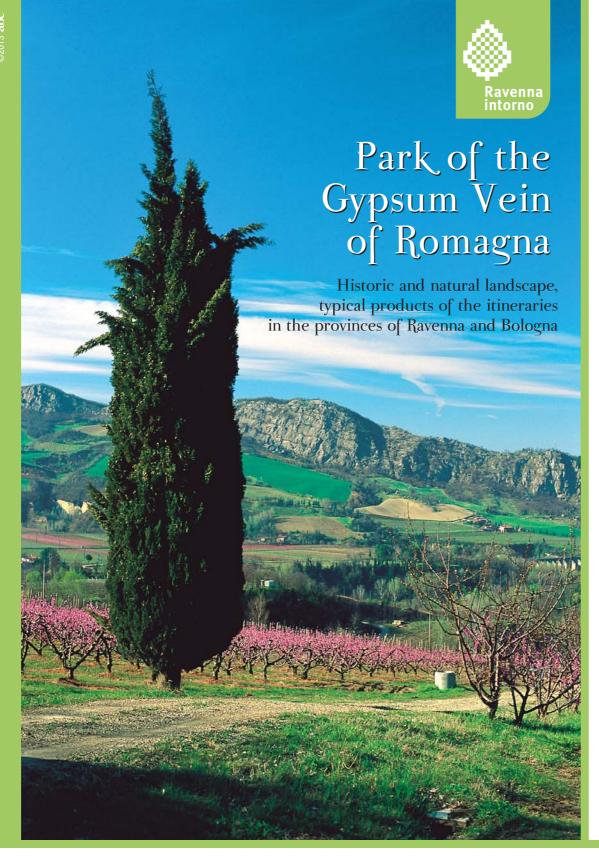


and Parks Service of the Province of Ravenna In collaboration with: Ente di Gestione per i Parchi e la Biodiversità - Romagna, Comunità Montana dell'Appennino Faentino, Comuni di Brisighella, Casola Valsenio, Riolo Terme, Società d'Area Terre di Faenza, CAI Club Alpino Italiano Sezioni di Faenza, Imola e Lugo Texts: Massimiliano Costa, Beppe Sangiorgi Photos: Archivio Provincia di Ravenna, Terre di Faenza, Marco Sami, Ivano Fabbri, Flavio Bianchedi Davide Pansecchi, Massimiliano Costa, Christian Asirelli Graphic design: ABC Srl, Ravenna Cartography: LS International, Milano Print: Tipografia Moderna, Ravenna, December 2013 Via della Lirica, 21 - 48124 Ravenna Tel. +39 0544.258424 - Fax +39 0544.258502 vennaintomo@mail.provincia.ra.it

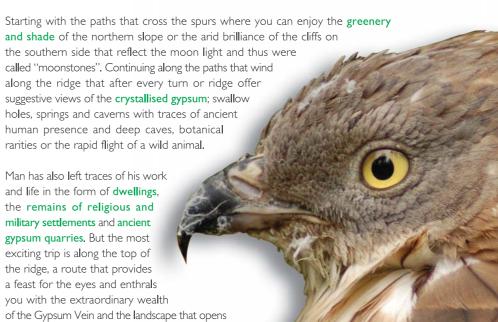




he valleys of the Santerno, Senio, Sintria and Lamone that cut through the Apennines in the western part of Romagna are intersected by the Gypsum Vein of Romagna about ten kilometres before they reach the plain.

The vein consists of a ridge of calcium sulphate, variously crystallised and is stratified in imposing walls that outcrop for a length of about twenty kilometres with a width that never exceeds one kilometre, passing through the territories of the municipalities of Casalfiumanese, Borgo Tossignano and Fontanelice in the province of Bologna and Casola Valsenio, Riolo Terme and Brisighella in the province of

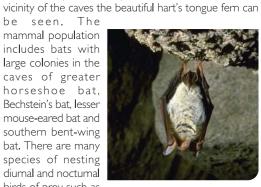
flora and fauna, producing a favourable influence on the microclimate of the four valleys and also leaving its mark in history and the life of man. It is a natural and historical asset that offers surprises and fascination for the excursionists who walk the paths of the park.



