

# UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES #INEMILIAROMAGNA

*A collection of the best stories from content creators  
from around the world*





# BENVENUTI #INEMILIAROMAGNA!

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Emilia-Romagna is a region that offers visitors a rich diversity of experiences. From its world-renowned culinary traditions and cultural heritage to its sun-kissed beaches, pristine nature parks and automotive attractions, there's literally something for everyone #inEmiliaRomagna.

Over the years, many travel bloggers have visited Emilia-Romagna and shared their stories on blogs and social media. One event in particular, the Social Travel Summit, held in Ravenna in September 2019, attracted more than 50 travel bloggers and content creators from around the world. We were proud and excited to welcome them to Emilia-Romagna, and judging by their stories, they went home with a wonderful collection of unforgettable experiences!

This Emilia-Romagna eMagazine, a collection of the best stories by travel bloggers, is a wonderful tribute to our land and people, our age-old traditions and historic treasures. I hope that you enjoy these travel stories and that they will inspire you to visit us and create your own unforgettable experiences #inEmiliaRomagna.



**Mr. Davide Cassani**

President Apt Servizi Emilia-Romagna Tourist Board





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## SIMON FALVO

A solo traveler for 20+ years, Simon Falvo is passionate about nature and hiking and also art, architecture, and design. She is always on the look for lesser-known destinations, and in her blog, [Wild About Travel](#), she tells stories of her journeys in words and photography.

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# EXPERIENCE ITALY'S FOOD VALLEY

IN EMILIA-ROMAGNA

WHEN MOST FOOD TRAVELERS THINK OF EMILIA-ROMAGNA, ITALY'S CHEESE, MEAT AND PASTA CENTERED FOOD BELT, THE FIRST TOWN THEY GENERALLY THINK OF IS BOLOGNA. AFTER ALL, BOLOGNA IS NICKNAMED "THE FAT ONE" FOR A REASON - MANY OF THE REGION'S FAMED PRODUCTS AND FOODS CAN BE EASILY FOUND IN THE CITY'S PORTICOED CENTER.

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Words & Photography  
DARYL & MINDI HIRSCH

Blog  
2FOODTRIPPERS



BUT THERE'S A WORLD BEYOND BOLOGNA AND OTHER EMILIA-ROMAGNA CITIES THAT DESERVE ATTENTION. THESE CITIES STAND ON THEIR OWN AND ARE, IN MANY WAYS, HALLMARKS OF ITALIAN CULTURE AND CENTERS OF THE ITALIAN FOOD DREAMLAND CALLED "FOOD VALLEY."

Emilia-Romagna is famous for products like Parmigiano Reggiano, Prosciutto di Parma and Culatello. Beyond food, Emilia-Romagna, like much of the Po Valley, represents some of the best of Italy's culture with contributions from music greats like Verdi and Toscanini and artists like Correggio. In other words, this is a region that touches all the senses. After our deep immersion, we found it difficult to imagine Italy without the culinary and cultural bounties that this region offers.

We packed a lot of experiences into our time in Emilia-Romagna. Not only did we indulge in food from dawn to dusk, but we explored the region's non-edible delights too. We also drank copious amounts of Lambrusco, Emilia-Romagna's ruby-red sparkling wine that pairs well with pasta and pork.

If you travel to Emilia-Romagna at any time of year, plan to do some or all of the following food-focused activities:

#### VISIT A PARMIGIANO REGGIANO DAIRY

Parmigiano-Reggiano, Italy's king of cheese, can only be produced in four specific Emilia-Romagna provinces. Modena is one of those provinces. Bologna, Parma and Reggio Emilia are the other three. Though food travelers can easily find Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese at restaurants and markets throughout Modena, visiting a cheese dairy is a special, not-to-be-missed experience. Not only is this type of tour educational for those interested in learning about the

cheesemaking process, but it also provides excellent photo ops and a chance to taste the king of cheeses at the source.

#### DRINK WINE AT A VINEYARD

We love drinking wine in Emilia-Romagna. In our opinion, the Food Valley's wines are a hidden gem worthy of exploration at a local winery. Emilia-Romagna isn't globally famous for its wine compared to Italian regions like Piemonte and Veneto but, surprisingly, the region produces 15% of all the wine in Italy.

We explored local Emilia-Romagna viticulture at Tenuta Venturini Baldini, a 130-hectar organic wine farm in the Reggio Emilia province that dates back to the 17th century. The winery typically starts its production in August when workers pick grapes that have matured under the hot summer sun. Since it was autumn during our visit, we got the chance to assist with the harvest.

As we learned, the centuries-old winery produces Lambrusco grapes which are used to make the region's famous red sparkling wine as well as other grapes including Malvasia and Pinot Noir. The organic vineyard also produces Balsamic Vinegar, a signature Emilia-Romagna product.

After filling baskets with grapes, we adjourned for lunch and wine. Drinking Emilia-Romagna wine at the source was a memorable experience and one that we earned cluster by cluster.









## TASTE TRADITIONAL BALSAMIC VINEGAR OF MODENA AND REGGIO EMILIA.

In addition to wine, Tenuta Venturini Baldini has been producing balsamic vinegar for centuries. It would have been wrong to leave the winery without tasting their Aceto Balsamico Tradizionale DOP di Reggio Emilia product.

Fueled by lunch and wine, we climbed up to the vineyard's vinegar attic, a piece of living history that dates back to 1670. More than 400 barrels fill the dark space, each worth € 40,000 to €50,000. The winery ages grape must in these barrels for at least 12 years and up to over 25 years. The aging process is quite rigid, resulting in certified bottles of balsamic vinegar available for purchase. The end product is unlike anything sold in grocery stores – a creamy, complex elixir that can be added to anything from salad to Parmigiano to ice cream. Balsamic Vinegar of Modena Tradizionale is an entirely different product than the condiment vinegar sold at mass-market grocery stores around the world. In Modena, Balsamic Vinegar (i.e. Aceto Balsamico) is a luxury item sold at luxury prices. Producers age grape juice in oak barrels for 12 to 25+ years to achieve DOP status. They then bottle the liquid gold and sell it to gourmands and chefs. This stuff is good with just about anything from Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese to strawberries to ice cream.

## EAT YOUR WAY AROUND PARMA

Many food travelers visit the outskirts of Parma to taste products like Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, cured ham and balsamic vinegar but they're missing out if they don't spend time in the city of Parma itself. Walking around the city provides a chance to taste the best of the Food Valley at eateries and specialty shops. Casual visitors can eat well without reservations; however, slow travelers can experience the city's best restaurants at all price points.

## INDULGE IN PROSCIUTTO DI PARMA

If Parmigiano Reggiano is the king of cheeses, then Prosciutto di Parma is the king of hams. With a history spanning the centuries, Emilia-Romagna's dry-cured prosciutto is coveted around the world but tastes best in Parma where it's produced.

During our visits, we greedily ate thin slices of the sweet PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) pork product at shops, restaurants and bars. Our favorite times were when we paired Prosciutto di Parma with Parmigiano Reggiano and Lambrusco for a perfect pre-dinner treat.

## SAMPLE CULATELLO

Walking through the cellar of Antica Corte Pallavicina is like walking through a culatello fantasy land. Slabs of curing pork hindquarters hang from the ceiling on chains, aging in darkness for one to three years.

Antica Corte Pallavicina is located at the banks of the mighty Po River in Polesine Parmense. The weather in the area is generally humid and dank. This climate may not be optimal for growing vines for winemaking but it's great for aging culatello, layering the curing meats with a special, funky, protective, flavor-contributing mold.

DOP (Protected Designation of Origin) culatello is coveted by food connoisseurs throughout the world. The pear-shaped cured pork product has been produced with pig buttocks for at least three centuries exclusively in Emilia-Romagna. Previously reserved for noblemen, today's culatello fans include the likes of Prince Charles as well as savvy food travelers like us. It's possible to reserve your own culatello – every piece of meat is labeled and, indeed, we were able to observe culatello consigned to the aforementioned British prince as well as Prince Albert of Monaco.

Antica Corte Pallavicina is an ideal spot to sample culatello, though you'll need to rent a car to get to its bucolic location. The extra effort is worth it for the chance to eat culatello after learning about the pork product's storied past. Touring Pallavicina's museum reveals that the Spigaroli family's connection to the historic property dates back to the 19th century.

Chef Massimo Spigaroli continues his family's culatello legacy – and what a legacy it is! Spigarolis have fed a number of notables throughout the 19th and 20th centuries including Giuseppe Verdi. Today, the family not only produces culatello but also runs a Michelin-starred restaurant, a more casual hosteria and a hotel. As if that's not enough, they offer cooking classes too.







## EAT ERBAZZONE IN REGGIO EMILIA

Without speaking a single word of English, Chef Gianni d'Amato introduced us to erbazzone, a vegetable pie unique to Emilia-Romagna. D'Amato fills the herbaceous pastry with fresh ingredients like swiss chard, spinach and, of course, generous amounts of Parmigiano Reggiano, the region's undisputed king of cheeses. The filling is then wrapped in a pastry layer of water, strutto (an Italian word for lard) or butter and water. The end result is a savory pie that's almost an Emilian answer to Greek spanakopita. D'Amato adds his own twist by wrapping his erbazzone with kataifi instead of conventional pastry dough for a more delicate crunch.

## EAT YOUR WAY AROUND MODENA

Wondering what and where to eat in Modena Italy? Although the Emilia-Romagna city is famous for being the home of Ferrari and Maserati, food travelers will find plenty of great food in Modena. Thanks to Modena's prime spot in Emilia-Romagna's Po Valley, the Modena food set is filled with familiar Italian food favorites like Tortellini, Tortelloni and Prosciutto. However, this Food Valley city has much more to offer when it comes to the gastronomy of Italy.

"MODENA'S MOST FAMOUS FOODS, TRADITIONAL BALSAMIC VINEGAR AND PARMIGIANO-REGGIANO, LINE THE SHELVES AT SPECIALTY STORES AROUND THE GLOBE."

Visitors to Modena can visit producers of these two certified DOP products, wandering through large aisles stocked with Parmigiano wheels. They can also traipse through attics filled with assorted sized barrels used to make Modena's legendary vinegar.

Lambrusco is another important Modena product. The dark red sparkling wine pairs magnificently with Modenese cuisine. Lambrusco is sold all over the world but, for some reason, it tastes best in its home region of Emilia-Romagna. Food travelers who plan their trips in the autumn can visit a local winery and view the local harvest.



## EAT GELATO IN BOLOGNA AND BEYOND

Gelato wasn't invented in Emilia-Romagna, but the creamy, dreamy Italian ice cream is better in the rich Italian region than anywhere else in the world. Yes, we said it. Emilia-Romagna has the best gelato in the world. You can eat gelato at more than a dozen excellent gelaterias in bustling Bologna or gobble down cones further afield at Gelateria Bloom in Modena, Cremeria Capolinea in Reggio Emilia and Ciacco Lab in Parma.

True ice cream lovers can visit the Carpigiani facility right outside Bologna for an even fuller gelato experience. Carpigiani, the premier gelato machine manufacturer, has an interactive Gelato Museum that traces gelato's roots back to Mesopotamia, Rome and Greece. Visitors of the Gelato Museum can participate in the company's Discovering Gelato experience which includes a guided tour of the museum, a gelato-making lesson and, most important, a gelato tasting.

## LEARN HOW TO MAKE PASTA

Emilia-Romagna locals grow up making pasta with their grandmothers (nonnas), many learning how to form noodles before they can even walk. Luckily for the rest of us, it's possible to take classes in Emilia-Romagna and learn about the art of pasta making. These hands-on experiences are both fun and educational, not to mention tasty.

One option is to attend a pasta making demo at the popular Le Sfogline pasta shop adjacent to Mercato delle Erbe. In the demo, sisters Daniella and Monica Venturi demonstrate their enviable pasta making skills while sharing colorful stories and secrets. Along with their employee Rosa, the Venturi sisters make the shop's pasta by hand, only using machines for stretching the dough.

Another option for learning how to make pasta is to take a private class from a Bologna local like Davide Labanti, an accomplished filmmaker who learned the pasta making craft from his nonna. Labanti patiently tried to teach us how to form tortellini, a process that is easier than it looks, before cooking up a meal that we enjoyed with wine and conversation. Labante even brought in gelato from Stefino, one of our favorite Bologna gelaterias. During our class, Labanti's

apartment was funky, cramped, hot, intimate and magical. We ate great food, talked politics, drank wine and connected in a unique way that makes international travel a truly special experience.

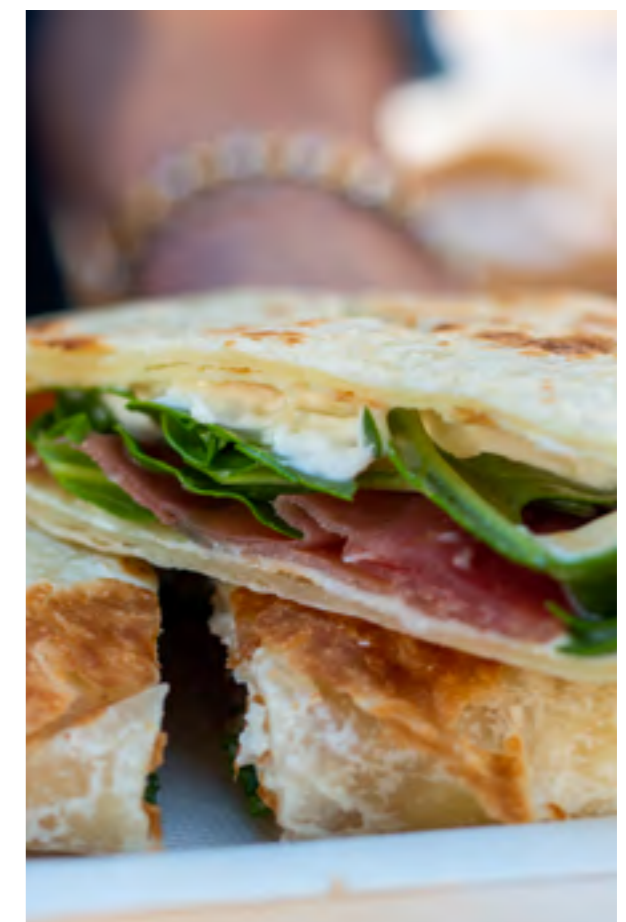
## SNACK ON A PIADINA ROMAGNOLA

Eating a piadèna in Rimini is a must. The piadina, otherwise known as a flatbread sandwich stuffed with local ingredients like prosciutto and stracchino cheese, is an ubiquitous Rimini food option that you can find all over town including the excellent version at local piadineria Lella Piada e Cassoni.

