

ARTISTIC AND HISTORICAL ITINERARY

DISCOVERING THE MAIN PLACES OF RELIGIOUS INTEREST

THE PARISH CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA MADALENA AT SIETINA

After leaving Arezzo, on the SR 71, the first council area we enter in the valley of Casentino is **Capolona**. Our journey starts at **Pieve a Sietina**, on the road that leaves Capolona in the direction of **Castelluccio**, crossing the village of **San Martino Sopr'Arno**. The Romanesque parish church has been mentioned since 1022 and emerges as a result of its cycle of frescoes of the Gothic (XIV century) and Renaissance (1490) periods.

The architectural structure is of three naves with three apses separated by four arches which rest on rectangular pillars. Booking necessary. Parish priest

0575.364113 339.2698525

THE PARISH CHURCH OF SANT'ANTONINO MARTIRE AT SOCANA

A few minutes after having crossed the bridge over the River Arno at **Rassina**, in the direction of **Castel Focognano**, you can see the architecture of the church which stands on what was sacred Etruscan ground. Already mentioned in 1072, the actual



Pieve a Sietina. Fresco with "Madonna on the Throne" (1490)



*Pieve a Socana.
Etruscan sacrificial
altar V century
B.C.*

building goes back to the XII - XIII centuries and is now much shorter than the previous structure. The church courtyard was taken up at one time by the more ancient church which boasted five spans. The foundations and the large Etruscan sacrificial altar (V century B.C.) remain visible today plus the remains of the early Christian phase (altar and plinths of the VII - VIII centuries). The façade goes back to the XVI century, whilst the interior is made up of three naves and three spans, strengthened by rectangular pillars with Goth-

THE ETRUSCANS in CASENTINO

Their presence began to remodel the appearance of the land through their agroforestry and urban activities from the VII to I century B.C. Remains of their settlements, sanctuaries, objects connected with burial rites, sporadic archaeological finds, all are factors which, together with the toponymy, indicate how widespread their sites were. As a result of the overlapping and adding of settlements from later epochs visible remains of the Etruscan period are few. Some are to be seen, however, at **Pieve a Socana** at **Masseto** (Pratovecchio) and at the **Archeological Museum** at **Partina** where there is a special exhibition of the finds and reconstruction of the **Sanctuary of the Lake of the Idols**. You can reach the area which stands at 1,400 metres on **Mount Falterona**, near the source of the River Arno, by means of an organized excursion. In 1838 one of the greatest votive finds of the Etruscan world was unearthed which resulted in being a real sanctuary (VI - I century B.C.) There was originally a lake which dried up in the XIX century where numerous votive statuettes, arms, coins and various objects were offered to the Gods in order to obtain, in exchange, favours - or to thank the deities for favours already granted. The greater majority of scholars agree that the reason for so many objects in one find was because the site was on an old and important route which connected central-north Etruria with the Padana area and, through the ports of Adria and Spina, with Greece. The proximity of the source of the River Arno (contraction of the word Sarnus: sacro) and the fact that the Etruscans believed that the lake coincided with the source itself, may have determined the sacredness of the area. (It is said that these waters have therapeutic powers.)



Small figure in bronze of Etruscan warrior.
Archeological Museum, Partina

ic arches. The bell tower, which is of particular interest, is formed by a lower cylindrical section (which goes back to the Roman era II - I centuries B.C.) onto which the final, hexagonal piece, has been added. Open 8.30 - 12.30 / 15.00 - 18.30

ABBEY OF SANTA TRINITA IN ALPE

From **Talla** you go in the direction of the hamlet **Pontenano** and then take the track road for **Poggio Cavallari**. Leave your car and continue on foot (Cai no. 44). The walk is rather demanding and brings you to the small abbey which houses the remains of the Romanesque



Ruins of the ancient Benedictine Abbey of Santa Trinita

church, also known as Fonte Benedetta. Founded before the year 1000 by two German Benedictine monks belonging to the Cluniac Order, the abbey knew remarkable prosperity during the Middle Ages but as from the XV century it began to lose in importance and was left in the hands of the monks of Vallombrosa until 1708. The design of the latin cross remains visible today and part of the walls of the transept and the apses. The picture which pres-

ents itself to the onlooker is particularly evocative because of the naturalistic surroundings in which the scene is set, 960 mt. a.s.l.

