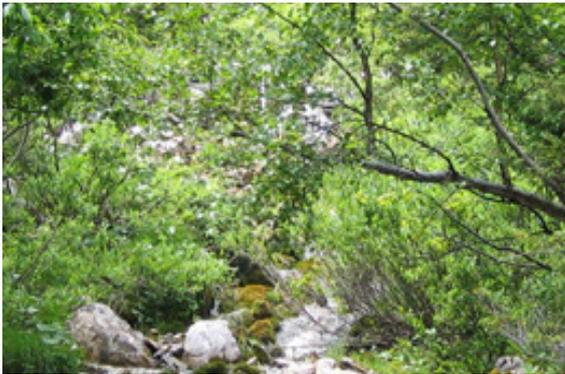




Introduction: Nature



Friuli Venezia Giulia is a mosaic of habitats in which thousands of botanical and faunal species live, some of which are extremely rare.

This is due to the unique geographical position of this region, that Ippolito Nievo did not hesitate to describe as "a small compendium of the universe": framed by mountains and overlooking the sea, offers a natural wealth with unique characteristics, beautifully mixed to history and art of all villages, churches, villas and castles.

Most of these diverse environments are not far from each other:

- The austere and wild mountains where the eagles fly, and where chamois and deers ride along the woods, and climb the bare rocks from which you can enjoy breathtaking sceneries;
- The rolling, barely marked, hills covered with meadows and vineyards and dominated by castles of austere beauty, between whose walls story of The Little Country was made and lived;
- The karst area, with thousands of caves entering the heart of the earth, where still re-emerge, in the splendid halls adorned with stalactites and stalagmites, the traces of prehistoric human settlement;
- The plain, marked by the laborious work of men, includes gravel roads and narrow streets that, entering in cultivated fields and silent clearings, lead to picturesque villages curled up around their ancient churches;
- Restless, majestic rivers and streams pass through it, creating pools, lakes, ravines and springs, and then open up to the sea, into the lagoons that seem to be made of light, air and sunsets.



Between the mountains and the sea you can discover this amazing piece of land that contains, in its pristine beauty, the history and the proud character of Friulan people.

The route: the province of Udine

Romagno Wood

Coordinates: 46.029717, 13.464732

The "Romagno Wood" is a natural park located between the towns of Cividale del Friuli, Prepotto and Corno di Rosazzo. It covers 53 hectares, almost all covered by the forest, and is easily accessible through a series of easy trails. The vegetation is made up of many plants including the black locust (imported from North America in 1601), the oak, the field and mountain maple, the black and white hornbeam, the cherry, the chestnut and the linden that together form a great variety of landscape. The under-



growth consists of brambles, holly, hazel and broom. In early spring Bosco Romagno is colored by thousands of blooming bulbs such as crocuses, primroses, snowdrops, campanule, pennyworts and other less common species, such as pulmonary or dog's tooth. In addition to the forest, the park includes extensive lawns and numerous rivers, including the Rio Cornizza, a small tributary of the near Corno stream, that is populated by river crayfish, now very rare, but that once represented the only reserve of food for the poor farmers of the area in times of famine.

In this area it was also built a pond that is the ideal place for salamanders, frogs and newts. The fauna that lives in the Romagno Wood and in eastern hills, that have not yet been transformed into vineyards, boasts an exceptional number of permanent and migratory species: there are numerous deer, while wild cats is in danger of extinction. You may also spot: foxes, badgers, squirrels and dormice, and even wild boars, attracted in certain times of the year both by the abundant production of acorns and by the presence of delicious underground bulbs. The forest provides food and shelter for many specimens of birds such as finches, chickadees and blackbirds, pigeons and jays, owls and hawks.