## SHOP AT LOCAL MARKETS

Shopping for produce in Emilia-Romagna is a joy whether or not you have a kitchen. Local markets display fresh fruits and vegetables in jumbled piles and sell them by the bagful. As in the case in much of Europe, shoppers enjoy the best selection when they shop with the season. We're talking about insanely delicious Vignola cherries in June and earthy porcini mushrooms and white truffles in the autumn months. Visitors can graze through a market, easily turning a shopping expedition into a meal. However, the true local experience is to shop at a market and then cook a meal at home.

Such an activity was a pipe dream for culinary travelers in the past, but the availability of short-term apartment rentals has turned this dream into a reality. Shopping and cooking may be chores at home, but doing both in Emilia-Romagna is utterly satisfying, with the true reward being a homemade lunch or dinner.



[LINK TO BLOG](#)



# WHAT TO DO IN BOLOGNA ASIDE FROM EATING

BOLOGNA IS THE CAPITAL OF THE EMILIA-ROMAGNA REGION AND ONE OF THE MOST HISTORIC CITIES IN THE COUNTRY AND AN UNDERRATED PLACE TO VISIT. IT IS ALSO KNOWN AS THE GASTRONOMICAL CAPITAL OF ITALY AND IS FAMOUS FOR ITS RED ROOFS. HERE ARE SOME TOP SIGHTS YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS IN THE CITY AS WELL AS SOME COOL ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO FROM BOLOGNA.

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Words & Photography  
NAM CHEAH

Blog  
LAUGH TRAVEL EAT







## FONTANA DEL NETTUNO

An iconic part of the city, the Fountain of Neptune was erected in the 16th century and represents the height of Renaissance art in Italy. Made of bronze and stone, it sits in a square adjacent to Piazza Maggiore with Neptune holding a trident surrounded by cherubs and nereids under.

## PIAZZA MAGGIORE

The central piazza of Bologna, Piazza Maggiore is a 20 minute walk from the train station, directly through the north gate of the city along Via dell'Indipendenza. It is a local chill spot and many sit on the square or at the nearby outdoor restaurants in the evening.

## FINESTRELLA

A small canal at the northern part of the old town, the Finestrella is easy to miss if you don't know what you are looking for. Made famous by photos of a window opening to a picturesque canal, the reality is far simpler and arguably uninspiring. However, it represents a significant part of the city's history and the other hidden canals, which were important in powering mills and spun silk. Most of the canals were built over and hidden, so this is one of the few that are still visible. Since it is only a short detour along the route between the train station and town center, it is worth a peek!



### SAN PIETRO CHURCH

A looming church on the narrow road close to the entrance to Piazza Maggiore, San Pietro is the Cathedral of Bologna and distinctive with its pink façade. It is larger than it looks, since much of it is hidden by buildings of similar height and narrow streets, with only the tower prominent. The current Baroque style was the result of rebuilding in the 16th century, with an ornate interior with white walls, statues adorning, and the side naves have beautiful fresco. A church had existed on the site since the 11th century, and it was elevated to a cathedral in 16th century. You can climb up the tower, which was built in the late 15th century, for a view of Bologna

### SANTO STEFANO BASILICA

The rustic church set in a picturesque square surrounded by lowrise building is deceptively small. Why? Because this church isn't just one church, it is a church within a church within a church – with a total of seven churches! The oldest dates back to the 4th century and the youngest the 13th century, and from Piazza Santo Stefano the complex looks like an odd collection of brick buildings of various heights and shapes.

### BASILICA DI SAN PETRONIO

The curious half brick and half pink church by Piazza Maggiore is San Petronio, named after the patron saint of Bologna. The curious exterior of the church was a result of it being unfinished, despite being built in the late 14th century. The pink marble doorway is decorated with scenes from the Old and New Testament, prophets, and San Petronio.

### ANATOMICAL THEATER

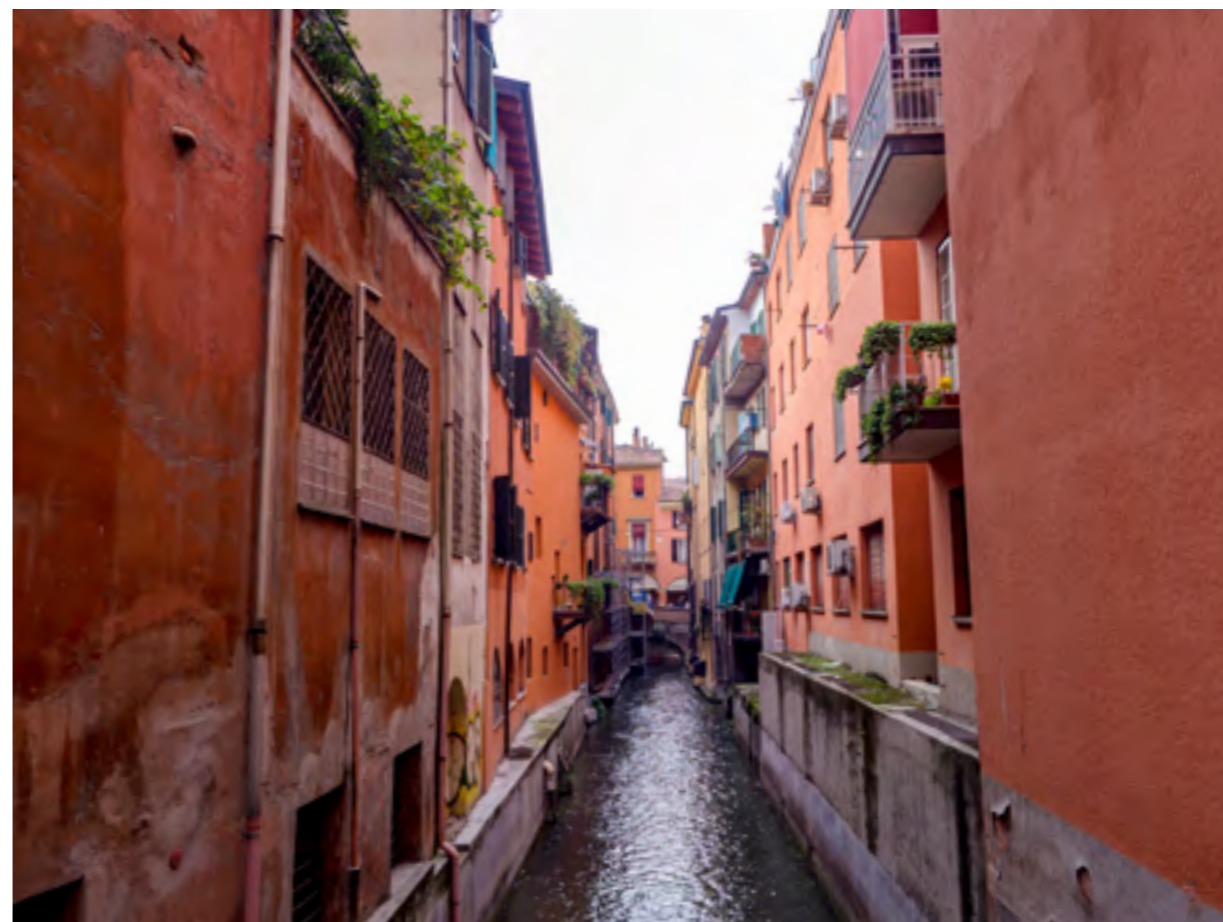
Bologna is home to one of the oldest universities in Italy and some of its buildings are works of art themselves. One such architectural gem is the Anatomical Theater. Built in 1636, it was designed by Antonio Levanti and renovated a decade later to its current state. Although this is a reconstruction as the original was destroyed during a WWII air raid. It's a short walk from Piazza Maggiore and the courtyard itself is a small haven itself with mosaic floors and portico.

### THE TWO TOWERS OF BOLOGNA

The most iconic part of Bologna, the two towers consist of the higher Asinelli Tower and the shorter but leaning Garisenda Tower. Bologna in the past were full of towers, built by family to upstage each other in a display of wealth. While the records are unclear, the two towers are attributed to the Asinelli and Garisenda family respectively, who wanted to outdo each other in the 12th century. The Asinelli Tower stands at 97.2m and is the highest building in Bologna; while the Garisenda Tower is 48m high.

### PALAZZO DELLA MERCANZIA

A 14th century building that was once the money changers and merchants bank, the red building is to the right of the two towers and easily missed if you are not looking out for it. Nowadays, it is the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture of Bologna.









## SAN MICHELE IN BOSCO

A known viewpoint south of the city, San Michele in Bosco was a church, monastery and a hospital. While it is a historically significant religious site and now a renowned orthopedic hospital, most people come here for the city view. It takes about half an hour to walk from Piazza Maggiore to the viewpoint, which offers a sweeping view of the famed red roofs of Bologna.

## SANCTUARY OF THE MADONNA DI SAN LUCA

While it's one of the most iconic landmarks in Bologna, San Luca is about an hour's walk southwest of the old city. It is the longest outdoor portico walkway in the world at almost 3.8km long, starting across the road from the entrance to the old city and ending at the hilltop church. The walkway was built between the 17th and the 18th century to give cover to a yearly procession that starts from San Pietro to San Luca, carrying the icon of Madonna. The church itself was mentioned in records as far back as the 12th century, though the current circular dark-red building is from the 18th century. It is about an hour plus walk all the way, starting first along the road before turning up-hill on stairs. If you don't want to walk, there's the option to take the San Luca Express by Piazza Maggiore which will whiz you up in half an hour with audio commentary on the city along the way.

## WALK AROUND THE BEAUTIFUL COVERED WALKWAYS

Bologna is full of beautiful covered walkways that makes it possible to go around the city in the rain even without an umbrella. An added bonus is that many of these have restaurants and outdoor seatings.

## VIA PESCHERIE VECCHIE

A fan of food and quaint little streets? Via Pescherie Vecchie is a narrow lane off Piazza Maggiore that is both home to a variety of restaurants and food stores. It is a good place to eat and people watch, though less good to walk through since it is pretty crowded.

## FICO EATALY

The Fico Eataly World is a place where the regional specialities come together at a mall about 40 minutes bus ride northeast of the city center. The idea is to be able to gather all the producers in one place for the masses who don't have time to visit them individually. If you don't have time to visit the individual places above and want to get a taste of Italy's cuisine, this is a good place to visit. The space was an old market turned into an agriculture food park. It covers an area of 8 hectares inside, with 2 hectares of surrounding ground consisting of stables for animals as an effort to show the entire food chain production to the new generation. More than 40 factories operate here and produce products daily that are sold on site, such as Mortadella and Parmigiano Reggiano. You can also buy a variety of products from the Emilia-Romagna region and beyond or even take classes such as pasta making! You can also take a guided tour and learn more about each products as you make your way across the huge complex. How to get there: the F bus have stops across the city and takes 30-45 minutes to reach the FICO Center. Tickets can be bought at the local tourism office for 5 euro one way or 7 euro return. If there are more than three of you, I'd recommend a taxi as it is much faster.

## CARPIGIANI GELATO UNIVERSITY

I'm sure everyone is no stranger to gelato. Some of you, like me, would have been told that gelato means ice-cream in Italian. But gelato and ice cream are actually very different things. Gelato contains more milk and less cream than ice-cream, and those who have tried it would know that gelato is an artisan product and usually made fresh every day. One of the best gelato machine producers there is Carpigiani, and they have a university! Established in 1946 by two brothers, Carpigiani create gelato machine tailored to the customer. Nowadays, they have customers from around the world and 11 branches. This university was created in 2003, about 40 minutes west of Bologna city center with a gelateria at the front and a museum on gelato history inside.

[LINK TO BLOG](#)





# THINGS TO DO IN ROMAGNA

## MUST VISIT PLACES AND EXPERIENCES

GRAB A CAR, GRAB SOME MATES AND TAKE A ROAD TRIP THROUGH THIS REGION OF NORTHERN ITALY AND CHECK OUT THE ROMAGNA MUST VISITS.

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Words & Photography:  
DANIEL JAMES CLARKE

Blog  
DAN FLYING SOLO







## BRISIGHELLA

When you think of Italy from the movies; you know the ones, hair flying in convertible cars, verdant green hills of vines, castles towering above little red roof towns, you're essentially thinking of Brisighella.

This too cute to believe town was my first day trip in Emilia-Romagna and it stayed my favourite. The picturesque streets with little cafes and gelato shops sit under the three hills of the town; one clocktower, one castle and one church. You can enjoy a casual stroll between the three and visit them before noshing down on all the gelato.

Be sure to check out the surroundings including the old quarry caves which now host live music performances underground, the excavation site of the old castle which offers terrific panoramic views and head to the mountains for some fantastic fresh food and fresh air at the Parco Carnè visitor centre.

## CESENATICO

Cesenatico was one of those places where I just pointed at a map and went with no real research (it's one of my best skills in life). Quaint Cesenatico was an ideal day trip from Bologna. The town itself was adorable, with colourful houses lining the few small canals, a maritime museum with boats displayed on the canal and plenty of little restaurants. The slow-pace of Italian life is ripe for the taking here.

## COMACCHIO

It took me a few visits to Emilia-Romagna before I finally made it to Comacchio, but it was certainly worth the wait! Comacchio isn't the most accessible place to get to in Emilia-Romagna as it does not have a train station, but whether you hire a car or make it here by bus, it's well worth taking a detour for!

A relatively small comune, the main town itself is everything you would expect: still canals reflecting colourful buildings, streets lined with excellent restaurants and bars, and the joy of not being too crowded by tourists. It's well worth hiring a bike to explore the local area and the Po Delta after you've enjoyed a couple of chilled days and sampled the local fish speciality, eel and clams.





"A RELATIVELY SMALL COMUNE, THE MAIN TOWN  
ITS SELF IS EVERYTHING YOU WOULD EXPECT: STILL  
CANALS REFLECTING COLOURFUL BUILDINGS, STREETS  
LINED WITH EXCELLENT RESTAURANTS AND BARS, AND  
THE JOY OF NOT BEING TOO CROWDED BY TOURISTS."





