



A TRANQUIL LAKE ONLY FEW KILOMETRES FROM ROME

## IL LAGO ALBANO E I CASTELLI ROMANI

**Thanks to a spectacular location, an even mild climate and an enchanting landscape, Lake Albano has become one of the favourite destinations for tourists from all over the world.**

### **LAKE ALBANO: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Lake Albano was called "Lacus Albanus" by Latin people and nearby, in the Roman age, the ancient town of Alba Longa was founded. It lies in a hollow formed out of two craters of an old volcano and is elliptical in shape with a perimeter of 10 km; it is the deepest lake in the Lazio region. Here the mild climate, the rich vegetation, the untouched environment and the well-equipped tourist centers have combined together to make Lake Albano become one of the favourite destinations for tourists in every season of the year. It is also famous for its splendid surrounding villages. The steep shores are covered with woods of oak and chestnut trees and offer a magnificent landscape for pleasant walks while the remains of various villas, built in the Imperial age, can still be admired. Lake Albano features such a calm surface as to allow boat and canoe racing. Its shores are well equipped with various hotels, typical restaurants, bathing and sports facilities.

### **THE CASTELLI ROMANI**

The region of the Castelli Romani, so called for the presence of the palaces of noble families, is situated at few kilometers from Rome, in the Alban Hills (Colli Albani) that, in the East, embrace both Lake Albano and Lake Nemi. This area is popular with tourists and many Romans because of its extremely scenic landscape, its historic-cultural heritage together with the local traditions and home cooking. The Castelli Romani include 17 villages of which some are still very small, others are becoming towns. We here present you with the most characteristics of them.

## **CASTEL GANDOLFO**

Famous worldwide and best-known as the summer residence of the Pope, Castel Gandolfo is set on the western side of Lake Albano. According to tradition, this village was built on the site of the ancient town of Alba Longa, founded by Aenea's son, and was named after the family that conquered it 700 years after the end of the Roman Empire. We recommend that you visit the Chiesa di Villanova with a dome by Bernini and the Ninfeo Bergantino or Bagni di Diana. From a lookout you can enjoy a view of the lake's artificial outlet, a work of Roman engineering that let the water flow into the Mole district.

## **ALBANO LAZIALE**

It is called "Madre di Roma" (Roma's Mother) since Alba Longa gave this town its name; in its municipal coat of arms, a white sow with thirty piglets, an icon that used to be sacred to Latin people and to the inhabitants of Alba Longa, is represented. The area is very rich in historical and artistic remains that deserve to be seen, such as the communal "Villa Doria", the Chiesa di San Pietro, the remains of the amphitheatre of Settimio Severo, the tomb called "of the Orazi and Curiazi", the Chiesa di S. Maria della Rotonda, the Porta Pretoria, the Civic Museum, the Cisternone and the Ponte Monumentale.

## **MARINO**

It overlooks Lake Albano. Situated in a splendid hilly place, Marino can boast luxuriant vineyards that produce rare wines. On the first Sundays of October of every year, a famous grape-harvest festival is celebrated and the wine is poured from the two Baroque fountains standing in the main road of the town. Very significant too are the Sanctuary dedicated to God Mithra, the Chiesa di Santa Lucia and the Piazza Matteotti with the Fontana dei Mori.

## **ARICCIA**

This town has very old origins and lies on a spur of volcanic rock. Its historic center was built by the inhabitants as a defence against the barbarian invasions. It is loved by Italian and foreign tourists because of its works of art (among which the Palazzo Chigi with the fountains by Bernini and the Chiesa dell'Assunta), the mild climate, the vicinity of Lake Albano as well as the typical cuisine and the very good wine.

## **NEMI**

Its origins are linked to the lake with the same name and it was called "Specchio di Diana" (Diana's mirror) by Latin people, since along the lakeshore they used to worship Diana, the goddess of the hunting. The village was founded in the 10th century, just after the building of the castle now called Palazzo Ruspoli. It features lanes adorned with flowers and various artisan workshops. Famous worldwide are the little strawberries to be tasted in Springtime. We suggest a visit to the interesting Museum of the Roman Ships, the Chiesa di Santa Maria Assunta and the Sanctuary of the Crucifix.

