



CALABRIA
STRAORDINARIA

DIARY OF A
CALABRIAN
JOURNEY

**THE NATURE
AREAS**





CALABRIA
STRAORDINARIA

Regione Calabria
Dipartimento Turismo,
Marketing territoriale e Mobilità

For further information:
www.calabriastroordinaria.it/en/

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This guide is part of a series of five *Diaries of a Calabrian journey*, each on a particular way of experiencing this region:

- **Nature reserves and parks**
- **Art and culture**
- **The historic centres and old villages**
- **The coasts and the sea**
- **Wine, food and the land**

The *Diaries* are meant to be a ready to use tool for anyone about to travel round Calabria, wanting to experience it in its fullness and complexity but, in particular, with the intention of looking at it with the eyes of a true traveller.

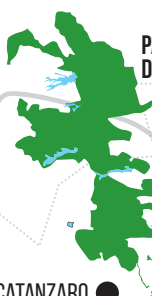
They are guides, full of advice and suggestions, on the physical and also mental paths that help the traveller not to miss any of the wonders in the area without stopping him/her from following their own instinct, interests and way of existence.

The word 'diary' automatically evokes a book whose pages are normally full of notes, supplemented by sketches or photos. That's why it was chosen as the metaphor for the journey and a very particular way of describing it using both words and pictures - more emotional than educational. It's an experience that purposely recalls the *Grand Tour* which, from the 18th to the early 20th centuries, included an almost compulsory trip into Calabria for European intellectuals of that time who, luckily, left an indelible trace for us in the pages of their invaluable travel diaries.



**PARCO NAZIONALE
DEL POLLINO**

COSENZA



**PARCO NAZIONALE
DELLA SILA**

CROTONE

CATANZARO

**PARCO REGIONALE
VALLI CUPE**

VIBO VALENTIA

**PARCO REGIONALE
DELLE SERRE**

REGGIO CALABRIA



**PARCO NAZIONALE
DELL'ASPROMONTE**





IT WAS **EXHILARATING**
TO TRAVERSE THESE **MIDDLE HEIGHTS**
WITH SERIAL VIEWS OVER THE **IONIAN**
...THE ROAD WINDS IN AND OUT
OF GULLIES WHERE **RIVULETS**
DESCEND FROM THE MOUNTAINS;
THEY ARE CLOTHED IN **CORK-OAK**,
ILEX AND OTHER TREES. GOLDEN ORIOLES,
JAYS, HOOPOES AND **ROLLERS**
FLASH AMONG THE FOLIAGE

FROM WHICHEVER SIDE ONE CLIMBS
OUT OF THE SURROUNDING **LOWLANDS**
ONTO THE **SILA** PLATEAU,
THE SAME SUCCESSION OF **TREES**
IS ENCOUNTERED

ASPROMONTE DESERVES ITS NAME.
IT IS AN INCREDIBLY HARSH
AGGLOMERATION OF HILL AND **DALE**,
AND THE **GEOLOGY** OF THE DISTRICT
REVEALS A PERFECT **CHAOS**
OF ROCKS OF EVERY **AGE**

NORMAN DOUGLAS, OLD CALABRIA, 1915

Sila, Gariglione, stream





Pollino National Park



Travel notes

Calabria is privileged to have three national nature parks - the Pollino, the Sila and Aspromonte, and a regional park, the Serre, as well as many other protected natural areas - places with very special morphological and environmental features. Their rocky conformation has created geographical features with surprising shapes when they aren't true 'geological monuments'. The flora can boast living works of art, such as the Bosnian pine on the Pollino or the forests of centuries-old larches in the Sila Grande. The fauna is enriched by species threatened by extinction elsewhere, like the wolf.

