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OPEN TOURISM

PORTO CESAREO

Protected Marine Area (Italy)



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PORTO CESAREO PROTECTED MARINE AREA (ITALY)

The protected marine area has almost 17000 hectares of sea and extends for 32 kilometers of jagged coastline, with long stretches dominated by high dunes of very light sand, alternating with sandy coves and rocky stretches dotted with islets not far from the coast: the Marine Protected Area (AMP) Porto Cesareo is one of the largest Italian marine reserves. Its territory extends from Punta Prosciutto (north end, on the border with the Province of Manduria) to Torre Inserraglio (south end, in the territory of Nardò).

It is a territory with a very strong tourist vocation, which has always attracted visitors for the beauty of its coasts, the clarity of its waters and the richness of its seabed. Today the AMP Porto Cesareo is included in the list of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (ASPIM), and since 2018 has achieved the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (CETS), initiating a process of involvement of the territory in a process of sustainable tourism development.

The Porto Cesareo Protected Marine Area includes two municipalities: Porto Cesareo and Nardò.

The coast of the AMP Porto Cesareo is an important rest area during migrations and wintering area for marine avifauna species. The structure of the coast, with coastal islets and brackish coastal marshes (canals and basins) with priority habitats and basins is particularly suitable as a resting and wintering area for migratory avifauna, including the Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), the Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*, Linnaeus 1758), the Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*, Linnaeus 1758), the Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*, Linnaeus, 1766), the Little Brother (*Charadrius alexandrinus*, Linnaeus 1758) and the Little Brother (*Sternula albifrons*, Pallas 1764). The beaches of Porto Cesareo are nesting sites of the *Caretta caretta* turtles, which almost every year choose the beaches of Porto Cesareo to lay their eggs.

Typical products

The AMP Porto Cesareo hosts one of the most important small-scale fishing communities in Italy. Today the catch of the Porto Cesareo fishing community, obtained with selective techniques and tools, is Slow Food Presidium.

Some restaurants in the area have begun to offer the local catch of the day and the Slow Food Presidium of small-scale fishing in Porto Cesareo: the Ristorante, the tower in Sant'Isidoro (Nardò), the Osteria Il Panarino and the Restaurant Aqua-le Dune in Porto Cesareo, offer dishes based on fish from the Slow Food Presidium of small-scale fishing in Porto Cesareo, with the aim of enhancing the local and zero-mile catch of the day.

Excursions by sea

The tour operators offering services authorized by the WAP are united in an Association (Association of Salento 360° tour operators). They have information boxes along the coast, from which they depart with their boats offering boat trips, visits to the Rabbit Island, fishing experiences, scuba diving with ARA and freediving, surfing, pad and kitesurfing experiences. They also offer integrated packages with tastings and excursions inland. A site equipped for sailing sports is located at the Residence Le Dune.

Activities

Some activities (sport fishing from boat or land, yachting, scuba diving with ARA and freediving) require the issuance of an authorization by the offices of the WAP (www.ampprotcesareo.it).

PORTO CESAREO (ITALY)

THE HISTORICAL-ARCHITECTURAL CULTURAL HERITAGE

a. Religious buildings

Church of Madonna del perpetuo soccorso

Erected in 1880 on indication of the bishop of Nardò Michele Mautone, the church of the Madonna del Perpetuo Soccorso stands next to the small chapel of 1639, dedicated to Santa Cesarea Vergine, which had become too small and was later used as a rectory. The new church has a simple neoclassical facade framed by two Doric pilasters and a triangular tympanum. The interior has a single rectangular nave with a star vault, while on the sides there are two niches hosting the papier-mâché statues of Saint Cesarea and the Madonna del Perpetuo Soccorso. The new building of worship was blessed on March 30, 1958 by the bishop of Nardò Corrado Ursi.

b. Civil and military architecture

The Watchtowers

Along the coast of Porto Cesareo are visible four watchtowers built in the sixteenth century to protect the Salento peninsula from the raids of Saracen pirates: Torre Cesarea, Torre Lapillo, Torre Chianca and Torre Castiglione. Two of these towers are accessible: Torre Lapillo, Visitor Center of the Regional Reserve "Palude del Conte and Duna Costiera di Porto Cesareo", and Torre Chianca, Environmental Experience Center of the Municipality of Porto Cesareo and First Aid Center Taratarughe Marine of AMP Porto Cesareo.

Torre Cesarea

Cesarea Tower is the largest watchtower ever and it was erected on purpose as the headquarters of Sopraguardia at the head of the Comarca of Cesarea. For this reason it is also called "Torre Capitana", as it was assigned the jurisdiction of military command over all the towers included in the territory. It has a quadrangular shape, a height of 16 meters and sides 21.50 meters long, with the base walls 4 meters thick. The tower, consisting of tuffaceous blocks, has various machicolations and the crowning is supported by corbels. Its construction began on May 1, 1568 and was completed in April 1570. Later it

was demolished and rebuilt in 1622. It communicated to the south with Torre Squillace, in the municipality of Nardò, and to the north with Torre Chianca. Currently the tower houses the offices of the Guardia di Finanza.

Torre Chianca

A square tower, without external stairs, which has a base escarpment of 15.60 meters and a height of 18 meters. It originally communicated to the south with Torre Cesarea and to the north with Torre Lapillo.

During the Second World War the tower became the home of some soldiers of the Italian army who had installed an artillery station there. During the same period the tower was visibly damaged due to the exercises of the German soldiers who took refuge in the camps of Leverano and San Pancrazio. Today Torre Chianca, completely restored, has become a cultural container that houses a center of experience on the sea and archaeology, managed by the Municipality of Porto Cesareo, as well as a first aid room for sea turtles managed by AMP Porto Cesareo.

Torre Lapillo

The Torre Lapillo, also known as the Torre di San Tommaso, was completed in February 1568. It has a square-based structure and an access staircase with three arches below, the last one added only in recent times: the staircase ended with a drawbridge. The base sides are 16 meters long, while the height reaches 17 meters. On the ground floor there is a cistern while on the second floor there is a large room. It communicated to the south with Torre Chianca and to the north with the destroyed Torre Castiglione.

The tower was restored in 2000. The internal rooms now house a Tourist/Environmental Visitor Center of the Municipality of Porto Cesareo, managed in collaboration with the environmental associations of Porto Cesareo, where it is possible to find information material on itineraries, traditions, the main architectural and cultural sites of the area, as well as participate in cultural events and food and wine events aimed at enhancing the products of the protected area. From the Torre Lapillo start itineraries by land and sea for the exploration of the Land Reserve and the Marine Reserve.

