



REGIONE LAZIO

Surprising Lazio

Walking through time

PARKS, CASTLES, MONASTERIES:
DISCOVERING HISTORY AND LEGENDS
FROM THE HEART OF LAZIO





REGIONE LAZIO

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After “Surprising Lazio - Where History meets the Sea”, the guide to the archaeological treasures of the coast of Lazio, we renew our commitment to provide new and updated means of promoting the Region of Lazio’s tourist activities, both in Italy and abroad.

“Surprising Lazio - Walking through Time” starts from the reality of the environmental systems present in Lazio and aims at creating virtual thematic systems regarding the heart of the region.

In order to meet the evident demand for authenticity, local character and substantiality of the present tourist demand, the guide offers particular cultural proposals in addition to the theme of environmental values thus enhancing the entire artistic, historical, and religious heritage of the five Lazio regions, also through charming popular traditions and legends.

In the spirit of an evocative discovery journey through the history of our civilization, let us explore parks and nature reserves along interesting and original itineraries, and meet splendid fortified structures among towns, castles and abbeys.

Their charm will guide us through art and history, faith and legends, nature and traditions, providing a new and unexpected rhythm to our walks through time.

Luigi Ciaramelletti

*Councilor for the Promotion of Culture,
Entertainment, Sports and Tourism*



REGIONE LAZIO



**Surprising
Lazio!**

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THE UPPER TUSCIA
OF LAZIOA THOUSAND
DISCOVERIES IN THE
FOOTSTEPS OF BANDITS

We start our journey into the heart of Lazio amidst breathtaking natural scenery in Tuscia, the noble land crossed since antiquity by pilgrims and travelers, scene of power struggles between Guelphs and Ghibellines, rich in traditions and cultures of remote origin.

CASTLES AND FORTRESSES

THE MONALDESCHI DELLA
CERVARA FORTRESS
Bolsena

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN DOMINATED BY THE SPLENDID ROCCA MONALDESCHI awaits us on the hill slopes of the Monti Volsini overlooking Lake Bolsena, the largest lake of volcanic origin in Italy. The first defensive town wall and watchtower, corresponding to the main tower of the present fortress, were built in 1156 over the remains of ancient *Velzna*, the last of the 12 Etruscan cities conquered by the Romans (256 BC), and the Roman town of *Volsinii*.

Those were the days of the raids of Frederick Barbarossa when Pope Hadrian IV ordered the fortification of all the towns situated along the *Vià Cassia*. The original fortress was erected in 1295, and in the early 1300s, following a vaster fortification campaign of the numerous Monaldeschi castles, members of Cervara faction started living there on a regular basis. In 1334 Ermanno Monaldeschi became podestà of the village and consolidated the authority of his family that obtained ownership of the fortress by order of Boniface VIII (1398), and later of Alexander V (1409). Political events and the decline of the Monaldeschi (1451) caused the



Bolsena, Fortress of the Monaldeschi della Cervara: facade.

fortress to be abandoned in 1460; raids and fires, also at the hand of the Lansquenets, caused further damage. In 1612, the structure was assigned to Cardinal Sanesio, bishop of Orvieto, who promoted restorations that proved useless in the wake of the terrible earthquake of 1665. Used as a prison and warehouse, it was restructured again in 1750 when Benedict XIV assigned it in perpetual lease to Captain Florido Zampi. Yet in 1815, the population itself preferred to destroy the castle rather than leave it to Luciano Bonaparte, prince of nearby Canino.

Since the 1400s the Monaldeschi Castle has been named after the noble and influential family that, when resident in Bolsena, carried out important restoration and expansion on the structure. From being an ancient medieval castle, the fortress became an actual fortified aristocratic residence. Perfectly integrated in the defensive structure of the town with its quadrangular plan, medieval tower, bridge and moat, it was an outpost dominating the southwest side, the inhabited area and the lake.

Its defensive function caused the entrances to the town and castle to be placed at opposite angles, according to a strategy that forced all attackers to be exposed on one of the two fronts. Thanks to restoration started in the 1970s, the Fortress is now open to the public and houses a Historical Museum.



GETTING THERE

■ **Bolsena (RM):** From north and south: A1 FI-RM, Orvieto exit, then SP 71 and junction for Bolsena (Km 15). Otherwise SS2 Via Cassia that crosses the town of Bolsena.

■ **Acquapendente (RM):**
A1 FI-RM from the north, Fabro exit direction Acquapendente.
Otherwise, from the south: SS2 Via Cassia to Viterbo, continue to Acquapendente; from the north: SS2 Via Cassia to Abbadia San Salvatore, Acquapendente.
By train: Viterbo-Acquapendente line.

■ **Nature Reserve of Monte Rufeno -**
From Rome: A1 RM-FI, Orvieto exit and directions for Acquapendente (around Km 30). From Florence: A1 FI-RM, Fabro exit and directions for Acquapendente.
Access to the Reserve is situated at Km 136 of the SS2 Via Cassia, between Viterbo and Siena.

■ **Nature Reserve of Selva del Lamone -** A1 RM-FI, Orvieto or Orte exit and directions for Viterbo-Montefiascone-Valentano-Farnese. From Rome: SS2 Via Cassia to Siena, or SS1 Via Aurelia to Montalto di Castro. From Tuscany, follow the signs for Saturnia, Manciano, Pitigliano, then continue for Farnese.



ITINERARY 1



FORTRESSES

THE FARNESE "JEWELS"

Starting from the 11th century, in the area around the lake of Bolsena, power was also held by the Farnese family, originally from the ancient *Castrum Farneti*, corresponding to today's Farnese. Owing to the intense political and military activities of Ranuccio the Elder, military defender of the papacy and nominated Senator of Rome in 1417, the family succeeded in obtaining estates in Tuscia as well as prestige. In time they acquired and built strategic castles, strongholds and fortresses virtually tracing a medieval and Renaissance itinerary in the Lake Valley: **Gradoli**, with the imposing Palazzo Farnese, a Renaissance work by Sangallo, **Latera** and its Farnese Castle in the heart of the medieval town, **Valentano**, with the Tower and the Fortress, seat of the Study Center on the ducal family, **Onano** with the Rocca Farnese but famous also for the variety of lentils by the same name, founded in the 16th century, and **Farnese**, with the remains of an ancient fortress and a prehistoric, archaeological museum. We finally return to the lake at **Capodimonte**, dominated by the 16th century Rocca Farnese.



The Monaldeschi della Cervara coat of arms.

HERALDRY

THE COAT OF ARMS OF THE MONALDESCHI DELLA CERVARA

The common practice of "personalizing" and decorating military banners and shields answered the need to distinguish the different corps of the Christian army during the Crusades. The symbols and figures were later adopted by noble families as a sign of distinction and dignity. This is how aristocratic coats of arms and emblems came into being and during the 12th century their use became widespread throughout the West. Following bitter internal struggles, the Monaldeschi counts were divided into four branches: **della Cervara**, **del Cane**, **della Vipera**, **dell'Aquila**. The coat of arms of the Cervara branch is present in all the pictorial decorations of the numerous family palaces between Umbria and Upper Lazio.

PARKS



THE REGIONAL PARKS OF MONTE RUFENO AND SELVA DEL LAMONE

MASSIVE VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS HAVE SHAPED THIS TERRITORY: lakes and hills, gorges and mountains are evidence of a highly active geology. This is the **Lazio section of Tusciana**, one of the most beautiful areas in Italy, where the ancient volcanoes of Volsinio, Cimino and Sabatino created the **lakes of Bolsena, Bracciano and Vico**.

The thermal springs of **Tolfa** were already famous in ancient Roman times, but lovely Caldara di Manziana, situated in a unique natural context that favours the presence of the southernmost birch trees in Europe, also deserves a visit. In the Monti della Tolfa the landscape becomes rougher. It is the setting for many Italian-style western films and a favourite area for horse and cattle breeding, an area of great natural variety with ancient agricultural traditions at a stone's throw from the capital. In this context, the **nature reserve of Monte Rufeno** is a strip of Lazio caught within the legendary land of Siena, whereas the **Selva del Lamone** is one of the most interesting and least known protected areas in Lazio.

THE PARK IN NUMBERS

Nature Reserve of Monte Rufeno

Management: Municipality of Acquapendente

Surface: 2,892 hectares

Instituted: 1983

Nature Reserve of Selva del Lamone

Management: Municipality of Farnese

Surface: 2,002 hectares

Instituted: 1994

Provincial nature reserve Monte Casoli di Bomarzo

Surface: 175 hectares

Instituted: 1999

Tuscania nature reserve

Surface: 1,901 hectares



Above: Lake Bolsena, Bisentina island.



FLORA

Woods of Turkey oaks, durmasts, Mediterranean bush, along with river bank vegetation along the Paglia.

Numerous varieties of mushrooms are also present, including the *Tricholoma Rufenum*, perfectly camouflaged in the vegetation.

Above: brushwood vegetation.



BOTANY

LAND OF FLOWERS

An interesting and unusual **itinerary** leads us into the historical center of Acquapendente where ancient majolica ceramics represent the area's **typical fragrances** and the plants growing in the city. In the Regional Reserve of Monte Rufeno, instead, the Giardino farmhouse hosts the **Flower Museum**, a must for all enthusiasts.



FAUNA

The species of interest that can be seen here are the dipper, hovering over watercourses in search of food, or the kingfisher, carefully scanning the water, ready to plunge and capture unaware fish. Boars, porcupines, badgers and dormice are also common.



Above: harrier eagle
(*Circus Gallicus*).
Left: dipper.

TYPICAL PRODUCTS

RED GARLIC FROM PROCENO

The hills around the medieval town of Proceno, abutting the Tuscan countryside and hills of Umbria, have for centuries favoured the cultivation of a typical variety of garlic that has been acknowledged as a **traditional product** of Lazio by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and given an authenticated trademark.

Red garlic has chunky cloves and a strong aroma, it is a product of the land obtained with patient cultivation by hand, careful in each of its phases, from the selection of the bulbs to be planted, to the control of the flowers at the beginning of the summer, the drying and the braiding of the bulbs in the characteristic "resta" strings.



ABBEYS AND MONASTERIES



THE ABBEY OF SAN SEPOLCRO

Acquapendente

THE BASILICA OF THE SANTO SEPOLCRO, SYMBOL OF ACQUAPENDENTE, was involved over the centuries in the fate of what was founded as the stronghold city of the Empire of Otto I. The Basilica was built around the year 1000 above the sepulchre of Mathilda of Westphalia (895-968), Otto's mother, as an homage to the Sepulchre of Christ in Jerusalem. Seat of the ancient Benedictine abbey, it was annexed to the House of the Templars, the military-monastic order of knights created to defend holy places and protect pilgrims (12th century). The elegant Romanesque-style Basilica was consecrated by Eugene III in 1149.

Between the 12th and early 15th centuries, Acquapendente passed under the rule of emperors, popes, Orvieto and Siena before being finally assigned to the Diocese of Orvieto in the 13th century. This was its period of maximum economic prosperity and the Basilica was decorated and enriched with works of art.

In 1649, following the destruction of the city of Castro, Acquapendente became a bishop's seat and the Basilica of San Sepolcro was elevated to the rank of cathedral, undergoing radical architectural transformations. In the course of the 18th century the original Romanesque structure was remodeled both in its facade and interior, and redone in the Baroque style, in the

typical taste of Upper Lazio. More recently, during the Second World War, (June 1944), the complex was seriously damaged by the collapse of the left nave, and restoration has brought it back to its primitive



Acquapendente, Basilica of San Sepolcro: the church tower.



Acquapendente, Basilica of San Sepolcro.

Romanesque aspect. Today we can admire its beautiful and elegant facade and the interior on three levels. Paintings on panels decorating the pilasters on the left side of the central nave illustrate the history of the

Basilica: the arrival of Queen Mathilda, the departure for the 1st crusade (1096-1099), Eugene III consecrating the church (1149), the destruction of the facade in World War II. Among other valuable decorative elements, two bas-reliefs by the school of **Agostino di Duccio (1418-1481)**, incorporated into the staircase leading to the presbytery, deserve to be mentioned along with the elegant

altar in glazed and painted terracotta by **Jacopo Beneventano (1522)**. Besides the remains of St. Ermete, the Basilica also preserves those of St. Anthony, St. Catherine and St. Augustine (13th century).

USEFUL INFO



Regional Reserve of Monte Rufeno
Pzza G. Fabriano, 17
01021 Acquapendente (VT)
Ph. +390763733442

Regional Reserve Selva del Lamone
C.so Vittorio Emanuele III, 395
01010 Farnese (VT)
Ph. +390761458741

Regional Reserve Monte Casoli di Bomarzo
c/o Provincia di VT
Via Aurelio Saffi, 49 01100 Viterbo
Ph. +390761924337
+390761924021

Regional Reserve of Tuscania
c/o Comune
01017 Tuscania (VT)
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www.provincia.vt.it

■ CASTLE OF BOLSENA

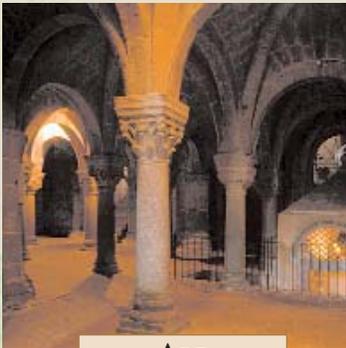
Piazza Monaldeschi - 01023 Bolsena (VT)
Opening times: Winter (from November)
Wed -Thu - Fri: 10am-1pm
Sat - Sun - Holidays - Pre-holidays:
10am-1pm / 3pm-6pm
Summer (from mid July): all week
10am-11pm
Spring - Autumn: all week
10am-1pm / 4pm-7pm
Closed Monday.

■ BASILICA OF SAN SEPOLCRO

Acquapendente - Ph. +390763734200
Open all day.

■ FLOWER MUSEUM

Acquapendente - Ph. 80040011834
www.museodelfiore.it.



Left: Acquapendente, the Romanesque crypt.

ART

THE ROMANESQUE CRYPT

The **Basilica** contains one of the most important **Romanesque crypts** in Italy, erected in the second half of the 10th century above the remains of the ancient aedicule of the Holy Sepulchre (9th century). The division of the space is especially interesting: three transversal naves and nine longitudinal ones with a play of 22 columns surmounted by rich capitals with stylistic elements of northern origin. The aedicule is at the center of the crypt, closed by a pyramidal cover with a rectangular base and, according to tradition, contains two small lithic fragments from the column of the flagellation of Christ stained with his own blood.



HISTORY

THE VIA FRANCIGENA

Considered one of the most beautiful tourist itineraries in Italy, in the Middle Ages it was the privileged route connecting the cities of the Italic kingdom with the world beyond the Alps, 2,500 km interspersed with **rest stops**, including **Acquapendente** and **Bolsena**. The itinerary met the need of the Lombards to connect the capital of their kingdom - Pavia - with the southern duchies by means of a protected path on the "Monte Bardone Pass", *Mons Longobardum*, today's Cisa. With the rise of Frankish domination, it was named "Via Francigena", that is, "road originating in France" and represented the main connection of the Holy Roman Empire with Rome. In the 9th century it became compulsory for archbishops to go to Rome to receive from the hands of the pope the *palium*, a wool shawl adorned with a cross, symbolic of the official investiture. In the travel journal of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Acquapendente is mentioned for the first time as a stop on the Via Francigena. Sigeric actually went to Rome in 994 at the time of Pope John VI and in the list of stops made on the way back to his bishop's seat, indicated 79 "*submansiones*" between Rome and the Channel. It became the route for pilgrimages to Rome and the tomb of St. Peter and for this reason was also known as "*Romea*" road, used by important travelers and as a vehicle for cultural and commercial exchanges.



THE MONTI
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TAKES US BACK TO AN AGE
OF GREAT SPLENDOUR

The beautiful province of Viterbo awaits us with its immense and refined cultural heritage.

Every ruler, papal and secular, left a deep mark in the history of the area and its people.

The fascinating evolution of a land that between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance was renowned beyond the Italian border.

CASTLES AND FORTRESSES



PALAZZO FARNESE

Caprarola

AMONG THE MANY ESTATES AND PALACES OWNED BY THE NOBLE FAMILY ORIGINALLY FROM ANCIENT FARNETI (9th century) in Tuscia, the Palazzo Farnese in Caprarola is doubtless the most magnificent and effectively represents their power that expanded throughout Italy and even Europe for seven centuries. A family of great patrons, men of arms, diplomats and ecclesiastics whose exemplary climb to power brought them to the foreground of the Renaissance political and religious scene. The magnificence of the papacy of Paul III, along with his influence on his grandson, cardinal Alessandro Farnese, was a determining factor. In the 16th century the latter erected a princely residence above the foundations of a fortress designed by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger. The Palazzo, a wonderful example of late Renaissance architecture and a monument of great historical and artistic value, was designed by **Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola**. His perspective studies and projects, aimed at exalting the structure and its visibility within the inhabited area, influ-



Frescoes of the Hall of the Guard.

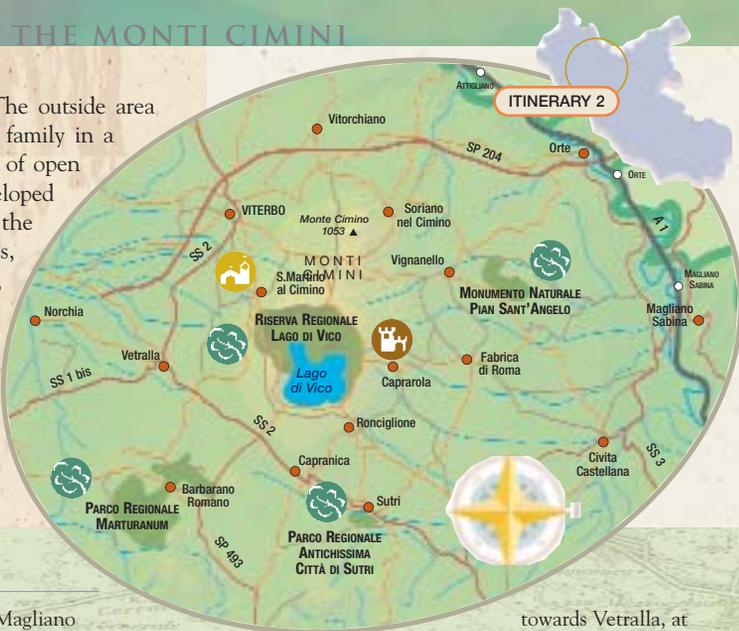


Caprarola: Palazzo Farnese.

enced the urban design of the town of Caprarola, which is dominated by its imposing presence. Numerous painters and artists were summoned to decorate the palace, seat of an active court life and frequented by nobles, men of letters, artists and musicians, in accordance with the fame of the Farnese as great patrons. The honorary entrance, accessed by a double staircase, has a great effect, as does the wonderful spiral staircase, created by Vignola and frescoed by **Antonio Tempesti (1580-1583)**, leading to the “piano nobile”, where the lord resided, detached from the pettiness of daily existence.

The halls of the palace are decorated by a precious cycle of Mannerist school frescoes. The paintings in the **Hall of the Labours of Hercules**, and in the **Chapel**, with its circular plan and valuable marble and terracotta floor, and frescoes with biblical themes, are by **Federico Zuccari (1566-1569)**. **Taddeo Zuccari (1560-1566)** painted the frescoes in the **Hall of the Farnese Deeds**, celebrating events in the life of Cardinal Alessandro in a context richly decorated with stucco. Also by Taddeo Zuccari, the **Hall of the Council of Trent**, with large frescoed panels recalls the convocation of the famous Council and events in the papacy of Paul III, along with stucco and arabesque decorations on the ceiling. The **Hall of Aurora**, of the **Wool Mills** and of **Solitude**, have frescoed ceilings with fine perspectives. The **Hall of the Globes**, with frescoes on the ceiling by **Giovanni Antonio da Varese** and **Raffaellino da Reggio (1574)**, represent the planetary system and were stunning for the period with their scenographic geographical maps painted on the walls with the four

continents known at the time. The outside area also represented the power of the family in a perfect Renaissance interpretation of open space visible in the great park, developed on different levels in the rear of the palace. Fountains, nymphaeums, and valuable decorative elements, both sculptural and in mosaic, reveal a clear tendency towards Baroque. Immersed in the elegant park is the **Palazzina del Piacere** with its courtyard and loggia adorned by frescoes.

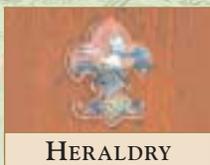


GETTING THERE

- **Caprarola (VT)** - A1 MI-NA exit Magliano Sabina towards Civita Castellana, directions for Fabrica di Roma-Caprarola. *From Rome:* SS2 Via Cassia direction Viterbo, junction for Caprarola.
- **Soriano del Cimino (VT)** - A1 MI-NA exit Orte. SS204 direction Viterbo and junction for Soriano. *From Rome:* SS2 Via Cassia direction Viterbo and junction for Caprarola. Follow the Via Cimina for Canepina Vignanello. For the location of the "Rocking Boulder" continue SW on a secondary road.
- **San Martino al Cimino (VT)** - A1 MI-NA exit Orte and SS204 direction Viterbo. *From Rome:* SS2 Via Cassia

towards Vetralla, at Cura turn right for San Martino.

- **Suburban Park of Marturanum** - A1 MI-NA exit Orte, indications for Viterbo and SS2 Via Cassia direction Rome, turn for Barbarano. In alternative *from Rome*, SS1 Via Aurelia direction Tarquinia, continue on SS1 Bis for Monteromano-Barbarano. *By train:* FS line Rome-Viterbo, Vico Matrino station.
- **Nature Reserve of Lake Vico** - A1 MI-NA exit Orte, direction Viterbo. *From Rome:* SS2 Via Cassia direction Viterbo, directions for Caprarola. *From Viterbo:* Via Cimina direction San Martino-Caprarola.

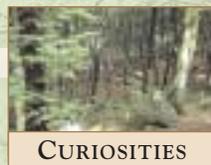


HERALDRY

The Farnese coat of arms.

