



Pino Striegola



sea level. From there the scenery opens up onto the karst plateau and onto the range of hills whose highest peak is Mount Hermada (323 metres). Leaving this panoramic point the path skirts the steep Cliffs through solitary black pines, across limestone pavements and rock outcrops with growing bushes. Entering the artificially planted pinewood you get to the crossroad from where you can reach the main road SS 14.

The main path continues along the edge of the Cliffs, and, through the wood and across the rocks,

THE PROTECTED AREA CLEARLY SHOWS THE PASSAGE FROM THE WOODLAND TO THE MEDITERRANEAN SCRUB



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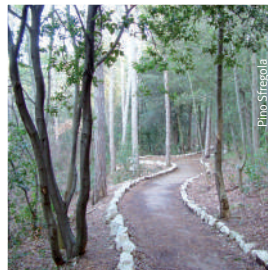
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Regional Nature Reserve THE DUINO CLIFFS

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THE RILKE PATH

Starting the path from the side of Sistiana near the Tourist Office, you skirt a camping site on the right and an abandoned quarry near the sea on the left. At the end of the quarry the path crosses a limestone pavement of outcropping furrowed calcareous rocks and scree deposits. There you can see low twisted black pines that endure extreme weather conditions. Leaving the limestone pavement you can reach the Second World War bunker that is now used as a panoramic point. Walking down a secondary path that opens up onto the Cliffs, it is possible to admire the coast below from a little terrace. The main path continues through a sparse wood and across limestone pavements up to a height indicated by a sign as a scenic point. It is the highest point of the path: 90 metres above



The Rilke Path

reaches a panoramic point located on the ruins of another Second World War bunker. Then, it gets to the crossroads where it is possible to turn towards the main road or to continue towards the new part of the path as far as the town of Duino. The path skirts some military excavations and continues through a thick vegetation of pines and holm oaks as far as the town of Duino. For people with reduced and impaired motor capacities the path starts from the town of Duino and reaches the terrace on the edge of the Cliffs.

HOW TO GET THERE

Driving along SS 14 from Trieste towards Monfalcone go past Sistiana and get to the parking area near the crossroads of Sistiana mare where you can find the signs indicating the Rilke Path.

You can reach the Rilke Path also from Duino.

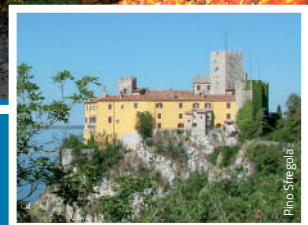
From Venice or Udine towards Trieste exit from the A4 motorway at Duino junction.



FRIULI
VENEZIA
GIULIA
Parchi e riserve naturali



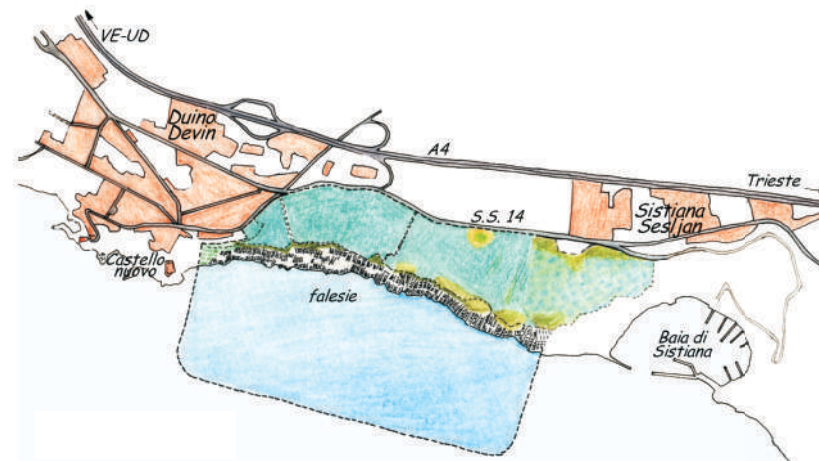
Sumac in Autumn



Pino Sfragola



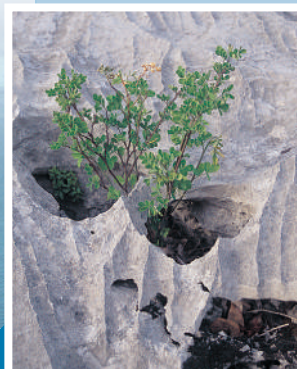
Pino Sfragola



IN AUTUMN SUMAC TINTS THE LANDSCAPE RED

Established in 1996, the Nature reserve of the Cliffs of Duino encompasses an area of 107 hectares along a narrow strip of land where it is possible to see the change from the Central European to the Mediterranean biogeography. The high biodiversity gives life to a landscape of rare beauty characterized by white limestone cliffs dropping sheer to the sea.

The path, named after Bohemian poet Rainer Maria Rilke, was inaugurated in 1987. It extends for over 1,700 metres and provides access to the nature reserve from both Sistiana and Duino (parking areas). Anybody can walk this level path to admire the morphology of rocks and the richness of the protected flora and fauna.



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WHAT TO SEE

The Cliffs of Duino are the only place in the world where you can find *Centaurea kartschiana*, a plant that grows on the Cliffs closest to the sea. You can also observe the surface karst phenomena derived from the water erosion process on the limestone. The action of rain creates the spectacular limestone pavements, furrows and small circular depressions, but it can also perforate the rock, thus enabling scree vegetation to grow. The white limestone is the star of the Reserve and forms single towers along the coast or rocky outcrops along the crests both well modelled by karst phenomena. The Rilke path winds, skirting the military emplacements, along the crest of the Cliffs between the new Castle of Duino and the bay of Sistiana. From the path you can enjoy the vast panorama over the Gulf of Trieste from the mouth of the Isonzo River to Punta Salvore (Savudrija) in Croatia.



Damiana Ota



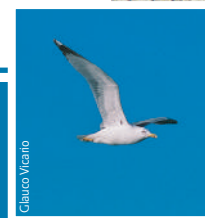
Damiana Ota

FLORA AND FAUNA

Like the whole karst plateau the Cliffs of Duino are made up of carbonate rocks that developed in the Cretaceous (120 million years ago) from the sedimentation of the shells of plankton animals on the bottom of a shallow sea, the Tethys.



Damiana Ota



Clauco Vicario



THE STAR OF THE RESERVE IS THE WHITE LIMESTONE MODELLED BY KARST PHENOMENA

About 50 million years ago, in the Eocene, the pushes of the African plate against the Baltic one vertically brought the seabed to the surface, forming the sharp cliffs dropping sheer to sea. Though most of the Reserve is covered by black pines that divide the SS 14 from the Rilke path, the protected area clearly shows the change from woodland to Mediterranean scrub mainly composed of holm oaks and hornbeams. Towards the sea they gradually give way to shrubs (terebinth, Christ's thorns and especially sumacs) and to rock vegetation. *Prunus mahaleb* and *centaurea kartschiana*, an endemic plant with pink-purple flowers, grow on scree deposits and ravines.

This is the suitable habitat for reptiles (snakes, vipers and lizards) and for the nesting of resident birds such as blue rock thrushes, yellow-legged gulls and common ravens. However, you should not forget the peregrine falcon, an endangered species that has found shelter in the most inaccessible areas of the Cliffs. Between Autumn and Spring you can often watch many migratory or winter species such as grebes, while the pinewood gives shelter to chaffinches, jays, woodpeckers, sparrow hawks and squirrels.



Damiana Ota