

**GUIDE TO THE**

**VALLE DEL  
TREJA**

**REGIONAL PARK**



## **GUIDE TO THE VALLE DEL TREJA REGIONAL PARK**

**Texts edited by** *Valle del Treja Regional Park offices*

**Translated by** *Authentic Enterprise Solutions Srl*

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GUIDE TO THE

# VALLE DEL TREJA

REGIONAL PARK



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 Parco Regionale Valle del Treja

 @ParcoTreja



*The narrow gorge carved in the Fosso della Selva,  
also known as Fosso del Peccato*

**The historical and natural heritage** of the Valle del Treja Regional Park is not based on an abstract concept, it is rather a concrete collective asset, more than just a local asset. We feel it is our duty to preserve it as intact as possible for present and future generations. This is the reason why our Park, besides offering a full schedule of all types of tours and excursions on weekends, is constantly engaged in environmental education activities towards students, with tours and programs suitable for youngest pupils as well as high school students. The main objective of these initiatives is to raise awareness towards environmental protection, in order to live harmoniously with our territory.

**The new Park guidebook** works in the same direction, providing cues and knowledge to inhabitants, tourists and visitors. It will be easier to discover unusual itineraries of such places, or to travel again through the most famous ones, both for those already familiar with them and for those who have not had the opportunity to see them.

**Providing new tools of knowledge** will give the opportunity – to those who desire it – to walk safely along valleys and hills, woods and streams, archaeological sites and historical city centres. Information about itineraries and places to visit can be found on the hiking map, logical supplement to the Park guidebook. More information can be found on the Park website, very comprehensive and always updated.

**I would like to warmly thank** all the staff of the Park who has worked to this guidebook and to other publications.

President of the Valle del Treja Regional Park  
**Luciano Sestili**



*A young pilgrim hawk, the niches and gorges in the rocky walls are the perfect place for the rapacious to nidify*

**A new Park guidebook**, renewed in terms of contents and graphic design, easy to read and in pocket format. The guide describes the history and the environmental characteristics, examines the geological and archaeological aspects, the morphological features of the land, strongly shaped by water. There are also stories, legends and curiosities. The protagonists are the river and the gorges, dug into the tender tuff; animals are often hardly visible, yet numerous; wavy plateaus and dense woods.

**The history of the Valle del Treja** is inextricably linked to the Faliscan people, contemporary of the Etruscan one, but well-distinct. The Park has also created a specific archaeological guide, tracing the history of the Faliscans, starting from the oldest settlements, to tombs, temples, underlining the correlations with the surrounding area.

**The pathways map** is also available with the Park guidebook. A clear and easy tool providing the necessary information for all types of excursions. The map contains a network of several tens of kilometres crossing all the land, proposing different kinds of itineraries, from easy walks to more challenging hikes. All guests can enjoy this charming and beautiful setting, discover new views and landscapes.

**All these features** contribute to create our ambition to share and make people fall in love with such places. The passage from knowledge to a sense of belonging, of identity, and, as a consequence, of protection is the objective we wish to encourage.

Director of the Valle del Treja Regional Park  
**Gianni Guaita**

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# THE PARK



*Steep walls, thick woods and medieval villages  
are the characteristic of Valle del Treja*

## The protected area

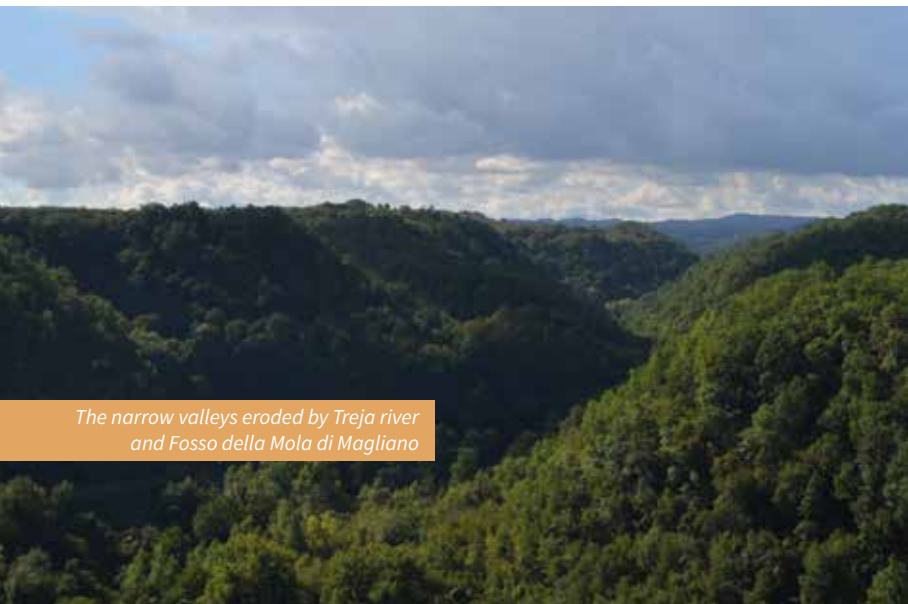
**T**he **Valle del Treja Regional Park** was born to protect and preserve a significant part of the Treja gorges. It was **established in 1982** with the regional law n.43 and covers a surface area of **658 hectares**, in the area of **Mazzano Romano** and **Calcata** municipalities, between the provinces of **Rome** and **Viterbo**. The perimeter of the protected area follows the external edge of the tuffaceous gorges dug by the Treja river and two tributaries: the Fosso della Mola di Magliano and the Fosso della Selva.

The valley landscape is the result of a complex geological history, full of **volcanic eruptions** and surface water erosion: the narrow valley bottoms are deeply cut by gorges surrounded by a **luxuriant forest vegetation** that interrupts the surrounding low hills, planted with **arable crops, olive groves** and **hazel groves**. A territory of great landscape interest that preserves a valuable environmental heritage: considerable animal and plant species, some of them even rare, found haven and peace in the sheltered gorges. The steep forms of the landscape contributed to protect the natural environment: nowadays the areas where the morphology prevented men from building and farming was unfavourable, offer to visitors a similar view to the one our ancestors could enjoy in the past.

The initiatives of the Park aim to manage and protect natural ecosystems and to add value to the cultural resources, promoting a soil use compatible with environmental protection, ensuring a parallel social and economic development of local communities.

## The gorges

**T**he Valle del Treja, with its slopes, its hills and cliffs, is the result of a very long geological history, deeply influenced by the presence of volcanos in the Sabatini complex. The numerous eruptive stages, that between **700,000** and **40,000** years ago alternated with long dormancy periods, covered ancient rocks and lands, creating thick layers of tuff interrupted by loamy and sandy layers. The erosive action of the Treja water and its numerous tributaries engraved the majestic tuffaceous tableland, creating, with its ceaseless flow, deep canyons that nowadays abruptly interrupt the gently rolling hills of the surrounding area. The water abundance and the particular microclimate of these huge cracks allowed the vegetation to grow lush. These savage gorges with their hidden steep cliffs has attracted humanity since the beginning of times: the Faliscans were the real dominating people of the Treja valley, they dug and shaped rocks in order to build their cities. Conquered by the Ro-



*The narrow valleys eroded by Treja river  
and Fosso della Mola di Magliano*

mans, the Faliscan centres were abandoned before being populated again in the Middle Age when a number of fortified well-defended villages were built on the tuffaceous spurs. Nowadays, only some of them survive and, with their narrow winding streets and their house grounded on the rocks they seem to extend, appear to be precious guardians of the old times atmospheres. The result of such a long evolution is an exceptionally beautiful land, where nature and history create an extraordinary combination. Some of the ancient streets crossing the valley are still accessible, thereby allowing to immerse in thick shady forests, following streams of different dimensions, whose quiet flow is interrupted by drops and waterfalls that create enchanting water games. Here and there, hidden by the vegetation, traces of human beings: the obscure threshold of a Faliscan grave, the ruins of a medieval tower or an ancient mill, an unexpected engraving along the excavated roads. The abundance of historical and archaeological proofs combined with the magnificent view points from the heights surrounding the valley is deeply inspiring and makes people feel part of such a beautiful natural environment.



# THE ENVIRONMENT

*The narrow valleys of the gorges hide  
a wild and lush nature*

## The climate

**T**he climatic and environmental conditions of a region shape the aspect of the region itself, influencing decisively the creation and the characteristics of soils, the distribution of vegetation and the fauna.

The Valle del Treja Park is located within the area with a temperate Mediterranean climate, with **mild winters** and **hot summers**. The average monthly temperature gradually increases from 6.7°C in January, the coldest of the year, up to 24.3°C in July, before decreasing continuously and regularly until December. The average annual rainfall is around **950 mm**, the driest month is July and the rainiest is November.

The set of annual data of temperature and precipitations provides information about the aridity of the area, a fundamental parameter for its influence on vegetation. The Valle del Treja suffers from a two-month period of summer aridity, between mid-June and mid-August: it is not an excessive condition as it is mitigated by the significant annual rainfalls.

These are the general characteristics of the Park taken by the nearest weather stations (Civita Castellana and Nepi), but, on a local level, the main climate parameters differ considerably.

The narrow and steep sides of the gorges hamper the sunlight spreading, hardly reaching the bottom. Going down towards the valley floor, shading increases progressively with a drop of temperature. At the same time, the luxurious vegetation and the several streams contribute to increase

dramatically moisture inside the valleys. The result is the creation of a **particular micro-climate**, significantly cooler and damper compared to the external plateaus, and where the summer dryness period is strongly mitigated, or even nullified.







*The fog reveals a thermic inversion, common phenomena in the gorges due to which the air temperature rises the higher the altitude, conversely to what normally happens*

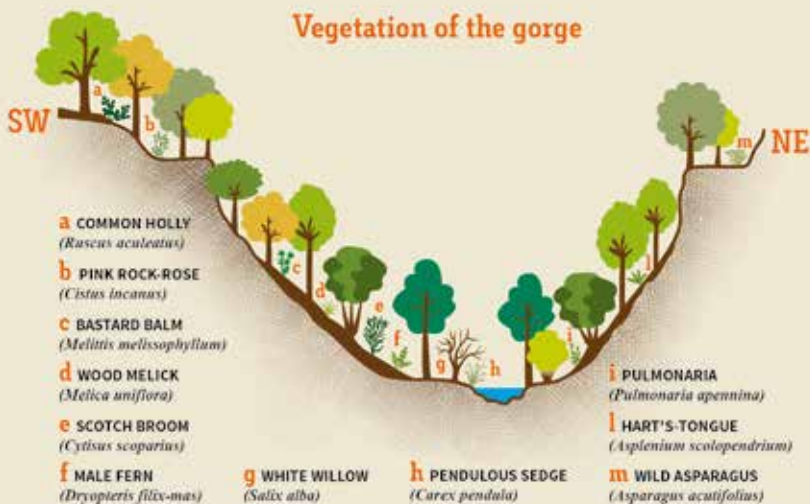
TABLE

## Thermal inversion inside gorges

*Cool at the bottom, hot on the top*

The morphology of the gorges, narrow and deep engravings dug by water along the surrounding plateaus, is at the basis of a particular atmospheric phenomenon that makes this area important and precious: **thermal inversion**. The **vertical thermal trend inside these gorges is inverted** compared to normal, with an increasing air temperature at higher altitudes, instead of decreasing.

