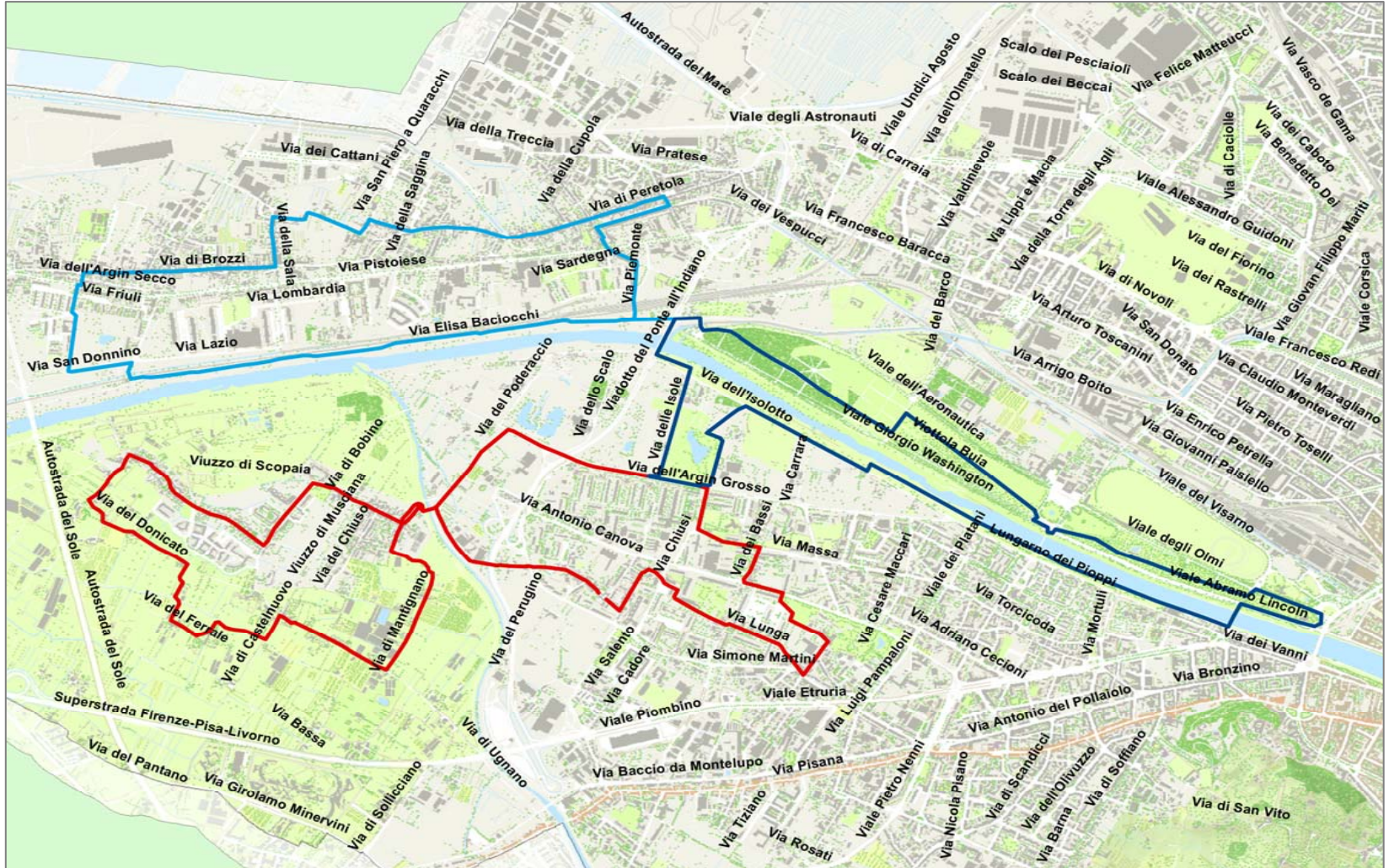


HEADING WEST
INTO THE ARNO VALLEY, ALONG THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE TREES TOWARD THE COUNTRYSIDE
OF THE PLAINS



The map



The region around our trail



Monumento all'Indiano



Isolotto footbridge



Parco dell'Argingrosso (Park)



The fertile countryside

This trail, with its very interesting history, landscape and environment, takes in the valley area west of Florence, the northern and southern banks of the Arno between the bridges Ponte all'Indiano and Ponte alla Vittoria. It runs through two great parks: one of interest for its history and monuments, the Cascine, and the other more recent Parco dell'Argingrosso. Together they make up a fundamental part of the Arno Metropolitan Parks System, currently nearing completion.

Thanks to the connected routes, the itinerary can be extended to the villages of Peretola, Quaracchi and Brozzi (on the north bank) and Mantignano, Ugnano, San Bartolo a Cintoia, Santa Maria a Cintoia and Le Torri on the south bank, winding through what was once (and to some extent still is) the fertile countryside of the plains, made up of vegetable gardens, fruit orchards, arable fields, old farmhouses and workers' houses: a patchwork of farms that are still extensive and visible, despite the presence of "heavy" infrastructure and the more or less recent building expansion that have "eroded" the natural terrain. The route is easy, completely flat, and passes for the better part through parks, gardens and walking/cycling trails. This route offers walkers and runners the pleasure of being near the river, with its weirs, its banks lined with tall trees, its varied bird life, its play, rest, and relaxation areas, and sports and recreational activities. At the heart of this route is the greenery and the river, that returns to its normal size downstream from the city, and gives us lovely and serene views. Continuing on, these culminate in the beautiful Parco dei Renai, in Signa.

