

# The Via Francigena in Rome

Paths of the ancient pilgrimage route



# ROMA



Assessorato alla Crescita culturale  
Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali



Cultural route  
of the Council of Europe  
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du Conseil de l'Europe



## The via Francigena in Rome Paths of the ancient pilgrimage route

Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali with the  
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This guidebook provides detailed information on the Via Francigena pilgrimage route in Rome. After introducing the history of the route, the guidebook divides into two sections: the northern and the southern Via Francigena. The first part encloses two alternative naturalistic paths, while the second one comprises two main routes with the related alternative trails.



The urban paths are indicated in red



The naturalistic paths are indicated in green



Special topics are indicated in yellow



The boxes related to the ancient roads are indicated in orange

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Legge 633 del 22 Aprile 1941 e successive modifiche.

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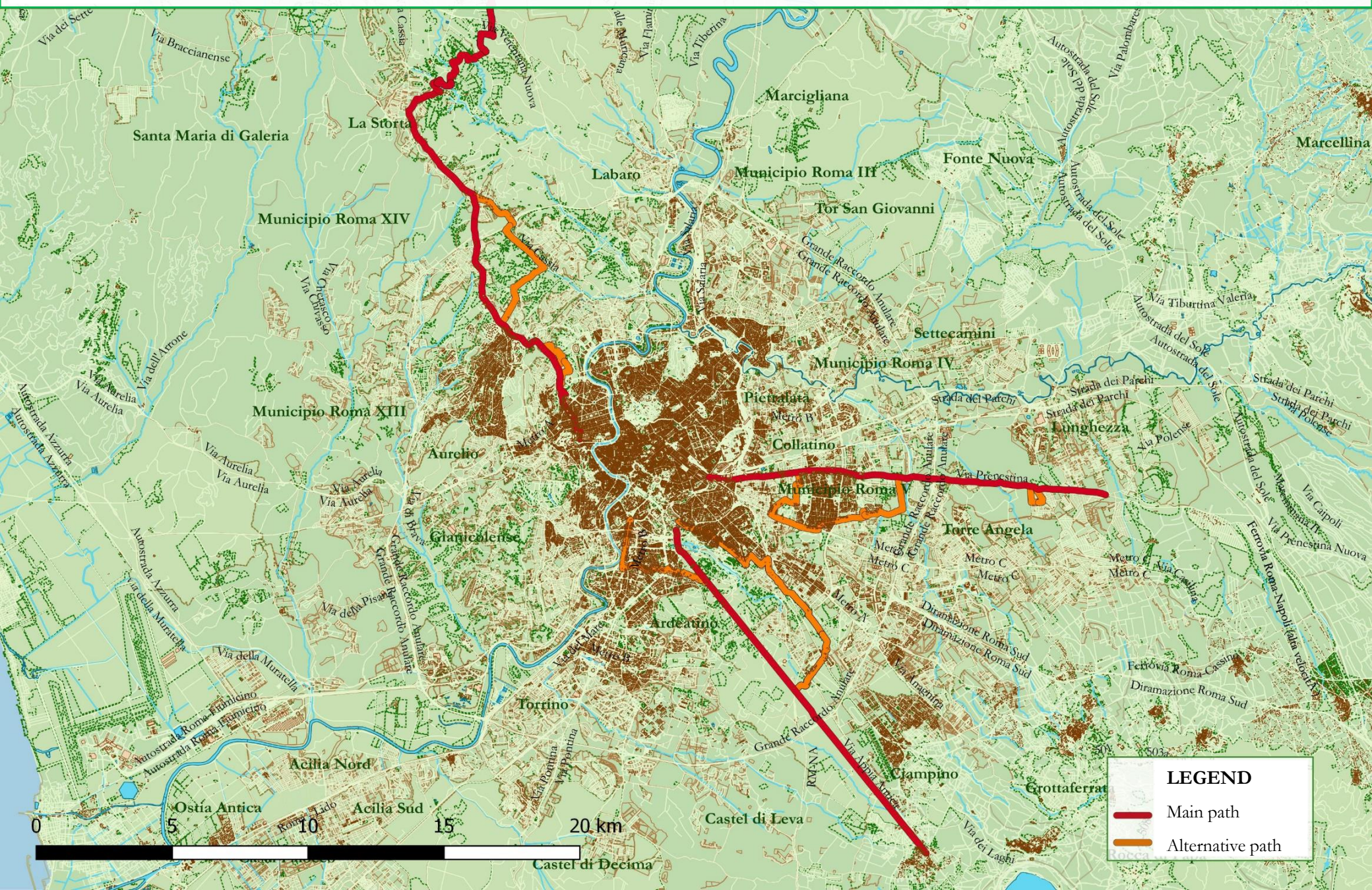
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## THE VIA FRANCIGENA IN ROME





# THE VIA FRANCIGENA

The via Francigena is the most important pilgrim route running from northern Europe to Rome and continuing towards south to Apulia and to the harbors of the Mediterranean, from which in the past the pilgrims set sail towards Jerusalem. The route, used since the Early Middle Ages, has been called “Francigena” since the Frankish Kingdom when this path was almost entirely included in its territories.

The pilgrims and merchants undertook this journey facing hidden dangers along rough roads and in unsafe times. The route was not only used to transmit merchandize but also to vehicle traditions, languages and experiences becoming a “cultural route” (Jacques Le Goff).

Nowadays the growing interest for pilgrimage routes and the new trend of “slow” travels bring a multitude of modern pilgrims along the Via Francigena searching for a journey in the midst of nature.

In 1994 the European Council has identified this route as an “European Council’s cultural itinerary”, while in 2004 it has been declared an “European Council’s great cultural itinerary”.

The European Association of Vie Francigene (AEVF) was founded in 2001 to promote the values of walks and pilgrimages.

AEVF is officially allowed by the European Council, Roma Capitale is both founding partner and member of the Executive Board.

## SIGERIC’S JOURNEY

It is difficult to retrace the old itinerary of the via Francigena: the path has been modified in part for the seasonal feasibility and in part for historical events during the Middle Ages.

Among the sources which describe this long journey, the main one is the diary of the Archbishop of Canterbury Sigeric. He wrote it in 990 on his way back to England from Rome where he went to receive his *pallium*, an ecclesiastical vestment, symbol of the jurisdiction delegated to high priests by the Holy See.

His itinerary is the most important document for retracing the path as it is very detailed and entirely preserved. Therefore it has been useful to define the modern path.



*View on Rome from Monte Mario.*

Today the via Francigena is a 1800 km long route which passes, from Canterbury towards Rome, through four European countries (England, France, Switzerland and Italy) and through seven Italian regions (Valle d’Aosta, Piemonte, Lombardia, Emilia Romagna, Liguria, Toscana, Lazio).

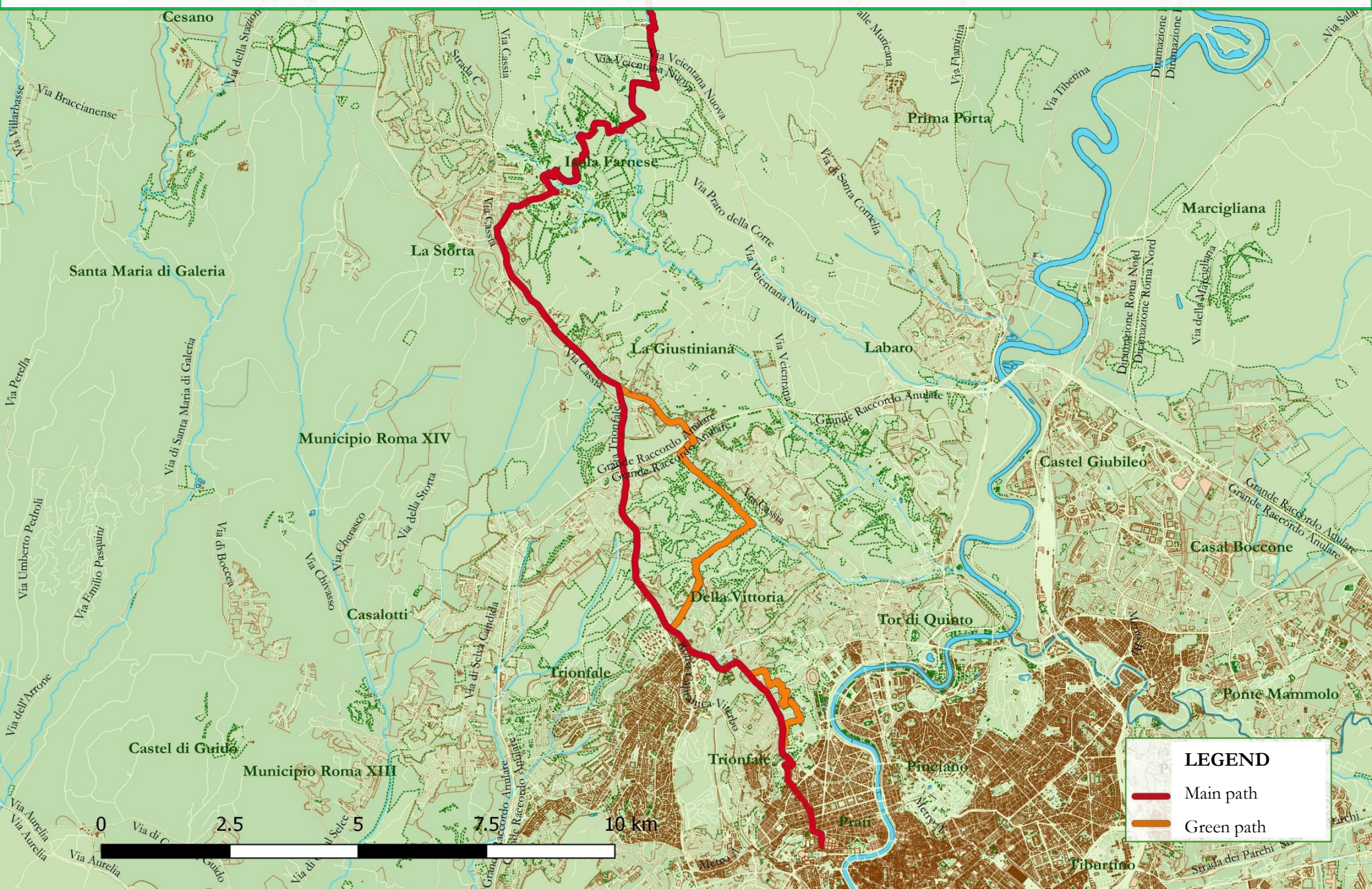
The via Francigena crosses a large part of the area of Rome, where there is the final destination of the pilgrimage: the Saint Peter’s Basilica. The path inside the city has been determined in February 2015, with a deliberation defining the official paths. The north section starts from Parco di Veio and ends in piazza San Pietro with two alternative paths inside the nature reserves Insugherata and Monte Mario.

Also the southern path as been retraced according to what the Regione Lazio has determined. Here you can choose between the *Regina viarum*, the via Appia (with the related alternative paths “via delle Sette Chiese” and “via Latina”), and the route Prenestina (with the related alternative paths “Tenuta della Mistica” e “Prato Fiorito”).

This guidebook provides images, maps and historical and practical detailed information which describe the path within the area of Rome.



THE NORTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA



**LEGEND**

- Main path
- Green path





## THE NORTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA



*The pathway in the Insugherata Nature Reserve.*

The northern via Francigena is an ancient path covered by the Archbishop Sigeric in 990 on his way back from Rome to Canterbury. It follows two main roads: the **via Cassia**, from the borgo di Isola Farnese to the area of La Giustiniana, and the **via Trionfale**, from La Giustiniana to largo Trionfale, near the Saint Peter's Basilica. The passing of time and the evolution of urban planning have considerably modified the conditions of these two main roads which twist and turn inside the Roman outskirts. Since these roads are always congested, it was necessary to find alternative routes: the path "Insugherata" and the path "Monte Mario" which pass through two Nature Reserves and offer pilgrims a pleasant and safer walk in the midst of greenery.

Walking along the northern via Francigena, after crossing the Parco di Veio, you reach Rome from via della Riserva Campetti. Follow this road until you reach via dell'Isola Farnese. From here you can turn right onto via dell'Isola Farnese and continue along the street until the crossroads with the via Cassia. Once you reach the via Cassia turn left towards Rome. In the area called "La Giustiniana" there is the crossroads with the via Trionfale: from here you can either turn right onto the via Trionfale or continue along the via Cassia following the alternative trail "Insugherata".