## FERRARA

Start your day off in the striking centre at the Castello Estense and marvel at the interior artwork before taking in the city from the viewing tower. The Palazzo dei Diamanti holds the famous National Picture Gallery while Ferrara Castle, a marble façade 12th-century beauty towers in the central Piazza.

The city is split between Medieval and Renaissance art, and you can easily hire a bike as part of a day trip here to hop between each side and see the contrast of the little streets change as you ride through.

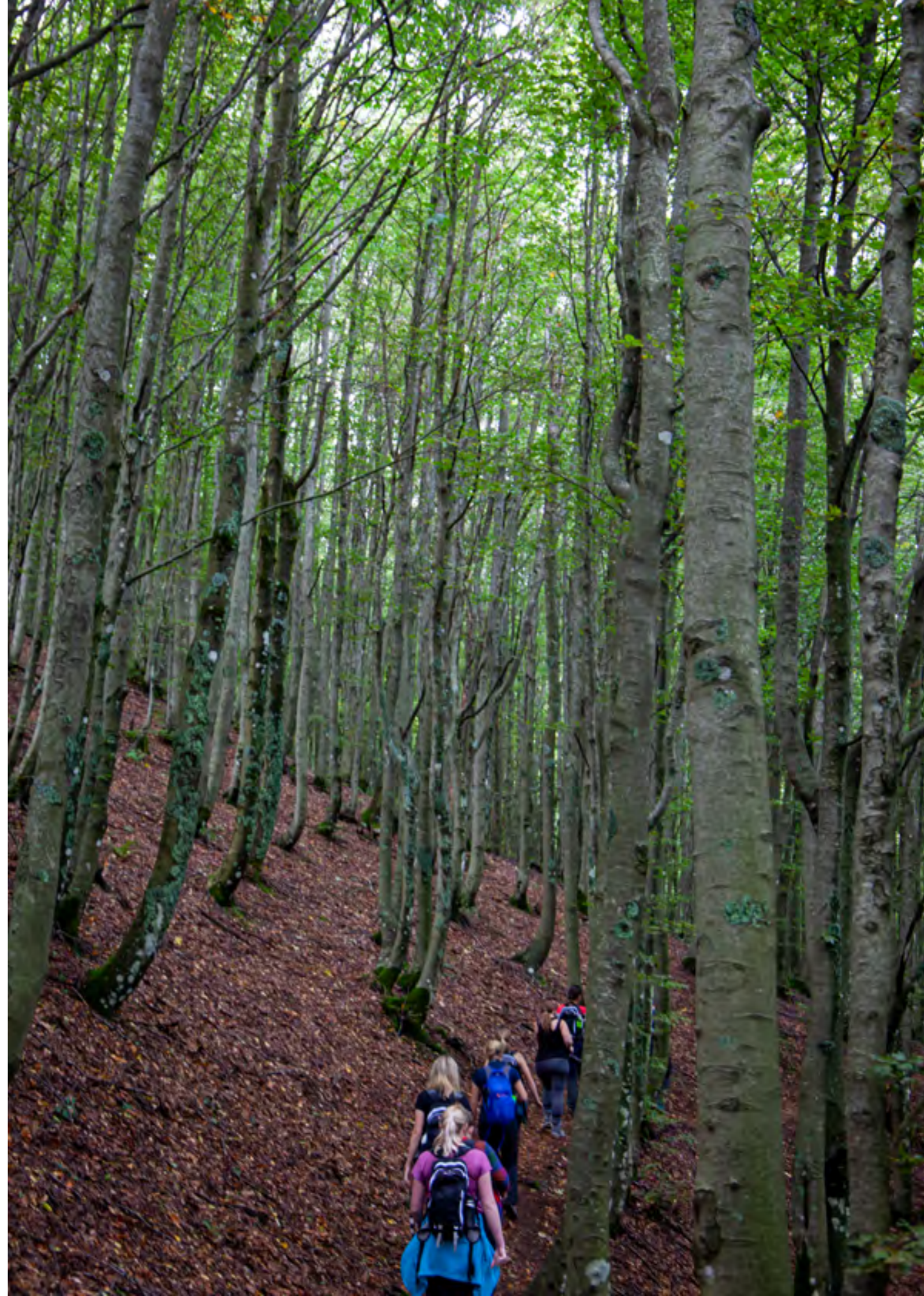
## BAGNO DI ROMAGNA

Up amongst the mountains of the Casentinesi Forest National Park, you'll find Bagno di Romagna, a charming and small town which is famed for the many thermal spa hotels and resorts here. Not that

well known with foreign tourists, this is an ideal place to escape for some R&R.

I stayed at the Roseo Euroterme Wellness Resort, which was vast and offered everything from a spa circuit, indoor and outdoor thermal pools through to blood sampling and recovery options. The town itself is compact but delightful, and whether you want a quick hop to nearby hiking options, or just to indulge in the Romagna side of the region's cuisine – there is a difference even here in Emilia-Romagna. A great spot to sample the differences in cheese and ingredients, with mushrooms being a real focus during the season, is the lovely Hostaria Volante, a small restaurant in the town with a very creative own who as well as designing the menu, has hand made the water glasses through to the lampshades.

[LINK TO BLOG](#)







# 10 PHOTOGENIC PLACES TO VISIT IN RIMINI

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Photography

AMANDA O'BRIEN, JURGA RUBINOVAITE, CELINE SIMON, MILOU VAN ROON, MICHAEL TURTLE

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Words

AMANDA O'BRIEN

Blog

THE BOUTIQUE ADVENTURER



RIMINI HAS LONG BEEN FAMOUS FOR ITS LONG STRETCHES OF GOLDEN SANDS AND LOCATION ON THE ADRIATIC SEA. HOWEVER, THE BIG SURPRISE FOR ME OF RIMINI WAS ITS ABSOLUTELY CHARMING OLD TOWN.

Rimini was established in 268 BC by the Romans so there is a lot of Rimini history. The beaches are lovely but should be combined with the Rimini old town plus some of the neighboring towns when it comes to Instagrammable Things to do in Rimini.

### 1. ROMAN RIMINI

Rimini is the point where two of the most important Roman roads meet: the Via Emilia, that connects Rimini to Piacenza, and the Via Flaminia, leading from Rome over the Apennines to the Adriatic Coast. At the junction of these two roads, you'll find the Arco d'Augusto, the southern entrance point of the old city and dedicated to Emperor Augustus, which together with the Ponte di Tiberio, are among the two most important landmarks of Rimini. The Ponte di Tiberio was one of the highlights of my Rimini sightseeing. This beautiful bridge was constructed in 20 BC and is still in perfect condition. It sits at the end of the canal that runs from Rimini beach to the Parco XXV Aprile. This was one of my favourite Rimini images and a great thing to do in Rimini at night is to come and photograph the bridge when it is lit up.

### 2. BORGO SAN GIULIANO

This village or neighborhood of Rimini in Italy was founded in the year 1000 and was the old fisherman district. Walk across the Tiberius bridge and you will be in Borgo San Giuliano, which is full of small alleys, cute houses, colourful murals, pedestrianized areas, flowering balconies, well-positioned Vespas, and a wonderful atmosphere. It is also home to many of the best restaurants in Rimini such as La Marianna and the lovely La Esse Romagnola which has a lovely outdoor seating area.

### 3. FELLINI INSPIRED STREET ART

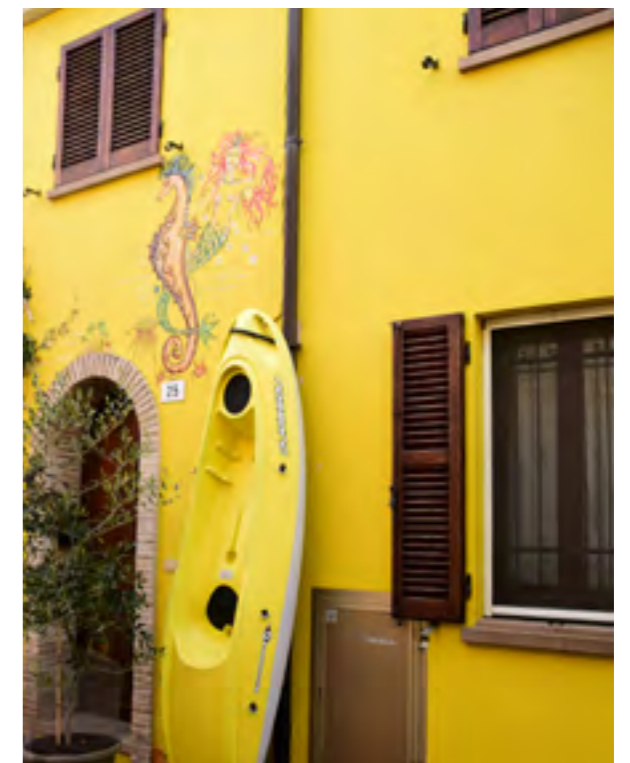
The street art of Rimini is inspired by the films of Fellini! Apparently the first murals appeared in 1980 during a festival. Their original purpose was to tell the story of the inhabitants of Borgo San Giuliano and particularly its relationship with the sea. However, following the death of Fellini in 1994, the area was dedicated to the director. Murals began to appear which reflected key scenes from Fellini's films and some of his most original characters.

I loved these little backstreets filled with such beautiful and quirky art and it was an Instagram dream come true! I highly recommend adding a street art walk to the top of your Rimini things to do list.

### 4. CINEMA FULGOR

Federico Fellini watched his first-ever film at Cinema Fulgor when he was 5 years old. As a young man, he began to design beautiful posters for the films on show at Cinema Fulgor. The cinema owner was so impressed that he gave Fellini and his brother free entry to the cinema in return for his works.

The cinema is absolutely beautiful. It is decorated in an Art Nouveau style featuring deep reds and gold. It still shows films and also hosts cultural events. And in 2020 the Fellini museum opened. This will be part of the festival to celebrate 100 years since the birth of Fellini. If you'd like to learn more about Fellini take a 2 1/2 hour private Fellini focussed tour with a guide. Taking a tour and watching a film at this beautiful cinema is one of the most fun things to do in Rimini when raining.





THIS WAS ONE OF MY FAVOURITE RIMINI IMAGES AND A GREAT THING TO DO IN RIMINI AT NIGHT IS TO COME AND PHOTOGRAPH THE BRIDGE WHEN IT IS LIT UP.







## 5. THE PIAZZAS OF RIMINI OLD TOWN

Piazza Tre Martiri is at the heart of Rimini and is one of its most popular spots. The square has a mix of historic and modern buildings. From Chiesa Dei Paolotti and Tempietto di Sant Antonio to high-end shops and restaurants. A 5-minute walk from Piazza Tre Martini Rimini is Piazza Cavour. This lovely square has some fantastic architecture, a great Cardinal statue, the newly restored Galli Theatre and it often hosts markets.

## 6. RIMINI BEACHES

Rimini is well known as a beach town thanks to its 15kms of sand and sea. This is one busy beach! The Rimini beach has many resorts and beach clubs. As a result, the beaches of Rimini are buzzing! They are really an extension of the Rimini city centre with some sand and water thrown in! I found the beaches

of Rimini most photogenic when all the umbrellas of the beach resorts were up but somewhat empty at sunset. This was also a lovely time to walk along the beach. And just off the beach on Piazzale Fellini is a giant camera sculpture that is very Instagram friendly!

## 7. THE GRAND HOTEL

The Grand Hotel is the best Rimini hotel. It is 110 years old and was made world-famous in Fellini's 1973 film *Amarcord*. The hotel became a national monument in 1994. The Grand Hotel Rimini is still in stunning shape! I loved the old world glamour feel of this hotel. Waiters in white jackets during the day, super high ceilings, decadent shops, old-world charm – the Rimini Grand Hotel is the best combination of stepping back in time and modernity! There are Instagram opportunities all over the Grand Hotel Rimini Italy including the beautifully prepared food. A visit here should be on the list for all Rimini holidays.





## 8. TEMPIO MALATESTIANO

Tempio Malatestiano is the unfinished cathedral church of Rimini and very beautiful. It is full of chapels, stunning glass windows, and some rather curvy angel sculptures!

## 9. GALLI THEATRE

The Galli Theatre opened in 1857 and featured opera and theatre. Located on Piazza Cavour, it was the cultural centre of Rimini. Unfortunately, the Galli theatre in Rimini was badly bombed in World War 2 – about 90% of the auditorium and stage were destroyed. It finally opened in 2018 with a stunning recreation of what it most likely looked like before the 1942 bombing. It is an absolutely beautiful theatre featuring thick red velvet, white and gold panels, arches and columns and some rather impressive chandeliers! Guided tours of the Galli theatre are run on Saturdays and Sundays by reservation. Next to the Galli Theatre and likewise overlooking the central Piazza Cavour, do not miss a visit to the recently inaugurated Museum of Contemporary Art PART.



## 10. THE OLD FISH MARKET

The old Fishmarket in Rimini is a lovely covered promenade where the people of Rimini come to chat, eat, drink and relax. The 18th-century marble counters of the Rimini fish market now make for seats. This market area is extremely popular and very busy at night. And it often serves as the Rimini flower market during the day. It is very photogenic.

