



**IT WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1993. ITS EMBLEM IS A**  
**”CUIRASSED PINE”**

## **IL PARCO DEL POLLINO**

**The area of Pollino, in time, has undergone various morphologic and climatic changes: the results we can see now are only a part of this immense geologic system, a heritage to be protected for the present and future generations. Today Pollino National Park is a big laboratory of studies. It preserves a relationship going back thousands of years between Nature and Man.**

### **POLLINO NATIONAL PARK: THE PHYSICAL AND THE ANTROPIC ENVIRONMENT**

The Pollino National Park, the largest protected area in Italy extending for 192,565 hectares, lies astride the Calabria and Basilicata regions and between the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Ionian Sea and offers varied landscapes: wide bare areas near the gentle landscapes of the valleys, slopes covered with flowers in Springtime and vast upland plains where sheep grazing is still being practised. Both to the East and to the West, it is embraced by the sea: the Tyrrhenian and the Ionian Sea that can be reached very easily in a short time. The mostly mountainous territory consists of three principal mountain ranges rising up to the highest altitudes in the Southern

Apennines: the Pollino Massif, the Orsomarso Mountains, on the south-western side of the Park, one of the most enchanting natural sceneries in Southern Italy, and, isolated in the North, Mount Alpi 1900 m high. The ridge of the Pollino Massif draws the boundary line between the two regions: it reaches the highest peaks in the Park and has the best-known and attractive plateau, surrounded by crests where some of the oldest specimens of "cuiressed pine" grow. From here you can admire a real unspoiled and wonderful area. The territory of the Park is divided into some clear-cut basins by the fluvial system that is rich in waterways and springs, some of which are low in mineral content and have thermal characteristics. The waters rush into very narrow gorges, between enormous rock faces, or flow through woods with ancient trees or even widens out into areas of vast stony ground.

Quite characteristic is also the inhabited environment: very small villages, where the elderly women still wear their traditional costumes, found near larger towns that have become important centers offering cultural events. Besides the evidences of the first inhabitants and the dominations that have followed one after the other over the centuries (Greeks, Romans, Longobards, Saracens, Byzantines, Normans and Spaniards) up to the Unification of Italy, here survive tenaciously a few groups of "arbereshe" (Italian-Albanian) cultural and language traditions. The archaeological finds are very interesting such as an indigenous inhabited areas, necropolises and burial ornaments, underground churches, frescoes, defensive boundary walls, sanctuaries and monasteries spread among the villages within the Park, some of them are located in picturesque spots or in the steep rock faces. Together with places of worship, there are other fortified structures and various palaces. The Park is also fascinating for its watermills, some of which still preserve remarkable millstones.

### **ORIGIN AND CONFIGURATION OF THE TERRITORY**

The mountain range of Pollino, made up of dolomite limestone, originated, together with the whole European continent, about 220 million years ago.

The continuous displacement of the continental plates created the primordial conditions of orogenesis and, in time, remarkable telluric and tectonic movements affected the whole areas of the Alps and the Apennines.

The corrugation process took shape less than 5 million years ago; together with the deposit of fossils and sediments, the Pollino Massif rose up to an altitude lower than 1000 m. It took its present structure about one and a half million years ago when it rose in altitude for a further 1200 m. Pollino, in time, has continuously undergone various morphological, climatic and cultural changes. In the past it was rich in ancestral traditions and rites that were at the center of the local population's life and culture.

It was reckoned to be the Mountain of Apollo, Sun-God in Greek mythology, but also in former times, the local population held it in great respect.

The source of the name Pollino seems to come from "Polleo", to indicate the value and the power of the officinal herbs growing on its slopes and very useful in medicine.

Other hypotheses connect it to the name of the ancient inhabitants "Ausoni Pellini" or even to Egyptian linguistic origins, but most of all to "Mons Apollinus", Mount of Apollo, the Sun-God. The geographical south /western side of the Park, called "the Mountains of Orsomarso", derives its name from the possible old presence of the "orso" (bear) in the area, while the highest peak of the range, the "Gozzo del Pellegrino" 1987 m s.l.m. is a reminder of the travels of the local population that, because of trade exchanges, crossed the mountain passes.

We can think of the "Via del Sale" (Salt Trail) that used to connect the Tyrrhenian Sea to the salt mines, the "salt marshes of Lungro", across Mount Pellegrino and Mount Mula. In present times, so technological and fast, everybody has the duty to preserve this precious culture and make it become known to the present and future generations.

### **VISITING THE PARK**

Pollino National Park, the widest protected area in Italy, established in 1993, still preserves an unspoiled natural environment, the splendour of the rocks and the greenness that dominates the intensive blue of the Tyrrhenian and the Ionian Sea.

It is a land rich in varied cultural roots, has mountain slopes dotted with hamlets and hermitages and a traditional cuisine to satisfy all palates.

