



Gallicano and the Eremo di Calomini

Gallicano is a town similar in size to Barga, situated on the opposite bank of the Serchio beneath the mountains known as the Panie. The valley leading westward from Gallicano along the Turrite river provides some excellent walking including a short walk to the **Eremo di Calomini** and longer walks to Trasillico, Fornolovasco, the "Grotta del Vento" and Monte Forato. There is a good bus service from Barga to Gallicano.

Take the bus to **Gallicano** and get off in front of the pasticceria Il Goloso. From there walk southward towards the piazza and take Via Cavour, the narrow street running westward. Continue through the main piazza and under the pointed archway of the aqueduct. The road follows the river at this point and you continue past the theatre on the left, avoid the road tunnel and follow the road to the left which looks across to the remnants of a paperworks. About 60m further on there is a narrow track to the left in front of a row of houses; follow this track which is not well signposted, as it follows the line of the river. After about half a km you will see on the left hand side of the track a small shrine to the Madonna. At this point turn right across the bridge and follow the red and white markers.

After about a further 1km beside a small substation, you will meet a tarred road; go left up this road about 100m until the track again diverges to the right in front of a large stone building in the process of restoration. Keep to this track as it follows the river until again you reach a tarred road at a bridge. Here go right, across the bridge and then left along the main road which leads to Fornolovasco

After 200m you will see a signpost to the Eremo di Calomini, (also known as "l'Eremita"). Take the road to the right which winds uphill to the Eremo, which is an amazing church which has been built partly within the cliff. Supposedly once the home of a hermit it's origins date back

at least to Roman times, in the first century AD. The written records date from 1361 and refer to the Cella S.Maria ad Martyres and to the Madonna of the Pen (or Feather?) represented in a wood carving in willow, which survives to this day. Records and traditions relate that from the earliest times pilgrims came, often barefooted, from as far afield as Modena, Reggio Emilia, Massa, Pistoia and Pisa. The devotion to the sanctuary at times became so intense that an annual pilgrimage became an obligation passed from father to son. Many important personalities made the pilgrimages including Cardinals, Bishops, Princes and Dukes of Modena and Lucca. A community of Franciscan monks established a monastery here and the names of some of the monks can be seen carved into the rock. There is still a religious community here and the church is still in use and is often open to allow visitors to see both the amazing rococo interior and also the monastic accommodation. The walk to the Eremo will take about 1 hr 30 mins.

From the car park in front of Eremo the path continues (signposted Agriturismo and Trattoria) up to an excellent restaurant which used to be housed within the monastery but which was recently relocated to some reconstructed farm buildings which have a dramatic view across the valley and down to the trout farm beside the river below. One of the specialities of the restaurant is the trout from this farm. After lunch you can retrace the track back to **Gallicano** or can continue uphill through the forest to the village of **Calomini** perched on the hill above the cliffs, at 600m asl, providing a spectacular view across the valley of the Serchio and up towards the Panie to the west. From the town of Calomini a road leads off along the ridge to the west towards the town of Vergemoli which looks down over the Lago di Trombacco. From here there are a number of longer walks which would involve either return transport or overnight stay. We can provide advice on feasibility. From Vergemoli, the road winds steeply down to the Lago di Trombacco, in the valley of the Turrite and from there down to meet the road below the Eremo, from where you can retrace the track back to Gallicano