



## Connected trail - Pink route

### Heading to the slopes of Monte Morello, around Villa La Petraia

Via di San Michele a Castello - Via della Covacchia - Via della Fonte (country road) - Via della Topaia - Via Pietro Dazzi - Via dell'Osservatorio (at the crossroads with Via di Boldrone)

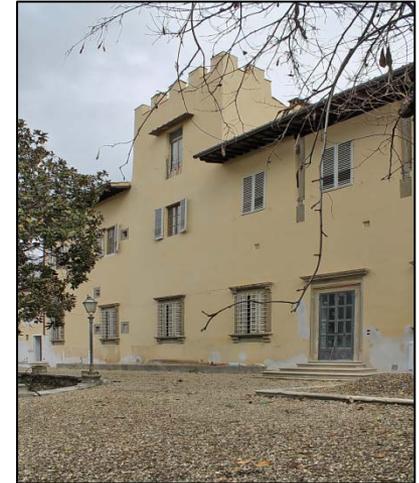
From **Via di San Michele a Castello**, we reach the crossroads with Viuzzo del Gondo where **Via della Covacchia** opens up just behind the Medici Villa di Castello. It is a beautiful street which cuts through the magnificent olive groves, offering charming views over the hillside spurs on Monte Morello. After we've reached the sharp bend, we take a few more steps and suddenly see the beautiful **Villa "La Covacchia"** (which is above our path). We bear to the right, skirting around the building, to head down the short **Via della Fonte**, a rural lane which winds all the way through an olive grove.



Via di S. Michele a Castello



Via della Covacchia



Villa la Covacchia



Villa della Covacchia as seen from the street of the same name



The start of Via della Fonte

**Villa La Covacchia** - This villa was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century as a noble home. It is dominated by its beautiful crenellated central tower. The building also has a loggia and an impressive portico at the front. Over the years, it has undergone many changes, but the building's tower has survived intact.



Via della Fonte

The only buildings we encounter along the final section of this path are the farmhouses at the crossroads with **Via della Topaia**. Here we take a right and stroll down this road, walking by the boundary walls to the **Medici Villa della Topaia** (which is not open to the public and not visible from the street).



Via della Topaia

**Villa della Topaia** - Villa della Topaia was built by Cosimo I de' Medici (pre-1550) from an existing rural building. This stately villa (although smaller than the other Medici residences) was essentially designed as guestrooms and a hunting lodge within the enormous park between the Castello and La Petraia. Villa della Topaia was also given the celebratory name of Cosmiana by Benedetto Varchi who stayed here for a long time while he wrote "The History of Florence", along with Scipione Ammirato, who was also a guest of Cosimo I. Since he was so fond of the natural sciences, Cosimo III commissioned a type of botanical garden for the villa, which was full of various species of fruits, citruses, grapes, flowers and strange or extravagant plants (as a mark of good taste for his Wunderkammer or "cabinet of curiosities"). The painter, Bartolomeo Bimbi, produced still-life paintings of these species, which are now on display at the Medici Villa di Poggio a Caiano. The villa was then passed on to the Lorraine and Savoy families. In 1919, it was handed over to the State, which gave it to the Opera Nazionale Combattenti (National Veterans' Association) who sold it on to private owners.



Villa della Topaia, in the foreground



The loggia of Villa della Topaia

With magnificent views over the olive tree hills, we move on from Via della Topaia, following a steady, gentle slope down which bears to the right, leading us onto **Via Pietro Dazzi**. This road is enclosed by dry-stone walls which mark out different properties, and just like the road beforehand, it has beautiful panoramic views. At numbers 25-27 we find **Villa del Gioiello** and No. 23 is Villa Il Pratello (once known as Porta Castello). When we reach number 9, we find one of the gates to the eighteenth-century **Villa di Quarto** also known as **Villa Paxton** (which is not open to the public and not clearly visible), as well as its beautiful Italian garden and the 19<sup>th</sup> century park behind the villa.



Via Piero Dazzi



Villa del Gioiello

**Villa di Quarto (also known as Paxton or della Granduchessa)**

Dating back to the fifteenth century, this villa used to belong to the Pasquali family back in 1713. They commissioned Alfonso Parigi to carry out the renovation work (who was also the architect behind the expansion of the Biboli Gardens). This work gave the villa its prevailing eighteenth-century character. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it belonged to the former King of Westphalia, Jérôme Bonaparte, who bequeathed it to his daughter, Mathilde. She then married the Russian Prince, Anatoly Demidov, who was the son of an ambassador, Nikolai Demidov. After his father's death, he inherited the largest Russian industrial empire in the manufacture of weapons. He was also a patron of the arts and during this time the villa became what it is today.



