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# TREKKING ROCCASTRADA



Consorzio Qualità Maremma,  
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Comune  
di Roccastrada

*i frutti dell'* **albatro**



## TECHNICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

The "Trekking Roccastrada" (hiking Roccastrada) has eight well marked hiking trails (a total network of paths, mule-tracks, cart-roads of 146 km, 235 miles) winding through thick woods, rivers, hills and low mountains; the altitude of the territory varies from 110 and 800 metres above the sea level with a whole gradient of 10.000 metres. The trails are accessible to anyone throughout the year.

The hiking routes wind through the inland hills of Maremma that once surrounded the ancient lake Prile and goes as far as the river Farma valley, which separates the provinces of Grosseto and Siena. The paths touch very peculiar and interesting environments. The botanical aspect is various: near Montemassi there are some areas of garrigue (undergrowth of bushes of 1-1.5 metres tall, grown after forest destruction or degradation).

We then can find Mediterranean evergreen oak woods, mixed deciduous broad-leaved wood, chestnut wood and beech wood in Monte Alto (797 metres) Sassoforte and in the Farma valley, which became a natural reserve in 1996 thanks to its peculiarities: the yew tree and the Alpine newt that are the remains of cooler climates and of the Ice Age kept intact by a long a isolation. Thanks to its integrity, this territory has a great number of wild animals: fallow deer, roe deer, wild boars, foxes, porcupines, kestrels, buzzards, together with the rarer wildcats and otters. The trails go through old paths where we can find medieval iron foundries along the Farma river, following its flow and then over high hill ridges, as far as the 800 meters of Monte Alto and Sassoforte. There are many panoramic views along the tracks, but the most spectacular and breathtaking is the one we can admire from the top of Sassoforte: we can see Siena, the Metalliferous Hills, the sea, the islands of Giglio, Elba and Corsica.

The Castle of Sassoforte, the one of Montemassi and the village of Roccastrada, all situated at a short distance are all examples of fortified battlements which are not to be found anywhere else in the province.

## TRAILS PRACTICABILITY

As already mentioned, the trails are practicable all year round as the hikers can find accommodation in the local farm houses (agriturismo) even in winter. Although in summer the heath can be a problem for the trails near Montemassi and Roccastrada, coming from the station, the other tracks are all in between the 500 and the 800 metres of Sassoforte and Monte Alto, the hiker can get some cool under the thick woods or in the fresh water of the Farma river.

Spring and autumn are the best periods of the year to go hiking: nature is at its best, the variety of colours is extraordinary: various gradation of green, brown, yellow, red and brown in autumn. In spring all the flowers and plants are in blossom and their colours are simply gorgeous. Even in the middle of winter the trails have lots of attractions: the main one is the wonderful view we can get from many spots as the sky is clearer in those months. From a technical point there are not particular difficulties, however we must be aware that in winter the days are very short and there might be sudden drops in temperature and unforeseen storms. After heavy rain it will be difficult and therefore dangerous to cross the Farma (near Ferriera), in the trail "Belagaio-Torniella" and (near "La Pietra") in the other one "Torniella-Sassoforte" as at the moment there is not other way to cross the Farma river. But again, if we leave out these two cases, all the other tracks are accessible to all throughout the year.

## HOW TO READ THE ITINERARIES

Along the paths there are indications to be followed to find our way. (Our book guide together with the map, can only give some sort of information)

These indications are white and red marks (usually stripes) painted on small stakes, stones or on the trunk of trees. Boards with the itinerary lengths and walking times are placed at the beginning of every itinerary.

We have chosen to use white and red colours as they have already been used in other itineraries in Tuscany: "Anello dell' Amiata", "Apuane Trekking", "Grande Escursione Appenninica", "Garfagnana Trekking".

If the stakes are in both sides the road, just before a crossroad, it means that we have to carry on that road which has also stakes on both its sides.

The red and white marks on a stake, on the trunk of a tree, on a stone near a crossroad, it means that we have to walk on the side of the road where the stake is. Some boards are situated near crossroads from where there are more than one itinerary direction, they also tell how to go to no marked paths. The red and white mark in a field or in chestnut wood where the path is not visible, confirms that we are on the right direction. At the beginning of every itinerary there is a board where there is a schematic map of our territory and our Trekking. Other boards on the paths give information on particular trees, rocks and medieval iron foundries.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS

FROM THE FIRST HUMAN SETTLEMENTS  
TO SIENESE'S RULE

The Maremma, especially the northern part that includes



the districts of Massa Marittima, Grosseto and Roccastrada, has always been known for its agricultural and mineral resources.

The mild climate together with a soil rich in mineral deposits such as iron, silver and copper have played a major role in the economical and political power division of this territory which has solely been exploited for its raw materials either by Vetulonia and Roselle towns in Etruscan time or Siena and Florence in medieval times. There are not many remains of ancient settlements, leaving out the imposing medieval ones. But we do not have to think that this area has scarcely been inhabited, since there are many factors that make this difficult to interpret: first of all this territory has never been deeply examined, in the second place the most fertile parts of this area, more suitable for settlements, have been turned into a swamp and consequentially drained several times altering the ancient landscape. Generally the first important evidence of human existence in the Maremma dates back to the Neolithic Age: traces have been found in Roselle, Massa Marittima, Argentario etc.. After a transition period (Eneolithic), around the third millennium starts the Bronze Age, where, thanks to primitive mines exploitation, the first trades took place. The first material to be exploited where copper and bronze found in the whole area (cupreous material in Roccatederighi). After the year one thousand BC the importance of minerals rose and this area very rich of them, flourished. The necropolis of Sticciano Scalo probably dates back to the eleventh-nineteenth centuries BC: it is a necropolis at incineration and it is built with ossuaries directly placed on the ground ( the necropolis' material can be seen in the prehistoric section at the Archaeological Museum of Florence). The first permanent settlements were built by people gathering from the countryside, in the hills near the coast and rivers to facilitate trade. The Etruscan cities of Vetulonia and Roselle became politically and economically powerful as they stood above the lake Prile, a wide basin facing the Tyrrhenian Sea, a strategic point for trading.

