

FERRARA

FEELINGS

# FERRARA BY BICYCLE

A journey through art, history and nature

Visit ferrara  
SEA · ART · NATURE



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Ferrara is a city where bicycles reign supreme: the percentage of those who get around by bike here is among the highest in Europe. Its large, mainly pedestrian historical centre encourages their use, and the landscape from the edge of the city outward is abundant with easy, safe bicycle paths, often next to waterways.

*Ferrara by Bicycle* offers a new way to experience Ferrara, getting around like true locals. These five itineraries will let you explore as you pedal, discovering monuments and interesting sites, facts, recipes and history.

The order to follow the itineraries in is up to you. Each one has its own intrigue, to be appreciated along the way or at the recommended stopping places. The guide meanders slowly, passing through places that seem as if time has stopped and yet others where the genuineness and authenticity of the land seem more alive than ever.

"Ferrara, Ferrara, the beautiful city: where you eat, drink and be merry!"

Riccardo Bacchelli, *The Mill on the Po*





*Rossetti's city walls: detail of one of the towers*

# THE CITY WALLS



"Of loves and ladies, knights and arms..."

Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, first line of Canto I

## Orlando furioso

*Orlando Furioso is the celebrated chivalric romance and epic poem written by Ludovico Ariosto in the early 1500s, considered one of the greatest masterpieces of Italian literature. The story takes place in a courtly world, with its jealousies, love stories, pain and human weakness. Published in 1516, Ariosto dedicated the work to Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, son of Ercole I d'Este, a tribute that helps us understand how the poem and its author were connected to the court of the House of Este.*

Ferrara is a rare example of a city whose historic centre has remained surrounded by the walls over the centuries. For nine almost entirely uninterrupted kilometres, the city still boasts one of the most powerful defensive systems of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Even Michelangelo Buonarroti was asked by the Republic of Florence to visit the Dukedom of Este to study its military strategies. While the city walls could be a nearly impregnable defensive tool in times of war, it became an extraordinary garden that hosted the leisure and entertainment of the court's nobles in times of peace. The city's entire history is enclosed within these walls and today they are an authentic monumental park, containing a unique historic and artistic heritage that is made available to citizens and visitors.



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**Duration:** 2 hours

**Length:** 10,5 km

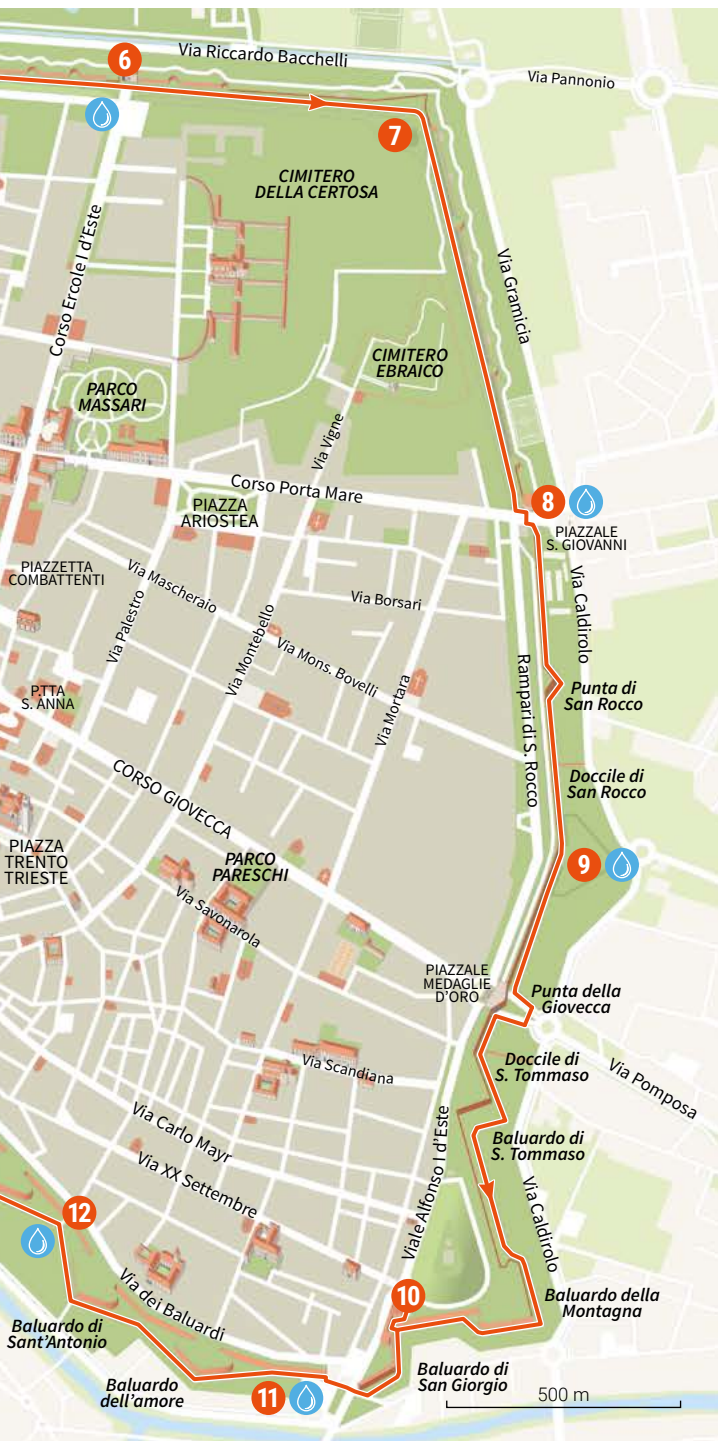
**Road type:** mixed paved/dirt road

**Number of stops:** 13

**Departure/end point:** Castello Estense, Piazza Savonarola

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## 1 CASTELLO ESTENSE

### From fortress to noble residence



This route departs from the castle (on the Piazza Savonarola side), one of the rare examples of a dwelling surrounded by a moat. The symbol of the city, it was built by Marquis Niccolò II d'Este, based on a design by court architect Bartolino da Novara. The Castello di S. Michele arose as a reaction to a fierce popular revolt that exploded in May of 1385 for an onerous tax burden imposed on the people. The fortress was built around

**Torre dei Leoni**, which at the time was connected to the ancient walls (later demolished). Declared a symbol of strength and power, it became a noble residence at the end of the 1400s, when a part of the Este court moved there from nearby Palazzo Ducale. Still today, the two buildings are united by Via Coperta, a covered walkway that passes over the arcades along one side of Piazza Savonarola.

The castle also is home to one of the most fascinating and mysterious **prisons** in Italy, which did not hold ordinary prisoners, but rather high-ranking detainees such as Ugo and Parisina, respectively the stepson and second wife of Niccolò III d'Este, the two of which were caught in an incestuous love affair [see more on p. 65]. On the main floor, visitors can admire rooms and halls of extraordinary artistic beauty with frescoes from the late 1500s, while the Torre dei Leoni offers a breath-taking panoramic view of the city.

**For more information and tours:** Ferrara Tourist Information Office, courtyard of Castello Estense

➔ With the castle to your back, head down Corso Martiri della Libertà until the Volto del Cavallo portico in Piazza Cattedrale. Turn right and head into the Piazzetta Municipale.

## 2 PIAZZETTA MUNICIPALE

This square was once the inner courtyard of Palazzo Ducale, both still standing in the second half of the 1400s. The square is dominated by the elegant Scalone d'Onore staircase. On the north side are the marble windows of the Este apartment and, on the same side,



you can note the former court chapel, now used as a theatre. On the south side of the square is the narrow Volto del Cavalletto, while the façade along the entry to Via Garibaldi is characterised by the Volto della Colombina and a Renaissance loggia. For the three centuries leading up to 1598, when rule over Ferrara changed hands from the state to the church, the Palazzo Ducale contained the apartments of Este princes and princesses and many administrative offices of the Este government. Today, the square is the backdrop to interesting cultural events.

### **THE BIRTH OF MODERN THEATRE**

*We can trace the birth of vernacular theatre to 25 January 1486, to the celebrations welcoming Francesco Gonzaga, the Marquis of Mantova and betrothed of Isabella d'Este, to Ferrara. Up until that time, entertainment was generally held in palaces, reserved exclusively for members of the court, with mimes and dancers. In this small square, on the other hand, a classic text, the Menaechmi by Plautus, was acted out for the first time, staged by amateur actors in costume and in the language spoken by the people.*

➔ Continue along Via Garibaldi, one of the oldest roads in Ferrara, named General Giuseppe Garibaldi in 1860. Stop at number 90.

### **3 PALAZZO BENTIVOGLIO**

Imagine this incredible façade covered in an even richer set of coats of arms and trophies, decorated and gilded according to the traditions of the time. Erected in the 1400s, the building was commissioned by Borso d'Este and given to his advisor Pellegrino Pasini in 1449.

The current appearance is the result of the restructuring ordered by the nobleman Cornelio Bentivoglio in the early 1580s: as history has it, the work was done in part by Neapolitan antiquarian Pirro Ligorio and Ferrarese architect Giovan Battista Aleotti. After WWII, the building became the seat of the Court of Ferrara and today, after a careful restoration, it is home to private offices and apartments.



→ Continue along Via Garibaldi until the Via Arturo Cassoli cycling route. Once you reach Viale IV Novembre, turn right. The city walls will begin to appear. Cross Viale Cavour. At the end of Via delle Barriere, after another pedestrian crossing, continue along the walls.

#### 4 THE BELVEDERE WALLS

You've just crossed what is known as the "**Quartiere Giardino**", the Garden Quarter. The name highlights the city's ongoing desire, already existing in the Este era, to integrate urban areas with oases rich in lush vegetation.

This section of the city walls was designed mainly by Biagio Rossetti upon the request of Ercole I d'Este near the end of the 1400s. The Ferrarese architect, as well as other intellectuals, contributed to the grandiose urban plan of what is called the Erculea Addition, an expansion that, thanks to its originality and rationality, made Ferrara the "first modern city in Europe". Before Ercole I d'Este focused on buildings and palaces, he decided to fortify the zone with defensive fortifications. He thus constructed the walls to the north, destined to enclose a new portion of the city, characterised by large, organised, regular quarters, just like in a true European capital.

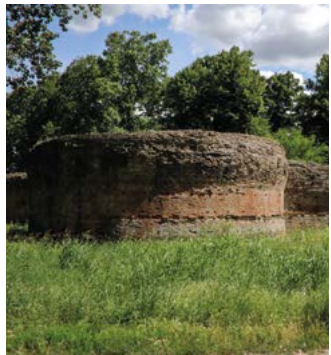
→ Continue along until the Porta Catena bridge.

#### 5 PORTA CATENA - TORRIONE DEL BARCO

The name of this site – Gate of the Chains – derives from the chains that stopped boats arriving from the north from passing through. This threshold was the access point to Ferrara by water, the entry of the **Panfilio shipping canal** into the city, allowing boats departing from Pontelagoscuro to pass through. It was a toll gate where the entry fee to the centre of Ferrara was paid. The water, in addition to extending all the way to the castle, ran through a system of locks all around the city in a ditch.

These ditches were drained and cleaned of their stagnant water only in the late 1800s, long after the time in which the walls had ceased to fill their role as a defensive system.

Proceeding for a dozen meters or so, on the left-hand side is the **Torrione del Barco**, a still-standing example of mil-



itary architecture. The openings that can be seen on the left were used to position the gunners who protected the area at the base of the walls. During times of peace, it was also a docking place for flat-bottomed boats that used the external flooded wall for commercial transactions. The section that follows differs in its semi-circular towers and long walkway along the parapet for sentries.

➔ Continue along to the next building at the end of the famous Corso Ercole I d'Este.

