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MAREMMA NATURE PARK AND THE STUNNING RUINS OF SAN RABANO ABBEY

Discover the Parco Naturale della Maremma and its timeless landscapes protected since 1975. Characterized by different natural environments and densely populated by wildlife and plants, it is a fantastic spot for nature and hiking lovers! Among the highlights of the park is the ancient Abbey of San Rabano, founded in the Middle Ages and recently restored.

Maremma Nature Park extends from **Principina a Mare** to **Talamone** and shares an eastern border with the Aurelia State Highway. Densely covered with a luxuriant Mediterranean vegetation, the **Monti dell'Uccellina** hills occupy the central and southern parts of the area and offer fantastic views over the Tyrrhenian coast, Giglio, Elba and Corsica. The dark waters of the **River Ombrone** flow into

the sea and mix gradually with the green waters of the Tyrrhenian, creating a remarkable scenographic effect; the park is characterized by several natural environments, including the **Trappola marshes** and some **wonderful dunes** covered with stone pine woods and crossed by artificial waterways built by the **Dukes of Lorraine**. The park's wildlife consists mainly of animals such as wild boars, foxes and fallow deers; however, it also includes badgers, roe deers, porcupines, weasels, wildcats and stone martens. The area is also rich in holm oak, oak and strawberry trees, scotch broom shrubs, thyme, cistus and rosemary. In order to visit the park, you need to go to the Centro Visite di Alberese, open daily from 8.30am to 8.00pm. From there, a bus will take you to **Pratini**, the departure point for all routes within the park.

The stunning ruins of **San Rabano Abbey** are located at the end of **Route 1**, right in the heart of the park and along the ridge of the Monti dell'Uccellina hills. The trail takes approximately 5 hours to complete. Founded in the Middle Ages as a Benedictine Monastery, San Rabano passed to the **Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem** who began some fortification works and also built the nearby **Uccellina watchtower**.

In the 16th century, the monastery was permanently abandoned and entered a long period of decay and neglect that only ended 400 years later, when the first phase of the renovation works started.

In order to reach San Rabano Abbey, you need to take a path that runs along an abandoned olive grove and enters a beautiful holm oak forest. After a steep climb, the path reaches level ground and then descends and climbs again onto **Poggio Lecci**, the highest point in the park. From the top of this hill, you can enjoy amazing views over the Tuscan Archipelago, the Corsica mountains and the mouth of the River Ombrone; before continuing, breathe in deeply and allow the intense scent of thyme to fill your lungs! The stunning ruins of San Rabano Abbey are just around the corner; in a few minutes, you will be admiring this wonderful, unroofed abbey and its imposing bell tower that stands out against the sky, surrounded by lush green vegetation.

The Parco Naturale della Maremma is a true paradise on earth rich in hiking trails that lead to unspoilt beaches, cliffs, old fortifications and green plains, where long-horned cattle and wild horses graze undisturbed. Best points of entry by air are either Pisa or **Rome** and hire a car is definitely the best way to explore the hinterland, which is no less beautiful. One of those places you just can't afford to miss when visiting Tuscany!

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