The name "Romagno" has Lombard origins and identified the location as "Arimanni Forest", the free Lombards men, who responded directly to the king and formed the avanguard that had to defend the area from the Slavs and Avars' invasions. This suggests the strategic role that Romagno Wood has covered within the Lombard defensive system, and whose role remained unchanged for centuries so that, during the Second World War, the town became the seat of an important powder magazine, of which you can still see the concrete bases intended for storage of explosives. But the event that ties Romagno Wood to history is related not only to its Lombard origins. Here, in fact, took place in one of the most tragic and controversial episodes in the Italian Resistance, which is still the source of much controversy.



Between February 8 and 20, 1945, in fact, seventeen partisans (including one woman) of the brigade Osoppo (formation of Catholic and secular- socialist orientation), were taken from the huts in Porzûs, murdered near the forest and buried here by a group of partisans of the Garibaldi Brigades belonging to the Italian Communist Party. Guido Pasolini, Pier Paolo's brother, was among the twenty-two partisans of Osoppo Brigade who were killed. At one of the entrances of the forest there is a plaque commemorating those tragic circumstances.

"Foci dello Stella" Reserve

Coordinates: 45.734943, 13.121796



The "Foci dello Stella" Reserve, which includes the karst spring river's estuary and a large sector of the Marano lagoon, stretches out for 1357 hectares and has become a natural reserve in 1996. Where the river Stella meets the Adriatic, fresh water, relatively abundant, mixes with the salty water creating a wide and shallow brackish zone. The vegetation is dominated by a large and compact groove of reeds, furrowed by the river's meanders. The reed, was once a widespread biotope on high - Adriatic coasts, but today is very rare and valuable, is in fact a constant and

significant expression of this reserve. There are many species of birds that inhabit and animate this

marshy environment all year long. There are purple herons and western marsh harriers. Many stop there during migration, many spend the winter, and others find in the reserve the ideal habitat for nesting.



Among the reeds that line the river bed, thousands of coots and mallards rest, while it is not unusual to see some specimens of loggerhead sea turtles, with their red-brown carapace, whose survival is threatened throughout the Mediterranean and it is now almost extinct in Italian waters. In the brackish waters, swim soles, gilthead breams, seabasses, eels, flounders and sea horses, but you can also have the chance to admire some species of dolphins (such as Risso's gray dolphin, the white dolphin and the common bottlenose dolphin) that, sometimes, following

little crafts go back for a short distance into the rivers that flow into the sea. When you enter in the extreme mouth, before your eyes opens a show of rare beauty: a village of fishermen's huts, characteristics of the Marano lagoon. In these constructions, made with reeds, piles of wood and wicker, the fishermen once stopped for several days, to avoid returning home each evening, that were several hours away, with rowing boats laden with fish. On the island the "motte" were built, which were consolidated with dirt, mud and stones, to have greater stability and shelter. They consisted of a single room with a fireplace with the door facing west, to protect from the bora. The huts were a refuge, a place of passage and, therefore, not destined to last over time, due to the perishable nature of materials with which they were built. These ancient shelters dot the lagoon mingling among the reeds and constitute an ancient track of the deep bond that once united man to nature. (45.734943, 13.121796)

But the mouths of the Stella are not the only reserve in the area: the Valle Canal Novo, located near the ancient town of Marano, is both a nature reserve and research and a disclosure center. It consist of a former fish farm and some arable land of recent reclamation, this reserve was already transformed at the end of the 80s in a protected regional reserve in 1996. It occupies an area of about 124 acres and looks like a lagoon area with many lakes and vast zone of salt marsh, interdicted to tides by the perimeter embankments. La Valle (from Latin vallum, embankment) is home to an aquarium, an educational center for conferences and some observatories disguised as typical lodges where you can see, especially in the winter, all the birds that find refuge and peace. Across the board walk (long wooden walkways calls effectively in dialect Marano "camminade on sull'acqua") you can venture into the reserve's heart and enjoy a spectacular view. (45.758661, 13.150978)

