

*Itineraries of the*

# MUSEUM GRAND TOUR

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*Nine routes exploring places and  
landscapes in the Museum System of  
the Castelli Romani and Prenestini*



SISTEMA MUSEALE  
TERRITORIALE  
CASTELLI ROMANI  
E PRENESTINI



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TERRITORIALE  
CASTELLI ROMANI  
E PRENESTINI



Immersed in natural beauty, an area rich in history with an extraordinary archaeological and artistic heritage now presents itself to visitors in the form of an extremely interesting and articulated cultural offering as part of the project 'Beyond Rome. A journey of discovery through the places of the Museumgrandtour', made possible thanks to funding from the Lazio Region.

For the first time, in fact, the Museum System of the Castelli Romani and Prenestini Mountains Museumgrandtour is offering decidedly captivating itineraries, waiting to be experienced, in which the collections and the numerous sites of interest are presented in new and unusual ways to not only its devoted public, but above all, to those who do not yet know these places and are curious to discover them.

From the boundless panorama of fortresses, the narrators of art and science, the gaze shifts to the painted landscape that so deeply captivated travellers and artists on the Grand Tour.

The stories of artisans, peasants and

cyclops alternate with other accounts that, following in the footsteps of a storyteller par excellence such as Cicero, take us to places of ancient and modern *otium*.

To delight younger visitors, don't miss the exciting stop that winds its way through old railways turned into a museum and toy trains. For those in search of purely archaeological itineraries, the System proposes urban routes, cities of "assonance" and life-size fossil remains.

Beyond Rome, therefore, lies a rich and vital territory, capable of unexpected and amazing surprises.

### **Serena Gara**

Commissario della XI Comunità Montana del Lazio

# CICERO AND OTHERS

## *Ancient and modern places of otium*

Like a true Grand Tour traveler, the visitor with a passion for ancient archaeology and modern art can set out for Frascati and Monte Porzio Catone in the footsteps of Cicero and other Latin writers in search of those places of *otium* that characterise both antiquity and the modern age!

Upon arriving in Piazza G. Marconi in the renowned **Frascati**, tourists are immediately immersed in a context overflowing with history. From the striking **Monument to the Fallen of the War** which frames **Villa Aldobrandini** (designed by the great trio of architects Della Porta, Maderno and Fontana for the nephew of Pope Clement VIII between 1598 and 1602 and still today the residence of Prince Aldo-branchini) in the distance, one easily recognises the 17th-century structure of the **Scuderie Aldobrandini** on the far-left corner of the square. Already visible in Matheus Greuter's engraving of 1620, the Scuderie, originally built as stables for the villa of the same name, were redesigned by the architect Massimiliano Fuksas in

2000 as the **Tuscolano Museum** (→ 1, 2) — a multifunctional space conceived to house the permanent archaeological and modern collection along with temporary art exhibitions, educational workshops, multimedia spaces and an auditorium. The most substantial part of the collection features artefacts found in Tusculum, while the modern section includes a portrait of Cardinal Henry Benedict, Duke of York and son of James III Stuart, who was bishop of the town for forty-two years.

From Piazza Marconi, the visitor heads towards the so-called 'vialoni' along the traces of the Ville Tuscolane. On Via Annibal Caro there are four imposing spur stone staircases leading up to the **Monumental Park of Villa Torlonia**, which is accessible via two ramps converging towards a central fountain with a mask and an eagle, the symbols of the Conti family. The park, miraculously saved after the bombings of 1943-1944, was commissioned by the illustrious Cardinal Scipione Borghese and is notable for the presence

of the *Teatro delle Acque* built by the architects Carlo Maderno, Flaminio Ponzo and Giovanni Fontana.

After strolling through the streets of Frascati's historical centre, the visitor can finally head towards Monte Porzio Catone where they will find **Villa Mondragone**, once owned by the Altemps and Borghese families. Now home to the Tor Vergata University of Rome, the modern villa, with construction beginning in 1573 by Martino Longhi the Elder, became the summer residence of Pope Gregory XIII, whose heraldic coat of arms featured a dragon, hence the villa's name. It was here that Pope Gregory XIII made public the famous papal bull *Inter gravissimas* which initiated the reform of the Gregorian calendar, still in use today.

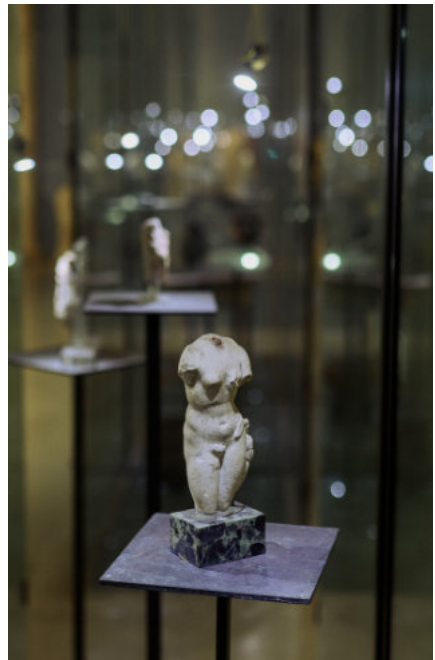
Remaining in the territory of Monte Porzio Catone but moving to the hill of the same name in the Regional Natural Park of the Castelli Romani, the visitor can wrap up the itinerary by relaxing at sunset amidst the nature and vestiges of the **Archaeological Cultural Park of Tusculum** (→ 3, 4). It is here that the contemporary 'grand traveler' can reconstruct the history of the archaeological remains admired in the Tuscolano Museum in Frascati by completing the journey amidst the archaeological ruins of ancient *Tusculum*.

While the origins of the ancient town are rooted in the myth of its founding by Telegonus, the son of Ulysses and the sorceress Circe, what is certain is that the acropolis area was occupied as early as the Iron Age, while the underlying monu-

mental area was occupied starting from the 7th-6th century BC. Thanks to its strategic position, Tusculum always played an important role in both Roman times and the Middle Ages as the privileged place of residence of the Roman aristocracy and later, the powerful house of the Counts of Tusculum. A dangerous rival due to its proximity to Rome, it was completely destroyed and abandoned in 1191. Of the ancient *Tusculum*, the theatre and monuments of the forum as well as an extra-urban sanctuary and two distinct thermal buildings still remain.

#### Tips and interesting facts

The itinerary, starting from Frascati and finishing at Tuscolo, is best suited for a sunny spring or summer day. In the winter



period, we advise visitors to follow the itinerary in reverse order starting from Tuscolo to take advantage of the light and warmth of the day to enjoy the beauty of the archaeological park.

To complete the day in the best possible way and to fully experience the spirit of the Castelli Romani, we advise tourists to book a night in one of the 'enoagriturismi' located between Frascati and Monte Porzio Catone and take advantage of the following day to savour the local wine by booking wine tastings and cellar visits.

