



# CYCLING THROUGH THE PARKS

## GUIDE TO THE BICYCLE PATHS THROUGH THE PROTECTED AREAS OF EMILIA-ROMAGNA



Ten cycling routes within the parks and nature reserves of Emilia-Romagna, which allow you to enjoy wonderful landscapes in the hills and plains while discovering not only the beauty of nature and the environment, but also history and architecture. These routes are intended for all cycling enthusiasts, but also for the less experienced cyclists. They are mapped out with varying degrees of difficulty and can be ridden for the most part by mountain bike, but in some cases also with a normal bicycle. The technical data provided for each bicycle route describes all relevant information in order to choose the most appropriate itinerary: length, gradient, degree of difficulty, travel time and useful contacts. The different bicycle routes are also accessible by train with a path "to the park" marked by specific signage, which departs from the nearest railway station and arrives at the gates of the protected area. Trenitalia provides the bike on board service for a small extra fee of 3.5 euros. Before leaving it is advisable to check out the timetables, prices and conditions on: [www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com).

### HELPFUL HINTS

#### WHICH BICYCLE TO USE?

In principle, any mountain bike is fine, and for riding along some paths even the city bike will do; at most, in the few trouble spots, you will have to get off the bicycle and walk for a few metres. The highly-trained biker will not even need clarifications, and yet one should treasure the golden rule that says to go slowly, even in relatively easy routes like these, where, by the way, there are steep descents that are potentially treacherous, especially if unpaved. Those who ride fast will gain only a few seconds, and risk falling, maybe getting hurt seriously, whereas those who ride leisurely are sure to have real fun.

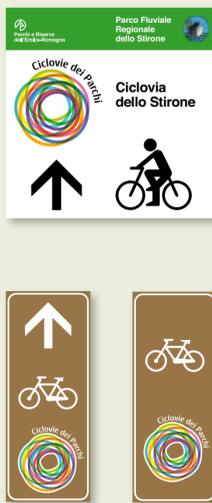


### BICYCLE SERVICE

This guide doesn't provide a list of service points because the proper ones (bicycle mechanics) are located in the cities, and therefore where the routes start, while possibly "minimal" assistance (from the tyre pump to the classic screwdriver) can be found almost everywhere. This notwithstanding, during each ride of this kind each biker must be self-sufficient at least when dealing with normal puncture cases and elementary repairs, which means bringing along the normal equipment any bicycle for suburban tours ought to be provided with. The bike bag should always include a medication kit (plasters, disinfectant and personal medicines).

### IMPORTANT NOTES

It is recommended to comply with the rules of the road and wear protective equipment and clothing that can ensure the well-being necessary to ride safely. Also keep in mind that even though you are riding along bicycle lanes, the presence of hikers walking is very likely; indeed, they are the ones who always have right of way.



## CICLOVIA DEL TREBBIA

The Trebbia bicycle path is characterised by a remarkable diversity of environments. It starts by crossing the urban environment of the historic centre of Piacenza: once you've left the railway station you ride cobblestone-paved streets, largely pedestrian or without much in the way of traffic, among Romanesque churches and lively squares. You then leave the city centre in a southerly direction, towards the hills, crossing the very green suburban environment on the protected bike path. A beautiful itinerary allows you to safely reach the village of Gossolengo, then, a short stretch inevitably to the side of the busy provincial road leads you to the large bridge over the Trebbia, after which you follow a first ring on the shore, on the left bank below the castle Rivalta. This is the river environment, where you ride on a trail through the sparse poplars and

willows, in practice on flood bed terraces never reached by the floods, but a stone's throw from the braided blue Trebbia meandering among the pebbles. After the advisable visit to the village of Rivalta you return to the bridge over the Trebbia to undertake a second ring, all on country roads, heading to Roveleto Landi and Pieve Dugliara, up to Rivergaro. Here we recommend a possible stop on the verdant riverside before resuming the way back, always on the right bank of the Trebbia. The itinerary is pleasantly varied among small white streets, old mills, more canals, vegetable gardens and the "wilder" river-bank environments, with riparian thickets, shrubs, stony and sunny soils where you can spot the uncommon stone curlews, the little ringed plovers, or the other shy birds, which inhabit the riverbed

