



REGIONE
LAZIO



STEFANO ARDITO

GUIDE
to the VIA FRANCIGENA
from SUTRI to ROME
THROUGH THE PARCO DI VEIO



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As the regional councillor competent for protected natural areas, I acknowledge the efforts made to promote and protect public areas with an enriched environmental and historical value.

By means of targeted investments in parks, the Regione Lazio is taking action to protect these areas, whose natural, animal and archaeological features are of key importance for the whole country.

This delicate system could be seriously jeopardised if no such action is taken.

In fact, the function of the protected areas guarantees the right balance between citizens - not only those who live nearby - and the nature around them.

We are on the verge of a new Jubilee, and the dissemination of material - such as this guidebook - is undoubtedly a fundamental contribution for those who wish to set out on the path to the Eternal City.

The Via Francigena, whose history stretches back to the 9th - 10th centuries, is perhaps the noblest piece of a rich and diverse puzzle.

GIANCARLO RIGHINI

Councillor for Budget, Economic Planning, Agriculture,
Hunting and Fisheries, Parks and Forestry

On the occasion of the Holy Year of 2025, the Parco di Veio is going to receive the pilgrims who will be travelling along the Via Francigena, allowing them to admire, experience, enjoy and get to know the lands they will pass through during their pilgrimage.

In this volume, which I will have printed and translated into English as soon as possible and made available on the Park's website, we will address in particular the last three stages of the Italian Via Francigena before arriving in Rome, the 43rd, the 44th and the 45th, as well as some of the variants. Thanks to the signing of several memoranda of understanding with municipalities and companies, a number of info-points have been set up where all the publications published by the Park can be found, so that the entire territory of the protected area with its wonderful landscapes full of nature, history and, most importantly, culture can be made known.

I wish you a good journey...

GIORGIO POLESI
Special Commissioner of Ente Parco di Veio

The present publication is a further contribution to the series of books, maps and other informative material produced, especially in recent years, for the purpose of disseminating the specific characteristics and riches of the protected area Parco di Veio.

This volume is a useful tool for guiding pilgrims on their way to Rome, so that they can enjoy the untainted nature of the Agro Veientano, a typical landscape of Lazio along with others equally valuable. Of the more than 100 km that constitute the path network, as many as 27 belong to the Via Francigena, which, very much like a backbone, crosses the Park longitudinally from north to south.

This guide to the Via Francigena thus pays the right contribution to one of the main strengths of the Parco di Veio.

Enjoy your walk!

DANILO CASCIANI
Director of Ente Parco di Veio

In the area routed by the Via Francigena between Monterosi, Nepi and the Roman hinterland a large community bank operates, the BCC Provincia Romana.

Established through the merger of the municipalities of Riano with Formello and Trevignano, for over 50 years it has presided over all the municipalities between the Via Cassia, the Via Flaminia and the Via Tiberina.

From the Bracciano lake to Bassa Sabina, its services are aimed at families and small and medium- sized enterprises with an individual-centred and caring approach.

Its history revolves around the support of so many Members, whose support makes it possible to promote initiatives designed to enhance the image and value of the area, handing down the history and virtues of our customs and traditions to future generations.

A valuable guide for pilgrims. Knowledge keeps us constantly on the move. United we are even more unique.

MARIO PORCU

President of BCC Provincia Romana - Bcc Iccrea Group

Guide to the Via Francigena from Sutri to Rome
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Part one - Introduction

1. Sigeric's Francigena

A journey more than a thousand years ago marks the history and geography of Europe. Its protagonist, a prelate named Sigeric, played an important role in the history of English Christianity. Educated in Glastonbury Abbey, he became bishop of Wiltshire in 985, and five years later was consecrated archbishop of Canterbury, and died in 995.

“In the year 990 Sigeric was consecrated archbishop, in the same year he went to Rome to receive the ‘pallium’,” reports the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, the main document on British history in the Middle Ages. It was customary for every new archbishop (of Canterbury, and elsewhere) to travel to Rome to receive the investiture of the Pope, regardless of how far they must travel.

Akin to thousands of anonymous pilgrims, Sigeric spent 160 days on the road, travelling on the back of a horse or mule, at the slow pace imposed by the clerics and servants who travelled on foot. He experienced sun and rain, the cold of the Alps and the humid heat of the Po Valley. He stayed in ecclesiastical palaces and modest mansions on the road. Sigeric risked being shipwrecked on the English Channel, being robbed by outlaws, falling ill from malaria on the Arno and at the gates of Rome.

In the Eternal City, the prelate showed extraordinary energy, visiting 23 churches and basilicas in one day. At St. John Lateran, which hosted the Pontiffs, he received the blessing and the *pallium* (the woollen robe symbol of archepiscopal investiture) from Pope John XV, and then left for Canterbury. A person from his retinue, whose name is unknown, left us a stage-by-stage description of the journey.

The Via Francigena, used in the Middle Ages by British and French pilgrims heading for Rome, at the time of Sigeric already had a long history stretching beyond it. The route between the Channel coast and Rome was the one used by the legions of Caesar and Claudius on their march to Gaul and Britain, similar to what the Pond Route used for the Celts. A route defended by fortified towns and castles and travelled by merchants, officials, diplomats and soldiers.

The road was divided into about 80 stages - a month could be enough on horseback - and became known in France as *Route des Flandres* or *Chemin des Anglais*, while on the Italian side of the Alps it was called Via Francigena or Francesca ('coming from France') or Via Romea ('leading to Rome').

Over the centuries, the Via Francigena has undergone a number of changes. Before Sigeric, British and Irish pilgrims passed through Bobbio and the tomb of St. Columbanus, but after the year 1000, the upgrading of the Via Emilia and the increased importance of Florence caused the route via the Cisa Pass and Lucca to be abandoned in favour of the one via Bologna and the Futa Pass.

According to many historians who have addressed the subject, starting with the French Jacques Le Goff and Jacques Duby, Sigeric's was 'one amongst the many Francigenas' amongst the many that were used over time. But it was his journey in 992, together with the document that chronicled its stages, that allowed the birth of today's Francigena.

2. The Via Francigena today

From the Middle Ages to the present day, the Via Francigena has always been in use. Across the 2476 metres of the Great St Bernard Pass, which allows crossing the Alps between Switzerland and the Aosta Valley, armies such as Napoleon's in 1800, as well as thousands of travellers in the years of the Grand Tour, have passed.

Between the 19th and 20th centuries, railways, carriageways and finally motorways altered the route, but the one linking England and northern France with Po Valley, Tuscany, Lazio and Rome re-

mained a great European route.

The rediscovery of the Via Francigena was initiated by two scholars, Giovanni Caselli, who published the guidebook *La via Romea, cammino di Dio* in 1990, and Renato Stopani, author of *Gli itinerari per Roma, Gerusalemme, Compostela* (1991) and *La via Francigena. Storia di una strada medievale* (1998).

In the years that followed, adopting the example of the Camino de Santiago through northern Spain, the first walkers and pilgrims began to set off from Canterbury, the Alps or other points, in the direction of Rome. The current route of the Via Francigena includes numerous variants to the original route, which south of Siena almost everywhere coincides with the Via Cassia, and is therefore not suitable for walking. The places where they stop, however, are those of Archbishop Sigeric and his retinue.

Today, the Italian section of the Via Francigena measures 1004 kilometres, and is divided into 45 official stages, the last nine of which are in Lazio. North of the Alps (i.e. in Great Britain, France and Switzerland) there are 61 stages with a total of 1230 kilometres.

Over the years, the classic via Francigena, sometimes referred to as the Francigena of the North, has been complemented by the Francigena of the South (from Rome to Brindisi), the Magna via Francigena (in Sicily, from Agrigento Palermo), the via Romea Germanica (from the Brenner Pass to Rome) and other routes. The Moncenisio variant of the Francigena descends from the Susa Valley and joins the main route in Vercelli. The Cimina variant, from Viterbo, reaches Vico lake, descends to Ronciglione and Nepi and joins the Francigena between Monterosi and Campagnano di Roma.

Crossing the Apennines towards the Urbe is the Via di Francesco, which starts from Verna and passes through Assisi, the birthplace of the Saint. In Latium Tuscia, to the east of the Francigena, runs the Via Amerina, a Roman road that connected Rome with Amelia. This route, about 80 kilometres long, has been included in the Cammino della Luce, which continues north to Assisi and Perugia.

3. *Walking the Via Francigena*

Today, there is much talk about the Francigena and the other routes that dissect across Italy. For those new to these routes, it is good to remember that they require a great deal of physical effort. Although only a few of the stages include significant height differences, ascents and descents in the hills challenge even those accustomed to hiking in the mountains. The stages of the Francigena are on average 20 to 25 kilometres long and therefore require at least five to six hours of walking. A few can exceed 30 hours as well.

At all the places where overnight stops are made, traditional accommodations such as hotels, bed & breakfasts and agritourisms are flanked by hostels and other 'pilgrim hospitality' facilities. To be received in the latter, in many cases, it is necessary to show the *Credenziale* (Pilgrim Passport), which can be requested on the website www.viefrancigene.org, and which must be stamped at each accommodation facility. Once they have arrived in St. Peter's Square, those who walk at least 100 kilometres along the Francigena can obtain the Testimonium from the Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi. Both documents become valuable records over the years.

In addition to walkers on the Via Francigena, on the Via Cimina or on the Via Amerina/Cammino della Luce, this guide is aimed at walkers looking for routes to walk in one day, which connect two or more of the villages on the route. For this reason, we have decided to divide some of the stages of the Via Francigena into two parts and have included Monterosi as a possible stopover between Sutri and Campagnano di Roma, as well as Formello between Campagnano itself and La Storta.

We have described some variants of the via Francigena at various sites. Some of these are signposted on the ground and also detailed in the various guidebooks on the market, others, such as the cycle path connecting Santa Maria della Pietà with the Policlinico Gemelli and Monte Ciocchi are not indicated as such, but are very easy to follow.

We only mentioned over a few lines, the numerous paths marked by the Parco di Veio, as well as by other protected areas or by the

Italian Alpine Club, which intersect the Francigena and the other described routes at several points.

4. Physical effort, clothing and footwear

Many walkers - especially from northern Europe - take the Via Francigena in the middle of summer, when the route is most certainly in excellent condition, but the heat and blazing sun of the hills of Latium (and of Tuscany, not to mention the Po Valley) increase the effort required.

The high season for hill-walking, both here and in other parts of Italy, coincides with the spring and autumn, when the climate is milder, and the green meadows and blossoms, or the woods that turn yellow and gold, make the route more enchanting. In the middle of winter, the Francigena remains viable, and the more barren landscape is dominated by Terminillo and the other snow-capped peaks of the Apennines. However, heavy rainfall can lead to problems with mud and waterlogged streams.

The clothing of the hiker, whatever the season, must be comfortable and light. From autumn to spring, most especially in winter and even for walking at low altitudes, a fleece sweater, a rain-proof jacket, a wool or fleece cap, and a pair of gloves are required. In the high summer, a sun hat and an abundant water supply become essential. Sunglasses and telescopic poles come in handy at all times.

For longer hikes, we recommend a good pair of hiking boots, while for shorter ones (and when there is no mud), you can also use low-cut hiking shoes, but always with a treaded sole. The rucksack must be comfortable and roomy, without any extra protective layers.

The times indicated apply to well-trained hikers and do not consider visits to historical centres and natural or historical monuments. The Via Francigena is profusely marked by red-white signs or other markers. At several points along the route, there are milestones with the initials VF, indicating the distance to St. Peter's Square.

The blue-white markers indicate the cycle route variant of the Francigena, which is longer than the classic pedestrian route. The

hiking map *Parco Regionale di Veio*, scale 1:25,000, is very useful between the border of the protected area (north of Campagnano di Roma) and the capital. Those who like to use GPS can download the tracks of the official route from www.viefrancigene.org.

The main route indicated by the tracks between the Monte Michele junction and Isola Farnese, however, is described as a variant in this guide.

5. *So that you don't go alone*

A number of Italian and foreign agencies (some are listed on the website www.viefrancigene.org) propose treks of one or more weeks along the Via Francigena. A few hour-long walks along the Francigena, the Amerina and their variants are proposed in the sections of the Club Alpino Italiano, and by dozens of other associations, many of which are members of Fedetrek, as well as by environmental hiking guides in Lazio and neighbouring regions.