Consequentially, while near the coast towns were flourishing, inland, in our territory, settlements were still very small and depending on Vetulonia and Roselle that were the solely exploiters of the mines in our territory.

Between the fifth and the sixth centuries BC, after a great period of prosperity and economic growth, there was a major crisis over mineral trade, caused by the closure of the trade routes. Agricultural was also involved. Partial depopulation of the territory and a great loss of power of Vetulonia, it was the consequence. Roselle, as its economy depended more on agriculture, was less affected by the crisis: it took advantage of it getting hold of Roccastrada and Massa Marittima's mines. Roccastrada's ter-

ritory was then entirely incorporated into Roselle's boundary. The only change in settlements there was in 294 BC, when Roma conquered Roselle. At that time the iron excavation stopped because the Romans found more convenient to import the raw materials from her far colonies than excavating them locally. What is more, starting from the Imperial time, there was a definitive ruin of the old agricultural economy that led to another depopulation of the countryside and the decline of towns; the landowners moved from small villages to the capital city.

It is at that the Maremma turned into a swamp and under the Roman Emperor Traiano, it was said to be unhealthy. But the Maremma's conditions were not yet very serious as they would have been later because important human settlements were found in the southern strip of Roccastrada district, in the plains that would be drained to improve agriculture. In the most southern part of our district, towards the Metalliferous Hills, along the Rigo and Asina torrents (near Montelattaia, Pian del Bichi etc.), some settlements have been found, to testify human presence from the sixth cent. to barbaric times. A necropolis that was discovered in 1935 near Sticciano Scalo dates back to that time. In the early Middle ages the situation grew worse: the drainage system was abandoned, the land was flooded several times and slowly turned into a swamp: the territory was finally abandoned. The period also saw another great change: Roselle and its district which included the conquered Vetulonia, under a combination of circumstances lost its power as a consequence in 1138, its Diocesan See was transferred to Grosseto.

The first important document for the history of our territory is dated 787 AD.: Charles the Great, king of the Franks, assigned the three "civitates" of Populonia, Roselle and Sovana to Pope Adriano I. The southern part of Tuscia was then divided in two: the south to the Pope and the north to the Emperor.

Our territory was just on the border of these two jurisdictions and being rich in minerals, it was controlled by both the Pope and the Emperor.

The fortunes of the Maremma revived under the feudal organisation of the Counts of Aldobrandeschi, they ruled for three centuries and built many fortified villages and castles. The first recorded documentation mentioning a castle in Roccastrada's territory dates back to 973 AD., the castle is Lattaja which was destroyed: in 1479 in 1640 only 25 people lived there.

Other medieval villages that are still inhabited were: Sticciano, Roccastrada which was first mentioned in a document of 1118 as "Rocca di Fabiano", Montemassi is thought to be built before the eleventh century, Roccatederighi (the medieval Rocca Norsina) was part of Roselle since 1110, Sassofortino which was funded by the es-

caping inhabitants of Sassoforte castle which was destroyed by Siene Republic in 1330, Torniella's castle was first mentioned in 1226. Starting from the tenth century the population was concentrated around these fortified villages. Under the Aldobrandeshi rule, we had the first unification of Maremma, on the other hand this land was isolated, scarcely inhabited and the plain reduced to a swamp. This territory, differentially from the rest of Tuscany, was characterised by imposing castles and fortified villages well separated one another. Castles such as Sassoforte, Montemassi, Roccatederighi well represent the stillness of a medieval world that had a long feudal system and was apart from the rest of Tuscany that was having an economic boost (the first cart-road between Siena and Grosseto was only opened in 1370).

Regarding agriculture it was intensive and limited to the castle's area. Where the marshes could be drained cereals were grown. Pastures were localised in the hills. Important was the presence of chestnut woods in Roccastrada's territory.

People at that time found it difficult to extend their cultivation: there were not enough people to give the needed labour to drain the marshes. At that time it was also necessary to watch the tillage as it was subjected to plundering: farmers had to walk many miles before getting to the fields so they were only able to grow crops that needed little care. In spite of this Roccastrada's territory was still a good resource of pasture, transhumance, cereal crops and metallurgy of iron that, after having been abandoned for centuries, it turned to be essential for the local economy. It is not possible to exactly say when the production of iron had restarted, but we can surely affirm that in the Middle Ages in this area iron mines, iron foundries and factories reopened, and it became an economically valuable inland region.

As a consequence there was a massive deforestation: wood was needed for the foundries. Later on the Medici family tried to stop this indiscriminate exploitation.

Between the thirteenth and the middle of the fourteenth centuries, all the castles of the area that were under the Aldobrandeschi rule, submitted to Siena which destroyed their fortifications for security reasons. This region held then a complementary position regarding other Tuscan centres and wealthy citizens started to invest in our area.

In the first half of the fourteenth century in the whole Italy and especially in Tuscany, the population was almost reduced to a half because of a series of calamities famine and plagues ended up with the Black Death in 1348. Most of the crops were abandoned.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century Siena had a population of forty/fifty thousand and fifteen thousand at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

The crisis gave the coup de grace to our territory: crops were

abandoned and our land slowly changed becoming wild and desolate, an aspect that will characterise the region for a long time.

The Republic of Siena of which Maremma was part, went into a progressive decline and ruralization of its territory becoming economically dependent to Florence and then politically after giving way to the Medici Family of Florence, who extended their domination throughout Tuscany in the first half of the sixteenth century.

