

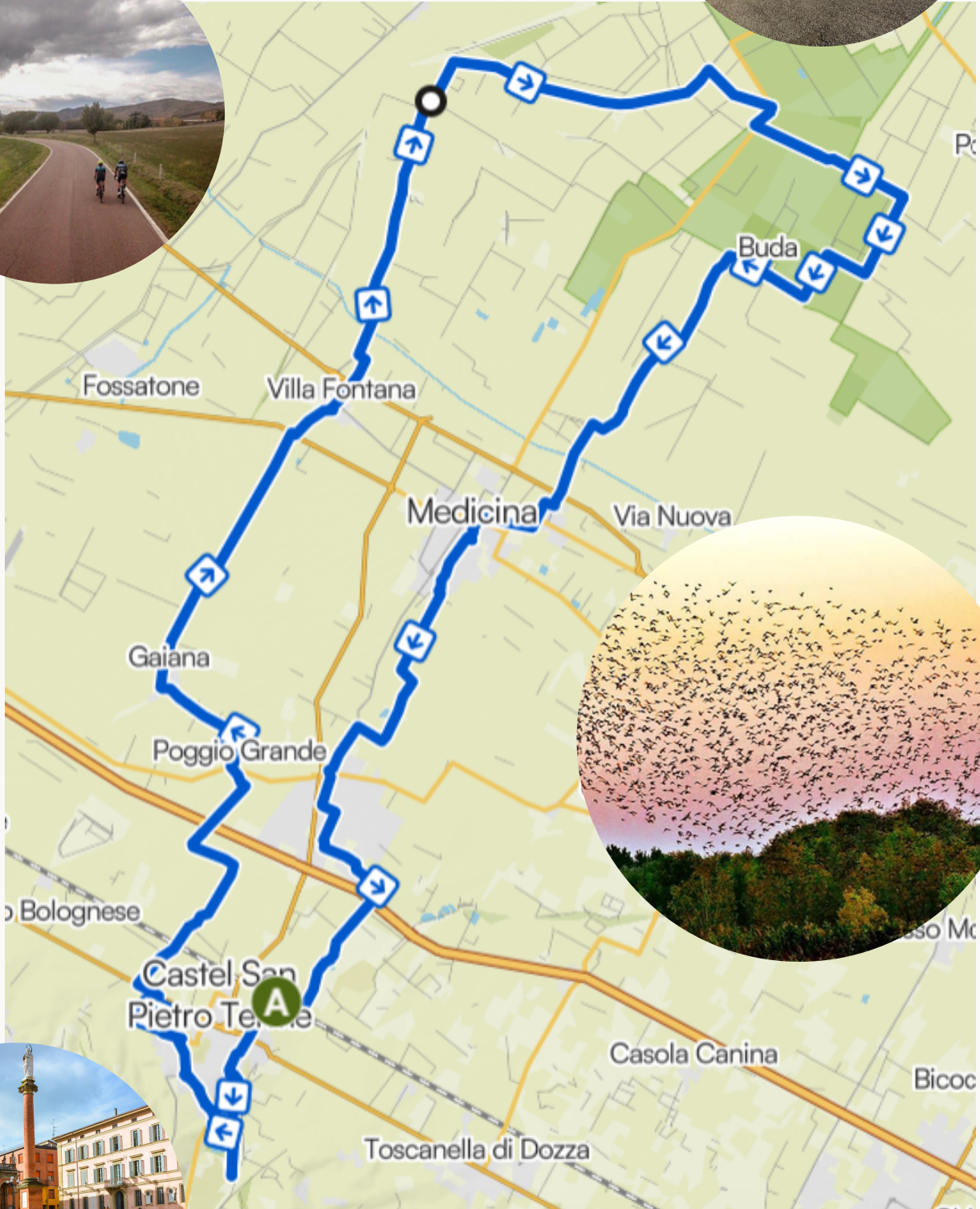
Roadbook



In Search of the Last Wetlands: Through the Traditional Countryside Between the Idice and Sillaro Rivers