6. *Dangers and challenges*

The difficulty of trails throughout Italy is indicated according to the CAI (Italian Alpine Club) scale, which includes the levels T (tourist), E (for hikers), EE (for experienced hikers) and EEA (equipped trails and *via ferratas*). The Francigena, the Cimina variant and the via Amerina can have dirt roads and carriage roads interspersed with long stretches on easy paths. However, remember that in some stretches, from autumn to spring, mud can make the paths slippery.

Long stretches of the Francigena in Lazio and other regions, take place in open countryside, in areas frequented by grazing flocks. In this case, caution must be exercised in encounters with dogs guarding the sheep. In such cases, it is necessary to look for the shepherd and call him, and to avoid any actions that the dogs may interpret as intruding into their territory.

Only a portion of the Francigena is in protected areas. This means that in autumn and early winter, hikers often have to share the territory with hunters. The most serious dangers, however, are

the short stretches where it is necessary to walk on roads open to traffic. The worst of these, shortly after leaving Sutri, can be avoided with a variant that adds three kilometres to the route. For the same reason, we recommend the Cimina variant of the Francigena instead of the Via Amerina south of Nepi.

7. An extraordinary natural landscape

It is not easy to imagine today, in the gentle hilly landscape of Tuscia, that hundreds of thousands of years ago the same territory was home to volcanoes, and was often shaken by impressive eruptions. And yet this is indeed the case. Many of the hills of Lazio, including the Bolsena,

Bracciano, Vico and Colli Albani lakes, were 'formed' by lava. Tuff, which is present in the architecture of Lazio to a large extent, is a product of these catastrophic eruptions.

In the Parco di Veio area, the first major volcanic eruptions occurred around 550,000 years ago near Morlupo and Riano. Later, 480 to 330 thousand years ago, the volcano of Sacrofano erupted and on its outer slopes now stands the village bearing the same name. A stretch of the Via Francigena (before the section which we have described in this guide), borders the Cimini Mountains, which erupted about a million years ago. The crater that today hosts Vico lake, however, only ended its activity about 60 thousand years ago.

All the watercourses in this part of Lazio have carved deep gorges in the tuff over thousands of years. The only real river encountered by the Francigena before flowing into the Tiber is the Treja, which forms the small but suggestive Monte Gelato waterfalls alongside the route.

The area of the Parco di Veio, and the other hills on the border between the provinces of Rome and Viterbo, offer visitors fascinating vegetation. The most widespread tree is the turkey oak, a deciduous oak that is present with impressive specimens. Where the terrain becomes steep, we can also find the holm oak (an evergreen oak). The cork oak has been planted and used in the hills of Lazio for centuries.

The woods also feature downy oak, hazel, field maple, *orniello* and pedunculate oak. Holly grows in the ravines, flanked by opal maple, various species of ferns and boxwood. Among the endemics are the purple *linaiola*, the *fiordaliso cicalino* and the fragrant saffron. Other rare plants grow on the tuff, such as the spring vetch, the slender broom and the small bullwort.

Pastures, woods and ravines are home to many species of animals. In the sky, diurnal birds of prey, such as the black kite and peregrine falcon can be spotted, while the woods are home to the green woodpecker and the great spotted woodpecker, as well as barn owls, tawny owls and scops owls. Passerines such as the skylark, the corn bunting and the little and red-backed shrikes fly over the pastures, along with larger birds such as the lapwing, quail and common pheasant, released for hunting purposes. Along the waterways, the river nightingale, moorhen and grey heron can be observed.

Among the reptiles are the viper, the whip snake, the rare Hermann's tortoise and the four-lined snake (a non-poisonous snake measuring up to two metres long). Among the amphibians, in addition to the green frog and the emerald toad, is the spectacled salamander, one of the most protected species in the Parco di Veio. The list of mammals includes wild boar, hedgehogs, porcupines, martens, skunks and dormice. The return of the wolf was confirmed a few years ago.

8. From Prehistory to the war between Rome and Veio

The rivalry between cities plays an important role in the events of the ancient world; Mycenae and its Greek allies against Troy, Athens against Sparta, Rome against Carthage. Before fighting the Punic Wars, however, the Urbe had to contend against Veio, a powerful Etruscan city that stood some twenty kilometres from the Capitol and the Forum.

The first human settlements in the hills of Tuscia date back to the period between the 16th and 10th centuries BC, and one of the most populated areas is the territory of Nepi. The first communities of farmers and breeders settled on the Veio highland in the 9th cen-

ture. The city that the Romans

called 'Veii' came into being a little later, and the *Agro Veientano* bordered the north-east with the lands of the Capenates and Falisci and to the west with the Etruscans of Cerveteri.

The wars between Rome and Veio, which according to Livy began in the 7th century when Anco Marzio reigned in the Urbe, are shrouded in myth. Among the best-known episodes is the massacre in 477 of the warriors of the Gens Fabia, who were ambushed by the Cremera river, and the killing of four Roman ambassadors by King Lars Tolumnius, later avenged by Aulus Cornelius Cossus, who succeeded in killing the Etruscan king.

According to ancient historians, the final siege lasted ten years, like that of the Greeks against Troy, and once again the impasse was resolved by a trap, a tunnel that led the soldiers of Marcus Furius Camillus into the parade ground of Veio. According to our calendar, it was 396 BC. Thirteen years later, Sutri is subdued, and the Capenates and Falisci also surrender.

Rome rearranged the whole territory of Etruria. Between the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, the Via Cassia, leading to Tuscany, and the Via Flaminia towards Umbria and the Marches were laid out, using pre-existing routes, alongside minor roads such as the Veientana and the Amerina.

Funerary monuments and post stations, as well as numerous rustic villas, sprang up all along these arterial roads. The catacombs of Monte Stallone near Formello, Santa Savinilla in Nepi and the church of the Madonna del Parto (a former *mithreum*) near the amphitheatre in Sutri testify to the Christianisation of the area.

9. From the Middle Ages to the present day

In the early Middle Ages, the barbarians descending on Rome and the clashes between the Lombards and Byzantines made life difficult in all the villages of Tuscia. In 728, a donation by the Lombard king Liutprand to Pope Gregory II made the village of Sutri the first nucleus of the Patrimony of St Peter, the future Papal State. The *domusculatae*, large agricultural estates, were created to give the

Roman countryside a new lease of life.

The proximity to Rome, and its location along busy roads, meant that Sutri, Nepi and the other centres in the area were often involved in wars and clashes. In 1155, Pope Adrian IV and Emperor Frederick Barbarossa met at Monterosi, and his successor Frederick II had a fortress built in the area. In 1433, Sutri was set on fire by the armies of Nicolò Fortebraccio.

In the centuries that followed, the situation quietened down, and the villages of the Agro Veientano and Tuscia became fiefs of the great Roman families, from the Orsini to the Chigi lords of Formello, the Colonna and the Farnese, who in the mid-16th century had an impressive fortress and palace built in Nepi. In 1537, in La Storta, Jesus appeared to St Ignatius of Loyola and ordered him to give life to the Jesuits. For ordinary people, work in the fields and cattle breeding remained almost unchanged.

The 'grand history' of armies unfolded in this countryside in 1798, when Nepi and Monterosi were involved in the Battle of Civita Castellana, between Napoleon's troops and those of the Kingdom of Naples. In September 1943, in Monterosi, the militia of the Ariete division blocked German tanks in one of the first battles of the Resistance. On the 4th of June 1944, German troops killed trade unionist Bruno Buozzi and thirteen other prisoners in La Storta.

In the 1950s, land reform subdivided the *latifundia* into estates assigned to farming families. After World War II, however, the balance shifted again. The farmers abandoned the fields and the population of the villages began to commute to Rome for work. Many citizens move to the countryside, build villas and mansions, and then contribute to the traffic to and from the city of Rome. In addition to widespread prosperity, modernity brings cement and traffic jams to the landscape of the Agro Romano.

10. Nature Preservation and the Parco di Veio

Lazio is known throughout the world for its cities, monuments and history. Between the Apennines and the Tyrrhenian Sea, howe-

ver, there is also an extraordinary natural environment, protected by three national parks (Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga; Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise; Circeo), including about seventy regional parks, reserves and natural monuments, and other protected areas.

While some of the parks and reserves protect the most intact and wild corners of the region, the Veio, Appia Antica and Castelli Romani parks, the other suburban parks and reserves and the 14 protected areas managed by Roma Natura have a different task. To preserve what remains of biodiversity in areas profoundly transformed by humans, and to contribute to a better quality of life for residents and non-residents alike.

The Via Francigena briefly touches the Parco Regionale della Valle del Treja, established in 1983 in the territories of Calcata and Mazzano Romano. Once past the GRA (Rome's Ring Road), it first crosses the Riserva Naturale dell'Insugherata and then the Riserva Naturale di Monte Mario, both managed by Roma Natura.

An important section of the Via Francigena runs within the Veio Regional Park, established in 1997, which includes the municipalities of Campagnano di Roma, Castelnuovo di Porto, Formello, Magliano Romano, Mazzano Romano, Morlupo, Riano, Sacrofano and Rome. A remarkable 7,000 hectares belong to the latter. The administrative headquarters of the Park with visitor centre is in Sacrofano, Via Castelnuovo di Porto, 14.

The *Guardiaparchi* (park rangers), who cooperate with the Carabinieri Forestry Officers and the Municipal Police of the municipalities, control poaching, forest fires, logging, unauthorised dumping and vandalism. When hunting season begins, the fight against poaching requires time and energy. One of the most challenging activities in the area just outside Rome is the fight against illegal building.

But the park, like other protected areas, has not only the function of control and enforcement. All year round, and especially from spring to autumn, hikes, guided tours and courses are organised, often with the collaboration of local associations. Many initiatives are aimed at schools.

The park promotes environmentally friendly agriculture and animal farming. The most important products are oil, honey, wine, nocino and the renowned Roman artichoke. The culinary tradition includes dishes such as *acquacotta*, *crescione* soup and *baciona* sausage. Desserts worth mentioning include the *scarzellone*, an Easter pizza made with eggs and flour.

Sports activities in nature such as hiking, mountain biking and horse riding are also promoted. Much work has been dedicated in recent years to the signposting and maintenance of local trails as well as the Via Francigena.

Part Two - The Villages

1. Sutri



Sutri, view of the historic centre from Villa Savorelli.

History, ancient testimonies and medieval and modern monuments make Sutri (a stopover site along the Via Francigena), one of the most interesting centres of art in Tuscia and all of Lazio.

The town, today as in the past, stands on a tuff relief towering over the Via Cassia from the east. In 1337, the poet Francesco Petrarca celebrated its “salubrious climate” and the “natural treasures” of the surroundings. According to ancient historians, the city was founded by the Pelasgians (a people of oriental navigators) or even by the god Saturn. A major city under the Etruscans, it was conquered by Rome in 383 BC, thirteen years after the fall of Veio.

Many centuries later, Sutri saw the Barbarians pass through on their way to Rome and became involved in the struggles between the Lombards and Byzantines. The first bishop we have certain news of is Saint Eusebius, who was consecrated in 465. In 728, thanks to a donation by the Lombard king Liutprand to Pope Gregory II, the village became the first nucleus of the Patrimony of St Peter- the future Papal State.

Another legend has it that before the year 1000, Berta, Charlemagne's sister (disinherited and exiled), gave birth in a cave to Orlando (or Roland), the future paladin and hero of France. In 1046, a Council was held in Sutri; in 1433, the village was set on fire by the troops of the leader Nicolò Fortebraccio. At the end of the Middle Ages, the Via Cimina became more important than the Cassia, and the diocese of Sutri was merged with that of Nepi.

The Piazza del Comune, the very heart of Sutri, stands on the site of the Roman Forum; it is guarded by a bell tower with a clock and has a fountain with four basins in the centre. The courtyard of the Palazzo Comunale displays sculptural fragments and epigraphs from Roman and medieval times.

Just a few steps from the square lead to the Concattedrale di Santa Maria Assunta. The building, which took the place of an older church, was consecrated in 1207 in the presence of Pope Innocent III. The elegant Cosmatesque floor is all that remains of the Romanesque church, the rest was renovated into Baroque style in the 17th century, and then again in the 20th century. The crypt, with its tuff capitals, is a masterpiece of Longobard art.

In the centre of Sutri, many other churches and the Porta Franceta, where Etruscan and Roman fortifications form the basis of the 15th century ramparts, are also worth a visit. The current state of the Porta Franceta was given by Cardinal Altieri, who had it restored between 1453 and 1472. The medieval Doebbing Palace, seat of the bishop until 1986, now houses an important museum.