### TECHNICAL DATA

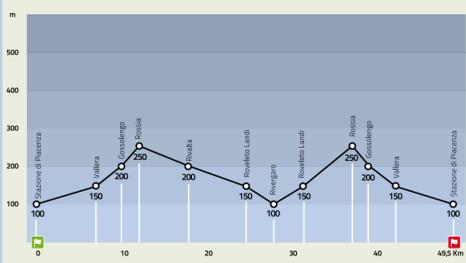
#### PROTECTED AREAS:

Trebbia Regional River Park

**LENGTH:** about 50 km without detours

**GRADIENT:** 300 m

**TRAVEL TIME:** one day



## TREBBIA REGIONAL RIVER PARK

The Parco Fluviale del Trebbia is the latest park set up by the Region. The protected area extends in the plains, from where the Trebbia River flows into the Po River (just north of Piacenza) up to upstream of Rivergaro, for a total area of 4,049 hectares. The environment is typically fluvial, with a bed of pebbles, very large and heavily influenced by seasonal water flow, which sees periods of prolonged drought, with the river divided into a thousand dynamic rivulets, alternating with rainy phases where the water body becomes compact, laps and submerges the riparian thickets of willow shrubs, which in fringe areas and deeper grounds give way to patches of trees. These are environments of relevant natural value, important points of reference for migratory birds.

The vast bed of Trebbia.



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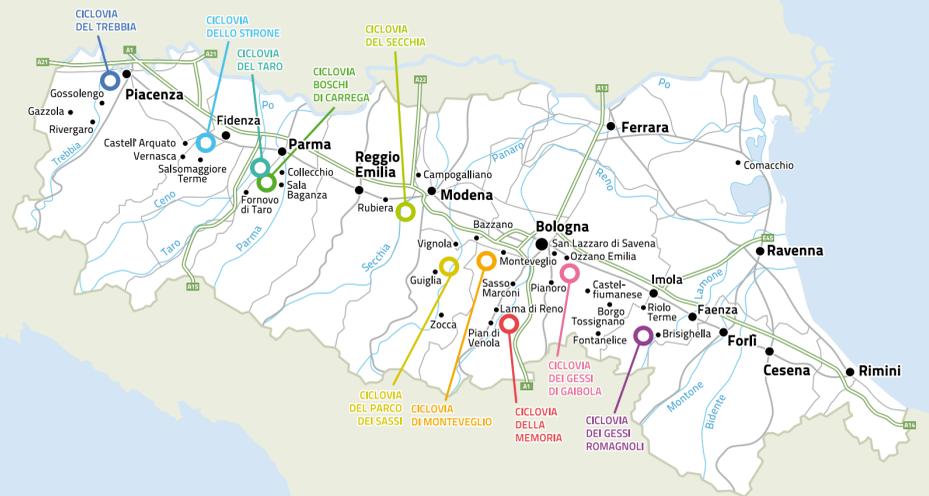
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### TECHNICAL DATA

#### PROTECTED AREAS:

Stirone e Piacenziano Regional River Park

**LENGTH:** 42 km the entire itinerary, which can be travelled in both directions. If you do not go up to Vigoleno subtract 7 km. If you are using the railway line Fidenza-Salsomaggiore subtract 10.5 km. Deviations result in differences of some kilometres without significant gradients.

**GRADIENT:** 100 m to get to Trabucchi; 300 m if you also go to Vigoleno, another 100 m to Salsomaggiore

**DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:** moderate to Trabucchi, average in other cases because of length and gradient.

**TRAVEL TIME:** one day

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**  
Visitor centre and nature museum  
Loc. Scipione Ponte 1  
Salsomaggiore Terme  
Tel. (+39) 0524 581139  
[info.stirone-piacenziano@parchiemiliaoccidentale.it](mailto:info.stirone-piacenziano@parchiemiliaoccidentale.it)  
[www.parchidelducato.it](http://www.parchidelducato.it)



## CICLOVIA DEL TARO

The bike path Taro is composed of two different routes, which are physically distinct but complementary. If desired, they may be ridden one after the other. You start from the Collecchio railway station and, after crossing the centre of town, you go south along the old Cisa State road for a couple of kilometres, turning right onto secondary roads up to Corte Giarola, the monumental complex of great historical and architectural charm, as well as the park headquarters and visitor centre, where one can also rent bicycles. The first route is rather easy, all on flat terrain, along quiet rural roads that wind their way south (upstream) touching the monastic building of Ospiano, an ancient stopping point for pilgrims crossing the valley floor towards Fornovo, along the Via Francigena to Rome. Beyond the village of Villanova you reach Ozzano Taro, back on the Cisa State road,

