

# 1 STAGE

→ Prato

→ Artimino

Length: 19.2 Km

Time needed for the journey only: 5 h 40 ‘

Time needed considering the stops: 9 h

## Detailed description

It starts from the parking area located at the northern entrance of the Cascine Park, in Via Traversa del Crocifisso, in Prato.

As soon as you enter the historic area, delimited by a wall that surrounds it from north and west, you walk along Viale dei Lecci which is flanked on the left by the Pavoniere Wood (at the time of the Medici used as a hunting reserve) and on the right by a large meadow, once an area used for grazing cattle and buffaloes kept in a semi-wild state. While walking along the straight avenue, flanked by specimens of holm oaks with a majestic bearing, you can see on the left numerous historical artifacts (passages over ditches, dry stone walls, canals, etc.) relating to the intense use that the area has undergone after the sixteenth century. We pass the Casa del Guardia (on the right), located almost at the end of the avenue, and also a passage in a fence once equipped with a gate, to continue our journey by climbing the small stone bridge that crosses one of the many water canals present in the estate. Go down the other side and turn right shortly afterwards, starting to walk along another long tree-lined avenue (Viale del Cacciaio). On the left, we pass the Polline rural residence with its classic rectangular plan, four-pitched roof with an advanced central turret, and immediately after we reach the Cacciaio's House (on the right). Shortly after, emerging from a short stretch where the avenue winds its way under a vault of trees, you can see the magnificent complex of the Cascine, in a state of neglect (25 ‘).

Turn right and immediately left to arrive quickly on a new tree-lined avenue that straight joins the southwestern elevation of the Cascine with the Manetti Bridge. You walk along it having in front the entire ridge of Montalbano which rises just above the umbrella canopy of the suggestive maritime pines placed on the sides of a further avenue, and also the two hills of Bonistallo (on the left), with the church, and Cerretino (right). You arrive at the tensile structure that allows the passage of the Filomortula, an artificial canal that collects all the drainage channels of south-western Prato plain, after which you continue on the gravel road that quickly leads to Podere Bogiaia 2 and the beautiful Manetti Bridge (45 ‘). After crossing the bridge, you immediately arrive at the entrance of the Barco di Bonistallo, beyond the busy state road 67 (50 ‘).

You enter the Barco from the western access at the parking lot, immediately encountering the signs relating to the Cascine di Tavola protected area of which the Barco di Poggio is an integral part. Immediately take the small road to the right that moves away from the old multipurpose building that appears in front of you and enters the woods that immediately show very old isolated specimens (cedars and, above all, oaks). At one of these (*Quercus ilex*, holm oak), turn right starting to climb gently, pass a majestic oak specimen and a series of curves until you

reach a right turn with a ruin of a building in front of you: you leave out the deviation to the left and continue flat until you reach one of the historic entrances to the Barco with a beautiful seventeenth-century ashlar portal and (worn) stone coat of arms placed in the vaulted stone (17 ‘). Immediately before the portal, a water fountain can be a valuable stop during the hot months.

Go back from the portal to turn right immediately, continuing along the old boundary wall and then right again at the next crossroads, continuing to walk parallel to the old wall. Where this shows a pronounced edge we find ourselves at a new intersection where we continue straight downhill always parallel to the wall. The small wood of Barco shows its best in this section with several big specimens. You will touch a farm that historically belonged to the Poggio a Caiano farm annexed to the Villa. You begin to descend and at the sharp hairpin bend to the right you keep to the right (ignoring the deviation to the straight), you pass suggestive slabs of boulder, descend again until you reach the east entrance of the Barco, near the state road; also it has a beautiful ashlar portal similar to the other (40 ‘).

As soon as you leave the Barco, on the right, the Cammino della Costituzione starts uphill, built by the Municipality of Poggio a Caiano, which leads to the church of Bonistallo above (see below). We continue straight on taking the pedestrian-cycle path, cross Viale Europa (nearby is the Il Barco Bar, for a possible stop), and then the main road when we are in front of PAM supermarket pointing towards the nearby Villa, clearly visible with its massive bulk on the top of the hill. Continue along the pedestrian crossing alongside the road beyond which we can see the old wall that encloses a plot that historically belonged to the Villa and called Il Chiuso. You pass next to a building characterized by a low dovecote tower (it was the site of the farm annexed to the Villa), climb the hillside and reach the entrance to the Villa of Poggio a Caiano (45 ‘). Two kinds of visits are possible: one limited only to the garden and park (free, about 30 ‘), the other to some internal parts of the Villa (accompanied, about 1h).

From the main entrance of the Villa, take Via Giuliano da Sangallo, keep right in the square of the Madonna del Rosario Church and enter Via dell’Ambra; turn in that direction at the first street on the right (via San Francesco); in front there is a view of the Bonistallo hill towards which our road leads with a perfect straight line, the result of a historical overlap between the eighteenth-century viability inside the Grand Ducal possessions facing the Villa and the present one. Go straight down passing the first intersection (Via dei Condotti), and then cross the small bridge over Montiloni stream and also the next roundabout in the direction of the church of Bonistallo. We begin to climb between the houses (on a perimeter wall you will notice a small tabernacle as proof of the antiquity of the route) and then leave them behind you as the climb becomes increasingly steep, you miss a deviation to the right and you crosses the last stretch among the olive trees reaching the church square, right near an observation point and also where the Costituzione path previously seen ends (1h 10 ‘). A few minutes of rest allows you to cast your gaze on the panorama that opens in east/ south-east direction.

Continue down the hill using the asphalted road and passing the parking lot with the Barco wall and the portal previously seen on your right; continuing on the small road you reach the crossroads of the Madonna del Violo where stands a beautiful tabernacle dated 1847 and recently restored, with a view of the beautiful complex of Cerretino towards the west. Turn right into Via Pietraia and, immediately, you have the feeling of leaving the town behind, entering the countryside of olive trees where muffled noises take over: on the right the fortified complex of Cerretino and on the left the Castellaccio, eight- nineteenth-century villa (with twentieth-

century modifications) which insists on a medieval garrison as evidenced by the internal walls in regular row of sandstone. A short climb leads to the crossroads for the small rural village of Petraia (on the left) which is worth a quick visit (1h 25 '). The intersection is also a good observation point to the east and south-east.

Continue along the narrow road (pay attention to the rare cars that pass) between old stone walls and olive trees and after a short climb you reach a new intersection (1h 40 '): in front of you the road that leads to the Villa di Trefiano (private and not open to visitors), an ancient possession of Rucellai family on a project attributed to Buontalenti (or one of his pupils); on the left the descent that leads to Poggetto and on which, very close, the detour to Villa del Cerretino is, on the left our direction towards the seventeenth-century Villa of Canida which we quickly reach after a short flat stretch (1h 50 '). At the gate of the villa, keep to the left, leaving the road and continuing parallel to the enclosure wall which contains a small aedicule as evidence of its antiquity, also testified by the numerous volumes that over time have been added to the original 16th century core. At the end of the wall, continue along the country road which begins to climb steadily to quickly arrive on Via Pistoiese, just below Villa Rasponi, in Carmignano (2h). Here turn left into Via delle Loggette which goes slightly uphill while on the left the view opens up on the underlying Villa of Canida and on the plain of Seano with the artisan buildings. Pass the north entrance of Villa Rasponi with, in front of it, an old farm with a beautiful majolica coat of arms of Rasponi family on the facade. As soon as you pass the rural dwelling, at the Enel pole, take the cart track that points between the olive trees to the visible 100-year-old holm oak, clinging to the side of the hill. It is one of the green patriarchs of the entire provincial territory duly reported in the provincial list of secular trees. Go back and continue on the narrow asphalted road until you reach Torcicoda intersection, a real 'hub' of the past (the homonymous rural house bears the same coat of arms on the facade as seen before) (2h 10').

Pass Carmignano provincial road and take Via Nella Borchii downhill and then continue along Via Redi - slightly uphill - to the top and then take Via Lorenzo il Magnifico on the right, along the old wall, which climbs along the villa of Ippolito Niccolini (left) and their respective stables (right). At the crossroads, turn right downhill (Via Lapo Mazzei), pass a tavern and turn left into the coves that lead us to the square of Carmignano, with the nineteenth-century fountain, the town hall (formerly Malaspina farm), cafes, groceries, fountains, restaurants and taverns. In short, everything you need for a refreshment stop (2h 15 ').

After having completed a tour of the square - the well in front of the town hall dates back to the mid-nineteenth century and has recently come to light - continue along the main street in the direction of Montalbano and quickly reach the Church of Santi Michele e Francesco which preserves the precious painting by Pontormo (the Visitation) and a beautiful cloister, certainly worth visiting.

