



SANT'ERASMO, THE GARDEN OF VENICE

FIFTH TRIP: Sant'Erasmus, the garden of Venice

DEPARTURE: Sant'Erasmus, ferry stop

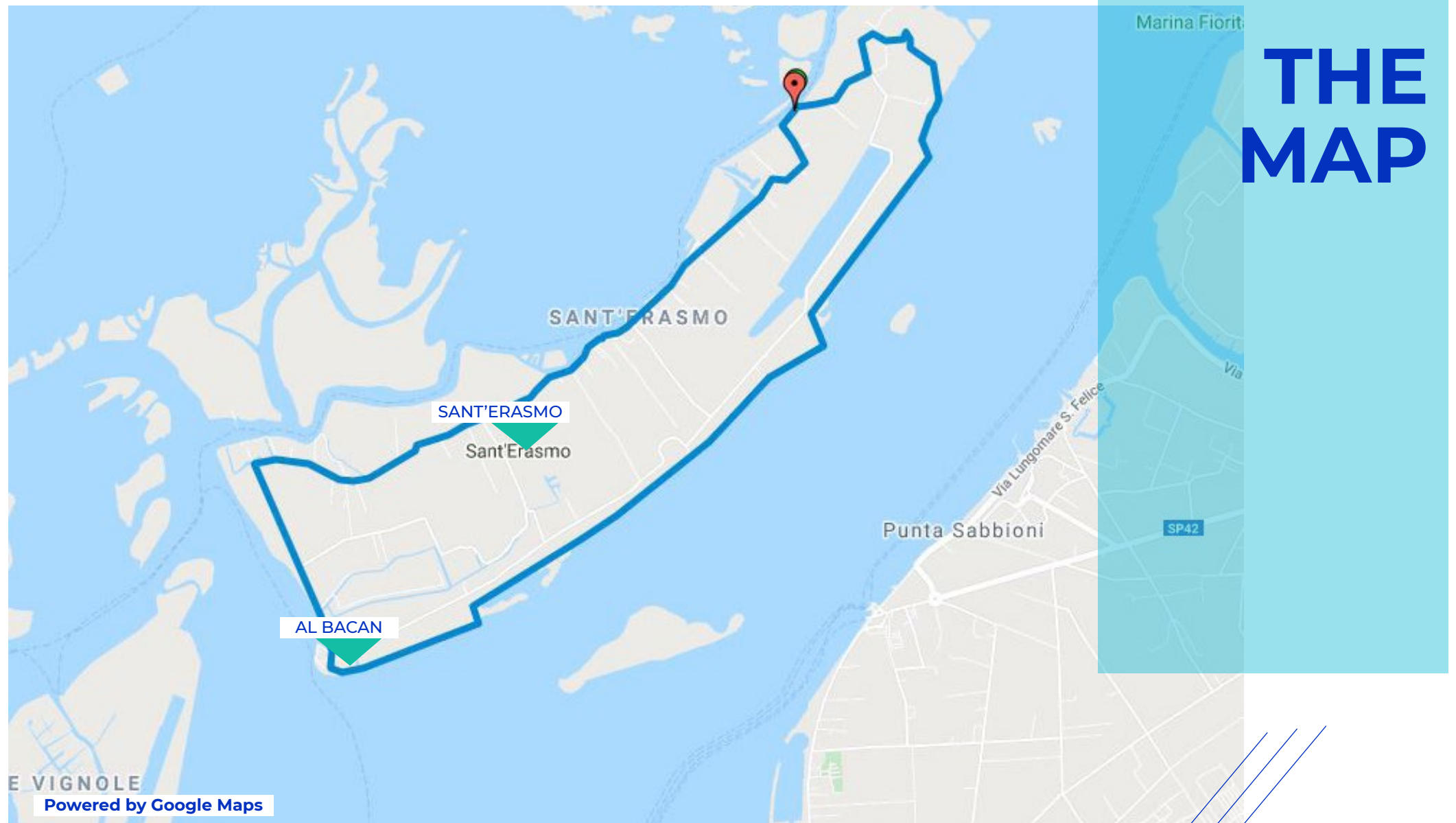
ARRIVAL: Sant'Erasmus, ferry stop

DIFFICULTY: Easy, bike paths + regular roads

LENGTH: 10 km approx.

ROAD FUND: Both paved and unsurfaced roads

RECOMMENDED BIKE: All except racing bikes



A very small ferry boat, line 13, carried us from Treporti to the island of [Sant'Erasmo](#) (you cannot buy tickets on board so you have to do so in the landing stage).

We had tried to go to Sant'Erasmo the day before, but had to give up because of an impending storm. Not before admiring a unique and unforgettable scenery: a dark and black sky with "shots of light" just on the spots of Venice, Murano and Burano, big waves and rough sea and then, all of a sudden, a downpour. Should this happen to you too, just grab your waterproof waxed cape and enjoy the show.