where you turn left to close the ring passing through Gaiano. Here, possibly, you may connect with the *ciclivia dei Boschi di Carrega* (bike path Carrega Woods). The environment is always rural, without traffic, between hedges, with rows of mulberry trees and isolated oak or walnut trees between the fields. The second loop also starts from Corte Giarola but winds near the Taro and the ancient canals that branch off from the main body of water, in river environment proper (woods, thickets, rocky environments of gravel bed), on a path with natural ground, which is flat, yet pleasantly varied and more "adventurous". You'll need to pay a little attention to some sudden changes of direction, some relatively narrow passage or with a little rough bottom (rocks, roots, puddles sometimes), and a few small fords.

### TECHNICAL DATA

#### PROTECTED AREAS:

Taro Regional River Park

**LENGTH:** about 20 km the first route and about 6 km the second

**GRADIENT:** minimal

**DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:** low in the first route (roads and little roads, paved or gravelled) and medium in the second (trails and a little bumpy tracks, though not difficult)

#### TRAVEL TIME:

half day

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Park centre Corte Giarola,  
Strada Giarola 11  
Loc. Ponteseodogna - Collecchio  
Tel. (+39) 0521 802688  
[info.taro@parchiemiliaoccidentale.it](mailto:info.taro@parchiemiliaoccidentale.it)  
[www.parchidelducato.it](http://www.parchidelducato.it)

**NOTES:** possibility to rent mountain bikes at the Corte di Giarola (also open on Sundays)



## TARO REGIONAL RIVER PARK

The park protects about twenty kilometres of the Taro River flow, from the Via Emilia to Parma, and up to Fornovo. The landscape ranges from parched expanses of gravel on the riverbed, to the surrounding cultivated fields, and riparian thickets. The protected area includes the wide riverbed and the nearby river terraces, both historically marked by man's intense exploitation, but still characterised by a wide variety of environments of great natural value and fundamental importance for migratory birds who stand on the banks of the Taro during seasonal movements. On the sides of the river there are flood plain areas where the rare Tamarisk appears and fireweed and blueweed bloom. There are dry meadows with dense patches of sea-buckthorn and precious orchids as well as vast cultivated fields crossed by ancient canals and dotted with ancient historical rural and religious buildings. Among the birds on the riverbed we should mention: the common tern, the little tern, the little plover and the rare elusive stone curlew.

Aerial view of the Taro River.



## CICLOVIA BOSCHI DI CARREGA

The Carrega bike path unfolds in a typical forest landscape and you may ride it on all year round, even in the hottest summer, thanks to the prevalence of cool and shady stretches. We are at about fifteen kilometres south of Parma, an ancient river terraces between Baganza and Taro that have always been covered with forests of great natural value as well as historical, touristic and recreational significance. These are the ancient hunting grounds of the Farnese family, the Bourbons and then finally (in the early twentieth century) purchased by the Carrega Princes. The Woods are composed of mixed deciduous forests to which, over time, exotic species have been added for ornamental purposes, mainly conifers. A special feature is the unique beech forest planted in 1828 by Marie Louise of Austria with specimens taken from the Parma Apennines. The route starts from the Collecchio railway station and, once you've crossed the village, you reach the entrance of

the park, at the end of the side street via Conventino. A strip of asphalt skirts around the Forest of Capannella and goes uphill with two hairpin bends to the straight road where you turn right onto a dirt road that leads quickly to the Casino dei Boschi, a magnificent residence of the Dukes of Parma nestled in a nineteenth century garden-park that now houses the visitor centre of the park. You proceed southbound, still on asphalt but in an environment which becomes more and more that of a forest, up to the 300 metres in altitude of Mount Castione, "turning point" of our itinerary. From this point onwards you'll ride downhill between chestnut forests until Tallignano from where you can reach the Romanesque Pieve di Tallignano (and from there possibly link up to the *Ciclivia Taro*). Alternatively, if the soil is dry, you can take the MTB trail through Piana Marchesi and the picturesque Lake Svizzera to reach via Conventino, which you already rode on during the first leg.

Roe deer (Capreolus capreolus).



