



BUCINE AND THE VALDAMBRA

T O U R I S T G U I D E



COMUNE DI
BUCINE
Provincia di Arezzo




VISIT
VALDAMBRA

BUCINE
AND THE
VALDAMBRA



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VALDAMBRA



VISIT VALDAMBRA

Tourist guide Visit Valdambra
project by the Municipality of Bucine

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printed in March 2024:

Tipografia La Zecca

www.tipografialazecca.it

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Tourist guide Bucine and the Valdambra

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The beauty of this unique valley Valdambra is born from the harmony of the landscape, the connection and balance that ties the sky to earth, nature to mankind. Allowing the ancient traditions, to be a solid base which will allow you to witness the past, present and future.

Bucine and the Valdambra

Presentation

Welcome to our corner of Tuscany, a land rich in history and magic, nestled between the mountains of Chianti, Valdarno Superiore and Valdichiana, located in the centre of three important cities of the Region: Arezzo, Siena and Florence. A territory that has always been dedicated to excellence, where skilled farmers and artisans are custodians of ancient traditions, where for centuries man has integrated himself with a profound respect and bond to the land, giving life to unique and well-known products all over the world: extra virgin olive oil and wine. A territory that is dedicated to sustainability, promoting an ecological and environmentally friendly way to ensure a future for new generations. There are numerous itineraries and paths to be explored, by foot, on horseback and by mountain bike on a landscape that is yet to be discovered. A welcoming land that of the council of Bucine: blooming farms, country houses, historical residences, fortified villages and farmhouses open their doors to those who decide to spend time in the Valdambra.

In restaurants, taverns, simple village shops, at festivals and events you can taste traditional Tuscan products and dishes, rich in ancient and authentic knowledge, which are characterized by the strong bond with this territory. You will be fascinated by our villages, surrounded by a landscape of incredible beauty, perched on gentle hills. Places where you can still savour the taste of tranquillity and conviviality, thanks to the local people, the first ambassadors of their land, who with simple gestures transmit the passion, values and personality that make this area unique.

Nicola Benini
Mayor of Bucine





**TOURIST MAP OF
BUCINE AND VALDAMBRA**

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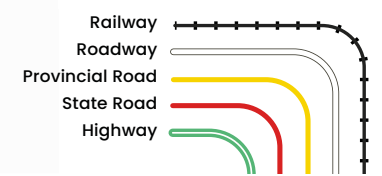


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Bucine and the Valdambra

A community that looks towards a sustainable future

You can travel to a place for its beauty and pleasant welcoming. But there is something else that Bucine and Valdambra offer: the meeting with a sustainable community, which is actually investing in a future. It is increasingly respectful towards the environment and its territory. We have 130 square km without even one traffic light where nature, history, food and wine give unique and unforgettable experiences. Routes to discover on foot, by bike, on horseback, attentive

producers committed to sustainable agriculture, accommodations immersed in greenery, taverns and restaurants using local products are some of the significant aspects. Active citizens, Proloco, and associations collaborate and take care of the territory, renewing the sense of community. A community that looks to the future responsibly, enhancing goods and resources that belong to everyone, safeguarding biodiversity, especially for future generations.



VALDAMBRA A LAND RICH IN HISTORY AND MAGIC

The history runs through the valley just like the river Ambra, threads its self into magical landscapes that surround, creating a unique and perfect harmony with the past and the present.



- Introduction

Valdambra represents a precious corner of Tuscany nestled between the hills of Chianti, Valdarno and Valdichiana, the historical crossroads between Arezzo, Siena and Florence. The valley takes its name from the Ambra river, which rises on the border of the Sienese territory and then flows into the Arno after 35 km. The territory of the Council of Bucine, with its villages and hamlets, has a history that has roots far back in time: fossils, remains of settlements, important castles and thousand-year-old parish churches are clear traces of this.

A landscape enclosed between hills full of heather, junipers, holm oaks, and monumental trees, such that in 1777 the Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo described Valdambra as a "narrow valley but full of houses and all very well cultivated".

Now days the Valdambra is much more:

...a territory rich in productions of excellence such as extra virgin olive oil and wine, worldly appreciated thanks to the continuous work of conservation and ancient traditions with an eye towards innovation with profound respect for the ecosystem.

...a place of continuous discovery, where itineraries and paths suitable for all lovers of trekking, cycle tourism and horseback riding lead to the exploration of suggestive landscapes and panoramas.

...a land that in a simple and convivial way, thanks to the people who live here, has so many stories to share among its fortified villages perched on the hills, abbeys, farmhouses and ancient mills.



Villages and castles

The medieval age left significant signs in Valdambra, which give, at least in part, an idea of what the organization of the territory was like in that period: documents speak of parish churches, abbeys and numerous castles built for defensive purposes. The phenomenon of fortification began after the year 1000: the Valley of Ambra in that period was dotted with small rural settlements which, with the progressive centralization of power in the hands of local lords, were transformed into fortified villages, identified by the Latin term "castrum". In the following centuries, with the rapid diversification of the social structure



Inside the castles, these small fortified villages grew, creating a new urban conformation: the area inside the castle would have been for the exclusive use of the lord, to defend the keep, the upper part of the city walls were built characterized by leaden structures, called loopholes, which had the function of fighting the enemy. Many of these villages have been restored and preserved over time, maintaining their original architecture and unique beauty. Going to discover the villages and castles of Valdambra means treating yourself to places

where you can immerse yourself in a reality that stimulates curiosity and reminds us what wonder is: a luxury to be savored slowly. Walking through the cobble alleys, you can rediscover the taste of conviviality made of simple and genuine gestures of the people who live there.

The villages of Valdambra tell their stories with the people, who are an integral part of it, in symbiosis that reflects the profound bond between man and earth.



Bucine

The capital of one of the largest council areas of Arezzo, covering an area of 131 square km. It probably takes its name from a type of fishing or hunting net, called "bucina": in fact the rampant lion depicted in the council coat of arms holds a net. Arriving from Valdarno you cross the large railway bridge built in 1864 for the Florence-Rome line, with two orders of arches and pedestrian passages, which resisted the aerial bombardments even if it was undermined by the retreating German army which blew it up together with the tunnels. The history of the reconstruction is fascinating, made possible by workers who came from far away, such as the carpenters from Friuli and the miners from Calabria and Abruzzo. The history of Bucine is told through medieval and modern documents which speak of the strong castle, surrounded by walls, which still surrounded it at the time when, in 1646, Giulio Vitelli was invested with the fiefdom of Bucine and became marquis. At the time the castle had four towers and, even if today the original wall circuit no longer exists, its remains can be glimpsed incorporated into the civilian homes.

The route, which takes you to the small square at the top of the castle where the ancient parish church stands, allows you to immerse yourself in a suggestive maze of narrow streets. The most significant building is the praetorian palace, now the seat of the town hall, overlooking the main square and full of coats of arms left over the past centuries by the various mayors called to administer this territory.



Right in Piazza del Popolo, in front of the town hall, it is possible to admire the monument to the fallen of the First World War, the work of the Montevarchino sculptor Pietro Guerri, surmounted by a bronze statue of the winged Victory. For the merits acquired by its population, by Decree of the President of the Republic the council of Bucine was decorated with a gold medal for civil valor in 1975 with the following motivation:

“Strenuously committed to the struggle for liberation, the people endured the cruel reprisals of the invading enemy with the sacrifice of the population, many lives of sons were lost to the cause of this homeland, keeping faith in the supreme values of freedom. 1943-1944.”



Ambra

Already from the 12th century when the Valdambra was under the dominion of the Ubertini family there is news of the castle of Ambra, whose name has origin from the river of the same name that crosses the valley. The alleys of the upper area of the town clearly reveal the medieval urban layout.

Ambra stands in an area inhabited since ancient times; there is evidence of the presence of a settlement between the 7th and 5th centuries BC. on the top of Poggio Castigliani, located on the opposite bank of the river Ambra, right in front of the castles location, until the mid-14th century was under the dominion of the Ubertini family before becoming part of the Florentine territory in 1386. It became the capital of the most recently acquired lands, grouped under the name of Valdambra nuova, which during the fifteenth century was united to the newly formed Podesteria of Bucine.

Walking through the narrow streets that converge in Piazza Filzi, the visitor will be able to appreciate suggestive views and a splendid view of the village that developed over the centuries at the foot of the fortified nucleus. In Piazza Filzi there is the parish church of Santa Maria Assunta, built at the end of the 16th century in the place of the previous church which had been heavily damaged by the earthquake of 1558.

This, which among other things incorporates the back the main Ambra altar, part of the medieval walls of the castle, has a single nave plan in the shape of a Latin cross. Worthy of note is the canvas with the Nativity of the Virgin located in the rightside chapel, created in 1600 by Michelangelo Vestrucci.

During the 1900s Ambra became famous for tobacco production and still today the ancient tobacconist buildings remain as evidence of this tradition.

On the occasion of the "Palio della Palla Tonchiata" the five districts: "Pozzo", "Senese", "Piazza", "Castello", "Poggio" compete in a medieval joust which recalls the conflict between Ambra and Bucine, aimed at winning the council position through the possession of a ball of pietra serena with weevils, the latter stolen from Bucine twice and hidden in the Valdambri hills, only a select few know where it is located.

The game consists of pushing stumped balls weighing 80/90 kg by two strictly "Valdambrini" pushers, who must go around the village twice to win.



Pietraviva

This small town has preserved the typical architectural layout of medieval fortified villages, including the ancient walls, which are still visible and today support numerous homes, including the church dedicated to Santa Lucia. Its name derives from the pietra serena, also called pietra viva, on which the ancient castle stood.

The symbol of the village is the Taxus of Pietraviva, a tree visible from the square, which represents one of the longest-lived specimens in Italy, with a majestic height and circumference.

Precisely because of these characteristics it is part of the list of the Trees of Memory, a project for the protection and promotion of the monumental plants of Valdambra, considering that this plant, like others, is registered in the regional and Italian register of monumental trees.



Duddova

Duddova is a small village, whose privileged position offers a spectacular view of the surrounding valley, characterized by green hills, cultivated fields, vineyards and olive groves.

The village is made up of ancient stone houses and cobbled streets between the houses, creating an intimate and welcoming atmosphere.

The houses have been restored with attention to detail, preserving their original appearance and typical Tuscan architecture. In the center of the town, now devoid of the fortifications that surrounded it in

the Middle Ages, you can admire the church of San Michele Arcangelo, which is attested in documents starting from the 12th century and was for a long time dependent to the abbey of San Pietro a Ruoti. The current appearance of the building is the result of restoration work carried out shortly after the middle of the last century.

Also interesting is the bell tower, more than 20 meters high, which was built in the early twentieth century and which represents one of the most characteristic elements of the village, you can recognize Duddova from quite a distance.

Cennina

The village of Cennina stands out on a hill, and is a destination that cannot be missed for every excursion in Valdambra. It was a fortress which in the past had great strategic importance given its central position between Florence, Arezzo and Siena. The castle was built in 1167 by Count Brandaglia Alberigo d'Uguccione.

Over the following centuries it was occupied by the Guidi, Tarlati and Ubertini families, it was besieged, destroyed and rebuilt several times. Starting from the mid-fourteenth century it became part of the Florentine territory, which established its fortified outpost here. Cennina is a popular destination for those who want to dive into an enchanting medieval legacy. Once you reach the characteristic village it is impossible not to notice the remains of the palace, residence of the castellan and the keep, a section of the imposing city walls, hands down a skilful art of defence from which a unique atmosphere shines through. The care dedicated to the historic core makes it one of the most enchanting and picturesque villages in the council of Bucine. You can witness this by starting from Piazza of the Cisterna and walking along the streets among the typical stone and brick houses, up to the church of San Pietro.

A strategic position for hikers who want to explore the nature of Valdambra, with the possibility to hike towards Solata or Duddova.



1 - Cennina, aerial view
2 - Cennina, Piazza Cisterna

Sogna

The castle of Sogna was built in an unspecified period, but it is known that in the 11th century the church and parish of San Tommaso depended on the Badia di Ruoti, which suggests that a nucleus existed on the top of the hill.

In the 12th century the castle belonged to the Ubertini family, as demonstrated by documents. Precisely due to its position on the border between the territories of Arezzo, Siena and Florence it was damaged and destroyed several times. After Florence's victory over Siena in the 16th century, the area finally experienced peace; the fortifications of Sogna were not repaired, but left in ruins.

Leaving the town, towards the north-east, the panoramic road to Carnia opens up, where a "Madonna and Child", protected by numerous cypress trees, watches over the path. Completely abandoned after the last war, the town has now become, after careful recovery of its original structure, a tourist-residential centre. Thanks to the attention of the renovation, the remains of the defensive wall of the original castle and the remains of the Keep, the most important building of the entire fortified nucleus, are still visible.



Mercatale and Torre

What is now the town of Mercatale is the result of the union of two neighbouring communities: Santa Reparata a Mercatale and San Biagio alla Torre.

Ancient possession of Count Guidi, the small village of Torre still recalls the typical medieval settlement: from

the small church of San Biagio, which almost overlooks the stream below, the town develops, up to the entrance gate. As its name suggests, Mercatale developed in medieval times as a place for commercial exchanges around the square, near the church of Santa Reparata. That same square in 1776 was described surrounded

with houses in the centre a public well and already then there were two "oil mills", very important testimonies of the olive oil tradition, which is still widespread here today.

The countryside around Mercatale is rich in typical flora and an incredible variety, made up of cypresses, holm oaks and oaks, vineyards and olive groves.

1 - Tower, church of San Biagio
2 - Tower, view of the valley



1



2

Montebenichi

The town, of very ancient origins, is located on a hill that separates Chianti from Valdarno. The castle originates from a Lombard settlement, of which today few traces remain except some sections of the city walls and the vestiges of a tower. Due to its position on the border with the Sienese territory, it was often the scene of clashes between Florence and Siena and was damaged several times. The most disastrous episode occurred in July 1478 when the castle was besieged, sacked and destroyed during the war between Florence and Siena. The current shape of the village derives from the reconstruction that took place after these events and visiting it today brings back the feeling of being in an authentic late medieval location.

A short distance from the village stands the ancient parish church of Santa Maria Assunta in Altaserra, a building of early Christian origin surrounded by splendid landscape, cypresses and olive trees. The church was built in an area with a very ancient history, evidence of Etruscan remains and a Roman travertine sarcophagus were discovered now exhibited at the Paleontological Museum of Montevarchi, documented to be from the year 715, when it was at the center of a dispute between the bishops of Arezzo and Siena.

Don't miss a visit to the Olivone di Montebenichi, a centuries-old plant, over 300 years old, known by all for its age and grandeur. The Olivone is included in the promotion and valorisation project called "The Trees of Memory" and registered in the regional and Italian register of monumental trees.