Basic trail - Blue route

The ancient park, Parco delle Cascine, and the new Parco dell'Argingrosso

Piazzaleto dell'Indiano - V.le dell'Aeronautica - Via del Galoppatoio dei Barberi - V.le del Pegaso - Prato del Quercione - P.le Kennedy - Via della Piramide - Via della Catena - V.le Stendhal - V.le degli Olmi - P.za Vittorio Veneto - V.le Lincoln - Ponte nuovo della tramvia (new tram bridge) - Via Baccio Bandinelli - L.no dei Pioppi - Via dell'Isolotto - Podere S. Leopoldo - Via Gubbio - Via dell'Argingrosso (raised bank) - Via delle Isole - Via dell'Isolotto - Ponte all'Indiano (pedestrian walkway)

Our trail begins at the foot of the **Ponte all'Indiano** bridge, by the **Piazzaleto**, or square of the same name. To our right -



Ponte all'Indiano

Built between 1972 and 1978, this earth-anchored cable-stayed bridge, supported by steel cables connected to two large piers, with a deck anchored to the ground, and a large span (206 metres in length), is the first and one of the largest of its type to be built in the 20th century. Built downstream from where the Mugnone flows into the Arno, it has a covered pedestrian walkway beneath it, and connects Peretola's north bank districts to those of Isolotto on the south bank.

where the Mugnone stream flows into the Arno – the **Monumento all'Indiano** (Monument to the Indian Prince) marks the northern boundary of the park, **Parco delle Cascine**.



Monumento all'indiano

Created by the British sculptor Fuller, this monument is dedicated to the memory of the young Indian Prince Rajaram Chatrapati, who died of an illness in Florence in 1870, on his return journey from London. His ashes were scattered, according to Hindu rites, at the confluence of two rivers (here the Arno and the Mugnone).



Il Parco delle Cascine

With its 118 hectares, it is the largest public park in Florence. Its name "Cascine" comes from the beech presses in which the curds were pressed to make cheese ('cascina' cheese), bearing witness to the history of the area.

Created in the second half of the 1500s as a farm, it was owned by Alessandro and Cosimo I de' Medici, originally intended for hunting and raising cattle. The Cascine, with the passage of the Grand Duchy to the Lorraine, was opened on special occasions to the whole city. Only in the Napoleonic period, under Elisa Baciocchi, did it become a public park. It was later purchased (1869) by the City of Florence.



Along the river at the Cascine



Botanical varieties: *Fraxinus angustifolia*



La Palazzina Reale (Royal Residence)



The pyramid



The amphitheatre



One of the sports facilities: the velodrome

Within the park are 35 hectares of forest with slightly fewer than 20,000 trees: originally mainly oaks, elms, maples and flowering ash (testimonials to the ancient plains forest that occupied the fertile alluvial soils). Here, over time, additional species have spread through the urban area. These include ailanthus, elder, pine, hackberry, ash, linden, ilex and sycamore. The heritage of the trees is highly "historicized" and includes the Atlas cedars in Piazzale Vittorio Veneto and the ginkgo biloba in the Piazzale delle Cascine. Many of the monumental furnishings and architectural examples (including the Palazzina Reale - once the estate's centre and now home to the Faculty of Agriculture - the pyramid, the pheasantry, the fountains) came with the renovations of the 1700s, on behalf of the House of Lorraine, by the architect Giuseppe Manetti and later in the Napoleonic period by Giuseppe Cacialli. Many sports facilities were also built in the Park in the late 19th century (the velodrome, the ball court, the horse tracks and the Pavoniere bathing facility, just to name a few). The new footbridge forwarded at Viale del Pegaso will provide another link between the Cascine Park and the Argingrosso park on the south bank.

But we keep to the left, going for just over 50 metres along **Viale dell’Aeronautica** (named after the Air Force Academy built in 1937-38, shown on the itinerary below), then we take – at the first clearing on the right - **Via del Galoppatoio dei Barberi**



Via del Galoppatoio dei Barberi

It takes its name from the racing of Berber horses that in ancient times originated in what is today’s Via Ponte alle Mosse. The race was held in Florence on June 24, Feast of St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of the city.

This long straight road runs alongside (left side) the inner zone called "Otto Viottole (Eight Lanes)" (the 17th century hunting area of the Medici estate, it still retains its original appearance of a star with eight rays) and leads us to the area of the **Anfiteatro delle Cornacchie** (Amphitheatre of the Crows), which stands next to the Casa delle Guardie (Guardhouse) designed in the 18th century by Giuseppe Manetti..



Anfiteatro delle Cornacchie (Amphitheatre of the Crows)

Built in the sixties, the amphitheatre stands on the site previously occupied by a sand quarry.

Its location within the park, next to the Via delle Otto Viottole, is open, sunny, close to the river, and completely closed to traffic (except for service and emergency vehicles), making it an ideal place for socializing and recreation.

After following the Via del Galoppatoio dei Barberi for about 1 km, we exit to the left onto **Viale del Pegaso** (named after the mythological winged horse, also used as a symbol by the Air Force Academy) to reach the large field **Prato del Quercione**, which we cross lengthwise along the pedestrian walk that runs along the right side (on the left, parallel to it, is the Viale dell’Aeronautica with the Air Force Academy).



