

# ALONG THE PO DI VOLANO

## First stage - From Ferrara to Ostellato

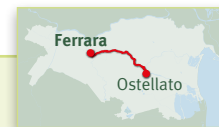


Final di Rero, Via delle Siepi

5



Technical notes



**Depart:** Ferrara, Piazza Savonarola

**Arrive:** Ostellato, Piazza Repubblica

**Length:** 38,890 km

**Difficulty level:** suitable for everyone. Level route mainly along minor roads, some of which have traffic restrictions.

**Railways. Ferrara/Codigoro**

Bicycle transport available. Please check timetables and availability. Info: 800 91 50 30 • www.fer.it



**Ferrara:**

Castello Estense

tel. 0532 299303 • www.ferrarainfo.com

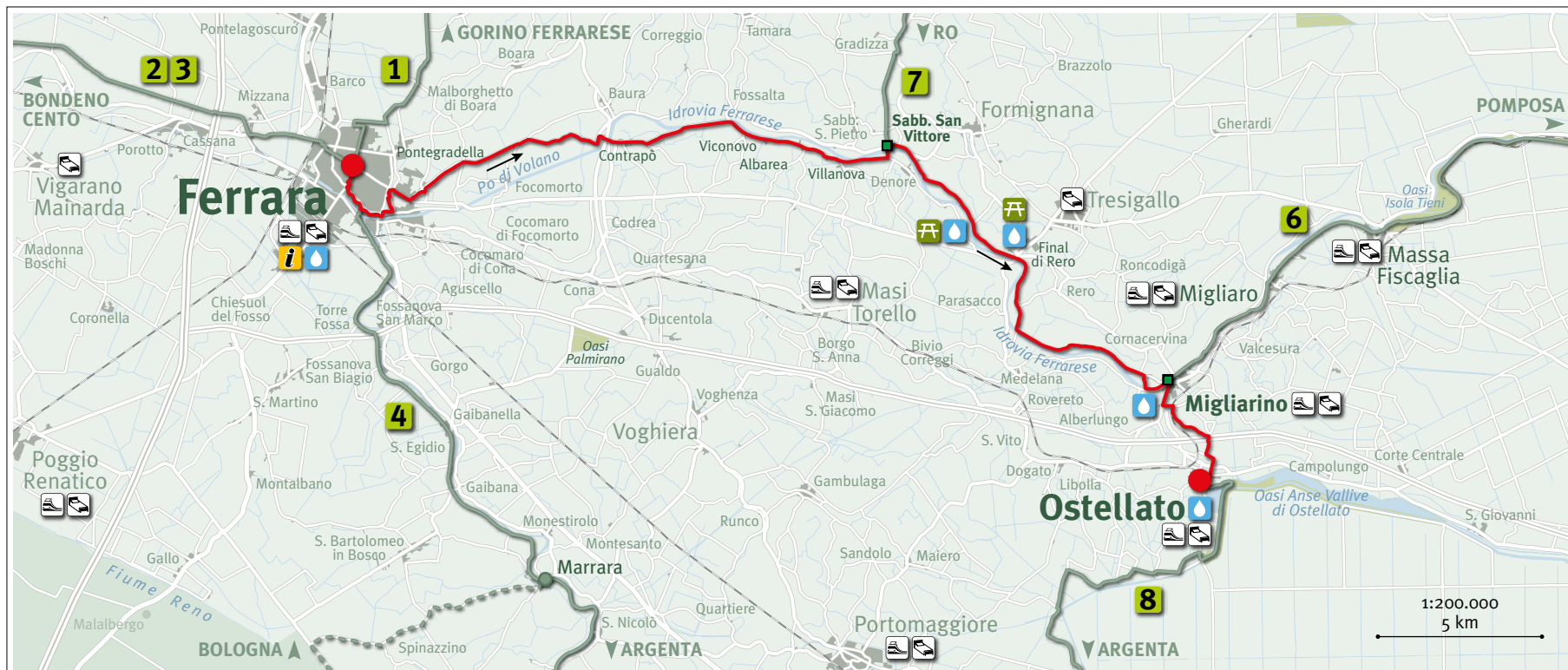
**Connections with other routes**

**6** Ostellato - Abbazia di Pomposa

**7** Ro - Copparo - Ostellato

**8** Ostellato - Argenta

Leaving historic **Ferrara** on long stretches of cycle path through various villages along the banks of what was once one of the main branches of the river Po, but which is nowadays much narrower. View countryside with an antique flavour, scattered with centres that in the past were moorings on the river, and which retain even now their little treasures of history. The journey follows the Volano and the Ferrara relief canal system as far as **Migliarino** and then skips over to **Ostellato**, where many and varied cycle journeys unwind and cross each other.



## ONCE UPON A TIME ON THE RIVER

This zone of countryside to the east of Ferrara was for centuries chosen by the nobles and rich families for their escape from the city. Unlike other parts of the province it was less subject to flooding, favouring settlement. Its trump card as regards transport connections between the city and the country was the course of the Po di Volano, along which grew up in different historical periods country retreats, hunting lodges, estate houses and holiday homes.

From the **Este Castle** in Ferrara we take Via Bologna towards the south of the city and turn onto the *sottomura* path in the shade of the walls and bastions that protect Ferrara. We leave the city to the east along the convenient cycle track beside the road as far as the hamlet of **Pontegradella**, then carry on along Via Pontegradella towards Baura, then, after the bridge over the Po di Volano, traverse tiny villages on the river. The embankment is low and the river visible from the road.

*The Anse Vallive di Ostellato nature reserve*