[LINK TO BLOG](#)





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# PO DELTA NATURE PARK

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Words & Photography:  
DANIEL JAMES CLARKE

Blog  
DAN FLYING SOLO



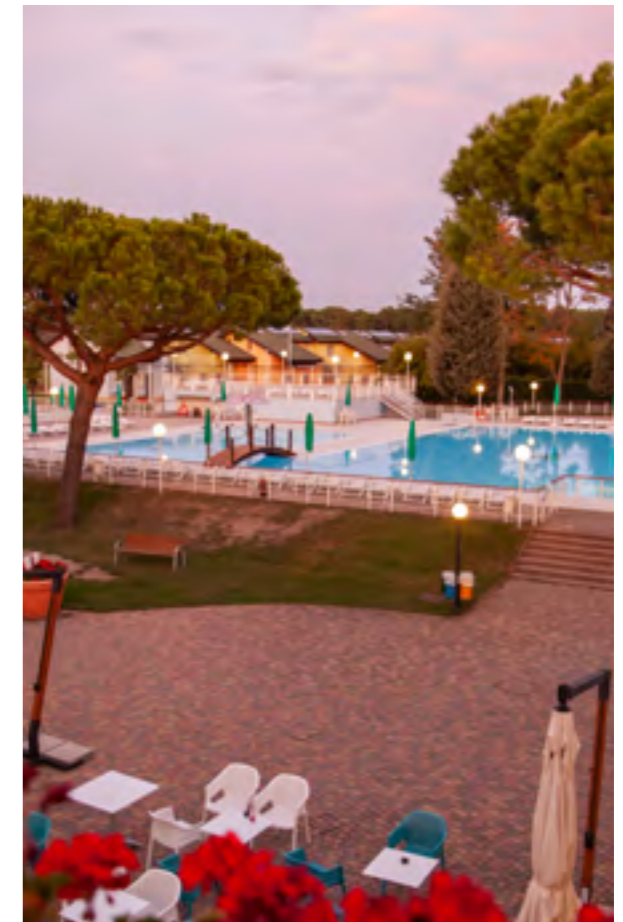
The Po Delta Nature Park sits across both Emilia-Romagna and Veneto, and I stayed at the Spiaggia Romea Club Village on the Emilia-Romagna side. This large resort, with pools, water sports, horse riding and a range of accommodation is set in a beautiful area that has been preserved by the current owners. Earmarked initially for property development, the land was all bought, and the resort takes up just a fraction, leaving the rest of the area to nature and wildlife to blossom. An electric golf cart can take you on a 'mini-safari' through this part of the park.

BUT THE REAL MAGIC LIES IN THE LAGOONS AND SALTWORKS OF THE PARK JUST OUTSIDE COMACCHIO TOWN.

Whether you opt to cycle, take a boat, or both, the views are made that more special by the Flamingos that can be found on the lake. Although a migration spot, there are now permanent flocks of Flamingos who have set up their home here.

Other options in the Po Delta National Park include heading to the Sacca di Goro by the border of the region to see traditional clam fishing with the 'rasca' (although this is quite a detour so, not ideal if you are short on time) or relaxing in one of the spa and wellness facilities.

[LINK TO BLOG](#)







# ROMAGNA – HIDDEN GEM OF ITALY

WOULD YOU LIKE TO VISIT A MORE AUTHENTIC PART OF ITALY THAT'S NOT YET OVERRUN BY TOURISTS, BUT ARE NOT SURE WHERE TO START? THE EMILIA-ROMAGNA REGION IN NORTHERN ITALY MIGHT JUST BE WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR! EMILIA-ROMAGNA IS ABSOLUTELY BREATHTAKING AND IT TRULY HAS IT ALL: THOUSANDS OF YEARS OF HISTORY, ART, ARCHITECTURE, BUT ALSO STUNNING BEACHES, LIVELY LOCAL TOWNS, BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPES, AND SOME OF THE VERY BEST FOOD IN ITALY.

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Words & Photography  
JURGA RUBINOVAITE

Blog  
FULL SUITCASE



IN THIS ARTICLE, YOU CAN READ ABOUT SOME TRULY AMAZING PLACES IN ITALY THAT NOT MANY TOURISTS KNOW ABOUT. WE ALSO SHARE A SIMPLE 3-DAY EMILIA-ROMAGNA ITINERARY THAT BRINGS YOU TO SOME OF ITALY'S AMAZING HIDDEN GEMS INCLUDING PLACES LIKE RIMINI, RAVENNA, FORLIMPOPOLI, AND SANTARCANGELO DI ROMAGNA.

## RAVENNA

Ravenna is a place full of centuries-old history that will make you put a lot into a different perspective. Back in the 5th century, Ravenna was a booming town, the capital of the Western Roman Empire. Many of the landmarks and monuments in Ravenna date from that period and are over 1500 years old. Behind the simple exteriors of Ravenna's oldest buildings, you'll find the most incredible treasures and extraordinary mosaics that will take your breath away. The main reason people come to Ravenna is to see its famous mosaics. Places absolutely not to be missed in Rimini are Basilica di San Vitale and Mausoleo di Galla Placidia. The mosaics here are simply stunning; I have never seen anything comparable before. Just next to Basilica di San Vitale, you'll find the National Museum of Ravenna – it's well worth a visit as well! Somewhat lesser-known, but also worth a visit, is the nearby Basilica di Sant'Apollinare Nuovo.

**TIP: If you have a car or are willing to take a bus or a taxi, make sure to also visit Basilica di Sant'Apollinare in Classe. It's a bit outside of Ravenna, but this 6th-century church with incredible 6-7th-century mosaics is also one of the must-see landmarks of Ravenna. The church is completely different than Basilica di San Vitale but really impressive in its own way. Near the church, there is another interesting museum – CLASSIS Ravenna.**

Piazza del Popolo, the main town square, is another place not to be missed when visiting Ravenna. Make sure to stroll around the surrounding small streets – the Old Town is very compact and there are so many really nice places to discover. Dante Alighieri, one of

the best-known Italian poets, was banned from Florence and died in Ravenna in 1321. Dante's Tomb is another place that is usually listed as one of the places to see in Ravenna. Just like any Italian town, Ravenna is so much more than the main historic landmarks! Stroll the streets of the Old Town, go shopping, get a gelato or Italian coffee at one of the countless cafés and soak up the atmosphere of this beautiful little town. Ravenna has also some really nice beaches. We visited one of the beach bars in the evening and it had such a great atmosphere! If you're visiting in summer, you may want to spend a couple of hours (or days) at the beach too!

**TIP: Even though not anywhere as busy as the biggest places in Italy, Ravenna is at its best early in the morning or late in the afternoon, when there aren't too many day tourists around. I, therefore, recommend spending at least one night in Ravenna.**

## FORLIMPOPOLI – CASA ARTUSI – SANTARCANGELO DI ROMAGNA

Start your day with an early morning walk in Ravenna. It's a great way to have the town all to yourself and see the main landmarks without the crowds. Then head to Forlimpopoli (45 min drive from Ravenna).

## FORLIMPOPOLI

Forlimpopoli is a small town in the Emilia-Romagna region that is so typically Italian! As we ar-



rived, there was a weekly market taking place in the main town square. A typical local market where you can buy everything from local cheeses and fresh vegetables to hats and shoes and everything in between. On a weekday in September, we were clearly the only tourists in town and it was fun to mingle with the locals. Forlimpopoli is a small town, but it's definitely worth a visit. Don't miss the town square, Piazza Antonio Fratti, and Rocca Albornoziana (aka Rocca of Forlimpopoli), the impressive 14th-century castle.

The main reason to come to Forlimpopoli is to visit Casa Artusi. Pellegrino Artusi, the father of Italian gastronomy, was born in Forlimpopoli in 1820. He was a businessman and the 19th-century Italian 'food blogger'. During his business trips, he collected hundreds of Italian recipes and in 1891 published Italy's first cookbook. The last edition of 'The Art of Eating Well', published in 1911, contains 790 unique Italian recipes. At Casa Artusi, you can visit the library and see the original edition of Artusi's cookbook, as well as many later editions. There is also a very good

restaurant where you can try some of the best dishes, following the recipes from Artusi's book. And finally, there is also the possibility to attend a cooking class. Which is what we did. With the help of local volunteers, we made all sorts of Italian pasta. These volunteers are called Marietta, just as Artusi's maid who used to try all the recipes for him. These kind ladies helped us with the pasta and afterwards made some delicious sauces, following Artusi's recipes no. 55 and no. 71. Our cooking class ended with a multiple-course lunch tasting local specialties, our self-made pasta, and local wines and deserts. We didn't want to leave...

**TIP: If you would like to attend a cooking lesson at Casa Artusi, it's best to contact them via their website. For English speaking guests, they usually arrange individual cooking lessons, based on your schedule and interests.**





## SANTARCANGELO DI ROMAGNA

Santarcangelo di Romagna is a small town close to Rimini. You can drive there by car or with a rented e-bike, as we did. The ride through the countryside is quite easy and relatively flat, but having the added power of an e-bike sure helped!

There are several reasons to visit Santarcangelo di Romagna and it appears to be quite a popular tourist destination in Emilia-Romagna. Another gem of Emilia-Romagna that I never heard about before... Grotte Tufacee Comunalì are a series of 150 underground caves hidden all over (or should I say under) the town of Santarcangelo. Nobody seems to know what the original purpose was, or how old the tunnels are (estimates range from 1000 BC to the 15th century – not exactly precise...).

These tunnels were used as cellars and also as shelters during the war. The local tourist office organizes guided tours to the tunnels several times a day. At the moment, a tour costs 2,5 EUR and is totally worth it!

Artisan Printing House Marchi, dating from 1633, is another place you have to see in Santarcangelo di Romagna. Here you can find local souvenirs made using an ancient rust dying technique and Mangano – a giant wheel used to iron the materials. They offer guided tours (hours depend on the season), but you can also just visit the shop. Very interesting! Other points of interest include Piazza Ganganelli and Arco

Ganganelli, Rocca Malatestiana, and several museums including the quirky Museum of Buttons.

The historic center of Santarcangelo di Romagna is quite compact and you can easily see most of the highlights in half a day. It's a wonderful place to include in your Emilia-Romagna itinerary!

## BONUS TIP – VISIT SAN MARINO

After visiting Rimini, we continued our journey and visited the Republic of San Marino. Surrounded by Italy, San Marino is a tiny independent country. It's so close to Rimini that it would be a pity not to visit! Therefore I recommend including San Marino in your Emilia-Romagna itinerary!

So, these are our suggestions for a trip to the Emilia-Romagna region in Italy. I hope that this article inspired you to visit these lesser-known places and discover a more authentic side of Italy. This is an Italian region that not many foreign visitors see. To give you an idea, more than 80% of tourists in Rimini are Italians. So if you are looking to discover the true Italy beyond the crowded places like Venice, Florence, or Rome, now you know where to find it... Oh, and did I mention that Emilia-Romagna is known as Italy's best food region? You're warned – you'll probably have to loosen up your belt after this trip...

[LINK TO BLOG](#)





# ACTIVITIES AND TIPS FOR YOUR ACTIVE HOLIDAY IN FORESTE GASENTINESI

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Words & Photography  
VIKTORIA URBANEK

Blog  
CHRONIC WANDERLUST



THE FORESTE CASENTINESI IS LOCATED IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE EMILIA-ROMAGNA REGION, BORDERING WITH TUSCANY. OUTDOOR LOVERS WILL FIND HERE A TREASURE CHEST FULL OF BEAUTIFUL HIKING TRAILS, CYCLE PATHS AND THE POSSIBILITY TO KAYAK.

#### HIKING IN FORESTE CASENTINESI

The Foreste Casentinesi is like a fairy tale forest, especially in autumn. The sun's rays, which make it through the dense foliage of the treetops, create a mystical flair in the forest. In Foreste Casentinesi you can choose from 160 different numbered and signposted hiking trails. If you would walk them all, you would need 250 (!) hours.

#### E-MOUNTAINBIKING

And although I'm not quite a big fan of cycling, I give e-Mountainbiking a try every once in a while. Before my first attempt on the electric bike, I didn't have too positive an opinion about it, but after trying it out a year ago in Carinthia, my attitude changed.

At Foreste Casentinesi, there are some beautiful routes that are worth a trip by bike, whether electric or traditional. One of them starts at the Ecomuseo IDRO and leads up to the shimmering, turquoise waters of the Ridracoli dam. There are also guided tours that combine the bike tour with a boat trip. Bicycles and e-mountain bikes can be picked up directly from the museum, by appointment.

#### KAYAKING AT THE RIDRACOLI DAM

In the warmer months you can go for a kayak trip on the beautiful Ridracoli lake or visit the most beautiful corners by small boat.

#### INFO RIDRACOLI

##### Boat trips

**From the end of March to September (depending on the weather) there are regular boat trips on the lake. It is best to call in advance and ask for the exact departure times and weather conditions.**

##### Kayak tours

**From April to September (also depending on weather and water level) kayak tours often take place on Sundays and by appointment at the Ridracoli lake.**











## THE BEST PASTA IN FORESTE CASENTINESI

The Agriturismo Biologico Poderone is a place where you can truly relax, situated in the middle of nowhere in the national park with a wonderful panoramic view. Every now and then, deer can be heard in the distance and those who know a bit of Italian can listen to the stories of the hosts.

And exactly here it was, where I enjoyed probably the best pasta of my life: Beetroot pasta aglio e olio with lots of Parmigiano Reggiano. But also everything else like appetizers, salads, snacks and desserts were almost too good to be true. I would have loved to have eaten every single day here.

If your mouth is watering now, then you should definitely make a reservation before your visit. You can reach the agriturismo at +39 543 980069.

The Agriturismo Biologico Poderone also has rooms and is therefore a good starting point for hiking and cycling excursions.

[LINK TO BLOG](#)



# WALKING THE ST. FRANCIS WAY

FROM RIMINI TO LA VERNA

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Words & Photography:  
*SIMON FALVO*

Blog  
*WILD ABOUT TRAVEL*







FROM THE SEA TO THE APENNINES, AMID AN EVER-CHANGING SCENERY THAT BECOMES MORE BEAUTIFUL WITH EACH STEP. THAT IS THE CAMMINO DI SAN FRANCESCO FROM RIMINI TO LA VERNA, THE NEW ADDITION TO THE ST FRANCIS WAY. AN EXHILARATING LONG-DISTANCE HIKE.

Over the last few years, I've grown increasingly fond of slow travel, places off the beaten track, and long-distance hikes. That's why I was thrilled to walk the Way of St Francis – Cammino di San Francesco in Italian – starting in Rimini and leading to La Verna. I got to discover the stunning landscapes of inland Emilia-Romagna. And it's been an incredible experience.

#### HISTORY OF THE PILGRIMAGE ROUTE

The Way of St. Francis is overall relatively recent. Until 2013, the trail started in La Verna and ended in Rome, passing through Assisi. It's a long-distance pilgrimage route that touches some of the most significant places in the life of Saint Francis.

However, 2013 marked the inauguration of a new route from Rimini to La Verna to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the journey of St Francis in Valmarecchia and across the Emilia-Romagna region. Created by the Association Umana Dimora, this long-

distance hike covers 118km (73mi) from the sea through the Apennines, to finally reach La Verna in 5 or 6 days.

