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NATURALMENTE

THE PATHS OF "*OTIUM*" BETWEEN NATURE AND CULTURE





Parco Archeologico della Villa Romana del Casale
e delle aree archeologiche di Piazza Armerina
e dei Comuni limitrofi

MILIARIUS

Travel, discover, know

A series of routes within the Territory by
Giada Cantamessa

NATURALMENTE

The paths of "otium" between nature and culture

by

Giada Cantamessa

Material by

Giada Cantamessa

Flavio R.G. Mela

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2013

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Parco Archeologico della Villa Romana del Casale
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**Naturalmente : the paths of "otium" between nature and culture / by
Giada Cantamessa ; material by Giada Cantamessa, Flavio R.G. Mela. -
Palermo : Regione siciliana, Assessorato dei beni culturali e dell'identità
siciliana, Dipartimento dei beni culturali e dell'identità siciliana, 2013.**

– Ebook

(Miliarius : travel, discover, know)

ISBN 978-88-6164-248-5

1. Riserve naturali – Piazza Armerina – Itinerari.

I. Cantamessa, Giada

II. Mela, Flavio R.G.

914.581224 CDD-22

SBN Pa10262455

CIP – Biblioteca centrale della Regione siciliana "Alberto Bombace"

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Initial research were supported by

Selz Foundation - New York

The routes and studies have been developed within
the Project

Wine of Polyphemus, funded by the **Ministero per i
Beni e le Attività Culturali** – L.77/2006

Special measures of protection and fruition of the
Italian sites

of cultural, landscape and environment, included in
the " World

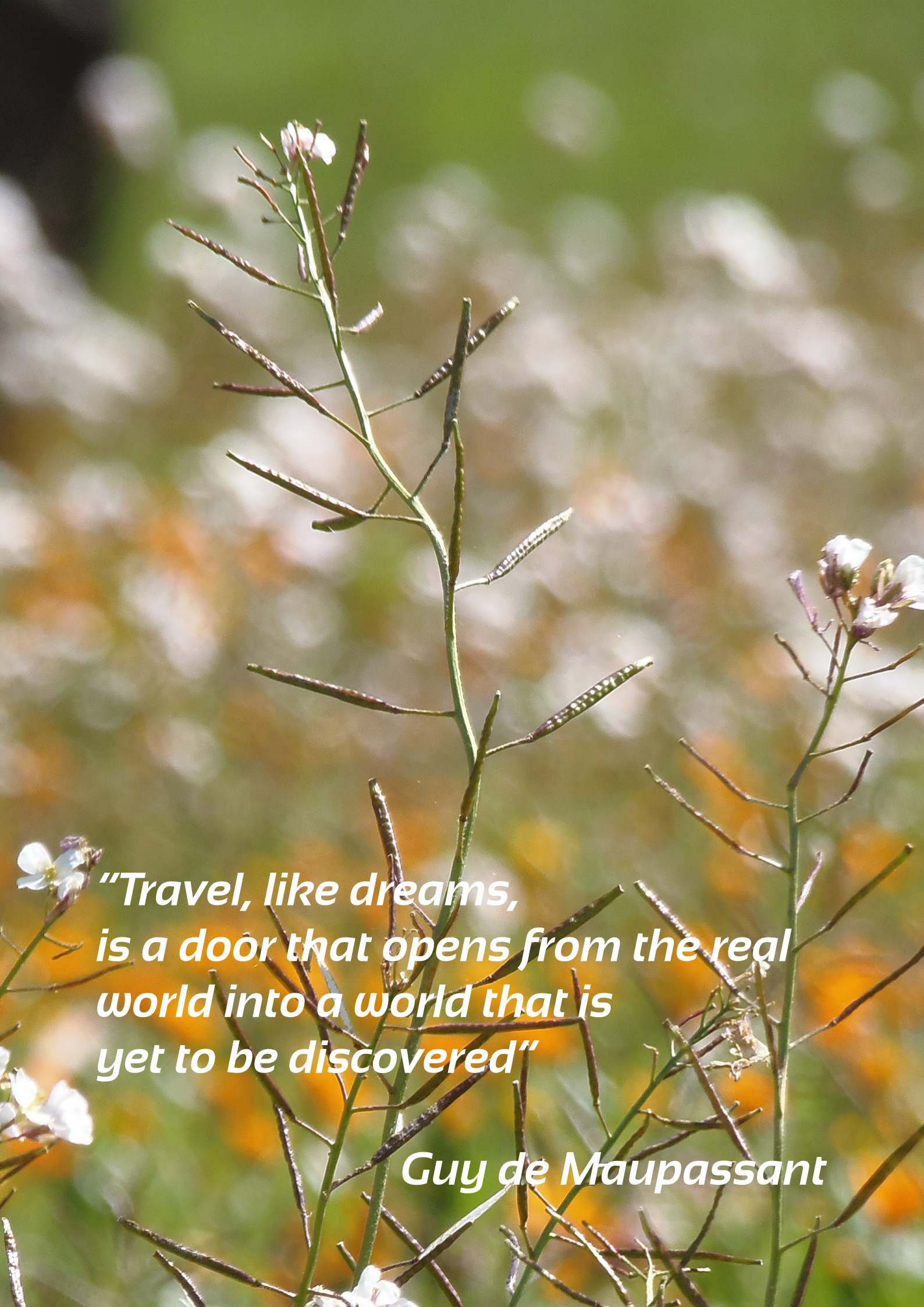
Heritage List ", placed under the protection of UNES

We thank for support and cooperation:

The Lake Reserve "Biviere" Gela

The Natural Reserve of Mount Capodarso and the
southern

Imera Valley



*"Travel, like dreams,
is a door that opens from the real
world into a world that is
yet to be discovered"*

Guy de Maupassant

Introduction

Archaeological Park of the Villa Romana del Casale

The Archaeological Park of the Villa Romana del Casale, Institute of Regional Department of Culture and Sicilian Identity, includes the territory of the town of Piazza Armerina, with the exception of some archeological districts, where, at north, the pre-greek and roman settings located on the of Mountain of March, at south the Roman *statio* Sofiana. Rich with historical and cultural layers that have occurred over the centuries, the territorial area that identifies it as a vast open-air museum focuses on the reality of the monumental Villa del Casale; an important agricultural and commercial island late antiquity, and today, an example of immeasurable artistic value.

Its architecture, the intense relationship with light, the natural landscape, the surrounding agriculture, murals and mosaics, which fill most part of the environment; visually reveal, better than any oral history, the multicultural nature of the site that hosts it. The interaction between the traveler and the territory becomes the premise to take paths that preserve and hand down an identity rooted in time. All these influences, marked by the creative activity of workers with different ethnicities, from Northern Africa to Asia Minor undertook a journey through routes and common roads, created the heterogeneous artistic repertoire that the Roman residence still keeps. The Archaeological Park of the Villa Romana del Casale is revealed through the stories of its land, inviting those who come along to linger and question it. Many of those who arrived in the heart of Sicily, between the XVIII and XIX century, like the geologist Dolomieu or the poet Von Platen, were fascinated by the landscapes of this land, they wrote notes of true astonishment in their diaries, consecrating a travel destination and place of retreat for the leisurely spirit of every man.

The official administrative headquarters of the Archaeological Park of the Villa Romana del Casale is the Palazzo Trigona Floresta, a noble palace, located in the historical center of Piazza Armerina, built between the XVII and XVIII century by the same family whose name it bears.

NATURALMENTE

The paths of "otium" between nature and culture

"Naturalmente" is the suggested route for those who want to "laze" ... but in the Roman way! Citizens of *Urbs*, in fact, distinguished the *negotium*, the moment the business and work, from *otium*, defined as the time for rest and tranquillity, of philosophy and arts, of nature and culture.

The Naturalistic and Nature Reserves, surrounding the Archaeological Park of the Villa Romana del Casale invite, to establish an intimate dialogue with those lush and unspoiled places that, even in ancient times, the inhabitants of Sicily led to believe that here the Spring was born.

Mythical lakes, enchanted mountains and enchanting woods become a wonderful setting for outdoor activities: walking, hiking, trail running, mountain biking, running, bird watching, horse riding, are just a few examples to delve into an alternative trip into contact with still untouched landscapes .

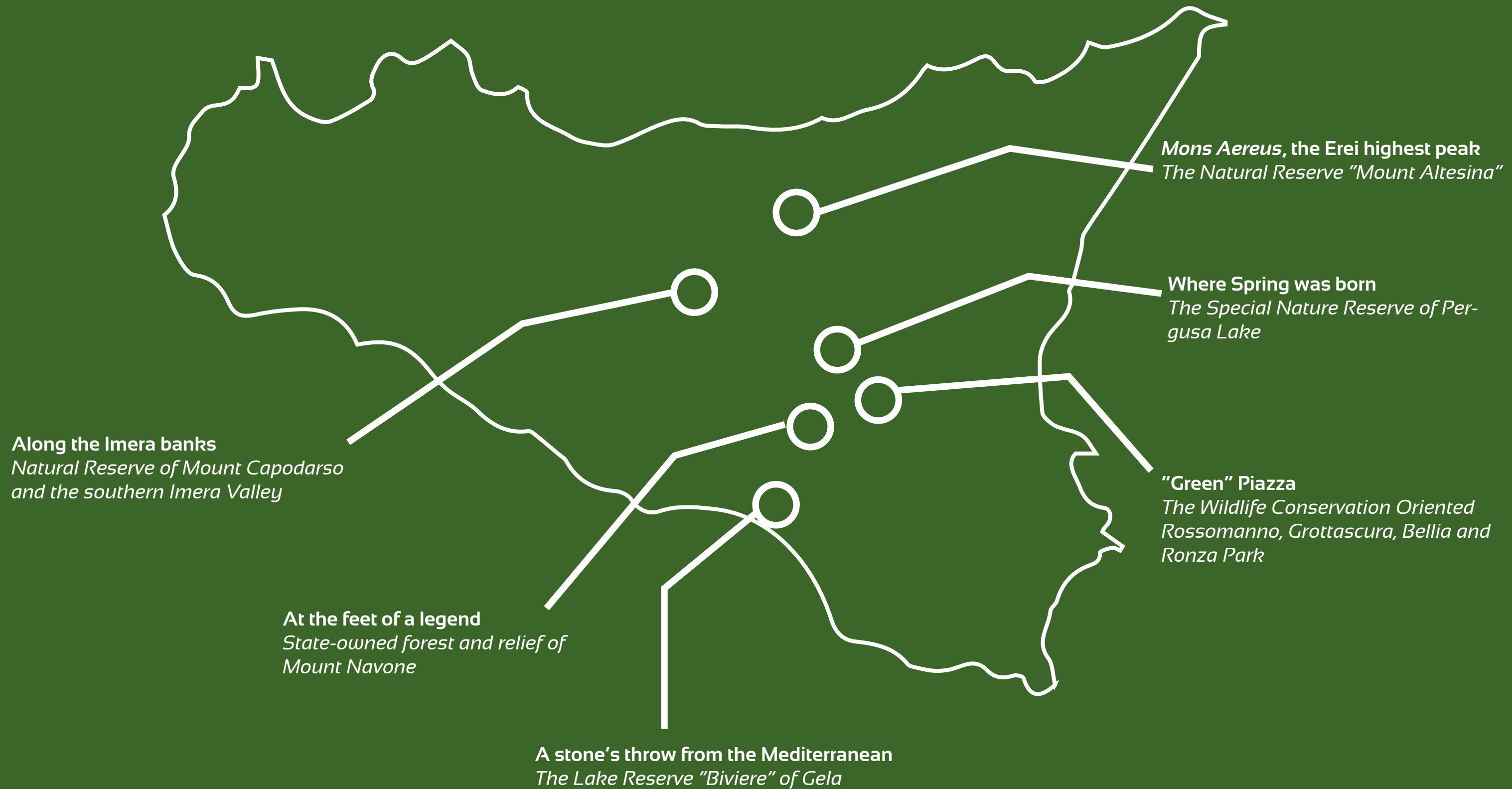
Good «*otium cum dignitate*»!
(Cicero, *De Oratore*)



For any further information:

Archaeological Park of the Villa Romana del Casale and
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Twitter: @VillaRdelCasale



GENERAL MAP OF THE ROUTE



In the following path uses a number of symbols that, through metaphorical representations, facilitates the identification of the subject matter that we deal with in the depth charts.

Legend of the icons



: Increase of archeology



: Contact Information



: Open air activities



: Myths and legends



: Special activities



: Museums



: Road information



: Focus on the natural aspects



: Tips for the traveler



: Panoramic glimpse views of the landscape



: Historical chronicles



: Popular traditions



: From classical sources, the voice of the ancient

How to get to Piazza Armerina

from the Fontanarossa-Catania airport > motorway A19 exit Dittaino > direction Valguarnera > Piazza Armerina

from the Punta Raisi-Palermo and Trapani-Birgi airports > motorway A19 exit Enna > direction Pergusa > Piazza Armerina

from Gela > road 117 bis > Piazza Armerina

The Villa Romana del Casale is located about 5 km from the city of Piazza Armerina, from which it can also be reached by shuttle bus during the summer months.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. <i>Naturaliter</i> . The <i>otium</i> according to nature in the mosaic scenes of the Villa Romana del Casale	11
2. <i>Naturalmente</i> . The paths of " <i>otium</i> " between nature and culture.	
2.1 "green" Piazza The Wildlife Reserve Oriented Rossomanno, Grottascura, Bellia and Ronza Park	23
2.1 At the feet of a legend State-owned forest and relief of Mount Navone	30
2.2 Where Spring was born The Special Nature Reserve of the Pergusa Lake	35
2.3 <i>Mons Aereus</i> , the Erei highest peak The Natural Reserve "Mount Altesina"	47
2.4 A stone's throw from the Mediterranean The Lake Reserve "Biviere" of Gela	56
2.5 Along the Imera Banks Natural Reserve of Mount Capodarso and the southern Imera Valley	68
3. The first park in Sicily on the Etna volcano	79
4. Bibliography	81

Naturaliter

The *otium* "according to nature" in the mosaic scenes of the Villa Romana del Casale

The Villa between *otium* and nature contemplation.

In ancient Rome the *otium* was intended as a leisure exercise of public affairs, aimed at the treatment of those activities aimed at pleasure and seeking quiet suburban villas that they could offer. The poet Martial wrote:

«There is no place in town, Sparsus, where a poor man can either think or rest One cannot live for schoolmasters in the morning, corn grinders at night, and braziers' hammers all day and night. [...] Whenever, overcome with weariness, I long for repose, I repair to my country-house»

(Martial, *Epigrams XII*, 57).



A valuable late antique residence in the heart of Sicily.

Belonged to a member of the Roman senatorial or, in other cases, built or expanded on direct imperial patronage, the Villa Romana del Casale is considered among the finest examples of late antique house of the West Roman Empire. The compositional richness of the ornate mosaics that decorate the rooms and open space porches, brings one back for stylistic ability and the issues discussed, the bonds that joined the workers of North Africa to Sicily, milestone of their traveling in the Mediterranean.

The villa, dating from the fourth century A.D., is located on a rural villa, built between the first and second half of the third century A.D. and aimed at a rich agricultural production activities based on cereals from the mass of Sofiana, the estate belonged to the rich residence of Casale. Divided into service areas, with floors decorated with geometric mosaics, and areas of residence or representation, the building late antiquity, in the dynamism of its architecture that unfolds on three large terraces, became the scene of an intellectual exercise and power, which was expressed in the activity of *otium*, *negotium* and *officium*. While it was the dwelling place

for contemplation and serenity of his dominus, acquitted the other functions of political and administrative center, the very heart of power.

In the Byzantine period and early Middle Ages (V-VII century A.D.), Late Roman structures arose a rural village which changed the initial setting of the Roman villa, transforming it into a fortified settlement. The different purposes of use continued to vary through the centuries, until the destruction took place during the second half of the twelfth century, which was followed by a long period of total abandon, between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, by the construction of an agricultural settlement built on its ruins. Migration from inland rural and floods obliterated the historical memory of the old village, until its rediscovery in the nineteenth century, with the beginning of some excavations that, even today, affecting other areas of the archaeological site.

INFO.

Download the guide and the mini guide of the Villa Romana del Casale of www.villaromanadelcasale.it.

These residences, isolated from the noise of the centers of power, to become a favorite destination for aristocrats and emperors who found refuge in them, to devote himself to meditative practice and sport events. Wide publicity was given to reading or listening to music in the rooms dedicated to stroll and philosophical discussion between the spacious corridors of the peristyle, until the hunting practice in the surrounding woods and body care in the spa. The Villa Romana del Casale summarizes the characteristics of places used to the practice of *otium* and its mosaics, revealing the eye of the beholder, face, into a dynamic narrative development, the issues related to it, not to mention edifying examples related to the victory of the *virtus* on the savage instincts of nature.

The late antiquity residence, with its the countryside structure, considered *locus amoenus* for excellence, could provide to its owner, his family or welcomed guests in its rooms the opportunity to cultivate the *quies*, a key condition for intellectual and philosophical reflection. The same work in the fields, called *otium negotiosum*, it could be considered a good source of inner peace. Some Latin authors bring back the villa setting, as well as the economic center for the presence of large estates, a place of

the owner used as *otium*. In this regard, the speaker Pliny the Younger explains that in a country villa:

«I can enjoy a profounder peace there, more comfort, and fewer cares: I need never wear a formal toga and there are no neighbours to disturb me; everywhere there is peace and quiet, which adds as much to the healthiness of the place as the clear sky and pure air. There I enjoy the best of health, both mental and physical, for I keep my mind in training with work and my body with hunting.»

(Plin. *Epist.*, 5, 6, English translation cited in *The Roman World, 44 B.C.-A.D. 180*, by Martin Goodman and Jane Sherwood, 2002, p. 186).

The suburban villa also became a prelude and, at the same time, direct setting for a profound knowledge of nature. In *Tuscolanae disputationes* of Cicero, *otium*, through the study of *humanae litterae*, is celebrated as means to learn about «*the infinite nature and the heavens and the earth and the seas*» and to carry out activities of philosophical contemplation on the existence of a balance between the human and natural phenomena, made idyllic and animated by the same divine presence.



Archaeologically nature: from the pollen to the ancient landscape.

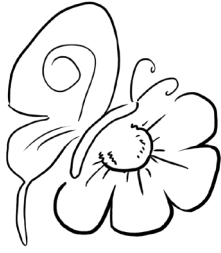
If the residence of the late antique farmhouse was contextualized in a landscape, it was right to ask how the environment could arise around it.

This question has been answered pollen analysis study of the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia performed on the artifacts taken from the archaeological site. Research has found that the area where the building was built, it was not particularly rich in forest cover. Through an examination of the of pollen composition, it was found that the prevalence of pine trees had to be made in this case of *Pinus halepensis* and *Pinus pinea*, used as shrubs for shade. It is assumed, however, in the hills surrounding originally there was pollen of oak, hazel, ash, linden and elm, which were to form the oak forest. There is the presence of *Fagus*, due to mesophilic forests of *Oak-Fagetea*, or olive pollen, *europaeae Olea*.

