

# THE MONTELORO RING

## Path of Saint-Genis-Laval

### “Parish churches and tabernacles”

ROUTE:  
SIECI – MONASTERY OF GRICIGLIANO – MONTELORO –  
MOLIN DEL PIANO – POGGIO CARPINETE – SIECI

TRAVELLING TIME: 3.30 / 4.00 H.

ELEVATION: about mt. 480

DIFFICULTY: E

**Advice:** In order to best appreciate the journey we suggest going on this hike when it is not too hot.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE ROUTE

We begin in the heart of the village of Sieci, in Piazza degli Albizi, close to the ancient Church of St. Giovanni Battista a Remole. The bell-tower is remarkable, constructed in pure Romanic Style, slender and stylish; it can be seen from afar since the church is slightly more elevated than the Arno River that flows a few meters away. It is a church with a nave and two aisles, containing beautiful altarpieces inside. From its façade a narrow alley winds from the ancient smooth cobble stone paving, and leads us directly to the river. We are now under the shade of a majestic tree and of an old, white stone tower called Torre del Mea by the inhabitants. After following a pedestrian stretch of the Lungarno, we enter a sidewalk along the via Aretina, pass the bridge where the Sieci stream merges with the Arno River, turn right and take a lane with the stimulating name of Via della Fonte. After a railway underpass, the asphalt lane enlarges, continuing with a light slope along the right side of the stream. Here, where the last small houses finish, the unpaved road begins, and the incline increases. Before entering the wood, we pass the first tabernacle, which



Parish church of San Giovanni Battista a Remole

was restored in 2006, and whose very presence indicates that Via della Fonte was once much more frequented than today. Just above the tabernacle, which is framed by two cypresses, is a stylization of the three hilled Golgotha, with the main cross on the highest central hill. After entering the wood and stepping over the small stream that runs from the ravine of Gricigliano, we leave the lane that goes on towards Montefoco – Molin del Piano (4a CAI), and instead turn into the well marked path to our left. Our path goes up the small gorge leaning over the ravine, under the shade of the wood. Abruptly, the path leaves the wood and runs out along the lower border of a vineyard that is hidden and completely surrounded by it. After this brief change, the path returns into the wood again. After passing a little stream, the path goes in a light downwards slope along the lower margin of the wide lawn that stretches out from the Gricigliano Complex. On our left is the ravine, and on our right the terraced wall of the great lawn, which appears invisible since it is higher up than the path. After having walked for about forty-five minutes, we

arrive at the beautiful complex of the Gricigliano Monastery.



The complex of Gricigliano

Nowadays this architectural complex, which was built according to the Famiglia Martelli's will at the end of 16th century, hosts a French Benedictine monastery. It is made up of several buildings among which are: the monastery itself, St. Giuseppe's Chapel which outside shows beautiful glazed earthenware attributed to Marco Della Robbia, and what was once the main farm. However, it is the fishpond surrounding the main building along three sides that certainly is the most noticeable aspect of the whole complex, since it is very rare in Tuscany. A slight stone bridge preceded by a gate leads to the main building and then to the sloping lawn. The existence of such a fishpond is due to a remarkable supply of water which was present there and which conveyed water towards the building. There is more evidence of this water supply: the artificial grotto decorated in the classical Tuscan Mannerist Style of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and constructed in front of the stony passage over the fishpond, the now-dry and dilapidated fountain basin along the main road we take downhill, and finally a little arched stone bridge in a deep curve, under which the stream flowed down, rushing from the depths of the wood into semi-natural falls. Despite the fact that water doesn't flow here any longer, this point, still