Torre Castiglione

Of the last watchtower placed at the service of this stretch of coast, Torre Castiglione, are now visible only a few ruins. The building, built at the end of the sixteenth century, was in fact demolished during the Second World War.

c. The archeological heritage

Porto Cesareo represents a hot spot of submerged archaeological discoveries and along the coast.

Archaeological site Torre Chianca

In just 3 km of coastline, near the town of Porto Cesareo, there are numerous well documented and well known archaeological sites along the shore and submerged:



- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Beached wreck | 5 Navis Lapidaria |
| 2 Burial Area (necropolis) | 6 Prehistoric submerged wall |
| 3 Roman Structures | 7 Mediaeval structures |
| 4 Prehistoric site | 8 Isolated recovery |



- a wreck of lapidary navis, which carried a cargo of monumental columns in cipollino marble, coming from Evia, near Torre Chianca, datable between the end of the second and third century AD. (fig. 1, n. 5);
- a beach wreck of medieval age, of which is visible a large portion of a side, still welded to the keel, at a depth of 2 meters and about 150 meters from the coast in the area of Bacino Grande, which currently lies hidden by beach sediments (fig. 1, n. 1);
- submerged structures (wall alignments and a paved arrangement), placed between the promontory on which remain the remains of the Bronze Age settlement of Scalo di Furno (fig. 1, n. 4) and the islet in front, at depths ranging between 2.20 and 3.55 m; depending on the construction technique

and morphology, the presence of ceramics and especially the relative sea level rise values, it seems plausible the identification with a sector of the protohistoric settlement behind. The structures, in fact, in the Bronze Age had to have emerged, as - on the other hand - the whole area including the mainland and the island of Malva (fig. 1, n. 6);

- a series of isolated or decontextualized discoveries: amphorae, anchors, ceramic materials, etc. (fig. 1, n. 8);
- levels of frequentation and remains of masonry structures and artifacts of the Roman age on the promontory of the Torre Chianca and on the one immediately further west, which denounce the presence of an important productive settlement for the exploitation of the resources of the sea, of buildings and necropolar areas (sarcophagi and tombs dug in the rocky bank) related to the one along the current shoreline, in condition of partial submersion and heavy erosion (fig. 1, n. 2-3).
- Conspicuous remains of a medieval settlement on the Strea peninsula (fig. 1, n. 7)

Roman Columns of Torre Chianca

On the sandy seabed in front of Torre Chianca, in 1960 five columns of cipolino marble were found side by side. They are monolithic columns 9 meters high and with a diameter varying between 70 and 100 centimeters. The columns were dated to the second century AD, in Roman times. Their presence in the sea and their singular parallel position make us hypothesize the shipwreck of the ship that was carrying them.

Furno

In 1963 a protohistoric village with sheds dating back to the Bronze Age was found north of the town of Porto Cesareo, from which Mycenaean ceramics from Ithaca and Kefalonia, votive sculptures and a cultic area dedicated to the goddess Thana have resurfaced. Surrounded by a protective wall about 2.5 meters high, this site was later frequented by sailors of Greek origin. In 1932, a crew of fishermen found in the sea of Porto Cesareo, between the islands of Malva and Chianca, an Egyptian statue representing the God Thout, lost during the shipwreck of some boats and now exhibited in the National Museum of Magna Graecia in Taranto. Legend has it that the statue is attributed to Ruth, a shaman and musician from Africa who lived about 10,000 years ago. Documents concerning her discovery are kept in the Archives of the Archaeological Museum of Taranto.

Wreck of Porto Cesareo

It is located inside the peninsula of the Strea in an area of the Protected Marine Area Porto Cesareo very frequented in the summer period as a landing place. It is a wooden wreck that lies on a sandy bottom at a regular depth of 2.5m. The wreck, subject to continuous sea storms, is not always visible every year. It occupies an area of 92 m² and has an extension of 18.5 x 4.5 m; it is SW-NE oriented. Its limits are not well visible because part of its continuation continues under the sediments towards SW, while the truncation and the disconnected elements towards NE suggest that this side has suffered more injuries and that it does not continue much under the sediments. The wreck is mainly made of wood, there are numerous metal concretions and along the N side is visible part of the lithic ballast and some very fragmentary ceramic fragments. Of the wreck is recognizable the rib consisting of ribs and stems of variable thickness between 10 and 15 cm. The distance between them seems to be regular of 16 cm and have a height of about 13 cm; the planks of the outer plating are recognizable, which have a thickness between 4 and 5cm, 20 cm wide and in some points are recognizable also the planks of the inner plating. The preserved portion of the wreck represents part of the side of the hull and has an almost flat, regular shape. The assemblages of the planks almost all seem to be made of iron, as suggested by the strongly oxidized concretions. In some places only a few square impressions of the nailing on the wood are preserved. Ceramic fragments found in the immediate vicinity of the wreck have attracted particular attention to some significant elements (wide banded loops, twisted loops, hems). Some local productions and some ceramic mixes with imported volcanic materials are recognizable. These suggest a chronological horizon between the 12th and 13th centuries. The wreck is very close to the medieval fishing village on the Strea peninsula and could clarify significant aspects of the coastal landscape at that time and contribute to the historical reconstruction of the place.

d. The Museums

The Museum of Marine Biology Pietro Parenzan

This museum dedicated to the fauna, flora and natural habitat of the protected area was founded in 1966 by the naturalist Pietro Parenzan, who donated the collections to the University of Lecce in 1977. Since 1999 the museum and has become a section of the Faculty of Biology of the University.

The exhibitions include about 900 exhibits, such as the Collection of Ecological Malacology consisting of specimens of shells collected on the local

coastline, the Algario which preserves more than 700 specimens of algae of 219 different species from the Ionian and Adriatic seas, samples from the tropical seas with specimens from the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, such as the collection of abyssal fish from the Ionian Sea and the collection of monstrous specimens.

The most attractive exhibits for the public are the large *Caretta caretta* turtle carapaces, the monk seal, the *Dermochelis coriacea* turtle which is the symbol of the Museum, some sperm whale vertebrae, a specimen of bottlenose dolphin and a two-headed shark.

On a temporary basis, the museum also hosts exhibitions dedicated to ecological and environmental themes.

The museum also has a well-stocked library with publications on aquatic and terrestrial habitats, an archive of photographs and catalogs, and a multimedia room. Entrance to the museum is free, only educational activities (guided tours and workshops) are available for a fee.

TRADITIONAL EVENTS

a. Religious manifestations

Feast of Madonna del perpetuo soccorso

Period: 27 and 28 June

On the occasion of the Feast of Madonna del perpetuo soccorso there are civil and religious celebrations in honor of the patron saint of the city. The event includes a religious program, but also live cultural and musical events.

