



## ALPI APUANE: THE MARBLE MOUNTAINS

A mountain chain close to 2000 m near Mar Ligure, in Northern Tuscany among Lunigiana, Garfagnana and Versilia. *Alpi Apuane* are known for their steep contours and slopes, this is what makes them different from the Apennines. They've been called "*Apuane*" from the population that lived here before the Roman conquest. The name "Alps" has been added afterwards for its particular geo-morphological identity. Extended over a large area of 1000 squared meters, Apuane has been indissolubly tied up since 2000 years to marble quarrying.

Today a good part of them is inserted in the homonymous regional park founded in 1985. The 170 quarries occupy about 5% of the territory. All the rest consist of woods, prairies, caves and pinnacles that dominate the sea. Since the Roman time the marble quarrying, called "*lunense*", has been characterizing Apuane, especially Carrara. We are in front of the biggest marble basin of the world. Complex geological events have produced a pure white marble, composed by 99% of calcium carbonate, making it the most unique in the world. For two thousand years this marble has been beautifying squares, streets, churches and museums all around the world.

Michelangelo, Canova and Moore were regular customers and consumers of these quarries whose products have been beautifully immortalized in their works.



### THE MARBLE BASINS

There are three marble basins in Carrara:

- starting from the East we have Colonnata
- in the center there is Miseglia-Fantiscritti
- in the west we have Ravaccione



It is preferable to visit the quarries in the afternoon or at the weekend for safety reasons.

To get an idea of the mountains of Carrara we can follow three itineraries:

1. The extractive one: starting from the center of Carrara in order to get to Colonnata, right before the village itself, it is possible to visit a roman quarry dating back to the I century B.C. and stop at "la Piana" quarry to see one of these at work. After going past the villages of Codena and Bedizzano, in Colonnata (Via Don. Minzoni, Via Erevan, Via Codena) after trying the tastiness of the place and admiring the village and the landscape heavily modified (not always in a better way) from humans, we get down through the old route, most of which is in tunnels of the unfortunately disappeared marble railway, to Vara bridges ("ponti di vara") (work dating back to the end of



1900 that

assured the transit of the trains full of marble) from Vara bridges we climb up to Fantiscritti where we can visit the local outdoor museum and a quarry in a tunnel.



2. The naturalistic one: getting down from Fantiscritti we head to Torano still following the old railway. Close to Torano there is a stunning landscape.

In Torano it is possible to visit the S.G.F. sculpture laboratory, where among the many works by many different artists from all around the world, a massive marble Cadillac from the 50s is on display.



3. The historical and naturalistic one: our tour starts from the town center of Carrara to Campocecina following the 446 main road to Gragnana Fosdinovo.

Passing through the villages of Gragnana and Castelpoggio, Castelpoggio is in an excellent geographical position.

Before arriving at Campocecina we head to the audiovisual museum of the resistance of the districts of Massa-Carrara and La Spezia were both awarded gold medals for their military valour (Via Delle Prate 12, towards Fosdinovo [www.museodellaresistenza.it](http://www.museodellaresistenza.it)).



*“Young people, if you want to go on a pilgrimage in the location where our Constitution was born, go to the mountains where partisans died, go to the prisons where they were imprisoned, go to the fields where they were hanged. Wherever an Italian died for redeeming liberty and dignity of the nation, go there, with the thought, because this is where our Constitution was born”*

**Piero Calamandrei 1955**

Once the visit has finished we take the main road to Campocecina crossing the Maestà, after 15 minutes by car we arrive at Piazzale dell’Uccelliera from where the quarries and the sea below are dominated by an amazing view.

From Piazzale dell’Uccelliera, after a few hundred meters we reach Piazzale del Belvedere, from there, on foot, after the CAI shelter, we go up to the Campocecina meadows, large acidophil prairies at the height of 1345 meters.

For lovers of walking, there are many footpaths, quite a few of the footpath go to Monte Borla (1466m) and one to Monte Sagro (1749m).



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