

Mantua, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Mantua had its highest glory during the long Gonzaga's domination, from XIV to XVIII century. The Ducal Palace, with the attached castle, is one of the largest Italian architectural complexes. The Prince Itinerary is a walk and cycle itinerary passing by the cathedral, S. Andrea basilica, Giulio Romano's Loggias on the Rio canal, S. Sebastiano, Mantegna's house and Palazzo Te, not to say about Romanesque San Lorenzo rotunda, Palazzo d'Arco and XVIII century Bibiena theatre. In 2008 **Mantua** and **Sabbioneta** became **UNESCO** World Heritage Sites, as they offer an extraordinary example of Renaissance architecture and town planning, connected by Gonzaga's ambitions and ideas.

The rivers: Mincio and Po

Po is the longest Italian river. Mincio river starts from Garda lake, makes three lakes around Mantua and floods into the Po in Governolo, where an impressive artificial basin, also known as ship lift, allows inland navigation towards San Benedetto Po.

Po river crosses lands and towns, entering Ferrara territory in Stellata di Bondeno, where the Panaro floods into it. Crossing orchards and fields, it gets to the Delta, in Goro, and then to the Adriatic Sea: here, the area is spread with irrigation canals and cycle tracks along their banks.

Stellata and Bondeno

Stellata di Bondeno is a compact village near the river, where the wonderful "Destra Po Route" starts from; here, you can also admire the star shaped fortress standing in the flood plain. You should pay a visit also to the archaeological museum, covering several ages. Crossing Panaro river – the last Po tributary – from Stellata, you get to Bondeno, the most ancient settlement in Ferrara province, whose history has always been strictly related to water. Today Bondeno hosts several fairs enhancing its traditional cookery. From Bondeno, you can take the fascinating shady cycle track along Burana canal to get to Ferrara through relaxing poplar groves.

In Bondeno, cross Cavo Napoleonico canal and proceed along the "Destra Po Route" as far as Pontelagoscuro.

FE20 Destra Po cycle track

With its 120 kms running along Po right riverbank from Stellata to the sea, this is one of the longest cycle tracks in Italy. It is a flat itinerary almost exclusively for bicycles and easy to everyone. The most interesting stages, starting from Ferrara, are Ro – with its floating mill and its literary itineraries dedicated to Riccardo Bacchelli –, Guarda church, Berra and its "Porta del Delta" (the Delta door) in Serravalle – where the river mouth branches out – the nice Mesola castle – which today hosts the Wood and Deer Museum – and the fishing ports in Goro and Gorino. In the surroundings, Mesola Wood lays; it is a unique coastal wood to be discovered on foot or by bike. Still, you may discover local tastes, such as the typical Ferrara bread, known as "coppia", the "salama da sugo", a local pork sausage, with mashed potatoes, "cappelacci", a local pasta, stuffed with pumpkin; Mesola asparagus, Comacchio eel, and the tasty fish dishes of the Po Delta.

Ferrara

Ferrara is one of the most important Renaissance centres in Italy, whose structure was harmonized with an extraordinary city planning. The magnificent Este court has left a permanent heritage, such as the Addizione Erulea with the sumptuous Corso Ercole I d'Este, the Estense castle, and Palazzo Schifanoia frescoes. You should not miss a walk or cycle tour along the 9 km itinerary around the city walls, to discover towers, fortresses and earthworks. In 1995, Ferrara town centre became a **UNESCO** World Heritage Site, as a fine example of Renaissance urban planning, which retains its old town intact. This recognition has then been extended to the Po Delta Park and the Residences of the Dukes of Este, examples of an extraordinary and original cultural landscape.

Ferrara-Adriatic Sea

Running from Ferrara on cycle tracks and low traffic roads along Po river, you pass by delicious villas such as Villa Mensa in Sabbioncello, nice villages such as Tresigallo, a jewel of Italian Modern Architecture, charming nature reserves such as Anse Valive in Ostellato. Still, you cross picturesque places such as Migliaro, Migliarino, Massa Fiscaglia and, beyond Codigoro, you already see the bell tower of Pomposa Abbey, a very attractive complex frescoed by Giotto's school. Not far from the sea, beside the lagoon, you may visit Comacchio and its peculiar centre spread with bridges and canals.

