

FROM BORGIO SAN LORENZO TO HIGH MUGELLO

From **Borgio San Lorenzo** we follow the **via Faentina** going north, through small and nicely cultivated hills. On the left, after 3 kms, there is a path lined with cypresses leading to the **Pieve di San Giovanni Maggiore**. Dated from the 10th century, the church was rebuilt between 1520 and 1530 and modified in the 19th century. The 11th century campanile is interesting and peculiar with an octagonal shape and a square base; three orders of mullioned windows increasing in size open on the sides. Inside there is a wooden **crucifix** dated from the 16th century and a remarkable *marble ambo* from the 17th century. The glass windows were made by the **Chini** factory.



The noble **Della Casa** family originated from the area where the **Pieve di San Giovanni Maggiore** is situated. In 1544, a member of the family, **Giovanni della Casa**, was named archbishop in Benevento and Apostolic Nuncio in the Republic of Venice. This *Monsignore* wrote the famous **Galateo which taught good manners to the world**.

After passing through the village of **Panicaglia**, we get to a curve where we can enjoy a beautiful view on the **Colle di Pulicciano** and the Ensa valley, with Ronta's old church and its high bell tower. After Ronta we reach the **Santuario della Madonna dei Tre Fiumi**, dated from 1578. It was later enlarged by the addition of two side aisles and a portico then **Cristoforo di Pietro Buini** made other renovations in 1705. Finally in 1780 the right archway of the portico was cut to allow space to build the new Faentina road. The annexed hospice has been turned into a hotel. It is said that while some women were kneeling praying in front of the tabernacle which was placed where the sanctuary is located today, the Virgin's face became flesh and started to cry. Many pilgrims went there to beg for mercy and many miracles took place. The decision to build a sanctuary was then made. Inside some paintings from the 17th century are kept and on the main altar, there is a fresco from the end of the 15th century that was taken out of the wall, depicting the *Madonna col Bambino in trono*.



Past the sanctuary, the road goes through woods and along the winding course of the Ensa river. We reach Razzolo where the church, la **Badia di San Paolo**, was founded in 1035 by San Giovanni Gualberto. After a number of road twists, we arrive at the **Passo della Colla di Casaglia**. From the pass we turn to the left in the direction of **Palazuolo sul Senio**. The road winds down through panoramas with outstanding uncontaminated forests of beeches, chestnuts and oaks to reach **Quadalto** and the **Santuario di Santa Maria della Neve**. In 1459, a small oratory was erected there and made bigger at the beginning of the 17th century to get the shape and size of the current building. The church has a light portico and inside it has three naves divided by arches on piers. On the main altar made of stone is kept a venerated picture of the **Madonna in the style of Botticelli**. In the choir, closed by precious iron gates, there is a work by **Dino Chini** and a lovely organ in the 17th century style. Near the church stands the convent built in 1744 and there is also the old **Molino di Quadalto**, a mill currently allocated to the forest administration. From Quadalto we can quickly reach **Palazuolo sul Senio**.

PALAZZUOLO SUL SENIO



Immersed in an extremely beautiful natural site, **Palazzuolo sul Senio** is a quiet village, very well kept and both historically and artistically rich. The **Palazzo dei Capitani del Popolo**, dated from the 14th century, hosts the **Museo delle Genti di Montagna** and the **Museo Archeologico Alto Mugello**. The **Museo delle Genti di Montagna** has a big collection of objects relating to the past uses and customs of this mountain community, located between Tuscany and Romagna. This museum distinguishes itself by the full reconstruction of places like a mill or domestic spaces and by the display of tools and agricultural machinery. (**Opening Hours of the Museum:** from 25/4 to 15/6 and from 1/9 to 31/10 Sunday and Public Holidays: from 15.00 to 18.00. From 15/6 to 15/7 Saturday and Sunday from 16.00 to 19.00. From 15/7 to 31/8 everyday except Monday from 16.00 to 19.00).



On the left hand side of the **Palazzo dei Capitani** stands the church of **Sant'Antonio** from the 17th century with a beautiful portico made of three arches; its interior is embellished with decorations in stucco and keeps 17th century paintings. The church of **Santo Stefano** is also worthy of a visit; it had ancient origins but was renovated at the beginning of the 20th century. In the church there are precious paintings from the 15th to the 17th century. The apse and the chapel are enriched with floral decorations made by Dino Chini in 1945.



Ideal village where it feels good to stay...

Enchanting village of the Mugello region, in the green heart of **Romagna-Tuscany**, **Palazzuolo sul Senio** is a place where you can feel happy in contact with nature as it is an oasis immersed in green and gentle mountains, away from pollution, traffic and frantic urban rhythms. When staying in Palazzuolo sul Senio, you will be able to visit large and small valleys, uninhabited farmhouses, ruins of castles and old villages now wrapped in silence after a glorious past. The historic journey offered by this wonderful village will trigger the desire to also discover its surroundings and their beautiful landscape, going along mule tracks and paths sending you back to a rural life almost forgotten. It will be possible to appreciate its uses and customs, its traditions including the culinary ones, its legends about ladies and knights, fights and battles. Palazzuolo sul Senio is therefore an ideal place for those who are keen on **trekking, doing excursions on mountain-bikes or horse-riding** but also for those who love touring on motorbikes as its intricate set of roads in the Apennines will offer a unique experience. For those who wish to spend time resting and relaxing, in addition to walking in the natural environment and enjoying bikes excursions, several sports structures are at disposal:

two tennis courts, a soccer field, a horse-riding ring and a swimming-pool, all inserted in a beautiful natural setting under the sun. Palazzuolo is also a lively village, and not only in summer, thanks to the small markets, musical evenings, shows for little children, gastronomic and cultural events in the open air which will give extra value to your holidays in this place considered by many as a ‘**little Switzerland in the Apennines**’.

