

Campione d'Italia

A Geographic Anomaly



Campione d'Italia is an Italian town and commune of Lombardy, occupying an enclave on the shore of Lake Lugano, otherwise surrounded by the Swiss canton of Ticino and separated from the rest of Italy by Swiss mountains and the Swiss portion of Lake Lugano. The enclave is separated from Italy by less than 1 km as the crow flies, but the rough terrain means the journey by road is over 10 km.

Its status came about when Ticino chose to become part of the Swiss Confederation in 1798, and Campione's people chose to remain part of Lombardy, which subsequently became part of Italy in 1859.

Campione's primary philatelic interest results from the impact of World War II on its postal service. In the initial period after Italy's entry into the war on June 10, 1941, Italian postal services continued to serve Campione with the mail transiting neutral Swiss territory between Campione and Lombardy.

After the overthrow of Mussolini in 1943, Campione sided with the royalists and did not participate in Mussolini's establishment of the Italian Social Republic in northern Italy under German occupation. With this development, Campione's access to Italian mail service was suspended.

To meet the need for continued postal communications, Campione entered into an agreement with the Swiss post office for mail originating in Campione to be processed through Switzerland. On May 20, 1944, Campione issued stamps denominated in Swiss francs to evidence payment of Swiss postage for this service. Because Campione was not recognized as a member of the Universal Postal Union, these stamps were only valid for postage on mail to Switzerland, and, by virtue of a separate postal treaty, to Liechtenstein. Mail to other international destinations required the application of additional Swiss postage which was processed and cancelled by the Swiss post office in Lugano.

This exhibit shows the successful transit of Campione mail through the Italian post before and during the early period of World War II and the subsequently issued stamps and their uses.