


# From Via De Bildt to Vicolo di Sant'Urbano


## Caffarella Valley

This itinerary runs entirely in the Caffarella Valley, an uncontaminated natural oasis surrounded by some of the most densely populated neighbourhoods of Rome, frequented uninterruptedly since Roman times. Its name come from the Caffarelli family, who, in the 16th century, consolidated the area into a single estate and put it to good use as farmland; it later became the property of the Pallavicini and, ultimately, of the Torlonia family.

The Valley hosts many archaeological remains and monuments, including, along the itinerary, a Roman cistern converted into a barn by the landowning Torlonia family, the 16th century Casale della Vaccareccia farmhouse, one of the many farms that dotted the area, testifying to its agricultural use in modern times, on a strategic position along the banks of the river Almone. Across the bridge, and continuing along the valley, you come to the Nymphaeum of Egeria, a monumental fountain dedicated to the nymph with the same name, and the Temple of Ceres and Faustina, which was converted into the church of Sant'Urbano in the early Middle Ages.

From here, where the itinerary ends, you can continue exploring the valley on one other interesting itineraries shown on the map in Vicolo di Sant'Urbano.

  
POI

  
Distance

**7**

**1.84 Km**

### Poi

- 1 The Caffarella Valley – Via Carlo de Bildt
- 2 Torlonia Cistern – Barn
- 3 Casale della Vaccareccia
- 4 River Almone (North)
- 5 The Nymphaeum of Egeria
- 6 Temple of Ceres and Faustine - Church of Sant'Urbano
- 7 The Caffarella Valley – Vicolo di Sant'Urbano



Scan the QrCode to access the navigable mobile version of the itinerary

# Poi 1



## Info

Free admission.

## Address

Via Carlo de Bildt - Roma (RM)

## How to get

From METRO LINE A station FURIO CAMILLO exit to via Baronio and walk for 14 minutes.

## The Caffarella Valley – Via Carlo de Bildt

### Roma / Place to visit - Natural area

The Caffarella Valley is an expanse of public land, covering an area of 190 hectares, bounded by the Aurelian Walls, Via Latina and Via dell'Almone. Its name comes from an estate owned by the noble Caffarelli family, who built a farmhouse here, in the 16th century, known as "Vaccareccia", and which can still be seen in the Park.

The area was listed as public parkland in the 1965 Zoning Plan, and today visitors may enter and appreciate its natural beauty and archaeological remains via a number of gates in the surrounding neighbourhoods. This green valley, crossed by the river Almone, features many archaeological remains, tombs, villas, towers and waterworks, having been inhabited since the 6th century BC. Initially consisting entirely of farmland, in the Imperial age it became a highly prized residential area. In particular, we know from the ancient sources that, at the time, Herodes Atticus, a prominent Athenian orator and politician, who lived in Rome in the 2nd century AD, owned a vast estate and built a huge villa here (known as the *Pagus Triopius*), the core of which, having passed into the hands of the emperor, later became the Villa of Maxentius.

Evocative buildings here are the so-called "*nymphaeum* of Egeria", the church of Sant'Urbano, originally dedicated to Ceres and Faustina, the tomb of Annia Regilla, the deceased wife of Herodes Atticus. Also of interest is the "Valca Tower", built as a mill in around the 11th century, on the shores of the river, as part of a fulling mill for manufacturing cloth.

# Poi 2



## Address

Via della Caffarella - Roma (RM)

## How to get

From METRO LINE A station COLLI ALBANI walk for 11 minutes along Via Marco Menghini towards Largo Tacchi Venturi.

## Torlonia Cistern – Barn

### Roma / Place to visit - Cistern

The Caffarella Valley, thanks to the lay of the land and abundance of water, being crossed by the river Almone, was exploited since Roman times, for farming purposes, as well as being appreciated as a setting for several wealthy suburban villas, with large rooms, baths, gardens and fountains. This is the reason for the presence, in the Valley, of a large number of cisterns – storage tanks for collecting water – an example of which is the so-called "Torlonia Cistern – Barn".

Built originally in the period between the end of the Republic and the Early Imperial age (between the end of the 1st century BC and the beginning of the 1st century AD), it probably belonged to a large villa the remains of which have been unearthed between via Carlo de Bildt and the Casale della Vaccareccia farmhouse. The walls of the cistern are built of concrete containing leucitite aggregates and it has a rectangular ground plan measuring 14 x 5.50 metres. Its unusual name is down to the fact that, between the end of the 19th and the early 20th centuries, it was converted into a barn by the owners of the estate, the wealthy and powerful Torlonia family, as part of the refurbishment of the Tarani cistern. On that occasion, an upper floor was added, to be used as a warehouse.

The building partially collapsed, in 2011, after which restoration and strengthening works were carried out.

# Poi 3



## Casale della Vaccareccia

### Roma / Place to visit - Casali

The Casale della Vaccareccia farmhouse is one of the many farmhouses built in the Caffarella Valley and incorporates a Medieval watchtower built to defend the Roman countryside.

