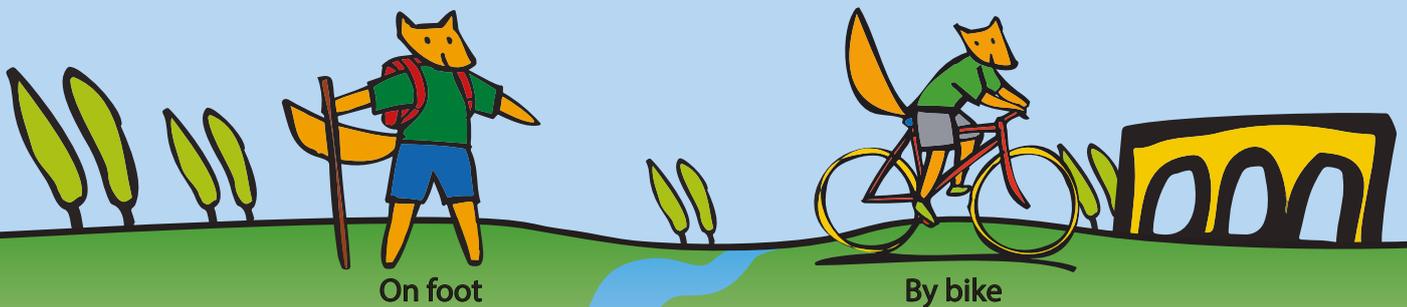


The Water-path of Caffarella



Caffarella Valley is furrowed with a network of ditches and irrigation canals, with minor drainage canals cutting across them. The main watercourse is the river Almone. Two irrigation ditches flow with it, one on the right and the other on its left side. The river Almone springs from the slopes of Colli Albani, while the two irrigation ditches originate near Via dell'Almone and are fed by small springs gushing out from the foot of the hills of the valley. During the centuries, river Almone has been subject to a myriad of diversions and channeling, given above all to the need of irrigating the adjacent fields of the fertile Caffarella Valley, which have always been cultivated. Today its route can be followed upstream to Ciampino airport, at the spring of Acqua Santa along Via Appia Nuova where it gathers the waters of the ditches Patatona and Acqua Mariana; downstream where it crosses Via Cristoforo Colombo. Here the ditch continues its course into a pipe of the Roma Sud collection drain. The name Almone, according to Aeneid, was given to the river by the homonymous Trojan hero, Tirro's son, the guardian of the herds of the Trojan army, who died during the war between Trojan and Latin people before the foundation of Rome.

From every entrances you can follow our ideal Water Path. Our advice is to draw the route, taking into account that to visit the whole valley on foot it takes 3-4 hours depending on the pitch and stops. The tour as proposed below is just one of many possible, in brackets found the nearest entrances.

1) The Casale ex Mulino and the Tomb of Annia Regilla (via della Caffarella – via Appia Antica)

The area currently known as Casale dell'Ex Mulino was part of the Pagus Triopius of Herodes Atticus, an influential figure who lived during the Age of the Antonines (mid 2nd Century AD). The Pagus Triopius was a large agricultural estate, turned into a sort of sanctuary and dedicated to the memory of Herodes Atticus' deceased wife Annia Regilla.

This area was crossed by an ancient and important road, by some identified as the Via Asinaria. The road, which crossed the valley diagonally, issued from the Aurelian wall, and, after passing near the Via Latina, run near the Tomb of Annia Regilla, met the Appian Way near the Mausoleum of Romulus, and then reached the Via Ardeatina.

During the Middle Ages, one of the five towers guarding the crossings of the Almone river was to be found here. The tower was adjacent to the Tomb of Annia Regilla; during the mid 16th century, the original building, which over



the centuries underwent several changes, was a Valca, i.e. a fulling mill used to wash and full woollen cloth. Already in Eufrosino della Volpaia's map dating back to 1547, the facility was portrayed as consisting in a tower and a lower building.

Subsequently, the fulling mill was turned into a gristmill: in the 19th century, fed by a small aqueduct, it was part of a farmhouse belonging to the Torlonia household, and was known as Mola della Caffarella, the Caffarella Mill, which continued to operate until 1930.