THE FARNESE COAT OF ARMS AND DEVICE

Palazzo Farnese is an authentic gallery of **dynastic emblems**; the coats of arms of about forty aristocratic families that over seven centuries became related to the Farnese are represented in the frescoes. The Farnese coat of arms stands out with its fleur-de-lis, symbol of the double character of the family, secular and ecclesiastic. In time heraldic mannerisms, inspired by mythological themes, led to variations in the decoration, but the shield, the pale blue fleur-de-lis in a gold field, the rampant unicorn and the plumed helmet remained unchanged. The Palazzo also contains the "**Farnese devices**", an interesting artistic and cultural phenomenon, popular since antiquity. These concise images accompanied by mottoes represent the Renaissance taste for allegory between the 15th and 16th centuries. While the coat of arms was a distinctive symbol of the family, the "device" stood for the personal goal of an individual member through a declaration of intentions, thus acquiring a moral value. In the Palazzo they are everywhere, among the stuccoes and frescoes, as a representation of the goals of the illustrious Farnese.



CURIOSITIES

THE ROCKING BOULDER

On the rocky plane of the Monte Cimino stands a curious boulder, known already in antiquity to the erudite Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27 BC) and to the naturalist Pliny the Elder (23-79 AD) who called it "*naturae miraculum*". This enormous block of trachyte, an eruptive rock common in the volcanic areas of central-southern Italy, weighs about 200 tons. It is 8.5m long, 6.5m wide, 3m tall and has a volume of about 100 cubic metres. In the area it is known as "sasso naticarello", and it maintains its balance even when it is pushed and caused to rock.

PARKS



THE REGIONAL PARK OF MARTURANUM AND OF THE ANTICHISSIMA CITTÀ DI SUTRI AND THE REGIONAL RESERVE OF LAKE VICO

UPPER LAZIO WAS SHAPED BY VOLCANOES IN THEIR EXPLOSIVE PHASE resulting in the lower range of the Monti Cimini and in the beautiful lakes of Bolsena, Mezzano, Vico, Bracciano and Martignano that form a fascinating landscape.

Evidence of human presence, Etruscan and Roman, blends with flourishing vegetation favoured by the acid composition of the volcanic soil. The area is enriched by deep valleys carved into the tufa by wind and water. An idea of the “silva cimina” that actually hindered the expansion of the Romans, can be had by climbing up the Venere and Fogliano mountains and looking over **Lake Vico**. This is one of the most beautiful and best preserved lake basins in central Italy, born of an active volcano a million years ago which today feeds numerous thermal-mineral springs.

Not too far from here, the regional park of **Marturanum** and of the **Antichissima Città di Sutri** offer an unforgettable glimpse of Etruscan Lazio. Tufa gorges, necropoli and walls remind us of the people who lived here before us, and the amphitheatre of Sutri, entirely dug out of tufa, is truly spectacular.

A unique environment of exceptional value with uncontaminated wildlife.

THE PARK IN NUMBERS

Suburban Park of Marturanum

Management: Municipality of Barbarano Romano

Surface: 1,220 hectares - Instituted: 1984

Urban Park Antichissima Città di Sutri

Management: Municipality of Sutri

Surface: 7 hectares - Instituted: 1988

Nature Reserve of Lake Vico

Management: Municipality of Caprarola (VT)

Surface: 3,300 hectares - Instituted: 1982

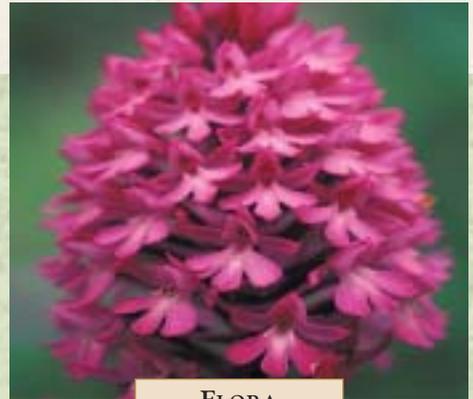
Natural Monument of Pian Sant'Angelo

Management: Natural Monument of Pian Sant'Angelo

Surface: 254 hectares - Instituted: 2000



Lake Vico.



FLORA

Woods of beech, Turkey oak and huge chestnut trees cover most of the slopes of the ancient crater of Vico. The so-called depressed beech wood (because of the lake climate it grows at a lower-than-average altitude, hence the name) of the Fondo delle Tavole is a breathtaking sight.

Above: *Anacamptis pyramidalis*.

THE MONTI CIMINI

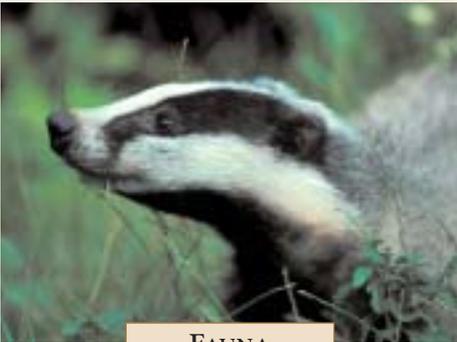


TYPICAL PRODUCTS

CHESTNUTS AND HAZELNUTS FROM MONTE CIMINO

Pride of the Viterbo territory, the **Chestnut of the Cimini** is considered by qualified experts among the best in Italy. Its quality is guaranteed by the cultivation area, and was appreciated already in the early 20th century when it was exported to Paris for the production of Marron Glacés. A traditional product of Lazio, recognized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, it is the main ingredient of typical dishes such as **chickpea and chestnut soup** and **chestnut cake**.

Technology and tradition coexist in the cultivation and production of **hazelnuts** or “**nocchie**”, that are found whole, crushed, or in a paste in sweets and seasonings. Their pleasant flavour, average weight (12 gr.) and excellent conservation properties make Cimino hazelnuts especially appreciated throughout Italy.



FAUNA

The charm of the wood is intact as proven by the elusive presence of wildcats, martens and badgers. Birdwatchers find one of their favourite spots in the Pantanacce, the reign of ducks, loons, herons and limicolous species.



Above: badger (*Meles taxus*).
Left: loon.

ABBEYS AND MONASTERIES



THE CISTERCIAN ABBEY

San Martino al Cimino

THE TOWN OF SAN MARTINO AL CIMINO is a splendid example of 17th century Baroque urban design. It is reached through the Porta Viterbese, designed by Borromini during his exile in Viterbo and modeled on the gate of Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome. The main attraction of the town is nonetheless the Cistercian Abbey with its gothic architecture of great historical and artistic merit.

Ancient sources confirm the presence of an early religious complex in San Martino in Monte, site of the Abbey. Documents mention the deed of gift of the land (838) to the Abbey of Farfa and the presence in the church of an ancient column (the first on the right of the central nave towards the altar) dating from the 9th century, with the coat of arms of cardinal Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini on the capital. Since then it was inhabited by a Benedictine community that became considerably important in the 9th century, thanks to the attention of Gregory VII.

The first Cistercian monks arrived in San Martino from the convent of San Sulpizio in 1151 by order of Eugene III (1145-1153) and later from the Abbey of Pontigny (1207), when the structure was granted to them with a papal bull by Innocent III. In addition to reinforcing the small preexisting religious community, the French monks established their mother house there. Thanks to a contribution of the pope, in 1208 the construction of the abbey began according to a project by Cistercian architects of the Burgundian school. The church was consecrated in 1225 and in 1305, during the pontificate of Clement V, the entire abbey complex was completed. After a period of splendour due to John II (1213-1228), the most important abbot, starting from the 14th century the abbey underwent a phase of crisis and thefts of goods that ended with the expulsion of the monks. The rebirth of



San Martino al Cimino, Cistercian Abbey: facade.

the Cistercian community occurred in 1462 with Pope Pius II (1458-1464) who entrusted the administration of the Abbey to his nephew, cardinal Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini (future Pope Pius III). Controlled by the Piccolomini until 1564, under Pope Pius IV (1560-1565) the abbey returned under papal authority. In 1645 Cardinal Pamphili (later Pope Innocent X) carried out a reevaluation of the principality of San Martino al Cimino and granted the title of Princess to Olimpia Maidalchini, widow of his brother Pamphilio, who bought the farms and also obtained the Church's independence from the Bishop of Viterbo. A woman of great artistic and intellectual sensitivity, she started significant works of restoration and reevaluation of the urban structure of the town with the purpose of preserving the beauty of the abbey complex and its historic function. The Monastery became a fortified complex with bold changes in the destination of its rooms. This unique example of gothic architecture has reached present times in all its splendour. The architectural layout, dominated by Cistercian dictates, appears further evolved than others in Lazio and shows the influence of medieval Viterbo. The best preserved parts are the **cloister**, the two **libraries**, the **capitular hall**, the **refectory**, the **abbot's quarters**, and the **monks' cells**. The Church of San Martino, focus of the monastic life, is a sublime representation of the Cistercian style, elaborated through elements of the Burgundian style, that give it more sobri-

USEFUL INFO



Regional Park of Marturanum
 c/o Comune
 Piazza G. Marconi
 01010 Barbarano Romano (VT)
 Ph. +390761414507

**Regional Park of the
 Antichissima Città di Sutri**
 Comune, Piazza del Comune, 32
 01015 Sutri (VT)
 Ph. +390761601218

Regional Park of Lake Vico
 Scuderie di Palazzo Farnese
 01032 Caprarola (VT)
 Ph. +390761647444

Monumento Pian Sant'Angelo
 WWF - Via Ottusa, 4
 01100 Viterbo
 Ph.+390761345784
 www.parchilazio.it
 www.parks.it

Right: San Martino al Cimino,
 Cistercian Abbey: ruins.



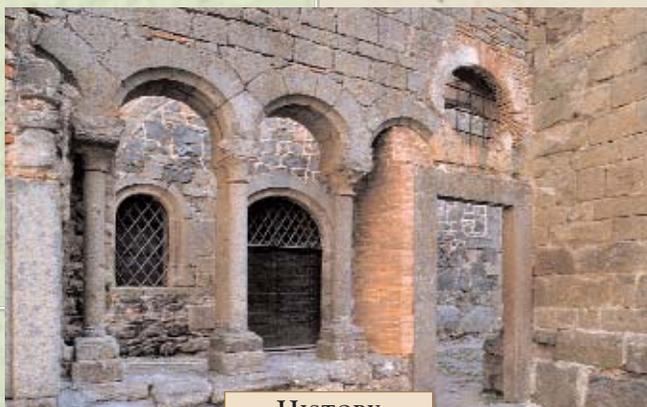
**AZIENDA DI PROMOZIONE
 TURISTICA DELLA
 PROVINCIA DI VITERBO**
 Piazza dell'Oratorio, 2
 Palazzo Doria Pamphili
 01030 San Martino al Cimino (VT)
 Ph. +3907613751
 Fax +390761379233
 www.apviterbo.it
 www.provincia.vt.it

■ PALAZZO FARNESE

Caprarola
 Ph. +390761646052
 Visits: 8.30am-6.45pm
 Except Mondays, January 1,
 May 1, December 25

■ ABBAZIA CISTERCENSE

San Martino al Cimino
 Ph. +390761379803
 Open every day until evening.



HISTORY

BENEDICTINES AND CISTERCIANS

ety and light. The typical facade, with two effective 17th century bell towers, has a gothic style multi-lancet window and the apse has a polygonal shape in the exterior and elegant single-lancet windows. The interior shows austere gothic forms imported from France, with a Latin cross, cross vaults and three naves with ogive arches supported by pillars and columns. The **choir** is a unique example in Cistercian buildings in Italy, as is the presence of gravestones, placed later in the presbytery (Princess Olimpia Pamphili) and on the floor of the central nave (the Bishop of Viterbo). The Baroque railing with the Pamphili insignia and the 17th century baptismal fount are worth mentioning.

The founder of the **Benedictine order** was **Benedict from Norcia (480-547)**, father of Western monasticism. He founded the first Benedictine monastery in Montecassino, where in **540** he dictated the "Rule" that was perpetuated in the communities of his order for centuries. Poverty, humility, austerity were and still are at the base of the life of the monks, devoted to work and prayer. A period of intense diffusion in the 6th century was followed by a crisis in the order, the reform of which resulted in the founding of the order of the **Cistercian monks** (named after the French town of Citeaux, ancient *Cistercium*), founded in 1097 by **St. Robert de Molesme** and spread throughout Europe by **St. Bernard**. The order aimed at recuperating the value of Christianity and returning to absolute respect of the Benedictine Rule by stressing the significance of manual labour and poverty. In Italy their presence determined the reclamation of uncultivated and malarial land and had a decisive role in the social and economic development of areas of the abbey complexes.

THE MONTI
SABATINIROME'S APPEAL
REACHED AS FAR AS
THESE ANCIENT TOWNS

*Just a few kilometers outside the city,
a fascinating blend of age-old paths
and charming views, and layer upon
layer of history and culture.*

*A flourishing natural environment
of ancient volcanic origin
provides the setting for charming
walks and excursions.*

CASTLES AND FORTRESSES

THE ODESCALCHI CASTLE
Bracciano

ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FEUDAL RESIDENCES IN ITALY, this military stronghold was erected over the remains of an ancient Etruscan town. It rises on the southern shore of Lake Bracciano and towers over the medieval town and the valley towards the lake.

The ancient nucleus of the castle originally belonged to the lords of the *Castrum Brachianum*, as indicated in a document dating from 1234 (from the Orsini archive) and containing a list of the family possessions, also including the ancient Fortress of the Prefetti of Vico. The *Castrum* was passed on to the Arciospedale of Santo Spirito in Rome (1290) and was also used as a stronghold for the Bretons in their period of conquests. In 1419 Pope Martin V ceded the estate to the Orsini family who brought new lustre not only to their residence but also to the medieval town. In 1470 Napoleone Orsini began the construction of a castle, completed by his son Gentil Virginio, above the preexisting Fortress of Vico, ancient seat of the Prefect. Bracciano Castle thus became a splendid Renaissance court, expression of the power and patronage of its owners, famous for lavish banquets



Bracciano, Odescalchi Castle: facade with tower.

and feasts, a meeting place for men of letters and scholars. In time the Orsini possessions grew and in 1560 Pius IV raised Bracciano to the rank of duchy with a papal bull.

The period of even greater splendour that ensued ended only in 1696 when the last Orsini duke, Flavio, sold the entire duchy to the Odescalchi family in order to emerge from the financial straits his own family had fallen into. The Odescalchi, originally from the Como area, took charge of the Castle and its upkeep with restorations, additions and embellishments.

Its excellent condition still allow visits along an itinerary through three thousand square metres, thanks to the presence of the **Castle Museum**, instituted by Prince Don Livio IV Odescalchi. The irregular structure has a square plan and consists of two asymmetrical nuclei, built at different times and connected by an inner courtyard and the long bay for rounds connecting the Castle's six towers. The minor quadrilateral, corresponding to the Orsini structure, develops around the courtyard that provides access to the kitchen and service area. The beautiful rooms on the main and upper levels are still complete with **period furnish-**

ings, decorated lacunar ceilings, valuable paintings and frescoes, such as those in the **Papal Room** where Pope Sixtus V was a guest, painted by the **Zuccari brothers**; the **Orsini Room** and the **Room of Isabella**. On the outside, the perfectly groomed secret garden should not be missed.



GETTING THERE

- **Bracciano and Anguillara Sabazia (RM)** - A12 Roma-Civitavecchia or SS1 Via Aurelia, Cerveteri exit, directions for Bracciano and Anguillara. In alternative SS2 Via Cassia, junction for Bracciano-Anguillara.
- **Canale Monterano (RM)** - A12 Roma-Civitavecchia, Cerveteri Exit, continue for Bracciano, junction for Manziana. In alternative SS1 Via Aurelia and after Cerenova turn right for Manziana
- **Valle del Treja Park** - A1 Milano-Napoli, Magliano Sabina exit and SS3 Via Flaminia for Civita Castellana-Calcata. From Rome: SS3 Via Flaminia, exit at Rignano Flaminio for Calcata or SS2 Via Cassia and Junction for Mazzano Romano.

- **Park of Vejo** - A1 MI-NA exit Fiano Romano direction Capena-Campagnano di Roma. Consular roads SS2 Via Cassia, SS2 bis Via Cassia bis, SS3 Via Flaminia cross the Park. By train: FM3 Rome-Cesano for the west side of the Park; urban railway Roma-Sacrofano for the east side.



CURIOSITIES

THE ARMOUR HALL

Visiting these magnificent rooms in the **Odescalchi Castle** is like travelling back in time, among motionless warriors in shining armour. The room in fact contains a rich collection of **cuirasses** and **weapons** from the **15th to the 17th centuries**, including a 15th century Milan-made equestrian suit of armour for tournaments and two German-made suits of armour for tournaments. Used by knights as protection in combat until the 18th century, armour traditionally included all defense devices: helmet, shield, cuirass and greave. Made of bronze, copper, steel and leather, in the Middle Ages artisan masters used to fabricate miniature suits of armour as toys for children.

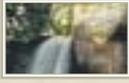


CURIOSITIES

THE GREEN ROADS ALONG BRACCIANO LAKE

Dirt roads and paths reserved exclusively for ecological mobility; Bracciano Lake offers cycle-touring enthusiasts the possibility of circumnavigating its perimeter along its shores. A ring of 36 kilometers, paved and without difficulties, is ideal even for non-pros. A celebration of alternative itineraries offering: nature, art, history, enchanting landscapes and unusual views of the castles of **Bracciano** and **Anguillara**.

PARKS



THE REGIONAL PARKS OF THE TREJA VALLEY, VEIO AND THE NATURE RESERVE OF MONTERANO

A LAKE WITH AN ENDLESS HORIZON and Etruscan cities lost among woods and gorges evoke the unique and mysterious landscape of the Monti Sabatini. The great lake of Bracciano and the smaller uncontaminated one of Martignano occupy a low depression (over 165 meters) resulting from the filling in of a volcanic cone. These waters are surrounded by a mosaic of fields and lovely historical centres that make it one of the most charming areas in southern Tuscia.

Not too far south lie the mysterious ancient cities of **Veio** (Rome's ancient rival) and **Monterano**, the most beautiful lost city in Italy, with its cluster of walls covered with ivy, churches, castles and an extraordinary arched aqueduct. On this site, excursionists are captivated by a sense of isolation, of the effect of time on the works of man and by the way nature takes over abandoned constructions. Two regional parks and a nature reserve protect this natural and cultural patrimony of Lazio.

THE PARK IN NUMBERS

Suburban Park of the Treja Valley

Management: Consortium of the Municipalities of Mazzano Romano and Calcata

Surface: 1000 hectares - Instituted: 1982

Regional Nature Park of the Bracciano and Martignano lake complex

Management: Regional Nature Park

Surface: 16,682 hectares - Instituted: 1999

Park of Veio

Management: Regional Board Park of Veio

Surface: 14, 984 hectares - Instituted: 1997

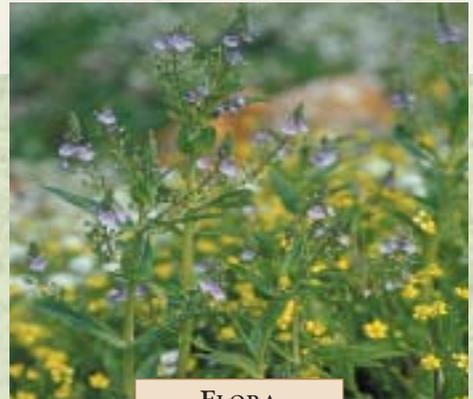
Nature Reserve of Monterano

Management: Municipality of Canale di Monterano

Surface: 1,084 hectares - Instituted: 1988



Lake Martignano.



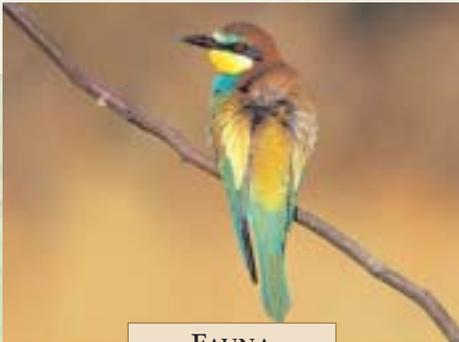
FLORA

Ferns and maidenhair cover the gorges of the ditches and streams of the park of Veio; the sunnier areas are filled with woods of holm-oak and durmast, Turkey oak and bay-oak.

Above: *Veronica Chamaedry.*



THE MONTI SABATINI



FAUNA

Loons and cormorants, widgeons and pochards, multicoloured bee-eaters along with thousands of coots, and rarer species of divers, different varieties of dun-birds that increasingly populate the park of the Lake Bracciano.



Above: bee-eater.
Left: pochard.

TYPICAL PRODUCTS

“SCORSONE”, THE SUMMER TRUFFLE

In the calcareous ground under the oaks, holm-oaks and hazels, it is possible to find a quality product of the **Monti Sabatini**, the **Summer Truffle** or “**Scorsone**” (*Tuber Aestivum Vitt*). The fruiting body varies in size from that of a nut to the that of a grapefruit, its pulp is beige in colour and becomes more intense as it ripens. It has a pleasant flavour and slight fragrance, it is less valuable than other varieties and it ripens from May to Autumn. If it is enjoyed while fresh, it should be considered a good truffle.



ABBEYS AND MONASTERIES



THE MONASTERY OF MONTE VIRGINIO

Canale Monterano

THIS SIMPLE, ENCHANTING MONASTERY WAS FOUNDED IN 1688, on the estate of Canale Monterano, property of the Orsini family. In the early 1600s an Orsini family member, Virginio, brother of the Duke of Bracciano Paolo Giordano, was in fact a Carmelite priest. Having renounced all his possessions, Virginio ordered his powerful brother to make a large donation to the Order of the Barefooted Carmelites for the construction of a monastery. In 1615 the tenant farmers were expropriated from the medieval town on the northern side of Monte Sassano and in exchange obtained new lands and pastures in the area known since then as Monte Virginio.

Construction began in 1651 and the solemn monastery complex was completed by 1668. The structure has a rectangular plan; the second floor is occupied by the monks' cells and the rooms for community activities. The large cloister at the centre provided access to the service areas. The Church was inaugurated later, in 1670. The Roman Province of the Barefooted Carmelites contributed to the development of the monastic community of Monte Virginio that soon came to manage a prosperous agricultural activity that guaranteed its economic autonomy for a long time.

Yet hard times were upon the Carmelites: in 1810 they abandoned the monastery owing to the suppression of monastic orders enforced by the Napoleonic empire, and returned there in 1817. Governmental persecutions of monastic orders led to another suppression in 1873 by the civil authority. Bought on auction by Prince Altieri, the monastery was partially returned to the Order in 1875 and was redeemed entirely only in 1893, thanks to a total payment of £.70,000 made to the Prince.