1



2

Curiosity

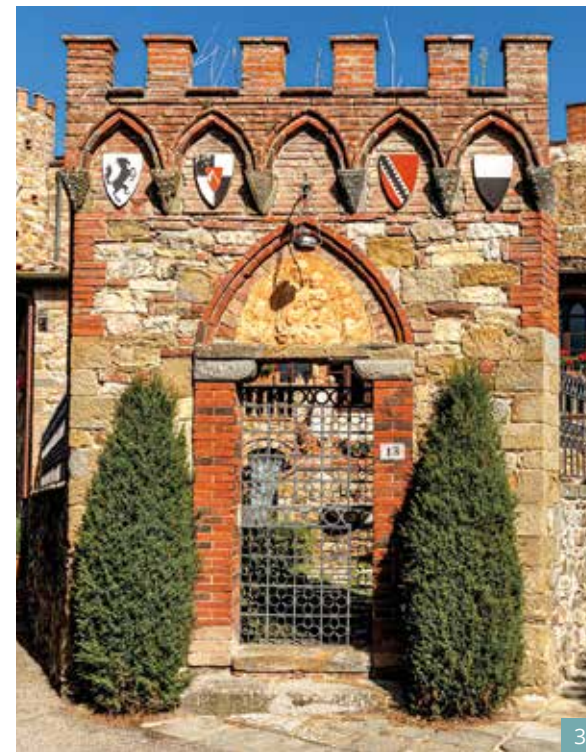
Gora da Montebenichi, born Gregorio Stendardi, was a soldier of fortune in the service of the Florentine Republic, defined as a "manesco troublemaker", who later became one of the most courageous and faithful captains in the service of Francesco Ferrucci, and is still remembered today by the plaque that stands over Palazzo Stendardi, at the entrance of the village.

In the small square located in the highest part of the village it is possible to admire, together with the houses that overlook and the characteristic well, the "castelletto", considered an integral part of the original defensive system restored in neo-Gothic forms at the beginning of the 20th century and now used to an accommodation facility.

1 - Montebenichi, Aerial view

2 - Olivone of Montebenichi

3 - Castel of Montebenichi



3

Rapale

Looking at the hills on the right bank of the Ambra, you can see Rapale, one of the few villages that has kept the appearance of the castle unchanged, in all its beauty, which over the years has respint numerous enemy incursions. Walking along the paved road that leads to the entrance you can enjoy the view of the entire Valdambra, and once you have entered in the village

you have the feeling that time has stopped in the narrow streets, once past the small church of San Miniato, the castle's chapel, the other side of the village, where a circular turret tower dominates the valley.

1 - Rapale, aerial view

2 - Rapale, bell tower of the church of San Miniato

A real journey, in space and time, which involves the head and heart, leaving a bit of Tuscanism in all of us, as well as wonderful and unforgettable memories.



San Leolino

Splendid village surrounded by olive groves, vineyards and cypress trees, between the castle of Cennina and the tower of Galatrona, San Leolino once a favourite summer residence of fifteenth-century noble families, still dominates, from the top of the hill, the medieval castle with its typical rounded shape.

The city walls are still recognisable, incorporated into the homes and an integral part of the church dating back to the 10th century, which was then enriched with seventeenth-century masterpieces by artists such as Michelangelo Vestrucci and Salvi Castellucci. It is a large complex of which the rectory and the rooms for agricultural use can be visited: the vat cellar, the orcia cellar, the granary and the oil mill, under the nearby oratory of San Michele Arcangelo. It is also possible to visit by appointment the small museum of sacred art set up inside the rectory together with the library and the historical archive.

Curiosity

It is precisely from the residence of San Leolino that Quirino Mocenni, the "Gentile Woman" who had a relationship with the poet Ugo Foscolo, wrote numerous letters. In one of these, dated 18 June 1818, Quirino also provides a description of the wonderful landscape. (1)

1
Now to define, with and like Boccaccio I will tell you that I find myself not in Certaldo but in San Leolino, and not seeing the ambitions and the unpleasantness and the facts of our citizens and of so much consolation in my soul, that if I could do without hearing anything about it, I believe my rest would increase greatly. In exchange for the solicitous and continuous envelopments of the citizens, I see fields, hills, trees with green fronds and various flowers, simply produced by nature, where in the citizens they are all fictitious actions: I hear nightingales and other birds singing, etc. etc., and nothing else needs to be transcribed for the Boccaccio will tell you for me

San Pancrazio

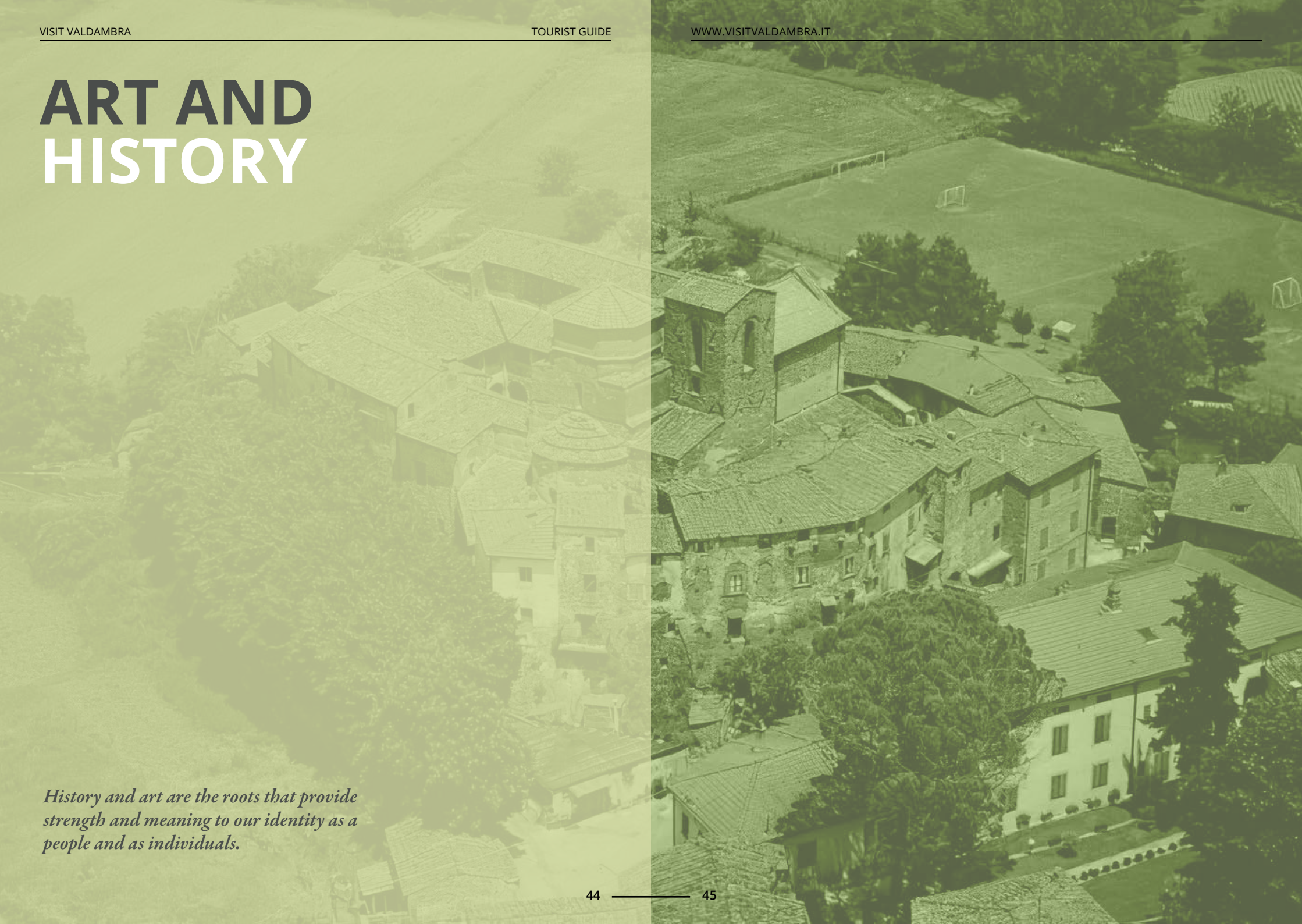
The village stands on a spur between Valdambra and Valdichiana. In 1350 it was under the control of the Florentine Republic. Count Pierangeli, appointed Podestà, moved the podestà to the palace he owned in San Pancrazio. This building, dating back to the 17th century, was partially destroyed on 29 June 1944 by the Germans who massacred 55 people, i.e. almost all the men in the village, in one of its cellars. The wives and mothers who escaped the massacre, with their strength and courage managed to rebuild the village. Today in this space, through the commitment of the municipal administration, the Museum of Memory and the Digital Archive of Memory were born, so that the facts narrated for years by the survivors could find historical documentation, thus assuming a concrete commitment for the protection of memory. In the relevant building, purchased and renovated by the council administration, there is also the Don Giuseppe Torelli Intercultural Center, dedicated to the parish priest of the community, who was also a victim of the massacre. In the garden behind the building, a rose garden was planted in memory of the murdered civilians, where each plant has a plate bearing the name of each of the victims. In the upper part of the garden there is a large marble statue by Firenze Poggi: a mother with powerful arms has her children with her and looks at the horizon. The plaque next to it reads:

“Here in perpetual memory of the misdeeds of history, in the place marked by the tragedy, a Maave affirms the villa as a lighthouse on the garden of the Rose.... towards the valley”



ART AND HISTORY

History and art are the roots that provide strength and meaning to our identity as a people and as individuals.





The Roman bridge of Pogi

The village of Pogi is built around the river and the Roman bridge. Pogi Alto was originally a castle overlooking the river Ambra and today its stone houses have the spectacle of the colors of the countryside which fascinate who wanders on the nature trails in the shade of the woods.

The Roman bridge of Pogi is an important historical testimony for the whole Valdambra. Today it can only be crossed by foot, creating a real journey into the past. It is characterized by a singular historical stratification of wood and brick architecture accumulated over the centuries. In Roman times, the bridge was located on a deviation an important road that connected Rome to Florence. The medieval structure rests on the ancient foundations: a humpback profile with five arches, the central ones being the largest.

Galatrona

The Tower of Galatrona, also known as 'Il Torrione,' according to some documents from the 10th century, was part of one of the main castles in the territory, of which today only a few traces of the gateway remain. Throughout the Middle Ages, Galatrona was at the center of disputes, precisely due to its strategic control position between Florence and Arezzo, and later between Florence and Siena, eventually being conquered by the Florentines in 1335. This led to the creation of a village with about twenty houses inside and double that outside, as evidenced by fifteenth-century cadastral documents.

The tower, built in sandstone and lime mortar, situated at an altitude of about 500 meters above sea level, is approximately 27 meters high and is divided into five floors. The mighty walls have a width of 7 meters that is maintained unchanged towards the top, and a thickness of about 1.80 meters, giving it a severe and imposing appearance. It is said that in the 16th century, the tower was inhabited by Nepo da Galatrona, a magician and sorcerer saved from the Inquisition by Lorenzo the Magnificent.

Even today, enjoying the extraordinary view from the terrace at the top of the tower, it offers an unparalleled panorama from Valdarno to Valdambra.

Nepo da Galatrona: "He was tall and well-built, with an olive-toned complexion that leaned towards brown; he had a bald head, a sharp and emaciated face, a long brown beard that reached his chest, and he dressed in rough and eccentric clothes." This is how a Florentine storyteller of the 16th century described Nepo da Galatrona, a sorcerer and miraculous healer known in 15th-century Florence. He lived in the castle, escaping the Inquisition twice, reportedly thanks to the intercession of the de' Medici family.

The Abbey

The foundation of the monasteries in Valdambra dates back to the second half of the 10th century. The birth of these monastic centres brought rules and regularity back to the life of the inhabitants of the valley, veterans of the troubled period of the barbarian invasions.

The two abbeys of Valdambra became important points of reference and, perhaps to avoid forms of conflict that would have put them in crisis these new balances, completed their territorial expansion towards different directions, Badia Agnano towards Arezzo and the Valdichiana, while Badia a Ruoti towards the upper Valdambra and the Senese.

A visit to these two incredible testimonies not only of medieval religious architecture, but also of the social division and way of life... A visit to these two incredible testimonies not only of medieval religious architecture, but also of the social division and way of life of that time, allows you to totally immerse yourself in an atmosphere of magic and mystery. Walking through these places you can clearly perceive how, although nowadays they have lost their role and (in the case of Badia Agnano) have not maintained their architectural integrity, they instead keep their originality intact Spirituality.

Badia Agnano

Badia Agnana is a village, perched on a hill above the Trave valley, which only in its name reveals the important role it played in the past. In fact, the powerful abbey of Agnana arose here, founded before the year 1000 by the will of the Ubertini: it became an important ecclesiastical fiefdom that controlled the churches of the surrounding area.

Benedictine first, then Camaldolese, but not by choice: the reform was imposed due to a need for greater rigor and spirituality in convent life, accentuating moments of solitary prayer and reflection. In this climate, many leading clerical figures were formed here, including the future holy bishop Carlo Borromeo, the last of the series of commendatory abbots who had succeeded one another starting from 1470, who returned the abbey to the Camaldolese.

The abbey complex has now become a civil residence, except for the church, the rectory and the company church. The church dedicated to SS. Tiburzio and Susanna, originally dedicated to Santa Maria, is an example of Romanesque architecture, without decorations, which well reflects the search for austerity and spirituality of the

- 1 - Badia Agnana, view of the former abbey complex of Santa Maria of Agnana
 2,3 - Badia Agnana, church of the Saints Tiburzio and Susanna with the adjoining church of company of the Visitation



Camaldolese order. The 2003 restoration brought the vault dedicated to Santa Maria back to its ancient splendour, a wooden crucifix and a baptismal font on which the Camaldolese coat of arms is still clearly visible: two doves drinking from the same cup.

The main square of the village is still today a meeting place where you can rest in the shade of a lime tree, sitting on the wall of the old well which is still equipped with outlets and the swinging arm of the pump dated 1899.

During the summer the village comes to life with events, opportunities to taste local products and experience moments of the Tuscan tradition.

