



DOSSIER 1

Summer School

design for social innovation



Finanziato dall'Unione europea



Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI FEDERICO II





Text

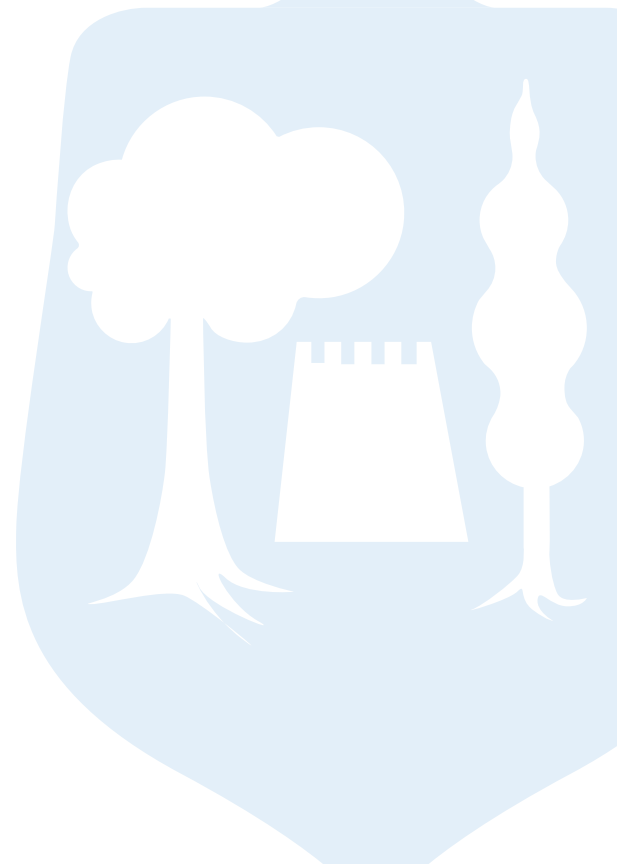
The dossier is a summary of the topics that will be covered during the workshop **days**. Starting from the analysis of these topics, project ideas marked by the development and enhancement of the area will be developed. A detailed classroom plan will be provided as soon as possible.



CONTENTS

Gioia Sannitica	1
Gioia Sannitica Castle	2
Micaelico cult	3
Via Francigena	4
Matese regional park	5

GIOIA SANNITICA





The municipality of Gioia Sannitica

Gioia Sannitica sits at the foot of Mount Monaco and Mount Erbano, part of the Matese mountain range. This is an area rich in caves karst origin. On a steep cliff, almost protecting the valley under the two mountains, is the castle of Gioia. It is a town in the upper Caserta area, located in a beautiful panoramic position, crossed by the "Sannitica road" that connects Telesse with Piedimonte Matese. Main productive activity is agriculture; valuable is the production of oil and wine, as flourishing is also the handicraft of wood and wrought iron. The layout is such that it is difficult to identify a single urban agglomeration so the buildings and dwellings are gathered around ancient churches.

Mount Monaco

Mount Monaco (m.1337), together with Mount Erbano(m.1385), are part of the Matese Flora and Fauna Park. They are stunning, sometimes snow-capped mountains rich in oaks and beeches suspended between valleys. The 'immense landscape of these places, offers the overcoming of any narrow perspective, giving us a "spiritual" vision without borders. Lush pastures and a rich fauna, both domestic (horses, cows) and wild (wild boar) characterize two beautiful plateaus: "Campo del Monaco" and "Piana delle Pesche."

Volturno River

The Volturno River originates at an altitude of 548 m.above sea level from the slopes of Mount Rocchetta, in the Mainarde massif of the Abruzzo Apennines, and with a course of 175 km, after crossing the territory of Gioia and the plains of Caserta, it flows into the Gulf of Gaeta, in the Tyrrhenian Sea. Historic is the October 2, 1860 battle that took place on its banks near Capua, where the Expedition of the Thousand led by Giuseppe Garibaldi conquered the Kingdom of Naples.



The hamlets

Auduni is an urban center just 3 km from Gioia. The agglomeration has developed around the Church of the Holy Savior; it houses a statue of St. Anthony of Padua, which is venerated with great devotion by the inhabitants of this small town.

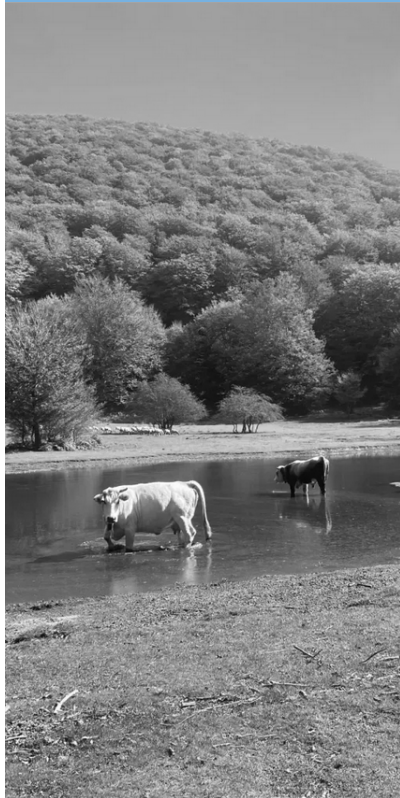
Calvisi is located about 6 km from the center of Gioia, at 347 meters above sea level. In the 500s a church dedicated to St. Mary of Carmel was built in the small village, and later in 1687 the relics of the martyr doctor St. Liberato, killed by the Vandals, were housed there. Thus was born in Calvisi di Gioia a great devotion in honor of the saint.

Carattano in ancient documents from the Middle Ages appears under the names Caraczanum and Caractanum. On September 23, 1304, it was visited by King Charles II. The urban center of Carattano is difficult to identify as there are numerous scattered dwellings. The church in Carattano is dedicated to Our Lady of Deliverance.

Caselle is a small urban agglomeration located in the vicinity of the Norman castle. The center is developed around the church of the Santissimo Salvatore, where the Madonna delle Grazie is kept, which is still celebrated on the third Sunday of October in memory of the liberation from the Germans and for the end of the war.

Criscia small urban agglomeration developed around the Church of the Holy Trinity. It is characterized by a small nucleus of houses and a number of scattered dwellings. In recent years there has been some urban development by emigrants, who returned to their homeland and built new houses.

Curti is a small urban center gathered around a church, dedicated to Santa Maria del Carmine. The main feast, on May 8, is in honor of St. Michael the Archangel. It is the original center of the cult of the saint, which is celebrated in a cave named after him, containing valuable ancient frescoes: the cave of St. Michael.



The Territory and Geography

The town is situated at an elevation of 247 meters above sea level and is dominated by a bristling 561-meter cliff on which, are located the ruins of an ancient Castle of Norman origin. The territory of Gioia topographically can be divided into a mountainous area to the north, and a rather flat area to the south, where the Volturno River passes through, marking the municipal boundaries in the southern part of the territory. The heights of the Gioiese territory are part of the Matese massif, the highest and most important mountain range in Campania, forming part of the Apennine ridge chain. The old part of the town has narrow, winding streets whose architecture is seventeenth-century in style. There are many houses with round-arched doorways, sometimes bearing Baroque-style coats of arms and friezes. The Matese, which is the largest mountain range in Campania with an elliptical shape with the major axis oriented almost from west to east, is located on the border with the Molise region. On the slopes of Mount Erbano (m.1385) and Mount Monaco (m.1337), which belong to the Matese massif, the territory of Gioia Sannitica has developed, characterized by several settlements, the most populated of which are Taverna, where the Town Hall is located, and the center of Calvisi. The other urban centers arranged at different altitudes, consisting of rural houses arranged around small churches are: Caselle, Curti, Criscia, Carattano, Auduni. It is evident, the lack of a single urban center, but all the agglomerations are nevertheless dominated by the imposing bulk of the Castle, which stands at the entrance of the valley delimiting Mount Erbano from Mount Monaco. In these territories, the Samnite people dwelt there in scattered houses, and in case of danger took refuge in places provided with fortified walls.