Set in a lovely location on the slopes of Monte



Canale Monterano, Monastery of Monte Virginio: facade.

Virginio, the complex dominates the surrounding valleys in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity, the same one the monks found when they settled there to pray and contemplate God. The individual dimension found its expression in silence, fasting, the *lectio divina*, that lead to the achievement of ascetism, individual in silent prayer; collective in the celebration of the Hours and the community liturgy.

The park around the complex and the presence today of only four monks are the most stirring elements in a discreet visit to the Monastery.

USEFUL INFO



Regional Park of the Valle del Treja
00060 Mazzano Romano (RM)
Via Roma, 1/3 - Ph. +390669049295

Regional Park of Bracciano - Martignano
c/o Comune di Bracciano
00062 Bracciano (RM)
Via Saffi, 4/a Ph. +390699806262

Regional Park of Vejo
00063 Campagnano di Roma (RM)
Via F. Cavallotti, 18
Ph. +390669042774
www.parcodivejo.it

Nature Reserve of Monterano
00060 Canale Monterano (RM)
Piazza Tubingen, 1
Ph. +390669962724
www.parchilazio.it



AZIENDA DI PROMOZIONE TURISTICA DELLA PROVINCIA DI VITERBO
Piazza dell'Oratorio, 2
Palazzo Doria Pamphilj
01030 San Martino al Cimino (VT)
Ph. +3907613751 - Fax +390761379233
www.apr.viterbo.it www.provincia.vt.it



AZIENDA DI PROMOZIONE TURISTICA DELLA PROVINCIA DI ROMA
Via XX Settembre, 26 - 00187 Roma
Ph. +39066421381 - Fax +390642138211
www.oltreroma.it

■ ODESCALCHI CASTLE

00062 Bracciano (Rm)
Piazza Mazzini, 14
Ph./fax +390699802380
Visits: April-September (summer schedule)
11-12am/ 3-6pm;
9-12:30am/ 3-6:30pm Sat and holidays
October-March (winter schedule)
10-12am/3-5pm;
10-12:30am/ 3-5:30pm
Sat and holidays. Closed Mon

■ MONASTERY OF MONTE VIRGINIO

00060 Canale Monterano (RM)
The Church is open to the public

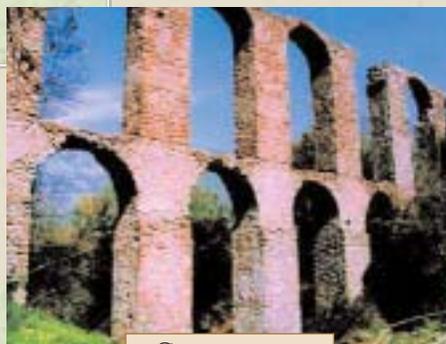


Canale Monterano, Monastery of Monte Virginio: coat of arms in wood.

HISTORY

THE BAREFOOTED CARMELITES

The Carmelite Order was founded in the 12th century as a hermit order strongly devoted to contemplation. In 1156 the Fathers settled on Mount Carmel in Palestine - hence their name - where they established their Rule with the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Alberto. Turned away by the Muslims, they returned to Europe and in 1247 were turned into the Mendicant Order of Our Lady of Carmel. At that time the Church established that contemplation was to be joined with mission work; the Rule was consequently modified and the order divided into three branches: **conventual**, **observant** and **tertiary**. Tied to the mystic concept of isolation, after centuries of uncertain application of the Rule, the monks went back to practicing a hermit life according to the reform of the Order established in 1538 by **St. Theresa of Jesus** and thanks to the work of **Saint John of the Cross**, founder of the observant branch of the Barefooted Carmelites.



CURIOSITIES

DEVIL'S BRIDGE

The countryside between **Manziana** and **Canale Monterano** has preserved for centuries an archaeological finding of truly impressive proportions. The remains of an ancient aqueduct have in fact left a bridge of uncertain date (Etruscan or perhaps Roman), 100 metres long, 4 metres wide, with powerful arches 9 metres high. Beyond its obvious historical and artistic merit, the bridge has a feature that has always been found fascinating. This colossus is formed by huge blocks held together without mortar and each one of them measures 2mt by 1mt. Popular belief attributes the building of this majestic, mysterious structure to the Devil who, according to tradition, wished to show his powers to a skeptical monk he casually met near by. There are those who prepared to vow the devil's hand is in that bridge!

THE ROME AREA AND
THE TIBER VALLEYEVEN GARIBALDI'S
SOLDIERS CAME
THROUGH HERE

As we approach the heart of Rome's province, the area around us seems suspended between space and time. From an ancient Roman presence to the heroic deeds of Garibaldi's troops, nothing has affected the deep identity of these mountains, countryside, cities and towns.

CASTLES AND FORTRESSES

THE ORSINI PALACE
Monterotondo

AT THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN STANDS PALAZZO ORSINI, SYMBOL OF MONTEROTONDO and of its entire history, which is strongly connected to the vicissitudes of the noble families who ruled it, the Orsini and the Barberini.

The first phase of the fortification grew in the 11th century above the remains of ancient *Eretum*, a Sabine city dedicated to the goddess Hera. In 1286 the *Castrum Montis Rotundi*, until then a possession of the Church, became property of the Orsini family who built the castle there. The first wall that also surrounded the town, was built between the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th centuries by Orso Orsini Di Gentile who also added four ramparts and as many doors, creating the first real fortification of the town of Monte Rotondo.

The Orsini conditioned the life of the townspeople for three centuries with their constant political struggles against the rivaling family of the Colonna, and the castle was almost destroyed in 1486 by order of Innocent VIII. Yet their munificence allowed them to overcome their difficult moments and, to show their power, they called many artists to fresco and embell-



Monterotondo: facade of Palazzo Orsini.

ish the rooms of the renovated structure.

The influence of the family was so great that in the second half of the 16th century two descendents, Franciotto and Raimondo, approved a new and more modern statute for the well-being of the community. The Orsini coat of arms, the five-petal rose, was thus joined with the new seal of the town of Monterotondo. In 1626 the family was forced to sell their farms in Monterotondo to the Barberini family who obtained the title of duchy for it. The town walls were rebuilt and enlarged, and the entire town and palace were transformed from fortification to an authentic aristocratic residence.

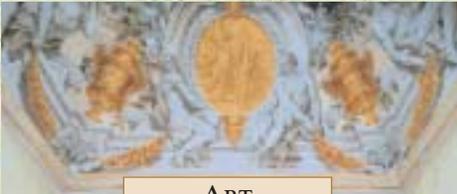
It later passed on to the Grillo family and then to the Boncompagni in 1814; today it is the seat of the Town Hall.

The large door leads into the courtyard containing a **splendid 16th century well**. The only surviving tower is a donjon used at one time as a prison, although with its height of 40 metres it served above all as a watchtower.

The royal staircase provides access to floors occupied by the family members, with splendid **frescoed rooms**.

GETTING THERE

- **Monterotondo (RM)** - From Rome: SS4 Via Salaria direction Rieti, at the km 21 follow directions for the historical centre and the Eremo dei Cappuccini.
By train: Metropolitan Train FM1 from Roma Trastevere and Roma Tiburtina for Monterotondo
By bus: Cotral lines from Roma Tiburtina station to Monterotondo.
- **Capena (RM)** - A1 exit Fiano Romano and continue to Morlupo, follow the directions for Capena and for the Valle del Fosso di San Martino (for the Lake).
- **Regional Reserve Macchia di Gattaceca and Macchia del Barco** - From Rome: SS4 Via Salaria up to km 12.4
By train: Metropolitan Train FM1 from Roma Trastevere and Roma Tiburtina for Monterotondo.
- **Regional Park of the Inviolata** - From Rome: A24, exit Tivoli and SS5 for Guidonia, deviation for Cascate dell'Inviolata, or Via Nomentana then Via Palombarese, directions for Cascate dell'Inviolata.
- **Marcigliana** - From Rome: G.R.A. exit Via Salaria direction Rieti and turn right for Via Marcigliana.



ART

Monterotondo, Palazzo Orsini: frescoes.



PROTAGONISTS

THE FRESCOES

The paintings in the third room of the main floor of **Palazzo Orsini**, with hunting scenes and landscapes of Monterotondo, are by the Flemish painter **Paul Bril** (1581). The artist spent an important period of his career in Rome and became one of the major representatives of **picturesque landscape painting**. Along with his pupils, including **Mattheus Bril**, he contributed to the delicate rustic scenes in the first room. The myth of **Adonis** is the theme of the 16th century frescoes and decorations in the second room. The artist, **Girolamo Siciolante da Sermoneta**, was a member of the Raphael school. Myths and the celebration of the deeds of the Orsini family are celebrated among mythological figures and coats of arms. At the end of the 1600s the rooms were enriched by harmonious barrel-vault ceilings, as can be seen in the fourth hall, finely decorated with an allegory of Time. The Renaissance **chapel** was restructured in later times according to Baroque taste but still preserves a lovely painting on wood by the **school of Ghirlandaio**.

CLARICE ORSINI AND LORENZO THE MAGNIFICENT

Icon of the strong power of the Orsini, **Clarice** was a young noblewoman of the influential **Monterotondo branch** of the family. She was chosen as a bride by the cultured **Lorenzo De Medici**, son of Piero and Lucrezia Tornabuoni, who longed to get his family closer to Rome and the Papal State. Delicate and kind, Clarice spent her youth in the splendour of the family Castle in the small rural town of Monterotondo, far removed from the elegance of Florentine nobility, at least according to the biting remark of her future mother-in-law, who resolved to refine the girl's manners. The wedding of the couple who was probably never in love, was the great event of the period: three days of celebrations (June 4, 1469) in Florence that from that year was ruled by Lorenzo who increasingly affirmed his authority throughout the country. Clarice, devout and reserved, was never truly at ease in Renaissance Florence but assumed her role of wife and mother with seriousness and tranquillity. Their marriage brought 8 children, including Giovanni De Medici who in 1513 became Pope Leo X.

PARKS



THE PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS AROUND ROME

ONE OF THE MOST SURPRISING FACTS ABOUT ROME is that it is one of the most important municipalities in Italy with an agricultural vocation. Churches and monuments, remains of the past and today's hectic traffic are interspersed with valleys, fields and thickets that together with the river Tiber create a tenacious, mysterious natural presence.

Discovering these corners of wildlife can bring pleasant, beneficial surprises also to those who live their everyday reality in Rome.

14,000 hectares of territory are managed by the RomaNatura Board for the safeguard of the environment and the management of protected areas. Archeological sites, monuments, villas and farmhouses are only a part of the wealth of this endowment, whose real treasures are the ecological niches that host 1000 plant species, 5000 species of insects and over 150 species of mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles.

THE PARK IN NUMBERS

Inviolata Archeological Park

Management: Municipality of Guidonia Montecelio

Surface: 535 hectares - Instituted: 1996

Nature reserve of Macchia di Gattaceca and Macchia del Barco

Management: Province of Rome, Department II, Service 5
"Environment planning, park development, nature reserves"

Surface: ca. 1,200 hectares - Instituted: 1997

Nomentum Nature Reserve

Management: Province of Rome, Department II, Service 5
"Environment planning, park development, nature reserves"

Surface: ca. 850 hectares - Instituted: 1997

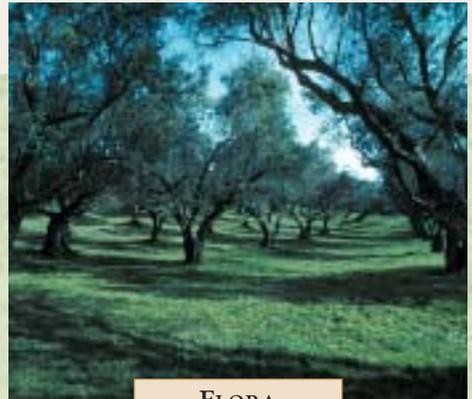
RomaNatura

Management: Regional Authority for the Management of the Protected Nature Area System of the Municipality of Rome

Instituted: 1998



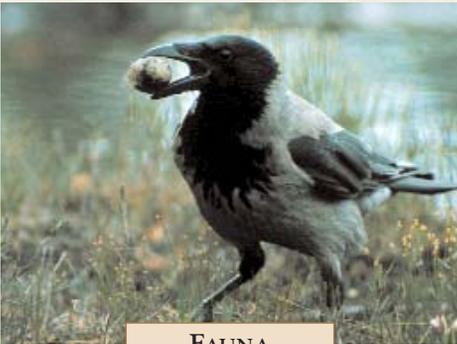
Roman countryside landscape.



FLORA

From the **protected area of the Marcigliana** to the **regional reserves of Gattaceca and Nomentum**, just outside the city, Nature provides occasions for a walk among olive trees, Turkey oaks, maples and hornbeam, and a chance to discover scents and sounds too often lost in the urban environment.

Above: olive trees.



FAUNA

The hooded crow, a constant presence in countryside excursions, is a very intelligent and adaptable bird that has managed to survive where others have fled. It endures pollution and noise and eats about everything, taking advantage of abandoned waste. A pleasant bird but a world populated only by crows would be rather dull.

Above: hooded crow.

TYPICAL PRODUCTS

GENTIAN LIQUOR

The **Gentian**, *Gentiana Lutea L.*, is a typical plant of the Appenines that grows in the clearings of woods and pastures, and blooms in the summer. Always used in liquor-making and in pharmacy, its long and brown cylindrical root is the ingredient of an excellent liquor with a sweet taste and a slightly bitter after-taste. According to an ancient recipe the roots are gathered in Autumn, left to dry and then washed, ground, and steeped in ethyl alcohol for 40 days.

Gentian liquor is completely natural and acknowledged as a traditional product of Lazio by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.



ABBEYS AND MONASTERIES



THE CAPUCHIN MONASTERY

Monterotondo

THANKS TO THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE *Bullarium Cappuccinorum*, and documents preserved in the convent archive, we know that the first official news of the original settlement of the Capuchins dates back to the 27th of February 1542. This is the date of the bill of sale of a piece of land, a vineyard, “to be used by the Capuchins”, made by Evangelista Jacobi Seretij of Monterotondo to one of the Orsini. In one of his reports, the Orsini doctor, who in 1642 owned the convent, confirms that it had been founded about 80 years earlier, as indicated in the bill of sale.

What the Capuchin Monastery meant for the local population is revealed by the history of the convent itself that was built thanks to their will and strong devotion. In the early 1600s the lords of the town bought some land and contributed to the construction of a new convent (1609) on the slopes of the Colle Reatino, along the Via Nomentana, to save the monks from the unhealthy air of their original location. So it is that today the convent rises on a splendid viewpoint, surrounded by the silence and greenery of the woods.

The **Church** is simple and sober, a destination for prayer and visits, and is dedicated to **St. Francis of Assisi**. It bears the emblem of the Municipality of Monterotondo on its main door, evidence of the strong tie between civil and religious worlds in the social context of the time. The Church houses paintings from the 16th and 17th centuries. The **Choir** contains paintings depicting Saint Lucy (17th century) and Saint Agatha (early 16th century). The **Cloister** partakes in the sober atmosphere of the convent with an ancient cistern at its centre to collect spring water. Many important figures in Italian civil and religious history experienced signifi-



Monterotondo, Capuchin Monastery: facade of the Church.

cant moments here. Brother **Crispino da Viterbo**, **canonized** in 1982, lived here for a few years (1703-1709) as official gardener, as recalled on the little well of spring water in front of the convent’s cellar, that he used to water the orchard. **Giuseppe Garibaldi** took refuge here with his wife Anita during his defense of the Roman Republic in 1849, and in 1867 he based his troops by the convent during the occupation of Monterotondo, in the struggle against the French and Papal forces, in the Roman campaign ending with the battle Mentana. Even **Pius IX** visited the monastery in 1853, as indicated by a plaque in the old Refectory. It seems that in occasion of that visit a large pine tree was planted in the woods of the convent that can still be seen today.

The role of this religious centre whose monastic community always preached poverty and hospitality, was very important. Also a study centre, it has a **seminary** founded in 1834, and philosophy and theology courses were introduced in the 1900s.

Saint Crispino (Pietro Fioretti) from Viterbo.



USEFUL INFO



Regional Reserve of
Gattaceca and Macchia del Barco
Regional Reserve of Nomentum
Provincia di Roma
Ufficio Parchi Naturali
Via Tiburtina, 691 - 00159 Roma
Ph. +390667663301

Regional Park of the Inviolata
c/o Comune - Settore Ambiente
00012 Guidonia-Montecelio
Ph. +390774340909

Romanatura - System of Protected
Areas of the Municipality of Rome
Villa Mazzanti
Via Gomenizza, 81 - 00195 Roma
Ph. +390635403436
www.romanatura.roma.it
www.parchilazio.it
www.parks.it



AZIENDA DI PROMOZIONE
TURISTICA DEL
COMUNE DI ROMA
Via Parigi, 11 - 00185 Roma
Ph.+3906488991 - Fax +39064819316
Centro Visitatori
Via Parigi, 5 - 00185 Roma
www.romaturismo.it



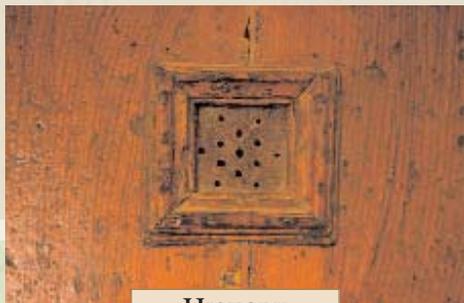
AZIENDA DI PROMOZIONE
TURISTICA DELLA
PROVINCIA DI ROMA
Via XX Settembre, 26 - 00187 Roma
Ph.+3906421381 - Fax +390642138211
www.oltreroma.it

■ PALAZZO ORSINI

Piazza Marconi, 4
00015 Monterotondo (RM)
Ph. +3906906741

■ MONASTERY OF THE CAPUCHINES

Convento Frati Cappuccini
Piazza San Francesco d'Assisi, 1
00015 Monterotondo (RM)
Ph. +390690627534



Monterotondo,
Capuchin Monastery:
detail of the door
to the cells.

HISTORY

THE CAPUCHIN FRIARS

The order of the Capuchin Friars Minor, named after the typical hood (in Italian "cappuccio") of their habit, started in the 16th century as a new branch of the Franciscans. Founded by **Matteo da Bascio** as a mendicant order, it was officially recognized in 1528 by Clement VII. Tied to the vow of poverty, the Capuchin friars observed the **Rule of St. Francis** rigorously and sustained the Jesuits in their programme of church reform. They have always lived their spiritual commitment and apostolic activities with great simplicity and openness, sharing their experience with the faithful. There are many Capuchin convents throughout Lazio and their first saint was San Felice da Cantalice.



CURIOSITIES

CAPENA LAKE

Near Capena, in the **Valle del Fosso di San Martino**, there is a small oval-shaped lake with strangely iridescent water. The peculiarity of this water basin is that it disappears for long periods and then suddenly reemerges. The phenomenon was known already in the Middle Ages, when the first documents regarding the lake can be found, and since then its presence has been discontinuous. Having reemerged after the sinking of the clayey ground, and thanks to the presence of water tables rich in iron salts, it has been there again since 1930, although the spring that feeds it appears to be drying up.



THE CASTELLI
ROMANIIN THE FAVORITE
VACATION RESORT OF
ARISTOCRATS AND POPES

*South of Rome
we discover traces of the taste
of the ancient Romans for pleasant
surroundings and leisure.
Man's constant care and
attention has maintained the
beauty of these site that preserve
archaeological, natural and
monumental treasures, an
authentic patrimony of humanity.*

CASTLES AND FORTRESSES

THE VILLA ALDOBRANDINI
Frascati

FROM THE MID 16TH CENTURY FRASCATI, ONE OF THE MOST ANCIENT TOWNS OF THE CASTELLI ROMANI, became a true living garden at the gates of Rome, celebrated for its princely villas, spectacular parks and fountains.

The imposing Villa Aldobrandini stands out among the town's numerous aristocratic residences also because of its location overlooking an exceptional view, that for a long time earned it the name of Villa Belvedere.

The original structure was built in 1550 by Monsignor Alessandro Rufini above the remains of a Roman villa belonging to the Ottavi family, and after changing owners on various occasions, finally in 1598 it came into the hands of Pietro Aldobrandini, cardinal and politician, as a gift from his uncle Pope Clement VIII. Thus began the most prosperous period of the villa, fated to become a place of rest and retreat for the family whose named it carries to this day. It was completely restructured in 1601 by **Giacomo della Porta** (the famous Lombard architect who completed the work on the dome of St. Peter's after the death of his master Michelangelo). At the request of Cardinal Aldobrandini, he created a

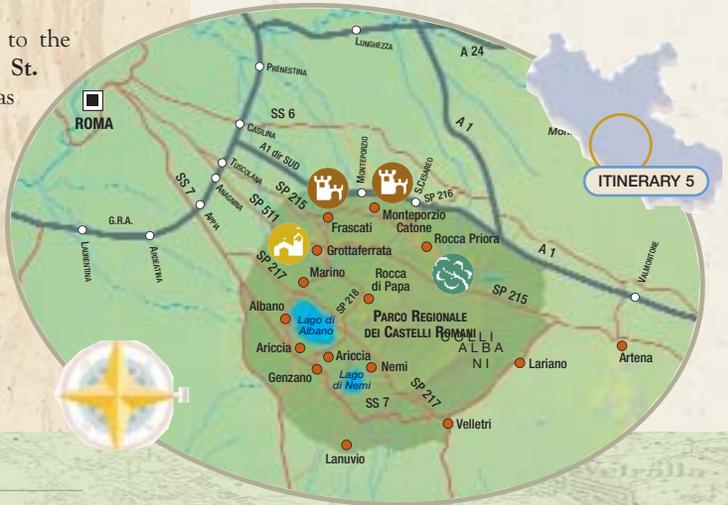


Frascati: Villa Aldobrandini.

magnificent Renaissance palace worthy of the grandeur of this Florentine family. At the end of the construction work all that was left of the small preexisting villa was a wall, incorporated into the new structure. The entire residential complex follows the layout of the area and develops on a series of terraced planes with striking yet functional ramps, according to the typical Renaissance plan, animated by ornamental elements that anticipate Baroque. The main facade is elegant, adorned with pilasters and the Aldobrandini coat of arms above the door. The spacious 18th century atrium leads to the great central salon on the ground floor, frescoed with colours made with plants (known as "grass juices"), along with rooms on the sides and stairs to the upper levels. The first floor houses the aristocratic rooms with fine furniture and painting decorations with biblical themes by Giuseppe Cesari, known as the **Cavalier D'Arpino**, who along with **Giovanni Fontana** completed the works after the death of della Porta. The great hall was located on the second floor. The loggia on the third floor and the belvedere terraces added splendour and prestige to the whole. The main structure is flanked by structures creating a balanced

THE CASTELLI ROMANI

effect, service areas and entrances to the palace, and a **chapel** dedicated to **St. Sebastian**. In later times the villa was acquired by the Pamphili family and then by the Borghese when in 1832 **Francesco Borghese** inherited all the Aldobrandini possessions and decided to adopt their name. Since then the villa, visible only from the outside, has always remained property of the family that preserves its wealth and history.



