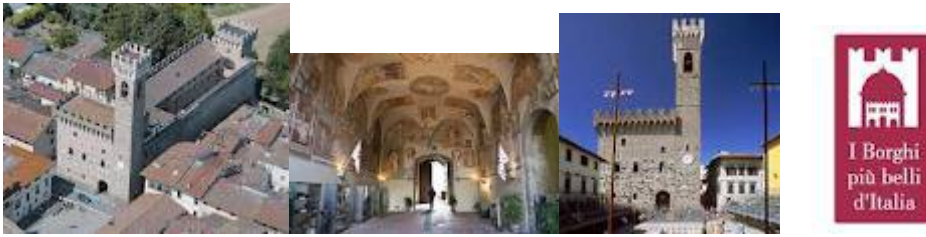


SCARPERIA



This is one of the gems of the Mugello region, established in 1306 by the Florentine Republic to counter the feudal power of the Ubaldini family. **Scarperia** is one of the most interesting historic centres in Mugello, a kind of Florentine outpost along the Bolognese road which later on became an important market place and a place to stop, thanks to its geographic position. Today it is still **divided in half by the road leading to Bologna**. Here the buildings have created a vaguely rectangular shape enclosed in stone walls interrupted by **square towers**.

Scarperia has been famous for more than five centuries for the **art of forging blades and knives**. The Vicary headquarters were located in Scarperia, exercising authority on the local civil and criminal administration and representing the Florentine Republic in a great part of the Mugello countryside.



In the centre of town in via Roma you can visit the **Palazzo dei Vicari**, established in the 14th century but transformed and renovated several times in the course of the centuries. In the 14th century it was a severe-looking residence with a tower, on the side over-looking the square, and at the back it was a fortress. The renovations made after the 1919 earthquake gave it a similar aspect to the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. The façade of the palace shows signs of the Medicean power as it is covered with **coats of arms of families** whose members occupied the important office of Vicar at various times. The blazons in glazed terracotta from the **Della Robbia** and **Benedetto Buglioni**'s workshops are very interesting. Inside, the decorations and frescoes from the Renaissance period contrast with the rough aspect of the palace. Upstairs, in the first room, we find a *Madonna con Bambino e Santi* (1554) belonging to **Ghirlandaio** school. Today, precious historical archives are kept in the palace which also hosts the **Museo dei ferri taglienti** (Museum of cutting tools), a production which, for centuries, Scarperia has taken credit for. The tradition of Scarperia's "**coltellinai**" (cutlers) is at least five centuries old as these craftsmen were in fact originally the armourers of a vast area. In 1538 the "Statutes of the Cutlers" were written to organize the iron cutters into a kind of professional guild. There were many craftsmen in Scarperia up to the 18th century and the production of cutting tools was very broad as they were used at war (daggers, spears and swords) as well as in a home or a professional environment (forks and awls, billhooks, shears and pocket knives). In 1906 there were still forty-six shops selling "cuttlers and scissors", employing about three hundred workers. There are only **five shops still operating** in Scarperia today; they are responsible for a rich production of any kind of knives from hunting to butchers' knives, kitchen knives as well as horn handle cutlery and all sorts of scissors. An old workshop has been recreated to show where and how a cutler used to work. You can find it 19 via Solferino.



On the square in front of the Palazzo dei Vicari stands the **Oratorio della Madonna di Piazza** dated 1320. This is where, according to the tradition, the solemn ceremony for the takeover of the Vicars receiving the oath of allegiance from the Vicary's *Podestà* was held.



It is an elegant building from the 15th century with a façade decorated with a portal and elegant gemed windows in *pietra serena*. The interior shows cross vaults decorated with frescoes attributed to **Jacopo del Casentino** who also painted the *Madonna in Trono col Bambino e Angeli* placed inside a refined little temple from the late Gothic period. The *Madonna* is inserted in a precious marble frame in the shape of a tabernacle with base and lunette, a work by **Mino da Fiesole**. Still on the square, the **Prepositura dei SS. Jacopo e Filippo** was the church of an Augustine convent and a part of the 15th century cloister is still there. Inside we can see frescoes from that period, a wooden **Crucifix** by **Sansovino**, a marble tondo by **Benedetto da Maiano** (15th century) and a tabernacle for the holy oil by **Mino da Fiesole**.

LA PIEVE DI SANT'AGATA

From **Scarperia** it is recommended to go to the **Pieve di Sant'Agata**, located in one of the most important routes in the Middle Ages, *la Via di Sant'Agata*, which connected Florence to Bologna through the *Passo dell'Osteria Bruciata* (the Pass of the Burnt Inn). The village expanded around the church, the most remarkable sacred building in all of Mugello. Erected before the year 1000, it underwent several renovations while maintaining its original structure. The external façade is simple, with a portal topped by an architrave sculpted with intertwining ribbons motives. The edifice was built in limestone and embossed with elements of sandstone and green serpentine. Its interior has three naves on which the wooden-beams of the roofing rest directly, following an original architectural solution.