The Romans in the period of their domination, preserved the customs and traditions of the subjugated peoples and thus the division of the Samnites into tribes and their dislocation over the territory. Later there were the Longobard and Norman periods of domination that left important traces in the territory. To the Lombard period is traced the veneration of Gioia Sannitica's patron saint, St. Michael the Archangel, who was venerated in caves or cave churches, one of which still exists today in the hamlet of Curti. Later there was the settlement of the castle by the Normans, a complex structure surrounded by walls, in which one can see a circular keep home to the feudal lord, houses and warehouses on the lower level. Not far away a cluster of houses around its own church: the Caselle.

The site

Regione Campania



Provincia di Caserta



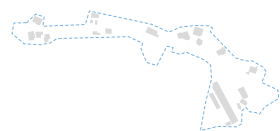
Calvisi



Audini



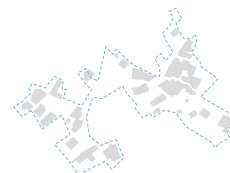
Madonna del Bagno



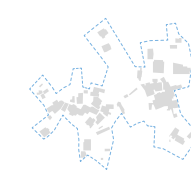
Criscia



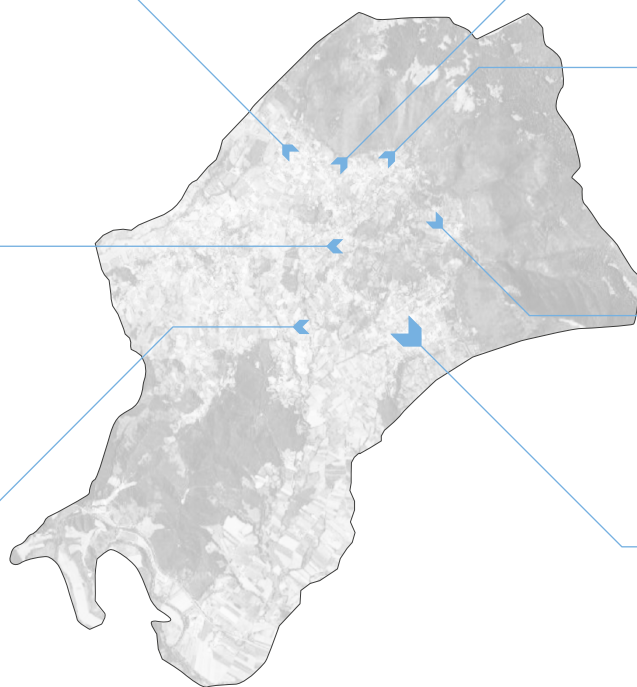
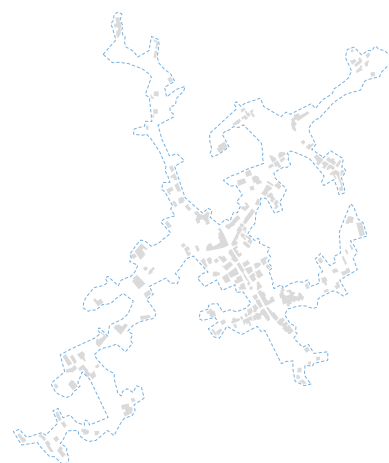
Curti



Caselle

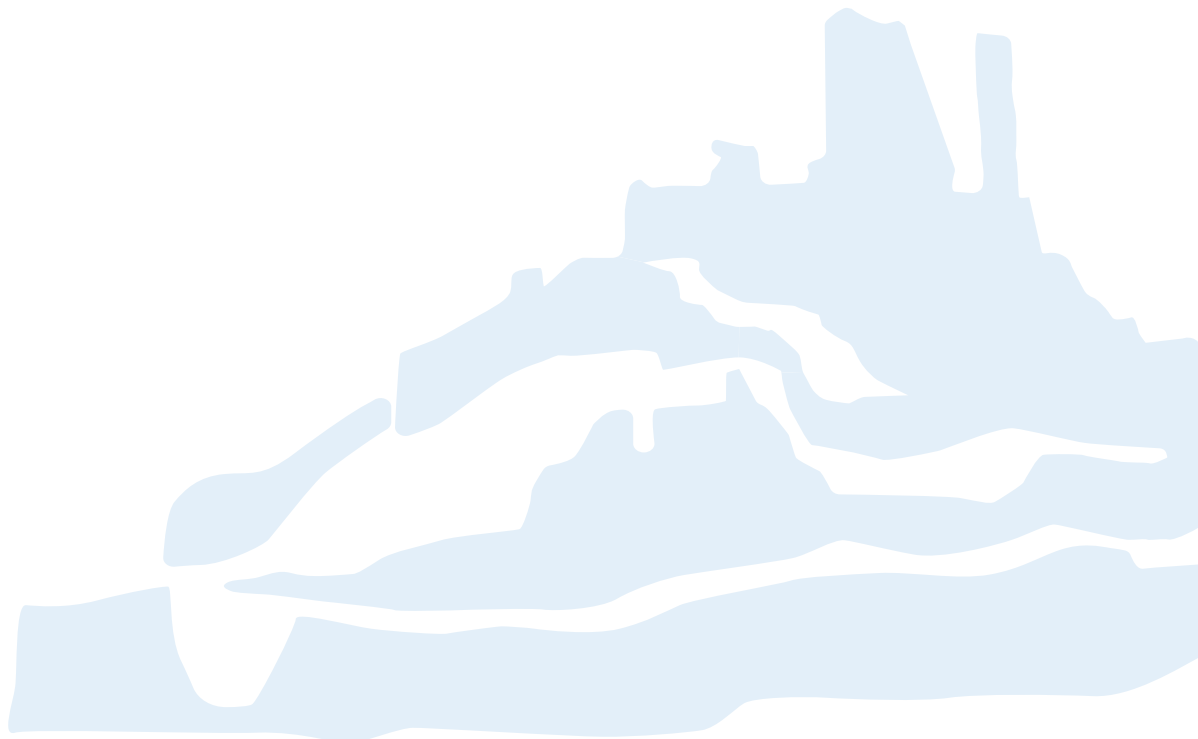


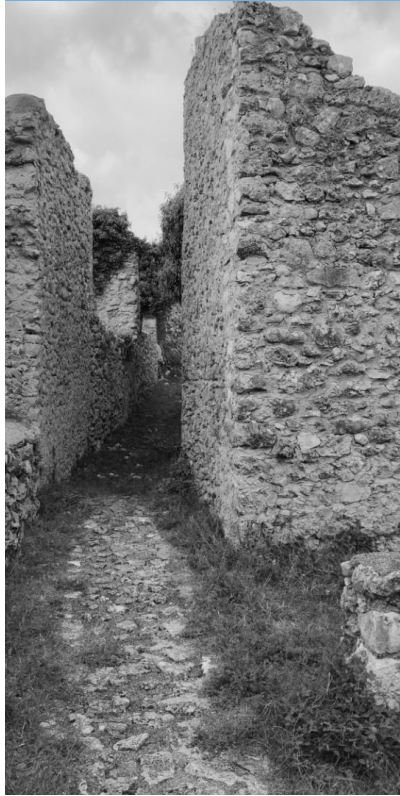
Gioia Sannitica





GIOIA SANNITICA CASTLE





Gioia Sannitica is situated at an elevation of about 250 meters above sea level, in an excellent panoramic position that opens onto the Volturno plain.