In front of the church there is an uphill pedestrian street (Via del Borgo) which leads to the hill above where the Campano, symbol of Carmignano, and the complex of medieval fortifications is - completely rebuilt in the late nineteenth century with the original material - which formed the great castle of Carmignano, fought several times in the fourteenth century between Florence and Pistoia due to its strategic position that extends over the Florentine-Prato plain. At the top of the ramp, turn left (Erta di Pogginari) continuing to climb, cross the road that comes from the town and take the walkway under the walls to the panoramic point (an excellent tool for recognizing places in the Province of Prato). Continue the pedestrian path along the walls until

you cross a deviation downhill to the left that you take and that immediately leads to the road below. Cross it and aim for the grassy walkway which descends parallel to a property boundary. In a few minutes you are again in front of the Church of Santi Michele and Francesco (2h 40 '). Go along Via Parenti with a beautiful view of the underlying Elzana valley, crossed by the Medici pipes, Artimino, the hills of Roveta, Florence and Chianti. At the end of the street, in front of the Institute of the Sacred Stigmata, turn left downhill and then immediately right onto the pedestrian path "Belvedere Padre Bocci" which quickly leads to the underlying Via Nencioni. Then take the country road that starts from the farmhouse and goes around it from the South-East passing alongside a group of cypresses and continuing well marked out in the fields of olive trees in a slight descent up to a sharp curve to the left: you are near one of the springs that supplied the pipes of the Villa of Poggio a Caiano. Continue along some ugly sheet metal huts (on the left) and, on the right, further down, a historic grove called Ragnaione. Always continue slightly downhill with the track that becomes smaller but still identifiable, you pass under a small Enel pylon and then turn left towards the lonely cypress located a few tens of meters below; go along a vineyard (on the left) and reach another big solitary cypress with border functions. In front of you passes the historic pipe that brings water to the Medici Villa of Poggio a Caiano. Turn right into the open field, keeping close to the ditch and the brick bridge, cross it and immediately turn right, continuing parallel to this until you reach the beautiful stone pyramid that marks the underground passage of the pipes (30 ').

Go back slightly, go over the ditch again and turn left continuing parallel to it on the flat until you cross another ditch that you overcome by entering on a cart track that you go to the right starting to climb and flanking trees. Continue steeply uphill, always parallel to the ditch half hidden among the trees, pass large boulders and terraces to reach the Pietranera farmhouse. Then take the asphalted road (Via degli Asinai) always uphill until you reach the municipal road of Citerna. The point is optimal for a stop and to observe the view towards the East with, on the left, the Campi Bisenzio-Sesto Fiorentino-Florence conurbation, Mount Morello (behind), the nearby hill of Montalbiolo, the village of Carmignano and behind Monte Iavello and Acquerino reserve. On the right, instead, the wooded hill of Bellosguardo which lies between Florence and Scandicci, in the background Mount Giovi and then Florentine Chianti. Continue left in Via Citerna, passing the beautiful Villa Verzani and facing the steep hill of Artimino; a flat stretch between vineyards and olive trees anticipates a descent at the end of which, in the saddle and under the power line, you leave the paved road by turning right and following the signs of the RET - Tuscan hiking network for Artimino (50 ').

A small path passes next to a beautiful tabernacle and slips downhill into the woods, quickly arriving at a stream that can be easily waded, continuing on the other slope uphill and always in the woods until it reaches a new tabernacle (sign of the antiquity of the path) located on the edge of the cultivated fields that you skirt along following the track that runs alongside old stone walls. You quickly arrive at Campisalti farm and at the following crossroads with a new tabernacle: continue downhill bending to the right and then, immediately after the intersection, to the left towards Comeana-Poggio a Caiano (RET sign) thus overcoming a very suggestive part in a beautiful cypress forest with old stone walls. Leave the wood and continue downhill towards the nearby La Borriana farmhouse which you pass by keeping to its left and descending steeply towards the asphalted road below with the wooded Artimino hill in front (1h 20 ').

At the end of the descent, where you cross Via delle Ginestre, turn right and then immediately left in the direction of the small building that you touch and then cross the municipal road

and ford the small stream in order to continue on the cart track that, touching the remains of the Barco Mediceo wall on the left, slips into the woods starting to climb with tight bends. At the second, on an intersection, keep left uphill (signs of the System of Protected Areas of the Province of Prato), pass some boulders and reach a new intersection where you keep to the left. A few tens of meters uphill and you are at a new intersection where you continue to the right passing under the telephone line and then emerge in a field of olive trees near Bel Pianale farm (1h 40 ‘).

Nice glimpse of the Ginestre farm, the Church of San Pietro in Verghereto, the nearby hill of Montalgeto and behind the hills of the chaotic complex that lean against the boulder sides of Montalbano. Above the wooded summit of Pietramarina. Continue on the access road to the farm and quickly arrive at the beautiful parish Church of San Leonardo in Artimino and the village (2h).

After visiting the village, it is absolutely worth taking the straight, tree-lined and panoramic avenue that leads to the Medici Villa located on the other end of the hill (2h 10 ‘).

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## 2. STAGE

→ Artimino

→ Bacchereto

Length: 22.1 km

Time needed for the journey only: 6 h 15'

Time needed considering the stops: 7 h 25'

### Detailed description

Before moving in the direction of the villa, it is advisable to have a tour of the town by taking the small road that goes around it beyond the houses on the north side for a view of the southern part of Montalbano area and Florentine-Prato plain.

From Piazza San Carlo in the village of Artimino, move towards the Villa la Ferdinanda located on the opposite end of the long hill, and when you reach Via di Querceto, turn right and follow the small road that goes downhill between the olive trees. Pass the first house (Pollaio farm) going around it from the left and then turn left onto the country track at the height of the pole with the solar panel. Then go around the hill on which the villa stands, covering a flat stretch with a beautiful view of the apse of the parish Church of San Leonardo until you reach the asphalt near the Casone farm, which shows anomalous architectural details (the stone framing of generous dimensions and carved windows, recassing in the wall that housed a tabernacle) for a farmhouse (20'). Here you turn left uphill following the road that passes next to another house and continues with the layers of boulder plunging in the direction of North-East in evidence on its bottom, thus justifying the presence of historic boulder quarries on the other side (north-east in fact) of the hill of Artimino. These quarries have provided over the past centuries, and together with those of nearby Golfolina, the stone material for many Florentine palaces. You arrive at the asphalted road right near the point where, on the other side, a flat cart road branches off with a sign indicating the Necropolis of Prato Rosello (white-red CAI signs 300).

Take it and, skirting on your right a piece of the seventeenth-century fence wall of the Barco that comes from the south and, crossing the track we are traveling on, heads towards the Villa, continue flat in the woods, leaving out a small road that branches off to the left; continue straight on the main track and so we will do on the other occasions that arise up to the necropolis duly marked with yellow/red signs. Then arrive at a plateau at the top of the hill with a view that opens towards the North-East and where there is an intersection (40'). Go straight in the direction of the nearby necropolis that we suggest to visit following the signs placed between the various burial mounds. Go back to the intersection and here you turn left downhill towards Poggio alla Malva. Shortly after, the panorama opens towards the South on the crafts area of Montelupo and the bell tower of Capraia while on the left is the wooded hill of San Vito in Fior di Selva. A little further on, the view also widens to the nearby hill covered with maritime pines of Recinto della Pineta, to the modern vineyards with the Poggilarca estate (abandoned) in a magnificent position and to the village of Camaioni, down in the river Arno valley. Leave the wood and continue straight through the olive trees in a steep descent aiming for an Enel pole and passing the Barco wall (collapsed); at the end of the descent, turn left and touch the small cemetery of Poggio alla Malva from the right to come out on the paved road, opposite

the entrance to the cemetery itself. Turn right and immediately arrive at a crossroads with a tabernacle (1h) where you turn left onto the dirt road that winds slightly downhill between two rows of olive trees. On the left, further down, the village of Poggio alla Malva. You pass a house while on the left you can see, on the edge of a steep modern vineyard, the ancient enclosure wall of the Barchetto della Pineta, a sort of detached appendage of the Barco Reale. A little further on you come to the beautiful seventeenth-century portal with stone ashlar that delimited the entrance. Next to the portal there is a beautiful seventeenth-century mansion (the Villa) built on a manor building belonging to the Medici estate.