La Verna sanctuary is famous for being the place where St Francis used to spend long periods of spiritual retreat, and where he received the stigmata in 1224. What is lesser-known, though, is that St Francis received La Verna as a gift in Emilia-Romagna. When he visited the town of San Leo in 1213, St Francis preached in the square, and his words struck one of the nobles who had gathered to listen to this extraordinary man. Subsequently, Orlando Catani, Count of Chiusi, asked to meet Francis in person. Eventually, he gifted him with the mount of La Verna, which he deemed would be a suitable place for a spiritual retreat.

With this recent addition, the Cammino di San Francesco develops further north from Tuscany to Emilia-Romagna. Subsequently, the Way of St Francis overall distance from Rimini to Rome is about 620 km (385mi).







## IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST FRANCIS

Although the Way of St Francis is a pilgrimage route, you have to know that this is not a path walked by the saint. Like the other stretches, the 118 km trail from Rimini to La Verna connects some of the most significant places visited by San Francesco in Emilia-Romagna and Valmarecchia.

Walking in the footsteps of St Francis is a journey through history and universal values. Furthermore, you'll get to discover the stunning scenery and enchanting towns along the route.

## WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO WALK THE WAY OF ST FRANCIS?

April to November is the best time to hike the Cammino di San Francesco. Though the trail starts in the sea town of Rimini, it soon reaches the hills up to the highest point, at 1,349 m (4,425 ft). Thus, in winter, the higher elevations might be blanketed with snow. In autumn, you'll have to take into account that days are shorter, and go for an early start.

I hiked a good portion of the long-distance trail the first week of June and was blessed with sunny days, only at times a little too warm in the areas without shade.

[LINK TO BLOG](#)





# HIKING AND CYCLING DANTE'S WAY

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Words

MARGHERITA RAGG

Photography

NICHOLAS BURNS

Blog

THE CROWDED PLANET



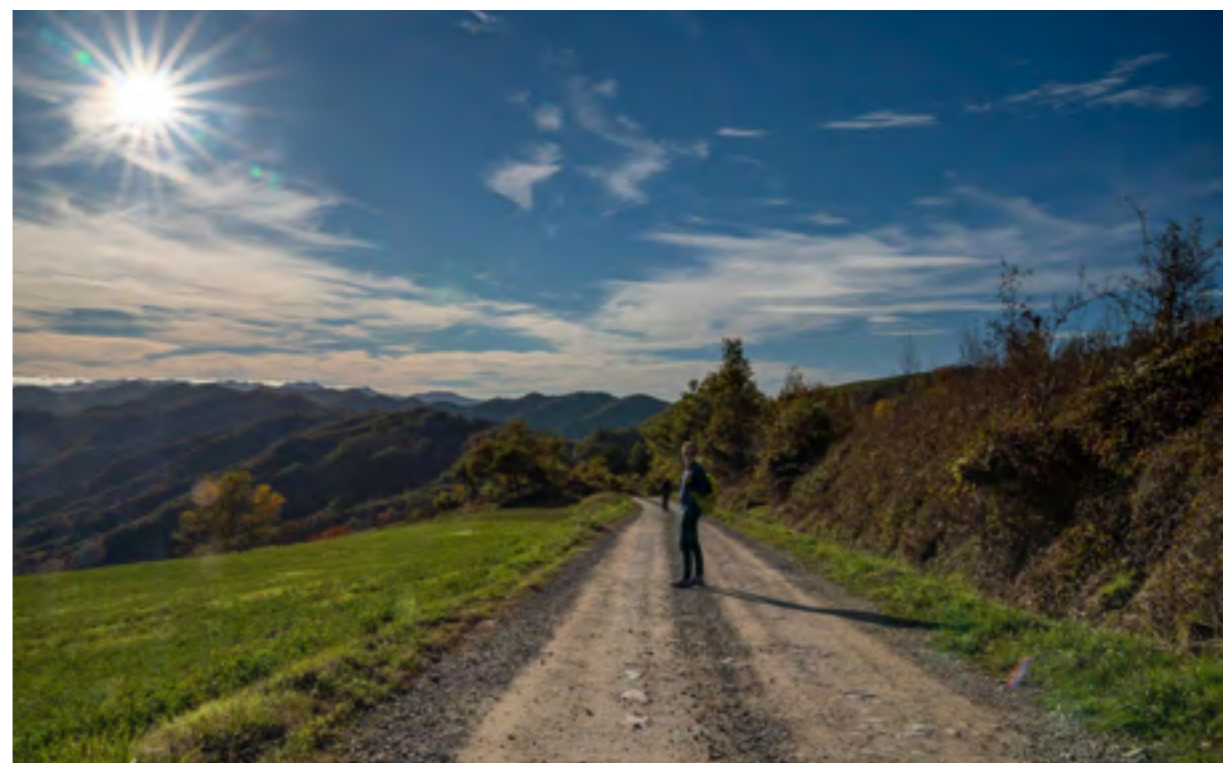


MANY GREAT STORIES ARE THE RESULT OF GREAT JOURNEYS – REAL OR IMAGINED, PHYSICAL OR METAPHYSICAL ONES, LIKE DANTE’S PEREGRINATIONS THROUGH THE UNDERWORLD, NARRATED IN THE DIVINE COMEDY.

Most of us will have heard of Dante and Virgil’s adventures through the circles of the Inferno, between demons and damned souls; of their journey up to the mountain of Purgatory, and finally up to Paradise alongside his sweetheart Beatrice, until he reaches his final vision – *l’amor che move il sole e l’altre stelle* (Love, that moves the Sun and the other stars).

Dante was also a great traveller in real life. After being exiled from his native Florence in 1301, he spent the remainder of his life moving between courts and castles, until his death in Ravenna twenty years later.

The great poet’s wanderings through Romagna and Tuscany can be retraced by modern-day pilgrims along Dante’s Ways, an area to be explored on foot, by bike, or by train, along the ancient roads that historically connected Florence and Ravenna, the poet’s places of birth and death.







## PRACTICAL INFO

Dante's Way can be divided in many stages along trails and paths, some of which date back to Etruscan times.

It can be covered by hikers between March and November, since it reaches altitudes of up to 1500 meters which can be covered in snow during the winter months. On top of that, accommodation in mountain areas and small villages may be hard to find in winter.

Hikers can walk a loop-shaped route, starting in Ravenna and travelling south-west to Florence via Brisighella, and the Acquacheta waterfalls. From Florence, the 'return' path to Ravenna crosses the Casentino valley, and the charming villages of Premilcuore, Dovadola, and Portico di Romagna.

Dante's Way crosses towns and villages - set in the so called Dante's Ways District - where the poet stayed in real life, as well as places mentioned in the Divine Comedy, like Acquacheta waterfall. Along the route, you'll find info panels highlighting Dante's connection with the place.

It's also possible to cover most of the route by bicycle: expert mountain bikers can cycle along the trails of Dante's Way, and those on road bikes can opt for scenic secondary roads with little traffic, perfect to explore on two wheels the Dante's Ways Area.

Naturally, you can also reach locations in the Dante's Ways District by car. Here are some of the highlights you'll encounter along the way, following the footsteps of Italy's greatest poet on a journey through culture, history, and nature, between Romagna and Tuscany.





## DANTE'S WAY HIGHLIGHTS – RAVENNA/FLORENCE

### RAVENNA

Don't be in a rush to hit the trail – Ravenna deserves to be explored for a few days, to discover its incommensurable historical and artistic heritage. The town is UNESCO-listed because of its beautiful Byzantine mosaics – San Vitale and Sant'Apollinare in Classe are probably the best known, but don't miss lesser known gems like the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia and Baptistery of Neon.

Start your journey at the Tomb of Dante, a neoclassical monument in the historic centre of the city, where the Poet's remains were laid to rest. Dante's journeys didn't end after his death in 1321 – his bones were moved several times, and they were even lost for several decades, until they were found by a student in a small box hidden within a wall.

Ravenna's connection with Dante's life doesn't end here. The town was also the birthplace of Francesca, the star-crossed lover made famous by chapter V of *Inferno*, where she is reunited with her lover Paolo.

You can learn more about Francesca and other *Divine Comedy* characters at the Dante Literary Park located just outside Ravenna, where all 100 chapters of the poem are on display, and where pilgrims can collect their trail guide and passport, to receive discounts on accommodation all along the route.

### ORIOLO DEI FICHI

From Ravenna, Dante's Way heads southwest, bypassing Faenza in the direction of Oriolo dei Fichi, a tiny hamlet dominated by a 15th century tower.

At the time, Oriolo dei Fichi was contended between the lords of Faenza and the Dioceses of Ravenna, and a tower was built on the site of an earlier Medieval castle for military purposes. About a century later, Oriolo and its tower became part of the territory of Faenza, and the tower lost its strategic importance.

The tower of Oriolo is open for visits between April and October, on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Entrance is free – it's worth climbing to the top of the tower for a spectacular view stretching all the way to the Apennines foothills, including fields, vineyards and farmhouses.

At the entrance of the tower, info panels show verses and illustrations from chapters VIII, IX and X of *Inferno*, narrating the arrival of Dante and Virgil to the infernal city of Dite, and their encounter with two damned souls in the circle of heretics.

The tower also houses a small shop selling local products, including Centesimino wines, made with an ancient grape grown only in Oriolo and surrounds.

### BRISIGHELLA

The following stage of the route is one of the most scenic, covering 17 km between Oriolo dei Fichi and Brisighella, crossing the calanchi, hills made of clay and gypsum formed as a result of erosion.

Brisighella is one of the most beautiful small towns crossed by this long-distance trail. Try to arrive in the afternoon, and spend some time exploring its historic centre, with narrow streets lined by pastel-coloured houses.

The most unique thing to see in town is the 'Via degli Asini', an elevated road once used to transport gypsum on the back of donkeys, now covered by buildings and lit by arch-shaped windows. Brisighella is surrounded by three rocky hills, atop which you'll find the Castle, the Clock Tower, and the Monticino Church.

When sunset comes, climb up to the Clock Tower, where you can get a bird's eye view of Brisighella, with its terracotta roofs surrounded by hills and countryside. If you have time, Brisighella is the perfect place to spend a 'rest day' – the town is a pleasant place to explore, surrounded by scenic trails and cycle paths immersed in nature.





'MIDWAY UPON THE JOURNEY OF OUR LIFE  
I FOUND MYSELF WITHIN A FOREST DARK,  
FOR THE STRAIGHTFORWARD PATHWAY HAD BEEN LOST.'

**Inferno, Chapter I, 1-3**





'EVEN AS THAT STREAM WHICH HOLDETH ITS OWN COURSE  
THE FIRST FROM MONTE VESO TOW'RDS THE EAST,  
UPON THE LEFT-HAND SLOPE OF APENNINE,

WHICH IS ABOVE CALLED ACQUACHETA, ERE  
IT DOWN DESCENDETH INTO ITS LOW BED,  
AND AT FORLÌ IS VACANT OF THAT NAME,

REVERBERATES THERE ABOVE SAN BENEDETTO  
FROM ALPS, BY FALLING AT A SINGLE LEAP,  
WHERE FOR A THOUSAND THERE WERE ROOM ENOUGH'

**Inferno, Chapter XVI, 94-102**



## MARRADI

After Brisighella, the route continues towards the ruined church of Gamberaldi, another very scenic spot, and then it momentarily leaves Emilia-Romagna to enter Tuscany, where Marradi is located.

Marradi was the birthplace of Dino Campana, a famous Italian poet, and it's worth stopping by for its elegant historic centre, framed by the peaks of the Apennines and lined with elegant buildings.

Marradi is also known for its local chestnuts – come autumn time, you'll find them for sale in wicker baskets all over town.

## SAN BENEDETTO/ACQUACHETA

Leaving Marradi behind, you'll be heading back into Emilia-Romagna. The destination is the small mountain village of San Benedetto in Alpe, in the heart of the Foreste Casentinesi National Park, straddling the regions of Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany.

This stage is one of the longest and hardest of the entire trail, with a considerable uphill altitude difference, but you'll be rewarded by the stunning sight of the Acquacheta waterfall, created by the Montone river tumbling 70 meters over a sandstone wall.

You'll be hearing the waterfall long before you approach, as you hike surrounded by secular trees. In the XVI chapter of Inferno, Dante compared the rumble of the Acquacheta waters to the Flegetonte, a river of boiling blood where thieves and killers are damned to spend eternity.

## FLORENCE

Dante's hometown needs no introduction, having amazed visitors from all over the world for several centuries. Even if it's not your first time in town, and you visited several times before, you'll sure to be amazed by the view of the city as you approach from afar, with the Arno River bisecting the city and the dome of the Duomo dominating the skyline.

In Dante's times, Florence looked very different from now. The town is the birthplace of Renaissance, and most of what we see nowadays dates back to the 15th/16th century. An exception to this is Palazzo Vecchio, one of the most famous sights in town overlooking Piazza della Signoria, built in 1300 – the same year when Dante first put pen to paper, composing those fateful lines.

Another unmissable sight for those following the steps of the great poet is his birthplace, now housing a museum dedicated to Dante's life and work. You won't just learn about Dante as a poet, but also as a soldier, a politician and a man.

Before turning your back on Florence and starting your return path to Ravenna, there's one more place to visit – Dante's cenotaph in the Church of Santa Croce, built in the hope that the Poet's body would one day be returned to his hometown. It portrays the poet sitting on a throne, supported by a statue depicting Italy, while another statue representing Poetry cries on his grave.



## DANTE'S WAY HIGHLIGHTS – FLORENCE/RAVENNA

### POPPI

The 'return' branch of the route towards Ravenna starts by crossing the Casentino valley, the ancestral home of the Guidi family, one of the most important Tuscan noble families in the Middle Ages, who ruled over this valley for 400 years.

Similarly to Dante, the Guidi family supported the Holy Roman Empire in its power struggle against the Pope, a view opposed to that of the central Florence government. For this reason, the poet sought refuge in their castles and mansions when he was exiled from his hometown. He is said to have spent up to a year in the castle of Poppi, where he composed the XXXIII chapter of *Inferno*.

If you have time to see one sight, make sure you visit the Castle. Inside, you'll find a chapel decorated by Taddeo Gaddi, one of Giotto's students, and a layout of the famous battle of Campaldino between Guelphs and Ghibellines, where Dante also fought.

