



Green
is Bologna

Explore

Via Mater Dei








Via Mater Dei (Path of the Mother of God) is the path dedicated to the Marian sanctuaries of the Bologna Apennines: a trail of around 157 km comprising 7 stages along hilltop ridges. Take a leisurely stroll from the city centre, with its medieval walls and monuments, to reconnect with nature, the earth and its elements: wind, sun and rain, the unpredictable yet unavoidable ingredients of a true hike. Step after step, on arrival at the last sanctuary and on entering the city once again, everything will look different through your fresh, renewed gaze.



How to find us

Bologna is easy to reach using the main means of transport.

Bologna

-  Bologna G. Marconi Airport
-  Bologna Central Station
-  Motorways (A1-A13-A14)

Via Mater Dei

Trekking

1st Stage

Length: **20,4 km** Elevation gain: **+734 -705** Duration: **7 hrs**

2nd Stage

Length: **20,4 km** Elevation gain: **+772 -675** Duration: **7,5 hrs**

3rd Stage

Length: **22,6 km** Elevation gain: **+1355 -849** Duration: **8,5 hrs**

4th Stage

Length: **25,4 km** Elevation gain: **+1116 -1091** Duration: **9 hrs**

5th Stage A

Madonna dei Fornelli-Bruscoli

Length: **13,9 km** Elevation gain: **+524 -554** Duration: **4,5 hrs**

Bruscoli-Baragazza

Length: **10,3 km** Elevation gain: **+442 -526** Duration: **4,5 hrs**

5th Stage B

Length: **24,2 km** Elevation gain: **+966 -1080** Duration: **9 hrs**

6th Stage

Length: **25,2 km** Elevation gain: **+988 -1124** Duration: **9 hrs**

7th Stage

Length: **18,7 km** Elevation gain: **+802 -1117** Duration: **7,5 hrs**

Bologna

Rastignano

Zena Pianoro

Loiano

Madonna dei Fornelli

Bruscoli

Baragazza

Ripoli

Riola

Total km: 156,9

Stages: 7

Municipalities: 11

Regions: 2



Santa Maria della Vita

Via Clavature 10, Bologna

In the heart of Bologna, enter the narrow Via Clavature to reach the Sanctuary of Santa Maria della Vita. The origins of this important place of worship date back to 1200 when a company by the same name was founded to take care of the sick, prisoners, the condemned and pilgrims. It houses a notable collection of holy works, including the “Compianto sul Cristo Morto” (Lamentation over the Dead Christ). This will be the first wonderfully charming sanctuary on a journey through religion, art and popular culture.



Beata Vergine di San Luca

Via San Luca 36, Bologna

A pilgrimage destination for worshipping the image of the Virgin with Child (known as “San Luca”), this Sanctuary stands on Monte della Guardia. It was founded in 1194 but often modified in the following centuries.

Completed in 1721, the famous Portico di San Luca connects the Sanctuary to Porta Saragozza. With its 666 arches, it is the world’s longest portico (3.79 km).



Santa Maria di Zena

Monte delle Formiche (Pianoro)

This peculiar name, “Madonna del Monte delle Formiche” (Our Lady of Mount of Ants) stems from an ancient and yet baffling phenomenon, occurring in the first ten days of September: the migration of thousands of flying ants to the peak of Monte delle Formiche. Here, in the middle of the Valleys of the Rivers Idice and Zena, history, sanctity and legend intertwine, making this place a spiritual landmark since ancient times.



Madonna dei Boschi

Madonna dei Boschi

A spiritual gem emerges from the thick vegetation on the ridge between Loiano and Monghidoro. The present-day religious building stands on the ruins of an ancient church built in 1616, named Beata Vergine del Nuvoletto or Bocca di Nugoletto. It all stemmed from an image of the Virgin Mary mounted on a baluster, resembling the Virgin Mary by St. Luke.



Madonna di Lourdes

Campeggio

The dedication to Our Lady of Lourdes came about thanks to a side chapel to the right of the church, dedicated to Saint Prosper. The chapel houses a true-to-life replica of the Massabielle grotto in Lourdes, France. The many testimonies of grace received in this place have made Campeggio so popular that it has earned itself the name of "Little Lourdes of Bologna".