Go back along the same road to the crossroads where this time you turn left in the direction of Poggilarca farm characterized by a large and articulated volume as evidence of its constructive diachronicity, perhaps the result of the change in the size of the farm over time it referred to. As soon as you reach the house, follow the cart track to the right that touches a large mulberry tree and continues flat among the vineyards up to an intersection where you follow the road that gives access to the house (visible) located further ahead; this leads quickly to the dwelling; pass the entrance gate (1h 15') and then turn left downhill towards the lake below which can be reached quickly. Near the fence, turn right (signs for Artimino-La Fonticina), walk along the lake briefly and begin to climb, passing shortly after the stream that feeds it (to do this, turn left) and continue uphill towards of the house that you reach quickly (1h 30'). Pass the chain and continue on the service road to the house (L'Olivo farm), thus arriving at the intersection at the Pollaio farm, where the solar panel is located. This time you turn left and enter the field of olive trees via the country road that descends with a beautiful view of San Leonardo church and Artimino. Pass the ditch that feeds the lake below and quickly go up to the asphalted road right next to an aedicule of the Stations of the Cross (2 hours).

Turn left and you are at the beautiful parish church of San Leonardo which is worth a visit. In front of the staircase that goes up to the entrance portal of the religious building, take the country road that enters among the olive trees; go along the wood and as soon as you reach a huge and isolated holm oak, turn right downhill entering the wood following the cart track and passing a chain. At the Enel pole, keep left on a steep descent and then left again at the bird hunting post, always continuing on a steep descent. All the lateral deviations are omitted until you cross a cart track with a field of olive trees on the right: here you turn left, pass the chain and shortly after reach the asphalted road (Via Arrendevole) where you take a left uphill to the crossroads for San Martino (2h 20'). Turn right in the direction of the abbey which can be reached quickly after an uphill stretch (2h 35').

Go back to the chapel next to the road that marks the site of the ancient cemetery of San Martino. Here take the small road to the left that goes into the woods (white/red sign indicating the fortress of Carmignano) and ignore all the lateral deviations keeping on the clearly evident track until you reach a sharp curve to the right placed at the head of a small valley crossed by a ditch, and continue to find a next one. Still ahead on the flat, ignoring the lateral deviations and always following the white/red signs. A third curve to the right always obtained in the head of a small valley, with a source (not perennial) placed just below the track (3h), anticipates an even stretch which is followed by a fourth curve to the right always at the head. Shortly after you are near an intersection with two cypresses in the middle (3h 10'): continue straight, following the signs, ignoring the detour to the right and shortly after you are at a new intersection: here turn right and then, immediately after, on the left downhill always following the signs. This is followed by a downhill stretch with a rough and pebbly bottom that quickly leads into the valley of Carpineto stream, emissary of Lake Verghereto, right next to a house that has taken

the place of a mill, located on the beautiful white road that climbs to Verghereto farm (3h 20'). Enter the road (note the ancient bridge that supports it) and turn left starting to climb and passing by the house that has an aedicule facing the road. Begin to climb while at the top you can see the bell tower of the Church of San Pietro in Verghereto; the route is marked as CAI Prato 1. Leave the deviation on the right leading to the semi-ruined farmhouse located just above and continue uphill to meet, on the right side of the road, magnificent carved stone bollards, once functional to avoid the accidental fall of the wagons in the field below, and on the right a beautiful stone wall with ladders cut into its thickness to go up to the field of olive trees above. This wall gives way to another road building with the same function of containing the road, of equal beauty and preciousness due to the construction details it presents. Pass a left curve with, on the outside, the two columns that defined the entrance to the nineteenth-century cemetery area of the small village of San Pietro a Verghereto. Another short uphill stretch leads to the panoramic terrace in front of the Ginestre farm, with the adjoining Oratory of San Francesco (3h 35').

On clear days it is possible to see Mount Morello (opposite), Calvana (left), Mount Faggi di Iavello and the Acquerino of Prato area (even further left). Nearer the fortress of Carmignano, the village of Poggio Secco and the wooded hill of Poggio ai Colli. On the right, instead, the hill of Artimino with the parish church of San Leonardo and, behind, Florence. Continue to climb following the asphalted road, make a left curve with an old spring and shortly after take a downhill dirt road on the left that leads quickly with some curves into the wood cut on a stream that you cross right under the barrier in stone that forms Verghereto lake (sport fishing) (3h 45'). Once you have passed the small stream, the historical bridge made up of gigantic boulders is worth a look, used - like the others present on the course of this small stream - to slow down the speed of water rolling, thus decreasing its erosive capacity.

Continue in the woods the visible trace (ancient road system?) which shows stone walls that support it on the valley side and quickly arrive to cross a small stream that anticipates an uphill crossing (3h 55'). Here turn right in a steep climb continuing for a stretch characterized by deep slopes, outcropping boulders and a bumpy bottom that leads to a flat part where the track runs along one of the ancient walls inside the Medici Barco which then moves away. Immediately afterwards a new steep but short climb begins, also characterized by deep water grooves and a very uneven ground. As soon as you reach the top, where the path widens and flattens, you will meet an intersection that comes from the left; continue to the right to reach, almost immediately, a new intersection where also here keep to the right, climbing quickly to a bump where you meet again the Barco wall left shortly before (4h 15').

Continue straight ahead slightly downhill in a forest of young chestnut trees and keep left at the intersection that is immediately after and the same is done at the next intersection to arrive at a new intersection point with a large forest road; on the intersection stands a remarkable specimen of oak born from a stump: continue straight on even, ignoring the deviation to the right downhill which is immediately after and at the umpteenth intersection, continue straight on even; you are now in sight of Montalbano riding school which you reach quickly (4h 30'). Walk along the horse training area from the left and arrive at a well-trodden cart track (Via Valicarda) where you turn right; continue on the wide track passing Castra estate (on the left) and an area equipped with wooden tables (on the right), arriving after a short stretch to the asphalted road (4h 40').

Follow the road in the direction of Carmignano (straight ahead) to quickly arrive at the



entrance of San Giusto Campsite where the signs (CAI 300, Archery) are positioned near the gate, indicating the direction that runs parallel to the campsite fence with a narrow path in the woods. The stretch is short and shortly after you come out in the area dominated by the beautiful Abbey of San Giusto al Pinone (4h 50').

After visiting the medieval monastic complex, continue along the road that leads to the church, facing the facade, ignoring the white/red signs. You arrive at the provincial road of Pietramarina, next to a restaurant: turn right and then, after a few tens of meters, left for the archaeological area of Pietramarina and the ridge of Montalbano (signs for Pietramarina Protected Area, Torre di Sant'Alluccio 300, System of Protected Areas of the Province of Prato). You begin to climb immediately in a sustained manner on the service road to the ridge of Montalbano and, as you climb, the panorama widens to the right towards the south. Ignore the deviation to the right downhill that returns to the provincial road and then instead take the one (marked) on the left that enters the wood with the indication "Pietramarina - Torre Sant'Alluccio" continuing slightly uphill and ignoring the unmarked deviation to the right. Then follows a slightly flat stretch and then a second deviation to the right (marked) (5h 05') which you follow slightly uphill, continuing in the Mediterranean scrub without considering the various lateral deviations. You then quickly arrive at the archaeological area of Pietramarina near two green patriarchs, a holm oak and a cedar (5h 15').

After visiting the archaeological area, descend from the wide service road in the woods that moves away in the opposite direction (North-West) to that of arrival (South-East). Almost immediately you reach the characteristic Devil's Boulder, once an excellent vantage point to the west, now hidden by the trees below, and then to the asphalted service road, right in the middle of a saddle from which various paths branch off. Then turn right and take path no. 2 (marked) consisting of a large downhill road that passes almost immediately alongside the Scodellino spring which remains on the left, slightly detached from the road. The wide track, always downhill, quickly leads to a pitch where two other water deposits are installed, connected to pumps that suck water from an underground spring (5h 35').

Keep to the right on the small road where the light blue pipe of the aqueduct emerges at times until you reach the next crossroads where you still keep to the right continuing downhill and passing a bend to the left while at the next one (right) you continue straight, on the outside of the curve itself, and you come to a new intersection where you go straight on even. Also at the next crossroads you go straight, leaving out the small road that almost goes back to the left and leads to Fornia. Continue downhill always following the aqueduct pipe, pass an inspection pit of the same and arrive at a crossroads (5h 55') where you continue downhill to the right, leaving out the straight direction (in the plain) and also that to the left.

You then suddenly emerge in a stretch without vegetation where a wonderful view of the hills of Carmignano and the Prato-Florentine plain appears. Continue touching the sheet metal huts with crops around them and then keep sharply to the left near a ruin. You pass immediately after a spring (on the left), come to cultivated fields and quickly to asphalt. Turn left and quickly reach Bacchereto, in the square (6h 15').

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## 3 STAGE

→ Bacchereto

→ Vinci

Length: 18 km

Time needed for the journey alone: 6h 40'

Time needed considering the stops: 8h

### Detailed description

From Bacchereto resume the route already used to descend from Pietramarina and return to the saddle located on the ridge where several paths cross (2h).

