

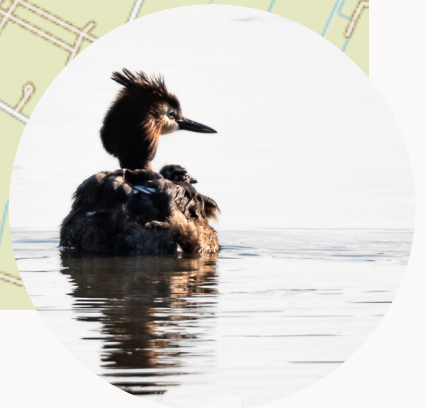
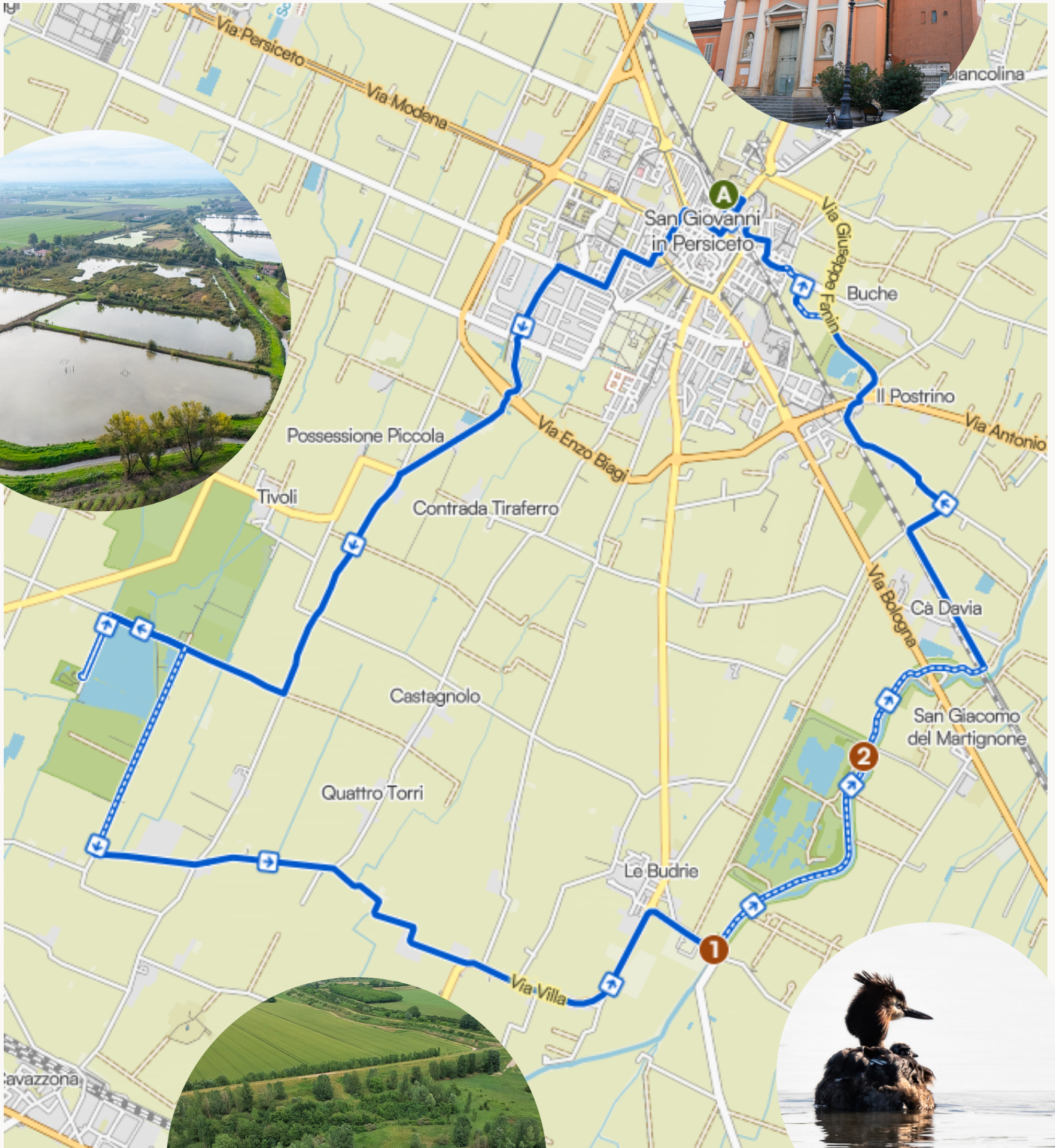
Roadbook



Habitats and Water Management in San Giovanni in Persiceto



Roadmap



The route is 28,5 km long

[Go to the page to download the GPX track](#)



Or scan the QR code



Itinerary

A flat and accessible route combining train travel with the exploration of the agricultural landscape and hydraulic infrastructure of the Bologna Plain.

