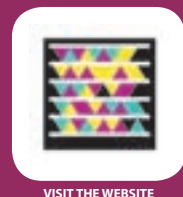


THE VIA FRANCESCA DELLA SAMBUCA

In medieval times, two main roads departed from Pistoia to Bologna: the Via Francesca della Sambuca and the Via Baiana. The latter arrived at Badia a Taona and went to Collina. Along the former that led to Sambuca had significant buildings and staging points. On the Pistoia side, there was the Castle of Santa Margherita, with the hospice of Prato al Vescovo (today, Spedaletto) beyond the ridge. Then followed the Mezzana bridge over Limentra, defended by a keep (San Pellegrino al Cassero), until arriving at the castle of Sambuca, the home of the powerful Vergiolesi family.

As Prof. Sergi wrote, the roads in medieval times were instead "road areas", i.e. bundles of routes that were able to vary direction while maintaining a main line. Used by pilgrims, merchants and travelers as the south-north axis of the peninsula, the Via Francigena basically had the Via Francesca della Sambuca as its byway, which pilgrims traveling to the tomb of Saint James in Spanish Galicia, followed to take up the main road again once past the Apennines. It was this road they left behind at Altopascio with the intention of having an initial redeeming encounter with the Apostle's relic in Pistoia. A few years ago, this stretch of the once highly-traveled medieval road between the castle of Sambuca and Pavana was restored "to the way it had been", creating a fascinating walk through history for tourists.



