



HOW TO GET TO MUGELLO

Access by bus and by car to the various localities in the area is excellent. From the **AI motorway**, there is the exit at Barberino di Mugello. There are also numerous interesting secondary roads. The fascinating old **Faentina railway** line takes the visitors into the Comunità Montana Mugello area either from the Romagna region, with departures from Faenza, or from the Tuscan region with departures from Florence. Local public transport is also available within the territory.

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The history

Quaint, ancient, intricately constructed towns are situated fairly close to one another along the flow of the Sieve River. What was once an area dominated by important Etruscan developments later becomes, in Roman times, the site of numerous colonies and hamlets. Later the Guidi and Ubaldini families, the medieval lords of the territory, come into conflict with the city of Florence, which was expanding and searching for "new lands". The territory witnesses a remarkable period of growth in the 14th century because the Mugello basin represents an extremely important strategic and economic asset for Florence. Mugello was a source of pride for the **Medici**, whose origins lay here, and the Lorena families, which invested strongly in the territory to consolidate their power in the area surrounding Florence. Numerous important structures and fortresses, castles, villas, and palaces still bear witness to this important period of growth in Mugello. In fact, even the artistic and cultural history of Florence owes much of its development to key individuals from the area. Artists such as **Giotto** and **Beato Angelico** were born here; important architects worked on the construction of the hamlets in the "walled lands"; and moreover, the Mugello landscape has provided inspiration for numerous Florentine paintings.

The land

The territory of the Comunità Montana unites two geographic areas: **Mugello** and what is known as **Upper Mugello** or **Tuscan Romagna**. The Mugello valley is situated in the upper middle part of the hydrographical basin of the Sieve River: it is an enormous valley closed in on the north by the main watershed of the Apennines (from Mount Citerna to Giogo di Villore), on the south by the spurs of Mount Giovi and Mount Senario, and closed in on the west by Mount Calvana beyond which the city and province of Prato extends. Here we find the towns of **Vaglia, San Piero a Sieve, Barberino di Mugello, Scarperia, Borgo San Lorenzo** and **Vicchio**. The Mugello countryside is varied: from the lofty crests of thick woodland where the wild boar, the roe deer and the fox reign, to the chestnut and olive groves; from the fields of wheat and sunflowers on the vast flat terraced lands bordered by cliffs, to the fertile lower valley where the main towns and roads lie. On the north side, among the towering peaks of Mugello, and the mountain passes that make their way down to Bologna and Romagna, in



The gastronomy

the upper part of the Santerno, Senio and Lamone basins, you find Upper Mugello with such centres as **Firenzuola, Palazzuolo sul Senio** and **Marradi**. The huge boulders and peaks, although reaching only 1000 metres above sea level, present an exceptionally breathtaking and imposing profile. The view is dominated by uncontaminated beech, chestnut and oak woods, by vast meadows dotted every now and again with juniper bushes, and by the occasional outcrop of rock. The limpid waters and luxuriant riparian vegetation make this valley the perfect habitat for numerous species of fishes and birds. The weather shifts from the harsh Padana Planes climate, where the cold winds gust down unrestrained from the lofty Alps, to the milder Mediterranean one that is typical of central Italy. The Mugello basin, which lies just below the higher passes of the mountain chain, is often where the cold north wind meets the hot and humid libeccio, sirocco and westerly winds: the result is that the cold winds sweep away the fog produced by the warm winds in winter, and bring in some cool relief to mitigate the hot damp spells those same winds produce in summer.

The gastronomy

In this Tuscan territory between Florence and Bologna, the traveller can discover traditional dishes and a variety of local produce that have maintained their authenticity to this day. The few dishes that have been passed down in Mugello from the gastronomic tradition of the past are all important, typical recipes with "natural" flavours, made with traditional wholesome ingredients and never with the strong spices that are often overused in modern day food. First servings often include "tortelli di patate" (small pockets of pasta stuffed with potatoes), the "tagliatelle sui funghi, sul cinghiale, sulla lepore" (thick string pasta with mushroom, wild boar or hare meat sauce), "farinata" (polenta with kale and beans), soup, and minestrone. Meat is a very important part of the Mugello cuisine: we find steaks two inches thick, but also "rosticiana" pork ribs, and sausages or "coniglio ripieno" (stuffed rabbit), and the very particular boiled duck. The main cheese is "pecorino", made with pure sheep's milk, or "misto" mixed with cow's milk; the side dishes include "fagioli all'olio" (beans with extra virgin olive oil dressing), and a tasty variety of garden vegetables dipped in batter and fried (artichokes, aubergines, pumpkin flowers). Desserts can be quite simple like the "pan di ramerino" (sweet buns with rosemary and raisins) and the "schiacciata con l'uva" (sweet flat bread with grapes), classical like the tarts made with delicious jams, or more elaborate like the cake or the "budino" (pudding), from Marradi, made with the delicious "Marrone del Mugello", the I.G.P. denominated Mugello chestnut.



