

IN THE CENTRE OF THE PROVINCE

This route follows a circuit of the geographical centre of the Province of Ferrara, connecting the great river Po, the northern limit of the province, and the Po di Volano, which was active from the 6th century and was one of the main two branches of the river along with the Po di Primaro, but was slowly supplanted by what is now the main stream. After the 18th-19th centuries the Po di Volano had really become little more than a canal.

The discriminating cycle-tourist who is interested in a more-than-superficial understanding of the region will cross these middle lands with interest: though there are no particularly precious buildings but there are rural workplaces, little old churches, and urban areas which recount the era of land reclamation with its waterworks and countryside taken from lagoons.

The point of departure here is the areas beside the river where the **'Mulino sul Po'** is anchored. This is a faithful reconstruction of the mill boats which were on the river hereabouts over a century ago, and has been placed in a very attractive natural surroundings: the Mill isn't just an open-air museum, but a living and productive reality where you can watch the milling and the preparation of bread in a tourist centre with moorings and a landscaped area by the river. We proceed on minor roads towards **Ro**, through **Zocca** where we turn onto the main part of the limited traffic path (the FE206) that leads to **Copparo**. Before the centre, the enchanting Romanesque Church of San Venanzio welcomes the visitor; it is one of the oldest buildings in the province and has frescoes of the Bolognese school from the mid 14th Century. The town of Copparo, founded in the mediaeval era, grew up on Este hunting grounds which we can see by the building of the Town Hall (Palazzo Comunale) on the ruins of an Este country house.

Romanesque Church of San Venanzio



Sabbioncello San Vittore, Villa della Mensa

From Copparo we reach **Sabbioncello San Vittore** almost entirely on a restricted traffic route (the FE211), and there we start alongside the Po di Volano which at this point is part of the Ferrara waterway, passing by the *Villa della Mensa*.

After **Migliarino**, along minor roads and a little unmetalled track, we get to **Ostellato**.

to the Este family. At one point it was surrounded by lagoons and then involved with the land reclamation which dried out the Valle del Mezzano. Today from that area all that remains are the **Anse Vallive**, our destination, which constitute a biotype freshwater wetland area unique in the region, especially for the quantity and variety of its animal life.

The River Po



The Ferrara waterway

The Ferrara waterway (Idrovia Ferrarese) links the Po with the Adriatic Sea, it actually leaves from Pontelagoscuro and ends at Porto Garibaldi; it is 70 km long and is made up of the Canale Boicelli (Pontelagoscuro - Ferrara), then a stretch of the natural course of the Po di Volano (Ferrara - Fiscaglia di Migliarino) and lastly the navigable canal from Migliarino to Porto Garibaldi that finishes in the Adriatic.

Ostellato has very ancient origins, as evidenced by numerous archaeological finds, the first documentation goes back to 997. Ostellato belonged first to Comacchio, then to Pomposa Abbey, from which it was ceded

For more about the Anse Vallive see **route no. 8**, From Ostellato to Argenta, p. 62.