The **Pieve di S. Agata** goes back to at least 984 and was much smaller by then as shown by the perimeter drawn on the ground near the main entrance. It is **one of the most famous parish churches from the Romanesque era in Mugello**. The stone portal is especially elaborated with its fluted doorframes and its architrave decorated with intertwining ribbons in relief. The lunette above it is made of serpentine with a **Greek cross in limestone** in the middle. The interior has three naves but is not divided in three parts because the six narrow columns dividing the naves manage to hold the trusses without arches or walls, giving the "pleasant feeling of a long sigh" to the person who looks at the ceiling. The columns in stone bossing are resting on solid quadrangular pedestals and terminate with small capitals. The choir is raised and constituted by a rectangular apse (the original was semicircular) and two side chapels. On the main entrance door a little niche contains a small statue of Saint Agatha made in pink marble dated from the beginning of the 15th century. On the right hand side, near the door, is found a marble holy water font by **Santi di Piero** from the

16th century. On the same wall, we can admire the saint's reliquary-altar, designed by the priest **Tolomeo Nozzolini** whose coat of arms can be seen there. Around the urn containing the relic, he chose to put various fragments coming from old dismantled paintings; it is then possible to admire with Saint Agatha, Saint Lucy, Saint Catherine, Saint Julian, Saint Biagio, Saint Martin and Saint Benedict. On the right wall, the **Altare del Santo Rosario** is also decorated with the arms of **Nozzolini**. It keeps a painting of the *Madonna del Rosario con Bambino e Santi*, among which can be seen Saint Agatha, Saint Dominique and Saint Peter. A painting by the Florentine master **Sacchetti** (1613) is kept in a frame showing the fifteen *Misteri del S. Rosario*.

Past a confessional stands the **Altare di S. Carlo Borromeo** (1616) where the saint from Milan is represented kneeling in front of a bare altar. Walking up two steps and past a door giving access to the choir, we find ourselves in front of the **Cappella della Madonna delle Grazie** built in the 15th century by the Compagnia di Piazza. The much venerated image of the *Vergine col Bambino* was attributed to the Florentine painter **Jacopo di Cione** (1383) and it is enriched by a beautiful decoration from the 18th century. Two paintings by **Cristofano Allori** (1577-1621) depicting the *Angelo Annunziante* and the *Vergine Annunziata* are hanging on two piers delimiting the apse. The main altar was made in 1968 using original 12th century fragments from renovation works which had been completed there. A beautiful wooden crucifix has been momentarily placed behind it; dated from the 16th century it is in the style of **Giambologna** and should later be moved into the chapel found on the left hand side. In the left hand side of the choir, we can admire in a very rich frame a painting coming from a polyptych by **Bicci di Lorenzo** (1368-1452), dismantled by **Nozzolini**, depicting the *Matrimonio mistico di S. Caterina d'Alessandria*, where, on the side opposite to the saint and at the foot of the Madonna, we can see Magdalene. Next to the painting we find the **Cappella del Crocifisso**, built in 1477 with a stone altar. On the left wall, a small niche contains the bust of an *Ecce Homo*. The side chapels are both decorated with frescoes from the painter **Luigi Ademollo**. Going back to the main entrance, we walk past a side tambour door and we find the **Altare di S. Francesco** with a painting by **Sacchetti** depicting the saint receiving the stigmata. Before reaching the baptismal font, there is a painting of the *Madonna col Bambino, S. Agata e un altro Santo* in an elaborate painted frame.

Finally we arrive in front of the **Battistero**. It is a peculiar setting made out of works from various eras and with different characteristics but holding undoubtedly a great artistic value. It was rebuilt after the 1542 earthquake with rudimentary techniques by the invaluable Nozzolini in 1608. It shows a balustrade made of **seven inlaid panels** coming from various works of art. Even the Telamone leaning against the wall, depicting a person wearing a tunic and standing on a lion cub, holding a book where are engraved the first words of Saint Matthew's gospel, most probably comes from the old pulpit. The octagonal shaped stone baptismal font, displaying faces decorated with heraldic motives and figures representing Christ and Saint John the Baptist, shows typical lines of the Renaissance period. The altar is a product of the Nozzolini's eccentric restructurations; it is topped by another painting by **Sacchetti** depicting the *Angelo Custode che presiede ad un Battesimo*.