Badia a Ruoti

Badia a Ruoti is a characteristic village born around the powerful abbey of San Pietro a Ruoti, which still dominates from above with its complex of buildings. Walking along the cobbled streets of the village you dive yourself into the past, since the village has remained unchanged over time, just like the English oak of Badia a Ruoti, an unmistakable and gigantic tree with its 27 meters of height and a circumference of over 4 metres. The village was the scene of numerous wars, sieges and raids which led to numerous structural changes; only recent restorations have brought the original form of the abbey back to life. The abbey church has been documented since 1076, when it adhered to the Camaldolese rule; the abbey controlled numerous churches and monasteries between Valdambra and Siena. It currently has bare walls with fragmentary traces of interesting frescoes, while on the altar the splendid Coronation of the Virgin is displayed, as altarpiece created in 1472



1 - Neri di Bicci, Coronation of the Vergine (1472)
2 - Badia a Ruoti, Abbey cloister of San Pietro a Ruoti

by the artist Neri di Bicci commissioned by the abbot of the monastery, surmounted by a lunette (not relevant to the work) with an Annunciation. Among the decorations there is clearly a wheel with eight spokes, symbol of the abbey, while anything but evident is the underground passage, no longer passable and now partly used as a cellar, which once led inside the abbey or inside the church. The fortified abbeys at that time had to guarantee escape or rescue routes just like castles; therefore, it is fascinating and right to think that this was not the only one. From the brick cloister, which can be visited, with the in cistern in the centre, you can access what were once the farm's rooms, restored and now transformed into accommodation.



The parish church

The word *pieve* comes from the Latin *plebs* (people). This was the term used in the Middle Ages to indicate minor ecclesiastical districts, made up of a vast territory managed by a main church with a baptistery, on which many other branch churches and chapels depended. Consequently, the parish churches were the only churches where the sacrament of baptism was administered.

They were places of high religious value, but also a point of reference for those who held political and administrative power in that territory. They often stood near important road junctions. Starting from the 10th century, due to the increased number of faithful due to the increase in population, almost all the early medieval parish churches were replaced with new, larger buildings. In certain periods, wars, invasions, power voids, the parish church represented the only “institution” able to organize and manage its territory, called *plover*. Its archives are still a precious source of information today.

Valdambra had up to five parishes at the same time. Santa Magia in Altaserra (near Montebenichi), San Vincenti Santi Quirico and Giulitta in Capannole, San Giovanni Battista in Petrolo and San Pietro in Presciano.

PIEVE ROBBIANA

Galatrona pieve of San Giovanni Battista at Petrolo

Surrounded by woods, olive groves and vineyards, the church faces a splendid farm and a little further up is the tower of Galatrona, which is all that remains of an ancient castle belonging to the Viscounty of Valdambra, over which the Guidi counts dominated until the first decades of the 14th century. Arriving from Mercatale it appears from afar with its light facade and white plastered bell tower hiding among the cypresses of the small square in front of it. Attested since the mid-10th century, it has a structure with three naves divided by massive pillars on which low arches rest.

The building houses three exceptional art pieces by Giovanni della Robbia created between the second and third decades of the sixteenth century commissioned by Leonardo Bonafede, parish priest from 1518 to 1528: the Baptismal font, with high reliefs of the life of Saint John the

Baptist, a statue depicting Saint John the Baptist, considered by critics to be one of the artist's best works; finally, the Ciborium, on the main altar, in the form of a hexagonal temple with six figured panels. But the parish church presents other elements of great interest: the altars show refined scagliola frontals, an expression of a refined "arte povera" typical of the 17th and 16th centuries. On the walls, however, there are oil paintings on canvas from the 17th century, including a Madonna and Child with saints, in the background of which you can see the Galatrona castle, surrounded by walls and with both towers. Then there is a Madonna of the Rosary appearing to Saint Dominic, attributed to the Montevarchino painter Michelangelo Vestrucci, also the author of another canvas, a Madonna of the Assumption crowned by two angels.



1



2



3

- 1 - Giovanni Della Robbia, San Giovanni Battista
- 2 - Petrolo, church of San Giovanni Battista
- 3 - Giovanni Della Robbia, baptismal font

The richness of this parish are the three Della Robbia: the baptismal font, the statue of St. John the Baptist and the altar's tabernacle. They were commissioned in 1518 by Leonardo Bonafede, rector of the parish for ten years and subsequently bishop of Cortona

Capannole pieve of Santi Quirico and Giulitta

This church is one of the oldest in Valdambra. It is named after the child martyr Quirico who, together with his mother Giulitta, were venerated in the first centuries of Christianity. The place where it was built was certainly inhabited since Roman times, as demonstrated by archaeological findings dating back to that period. The great strategic value of this place is strengthened by the hypothesis that here there was the ancient Roman post station "Umbro flumen" mentioned in the Roman map Tabula Peutingeriana. The church was built at a fundamental road junction, at the crossroads of important communication routes between Arezzo, Florence and Siena.

By venturing into its surroundings by foot you can discover suggestive views. It is recommended to visit the ancient village: here it is like jumping back into the Middle Ages thanks to the small houses placed next to each other, the small streets and the old city walls that defended the ancient castle, also depicted on a seal of an eighteenth-century text, as a symbolic image of the free council of Capannole. The oldest document referable to the parish dates back to 1021.

The neo-Gothic forms are due to the rebuilding of 1928, like the walls of the presbytery, covered with paintings created in the same year by a local artist, Luigi Papi. The building underwent a first renovation in the 18th century which involved the change of orientation, the reduction from three to one nave and the removing of the apse.

The original facade can still be seen at the back of the church. The paintings found inside date back to the 17th and 18th centuries and were part of the church's furnishings before it was rebuilt, except for the beautiful Madonna and Child in gloria fra saints, the work of Francesco Curradi. The other paintings are the Martyrdom of Saints Quirico and Giulitta, attributable to the painter Liborio Ermini, a Saint Anthony of Padova with Baby Jesus by an unknown artist and an Annunciation of Saint Joseph. Also noteworthy, along the walls, are the Stations of the Cross in polychrome plaster.





Levane sanctuary of Santa Maria della Ginestra

The hamlet of Levane is divided between the councils of Bucine and Montevarchi. The center extends along the Ambra river in between the hills of Levane alta and that formerly known as Leana, home to ancient settlements. Precisely on this hill is the sanctuary of Santa Maria della Ginestra.

The sanctuary, whose origin is not precisely known, it is very well known throughout Valdambra, over time it was a hermitage and then a hospice for pilgrims. Important archaeological finds speak of a territory already subject to settlements since the Etruscan era, initially called Santa Maria a Castelvechio, due to the ruins of an ancient castle nearby, it took the name of Santa Maria della Ginestra after the rebuilding in 1765.

The painting depicting the *Madonna della Cintola* is preserved inside a stone frame, unfortunately deprived of some people, referable to an unknown Florentine painter from the first decades of the 10th century.

Bucine

Church of Sant'Apollinare di San Giovanni Battista

The current parish church of Bucine, originally dedicated to San Giovanni Battista, was built in the market area located at the foot of the castle settlement, during the 16th century by will of the Conti family, as evidenced by an inscription visible on the entrance portal, where we read that "Bartolomeo di Sebastiano Conti, a Florentine citizen, finished this church in the year of our Lord 1581". When at the end of the eighteenth century a fire damaged the castle church dedicated to Sant'Apollinare, the parish title and baptismal font were attributed to it. It preserves numerous works of art, many of which come from other churches of Bucine that no longer exist or have been heavily remodelled. In the altar of the Madonna del Rosario, located in the left nave, preserved a painting from the first decades of the seventeenth

century depicting a Madonna with Child and angels, known as Madonna delle Grazie, the work of the Monteverarchino painter Michelangelo Vestrucci. The pictorial ensemble, dating back to the same years, is composed of three other canvases that adorn the chapel. Above the main altar there is a Last Supper, attributable to Michelangelo Vestrucci or his school. In the left nave there is also the canvas which reproduces the image of the Madonna delivering the relic of the Sacred Belt to Saint Monica, assisted by Saint Augustine and Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, dating back to the early 18th century. Also very interesting is the large canvas depicting the Miracle of Santa Maria della Neve on the Esquiline, i.e. the miraculous event which, according to tradition, gave rise to the foundation of the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.

The work, recently attributed to the Florentine painter Ludovico Buti, comes from the castle's small church and was relocated here in 2013 after the restoration. There are also two other seventeenth-century paintings that can be generally traced back to the Arezzo area. The first represents a Holy Bishop (most likely the patron Saint Apollinare), also coming from the ancient parish church, while the second represents Christ crucified among his brothers and comes from the church of the Company of the Holy Cross, which no longer exists today. Above the altar of the right nave there is a wooden crucifix dating back to the early 16th century.



Michelangelo Vestrucci, *Madonna con il Bambino*, known as: *Madonna delle Grazie*

MOVING UNDER THE SKIES OF VALDAMBRA

La Valdambra is a hidden jewel of nature, where the enchanting landscape paints a symphony of colours and scents that captivate the soul and awaken wonder for those who discover it.



1

1 - Polo Club VAS, Montebenichi
2 - Valdambra Trail (Badia Agnana)



2



Introduction

Every moment of the year is the right time to discover Valdambra hiking, by bike or on horseback, an area which, with its woods of heather, holm oaks and brooms, with its vineyards and olive groves, is capable of restoring tranquillity and relaxation to all.

A valley suitable for those who love walking, horseback riding or cycling to discover a natural, cultural, historical, artistic and food and wine heritage, and immerse themselves in a nature in which man has integrated for centuries, shaping the many forms of the landscape, in profound respect for one's land and the environment.

And so, itinerary after itinerary, the numerous villages of Valdambra will reveal their ancient past, from that of Montebenichi, to those of Cennina and Rapale, from the splendid Galatrona tower to what remains of the fortifications of Ambra. Step by step we will be able to enter places of faith such as the Abbeys of Badia a Ruoti and Badia Agnana and the ancient Pieve di Galatrona to discover three important pieces of art by Giovanni della Robbia; we will stop in silence in the places of memory or we will pause in wonder at the foot of an ancient tree. Visiting the cellars, tasting local products and dishes in the restaurants, taverns and village shops will immerse the visitor in a very unique and special atmosphere of conviviality.

“Walking is the great adventure, the first meditation, a practice of heartiness and soul primary to humankind.” (Gary Snider).

Sentieri del Viandante

“The journey. No other word so succinctly encapsulates the curiosity and innate desire to discover what has made human beings what they are today. I heard about Valdambra on one of my many trips around the world, and a day I decided to visit it, walking along the ancient streets.

Forests, castles, sorcerers, ancient villages, evocative landscapes, and remains of ancient civilisations, this small valley in the middle of Tuscany has amazed me more than once during my journey. I will try to tell you what I saw, describing the places I visited and how I got there, the colours, the smells and the sensations that this wild land gave me, because a journey is not a real journey if you don't also do it with your mind, and above all with your heart.”

— *The Traveller*



The broom's path

Perelli - Levane - Santa Maria della Ginestra

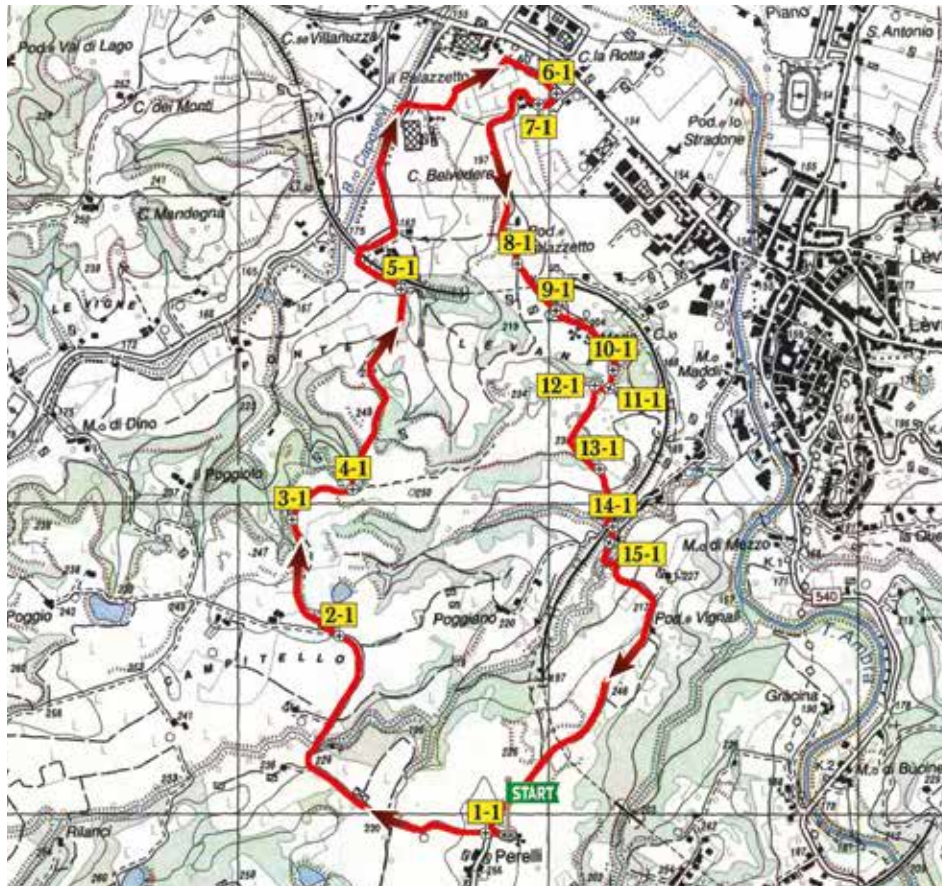


A short easy walk, among the tall brooms typical of Valdambra, which has a few stretches of tarmac roads among the silent green of the fields. It offers wide views of the town of Levane, the Upper Valdarno and Ambra. A pleasant route to reach the ancient sanctuary of Santa Maria della Ginestra,

hidden among the cypresses. A thousand-year-old place of worship: it seems to have been built due to the nearby presence of a miraculous water source which helped to produce milk whilst breastfeeding. Archaeologists claim the presence of a temple already in Roman times.

Total Distance: 7,5Km
Journey Time: 2h30'

Difficulty: Easy
Altitude: min.149. - max.253



The wine road

Mercatale V.no - Pieve di Galatrona - Torre di Galatrona
San Leolino - Tontenano



In order not to have a too long and tiring walk, it is advisable to start from the car park of the cemetery of Mercatale and explore the Trebbiano and Vermigli vines, which have always been considered among the best wines of Tuscany, also much loved by the Medici family. The name Mercatale is due to the market that arose in the late medieval period near the church of Santa Reparata. Viticulture in these parts has ancient roots and is widespread throughout the valley.

During the walk, among centuries-old oaks and cypresses, you will come across Pieve and Torrione di Galatrona and the suggestive Petraia farm, built in the 18th century; passing through the olive trees of Poggio del Fattore you arrive at the village of San Leolino, with its wonderful medieval castle; finally, it is the vineyards of the village of Tontenano that accompany hikers back to the starting point.