### TECHNICAL DATA

#### PROTECTED AREAS:

Carrega Woods Regional Park

**Length:** about 20 km (including the detour to Tallignano)

**GRADIENT:** 200 m

**DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:** low if one is always on the main path, almost all paved, average if you make variants on forest roads (not recommended after heavy rains because of the mud)

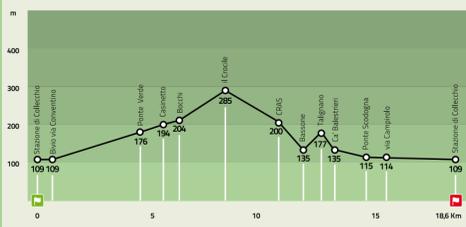
#### TRAVEL TIME:

half day

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Park centre "Casinetto",  
Via Olma 2, Sala Baganza,  
Tel. (+39) 0521 836026  
[info.boschi-carrega@parchiemiliaoccidentale.it](mailto:info.boschi-carrega@parchiemiliaoccidentale.it)  
[www.parchidelducato.it](http://www.parchidelducato.it)

**NOTES:** at the Casino dei Boschi there is a mountain bike rental managed by the park.



## CARREGA WOODS REGIONAL PARK

A refined atmosphere, historic and noble, even if sometimes decadent, surrounds the park, the first to be established in the Emilia-Romagna region in 1982. The protected area, spread over 1,270 acres, is an enchanting mosaic of forest (one of the few left in the foothill areas of the region), vast glades, scenic lakes, glorious noble mansions adorned with romantic parks, shady valleys, ravine basins, cultivated fields. The Carrega Woods retain the imprint attributed to them first by the ducal families and then by the Carrega family, starting from the second half of the '700 until the first decades of the '900. The abundant wildlife that inhabited the ducal game sanctuaries is still one of the greatest assets of the protected area. The most representative animal is the roe deer, which is housed in a particularly favourable environment for the alternation of woods and glades.

Aerial view of the Villa of the Casino dei Boschi.



## STIRONE E PIACENZIANO REGIONAL RIVER PARK

The park was established in 2011, and was created by uniting the *Parco Regionale dello Stirone* and the *Riserva Naturale Geologica del Piacenziano*. The bicycle route, however, crosses only the section of the park located along the Stirone valley floor. Especially in the first stretch, the river flows encased in a sort of canyon between Pliocene clays. The morphology is wild and escarpments reveal fossil beds of considerable importance. As for the vegetation cover one can distinguish between the farming environments in the valley bottom and those of the pebbly shore, with willows and poplars, while the highest parts, from Ponte Trabucchi to Vigoleno, are covered with mixed forests. The fauna is rich and diverse: even the "passing by" cyclist cannot help but notice several species of nesting birds along the river including the colourful bee-eater, a migratory bird that builds the nest in tunnels dug into the slopes.

Landscape along the Stirone.



View towards the castle of Vigoleno.



The tern is the park's emblematic bird.



The tern is the park's emblematic bird.



## CICLOVIA DEL SECCHIA

This is a copybook itinerary. It includes a sensational start through the historic city centre of Modena (the wonderful Piazza Grande is a UNESCO World Heritage Site), an approaching route along bike lanes or small roads with very little traffic, a possible detour (Campogalliano), and a destination of exceptional natural value: the Reserve "Detention Basin of the river Secchia." (Riserva Naturale Orientata Cassa di espansione del fiume Secchia). This itinerary also includes Rubiera, where you can admire the ancient Ospitale, the historic city centre and the Romanesque church of San Faustino. The detention basins (dammed basins with 9 kilometres of perimeter and a floodable surface of about 200 hectares) were begun at the end of the 70s as a device for "hydraulic safety" to regulate the floods of the river Secchia. Over time they have acquired other qualities: scenic landscape views, habitat for nesting birds and, last but not least,

a destination for excursions and hiking. From the Modena railway station you reach the Via Emilia and follow it to the west. Beyond the gates of the city you follow a path along "minor" streets until you cross the Secchia with the beautiful bridge "Barchetta". On the opposite shore you can make a detour to the centre of Campogalliano or you may reach the detention basin from the Santuario della Sassola. This area offers at least three different types of environments: the woods of a plain, the reeds along the banks, and the expanses of water, even with marsh stretches. The proposed cycle route is fully representative, because it allows you to take in the whole habitat of the protected area. It consists of the complete tour of the riverbanks, pleasantly enriched with some detours and stops for contemplation and bird-watching, one of the big attractions of the entire reserve.