## FROM THE MEDICI'S RULE TO PRESENT TIME

Under the Florentine's rule the condition of our region and its inhabitants worsened. People were "secluded" into the fortified villages and castles on top of the hills on the edge of a dangerous and unhealthy plain. Many local landowners were then forced to grant rights on the use of the land to try to bring human presence in their territories. This happened in Sticciano, where the Counts granted, in the second half of the sixteenth cent. a number of rights (Usi Civici) in pasture, sowing, woodland the guarantee to get a great amount of salt to those who went to live in their estate. Like in Sticciano, in all the other villages of Roccastrada district the "usi civici" flourished and very often they survived up to now, but at that time they were the main sustain of people that lived on the forest's produces such as chestnuts, wild berries, wood and wild animals.

In 1738 with the death of Gian Gastone de' Medici the Lorena family succeeded and started a new and wise policy towards the Maremma. In the second half of the eighteenth cent. a series of institutional and administrative reforms were introduced together with a scheme of investments and repopulation that did not leave out Roccastrada's territory but it had to wait some years before getting into the new developing system. Mines reopened in Roccatederighi around the first half of the nineteenth cent., there also was a renewal in agriculture and population grew. It was at that time the territory changed its exterior aspect: industrial villages were built near the mines, woods were cut to give room to farming, which now spread far from medieval villages, olive trees and vineyards were reintroduced. Economy development was uncertain and contradictory, but Italy, under the Savoia Family's new rule, found a new economic boost in the construction of the railway. Sleepers were needed to build rail-tracks and Roccastrada's woods were a good resource for it. A huge number of trees were then rashly cut and replaced by coppice and Mediterranean macchia. Once again the territory was used for its raw material and its exploitation did not help the development of our area as the material was exported.

Later on, the exploitation of local raw material stopped as other was used: any important economical activity ceased too.



Mines were quite important ( the biggest of all in Ribolla which was closed in 1954) but what remains of them it is just the villages built around the well shafts. The economic growth of the 60's did not touch on Roccastrada. As the economic depression has slowly grown, the environment - the only "resource" of the area - is still intact as it was 100 years ago, at the end of the early industrial revolution.

## AN OUTLINE OF MINING HISTORY

"Roccastrada's ground is rich in copper, silver and gold" (O. Piattelli, 1902), this is the way the economic potentialities of the local mining were explained in a brochure where hopes and illusions were translated in words by renowned geologists of Regio Campo delle Miniere, above all a geologist named Lotti. The interest that our mines stirred up started long ago but it was less compared to Massa Marittima and Montieri. Near Roccastrada we can find ancient mine excavations attributed to the Etruscans.

After centuries of inactivity, with the advent of the modern mining industry, at the end of the eighteenth century started in Maritime Tuscany intensive research and extraction with good results in Montecatini Val di Cecina, Larderello, Massa Marittima, Monte Amiata. Roccastrada's territory was part of it and in 1834 the "Compagnia Porto" was funded, a society that had the "concession of the perpetual rights of the excavation of mineral and metal of all sorts" (notarial act, 1834). This interest was concentrated on Roccatederighi's area and the copper of "between serpentina e diabase". The mine called "Cerrone e Costa" was dug out for many years. An unknown author wrote that the percentage of copper in the rock was of 2-4%. Digging stopped in 1880 as it was found that mineral was discontinuous and its consistency modest in spite of what the geologists had said. Brown coal had been excavated for centuries in the valley of Bruna and all the mining were a spur for the geological studies of this part of Tuscany. Chalk and siliceous sand farms have been recently opened. Siliceous sand was first excavated in Bono Staiale, it originates from the erosion and accumulation of "VERRUCANO" sandstone in the Pliopleistocenic Age (1.8 million of years). Chalk is excavated from a pit in the torrent Bai valley and it originates from evaporation of the superior trias, it can also be found around Sassofortino it originates from a clayey-gypsum sedimentation in the Messiniano (10 million of years).

## FLORA

The vegetation is heterogeneous. There are three different kind of landscape, the agricultural situated on the plains, the agricultural-forestal on the hills and the one dominated by thick woods on the mountains and hills. In the alluvial plain of the Bruna river, between Sticciano and Ribolla, the landscape is characterised by tilled land. The well squared fields, drained by artificial ditches do not leave any trace of the original vegetation that once should have been composed by elm trees wood (*Ulmus minor*), ash tree (*Fraxinus oxycarpa*) and other trees that only live in humid climates. Among the native trees as the downy oak (*Quercus pubescens*), the cork-tree (*Quercus suber*) and the black poplar (*Populus nigra*), exotic ones can also be found, these are: the cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*, *arizonica*, *glabra*), the locust-tree (*Robinia pseudacacia*), the eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*), the tree of heaven (*Ailanthus glandulosa*) and some other not related to this environment as the stone pine tree (*Pinus pinea*) or the Aleppo pine tree (*Pinus halepensis*) that grow spontaneously only near the coast. In a place called Monte Lattaia we can find what remains of an enormous cork-tree plantation. In the past these trees grew on tilled land, which was also used for pasture as we can still see in the Maremma Regional Natural Park. Nowadays that kind of tillage has been abandoned. Many cork trees have been extirpated, only a few remains that are used as windbreak. In the undergrowth of thick shrubs, we can find thorns (*Rubus*), heather (*Hedera helix*) and scotch broom (*Cystisus scoparius*), that in summer easily catch fire and many portions of forest disappear. The forests are mainly situated in the north of the district, in the hilly lands between Montemassi and the torrent of Follonica, along the Farma valley and in the mount of Sassoforte and Monte Alto and in the southern part of the district, in Monte Leoni. There are some exotic species of tree as the black pine (*Pinus nigra*) in the northern slope of Sassoforte, autochthonous chestnut and cork-tree woods that have always been precious to man during the past, can still be found in a great number together with no autochthonous maritime pines (*Pinus pinaster*) that man introduced to reafforest woods.