### FORESTE CASENTINESI

After leaving Poppi, the following stages of the route cross the Casentino Valley, dominated by the Foreste Casentinesi National Park. It's time to leave towns behind and head into the wilderness – if you like walking through forests, and you're not afraid of hiking uphill, this is the section you'll probably love best.

The Foreste Casentinesi National Park stretches along the Apennines, connecting Tuscany to Romagna – over 80% of the park is covered in secular beech and fir forests, among the wildest in Italy, virtually untouched by human development.

The Foreste Casentinesi also include the highest altitude point of Dante's Way – Rifugio La Burraia, a mountain hut open in summer, located at 1400 meters in a scenic location right along the border between Romagna and Tuscany.

If you can, plan to hike in summer, to be able to spend a night in this unforgettable location, surrounded by beech forests and meadows from where you can see the peaks of the Apennines stretching all around you.

Alternatively, a great time to visit the Foreste Casentinesi is Autumn – late October is the time where the colours are at their most vivid, and the mountains look like an artist's palette, with splashes of burnt orange, golden yellow and bright red.

### PREMILCUORE

Continuing across the Foreste Casentinesi National Park, the first village you'll encounter is Premilcuore, a tiny town of just over 700 souls. Premilcuore looks, and feels, suspended in time – it's in a remote location, connected to nearby towns by twisty mountain roads.

Premilcuore houses a castle once owned by the Guidi family, and it is crossed by the Rabbi, a fast-flowing mountain river. Just outside the town, it's possible to visit two waterfalls, created by the Rabbi as it makes its way through the valley.

The most famous is the 'Grotta Urlante', a spiral-shaped waterfall ending in an emerald-coloured pool of water, surrounded by rocks. The name 'Urlante' (shouting) refers to the noise made by the water as it rushes through the rocks.

Nearby there's also a Roman bridge, and a panel recounting Dante's journey through the circle of envy in the XIII chapter, where he met souls with their eyes sewn shut with wire.











## PORTICO DI ROMAGNA

Only 9 km from Premilcuore, you'll reach Portico di Romagna, an enchanting town with steep cobbled streets, surrounded by mountains, forests, and waterfalls.

The way into Portico is one of the most scenic of the entire trail – you'll pass an old mill first, and then the spectacular Ponte della Maestà, a single-arch Medieval bridge still preserving the original stonework.

Wandering around Portico, you'll notice another name used alongside Dante's – that of Beatrice, the poet's famous sweetheart. Beatrice's last name was Portinari, and her family hailed from Portico di Romagna, where Palazzo Portinari still stands to this day.

Before heading to your accommodation or continuing on, make sure you visit two places in Portico di Romagna – the spectacular Brusia a Bocconi waterfall, just outside town, and the Dante e Beatrice Municipal Gardens, the ideal place to take a break from all the hiking.

In case you're exploring Dante's Way by car, please be aware that SP25, connecting Premilcuore to Portico di Romagna, is currently closed due to a landslide – even though many GPS apps still mark it as open. The easiest way to travel between the two towns is driving along SS9ter and SP23 to Rocca San Casciano, and then continuing along SS67 – or vice versa.

## DOVADOLA

Dovadola, is probably the oldest place you'll encounter along the route. The first settlement is of Celtic origin, predating Roman times. As you approach Dovadola, you'll notice a large, squat castle overlooking the town – it was first built in the 12th century, and owned by (yes, you guessed it!) the noble Guidi family.

Nowadays, it's a sleepy little town on the edge of the Apennines. Take some time to walk around the streets, and if you want to hike a little more, you can take the trail leading 300 meters up to the Eremo of Montepaolo, where Saint Anthony of Padova lived in the 13th century.

## FORLÌ

After Dovadola, you'll be leaving the Apennines behind you. The rest of the route continues downhill, crossing the thermal town of Castrocaro all the way to Forlì, where the following stage ends.

Forlì is a bustling Romagna town, located along the Via Emilia, the road of Roman origin connecting all the main cities in Emilia-Romagna. Once you reach the historic centre, take a break in Piazza Saffi, the main square in town. Around the square you'll find the San Mercuriale Abbey, the best-known symbol of Forlì, and the Palazzo delle Poste, built in the 1930s when the square was remodeled in Fascist style.

Leaving Forlì behind, the route continues through Pontevico, before finally reaching Ravenna. Make sure you pay another visit to the Tomb of Dante – you'll probably feel closer to the experience of the eternal poet, after walking along his footsteps through Romagna and Tuscany.



[LINK TO BLOG](#)



# PATH OF THE GODS

HIKING FROM BOLOGNA  
TO FLORENCE

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Words

NELLIE HUANG

Blog

WILD JUNKET

Photography

DAVE BRETT, SCOTT TISSON, DANIEL JAMES CLARKE







## WHAT IS THE PATH OF THE GODS?

The Path of the Gods (Via degli Dei in Italian) is an ancient route connecting Bologna to Florence through the Apennines mountain range in northern Italy. On the 135-km trail, you are literally following in the footsteps of the Romans as it retraces parts of the historic Flaminia Military Roman Road built over 2200 years ago.

**NOTE! This Path of the Gods is often confused with The Path of the Gods on the Amalfi Coast. Both are named Via degli Dei, but the Amalfi trail is only 4 miles (7 km) and takes 1.5 to 2 hours to walk. This one, from Bologna to Florence takes 5 to 6 days to walk.**

## HOW THE PATH OF THE GODS GOT ITS NAME

The name Via degli Dei translates to mean “Path of the Gods”. It comes from the names of the five peaks this path crosses over. They include Mount Adone, Monzuno, Mount Venus, and Mount Lunario. Monte Adone is the highest one, with its peak at 654m above sea level. You’ll not only see sweeping views over the Bologna Hills, but also craggy sandstone cliffs that create a unique landscape.

While you won’t be traversing high altitudes during the trek, there are a few uphill and downhill walks. But they are not overly steep and are short ascents and descents.

## WHY HIKE THE PATH OF THE GODS

Created in the 1990s, the Path of the Gods is designed to pass through the mountains and rural villages of the Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany regions of Italy. The hiking trail also crosses several nature reserves and weaves its way past many monasteries and sanctuaries.

Today, it is a popular hiking and biking trail among Italians — but it’s still relatively unknown among foreign visitors, so go soon! Not only will you

be exploring the backroads of Italy where tourists are few and far between, you’ll be seeing its nature, learning its history, and experiencing its rich culinary culture.

## IS IT EASY TO HIKE THE PATH OF THE GODS?

Generally speaking, the Path of the Gods is relatively easy and almost anyone with a reasonable physical fitness level can do it. The trail does not reach high altitudes, and neither are there steep ascents or rough terrain. You’re mostly walking on ridges and crossing hills of no more than 1200m high.

You’ll need five or six days to walk the 135km trail at a comfortable pace. That allows you to walk 13–20km a day, which is around 3–5 hours. You don’t need to hike the whole way either — you can also choose to skip some of the less-interesting parts and use the time to visit monasteries or enjoy the spa. It’s all up to you.

If you prefer to walk at a leisurely pace, I recommend hiking the Path of Gods with a tour operator. My hike was organised by Appennino Slow, a tour operator that encourages travelers to go slow and explore meaningfully. The itinerary they designed for me was perfect, incorporating rest days and adding museum visits and cooking demonstrations.

## HOW TO HIKE THE PATH OF THE GODS

The Path of Gods is marked by red and white symbols and signs. You’ll find them at the beginning and at the most important intersections. There are also sign boards in each town, with information on the destinations. But note that everything is written in Italian, only some information boards in towns are translated to English.

Similar to the popular Camino de Santiago, hikers can also get a credential (similar to a passport) and receive a certificate at the end. You can pick one up at the Bologna Tourist Office. Remember to get a stamp at each of your accommodations to present it to the Tourist Office in Florence for your certificate.



## HIKE THE PATH OF THE GODS INDEPENDENTLY OR ON A GUIDED TOUR?

It is possible to hike the trail on your own, but you might not find your way as only some parts of the trail are signposted. The beginning of the trail in particular didn't have any signs. The signs for the trail only started appearing at Via de Bregoli after we left Bologna behind. Also, I didn't see many hikers on the Path of the Gods, which was great. But if you were walking independently, you won't be able to ask around or get help if you need. When I did the Camino de Santiago, there were so many other hikers that it was easy to follow the path.

With a guide, you can see a lot more of the flora and fauna (we even spotted a peregrine falcon), and understand the history and environment. My guide Stefano Fazzioli from Appennino Slow was an excellent guide and a wealth of information. He was patient and walked alongside me at my slow pace, sharing interesting info and stories. He wrote the official guide to the Path of Gods (in Italian) and knows the trail inside out.

## WHO WILL ENJOY THE PATH OF THE GODS?

The Path of the Gods is suitable for medium-level hikers — those who can hike around 10–20km a day and prefer not to hike for more than one week. It's perfect for avid hikers who want to go slightly off the beaten path in Italy or combine city visits with a

trek. As I mentioned, I hardly saw other hikers on the trail. The only people I met was a group of hikers from Bologna, who were beginner hikers. They mentioned that this was the first multi-day hike they've done.

That's the beauty of the Path of the Gods: many people actually hike the trail (mostly Italians) but because of the way it's designed, you don't really cross paths with others. Some trails like the Camino de Santiago can get too crowded sometimes.

## WHEN TO HIKE THE PATH OF THE GODS

The best time to hike the Path of Gods is in spring (April to May) and autumn (September to October) when temperatures are mild.

It can get very hot in summer with temperatures rising to 104°F ( or 40°C) during the day. In winter, temperatures in the mountains drop to zero and there can be snow sometimes.

I hiked the Path of the Gods at the end of May. The weather was excellent on the first few days of my hike — it was sunny but not overly hot, and I was comfortable hiking in t-shirt and pants. But it started raining non-stop halfway through my trek.

It was abnormal as usually it is close to 30 degrees Celsius at this time of the year. I recommend checking the weather forecast a few days before your hike to be prepared for the conditions.



[LINK TO BLOG](#)





# GUIDE TO THE VIA FRANCIGENA

IN EMILIA-ROMAGNA

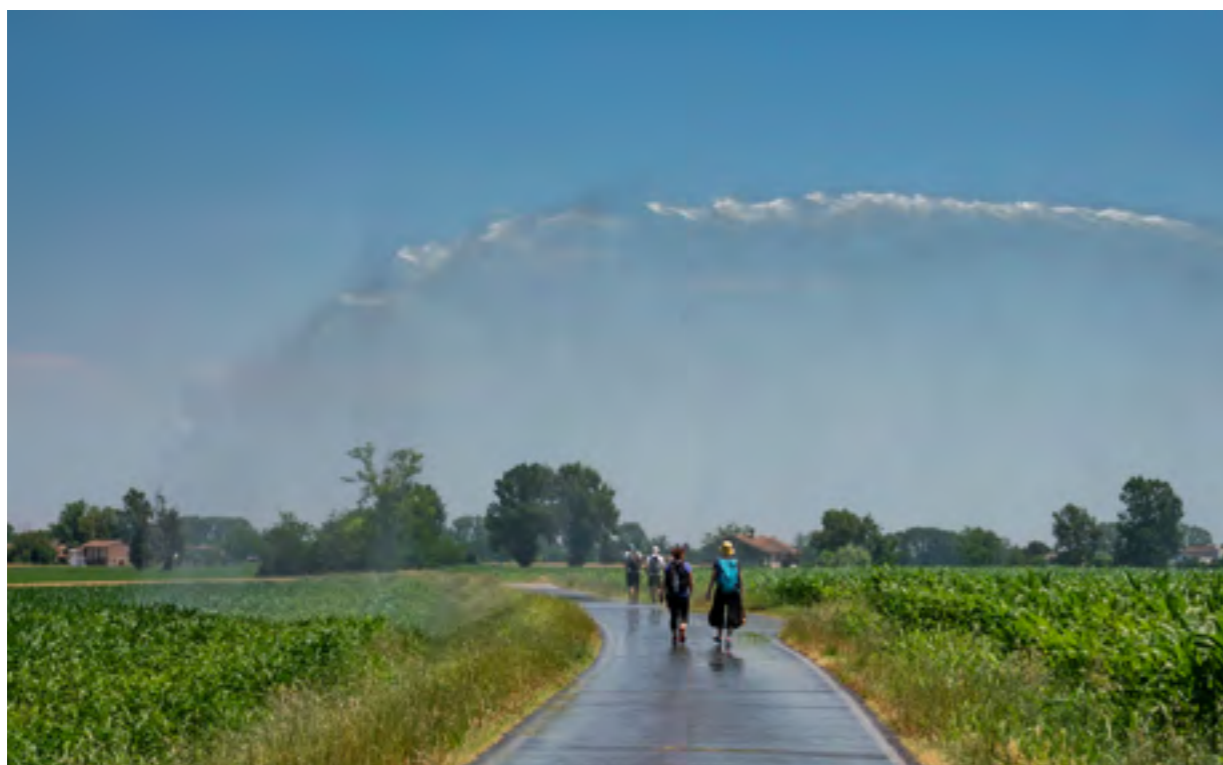
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Words  
MARGHERITA RAGG

Photography  
NICHOLAS BURNS

Blog  
THE CROWDED PLANET





THIS YEAR WE WALKED THE VIA FRANCIGENA IN EMILIA-ROMAGNA, FROM THE PO RIVER TO THE CISA PASS. THE LENGTH OF THIS SECTION IS 143 KM, AND IT CAN EASILY BE HIKE IN ONE WEEK. HERE'S ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW!

Together with the Camino de Santiago, the Via Francigena is Europe's best known long-distance pilgrimage trail. It stretches from Canterbury to Rome, travelling the length of France, cutting across Switzerland and half of Italy, before ending in St. Peter's Square.

Covering the entirety of the Via Francigena takes two months or more, depending on your fitness and on how many times you stop. You can still find traditional 'thru-hikers' walking the entire length, but the Via Francigena also lends itself to being hiked a little at a time.

Many pilgrims dedicate a week or two each year to covering this ancient trail, taking their time to discover historical and natural points of interest found along the trail. This is exactly what we did - starting with the section of the Via Francigena in Emilia-Romagna, 143 km long.

