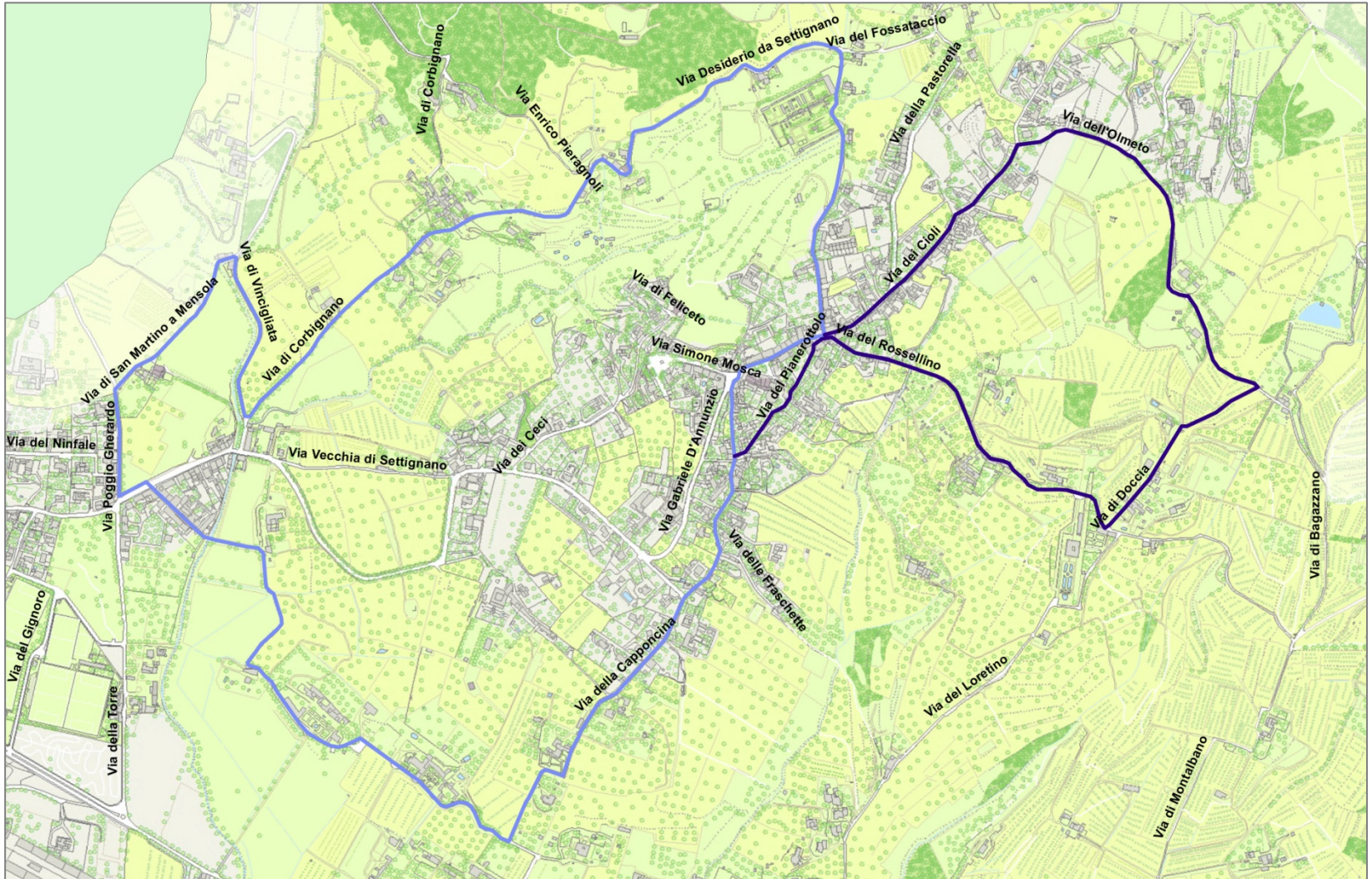


The map - Connected trail - Purple route



Connected trail - Purple route

Heading to Settignano through villas, olive groves and charming gardens

Piazza Niccolò Tommaseo - Via di San Romano - Via de' Cioli - Via dell'Olmeto - Via di Doccia - Via del Rossellino - Via del Pianerottolo - Piazza Niccolò Tommaseo