The vegetation may vary considerably relating to its substratum, altitude and exposition.

Evergreen Mediterranean oak-groves are widely spread on the territory, the dominant species are: the holm-oak tree (*Quercus ilex*), the arbutus (*Arbutus unedo*), the flowering ash (*Fraxinus ornus*) and the cork tree that only grows on siliceous soil; the undergrowth shrubs are: *Philirea latifolia* and *angustifolia*, the laurustinus (*Viburnum tinus*), the holly (*Ruscus aculeatus*), the mastic-tree (*Pistacia lentiscus*) and in warmer areas the myrtle (*Myrtus communis*); among liana we can find the *Smilax aspera*, the evergreen rose (*Rosa sempervirens*), the wild madder (*Rubia peregrina*); there is also

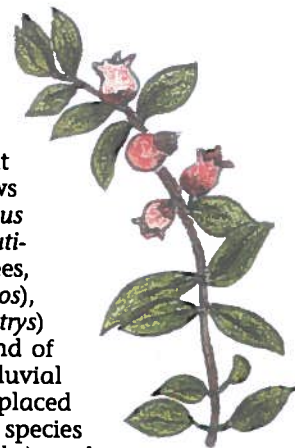
the cyclamen (*Cyclamen repandum*) that blossoms in spring and autumn. At the side of the roads and in the undergrowth that has been exploited or was once destroyed by a fire, we can find the cystus (*Cistus monspeliensis; incanus*), the hairy canary clover (*Dorycnium hirsutum*) the *Helychrysum italicum*. On calcareous soil, the broom (*Spartium junceum*) the spike lavender (*Lavandula latifolia*) and the *Globularia punctata*. On siliceous soil there are the *Cistus salvifolius*, the heather and the Spanish lavender (*Lavandula stoechas*). In Peruzzo, near the village of Montemassi, there is a cork-tree grove where we can find this kind of vegetation in large scale. At higher altitudes there are deciduous broad-leaved woodlands, dominated by the turkey-oak tree (*Quercus cerris*), the flowering ash-tree, the true service tree (*Sorbus domestica*), heather, hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), the black thorn (*Prunus spinosa*), the horned violet (*Viola alba*) and the orange lily (*Lilium bulbiferum*). Where soil is humid and temperature is low there are the European hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), the hazel-tree (*Corylus avellana*) and the spindle tree (*Euonymus europaeus*) and then the wind flower (anemone), the primrose (*primula vulgaris*), the columbine (*Aquilegia vulgaris*), periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) and wild bell flower (*campanula trachelium*). On calcareous soil the downy oak, the hornbeam (*Ostrya carpinifolia*); the shrubs are: the field Maple (*Acer campestre*), the privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*), the cornel-tree (*Cornus mas*), the jungle berry bush (*Pyracantha coccinea*), and Liana as the Italian woodbine (*Lonicera caprifolium*). Plants such as the *Melittis melissophyllum* and the *Buglossoides purpuro caerulea* the grass-pea (*Lathyrus venetus*).



The siliceous soils are dominated by the chestnut tree (*Castanea sativa*), the wild service tree (*sorbus terminalis*) and by the durmast (*Quercus dalechampii*) and bushes of holly, female fern (*pteridium aquilinum*), the wood sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), the fescue (*Festuca heterophylla*), the golden rod (*Solidago virgaurea*). Deciduous broad-leaved forests are difficult to find on calcareous soil, they are restricted to slopes or quarries, where we can find the broom (*Spartium junceum*), the spike lavender and sweet scabious (*Globularia punctata*). On siliceous ground there are wide areas of scotch heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) grown when chestnut-tree woods died because of



a parasite fungus. These areas are locally called "brantalai" ("brantalo" means scotch heather) and have been reforested with maritime pine (*Pinus pinaster*). Along streams, far from tilled land, grows a vegetation that is dying out in the rest of Italy: woods of willows (*Salix purpurea; alba*), poplars (*Populus alba; nigra; tremula*), alders (*Alnus glutinosa*), ash-trees, elms, apple trees, hawthorn, lime-trees (*Tilia platyphyllos*), wild vine (*Vitis vinifera* subsp. *silvestris*) and hop (*Humulus lupulus*). Such kind of forests were once widely spread in alluvial plains and along rivers and later replaced by black poplars, and an American species called cotton-poplar (*populus deltoides*) and another tree of American origin called locust-tree (*Robinia pseudacacia*), introduced in Italy in the seventeenth century, to produce wood.



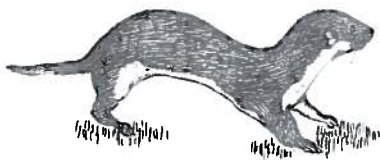
Together with these species there are some peculiar trees, which are rare in this region and at such altitude, they are the yew-tree (*Taxus baccata*), the beech-tree (*Fagus sylvatica*) and the box-tree (*Buxus sempervirens*). The beech and the yew-tree can only be found in Italy over the 800 metres above the sea level. In the Farma valley, in the district of Roccastrada we can find them at an altitude of 200 metres. The yew-tree is also located in Monte Alto and along the Seguentina stream. In the northern slope of Sassoforte there are imposing woods of beech-trees. The box-tree is an evergreen plant that can be found in Europe in two main areas: the south of France, the north of Spain westward and eastward in the hearth of the Balkan States. Between these two areas, the box-tree very rarely grows in the south of Tuscany: a few settlements can be seen along the torrent of Lanzo, not far from Belagaio, in the Farma valley, remains of the Tertiary Period.

On southern hill slopes and on clayey soil, imposing edges and secular oaks encircle the fields of olive-trees.