In the Samnite municipality there are the ruins of a castle, located on a rise about 560 meters above sea level.

The castle of Gioia (10th-11th century) was built in the locality of Caselle on a hill overlooking the valley. The fortified village is among the best preserved in Campania, thanks to the fact that after its abandonment-which presumably occurred in the late 14th century-it was never reoccupied. The village is defended on the northern side by a very simple curtain wall, while on the other sides the natural defenses were exploited to the maximum. The curtain wall consists of mortar-bound limestone and has only a semicircular tower to the northwest, a strut tower to the east, followed immediately by another smaller semicircular one. The walls have no battlements on the top and are equipped with narrow loopholes. Inside the village, to the east, is a large clearing devoid of buildings, dominated by the central tower, which had defensive functions. The stately castle lies to the left of the entrance and can be reached by a narrow passage between the keep and the southern cliff. The residence consists of a trapezoidal building with a central courtyard onto which six rooms of different sizes open, and a mighty cylindrical tower on a quadrangular base.

The palace was on several levels, as evidenced by the remains of stairways and traces of a large chimney on the upper floor. To the east of the palace are the remains of some buildings, possibly dwellings or storehouses. The bulk of the settlement, however, extended west of the entrance, where numerous small rectangular rooms are preserved, leaning against each other and separated by narrow streets.

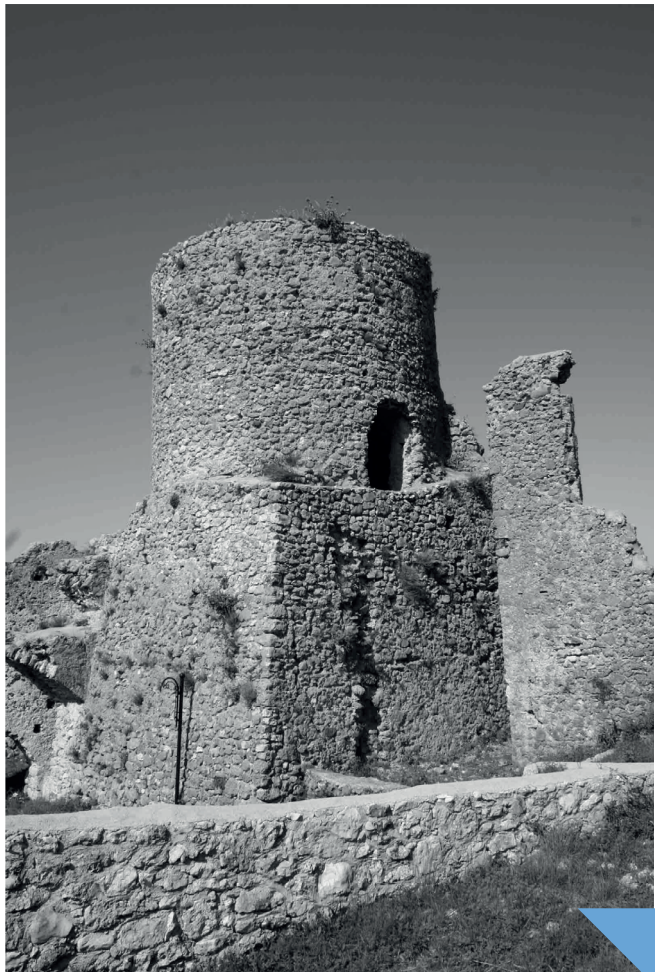
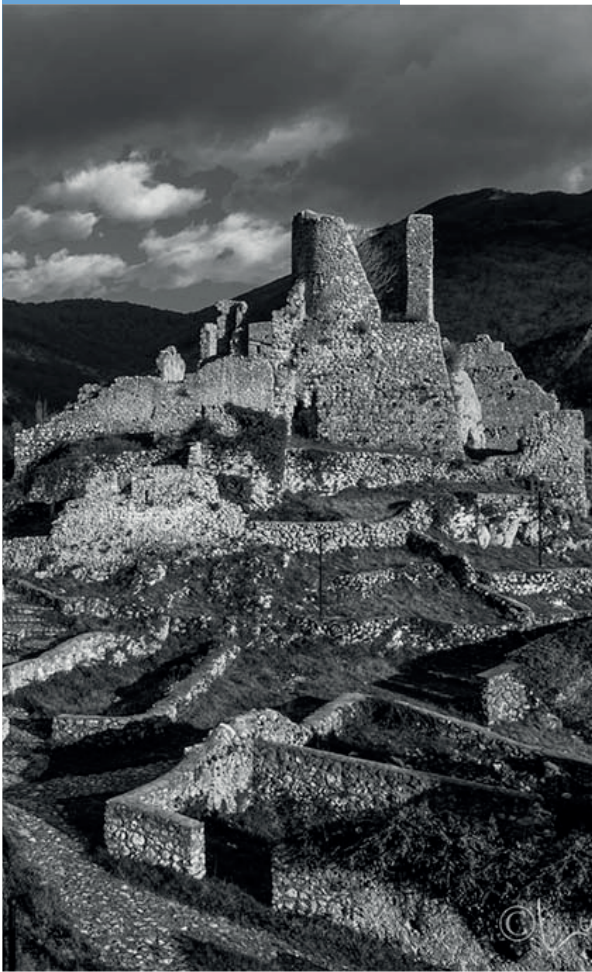
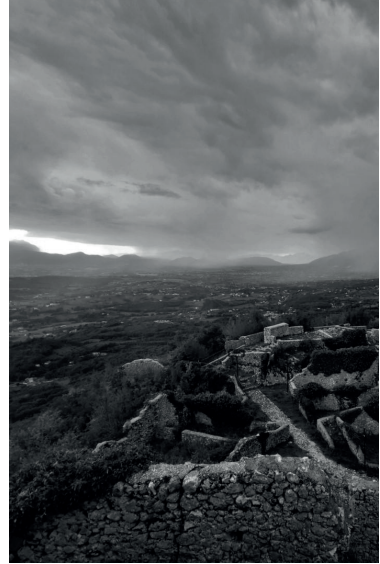