GETTING THERE

- **Frascati (RM) and Monte Porzio Catone (RM)** - A1 MILANA, exit Monte Porzio and continue along the SP216 according to directions.
- **Grottaferrata (RM)** - From Rome: G.R.A., junction for the Via Tuscolana and/or Via Anagnina and follow directions for Grottaferrata.

By bus: Cotral Bus from the metro station Anagnina direction Rocca di Papa.

- **Ariccia (RM)** - From Rome: G.R.A. exit Via Appia continue along SS7 Via Appia direction Ariccia.

- **National Park of the Castelli Romani** - From Rome: G.R.A., exit Anagnina-Tuscolana direction Grottaferrata, follow directions for Rocca di Papa where, in Via Cesare Battisti 5, seat of the Regional Park of the Castelli Romani.



ART

Frascati, Villa Aldobrandini: detail of the mosaics in the Park.

THE PARK OF WONDERS

After the stay of Pope Clement VIII in Frascati in 1603, a beautiful **monumental garden** was set up in the park surrounding **Villa Aldobrandini**, along with an innovative work for the channeling of water. **Great artists** of the time participated in the project, including sculptor **Ippolito Buzzi**, French stucco decorator **Jacques Sarrazin**, and painters **Domenico** and **Tommaso Passignano**. The celebrated fountain attendant **Orazio Olivieri** along with **Giovanni Guglielmi** created the **sophisticated hydraulic devices** that allowed each fountain to produce marvelous waterworks complete with sound effects. The architecture was bold and scenographic, in typical Baroque taste, and aimed at surprising and entertaining visitors with the spectacular effects of its **fountains**, **waterfalls**, **nymphaeums**, mythological **statues**, **paintings**, **ornamental mosaics**, the **Theatre of Waters** and the great **Hall of Waters**. In his "Relatione", the designer of the iconography, monsignor **Giovan Battista Agucchi** - Pietro Aldobrandini's secretary - describes the allegory of Beauty in the Garden of the Villa by comparing it to the Garden of the Hesperides. According to this plan, the power of Pope Clement VIII corresponded to that of Atlas sustaining the world, and his nephew Aldobrandini was represented by Hercules who helped him. At the time uncle and nephew were both greatly involved in defending Christian peace.



HISTORY

THE GREGORIAN CALENDAR

In **Villa Mondragone**, near Monte Porzio Catone, on the 13th of **February 1582** Pope Gregory XIII signed the Bull of the "**Gregorian Reform**" decreeing the revision of the **Julian Calendar** and the adoption of a new criterion to establish the cycles of leap years. The solar cycle at the base of the calendar established by Julius Caesar in 46 BC and used since that time, exceed correct calculation by as many as 11 minutes and a quarter every year. Through the centuries the inaccuracy had added up to 11 days, and in October of 1582, by order of the pope, 10 days were suppressed, passing from the 3rd to the 14th of October. Thanks to the calculations and studies of Luigi Lilio, an astronomer from Calabria, and other famous mathematicians from all over the world, the Gregorian Reform was established, introducing the **Gregorian Calendar**, adopted by most Western countries.

PARKS



THE REGIONAL PARK OF THE CASTELLI ROMANI

THE CASTELLI ROMANI, BY NOW AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE METROPOLITAN AREA OF ROME, are still a traditional destination for the out-of-town excursions of the Romans. At one time site of dark woods of oak and beech, today they appear as a mosaic of bush and vineyards, houses and towns, the result of a very ancient urbanization. Nature here has been shaped by the power and variety of geology. The entire area originated from a series of volcanic eruptions that shook the original crater, creating the lakes of Albano and Nemi and of the one of Ariccia, which is now dried up. The rock of the Castelli, the famous peperino, was used to build the Roman wall that separated the Imperial Forums from the Suburra, but even the slab stones of Roman roads were made with basalt from the Colli Albani.

In this unique setting, with its blend of nature and culture, we need to know how to look for evidence of natural life. An authentic natural patrimony in a protected area surrounded by towns inhabited by 350.000 people, where we can still see the flight of owls and sparrow-hawks.

THE PARK IN NUMBERS

Nature park of the Castelli Romani

Management: Public Right Board

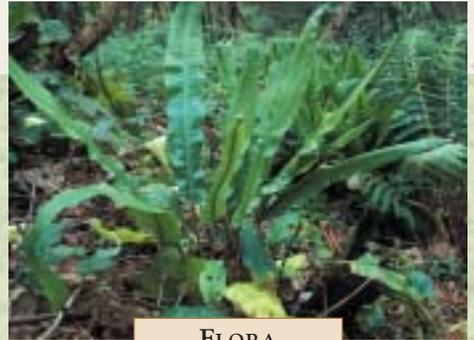
Municipalities involved: Albano, Ariccia, Castel Gandolfo, Frascati, Nemi, Genzano, Grottaferrata, Lanuvio, Lariano, Marino, Monte Compatri,

Monte Porzio Catone, Rocca di Papa, Rocca Priora, Velletri, XI Comunità Montana, Province of Rome

Surface: 12,000 hectares - Instituted: 1984



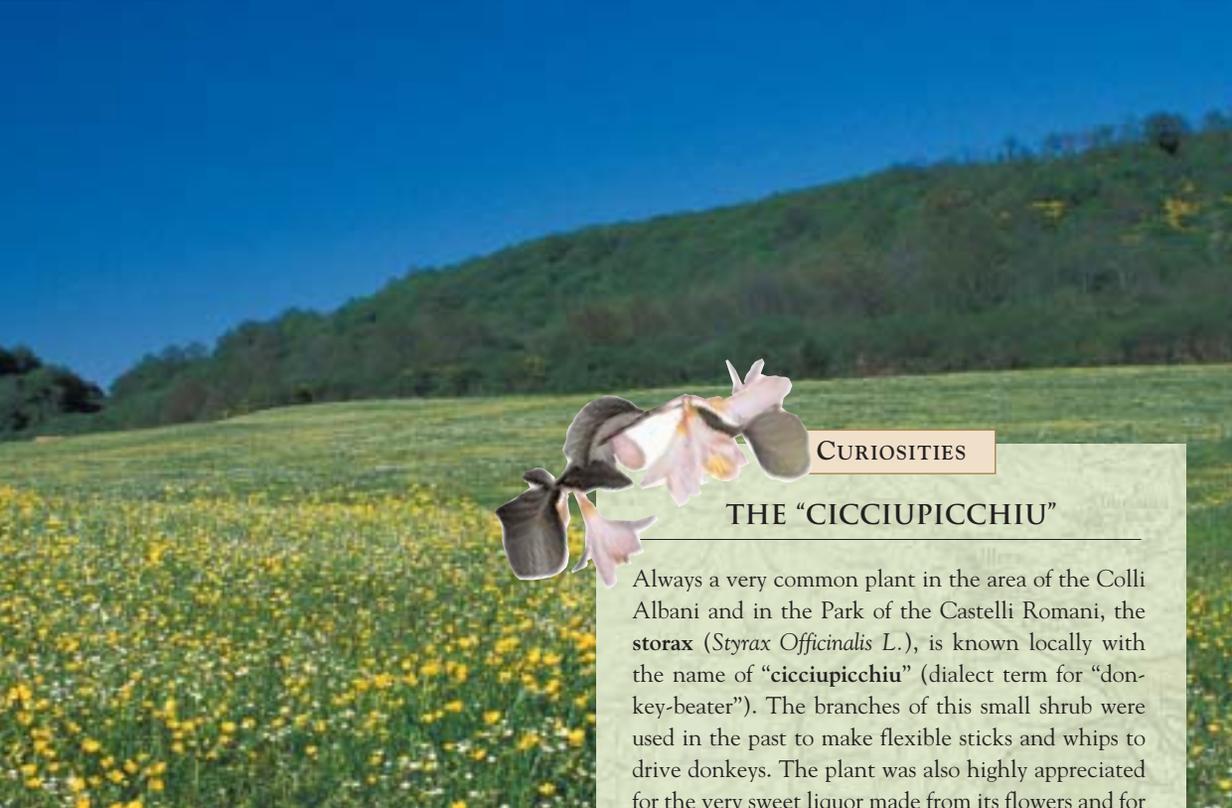
The Pratoni del Vivaro.



FLORA

At the top of Monte Cavo it is still possible to admire tall beech trees and a few chestnuts here and there on the slopes. The coppice woods are made up of holm oak and maple, hormbeam and hazel. There is also a beautiful Mediterranean bush thick with broom, heather and strawberry trees. Narcissus and peonies are rather common too.

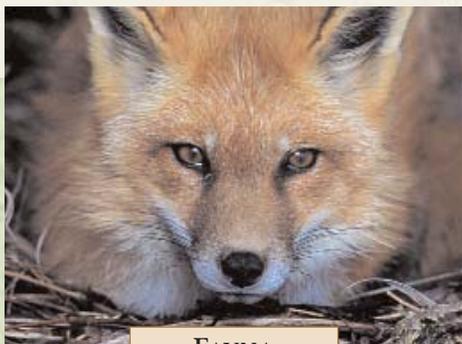
Above: brushwood with ferns.



CURIOSITIES

THE “CICCIUPICCHIU”

Always a very common plant in the area of the Colli Albani and in the Park of the Castelli Romani, the **storax** (*Styrax Officinalis L.*), is known locally with the name of “**cicciupicchiu**” (dialect term for “donkey-beater”). The branches of this small shrub were used in the past to make flexible sticks and whips to drive donkeys. The plant was also highly appreciated for the very sweet liquor made from its flowers and for its officinal properties.



FAUNA

In the Pratoni del Vivaro we can come across a tortoise, or spot an egret hunting along the lake shores. Where Man's presence in the lake area is scarce, in every season we can enjoy the sight of tenches, bleaks and pikes darting through the water while herons, loons, dabchicks and ducks swim undisturbed.

Above: a fox.

TYPICAL PRODUCTS

THE FRAGOLINO AND FRAGOLINA OF NEMI

The names seem taken from a romantic Italian fairytale, but they actually refer to two typical products of Lazio. Fragolino is a **tasty distillate of wild strawberries** (“fragolina”), common to the area of the Colli Albani and one of the four recognized as typical product of Lazio. The original recipe for **Fragolino** calls specifically for the wild strawberries from the woods around the **Lake of Nemi**, sweet and aromatic, and strictly hand-picked.



ABBEYS AND MONASTERIES



THE ABBEY OF SAN NILO

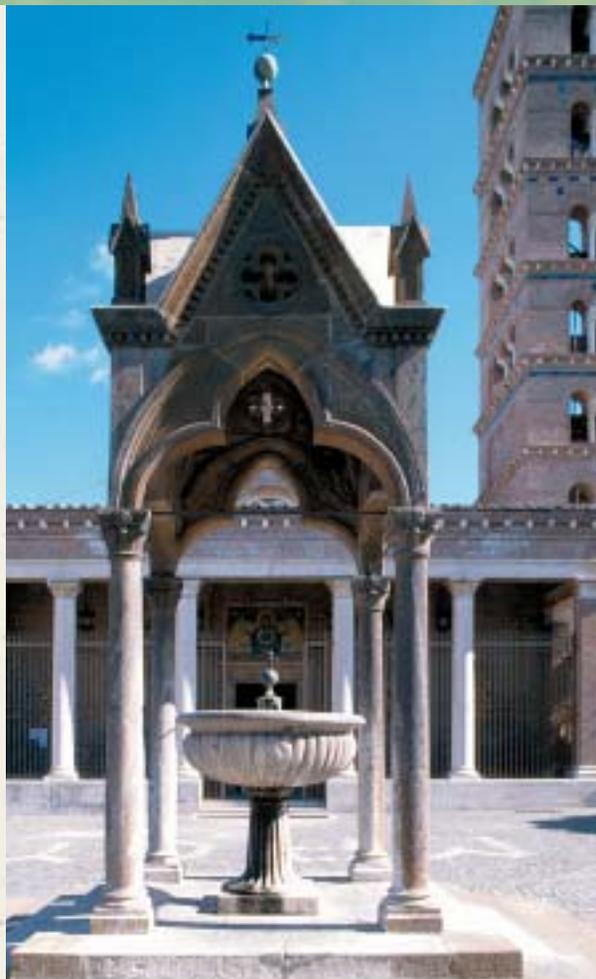
Grottaferrata

THE ABBEY WAS FOUNDED IN 1004 BY ST. NILO, a Basilian monk from Calabria, who was already over ninety at the time. Gregorio I, master of Tuscolo, granted the scribe monk the piece of land on which the monastery was built and that was previously occupied by a sepulchral chapel from Republican times, known as *Cryptaferrata* because of the iron protection surrounding it, that probably also originated the name of the town of Grottaferrata that hosts the beautiful abbey.

The complex is the only one of the numerous Greek monasteries built in Italy and Europe between the 6th and 13th centuries that survived time and destruction and in which Basilian monks still observe the Orthodox rite, in communion with the Church of Rome, to this day. The Greek-Catholic rite differs from the Latin only in exterior aspects and was widely diffused in southern Italy around the 15th century when, following the invasion of the Balkan area by the Turks, many Albanian monastic communities moved to Italy.

Declared national monument in 1874, the complex has a square plan and the appearance of a fortified Renaissance abbey, with four towers at the corners and a mighty wall. This was how the Cardinal Giuliano Della Rovere wanted it when between 1483 and 1491 he ordered the restructuring project to Antonio da Sangallo, in a period in which monasteries were not just places of worship and faith but also fiefs that exerted their jurisdiction over the neighbouring territory. Fully equipped with a moat and a bridge for defense, the structure presents all the typical elements of an abbey complex: basilica, cloister, library, refectory, and other service areas used by the monks in their daily practice of faith.

The actual monastery is accessed through the first courtyard, where we find the airy **Portico** designed by **Sangallo** framing an elegant garden.



Grottaferrata, Abbey of San Nilo: in the background the Portico by Sangallo.

The **Basilica di Santa Maria di Grottaferrata**, founded by St. Bartholomew, is in the second courtyard: the interior is in 18th century style, owing to the numerous interventions that erased the original Romanesque style, represented by the elegant bell tower from the 12th century. The church has three naves and contains Byzantine mosaics (13th century) and decorations, a baptismal font (10th century) and a fine Byzantine-Italic icon painted on wood and representing the Virgin and Child. Scenes from the life of St. Nilo and his disciple St. Bartholomew are depicted on the walls of the **Chapel** dedicated to the founder of the abbey, frescoed in 1610 by **Domenichino** (1584-1641), accessible from the right nave of the basilica.



REGIONE LAZIO

Surprising Lazio



Walking through time

PARKS, CASTLES, MONASTERIES
DISCOVERING HISTORY AND LEGENDS
FROM THE HEART OF LAZIO



GENERAL *General Map* MAP



ASSESSORATO ALLA CULTURA,
SPETTACOLO, SPORT E TURISMO

REGIONE LAZIO



General

KEY



Seat of the APT



Touring Club
Orange Flag Locality



Embarkation



Itineraries



*Itinerary 1:
Bolsena,
Monaldeschi
Fortress.*



*Itinerary 2:
Caprarola,
Palazzo Farnese.*



*Itinerary 3:
Bracciano,
Odescalchi
Castle.*



*Itinerary 4:
Roman countryside,
Autumn landscape.*



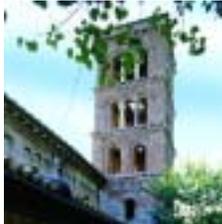
*Itinerary 5:
Frascati, Villa
Aldobrandini.*



Map



*Itinerary 6:
Labro, Vitelleschi
Castle.*



*Itinerary 7
Palombara Sabina
San Giovanni in
Argentella.*



*Itinerary 8
Castel San Pietro,
Colonna Castle.*



*Itinerary 9
Veroli, Abbey of
Casamari.*



*Itinerary 10
Sermoneta,
Abbey of
Valvisciolo.*



REGIONAL PARK AGENCY

The Regional Park Agency (A.R.P.) is a governmental organization established by the Lazio Region Government, with the objective of improving the management of the Regional Protected Areas System.

The Agency specifically deals with the training and continuing education of the Park staff and supports sustainable development projects for the enhancement and sustainable utilization of natural resources.

The Agency promotes sustainable tourism in protected areas with the "GIORNIVERDI (GreenDays) Program" offering naturalistic and cultural activities, educational camps, access to nature without barriers and promotion of the local accommodation industry. In 2003 ARP and certain protected areas in Lazio offer more than 400 initiatives to discover the nature, history, fragrances, colours, and flavours of the area. Information on the protected areas of the Lazio Region, specific projects and initiatives for the promotion of local resources is available on the Web-site www.parchilazio.it

ARP Regional Park Agency

Via Indonesia, 33 - 00144 Roma
Ph.+39065913371 fax +39065919404
agenzia@parchilazio.it
www.parchilazio.it
comunicazione.arp@parchilazio.it

*On the cover of the general map
Land map of Lazio
Domenico De Rossi, 1693*

Relief map of Lazio: Regione Lazio
Dipartimento Territorio - Direzione Regionale
Territorio e Urbanistica
Sistema Cartografico e Geografico

USEFUL INFO



Regional Park of the Castelli Romani
Via Cesare Battisti, 5
00040 Rocca di Papa (RM)
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www.parks.it



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www.oltreroma.it

■ **VILLA ALDOBRANDINI**

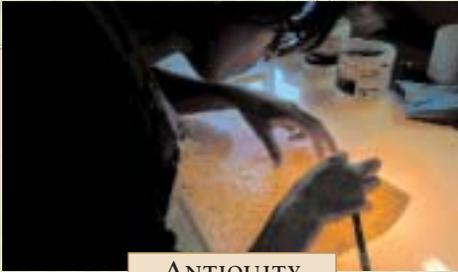
Via Cardinal Massaia, 112
Frascati (RM)
Visits by appointment:
9am-1pm / 3-5pm
I.A.T. Ph. +39069420331

■ **VILLE DI MONTE PORZIO
CATONE (RM)**

Visits by appointment:
I.A.T. Ph. +39069420331

■ **ABBEY OF SAN NILO**

Corso del Popolo, 128
00046 Grottaferrata
Visits by reservation
(except Monday)
www.abbaziagreca.it
Biblioteca - Ph.+39069415122
sannilo@librari.beniculturali.it



ANTIQUITY

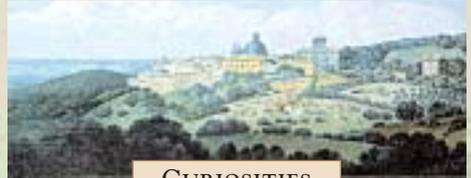
THE SCRIPTORIUM

The Abbey of San Nilo is famous for the presence of the fascinating **Scientific Laboratory for the Restoration and Conservation of antique books** and for the **School of Miniature and Paleography**, both instituted in 1931. The delicate work of “curing” and preserving the book patrimony - vulnerable to the marks and injuries of time - originated at the time of the Abbey's founding, when the *scriptorium* created by St. Nilo was assigned to the practice of decorating and preserving ancient manuscripts carried out by patient amanuensis monks. Through this masterly work handed down for centuries, the monastic community has instilled its profound sense of prayer, present in every simple gesture of daily life.

It was here that the restoration of the Atlantic Code by Leonardo da Vinci took place in 1962, twelve volumes of drawings, studies and calculations. It was the monks from Grottaferrata who, on request of Pope Paul VI, recuperated and saved 1200 volumes of an immense book patrimony during the flood in Florence in 1966, and to this day it is in this institute that rare works from all over the world are given rigorous chemical conservation treatments.

The monastery **Library** and the public one, among the most ancient and precious in Italy, contain 60,000 Byzantine works, one thousand illuminated manuscripts, incunabula, Greek and Latin manuscripts, works by St. Nilo, Plato, Aristotle, Petrarch and Boccaccio.

*Left:
Grottaferrata,
Abbey of San
Nilo, a moment
in the patient
restoration of a
manuscript.
Below: view of
Ariccia.*



CURIOSITIES

THE “DESCENDING” CLIMB

Near **Ariccia** there is a place where a strange phenomenon was recorded in 1978. To fully understand its effects it is worth going to the exact spot, at km 11,6 of the SS218 between Ariccia and Rocca Priora, past the junction for Castel Gandolfo. The rise in this location, 550mt above sea level, forms a descent that continues into a broad curve and looks quite normal. Yet, in defiance of all rules and the law of gravity, the descent behaves like an up-hill climb: every object tends to roll up rather than down. In that point even people feel strangely attracted to the climb. Despite the strong skepticism of the scientific community, some scholars exclude it could be an optical illusion. It seems the unique phenomenon may be explained through an anomaly in the magnetism and force of gravity in the area of the Colli Albani, caused by the preexistence of the ancient volcanic range, the Lazio Volcano, extinguished 25,000 years ago.

THE MONTI SABINI
AND REATINIFRAGMENTS OF HISTORY
ALONG THE PATHS
AMONG THE OLIVE TREES

Here where agricultural and pastoral traditions coexist with innovative tourist structures, religious feeling, power and culture have always found time and space to express themselves at their best.

Saints, emperors and artists wrote history along the Via Salaria, the ancient road that crossed the heart of Sabina, the land of the Valle Santa up to the Apennines.