Further down the historical centre, next to the Via Cassia, Sutri's history is told by the spectacular Amphitheatre, built between the late Republican period and the beginning of the Imperial age of

Rome; using typically Etruscan technique. With an elliptical layout, it could hold about 7,000 spectators in three tiers of seats. For centuries it was buried and farmed over, to be eventually brought to light between 1835 and 1838 by the Savorelli family, owners of the land and the elegant palace on the nearby hill.

At the foot of this tuff hill are numerous Etruscan tombs. One of these was transformed into a *Mithraeum* and later into a Christian church, consecrated to St Michael Archangel and then to the Madonna del Parto. The ancient *frescoes* on the walls and columns add to its charm.

In the first room, a row of medieval pilgrims walking towards Rome is depicted; they are amongst the symbols of the modern Via Francigena. The Park of the Ancient City of Sutri, established in 1988, protects the nature and history of this extraordinary place.

2. Monterosi



Monterosi, Church of San Giuseppe.

The village of Monterosi, the 'gate' to Tuscia for those arriving from Rome along the Via Cassia, appears with the name *Mons Rus-*

sulus inscribed onto a papal bull issued by Pope Innocent III in 1203. According to the 19th century historian Giuseppe Tomassetti, author of studies on the old towns and monuments of Latium, Monterosi already existed in Roman times under the name *Rossulum*, which later became *Rosoli* and then *Mons Rosi*. The modern-day toponym dates back to the 19th century.

In ancient times and the Middle Ages, the settlement was raised on Monte Lucchetti, or Monte della Torre, in order to ensure better protection. Here, in the 13th century, Frederick II of Swabia had a manor built. In the 15th century, when the danger of attacks diminished, the inhabited area began to move towards the valley.

On the shores of Monterosi lake, north of the town, in 1155, a famous meeting took place between Pope Adrian IV and Frederick Barbarossa, who was about to be crowned Emperor and refused to hold the Pope's stirrup as he was to get on his horse.

Five centuries later, in 1649, Monsignor Cristoforo Giarda, sent by Pope Innocent X to convince Ranuccio II Farnese to return the Duchy of Castro, was murdered near the village. The crime was probably among the reasons that prompted the Pontiff to order the destruction of Castro.

On the 5th of December 1798, Monterosi was involved in the Battle of Civita Castellana, in which the army of the Kingdom of Naples led by the Austrian general Karl Mack, was defeated by the Napoleonic troops of the Army of Rome led by generals Championnet and Macdonald. After the defeat, the Neapolitan army disintegrated, and the French advanced to Naples, where the Neapolitan Republic was born.

On the 9th of September 1943, less than twenty-four hours after the Armistice was announced, a few Italian soldiers of the Ariete division, thanks to the sacrifice of Lieutenant Ettore Rosso and four other sappers, succeeded in repelling a Wehrmacht force of about 60 armoured vehicles. It is one of the first chapters of the Resistance.

Still today, in Monterosi it is possible to distinguish the Borgo Madonna della Centura (of medieval origin), the Borgo Romano, (built in the 15th century), and the Borgo Aldobrandino, (created

between the 16th and 17th centuries). The Baroque church of Santa Croce, built in the 16th century and flanked by a bell gable tower, is of great charm. Inside are the relics of Saints Vincent and Anastasius, the two patron saints of the village.

Not far away, on the main street, is the Palazzo Cardinalizio; the historic residence of the Altieri family, the Del Drago family and later Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, nephew of Pope Paul III. The stage of the Francigena road heading towards the waterfalls of Monte Romano and Campagnano begins next to the 17th century church of San Giuseppe, unmistakable thanks to its octagonal-based dome and two small bell towers. The small church of the Madonna della Neve dates back to the 16th century.

Monterosi lake, known in the past as Janula, has volcanic origins like many other basins in Lazio, and a surface area of only three square kilometres. Protected since 1995 as a *Sito di Importanza Comunitaria* (Site of Community Importance) and since 2016 as a *Zona di Protezione Speciale* (Special Protection Area), it is about 7 metres deep and is home to water lilies and other aquatic plants. The kingfisher, great crested grebe and numerous species of herons, ducks and birds of prey roam or nest next to the lake.

3. Nepi

Those arriving from Rome along the Via Amerina, before reaching the centre of Nepi, encounter the Bastioni Farnesiani, designed around 1540 by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger. A work that Giorgio Vasari, a painter and historian who lived in those years, described as ‘impregnable and beautiful’. Past the Bastioni, on the right, we reach the spectacular Cavaterra Waterfall, which plunges into a tuff gorge. Then we climb up to the Palazzo Comunale, another work by Sangallo.

It is possible that the ancient name of Nepi, Nepet or Nepete, stems from the Etruscan word Nepa, meaning water. Even if we try to find a different explanation for the place name, however, the water that flows from a famous spring south of the town, and that has carved the gorges that run alongside the old town centre into

the tuff over the millennia, has played a fundamental role in the history of this picturesque town that lies in the heart of the Agro Falisco.

The first settlements around Nepi flourished as far back as the 11th century BC, and then at the end of the Bronze Age. The tuff spur that houses the town today began to be occupied in the 8th century. Although it was long under the rule of Veio, the town was inhabited by the Falisci, whose culture and art were similar to that of the nearby Falerii- today's Civita Castellana.

Nepi, together with Sutri, was one of the gateways to Etruria for the Romans. The town became rich and powerful, witnessing the construction of villas, thermal baths and an aqueduct. In the early Middle Ages, it continued to be of major importance due to its position on the Via Amerina that connected Rome with Ravenna, the capital of Byzantine Italy. Nepi became a Free Commune in 1131 and was involved in various medieval wars. It later belonged to the Orsini, Colonna, Sforza and Farnese families. The latter, between 1537 and 1545, created some of the most striking monuments.



Nepi, Fortress of the Borgias

Those interested in the ancient history of Nepi, after visiting the Archaeological Museum, may want to take a look at the Catacomb of Santa Savinilla. Dating from the late imperial period, it can be accessed from the church of San Tolomeo alle Sante Grotte. Also possessing ancient origins are the Cavoni and the other *tagliate* in the tuff. The spectacular necropolis of Tre Ponti, on the Via Amerina, rises a few kilometres north of the centre.

Nepi became Christian in the 5th century. The cathedral was built in a Romanesque style, as evidenced by the portico (with tombstones and other marble decorations), parts of the façade and the crypt. In 1798, the building was destroyed by the French, only to be rebuilt later with a five-nave interior. The Holy Saviour triptych is attributed to Giulio Romano, whilst the high altar in Carrara marble is attributed to Bernini.

Also worth seeing are the church of San Biagio, which already existed in 950, and that of San Tolomeo or the Rosario, designed by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger but completed by other architects. The great Florentine architect also started the Palazzo Comunale in 1542, and this was completed two centuries later by Michele Locatelli. The Aqueduct that supplies the city also dates back to the 18th century.

It is worth it to take a stroll through the centre to see the Celsi and Sansoni palaces (both in Via Garibaldi), and the nearby Palazzo Pisani, which hosted Pope Pius VII in 1805. The Palazzo Savi overlooks the gorge to the south of the city, and the Palazzi Floridi and Melata are also of medieval origin. The latter was rebuilt in Roman Baroque style.

4. Mazzano Romano

The village of Mazzano Romano lies on the border between two of the most beautiful and interesting protected areas in Lazio. The municipal territory is partly included in the Parco di Veio and Mazzano is one of the two centres (the other is near Calcata) of the Parco Regionale della Valle del Treja. The river, which flows northeast and then into the Tiber, passes at the foot of the medieval village.



Mazzano Romano, entrance to the medieval village.

In ancient times, the territory of Mazzano was inhabited by the Falisci, a people ethnically connected to the Latins but influenced by Etruscan culture. Evidence of this is found in the necropolises of the Valle del Treja, such as those of Monte Li Santi and Monte La Corte, and the archaeological findings in the Museo dell'Agro Falisco in Civita Castellana; the Museo Archeologico Virtuale di Narce (MAVNA) in Mazzano Romano and the Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia in Rome.

After the Roman conquest, the territory of Mazzano was included in the Agro Falisco, and partly donated as agricultural land to the veterans of the Roman army. The buildings in *opus reticulatum* within the village, typical of the Augustan age, prove that the settlement already existed in the first years of the Empire. The name Mazzano probably derives from a *Matianum* estate, owned by one of these families.

In the early Middle Ages, the settlement and its territory were ransacked by the Lombards. Later, they were at the edge of the *Domusculda Capracorum*, a vast agricultural property established in 780

by Pope Adrian I. When this was abandoned, some of its inhabitants continued to live within the structure.

The oldest reference to Mazzano dates back to 945, in the act of the donation of the castle and its territory to the Monastery of San Gregorio al Celio by the Counts of Tuscolo. At the beginning of the 15th century, the landed estate belonged to Everso I Anguillara and remained in his family until 1599. Later, Mazzano passed to the Biscia and then to the Del Drago, who governed it until the land reform after World War II.

The medieval village, which can be reached by crossing a vault where the Biscia coat of arms appears, is crossed by two tortuous main streets, with buildings bearing medieval and Renaissance architectural features, and alleys that follow the shape of the cliff.

Today, the most magnificent building is the Baronial Palace. In the past, it was the church of San Nicola, on the Piazzetta dell'Antistà, which is said to have been built by Vignola or one of his pupils, consecrated in 1563 and originally sided by a twenty-five-metre-high bell tower.

The building, unstable due to landslides that had affected the cliff, was demolished in the 1940s by the Genio Civile, and today only the back wall remains. The statue of the Madonna Vestita, which was in the church of St Nicholas of Bari, is venerated today in the new parish church. In the same church is a 16th-century triptych attributed to Girolamo Siciolante known as 'Sermoneta'.

In Piazza Umberto I, outside the village, is the small Church of St Sebastian, with 16th century *frescoes*. The one on the apse depicts The Martyrdom of St Sebastian between St Roch and St Pope Gregory, the one on the left wall shows the Madonna and Child and St Anne.

Near Mazzano, in the Parco Regionale della Valle del Treja, is the Monte Gelato compound; where a medieval tower, a Roman villa and a millstone look out over small waterfalls formed by the river. On the other side (north-east) are the remains of the Falisco settlement of Narce and the medieval site of Santa Maria or Castel Vecchio, where the remains of a tower, a church and a convent overlook the gorge of the Treja just opposite Calcata.

On the summit of Monte Li Santi, the ruins of an ancient public building have been unearthed, further south are the remains of a Roman villa and a medieval settlement. At the foot of the hill was a sanctuary used for the cult of female fertility. Monte Gelato, touched by the Via Francigena, can also be reached by car. The other monuments listed can only be reached walking over marked paths.

5. *Campagnano di Roma*



Campagnano, Church of the Gonfalone and Clock Tower.

One of the most densely populated centres of the Parco di Veio lies east of the Via Cassia, on a ridge of volcanic rock that separates the ancient crater of Baccano from the Tiber Valley.

Campagnano di Roma, which is home to remarkable monuments, is a popular destination all year round.

The most ancient settlements in the area are a village at Mola dei Monti, the Costa del Follettino *necropolis* with about a hundred burials, and the tomb between Monte dell'Impiccato and Poggio del Mello. These burials resemble more those of the Falisci and Capenati than those of Veio.

The first reliable evidence in the territory left by the Etruscans is the opening of a 7th century canal between the Baccano Valley and Martignano lake. The territory entered Rome's possessions after the conquest of Veio in 396 BC and the subsequent conquest of Falerii. On Monte Razzano stands a temple dedicated to Bacchus, after whom the Valle di Baccano is named.

In the imperial age the territory became more densely populated, and next to the Cassia rose the *Mansio ad Vacanas*, a post house with stables, shops, baths and barracks. The so-called Villa dei Severi, at the 16th mile of the Cassia, decorated with mosaics, possibly witnessed the martyrdom of St Alexander. The *Fundus Campanianus*, the agricultural fund that gave its name to the modern town, dates back to this period.

The fortified village of Campagnano was built around the year 1000 on a ridge and is first mentioned in 1076 as *Castellum* (or *Castrum*) *Campaniani*. Belonging to the Annibaldi della Molarà family, in 1410 it was sold by the Senate of Rome to the Orsini family, who had a castle built, which was partly dismantled in the 17th century. In 1661 Pope Alexander VII authorised the city to be sold to his nephew Flavio Chigi.