## 6 PORTA DEGLI ANGELI

Built as a part of the Erculea Addition, this “Angel’s Gate” was named after Via degli Angeli, the former designation of Corso Ercole I d'Este, considered one of the most beautiful streets in Europe. It was once the city’s noble gate, providing a connection to Castello Estense, and today is the only one that can still be visited on the inside. Tradition has it that Cesare d’Este, the last Duke of Ferrara, left from this gate in 1598, when the city became part of the Papal States. In the 1800s, Porta degli Angeli was first used as an abattoir, then an armoury (a wartime ammunition depot) and, from 1894 to 1984, a civilian home. In front of it you can see what’s left of an arrow-shaped bulwark, connected to the structure by a bridge (no longer standing), now replaced by the metal walkway you see before you. Today it is used as a venue for temporary art exhibitions.



➔ Continue until the dirt road runs along an actual hill.

## 7 PUNTA DELLA MONTAGNOLA

What today seems to be “just” a modest mound of land where energetic runners go to train, once had an important defensive function as a “cavalier”



where weapons aimed outside the city were placed. It must have been truly impressive in its prime, back in the 1500s. Tucked into the corner of the defensive walls there also was once what was called the “Rotonda del Duca”: a pleasant place for entertaining important people, with finely decorated rooms and gardens with cedar, orange, lemon and olive trees, where plays, theatrical events and water shows were staged. These whims included the Isola Beata, presented in 1569 at the request of Duke Alfonso II d’Este: a sort of naumachia/tournament, with knights, nymphs, giants and sorcerers performing in the moat and in a papier-mâché palace while nobles applauded from temporary stands and the people from steps on the walls.

When Ferrara became part of the Papal States, this defensive section was altered to what you see today.

### Continue along, slowly...

Large trees such as linden, elm, chestnut and oak line the path. Here, the walls separate two realms. That outside the city, with the frenetic buzz of never-ending yet distant and non-bothersome traffic, contrasts with that within the city, which seems as if time has stood still, meditative and enchanted. A serene silence envelops the vegetation. “O deserted beauty of Ferrara”, wrote d’Annunzio in *The Cities of Silence*.

Here you’ll find two historic symbols of the city: the **Jewish Cemetery** and the **Ferrara Charterhouse and Cemetery** (La Certosa). Along with the Church of San Cristoforo, the latter can be traced to an ancient monastic complex built at the behest of Borso d’Este and later transformed in the 1800s into the most important, most monumental cemetery in the province. Here you will find tombs listing famous names such as Michelangelo Antonioni, Giovanni Boldini and Filippo de Pisis. Next to La Certosa are the fields of the Jewish Cemetery, dating back to the 1600s. This vast expanse of greenery inspired Giorgio Bassani when he wrote *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, an extraordinary novel that tells the tale of a wealthy Jewish family living in Ferrara during the 1930s. Its adaptation as a film of the same name by Vittorio De Sica in 1970 placed Ferrara square in the public eye.

➔ Continue towards the end of this first section. Note the periodic appearance of circular towers and the walkway atop the bastions.

## 8 TORRIONE DI SAN GIOVANNI BATTISTA

This tower, larger than the others as it was built to protect one of the main entries to the city, at the start of Via Porta Mare, is the last stop on the section of city walls designed by Rossetti and commissioned by Duke Ercole I d'Este. Originally, the ends were characterised by battlements where, between one merlon and another (the teeth-like sections along the top of the battlements), artillery was kept. The current umbrella-like roof was completed when the walls of the following section were built. With the evolution of defensive techniques, it was no longer necessary to place heavy weapons on the top of the building.

In 1999 the tower became the headquarters of the **Jazz Club**, one of the most beloved music venues in Europe. Enjoying a jazz concert within a perfectly-maintained Renaissance building is an absolutely one-of-a-kind experience.



➔ Continue along, though you will no longer be on the embankments. Cross Corso Porta Mare via the pedestrian crossing on the left, go past the car park in front of you and enter into what is called the “sot-tomura” (the area just below the walls), until you reach a long hedge.

A very important section for the history of the city's defence system begins at this point. In the 1500s, as military strategies evolved and new defensive needs emerged, the walls changed, becoming more imposing and impressive. Duke Alfonso I d'Este, nicknamed the “Artilleryman Duke”, was the one to build the large outcropping bastions in the shape of arrows. These structures, as high as the walls themselves, were positioned so as to protect the dangerously exposed straight sections.

### **DOCILI DI SAN ROCCO AND SAN TOMMASO**

*Doccili were 17th-century ducts built to carry the city's sewage away from the centre of town. Two of them are still standing, just a stone's throw from each other, one named after Saint Roch and the other after Saint Thomas.*

## 9 EX-BALUARDO DI SAN ROCCO

The scenic hedge that dominates this strip of land at the base of the walls recreates the space occupied by the Baluardo di San Rocco (the Bulwark of Saint Roch). Though it was demolished in the 1800s along with other fortifications that were considered useless, it was undoubtedly the largest bulwark ever built in Ferrara. Its destruction brought with it the inevitable creation of a large opening in the curtain wall, and this empty space was filled with the arches that today create an architectural simulation. This joining element can also be seen in the different colours of the bricks, each belonging to different eras.

→ Continue along, paying close attention to the intersection that briefly interrupts the area at the base of the wall near Piazzale delle Medaglie d'Oro. The pedestrian crossing is on your left. Once back on the dirt road, after 1 km there will be a small square with an ancient passage. Get off your bicycle and take the corridor on your right.

## 10 PALAZZINA DEI BAGNI DUCALI



Small houses, known as **Delizie** (singular: delizia), still stand as testament to the charming, enchanted places that the Este family created to embellish the region. Here, members of the ducal court cultivated their hobbies and passions, or simply spent time relaxing or enjoying some form of entertainment. No matter their use, a sense of naturalism characterises these noble buildings, as if they came straight out of a fairy tale. Existing documentation on this small palace mention a bathroom, which led historians to once call it the Fabbrica del Bagno or the Bagni Ducali (Bathroom Factory or Ducal Baths). The building was constructed in the early 1500s at the behest of Ercole II d'Este, based on the drawings of architect Terzo

Terzi. Famed artists such as Girolamo da Carpi, Benvenuto Tisi da Garofalo, Camillo Filippi and Battista Dossi were assigned the task of decorating the exterior of the noble building, their paintings now sadly lost. The building is arranged around an inner courtyard, clearly a reference to the floor plan of a Roman *domus*. With the devolution to the Papal States, almost all *delizie* were destroyed, yet this one survived because it was used to house the Pope's troops. With the French occupation, it became a military barracks and stable. In the 1800s it became a warehouse, an elementary school in the early 1900s, and a shelter for displaced people during WWII. It is currently used for public administration purposes, its role since 1975.

→ Continue along the tree-lined street to your right and admire what time has preserved up close. Go around the mountain, then go back to the Palazzina dei Bagni Ducali. On your right is an inner courtyard, what was the Baluardo della Montagna (Bulwark of the Mountain).



The Palazzina was set amid a landscape that one could only describe as paradise-like. What the residents of Ferrara now call the “Montagnone” (large mountain) was once an **imposing defensive cavalier** measuring over 100 meters high (so soldiers could shoot long distances) with its slopes covered in streams, grapevines and fruit trees. At the foot of the mountain were two grottos designed by Girolamo da Carpi and decorated by Flemish artists with grotesque motifs, studded with precious marble and shells. At the base of the artificial mountain, facing the slides, was a fish farm, while between the lake and the city was a long pergola, made of marble columns and iron arches, covered in grapevines and trees. There was also a labyrinth that stretched between the mountain and the walls. Here they raised albino peacocks, monkeys, ostriches, dwarf donkeys and turkeys. Today, on the peak of the mountain, stands the structure that from 1890 to 1932 was the city's aqueduct.

→ Head back down the same road you came on to return to the bicycle path. Pedal until the 17th-century watchtower. Use the pedestrian crossing to get to the other side of Viale Alfonso I d'Este and then follow the path ahead of you. Continue along the area at the base of the walls to your right.

## 11 THE SOUTHERN WALLS

In front of you is the 14th-century **Porta San Giorgio (Gate of Saint George)**, which was called Porta Romana after 1798. The straight stretches of wall that you'll find as you continue along were built by the Signoria (the governing authority) of Borso d'Este, while the monumental bulwarks in the shape of spades were constructed under Alfonso II, the last to rule the Duchy of Ferrara up until his death in 1597. Alfonso II decided to improve the already-existing, yet ineffective, fortifications that had been damaged by the earthquake of 1570. The Po River, which ran to the south of the city, not far from the fortifications, was increasingly buried due to the overflows and floods that changed the look of Ferrara over the centuries. The river could no longer act as a natural barrier, so there was an urgent need for a new defence system. The result, from that point on, was characterised by the strong curtain wall and the increasingly imposing **bulwarks**.

## 12 PORTA DI SAN PIETRO

More recently built, this gate is a reminder of the presence of a 15th-century gate commissioned by Borso d'Este. In 1630, papal dominion led to the gate being torn down and the closing of the threshold, reopened only in 2002.

➔ At the end of this section of the walls, you'll see Porta Paula in all of its splendour.



## 13 PORTA PAULA

This gate was designed in 1612 by architect **Giovan Battista Aleotti** (often called "l'Argenta") and dedicated to Pope Paul V. This important monument, with its Mannerist and Baroque characteristics, was connected to the city walls and protected on each side by two bastions (the current-day bastions of San Lorenzo and San Paolo) up until the end of the 1800s. It was the main entry point to the southern part of the city. The recent iron, wood and glass walkway echoes the bridge that united the gate to the ravelin, another fortification structure. At the end of the 1700s, with the French occupation, the gate's name was changed to Porta Reno (written on the other side) and the bust of the pope that was placed at its top was destroyed. It continued to play a military role and then act as a duty or fee collection point.





→ With Porta Paula behind you, head down Corso Porta Reno to return to the area near the castle.

#### **L'OSTERIA OR ALBERGO DELL'ANGELO**

*At the corner of Porta Reno and Via Ripagrande, where a residence for the elderly now stands, is the very place where Michelangelo once lodged in 1529. The famed artist visited Ferrara on at least three occasions, asked by the Florentine Republic to study the Este defence system and the new walls that Duke Alfonso I just had built.*

#### **TORRE DEI LEUTI**

*About 30 m high, with walls that are 1.45 m thick, this is the only surviving tower out of the thirty-two that stood in Ferrara in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Built in the late middle ages, it belonged to the ancient house of Leuti that, once fallen, had to cede some of their property to the Este family. It was the defence point for a city that, at that point, looked out over the Po.*



# The recipe

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## Salama da sugo

Salama da sugo is one of the undisputed symbols of the cuisine of Ferrara, with ancient, noble origins. Hints of its existence even at the time of the Este court can be found in a letter in which Lorenzo de' Medici thanks Ercole I d'Este for the salama da sugo that he was so happy to have received. Mashed potatoes are the recommended side dish, creating the perfect balance of flavours with the robust taste of the sausage delightfully uniting with the soft sweetness of the mashed potato.

Even if peasants carefully guarded their recipe for this dish, passed down from generation to generation, its base is made by grinding various cuts of pork, both fatty and lean, then adding a small amount of tongue and liver.

Salt, pepper, nutmeg and cloves are added to the salama da sugo mixture, then everything is mixed with red wine, just as much as the meat will absorb. The mixture is then piped into a pig's bladder, often called "investiture", evoking the fiefs of the area around Ferrara. It is then aged for about a year and, depending on its size, cooked for at least 5 hours.

