



C16th Map of Barga

## Around the Castello di Barga

The town of **Barga** was built on a prominent outcrop of rock above the Serchio valley more than 1000 years ago. There is evidence of a settlement in pre-Roman times and the romanesque Duomo appears to have been built on the site of an early pre-Christian religious centre. The town developed around natural springs which provide a good supply of clear water all year round, at a junction of the main roads through the mountains and down the **Garfagnana** valley. The city walls date from before 1200 AD and there are records of them being reconstructed in the 13<sup>th</sup> C.

This walk provides a 360° tour round the outside of the old walled city, known as **Barga Castello**. Parts of the path are uneven and need some care. Starting at the main gate, Porta Mancianella (also known as Porta Reale) walk northwards through Piazza della Vittoria where there is a war memorial. Here, cross the main Via Guglielmo Marconi at the pedestrian crossing and walk down to the belvedere (take care as there is no sidewalk) from which there is a good view out over the area of Barga known as Giardino. Don't go down Via G Marconi but take the slip road down the side of the belvedere, (actually the exit from the parking area) and follow the stone paved path which leads into the wooded park. This area was laid out in 2010 as the "Parco Storico di Barga Castello" with interesting story boards about the archaeology and history of Barga.

The pathway leads down below the Ponte Vecchio and the adjacent new bridge which was reconstructed after destruction in WW II. Below the two bridges is a small park known as Parco Kennedy which commemorates a visit by US President Kennedy's family in the 1950's. In the park there is a restaurant/pizzeria called Fontanamaggio whose name refers to a stream which

used to run through the park but has now been culverted over. Directly in front you will see the acquedotto, built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to increase the water supply within the city. Walk up via dell' acquedotto, under the acqueduct, with the city walls above you to the right, until you reach Porta Macchiaia, the mediaeval city gate which gave access eastward to the Appenines. Don't go up to the right, into the city but walk straight across, under the raised terrace and follow the broad grassy track known locally as Sotto la Ripa. To the right you will see impressive brick arches constructed in the 1930s to control the erosion and landslips of the hill on which the Duomo was built. The hill is of a soft conglomerate rock laid down at a time when this area was part of a vast lake.



The broad track soon deteriorates to a narrow path cut into the hillside. Wooden balustrades are now in disrepair so take care on this section. When you reach the point where the wooden balustrade leads steeply up to the right, follow that path which then skirts along the bottom of olive terraces.

The path enters a dense grove of bamboo and then after 100m or so, on your right, you will find a rough stairway leading up to

a gate which opens onto Via del Sasso. Go to the right and you will arrive in a small park with an imposing monument to Antonio Mordini, one of the supporters of Garibaldi in the Risorgimento which resulted in the Unification of Italy in the 1860s. The stepped amphitheatre below the statue leads down to the area known as **il Fosso**, once the defensive moat, subsequently a field for archery and ball games and now a car park. You are now back at **Porta Mancianella**, the main gate into the city.