

1. GEOLOGY AND LANDSCAPE

The area is the result of a long series of events that have been occurring for hundreds of millions of years, but it is only in the last million years that phenomena have generated the present landscape. The protagonist was a large volcano probably over 2,500 metres high, active above all between 420,000 and 95,000 years ago. Around 151,000 years ago underwent an intense eruptive phase emptying its magmatic chamber and projecting onto a surrounding area of 1200 km², approximately 10 km³ of material: the volcanic construction collapsed on itself! These materials are represented above all by the so called “black waste red tufo” and are characteristic of all “Tuscia rupestre” (rockface). Inside the volcanic ejecta numerous minerals have been found that are very interesting both scientifically and for collectors. Some of them are quite rare and were discovered here for the first time, like *vicanite* and *capranicaite*, found in submillimetric crystals. The level of the water in the lake has varied over the time: three natural terraces, created by water erosion, are visible at around 540, 525 and 513 a.s.l. metres and are connected to various climatic phases. For the prehistoric era we can imagine a much wider and deeper lake, with a natural waterfall into the Rio Vicano. Since the age of the Romans the level has dropped further through the excavation of an underground tunnel, approximately 400 metres long, restored at the half of 1500s by Farnese Family after the Medieval Age ruin.

2. FLORA AND FAUNA

The special microclimate found within the Vico caldera has allowed the survival of living species considered “relics” of the post ice age like the numerous examples of several hundred year old beech trees. The crater wall that circles the lake is covered by a succession of very different ecological environments that range from cane thickets, in the wetlands characterized by flooded reeds and meadows, to hazelnut woods that occupy all the plain and low hills, to fruiting chestnuts in the steeper areas, and finally, to beech and turkey oak woods that surround the caldera up to 965metres a.s.l. on Mount Fogliano. Some species of wild orchid are also present. The section of cultivated land that we see around the lake today, especially in the northern and eastern sectors, is an environment created by man, probably since Roman times: almost all the very fertile lands, today are under hazelnut monoculture. Many species of typical forest mammals live here like the pine marten, the crested porcupine, the European badger, the red squirrel, the European roe deer and the wild boar, the most widespread of the ungulates. The area has great importance for birdlife: especially the aquatic environment comprising the lake, the cane thickets, the swampy Pantanacce area and the surrounding wetlands host numerous species every year among nesting, overwintering and transient species. During the winter you can easily see various types of duck. Easily visible are the diving species who hunt in the deeper waters, disappearing underwater for several seconds before reappearing some distance away, among these is the Great crested grebe, symbol of the Reserve.

3. HISTORY AND ARCHEOLOGY

The stable presence of humans in the Vico area is very ancient. Finds from the most ancient phases date back to the mid-sixth millennium BC, in the Neolithic age: on Monte Venere, the frequentation of a volcanic cavity for cult purposes is known, with the deposition of terracotta objects, vases and bowls. In the Bronze Age (mid-third century BC), the presence of villages of huts near the shores of the lake is confirmed. Little is known about the Etruscan period, when the thick forests that grew on the volcanic slopes were for centuries a natural obstacle to the advance of the Romans, crossed only in 310 BC by the legions of the consul Quintus Fabius Rullianus. In the Roman era, the lake was lowered with a conduit to bring out new lands and became a large fish pond. Its level rose again in the Middle Ages due to the collapse of the conduit, restored in 1500s by the Farnese, lords of the Duchy of Castro, Caprarola and Ronciglione. Its waters have fed the factories of the Rio Vicano valley for centuries: paper mills, carpenters and ironworks, tanneries and copperworks brought wealth and well-being to Ronciglione. Prosperity was also brought by the route of the ancient Via Cimonia, which crosses the Reserve, a true highway of antiquity, for centuries an alternative to the nearby Via Cassia, traveled by merchants, pilgrims and illustrious figures, such as Dante and Leonardo da Vinci. Everyone paid a sort of “toll” to the noble families of the time; along the route was the Borgo di Vico, overlooked by the castle of the powerful family of the same name, destroyed by the papal troops and the soldiery of the Anguillara, their bitter enemies, in the mid-1400s.