Total Distance: 10Km
Journey Time: 3h

Difficulty: Easy
Altitude: min.270. - max.477



The terrace on the Valdarno

Pogi - Iesolana - Casa Stracca - Montozzi - Villa Migliarina

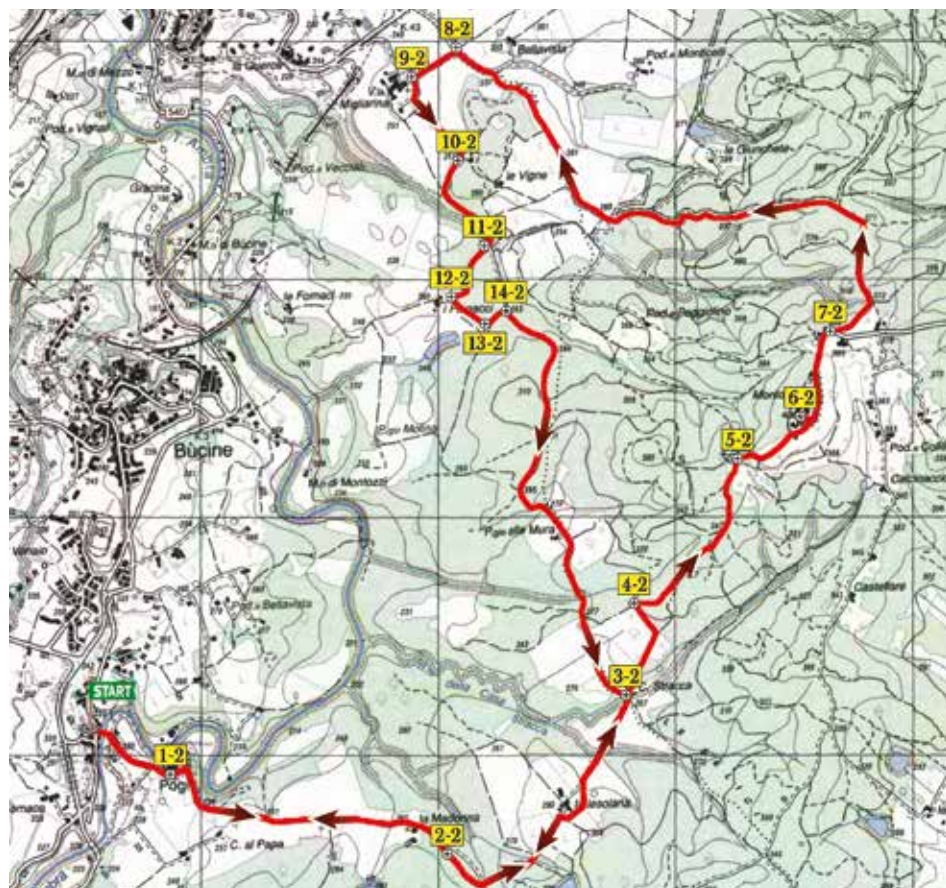


A quiet and tranquil excursion: starting from the bridge Roman bridge of Pogi you can explore the many medieval remains and arriving to the Montozzi castle, among large holm oaks and ruined dry stone walls, offers an incredible view over the entire valley. You then descend through the woods and an olive grove, to resume to

climb among oaks and holm oaks and brooms, up to the farm villa of Migliarina, built at the beginning of the nineteenth century and embellished with a large garden. Continuing among pines, cypresses and tall oaks to return to the Pogi bridge, there you may be lucky to have close encounters with roe deer and hares.

Total Distance: 15,2Km
Journey Time: 4h30'

Difficulty: Medium
Altitude: min.225. - max.408



The path of the four villages

Capannole - Castiglion Alberti - Badia Agnano
Villa - Capannole Alto

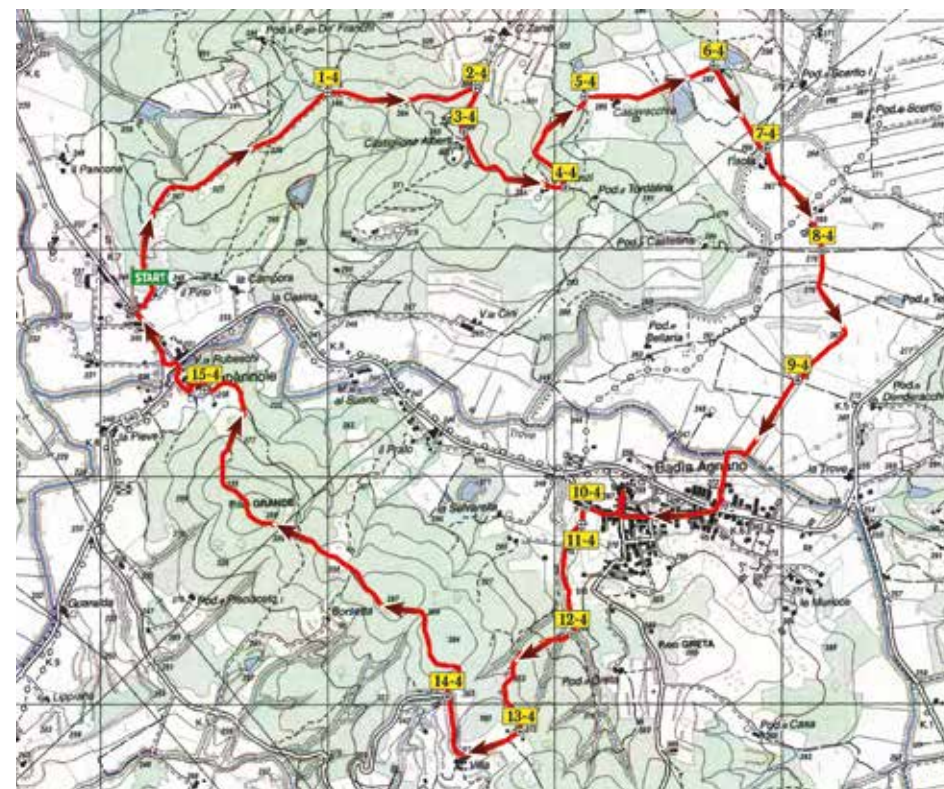


Capannole, our starting point, was in ancient times a strategic place for commercial and military routes, so much so that some scholars think that in the area there was the "Umbrian flumen" stop mentioned in the Tavola Peutingeriana, an ancient geographical map; the remains of a Roman villa were also found here. The path of the four villages winds through the ancient Roman roads and the typical Tuscan dirt

roads up to Castiglion Alberti, to reach an ancient ford on the Trave stream to reach Badia Agnano. From here the itinerary becomes wilder and wooded, and passing through the small town of La Villa you reach Capannole Alto, the last suggestive stage of the journey.

Total Distance: 13Km
Journey Time: 4h

Difficulty: Medium
Altitude: min.225. - max.401



The Arbutus road

San Martino - Podere Rota - Cennina - Duddova

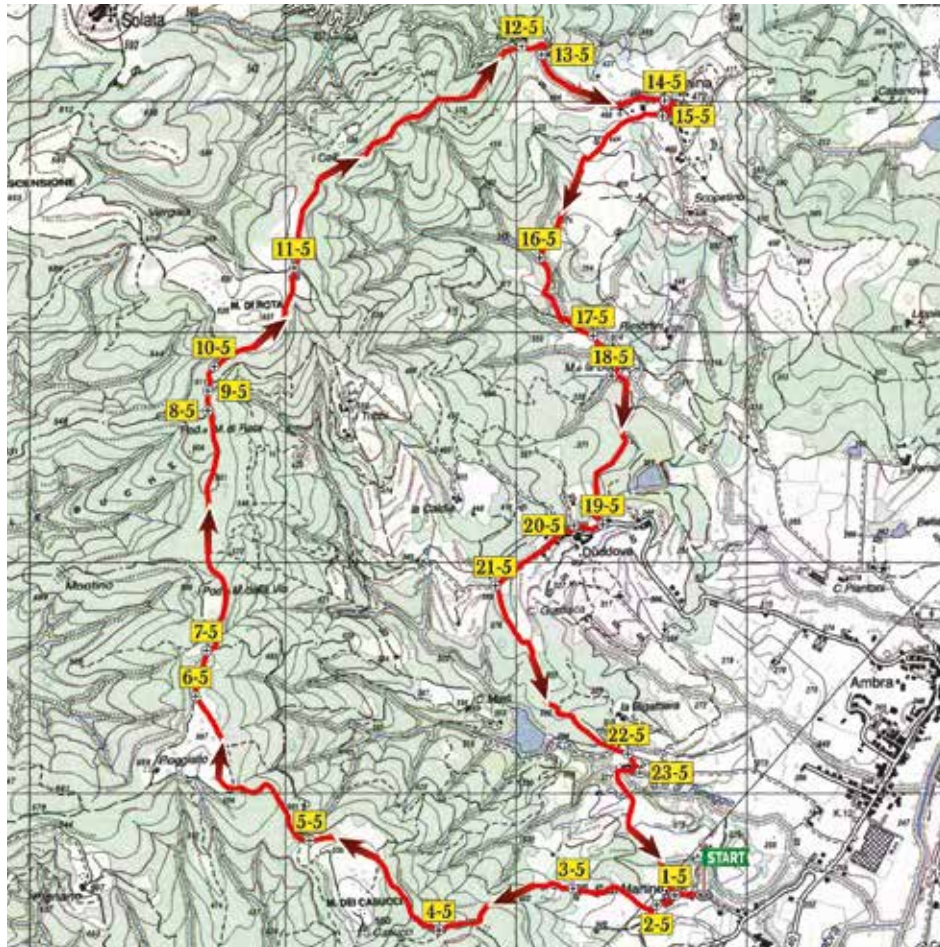


An uphill path that starts from San Martino, to be followed at your own pace, without rushing. The effort is rewarded by the sight of the suggestive villages of Cennina and Duddova, ready to give

unique emotions both through the wonders of the medieval buildings and the incredible views of the Valley that can be seen among the uncontaminated flora.

Total Distance: 13Km
Journey Time: 4h30'

Difficulty: Medium
Altitude: min.284. - max.634



Between sacred and profano

Badia a Ruoti - Sogna - Rapale

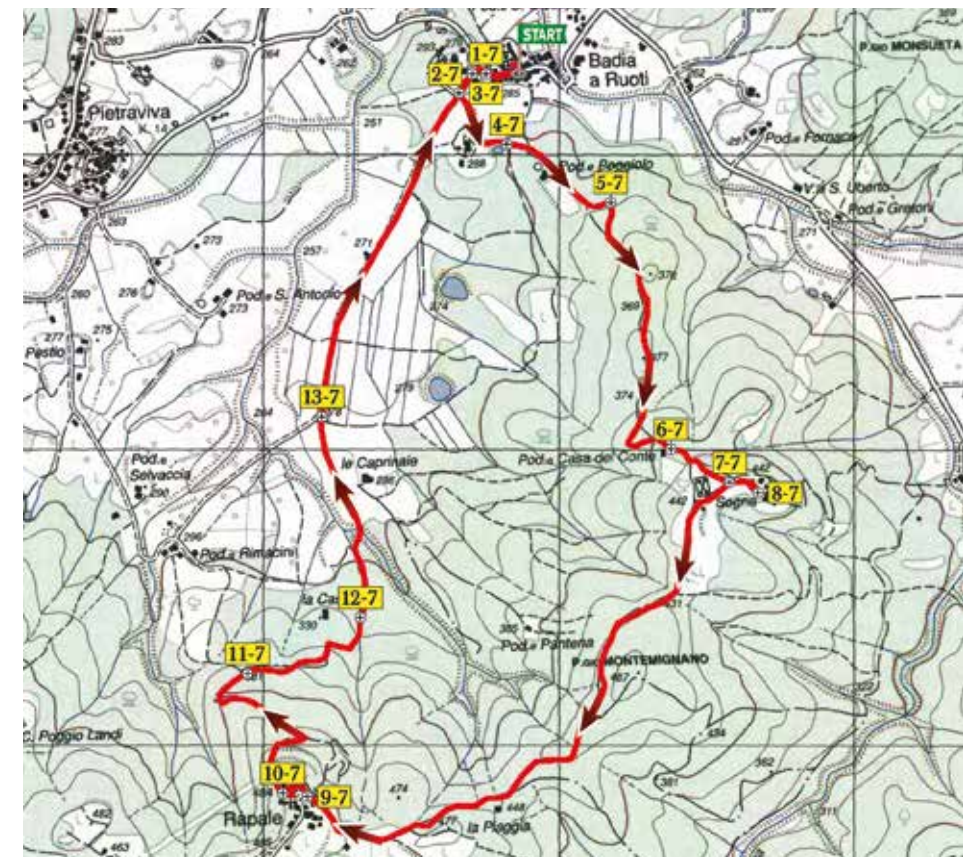


An itinerary that wonderfully alternates the sacredness of Badia a Ruoti, the starting and finishing point of the journey passing through the villages of Rapale and Sogna which bear witness to an ancient history. In fact, numerous Etruscan and Roman finds have been found near Rapale, as well as the remains of what appears to be an ancient settlement.

Sogna, on the other hand, is today the ideal place to spend a peaceful holiday, but it still bears some signs of a remote and warlike past, left by the very long war between Siena and Florence in the 15th century.

Total Distance: 9Km
Journey Time: 3h

Difficulty: Easy
Altitude: min.260. - max.484



The old heather road

Ambra - Poggio Castiglioni - San Pancrazio
Podere Asciana - Gavignano

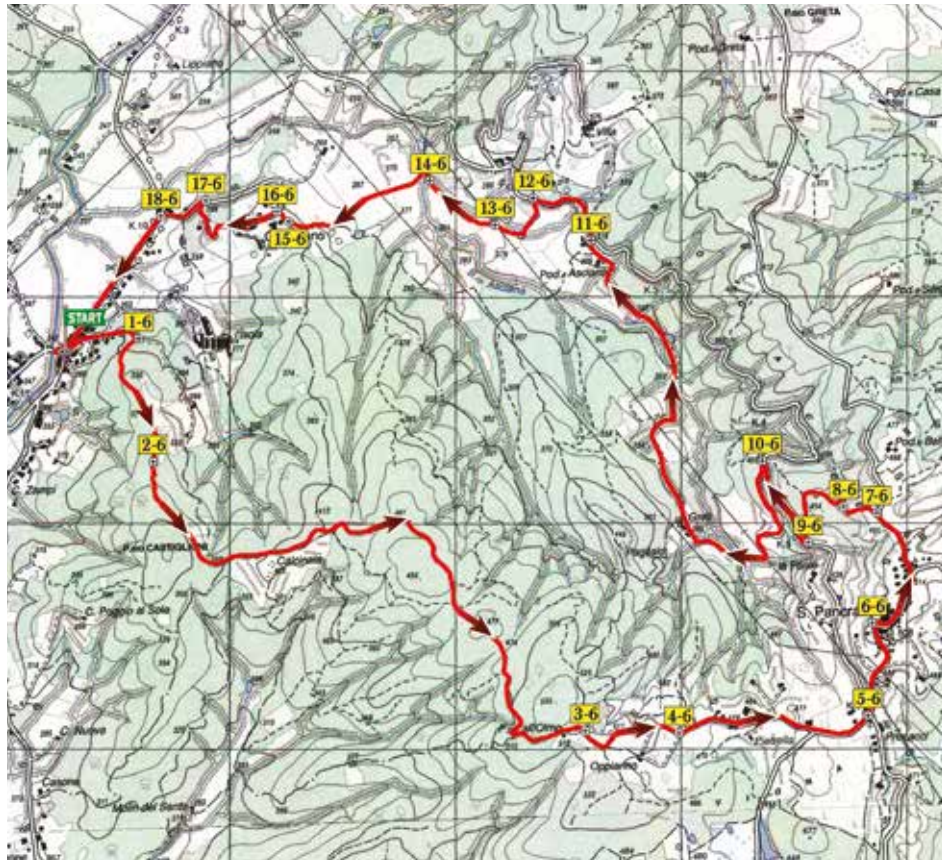


Near Ambra, the starting point for this itinerary, a large Etruscan settlement was found, a sign that the area had been inhabited since ancient times. A suggestive atmosphere that refers to the distant past and to a

more recent one, when you arrive in San Pancrazio, an enchanting village marked by the tragic events of the Second World War, on whose rubble, literally, the Museum of Memory was founded.