Madonna di Pompei

Piamaggio

The Sanctuary stands in the centre of the village of Piamaggio. The church was completed in 1893, at the request of Monsignor Giuseppe Fanti and thanks to the hard work of the locals, as an extension to a pre-existing oratory. It was then embellished with an image of Our Lady of Pompei, which was carried in procession on 27th July 1894 and consecrated by the parish priest among a crowd of joyous worshippers.



Madonna della Neve

Madonna dei Fornelli

The present-day religious building became a Sanctuary in 1960, although a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of the Snow existed much earlier than that. The name of this sacred place originates from the snowfall of about 5 August 1610. This singular event, similar to the one that had taken place centuries earlier at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, resulted in a growing devotion to the Virgin Mary, making it a point of reference for all neighbouring communities.



Madonna di Ripoli or della Serra

Ripoli

Sitting on the promontory overlooking the Setta Valley, the sanctuary is one of the oldest places of worship of the local Apennines. Its history began in around the year 1000, when the Virgin Mary appeared before two young shepherds, asking them to build a church on the site of the miracle. Inside the building, among various significant icons, we find a painting of Our Lady of the Rosary, the very canvas carried in procession in 1855 to contrast the tragic cholera epidemic that had spread throughout the Bologna area.



Beata Vergine delle Grazie di Boccadirio

Boccadirio

Boccadirio (719 m altitude) is an enchanting haven of peace and unspoiled nature. It is Bologna's second most important sanctuary, after the Sanctuary of Madonna di San Luca. The first official documents date back to the early 17th century and recount the miracle which took place here on 6th July 1480 when two young shepherds, received a visitation from the Virgin Mary. The population then laboured to build a church with a tabernacle. Twenty years later, the faithful placed the Holy image there, as a gift from the prophetess.



Beata Vergine della Consolazione

Montovolo

Located within the “Montovolo and Monte Vigese Park”, at an altitude of 912 metres, the Sanctuary stands on a plateau connecting the two mountains. In Etruscan times, it was the site of a temple dedicated to the Goddess Pales. Around the year 1000, the plateau took the name Mount Ovolo, owing to its egg-like shape, and the first Christian church was built. The current Romanesque building, on the other hand, dates back to 1211, as inscribed in the lunette surmounting the entrance.

Why Mater Dei?

Via Mater Dei (Path of the Mother of God) is the path dedicated to the main Marian sanctuaries of the Bologna Apennines.

It is a trail of around 157 km comprising 7 stages along hilltop ridges and connecting the city of Bologna to 7 municipalities in the Bologna Apennines. Pianoro, Loiano, Monghidoro, San Benedetto Val di Sambro, Castiglione dei Pepoli, Camugnano, Grizzana Morandi and the municipality of Firenzuola in Tuscany. This journey through faith and legends, history and folk tales, is your chance to discover the deep-rooted bond linking Bologna to its mountains and to their communities with their authentic and welcoming spirit.

How many days will it take to complete the walk?

The trail is 157 km long and can be walked in 7 days. You can easily decide for yourself how to plan your route. Along the way, you will find private accommodation as well as parish complexes offering board and lodging. Get in touch with eXtraBo for any information you may require. They will help you organise your trip.

Where does the walk start and finish?

The official walk starts in Bologna and ends with the visit to the Sanctuary of Madonna del Rosario di Ripoli, not far from the San Benedetto Val di Sambro railway station on the super-direct Bologna–Florence line. This means you will find a daily link between the two cities.

How will I recognise the route?

The route runs mainly along CAI (Italian Alpine Club) paths, marked with red and white posts and special signs featuring the Via Mater Dei logo.

The walk makes its way along hilltop ridges. Even so, do not underestimate the overall differences in level and the distances, which require experience, navigation skills and training: should these prerequisites lack, we recommend getting in touch with an expert guide. At the moment, not all the sanctuaries are organised to allow visits every day of the week. However, we are working to open them up for a few hours a day, every day.

When are the sanctuaries open?

At the moment, not all sanctuaries are open to visitors every day of the week, but we are working to make them accessible a few hours a day, every day. For information on opening hours you can contact info@foiatonda.it or turn to the outdoor information desk eXtraBO, where you can also find advice and information on your walk and buy the guidebook.

viamaterdei.it



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