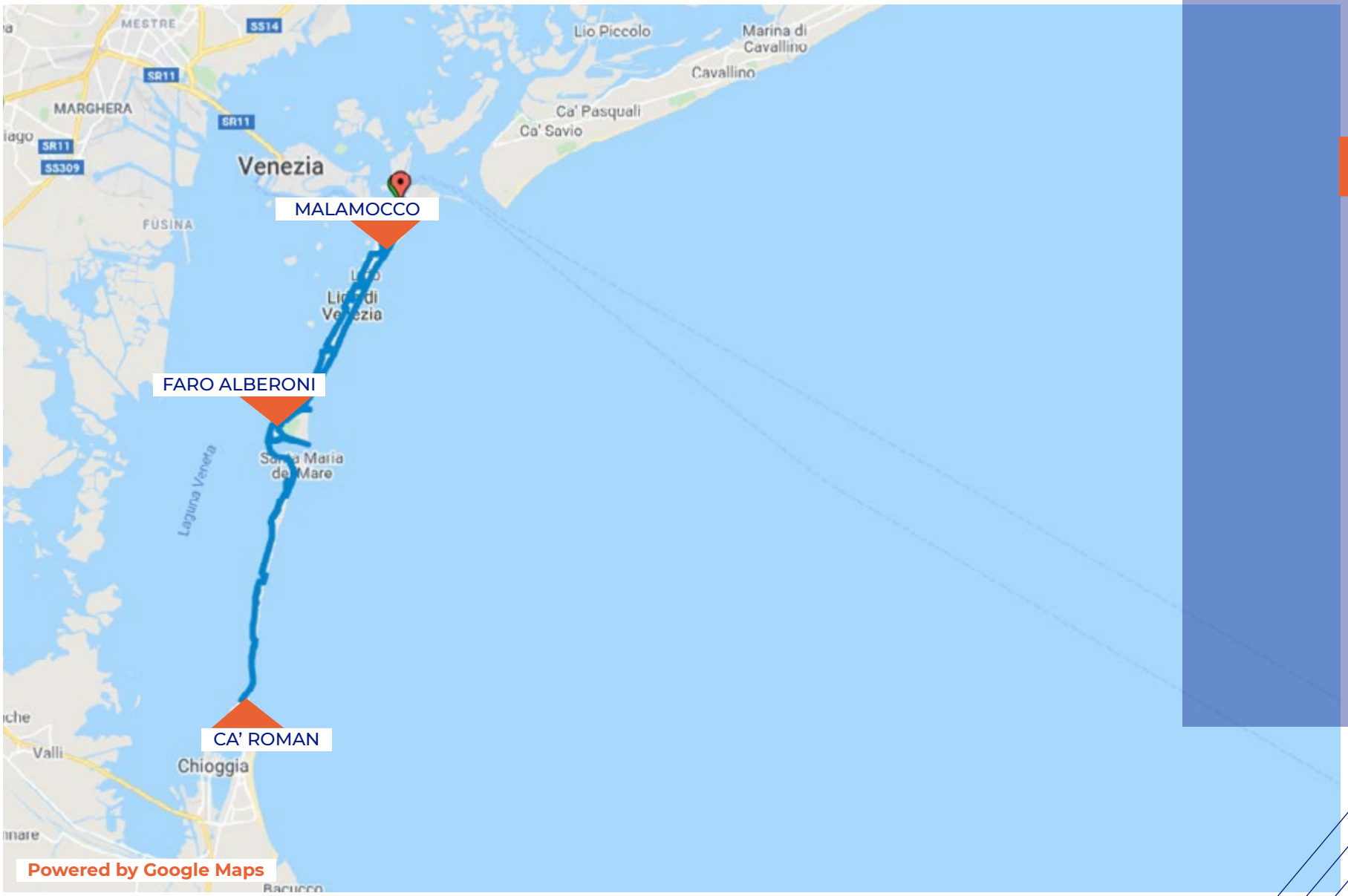


FORTRESSES IN THE LAGOON

SIXTH TRIP: Fortresses in the lagoon
DEPARTURE: Mestre train station
ARRIVAL: Mestre train station
DIFFICULTY: Easy, mostly on bike paths, some secondary roads
LENGTH: 42 km approx.
ROAD FUND: Both paved and unsurfaced roads
RECOMMENDED BIKE: City bike, mtb, gravel