#### VIA FRANCIGENA HISTORY

The 'Francigena' in the trail name may sound like France, and indeed the route crosses modern-day France, but when the pilgrimage route was established in the Middle Ages, the Frankish Kingdom also extended over half of what today is Italy, plus Belgium, the Netherlands and Western Germany. The first recorded chronicle of the route dates back to the year 990, when Archbishop of Canterbury

Sigeric travelled to Rome to receive the pallium (investiture) from the Pope. He recorded his journey back, *de Roma usque ad Mare* (from Rome to the sea, meaning the English Channel) including a number of submansiones, or stops, allowing us to retrace his journey precisely.

Sigeric's account forms the base for what the Via Francigena is today. Thousands of pilgrims followed his footsteps for centuries, and more chronicles were written, some of which survive to this day. The golden age of pilgrimage lasted more than five centuries from Sigeric's journey, all through the Middle Ages. Hostels and rest points sprung up all the way along the Via Francigena, as pilgrims received free rooms and board.

Pilgrim numbers decreased drastically after the Renaissance, before rising again in the mid-20th century. Naturally, modern pilgrims are a completely different breed from their Middle Age counterparts, covering trails for leisure or personal interest rather than religious reasons.

The route of the Via Francigena also changed throughout the centuries. Sigeric walked along Roman roads like the Via Emilia, which nowadays is a busy state road. Local volunteer groups worked hard to create alternatives to busy roads, allowing pilgrims to walk through country lanes, mule tracks, and B-roads with little traffic.



"NATURALLY, MODERN PILGRIMS ARE A COMPLETELY  
DIFFERENT BREED FROM THEIR MIDDLE AGE  
COUNTERPARTS, COVERING TRAILS FOR LEISURE  
OR PERSONAL INTEREST RATHER THAN RELIGIOUS  
REASONS."





## WHEN TO HIKE THE VIA FRANCIGENA

The Via Francigena in Emilia-Romagna can be hiked year round, but we highly recommend avoiding the hot summer months, as there is very little shade in the first two or three stages in the Po Valley. When we hiked in June 2019, daytime temperatures exceeded 35°C during the hottest part of the day, and on the week after our visit, they reached 41°C.

Also, the trail reaches the second-highest point in its entirety on the summit of Monte Valoria (1229 meters) before descending onto the Cisa Pass (1041 meters). It's cold and rainy in winter, and snow is not uncommon. The hostel at the Cisa Pass closes in October, so hiking in the winter months may also prove hard from a logistical point of view.

We recommend hiking the Via Francigena in spring, early summer or autumn. We recommend keeping an eye on the weather forecast and making sure to avoid hiking in the hottest part of the day if it's very hot.

If there are chances of severe thunderstorms, make sure you have a plan B and consider a rest day or skipping a stage. Hail can cause severe damage, and there's little shelter during many stages.

## WHAT TO PACK

We always like to direct people to our long-distance hiking packing list for info on what to pack for something like the Via Francigena. Consider that camping equipment is not needed, as there are plenty of places to stay all along the trail.

## PILGRIM'S CREDENTIAL

Also, make sure you don't forget your Pilgrim's Credential! This small piece of paper allows you to access hostels, get discounted meals, and take advantage of a 10% discount on regional trains all over Italy.

You can order it online, fill in your personal details, and start collecting stamps – from churches, tourist information offices, and hostels you stay at. It will be a cool souvenir of your Via Francigena experience!

[LINK TO BLOG](#)





# HIKING THE VIA DEGLI ABATI

## A COMPLETE GUIDE

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF THE VIA DEGLI ABATI? THIS 120 KM TRAIL ACROSS THE EMILIA-ROMAGNA APENNINES IS WILD, FULL OF HISTORY AND WALKED ONLY BY A FEW HUNDRED BRAVE SOULS EVERY YEAR.

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Words

MARGHERITA RAGG

Photography

NICHOLAS BURNS

Blog

THE CROWDED PLANET







Via degli Abati may very well be the perfect Italian long-distance hike. It's not too long – its best known section is only 120 km that can easily be hiked in 5 or 6 days, with excellent accommodation and food options throughout. The trail crosses the little-visited north-western corner of the Emilia-Romagna Apennines, from the town of Bobbio to Pontremoli just across the Tuscan border, passing through medieval churches and villages, remote mountain passes and forests where pilgrims have walked for millennia, on their way to Rome.

In fact, the Via degli Abati doesn't start in Bobbio, but in Pavia, a further 70 km to the north, and in Pontremoli it connects with the more famous Via Francigena, the popular pilgrimage route from Canterbury to Rome. The Pavia-Bobbio route can be hiked over three days, and it was mapped and marked just recently.

#### VIA DEGLI ABATI HISTORY

The Via degli Abati is a variant of the Via Francigena, the famous pilgrimage trail from Canterbury to Rome. The 'classical' Via Francigena that we know today was the one described by Sigeric the Serious, the Archbishop of Canterbury who journeyed to Rome in 990 AD to receive his investiture by the Pope.

Sigeric's route mainly followed the plains of the Po Valley, largely bypassing the more treacherous Apennines. However, there was another shorter and more direct route, crossing the mountains and dating back to the 7th century – making it three centuries older than Sigeric's Francigena.

This is what we know today as the Via degli Abati. The route was used by pilgrims, abbots, friars and Lombard kings travelling to Rome to pay homage to the Pope. One of the stops along the journey was St. Columban's Abbey in Bobbio and the place of his death, a grotto in the mountains a few kilometres from Bobbio itself. These two sights made the Via degli Abati a popular route for pilgrims from the British Isles and devotees of the Irish saint.

The Via degli Abati was then 'rediscovered' in the 1990s by a local historian, and the trail is now maintained by groups of local volunteers. Only about 800 people hike the Via degli Abati every year, and that includes the 300 people taking part in the Abbot's Way, an ultra trail race taking place every year along the trail. To put things into perspective, the Camino de Santiago is hiked by 250,000 people yearly. Make sure you go there before it becomes the new Camino!









## WHEN TO HIKE THE VIA DEGLI ABATI

The Via degli Abati can easily be hiked from April to October. The maximum altitude reached is just over 1200 meters – snow, rain and poor visibility are a likely occurrence in Winter, and since crowds are not really an issue along the Via degli Abati, you may as well stick to Spring, Summer and early Autumn.

The Abbots Way ultra trail takes place in late April/early May. The trail is still open during the race, but we would recommend to plan alternative dates in order to avoid getting in the way. During Summer time the heat can get unbearable, so plan to start very early if the forecast exceeds 30° in the middle of the day.

We hiked from June 24th to 27th and we were lucky to have excellent weather conditions – the days were dry and sunny and the temperature never exceeded 25°.

[LINK TO BLOG](#)



# TOURING THE MOTOR VALLEY IN EMILIA-ROMAGNA

EMILIA-ROMAGNA IS THE PROUD HOME OF SOME OF THE MOST CUTTING-EDGE CAR PRODUCERS ON THE PLANET. THINK FERRARI OR MASERATI! I DON'T WANT TO OWN A FAST EXPENSIVE CAR, BUT I LOVE TO SEE AND HEAR THEM. SO, I WAS THRILLED WHEN I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT THE MOTOR VALLEY IN EMILIA-ROMAGNA, THE HEART OF THE ITALIAN AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY.

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Words & Photography  
NIENKE KROOK

Blog:  
THE TRAVEL TESTER





## TOUR OF THE ENZO FERRARI MUSEUM MODENA

In Italy, there are two museums for Ferrari-lovers that cannot be missed: the Museo Ferrari Maranello and the Museo Enzo Ferrari Modena. On my visit, we checked out the Enzo Ferrari museum, which opened in 2012.

On site, there are two buildings for us to explore: Enzo Ferrari's birthplace and a new exhibition gallery adjacent to the house. After we get our tickets, we start at the house, which has been restored to preserve the living space of Enzo Ferrari, as well as his garage. With a guided Ferrari tour, we are taken along the highlights of the museum, to make it to the exhibition gallery in time for a movie about the history of Ferrari, which our guide tells us we don't want to miss. We learned a lot of Ferrari facts along the way.

## ENZO FERRARI'S HOUSE & WORKPLACE

We start our tour learning all about the gradual development of the Ferrari logo (yellow being the colour of Enzo's hometown Modena and the initials SF for "Scuderia Ferrari") and its brand as the best race cars out there, the childhood of Enzo Ferrari and how his passion for racing (and later building cars) started in his dad's steel workshop. There is a whole section about all the different Ferrari motors, a detailed history of every single car Ferrari has made, which is more interesting if you're into all the tech details (which I am not so much), but I'm personally more interested in the personal story of how little Enzo turned his passion into a thriving business.

I loved hearing how Enzo was so dedicated to building his cars for speed (and speed alone), and how he had little interest in making cars for everyday use. He only did because he needed funding for his race team, but if it was up to them, his cars could only be seen on the circuit.







## MAIN GALLERY

The futuristic looking main gallery (with a car bonnet-inspired roof) has two different exhibitions each year, and during our visit it was all about the Timeless Masterpieces of the Ferrari collection. Before we check out the cars, a movie is projected on the tall white walls of the exhibition space, displaying the story of Enzo Ferrari's life and his accomplishments and car developments over the years. All supported by dramatic opera music, to give everything some extra grandeur. Then it's time to have a close-up look at all the cars on display. There is a mix of unique, one-of-a-kind cars (going for many millions – if they even were on sale in the first place), as well as limited edition and various types of racing cars, both vintage as modern versions.

That Ferrari is an exceptional car brand, I already knew. But seeing the different cars from up close at the Museo Ferrari Modena and learning a bit more about the history of the brand and its founder Enzo Ferrari, I definitely have grown a bit more respect for it! The combination of great design, exclusivity and great craftsmanship make Ferrari a unique car brand and this museum gave a great look into this world that I knew little about.

The Enzo Ferrari Car Museum is located in the centre of Modena. You can arrive on foot, with public transport or by car. There is free parking at the back of the museum (via Giuseppe Soli 101). From Bologna to Ferrari museum in Modena, it's about 55 minutes driving.

## INFO

**From Modena centrale train station, you can take bus 1, 3 or 9, getting off at Caduti in Guerra street and walking the last bit. Also looking to visit the Museo Ferrari Maranello? There is a special bus service connecting the two museums.**

### Factory Tours

**While we had factory tours at Ducati and Lamborghini, we didn't tour the Ferrari factory Italy on this trip, but this is possible at the museum in Maranello. They offer visitors exclusive Ferrari factory tours to the Fiorano track and along the Viale Enzo Ferrari boulevard in the factory complex. Do note that during these shuttle bus tours, cannot get off the bus, can't take photos or videos. Tickets are 15 Euros.**

### Opening Hours:

**09:30 to 19:00 (April to end October),  
until 18:00 November to end March.  
Closed: December 25th and January 1st.**

### Tickets

**16 Euro (adults) 6 Euro (kids).  
There are also combination tickets with the museum in Maranello.**

[LINK TO BLOG](#)



## THE PANINI COLLECTION OF UNIQUE CARS IN ITALY YOU NEED TO SEE

After feasting on Emilia-Romagna cheese at the Hombre farm, it was time for another highlight: seeing the impressive Maserati car collection that Umberto Panini started in the hangar on his farm.

Maserati doesn't really have their own museum (they have a showroom with some information about their history, that we visited as well, but it was quite small), so lucky for them, Umberto saw the need to create a collection that shows the complete history of the car brand and preserves them for future generations. This collection, we soon learn, is the largest and most exclusive Maserati collection IN THE WORLD! Here you can find almost all old series models and in addition you can find a number of rare prototypes and historic racing cars including the Maserati 250F, Maserati 420M Eldorado and the famous Maserati Tipo63, better known as the 'Maserati Birdcage'.

It seems that the cars used to belong to a collection owned by the factory, then transferred to Maserati owner Alejandro de Tomaso. In 1997, he wanted to sell the collection to Fiat (who bought Maserati in 1993) for a lot of money, but strangely enough they were not really interested.

Lovers of the car brand feared the collection would be split up and sold across the world, so Maserati enthusiast Umberto Panini stepped up and made a deal to buy all the cars in one go. He didn't even have a proper space for all the cars! That's why they ended up in the barn of his farm, where you can find them now.

In the museum you can also learn about the history of the Maserati brand through the many displays. The entire collection contains 23 Maserati cars, but you can also find some models on the first floor of the building. I was expecting them to be just there for display purposes only, but while we were there, two of the cars got driven outside and we learned that many cars often leave the property, for example to participate in national and international events, where they have won many prizes.

Apart from the Maserati cars, you will also find motorbikes, scooters and mopeds on the upper floor and outside you'll see a couple of old tractors, that we just had to climb on.

On the top floor you can also find some rare motorbikes and other interesting vehicles.

### THE TRAVEL TESTER - THE VERDICT

The combination of cheese and cars has proven to be a winning combination and I had a great time spending the morning at the Hombre farm. If you are a die-hard car fan, then you can spend many hours here, for sure. Visiting the museum shows the splendor of the Maserati brand and you really make a journey through time!







## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### Museo Panini Modena

#### Address

Str. Corletto Sud, 320, 41100 Modena MO, Italy

#### How to get there

The Museum is located just outside of Modena. You cannot get here with public transport, so drive here or get a guided tour / taxi from Modena.

#### Opening Hours

Monday-Friday 09:00 – 12:30 and 14:30 to 18:00,  
Saturday 09:00 to 12:30 and Closed on Sunday.  
(March to October)

#### Costs

You can visit the museum for free, just make an appointment on their website. If you are a group, then you need to organise a tour

[LINK TO BLOG](#)



## LAMBORGHINI MUSEUM ITALY VISIT & FACTORY TOUR



The Lamborghini Motor Museum (MUDETEC – Museo Delle Tecnologie) is located in Sant’Agata Bolognese, a small comune in the Metropolitan City of Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, in the north of Italy. While it’s often presented as being the ‘Lamborghini museum Modena’ or the ‘Lamborghini museum Bologna’, it’s actually about a 45 minute drive from the city center of Bologna, so keep that in mind for your visit.

The factory, which is located right next to the museum, is the only place in the world where the Lamborghini cars are made.

The Lamborghini-effect rubbed off on the whole area, because besides the museum and factory, there are also restaurants with a Lamborghini theme (we ate at one where the workers from the factories have lunch themselves) and there are plenty of places where you can rent your ‘own’ supercar for the day.