The latter, along with the holm oak, *Quercus ilex*, cork oak, *Quercus suber*, myrtle, *Myrthus*, and *Phillyrea*, that constituted a Mediterranean stain, especially in areas adjacent to the village, where today, in the hills, you can find woods thermophilic of evergreen oaks.

Near the waterways search results have reported the presence of *Tamerix*, and hydric trees such as alder, *Alnus*, willow, *Salix*, and poplar, *Populus*.

The strong population of the area was also confirmed by the presence of several herbs, such as *Cichorioideae*, *Poaceae*, *Apiaceae*, *Chenopodiaceae* and *Asteroideae*, composed of *Artemisia*, *Carduus* and *Cirsium*. It has also been found to contain plantain, *Plantago*, and stinging nettle, *Urtica dioica*.



The flora of the Villa Romana del Casale.

Below are all of the botanical species identified, thanks to the types of pollen in sediment samples collected at the Villa del Casale, dated back to Roman times:

Trees / shrubs

Trees / shrubs to shade individual isolated trees or avenues or barriers:

Cupressus sempervirens, Juniperus phoenicea, Castanea sativa, Quercus ilex, Quercus pubescens s.l., Juglans regia, Cytisus, Genista, Spartium junceum, Ficus carica, Myrtus communis, Fraxinus excelsior, Fraxinus ornus, Olea europaea, Phillyrea, Chamaerops humilis, Abies nebrodensis, Pinus halepensis, Platanus orientalis, Rhamnus alaternus, Prunus avium, Rubus, Salix, Tamarix, Taxus baccata, Tilia, Ulmus.

Shrubs "effect color of flowers or fruits":

Ilex aquifolium, Capparis spinosa, Viburnum tinus, Cistus, Spartium junceum, Myrtus communis, Prunus avium, Prunus spinosa, Pyrus, Rosa, Rubus.

Trees / shrubs / vines for fences, pergolas, roofing climbing:

Ilex aquifolium, Hedera helix, Buxus, Viburnum tinus, Arbutus unedo, Rosmarinus officinalis, Spartium junceum, Smilax aspera, Myrtus communis, Clematis, Rhamnus alaternus, Prunus spinosa, Rosa, Vitis.

Woody fruit:

Arbutus unedo, Castanea sativa, Juglans regia, Ficus carica, Olea europaea, Prunus avium, Pyrus, Rubus, Vitis vinifera.

Herbs

For lawns:

Stellaria, Bellisperennis, Taraxacum, Capsellabursa-pastoris, Cruciferae spontanee, Gramineae spontanee, Labiatae spontanee, Trifolium, Leguminosae spontanee, Plantago lanceolata, Ranunculus, Ranunculaceae spontanee, Potentilla.

Cereals, vegetables, textile plants, herbs, medications:

Cannabis sativa, Beta vulgaris, Artemisia, Cichoria, Lattuga, Brassica, Sinapis, Triticum, Mentha, Rosmarinus officinalis, Vicia faba, Allium, Asparagus, Malva sylvestris, Fragaria vesca, Apium graveolens, Daucus carota, Foeniculum.

Herbs "effect color of flowers and fruits":

Dianthus carthusianorum, Saponaria officinalis, Bellisperennis, Helichry sumitalcum, Sedum, Armeria, Anemone hortensis, Viola.

Herbs for aquatic and semi-aquatic tanks:

Alisma, Carex, Cyperus, Phragmites australis, Lemna, Nymphaea alba, Potamogeton, Sparganium erectum, Typha angustifolia.

De Naturalis Historia in Villa, from weaving knowledge of nature.

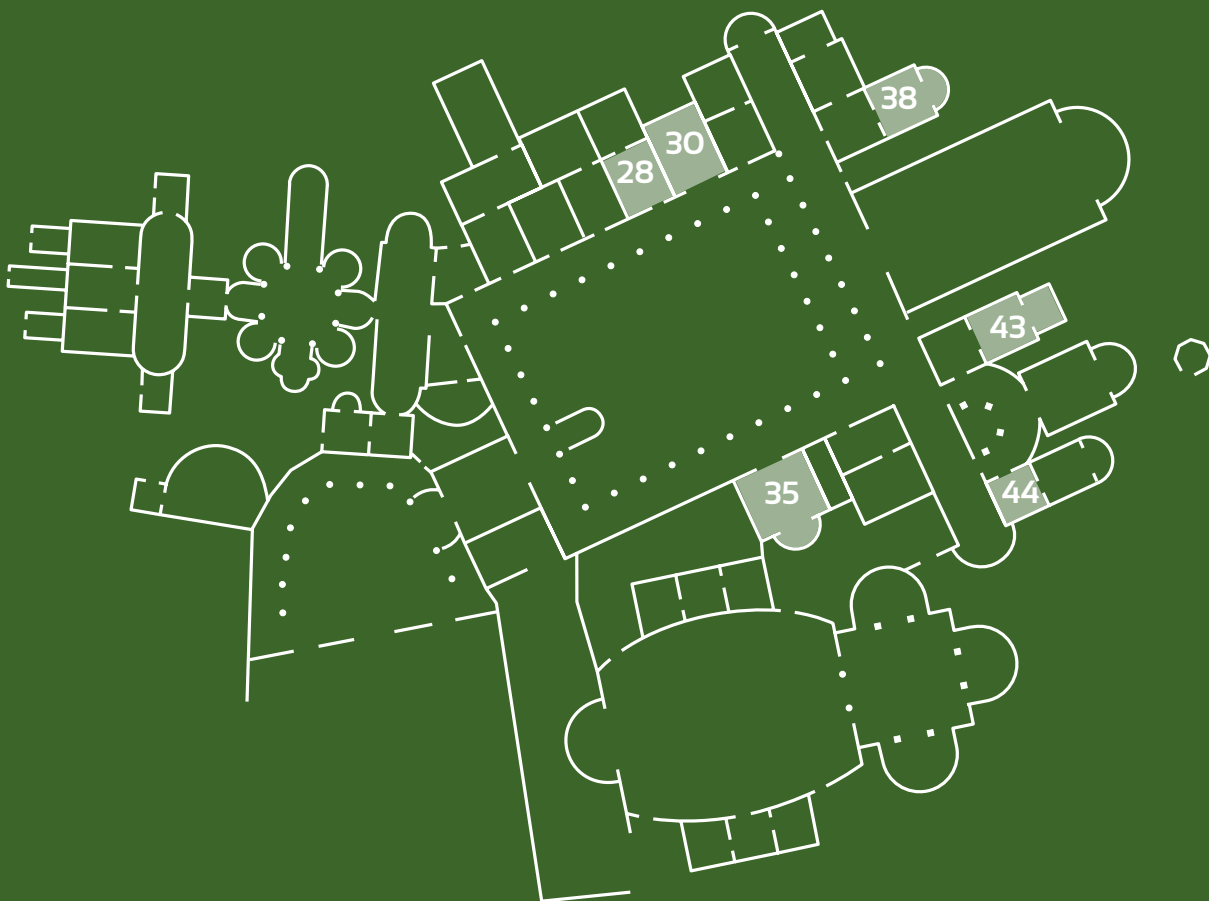
In addition to the detailed description, present in the iconography of some rooms, what was the real landscape around the villa, the ornate mosaic of the archaeological UNESCO site return a mapping of vegetation and fauna of the best known of the time, the characteristics of which have written the most famous Latin authors of combining natural sciences, the study of nature, interest in the activities of *otium*.

A walk through the *septum venationis* of "Little Hunt" [30].

If some scenes of the mosaics ornaments, like that of the ambulatory of the "Great Hunt", describing animal and plant species in North Africa, on the contrary, scholars have speculated that the *diaeta* of "Little Hunt" describes the natural environment over the next the historic residence: the one of the *septum venationis*, the area reserved for the hunting of the *dominus* and his family. In the mosaic floor, you narrate some episodes of hunting activities carried out by a group of hunters struggling with various species, captured through the use of force and audacity. In the five registers on which unfolds the scene opens a rich natural

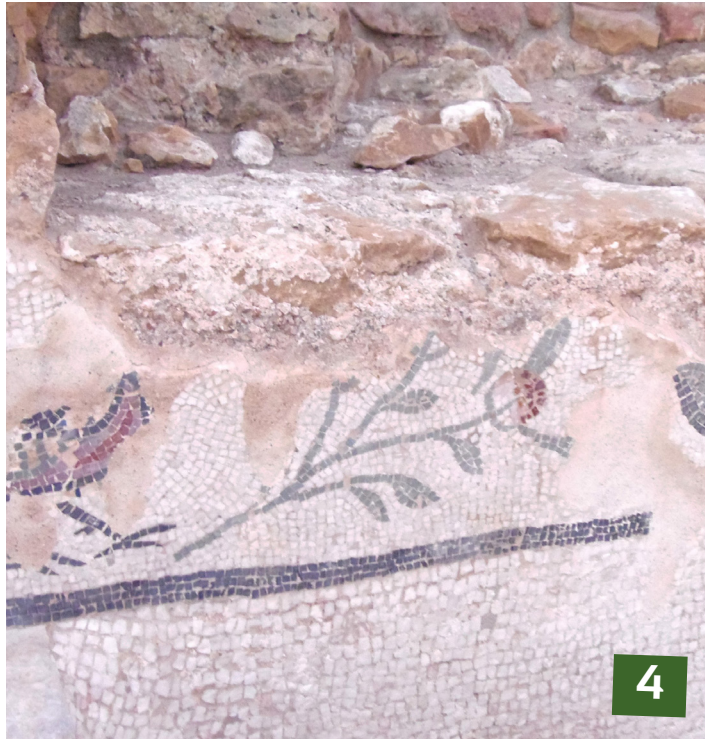
environment of shrubs, plants and trees, inhabited by animals that once occupied the hills and wooded ravines that still characterize the landscape surrounding the Villa.

Among the described species, with greatest frequency of occurrence, in the mosaic of this room, the fox and the hare stand out. This last one, in ancient times as today known for, the high reproductive capacity, due to the fact that the animal, according to the beliefs of the time, capacity had male and female genitalia, so as to proliferate in complete autonomy, without having relations with the other sex. Normally, the hares were detained near the villas in wooded areas fenced calls *leporaria*, with burrows and holes so that the animals could hide during the day.



In the last log, near the entrance of the room, the narrative takes as its subject the pursuit of deer being hunted by hunters on horseback. These animals were considered easy prey, capable, if stalked by hunters, to stop, and then resume the race when the proximity to the danger is reduced. According to Pliny the Elder, the aspect that made it easy to capture the deer was the ingenuity, since the animal was «able to stop and admire amazed anything, so much so that if a horse or a cow it approaches he would not realizes that he is near a hunter or even, if they can see, its able to stand there and contemplate the bow and arrows the one» (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*).

Of great emotional impact, is to capture the ferocious boar, furious, he rails against the hunters, succeeding and injuring one. This animal was undoubtedly the most coveted prey, his strength and his aggressiveness guaranteed fame and glory to those who had killed him. Varrone *De re rustica*, says the custom of keeping wild boars within the hunting estates and that, in addition to those in the wild, there were also many examples domesticated and hybrids, born from a crossbred between pigs and the same wild boars.



4



5



6



7





The scenes of "Little Hunt" are enriched with natural elements such as simple leafy bushes or trees, among the latter, it can be recognized in the scene of the capture of wild boar, ceratonia tree, «sweet and do not seem very different or for the fact that they also eat the bark » (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*).

The oaks are depicted in mosaic, with the function of supporting the shroud, with his shadow, he had to protect the outdoor meal of the hunters. Despite its size, the oak was not recommended to produce charcoal, or as a tree to draw construction wood. According to the ancient naturalists, this plant had a very thick bark and a wide trunk, hollow and porous, in addition, was subject to rot, when he was still alive, and to attracted lightning, sufficient reason to avoid using it during the sacrifices. The acorns of the tree were never consumed as a food, because of their bitter taste, appreciated only by pigs in the absence of other food.



Birdwatching in the ornate mosaics of the Villa.

The chirping of the birds, which can be heard coming from the wooded areas surrounding the house seems to persist within those environments that describe with, agile skill, different species. In the **third room of the suite [28]**, at the busts of the Seasons, alternate *xenia* with fish and birds. Among these, from the top down, you will recognize, in order of representation, within medallions, two plovers, a peacock, still a pigeon, and finally, a duck. Further, in the mosaic of *diaeta* of "Little Hunt" [30], we find two thrushes, eyed from hunters who try to catch them with their javelins, or *iacula*, or with their hawks. Perhaps the two men are aware of the fame attributed to these birds in Roman cuisine, mentioned by Martial in his *epigram*:

«...the most good of birds is the thrush».

The ambulatory of the "Great Hunt" offers the opportunity to follow the loading of two ostriches on the ship that will take them from the African coast to a Roman port in Italy, but it is decorated **diaeta mosaic of Orpheus [35]** that focused for the most part on the birds, intent listening, like other animals, the melodious sound emitted by the lyre of the famous musician. To represent the plant kingdom, to the right of the small apse, stands a majestic tree, with lush green foliage and branches that linger from the trunk. On these are placed, from top to bottom, the nightingale, the goldfinch, the hoopoe with its typical crest and, again, on the right, two other species from the colorful plumage. Below, on short strips of land adorned with a few plants, depicts the black crow, goose, two other examples of birds and a colorful parakeet. And 'then the turn of the peacock, advancing majestically towards Orpheus, showing its elegant tail. To the left of the apse, facing the lush foliage of the tree, a large boulder welcomes a heron and duck. Further down, before the face of Orpheus, you can see the thrush from his chest and tapped the pheasant tail streaked by bifida. Beyond the gap of the scene, to the left, a large eagle rests on the ground covering, with its right wing, a free-range rooster. Just above, behind the angle, is also portrayed the legendary phoenix, whose head is wrapped in a radiated halo.



11

From the Hall of Orpheus, the description of other species, continues in the south apartment manor, in the **antechamber of the cubicle with alcove [44]**, where pairs of birds chariot yoked to, compete with enthusiasm, in a race run around the plug a circus. Their neck, surrounded by nature's products, has led experts to assume that the scene mosaic is, among

other hypotheses, a representation of the cycle of the seasons. In fact, the chariot of pheasants, which wear olives on their neck, depicts the Winter, while the Purple Swampphen, with bunches of grapes, would remember the Fall. To follow the geese with the ears of wheat, the symbol par excellence of Summer and, finally, the flamingos with flowers in memory of Spring. Finally, other birds are represented in the mosaic floor of the **cubicle with alcove [43]** in a playful hunting activities of young children.



12a



12b



12c



12d



Natura da assaporare.

The depiction of a spontaneous nature and uncultivated, is often associated, within the Villa Romana del Casale, the iconographic reproduction of fruit trees, which were to enrich agricultural landscapes and gardens of the residence, as well as the table during your meals of the day. Example, in this regard, is the **main north hall with an apse of the apartment [38]** full of *xenia*, welcoming gifts made, in this case, by different types of fruits, mostly of autumn, delimited, in the mosaic, in medallions of bay.

From the crown located in the northeast corner are identified in series: two yellow melons and watermelon, the cedars, a branch with

pomegranates, three clusters of white and black grapes, figs, pile of chestnuts and medlars, some apples and finally pears. In the left of the medallion were perhaps peaches. The treaties of agronomy describe these fruits, specifying the various species and the best way to preserve the characteristics that they possessed and their use in certain areas, such as medicine.



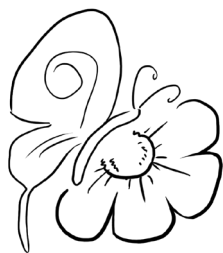
Pomegranate, the “Punic apple”.

Pliny the Elder mentions the pomegranate as an African fruit, that came from Carthage, appreciated for the different varieties of taste: sweet, sour, mixed acid and winey. To storage after the harvest, the Roman agronomists advised to lay down their pomegranates, ripe and already harvested in an earthenware in a pot completely covered covered with sand. Another method was to make them hard with boiling sea water, dry them in the sun

for three days and then hang them.

In everyday life, when it was not ripe, the pomegranate was used for working hides, while its flower, *balaustio*, was used for dyeing clothes and medicine. In the setting area they produced the sour pomegranate *stomatice*, a very useful medicine «[...] for the affections to the mouth, nostrils, ears, for the clouding of the eyes, fleshy growths on the nail and the genitals [...]»

(Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*).



The citron juice.

From the citron seeds or from the fruit the juice was extracted and used as a drink and given on different occasions. It could be mixed with wine as an antidote for poisoning, or was used as a mouthwash to freshen the breath, finally, the seeds were also recommended for the lack of appetite in pregnant women.

Not only to be pressed.

In ancient times, the grapevine could produce, like today, grapes and grapes suitable for human consumption and to be dispatched for crushing. As can be seen from the *De re rustica* of Columella and Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, the first in its type and dūracinus and early picked, it was mostly cultivated in soils close to the city, to be able to sell it in the markets, and its value was tied so much to the flavor as to the beauty of the bunch. The sources point out the "ambrosia", very durable at all temperatures.

The fig, the energy food anti-ty.

The figs, such as those represented in the mosaic, were considered an important food for the human diet. For storage it during the winter season, they were dried in the sun and placed in boxes. Their use was like bread and butter, fit for the meal of the slaves who worked the land. Pliny the Elder in his *Naturalis Historia* describes these fruits: «All the figs are soft to the touch when they are ripe carry inside of the grains; during ripening the

juice is similar to milk, when the ripening is accomplished, honey. When they age on the tree and are old, they drip drops of gummy resin».

The medlar.

Ancient sources describe three types of fruit from the tree, imposing and with red leaves: the *anthonon*, the *setania* and *gallic*. The larger one was the *setania*, with a more whitish color and the seeds less hard, the other, on the contrary, were smaller, but with higher storage properties and a more intense aroma. As a fruit of the medlar were appreciated for their medical astringent qualities for the stomach.

Chestnuts, "acorns" of Jupiter.

In ancient ages the chestnut, symbolically was a tree dear to Jupiter, so that its fruits were called *lovis glandes*, acorns of Jupiter. In ancient times, as reported by Pliny the Elder, the chestnuts were eaten roasted, as in our days.

Apples, the most special species to the remedies for health.

The varieties of this fruit, even in Roman times, were many. After the harvest, for better preservation, apples were laid on straw or wool in a cool, dry place or wrapped in fig leaves in a basket sprinkled with clay. Their use was also aimed at the treatment of certain diseases: baked apples preserved in honey, they were great for the affections of the stomach, while the flower fresh and dry was indicated for inflammation of the eyes.

Pears.

The variety most liked in ancient Rome were the *crustumina* and *falerna*, from which they drew a lot of juice. Stored in earthenware containers upside down, sealed

with pitch and buried in holes, pears boasted of medicinal qualities, although, according to some, they were assigned the same properties of the wine so as to be administered, in some cases, carefully.

"Malum persicum".