The symbol of the Park is the famous "cuiressed pine", typical of the national territory, a tree of a very rare beauty and strength, probably a glacial relic that has survived for centuries. There are huge forests of beeches that somewhere grow together with imposing silver firs. Flowers cover the karst upland plains with splendid colours: orchids, buttercups, saxifrages, gentians, etc.



The fauna has increased, as a result of the institution of the protected area, so that more specimens of wolves, roe-deer and eagles are now present.

Recently the Ente Parco has promoted some projects for the reintroduction of the deer and they are even making some attempts to reintroduce the griffon eagle.

Visiting Pollino National Park can be a worthwhile experience for various reasons: to come into contact with an unusual and wild environment, to become familiar with the culture, the traditions and the folklore of the populations of Southern Italy, to get to know a protected area aimed at exploiting its own resources and able to offer its visitors a wide range of ways to enjoy a holiday in the name of the beautiful views, the pleasure of making discoveries and finding the atmosphere of old times.

We recommend guided tours led by the "Guide Ufficiali del Parco" that organize very interesting thematic routes.

In the area you can practise trekking, excursions, climbing, rafting, caving, mountain-bike, horse-riding, downhill-ski, cross-country ski, ski-touring and everybody can enjoy relaxing walks.

For more information, please call:

3401763287 - 3498108229

3473506963 - 3403280485.

The environmental programme of the Park, especially aimed at preserving its natural resources, also includes some activities for the economical growth of the local population.

For this reason many initiatives such as the trademark for the Park, the biological agriculture, a Park house in each village, visitor centers, eco-hostels and info-boards have been created to stimulate interest.

Young people are especially encouraged to take the opportunities offered by the resources of the Park, to invest in new professions and enterprises.

#### **Useful numbers:**

Ente Parco Nazionale del Pollino

Tel. 0973669311

C.T.A. - C.F.S. Tel. 0973667814.

### **SOME VILLAGES OF THE PARK**

In the Park, that covers three districts (Cosenza, Potenza and Matera), the visitor can follow varied routes and immerse himself in the atmosphere full of evocations of the rural culture. There are 56 communes in the protected area, rich in history and ancient charm, whose inhabitants are still the guardians of local traditions and genuine flavours. Here we have space to present you with only a few of them, the wealth of rare beauties together with history, culture and legends, for you to discover the delicate balance, still surviving, between Nature and Man.

#### **ROTONDA**

(580 m. s.l.m.)

*It lies 144 km from the chief town of the area, Potenza, but only 47km from the sea (Scalea).*

Its name probably comes from the ancient part of the village, built on terraces along the side of a conical hill and overlooked by the remains of a castle dating back to around the 15th century, an important estate of the Sanseverino family. Weaving by hand and treadle looms to produce canvas, woollen and linen textiles was practised at Rotonda. Here you can admire a vast architectural (religious, civil and rural) and artistic heritage. We would suggest that you visit the Museo Naturalistico del Pollino that preserves various fossils found in the Valle del Mercure, among which there are some interesting remains of an *Elephas Antiquus* and a *Hippopotamus Amphibius*.

#### **MORANO CALABRO**

(694 m. s.l.m.)

*It lies 7 km from the chief town of the area, Cosenza, 38 km from the seacoast of Villapiana and 50 km from Scalea.*

An important station along the Roman Consular Road Popilia-Annia, in the Middle Ages it was a military spot defended by a Norman castle dating 13th century. Between 1515 and 1546 the mansion was restored and enlarged by Neapolitan architects taking as a model Castel Nuovo of Naples. Since the middle of 19th century, lots of the inhabitants have been emigrating to South America and only now does the population seem to be increasing again. Among the vast architectural and artistic heritage of the place, we would recommend a visit to the remains of the Norman Castle, the Collegiata di San Pietro e San Paolo in the highest part of the village, the Chiesa di San Nicola, the Convento and the Chiesa di San Bernardino, the Collegiata di

Santa Maria Maddalena, the Convento di Colletero.

### **CIVITA**

(450 m. s.l.m.)

*It lies 74 km from the chief town of the area, Cosenza, but only 24 km from the sea (Villapiana).*

At the end of the 15th century the Princes Sanseverino let some Albanian refugees settle in the area where an Italian-Greek convent used to stand. The place was called Civita, the name that usually indicated destroyed and rebuilt settlements. Later the first group extended towards S. Antonio and led to the creation of a new district.

Also to be seen are the fountains covered with the local stones and the water mills with an unusual horizontal paddle system; the Filanda Filardi realized along the sheer cliff of Raganello, a few meters from the old Ponte del Diavolo that used to supply energy for the production of skeins of wool by the falling of water; the Albanian Ethnic Museum with photographic exhibitions of the Albanian ethnic group's geographical areas.

For further information, please call the Town Hall Tel. 098173043.

### **SAN SEVERINO LUCANO**

(877 m. s.l.m.)