The vegetation composition proves visibly this difference: climbing down into the gorge, the microclimate conditions change and the presence and distribution of plant species vary as well: those plants which are available outside



are gradually replaced by other plants which are more suitable for the cool and damp environment at the valley bottom. By simplifying, climbing down these narrow engravings, in a depth of a little more than a hundred metres, corresponds, in terms of vegetation, to climbing the slope, from sea level up to 900 and more meters. The sequence is inverted, with **the Mediterranean vegetation on the higher part and the montane forest to the bottom.**

Some beech specimens survive exceptionally into some Latium gorges, at 200 meters altitude: in our region, this species can be easily found at more than 900 meters altitude. Regardless of the beech presence, the woods inside the valleys host different species normally found in the Apennine beech forests, remainders of a cooler era, giving these formations a huge phytogeographical interest.



**DOWNY OAK**  
(*Quercus pubescens*)



**FIELD MAPLE**  
(*Acer campestre*)



**HOLM OAK**  
(*Quercus ilex*)



**MONTPELLIER MAPLE**  
(*Acer monspessulanum*)



**EUROPEAN HACKBERRY**  
(*Celtis australis*)



**TURKEY OAK**  
(*Quercus cerris*)



**COMMON HAZEL**  
(*Corylus avellana*)



**BLACK ALDER**  
(*Alnus glutinosa*)



**COMMON DOGWOOD**  
(*Cornus sanguinea*)

## The geology

**T**he origin and the geological development of the Treja valley are strictly linked to the eruptive phenomena of Vicano and Sabatino volcanoes complexes, that between 700,000 and 40,000 years ago, alternated their eruptions.

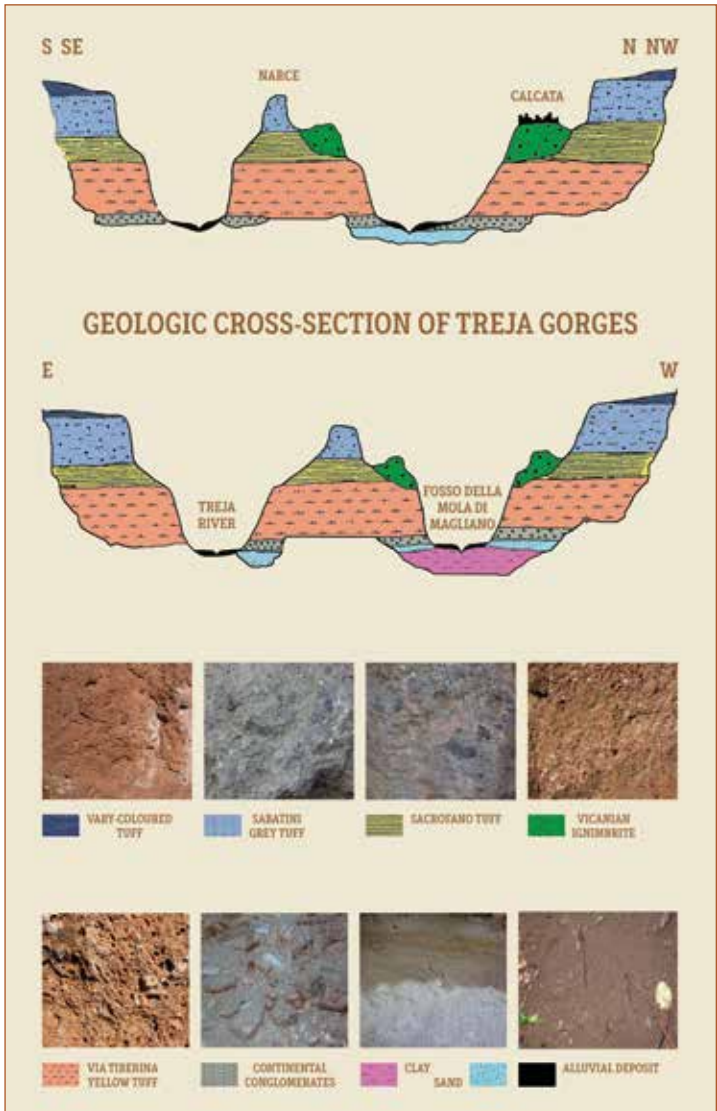
Liquid and gas mixtures found a way towards the surface, projecting out with great violence and at long distance **enormous quantities of materials** that, gathering and cementing, gave birth to those **thick layers of tuff** all along the area of the Park.

The flowing surface water erosive action, deeply digging volcanic coulters, caused, alongside gravity, the present land conformation: very deep valleys, with steep slopes with terraces, influenced by its lithological nature and, as a consequence, by different levels of soil erosion, of outcropping rocks.

In the Park area volcanic materials lay on sedimentary Plio-Pleistocene rocks, constituted by clays and marine sands dating back to the Pliocene (geological epoch, between 5.3 and 2.5 million years ago, when sea submerged a large part of central Italy), followed, upwards, by stratifications of conglomerates and silts, or loam, dating back to Pleistocene (between 2.5 million and 12,000 years ago), when a huge river, the "**Paleotevere**", ran along the territory depositing an enormous quantity of materials.

These sediments are quite important from a hydrogeological point of view, because they constitute the impermeable base layer of the slopes in the volcanic deposit above, that are on the contrary very permeable. Above the sedimentary base, there are volcanic rocks with variable thickness, from 60 to

100 meters. At the end of the stratigraphic stages, there are materials from the filling of crater floor, diatomite deposits, travertines and river wash of the present Holocene.



TABLE

## The Treja river

Up to 700,000 years ago, the **ancient Tevere river** flowed in an **alluvial plain** replacing the Treja valley. Then, the activity of the Sabatino volcanic complex raised the area by at least a hundred meters. The river, deviated by the materials produced by volcanic eruptions, created a new way to the east of **Monte Soratte**.

Its ancient path was engraved by the waters of Treja, that nowadays flows following the opposite direction to the one originally followed by the Tevere. A direction, from the west to north-east, that leaves the sea behind: an unusual combination, caused by the orographic conditions of these places.

*The foamy water of the Treja river  
in the area of Monte Gelato*



The source of the Treja is located on the Monte del Lagusiello, near the lake of Bracciano. Starting from here, the river flows into the Tevere, to the north of Monte Soratte, after a run of 36 kilometres, 13 of which protected by the Park. Despite a short river course, the Treja gathers water from a huge area, crossed by **a rich and complex hydrographic network**. The whole basin reaches the lake of Vico and includes an area of 497 square kilometres.

The origin of the name Treja derives from the confluence of three ditches. At the beginning of its path, the river is known as Fosso del Pavone. Just a little upstream from the edge of the falls of Monte Gelato, it mixes its water with the water of the Fosso della Maggiorana first, and then of the Fosso Sarnacchiola: the Treja, also called as Tregia or Triglia, would find its origins in the confluence of these three ditches.



## The flora

**T**he vegetation of the Park is characterized by highly extended forests, completely covering the gorges and extending for more than 60% of the whole protected area. Most of the area is covered by **broadleaf and mixed forests**, whose specific composition and structure change considerably as a result of changes in environmental characteristics, such as exposure, slope, substrate depth.

Outside the gorge, the most represented type of wood is constituted by oak woods dominated by **Turkey oak**, a plant historically used by humanity to produce firewood. Nearby, other plants grow: the

*The flourishing of the *Ranunculus lanuginosus* colors the underwood in Spring*







*Cyclamen all over the paths*

**downy oak**, particularly common in arid and sunny areas, the **field maple**, the **field elm**, the **europaean hop-hornbeam** and, sporadically, the **common oak**. The **cornelian cherry**, the **europaean spindle**, the **hawthorn** and the **common privet** grow on the forest floor. They are thermophilic woods, widespread on the lowlands and hills with slight slopes. Mixed downy oak forests predominate on sunnier slopes with shallow soil, mostly airy forests below which typical

holm oak forest species grow, such as **wild asparagus**, **common wild madder** and **spring sowbread**.

Inside the gorge, microclimate conditions differ from the outside. Due to poor insolation and ample supply of water, even in the hottest and driest summers, there is a high moisture content and cooler air. The woods growing in the valley are thick and abundant; with the Turkey oak, there is the **europaean hornbeam**, dominating cooler places, the **sycamore** and the **common hazel**.

Environmental conditions favour mesophilic species, namely the typical species of cooler regions; the forest floor hosts also typical species of the mountainous beech forests, such as the **dog's mercury**, the **woolly buttercup**, the ***Cardamine chelidonia*** and the **snowdrop**.

In the valley bottom, ferns flourish thanks to high moisture: they grow prosperous, clinging to the rock sides, varying from **male fern**, **lady fern**, **hart's-tongue fern** and **soft-shield fern**.

On those slopes dominating the gorges, the continuous disintegration of tuffaceous walls allows only the species that are resistant to drought and have robust roots, allowing them to cling to the rocks, to grow. Many thermophilic communities develop here, such as **holm oak** with typical Mediterranean shrub species, such as **mock privet** and **Viburnum tinus**. The **common hackberry** and the **Montpellier maple** also grow in these areas.

The riparian vegetation is important as well, it grows along the Treja river and the ditch of the Mola di Magliano. The most common species is the **black**

*A centenarian turkey oak dominates the Monti Li Santi hill*





*Black alder tree, one of the most common trees in this area*

**alder**, with the **black poplar** and the **white willow**. Around river bends, where river bed widens, there are woods dominated by impressive specimens of **black poplar**.

An aspect linked to the forest environment and well-represented in the Park is brush woods, spread both in forests' borders and in areas grown or grazed in the past and now abandoned. The most common specimen is **plum orchard**. Towards the south, on deeper soils, there are **common broom** bushes, while, on

eroded soils, there are **pink rock rose** and **spanish broom** bushes. Those bushes often create a mosaic structure with uncultivated areas, where ruderal species such as **chicory**, **mugwort** and **bindweed** dominate.

Despite the high water quantity, the aquatic vegetation is not very developed, extremely limited by a poor insolation of the valley bottom, due to the particular morphological conformation of the territory and the intensive presence of plants alongside the shores. Where the river bed widens and the radiations increase, dense aquatic vegetation communities develop and we find **watercress**, **fool's-watercress**, **water speedwell** and **brooklime**. Near the waterfalls of Monte Gelato, the extent of the bed and the poor stream enable the development of a rich aquatic vegetation, dominated by the **common water-starwort** and the **curled pondweed**.

TABLE

## The undergrowth of the gorges

### *A hardly well-known environment*

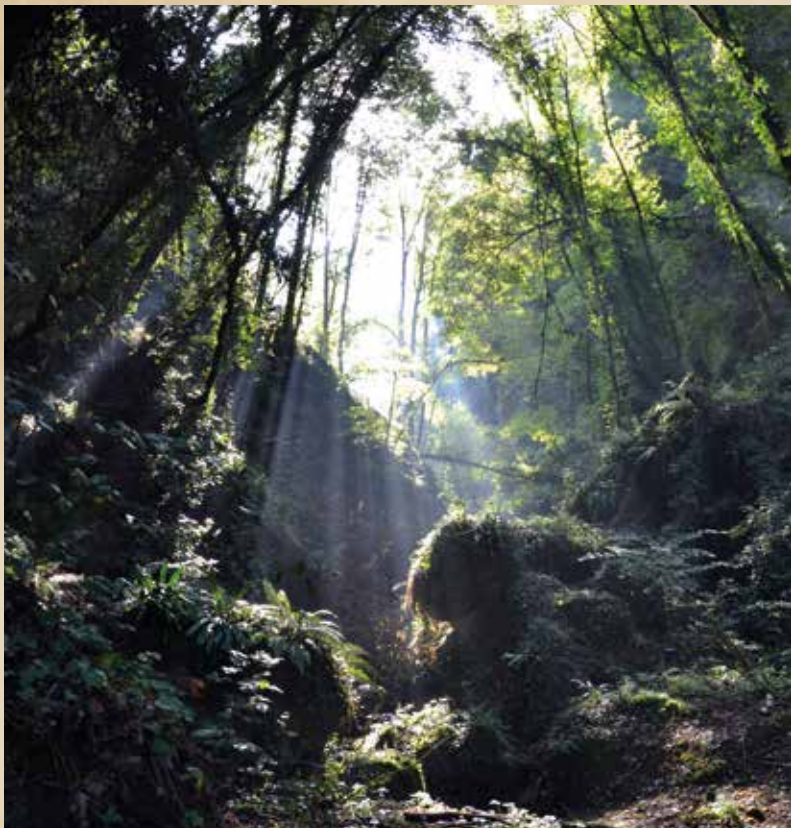
The microclimate characterizing the inside of the gorges, cooler and damper compared to surrounding plateaus, favours the development of a particular vegetation.