*Road sign in the Insugherata Nature Reserve.*

Following the via Cassia until the street number 1081 you get to the entrance of **Insugherata Nature Reserve**. The path through the Reserve starts from here and it's about 5 km long until via Augusto Conti, from which you exit the park. Continue along via

Fratelli Gualandi and, at the end of the street, turn left onto the via Trionfale.

Once you reach the via Trionfale, you can either follow it entirely until largo Trionfale or take the alternative path through "Monte Mario".

In order to reach the **Nature Reserve of Monte Mario** it is necessary to take a detour from the via Trionfale to piazza Igea by turning left onto via Igea.

Continue until the crossroads with via della Camilluccia which you follow until you turn left onto via Edmondo De Amicis. The entrance of the Reserve is located on the right after a bend.

Inside, follow the path which leads to the first open space with view on the city. Then continue along the trail until you exit the Nature Reserve from via del Parco della Vittoria. Here you are again on the via Trionfale and after just a few meters, on the left, re-enter the Reserve by crossing an arch in order to enjoy the view of the Saint Peter's Basilica.

Once again exit on the via Trionfale and proceed along the street until largo Trionfale. From here follow via Leone IV and at the end of the skirt the Vatican walls turning left onto viale dei Bastioni di Michelangelo. When you reach piazza del Risorgimento, turn right onto via di Porta Angelica. From here follow the street until you reach the Bernini's colonnade and the Saint Peter's Basilica.



km 1,2

THE NORTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA

## FROM ISOLA FARNESE TO LA GIUSTINIANA

Coming from Formello, we get into the city of Rome through **Parco di Veio** in via della Riserva Campetti and we continue following this road until the crossroad with via dell'Isola Farnese. From here we turn to the right on via dell'Isola Farnese and we follow along this road until we reach the crossroads with via Cassia, where we turn to the left towards Rome. Proceeding along the via Cassia we pass through the area of **La Storta**. Here in piazza della Visione (square of the Vision), stood an ancient coaching inn. Nowadays in the same square, the **Cappella della Visione** (Chapel of the Vision) can be visited.

### THE CHAPEL OF THE VISION

The Church is located in the place where, according to tradition, in 1537 Ignatius of Loyola received a vision of Jesus Christ holding the cross. According to biographers, after this event, in 1540, he decided to establish the Society of Jesus. Since then, the Church became a venue of worship. The façade has two low windows on both sides of the front door each with an underlying seat, in order to allow the pilgrim to kneel down and pray if the Church was closed. On May 10<sup>th</sup> 1944 the chapel was destroyed by a bombardment and in the same year it was rebuilt, returning to be an important staging point for the pilgrims along the via Francigena. The Church can be visited every working day (or anyway it can be accessible by asking the near parish).

Continuing on the via Cassia once reached the intersection with via Torre delle Cornacchie, there is its namesake **Tower**, which dates back between the 11th and 12th centuries. At the intersection between via Cassia and via Riccardo Moretti, there is a tower with a farmhouse: **Torre della Spizzichina**, also constructed between the 11th and the 12th centuries. Both towers were built in order to control the inward and outward Roman traffic. A third complex, called **Torre della Castelluccia**, can be reached from the via Cassia turning to the right onto via della Torre delle Cornacchie and then to the left onto via della Torre di Spizzichino and then again to the right onto via del Casale della Castelluccia.

The area is called **La Giustiniana** and it's named after the ancient family Giustiniani, who owned a large estate in this place.



*The Chapel of the Vision in 1966.*



*Torre delle Cornacchie.*

Arrived at the intersection with the via Trionfale you can choose either to turn to the right, following the traditional path, or to remain on the via Cassia, following the recommended alternative route in the midst of greenery.





## THE ANCIENT CITY OF VEII

**Veii** was an old Etruscan city which stood on a wide plain near the current Borgo di Isola Farnese. The village has been inhabited since protohistory and was at its height between the 6th and the 5th century B.C. The control of trade along the banks of the Tiber and of the salts marshes at the mouth of the river caused conflicts with Rome. After ten years of besiege, Veii was occupied by the Romans in 396 B.C.

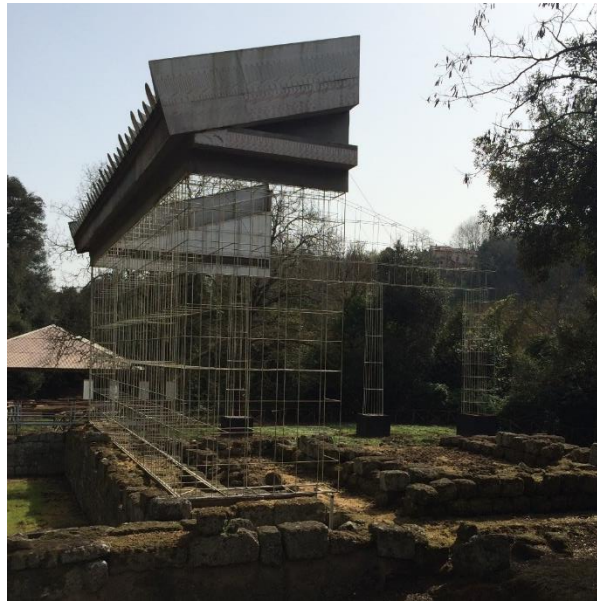
Reaching Rome, along the via Francigena, we can notice the remains of two areas which stood on the edge of the ancient city and were place of worships.

**The archaeological area of Campetti** was an holy area situated along the western slopes of the plateau, with a number of structures linked to the water worship. The venerated gods in this area were Igea, Esculapio, Ercole, Fontes and Diana. Around the 5th and 6th century A.D. some sectors were occupied by private structures, while during the 7th century A.D. the area was definitively abandoned.

Excavation work in the archaeological site is still continuing.

**The Portonaccio sanctuary** lies on a natural terrace along the western plateau on the Etruscan city of Veii. The first signs of worship occurred in the middle of the 7th century B.C. when a votive offering was established and the area was paved. The construction of the temple of Apollo dates back to the end of the

6th century B.C. and its ruins dominate the holy area which nowadays are valued by the rebuilding proposed by Franco Ceschi in 1993.



*Apollo's temple in Portonaccio sanctuary.*

It is possible to enter the archaeological site from via Riserva Campetti (Mon-Thur 9-17; Fri 9-14).

The ancient urban settlement of the Etruscan city was reduced over the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. to the area of the current Borgo di **Isola Farnese**.

Previously known as "Isola", due to its position

between the valleys of La Storta and San Sebastiano and the river Piordo, it added "Farnese" when in the 7th century the family acquired the castle and the estate, previously owned by Orsini family.

### THE HAMLET OF ISOLA FARNESE

The existence of a fortified center in this area has been reported since 1003 A.D. During the 12th century the village was quite large, counting six churches: San Pancrazio, Santa Lucia, Santa Maria de prato, San Giovanni, San Gregorio and Santa Maria della valle. One of these, the church of San Pancrazio, still dominates the square. Although its foundation is medieval, its shapes are the result of a massive rebuilding dating back to the 15th century.



*Isola Farnese's castle.*

## VIA CASSIA

The via Cassia is one of the most important consular Roman roads which headed to the north. It was built in the 2nd century B.C. by a consul called Cassius in order to connect Rome to the southern Etruria. Still today it is a very busy road leading to Tuscany.

### WHICH CASSIUS?

There were at least five Roman Consuls called Cassius in the 2nd century B.C. when, according to the studies, the road was built. For this reason historians and academics have not yet been able to identify exactly the years of its construction and the identity of the person who ordered the commission.

The ancient sources mentioned it as the central of the three roads which rejoined in Modena (at the east the via Flaminia and at the west the via Aurelia) and added that it divided the Etruria in two parts. A network of streets radiated out from the via Cassia in order to connect the main road to many inland villages. Although in recent years the city's landscape has been changed by urbanization, the via Cassia is an amazing example of continuity between the past and the present. Today the road still follows the route of the ancient Roman way: starting right after the Milvian Bridge and reaching Arezzo and Florence.



*Via Cassia, Publio Vibio Mariano's tomb in a drawing, 1800-1850.*



*Via Trionfale, view on Saint Peter's Basilica from Monte Mario.*

The route of the modern via Trionfale mostly follows

## VIA TRIONFALE

the ancient Roman road of which we have information from the 2nd century A.D. According to tradition its name comes from the triumphal processions that the Roman army made towards Rome after victories, probably using this path.

The road departed from Pons Neronianus, today disappeared, not far from the modern Ponte Vittorio Emanuele II. Once reached Saint Peter's, it separated from the via Cornelia and the via Aurelia. The road continued running north-south, underneath the modern via del Pellegrino, and over the Vatican City probably following approximately the path of the modern via Leone IV.

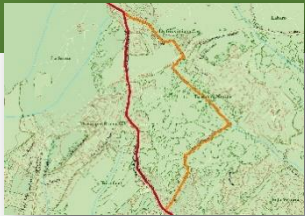
From Monte Mario on, the road seems to be retraced by the modern via Trionfale. Compared to the modern road the ancient one was slightly to the east and straighter.

### THE TRIUMPH

The triumph was an army parade in the Roman world which, when the soldiers returned, celebrated the victory in a military campaign. The Roman soldiers paraded with the captives, the spoils and paintings depicting episodes of war.

The procession ended at the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline hill.





km 7,3

## THE INSUGHERATA NATURE RESERVE

After passing the crossroads for La Giustiniana, we proceed on the right side of the via Cassia until we reach number 1081, the entrance of the Insugherata Nature Reserve.

This protected area of the Lazio Region, run by the Regional Body of RomaNatura, covers an area of 740 hectares between the XV and XIV municipality, bounded by the via Cassia to the east and by the via Trionfale to the west.

The Insugherata Nature Reserve is a valley surrounded by wooded hills. The name comes from the cork oaks which grow in large number in this territory.



*Aneto's flowers.*

### THE FAUNA

There are many different animals in this area: among the mammals there are wild boars, hedgehogs, moles, crested porcupine, foxes, weasels and hazel dormice; among the birds there are kestrels, pheasants, European turtle doves, cuckoos and many nocturnal birds of prey; among the reptiles there are the slow worm, the grass snake and, although rare, the venomous viper. Because of its great water wealth, this area is a perfect habitat for the existence and reproduction of many amphibians such as the spectacled salamander, a species found only in the Italian mainland, together with the more common toads and frogs.

### THE FLORA

The climate conditions of the area can be roughly divided into two main types which influence the growth of different plant species. There are cork oaks, downy oaks and evergreen oaks on the warmer side of the valley, while, on the cooler side there is a completely different kind of vegetation with considerably important mixed woodlands made up of European hornbeams, South European flowering ashes, pedunculate oaks and maples. There are also chestnuts and common hazels in the lower areas of the valley.

In geological terms, the land has the mixed clayish and sandy characteristics of the so called “Unità di Monte Mario”. Formed about two million years ago by settled sediments of the sea which became less and less deep, because of the receding of the waters during the ice ages and the consequent formation of new lands. Today it is still possible to find some marine fossils in the soil.



*Along the via Francigena, through the Reserve.*

Exiting the reserve along via Augusto Conti, we proceed on via Fratelli Gualandi until we get to the via Trionfale.



km 6,7

## FROM LA GIUSTINIANA TO MONTE MARIO

If you choose to proceed along the via Trionfale, you will have to deal with a traffic congested path for about 5 km. Crossing the Roman outskirts, however, some ancient monuments have been preserved. The first area you cross is called *Ipogeo degli Ottavi* (Hypogeum of the Octavian Family) and it is named after an important *tumulus*.

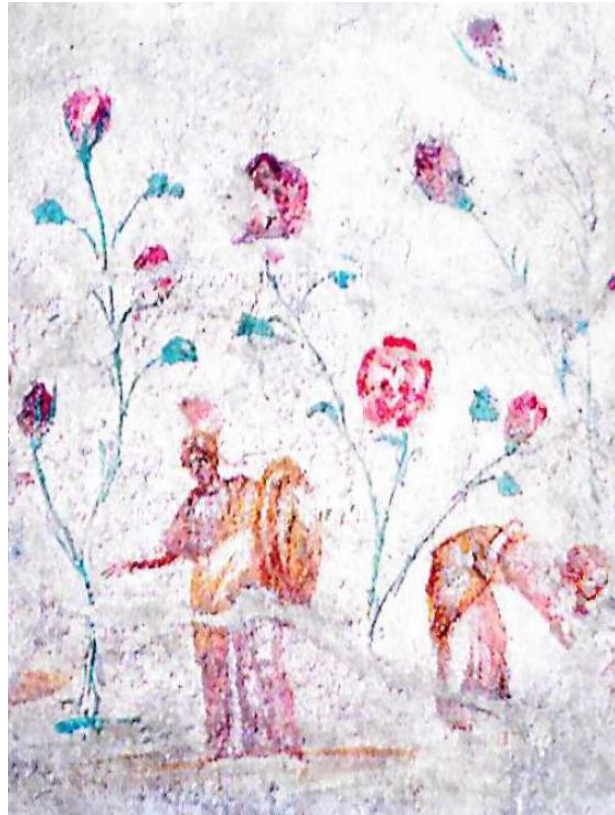
### HYPOGEUM OF THE OCTAVIAN FAMILY

This gentilitian sepulcher has been discovered in 1921 during the construction works of a housing complex. It stood along a *diverticulum* of the ancient via Trionfale. The sarcophagi of Octavia Paolina and of her father Octavius Felix, along with the ones of other two family members, have been found inside the burial chamber. Hence, the name of the monument corresponds to the one of the noble family which ordered the commission and probably owned a nearby villa. The monument dates back to the first years of the 3rd century A.D. and the first to be buried in it was the little Octavia, who died at the age of six and to whom the decoration of the *arcosolium* in line with the entrance is dedicated.