## Preparation

To verify the state of the sausage, put it in a pot of water. If it sinks, you can proceed! To cook it perfectly, let it soak in lukewarm water overnight. Once washed and softened, wrap it in a fine cloth. Tie the upper part to a wood stick that, resting sideways on the edges of the pot, will hold up the sausage for the entire time it needs cook. The sausage mustn't ever touch the bottom of the pan. After having cooked for at least 5 hours over a low flame, remove the twine or string, cut it at the top and serve with potato puree. It will be soft and delicious!!





*The Burana bike path*

# VILLAS AND DELIZIE



“A diamond ...almost fell to bejewel  
a desolate boscage and forlorn lands”

Riccardo Bacchelli, *The Mill on the Po*

## *Riccardo Bacchelli, The Mill on the Po*

*Riccardo Bacchelli, writer and playwright from Bologna, is remembered mostly for his novel, The Mill on the Po, published in 1957. The book tells the tale of a family of millers from Ferrara, in the Po River flatland, whose lives become part of a historical-social context that spans from Napoleonic rule to WWI. The novel also mentions the Este property that will be visited at the end of this route, the Delizia della Diamantina.*

As Bacchelli wrote, even its name is symbolic, referring to one of the emblems of the House of Este, the diamond. In the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, the plains around Ferrara were marshy, entirely furrowed by streams and waterways, making them quite difficult to farm. The Este family completed important land reclamation works, installing a complex water diversion system and, to do so, they built numerous **castalderie** (efficient agricultural estates) throughout the duchy, always near waterways so that they could be easily reached. The prince would visit to check on the administration of the land, the progress of the land reclamation being done and to collect taxes. But beyond their economic, political and strategic functions, these farm estates were used for leisure, entertaining and hunting. With their sophisticated architecture and luxurious decorations, they were given the name **delizie (delights)**, attesting to their Edenic character as symbols of power yet also places of idle distraction for the itinerant Este court, often moving between their various abodes. We'll visit these 'delights' via a route that we like to imagine traces one of the journeys that these nobles undertook to leave the city by boat.



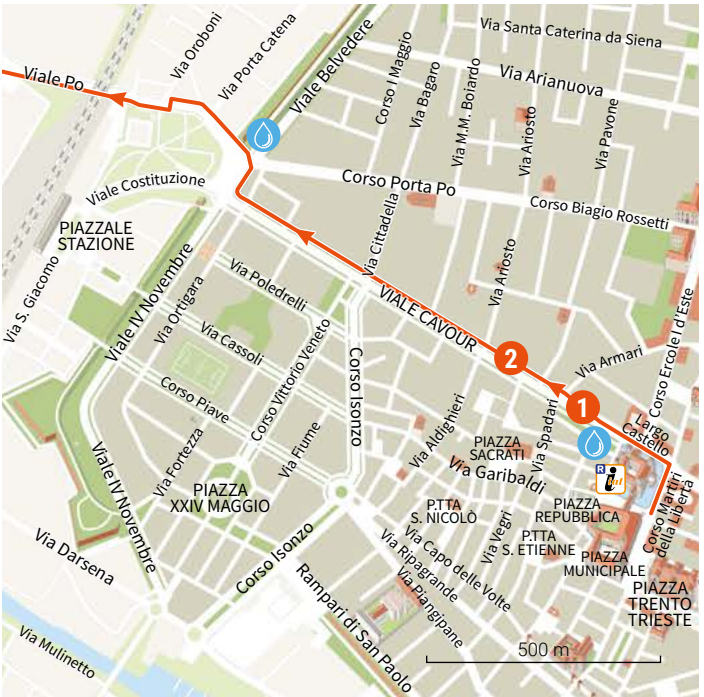
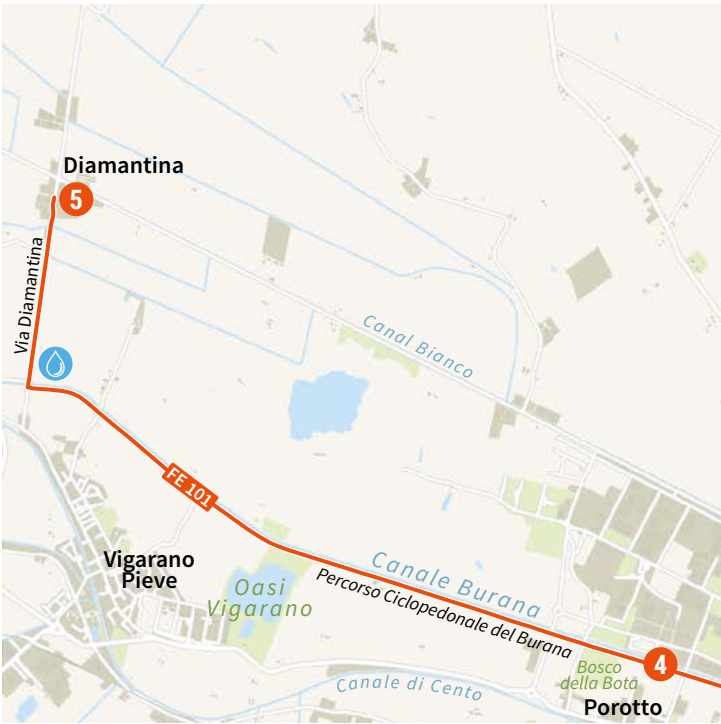
**Duration:** 4 hours

**Length:** 24 km

**Road type:** asphalt

**Number of stops:** 5

**Departure/end point:** Castello Estense, Piazza Savonarola





# 1 VIALE CAVOUR (FORMERLY THE PANFILIO CANAL)

## Departure from the gate of Piazza Savonarola

Up until 1645, this was the site of a small dock for boats travelling down the Panfilio Canal, which ran along the course of present-day Viale Cavour, today one of the main roads in Ferrara, connected to the castle's moat. Under the Este rule, the west part of the city had an almost fairy-tale like appearance: ponds, lakes and canals were lined and protected by hedges that concealed the dukes from the prying eyes of their subjects as they sailed down what was then called the Cavo dei Giardini, to reach their estates and delizie. Under papal



rule, the Cavo dei Giardini was annexed to the Cavo del Barco, which connected Ferrara to the Po to the north, taking the name of 'Panfilio' in honour of Pope Innocent X (Giovanni Battista Pamphilj). In the late 1800s, the canal was filled in to allow for the construction of Viale Cavour, a straight line connecting the railway station to the city.

### THE MOAT BY BOAT

*You too can experience what it was like to travel by boat in the castle's moat, setting sail from the jetty near the fence along Piazza Savonarola. Boat tours are offered in the fine weather and last 15 minutes, giving visitors the chance to admire the monument from a different point of view, surrounding themselves with a 16th-century atmosphere.*

**For info:** Tourist Information Office, Castello Estense



➔ Head to the traffic light at the end of Corso Martiri della Libertà, cross the street and turn left onto Largo Castello and then along down Viale Cavour using the tree-lined service road, until reaching n. 112.



## 2 20th-CENTURY VILLAS

At the end of the 1800s, Viale Cavour became the new axis of the city and home to the bourgeoisie. Buildings aspiring to grandeur and magnificence, characteristic of Fascist era, still alternate today with **Art Nouveau** cottages, where the relationship between architecture and vegetation was key. The stone and iron decorations of these houses and apartment complexes seem to come to life, with the plants in the garden materialising on their walls, gates and windows. Private green spaces were created, echoing the glory of Este splendour. And indeed, the early 1900s was a time rich with the influence of Renaissance culture in an ongoing ode to the Este family. Today, only a handful of these buildings still have the Art Nouveau appearance that dotted the road up until the outbreak of WWII.

Let's take a look at a few of them.

### PALAZZINA FINOTTI-MASIERI

Viale Cavour, 112

Built in 1908, this apartment complex was designed by **Ciro Contini**, the engineer who was behind a good part of the **Art Nouveau buildings** along Viale Cavour. Contini's architectural treatment of the corner is the first thing the eye lands on. When it was first built, this structure stood alongside a public space and, in order to emphasise the connection between the building and the square, Contini



decided to replicate the corners often seen during the Renaissance that tended to highlight the ends of the building rather than the façade. One such example is the famous balcony of Palazzo dei Diamanti. Another Renaissance element is the double loggia, characterising the entire building. Floral decorations embellish the capitals and the pediment of the balcony along Viale Cavour.

After the apartment complex, just a few meters ahead of you, is the rounded corner of the **aeronautics building** (built in 1935-1937), where the surface curves seamlessly from Viale Cavour to Via Ariosto.

### VILLINO MELCHIORRI

Viale Cavour, 184

A masterpiece of Ferrara's Art Nouveau, this building opened on 30 July 1904, also designed by **Ciro Contini**. In a symbolic reference

to the profession of the commissioner, the noted flower grower Ferdinando Melchiorri, sunflowers and circles are at the heart of the entire decorative motif. The blooms engage and meander, becoming symbols of a “garden city” [see the [Parks and Gardens route, p. 31](#)].

The entire structure is meant to create a relationship between man and nature. Even the balcony looks out onto an area that, at the time, was covered in greenery. The floral decorations, windows and undulating motifs evoke a sense of freedom and airiness.



The floral decorations, windows and undulating motifs evoke a sense of freedom and airiness.

## VILLA AMALIA

Viale Cavour, 194

Though yet another construction by **Ciro Contini**, his usual Art Nouveau style was simplified here, with linear, geometric elements prevailing over floral motifs, probably upon the request of the owner, industrial metal producer Paolo Santini, who had the house built for his wife Amalia Torri in 1905. Yet one flower



was kept: roses form the predominant decoration on the iron parts of the building and on the ceramic pediments above the windows. The façade is enlivened by single, double and triple light windows.

➔ Continue on until the end of Viale Cavour, then follow the signage for Mantova (sign for FE101) to head out of the city. After the second traffic light, use the pedestrian crossing on your left to cross Viale Po and continue on the bicycle path to make a short stop at the wood bridge over the Boicelli canal.

## 3 BOICELLI CANAL

### The birth of the industrial area

This canal was created between WWI and WWII to connect the old riverbed of the Po (which ran along the south side of the city, today's Po di Volano) with its current route, acting as the border between

Emilia-Romagna and the Veneto. Work was finished on the canal in 1932. The excavated dirt was then used to fill in the Cavo del Barco, which runs more or less parallel, and the Panfilio Canal. This was then the basis of the creation of the industrial area that was developed mainly along the Boicelli Canal.



➔ Keep going on the bicycle path for about 1 km. Follow the “Burana” tourist indications, cross Via Modena before the roundabout, then turn right to get to the bicycle path.

#### 4 BURANA CANAL

This **bicycle path** is one of the easiest and most peaceful of the entire province, shaded in large part by poplars and willows. The flat, bright landscape, often called the “Burana habitat corridor”, is rich with animals and vegetation: if you pay close attention, you may sight pheasants, grey herons, egrets and beautiful peacocks, now used to curious passing cyclists. The route flanks the Burana canal, reaching Bondeno. Near Vigarano, close to the cycle track is a former quarry that has been turned into a **lake**, surrounded by a public garden.



The word 'burana' (a toponym of Byzantine origin that means "bottomless ditch or ravine") in Italy has for centuries indicated an area in which water dominated the land. The canal is a daily reminder that land reclamation efforts have, over the years, played a central role in the social and economic fabric of the country. In this area, waterways from Mantova, Modena and Bologna converge. After the 'Rotta di Ficarolo' in 1151-1152 (an event in which the Po overflowed its banks, deviating the path of the great river forever), Burana became an important place, as it was here that the excess water sat, unable to return to the Po.