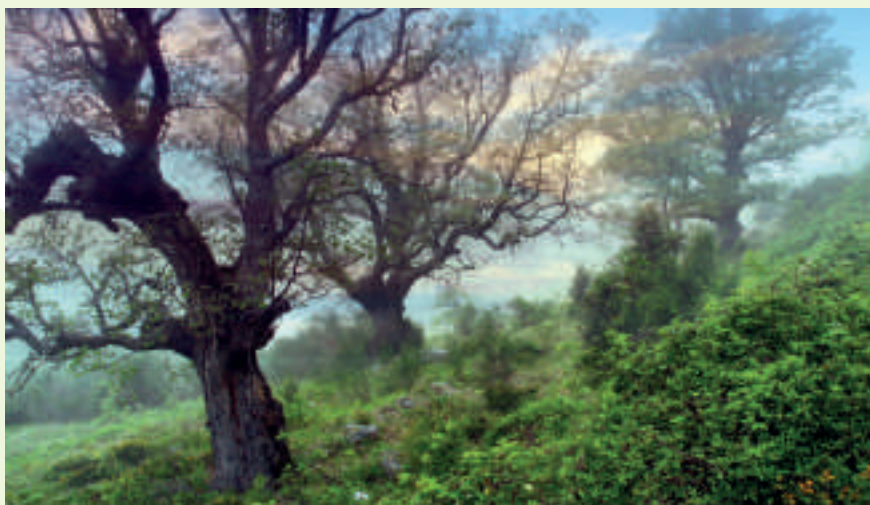
In the internal areas of Calabria, the countryside is still more or less uncontaminated. A day out or a simple trip to the mountains can easily turn into a pleasant adventure with the chance to range your eyes from a valley below to a nearby summit - but also to the more distant horizon of the sea, to marvel at glimpses and landscapes that form a spectacle of incomparable beauty for the eyes and mind. Just like many places in the interior, some parts of the sea are worth particular safeguard, special care for their natural beauty and considerable biodiversity but also because they were privileged places of Magna Graecia civilisation, landing points for the many colonies of the Hellenic poleis which chose them for their houses and as a second home.

Calabria is especially well-known for its sea, which almost completely surrounds it, and its 800 kilometre-coast. However, it's always easy to reach the mountains of the interior from the coast with a short journey, in the twinkling of an eye generating a radical change in perspective - from the climate to the landscape. The Pollino group has Bosnian pines and the charm of the S. Maria delle Armi Sanctuary, which tightly clasps the most inaccessible rocks in an indissoluble embrace. The Sila plateau has lakes, villages and woods of ancient fir trees, the Serre have forests of silver firs and the celebrated Archiforo wood, which host the well-known Certosa and the last charcoal burners, and the Aspromonte massif, with the abandoned



villages, the valley of the Grandi Pietre and its 'natural terraces' with views looking over the sea.

This ability to pass so quickly from the sea, and perhaps a marine reserve, like that at Capo Rizzuto, to the mountains in just a few kilometres, the oddity of being near imposing mountain chains and extensive plateaux is no small surprise in a southern, so typically Mediterranean, region. However, the real surprises are in the interior - a mountain area that's just as good as the better known and more visited mountain chains of Italy. Hills and mountains that exhibit natural environments as varied as they are extraordinary, rocky formations that nature has carved for our eyes, vegetation that brings out all the shades of green, from the palest to the most intense, and a landscape that can be both harsh and wild and, at other times, welcoming and gently rolling.



Cerchiara di Calabria, Ancient oak trees



POLLINO NATIONAL PARK

The Pollino National Park, which straddles Calabria and Basilicata, is vast and ranges from the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Ionian Sea. The mountains have rocks and ramparts, precipices and gorges, caverns and plateaux, meadows and high-altitude pastures but the undoubted king is the Bosnian pine, a thousand-year old tree with a contorted outline and a bark that recalls the cuirass in the armour of old Roman soldiers, from where it probably gets its Italian name (*Pino loricato*). The Romito Cave at Papasidero hosted a settlement dating to the Palaeolithic and has one of the oldest art exhibitions in the whole of Italy at the entrance - the so-called '*aurochs*', the shape of a bovine etched on a large stone by the hand of an ancestor who already felt the need to leave a tangible sign of his earthly passage. The Raganello gorges, a real canyon enclosed by sheer rock walls is a special attraction with the river of the same name flowing through and its waterfalls. Extreme sport fans can canoe or go rafting on the River Lao.



Pollino, Bosnian pine



GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE PARK

- Surface: 192,565.00 hectares
- Regions: Basilicata and Calabria
- Province (in Calabria): Cosenza
- Municipalities (in Calabria): Acquaformosa, Aieta, Alessandria del Carretto, Belvedere Marittimo, Buonvicino, Castrovillari, Cerchiara di Calabria, Civita, Francavilla Marittima, Frascineto, Grisolia, Laino Borgo, Laino Castello, Lungro, Maierà, Morano Calabro, Mormanno, Mottafollone, Orsomarso, Papisidero, Plataci, Praia a Sea, San Basile, San Donato di Ninea, San Lorenzo Bellizzi, San Sosti, Sangineto, Sant'Agata di Esaro, Santa Domenica Talao, Saracena, Tortora, Verbicaro.