From the heart of Settignano in **Piazza Niccolò Tommaseo**, we head down the narrow **Via di San Romano** (the main road in the village which is lined with rows of ancient townhouses). When we reach the crossroads with Via della Pastorella, this road becomes **Via de' Cioli**, which gets its name from the family of sculptors from Settignano, the most famous of whom was Valerio, who helped Tribolo with the Boboli Gardens and created many works of art, including the Morgante statue at Boboli.



Via de' Cioli at the crossroads with Via della Pastorella



The panoramic view from Via dell'Olmeto

We continue uphill along this road as the houses gradually begin to disappear. On our right we come to the beautiful **Via dell'Olmeto**, which gets its name from the elm trees ('olmi' in Italian) that used to line this street. Cypress trees are now scattered here and there as the first section of this road climbs uphill with a challenging slope. A magnificent panorama now opens up and there is a striking view over nearby Settignano, which lies in the Florentine valley on the crest of the surrounding hills. There is a sense of complete and utter harmony, as we enjoy this perfect balance between nature, man's work and art.

We come across many beautiful villas, including **Villa Il Quercione** (not open to the public) which we find at the first opening on our left along *Via dell'Olmeto* (a recommended detour).



First section of *Via dell'Olmeto*



Villa Il Quercione

Villa Il Quercione - Dating back to the 14th century, this villa has been significantly altered and now retains its 19th century features. In 1937, the garden layout was organised in part by the landscape architect, Pietro Porcinai. He was the son of the head gardener at Villa di Gamberaia (which at that time was owned by the Romanian Princess, Catherine Jeanne Ghyka) where he was born in one of the annexes to the villa.

We retrace our steps to get back onto *Via dell'Olmeto* which now becomes very narrow and worn (nonetheless vehicles still come from both directions so please be careful!). At the end of this road, we come to **Via di Doccia** (at No. 6 on the crossroads we find a small building that was once used to store the decoy birds used on hunts in the surrounding properties).



The small building used to store decoy birds at the crossroads with *Via Doccia*



The panorama from *Via di Doccia*

We turn right onto **Via di Doccia**, at the end of this road we reach the so-called “ponte del diavolo” (Devil’s bridge). Once we’ve crossed this bridge, we reach the crossroads with **Via del Rossellino** where the extraordinary **Villa Gamberaia** opens out with its magnificent gardens (No. 72, Via del Rossellino).



Villa Gamberaia - In the fourteenth century this villa used to be a farmhouse owned by the Benedictine monks of S. Martino a Mensola. The building and its surrounding land (the name possibly comes from the Italian word for shrimp, which were once found in the nearby river) were bought at the end of the 14th century by Matteo di Domenico Gambarelli, whose notable descendants include Antonio and Bernardo (known as Rossellino), who were fifteenth-century architects and sculptors. In 1610, the new owner Zanobi di Andrea Lapi wanted to turn it into a luxurious country residence so during this period he finished the construction of the main villa and began work on the garden, which was then embellished and decorated by the Marquis Capponi, who lived here from 1717. When they purchased the villa, the property covered nearly 100 hectares with 15 farmhouses and even back then it already had the driveway, the holm oak groves, the lemon house, the bowling green and the *gabinetto rustico*. Statues, fountains, playful water features and other architectural aspects were added. In the 19th century, the property changed hands many times, suffering a period of gradual decline until 1894 when the Romanian Princess Ghyka fell in love with the location. She decided to turn it into her favourite home and begun major building work, including the construction of a water parterre where the parterre de broderie used to be (1905-1913). In 1925, the property was passed on to Baroness Matilde von Ketteler, but in 1944 retreating German troops set fire to Gamberaia, seriously damaging the villa and its gardens. It was sold to the Vatican and then purchased by the Marchi family in 1952, who brought it back to its former glory. Their work continues today thanks to their heirs, the Zalumi family.