PARISH CHURCH OF SANTI IPPOLITO AND DONATO

Positioned in the historical centre of **Bibbiena**, it began life as the castle chapel. It later took on the responsibilities of the town parish church, which stood beyond the city walls. It was destroyed in 1289 after the Battle of Campaldino. The present building, which has only one nave, in the form of a Greek cross, houses important works from XIV to the XVII centuries. Open 7.30-13.00/15.00-19.00

THE CHURCH OF SAN LORENZO

Situated in front of the Dovizi building, in the historical centre of **Bibbiena**, it was rebuilt with three naves in 1474 by the Franciscan Frati Minori. It is interesting because of the two **terracotta** by **Della Robbia** representing the Deposition from the Cross and the Adoration of the Shepherds. The adjacent **cloister** boasts a cycle of frescoes depicting the life of St. Francis.

PARISH CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA AT BUIANO

It is situated between **Bibbiena** and **Poppi**, on the ancient road which follows the right bank of the River Arno. The first documented evidence on



Santa Maria, Buiano. Entrance to the crypt

PARISH CHURCHES

In Casentino there are numerous parish churches which date back to the Romanesque era and which were built along main routes (among which the Via Major). The buildings, in local sandstone, for the most part visible from the roads, stand on what were places of pre-existing pagan cult. The architectural position of the apse was inevitably facing East to permit the faithful at least to send their prayers in the right direction, towards Jerusalem. Even in open countryside it is possible to find a tiny group of houses with their 'parish church' which, for centuries, was a religious, political and economic reference point for the 'plebs'. Casentino, always a land of dubious borders, is still today divided between the bishop dioceses of Fiesole and Arezzo.

the church, founded on the remains of a **Roman Spa**, goes back to the first part of the year 1000. (An **Etruscan kylix** dating about V century B.C., and depicting red figures, was discovered on the archaeological site.)

The present church built about the beginning of the XII century is much smaller than the previous more ancient building which was a structure comprising three naves with Gothic arches. The **crypt** is particularly interesting, maintaining its original design of four small pillars which divide three small naves, covered by a cross-vaulted ceiling. The supporting capitals are of various types. Open on request: Sig. Bini Ottavio 0575.529673

ABBAY OF SAN FEDELE

It is the largest Romanesque church in Casentino situated in the historical centre of **Poppi**. It was built to satisfy the wishes of the Counts Guidi in 1195, together with the monastery,



Abbey of San Fedele, Poppi

which welcomed the monks who came from the more ancient abbey of **Strumi** (X century), 2 kms. from Poppi, the remains of which are still visible.

This church, with the apse facing East has a single nave with transept and truss ceiling, three large round arches with black and white decoration which divide the transept from the nave. The overall style is late Romanesque - Gothic.

Inside the building, walking in the half-light, the visitor is unprepared for the surprise of being able to view a series of remarkable works of art of considerable importance (XIII, XVII c.). It is possible to enjoy an 'art gallery' and, at the same time, enter visually and emotionally into the Christian Middle Ages. Some examples are:

The Crucifix, tempera on board, school of Giotto; The Madonna with Child by the **Maestro della Maddalena**; Saint Benedict - adoration of the Virgin Mary: by **Jacopo Ligozzi**. At the left of the altar you can go down to the crypt where the remains of **Blessed**

Torello lie, patron of the town. Open: 10.00-13.00 / 15.00-18.00

Information: The Venerable Brotherhood of Saint Torello
0575.539534

CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA ASSUNTA AT CERTOMONDO OR CERROMONDO

This church, situated at **Ponte a Poppi** near the Plain of **Campaldino**, was founded in 1262 by the Counts Guidi in thanksgiving for the Ghibelline victory at Montaperti. The façade of the building faces Poppi Castle. In the inside of the church there is a XV century painting of The Annunciation, tempera on board, by Neri di Bicci. The mortal remains of **Guglielmino degli Ubertini**, Bishop of Arezzo - who died in the Battle of Campaldino - were found recently.

PARISH CHURCH OF THE SANTISSIMA ANNUNZIATA AND SAN BARTOLOMEO

Situated in the town of **Ba-**



Crypt of the Parish Church, B. Prataglia

dia Prataglia this church was founded before the year 1000 by the Benedictine monks who hailed from **Montecassino**. It gained sufficient importance to enter into conflict with the Her-

mitage of Camaldoli, so much so that it was necessary to request the peaceful intervention of the Bishop of Arezzo. The original design was of three naves with the apses facing East. Today there is one nave only with a truss ceiling. The **crypt** under the church is of particular interest, boasting two spans and three small naves. The capitals of the pillars are each in a different style and handiwork and, very probably, at least two are the result of re-using materials originally from Romanesque buildings.