Site of Community Importance (SCI) managed by the Park:

- Valle del Fiume Lao.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) managed by the Park:

- Bosco della Farneta
- Cima del Monte Dolcedorme
- Cima del Monte Pollino
- Cozzo del Pellegrino
- Gole del Raganello
- La Falconara
- La Montea
- La Petrosa
- Monte La Caccia
- Monte Sparviere
- Pollinello e Dolcedorme
- Rupi del Monte Pollino
- Serra del Prete
- Stagno di Timpone di Porace
- Timpa dell'Orso-Serra del Prete
- Timpa di S. Lorenzo
- Timpone della Capanna
- Valle del Fiume Abatemarco



- Valle del Fiume Argentino
- Valle del Fiume Esaro
- Valle Piana and Valle Cupa.

Special Protection Area (SPA)
managed by the Park:

- Pollino and Orsomarso.

State Reserve managed
by the Park:

- Valle del Fiume Lao

POLLINO AND UNESCO

In November 2015, the *Parco Nazionale del Pollino* (Pollino National Park) was recognised as a 'UNESCO Global Geopark', becoming part of the World Heritage and so a site to protect and valorise for the landscape of international geological relevance, and the particular features and importance from the naturalist, cultural, historical and archaeological points of view. The Pollino Geopark includes many geosites of considerable interest, like the *cirques*, moraine deposits, snowfields, the Rudiste fossils, the particular rocky formations, prehistoric caverns, canyons, Karst plateaux, sinkholes, hills or ravines and the highest peaks.

Civita, the Raganello gorges



Mount Pollino



Pollino, Bosnian pines

Pollino National Park



VISITING THE POLLINO NATIONAL PARK

One of the main access points on the Calabrian side of the **Pollino** chain is the **Campotenese** motorway exit, leaving the Tyrrhenian coast behind. From here, you can drive along the internal roads until you reach the Ionian side. However, to get to know the Park well, you have to be kitted to move on foot as far as possible, possibly only partly climbing the peaks of Mount *Pollino*, *Dolcedorme*, the *Cozzo del Pellegrino* and *Montea*, all places of great impact for their landscape. One of the main features of the Park are the extensive and unforgettable views that thrill visitors, and these include the true natural monument of the Park - the Bosnian Pine seen on the peaks. The tree with its sinuous form, shaped by the wind, grows in the most inaccessible places.

A good way of visiting an area of the Park is to follow the River *Lao*, which flows into the Tyrrhenian Sea between **Laino Borgo** and **Papasidero**, two splendid, well-preserved villages. Rafting, one of the most exciting



and adventurous of river sports in which large rubber dinghies are carried on the current, can be done on this river.

The River *Raganello*, on the other hand, flows into the Ionian Sea. By following it, you pass through the surroundings of some of the most beautiful and interesting centres of the Park.

San Lorenzo Bellizzi rises among rocky walls, such as the *Timpa di San Lorenzo*, and has an old centre featuring typical buildings in exposed local stone. **Civita** is one of the most characteristic villages of Albanian origin in the Pollino and,



Papasidero



Fagnano Castello, Two-men Lake



Serra delle Ciavole

like the neighbouring **Frascineto**, preserves old customs and the use of the 'Arbëresh' language. You can start from here with Park guides for a visit to the evocative *Raganello* gorges, where the river passes between sheer rock walls and generates impressive waterfalls. Some villages in the Park preserve true architectural and artistic-cultural gems that would be a pity not to see - the *Santuario della*



Madonna del Pettoruto at **San Sosti**, the *Santuario della Madonna delle Armi* at **Cerchiara di Calabria**, the old centre, churches and castle of **Morano Calabro**, the old centre of **Laino Castello**, the *Romito* cave with the prehistoric graffiti of the *aurochs* at **Papasidero**, and the villages of **Mormanno** and **Alessandria del Carretto**, the highest settlement in the whole of the Pollino chain.