In the following centuries, the town expanded south of the medieval village, with the opening of the straight Borgo Paolino, today's Corso Vittorio Emanuele. Upon its completion in 1714, the Porta Romana - 'the Arch' for residents - was inaugurated. Many European artists worked in Campagnano, and the marshy basins of Baccano and Stracciacappe were reclaimed in the surrounding area.

The list of Campagnano monuments begins with the Fountain of Dolphins, built in Baroque style (attributed to Vignola) and restored in 1753 at the behest of Agostino Chigi. It is characterised by two travertine dolphins and a bell in *peperino*, the emblem of the municipality.

The 18th century Palazzo Venturi, built for the Chigi family, overlooks Corso Vittorio Emanuele and was complemented by a neo-Gothic tower in the 19th century. Today it is municipal property and houses the Municipal Historical Archive, the Municipal Library

and the Cultural Centre. The Town Hall, built at the end of the 19th century in neo-Gothic forms, replaced the Orsini Fortress.

The Church of the Gonfalone, built in the late 16th century, houses Baroque altars decorated in stucco. The Parish Church of St. John the Baptist, built in the 13th century and reworked between the 16th and 17th centuries, features a Baroque bell tower from 1602, and houses *frescoes* from the school of Zuccari and works by Giacomo del Duca.

In the medieval church of Santa Maria della Pietà is a *fresco* from 1518. A portico houses the statue of Cesare Leonelli, an anti-fascist who was massacred at the Fosse Ardeatine in 1944. On the Fontana Secca, in the small square bearing the same name, stand the coats of arms of the Campagnano and Orsini families. In popular tradition, the *Tifo*, a medieval bas-relief, played an analogous role to that of the Pasquino in Rome, on which accusations and anonymous messages were hung.

Beyond Porta Romana and the very broad Via della Vittoria, a building that was originally a stable for the Papal Carabinieri, houses the Museo Archeologico del Pellegrino, which features Etruscan, Roman and medieval remains. For the Festa del Bacchanale, on the first Sunday in May, the eight districts of Campagnano race each other in the Corsa dei Somari (Donkey Race). On the last Sunday of the month, an important antiques and crafts market is held in the village. North of Campagnano is the Vallelunga racetrack, dedicated to the driver Piero Taruffi.

6. Formello

This centre, one of the 'gates' of the Parco di Veio for those arriving from the Via Cassia and Rome, has grown rapidly in recent decades. Its medieval village, restored and enriched with a splendid museum, is among the most picturesque in the countryside north of the Capital.

In ancient times, the area of Formello, just north of Veio, was frequented by the Etruscans. Between the 7th and 6th centuries BC, a monumental tomb, the Tumulo Chigi of Monte Aguzzo, stood in the countryside to the south of the town. It had already been pilaged in Roman times and explored by archaeologists in 1882.



Formello, Church of San Lorenzo.

The name of the village derives from the Latin *forma* (water conduit), due to a network of tunnels used to supply water to the territory. The village appears in official documents at the beginning of the 11th century, when it is mentioned as *Castrum* (castle) and given by Pope Gregory VII to the monks of San Paolo Fuori le Mura.

Until 1661, Formello belonged to the Orsini, and then passed to the Chigi. The latter, in addition to renovating the village and transforming the fortress that can be accessed by a drawbridge into a palace, had the 'Versaglia' built; a large villa resembling the French royal palace at Versailles. Work started in 1665 and was directed by Felice della Greca and later by Carlo Fontana. The Borgo di Sant'Antonio dates back to the same period.

The Borgo di Formello, between the Porta da Capo (facing the modern centre) and the Porta da Piedi, is composed of medieval and Renaissance houses built between the 15th and 16th centuries. The magnificent Palazzo Chigi, a transformation of the mediaeval castle, saw the work of architects and artists Felice della Greca, Carlo Fontana, Giovan Battista and Francesco Laurenti, Giovanni de Momper, Francesco Milizia and Paolo Albertoni.

Inside is the Museum of the Agro Veientano, which depicts the history of the area from Protohistoric times to the Iron Age, from the Etruscan Orientalising and Archaic periods to Roman times, starting with the conquest of Veio in 396 BC.

The six rooms of the museum display findings from 10th century BC to the 17th century, the Ward- Perkins Room has temporary exhibitions dedicated to the latest discoveries in the area. The Stanza della Rovere and the Stanza dei Trofei have *frescoes* from 1483-1484, those in the Stanza delle Grottesche and the Stanza dei Tritoni date from the years between 1570 and 1580. A staircase leads to the Torre Civica, recreated by architect Andrea Bruno, a magnificent viewpoint over the village and the Agro Veientano.

The church of San Lorenzo (next to the Palazzo Chigi), has medieval origins, and was remodelled in the 16th century housing precious *frescoes* painted around 1570 by the Formellese Donato Palmieri, a pupil of Vasari. The altar, which was built for the church of Sant'Apollinare in Rome, dates back to 1744.

The bell tower, built before 1471, was restored in 1677 after being struck by lightning. The large sundial on the floor, dating from 1796, is a scale copy of the one in Santa Maria degli Angeli in Rome and is the work of Don Luigi De Sanctis; a singular priest who was also an astronomer, mathematician and stonemason. The church of San Michele Arcangelo is of medieval origin, and has an entryway from the 16th century, housing *frescoes* of *Christ Blessing*, *St Michael Archangel* and many others very recently discovered.

South of the village and the modern centre of Formello are the Tumulo Chigi of Monte Aguzzo and the ruins of the Versaglia, abandoned in the 19th century. The Christian catacombs of Monte Stallone can also be visited by contacting the Museo dell'Agro Veientano beforehand.

7. Veio

The enigma of Apollo is still there. With its smile, braids and peplos, the large terracotta statue found at the gates of Veio still thrills visitors to the Etruscan Museum of Villa Giulia in Rome.

More than six feet tall, the Apollo was placed twenty-five centuries ago, together with other statues, on the roof of the Etruscan temple of Portonaccio.

The sanctuary, dedicated to *Menerva*, the Minerva of the Romans, was built in 6th century BC in view of the Fosso Piordo, outside the walls of Veio. After the Roman conquest in 396 BC, it was used for another five centuries, and abandoned in 1st century AD. The statues were thrown into a ditch where they were found in 1916.

The charm of the Veio plateau has also resisted the centuries. Wide and gently sloping, it alternates between cultivated fields and



Veio, between the Ponte Sodo and the Tomba Campana.

pastures, is spotted with turkey oaks, and is home to a few farmhouses. On a clear winter's day, it offers a beautiful panorama of the snow-covered Apennines.

Veio, twenty kilometres from the Capitol, soon began to clash with Rome. In 477 BC, the Fabii were defeated on the banks of the Cremera, in 434 BC the Veian king Lars Tolumnius died in a battle won by the legions of Rome. The decisive siege began in 426 BC and was likened by Roman historians to that of Troy. In 396 BC, Furio Camillo's troops razed the city to the ground.

"Veio lives more in its history than in its monuments, it has fallen to crumbs and dust, it is the sepulchre of itself", wrote George Dennis in 1849; English consul in Rome, he left in his *Itinerari Etruschi* (from *The Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria*) a beautiful description of the Etruscan sites of Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio.

The vast archaeological area of Veio began to come to light with the first archaeological excavations in the 17th century. Today, the exploration continues thanks to the Soprintendenza Archeologica, Belle Arti e Paesaggio for the Area Metropolitana di Roma, the Province of Viterbo and Southern Etruria and the Department of Antiquity Sciences of La Sapienza University of Rome.

The sanctuary of Portonaccio, just outside the city, was venerated throughout Etruria as a place of oracular worship. In addition to the temple, the sacred area included a 'pool' for water-related rituals and an altar for sacrifices. The painted terra-cotta decorations on the roof were the work of Vulca, a Venetian artist who also worked in Rome. In a building behind the altar, rich votive artefacts were found.

The city was surrounded by walls made of tuff blocks, in which at least ten gates opened, among which one can see that of Capena. In the locality of Campetti are the remains of an archaeological complex dating back to Roman times, with thermal, therapeutic and cult functions. On the *pianoro* (plateau) there is a road paved by the Romans, while on the Piano di Comunità (perhaps the Etruscan Acropolis) are the remains of a Roman villa. In the area of Macchia-grande are the ruins of the Roman Age Forum, and sculptures were unearthed. These are preserved today in the Vatican Museums.

On the hill of Piazza d'Armi are other imposing walls and a monumental gate. Inside are streets, a square with a large cistern and the remains of a temple from which several terracotta slabs depicting a procession of chariots were excavated, now in the Villa Giulia Museum.

Also fascinating are the Etruscan tunnels such as the Ponte Sodo, over 70 metres long, and the Fosso degli Olmetti tunnel. Around the plateau on which the city stood were vast necropolises. Among the most beautiful burials are the Tomba delle Anatre with brightly coloured *frescoes*, the Tomba dei Leoni Ruggenti discovered in 2006, which is the oldest painted tomb in Etruria, the Tomba Campana and the Tomba dei Pilastri. Next to Porta Capena is the Roman necropolis known as Colombario, further away from the city are the Chigi, Vaccareccia and Monte Oliveto tumuli.

8. Isola Farnese and La Storta



Isola Farnese, the Castle

With just over sixty inhabitants, and at least a thousand years of history; the village of Isola Farnese, gateway to the Veio archaeological area for those arriving from the Cassia and Rome, is often over-

looked by those heading towards the Portonaccio Sanctuary and the Ponte Sodo - such a mistake.

The settlement, perched on a tuff cliff, arose in the Middle Ages, and for centuries saw pilgrims on their way to Monte Mario and St Peter's Basilica. Emperors Otto IV and Henry VII stopped here on their way to Rome to be crowned. In the early decades of the 15th century, Isola Farnese became a municipality, and Pope Eugene IV ordered the inhabitants to send troops to Bracciano to fight the armies of Nicolò Fortebraccio, an opponent of the Church.

From its inception, the village was referred to as *Insula* because of its position on a cliff, between the Piordo, La Storta and San Sebastiano gullies, which detached the settlement from the surrounding area. Isola Farnese began to be mentioned as a *Castrum* (castle) shortly after the year 1000 and belonged to the Roman monastery of Santi Cosma e Damiano.

In the 13th century, it became part of the possessions of the baronial Orsini family, who held it until 1616, when it was sold to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, hence its modern name. In the post-war period, the medieval core was joined by vast areas of modern construction.

From Piazza della Colonna, named after a Roman column and capital, you reach the small church of San Pancrazio, built in the Middle Ages and rebuilt after the siege of 1500 by Borgia troops. Inside are *frescoes* of fairly good workmanship, a stoup made by reusing two Roman capitals and another bearing the Farnese coat of arms.

After passing through an arch, you continue along Via Baronale, cross the most picturesque part of the village and reach the Castle, protected by a moat and rebuilt in the 16th century on the remains of a medieval fortress. Since the end of the 19th century, the complex has belonged to the Marquises Ferraioli. Today it houses some residents and is used as a venue for weddings and other events. A tower with a circular base and a moat evoke its ancient origin.

Less than an hour's walk, or a few minutes by car or bus, separates Isola Farnese from La Storta, which is now a modern village at kilometre 17 of the Via Cassia. Its position on the road, however,

has made it a famous post house since antiquity. A tombstone from 380 AD, at the time of the emperors Gratianus, Valentinian and Theodosius, commemorates the construction of a stable. In 990 Sigeric, archbishop of Canterbury, on his way to Rome along the Via Francigena, spent one night in La Storta.

In 1537, according to tradition, Jesus appeared here to St Ignatius of Loyola, who shortly after founded the Society of Jesus. On the 4th of June 1944, the day Rome was liberated, the German troops killed 14 prisoners, among them the socialist trade unionist Bruno Buozzi.

The imposing church of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, (the cathedral of the Porto-Santa Rufina diocese), erected between 1926 and 1950, watches over the Via Cassia from above and is flanked by a 54-metre-high bell tower, clearly visible from the state road and the countryside. Inside are *frescoes* and beautifully crafted polychrome stained-glass windows. The nearby Cappella della Visione, inaugurated in 1540 shortly after the foundation of the Society of Jesus, was destroyed by a bombing in 1944, rebuilt and re-consecrated a few months later.

9. Rome

For medieval pilgrims on the Francigena, Monte Mario was the *Mons Gaudium*, the 'Mountain of Joy'. From here, after months of walking, Rome, the Tiber and St Peter's Basilica could finally be seen. Later, on this wooded hillside that peaks at 138 metres, the 16th century Villa Madama and the Astronomical Observatory were built to be inaugurated in 1923.