Once on the asphalted service road, turn right and start along the forest road which, on the flat, branches off alongside the asphalted road that goes up to the repeaters. In order, you pass a curve to the left with a large oak and a small power line (go under it) and then enter a beautiful holm oak forest made up of adult specimens that cover the steep south-western slope of Poggio Ciliegio. You exit from this on a curve to the right with a large oak tree in the center of some itineraries: we continue on the main one which takes us to a rough slightly downhill stretch with a coppice forest and related service roads to the cut that branch off to the right and left. Continue slightly downhill with sweeping views of the Valdarno di Sotto, Monte Serra and the Fucecchio Marshes, overcoming a wide curve to the left and at the end of this you arrive at a plateau with a young holm oak in the center. The plateau was recently used by mechanical vehicles that cut the wood cover (2h 30'). Here several traces converge: take the path that, on the right, not marked, climbs in a decisive way on the southern side of the Cupolino, the highest peak of Montalbano (640.5 masl) until you reach the watershed ridge, just below the summit (2h 50').

Also in this point different paths cross: to the right you go back towards Pietramarina using the ridge path; on the left you go in the direction of Torre di Sant'Alluccio (your direction), while beyond this well-trodden path there is a small road that leads to the top of the Cupolino. The summit is a bit shabby, hosting the usual repeaters and being covered by a sparse and cut forest, however enough to almost completely hide the view of the plain between Seano and Quarrata. Anyway, those wishing to climb it can take the small road that takes you there in a few minutes and then descend on the other side via the "Cupola FR1" path for bikers which almost immediately returns to the main route. For those wishing to stay on this one, once you come out on the ridge, turn left following the signs for Torre di Sant'Alluccio. A short flat stretch of the little road shows beautiful specimens of oak placed all in a row on the edge of the path; this section immediately anticipates a curve to the right with a crossroads to the left for Santa Lucia - Faltognano, which you neglect, continuing on the flat until you reach Torre di Sant'Alluccio (3h 15'). It is a locality of Montalbano pass of ancient origin, located between the summit of the mountain and Sasso Regina and a meeting place for the administrative borders of Quarrata, Carmignano and Vinci and therefore of the former provinces of Pistoia, Prato and Florence. Here, in fact, many paths converge: on the right, in your direction of travel, a wide flat road starts which a few tens of meters later divides further into two sections that lead to Spazzavento (the one on the left) and Bacchereto (the one on the right). On the left (almost to go back), the visible track begins that leads to Santa Lucia and Vinci while straight ahead you

on the plateau (one right in front of the deviation that goes up to the tower and the repeaters) to indicate the administrative boundaries. Continue straight ahead, almost immediately overcoming the short detour to the right for the ruin, which has taken the place of the tower, and the lawn right under the repeaters. Shortly after you meet the crossroads for Sasso Regino spring (on the right), which you neglect, continuing slightly uphill followed by a descent with a view of Monte Fiore, one of the northernmost peaks of Montalbano, in the Middle Ages the site of a very powerful castle of Carmignano community. Today it houses yet another repeater. At the bottom of the descent you arrive at a new intersection (3h 35') where on the left you go towards the spring of Romito-Santa Lucia-Vinci, while straight ahead you continue on the ridge in a false plane. Continue in the latter direction, passing some centuries-old chestnut trees and letting go of a detour to the left without indications to immediately reach the bottom of a short descent where the main road is held (on the left), which immediately leads to a new intersection with an asphalted road. (3h 40').

Straight up enters Via le Croci, the carriage road that leads to Anchiano and Vinci, while on the right the forest road slightly climbs the southern slope of Poggio il Casino, towards San Baronto pass. Continue on the forest road that climbs slightly and almost immediately you meet a deviation to be overlooked which, on a tight curve to the right, comes from the left. Shortly after (4h) you arrive at another similar intersection, with a small road that also comes from the left; continue straight ahead following the white/red signs. A flat stretch, two other crossroads with side deviations to be omitted and a slight descent, anticipate a further crossroads where a forest road branches off to the left that leads to Lamporecchio and Porciano (signs); you also omit this detour by staying on the track in the direction of Casa di Monte (sign) to arrive quickly at the point where you turn left taking the narrow path that enters the chestnut wood on the left and leads to Sasso di Pietra (sign) in a few minutes on the flat. You are on the top of Poggio Campo di Baldo (522 masl), one of the peaks that form the north-western Montalbano ridge (4h 10').

Go back along the same path up to the ridge road where you turn right and arrive again at the crossroads with the signs for Lamporecchio and Porciano which, this time, you follow until almost immediately arriving at an intersection with a similar forest road to the one you are traveling on: here you turn left and continue on a false plain until you pass a large power line (4h 20') after which the downhill stretch that will take you to the little village of Fornello begins. A few tens of meters after the power line, at a point where large slabs of boulder emerge and another path arrives from the left, you have to pay attention because on the sides of the wide forest road you are walking along you can see the remains of the ancient wall of the Medicean Barco that go into the woods. Shortly after, you reach a point characterized by a solitary cypress tree at the foot of which two large boulders stand out, which serve as an observation point for the panorama towards the South-East: you can see the two towns of Empoli and (on the left and partially covered by the Montalbano) Montelupo, with behind the hills that rise to Montespertoli along the Turbone valley. In the background, in the distance, the long ridge that separates Valdelsa from Valdera with the reliefs of the Metalliferous Hills (Cornate di Gerfalco and Poggio di Montieri) behind it. Continue straight on to descend; the panorama widens to the right on Fucecchio Marshes with Monte Serra and the Apuan Alps behind you, then, right in front of you, the Valdarno below and in the background - on clear days - the cranes of Livorno port. Continuing to descend, the landscape widens more and more: on the left, very close, on a ridge parallel to the one you are traveling on just beyond Burrino gorge, the Church of Sant'Amato appears clearly visible; on the right, in addition to the above, you can now see the clearly evident 'dome' of Monsummano, the hill of Montevettolini with the Medici Villa

and, closer, the Castle of Larciano. At the point where the track shows a deviation to the right downhill, flanked by three pine trees (4h 40'), turn and descend a few tens of meters steeply between old terraces covered by woods. As soon as this gives way to an olive grove, you can see on the right a sort of small stone 'dome', with a circular plan, equipped with an entrance and built from stones subsequently projecting with a tholos-like roof. It is an artifact whose functions are still unknown to scholars today (small furnace?), present in several examples in the Leporaia-Fornello area. Go back to the main track where you turn right continuing to descend with the view that also widens to Vinci with the castle (your goal) and to the domed profile of the highest point of Montalbano, which takes its name from this shape (the Dome/Cupola). Shortly after you meet a fence that you flank until you come out on a white road right in front of a small brightly colored house (4h 50').

Follow the cart track to the left (note on the right, among the olive trees, another of the enigmatic artifacts) and after 50 meters on the right among the olive trees follow a downhill road. The intersection is marked by the presence of a house with a wooden shed alongside. Continue to descend and quickly arrive at Fornello di Sopra, in a clearing between the houses where you keep to the left to go down on the provincial road right near a small fountain (5h 05'). Continue on the main road towards the intersection in front of you, a few meters away, and here take a left downhill towards Orbignano and Lamporecchio. Go down among the few houses in Fornello, pass a small tabernacle and also the cemetery of the Church of Santa Maria Assunta in Orbignano. You immediately reach the small church surrounded by cypresses (5h 25').

Pass the church and at the Enel pole, turn left among the olive trees, taking the ancient Via Orbignanese which led to Vinci, in perfectly preserved cobblestones. Descend steeply among the olive trees to the underlying ditch that has served as a community border for several centuries, as evidenced by the stone well planted in the ground near the waterway and the house (former mill). Cross the stream and take the small road that climbs up on the opposite side and which quickly leads to an ancient tabernacle dated 1848, demonstrating how old the path you are using is. Continue straight, touching a border network with a house to reach an intersection on asphalt. Here go straight (Via Orbignanese) ignoring the deviation to the left uphill to Tigliano, continue in a landscape made of olive trees and old stone terraces, go down a descent until you reach a small bridge (5h 41') where you continue straight uphill. At the intersection you meet immediately after, continue straight ahead and at the next one, follow the asphalt road that bends to the right and begins to descend. At the intersection immediately after, continue downhill to the left, ignoring the deviation to the right (Via Magrina). Then descend decisively into another small valley until you reach the little bridge very similar to the one already passed (6h 05').