The tabernacle of Monteloro

crowned by a majestic oak, is so noteworthy that it recalls the famous Parco dei Mostri of Bomarzo, in the Viterbo Province. The second tabernacle is outside of the Monastery, opposite us on the other side of the cultivated hill. This tabernacle covered by a huge wild cherry tree was built in the 1930s, and as a result of its dominant and lone position, appears to be quite charming. However, our well-marked path along the street goes uphill, skirts alongside a couple of cottages, and then runs straight. Our track now runs along a landscaped route, inside a mixed and arbutus-rich wood, which is very different from the dark one which characterized the first part of the hike. After forty minutes, and having merged onto an unpaved road, our path leads us to a ridge near the ancient Romanesque Church of St. Giovanni Battista a Monteloro, which can be reached quickly by following the ascending asphalt road. It stands close to where the Archbishop of Fiesole's castle stood, and has been broken down since 1427. To our left, a few steps ahead, we arrive at the small Village of Monteloro. At the end of a field, stands the third and last tabernacle of our journey. This small, solid and classically shaped tabernacle has also been recently restored and shows a scarcely discernible emblem which appears to be a pair of pincers clenching a tooth, and thus is probably an allegory of the Christian martyr St. Apollonia; it is also the last surviving trace of antiquity. From here the downhill path begins with a much steeper descent

compared to our prior ascent.



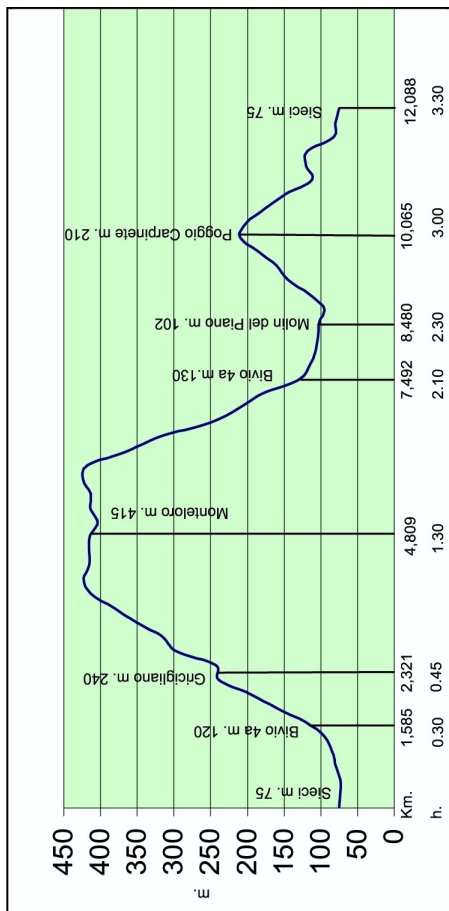
“Il Poggiolo” ex-dwelling of Guadagni Family – near Monteloro

Snaking down between terraces and patches of wood, the path heads for the Molin del Piano Valley, passes nearby the ancient Tornaquinci Farm's vineyards, and finally enlarges into a lane that borders an empty cottage. If followed, this lane ends up in the ring road of Molin del Piano, not far from the upper junction to the old asphalt road. Or if one prefers, it is possible to take a shortcut back to Sieci following the path nr. 4a CAI, just before the asphalt road. Otherwise, following to the main route we will pass Molin del Piano, near to which we might visit the small octagonal church, and further on, the ancient Torre a Decima Castle and the hermitage of St. Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. After crossing the two main squares (the first of which is on a slight inclination containing a war memorial, the second is recognizable by a school building on our left) we pass under a bridge. Here we shall leave the main street to follow the GEO-A trail. The steep path begins to snake upwards immediately and heads to the ancient Farm of Valiano. From here we'll take the smooth path in the cultivated fields that heads toward the woods. Suddenly we will enter an entirely wooded landscape, while the path begins to rise steeply again, up to the ruins of a cottage where it turns.



Molin del Piano

We now leave the wood and by essentially climbing a ridge, will arrive on an exposed plateau, unseen from the street that runs a hundred meters below. Here we are close to the old stone cave of Poggio Carpinete, a cave that was once used frequently, but since has been left unused. The ancient mining industry counted among its properties this cottage, the majestic lower ruins of the old kiln, and the building outside of Monteloro that has now been turned into a health assisted residence. Again, the path enters an oak wood and descends toward an unexpected outlet. Now we find ourselves bordering the last house (from our perspective it is the first) of Sieci. The path swiftly descends again, comes close to a second isolated house, and then crosses the unique developed area of Sieci known as “Il Giani” by the residents. Let's now follow the path signs, briefly climb up to a beautiful house looking onto the Arno Valley. From here we leave the road and follow the path stretching through the fields. We'll finish the descent by skirting along the Graveyard of Sieci, and passing under the railway and we soon find ourselves in Piazza degli Albizi, our point of departure and where our ring ends



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