Mantua - Peschiera

A 43,5 km long itinerary totally running on the cycle track along Mincio and canal banks, through Mincio River Natural Park. Starting from Peschiera, you may easily divert to see Ponti sul Mincio castle, Monzambano with its Della Scala castle and parish church, Castellar Lagusello – now a **UNESCO** World Heritage Site – and its small heart shaped lake, Cavriana, and Borghetto. In Volta Mantovana, you may appreciate Palazzo Gonzaga and the Italian garden. Before getting to Mantua, you reach Bosco Fontana, which was once a hunting ground of the Gonzaga family.

Diverting to the right, proceed from Soave towards Maglio along Diversivo canal bank; after crossing the bridge on Mincio river, proceed towards Sacca di Goito. Then follow the municipal road to Rivalta sul Mincio and the cycle track leading to Grazie, which is famous for its Marian shrine.

Sabbioneta

Sabbioneta is a star shaped town 35 km far from Mantua. Planned and built by duke Vespasiano Gonzaga in late XVI century, it is an extraordinary example of ideal planned city, embellished with the prince's buildings – such as the Ducal Palace, Palazzo Giardino, Galleria degli Antichi, Teatro all'Antica –, the Synagogue, and the Sacred Art Museum, where Vespasiano's Golden Fleece is held.

A 47 km long cycle track connects Mantua and Sabbioneta, the "Ciclovía Mantova e Sabbioneta – Città dell'UNESCO", running along scenic roads where cars too may go. In the surroundings, you may visit Vigoreto church and the impressive Villa Pasquali parish church.

San Benedetto Po and Matilda of Tuscany's lands

Polirone monastery in San Benedetto Po is one of the most important Benedictine complexes in Northern Italy. It was Matilda of Tuscany to found the abbey, which is also known as "Northern Montecassino", and which hosts the Polirone Civic Museum, one of the largest ethnographic museums in Italy – with farm implements and period puppets. Matilda also built several Romanesque churches, such as parishes in Pegognaga, Quingentole and Pieve di Coriano, Comuna shrine in Ostiglia, Ghisione oratory in Villa Poma, Sermide and Felonica parishes. Still, Nuovolato di Quistello is interesting for its Romanesque S. Fiorentino church and its museum.

From Revere, proceed along the right river bank of the Po, following an itinerary crossing Secchia river and San Benedetto Po towards Suzzara.

Natural parks and reserves between Mantua and Ferrara

Mincio River Regional Park and **Oglio** River Regional Park take care of nature in Mantua territory.

Mincio River Natural Park

The Garda morainal amphitheatre hosts, from north southwards, Castellar Lagusello Regional Reserve, Bertone Natural Reserve in Goito – with a white stork nesting area – and Bosco Fontana Nature Reserve in Marmirolo. The Mincio Valley Natural Reserve, between Rivalta and Borgo Angeli, is the largest inner wetland in Italy. The charming Vallazza flood land lays in Viriglio. Oltrepo too has its important natural reserves, such as Paludi di Ostiglia, Isola Boschina – a small island in Po river – and Isola Boscone in Carbonara Po.

Ferrara nature reserves and the Po Delta Park

Here, Po crosses a typical landscape of flood plains, water plants and water lilies, river woods of willows, poplars and oaks; this area is full of life, colours, birds, frogs and mammals.

Isola Bonello Pepoli at Bondeno and **Porporana Wood**, on the Destra Po route, are two nature reserves of the area: the second is an example of the ancient riverbank woods of wild plants and native herbs, which is today a poplar grove. **Isola Bianca Reserve**, dating from Este period, is one of the most ancient islands in Po river; it is an important area hosting several kinds of plants and herbs. The **Po Delta Park** landscape, along the last part of the river course, was modelled during the Renaissance and is still a good balance of water and land, spread with woods and swamps. This very special landscape, which is a **UNESCO** World Heritage Site, hosts several kinds of resident and migratory river birds, and is a paradise for birdwatchers. Cycling along canal banks and through pine woods, you may experience a unique natural landscape, towards the sea as far as Goro lighthouse, on the Adriatic shore. In the province of Ferrara, you should pay a visit to Mesola Wood, Sacca di Goro, Gorino and Comacchio lagoons. Walk, cycle and boat natural excursions start from all of these places.