## FAUNA

Roccastrada's territory is characterised by impervious hills of thick wood difficult to reach and therefore to cultivate: a perfect habitat to many wild animals. Even though many of them are dying out, two smart ones, the wild-boar (*Sus scrofa*) and the fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), have found their way to survive and what is more, to proliferate in excess. This is probably due to their skill of adaptation and food habits: both of them are omnivorous, which means they eat both vegetables and meat, the boar eats wild and orchard fruit,





cereals, pulses, bulbs, roots and small animals, molluscs and insects, in the order of 10-15% ;the fox eats above all small animals, insects, frogs, arions of rats or wild mice and it is said that she can

eat as many as 5,000 in a year. In summer and in autumn, the fox also eats fruits and berries, which in some region are her sole food. Both the fox and the boar, thanks also to their enterprising characters have adapted themselves to the territory's changes. The fox has no enemies, therefore there are a great number of specimens that represent a problem because of the rabies spreading, originated in Siberia and as far as today it has reached the Pyrenees (in Italy the first case of rabies was notified in 1977 in Valle Aurina and it has now reached the river Po).

The boar gives another kind of problem it damages crops "ploughing" with its snout and doing the same in the wood, it stops its growth and regeneration. This mainly happens in protected areas and Natural parks where there are neither hunters nor predator to stop the number of boars. In the Abruzzo National Park it is said that the introduction of boars reduces the bear's presence, taking away from him food and tranquillity.

In our territory, hunting has always been practised, although it has reduced the pure breed of the Maremma boar, (which have been crossed with other boar breeds) it has balanced their number. We therefore can find a wide number of wild animals living in the forest: the hoofed one, as the fallow deer (*Dama dama*) and roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*).

Among the flesh-eating animals we can find the weasel (*Mustela nivalis*), the beech marten (*Martes foina*), the polecat (*Mustela putorius*), the pine marten (*Martes martes*) and the badger (*Meles meles*). Wild cats (*Felis silvestris*) have been seen in Belagaio and Monte Leoni areas. The presence of the otter (*Lutra lutra*) is not sure: it was lastly seen near the river Farma and the Farmulla, its tributary. There are also rodents: the biggest is the porcupine (*Hystrix cristata*), a protected animal because it is dying out. It has long quills in vertical black and white stripes it straightens up when it feels in danger. Then the squirrel (*Scirus vulgaris*) that can easily be seen in every wood, the hare (*Lepus capensis*) together with other very small animals difficult to discern such as the common (or hazel) dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) and the fat dormouse (*Glis glis*), the wood mice (*apodemus sylvaticus*), the house mouse (*mus musculus*). Among the large number of insectivorous mammals, the most known is the hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), similar to the porcupine but much

smaller, there are also the dwarf shrew (*Sorex minutus*) and the water shrew (*Neomisanomalus*), the white-toothed shrew (*crocidura leucodon*), the pygmy shrew (*suncus etruscus*), which is one of the smallest known mammals. The birds of prey are also numerous: kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) nest on the rocky walls at the back of Belagaio castle. The peregrine hawk (*Falco peregrinus*), the sparrow hawk (*Accipiter nisus*), the harrier (*Cicus pygargus*) and the buzzard (*Buteo buteo*), which is the most common hawk of this area, nest nearby. We can also see the brown kite (*Milvus migrans*) the duck hawk (*Circus aeroginosus*) and the hobby (*Falco subbuteo*). Among nocturnal birds of prey we can find the long-eared owl (*Asio otus*), the owl (*Athene noctua*), the barn-owl (*Tyto alba*) and the tawny owl (*Strix aluco*). At night we can also come across bats: the small bent-winged bat (*miniopterus schreibersii*), the lesser horseshoe bat (*rinolophus hipoosideros*) and the great horseshoe bat (*rinolophus ferrumequinum*).

Birds are numerous too: the green woodpecker (*Picus viridis*) with its unmistakable call, the jay (*Garrulus glandarius*), that is called the woods' sentry as it warns all the forest's inhabitants if there are dangers of any sort. In open land there are species of the crow family: the magpie (*Pica pica*), the hooded crow (*Corvus corone cornix*) and the jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*) that can also dwell in villages. Other birds can be noticed for their "voice" as the cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) or for their gaudy feathers as the hoopoe (*Upupa epops*) with its erecting crest, the pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*), the kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) or the bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*) are real explosion of colours. Other birds found in this territory are: the mideddled spotted woodpecker (*dentrocopos medius*), the dipper (*cinclus cinclus*), the black head bunting (*emberiza melanocephala*), the goatsucker (*caprimulgus europaeus*), the blackbird (*turdus merula*) with other birds of passage, persecuted by hunters, wood pigeons (*columba palumbus*), woodcocks (*scolopax rusticola*), orioles (*oriolus oriolus*), wagtails (*motacilla alba*), robins (*erithacus rubecola*), nightingales (*luscini megarhyncha*), together with shrikes (*lanius*), skylarks (*alauda arvensis*), starlings (*sturnus vulgaris*), sparrows (*passer italiae*), and finally the common

swallow (*hirundo rustica*), that in summer settles in villages and farms. Among reptiles, we can often come across the asp viper (*vipera aspis*): we should not be very scared of it as it





only bites when it feels in danger, therefore we only have to be a little bit careful when we go into the forest. There are other non poisonous snakes: the smooth snake (*coronella austriaca*), the western whip-snake (*coluber viridiflavus*) the four-lined snake (*elaphe quatorlineata*) the coluber, the blind worm (*anguis fragilis*) and along torrents the grass snake (*natrix na-*

*trix*). Then the green lizard (*lacerta viridis*) and the wall and field lizard (*lacerta muralis and lacerta sicula*) those on sunny days can be seen on rocks and stones. We can also find many tortoises. An interesting bio and geographical problem, is the presence of the alpine newt (*triturus alpestris apuanus*), which live in the Troscia pond, not far from the castle of Belagaio. This is the most southern an isolated settlement of this amphibian that has survived in this valley thanks to its climatic and ecological peculiarities.

