

6 – Otto delle grotte dei Parmigiani - 8km – 190 m difference in height

Anyone who had thought that, following this itinerary, one would go to the discovery of an ancient aging station for *Parmigiano* cheese will certainly be disappointed, but maybe the beauty of these places could remedy ...

In reality we are moving near a limestone-sandy formation that emerges in the hilly areas, to immerse ourselves under the sediments of the coastal plain, of which it partly constitutes the substrate and which, thanks to the friability of this type of rock, has allowed, at least in three sites known to me, the excavation of caves in ancient times.

While, however, the caves of the Tane further south (path #4), being the most easily accessible, have also been very popular in recent times, those caves of the Parmigiani and those of Linaglia further north (path #14) have better preserved their original appearance

Following the provincial road of *Paratino* from north to south, we turn left into via dei Parmigiani and follow it until it becomes a dirt road.

Before leaving the road, you can park your car at the edge of the street...

We therefore continue along the road, up to a T-junction, where there is a chain on the left, while we will turn right.

After a while the little road becomes a path and, turning left, it skirts a narrow moat. At the point where you turn left, there is a concrete walkway to cross, but we continue to skirt a ditch for about 200m.

Once found another passage on a concrete pipe, this time we cross and follow to our left a newly traced path that allows us to go up the wooded bank, to then appear in an uncultivated field.

Still keeping to the left, we skirt the field to the end, then turn right and continue along it until we reach a large oak tree; here the path turns left and, almost immediately, becomes a small road and then a dirt road.

Continuing, we are at the intersection of our 8, at a crossroads between 5 little streets: we will take the one immediately in front of us (the second one starting from the right). We continue to follow it until it becomes a path and, shortly after, we find a crossroads, at which we turn left.

The path begins to descend into the woods and we pass two false crossroads (it is indifferent to take to the right or to the left because, after a while, the paths rejoin). Now the limestone rock begins to emerge which, in some places, can become slippery also due to the presence of moss.

Having reached another slightly wider path, we can decide to make a small detour to the right of about 150m and we will be in the clearing in front of the Tane caves (already seen with itinerary 4).

Our route today, however, turns to the left, skirting the *Ferraccione* ditch along a pleasant path. Suddenly we come out of the wood and, coming out into the open, we continue straight on a small road that crosses an olive grove, savoring the magic that always hovers on the edge of the wood.

It is the perfect place for a snack.

Follow the small road which first turns left and then right; do not forget to look towards the sea: on clear days you can see the mountains of Corsica, as well as the islands Elba and Capraia. In the middle of the stretch of olive grove that is now on our left we will be able to see a wide trace of a path that descends decisively towards the valley floor.

Having crossed the small moat that runs at the bottom with a step, we continue straight on, going up the other side of the valley, with still olive trees on our left and a small stretch of wood on our right.

The little road now continues flat in the middle of the fields and we arrive at a crossroads, where we will turn left, crossing an area of villas, agricultural outbuildings and more olive groves.

Thus we arrive again at the center of the 8, represented by the intersection of 5 little streets.

We take the first road on the right and follow it to the end. At a certain point, in the sea in front of us, the island of Gorgona could be clearly distinguished.

After the last annex, we turn right along the paths that have just been traced, at first the fence of the annex and then other olive groves; we continue to descend towards the bottom of the valley, taking care to stay along the path.

At the bottom of the descent we will find the ditch we've seen at the start, which this time we will cross on a wooden and sheet metal walkway.

Turning left, we will skirt the course of the ditch until, in correspondence with a beautiful four-trunked holm oak on our right, we will see the clearing on which the two entrances to the Parmigiani caves open.

Now we just have to continue along the ditch, until we find the indication of *via dei Parmigiani* and the entrance to the town of Cecina.

From here we walk backwards along the small stretch of *via dei Parmigiani* which takes us back to the cars.