Prato del Quercione

Taking its name from a great oak tree (cut down in the early 1900s, having withered, it was then replaced) this vast field was once used for grazing cattle. The small construction in the form of an octagonal kiosk is the watering hole, also known as the "fontana delle boccacce (fountain of masks)", because of the decorations from which the water gushes. It was designed by Giuseppe Manetti for Pietro Leopoldo to ennoble the hydraulic pump which, in summer and during water shortages, guaranteed that the cattle from the nearby stables grazing freely in the meadow would have water.

At the end of Prato del Quercione is **Piazzale John Fitzgerald Kennedy**, with its flower beds and the quadripartite circular pool, and in the background, Piazzale Vittorio Veneto and the ancient **Palazzina Reale** (Royal Residence).



Palazzina Reale (Royal Residence)

Built on a design by Paoletti and primarily Giuseppe Manetti, it was commissioned by Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo as a residence when he turned the Cascine (the Grand ducal farm) into a public park around 1765. At the time it was intended for various purposes, including a women's agricultural school, the Education Committee for Colonial Agricultural, and Forestry Institute. Since 1936, it has housed the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Forestry, University of Florence.



Scuderie Reali. The Cascine Park Visitor's Centre.

The Visitor's centre is the right place to get all the information about the park and the various opportunities it offers. The masterplan of the Cascine Park has forwarded a series of projects for the restoration of the area and for its general improvement. So the park is now a 'work in progress' area where new facilities, opportunities and services will soon be realized. In the Visitor's Centre you can be updated about this news also.

On the west side of Piazzale Vittorio Veneto is situated the new Visitor's Centre of the Cascine Park. Since 2013 it has been housed in the ancient Royal Stables.

The centre offers to local citizens and tourists various information and orientation services, (digital media also), regarding cultural, environmental and sport opportunities inside and outside the park.

On the upper floor of the building, the Casa dell'Arno houses an exhibition space dedicated to the Arno River, its relationship with the Florentine and Tuscany area and its water cycle management.

We continue now onto **Via della Piramide** (pedestrian walkway that runs internally and almost parallel to Viale Lincoln), whose name derives from a nearby **stone pyramid**, a former ice house, in other words, where snow was deposited.



Piramide (Pyramid)

Once used as an ice house, where winter snow needed for preserving the cheeses produced on the Grand ducal farm was deposited, today it is only ornamental.

Now we go along **Via della Catena** (which takes its name from a chain placed at the entrance to prevent carriages from passing through), all the way to its end where we find the complex **Le Pavoniere**.



Le Pavoniere (Swimming Pool)

At one time the two small neo-classical temples (also called pheasantries) used as bird cages for park decoration were called Le Pavoniere. Today they are part of the homonymous swimming pool. The adjacent building, designed by Giuseppe Manetti in the late 1700s for the Grand ducal guards, forms the backdrop to the entire complex (today a public swimming pool).

At the end of Viale della Catena, where the bridge of the tramway starts, we turn left onto **Via Stendhal** (in the final section, we can see the **Ippodromo del Visarno (Hippodrome)**). We then turn right onto **Viale degli Olmi**.



Ippodromo del Visarno (Hippodrome)

1847: the Società Anonima Fiorentina Corse, the Florentine racing association, that already organized events in the narrow Prato del Quercione in the Cascine, managed to obtain the Prato del Visarno in concession, a wider field, where the track was built for racing at full gallop, the first sport officially established in the Cascine. Now the Ippodromo also houses the track for harness racing, which used to be held in the Ippodromo delle Mulina.

At the end of the Avenue degli Olmi we reach **Piazzale Vittorio Veneto** (from here there is a view of the new music park, **Parco della Musica**) but we do not cross it. Instead we take an immediate right, then right again, onto **Viale Lincoln**, along the river. We go along the avenue to the intersection with the new tramway bridge - across the pedestrian walk - climbing over the Arno and going right along the **inner white dirt embankment road of Via Baccio Bandinelli**.



Parco della Musica - Nearing completion, it is home to an opera house (2000 seats), a concert hall (1000), an auditorium (3000), and an outdoor amphitheatre (2000).

Section of the Parco della Musica (Music Park)



The bridge of tram line 1



The internal white road in Via Baccio Bandinelli

Further along the river we pass the **inner gardens of Lungarno dei Pioppi** (where one can access the Isolotto footbridge connecting to the Cascine Park) and **Via dell'Isolotto** (with its large weir).



Isolotto footbridge. The Cascine as backdrop



Gardens on Arno embankment



The Isolotto weir

At the intersection with **Via dell'Argingrosso** the landscape becomes less man-made, regaining some of its original appearance, that of farms, gardens and orchards. We are here in the overflow basin of the Arno, where the preliminary project, approved by the City of Florence, is designed to create controlled flooding areas in the event of river floods.