Getting here

PESCHIERA DEL GARDA

BY PLANE

Bergamo, Montichiari, Venice, Verona Villafranca

BY TRAIN

Trenitalia
Directly from Northern Italy main stations

MANTUA

BY PLANE

Bergamo, Bologna, Montichiari, Parma, Venice, Verona Villafranca

BY TRAIN

Trenitalia
Verona – Bologna
Mantua – Milan
Mantua – Padua
Ferrovie Emilia Romagna
Mantua – Ferrara

FERRARA and LIDI DI COMACCHIO

BY PLANE

Bologna (Shuttle Bologna Airport-Ferrara), Forlì, Rimini, Treviso, Venice, Verona

BY TRAIN

Trenitalia
Venice – Florence – Rome
Ferrovie Emilia Romagna
Mantua – Ferrara – Codigoro

Bergamo "Orio al Serio" www.sacbo.it	Parma "G. Verdi" www.aeroporto.parma.it	Verona "V. Catullo" www.aeroporto.verona.it
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Accommodation

Further information can be found on the tourism website of the routes.

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A tour cycle itinerary running from Veneto to Emilia Romagna, crossing Lombardy, touching Lake Garda, Mincio and Po rivers, and two Renaissance cities on the water: Mantua and Ferrara.

Mantua and Ferrara, which are **UNESCO** World Heritage Sites, were connected for a long time in past centuries because of marriages and alliances between Gonzaga and Este families; but they were also strictly connected with artistic and literary ties. Still, rivers and canals crossing their territories have always been fundamental for agriculture and communication and trades.

Water actually characterizes this itinerary: Mincio in Mantua, Po in Ferrara and then the Adriatic Sea. You may easily and slowly travel by bike or by boat to better appreciate this peculiar territory.

From the lake to the sea, from lake and morainal landscape around Mincio river to the majestic calm of Po stream and the relaxing Adriatic shores.

The cycle track starts in Peschiera del Garda;



from there, you may take several deviations to explore nature and history along the morainal hills towards Mantua.

From the lake banks in **Mantua**, you proceed towards Bagnolo San Vito, where the important Forcello archaeological park lays. Here you finally meet Po river, proceeding along Mincio left riverbank towards Governolo and passing over the lock. The itinerary keeps on along the Po left riverbank as far as Ostiglia, then Revere – and its Po river museum –; crossing the iron bridge, you get to Quattrelle along Po right riverbank.

The Truffle Route celebrates a very special produce of Oltrepo area, while the landscape





is spread with pear trees, melon plants, Grana Padano and Parmigiano Reggiano dairies, Lambrusco winegrowers' cooperatives. Bonizzo, a small village in southern province of Mantua, hosts the Truffle Museum. The province of **Ferrara** starts in Stellata di Bondeno; here the cycle track becomes the "Destra Po Route" on the right riverbank. It is one of the longest cycle itineraries in Italy and is a part of Eurovelo project; it starts from the star shaped Rocca Possente fortress. After crossing Panaro river, you get to Bondeno, where you may take the walk and cycle track along Burana canal as far as Ferrara. Its town centre is charming and tranquil, with many bicycles, and no car access.

From here you may proceed to the sea, cycling towards Francolino and then along the "Destra Po Route" through a fascinating

landscape. Near Ro, you may admire the Mill on the Po, inspired by Riccardo Bacchelli's famous novel. The river flows calmly till Serravalle, where it branches out in two: one branch flows northwards to Venice, the other, the Po di Goro, flows southwards.

This river fork is called Porta del Delta; from here you proceed along Po di Goro riverbank towards Mesola, famous for its elegant Este castle. The river runs southwards for 10 km through the Po Delta Park. Then you keep on as far as Goro and Gorino, which are focused on fishing and green tourism, passing by a pontoon bridge to the Veneto province. From Gorino, you may proceed by boat towards the Adriatic Sea to the lighthouse.









From Lake Garda to the Adriatic Sea

BY BIKE

along the rivers between Mantua and Ferrara





Mantova, un territorio che accoglie

Ferrara, città del Rinascimento e il suo Delta del Po Mantova e Sabbioneta

Ferrara terra e acqua