Many kind of frogs and other amphibians live in the valley as the spectacled salamander (*salamandrina terdigitata*), which is an important presence too because of its great sensitiveness to water ionisation, therefore to town-waste. Fish is also numerous in the Farma: salmon trout's (*salmo alpinus*), that only live in very clean water, then roaches (*chodrostoma genei*), chubs (*squalus cephalus*), and bleaks (*alborelle albidus*).



## STICCIANO-ROCCASTRADA

## 1ST ITINERARY

DEVELOPMENT: km 18,8

TIME: 7.25' hours

PRACTICABILITY: This trail is a bit difficult just before getting to La Civitella, it runs through cartways, macchia and fields. We suggest covering the route when it is cool. We remind to take water with you as you can only fetch it at Roccastrada station.

From Sticciano it is possible to walk up as far as Monte Leoni (616 meters of altitude) even though the path is no marked: it is explained how to do the excursion following an alternative route : you arrive in Monte Leoni and from there you go as far as Stazione di Roccastrada (Roccastrada railway Station) and take a bus to Roccastrada from there.

On leaving Sticciano we find an environment characterised by a typical Mediterranean wood of cork trees. Bushes, heather, cystisus and arbutus cover the emerging rocks; also turkey-oak trees and durmasts are easy to spot. We can see that wood has been a resource for ages: it has been cut for centuries and only a few strong plants are left for reproduction among those, the imposing holm oak tree (*Quercus ilex*) whose kernels are eaten by wild boar (once they were pigs' solely food) and its large leafage guests game. On the south slope of Monte Leoni we find the typical Mediterranean macchia(1) once again.

Following the path we come into a wood of maritime pine and we then get to Pian del Muro, a largely cultivated area and from there, following a gravel road, we arrive at the Stazione di Roccastrada (Roccastrada station). The path leads to the strada provinciale (main road), we cross it and we then take another gravel road which is next to a house. We first go through a forest of holm oak trees arbutus heather and cork trees, the wood thickens with turkey oak trees. We walk through a tiny valley, to find at the top of a calcareous hill a farm surrounded by shrubs, we go down the hill to a cultivated area characterized by small fields locally called "Cetine", where olive trees, vineyards and hedges nicely sketch the hills' sides. The small cottages are typical of our area: with some browsing sheep and goats, chickens, rabbits, a straw-stack: we can easily see the way these small properties were once run as they do not differ much from the past. These lands were part of large landed properties belonging to the marquisate of the Patrizi-Chigi family of Paganico. The lands were once covered of thick forests which were cut down by the inhabitants under the Marquis permission: the land was first rented and then



bought by local people. Turning left we have a great view of Roccastrada; we then get to "La Civitella", a medieval stronghold which has kept many of its original features. Above all a travertine pointed arch situated in the courtyard. Walking on the gravel road, we get near a mound where the castle of Fornoli once stood. Fornoli, together with the villages of Civitella Marittima and Pari, were part of the Ardengheschi county and it is mentioned in an act of the Sienese Republic's Mayor where it is defined the western and northern border of Grosseto's territory: "A GESSIS OF SASSOFORTE USQUE A FORNOLI ET A CIVITELLA USQUE A SAXUM...". We soon get to the main road where the hamlet of "Il Terzo" is, and from there to the village of Roccastrada.

### EXCURSION TO MONTE LEONI

From Sticciano it is possible to go to Monteleoni (616 m) on a very pleasant excursion among fields and under wood of Mediterranean trees and plants such as the cork tree and durmast that grow on acid soils (Verrucano rocks).

This excursion is not marked, we therefore need to accurately follow these instructions. We start from the itinerary that leads to Roccastrada station, but as soon as we arrive at the cemetery, instead of following the marks, we carry on the unpaved road that bends right. After having walked up a bit, the road becomes flat. When it goes up again, on the right we find a private propriety surrounded by a wire-netting with two imposing maritime pines at the sides of the entrance. On the left we can see two roads 20 metres far one another (the first goes down, the second up) and we walk on to find Fonte Vecchia, the Old Fountain, one km far from the village. Ten metres before the wire-netting ends, there is a turning and we take the road on the left. At the next turning we take another road on the left which goes up to a steep slope. The opposite road is connected to this one further up: it is less steep but much longer. At the top of the slope there are two roads on the right: the second one rejoins the less steep and longer road. In this spot we get a great view of the plain as far as the sea, with Sticciano and Montemassi, the two ends of these itineraries. Walking for about 200 metres, on the left we find a gate, we walk for another km (on our left there is a barbed wire-netting). We turn left walking up, with the netting on our left, on a path that does not follow the road but orthogonally detours it. This is the boundary between the no-hunting zone and the Azienda Faunistica Venatoria "I Murali" as we can see from the signs.

At the end of the slope, on the left, we can find a way through the netting, going up 200 metres we get to the top of Monte Leoni, topographic point of the Military Ge-

ographic Institute, which is marked with some stones. Just beyond the netting, we have to cross a chain of stones that encircles the top of the mount: these are the ruins of a pre-Etruscan settlement. We are in the middle of a striking wood of turkey oak trees with an under wood of heather and holly trees that are periodically cut.

In some periods of the year, on the top of the mount we can get a grand panoramic view: can admire the islands, the sea and inland, all the itineraries of our trekking.

## ROCCASTRADA-BELAGAIO CASTLE

### 2nd Itinerary

DEVELOPMENT: km 13,5

TIME: 4,55' hours

PRACTICABILITY: It is a bit difficult only in the trail that from the Gretano torrent goes up the slope of Poggio al Sugherone, almost the entire itinerary runs on cartways, through fields and woods. half way to Roccastrada we suggest covering the route when it is cool. Water can be fetched along the route.