➔ Continue along for almost 7 km until the bicycle path meets Via Diamantina. 💧 Follow the signs for the "Delizia". On the way back, you'll take the same road in reverse, following the FE101 signage for Ferrara.

## 5 DELIZIA DELLA DIAMANTINA

The building that dominates the countryside of Vigarano Pieve was once **a noble estate belonging to the Este court**, a jewel of rural architecture. The name comes from one of the Este devices (symbols that translated the virtues of the prince into images): the diamond, an emblem of incorruptibility and strength. This delizia is composed



of an imposing complex of buildings erected in the second half of the 1400s following the land reclamation ordered by Borso d'Este. The estate, after having been public property owned by the hamlet of Settepolesini, was sold to Duke Ercole I in 1506 in exchange for an insignificant sum. It still belonged to the Este family when the duchy became part of the Papal States in 1598.

Like many others, this delizia ensured the productivity of the land, monitoring it to protect it from the threats posed by water. The area was characterised by marshes and wetlands. The Diamantina was a true *castalderia*, the administrative headquarters of the town, from which they monitored all the surrounding areas. It was easily reached from the city via the dense network of waterways that spread out over the lower Po basin. The Este court often met here to check in on the farms that enriched the ducal larders and to go hunting or fishing, which often were diplomatic occasions to create political ties. This delizia was transformed into a large farm in the late 1800s.

The absence of a family chapel and small theatre, present in other villas near Ferrara, indicates that the structure was simply for rural purposes. The barnyard in terracotta and the general layout of the building identifies the structure as a typical example of those belonging to the Ferrara court.



Privately owned today, the delizia is the headquarters of the **Farming Culture Museum** and houses a large collection of tools, equipment and objects related to farming. It can be viewed from the outside or visited during special short-term events.

Each year, Diamantina is the location of two festivals: the Spring Festival in March and the Farming Festival from May to June, where guests can taste delicious pumpkin *cappellacci* (a type of stuffed pasta) in the barnyard.

# The recipe

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## Pumpkin cappellacci

This pasta was named after the straw hats worn by farmers in the past (called *cap'lazz* in local dialect), which it resembles. For centuries, pumpkin was one of the main sources of nourishment out in the countryside. Still today, these *cap'lazz* are the symbolic dish of **cuisine from Ferrara**, the apex of one of the greatest agricultural products from the region. Those from Bologna good-naturedly call people from Ferrara *magnazocca* (pumpkin eaters), thereby confirming the origin of the product, quite different than Bologna's tortelloni.

The first written recipe for pumpkin cappellacci is from 1584, published by Giovanni Battista Rossetti, cook to the court of Alfonso II d'Este, in his book *Dello Scalco*. Over the years, the recipe has changed radically: initially it called for ginger and cinnamon in the filling in pure Renaissance style, but as time went on, cappellacci became a dish of the people. Today, only nutmeg remains as a spice to remind us of the recipe's glorious past.



# Ingredients for 5-6 people

## FILLING:

1 kg butternut squash, baked, 200 g Parmigiano Reggiano, nutmeg

## SFOGLIA ALL'UOVO:

600 g flour, 6 eggs

## Preparation

Create a mound with the flour, then create a dip in the middle. Mix the eggs with a fork, then pour them into the dip in the flour mound and mix with your hands, slowly. Once the dough is a dense, smooth ball, let it rest for fifteen minutes. Roll it out with a rolling pin or, as it's called in Ferrara, a *sgnadùr*.

Cut the dough into squares about 6-7 cm on each side and spoon a bit of the filling onto the centre of each one. Fold over to connect the two opposite corners of the square, creating a triangle, then press well with your fingers to join. Cook the cappellacci in boiling water. They're ready when they float at the top of the water. Scoop them out with a slotted spoon or ladle. Serve with melted butter, sage and "parmigiano" cheese on the top, or with meat sauce.





# PARKS AND GARDENS



"Even to such pitch thy glorious fame  
should rise, thou from all Italy wouldst  
bear the prize"

Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, Canto 43, LV

In Ferrara under the Este rule, gardens were appreciated and widespread. Practically every noble house or building had an Edenic, almost theatrical appearance: fragrant flowerbeds, babbling brooks and waterfalls, woods, dramatic hedge mazes, grottos and man-made mountains, symbolising the power and glory of the court. The Este family spent a solid two centuries designing buildings and urban spaces in perfect harmony with nature. This route winds among courtyards and parks, crossing through the **Erculea Addition**. The city, as imagined by Ercole d'Este and designed and constructed by Pellegrino Prisciani and Biagio Rossetti, was an *unicum* for the late 1400s. The extended area of Ferrara doubled, expanding the Medieval core with the addition of an orderly, organised city plan, crossed by wide, long streets where sumptuous buildings with their refined gardens were placed on centre stage. Thanks to this urban expansion, Ferrara has been considered the "first modern city in Europe" since the time of the great cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt (1860).



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**Duration:** 1 hour, plus stops to picnic

**Length:** 11 km approx. (including any explorations of the Parco Urbano and Parco Massari)

**Road type:** mixed, asphalt/dirt

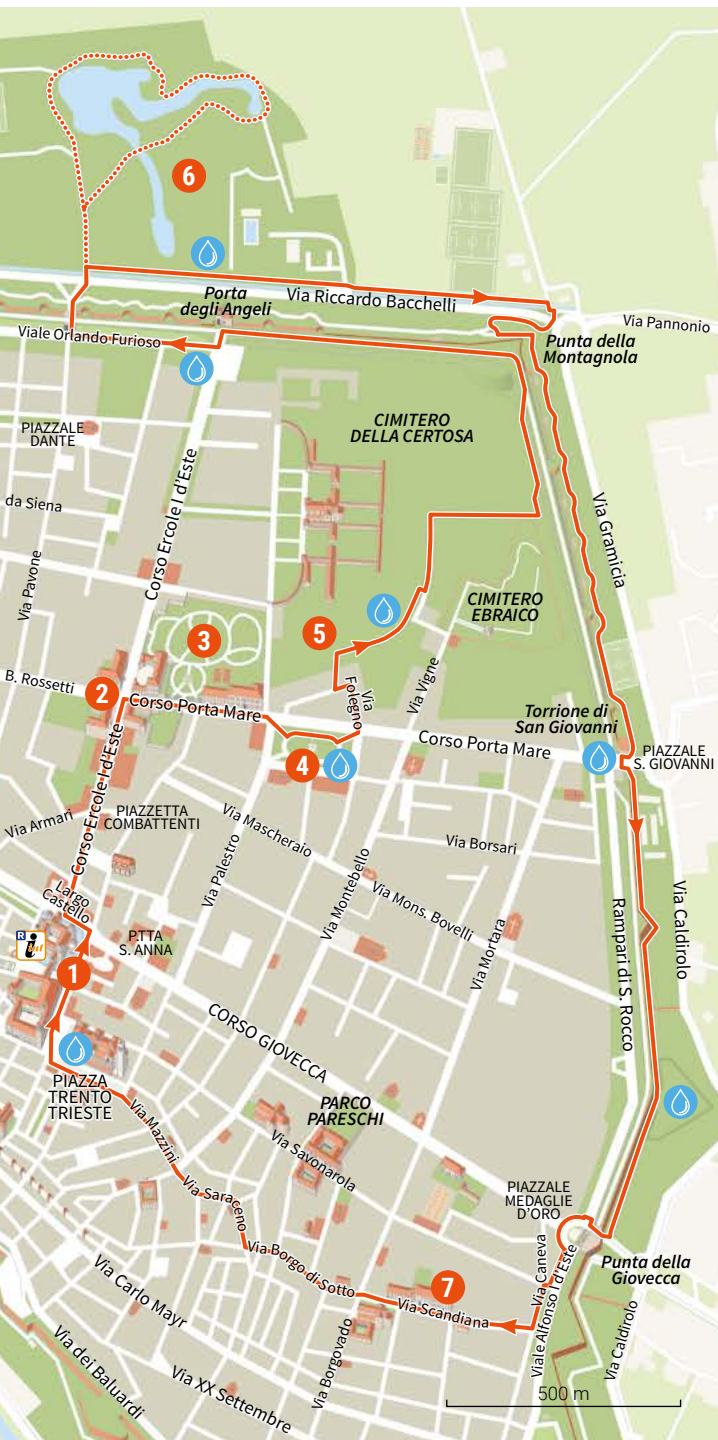
**Number of stops:** 7

**Departure/end point:** Castello Estense, Piazza Savonarola

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- 1 Giardino degli Aranci - Castello Estense
- 2 The "Quadrivio" and Palazzo dei Diamanti
- 3 Parco Massari
- 4 Piazza Ariosteia
- 5 The urban countryside
- 6 Parco urbano "Giorgio Bassani"
- 7 Palazzo Schifanoia



## 1 GIARDINO DEGLI ARANCI CASTELLO ESTENSE

Looking at the castle, your eye will be drawn to the **Giardino degli Aranci**, the orange garden built in the 1500s and also known in local dialect as the “zardin sopra la cucina”, a hanging garden embellished with citrus trees, located next to the Torre dei Leoni. Still today, it is surrounded by a special crenelated wall, though in the past it was also painted. At the time of Alfonso II d'Este (duke from 1559 to 1597), the garden was crossed by trails, via which numerous kinds of ornamental and medicinal plants were cultivated.



Along this route, you'll discover that Ferrara has preserved a number of these 'secret' gardens, and you will note how the majority of buildings in the city reveal their green spaces, often piquing the interest of passers-by, even becoming a centre for unique, engaging local initiatives.

➔ **Head to the intersection of Corso della Giovecca. Cross the road and turn left, then immediately turn right onto Corso Ercole I d'Este. Stop at Palazzo dei Diamanti.**

### **GIARDINO DEL PADIGLIONE**

*At the end of the 1400s, the intersection that brings us to Corso Ercole I d'Este was the location of a sumptuous garden with a pavilion supported by imposing columns, all surrounded by a high green hedge. Those walking along the ancient Via degli Angeli couldn't help but marvel at the spectacle that stood before them: a fairy-tale castle floating above the lush vegetation.*

## 2 THE "QUADRIVIO" AND PALAZZO DEI DIAMANTI

Halfway down Corso Ercole I d'Este is an impressive intersection, where every last detail has been designed to impress. The **Quadrivio degli Angeli** (Angels' Quadrivium), considered the heart of the Ercolea Addition, is the perfect synthesis of practical requirements and aesthetic values. The two roads that intersect have been designed like a grandiose set, rising around the visitor with spectacular perspectives and views. Here three buildings look out over the intersection, giving it a sense of monumentality: the famous Palazzo dei Diamanti, Palazzo Turchi di Bagno and Palazzo Prosperi Sacrati, the latter two both in brick, with majestic marble corners. Palazzo dei Diamanti stands out, with its charming balcony, designed only to be glimpsed. The residence, whose construction took place in 1493 at the behest of Sigismondo d'Este, is covered in over 8,000 marble ashlars sculpted into the point of a 'diamond', the heraldic symbol of Duke Ercole, brother to Sigismondo.

The building is currently home to the **National Art Gallery of Ferrara** and is the setting for **temporary art exhibits** of international importance.



### The garden or courtyard of Palazzo dei Diamanti

Originally, the courtyard was decorated by roses, medicinal herbs, fruit trees and a "wood pergola" covered in interwoven vines. At the start of the 1800s, the end of the garden was delimited by a high wall with columns and arches. The current seventeenth-century perspective portal on the east side of the courtyard, brought here in 1931, was built to decorate an ancient building in Viale Cavour.


➔ Leave the intersection and turn right. Cross Corso Porta Mare at the first pedestrian crossing you come to and enter the park.