ONE THREE FIVE DAYS in Mugello

Mugello is in the Tuscan region and has lived for centuries under the rule, and in the shade of the city of Florence. A nature holiday between history and art



Qui, il mugello toscana



Medicean Villa of Cafaggiolo - on the left: Villa Pecori Giraldi

1 DAY - The Medici Route

The suggested route runs along the roads that bring to the towns of **Scarperia**, **Barberino di Mugello** and **San Piero a Sieve**.

• The tour starts in Scarperia, "terra nuova", which was founded by the town of Florence in 1306, and still conserves the impressive **Vicari Palace**, which was built in the same period but has undergone numerous transformations and restorations throughout the centuries. It is the home of the **Museo dei Ferri Taglienti** - antique and modern cutlery - (tel. +39 055 8468165).

In via Solferino, the historic "Bottega del Coltellaio" (cutler's shop), still stands. We strongly recommend the choice of a finely made knife in one of the many shops in the town.

• From Scarperia you move on to **Sant'Agata**, where there is a beautiful **Romanesque church** (tel. +39 055 8406853), the most famous sacred structure in Mugello. Once in Galliano, you can take the road down towards Bilancino Lake, which is now open to visitors, but only after a detour to the left that allows you to visit the Bosco ai Frati Convent, which was rebuilt according to Michelozzi's design, by order of Cosimo de' Medici. Inside, you find the splendid Crucifix attributed to Donatello (tel. +39 055 848111).

• Heading towards San Piero a Sieve, you find the **Medicean Villa of Cafaggiolo**, one of the favourite residences of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and a splendid example of Renaissance architecture (tel. +39 055 8479293). Not far away, towering above you, surrounded by century old cypress trees, you can admire the **Trebbio Castle**: another magnificent Medici construction (tel. +39 055 848088 - 339 3029697).



3 DAYS - Between art and nature

If you intend to spend a long weekend in the area, after the above-mentioned excursion, you might want to use the following route which winds through the towns of **Borgo San Lorenzo**, **Vaglia** and **Vicchio**.

• In Borgo San Lorenzo we recommend a visit to **San Lorenzo Church**, an important Romanesque building that conserves a precious Madonna attributed to Giotto (tel. +39 055 8459295). We also recommend the particular **Museo della Manifattura Chini** (ceramics museum) in the finely restored **Villa Pecori Giraldi** (tel. +39 055 8456230), which is dedicated to the vast array of activities of the Chini family during the Liberty period (architectural furnishings and various fittings for the home in ceramic, stoneware and glass in Art Nouveau style). The museum also hosts temporary exhibitions of ceramics from other collections and museums.

• If you are looking for a natural environment and fresh air; you can take a trip to the **Museo della Civiltà Contadina di Casa d'Erci** (museum of farm life and customs) where, apart from the visit to the country house which offers a display of farm tools and furniture, you can take a hike (max one hour) on a path that runs through the woods and across a stream; and you can stop to eat at an equipped picnic area (tel. +39 055 8492519 - 338 6880647).

• From Borgo San Lorenzo you can take the main road Faentina towards Florence; once at the Passo di Vetta le Croci, the road on the right leads up to the **Convent of Montesenario**, which towers over the Mugello valley, offering a magnificent breathtaking view. The original church was built by the Servites in the year 1241 (tel. +39 055 406441). Not far off you find the imposing **Medicean Park of Pratolino** (tel. +39 055 409427). The estate was bought in 1569 by the Grand Duke Francesco I de' Medici who engaged Ferdinando Buontalenti to design and build the villa.

• The palace and the surrounding buildings were later torn down by the Lorena family. Some time after, the Russian Prince Demidoff bought the estate and converted the palace's quarters into a villa. The park is magnificent and includes artificial caves and fountains such as the impressive statue of the Apennine, conceived by Giambologna, and the beautiful hexagonal chapel supported by fourteen stone columns, and with a lead-laminated cupola.