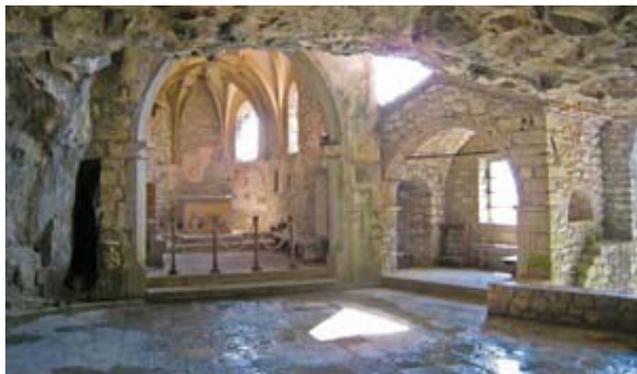
Before starting the hike is advisable to visit the old town of Marano Lagunare, where the old tower, among a series of narrow streets and small squares, testifies the passage of the Republic of Venice, who ruled these lands from the fifteenth to the late eighteenth century. "Se la Venesia non la fussi, Maran Saria Venesia" (If there was no Venice, Marano would be Venice) reads a local saying: Marano in fact, although it is of Roman origin, has been shaped by the Venetian Republic that has made it a small but important stronghold of its republic. There are still many buildings erected by the Dominant: the Loggia Maranese where the community gathered, the so-called Torre Millenaria, 32 meters high, of which we have news since 1066, that was probably built on the ruins of a Roman sighting tower, the Palace dei provveditori, home of fortress Governors of the, which was once completely walled and powerful enough to withstand the assault of the Turkish hordes. (45.76399, 13.167028)



Since the reserve of Foci dello Stella entirely develops in an aquatic environment, marsh and lagoon, the visit can be made only with the ferries that sail from Marano, while the Valle Canal Novo is accessible on foot.

The cave of San Giovanni d'Antro

Coordinates: 46.152903, 13.478251



The underground complex known as “the cave of San Giovanni d'Antro” is set into a rocky wall, not far from the village bearing the same name, a small and ancient hamlet of Pulfero, not too far from Cividale del Friuli. A path of about 500 meters and a staircase of 144 steps leads to the ancient cave which is located about 350 meters above sea level. In its initial part is partially occupied by building that testify this cave's use by man since ancient times, both as a fortress and as a religious site. In the middle of the entrance stairway, lies the remains of a medieval castle, probably

built where, in Roman times, there was a garrison seat, ie a place of sighting and defense to protect Aquileia and Forum Julii (Cividale del Friuli). During the empire in fact, the cave was an integral part, along with the rivers' forts Erbezzo-Natisone and the castelliere of Barda, of the defensive system on the eastern borders, designed by Regio X. During the barbarian invasions, the cave was used as a shelter to provide protection for the local populations. From all the existing walls you can see that the three-storey manor house is elevated until it reaches the height of the current floor of the underground church. On the walls you can see the aligned holes in the beams that supported the rooms's paving.

The entrance to the castle had to be through a retractable wooden staircase, which connected the stone staircase at the entrance. The fort's remains shows that it was not permanently inhabited, but it had only a military function as refuge for the inhabitants of the neighboring villages during the invasions that have occurred over the centuries. The castle is also linked to a well-known legend that reflects the place's inaccessibility. As a matter of fact, in ancient times it could only be accessed by using ropes or wooden stairs. Queen Rosamund, who, according to local tradition, was the noble Lombard Theodolinda, managed to escape with all her people from the assaults of the Huns, using the inaccessible cave of San Giovanni d'Antro as shelter.

The besieged saw the smoke rising from the plains and the houses on fire and, when the supplies began to run low, the brave queen took the last bag of wheat and threw it out of the rock of the cave towards the enemy saying, “We have as many sacks of grain, as the beans in this bag”. The intent was to make the enemy believe, the presence of a significant amount of supplies, such as to prevent the conquest of the castle. The ruse worked, the enemies ceased the block and the besieged were able to return to their villages. The cave of San Giovanni d'Antro is especially as an ancient place of faith, where pagan and Christians cults overlap.