Papasidero, Romito Cave



Cerchiara di Calabria



SILA NATIONAL PARK

Sila is a plateau in the centre of Calabria and is part of the National Park of the same name. It is covered by dense forests, particularly of conifers, and dotted with artificial lakes that are so well set into the surrounding area that they almost appear to be natural. Lake Ampollino, the first of the bodies of water to be created at the beginning of the 20th century, Lake Arvo, a significant tourist centre with the traditional village of Lorica, and Lake Cecita, perhaps the wildest of the three, all have a special charm. There are many characteristic villages in addition to Lorica and most of them focus on tourism and handcrafts. There are also ski resorts with modern facilities and ski-lifts, open when there are abundant snowfalls in winter. The wolf is the park's animal symbol but the whole area is full of wildlife, such as squirrels which are easy to see as they scamper through the treetops. The Bosnian pine is the most representative tree of Sila and some majestic specimens enrich Fallistro wood,

near Camigliatello Silano. Gariglione Wood is equally attractive and its dense trees alternate with clearings and pastures.



GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE PARK

- Surface: 73,695.00 hectares
- Minimum height: 368 m
- Maximum height: 1,928 m
- Provinces: Catanzaro, Cosenza and Crotona
- Municipalities: Acri, Albi, Aprigliano, Bocchigliero, Casali del Manco, Celico, Corigliano Rossano, Cotronei, Longobucco, Magisano, Mesoraca, Petilia Policastro, Petronà, San Giovanni in Fiore, Savelli, Sersale, Spezzano della Sila, Taverna, Zagarise.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) managed by the Park:

- Acqua di Faggio
- Arnocampo
- Bosco di Gallopane
- Bosco Fallistro
- Carlomagno
- Colle del Telegrafo
- Colle Poverella
- Cozzo del Principe
- Fiume Tacina
- Juri Vetere Soprano
- Macchia Sacra
- Monte Curcio
- Monte Femminamorta
- Monte Gariglione
- Nocelleto
- Palude del Lago Ariamacina
- Pianori di Macchialonga
- Pineta del Cupone
- Pineta di Camigliatello
- Pinete del Roncino
- S. Salvatore
- Serra Stella
- Timpone della Carcara
- Torrente Soleo
- Vallone Freddo.

Special Protection Area (SPA) managed by the Park:

- Calabria National Park.

State Reserves managed by the Park:

- Coturelle - Piccione
- Gallopane
- Gariglione - Pisarello



- Golia Corvo
- I Giganti della Sila
- Macchia della Giumenta - San Salvatore
- Poverella Villaggio Mancuso
- Tasso - Camigliatello Silano
- Trenta Coste.

Man and Biosphere (MAB) Reserve managed by the Park:
Riserva MAB Sila.

SILA AND UNESCO

In 2014, Sila officially became an Italian Biosphere Reserve, included in the world network of UNESCO Heritage Sites, under the 'Man and Biosphere' programme, which promotes a balanced relationship between man and the environment on a scientific basis through the protection of biodiversity and best practices in sustainable development. The Reserve includes the whole *Parco Nazionale della Sila* (Sila National Park), distinguished by its marked biodiversity, and also extends beyond the park into areas not subject to restrictions, showing that a harmonious relationship between human beings, with their production, and the surrounding nature is possible.

Camigliatello Silano, skilifts



Villaggio Mancuso



Garcea Visitors' Centre

Lake Arvo, canoeing



VISITING THE SILA NATIONAL PARK

On arriving from Cosenza, **Sila** immediately surprises us with the attractive mountain village **Camigliatello Silano**, geared to hospitality and well-equipped for mountain tourism with plenty of tourist accommodation. Its streets are full of shops selling souvenirs and traditional Calabrian products. There's a modern *ski-lift*, ideal for snow sports enthusiasts, at the foot of the uplands not too far away. The village is the start for various types of trips for all tastes inside the Park. However, as the Park lies in three provinces, it is easy to access not only from Cosenza but also Catanzaro and Crotona.

First of all, a tour of the lakes - from Lake **Cecita** to Lake **Arvo**, where you can go canoeing or make simple boat trips. The beautiful tourist resort of **Lorica** lies on its banks and there is also a modern *ski-lift* nearby for the winter. Then there is the little Lake **Ariamacina**, the large Lake **Ampollino**, which lies in the three provinces of Catanzaro, Cosenza and Crotona, and Lake **Passante** near to which you can have a quiet picnic.