The map



The route is 60 km long

[Access the page to download the GPX track.](#)



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The itinerary

This circular route explores the eastern Bologna plain, following the historic network of drainage canals through villages, farmland, and wetlands that tell the story of the deep relationship between people and water. The itinerary alternates between quiet secondary roads, short stretches of cycle paths, and unpaved country roads, passing through places of outstanding historical, environmental, and scenic interest: from the Medieval Weir of Castel San Pietro Terme to the Medicina Canal, from the ancient wetland port of Buda to the restored wetlands of the Quadrone Oasis, as well as the Fiorentina Radio Telescope Station and the historic Agrarian Participation of Villafontana.

Route features

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

Technical details

- **Distance:** 60 km
- **Estimated duration:** approximately 4,5 hours (excluding visits)

The route has been designed primarily using cycle paths and low-traffic secondary roads with mixed use. Where this has not been possible, the itinerary briefly follows busier roads for short sections. In all cases, cyclists are advised to exercise the utmost caution and to comply with the Highway Code at all times.



Description

The route starts at **Castel San Pietro Terme railway station**, easily reached by train from Bologna. From here, follow Via Aldo Moro and Via Scania to reach the Via Emilia. After a short stretch **along this historic Roman road**, turn onto Via San Biagio towards the hamlet of Poggio, with the Invaso Lake on your left. The route then reaches Villafontana, home to the historic **Agrarian Participation (Partecipanza Agraria)**, an ancient communal land-management institution that still plays an important role in this part of the Bologna plain. Continue along Via Fasanina to the hamlet of Fiorentina, where you will find the **Fiorentina Radio Telescope Station**, an important centre for astronomical research.

Following Via Buda, the route crosses a landscape of restored wetlands within the **Quadrone Oasis**, before reaching the historic village of Buda, which until the 18th century served as an important port on the permanent marshlands. The itinerary continues along Via Guazzaloca and Via Ganzanigo, passing through the village of the same name, which developed alongside the **Medicina Canal**.

Upon reaching **Medicina**, the route crosses the historic town centre, the Parco delle Mondine, and the old public washhouse, all bearing witness to the town's long-standing relationship with water management.

A short distance further on lies the Trifolce Flood Retention Basin, an important flood-control area set amid the surrounding countryside. The route then follows Via Madonna del Poggio to Via San Carlo. After crossing the artisan district, continue along Via Poggio (SP 31), Via Brina, and Via Madonnina, returning towards Castel San Pietro Terme after passing beneath the motorway.

The itinerary concludes by crossing the historic centre along Via Mazzini to reach the **Medieval Weir of 1268**, a remarkable hydraulic structure on the Sillaro River that diverts water into the **Canale dei Mulini (Mill Canal)**, also known as the Medicina Canal.

Finally, return to Castel San Pietro Terme railway station for the train journey back to Bologna, if desired.



Castel San Pietro Terme

Castel San Pietro Terme lies where the Po Plain meets the Sillaro River valley, on the historic border between Emilia and Romagna. The town was founded in 1199, when the Municipality of Bologna established a fortified settlement by building an imposing stronghold to defend its eastern frontier.

The most iconic reminder of these origins is the Cassero, the town's ancient fortified gateway, complete with its clock tower, now home to the Municipal Theatre. Beyond the gate, the streets of the historic centre lead to Piazza XX Settembre, the heart of the town, where the Town Hall and the Sanctuary of the Madonna del Crocifisso stand. The sanctuary's bell tower houses a remarkable peal of 55 bells, unique in Europe. Just a short walk away, along Via Castelfidardo, are the remains of the town's medieval defensive walls.