It is believed that the cavity was the site of a pagan cult of the waters, very ancient rites that were eventually taken over by Christian ceremonies, as evidenced by the consecration of the chapel to St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist (saints that normally mark the transition from the heretical to the Catholic cult). The mysterious circular “mortar”, cut in the rock, in the internal path, was perhaps an Aryan baptismal font. Between 533 and 568, before the Lombards' arrival, it was the site of a Byzantine monastic foundation made by the monks of Cividale. The Lombards, who then became Christians at the beginning of the eighth century, have built, using workers from the East, the first



chapel that you meet along the way, which remained mostly intact and is remembered as “Santa Maria Antiqua” (there are less specimens than 5 in all of Italy), a primitive shrine of Lombard origin is visible in a recess of the cave.

With the passage of time the masonry works followed. Currently the church occupies the space above the cryptoporticus and consists of a main church (the hall of the cave of St. John), a presbytery-chapel (dating back to 1477 and made by Andrea da Skofja Loka, Slovenian late Gothic style), a vestry and a loggia, which opens on the valley. The cave’s hall consists of a room of about 23 square meters, four meters high, that is reached through a pointed, limestone arch. Passing behind the altar and continuing along the path which is lit and fit for use for approximately 300 meters. The site was used as a shelter since prehistoric times, as evidenced by the numerous remains of “Ursus Spelaeus” (cave bear), which are constantly recovered after each flooding, and fragments of human jaws, vertebrae and teeth as well as ceramics from pre-Roman times.

Natural Reserve of Lake Cornino

Coordinates: 46.229728, 13.019485

The Natural Reserve of Lake Cornino was established in 1996 considering the peculiar characteristics of the area and the high natural values of the different environment components.

Is located on the southeastern margin of the Carnic Alps. The broad bed of Tagliamento separates



it from the Julian Pre-Alps, the hilly ranges and the Friulian high plains. This river is 170 km long and has a wide basin of nearly 3,000 km², it is the most important river in Friuli Venezia Giulia and, is considered as the only one to preserve a braided channels morphology in the Alps, and one of the few in Europe. Thanks to this feature, as well as the ecosystem’s uniqueness as a whole, it is also called the King of Alpine rivers. The reserve has an overall area of 487 hectares and is included in the municipalities of Forgharia and Trasaghis. Within a depression created by an ancient landslide, is located the Cornino Lake,

with its very blue -green transparent waters coming from underground springs.

The lake does not have emissaries on the surface, but receives a continuous water exchange through underground aquifers that allow him to maintain throughout the course of the year a constant temperature between 8 and 9 degrees, as well as a very clear water. The morphology, the exposure of the elevation and the river’s presence give to this harsh area a wild fauna and vegetation that determine very interesting situations. The flora comprehends: junipers, rosemary willows, sallowthorns and evergreen holly oaks. The environment’s aridity creates the perfect conditions to the life and reproduction of many reptiles such as the horned viper and the slow worm, while it allows a limited presence of amphibian such as: the spotted salamander, the common and the emerald toad. The area is particularly interesting for the birds. On the Tagliamento banks and in the surrounding areas, it is easy to observe the presence of typical birds of plains or wetlands such as herons: ducks, gulls. Near the lake, on the other hand, where there are woods and meadows the fauna is dominated by blackbirds, chickadees, finches, jays and woodpeckers. In addition there are also many mammals. Some are very common in the Alpine shrew like hedgehogs, dormices and squirrels. More difficult to observe, as they only come out at night or at dusk, are the foxes, the badgers and the martens. In a setting of ineffable beauty, for almost twenty years has been developed an international project for the conservation of the griffon vulture,



one of the most interesting element in the protected area. The griffon vulture is one of the largest and most majestic birds in Europe. This huge vulture feeds exclusively of animal carcasses and for this rea-



son has developed the characteristic bald head that allows it to dig into the remains of large animals with ease and without getting too “dirty”. Even the claws are extremely small and unable to capture live prey. The griffons, as well as other vultures, are the “nature’s scavengers” and have a unique ecological role: they eliminate effectively the carcasses of dead animals, that would otherwise cause health problems. In the Western collective imagination, vultures are often associated with misfortune, bad omens, mystery and occult forces from which to shun. In the

last few centuries, and especially around the mid-1900s, their systematic persecution brought them on the brink of extinction almost everywhere in Europe. Once, this great vulture was present throughout the Mediterranean basin and in vast areas of the Alps and central Europe.