• The tour turns back towards the valley, therefore Borgo San Lorenzo, and ends in Vicchio with a visit to the recently restored **Home of Giotto** (tel. +39 055 8448250 - 055 8439224), in his native Vespignano, and **Museo di Arte Sacra Beato Angelico** (sacred art museum, tel. +39 055 8497082 - 055 84392055) in the historical centre of the town.

5 DAYS - In Tuscan Romagna

If you want to stay five days in Mugello, we suggest, as well as the recommended itineraries, an unforgettable visit to Upper Mugello, also known as Tuscan Romagna, through the towns of **Firenzuola**, **Palazzo sul Senio** and **Marradi**.

• This territory, more than any other, has taken great care to keep and preserve its natural resources and social traditions. To reach Upper Mugello from the Mugello valley, you must take the roads that lead up to the passes (Passo della Futa, del Giogo, della Colla, del Muraglione) that guide you over the mountain out of Tuscany and into Romagna. Upper Mugello offers its visitors many different ways of enjoying the natural environment and its incredible resources:

- **nature walks** can be taken in groups, families or alone along SO.F.T. (Florence Springs Trekking) paths: a series of trekking routes that run from the top of the mountains down to the valley;

- "**equitation-tourism**" for horse riding fans who would love to ride along fairly easy, but extremely suggestive paths and side roads;

- on speed **bikes** and mountain bikes you can take advantage of the fresh, clean air;

- **fishing, canoeing, climbing, archery, orienteering**, and many others activities are available for those people who want to fully enjoy their spare time and get away from the stress of everyday life.

• Here, more than in any other part of Mugello, the **cuisine** and the **produce** have preserved their traditional genuineness. In the Marradi cuisine, numerous recipes using the "Marrone del Mugello" (Mugello chestnuts) have been handed down from generation to



Bilancino Lake



generation: for example, the famous cake, the delicious pudding and the scrumptious fried tortellini. In Palazzo you will find liqueurs, jams and syrups made from wild berries, as well as Senese "Cinta" pork meat, an ancient breed of pigs with dark hide and a white band (cinta) around its middle, and dishes prepared with fine home grown herbs. In Firenzuola the meat is organic, and the cattle graze on sweet-smelling mountain fields.

• We suggest an itinerary that begins in Firenzuola, Florentine "new land", with a visit to the **Museum of Pietra Serena** (the typical sand stone), situated in the Town Hall, called "La Rocca", which is dedicated to the traditional excavation, and working of the sand stone (tel. +39 055 8199451 - 055 8199459), and a trip to the nearby **Moscheta**, where, besides excursions on foot or on horseback, it is also possible to visit the **Museo del Paesaggio Storico dell'Appennino** (museum of the historical Mugello Apennine landscape) in the thousand year old Vallombrosian Abbey (tel. +39 055 8144900).

• On leaving Firenzuola, the route takes you to San Pellegrino, Coniale and Tirli, and after about 30 km on a road with very little traffic, you reach Palazzo sul Senio. This quaint, extremely well kept medieval village on the banks of the Senio River conserves the impressive 14th century Palazzo dei Capitani in the main square. It is the home of the **Museo delle Genti di Montagna** and **Museo Archeologico Alto Mugello** (mountain folk and the Upper Mugello archaeological museums - tel. +39 055 8046008 - 055 8046154). Not far off we can admire the **Sanctuary of the Madonna delle Nevi of Quadalto**, built in the 15th century (tel. +39 055 8046072).

• From Palazzo the route takes you a mere 12 km away to Marradi. The town, where the poet Dino Campana was born and lived, preserves an important historical centre with many prestigious palaces, the extremely elegant **Animosi Theatre** with its typical late 18th century style and the **San Lorenzo Church** which holds the splendid late 15th century paintings by the Maestro of Marradi (tel. +39 055

8045024). From Marradi the road takes you to San Benedetto in Alpe, and just a few kilometres away you can appreciate the splendid **Badia del Borgo** (Santa Reparata in Salto), which dates back to the 11th century.

The ospitality

The Mugello countryside is beautiful in all seasons: the best way to experience it is by staying in the finely restored ancient farmhouses. The farm holidays let out rooms or flats; some offer meals and the possibility of buying their produce and farm products, or offer a variety of recreational activities. It is also possible to stay in small but friendly hotels, in charming historical villas, in restored hamlets that have become country residences, and in the bed and breakfast lodgings, which are mostly to be found in farmhouses throughout the area.

If you want to keep in touch with nature, you can sleep in comfortable campsites or in alpine huts and shelters. In the official Comunità Montana Mugello web site (www.mugellotoscana.it) you can find information on all the updated tourist accommodation in the Mugello territory.

