



"LE MORETTE" NATURE ITINERARY (walk)



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This trail is particularly suitable for birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts.

The trail starts at the Castelmartini Visitors' Centre that provides plenty of documentation on the wetlands: photographic exhibitions on the flora and fauna, local handiwork made from the marshland grasses and a well supplied library.

From here follow the road signs for the Nature Reserve. The route follows a panoramic road as far as the Morette Harbour, where it is best to leave your car before reaching the bridge. This harbour in the Marshes is one of the few cases of a four-sided structure built of bricks on three sides, showing how important the little port once was, serving as more than just a local berthing.

The walk through the marshland basin begins after the bridge over the Terzo Canal. In front, set in the middle of a Poplar stand, is the Criachi Hut, where a plaque commemorates the victims of the holocaust: the morning of 23rd August, 1944, 174 men, women and children were brutally killed in various areas of the Marshes.

Continuing northwards along the banks of the canal, you will find the educational panels for the Provincial "Le Morette" Nature Reserve. Through careful management and restoration, the Province of Pistoia has recreated favourable environmental conditions for stop-over and breeding grounds for many species of birds.

After several more hundred metres stands the Green (or Biagiotti) Hut that has been refurbished into a wildlife observatory. Look through the slits of the screens for a view of the stretches of open waters inside the Reserve, with their margins protected by extensive reed beds.

Opposite the observatory, during the spring and summer months, some of the emerging bushes and the large reed thicket support the heronry, with nests belonging to seven different species of heron; in the autumn and winter the pools of water are home instead to thousands of ducks, coots and other overwintering water birds.

The best time of the year to visit the Reserve is Spring, from March to the first half of June. In the summer the best times are dawn and dusk to avoid the hottest hours of the day. From September to January the best days of the week are Tuesday and Friday (when hunting is prohibited) because the Reserve is surrounded by areas where hunting is permitted.

COMMEMORATIVE PLACES

A few tens of yards from the Castelmartini Visitors' Centre you will find a monument created by the artist Gino Terreni that commemorates the cruel massacre of 23rd August 1944, when 174 helpless people (mostly women, old people and children) were killed by the Nazis on the banks of the Marshlands.

A little further, on the opposite side of the main road, it is possible to visit the Memorial Garden, an "area for art" designed by the artists Andrea Dami and Simone Fagioli.

ATTENTION! In the adjacent Nature Reserve area the hunting season is in full swing from September to 31st January: consequently we advise you to visit the area on days when hunting is prohibited (Tuesday and Friday).

ATTENTION! Over the last years, several cars parked in the Le Morette Port area have been broken into by forcing the locks : we strongly recommend not to leave any valuable objects unguarded.

ATTENTION! To avoid disturbing bird life, please remember it is absolutely prohibited to walk on the raised banks coasting the route for the Le Morette observatory.

For information and guided tours

Centro di Ricerca, Documentazione e Promozione del Padule di Fucecchio (Centre for Research, Documentation and Promotion of the Fucecchio Marshes):

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