CASTLES AND FORTRESSES

THE NOBILI-VITELLESCHI
CASTLE

Labro

THE TOWN OF LABRO IS A CHEST OF MEDIEVAL TREASURES, buildings and churches, doors and gates, decorative architectural elements, elegant windows, inscriptions, bays and above all the Nobile Vitelleschi Castle, a splendid feudal fortress that is one with the town. The present complex rises above the remains of an ancient fortress founded around the 10th century. In fact, in 956 Emperor Otto I assigned the estate of Labro to the powerful aristocratic family of the de' Nobili who established their residence there. The Nobili built the castle in order to control the communication routes in the valley below, between the Monti Reatini and the Tiber Valley. This was their main activity and for a few centuries they created and controlled most of the fortified settlements in the area.

In the 12th and 13th centuries the fate of the castle was tied to the events of the Church of Rome and of the rural area around Rieti. At the end of the 1500s the



Labro, Nobile Vitelleschi Castle: rampart and detail of the wall.

Nobili became related to the Vitelleschi family and in 1624 when the latter became extinct, adopted their name along with their own.

Between the mid 15th century and the beginning of the 16th, the castle was entirely reconstructed and enlarged by incorporating houses, towers and walls of the older fortress, in order to make it safer and more compact. To this day ancient paths departing from the famous Three Gates in the heart of the town, run along the defensive perimeter. Restorations in later times allowed the family to transform their residence in a true baronial palace with a beautiful terraced garden crossed by a spectacular double staircase. Between the end of the 1800s and the early 1900s the complex was significantly restructured with the opening of windows, the addition of small loggias and typical Guelph battlements. In excellent condition, it is still inhabited by the aristocratic Vitelleschi family.

THE MONTI SABINI AND REATINI

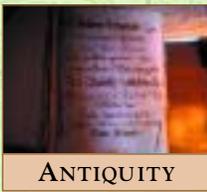


GETTING THERE

- **Labro (RI):** A1 MI-RM, exit Fiano Romano, then SS4 Via Salaria for Rieti; then SS Ternana up to Ponte Crispolti and follow directions for Labro.
- **Montenero Sabino (RI):** A1 exit Fiano Romano, then SS4 Via Salaria and SS313.
- **Borgo San Pietro - Poggio Bustone (RI):** A24 RM-AQ exit Valle del Salto and SS4 Via Salaria.
- **Fara in Sabina (RI):** A1 RM-FI exit Roma Nord Fiano Romano. *Or from Rome:* Via Salaria, exit Passo Corese and from Rieti Osteria Nuova. *By train:* Metropolitan Train from Fiumicino to Fara Sabina and Cotral bus for Farfa.
- **National Park of Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga:** A24 RM-AQ-TE (exit Assergi towards the Aquila part, San Gabriele - Colledara for the Teramo part), then SS17bis to reach the excursion departure point. *From Rome and the*

Adriatic coast: SS4 Salaria for the Lazio and Umbria parts. *From L'Aquila and Teramo:* SS80 along the Valle del Vomano for the Abruzzo part and the Monti della Laga. For the SW part: SS17 from L'Aquila to Navelli, continuing then for Pepoli. For the SE part, the carriageways of the Pescara valley. *By train:* L'Aquila and Teramo FS stations and then by coach.

■ **Monte Navegna and Monte Cervia Nature Reserve**
From Rome: A24 exit Oricola Carsoli, then SP Turanese towards Rieti. *From Rieti:* SS578 direction Avezzano, then Sp67 Cicolano, directions for Varco Sabino.

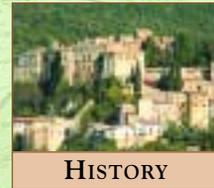


ANTIQUITY

Labro, Archive of the Nobili-Vitelleschi Castle: ancient manuscript.

THE HISTORIC ARCHIVE

For over one thousand years, the **Nobili-Vitelleschi Castle** has preserved precious documents through which it is possible to reconstruct the history of the family. The **Historic Archive** collects and conserves documents dating from 1068, and more than 300 rare parchments also include a "brief" in which Pope Celestine III authorized the building of a church in 1191 and the one in which the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III nominated one of the descendants of the Vitelleschi Palatine Count in 1452.



HISTORY

THE ASSAULT TO CONTIGLIANO CASTLE

During his papacy, Alexander VI impassively supported the designs for domination of his son **Cesare Borgia**, intent on creating a strong state in central Italy. After conquering a large portion of Romagna, Cesare proceeded south by attacking and invading, and eventually ordered the assault on the **Castle of Contigliano**, a strategic base for the control of central Italy, in August of 1501. To the resistance of the townspeople, the leader of the troops **Vitellozzo Vitelli** answered with a harsh battle that led to the occupation of the town. Every August the event is commemorated with an evocative ceremony in medieval costume with a Historic Parade, the Palio dell'Ariete, and the reenactment of the battle with warriors in costumes.

PARKS



THE NATIONAL PARK OF THE GRAN SASSO AND OF THE MONTI DELLA LAGA

ALONG THE BORDER BETWEEN LAZIO, ABRUZZO AND MARCHE, lies one of the most beautiful forests in Italy, the forest of the **Monti della Laga**, part of the **National Park of the Gran Sasso**. Water flows through sandstone and marls forming a unique environment in the context of the Apennines and that during the thaw offers a truly unforgettable sight. Mountain climbers explore these surges in the wintertime also, evidence of how the Laga is an ideal destination for excursions all year round. The waterfall of the Barche has a drop of over forty metres and is one of the most evocative places in this part of the region. Flowing water is the main feature also in the **nature reserve of Lakes Lungo and Ripasottile**, and the one of **Tevere-Farfa**, two natural lakes along the Velino river and a marshy area created after the construction of an artificial water reservoir, two among the most popular destinations for the observation of bird-life in a swamp environment in Lazio. Two authentic natural “lungs” just outside of Rome.

THE PARK IN NUMBERS

National Park of the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga

Management: Park Board

Surface: 150,000 hectares - Instituted: 1991

Nature Reserve of Lakes Lungo and Ripasottile

Management: Municipalities involved: Rieti, Cantalice, Colli sul Velino, Contigliano, Poggio Bustone, Rivodutri

Surface: 3,000 hectares - Instituted: 1985

Nature Reserve Monte Soratte

Management: Province of Rome, Department II, Service 5
“Environment planning, park development, nature reserves”

Surface: ca 410 hectares - Instituted: 1997

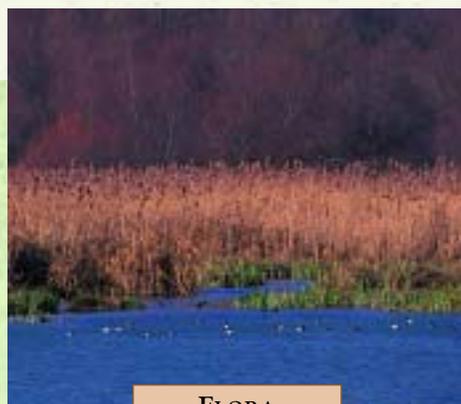
Nature Reserve Tevere Farfa

Management: Board of the Nature Reserve

Surface: 705 hectares - Instituted: 1999



Monte Soratte.

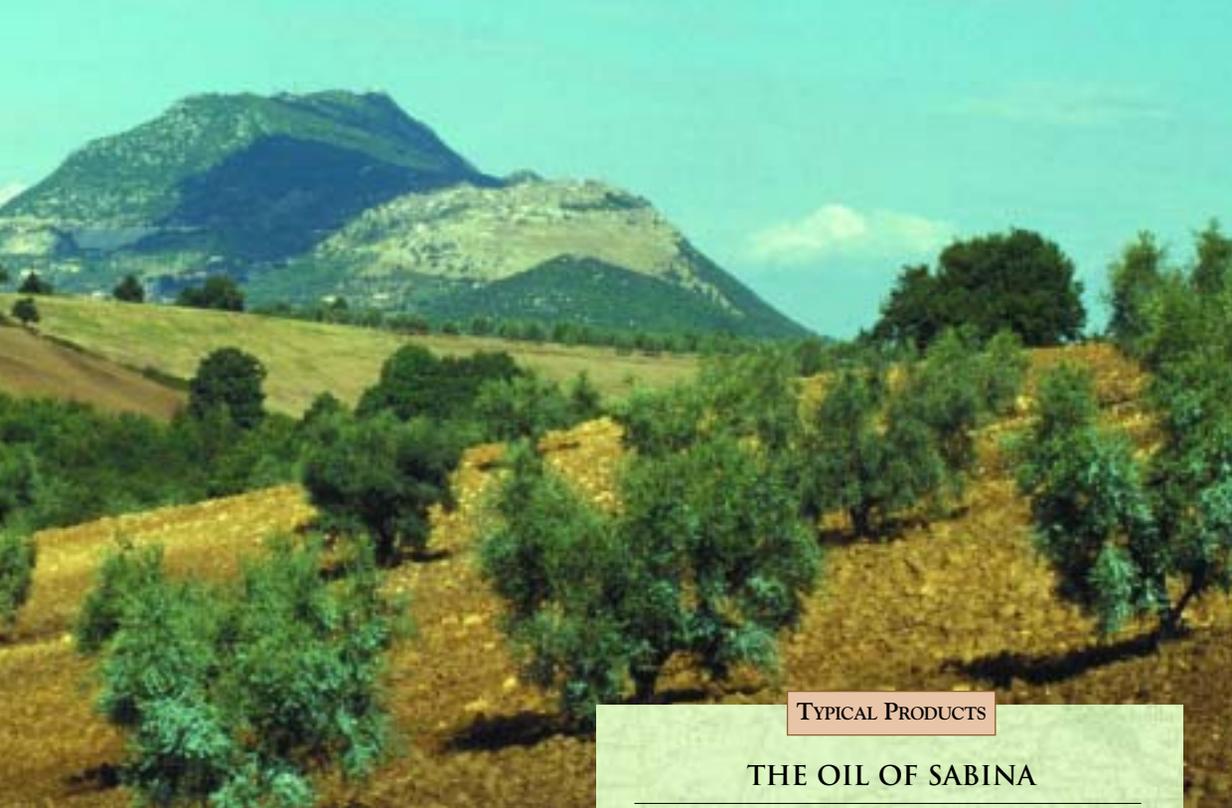


FLORA

Reed thickets are true reservoirs of biological diversity and the entire swamp environment gravitates around them. Along with reeds and cat's tail, the surface of the water is scattered with white water-lilies and yellow candocks, delicate duckweed and less known varieties of water plants.

Above: swamp landscape with reed thicket.

THE MONTI SABINI AND REATINI



TYPICAL PRODUCTS

THE OIL OF SABINA

Yellow, almost green in colour, an aromatic, almost fruity flavour, this refined product from the land of Sabina obtained the **authenticated trademark for quality** a few years ago. The “liquid gold” the Romans were the first to appreciate is today a high quality extra-virgin olive oil, thanks to its area of origin, its seven selected cultivated varieties (*Carboncella, Leccino, Frantoio, Raja, Pendolino, Moraiolo, Rosciola*), and its precious organoleptic characteristics. The mild climate and the calcareous soil of the hills, typical of Sabina, have created for over 2000 years the ideal habitat for the cultivation of olives that the ancient Romans themselves implemented. In time, the patient work of the Benedictine monks refined and rationalized the various phases (hand-picking and pressing) of the careful limited production. In **Canneto Sabino** stands a **2000 year-old olive tree**, the biggest in Europe, whose trunk has a diameter of 7 metres.



FAUNA

The wolf is the most feared and admired animal in Italy. Its proverbial ability to survive in difficult conditions has led him past the Alps from the heart of our Apennines, a great example of wildlife's strong adaptability.



Above: a wolf.

ABBEYS AND MONASTERIES



THE CONVENT OF SAN GIACOMO

Poggio Bustone

NEAR THE RUSTIC TOWN OF POGGIO BUSTONE, on the slopes of Monte Rosato, stands the Convent of San Giacomo, built between 1235 and 1237 by the grotto where Saint Francis lived in the years of his preaching in the Rieti valley around 1209. After becoming a Franciscan Sanctuary it was rebuilt numerous times between the 13th and 17th centuries and all that is left of the original architecture of the 1200s is a small portico leading to the Church and Convent complex, consisting of sections from the 14th century and other sections added later, along with the charming **Cloister**.

The **Refectory**, built in the 16th century, is decorated with frescoes representing saints.

The convent **Church** dedicated to **Saint Giacomo Maggiore**, dates from the first half of the 1400s and is an example of simplicity and devotion: the exterior has maintained the original aspect whereas the interior, with a single nave, is in gothic style. Beautiful frescoes represent moments in the life of St. Francis, including one from the 15th century that shows him receiving the stigmata.

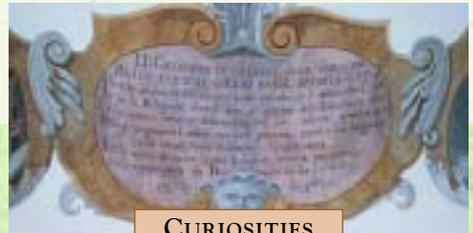
The life of St. Francis had a strong influence on this place of prayer and stretched to the area outside the convent itself. Starting from the square and climbing up Monte Rosato, we arrive in fact at the **Hermitage**, a place dug out of the rock where the Saint retired to pray in solitude or with his companions. We still find it today, practically identical to when he received the revelation from God on the rightness of the path he had chosen and regarding the mission of his Order, and for this reason it is also known as the “**Grotto of Revelations**”.

The grotto is situated in a small 13th century church built after St. Francis’ death and to which a chapel was added in the 1600s, containing a beautiful paint-



*Borgo San Pietro - Poggio Bustone:
Church and Convent of San Giacomo.*

ing with an “*Angel Announcing the Forgiveness of Sins*” that seems to recall the forgiveness St. Francis obtained there for his own sins.



CURIOSITIES

THE WORDS OF SAINT FRANCIS

“**Hail good people**”. With these words, in October 1208, a young monk greeted the townspeople of Poggio Bustone who had rushed to listen to his preaching. To pay homage to St. Francis’s profound work of evangelization, every year on the 4th of October at dawn, an inhabitant of the town greets all his fellow townspeople with those words, accompanied by a tambourine. The verbal communication of the Saint has maintained its strong emotional impact to this day. His words and works have always been a source of inspiration for artists, scholars and men of letters, as proven by the words represented in the 16th century painting preserved in the **Refectory of the Convent of San Giacomo**.

*Poggio Bustone, Refectory of the Convent of San Giacomo:
words attributed to St. Francis.*

USEFUL INFO



National Park of the Gran Sasso and the Monti della Laga

Via Convento, 1
67010 Assergi (AQ)
Ph. +39086260521
www.gransassolagapark.it

Regional Reserve of Lakes Lungo and Ripasottile c/o V Comunità montana

Via A. Manzoni, 10 - 02100 Rieti
Ph. +390746200999

Regional Reserve of Monte Soratte

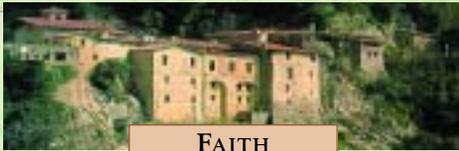
Provincia, Ufficio Parchi Naturali
Via Tiburtina, 691
00159 Roma - Ph. +390667663301



**AZIENDA DI PROMOZIONE
TURISTICA DELLA
PROVINCIA DI RIETI**
Via Cintia, 87 - 02100 Rieti
Ph. +390746201146 - Fax +390746270446
www.apr.rieti.it

Regional Reserve of Tevere-Farfa

Via Tiberina, km 32
00060 Nazzano (RM)
Ph. +39076530271
www.parchilazio.it
www.parks.it



FAITH

THE SANCTUARIES OF VALLE SANTA

Saint Francis represented a profound spiritual turning point in the history of Christian faith. The simplicity and poverty he preached can be traced in the bare structures and serene atmosphere of the sanctuaries, convents and monasteries he stopped at during his preaching in the **Rieti valley**. We know it all began in **Poggio Bustone** in 1208 and that every place chosen by St. Francis through the years as his spiritual retreats became symbols of faith and devotion. **Greccio**, where he represented the "Nativity of Baby Jesus" for the first time (1223), is for this reason considered the "Bethlehem of the West". The town, that hasn't lost its original aspect of medieval castrum, welcomed him for the first time in 1209. The **Franciscan Convent**, symbol of the Saint's work, and still today a destination for pilgrimages, was built in 1260.

Among the woods and hills there were many places the Saint chose as retreats to pray in the last years of his life (1182-1226), spent in the Rieti valley, including Monte Rosato, Monte San Francesco, the Chapel of Forgiveness. In the **Convent of Fonte Colombo** in 1223, after fasting for forty days, he wrote the Rule of the Order. In 1225, in occasion of a visit to Rieti to cure his eyes, Saint Francis stopped at the **Convent La Foresta**, where according to tradition, he composed the "Song of the Creatures".

■ NOBILI-VITELLESCHI CASTLE

Labro (RI)- Via Santa Maria Maggiore, 4
Ph. +390746636020
Visits: 10-12am / 3-6pm;
3-7pm (summer)

■ CONVENT OF SAN GIACOMO

02018 Poggio Bustone (RI)
Piazzale Missioni Francescane
Ph. +390746688916
Visits: 9-12am / 3-6pm

■ ABBEY OF FARFA

02032 Fara in Sabina (RI)
Via del Monastero, 1
lanuovafarfa@libero.it
Visits: 10am-1pm/ 4-7pm except Mondays
Library: 9:30am-1pm/ 3:30-6pm
Saturday 9:30am-1pm Holidays closed

■ FRANCISCAN SANCTUARY OF THE NATIVITY OF GRECCIO

Ph. +390746750127
fratigreccio@hotmail.com
Visits: 9-12:45am/3-5:45pm; 3-6:45pm (summer)



MONUMENTS

THE ABBEY OF FARFA

A representative monument of the European Middle Ages rises above the ruins of a pagan temple where around 420 Saint Lawrence from Siro founded a Christian hermitage, destroyed by the Lombards in 556. In 680 **Thomas de Maurienne** built a Benedictine monastery and in 775 Charlemagne granted it the most complete form of autonomy and turned into his outpost to control Rome, and the monastery became a centre of power. It was sacked by the Saracens in the following century (9th century), but with the abbot Hugo of Cluny (10th century) it reacquired its cultural role and became one of the most important spiritual centres in Western monasticism. It exerted its jurisdiction over all of Sabina with the means and the influence of an authentic feudal state and controlled 683 churches, 132 castles, ports, mills and numerous cities. Its decline began in the 1200s when it became a papal holding. Its many treasures include the **Library** with over 20,000 volumes, rare illuminated manuscripts; the **Church of Santa Maria di Farfa** (1400) with a valuable fresco (*The Last Judgement*) by Flemish painter **Baker**, and a Roman sarcophagus from the 3rd century AC in the Carolingian crypt.

THE MONTI LUCRETILI
AND THE SALTO CICOLANOTHE TIBER AND THE
ANIENE, AN ANCIENT
HEART FULL OF SURPRISES

In the valleys of Lazio's two main rivers, northeast of Rome, a richly evocative land awaits the patient and curious. Elements of ancient Christianity coexist here with significant evidence of the Barbarian invasions, dominions, aristocratic residences and monastic dwellings, in a complex and fascinating mosaic of nature, history, religiosity and traditions.

CASTLES AND FORTRESSES

SAVELLI CASTLE
Palombara Sabina

WITH ITS POSITION, THIS MAGNIFICENT, IMPOSING CASTLE determined the urban development of the first settlements in the area. Today it is situated at the centre of a precise and fascinating structure of concentric rings in the medieval town of Palombara, at the foot of Monte Gennaro.

The first official mention is found in 1064, in the *Regesto Sublacense*, and in the same period sources indicate the presence of the fief of Columbaria - ancient Palombara - belonging to Duke Alberico, a descendant of the Lombard dynasty.

It seems that following the Lombard invasions and raids (578 AD), a *castrum*, a specifically military encampment, was built around the original nucleus (consisting of a cell used by hermits as a refuge) which in time became an urban settlement. In later times, owing to its strategic location, the *castrum longobardum* was attacked by the Saracens who took over the castle in 875 and used it as an observation and defense base, as well as for their attacks on neighbouring cities and on Rome. When the castle



Savelli Castle in Palombara Sabina.

was abandoned (10th century), the Ottaviani, a branch of the Roman Crescenzi and eventually first lords of Palombara, settled there.

At that time the *castrum* already had its quadrangular structure with the ancient tower, but the Ottaviani family provided it with new buildings and fortifications and gave it the aspect it maintained for two centuries.

It became property of the Savelli family no sooner than 1216, when Honorius III Savelli ordered the restoration of the Church of San Biagio and perhaps built the **Church of Sant'Egidio**.

Between the 15th and 16th centuries the aspect and function of the castle changed, from fortress to authentic baronial residence in Renaissance style. The apartments of the masters, in the shape of casemates, incorporated the service areas; the stronghold was connected to the cylindrical tower and the walls by a fortified bay, the **Wall of Rescue**, used by crossbowmen in times of attack.

The significant frescoes in the **Hall** known as "**of the Republican Heroes**" date from the same period. Ordered by Cardinal Savelli to exalt the valour of the monarchy and of the Roman Republic, they are lively and of excellent quality, to the point of being

THE MONTI LUCRETILI AND THE SALTO CICOLANO

attributed to the School of Raphael in the first half of the 16th century.

The Castle remained property of the Savelli until 1637 and maintained the family name.

In the late 1800s the Torlonia Princes purchased the estate which then passed on to the Sforza-Cesarini and finally in the last century it became municipal property.



GETTING THERE

■ **Palombara Sabina (RM):** 35 km from Rome, by car from the Via Salaria (even for those coming from Rieti) and then along the “Stada della Neve”, otherwise Via Nomentana and then Via Palombarene, or also from the Via Tiburtina continuing for the Via Maremmana.

■ **Natural Park of Monti Lucretili**

By car: for different accesses to the sections of the Park: Via Salaria (also for those coming from Rieti); SS 636 for Marcellina, Palombara Sabina, and San Paolo dei Cavalieri; A24 Roma-L’Aquila, exit Vicovaro-Mandela, continue along the Via Tiburtina and then the SS 314 Licinese.

By train: train line Roma-Pescara, stations of Tivoli and Vicovaro-Mandela.