Monte Mario was made accessible from the city between the two world wars, when the Prati neighbourhood, the Olympic Stadium and the other sports facilities of the Foro Italico were built. After WWII, the Foreign Ministry, the RAI facilities in Via Teulada, the Farnesina and Camilluccia areas with villas; residences and embassies, the bourgeois neighbourhoods of Balduina and Monte Mario and the working-class neighbourhood of Trionfale all sprang up at its foot.



Rome, St Peter's Square from the Dome.

Monte Mario is not only a balcony over Rome. Its pine forests are flanked by holm oak, hornbeam and cork oak woods. Mediterranean scrub and broom decorate the landscape which boasts spectacular viewpoints, and the fauna is also very diverse. Since 1997 Monte Mario has been protected by a 204-hectare regional nature reserve, managed by Roma Natura, based at Villa Mazzanti.

Before Monte Mario, walkers on the Francigena pass by the Santa Maria della Pietà complex, which was Europe's largest psychiatric hospital from 1913 to 1999. Today, the pavilions are home to offices and outpatient clinics of the ASL Roma 1, the XIV Municipality of Rome and the Museo Laboratorio della Mente. Further on is the Church of St Francis of Assisi on Monte Mario, built between 1667 and 1676. Only in this section, in the urban area of Rome, does today's Via Francigena retrace the Via Trionfale, used by medieval pilgrims to travel to the Vatican and St Peter's Basilica.

The Francigena ends at St Peter's Square, surrounded by the famous Colonnade built between 1657 and 1667 by Gian Lorenzo Bernini. In 1586, the Egyptian obelisk that previously decorated

Nero's Circus was erected here. The two fountains, by Carlo Maderno and Bernini, date back to the 17th century. Before the Colonnade you pass under the Passetto di Borgo, the fortified gallery that allowed the Popes to take refuge in Castel Sant'Angelo.

The Basilica, the Piazza and Vatican City are the centre of the world for 1.3 billion Catholics. Here, where Nero's Circus was in ancient times, the martyrdom of the Apostle Peter took place; his body was laid to rest in the necropolis below. The Basilica was built to honour his memory and has changed appearance several times.

Vatican City, which came into being in 1929 as a result of the *Patti Lateranensi* (Lateran Treaty), signed by Benito Mussolini and Cardinal Pietro Gasparri and ratified in 1948 by the Republican Constitution, is the smallest state in the world at 0.44 square kilometres. Its history, and the presence of the Pope, make it one of the most authoritative, not only for those who identify with the Catholic Church.

Visiting the Basilica takes time due to its size and the many works of art. On the right, after the entrance, is Michelangelo's Pietà from 1499, among the funerary monuments are works by Bernini, Thorvaldsen and Canova. The bronze statue of St Peter, much venerated by the faithful, is attributed to Arnolfo di Cambio.

At the foot of the dome, on the vertical of the Saint's tomb, stands the almost 30-metre-high Baldachin of St Peter, designed by Bernini and made between 1624 and 1633 with bronze taken from the Pantheon. In the Grotte Vaticane, beneath the Basilica, 24 Popes are buried, from St Peter to John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The ascent to the dome, which is over 133 metres high, is a fascinating experience. The lift will take you as far as the Terraces, but the other 321 steps must be taken on foot.

The last terrace is a viewpoint over Rome and the Vatican. Beyond St Peter's Square, you can see Via della Conciliazione, which in 1936 took the place of the houses and alleys of the Spina di Borgo. Next is Castel Sant'Angelo, the ancient mausoleum of Emperor Hadrian, which was used as a fortress from the 5th to the 17th century, and has been decorated since 1753 with the gigantic (five and a half metre high) statue of the Angel placing the sword in its scabbard.

Part Three - The Trails

1. From Sutri to Monterosi

10 km, 3.45 hours

Those travelling along the Francigena from Viterbo, Siena or from a place further north, will appreciate the magnificent medieval town of Sutri, which marks a distinct change of scenery. Leaving behind the wooded heights of Tuscia, you reach the vast plateau crossed by the Via Cassia, with a view, on a clear day, of the Latium Apennine ranges. This walk, which ends in Monterosi, is the first half of stage number 43 of the Francigena, which leads hikers and pilgrims to Campagnano di Roma. It is an enjoyable route, made even more interesting by the heights you encounter during the central part of the stage, as well as by Monterosi lake, which is worth a slight deviation. The first part is on the provincial road linking the Via Cassia with Trevignano and Bracciano, where you walk for more than a kilometre on a paved road open to traffic. Be careful!

From the Piazza del Comune in Sutri (277 metres), you walk along Via Vittorio Veneto, go past the cathedral and continue down Via XXIV Maggio and then Via IV Novembre until you reach Via Cassia. You can also set off from the parking area of the archaeological site in front of the entrance to the amphitheatre (260 metres). Keep walking for a few hundred metres along a lane protected from the state road to the left; when this ends, you continue to walk and want to have the Via dei Creti variant on your left. You can also get there by walking to the right of the Cassia, along a path that runs alongside some spectacular Etruscan tombs excavated in a tuff wall.

In any case, on the right-hand side of the state road, you take a dirt road, following signs for the Francigena and Pian Ceraso. Con-

tinue on the left for about 600 metres until you arrive at the Cassia (268 metres, 0.30 hours).

Proceed along the state road for a few metres before taking a right, then turn right again onto the provincial road to Trevignano and Bracciano, and follow it for about one kilometre. This stretch, devoid of pedestrian protection, requires the utmost attention. At the end of a straight stretch, we turn left onto Via di Santa Giulia, which soon intersects with Via Vallicella, a wide and scenic flat dirt road.

Follow it to the left (south) along a pleasant route with views of small, wooded hills and, in the distance, of Monte Soratte and the Sabine Mountains. At the forks, continue straight ahead, still on Via Vallicella. After three kilometres, you reach an asphalted road from the Cassia, in front of a milestone of the Via Francigena, a fountain and the entrance to the Golf Nazionale (252 metres, 1.30 hours).

Turn right onto the paved road, which bends toward the left and rises gently between large oak trees. At the end of the climb, turn left onto the Antica Via di Sutri, a wide dirt road that crosses the Terre dei Consoli Golf Club grounds almost levelling out. From a fork in the road with large signs (277 metres), a path branches off to the left - indicated by CAI signs - that descends to the remains of the Fountain of Pope Leo and the small Monterosi lake.

Continue along the main track descending sharply; this bends to the left and then to the right, crosses a bridge (246 metres) and goes up towards the modern town of Monterosi. You reach the wide Via Cimina, pass by the Palazzo Del Drago (or Altieri), which today houses the Town Hall, and continue uphill along Via Roma, entering the old town centre. At the end of the uphill slope you reach a crossroads and, a few metres to the left, the elegant Baroque church of San Giuseppe (272 metres, 1.15 hours).

2. The variant of Via dei Creti and Pian Porciano

This variant to the basic route of the Via Francigena, which runs in the countryside to the north-east of the Via Cassia, was mapped a few years ago following an initiative of the Region of Lazio, whose aim was to bypass the asphalt stretch. It reconnects to the main path after the dangerous stretch on the provincial road to Trevignano and Bracciano. Nevertheless, despite its successful implementation, this variant is rarely used due to its longer route (about 3 km and almost an hour's walk).

From the historic centre and amphitheatre of Sutri, as is the case for the standard route, follow the protected footpath to the left of the Cassia. At its end, follow signs and markers to the left onto Via dei Creti, which descends to a bridge, climbs halfway up the hillside and reaches a junction where you turn left. Continue for another kilometre almost on level ground, and at a fork (285 metres) turn right into Località Pian Porciano. There are plenty of signs to prevent you from going the wrong way, (at this fork as well as at the subsequent ones).

Continue along a paved road, which becomes unpaved and then paved again, between farm fields, hazel groves and farmhouses. Turn right onto a provincial road, then turn left onto an unpaved road that reaches the Via Cassia (255 metres, 1 hour), which you to cross despite the absence of pedestrian crossings (be careful!).

Continue on another small road, which runs alongside fields, crosses a ditch with a bridge, and reaches Via Vallicella (260 metres, 0.30 hr) and the basic route of the Francigena, which you take to the left. Walk for another 0.45 hours to reach the paved road from Cassia, the Francigena milestone, a fountain and the entrance to the Golf Nazionale (252 metres).

3. From Monterosi to Campagnano di Roma

14.5 km, 4.15 hours

Woods, open hills, waterfalls. The second part of stage number 43 of the Francigena begins on the plateau to the east of Monterosi, and then enters a more varied landscape. Beautifully cultivated or grazing hills,

from which big oaks stand out, take walkers to the waterfalls of Monte Gelato, (a small and popular) wonder of the Parco Regionale della Valle del Treja. After a stretch on asphalted roads with little traffic, you continue over the hills, in solitude and with a solemn atmosphere. In the last stretch, in the Parco di Veio, keep walking as far as the village of Campagnano di Roma. The crossroads with the Via Amerina and the Cimina variant of the Francigena - described later in this guide - open to a number of variants.

From the crossroads in the historic centre of Monterosi (272 metres), go left of the Baroque church of San Giuseppe and descend, keeping to the right of a large roundabout. Continue along the pavement, indicated by clearly visible Francigena road signs, to the left of the junction connecting the town to the Via Cassia. Before reaching the state road, go left along a well-marked lane bordered by a fence that runs a few metres above the road.

Further on you descend down to the Cassia, skirting it on a path that is made safe by a guardrail, passing an abandoned petrol station and then turning left onto Via della Salivotta, a wide dirt road that heads east towards Monte Soratte and the Apennines, bordering cultivated fields and residential areas.

At the fork, leave Via del Castellaccio to the left behind you (245 metres, 0.30 hours); along this road comes the Cimina variant of the Francigena (see Table 1). Pass by a large villa, and continue with slight inclines and declines until reaching (232 metres, 0.30 hours) Via Umiltà, the busy provincial road 38 connecting the Via Cassia with Nepi.

Just beyond the crossroads is the Via Amerina, which continues to the right, flanked by a stretch of ancient stone paving. The road is signposted for the alternative Francigena and the Cammino della Luce (see Table i).

In order to continue along the Via Francigena, follow the Via del Cascinone, which becomes a dirt road and skirts the Il Cascinone holiday farm, continuing slightly downhill among the oaks.

Turning right, you emerge into a more open area; you cross a

ford with a small bridge and go uphill to the left between fields and pastures until you reach the hump where the Sansoni Farm is located (221 metres). Here it is possible to rest and get drinking water at an Infopoint of the Parco di Veio.

Beyond the buildings, the dirt road descends for a few metres, then continues almost level until it reaches Via Ronci, which is paved and which we follow to the right. Some turns in a grove of oaks and a descent lead to a crossroads where you follow the road to the right. A wider asphalt road leads to another crossroads (182 metres) with the provincial road that connects Mazzano Romano to the Cassia.

Cross it (be careful!), then continue up and then down to a bridge (162 metres, 1.30 hours) overlooking the Monte Gelato waterfalls, one of the most popular destinations in the Parco della Valle del Treja. The last 200 metres on asphalt can be skipped if you take a marked path to the left, which passes next to a farmhouse. Before the bridge, there is a path to the left leading towards Mazzano; short tracks make it possible to explore the ruins, waterfalls and riverbanks.

Set off again on the paved road that crosses a bridge over the Treja, skirts a restaurant, forgoes the right the uphill slope that leads to a parking area and then continues through the fields to a junction where you go left. At the next fork, turn right onto a paved road that ascends to scenic heights and bends left at the foot of a power line.

At the next fork, go right again, and descend past the Azienda Agricola B.O. and then the Monte Gelato Ranch. We go back up to the left, past other buildings, and come to the end of the paved road (198 metres, 0.45 hours), where a dirt road that branches off to the left leads in the direction of the Mola di Magliano, and where two signs welcome hikers to the Parco di Veio.

From here, go right along a slightly uphill dirt road, which bends right and then left, makes short inclines and declines and passes next to the Il Poggio farm. Keep to the left at the next fork, then a level stretch leads you to cross the Fosso Sarnacchiola (206 metres). From here on, you walk along the boundary of the Parco di Veio.

The dirt road continues to climb gently from here, enters the Valle Oliva and skirts the slopes of Monte Gemini until it reaches a wider road. On this road, past a bridge, you ascend beside the Fosso dei Cappuccini. We keep to the right at the fork, pass the paved ramps of Via Santa Lucia, and enter the historic centre of Campagnano di Roma. After passing the Fontana Secca and the Collegiata di San Giovanni Battista, you arrive at Piazza Leonelli (277 metres, 1 hour), the heart of the village.