Among the most famous local products, we recommend tasting 'la Pupazza' of Frascati, which is a traditional sweet in the shape of a doll with three breasts (two for milk and one for wine) that is recognised as a traditional speciality of the

Lazio region, and 'Frascati DOC' wine.

### Useful links

→ [www.museumgrandtour.com](http://www.museumgrandtour.com)

→ [www.villamondragone.it](http://www.villamondragone.it)

→ [www.tuscolo.org](http://www.tuscolo.org)







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# TWO HERALDIC LIONS AND A WHITE SOW WITH PIGLETS

*The history of Albano Laziale through its symbols*

A flourishing town of about 42,000 inhabitants only 25 km from Rome, **Albano Laziale** has a rich history visible in its heraldic symbols and coats of arms. In the historical centre, visitors will notice the peculiar municipal coat of arms depicting a white sow on a verdant meadow, surrounded by piglets. This is a reference to the legend of Albalonga, which was founded by Ascanio on the spot indicated to his father Aeneas by a sow appearing to him in a dream, a metaphor emphasising the maternal role that the mythical city — from which the name Albano derives — had in relation to the Latin people.

The layout of the present-day urban centre is partly related to the configuration of the *castrum* — a rectangular fortified encampment enclosed by an imposing square wall. It was built by order of Septimius Severus between the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century AD to house the Second Parthian Legion and guarantee its safety. The approximately 6,000 legionaries housed in the

*Castrum* and their families located in the area just outside formed, together with artisans and merchants, a substantial urban aggregate.

Today, the *Castrum* is visible in parts of the surrounding wall and ruins of the imposing **Porta Pretoria** (on Via Corso G. Matteotti), which is the main three-arched access to the *Castra Albana* on the side facing the Via Appia Antica (now Viale Rinascimento). The **monumental tomb known as 'of the Orazi and Curiazi'**, a funerary building of the late Republican age perhaps inspired by the Tomb of Arunte, stood along the Appian Way. Its traditional but unsubstantiated name is inspired by the famous duel between the two most representative families of Rome and Albano which actually took place at the fifth mile of the Appian Way.

Older monuments were incorporated in the area of the *Castrum*. The **Cisternoni** (→ 5), a monumental water reservoir with a trapezoidal plan divided into five naves covered by barrel vaults supported by

thirty-six pillars and fed by aqueducts and springs, ensured the surrounding area's water supply. The complex of the **Church of S. Maria della Rotonda**, a nymphaeum from the 1st century AD, was transformed into a thermal environment with figured black and white mosaic floors in the 2nd century AD and then adapted for Christian worship from the 9th century onwards. The **Severian Amphitheatre** also dates back to this time. Located beyond the north-east side of the *Castrum* and originally 22 mt high, it is elliptical in shape. The arena is still clearly visible: the north side carved into the tufa outcrop, the triumphal entrances and the ground floor and first floor of the south side, which were supported by vaulted archways that sustained the tiers of seats and part of the triumphal entrances. Also present was a monumental thermal complex among the ruins of which the district of Cellomaio developed in the Middle Ages. The substructural rooms of the thermal baths house the **Museum of the Second Parthian Legion** (→ 6), which is entirely dedicated to this military corps with full-scale reproductions of the military figures of the legion and archaeological artefacts recovered from the excavations of the *Castrum* itself.

In one hall of the baths is the **Church of San Pietro**, which features a coat of arms representative of Albano's history. Depicting two heraldic lions facing each other, it is the symbol of the noble Savelli family, whose history is closely connected with that of the city. After the fall of the Roman

Empire and the turbulent early Middle Ages, Albano came under the control of the family in the 10th century, and between the 16th and 17th centuries the city took on its present form through the construction of numerous buildings and, above all, the creation of an urban layout centred on two new transversal road axes, Via Aurelio Saffi and Via San Francesco d'Assisi.

The Savelli rule lasted until 1697 when the fiefdom was auctioned off and purchased by the Apostolic Camera, thus becoming part of the Papal State. Those interested in the history and ecclesiastical art of the Diocese of Albano can visit the **Diocesan Museum** (→ 7), hosted since 2012 in Palazzo Lercari, the seat of the bishop since 1757. Those with a passion for Chris-



tian archaeology can also request to visit the Catacombs of S. Senatore.

The itinerary ends at the **Civic Museum of Villa Ferrajoli** (→ 8), a small neoclassical villa dating back to the first half of the 19th century which features a permanent exhibition of more than two thousand archaeological artefacts narrating the history of Albano from the Lower Palaeolithic to the Renaissance.

### Tips and interesting facts

We advise our tourists to visit Albano and its treasures during the second week of September in order to experience the festive atmosphere of the **Bajocco Festival**. By planning an overnight stay, the visitor can spread the cultural outings over two days and indulge in an enjoyable evening

during the street artists' festival, which has always attracted both young and old alike.

### Useful links

→ [www.museumgrandtour.com](http://www.museumgrandtour.com)

→ [www.museicivicalbano.it](http://www.museicivicalbano.it)

→ [www.museodiocesanolalbano.it](http://www.museodiocesanolalbano.it)





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# HISTORY THROUGH ASSONANCE

## *A walk between Lanuvium and Lavinium*

About a 30-minute drive from one another, the cities of Lanuvio and Pomezia have an archaeological history that seems to link them not only by similarity of name. Myth has it that they were both founded around the 9th century BC. The former, known as *Lanuvium*, may have two origins: one by Diomedes, son of Tyldus, according to the Greek-Argic tradition, and the other by the trojan Fabio Pittore, who arrived in Italy after the Trojan War. Pomezia, on the other hand, is known to be the ancient *Lavinium*, the city founded by the hero Aeneas who landed on its shores after the burning of Troy.

The itinerary of our traveller who is curious about archaeology and contemporary history begins in Lanuvio in Piazza della Maddalena at the **Lanuvino Civic Museum** (→ 9, 10). It is here that evidence of ancient *Lanuvium* is preserved, including the oldest Latin *alphabetario* (6th century BC) and fragments of a fresco depicting scenes of Dionysian initiation. However, Lanuvio was also known for the presence

of a large **sanctuary** from the first half of the 1st century BC dedicated to **Juno Sospita**, considered the most famous in Lazio regarding the cult of the goddess. The archaeological site of the temple is located in the park of Villa Sforza Cesarini, an Art Nouveau villa from the first half of the 20th century now housing the Municipal Library. Also linked to this are the remains of three cylindrical peperino blocks with engraved scales, probably related to the cult of the snake prevalent in the ancient city.

The end of ancient *Lanuvium* was marked by the Edict of Thessalonica (380 AD). Declaring Christianity the official religion of the Empire, it banned pagan cults and imposed the closure of temples, including that of Juno Sospita. This brings us to the medieval history of *Civita Lavinia* founded in the mid-10th century AD by Benedictine monks, who built no less than five towers that still stand today. Prominent is the picturesque Torre Maschia in Via della Libertà, consisting of a massive

cylindrical body with an external crenelated walkway. Known as the **Tower of Porta Romana**, it bears the coat of arms of Pope Victor III to whom the reconstruction of the town is most likely attributed. Owned by the heirs of Colonna di Palestrina until the 15th century, it passed into the hands of the Cesarini family and in the 17th century served as a prison. Today, it is possible to visit the narrow room of the cell, below which are traces of a cistern dating back to Roman times, devoid of the traditional earthenware covering, and, perhaps for this reason, all the more evocative.