PARISH CHURCH OF SAN MARTINO A VADO

This church is situated very near to the River Solano at **Strada in Casentino** below



San Martino, Vado. An example of Romanesque art

the castle of San Niccolò. The place was originally mentioned in documents going back to the year 1028. The word 'vado' refers to the fact that it was positioned in the area of a ford (guado) over the small river Solano. The building is characterized by a basilican design with

three naves, truss ceiling, and round arches on monolithic pillars. (Traces of an older phase, c. XI century have been found under the present flooring.) **The Romanesque capitals** are of considerable value as the various figures sculpted – zoomorphic, human and vegetable – denote the artistic expression of the thoughts of the medieval man. To the left, on entering, is an allegory of the Creation of Man in body and soul and, to the right, an allegory of 'The Disheartened Man' who returns to the comfort of God. There is a capital of particular interest which shows a design of chestnut leaves, obviously a reference to the wooded scenery of Casentino.

Open: 9.00-12.00/16.00-19.00
Information: Parish priest 0575.572602

THE CHURCHES OF SANTA MARIA AND SAN MICHELE AT CETICA

From Strada in Casentino take the road to **Pagliericcio**, following the indications for **Cetica**. The first church visible, climbing on your right on arriving at the small town, is **Santa Maria** (1209), from where you can enjoy a splendid panorama of the Valley of the Solano. Continuing on the main road you arrive at the church of **San Michele** or **Sant'Angelo** – probably of monastic origin (Vallombrosa), dating back to the XIII

century. The interior is divided into three naves. Paintings c. 1400 of particular importance are the **Madonna della Melagrana del Pesellino** and the **Vergine in Trono by Bicci di Lorenzo**. To the left of the altar is a **wooden Crucifix** of the Florentine school of **Donatello**.

PARISH CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA ASSUNTA IN CIELO

Once in the small town of **Montemignai**, before arriving at the castle near the river Scheggia, you can see the ancient parish church, built in



Capital in the parish church, Montemignai

the XI century on the wishes of the Counts Guidi. The church has three naves, with a raised high altar. Worth a long look are the **capitals** on the pillars, artistry by local and Lombard skilled workers as at Romena, Vado and Stia. On the walls are **frescoes** dating from 1400. To the right of the

altar is a polychrome **terra-cotta** by **Della Robbia**.

ABBEY OF SANTA MARIA AT POPPIENA

Known as the Abbey of **Pratovecchio**, this church is situated at the beginning of the small town arriving from Poppi. Evidence of its existence goes back to 1099. The lower half of the façade is composed of pale and dark grey stones chiselled into a perfect rectangular shape. The upper half boasts a rose window positioned above the entrance door. The interior houses works from XIV - XV centuries.

PARISH CHURCH OF SAN PIETRO AT ROMENA

This building is situated above the small town of **Pratovecchio** along the road that leads to the Castle of **Romena**. The present building, which goes back to 1152, has a semicircular apse and three naves with rows of pillars and round arch-

es. Traces of a more ancient tri-apses building have been found (which it is possible to visit) under the present floor level. Among the **capitals**, one bears the name of **Pievano Alberico**, founder of the church in '**tempore famis**' (to give work to the local skilled craftsmen following a famine). **Romena** is an obligatory stop. The solitary majesty of this religious temple which stands alone in surroundings of naturalistic beauty leaves the onlooker almost moved by the scene, in which art and history also play an evocative role. Information: Signora Cipriani 0575 583725

PARISH CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA

This church is situated in **Piazza Tanucci**, **Stia**. The original structure of the building, already mentioned in documents dated 1017, was modified during the XVIII century involving the destruction of the façade and the original apses. The interior