Feast of Saint Cesarea

Period: 21-24 August

The Christian tradition has brought the history of Santa Cesarèa to us. Cesarea was the name of a young motherless girl, who fled from her father-master in a cave near Otranto (where today's Santa Cesarea Terme stands). When the man who was chasing her managed to reach her, high flames of sulfur burned him alive and the small mountain where she had taken refuge opened to give refuge to the young girl. The waters inside it became miraculous, to the point that sick and suffering people went there to bathe to ask for a healing grace. Another version of the legend, also handed down by the locals, traces the life of Cesarea around the year 1100. In this case Cesarea was a girl who lived in a wealthy family, and despite the many suitors had made a vow of chastity. A Saracen, arrived in the city after an attack, wanted to take her with him

but Cesarea to escape this violence went to take refuge in a cave. When the Saracen arrived, a cloud hid Cesarea in his eyes and without seeing anything he fell on the rocks.

The feast of St. Cesarea is the patronal feast of Porto Cesareo and usually takes place every year between the 21st and 24th of August. On the first day there is a procession from the parish church of the Sacred Heart to the sea, in memory of the miraculous event. The procession brings to the sea not only the statue of Saint Cesarea, but also the statue of the other patron saint, the Beata Vergine del perpetuo soccorso. Once they reach the sea, they are hoisted on two different boats and made to cross the waters. Parties are then organized with stalls, traditional music, fireworks at sea (photo below) and with the "cuccagna a mare" that offers prizes to the winners, but above all lots of fun.

b. Other events and manifestations

Fish Festival

Period: June - July

The Fish Festival is a typical summer event of Porto Cesareo, even if organizational difficulties have not yet managed to give the festival a fixed annual frequency. When it happens, it is held in June or July and of course the favorite food to be enjoyed is the local fish caught exclusively in the waters of Salento. In particular, it is very appreciated the fried fish, cooked in the square and offered together with other fish products and wine from Salento.

In any case, the festival is part of the traditions of Porto Cesareo, the first edition dates back to 1965 and in fifty years has seen the light in thirty-six editions. It is usually organized over three days and other initiatives such as cultural activities, music and awards are planned together. In one of the last editions was also beaten the record for the largest frying pan in Italy, it was in fact used for frying in Piazza "Polifemo", a large frying pan with a diameter of four meters.

Palio dei Rioni

Period: July and August

The Palio dei Rioni is a race of traditions, muscles, heart, culture and belonging. An annual event very much felt by the inhabitants of Porto Cesareo, and that over the years has managed to attract more and more tourists and curious people from all over Salento.

It consists of a real race at sea between rowers from different districts.

The town of Porto Cesareo is in fact divided into ten districts, each with its own coat of arms, color and symbols: the Strea; China; Korea; Historic Center; Riviera di Levante; Lapillo Tower; Bacino Grande; Scalo di Furno; Punta Grossa; Il Poggio. These districts are represented by a couple of rowers who during two heats, in July and August, challenge each other on identical boats. The ten rowing boats are built by the Latin Shipyard of Porto Cesareo, the meeting of the ten couples takes place in Piazza Nazario Sauro from here we head to the sea accompanied by a procession that exposes the Palio with the usual characters in period costume and the inevitable flag wavers.

The route of the race includes the start at the Riviera di Levante, the turn at the height of two buoys placed at the small lighthouse and return. The sum of the times timed during the two heats decrees the winning couple of the Palio. The event is organized by the Association "Il Palio di Porto Cesareo".

NATURE

The Regional Reserve "Palude del Conte e Duna Costiera di Porto Cesareo".

The Reserve extends entirely along the whole coastal territory of the homonymous municipality for a total of 898,29 Ha. The perimeter of the Reserve is not continuous and includes, starting from the south, the peninsula of the Strea, the archipelago of Cesarino, the hill "Belvedere", and along the coast starting from the coastal tower of Torre Lapillo, the "spunulate" of Torre Castiglione, the wetland and what remains of the Arneo forest on the border with the province of Taranto. The Reserve includes the areas that once were the stains of Arneo and the entire wetland and malarial area, with the sixteenth century towers Cesarea, Chianca, Castiglione (ruin), farms and "lazzi" memories of ancient transhumance and crops now discovered. The reclamation works, and in particular the Punta Prosciutto water-scooping plant, bear witness to a recent epic that has shaped the landscape and nature, giving the Reserve its current appearance. Today the area is a complex mosaic of ecosystems included in three large homogeneous areas: the peninsula of the Strea and the small archipelago of islets made up of the island Grande and the rocks of Testa, Mojuso and Malva which are characterized by a strongly brackish environment with large saltwater and cliffs in rhythm-static, classic locus of the Apulian static (*Limonium japgicum*) and therefore a priority habitat tutelato by EU regulations.

But also by punctiform endemisms such as the *Iris revoluta Colasante* of the Mojuso rock and the buttercup of Baudot on the peninsula of the Strea included in the Regional Red List. The lack of accessibility, makes this part of

the Reserve, a pasture area for many species of herons and herons, while the beaches outside host the nesting of the Tern, of the little tern and give hope for those of the rare Corsican gull.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The “spunulate” of Torre Castiglione are a species of outcrops of the stratum due to karst erosion, unique and semi-unknown ecosystems connected by hypogea with the presence of brackish flora, including the endemic spinaporci (*Sarcopoterium spinosum*) and marsh fauna, especially Eurlian fish, including the rare ninth (*Aphanius fasciatus*). The westernmost part of the protected area still preserves, despite the strong anthropization, the typical sequence of sandy coasts with a dune belt on which the cuddly juniper and the rarer Phoenician juniper can be seen; the area behind the dunes with the presence of rushes and salicorns, wrecks of the ancient marsh of the Count, with the system of basins and canals in function of ecological network and reservoir of naturalness characterized by rare plants such as the *Sagittata Hypomea* and the marsh orchid or unusual as the milk thistle and the presence of birds such as the Kingfisher, the River Nightingale, the Woodcock and the Swamp Hawk, as well as the marsh tortoise and a great variety of dragonflies. Upstream of the reclamation canal, characterized by a constant flow of fresh water and a rich hydrophilic vegetation, the Arneo Wood, from the planting pinewood, is preparing to return broadleaf forest, and preserves an interesting undergrowth with Cyclamen, Blackthorn, Viburnum Tino, Clematis and the rare *Anagyris foetida*; towards the interior large stretches of scrub and garrigue, with tree mastic trees.