There are many herbaceous species typical of the beech forest, or in general of cool forests, growing in the shadow of the Treja Valley.

They bloom from February to May. **Snowdrops** are the first to appear in the leaves fallen from the trees, lining the coolest sides of gorges at the end of winter.

*The snowdrop flourishes only in Winter*





*The lack of light and the high humidity within the caves favor the development of ferns*

There are also the greenish flowers of the **spurge-laurel** and the **wood spurge**, but the **blue anemone** stands out, with its flowers veering from white to intense blue, the rose flowers of the **hollow corydalis** and the **spring vetchling**, or those bright blue-violet of the **lesser periwinkle**.

There are also, denoting again the mesophilic aspect of these woods, the **moschatel**, the **italian garlic** and the **wood millet**.

## The fauna

**T**he variety and good state of conservation of natural environments of the Park ensure the common presence of a **rich and diverse fauna**.

Among the mammals, some forest species found refuge in the dense woods of the Treja, already disappeared elsewhere, such as the **wild cat** and the **pine marten**. There are also **European badgers**, **beech martens**, **porcupines**, **foxes** and **dormice**. The **squirrel**, crowding again the territory during the last decade, is nowadays well-distributed and can be seen while jumping on the branches of the trees. The **polecats**, a mustelid typical of wet areas, is rare and elusive. The **wild boar** is the most common ungulate, but some **fallow deer** escaped from a breeding area live now on the hills surrounding the Treja.

The group of micro mammals is well-represented by **dormice**, **wild mice**, **shrews** and **voles**. Inside caves and graves dug into the rocky sides there are bats, including the **greater horseshoe bat**, **lesser horseshoe bats** and the **greater mouse-eared bat**.

*A fox, quite common in this area*





*A buzzard, found injured, is about to be set free*

Several bird species, breeding and passing bird, were reported in the Park. Between the rapacious, it is easy to see the **common kestrel** and the **common buzzard**, while the presence of the **honey buzzard**, typical of wood environments, and the **peregrine falcon**, that nests on the steep rocky slopes. Between the nocturnal rapacious, there are the **long-eared owl**, the **eurasian scops owl**, the **tawny owl** and the **little owl**. Many birds dwell on open areas, such as the **nightjar**, a nocturnal bird, the **red-backed shrike**, the **woodchat shrike** and the **whitethroat**, while border areas, between woods and camps, host the **oriole**, the **hoopoe** and the **long-tailed tit**. In the forest it is also possible to find the **green woodpecker**, whose call echoes in the valley, the **great spotted woodpecker**, **wood pigeon** and the **eurasian jay**. Along with the branches of the watercourses it is possible to notice the **kingfisher**, the **cetti's warbler** and in some sections of the Treja river **moorhens**, **mallards** and **grey herons**.

There are numerous species of reptiles, some of them are important such as the **Hermann's tortoise** and the **four-lined snake**. The most common species of snake are the **green whip snake**, **Aesculapian snake** and the **asp viper**, while among those species more linked to water environments we can find the **grass snake** and the rare **dice snake**. We can also find lizards and geckos along with the **Lacerta viridis** and **blindworms**.



Grass snake

The water abundance in the entire land favours the amphibian species. The most common species is the **Italian stream frog** which is strictly linked to

Spectacled salamander





humid forests, once it reaches adulthood it stays by the watercourse only on the breeding season. It acts just like the **spectacled salamander**, a small peninsular endemic urodell, quite common in valley of Treja. It is also possible to find the **common toad**, the **green frog** and the less common **north-ern crested newt**.

The integrity of the river sides and the lush vegetation enable watercourses crossing the basin of the Treja the perfect habitat for a wide range of fishing species. There are 5 fish species which are protected by the Habitat Directive: **South European roaches**, **vairones** and **horse barbels** are quite common in this land. There are still a few numerous populations of **Arno goby** and the rare **brook lamprey**.

The arthropods are still to be studied but we can remember the presence both of the **Potamon fluviatile**, quite present in all the watercourses of this area, and of the Odonates such as the *Onychogomphus uncutus* and the common *Calopteryx splendens* e *Calopteryx haemorrhoidalis*.

*Potamon fluviatile*



TABLE

## The wildcat

*The cat, quite rare, has been detected in the valley of Treja*

**Camera trapping** is used to document the presence of elusive species in a territory.

Cameras linked to an infrared sensor, collocated within the protected area have captured the pictures of many animals: **porcupines, badgers, foxes** and a probable sample of ***Felis silvestris***, one of the most elusive predators living in this area.

The pictures taken aren't clear enough to have a specific determination, but some distinctive elements of the fur, the striping on the neck, on his body and on his tail, underline some of the characteristics of these species.

*A *Felis silvestris* "captured" by a hunting camera*





*The park ranger installing a hunting camera*

The determination of this species by a picture is quite difficult to achieve, but the presence of the wildcat in Treja valley has certainly been certified by the revenue of a dead sample near the protected area; the DNA analysis has confirmed the first hypothesis based on how the animal looked.

The progressive destruction of the natural environment, pollution, and human behaviour have limited his hunting ground, reducing his vital space. This is a demanding species in terms of habitat: he is at the peak of the food chain and demands a pristine environment, which offers preys and havens. Its presence in any territory shows a high environmental quality.

TABLE

## The fish of the Treja river

*An important basin with rare species*

The presence of a high number of protected fish species and the lack of alien ones, which are mostly present in the final branch, makes **the Treja one of the best preserved watercourses in the region of Lazio.**

The narrow rocky walls where it flows have protected the river from both anthropogenic activities that have jeopardised many watercourses in lowland areas and the works of repopulation for fishing purposes, which have released all over

*Barbus tyberinus*  
in a drawing by Hardy Ritche



the region species belonging to other zones, which has posed an actual threat for the local ones. **This precious heritage is being jeopardised by pollution.** In many cases in the last few years all along the Treja there have been a great number of fish deaths caused by the release of great quantities of waste water.

The high natural character of the river has always allowed **a recovery of the ecosystem** and the fish have always repopulated the Treja river, coming from tributaries and other sections that weren't polluted.

It is not possible to know for how long the river will still be able of resisting to these alterations and so we need to commit ourselves to preserve this natural environment.



# THE HUMAN PRESENCE

*An ancient road carved into tuff  
that goes from Lo Pizzo toward Treja*

## The soil use

**T**he soil of the Park is characterized by a wide extension of natural and semi-natural surfaces that cover about 70% of the overall area. The missing part is mostly occupied by rural areas (27%), which include semi-natives and tree cultivations (hazel groves and olive groves), scattered over the external perimeter of the Park and in some cases they also grow in gorges.

The urbanized areas do not interfere with the area of the Park, which includes within its borders only the two historical centres and a few random settlements of isolated houses in the municipalities of Mazzano Romano.

The populations which has a direct relation with the protected area is composed by the inhabitants of the two municipalities, which account for **4.000 people**: less than 1.000 in Calcata and slightly more than 3.000 for Mazzano Romano. The number of people that actually live in the Park is not available, but basically it's only the number of permanent residents of the two villages and of those rural houses that are inside the perimeter.

*Olive groves are very common in this area*

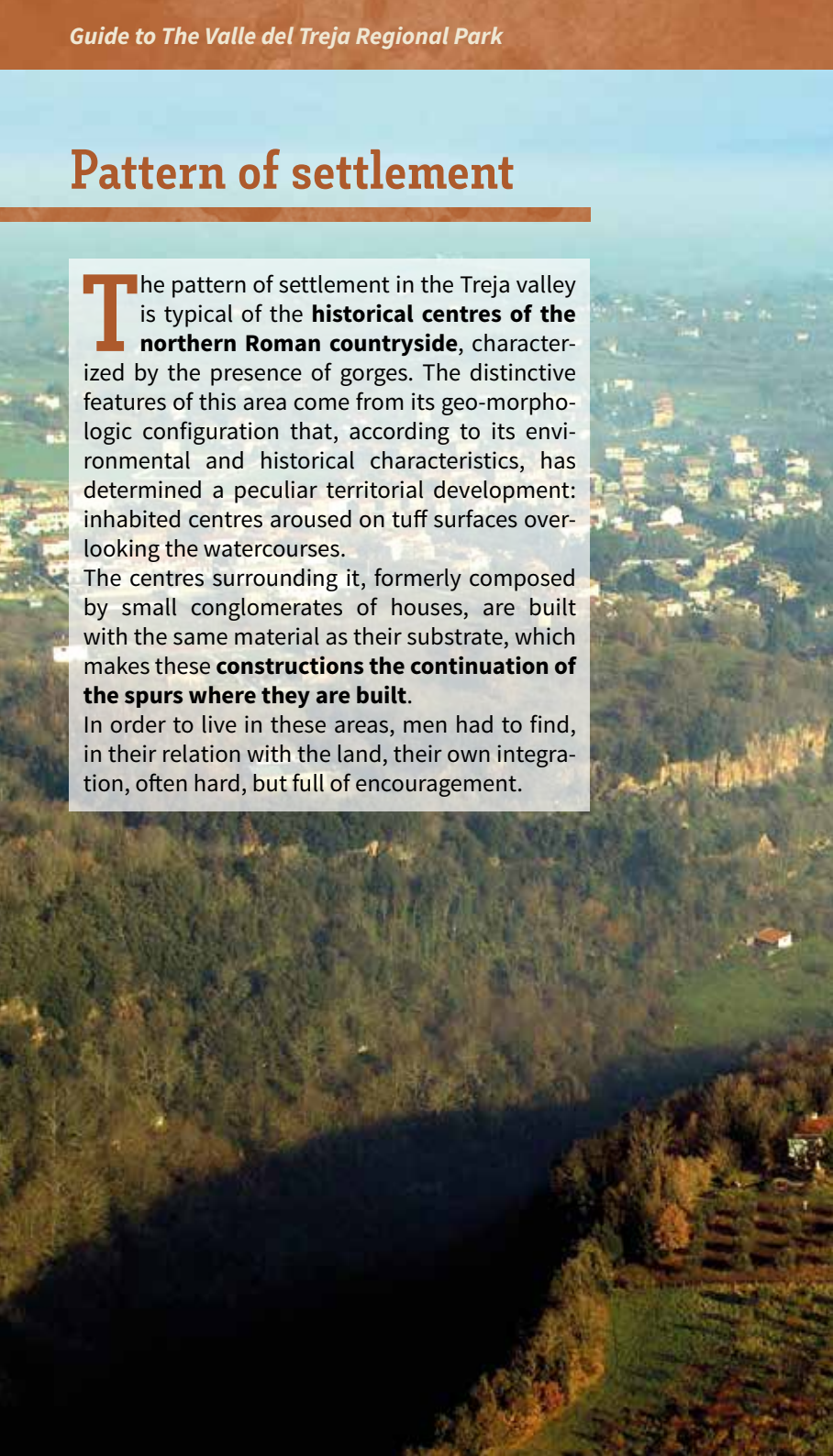


## Pattern of settlement

**T**he pattern of settlement in the Treja valley is typical of the **historical centres of the northern Roman countryside**, characterized by the presence of gorges. The distinctive features of this area come from its geo-morphologic configuration that, according to its environmental and historical characteristics, has determined a peculiar territorial development: inhabited centres aroused on tuff surfaces overlooking the watercourses.