Less than 100 metres away from the medieval tower, the journey of our 'grand tourist' into Lanuvio ends at Via Sforza Cesarini where the scenic **Fountain of the Rocks** is located. Built in 1675 by architect Carlo Fontana on commission from Filippo Cesarini, it is thought to be a replica of Bernini's *Fountain of the Four Rivers* in Piazza Navona in Rome. Originally, the fountain had two huge snakes on either side of the rocks, linking it with the cult of Juno Sospita.

From Lanuvio in the territory of the Castelli Romani, the visitor can move along the Roman coast towards Pomezia to trace the town's history in reverse. The first stop is the **Aulic Nucleus of the City of Foundation** in Piazza Indipendenza, the centre of Pomezia's mussolinian founding. Here the tourist can reconstruct the history of the city's historic centre whose architectural complex was designed and built according to the princi-

ples of Italian Rationalism between 1938 and 1939 by the architects Petrucci, Luciano, Paolino and Silenzi. The **Civic Tower** and the **Church of San Benedetto Abate**, both characterised by a strongly rationalist style, overlook this same square. Continuing along the more contemporary history of the city, the tourist in search of the origins of ancient *Lavinium* will head to Largo Catone where they will discover the **Ugo Tognazzi Municipal Library** building. Along its outer walls the street artist Agostino Iacurci has created a lively mural entitled *L'Antiporta* in which stories and symbols from the Aeneid are interwoven, recalling the mythical foundation of the city. The traveller can finally conclude the journey by going to the **Lavinium Archaeological Museum** (→11) in Via Pratica di



Mare, where they can observe numerous votive materials from the **Sanctuary of the XIII Altars** (→ 12) which are linked to the mythical Virgilian hero, as well as the remains of the so-called **Heroon of Aeneas**, a tomb belonging to an important personage from the 7th century BC, invariably associated with the figure of the Trojan hero. But it was not only male heroes who symbolised ancient *Lavinium* — there were also female goddesses. One such example is the goddess Minerva Tritonia, to whom an important sanctuary was dedicated and to whose cult many terracotta statues dating between the 5th and 3rd centuries BC are associated, and whose statue welcomes the visitor to the museum.

### Tips and interesting facts

One cannot visit Lanuvio without tasting ‘maza’, a savoury flatbread linked to the cult of the Serpent of Juno Sospita in ancient times. On appointed days, consecrated virgins would enter the forest blindfolded bearing a flatbread to give to the serpent. Tradition has it that the serpent would accept the offering only if the young women were truly virgins.

Concluding their tour at Pomezia, visitors should make a final visit, accompanied by the guides of the Civic Museum, to the **sacred area of the XIII Altars** and see first-hand the **Heroon of Aeneas** in order to better understand its history and origin.

### Useful links





- [www.museumgrandtour.com](http://www.museumgrandtour.com)
- [www.comune.lanuvio.rm.it](http://www.comune.lanuvio.rm.it)
- [www.museolavinium.it](http://www.museolavinium.it)



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# TWO TERRACES OVERLOOKING ROME

*The art and science of the Castelli Romani Fortresses*

Starting from Rocca Priora, tourists begin in Piazzale Zanardelli, the town's famous 'belvedere', from where both the 11th-century Rocca Savelli and the infinite panorama, which extends from the sea all the way to Rome and as far as the Monti Prenestini, can be admired. From here on the left, one can see the entrance to the **Monsignor F. Giacci Cultural Centre**, a 19th-century historical building where the Municipal Library and the **Benedetto Robazza Museum** (→ 13, 14) are located. The result of a considerable donation of works made by the artist Mario Benedetto Robazza to the municipality of Rocca Priora, the focal point of the centre is the external courtyard where the large marble frieze *L'Inferno di Dante* (1994) is housed. Leaving the museum, visitors can find the **Cathedral of S. Maria Assunta** in Piazza Umberto I. It was consecrated by Cardinal Bessarione in 1464 on the remains of an ancient Roman temple dedicated to the Dea Fortuna and features frescoes painted in 1972 by Ugolino da Belluno.

Branching off from the cathedral, which is located on the highest point of the Rocca, there are numerous characteristic alleyways where the tourist is bound to come across many works by Robazza. Among the streets within the medieval entry arch — of which the hooks of the original wooden door still remain — are the stations of the Via Crucis in marble-resin, and continuing towards the urban centre one notices the fountain of the *Triumph of Good over Evil* and the *Fountain of Narcissus*, both in bronze.

Upon arriving in Viale degli Olmi, tourists conclude their journey in Rocca Priora at the **Sanctuary of the Madonna della Neve**, a place of worship of great importance to the town because of the snow market conducted on a large scale here between the 17th and 19th centuries.

Once at Rocca di Papa, the itinerary begins at the *Campi d'Annibale*, the highest point of the Rocca. Descending a little, one will immediately come across the **Anibaldi Fortress**. The earliest records of the

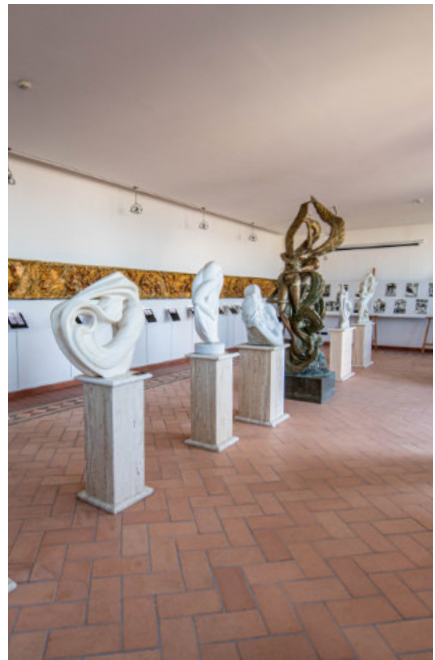
fortress date back to medieval times when Pope Benedict IX, expelled from Rome in 1044, is said to have taken refuge here. Because of its natural strategic position, Rocca di Papa was an extremely important medieval fortress in the Roman countryside and was controlled by several Roman families: the Annibaldis were succeeded by the Colonnas, who countered the attempts of the Orsinis, Caetanis and Borgias to take possession of the site. In 1577, the site was almost completely destroyed by fire, and it was progressively abandoned and used as a quarry and agricultural area.

Tourists can immediately appreciate the privileged position of the fortress and the marvelous panorama of Rome that can be admired from it. Not far away, tourists wishing to better observe the landscape and the skies can pay a visit to the **Geophysical Museum** (→ 15, 16), which has a terrace equipped with a telescope for nocturnal observations. Managed by the INGV, the museum offers a journey into the earth sciences through interactive and digital displays, retracing the stages of scientific research and the disciplines that study our planet.