The countryside, gradually less man-made

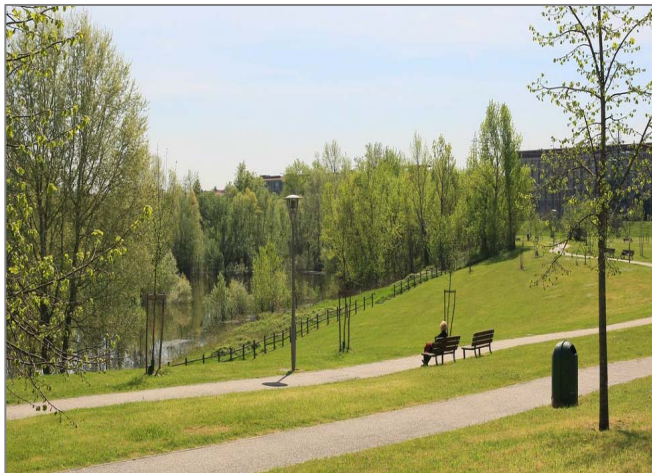


On the pond



Water hazards on the golf course

Shortly after the intersection with Via Carrara is a beautiful 9-hole golf course (soon it will be a 18-hole), whose front section (the practice field, behind which are the greens) we can see. Now we're at the borders of the **Parco dell'Argingrosso**



Parco dell'Argingrosso (Park)
This wonderful green space of about 15 hectares (18 with the riverside gardens of Via dell'Isolotto), between Via dell'Isolotto and Via dell'Argingrosso, is populated by recently planted species (currently more than 140 tree species including elm, maple, apple, hazelnut, cherry, rowan and more than 200 berry bushes also selected based on their attractiveness to birds).



Parco dell'Argingrosso

Full of footpaths, cycle tracks, an oasis for bird watching, play areas, numerous allotment gardens (where the use of fertilizers and chemical fertilizers is also forbidden), it was created in recent years thanks to constant environmental regeneration efforts aimed at, among other things, creating a further link between the green areas on the south and north banks of the Arno through the creation of a cycle/pedestrian footbridge connecting to the Cascine Park.



We now cross the Park coming to the pedestrian area adjacent to street number 51. Here, diagonally to the left, we take the driveway that leads into a local lane (called **Interno di Via dell'Argingrosso**), following which we reach the **dirt road parallel to the raised embankment of Via dell'Argingrosso**. Keeping to our right, here we come into **Via delle Isole** (following it towards the Arno) and find an equestrian rehabilitation centre, many allotment gardens (here alone more than 250), and a beautiful pond created from an excavation. Taking **Via dell'Isolotto** (embankment) again, we come to **Ponte all'Indiano**, where our itinerary started and now concludes.

Technical information

Trail distance	8.7 km
Height difference	15 m
Maximum gradient	-
Average journey time	walking: 2h 10' - running : 55'
Difficulty	*

Technical and sporting features

Road conditions and surface	The completely flat route (only two slope variations, at the bridges crossing the Arno) largely passes through the pedestrian areas, the Cascine and Argingrosso Parks on regular roads (and at times, dirt tracks or asphalt).
Suitable for	Walkers of all levels Families with children (some caution should be exercised in areas crossed by the tram, where there are only curbs and no railings) Runners of all levels
Type of training	Due to its characteristics, this type of route allows for various levels of training depending on capacity. Excellent for developing resistance . It lends itself well to repetitive training for developing aerobic strength .
Footwear	Walking shoes and in particular running shoes

Directions

Ataf lines	<i>With stops directly at or next to the start of the trail</i> Line 35, stop Pistoiese 03 (Stazione SMN directions) <i>With stops near to one of the points on the trail</i> Line 17, stop Piazzale Kennedy (Coverciano - Cascine) Line 60, stop Cascine 02 (Careggi - Stazione SMN)
Tram	Line 1, stop Cascine (Scandicci - Stazione SMN)

Connected trail - Pale blue route

The countryside and the ancient villages of the plain: Peretola, Quaracchi and Brozzi

Ponte all'Indiano - Via S. Biagio a Petriolo - Via de' Vespucci - Piazza Garibaldi - Via di Peretola - Via di Brozzi - Via dell'Agio - Via San Piero a Quaracchi - Via San Bonaventura - Via della Sala - Via di Brozzi - Viuzzo della Croce - Via Campania - Via di San Donnino - Via della Nave di Brozzi - pedestrian/cycling path along the Arno - Ponte all'Indiano

From **Ponte all'Indiano** on the right bank of the Arno, still following the riverbank downstream, we take the first right: **Via San Biagio a Petriolo**.



Ponte all'Indiano

Built between 1972 and 1978, this is the first earth-anchored cable-stayed bridge in the world. It is supported by steel cables connected to two large piers, with a deck anchored to the ground, and has a large span (206 metres in length). It is one of the largest of its type to be built in the 20th century. Constructed downstream of the Arno River's confluence with the Mugnone stream, it has a covered pedestrian footbridge beneath it, and connects Peretola's north bank districts to those of Isolotto on the south bank.

Along this long road, accessed through the railway underpass, are newly built residential buildings in the first section and farther along a row of low mainly 20th century houses, as far as **Via Pistoiese**.

Crossing this major traffic artery, we continue on the same road where on the right, we can see the beautiful **Chiesa di San Biagio in Petriolo**, parish church of the ancient homonymous village, now considered the outskirts of Peretola, but at one time independent from an ecclesiastical point of view.



Chiesa di S. Biagio a Petriolo

The original structure of the church dates from the 11th century. Preceded by the 15th century porch, it has a Romanesque portal entry with Pilli family crests and, in the lunette, a 14th century fresco (damaged) of the "Madonna and Child with Saints." The interior, with a Latin cross plan, expanded in the 19th century, contains an unusual baptismal font, chancel seat and ciborium (attributed to Mino da Fiesole). In the adjoining Society of St. Sebastian a wooden crucifix from the workshop of Antonio da Sangallo was preserved, and is currently located inside the Church.

