

20 - Anello del Molinaccio – 7 km – 240 difference in height

More than a real ring, this path has the shape of a pan.

We leave the cars in Riparbella, in the parking lot located at the beginning of the town, turning left downhill just before the church.

From here we continue moving away from the town.

After passing the purification plants, the dirt road begins to climb; we will leave out some crossroads, both at right and left, always remaining on the main path.

After a curve to the right, we skirt a rather important housing complex, which could be a renovation of the ancient Mantilli Mill.

As we have done in the previous paths of the Rotone Valley (route 9) and the ring of the lake and the Linaglia mills (route 14), here too we find ourselves in fact looking for the remains of the mills along the Le Botra stream.

The lowest, the Mulino del Frullino, is not part of today's route and is located in the already flat part of the river bed. Today it would not be recognizable as an ancient mill, because you only see a ruined building that seems to date back to the early 1950s, with the typical architecture of the Ente Maremma; However, I remember seeing it in operation as an electric mill in the second half of the 1970s.

The Mantilli Mill is located further upstream and on our current path, but it is no longer visible because it has been transformed into a home.

Always continuing slightly uphill, we now arrive behind the Monumental Cemetery of Riparbella, the work of the architect Luigi Bellincioni (1894); on the way out or back it is worth stopping for a short visit of historical and architectural interest.

Continuing behind the cemetery, we find ourselves in Maschereta: here ends the handle of our pan, which we will find on our return.

We then turn left and take a nice path that winds its way down through the woods. At a certain point we will find a crossroads: both roads lead to Mulinaccio, but the one on the right goes down less steeply.

Having arrived shortly after the point where the two paths rejoin, we should leave the path for a moment and continue among the trees on our right: it will thus be possible to overlook the amazing Mulinaccio gora.

Why amazing? First of all it is very large and then the wall is completely intact and bears the signs of maintenance that still took place in the last century. I thought this could be an indication that the mill had been in operation with the thrust of water at least until the postwar period, when electrification then made the use of this ingenious technology disappear.

Recently, however, I discovered that a friend of mine still saw it in operation in the second half of the 1960s.

Back on the path, we reach a house, which was built by renovating the mill building and which is now a holiday home for a Swiss family, so it is uninhabited in winter.

Unfortunately, the restructuring has wreaked havoc on all other parts of the mill and it is no longer possible to even locate the exit from hell. Turning around the building, however, we can admire the outer walls of the mill from below.

We continue our journey on a concrete ford that crosses the Le Botra stream; upstream of the ford there is still the old iron walkway.

The path starts to climb again in the woods, and then comes out, near an old annex, in a beautiful olive grove. We are inside a farm, this one inhabited all year round by another Swiss family, which we will try not to disturb by passing to the right of the house.

Continuing to climb, we soon reach another uninhabited house that we will go around on the right, and then find ourselves on a carriage road.

We are now at the foot of the Poggio di Nocola; if we turn to our left we can admire the valley in which our torrent flows and whose right side, among the vegetation that has now colonized the slope, still shows the steps of an old stone quarry.

We continue on the small road, until we cross another one that we will take to the right.

We are again descending slightly towards the stream bed which crosses again by means of a small bridge (Guado alla Troia Bassa).

On the left corner before taking the bridge, some remains of another building are visible.

A small foray into the woods behind the ruin revealed other remains that seem to be those of a millpond. Is it possible that there were four mills here? Or that of the Frullino (the lowest) was built only after the electrification and the abandonment of the other three mills? We will have to continue to investigate ...

We continue to walk over the bridge, on the small road which, in the meantime, becomes asphalted. A few tens of meters and then, keeping an eye on the woods on our left, we will be able to see the faint trace of a steep path that descends to the bank of the stream.

We are in a truly evocative corner, with clear water that flows to form tiny waterfalls among very white limestone rocks. It is worth stopping for a snack!

Back on the small road, we continue to follow it uphill between farms and wooded stretches, until we arrive again near the cemetery, having covered the entire perimeter of the pan and ... we return to the handle that we traveled on the way to our parking lot.