### 3 PARCO MASSARI

Parco Massari is the largest garden within the city walls, designed in 1780 by Ferrarese architect Luigi Bertelli for the Marquis Camillo Bevilacqua. Archive documents give us an idea of how the park looked: rich with statues, ornamental plants and citrus trees. At the entry was a single path, lined by columns upon which stood statues of heroes and divinities. There was also a fountain larger than the one seen today, marble arcades and a theatre decorated by hedges. Unfortunately, this paradisiacal place was destroyed during the French occupation, with their troops encamped in this very location. Around the mid-1800s, the Massari Counts acquired the building, restoring the gardens and modifying the entire complex to take on the appearance of an English garden, planting trees that are still alive today, such as the two Lebanon cedars at the entrance.

It has been a public park since 1936. The entry on Corso Ercole I d'Este was designed to be the access point to the gardens, quite imaginatively, of the Finzi Continis in the 1970 film of the same name directed by Vittorio De Sica which was an adaptation of the novel by Giorgio Bassani and winner of the Oscar for best foreign film.

 **Head back to the entry to the park, cross Corso Porta Mare and turn left. After a few meters, you'll see one of the most symbolic squares of the Italian renaissance. Head into its centre.**

### 4 PIAZZA ARIOSTEA

Located along the decumanus (the east-west road) of Erculea Addition (in ancient times, the Via dei Prioni, today known as Corso Porta Mare), this Piazza Nova or “new square” was designed to be a space of surprising size, at least at the time. As the work done in 1494 under the guidance of Biagio Rossetti attests, the area was meant to be entirely surrounded by porticos, acting as a scenic frame to the colossal

equestrian monument to Ercole I d'Este at its centre. Representing the duke on horseback, the sculpture would have been elevated on top of two columns, one of which broke. The surviving column was placed in the centre of the square only in 1675 to support first the bronze statue of Pope Alexander VII, then the statue representing liberty in 1796, that of Napoleon in 1810 and, lastly, from 1833 to today, the statue of Ludovico Ariosto, symbol of the culture of the Este family, giving the square its current name. In the 1930s, it hosted the famous Palio di Ferrara horse race.



### “A THOUSAND CLINKING BELLS”

*Filippo De Pisis in Ugo Malagù, Villas and "Delizie" of Ferrara*

*Every child in Ferrara has played in Piazza Arioste at least once in his life, some with a ball and others on skates. In the early 1900s, one of the favourite pastimes of little boys was to capture the crickets that, like a “thousand clinking bells”, resonated across the grass. After having poked at them in their dens, they would close them in reed cages and give them to little girls.*

➔ Go up the ramp in front of Via Folegno and cross Corso Porta Mare. Continue along Via Folegno then turn on Via delle Erbe to immerse yourself in the “urban countryside”.

## 5 THE URBAN COUNTRYSIDE

Via delle Vigne, Via delle Erbe (Vine Road, Grass Street)... even the street names indicate an increasingly rural area. Ferrara is the only city in Italy that has a 5-hectare agricultural grounds in its historic centre, a place where organic and biodynamic farming is practiced. This expanse of greenery, visible from the top of the city walls, was once a place for dukes and nobles to go hunting.

### THE COUNTRYSIDE IN THE PORTA DEI MESI

Among the tiles of the now-lost *Porta dei Mesi* (Door of the Months) of the Duomo of Ferrara, today kept at the Cathedral Museum [see p. 55], October is represented by a barefoot boy in a raised tunic as he climbs a tree brimming with leaves and fruit. It's quite a rare image, considering it comes from a time in which fruit was grown exclusively to be served at the tables of nobility; farmers had to make due with picking it from the infrequent trees that grew spontaneously near their vegetable plots.



Follow the dirt road to reach the embankment, staying to the left. Once you've reached the *Porta degli Angeli*, descend and leave the walls. Pass under the crossing, staying on the bike path, and cross *Via Bacchelli* at the traffic light.

## 6 PARCO URBANO “GIORGIO BASSANI”

This is one of the main public parks in Ferrara, the location of numerous sports facilities and various events. During the time of the Este dukes, it was a vast hunting area that extended between the northern city walls and the Po, just a few kilometres from here. The reserve was divided by the northern wall into two areas: an external zone that was called **Barco** (the current "Parco Urbano") and an internal one that was named the **Barchetto**, where animals, including exotic species, were raised.

Among the diversions and leisure of the court, **hunting** had important symbolic value: the expertise of riding on horseback and the strategies adopted in killing prey were the ideal simulation of battle against an enemy. The Este dukes even organised horse races and competitive deer or boar hunts. The backdrop of the Barco was quite impressive, including a spiralling labyrinth and a population of rabbits, hares, ostriches, peacocks and leopards. The water buffalo belonging to Eleonora d'Aragona, Ercole's Neapolitan wife, were also quite prized, raised in the Barco thanks to his desire for delicious mozzarella!





Compared to traditional hunting, participants thrilled in the use of a cheetah or falcon, an event depicted in the frescoes of Palazzo Schifanoia (the last stop on this route), where Duke Borso is shown ready to depart for a hunt among pawing horses, dogs and falcons.

Once you've explored the park, continue along the hedge that marks the edge of the park, go past the golf courses and, at the end of the path, cross Via Riccardo Bacchelli using the pedestrian crossing that leads to the bicycle path at the base of the walls. Continue for one km, then, with the tower behind you, head across Piazzale San Giovanni to continue along in the area just below the walls. Once to the next intersection, go up the ramp and turn right onto Piazzale delle Medaglie d'Oro. Pass under the arcade and go beyond the square at the foot of the steps. Then head towards Viale Alfonso I d'Este. Follow the signage for Palazzo Schifanoia.

#### **CORSO DELLA GIOVECCA, "THE PERSPECTIVE"**

*In the shape of a triumphal arch, it was built between 1703 and 1704 at the behest of Maestrato dei Savi using the designs of an architect named Mazzarelli, in an expression of thanks and gratitude for Pope Clement XI, who managed to ensure Ferrara discreet tranquillity and neutrality in relation to a few battles and wars.*

## 7 PALAZZO SCHIFANOIA

Having reached the end of our route, stop to admire the façade of Palazzo Schifanoia, one of the Este delizie. Legend has it that the name “Schifanoia” means “to loathe”, as in **“to loathe boredom”**, distance oneself boredom in the search of pleasure. It was here that the court met in a more intimate atmosphere, free from the daily duties of good governance.

The first building was constructed between 1385 and 1391 by Alberto d’Este. Borso d’Este expanded it, raising it by one storey and giving it a large hall decorated with a fresco cycle depicting the months of the year. Biagio Rossetti, among various other changes, replaced the crenelations with the current cornice in terracotta. The large marble portal that takes up the entire height of the façade is of course eye-catching. The marble shield has a solemn appearance, with the crest of the House of Este, originally painted and still watched over by the unicorn, a symbol seen on coats of arms, connected to the land reclamation completed by the Este dukes around Ferrara.

Large loggias opened out onto the gardens, and a monumental staircase led directly to the hall. The courtyard, which now is home to a restaurant, was originally planned to be the main entry to the building.



### The Salone dei Mesi in Palazzo Schifanoia

Inside Palazzo Schifanoia is the Salone dei Mesi, a room that preserves one of the most important frescoed cycles of the Renaissance, painted between 1469 and 1470 by artists of the so-called **Ferrarese School**, such as Francesco del Cossa, Ercole de' Roberti and Cosmè Tura. The mastermind behind its complex iconography was **Pellegrino Prisciani**, court astrologist and librarian. The frescoed cycle represents the twelve months of the year, with only those from March to September being visible. Each month is divided into three levels: the first depicting a **pageant of the Greek gods of Mount Olympus**, the central one with **zodiac signs** and "decani" (mysterious astrological figures connected to the constellations), while the lower register

features **scenes of daily life** with the artwork's commissioner, Borso d'Este, as the protagonist. He used art as a means for propaganda, demonstrating how well the city was governed under his rule.

Vertically reading the frescoes places the courtly world, the physical world and that of human action in relation to the symbolic world of the gods who seem to determine, with their influence, the course of the month. Horizontally evaluating the compartments, however, brings out the activities completed in each period of the year: the duke departing for the hunt, rural scenes with farmers intently pruning, diplomatic court scenes, all within the refined setting of Ferrara under the Este rule.

Since January 2018, the museum is closed to the public to make the building earthquake safe, given the immense importance of the frescoes.



### **FERRARA: A COLOURFUL, DECORATED CITY**

*The entire façade of Palazzo Schifanoia was painted with a faux marble motif in octagonal and square shapes in bright colours: white, red, green and yellow. Only a few bits of the original decoration survive, found under the cornice and on an internal wall inaccessible to the public. There are numerous documents that attest to the decorations on the walls of other local buildings - even in the Castle, the inner courtyard, the merlons of the ravelins and the towers were covered in colourful interplays of green and pink.*

➔ Go back towards Castello Estense, going straight and taking Via Borgo di Sotto, Via Saraceno, Via Mazzini, and Piazza Trento Trieste.

# The recipe

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## Pasticcio di maccheroni

One of the masterpieces of the cuisine of Ferrara is the *Pasticcio di maccheroni*, a recipe that embodies the traditional Este taste for contrast between sweet and savoury. It was mainly eaten during carnival, a period in which people allowed themselves more substantial dishes than usual before Lent. Because it is so complex to execute, it has always been considered a prestigious dish, one that often was part of fine dining. From luxurious Renaissance banquets, it underwent various changes until becoming the current recipe during papal legation. It is probably is no accident, then, that its shape resembles the hat of a priest.

Cooking a 'Pasticcio di maccheroni' takes quite a bit of work, because it is a single dish made up of three parts, each with its own process: the outer layer in shortcrust pastry, the filling made up of maccheroncini pasta, and the inner sauce being bechamel and a ragu of meat, truffles and mushrooms. Today it is rarely made in the domestic sphere, if not by nostalgic, willing home cooks. Instead, it is often found in the shops of talented pastry shops around town.



## Ingredients for 6 persons

For the shortcrust: 500 g flour, 250 butter, 5 egg yolks, lemon zest, 1 pinch of salt, 300 g sugar.

For the ragu: 30 g dried mushrooms, 1 onion, 1 carrot, 1 celery stalk, 2 sausages, 200 g ground veal, 150 g ground beef, 1 cup white wine.

For the bechamel: 25 g butter, 2 tablespoons flour, ½ L milk, nutmeg, grated parmesan.

300 g maccheroncini (or sedanini, pasta that's small and ridged), truffle, extra virgin olive oil, one egg yolk to brush on top.

## Preparation

Prepare the shortcrust pastry with the listed ingredients. Create a uniform ball and let it rest for half an hour. Then roll it into two circles.

For the ragu: soak the mushrooms and then boil them for 15 minutes. Chop and brown the celery, carrot and onion in the oil, add the meat, salt, pepper and rehydrated mushrooms. Add the wine and, once evaporated, cover with water and let cook over a low flame for about two hours.

Meanwhile, make the bechamel with the listed ingredients. In a large soup tureen, combine the still-lukewarm bechamel with the ragu, mushrooms and pasta. Mix everything, shaving a few truffle slices over the mixture. Stuff one of the shortcrust pastry rounds with the dressed pasta, creating a dome of the filling with your hands. Cover with the other shortcrust pastry round, unite the edges of the two pastry discs, and cut off any excess.

The leftover shortcrust pastry can be rolled out again and shaped as a decoration for the pasticcio. A traditional decoration is that in the shape of a flower, placed at the top of the 'dome'. Brush the crust with beaten egg yolk and cook in a pre-heated oven for 25 minutes at 175°C.

It's lots of work, but your taste buds will thank you!



*The Church of San Gregorio*

# SACRED FERRARA



"...a small and humble town.  
Before it runs the Po..."

Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, Canto 35, VI

This route leads through the heart of the city to explore its distant origins. However, it is necessary to imagine the region in which the first inhabited centres of Ferrara sprung up in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. A typical river city enlivened by trade, the landscape was mainly dominated by water. Today, the Po di Volano isn't much more than a reminder of a much more powerful waterway. Up until 1152, this large river ran south of the current historical centre and, with its offshoots, it constituted both a fundamental defensive barrier and a primary resource for the local economy. Its banks were home to the early settlement of Ferrariola (the city's original name), with the first **Cathedral of San Giorgio** and the **Byzantine Castrum**. During this excursion, there are plenty of beautiful churches to admire, each with its own unique history to tell, and you will discover the religious and military origins of Ferrara.



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**Duration:** 2 hours

**Length:** 5 km

**Road type:** mixed paved/dirt road

**Number of stops:** 8

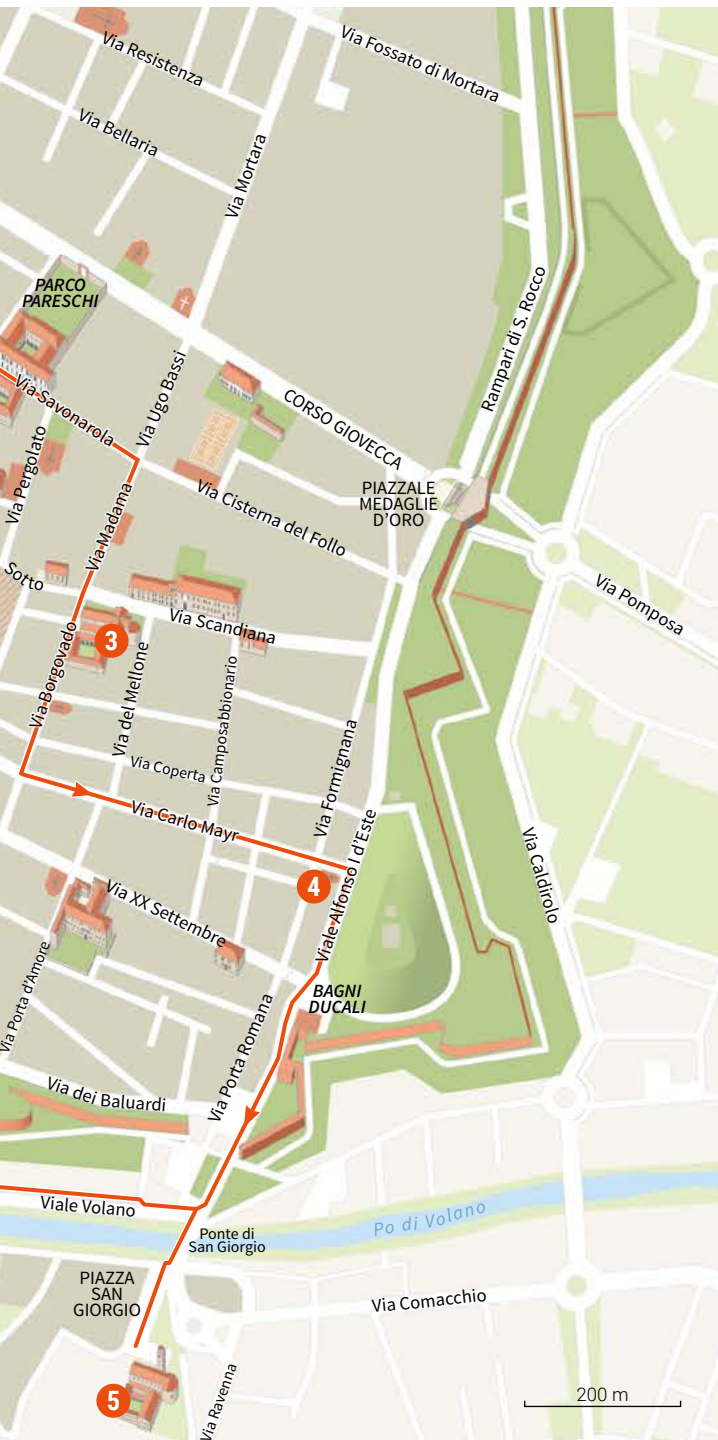
**Departure/end point:** Piazza Cattedrale

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- 1** St. George's Cathedral
- 2** Basilica di San Francesco
- 3** Basilica di Santa Maria in Vado
- 4** Chiesa di Santa Maria della Visitazione or della Madonna
- 5** Basilica di San Giorgio outside the walls
- 6** Monastery of S. Antonio in Polesine
- 7** Castrum
- 8** Cathedral Museum  
The former Church of San Romano







## 1 ST. GEORGE'S CATHEDRAL

### A masterpiece of religious architecture

The interior can be visited; the façade is under restoration

Following a series of political, religious and urban layout changes, at the dawn of the 1100s, the cathedral was transferred from the southern bank of the Po to the centre of the city, thereby making it easier for the faithful to attend religious ceremonies. The church was consecrated in 1135 and dedicated to Saint George, the city's patron saint. The building's current appearance is the product of modifications and restorations implemented over the centuries. The lower register of the façade is **Romanesque** in style, with its elegant portal, attributed to the sculptor Nicholas, while the upper register is **Gothic**; with expertly-sculpted stories of the Bible alternating rhythmically with columns and arches. The southern side, conceived of as a second façade, is covered in a series of arches (65 to be precise) of different shapes and sizes. Exactly in the centre of them, dating to the early 1700s, the **Porta dei Mesi** (Door of the Months), was once decorated with small sculptures representing the agricultural work done in each month of the year (now kept at the Cathedral Museum [see p. 55]). Directly in front of Via San Romano, the road that leads to the Po di Volano, pilgrims disembarked to reach the church to pray. The bell tower's construction began in 1412 and continued during the 1430s to 1450s following a design attributed to **Leon Battista Alberti**, even if it wasn't finished until the end of the century. Inside the cathedral, the Mannerist taste for triumphant religious scenes is more than evident. The fresco in the central apse stands out: a **Last Judgement** painted between 1577 and 1580 by Sebastiano Filippi, also known as **Bastianino**, who did not hide the fact that he was inspired by Michelangelo's famous rendering of the scene in the Sistine Chapel.

### LOGGIA DEI MERCIAI

*Since the early 1300s, the southern side of the cathedral was occupied by merchants with removable wooden structures, destroyed in a fire later in the century. In the 1400s, the Loggia dei Merciai was built, occupied by the shops of “strazzaroli”, that is, textile merchants.*

➔ After admiring the southern side of the cathedral, at the end of the square turn left on Via Canonica. After a few meters, turn right at Via Voltapaletto, once called Via San Francesco, which leads to the church of the same name.

## 2 BASILICA DI SAN FRANCESCO

Partially open to the public

This church may be the most-typically ‘Renaissance’ among the churches of Ferrara, with a Latin cross floor plan, three naves and eight chapels per side.

Available documentation shows that, in the early 1200s, a small Franciscan church stood on the current site of the convent, replaced in the 1300s with a new, larger building. The 14th-century church was chosen by the Este family as their final resting place. Even **Ugo and Parisina** (son and second wife of Nicolò III d’Este), once outed as lovers, were decapitated and buried at the base of the bell tower [see p. 65].

The 14th-century building was replaced after 1494 by the current church designed by **Biagio Rossetti**.

The history of this basilica is studded with twists and turns. The first problem encountered was a lack of funds to complete it. To finally be built, everyone set aside some money, including the Este family, the



wealthiest among the faithful and even the Franciscan friars. After a number of other setbacks, it was finally consecrated in 1594.

Another twist was the **bell tower**. Built in 1606 by Giovan Battista Aleotti, it fell prey to the sandy terrain it was built on. With the threat of collapse, the tall structure was partly demolished, leaving it truncated and not very visible, as you can see today. Inside the church was an impressively complete cycle of Franciscan iconography, with a number of images by **Benvenuto Tisi da Garofalo** decorating the side chapels. Today, however, only one remains: that of the first chapel to the left, the beautiful night scene of the *Taking of Christ* from 1524. The convent, very little of which is still standing, was the headquarters of the Ferrara Law School, whose most famous alumnus was the great Polish astronomer, **Nicolaus Copernicus**.

→ Continue on Via Savonarola and then on Via Cisterna del Follo. At the end of the street, follow the signage for Santa Maria in Vado.

#### **CASA ROMEI**

*On Via Savonarola, on your right is a small gate guarding the 15th-century house of the rich banker Giovanni Romei, a rare example of a well-preserved Renaissance residence that became a museum in 1953. The prestige and value of the architecture is combined with the interesting frescoes and art collections it contains within. Open to the public*

### **3** BASILICA DI SANTA MARIA IN VADO

**Open to the public**

Santa Maria in Vado is without a doubt the most famous place of worship in the historical centre of Ferrara. As far back as the 5<sup>th</sup> century, stood a simple capital with an image of the Virgin Mary. Her growing number of devotees to a small church being built in place of the capital around the 7<sup>th</sup> century, located near the "ford" that made it possible to cross the numerous marshes found in the area. The church was immediately given a baptismal font for the residents of the quarter, who otherwise would have had to cross the Po to the already-existing cathedral. Santa Maria in Vado is thus the first place of devotion within the city walls.

**This church is known for its blood miracle:** according to local tradition, on March, 28<sup>th</sup>, 1171 (Easter), when the priest leading mass broke the blessed wafer representing the host, spurts of blood began gushing out of it, brushing against the small vault of the apse above

the altar, which still today bears the mark of the event. The Sanctuary of the Holy Blood is found on the right transept. The current appearance of the church can be traced back to the late 1400s. Ercole de Roberti carried out the project with the rhythmic and proportional suggestions of **Biagio Rossetti**. The previous church was incorporated into the new Renaissance building, becoming its transept. Today, the three-nave interior is decorated with exquisitely Baroque decorations. The ceiling, choir and transept are decorated by work by **Carlo Bononi**, one of the most important 17th-century painters in Ferrara.



➔ Continue along Via Borgovado

#### **VIA COPERTA (FORMERLY VIA DELLE VOLTE)**

*Via Borgovado crosses one of the city's most attractive streets: Via Coperta. The name "Coperta" (covered) is believed to come from the numerous vaults that connected the two facades of the buildings that looked out onto the street. It was a service route between the street along the port with its storerooms and warehouses, and the road leading to the city and the residences of merchants.*

➔ Turn left onto Carlo Mayr and continue until you reach the end of the street.

## **4 CHIESA DI SANTA MARIA DELLA VISITAZIONE OR DELLA MADONNINA**

**Closed for restoration**

The name Madonnina is connected to a Marian image considered to be miraculous, found intact after the door on which it was hung was knocked down. People were so devoted to her that Duke Alfonso I d'Este had the church built to commemorate the event, consecrating it in 1531.

➔ At the traffic light on Viale Alfonso I d'Este, turn right until reaching the bridge of San Giorgio. Having crossed the Po di Volano River, just to the right is a pedestrian crossing.



## 5 BASILICA DI SAN GIORGIO FUORI LE MURA (SAINT GEORGE OUTSIDE THE WALLS)

“A lighthouse in the fog”

Ugo Bassi, *Why Ferrara is Beautiful*

### Open to the public

This basilica was the **first cathedral in the city**, built around 650 on a tract of land emerging from the marshes, following the fall of the episcopal seat of Voghenza, an ancient Roman settlement. The church was completely rebuilt in the 1400s thanks to the work of important figures such as **Cosmè Tura**, buried here at the base of the bell tower, and the architect **Biagio Rossetti** (who had a hand in the entire complex, from the apse to the sacristy, and from the cloister to the bell tower, the latter having been built in 1484-1485 with an abundant use of terracotta). At the centre of the façade, completely redone in 1722 based on the drawings of sculptor Andrea Ferreri, is a grandiose marble medallion representing Saint George slaying the dragon. The interior is layered with different styles and eras. The **baroque frescoes** stand out, taking the viewer on a mystic journey with decisive spiritual impact.