On one side the **bluish-green ridges** follow one after the other towards into the distance until they fade into the horizon, on the other side, beyond the arid low-lying network of calanchi (ridges) a brilliant white plain dotted with houses, villages and cities extends to the sea which, in the words of Tonino Guerra, appears as "a long

up towards the mountains and down to the plain.

The landscape is hot and arid on the southern slopes where sparse specially adapted plants grow such as the rare Cheilanthes Persica fern which, in Italy, grows only here. Where there is a little soil you can find brush of curry plant, wormwood, lavender or clumps of pubescent oak with Holm oak, terebinth and evergreen buckthorn. This gypsum-sulphurous feature has influenced the formation On the slopes facing the north the climate is cool and of the surrounding landscape due to its size and composition, damp, with woods of hop hornbeam and flowering ash, the extraordinary variety in its morphology and the typifying sometimes alternating with chestnut groves. The deep precipitous gorges are home to mountain species such as snow-drops and European bladdernut while in the be seen. The mammal population includes bats with large colonies in the caves of greater horseshoe bat Bechstein's bat, lesser



he outcrop of Miocene

gypsum that extends in a

series of spectacular cliffs,

and Monte Mauro, consists

contains extensive Karst-

formations with a vast

labyrinth of caves, dolinas, swallow holes and springs.

birds of prey such as the western honey buzzard, Montagu's harrier and great horned owl. An interesting feature is the presence of the blue rock thrush and montana swallow. The most interesting reptile species to be found is the southern smooth snake while the major amphibian species are Italian cave salamander and yellow-bellied toad. Fish species include the South European nase and Italian freshwater goby.



THE NATURAL

HERITAGE

he connection between man and the Gypsum Vein is ancient and has taken many forms. In prehistory the caves (Tanaccia and Re Tiberio) were used as shelter and in the deeper parts as a place of worship of the

water god whose roar could be heard in the depths. In the Middle Ages religious and military settlements rose on the Gypsum Vein at Brisighella, Rontana, Monte

Mauro, Sassatello, Rocchetta, Tossignano and Gesso. For their construction blocks of chalk were used, as for the farmhouses, for the villages of Crivellari, Borgo Rivola, Gesso and for the towns of Brisighella and Tossignano. More ancient and widespread was the use of calcined like the Riva di San Biagio gypsum as recorded by a chronicle of Brisighella dating from 1504: ''mountains of gypsum which, when heated of a soluble mineral and in a kiln, makes excellent material for building houses"; for more than five centuries the gessaroli (gypsum workers) laboured in the caves of Tossignano, Brisighella and Borgo Rivola. Generations of country-folk have lived in the area of the Gypsum Vein, making use of the woods and chestnut groves and cultivating the land above the gorges, creating a varied landscape pleasantly outlined by areas of brush land alternating with small pastures, vineyards, fruit groves and olive groves. The favourable microclimate, due to the Gypsum Vein, protects the land from northerly winds, something known well by the monks that started their cultivation ten centuries ago together with chestnut trees, as in the chestnut grove of Campiuno.



griculture provides exceptional agri-food products whose value is enhanced by specialised production, quality brands and fairs. Outstanding fruits, of the many produced, include the peaches and

nectarines of Romagna (PGI), the scallions of Romagna (PGI) the extravirgin olive oil of Brisighella (PDO), the chestnuts of Castel del Rio (PGI), the apricots of the Santerno Valley, the aromatic herbs and forgotten fruits of Casola Valsenio. In the entire area truffles can be found along with fresh and aged cheeses and the beef of the particular strain of Romagna (CQ), grazing lamb CQ and 'Mora Romagnola', the autoctonous black pigs which are suitable for making pork products. Both traditional dishes and those of the new cuisine of nagna are accompanied well by the wines in this part of Romagna, the main ones being Albana di Romagna (DOCG) and the DOC wines Sangiovese di Romagna, Trebbiano di Romagna, Cagnina and the recent Colli d'Imola and Colli di Faenza.