Total Distance: 14Km
Journey Time: 4h30'

Difficulty: Medium
Altitude: min.250. - max.529



Towards the spring

Santa Maria in Altaserra - Montebenichi
Molino della Macinaia - San Vincenti

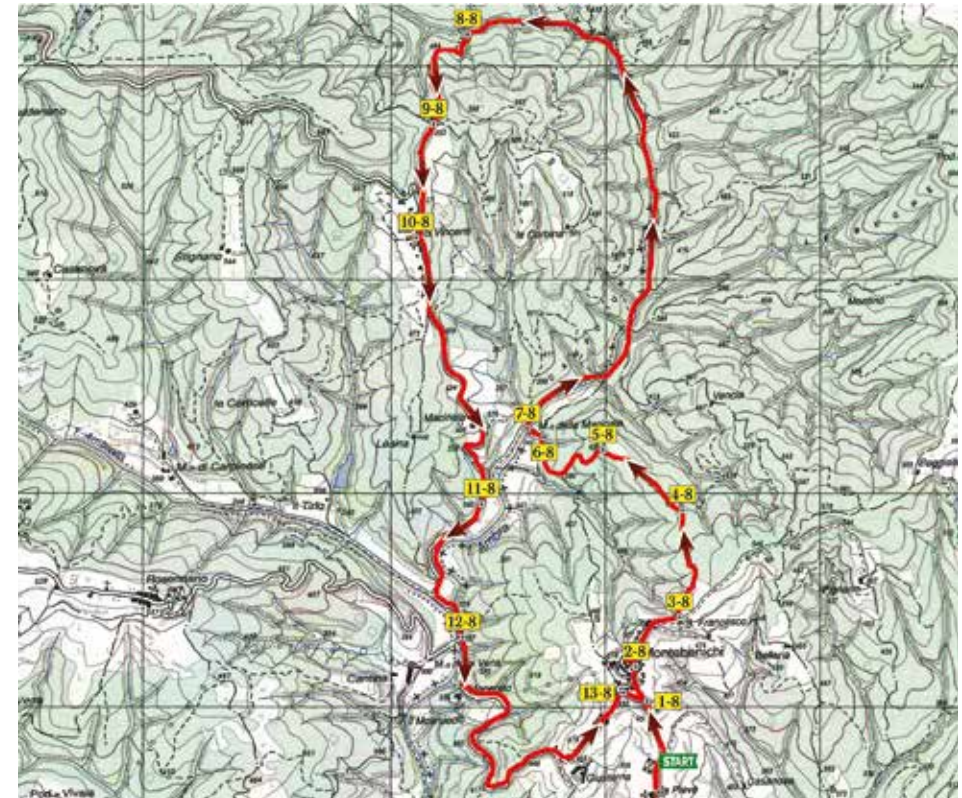


An itinerary that leads up to where the river of Ambra is born from the waters of ravines and streams that flow along the slopes of the Chianti mountains. It's not an easy walk, it starts near the parish church of Santa Maria in Altaserra, which stands in a place known since Etruscan and Roman times, as demonstrated by recent archaeological excavations; we pass by Montebenichi,

where the legendary Captain Gora lived, a valiant mercenary captain who lived in the 16th century, whose ghost is said to still live in the castle. Finally, for about three kilometres, we follow the course of the Ambra, crossing it eight times before returning to the starting point.

Total Distance: 12Km
Journey Time: 4h

Difficulty: Medium
Altitude: min.324. - max.534



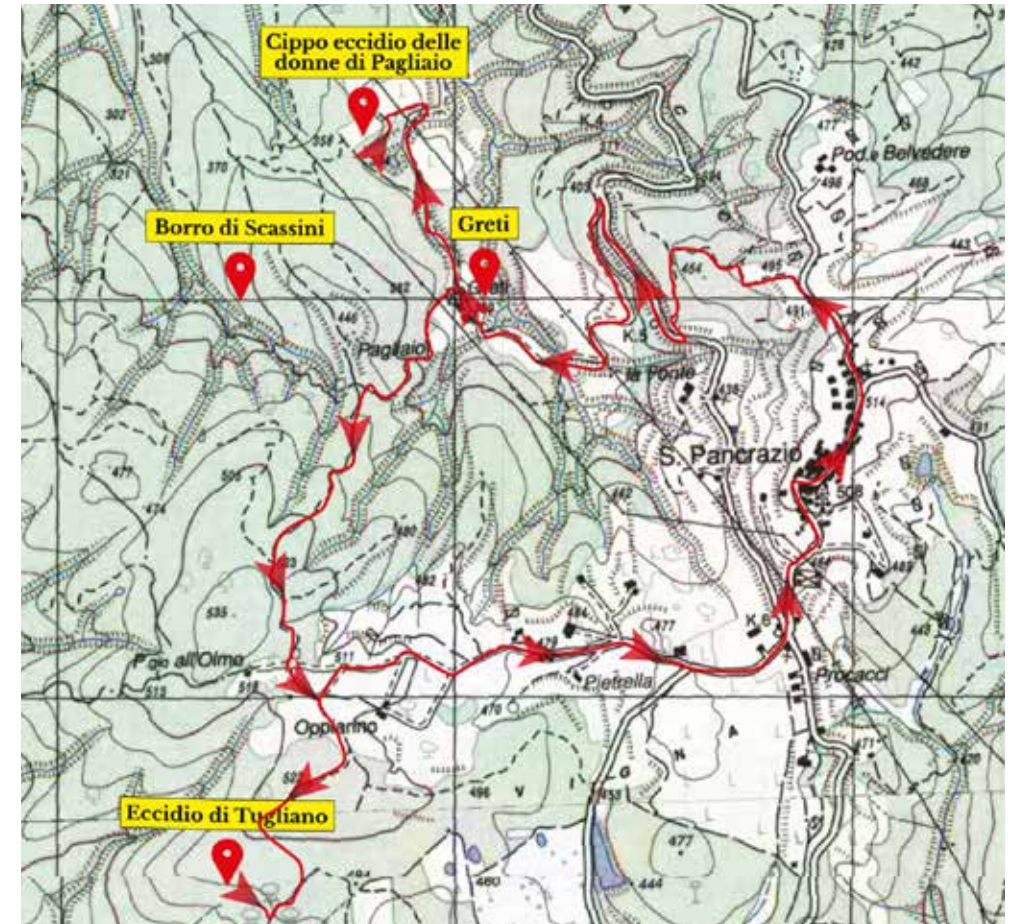
The places of memory

“Places of Memory” was born from the need to remember the victims of the massacres of the Second World War so that their unjust and cruel deaths are never forgotten and help the new generations to carry on dialogue, encouraging an active and conscious culture of peace.

Museum of Memory San Pancrazio

The Museum, which collects all the documentation on the massacre of San Pancrazio, was set up in the cellar of the building, dating back to the 16th century, which the Germans set on fire after having massacred all the men of San Pancrazio on 29 June 1944. The building also houses the Don Giuseppe Torelli Intercultural Centre, dedicated to the community's parish priest, who was also a victim of the massacre. The Centre has become part of the Regional Network of Intercultural Centres whose purpose is the creation of teaching programs, meetings and research in the demanthropological and historical fields. The objective is to promote a concrete commitment to safeguarding historical memory.

1 - San Pancrazio, Museum of memory



San Pancrazio's memorial path

A circular hiking route, just under 10km long and well signed, also suitable for less experienced trekkers. Starting from San Pancrazio it winds along dirt roads through the most beautiful and evocative Tuscan landscape to always return to the village of San Pancrazio, from a different angle from where we started. The path of San Pancrazio, in addition to enjoying the views as far as the eye can see thanks to its privileged position on the ridge between Valdambra and Valdichiana, touches three places in Valdambra which in 1944 were the scene of massacres by the Nazi occupiers. Thanks to the volunteers, who are responsible for keeping alive the memory of the civilians killed, we can today walk to remember. For constantly updated information on the route and the museum of San Pancrazio, we always recommend consulting the dedicated Facebook and Instagram pages.

The memorial tree's

Speaking of masterpieces created by nature, we cannot fail to immediately mention the simplest, oldest and certainly most unique itinerary in Valdambra: "The memorial tree's":

Walking along the paths of this unique territory, your attention is captured by beautiful trees that immediately make you perceive their longevity, not only because of their size but also for the sensations that their grandeur manages to arouse. These are usually cypresses that delimit the boundaries between lands or mark crossroads, and oaks, which in ancient times were called "robur", Latin for "strength".

Among these natural phenomena, however, seven trees deserve a dedicated excursion, and in exchange give the feeling of being inextricably linked to the earth, and at the same time overwhelmed by the greatness of mother nature: they are the Trees of Memory. Called this way because in their centuries, sometimes millennia, of history they have collected and guarded emotions and secrets, being the oldest and most faithful inhabitants of Valdambra.

The Council of Bucine has been preserving and enhancing them for years with workshops and environmental education aimed at schools, citizens and tourists; they were also registered by the State Forestry Corps. The Holm oak of Bellavista, the Yew of Pietraviva, the Cypress of Petraia, the Mulberry of Castiglion Alberti, the Olivone of Montebenichi and the Roverella (hybrid) of Badia a Ruoti are in the list of Monumental Trees of the Tuscany Region and of Italy.



1

1— Detail of Olivone of Montebenichi's bark
2 - Olivone of Montebenichi

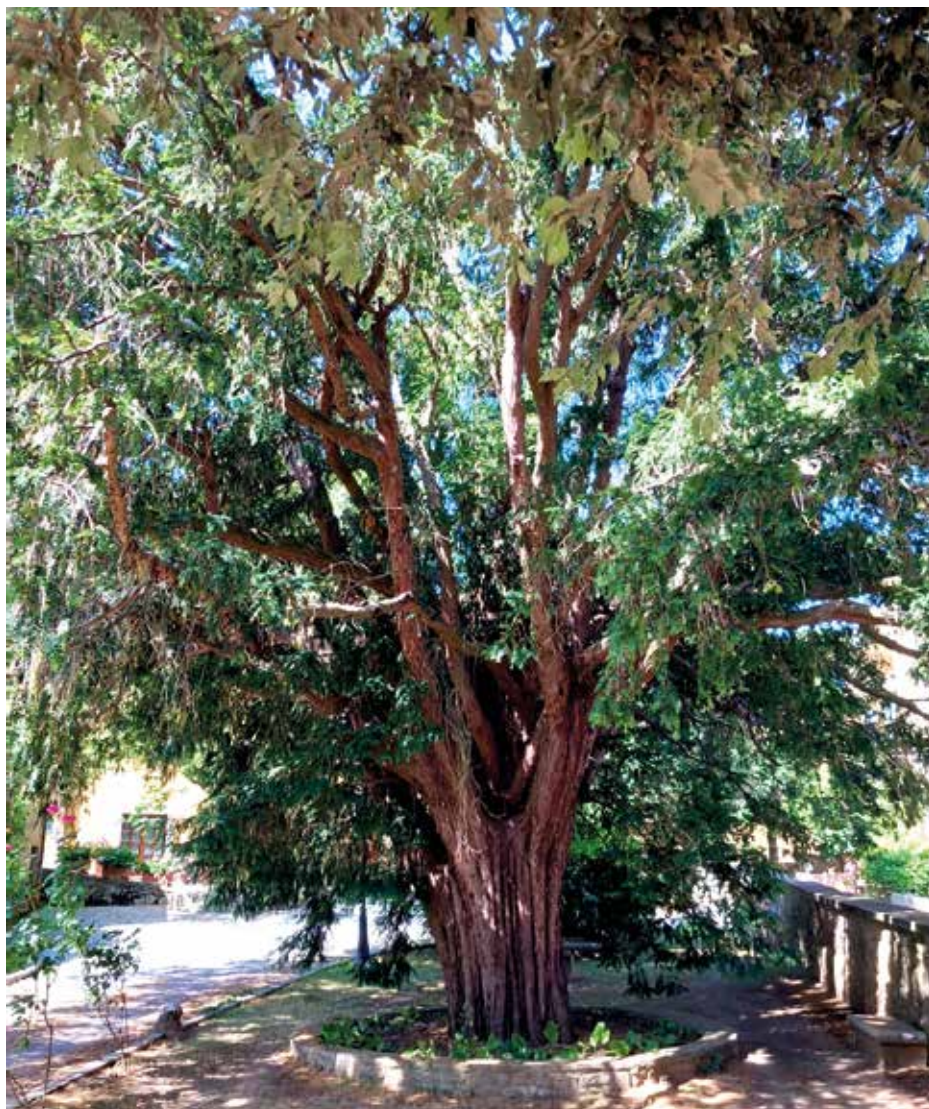
—“Olivone of Montebenichi”

(Olea europea)

A few hundred meters from the ancient village of Montebenichi, it grows among very young olive trees “Tolivone”, named due to its extraordinary dimensions. In fact, it has a circumference of approximately 640 cm and is approximately 4.5 meters high. The age estimated at approximately 500 years, unique for its genetic characteristics called “Noccolo” by the owner of the land. Since 2023 Olivone di Montebenichi has been registered with the regional repertoires of local genetic resources.