Peach, for its origin from the eastern lands, from the first century B.C., was called by the Romans *malum persicum*, "apple persica", a name derived from the place of origin. Even today in Sicily this fruit is called "Pèrsica", "pèrs'ca" or "pìrsica." In ancient times, the peaches, the variety most famous was the most long lasting, were used mainly for the sick people, so that their cost had increased to thirty gold for each one



"GREEN" PIAZZA

**Natural Reserve of Rossomanno,
Grottascura, Bellia and the Ronza Park**

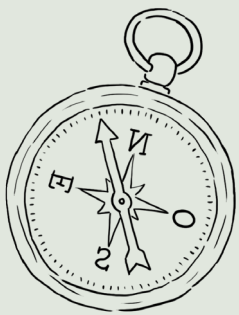
1

"Green lung" of the city of Piazza Armerina, the Natural Reserve Rossomanno, Grottascura, Bellia and forest are the refuge for many fans of outdoor sports, such as cross-country running and mountain biking. Several paths create a network of trails for all difficulty from leisurely walks to adventurous excursions. The well-equipped area of Ronza Park and the archaeological area of Rossomanno, the Reserve is the natural habitat for those who love the uniqueness of the environment and its changing landscapes.

1

Natural Reserve of Rossomanno, Grottascura, Bellia and the Parco Ronza

GREEN "PIAZZA"



Distance in kilometers from Piazza Armerina:
about 2.5 km

From Piazza Armerina. Viale Generale Gaeta in Piazza Armerina, continue for about 1 km from the Armerino center entrance to the reserve is on the right (Ex slaughter).

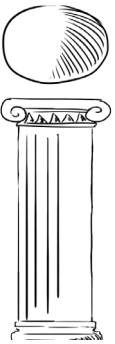
Car and motorcycle.
Yes.

Public transport.
No.

Mountain bike or racing bike.
Yes, equipping the vehicle with warning lights.



"Green lung" of the city of Piazza Armerina, the Natural Reserve Rossomanno, Grottascura, Bellia and forest are the refuge for many fans of outdoor sports, such as cross-country running and mountain biking. Several paths create a network of trails for all difficulty from leisurely walks to adventurous excursions. The well-equipped area of Ronza Park and the archaeological area of Rossomanno, the Reserve is the natural habitat for those who love the uniqueness of the environment and its changing landscapes.



For information on the Reserve:

Office of the Provincial Forestry
Authority of Enna
via Piazza Armerina 25,
Enna

Toll Free # 840 700 839

Tel. 0935 565401 (switchboard)
- 0935 565422 (U.R.P.) - 0935
565418 (Dr. Morgano)
Fax 0935 565421- 565413

e-mail: fsignorelli@regione.sicilia.it

web site: www.regione.sicilia.it/agricolturaeforeste/azforeste/



The natural features of the Reserve

Reliefs of sand and streams. Inhabited since ancient times, the area is characterized by a reforestation with conifers and geologically, from sandy uplands (between 600-800 meters above sea level) and heights, reaching nearly 900 meters above sea level. Among the main findings include the Mount Serra Casazze, Mount Rossomanno and Cozzo Bannata. Their special sandy texture, expose them to the erosion of weathering.

The territory of the reserve is crossed by several small rivers of torrential character, including the Rossomanno Walloon, the Grottascura and Cannarozzo. All enrich, with their scope, the tributaries of the river Dittaino and the Salso river, helping to maintain a moist environment thanks to the sandy soil that prevents water from stagnating.

Atypical flora. The most common arboreal element

is the Pine, *Pinus pinea*, but, by naturalists, is considered a species abnormal for the environment of the Reserve. In fact, normally, it takes root at 500-600 meters above sea level: in Reserve was also detected at 800 meters above sea level and sources close to the coast!

In the undergrowth of the pine forest you can find, however, patches of Brambles, *Rubus ulmifolius*, and shrubs of dog rose, *Rosa canina*, lianas of Sarsaparilla, *Smilax asper*, and hedges of hawthorn, *Cratageus monogyna*. To characterize the territory of central Sicily there are species of elderberry, *Sambucus*, *Asparagus*, *Asparagus officinalis*, and the Wild pear, *Pyrus pyraster*, while among the vegetation introduced by humans can distinguish Cypress, *Cupressus sempervirens*, the Pine Aleppo, *Pinus alepensis*, chestnut, *Castanea sativa*, Hazel, *Corylus avellana*, the domestic Pero, *Pyrus communis*, and the black Mulberry, *Morus nigra*.



Thanks to its dirt paths, for the most part flat, surrounded by undergrowth, wildlife adapts to wonderful excursions outside the city, for travelers of all ages and physical preparation, on foot or by ecological vehicle.

Birdwatching.

Among the birds you can observe the Sparrowhawk, *Accipiter nisus*, the Buzzard, *Buteo buteo*, the Kestrel, *Falco tinnunculus*, the Hoopoe, *Hoopoe epops*, the Jay, *Garrulus glandarius*, the Cuckoo, *Cuculus canorus*, the Bee, *Bee-eater Merops*. Among the nocturnal birds of prey are more difficult to trace, is indicated the presence of the Owl, *Asio otus*, the alocco, *Tawny Owl*, the Owl, *Athene noctua*, and the

barn owl, *Tyto alba*.

Trekking.

Difficulty: easy to medium. Presence of passable roads and steep climbs with difficulty. Hiking boots are recommended.

Mountain bike.

Level of difficulty: easy to medium. Presence of passable roads and steep hills with difficulty.

Race/ Trail

Difficulty level: Medium to high. Presence of steep hills and roads with bumps and dips.



Azienda Regionale
Foreste Demaniali



Regione Sicilia



Rossomanno Grottascura Bellia

circolo
MTB

CIRCUITO PER MOUNTAIN BIKE

all'interno della R.N.O. Rossomanno - Grottascura - Bellia
con n°2 percorsi con grado di difficoltà differente

PERCORRIBILITÀ:

Tutto l'anno

Dislivello 90 metri. Altezza s.l.m.: max mt. 880 - min. mt. 790.

PERCORSO FACILE:

Km. 4,400 - Collinare pianeggiante interamente su carrarecce sterrate e terra battuta. Seguire segnaletica nera (frece nere)

PERCORSO DIFFICILE:

Km. 5,500 - Collinare con brevi tratti in discesa e leggera salita su single-track sabbioso (65%) e carrarecce sterrate (35%). Seguire la segnaletica rossa (frece rosse).

SEGNALETICA:

Le frece nere stanno a indicare le direzioni per il percorso facile; le rosse, il percorso difficile. Eventuali inclinazioni delle frece stanno a indicare l'inizio di una salita o discesa ripida.



PERCORSO DIFFICILE

Unione Europea



PERCORSO FACILE

PER INFO: 091/20947080 - 091/4334

Wildlife. Populated by some varieties of animals, the undergrowth is home to the fox, *Vulpes vulpes*, the Porcupine, *Hystrix cristata*, the Hedgehog, *Erinaceus europaeus*, wild boar, *Sus scrofa*, the green lizard, *Lacerta viridis*, and pond turtle, *Emys orbicularis*.

The Ronza Park: oasis of refreshment.

Nestled within the Reserve Rossomanno, Bellia, Grottascura, the Ronza Park can be reached through the path inside the woods, either by car through the highway SS117bis. Offering a large parking lot, the park is characterized by flat green areas, equipped with many barbecue facilities, tables and wooden benches. Among conifers and eucalyptus, it's also possible to spend quiet and peaceful days in the open air cooking delicious food. In addition to having a play area for children, the park lends itself to the curiosity of children for the presence of a large aviary, home to many breeds of birds, and enclosures containing Tibetan goats, llamas, deers, wild boars and other animal species.



How to reach Park hums with the car?

Head to the Park, by car, coming from Piazza Armerina, is like taking a pleasant journey. Leaving the city of Mosaics from Viale Generale Gaeta (North) continue and take a slight right onto the ramp to SS117bis. Turn right again and take the SS117bis. The park's entrance is along the right side. The entire route is about 9.5 km.

Rossomanno, the story of a village



Indigenous traces.

In the heart of the Reserve some ruins handed down a mysterious and little-known story related to the Mount Rossomanno, at north of the protected area. In 1560, Thomas Fazello wrote, in his writings, that a native center stood on the heights of the relief. This thesis was confirmed centuries later by scientific studies that attributed the membership of some remains, still visible today, a community seventh century B.C., which is located also on the other hills in the area, as Cozzo Primavera, Serra of the Casazze and Rocca Crovacchio. In particular, in the setting of the two areas, were also found artefacts belonging to the period of Greek colonization. Its really interesting how the walls of a citadel appears located on the top of Serra Casazze, characterized by local calcarenitic stone.

Depopulation and population.

In Roman times, the area of Rossomanno underwent an abandonment by the inhabitants of the territory, who preferred, in a progressive manner, move closer to urban centers.

Only during the Byzantine period, Rossomanno was resettled, given the presence of pottery of this period and on the west side of the hill, a plan church and a basilica map, which the foundation remains.

An unhappy fate.

During the Swabian period, Rossomanno, was enfeoffed in the territories of the family of the Uberti, residents in the city of Enna, the ancient *Castrum Johannis*. Its members, of noble birth, had the courage to ally with the family Chiaramontes, who aspired to the crown of *Regnum Siciliae*. This provoked the wrath of Martin IV, king for law, and he sent his troops to destroy the estates of aristocrats rebels. Among them, Rossomanno, whose village, newly established, was razed to the ground, forcing the surviving inhabitants to take refuge in the suburbs of Enna. In the Rossomanno area, in the locality Conventazzo, settled, later, a community of hermits. Among the remains of the ancient settlement is possible today to identify the base of the so-called "Torre degli Uberti" on the top of Mount Rossomanno.



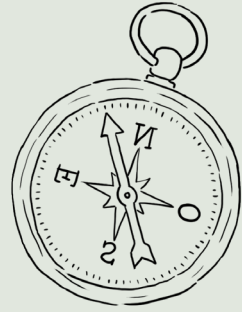
ON THE SLOPES OF A LEGEND

The Demaniale forest and the relief of "Mount Navone"

2



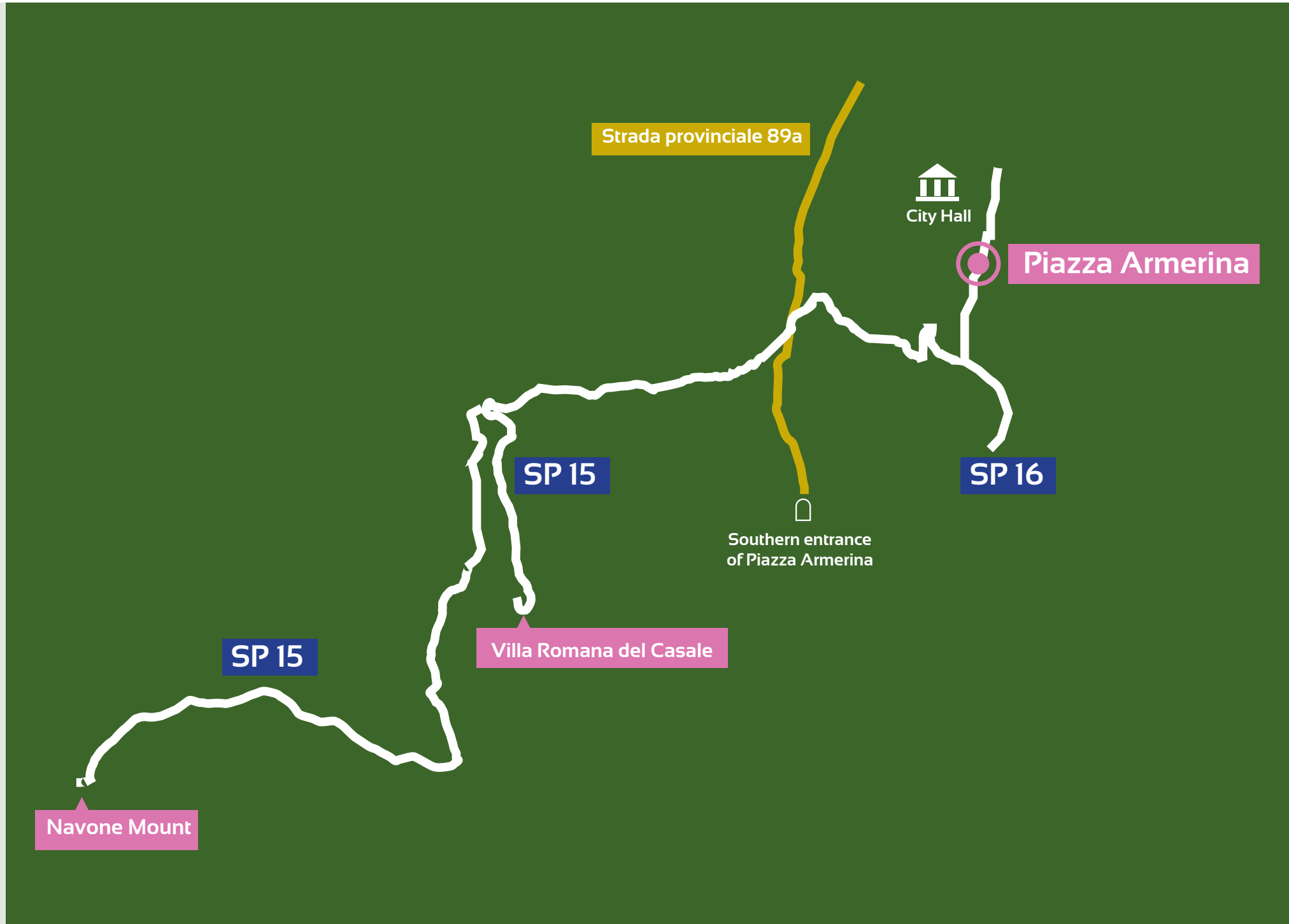
To the west of Piazza Armerina, Mount Navone stands imperious, among plowed fields, south of the Villa Romana del Casale, reaching 754 meters above sea level. Belonging to the chain of Erei, the relief consists of sandy deposits, clays and silty sands of the Pleistocene period. A legend surrounds the mysterious paths and ancient history lingers among the top of its rocks.



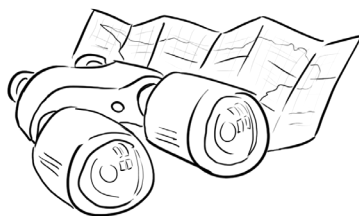
Distance in kilometers from Piazza Armerina: about 12 km from the Villa Romana del Casale, Mount Navone is only 9 Km.

From Piazza Armerina. Exit Piazza Armerina and take the SP15 towards Villa Romana del Casale. Continue along the SP15 for about 8 km towards Barry. Finally, on the left, take the provincial road SP36 towards Mazzarino. The entrance to Mount Navone is on the right about 1.6 Km.

Car and motorcycle. Yes. **Public transport.** No. **Mountain bike or racing bike.** Yes, equipping the vehicle with warning lights. Please note: the trail to climb to the top has important slopes and rough road and it is not really suitable for bikers.



To the west of Piazza Armerina, Mount Navone stands imperious, among plowed fields, south of the Villa Romana del Casale, reaching 754 meters above sea level. Belonging to the chain of Erei, the relief consists of sandy deposits, clays and silty sands of the Pleistocene period. A legend surrounds the mysterious paths and ancient history lingers among the top of its rocks.



Trekking and hiking. If you can reach the official entrance of Mount Navone with the car, as mountain biking, trekking is the sport most suited to climb.

To tackle the climb of Mount Navone is advisable to wear and bring with you:

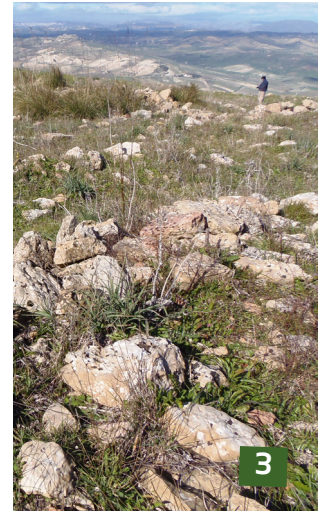
- Hiking boots.
- Windbreaker.
- Hat.
- Sack lunch and plenty of water (especially in the summer).
- Camera.

Please note: the area is not equipped with facilities.



DETTANTO
FORESTALE
FOS. M. NAVONE


PER SICILIA
2007-2013
Misura 226



Navone in archeology and history.

«A little walled town of indeterminable age».
(P. Orsi, 1930).

The witnesses who reported the presence of some ruins on top of the mountain, which were collected by the archaeologist Paolo Orsi, first, he explored in the first half of the twentieth century, discovering the remains of an ancient village. On the spot, the researcher identified the Greek fragments dating back to the IV-III century B.C., and many pottery from the Byzantine period and the early Middle Ages. Despite the result of stratigraphic tests, the origin of the city remained unknown, returning to «*another of the region's archaeological riddles (Sicily)*» (P. Orsi, 1930). Followed by new explorations in the 50s. On that occasion, in addition to material dating back to the sixth century B.C. and the Middle Ages, archaeologists discovered four chamber tombs already excavated earlier. Inside one of these, were collected artifacts attributable to the VI-V century B.C.

Around 1960, the archaeologist Adamesteanu, thanks to an aerial survey, had himself photographed from the top of Mount Navone, noting the presence of two quite distinct areas between them. From the survey, it was clear that the western tip was completely detached from the most impressive part of the town, situated on the eastern side and protected, especially on the southern side,

from a defensive structure to agger, or obtained by digging a moat. In addition, on the eastern side was recognized a main east-west axis. The study of the survey led experts to speculate that the western hill not far could accommodate an acropolis.

The medieval village in the affairs of the Sicilian Vespers.

The earliest records of Mount Navone are linked to the history of the Norman-Swabian of the center of Sicily. In fact, Mount Navone with his town was delivered by Frederick II of Swabia to the noble Abbo Barrì the Younger, Lord of Pietraperzia, which House had come to Sicily following the Normans, during the war against the Saracens.

In the years of the Sicilian Vespers (1282-1302) lit a furious war of succession between the brothers *Giacomo* and *Federico*, sons of King Pietro of Aragona, who claimed the throne of Sicily.

Giacomo acquired, in an unlawful manner, the title of king of the island, supported by the French and by some barons of Sicily, including Giovanni Barresi, Count of Pietraperzia and Navone.

After obtaining the victory *Federico*, appointed as the new king, attacked Pietraperzia able to conquer it. The village of Mount Navone suffered a worse fate: it was razed to the ground and turned over to the jurisdiction of Piazza Armerina, while the Count Giovanni Barresi was stripped of his titles and exiled

By a name other.

Mount Navone was not always called that. Was, in fact, indicated with: Anaor (Der. Arab), Naòne, Naùni, Dragone and Nahòne.





The treasure of the seven kings.

Over the centuries Mount Navone, alone in his imposing size, was surrounded by an aura of mystery. In the folk tradition of the nearby cities, such as Piazza Armerina or Barrafranca, tell fantastic stories: in particular, of unknown origin. It is said that the city of Mount Navone was ruled by a king who, one day, with a notice, promised to marry his beautiful daughter to the prince who had been distinguished for wealth. The news quickly spread and Navone presented seven kings, with all their belongings. Unfortunately, the king did not keep his word, revealing his true intentions. He killed the seven kings, seizing their treasures hid in the mountain. Legend has it that Sicily will remain poor until this treasure will not be found and freed from spells that guard it.

The ghost fair and Mastro Carretto.