Moving into the heart of the village, tourists can delight in discovering the murals that adorn the alleyways of the historic centre. In fact, thanks to the creativity of the painter Miro Fondi, the village has welcomed numerous works of street art from as early as the 1980s. Since then, local artists eager to make their contribution to the rebirth and the cultural and

artistic growth of the village have continued the project. Today, the historic centre has dozens of murals featuring a wide variety of colours and themes.

Arriving in Piazza Duomo, the itinerary ends with a stop at the 17th-century **Cathedral of S. Maria Assunta**, dating back to 1664 and designed by the architect Antonio Del Grande at the behest of Cardinal Girolamo Colonna. Following his death, work stopped for over 65 years, only to begin again in 1731 thanks to the generosity of the patron Pietro Ottoboni and Pope Clement XII. The resumption of work was first entrusted to the architect Pietro Passalacqua and then to the architect Domenico Gregorini, with its consecration taking place in 1754. Over the years, the cathedral has been the focus of



dramatic events including the devastating earthquakes of 1800 and the bombings of World War II. Rebuilt each time, it has become a symbol of resilience for the entire community. Inside, many works by great artists, including Perin del Vaga (1501-1547), Corrado Giacchino (1703-1766), Domenico Tojetti (1807-1892), and T.W. Achtermann (1799-1884), are preserved.

### **Tips and interesting facts**

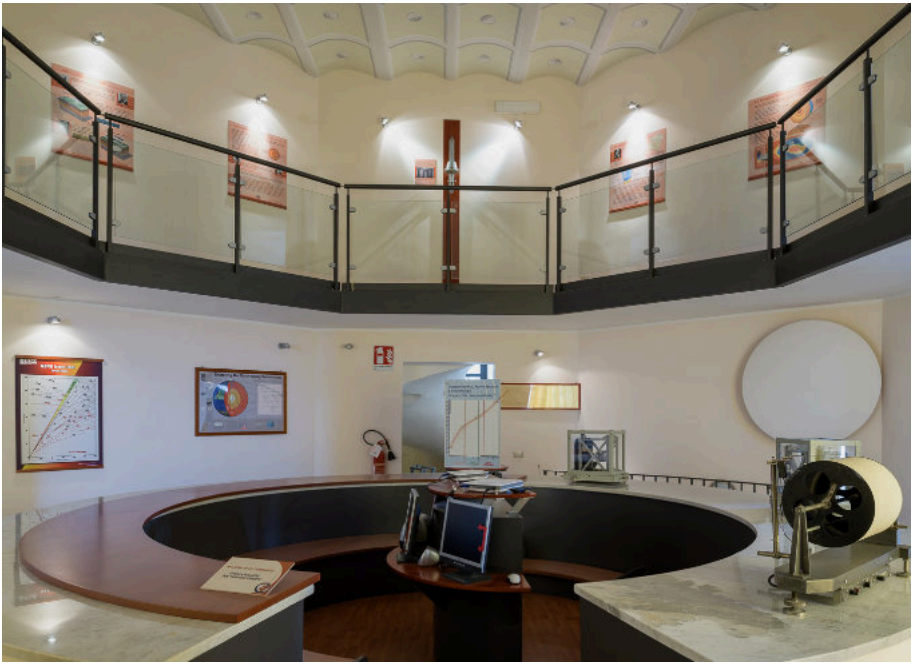
If one wishes to get away from the chaos of the city, admire sweeping views and find relief from the summer heat, one will find everything they are looking for in Rocca Priora and Rocca di Papa. The two 'Rocks' — at 768 metres and 680 metres above sea level, respectively — are, in fact, the highest towns in the Castelli Romani.

We therefore advise undertaking this itinerary during the summer, when the two villages are at their most vibrant owing to the festivals and open-air events.

### **Useful links**

→ [www.museumgrandtour.com](http://www.museumgrandtour.com)





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# RAILWAYS AND TOY TRAINS

*A journey through Colonna, San Cesareo  
and Zagarolo*

Like any respectable journey, this one begins with a **means of transport**. Whether in its real form or the fairytale form of a toy, it is the **train** that will be the *fil rouge* of this itinerary tracing the history of Colonna, San Cesareo and Zagarolo.

Our journey thus begins at the **Colonna Railway Station Museum** (→ 17, 18). Located in San Cesareo on the Via Casilina, the museum was created with the intention of preserving the memories, materials and a last stretch of track of the old Rome-Fiuggi-Frosinone railway line. Its name refers to the century-old Colonna station (where the Railway Museum is located) of which some historic buildings — in particular the passenger hall, which also housed the stationmaster's private home, and the goods warehouse — are still preserved today, together with a collection of rail cars. It is a true journey through time that also includes a stop during the Second World War, to which, due to the strategic importance of the Via Casilina, the railway and Colonna station

were important witnesses.

From the Railway Museum we continue to **Colonna**, the smallest town of the Castelli Romani. Perched on the top of a hill, it presides over a fabulous panorama. Its origins are probably linked to the Roman conquest of *Labicum*, of which Colonna was the direct heir. The town flourished most in the Middle Ages when, endowed with the *castellum Colupna*, it became the domain of the Colonna family founded by Pietro dei Conti di Tuscolo in 1101. The fief was ceded to Cardinal Ludovisi in 1662 and then passed to the Rospigliosi-Pallavicini family, who controlled the village until its independence in 1848. Traces of the Renaissance can be seen in the **Palazzo Baronale**, erected in the 16th century, but now only visible from the outside. Its considerable size, noble appearance and large ashlar portal are striking; at the back it has a double order with five arches. It formerly occupied an entire block, but the south-east side of the building was radically altered with the

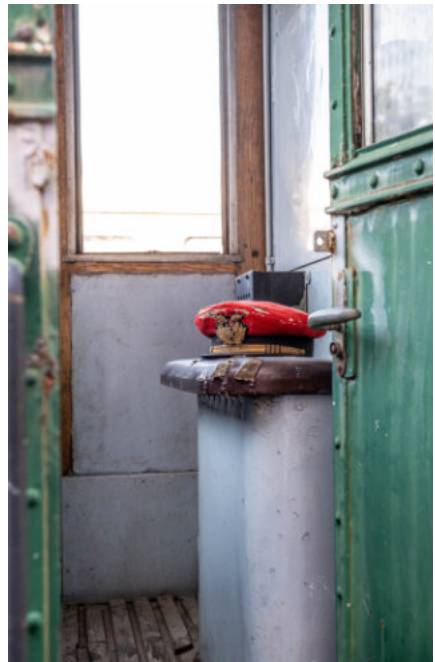
construction of the **Church of San Nicola of Bari**.