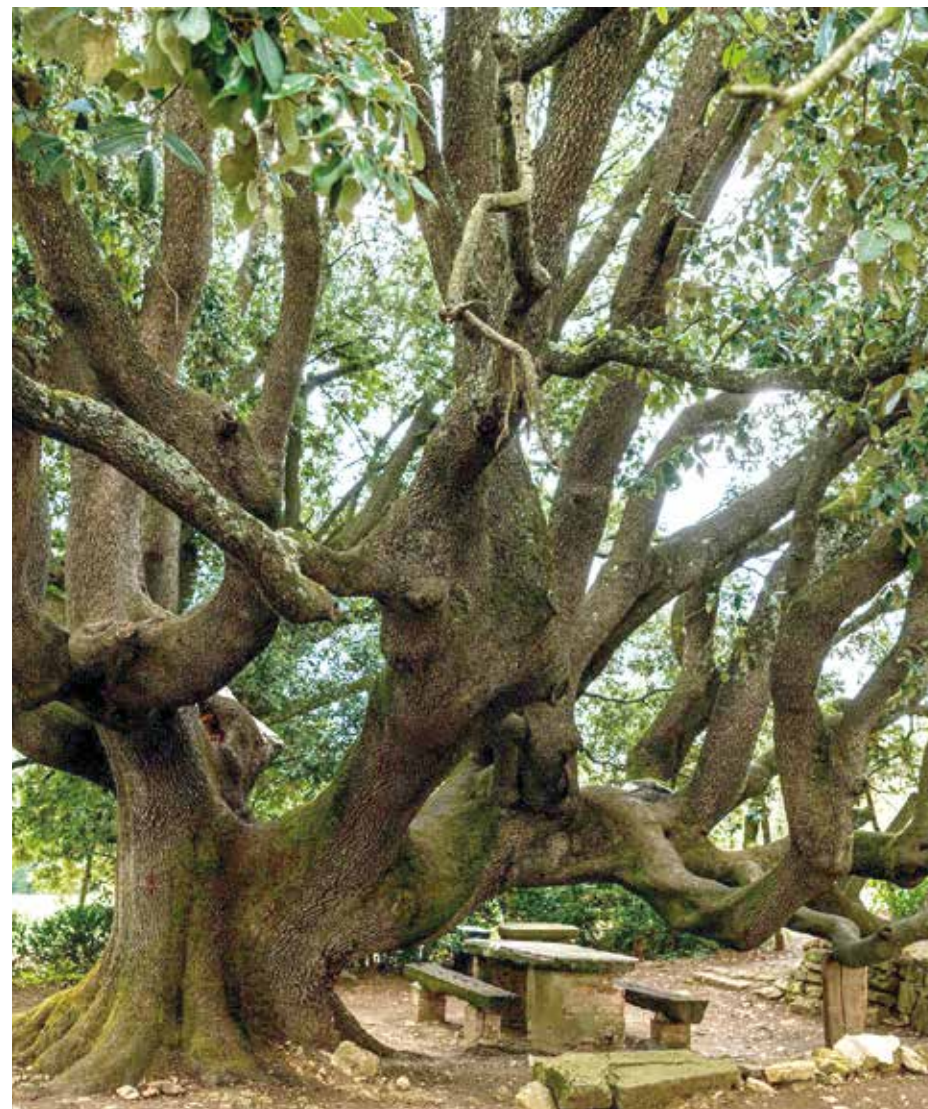
2



—Yew of Pietraviva

(Genere: *Taxus*, specie: *Taxus Baccata*)

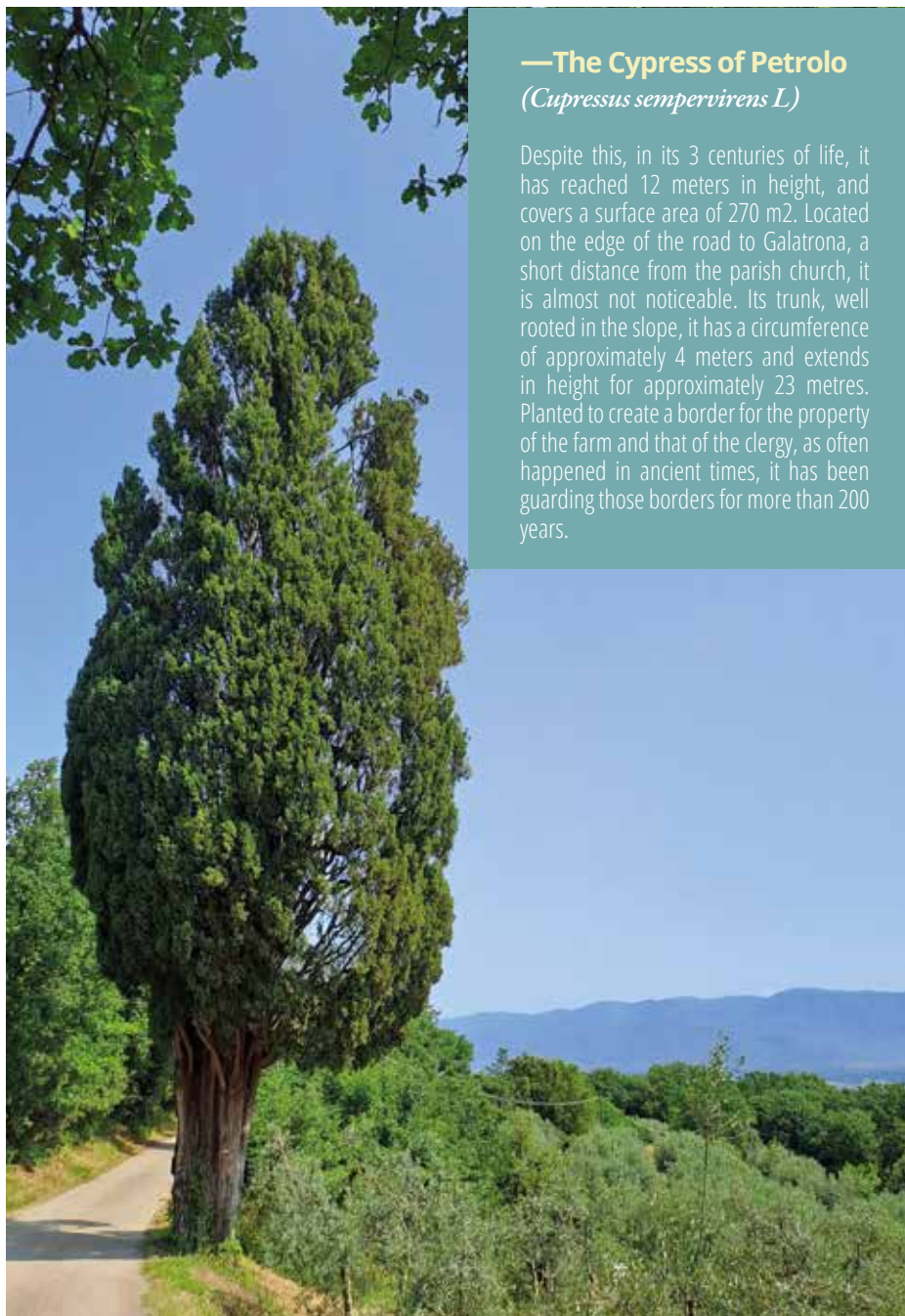
Located in the garden of a villa in Pietraviva, which overlooks the town square, from where it can be admired. 16 meters tall, with a trunk with a circumference of 3.75 meters due to the slowness of its growth, it is difficult to understand its “date of birth”; it is officially classified as “before 1700”.



—Holm oak of Bellavista (Bucine)

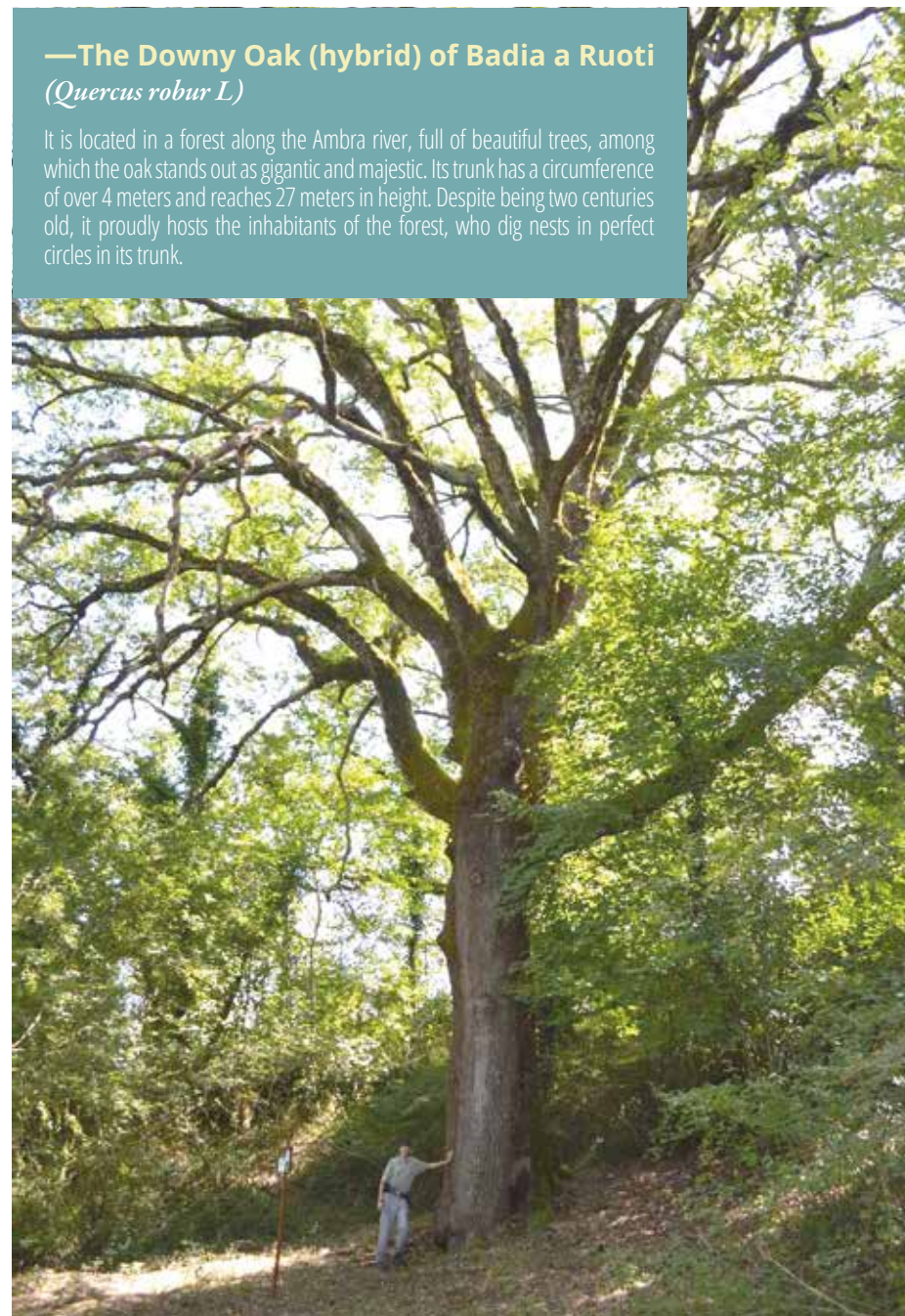
(*Quercus ilex*)

Evergreen common in Valdambra, the Leccio di Bellavista has grown among human beings more than others, and this has left indelible marks, the low trunk and the branches bent horizontally, in fact, made it, with the help of nets, a perfect “croccolo”, a bird trap. Despite this, in its 3 centuries of life, it has reached 12 meters in height, and covers a surface area of 270 mg.



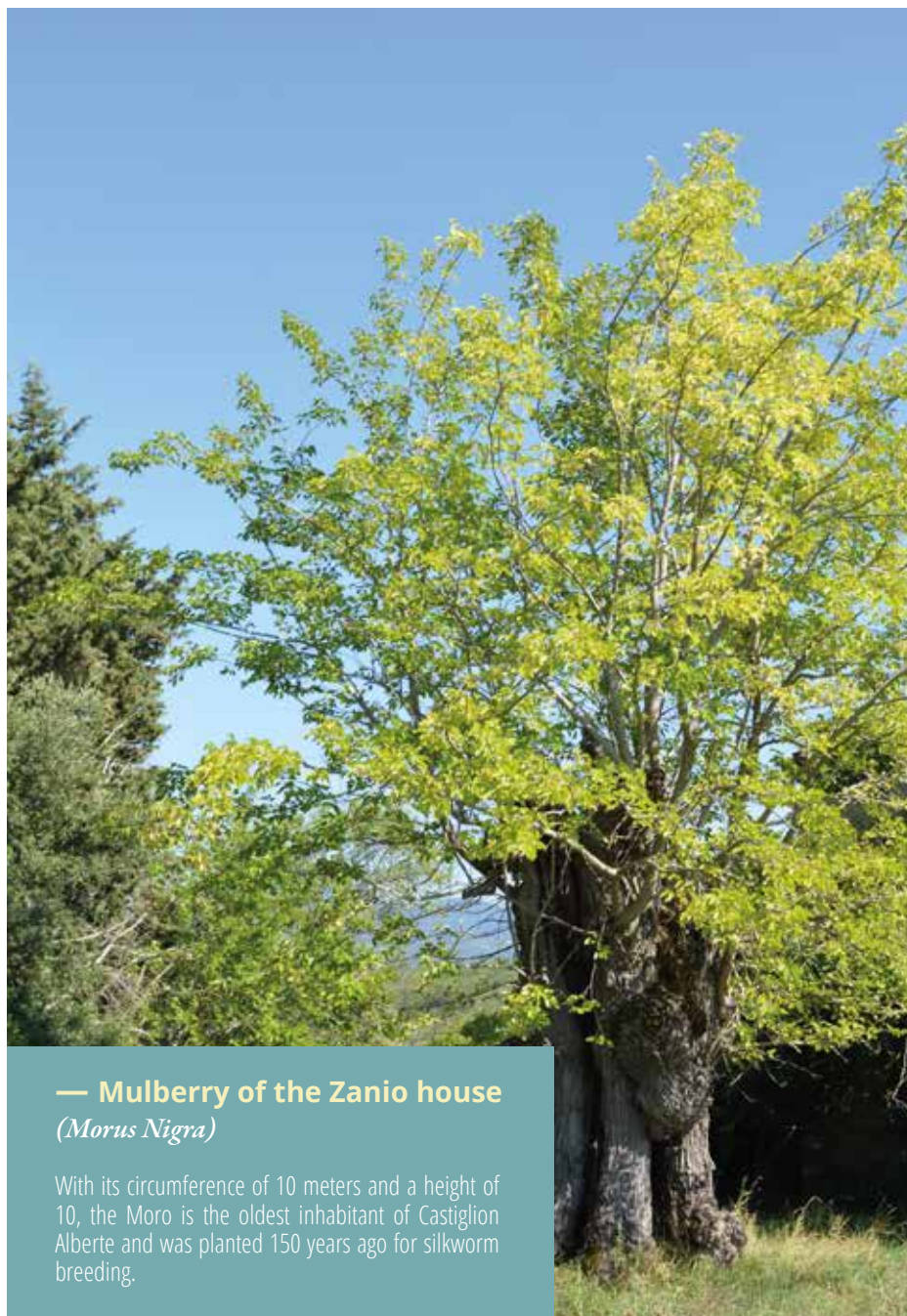
—The Cypress of Petrolo (*Cupressus sempervirens L*)

Despite this, in its 3 centuries of life, it has reached 12 meters in height, and covers a surface area of 270 m². Located on the edge of the road to Galatrona, a short distance from the parish church, it is almost not noticeable. Its trunk, well rooted in the slope, it has a circumference of approximately 4 meters and extends in height for approximately 23 metres. Planted to create a border for the property of the farm and that of the clergy, as often happened in ancient times, it has been guarding those borders for more than 200 years.



