


from BALZE to PRATOMAGNO



Tourist
Information 

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The Upper Valdarno is a wide natural basin over which the Arno River flows, closed to the northeast by the Pratomagno massif that unites it and, at the same time, divides it from the Casentino. The Arno flows through the two valleys and embraces Pratomagno, transforming it into a sort of island surrounded by the waters of the river. The landscape is very varied: alpine and solitary on the high slopes of Pratomagno; rugged by picturesque clay erosion in the Balze area, at the foot of the same ridge.

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VALDARNO

The Upper Valdarno is a wide natural basin, closed to the north-east by the Pratomagno massif and bordered to the south-west by the Chianti hills. The Arno River enters it through 'Valle dell'Inferno', a long gorge now occupied by two contiguous reservoirs, then exiting at the 'stretta dell'Incisa'. Thanks to its particular geological connotation, the Valdarno is a naturalistic world waiting to be discovered: a succession of steep ridges sculpted by rainwater, soft hills, lush woods and clear waters. This is the land where nature shows its most vivid and original face, with natural reserves created to protect and preserve the landscape, plants and animals, such as the Valle dell'Inferno Reserve, the Bandella Oasis, the Roseto Fineschi di Cavriglia, the alpine environment of Pratomagno and the Balze Reserve. A landscape modelled by man with grace and poise that among villages, towns and farms tells of the ancient civilisation of the Tuscan countryside.

PRATOMAGNO MASSIF

The Pratomagno massif unites and divides the Valdarno from the Casentino: from every point on its ridge it is possible to observe the two valleys where the Arno River flows, embracing each side of the massif, thus transforming it into a large island. The name Pratomagno is due to the large meadow that runs along almost the entirety of its ridge (about twenty kilometres), from Monte Lori to Monte Secchieta. From here it is possible to enjoy incredible views over half of Tuscany: an ideal place for both short walks and challenging itineraries. The symbol of Pratomagno is the large iron cross built in 1928 on its ridge at an altitude of 1592 metres. Access to the massif from the Valdarno side is from the villages along the Setteponti road: Loro Ciuffenna, Castelfranco Piandisco. It starts from the plain where the Arno flows and climbs gently amidst terraces of vineyards, olive groves and cereal crops. Climbing in altitude we then find woods, pine forests, chestnut and beech trees, until we reach the ridge formed by a large prairie. From the Casentino towards Pratomagno, the climb is immediately steeper than in Valdarno and the climate is much wetter and colder. For this reason, the forest formations - woods, chestnut and beech trees - are moved a little lower. The ridge extends with its large grasslands as far as the Passo della Consuma on the border of Florence. Access to the mountain from the Casentino side is from Talla towards the Crocina Pass, from Raggiolo, Castel San Niccolò and Cetica and at its end from Montemignaio.



Le Balze



BALZE NATURAL AREA

The Balze Protected Natural Area was established to protect the curious and very particular reliefs of stratified detritus composed of sand, clay, pebbles and gravel. Peculiar hills formed by erosion following the draining of a lake that, two million years ago, covered the area where they rise. Shaped and sculpted over time by atmospheric agents, the 'Balze' have unique morphological characteristics of great landscape and environmental interest. The landscape has colours ranging from grey to ochre, from blue to green woods and cultivated fields. True natural cathedrals, the Balze also attracted the attention of Leonardo da Vinci, who treated them in the Hammer Codex (or Leicester Codex) and made them an iconic element for his painted landscapes such as those that appear in the 'Virgin of the Rocks' or the 'Mona Lisa'.

VALLE DELL'INFERNO AND BANDELLA NATURE RESERVE

Valle dell'Inferno is the realm of water and woods. A nature reserve characterised by a part of the Arno River (that flows here between Romito bridge and Acqua Borra bridge), a lake and marsh area that were formed because of the dam built in 1956. In the silence of over 500 hectares of uncontaminated nature, one can observe white and grey herons, cormorants, kingfishers, shrikes and mallards; while in search of small prey, one can spot kites, kestrels, buzzards and marsh harriers. Equipped trails lead to the discovery of woods and countryside where, in the flowering season, many varieties of wild orchids can be found.



ALPE DI CATENAIA

VALTIBERINA

Stia

Pratovecchio

POPPI

BIBBIENA

Rassina

La Scheggia

Pieve di Romena

FIRENZE

CASTEL SAN NICCOLÒ

Ortignano

Castel Focognano

Pieve di Socana

SUBBIANO

Montemignao

Raggiolo

Carda

TALLA

CAPOLONA

P R A T O M A G N O

Pontenano

Pieve di Sietina

Giovi

AREZZO

CROCE DEL PRATOMAGNO

Gello Biscardo

Ponte Buriano

Rocca Ricciarda

Trappola

Anciolina

CASTIGLION FIBOCCHI

Ponte Buriano and Penna Nature Reserve

Reggello

VIA DEI SETTEPONTI

Pieve di Gropina

LATERINA

FIRENZE

CASTELFRANCO

LORO CIUFFENNA

Valle dell'Inferno and Bandella Nature Reserve

Ponticino

VALDICHIANA

Balze Natural Area

Terranuova Bracciolini

Pergine Valdarno

CIVITELLA IN VAL DI CHIANA

Figline Valdarno

SAN GIOVANNI VALDARNO

MONTEVARCHI

Levane

Bucine

SIENA