There are many recreation areas and *nature reserves* in Sila with *Ecomuseums* and the chance to see animals like fallow deer and roe deer, and all the fauna typical of a plateau. Other places include the *Centro Visita Cupone* (Cupone Visitors' Centre), near Lake Cecita, the *Centro Visita Garcea* (Garcea Visitors' Centre), adjacent to **Villaggio Mancuso**, a tourist centre in Catanzaro province made characteristic by its traditional wooden houses built among the Bosnian pines, and the beautiful reserve of centuries-old Bosnian pines named *I Giganti di Fallistro*



Lorica, skilift



Lake Ampollino



Ciricilla

(the Fallistro giants), a residual forest with majestic specimens of trees up to 45 metres tall. For tourists looking for special thrills, lots of *adventure parks*, also suitable for children, have been established in recent years where sport and nature can be combined. The important historic centres in the Park and its neighbouring area include **San Giovanni in Fiore**, the village of the friar *Gioacchino da Fiore* and the *Abbazia Florense* (San Giovanni in Fiore Abbey) he founded, **Taverna** has



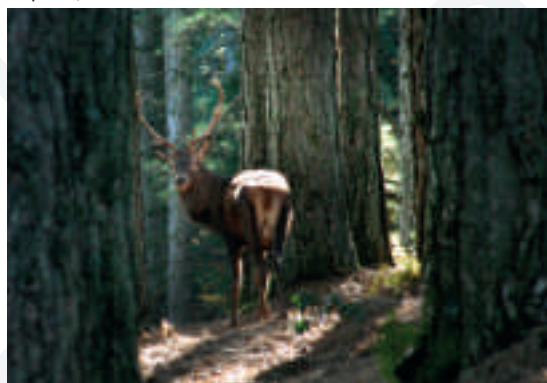
a widespread museum with precious paintings of *Mattia Preti* and his brother Gregorio who were born there, **Longobucco**, with its lovely Traditional Cloth Museum, **Corigliano Calabro** and its *Castello ducale* (Duke's castle), and **Petilia Policastro** and the *Santuario della Santa Spina*.

The *steam train* has recently been restarted and shuttles between **Moccone** station and that of **San Nicola**, close to the tourist resort of **Silvana Mansio**, unique for its fairytale-like wooden houses.



Presila Catanzarese, chestnut grove

Cupone, Visitors' Centre



Sila Grande, Podolica cattle grazing

Villaggio Mancuso, Albergo delle Fate



MARE TIRRENO

ASPROMONTE NATIONAL PARK

The Aspromonte National Park is a mountainous massif in southern Calabria almost completely surrounded by the sea. Its mountains, which reach a height of almost 2,000 metres, fall away to the Ionian Sea coast to the east, that of the Tyrrhenian Sea to the west and towards the Strait of Messina to the south. The area hosts a community that still speaks the old Calabrian Greek language, which may derive from Ancient Greek or Byzantine Greek. There are many places of a certain importance that are part of the massif or next to it. The most evocative include Pietra Cappa, the Valle delle Grandi Pietre (the Valley of the Large Rocks), the Calabrian Dolomites and Pentedattilo, the hand-shaped mountain with the village of the same name at its foot, which is being repopulated, mainly for tourism, after years of desertion. This area features large monoliths, like the Pietra Cappa whose enigmatic shape rises in the Valle delle Grandi Pietre, and the so-called '*via dei palmenti*' (Road of the must fermentation tanks), at long last now valorised.



Roghudi



GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE PARK

- Surface: 64,544.61 hectares
- Province: Reggio Calabria
- Municipalities: Africo, Antonimina, Bagaladi, Bova, Bruzzano Zeffirio, Canolo, Cardeto, Careri, Ciminà, Cinquefrondi, Cittanova, Condofuri, Cosoleto, Delianuova, Gerace, Mammola, Molochio, Oppido Mamertina, Palizzi, Platì, Reggio Calabria, Roccaforte del Greco, Roghudi, Samo, San Giorgio Morgeto, San Lorenzo, San Luca, San Roberto, Sant'Agata del Bianco, Sant'Eufemia d'Aspromonte, Santa Cristina d'Aspromonte, Santo Stefano in Aspromonte, Scido, Scilla, Sinopoli, Staiti, Varapodio.



Sites of Community Importance (SICs) managed by the Park:

- Canolo Nuovo, Zomaro e Zillastro
- Contrada Gornelle
- Contrada Scala
- Montalto
- Monte Basilicò and Torrente Listi
- Monte Fistocchio and Monte Scorda
- Piani di Zervò
- Piano Abbruschiato
- Torrente Ferraina
- Torrente Menta
- Vallone Cerasella.

Special Area of Conservation (SAC) managed by the Park:

- Pietra Cappa, Pietra Lunga and Pietra Castello.