Itinerary A

CARNÈ REFUGE

UniCredit Banca

he itinerary starts at the Cà Carnè where there is a visitor centre, accommodation facilities and a restaurant. Before setting off the small but interesting nature museum, devoted to the fauna of the Gypsum Vein, is worth a visit. The excursion begins by going up trail CAI



505, leaving Mount Rontana behind on the left. You come to the crest at Ca' Angognano and continue along the 505 until the second track on the right which takes you around the peak of **Mount Spugi** (439 m) along the 511/b, until you arrive at the Vespignano Chapel,

turn right along the 511 following a path up through a wood to the crest of the gypsum outcrops of Castelnuovo overlooking the dolina of Ca' Piantè. You enter the wood again and continue uphill to the

ridge at 323 m altitude and then descend again to the track which takes you back to the parking area or the Cà Carné for a well deserved snack. The itinerary is **5 km** long and can be covered in about 3 hours. In the afternoon you enter the Gypsum Vein in the true sense of the word exploring the Tanaccia Cave, with a guided speleological tour which can be booked at the Carné Refuge or by telephoning 0546-80628. There are tours every Sunday from May to September at 10 am, 2.30 pm and 4.30 pm. On leaving the Carné you set off towards Brisighella and after about I km you come to the parking area where the path starts for the Speleological Hut, the meeting place for the excursion and the entrance to the cave which nature has decorated with the beautiful leaves of hart's tongue fern.

The descent into the cave is exciting, with illumination from the helmet lights and the guides of the Faenza Speleological Group. Here you can admire the caves excavated in the gypsum by the clear underground river marvel at the stalactites and large breast-shaped deposits. This easy-going speleological trip lasts about one hour. For the evening we suggest a visit to the medieval town of Brisighella for a walk along the evocative via degli Asini, an elevated road with illuminated arches that among vineyards and fruit groves; then you take the overlook the town below, and then a walk up an alley CAI 511. A track leads to the area of Castelnuovo, cut into the gypsum as far as the Clock-tower, a fortress returning to the gypsum outcrops whose more uneven built in 1548 on earlier foundations dating from 1290



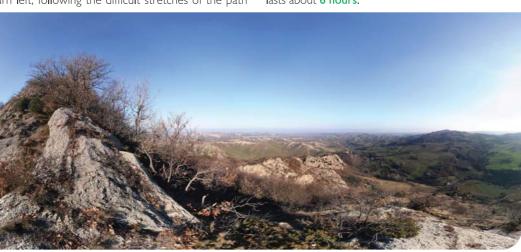


MONTE MAURO

he itinerary starts from the road that goes up to Mount Mauro (the highest peak of the Chalk Vein, 517 m) and crosses over to the right (in the direction of Zattaglia) of the valley bottom of the Sintria river. From the parking area before the last hill that leads to the parish church of Santa Maria in Tiberiaci, you continue along the CAI 511 trail, passing the church and along the spectacular crest of Mount Mauro about half way up its side. From here you can admire a breathtaking view over the plain of Romagna and all the way to the sea on the clearest days. Skirt the peak on the south side where you can see the best examples of the characteristic cliff vegetation and brush. The path then leads into the wood and goes down a steep wooded hill until it crosses a track where you turn left towards Ca' di Sasso, right under the sheer cliff of Mount Incisa, along the CAI 513 trail. After about 150 m you leave the track and follow a path on the left that overlooks a ridged valley. After passing another house after about 500 m you take the left fork to another track that takes you up to the next bend where you turn left on another path to Ca' Castellina. The path continues uphill and you keep right until you reach a point under the saddle of Ca' Faggia. Passing the house of the same name you go down to Ca' Sasso where a track on the left takes you to the picturesque village of Crivellari whose original houses of chalk and flint date from the 13th century. You go up a path right through the centre of the village between patches of vegetation and arid meadows where Basino. Continuing along the ridge which overlooks the you can admire the splendid flowering of orchids and cliff you come back to the point of departure. The on to the crest of the Gypsum Vein and return to the itinerary which enables you to discover all the important CAI 511 trail at the top of Mount Volpe (495 m). You aspects of the Gypsum Vein is about 11 km long and turn left, following the difficult stretches of the path lasts about 6 hours.



carefully, among patches of terebinth and evergreen buckthorn where you can watch the flight of the Kestrel and in the meadows the roebucks pasturing among the boulders of chalk that have rolled down. The view includes the two valleys of the Sintria and Senio, decorated like an artist's palette with vineyards, fruit groves and pastures separated by patches of vegetation and hedges. After about 800 m, under the cliff you can see the blind valley of the Stella river, a small river that disappears into the gypsum and then resurfaces after an underground passage almost one kilometre long having the name Rio