It was erected in 1547 by the Caffarelli family, and important family of the Roman nobility, who

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had started purchasing land in the area since 1529 and eventually built up an estate covering almost the entire valley. The Caffarelli sold the estate in 1695 to the Pallavicini, who, about a century later, in 1816, sold it to the Torlonia.

Poi 4

River Almone (North)

Roma / Place to visit - Natural area

In Roman times, the stream crossing the entire length of the Caffarella Valley was called *Almo flumen* (river Almo) and was the third most important waterway of the ancient city. Its headsprings being located in the Alban Hills, near the modern-day town of Marino, and it crossed the Roman countryside before reaching the city.

In this area, near the Tenuta della Caffarella estate, the river was fed by the Fonte Egeria springs, after which it crossed the Aventino Valley and then flowed into the Tiber. Ovid mentions a solemn festival linked to the river and held every year on 27 March, since 205 BC, called the *lavatio Matris deum*, during which the black stone symbolising the goddess Cybele (Magna Mater) and the sacred ritual objects used in her temple on the Palatine hill were washed at the point of confluence of the Almone and the Tiber. Almo, Virgil recounts in Book VII of his Aeneid, was also the name of a young woman at the court of the Latin king, associated with the legend of the arrival, on the coast of Latium, of the Trojan Aeneas, fleeing from the destruction of Troy, the first to die in the clash between the Latins and the Trojans. Since the 16th century the river has also been called Acquataccio (Bad Water), from which marrana dell'Acquataccio or marrana della Caffarella, marrana meaning ditch in the Roman dialect. In 1939, the river, after the point where it is crossed by the Via Appia, was covered over and channelled into an underground pipe to the wastewater treatment facility of Roma Sud.

At the Casale della Vaccareccia farmhouse the river is crossed by a small brick and tufa bridge.

Poi 5

Address

Valle della Caffarella - Roma (RM)

How to get

From METRO LINE B station COLOSSEO take the BUS 118 to APPIA PIGNATELLI/S.URBANO stop, alternatively, from METRO LINE A station ARCO DI TRAVERTINO take the BUS 660 to ALMONE stop.

The Nymphaeum of Egeria

Roma / Place to visit - Nymphaeum

The nymphaeum owes its name to a Renaissance antiquarian tradition, according to which, based on the interpretation of several ancient texts, this was the location of the legendary grotto of the water nymph Egeria, trusted advisor and lover of king Numa Pompilius. However, the actual water springs and grove sacred to Egeria were probably located close to the Porta Capena gate, at the beginning of the Via Appia, while the so-called Nymphaeum of Egeria we see here is a brick structure dating to the 2nd century AD, belonging to the huge estate of the wealthy Athenian orator Herodes Atticus, one of many buildings the remains of which still dot the Caffarella Valley today. Rather than being a monumental fountain archaeological investigations have shown that it was a recreational building, designed to host banquets and other leisurely activities in the summer months, of a type commonly found in the wealthy countryside villas built on the edges of the ancient city, fashioned to look like a natural cave set in a rural landscape. The building consists of two rectangular chambers arranged to form a T shape; the first chamber is barrel vaulted and has three niches on each longer side and a large niche at the end, which, today, hosts a marble statue of a river god, probably the god Almo. The floor was paved with slabs of green serpentine marble, while the walls were clad with verde antique marble and the niches faced with white marble. The grotto was also decorated with colourful glass-paste mosaics, sea shells and pumice stones in imitation of a natural cavern.

Poi 6



#### Address

Vicolo S. Urbano, Roma - Roma (RM)

#### How to get

From METRO B station COLOSSEO take the BUS 118 to APPIA PIGNATELLI/SANT'URBANO stop.

## Temple of Ceres and Faustine - Church of Sant'Urbano

### Roma / Place to visit - Churches

Easily accessible from Vicolo Sant'Urbano, which branches off Via Appia Pignatelli on the left, at about 800 metres from the Catacombs of Pretestato, there is a Roman temple which, in the 9th century, was modified and consecrated as a church dedicated to St. Urban.

The original temple, erected in the 2nd century AD by Herodes Atticus as a "prostyle" temple with a colonnaded porch, on a low podium and with the cell in the centre, is believed to have been dedicated to Ceres and Faustina, as a memorial to his deceased wife Annia Regilla.

Its appearance was radically altered in 1634, during the restoration work commissioned by Pope Urban VIII, who had the spaces between the columns bricked in and a bell tower added on the roof.



#### Info

Free admission.

#### Address

Vicolo di S. Urbano - Roma (RM)

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From METRO LINE B station COLOSSEO take the BUS 118 to APPIA PIGNATELLI/SANT'URBANO stop.

## The Caffarella Valley – Vicolo di Sant'Urbano

### Roma / Place to visit - Natural area

The Vicolo di Sant'Urbano is an alley on the southern edge of the Caffarella Valley, a huge expanse of public land, covering an area of 190 hectares, bounded by the Aurelian Walls, Via Latina and Via dell'Almone. Its name comes from an estate owned by the noble Caffarelli family, who built a farmhouse here, in the 16th century, known as "Vaccareccia", and which can still be seen in the Park.

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# Poi 7