To conquer the hidden treasures of the seven kings, no need to look because the spirits that guard them show them to passersby, putting them to the test. Legend says that a man named Master Carretto, coming from Mazzarino to go to Piazza, was hit by a surreal sight, even before reaching the trough, known as "Mastro Diego" at the foot of Mount Navone. An extraordinary "fair" piled up in front of him immense and rich treasures. The demons or spirits who guarded them invited the good man to collect as much he

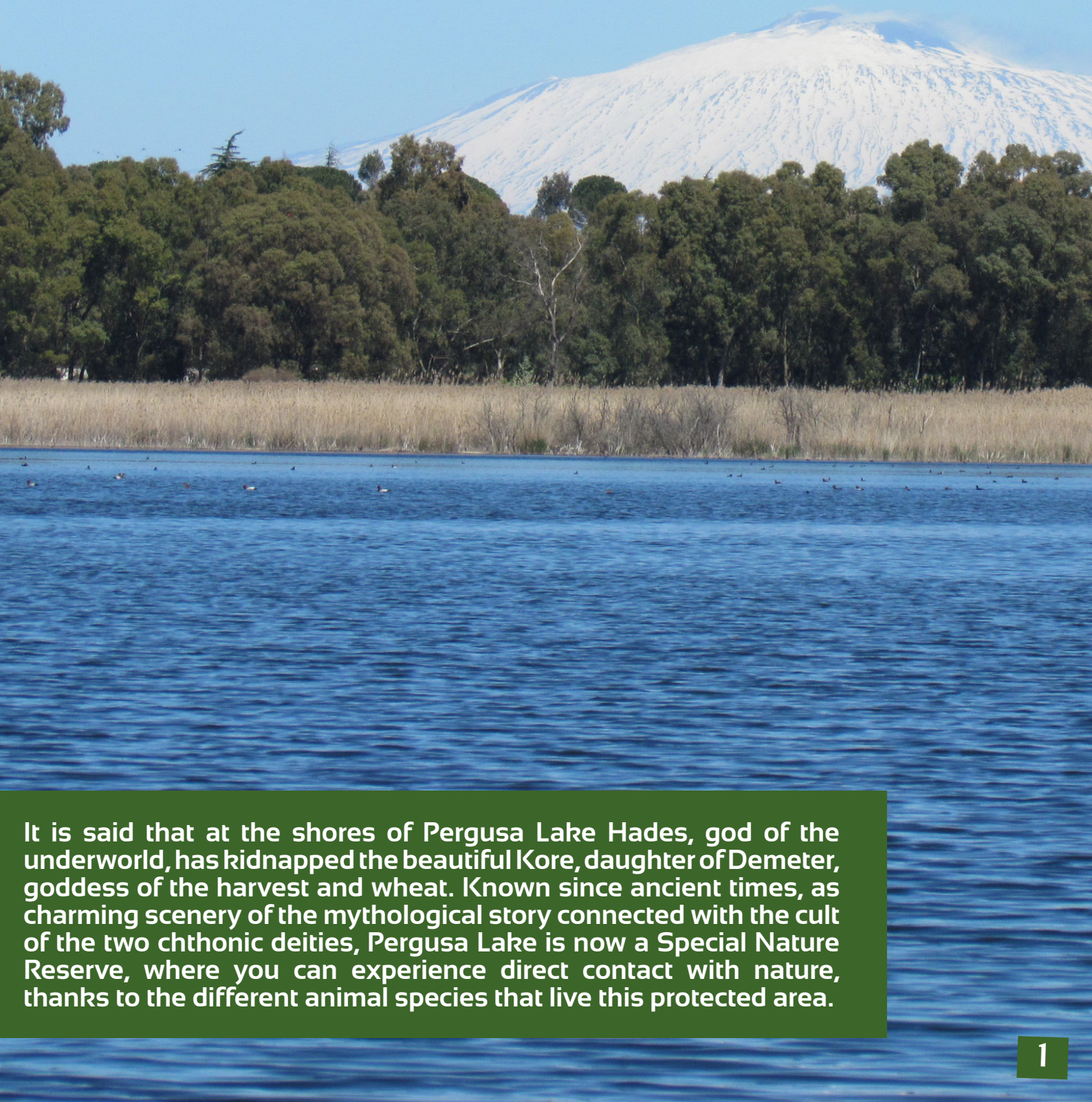
could, but on one condition: he could take with him only if he could get to the trough without ever looking back. Unfortunately, perhaps intrigued by the sounds and glittering jewelry from "fair" ghost, Master cart turned causing the wrath of the spirits, who took him at odds with such a fury that his eyes were red for life. The assets that had managed to gather vanished and with them the extraordinary "fair".



THERE WHERE SPRING WAS BORN

The Special Nature Reserve of Pergusa Lake

3

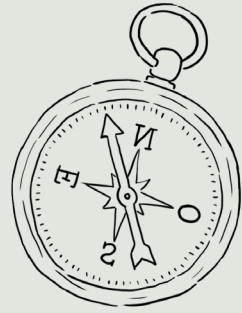


It is said that at the shores of Pergusa Lake Hades, god of the underworld, has kidnapped the beautiful Kore, daughter of Demeter, goddess of the harvest and wheat. Known since ancient times, as charming scenery of the mythological story connected with the cult of the two chthonic deities, Pergusa Lake is now a Special Nature Reserve, where you can experience direct contact with nature, thanks to the different animal species that live this protected area.

1

The Special Nature Reserve of Pergusa Lake

THERE WHERE SPRING WAS BORN



Distance in kilometers from Piazza Armerina: about 25 km.

From Piazza Armerina. From Viale Generale Gaeta in Piazza Armerina, take the exit for SS117bis. Then, turn right, onto the SS117bis for 8.3 km and then turn right again towards the Sp4. Continue along the Sp4 and turn left towards Floristella and then continue on to Viadotto Ramata Secondo. Proceed on SS561 for 3.9 km and turn left.

Car and motorcycle. Yes.
Public transport. Yes.
Mountain bike or road bike. Yes, by equipping the vehicle with lights..



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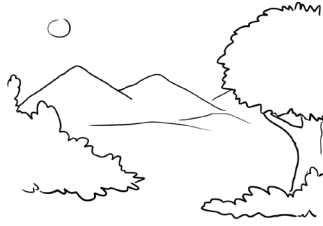


For information on the Reserve:
Regional Province of Enna
Department of Territory and Environment
Sector VIII - Environment, Land and Civil Protection
A.P.O. Service Area Planning and Management nature reserves
Natural Reserves Management Office

Regional Province of Enna
VIII sector Environment, Land and Civil Protection
Service Planning and Territory Management of Nature Reserves
Piazza Garibaldi - Enna

Tel 0935 521111 (switchboard) - 0935 521357 (direct)
E-mail: ptp@provincia.enna.it
website: www.provincia.enna.it
Website reserves: www.riserveenna.it



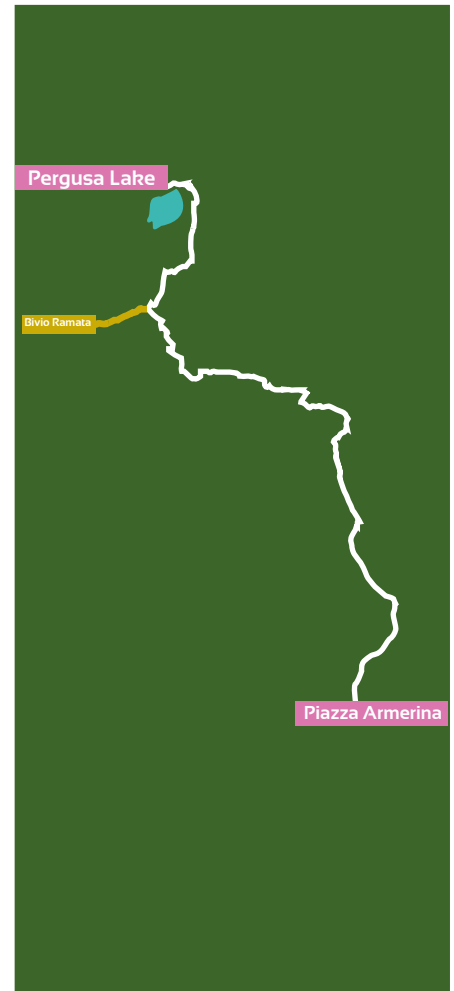
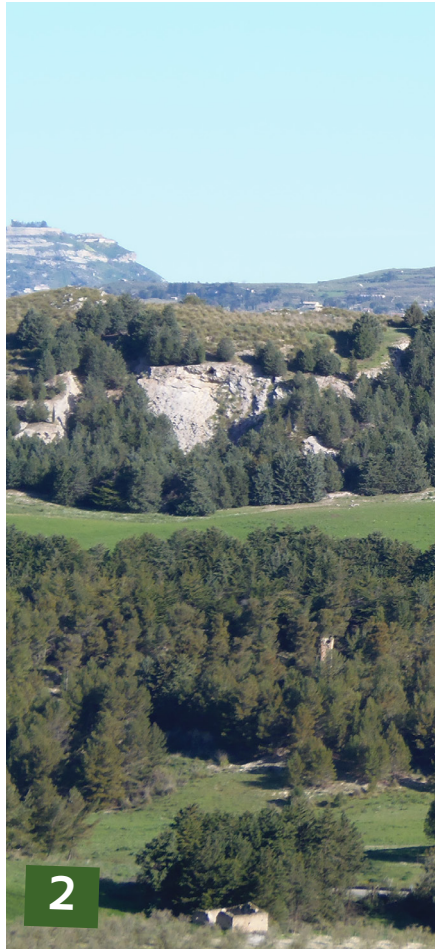


Piazza Armerina - Pergusa on mountain bike.

For mountain bikers, you can reach Pergusa Lake, along a road, with no traffic or just some, characterized by paved dirt roads, which passes through the hills of Sicily, not only surrounded by beautiful landscapes but rich areas countryside alternate to woods. The route is not recommended during the hottest period of summer.

Directions from Piazza Armerina.

From Viale Generale Gaeta in Piazza Armerina, take the exit for SS117bis. Then, turn right onto the SS117bis. After about 8.3 miles turn slight left to stay on SS117bis in the direction of Enna. More or less than 7 km, turn right onto the SS561 towards Pergusa.



The nature shows its self and birdwatching

Easily accessible from Piazza Armerina, but also from every area of the island, due to its central location, the Pergusa Lake lends itself to days devoted to the observation of nature. And for this reason that birdwatching is the most popular activity in the natural area, attracting many fans. It is best to have a pair of binoculars, a camera, a bird manual and lots of patience!

A bike ride, 5 Kilometres.

The circuit around Pergusa Lake offers cyclists the opportunity to train with the bike along the entire perimeter of the basin of water for a total of 5 kilometres per lap.

Race.

Difficulty level: easy.



The Reserve and its inhabitants

Of lush forests and woods around the mythical Pergusa Lake, there is very little left, mainly because of the changes introduced by man, such as the creation of a racetrack that has surrounded it as a ring. In 1995, the Sicilian Region established a reserve, calling the area «*lake environment of tectonic origin, which, for its size, is home to a rich variety of birdlife and is the only wetland park in the heart of Sicily for migratory birds*».

Located 667 meters above sea level, the lake has tectonic origin, with an elliptical basin generated in the course of the geological era, by the sinking of the land. Devoid of inlets and outfalls, this basin, of medium proportions, represents an extraordinary natural reality characterized by a delicate environmental balance, because the source of water supply, through both surface and groundwater, is exclusively linked to atmospheric phenomena, as demonstrated by the critical factors in certain months of the year. The environment is characterized by a mesomediterranean climate, since there is a dry period of three months, with temperatures ranging between 5 to 6 ° C during the months of January and February.

Flora.

The reeds and rushes are two of floral species no longer present in proximity the lake. Located in the proximity of the water, the all the reeds is constituted by the species of *Juncus aculeatus* and *Tamarix*. In the outer areas, the reed is characterized, however, by the Common reed, the Tamarisk, and the *Calistegia sepium*.



The marine plants in the lake.

The predominant aquatic plant is the *Ruppia*. There are also various algae including *Ulva*. The Reserve is characterized by the presence of numerous orchids such as *Barlia*, the *Ophrys* of Bertoloni and the Italian Orchide, in addition to the presence of some endemic species such as *Euphorbia cornuta*.





Fauna.

Between march and may and between october and november, the Pergusa Lake becomes a gathering place for many species of migratory birds, many of which are protected. As for the rest of the year you can watch the inhabitant birds and in the winter they hole up. In the area there are :

Ducks

- Eurasian Teal (*Anas crecca*), considered the smallest duck in Europe.
- Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*), so named for its particular whistle.
- Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*).
- Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*), characterized by a beak-shaped spoon.
- Ferruginous (*Aythya nyroca*), with rust-colored plumage.
- Common Pochard (*Aythya ferina*), also called "Redhead" for the color of the head.

Rails

- Coot (*Fulica Atra*), which nests in the reeds.
- Common Moorhen (*Gallinula Chloropus*), nesting.
- Purple Gallinule (*Porphyrio Porphyrio*), nesting.
- Water Rail (*Rallus Aquaticus*), very elusive.

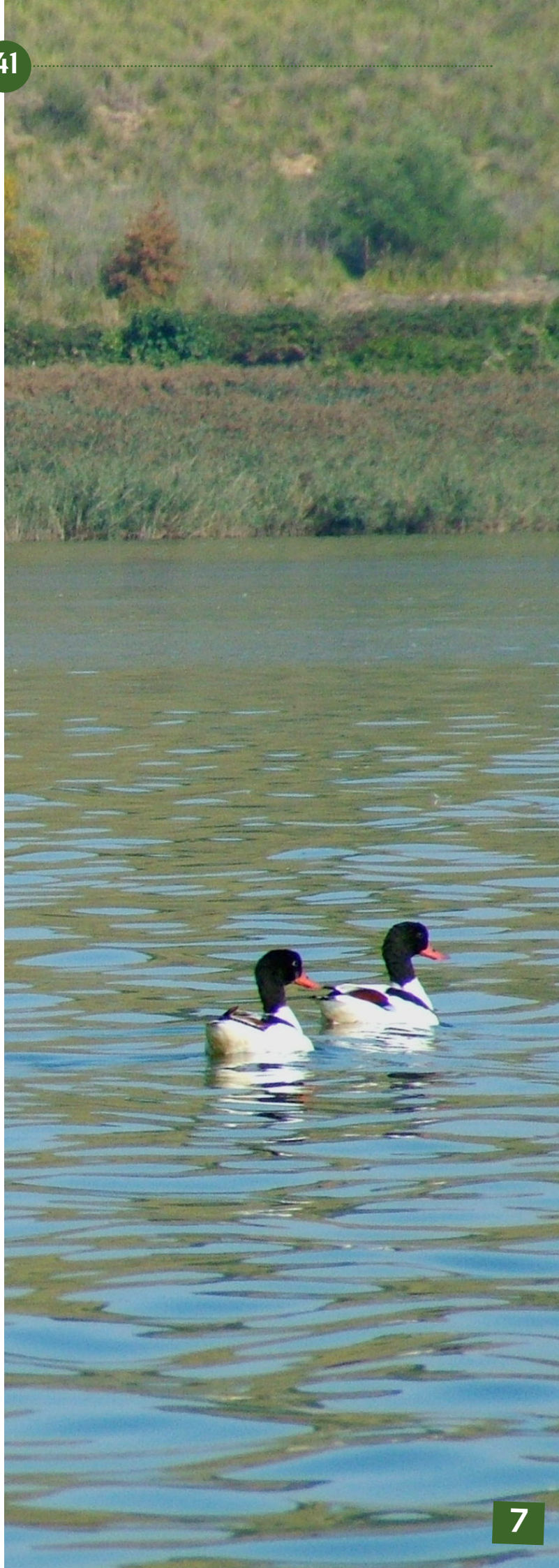
Raptors

- Eurasian Scops Owl (*Otus scops*), a nocturnal bird belonging to a protected species.
- Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), nocturnal bird belonging to a protected species.
- Little Owl (*Athene noctua*), nocturnal bird belonging to a protected species.
- Western Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*), very rare species, whose presence in the lake has recently been certified with nesting in the reeds Pergusa.

Other birds

- Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*).
- Great Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus Arundinaceus*).
- Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus Scirpaceus*).
- Bee-eater (*Merops Bee-eater*).
- Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus Vanellus*).
- Starling (*Sturnus Vulgaris*).
- Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus Minutus*).

In the hills surrounding the Pergusa Lake you can see species such as the Sicilian Rock Partridge (*Alectoris graeca whitakeri*), a variety of partridge from mountain area, the lanner falcon (*Falco biarmicus*) and the common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*). Among the mammals is reported the presence of the crested porcupine, the weasel, the screw and bats, attracted by the large number of insects that inhabit the lake. Among the amphibians is the endemic Sicilian toad and painted Discoglossa, while among the reptiles lists the Sicilian pond turtle, the grass snake, the Smooth snake and the sand lizard.







The Purple Gallinule. Edited by Rosa Termine, a biologist at the University of Enna "Kore"



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI ENNA "KORE"

The Purple Gallinule, *Porphyrio p. porphyrio* (Linnaeus, 1758), is a bird belonging to the order Gruiformes and family Rallidae. E'caratterizzato by a beautiful metallic blue plumage, and the undertail is white, while the beak, with front plate, and the big feet, with long fingers, are coral red. And more massive than the more common coot, with a weight up to 850 grams and a wingspan of up to 100 centimeters.

It a typical bird of the swamp with extensive reed beds and shores of lakes with dense vegetation. It mainly feeds on plants (Cattail, Reed, Rush, Scirpo, etc..), but also of invertebrates, small fish, amphibians and eggs of other birds.

It is a protected species by the National Law No. 157 of 1992, the "Birds" Directive 409/79/CEE, the International Convention of Berne of 19/09/1979, and is considered "Vulnerable" by the IUCN Red List.

The Purple Gallinule has suffered a sharp contraction of its European range, it is limited to Spain, Italy (Sardinia and Sicily), Portugal and south-eastern France. The main factors limiting the distribution area of this species are hunting, fires, land reclamation, fragmentation and desertification of the habitat. In Sicily became extinct in the 50s precisely because of the reclamation of many wetlands and excessive hunting.

Because of its sedentary nature, it was unlikely that these areas could get back to colonize Sicily. So in 1997, the National Wildlife Institute (now the Institute for the Protection and

Environmental Research) and the Italian League for Bird Protection started the project "*Reintroduction of the Purple Gallinule in Sicily*", funded by the Sicilian Region, this project has led, among 2000 and 2003, the placing of 104 subjects in three different historic sites "Biviere" Gela (CL), the mouth of the river Simeto (CT) and Saline di Siracusa (SR). The Purple Swamphen reintroduced, all ringed, were taken from the Center for the Study and Protection of the Natural Environment Valencia (Spain), which deals with the protection of endangered species in the Mediterranean and which for some years has initiated a program to the breeding of the Purple Gallinule, intended to allow the reintroduction of the species within the historic of the area.

From the release sites Gallinule you went expanding, colonizing several wetlands located along the eastern coast of Sicily and the southern one.