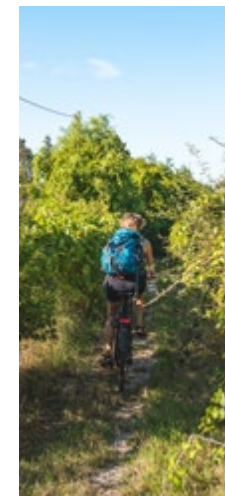
On the day of the visit, however, the weather was clear and the sun shined on all the greenery that has earned Sant'Erasmo the nickname of "[Garden of Venice](#)".

CHURCH OF SANT'ERASMO





To make the best of our excursion, we parked our bikes, and resuming ferry line 13, we took a pleasant walking tour of the nearby islands.



The island still hosts farming activities, especially for the production of the typical first of the season small artichokes, called castraure.

A Slow Food presidium, Sant'Erasmo's violet artichoke is among the most renowned traditional Italian food products.

As we got off the ferry, we followed the sign to Ridotto di [Sant'Erasmo](#) on the left hand side, and took a very narrow unsurfaced road (cover up your arms and legs, or be really careful, as it is lined with brambles).



This small road leads to a [ridotto](#), a lawn overlooking the lagoon with a priceless view of [Burano](#) and [Torcello](#). A wonderful place, quiet and off-hand, where you can sunbathe, or relax in the shade, depending on time and temperature. Perfect for a picnic or an aperitif at sunset.

We then followed on with the island tour (about 10 km long, 8 km on paved roads and the remaining 2 km on unsurfaced roads). With an extension of about 3.26 square kilometers, it is one of the few islands in the lagoon where cars are allowed, although there generally is very little traffic. Except for the very Italian “ape-car” motor tricycles.

We finally got to a very nice bike path by the sea, which took us directly to the beach, and to the only kiosk on the island, located in a strategic spot to get a drink while contemplating the lagoon.

The small road continues with some short interruptions or poorly kept stretches up to the [Torre Massimiliana](#), the only monument in Sant’Erasmus. Facing the Lido, this is a 19th century cylinder fortress and is part of the Fort Sant’Erasmus and of the Venetian defensive system orchestrated by the Austrians and carried out by the French.

To make the best of our excursion, we parked our bikes, and resuming ferry line 13, we took a pleasant walking tour of the nearby islands. Together with Sant’Erasmus, they form the fruit and vegetable reserve of the Metropolitan City of Mestre and Ve-

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AL
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nice: the so-called “gardens of the Serenis-sima”.

The first stop was [Lazzaretto Nuovo](#).

A canal separates this island from Sant'Era-smo. It is green and rich in any form of ani-mal and plant life, which you can observe while strolling along the paths, following the old “wall-walk” of sentinels in old times.

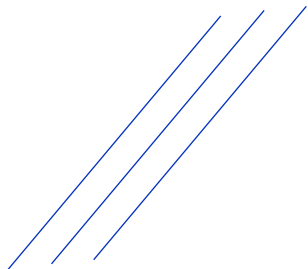
On the ramparts you can find information signs and enjoy a 360-degree view of the lagoon in front of Venice.

Due to the presence of different species of birds, this walk is especially recommended for bird-watchers.

Entering the complex you can visit the [Te-zon Grande](#), the main monumental buil-

TO
AL BACAN





ding on the island, more than 100 metres long (second only to the Corderie in the Venetian Arsenal). There crews, passengers and even goods used to be kept in quarantine to avoid the spreading of infectious diseases.

Our second stop was in Vignole which, in addition to the numerous vineyards from which it is named, is truly lush with mulberries, poplars, elders, tamarisks. The wilderness is only interrupted by vegetable gardens and weeds.

We visited the remains of Sant'Erosia's church a small distance away, and looked in the distance at the imposing fort Sant'Andrea, still the base of the Italian army's "Serenissima" Lagoon Regiment.

On the way back, we noticed several taverns with pergolas along the road which promised the pleasure of a stop for lunch; but we got back on board ferry number 13, instead, and in a few stops back we were to Sant'Erasmo, to retrieve our bikes, and then to Treporti, where we had started from.



ALBACAN

WHAT TO SEE AND TASTE

LE VIGNOLE ISLAND: FROM FORT SANT'ANDREA TO 0 MILE VEGGIES

By Germana Cabrelle

he isle of Le Vignole is another land of the Venetian lagoon devoted to growing vegetables with homeodynamic methods.

Cauliflowers, savoy cabbage, radicchio, peppers, eggplants and sauce tomatoes are grown by passionate farmers, without the use of chemical fertilizers or pesticides against fungi, insects or weeds –only relying on the tiller.