Built in the Baroque style commencing in 1753 at the behest of Prince Nicola Pallavicini, the **Church of San Nicola** was designed by the architect Carlandi and commissioned, amidst complex events, by Cardinal Benedict Stuart, Duke of York. Among other valuable works, it houses Duilio Cambellotti's frescoes of a polychrome cross in the lunette, the Annunciation scene in the central basin, sides decorated with crosses of vine shoots, and two paintings, *San Nicola Protector of Colonna* and the *Storm Calmed by San Nicola of Bari*, representing the miracle of the saint.

Having completed the first leg of our itinerary, we can move on to **Zagarolo**, a 16th-century town whose centrepiece is **Palazzo Rospigliosi** (→ 19). Transformed into a residence by Prince Marzio Colonna, it was originally a castle built around the year 1000. Massive reinforcements and pictorial decorations — frescoes by the 16th-century Mannerists, additions by the Zuccari brothers, ornaments of the Viola and works by Vanvitelli — completed the transformation of the building. Palazzo Rospigliosi is not only the historical heart of the town but also the cultural one, housing both the Municipal Library and the **Toy Museum** (→ 20). It is in the museum, whose collection boasts about 1,000 pieces from historical collections tracing the history of toys from the 19th century to the present day, that one of the largest moving toy trains on rails in Italy

can be found. The exhibition focuses on the links between toys and socio-cultural reality through a series of themes linked to the places and moments of everyday life.

The entrance to the historic centre of Zagarolo is the **Porta di San Martino**, built in the early 17th century in honour of Pope Martino V. Flanked by two massive crenellated bastions, it was formerly topped by a bust of Jupiter with an eagle and thunderbolt and later replaced by a large coat of arms of the Rospigliosi family. At the back, it is crowned by a tympanum with a marble bust in the centre and bas-reliefs on the sides depicting weapons, armour and trophies, recalling the glories of ancient Rome. Continuing along the main street, we reach the central Piazza Marconi with



its unmistakable Vignolesco architectural style overlooked by some of the town's most important buildings: the Palazzo Gonfalonieri (now the Town Hall) flanked by a three-arched portico and the Palazzo di Giustizia. Special mention must go to the **Church of San Lorenzo Martire** opposite, with its Baroque façade realised at a later date by Carlo Maderno. Built by Camillo Colonna in 1553 over an earlier 10th-century church, Pope Sixtus V gave it the title of Basilica Minore and Collegiate Church in 1586. Inside is a work of great value — the Triptych of the Holy Saviour between Saints Peter and Paul, painted in the late 15th century by Antoniazio Romano.

#### **Tips and interesting facts**

To better contextualise the history and territorial development of the old Rome-Fi-

uggi-Frosinone railway line, one must recall that until the 80s the three municipalities of the itinerary (San Cesareo, Colonna and Zagarolo) were connected by this very railway, which has now disappeared. Stopping in San Cesareo, one can find another Rome-Fiuggi station on the Via Casilina, whose passenger hall now houses a pharmacy. Not far from this station was the junction from which the San Cesareo-Frascati branch line originated, which linked the railway to the so-called Castelli Romani tramways.

#### **Useful links**

- [www.museumgrandtour.com](http://www.museumgrandtour.com)
- [www.ferroviamuseo-colonna.it](http://www.ferroviamuseo-colonna.it)
- [www.museogiocattolo.it](http://www.museogiocattolo.it)







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# AMIDST ACROPOLISES AND 'ROCCHÉ'

*An endless panorama of the Monti Prenestini*

The journey of our 'grand tourist' to discover the infinite panorama of the Monti Prenestini from Castel San Pietro and Rocca di Cave begins in **Palestrina**. Situated on the Via Prenestina from which it was named, Palestrina stands on the slopes of Monte Ginestro between the basins of the Sacco and Aniene rivers. The present town stands on the ancient Latin city of *Praeneste*, famous for the **Sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia**, which we recommend visiting along with the **National Archaeological Museum** as part of an itinerary of at least two days.

Once an important site of pagan worship, Palestrina has become the centre of the territorial diocese of the Monti Prenestini. In fact, the day's itinerary begins at the **Prenestino Diocesan Museum of Sacred Art** (→ 21). Inaugurated in 2005 in the south-west wing of the episcopal residence, it consists of fifteen exhibition rooms in which objects from the churches of the eighteen municipalities of the suburbicarian diocese are collected. Of inter-

est is the archaeological section with the *Ara delle Vittorie* dating back to the 2nd-3rd century AD, together with precious reliquaries, graduals, illuminated booklets, parchments, ancient books, vestments, liturgical objects, sculptures and paintings of sacred subjects, as well as finds from the area of the *Praeneste* forum buildings, inscribed slabs and Christian epigraphs from the 4th-5th century AD from the Quadrelle area where the primitive basilica dedicated to Sant'Agapito, the patron saint of the town martyred in 274 AD under the Emperor Aurelian, stood. Among the most interesting works are a Renaissance-era bas-relief attributed to Michelangelo Buonarroti depicting *Eolo* and the *Beheading of San Gennaro* from the school of Caravaggio. The museum hosts numerous initiatives in cooperation with the Historical Archive and the Diocesan Library.

In search of the archaeological history of Palestrina and a breathtaking view, our tourist heads toward **Castel San Pietro**

**Romano**, which, founded in the late Bronze Age, became the ancient Prenestine acropolis where rites linked to the practices of *augurium* and *auspicium* took place. Enclosed by mighty polygonal walls from the 6th century BC, it is still possible to observe these today in one of the main itineraries of the **Museo Diffuso of Castel San Pietro Romano** (→ 22). Established in 2016, the MuDi aims to tell the story of the Prenestine territory and welcome visitors by immersing them in a glorious past of history, archaeology, art and tradition. The heart of the MuDi is the Visitors' Centre in Palazzo Mocci. It was built in the 17th century by the family of the same name in one of the many urban transformations to which the village was subjected, starting from the rule of the Barberini family. Tourists can start their visit here and learn about the thematic itineraries designed to discover one of the 'Most Beautiful Villages in Italy'. From the 'archaeo-trekking' route one can then move on to discover the medieval character of the village. From the early Middle Ages, in fact, the site was the location of a Benedictine monastery where Pope Gregory the Great also stayed.

In the 12th century, the territory became part of the fiefdom of the Colonna family who built a *castrum* with a strategic/military function. The fortress was first destroyed by Pope Boniface VIII and then by Pope Eugene IV in the numerous clashes between the Colonna family and the papacy, only to be rebuilt for civilian use in 1482 by Stefano Colonna. The *Rocca*

*Colonna* is one of the most beautiful vantage points in the village where many cultural and astronomical events take place and from which one can enjoy the view of the entire Prenestine area. The village, with its fortress and its main monuments, has become the location for numerous film shoots since the 1950s when the mayor, Adolfo Porry Pastorel, established relations with some of the most important directors of the time, including Vittorio De Sica, who filmed *Pane, amore e fantasia* there.