The project for the Conservation of the Eurasian griffon, which began in the nature reserve of Lake Cornino at the end of the 80s, has, as its main objective to ensure the future of population of griffon vultures in the Alps, providing food aid and enticing the griffons to frequent safe areas.

After the establishment of a wild colony, at the end of the 90s, the first natural births were recorded. They increase, year by year, with new breeding couples and newborns.

In the reserve’s civic center, from which depart picturesque hiking trails to Lake Cornino and the bed of the Tagliamento, there are some aviaries with diurnal and nocturnal raptors and a terrarium in which it is possible to observe the horned viper and the lizard.

The vultures’ flight can be observed especially in the late morning hours.

Quadris Oasis

Coordinates: 46.134631, 13.074138

The Quadris Oasis, which has an area of about 100 hectares, is located on the northwest of Fagagna, where there is a wetland characterized by the presence of thirty quadrangular tanks full of water called, in fact, quadris. They are the result of some excavations which have started in 1700 in order to produce clay to create artifacts and peat as fuel. Count Fabio Asquini started the rational exploitation of this area’s resources, since peat could be used as fuel in place of wood, already scarce. The marsh was divided into lots of cultivation, and many trees were planted, such as oaks, alders and poplars, along the ditches made for the water’s drainage. At the beginning of the last century, with the unwinding of peat, began the extraction of clay and the holes were formed becoming the most characteristic element. From the mid ’90s the area was abandoned in its natural state.



The pools were no longer used, and they gradually filled with rain and ground water, turning into wetland characterized by a very impressive and particularly beautiful vegetation, with reeds, water lilies, willows and privets. The entire oasis includes, in addition to the wetland itself, also grassland, moorland, farmland and wooded areas, not entirely accessible. More than 7 hectares are equipped as a “pre-park” area and birdlife Center. In the latter structure, in 1983, started the Hermit Ibis Recolonization project. In 1989, the Experimental Station for the white stork reintroduction began, and soon became, the second station in Italy for the number of couples who have established here.

These birds once nested in our country, but for various reasons there has been a species decrease that led to his extinction. The storks colony in the oasis of Quadris is permanent and therefore it is possible to observe these specimens also during the winter period when, being free to fly, they glide with ease even in the surrounding gardens and courtyards.

Furthermore, once paired, these birds tend to remain in the reproduction place and often, even if the

new born are left free to fly, they return to nest in the same area where they were born. More and more often they stop there, attracted by the calls of their fellows. Even the wild storks stop here, during their migrations from Africa, where they live in winter, to Europe, where they arrive to spend the summer and nest.

The births are concentrated at the end of May, when it is possible to observe the great partnership in which the male and female build their nests and raise their offspring, The male manages the material



(twigs, sticks, earth, rags, grass, stones, newsprint) that the female uses to form the large platform (that can reach 2 m diameter) on which she lays 3 to 5 eggs.

The couple communicates swaying their necks back and forth and, slamming the beak, causing the characteristic noise that can be heard even hundred miles away.

The first two specimens housed in the Oasis were born from a wild couple that had nested in Dignano and had then abandoned them. Other livestock have

been donated or purchased in Swiss centers. Today there are a hundred specimens.

The oasis also houses about forty specimens of Hermit ibises, a rare, weird-looking bird, that is very threatened by extinction and that has started to frequently reproduce in Fagagna.