Palazzuolo, like **Marradi**, are both territories sitting in-between Tuscany and Romagna and therefore they **take advantage of the gastronomic traditions of both regions**. Pasta is more popular there than in Tuscany, especially the one cooked in layers (like the lasagne). Hand-made, it is delicious baked or stuffed (try the “cappelletti” filled with stracchino cheese or the “passatelli”); meat is often grilled but the “bistecca” is thinner than the classic Florentine one. In Marradi lamb “**castrato**” meat is preferred to the beef one. In this region, it is possible to eat buck stew. For centuries these forests have been producing berries and field herbs which became the essential ingredients of the peasants’ daily diet. In Palazzuolo, this habit never stopped and natural produce continues to hold an important role in the local gastronomy. In the **Bottega dei Portici** in the centre of the village, it is possible to buy and taste the local brandy “grappa” made with melissa, blackberries, raspberries, blackthorns, sage, juniper, apple and mint; liquors made with rosemary, walnuts, basil, laurel and others; jams made of chestnuts, raspberries, elderberries; syrups; wild rose tea; acacia, “millefiori” or chestnut honey.



MARRADI

From **Palazzuolo sul Senio** we go towards **Marradi**, a village renowned for its chestnuts which are harvested there and hold a special place in the local gastronomy. The most attractive part of the city is the beautiful **Piazza Scalette**, where stands the **Palazzo Comunale** as well as a big archway and other palaces. Marradi’s dynamic cultural life is attested by the elegant theatre, the **Teatro degli Animosi**, from the end of the 18th century. The poet **Dino Campana** was born in Marradi in 1885. He was a mysteriously charming character, similar to many masters of art and literature who moved with unsteady balance **between genius and madness**. In 1913, Campana had already been in an asylum and in jail, he had experienced lack of success and misunderstanding, a life of vagrancy and the practice of many jobs in Italy, Europe and South America. His **Canti Orfici**, from 1914, visionary and audaciously symbolic, are some of the most authentic expressions of the **Italian Decadentism**. In 1918 he was hospitalized in the Castel Pulci asylum near Florence where he spent fourteen years, until his death on 1 March 1932, putting an end to his tormented existence. In Marradi, a **Centro Studi** was created in memory of him, with a collection of his various works, his university graduation thesis, archive documents and reviews and papers containing a number of his texts and critics.





Chestnuts are the leading produce of this land. Farmers used to give particular care to chestnut groves and their fruit. Around these mountains, the greater part of the farmers' life during the year was dedicated to activities such as pruning the trees, operating the "smacchiatura" (elimination of dry branches), cleaning the terrain under the trees, making "parate" (piles of leaves preventing the husks to roll too far away), selecting the fruit and drying them. **Nothing was wasted in the chestnut grove**, even the few fruit left on the ground, the worm-eaten fruit or not properly grown were used as food for the pigs. In Marradi the chestnut has been for centuries under a constant selection process, leading to the homogeneity of a product unique in Italy. For years now in Marradi and in a great part of Mugello, exclusive focus has been on producing the **Marrone del Mugello I.P.G.** It has been recognised by the E.E.C as completely natural, following the rules of a specific discipline of production forbidding the use of fertilizers, phytopharmaceutical and synthetic products. The Mugello chestnut has a homogeneous size, from medium to big, an elliptic slightly flat shape and its pulp has a fine grain with a very sweet taste whereas other chestnuts can, in general, greatly vary in size and shape. **The Marradi chestnut is widely appreciated in the whole world, exported overseas and as far as the Orient. English people have in fact always been fond of the Chestnut of Marradi preferring it to others.** Several dishes cooked in the plain area with corn or wheat flour used to be made in Marradi with chestnut flour. The so-called "**pattona**" (hard polenta made with sweet flour) was cooked once a fortnight and used to be eaten in slices, like bread, on its own or with milk, ricotta or raveggiolo, grilled or fried. **This is why the chestnut tree was called the bread-tree.**



Every Autumn this gastronomic tradition is revived in October with the SAGRA DELLE CASTAGNE (coronation of the chestnuts) which offers an assortment of chestnut based specialties. One can taste charcoal-grilled chestnuts called *bruciate*, chestnut cakes (*torta*, *budino*, *castagnaccio*), fried *tortellini*, a cake made of chestnut and ricotta, the *tronco*, the *ciambella* and the *fritelle*, sweet flour doughnuts, as well as chestnuts with chocolate...

Before falling under the Florentine domination in 1258, Marradi was an independent fief of the **Badia del Borgo (Santa Reparata del Borgo)** where we can rapidly go to, following the provincial road leading from Marradi to **San Benedetto in Alpe**. There is a very important monastic settlement, going back to the 11th century, which belonged first to the Benedictines and then to the Vallombrosians. It was restructured in Barocco style between 1741 and 1765. The severe and heavy campanile with its square plan keeps a Romanesque look. The stone built church has a simple saddleback façade and the inside is in Baroque style with a single nave and a wide transept. We go back to Marradi taking the **Faentina road** heading south. We drive up to the Passo della Colla di Canaglia going through various characteristic mountain villages.