The town's development has also been closely linked to the use of its natural water resources. Since 1337, the therapeutic properties of its sulphurous and saline-bromine-iodine thermal waters have been documented. This spa heritage is still reflected today in the historic Terme Park and the Fonte Fegatella spring. Further upstream along the Sillaro River stands the Ancient Sillaro Weir, a remarkable hydraulic engineering work whose original structure dates back to the 13th century.



Chiusa sul torrente Sillaro

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Trifolce Retention Basin

The Trifolce Retention Basin is a hydraulic infrastructure located in the municipal territory of Castel Guelfo, designed, built and managed by the Consorzio della Bonifica Renana. Its primary function is to mitigate flood risk for the urban centre and surrounding areas of Medicina, made necessary to preserve the drainage capacity of the Medicina Canal in the face of heavy upstream urbanisation. In addition to flood protection, during the summer season the reservoir is used as a water storage facility for irrigating the surrounding fields.

Constructed between 2006 and 2008, the detention basin covers an area of three hectares and can hold up to approximately 78,000 cubic metres of rainwater. The engineering project was accompanied by the creation of a surrounding green area, planted with vegetation typical of traditional retting ponds and ancient wetland areas, designed to blend the artificial structure into the rural landscape of the plain.



Medicina

Medicina lies in the plain east of Bologna, within a region strongly characterised by a rich agricultural tradition and particularly famous for the production of the **Medicina onion**. The origins of the settlement and its name are rooted in the Roman era, traditionally linked to the presence of a staging post or a military medical post, before developing during the Middle Ages as a strategic fortified outpost and commercial trading hub disputed between neighbouring powers.

The historic core retains its typical medieval and Renaissance urban layout, embellished by long stretches of porticoes that characterise the main streets. The town's iconic landmark is the **Torrazzo**, an imposing medieval civic tower rising in the heart of the town, flanked by the Town Hall. The latter bears witness to the administrative and political importance acquired by the community over the centuries under the influence of Bologna.

The architectural heritage also includes places of worship of significant historical interest, such as the **Church of Santa Maria Maggiore** and the **Church of Carmine**, which house notable examples of local art. The surrounding territory is further enriched by historic country villas and the landscape of the Imola plain, featuring areas of naturalistic value such as the nearby Pratizze Ecological Recharging Zone (Zona di Riassorbimento Ecologico).