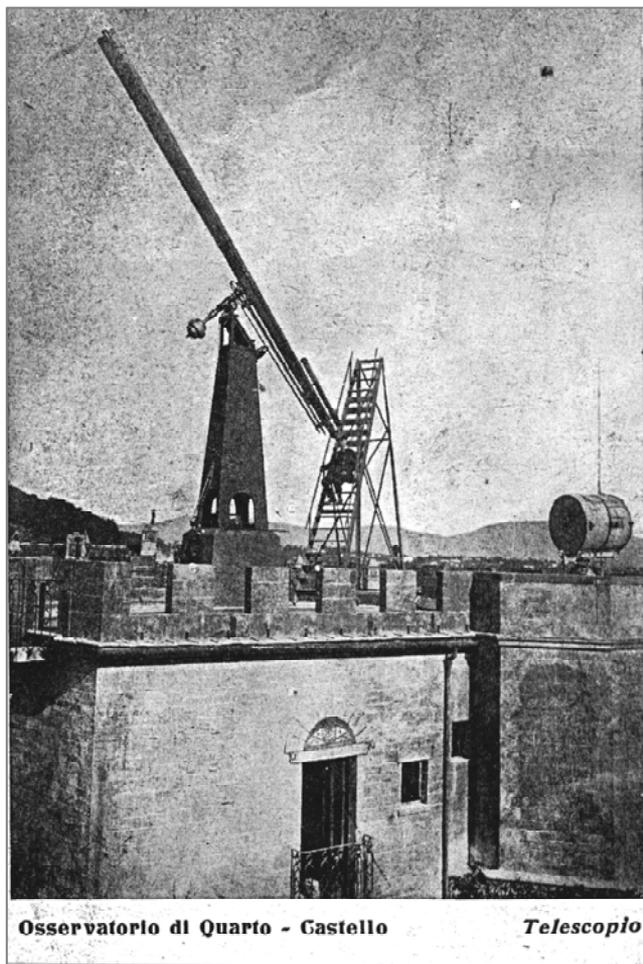
Villa di Quarto and its park as seen from Via Pietro Dazzi No. 9

In 1908, it underwent complete restoration work on behalf of Baron Ritter de Zahony. The villa has had many illustrious guests, including the French historian and statesman, Adolph Tiers, and the American writer, Mark Twain, whose beloved wife actually died here.

As we stroll down Via Dazzi we arrive at an opening (to the right is a boundary wall of a villa and to the left we see a dry-stone wall marking out an olive grove). From here, we take a right down **Via dell'Osservatorio**, which takes its name from the Observatory of S. Maria a Quarto founded by Father Raffaello Stiattesi in the early 1900s).

### **Via dell'Osservatorio**

This road takes its name from the Observatory founded in the late 1800s by Father Raffaello Stiattesi, the parish priest of the Church of Santa a Maria a Quarto. He used the State's land and buildings here to construct an Observatory equipped with various types of seismographs, one of which is enormous and fixed to a rock: it is known as a "Stiattesi horizontal pendulum". The Observatory was destroyed during the Second World War by German troops who thought that it contained a secret radio station.



**Osservatorio di Quarto - Castello**

**Telescopio**

This long road is enclosed between the traditional dry-stone walls that mark out different properties. It slopes downhill, providing beautiful views over the distant Scandicci hills.



The upper section of Via dell'Osservatorio



The secondary gate to Villa La Petraia on Via dell'Osservatorio

We continue down this steady slope, until on our right after about 400 metres we find one of the secondary entrance gates to the Medici Villa della Petraia (if it were in use it would take us through the woods that run on the north-east side of the villa). While if we look to roughly the same spot on our left, we'll see the **Church of Santa Maria a Quarto**.



The façade of the Church of **Santa Maria a Quarto**



Inside the Church



Inside the Church

### The Church of Santa Maria a Quarto

The name Quarto comes from the fourth (*quarto*) Roman milestone on Via Cassia which runs from Rome towards Prato. The church was built here on an elevated position above the plains. There are reports of the church dating back to 1200. As a chaplaincy, it was originally part of the Church of Santo Stefano In Pane (on Via delle Panche). It has been altered many times and now little remains of its original appearance. It has a sixteenth-century portico at the front and a single nave inside. It houses a wooden sculpture that dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century (*Madonna with Child*).



Villa di Quarto from Via dell'Osservatorio No 152



Villa di Quarto as seen from the gate

We continue along our path for a little while until we find the other entrance on our left to **Villa di Quarto** (also known as Paxton or della Granduchessa), which we already encountered on Via Pietro Dazzi.

We walk on again, still strolling down this gentle slope in between dry-stone walls. The landscape here is marked by fields of olive trees, as we reach the crossroads with **Via di Boldrone**.

## Technical information

Trail distance	2.6 km
Height difference	83 m
Maximum gradient	23%
Average journey time	Walking: 50' - Running: 25'
Difficulty:	****

## Technical and sporting features

Road conditions and surface:	There is no sidewalk along this trail which winds through narrow streets usually covered with asphalt (except for Via della Fonte which is a beaten track). The first section is uphill (for about 1 km). It continues with a gentle up and down section until Via Dazzi. <b>Pay attention</b> and always run against traffic, around bends you should always keep the angle open so you can see what's coming.
Suitable	Walkers of all levels 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 route allow you to train up your <b>lactic acid tolerance</b> , by producing a large amount of lactic acid and then getting rid of it at the same time.
Footwear	Walking shoes and in particular running shoes

## Directions

Ataf Line Services

*With stops directly at or next to the start of the trail:*  
**line 2, stop Sestese 05 (Station SMN - Sesto Fiorentino - Calenzano)**  
line 28 stop Sestese 05 (Sesto F.no - Station SMN)

## 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
<i>Special thanks</i>	The Special Superintendency for Historical, Artistic and Ethno-anthropological Heritage for the Museums in the City of Florence Managers of places of art, faith, nature and culture <i>for their kind permission to reproduce the images and for their collaboration</i>
Thanks	Presidents of the Commissions for Sport in the Districts of the Municipality of Florence  Ataf
<i>for the route layouts</i>	Bardazzi Andrea, Bardazzi Giulia, Bugetti Stefano, Verzieri Daniele and Gensini Marco Presidents of the Commissions for Sport in the Districts of the Municipality of Florence

### Maps and Mobile Apps

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