4. From Campagnano di Roma to Formello

8 km, 2.30 hours

The long stage number 44 of the Via Francigena begins in Campagnano di Roma, passes through Formello and reaches the hamlet and large modern church of La Storta, located on the Via Cassia in the outskirts of Rome. As with the previous one, in this guide we decided to divide this stage into two parts, which fit and experienced walkers can combine as they prefer. The first part, which we describe here, runs for the most part along paved secondary roads. After a rather man-made first section, you enter the green Sorbo Valley, which passes by the Sanctuary bearing the same name. After crossing the valley, (where a deviation towards the stream and the Mola di Formello is worthwhile), an uphill and a final downhill stretch leads to the modern town and the medieval village of Formello.

From Piazza Leonelli (277 metres), the heart of Campagnano di Roma, follow Corso Vittorio Emanuele, cross the majestic Porta Romana and then climb to the left along Via San Sebastiano, with the entrance to the Museo Archeologico del Pellegrino (Archaeological Museum) below to the right. Continue slightly uphill along a wide paved road bordered by walkways. After about 1 km, now outside the village, you reach a crossroads (317 metres) next to the municipal sports ground.

Here you go right, following the clearly visible signs for the Via Francigena, turn immediately left onto a path that ascends a few steps, and rejoin the asphalt road before a fountain. Continue uphill

and keep right at a fork in the road to reach a wide ridge and the entrance to the Campagnano municipal swimming pool (380 metres, 0.30 hours).

Continue along the paved road again, keeping left at a fork in the road, and then down the Strada delle Piane, which is sided by a few villas and the tall wooden crosses of a Via Crucis. Once past the residential area, continue halfway along the paved road in a quiet, green area from which, on a clear day, the Tyrrhenian Sea can be seen.

After passing more residential buildings, you come out (282 metres) onto Strada del Sorbo, which you follow downhill to the left. Pass further mansions and agricultural areas, then head down a steep slope, with a few bends. A final ramp leads to a pass, from which you go up to the clearly visible Sanctuary of the Madonna del Sorbo (222 metres, 0.45 hours), which stands on the opposite hill and is well worth a thorough visit.

Head back to the main road, and follow it down the mountain-side through a forest overlooking a gorge guarded from above by the Sanctuary. At the end of the descent you reach a bridge (174 metres) and a metal fence barring the way to cattle. Once past them, you come out onto the meadows of the Valle del Sorbo, traversed by cattle grazing freely and guarded by the woods of Monte Piano and Monte Silio.

A stretch where the road is unpaved and very wide leads to a parking area and the San Silvestro Bridge, from which a marked path climbs to the left towards the Porcineta ridge. Beyond the bridge, a large metal sculpture stands out in the meadow on the left. A little further ahead, on the right, a wide unpaved road begins (196 metres, 0.30 hours); the first stretch is downhill and is crossed by the Park's marked routes towards the Mola di Formello and Le Rughe.

The main road becomes paved again, and ascends up into the woods, passes a second fence and reaches a large parking area with a board of the Parco di Veio. From here we continue slightly uphill passing the mountainside on the paved road, skirting some houses and emerging onto another flat road (278 metres).

Just beyond the crossroads, turn left down toward Via Belloni, (which is a one-way uphill road if you are driving). In a short time you reach Corso Umberto I, the heart of the modern town of Formello (225 metres, 0.45 hours), where you turn left. A few metres uphill takes you to the medieval village, which has at its centre the Palazzo Chigi and the church of San Lorenzo.

5. From Formello to Isola Farnese and La Storta

12 to 14 km, 4 to 4.45 hours

The second part of stage number 44 of the Francigena, beyond Formello and the Via Cassia Bis, enables hikers to discover the landscapes and archaeological remains of Veio, one of the most important cities of Etruria, which was subjugated by Rome, after a very long siege, at the beginning of 4th century BC.

On the plateau where the ancient city stood, only a few ruins have survived the passage of time. But if you pay close attention and take short detours from the route, you will discover wonders such as the Ponte Sodo - an enormous tunnel carved into the rock by the Etruscans - the Tomba Campana and the Santuario di Portonaccio. Also fascinating is the village of Isola Farnese, which marks the transition from the archaeological area to the urban area of Rome.

The footpath from Isola Farnese to La Storta, of major importance for those following the Francigena route all the way, can be avoided by those seeking a one-day walk. The crossing of the Veio plateau, which we describe as the main route, is shorter and much more interesting than the classic route; the latter, described in some guidebooks, reaches the new bridge over the Valchetta stream, Cremera for the Romans. Once at the Monte Michele crossroads, one must choose which route to follow.

From the medieval village of Formello, overlooked by the Palazzo Chigi and the church of San Lorenzo, take Via Vittorio Emanuele II, past the church of Sant'Angelo and down a flight of steps to the left. Continue following the Francigena signposts, on the paved road and then along the carriageway that runs alongside the Fosso Pantanici, past the village water purification plant.

Further on, the path descends to the bottom of the valley and then continues up into the hillside beside a fence. At the end of the valley, you emerge (120 metres) onto a paved road (Via della Pietrarella di Monte Aguzzo) and follow it uphill until you arrive at a crossroads (140 metres) where you go right down toward Via del Prataccio. With another road on the right, you come out on Via di Santa Cornelia (113 metres, 1 hour).

Here you turn right, watching out for traffic, then turn left onto Via della Selvotta, skirting the Società Sportiva Lazio training centre. A short climb leads to the viaduct (108 metres) over which you cross Via Cassia Bis.

You head down between villas lined with vegetation (to the left is a surprising grove of bamboo), then descend to a fork where you turn right. You go upward past houses to a crossroads (107 metres, 0.30 hours) where we turn left onto Via Monte Michele, leaving the built-up area behind us.

Continue slightly uphill, with a pleasant route facing east towards Monte Musino and the far-off Monti Lucretili, to a crossroads (114 metres, 0.45 hours) marked by signs and a board dedicated to the trails of the Parco di Veio. Here we advise turning right, along a route that is shorter than the traditional one (see Table ii) and crosses the archaeological area of Veio.

Those who wish can continue for a few dozen metres beyond the crossroads, past a sign that indicates the Monte Michele necropolis, and then take a detour downhill to the left along an unmarked path that runs alongside a field, bends to the right and reaches an Etruscan burial ground.

Continue along a less visible path that enters an oak wood, skirts a small ditch and reaches a wider one. If you walk along it to the left, you will soon reach the Etruscan tunnel of Cunicolo degli Olmetti (82 metres, 0.15 hrs more round trip).

But now let us focus on the fork between the two paths of the Via Francigena. The right-hand path, indicated by trail marker 207A, descends for a stretch into the woods, overlooks a meadow and splits off again. Heading right, you quickly ascend to the Tomba

Campana, preceded by an impressive *dromos* (access corridor) and copies of ancient statues of two lions.

You then return to the main path, which from here on is fenced off. You skirt a meadow, cross a small bridge, and continue along the Valchetta stream, the Cremera degli antichi. High up, on the opposite bank and almost invisible from below due to the dense forest, is Porta Capena; a now-eroded Roman bridge once crossed the gorge with its huge span.

The trail climbs next to a secondary ditch, drops down again and continues to a gap in the fence on the left that allows you to descend for a few metres - if there is mud be careful and use the short rope to help avoid slipping - to the stream just in front of Ponte Sodo (84 metres, 0.30 hours), a massive artificial tunnel dug by the Etruscans to prevent water stagnation.

You return to the path and follow it uphill to a signpost indicating the Ponte Sodo, which at this point is right under our feet. In the future, a trail leading to Porta Capena is planned to be marked and cleared of vegetation by the Parco di Veio.

This trail passes a very short, deforested area in the tuff and then climbs between two fences, skirting meadows often grazed by sheep and frequented by dogs. On the right, a row of oaks hides the deep Valchetta Valley.

Three uphill ramps, separated by a flat stretch and a short descent, lead to an iron gate (130 metres,

0.30 hours) and a wide dirt road that we follow to the right. We are on the Veio plateau, and on a clear winter's day from here you can see the snow-capped Terminillo.

At the first fork, a few dozen metres from the entryway, we leave the dirt road to the left behind us and the routes (signposts 208B and 208C) for La Piazza d'Armi and the rock tombs. At the next crossroads, indicated by signs, go left along a scenic descent through fields. Leaving the Roman Villa di Campetti on the right, a steeper descent leads to a square (85 metres).

On the left, a gate gives access to the Santuario di Portonaccio. Inside the archaeological area, a beautiful, paved road leads shortly

to the remains of the Temple. A modern metal outline reveals the impressive dimensions of the building. The statue of the Apollo of Veio, a work by the famous Etruscan sculptor Vulca, was found here by archaeologists in 1916 and is now on display in the National Etruscan Museum of Villa Giulia in Rome.

From the square, on the opposite side of the sanctuary, you descend a few metres to view the gorge and the spectacular waterfall of Fosso Piordo. Leaving another waterfall and a restaurant on the right, we cross a small footbridge (the road crosses the watercourse with a ford) and reach the parking area of the Mola (80 metres), used by hikers on their way to the archaeological area of Veio.

Continue along a dirt road in the valley and then head uphill. After leaving the Isola Farnese cemetery on the right, you go up the asphalt road until you emerge on the road coming from the Cassia, where the route of the Francigena and its signposts go to the right. Turning to the left instead, you quickly ascend to the village of Isola Farnese (110 metres, 0.45 hours), where the church of San Pancrazio and the castle are located.

If you need to continue towards Rome and do not feel like walking; ATAC bus 032 takes you to Via Cassia and La Storta, through its FFSS station. If you walk, you can take Via Isola Farnese and then the paved walkway of the Cassia, which takes another 0.45 hours.

6. The Doganella variant and the Tomba dei Leoni Ruggenti

Instead of the official route that runs south from Formello along the Via Francigena, some walkers follow a route that runs further west, reaching the archaeological area of Veio, crossing the Doganella plateau and stopping at the Tomba dei Leoni Ruggenti. This trail, less interesting than the main route, became popular in 2015 following the construction of a bridge that crosses the Valchetta stream with a view of the viaducts of the Cassia bis.

In the centre of Formello, with your back to the medieval village, follow Viale Umberto I, which is signposted for Valle del Sorbo and Agriturismo La Porcineta. Continue uphill along Via Belloni, arri-

ving onto Via Bassanelli and turn left.

A little further on (272 metres, 0.15 hours) you take Via di Grottefranca, indicated by the noticeable signposts 207A and of the 'Francigena alternativa' (alternative Francigena) that heads west towards the Valle del Sorbo. Those coming from Campagnano can take this variant on the right, at the end of the asphalt road that follows the Valle del Sorbo.

Where the road ends, you turn left onto Via delle Spinareta, which is travelled for about three kilometres (on the flat or slightly downward path) among villas and olive groves. In the background, on a clear day, appears the city of Rome.

The road ends at a crossroads (170 metres, 1 hour). Continue along Via della Ficoraccia, leave the Parco di Veio, turn left and follow a dirt road, approaching the Cassia Bis. A sign indicates to turn right passing under the viaduct of the new state road, bypassing a dog training area and reaching the bridge over the Valchetta (114 metres, 0.30 hours) inaugurated by the Regione Lazio in 2015.

Cross the bridge and go back up to the Doganella plateau, skirting some gaudy fences. When you reach a paved road (132 metres), follow it to the left, arriving at the entrance to the Terre del Veio winery. A little further on, a sign on the left indicates the Tomba dei Leoni Ruggenti, one of the Etruscan wonders of Veio, which can only be visited on some special occasions.

Carefully cross the Via Formellese (114 metres) and continue along a dirt road on the Veio plateau to a fork signposted in a visible way (128 metres, 1 hour). There you will find the basic route again, descending to the right in the direction of the Etruscan Santuario di Portonaccio and Isola Farnese.

If you want to reach Ponte Sodo from the 128-metre fork, you need to continue for about a hundred metres to an iron gate on the left of the road. Here you take a pleasant path, travelling in the opposite direction from the Francigena and descending to the Valchetta river and the Ponte Sodo. It takes an extra hour to go there and back.

7. The variant of Casale Vacchereccia and Prato della Corte

The traditional route of the Via Francigena, considered 'official' based on signs and many old guidebooks, circumvents the Veio plateau to the southeast. It is a longer route than the one we have just described, less interesting from an archaeological point of view, and rather dull in the last stretch. The adventurous ford of the Valchetta described in the old guidebooks has been replaced by a more comfortable bridge.