The result are excellent products from a nutritional point of view, in full respect of the environment and of consumer safety.

Needless to say, local restaurants rely on these zero-mile vegetables in cooking the dishes of their menus.

Once in Le Vignole, fort Sant'Andrea is no doubt worth a visit. Although a military property, this fortress can be visited thanks to agreements between institutions aimed at promoting tourism. Its architectural structure expresses all its 500 years of history.

Like all Venetian houses, the fort Sant'Andrea also had its Porta a mar (gateway overlooking the sea) and in this case it was no less than that of the Republic of Venice.

On either side of the door there is a cannon, representing the power of the Republic: willing to welcome sailors on one hand, but tacitly revealing it is perfectly capable of defending itself.

Sant'Andrea as you see it was not born as such: it has been built over what was first a wooden tower and then an armed keep.

During the 16th century the Veronese military architect Michele Sanmicheli was commissioned to design a "stone



PATH SANT'ERASMO



ship" to defend the "mouth of the port", the most important defensive structure since it would be at the entrance of the lagoon and close to the power of the Republic of Venice.

A system was therefore created between the fort Sant'Andrea and the fort San Nicola, to prevent any unwanted entry.

It is said that one of the ghosts that inhabit the fortress Sant'Andrea is Giacomo Casanova's, who at the age of 16 was imprisoned in a cell for matters of women and debts.

The fort Sant'Andrea has 42 gun ports at water level, at the waterline, to cause the immediate sinking of any approaching enemy.

There is, however, a curiosity: the 5 gun ports facing Piazza San Marco are closed because no doge would accept having the fort's cannons aimed at him.



CHURCH OF SANT'ERASMO



CHEERS WITH WINE FROM VENICE GARDENS

By Germana Cabrelle

When you dig the lagoon soil just 50 centimeters, you will, of course, find sea water. It is therefore obvious that here certain crops – such as vineyards – are considered “extreme”, as they do not obey the classical canons of traditional viticulture. The sandy bottom, completely different from the compact clods of the mainland, inevitably confers mineral and saline notes to any plant.

Dedicated to the protector of sailors, Sant'Erasmo is the largest island in the lagoon after Venice. It has always borne generous vegetables crops, including the exquisite violet artichoke. Over the centuries this agricultural vocation has earned this island the definition of “Garden of Venice”.

Local farmers have been growing a variety of cultures in Sant'Erasmo, but in the past vine never flourished successfully and was therefore neglected in favor of more profitable crops.

Nevertheless, in the past twenty years a unique wine is being produced here; its peculiarity being that it is entirely produced within the lagoon boundaries. It is a white wine with a blend composed of about 60% of Malvasia Istriana, 30% Vermentino and a minimum percentage of Fiano. In addition to Sant'Erasmo, the island of Mazzorbo also produces wine from the autochthonous Dorona vine: a golden white wine with salty notes that evoke, in fact, the sea of Venice and its gardens.



VEGETABLE GARDEN OF VENICE

PRODUCT SLOW FOOD

CASTRAURAS OF SANT'ERASMO, A SLOW FOOD PRESIDIO DELICACY EXQUISITE PURPLE

By Germana Cabrelle

Born in 2004, the Violet Artichoke of Sant'Erasmo Consortium includes about fifteen certified partner farmers. Don't forget that this typical artichoke from the Laguna is also a Slow Food presidium since 2002. A delicacy and culinary excellence, it is sought after for its unmistakable taste, different from any other.

Sant'Erasmo's gardens overlook the waters of the Venetian lagoon, and there, in the most Northern location in Italy by far, artichokes can flourish thanks to the mitigating effect of the Adriatic sea. The salinity increases temperatures compared to the mainland, and up to 20 small artichokes can then grow per plant. The artichoke fields actually stand out for their tall size. In winter, farmers build small earth mounts by the plants to protect them from the North-Eastern Bora wind.

Every plant grows out of the so-called carduccio, a small sprout selected at the foot of the mother plant, replanted in the ground, fructifying from the second year, and then living on perennial. The so-called castrauras are the first artichokes you cut off, giving the plant energy to produce more fruits.

Once picked and gathered in bunches, the purple artichokes are transferred on board the comacina, the boat used to carry the lagoon products to the fruit and veg market in Rialto.

Among the traditional recipes based on the artichoke of Sant'Erasmo are artichokes in tecia (sautés in a pan), deep fried in batter, artichoke paté to spread on fresh or toasted bread, raw artichokes served with Parmesan flakes. But to appreciate their unique authentic taste, farmers in Sant'Erasmo suggest to simply slice them raw and season with extra-virgin olive oil, pepper and salt.



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