Today, the Casale dell'Ex Mulino is the property of Fondazione Gerini, and has been rented since 2001 by the Park Authority, which turned it into a Centre for environmental education and recreational activities. The Tomb is the property of the city of Rome.

2) Springs

The Felice Aqueduct, whose name derives from the first name of the pope who built it, Sixtus V (Felice Peretti), destroyed most of the arches of the ancient Marcian Aqueduct (Itinerary 7) and assumed its exact route. Built between 1585 and 1587, with water coming from springs at Pantano Borghese along the Praenestine Way, it first flowed in an underground channel before emerging above ground on the "Roma Vecchia" estate (Itinerary 7) and terminating at Domenico Fontana's Moses Fountain in Largo Santa Susanna.



3) The Nymphaeum of Egeria

According to the legend, nymph Egeria was one of the Camenae (minor deities linked to water and springs). Camenae used to repay the offers of water and milk with prophecies, and generally accompanied very important heroes or characters: Egeria linked herself to the origins of Rome by marrying Numa Pompilius, the Sabine king who succeeded Romulus.

Always according to the legend, they used to meet in this place to chat and make love; here the nymph inspired her husband in the elaboration of laws and in the religious organization of the primitive Rome.



The architectural structure of the building can be easily recognized thanks to the restoration carried out in 1999. It consists of a big rectangular hall, with a niche at the bottom and three smaller niches on both lateral walls, everything built in "opus mixtum", with opus reticulatum and opus latericium. This building technique dates the building back to the half of the 2nd century AD.

The water of the fountain springs from the bottom niche, where there is a laid-down statue of the god Almone: the water is intercepted by an acidulous spring under Via Appia Pignatelli, which once naturally flew into the river Almone. Today, the Park has artificially built a canal to carry these non-polluted waters into the left Marrana, which is characterized by fine environmental features.

The 19th century brickwork canal running along the metal footbridge belonged to a larger canal used in the past to provide with water the grindstone of the Mill situated next to the Sepulcher of Annia Regilla.

4) Church of S. Urbano or Temple of Ceres and Faustina (vicolo di Sant'Urbano)

In the 9th century AD, the ancient temple which dominates the entire valley was turned into a church dedicated to S. Urbano, a bishop martyred during the 2nd century AD at the time of Marcus Aurelius.

The current appearance of the building is the result of radical restoration carried out in 1634 under Pope Urban VIII, who, to enhance the stability of the church, had a brick wall built between the columns of the front portico.

The original plan of the building, which at the moment cannot be made out as its base is buried, was that of a small temple built over a high podium entirely made of bricks. The four front columns supporting the architrave are in Penteli marble, coming from the quarries which Herodes Atticus possessed on Mount Penteli, near Athens.



5) The Roman reservoir

As you can see in the background by turning right, with the rests of the Basin behind you, we are in the periphery of the relief belonging to Colli Albani volcanic complex.

Here you can have a good overall view of Caffarella Valley furrowed with the river Almone. It represents one of the few places where it is still possible to observe the most ancient rocks produced by the activity of the volcano of Colli Albani, in particular red pozzolana and tuff of Villa di Senni.



The Basin, probably built around the 1st century AD, was in origin an underground basin collecting rain for the irrigation of agricultural fields. Afterwards, during the building of the Circus of Maxentius, it was opened because of the withdrawal of materials for the building of the track.

6) The Sacred Wood

The older holm oaks are all that remains of an ancient holm oak wood that during the Renaissance was mistakenly taken for the "Sacred Wood of Egeria".

According to ancient Roman tradition, king Numa Pompilius met nymph Egeria here. She inspired him to design the sacred laws of Rome. In fact, the sacred wood was later found to have stood where the Camenae lake and wood were, within the boundary of the Aurelian Wall, in the area of the current Passeggiata Archeologica (archaeological trail).



It is here that today the inhabitants of the area plant a tree whenever a child is born, in memory of Lorenzo Cuneo, a generous young man who loved the Caffarella Valley. Here in the Autumn of 2009 the students of Liceo Augusto (a local high school) planted young holm oaks possessing the same genome as the original wood (they are the smaller trees in the yard before the wooden fence).