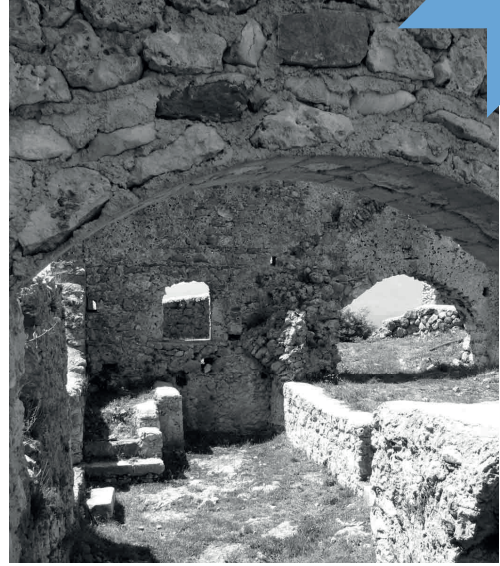
The legend of Erbanina

The castle and its ruins have provided the ideal setting for the birth of legends of ladies and knights. One of these, which has been passed down to us, is the legend of Count Ugo Villalumo, feudal lord of the castle, and his bride, the beautiful Erbanina. The newlyweds' life in the castle was quiet, until one night of a full moon. Since he could not sleep, Count Ugo thought of visiting the highest tower, which was Erbanina's room. When he entered, Erbanina was intent on sprinkling her body with a strange scented ointment and did not notice him. Intrigued, the count continued to spy on her undetected and saw, much to his surprise, that Erbanina jumped from the tower window and took flight, in the direction of Benevento. Erbanina, who secretly made magic potions and filters, was headed under the walnut tree in Benevento, where the witches' sabbath took place: but the count, blinded by jealousy, thought she was going to meet a lover. Furious with jealousy, Hugh enacted his revenge: he took the cruet that contained the magic ointment, emptied it and replaced it with common lard. After about a month, the full moon returned Count Hugh hid again to spy on his bride. But this time, when he launched himself from the tower, he failed to fly. He crashed to the ground with a chilling cry that echoed throughout the district for over a month. The witch Erbanina left her name to the mountain near the castle, which has been called Erbanino ever since.

The castles' network







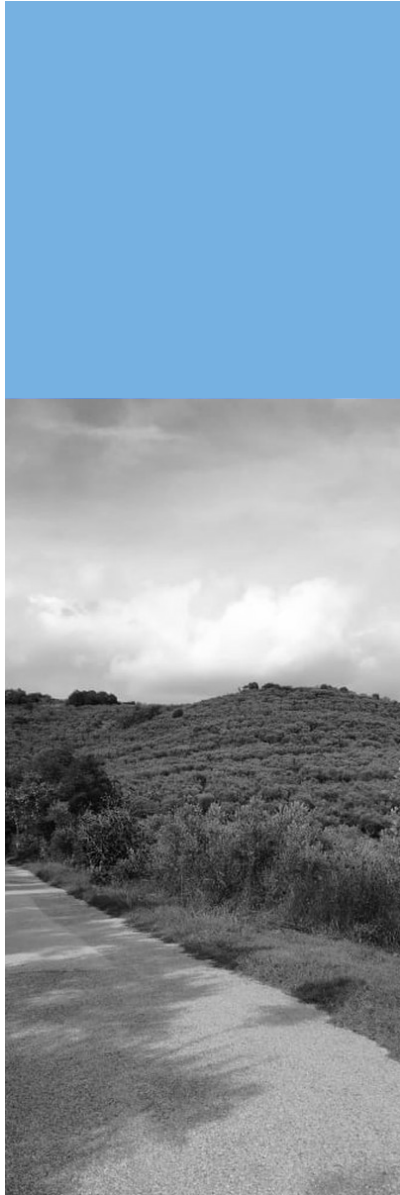
MICHAELICO CULT





Special is that for St. Michael the Archangel. The original center of the cult must have been the cave of St. Michael in Curti, where celebrations take place on May 8: the cave is frescoed, like almost all medieval rock sanctuaries. Very heartfelt is the festivity that takes place on September 29 in Gioia Sannitica, where in the church of S. Felice is preserved an ancient wooden statue covered with valuable stucco and oil colors, which recently underwent a restoration completed with many difficulties due to the precarious condition of the work. The statue represents St. Michael with his right hand armed with a gold sword and with the devil under his feet, the expression of defeated evil. St. Felix Church has been a parish church since 1525 named after St. Felix the Martyr remembered on January 14. The church of S. Felice already had a nave and two aisles with a dome at the end of the 16th century, while in the following century it was enriched with new altars, several chapels, and a bell tower; the facade features a neoclassical gable and is adorned with a finely worked stone portal. In the countryside in the contrada Madonna del Bagno, there is a beautiful church where the cult of the Madonna is celebrated whose festivities take place 40 days after Easter on the day of the Ascension for which the date varies every year; there is a story of the statue of the Madonna discovered in a well nearby, before which, oxen that were working in the fields knelt down.

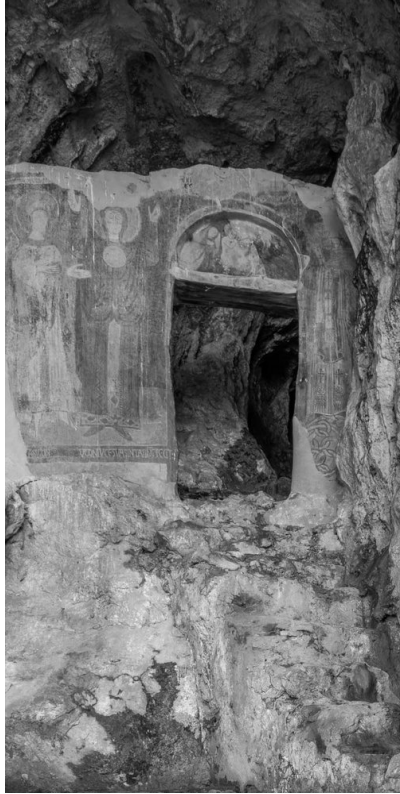
Six kilometers from the center of Gioia is the second urban agglomeration, Calvisi located 347 meters above sea level; in the last years of the "500 in the small village was built a church, dedicated to S. Maria del Carmelo, and to it in 1687 were donated the relics of the martyr doctor S. Liberato killed by the Vandals. Thus was born a cult, which is still widespread today, for which many pilgrims with devotion celebrate him on the second Sunday in May. The church of S. Liberato also has three naves, although it has a less majestic appearance, it can count on a remarkable 18th-century portal. To the same century date the church of S. Antonio, the church of Carmine, and the church of Madonna della Libera, all of which have a single nave with a barrel vault. By contrast, St. Peter's Church, dating from the 19th century, is three-aisled.



The Micaelico matesino way

For centuries pilgrims have walked thousands of miles, driven by faith, to reach the great sacred places of Christianity. We could call these men pioneers of trekking, for laying the path and pointing out those routes that today fascinate and attract even ordinary walkers. The Way of St. James and the Via Francigena are among the most famous and frequented paths by modern pilgrims; but there are many others that allow you to discover lesser known places in a slow way.

It is a route that crosses two regions (Molise and Campania) and three provinces (Caserta, Benevento and Isernia) and leads to particularly evocative historical-naturalistic sites dear to the Archangel Michael according to some legends. Michael is the Archangel healer, companion of souls and warrior who fights against the Evil One and defeats him. His cult spread between the 6th and 7th centuries, when the Lombards who came to Italy converted to Christianity and chose Michael as their protector. A curious feature of this cult is the presence of natural or rock-cut caves that local legends somehow link to Monte Sant'Angelo on the Gargano, where the Archangel's first apparition is said to have occurred.