TYPICAL PRODUCTS

“Quataru”, the fish soup of Porto Cesareo.

This dish, takes its name from the pot called “quatara”, made of copper originally used for its cooking. It is a fish soup originally prepared by fishermen during fishing trips with less valuable or abused species. The preparation has remained unchanged since it was, even for long periods, the only dish of the fishermen during their sorties of several days. They left the flavor for a while and poured a few liters of water, half marine, half spring and when it boiled the fish or better marine animals, but following a precise order.

Today Lu Quataru is in the list of typical regional dishes of the MIPAAF.

TOURISM SERVICES

a. Accommodations

The official website of the municipality of Porto Cesareo reports the presence in the territory of 77 accommodation facilities of different types. The 35 bed & breakfast are certainly the most numerous type of accommodation, followed by the 27 hotels surveyed. Among these, the most numerous category is undoubtedly that of four-star hotels, with 12 addresses. Among the receptive structures present in Porto Cesareo there are also rooms for rent (3 units), vacation homes (3 units), tourist villages (1), hotel villages (1), camping (2). The researches on the tourist intermediation platforms lead to much more relevant results in terms of number, also due to the presence of an occasional and unofficial seasonal extra-hotel offer.

b. Restaurants

The catering facilities in Porto Cesareo listed on the official website of the Municipality are a total of 32, including both restaurants and trattorias and pizzerias. The offer on the tourist intermediation platforms is much wider, with more than 130 addresses reported on Tripadvisor selecting only the "restaurants" category. The number of reviews of the first twenty restaurants of the territory present on this platform appears very high, a sign of a good general visibility of the culinary offer of the territory. In addition to the restaurants proper, Porto Cesareo's food offer includes every kind of offer, with trattorias, pizzerias, fast food, bars with gastronomy.

c. Farmhouses

There are censuses on the municipal territory of Porto Cesareo eight farmhouses with accommodation and/or catering activities.

d. Tourism services

ProLoco

It offers information to tourists about services and events available in the area. It hosts events and small exhibitions in the summer period.

Visitor Center Torre Lapillo

The Visitor Center of the Regional Reserve is located in the Lapillo Tower, which gave its name to the town of the same name in the municipality of Porto Cesareo. The tower is therefore open to the public and, in addition to discovering its history and visiting it, you will be able to observe the collection of shells and the exhibition dedicated to small artisan fishing. From the Tower there are routes by land and sea to visit the MPA and the Terrestrial Reserve.

NARDÓ (ITALY)

HISTORICAL-ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

a. Religious buildings

Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta

The cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta rises on the place where the ancient Basilian church of Sancta Maria de Nerito was founded, by some oriental monks of the 7th century who escaped the iconoclastic persecutions. With the Norman conquest of the city in 1055, the Basilian monks were slowly replaced by the Benedictines, to whom the monastery and the church were entrusted. It was in fact in 1080 that the Norman Count Goffredo had the remains of the pre-existing Basilian church rebuilt, a new church that by decision of Pope Urban II was dedicated to the Holy Assumption. Over the centuries the church has undergone several rebuilding works, even radical ones, which have altered its original architectural layout. It has a basilica plan with three naves, divided by two orders of round and pointed arches. On the walls remain numerous frescoes, including those of St. Nicholas and Christ enthroned blessing the Greek (XIV century), the Virgin and Child (1511), St. Augustine (XV century) and Our Lady of Grace (1249, work of Baiulardo). Of notable importance is the wooden Crucifix of the XIII century, called the Black Christ for the particular dark color of the cedar wood. Some altars date back to the baroque period and the Cappellone di San Gregorio Armeno, work of Placido Buffelli of 1680.

Church of San Domenico

The church of San Domenico, built for the Dominican order between 1580 and 1594 by Giovanni Maria Tarantino and Gio Tommaso Riccio, was initially

dedicated to Santa Maria de Raccomandatis. Originally it had a basilica plan with three naves that was later transformed into a single hall to better meet the needs of preaching, typical of the mendicant order founded by St. Dominic of Guzman. Following the 1743 earthquake, the factory was almost completely destroyed, with the exception of the facade, the left side wall and part of the sacristy. The facade is in *carparo* stone and was built at two different times; the lower part is full of human figures and caryatids leaning against each other, while the upper part has lighter forms. The interior, Latin cross-shaped with three chapels on each side, was rebuilt after 1743 following the architectural canons of the Counter-Reformation.

Among the different altars stands out the one of the Madonna del Rosario with the fifteen mysteries, work of the painter Antonio Donato D'Orlando. Adjacent to the church is the Dominican convent remodeled by Ferdinando Sanfelice after the earthquake.

Church of the Immaculate

The church of the Immaculate Conception was built in 1580 on the remains of a medieval building. Originally dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi, from 1830 it was consecrated to the Immaculate and entrusted to the homonymous confraternity. It presents an elegant prospectus in *carparo* stone divided into two orders by an overhanging cornice and characterized by pairs of pilasters with festoons that frame niches tympanate. The entrance portal, surmounted by a niche with the Lecce stone statue of the Immaculate, is placed in axis with the rose window of the upper order. The interior, with a single nave ending in the presbytery, houses three side altars in Baroque style. The adjoining convent of the Conventuals, purchased by private individuals after the suppression occurred in 1809, is used as a civil dwelling.

Church of Santa Chiara

The church of Santa Chiara is annexed to the convent of the Poor Clares founded in the 13th century. The monastic complex was built on the remains of a pre-existing fortress, of which battlements are still visible. The subsequent needs of growth of the community made necessary, during the seventeenth century, some expansion works, during which was incorporated into the complex, the adjacent church of St. John the Baptist, whose portal is still visible along the perimeter of the monastery. It suffered significant damage with the earthquake of 1743. The church, rebuilt *ex novo* between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, has a sober facade with two orders, ending with a mixed gable. The interior has a single nave, with three short chapels on each side hosting baroque altars. These are dedicated to St. Francis of As-

sisi, St. Michael the Archangel, the Crucifix, St. Francis Xavier, St. Clare, the Immaculate and St. Anthony of Padua. A large triumphal arch introduces to the rectangular presbytery decorated with pilasters painted in polychrome marble.

Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Carmel

The church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Carmel, with the adjoining convent, is one of the largest monastic complexes in the city. The oldest document that attests the existence of the church, initially dedicated to the Annunziata, is dated 1460. The building underwent various phases of renovation from 1532, due to the damage caused by the French siege, until 1743, following the earthquake. The facade has motifs from the Romanesque period. The lower order is characterized by a prothyrum overlooking the entrance portal flanked by two lions in fierce attitude. The statues of the nunziante Angel and the Madonna Annunziata, placed in the niches, and the motifs of hanging arches with decorated corbels that surround the main and side elevation date back to the 16th century. The interior, completely decorated with baroque stuccoes, develops longitudinally, rhythmized by six arches on pillars and concluded by a quadrangular presbytery room that houses the choir. The two side naves house the altars dedicated to the Trinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel, Saint Eligius, the Crucifix, Saint Catherine of Alexandria, the Sacred Heart and the Annunciation.