Proceeding along the via Trionfale, after crossing the area called **Ottavia**, we arrive near the ex **Santa Maria della Pietà** hospital complex, which develops along the right side of the road.

We now enter the district of Monte Mario and we

proceed along the via Trionfale keeping on the right at the crossroadss with the Giovanni XXIII gallery.



*Hypogeum of the Octavian Family, detail of the paintings.*

On the right side of the road there is the Agostino

Gemelli University Polyclinic, whereas on the left stands the **Forte Trionfale**, built after the unification of Italy.



*The Forte Trionfale in 1975.*

### THE FORTE TRIONFALE

Built between 1882 and 1888 along its namesake road, according to a Royal Decree of 1877 which assigned the forts the defensive tasks in the new capital. The Forte Trionfale, in particular, had to ensure the control on the routes heading towards Rome from the north. Its construction forced the via Trionfale to divert and to make a wide curve where the Forte stands.





## EX SANTA MARIA DELLA PIETÀ HOSPITAL COMPLEX



Ex Santa Maria della Pietà hospital complex.

Taking a detour from the Via Trionfale, you can reach the gardens and the ex Santa Maria della Pietà hospital complex in its namesake square. The **Museum Laboratorio della Mente** stands inside this structure, in pavilion number 6.

Thanks to audio-visual equipments you can travel through the history of the hospital from its foundation as "*Hospitale de'poveri forestieri et pazzi dell'Alma Città di Roma*" until its closure in 1999. The hospital was established in 1548 thanks to the magnanimity of personalities connected to Ignazio di Loyola.

The first headquarter, located near piazza Colonna, was initially designated to host the many pilgrims

expected for the holy year in 1550, later specialized in helping the poor, especially in taking care of the "*pazzzerelli*" (the insanes).

In 1725, since the Santo Spirito in Sassia hospital, the most important health institution in the city, could no longer host patients, Pope Benedict XIII built two new structures in Trastevere: San Gallicano and Santa Maria della Pietà alla Lungara. The latter experienced a remarkable growth.

Recognised as "*Opera Pia*" in 1861, at the beginning of the 20th century there was a need of a wider, more isolated and new structure. The construction of this new complex began in 1909 on the Monte Mario hill, entrusted to Edgardo Negri and Eugenio Chiesa. The new hospital was called "*Manicomio Provinciale di Santa Maria della Pietà*".

On the 31st of May 1914 it was inaugurated by Vittorio Emanuele III. The complex, conceived as a mental institution-village, consisted of forty-one hospital and recovery buildings which, surrounded by the greenery and connected to each other through an around 7 km road network, represented the biggest mental institution in Europe.

At the end of the 1960s the public opinion became aware of the often inhumane conditions inside the mental institutions. The Basaglia Law of 1978 closed the psychiatric hospital and transferred the patients in the new structures of the Italian National Health Service.

### STREET ART

Since 2015, the park and its pavilions have been experiencing a new and interesting phase in their history. Thanks to the project "*Caleidoscopio*" 28 artists have decorated the walls of the former mental hospital's buildings, adding a fresh touch of color in these places. Among the several international artists we mention: Gomez, Moby Dick e Jerico.

In November 2016 Gomez realized *Le cose che non si vedono* (What can not be seen), the big mural that decorates the façade of the Museum Laboratorio della Mente: the artist's perception of the outside world.



Luis Gomez de Teran, What can not be seen, 2016.





## THE MONTE MARIO NEIGHBORHOOD

Proceeding south along the via Trionfale we get to piazza di Monte Gaudio, where there is the **church of San Francesco a Monte Mario**.

### SAN FRANCESCO A MONTE MARIO

The church of San Francesco a Monte Mario is about 200m from the Forte Trionfale. The original structure was built in 1668 under the will of Bartolomeo Neri, who owned an estate in the area. The façade, erected during the years 1728-1729 and designed by Pietro Passalacqua, the same designer of the façade at Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, has a vertical development emphasized by two high lateral pilasters and a staircase leading to the entrance. Inside the single-nave church, with a barrel vault, has Baroque decorations and an altar in polychrome marbles and Corinthian columns. The sacristy contains a canvas depicting the *Immaculate Mary* painted by Pietro Gagliardi (1865).



*The church of San Francesco a Monte Mario.*

Just a few meters from the church, there is the **Pio IX's fontanile**. Because of the foundation of the modern via Trionfale, it is on a pavement level much lower than the street. Built in 1866 under the will of Pope Pio IX the *Fontanile* is made of bricks. There are two basins: one inside, used for the laundry and the water supply, and one outside, used as a watering trough.

A Papal coats of arms marble plaque is situated on the façade of the *Fontanile* in homage to the Pope who ordered the commission. Proceeding along the via Trionfale you arrive to piazza Igea, where you can choose either to continue along the road until Saint Peter's Basilica or turn left along via Igea in order to take the recommended **alternative path of Monte Mario**, in the midst of greenery.

### THE ROME OF Pope PIO IX AND ITS FOUNTAINS

During the pontificate of Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) special attention has been paid to the public utilities. Among these it is worth noticing the interventions on the water supply systems and the monumental display of reservoirs with the building of fountains and *fontanili*. The so-called *fontanili* were born in the 17th century in order to meet the demand of water, ensuring that the citizens could use the water from the aqueducts, which was free and healthier. This meant avoiding the purchase of Tiber river's water from the «*acquaiole*». At the same time these structures allowed the urban development. The Pio IX's *fontanile* was built along the via Trionfale for the purpose of supplying the outskirts of Sant'Onofrio and encouraging its growth.



*The Pio IX's fontanile, in 1866.*



km 2,6

## THE MONTE MARIO NATURE RESERVE

The Nature Reserve of Monte Mario was established in 1997 and is managed by the regional institution RomaNatura.

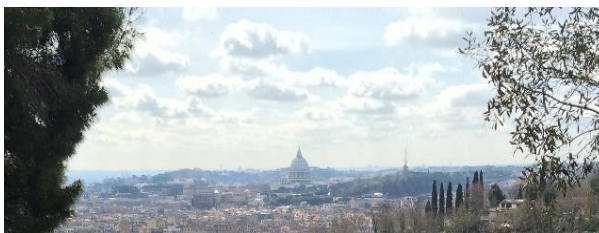
This green area inside the City of Rome covers an area of 238 hectares and stands on the top of a mount, from which the area takes its name.

In spite of the vivid building growth, the landscape is still similar to the one encountered in the past by pilgrims.

### THE FLORA

The rich vegetation includes trees and shrubs. Holm oak, cork oak, heather and butcher's broom are predominant in the north area, while in the hollowed areas you can find poplar, which usually grows near the water streams, and the so-called Judas-tree. The latter draws its name from a legend, according to which the Apostle Judas hung himself to a tree of this species: its knotty wood would be a consequence of this event, while its flowers revoke the tears of Jesus, as their shape is similar to a drop and the purple color recalls the shame provoked by Judas's betrayal.

Black locust, elm and bay tree are predominant in the southern area of the reserve and you can also catch a sight of ivy-leaved toadflax with its typical leaves of polilobated shaves, which in the past was used for infusions for kidney stone disease or for its cicatrizing action.



*Saint Peter's dome from the Monte Mario panoramic viewpoint.*



*Along the via Francigena in the Monte Mario Nature Reserve.*

### MONTE MARIO

Monte Mario is known in the history of pilgrimage towards Rome as **Monte Gaudio** for the happiness of the wayfarer when he finally viewed Rome and the Saint Peter's Basilica.

Monte Mario is a high ground of 139 meters, the highest of the Farnesina hills, previously included in the *Ager Vaticanus*, an extended area on the right bank of the river Tiber.

Geologists recognize different layers which testify the evolution of this area from a deep marine environment to a coastal one and then to a lagoon one.

The name derives probably from *Mons Malum*, a toponym popularly used for this area since, in 998, the nobleman Crescenzo Nomentano was executed under the will of Emperor Otto III and his tortured body was showed on the mount. He was held responsible for the election of the antiPope John XVI.

Monte Mario was chosen as aristocratic residence already in the Roman times and several villas have been built since the 16th century. We mention Villa Strozzi, Villa Madama - built by the Medici and designed by Raphael, then owned by Margaret of Austria, illegitimate daughter of Charles V, from whom the name of "*Madama*" derives - Villa Stuart, previously owned by the Bathurst family, which now hosts a clinic and lastly Villa Mellini, built by Mario Mellini, where today the National Institute for Astrophysics is located.





km 2,4

THE NORTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA

## FROM MONTE MARIO TO SAINT PETER'S BASILICA

Leaving the Natural Reserve, the alternative path rejoins the traditional route. For the short stretch up ahead it is recommended that you keep walking carefully on the left side just near the guard rail as there is no pedestrians path. Just a few meters ahead turn left and go down the flight of stairs of Monte Mario, which helps to avoid the hairpin turns and proceed safely down the slope of the hill.

At the end of the road's descent there is an alley pointed out by a signboard on the left indicating the **Church of San Lazzaro dei Lebbrosi**, an ancient wayfarer's shelter with a Church inside the borgo of San Lazzaro. It was the last stop of via Francigena for the pilgrims heading towards Saint Peter. Cardinals came to this place in order to meet the foreign ambassadors and the future Emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, who reached Rome to be crowned.

After passing the Church of San Lazzaro proceed along the via Trionfale towards the center of Rome. At the street numbers 60-64, just before arriving to largo Trionfale, stands the so-called **Palazzina del Falcone**, named after the ancient toponym for this area (Prata Falconi), known since the mid-fifteenth century. It initially belonged to the Strozzi family and was later used as a choaching inn.

### SAN LAZZARO DEI LEBBROSI

Originally dedicated to Santa Maria Maddalena, the Church changed its name to San Lazzaro in the 15th century, after the conversion of the nearby neighboring inn into a leper colony for pilgrims. During the Sack of Rome (1527) the Church was heavily damaged and then rebuilt in 1536. It is characterized by a hut-shaped façade and a marble portal with St.'s Peter - Coat of arms. The Church is divided into three naves by reusing ancient Roman columns. Outside there are the typical pilgrims seats.