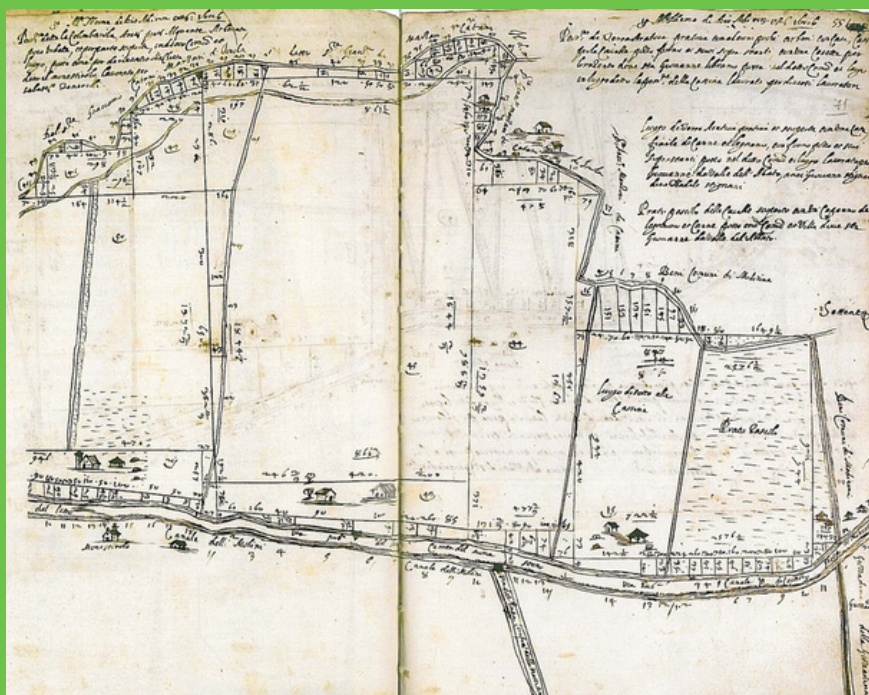


Medicina Canal

The Canale dei Mulini del Sillaro, commonly known as the Medicina Canal, is a key hydraulic system of the lower Bolognese plain with nearly nine centuries of history. Created between 1199 and 1200, its original purpose was to feed the moat protecting the walls of the newly established Castel San Pietro and to dispose of the settlement's wastewater. Later, from the sixteenth century onwards, the canal was incorporated into the major Renaissance land reclamation projects aimed at regulating the lowland water system, preventing continuous river overflows through the digging of channels and the draining of marshes by warping (colmata).

The canal's history is marked by significant changes of ownership and a profound impact on the local economy. In 1385, Zanochino Malvezzi donated the land between Ganzanigo and Medicina to the Municipality of Bologna, along with the canal and an ancient mill. Shortly after, in 1387, the Bolognini family was granted the right to build new mills in Ganzanigo, turning the waterway into a key source of energy for powering flour mills, paper mills, silk spinning mills, retting ponds, and fishponds, with the active cooperation of the local community who undertook the extension and maintenance works.

From the medieval weir of Castel San Pietro Terme, the canal initially flows alongside the town before winding its way into the plains of Castel Guelfo and Medicina. In its final stretch, its course straightens out until it flows into the Quadrone Oasis, where its waters still play an essential role today in feeding and preserving this important lowland wetland.



Radio Astronomy Station and Marcello Ceccarelli Visitor Centre

The Medicina Radio Astronomy Station is one of Italy's most important research facilities for exploring the Universe, managed by the National Institute for Astrophysics (INAF). Its history began in May 1959 from the vision of Professor Giampiero Puppi and Marcello Ceccarelli.

The complex is famous for its imposing scientific antennas: the large Noto-Medicina dish (a parabolic radio telescope with a 32-metre diameter) and the striking Northern Cross (Croce del Nord), one of the largest radio receiving antennas in the world, consisting of a long straight arm formed by numerous reflectors.



Adjacent to the scientific research area is the "Marcello Ceccarelli" Visitor Centre, named after one of the founding fathers of Italian radio astronomy. The facility serves as an educational and outreach hub, designed to allow schools and visitors to discover how radio astronomers "listen" to signals originating from deep space. Inside, the exhibition trail offers interactive exhibits, 3D multimedia projections, historical equipment, and scale models, making it possible to understand astronomical phenomena, the history of the installations, and the workings of the technology used for space research.



The Quadrone Oasis



The "Il Quadrone" Wildlife Sanctuary is a natural area of approximately 270 hectares located in the municipal territory of Medicina, within the Quadrone Basin (Cassa del Quadrone) and on the land of the LA.C.ME. Agricultural Cooperative. Established in 1985 by the Province of Bologna, it represents a vital refuge, resting, and nesting area for numerous plant and animal species, with a particular focus on birdlife.

The landscape of the Oasis is extremely varied and features several microenvironments: a marshland wetland, a hygrophilous woodland, a wet meadow, and a small wooded area. The complex is structured to welcome visitors via an educational trail that starts at the Visitor Centre and winds through the different habitats. The area is equipped with descriptive information panels and dedicated wooden hides designed for observation and birdwatching.

Thanks to low-impact agricultural practices and ecosystem protection, the Quadrone Oasis is strongly oriented towards environmental education. The agricultural cooperative also manages the facility as an educational farm, providing fully equipped rooms in the Visitor Centre to run educational workshops and guided tours throughout the academic year.

Thank you for riding with us!

For more info and other itineraries:

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