Parish church of S. Maria, Stia

with three naves, has rows of monolithic, sandstone pillars with round arches. There are two main types of **capitals**; one with floral motives and one depicting figures. The subjects can be zoomorphic or anthropomorphic. The remains of a cylindrical pillar have been found under the present floor level in the central nave and, a square pillar (of more than 1 metre in diameter) under the altar area, which probably hail from a more ancient structure of the Romanesque era. There are various works of art inside the church. In the chapel, on the right hand side is **L'Annunciazione di Maria e Santi** (1414) tempera on board by **Bicci di Lorenzo** and a coat of arms in polychrome terracotta by **Della Robbia** (XVI century). In the chapel on the opposite side the **Madonna col Bambino** in white glazed earthenware by **Andrea della Robbia** (1437 – 1528) and the **Vergine con Bambino** e



San Pietro, Romena

due Angeli by the **Cimabue** School (1290-1300).
Open: 8.00 - 19.00

SANCTUARIES

Santa Maria delle Grazie, Stia

On the road to **Londa**. It was built in the XV century, following the apparition of the Madonna to Monna Giovanna. The sanctuary comprises various stone buildings with an arcade from where you can enjoy a beautiful view over the surrounding countryside. The interior of the church contains terracotta works by Della Robbia and other frescoes of the 1500s.

Santa Maria del Sasso, Bibbiena

Built in 1495 after the apparition of the Madonna in 1347. The structure, which is in Renaissance style, is absolutely not to miss because of the beauty of the natural landscape; the portico, the **lower church** (below ground level); the cloisters; and the tabernacle belonging to the major church which also houses numerous works of art among which the wooden sculpture of the **Madonna del Buio** by **Della Robbia**.

ORATORIES

Oratory of the Madonna delle Calle

This building is situated on the road which from **Montemignaio** leads to Consuma.



S. Maria del Sasso, Bibbiena. From 1899 a national monument

In 1400 it was a tabernacle built on an ancient mule path and later enlarged around the 1700s. It remains much the same today with its portico which offered rest to passing pilgrims.



Built along the mule path that climbed towards Consuma

Oratory of the Madonna del Morbo

In the historical centre of **Poppi**. It is a votive temple, late Renaissance, hexagonal in shape with a **dome** vault.

It was built in 1659 in thanksgiving to the Virgin Mary for protection given during the dreadful plagues.

Oratory of the S.S. Stimate di S. Francesco

Situated in the historical centre of **Bibbiena**, the construction dates back to the first half of the 1700s with a neo-classic façade and rectangular design. The interior is the exaltation of **baroque art**. It is the only one of its kind in the province of Arezzo.



FROM CASTLE TO CASTLE... BETWEEN GUELPHS AND Ghibellines

THE CASTLE OF THE FIORAIA

It is situated at **Castelnuovo di Subbiano**, well visible from the Umbro-Casentinese state road and has been known as a fortification since 1022. Conquered and destroyed in 1130



View of the Castle of the Fioraia

and in 1170, it was rebuilt by the nobleman Simone della Fioraia in the XV century as a gentleman's mansion. Signs of the Renaissance era are still visible today amongst which are the **Chapel** with frescoes dating back to the 1500s by a pupil of Don Agnolo di Lorentino. The staircase in the courtyard, the loggia and other additions are from the late 1800s. An interesting feature is the keep, with its corbels, merlons and trapdoors.

Information: 0575.420450

THE CASTLE OF VALENZANO

Travelling on the state road 71, once at **Calbenzano** take the



The neo-gothic style of the Castle of Valenzano

THE BUILDING OF CASTLES IN CASENTINO

An area of divided territory, the valley has witnessed various populations clash – the Longobards, the Goths and the Byzantines who certified their presence in the area by building fortifications as from late medieval times. The number of towers, forts, castle residences and fortified villages amount to over 60 and were built on high land, along the main transport routes and near to obligatory pathways, controlling and dominating the territory. The fortifications of High Casentino belonged primarily to the dynasty of the Guidi whilst from Bibbiena to Subbiano they were owned by various bishops' families – counts of the city of Arezzo. From the second half of the XV century, Casentino has been linked to the destiny of Florence.

road on the right to arrive at the castle of **Valenzano** near **Subbiano**. At one time owned by the Ubertini, it was totally rebuilt as from the year 1870 in neo Gothic and neo Romanesque style, which reflected the medieval Sienese architecture. Even though it no longer has any of the original medieval construction, its striking beauty leaves a lasting impression on visitors.

Information: 0575.420450

THE CASTLE OF FOCOgnANO

This castle can be reached by crossing the bridge over the

River Arno at **Rassina**. It was built during the first half of the XI century. Snatched from the hands of the Ubertini, from 1404 to 1778, it was placed under Florentine jurisdiction. There remains from the original construction a beautiful **polygonal tower**, with seven sides.