The centres surrounding it, formerly composed by small conglomerates of houses, are built with the same material as their substrate, which makes these **constructions the continuation of the spurs where they are built**.

In order to live in these areas, men had to find, in their relation with the land, their own integration, often hard, but full of encouragement.







*Sky view of Mazzano Romano and the Treja valley. Men had been able to take advantage of the tuff cliffs to build protected villages*

Since the pre-historical period, when the settlements were located along the main roads on the valley floors, the stand has taken advantage of the incredible defensive peculiarities of the tablelands. The villages, settled on tuff spurs, often delimited by watercourses on two or three sides and fortified on the other ones, are the classic picture of the Pre-Roman settlement. The Faliscans have been able to adopt themselves to the harsh condition of the area, creating, between the VII and the III century B.C., an incredibly rich culture, as **the ceramic, jewellery production and funeral architecture** show. The pattern of settlement, brought to light thanks to the excavations, shows that the tablelands at that time were highly inhabited with a typical pattern of settlement. The “Faliscan” system doesn’t have a clear hierarchy of the inhabited centres, as it happened in the Etruscan system, but it has a territorial independence for every centre, always making provision for the economic and political capital of *Falerii Veteres* (currently known as Civita Castellana). The system was made of a complex road network that linked the different inhabited centres, with roads in valley floor and tablelands.

The roman conquer of the *Ager Faliscus*, completed in the III century B.C., leads to a completely different territorial system. Both for economic reasons and for strategic-army ones, not needing to be defended, the model of the fortified villages wasn’t no longer necessary and so it turned into a system of villas and farms set in the more fertile tablelands. The largest inhabited centres are, in this period, Nepi and *Falerii Novi* (built in the III century B.C. not far from *Veteres*). The viability pattern is based on two big axes of communication: the eastward one with **Via Flaminia** and the westward side with **Via Amerina** (which linked Rome and the Faliscan lands with the region of Umbria). As soon as during the II century B.C., a slow inversion started and the set-

tlements of the Pre-Roman period started to be abandoned. The link with the land of the gorges is reaffirmed in the pattern of settlement typical of the high medieval period, when, for the renewed defensive necessities, they choose to move towards the most remote and inaccessible places, repopulating the primordial centres of the Faliscan times. From the VII century on, farms and scattered rural sites are abandoned in favour of fortified settlements, typical of the Middle Ages, which during the X century were already an important border made of big and small fortresses to defend Rome. With the full accomplishment of this new kind of medieval settlement, viability too is characterized by a double-axes system between Via Flaminia and Via Amerina, with some secondary links that unfold on paths towards the castles. The pattern of settlement won't change anymore. Numerous **castles will be abandoned** between the XIV and the XVII century, by preferring bigger **villages**. Yet the road network, the agricultural exploitation of the tablelands and the water resources of the valley bottoms (especially for **mills**) will stay untouched for many centuries.

*The Via Amerina in Cavo degli Zucchi in the municipality of Fabrica di Roma*



TABLE

## The castles of Valle del Treja

### *An important defensive medieval line*

Between the IX and the X century the riots carried out by the Saracen and the gangs of bandits turned the countryside in an insecure place, forcing the populations to abandon their settlements and use fortified structures.

The process of encastellation characterized a long period in which this land forced the inhabitants to repopulate many times the ancient Faliscan villages, located on fortresses.

The particular conditions and its strategic-geographic position turned the narrow Treja valley into a vital defensive line, which protected Via Flaminia and also the rich city of Civita Castellana. Therefore along the Treja river and its tributaries new castles were built in order to ensure the

*The majestic ruins of Castel d'Ischia in the municipality of Castel Sant'Elia*





*The ruins of the watchtower of the Castello di Fogliano in Faleria*

defense: the Calcata and Faleria themselves, the fortified abbey of Santa Maria, the small cities of Porciano and Filissano, the castles of Paterno and Fogliano, Castel d'Ischia, Castel d'Agnese and many others.

Still today, along the paths in the countryside, it is possible to find in the higher parts of the cliffs, imposing and magnificent ruins of the strategic fortresses that used to defend the land during the Middle Ages.

## The Ager Faliscus

**T**he ancient Faliscan people lived in a volcanic, steep and gruelling territory settled between the **Cimini Hills**, the **Tiber river** and the **lake of Bracciano**, known as **Ager Faliscus**. The heart of this region can be identified with the Treja river which represents an actual way of communication, that going from the south to the north, flows into the Tiber river. The *Ager Faliscus* has always been occupied since the prehistory, especially from the **Neolithic** period, with a strong presence of numerous small caves called “*Cavernette falische*”. During the **Bronze Age**, there were high ground villages scattered all along the area of the valley of Treja. The establishment of the city of Veio appears to be at first sight as an obstacle for the occupation of the Faliscan territory, that seems to empty out from villages and the communities that lived there during the Bronze Age, fascinated by the developing city. However, only after the beginning of the VIII century B.C. the city starts to perform a demographic growth. In the crossing focal points of Valle del Treja, little tuff cones are occupied by conglomerates of huts: the future Faliscan cities. Quite soon it is possible to see Falerii (currently known as **Civita Castellana**), the “**capital**” of the territory, that gave its name to the entire region, together with Corchiano, Vignanello, and climbing up the Treja course towards the south we find Narce (Mazzano Romano/Calcata). Unique enclave on the right bank of the Tiber that wasn't properly neither Etruscan nor Latin but it was a crossroad of peoples and cultures, an open border, a middle ground, a natural and intercultural corridor that makes the *Ager Faliscus* a one-of-a-kind region. The relation with Veio is also innate thanks to the myth: it is to mention the relation between the mythical founder of the city of Falerii, Halesus, with



*The Ager Faliscus and the neighbor territories of the pre-Roman era  
(based on De Lucia Brolli and Tabolli, 2013)*

the king of Veio, Morrius, its progenitor. This character, according to some mythical traditions, may be the son of the king of Mycenae Agamemnon, according to others he may be the son of Saturn or Neptune. **The Roman conquest of Veio**, carried out and accomplished by the consul Furio Camillo in the **396 B.C.** left the *Ager Faliscus* at the mercy of the expansionistic ambitions of Rome. The consul had already attacked Falerii imposing a peace treaty. The hostilities returned with the Faliscans' allies of Tarquinia, ending up in another defeat and a new treaty. Probably Narce will also be annexed to the Roman political control and a perpetual treaty of peace with Falerii will be signed. But in 241 B.C. another rebellion aroused against the Roman domination. The Faliscans are defeated once again by the Romans and so that determines the



*The hill of Narce seen from Le Rote*

beginning of the Faliscans cultural absorption into the Roman one. In this period Narce is completely abandoned, while the population of Falerii moved into the tablelands. The culture and the language of the Faliscans are constantly and slowly assimilated into the Roman ones, becoming part of the political and cultural heritage of Rome imposed all over the peninsula. The testimony of a memory of identity that survived the Faliscans' political end is the vivacity of the sanctuaries of Narce and Falerii, that were still attended until the end of the I century B.C. The Roman supremacy over the *Ager Faliscus* was signed by the construction of the big via Amerina, that joined Rome with the city of America in Umbria. Its construction date is unknown, but the fact that the path corresponds for a short section with the principal hinge of Falerii Novi, testifies that its construction has to be dated back to at least the 241 B.C., which is the date of destruction of Falerii and



the foundation of the new city. The path of this road didn't reach the city of Narce; it had to be intended as a tool to carry out the **process of romanization over the Ager Faliscus**. This trace survived as an artery road for this territory even after the fall of the Roman Empire, as testified by the medieval sites and towers built along the road that had a control function. The strong identity of the *Ager Faliscus* territory didn't end with the ancient age. The proof can be found in the settlement, during the Middle ages, of the Diocese in the city of Civita Castellana, the ancient Falerii capital of the *Ager faliscus* which territory today still belongs to the diocesan one.

*The monumental access door to the ancient city of Falerii Novi in the municipality of Civita Castellana*



# PLACES OF INTEREST



*The waterfalls of Monte Gelato,  
one of the most prestigious sites of the territory*

## Calcata

**L**ittle medieval village, erected on a high cliff and defended by a deep gorge, Calcata is particularly charming, because it stands on **a real volcanic rock cliff**, in the real heart of the Treja valley.

It appears on official maps in 974, when the abbot of San Gregorio of Rome was given the castle. Since then, a long list of landlords and protectors alternated in leading the territory, including the most famous Sinibaldi and the Anguillara family.

The village preserves **the medieval structure unchanged** still today. The entrance is on the bottom, through a double door dug in the rock, leading to the main square. The little streets leading to several precipices started from there: the cliff appears to be dug with a myriad of passages, cellars and, sometimes, graves. The oldest tuffaceous houses date

*The square Umberto I in Calcata*



back to **1200**, streets are paved with large river pebbles since **1700**, the square with the church is based on Renaissance structures.

The **baronial palace**, modified between the 18th and 19th century, was restored and now is owned by the Park.

Nowadays, a few dozen people live permanently in the old village. In 1935, Calcata was added to the list of villages to be restored: only the occurrence of the war avoided the relocation of inhabitants and the destruction of the houses.



In the '70s, anyway, **the local population moved to new Calcata**. Since then, the abandoned village started to live again paradoxically, due to the presence of people from outside.

It turned out to be an ideal place for intellectuals, artists, writers and artisans: with their shops dug into the red tuff, they brought a breath of unconventional and bohemian air.

In 2000 the cliff was reinforced and the village definitively saved: the ancient inhabitants, however, had already left the village.



*During the Fall winter mornings, the village of Calcata is covered with fog*

TABLE

## The Palazzo Baronale

*The most important building of Calcata*

Dating back to the 11th century, the **Palace of the Anguillara family** is the most important building of Calcata and, with its crenelated tower, characterized the shape of the village.

Over time, after hosting the Anguillara family, it hosted all the main services of the village: the post office, the school, the medical facility.

Until the '50s, the main hall hosted the most important events of the village, such as the wedding receptions of almost every citizen.

After relocation in new Calcata, the Palace was abandoned for many years, propped in some areas and without a roof portion.

**Acquired by the Park**, it was completely restored with a restoration project by the architect Paolo Portoghesi. The renovation works, started in 1995, enabled the full recovery of this structure, **now hosting the Park offices**.

The ground floor halls are used as exhibition area, or for conferences, courses, public events, open to private initiative and associations: thus, the Palace is available to the public.

In 2015, the basement area underwent major conservative restoration works: it was used in the past as a **public bakery** by the inhabitants. The huge hall with vaulted ceilings is certainly **the most ancient area of the Palace**, along with other halls with barrel-vaulted roof bordering the main hall.