We continue along our road, flanked by a row of low houses, until the intersection with **Via de' Vespucci**, which we take, turning right. In Via de' Vespucci we stay on the inner part in the pleasant, safe gardens.



In the Via de' Vespucci gardens



The pedestrian alley



Arched passageway



House with courtyard

At the second intersection on the left, we take the pedestrian alley for **Piazza Garibaldi**, the ancient village of Peretola, where we find the church, **Chiesa di Santa Maria** with its portico with five arches

The village of Peretola

Of high medieval origin, it enjoyed its greatest period in the 15th century, at the height of the economical and cultural development that characterized Florence. Lying between two major roads (Via Pistoiese and Via Pratese), depended until 1928 on the Municipality of Brozzi, until the latter's status was suppressed. The old part of town is characterized by narrow streets with "row" houses (the oldest - like number 8 Via di Peretola which belonged to the Vespucci family, and whose descendent was the great navigator Amerigo - date to the 14th century, and many to the 17th - 19th centuries), bearing no decorations, with courts and courtyards separated from the street front by arched passageways (some of which still have the old wooden beams). A suburban and rural type of settlement (the fertile land here grew mainly sorghum wheat and the village's wealth also came from the processing of straw, including braids for hats, very popular in the 19th and 20th centuries) that also met the demands of relationships and contiguity between families.



Piazza Garibaldi and the Pieve di S. Maria a Peretola

Pieve di Santa Maria a Peretola (Parish church)
Dating from 1100, its precious interior houses works of art such as the Tabernacle of the Sacrament, a masterpiece by Luca della Robbia, the baptismal font by Francesco di Simone Ferrucci and frescoes by Domenico Michelino in the chapel dedicated to San Leonardo.



House once belonging to the Vespucci family

Casa Vespucci (No. 8)
Unique for its loggia in front, it belonged to the Vespucci family in 1483 when Amerigo - the great navigator - and his brother Antonio, sold it to their cousin.

Now we walk all of Via di Peretola, with its continuous wall of old low houses. After about 1 km the street takes the name **Via di Brozzi**. We will follow it to find the same type of building: the continuous row of houses with internal common "courtyards" shared by several houses, bearing witness to the community's former style of life and work, particularly devoted to processing straw and cultivating the fields (corn, hemp, sorghum, hay, and mulberry). We then take the right at a crossroads onto **Via dell'Agio** (marked by a votive shrine, typically found in the countryside and towns at the "crossroads"),



The shrine in Via dell'Agio

Shrines in country villages

The area crossed by our route is full of votive shrines, almost all dedicated to the Virgin Mary and all situated along the ancient road routes. The original roads wound through fertile, extensive and well cultivated country, where there were strong traditions of popular piety, linked - as everywhere else - to worshipping Mary.

Today it is quite difficult to "interpret" the true vocation of this area, due to the major infrastructure and often disorderly urban sprawl, but tangible signs of its past are, in fact, in these ancient traces and testimonies to the faith associated with them.



The shrine in Via S.Piero a Quaracchi

at the end of which we take, on the left, **Via San Piero a Quaracchi** where we will find another **shrine** (recent, dating back to 1950). Although our journey continues left, we must have a look at the beautiful **Chiesa di San Pietro a Quaracchi** (church on the right).

The village of Quaracchi

Situated between Via di Brozzi and Via Pratese, until 1928 it was part of the Municipality of Brozzi (like Peretola and San Biagio in Petriolo). On that date it was annexed to the City of Florence. It is famous for its "padri Editori di Quaracchi" (Franciscan fathers, editors of the *Archivium Franciscanum Historicum*, among other things), as well as the Chiesa di San Pietro and the beautiful Villa Lo Specchio (once belonging to Giovanni Rucellai, author of "Zibaldone [Miscellany]"). The typical activities in the area were agriculture and, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries, the crafting of braided straw for the hats that were so fashionable at the time.

The name Quaracchi came from the Latin "Ad claras aquas" and refers to the mirrors, reflective bodies of water and marshes scattered throughout the area.



Chiesa di S. Pietro a Quaracchi

Documented since the mid 9th century, it received the patronage of many important Florentine families. Renovated in the mid-18th and early 20th century, in the '60s it was restored to its original appearance. Inside, the fresco (1428) "St. Anthony Abbot Enthroned with Saints" is attributed to Bicci di Lorenzo.

Continuing on, at the end of Via dell'Agio, right in front of us, on **Via di San Bonaventura**, is the **Villa Lo Specchio**



View of the facade of Villa Lo Specchio

Villa Lo Specchio

Designed by Leon Battista Alberti in the 15th century for Giovanni Rucellai (author of the "Zibaldone [Miscellany]"), it was a meeting place for scholars and writers of the time, with a beautiful Renaissance garden overlooked by a double cloister above. A series of events over time reduced it to a rundown "palazzaccio". It was even a broom factory and hospital for infectious patients when, in 1877, it was bought by the Franciscan fathers (then brothers) who had joined Padre Fedele Maddalena da Fanna, a Venetian and Bonaventure. Here the purpose of the Fathers, "Padri editori di Quaracchi", was to research, study and publish a special edition of Opera Omnia di San Bonaventura (Complete Works of St. Bonaventure), the result of exploration into 400 libraries scattered between Russia and Spain (manuscripts and ancient editions).