The quarter surrounding the church, called Contrada della Misericordia until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, continued to have close ties to life in

the city: its bell tower, with a lantern at the top, was a reference point for those travelling by boat down the river and the square, while its cattle market, was the focal point of trade in the city every week.

### **SAINT GEORGE**

*The story of Saint George comes to us from the East. The iconography that has been handed down over the centuries represents him on horseback as he defeats a dragon. The legend goes that a maiden had to be sacrificed daily and offered up to a dragon that lived in a lake in Libya. One day fate called upon the young daughter of the king. The innocent girl was saved at the last minute by a knight, George, who killed the beast with his sword. As a result, the city's residents renounced idolatry and embraced Christianity. The Este family took on the knightly saint as a symbol of their political actions to vanquish any form of evil that could undermine the city and its splendour. The patron day of Saint George is April, 23<sup>rd</sup>.*

➔ Return to the pedestrian crossing and walk your bicycle over the bridge. Cross Via Volano and continue on the bicycle path to your left. After 500 m turn right to travel along the area just below the walls until Porta San Pietro. Go up the ramp, enter into Via Quartieri and turn right on Via Beatrice II d'Este, following the signage for Sant'Antonio in Polesine.

## **6 MONASTERY OF S. ANTONIO IN POLESINE**

### **Open to the public**

This monastery existed already by 1000 on Polesine di Sant'Antonio, an island on the Po to the south of the city. It has an enchanted, delicate aura, seeped with religious devotion. A Japanese cherry tree greets visitors, lending a bit of pink-tinged magic to the courtyard in spring.

The monastery was founded in the 1200s by **Beatrice d'Este**, daughter of Azzo d'Este. Known for her devout Christian faith, she died at the age of 36. Her cultus began when the faithful, having realised they had seen her for the last time,





were given the water that had been used to wash her body by her fellow nuns. Of course, this water was nothing short of prodigious. Afraid her relics would waste away, it was decided to conserve them in an urn that, in turn, began to produce condensation that was gathered

and given to the faithful. Today, her bones are kept in a silver and copper reliquary, while the **Tears of the Saint** continue to flow from the sepulchral stone of the cloister.

Built on top of a former church, the present-day building has two separate areas for worship. The external one, for the faithful, is decorated with a sumptuous Baroque centrepiece, while the inner church, embellished with a wood choir, is exclusively for the nuns. Safeguarded within it are three chapels with incredibly beautiful **frescoes**, inspired by the **Life of Jesus, the Virgin Mary and the Passion**. The artists and commissioners are not documented, but it all bears the signs of an exaltation of Giotto's style. Between the late 1200s and the early 1300s, numerous workshops coming from different places, from Rimini to Bologna, were set up here, in a true crossroads of artistic experience. Among the most engaging frescoes is a rare image for the history of art: Christ who voluntarily gets up on the cross. Every day, at set times, visitors can listen to the fascinating sound of **Gregorian chants** from the nuns in the inner church.

➔ Now head towards the oldest part of the city, the **Byzantine castrum**. Take **Via Gambone** and, once you've come to **Via XX Settembre**, turn left. Go down **Via Porta San Pietro** and, at the intersection, turn left onto **Via Carlo Mayr**. When you see the arch of **Via Cammello**, head down that road.

## 7 CASTRUM

### The origins of the city

Via Cammello, one of the roads surrounding the *castrum*, is so called because Antonio Cammelli once lived here, an artist linked to the Este court who dedicated over 400 sonnets to Isabella d'Este. Where you stand now was also once the





left bank of the Po. This is the site of the U-shaped **Byzantine castrum**, a **founding settlement of early Medieval Ferrara** built by the Byzantine empire against Lombard invasions. The first document to mention Ferrara dates back to 757 and describes the *castrum* as a *Ducatus Ferrariae*. At the time of its foundation, defensive ditches, wood fences and embankments were created and parallel roads were built. At the intersection with Via Carmelino is the Church of San Gregorio Magno, one of the oldest in Ferrara (10<sup>th</sup> century).

### TERRACOTTA

*The portals, windows and cornices of the buildings in the castrum and of all of Ferrara have been in terracotta since the beginning, a material that was plentiful given the abundance of clay-rich land around the Po. More expensive marble, on the other hand, was reserved for 'richer' buildings like Palazzo dei Diamanti or the Cathedral.*

➔ At the end of Via Cammello, turn left, then continue down the entire length of Via Saraceno and Via Mazzini until reaching the end of the route, which started with the St. George's Cathedral and which ends with the museum of the same Cathedral.

## 8 CATHEDRAL MUSEUM - THE FORMER CHURCH OF SAN ROMANO

### Open to the public

From the street, you will already note the beauty of the **inner courtyard**, consisting of a series of ancient columns. Constructed in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the church was used as a prison in the 1700s and a hardware shop in the early 1900s. Today, however, it is the headquarters of the Cathedral Museum. Among the pieces on display, the **ancient organ doors from**

**the cathedral** stand out, an absolute masterpiece by **Cosmè Tura**, as do the **sculptures from the Door of the Months** [see p. 38], the magnificent *Madonna of the Pomegranate* by Jacopo della Quercia, the grandiose tapestries and the illuminated choral books.



# La ricetta

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## Pampepato

### History and notes

Pampapato or Pampepato? (Literally "bread with pepper")

Both names have existed side by side for centuries, often misleading curious gourmands. The current recipe, as you might have guessed, has nothing to do with pepper. This dessert, full of precious ingredients, has gone down through history as a 17th-century creation, the period in which Ferrara was once again under the domain of the Holy See. Legend has it that the Poor Clare nuns at the Monastery of Corpus Domini (between Via Pergolato and Via Campofranco) were its masterminds.

Costly spices such as nutmeg and cinnamon make it likely that this recipe was created in a clerical or monastic context, spaces that, at the time, had rather impressive spending power. The characteristic skullcap shape even echoes the head covering of a bishop or abbot. As an homage to the clergy, it thus took on the name Pan del Papa (bread of the Pope). On the other hand, the spices included on the list of ingredients may confirm the idea of "peppery" bread, i.e. bread with lots of different, intense flavours.

Mentions of pampepato can be found in writings from the 1400s, when Borso d'Este had a golden ducat inserted into a cake of this name to be served to each guest. It was an item with a spiced base, including pepper, honey, sugar, almonds, orange zest and flour. During the 1500s, with the spread of cacao, the cake was covered in chocolate, taking on the appearance that it's known for today.

Moisture is an essential element for the pampepato to come out as it should. Generally a Christmas cake, it was usually cooked well before the holidays so that it would absorb the moisture from the fog and the cool, damp rooms it was stored in, ensuring it would be soft as possible inside when served.

# Ingredients

1 kg flour, 600 g sugar, 400 g lightly toasted and peeled almonds, 100 g pine nuts, 200 g cocoa powder, a pinch of cinnamon, a pinch of nutmeg, a pinch of salt, 250 g candied fruit (as desired), 250 g dark chocolate for the coating, 1 cup (more or less) of water, yeast, espresso ...and a bit of humidity...

# Preparation

First prepare the ingredients to be mixed together: the coarsely chopped almonds, diced candied fruit, whole pine nuts and cinnamon. Pour the flour into a mound and create a crater in the centre, then add the sugar to it along with the cocoa powder, the yeast and the mixture of spices and candied fruit (already prepared). Knead everything with water and espresso. Divide the dough depending on how large of a cake you want to make. Smooth out the round mounds of dough that you've created. Cook very slowly with the oven at a moderate temperature. The cakes will need about an hour if they're large, a bit less if they're smaller.

For the icing, melt the dark chocolate in a bain-marie, then apply it with a brush to the baked pampepato.





*The Po River*

# THE DESTRA PO CYCLEWAY



"Ferrara, Ferrara, the beautiful city:  
where you eat, drink and be merry!"

Riccardo Bacchelli, *The Mill on the Po*

The Destra Po, the longest cycleway in Italy, part of EuroVelo 8, is made up of 125 km that in the Province of Ferrara unite Stellata di Bondeno with Gorino Ferrarese, at the mouth of the great river. Along the Destra Po, flowing water will accompany you along plains that abound with colours and aromas, to reach the Mulino del Po (Mill on the Po) in Ro.



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**Duration:** half a day including stops

**Length:** 46 km

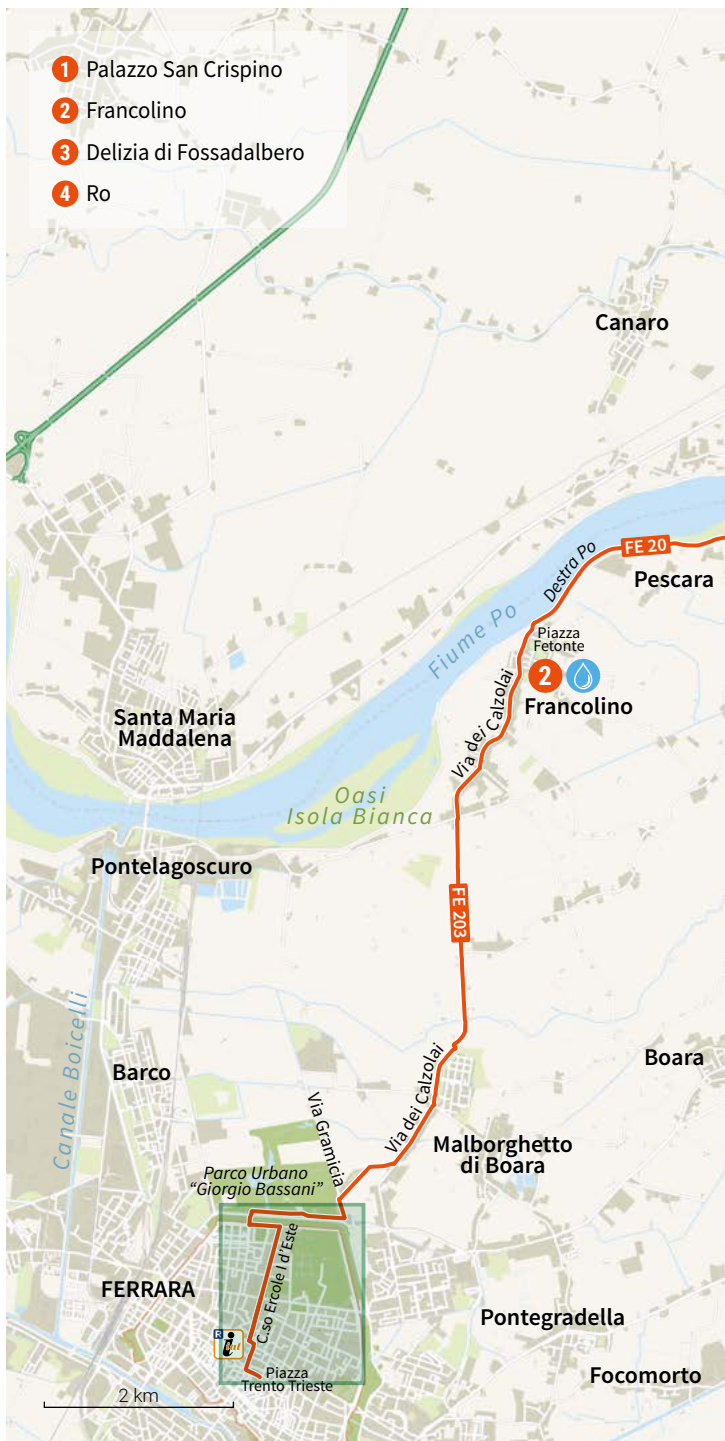
**Road type:** asphalt

**Number of stops:** 4

**Departure/end point:** Piazza Trento Trieste

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- 1 Palazzo San Crispino
- 2 Francolino
- 3 Delizia di Fossadalbero
- 4 Ro





# 1 PALAZZO SAN CRISPINO

## Piazza Trento Trieste

With Medieval origins, this building is also called the “Oratory of Shoemakers”. Only the most attentive visitors will have noticed that, on the Via Mazzini side, the building has the outline of a shoe sole and in fact next to the first capital, carved into the marble, is the imprint of a shoe, in memory of

the original use of the building. The legend goes that in 808 **Charlemagne**, passing through Ferrara, received a pair of shoes so comfortable that he decided to attribute this location to **shoemaking**. The porticoed façade was completed in 1841, decorated with Neoclassical medallions that contain portraits of various illustrious citizens of Ferrara. Now head towards a suburban street, named after artisan cobblers and shoemakers: Via Calzalai.