Originally, it was used as a stateroom, then largely restored over the centuries: it turned out to be

used, at the end of 18th century, as a kitchen and storeroom.

The use as public bakery compromised its painted decorations, covered over the years with smoke layers. Works carried out concerned the painted surfaces of vaults, walls and oven.

The removal of thick layers of mixed painting and haze brought back to life **frescoes of great interest lost in the mists of time**, reminding the powerful **Anguillara family**.

*Palazzo Baronale of the Anguillara family in Calcata, seat of the Park offices*



TABLE

## The Holy Prepuce relic

### *An ancient and famous legend*

The presence of the **relic of the Holy Prepuce in the church of the Santissimo Nome di Gesù** is one of the main curiosities linked to Calcata, so that it has been quoted in Saramago's novel "The gospel according to Jesus Christ" and also in Joyce's masterpiece "Ulysses".

During the Sack of Rome, carried out by the landsknecht in 1527, many of the treasures that were in the palaces, houses and city museums were stolen by the soldiers. Among those there was one of the relics belonging to Jesus Christ's circumcision officially recognized by the Church and preserved in the Sancta Sanctorum of San Giovanni in Laterano.

The relic was held in a precious chest decorated with gems and probably the landsknecht, who almost five centuries ago hid it under its blouse, was more attracted by the case rather than by its content. Then, the famine and the plague disseminated all over the city, and so the soldier of fortune had to leave; he was then captured and imprisoned.

Thirty years later, according to the tradition, the reliquary was found in his cell, where he hid it. It was then brought to the church of Calcata. The holy relic was kept there until the '80s, when **it mysteriously vanished**. Still today, nobody knows for sure if it was a theft or, maybe, it was a secret acquisition by the Vatican, aimed at eliminating the attractiveness of the relic.

Truth to be told, in 1900 the Holy Office had already advised through a disposition to take care of the relic in Calcata and when it disappeared, the



reliquary had already been moved into the presbytery, hidden from the eyes of the devoted ones.

The story of the landsknecht is the most credited version regarding the presence of the relic in Calcata. It goes without saying that **many legends were born**. One among the most popular ones is based on the fact that the relic might have been buried in front of the Calcata church entrance. From that moment on no animal has ever crossed the entrance of the village again. Oxen, sheep and donkeys started to kneel in front of the door and they wouldn't start walking again. At the end, in order to understand such a behavior, they started to dig and so the reliquary was found. The animals started to walk again and the inhabitants to boast the treasure.

*A precious reliquary preserved for many years in the church of Santissimo Nome di Gesù in Calcata*



# Mazzano Romano

**S**een from above, we immediately understand why Mazzano Romano was built there: it stands on a tuff butte that plunges into the valley, hidden and easy to protect, but also near the river and not far from the main ways of communication. The history of its territory begins with the first settlements of the Faliscan people that used to live in this valley for centuries.

In 241 B.C. the Romans invaded this area, and so the region became a land of conquer and it was then used in part as a **penitentiary colony** and it was also given to the veterans of the army of Rome. And it is exactly because of a name of a roman family, Matius, and to its territory called **Matianus**, that the current name is Mazzano.

*A sky view of the medieval village of Mazzano Romano, the helix structure shaped by the alcoves that follow the cliff can be noticed from here*



With the fall of the Empire, both the great ways of communication disappeared and so the wide rural Roman villas did. In centuries to come, the Roman lords pushed the populations to occupy the sites of the entrenched ancient Etruscan-Faliscan cities, which were **easy to fortify and so safer**, in a time in which the Saracen riots and the gangs of bandits made those lands more and more dangerous. The birth of Mazzano occurred during the Early Middle Ages. The first news date back around the 750 A.C. It didn't have the solid building consistency, we could imagine it as a castle, stronghold of a rural area, that at the same time was part of a much bigger agricultural holding, known as *Capracorum*, which covered from the current Prima Porta to Nepi and it used to supply Rome with wheat, oil, wine and other food commodities.

During the entire period of the Middle Ages until the Renaissance, Mazzano became a focal center for the **routes of pilgrimage** due to its closeness to three main roads: the **Via Francigena**, which led the pilgrims from England and France towards Rome, the **Via Amerina**, which brought them from Rome to the region of Umbria, and the last one is the currently known as *Cammino degli Angeli* (**The route of the angels**), a Franciscan pilgrimage route, which brought the pilgrims from Rome to Assisi.

In 945 A.C. the powerful Roman prince Alberico - father of the future Pope John XII - gave this settlement and its territory to the abbot of the **Roman monastery of Santi Andrea and Gregorio al Celio**, who became the owner of the feud until 1526, year in which the village was sold to the powerful **family of Anguillara**. In 1599, Flaminio Anguillara sold Mazzano to the **Cardinal Lelio Biscia** and in 1658 the feud was inherited by the noble **family of Del Drago**. The princes owned it until the '50s, in which the **land reform** implemented by Ente Maremma expropriated and assigned to the population almost the entire feud.

Still today, **the ancient settlement preserves the medieval building plant**, with a helix structure made up of alcoves that follow the cliff shape. Throughout the village there are numerous architectural elements that decorate the buildings façades: double lancet windows, capitals, corbels, cornices with emblems. Decorations that tell the story of an important past which village was characterized by imposing buildings.

*Important palaces overlook the narrow street of Mazzano Romano*



TABLE

## The Park of Treja in the cinema

*More than one hundred films in the Valley*

The suggestive waterfall and the surrounding lush wilderness have made the **Treja one of the favorite scenarios, according to film directors and photographers** who search for an idyllic atmosphere.

The first encounter with the camera was crucial: in 1950 **Roberto Rossellini** chose Monte Gelato as the film set for the realization of “**The Flowers of St. Francis**”, recreating a few moments of the pilgrimage of the monks towards Rome.

Since then, the cinema has never abandoned these zones, **over a hundred films where shot** near the waterfalls and along the river Treja.

In the '60s, the construction of a soundstage began and almost all the inhabitants became background actors.

*A photogram of Rossellini's film  
"The Flowers of St. Francis" of 1950*





*A break during the shootings in Monte Gelato*

Many of them are still recognizable on the setting of Roman camps, battles between Indians and cowboys or in Maciste films. These were also the set of many comedies of Franco and Ciccio and also for “They called me Trinity”; even a few scenes of “For a few dollars more” by **Sergio Leone**, “Sparrow” by **Franco Zeffirelli** arriving to Don Quixote by the great **Orson Welles**.

This land is not only about waterfalls. The funny adventures of “Totò destination Piovarolo” took place in Mazzano too, while some other scenes of “The adventures of Pinocchio” by **Comencini** have been shot in the Baronial Palace of Calcata, which is now the seat of the Park’s offices. Calcata has also been the set for **Tarkovskij’s** film “Nostalghia” and a famous scene from the film “My friends” was shot in the ancient village.

In the last few years, film productions have decreased, yet Monte Gelato and the entire Treja valley are still a prestigious place for TV dramas and advertisements.

TABLE

## Santa Maria di Castelvecchio

### *An abandoned medieval settlement*

Santa Maria di Castelvecchio arises on a rocky buttress, in Valley of Treja and adjacent to the village of Calcata.

**Completely abandoned already in 1600**, it preserves the ruins of some of the ancient buildings. The actual *castrum* used to cover the external part of the buttress, separated from the tableland by a ditch, today partially covered, that went from north to south.

Here arises **an imposing squared-based dungeon** made of tuff blocks. In the surrounding areas there are numerous hypogeum wells and

*Santa Maria di Castelvecchio, the ruins of the XIV century church have recently been consolidated by the Park*







*Internal view of the medieval tower of Santa Maria*

rupestrian settlements. Outside of the walls there are some recognizable ruins of **a religious building from the XIV century**, made up of a church, an ancient monastery and a defensive wall that used to encircle it.

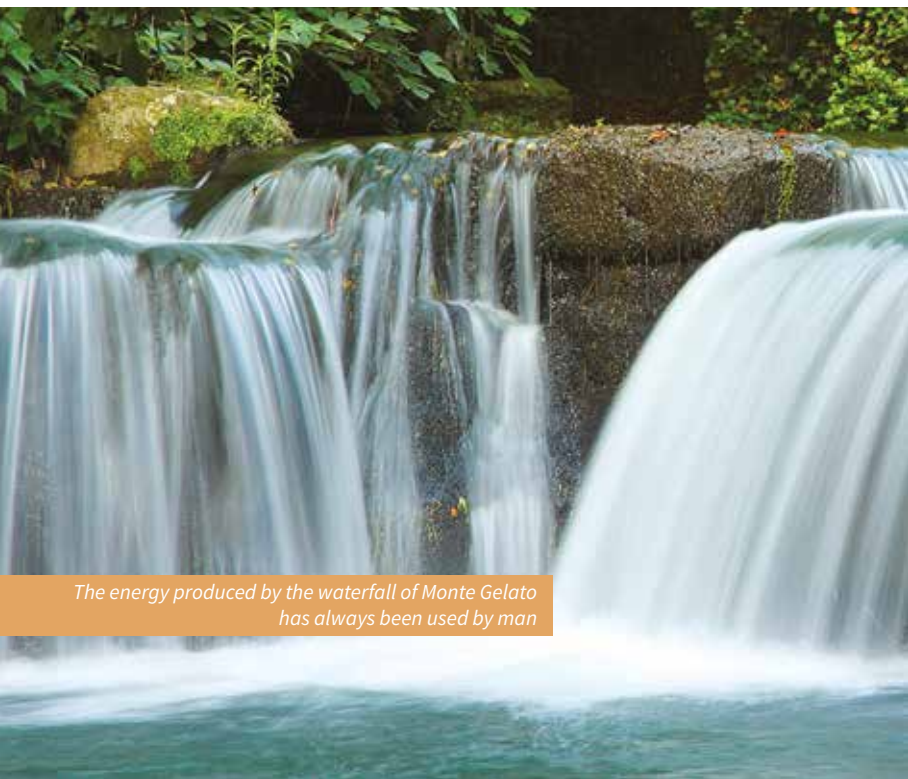
The whole settlement has been subjected to restoration activities carried out by the Park by reinforcing the walls and the roof of the main tower was rebuilt to avoid infiltration and collapses.

On Easter Monday, as custom dictates, the church is the destination of a procession and a rural party.

## Monte Gelato

**M**onte Gelato, with its **medieval tower**, the **ancient watermill** and its **waterfalls** along the river, is one of the most famous sites of the Park, and it is an important landmark for the entire area. Since its pre-historical origins, the site has preserved evidence of many different settlements of the past: from the Roman villa of the I century B.C., to the rural settlement of the VIII century A.C., until the watermill built in the nineteen century that worked until the '60s, it has today become the symbol of the Park.

The Mola, or mill, was first built in 1830 by will of the **Del Drago family**, that in 1837 will become the owner of the entire manor. It is a conglomerate of



*The energy produced by the waterfall of Monte Gelato has always been used by man*

buildings that was built on the basis of medieval plants: a structure built among the two branches of the river adjacent to the famous waterfalls, perhaps it was already used as a mill, along with a tower on the southern side where the current road is. The original mill was built on the first structure, composed of a multi-level tower adjacent to a lower building. The milling zone was on the lower floor of the highest building while the entrance was on the first floor and it was linked to the opposite tower through a bridge. Near the mill there was a massive wall which had **valves to regulate the water flow**. It worked until the '60s. The mill has been abandoned for a long time, yet in the '90s the Park bought and restored it.