The itinerary starts from **San Giovanni in Persiceto railway station**, including a visit to the historic town center, before continuing towards **Tivoli-Manzolino**, Site of Community Importance and Special Protection Area, through the countryside and rural landscapes. The route then reaches the **Samoggia Stream Flood Retention Basin** and continues along a short section of the Sun Cycle Route (Ciclovia del Sole), ending at the **La Bora Ecological Rebalancing Area**.

Route Features

- **Terrain:** predominantly asphalt and gravel
- **Elevation gain:** negligible
- **Type:** circular loop
- **Suitable for:** cycle touring, gravel bikes, e-bikes

Technical Information

- **Distance:** 43 km
- **Cycling time:** approx. 3.5 hours (excluding visits)



The itinerary was designed to prioritize cycle paths and low-traffic secondary roads. In the few sections where this was not possible, the route follows busier roads for short stretches. In all cases, we recommend exercising maximum caution and always complying with the Highway Code.

Description

The route begins at San Giovanni in Persiceto railway station, with time for a short visit to the **historic town centre**. Leaving the urban area behind, the itinerary winds through the countryside along low-traffic secondary roads and shared cycling and pedestrian paths, eventually reaching the **Tivoli-Manzolino SCI-SPA nature site**, an area of significant environmental value characterized by wetlands, canals, and habitats of European conservation importance.

Continuing through the agricultural landscape of the Bologna Plain, the route leads to the **Samoggia Stream Flood Retention Basin**, an important hydraulic infrastructure that plays a key role in flood mitigation and land protection. From here, the itinerary joins a short section of the **Sun Cycle Route (Ciclovia del Sole)**, which provides access to the **La Bora Ecological Rebalancing Area**, a renaturalized site rich in biodiversity and an ideal place to observe the flora and fauna typical of lowland wetlands. The route then concludes with the return ride to San Giovanni in Persiceto railway station.



San Giovanni in Persiceto, the Rounded Village

San Giovanni in Persiceto is a lively town where visitors can immerse themselves in history, art, and local traditions. A distinctive feature of the town centre is the **Borgo Rotondo**, the ancient medieval settlement of **Lombard origin**, recognizable by its **unusual circular urban layout**, which makes the historic centre truly unique.

Visitors can also explore **Piazzetta Betlemme**, renowned for its colourful trompe-l'œil murals that transform building façades into open-air works of art. The square was created by the Hollywood set designer Gino Pellegrini.

In Piazza del Popolo stands the Collegiate Church of Saint John the Baptist, home to artworks by **Guercino**, Francesco Albani, and Ubaldo Gandolfi. The square also features the largest walkable outdoor sundial in the world, a remarkable work that combines beauty with ingenuity.

San Giovanni in Persiceto is famous for its **historic Carnival**, considered one of the most original in Italy thanks to the tradition of the spectacular “spilli”—allegorical floats that transform before the audience’s eyes. The town is also the birthplace of the writer Giulio Cesare Croce, creator of the celebrated character **Bertoldo**, an iconic figure in local folk culture.



Tivoli-Manzolino Oasis

The Manzolino–Tivoli Oasis is a lowland area located between the provinces of Modena and Bologna, where environmental, agricultural, and hydraulic functions overlap in a landscape shaped by centuries of land management and water-control interventions. The site extends north of Manzolino (a hamlet of Castelfranco Emilia), south of Tivoli (within the municipality of San Giovanni in Persiceto), and also borders Sant’Agata Bolognese, forming a mosaic of wetlands and land-reclamation infrastructure.

Recognized as **both a Site of Community Importance and a Special Protection Area**, within the Natura 2000 Network (site code IT4040009), it comprises three main sections: the Manzolino Flood Retention Basin, the former Tivoli Fish Farming Facility, and the Boaria Rossa Area, covering a total of approximately **326 hectares**. These environments, once degraded and heavily altered by human activity, have been progressively restored through conservation and management initiatives carried out jointly by local authorities, the regional government, and land reclamation consortia. Former hunting areas have been converted into protected zones, and suitable habitats have been created to support wildlife.

The predominant habitat is **marshland**, with extensive reed beds dominated by common reed (*Phragmites australis*), providing ideal nesting conditions for species such as the Purple Heron, Western Marsh Harrier, and Little Bittern. Shallow-water areas, supplied and regulated by the San Giovanni Canal, alternate with open water, muddy saltmarsh-like flats, and small islands, creating a diverse mosaic of habitats that supports numerous waterbirds, particularly waders and dabbling ducks during migration and wintering periods. The area is also home to Grey Herons, Great Egrets, Little Egrets, and Black-crowned Night Herons, which can often be observed along the water bodies and embankments. The small ponds and channels hidden within the reed beds support a rich amphibian community, including the Common Toad, European Green Toad, Green Frogs, European Tree Frog, and both the Italian Crested Newt and Smooth Newt. Along the banks and on the emerging islets, visitors may also spot the European Pond Turtle, which uses these sunlit surfaces for basking and thermoregulation.