THE MAP


MESTRE
SS14
SR11
MARGHERA
SR11
SR11
SS309
Venezia
FUSINA
Lio Piccolo
Marina di Cavallino
Cavallino
Ca' Pasqualì
Ca' Savio
MALAMOCCO
FARO ALBERONI
Laguna Veneta
Chioggia
Valli
Powered by Google Maps

You can dedicate a whole day to this lovely tour, especially thought for city bikes, hybrid, or e-bikes, less recommended for more athletic and expensive racing bikes.

For two reasons: first of all it is on mixed terrain, bike paths plus dirt and bumpy surfaces, and main roads; and then because you may need to tie up your bike to visit some sites and this does not please racing cyclists.

We suggest you see all the forts, to get an overview of the protective “shield” they created around Venice.

Some of them are worth just passing by, the most interesting thing being the road to get there, while others are worth a real visit, that can last up to a few hours.

Origins

Austrians started building this defense system , called entrenched camp, in the early 19th century, but it was the French who completed the work during the Napoleonic occupation.

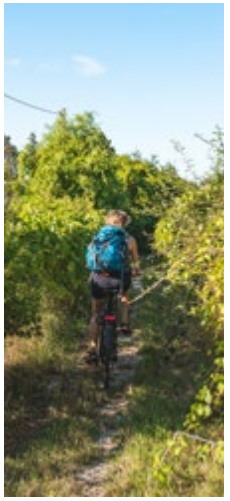


LIGHTHOUSE ALBERONI

BUNKER OF CA ROMAN



It is a beautiful old and lively village where you can go for the many activities related to the Biennale of Venice



The idea was to have an “arch” of fortresses from Malcontenta to Tessera for complete control of the area.

Unfortunately the construction of those forts took so long that once finished most of them proved obsolete compared to the warfare technologies that had developed in the meantime.

Built to withstand cannon fire and not rifled rounds and ogives, they were never really used for defensive purposes.

Today, thanks to various associations of citizens and to the Municipality of Venice, these fortresses are nothing but peaceful sites, public areas for recreational use, hosting cultural and popular events that improve the attractiveness of the city and the quality of life of its residents.

From Mestre train station take the well-signed bike path to Forte Marghera, a 19th-century fortress and former barracks of the Italian Army, about five kilometers from the city center.

The name comes from the ancient town of Marghera, after which modern Porto Marghera is named too.

Property of the Municipality of Venice, it is used as a public park, and a venue for events and cultural productions. It is a beautiful old and lively village where you can go for the many activities related to the Biennale of Venice, but also for three delicious little restaurants, each one different in style and menu: a fairly rustic steakhouse, a pizzeria and a fine bistrot, where you can taste dishes that have been creatively reinvented from classical and local cuisine. From April to September you can also come here for the concerts organized every evening from Tuesday to Sunday.

The fortress is managed by Forte Marghera Foundation, and the restaurants are run by a social cooperative. We highly recommend a visit for lunch, dinner or aperitif. Closed on Mondays.
The tour continues toward Parco San Giuliano where you follow a beautiful bike path surrounded by green and trees, with Venice in sight, running along a canal where Mestre residents tie up their boats.

This bike path soon turns into a wider path in the open countryside, taking you to Forte Bazzera, a powder keg built in 1910 to reinforce the defenses of the entrenched system, and the only one to have survived intact in structure with a moat, lightning rods and sentry-boxes.

Set between the Bazzera and Osellino-Marzenego canals, Forte

BACK TO THE MAP



FARO ALBERONI



Bazzera is a natural bridge between rural environment and the lagoon ecosystem.

Abandoned for years and used as a junkyard, the area has been reclaimed and converted, and now hosts theatrical and musical events, fairs and markets, waiting to become a lagoon park.