Immediately upstream of this, on the left orographic bank of the small stream, you can see old stone artifacts; these are hydraulic works belonging to the many mills that marked this (and all the others) watercourse and which remained active until the second postwar period. Then take the dirt road that runs along the river in the direction of Burra farmhouse; the property you immediately encounter is an old mill with the old collection basin, now underground, still recognizable. In front of the semi-abandoned building, in the course of the water, there is a beautiful stone dike with an old millstone inserted in the masonry as evidence of the building's past use. Continue on the small road in the direction of Burra (a small path on the left that slips into the shore leads to another old stone dike much higher than the previous one). Once you arrive at the house, turn left towards the watercourse aiming for the large holm oak that can be seen on the edge. Reached the edge of the field continue parallel to this to quickly reach the

vegetable gardens belonging to the next house that you pass by entering the paved road and turning left. Quickly reach a small bridge (6h 25').

Ignore the detour to the right before the bridge and continue on even level approaching the provincial road. Immediately before this, at a house, turn left into Via Mazzantino, ignoring the detour to the right over a small bridge. Pass in front of the house to go and take the track that starts at the point between the corner of the house and the hut. Then enter the wood following itinerary 12C (marked) which quickly leads you to other houses where you meet the asphalt again: here turn right and immediately left (following itinerary 12B-C) in the direction of Vinci. Pass by a house and continue in the fields until you quickly arrive at another house located just below the walls of Vinci. Here turn right and go up briefly to then find a stairway on the left that you follow and that leads right below near the church and castle of Vinci (6h 40').

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## 4 STAGE

→ Vinci

→ Fucecchio

Length: 19 km

Time needed for the journey alone: 5h 40'

Time needed considering the stops: 6h 40'

**Detailed description** It starts from the church going down to the underlying Via Androne Ciofi (track marked “Romea Strata”) which you follow retracing in the opposite direction to the road used previously, quickly arriving at the house below. Turn left and continue flat to the next house that introduces the asphalt road where you turn left following the direction of the itinerary that leads to San Pantaleo and Toiano. Cross the provincial road immediately after continuing on a dirt road (Via Lamporecchiana) with the indication “Romea Strata” and at the immediately following crossroads continue straight, ignoring the detour to the right; shortly after, in the middle of the olive trees, keep right following the sign “Romea Strata”. In short, you reach an abandoned farm (20’) in a solitary position; continue beyond the rural residence, cross a bridge on Cerretana provincial road followed by a short, very scenic stretch despite the mediocre altitude at which you are: on the right the entire ridge of Montalbano opens up, which extends up to to the hill of Monsummano (medieval village placed on the flat top of the relief) which stands out clearly due to its ‘decisive’ shape, given by the lithological nature completely different from that of Montalbano of which it is also part. Behind are the reliefs that form the upper Pescia valley and that are grafted into Pistoia Apennines. On the left the profile of the Apuan Alps.

Continue to reach the abandoned Cassinetto Ceoli farm and then immediately arrive at a crossroads with an asphalted road: continue straight (Via di Pantaleo) on a dirt road ignoring the detour to the right with the sign “Romea Strata”: enter the small basin of Lupaia stream, suggestive for the persistence in certain areas of the traditional agricultural parcels. On the right you can see the Church of San Pantaleo with its bell tower. Shortly after you pass in rapid succession two rural areas where the asphalt ends and the country track begins, which you follow for a hundred meters up to a Telecom pole where the “Romea Strata” sign (35’) stands out.

Here turn left and follow the clearly visible country track that goes through vineyards and downhill leads to Lupaia stream which you pass and then turn sharply to the right going up the opposite side, always on a clear track. At the first intersection turn right, continue slightly downhill passing some oaks (with an ancient function of property border) and then continue parallel to the tributary ditch of Lupaia stream, ignoring the deviations that come from the left and aiming for the village of Toiano which is in front of you above. At the base of the climb you can see on the right an erratic mass of cemented sand, the typical rock of this area of marine-lake sedimentary origin. Before reaching Toiano it is worth stopping for a moment in the middle of the climb, turning around and observing the panorama that stands out in front of you: from the left the ridge of the northern Montalbano, which rises gradually and then descends to the nineteenth-century pass of San Baronto, where you can see the bell tower of the beautiful Romanesque abbey. Continuing, the ridge line rises towards Monte Fiore (with antenna), site of a very powerful castle in the Middle Ages belonging to Carmignano

community, and then continues with the area of Leporaia and Sasso di Pietra. Moving with your gaze on a lower line, always from the left, you can see the castle of Larciano with the high tower, the Villa Rospigliosi in Lamporecchio and the village of Fornello. The climb resumes and you will soon reach Toiano (1h).

You enter Via Cerretana right at the point where an old stone bollard remains, the rest of the nineteenth-century road system. Turn right and continue on the road towards the nearby village of Cerreto Guidi until you reach, a few tens of meters later, the intersection with Via del Fondaccio where, on the ground, you can see the old wooden cross on a stone base in memory of popular rogations that took place in the countryside until the 1960s. Immediately after a large oak tree on the left indicates a country lane that enters the cultivated countryside that you follow by continuing parallel to the asphalt road and then following the Telecom poles among the vineyards; once these are finished, continue straight through the olive trees, skirting a pink house and then quickly arriving at the dirt road near the provincial road and an Enel pole (1h 25').

Here you must be careful because the path to follow takes the flat country road that runs alongside the house and a vineyard and points to the visible Enel pylon not far away; reached this, continue straight between the rows starting to descend into the small valley of the tributary of the Streda stream placed in front of you. As soon as you begin to descend, turn left following the profile of the vineyard and then, immediately afterwards, right along the path that descends straight into the valley floor among the vineyards, skirting an Enel pole (1h 45'). Once you reach the bottom, pass the stream and turn sharply to the right and then, 20 meters later, to the left, always uphill among the vineyards up to the top where you turn left continuing to flank the vineyard; at the bottom of this one turn sharply to the right once more, go up a short climb and arrive at the paved road (Via di Strognano) (2h).

Turn left and head towards the visible sign of "Pieve Vecchia" farm where a secondary road begins that leads to the homonymous farmhouse. Descend gently into the countryside for about 300 meters facing the village of Cerreto perched around the top of the hill; when you arrive near the house, keep right next to the hedge and continue taking the well-marked path that descends sharply in the open fields to the nearby lake, visible at the bottom of the valley. Walk along the small stretch of water, cross the stream and turn left, continuing on the track that runs parallel to the watercourse to the point where you notice a new crossing of the same. Here turn left for a short digression pointing to the visible nearby monument that recalls a tragic plane crash that occurred on the morning of the 27th of February 1978. Going back pass the ditch again and begin to climb along the country lane that climbs straight up the hill where the town of Cerreto Guidi is located. Pass a lonely cypress tree, some tin shacks and enter the first houses of Via Ripa (white/red RET signs) (2h 30').

Go along the whole Via Ripa and arrive at the roundabout where you take Via Roma which, uphill, enters the historic center of Cerreto, quickly arriving at the Medici Villa (2h 05').

After visiting the beautiful Medici villa, go back slightly and turn left into Via Vittorio Veneto which leads, shortly after, onto the provincial 31 (Via Pianello Val Tidone) where you keep to the left and quickly arrive at a new intersection where the beautiful Church of Santa Liberata is. Here go left into Via Matteotti. Continue on the flat, moving further and further away from Cerreto, pass the cemetery and turn left into Via di Corliano (2h 20').

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The small road, of ancient origin (it is already documented at the beginning of the nineteenth century as “via da Fucecchio per Cerreto”), crosses the ridge of the hill and, after just over a kilometer, divides near a large abandoned house (2h 40’). Follow the right branch (Via di Petriolo) which goes into the countryside among the olive trees and soon becomes a dirt road. Continue flat along the crest of the long hill with alternating views to the right (N) and left (S), encountering farmhouses to be restored and restored ones (for example in the Querciola area) belonging to the Petriolo farm, owned in the 16th–20th centuries by Degli Alessandri family, built on pre-existing medieval buildings. You arrive at the beautiful complex (under renovation) (3 h) and right at the point where you enter the square, turn right along the cart track that passes the manor complex from the north, continuing in the fields with olive trees and vineyards, with a beautiful row of cypresses on the left.

Continue on the crest of the hill (white/red RET sign with indications Fucecchio–Via Francigena) with sweeping views towards the SW to quickly descend into the small valley of Barbugiano stream. Pass a couple of houses (Casino and Barbugiano farms) and cross the small road, now paved, along the valley floor until the crossroads with Via Scheggia on the left (3h 35’), immediately identifiable by the very long double row of cypresses that accompanies the road from the base of the hill. Then enter Via Scheggia, cross Barbugiano stream and climb the hill (white/red RET sign) until you reach an intersection just below the wood where you turn right, skirt it continuing to climb and arrive at the ridge with a large restored farmhouse on the right, above (the Scheggia) (4h).