The Micaelic caves

The Micaelic caves of the Matese can be reached via paths that pass through forests or are close to small, quaint villages; some are particularly frescoed while others stand out for their architecture. Our suggestion, then, is to wear comfortable shoes, a backpack stocked with water and some snacks and set out "on the road" starting from:

Sant'Angelo d'Alife

The small rock church is located inside a huge karst swallowhole, perhaps frequented as early as prehistoric times. At the bottom of the cave is a ciborium (canopy), protecting an altar, and a kind of basin that served, perhaps, as a baptismal font. At the entrance to the cave one can see deep fissures in the rock, which appear to have been carved by large, long nails. It is said that they were left by the devil during his confrontation with the Archangel, before sinking into the underworld. The narrow road that leads to the cave is located along the Provincial Road that connects Sant'Angelo d'Alife to Raviscanina. You can drive along it until you reach the 18th-century church of San Michele, adjacent to the cave. Once past the entrance it is necessary to proceed with caution on the rocky bottom, which is slippery due to moisture.

Gioia Sannitica

The small rock church located in the Curti locality consists of a few structures built against a rocky wall of karst nature, bordered by a boundary wall. The uniqueness of this place is in its wonderful frescoes bordered by epigraphs, dating perhaps from the 12th century, still in an appreciable state of preservation. These were commissioned by Sicone, a nobleman of Lombard origin, for his wife Sinta (for further analysis of the frescoes we recommend the following reading: Luigi Sandrino Marra, *Iconography of the Cave of St. Michael Archangel in Curti di Gioia Sannita*). On one of the frescoed walls is an opening that leads inside a small natural cave. Reaching the cave is very easy, in fact it is only one kilometer from Curti, the small hamlet of Gioia Sannitica. Here it is possible to leave the car and walk along a beaten path, surrounded by olive groves and terraced fields, bordered by a fence.



Cerreto Sannita

The rock church of Sant'Angelo, in Cerreto Sannita, is certainly a unique site. Among the huge rocky boulders, to which nature has given the profile of a feline, is a cave that the Lombards consecrated to Michael the Archangel. For these reasons the area is known by the names "Leonessa" and "Morgia di Sant'Angelo." The place of worship was frequented until the 1700s, when it was deconsecrated. Today it is among the most interesting destinations for visitors to Sannio. La Leonessa is located in the open countryside, between the towns of Cerro and Cese. Once you take Provincial Road 11, you reach the site by following a fairly bumpy little road. In the last stretch (about 500 meters) an off-road approach or on foot is recommended.

Faicchio

The Faicchio cave is on two levels, in a large cave that still retains beautiful, brightly colored frescoes.

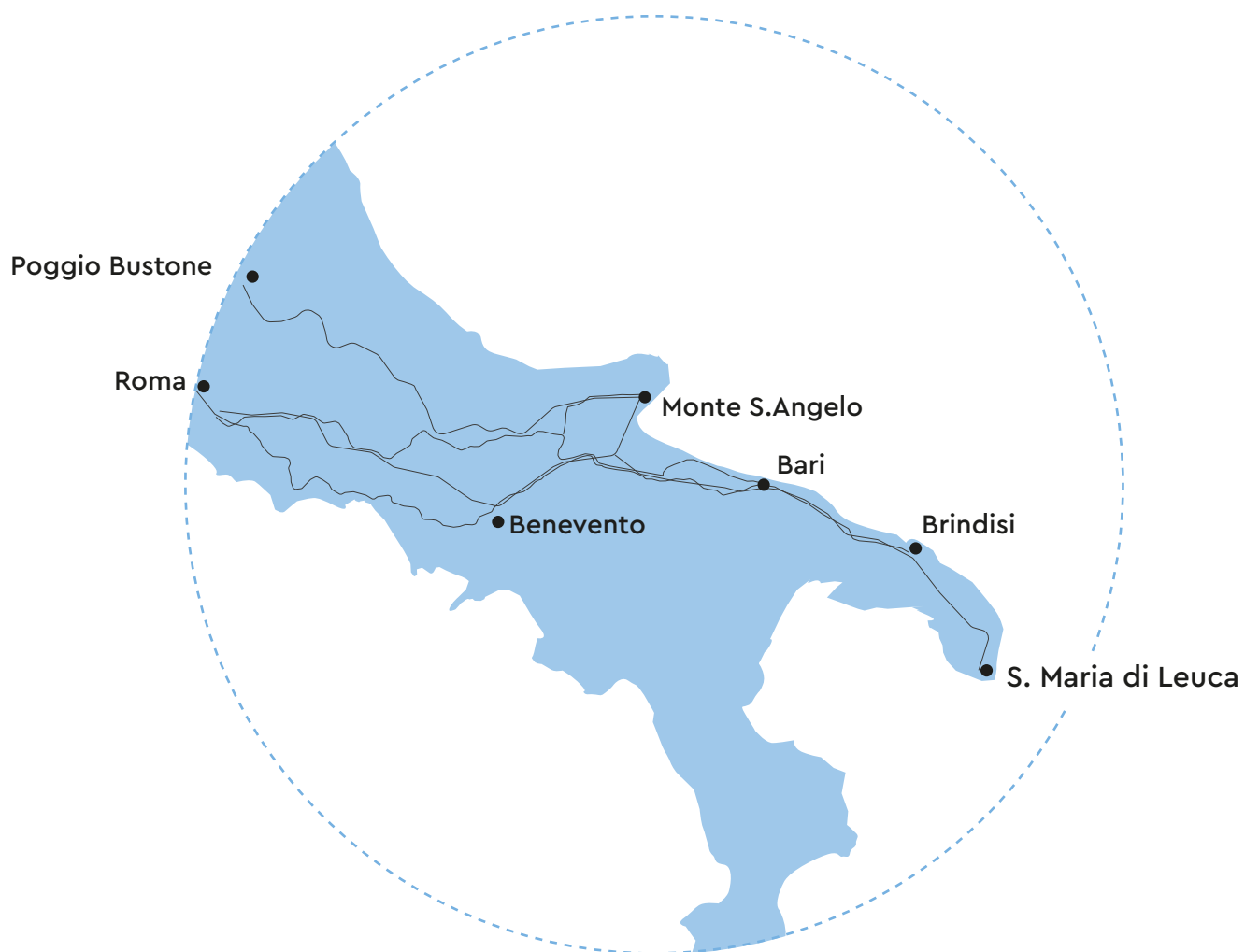
Unlike the other caves mentioned, the interest of the fresco artists has focused around one figure in particular: a Benedictine monk depicted kneeling at the feet of the Virgin and Child. A hermit inhabited these places for a long time and was probably buried in the tomb located right in front of the fresco depicting him. In Faicchio, Archangel Michael manifests himself mainly through his natural attributes: the cave and the spring of water. The latter is considered to be filled with miraculous virtues and capable of warding off negative influences. The Faicchio cave is located about 700 meters above sea level and can be reached only by two paths (marked by careful signage and bordered by a wooden fence) that cover an elevation difference of about 500 meters. It is a hike that requires a minimum of physical fitness and is recommended in cooler seasons. The two trails are accessible from the convent of San Pasquale and locality Fontanavecchia, respectively, where you can leave your car.