The third fortress on this tour is Forte Cosenz, once a powder keg, too. You can reach a nearby refreshment point by following a beautiful bike path, part of our “woods and gardens” tour. Just mind that in via Lazzaretto you will find yourself on a main road with traffic.

The following fortress is Forte Carpenedo, worth an extended visit. You might even consider making a reservation for a guided tour.

BACK TO THE MAP

MALAMOCCO

The association that manages the fort - ten volunteers and four employees - is made up of historians and enthusiasts who are happy to share all the beauty, history and secrets of the building.

They also run a bar. They will welcome you warmly at the entrance, proudly identifying their activity as a “a social business, where profits are reinvested in improvements and renovation of the area”.

You might want to experience a “special tour” and listen to historical accounts, surprising anecdotes and stories, and have a complete visit of the building.

You will learn the full history of this fort, which was built at the end of the 19th century, inspired by the forts designed by Austrian Colonel A. Tunkler (also called of Prussian type).

It is part of what is known as Campo Trincerato di Mestre, a widespread system of fortresses on land (in addition to one on the lagoon). Tunkler designed his forts with the surrounding territory in mind, exploiting whatever aspect could be functional to the fortress , intervening on the environment to camouflage the architecture and influencing agriculture by binding farmers with specific obligations and prohibitions.

The purpose of this fortress was to defend



Venice, its port and especially the military Arsenal from any attack coming from the mainland.

To enter the fortress you will cross the bridge (a drawbridge at the time) walking under a large and solemn portal, absolutely not camouflaged.

This is the rear entrance, where there is no need to hide, while on the opposite side the building was hidden from the sight of those arriving: everything was designed to keep watch from the inside and see as far as possible without being seen.

On the sides you can see one of the 4 caponiers that allowed soldiers to defend the entrance from the narrow vertical slits. You then access the central body of the building, called central traverse hall, where the logistics was based: headquarters, various service and office rooms, infirmary, tailor workshop.

Along the front of the fort and on the sides, there are dormitories, kitchens, ammunition depots and a stable. These rooms are all connected to a single traverse hall 350 meters long that runs through the entire building.
The stairs that wind along the corridor lead to the attack area and the artillery positions. Extensive and fascinating, the tour is more like a journey through time.

Rooms and settings have been reconstructed to the last detail by volunteers with millimetric precision. In the infirmary, for example, you will find medical instruments, as well as crutches and stretchers for the wounded, and bandages too!

The canteen, stables and dormitories have a very strong evocative power as well, just like the stories about the life of soldiers, living inside that dark and closed space, ventilated only by effective air intakes... Tour guides talk with passion and knowledge, taking visitors back to those distant times.

BACK TO THE MAP



BEACH OF CA ROMAN



There are so many curiosities and details that you could spend hours listening to them! For example, you will learn that the numbers that appear, with a regular pattern, on the walls were used to indicate muster points even to the illiterate, who were very numerous at the time.

You will hear that the fort was designed to protect ammunition, beasts and men in this order. And that floors were made of solid wood fixed only with copper nails because copper is the only material that wouldn't spark under the iron heels of soldiers' boots: in a powder keg you couldn't certainly risk any sparks! At the end of the tour you will also see something that very rare at the time, even in aristocratic mansion: latrines! It was a real luxury to have this kind of "service" inside the building and not in the open air...

And then, out you go, excited and amazed like children, to keep on with the tour of the outer areas.

The fortress area is partly located in the Carpenedo Woods, an environment with unique and valuable characteristics.
Walking on the trail that follows the perimeter of Forte Carpenedo, you can make some truly unexpected naturalistic discoveries, particularly extraordinary considering that you are a handful of kilometers from the city center and urban traffic. For sure birds are the animals that you can most easily observe and listen to, especially during the migration seasons: spring and autumn.

Before leaving you will probably get to meet Gino, a very nice coypu adopted (and christened) by volunteers of Forte Carpenedo Onlus (No Profit Association). Gino usually goes around with ducks - probably believing to be one of them - and all are part of the Carpenedo family!