This itinerary leads us to the Farma valley, a very interesting environment under both the ecological and the botanical aspect.

On the hill that goes down from Roccastrada to the Gretano torrent, we get through crops and Mediterranean macchia. It is a varied landscape divided into small fields which are very fertile thanks to the presence of Rhyolite rocks (that we can see emerging just beyond a farm called "Le Pescine"). We then find two springs: the first one is named "Fonte Forna", from which locals once fetched its pure waters.

On reaching the Gretano torrent, we cross the border between the two municipalities of Civitella Paganico and Roccastrada; we cross it all the way up. We then enter a wood of holm, cork, turkey oaks, durmast and arbustus trees. The soil has also changed: we find Verrucano rock instead of rhyolite. Going down we come into a forest of impressive Turkey oaks that takes us as far as the gravel stone road of Belagaio: at its sides secular Turkey oaks give the road a solemn look. These oaks have been preciously kept by the Grottenelli family. We then arrive to the castle of Belagaio, which was built in the twelfth century but it has been entirely restored. The state bought it in 1969. The castle surrounded by lovely hills, fields and grazing Maremma horses, gives a suggestive and relaxing atmosphere.

## BELAGAIO CASTLE-TORNIELLA

## 3rd Itinerary

DEVELOPMENT: km 13,1

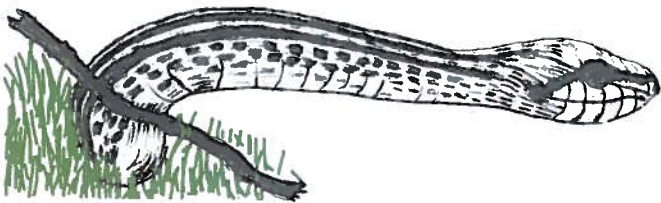
TIME: 4,25' hours

PRACTICABILITY: Easy trail, winding through woods fields and pastures and occasionally on cartways it can be practicable in every season. Possibility of bathing in the Farma river (remarkable are the Canaloni). Water can be fetched along the route.

This is the "Ferriere" (iron foundries)itinerary. It is interesting for its botanical aspect: from the castle to the torrent Farma we find many species of trees such as the durmast, the lime and the maple. The "Poggio alle Macine" slope has a series of vertical bents where vegetation grows. The dominant species are: homl oak, arbutus, heather, going down to the small valleys we find durmasts, turkey oaks; poplar and ash trees along creeks. Just after having crossed the Farma, we find the ruins of the first iron foundry, we then walk near some fine poplars and then next to the dyke which was once a barrier for the water used for the foundry.

Keep on walking along the torrent bank (which is on our left), we get to the "Canaloni", a place where the torrent has dug out some pools on the rocks: in summer we can have cooling baths and sunbathe on the stones or on tiny sandy beaches.

Keep on walking for other 600 metres, where the path detours on the right on leaving the torrent, we get near two water springs and after having covered part of a gravel road we get to the other iron foundry's dyke. (If we find it difficult to cross the dyke we can easily arrive in Torniella covering all the gravel road as far as the no 73 road, Senese-Aretina). We carry on, walking through very pleasant fields, particularly beautiful in spring with various kind of wild orchids in blossom. After a while we can see the second iron foundry: it is a stone building, recently restored. We then walk under a chestnut tree wood to find a very peculiar engraved fountain with a stone chair by its side and we arrive in Torniella.

TORNIELLA-SASSOFORTE  
SASSOFORTINO or ROCCATEDERIGHI

## 4th itinerary

DEVELOPMENT: km 19,8

TIME: 7,35' hours

PRACTICABILITY: Difficult because of its length and the part that goes up to Sassoforte, it runs for almost its entire length along paths through forest and chestnut wood. It is practicable in every season and water can be fetched along the trail.

On leaving Torniella, after having gone through a chestnut tree wood we get to an old farm called "La Pieve". Walking on the road that goes down through a turkey oaks wood, we reach the Farma and we have to cross. If it has recently rained and the water level is too high, we can walk along the fields' edges and through a hundred metres of wood and then get to the bridge of the road no 73, Senese-Aretina. To get back to our itinerary, left the bridge we walk on for about 1 km where we turn left on a unpaved road; on the right there is a farm called Santa Sicutera. After about 300 metres the road wades the Farmulla torrent and after other 300 hundred metres, we find the path, fording height, at the opposite side of the torrent's bank. Keeping left, walking on the unpaved road, we get to a small disused jasper quarry, just below a rock spur called "La Pietra", which gives the name to a small Natural Reserve between the Farma and Farmulla torrents, from here we get a wonderful view of the Bardellone valley and Monte Alto. We can admire a large wooded area, which gives the best of itself in autumn thanks to the colours of the leaves: it is a vast area characterised by heterogeneous coppice wood, thick and intricate under wood of shrubs, a perfect environment for wild boar, which is widely hunted here. Hunting is practised during winter. Sometimes hunters get involved in shooting accidents but dogs are more at risk: they very often get attacked by wild animals and get seriously wounded.

Just before getting to the Farma, we find a spring, once surrounded by secular alders.

We walk on, crossing the Farma by the Bardellone bank, for a long way. It is a pleasant environment, in spring it is full of flowers such as primroses and violets that embellish a wood of poplars, alders, maples, turkey oaks, hornbeams, and beeches. We walk near the ruins of an old mill and some spring waters called "Le Vene".

