

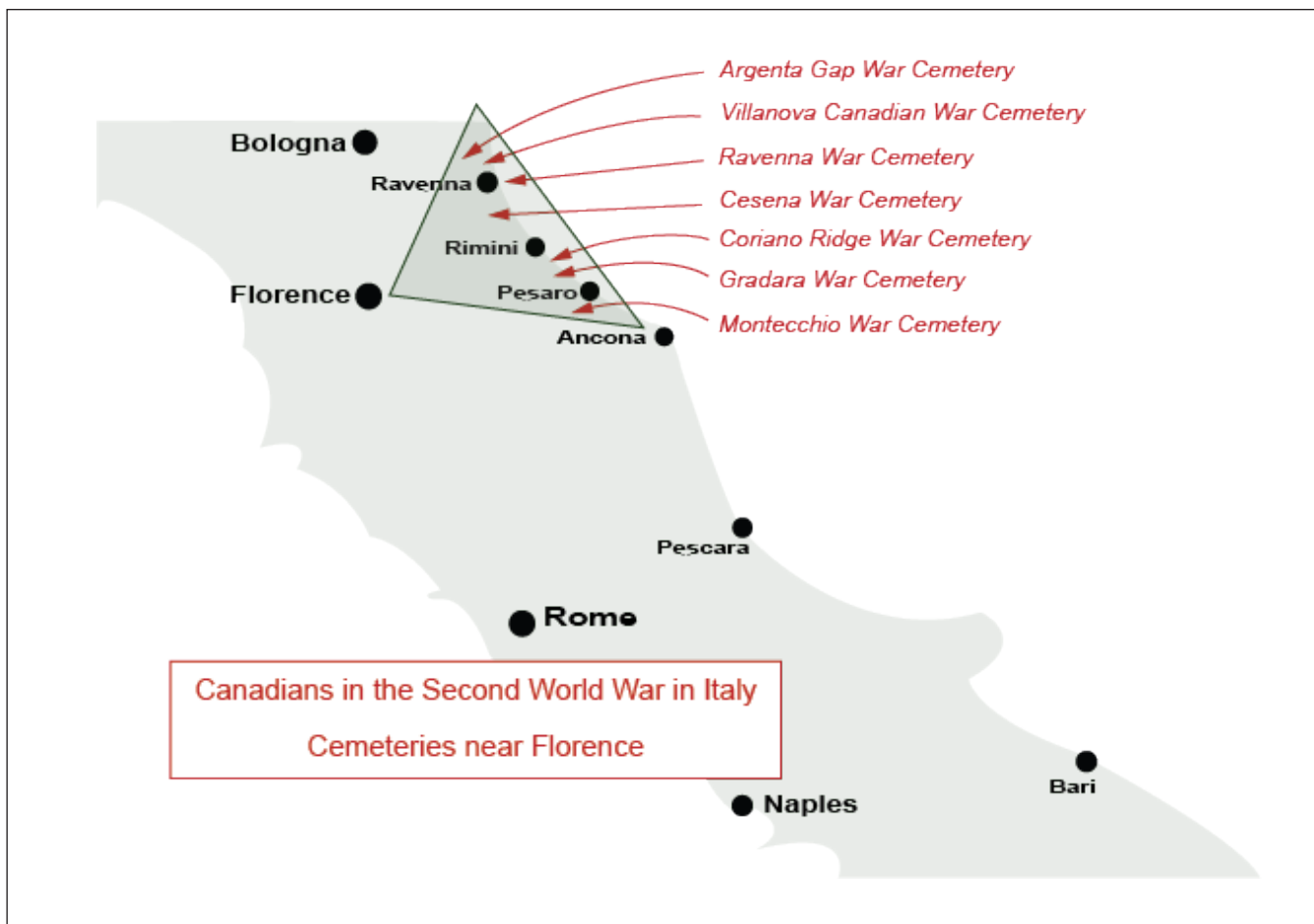


CANADA REMEMBERS GUIDE

WWII in One Day from Florence

You will find seven Commonwealth war cemeteries on the east coast of Italy, just an hour from Bologna and two hours from Florence.