■ **Regional Reserves of the Monti Cervia and Navegna**

By car: Autostrada A24 Roma-L’Aquila-Teramo exit Carsoli-Oricola, or SS 5 Via Tiburtina up to Carsoli
By train: FS stop in Rieti and continue with local bus lines.



CURIOSITIES

THE PALOMBELLA

One of the rooms in the Savelli Castle contains a bust of delicate and tender beauty known as the “Palombella”, an early work by French sculptor Jean Baptiste Carpeaux, made around 1855 when he was a “boarder” at the Academy of France in Rome, at Trintà dei Monti. The artist had fallen in love with Barbara Pasquarelli, a young girl from Palombara he had met by chance in Trastevere, in occasion of the grape harvest in the vineyards there, and who posed for this portrait. Their attachment was sincere and passionate but their lives - commitment to art on his side, her family on hers - separated them. A few years later Carpeaux heard that the girl was very ill and according to tradition, rushed to Palombara to see her. It was the year 1861 and the two confessed their unchanged feelings for each other. Their love became a cherished memory for the artist after the premature death of the “Paolombella”.



FORTRESSES

THE CASTLE OF ROCCA SINIBALDA

In the heart of the Turano Valley stands a fortress of great interest, the Castle of Rocca Sinibalda, symbol of the life and history of the town in the Rieti area by the same name, built by Cardinal Alessandro Cesarini in the 16th century on a project by the great architect Baldassarre Peruzzi. The imposing structure shows evidence of medieval stylistic themes and is composed of a donjon, residences, courtyards towers and massive walls. As others in the neighbouring area, the estate was the property of a whole succession of Italian aristocratic families, from the Cesarini to the Lante della Rovere, the Sforza- Cesarini and the Mattei.



PARKS



THE PARK OF THE MONTI LUCRETILI AND THE SALTO CICOLANO

EAGLES AND A WONDERFUL BEECH-WOOD JUST AN HOUR FROM ROME? The **Monti Lucretili** are certainly one of the surprises to be found close to the city. On clear days the rounded profile of these mountains can be seen even from the terrace of the Janiculum, as a backdrop for the skyline of roofs and buildings of the Eternal City. An advanced front of the Appenines, these mountains form a southern appendix of Sabina. The peaks are calcareous, never sharp-looking, with wide Karstic tableland, fresh woods and small lakes forming the natural setting of a rather solitary environment. The area is enhanced by the presence of the nature reserve of **Monte Navegna** and **Monte Cervia**, instituted to safeguard - in two distinct nuclei - an important section of the calcareous ridge between the **lakes Turano and del Salto**.

THE PARK IN NUMBERS

Regional Park Monti Lucretili

Management: Municipalities of Monteflavio, Montorio Romano, Moricone, Palombara Sabina, Marcellina, S. Paolo dei Cavalieri, Vicovaro, Roccagiovine, Licenza, Percile, Scandriglia, Orvinio, Poggio moiano, the IX and X Comunità Montana
Surface: 18, 204 hectares - *Instituted:* 1989

Nature Reserve of Monte Navegna and Monte Cervia

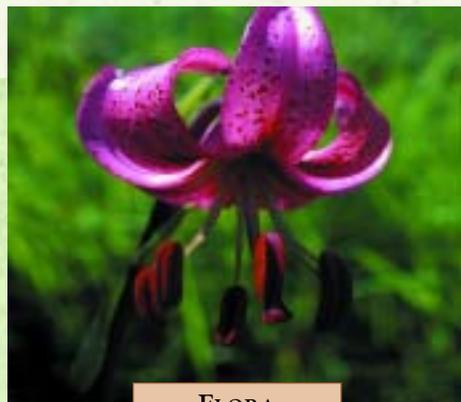
Management: Reg. Board Reserve of Monte Navegna and Monte Cervia
Surface: 2,195 hectares - *Instituted:* 1988

Nature Reserve Montagne della Duchessa

Management: Municipality of Borgorose
Surface: 3,543 hectares - *Instituted:* 1990



Above: the Lake of the Duchessa.



FLORA

The beechwood is striking for the silence it offers. At times it feels like a deserted world, inhabited only by huge tree trunks marked by time. The flora is very rich and multicoloured, with the endemic *Iris sabina* and the charming *Turk's cap lily*.

Above: Turk's cap lily in bloom.

THE MONTI LUCRETILI AND THE SALTO CICOLANO



FAUNA

The natural symbol of the Monti Lucretili is the golden eagle that nests in the area. The presence of pern-hawks, sparrow-hawks and other varieties, is also worth mentioning. There is no lack of mammals, wildcats and wolves along with martens, porcupines, hedgehogs, badgers, dormice and foxes, evidence of how the area has remained untouched by pollution.

Above: porcupine.

TYPICAL PRODUCTS

SPELT FROM THE MONTI LUCRETILI

Because of its resistance and adaptability, spelt is one of the most ancient cereals; its cultivation dates to at least 7000 BC and its land of origin seems to be Palestine. Common in ancient Egypt, quoted in the works of Homer, it was greatly valued also by the ancient Romans who used it as “exchange currency” . The **spelt from the Monti Lucretili** is a typical product of Lazio, recognized by the Ministry of

Agriculture and Forestry. In the larger varieties it is the basic ingredient of many local recipes, such as **spelt tarts** with almond flakes and pine-nuts, different types of pasta, including tagliatelle and **stortini**, and healthy soups.



ABBEYS AND MONASTERIES



THE ABBEY OF SAN GIOVANNI IN ARGENTELLA

Palombara Sabina

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ABBEYS IN LAZIO, in imposing Romanesque style, it is a spiritual centre for the Benedictines and was declared national monument in 1895. Although information on its origins is imprecise, the Church was probably founded before the 9th century over the remains of an early Christian oratory (4th century). During the Lombard era (8th century), a new complex incorporated the original structure (crypt, main altar and ciborium), and its construction was completed only in the Romanesque period.

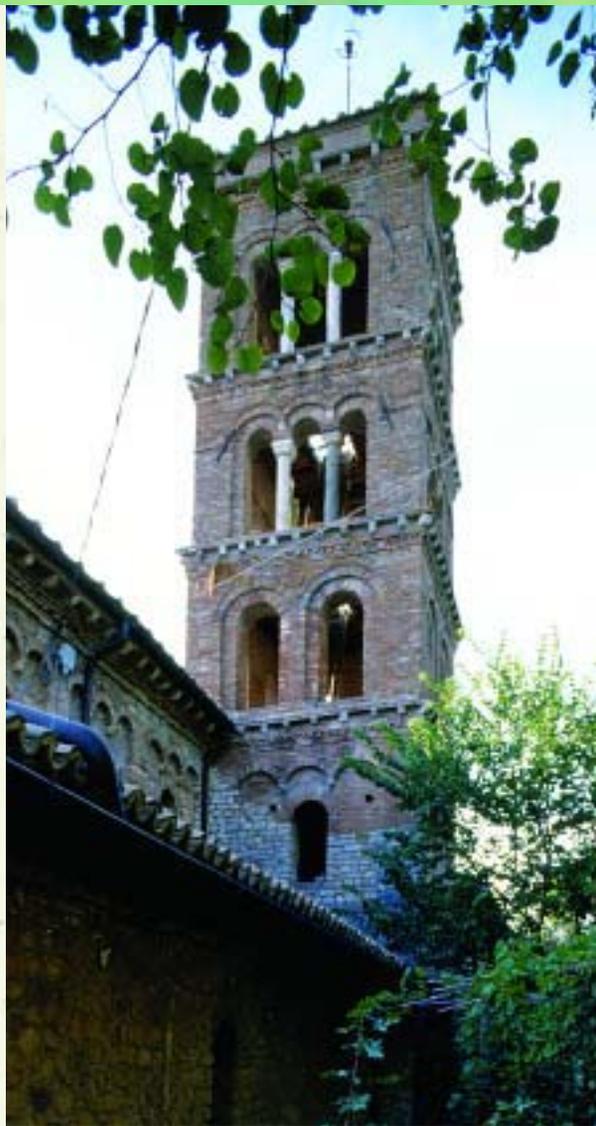
The ancient **Church of the Argentezza** may have been named after the silver reflections on the surface of the spring water that to this day flows in the crypt and is traceable to groundwater tables of the valley floor.

Outside, above the entrance to the Church, the presence of an insignia with a Greek cross (with four discs in between its arms), symbol of the Basilian monks, may indicate that it was founded by the Basilian monks of Eastern rite from Greece.

It became property of the Benedictines as early as the 11th century, then in 1284 Pope Honorius IV Savelli donated it to the Guglielmites, followers of Guglielmo Malavalle, whose order was officially recognized by Innocent IV and that between the 13th and 14th centuries founded over sixty monasteries in Italy, France and Germany that all obeyed the rule of Saint Benedict.

Owing to the impoverishment of the order, the Abbey was initially managed by commendatory abbots together with the Silvestrine monks, until it ended in a serious state of abandonment.

Thanks to patient and careful restoration, today we can admire the imposing stone structure that on the outside of the longitudinal walls shows regular white stripes in calcareous stone. The **Church** is rich in Byzantine graffiti and preserves a very ancient fresco representing



The ancient Church of the Argentezza.

St. Bernard. It is structured into three naves with three semi-circular apses with uncovered trussed ceilings, and a choir divided from the rest of the church by an arch-volt. The **bell tower** still stands out against the greenery and is divided into four sections with single, double and triple lancet windows in Romanesque style.

The annexed **Convent** is also in Romanesque style and is inhabited today by a lay community. The Abbey has always been an important reference point not only in its spiritual commitment, but also in the administrative and political life of the surrounding area.

USEFUL INFO



Regional Park of the Monte Lucretili

Piazza Vittorio Veneto
00018 Palombara Sabina (RM)
Ph. +390774637027
www.montilucretili.it

Regional Reserve of Monte Navegna and Monte Cervia

Via Roma, 35
02020 Varco Sabino (RI)
Ph. +390765790139

Nature Reserve of the Montagne della Duchessa

02021 Corvaro di Borgorose (RI)
Ph. +390746306493
www.parchilazio.it
www.parks.it



**AZIENDA DI PROMOZIONE
TURISTICA DELLA
PROVINCIA DI RIETI**
Via Cintia, 87 - 02100 Rieti
Ph. +390746201146 - Fax +390746270446
www.apr.rieti.it



**AZIENDA DI PROMOZIONE
TURISTICA DELLA
PROVINCIA DI ROMA**
Via XX Settembre, 26 - 00187 Roma
Ph. +3906421381 - Fax +390642138211
www.oltreroma.it

■ SAVELLI CASTLE

00018 Palombara Sabina (RM)
guided visits Saturday and Sunday
10-12am / 3-5pm
(winter schedule)
10-12am / 4-7pm
(summer schedule)
Associazione "Amici del Castello"
Ph. +39077466779

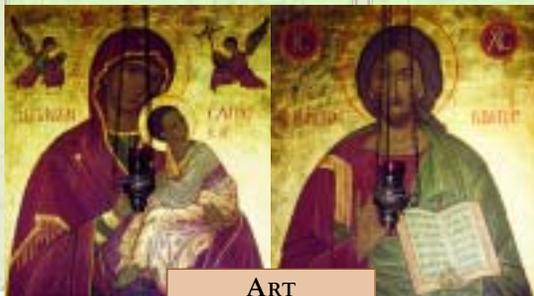
■ ROCCA SINIBALDA CASTLE

02026 Rocca Sinibalda (RI)
Via del Castello, 15
10-12am / 3-4pm
(winter schedule)
10-12am / 4-5pm
(summer schedule)
Open from February to December
Only Saturday and Sunday

■ ABBEY OF SAN GIOVANNI IN ARGENTELLA

00018 Palombara Sabina (RM)
Via Palombarese, KM. 34.200
Ph. +39077466093

*The two icons
of the Virgin
with the Child
and Christ
Pantocrator.*



ART

THE PERGOLA

At the end of the right side nave of the **Church of the Argentella**, closing the chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, we find a **Pergola** supporting two icons representing the **Virgin with the Child** and **Christ Pantocrator**.

The two slabs of marble that function as a stand were made by Centurius - marble worker - who in 1170 decorated the base with Cosmatesque mosaic designs in porphyry, white and coloured marble, without the use of gilded tiles, in accordance with an ideal of simplicity, and whose beauty recalls that of the Cosmatesque ambo in the nearby Abbey of Farfa. Lamps hang from the architrave, following the model of the pergola in early Christian churches.



CURIOSITIES

THE WELL OF CINETO ROMANO

In Cineto Romano, along an ancient mule-track leading to Riofreddo, we find one of those works of man, maybe dating from **Roman times**, that to this day remain a mystery: an **artificial well** dug out of the bare rock, over 500 metres deep, with about 6 metres of water at the bottom and less than 3 metres in diameter. Scholars still debate its real function, although a reference made by the naturalist **Pliny the Elder** who recommends digging deep wells to prevent earthquakes, could provide an interesting explanation.

THE MONTI
SIMBRUINIROCKS, WOODS,
PLAYS OF LIGHT AND
INTENSE FRAGRANCES

Along the age-old course of the Aniene river, valleys and mountains alternate with rocks and greenery, fortresses and churches, creating contrasting effects of great impact. The history of these fascinating places is very ancient and dates back to over one thousand years before Christ, when the valleys were still marshes and primitive tribes lived on the fortified heights...

CASTLES AND FORTRESSES

COLONNA CASTLE
Castel San Pietro Romano

HISTORICALLY CONNECTED TO THE POLITICAL EVENTS of nearby Palestrina, the town of Castel San Pietro Romano and its Castle have always maintained the evocative atmosphere of their ancient origins. The town's first settlement, on the Monte Ginestro, dates to before the foundation of the *Arx Praeneste*, the ancient stronghold of the Latin city, object of constant sieges and invasions.

The origins of the fortress itself date to the 10th century. In 970 Pope John XIII requested the fief of Palestrina from senator Stefania -his sister- who built the fortress already known as Rocca Preneste in 980 to protect the town and its inhabitants.

The Colonna family gained possession of the fiefs in the province from Palestrina to Zagarolo with Pietro, a descendant of Giovanni, senator Stefania's nephew. Following an accusation for simony made by the Colonna family to Pope Boniface VIII in connection with his allegedly illegitimate election, the papacy claimed the fief of Palestrina with a series of wars that saw the Roman nobles divested of all their possessions.



Castel San Pietro Romano, Colonna Castle: tower.

In 1306, with Clement V, the Colonna became lords of Palestrina again and regained possession of their lands, including the fief of Castel San Pietro Romano, thus resuming the work of reconstruction that over the centuries never ceased.

In 1438, when Cardinal Vitelleschi ordered their expulsion, another series of wars destroyed their properties, including the fortress.

Only the peace between Lorenzo Colonna and Pope Nicholas V (1448) returned the estates to the Colonna who maintained them until the 17th century. The Castle was rebuilt in 1482, as indicated in the famous inscription on the turret of the external bridge: *MAGNIFICUS DOMINUS, STEPHANUS COLUMNA RAEDIFICAVIT CIVITATEM CUM MONTE ET ARCE MCDLXXXII.*

The Princes rarely used it as their residence, at least in the period of the battles, and the structure was used exclusively for defense. With its square plan and square towers at the corners, the rationality of its layout and its safety, the Castle became the **refuge** of important personages in seek of protection, or even a secure **prison**, whose restricted spaces were housed in the cylindrical rampart at the centre of the structure. Illustrious people were imprisoned there: **St. Bernard**, Bishop of the Marsi, **Jacopone da Todi**, **Conrad of Sweden**, and the

THE MONTI SIMBRUINI

painter **Caravaggio**.

The typical castle architecture is still intact thanks to important restoration; inside we find the well to collect springwater, used in lieu of a source of spring water in the area, and on the outside, the defensive moat surrounding the structure and the small bridge with the arched gate to access the town. Once it lost its defensive function, in time the fortress decayed and in 1630 it became a property of the Barberini family.



GETTING THERE

- **Castel San Pietro Romano and Capranica Prenestina (RM)** - From Rome: Via Casilina or Via Prenestina up to Palestrina and continue to Capranica or Guadagnolo. AI RM-NA: exit S. Cesareo; SS155 up to Palestrina and then to Guadagnolo. A24 RM-AQ: exit Tivoli, direction Ciciliano-San Vito Romano.
- **Arsoli (RM)**: A24 RM-AQ - Teramo: exit Roma Est-Bagni di Tivoli, continue along the Via Tiburtina up to Arsoli.
- **Subiaco (RM)**: A24 RM-AQ exit Mandela-Vicovaro; Via Tiburtina for 6 km up to the entrance of the SS 411, then 17 km up to Subiaco, from which the road to the monasteries departs.
- **Regional Nature Park Monti Simbruini** - The Park is easily reached by car from three sides.
West side: A24 RM-AQ, exit Mandela-Vicovaro or Carsoli, then Via Tiburtina.

South side: from the Via Tiburtina Valeria, at the height of Roviano, get onto the Sublacense State Road for Subiaco. Directions both for Cervara di Roma (ca. 12 km), Monte Livata (12 km), Jenne and Vallepietra (25 km).

East side, Trevi nel Lazio and Filettino: from the Altipiani di Arcinazzo provincial road, past the Bridge of the Tartare and go up the other extreme of the Park (ca. 20 km).

From the Abruzzo side: A24 RM-AQ-Teramo, exit for Tagliacozzo. Cross the Tiburtina Valeria and up towards Cappadocia, continue along a mountain road up to the boundary with the territory of Camerata Nuova.



Castel San Pietro Romano, Colonna Castle: slit in the fortress.

PROTAGONISTS

THE IMPRISONMENT OF JACOPONE DA TODI

In 1298, when Palestrina was razed to the ground by Boniface VIII, **Brother Jacopone da Todi** was held captive in the prison of the Colonna Castle by order of the pope himself, against whom he had fought in the struggle with the monastic movements. After the accidental death of his beloved wife, Countess Vanna of Coldimezzo (1268), Jacopone da Todi, noble lord of the De' Benedetti family, chose a path of repentance and became a hermit and then a Franciscan friar. He spent five years in prison in harsh conditions. Isolation and suffering inspired some of his greatest works, such as the 102 *Laudi* and the famous *Stabat Mater*.



FORTRESSES

THE MASSIMO DI ARSOLINO CASTLE

This ancient residence dates to the end of the 10th century and became a possession of the family by the same name in 1574, when it was bought by the noble Fabrizio Massimo. Over the centuries the castle underwent numerous interventions. At present it is well preserved and houses evidence of a fascinating past: period furniture, ancient armour, documents and musical instruments. The magnificent halls are enriched with valuable **frescoes** on the ceilings and walls by the brothers **Federico** and **Taddeo Zuccari (1557)** and **Marco Benefial (1749)**, a highly original representative of the Roman Academy.

The Castle also has a Villa right next to it, along with a splendid **Italian-style garden** with a statue of the goddess Rome at its centre.

Left: Pope Boniface VIII.

PARKS



THE REGIONAL PARK OF THE MONTI SIMBRUINI

THE LARGEST REGIONAL PARK IN LAZIO, the Monti **Simbruini**, awaits us with all the mystery and charm of an intact and wild natural area. At the border with Abruzzo, the protected area has peaks of over two thousand metres with rocky ridges and spectacular tablelands. Here, in the vast forests of beech, life flourishes and awaits only to be discovered in every season, in an authentic mountain setting only an hour away from Rome. It is a land of water that imbues the Karstic terrain and reemerges everywhere in the form of streams and waterfalls, supplying some of the most important hydraulic sources in the region. The wealth of biological diversity is impressive. Woods stretch over two thirds of the park's extension. There are **woods**, such as **Tagliata**, **Vallone**, and **Campo dell'Osso**, that are themselves worth a visit for their complexity, age and variety.

THE PARK IN NUMBERS

Regional Natural Park of the Monti Simbruini

Management: Board of Public Right

Surface: 29,900 hectares - Instituted: 1983

La Selva Natural Monument

Management: La Selva Natural Monument

Surface: 25 hectares - Instituted: 2000

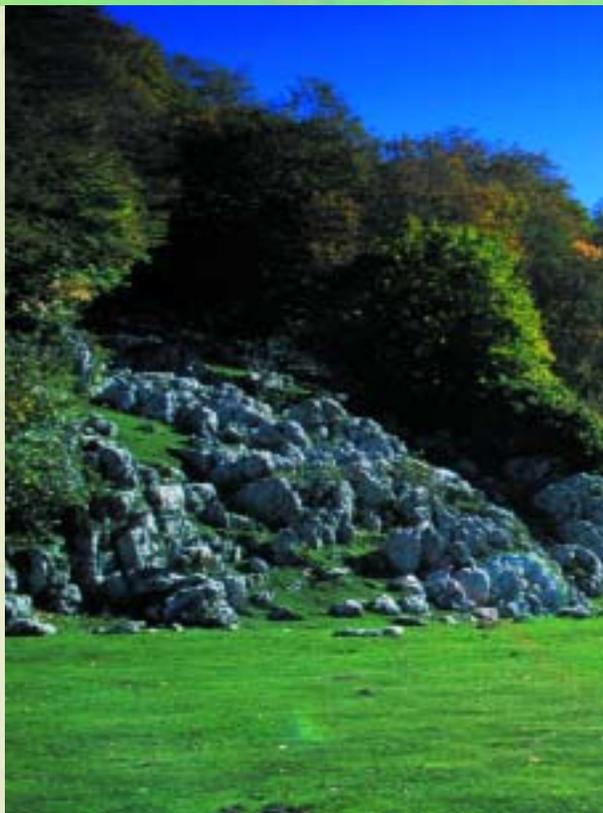
Valle delle Cannuccete Natural Monument

Management: Municipality of Castel S. Pietro

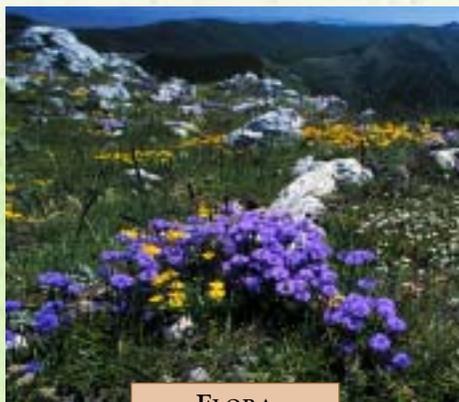
Surface: 20 hectares - Instituted: 1995



Beech leaves.