Turn right, neglecting the branch that leads to the house, and follow the wide road that runs alongside the forest until you reach a crossroads on the hill (4h 15’) overlooking Valdarno di Sotto. Turn left (white/red RET signs) and quickly descend to the parish Church of Ripoli to arrive on provincial road 11. Cross it and take Via di Ponzano on the opposite side which you follow shortly after turning left (white/red signs RET and Via Francigena) and, after passing a large renovated farmhouse (which remains to the right), turn right entering the fields. Follow the country road that passes an abandoned hut and a recent unfinished house to arrive at a crossroads of country roads placed under an aeolian (4h 45’): turn right, always following the signs of RET–Via Francigena and reach almost immediately a large ruin of a farmhouse with a hut in front where the track passes between the two buildings and immediately turns left. About 200 meters separate you at the point where the track, after having passed a small Enel pylon, crosses a large ditch used to drain the rainwater from the surrounding fields, and quickly arrives at a new rural settlement, this time inhabited (although in part) (5h). Pass it by aiming for the nearby underpass of the elevated road and then continue flat on the paved road (Via di Ponzano) which passes alongside some houses and arrives at a crossroads with a small tabernacle where you continue straight ahead and then quickly arrive at the entrance to the old Via Samminiatese, right at the point where you find the sign indicating the entrance to Fucecchio (5h 20’).

Turn left, walk along the short stretch that separates you from the large Piazza Aldo Moro along which, through Via Gramsci, you head towards the historic center of Fucecchio reachable through Piazza Montanelli, via Donateschi and via Martini which go up to Palazzo Corsini and to the homonymous park (5h 40’).

Going back to the theater square, you can access the nearby Piazza XX Settembre where there is the bus stop for Fucecchio–San Miniato station (about 15’) and for Empoli (about 40’).

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# Magia ring

→ La Magia

→ Quarrata

Length: 15 km

Time needed for the journey alone: 4h 30'

Time needed considering the stops: 5h 30'

## Detailed description

The route starts from the intersection of paths that is located immediately below the hill where the Torre di Sant'Alluccio rises, detaching itself from the main itinerary of the Medici Route. Next to the boundary stone a wide track branches off in the N-NE direction that points towards Spazzavento and the fortress of Carmignano (RET itinerary) to fork almost immediately: on the right uphill continue to Bacchereto while on the left downhill slightly goes to Spazzavento. Take this last direction, immediately undergo one of the large Montalbano power lines and continue downhill passing through a shady flat stretch, inside the forest on the northern side, consisting of young chestnut trees, oaks and a few pines. Leave the wood with a fleeting view to the right of Florence, and, in the background, the long ridge of Pratomagno, while even further to the right you can see the white Medici Villa of Artimino, the three hills of Roveta and, in the background, the Florentine Chianti. Another flat stretch follows, still in the woods; you then pass the intersection with the small road that on the left leads to the nearby repeater (of which you can hear the hum of the fans) and begin to descend with the wide track that shows outcrops of boulder, the rock of which the structure of Montalbano is deeply made.

At the next curve to the right (15') a first view opens up which, on clear days, is of a certain impression due to the vastness of the territory it embraces: from Chianti (to the east) to Abetone (to the west), from Florence to Pistoia. Immediately below lies the town of Quarrata with the Villa la Magia at its western end, on a slight prominence. Continue on the forest road, passing a sharp left curve and a series of views that alternate with less open sections. Thus, you definitively leave the wood where the view becomes very broad again and where the cultivated fields take the place of the arboreal vegetation; here there is also the lithological contact between the boulder and the formation of sillane which also justifies the different water sources present in the area. Immediately after, on the right, the evocative ruins of the Medici Barco Reale wall anticipate the arrival at Midolla farmhouse (30').

At the height of the accommodation facility, right in front of the utility meters, a visible flat track branches off to the left and enters the woods and also runs alongside a field of olive trees. Take this and continue flat along an old stone wall that serves as a terrace for the overhanging field and shortly afterwards the view opens on Pistoia plain with the city of Pistoia in the background, immediately under the Apennine reliefs on the right which are connected to those of Pistoia Acquerino. In the foreground you can see the town of Quarrata and, on the left, the gentle hills on which Villa la Magia lies, with the pertinent wood behind it. Return to the wood characterized by chestnut, oak and pine trees, always continuing in evenness and then passing an isolated house and shortly after reaching the spring of Bettina (45'). A sign warns that the water is not controlled even if it is drunk by everyone. The spring, as above mentioned, originates from the lithological contact present around 320-350 meters above sea level. on the

whole north side of Montalbano, also responsible for a whole series of water outcrops located at this altitude up to Chiuso, near Verghereto. Continue on the shady road and shortly after pass a picnic area organized by the Municipality of Quarrata a few years ago, with another spring. A fence to the right of the track slightly anticipates the arrival on the asphalt: you are near Hotel il Rifugio (50').

Continue down the road that shows the ancient name on a sign (Via Sanbusceto), present in the Leopold cartography of the early nineteenth century, different from the one with which it is named on satellite maps (Via Leonardo da Vinci). Pass an intersection on the right for Baugiano, pass a point that offers a view of the underlying Quarrata, 'split' by Via Montalbano which runs straight towards the state road 67, on Prato plain and its city, the Medici Cascine with its park and Calvana and Morello mountains. Shortly after you arrive at a crossroads on a narrow curve to the right, near a couple of houses, one of which (Rocca Maestrino) shows, in addition to the microtoponym, also in the forms and walls the ancient military origin (1h). Turn right and, as soon as you pass the entrance gate of this house, a track departs from it which descends into the olive groves below and which you follow. Numerous outcrops of alberese stone testify that the lithological contact mentioned above has given way to the rock that is under the boulder (which forms the entire upper part of Montalbano); continue steeply downhill between fields of very beautiful and well-kept terraced olive trees and quickly arrive at a small group of houses where the paved road begins. You are in Buriano, a hamlet of Quarrata (1h 10'). You pass a roadside shrine and immediately afterwards you have to pay attention to the stairs that, on the right, descend to the street level below that you cross going to take the faint track in the field of olive trees right in front of you, which continues slightly downhill alongside of a property wall. A few meters later leave the small road because it is invaded by vegetation and complete the last meters among the olive trees, pointing to the church already visible in front of you where you arrive almost immediately (1h 20').

The church faces NW and from the square in front of the facade it dominates the entire plain below. From the church square, the municipal road resumes in the opposite direction to that of arrival, that is, moving towards Tacinaia. Go down to the stream below along a stone wall, go up and pass the junction with Via Fissa (road tabernacle) after which the gentle climb continues for another short stretch allowing you to pass Sasso Regino farmhouse; go down a slope and pass an intersection with a private by-pass where you continue straight ahead going over a small bridge and a new intersection where you keep the left flat to get to the small village of Tacinaia (1h 30'). Continue steeply downhill into a beautiful terraced olive grove up to a crossroads with a tabernacle where you continue straight ahead to come to flank a large restored house, at the end of whose enclosure wall the road makes a sharp left downhill curve. You are in Pollaiolo, where the cadastral cartography of the early nineteenth century shows the presence of some buildings going to water (mills) that exploited the consistent fall that Tacinaia river makes between the homonymous village and this point (about 100 meters in altitude) and also that of the river that comes from the church of Buriano and that joins the other shortly after.

Here, on the outside of the curve, a downhill road branches off between the walls: it is the old Via Burianese that immediately crosses a stream that descends from Tacinaia hill. The old road continues on the other bank, touching a long disused wash house and half-submerged by vegetation and begins to climb, leaving a branch on the left and entering a terraced olive grove typical of Quarrata area. In this case, the terraces in alberese stone show a much worse state of conservation than those along Via Tacinaia. At the intersection that is located, continue