From the junction between the two Via Francigena trails (114 metres) continue along the carriage road indicated by trail marker 207, forgo the path to the left for Fosso degli Olmetti, and continue along the scenic route to Casale Vacchereccia (123 metres), flanked by a landing strip for model aircraft.

Continue along a wide dirt road bordered by tall maritime pines, from which the bell tower of La Storta appears in the distance. At a fork with signposts, leave the road behind you and descend to the right down a carriageway, which bends to the right and then to the left and descends to a fork where you leave a path to the right behind you (signpost 208B) for the Bagno della Regina and the Veio plateau.

Immediately afterwards, cross the new bridge over the Valchetta stream (20 metres, 1 hour), from which you can see below and to the left the large stones of the old ford. Continue on the Prato della Corte, at the foot of the cliffs of the Piazza d'Armi di Veio. The road crosses over a bridge across the Fosso Piordo and becomes wider and less appealing. After passing alongside some sports facilities, a ramp leads to a paved road from which you go up to the right to Isola Farnese (110 metres, 0.45 hours).

8. From La Storta to St Peter's Square

19 km, 5.15 hours

The last stage of the Francigena leads from the countryside of La Storta to the centre of Rome and St Peter's Basilica, a famous destination for pilgrims today just as it was in the Middle Ages. This stage will present a series of contrasting elements. It starts with a long walk on the pavements

of the Via Cassia, which is almost always busy with traffic. After crossing the GRA (Rome's Ring Road), a descent leads to the Riserva dell'Insugherata; a valley surrounded by woods and offering solitary atmospheres.

Back in the modern city, we pass through the Monte Mario Alto neighbourhood and then along the modern Via Trionfale. A short walk through the greenery of Monte Mario and a viewpoint overlooking the 'Cupolone' (Saint Peter's Dome) precede the last descent of the Via Trionfale, as well as the flat stretch leading to the Vatican City walls and St Peter's Square. The cycle/pedestrian path is a quieter variant of the Francigena that links Santa Maria della Pietà to the Policlinico Gemelli and Monte Ciocchi. From there, it is possible to reach St Peter's Basilica in a short time.

From the FFSS La Storta railway station (152 metres), it is a short climb to the large modern church of the Sacri Cuori di Gesù e Maria, consecrated in 1950, flanked by a 54-metre-high bell tower, which is home to *frescoes* and polychrome stained-glass windows of good workmanship.

Go down the other side to rejoin the Cassia, and follow it on the left side pavement, which passes the junction from which the Via Claudia Braccianense branches off to the right. After almost 1.5 km the pavement stops for a stretch (be careful!) in front of the medieval Torre delle Cornacchie.

Further on the footpath resumes and continues easily alongside Via Cassia, until a large roundabout at the entrance to the Giustiniana suburb (142 metres, 0.45 hours), 3 km from La Storta, where you leave Via Trionfale to the right behind you. This route, which we will find again after crossing the greenery of the Insugherata, was used by medieval pilgrims who followed the Francigena in the direction of St Peter's.

Once past the Giustiniana, there remains a 1 km stretch alongside the Via Cassia, which descends sharply and makes a couple of turns. After the second turn you need to cross the state road on then pedestrian crossing, and then cross the right-hand pavement over the viaduct (110 metres, 0.30 hours) by which the Via Cassia passes over Rome's GRA.

Once past the viaduct, turn right downhill, past an unlocked gate with house number 1081. Follow a short asphalt road that descends a few metres from the GRA, pass a parking area, a picnic area (61 metres) and a barrier, and continue along a lane, marked and lined with a fence, that runs alongside the Fosso dell'Acqua Traversa.

The lane overlooks some meadows overshadowed by the modern buildings of the Via Cassia, then crosses the Fosso and turns into a wide track, which can be muddy after heavy rain. Further on, you leave to the left behind you a small wooden bridge and a path (often barred) that climbs towards Nero's Tomb. Then you turn right (42 metres) into the green and picturesque Valle dell'Insugherata, flanked by large oaks, which further on opens up into a series of meadows.

In the widest grassy stretch (66 metres), where the valley bends left and where another grassy valley joins from the right, is a picnic area and a Francigena signboard. From here, an unmarked path to the right crosses an area of dense vegetation and then climbs (the beginning is very steep and is hence equipped with a rope) towards Via Paolo Emilio Castagnola and the 'official' entrance of the Riserva Naturale dell'Insugherata.

However, you continue to the left, passing some small, farmed areas and reach an asphalted clearing (83 metres, 1.15 hours) at the end of Via Augusto Conti. From here we leave the Valle dell'Insugherata by following a steep asphalt climb, which can be exhausting on a hot day.

When the route becomes flat again, we continue through the Monte Mario Alto district, following the pavements where the Francigena markers and signs continue to appear regularly. A descent leads back to Via Trionfale at a crossroads (117 metres, 0.30 hours) where a large image of the Holy Mary is depicted.

Here, Via Vincenzo Chiarugi branches off to the right, leading about a hundred metres into the Santa Maria della Pietà complex. From this road, to the left, the cycle/pedestrian path branches off towards the Policlinico Gemelli and Monte Ciocchi (see Table iii).

The main route, constantly marked, continues on the pavement of Via Trionfale, in an urbanised area. Leaving the Monte Mario railway station on the right, which is also connected to St Peter's Station and the centre of Rome, keep on the pavement on the left for a stretch, then turn right and cross both carriageways of the road at a traffic light.

Further on you find a series of junctions separated by grassy flowerbeds, where the Galleria Giovanni XXIII, coming up from Via Flaminia, joins from the left, and Via della Pineta Sacchetti, coming from the Aurelio neighbourhood, joins from the right. Follow the signposts and walk on the pavement that runs along the back of the Policlinico Gemelli. Make a wide bend to the right and you will reach the Piazzetta di Monte Gaudio and the 17th century church of San Francesco a Monte Mario (123 metres, 0.45 hours).

From here Via Trionfale descends straight and leaves Via Mario Fani on the left; where historically on the 16th of March 1978, Red Brigades terrorists kidnapped Aldo Moro, (president of the Christian Democrats) and killed his five bodyguards. Further ahead, a sign indicates to cross the Via Trionfale on the pedestrian crossing.

Continue along Via Igea, reaching Piazza Walter Rossi and the Monte Mario ridge. Turn right onto Via della Camilluccia, which you walk along on the left-hand pavement, bordering the Don Orione hospital and sports complex. When this ends, descend left onto Via Edmondo De Amicis, which requires attention because the pavement is often cluttered with vegetation.

Where the road bends to the right, pass the first entrance to the Riserva Naturale di Monte Mario (Monte Mario Nature Reserve) on the left. At the next bend, enter the reserve on the right (95 metres, 0.30 hours), and follow a lane that rises among pines and holm oaks to a scenic ridge (120 metres). Continue along the main path, indicated by the markers and by the arrows of CAI path 215.

The path descends for a short stretch, crosses a grassy valley, and climbs up next to some yellowish tuff walls, past steps and stretches marked by erosion. Further on, you enter into the forest, and continue among the holm oaks, past an abandoned car on the left and

reach a second viewpoint overlooking; the Olympic Stadium, the Tiber, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a large portion of Rome, and the Apennines.

A little further on we reach a small, asphalted road, and follow it downhill, bordering the Giacomo Leopardi Primary School on the left, and overlooking the park of the Villa Stuart Clinic on the right. Past the entrance to the school, the road (Via Parco della Vittoria) widens and descends towards Via Trionfale.

Before you reach it, watch for the markers and turn left along a fence, head up among the holm oaks, and you will arrive at Via del Parco Mellini. The Francigena continues through the gate at the front, but it is better to climb up - at the foot of the historic Astronomical Observatory of Rome - to the Terrazza di Monte Mario (132 metres, 0.30 hours), which is another fantastic viewpoint.

Continue down the same path, turn left through the gate and back into the park and reach a clearing downhill (the Belvedere of the First Meridian of Italy) where we finally stand in front of the 'Cupolone' of St Peter's. The sight of the Basilica, which in the Middle Ages looked very different, was the reason why Monte Mario was known to pilgrims as *Mons Gaudii*, the 'Mount of Joy'.

The path hugs the side of Monte Mario facing the Tiber, descends with long ramps and reaches Villa Mazzanti, an elegant 19th century building that houses the offices of Roma Natura, the organisation that manages no less than 18 Parks, Reserves and Natural Monuments protected by the Lazio Region within the Municipality of Rome. Among the latter is also the Monte Mario Natural Reserve.

A narrow road that descends in tight bends, or alternatively a steep flight of steps to the right, leads out of the greenery of Monte Mario onto Via Gomenizza (28 metres); once you cross it (on the right stands the Centro RAI in Via Teulada), follow Via Novenio Bucchi, cross the Circonvallazione Clodia and reach the very long tree-lined Viale Angelico.

Follow it to the right for almost 2 km in the direction of San Pietro. After Viale delle Milizie and the Metro A station of Ottaviano, follow Via Ottaviano until Piazza Risorgimento, overloo-

ked from the right by the Mura Leonine, which encircles the Vatican City.

Walk along the Walls on Via di Porta Angelica, leave the Porta Sant'Anna guarded by the Swiss Guards on the right, pass under the Passetto di Borgo and reach the Bernini Colonnade and St Peter's Square (16 metres, 1.15 hours), where the via Francigena comes to an end.

9. The Monte Ciocchi cycle and footpath variant

The Monte Ciocchi cycle/pedestrian path, a beautiful construction undertaken by the Municipality of Rome, runs partly next to and partly over the railway line connecting the centre of Rome with Viterbo. The route, which can only be travelled by bicycle or on foot, connects the Monte Mario Station with the Policlinico Gemelli and continues to the Monte Ciocchi Park, overlooking the 'Dome' of St. Peter's. This route, which does not reach the historic viewpoint of Monte Mario, is protected from noise and traffic and is hence often preferred over the traditional route of the Via Francigena.

From the junction of Via Trionfale with Via Vincenzo Chiarugi (117 metres), where a large image of the Madonna stands, leave the signs and markers of the Via Francigena to the right and go in the direction of the buildings of Santa Maria della Pietà. Before arriving there, on the left, take the cyclo-pedestrian road, which soon reaches the Monte Mario railway station square (114 metres).

Go straight over it, cross Via di Torvecchia at the traffic lights, and continue along the clearly visible and protected path, which bends gradually to the left, passing an old railway tollgate adorned with mural paintings. Further on, you reach the Policlinico Gemelli railway station without having to climb up to the road (100 metres, 0.30 hours).

Continue past a car park, rejoin the cyclo-pedestrian path, and descend to cross a pedestrian viaduct that runs alongside the railway bridge, overlooking the upper part of Valle Aurelia and the Policlinico Gemelli buildings on the left.

An uphill stretch leads to the first houses of the Balduina district, where the trail resumes above the railway track tunnel. You can't go wrong until the Balduina railway station - which you pass through via an underpass - and then the Via Appiano station, which you bypass on the right.

Turn left where the track ends, follow a dirt road and enter Monte Ciocchi Park. On the right, a large sheepfold and pastures overlook the old kilns and the modern Valle Aurelia area. There is a school on the ridge to the left.

The park's paved path ascends to a scenic ridge, from which you descend to the left to the Piazzale di Monte Ciocchi (73 metres, 1.15 hours), overlooking Rome and the Apennines. In front, very close, is the majestic dome of St Peter's and the Mura Leonine, which enclose the Vatican City.

To the right of the square, a winding road and a steep staircase descend towards Valle Aurelia and its Metro A station. At the end of the descent (37 metres) you veer left onto the pavement of Via Anastasio II. Cross it at a traffic light and continue along Viale degli Ammiragli until you reach Via Angelo Emo.

Turn left again, continue along Via Candia, then turn right onto Via Leone IV. You reach the Vatican City walls, where visitors to the Vatican Museums often queue. Walking along the walls you reach Piazza Risorgimento, where the traditional Francigena road reappears.

Turn right, walk along the Vatican walls following Via di Porta Angelica, leaving on the right the Porta Sant'Anna attended by the Swiss Guards, pass under the Passetto di Borgo and reach the Bernini Colonnade and St Peter's Square (16 metres, 1.15 hour), where the Via Francigena ends.