## TECHNICAL DATA

### PROTECTED AREAS:

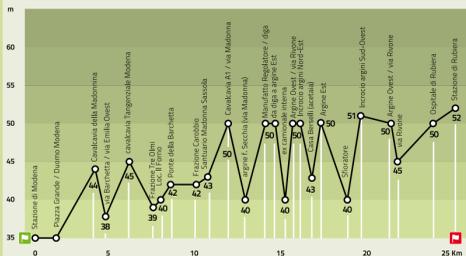
Natural Reserve "Detention Basin of the Secchia River"

**LENGTH:** from 25 km in the shortest route to 38 km according to the deviations

**GRADIENT:** negligible

**DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:** low.

The inland route is within the reach of everyone. The one from Modena



## NATURAL RESERVE "DETENTION BASIN OF THE SECCHIA RIVER"

Spread over 255 hectares, the reserve was established in 1996 on an environment created artificially in the late 1970s for flood safety reasons. Two large basins can receive floodwaters of the Secchia River in order to "lighten" its flow and avoid overflowing in downstream areas. The water level varies depending on the season and climate, but remains within a few metres. The large basins are interrupted by stretches of land and little islands periodically inundated and colonised by vegetation. Abundant birdlife finds refuge here: herons, little egrets, night herons. The high embankments, developed for 8km around the basins are covered with heterogeneous vegetation, ranging from patches of reeds, to poplars and border willows. Also interesting is the dense riparian forest in the bed of Secchia, consisting of several hydric species, both native (willow, poplar, alder) and exotic (tree of heaven, black locust and American maple).

Evening view of the detention basins.

ENRICO TURILLAZO

## CICLOVIA DELLA MEMORIA

This is a very rewarding itinerary despite (actually, for some people because of) the significant physical effort required, due to the gradient, the relative length of the route and the recurring presence of muddy stretches. The place has features of obvious interest in terms of landscape (long stretches of ridge between Reno and Setta, with panoramic views), botany (mixed deciduous forests typical of the average Apennine mountains next to peculiarities such as the rock areas (chance of spotting herds of ungulates, not to mention the presence of the wolf, by now stable). Yet, it should be emphasised that this is essentially a historical and memorial park, linked to the memory of the most painful massacre of civilians carried out by the Nazi occupiers in Italy. You depart from the railway station of Lama di Reno and reach the Romanesque parish church of Panico, which we suggest

you visit, and then you ride up to San Silvestro, on the ridge between Reno and Setta, which in practice will mark the backbone of the route. Leaving behind the often-muddy stretches of clay, you'll reach the sandstone formations of Monte Sole. You'll bypass the top of this mountain via a long detour passing through the nearby Oratory of Cerpiano and the cemetery and church of Casaglia. These buildings, like the others along the route are the silent witnesses of the massacre that resulted in the destruction of the community of Monte Sole in the autumn of 1944 (770 victims, 955 in total during the occupation). They have been consolidated but not rebuilt and they were entrusted with the task of handing down "what was" and the message that "this must not happen again." The return starts from the park visitors' centre "Poggiolo" along the small road that goes down to Sperticano and Pian di Venola, where you take the train.

## TECHNICAL DATA

### PROTECTED AREAS:

Monte Sole Regional Historical Park

**LENGTH:** 25 km

**GRADIENT:** 550 m ascent and 500 m descent

**DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:** medium to high, varying according to the season (presence of stretches that besides being steep, may also be muddy)



## MONTE SOLE REGIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Established in 1989, the *Regional Historical Park of Monte Sole* is perhaps the one that stands out the most from the panorama of regional protected areas, because of its historic character all of its own. It retains a painful memory that is both a testimony of events and a warning that the facts here occurred must not be repeated ever again. That said, there are nevertheless interesting natural and environmental characteristics, such as the cliffs with holm oak and heather, meadows with orchids, the relic clumps of Scots pine, the overall heritage of rich flora, the wealth of ungulates and birdlife, as well as the confirmed presence of the wolf. An excursion whose underlying themes are the places of massacres is an unforgettable experience. Those who have not experienced it find it hard to believe that gutted buildings, tombstones with long lists of unfamiliar names, and the tale of events of seventy years ago can arouse such and so many emotions, yet the park exists precisely for this purpose.

The ruins of Caporaso di Sopra.

