

Walks & Parks

Walks For Spring Or Whenever

Italians don't walk a lot, unless it's from the car to the gelati bar. The tourist information centres usually have no useful maps or itineraries if you would like to get out on foot to see the often blissful surrounds of Perugia and other towns. Hence the pedometer-powered Little Blue research department has been out pounding the backroads and byways to bring you this new section with our suggested walking routes; donations of shoes welcome. As most of these walks involve walking by the roadside rather than on dedicated tracks, they are better on Saturday afternoons or Sundays when there are less snarling Fiats about.

Montelaguardia - For a blissful countryside experience, take bus 14 from in front of the Etruscan Arch to Montelaguardia. Follow the road over the crest of the hill and then immerse yourself in wildflowers, sweeping views, and fresh air. After San Marino take the left fork and you will end up at Ponte Rio. Then take the bus back to centro or walk right up Via Bulagaio back to the Arch. It takes roughly three hours for the entire trip, more when Andrea stops to forage for wild mint and oregano.

Cemetery - Start at the Prosciutti building (see the map at the end of the book if you don't happen to be a student at the Stranieri). Go around the back, through the low gate and carpark and along the road away from the city. A few hundred metres along is a gravel road to the right; take this if you fancy a ten-minute detour to the rarely-used modern amphitheatre. Otherwise continue along the fine, tree-lined avenue with views across the valley to San Pietro. When you reach the cluster of buildings and the palm trees, go up the ramp and out on to Via Del Giochetto. Turn right and follow the road down the hill until you reach the cemetery. It's about 25 minutes to this point. The cemetery is open every day and has some interesting tombs including an Egyptian pyramid complete with sphinx! Going back to Perugia, retrace your steps up Via Del Giochetto then take the left fork, Via Enrico Dal Pozzo, to arrive at Porta Pesa, or the right fork, still Via Del Giochetto, to get to Monteluca. Otherwise you can take bus 2 (Gallenga), 3 (Partigiani) or 89 (Morlacchi) back to the living. If you prefer walking to wandering among spirits, you can continue further down the road. Go along the right side of the cemetery then under the walkway where the road forks. Straight ahead lies Casaglia (20 minutes) and eventually Ponte Valleceppi (40 minutes). Both have buses back to Perugia, numbers 2 and 8 respectively.

Santa Margherita valley - Start at Porta Pesa. Go down the steps to Kandinsky Pub in Via Enrico dal Pozzo. Follow this road about 800 metres then turn right down Via S.Simeone del Carmine. Another kilometre along and you're in the midst of olive groves, tumble-down chicken coops and small farms. It's about 25 minutes' walk to this point. From here we can't help you much - there are many roads and all seem to be suffering from namelessness. If your luck is in you might eventually find the holy grail track which crosses the stream and goes up to Via San Girolamo on the other side of the valley. Or, from the bottom of the valley go left and up until you eventually meet Via Del Giochetto. From there return as per the cemetery walk.

Santa Margherita Park - Start at the bottom of the Sant'Ercolano steps. Head to the intersection and then along Corso Cavour. Take the first left, another nameless street that shoots off just after number 60. Go to the end and follow the car park along until to the right you see a wooden fence and descend the steps leading down to the road. Cross the road - carefully, it's a horrible corner - and another 30 metres or so along is Via del Cortone which leads down into the park. Stop a moment to examine the sign-board and map but be aware that it's increasingly pure fantasy. This park is maintained by the Severe Neglect Department of the Council and many of the so-called tracks are overgrown with blackberries or become rivers of mud after rain. Take the first track to your left, then right after the broken fence, turn left and down after the bench then across the wooden bridge. 30 minutes' walking to this point has you in the middle of the park. There are some passable picnic tables, an exercise trail and possibly even some non-pigeon fauna. If you would like to leave by a different route, find your way further down until you can see the white gravel road. Follow it up past the vegetable gardens and then around the top of the amphitheatre. Keep going up until the road forks, take the right track until you reach the bitumen and turn left here. The road takes you to the Prosciutti building of the Stranieri campus, about 20 minutes from the centre of the park. Please be counselled that we do not recommend visiting this park at night under any circumstances.

Via Roma - Start at the Sant'Ercolano steps. Go down the steps and then to the intersection. Go right through the Three Arches, left and down the stairs. Cross the road and head left, away from Perugia. Via Roma develops into a lovely avenue with expansive views south. Once you round the sharp bend, go right at the intersection along the continuation of Via Roma. After the AGIP petrol station, cross the road and go into the Botanic Gardens. Take the gravel path across to the other side. Go out and up to your left. Note the Chiesa di San Costanzo to your left as you ascend, a thousand-year-old church dedicated to one of Perugia's patron saints. Follow the road as it veers to the right and then around the side of the hill. Do the chicken run through the tunnel and keep following the road until the intersection. Take the right fork and continue on Via Ripa di Meanna until you come to a carpark on the other side of the road that is blessed with the sign "Antichita' Piantarose". Go up the rickety steps and along the street to find yourself back at the start of Corso Cavour. It's a 50 minute round trip.