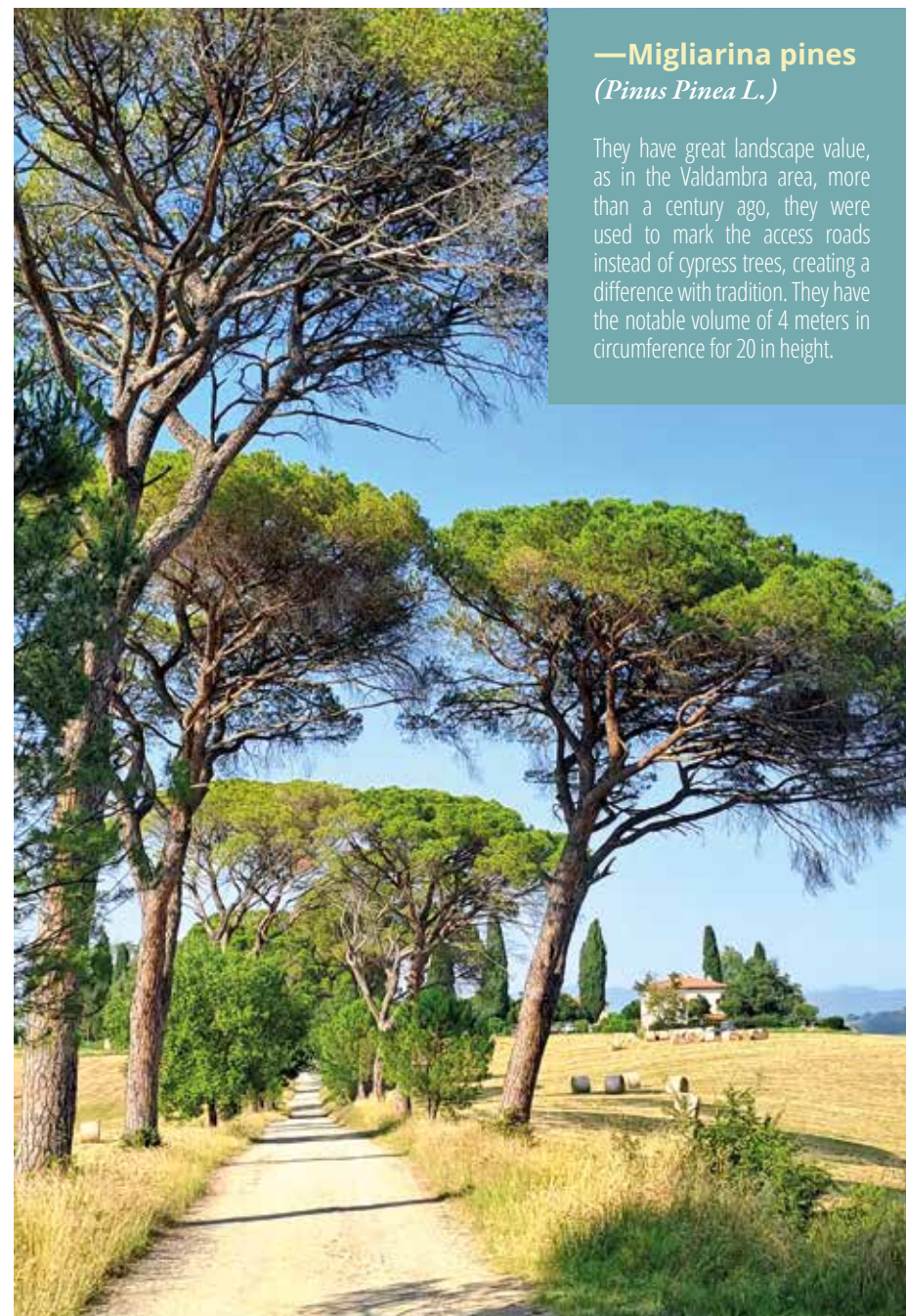
—The Downy Oak (hybrid) of Badia a Ruoti (*Quercus robur L*)

It is located in a forest along the Ambra river, full of beautiful trees, among which the oak stands out as gigantic and majestic. Its trunk has a circumference of over 4 meters and reaches 27 meters in height. Despite being two centuries old, it proudly hosts the inhabitants of the forest, who dig nests in perfect circles in its trunk.



— **Mulberry of the Zanio house**
(*Morus Nigra*)

With its circumference of 10 meters and a height of 10, the Moro is the oldest inhabitant of Castiglion Alberte and was planted 150 years ago for silkworm breeding.



— **Migliarina pines**
(*Pinus Pinea L.*)

They have great landscape value, as in the Valdambra area, more than a century ago, they were used to mark the access roads instead of cypress trees, creating a difference with tradition. They have the notable volume of 4 meters in circumference for 20 in height.

The road of oil

La Cycling is an excellent way, together with walking, to discover Valdambra in a sustainable and exciting way. There is nothing better than starting the day by cycling along the paths surrounded by nature: peace and beauty are all around you can touch them.

The route of "La Via dell'Olio" is a circular ring that includes the council of Bucine and Laterina Pergine Valdarno, created thanks to the Valdarno Bike Road project (www.valdarnobikeroad.it). The name "La Via dell'Olio" derives from one of the main crops in the area: the olive tree.

The itinerary owes its incredible beauty to the numerous stretches of "white roads", the classic Tuscan pavements, surrounded by olive groves as far as the eye can see, thanks to which it was possible to produce an excellent product: extra virgin olive oil.

The route is approximately 42 kilometers long and is of medium-high level, suitable for road bicycles, MTBs, e-bikes and gravel bikes; it passes by various points of interest where you can choose to stop for refreshments, visit the village, or simply admire the view.

Without a doubt, not to be missed is the Torrione di Galatrona, for its magnificent view from the top floor terrace, but also the historic Pieve not too far away. Continuing you come across the small villages of San Leolino and Cennina, but a small detour can be taken into account for a visit to the Lupinari Castle: one of the examples of Tuscan Art Nouveau, designed by the architect Coppedé also known as Villa Frisoni



1 - Bucine, Lupinari Castle
2 - "The Olive Oil Route" Itinerary



AUTHENTIC TUSCANY

The authenticity of our spirit is like a good wine, it has a unique and unmistakable flavour that conquers you with its character and tradition.



Introduction

So far we have talked about the wonders of a valley full of history and magic but, if on the one hand it is true that by visiting this evocative corner of Tuscany you will be fascinated by our villages, immersed in a landscape of incredible beauty and perched on gentle hills, it is equally true that Tuscaness goes beyond places: it's the hospitality and welcome that have been handed down for generations.

Even today you can savour the taste of tranquillity and conviviality, precisely because the people are the first ambassadors of their land, transmitting the passion, values and characters that make this territory unique. This is why visiting the hamlets and villages of the council of Bucine creates such a pleasant experience: in addition to enjoying landscapes and places of extraordinary beauty, rich in history and art, it is easy to find yourself in the middle of a village festival where entire families, elderly and young people work together, keeping the beauty and unmistakable character of these villages preserved.

By reliving the traditions that modern times tend to forget, even small communities are able to transmit the warmth of a place that remains genuine and "on a human scale", thanks to the ability of its people to maintain a subtle, perfect, balance between ancient values and the future.

Savouring excellence

The Valdambra area is historically a source of excellent products, thanks to the work of skilled farmers and producers who are still the custodians of ancient traditions.

There is no shortage of local products of great quality and they are all worth trying in the restaurants, taverns, village shops and in the numerous demonstrations and events which, especially in the summer period, are organized by associations and pro loco. A basket of products, from honey to truffles, to pecorino, from Tarese del Valdarno, a Slow Food presidium, to E.V.O. oil, and to wine, which have a very ancient history in this land, undisputed stars of local productions. The recognitions gained at an international level confirm the olive growing and viticultural vocation of Valdambra.

Extra Virgin Olive Oil: the green gold of Valdambra

“So if we asked ourselves what the value of a bottle of green gold is, we can only answer: priceless. In fact, each drop contains a thousand-year history, passion, innovation, work, health, respect for the environment and an unmistakable note of Tuscany: the landscape and the character of a land unique.”



The beauty of the Bucine area is given by the presence of widespread olive groves, which gives the landscape that typically Tuscan conformation, as well as producing a territorial excellence: extra virgin olive oil, a fundamental food of Mediterranean cuisine and diet. The consumption of quality EVO oil, i.e. with a high content of oleic acid, antioxidant substances such as polyphenols and vitamins, and a low content of saturated fatty acids, is very important for health. To inexperienced eyes, olive trees may all seem the same, but there are varieties that are also genetically different: in Tuscany the confirmed varieties. There are around 80 called cultivars. The most important

and widespread Tuscan cultivars are: Frantoio, Moraiolo, Leccino and Pendolino. The council of Bucine has undertaken a process of valorisation of Valdambra EVO oil with a dual objective: to protect the biodiversity of Valdambra olive growing and to enhance the high quality of Valdambra oil, through the best extraction techniques. The EVO oil produced in Valdambra has excellent organoleptic properties with an intense green colour, golden shades and a characteristic fruity aroma with hints of artichoke and fresh grass.



Olionostrum Project biodiversity and innovation for an Olio E.V.O. of top quality

In 2017, with the Olionostrum Project, the council of Bucine obtained, together with the University of Florence, ANCI Toscana, an important loan for two local agricultural companies from the Tuscany Region, with the European PSR 2014-2020 funds, for the creation of a new mill prototype. In 2022 the Olivone oil mill became a reality and thanks to a group it is fully working and available to companies and all those producers who require quality production of EVO oil.

Olionostrum is a registered trademark of the Municipality of Bucine and represents a development opportunity for Valdambra and for companies in the olive growing sector, giving them the possibility of producing an E.V.O. oil. competitive in the sector for quality, uniqueness and closely linked to the territory.

1



1 - Olionostrum brand registered by the Municipality of Bucine
2 - Detail of the olive press prototype



2



The olive biodiversity of Valdambra, an inestimable heritage

Biodiversity represents our insurance on the life of the planet. Over the last sixty years, numerous breeds and ancient varieties have also been lost in Italy due to a substantial standardization of food lifestyles and therefore uniformity of the consumption of products, as well as excessive urbanization with consequent exploitation and impoverishment of the soil.

To preserve biodiversity, we can adopt virtuous and environmentally friendly behaviors such as limiting the use of chemical substances and encouraging the use of local products. Since 2017, the Council of Bucine has undertaken a path to protect and safeguard the olive biodiversity of Valdambra thanks to the collaboration of CNR Ibe of Florence.

This involves the recovery of over 40 native olive tree genotypes starting from the symbolic plant: the Olivone di Montebenichi, which gave life to the Valdambra olive biodiversity field in Montebenichi. The collection represents an important agronomic value for olive growers in terms of productivity and environmental sustainability; in the future, it will be possible to experiment and obtain mono-varietal oils closely linked to the territory.

Every year, with the olives harvested, the council of Bucine produces the Valdambra Biodiversity Oil which is used for the promotion and valorisation of the project.



1,3 - Autochthonous genotype of Valdambra
2 - Montebenichi,
Valdambra Olive Biodiversity Field



Wines of the Valdambra

“ ... I believe that most of happiness goes to people who are born where good wine is made...”

So said Leonardo Da Vinci, testifying that wine production in Tuscany has a very ancient history of excellence.

Valdambra wine has always been highly appreciated on the market; already in the mid-1300s the white Trebbiano produced in the areas of Torre and Galatrona was purchased by the Datini, rich merchants from Prato, at 2 and a half florins per hectolitre, one of the highest prices recorded in that period. Indeed, about a century earlier, we find traces of the importance of vine cultivation in the rules in the Statute of the Viscount of Valdambra, the collection of laws issued by the Count Guidi gave regulations to the population of their possessions in this territory.

The protection reserved for vineyard plots since then is a clear signal of the importance of wine in the economic and social organization of the Valdambra from the Middle Ages.

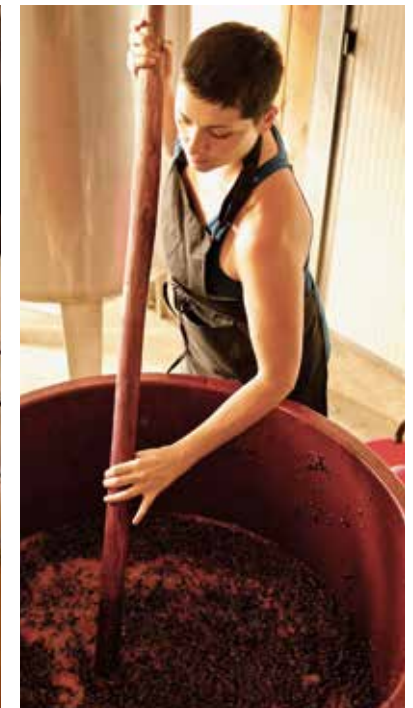
What type of wines were produced and in which areas of Valdambra? Historical evidence tells us that in 1427 among the most valuable wines registered by the Florentine Land Registry were those produced in the areas of San Leolino, Cennina and Galatrona, both Trebbiani (white) and Vermigli (red).

The best wines of the Florentine countryside, therefore, came from here, and had a quality also recognized by

the lords of the time, among whom it is important to mention the Medici family.

A land which, despite the passing of centuries, has always preserved its winemaking tradition thanks to the constant work of its population, who safeguard and pass down ancient techniques with passion and dedication. The most important grape variety in the area is Sangiovese, which distinguishes most of the wines of Valdambra, unmistakable for its tannicity and freshness, which represents the basis for Chianti D.O.C.G in the Colli Aretini denomination: it is a wine brilliant, ruby red in colour, persistent on the palate, rich in aromas of violets and cherries.