*Achille Pinelli, San Lazzaro dei Lebbrosi's church, 1834.*



*The Palazzina del Falcone in 1973.*

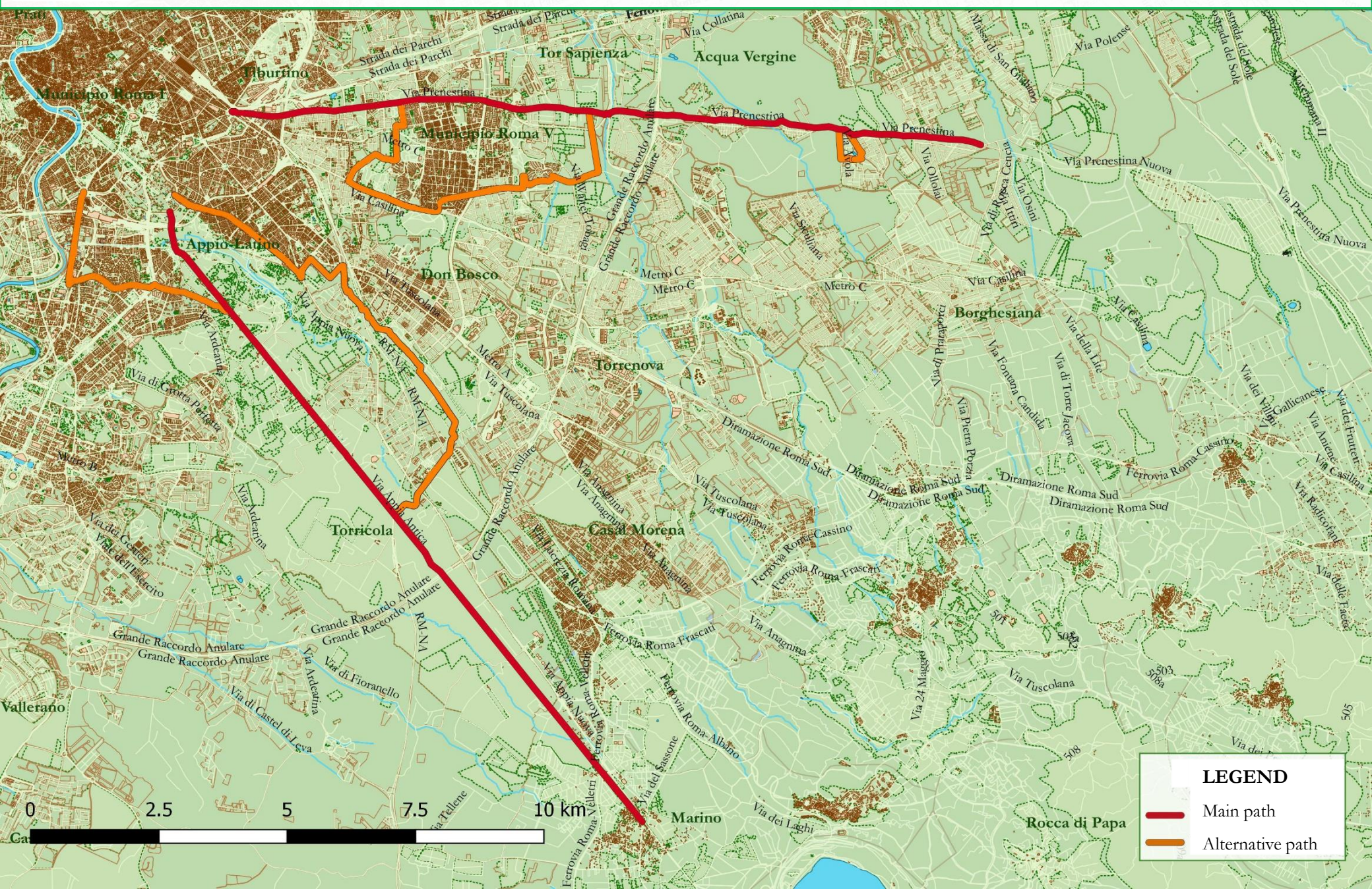
Arrived in largo Trionfale, the route continues along via Leone IV, from which you catch sight of the impressive walls surrounding the Vatican City. These walls are the result of the defensive system devised by Pope Paul III (1534-1549) and built with the collaboration of architects like Michelangelo and Antonio da Sangallo, in order to replace the Leonine walls.

At the end of the road we skirt the walls turning to the left towards piazza Risorgimento and then to the right towards Porta Angelica. Borgo is the district designated to welcome devoted and wayfarers.

The arrival is beyond the Porta Angelica, where the pilgrim is embraced by the majestic Bernini's colonnade and by the **Saint's Peter Basilica**.



# THE SOUTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA





## THE SOUTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA

The southern via Francigena is an historic route of pilgrimage from Rome to the Holy Land.

Over the centuries, this path has been mentioned several times, above all in the Middle Ages when, with the resumption of the relations between Byzantium and the West, the route became more and more important as the ideal conjunction between the Northern and Mediterranean world.

Nowadays this trail departs from Rome, it reaches the coasts of the Apulia and then continues to Jerusalem, passing through five different regions (Lazio, Molise, Basilicata, Campania and Apulia) and one hundred and fifty municipalities.

This long route is covered by walkers and pilgrims for whom Rome is a point of departure or arrival.

In February 2015 a resolution of the municipality of Rome defined two major directions: along the via Appia or along the via Prenestina. Departing one from Porta san Sebastiano and the other from Porta Maggiore, they both arrive to the boundary of Roma Capitale. Since these routes pass through many arterial roads and suburban areas, for both of them it was necessary to create other alternative paths.

### **The via Appia**

Along the via Appia the first alternative trail is that of the “Sette Chiese”, which from Porta San Paolo proceeds along the via Ostiense up to the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls and then goes on along via delle Sette Chiese until it rejoins the via Appia Antica.



*Southern via Francigena along via Appia.*



*Information plaque along via Prenestina.*

The second alternative trail, called “Latina”, starts from Porta Latina and proceeds along different roads passing through three green areas: the archaeological Park of the Tombs of the via Latina, the Park of the Torre del Fiscale and the Park of the Aqueducts. Finally the route rejoins the via Appia Antica.

### **The via Prenestina**

Also the via Prenestina has two alternative trails: the so called “Tenuta della Mistica” and “Prato Fiorito” which pass through peripheral areas with green zones, archaeological evidences and modern buildings. Both these roads separate from the main one and then rejoin with it after a few kilometers.



## VIA APPIA

The via Appia, also called *regina viarum*, was built in order to connect Rome with the most important villages in southern Italy. Traditionally, it was the censor Appius Claudius Caecus who ordered to construct the road, from Rome to Capua. In 312 B.C. Appius Claudius, as magistrate, following a preexisting layout, modified and paved this road, which was then named Appia after him. The construction of such an imposing infrastructure project is linked with the historical context of the second half of the 4th century B.C. During this period Rome, in the wake of the Second Samnite War, needed to move its troops towards southern Italy as fast as possible, keeping at the same time a tighter control of the coasts. Around the mid 3rd century B.C. the road was extended to the settlement of Benevento whereas, certainly before the 2nd B.C., the stretch from Benevento to Brindisi was built. At last Emperor Trajan built an alternative route which, departing from Benevento, led to the Adriatic coast in the shortest time possible, arriving directly to Canusium (today's Canosa di Puglia) and to Egnatia and then to Brindisi. Before the construction of the Aurelian walls the road departed from the ancient Porta Capena, located at the southern limit of the Circus Maximus. Soon the via Appia became the major connecting road between Rome and southern Italy and along to Greece and the east.



*Basoli pavement in Appia.*

Because of the importance of this road and of its traffic density, Statius named it *regina viarum* (queen of the roads) and many sepulchers belonging to some of the most wealthy and influential Roman families were built along its trail. From the *Bellum Gothicum*, written by Procopius of Caesarea, we know that in the 6th century A.D. the via Appia was still regularly traveled. From this moment on the road became less and less traveled and the normal maintenance was no longer realized. Yet, it was still largely covered in the Roman suburbia, since many Christian places of worship rose in this area, near the apostolic memory which had its center in the *cymiterium ad catacumbas* in the Basilica of St. Stephen, at the III mile of the via Appia.

### FULL OF NUMBERS!

The street was built with sizes that later have become accepted for all the consular Roman roads: 14 feet wide (4,10 m) for the central section, coated with "*pietra basaltina*", 11 feet wide (3,10 m) for the dirt pedestrian paths on each side. On the whole the road was more than 10 m wide. In order to shorten distances the road was built by preferring straight paths whenever possible and in order to overcome obstacles several areas were reclaimed (such as in the area of the pianura pontina) and mighty buildings were constructed on the slopes.



km 0,85

THE SOUTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA

## FROM PORTA SAN SEBASTIANO TO THE III MILE

The extra-urban route begins from Porta San Sebastiano, however, inside the Aurelian walls, it is worth noting the **Tomb of the Scipios**, dating back to the beginning of the 3rd century B.C., belonged to one of the most important families of the Republican Age.



Porta San Sebastiano in 1933.

It is also worth noting the **columbaria of Vigna Codini**, dating to the first half of the 1st century A.C. Nowadays **Porta San Sebastiano** (originally named Porta Appia) hosts the **Museum of the walls**. What we see today is the result of many restorations which took place over the centuries (one of the most important is the one which occurred in the 5th century A.D.). Not far from here it is possible to see an arch of the Aqua Marcia conventionally called Arch of Drusus. A few dozen meters from the walls you find the first *miliarium*, a stone indicating the beginning of the second mile, since originally it departed from Porta Capena. Proceeding along the trail you meet an

overpass and then the river Almona. This stretch of road from the Almona to the cross with the via Ardeatina is lined with many monuments: the so called **Tomb of Geta**, the church of *Domine quo vadis?*, the **Tomb of Priscilla** and the nearby *osteria*.

Near the church *Domine quo vadis?* there is a crossroads: on the left departs via della Caffarella, on the right via Ardeatina and continuing straight we remain on the via Appia. From this point, on the right side of the street there is a wall which demarcates the Catacombs of Callixtus and of Balbina.

### DOMINE QUO VADIS?

Near the crossroads with the via Ardeatina there is the small Church of Saint Mary *in Palmis*, known as *Domine quo vadis?*. The church was built over the place where, according to tradition, the apostle Peter, while escaping from Rome because of the persecutions, would have met Jesus. According to this telling, Peter would have asked the Messiah where he was headed («*Domine quo vadis?*») and Christ would have answered: “I come to Rome to be crucified again”. After this encounter Peter understood that he had to turn back and face his martyrdom. At the center of the Church, on a small marble slab, there are two footprints left, according to tradition, by Jesus (actually an ancient pagan ex voto).

Opposite to the Tomb of Geta there are the headquarters of the Appian Way Regional Park, inside the ex Cartiera Latina (an ancient paper mill).

After passing the crossroads with via Ardeatina and via della Caffarella we get to the **catacombs of Callixtus**, traditionally considered the first hypogeal Christian common cemetery in Rome (half 2nd century A.D.).



Domine quo vadis? Church.





km 2,9

## AD CATACUMBAS: THE III MILE

The III mile stretch of the via Appia is the one that preserves most of the historical and archaeological evidences, including the Catacombs and the Basilica of San Sebastiano, the Circus of Maxentius and the Tomb of Caecilia Metella.

### THE CATACOMBS

The area where the Catacombs of San Sebastiano rose was originally called *ad catacumbas* ("where there is a depression/cavity" indicating that there were gravel quarries). The name was then used to identify all the common hypogeum cemeteries, both Christian and pagan.

After a bloody persecution of Christians ordered by the Emperor Valerian (3rd century A.D.), the relics of the apostles Peter and Paul (from which comes the original name *memoria Apostolorum*) were laid in these **catacombs** (named "**of San Sebastiano**" from the early Middle Ages), and then moved in the basilicas named after the two saints.

The **Basilica of Saint Sebastian Outside The Walls** is one of the six circular basilicas built in Rome under the Emperor Constantine. Throughout time the Basilica underwent many renovations, the most important of which was promoted by Cardinal Scipione Borghese in 1608 with the art direction of Guido Reni. The most relevant work of art preserved inside the Basilica is certainly the *Salvator Mundi* made by Gian Lorenzo Bernini.

Proceeding along the via Appia you get to the **Villa of Maxentius**, a complex consisting of three main buildings: the circus, the mansion and the Tomb of Romulus (son of Maxentius). These buildings date back to the beginning of the 4th century A.D. and were realized by the Emperor Maxentius, who was then defeated by Constantine in 312 A.D. during the battle of the Milvian Bridge.

A litter further, on the left side of the street, there is the **Tomb of Caecilia Metella** (end of the 1st century B.C.). The tomb consists of a squared basement on top of which rises a majestic cylindrical drum, decorated at his top with bucrania and flower festoons.

### CAECILIA METELLA

A glance at the status women in ancient Rome: the main inscription is short and simple, "For *Caecilia Metella* daughter of *Quintus Creticius* and wife of *Crasso*". Here the woman is described only referring to the men in her life: her father, who was consul in 69 B.C., and her husband.

Between the 13th and 14th century this monument was turned into a *Castrum* by the Caetani family. A defensive tower (accomplished by incorporating the Tomb of Caecilia Metella), a defensive wall and a multi-store building were added to the original structure. Moreover, the Church of San Nicola was built not far away from here. From this point on it is possible to see the original ancient *basoli*

pavement of the via Appia.

Four hundred meters ahead the Tomb of Caecilia Metella, at number 22, there is the **Capo di Bove Villa**, which preserves the ruins of thermal baths built from the 2nd century A.D. to the 4th century A.D.



*The Tomb of Caecilia Metella, 1939-1949.*



km 9,6

THE SOUTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA

## AMONG VILLAS AND SEPULCHRES: FROM THE IV TO THE X MILE

Proceeding along our trail, on both sides of the street, there are a series of sepulchres and funeral buildings. At about one kilometer from Capo di Bove you find the so called **Tomb of Seneca**, composed of a façade in *opus latericium* (reconstructed in the 19th century by Antonio Canova). From number 203 on, on the right side of the street, among all the sepulchres it is worth to point out first the Tomb of the Licini, then the so called Sepolcro Dorico and at last the Tomb of Hilarus Fuscus.