7) Water Spring Egeria

Known since ancient times for its therapeutic virtues, the water of Spring Egeria, whose name is linked to an ancient legend, after a long period of oblivion became again popular in the 16th century thanks to the doctor of Pope Gregory VII and to Abbot Tommaso delle Valle, who talked enthusiastically about it in its Guidebook of Holy Water.

The first chemical analyses were carried out in the 18th century, and the spring was connected to the town through two carriage roads. During the first half of the 20th century the spring still was an ideal destination for Romans. Since 50 years the water management of Spring Egeria is entrusted to Società Acqua Santa of Rome. It is a medium-mineral water rich in mineral salts, among which calcium, magnesium, potassium, and fluorine. The factory is open every day from 8.30 to 16.30 (18.30 with daylight saving time). Here you can find a comfortable picnic area.

7 bis) Constantinian Columbarium (via dell' Amone – Water Spring Egeria)

The so-called Constantinian Columbarium is a 2nd century AD temple-like sepulcher. The two-story monument has a rectangular plan, with front portico made of yellow bricks for its structural parts and red bricks for the decorative aspects. Downstairs there was the funerary chamber. During the Middle Ages the building was transformed into a mill: a water channel regulated by a lock entered the building and moved a horizontal press. The mill was provided with water by an upstream spring whose waters have been diverted into the river Almone to preserve the static quality of the building.



8) The Valca tower

The Valca tower was built probably between the 12th and the 13th century, when the Caetani family had taken hold of the Tomb of Cecilia Metella and the surrounding land, and was fortifying the entire area.

The tower's position in this area of the valley is also related to the fact that one of the roads connecting the Appian Way and the Via Latina probably crossed the river here: indeed, on the riverbank near the tower there are the remains of a bridge, probably predating the tower itself.



The construction, which over the centuries was restored several times, maintained a square plan with several storeys divided by wooden floors. Walls are lined with Peperino blocks, alternating in some areas with yellow tuff blocks.

Outside the building a large pipe capable of carrying an amount of water comparable with that of an aqueduct was found. It was probably linked to a canal whose remains were found to the south of the tower. Supposedly, the tower was part of a complex canal system that continued to be used until the Renaissance.

The presence of two small tubs, the discovery of a canal linked to the tubs and of heaps of waste suggest that the area hosted a workshop of some kind. According to ancient sources, around the year 1000 the Valley of the Caffarella hosted many valche. Valche, a word deriving from gualchiera, were buildings with tubs used to wash and full woollen cloth.

9) The Almone river

The Almone river rises from the volcanic Alban Hills, its source being located at the foot of Monte Cavo. According to the Aeneid, the river was named after Almone, the Trojan hero son of Tyrrus, the keeper of the army's herd, who died in the war between the Trojans and the Latins which preceded Rome's foundation. Originally, the river flowed into the left bank of the Tiber near the Mercati Generali (Vegetable and fruit market). Currently, after flowing past the Park Authority seat, the former Latina Paper mill (ex Cartiera Latina),

The entire catchment basin has a surface of 54 Km, its elevation ranging between 400 and 18 metres above sea level. The length of the basin is 22 Km, and its maximum width is 4 Km. The sections of the river whose banks and bed still possess nearly natural qualities are essentially three, corresponding to the following locations: Villa dei Quintili, the Acqua Santa Golf Course and the Caffarella Valley.



10) The Casale della Vaccareccia

The Casale della Vaccareccia was built during the 16th century by the Caffarelli, after they drained the Almone Valley and reunited the entire area under a single farm. The building is in fact included in the 1547 map of Latium by Eufrosino della Volpaia, under the name of "Vigna de Cafferelli".

The structure which rises from the shed roof is a pre-existing tower dating back to the 13th century. The tower, made of tuff blocks and marble fragments, is one of the five watchtowers that were built



in the valley's strategic spots during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

The main farmstead building, which cannot be seen from the outside, features an arched portico with granite columns surmounted by marble Corinthian capitals, which supports the rooms on the main floor. Over the years other structures were built on the sides of the main building, to be used for farming purposes. At the end of the 17th century, the estate became the property of the Pallavicini, who sold it to the Torlonia in 1816.