In April 2006, the Purple Gallinule was spotted for the first time, in the Natural Reserve of Pergusa Lake (25 kilometers from Piazza Armerina), where he took office independently and where it had never been reported in recent historical times; however POTENZA LAURIA, in describing the fauna of the lake in 1858, citing the presence of "... Purple Swamphen (Fasciani) *Porphyrio Hiacintia, Porphirion Antiquarum Bon ...*". The Purple Gallinule observed and photographed in 2006 was not ringed, a sign that it was not an individual released during the project mentioned

above, but that stemmed from the reproduction, in nature, of those Purple Swamphen, demonstrating that the species was well adapted to the new Sicily environment.

Pergusa Lake environment of great natural interest characterized by high biodiversity and the presence of endemic species (such as amphibians Discoglossus painted *Discoglossus pictus pictus* and how the reptile Sicilian pond turtle *Emys trinacris*), the Purple Gallinule has now become stable reproductive and still in the expansion phase, were surveyed in 2012 and 16 pairs in 2011 nesting has also been documented, with photos and videos. This settlement process is carefully monitored by the University of Enna "Kore" with studies promoted by the Province of Enna, National Manager of the Reserve. The presence of the Purple Gallinule in Pergusa, 667 meters above sea level, is of considerable interest because this species normally populates altitude ranges between 0 and 370 meters away and the lake of Pergusa for its strategically central location plays an important role in facilitating trade, essential from the genetic point of view, Purple Gallinule individuals from different areas of Sicily, exchanges that ensure the survival of the species on the island (R. Termine, 2013).

This species, for his flamboyance, was admired since the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans. It was much better known in ancient times

than it is today. The Purple Gallinule was, in fact, considered sacred and used for divination, for example before a battle, as they write and Aristotle (fourth century B.C.) That Pliny the Elder (first century A.D.) or Aelianus (II / III sec. A.D.); was probably involved in alectryomancy, observation for divination of the way in which it fed. This species was also frequently represented in low reliefs, frescos, mosaics, etc., as illustrated by the iconography of the Roman period, representing Purple Gallinule, found in the whole Mediterranean area, among them, the mosaic of the antechamber of the room mansion south apse of the apartment (44) of the Villa Romana del Casale in Piazza Armerina (EN) of III - IV century. A.D., depicting a chariot race pulled by pairs of birds, a mosaic of the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna in the sixth century. A.D. or a mosaic of Tabarka (Tunisia) of the fourth-fifth century A.D., preserved in the Louvre in Paris (M. Andreoni, A. Andreotti, 2010).



The Lake as a hunting reserve of the Emperor.

During the medieval period, the area of Pergusa, with its rich game, became hunting reserve for the Emperor Frederick II of Swabia, who practiced fishing and hunting of birds, carried out with the art of falconry, of which was very experienced.





There, where the seasons were born: the myth of the kidnapping of Kore.

The prior event.

According to ancient mythology, Hades (or Pluto), god of the underworld, fell in love with the young and Kore, he went to Zeus, and asked the permission to marry her. The father of the gods feared to offend the older brother with a refusal, but he also knew that Demeter would never have forgiven her daughter had been confined in Tartarus. Zeus said that they cannot refuse, either grant his consent. Ade felt then be entitled to kidnap Kore, just as this, along with some nymphs, she was gathering flowers in the meadows around Pergusa Lake.

Careful Kore!

Emerging from a cave with a chariot drawn by horses, the god of the underworld reached the young girl and took her underground, its telled, at Syracuse, where the chasm created the source Cyane.

The pain of a mother.

Since that time, Demeter, unable to find the daughter, tried for nine days and nine nights, in prayer invokeing continually her name. On the tenth day the goddess met a shepherd named Triptolemus, son of Celeus, who told her that he saw the land torn apart from the emergence of a wagon. The faces of those who drove the chariot were invisible, but the boy noticed a girl crying, held firmly by the mysterious charioteer. Upon hearing this news with joy, Demeter went to Elio, driver of the chariot of the sun, who sees everything, forcing

him to admit that he was guilty of Hades ignoble kidnapping.

The rage of a goddess.

Demeter did not go to rail against Zeus at the Olympus, but wandered on earth furious, requiring the trees and the land does not produce no fruit or made. In doing so, he began to threaten the survival of mankind. Not earned the prayers and gifts of Zeus to convince Demeter, which threatened the total famine on earth Kore if it had not been returned. To avoid the infortunate event, Zeus asked Hades to return the girl and, at the same time, sent a message to Demeter, declaring that she could get her daughter back, if only this had not eaten the food of the dead.

In addition deception, mockery.

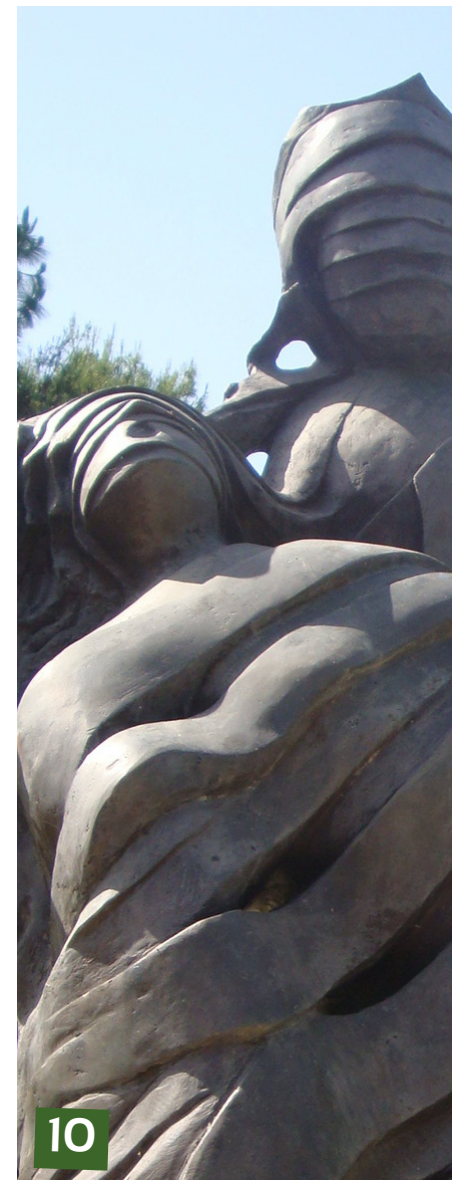
No news would have stopped her coming back until, one of the gardeners of Hades, that revealed to his master that he saw the girl eating seven pomegranate seeds of the Underworld. Learned this, Demeter, glad to embrace his young daughter, he fell into despair.

All is well, that ends well.

Zeus, thanks to the intervention of Rhea, his mother, Hades and Demeter herself, succeeded in pacifying the situation with a compromise: Kore would spend a few months in the company of Hades, as queen of Tartarus, and others in the company of Demeter.

Thus were born the seasons ...

Thanks to this myth, the ancients explained the origin of the alternation of the seasons: the cold months, autumn and winter, when Kore is in the Underworld; spring and summer when it is close to her beloved mother.



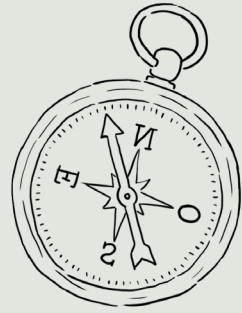
MONS AEREUS,
THE TOP OF EREI
The Natural Reserve
"Mount Altesina"

4

Formerly known as *Mons Aereus*, Mount Altesina is, with its two peaks reaching 1192 m and 1180 m altitude, the highest point of Erei. From its top, the Saracens divided into three valleys Sicily! Characterized by beautiful nature and fascinating historical roots, it is, as always, one of the most popular destinations of travelers. The Natural Reserve "Mount Altesina" offers striking views in the silence stretches of the Sicilian hinterland.

The Natural Reserve "Mount Altesina"

MONS AEREUS, THE TOP OF EREI



Distance in kilometers from
Piazza Armerina:
about 48 Km

From Piazza Armerina.

Leaving Viale Gaeta in Piazza Armerina north, take the exit for SS117bis. Then, take the SS117bis for 8.3 km and then turn right again towards the Sp4. Continue along the Sp4 and turn left and continue on towards Floristella Viadotto Ramata Secondo. Take the SS561 and cross the first roundabout. At about 9 km, turn right and take the SS117 bis. Turn left after about 3.5 km away and intruding on SS121. Go ahead and take the first right onto SS290. After traveling 3.5 km, turn right again, continuing on the SP63, and after 600 m turn left onto the SP80. After 8.5 km, turn right.

Car and motorcycle. Yes.

Public transport. No.

Mountain bike or racing bike. Yes, equipping the vehicle with warning lights and only for experts.

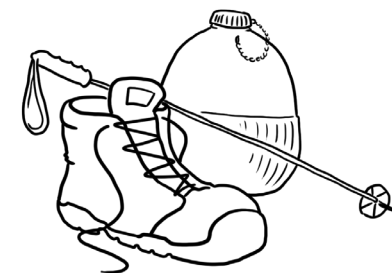


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For information on the Reserve:

Office of the Provincial Forestry Authority of Enna
Via Piazza Armerina 25 - Enna
Tel 0935 565401 (switchboard) - 0935 565 422 (URP) - 0935 565 418 (Dr. Morgano)
Fax 0935 565 421 - 0935 565 413
Toll free # 840 700 839



It is advisable to be equipped with:

- Hiking boots.
- Windbreaker.
- Hat.
- Sack lunch and plenty of water (especially in summer).
- Camera,

SENTIERO SITO
ARCHEOLOGICO

SENTIERI
"MONTE ALTESINA"
"MONTE DELLA CAMPANA"

BIRD
WATCHING



A peak, various “faces”.

If, on the inside, the Natural Reserve “Mount Altesina” is characterized by several peaks, such as the Altesinella (1043 m above sea level) and Campana (1007 above sea level), it is definitely the relief from which it takes its name owes its fame among hikers. Formed in the Miocene period, Mount Altesina, offers a varied and diversified in its morphological characteristics, sometimes full of rocks devoid of vegetation, others, soft in its undulating slopes, covered by dense forest, up to the pastures on the slopes of the mountain. Rich of Water, the territory dell’Altesina presents a hydrographic network that acts as a tributary to the rivers as south Imera and Simeto.

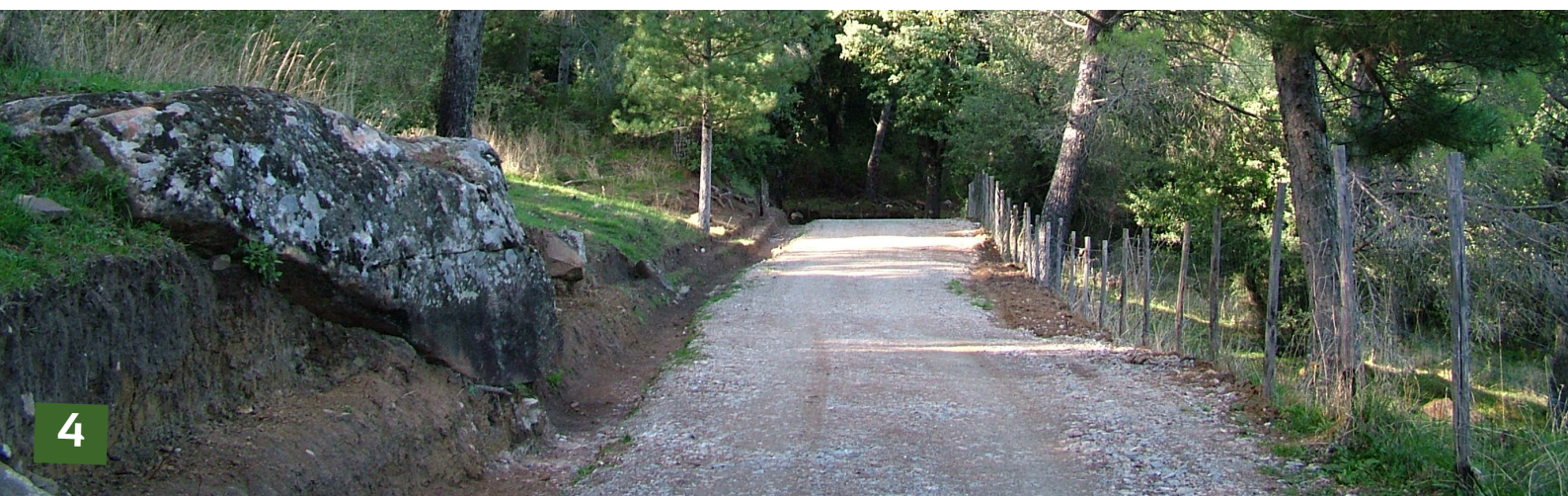
A remarkable biodiversity

Due to its morphological variety, Mount Altesina is an innate cradle of biodiversity, consisting of different species of trees and flowers. If you can meet in the slopes of the endemic *Nebrodis Ginestra* or *Red Ginestra*, going up the trails, the landscape, depending on the period, is colored white flowers of wild pear or *Blackthorn*. At higher altitudes, extending woodlands, consisting for the most part and progressively, by oak, holm oak and

evergreen, detectable even at over 1100 meters above sea level compared to the usual presence at medium altitudes (500 m). Also belong to the flora Altesina different species of flowers, such as iris of Sicily, the *Anemone star flower*, the *Cyclamen spring*, the *Yellow Asphodel*, *Orchids*, etc.

Some diversity is also seen in the fauna of the reserve of “Mount Altesina.” Among the mammals there are examples such as the hare, porcupine, hedgehog, small mice and wary wildcat. Many are the creatures that live in the protected area as the western green lizard, the gecko, the *Ocellated Gongilo*, the common grass snake, the sand lizard, a snake from the black mantle. Are part of the amphibians, however, the Frog and several species of toad.

For bird watchers, the Reserve offers the possibility to identify different species of birds, such as the *Great Spotted Woodpecker*, the *Hoopoe*, *Great Tit*, the *Greenfinch*, *Goldfinch* and the many others. The hills and cliffs dell’Altesina are then inhabited by birds of prey, including *Bonelli’s eagle*, the *peregrine falcon*, the *buzzard*, the *kestrel*, the *buzzard*, the *Black Kite*, and night, for example, the ‘*scoops owl*, the *tawny owl*, the *barn owl*, the *owl* and the *little owl*.







Altesina in the changing events of the Heart of Sicily.



At the time of the natives.

The civilization of Altesina finds its beginnings in the Bronze Age, belong to the period some burial caves and oven. Subsequently, the highest peak of Erei was involved in the confrontation between the local natives, the Greeks and Punic peoples. At this time, a settlement was located on the top of the mountain, consists of a quadrangular environments, consisting of mixed stone and carved directly into the rock feature, the setting, due at the time primeval history. According to studies, the village was abandoned, until it disappears, probably, after the Punic Wars or servile.



Val di Noto. In the long run of the Muslim conquest, the area around all'Altesina began to be populated by "hamlets", which, over time, grew larger villages and then becoming the first true city.

"Altesina" in the Normans cards. Following the Norman conquest of Sicily, the ancient name of *Mons Aereus* lost track and the highest point of Erei was given by the nations occitan and provencal in the wake of the Normans, the name "Altesina". The mountain was equipped with fortifications and was built on the slopes to the east of the relief, a convent of monks, hermits dedicated to Santa Maria di Lartisina.

Refuge of flock and convicts.

In Roman times, the Altesina became a prominent isolated and dangerous. While it is likely that the Romans were using the large landowners relief for the flocks of their property, on the other hand it is possible that in its most secret paths took refuge criminals or outcasts.

So the Arabs divided Sicily in Valli.

After centuries of antiquity, the area around all'Altesina followed one another before the Byzantines and then the Arabs. According to historical sources, it was from the top of Mount Altesina that the Saracens of Sicily geographically divided into three valleys, which the Normans later gave the names of Val Demone, Val di Mazara





8a

A patchwork of fiefdoms.

In the following centuries, the Altesina and its territory were enfeoffed of *Universitas* state town of Nicosia, while at the feet of the mountain were placed several fiefs belonging to the nicosiane noble families of the city or Calascibetta.

From 1812 to 1926.

Coming up the abolition of feudal rights in 1812, the Altesina became part of the territory of the Province of Catania, until 1926, when the territorial area was incorporated into the new province of Enna.



8b



In the shadow of the Brancifortes: from the land of Tavi to the town of Enna

One of feuds that they divided at the foot area of Altesina was the land of Tavi, south-east of the highest mountain in the center of Sicily. The property, belonging to the powerful and illustrious family of the Branciforte, was renowned as a place full of water, so as to allow the construction of mills, from which the noble landowners obtained a great income. According to historical records, a member of the family of the Branciforte, Nicolò Placido, received August 26, 1610 *licentia populandi* that gave the authorization to found a village of the territory of Tavi, in whose area stood already some small dwelling. In 1613, Tavi became the town of Enna, which in 1622 was elevated to the rank of principality. The Branciforte family greatly influenced the structure of the town, whose urban orientation developed an orthogonal layout. It aimed to reconciling a linear distribution of the spaces with the construction of monumental architecture, gave rise to the majestic Palazzo Branciforte, symbol of the power of the noble house. The four floors building, has a massive square structure, lightened by elegant balconies supported by brackets. If, at the bottom, the front is characterized by a doorway decorated with plumes and a Mannerist rustication, at the top, the roof is decorated with a perfect battlements.

At the behest of the Branciforte, in 1611, the mother church was founded dedicated to St. John the Baptist, opened later in '700. Interesting and of great splendor had to be the complex of fountains and garden in the south

west of the city, built around 1651. To represent the magnificence of this plumbing remains today the "Great Source" in Baroque style, in the lower part of which is available twenty-four spouts of water.



9



10



TWO STEPS FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN

The Reserve of Biviere Lake of Gela

5

Mentioned by the ancient Latin authors for healing springs, the Biviere Gela was, along the course of its history, one of the most famous salt mines of southern Sicily. Designated, as following, the area of fishing and hunting, was attended by big names of the past, among them stands Camillo Benso Conte di Cavour. Today, it is one of the most important reserves for biodiversity that characterizes its natural environment.