### **HORATII AND CURIATII**

Proceeding along the road it is possible to see two graves: the **Tomb of the Horatii** and the **Tomb of the Curiatii**. According to an ancient Roman legend, during the age of king *Tullus Hostilius*, Rome and Albalonga were fighting a fierce battle and their armies would have met in this place. In order to avoid a slaughter, it was decided that only three members of each army should fight to death: the three brothers of the *Horatii* and those of the *Curiatii*. Only one of the *Horatii* survived and from that day on the two mounds became the tombs of the two families.

At via Appia number 1092 you find the majestic **Villa of the Quintilii**, one of the most sumptuous Roman rural villas. Its name comes from the family who owned it, the *Quintilii*, two members of which were consuls in 151 A.D. The monumental entrance of the villa was on the via Appia antica but the entire complex stretched towards north, including the residential and representation areas, the thermal baths, a maritime theatre, an aqueduct with some cisterns, an hippodrome and a stadium. When in 182 A.D. the two owners were killed by Emperor Commodus, the villa became Imperial property up to the 3rd century.

At the VI mile, on the left side of the street, there is **Casal Rotondo**, the largest circular burial monument on the via Appia.



*Villa of the Quintilii.*

It takes its name from the fact that a farmhouse was built on top of the circular Roman sepulchral building.

On the same side of the street, a little further on, it is possible to see a sighting tower dating back to the 12th century, the **Torre Selce**. The remains of some arches of the aqueduct which fed the Villa of the *Quintilii* can also be seen in this area.

At the VIII mile of the street, a couple kilometers south, on the left side, there are the ruins of the so called **Temple of Hercules**, recognizable by his pillars, which was in reality a stopping place for travelers.

On the opposite side of the road, before arriving to the crossroads with via Fioranello, there is the so called **Berretta del Prete**, a circular Roman sepulcher covered by a dome, which was then turned into a tower.

Just before the intersection with via Capanne di Marino, there are the ruins of a big mausoleum in *opus latericium* placed on top of a circular basement (originally decorated with marble slabs), ascribed to Emperor Gallienus.

At the IX mile we find a mound grave called **Monte di Terra**, while at the X mile, before the Rome-Velletri railway, there is the circular mausoleum named **La Mola** dated between the late Republican Age and the early Imperial Age.

## VIA OSTIENSE



Porta San Paolo.

Passing through Porta San Paolo you get on the modern via Ostiense, which mostly preserves the same layout of the ancient Roman path. The name of this road comes from the word “*ostium*” (in latin: river mouth), showing its final arrival (the city of Ostia, near the Tiber river’s mouth).

The construction of this Via is linked with the expansionist ambitions of the fourth king of Rome, *Ancus Marcius* (second half of the 7th century B.C.): according to tradition, the foundation of the city of Ostia, crucial for the control on the Tiber river, on the trades towards the sea and on the nearby salt mines, dates back to this period.

Today the ancient Porta Ostiense is called **Porta San**

**Paolo** because of its proximity with Saint Paul’s cathedral. Originally the door consisted of two arches with a semicircular tower on each side. It changed under the Reign of Massenzio (306-312 A.D.) when an inner door was added and the towers were heightened. Under Onorio (401-403) one of the arches of the outer door was removed, and the tower raised of a floor. Many centuries passed and, on the 10th of September 1943, the gate witnessed the desperate attempt of the Roman people to resist to the German occupation. 570 people died in this occasion, now remembered thanks to memorial inscriptions placed on the door. During the bombings in 1944 part of the ancient city wall, which connected the gateway with the Pyramid, was destroyed, in the exact place where the road dedicated to Raffaele Persichetti, who lost his life in duty, passes today. Nowadays the gateway hosts the **Via Ostiense Museum**, established in 1954 with the aim of illustrating the topography of the landscape between Rome and Ostia. The museum exhibits archaeological materials found in this area and two plastics which show the ancient city of Ostia and the imperial harbours of Emperors Claudius and Traianus. In the eastern tower there are remains of frescoes, dated between the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century, which reveal the presence of a Byzantine community who used to gather in this place. In the square opposite the gate stands the **Cestia Pyramid**, a burial monument built for a member of the *septemviri epulum* (priests who arranged banquets

in honor of the Gods) named *Gaius Cestius*. The Pyramid was built between 18 and 12 B.C. and was then incorporated in the Aurelian walls.

The building, square based, is placed on a basement in travertino and built with the *opus caementicium* technique, with a clay-brick pavement covered with Carrara marble slabs. A long hallway on the western side of the Pyramid leads to the burial chamber, with a rectangular ground plan and a barrel vault as a cover, originally decorated with frescos in third Pompeian Style which have almost completely disappeared. On the outside corners is still possible to see two of the four columns which decorated the monument.



Cestia Pyramid.





km 1,1

THE SOUTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA

## FROM THE NON-CATHOLIC CEMETERY TO THE GENERAL MARKETS

Nowadays, a well preserved stretch of wall, composed by equally-spaced four-sided towers, encloses the **Non-Catholic Cemetery**. In 1716, this area was given to the Stuart's court members, exiled from England, by Pope Clement XI. Thereafter also other non-Catholics could be buried in this place.

Here rest many eminent people such as the English poets John Keats, Percy B. Shelley, the politician Antonio Gramsci, the novelist Carlo Emilio Gadda. The cemetery keeps the Nordic tradition of burying the dead in the ground and the tombs are arranged in a simple way. Proceeding through the most ancient part of the cemetery it is still possible to see a piece of ancient Roman road paved by large stones called *basoli*, probably a byway of the via Ostiensis, along which there are remains of structures in *opus reticulatum* and is attached to a postern of the Aurelian walls.



*The non-catholic Cemetery.*



*Fountain of the amphorae in piazza Testaccio.*

### TESTACCIO

Before proceeding along your trail you can stop to visit the popular neighborhood of Testaccio. Here there is the so called **Monte dei cocci** (cocci: potshards), or Monte Testaccio, made of many pieces of broken amphorae from the nearby river port in use until the 4th century A.D., which gives the name to the district. Not far away from here there is the **MACRO**, contemporary art museum of Rome. This museum was built reusing the structures of a former slaughterhouse of the 19th century. Today, this district is well-known and very popular due to the many clubs and places where traditional Roman dishes can be tasted.

Back on the via Ostiense, on the left side of the square in front of the gateway, there is the **Porta San Paolo Railway Museum**, which shows the history of railway transport by exposing ancient locomotives and cable cars. The museum is located in the Rome Porta San Paolo train station and was opened in 2004.

The modern neighborhood along the via Ostiense preserves only few features of the old city's configuration.

On the sides of the road there used to be large funerary areas, villas, farms and production facilities connected with port and industrial activities which took place along the banks of the Tiber in ancient times.

In 1911, together with other activities promoted to celebrate the international exhibition for the fiftieth anniversary of the unification of Italy, the construction work for the **General Markets** begun, on the large clearing eastern to the via Ostiense. This structure has been operating until a few years ago and now hosts the **Città della gioventù** ("City for Young People"), a place that will have many commercial premises together with sport and tourist facilities. This project is still under construction. On the opposite side of the road the General Stores were placed, according to Tullio Passarelli's construction project. Today this compound houses a Firemen's school.



km 1

THE SOUTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA

## FROM THE GAZOMETRO TO SCHUSTER PARK

A little further there are the former Gas Establishments of the city of Rome which, until the introduction of electricity, exercised a monopoly on the lighting of the whole city. This area, named **Gazometro**, is actually part of the city's urban landscape and, in the past few years, it has been subject-matter of many requalification and reutilization projects. Specifically, sports events, cultural entertainment, theatrical and cinema productions are frequently organized in this place.

Proceeding along the via Ostiense, leaving the General Markets on the left, on the right side of the road you arrive to the **Centrale Montemartini**. It was the first public facility for the production of electricity in Rome, opened at the beginning of the 20th century, now turned into a museum.



*Centrale Montemartini*

The museum especially hosts archaeological finds discovered in Rome and in its suburbs around the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.



*Rome, view on the Gazometro and the former General Markets*

### SPOTLIGHTS ON THE GAZOMETRO

According to English reporters this part of Rome has turned in the "Özpetek District": the Turkish film director has set most of his features in this place, first among all *Le fate ignoranti* (2001), in which the Gazometro acts as background. The structure can also be seen in other movies of the same director, such as *Saturno Contro* (2007) and *Un giorno perfetto* (2008).

Going back in time, the Gazometro has also acted as meeting place for Diego Abatantuono and Monica Vitti in the movie *Tango della Gelosia* (1981).

This finds are distributed among the three rooms of the museum, creating an unusual juxtaposition between the white figures of the statues and the dark bulk of the machines.

Near to via Ostiense 106 you find a mold of a bas-relief and an epigraph (the original one is located in the Museum of via Ostiense) which reminds of a monument that no longer exists: the small chapel which rose over the place where, according to a pious tradition, the apostles Peter and Paul would have hugged and then parted, each towards his own martyrdom, Saint Peter in the Vatican City and Saint Paul on via Ostiense. The small church, mentioned for the first time in the 7th century, used to raise in the area where the General Markets stand today. In mid-1500 it was torn down and rebuilt on the opposite side of the road and then definitively wiped out in the early 1900s. Anciently, in the lawns ahead of the Basilica of Saint Paul, today Schuster Park, there was a long colonnade portico covered with an A-frame roof which, departing from Porta San Paolo, led pilgrims to the Church, protecting them from bad weather. This structure, called via Tecta, was built in the 5th century, reusing ancient marble columns, some of which still remain scattered inside the park.

In 2008 the **Martyrs of Nassiriya Monument**, realized by the sculptor Giuseppe Spagnolo, was raised in this park. This monument, called "*Iron Forest*", is made up of nineteen menhirs symbolizing the seventeen militaries and two civilians fallen in Iraq the 12th of November 2003.





## FROM SAINT PAUL'S BASILICA TO VIA DELLE SETTE CHIESE

You reach one of the four papal basilicas in Rome, second in extension only to Saint Peter: the **Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls**.

Emperor Constantine gave instructions to build a church over a previous sepulchral chapel, arisen in the place where the apostle was buried, but this basilica soon turned out to be inadequate for the large number of pilgrims who arrived. For this reason, in the year 391, it was completely reconstructed and remained basically undamaged until the disastrous fire in 1823, after which it was newly rebuilt resuming the layout of the ancient basilica. Today the outside of the church consists of a courtyard with *quadriporticus* and a façade decorated with a mosaic.

Inside the basilica, the five aisles are decorated with exquisite realizations which range through a long period of time. The mosaic representing Christ *Pantocrator* upon Galla Placidia's arch (5th century), the decorations of the apse and Arnolfo di Cambio's ciborium date back to the Middle Age; the chapels of Saint Lawrence and of the Blessed Sacrament are of the 16th century and the mosaic tondos with portraits of the Popes were realized in the 19th century, although inspired to those of the ancient basilica.

From the year 1300, the first Holy Year, this church is one of those included in the jubilee itinerary to receive the indulgence and the ceremony of the opening of the Holy Door is celebrated here. This place is among the Unesco World Heritage Sites since 1980.

Not far from the basilica lie the ruins of the large Burial Ground of the via Ostiense, in use from the 1st century B.C. to the 4th century A.D.



*Basilica of Saint Paul.*

The fact that there are both columbaria and burial chambers demonstrates a transition from the cremation practice to the burial by interment.

Behind the basilica, between via Ostiense and via

delle Sette Chiese, rises the so called “**Rupe di San Paolo**”, a volcanic-sedimentary rock dating back over four hundred years ago, which reaches its maximum thickness of outcrop exactly in this spot. At the base of the crag it is possible to identify two columbaria, whereas a small catacomb of the 4th century A.D. is excavated inside, named after the Christian martyr Timoteo, currently impassable.

Proceeding along the route you get on **via delle Sette Chiese**, last devotional path for visiting the Seven Churches, established by Saint Philip Neri in 1552. This tour takes its inspiration from the journeys of medieval pilgrims who traveled to Rome in order to receive the plenary indulgence.

### THE “GROTTA DEI PERFETTI”

Walking along via delle Sette Chiese, straight on the right, there is a cave dug in the tufa called **Grotta dei Perfetti** (“Cave of the Perfect prophets”). Its name comes from a medieval popular belief according to which one day the prophets Enoch and Elia came out from here to fight against the Antichrist, whose arrival takes place just before the end of the world. This legend has inspired a sonnet to the Roman poet Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli, in which the two prophets Enoch and Elia turn into a single person named *ErNocchia*.



km 1,3

THE SOUTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA

## VIA DELLE SETTE CHIESE: THE GARBATELLA DISTRICT

The road continues through a “cut” in the tufa, made in Roman period in order to facilitate the passage over the cliff where now rises the quarter of la **Garbatella**.

