Green
is Bologna

Discover

Cycle route in the footsteps of the Etruscans

Comacchio-Bologna-Montepiano

LOOK

A mountain bike journey that does not set out to follow an ancient route the Etruscans actually travelled along, but to discover both obvious and hidden traces of our ancestors, visiting museums and archaeological sites, to create an increasingly close relationship between cycling, tourism and culture; a cycle path designed to show cyclists who “pedal with their heads down” how to cycle along the same path and see something different each time, to teach them how to go slower, to look back and even "get off the bike...".

How to get there

Bologna is easily accessible by most means of transport. Given its accessibility from various points on the local railway network, sections of the route can be chosen for cycling along at different times.

Bologna

- G. Marconi Bologna Airport
- Bologna Centrale Station
- Motorway (A1-A13-A14)

Cycle route in the footsteps of the Etruscans

1 Stop
Climbing back up the ancient course of the Po di Spina from Comacchio to the National Archaeological Museum in Ferrara
Length: **70 km**
Height difference: negligible
Difficulty: TC/TC (= tourist)
Mainly paved terrain

2 Stop
Villanovan heritage and Bolognese country villas
Length: **76 km**
Height difference: negligible
Difficulty: TC/TC
Mainly paved terrain

3 Stop
Discovering Kainua from Bologna to Grizzana
Length: **51 km** Height difference: **+1250 m, -800 m**
Difficulty: MC+/MC (= for cycle excursionists with medium technical skills)
Mainly dirt tracks

4 Stop
On the Park ridge towards Tuscan Etruria from Grizzana to Montepiano
Length: **35 km** Height difference: **+1150 m, -1000 m**
Difficulty: MC/MC
Mainly dirt tracks

Comacchio
70 km
Ferrara
76 km
Bologna
51 km
Grizzana Morandi
35 km
Montepiano
Prato
Volterra
Populonia (Piombino)

From Spina to Populonia:
Recommended stops 10
Length 500 km
Difference in level approx. 8000 m

Comacchio

The Valleys and the ancient port of Spina

The journey begins in the lagoon town of Comacchio, part of the Regional Po Delta Park, home to the Museum of the Ancient Delta, which shows how it has changed through ancient, Etruscan and Roman times. Nearby stood the town of Spina, which flourished from 540 B.C. as a port-emporium on the Adriatic Sea, a link between the Etruscan and Greek worlds, one of the Etrurian centres in the Po valley. The urban area and its necropolises, discovered as a result of reclamation work in the 1920s have undergone extensive digs.

The Estense Delights

A model Renaissance town

The capital of the Este Duchy (7th-8th century), designated as a “Renaissance town” by UNESCO is not to be missed by culture, nature and good food enthusiasts. The Archaeological Museum contains most of the finds from the Spina digs.
The “Delizie” (delights) of Belriguardo and Verginese are two of the Este residences built outside the town for leisure activities and for monitoring the area of the Po valley.

Bagnarola di Budrio

The Versailles of Bologna

Inhabited in sequence by the Etruscans, Celts and Romans, it owes its name to the previous presence of marshy areas. Between the 16th-18th century a number of Bolognese aristocratic families chose the land, which had been reclaimed and made fertile, to build their country villas. That’s why it is called the "Versailles of Bologna". The most important buildings are Palazzo Bentivoglio-Odorici, Palazzo Ranuzzi-Cospi and the Ville Malvezzi-Campeggi.

Villanova di Castenaso

The discovery of a civilization

In this small hamlet, in 1853, Count Giovanni Gozzadini discovered vast burial grounds on his estates dating back to the Iron Age and identified the first traces of the earliest phase of Etruscan civilization (9th-8th century B.C.), which he named Villanovan after the place.
The MUV-Museum of Villanovan Civilization, stands where the count made his discoveries. It displays artefacts from the digs in Marano di Castenaso.

Bologna

The ancient Felsina, UNESCO city of music and porticoes

The ancient university city, famous for its towers and long porticoes. The first Villanovan villages date back to the 9th century B.C., but it was from the 6th century B.C. that Felsina developed in a fully urban sense and became the main Etrurian centre of the Po valley, the fulcrum of communication and trade routes between northern Europe and the Mediterranean area. The Archaeological Civic Museum contains artefacts from the extensive excavation campaigns conducted since the mid-19th century in the city and surroundings.

Sasso Marconi

The Reno River and the hills of Guglielmo Marconi

The town owes its name to the Sasso di Glossina and to Marconian sites such as Villa Griffone, Guglielmo Marconi's residence and the site of his first experiments.
The Marconi Museum is dedicated to the origins and developments of radio communications and the scientist's mausoleum is located here. Other places to see: Palazzo de' Rossi, Borgo di Colle Ameno, Vizzano Bridge and the San Gherardo Oasis.

Marzabotto

Kainua

Marzabotto is mainly known for the tragic events which occurred there during the WWII. This is where the remains of the Etruscan city of Kainua are located, built in the 6th century B.C. to guard the trade route in the Reno Valley from the Po valley to the Tyrrhenian part of Etruria; the site exceptionally preserves the original urban layout. The Pompeo Aria National Etruscan Museum in Marzabotto contains some of the artefacts found in the digs.