With the building behind you, cross Piazza Trento Trieste and turn onto Corso Martiri della Libertà. At the intersection with Corso della Giovecca, turn left and then take a quick right down Via Ercole I d'Este, following it to the end. At Porta degli Angeli turn left and go under the bridge to enter the Parco Urbano. Continue along the hedge and, at the end of the trail, turn left onto Via Gramiccia. After a few meters, on the right will be a bicycle track (FE 203). Take it and, at the end, follow the signage for Destra Po. Once in Francolino, catch your breath in Piazza Fetonte before climbing up the river embankment, a few dozen meters away.

### VIA CALZOLAI

*The myth of Palazzo di San Crispino isn't far from reality. In the 1800s, following the development of the road network, fewer and fewer businesses kept using the river, meaning that Francolino, the town you're heading to, eventually lost its port. As such, in the early 1900s, various artisan crafts took root, especially that of shoe making. Over the course of the 1900s, Ferrara named the old country road that connected the Po, the “Via dei Calzalai” (Shoemaker street).*



## 2 FRANCOLINO

An ancient city that rose on a vast marsh, Francolino once was quite important thanks to its **strategic position near the Po**: it was considered the port of Ferrara, connecting the city to the land beyond the river. The Este family often welcomed illustrious court guests in Francolino. The city underwent overflows of the Po and the devastation caused by wars with Venice on the cusp of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The origin of the name 'Francolino' is uncertain, though it seems to come from a bird similar to a pheasant or from *luogo franco*, a place in the Middle Ages that enjoyed special tax privileges.

### PIAZZA FETONTE

At the end of Via Calzolari, just before the river embankment, is a square that in the 1930s was dedicated to Phaethon, a mythological character, the son of the god Apollo. According to the legend, Phaethon was driving the sun chariot and got too close to earth, starting fires and inciting disasters. Jupiter struck him with lightning, causing him to fall into the Eridano (the ancient name of the Po) right next to Francolino. Phaethon's sisters, inconsolable over the death of their brother, were transformed into poplars, trees often seen on the nearby plains. The story inspired painter Achille Funi who, between 1934 and 1938, frescoed the **story of Phaethon in the Sala dell'Arengo** of Palazzo Municipale.

Continue on and go up top of the embankment of the Po.

### THE PO RIVER

The Po: just two letters to recall the history, memories, emotions and images of a land that has always been connected to the passing of the water it contains, slowly heading to sea. Over the course of history, it has been an important commercial resource, both a separating element and a setting for conflict with nearby Venice. Ferrara was profoundly shaped by the numerous river floods, like that of Ficarolo in 1152, which changed the main course south of the city to its current position.

Solemn and captivating, the Po is an essential stop for those visiting the Province of Ferrara, just like a true monument. In 1999, **UNESCO** extended the recognition of the historical centre to the Po River Delta and to the delizie (the countryside court residences), considering it a perfectly-preserved cultural landscape. In 2015, it joined the elite of parks protected by the Man and the Biosphere project (**MaB - UNESCO**).

Silence envelops just about everything here, interrupted in the sum-



mer by the song of cicadas and by the breeze that delicately rustles the long rows of poplars.

Grey herons, swallows and small hawks may keep you company as you cycle, without ever being bothersome. The outlines of tall bell towers slowly pass one after another, points of reference for cyclists as they pedal along the riverbanks, symbols of the small towns surrounded by fertile fields and forests of elm, ash and maple trees. At dusk in summer, you may just catch a glimpse of bright green lizards on the road, stopped to take in the last rays of the sun for the day.

#### **A LAND PAINTED IN WORDS**

*The names of the hamlets and towns along the route provide a clear picture of the land, hinting at its residents, marshy waters and woods. **Pescara**, for example, is a clear derivation of the Medieval Latin word Piscaria, meaning fishing weir (pescaia in Italian), a gated-off place to hold water or fish. **Sabbioni**, on the other hand, refers to the sand content in the land that the town stands on. **Fossadalbero**, from the Latin Fossa Arborum, seems to indicate a low-lying place with planted trees. **Ruina** gets its name from a once-standing castle whose local ruins lay abandoned for quite a long time.*

Make a small detour to admire the Este residence in Fossadalbero (which can be seen from the outside only). Head down from the embankment and follow the signage for the Delizia.

### 3 DELIZIA DI FOSSADALBERO

Private property, visible from the outside



This delizia, a courtly country residence, was the place where the **unlucky love affair between Ugo and Parisina** took place, respectively the son and second wife of Marquis Nicolò III d'Este. The story goes that in 1424, with a plague outbreak in Ferrara, Nicolò ordered his son Ugo to accompany his stepmother Parisina far from the city to their villa in Fossadalbero. A secret love affair arose between the two, discovered after a very short time and punished first with a prison sentence in Castello Estense [see p. 6], and then with the decapitation of both of them – she was barely twenty and he was just nineteen.

Used as a hunting lodge, this delizia was built by Nicolò III and enlarged by Borso d'Este shortly before his death (1471). It looks like Guelf-style crenellated castle, with a solid tower equipped with a canopy to protect the entrance. The structure, which hosted George Byron in 1817, passed from family to family until becoming the current headquarters of Ferrara's prestigious Country Club.

The first **tennis court** in the province was built here in the 1900s at the behest of Marquis Tancredi Trotti Mosti, patriot and commander of the Bersaglieri del Po. History has it that the field is exactly where unfaithful Parisina was surprised while sweet talking her stepson Ugo.

Head back to the embankment and continue along the Destra Po - FE20 bicycle route. Proceed until the floodplains of Ro for a relaxing stop. To return to the city, take the same route and follow the signage for Ferrara FE20.

## 4 RO

Once again, two letters embody centuries of man's co-existence with the river and history marked by cyclic floods that inundated the land. The landscape of Ferrara is, in fact, reclaimed, with agriculture always playing an important economic role. Along the route on the river's embankment, the local residents have



never abandoned their fields, planted with grains and fruit trees. Ro, in particular, excels in the cultivation of wheat, corn and pears.

The countryside around Ro is known for the book ***The Mill on the Po*** by **Riccardo Bacchelli**, which tells the tale of the Scacerni family, millers living on the banks of the river. For the traditional characteristics of the river basin and the agricultural setting in general, and for the literary importance of the tale, in 1999 an Italian legislative decree gave the entire area and places described in the book special protection, naming it the Parco Letterario (Literary Park) dedicated to Bacchelli.

### **SAGRA DELLA MISERIA**

*The banks of the Po are to be experienced, lived, discovered and even tasted. For example, in Ro, between August and September is the Sagra della Miseria, a traditional festival in which simple flavours and authentic food are the focus, honouring the humble diets of the labourers of not too long ago.*

*These delicious dishes from past range from smoked herring with polenta to bean soup.*

### **Bacchelli, The Mill on the Po**

#### **Volume I, Prologue**

*"They're the last floating mills, the last of the last. And surely not even one of them is still there today...soon we will lose the memory of a costume, the language of an art, of a trade: the millers along the river..."*

## THE “MULINO SAN MICHELE” OASIS

### The mill on the Po

The name of this natural oasis comes from the San Michele mill described in Bacchelli's tale. The banks of the river were once home to the 173 mills that were found throughout the province of Ferrara. Industrial development and state regulations to protect the river banks led to their gradual disappearance in the 1920s. This historical reconstruction is captivating and nostalgic: by calling and booking a tour in advance, it is possible to visit the inside of the mill to see how it operates. A wooden slat wheel is activated by the river, which is connected to a single, perfectly functioning **granite millstone**. This mechanism grinds the wheat grown nearby; the resulting flour, which also includes the bran (i.e. whole wheat flour), is certified with the “QC” symbol (Quality Control) by the Region of Emilia Romagna.

The mill on the Po is a small floating museum that bears witness to and presents the history of one of Ferrara's PGI products: **bread**.



#### **TOURIST SERVICES**

*The mill is found in a floodplain frequented by tourists and equipped with a car park for campers and bicycle parking for cyclists (a “bicigrill”), open during summer. There is even a small dock for private boats and tourist excursions that sail up and down the Po to explore the wildlife of its banks. From April through the end of summer, the area hosts events and culinary itineraries.*

# The recipe

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## The "Coppia Ferrarese"

In the city like in its surroundings, one thing that Ferrara natives simply can't do without is the daily ritual of shopping for fresh, fragrant bread – the feather in the cap of the region's culinary traditions. It is said that the secret to its unique qualities is not the recipe but the air, the water and thus the proofing process.

Before the 1100s, bread came in the form of round loaves. However, in Ferrara's Statutes of 1287, precise rules on the matter were imposed: only white flour was allowed, formed into "orletti" (a sort of horn shape united in the centre), with a specific weight. Bakeries had to be far from public passage to ensure burning embers didn't hit passers-by and guarantee that the baked goods weren't ruined by dust and dirt from the street.

Each baker put his own seal on his products, almost presenting them as prized goods. It was, in all effects, a true institution. The twisted bread seen in the coppia ferrarese as we know it first appeared in 1536 during a Carnival banquet. The elegance it embodies today is a quality taken on over the centuries, and the traditional coupled form with the two elegantly twisted pieces creating four breadsticks came down from history to finally be added to the "Italian Register of Protected Designations of Origin and Protected Geographical Indications". In 2011, Production Regulations were adopted and in 2004 the Consortium for the Protection of Coppia Ferrarese PGI was formed.



# Ingredients

400 g "0" flour

180 g lukewarm water

20 g olive oil

30 g lard

100 g fresh sourdough starter or 10 g brewer's yeast

1 teaspoon fine salt

1 teaspoon malt

# Preparation

Dissolve the yeast or starter in the lukewarm water, then add the malt, flour, olive oil and salt. Knead well for 15 minutes, then, once the dough is smooth, combine the lard and continue to work it until completely absorbed. Let the dough rise, covered with a damp cloth, for 3 hours. Divide into 4 balls, roll them with a rolling pin to form strips that are about 50 cm long. Now twist each piece: hold one end with one hand and, with the other, start rolling and unrolling. Unite them to form the coppia (pressing them together in the centre), then let rise on a baking tray in a warm place for 90-120 minutes.

Preheat the oven at 200°C. Bake the coppia for 18-20 minutes. A true Ferrara native will eat this bread with just about any dish, but it is particularly delicious with garlic salami. Pieces that are a bit stale can be crumbled into a latte for a traditional local breakfast!