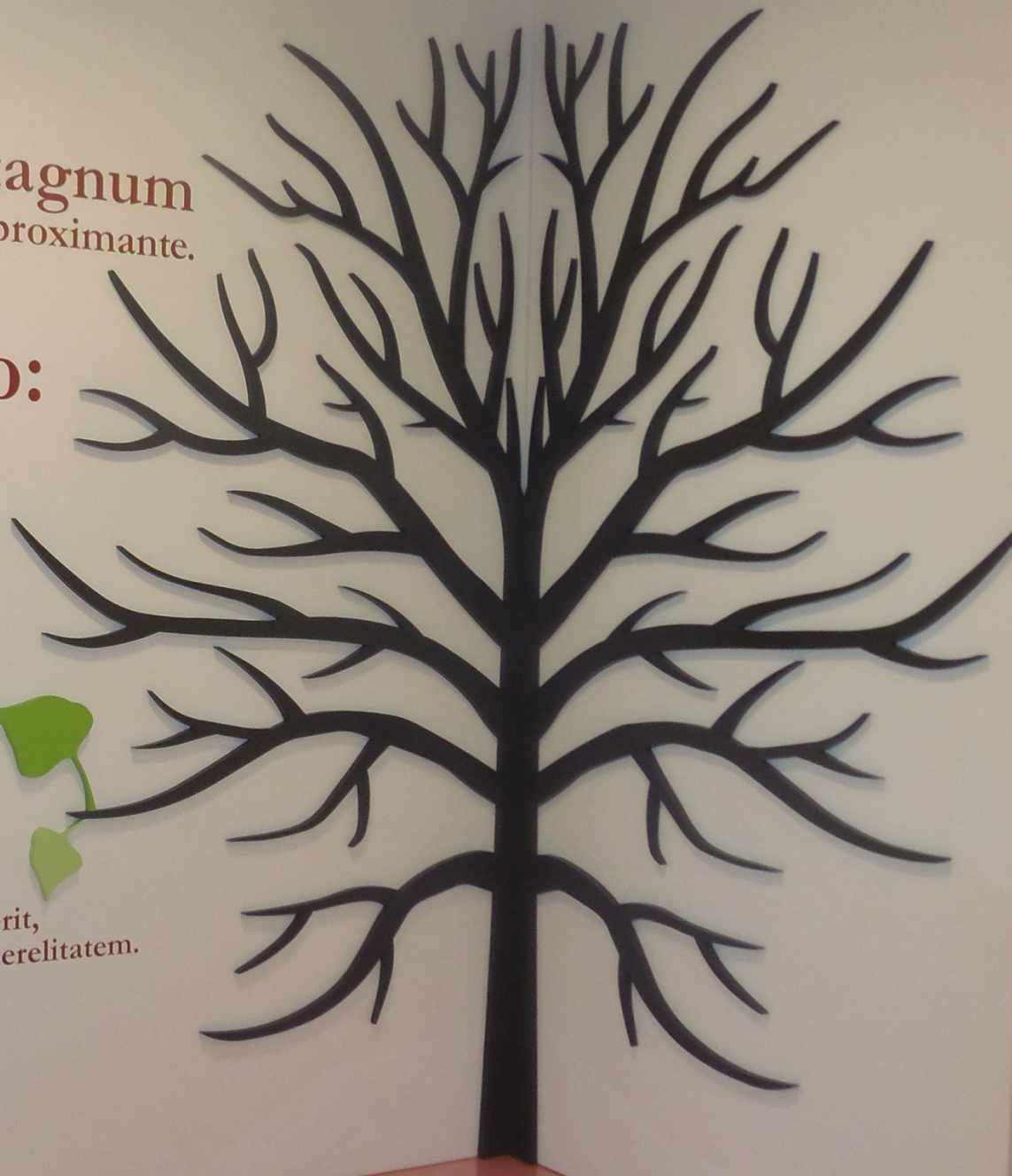
Gelonium stagnum
tetro odore abigit proximante.

Ibi et
fontes duo:

alter, de quo
si sterilis sumpserit,
fecunda fiet,

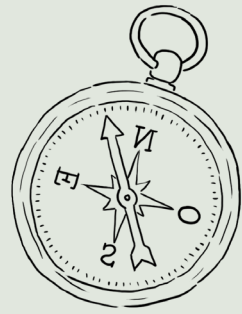


alter, quem si
fecunda hauserit,
vertitur in sterelitatem.



The Reserve of Biviere Lake of Gela

TWO STEPS FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN

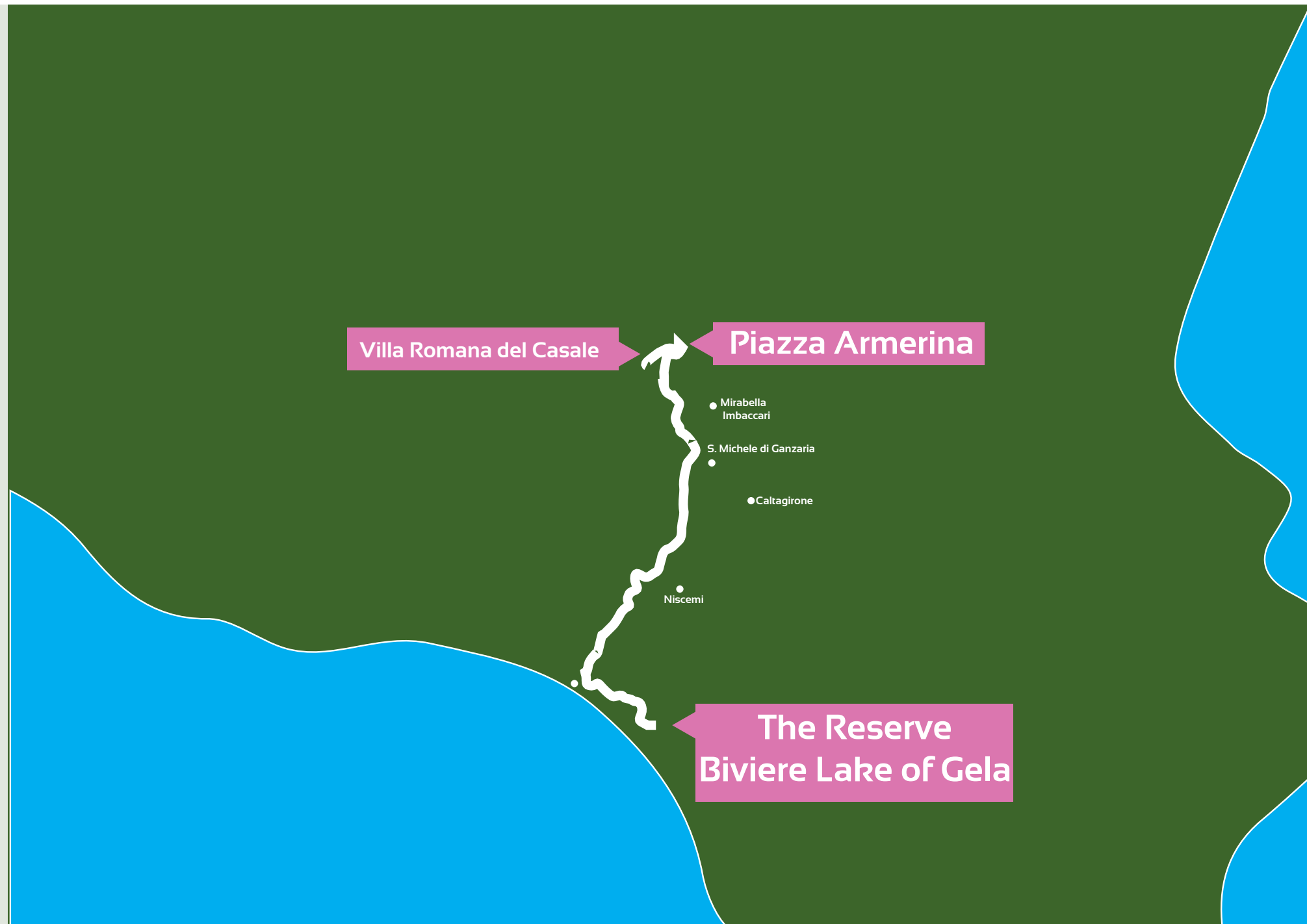


Distance in kilometers from Piazza Armerina:
about 53 Km

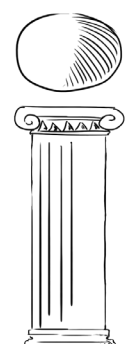
From Piazza Armerina. Leaving Via Libertà in Piazza Armerina south, take the SS117bis, and approximately 21 kilometers, take junction Agrigento / Gela. Getting in SS417 and proceed on SS117bis. After reaching the city of Gela, at the roundabout, take the third exit and take the SS115. Continue for about 5 km, turn right to take the SP51. At about 5 miles turn right signposted for Biviere Lake.

Car and motorcycle. Yes.
Public transport. No.
Mountain bike or racing bike.

Yes, equipping the vehicle with warning lights and only for experts.



Mentioned by the ancient Latin authors for healing springs, the Biviere Gela was, along the course of its history, one of the most famous salt mines of southern Sicily. Designated, as following, the area of fishing and hunting, was attended by big names of the past, among them stands Camillo Benso Conte di Cavour. Today, it is one of the most important reserves for biodiversity that characterizes its natural environment.



For information on the Reserve

LIPU RNO "Biviere di Gela"

PO Box 150 Gela / Center
Zip code 93012 Gela (CL)
Phone: 345 661 2743
Mobile: 345 575 5044

e-mail: direttore@riservabiviere.it
website: riservabiviere.it



At the end of the chapter on the reserve, there is an alternative route to reach Biviere Lake of Gela through historical and archaeological in-depth analysis "Lords and castles on the way to Gela: a journey through Mazzarino, Riesi and Butera."



The Biviere biodiversity

Only 1,3 Km away from the sea and separated from it by a system of dunes, called "macconi", the Biviere Lake of Gela dates back to the Pleistocene. The lakeside landscape is rich in vegetation, such as thick reeds which alternates with rushes, meadows and groves of tamarisk.

Many species of plants, submerged, enrich the shallows of the lake, while others grow in areas that tend to dry up in summer. Signaled the birth, as well as Thyme and Wild Rosemary, wild orchids as well as the endemic *Ophrys oxyrhynchos*. Among the species typical Sicilian, include, especially in dunes areas, the White Broom, Cornflower beaches and the rare *Leopoldia gussonei*.



The biodiversity of Biviere is also represented by the animal species that inhabit the area. Among the mammals are common the Fox, Weasel, Rabbit Selvatico, hedgehogs and porcupines, while among the reptiles are listed snakes, such as the rare snake *Colubro Leopardi*, and lizards, it belongs to the colorful lizard Ramarro and more bashful Gongolo. Amphibians are extremely well represented by the rare and little frog called Discoglossa

"African" insects.



The Biviere Gela hosts to a multitude of insects, but two of them seem to intrigue fans of entomology. The first species is the *Brachythemis leucosticta*, a dragonfly typical of North Africa, present in the lake between June and October. Finally, there is the African Monarch, a beautiful orange butterfly with black and white spots.







Birds, the treasure of Biviere

The birding is very frequent in the Biviere Lake of Gela, which each year welcomes many species of birds, including migratory ones, that find the lake an ideal place for feeding and nesting. Among the species can be observed:

Ducks.

- The Wigeon.
- The Pintail.
- The Shoveler.
- The Pochard.
- The Garganey.
- The Ferruginous Duck.

Waders (birds whose food is represented by insects, larvae, mollusks).

- The Knight of Italy.
- The Black-tailed Godwit.
- The Curlew.
- The Little Ringed Plover.

Hérons (usually on the banks of the lake and in the reeds).

- The Grey Heron.
- The Purple Heron.
- The Great Egret.

- The Egret.
- The squacco.
- The Bittern.
- The Night Heron.

Glossy Ibises and Spoonbills.

- The Glossy Ibis.
- The spatula.

Raptors.

- The Marsh Harrier.
- The Kestrel.
- The Buzzard.
- The Osprey.
- The lesser spotted eagle.

Passerines.

- The Pendolino (normally in the forests of tamarisk).
- The Bee-eaters.
- Kingfishers.
- The Hoopoe.





In studies of Latin authors.

The lake Biviere Gela has been known since ancient times, enough to be mentioned by Pliny the Elder to the luster of the rooms which were composed of its waters, which, accumulating on the banks, reflected images. Similarly, around the middle of the third century A.D., Caius Iulius Solino described, in his lyrics, the presence of two sources located at the lake area, both with different properties between their conflicting one, had the negative reputation of making infertile women, while the second ensured the fertility.

The lake, from saline to biviere.

Since the Middle Ages, listed in the "Segrezie of Sicily", the lake was used as saline Biviere, before being transformed, in Modern Age, around 1582, in biviere.

Belonged to the noble Newfoundland Giovanni di Guccio, who sold it later, around 1598, to the Duke Don Giovanni, took him into his warehouse area with a few houses, to which were added a house to shelter fishermen and a chapel to celebrate the mass.

Illustrious Men' of '800 to the shores of Biviere.

Its well known that, for several centuries, the Biviere of Gela was the destination of many fans of hunting and fishing among which includes, Don Alessandro Mallia Paternò, marquis of Torreforte, considered a distinguished physician and botanist '800. It was the setting to engage in their hunting activities at Lake of Gela, Camillo Benso Count of Cavour.

The Cork forest of Niscemi



Along the way between Piazza Armerina and Gela, you can expect, on their own schedule, a stop at the Natural Reserve Sughereta (cork forest) of Niscemi, located at north-east, in the same area range, compared to Biviere Lake. The sense of the protected area is contained within the following sentence, taken from the decree of establishment of the reserve: "the woods of Niscemi represent the most important relic of cork mixed with ilex existing in Central Sicily." In fact, the forested area takes its name from the presence of cork, an evergreen oak, which can reach a height of between 5 and 15 meters. The Sughereta Niscemi welcomes you in its natural heritage with majestic oaks with a trunk diameter of about five meters. Niscemi, a town founded in the early XVIIth century, was able to take advantage of this unique green area, thanks to the production of cork, made from the bark of the thick and wrinkled trees, which became a primary economic resource.

At one time the Sughereta (cork forest) Niscemi was a part, together with Bosco of San Pietro of Caltagirone, a vast "green lung" reduced, over the centuries, from the intrusive presence of man. In particular, the dense forest and flourishing of the territory of Niscemi was exposed to intense deforestation during the 1600s, when the noble family of the Branciforte, to which we owe the foundation of Niscemi, got to populate the feud. On that occasion, the agricultural crops were replaced at the expense of the forest, which lost much of the original extension. In 1800, decommissioned the large land system, the natural heritage of Niscemi suffered further damage as a result of arson caused by the discontent of some peasants, who were deprived of the opportunity to obtain plots of land.

With incisive protection operations, the institutions were able to preserve what remained of the ancient forest until 2007, when it was inaugurated the Reserve.

Useful contacts

Regional Department of Forestry Authority,

Provincial Office of Caltanissetta

Via Gibil Gabib, n. 69 - 93100 Caltanissetta (CL)

Tel: 0934 532 911 - Fax: 0934 532 935

E-mail: upacl.aziendaforeste@regione.sicilia.it

Website: www.boschidisicilia.it

Environmental Education Center o.n.l.u.s. Niscemi

Didactic Museum of Natural History

Via Angelo Marsiano, sn, 93015 Niscemi (CL)

Tel: 334 860 5684 - Fax: 0933 958 405

Website: www.ceaniscemi.it E-mail: ceaniscemi@tiscali.it



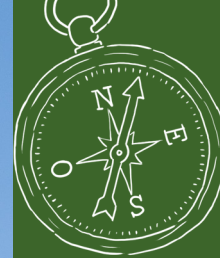
Lords and castles on the way to Gela: a journey through Mazzarino, Riesi and Butera.



To reach Gela and then the Natural Reserve of Biviere Lake, you can proceed to an alternate route about 75 km long, from the hinterland of Sicily, leading to the maritime coast of the island. The itinerary, articulated and charming, involving the cities of Mazarin, Riesi and Butera to the discovery of places related to the history of important noble families and the presence of massive fortresses. An adventurous journey to reach the city of Gela, rich in archeology, art and historical events that have left a mark, through the centuries, in the heart of Sicily.



13



From the Villa Romana del Casale (Piazza Armerina) to Mazzarino.

From the street of the Villa Romana del Casale, proceed on SP15, turn left and after about 5 km on the SP169 via Mazzarino. And continue on the SP26, 5 km, continue straight on the SP23. A 240 m, turn right to continue along the SP23 and follow the signs towards the center of the town of Mazzarino.



Noble Mazzarino.

From the top of the mountain peak on which it stands, Mazzarino dominates the upper valley of the river Gela, maintaining, for many centuries, a solemn and austere appearance. Its Norman origins accounted by age, are related to the family of Aleramici that, since 1143, became masters of the city. In 1288, the fief of Mazzarino was subtracted from Giovanni Mazzarino, the son of Manfredi, lord of Mongialino, and delivered to the noble Vitale of Villanova. Between the XIIIth and XIVth century, the estate became the property of the powerful family Branciforte, who ruled the population by the majestic medieval castle, now in ruins, called "u Cannuni" for the cylindrical turret and the only survivor. The fortress and the village below are, even today, tangible evidence of the

development of the typical medieval city.

Only in 1676 following a decision by Carlo Maria Carafa, grandson of Giuseppe Branciforte, that in that year he was awarded the title of Prince of Mazzarino, the family residence was transferred from the castle to the prestigious building within the center of city. According to historical chronicles and detections, *«the palace, adorned with splendid halls, gardens on the ground floor and wall units, vast courtyards with capable tanks, still visible immense warehouse, warehouses, dozens and dozens of rooms for servants and vassals, barracks and courtyards for the company feudal juror classroom for the civic magistrate [...] and another for the final and public stores, a chapel of the palace, underground prisons of the rooms in the back and a fort adjacent to form the current prisons, an elegant theater [...]»* (A. Li Gotti, 1982).

Under the rule of Branciforte-Carafa family, Mazzarino was embellished with many civic and religious monuments such as the Cathedral Church of

Santa Maria della Neve, unfortunately incompleated on the front, but majestic in its structure. According to scholars, the architect Angelo Italia, who died during the work of his creation, was inspired, in his project, the Roman classical vision.

Of importance are also the baroque Church of Carmelo and the Capuchin Monastery (Convento dei Cappuccini), in which is preserved a wooden tabernacle inlaid with ivory, ebony, mother of pearl and coral, artistic work of Brother Angelo Gagliano of Mazzarino. Important, finally, to the devotion of Mazzarinesi, the Church of Santa Maria del Mazzaro, 1782, originally dedicated to Santa Maria delle Grazie. According to historical sources, the current religious building was built on the previous three other factories dating from the twelfth century. The third, in particular, was destroyed by the earthquake of 1693. The church holds two important artifacts of the twelfth century: a painted panel depicting Saint Maria Delle Grazie and a wooden crucifix.



Riesi, an ancient feud.

Archaeological data have revealed an attendance of the territory of Riesi since the IIIrd or IInd millennium B.C. The more remote epoch of the *extra moenia* (area outside the city walls of the town) is attested by the discovery of a multitude of ancient artifacts, many of which are identified in the necropolis located in front of Mount Veronica and the so-called "Piano of Margio". The oven tombs, exceeding fifty, have the same characteristics of the most famous tombs of Castelluccio and Pantalica. In the same cemetery, archaeologists have identified objects dating from the VIIIth century B.C., during which they have appeared the first Greek colonists. Remains of the Hellenic civilization were discovered in some districts of Riesi, like the traces

of a farm dating from the Vth and IVth century B.C. near Giarratana Mountain. In Roman times, the territory of Riesi was populated by small farms linked to the large Sicilian estates of the centre of Sicily. After a long period of neglect, in the norman age, the area became a fief under the dominion of the most important noble families of the time. In particular, the territory of Riesi was owned by the dynasty of Ventimiglia, who lost it in 1393 and then re-appropriate in 1453, to give, finally, between the XVth and the XVIth century, to the De Castellar family. After many years, during the first two decades of the XVIIth century, were awarded the barony of Riesi the Urries, mentioned in the historical chronicles for donating to the territory of some mills, a church, a warehouse and stores. But only later, in the second half of the XVIIth century, it is possible to place the foundation of Riesi work for the Prosecutor Don Cristoforo Benenati, whose intervention allowed the construction and start building of the first houses, around 1629, the first factory the Mother Church, is currently

visible in the area of the "Drain".