San Marco - Start at the Gallenga building. Go up Corso Garibaldi away from the city. Turn right along Via Sperandio and follow it around the side of the hill. There are spectacular views here for those with panoramic cameras or just very wide eyes. Turn right again at the San Marco signpost and go up over the crest and down. At the Ponte D'Oddi roundabout keep going straight. When you get to the San Marco sign, well, you're at San Marco. Take the next left and follow the road down until you see the bus stop on the right-hand side of the road. Buses 16, 87 and 90 will take you back to Perugia. This walk takes almost an hour. If Your Boots Are Made For Walking, consider extending your jaunt with one of the Montemalbe walks.

Montemalbe - From Piazza Morlacchi take bus 88 to Montemalbe (there's a stop called Fermata Montemalbe). From there you have two choices. Via S.Lucia-Canetola takes you on a shaded walk down past country villas to the percorso verde and eventually Via Cortonese. It takes about 50 minutes. You could also follow the strada panoramica sign which takes you on a more exposed route around the side of the hill with fantastic views back to Perugia. Allow about 60 minutes to get to Ferro di Cavallo. From both end points there are buses back to either the railway station or Piazza Italia. The Montemalbe bus doesn't run on Sundays, instead you can take 5 or 16 to San Marco and walk an extra 15 minutes along the main road to get to the Montemalbe junction.

Parks

Perugia and trees are not quite mutually exclusive but you have to look hard. Here is our quick guide to the closest parks, mostly no more than a few minutes' stroll from the centre of the city.

Parco della Cupa - Most foreigners never find this one. From Corso Vannucci, duck down Via Scura which is more easily identifiable by the Hotel Umbria sign hanging across it. Go through all the twists and turns, down, down until you reach a road and a stone fence. Peer over the fence and you'll see both the park and the access steps that lead down to it. It has a few benches and picnic tables and is very pleasant in spring. Set into the Etruscan wall you should notice the *postierla*, an ancient gateway into the city. Archaeologists believe that the height of the wall reflects the original level of what is now Corso Vannucci, ie. the natural dip between the two hills (ie. Colle del Sole at the Porta Sole end and Colle Landone at the Piazza Italia end) was purposefully filled in to create a more amenable city centre.

Giardini Carducci - A delicate spot at the southern end of Corso Vannucci, the gardens are named after Giosue Carducci, a poet whose famosissimo "Canto dell'Amore" was inspired by the views from this point. Yeah, there's plenty of smiling mountains, bubbling streams and all that. A bust of him faces his favourite lookout along with those of architects Alessi and Calderini, painters Checchi and Pinturicchio and geographer-cum-explorer Orazio Antinori. The big number though is a giant statue of artist Pietro Vannucci, known popularly as Perugino, although the statue was kindly provided by the town of Citta' della Pieve to remind everyone where he really came from. This park is in grand condition thanks to the 2005 renovations which included the peepholes down into the chambers of the Rocca Paolina underneath. A lovers' favourite.

Parco Sant'Antonio - You'll find panoramic views from among the olive groves and a cool refuge on summer afternoons. It's not a great park for soccer unless you fancy fetching the ball from the bottom of the valley when Colin has a wayward shot. To get there go up Corso Garibaldi until you see the Parco sign just after the houses in the low hundreds. It looks like a dead end street but there's a door through the city wall into the park. Technically the park is closed at night although it remains open during summer evenings for the outdoor cinema and bar.

Giardini del Frontone - A favoured meeting point of the Perugian intelligentsia, back in the days when there presumably were some, the Frontone Gardens are elegant and tranquil at any time of year. Except for summer evenings, when they are taken over by a raucous outdoor cinema spinning classics dubbed into *italiano*. Go down the Sant'Ercolano steps, along Corso Cavour and then Borgo XX Giugno until you see the entrance on your right just after the war memorial. It's not really a picnic spot, the Frontone are more suited to quiet philosophy or for writing a postcard to someone special.

Parco Sant'Anna - Go down the Sant'Ercolano steps and then to the intersection. Go right through the Three Arches, left and down the stairs. Cross the road and bear right for 40 metres until you see the steps that lead down toward the Sant'Anna train station. Skirt the right side of the train station until you see the signs for Piazzale Eropa. Take the escalators all the way down, including the last one under the road. Just past the boom gates is the entrance to this park. It's quite extensive and has sporting facilities for the typical Italian addictions of soccer, basketball and bocce. There are also a few quiet spots although it's not a particularly serene or sunny park given the toweringly ugly modern apartment buildings that line either side. If you follow the park all the way to the bottom you eventually come out on Via della Pallotta from where there are buses back up to the centre of town.

Parco Santa Margherita - See *Santa Margherita Park* in the **Walks** section above..

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