4. THE VILLAGES

CAPRAROLA

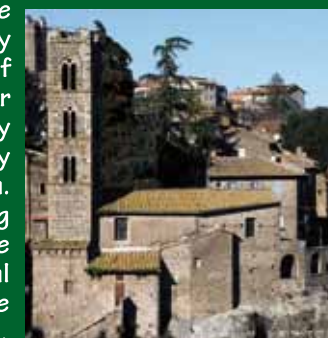
One of the most beautiful villages in Italy, it is dominated by the pentagonal mass of Palazzo Farnese and its gardens, a symbol of the political and economic power of one of the most important Italian families of the 1500s, the Farnese, especially with Pope Paul III. Frescoed rooms, large spaces and



an incredible view towards the Tiber Valley make it one of the most famous historic residences in Europe. The village is worth a visit: walking along its steep streets, buying local products made with hazelnuts and chestnuts or eating in one of the many small restaurants are experiences not to be missed.

RONCIGLIONE

Voted best village in Italy in 2023, it has an older core perched on a high spur of volcanic rock, crossed by a network of alleys from which breathtaking views open onto the Rio Vicano gorge. The severity of the medieval architecture, built with local rock, contrasts with the brightness of the city buildings overlooking the wide and bright streets of the sixteenth-century layout, still today traveled by the colorful caravans of the historic Carnival and the clatter of horses in the famous “empty races”, both traditions deeply felt by the proud “Roncionese” population. We strongly recommend walking around the town and experiencing the numerous traditional and cultural initiatives, to appreciate the liveliness and hospitality of this land.



5. A NATURE “RESERVE”...

The Lake Vico Nature Reserve was established in 1982. In 2008 was enlarged to also include the Ronciglione part of the lake, bringing the actual size to 4,109 hectares and including the entire volcanic caldera. The Reserve was created to protect and conserve environments of great natural importance, where animal and plant species, often in danger of extinction, live. It also protect the landscape from any modification that could alter this. Parks and Reserves don't exclusively play the role of environmental “guardians”, but are, promoters of the area and of the development of the cultural and traditional heritage, as well as support “sustainable” local production. The main office of the protected area is situated in Caprarola (Vt), on Provincial Road 1, Cassia Cimina, at exactly 12km. Given its altitude (above 850 m s.l.), the building has “alpine” architecture and is of historic-architectural interest. Close to the main building, that hosts the administrative, technical and surveillance offices, there is the **CRAS - Wildlife Rescue Centre**, in operation since 1983, an essential point of reference for local authorities and for private citizens: wounded animals, young birds unable to fly, young mammals or animals impounded by the Forces of Law and Order from illegal detention are all brought here. Next to the CRAS there is also an **Educational Apiary**, created in 1999 to promote and develop apiculture, promote environmental and sustainability educational activities in the entire area.



The Management Body of the Lago di Vico Reserve is also responsible for managing the Nature 2000 site “Monte Cimino Special Conservation Area”, in the nearby municipality of Soriano nel Cimino. On the highest peak in the province there is one of the oldest beech forests in Europe, a UNESCO heritage site. The site extends over more than 1000 hectares and offers trails for hikers, equipped areas for rest, panoramic points and a restaurant. Near the parking there is the “Sasso Menicante”, an enormous block of lava that can be swayed, despite its weight, with a lever, mentioned by Pliny the Elder.

6. THE RESERVE IN NUMBERS

1982: year of its inception, **2008**: year of enlargement
4109: area in hectares, including the lake surface;
25: species of overwintering birds
5,000: from the colder areas of Europe;
1100: average annual rainfall in mm
510: altitude in metres of the lake surface (among the large lakes in Italy it is the highest)
965m: maximum altitude above sea level (Mount Fogliano)
48,5: maximum known lake depth
22 m: average depth of the lake
12: the lake surface expressed in km²
800,000: years ago volcanic activity began
90,000: years ago it stopped
1200: km² covered by the volcanic emission in the strongest phase, expelled from the vican complex around **151.000** years ago.