straight ahead, ignoring the detour to the right and heading towards the visible house a little further ahead that you pass by passing it. Another short climb takes you to a crossroads where the asphalted road begins: on the right, slightly uphill, you reach the visible rural village of Le Piagge, instead continue straight ahead passing shortly after next to a couple of houses with a large wall in stone in front, while on the left lies the town of Quarrata (now close) and behind, the hill of Villa la Magia with its wood and in the background Pistoia and the Apennines that overlook it. You come to a new intersection characterized by a large and isolated cypress tree (2h 05') where you continue straight uphill until you flank a double row of cypresses alongside the road. At the end of this row you are on the top of a hillock characterized by the presence of a crossroads: go straight on towards Tizzana, and on the right you immediately arrive at the houses of Poggio Casagli. Instead turn left, right next to the last cypress, taking a faint track (it is always the old Via Burianese) that goes straight down among the olive trees and leads quickly to a house that you pass to continue along the dirt road that serves it and which leads quickly to pass a large isolated cypress tree (note the perfect shape) and reach the intersection with the asphalted road (Via dei Ronchi), with the house on the corner. You are in Giachi area. Turn right and you will soon reach a new intersection (with Via di San Lorenzo) (2h 30') where you keep left and immediately descend into the urbanized plan continuing to the right, passing the intersection with Via Salvator Allende and arriving at Fosso delle Mulina. Here, next to the ancient road tabernacle that housed the old Via Burianese and San Lorenzo in the early nineteenth century, turn right and enter the recent cycle-pedestrian path created by the Municipality of Quarrata that runs alongside Fosso delle Mulina (mill's ditch). Following the track you pass, in order: two city streets, a bridle on the watercourse and some lateral detours accessible via small brick bridges. You then come to cross Via Roma, which at the beginning of the nineteenth century was the "Via vecchia Fiorentina" (2h 45') where you turn left following the aforementioned road which, in a hundred meters, leads to the main square of Quarrata (Piazza Risorgimento) with a monument by Agenore Fabbri in memory of the fallen of all wars, with a strong emotional impact, located at the point where the focal point of the very long Viale Montalbano converges. Pass the square and take Via Pistoia on the opposite side (at the beginning of the nineteenth century it was the old Via Fiorentina that led to Pistoia) continuing straight and thus crossing Via delle Libertà (on the left) and also a small bridge over Farnio stream which comes from the nearby artificial lake (extended for about 3 hectares). Immediately after the curve to the right that the road makes, turn left into a narrow road between two old columns that betray the function of the entrance that this route must have once had. It flanks a perfect example of a farmhouse, complete with a granary on the upper floor and a large window for accessing the harvested wheat, and after a few meters you take the path that gently climbs the side of the hill towards Villa la Magia which you reach quickly (3h 05'). The vivid contrast between the noise of the traffic of the city center and the peace and silence that reign in front of the villa, surrounded by the cereal crops in front and by the forest at the back, helps to create moments of intense suggestion in the walker, who suddenly finds himself in a pleasant place rich in history, facing the wooded ridge of Montalbano.

Continue on the small road that crosses the hill with an exhibition of land art and two stone columns in travertine to signify the old entrance to the part in front of the villa, continuing with a long straight at the edge of the wood that leads to a restored farmhouse where you turn sharply to the left taking the dirt track that descends gently and continues alongside a large brick wall. This shows artifacts that are parts of a clear hydraulic matrix, until it crosses the paved road (Via Boschetti) in Case Ferretti (3h 25').

Continue straight to the next crossroads, starting along Via del Sole characterized by a row of

modern and anonymous villas that ends with the end of the asphalt. Here the road becomes rural, betraying its ancient function as evidenced by the olive trees and the plants of the scrub that surround it until you reach a new house that you leave to the right continuing on asphalt in a slight slope up to a crossroads in Leano (3h 40'): keep left and start walking along the street of the same name, touching other isolated houses in the countryside located on the hilly ridge that divides two small rivers (Buscione torrent on the right and the nameless one that flows into the visible lake on the left). Some of these houses are located on the top of the hill in a position that certainly has to be traced back in time. The view opens onto the steep and wooded Monte Fiore and the ridge of Montalbano which joins this summit to the other places further to SE, all characterized by repeaters. Note the clear line of junction between the cultivated fields and the forest above which runs around 300 meters asl. and which also shows a marked change in slope, a sign of another change (occult in this case), namely the lithological one between the formation of sillano (especially alberese stone) and the boulder of the upper part of Montalbano, as mentioned above. A short descent and a shady stretch between the houses anticipate a new crossroads: you are in Prunaie area (3h 55').

Keep to the left and immediately after, at the height of a large poplar, left again on the flat, skirting a small vineyard (on the left) and two isolated cypresses (on the right) and then a partially renovated house (on the left). Cross the small ditch that further downstream enters the artificial lake, skirt a vineyard and begin to climb by turning right. Pass a stretch where a nice pavement emerges, perhaps to refer to the ancient road system of the area, while on the left appears a fleeting view of the north-eastern end of Pistoia with the recognizable sky line of the Triangle by the architect Savioli, the most discussed of all the buildings that make up the popular housing complex of Fornaci, born in the eighties of the last century. A short climb leads to an intersection with the asphalt road (4h 10') where you turn right to immediately reach the scattered houses of Lucciano and to a new intersection: keep right uphill (Via per il Monte) and immediately reach the crossroads then continue straight ahead in a steep climb on a narrow asphalted road. Skirt the houses to continue on a country lane, the remnant of an ancient road, as evidenced by the repeated aedicules placed on the walls of the houses that flank the lane. Return to the paved road you left shortly before and continue uphill while the view of Pistoia plain widens as does that of the clearly visible hills (Pistoia Apennines and Pistoia-Prato Acquerino) and the conurbation of the plain below. At the new crossroads, continue straight, avoiding taking both Via delle Poggiolo (on the right) and Via del Gozio (on the left) (4h 25'), continuing to walk among the few houses that become more and more sparse as the forest approaches. At the umpteenth intersection with a black metal cross in the middle, keep to the right pointing towards the visible house not far away that you pass and do the same with the next one.

Enter the wood of Monte Fiore where the climb is immediately sustained (on average the northern side of Monte Fiore has a gradient of almost 30%) and where, fortunately, some short stretches where it calms down allow you to pull the breath. Continue to climb in a very cool and humid landscape up to a hairpin bend that the track makes to the right (4h 45') which is followed almost immediately by another to the left where you ignore the deviation that on the outside of the latter continues to straight ahead. Continue to climb even if in a less sustained way and soon you arrive at the saddle located between Monte Fiore and Poggio Papinta, where the track enters a crossroads with an asphalted road that comes from the southern slope of Montalbano and another (barred) that goes up to the repeaters of Monte Fiore (5h). Turn left following the directions for Romea Strata and starting to go uphill Via Pali di Matteo; shortly afterwards leave the detour that goes to the left, continuing straight uphill and shortly

after starting to flank a long stretch of the Medici Barco Reale wall that climbed to the top of Monte Fiore, as evidenced by the Leopold cadastral maps of the early nineteenth century. Pass a slight descent and come to flank an abandoned restaurant with swimming pool (!), a real insult to common sense, where the wide track makes a curve to the right that you follow (5h 15'), ignoring the deviation to the left. Follow the wide ridge road with white/red CAI signs, leave off a detour to the right that goes down to Porciano and instead keep to the left, always following the signs for Romea Strata, immediately facing a slightly uphill right-hand bend. An uphill stretch follows where extended slabs of boulder emerge that anticipate the detour to the right for Sasso di Pietra (5h 30').

***At this point you return to the main path of the Medici Route.***

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## Montelupo Fiorentino and Capraia e Limite

Length: 14 km

Time needed for the journey only: 3h

Time needed considering the stops: 4h

### Detailed description:

It starts from the chain which, at the L'Olivo farm, blocks access to the country road from which you come.

### ARTIMINO – MONTELUPO

Immediately before the chain, take the country road on the left that descends towards the valley floor below where a small rural stream flows, which you pass, and then enter the woods slightly uphill. You come out shortly after skirting a field of olive trees continuing slightly downhill with the olive trees still on your left and the woods on the right. The bottom of the country road shows the presence of a cobbled paving of ancient origin. You then reach some houses: pass the steel rope that blocks the small road from which you come and turn right (in front of the access gate to the house) continuing on the unpaved road beaten by the passage of cars (30 ').

The road descends alongside a fence and then shows (on the left) fleeting views of the underlying Arno valley until you reach some houses again, that you pass, and then take a short climb that leads to the paved road (via Arrendevole). Take the small road on the left downhill that runs alongside the paved road and then cross it almost immediately turning right onto a wide country road at the head of a new vineyard, also blocked by a steel wire and with two large rocks of Macigno. A short stretch on a false level, with a view of the abbey of San Martino at the top right, leads you to a crossroads made up of several country roads: go straight downhill and then turn left, pass between a clump of trees and continue always downhill with a view of the underlying Arno valley, the abandoned rural village of Caterattino, in the Camaioni Plan. You go around the Casanuova farm with its dovecote tower from below, go along a last stretch parallel to the paved road until you return to this just near the bridge over the Arno (1h).