Today it is an information point that has illustrative panels that show the history and how the old mill works describing the main aspects of the surrounding area.



## The ancient city of Narce

**N**arce, with its origins belonging to the Bronze Age (XIV century B.C.) was one of the most important sites of the *Ager Faliscus* region. The excavation campaigns carried out between the end of the nineteenth and the twentieth century in the inhabited settlements and in the necropolis of the whole area, have brought to light many valuable objects.

Most of them are exposed both in the **National Etruscan Museum of Villa Giulia** in Rome (these objects were the material of the first expositions of the museum) and in the **Archaeological Museum of the Ager Faliscus in Civita Castellana**.

The name Narce, which was recently assigned, comes from the most important of the three hills and it may hide a more modern meaning in “*in arce*”, which means “on a fortified site”.

The toponym proves that the local community preserves the memory of an acropolis in the highest part of the tuff hill. A significant inscription scratched on a chalice has given back what it should have been the Etruscan name of the ancient city. The inscription quotes a “*spura*” (Etruscan word for City) called *Thevnalthia*.

This name has Italian origins, not Etruscan, and it might have been the original Faliscan name of Narce and it could be translated as “On the *Thevna* fortress”.

The historical data show period of depopulation at the beginning of the Iron Age, which lasted almost for a hundred years, also probably linked to the attractiveness of Veio. During the VIII century B.C. the three main hills of **Narce**, **Monte Li Santi** and **Pizzo Piede** are occupied.

In the VI century B.C. mighty tuff walls are built, and



*The three hills where the city of Narce was built and the surrounding necropolis, in an inscription of Adolfo Cozza and Enrico Stefani*



*A chamber tomb in Pizzo Piede*

today we still have a few ruins of it.

These walls were made to organize the acropolis of Narce in three big steps, while they were a sort of double town walls for Monte Li Santi.

Probably the 10 meters high and 50 meters long viaduct can also be related to the same period. It used to link both hills.

The development of the historical city ended with a demographic concentration in Pizzo Piede at the end of the VI century B.C. **The fortress was impregnable**, and used to have a big **town wall** and a **moat**.

The fall of the near city of Veio in 196 B.C. must have led to the decline of this Faliscan center.

In 293 B.C. the defeat of the Faliscans, allied with

Tarquinia against the Romans, has led to a strong resizing of Narce and it was also abandoned in some cases. We have little information regarding the following phases. Roman villas were built in some part of it, but the occupation of the site still continues during the Middle ages. On the peak of Monte Li Santi, for example, it is possible to see the typical cave houses of this territory and some ancient walls belonging to an **old monastery**, element which might have a relation with the current name of the hill.

The three-tableland construction may appear quite small today compared to the dimension of the community that once inhabited it; this is due to the **erosion**, quite common in this area.

Nevertheless, it is still possible to notice the imposing position of these settlements both on the surrounding area and on the main communication roads, represented by the watercourses flowing in the canals.

*Medieval settlement in a cave on the hill of Narce*



TABLE

## The Cavone di Monte Li Santi

### *A monumental Faliscan necropolis*

It was a typical custom to dislocate the sepulchral zone along the inhabited areas of the big cities, as if they wanted to limit the territory by using the sepultures of their predecessors.

The necropolis of Cavone di Monte Li Santi, one of the most monumental necropolis of Narce, is located along a big way cut in the tuff, a “hollow” way from which probably the name comes from.

The necropolis was probably used since **mid-7th century B.C.**, as the pit grave discovered during the first excavations at the end of the 1800s proves. It was largely used between the 6th and the 4th century B.C. when the walls on the side of the way were widely excavated and modified to build a number of chamber tombs with cave façades (carved in the tuff).



*The rupestrian tombs of the necropolis of the Cavone di Monte Li Santi are located in a thick forest*



The tombs, except a few particularly complex cases, generally have a **little antechamber and a principal chamber**. There could also have been crypts carved in the wall that were sealed after the deceased burial, or in other cases it used to have funeral tombs carved in the rock.

The small size of most of the chamber tombs reflects the social model of the community of Narce, which was characterized by **little domestic nuclei**. The burials had to be designed to be used again for others burials, considering also the few number of burial recess and funeral beds. Nevertheless, more elaborate monumental tombs with large rooms have been recorded.

The latest works, carried out completely by the Park, enabled the **excavation of three chamber tombs with decorated entryway** and provided an overview for those who crossed the ancient “tagliata” road, even if for a short stretch, with the spaces for worshipping activities in front of the chamber tombs.



TABLE

## The Faliscan shrine of Monte Li Santi - Le Rote

*An incredible holy complex on the banks of the Treja River*

Since 1985, year in which the shrine of Monte Li Santi - Le Rote in Mazzano Romano was discovered, a few meters far from the Treja river, the Superintendence has led many archaeological studies, that continued until 2004 and are the proof of an extraordinary peri-urban shrine. Particularly active from the VI to the II century B.C., the shrine was dedicated to fertility, birth and married life. It could have been dedicated

*One of the altars found in the ancient sanctuary of Monte Li Santi - Le Rote*





*Some of the terracotta masks exposed at the MAVNA in Mazzano Romano*

also to the close relation with the worship of water, considering the particular location near the river.

In 2014 the **Park has promoted and financed works to improve the area** aimed at building a new cover for the archaeological zone of the shrine. During the excavations **almost 300 pottery masks were found, objects that were offered to the gods of the shrine along with an incredible series of keys and skewers made of iron**, which prove a collective ritual of the community, perhaps after being defeated against the Romans.

Thanks to the cooperation of the American Institute of Archaeology, nine students of the Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro (High Institute for Conservation and Restoration) have restored the ancient surfaces and the incredible colors of the artefacts found, which were then deposited at the laboratory of the **Archaeological Virtual Civic Museum of Narce (MAVNA)** in Mazzano Romano, where they are currently exposed.

# VISITING THE PARK



*The network of paths that cross Valle del Treja offers the possibility to explore a unique landscape*

## Itineraries

The Park is characterized by a **narrow network of paths** that cross the complex system of gorges that help to reach all the most interesting areas; crossing the narrow woods of the Treja and reaching historical sites, it offers a wide vision of this charming land.

Here we recommend a few paths that, taking advantage of the old paths allow a half-a-day hiking or an all-day hiking.

These are suggestions that we provide, the paths can be changed and integrated following the different available paths that are indicated on the hiking map of the Park.

The geological nature of this land makes it prone to collapses and landslides so it is advisable to check the feasibility of the paths before starting.

### Degree of difficulty of the paths

<b>EE</b>	path for expert people, it develops on a tricky and steep terrain, with steep slopes and slippery
<b>E</b>	hiking path structured on signed tracks that requires a certain walking training experience and appropriate footwear
<b>T</b>	simple muleteer and comfortable path tracks

## 1. Valle del Treja, from Monte Gelato to Calcata

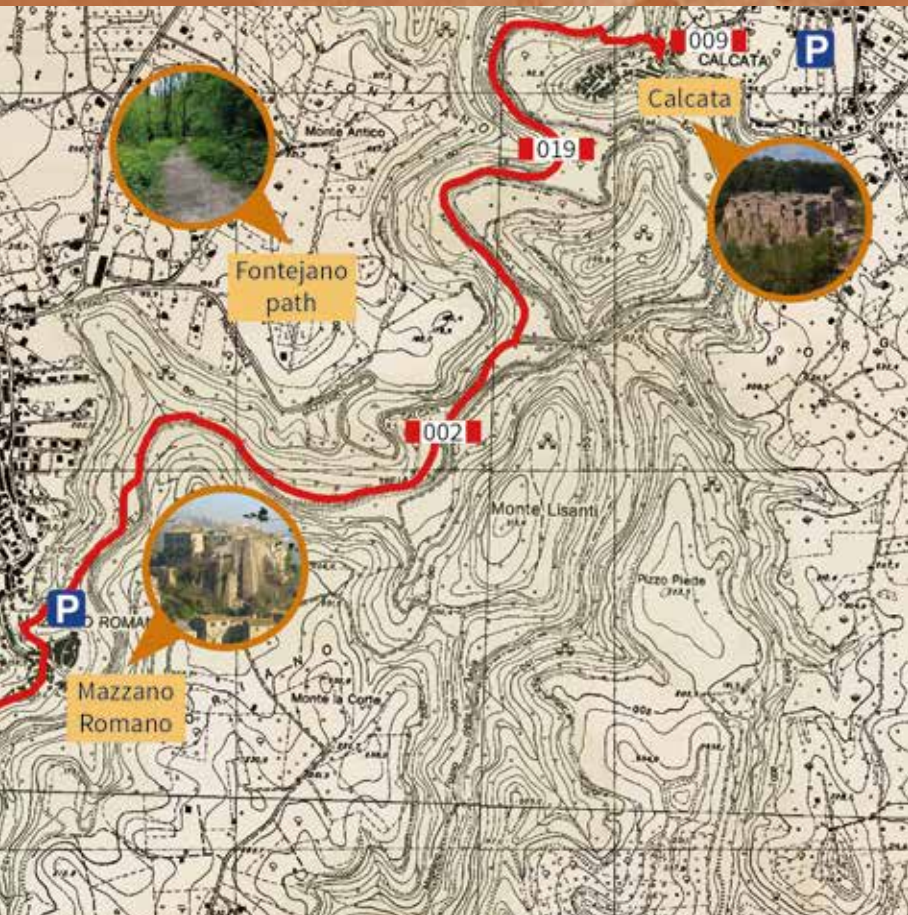
**Park path:** 001, 002, 019, 009

**Length:** 7 km

**Difficulty:** EE in the section from the waterfalls of Monte Gelato to Fonte di Virginio, E/T in the following section

The route that goes from the waterfalls of **Monte Gelato** to **Calcata**, passing through **Mazzano Romano** is surely one of the most complete and interesting of the area for its variety and natural beauty. The path is a 3 hours long and besides the appropriate footwear it is necessary to be careful and pay attention especially in the first section, which is advised only for expert hikers and it has to be taken into consideration only in good weather conditions.





The starting point is the site of Monte Gelato waterfalls, in concordance with the path on the branch of the Treja river, it is identified as **001**. At the beginning the track is quite comfortable, after the waterfalls it shrinks and climbs over the tuff cliff. This section has been provided with iron cables and steps to facilitate the circulation, it requires though attention and appropriate footwear for mountain activities. Moreover, we suggest you avoid this path in case of bad weather conditions such as rainfalls or windy weather, which may increment the risk of slippery ground or landslides.

0 150 300 450 600 Metri



After this section, the route is no longer so difficult. There are zones in which it is possible to find small water courses and mud areas, after a few minutes there will be a small tributary coming from Fontana Salsa or Fonte di Virginio, which is easy to cross with some latches in the woods, remember to follow the nearest path to the river.

After about fifteen minutes after passing the tributary, the route turns left to cross with a wider one. By keeping the same direction as this tuff track you will arrive to the hill: ruins of old rocky terraces can be seen. Then you will find a descent that will lead you to a wide pasture.

After an hour and a half from Monte Gelato you will arrive to Mazzano Romano. Once you reach the historical center you should take “Via del Lavatoio”, after that, turn right to take the path **002** that will take you to the Treja river in a few minutes.

Follow the river course until reaching the provincial road near the border between the two provinces of Rome and Viterbo. Cross the paved road and take the unpaved road on the left side of the Treja river, you will find a bar that prevents cars from passing it, follow the signal **019** of the Park.