There are a lot of Canadian burials in these cemeteries because of intense and deadly fighting in these areas in late 1944 and early 1945 as the Allies moved north and the Germans fought back from well-reinforced defensive positions. Also, don't miss the war cemeteries in Florence and Bologna, where Canadians can be found among the war dead of the Commonwealth.





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Notes for the traveller: This itinerary assumes that you are staying in Florence so starting and ending there. The fastest way to get to the cemeteries on the coast, east of Florence, is to go through Bologna. There is an “Autostrade” – that is, an “A” road from Florence to Bologna. Make sure you keep the toll booth ticket because you need it to pay upon exiting the highway!

If you have more time, it’s nice to break up this trip and stay a night in Bologna (I did and loved it!) or at any of the beautiful coastal towns. I tried to build in some time for quick coffee and lunch breaks.

There are Commonwealth cemeteries in both Florence (50 Canadians) and Bologna (31 Canadians). Descriptions of those two cemeteries can be found at the end of this itinerary in case you are able to do those as well. The good news is that this is your trip so you can make alternations to customize it. You can email me at CanadaRemembersGuide@gmail.com if you have questions, need help, or have suggestions. Feel free to send me an email to let me know how the trip went.

The name of each cemetery in this itineary is the one used by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) on their website (cwgc.org). However, it’s not necessarily the name that comes up in map searches, so I have provided those names and spellings as well. Sometimes the addresses are slightly different too, so I have provided both. The CWGC maintains all Commonwealth cemeteries and the website has good descriptions of each location. If you are looking for a particular person or regiment, this website is invaluable. If there is a padlock on the gate after hours, check the CWGC site for the code.

Don’t forget to sign the Visitors Book. Bring small Canadian flags with you to lay at the headstones of our Canadian soldiers. If you are with kids, maybe they can paint a small rock with a flag or message, which they can then lay at a headstone. Pack water and snacks in the car. Gas stations on the autostrade have excellent restrooms and food, which you should use because the small towns you will be travelling through do not always have facilities. Maps in this guide are for illustration and are not to scale. Safe travels! KW