Cross the river right near the point where, in past centuries, the ship that served as a link between the two banks docked and sailed. Once on the other side, you enter the administrative territory of Montelupo Fiorentino and immediately arrive at the beginning of the cycle path, near the railway underpass. The track is part of a project co-financed by the Tuscany Region and the European Community and once finished it will see the cycle path join the city of Florence with Pisa; currently only some sections are open to the public, such as the one that goes from Camaioni to Montelupo Fiorentino. You enter the path with a perfectly flat and well-maintained surface and start walking in the Arno valley with the river on your right and, on the left, the Florence-Empoli-Pisa railway line. The excellent floor allows you to look up at the landscape that opens up around you: on your right, on the wooded hill that rises on the right bank of the river, you can see the Ruzzolapaiolo farm in a beautiful position (in 1830, Il Paiolo farm) from the singular name that dominates one

of the very rare stretches of the rocky bank of the Arno in this part of its course. On the left bank, on the other hand, at the end of the alluvial plain which in this stretch widens for a few hundred meters, due to the large left-hand bend that the Arno makes, you can see the beautiful Villa Antinori with the facade facing east, raised by a few ten meters from the floor. Below it, but hidden from the view, there are what were once the majestic stables belonging to the villa (now a restaurant), located right on the Via Pisana, the most important thoroughfare in the Lorraine Tuscany. You pass an abandoned building, perhaps pertaining to the old railway line and shortly after a barrier on the cycle path warns the beginning of a 'depression' that runs very close to the river a little raised so that, in moments of flooding of the river the water invades the path itself. To your right stands the high medieval bell tower of the former monastery of San Giorgio a Capraia just before the first ancient houses of San Miniato, beyond the railway line, to the left, where the fifteenth-century ceramic tradition of Montelupo was born. The cycle path climbs slightly out of the more narrow floodplain area of the Arno which, on the steep right bank, shows wide traces of bank erosion. Shortly after the first vegetable gardens created along the narrow strip of land located between the houses and the river, testify to the entrance into the urban area of Montelupo confirmed by the presence, further away, of the four majestic towers of the Ambrogiana, the Medici villa desired by Ferdinando I. On the right, in a beautiful position overlooking the Arno is the town of Capraia which clearly reveals its Castrensian origins. At the end of the cycle path (2h) you continue on the pedestrian path that intersects via Don Minzoni and continues along the Schifanoia ditch to then bend and continue between the railway embankment and the houses. You come out on the road just near the railway underpass, cross it and continue on the pedestrian path, go under the railway and the station, coming out into the little square in front of it. Here turn right and head to the parapet over the Pesa stream, precisely in the final stretch made artificial in its course between the 16th and 17th centuries. Opposite, the ruined complex of Fanciullacci ceramics which symbolizes the second golden season of Montelupo ceramics and which is waiting to be repurposed. Go back to the station square and continue on the pedestrian path in the direction of the historic centre which can be reached quickly by entering Piazza della Libertà where huge terracotta jars show off (2h 15').

### **MONTELUPO - S. MARTINO ABBEY**

From Piazza della Libertà, head towards the station via the pedo-cycle path, underpass the railway and continue on the road that heads towards the Arno, crossing it with a bridge. Pay attention to the first section of the ramp that leads to the top of the bridge as it lacks a sidewalk (situation destined to change shortly since road widening works are planned). At the end of the bridge ramp that goes down to the other bank, turn right and through a few steps you enter the small square (with a drinking fountain) which we cross transversely towards the Arno; once you reach the parapet you can see how the river has eroded its own bed in the last 70 years (age of the bridge), exposing part of the two foundation plinths of the structure. You enter the narrow pedestrian passage located between the parapet of the river and the building of the former Pasquinucci furnace (now used as an exhibition centre and municipal offices) and once you come out on the other side, turn left onto the old paving starting to go up towards the castle of Capraia above. You take the flight of stairs which, on the right, continues uphill with a beautiful stone paving equipped with non-slip herringbone guides, you pass a small votive niche carved into the wall and cross via Giudea; a short detour following this road leads us immediately to a small square with a viewpoint towards the south-east, with a view of the villa dell'Ambrogiana (side facing the

river) and the nearby complex which until recently housed the patients of the Montelupo judicial psychiatric hospital, one of the very few left in Italy after the Basaglia law. You return to the staircase that leads to an open space overlooking the Arno river and with a view that extends to the village of Samminiatello, to the overhanging hills of Malmantile with their flat top and very steep sides that reveal their sedimentary origin (bottom of the Pliocene sea) and the action of the modeling forces of Nature. Opposite, lying on the side of the hill that rises steeply to the former parish church, is the ancient village of Montelupo enclosed by the walls still partially identifiable; in isolated position is the ancient villa Schifanoia in exposed stone. On the right, the profile of the final part of the Pesa valley dominated by the ancient river terrace on which the ugly Bobolino urbanization was built; below your can see the current conurbation (35').

Continue along Via Guelfa, pass an ancient building that still shows the remains of the arms on the facade and come out in Piazza Pucci which houses the church of Santo Stefano and the remains of the castle walls, near one of the doors. From the square, exit the village, pass alongside the parking lot and take the dirt road that goes away with a Downy oak right on the corner of the intersection. The trail shows a part of the old cobbled paving thus declaring its ancientness (perhaps it is the original stretch of via Valicarda that reached the castle), passes alongside another totally inappropriate urbanization and ends on via Valicarda near a crossroads (50').

Leave Via del Poggione on the right and continue straight on descending into a saddle with a view to the left of the San Miniato fortress and the Valdarno of the Empoli area. Continue in an environment consisting of cultivated fields and isolated houses that testify to the ancient sharecropping order and leave out all the side deviations that lead to the farmhouses in the area. At a certain point you reach a point where the road makes a sharp curve to the right and shows a sudden change in slope. You are at the point where there is a change in lithology: the pebbles, sands and clays of continental sedimentary origin are being replaced by the Macigno, sandstone that forms the structure of the whole Montalbano. The same dry stone walls on the sides of the road testify with the stone material that constitutes them the change of lithology. The point offers the opportunity for a stop and a retrospective look: the hills of Botinaccio with the Montecastello villa slope down into the Empoli plain crowded with production buildings. Behind the ridge between Valdelsa and Valdera and in the background the Livorno mountains. You resume your route and soon reach the Cantagallo estate (1h 20').

Continue following the visible country road that begins to rise gently between vineyards (on the left) and fields of olive trees (on the right); on the left, clearly visible beyond the narrow wooded valley of the Rio Guidi, the church of San Jacopo a Pulicciano, in a beautiful and solitary position. Keep left at the next intersection where a deviation continues straight through the olive trees but which you ignore. After a couple of road bends you begin to climb in a more sustained way and pass a meeting point for wild boar hunters well camouflaged at the edge of the wood; you then pass a vineyard that remains on your right and go along a short flat stretch that anticipates an intersection with a beautiful oak tree on the right side of the road (1h 40'): here keep to the left, omitting to continue straight. You continue climbing gently, and ignore the small road that enters the woods on the left, continuing instead on the wide track, always uphill. You continue uphill, now more accentuated but short, pass a new intersection with a small road to the left to be omitted and you reach a further intersection with a beautiful specimen of holm oak in the center (2h).



Keep to the left along the road bend and continue slightly uphill and then begin to cover a wide flat stretch with several small roads that branch off to the right and left (some barred) but which you ignore, keeping on the main road, clearly evident. Then follows an uphill and a flat stretch that leads to the Madonna di Valicarda, an ancient meeting point of different routes that connected the abbey of San Martino and Artimino with the Valdarno below, the castle of Capraia and that of Montelupo (2h 20').

From the crossroads, dominated by an imposing oak, continue straight on following the signs for San Martino/Terre degli Etruschi itinerary and turning to the right. You begin to descend, as you have passed the ridge of Montalbano which at this point drops to only 309 m asl, walking on a bumpy ground with outcrops of Macigno stones. On the right, among the vegetation, La Ferdinanda Medici Villa in Artimino, further away Villa Caruso di Bellosguardo (above Lastra a Signa), the hills of Malmantile and behind, in the plain, Scandicci. Continue to descend gently with more or less bumpy sections until you reach a crossroads where you continue straight downhill. A very bumpy downhill stretch now begins, which in case of wet ground is also slippery which takes you to the Abbey of San Martino (2h 40'). When you come out of the wood, near the ancient religious complex, a remarkable panorama opens up to your eyes, despite the modest altitude (217 m asl): starting from the left you can see, in the foreground, the two wooded hills of Montalgeto and Poggio ai Colli with the village of Santa Cristina a Mezzana behind it and that of Carmignano with the Fortress. In the background, the Abetone and then, moving to the right, the Natural Reserve of Acquero between Pistoia and Prato, forming a single ridge that ends at the Iavello Beeches and then descends on Monte le Coste, the 'plume' that overlooks the Bisenzio Valley. In front of this, on the plain, the town of Prato and to the right the conurbation that links it to Calenzano and then to Sesto Fiorentino, with Monte Morello behind it. Still to the right, nearby, the village of Artimino. In the centre, in front of you, the cultivated and wooded Elzana valley.