After a kilometer and a half, in an area full of poplars and willows scattered all around the river, you will find a wooden bridge that enables you to cross the river.

You will get to the lower part of the Calcata cliff that it is possible to reach by following the path **009**.

*A path along the Treja*





## 2. The heart of the Park: from Mazzano Romano to Calcata

**Park path:** 002, 019, 009, 014, 011, 012, 007

**Length:** 8 km

**Difficulty:** E/T

This is a sort of loop route which links the two inhabited centers of the Park, Mazzano Romano and Calcata by passing through the ruins of the ancient city of Narce, in a beautiful natural landscape.

The entire route takes about 3 hours.

Starting **from the historical center of Mazzano Romano**, the path starts in “Via del Lavatoio” indicated according to the Park code as **002**. The path descends to the building of the **old washtub** (*lavatoio*). From here it turns right along the path that leads to the Treja river.

The path continues along the river course characterized by thick trees and watercourses, until reaching the provincial road near the border between Rome and Viterbo.

Cross the paved road and take the unpaved one on the left side of the Treja river, you will find a bar that prevents cars from passing it, follow the signal **019** of the Park.

After a kilometer and a half, in an area full of poplars and willows scattered all around the river, you will find a wooden bridge that allows you to cross the river. Climbing a steep slope, you will get to **Calcata**. Once you have visited the village, you have to descend along the opposite side, taking “Via della Fontana Nuova”, following the path indicated as **014**, passing over the basement of Calcata in order to get to Fosso della Mola.

There is a bridge to enable you to cross the watercourse, continuing on the left side of the river entering the woods and old and abandoned hazel groves.

Then it is possible to get to the provincial road of Mazzano-Calcata. Crossing the street, you have to continue along the Fosso della Mola and then take the opposite unpaved road after the wooden gate, indicated as **011**.

The 800 metres long path follows the slopes of Monte Li Santi, after a right turn it starts to climb, joining the **municipal road Le Rote**.

The path turns left. After around 200 meters it is advisable to take a small detour that will bring you to “**Cavone di Monti Li Santi**” one of the most interesting necropolis of Narce.

A recent improving project promoted by the Park has led to the reopening of a few tombs, and it has also restored the original aspect of the old necropolis.

The archaeological site can be reached through the path **018** that on the left side enters the woods. Once you take the wooden staircase you will get to the tombs.

Going back to the Le Rote road turning left and then crossing the cultivated lands you will find the path **012**. This path, after around 250 meters, ventures in the woods and starts to descend down the gorge. The path leads to a concrete bridge over the Treja river in order to cross it.

From the left side of the river you can take the **007** path, which climbs up to the historic center of Mazzano Romano, starting point of the hiking.

This path crosses the heart of the Park and has many alternative routes.

From the **014** path that goes from Calcata to the provincial road of Fosso della Mola it is possible to reach the peak of **Narce** hills, the ancient Faliscan city. Right before the beginning of this path a signal on the right indicates the path that leads to the peak: here you will find an extraordinary view of the Treja gorges and of Calcata village.

Another important archaeological site is reachable if you take the path **011** and the road of Le Rote from the right side rather than from the left, reach-



ing the Treja river bank and the ruins of the **temple of Monti Li Santi - Le Rote**.

From here it is possible to shorten the path, both coming from Calcata and Mazzano: a wooden bridge links the Le Rote road with the path **002**, described at the beginning of the route.

*The Treja river in Fonteiano*



### 3. The medieval village of Santa Maria

**Park path:** 002, 019, 009

**Length:** 7 km

**Difficulty:** E/T

The route takes you from the village of **Mazzano Romano**, along with the **river Treja**, to the ruins of the **medieval village of Santa Maria di Castelvechio**, abandoned by its inhabitants during the XVII century. The historical interest and the wide landscape over Calcata make this site one of the most recommended for a journey in Valle del Treja. The duration of this path is about 2 hours and a half and it has a low degree of difficulty.

Leaving the car in Mazzano Romano you have to take the Via Romana towards the historical center, once you get to piazza Umberto I you have to turn left, taking the Via del Lavatoio and from here the **002** path that runs along the Treja river, already described in the previous routes.

Once you pass the provincial road of Mazzano-Calcata, you have to take the path **019**. After around one kilometer and a half a wood signal will indicate the deviation for Santa Maria, that can be reached only by taking the path **009**.

The track, initially flat, climbs along the northern side of the hill. The surrounding environment is the typical one of the gorges: with thick woods that are dominated by maples and hornbeams, among the trees, big rocks that have fallen down from the mountains. Once you overcome this last section, quite steep but short, the path reaches the wide tableland on the top. On the left, you will find the ruins of the church, of a monastery and of the defensive walls. Going eastward it is possible to get to the peak of the rocky buttress where the old

castrum was settled with an isolating ditch which today is partially covered. Some steps enable to overcome the entrance. On the right you will find the watchtower that dominates on the valley, while all around it you can find the recesses of the rupes-trian settlement.

Once the visit finishes, you have to come back and once you pass the church keep walking along the western ridge, passing a wonderful glade with a beautiful view over Calcata and the gorge of the Treja river. After that, the path continues towards Mazzano, in some sections the track becomes narrower but the carved steps enable a more comfortable passage. Once you get out of the woods you have to keep walking on a wider path for almost 300 meters and then turn right taking a large communal unpaved road.

Reach the intersection with the **Vignacce road**, with houses and cultivated fields until you get to the provincial road that takes to Mazzano. In order to avoid the provincial road, since it hasn't got a sidewalk, it is possible, once you get to the communal road, to cross the intersection and take the second road on the left until the end then turn left on **Via dell'Agnese** and from there, after 800 meters you will find the provincial road.

*The path that goes from the Treja river to the Santa Maria cliff*





## 4. Around Calcata - La Valle

**Park path:** 013

**Length:** 5,5 km

**Difficulty:** E/T

This path is a comfortable walk that goes **from Calcata to the valley**, seeing the Treja river for a charming section just to climb then and get back to the starting point through the cultivated lands. The route takes 2 hours to be completed and it has a low degree of difficulty.

The starting point is piazza Roma in Calcata, along the paved road on the left side of the bar, indicated with the **013** number.

Keep walking straight towards north; the path develops up the slopes for almost a kilometer, offering wonderful views over the buttness of Santa Maria, the gorges and over Calcata itself.

The track isn't harsh but we recommend to pay attention anyway, because the presence of clayey zones causes many landslips and landslides.

After about 20 minutes you will get to the Treja river. Keep walking for almost a kilometer, crossing the abandoned hazel groves.

At the crossroad, where the path deviates from the river shore, take the road on the right, which climbs the gorge through narrow curves.

Once you get out of the woods the road turns sharply towards the left, and walking through the olive and hazel groves it is possible to reach a wide unpaved road.

Turn right and go towards south.

After almost a kilometer, in the middle of the countryside, you will get to Calcata Nuova and from here, going down, the medieval village, the starting point of this route.





Castel Fogliano ↑

↑ Via Narcense

013

Calcata

0 150 300 450 600 Metri

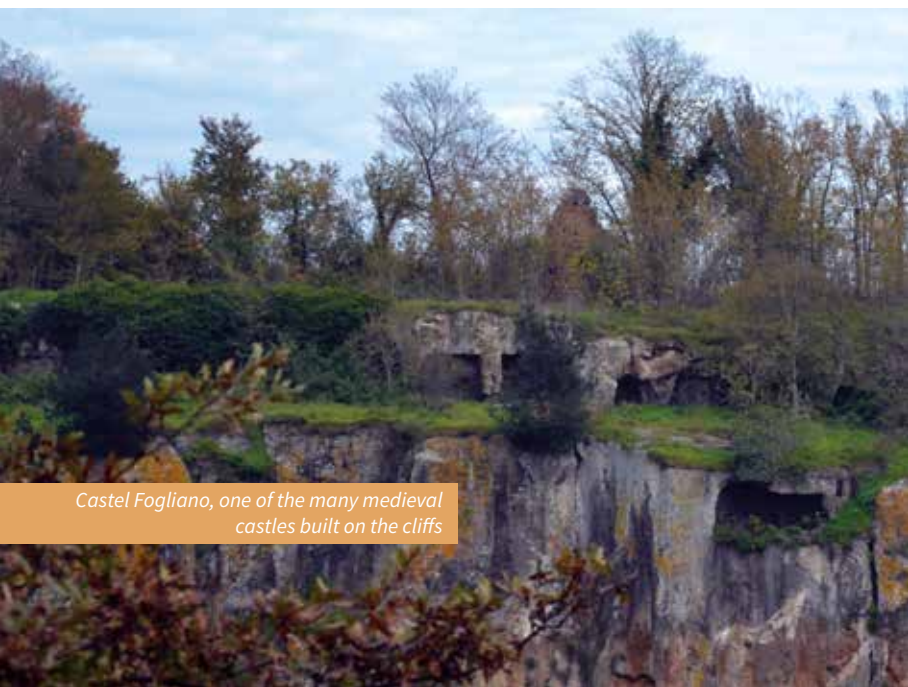
## 5. The Via Narcense and the castles

The beginning of the path previously described coincides with the first section of the **Via Narcense, the ancient road** that used to link, along the Treja valley, **Narce** with **Falerii**, capital of *Ager Faliscus*. The 12 kilometers long path takes almost four hours to be completed.

From **Calcata**, along the path **013** arriving to the crossroad that enables the climbing of the mountainside and to reach of the village, keep going on along the river banks. After a few minutes it is possible to reach the northern border of the Park.

This part of the path is in the hand of the volunteers and during the summer some sections may be hard to complete because of the vegetation.

The path continues along the river banks, between tuff walls, big trees and a lush underwood. After an hour and a half, you should reach the crossroad, leave the track that follows the river and take the one on the right that takes, in about half an hour,



*Castel Fogliano, one of the many medieval castles built on the cliffs*

to the ruins of the **castle of Fogliano**. To get back to the Narcense you have to go down the main path towards the Fosso della Mola di Faleria. Crossing the little bridge, you will get to the Treja.

On the right, you will find the path that will eventually take you to the **castle of Paterno**. Keep walking along the river, the valley opens, the woods are replaced with cultivated lands and the path flows into a comfortable unpaved road that reaches Via Flaminia.

To reach **Civita Castellana** keep walking for a kilometer and a half on the paved road.

Both the castles of Fogliano and Paterno can also be reached with a more comfortable road: it starts from the Faliscan provincial road in Montorso, right after Calcata, and crosses the entire tableland.

This is an easy path that you can complete also by bike or by horse, just follow the indications for Castel Fogliano and after no longer than 4 kilometers you will get to the ruins of the fortress. Going towards north until the end of the tableland the path will flow into Via Narcense.



