



This is a series of itineraries inspired by the path taken by St. Francis in 1207, when, following his public spoliation in the main square of Assisi, he left his home to reach Gubbio. This is an opportunity to walk along a path, in the wilderness, nestled amidst the typical woods of Umbria: over 40 kilometres divided into different paths to enjoy on foot, by bicycle or on horseback. All this is complemented by a gratifying landscape, the same seen by St. Francis, an observant and profound admirer of nature, which he considered a reflection of the face of God. This is one of the most beautiful and most interesting itineraries, as far as both landscape and vegetation are concerned. At the border between the municipality of Valfabbrica and that of Assisi, the "Rio Grande" torrent offers us a landscape, still untouched by human hand, in which the vegetation consists mainly of species of trees and shrubs that are typical of the Mediterranean scrub. The numerous species of thermophiles present in this area tell us that on a geological and a climatic level, we are in an atypical pre-Apennine cove, in which there is an unusual microclimate. However, thanks to this and to the uneven morphology of the soil, the Forre di Rio Grande gorges offer the observant and respectful visitor a setting of unique beauty. After arriving at Valfabbrica (on highway SS. 318), if you are coming from Perugia, at the beginning of the village, leave the highway and turn right, following the indications for the Strada Francescana (Franciscan Road) - "Pieve San Nicolò. After about 150 m, after crossing a small bridge, carry on for another 40 m and turn right, ignoring the uphill road, leaving it on our left. From here, proceed for about 600 m, until you reach the locality of il Pioppo. Here, the road forks, bypassing a beautifully renovated farmhouse. Turn left along a dirt road alongside the Rio Grande torrent. After about 1 km there is a dirt road on the right, which crosses the torrent via a small bridge, and leads into a dense undergrowth. Ignoring this, about 10 m from this intersection, the road turns sharply to the left and starts to climb. In the vicinity of this bend, leave the car and continue on foot. Following the path along the Rio Grande torrent, keep to the left for about 300 m, after crossing a flat, unkempt clearing. At this point, the path seems to end, but this is not the case and, after passing a small escarpment, there is a ford on our right, which is easy to cross. After crossing, continue on the path that runs alongside the torrent. After passing through a second clearing, from this point along the trail, the landscape appears in all its beauty. Surrounded by holm oaks (*Quercus ilex*), are evergreen trees, typical of the Mediterranean scrub: *Spartium iunceum* (broom), *Cistus scoparius*, *Juniperus oxicedrus* (red Juniper) and *Smilax aspera* (rough bindweed). We realize that, in just a few metres, we have passed from a vegetative environment characterized by a cold Lauretum to warm Lauretum environment, typical of the Tyrrhenian coast. What nature has achieved in this area is truly unique and unrepeatable. Following the path along the torrent, after about 10 minutes, we find

ourselves faced with a mule track carved in the rock to our left, while on our right the path becomes more and more uneven, forcing us to cross another easy ford. Ignoring the mule track on the left (it should be noted that the road ends after just 20 m), take the path on the right and, from this point on, following the main path and following the torrent you will reach the gorges of the Rio Grande torrent. It is not easy to describe the path here, because the impervious morphology of the area prevents the route from being closing in a loop. Therefore, with extreme caution, continuing along the torrent, we come across some gorges that make it somewhat difficult to continue the journey. Therefore, at this point returning back along the same trail is recommended.

TIME: About two hours