

Volterra Montecatini Val di Cecina Tour






View the interactive map:
<https://maps.valdicecinaoutdoor.it/>

Map data:
© OpenStreetMap Contributors

Made by
Webmapp.it

Volterra Montecatini Val di Cecina Tour



Type: Bicycle - Gravel, Bicycle - MTB |  780 m |  657 m |  41 km

Località di partenza e arrivo: -

We have described only the points of interest located outside the town area.

A large ring that connects Volterra, a city of art and culture with 3000 years of history, to Montecatini Val di Cecina, one of the most beautiful medieval villages in Tuscany and featuring the most famous and richest copper mine in 19th century Europe. Between them sprawls an extraordinary landscape where gentle hills contrast with wild and rugged gullies, crags and, as Montecatini draws closer, steep rocky reliefs that resemble mountain landscapes.

The itinerary begins at the edge of the chasm of the Balze di Volterra, with finely preserved remnants of the Etruscan city walls and at your back the massive Badia (a Camaldolese monastery of medieval origin), hanging between earth and sky over the abyss of the Balze that advance inexorably; from then you descend towards the Val d'Era. You will then take the panoramic dirt road called "Itinerario delle Balze e dei calanchi" from which you can take some detours to easily reach the environmental sculptures of the artist Mauro Staccioli, extraordinary expressions of "land art" that interpret the essence of the artist's "places of experience".

After about 600 metres on the flat SR 439 road, you can take another scenic dirt road again, the Vicinale di Cavallino from which you can move upwards and return to a proper, paved road.

The final climb towards Montecatini features hairpin bends, breathtaking bird's eye views and increasingly rocky and harsh terrain and makes you feel as if you were just moving towards a mountain village overlooked by the mighty bulk of the Belforti tower that, like a lighthouse, heralds the coming of the nearby ancient castle.



View the interactive map:
<https://maps.valdicecinaoutdoor.it/>

Map data:
© OpenStreetMap Contributors

Made by
Webmapp.it

The history of the medieval village of Montecatini Val di Cecina is linked to its copper mine, which gave its name to one of the largest industries of the 20th century, which later became known as Montedison; the material evidence and the tales told by the elderly tell the story of the economic and social splendour of the early years of the Kingdom of Italy linked to the flourishing mining activities.

A little more than 1 km from the town the Caporciano Mine with the Pozzo Alfredo shaft, the workshops, the laverie and the 19th-century mining village are part of an Industrial Archaeology Park with various visiting itineraries.

After passing the entrance to the mine access tunnel, you can take the road back downhill to Bacchettona, following the Ligia branch and there you can take the paved road SR 439 from which you can then take the Monte Volterrano provincial road, which has little traffic and a gradual climb that takes you back to Volterra, offering even more extraordinary views of the gentle countryside of the Volterran clay hills.

Points of interest

Valdicecina - OUTDOOR -

1. Start and end of the route - Volterra Montecatini V.C. tour

Start-End

P.zza dei Priori, Volterra [Read more about the Piazza dei Priori of Volterra...](#)

Valdicecina - OUTDOOR -

2. The Balze and the Etruscan walls of Guerruccia

Historical-cultural feature

The Balze, one of the most fascinating and disturbing places in the Volterrano area, is a gigantic chasm that deeply incises the NW side of the hill. The extensive landslide is the result of the erosive action of rainwater infiltrating through the permeable sandy deposit at the top of the Volterra hill and melting the impermeable clay below, thus causing the progressive collapse of the sandy and arenaceous layers on top of it. The erosive phenomenon, active for several centuries, has involved part of an Etruscan necropolis and the churches of S. Clemente and S. Giusto al Botro, devoured by the precipice in the 17th century.

From the car park near the Balze, it is possible to walk along the ancient Etruscan walls dating back to the 4th century B.C. and admire extraordinary views before reaching the remains of the Camaldolese Abbey, which has been suspended between the earth and the sky for about 10 centuries, challenging the inexorably advancing chasm of the Balze.