Castel San Pietro Romano is not only about history, however, as a few kilometres away from the town is the **Valle delle Cannuccete**, a protected natural area of about 20 hectares and a natural monument since 1995. One can choose from nu-



merous trekking routes to discover the flora and fauna of the sub-mountainous territory of Lazio and see the remains of the ancient pre-Roman aqueduct dating back to the 6th century BC which provided the water resources necessary for the city of Palestrina until the middle of the last century.

In the far-off distance of the vast landscape dominated by Castel San Pietro, one can faintly make out **Rocca di Cave**, the smallest village in the Prenestini Mountains with only 354 inhabitants. With the aim of discovering the landscapes and geodiversity of the region in a unique panorama stretching more than 100 km from the coast to the centre of the Apennines, the visitor can climb the streets of the historic centre all the way to an actual 'Rocca' — an observation tower that houses the **GeoMuseum of Rocca di Cave** (→ 23). Divided into several rooms, the museum is dedicated to the exploration of the main geological events in the history of Lazio and the rocks and fossils of its territory through exhibits, models and sound stations. After visiting the museum, one can follow the geo-paleontological trail (declared a natural monument in 2016) where one can admire the 100-million-year-old fossiliferous cliff. The richness of the fossiliferous outcrops of this site is such that it is an 'open-air museum' and not to be missed. 'Beyond the Earth, the Sky' is the motto of the GeoMuseum as it boasts a planetarium with the sixth largest dome in Italy. Here one can participate in shows and interesting lectures on

space and the stars, accompanied by an interactive and innovative projection.

### **Tips and interesting facts**

We recommend that visitors stay at least one night in Palestrina in order to spend more time in the city itself in order to visit the *Temple of Fortuna* and the *National Archaeological Museum* and enjoy the villages of Castel San Pietro and Rocca di Cave at a more leisurely pace.

Among local products, we recommend trying the 'Giglietto', a simple biscuit made of flour, sugar and eggs, typical of Palestrina and Castel San Pietro. Linked to fate of the Barberini family, who were introduced to this product by the Bourbons from whom it took its lily shape, it is now a certified slow-food product.

We also recommend Castel San Pietro Romano at Christmas time when the *Presepe Artistico* scene comes to life in the poetic setting of the Rocca dei Colonna.

### **Useful links**

- [www.museumgrandtour.com](http://www.museumgrandtour.com)
- [www.castelsanpietroromano.net](http://www.castelsanpietroromano.net)
- [www.geomuseoroccadicave.it](http://www.geomuseoroccadicave.it)



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23

# STORIES OF COUNTRYFOLK, ARTISANS AND CYCLOPS

*Through the historical centres of Gavignano  
and Alatri in search of local traditions*

Linked by a strong rural and artisanal tradition, Gavignano and Alatri are the two easternmost municipalities of the *MuseumGrandTour* Museum System. This itinerary takes our visitors on a journey to discover the history and local traditions of two towns located on the border between the provinces of Rome and Frosinone, revealing anecdotes and myths of their origins.

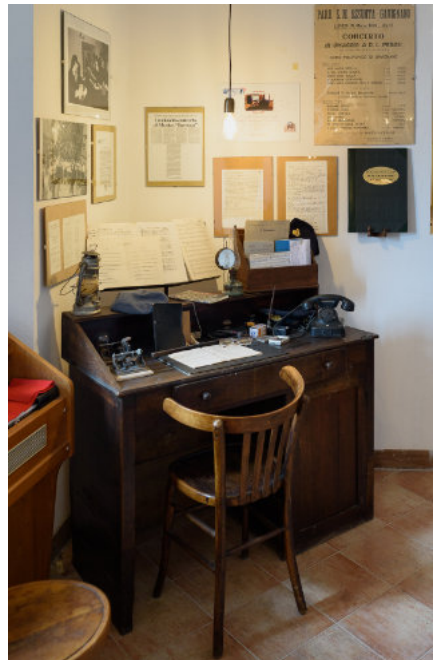
We begin in **Gavignano**, a municipality of just under 2,000 inhabitants located in the Monti Lepini where the Rio and Sacco rivers meet. Its Roman origins are confirmed by the presence of numerous archaeological finds in the Rossilli area — including a mosaic of Alexandrian origin — and the documented presence of numerous patrician villas along the consular roads. The peak of the town's development, however, occurred in the Middle Ages when numerous churches and abbeys were built, including the renowned and still-standing **Rossilli Abbey**. These were coupled with the building of castles

and strongholds which resulted in Gavignano taking on the appearance of a *castrum* with walls and a *mastio* (tower) around which the **Palazzo Baronale** was later built. Of notable grandeur, it was remodeled several times over the centuries to the point that the history of its construction accompanied the construction of the town, with Amato Conti (1044), Innocent III (1161) and Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini (1621) each taking turns in the residence. The tour starts at **Porta Napoletana** where our visitor plunges into the narrow streets of a marvelous medieval town centre made of local stone, enjoying the view of numerous manor houses and buildings. Strolling through the streets, the attentive tourist becomes immediately aware of the peculiar juxtaposition of the cluster of small medieval houses of two, or at most, three storeys on one side, and the grand scale of **Palazzo Baiocchi** on the west side and **Palazzo Traietto** on the south-east side of the town. In the heart of Gavignano is the **Museum of Ru-**

**ral Life** (→ 24, 25), housed in the **Palazzo di Corte**. Created with the intention of reconstructing the history of rural and artisan life at the beginning of the 20th century as opposed to a simple exhibition of objects, the museum is a place to experience a distant way of life as if it were alive and near. Several exhibition spaces recreate the aspects of life dedicated to the work, home and care of family of the first inhabitants of Gavignano and the neighbouring villages that became autonomous after the unification of Italy. The objects chosen as representative of 20th-century rural everyday life are the plough, the clock and the bell. Following these are spaces dedicated to the typical work of the period and a second room dedicated to the reconstruction of the humble rural home environment and the traditional work of the housewife. Finally, the last rooms are dedicated to entertainment and the choral and musical arts.

After Gavignano, our visitor can proceed to **Alatri**, one of the most beautiful and noble cities of art in southern Lazio, whose charm is amplified by the remarkable coexistence of archaic monumental elements and those dating back to subsequent eras, most notably the Middle Ages. The first stop of the second part of the itinerary is the **Civic Museum** (→ 27). Here as well is a demo-ethno-anthropological collection of tools and equipment related to the local agricultural and artisanal tradition, located on the third floor. Housed in the mediaeval **Palazzo Gottifredo** in the heart of Alatri's historical centre, it is di-

vided into various sections spread over the different floors of the tower-house: on the ground floor, a polychromatic floor mosaic with geometric decoration from 80-90 BC in the 'Voyagers of Discovery' section; on the first floor, the section on ancient **Aletrium** with epigraphs and archaeological finds from the surrounding area; in the mezzanine, a section dedicated to Etruscan art. In addition to its medieval history, however, Alatri is known above all as the 'City of the Cyclops' thanks to the exceptional state of conservation of its **Acropolis of Civita** and the **Cyclopean Walls** (→ 26) that encircle it, the true symbol of the megalithic cities of Lazio to which mysteries and legends have always been linked. Situated on the top of the hill, the acropolis is notable for



its polygonal walls made up of several layers of differently-shaped megaliths, often up to 3 metres high, made to fit together perfectly without the use of mortar or concrete. With a perimeter wall 2 km long and preceded by a flight of steps, the acropolis can be entered through two gates: the **Porta Maggiore** and the **Porta Minore**. In addition to the first wall is a second one, again in polygonal construction and concentric to the acropolis, but wider, in which as many as five gates, originally topped with monolithic architraves, opened. Of these, only the **Porta di San Benedetto** still remains. The gothic **Church of San Francesco** (13th-14th century) is particularly representative of the medieval character of the city of Alatri, and a convent which was annexed to it is now used as an

exhibition hall. Located there in a narrow cavity is a fresco by an unknown author depicting a Christ Pantocrator at the centre of a labyrinth of eleven coils and twelve circles which measures 140 cm in diameter. Considered an iconographic *unicum*, it is thought that it may have been connected to a Templar presence within the city's fortified walls.