It is recommended to proceed by foot to take a look at this neighborhood, whose popular appearance together with different architectural styles, such as the Roman *barocchetto*, turns it in one of the most particular and fascinating in Rome.

Moving forward along via delle Sette Chiese you get to the **Giovannipoli park**, a green area which highlights the layout of the **Commodilla's catacombs**. Their name comes from that of the owner of the place, a Christian matron who donated her plot of land to the religious community with the aim of digging the hypogeum catacombs. During the period of late antiquity this place was known with the name of the two most important martyrs who were buried here, the Saints Adauto and Felice. These catacombs were a place of worship and pilgrimage for Christian believers until Pope Leo IV (847-855) donated the relics of the Saints Felice and Adauto to Emperor Lothar's wife. From that moment on the catacombs were abandoned and forgotten, until the end of the 16th century, when the archaeologist Antonio Bosio rediscovered them. Inside the basilica there are also some frescos of a certain artistic value: the depiction of Felice and Adauto, Saint Luke depicted for the first time with surgical tools inside a small leather bag and a fresco with the Virgin Mary together with the two martyrs and a lady named Turtura who was buried here by her

son. The largo delle Sette Chiese eventually interrupts the continuity of the ancient street.



*Monument for the Roman Resistance.*

Here there is a steel monument made by the sculptor Cesare Esposito, dedicated to the thirty-year Roman resistance movement (1944-1974) which was joined by many citizens of the Garbatella. Proceeding along the road you arrive to the **“Chiesoletta”**(small Church) **of the Saints Isidoro and Eurosia**. The original medieval church was altered in the 1800s with the addition of a porticus realized by the architect Giuseppe Valadier. Inside, besides some interesting

epigraphs, there is a painting attributed to the artist Vincenzo Camuccini and three chalk sketches considered by many a work of the Canova. On the side wall overlooking the street there is fifteenth-century plate that says “via Paradisi”, probably the name of the street during that period. The name meant that whoever walked along this processional trail could gain an easier access to heaven, thanks to the indulgences that he had achieved. Moreover, there are two marble medallions with the portraits of Saint Filippo Neri and Saint Carlo Borromeo, testifying that in 1575, during one of the pilgrimages along via delle Sette Chiese, they met in this place. Further along the road there is the Oratory of Saint Filippo Neri with its church, built in 1954 and characterized by a modern architecture. Inside, it preserves a mural painting of Saint Philip and some mosaics of the school of Sciltian.



*Church of the Saints Isidoro and Eurosia in 1977.*





km 1,9

THE SOUTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA

## VIA DELLE SETTE CHIESE: THE ARDEATINO DISTRICT

After passing piazza Oderico da Pordenone, on the right, you can see an impressive glass building where the Regione Lazio has its siedege.

We now arrive on via Cristoforo Colombo, road that interrupts the ancient via delle Sette Chiese until piazza dei Navigatori. For the pedestrian crossing it is necessary to get to via Cristoforo Colombo 196. This road was constructed in the late '30s as a via Imperiale (imperial street) in order to connect Rome with the E42, a business district which was supposed to opened in 1942 but eventually wasn't, because of the beginning of the war. The construction work was resumed only in the '50s and the E42 turned in the present EUR district.

### ROMAN CISTERN

Around four hundred meters from the pedestrian crossing, exactly at number 142 of via Cristoforo Colombo, there is a circular Roman cistern, dating back to the beginning of the 2nd century A.D. This cistern is built in *opus reticulatum* and is connected to another smaller circular structure. The monument was discovered during the bleaching of the via Imperiale (now via Cristoforo Colombo), when the demolition of a farmhouse revealed the existence of an ancient agricultural establishment which hosted the cistern.

Near the intersection with the modern via Ardeatina there are the **Domitilla's catacombs**, a 17 km complex dug in the tufa on four levels, partly reusing

preexisting tunnels. These catacombs were probably commissioned by the Flavian family, since Flavia Domitilla, a member of this family, donated her land to the Christians before going into exile.

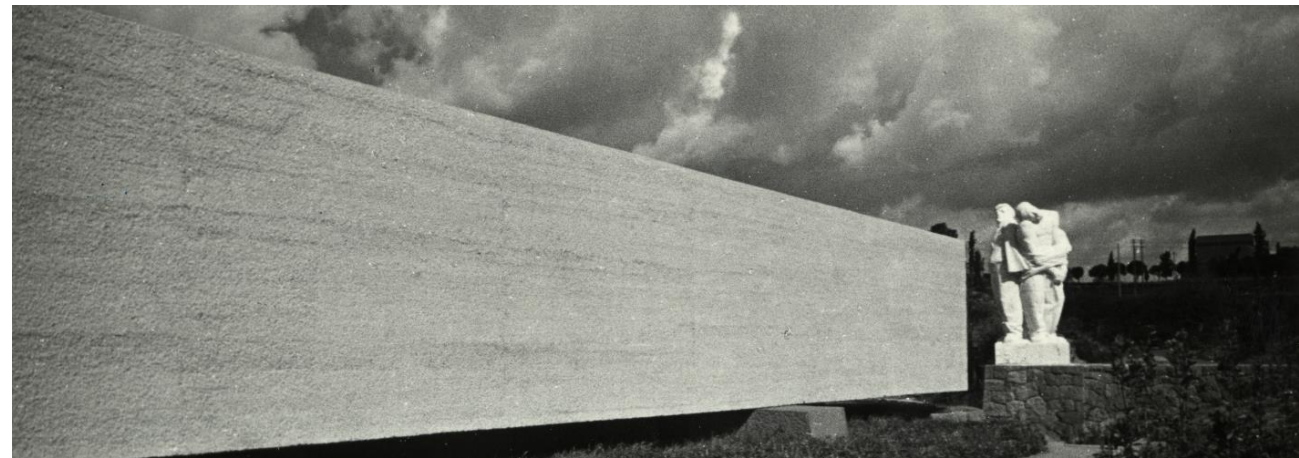
In this area there are approximately 150000 tombs, dating back to the 3rd century A.D., with a great iconographic and epigraphic collection. During the first centuries of Christianity, these cemeteries were frequently visited by pilgrims and believers.

They were then abandoned, in the Early Middle Ages, since Pope Leo III decided to move the relics of the Saints in the church of the Saints *Nereus* and *Achilleus*, inside the Aurelian Walls, because of the dangerousness of the suburb and of the Roman countryside.

### THE FOSSE ARDEATINE MEMORIAL

Before reaching the end of this trail, it is recommended to visit the Fosse Ardeatine Memorial. This monument was realized in memory of the massacre operated by the Nazis in Rome on 24th March 1944 inside the gravel caves on the via Ardeatina.

The memorial consists of the caves, where the massacre took place, the mausoleum, where the corps are kept and the sculpture, which emotionally represents the 335 martyrs' tragedy. The bronze portal is not to be missed: it's a work by Mirko Basaldella, dating 1949-51. At about one kilometer from here, via delle Sette Chiese reaches the Basilica of Saint Sebastian on the via Appia antica.



*The Fosse Ardeatine Memorial.*



km 3,3

THE SOUTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA

## FROM OSTIENSE TO TOR MARANCIA: COLOURFUL STREET ART

Over the last few years Rome has become more and more colored of contemporary due to the emergence of an artistic trend called Street Art. The movement originated from the American “Writing” which, from the ‘60s to today has developed in all the major capitals of the world. In Rome, this trend has involved above all many suburban areas such as the Trullo, Tor Marancia, San Basilio, Primavalle, Quadraro and Tor Pignattara which have been redeveloped and turned into actual outdoors museums. Due to its industrial heritage, the Ostiense neighborhood, although quite central, has been one of the first areas involved with Street Art and, from 2011, it has hosted two important projects aimed at promoting urban art: Outdoor Festival and 999 Contemporary-Avanguardie Urbane. In order to see the works of Street Art in this area it is possible to follow a trail, departing from the intersection of via Ostiense with via del Porto Fluviale. Here, on the left, it is represented a seabed with a pod of dolphins, painted by Alvarez, and important archaeological finds, realized by Atoche. Looking upwards you see two huge murals of Blu realized on the façades of the ex-barracks of the military air force, which was occupied by the activists of the city Coordination for housing struggle in 2003. In a stormy sea, a big ship carrying cranes and buildings is attacked by a multitude of red figures, representing the housing struggle between builders, institutions and people searching for an accommodation. The other two sides of the building are an example of how the works of

Street Art need to adapt to the surfaces on which they are painted. Blu takes advantage of a series of windows to create many faces of fantasy figures in defense of the building.



*Murals by Blu and Carlos Atoche on the former barracks.*

Proceeding along via del Porto Fluviale, on the left side, there is a big image of a swimmer from the side realized by the Italian artist Iacurci. Also this artist has taken inspiration from the building, within which there is an historical fish market, and from the place, which was an ancient commercial river port on the Tiber, as the name of the street suggests. The celebration of the neighborhood’s history continues on the short side of the street where Void depicts the back of a woman, the owner of an historical hardware store who contributed to the construction of this area. On the collar of her

shirt there is a light blue circle in which is represented an indistinct herd of people, the workers, who are the driving force of every factory.

After turning for two times on the left you get to via dei Magazzini Generali. Walking along this street we have the sensations of being watched since several faces are painted on both sides. On the right the artist JB Rock creates an alphabet by associating each letter to the face of a celebrity or of someone he loves with the aim of reinterpreting the primary language of communication, combining private with public and reality with imagination. On the left Sten & Lex experiment the graphical effects of poster art in painting, creating fictitious portraits of potential inhabitants of the district.



*Agostino Iacurci and Axel Void's murals in via del Porto Fluviale.*





Proceeding for about 650 meters along the via Ostiense, on the right, there is another huge mural by Blu. Once again the artist realizes his work of art on an occupied building, the Alexis Grigoropoulos community center, dedicated to the fifteen years old boy who in 2008 was killed by a police agent in Exarchia, the anarchic district of Athens. The art work, besides the portrait of this young man, depicts many yellow cars linked together by heavy chains closed by a central padlock. Here Blu's murals play a magical role, such as the shamanic tattoos of the indigenous populations: painted on the "skin" of the building it protects it from any negative event. We recommend to discreetly peek through the entrance gate's keyhole in order to see other interesting artworks. Specifically, on the right it is possible to see a mural made by Alice, an important female Italian street artist, and one by Bol23, one of the first Roman graffiti artist. After having walked along via degli Argonauti, on the left, you get on via Libetta. Here the buildings are decorated with many works of art: from the handwriting images by Brus, realized on the headquarter of the Officine Fotografiche, to the murals of Diamond, Moby Dick and Gomez, which decorate the Circolo degli Illuminati, and at last a series of characters realized by Jacuri up to via Ostiense. You then continue towards Saint Paul until you get to the crossroads with via delle Sette Chiese, here, turning on the left, there is a mural of Sam3: a series of stars that form the portrait of a man who holds a big full moon in his hand.



*Seth, Bambino Redentore, Tor Marancia 2015.*

You now get to the intersection with via Cristoforo Colombo. Here we recommend a slight detour because, not far from here, on via Elio Rufino, you find the marvelous complex of murals of Tor

Marancia, realized in 2015 throughout the project Big City Life. This project, in which twenty international artists have been involved, has been handled by 999 Contemporary, financed by Fondazione Roma and by the Campidoglio and sponsored by the VIII Municipio. The *Bambino Redentore* (redeemer kid) realized by Seth, a French artist, shows the entrance to the complex of public housing. This child is depicted from behind on a small colored ladder, representing the different forms of art, and invites passersby to get lost into the colorful world of Street Art.



*Luis Gomez de Teran, mural in via Libetta, 2016.*

## VIA LATINA

The via Latina is an ancient Roman road which connected Rome to Capua. Already in the Iron Age (9th-8th century B.C.) this path was the major transport route between Rome and the populations who lived in the southern regions.

Later on, from the 8th century to the early 5th century, the Etruscan civilizations used to travel along this route in order to stay in touch with their settlements in Campania, as an alternative to the sea routes. This trade among Etruria and Campania became less and less frequent between the end of the 6th and the 5th century B.C., when italic populations from the Appenine regions descended in these territories. With the break-up of the Latin League (338 B.C.) and the expansion of Rome towards south, the route was once again used to connect the entire territory.

### ABOUT THE NAME

There are two hypotheses on the origin of the road's name: according to the first it relates the end of the Latin War, after which the Roman colonization began. According to the other, it originates from the fact that the road lead to the ancient place of worship to Jupiter on the *Mons Albanus*, where the *feriae Latinae* (festivities) were celebrated.