THE CASTLE OF CHITIGNANO

Situated on the road to Chitignano, the castle at one time belonged to the Ubertini family, together with the adjoining **residence of the Podestà**, established by the Florentine Republic.



The castle amidst the greenery of Casentino

lic after 1402. From the remains of the oldest part of the building the Guardhouse – with a large barrel vault – the Justice Room with a coffered ceiling, a small bell gable and a rather narrow courtyard are still visible.

Open: booking only:
347.6004815

THE CASTLE OF GRESSA

About 1 km. from **Bibbiena** in the direction of La Verna, take the road on your left for Gressa. For the tourists who go on foot there is the extra pleasure of the colours and perfumes of the genista and lavender bushes – especially in the Spring and Summer seasons - which line the access route. Once at the castle it is possible to enjoy a beautiful view of the valley.

This structure, not one of the most visited was, at one time, the property of the Bishop of Arezzo. There is evidence of its existence as far back as the XI century. It was composed of two **outer walls**, the village, the church and the quarterdeck with the tower. It is possible to visit the village, the entrance to the internal enclosure and a part of the walls. The remains of the quarterdeck with access portal are visible only from the outside. The church and the old bishop's residence can be visited on booking.

Open: Booking only:
Sig. Dini 0575. 594610

THE CASTLE OF POPPI

It is situated on top of the hill and dominates the village and the whole valley. The original construction is easily recognized in the present front Tower which dates from 1191. In 1274 Count Simone da Battifolle transformed this fortified structure into a residential mansion and it became one of the main residences of the Counts Guidi until 1440 when it then became seat of the Vicariate under Florentine dominion. The architectural overlap-

arms of the Vicari families; the rooms of ancient residences; the wooden balconies; a plastic model of the Battle of Campaldino; the great Feast Room; the chapel with frescoes by **Taddeo Gaddi** (XIV century); the Tower; the **Riliana Library** housing an enormous patrimony of manuscripts, incunabula and books, and important sources of historical documentation on Casentino and Tuscany. On the opposite side, the mysterious **Tower of the Devils** with



The castle of the Counts Guidi, Poppi which hosted Dante Alighieri

ping has not altered the original form which was designed by **Lapo** or **Arnolfo di Cambio** who later used it as a guide for the construction of the **Palazzo Vecchio** in Florence. The castle buildings, amongst the best conserved in the whole region, offer many points of interest for visitors: the courtyard with coats of

so many ghosts and legends. Recent excavations on the open green in front of the castle, testify the presence of an **Etruscan dwelling** of the V century B.C.

Open: In Winter from Thursday to Sunday 10.00 – 12.30
14.30 – 17.30

In Summer: 10.00 – 19.00
Information: 0575.520516

THE CASTLE OF SAN NICCOLÒ - STRADA

In a dominating position over the valley of the Solano, it can be reached by



The clock tower in the village of Castel San Niccolò

an old mule path in the form of a letter 'M' in honour of the **Countess Matilde di Canossa**. The first thing the visitor sees is the Clock Tower, for many years the only signal of passing time for the people of the surrounding countryside.

Here we are in a rather special place. The systems of fortification and construction, very typical of the Middle Ages, are well conserved which indicate the political, economic and feudal systems of the time. The castle, XII – XIII century, (fortified residence with tower, partly residential, courtyard, water-tank), the fortified village with the church and, going

beyond the bridge, the ancient market town of **Strada**.

Open on request:
Sig. Biondi 0575.572961

THE CASTLE OF ROMENA
Leaving the built-up area of **Pratovecchio** and crossing the River Arno, you continue on the road that leads to the

DANTE E D'ANNUNZIO

*“Li ruscelletti che d’i verdi colli
del Casentin discendon giuso in Arno,
faccendo i lor canali freddi e molli,
sempre mi stanno innanzi, e non indarno,
ché l’image lor vieppiù m’asciuga
che ‘l male ond’io nel volto mi discarno...
Ivi è Romena, là dov’io falsai
la lega suggellata del Batista;
per ch’io il corpo sù arso lasciai.
Ma s’io vedessi qui l’anima trista
di Guido o d’Alessandro o di lor frate,
per Fonte Branda non darei la vista.*



D. Alighieri, Inferno canto XXX 64-78

These words were pronounced by Maestro Adamo, whom Dante put into Hell in the VIII Circle - 10th Pit of Hell in amongst the money forgers. Encouraged by the Counts Guidi of Romena to forge the Florentine florin, he was captured by the Florentine Governing Body and burned alive in 1281 in a locality near Consuma which, since then, has been known as **‘L’Ommorto’** (The dead man).