It's now time to head towards Zelarino in the direction of Forte Mezzacapo, twin building to Forte Carpenedo. Here there are two points of interest to consider: the Museo della Civiltà Contadina (Museum of Peasant Civilization) inside, and the Ronda dell'Arte, once the soldiers' patrol route running about a kilometer all around the fortified building, today an open-air museum with sculptures, art installations and "land art" scattered in the park, thanks to art critic Gaetano Salerno, curator of this project.

Cycling along via Forte Gazzera, a dirt road with very little traffic, you then get to Forte Gazzera, the first of Carpenedo twin fortresses , actually the original one. Managed by the Gazzera Cooperative since 1998, it is mainly used as a picnic area by families and groups of people in the warm season.

Leaving Forte Gazzera pay great caution to the pretty busy roads (a bike path is under construction) that take you back to Mestre station, just where your started your trip.

It is advisable to plan your tour of the fortresses on days with mild, not too hot, weather to fully enjoy the journey and the views of Venice in the background, taking time to visit the most interesting and rich in history, getting a glimpse of the others while passing by and enjoying all that Forte Marghera can offer – high-society lifestyle included





THE FERRY

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

By Germana Cabrelle

Every year, between the end of August and the beginning of September, the Lido of Venice is in the spotlight of the world during the ten days of the Venice Film Festival, when stars, actors and celebrities flock to Palazzo della Biennale for film screenings, parading on the red carpet and moving around the halls of the Excelsior.

This hotel, built in fascinating Moorish style architecture, is an inseparable part of the Venice Film Festival: it is itself a protagonist in the history of the Festival. It was inaugurated on 21 July 1908 with 30,000 Venetians and 3000 guests from all over the world attending the opening party. Walking through the halls and salons is an opportunity to feel and breath some of the history of world cinema and at the same time offers the experience of a five-star hotel. The Stucchi Room on the third floor, for example, is the setting of the famous restaurant scene of “Once Upon a Time in America” by Sergio Leone.

For the rest of the year the Lido lingers in ancestral charm made up of sea and wind, legendary memories and prestigious hotels, in an atmosphere of temporary oblivion, a somehow snobbish stand-by before resuming the glittering fame of the Festival days.
All year round the Lido is perfect for the so-called slow and experiential tourism.
From here, between the beach and the sea, you can book a typical Venetian rowing lesson, for example. Nautical clubs offer free trials and if you like the experience, there’s always the chance to learn this rowing technique going out on a boat trip.

Malamocco is the southern part of the Lido, the one that winks at Venice on the horizon, the sight interrupted only by briccole – the so-called Venetians dolphins (not the cetacean, of course) emerging from water – and water taxis. And last but not least, golf lovers will here find the Venetian golf club: the green of the green by the blue of the sea.

PRODUCT SLOW FOOD

THE CAVALLINO "BIG NOSE" TOMATO

By Germana Cabrelle

It has a reputation for being the largest tomato in Italy, reaching considerable size and weight (some specimens even weigh more than a kilo). An autochthonous ecotype, ancient and rare, this excellent breed grows exclusively in a dozen greenhouses on the coast of Cavallino.

Its full name is Pomodoro Nasone di Cavallino (Cavallino Big Nose Tomato). Looking very similar to the "cuore di bue" (ox heart) breed, this tomato is firm, without seed and very tasty.

Available from June to October, it can also be called Cirione (big Cirio), for its size. The Nasone tomato is a very limited local variety that can be found at the greengrocers of Cavallino Treporti or directly from growers.

Cut into thin slices, it is exquisite on a hot bruschetta, seasoned with olive oil, salt and oregano. However, the best way to enjoy it is with a good pizza.

Some pizzerias along the coast have it on their menus and the best restaurants offer a dish of pure Nasone tomatoes, sometimes served with burrata (mozzarella stuffed with cream), or simply dressed with extra virgin olive oil, balsamic vinegar, salt and basil.



VIDEO EXPERIENCE



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