10. From Nepi to Campagnano along the Cimina variant of the Francigena and the Via Amerina

19,5 km, 6 hours (11 km, 3.30 if you arrive in Monterosi)

From the historic town of Nepi, surrounded by deep tuff valleys, it is possible to reach the Via Francigena and Campagnano via two sepa-

rate routes. The best known (see Table i) follows the historical *Via Amerina*, also referred to as the *Cammino della Luce*, but it requires you to follow *Via Umiltà* for almost 5 km- a provincial road with heavy traffic that makes walking not very pleasant.

It is far more interesting to follow the Cimina variant of the Francigena, marked in the first part by the Viterbo section of the CAI, which crosses the spectacular Cavoni di Nepi, the provincial road, and continues through the countryside between Nepi and Monterosi until it rejoins the Francigena on Via della Salivotta.

From here, turn left and you will reach and cross Via Umiltà. Then continue in the direction of Campagnano along Via Amerina (which we describe here) or on the Francigena, which touches the Monte Gelato waterfalls. Those who are looking for a one-day walk, and are not heading towards Piazza San Pietro, can also turn right onto Via della Salivotta and conclude their journey in Monterosi.

From the Piazza del Comune of Nepi (227 metres), follow Via Matteotti, turn left into Via Tortolini and walk around the Rocca dei Borgia, passing through Porta Romana and overlooking the Catterra waterfall - which can be enjoyed from a viewpoint on the left. The signs of the Viterbo CAI indicate the route from the beginning; the marker is 100M, which is flanked by symbols of the Via Francigena.

We cross a square, exit onto Via Umiltà (provincial road 38), and follow alongside it for a short distance on the pavement. A little further on, at a crossroads with noticeable signs, turn left onto Via del Cardinale. Keep right at the fork, head downhill along the fence and reach a concrete bridge (181 metres) and a fork with CAI signs.

From here, forgo a path to the left (signpost 178) for Castel Sant'Elia, and ascend to the right at the entrance to the Cavoni di Nepi, which are spectacular *tagliate* in the tuff. Pass the first bottleneck, reach a fork, and turn left over a short uneasy step. Further on, the trail improves, bends to the right, and leads to a cultivated plateau (227 metres).

Go around the fence on the right, pass some well-visible mobile

phone towers, pass by the exit of the second Cavone on the right, and continue along a carriage road through the fields that will soon lead you to the wide Strada Vicinale La Massa (local road). Follow it to the right, first on a dirt track and then on asphalt, for 1.5 km until you reach (220 metres, 1.30 hours) Via Umiltà.

Cross the provincial road, which is often busy with traffic and where a Francigena sign advises you to follow. Continue instead along Via San Marcello, which runs flat through the countryside, bends left and then right, and reaches a three-way crossroads (228 metres) where a sign describes the cycle/pedestrian routes of Nepi.

Turn left onto Via Valle Petrosa, cross the valley floor over a bridge (200 metres), and ascend with a few turns to the plateau, which you will cross in view of Monterosi. The dirt road bends to the left, reaches a farmhouse (238 metres, 1 hour) where it changes course and joins Via del Castellaccio. Continue along the latter and you will reach (245 metres, 0.30 hours) Via della Salivotta and the main route of the Francigena.

Following Via della Salivotta to the right (see Table i), it is possible to reach Via Cassia, follow it to the right, cross the viaduct over the Cassia and reach Monterosi (272 metres, 0.30 hours from the junction). To the left instead, you will encounter varying ascents and descents, until you cross Via Umiltà once again (232 metres, 0.30 hours).

Beyond the crossroads, the Francigena (see Table i) continues along a wide dirt road towards the Monte Gelato waterfalls and Campagnano di Roma.

In order to continue along the Via Amerina, we turn right downhill on a stretch of Roman paving also marked by the signposts of the 'Francigena Alternativa' (Alternative Francigena) and the Cammino della Luce (Path of Light). A flat section leads to a small Roman bridge which you cross into a meadow where the trail is often very muddy.

New stretches of basalt paving (a dirt road on the left), lead to a meadowy plateau. Descend towards a wide valley and climb up until you reach a large area of ancient basalt paving and the Agriturismo

Podere Bianca Maria (227 metres, 0.45 hours). From here, a wide dirt road (Via Campo dell'Olmo) heads south, passing by a large farm, until it emerges (194 metres, 0.30 hours) onto the provincial road linking the Via Cassia with Mazzano Romano and Calcata.

Cross it and continue along a carriage road flanked by a power line. At the fourth pylon, following the markers, climb to the right to scramble over a hillock, descend to the Fosso del Fontanile and cross it on the paving stones of the Via Amerina. The trail crosses a clearing, goes past the Fosso del Pavone over a small bridge, and reaches the modern village of Monte Sarleo (197 metres).

Through Via dei Pini, Via dei Cipressi and Via di Monte Sarleo you reach the provincial road (205 metres, 0.30 hours) that connects Via Cassia with Campagnano. Follow it briefly to the left as it bends right uphill next to a signpost of the Via Francigena. Continue slightly uphill on the Strada della Valle del Baccano to the Latrona Fountain (270 metres) in a green hollow, flanked by a signpost of the Via Francigena.

Follow the steep Via di Fontana Latrona, spilling out onto another road that you follow to the left and reach a crossroads flanked by gates. Continue uphill on Via delle Vignacce, go left to Via del Pavone, then follow it to the right as far as Porta Romana and Piazza Leonelli (277 metres, 0.45 hours), the heart of Campagnano di Roma.

11. From Nepi to Campagnano along the Via Amerina

19 km, 4.45 hours

This route, recommended by the official guide of the Via Amerina/ Cammino della Luce, accurately follows the route of the Roman and medieval road that connected Rome with Nepi, Orte and Umbria. While the second part of the route, beyond the junction with Via della Salivotta, Via del Cascinone and the Francigena is pleasant and evocative, the first few kilometres, on the asphalt of Via Umiltà, are unpleasant and dangerous.

An alternative option is to start on the previous route, cross the Caverni di Nepi, and continue on Via Umiltà after travelling along Strada Vicinale La Massa. In the final part, between Via di Monte Sarleo, the

Latrona Fountain and Campagnano, signposts and map boards of the Via Francigena appear next to the route, which could cause some confusion.

From Piazza del Comune di Nepi (227 metres), as for the previous route, follow Via Matteotti, turn left into Via Tortolini and go around the Rocca dei Borgia via Porta Romana and overlook the Cavaterra waterfall- which can be admired from a viewpoint on the left. The signs of the CAI of Viterbo indicate the route from the beginning; the marker is the 100M, flanked by symbols of the Via Francigena.

Cross a square, exit onto Via Umiltà (provincial road 38), and follow it on the pavement, leaving on the left the variant Cimina of the Francigena, which we described earlier (see Table i). Continue along the provincial road, which is picturesque if travelled by car or by bicycle, but not very pleasant and at times dangerous if walked on foot.

Past the crossroads (220 metres, 1 hour) where the Strada Vicinale La Massa branches off to the left, from which the Cimina variant of the Francigena arrives, continue downhill on the provincial road until the Agriturismo la Sorgente and to a bridge (193 metres). To the left of the bridge, the massive, Roman old Ponte Nepesino can be glimpsed in the vegetation.

To get a better look at this structure, turn left at the next fork towards the Acqua Nepi plant. Where the road turns right, walk a few metres downhill to the left and you will reach the stream, with a view of the arches of the ancient bridge.

Beyond the fork, from a wide widening on the right, you can take Via Castellaccio. After a few minutes' uphill climb, from a signpost, head upward on the right to the striking ruins of Castel Nepesino (or Castel di Ponte Nepesino, 204 metres, 0.30 hours more to get there and back).

To continue along Via Amerina, walk along Via Umiltà, which climbs with a couple of wide bends (be careful!) and skirts by uncultivated land that you can enter to get away from the asphalt.

Further on, pass by the foot of the abandoned church of Madonna dell'Umiltà, and reach the crossroads from which you turn

left onto Via Ronci.

This is followed by a straight section where you can move away from the asphalt only for a few stretches. In the last 300 metres, after a ruin on the right, you can follow the ancient paving stone to the left until the fork (232 metres, 1.15 hours) where the Via Francigena crosses. From here, on the route described earlier (see Table i), continue as far as Campagnano di Roma (2.30 hours).

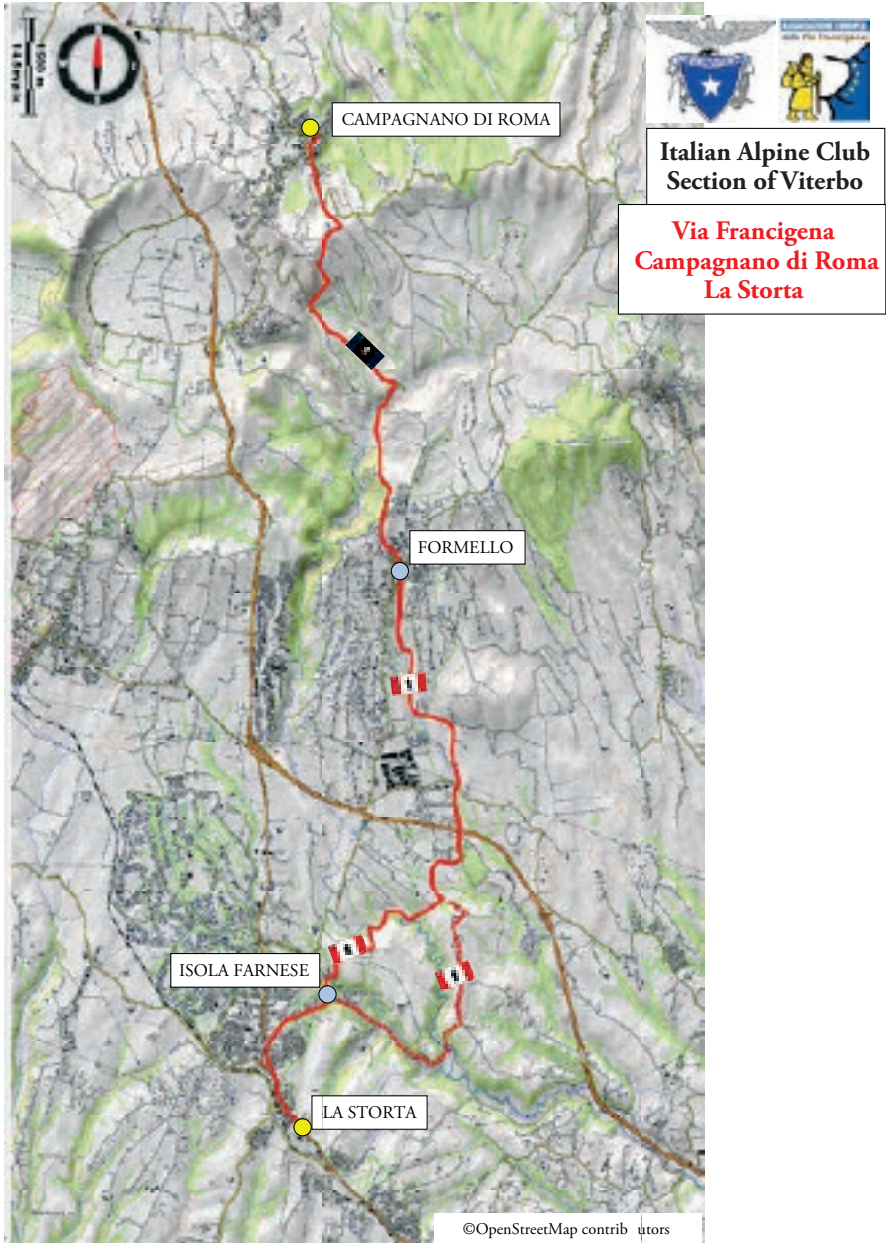
Tables



Italian Alpine Club - Section of Viterbo

Via Francigena, Sutri Stage - Campagnano di Roma Stage







**Italian Alpine Club
Section of Viterbo**

**Via Francigena
La Storta - San Pietro**

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From the Middle Ages to the present day, the Via Francigena has always been in use. Across 2476 metres of the Great St Bernard Pass, which allows crossing the Alps between Switzerland and the Aosta Valley, armies such as Napoleon's in the 19th century, as well as thousands of travellers in the years of the Grand Tour, have passed.

Railways, carriageways and finally motorways altered the route between the 19th and 20th centuries, but the one linking England and northern France with Po Valley, Tuscany, Lazio and Rome remained a great European route.

This guide describes the last stages from Sutri to Rome, through the great, green area that is the Parco di Veio, whose backbone is the dense network of paths of the Via Francigena.



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