

From Panperduto to Tornavento on foot

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Water is the main feature of this new section of **footpaths in Varese Province**. The distance from **Panperduto to Tornavento** is 14 kilometres, in the safe surroundings of nature, and of great works of human ingenuity.

The path lies entirely **within the Ticino Park**, beginning in the car park along Highway 336, which goes from Somma Lombardo into Piedmont. After 600 metres, you come to the Panperduto Dam and Hostel. The way is all indicated, because it is a section of the E1 Path, one of the longest rambling paths, which begins in the North Cape and leads to the very south of the Italian peninsula.

The Ticino and the Industrial and Villoresi Canals are the strongest elements of the walk, together with the blooming nature, which is full of fragrances and of birds of every kind. There are few places where the environment and human ingenuity come together so well. The hydroelectric power station brings wealth to the whole area of the river, and still today, it is possible to see works that were built in the 1800s.

Greater environmental awareness and opportunity, also of a tourist kind, are leading to the development of interesting projects, like the possible navigation from Locarno to Milan, and on to Venice. The second half of this long walk makes all the effort worthwhile, because Tornavento is a concentration of beauty and history.

THE ROUTE

After leaving your car in the small car park opposite a bar on Highway 336, and a long descent from Somma Lombardo towards Piedmont, you soon come to the **Panperduto Dam**. A short distance away, along the towpath of the Naviglio, there is the Hostel, where you can sleep, or stop for a coffee, eat a quick meal, or read a newspaper or two. An assortment of local and Fairtrade products are on sale.

A little further on, at the Dam, is where the **Villoresi Canal begins**. The prettiest way is along the E1 Path, close to the Ticino. At the moment, there is a barrier indicating problems along the section as far as Maddalena. In fact, it is possible to walk along the path, although the initial section has not undergone any maintenance. In any case, there are two alternatives, both of which are interesting. The prettiest is the path that runs between the two canals. It is an easy walk, without any asphalt, which goes as far as the bridge that leads to Maddalena and the ANFFAS community. It takes about 20 minutes of walking, and you can't go wrong because, at a certain point, you have to step up from the path, to reach the bridge.

The other alternative, again from the start of the Villoresi, is to take the towpath on the right of the canal. The road is completely safe, it is closed to traffic, and is used by many cyclists. The distance is the same, because the two ways are parallel.

When you come to the community, continue straight ahead until you reach the Ticino River, and then take the path on the left, which, for a good half hour, winds through the wood with its little stopping points, where you can admire the full beauty of the Ticino. The path leads back onto the towpath of the Villoresi, a little before Vizzola Ticino. Here, you can admire all of the engineering work carried out to

build the power station and the navigation locks. The Pirelli test ground is also nearby.

From Vizzola, the way continues along the Industrial Canal, to the outskirts of Tornavento, where you can climb up again to reach the Villoresi, which flows higher up, and come to the Austro-Hungarian customs building. From there, you can walk along the beautiful Via Gaggio (3 km, with so many relics from the Second World War), or take the avenue to reach the famous square in Tornavento.

USEFUL INFORMATION

The path lies entirely within the **Ticino Park**.

THE TICINO PARK

The Ticino Valley lies partly in Switzerland, and partly on the border between Lombardy and Piedmont; in Italy, it is protected, on the Lombard side, by the Lombard Ticino Valley Park, and on the Piedmont side, by the Ticino Nature Park.

The Ticino River is 248 km long, from the Nufenen Pass in Switzerland, to the confluence with the Po River. The section inside the Park, from Sesto Calende (Varese Province) to Ponte della Becca (Pavia Province), is 110 km long.

In 2002, the Ticino Valley, as a whole, was recognised as a Biosphere Reserve, within UNESCO's Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme. With an extension recognised in 2014, it was named the Ticino Val Grande Verbano Reserve, in 2018, extending the Ticino Valley Reserve as far as the Swiss border.

THE PATHS

The network of cycle and footpaths in the Ticino Park cover a distance of no less than 780 km, of which 122 km is along the towpaths of the Naviglio Canals; they provide the opportunity to venture into nature, in the open air, and to discover the abundance of natural habitats, just a short distance from Milan.

The paths, which are of environmental, historical and cultural interest, are almost entirely unpaved; you'll have fun getting to know the Park.

THE E1 PATH

The European E1 path is a long-distance path that links the North of Europe (North Cape – Norway) and the South of Italy (Cape Passero, near Syracuse). The path is indicated with red-white-red signs bearing "E1"; on foot, and even on the bicycle, in the Ticino Park, the E1 is not easy, but is a real "greenway", connecting the Alps with the Apennines, through one of the most beautiful, lowland river valleys.

di [Translated by Prof. Rolf Cook](#)