## WALKS IN VALLE DEL TREJA REGIONAL PARK

	km
001 Fossi della Mola di M. Gelato 1	3,2
002 Fossi della Mola di M. Gelato 2	1,7
003 Fornace	0,4
004 Fonte di Virginio	0,9
006 Lo Pizzo per Campagnano	0,7
007 Settecannelle	0,9
009 Calcata - S. Maria di Castelvecchio	1,4
011 Monte Li Santi	1,2
012 Suriano	0,6
013 Ceciuli	2,7
014 Grotticelli	1,5
015 Narce	0,6
016 I Tufi	1,8
017 Morgi	0,4
018 Cavone di Monte Li Santi	0,1
019 Fontelano	1,5
021 Castellaccio	0,3
023 I Conti	1,9
024 Panoramico Capomandro	0,3
025 Petrina	0,3

			Path in the Park
			Path
			Municipal road
			Via Amerina
			Via Francigena
			Via Narcense
			Provincial road
			State road
			Railway

Part of the map  
of the Valle del Treja Regional Park



Castello di Fossano 9

S. Maria di Castelnuovo 2

CALCATA 1

Necropoli della Polvina 4

Tempio Motta Li Santi 5

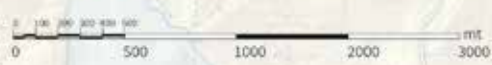
MAZZANO ROMANO 3

Necropoli del Cavone 4

Rocchetta

Fonte Lavinaia

Motta di Magliano



PARCO di VEIO

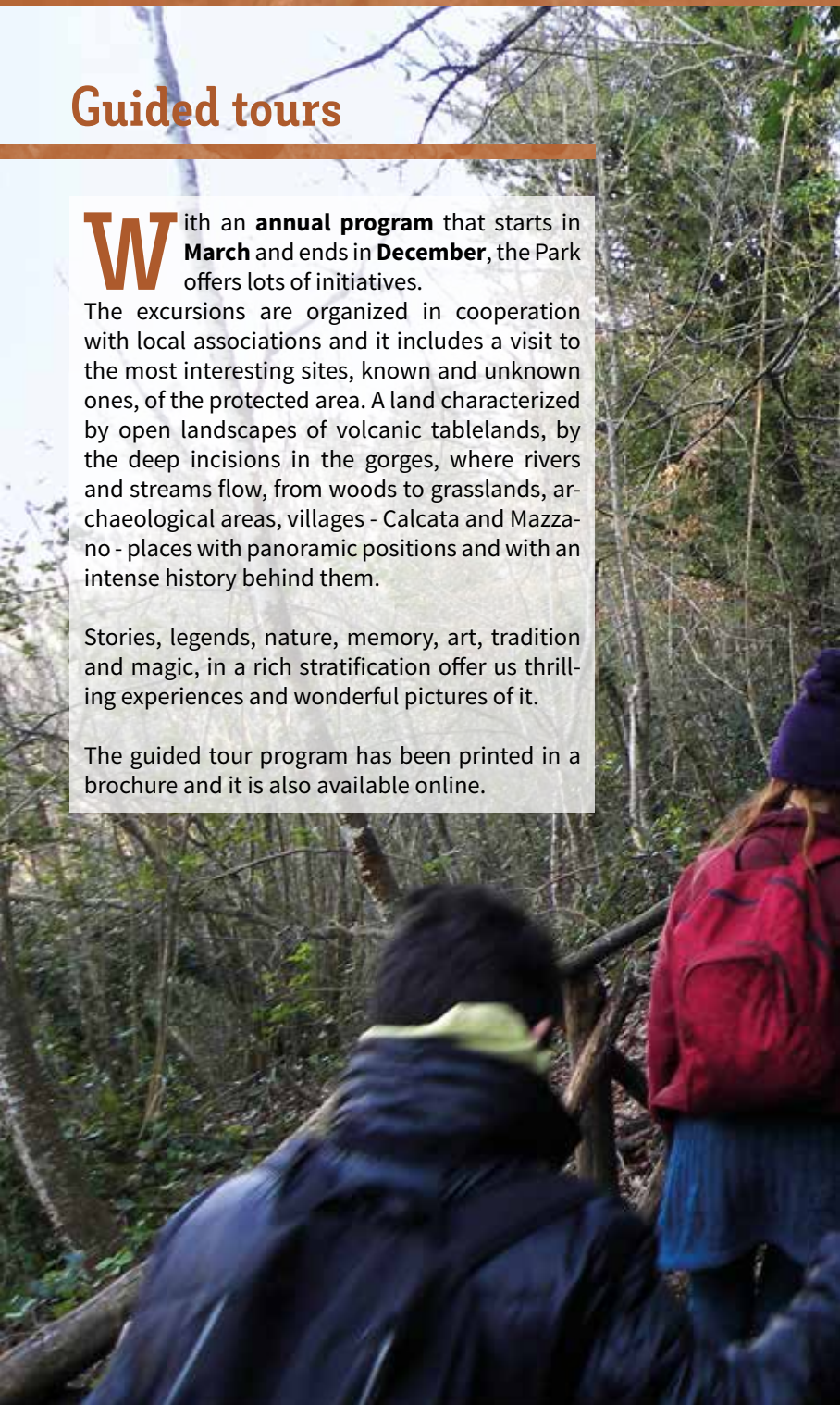
## Guided tours

**W**ith an **annual program** that starts in **March** and ends in **December**, the Park offers lots of initiatives.

The excursions are organized in cooperation with local associations and it includes a visit to the most interesting sites, known and unknown ones, of the protected area. A land characterized by open landscapes of volcanic tablelands, by the deep incisions in the gorges, where rivers and streams flow, from woods to grasslands, archaeological areas, villages - Calcata and Mazzano - places with panoramic positions and with an intense history behind them.

Stories, legends, nature, memory, art, tradition and magic, in a rich stratification offer us thrilling experiences and wonderful pictures of it.

The guided tour program has been printed in a brochure and it is also available online.





Guided tour to the ancient city of Narce

TABLE

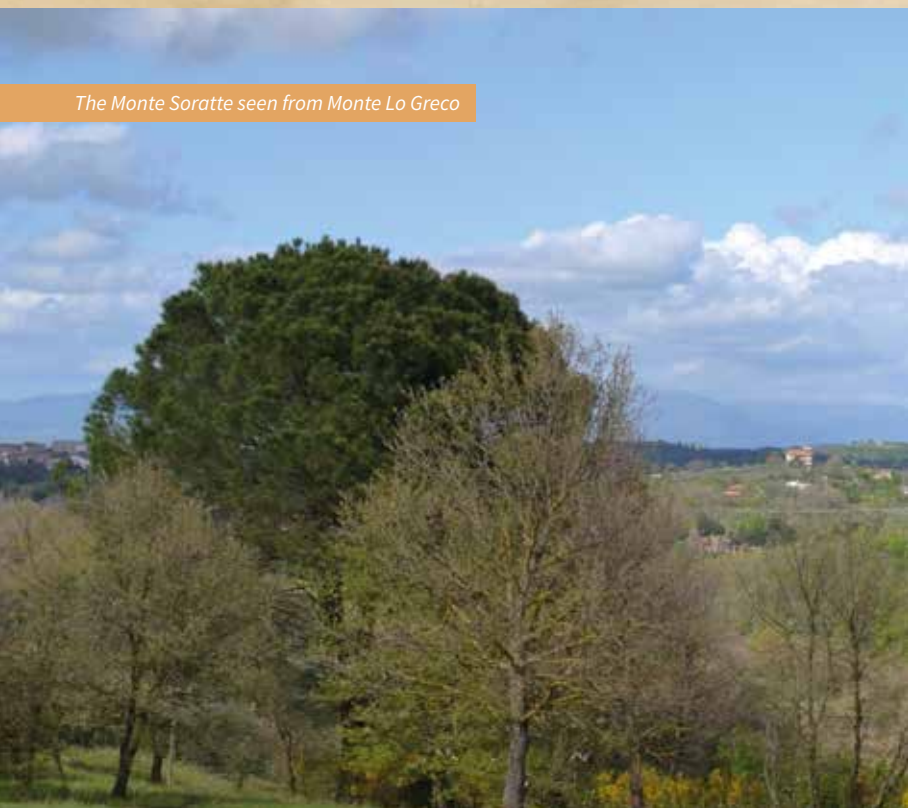
## Monte Soratte

Soratte is **a fascinating and mysterious mountain**, a reference point for the Lazio region.

It is a beautiful skyline, wrapped by the sweet hills that sway for kilometers on the plain that characterizes the landscape shaped by the ancient volcano called Sabatino.

Its unique nature and the dotted structure have

*The Monte Soratte seen from Monte Lo Greco*





made it unique, distinguishable even from far away. Its peculiarity has contributed to transform it in **a place of worship** since the early pre-Roman ages.

An enchanted place often indecipherable has stimulated fantasy and spirituality in people's minds, also thanks to the Meri, deep sinkholes on the mountains.

These incredible cracks, which appear suddenly in the middle of a thick wood, have been considered as **the door of the Nether Realm** for a long time.



TABLE

## Rules of conduct

In the paths, woods and lands of the Park, in order to avoid any trouble with the wildlife and not to bother the other visitors, **dogs must be leashed.**

**Noises and disturbing sounds may bother the animals** and those who try to enjoy the peace of nature.

In the Park, **flowers and stones** are an important part of the land and **it is not allowed to take them away**; the **collection of soft fruits and mushrooms is regulated.**

**Walking and stopping with cars or other vehicles out of the roads** damages the natural environment and it **is legally prohibited.**

**Camping is not allowed.**

**Keeping the natural environment clean** helps us to improve our resources and our services.

In order to avoid forest fires, **starting fires** out of the established places and structures **is forbidden.**

**Any transgression of the rules of behavior will be subjected to sanctions** provided by the law.

## TABLE

## How to reach us

The Park offices are located in Calcata (Viterbo) in Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II, n° 4  
tel. 0761 587617 - fax 0761 588951  
For further information visit: [www.parcotreja.it](http://www.parcotreja.it)

### *By car:*

#### **From Rome:**

- Take the Strada Statale n. 2 Cassia bis Veientana until the km 35, turn right and keep going for 12 kilometers, you will then arrive to Calcata crossing Mazzano Romano;
- Take the Strada Statale n. 3 Flaminia until Rignano Flaminio, from here go towards Faleria and then to Calcata.

**For those tourists coming from the north by the Austostrada del Sole (A1):** exit in Magliano Sabina, from here go towards Civita Castellana, Faleria and then Calcata.

**For those tourists coming from the south by the Autostrada del Sole (A1):** follow the indications towards Cassia Veientana or towards Flaminia on the Raccordo Anulare (Highway), after the exit of Valmontone keep on the highway and then turn right on the Bretella highway toward Roma Nord (towards Florence), exit in Fiano Romano, follow the indication for Sant'Oreste and then for Faleria and Calcata.

### *By bus:*

The departures are in the Saxa Rubra station of Rome. The timetable is available online on the website [www.cotralspa.it](http://www.cotralspa.it).

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## About the Park

**Institution:** 1982

**Extension:** 658 hectares

**Management:** The Park is a consortium between the municipalities of Calcata (Viterbo) and Mazzano Romano (Rome)

**River:** Treja, right tributary of the Tiber river, is 13 km long and flows in the protected area


*The main function of a protected area is that of keeping the natural balance of the territory and most of all its biodiversity. The Valle del Treja Regional Park has been instituted to protect the integrity of its natural, aesthetic and cultural features in order to contribute to the social welfare and economic development of the inhabitants.*




President: Luciano Sestili  
Director: Gianni Guaita

The Park offices:  
Piazza V. Emanuele II, 4 - 01030 Calcata (Vt)

Tel. 0761 587617 - fax 0761 588951  
parco@parcotreja.it - www.parcotreja.it

 Parco Regionale Valle del Treja

 @ParcoTreja



The Valle del Treja Park  
is part of the system of  
protected areas of the  
Lazio region



Unione europea



REGIONE  
LAZIO



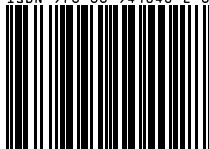
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