Despite its relatively small size, this garden is a masterpiece: in front of the villa, the typical geometric flowerbeds of an Italian garden have been replaced with four large water tanks that reflect the box hedges, roses, lavender, irises and cypresses. At the centre there is another smaller tank with a fountain and in the background we find the scenic landscape architecture featuring a hedgerow with topiary arches that also run along the sides and a spectacular balcony over Florence. As we stroll down a long green passageway in bloom which runs all throughout the park, we cross the rhododendron garden to reach the “secret garden”. It has remained unchanged since the 1700s, featuring obelisks, statues nestled in niches, pots of flowers and mallow, as well as a grotto in the background. We take a staircase to the “lemon garden”, which is overlooked by a fifteenth-century building that may once have been the original residence of the first owners of this plot of land. As we go back through the passageway, we climb back up the hill to reach the nymphaeum, which is lined with ancient trees and surrounded by walls. The beautiful fountain of Neptune rises up from in between the mosaics and rocks.

We now stroll down **Via del Rossellino**. When we reach number 62 there is a recommended detour to our right to visit the small charming medieval village known as “Il Bosco”.



From Via del Rossellino towards the small village



The small village of “Il Bosco”



A gallery balcony in the small village

Once we've finished the final section of Via del Rossellino, up to the village of Settignano, we turn left around the corner building to head down **Via del Pianerottolo** (which takes its name from one of the Cerretani villas which rises up above a ledge on the Settignano hills). After about 300 metres we arrive back at **Piazza Niccolò Tommaseo** on our right, which is where we started and now finish our walk.



Leaving the small village



Via del Pianerottolo



Piazza Niccolò Tommaseo

Technical information

Trail distance	2.6 km
Height difference	96 m
Maximum gradient	16%
Average journey time	Walking: 50' - Running: 30'
Difficulty	***

Technical and sporting features

Road conditions and surface	There is no sidewalk along this trail, most of which is on asphalt (except for the beaten track section on Via dell'Olmeto). It mainly runs through narrow streets. Pay attention and always run against traffic.
Suitable	Walkers with a good level of fitness Runners with a good level of fitness who can run the whole trail Beginners should alternate between running and walking (in the more difficult sections).
Type of training	The features of this layout allow you to perfect your walking/running technique .
Footwear	Walking shoes or running shoes

Directions

Ataf Lines	<i>With stops directly at or next to the start of the trail:</i> line 10 (S. Marco - Settignano) stop Settignano, Piazza Niccolò Tommaseo
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Places to visit

Gardens of Villa Gamberaia	Paid entry. From Monday to Saturday from 9:00 am to 5:00 p.m. (in the summer until 6:00 p.m.). Sundays open until 4:00 p.m. Public holidays upon booking by phone (+39 055/697205) or email: info@villagamberaia.it http://www.villagamberaia.com
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NB: The information on the line services and the places to visit was correct in January 2014. Please check for potential changes.

Design, creation and coordination

Project

Text, layout and coordination	Municipality of Florence - Department for Culture, Tourism and Sport: Carla Giannini
Route layout	Municipality of Florence - Department for Culture, Tourism and Sport: Paolo Mangini
Technical and sporting features	Training Consultant: Fulvio Massini
Photos	Municipality of Florence - Department for Culture, Tourism and Sport: Giulio Monasta and Carla Giannini Contributor: Giacomo Scarzanella
Photo credits	Villa Gamberaia - for the kind permission of the villa's owners
<i>Special thanks</i>	Managers of places of art, faith, nature and culture <i>for their kind permission to reproduce the images and for their collaboration</i>
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Maps and Mobile Apps

Coordination and development	Municipality of Florence - Department for Information Systems: Gianluca Vannuccini, Enrico Castagnoli, Leonardo Ricci, Elena Marrassini, Stefano Gecchele and Annita Bandini Contributor: Giacomo Scarzanella Linea Comune S.p.A.: Bianca Maria Beconi and Gabriele Andreozzi
Mobile app:	Geoln S.r.l.