### Tips and interesting facts

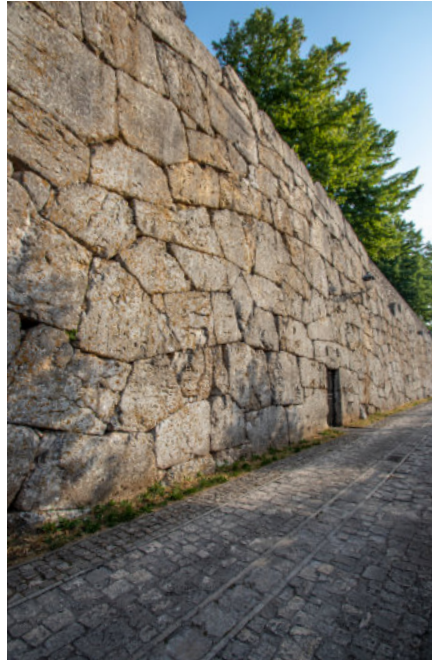
We recommend an overnight stay in Alatri in order to visit during Ferragosto when the traditional Folklore Festival dedicated to the fusion of art and local culture is held.

### Useful links

- [www.museumgrandtour.com](http://www.museumgrandtour.com)
- [www.museogavignano.it](http://www.museogavignano.it)
- [www.alatriturismo.it](http://www.alatriturismo.it)







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# THE GRAND TOUR THROUGH THE MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY

*The tradition of landscape painting in  
Valmontone, Genazzano and Olevano Romano*

Curious to step into the shoes of a true 'grand tourist', our traveller will find the ideal itinerary in Valmontone, Genazzano and Olevano Romano. Linked by a strong landscape painting tradition and by both modern and contemporary artistic patronage, the three towns dominate the valley where the river Sacco flows, still offering spectacular views of a limitless landscape.

We begin in **Valmontone** in the **Museum of Palazzo Doria Pamphilj** (→ 28), which is divided into two sections — the first, on the ground floor, dedicated to archaeological finds discovered in the surrounding area, and the second, a historical-artistic section corresponding to the splendid cycle of frescoes commissioned by Prince Camillo Pamphilj between 1658 and 1659. Spread throughout the eleven rooms of the Palazzo's *piano nobile*, the decorations present an iconographic programme depicting the allegories of the Four Elements and the Four Continents, created by Francesco Cozza, Pier-

francesco Mola, Giambattista Tassi and the great Mattia Preti who, in 1661, was called upon to decorate the ceiling of the Aria. Completing the tour is the marvellous trompe l'oeil landscape in the Salone del Principe frescoed by Gaspard Dughet in collaboration with Guglielmo Cortese. It is by viewing the frescoes in this long, narrow room that our visitor will most feel like a true Grand Tour traveller by being able to admire the landscape that could be seen from the large windows of Palazzo Doria at the time. Right next to Palazzo Doria Pamphilj is the **Collegiate Church of Santa Maria Maggiore**. Built between 1685 and 1689 by the architect Mattia De Rossi (Bernini's favourite pupil), the majestic Collegiate Church dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin into Heaven was commissioned by Prince Giovanni Battista Pamphilj in order to continue the ambitious project of creating an ideal 'Pamphilian city' begun by his father with the construction of the palazzo. The intervention of De Rossi — who also designed the

palazzo — included demolishing the previous Gothic church and rebuilding a new church with an elliptical plan and a façade enclosed by twin bell towers, inspired by Borromini's Sant'Agnese in Agone in Rome.

From Valmontone, we move towards Genazzano, stopping first at the **Castello Colonna**. Situated on a spur of tuff rock, it offers a marvellous view of the landscape that stretches from the Sacco Valley to the eastern mountains. The history of the castle, as its name denotes, is linked to the Colonna family who transformed it from a simple defensive fortress to a manor house of great artistic and architectural importance from the 11th century onwards and it was in 1639 that Cardinal Girolamo Colonna commissioned the interior frescoes. These include the ones in the chapel located on the first floor in the east wing where, as in Palazzo Doria, glimpses of the landscape that give an idea of the views of the time are depicted, along with sacred scenes. The artistic history of the castle was revived in modern times when it was purchased by the municipality in 1979 and restored, becoming a centre of attraction for numerous theatrical and contemporary art initiatives. These included *Le Stanze* (1979), the first artistic event curated by the critic Achille Bonito Oliva, in which the leading exponents of the Transavantgarde movement participated. Today, the castle houses the **Castello Colonna Atelier Museum** (→ 29), made up of five sections: the **Quadreria**, the **Museum of the Infiorata**, the **Museum**

**of Popular Arts and Traditions**, the **Archaeological Museum** and the **Living Museum**. The museum system with its **Quadreria** was inaugurated on 23 April 2022. It presents the works of Scipione Vannutelli and those related to the *Genazzano Prize* (1953-1970), with works by Calabria, Sughi, Vespignani, Guccione, Attardi, Turchiaro, Lippi, Mafai and others. Not far from the centre of the village, Genazzano still amazes the contemporary 'grand tourist' with the sight of modern ruins — the remains of the **Nymphaeum of Bramante**, an architectural complex dating back to the beginning of the 16th century attributed by Frommel to the great Renaissance architect Donato Bramante, perhaps commissioned by Cardinal Pompeo Colonna. The grandeur and magnifi-



cence of this imposing work, which combines the reminiscences of Roman classicism with the aspirations of Renaissance classicism, are intended to create an evocative and magical place, secluded on the edge of a stretch of water and surrounded by greenery, where the visitor can seamlessly merge with nature, evoking Arcadian impressions of the past.