From Mazzarino to Riesi.

From Viale della Resistenza in Mazzarino proceed straight on to SS191 for about 1 and a half km, then turn right onto the SP27. Continue for 8 km, turn on the right onto the SS190 in the direction of Riesi, only 5 km away.



Butera between towers and castles.

The fertility of the soil and strategic location between the coast of the Sicilian hinterland have fostered the birth of civilization in the buterese territory. Since the II millennium B.C., the area was dotted with small hut villages, whose livelihood was based on farming and agriculture. One of the most relevant sites from the archaeological point of view is Mount Muculufa, 400 m high above sea level and not far from the left bank of the Salso river. The human settlement, at the rock crest, dating back to 2000 B.C. and includes a small village, a sanctuary and a cemetery with burial caves, carved into the rock. After the prehistoric period, Mount Muculufa was probably busy, between the VIIth and IVth centuries B.C., a group of farmers, as evidenced by the discovery of a house of the IVth century. Remains of subsequent frequent visits, according to the results of stratigraphic excavations, can be traced back to a period between the IXth and XIIIth century. In particular, in addition to several findings

in glazed pottery, medieval age, showed the presence of a structure, which, according to some theories, it would be identified with the ancient Saracen fortress of *Moclofa* or the fortress of *Mocluse*, mentioned in the chronicles of the Norman period. However, for the modest remains found on the site, scholars tend to identify, on the summit of Mount Muculufa, a lookout tower rather than a real castle. Within the town of Butera, the city center, was founded in the Arab era, probably around the present castle, which, according to historical sources, was of Byzantine origin. The fortress was conquered by the Normans in 1089 during the campaign for the conquest of Sicily against the Saracens. Under the rule of the Altavilla, Butera underwent an attack by King Guglielmo I, known as Malo, which caused considerable damage to the system of fortifications of the city. Only later, thanks to the intervention of the monarch Guglielmo II, the castle was strengthened and restored up to welcome

in 1233 Federico II of Swabia, which, at that time, extended its domination on the island with the construction of Heraclea-Terranova. During 1392, together with the county of Butera, the castle was granted by King Martino I the noble Ugone Santapau while, centuries later, in 1540, his property passed to the noble family of the Branciforte. Vito Amico, historian and scholar of the XVIIIth century, described the castle as «a fortress manufactured in a hill in the southern part of the country, with a door facing north [...]; they are very strong and solid stone walls of the square of 18 palms wide, and arise to such a height that support five orders of vaults, and also on the sides with square stones. There is a courtyard and a very wide space, preserved barley and wheat, weapons, stables for horses, it was deep and spacious. A cistern distinguished above all others, countenance unveiled a few years ago, surpasses all expectation [...]. The outer edges of the fortress are inaccessible on all sides, and the angles

only presentansi to besiege, and joined» (Vito Amico, *Topographical Dictionary of Sicily*). To the south, including in areas within the municipality of Butera, stands the Castle of Falconara, an important fortress that overlooks the sea, which in historical times was the role of lookout for the defense of the southern coast of Sicily. According to historical records, in spite of its complex structure, the nucleus of the castle was a tower, built during the early years of the XVth century and strongly supported by King Martino I. Over the centuries, the owners of the castle were the lords of Butera, Santapau first and then the Branciforte. In the XIXth century, the fortress was brought as a dowry from her aristocrat husband Branciforte, Count Wilding, a German officer, who in 1848 sold the castle in Falconara to Antonio Chiaramonte Bordonaro.



From Riesi to Butera.

Exit from the town of Riesi, proceeding along Viale Luigi Einaudi, taking a left, once outside the town, the SS190. At 4 km, turn slightly to the right to get on the SS626. Approximately 6 km, take the exit for Butera, then turn left onto the SP49. Follow the road signs towards Butera.

From Butera to Gela (The Naturalistic Reserve of the Lake Biviere).

The distance between the town of Butera and Gela is only about 17 km, proceeding along the provincial road 8 in the south-east. If you wish to visit the Castle of Falconara, on the southern coast, it is necessary to proceed from Butera north towards the SP8, then onto the SP49. Continue for about 3 km, turn left to enter the SS626 towards Gela. At about 13 km, at the fork, keep right on SS15, Licata / Agrigento, following the signs for the Castle of Falconara. From the fortress to the city of Gela, proceed on the SS15 toward north-east.

ALONG THE IMERA BANKS

The Natural Reserve of Mount Capodarso and the southern Imera Valley

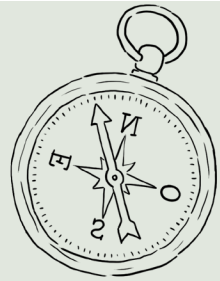
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Enclosed by the Province of Enna and Caltanissetta, the Reserve covers a large part of the valley with the Salty river, which branches in the heights of Mount Sabucina, Mount Capodarso and the bridge of the Besaro. Since remote centuries, the area has been the subject of human settlements from the Bronze Age to the fourth century B.C., and among them includes the ancient city of Sabucina. In addition, a great contribution to the birth of civilization in the center of Sicily is to be assigned to the river Himera that the Greeks were able to penetrate from the coast to the heart of the island, merging with local cultures. The stream is also the central border, first between the territories of indigenous peoples, the Sicani and the Sicilians, then among the great powers represented by the Greeks and Romans. In the modern era, due to its geological chalky-sulphurous, this area, now protected, was used as a quarry of sulfur, suffering gravosamente the impact of mines, such as those of Trabonella and Giumentaro. Because of these, the nature of the area was subject to deep damage. In 1999 the Natural Reserve was established, «based on a management that welcomes, accompanies those traditional activities that, over time, have been the engine of the local economy» (L.A. Janni, 2002).

The Natural Reserve of Mount Capodarso and the southern Imera Valley

ALONG THE IMERA BANKS



Distance in kilometers from Piazza Armerina: 53 Km

From Piazza Armerina.

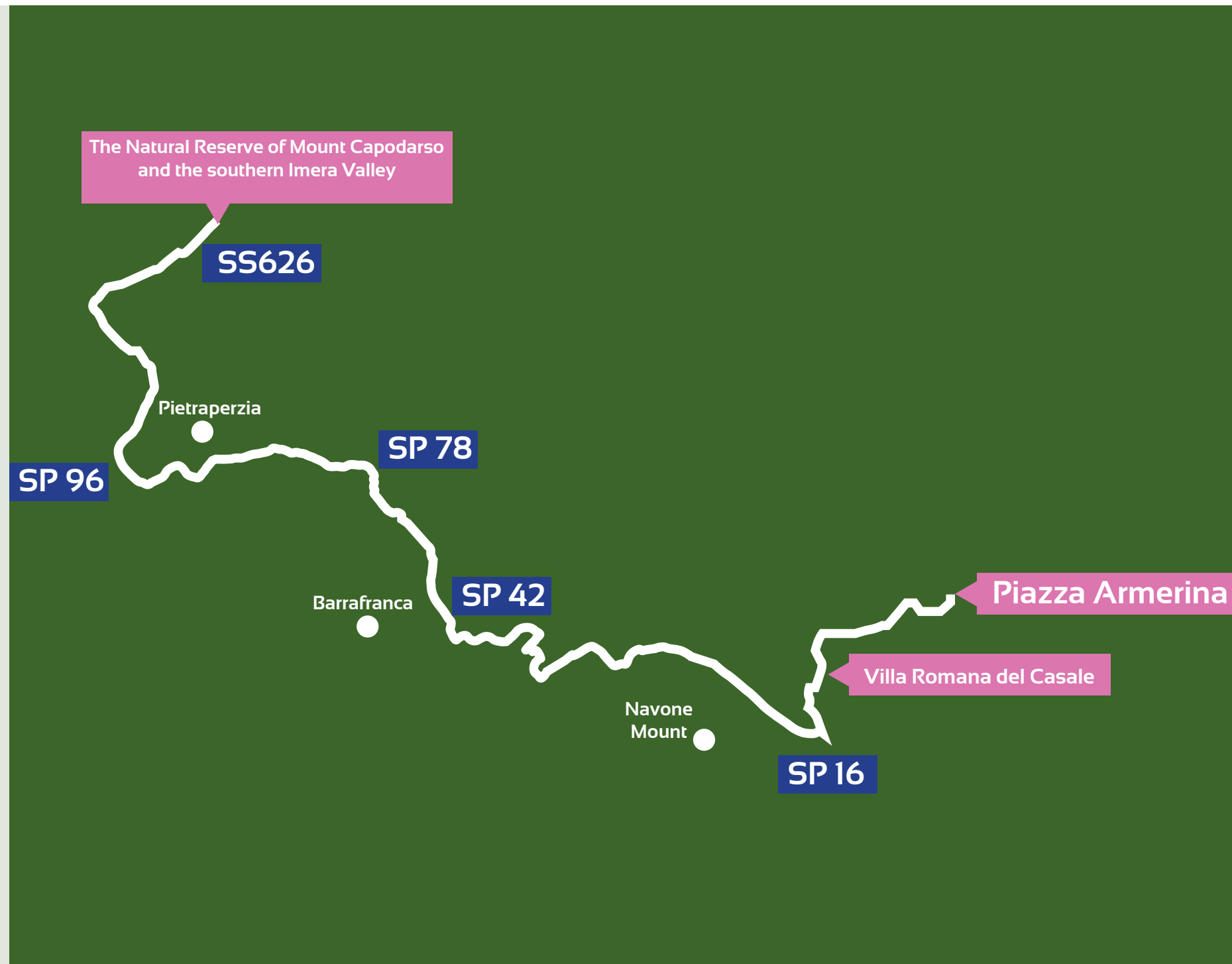
Exit Piazza Armerina and take the SP15 towards Villa Romana del Casale. Continue along the SP15 for about 17 km towards Barrafranca. Turn left and take the SP12 in the direction of Barrafranca for about 2 km later, turn slightly to the right and head towards the SS191 in the direction of Pietraperzia. After about 10 km you will reach the town of Pietraperzia. After having crossed (Viale Guglielmo Marconi – Viale della Pace), turn right, towards the E931. Go ahead and take junction Palermo / Catania, proceeding on the SS626. Continue on SS626 and turn right towards Nature Reserve of the Mount Capodarso and Imera Valley. Turn slightly left at the stop sign and take the SS122 in the direction of Caltanissetta.

Car and motorcycle. Yes.

Public transport. Yes.

Mountain bike or racing bike.

Yes, equipping the vehicle with warning lights. It is advisable to reach by bike to the archaeological site of Sabucina only to experts.

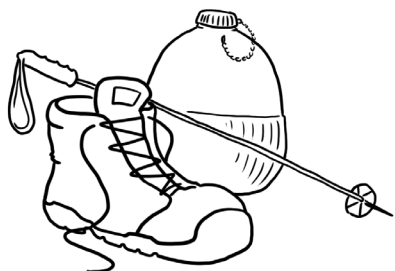


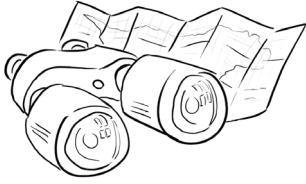
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Suggestions for equipment:

Hiking boots.
Windbreaker.
Hat.
Sack lunch and plenty of water (especially in Summer and for longer distances).
Camera.





REGIONE SICILIANA
Assessorato Territorio e Ambiente
Riserva Naturale Orientata
MONTE CAPODARSO E VALLE DELL'IMERA
MERIDIONALE



Italia
Nostra ente gestore

The Capodarso Reserve and the Southern Imera Valley lends itself easily to trekking and excursions, in a typically Sicilian unique natural environment. Below it shows the routes (from the shortest to the longest) proposed by the Management Authority of the Reserve, Italia Nostra Onlus, suitable for younger and less experienced. The trails are sign posted, rest areas, areas of pedestrian traffic in the most difficult sections and panels, so keep up to date the hiker. For the disabled have platforms been prepared for wheelchairs and Braille panels in for the blind.

For more information on the activities of the Reserve, please contact:

Italia Nostra

Management Authority of the Capodarso reserve and the southern Imera Valley.

Office of the Reserve -

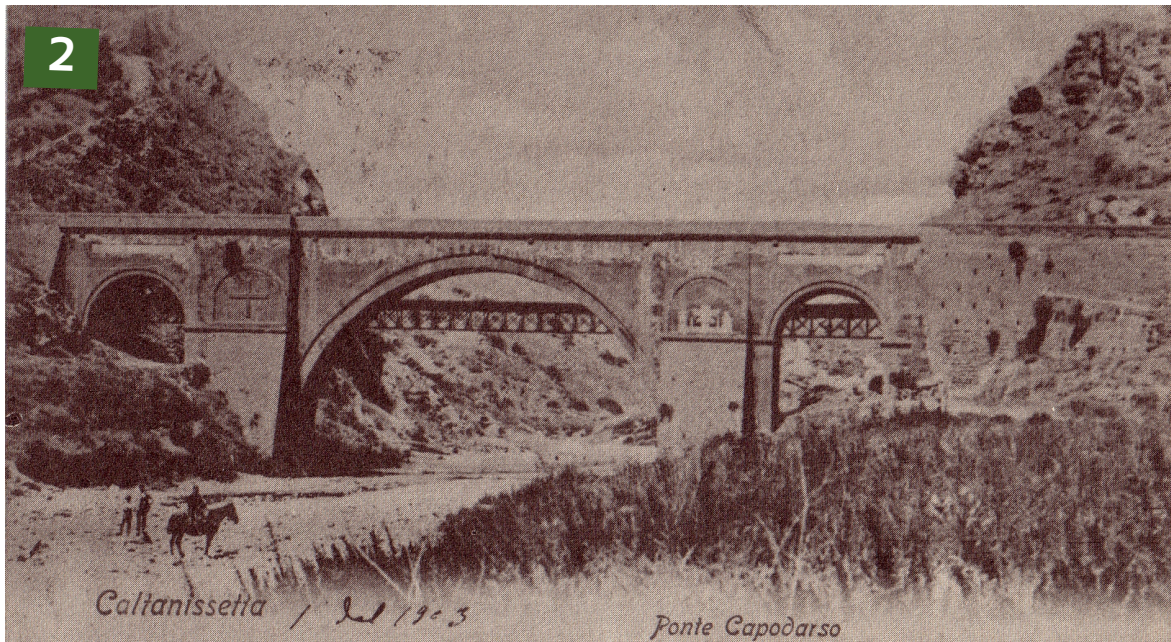
Viale Conte Testasecca, 44

93100 Caltanissetta

E-mail - riservaimera@italianostra.org

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www.riservaimera.it



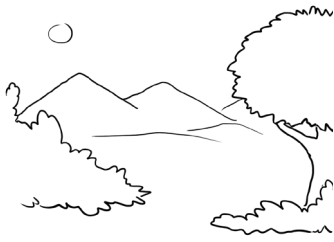
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The Bridge of Capodarso.

Right between Mount Capodarso and Mount Sabbucina, the river Imera creates a very narrow gorge. In 1553, during the monarchy of Carlo V, they built a three-arched bridge that connected the two sides.





Pietraperzia, the town on the rock.

Along the road that leads to Sabucina, you encounter some countries, such as Barrafranca and Pietraperzia. The second one, in particular, becomes a must to achieve Sabucina because, through his inner paths, offers a wide range of cultural and natural. The story begins Pietraperzia since prehistoric times and are about 50 archaeological sites identified in its territory. Originally frequented by the Sicani, then by the Sicilians, and ultimately from the Greeks, the landscapes that surround the town of Pietraperzia live in an ancestral and original charm, full of spurs and rocky plateaus, shelter for thousands of years of human destination for civilization and, today, hikers and lovers of exploration. Inside, Pietraperzia offers the warmth of a serene and peaceful small town, valuable for its ancient churches and the castle of the noble Barresi family, now in ruins, from the top you can relax your gaze on to the valley, crossed by the Salso river.

Known throughout the world, the most important folk tradition of Pietraperzia is a religious procession through the streets of the town on Good Friday: "lu Signuri di li fasci."







The natural features of the Reserve

The reserve is set in the context called basin or pit Caltanissetta and falls in the middle of Chalky Series - Solfifera, but the characteristics of some areas are definitely related to clay and sandstone compositions.

The major players in the natural reserve are arguably the mountains and the river Imera, each with its own geological characteristics and environmental conditions.

The Mountains. Among the most impressive natural attractions of the Reserve there are Mount Capodarso (795 m) and Mount Sabucina (706 m), called by scholars "structures at cuesta", or reliefs that consist of limestone material, flattened form, which dominate softer rocks and ancient. Other mountains, not far distant, are those of Mount Pasquasia (610 m) and Mount Carangiaro (911 m).

The flora. The Reserve, before the massive man, was to be characterized by a dense forest with oak and oak trees, of which there are still some elements:

- Pigamo Calabria, *Thalictrum calabricum*.
- Sarsaparilla, *Smilax aspera*.
- Wild madder, *Rubia peregrina*.
- Caprifoglio Mediterranean, *Lonicera implexa*.
- Etruscan honeysuckle, *Lonicera Etruscan*.
- Common Hawthorn, *Crataegus monogyna*.
- Rose, *Rosa canina* and *Rosa sempervirens*.
- Common bramble, *Rubus ulmifolius*.
- Buckthorn, *Rhamnus alaternus*.
- Ginestrella, common *Osyris* dawn.

- Euphorbia bushy, *Euphorbias caracias*.

Over the centuries, the most mountainous and hilly areas have become the privileged seat of the garrigue, the vegetation formed by the alternation of dry meadows and evergreen bushes. In particular, Mount Capodarso is the garrigue Spazzaforno, *Thymelaea hirsuta*, and the shrub Thyme, *Thymus capitatus*. On the same stretch of steppe meadows *Ampelodesmeti*, *Ampelodesmos mauritanicus*, and, on top, the whitish Plantain, *Plantago albicans*.

Another special botanical reserve is found in the ravines, those territorial sections, and little waterproof clay, marked by deep furrows, which are created by water erosion. On their surface are reported and rare plants originate in North Africa, such as the Hollyhock of Agrigento, *Lavatera Agrigentina*, Astro Sorrentino, *Aster sorrentinii* (endemic to Sicily), and *Centaurea Salamanca*, *Mantisalca salmantica*.

Of all the plant species of the mountainous areas of the Reserve only one can be considered endemic, only found in the Imera Valley: Brassica Tinei. Belonging to the family of the common cabbage, is a plant that reaches 150 cm in height and blooms between March and June. This variety has been found on Mount Sabucina, along with a endemic species of Sicily, called *Ophrys panormitana*.

Finally, a careful eye will not escape the presence of some conifers and areas of eucalyptus, which, however, are merely the result of an attempt to reforestation.





Medicinal Plants.

The reserve is homes some plants particularly suited to some physical problems. Here are some examples:

- The Maidenhair fern, *Adiantum capillus-veneris*. This fern is used against hair loss.
- The southern Polipodio, *southern Polypodium*. From the Greeks and Romans, this plant was a good purgative and vermifuge.
- The Common Borage, *Borago officinalis*. Plant for cough.
- Coreggiola, *Polygonum aviculare*. Plant used in Roman times as a hemostatic.