Church of St. Anthony of Padua

The construction of the church of St. Anthony of Padua dates back to 1497 when, after the expulsion of the Jews by Count Belisario Acquaviva, the convent of the Friars Minor was built on the site of the ancient synagogue. The facade preserves clear Mannerist elements and is divided into two orders with mystilinear crowning. The interior has a basilical plan divided into a central nave and two intercommunicating side rooms, it has no transept and the roof consists of a wooden coffered ceiling in walnut. Along the sides of the church there are chapels that host valuable altars hosting paintings and statues of the 16th and 17th century, such as the wooden statue of St. Anthony of Padua (by Stefano da Putignano 1514) and the sculptural group of the Crucifixion (17th century work of the Venetian school). Behind the high altar is the cenotaph of 1545 erected in memory of Belisario and Giovanni Bernardino Acquaviva. The adjacent convent, of which only the cloister survives, with the suppression of ecclesiastical property, in 1866 was first transformed into a kindergarten and then into a hospital.

Spire of the Immaculate

The Spire dedicated to the Immaculate, which was built by the will of the entire population of Neretina following the disastrous earthquake that shook the whole Salento in 1743, was inaugurated in 1769. 19 meters high, according to the Apulian baroque style, of pyramidal shape with an octagonal plan, the *carparo* stone construction consists of five different sections of increasing size from bottom to top and has at the base the statues of St. Joseph, St. Anne, St. Joachim and St. John the Baptist. A series of friezes, decorations and cusps accompany the monument to its end where the statue of Mary Immaculate stands.

The Episcopal Seminary

The bishop's seminary was built in 1674 by Bishop Tommaso Brancaccio on the site of the begging asylum. A few years later, in order to arrange an adequate training of the clerics, Bishop Orazio Fortunato ordered the enlargement of the building. In the first decades of the 18th century new classrooms were added. Damaged after the earthquake of February 20, 1743, the seminary was restored with the bishop Francesco Carafa (1737-1754); he provided the inner courtyard with a small porch with cross vaults, to facilitate communication between the different environments, and built the flyover that connects the seminary to the episcopate. In the first half of the last century, by bishop Francesco Minerva, the main facade of the building was completely rebuilt in neoclassical style, in accordance with the main architectural features of the bishop's palace. The facade is divided horizontally by two pilasters: the lower part is characterized by a polished ashlar, while in the upper floor the smooth wall is interrupted by the rhythmic alignment of the architraved windows and the presence of the ashlar at the corners. The entrance portal is surmounted by a balcony with a French window door surrounded by frames and crowned by an architrave with a tympanum.

Episcopal Palace

The Episcopal Palace, located next to the Cathedral, was built in 1830 at the behest of the Bishops Lettieri, Ricciardi and Vetta. The coat of arms of the latter, in fact, is present on an internal arch, from which you can access the large garden. Inside the palace you can admire numerous paintings representing not only sacred images, but also all the bishops who succeeded from 1413 to today.

b. The civil and military architectures

The Municipal Theatre

The Municipal Theatre of Nardò was built at the end of the 19th century on a project by the engineer Quintino Tarantino. It was inaugurated in 1909 with the staging of the opera *Mefistofele* by Arrigo Boito. Despite the functionality of the structure was not constant, the activity was intense and was also used as a music and dance hall because, thanks to the system of pulleys designed by Tarantino, the stalls were raised to the height of the stage. In 2006 the works of adaptation to fire regulations were completed, which saw the protagonists were design groups and local workers. The opening ceremony was entrusted to the famous Maestro Francesco Libetta, who involved Carla Fracci, Franco Battiato, Salvatore Cordella, Gianni Calignano and the dancers of the Balletto del Sud.

Il Sedile (the Seat)

The construction of the Sedile is linked to the foundation of the University of Nardò, built in the period of socio-economic recovery linked to the Acquaviva family in the second half of the fifteenth century. Of Renaissance plant, the sober parallelepiped volume, formed by round arches, was enriched by rococo contaminations (at the end of the 17th century) in the upper fastigio with the statues of St. Gregorio Armeno, in the center, St. Michael the Archangel and St. Anthony of Padua at the sides. Still at the end of the seventeenth century, inside, were preserved the paintings on canvas of the patron saints of the time: the Crowned Virgin with St. Michael, St. Gregory Armenian and St. Anthony of Padua.

Clock Tower

The Clock Tower was erected in 1598 in the Palazzo dell'antica Pretura in Piazza Salandra, but rebuilt after the earthquake. The mechanism is a rare prototype made by the company Caccialupi of Naples in 1882, date engraved on both the machine and the clock. The mechanism is positioned behind the clock in a cabin, and is made up of two mechanisms that strike the quarters and the hours. The watch is wound by a crank, which is connected to two weights attached to two steel cables. The watch is then wound by hand for 36 hours. This means that even today there is still an attendant busy winding, checking and operating this historical construction that plays the hours to Nardò inhabitants. For sixty years, this task was entrusted to Mr. Aldo Spano who had to climb 80 steps every day to go to the top of the tower and wind this historic jewel by hand.

Acquaviva Castle

The first chronicles relating to the castle date back to the second half of the fifteenth century, when its construction marked the transition from Angevin domination to Aragonese domination, which in the city coincided with the establishment of the Acquaviva family. The structure was the work of the architect Giulio Antonio Acquaviva, Duke of Atri and pupil of Francesco di Giorgio Martini. Probably the building was conceived as an extension of a previous construction, and was characterized by a quadrangular plant surrounded by walls and surrounded by a deep moat. The manor house was completed at the corners by four massive almond-shaped protruding towers; one of which was then rebuilt by Guercio di Puglia after the revolution of 1647, which broke out in conjunction with the popular uprising in Naples led by Masaniello; certainly the whole building was on four levels in which were distributed about 49 rooms. The Castle lost part of its consistency when it was the object of a decisive remodeling that led to its transformation into a civil residence of the Personè family between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, designed by the engineer Generoso De Maglie di Carpignano Salentino. Of admirable workmanship remain the cornices of the highest part of the towers, slightly overhanging, resting on small brackets. Even the main facade, decorated with rusticated motif, is the result of the nineteenth century remodeling, and now characterizes the final appearance of this now noble palace that houses the Town Hall.