Santa Maria del Molise

Popular tradition has it that the Micaelic church of Sant'Angelo in Grotte, a hamlet of Santa Maria del Molise, was the place chosen by the Archangel as his home. He was, later, forced by God to move to the Gargano, where a large shrine was dedicated to him. The one in Molise is a truly enchanting place of worship, where the interior walls, made of living rock, reflect the green and pink of sunlight. Outside, on the other hand, the white stone of the bell tower stands out among the green vegetation. Here, too, is a blessed spring from which gushes forth water believed to be miraculous. The small church is situated on a rocky outcrop almost at the entrance to the village, conveniently accessible by car. From here, at an altitude of about 1,000 meters, the splendid panorama of the Bojano plain can be seen.

The itineraries





MATESE NATIONAL PARK





The Matese Regional Park is situated within the Province of Benevento, as well as the Province of Caserta. It covers a total geographical area of 330 square kilometres. Among the highlights of the park are the lakes of Lago del Matese and Lago di Gallo Matese, as well as the hill town of Letino .

The territory

The territory of the Matese area is made of a mainly calcareous mountain chain situated between Molise and Campania. It is a territory rich in wild places, populated by Wolves and Golden Eagles, gentle landscapes with blue-water lakes where the peak of the mountains reflect themselves, original and well-preserved historical town centers, a lot of history also made by the tense relationship between the Romans and the Samnites, genuine, unique and tasty local products. The Park covers an area of 33,326.53 hectares, along a north-east/south-west axis which from the valleys of the rivers Lete and Sava runs for about 50 km until it reaches the Valley of the River Tammaro, in the province of Benevento. This alignment is also followed by the main mountains: the Mountains Miletto, Gallinola and Mutria. It affects the climatic features of the territory which, in the mountain areas, represents the last bulwark of continental climate, while the lowest areas, exposed to the warm winds coming from the Mediterranean coasts of Campania, are characterized by the presence of Mediterranean landscapes with olive groves, ilex and cypress groves, and Mediterranean maquis. The geographical proximity of two different climatic areas makes this territory one of the richest places in biodiversity of the southern Apennines. The richness of the pastures, in particular, allowed the development of stock rearing which, together with agriculture and wood exploitation, represented in the past the main source of income for the local population.



Geological Features

The mountain chain of Matese represents the first part of the southern Apennines, with the summit of Mt. Miletto, which is situated on the slope of Molise and is the highest peak with its 2,050 meters above sea level. However, the mountain chain is scattered by many other summits, even if lower summits (La Gallinola, Monte Mutria, Monte Pranzaturo, etc.), basins and karstic lakes like the Lake of Matese situated at 1,011 meters above sea level, the highest karstic lake in Italy. Moreover, there are several artificial basins: the Mortine, on Volturno, the Lake of Gallo, the Lake of Letino. The karstic territory is, like all karstic territories, rich in dolines, gorges, caves, swallow-holes with watercourses sinking and reappearing on the surface, streams deriving from the several drippings of water coming from the rock fissures.

The Matese area emerged from the sea, a nephrite and warm sea, more than one hundred million years ago. The long domination of the sea is witnessed by the presence of very rich fossil deposits. As a matter of fact, among the naturalistic aspects it also numbers Pietraroja geo-paleontological site (province of Benevento) in which traces of past life dating back to 110 million years ago have been preserved, together with a unique heritage of vertebrate fossils like fish, amphibians, reptiles, crustacea, and a young specimen of carnivorous dinosaur probably belonging to the evolution line of the most specialized Velociraptor and Tyrannosaurus.

Culture and Traditions

The Matese area also represents an important heritage of history, traditions, and legends, many of which still survive as an expression of local folklore, strictly linked to the daily life of farmers and shepherds. In the perfectly preserved villages, where it is still possible to live in a condition of great calm and peacefulness, but at the same time to feel the harshness, the difficulties, and the loneliness of the mountain life, it is possible to walk on foot along stone roads rich in history: the history of transhumance, of brigandage after the Unity of Italy, the history made by the nature cycles.



Flora

The whole area presents an exceptional naturalistic value: the mountains are covered by beech tree woods on the slopes of the highest altitudes, above all on the eastern slope.

At lower altitudes, the mixed wood dominates by alternating with the chestnut tree woods shaped by man, and with the ilex groves growing from the foot of the massif to the hottest quadrants of the area. The dominating essences are therefore the Downy Oak (*Quercus pubescens*), the Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*), the Hop hornbeam (*Ostrya carpinifolia*), the Chestnut tree (*Castanea sativa*), and on the sunniest slopes the Mediterranean maquis. The undergrowth is characterized by the blooming of several Wild Orchids belonging to the genus "Orchis". The cliffs, and in particular the top cliffs, house an interesting flora rich in endemic plants and rare species. They are usually species having affinities with the populations of the pastures and of the high cliffs of the Central Apennines, like the Saxifrages, among with the rare *Saxifraga porophylla*, the Bear's ear (*Primula auricola*), the Violets of the rocky pastures (*V. pseudo gracilis*, *V. eugeniae*, *V. aetnensis* ssp. *splendida*), the Grassy bells (*Edraeanthus* sp.), the *Solenanthes apenninus*, the *Pedicularis* sp., the *Rhinanthus wettsteinii* and *R. personatus*, and the Mulleins (*Verbascum* sp.) just to quote the most showy ones.

On the Massif the mountain pastures and the dry grasslands are represented, and they often house interesting Mediterranean floristic entities finding here their northern limit of expansion. Finally, of particular interest the presence in the Municipality of Fontegreca of a large spontaneous cypress grove, with trees reaching the 30 meters of height, and crossing the course of the River Sava.



Fauna

The faunistic heritage is extraordinary: the reliefs are populated by the Wolf (*Canis lupus*) and by the Wild Cat (*Felis silvestris*); at the lowest altitudes dominated by the mixed woods it is possible to find Goshawks (*Accipiter gentilis*), Sparrow hawks (*A. nisus*), Woodpigeons (*Columba palumbus*), and Buzzards (*Buteo buteo*), which frequently reach the rocky walls, the realm of birds of prey like the Lanner (*Falco biarmicus*), the Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), and other rock species like the Chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*), the Rock Thrush (*Monticola saxatilis*), the Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*), and the Water Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*). In the woods the Greated spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos minor*) is particularly frequent. The birds flying over these places in spring are, among the others, the Red kite (*Milvus milvus*) and the Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*). The presence of stretches of water gives the opportunity to practice birdwatching because of the presence of nesting birds like the Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*), the Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*), the Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya niroca*), and the Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*). During the passages you can also sight the White Heron (*Casmerodius albus*), the White and the Black Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*, *C. nigra*), the Marsh harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*), the Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*), and the Garganey (*Anas querquedula*). In winter, several duck species seek shelter among the clearings of the canebrakes. Finally, we must mention the presence of the Spectacled Salamander (*Salamandrina terdigitata*) and, among the Reptiles, the very rare Slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*).



Matese Lake

The Lago del Matese lake is situated in the Matese Regional Park, within the Province of Caserta. The lake covers a surface area of 5 square kilometres and is 15 metres deep at its deepest point. It stands at an elevation of 1,011 metres above sea level. Nearby places of interest include Lago di Gallo Matese and Letino. Lago del Matese, also known as Lake Matese, is a beautiful alpine lake located in the Matese Regional Park in the Campania region of southern Italy. Surrounded by the stunning Matese Mountains, the lake offers visitors a peaceful and picturesque natural retreat, making it a popular destination for nature enthusiasts and outdoor lovers.

