

## 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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