Above: The Regional Park of the Monti Simbruini.

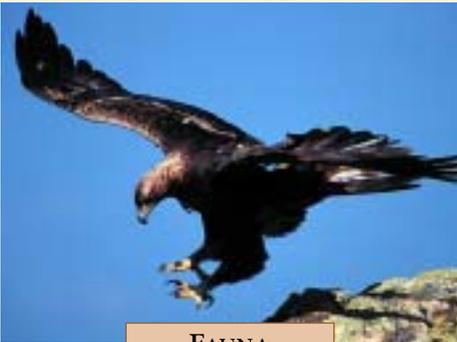


FLORA

Gentians, bellflowers and wild lilies are common in this natural environment.

As many as 1246 species of plants have been registered in the park, of which 79 are considered at risk and especially protected. Spring in these parts is an explosion of colour.

THE MONTI SIMBRUINI



FAUNA

Every excursionist's dream: sighting an eagle, symbol of strength and wild nature! Thanks to the protection assigned to it and to its presence in the parks, this species is slowly recovering, allowing us to be optimistic in our bird-watching.



Above: golden eagle.

TYPICAL PRODUCTS

THE BLACK TRUFFLE OF CERVARA

In the heart of the **Park of the Monti Simbruini**, in a town at the foot of Monte San Bartolomeo called Cervara, we find the black truffle named after it, a truly precious typical product and the pride of the area. The **black truffle of Cervara** is an ingredient of delicious fettuccine and tasty bruschetta.

There are different seasons for its tasting, the long winter period for the most valuable variety (*Tuber Melanosporum Vitt*), and the Autumn for the more common, but not less flavourful, Ordinary Black Truffle (*Tuber Masentericum Vitt*).



ABBEYS AND MONASTERIES



THE MONASTERY OF SAN BENEDETTO AND THE ABBEY OF SANTA SCOLASTICA

Subiaco

IN THE HEART OF THE ANIENE VALLEY, on an isolated hill, Subiaco seems to silently watch over its archaeological and architectural treasures, constantly recalling the intense history and mysticism of the place in which in the 5th century **St. Benedict** chose to spend a period of prayer and meditation.

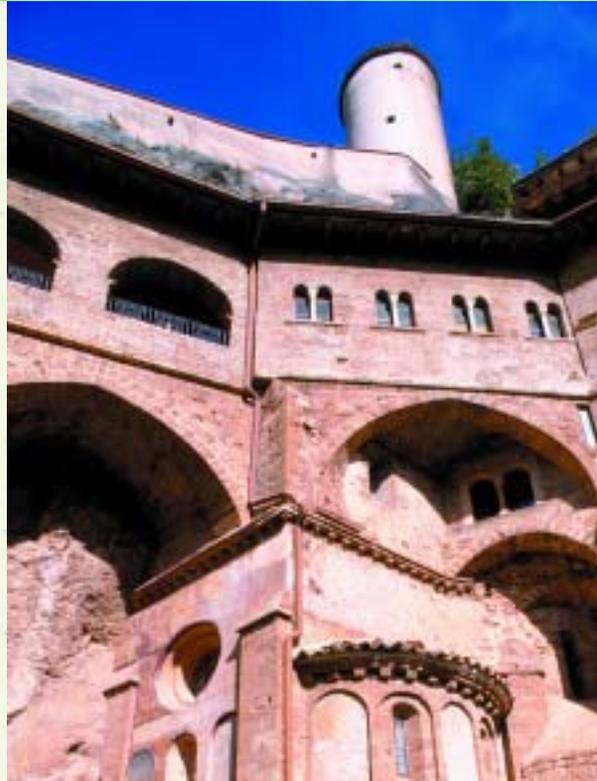
The three years of monastic retreat were spent in a rocky hermitage later known as the **Grotto of the Sacro Speco**, ideal focus of the entire **Monastery of San Benedetto**, that in fact contains a statue of the Saint illuminated by thirteen oil lamps.

The imposing monastic complex was built starting from the 13th century and follows the unevenness of the rocky face of Monte Talèo on which it is situated and that, like the structure itself, overhangs the valley below.

The most ancient parts, some of which dug out of the rock, represent to this day the daily life of the Saint and his spiritual experience: the **Holy Wood**, through which the Convent is accessed, the **Grotto of the Sacro Speco**, where he spent his years of isolation, the **Grotto of the Shepherds**, where he met the local shepherds for his preaching, the **Holy Staircase**, that facilitated his way to the Grotto. Those were the years of the codification of the norms that would regulate the life of the Benedictine order for centuries, and during which St. Benedict promoted the construction of other twelve monasteries in the Aniene Valley, although the only surviving one is the nearby Abbey of Santa Scolastica.

In later times, the **Chapel of Gregorio Magno** (or of the Angels), the **Upper Church**, with a rectangular plan and the Lower one, formed by chapels on different levels (14th century), were built around the Sacro Speco.

Close by we find the **Abbey of Santa**



Subiaco: Monastery of the Sacro Speco.

Scolastica (dedicated to Saint Benedict's twin sister starting from the 15th century), an important cultural and spiritual centre, as indicated by the presence of a very ancient and rich **Library** and the **Archive** containing copies of ancient codexes.

The Abbey captivates visitors with its stylistic variety, already evident in the 12th century facade, in the marvelous portal, and in the Romanesque bell tower, thought to be the oldest in central Italy.

The structure is centred around three **cloisters**, constructed in different periods; the first we meet dates to 1580 and contains two columns recuperated from the imposing villa Emperor Nero built near Subiaco.

The courtyard providing access to the church dates from 1052 and is featured by small ogive arches, whereas the elegant Cosmatesque architecture makes the last cloister, from the 12th-13th century, the most precious and truly emblematic of monastery life. The **Church** was built in 981, restructured in gothic style during the 13th century, and its interior was renovated later in accordance with Neoclassical taste.

USEFUL INFO



Regional Park of the Monti Simbruini

Via Roma, 20 - Jenne (RM)
Ph. +390774827219

Natural Monument La Selva
Comune - Piazza Santa Maria, 4
00030 Genazzano (RM)
Ph. +39069579010

**Natural Monument
Valle delle Cannucette**
Comune - Via Vittorio Veneto
00030 Castel San Pietro (RM)



**AZIENDA DI PROMOZIONE
TURISTICA DELLA
PROVINCIA DI ROMA**
Via XX Settembre, 26 - 00187 Roma
Ph. +3906421381 - Fax +390642138211
www.oltreroma.it

Ph. +39069538481
www.parchilazio.it
www.parks.it

■ COLONNA CASTLE

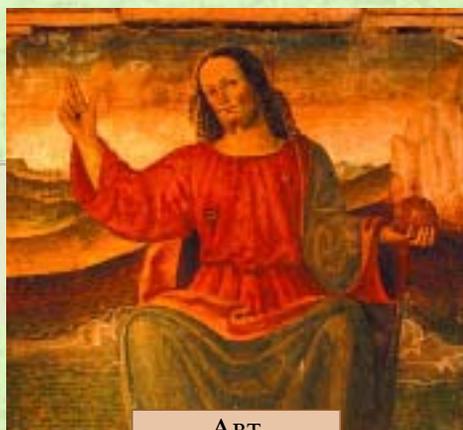
Castel San Pietro Romano (RM)
Tourist Information c/o Comune
Ph./fax +39069538481

■ MONASTERY OF SAN BENEDETTO SACRO SPECO

Via dei Monasteri
00028 Subiaco (RM)
Ph. +39077485039
Visits: 9-12:30am / 3-6pm

■ MONASTERY OF SANTA SCOLASTICA

Via dei Monasteri, 22
00028 Subiaco (RM)
Ph. +39077482421
benedettini@farma-it.com
Visits: 9-12am / 4-6:30pm
(winter)
9-12:30am / 4-7pm (summer)
Biblioteca Monastero Santa Scolastica
Ph. +39077485424 - Fax +39077483330
scolastica@librari.beniculturali.it
Opening times: 8:30am-6:30pm
Closed holidays; Sat.8:30am-1:30pm



Left: Subiaco,
Sacro Speco:
frescoes.

ART

THE FRESCOES

In addition to the wealth of its spiritual message, the **Monastery of San Benedetto** also houses truly unique artistic treasures.

Its interiors, with their wonderful frescoes, offer a virtual reconstruction of the work of the painting school of central Italy, from the 14th century on. The **Lower Church** contains Sienese paintings, the **Chapel of the Angel** has frescoes from the 13th century and the famous portrait of St. Francis (1223) by a local monk; the **Upper Church** contains Stories from the Life of Christ painted by artists from Siena in the 14th century (front part) and frescoes from the Umbria and Marche school of the first half of the 15th century representing episodes of the life of St. Benedict.

The **Grotto of the Shepherds** contains a last treasure, a precious 9th century, late-Byzantine fresco of the Virgin Mary with the Child.



CURIOSITIES

THE SANCTUARY OF THE MENTORELLA

On **Monte Guadagnolo**, the highest peak of the Monti Prenestini, at an altitude of 1218 mt, we find a place where art, faith and nature coexist in an unreal silence, pervaded by the fragrance of an ancient "sweet-smelling mint". The **Sanctuary of the Mentorella** - the most ancient in Italy - was founded thanks to Constantine, the first Christian emperor, 1800 years ago. According to Christian tradition, Saint Eustachio had a miraculous vision of Christ on this site at the time of the Emperor Hadrian (117-138 AD) and so later Constantine decided to erect a church here which was then consecrated by Pope Silvester. The strong religiosity and harmony of this place are represented by the sweetness of its symbol, said to have miraculous powers: a **statue** of the **Madonna of the Mentorella**, a precious 13th century wooden sculpture by a Lazio workshop, embedded with gems and pearls. It is preserved in the main altar of the Church, founded in the 4th century, with a simple hut facade in medieval style.

THE LIRI VALLEY
AND THE MAINARDEA MYSTIC ATMOSPHERE,
MIRACULOUS HERBS,
LONG LOST FLAVOURS

Millenary worship, faith and spirituality, great historical figures and strong cultural forces, artistic treasures and unaltered traditions, the silence of nature and curious phenomena. Let us grant ourselves some time off to breathe in the essence of these places, all deeply connected with Ciociaria.

CASTLES AND FORTRESSES

THE LONGHI DE PAOLIS CASTLE
Fumone

STILL PROPERTY OF THE MARQUISES LONGHI DE PAOLIS, the fortress is a valuable example of an aristocratic residence with a strong military and medieval character. Its position at the top of Monte Fumone (783mt), which also offers a splendid view from the Liri Valley to the Colli Albani, already indicated its different functions, strategic, political and residential. The origins of the fortress are ancient and unclear, but even before the Middle Ages, tightly connected with its function as watchtower. In medieval times, its strategic location led it to be part of an authentic communication system, aptly summed up in an ancient motto: “*Si Fumo fumat, tota campanea tremet*”. In fact the Castle worked as a centre for sighting and giving the alarm in occasion of the invasion of the surrounding area; smoke from the tower warned Rome and the entire territory of possible attacks drawing near. Always tied to the ancient Longhi family, that was granted the fief of Fumone by Pope Innocent III in 1210, the Castle was under ecclesiastic dominion for 500 years and used as



Fumone: exterior of the Longhi De Paolis Castle.

an outpost for Southern Italy and as a **papal prison**, starting from the 11th century.

This was the prison of hermit Pietro da Morrone, better known as **Celestine V**, the pope who renounced the pontificate and abdicated in 1294 as a sign of protest against an ecclesiastic system he did not acknowledge. Owing to this “great refusal” Dante placed him among the slothful (Inferno, Canto V). After numerous escapes, he was captured by order of his successor Pope Boniface VIII and held in the Castle, where he died after ten months of harsh imprisonment, in 1296.

In 1584 Marquis Giovanni Longhi, descendent of Boniface VIII, bought the property and requalified the ancient manor, abandoned at the time, and transformed it into an aristocratic residence of great taste and value.

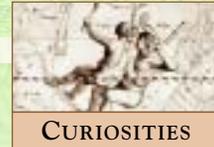
Today we can admire, along with the perfectly preserved halls, the service structures that best reveal the customs of the time: the drawbridge, the moats and roof garden (the highest in Europe), the halls and the rooms of the guard, the evocative bays used for rounds, the wells and cisterns.

THE LIRI VALLEY AND THE MAINARDE



GETTING THERE

- **Fumone (FR):** A1 MI-NA, from Rome, exit Anagni/Fiuggi Terme, SS6 Via Casilina up to Ferentino and junction for Fumone; from Naples, exit Frosinone, SS "Monti Lepini" direction Fiuggi, SS6 up to Ferentino and junction for Fumone.
- **Isola del Liri (FR):** A1 MI-NA, exit Frosinone, SS "Monti Lepini" towards Sora, after 30 km junction for Isola del Liri.
- **Veroli (FR):** A1 MI-NA, exit Frosinone, SS "Monti Lepini" towards Fiuggi, after 6 km junction for Veroli.
- **Collepardo (FR):** A1 MI-NA, from Rome exit Anagni/Fiuggi Terme, SS155 for Fiuggi, continue towards Vico nel Lazio and Collepardo, from Naples, exit Frosinone, SS "Monti Lepini" towards Fiuggi and after Alatri, junction for Collepardo.
- **Cassino (FR):** A1 MI-NA, exit Cassino.
- **Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise:** A1 exit Frosinone, SS "Monti Lepini", towards Fiuggi, after 6 km junction for Veroli (SP Verolana Seconda) and continue towards Prato di Campoli; otherwise A1 exit Cassino, highway for Sora-Avezzano and at Atina junctions for S. Biagio Saracinisco or Picinisco.
- **Regional Reserve Lago di Canterno - A1:** exit Anagni/Fiuggi Terme SS155 direction Fiuggi.
- **Nature Reserve Lago di Posta Fibreno - A1:** from Rome exit Frosinone, from Naples exit Cassino. Highway for Sora up to the exit for Sora, SS for Atina-Cassino for about 12 km until you find the junction for Posta Fibreno on the left.



CURIOSITIES

ARCHEOLOGICAL CHARTS AND STELLAR ALIGNMENTS

According to legend, when the Greek god Kronos was overthrown by Zeus, he found refuge in Lazio and originated the Golden Age. For the Romans he became Saturn, the god of sowing, and founded five fortified cities in Ciociaria: **Anagni, Ferentino, Alatri, Arpino** and **Atina**, all of them built on the median line of the Gemini constellation. Official science and archaeology never provided an explanation, but some scholars have proven the almost perfect correspondence between the **stellar charts** and **land cartography** of Southern Lazio and the location of the cities. The hypothesis is that these sites may have been in the past points of anomalous energy tied to the stars and this may have allowed the **Pelasgians** or their local successors, the **Ernici**, to move the enormous blocks, a possible explanation, defying all laws of gravity, to understand the building process of the **acropoli**. All we need to consider is that Alatri is surrounded by a wall made of gigantic blocks and that the large gate, known as "of the Civita", is 4,50mt tall, 2,68mt wide, and the single stone of the architrave is 5,30mt wide and 1,80mt tall, for 1,65mt of depth, which converted into volume means 15 cubic mt. and a weight of many tons.



FORTRESSES

THE BONCOMPAGNI - VISCOGLIOSI CASTLE

In the historical centre of **Isola del Liri** the river divides into two branches, and the **Castle Boncompagni-Viscoqliosi** stands in the vicinity of the **Great Waterfall**. Mentioned in a manuscript from 1100, it originally belonged to the Church, later to the Della Rovere Dukes and towards the end of the 1500s it was passed on to the Boncompagni. With its medieval tower, courtyard, park with a spring, the fortress had a strategic and defensive function not only for the nearby town, but for the entire plane of Sora and the valley beneath. Its history of wealth, splendour and political intrigue, is characteristic of the families who lived there. The finely decorated halls, such as the **Room of the Swallows** with its 17th century frescoes with episodes from the Old Testament, and the **Room of the Stuccoes**, with its 18 bas-reliefs from the early 1600s, are worth a visit.

PARKS



THE NATIONAL PARK OF ABRUZZO, LAZIO AND MOLISE AND THE REGIONAL RESERVES OF THE LAKE CANTERNO AND POSTA FIBRENO

THE WATERS LOOKING UP TO THE MOUNTAINS, recalling their origin, give life to **Lake Canterno**. The thickets of poplars and willows, and the legendary “floating island” of **Posta Fibreno** (already known to Pliny the Elder, the first naturalist in Western history), face the nearby mountains of Abruzzo. In a setting of great natural beauty, between cultivated fields and meadows and because of their clean waters, these two nature reserves host very rich wildlife. Nearby, the **National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise**, one of first in Italy, offers one of the most intense experiences of wilderness available in the country. All the great Apennine fauna lives and thrives there. Bear footprints left in the snow or in the woods, traces of the presence of wolves and their howling at dusk, the flight of eagles across the sky, chamois jumping on the rocks in perfect freedom, all call out to the need for wild nature in everyone of us. The Lazio side descends from the ridges of Monte La Rocca and leads to the wide basin of the Comino Valley and to the beech-wood of Carbonara Valley. Among woods and forests, peaks and valleys, rivers and waterfalls, this part of Lazio is a natural jewel worth knowing and visiting to experience the passing of the seasons day by day.

THE PARK IN NUMBERS

National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise

Management: The Park Board

Surface: 43,900 +60,000 hectares protected externally

Instituted: 1923 (Park Board: 1951)

Nature Reserve of Lake Canterno

Management: Special Consortium Company

Surface: 1,824 hectares - Instituted: 1997

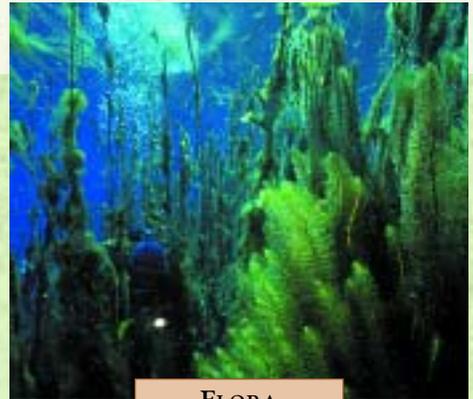
Nature Reserve of the Lake of Posta Fibreno

Management: Municipality of Posta Fibreno

Surface: 345 hectares - Instituted: 1983



Above: Lake Canterno.



FLORA

The parks are the reign of clear and running water, free from pollution and alterations. This is the home of duckweed and cress, that along with other species of water plants, offer a safe refuge for fish and amphibians.

Above: aquatic vegetation.

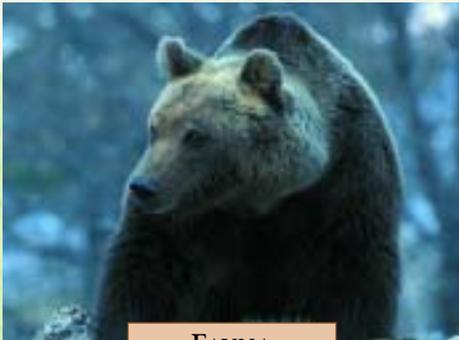
THE LIRI VALLEY AND THE MAINARDE

BOTANY

THE LAND OF HERBS

For twenty years **Colleparado** has been at the centre of an intense study of the immense botanical patrimony of the area of the Monti Ernici, where, between 200 and 2.100mt above sea level, 1200 botanical species classified in 150 families, can be found. The **Botanical Garden** of the Flora of the Ernici houses 500 spontaneous species of Apennine flora, including

the *Salvia Officinalis*, common in the mountains and the basin of the River Liri and already known in the Roman world as a panacea for its therapeutic properties. Along the **Flower Path**, for 4km there are charts describing the over 60 varieties of flowers present in the area. Lazio visitors may prefer the ancient **Herb Museum** in the town, with its display of dried plants and courses of botany and phytotherapy.



FAUNA

Everyone would like to see a bear, even if we are afraid. Yet our brown bear is a tranquil omnivore that rarely attacks the grazing flocks and keeps at a safe distance from man. Those who are lucky enough to see him in the wild never forget. He is the true symbol of wildlife.

Above: brown bear.

TYPICAL PRODUCTS

HONEY AND GRAPPA

The bees that populate the Lazio side of the National Park of Abruzzo produce excellent **honey** in different varieties: **acacia honey** with a dry flavour, **chestnut honey** with its rich, aged taste, **thyme** or **eucalyptus honey** with therapeutic qualities, and the classic **wildflower**, fresh and delicate.

In the heart of Ciociaria we find the largest Italian plant for the production of **grappa**.

Technology and tradition coexist in the distillation of wine products, always a typical activity in the area, and maintain the flavour of traditional Italian brandy and of grappa, aged in durmast.



ABBEYS AND MONASTERIES



THE ABBEY OF CASAMARI

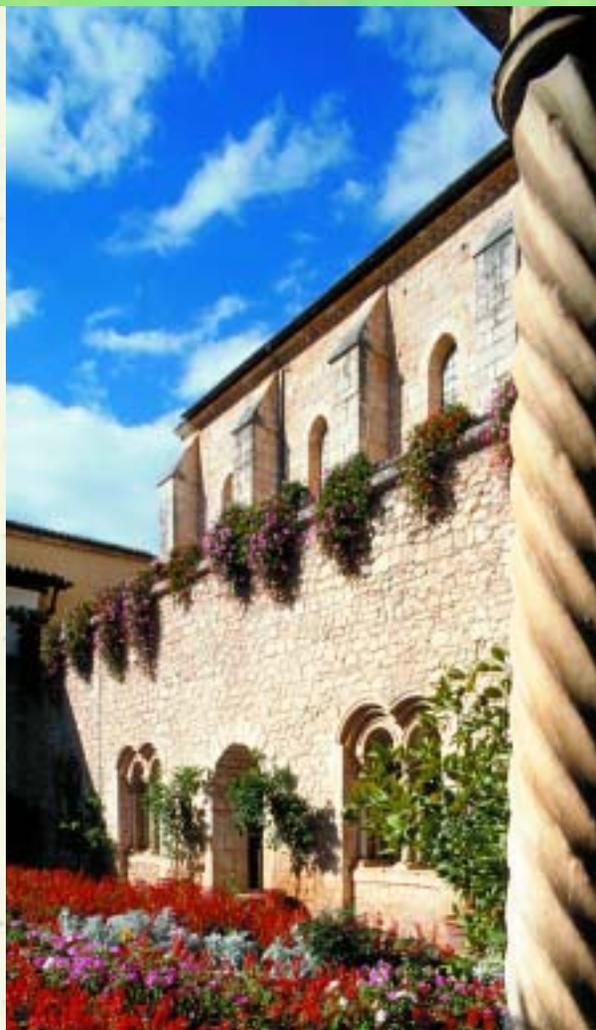
Veroli

FOR OVER 1500 YEARS CIOCIARIA, with its numerous historical abbeys, has welcomed expressions of spirituality and Christian faith. Monasteries were founded mostly thanks to the work of Saint Benedict (480-547), and have always been centres for study, meditation and prayer in which the Rule established by the saint is respected to this day. The structure of these abbey complexes reflects the style and rhythm of daily spiritual life inspired by the Benedictine Rule, in a social micro-system organized for total autonomy.

