof coverings, as inferred from structural stratigraphy.

5.2 19th–20th Century Restorations

Restoration campaigns in the 19th and early 20th centuries addressed structural distress and material deterioration, including roof timber replacement and tile renewal. These periods also saw interventions on façade and access features, such as the creation of monumental staircases and monumental entry sequences.

5.3 Contemporary Conservation

Recent restorations have emphasised holistic preservation, combining roofing repair, moisture control systems, and preventive monitoring. Funding through ecclesiastical and

heritage programmes has supported consolidation of roofing timber frames, waterproofing retrofits, and rainwater management regimes to protect both structure and decorated surfaces.

Today the Sanctuary's roofing systems are considered structurally sound and historically legible, offering valuable insight into medieval roofing technology adapted to Alpine and Prealpine contexts.

6. ESSENTIAL/SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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