VISIT THE WEBSITE



PROVINCIA
DI PISTOIA

INFO POINT

Abetone + 39 0573 60231
Cutigliano + 39 0573 68029
Pistoia + 39 0573 21622

info@pistoia.turismo.toscana.it

TEXT

Lorenzo Cipriani

PHOTOS

APT - Italia Turistica Marco
Melodia - Katrin Fox

TRANSLATION

Studio Blitz - Pistoia

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Studio Phaedra

ITINERARIES OF ART AND HISTORY

SAMBUCA AND THE AREA OF THE THREE LIMENTRA RIVERS

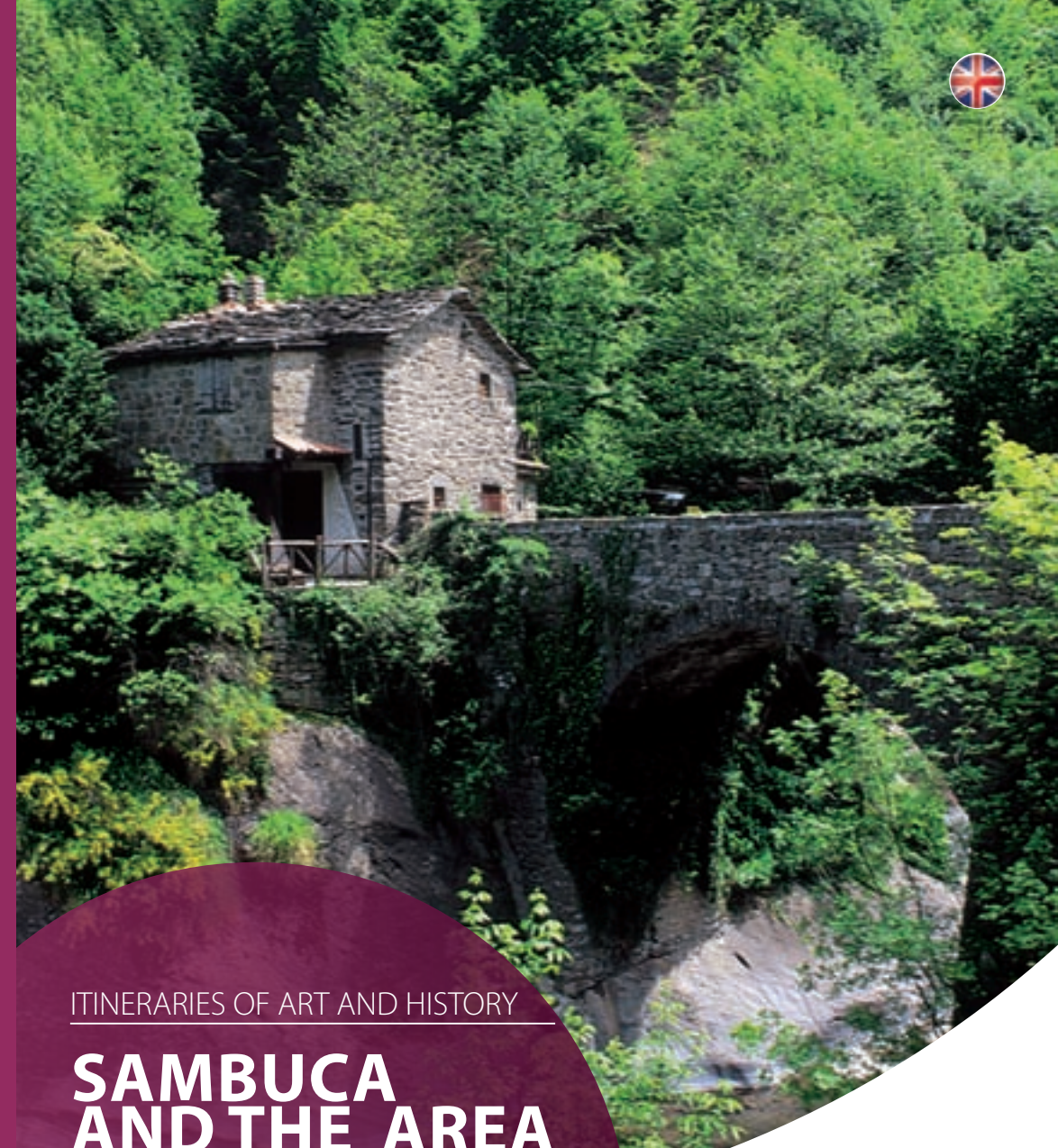
www.pistoia.turismo.toscana.it



AGENZIA
PER IL TURISMO
ABETONE PISTOIA
MONTAGNA P.S.E.



Intervento realizzato all'interno delle azioni previste dal progetto interregionale (L.135/2001 art. 5) "Valorizzazione comprensorio sciistico toscano emiliano" cofinanziato da Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri - Dipartimento per lo sviluppo e la competitività del turismo - e dalla Regione Toscana



SAMBUCA AND THE AREA OF THE THREE LIMENTRA RIVERS

During the classical era, the mountains of Pistoia between the Reno and the three Limentra rivers were indeed a transit area for people and goods crossing the Apennines to reach the Po River valley. The routes and tracks varied, depending on geological conditions (rock falls, landslides) and the convenience of the few residents and travelers. Over time, a number of important works

have been written about pre-Roman and Roman history. For example, one work has been written on the trans-Apennine connection between classical Etruria, which reached as far as the Arno River; the one that looks at the rise of the centers of Marzabotto (Misa?), Felsina (Bologna), and Spina; and the ones about the routes taken by Hannibal and by Catiline in the Roman period.

More reliable information concerns the early Middle Ages when, after the Lombard occupation of Pistoia (at the end of the VI century), the Byzantines retreated over the ridge that formed a defensive line. The Lombard settlements of freemen (arimannias) stood against them; this situation continued for over a century and involved a broad nomad's land, raids and clashes until the Lombard conquest of Ravenna. In the feudal period, these early military settlements had evolved into places called Lambardi, in Pistoian

documents. An important example is that of the castle of the lords of Stagno. This domain, which attempted to expand, gave rise to a conflict that long characterized the mountain beyond the ridge, because the bishop of Pistoia had an important property in the area of Pavana and the Pistoian Church did not want to lose the income from the tolls it collected.

Around the year 1000, the bishop's throne - because it was a holiday period or being ruled by elderly bishops - became the weaker op-



ponent. From that moment on, the City of Pistoia (the first consuls were in 1105) realized that it needed to extend its territory beyond the ridge to be protected from the claims of a strong Bologna.

This led to a war between the two city-states, which lasted until peace was sworn in 1219, thus assuring that the territory of Pistoia extended as far as Sambuca.

Meanwhile, local residents had realized their self-government as a rural community, a self-rule granted by Pistoia, which remained the politically dominant center. The proof is found in the 1291 statute of Sambuca (the document had been lost

and then luckily found again during a 1975 reorganization of the State Archives papers), that is testament to a management model of local life, but one under the podestà sent by Pistoia.

From that time up til now, Sambuca was and is a municipality within the province of Pistoia, bound to the typical industries of the mountains, marked by the buildings whose remains were seen portrayed a few years ago in beautiful drawings by Bill Homes: buildings for drying chestnuts, mills, bunkers for storing bundles of charcoal waiting to be sent to market, livestock barns, roadside shrines, and chapels.