From **Sant'Agata** we go back to **Scarperia** and from there we can reach the **Mugello motor-racing track** owned by Ferrari since 1988. The autodrome offers one of the best high speed circuits in the world where the pilot's skills make the difference. Only really skillful pilots will know how to handle the San Donato corner where they can arrive at a 340km/hour speed. The Mugello circuit is the main one used by **Scuderia Ferrari** for its Formula One testings and it is also where one of the **Grand Prix of Motorcycle Racing (MotoGP)** takes place, the most anticipated race of the season. In addition, throughout the year, the autodrome opens its doors to racing car and bike fanatics who can enjoy exciting free testing sessions. The circuit is immersed in a beautiful landscape with soft and quiet hills: if you happen to be strolling around, you will be able to notice the strange but beautiful effect created by the purring of a Formula one racing on the track while in the surrounding woods the most absolute silence prevails. A strange and unique feeling. On racing days, especially during the **Gran Premio d'Italia MotoGP** week-end, everybody around **Mugello** talks about the event and you have to be extremely patient to arrive at the autodrome because of the crowds getting there. All events regarding the Scuderia Ferrari are celebrated there, like the festivities marking the end of the racing season.



To go to **Firenzuola**, we take the road SS 503, driving up to the panoramic **Passo del Giogo di Scarperia** (882 m), between chestnut groves, oak forests and vast pinewoods. Taking a turn to the left, before arriving in Firenzuola we reach the beautiful **Badia di San Pietro in Moscheta**, a **natural work of art, immersed in a protected green area**, and a good starting point of excursions. It was funded in 1034 by Saint **Rodolfo dei Galigai**, a member of Giovanni Gualberto's Vallombrosian Order. Nothing remains from the original building apart from a big wall with a broken arch. It is said by tradition that Galigai had built a convent which was considered too big and was destroyed by heavy floods from the nearby river because of Saint Giovanni Gualberto's prayers as he had wished for more humility. Close to the Badia is the **Museo del Paesaggio storico dell'Appennino** which focuses on the characteristics of the Apennine mountains in Mugello. The journey goes from landscapes of woods and castles to the beginning of agriculture and the big changes made in the landscape with the building of roads and villages. Finally it gets to our era which is marked by the progressive desertion of the mountains.



FIRENZUOLA

Firenzuola, 'Little Florence' as the chronicler **Giovanni Villani** called it in 1332, was built by the Florentine Republic in the 14th century and suffered significant destructions from the 1944 bombings. We can still see the **Porta Romana**, surmounted by a bell and the **Porta Bolognese** through which passes the main street, via Villani. On Piazza Agnolo the **Rocca** hosts the **Museo della Pietra Serena** which is worthy of a visit. The Rocca is a small fort built in 1371 following **Antonio da Sangallo il Vecchio's** plans, as wanted by the Florentine Republic. Inserted in robust walls it was completed in 1410. Destroyed by the 1944 bombings it was rebuilt to become the town hall and it also hosts the **Museo della Pietra Serena**, the *pietra serena* being a material used for the towns' traditional activities. The museum is set in the Rocca's

underground passages and is divided in six sections showing the journey of the stone from its extraction from the quarries to its use to create various objects. Of particular interest is the exhibition of works of art and everyday objects made out of the stone, proving the technical skills of Firenzuola stonemasons.

Opening Hours: Winter (1 October-31 March): Monday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday and Public Holidays, 10.00-12.00 / 14.30-16.30. Summer (1 April-30 September): Monday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday and Public Holidays: 10.00-12.00 / 15.00-17.00.

Today there are a lot of firms in Firenzuola producing quality outdoor work like paving for roads and pavements, fountains as well as internal fittings like floor paving, window framing, staircases and fireplaces.

From Firenzuola, we take the road in the direction of the **Passo della Futa** and near **Cornacchiaia** we find the **Pieve di San Giovanni Battista Decollato**. This church stands on the important medieval road of Sant'Agata and shows a typically Romanesque structure recalling the Pieve di Sant'Agata.



At the **Passo della Futa (903 m)** there is a German monumental military cemetery where 30.683 soldiers are buried, all killed fighting on the Gothic Line during World War II.