11) The Casale Vigna Cardinali (via Latina - Largo Tacchi Venturi)

The Casale Vigna Cardinali is an example of traditional rural architecture of the Roman Campagna and is listed among the "monumental historical heritage of the Middle and Modern Age" in the Environmental Management Plan 15/12.

In the Gregorian Cadastre (1816-1835) the building is listed as "House with courtyard for the use of the vineyard".

Around 1870, it became a property of Prince Alessandro Torlonia, son of Duke don Giovanni Torlonia who bought the Caffarella Estate from the Pallavicini family in 1816.

Since the beginning of the 20th century the building is known as Casale Vigna Cardinali and appears with this name in the map of the Military Geographic Institute of 1925. A detailed description of the building can be read in the Caffarella estate Survey of 1905 that is present in the Torlonia Administration Archive:

In the 1930s, the farmhouse was renovated by the Torlonia family, in accordance with the law for the reclamation of the Agro Romano, which dictated specific hygiene rules for the buildings. The arch openings discovered during recent restoration works belong to this phase, but they were later closed with rectangular windows. In 1939 the property was transferred to don Carlo Torlonia, son of Anna Maria Torlonia and Giulio Borghese, and in 1950 to his nephew, the Marquis Alessandro Gerini and to the Marchioness Liliana Poli, Gerini's widow. In 1997 the Casale and part of the surrounding land were expropriated and are now part of the City property.



The restoration and consolidation works were managed by the Appia Antica Regional Park, in the framework of the 2007/2013 Regional Operating Program (POR).

From September 2015 it hosts the Casa del Parco. It is open on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday from 9.30 to 13 and from 14 to 17 (until sunset in summer). It is managed by Humus Onlus and offers services like: reception, guided tours, education for schools, workshops for children, horticulture, bike hire and bicycle repair.

Info: casadelparco@parcoappiaantica.it

12) The Nymphem Reservoir (via Latina)

Uncountable hydraulic structures, dating back to the Roman Republican still characterize the Caffarella Valley landscape today. They stand as a testimony of the early usage of the rich spring water heritage, exploited by the Romans, especially in the agricultural and residential fields.

The excess water was eliminated through complex agricultural land reclamation systems.

Open sky reservoirs for the gathering of rain

water, tanks for the stocking and redistribution of spring and aqueduct waters, and draining canals and tunnels were used. These structures can still be seen today. They were employed to avoid the constant formation of marshes on the valley floor, in order to obtain a good farming yields and, in medieval times, to gain an efficient driving force for artisan systems. The Nymphem Reservoir is among this extraordinary legacy. It is located close to the entrances along Via Latina and Largo Tacchi Venturi.

It is actually a water tank powered by an aqueduct or by a bigger water tank. The rectangular-shaped layout structure, covered by a layer of brickwork called Opus Latericium, measures 7.10 m by 9.15 m, and stands 3.50 meters tall. The original covering, once made of a barrel vault, has collapsed. The building technique allegedly dates back to the 3rd century AD.

The south-eastern part is characterized by four pillars protruding from the wall, connected by three arches.

Small breaches were made on both short sides to access the inner part of the reservoir. They were made in recent times, when the reservoir was used as a dwelling.

The restoration and highlighting efforts of this structure and the other hydraulic facilities were managed by the Appia Antica Regional Park under the terms of the "POR 2007/2013 Programme for Water Culture", in collaboration with the Italian "Sovrintendenza ai Beni Culturali di Roma Capitale", (the Rome Authority for Cultural Heritage) owner of the heritage, and the "Sovrintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma", in charge of the heritage protection.



13) The Barn Reservoir

The so called Barn Reservoir is a perfect example of the leading characteristics of the Caffarella Valley's history. It is a water rich agricultural estate, present in both the set of hydraulic structures and among the agricultural buildings.

It has a rectangular layout measuring 14 m by 5.5 m, and was built with used bricks and modern materials.

It is set up on the tank of a Roman hydraulic structure, made with opus caementicium with basaltic lava chips.