Originally, the road departed from Porta Capena. After the construction of the Aurelian Walls (270-275 B.C.), the starting point became the new Porta Latina, furthest from the original position.

Forward in time the road underwent some changes. In the 3rd century B.C., for example, it was adjusted in order to connect Rome and Capua in the shortest time possible without passing through other smaller cities, which were now connected by branches of the main road.



*Basoli pavement along via Latina near via di Vigna Fabbri.*

### PAVEMENT AND MEASUREMENTS

At the beginning the road was 146 Roman miles long and was made of gravel and dirt floor, along its path there were several milestones in order to provide information on the route and distances. After the changes which occurred in the 3rd century, the road measured only 129 Roman miles. For this reason two different mileage numbers are now written on the milestones, testifying that the road had been shortened. During Imperial Age, the road was paved with polygonal local stone (flint *basoli* in the Roman region and limestone *basoli* in the area of the Ciociaria and in Campania). This type of paving is typical of all the major Roman *viae*.

With the fall of the Roman Empire, the via Latina suffered various damages, losing most of its functionality. Because of the urban destabilization which occurred in the Middle Ages and led to the abandon of many cities in the plains, the via Latina was covered only along few stretches, mainly to connect the cities with their castles. In the 17th century a work of maintenance and restoration from Rome to the limits of the Kingdom of Naples was carried out. The ancient Roman approach, according to which from a straight line several different branches departed, was resumed in modern ages with the construction of the railway line Rome-Naples and of the highway, which retraces approximately the same route of the ancient via Latina.





km 1,1

THE SOUTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA

## FROM PORTA LATINA TO THE PARK OF THE TOMBS OF VIA LATINA

The itinerary starts from **Porta Latina**, one of the most impressive and well preserved among the gateways of the Aurelian Walls, built in the 3rd century A.D. It is a single-arched gate, originally with a squared based tower on each side. During the reign of Emperor Honorius (384-423) the gateway underwent some changes. The arch was narrowed, the two towers became cylindrical and the travertine façade was modified. On the outside arch's keystone there is the Christ's monogram XP. The seventeenth-century door behind the western tower gave access to the wall-walk and to the helm station, recognizable by the five arched windows. During the capture of Rome, in September 1870, the Italian soldiers didn't succeed in breaking through it, as they did with Porta Pia. The gateway was finally reopened in 1911.

Despite the growth of the city led to radical changes, along the via Latina there are still many evidences of the past. In Imperial Age in this area there were many burial sites, both monumental and hypogeum, whose remains can still be seen. Most of these sites belong to the Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra.

At a short distance from Porta Latina there is Piazza Galeria. In its center there are several blocks of peperino, now used as seats, probably the covering in *opus quadratum* of a mausoleum sepulcher. Towards via Cilicia, there are two tombs; the first one is rectangular based in *opus latericium* with the shape of a small temple dating back in the 3rd

century A.D., the second one is circular based in *opus latericium* with recesses along its walls. In the square there are also remains of part of the Aqua Marcia aqueduct.



Porta Latina.

Before you get to the railway overpass, on the left, there is a three-story rectangular sepulcher in *opus latericium* shaped as a small temple dating back to the 2nd century A.D., named **Torre dell'Angelo**.

Among the numerous examples of Christian burials in this area you find the **catacombs of Tertullianus and those of Apronianus**, both dating back to the 4th century.

In via Mantellini 13 there is one of the major sepulchers of this area, the **hypogeum of Trebio Giusto** (it is possible to visit this hypogeum by contacting the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma; tel. 06 477881), dating back to the age of Constantine the Great (306-337 A.D.) and decorated with interesting paintings showing the deceased's everyday life.

Moving forward, on via Latina 258, there is the sepulchral complex known as **Ipogeo di via Dino Compagni** designated for the burial of members of several wealthy families, both Christian and pagan. This burial area was realized from the first half of the 4th century A.D. during four different stages between the 315 and 360 A.D. There are approximately 400 burials, placed in 325 tombs, probably divided among four different families. The peculiarity of this burial ground is certainly its decoration items.

Proceeding along the route you get to the Archaeological park of the Tombs of via Latina.



## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK OF THE TOMBS OF VIA LATINA



*Archaeological park of the Tombs of via Latina.*

This archaeological area preserves part of the ancient via Latina made of flint *basoli* and many other buildings along its path: mainly sepulchral monuments dating back to the 2nd century but also more recent farmhouses and service stations for wayfarers. The entrance is on via dell'Arco di Traverentino, at the intersection with via Appia Nuova.

The first monument that you meet is the **Barberini sepulcher**, a two-story red bricks building. Originally it had three floors and underwent many changes through time, especially when, in the 18th century it was turned into a barn. A sarcophagus depicting Protesilaus and Laodamia was found in this hypogeum.

Continuing along the path you get to the **Sepulcher of the Valerii**. The exterior is a nineteenth-century remake, while the inside is still well preserved. The sepulcher is a rectangular structure on two floors: the first one with a two columns portico that overlooks the street, the second one has a rectangular window and is covered by a sloping roof. Originally the sepulcher was surrounded by a portico of which only two columns remain. Descending two symmetrical staircases you enter the hypogeum which still preserves decorations on slabs of marble medallions representing satyrs, maenads, nereids and sea creatures.

After passing another brick sepulcher, the **Bacelli's tomb**, you get to the **Tomb of the Pancrazi** probably built between 120 and 130 A.D. The name of the family who owned this monument is depicted from an inscription found on a coffin still kept in the first room of the hypogeum. The upper part of the building is now completely lost but it was probably similar to that of the other sepulchers inside the park. The hypogeum is made up of two different rooms: the first and oldest one was is a decorated vestibule; the second one preserves a black and white mosaic floor with geometrical patterns, eight sarcophagi and marvelous stuccos and paintings. The last sepulcher inside the park, on the left side of the path, is the **Sepulcher of the Calpurni**, of which only the hypogeum, decorated with plaster and stucco, remains.

Behind the Tomb of the Pancrazi, there are the

remains of the **Basilica of Saint Stephen**, dating back to the 6th century A.D. The basilica, which took the place of a Roman villa of the 1st century A.D., had three naves and ended with a raised apse. It was a catholic center of pilgrimage until the 13rd century but, in 1964 it was largely destroyed and replaced by two football fields.



*Sepulchre of the Valerii.*





km 2

## FROM THE PARK OF THE TOMBS OF VIA LATINA TO THE PARK OF THE AQUEDUCTS

Proceeding along the road that runs along the left side of the park, you get on via Demetriade. At the end of this street there is a well preserved section of the **Aqua Felice**. This impressive work of waterway architecture was ordered by Pope Sixtus V in the second half of the 16th century in order to bring water to all the *riioni* still lacking of a water distribution system.

With a length 28,7 km, the aqueduct carried water from the countryside between Zagarolo and Palestrina to Rome.

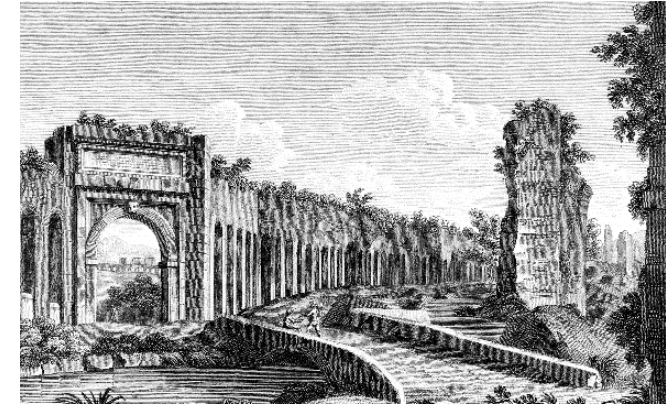
The architect Giovanni Fontana reused materials from the *Aqua Claudia* and leaned the new conducts on the arches of the *Aqua Marcia*. These arches are closer one another and show a thinner stonework compared to the new ones. Moreover, Sixtus V resumed the Roman tradition of transforming the aqueduct's arches in monumental gates in correspondence with important roads. In this case, the arch over via Tuscolana became **Porta Furba**. In 1733 Pope Clement XII decided to place near the door a travertine fountain which has a peculiar mascarón with the shape of a bat.

Walking by the aqueduct along vicolo dell'Aquedotto Felice, you get to the entrance of the **Park of Torre del Fiscale**, which is part of the Appian Way Regional Park. Inside it is possible to witness the passage of the ancient via Latina thanks to the remains of Roman aqueducts, sepulchers and ruins of ancient villas. The name of the park comes from the medieval tower which stands inside it, Torre del Fiscale, named after the job of its owner, Monsignor Filippo Foppi, who in the 17th century was a *fiscale*, the person in charge of

the papal treasure. The tower is 30 meters tall and was built in order to control the area reusing tuff blocks of the *Aqua Marcia* and *Aqua Claudia* and two of their arches.



*Aqua Claudia in the Park of Torre del Fiscale.*



*Pietro Ruga e Pietro Parboni, Porta Furba, 1818.*

### AQUEDUCTS AND LITERATURE

*«Antiquity does survive in the Campagna – fallow, empty, accursed as the desert, with its great stretches of aqueduct and its herds of large-horned cattle. That is truly beautiful, the antique beauty one has imagined»* Gustave Flaubert.

Aqueducts have always been one of the most known elements of Roman architecture, masterpieces of ancient engineering. Throughout time they inspired many artists and poets, such as Johann Wolfgang Goethe who in his 1786's diary described them as *«a sequence of triumphal arches»*. Stendhal also wrote a few lines on the aqueducts during his visit in Rome in 1827: *«Most viewpoints are dominated by the ruins of an aqueduct or a tomb in ruins, which gives the Roman countryside a grandeur that cannot be approached elsewhere»*.



km 5,6

THE SOUTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA

## THE PARK OF THE AQUEDUCTS

Proceeding on via del Quadraro you get to the **Park of the Aqueducts**, also this park is part of the Appian Way Regional Park. The park has an area of about 240 hectares inside which run well preserved segments of seven aqueducts: *Anio Vetus* (subterranean), *Marvia*, *Tepula*, *Julia e Felice* (overlapping), *Claudio e Anio Novus* (overlapping). Inside, there is also a small watercourse named **Fosso dell'Acqua Mariana**, which flows from the *Aqua Felice* forming a small river and a waterfall, retracing the course of the ancient *Aqua Mariana*.



*A view of the Park of the aqueducts.*

The first remains that you meet are those of the so called **Villa delle Vignacce**, one of the major Roman villas of this area, built between the 2nd and 4th century A.D. The villa had a big garden and massive structures, of which remain an apsidal space and a circular element, together with a big cistern, built at the same time of the Aqua Marcia, from which the villa got her supply of water.

Before you get to the 13th century **Casale di Roma**

**Vecchia**, which preserved many archaeological finds rediscovered during the excavation subcontracted by the Torlonia family in 1830. It is possible to see the remains of a medieval tower, built with parallelepiped blocks of tuff on top of an ancient Roman cistern which still preserves its barrel vault cover.



*Casale di Roma Vecchia.*

In the place where vicolo di Roma Vecchia turns towards via Tuscolana there is an historical railway toll station, called **Casale del Sellaretto**. Dating back to 1860, this building was the inspector's house of the first Vatican railway line. It connected Rome to Frascati and was inaugurated on the 7th July 1856 on request of Pius IX.

Finally you arrive on via delle Capannelle where there are the impressive ruins of **Villa dei Sette Bassi**, one of the largest villas of the Roman countryside, so big

that in the past it was thought to be a small city. The wealthy villa had great reception halls, sumptuous cubicles, a balcony with windows and a panoramic viewpoint, together with thermal baths, a small temple and an agricultural holding.

Walking out of the park, still on via delle Capannelle, you once again cross via Appia Antica. Here turn on via del Casale Rotondo which then finally rejoins with via Appia Antica, primary trail of the southern via Francigena.

### AQUEDUCTS IN MOVIES

Since the '50s, the aqueducts - as well as other archaeological remains - have inspired many movie directors. We mention, at least, *Mamma Roma* by Pier Paolo Pasolini and, recently, *La Grande Bellezza* by Paolo Sorrentino, Academy Award winner for best foreign film in 2014.



*The Villa dei Sette Bassi in a 18th century drawing.*



## VIA PRENESTINA

The via Prenestina, in early times known as the via Gabina, connected Rome to *Praeneste*, modern Palestrina, from which it takes its name, and to the roads towards the Campania region.