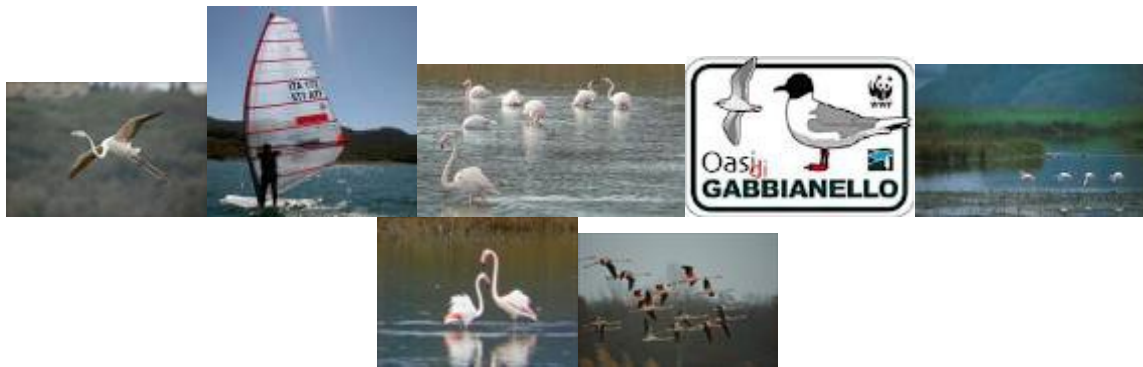
Proceeding south on road SS 65 in the direction of the lake of Bilancino, in the village of **San Gavino** we come across the **Pieve San Gavino Adimari**. Erected in 1037, it was for a while one of the most important churches in Mugello, holding jurisdictional powers on seventeen other churches. On the façade and on the campanile are displayed many emblems of the Medici family, their benefactor from the 15th century onwards.

The artificial lake of Bilancino gives anyone the possibility to practice canoeing, sailing, wind-surfing and sport fishing.



At the end of the 1950s, to avoid the dewatering of the **Arno river** and address **Florence** water needs, plans were made to realise a dam on the **Sieve river** near the village of **Bilancino**. This idea was only materialized in 1978, twelve years after the famous floods in Florence. The *Consorzio per le risorse idriche* was then created with the provinces of Florence and Prato. Works started in 1984 after various modifications leading to the addition to the project of laid out areas, a hunting zone and a zone for water sports. The project expanded to the creation of a real lake. It was opened to the public in 1999 and covers about 5 square km. It is currently one of the largest artificial lakes in Italy, with a depth of 31 m.

In addition to the laid out beaches, the area includes also a **Natural Oasis managed by the WWF** (World Wildlife Fund) and several areas where it is possible to practice trekking and mountain-bike riding, as well as watersports like canoeing, kayaking, windsurfing and sailing. It is, on the other hand, forbidden to use motor boats, except for electric ones. Regarding sport fishing, one can fish carps, chubs, perches and pikes in the lake. It is allowed to fish in rowing boats or motor boats, in the middle of the lake or from the shore, with a maximum of two fishing-rods and it is forbidden to use live baits.



It is also possible to stay around the lake in a campervan in a new area equipped and controlled by the *Protezione civile*. Scouts can stay in a permanent camp.

L'Oasi Naturalistica del Gabbianello

The natural oasis covers 25 hectares and is located in the municipality of Barberino di Mugello, in **Gabbianello di Sotto**. It is surrounded by large forests and organically cultivated lands showing how important this activity still is for the local economy. There are also meadows mainly used for bovines. The oasis is set in a large plain between the Apennines from Tuscany-Romagna and the Calvana mountains. The scenery is therefore typical of Tuscany, given the great number of oaks, green oaks, ashes and aromatic plants. Around this large protected area, there are several interesting buildings such as Medicean castles, the Villa delle maschere and the Pieve di San Giovanni in Petroio. The oasis of Gabbianello is very young; it only became a protected area in 2004 and it is under the care of Ischetus, a cooperative managing it for WWF.

With the draining of many humid and swampy lands in Tuscany, lots of humid habitats disappeared so that today the oasis is the only protected wetland area in Mugello. Despite the artificial nature of the area and given its position on one of the main migratory routes, it provides a very important environment. In addition, because of its link to the plain of Florence and thanks to the diversification of its environments, it has become, along the years, the place where certain duck species like the **teal** and the **shoveler** come to hibernate. It also represents an ideal terrain for the nesting of numerous species as common as **woodcocks** and **thrushes**. Others can be seen in Gabbianello only during the migration period like the **white stork**, **wild goose** and the **crane** but also more particular species like the **flamingo**. In the smaller range of aquatic fauna we find the **warbler**, the **reed warbler** and the **river nightingale**. Among the birds of prey, there are various types of **hawks** to observe: the **buzzard**, the **royal harrier** and the **kestrel**. In the oasis, like more or less everywhere in Tuscany, it is also possible to see some small animals like badgers, hedgehogs and martens. The different species can be observed following the long path inside the area, equipped with small bird-watching cabins, or walking on various paths along the lake of Bilancino. The oasis can also provide bicycles and electric cars for handicapped people. A butterfly garden is being built where it will be possible to observe them and take photos following specific pathways.