The description of these places is also connected to the autobiographical experience of the poet who had fought at **Campaldino** in 1289 in the famous battle between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. During his exile, he had been guest of the Counts Guidi at Romena, Porciano and Poppi.

“Mi cerco e mi ricerco in questo Casentino di passione e di preghiera, come già mi cercai e ricercai nel suolo aspro dove nacqui e nel dolore di colei che mi portò. Se nato non fossi nella terra d’Abruzzi, vorrei esser nato qui, nella terra della Verna e di Michelangelo. Qui, più che altrove, posso io irrobustire la mia pertinace selvatichezza nativa e nel tempo medesimo spiritualizzare fino all’apice della grazia ogni mio istinto selvaggio. (...).”

Gabriele D’Annunzio 1907 da **“L’Ommorto e il Centauro”**
The poet was a guest of the Counts Goretti de’ Flaminii from June to October in 1902 in the villa of Romena where he wrote book III of **Le Laudi, Alcione**. At the same time the actress Eleonora Duse was in the villa of the parish church of Romena; she remained with the poet for the whole period of his stay.

ruins of the castle, present in this valley since 1008 under the rule of Count Guido Alberto of the Marquis of Spoleto. After 1125 it became one of the most important possessions of the Counts Guidi. The castle had two cir-

WALKING THROUGH RENAISSANCE PORTICOES

The squares and the main thoroughfares of the historical centres of Poppi, Pratovecchio and Stia are bordered by uninterrupted rows of colonnades - an indication of the close link we enjoy with our neighbouring Emilia Romagna. These are the result of an architectural tendency which changed the balconies (with external access) of the pre-existing XIV century façades, some traces of which are still visible. Even a walk in the rain allows you to observe that every building or house has different archways, pillars and capitals; portals which reflect the style of their epoch; courtyards paved in sandstone; window bars and gates in wrought iron. A walk through Renaissance Casentino is a walk through history, pausing only to gaze into a shop window or watch a craftsman at his work.



The Castle of Romena

cling outer walls, both one metre thick. At the southern tip of the most external wall the famous **Fonte Branda** was situated. Today, the quarterdeck, the Prison Tower and the 'Gioiosa' (joyful) portal remain visible.

THE CASTLE OF PORCIANO

Situated on a hill, dominating the small town of **Stia**, it can be reached by taking the road in the direction of the Mugello. A rare example of a **Tower House**, it was brought back to its original appearance at the beginning of

the 1900s through private intervention. It was court to the Guidi as from the first years of 1000. Today, the tower is visible - the largest of the Casentino castles - housing an interesting **museum** of medieval finds; the open meadow with its well; some towers of the castle wall and two entrance doors, one of which still leads to the small country houses around the castle.

Open: Sunday and Feast days:
10.00-12.00/16.00-19.00

Information: Signora Specht
Corsi 055.400517
329.0209258



The Castle of Porciano

CAMALDOLI

This is the mother house of the Camaldolite Order founded here by **Saint Romualdo** in 1012. We suggest you arrive by the SR 71 in the direction of **Soci**, then to **Partina** and, climbing, turn left at the junction signposted 'Camaldoli'.

fir-woods which separate the **Hermitage** (1,111 metres a.s.l.) from the **Monastery** (814 metres a.s.l.) The latter (XI – XVI centuries) is composed of: the **archicenobio** of the **Monastery**, the **Church** which houses paintings by **Giorgio Vasari**, the **Ancient**

where the **Maldolo Cloister** is of particular interest.