To this main objective, new studies around Alexander of Hales were gradually added and then another, l'Opera Omnia su Duns Scotus (The Complete Works of John Duns Scotus). Already in the 19th century the Friars of Quaracchi had created their own printing press, later damaged, along with the College, at the end of World War II. The flood of 1966 severely compromised the restoration and improvements made since the end of the war. In 1971 the Brothers moved to Grottaferrata, located in the Castelli Romani area. Today Villa Lo Specchio is a branch of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Florence.

We walk down all of Via San Bonaventura, in which less developed sections alternate with the typical rows of buildings for the area to arrive at **Via della Sala** (the name refers to the Lombard meaning of the word, namely: rural settlement, and we must remember that there was a considerable Lombard presence in these areas, with the place name of Brozzi being derived from the person's Germanic name "Brozo"). We take this road to the left and it takes us to **Via di Brozzi**, where we turn right. This long, narrow street, enclosed by a double wall of low houses where from time to time archways open onto inner courtyards, was once an important connection axis between Florence and Pistoia (this was the "Main Thoroughfare to Pistoia"). We are going through the historical part of the village of Brozzi.

The village of Brozzi

One of the historic villages of the Florentine countryside, Brozzi was a Comune (in the Napoleonic period (the villages of Peretola, San Biagio in Petriolo, Quaracchi, La Sala and San Donnino were dependent on it) and remained so until 1928 when, during the fascist period, it was suppressed and its territory divided between the Comunes of Sesto Fiorentino, Florence, Tuscany and Signa.

The origin of the medieval village, situated on the road between Florence and Pistoia, is attested to by ancient buildings like **Palazzo Orsini Baroni** (in the 13th century already belonging to the Strozzi family) and the parish church, the **Pieve di San Martino** (from the early 1000s).

Famous for processing straw (an activity that, in the 18th-19th century, decreed the strong economic and demographic development and therefore urban sprawl), brooms made with sorghum, it still retains some of its traditions today, one being a typical dish of the area: fried frogs (fishing for shrimps and crabs in the Arno and the ditches of Osmannoro, once a popular activity, is a thing of the past).



Palazzo Orsini Baroni, 13th century (Via di Brozzi)



Via di Brozzi : Oratorio della Madonna del Pozzo (early 17th century). Inside, "Madonna", a 15th century fresco



La Pieve di San Martino a Brozzi, in the homonymous street (off course)

When we reach the intersection with Via San Martino a Brozzi, characterized by the presence of an ancient building (recently restored, dominated by a tower), on the opposite side of the road, we take the **Viuzzo della Croce**. We walk its entire length of the Viuzzo until we come to **Via Pistoiese**, where we cross at the nearby pedestrian crossing on our right.

Before us is **Via Campania**, which we enter. This long road that heads towards the Arno, lined with relatively recent buildings, poorly built, is part of **Le Piagge**.

Le Piagge

A housing project built in the 1980s under the Andreatta Plan to meet housing needs following a series of evictions that affected the weaker sections of the population, it is located between Via Pistoiese, the old Florence - Pisa railway line, the A1 motorway, and the Arno. This was once the "countryside" of the "historical" inhabitants of the area of Via Pistoiese (famous for producing watermelons and cantaloupes, because of the adequate quantity of sand in the soil required for this type of crop) . This green area was dotted with Arno sand quarries used for the city's construction (which in the 60s experienced a veritable boom) and the illegal dumping of inert materials.

Le Piagge - whose most distinctive complex from the architectural point of view is "Le Navi (The Ships)" - have long been the focus of redevelopment aimed at "re-shaping" the area to fit the surrounding context (structural and infrastructural), through improvements in the urban fabric and connections. At Le Piagge, there are some important "basic" (Christian and secular) social communities actively engaged in listening to social problems and making a practical contribution to improving the cultural and social conditions of the population, and they constitute a fundamental reference point.



Le Piagge: the complex known as "le Navi"

Having reached the end of Via Campania, we cross **Via San Donnino** (very poor construction here as well), onto which we turn left until we reach **Via della Nave di Brozzi**, which we take going to the right towards the river (the name indicates that at one time, in this area along the river, there was the "Nave", the ferry connecting the two banks of the Arno). At the end, we continue along the **pedestrian-cycle path along the Arno**, which runs parallel to the railway line and which brings us back to the bridge, Ponte all'Indiano.



Pedestrian-cycle path along the Arno between Le Piagge and the bridge, Ponte all'Indiano

Technical information

Trail distance	7.7 km
Height difference	10 m
Maximum gradient	-
Average journey time	walking 1h 55' - running 50'
Difficulty	*

Technical and sporting features

Road conditions and surface	The route is entirely flat, with the first part on a regular paved road and with level crossings. The last part is totally straight and on beaten dirt track
Suitable	Walkers of all levels Runners of all levels
Type of training	Due to its characteristics, this type of training allows the body to sustain a prolonged effort over time or do resistance training . The last part of the route is especially suited to repetitive training for developing aerobic strength .
Footwear	Walking shoes and in particular running shoes

Directions

Ataf lines	<i>With stops directly at or next to the start of the trail</i> Line 35, stop Pistoiese 03 (Station SMN Directions) With stops near to one of the points on the trail Line 17, stop Piazzale Kennedy (Coverciano - Cascine) Line 60, stop Cascine 02 (Careggi -Tram 1)
Tram	Line 1, stop Cascine (Scandicci - Station SMN)
Train	http://www.e656.net/orario/stazione/le_piagge.html