Casalinuovo d'Africo

Woods at Canolo



Zomaro, beechwood

VISITING THE ASPROMONTE NATIONAL PARK

Our route on **Aspromonte** can start from the appealing Calabrian Greek area where ancient Greek is still spoken and the traditions of that extraordinary culture are preserved. Take a look at the village of **Galliciano** and then continue to the old village of **Amendolea**, also on foot, walking along the bed of the partially dry river of the same name. Then you can continue to **Bova**, with a well-preserved historic centre, and the *Piani di Bova*, a sort of natural terrace that looks out over a spectacular landscape. You can also reach **Roghudi**, one of the most-photographed abandoned villages of Aspromonte, with its natural stone monuments - the *Caldaie del Latte* and the *Roccia del Drago*. There is also the old **Africo** with its *Santuario di San Leo*, isolated in the heart of Aspromonte, now restored and easily to reach for tourists. However, the conformation of Aspromonte, between the Ionian and the Tyrrhenian Seas, mean that in just a few minutes you can go from the sea to its highest peaks, like **Gambarie**, with the tourist resort of the same name with a well-equipped *ski resort* and a modern ski-lift. The



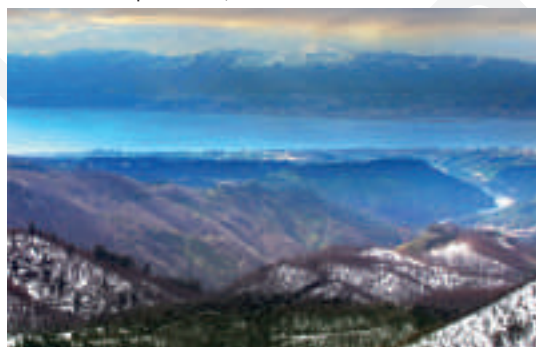
landscape is unique and you can ski with a view of the Tyrrhenian Sea or go on trips through the immense ancient beechwoods and *Riserva forestale di Basilicò* (Basilicò Woodland Reserve).

Aspromonte is also a place of literature and one of its most important villages is **San Luca**, where the great Calabrian writer *Corrado Alvaro* was born. He described these places in all his work, particularly in his masterpiece '*Gente in Aspromonte*'. To show that the region can satisfy many interests, there is a geological-naturalist path that starts at San Luca and goes towards the *Valle delle Grandi Pietre*,



Gambarie d'Aspromonte, skilift

Gambarie d'Aspromonte, view of the Strait of Messina



Roghudi, Roccia del Drago



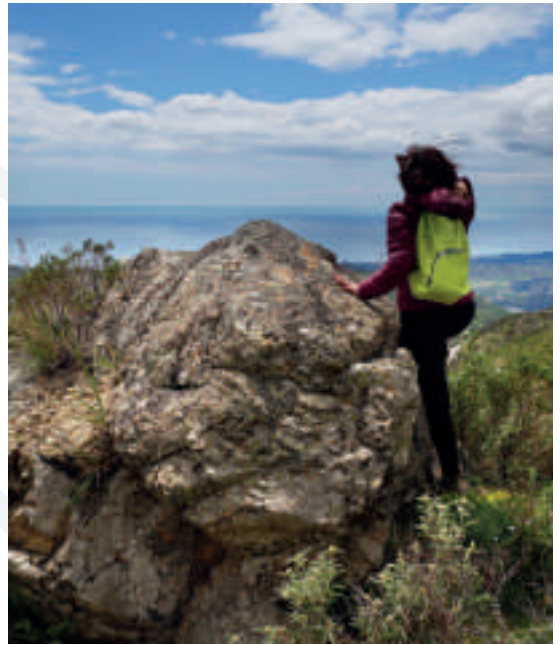
Ferruzzano, Must fermentation tank

River Amendolea

passing through breathtaking landscape - from the *Pietra Cappa* to the *Pietra Castello*, through to the attractive *Rocce di San Pietro*. Other natural monuments are the immense rocky formations of the *Tre Pizzi* of **Ciminà** and the so-called *Calabrian Dolomites* at **Canolo Vecchio**. The visit could end in the scenery of the valley that holds the *Santuario della Madonna di Polsi*,



the most venerated holy figure in the whole of Aspromonte. However, the Park is also a place full of charm, due to the many now uninhabited villages which still have an almost unchanged urban layout, deep in a beautiful, uncontaminated landscape - from the old **Ferruzzano** to **Bruzzano Zeffirio**, and **Precacore di Samo** to **Pardesca di Bianco**.