The University Palace

The Palace of the University, also known as the Town Hall, dates back to the end of the 16th century and was built to house the civil authorities, i.e. the Mayor of the Nobles and the Mayor of the People. Built between 1588 and 1612, it was rebuilt after the 1743 earthquake. The new building, completed in 1772, has an elegant façade in baroque trado style and is divided into two orders: the lower order is characterized by a porch supported by seven columns; the upper one, marked by pilasters and decorated with floral motifs and small shelves, houses four windows and a large balcony. On the right side stands the clock tower.

The palace hosted the municipal offices until 1934, when they were transferred to the Acquaviva Castle. The Palace also hosted the Ordinary Court of Lecce, detached section of Nardò.

Palazzo Chiodo

The palace was built in the sixteenth century by Vittorio Chiodo, who was a loyal subject of Charles V of Habsburg, who, after appointing him a knight,

allowed him to grant asylum and immunity at his palace. The whole structure underwent various alterations and presents some remarkable sixteenth-century frescoes.

Palazzo De Pandi

The building was built in the 15th century and renovated at the end of 1800. It consists of two buildings with a connecting arch that connects them passing above the street. It is closed with glass on both sides and on the upper part. Inside a fairly large courtyard and several rooms are enriched with frescoes. In the Palace, there is a chapel dedicated to the Mother of Good Council.

Palazzo Il Mignano

The palace that belonged to the Acquaviva family, dukes of Nardò since 1497 and owners of the adjacent castle, was probably built in the sixteenth century. Later it became property of Baron Massa until 1861 but with the fall of the Kingdom of Italy it passed into the hands of the people. After the violent earthquake of 1743, which destroyed a good part of the buildings of Nere-tini, the portal was probably rebuilt by the "clan" of Preite, the same skilled carpenters who in that period completed the nearby church of S. Giuseppe and built the Spire of the Immaculate (1769). The rich embroidery of the portal-balcony, carved in the typical local stone, is finely decorated with volutes and intertwined leaves camouflaged in the thick ornamentation, which goes beyond the portal itself; it is a valuable example of Baroque Salento. It is completed by an interesting solution of applied art: the wooden rosta (XVI-XVII century), inserted as an entrance over door, is equipped with a wagon wheel spoke with an apotropaic mask in the center. In the courtyard the access to the upper floor is guaranteed by an "open" staircase, which becomes an element of continuity between the space of the courtyard and the house itself. Inside, made up of numerous rooms, today skillfully restored, it is possible to observe the structure of the sixteenth-century buildings of the following sixteenth-seventeenth-century interventions.

Palazzo Personè

Undoubtedly the building has fifteenth-century origins, but its moment of greatest splendor dates back to the Baroque period, when it became home to the nobles Massa, one of the most powerful families in the area, so rich that it owns dozens of farms throughout the Apulian territory. At the end of '700, fallen in disgrace the Massa, the whole area was acquired by the noble Personè di Nardò, barons of Ogliastro, Carpignano Salentino, Castro and Palio. Originally from Bergamo (it seems to be from the city of Albino), through

their descendants, first Luca and then Alessandro and Francesco, gave life to a process of rebuilding the entire block, creating one of the most imposing buildings in the city, to the point of being called the “palace of 100 rooms”. Used as a tourist accommodation, today it is only a part of the entire Palazzo Personè in S. Giuseppe, where you can still find living evidence of the recent past: frescoes, paved and mosaic floors, parquet floors, stairs and paintings of the period, while on the ground floor are still intact an original “stables” and many other rooms used as oil mills or warehouses for food and storage of oil and wine.

Palazzo Tafuri

It was built in the seventeenth century and was renovated over time, in fact the main facade dates back to 1841, inside was located the Chapel of the Immaculate.

Piazza Salandra

A square that has always been the beating heart of the city neretina, the center of religious and administrative life since its arbors. Originally called “Piazza delle Legne” and later known as “Piazza Municipale”, it dates back to the 14th century. Connected by Via Duomo to Piazza Pio IX, near the ancient municipal theater, the Churches of the Immaculate and St. Joseph, the “agora” is made even more important by the presence of numerous monuments of a certain historical and architectural importance. Such are the Spire of the Immaculate, the Sedile, the Church of San Trifone, the old University Palace, the Church of San Domenico and the Fountain of the Bull.

Fontana del Toro (Taurus Fountain)

The fountain was built in 1930 by the master Michele Gaballo and was delivered to the City on December 8, 1930 for the inauguration of the Apulian Aqueduct pipeline. The bull is framed by a decorative band with intertwined eels, probably to symbolize the purification of water. This one, very precious, is collected in the overhanging tank and poured to cascade in that one below where gushes also the water coming from the mouths of the two masks placed under the amphorae. In the rounds to the sides of the monument are reproduced the civic coat of arms and the emblem of the Province of Lecce that replaced the original fascist sign.

Temple of L'Osanna

“Hoc Osanna ad Dei cultum a fundamentis aere erigendum curarunt Octavius Theotinus et Lupus Antonius Dimitri Mayors 1603”. This is what can be read

on the cornice of the very particular Hosanna temple. Erected in 1603 by Mayors Theotinus and Dimitri in the immediate vicinity of the now symbolic Porta San Paolo, is located at the intersection of the avenue that surrounds the historic center and the one that leads to Lecce. It has an octagonal plan with eight columns joined by polilobi arches as well as a central column supporting the dome containing the eight spires and has been defined for its architectural setting "ghotic revival". Since its construction it was used for the consecration on Palm Sunday and later assumed a considerably important value for the blessing of the countryside. It also represents one of the few monuments of Neretini delivered to us from the baroque period.

Historical Botanical Garden "Villa Comunale".

Commonly called "Villa Comunale", the garden of the Castle is certainly one of the most beautiful and representative historical gardens of the Salento area. The garden is part of the sixteenth-century residence of the Acquaviva d'Aragona family, then passed to the Personè family and since 1936 the Town Hall. The garden, in the second half of the nineteenth century, was planted in the ancient moat by Generoso De Maglie, an artificial and eclectic engineer who changed the appearance of the Castle introducing various species of trees (Aleppo pines, holm oaks, yuccas) and a valuable temple paved with blue majolica. The plant layout is in a style halfway between the formal "Italian style" garden - given the articulation of the space in flowerbeds surrounded by hedges in compulsory form - and the landscape park "English style" for the dense tangle of foliage on various levels of typically forest species such as Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*) and holm oak (*Quercus ilex*). The Park has recently been the object of a botanical restoration with cultural interventions of restoration and revitalization, marked by respect for the noble stratifications and enhancement in the sense of the original intent, which was to create a "garden of wonder" rich in rare plant forms (new for the times) and multi-form and polychrome. A variety of essences was selected in order to balance the compositional and pictorial needs (of the garden) with the scientific-didactic needs (of the botanical garden). The restoration project, with the aim of enhancing the local flora without excluding the possibility of introducing new species of a given environment, is based on three dominant themes represented: the widespread Palm grove, in keeping with the original inspiring sense of acclimatization garden wanted to amaze guests with scenic and stylized plants; the Evolution of Plants, with scientific and educational value and the Mediterranean Spots.