7. BEHAVIOUR TIPS

To preserve the condition of the Reserve we need your attention and help.

Avoid leaving litter outside the designated areas: wild animals love to spread it about in search of food. In the hotter months do not drop burning cigarette butts or park your car on dry leaves: dangerous fires can be caused. Barbecues must only be lit in the designated areas. If you see smoke or unguarded flames immediately call the Park Ranger on **3388662818** or the Regional Emergency number **112**.

Avoid making unnecessary noise, respect your neighbours, both human and animal. The meadows are beautiful in flower, don't collect the flowers, just to see them wilt in your hands. If you want beautiful souvenirs, take as many photos as you wish! Drive your car only in the allowed areas: avoid damage or receiving unwelcome fines. Walk or ride your bike, it's also good for your health! Unauthorized drone - SAPR flights are strictly forbidden.

A map of the walking paths is available from authorized centres or can be downloaded from www.riservavico.it



More info about the Reserve? Follow the QR Code and download the official guide

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riserva_lagodivico

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NATURE RESERVE VICO LAKE



TOURIST INFORMATIONS OFFICIAL SHEET





REGIONE
LAZIO

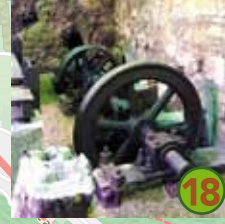
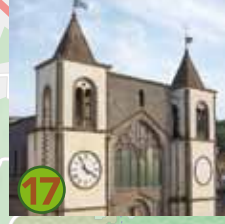
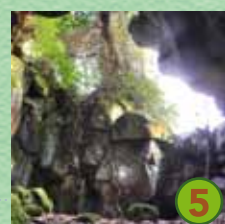


RISERVA NATURALE LAGO DI VICO



PUNTI D'INTERESSE - POINTS OF INTEREST

- 1 Posta Vecchia - Ancient Toll post
- 2 - 8 Punto panoramico - Viewing area
- 3 Sentiero geologico - Geological pathway
- 4 Sentiero natura - Educational pathway
- 5 Pozzo del Diavolo - Volcanic Cave
- 6 Sentiero "Le Prove" - "Le Prove" pathway
- 7 Chiesa di Santa Lucia - St. Lucia Church
- 8 Castello dei di Vico - di Vico Family's Castle
- 9 Abbotatore del lago - Lake outlet
- 10 Eremo di San Girolamo - Hermitage
- 11 Faggete secolari - Centenarian beech forests
- 12 Loc. Croce San Martino - St. Martin cross
- 13 Sentiero non vedenti - Pathway for blinds
- 14 Caprarola - Palazzo Farnese e borgo - Village
- 15 Ronciglione - Borgo medievale - Village
- 16 Eremo di San Leonardo - Hermitage
- 17 Abbazia di San Martino - Abbey
- 18 Museo della Ferriera - Museum of Old Iron foundry



Legenda

- Strada regionale - Regional Road
- Strada provinciale - Provincial Road
- Viabilità minore - Local Road
- Strada non asfaltata - Macadam Road
- Confine Riserva - Reserve Border
- Punto informazioni - Infopoint
- Numerazione stradale - Road numbering
- Sentiero CAI - CAI Pathway
- Area pic-nic
- Camping
- Parcheggio Parking
- Uffici Riserva - Reserve Headquarters
- Sede vigilanza Park Rangers
- Apiario didattico - Educational Apiary
- Spiaggia con assistenza bagnanti Beach with lifeguards
- Spiaggia senza assistenza bagnanti Beach without lifeguards
- Parco Avventura - Tree climbing
- Punto panoramico Viewing Area
- Osservatorio per l'avifauna Birdwatching Observatory
- Punto d'interesse Point of interest
- Torre d'avvistamento Lookout tower



Mappa rielaborata da OpenStreetmap.org