We get to a pond named "Pozzo alle Pecore", we keep on walking through "Poggio del Castagno" to get to Sassoforte. We take the road that starts from a farm (called



Poggio al Castagno itself) and we then get to another road that can be a short cut (if taken eastward) to arrive in Sassoforte (2 km) without following the marked indications. We then enter the chestnut wood of Sassoforte with its secular trees, among huge rocks and striking sheer walls. And after the final ascent, we find ourselves on a plateau where imposing beech trees grow. Here there are the ruins of Sassoforte Castle, an impressive strong hold destroyed by the Republic of Siena in the fifteen century. We then walk down on a path which goes through a coppiced wood and part of a chestnut wood, as far as the panoramic road of San Martino to find the indication of our Trekking: turning right we arrive in Roccatederighi, turning left, in Sassofortino.

## PILONI-SASSOFORTE- SASSOFORTINO or ROCCATEDERIGHI

### 5th Itinerary

DEVELOPMENT: km 15,7

TIME: 7,5' hours

PRACTICABILITY: If it is covered throughout its length, this route can be difficult. It runs through paths, woods, and it is practicable in every season. Water can be fetched along the route.

We leave the hamlet of Piloni walking towards the old kaolin quarries and then through a abandoned chestnut wood which was once the solely sustain of the local economy. We arrive to Monte Alto (797 metres above the sea level), the highest mount of Roccastrada district. Atop we can notice a small tower built to sight fires. Between the northern and the southern side of Monte Alto there is sharp change in vegetation: chestnut and beech trees give way to turkey oak trees. We walk on to find a spring called "La Polla", towered by enormous beech trees, summer stopover for those who want to have a rest and drink its fresh water. The Seguentina torrent has its source here. Along these steep slopes, thanks to the peculiar climate of this narrow valley, grow a colony of yew trees. On the map there is an optional route that follows the torrent, we then see a ditch on the right and in the middle of an open space, a beautiful yew majestically stands. To go back to the itinerary, we go up the ditch, and then we turn left when we get to the road. Walking to the right we pass "Poggio ai Tuoni" and under a high voltage trellis. We walk through a wood of chestnut trees as far as a carriage way and from there to a gravel stone road, which is a short cut to Sassofortino (2 km). However, if we follow the trail, we get to the Bardellone torrent and then to the "Pozzo alle Pecore" pond: we are on the itinerary no 5, Regoni - Sassofortino.

## SASSOFORTINO-MONTEMASSI

### 6th Itinerary

DEVELOPMENT: km 12,9

TIME: 4,45' hours

PRACTICABILITY: Medium difficulty. It runs through paths and cartways, fields and woods. We suggest covering this route when it is cool. Possibility of fetching water along the trail.

We leave Sassofortino walking through small crops, Macchia, vineyards and pastures, an area rich in calcareous fossils where it is easy to find imprints of bivalves and gasteropoda where the fields are ploughed. In the whole area, especially on the highest part of the hill, huge oaks stand out on the fields. They were once very common, kept for their acorns and also for the precious shade they gave to the ploughmen when they rested. These oaks are nowadays cut down to give space to the work of tractors. We keep on walking through crops and woods of cork trees, to find ourselves in the "Pagiano" area where chestnut trees easily grow thanks to the presence of a plate of rhyolite, we then find holm trees and we get to the "Pieve of Caminino". By the asphalted road there is the Oratory of Saint Feriolo, where it is said the Saint was martyred. Pilgrimage to this place only ended a few decades ago: people came in spring to pray that they would have plenty of water for they crops. Pilgrims would put an herring on the Saint painting, near his mouth so that it might recall him the idea of the refreshing water. We carry on crossing the asphalted road that leads to Sassofortino; we go through an under wood of cistus and lavender together with arbutus heather and huge cork trees. Going down to the dyke of the torrent Asina, we find the itinerary that comes from Roccatederighi, through "Poggio Colombo" we arrive in Montemassi.



## ROCCATEDERIGHI-MONTEMASSI

### 7th Itinerary

DEVELOPMENT: km 7,4

TIME: 2,35' hours

PRACTICABILITY: This route is not very difficult. It runs on cartways through field or woods, we suggest covering it when it is cool. Remember to bring water with you as it is not possible to get water along the trails.

The first part of this itinerary goes through chestnut trees woods and crops going round the Rhyolitic spur on which Roccatederighi was built. In this part of the paths there is a botanical curiosity: the prickly broom (*Ulex europaeus*), which is not to be found anywhere else in our Municipality. Crops and olive trees becomes now predominant: they divide the land into small proprieties, giving the territory its characteristic aspect. We carry on towards the valley: behind us Roccatederighi's church and the bell tower are easily spotted among the Rhyolitic rock spurs.

We then get to the dyke of the torrent Asina and we take the gravel road leading to Montemassi. There are no more crops but woods of turkey oak, arbutus, heather and cistus. Further up we can enjoy a wonderful view from two panoramic spots: the upper part of the road we are on from which we can see the village of Roccatederighi with the side of the mound sketched with edges, rows of olive trees surrounded by woods. The other spot is Poggio Colombo from which we can get a 360° view.



### PLEASE NOTE:

- \* It is forbidden to damage the environment
- \* Do not leave any litter along the trails
- \* Noises cause disturbance to animals
- \* Do not pick up flowers or plants
- \* Do not pick up fruit or similar
- \* Do not walk on crops
- \* Always respect private proprieties
- \* Do not create passages through edges or netting
- \* Always close gates behind you
- \* Camping is forbidden as well as lighting fires
- \* It is hiker's duty to report fires
- \* We advise you to call the local administration before starting an excursion. They will give you up to date information of the itineraries, Hotel prices etc.
- \* We also advise you to give notice of your arrival
- \* We also suggest that you should not leave in case of bad weather
- \* Do not leave the marked paths
- \* Take a strong and spacious backpack with you avoiding to load it too much (its weight should not exceed of 15-18 kilos)
- \* Boots are very important: they should be water-resistant and comfortable
- \* Take an anorak and a hat to protect you from rain or sun
- \* Please remember to take a first-aid kit together with a viper serum



Translated by Paola Crespi