It is a large bird slightly smaller than the stork, with a smooth, red head. The plumage completely black with metallic green, purple and bronze reflections. It has a long red beak with which it hunts, among stones and rocks, ants, scorpions, amphibians and reptiles.

The species was once fairly common along the rocky areas and cliffs in southern Europe, in the Middle East and North Africa.

The numerical decline of the hermit ibis began centuries ago still unknown reasons. From the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the population of ibis has undergone a drastic decline, accounting for about 98%, due to poaching and the destruction of its natural habitat (to create farms and intensive plantations), the use of pesticides and to the annoyance of migration routes and breeding colonies, due to excessive human activity.

This bird has also lived in Friuli, but towards the end of the seventeenth century disappeared for reasons that are still not very clear. It is known though that it was hunted, especially the younger specimens, for the delicacy of its meat.

Cormôr Park

Coordinates: 46.083873, 13.189967

Over the years the Cormôr Park, owned by the Municipality of Udine and located in the north-western zone of the Friuli's capital, has considerably developed, becoming a gathering and meeting place for all citizens. It also accommodates many and varied cultural activities.

Much of the area has been the subject to intensive work of resettlement and environmental restoration, as it was in a serious state of neglect and decay. This has allowed to preserve the floodplain and riparian vegetation along the Cormôr stream, the broadleaf flaps on the banks such as: poplars, locusts, maples and ashes, and the permanent grassland on a series of terraces that slope down to the river bed. There are some dense woods, mulberry avenues, limes, poplar and plane trees.

The natural environment, embraced in its entire length by the Cormôr's right bank (which is the most important stream of the entire moraine hills near Udine), has an area of 30 hectares and although it is



inserted in a highly urbanized area, is considered “Udine’s green lung”.

The plant barrier along the motorway’s edge, the network of pedestrian paths made through the recovery of ancient cart tracks, the picnic and rest areas, a “lookout” fountain, a grassy mound with



a spiral path, ditches, the “life path” and, finally, the playground, makes it the ideal place to spend relaxing and quiet moments and without going far away from the city. This city park is the final (or initial) part of a much longer nature trail called “Cormôr’s Ippovia”, which extends for over 30 kilometers along the banks, crossing different areas with specific natural features, that survive to a highly urbanized fabric.

The route takes advantage of the network of rural clay roads linking the various villages, which has been used for centuries by local populations. You can admire

green landscapes with remarkable flora and fauna, interspersed with glimpses of rural civilization, monuments, palaces, villas and churches. The route, which is limited to the south by the Cormôr Park, and to the north by the hilly town of Buja, passes through the rural hamlets of seven towns on the foothills of Udine, rich in history, traditions, secular architectural and religious art, as well as the region’s culinary excellences. Tavagnacco, with the little church of San Leonardo (in the hamlet of Cavalicco) which, according to tradition was consecrated in 780 by the Patriarch of Aquileia S. Paolino, preserves frescos from different eras. The villa of Prampero dates back to the seventeenth century and is enclosed by a large park, sloping gently down the stream Cormôr. The fields of white asparagus, for which the country is famous all over the Friuli, surround the village. (46.127508, 13.213377) Pagnacco, with the charming rural village of Fontanabona, is quoted, at the end of the twelfth century, with the name of Fons Bonus and remained unchanged over time. In the village there’s the Castle hill with the old house, the eighteenth-century villa, the Gastaldo’s factory, the village or “villa”, the hill called Zuch with two farmhouses and cottages, and all the arable fields, meadows and forest are part of this remarkable complex. There is also a museum with furniture, furnishings and tools related to crafts and agriculture. On the ground floor there are objects related to the fireplace and the kitchen, while the first floor is devoted to the processing of plants and animals textile fibers. In rustic houses are collected tools for working the land, for the government of animals and stables, for the production of agricultural products, and the breeding of silkworms and harvesting. 46.124891, 13.186169) Tricesimo, was founded in 60 BC, thirty miles from Aquileia on the important road leading to