Connected trail - Red route

From the Cascine to the ancient villages of Mantignano, Ugnano and San Bartolo a Cintoia

Via dell'Argingrosso - Via del Fosso degli Ortolani (road overpass) - Via del Ponticino - Via di Mantignano - Via di Ugnano - Via di Fagna - Via del Donicato - Via del Ferrale - Via di Castelnuovo - Via di Ugnano - Via di Mantignano - Via del Ponticino - Via del Fosso degli Ortolani (road overpass) - Via di San Bartolo a Cintoia - Viuzzo di S.Maria a Cintoia - Via del Saletto - Via Lunga - Via delle Torri - internal walkway through gardens - Via Canova - Via de' Bassi - Via Massa - Via Gubbio

Our route starts at **Via dell'Argingrosso** (the name relates to the massive embankment erected to contain the water in case the river should flood), near Via delle Isole. Shortly after the underpass of the Viaduct we continue along the same road that after a few dozen metres bends to the left, taking on a different appearance, becoming narrower and less busy. Before us, in the distance, are the hills of Scandicci and at the roadsides are strips of cultivated fields or mixed use land, in a landscape that alternates between lovely countryside and recent urban development. The road now leads us to the **Ponte del Fosso degli Ortolani** that crosses the Greve river (the "gardeners' ditch" flows here, currently collecting wastewater discharged from the Isolotto neighbourhood. It will soon be redirected via pipeline and conveyed to the new collector on the left bank of the Arno, intended to redirect all discharges from the areas of Florence and Bagno a Ripoli that are not yet connected). After the **bridge**, we take **Via del Ponticino** (small bridge, from the old river bridge of more modest proportions than the present one and currently closed). From here we turn right into **Via di Mantignano**, going into the village.



Houses in the village of Mantignano



In May, the fields ploughed and tilled

Mantignano

It derives its name from "Amantinius", ie the bottom, the Roman praedial (farm) Amantinius. We are in the fertile plain, in the country that supplied (and still does, although to a lesser extent,) the Florentine markets with fruits and vegetables. An extensive patchwork of arable farms, vegetable gardens and orchards that benefit from abundant water and proximity to town, and which still survive tenaciously today despite the siege and growth of the urban infrastructure nearby. This portion of the land remains one of the largest plains areas not yet completely compromised, so that - despite the historical and increasing abandonment of farming, here as elsewhere - some hundreds of acres are cultivated and thrive in defense of the land's original vocation.

The entrance to the village is heralded by the old oak tree (the "Oak of Mantignano") that the inhabitants were unwilling to sacrifice when the new bridge was built. Along the street are cottages, small 19th and 20th century residences, some farmhouses and, continuing to where the road opens onto a view of fields, the outline of the abbey, Badia di S. Maria a Mantignano.



Fields planted in early May



S. Maria a Mantignano: the semicircular apse; the transept wings

La Badia di Santa Maria a Mantignano (Abbey)

Dating from the year one thousand, the era of the reign of the Cadolingi Counts - powerful lords of Lombard origin whose territories extended from the plain of Settimo a Fucecchio right to the plain of Lucca - this abbey was founded by them and also desired to ensure traffic control in the Valdarno. The Monastery, from its beginning tied to the Camaldolese of Badia a Settimo, was home to a Benedictine women's community and at the centre of a clash with the episcopal Florentine power who resented the demands for apostolic autonomy and protection forwarded by some Abbesses to the Holy See, a confrontation that ended in early 1200 with the final resolution that they be elected by the bishop of Florence. Already at the end of the 12th century, around the Monastery, which was certainly not without resources, a village had begun to grow. In 1441 it was joined to the Badia di S. Apollonia and became a women's hospital, though the nuns still maintained the patronage of the Church. Suppressed in 1785, the church became a simple parish church and in subsequent years, the premises of the monastery were used as private homes.

We continue along the street which leads us towards the "modern" part of the village, with its low houses, until we reach **Via di Ugnano** on the right, along whose side a wall bordering private property runs for a long distance.



On Via di Ugnano

The village of Ugnano

The name dates back to a Roman praedial (farm) and means "possession of Aunius".

Documented in the records from the 12th century, it was dominated by the castle of the same name, owned by the Florentine branch of the Alberti, a powerful family that ruled the mountainous part of the Prato area and a section of the Bolognese area. Like all villages of the plain, it suffered from frequent flooding of the Arno, and it was during the terrible flood of 1623 that the castle was destroyed.

The fact that flooding of the river and marshes in the area was something the inhabitants had to live with is demonstrated by the way that the barns and cellars of old farmhouses were often raised to protect animals and food supplies from the ravages of flooding.

We take the Via di Ugnano until reaching **Via di Fagna**. At the junction of the two roads is the church, **Chiesa di Santo Stefano a Ugnano**



Ancient farmhouse on the outskirts of the village



Chiesa di S. Stefano a Ugnano

Documented since 1000, it underwent much restoration work at the end of the 18th century, including the raising of the floor because of the many floods.

Entirely rebuilt in the early 19th century, damaged by an earthquake in 1895 and then completely destroyed by German mines in 1944, it was rebuilt from scratch in 1953.

Now we turn left in **Via di Fagna**, a typical minor rural road, on whose right hand side is a long dry stone wall bordering the land where a vegetable garden and orchard grow. After a while, we find - to our left - **Via del Donicato** (the name derives from the Latin "dominicus", ie, master, and therefore means "privately owned land not encumbered by feudal ties) that, gradually, accentuates its typically rural and agrarian nature, offering a view of the orderly stretch of cultivated fields.