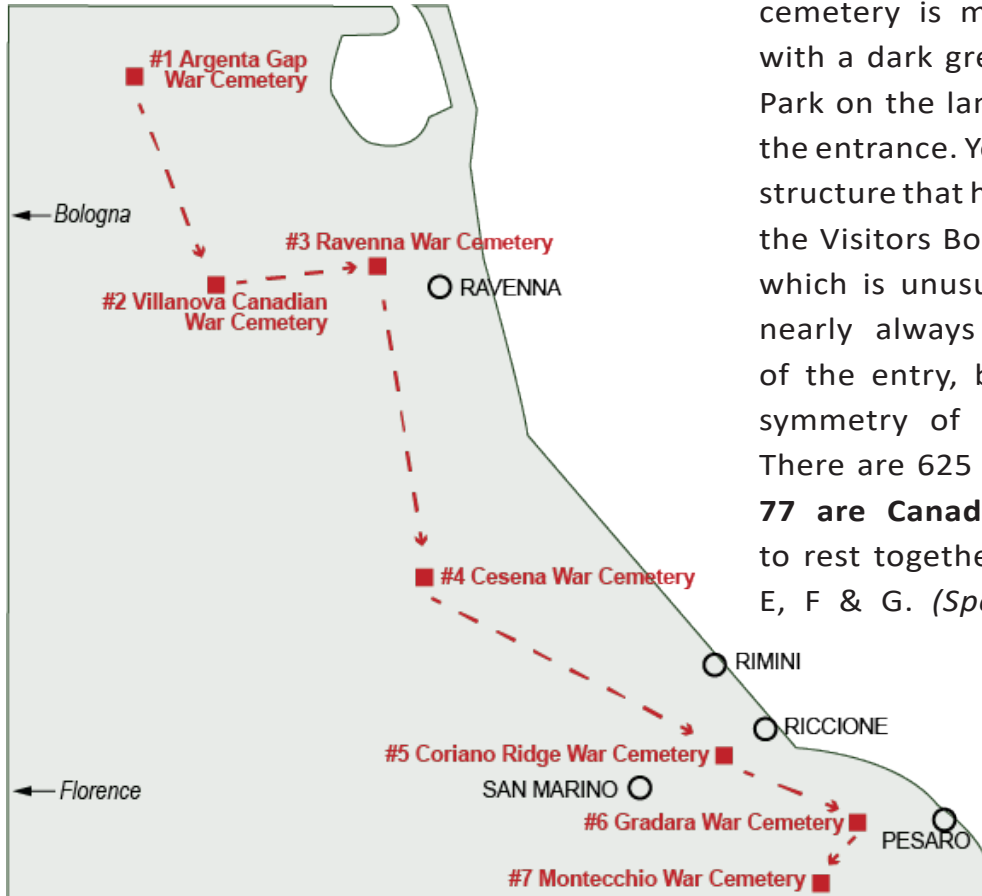


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SELF-GUIDED ITINERARY:

8.00am **#1** Set GPS [180km] to **ARGENTA GAP WAR CEMETERY**, which is just 2km south of the town of Argenta [Address: Via Piangipane snc, 44011 Argenta]. The



cemetery is marked from the road with a dark green CWGC arrow sign. Park on the laneway right in front of the entrance. You will notice the small structure that houses the Registry and the Visitors Book is front and center, which is unusual, as this building is nearly always located to the side of the entry, but it emphasizes the symmetry of this lovely cemetery. There are 625 burials here, of which **77 are Canadians**. They were laid to rest together in Plot 4 in rows D, E, F & G. *(Spend 15-30 min here.)*

11.30am **#2** Set GPS [40km] to **VILLANOVA CANADIAN WAR CEMETERY** (map search shows: “Cimitero Canadese Villanova di Bagnacavallo”), located between the towns of Bagnavallo and Ravenna. The cemetery is on a road called “Via Chiesa” but the address on the CWGC website [Via Chiesa 11, 48020 Bagnacavallo] seems to be a parking area nearby. It is better to search by the name, which will get you right to the entry. The cemetery is marked from the road with a dark green CWGC arrow sign. This a Commonwealth cemetery but designated as Canadian as **all but six of the 212 burials are Canadian**. It is a wide but narrow cemetery adjacent to a road that has benches painted with Canadian flags and trees covered in crocheted poppies and flags . It is clear that locals help keep remembrance alive here. – not to be missed! *(Spend 15-30 min here.)*



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1.00pm **#3** Set GPS [6km] to **RAVENNA WAR CEMETERY** (map search shows “Ravenna Commonwealth War Cemetery”). The CWGC website shows the address as Via Piangipane 24B, 48100 Piangipane but my map search showed Via Piangipane 24, 48124 Ravenna - both work. There is a dark green CWGC arrow sign on the road across from the entry but, when I was there, it was hidden behind large garbage bins, so I drove past it a couple of times. You cannot see the cemetery from the road but there is parking at the road entry. From there, you will walk past the stones framing the parking area and follow a wide, grassy, tree-lined path to the cemetery gates. I was touched to see how many beautiful messages were in the Visitors Book. Of the 956 burials here, **438 are Canadians**. They are laid to rest mostly in Plots 2, 3, 5 & 6 although there are a couple of Canadians in Plots 1 & 4, as well. (*Spend 15-30 min here.*)

1.45pm **#4** Set GPS [45km] to **CESENA WAR CEMETERY** on the eastern edge of the town of Cesena (map search shows “CWGC Cesena War Cemetery”). This one was a bit tricky to find as the service road leading to the entry gates starts in the parking lot for the Cesena Rugby Club. The address on the CWGC site is Via Spinelli, 47023 Cesena which did not work for me but the address that came up in my map search is Via Altiero Spinelli, 47521 Cesena (same as Cesena Rugby Club). It is a quiet and lovely cemetery. Of 775 burials here, **307 are Canadians**. They are laid to rest in Plots 3, 4, & 8, although there are also a few at the back of Plots 5 & 7. (*Spend 15-30 min here.*)