Galatena River Tower (today Four Columns)

The Galatena River Tower is one of the many coastal watchtowers of Salento built by Charles V, in the sixteenth century, to defend the territory from the assaults of the Saracens. In the place where the tower is located there is a source of fresh water, also known by pirates who often attacked the area for supplies. Charles V decided to protect this spring by having the tower built. The tower had a truncated pyramidal structure with a square base with pentagonal angular bastions and a height of 16 meters. In the upper part there was a string-course with pecks. The central part of the ancient tower probably collapsed not long after its construction, following some enemy attack or telluric phenomena. Today only the four corner bastions remain: for this reason the tower is also called "of the Four Columns".

Torre Santa Caterina

Situated at about 60 m above sea level, surrounded by a thick pine forest, this coastal tower was built in the sixteenth century with defensive functions to make safer the sea ice of the Salento peninsula.

The building has a truncated cone base with a square plan separated from the upper body by a stringcourse frame. The superior plan, endowed with windows, finishes with a frame to beccatelli and is provided of leaded. A large stone staircase leads to the access door. The interior houses two overlapping rooms; the ground floor was used as a shelter for animals or the storage of tools and had a separate access, the second floor, divided into three rooms (occupying one half, one quarter and one quarter of the space) with a fireplace, is accessible via an external staircase and was used as a residence.

Torre Santa Maria dell'Alto

Also known simply as Torre dell'Alto, is a coastal tower of Salento located in the municipality of Nardò and falling in the area of Porto Selvaggio and Palude del Capitano. Located 51 m above sea level, on a rocky spur overlooking the sea, was erected in the second half of the sixteenth century with defensive functions designed by the Spanish viceroy Don Pietro da Toledo who drew up a system of control of the coast of the Salento peninsula.

Finished to build already in 1569 by the master neretino Angelo Spalletta, the construction presents a truncated pyramidal base with a square plan, slightly scarped, separated from the upper body by a stringcourse frame. The upper floor, equipped with an access door, ends with a cornice with corbels and is equipped with blackbirds and ten lead plumbing distributed on all four sides. A large tuff staircase with three arches allows access. The interior, consisting of two overlapping rooms, is equipped with a cistern for water supply; the

ground floor was used for the storage of supplies, the second floor, divided into four rooms, was used as a dwelling of the riders (so were called the guards who guarded the tower and in case of possible arrivals of pirates reported it to the inland villages using the horse).

Torre Uluzzo

With smaller dimensions than the other towers in the area, was erected in the second half of the sixteenth century with defensive functions, at the behest of Alfonso de Salazar, by master Leonardo Spalletta neretino. It was built on top of a rocky spur and completed in 1575, and has a truncated pyramidal shape, but has partially collapsed. The roof is no longer present and only a few walls remain standing, built with irregular ashlars; in particular the north side and the side facing the sea are the best preserved. The remains of some plumbing and corbels for the crowning are still visible. From some documents we learn that the tower was frequented until 1695 and that in the 18th century it was already seriously compromised.

Torre Inserraglio

The tower belongs to the series of coastal watchtowers of Salento, built for the purpose of sighting Saracen ships, dedicated to raids. The current tower is a truncated pyramid-shaped building, not very high and powerful, built around the fifteenth century and then reinforced in the sixteenth century.

The access to the tower was allowed by a raised door that no longer exists. The interior consisted of two rooms with barrel vaults on the ground floor and a large single room on the upper level from which they faced the attacks of enemies. In the wall thickness were then obtained the cistern and the embrasures, one of which is still preserved. The tower was used until 1842 by customs guards, and then underwent a slow process of degradation caused by its abandonment. It communicated to the north with Torre Sant'Isidoro and to the south with Torre Uluzzo.

Close to the tower, there is an urban center characterized by residential building that dates back to the hinterland, where there is a tourist complex recently built: some residences with sports facilities (swimming, tennis, soccer, basketball, volleyball) and many private villas surrounded by private gardens and condominium manicured daily.

Torre Sant'Isidoro

One of the many coastal watchtowers of Salento built by Charles V, in the sixteenth century, to defend the territory from the assaults of the Saracens. It was built with regular carparo blocks and it develops on three levels. The

ground floor, without external accesses, has a truncated pyramidal structure with a square base. The last two floors are developed vertically, with a parallelepiped structure, and a stringcourse in the upper part. The string-top has a series of nozzles and a machicolation on each side. The only access is represented by a majestic staircase that leads to the second floor and is located on the opposite side to the one that overlooks the sea. The largest room is on the second floor. From here you can reach both the ground floor, through a trapdoor, and the second floor, through a staircase on a side wall. On the terrace there is a small guardhouse. It communicates to the south with Torre dell'Inserraglio and to the north with Torre Squillace. The tower is state property and is used as a summer residence. In the past it was inhabited among others by the tower captains Gian Camillo Levere and Gaetano Lauvè.

Torre Squillace

A few meters from the beach that extends between the hamlet of Sant'Isidoro and Porto Cesareo, Torre Squillace was built by the master builder Pensino Tarantino from 1567 and completed in 1570. The tower has a truncated pyramidal shape with a square plan. A string-course bull separates the base escarpment from the upper floor, ending with a cornice with beaks provided with blackbirds and four plumbing, one on each side. In 1640 it was equipped with a large external stone staircase that allowed access. The interior houses a well and a barrel vaulted room with a fireplace.

The Eclectic Villas of the Cenate

The eclectic Villas of the Cenate take their name from the homonym zone in which they have been built: the Cenate precisely. These important buildings were built between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the following century, located mainly along the road that leads from Nardò to the neretine marinas of Santa Maria al Bagno and Santa Caterina and clear expression of that nineteenth-century recovery of the most varied styles called Eclecticism.