History

Lago del Matese was formed by glacial activity during the last Ice Age, and its origins date back thousands of years. The lake has been a significant part of the Matese landscape for centuries, providing water resources to the surrounding communities and supporting local flora and fauna. Over time, it has also become a recreational area, attracting tourists and visitors seeking to enjoy its scenic beauty and tranquility.

The history of the Matese Lake area is intertwined with the broader history of the Italian peninsula. This region has seen the rise and fall of various civilizations over the centuries. Key historical points include:

Ancient Roman Era: During the Roman period, this area was recognized for its scenic beauty, and the Romans established villas and settlements in the vicinity of the Matese Lakes. It was used as a retreat and a place of leisure by the Roman elite.

Medieval Period: The Matese Massif, where the lakes are located, was home to monasteries, such as the Abbey of San Vincenzo al Volturno. These monastic communities played a significant role in preserving knowledge and culture during the Middle Ages.

Modern Times: In more recent history, the Matese Lake area has become a destination for tourists and outdoor enthusiasts. Its natural beauty, combined with its historical charm, attracts visitors from Italy and beyond.



Geology

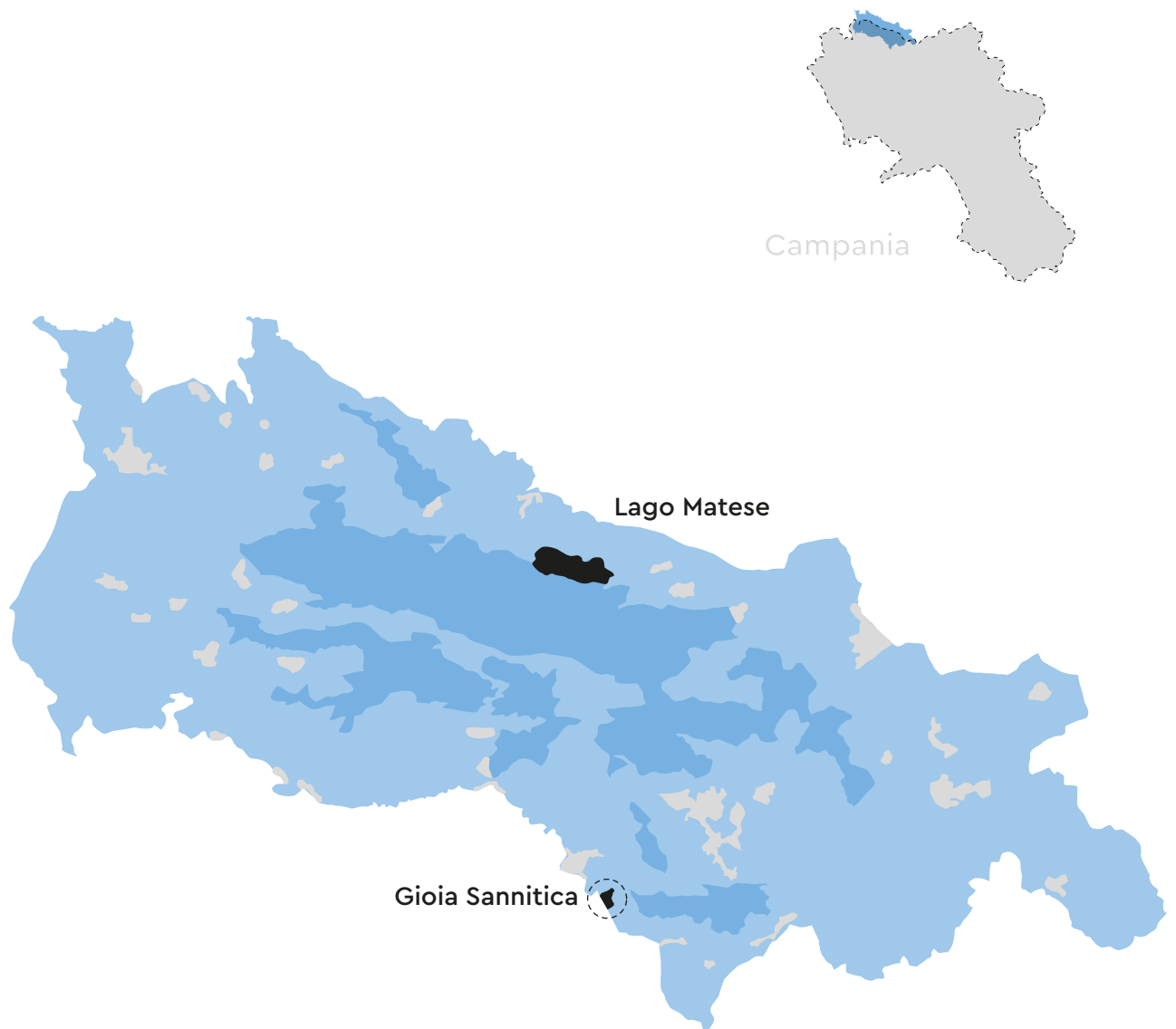
The geological history of the Matese Lake area is fascinating and contributes to its unique landscape. Here are some key geological aspects:

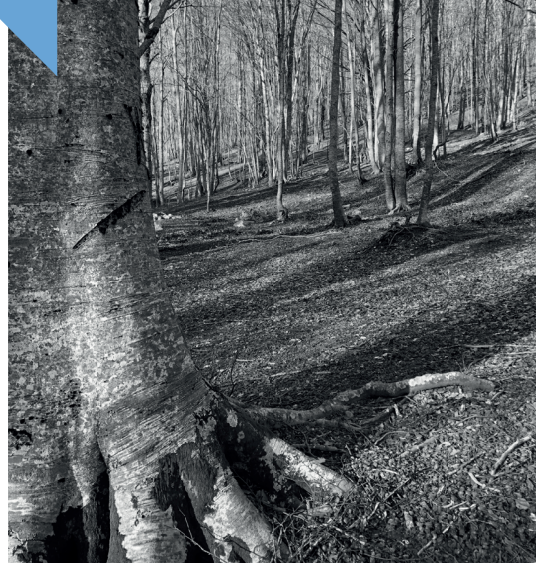
Limestone and Dolomite Formation: The Matese Massif is primarily composed of limestone and dolomite rocks, which originated during the Mesozoic Era when the region was submerged beneath a shallow sea. Over millions of years, sedimentation and compaction led to the formation of these carbonate rock layers.

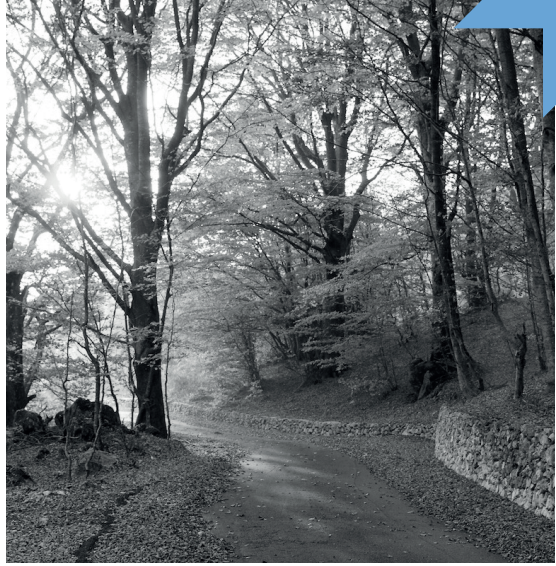
Tectonic Activity: The region's geological evolution also involves tectonic forces that have uplifted and folded the rocks. This tectonic activity has created the rugged terrain, steep slopes, and geological features like sinkholes and caves found in the area.