Monte Sole

Remembrance Park

The Monte Sole Regional Historical Park, in addition to its wealth of wildlife and naturalistic merits, is characterized by its historical significance resulting from the massacre that occurred in September-October 1944, when Nazi-Fascist troops slaughtered hundreds of defenceless people and left the area in ruins. Inside the park is the Memorial Trail, which passes through the symbolic sites of the massacre and the summit of Monte Sole.

Grizzana Morandi

Art in the Bolognese Apennines

Grizzana recalls in its place name the artist Giorgio Morandi, who lived there for a long time, finding inspiration for some of his most famous masterpieces. Casa Morandi stands on the exact spot from which the artist loved to portray the surrounding landscape, particularly the Fienili del Campiaro, now home to the Museo degli Allievi di Giorgio Morandi, Casa Veggetti and Villa Tonelli, as well as the Case della Sete e Lilam, with the backdrop of the Veggio mountains.

Montovolo

The sacred mountain

Peak of the Bolognese Apennines (962 m above sea level), it is part of the Provincial Park of the same name.
In addition to its naturalistic aspects, the area is of historical-artistic interest. The Sanctuary of the B.V. della Consolazione and the Oratory of St. Caterina d'Alessandria (13th century) are located here. It is believed to have been a sacred mountain since ancient times, probably a transit route even in the Etruscan era.

Lakes Suviana and Brasimone Park

The bell of the deer

The park stretches along the centre of the Bolognese mountains around the two hydroelectric reservoirs of Suviana and Brasimone. Rich in woods and wildlife (deer) it has an active Visitor Centre and Forest Museum. The Brasimone reservoir was completed in 1911 to power the railway. Along the ridge leading to the lake, artefacts from the Etruscan period have been found at Monteacuto Ragazza and from the Bronze Age at Burzanella (19th-12th century).

Montepiano

On the border of Tyrrhenian Etruria

After passing the San Giuseppe pass, set among beech woods, the trail descends to Montepiano, on the watershed between the Setta-Reno and Bisenzio-Arno basins. The Montepiano pass has been a convenient Apennine pass for the Etruscans in the direction of Kainua, and later for the Romans. After just a few kilometres is Vernio station, where you can return towards Bologna or Prato, after taking a look at the Santa Maria Abbey dating back to 1095.

Why have a cycle route in the footsteps of the Etruscans?
The itinerary touches some of the most significant places of the Etruscan civilization in the Po Valley and central area of Tuscany. The Etruscans left significant traces in this area, and in a country aiming to provide "paths," we wanted to propose a cycle route that would combine naturalistic attractions with the historical heritage of an ancient race, yet to be discovered.

How many days does it take to cycle along it?
The complete itinerary, Comacchio-Populonia, can be covered in 10 days. The route runs through Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany for a total of more than 500 kilometres and about 8000m of difference in height. For an even richer experience, we recommend splitting the Emilia section into four stages of one-day each.

What to see along the cycle route?
In the territory of Emilia-Romagna, the cycle route leads from the Adriatic coast (Po Delta Park) toward Bologna and the Apennines, along ancient land and water routes, recounting not just the Etruscans, but man's eternal dialogue with the landscape.
Climbing up the hills of Bologna to the Tuscan ridge, it connects areas of environmental and historical value, parks and the nature reserves of eastern Emilia.

When is the best time to cycle along it?
The best seasons are spring and autumn, to avoid the excessive heat of summer or fog on the plains and the harsh winter on the Apennines.

Getting on the road
The complete itinerary can be divided into three sections according to the different morphology of the area (plains, mountains, hills), with different degrees of difficulty (low, medium-high, medium).
It can be done in various stages at different times and by users with different technical ability and type of bicycle, thanks to the accessibility of the railway network at different points.

How to get there and back by train?
Comacchio is not on a railway line. You can get there on the Ferrara-Argenta-Comacchio cycle path:
- from Argenta station on the Ferrara-Ravenna railway line (about 40 km),
- from Consandolo station on the SFM Bologna-Portomaggiore line (about 48 km).

Alternatively, from Ravenna station following the AdriaBike cycle path (about 60 km), a beautiful route between the Valleys that takes an extra day.
Marzabotto is on the Bologna Porretta railway line, where many regional trains stop. Vernio and Prato are on the Bologna-Florence railway line.

For further information

Museo Delta Antico, Comacchio
museodeltaantico.com

Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara
archeoferrara.beniculturali.it

Museo della Civiltà Villanoviana-MUV, Castenaso
comune.castenaso.bo.it

Museo Civico Archeologico di Bologna
museibologna.it/archeologico

Museo Nazionale Etrusco Marzabotto-MNEMA
musei.emiliaromagna.beniculturali.it

For details, see the interactive map of the path from Comacchio to the Apennine ridge and the cultural heritage along it on www.tourer.it

For further information and GPS tracking:
sulletraccedeglietruschi.caibo.it ciclocai.caibo.it

eXtraBO Outdoor Infopoint
Piazza Nettuno 1/ab
40124 Bologna
T +39 051 6583109
M extrabo@bolognawelcome.it

BOLOGNAPPENNINO GAL Appennino Bolognese
UNIONE EUROPEA Fondo Europeo Agricolo per lo Sviluppo Rurale
RegioneEmilia-Romagna
Programma di Sviluppo Rurale dell'Emilia-Romagna 2014-2020
Bologna Modena territories
eXtraBO
MTB CicloCai Bologna
Sezione di Argenta
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