Le Budrie: The Sanctuary of Saint Clelia and Palazzo Caprara

Continuing along the route, you will reach the village of **Le Budrie**, home to the Sanctuary of **Saint Clelia Barbieri** (1847–1870), founder of the Little Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows and **the first Bolognese saint of the modern era**. The sanctuary complex includes the Parish Church of Santa Maria Annunziata, the Oratory of Saint Joseph, where the saint's remains are preserved, and several historic buildings associated with the religious congregation. A destination for pilgrims and a place of deep devotion, the sanctuary commemorates a woman who dedicated her life to education, assistance for the most vulnerable, and charitable work among the rural communities of the Bologna Plain.

A short distance away stands the imposing **Palazzo Caprara**, now also known as Villa Orsi-Mangelli, one of the most remarkable historic residences in the Bologna Plain. Built in the sixteenth century as a country estate for the influential Caprara senatorial family, the villa was expanded and embellished during the eighteenth century with elegant decorations and stucco work. Surrounded by an extensive rural estate and located along the **Samoggia Stream**, the residence reflects the important role played by noble families in the agricultural management of the region. Since 1922, it has belonged to the Orsi-Mangelli family and is associated with one of Europe's **most renowned trotting horse breeding operations**.



Insight

The Samoggia Stream Flood Retention Basin

Located near Le Budrie, the **Samoggia Stream Flood Retention Basin** is a major hydraulic infrastructure designed to reduce flood risk and enhance territorial safety by temporarily storing excess water during periods of high flow. Covering approximately **105 hectares**, it represents an outstanding example of how hydraulic engineering can be successfully integrated with environmental restoration. Conceived in the late 1990s and completed in 2011, the site was designated in 2012 as part of the Natura 2000 Network (SCI-SPA IT4050031) in recognition of its growing ecological importance. An area once devoted to intensive agriculture has been transformed into a **diverse landscape of wetlands**, permanent water bodies, grasslands, shrublands, and young woodlands, making it one of the most significant ecological hubs in the Bologna Plain. This variety of habitats supports numerous species of birds, amphibians, and reptiles, including the Common Kingfisher, Black-winged Stilt, Western Marsh Harrier, and the European Pond Turtle. Along the section of the Samoggia Stream included within the protected area, visitors can observe meanders, small islands, and natural riverine environments that demonstrate how infrastructure originally designed for water management can also become a **valuable refuge for biodiversity**.



La Bora Ecological Rebalancing Area and the New Reptile and Amphibian Centre

Finally, following the **Sun Route** (Ciclovia del Sole) back towards San Giovanni in Persiceto, you will reach the **La Bora Ecological Rebalancing Area**, one of the most significant environmental restoration projects in the Bologna Plain. Created through the transformation of a former clay quarry, the site is now a nature oasis featuring a large lake, wetlands, lowland woodlands, and areas left to natural ecological succession. Established in 1990 by the Municipality of San Giovanni in Persiceto, La Bora plays an important role in biodiversity conservation and environmental education through its network of equipped trails, observation points, and educational activities designed for schools and visitors. **The area supports a wide variety of waterbirds, amphibians, reptiles, and insects, providing a valuable natural refuge within an otherwise highly modified landscape.**

Located within La Bora is the Persiceto Reptile and Amphibian Centre, a facility dedicated to the **conservation, study, and public interpretation of native amphibian and reptile species**. Originally established to support conservation programmes for the **European Pond Turtle (*Emys orbicularis*)** and other threatened species, the centre was expanded in 2026 and has become the largest facility in Italy dedicated to the conservation of the European Pond Turtle. Its ponds and breeding environments replicate natural habitats, enabling scientific research, conservation breeding, and public awareness initiatives. Through these activities, the centre makes a tangible contribution **to safeguarding the biodiversity** of the wetlands of the Emilia-Romagna lowlands.



Insight

The Sun Route

The Bologna section of EuroVelo 7, the cycle route stretching from North Cape to Malta, passes here. The first Italian section was inaugurated on April 13, 2021, at the former **Bolognina station**, a symbolic site where a tragic train accident occurred in January 2005.

Built along the old Bologna–Verona railway line, the Ciclovía del Sole also offers the advantage of **bike–train intermodality**: at the train station, you can board or alight with your bicycle to reach another point along the route.

Beyond the historic town centres, the Sun Cycle Route (Ciclovía del Sole) offers the opportunity to explore the surrounding countryside and reach additional points of interest along the way.

In Emilia-Romagna, the Ciclovía del Sole is fully completed along the **Concordia sulla Secchia–Osteria Nuova** section. It is also possible to continue towards Bologna by following a temporary route while the remaining infrastructure is being completed.

For more information, visit www.cicloviadelsole.it.



Thank you for cycling with us!

For more information and other itineraries:

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