The great Etruscan circle of walls in "panchino" stone was more than 7 km long and enclosed an area of 102 hectares. [Read more...](#)



3. Fonte di Mandringa

Historical-cultural feature

The Mandringa spring is covered by a single stone arch probably dating back to the middle of the 13th century, when the town council ordered the men of the Pratomarzio district, under whose jurisdiction the spring was located, to work on covering the fountain.

In the past, the spring was called Grimaldinga, a place-name of Germanic origin, while it was also called the Pratomarzio spring, mistaking it for the Frana spring.

"Whomsoever rinses their bed sheets in the Docciola, should draw their water from the Mandringa" G. D'Annunzio from "Forse che sì forse che no".

Valdicecina - OUTDOOR -

4. The Camaldolese Abbey Historical-cultural feature

At the northern end of the town, the imposing mass of the Badia di San Giusto overlooks the Balze. The monastery was built at the behest of the bishop of Volterra Gunfredo in the year 1000; the building with all its properties was then entrusted to the care of the Benedictines, who were replaced by Camaldolese monks during the 13th century. In the early 17th century, the Balze landslide began, which in the following centuries came to threaten even the Abbey. Then in the early 19th century the monastery was temporarily suppressed by the French occupation government, but when the Camaldolese were able to return a few years later, in 1861, also due to the earthquake of 1846, they abandoned the building for fear of the Balze. Today, the monastery is a single structure divided into two distinct parts: the church, almost destroyed, of which only scant remains of the perimeter walls still preserve the Romanesque structure, and the residential building, with the cloister, the refectory and the monks' quarters, which have a more modern appearance due to the reconstruction ordered by Abbot Mario Maffei in the 16th century. The windows of the Abbey look out onto spectacular views of the village church, the Etruscan walls and the pinnacles of the Balze. Read more...

Valdicecina - OUTDOOR -

5. The Gullies of San Cipriano Historical-cultural feature

Gullies are mainly generated by the leaching effect of meteoric water on silty-clay soils which forms a series of contiguous dales separated by steep, sharp ridges. The gullies are easily identifiable as an area, generally with a horseshoe contour, consisting of a system of furrows or dales, with extremely steep and denuded sides, separated from each other by thin clay ridges with a very steep profile. They are almost always present only on the southern slopes. Read more...



6. Places of Experience: Corbano Historical-cultural feature

Sculpture by Mauro Staccioli near the small Church of S.Lucia in Corbano (11th century). The work is part of the extraordinary open-air exhibition "Volterra 1972-2009 - Luoghi d'Esperienza" (Volterra 1972-2009 - Places of Experience), together with others located around the Volterra hillock. The works are placed in the landscape as viewpoints, underlining the relationship between man, work and the environment.



7. Places of Experience: San Giacomo in Fognano Historical-cultural feature

Sculpture by Mauro Staccioli at the San Giacomo farm. The work is part of the extraordinary open-air exhibition "Volterra 1972-2009 - Luoghi d'Esperienza" (Volterra 1972-2009 - Places of Experience), together with others located around the Volterra hillock. The works are placed in the landscape as viewpoints, underlining the relationship between man, work and the environment.

Valdicecina - OUTDOOR -

8. The Caporciano Mine Historical-cultural feature



9. The village of Montecatini V.C. Historical-cultural feature

A village still with the authentic charm of a real castle.

Valdicecina - OUTDOOR -

10. Ligia Historical-cultural feature

Along the old road to Volterra, perhaps already present in Roman times, is the Fonte della Madonna spring, one of whose stones bears the date 1681, stretches of medieval paving, remnants of ancient chestnut groves and the remains of the stately Fattoria di Ligia building as well as old abandoned mills.



11. Places of Experience: Portal - Equanimity Historical-cultural feature

Sculpture by Mauro Staccioli on the road to the Lischeto farm. The work is part of the extraordinary open-air exhibition "Volterra 1972-2009 - Luoghi d'Esperienza" (Volterra 1972-2009 - Places of Experience), together with others located around the Volterra hillock. The works are placed in the landscape as viewpoints, underlining the relationship between man, work and the environment.

Sculpture by Emilie Cummings-Enneking. Landscape sculpture 'Equanimity'. Sculpted in bronze and nine metres high, it has become a monumental icon, perfectly blending with the natural landscape.