An American plant... in Sicily.

In 2001, following an exploration, Morella rostrata was identified, *Solanum rostratum*, native to North America.

How coastal species reached in the Imera river?

According to studies, this phenomenon was born in the Messinian period, when there was the drying up of the Mediterranean and the consequent migration from a desert of plants of the marine rocks and salty environments.





The Imera River. The bed of Southern Imera, which runs from north to south, the area of the reserve is characterized by recent alluvial terraces and in other parts, patchy, from ancient fluvial deposits. In its paleo-geographic development, the river, with its strength, has eroded the sides of Mount Sabucina and Mount Capodarso, tracing its course and plowing through the top part of the two surveys. Some of its tributaries run through soils rich in rock salt. In the warm and dry of the summer, you may notice, in fact, several stretches covered with white salt.

Riverine vegetation. For naturalists the area of greatest interest is linked to the river, which, precisely because of the particular salinity, a vegetation typical of coastal areas and salty environments:

- The Ginestrino of the cliffs, *Lotus cytisoides*. The yellow flowers occurring in clusters.
- Grass-franca annua, *Frankenia pulverulenta*. Small and violet flowers.
- Curved Logliarella, *Parapholis sags*. Curved stem to blossom and violet-red top.
- Logliarello retracted, *Cutandia divaricata*.
- Tail hare, *Polypogon monspeliensis*. Flowers together to form a panicle extended.
- Sueda maritime, *Suaeda maritima*.
- European Salicornia, *Salicornia aeropaea*.
- Limonio of Optima, *Limonium Optimae*. Local endemic plant, which grows along the river bed.

Other plants found along the bed of the river are the Rushes, *Juncus aculeatus*, the Reeds, *Phragmites australis* and *Hirundo pliniana*, the Tamarisk, *Tamarix gallica*, and the Tamarisk greater, *Tamarix africana*.

Fauna between river and mountains.

The banks of the river are inhabited by some pond turtle, *Emys orbicularis*, common frogs, toads and the Grass Snake, snake harmless to humans. Among the mammals, especially in mountainous areas, there are the rare Porcupine, *Hystrix cristata*, the Hedgehog, *Erinaceus europaeus*, the Wild Rabbit, Weasel, *Mustela nivalis nivalis*, and the fox, *Vulpes vulpes*. Finally, among insects, distinguish the beautiful Amantide religious, *Mantis religiosa*, dragonflies and butterflies.



It 's birdwatching time.

The avifauna is very rich, mainly because of the centrality of the Reserve in the migratory routes of birds and diversification of habitats. Below, for the presence of multiple species, it will report the names of the most common. Among the migrant species, can be listed:

- Crane, *Grus grus*.
- The White Stork, *Ciconia ciconia*.
- The Grey Heron, *Ardea cinerea*.
- The Great Egret, *Egretta alba*.
- The Little Egret, *Egretta egret*.
- The Ferruginous Duck, *Aythya nyroca*.

Along the banks of the river the kingfisher loves to hunt, *Alcedo attis*, bright colors and lively. Among the reeds of the river lives instead Warbler, *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, or along the banks of the Knight of Italy, *Himantopus himantopus*.

E'attestata the presence of birds of prey: some migrate to the wetlands, other nesting in the cliffs of the surrounding mountains. Among migrants, there are the Osprey, *Pandion haliaetus*, the lesser kestrel, *Falco naumanni*, and Marsh Harrier, *Circus aeruginosus*. On the peaks, especially on Capodarso and Sabucina, you can observe the buzzard, *Buteo buteo*, the peregrine falcon, *Falco peregrinus*, the Kestrel, *Falco tinunculus*, and the Lanner, *Falco biarmicus*. Difficult to see, but in the area, are nocturnal birds of prey, such as the barn owl, *Tyto alba*, the Tawny Owl, *Strix aluco*, the Screech Owl, *Otus scops*, and the little owl, *Athene noctua*.





Mount Sabucina, a crossroads of cultures.

The hill of Sabucina gives its name to an archaeological site, located on the top of the hill. Archaeological evidence dates the presence of man in the Sabucina since the XIVth century B.C., the period to which stands the building of a village capannicolo the Late Bronze Age. Later, between the VIIIth and VIIth century B.C., the original nucleus, was replaced by an indigenous center whose houses were cut into the rock, were made of dry stone walls in the upper part. During this period we find the first traces of sacred areas. The following century was characterized by a narrowing of the town, and from that moment was protected by walls. In the Vth century, the citadel of Sabucina was enriched by a monumental sacred area and a populated area to the north with workshops. This is the

period during which the city was also destroyed and rebuilt after the riots of the natives against the Greeks, whose colonization began early as the VIIIth century B.C., with migrations from Gela headed for the inner territories, going back on the Imera southern river. The end of the town of Sabucina is brought back to the IVth century B.C.



Soprano Lake, a small nature reserve in Serradifalco



At only 21 km south-east of Caltanissetta, in the Municipality of Serradifalco, is located the smallest protected area in the province of Caltanissetta: Soprano Lake. The basin of karst origin, was included by the Italian Botanical among the biotopes of scientific relevance and natural interest. The lake shoreline, characterized by the common reed (*Phragmites australis*), is animated by a rich birdlife such as the Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus arundinaceus*), the coot (*Fulica atra*) Pochard (*Aythya ferina*), the Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*), Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*), Cetti's Warbler (*Cettia cetti*). Reported in the lake also not sedentary species. Among the mammals have been identified species, such as porcupines, weasels or the hare, while reptiles are represented by the typical pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*).

For information about the protected area:

Regional Province of Caltanissetta

Tel - 0934534413.111

Fax - 0934.583556



The first park in Sicily on the Etna volcano

From many peaks of the center of Sicily you can find yourself in front of a landscape in the background which stands out clear and sharp the massive peak of Mount Etna, the highest active volcano in Europe, located in the area of eastern Sicily, near Catania. The area of the mountain, famous in mythology to be the forge of the God Vulcan, in 1987 it became the seat of the first park in Sicily.

Dating back to the lower-middle Pleistocene, Etna is the creation of a variety of geological events that have occurred over the centuries with massive eruptions and lava flows, which, today, continue to fascinate and amaze. The constant change of the substrate of the soil due to the lava spills and different temperatures due to the altitude had a significant effect on the floral landscape of the Etna Park. If, in fact, at low altitudes, are localized areas with oak, hazel and chestnut which is flanked by vineyards, at 2000 meters was born on the endemic beech and birch. Reaching the highest odds up to the top, nature gives way to the impressive volcanic desert.

Etna is characterized by a particular animal and rich biodiversity, which has several species of mammals, such as porcupine, dormice, wild cat or weasel, a great multitude of insects and reptiles. For birdwatchers the great mountain offers the opportunity to see the eagles, queens of the skies in the most inaccessible and isolated the relief.

The wildest nature integrates seamlessly with the presence of the man who for centuries marks with his farming the lands of the volcano. Walking the paths and roads of this last one, we often meet imposing systems of terracing and agricultural works that recall ancient traditions. The Park Authority is aware of this sense of the man-made landscape, promotes initiatives aimed at safeguarding of organic products, healthy and "pure" are recognized

around the world for their rich organoleptic properties. Among the various productions of great importance and significance, is the cultivation of grapes, identified by Etna Park as "priceless inheritance." The official home of the Etna Park is located at the town of Nicolosi, the former Benedictine Monastery of San Nicolò la Rena, dated to the second half of the XIIIth century. Inside, the lower floor, you can visit a small museum dedicated to the volcanic phenomena related to Etna. A didactic purpose, near the main building, has been arranged a digital seismic station in collaboration with the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology. Finally, outside there is an area dedicated to the "Bank of Germoplasm" with plants and trees typical of the Etna area. The bank is associated with the "Path Germoplasm", a real naturalistic course of the "five senses", also equipped for public differently abled, visually impaired and blind.

To contact the Etna Park:

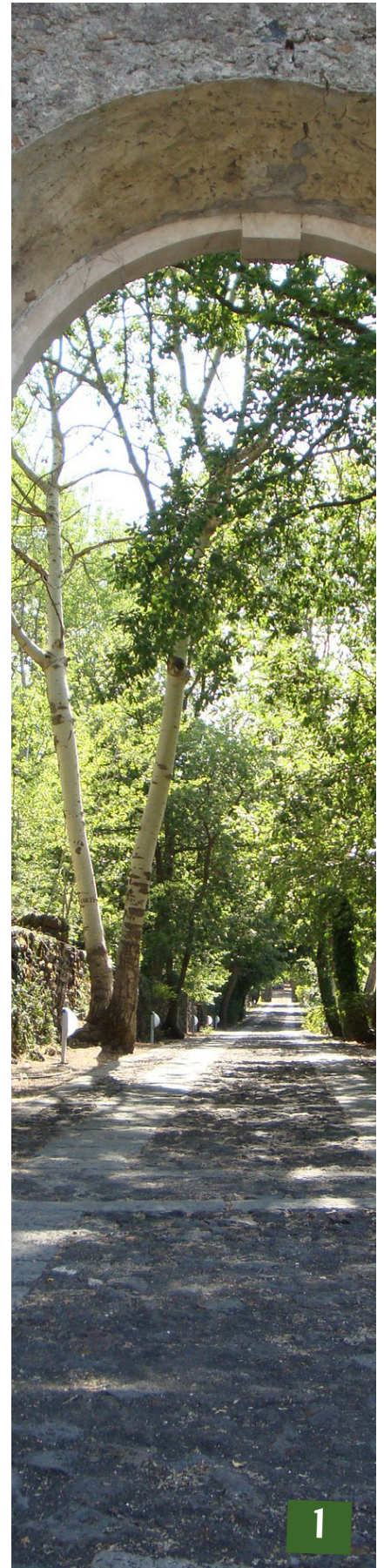
Ente Parco Etna

Via del Convento, 45 - Monastero di San Nicolò La Rena - 90035 Nicolosi (CT)

Telefono: 095/821111 - Fax: 095/914738

E-mail: ufficiostampa@parcoetna.it

Sito web: www.parcoetna.it





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Image Captions

Naturaliter.

The otium according to nature in the mosaic scenes of the Villa Romana del Casale.

1. Monumental entrance of the Villa Romana del Casale (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by M. Noto).
2. Ionic columns of the colonnade of the Villa Romana del Casale (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by F. Mela).
3. Overview of the Villa Romana del Casale. Behind Mount Mangone (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by F. Mela).
4. Flowers and birds in the mosaic decoration of the monumental fountains of the Villa Romana del Casale (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by F. Mela).
5. Hare. Detail of mosaic of the room of the "Little Hunt" (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by R. Bianchini).
6. Capture the deer with a net. Detail of mosaic of the room of the "Little Hunt" (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by R. Bianchini).
7. Hunter and dogs chasing a fox. Detail of mosaic of the room of the "Little Hunt" (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by M. Noto).
8. Boar. Detail of mosaic of the room of the "Little Hunt" (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by M. Noto). (Adjust the image until you have one shot to bust wild boar).
9. Scene of outdoor banquet. Detail of mosaic of "Little Hunt" (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by M. Noto). (Edit the picture, framing only the banqueting and oaks which is linked the tarp).
10. The thrushes in the scene of hunting with hawks "Little Hunt" (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by R. Bianchini).
11. Tree with birds. Detail of mosaic of diaeta of Orpheus (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo Pixher).
12. (All Photos of) (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by M.

Noto):

- 12a: Chariot of pheasants, environment n.44, Villa Romana del Casale.
- 12b: Chariot of Purple Swamphen, environment n.44, Villa Romana del Casale.
- 12c: Chariot of the geese, environment n.44, Villa Romana del Casale.
- 12d: Chariot of flamingos, environment n.44, Villa Romana del Casale.
- 13 - *Xenia* with pomegranates in the hall with an apse mosaic of 39, Villa Romana del Casale (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by R. Bianchini).
- 14 - *Xenia* with grapes in the hall with an apse mosaic of 39, Villa Romana del Casale (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by F. Mela).

1 – "Green" Piazza The Wildlife Reserve Oriented Rossomanno, Grottascura, Bellia and Ronza Park

1. Field with daisies inside the Natural Reserve Rossomanno, Grottascura, Bellia (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by F. Mela).
2. Inside the reserve branch out a series of mountain bike trails, marked by boards with maps and directions (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by F. Mela).
3. Wild Hawthorn (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by F. Mela).
4. Interior paths in the heart of the forest of the Natural Reserve Rossomanno, Grottascura, Bellia (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by F. Mela).
5. Equipped areas of the Ronza Park (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Villa Romana del Casale - Photo by F. Mela).
6. Overview Area Rossomanno (Arch. Fot. Parco Arch. Villa Romana del Casale - Foto di F. Mela).

2 – At the feet of a legend State-owned forest and the relief of Mount Navone

1. Overview of the promontory of Mount Navone (Arch. Fot. Parco Arch. Villa Romana del Casale – Foto di F. Mela).
2. Start of the internal path to the slopes of Mount Navone (Arch. Fot. Parco Arch. Villa Romana del Casale – Foto di F. Mela).
3. View from the top of Mount Navone (Arch. Fot. Parco Arch. Villa Romana del Casale – Foto di F. Mela).
4. Ruins of the medieval village on the plateau at the top of Mount Navone (Arch. Fot. Parco Arch. Villa Romana del Casale – Foto di F. Mela).
5. Ruin on the plateau at the top of Mount Navone (Arch. Fot. Parco Arch. Villa Romana del Casale – Foto di F. Mela).

3 – Where Spring was born The Special Nature Reserve of the Pergusa Lake

1. Pergusa Lake with Mount Etna in the background (Foto di R. Termine – Unikore).
2. Overview of SS117bis (Arch. Fot. Parco Arch. Villa Romana del Casale – Foto di F. Mela).
3. Cane thicket (Foto di F. Mela).
4. Explicative Panel of the avifauna of the reserve. (Arch. Fot. Parco Arch. Villa Romana del Casale – Foto di F. Mela).
5. Ophrys of Bertoloni, orchid (Foto di R. Termine – Unikore).
6. Euphorbia ergot, an endemic species (Foto di R. Termine – Unikore).
7. Anatidae (Foto di R. Termine – Unikore).
8. Sicilian pond turtle, an endemic species (Foto di R. Termine – Unikore).
9. Purple Gallinule on nest with chicks (Foto di R. Termine – Unikore).
10. Bronze statue of "The kidnapping of Proserpina" in Pergusa, the work of Gesualdo Prestipino artist of Enna (Arch. Fot. Parco Arch. Villa Romana del Casale – Foto di F. Mela).

4 – *Mons Aereus*, the Erei highest peak The Natural Reserve “Mount Altesina”

1. Panoramic view from the summit of Altesina Mount (Foto di M. Li Destri).
2. Panoramic view from the Mount Altesina summit. In the distance, the Nicoletti artificial lake, known for the opportunity to practice various water sports and fishing (Foto di M. Li Destri).
3. Equipped area within the Reserve (Foto di M. Li Destri).
4. Towards the summit dell'Altesina through the wooded trail (Foto di M. Li Destri).
5. Licoside (Foto di M. Li Destri).
6. Tomb of Prehistoric oven (Foto di M. Li Destri).
7. Archaeological Area of Mount Altesina (Foto di M. Li Destri).
8. Ruins of the Convent of Santa Maria di Lartisina (Foto di M. Li Destri).
9. Palazzo Branciforte (Foto di M. Li Destri).
10. Granfonte (Foto di M. Li Destri).

5 – A stone's throw from the Mediterranean The Lake Reserve “Biviere” of Gela

1. Panoramic view of the Biviere of Gela. The Biviere Gela is a natural lake behind the dunes that stretch for about 120 hectares making unique coastal landscape of the Gulf of Gela. (Foto di G. Giuliana – Arch. LIPU).
2. Detail of the educational center of Biviere Lake of Gela.
3. View of Biviere of Gela. Among the rushes and reeds of the wetland of the Biviere of Gela, internationally recognized by the Ramsar Convention, is home to a rich birdlife. (Foto di G. Giuliana – Arch. LIPU).
4. Fox, Biviere di Gela (Foto di E. Giudice – Arch. LIPU).
5. *Brachythemis imparted*, Biviere di Gela (Foto di G. Vaccaro – Arch. LIPU).
6. Hedgehog, Biviere di Gela (Foto di G. Campo – Arch. LIPU).
7. Night Herons, egrets and cattle

egrets rest on the vegetation after the long migration journey that brought from Africa to Biviere. (Foto di E. Giudice – Arch. LIPU).

- 8 The staff of the Reserve oversees the activities of monitoring, outreach, scientific, didactic and educational and is always available and the visitor service of the Reserve (Foto Arch. LIPU).
 9. Activities of birding at Biviere Gela. (Arch. LIPU).
 10. In the Reserve for several years it has become common in autumn to spot the Lesser Spotted Eagle, rare and majestic bird of prey predator of aquatic birds. (Foto di S. Di Maria– Arch. LIPU).
 11. The reserve has various facilities for public use, including a very interesting Visitor Centre called SynVolum. (Foto di G. Campo – Arch. LIPU).
 12. Sughereta Niscemi. The so-called “Oak Mosaic”, a centuries-old patriarch plant believed to be the largest tree of the species *Quercus suber* existing in Italy. (Photo by Salvatore Zafarana).
 13. Castle “U Cannuni”, Mazzarino (Arch. Fot. Parco Arch. Villa Romana del Casale – Foto di F. Mela).
 14. Mount Muculufa (Arch. Fot. Parco Arch. Villa Romana del Casale – Foto di F. Mela).
 15. Castle of Falconara (Foto di A. Vullo)
- #### 6-Along the Imera banks. Natural Reserve of Mount Capodarso and the southern Imera Valley
1. Cove of the river Himera and ruins of rural building (Arch. Fot. Riserva Imera)
 2. Historic postcards from the early '900s Bridge Capodarso.
 3. Excursion within the Reserve (Arch. Fot. Riserva Imera).
 4. Pietraperzia (Photo IPERTEC, da Soprintendenza BCA di Enna).
 5. Stretch of the South river Imera (Photo by E. Bartolotta).
 6. Mount Capodarso (Mount Etna in the background) (Photo by E. Bartolotta).
 7. Spring Landscape

(Arch. Fot. Imera Reserve).

8. Stretch of the river Imera (Salso) downstream of the bridge Besaro (Photo by E. Bartolotta).
9. Thoroughbreds grazing (Arch. Fot. Riserva Imera).
10. Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*) (Photo di G. Burgio).
11. Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*) (Foto di M. Maggiordomo).
12. Southern Necropolis. Chamber tombs with monumental fronts (Arch. Fot. Arch. Park Sabucina).
13. Soprano Lake, Serradifalco (Photo by Gina Tortorici, CEO LIPU Serradifalco).

7 – The first park in Sicily on the Etna volcano

1. Entrance avenue of the Monastery of San Nicolò La Rena (Photo by F. Mela).
2. The volcano Etna from the centre of Sicily (Photo by F. Mela).

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Dipartimento Regionale dei Beni Culturali e dell'Identità Siciliana

2013