Itinerary (

RIVA DI SAN BIAGIO

he itinerary starts from the town square of Tossignano, an old village built on gypsum, in a position overlooking the Santerno river valley. Follow the CAI 705 trail as far as the church of San Mamante and the ruins of the medieval fortress. Skirt the hill on which the village stands along a path that takes you down to the gorge of Tramosasso which can be crossed where the **Sgarba river** disappears under the chalk. Then you pass under the imposing cliffs of the Riva San Biagio walking through meadows, patches of juniper and broom and large boulders of gypsum that have rolled down. After the ruins of Ca' Nova you ascend to the top of the cliff to the **Prè pass** (384 m). From here you follow a long stretch the crest of the ridge taking due care if it rains. The path is bordered by patches of bushy Holm oak and evergreen buckthorn. There are frequent traces of diggings left by hedgehogs and prickles left behind. You continue up to Mount Casino (474 m) and then descend to the Ca' Budrio saddle. Go past the house on the southern side along the side of a dolina where there is a meadow, an excellent site for seeing various species of orchids. Go round the dolina, crossing the meadow lower down and then follow the CAI 705 trail



which leads you through some gypsum boulders and back up the cliff. Continue to the left of a beautiful chestnut grove and on the right you will see the typical gypsum soil brush. You come in sight of the church of Sasso Letroso where you follow a track that returns westward flanking some fruit groves and the lower part of the chestnut grove. Pass by Ca' Oliveto, then Ca' Siepe where the panorama opens up to the north over the natural amphitheatres created by the calanchi (ridges)

of the Gambellaro river. At the fork take the road on the left which goes back up to Ca' Budrio. Here you take the lower track through woods alternating with chestnut groves as far as the remains of the Banzole Villa, then descend to a dew pond where you take the municipal road to the ruins of the Casone Nuovo and then go down through the narrow gorge of the Tramosasso. Proceed alongside the **Sgarba river** towards Santerno and before coming to the river you go up on the left through the apricot groves to the cemetery of Borgo Tossignano. From here there is a series of paths that cut across the loops of the asphalt road taking you to Tossignano. The route is about 11 km long and lasts about 5 hours.

On returning to Tossignano it is worthwhile stopping at the Palazzo Baronale visitor centre devoted to the ecosystem of the Chalk Vein and the torrential rivers of the Apennines that cut through it.

Itinerary **D**

MONTE PENZOLA

L he itinerary, of considerable geological interest, starts just before the bridge on the Montanara provincial road over the Santerno river near the enormous block of gypsum, known as the Sasdello, which fell right into the middle of the water course. The track goes up following the CAI 703 marking north of the vein as far as the top of Mount Penzola (409 m) which can be reached following a rather steep ascent among apricot groves and meadows. From the top of the mountain you can enjoy a view of the Santerno river valley and looking downward among the blocks of gypsum that have rolled down and patches of brush it is possible to catch a glimpse of deer and wild boar. After passing through Ca' Budriolo you ascend on the right through the patches of broom to the clayish crests from which the walk along the calanchi (ridges) of the Mescola river valley begins. After crossing a ploughed field the narrow trail rises over clay to Mount Acqua Salata which owes its name to the existence of a spring of bromo-iodic river and after a short stretch of the Montanara road water, typical of clayey regions. The trail descends along you return to the point of departure. There is another the crest to the ruins of the Carré where it becomes a muddy track until after the former quarry area of Mount Verro. On passing the quarry you take a path to the right which rises and bears right again to the source of the Mescola river and the top of Mount Maggiore, a clayey peak rising 455 m. Then you follow the trail down to Colline while the path on the crest of wide river flood plain you follow the path that separates the calanchi gradually becomes narrower and increasingly it from the Santerno and brings you to via Rineggio. interesting until you come to the so-called Croara here is the center of the River House, equipped with Bridge which leads to the church of Croara where you tables for picnics, from there back to the starting point,



itinerary that starts from this point that provides an opportunity to discover the hilly stretch of the Santemo river. You go uphill along the right bank of the river through small woods of poplar and willow and over large gravel deposits. Schools of chub and south European nase dart about in the lazy current. On coming to a join the road. A little further on you come to a path on where one can go further, towards the valley, until Bailey the right which takes you back to the crests of the bridge. Complete the route length is about 17 km and calanchi. First you come to the enormous Sabbioni pine, the distance is about 6.30 hours.