3.15pm **#5** Set GPS [42km] to **CORIANO RIDGE WAR CEMETERY**, which is just inland from the coastal resort town of Rimini [Address on CWGC website is Via Piane, 4, 47853 Coriano and my map search yielded “xv d, 4, 47838 Coriano. Both work.]. This is a large cemetery, with nearly two thousand burials. Of the 1,940 men laid to rest here, **428 are Canadian**. There are twenty plots; Canadians are in Plots 1, 2, 9, 10, 13 & 14. (*Spend 15-30 min here.*)

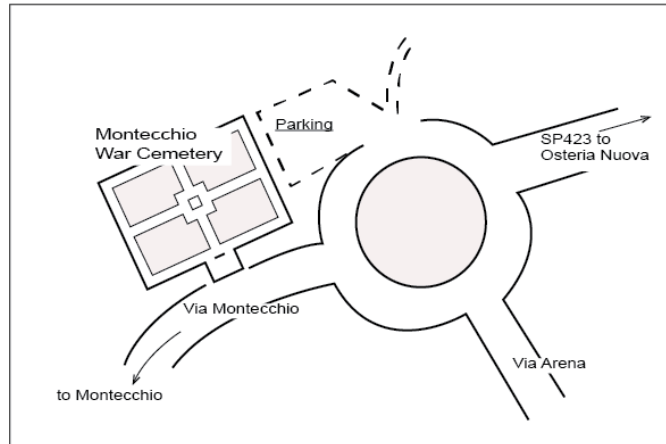
4.15pm **#6** Set GPS [20km] to **GRADARA WAR CEMETERY** (map search shows “CWGC Gradara War Cemetery”), located east of the town of Gradara. [The address on the CWGC website is Via Pesaro, 61012 Gradara which did not work for me. A search by name got me there and showed the address as “61121 Pesaro”.] It is on a small road off the Via Pesaro on the east side of Autostrade E35/A14, well marked with a dark green CWGC arrow sign. Inside the gates, you will see the Registry/ Visitors Book shelter and the Cross of Sacrifice and then, if you look up the hillside, you will see long rows of graves ranging from A at the bottom to H, at the top. Of the 1,192 burials here, **369 are Canadians** and they are laid to rest in Rows G & H. (*Spend 15-30 min here.*)



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5.15pm **#7** Set GPS [15km] to **MONTECCHIO WAR CEMETERY**, which is just inland from the coastal town of Pesaro in the town of Montecchio (map search shows “Cimitero di guerra inglese”). [Address in the map search shows up as Via Montecchio 158, 61025 Vallefoglia, which is slightly different than the one given on the CWGC website]. There is no parking at the front entry gate but there is a small lot off to the side, accessible via the roundabout. This is a smaller cemetery with 582 burials, of which more than one half – that is, **289 are Canadians** who are laid to rest in Plots 1 & 3. *(Spend 15-30 min here.)*



----- RETURN TO FLORENCE -----

ADDENDUM:

FLORENCE WAR CEMETERY

The Florence War Cemetery (map search shows: “CWGC Florence War Cemetery”) is located 10 km to the east of central Florence [Address: Via Aretina, 38, 50061 Girone]. There is a parking lot in front of the entry gates, which looks down and over this large and beautiful cemetery. When I visited, I had Canadian flags in one hand and was juggling two cameras in the other. Two gardeners came rushing over and, although we could not understand each other’s languages, they gestured and led me to the resting places of several Canadians in this cemetery. They made sure I found the Canadians. Very emotional. Of the 1,637 burials here, **50 are Canadians**. It is well worth the visit.

BOLOGNA WAR CEMETERY

The Bologna War Cemetery (map search shows: “CWGC Bologna War Cemetery”) is located 8km to the southeast of central Bologna [Address: Via Dozza Giuseppe 32, 40139 Bologna]. There is no parking at the entry gates, so I parked nearby on a small side street. This is a small, lovely cemetery with only 185 burials, of which **31 are Canadians**.