However, it is in **Olevano Romano**, the last stop of our itinerary in the Roman countryside bordering the province of Frosinone, that our traveller will find the contemporary traces of the landscape tradition of the Grand Tour. At the **Olevano Romano Civic Museum of Art** (→ 30) housed in the historic Villa de Pisa, one can admire a large collection of works that testify to the profound cultural tradition that,

starting in the early 19th century, placed this small town at the centre of interest of numerous European artists fascinated by the beauty of the landscape and the authenticity of local customs and traditions. Among those on display are works by 20th-century and contemporary artists who have kept and continue to keep alive the tradition of the Grand Tour, a cultural phenomenon that still continues here. To better understand the wonder and amazement that ancient travellers must have felt at Olevano Romano, our tourist should set off on foot towards the **historic centre**. Perched on a spur of tuff rock, the village is striking for its cluster of local stone houses placed neatly one on top of the other, above which rises the tower of the castle also built by the Colonna family, who acquired the *castrum* from Pope Gregory IX in the 13th century. It is worth reaching the top of the village to enjoy a 360° panorama of the Sacco Valley below and the wilderness of the **Woods of the Serpentara**. Currently managed by the German Academy of Villa Massimo in Rome, the Serpentara was a source of inspiration for a large colony of European artists during the Romantic period who found inspiration for their creations in the pristine nature.

#### Tips and interesting facts

We recommend this itinerary in the first week of July on the Sunday of the 'Feast of the Sacred Heart' when the traditional *In-fiorata* of Genazzano takes place. Internationally famous with a history going



back to 1883, it gives tourists the opportunity to participate in the composition of the floral carpet laid out along the streets by master floral designers.

Passing through Olevano Romano — since 2007 the Strada del Vino Terra del Cesanese — our tourist must stop for lunch in one of the many renowned local trattorias to savour a fine glass of Cesanese red wine, once much appreciated by the popes and the noble families who resided in the territory.

### Useful links

- [www.museumgrandtour.com](http://www.museumgrandtour.com)
- [www.amolevano.it](http://www.amolevano.it)
- [www.villamassimo.de](http://www.villamassimo.de)



# GHOST TOWNS AND FOSSIL REMAINS

*Following the archaeological traces  
of Artena and Colleferro*

What is it that links Artena and Colleferro, two medium-sized municipalities located in the Valle del Sacco, east of the metropolitan province? They are linked by the archaeological traces of the still unknown towns or buildings that have disappeared. In fact, it is on the footsteps of history — both ancient and recent — that our visitor will travel on the following itinerary!

The tour starts at the **Piano della Civita archaeological area**, about 1 km away from the medieval town of **Artena**. In a spectacular landscape setting with a panorama that sweeps from the Pianura Pontina through the Castelli Romani to the Monti Prenestini and the Valle del Sacco, tourists can visit the ruins of a late archaic and mid-Republican settlement that was abandoned in the first quarter of the 3rd century BC and whose name, however, is still unknown. Inside, there are substantial remains of the polygonal wall and a monumental central terrace, behind which are the ruins of a rustic Roman villa. The archaeological area of the Piano di

Civita is closely connected with the **'Roger Lambrechts' Archaeological Civic Museum** (→ 31, 32), the second stop on our itinerary. Housed in the 18th-century Granaio Borghese and named after the Belgian archaeologist who conducted excavations in this very area for more than twenty-five years, it holds remains from the Piano della Civita area and the surrounding countryside. Prominent in the collection is the *Soldier's Head with Helmet*, fully in the round and cast in light sandblasted earthenware, comparable to — both in subject and date — other examples found in southern Lazio from the early 5th century BC. From the museum, our visitor concludes the first part of the itinerary by strolling through the streets of the **historic centre of Artena**, whose beauty can be perceived not only in its peculiar medieval urban layout, but also in its houses. Featuring small narrow windows, they are perched along the ridge and reachable by steep stairways and alleys. Immersed in the narrow streets, it is

easy to grasp the compactness of the village, which actually seems more like a fortress, hence its original name of 'Montefortino'. This was its name from the time of the rule of the Counts of Segni and was only replaced by the present one in 1873. The route ends at the **Collegiate Church of Santa Croce**, built in the Middle Ages but completely restored in 1659 by the architect Domenico Terzago at the behest of Prince Giovan Battista Borghese. From here our visitor can, one last time, enjoy a wonderful view at roughly 420 m above sea level.

It is now time to move on to the town of **Colleferro**, located on the border with the province of Frosinone. Although the name of the town has nothing to do with iron (ferro) but rather with the conversion of the phonetic value of the F into V, an important deposit of fossil fauna has been found in the area of Colle Pantanaccio. These are kept at the **Archaeological Museum of the 'Tolerianse' Territory in Colleferro** (→ 33, 34), the first stop of the second part of this itinerary. Located in the former B.P.D. factory, the museum is divided into five main thematic sections, each dedicated to a historical period: palaeontology, prehistory and protohistory, the archaic period, the Roman period and the early Middle Ages and Middle Ages. What impresses even adult visitors is the palaeontological section in which not only Pleistocene animal fossils are on display, but also, most notably, a spectacular full-scale reproduction of a straight-tusked elephant (*Palaeodoxodon antiquus*). The

mediaeval section, on the other hand, houses finds from the area's castles, in particular those from the excavations of the Castello di Piombinara (12th-18th century) and it is precisely to the remains of the church of **S. Maria di Piombinara** that our tourist heads once the museum visit is over. Belonging to the castle of the same name, we first hear of this church in the 12th century. Knocked down after the war to make way for the Via Casilina along which it stands, all that remains of it today is the square-plan bell tower made of irregular blocks of tuff and an archaeological area excavated and developed by the Archaeological Museum in collaboration with the pertinent *Soprintendenza*.

The church of Piombinara is not, however, the only 'ghost building' in Colleferro.



It is also worth mentioning the **Castello Vecchio**, the last stop on our itinerary. Situated on the top of a hill at 245 m above sea level, it is accessed through a vaulted corridor that leads into the central courtyard onto which the different parts of the mostly rectangular structure open up. No definite information is available on its origins, but its history is thought to be linked to the Conti family and therefore attributable to the beginning of the 13th century. Destroyed and rebuilt several times over the years, it suffered serious damage in the 1915 earthquake before finally coming into the possession of the municipality of Colleferro in 2020 when it was purchased by the Furlan family. After the purchase, extensive cleaning of overgrowth and the removal of a dump from the last century

revealed the remains of a polygonal structure from the Republican period and a presumably early medieval church which can be visited by guided tour.

#### Tips and interesting facts

We recommend visiting Artena in August for the *Palio delle Contrade*, a popular folkloristic event during which games, customs and traditions of the town's 20th-century agricultural tradition are re-enacted. The palio is also an opportunity to taste some of Artena's typical dishes, such as *gnocchi lunghi*, polenta with ribs and lamb skewers, all accompanied by a glass of good wine.

In addition to its archaeological history, Colleferro has a strong 20th-century history as evidenced by the *città morandiana*





and the air raid shelters that extend for no less than 6 km beneath the town.

**Useful links**

→ [www.museumgrandtour.com](http://www.museumgrandtour.com)



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SISTEMA MUSEALE  
TERRITORIALE  
CASTELLI ROMANI  
E PRENESTINI

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