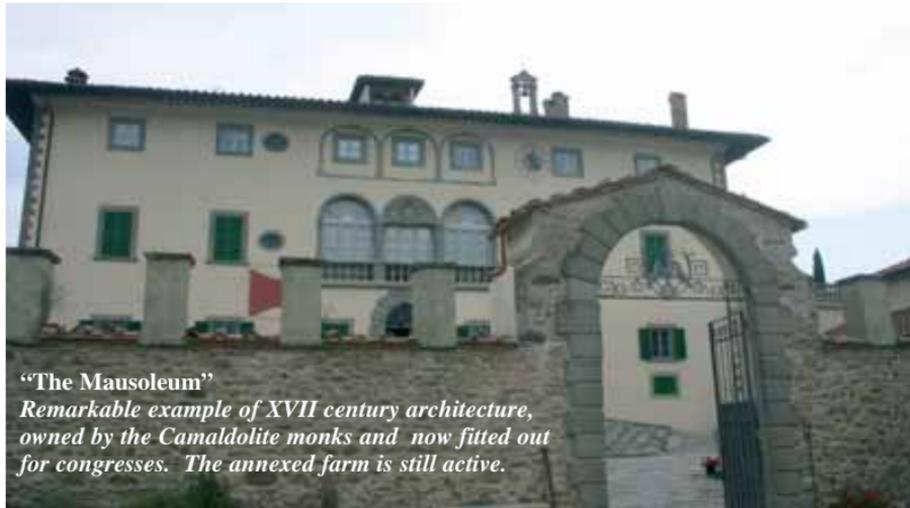
We then proceed to the forestry house of **Metaleto** where it is possible to see the majestic **Miraglia Chestnut tree** which, at the base of its hollow trunk, measures 11 metres. From here the road climbs until we reach the **Holy Hermitage** where an external wall encloses the group of cells of the closed order monks who live in complete seclusion. Walking beyond the entrance gate to this enclosure, we can see the **Church** on the right, with its Neapolitan baroque-style façade (**two bell towers**) in the interior of which there is the **Capitular Room**. **St. Francis** was present on the occasion of the first consecration of this church in 1220. Leaving the church on the opposite side to the entrance, there is **Saint**



Entrance to the Monastery

The actual village itself is in the midst of the monumental

Chemist with Galenic laboratory and the Guests' residence



“The Mausoleum”

Remarkable example of XVII century architecture, owned by the Camaldolite monks and now fitted out for congresses. The annexed farm is still active.

Romualdo's cell with his bed, small study, fireplace, chapel, and tiny kitchen garden. The saint's intuition to separate coenobitic activities from spiritual ones gave life to a system of monasticism which has continued for over 1,000 years. Camaldoli is still today a study centre with congresses and meetings on current affairs.

From the Hermitage we descend by the old, steep road known as 'La Corta'. Once at the Monastery we follow the panoramic route from **Mog-giona** to **Poppi**.

Information: 0575.556012

The Monastery and the Hermitage are linked by numerous well indicated **paths** which are easy to follow. More detailed and demanding routes are possible for those in possession of an **Excursion Card**.

THE SANCTUARY OF LA VERNA

This is the spiritual centre where **St. Francis of Assisi** received the **Stigmata** on the '**rough stone**' remembered by Dante Alighieri. It is situated on Mount Verna, a buttress of the Apennines, between Bibbiena and **Caprese Michelangelo**. The history of La Verna began in 1213 when it was donated to the Saint by the Count of Chiusi, Orlando Catani. The remarkable architectural and artistic works in the Sanc-



Andrea della Robbia. The Annunciation

tuary, XIII – XVI centuries, contribute to creating an atmosphere which echoes and breathes the presence of St. Francis.

It is possible to arrive by way of the tortuous, paved road **La Beccia** where so many pilgrims' feet have passed before. For the less energetic you can drive as far as the car park.

Inside the **Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta**, or major church, masterpieces of **Andrea della Robbia** are on show, amongst which **The Nativity** and **The Annunciation**. There is also the **Choir** with its majestic **organ** of 5,000 'voices' or tones, 4 keyboards and 72 choices of musical range. Every Summer musicians of international fame perform here.

The itinerary continues from the square known as the

Quadrant towards the places most frequented by St. Francis. The **Corridor of the Stigmata** from where you can reach the grotto which houses the **Saint's bed**, the **Chapels**, the **Precarious Stone**, the small **Church of St. Mary of the Angels**, the **Museum** rooms which date from XV century which house illuminated choir books, objects from the Ancient Chemist, the spices laboratory, objects of religious art and the enormous '**communal fireplace**'. To complete your visit we suggest a walk of about 30 minutes, to the top of **Mount Pen-na**. The path, amidst majestic fir-woods – residual forests from the last Apennine ice-age – is very well indicated. The breath-taking view from the top of the mountain compensates for any fatigue felt.

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