FRANCESCO ZAMBONI

## CICLOVIA DEL PARCO DEI SASSI

This route requires considerable effort, due to both its length and gradient, but it may be shortened a little in case of need. Everything revolves around the Sassi, sandstone pinnacles emerging in the landscape and almost always visible in the centre of our ring journey. Curiously similar to the Greek Meteora, in addition to their geomorphological value, the Sassi also retain flora and fauna peculiarities: suffice it to mention the wallcreeper, the rare cave salamander found in some natural cavities, or birds of prey nesting on the rocks like the peregrine falcon. You should also not miss a visit to the Pieve di Trebbio, near the park visitor centre "The Fontanazzo". The little church retains the Romanesque structure and several original stone sculptural elements, despite the heavy restoration of the early 1900s. From the Vignola railway station you reach the boundaries of the park riding along the Nature Trail of the Panaro valley bottom. After crossing Ponte Casona you

take the road of the same name until the unmistakable fork at 307 m of altitude, from where you climb up switch-backs up to Pieve di Trebbio. You'll then arrive in Castellaro and Borgo dei Sassi, dominated by sandstone pinnacles that are the heart and the main attraction of the park. After the optional walk uphill to the highest of them, you go back to the junction of Castellaro to reach, on asphalt, the village of Roccamalatina. From here you have two options. You can climb to Montecorone; another medieval hamlet nestled among chestnut trees and fields in view of the Sasso di Sant'Andrea. Alternatively, you can immediately undertake the circumnavigation of the valley of Mulino della Riva, traversing along the winding road that reaches Castellino delle Formiche and a panoramic view towards the Sassi. From here, passing through Sant'Apollonia, you ride downhill to the fork at 307 m of altitude you already touched on the first leg, and you return to Vignola.

The sandstone Sassi within the park's territory.

FABRIZIO DELLA

## TECHNICAL DATA

### PROTECTED AREAS:

Sassi di Roccamalatina Regional Park

**LENGTH** about 50 km total

**GRADIENT:** 550 m uphill and the same down

**DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:** high (length and gradient are not negligible, but the pavement of the route is almost always good)



## SASSI DI ROCCAMALATINA REGIONAL PARK

The centrepiece of the park, both in topographical sense and in terms of landscape and geomorphological peculiarities, is the complex of the Sassi: oligocene sandstone pinnacles, with typical botanical and animal species. The park, halfway between the hills and mountains, covers an area of 2,300 hectares. The "gradual surfacing" of the spires is due to differential erosion that has dismantled more quickly the underlying soft clay. The morphologies are natural but sometimes reworked by man over the centuries, from the early medieval fortifications, as in the case of "spiral flights of steps, cisterns, storage rooms, caves, ovens and even large rooms ...". The natural caves are a different story: small cavities created by corrosion, though limited, exerted by the water on the calcareous component of sandstones. The sandstones of the Sassi are the undisputed reign of birds of prey such as the peregrine falcon, historically linked to these inaccessible walls for nesting.

Gullies along the route.

CLAUDIO PALMERI

## TECHNICAL DATA

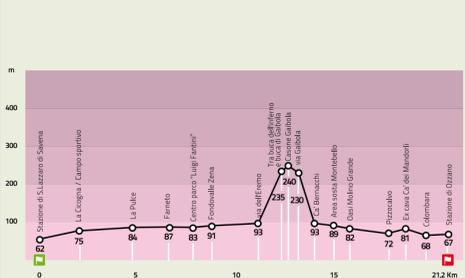
### PROTECTED AREAS:

Gessi Bolognesi e Calanchi dell'Abbadessa Regional Park

**LENGTH:** 21 km (with the deviation to the WWF Molino Grande River Oasis)

**GRADIENT:** 200 m

**DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:** medium (there is a steep uphill stretch on dirt road, but it's not prohibitive)



## GESSI BOLOGNESI E CALANCHI DELL'ABBADESSA REGIONAL PARK

Established in 1988 on an area of 3,421 hectares (more than 1,377 hectares of contiguous area), the Parco dei Gessi Bolognesi e Calanchi dell'Abbadessa (*Park of the Bolognese Gypsoms and Gullies of the Abbadessa*) protects a karst area and an adjacent portion of clays. Both areas are interesting in geomorphological, botanical and landscape terms, yet the first appears to be more peculiar because of the numerous outdoor and underground karst phenomena. It is sufficient to mention the more than 150 caves, large and small, generally accessible only to organised speleological groups. These are a treasure of inestimable scientific and ecological value due to the presence of about fifteen species of bats. The area of the Calanchi dell'Abbadessa encloses the wilderness, almost desert, and characterised by steep slopes with very little vegetation: an environment populated by different species of amphibians, reptiles, birds of prey and mammals, among which even the wolf recently made its appearance.