It belongs to a date between the Republican Rome and



the first Imperial Age.

In the Gregorian Cadastre (1816-1835) the building is defined as “ruined house”, in the area of the Caffarella Estate. It was owned by the Duke Giovanni Torlonia.

Between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the building was converted into a barn by the Torlonia family, during the restoration works on the Riserva Tarani, which the structure was part of. Notably, the upper floor was built becoming a storage room for dry fodder.

In the 1905 survey of the Caffarella Estate, stored in the Torlonia Archives at the Central State Archive, the description of the construction as it was at the beginning of the 20th century can be found, known as “Cascina Tarani”. “It covers an area of 74.50 meters. It is divided into two floors, one room per floor. The ground floor is used as a storage room and it has a terrain floor and a vaulted ceiling. The upper floor has been built only recently, it is used for the storage of dry fodder. It is covered by a Marseilles double slope roof shows good robustness and upkeep. It has a storage capacity of approximately 100 quintals of hay.”

After the 2011 collapse under the terms of the “POR 2007/2013 Programme for Water Culture”, the Appia Antica Regional Park stabilized the remaining North wall and partially reconstructed the East and West short sides, so as to provide greater understanding of the building and its construction history. The restoration works were carried out in cooperation with the “Sovrintendenza ai Beni Culturali di Roma Capitale” (the Rome Authority for Cultural Heritage), owner of the property and the Rome Sovrintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici, in charge of the heritage protection.

14) The Marrana and the wet area (via Macedonia)

The Caffarella Valley is crossed by a network of smaller and larger ditches and irrigation canals (marrane). The main body of water is the Almone river, on whose left and right two marrane flow. The Almone river rises at the foot of the Alban Hills, while the two marrane rise near Via dell’Almone and are fed by two small springs originating at the foot of the valley’s hills.

The wet area, where the hut for birdwatching is, has been created by diverting the waters of the right-hand irrigation canal (marrana), which frequently



overflowed damaging the nearby farmland. After feeding the pond, the water flows downstream into the old bed of the marrana. Water quality in this area is very good, an element also testified to by the presence of breams and sticklebacks, fish living in pristine environments.

The cabin is opened every day and is the suitable place to approach the bird’s study and observation. Easily accessible, it is provided with informative panels about the present species, which allows also the “beginners” to recognize them. The pond hosts many aquatic animals: mallards, grey herons, coots (all easily identifiable), but also birds like the common kingfisher (which seems to esteem a lot our area as “hunting” area) or the more elusive little bittern that we hope will keep nesting here.

15) Monumental Reservoir (via Centuripe or via Bitinia)

On a hill overlooking the Caffarella valley, at the end of the path that follows Bitinia street, there is a Roman villa.

Much pottery and building material has resurfaced in this area, suggesting a probable presence of ancient structures underground.

Near the Villa there is a huge reservoir, with eight protruding columns on the valley side,

that is also a support for the natural scarp. Realized digging into the tuff rock face, the reservoir lays on a steep sloped terrain, from North towards South. The building is approximately 8 metres high and its surface around 37x12 metres has a rectangular layout. It has two longitudinal naves with barrel vault ceiling, adjoin trough five arch opening in the partitioning wall, and two perpendicular aisles.

Only the north nave and the orthogonal west space have the barrel vault entirely preserved.

Built in opus caementicium with basaltic lava chips, the building is dated back to the first Roman Imperial Age.

It is a reservoir with parallel adjoining chambers that collect the water coming from the aqueduct. The volume of water it could contain was nearly 1500 m³.

The ancient structures on which the Cartoni Vineyard farmhouse rests are probably part of the same complex. (C.A.R. 24.360)

During the centuries, the building piqued the interest of artists and scholars: in XVI it was drawn by Pirro Ligorio. It also appears in the Pietro Rosa's plan of the first segment of the Appian way of (1853-54), who defined it "Ancient villa" and in Rodolfo Lanciani's sketch relative to the Pisani Vineyard.

Even the archaeologist Thomas Ashby described the structure in 1907 during his research of the Ancient Latin way topography.



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