Precisely in order not to lose the connection with this wonderful land in the tradition of the wines, Sangiovese is still the most used grape variety today by the majority of producers in Valdambra.



The Vinsanto

Valdambra never ceases to surprise: this rich land also produces excellent Vinsanto, which is made from Trebbiano and Malvasia grapes, traditionally dried on reeds or by hanging them on hooks.

Once dried they are pressed with the “press”, an ancient wine press, and the must is transferred into caratelli, small wooden barrels used for the maturation of wine, with the “mother”, i.e. the deposit at the bottom of the caratelli. Precisely this passage is the true secret of this ancient process: in fact, each producer jealously guards the “mother” which is handed down from generation to generation. The sealed casks, following tradition, were left in the cellar or attic for a minimum of three years, as it was believed that the strong temperature variations benefited the fermentation.

Today several wineries manage to produce excellent quality vinsanto, also with the help of innovative technologies, maintaining the respect for this centuries-old tradition.



O.O.E. Valdarno di Sopra

The most antic and the youngest



1

Valdarno di Sopra is one of the D.O.C. most recent of the scene of Controlled Designations of Origin regulated with modern regulations born in the 60s of the last centuries. Yet the production of high-quality wines was so consolidated in this area that it was included in the announcement of Grand Duke Cosimo II de' Medici who in 1716 felt the need to protect Tuscan wine coming from the Chianti, Pomino, Carmignano and Valdarno di Sopra area from counterfeits. Cosimo II de' Medici's edict took note of a situation of high-quality wine production that was already widely consolidated and recognized at that time and which derived from a very ancient history.

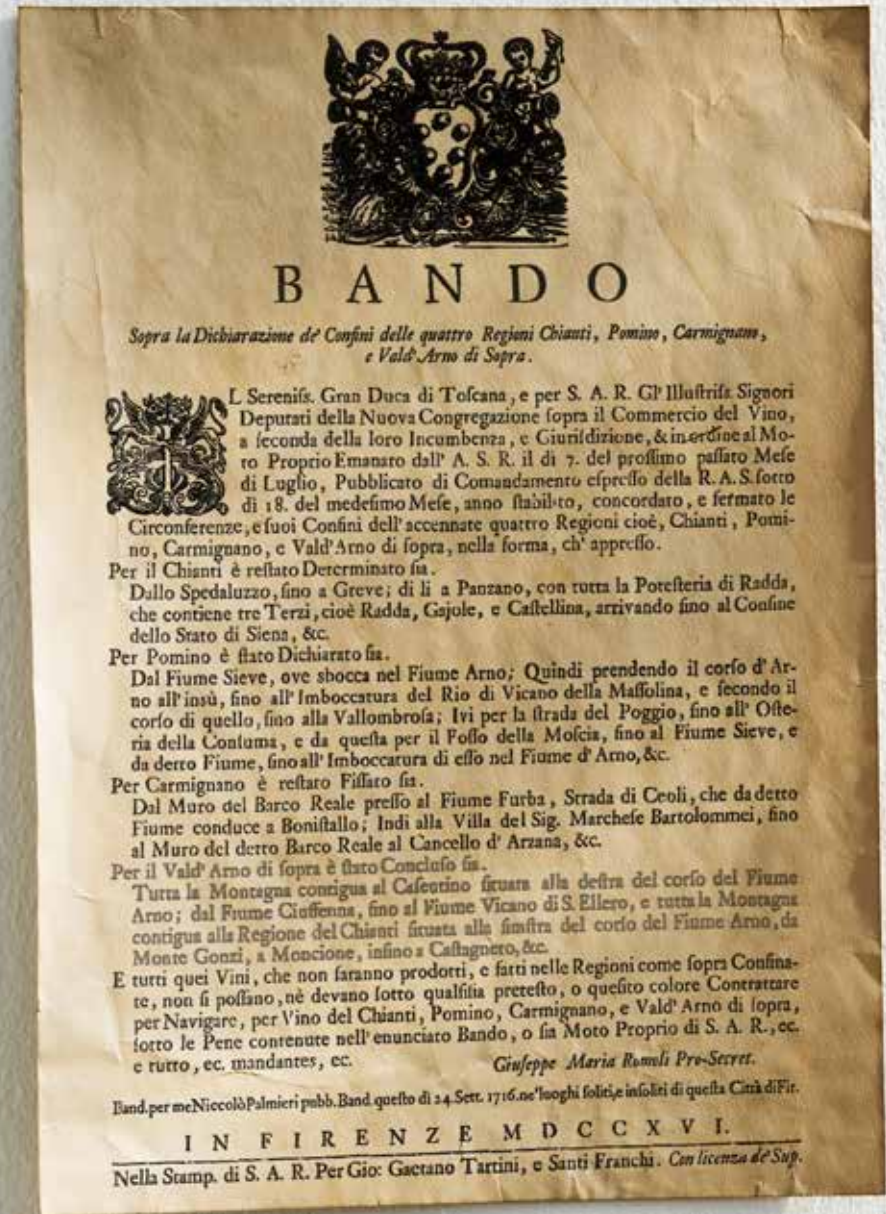
The Etruscans were already able to make wine in the 4th century BC. while in the 1st century AD Pliny the Elder spoke of the areas surrounding Arezzo as the best for wine production and refers to numerous varieties of grape cultivation. In the Middle Ages it was the monks who took care of and protected the vine crops from the risk of theft and devastation. Over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, the wines produced in the Valdarno di Sopra had progressively been linked to the name Chianti, initially in a generic manner, later with the specification of the Colli Aretini sub-area. For the wines produced in the Valdarno di Sopra this assimilation with Chianti did not do justice to the complexity of local production. From this

territory came the grapes that gave rise to numerous "Super Tuscans" which had acquired fame among professionals.

In 2011 it was made official with the attribution of the Controlled Designation of Origin to the "Val d'Arno di Sopra" or "Valdarno di Sopra" wines. The D.O.C. Valdarno di Sopra includes the following types: White, Sparkling White, Rosé, Sparkling Rosé, Red. The specification provides for the use of the following vines: Chardonnay, Sauvignon, Cabernet sauvignon, Cabernet frane, Merlot, Sangiovese, Syrah. The production area include the Concil of Cavriglia, Montevarchi, Bucine, Laterina Pergine Valdarno, Civitella in Val di Chiana, Castelfranco Piandiscò, Castiglion Fibocchi, Terranuova Bracciolini, Loro Ciuffenna, San Giovanni Valdarno.



1 - Consortium brand of Valdarno di Sopra O.O.E.
2 - Document of Cosimo III de' Medici (1716).



2

Products of the territory

The Tarese of Valdarno

To be tasted, when passing through this territory, is definitely the Tarese, a pork salami with ancient origins and unusual dimensions, also created for the need to inventively preserve every part of the pig before the advent of refrigeration, when the only method for preserving meat was salting.

The considerable dimensions of the Tarese, which can measure up to 50 cm by 80 on each side, produced from heavy pigs, traditionally around 200 kilograms.

The processing of the meat takes place in three phases: at the beginning the meat is deboned, then massaged with a mixture of pepper, coarsely ground red garlic, juniper and other spices, but no one knows for sure which ones and in what quantities, since the recipe varies from producer to producer, and is secret.

The flavoured piece is then placed in coarse salt and remains there for between 10 and 15 days, depending on the size.

The Tarese is then cleaned, washed and massaged again with a mixture of garlic spices: only at this point is it ready for maturing, which lasts for a variable period, from 60 to 90 days.

This traditional procedure is the reason for its particular taste, which is characterized by a pronounced and persistent, but at the same time delicate flavour; the slow maturing, in fact, gives the fat softness and pastiness, and the spices with which it is covered enhance the peculiar aromatic notes.



Gnudi of black cabbage sauted with Tarese of Valdarno



Ingredients:

300 gr. ricotta
600 gr. black cabbage
40 gr. grated Parmesan
3 yolks
Flour
Salt
Pepper
200 gr. butter
Bunch of salvia
Slices Tarese del Valdarno
Seasoned pecorino

Preparation:

Tear the black cabbage and boil it in salted water. Remove from the heat, drain it and squeeze it well; chop it with a knife. Place the black cabbage in a bowl, adding the other ingredients one at a time. With floured hands, take a small amount of dough and knead it into a round shape. Continue until the dough is finished. When the water boils, add salt and add the gnudi. Remove them as they come to the surface and place them on the serving plate. Drizzle them with butter in which you have browned a lock of sage. Sprinkle them with seasoned pecorino; finish the dish with the crispy Tarese freshly pan-fried.

Honey

The favorable environmental conditions of Tuscany have allowed the development of beekeeping since the times of the Etruscans and Romans, on whose tables honey was never missing.

An easily assimilable food, having not undergone transformation processes, and at the same time highly energetic, it has always been considered an excellent healing remedy. Even in Valdambra, the climate and botanical diversity allow small beekeepers, who often dedicate themselves to this activity as a hobby, to obtain a range of aromas and flavours that distinguish the different types of honey. Heather, acacia, wildflower and chestnut honey are the varieties mainly produced in Valdambra. Honey is widely used in traditional Tuscan cuisine, both for the preparation of desserts and biscuits, and combined with fresh or mature cheeses, such as pecorino. The secret of the



The pecorino

unique and enveloping flavour of dairy products and derivatives, such as pecorino cheese, resides in the pasture lands, where fragrant herbs grow which give sheep's milk an unmistakable flavour. Fresh pecorino and more mature pecorino are produced, but also excellent ricotta and raviggiolo. Seasoned pecorino weighs approximately 2.5 kg, has a straw-yellow paste and small holes; this, after maturing for at least 120 days, acquires an intense and slightly spicy flavour. Fresh pecorino cheese weighs approximately 1 kg and has a compact white texture. The minimum maturation is 20 days, but generally the product is consumed after 30-45 days; the taste is delicate and sweet. Pecorino is a very versatile product that can be used both for the table and in the kitchen. The fresh product pairs well with white wines, the matured one with red wine.

Flan of Pecorino with cream of broad bean



Ingredients:

For the flan
 1 kg potatoes
 200 gr. milk
 150 gr. red onions
 280 gr. of Pecorino
 100 gr. of pancetta
 50 gr. breadcrumbs
 25 gr. of olio EVO
 10 gr. chopped parsley
 2 eggs
 Nutmag as needed
 Salt e pepper q.b.
 For the broad bean cream
 1 clove of red garlic
 10 red onion
 40 gr. di olio EVO
 10 gr. basil
 300 gr. broad beans

Preparation:

For the flan

Boil the potatoes, peel them and mash them with a masher. Chop the onions, stew them together with the diced bacon and mix them with the potatoes. Add the eggs, the diced Pecorino, the milk, the chopped parsley, the nutmeg, the pepper and the salt. Cover the edges of the molds with oil and breadcrumbs and fill them with the mixture made previously. Bake in a bain-marie at 180°C for 20 minutes.

For the broad bean cream

Brown the crushed garlic clove and the julienned spring onions. Add the broad bean pods and simmer (adding vegetable broth if necessary). Season with salt and blend with the basil and EVO oil.

Truffle

Valuable underground mushroom with a unique flavour grows in Valdambra thanks to the pedoclimatic conditions. It develops underground, near trees or shrubs (poplars, oaks, willows, cedar hazels) with which they live in symbiosis.

It looks like a “tuber” with a generally globular shape; the outermost part, the peridium, can appear smooth or wrinkled. The gleba, the heart of the truffle, varies from pale shades of beige to warm tones of darker hazelnut and is crossed by numerous veins, with reflections that change depending on the variety. When ripe it gives off a characteristic scent typical for each species. In Valdambra, depending on

the harvest period and the variety, truffles can be harvested all year round, except the month of May, when harvesting is forbidden. They include the white truffle (*tuber magnatum*), the scorzane truffle (*tuber aestivum* also known as the black summer truffle), the brumale truffle (*tuber moscatum* also known as the black winter truffle), the marzuolo truffle (*tuber albidum* also known as the biancetto truffle).

Fresh truffles can be stored for a rather short period by wrapping them one by one in porous paper (to be replaced every now and then) and placing them in the refrigerator in airtight glass jars. This represents one of the best condiments you can have in the kitchen.



Fresh tagliolini with truffle



Ingredients:

250gr. Fresh Tagliolini
80gr. White and black truffle
40 gr. Butter
Salt as needed

Preparation:

For the seasoning, melt some butter in a pan with salt and a few tablespoons of the pasta water: once you have added the cooked tagliolini, sauté them to cream them and ensure that they mix well with the butter. Once plated, it's time to add the final touch: the truffle flakes, to be sliced directly on the plate with a truffle slicer. This is a classic accompaniment for tagliolini with white or black truffle, thanks to the heat the butter fats bind to those of the eggs and the truffle molecules, creating a dish in which aroma and flavour that will surprise and delight your taste buds. Moreover, we must not forget that one of the favourite combinations of truffles is with eggs.

Genuine hospitality

In a welcoming land like Valdambra, accommodation facilities are many: farmhouses, bed and breakfasts. Hotels, campsites, holiday homes; places where you will feel at ease making the holiday for those who choose Bucine and its territory unique.

The history of these places can also be felt in the many different types of structures that open their doors to those who come to this corner of Tuscany: each of them offers a different experience, immersed in landscapes, views and atmospheres capable of arousing unique emotions and leave indelible memories.

For more information:

www.visitvaldambra.com



Feeling Toscan

In Valdambra, thanks to the hospitality and conviviality of the people, you can feel a little Tuscan all year round; the best time is certainly summer. The festivals, the events in the square and in the villages have the power to completely allow you to dive into Tuscan traditions, rich in authentic knowledge and flavours, characterized by a strong bond with the territory.

Often in Tuscany moments of celebration are linked to the past and good food: this is how ancient customs and crafts are recalled year after year and Bucine and Valdambra are no exception. There is no shortage of folkloristic and gastronomic events, but they can change from year to year.

For more information:

www.visitvaldambra.com



Marry me in Valdambra

Valdambra, with its colours, scents and breathtaking landscapes, represents a perfect setting for the dream wedding: you can pronounce the fateful “yes” in one of the many small churches scattered around the area, in a village or in one of the splendid locations that characterize it.

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Valdambra beauty all year

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Special thanks for the photographic material to:

Andrea Tanzi
Brunero Cicogni
Carlo Fabbri
Elia Bruttini
Elisa Santarelli
Eugenio Fieni
Giovanni Latorella
Graziano Sani
Irene Dalla Noce
John Werich
Juri Tanzi
Lorenzo Acciai
Luciano Bartolini
Massimo Anselmi
Michele Macinai
Nedo Baglioni
Studiowiki

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