Gullies at Castel De Britti.

GIAMPAOLO ZAMBONI

## CICLOVIA DI MONTEVEGLIO

This is a hill itinerary with some gradients, but it's easy (it's all on asphalt) and in an ideal environment made of groves interspersed with fields and, in some areas, with gullies. Hub and heart of the park, as well as the excursion, is the Abbey of Santa Maria di Montevoglio, which provides the protected area with its name and identity. It is a Romanesque church, which still retains the original architecture (even if the restoration works carried out between 1927 and 1931 included some arbitrary reconstruction). With its mass of red brick, its surrounding cypresses and its picturesque location at the end of a quiet hamlet, the abbey also has an unmatched view of the landscape. The route starts from the Bazzano railway station and, once you've crossed the historic centre of town (with the Rocca and its not-to-be-missed museum, rich with archaeological finds), you'll arrive at the boundaries of the park via small secondary roads. After bypassing the village of Montevoglio by riding along the bike path, you reach

the abbey through a short but intense climb. The abbey is worth visiting for its interesting historical, architectural and environmental features. After going back down along via Abbazia to the park visitor centre, located in the beautiful San Teodoro meadows at the gates of Montevoglio's new built-up area, you'll get back on the route, which is initially parallel to the stream Ghiara di Serravalle and then climbs from the south side of the park along paved roads with very little local traffic, and in a pleasant country setting. The climb ends in the vicinity of the ridge which separates the valley of the Rio Paravere from the valley of the Rio Marzatore at around 300 metres above sea level, from where you'll start riding downhill among mixed broad-leaved woods (oak, hornbeam, maple) and small cultivated fields with cherry and walnut trees. Once you've reached Tagliolina you ride along the shady valley bottom of the Rio Marzatore, closing the ring a couple of kilometres from Bazzano.

## TECHNICAL DATA

### PROTECTED AREAS:

Abbazia di Montevoglio Regional Park

**LENGTH:** about 27 km, including the detour to Montevoglio Alto

**GRADIENT:** 380 m uphill and the same down

**DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:** easy (total absence of dirt and/or muddy stretches; there is a climb with some very steep yet not problematic stretches)



## ABBAZIA DI MONTEVEGLIO REGIONAL PARK

The park was established in 1995 and covers 881 hectares, all in the municipality of Montevoglio, in a strip of hilly landscape typical of low altitudes, which in this case go from the 100 m of valley Samoggia, to the 349 m of Monte Fredo. The "heart" of the park is the Abbey of Santa Maria di Montevoglio with the millenary parish church, set in a hilly region of small valleys and inaccessible gullies that extend interspersed with formerly cultivated fields, crops and vineyards. The geology of the area is quite diversified: the most prominent mountains, including the hill where the Abbey is located, are made of marly and calcareous rocks, whose steep slopes host ample forests of mixed deciduous broad-leaved trees, with the exception of a few olive trees on the hill of Cucheria. Around these, the widespread gully morphology develops on purely clay soils, characterised by a discontinuous ground cover, herbaceous or shrubby at most, dry and parched in summer and muddy in winter.

Autumn view of the rural landscape of the park.

CARTELLI BALAZZO

View towards the gully Rivabella.

SERGIO BIANCHI

There are many caves of great speleological and archaeological value.

GIAMPAOLO ZAMBONI

## VENA DEL GESSO ROMAGNOLA REGIONAL PARK

Spread over 6,000 hectares, the park features over 2,000 hectares of gypsum outcrop, and is the most important karst area of Emilia Romagna, with over 220 natural cavities already known and detected, plus others that are being explored. The protected area, which for its outstanding natural beauty has been the target of scientific exploration since the nineteenth century, presents a wide variety of environments and valuable refuges for animal and plant species, some of which rare. On the cliffs facing south are habitats of the Mediterranean type, with thickets of holm oak and turpentine trees, as well as "carpets" of helichrysum, thyme and even succulents, "fat plants" of the genus Sedum. On the northern slopes, on the other hand, we find dolines and ravines with a cool-moist microclimate that host plants which love the cold, and actual floristic and faunal relics of much higher altitudes. The extraordinary fauna patrimony of the area is especially interesting due to the presence of bats (there are several wintering and breeding colonies in the caves) as well as the diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey.

The route along the Monte Mauro loop.

MARCO MARCINETTI