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Ressort: Reise & Tourismus

The trails of the Elsa River

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The trails of the Elsa River offer a unique experience that blends nature and history. Along the path, immersed in lush vegetation, you can admire the crystal-clear waters of the Elsa, waterfalls, and ancient mills. It's an ideal itinerary for those seeking tranquility and unspoiled beauty.

The Elsa River flows through the Italian region of Tuscany, originating near Poggibonsi and extending for about 40 kilometers. Its waters, a deep green, are fed by high-quality springs and traverse enchanting landscapes. In past eras, the Elsa was crucial for milling activities, thanks to the numerous mills that harnessed its power. Today, the river remains a symbol of natural beauty and historical heritage.

Sentierelsa is a beautiful natural trail that runs along the Elsa River for 2 km, reaching the San Giorgio area. The trekking route starts at Gracciano, south of Colle di Val d'Elsa, specifically from the San Marziale bridge. This starting point is highly recommended due to the ample free parking available. After parking, walk a few hundred meters up the road, cross the San Marziale bridge, and enter the Val d'Elsa river park. Alternatively, there is a northern entrance along Provincial Road Colligiana. Park your car on Via dei Cipressi, cross the road, and you will find the trail entrance.

Starting from the Gracciano area, from the pedestrian walkway, you can admire two hydraulic engineering works, the Steccaia and the Callone Reale, dating back to the medieval period. These structures were primarily used for irrigation and later as a power source for mills, paper mills, and other industrial uses. After walking 200 meters, you reach the spectacular Diborrato waterfall: a drop of 15 meters high and over 10 meters deep. Descending along the well-maintained and easily accessible trail, you can view the Bear Caves beneath the waterfall, named for their vague resemblance to a bear's shape. The trail then ascends for 100 meters before reconnecting with the river, where there is a large, flat boulder.

You then reach the Gore Rotte, where the other entrance to the park is located, featuring some small bridges and Tibetan-style walkways. Along the trail, you can admire numerous elevations, natural limestone pools, and small rapids created by white boulders. During the hike, it's not uncommon to smell sulfur, as the Colle

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Val d'Elsa river park is subject to underground hydrothermal phenomena that leave traces of sulfur and other minerals. The deposition of calcium carbonate results in the formation of white limestone pools that give the river its characteristic turquoise color. The river is swimmable, and you can relax along its banks to the soothing sound of the water beneath the vegetation.

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