

9 - Anello della Valle del Rotone - 11 km – 560 difference in height (hunting area)

This route, as well as the following 14 and 20, takes us to visit the sites of ancient mills. In our area, characterized by streams of small size and discontinuous flow, the technology used was that of the ritrecine (horizontal wheel mill). Usually, along the same water course, we meet three or more mills which, at different altitudes, were able to exploit the energy of the same water several times. Furthermore, thanks to different processing of the stone mills, it was possible to obtain different steps of progressive flour refining.

The structure of a ritrecine mill is spread over two floors, the construction of which usually takes place by exploiting the natural unevenness of the ground. The horizontal wheel and the millstones are in fact placed in two distinct and superimposed rooms and connected by a single vertical axis.

The ground floor of the building houses the millstones, while the horizontal wheel (the ritrecine) is located in the basement. The basement of the horizontal wheel mills is also called *infernaccio* and is a room in river stone masonry, with a barrel roof that serves to support the weight of the building above and the thrust of the water. The compartment has an upstream opening that conveys the water from the overlying gora (collection basin) inside the wheel, while the arched opening downstream is used for the exit of the water from the mill.

A vertical pole transmits the rotational movement of the ritrecine to the above millstone (the sovereign), while the underlying one (*sottana*) is fixed to the floor. The Molini valley and the botro that runs through it clearly take their name from 5 mills that were powered by the botro itself, built between the 18th and 19th centuries.

The oldest and most important mill in the valley was the Mulino del Rotone, built in the early 1700s. Currently it has been renovated and is used as a farmhouse. It takes its name from the large wheel it was equipped with (*ruotone*, big wheel). With the increase in the population of Castagneto this mill was no longer sufficient, so others were built. A little further downstream the Mulinaccio, known as del Saletro, was built in 1876, currently used as a dwelling. The mills of which the ruins remain that we will find along the way, going upstream, are the Mulinello (1804) the Mulino di Mezzo (1779) and the Mulino di Cima (1733).

We leave the cars in the parking lot of the sports field of Castagneto Carducci and, on foot, we go back to the building of the Kindergarten in via Umberto I, where we take the Via dei Mulini on our left which descends steeply towards the bottom valley.

Here the road becomes a dirt road which, shortly, leads us to the Mulino del Rotone farmhouse. Once here we take the small road on our left which is still called Via dei Mulini and which indicates path #2.

Thus you begin to walk the valley floor of the Fosso dei Mulini on a small road that winds through the woods.

It is good to pay attention to what appears among the trees to our right, on the bank of the ditch: in fact, I probably could not find the ruins of the Mulinello, while, after less than 1 km from the farmhouse we can see the ruins of the Mill. Upon entering the upper room the hole above which the millstones were located and through which the pole that served as an axis passed is clearly visible, while in the lower part of the building the outlet and the vault of the *infernaccio*.

Resuming the path, after 200 or 300 meters, while the road begins to climb on a layer of outcropping rock, on our right a small ford takes us to the Mulino di Cima, where the two millstones are still in their place.

Back on the path, we resume the path, which now gradually begins to rise and, after about 200 m, we find a crossroads with the indication to the right for path 2 and we follow it.

Thus you ford the ditch of the Mills and begin to skirt the other side of the valley, and then cross again after about 100 m and return to the orographic right of the ditch.

The path begins to rise more decisively, until you see the arches of the Ponte Lungo di Sotto, which is part of the Colacchie aqueduct, in front of you.

Our path continues to rise and the path is more and more just a track that climbs the side of the valley by steps. Every now and then we find a red signpost on the trees or an arrow that still indicates path 2. Finally the path comes out on a wider and well-traced one, at the Ponte Lungo di Sopra. A few steps downhill will allow us to admire the arches.

It is a good place for a snack break, but then we have to take the path back in the direction of the climb; after a few steps, on our right we can see a water collection station.

Now go up steeply, until you reach a large birthing system, after which we come out into the large clearing with the burnt chestnut in the center where we stopped for a snack on our way to Pietrarossa (route 7).

Then we just have to take via Nemorense to the left and, through wide curves and a gentle descent, arrive at Castagneto, not far from the parking lot.