the Norian. It has many elegant villas, a massive castle built in the thirteenth century and plundered in 1511 by the starving peasants in revolt, and the church of Santa Maria, that recalls, through a writing dating back to 1477, a locusts invasion and the Turks who, after crossing the Isonzo, devastated and burned the Friuli. (46.162593, 13.209515) Colloredo di Monte Albano, dominated by the prestigious castle, where the writer Ippolito Nievo lived, was destroyed in 1976 by the earthquake and now only is partially reconstructed. (46.16405, 13.136301) Cassacco was an important element in the defense system of Friuli, with its castle of ancient origins. Villa De Ciani (in the hamlet of Montegnacco), dating from the XVI century, is located in a magnificent natural setting, with rolling hills on the southern side and a spectacular view of the Alps on the back. The Cichinot bog, houses rare plant species, while the old Ferrant mill dating from the eighteenth century, houses a collection of objects related to the past rural world. (46.175908, 13.183937) Treppo Grande is situated on a high hill that offers breathtaking views, with the characteristic village of Zegliacco, and the ancient furnace. (46.190705, 13.15733) Buia, the town of medal’s art, houses an interesting museum dedicated to the Engraving Masters that in the twentieth century have honored Buia and Friuli worldwide. (46.203834, 13.118362) The environment through which the trail bends is predominantly rural, characterized by cultivated fields, meadows and forest where certain species of trees prevail, such as: hawthorns, acacias, elders, you can also see hor-

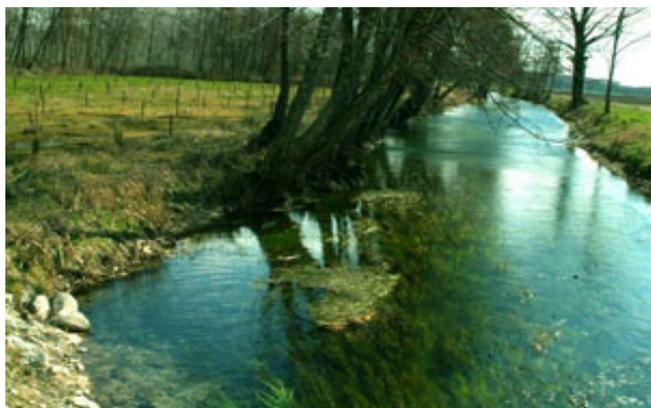
nbeams, oaks, maples, native birches, poplars, beeches and ash trees. In the less inhabited areas, the fauna is represented by the hare, the Dormouse, the mole, the marten, the common vole, the hedgehog, the weasel. Among the birds are very common pheasants, hooded crows, crows, wagtails and all kinds of passerines. The owl is also very common. It is a nocturnal bird that nests in large cavities or on trees branches. The route is travelable on foot, by bike and on horseback. At both limits of the bridle path, in fact, are located stables that offer hospitality to horses and riders.

In some places you have to pass fords over the river Cormôr (which is dry in summer) and, in some others, you have to cross roads to resume the bridle path.

Within the whole route, any point can be chosen as departure and arrival place, knowing that the two extremes are both in the heart of Friuli.

Springs Park

Coordinates: 45.941481, 12.990046



In a meeting point between high and low plain, that is to say, the meeting point between permeable and impermeable soil, the accumulated underground water re-emerge creating a strip of land (whose extension can vary from 2 to 30 km) called "line spring". Along that line, lie all the points in which water rises to the surface and produces springs or fountains. These waters have special characteristics: a constant temperature of 9-12 degrees and a permanent flow throughout the year of about 65 m³ per second. The waters are clear, drinkable and rich in minerals.

These features cause a moist environment character-

ized by rivers, canals, streams, riparian shoreline zone, and now rare, stretches of lowland forests and peat bogs. Today, the spring's landscape has been almost completely quenched. Small trace of this environments remain in small areas of the region, such as the south area of the town of Codroipo where, precisely to protect this area of great value, in 1983, arose the Springs Park that extends for about 45 hectares.