In Via di Fagna



Via del Donicato: ready for harvesting vegetables



Via del Donicato: fields tilled and plowed, in May



Via del Donicato: the fertile earth, in May

We walk a long distance along this beautiful road that leads us into the fertile countryside, orderly and tilled, that land that still allows us to enjoy locally produced, naturally grown vegetables and fruits on our tables. We walk until, on our right, near the new buildings behind the Ugnano area (PEEP area), we find Via del Ferrale (derives its name from ancient spelt cultivation). We continue our journey through the countryside, along **Via del Ferrale**, until at a curve, we come to the beautiful **Villa Lisi** (closed to the public).



Via del Ferrale: here too the lovely tilled countryside

Villa Lisi

Already documented in medieval times as the "Palagiaccio Agnano", it was, along with the Ugnano Castle and the Abbey of Santa Maria a Mantignano, one of the most important structures in all this vast territory. Its current appearance dates from the 15th century; the chapel on the side however, dates to the 17th century. It belonged to the Nerli, to the Andreini (wealthy Florentine goldsmiths), to the Piccolomini and, at the end of the 17th century, to the Medici, to then pass to the Lisi family, the current owners.



Villa Lisi: detail of chapel (17th century)



Villa Lisi: partial view of the facade



Villa Lisi: detail of the garden

We cover all of Via del Ferrale to come to **Via di Castelnuovo** (from a castle, later than that of Ugnano, hence "new", then totally destroyed), where we turn left.

On reaching **the village of Ugnano**, we go right on **Via di Ugnano** and continue until we reach the intersection with **Via di Mantignano**. We take this long road to the left, with its greenhouses, its vast expanses of worked and cultivated fields, and some old farmhouses.

We travel its entire length until we reach the village of Mantignano where- recrossing the bridge of **Via del Fosso di Ortolani** - we turn right on **Via di San Bartolo a Cintoia**. This road, with its mixed scenery of remaining countryside and industrial sites - brings us to the old village of San Bartolo.

Passing the continuous wall of low houses, we go left into the **Viuzzo di S. Maria a Cintoia** (Cintoia from the Roman "centuria").

From here we go to the end and turn right onto **Via del Saletto** (the name derives from "Salceto" to indicate the place where the willows grew) that continues into **Via Lunga** (at one time, when it was surrounded by fields, it must have seemed this way). At the end of Via Lunga is the village of Le Torri.

Going left into the **Viuzzo del Crocifisso delle Torri** (named after a shrine with a crucifix - poorly maintained - close to Villa Le Torri, now Villa Vogel) we arrive at **Via delle Torri** (this also takes its name from Villa Le Torri, today **Villa Vogel**).



Villa Vogel: view on Via delle Torri



Villa Vogel



Villa Vogel

Originally called Villa Le Torri, it began as a rural fortified building with a tower surmounting the structure. In the 14th century it was modified and in the late 15th century extended with a colonnaded courtyard backing onto the tower. In the next century it was the fulcrum of the various properties that the Capponi family boasted in the area and it was precisely because of its central location that it was renovated and extended, with the addition on the northern side and the porch to the south, and the creation of the boundary wall which by connecting all its environments, closed in the property.

In 1814 the Villa passed to the Franceschi family, then the Benucci until, in the period when Florence was the capital, it was divided up and rented out. In 1923 the villa was bought by the Swiss Vogel. It went through a phase of abandonment until, in 1981, the City of Florence took over the property, using it for District and social activities. After a slow and demanding restoration completed in 1999, the Villa became the seat of the District Four Council. The inner courtyard, the lemon house and the colonnaded courtyard often host contemporary art exhibitions. The Villa is surrounded by a public park and is popular with the citizens. It has sports and play areas, often used for artistic events and performances. There are beautiful trees, both newly planted and "historical", consisting mainly of pines, cypresses, oaks and lindens.

Now taking a pedestrian path to a nearby garden (and crossing it), we arrive at **Via Canova**, at which we turn left and continue for a hundred metres and then turn right into **Via dei Bassi**.

From here we turn left onto **Via Massa** to then turn right on **Via Gubbio** which takes us into Via dell'Argingrosso, back to the start of the route and the conclusion of our itinerary.

Technical information

Trail distance	10.6 km
Height difference	10 m
Maximum gradient	-
Average journey time	walking 2h 39' - running 1h 10'
Difficulty	*

Technical and sporting features

Road conditions and surface	The trail is entirely flat, covering mostly smooth asphalt road. In some places, there are no sidewalks, and intersection crossings are level.
Suitable	Walkers of all levels Runners of all levels
Type of training	Because of its characteristics, this type of route allows the body to sustain a prolonged effort over time, in other words, resistance training.
Footwear	Walking shoes and in particular running shoes

Directions

Ataf lines	<i>With stops directly at or next to the start of the trail</i> Line 5 stop Canova 12 (Rifredi - Canova -Soffiano) Line 44 stop Castelnuovo (Federiga - Ugnano - Mantignano) Line 77 (Foggini - La Casella - Canova)
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DESIGN, CREATION AND COORDINATION

Project

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Route layouts	Municipality of Florence - Department for Culture, Tourism and Sport: Paolo Mangini
Technical and sporting features	Training Consultant: Fulvio Massini
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