The via Gabina, a road which dates back to the end of the 6th Century B.C. reached the Latin city of *Gabii*, located 18 km from the Servian Walls, east of Rome between the modern roads via Prenestina and via Casilina. In a short time, it became one of the favorite places for the construction of suburban Roman villas commissioned by noble families. During the Late Republic *Gabii* was subdued by the Romans and the ancient via Gabina was replaced with the modern via Prenestina as a major arterial road. The name appears for the first time in the 19th century A.D.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the via Prenestina remained for centuries a highly popular road, until it became one of the routes of the southern via Francigena, along with the via Appia and the ancient via Labicana (modern via Casilina). During the Middle Ages, pilgrims heading towards Jerusalem, followed this road in order to reach Brindisi and embark for the Holy Land.

The Latin city of *Praeneste*, located on the slope of Monte Ginestro, played a determining role in the communications between Etruria, Lazio, Campania and Magna Grecia. Thanks to its geographical position the city controlled the communications between Latium, Campania and the Anzio harbor. At the beginning of the 7th Century B.C. *Praeneste* was one of the most developed areas of the *Latium Vetus*.



*Villa of the Gordiani.*

The sudden housing growth during 1930s has changed the landscape along the via Prenestina, with the constructions of the outskirts Prenestina and Gordiani.



*A view of via Prenestina in 1977.*

The Roman countryside, which inspired many painters and ancient poets, was predominant outside the Aurelian Walls until the 20th century. Today it is densely populated until the slopes of the Monti Prenestini.

The via Gabina-Prenestina, along with the via Labicana, departed from one gate of the Servian Walls, the Porta Esquilina, located in the area between Termini Station and piazza Vittorio Emanuele II. During the Augustan Age it was converted in an arch. The gate had initially three arches, the central one wider and higher of the side ones. In 262 A.D. the arch was dedicated to the Emperor Gallieno and his wife Solonina by Aurelius Victor. In Middle Ages it was known as “*arcus pictus*”.



## PORTA MAGGIORE

The **Porta Maggiore**, from which starts the via Francigena route along the via Prenestina, is located in piazzale Labicano. The two arches of the *Aqua Claudia* and the *Anio Novus*, monumental structures built over the via Labicana and the via Prenestina, formed this gateway. The new city walls, built in 272 d.C. by the Roman Emperor Aurelian, incorporated the two aqueducts and converted the arches into an entrance gate. On the attic there are three inscriptions: one in praise of Claudio for having built this structure, and the others dedicated to Vespasiano and Tito for its renovation. The gate is known since the 10th and 11th centuries as *Porta Maior* or *Lavicana*.

In front of Porta Maggiore there is the **tomb of Marcus Virgilius Eurysaces the Baker** built between the Late Republic and the early years of the Empire. Under Honorius the walls were improved (5th century) and the tomb was covered until 1838, when it was brought back to light during a renovation. The Greek surname of the baker, written in the central inscription, reveals that he was a former slave. The cylinders imitate kneading-machines and the frieze along the top of the tomb displays different stages of bread production, hence we understand which was his profession. Both the baker and his wife were buried in this grave. In 1917, after the collapse of the ground under the railway station, the **hypogeum Basilica** near Porta Maggiore was accidentally discovered.



*Porta Maggiore.*

It has the most magnificent stuccoes inherited from the years of the Roman Empire. The structure, dating back to the 1st century, has three naves with an apse at the end of the central one. In the vestibule and in the naves there are many stuccoes and valuable paintings. These representations display scenes from daily life and mystic rituals.

The Basilica is situated 7,25 meters below the level of the via Prenestina and visits need to be booked.

### THE UNDERGROUND BASILICA

A group of Roman young aristocrats converted to the Neopythagorean doctrines probably founded the basilica which was then closed up by the *Senatus* of the Roman Empire. The teachings connected with this philosophy were grounded on the tenet of soul's purification carried out by ethical leaving. Some paintings symbolize the Neopythagorean belief of the souls' travel to the world of the blessed. For example, the one of Sappho throwing herself off the Leucadian cliff into the sea, embraced by a Triton who led her to the groom.





km 2,3

THE SOUTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA

## FROM PORTA MAGGIORE TO LARGO PRENESTE

Several graves, rich columbaria and majestic mausoleums of the Imperial Age distinguished the via Prenestina in its extra-urban stretch. Archaeological testaments of this heritage have been discovered at the end of the 19th century. Other graves and columbaria, which confirm the funerary use of this area, have been found between the years 1940s and 1960s, when the neighborhood was being constructed.

Forward along the road, on the left side, there is the **Torrione**, right at the end of the tangenziale est viaduct. This circular tomb has a remarkable size and dates back to the time of Augustus. Built for an unknown person, the structure has the typical forms of the Augustus or Cecilia Metella Mausoleum. The fortification, carried out in the Middle Ages, probably gave the name to the Mausoleum because shaped as a tower. During the 15th century the Ruffini family owned the estate and the fountain located outside on the west side dates back to the same period. It became then property of the Dominican friars.

The monument has been damaged by the bombing during the Second World War, which caused the collapse of the barrel vault, and by the broadening of the road in the following years, when the façade was cut and the embankment removed. Only the containment wall has been preserved while the tomb inside has been destroyed.

Arriving to largo Preneste, in the middle of the gardens, there is a **sepulcher in bricks** of the

Antonine Age (middle of the 2nd century A.D.). For its architectural features and its small proportions, this building recalls a little temple. It is characterized by the alternation of red and yellow bricks and was wrongly believed to be a columbarium. The remains of small arches, which supported a balcony, are visible on the side of the entrance while on the southern section there are signs of the staircase used to access the higher floor, where funeral liturgies took place. Inside there is only a small squared hall. Until the 18th century, the sepulcher was turned into a farmhouse, causing damages to the original shapes.



*The Torrione.*



*The Columbarium in largo Preneste.*

### THE COLUMBARIA

This kind of architectural burial was used between the 1st century B.C. and the 1st century A.D. Its name comes from the resemblance with dovecotes: there are indeed small recesses dug in the wall and each of them contained the ashes of the deceased. The columbarium was generally a place where people with middle class origins were buried.



km 3,4

THE SOUTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA

## FROM VILLA GORDIANI TO TENUTA FORMICOLA

Today this neighborhood appears as densely populated and characterized by big apartment buildings and heavy traffic. However, archaeological remains and historical evidences of a great past have been preserved and, paying close attention, can be admired.

At the III mile of the via Prenestina there are the remains of one of the greatest Roman suburban villas, the current archaeological park called **Villa Gordiani**. The first residential settlements in this area took place at the peak of the Roman republic (3rd century B.C.) when a patrician villa was built. The whole area has been taken over starting from the 2nd century A.D. by the powerful family of Gordiani, which, during the 3rd century A.D., had three of its family members on the imperial throne.

In the park there are the ruins of the villa: the octagonal room, the nymphaeum, the mausoleum and the funerary basilica. The octagonal room and its dome decorated with stuccos is what remains today of the currently buried patrician villa. The structure had a portico with some 200 columns in marbles and parts of polychrome mosaics have been found. East of the villa there are the ruins of a nymphaeum with a conch-shaped pavilion. Walking through the park we meet a mausoleum (290-310 A.D.), a funerary basilica and the nearby remains of a late antique necropolis.

In the '50s a **catacomb** adjacent to the perimeter of Villa Gordiani has been found. The catacomb has been heavily destroyed by the diggings for the construction of apartment buildings in the current via Rovigno

d'Istria. However, some burial recesses dug into the tuff rock and intended for both adults and children can still be glimpsed in front of the market, behind the surrounding wall of the villa.



*Villa Gordiani.*

At the **Tenuta Formicola**, in front of via Giuseppe Candiani (inside a storage of the ATAC), there is a sepulchral area of the Imperial Age. The base of a marble sarcophagus has been preserved quite in its

whole.

Near these remains emerges a section of a Roman pavement which belonged to a small transverse road: the ancient via Prenestina was indeed just north of the current road.

### VIA ROVIGNO D'ISTRIA CATACOMBS

A frenetic housing construction, started during the years of the economic boom, damaged heavily the city archaeological heritage, especially in the neighborhood. It is thought that the catacombs were not used by the Christians but there are still doubts due to the presence of a mausoleum, probably built by Constantine for his son Crispo, and for the nearby ruins of a basilica and grave tombs.



*Via Rovigno d'Istria catacombs in 1960.*





km 10,3

THE SOUTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA

## TENUTA DELLA MISTICA

Departing from the regular route along the via Prenestina, you can get a glimpse of what the outskirts of Rome looked like to the travelers who undertook the Grand Tour in the past.

Valuable scraps of the Roman countryside may be observed among the surrounding high buildings in the district Prenestino - Centocelle.

At the VII mile of the via Prenestina, turning on the right, you can take the alternative path along **via Olevano Romano**.

In 1958 a marvelous **columbarium** (first half of the 1st century A.D.) has been discovered here.

The structure of reticulated work has a barrel vault and checkerboard and floral patterned walls marked with five rows of niches.

From via Olevano Romano you turn to the right onto via Anagni and at the end of the road, after approximately 100 metres, you can take via dei Gordiani.

After about 800 metres, you reach via Labico by turning to the left, and then you can take again via dei Gordiani, which will lead you to via Casilina nord.

If you continue down the road, after approximately two km, turning to the left onto via Tor de' Schiavi and then again on the right, you reach piazza delle Camelie.

From via delle Camelie the route continues straight along via dei Pioppi and via degli Olmi.

The streets of this district have been named after trees and flowers.

The Roman **aqueduct** "*Aqua Alexandrina*" features all the path from here on and the ruins are visible along via degli Olmi, via Francesco Tovaglieri and via Walter Tobagi. The district characterized by these ruins is called "quartiere Alessandrino". It was built in 227 A.D. by the Emperor Severus to supply the Campus Martius and the Thermae of Nero.

The 22 km long aqueduct starts on the foot of the hill Sassoletto and enters the city through Porta Maggiore.

After passing through the park, you continue to walk along via Rolando Lanari, surrounded by greenery, and at the end of the road you can turn left to take via Walter Tobagi.

Finally, the alternative path rejoins the route of the southern via Francigena, direction Prenestina through via della Tenuta della Mistica.



*Aqua Alexandrina in Tor Tre Teste Park.*



km 9,3

THE SOUTHERN VIA FRANCIGENA

## FROM TOR TRE TESTE TO PONTE DI NONA

Arriving at the cross road between the via Prenestina and via di Tor Tre Teste beyond a fence on the right you can see a section of the *ancient via Prenestina* with the old waggon's signs. It is just to the east, parallel to the current road and it has recently been brought to light.

A famous tower of the Roman countryside, called **Tor Tre Teste**, is located just up ahead, by the side of a military area. The name comes from a Roman low relief depicting three half-busts. Another low relief has the marble busts of two women and a man and it has been set into the right wall of a seventeenth-century Church, now destroyed. The tower, which dates back to the 12th century, has collapsed twice: in 1951 and in 1972. This last collapse halved further the tower causing the fall of a medieval epigraph which reminded that it belonged to the Saint John Lateran Basilica.

Overtaking the Grande Raccordo Anulare, you cross Ponte di Nona. The toponym reminds you are at the IX mile of the via Prenestina, starting the measuring from the center of Rome. Here there were, on the adjacent hill, a holy place, a thermal structure and a residential area of the Roman age: the *Pagus Ad Nonum*, the remains of which have been destroyed by the opening of pozzolana quarry in 1964. The bridge dates back to the end of the 2nd century B.C. and a previous small bridge has been incorporated between two bigger pillars in its central arch. This bridge shows the avant-garde of ancient Roman engineering developing itself over seven arches which are based on tapered pillars. The structure, built in Roman concrete, is covered with

local stone, travertine and red tuff. The bridge can be admired only by descending into the underlying valley.

### PRATO FIORITO

Following the via Prenestina until the district of Torre Angela, you reach the crossroads between via Prenestina and via Avola, where the area of Prato Fiorito begins.

Here the Giardino dell'acqua e del vino can be visited by taking a detour and turning right onto via Avola. This is a successful attempt of requalification for a Roman outskirt.

It is a 7 hectares park with a vineyard and some dew ponds. This is the first example of Roman productive countryside, able to provide around 10000 wine bottles a year.

You can enter the park through the entrance at the crossroads between via Giardinello and via Villafrati.



*Ancient church in the nearby of Tor Tre Teste.*



*Giardino dell'acqua e del vino.*

### GABII

Diverting two km from our route and walking along the ancient via Prenestina, you reach the Temple of Juno's ruins. This important archaeological monument is located in the larger site of *Gabii*, the city founded by Alba Longa where the Latins came from.

You can access this area through a path at the side of a gas station and it may be visited upon request.



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