Aspromonte, Hiking

Canolo, Calabrian Dolomites





SERRE REGIONAL NATURE PARK

The Serre Regional Nature Park features vast forests and the centre of Serra San Bruno. St Bruno of Cologne came here in retreat and founded the first Carthusian monastery in Italy at the end of the 11th century. The well-known *Certosa* (Carthusian monastery), completely destroyed in the earthquake of 1783, was reconstructed by popular demand in the second half of the 19th century but some ruins of the church and 17th century cloister of the old buildings still remain. As it is a secluded monastery, the religious complex can't be visited except in exceptional circumstances but there is a museum which faithfully reproduces monastic life and shows the history of the Certosa through articles and a narrative. The dense woods of the Serre are home to last charcoal burners who produce coal in the same way as hundreds of years ago using a process that has almost become a ritual. During the Kingdom of Naples, the Serre was a true industrial area with forges and a weapons factory, of which extensive traces can still be seen.



Archiforo Wood



Bivongi, River Stilaro

GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE PARK

- Surface: 17,687.00 hectares
- Provinces: Catanzaro, Reggio Calabria and Vibo Valentia
- Municipalities: Acquaro, Arena, Badolato, Bivongi, Brognaturo, Cardinale, Davoli, Fabrizia, Francavilla Angitola, Gerocarne, Guardavalle, Maierato, Mongiana, Monterosso Calabro, Nardodipace, Pizzo, Pizzoni, Polia, San Sostene, Santa Caterina dello Ionio, Satriano, Serra San Bruno, Simbario, Soriano, Spadola and Stilo.



Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) managed by the Park:

- Bosco di Stilo - Bosco Archiforo
- Bosco Santa Maria
- Lacina
- Lago dell'Angitola.



Serra San Bruno, Charcoal burners



Monte Consolino, ruins of Stilo Castle

Stilo Wood

VISITING THE SERRE REGIONAL NATURE PARK

Any route must start from the centre of the **Serre** plateau. Here there is the most beautiful and mysterious place of Calabrian piety, the well-known *Certosa* of **Serra San Bruno**, inhabited by Carthusian monks who live in their own spiritual dimension and are practically isolated from the world. You can find out about how they live in the neighbouring museum. From this point, you can continue, also on foot, to the *Bosco di Santa Maria* (Santa Maria Wood) where there is the *Laghetto di San Bruno* (St Bruno's Lake) among very old beeches and silver firs. There is also a flight of steps leading to the *Santuario di S. Maria del Bosco*, open to worshippers. Your trip can then continue to **Mongiana** for a historic-cultural visit to the *Museum* and *Bourbon Forges* but also a walk in the *Park of Villa Vittoria*, ideal for families with children with its nature museums and tourist facilities. Passing by the ancient *megaliths*, whose structure is thought to be the work of man as well as nature, you reach the appealing village of **Nardodipace**, typical

Monte Consolino, Stilaro Valley



because of its low houses built on the crest of a mountain. From here, continue towards the old *Bosco di Stilo* (Stilo Wood) to visit the old Bourbon hunting reserve of the *Ferdinandeia* (an area of 3,600 hectares). Trips are organised in the area of **Bivongi** to the *Cascade del Marmarico* (Marmarico Falls) while a walk on *Monte Consolino* takes you to the *Norman Castle* and *Cattolica* at **Stilo**.



Bivongi, Marmarico Waterfall



Nardodipace, Megaliths



Mongiana, Ironworks

Mount Pecoraro, Beechwood





VALLI CUPE REGIONAL NATURE RESERVE

The Valli Cupe Regional Nature Reserve, in the province of Catanzaro, is an especially interesting area for nature. It extends from the heart of the Pre-sila Catanzarese to near the Ionian coast at the Gulf of Squillace. The main attractions of the whole area include the **Valli Cupe** canyon, the **Monte Raga** plateau, the **Crocchio** gorges and falls, in the Sersale area, and the torrent with the **Campanaro** and **dell’Inferno** falls, between **Sersale** and **Zagarise**; there are also the **Pietraggiallu** monolith and the monumental trees of **Cavallopoli**. The biodiversity of the flora and fauna, due to the vicinity of the sea, the Mediterranean climate and the particular conformation and extension of the area, is one of the most prominent features. The mountain area of the Reserve is studded with rocks that create imposing monoliths and have steep slopes forming true canyons with rivers which, with their spectacular drops and falls, look like water features designed directly by nature. The vegetation is the typical **Mediterranean scrub**, with monumental trees, particularly chestnuts and larches, considerable in both size and age, and also very old plants of great botanical interest. The area also hosts an interesting **museum network**.