### THE FACTORY TOUR

Good news: the Lamborghini factory tour is open to anyone interested, as long as you keep the opening hours in mind and get yourself a special ticket. You can book online and the Lamborghini tour is led by a knowledgeable guide who will take you along the entire process of assembling the cars. It’s not cheap at 75 Euros, but I definitely thought it was one of the highlights of our trip!

The Lamborghini factory location is the same as the museum (next door), so just go to the museum desk and they can help you further. Along with your

ticket to the guided tour of the factory, you also get a ticket for the museum, which you can then visit afterwards.

### LAMBORGHINI FACTS

During the tour of the factory, we learned that Lamborghini was founded in 1963 by farmer Ferruccio Lamborghini, who drove a Ferrari himself, but after the clutch of his car kept breaking, he replaced it with the clutch of his tractor... the Lamborghini car was born and the competition with Ferrari was on (hence the bull in the logo: it’s fighting the horse of Ferrari, but it’s also his zodiac sign, Taurus).

The small models at the entrance show us which cars are currently in production: the Aventador, the Huracán and the Urus. They make 13 brand new Aventador cars each day, which doesn’t seem like a lot, but if you see the amount of work that goes into it, you totally understand why (and why they are so expensive – for under 250.000 Euros you get nothing here).

In the factory, we see a big electronic clock telling the workers that they have 35 minutes for each section of the assembly line, before it moves over to the next. You understand there is a lot of precision work needed and everything in the Lamborghini factory seems to be optimized to the max. There are even traffic lights, so the assembly line and all the carts, men and women and even one yellow robot can keep moving throughout the factory without causing any road blocks.



Everything in the factory is 100% handmade and we pass parts of the line that make the engines, the doors, the wheels, the coating of the seats, the trunks ...and many more elements!

We get to feel the super light carbon fibre of the car's body, see samples of the 311 colours you can have your car painted in, where they make all the customized interiors (lots of leather, lots of embroidery) and see cars spin around like rotisserie chicken. It's a sight! The colours on their own are fantastic, it's like I'm in a Harry Potter novel... 'Blu Delphinus', 'Verde Scandal', 'Rosso Alala' and 'Viola Acutus'... I'm under their spell already!

As we walk further and arrive at the Huracán assembly line, the time to make the car increases (only 4,5 are made daily, each station takes 100 minutes) ...and so does the final price, which is about 100.000 more than the Aventador! Everything is of course customized and all cars we see in production have already been sold and are being transformed into the buyer's dream car. The only limit these cars seem to have is the length of the person driving them. If you're over 1m90, this car probably isn't for you as you can't even fold yourself into the car, haha! It's one of the reasons they started building SUV's.

Finally, when the car is finished, it's tested (also on the roads in Sant'Agata) before being shipped to the happy owners. Like a baby, there is a 9-month waiting list to get a car like this, but I'm sure that when it finally arrives, you'll love it forever.

#### THE MUSEUM – PAST

At the wonderful museum, you can walk through time and learn all about the history of Lamborghini, starting in the past at the ground floor. Ferruccio Lamborghini never intended for his cars to participate in races, so very much the opposite of Enzo Ferrari!

#### THE MUSEUM – FUTURE

On the top floor of the museum, you can find the cars that are currently in production, as well as some other futuristic models.

Make sure to walk all the way to the back of the room (on the left), because there we found a Lamborghini disco-room, with loud dance music and videos, haha, crazy!

#### LAMBORGHINI DRIVING EXPERIENCE IN VR

Another cool thing in the back of the room on the top floor was the virtual reality driving experience. This simulator lets you pick your favourite car and race track and then you get to do a few laps before you inevitably crash into the barriers (at least, that's what we all did – it's hard, but a good laugh!)







## THE GIFT SHOP

Before you leave, you might want to check out the Lamborghini gift shop (if you dare -things are expensive!). You'd almost miss it on the way out, because it's located in the building next to the museum. So go back outside, then into the next building and past a little reception- and seating area. Then you'll find the shop.

They have everything from clothing and hats to little models, watches and even Lamborghini bags (loved them!), so for the fans, this is a stop not to miss. Whether you're a car fanatic or just an admirer of good design, I can recommend a visit to the Lamborghini museum and also definitely the Lamborghini factory. It's a unique experience seeing how these super cars are made and the work that goes into them.

Of course don't forget to drive a Lamborghini at the simulation in the back of the museum on the top floor! It's probably the only Lamborghini test drive you'll dare to ever do, once you know just how expensive these cars are!

## LAMBORGHINI MUSEUM & LAMBORGHINI FACTORY VISIT

### Address

**Automobili Lamborghini/Museo Lamborghini via Modena 12 40019 Sant'Agata Bolognese**

### How to get there by car

**direction Ferrara > direction Nonantola > direction Bologna > S. Agata Bolognese (around 40 minutes). You can get a helpful map at the tourist information office.**

### Museum Hours

**10:00-12:00 and 14:30-17:00  
(Mon-Fri, closed on weekends)**

### Factory Tours

**Tours start at 09:30 and the last tour starts at 15:45 (remember this is a working factory, so it's closed on the weekend) - Also remember: no camera/ phones allowed!**

### Admission

**€15 (museum entry only),  
€20 (museum entry + guided tour of museum)  
€75 (museum entry + production line visit)**

[LINK TO BLOG](#)



# DUCATI FACTORY TOUR

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Words  
KERWIN MCKENZIE

Blog:  
PASSRIDER

Photography  
NIENKE KROOK & NICHOLAS BURNS







When I was about 8 or 9, I fell off my uncle's motorbike. I wasn't paying attention and when he turned right, I leaned left and fell off. My mother, his sister, was livid! I've not gotten on a motorcycle since then.

So when you see people riding motorcycles in foreign countries, that's won't be me. Maybe that will change at some point, who knows! I took a small step when I mounted a Ducati motorcycle at the end of the Ducati Factory Tour. I wasn't moving of course :-). But it was fun. During the factory tour, you are not allowed to use your phones. You can lock them up in free lockers or they put little stickers over the cameras.

IT'S PRETTY AMAZING AS YOU GET TO SEE THE ASSEMBLY PROCESS FROM START TO FINISH. AND IT'S COOL THAT THE EMPLOYEES ARE ALL DRESSED IN RED DUCATI T-SHIRTS AND BLACK PANTS.

A lot goes into the production and you can see the safety systems in place too. It was fun seeing them start a motorbike for the first time as well and test it right before our very eyes.

The Museum does a good job of showing you the history of the bikes. It's amazing to see the early bikes; quite different than the ones we have today. When we got outside, I noticed that only Ducati-branded motorbikes were parked in the factory parking lot and was fortunate to see an employee ride out on a Ducati.

[LINK TO BLOG](#)



# AMAZING FERRARI DRIVING EXPERIENCE

IN ITALY

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Words  
MARGHERITA RAGG

Photography  
NICHOLAS BURNS

Blog  
THE CROWDED PLANET





HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO DRIVE A FERRARI?  
HERE'S HOW TO DO IT – WE'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT  
OUR AMAZING FERRARI DRIVING EXPERIENCE IN ITALY,  
AT THE MODENA RACE TRACK!

After visiting iconic Motor Valley sights like the Enzo Ferrari Museum in Modena, the Lamborghini Museum and Factory, and the Maserati Museum, we couldn't wait to drive a real Ferrari around a race track. The experience would be a little different from what we had imagined – but no less amazing. Read on to discover why!

FERRARI DRIVING EXPERIENCE AT THE  
MODENA RACE TRACK

The Modena Race Track was built in 2011, to replace a former race track, the Aerautodromo di Modena, location of some of the first F2 races. The Aerautodromo di Modena was first born as an airport, and it was then used as a testing track by both Ferrari and Maserati. As the city grew around it, it was decommissioned in the 1970s, and it became a public park twenty years later.

The new Modena race track was planned specifically for test drives – it is 2068 meters long, with straight sections and a total of 11 turns. On the straight sections, drivers and passengers are able to 'feel the speed' of the supercars they're in, and the turns allow them to test the incredible manoeuvrability of Ferrari and other supercars. In 2012, the Modena Race Track subscribed to an agreement to promote electric and sustainable mobility, with the aim of becoming the first carbon-neutral race track in Italy.

There's actually a lot of research into sustainable technology in the world of supercars – the Lamborghini factory in nearby Sant'Agata Bolognese has been certified as carbon-neutral since 2015. I bet you didn't expect that from a supercar manufacturer – and if you want to know more, make sure you visit and take a top secret Lamborghini factory tour!

Nowadays, the Modena Race Track organises a number of activities, including 'green driving courses' showing people how to maximise the use of fuel, motorbike courses, open days when people can come and drive their own car, and naturally, Ferrari test drives – the reason why we were all there.

THE CAR – FERRARI 458 CHALLENGE

The Modena Race Track offers a variety of supercar driving experiences – so you can also opt for a Lamborghini, if you're not a Ferrari person! It's possible to choose between a Ferrari 488 Challenge (their best car), Ferrari 458 Challenge, Ferrari 430 Challenge, Lamborghini Gallardo Trofeo, Lamborghini Huracan Trofeo, and KTM X-Bow.

Our Ferrari driving experience was going to be in a Ferrari 458 Challenge. I'll give you some technical details in case you're a car person – it was introduced during the Bologna Motor Show in 2010, as an improvement from the F430. It's 100 kg lighter, thanks to changes in the seats, wheels and chassis. The Ferrari 458 Challenge has a 4.5 liter V8 engine, with 340 km/hour (210 miles) top speed, and accelerates between 0-100 km/60 miles in 2.6 seconds.

Something that really surprised me was how light the car was – only 1200 kilograms, about as much as my own Fiat Panda! As you enter the car, you'll see why – the interiors have been stripped of all but the essentials, and seats are bare-bones.

These racing cars are not road legal and they're not meant to be comfortable – the aim is speed!











## OUR FERRARI DRIVING EXPERIENCE

After entering the Modena race track, we were taken to a waiting room with drinks and snacks, where we were also briefed. There, we found out some unexpected news – we wouldn't be able to drive the Ferrari ourselves, we would go around the track as passengers. To be honest, I didn't mind that at all – I thought that being driven by a professional would be a far better way to enjoy riding in a Ferrari 458 at its fullest, with its incredible braking and acceleration abilities.

We all signed a disclaimer, and one by one, we were handed a black balaclava (that we got to keep!) and a blue and yellow racing helmet – the colours of the Modena race track. There were two different Ferrari 458 Challenge – a yellow and a red one. To be honest, I really, really wished I would get to ride on the red one. Even though the earliest Ferraris were yellow, 'Ferrari red' has been the signature colour for decades, since Italy was assigned the colour red in racing competitions.

The gods listened to my wish, and I did indeed get to sit in the red Ferrari 458. My heart was pounding as I climbed into the racing seat – they're lower than regular car seats, and moulded to fit the shape of your body. An assistant buckled me up in the 5 point racing harness, while a myriad of questions coursed through me. How would I film? Should I use my phone or GoPro? Would I even be able to film at all, or would I get sick at the first turn?

THE ACCELERATION TOOK ME BY SURPRISE. IT FELT LIKE BEING ON A ROLLERCOASTER AND A PLANE ALL AT ONCE – THERE WAS JUST ENOUGH TIME FOR ME TO REALISE THAT WE WERE ACTUALLY MOVING, AND WE WERE ALREADY TOPPING 180 KM/H (110 MILES).

Then came the braking and turning, the part I was worried about given my tendency to get motion-sick. The driver hit the brake, flipped the paddles on either side of the steering wheel, and within seconds our speed had dropped to 70 km/h (43 miles), and we were turning smoothly. The first lap was over in a flash, before I could even press the 'record' button on my phone. Then, there we were again – zipping down the straight stretch, accelerating and braking faster than I could even realise what was going on.



Then, once again, it was over – I would do it all over again, I thought, as I took my helmet off with a huge grin on my face. We didn't end up driving our own Ferraris, but being driven by a professional allowed us to experience the full potential of the cars.

Ok, maybe not full full, as we only hit 200 km/h (125 miles) maximum, a far cry from the 340 km/hour (210 miles) top speed – but still, there's no way I would have been able to flip paddles/hit brakes/hit throttle as seamlessly as our professional driver did.

#### HOW TO PLAN YOUR OWN FERRARI DRIVING EXPERIENCE IN ITALY

So, we didn't get to drive our own Ferrari, but the good news is that YOU CAN! In Italy, you can have Ferrari driving experiences in many places, including both on race tracks and on the road. Here's all you need to know!

##### At the Modena Race Track

If you're visiting Modena, Bologna, or other towns around Emilia-Romagna, the Modena race track will probably be the easiest place for you to plan a Ferrari driving experience. You have two options – going around the race track as a passenger, or driving yourself.

As a passenger, the Ferrari test drive will cost you €130 per lap – we recommend a minimum of two laps, three if possible. Trust me, it's FAST! To drive yourself, the price depends on what car you choose, and how many laps you want to do – you can choose between 2 and 5, the first one as a passenger, and the rest behind the wheel.

##### Here are the prices

###### Ferrari 430 Challenge

2 laps €440, 3 laps €540, 4 laps €640, 5 laps €700

###### Ferrari 458 Challenge

2 laps €690, 3 laps €750, 4 laps €870, 5 laps €950

###### Ferrari 488 Challenge

3 laps €775, 4 laps €905, 5 laps €990

You can also opt to drive a Lamborghini or the KTM – check here for prices and details, and don't forget to book in advance!

##### On Other Race Tracks

Ferrari driving experiences are on offer on other race tracks around Italy. Another option near Modena is the Maranello race track, adjacent to the Ferrari Museum. You can book an exclusive Ferrari tour that includes the museum, lunch and TWO TEST DRIVES – on the road and on a race track! If you're staying in Milan, the race track in Castelletto near Pavia also offers Ferrari driving experiences – find out more and book here!

##### On the Road

Driving a Ferrari on a race track allows you to really enjoy these supercars without having to worry about traffic lights/other people on the road/speed limits, but if you want to pretend you're on an Italian road trip in your own Ferrari, you can also hire one and drive it on the road! I've found two places where this is possible – Maranello, as part of the full-day exclusive Ferrari tour, and Milan, where you can rent a Ferrari and drive it on the motorway.



[LINK TO BLOG](#)



## MORE INFO

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