

FROM THE CITY WALLS TO THE RIVER PO km 23,220



Ferrara retains its historic walls almost complete, encircling the city in an embrace of red brick and tree-lined earthworks: one of the most impressive historic defensive systems in all Italy, showing all the most significant periods of military architecture.

Studied by no less an engineer than Michaelangelo, these walls demonstrate all the defensive techniques of the 15th and 16th centuries: historic gates, bastions, embrasures for guns and cannon. Time has transformed the walls into a meeting place, a place for sport and leisure, a place to relax and to admire inside the walls the panorama of the city with its palaces, churches and gardens, and on the outside the view over the countryside towards the Po.

From the walls you can get to the Po by following the cycle track to the east of the Urban Park, leading to Francolino, where it joins the **Destra Po cycleway**.



Start: Ferrara, Estense Castle

Arrival: Pontelagoscuro, Isola Bianca reserve

Length of Route: km 23,220

On Roadways: km 2,580 (11%)

On cycle track: km 17,500 (76%)

On unmetalled roads: km 3,140 (13%)

A The **Estense Castle**, that symbolic monument placed in the centre of the city, is a fortress of 1385 which was transformed over the succeeding centuries into a residence for the Dukes of Ferrara. Its imposing bulk, surrounded by a moat, is somehow softened by having marble balconies instead of battlements, and by its rooftop loggias and terraces. A tour of the castle is a tour round different atmospheres, from the gloomy prisons of Giulio d'Este and the doomed lovers Ugo and Parisina, to the sumptuous frescoed rooms of the first floor and the climb up to the Lion Tower.



B **Corso Ercole I d'Este** was the main axis of the Renaissance extension to the city planned by Duke Ercole I in 1492, and along it were erected palaces with a rich history, like the **Palazzo dei Diamanti**, which takes its name from the more than 8,000 pyramidal stones covering its two faces. At the end of Corso Ercole I d'Este, on the walls, is the **Porta degli Angeli**, the only remaining original gate of the defences, at one time the access to the **Barco**, the ducal hunting grounds on the site of which today is the 'Giorgio Bassani' Urban Park.

C This stretch of wall, green and shady, runs as far as the **Torrione del Barco**, a defensive construction of great interest, with after it the Capinere Gardens. From this point the wall turns to the southwest.

D **Porta Paula** was built in the 17th century and is followed by a stretch of wall which was originally one of the oldest parts, but was substantially changed in the late 16th century on the orders of Duke Alfonso II, and is characterised by powerful bastions in the shape of the Ace of Spades. Along this stretch of wall is **Porta di San Pietro** which leads back to the centre.

E The **Torrione S. Giovanni**, a structure typical of Renaissance military architecture, is the start of the late 15th century wall, showing its difference with modest semicircular bastions and long parapet walks. The most atmospheric view is to be had from the top of the earthwork, a wooded road from which you can view the Jewish Cemetery and the old Carthusian Monastery.

F In front of you stretches out the green area of the 'Giorgio Bassani' Urban Park, the former Este hunting reserve, laid out with paths, ponds and spaces for sport and leisure, an excellent site for events like the **Ferrara Balloons Festival**, held in September.



G The **Isola Bianca** reserve is one of the oldest islands on the Po, and is important for naturalists because of its numerous and diverse flora and fauna.

	Roadways	Cycle track	Unmetalled roads	
A	0,000			Ferrara. Start from the Castello Estense and continue along Corso Ercole I d'Este.
B	0,550			From Palazzo dei Diamanti continue along Corso Ercole I d'Este up to the Porta degli Angeli .
C	1,360			When you get to the Porta degli Angeli go up onto the walls and then turn left.
	2,790			Descend from the walls and use the cycle track to go over the crossroads to via IV Novembre.
	3,900			Leave the cycle track and continue along via G. Agnelli.
	4,100			Turn left into Corso Isonzo.
	4,230			Turn right into Rampari di San Paolo.
	4,370			After the bus station rejoin the cycle route on the right until Piazza Travaglio and Porta Paula .
D	5,040			As you pass Porta Paula turn right and then immediately left following the cycle track at the bottom of the walls.
	6,610			Cross via Alfonso d'Este and then rejoin the cycle route below the walls.
	7,900			Cross Punta della Giovecca using the pedestrian crossing and rejoin the route below the walls.
E	9,030			Cross Corso Porta Mare using the pedestrian crossing and go up onto the walls to the left of the Torrione di San Giovanni .
	10,620			At the Porta degli Angeli descend from the walls and proceed straight along via Orlando Furioso.
F	10,920			Turn right into via Azzo Novello and exit the city walls heading towards the Parco urbano Giorgio Bassani .
	11,040			Cross via Bacchelli and proceed to the right along the cycle route parallel to the canal.
	12,040			Turn left into via Gramicia following the signs for the cycle track until you reach the village of Francolino.
	18,770			In Francolino, where the cycle track ends, continue straight on heading towards the embankment of the River Po.
	19,220			Once you are on the embankment, turn left on the FE 20 Destra Po cycleway .
G	23,220			Arrival at Oasi Isola Bianca.