Near Veroli we find the Abbey of Casamari, originally erected (1035) above the ruins of the ancient Roman city of "Cereatae Marianae", thanks to the work of four priests who founded a Benedictine monastic community there.

Through the centuries it became a lively cultural centre with the Cistercians, to whom it was assigned in 1151. In those same years the Abbey was reconstructed in the gothic-Cistercian style, perfectly preserved to this day. Austere portals and wide arches are the features of the monastic complex: the cloister, refectory, living quarters of the monks, pharmacy and magnificent Capitular Room, severe and linear in its three naves with ribbed vaults and a true architectural treasure, confirm the fame of the Abbey of Casamari as a gothic-Cistercian masterpiece. The Church itself - built in 1203 and consecrated in 1217 - is imposing in its facade, with the rich central portal, and essential in the interior which has an Egyptian cross plan in three naves (of Burgundian and Cistercian influence) and the cross vaults sustained by sheaf pillars and small pensile columns, typical of the gothic style.

Yet the Abbey of Casamari is famous above all for the galenic activity of its monks and its **ancient pharmacy**. The existence of an authentic pharmacy is officially mentioned in 1711, although 160 varieties of officinal plants were already cultivated in the



Veroli, Abbey of Casamari: interior.

monastery garden during its Golden Age. 1761 seems to be the date of the official foundation and the activity increased over the following years. The *Epistolario De Jacobis*, preserved in the abbey Archive, indicates that Fra' Giacobbe Margione bought only some particular plants in Rome and when he obtained the license of *apothecary* in 1822, the pharmacy was opened to the public. It also became a study and preparation centre for lay pharmacists under the direction of Don Giacomo Verrelli who invented the preparations that made the pharmacy of Casamari famous, such as the *seven-herb elixir* and the *ancient imperial tincture*, of the modern distillery. The rich **Painting Gallery** and **Museum** are also worth a visit.

USEFUL INFO



**National Park of
Abruzzo, Lazio, Molise**
Viale Santa Lucia
67032 Pescasseroli (AQ)
Ph. +390863910715
www.pna.it

Regional Reserve of Lake Canterno

c/o Ass.to all'Ambiente
Provincia di Frosinone
Via Brighinti - 03100 FR
Ph.+390775836823

Regional Reserve of the Lake of Posta Fibreno

Piazza Cesare Battisti, 14
03030 Posta Fibreno (FR)
Ph. +390776887184
www.parchilazio.it
www.parks.it



CHARTERHOUSES

SAN DOMENICO OF TRISULTI AND THE PHARMACY

Despite its Benedictine origin (San Domenico da Foligno, 10th century), this building complex was rebuilt in 1204 according to the Carthusian and Cistercian style and tradition, by Carthusian Fathers from Piedmont by order of Pope Innocent III. The **Charterhouse of Trisulti** is one of the most ancient architectural examples of its type and owes its fame to the herbal preparations of the monks. Saint Bartholomew dispensed his cures here and the **ancient pharmacy** (1763) was always very active. The 18th century rooms, decorated by Neapolitan painter **Filippo Balbi**, preserve the collections of antique vases, bronze mortars and wooden boxes. The production of traditional liquors is still active.



*Ancient pharmacy:
detail of
the frescoes*



AZIENDA DI PROMOZIONE TURISTICA DELLA PROVINCIA DI FROSINONE

Via Aldo Moro, 465 - 03100 Frosinone
Ph. +39077583381 - Fax +390775833837
www.apr.frosinone.it

LONGHI DE PAOLIS CASTLE

Via Umberto I, 27 - 03010 Fumone (FR)
Ph. +39077549023
Museum hours: 10-12:30am / 3-6:30pm

ABBAY OF CASAMARI

03020 - Veroli - Casamari (FR)
Ph. +390775282371 - +390775281163
Visits: 9-12am / 4-6pm
Library: Ph./Fax +390775283430
casamari@librari.beniculturali.it
Visits, holidays excluded: 8:30am-5:30pm
Saturdays: 8:30-12am

ABBAY OF MONTECASSINO

03043 - Cassino (FR) - Tel. +390776311529
montecassinoarchivio@libero.it
Visits: 9-12am / 3:30-5pm
Library: Ph. +390776311529
Fax +390766311010
montecassino@librari.beniculturali.it
Visits, holidays excluded: 8.30-12am

ABBAY OF TRISULTI

Via Trisulti, 8 - 03010 - Collepardo (FR)
Ph./fax +39077547024
Visits: 9-12:30am / 3:30pm-an hour
before sunset
Library: Ph./fax +39077547025
trisulti@librari.beniculturali.it
Visits, holidays excluded: 8:30am-3pm
Tues and Thurs; 8:30-12:30am Sat.

BOTANICAL GARDEN "FLORA ERNICA" and Herb Museum

03010 - Collepardo (FR)
Visits: from April to June, Saturday,
Sunday and holidays 3:30-7:30pm
Guided visits by reservation:
Ph. +39077547012 - +393474422642



HISTORY

THE ABBEY OF MONTECASSINO

Saint Benedict from Norcia founded it in 529, but it was devastated by the Lombards (580) and the Saracens (883), and totally destroyed during World War II (1944). The abbey was rebuilt every time and its Latin and Christian culture was maintained and preserved. On this site the promoter of Western monasticism established the principles of the **Rule** (540) - liturgy, reading of sacred texts and manual labor - and was buried (547) with his sister Saint Scolastica. The relics were found in 1950 and are now preserved in the crypt from 1557. Starting from the 8th century, the abbey became a centre of culture, especially in the transcription of ancient works according to the Benevento writing technique, and for its **Library**, a national monument which houses rare works including 40,000 parchments, codexes and incunabula (15th century). The **Apothecary** is known for the work of the monks with herbs and pigments, for the production of medicaments and distilled waters and liquors, as well as for the beautifully cared for **Hortus Sanitatis**.

THE MONTI LEPINI,
AUSONI AND AURUNCI

NATURE PROVIDES AN OPEN-AIR SPECTACLE

We conclude our journey by exploring a border area.

The South of the peninsula starts here, the planes of Lazio are bound by the sea, and yet these geographic confines are also precious occasions for culture exchanges, that have always marked the destiny of these lands and their people. The beauty of the landscape and its characteristic features offer an exciting experience.

CASTLES AND FORTRESSES



CAETANI CASTLE

Sermoneta

WHEN SERMONETA BECAME A FIEF OF THE ANNIBALDI family (1222), the preexisting fortress (dating at least to the 11th century) was reinforced: the only surviving elements of the original structure visible today are the Donjon and the counter-tower. Excellent observation point over the entire Pontine plane, the Castle immediately acquired a decisive role in the control of the traffic routes between the coast and the mountains, Rome and the South.

In 1297 the Annibaldi sold the fiefs of Sermoneta and Bassiano to the noble Caetani family for 140 thousand gold Florins, and from that moment the entire area thrived. In those years the Castle was completely restructured and new sections were added, including the famous Hall of the Barons, 22mt long. In the early 1500s, the town of Sermoneta was assaulted by the unrestrainable Borgia family that conquered it along with the Castle. Consequently, **Antonio da Sangallo the Elder** - great military architect - was commissioned by



*Caetani Castle:
drawbridge.*



Sermoneta: view of the Town and of Caetani Castle.

Pope Alexander VI Borgia to turn it into a real fortress, the "Citadel", which was designed to include the construction of a fortified residence (the House of the Cardinal), still part of the structure. On the outside the castle was surrounded by five concentric defense lines, according to the medieval model, so that the inhabited area was incorporated into the circuit of walls, forming an authentic fortified town.

From the 13th century, with the exception of the Borgia years, the castle belonged for long periods to the Caetani family and, thanks to a total restoration at the beginning of the last century - at the time of Gelasio Caetani - it is still perfectly preserved. The complex of buildings, a typical example of defensive architecture, has a powerful and majestic appearance, with its central nucleus supporting the system of fortified walls and ramparts.

The halls and rooms are beautiful: the **Hall of the Barons**, the **House with the Painted Rooms**, with frescoes by a student of the **Pinturicchio** school, and the **Large Battery**, a long corridor, the **Stables** and **Parade Ground**.

THE MONTI LEPINI, AUSONI AND AURUNCI



GETTING THERE

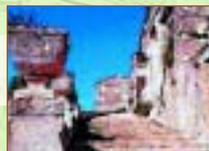
- **Sermoneta (LT)** - A1 MI-NA, from Rome exit Valmontone-Sermoneta, from Naples exit Frosinone, SS156 Monti Lepini towards Sezze Scalo and junction for Sermoneta. From Rome, SS 148 Pontina direction Latina, exit Latina Scalo FS-Sermoneta. The Abbey of Valvisciolo is 3,5 km from the town of Sermoneta.
- **Bassiano (LT)** - A1 MI-NA, exit Frosinone, SS156 "Monti Lepini" for Sezze Scalo Latina up to the Via Appia and turn right for Latina Scalo: Or from Rome SS148 Pontina direction Borgo Piave Latina and turn for Latina Scalo: From there follow directions for Norma and Bassiano.
- **Priverno (LT)** A1 MI-NA, junction for Frosinone, SS156 "Monti Lepini" direction Priverno. From Rome, Via Appia direction Latina, at the junction with the SS156 turn for Sezze Priverno. The abbey is 6km from the town.
- **Itri (LT)** - A1 MI-NA, exit Ceprano and SS82 Valle del Liri, head south for Itri, at the junction proceed towards the Santuario della Madonna della Civita (about 12km from Itri).
- **National Park of the Monti Aurunci** - A1 exit Cassino, towards Formia you find the municipalities of Esperia and Ausonia, exit Pontecorvo in the direction of Pico. By train: from the Fomia station, bus service to the Municipalities of the Park.
- **Suburban Park of Gianola and Monte di Scauri** - A1 exit Cassino, direction Formia. From Rome, SS7 Via Appia, access roads to the Park are situated between km146 and km 148.



PROTAGONISTS

LUCREZIA BORGIA

One of the illustrious guests of the **Caetani Castle in Sermoneta**, she lived there towards the end of the 1400s, when her father Rodrigo Borgia, Pope Alexander VI expropriated the Caetani family. Very young and gentle at the time, she was used by her brother Cesare and her father for the advancement of their political interests and married off three times to men she never chose. It was said that during her short but intense life (1480-1519), the charming **Lucrezia** was never really happy. Intellectually engaging, she expressed her strong personality and intelligence in the creation of a splendid court life. When she married her third husband **Alfonso I d'Este** (1501) and became **Duchess of Ferrara**, she surrounded herself with the most brilliant individuals in Italian Renaissance culture.



CURIOSITIES

THE SPIRAL OF BASSIANO

Walking through the ancient streets of this medieval town also rich in Renaissance recollections, we discover the peculiarity of its **urban layout**. The ancient part of the town, protected by a circular wall (12th-13th centuries), has a unique "**spiral**" structure in which the houses and the main street with its pavement made of small cubes, develop in a helix up to the **Piazza della "Torre"**. The presence of the imposing cylindrical structure at the top, raised and paved with small stone cubes, provides an even greater evocative charm; it seems time has stopped. This is the birthplace of **Aldo Manuzio the Elder**, typographer of the 1400s, famous for inventing the "aldino" type, an italic inspired by the writing of the Roman chancellor. A museum has been dedicated to his work.

PARKS



THE REGIONAL PARK OF THE MONTI AURUNCI

FROM THE BREATHTAKING CLIFFS of the regional parks of Gianola and Monte Orlando, the peregrine hawk attacks the exhausted migrating birds coming and going from Africa. A complex of calcareous mountains dropping into the sea surrounds the southern section of Lazio, the **Ausoni** and **Aurunci mountains**, that along with the **Lepini** precipitate into the sea with the beautiful cliffs of Sperlonga. When impenetrable forests covered this area it was the reign of bandits of all kinds: today we find a low bush area with shrubs, terebinth, broom and heather. Only on the cooler mountainside do we find a scrub of holm oak, manna-ash, field maple, cork-trees, hornbeam and durmast. In a landscape where Lazio meets Campania, the sunny, solitary, wild beauty of the Aurunci truly stands out. The regional park is very famous for its botanical complexity and has around two thousand registered species. From the woods of holm oak to the cliff vegetation, in the space of a few kilometers we go from beech woods to woods covered with orchids and saxifrages on the mountain ridges. The gentler cliffs are the home of authentic botanical rarities such as the *Sternbergia lutea*, the *Euphorbia serrata* and the *Bupleurum rolui*. The side facing the sea has typically Mediterranean woods, with holm oak and cork trees and beech further north.

THE PARK IN NUMBERS

National Park of the Monti Aurunci

Management: Park Board

Surface: 19,374 hectares - Instituted: 1997

Urban Park of Monte Orlando

Management: Municipality of Gaeta

Surface: 60 hectares - Instituted: 1986

Suburban Park of Gianola and Monte di Scauri

Management: Consortium of the Municipalities of Formia and Minturno. Surface: 290 hectares - Instituted: 1987



Above: panoramic view of the Monti Ausoni.



FLORA

The Mediterranean bush is the symbol of Nature that resists everything: wind, rain, fire. Mastic and strawberry trees, cistus, daphne, heather and all the other species, cover the green hills and mountains in every season.

Above: *Daphne Sericea*.

THE MONTI LEPINI, AUSONI AND AURUNCI



FAUNA

This is the reign of thrushes and blackbirds, starlings, and robins, Sardinian warblers and magpies, jays, along with owlets and barn owls. The peregrine hawk is the fastest bird of prey. When it dives it can reach 300 km an hour. There is no escape. Yet it is the only one in real danger, as it needs peaceful cliffs to nest in and finds safety only in parks. Mammals in the area include hedgehogs, foxes, weasels and dormice.

Above: peregrine hawk.

TYPICAL PRODUCTS

HONEY FROM THE PONTINE PLANE

Recognized as a “traditional product” of Lazio by the Ministry of Agriculture, the **honey** of the **eucalyptus monoflora** type is collected and manufactured in the Pontine Plane. Every year in occasion of summer blossoming, thousands of hives rush here, especially from the surrounding areas and the north. This particular type of honey is made thanks to the presence of the *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, a tree planted in abundance in the Agro Romano and in the area of Latina in the last century by monks to favour the reclaiming of the marshy land. Intensely aromatic, not very sweet and with balsamic properties, it is the ingredient of a refreshing natural beverage made with water, eucalyptus honey and lemon juice.



ABBEYS AND MONASTERIES



THE ABBEY OF VALVISCIOLO

Sermoneta

IN THE LAND WHERE THE RULES OF HISTORY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN DICTATED BY POWER AND FAITH, the Abbey of Valvisciolo has always been an important point of reference in monastic life.

The uncertain origin of the Abbey's name is the first sign of its complex history. Valvisciola may derive from a simple naturalistic reference: *vallis luscinae*, nightingale valley, or possibly valley of the "visciole", the wild cherries that grow in the area, at the foot of Monte Corvino. The first founding monks were Greek Basilians of Saint Nilo in the 8th century and later, in the 13th century the abbey was rebuilt by the Cistercian Fathers who definitively took over.

According to tradition it was also an ancient Templar centre until the suppression of the order, in the early 14th century. This theory is confirmed by the presence in the rose window of the church of a small cross of the order of the Templars carved in the left side of the central oculus. The small cross was also found in the ceilings of the cloister (north wing) during the restoration of 1956-1957.

The presence in Valvisciolo of Knights of the Order of the Temple, the monastic-military order instituted by Hugo de Payns at the beginning of 12th century to defend holy places, would have doubtless been an exceptional event but explainable through the famous connection between the Knights and Cistercian monasticism, as indicated clearly in the final formula of the Templar vow.

The monks of the Abbey of Carpineto Romano, originally called Valvisciolo, moved from there in the 14th century to the new monastery and brought the name with them.

Together with the Abbey of Fossanova, the Abbey of Valvisciolo is a true jewel of gothic-Cistercian architecture, with the simple facade, the



Sermoneta: the Abbey of Valvisciolo.

portal, the beautiful rose window with a 5mt diameter, and the oculus.

The Church, simple in its interior too, has three naves with pointed arches and gothic arches in the main one, and the Choir with a rectangular plan creates a sense of intimacy in these distant places so full of history. Baroque paintings and frescoes are the only decorative element. The Monastery building contains numerous beautiful rooms, such as the Capitular Hall of the 12th century, the Refectory and the elegant Cloister with a square plan and double lancet windows with small columns and elegant capitals.



USEFUL INFO



Regional Park of the Monti Aurunci

Viale Glorioso,
04020 Campodimele (LT)
Ph. +390771598114
www.parcoaurunci.org

Regional Park of Monte Orlando
Comune, Piazza XIX Maggio, 3
04024 Gaeta (LT) Ph. +3907714691

Regional Park of the Gianola
Via Appia, 260
04028 Scauri di Minturno (LT)
Ph. +390771614268

Natural Monument Mola della Corte-Settecannelle-Capodacqua
c/o Parco Monte Aurunci
Viale Glorioso,
04020 Campodimele (LT)
Ph. +390771598114 - +390771598166
www.parchilazio.it
www.parks.it



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Via Duca del Mare, 19
04100 Latina
Ph. +390773695404
Fax +390773661266
www.aplatinaturismo.it

■ CAETANI CASTLE

Via della Fortezza -
04013 Sermoneta (LT)
Ph. +39077330008
Guided visits:
10-11-12am; 2-3-4pm (winter)
3-4-5-7pm (summer)
Closed Thursdays and Christmas
holidays.

■ MUSEO DELL'OPERA ALDINA

C/o Comune Bassiano (LT)
Ph. +390773355226

■ ABBEY OF VALVISCIOLO

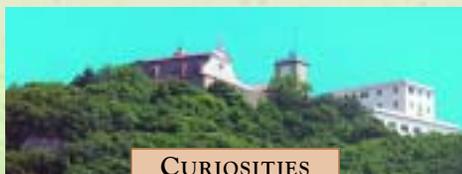
Via Badia, 14
04013 - Sermoneta (LT)
Ph. +39077330013
Holy Mass: 7:30-9:30-11:30am-5pm
(Sundays and holidays)
5pm Saturday and holidays, 6pm (summer)

■ ABBEY OF FOSSANOVA

04015 Borgo di Fossanova
Priverno (LT)
Visits: 7-12am / 4-7pm (summer)
7-12am / 3-5:30pm (winter)

■ SANCTUARY OF THE MADONNA DELLA CIVITA

Itri (LT)
Visits: 7:30-12:30am / 3-7:30pm



CURIOSITIES

THE MADONNA DELLA CIVITA

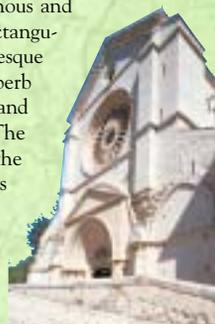
According to tradition the holy image of the **Madonna della Civita** was painted by the Apostle Luke and was fought over through the centuries by the towns of Campodimele and Itri. The dispute was concluded by relinquishment on both sides, that still celebrate the event with a meaningful ceremony known as the "**Embrace of the Elders**", in which two groups of seven elderly citizens partake in a brotherly embrace in front of the Sanctuary of the Madonna della Civita (**Itri - 11th century**), which houses the sacred image. A curious fact is the presence in the Church of the Sanctuary of a **red cement tile** in the marble floor on the right of the main altar. This "aesthetic" anomaly is originated by a strange phenomenon: every time a substitution of the red tile with a marble one was attempted, the new one always broke. The people in charge at the Sanctuary consequently decided to relocate the red one as they were unable to explain the unusual cracks.

MONUMENTS

THE ABBEY OF FOSSANOVA

The majestic abbey, declared national monument in 1874, was founded in the vicinity of **Priverno** by **Benedictine monks** in the 11th century above the ruins of a Roman villa.

In 1134 the **Cistercian Fathers** arrived in the area to reclaim its marshes, and the name seems to have originated from the digging of a drainage channel, the "fossa nova". The abbey was rebuilt according to primitive Cistercian architecture of which it is a well preserved example. The access **portal** has a very effective Cosmatesque decoration and the **rose window** has 24 small double columns. The interior of the **Church**, consecrated in 1208, is in gothic-Burgundian style: bare, luminous and beautiful. The **Cloister** has a rectangular plan, three sides in Romanesque style and one Gothic. The superb **Capitular Hall** is also gothic, and was restructured around 1250. The **guest quarters** still preserve the cell where St. Thomas Aquinas died in 1274 during the stop on his journey to Lyons. The cell is today a chapel with a lacunar ceiling.



Walking through time

PARKS, CASTLES, MONASTERIES:
DISCOVERING HISTORY AND LEGENDS
FROM THE HEART OF LAZIO

Editorial project: Vitesse - Rome
On behalf of the APT of Rome

Graphics and cartographic drawings:
Nicola Pietravalle, Silvia Ranalli

Text: Alessia Petruzzelli
Nino Martino (sections regarding parks)

Translation: Francesca Caruso

Photos: Simonetta Panzironi;
Archive of the APT of Rome
Park sections: Panda Photo

Printed by: Tipolitografia C.S.R. - Roma



On the cover: Sermoneta, Borgo and
Caetani Castle (Simonetta Panzironi).

In the background: land map
of Lazio - Domenico De Rossi, 1693.

Relief maps of Lazio: Regione Lazio
Dipartimento Territorio
Direzione Regionale Territorio e Urbanistica
Sistema Cartografico e Geografico

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