## **FRASCATI**

It is the best-known town of the Castelli Romani and was founded on the site of a big Roman villa. Now it is an important residential centre that feels the effect of the nearness to Rome. Here the Villa Aldobrandini, the park of Villa Torlonia, the Teatro delle Acque, the Duomo and the Chiesa del Gesù deserve to be visited. The economy of the town most of all depends on the production of the Frascati Wine D.O.C., appreciated all over the world. Frascati is one of the favourite destinations for tours to the outskirts, a place rich in typical gastronomic specialities to be tasted in the famous "Fraschette", the characteristic osterie that remind you of ancient times.

## **ROCCA DI PAPA**

It was named after Pope Eugenio III and is overlooked by Mount Cavo (949m a.s.l.). It has always been considered a place of worship as well as a weather forecast landmark by the Roman people. It boasts some attractive places and monuments such as the medieval hamlet, the "Quartiere dei Bavaresi", the Santuario della Madonna del Tufo, the Campi di Annibale, the Via Sacra and the Convento di Palazzolo.

## **ROCCA PRIORA**

It is located at a higher level than the other towns of the Castelli Romani. Some archaeological relics are the evidence of its very ancient origins; there is a medieval ogival gate at the entrance of the hamlet. Only few tourists know that Rocca Priora used to supply ice to Roma since it underwent heavy and frequent snowfalls in wintertime. The snow was pressed so much as to become a block of ice that was conserved in a deep well all the year round. It even happened that it snowed in August.

## **GROTTAFERRATA**

Its history comes from the Abbazia di San Nilo, built on the remains of a Roman villa around the year 1000 by the Basiliani Monks. Today it is one of the most visited towns of the Castelli Romani both by tourists and Roman people. In the Museum of the Abbey you can visit the "Scriptorium", a workshop for the restoration of books also where the Codice Atlantico by Leonardo da Vinci was repaired.

## THE NATURAL PARK OF THE CASTELLI ROMANI

The Natural Park of the Castelli Romani extends for about 9500 hectares and includes 15 villages. It was established with the aim of preserving the natural characteristics and the equilibrium of the its environment. During the last few years very good results have been achieved and some specimens of the fauna such as the badger, the marten, the porcupine and the bat have turned up, but what is news most of all is the return of the wolf.

As regards the flora, the park is rich in woods of linden, elm, beech and chestnut trees.

The chestnut trees are also cultivated to produce wood to be used for various manufacturing needs. The careful work of the park-keepers has allowed people to avail themselves of various kinds of equipment and facilities such as paths, aviaries, guided tours and lessons about the birds species.

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### *Cuisine*

The simple products of the land such as wine, oil and cheese have always been the prevalent ingredients of the local cuisine, since its ancient origins. Over time, it has always maintained its genuineness and has become more and more appreciated in Italy. The typical dishes are the "spaghetti cacio e pepe", the "bucatini all'amatriciana", the "rigatoni con la patata", the "abbacchio cotto al forno con le patate", the "trippa", the "puntarelle con aglio e alici", and the "carciofi alla romana". Among the specialities of the Castelli Romani you must not miss the "porchetta di Ariccia" to be tasted with homemade bread, the "pupazze di Frascati" (typical biscuits in the shape of dolls with a triple breast: two for milk and one for wine), "polenta e salsiccia", "zuppe di legumi", the "fragoline di Nemi", the "pesche di Castel Gandolfo" and the excellent wine of the "Castelli Romani" D.O.C.

### *Getting to Lake Albano*

**By car and by bus:** A2 Motorway Roma-Napoli; Main Ringroad: SS 7 Via Appia - SS 215 Via Tuscolana. **By train:** From Roma Termini bus connections. **In aereo:** Leonardo da Vinci Airport - Fiumicino; Ciampino Airport - Via Appia Nuova.

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