*It lies 150 km from the chief town of the area, Potenza, but only 72 km from the sea (Policoro).*

The most recently established village of the province and the region, whose first settlement goes back to the end of the 15th century, is the evidence of the rural settlement promoted by the Abbazia Cistercense del Sagittario on the Princes Sanseverino's land. The Cistercians, well-deserving of their fame for their religious, economic and social life, built farmhouses for cereal producers, a thriving activity that lasted up to 1807, when the lands were forfeited by the State. The following phenomenon of banditry paralysed the florid economy of the village. The architectural heritage, besides the Ponte del Brigante that states in its name the memory of a very violent local phenomenon, preserves the Santuario della Madonna del Pollino with rural huts to lodge the pilgrims.

### **TERRANOVA**

(926 m. s.l.m.)

*It lies 154 km from the chief town of the area, Potenza, but only 59 km from the sea (Policoro).*

Terranovella di Noja was founded at the end of the 16th century when Fabrizio Pignatelli, Lord of the State of Noja, encouraged the settlement of farmers on his land, to increase the local economy.

During the feasts and celebrations some traditional instruments such as the "cupe-cupe", the barrel organ and the bagpipe are played, while the dances "pastorale" and "tarantella" are still performed. Among the architectural (religious, civil and rural) and artistic heritage, we would suggest a visit to the Chiesa di San Francesco da Paola with an ancient portal made from "cuirassed pine" wood, the Cappella di Santa Maria delle Grazie dating back to the 16th century and which has a canvas dating from 1500, the Cappella di S. Antonio that houses two bells of 1500.

### **ORSOMARSO**

(120 m. s.l.m.)

*It lies 100 km from the chief town of the area, Cosenza, but only 17 km from the sea (Belvedere Marittimo).*

Perhaps already inhabited in the Prehistory, it was a Romanesque center particularly important for trade exchanges first and for monasticism later.

The village gradually developed around the palaces and monasteries.

We recommend a visit to the Chiesetta di S. Maria di Mercuri (11th century), the Chiesa di S. Leonardo and the Watermill nearby, the Grotta di S. Michele o dell'Angelo and the Eremo di S. Nilo at Timpone Simara.

### **ACQUAFORMOSA**

(756 m. s.l.m.)

*It lies 71 km from the chief town of the area, Cosenza, but only 40,5 km from the sea (Sibari).*

Acquaformosa is one of the Albanian speaking language villages of National Park of Pollino. In fact, at the end of the 15th century, a group of Albanian refugees established themselves on the land of the Abbazia Cistercense di S. Maria di Leucio and founded the village of Acquaformosa. The architectural and artistic heritage is very interesting. We recommend a visit to the Santuario di S. Maria del Monte, probably dating back to the 9th-10th centuries, rising on the plateau of Monte Cozzo di Lepre, one kilometre from Acquaformosa. It is the highest located sanctuary in the whole region of Calabria (1450m). On 1st May and on the first and the last Sundays of July, very important pilgrimages are organized.

## **THE ARBERESHE COMMUNITY**

Between 1470 and 1540, some groups of Albanians, to elude Turkish militias, sought refuge in the regions of Calabria

and Lucania and there established some communities where they have kept their history alive. True to their traditions, customs and language, they succeeded in preserving their Arbereshe culture in the towns they founded, among which there are Acquafomosa and Civita.

The Albanian community living in the Pollino is one of the most firmly rooted in Italy: at Civita there is one of the Museums of the Arbereshe heritage where many objects, tools and typical costumes are preserved. Very interesting are the Byzantine-Greek church services such as the wedding celebrations.

Splendid too are the costumes they are used to wearing on the occasion of festivities, while they sing traditional songs and dance the Vallje, unusual dances where the couples are tied together with a scarf. Many rites celebrate the relationship between Man and the Mountains.

## **CUISINE**

### **AMONG THE FLAVOURS AND SAVOURS OF POLLINO**

Pollino is a magical place, almost from a different time, where flavours and savours, together with the preserved environment, are the leading elements. Somewhere you can find wood, glass, iron handicrafts but everywhere you can find oil-preserved produce and locally prepared. There are natural and typical products certified and guaranteed by the Organs of Control. The "masserie" spread on the upland plains offer special kid and lamb meat, smoked salami, dairy farming products even famous in Greek and Roman times and appreciated for their deliciousness. Among the typical dishes, we recommend the "pasta agli aromi" with the herbs of Pollino, "cavati al sugo", "tagliolini con fagioli", "frittata di verdure", "peperoni ripieni", "fagioli e cotiche" and the "polpette".

To buy certified local agricultural produce, you can apply to 0973.667649

## **GETTING THERE**

**By car:** A3 Motorway - Exits: Lauria Nord, Campotenese, Tarsia Nord

**By train:** Scalea, Paola, Sibari, Maratea, Sapri, Policoro

**Nearest Airports:** Lamezia Terme, Bari, Napoli

### **ENTE PARCO NAZIONALE DEL POLLINO**

Via delle Frece Tricolori, 6

85048 Rotonda (PZ)

Tel. 0973 669311 - Fax 0973 667802