Here, running on the impermeable subsoil, the water, collected in the high plains and in the foothills, resurface as fountain springs (cavity with an irregular contour), blades (swampy lowlands), jars (artesian wells) and bollidori (artificial excavations covered with trellis).

After the many canals built in the 1920s, other larger ditches have been dug, onto which are exposed four of the original twenty-two mills.

All these water emergencies have formed a series of parallel channels: the Aghe Real (Royal Water), the Aghe Blancje (White Water), the Aghe Lusinte (Shining Water), the Aghe Black (Black Water). These waters, together with those of the Canal of San Odorico, converge into a single course flowing into the Corno and later in the Stella river.

The park preserves many endemic vegetable varieties, typical of the area and limited to a small range, such as the Friuli cornflower (*Centaurea forojulensis*) and the swamp cabbage (*Ecastrum palustre*). The gentian and various winged species of orchids are used as symbols of the whole area.

Close to water courses you can distinguish black alders, black poplars, white poplars and silver willows, while in the drier areas you can see oak trees, elms and maples. The "molinieto" (the outer belt of depressions spring's name) houses a variety of grasses, among which stand out the big strains of black reed.

The many botanical rarities of these places hide near the artesian wells, that keeping the surrounding environment cool, allow the survival of many alpine plants that have taken refuge there from the last glaciation. Among these there are butterworts and sundews, two small carnivorous plants that feed on small ants and gnats.

Many animal species inhabit this area. You can catch a glimpse of foxes, hares, deer and squirrels, while the thickets provide shelter to jays and red peaks, which nest in trees cavities. There are also birds of

prey as buzzards and sparrow hawks.

The poet Amedeo Giacomini described the park as “a wonderful wealth of greenery and flowers, a unique ecological place”.

In fact this natural oasis, veined with trails and dirt roads, is of extreme value for the whole region as it offers to visitors a chance to find landscapes that have disappeared elsewhere and admire how this beautiful land was in the past.



At the edge of the wooded area along the canal of San Odorico, some mills witness the past civilization, based on the exploitation of land and waterways.

The buildings, mostly dating from the sixteenth century, but substantially reworked in later centuries, are now unfortunately largely altered in form and function.

This canal was one of the first canals built by man before the eleventh century and took water from the river Tagliamento. The water's acceleration was needed

by the town, but also provided the driving force to the mills located along it.

Today, of the 22 original mills, only 4 still exist. The only one that is still working is that of Bert - Zoratto that, since 1400, in addition to the traditional mill work (from cereals coming from the local organic farming are obtained: whole grain flours to make polenta, and refined flour for bread), also accomplishes the threshing of the stockfish through the ancient system of the linen pestle. It is the only mill in Italy that still does that.

Along the canal of San Odorico (next to the parking area) you can also visit another historic site of great importance: the remains of a castelliere, one of those small fortified settlements that were built between the fifteenth and the third century BC in Istria, and later expanded to Friuli Venezia Giulia, Dalmatia, Veneto and surrounding areas. The “Castellieri civilization” has lasted for over a millennium (from the fifteenth to the third century BC) and ended only with the Roman conquest.

They were fortified villages, usually located on hills and mountains or, more rarely, on the plain (in south-eastern Friuli). They consisted of one, or more, concentric walls with a round or elliptical shape (in Venezia Giulia and Istria), or a quadrangular form (Friuli), within which the town developed.

It should be noted that the walls could be four or five meters thick, and five or seven meters high. They were of rather massive cities whose perimeter could measure from two to three kilometers. The construction technique was “the sack”: two parallel walls, of large stone blocks, were built and filled, with smaller rocks, soil and other residual materials.

The houses, generally had a modest size and a circular shape, the base was made of limestone or sandstone while for the rest were built with perishable materials, especially wood.

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