The first village is **Contrapo**, dominated by the elegant facade of its 17<sup>th</sup> century parish church, San Martino, where we find the Bishop's House 'Casa del Vescovo', later called 'Casa Mistri', which dates we think from the 16th century. At **Viconovo**, under the Volano embankment, is the villa once known as 'dei Costabili' that in 1845 was the property of William Mac Alister, a rich Scottish merchant who resided a long time in Ferrara and used his post of British Consul to defend the city from abuses of power under the Austrians. At **Albarea**, next to the church, was the great house belonging to Gian Battista Aleotti, known as 'l'Argenta', the Dukes' architect and engineer. Villa Gandini, later known as Colombari, with decorations in the Art Nouveau style, is in **Villanova di Denore**.

A little before **Denore**, where the Villa Naselli (now known as Villa Beltrame) stands beside the river, we cross the Po di Volano on the bridge towards **Sabbioncello San Vittore** and continue along the road to the left of the watercourse. At Sabbioncello there is mooring for boats.

Next to the embankment, on the left, stands the *Villa della Mensa*, built between 1474 and 1495 on the orders of Bartolomeo della Ro-



## Boating on the Volano

From spring to autumn there are guided river excursions on which you can also take your bike. The departure point is in the Darsena port at Ferrara, but other points of joining are possible, such as Sabbioncello S. Vittore, Final di Rero or Migliarino. Destinations are Baura, Fossalta, Ostellato and Comacchio.

Booking essential.  
Info tel. 0532 205681.

vere, as a summer residence for the Bishops of Ferrara. After Villa della Mensa the track becomes cycleway only and stays with the Volano as far as Final di Rero. Just before this, note the lock basin at Valpagliaro which works with wind powered doors and allows a drop of about 3 metres. After **Final di Rero**, this pleasant cycle track, here named Via delle Siepi, goes alongside an area of the Volano embankment that is being ecologically rebalanced with native vegetation, and is particularly pleasant in spring.



*The Po di Volano between Final di Rero and Migliarino*

Carry on along Via Argine Sinistro Volano as far as **Migliarino**. Here we turn right on the cycle/pedestrian bridge across the Volano, and enter the village on the road. We then stick to minor country roads, moving away from the watercourse which heads north to the sea; the branch that diverts towards Ostellato is the Ferrara Waterway.

The **Anse Vallive di Ostellato** are a unique freshwater wetland in this region, populated by 150 species of water birds including beautiful herons, and is characterised by vegetation like cane, water-lilies, flowering rushes. There are many activities possible: birdwatching, outings on foot, bicycle or horseback, canoeing.