

From Vivo d'Orcia all'Eremo to the hermitage and the spring of Vivo

A Romanesque chapel and an extensive hermitage (Eremo) were also constructed to accommodate for a fascinating group of humble monks, known as the “Camaldolesi”, who first inhabited the caves that now form the foundations of the castle in 1,004 ad (500 years previously). Along with this impressive estate the church established one of the largest and finest industrial centres of the 16th century, way surpassing anything built up until that time. Comprising of 6 large water mills, several huge and elaborate marble tanks, for cleaning and preparing the paper pulp, the estate soon lived up to its name “Alive” by becoming the only industrial centre in the whole region, vital for crushing olives, smelting iron tools and producing one of the finest quality writing papers in Europe of its day.

Characteristics: not a particularly difficult itinerary, ideal even during the summer months, it almost completely unfolds among woodlands.

Departure and arrival: Vivo d'Orcia

Length: ca. 5 km | Road surface: footpath and cart road

Height difference: ca. 200 m

Duration: 2 hours

From Vivo d'Orcia we start downhill on Via dell'Eremo toward the white-fir forest of Vivo d'Orcia, one of the last remaining in Tuscany of this kind. At the end of the road we cross the bridge over the Vivo stream passing under a stone arch that leads to the Borgo dell'Eremo.

Very few houses are clustered around the XVI century Palazzo Cervini and the church of San Marcello. We proceed going back to the stone arch without crossing the stream, turning left on a footpath that starts at a gate and some stone steps that climb up to the fir-woods. We carry on for about 10 minutes up to a junction where we turn right along a path that leads to the asphalted road (Vivo-Seggiano). Here turning left we carry on downhill for about 200 m to another junction where the right turn will lead us steeply uphill to the equipped area of Lo Scudellino. Carrying on the footpath, lined by a wooden fence up to some boulders and a little bridge that crosses over the Mulino stream, we reach some picnic tables in a chestnut-woods. Climbing up among the huge chestnut trees the footpath becomes wider and leads us to a T-junction at which we turn right and cross a wooden bridge to reach a dirt road next to Sasso della Lupareccia. Here, making a right turn we arrive, uphill, at the Ermicciolo. The dirt road leads, with no problems, to the asphalted road that we take uphill and on the left, up to a second dirt road that will take us to the equipped area of the Ermicciolo. Following the main road we get to a stone aqueduct and through a flight of stairs, on the right, we reach the little Romanesque church of the Ermicciolo, today private chapel of the Cervini family. Two drying kilns are at a stone's throw away from here. Leaving the little church behind, we proceed on the footpath that going through the woods, will lead us, in few minutes, to a dirt road in the proximity of a hairpin. We carry on the right, down to the asphalted road. From here it is either possible to go back to Vivo d'Orcia on the asphalted road for about 1 km or by the dirt road on our right, previously covered, that goes up to the junction with the asphalted road which, turning right, will lead us to the centre of Vivo d'Orcia.

