

## Card

Starting location:	Villanova Marchesana
Place of arrival:	Papozze
Municipalities crossed:	Villanova Marchesana, Papozze

## Description

The next step is in the district of Villanova Marchesana in Canalnovo, a village that rose on the "new channel" that is a new stream that was originated by the terrible 1152 flood that led to the destruction of Gavello abbey. Trying to escape from the destructive waters, some Benedictine monks found shelter in the new hamlet, thus creating a new court in S.Lorenzo Oratory. This church was restored many times and it became parish church only in 1956, the tower bell was built ten years later. North of the church, beyond the provincial road, there stand Villa Casacchio, Drago. On the side of it there is a big "barchessa", an additional building used as stable or warehouse, with twelve semicircular arcades, some of which have been closed.

However the village is famous mainly for its wide flood plain which stretches over 30 hectares. In it there are two furnaces, that have been active for a long time. Now they have been abandoned but are considered interesting examples of industrial archaeology waiting to be restored and valorized.

The recent intervention that made a part on the flood plain exploitable as a river berth and recreational area was easier to make. The flood plain has a particularly lush vegetation, it is an important landmark for the rich fauna and is the ideal place for various species of birds. Meanwhile we have reached Villanova Marchesana, a place that took this name from the ancient Villanova Burgellorum (Burgelli's), after it became a possession of the marquis Nicolò III d'Este at the beginning of the XV century. The parish church is located by the embankment. It was rebuilt at the end of the XVIII century in the Estensi's style; the tower bell was built in the mid-XVII century.

Going along the bankside road we encounter the 4-storey Daclon palace, built in 1834 by a French official of the Napoleonic army. He fell in love with a beautiful girl of the village whom he dedicated the building. Then we can admire the monumental Villa Luisa's Stable made up of seven semicircular arcades, unfortunately no trace is left of the neighbouring owner's house that had to be knocked down to allow the reinforcement of the river bank.

After that we find the XVIII century Villa Camerini, now Brogiato, which was built where once there used to be a Carthusian's friars Monastery; the Oratory has survived and is placed next to the villa.

Along the bank in Santi, neighbouring with Papozze, we notice the ramp to ferryboat (the last one that has remained in the Polesine area where the Po flows) that connects the Veneto side to the Emilia side.

Heading to Papozze, the village where the Prk of the Po Delta starts. This place-name derives from Teobaldino Papucius, the first owner of the territory that in the XIII century sold this vast area to Querini brothers from Venezia. Soon the place returned under the influence of Ferrara obtaining from the Estensi privileges that remained in force until the Congress of Vienna with the arrival of the Austrians.

However the recent history of Papozze is linked to the 1952 flood, after which the local authorities decided to rebuild the main core of the village beyond the embankment, that formerly was in the flood plain. Dozens of exquisite buildings were knocked down in this way Papozze lost his historical heritage. The Parish Church was saved because it already was placed beyond the bank in front of the river. The present building dates back to the mid-XIX century, from a project of the Venetian architect G.B.Meduna. It is embellished by many works of art, among which the Madonna del Rosario, ascribed to Scarsellino and a painting depicting S. Philip and S. James, probably by Garofalo.

Beyond the flood plain, in front of the church, there is the verdant Mezzano Island, now undisputed kingdom of nature. Until the beginning of last century some people lived on it, an evidence is the presence of XVIII century Villa Zotti, known as Ca' Mezzano, which is unfortunately in a state of severe degradation. This villa is famous for its Chapel dedicated to S.Carlo Borromeo, that was said to have slept here in the night between February the 7th and the 8th 1580, during a trip from Milan to Venice along the Po river.

Proceeding on the Po, in the village of Ca' Matte we find an equipped dock with haulage facilities used by sport-fishers especially for European catfish; and an important point of departure for nautical excursions in the Delta that here starts with the southward detachment of the Po of Goro from the Po of Venice.

Meanwhile we have reached the village of Panarella, whose past is linked more to the one of Adria than to the one of Papozze, in fact this village was under the Serenissima's influence the XVI century. Next to Panarella's Parish Church there is the XVI century's residence of the noble family Villa Lardi, now Zangirolami. Its façade is traversed by two chimneys and enriched by a colonnaded pronao which was added later. According to traditional stories, in 1782 Pio VI stopped at the villa and was greeted enthusiastically by the local population.

Today the village is also famous for its flood plain, which is very interesting from an environmental point of view: it is a W.W.F, managed natural oasis, with a wood hosting mainly the white willow and a paludal area with common reeds, reed-maces and aquatic mint. Here we also find many kinds of frogs and birds, such as the Bittern, the Little Grebe, the Grey Heron, the Night heron, the Duck-Hawk, the Goldfinch and others that chose this place as their permanent shelter.

It is easy to understand how is such a fascinating and simulating environment the original idea by Professor Luigi Salvini developed in the 1950s. It is the so called "Bosgattia Republic" a project that lasted several years and involved people of culture



from all over Europe based on open air free life.

An anticipation to the natural and landscape ideals searched by those, more and more numerous who are about to appreciate the itineraries along this great Italian river.