Valli Cupe



VISITING THE VALLI CUPE REGIONAL NATURE RESERVE

Visiting the **Valli Cupe** means, in particular, moving through an area whose particular conformation can evoke special feelings. Start by moving up the River Crocchio. Before reaching the Ionian Sea, it crosses **Cropani** where the Romanesque Duomo, a lovely historic centre and the archaeological museum can be visited. **Sersale**, the village at the centre of the Valli with an old tradition of handcrafts, can be reached from there. Sersale also has the remains of the Italian-Greek monastery of the Santi Tre Fanciulli and many museums on local culture and the naturalistic relevance of these places. The ruins of the old village of Marcaglione, near Sersale, are specially interesting historically and culturally. The noble palaces and murals telling of the peasant traditions of the village, and the chestnut and ceramics museums are worth seeing in **Cerva**. Lastly, there are some 16th century frescoes of considerable artistic interest in the Gothic style Chiesa del Rosario (Church of the Rosary), and a Norman Tower at **Zagarise**. You may also find the remains of the 'lost town' of **Barbaro**, whose origins are

Valli Cupe



shrouded in legend, as you wander through the Valli. Whoever visits the Valli shouldn't miss any path that takes in the most interesting places from the naturalist and landscape points of view such as the **Valli Cupe Canyon**, the **Pietraggiallu** monoliths and that of **Misorbo** with the **Allori** waterfall, the canyon with the **cascata dell'Inferno** (Hell's waterfall), the **cascata delle Rupe** (cliff waterfall) and the **cascata Campanaro** (Campanaro waterfall), the gorges and **cascatelle del Crocchio** (Crocchio falls), the monumental trees of the **Gigante buono** (the Gentle Giant), the **Gigante silano degli ulivi** (the Silan giant of the olive trees), an imposing larch which is probably more than 300 years old, and the centuries-old chestnut trees of the **Giganti di Cavallopoli** (Cavallopoli giants).



Valli Cupe



Valli Cupe, view from the above



OTHER NATURE AREAS

There are many other important areas for nature including the **Reventino** and the **Presila Catanzarese**, with **Monte Tiriolo** at the narrowest point of Italy and from where both seas around Calabria can be seen, the **Valle del Corace**, the **Marchesato**, with the cliff settlements of **Casabona**, the **Arco di Zinga**, **Crotone**, that was once one of the most important colonies of Magna Graecia, the **Valli Cupe**, recently rediscovered and promoted, **Angitola Lake**, famous for its considerable biodiversity, the **Regional Marine Parks** of Riviera dei Cedri, Baia di Soverato, Costa dei Gelsomini, Fondali di Capocozzo - S. Irene, Vibo Marina, Pizzo, Capo Vaticano and Tropea, Scogli di Isca in the sea of Amantea and Belmonte Calabro, which are also WWF blue oases.



Some of the many areas for nature in Calabria have been picked out as State and Regional Nature Reserves.

State reserves:

- Cropani Micone
- Gole del Raganello
- Iona Serra della Guardia
- Marchesale
- Serra Nicolino - Pian d'Albero
- Valle del Fiume Argentino

Regional Reserves:

- Foce del Crati (Crati Estuary)
- Lago di Tarsia (Lake Tarsia)



Casabona, Zinga Arch

Cutro, View from the Marchesato



THE IMPORTANCE OF FEDERPARCHI

The *Federazione Italiana Parchi e Riserve Naturali* (**Federparchi** - Italian Federation of Parks and Nature Reserves) is a sector association uniting and representing the management bodies of Italian protected natural areas. Its primary aim is to build and strengthen a national system of protected areas, promoting the exchange and sharing of knowledge, experience and best practices. It is also constantly committed to the conservation, valorisation and promotion of the natural heritage, also through **Parks.it**, 'the Italian parks portal' which has interesting suggestions for visits to the parks in all their extent and beauty. Some of the information shown here has been taken from the portal.



Sila, Gariglione, very old beech tree

This small space is intended for notes and personal impressions of those who, not being content with the tales of others, want to experience the places and feelings they may trigger in first person.





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