Karst Topography: The Matese Lake area exhibits classic karst topography characterized by sinkholes, underground caves, and limestone cliffs formed by the dissolution of carbonate rocks by water. The karst landscape is a distinctive feature of the region.

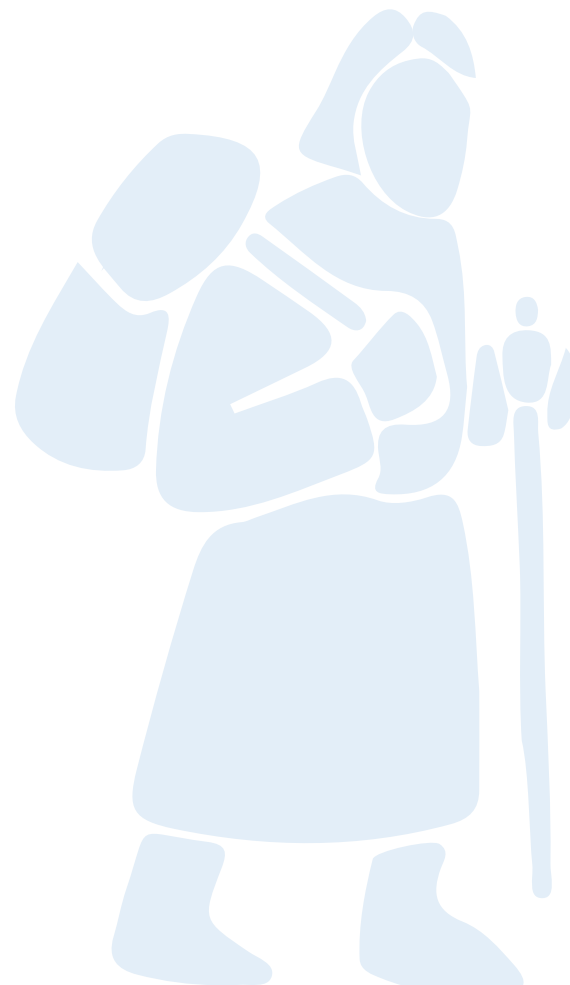
The areas







VIA FRANCIGENA



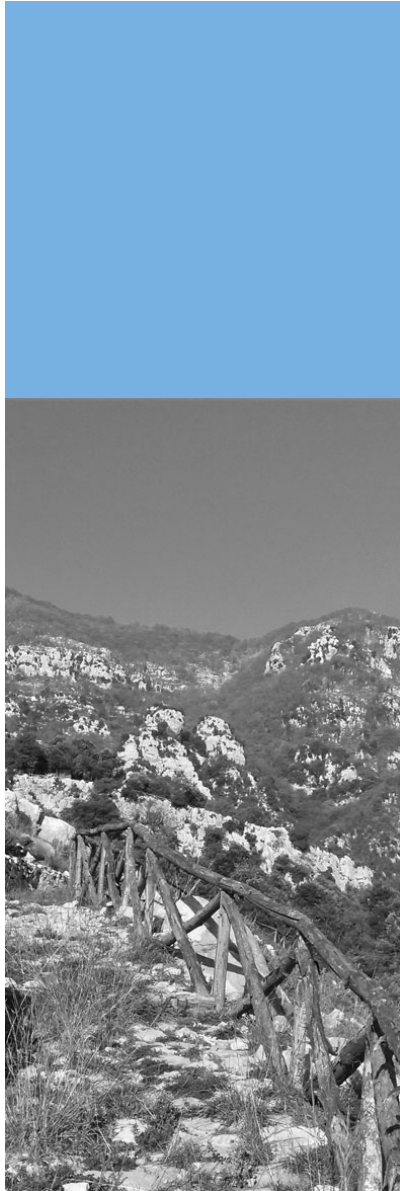


In the early Middle Ages, around the 7th century, the Lombards contested Italian territory with the Byzantines. The strategic need to connect the Kingdom of Pavia and the southern duchies by a sufficiently safe route led to the choice of an itinerary until then considered minor, which crossed the Apennines at what is now the Cisa Pass, and after the Magra Valley moved away from the coast in the direction of Lucca. From here, in order not to get too close to the areas in Byzantine hands, the route continued through the Elsa Valley to Siena, and then through the valleys of 'Arbia and Orcia, to reach the Val di Paglia and the Latium territory, where the route joined the ancient Via Cassia leading to Rome. The route, which took the name "Via di Monte Bardone," from the ancient name of the Cisa Pass, Mons Langobardorum, was not a real road in the Roman sense, nor even in the modern sense of the term. In fact, after the fall of the empire, the ancient consular routes fell into disuse, and except for a few fortunate cases ended up in ruins, "rupte," so much so that the use of the word "route" to define the direction to be taken dates back to that era.

The road area

Roman pavements gradually gave way to bundles of paths, tracks, tracks beaten by the passage of wayfarers, which generally spread across the territory to converge at tasks (towns or hospices where lodging was found for the night), or at certain obligatory passages such as passes or fords. Rather than roads, therefore, these were "road areas," whose routes varied due to natural causes (overflows, landslides), changes in the boundaries of the territories crossed and the consequent demand for gabelle, and the presence of brigands. The bottom was paved only at the crossings of settlements, while in the connecting sections beaten earth prevailed.

It seems, therefore, clear that the reconstruction of the "real" route of the Via Francigena would be an impossible undertaking today, since this never existed: instead, it makes sense to find the main tasks and places touched by the wayfarers along the Via.



The Via Francigena is born when Longobard domination gave way to that of the Franks, the Via di Monte Bardone also changed its name to Via Francigena, or "road originating in France," the latter name which in addition to present-day French territory included the Rhine Valley and the Netherlands.

At that time traffic along the Via also grew, and it established itself as the main route between northern and southern Europe, along which merchants, armies, and pilgrims passed.

Pilgrimage through time

Between the end of the first millennium and the beginning of the second, the practice of pilgrimage assumed increasing importance. The holy places of Christendom were Jerusalem, Santiago de Compostella, and Rome, and the Via Francigena represented the central junction of the great routes of faith. In fact, pilgrims from the north traveled the route to Rome, and eventually continued along the Via Appia to the ports of Puglia, where they embarked for the Holy Land. Conversely, Italian pilgrims heading to Santiago would travel it north to Luni, where they would embark to French ports, or to continue to the Mont Cenis and then join the Via Tolosana, which led to Spain. Pilgrimage soon became a mass phenomenon, and this enhanced the role of the Via Francigena, which became a crucial communication channel for the realization of the cultural unity that characterized Europe in the Middle Ages.

The itinerary sources

It is mainly thanks to the travel diaries, and in particular the notes of a distinguished pilgrim, Sigeric, that we can reconstruct the ancient route of the Francigena. In 990, after being ordained Archbishop of Canterbury by Pope John XV, the Abbot returned home, noting on two handwritten pages the 80 tasks where he stayed overnight. Sigeric's diary is still considered the most authoritative itinerary source, so much so that "Via Francigena according to Sigeric's itinerary" is often used to define the most "philological" version of the route.

The path

