



Green  
**is Bologna**

Discover

# 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 140 km comprising 6 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 but unavoidable ingredients of a true hike. Step after step, on arrival at the last sanctuary and on entering the city once again, everything will have a new look, because you will have a new outlook.



### 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-A14)

# Via Mater Dei

## ⊗ Trekking

### 1st Stage

Length: **18.4 km** Difference in level: **Elevation gain of 555**

Duration: **4.5 hours**

### 2nd Stage

Length: **32.1 km** Difference in level: **Elevation gain of 1540**

Duration: **9 hours**

### 3rd Stage:

Length: **25.4 km** Difference in level: **Elevation gain of 1360**

Duration: **8 hours**

### 4th Stage:

Length: **22.5 km** Difference in level: **Elevation gain of 985**

Duration: **7 hours**

### 5th Stage:

Length: **23.5 km** Difference in level: **Elevation gain of 1381**

Duration: **8 hours**

### 6th Stage:

Length: **18.5 km** Difference in level: **Elevation gain of 452**

Duration: **6 hours**

## Bologna

18.4 km

Rastignano

32.1 km

Barbarolo

25.4 km

Madonna dei Fornelli

22.5 km

Boccardiro

23.5 km

Montovolo

18.5 km

Ripoli

Total km: 140

Stages: 6

Municipalities: 8

Regions: 2



## Santa Maria della Vita

Via Clavature 10, Bologna

In the heart of Bologna, just a stone's throw from San Petronio Cathedral, enter the narrow Via Clavature to reach the Sanctuary of Santa Maria della Vita (Virgin Mary of Life). 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) (dating back to around 1463). 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 representation of the Virgin Mary with Child (known as "by St. Luke"), this Sanctuary stands on Monte della Guardia. The foundations were laid way back in 1194. It was renovated over the centuries that followed and the new Sanctuary was only inaugurated on 25th March 1765, by the Cardinal Archbishop Vincenzo Malvezzi. Completed in 1721, the famous San Luca Portico 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" ("Virgin Mary of Mount of Ants") stems from an ancient phenomenon that is still baffling people to this day, occurring in the first ten days of September: the migration of thousands of flying ants ("Myrmica scabrinodis") to the peak of Monte delle Formiche, located between the Valleys of the Rivers Idice and Zena. Here, on this crag between the two rivers that give their names to the surrounding valleys, 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 Nuvoleto 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. The most important celebration takes place in May for the Feast of the Ascension day.



## Madonna di Lourdes

### Campeggio

This site has extremely ancient origins, although we do not have any definite information about it before 1223. 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. A passageway behind the rock allows you to stand close to the statue of the Virgin Mary. 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 parish church and Sanctuary in 1960. But a chapel uniquely dedicated to Our Lady of the Snow existed much earlier than that. This holy place is named after an extraordinary event: a snowfall that happened on 5th August 1610, roughly. The event, just like the one that had happened centuries earlier at the Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica in Rome, increased devotion to the Virgin Mary, so much so that the site became a landmark for all neighbouring communities. The image of the Virgin Mary with child, the very one consecrated in the 17th century, is now positioned in the apse and dominates the main altar.



## 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. In 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 present-day building, on the other hand, dates back to 1211, as inscribed in the lunette surmounting the entrance. Its Romanesque style makes it unique.



## Beata Vergine delle Grazie di Boccadirio

### Boccadirio

At an altitude of 719 metres, Boccadirio is an enchanting haven of peace and quiet 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 on 6th July 1480 when two young shepherds, Donato and Cornelia, received a visitation from the Virgin Mary.

The Virgin Mary prophesied that they would devote their lives to religion. And so the people laboured to build a church with a tabernacle.

Twenty years later, the faithful placed the Holy image there, a gift from the prophetess Sister Brigida, the name adopted by Cornelia once she had taken her vows.



## Madonna di Ripoli or della Serra

### Ripoli

Sitting on the promontory that overlooks the Setta Valley, the sanctuary is one of the oldest places of worship in the Bologna 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 we find two historically significant icons of great symbolic value: a polychrome terracotta statue of the Virgin Mary with Child from 1603 and a painting of Our Lady of the Rosary, the very canvas carried in procession in 1855 to combat the tragic cholera epidemic that had spread throughout the Bologna area.

## 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 140 km comprising 6 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 me to complete the walk?

Via Mater Dei connects Bologna to the most important Marian sanctuaries of the Bologna Apennines. The trail is 140 km long and can be walked in 6 days. You can easily decide for yourself how to plan your walk. Along the way, you will find private accommodation as well as parish complexes where you can ask to stay. 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, which is 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: if you do not have these, 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.

[viamaterdei.it](http://viamaterdei.it)

## eXtraBo

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## What are the opening times of the sanctuaries?

### Santa Maria della Vita

Via Clavature 10, Bologna  
Every day except Mondays: 10 am – 12 pm / 3 pm – 7 pm

### Sanctuary of Beata Vergine di San Luca

Via San Luca 36, Bologna  
November to February: 7 am – 12.30 pm / 2.30 pm – 6 pm  
March to October: 7 am – 12.30 pm / 2.30 pm – 7 pm

### Sanctuary of Santa Maria di Zena

(or of Monte delle Formiche)  
Via Monte delle Formiche, Pianoro  
Sat and Sun for the liturgical celebrations.

### Sanctuary of Madonna dei Boschi

Via Madonna dei Boschi 12, Monghidoro  
Every day: 9 am – 12.30 pm / 4 pm – 8 pm

### Sanctuary of Madonna di Lourdes

Via Boschetto 2, Campeggio (Monghidoro)  
May to June: Sat 3 pm – 6 pm; Sun 9 am – 12 pm  
July to September: every day 9 am – 12 pm / 3 pm – 6 pm  
October to April: closed

### Sanctuary of Madonna di Pompei

Via Provinciale, Piamaggio (Monghidoro)  
Every day: 8 am – 8 pm

### Sanctuary of Madonna della Neve

Piazza Madonna della Neve 10, Madonna dei Fornelli  
Every day: 9 am – 6 pm

### Sanctuary of Beata Vergine delle Grazie di Boccadiorio

Via Bocca di Rio 22, Boccadiorio  
Every day: 7.30 am – 12.30 pm / 2.30 pm – 7.30 pm

### Sanctuary of Beata Vergine della Consolazione

Montovolo (Grizzana Morandi)  
May to September: Fri, Sat, Sun 10 am – 6 pm

### Sanctuary of Madonna di Ripoli or della Serra

Via La Costa 4, Ripoli (San Benedetto Val di Sambro)  
Every day: 8 am – 8 pm