A unique and very particular itinerary that allows us to discover the eclectic villas of this part of Salento. These villas were built by the local nobility at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to demonstrate their social status. Walking on foot or by bicycle along the country roads that flank these residences, suddenly, in the midst of olive trees, or secular pine trees, you may come across small, ancient and precious baroque villas, in Moorish style, rich in oriental motifs, or in Art Nouveau style. There are also imposing buildings with large staircases and rich in neoclassical motifs, or low and almost completely immersed in the garden, hidden by monumental pine trees.

c. Museums

Museum of Memory and Hospitality

The Museum of Memory and Reception, designed by Architect Luca Zevicon, was inaugurated in 2009 in the presence of the Chief Rabbi of Rome and houses photographic and video documents, a multimedia room, a library and newspaper library, three murals. The material collected dates back to the period between 1943 and 1947, initially kept in the Historical Archives of Nardò and illustrates the history of the 150,000 Jewish refugees who escaped the holocaust and found hospitality in the hamlet of Santa Maria al Bagno who set up the Campo Santa Croce to host the Jews. Nardò is also twinned with the city of Hof-Hacarmel Atilit, in Israel, where some of the refugees who escaped extermination took refuge. The murals were made by the Romanian Jew Zivi Miller, also a refugee and a veteran of concentration camps. The works illustrate the suffering and pain concerning the extermination of the Jewish people, through the use of the color gray, without the use of doors and windows.

The Sea Museum

The Museo del Mare Antico di Nardò (Museum of the Ancient Sea of Nardò) houses important finds of the Roman age coming from archaeological investigations carried out in the sea and along the coast. Initially conceived to house the remains of the Roman ship of St. Catherine, it then responded to a much larger project, The Landscape as a Museum. Archaeology of the coast of Nardò, still in progress, which is divided into a research program of archaeology of maritime landscapes, with excavations and prospecting on land and sea, aimed at reconstructing the dynamics of evolution and population of the coast over the centuries, as well as the routes and commercial circuits that touched it.

Archaeological Museum of the Boys

In the "Archaeological Museum of the Boys" the knowledge of prehistory takes place through activities of manipulation and construction of objects. Therefore, the Museum presents itself as a Tactile Museum whose objects are reconstructed by means of experimental archaeology, with the guidance of an operator. The exhibition includes an Archeo-park in which the various living phases of prehistory are illustrated. The Museum carries out the following activities for children: experimental archaeology workshops, simulation and role-playing workshops, construction of models, guided tours of the area, itinerant museum, summer school camps.

Diocesan Museum

The Diocesan Museum of Nardò is housed in the bishop's seminary, where sacred furnishings, paintings, tombstones, manuscripts, metals, sacred vestments, sculptures, liturgical furnishings and fabrics from the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and other buildings of worship in the area are on display.

Museum of Prehistory of Nardò

Inside the Museum of Prehistory of Nardò, located in the former convent of St. Anthony of Padua, you can enjoy most of the finds from archaeological research conducted since the early sixties of the last century, at all the caves located in the Regional Natural Park of Porto Selvaggio and Palude del Capitano. The high concentration of caves frequented by man during the Palaeolithic (caves and shelters of Capelvenere, Marcello Zei, Torre dell'Alto, Cavallo, Uluzzo C, Uluzzo, Bernardini and Serra Cicora A), makes the Park a unique context for the richness of the landscapes and the history of Man, which are now studied and told inside the Museum. This richness allows to deal with themes concerning climate change and the transformation of landscapes organized by Homo neanderthalensis first and then by Homo sapiens, starting from at least 150.000 years ago. In the museum you can also observe a collection of marine fauna of the Cretaceous period (about 70 - 75 million years ago), coming from the fossiliferous deposits of Nardò.

The exhibition space is organized in the following sections: the evolution of the coastal territory; the contribution of archaeological research in the growth of the territory and the experience of the Neretino Speleological Group; the evolution and diffusion of Man; the traces of human frequentation in the Palaeolithic period in Neretino; the Neolithic and Bronze Age in the Neretino context; the laboratory for restoration and study of the finds.

Among the most important finds, the Museum preserves osteological remains of Homo sapiens dating back to about 45,000 years ago, the oldest fossils of "anatomically modern men" that spread throughout the European continent.

Museum of Peasant Civilization and Popular Traditions "Nardò sparita"

The museum presents a collection of tools, work tools, photographic documents, objects and furniture of an ancient Nardò.

Aquarium Salento

The Aquarium is set up in the recovered and remodeled rooms of a disused kindergarten. It has a covered area of about 250 m² and an open space of 800 m². The path develops along 17 seawater tanks, organized in four thema-

tic environments that through evocative settings and faithful reconstructions allow you to discover, along with the varied local fauna, the main shipwrecks and sinkings along the Ionian coast:

- the submerged cave;
- the hall of the coast;
- the hall of the open sea with the wreck of a shipwreck of Roman times;
- the hall of the deep sea with the wreckage of two ships and an aircraft from the Second World War.

In the multimedia room, video documentaries and exhibitions offer further insights and curiosities. After the visit, children can draw and color their emotions in the creative corner.

d. Archaeological Sites

Archaeological site of Serra Cicora

Of great historical and landscape interest, the archaeological site of Serra Cicora stands on a large plateau overlooking the Ionian coast, visible along the stretch of provincial road that leads from Sant'Isidoro to Porto Selvaggio. The site was frequented during the Neolithic period and more precisely in two phases dating back to the sixth and fifth millennium BC. In this last phase the plateau was used as a necropolis. On the slope overlooking the hinterland, the site is surrounded by an imposing dry stone wall whose construction can be dated, at least in part, to the ancient Neolithic. In a well-preserved stretch, in fact, below its foundation boulders was found a burial site dating back to the first half of the sixth millennium BC. The necropolis of Serra Cicora has returned funerary evidence of various types among which stands out a dry construction of megalithic type containing four individuals. Frequent are the burials, single or with more individuals, enclosed in circles of stones. Not missing, finally, those in simple pit. The funeral ritual provided that the deceased was placed on the right side in a crouching position and looking east. In the center of the plateau was also found a singular testimony: a small ritual hut, probably related to the funeral ceremonies that took place on the site, on whose threshold was placed an individual. Some burials contained precious objects such as, for example, jars decorated with "S" and spiral motifs (Serra d'Alto style); others, instead, contained objects of everyday life such as sickle and bowls decorated with decorations; one, finally, an ox scapula. Part of the archaeological evidence of Serra Cicora can be visited at the Castromediano Museum in Lecce, which, next to some objects, preserves the life-size reproduction of the ritual hut and the megalithic tomb.

Prehistoric District of Porto Selvaggio

The territory of Nardò is home to the most important prehistoric district of Italy, with the complexity of its historical stratification ranging from traces of Neanderthal frequentation to those left by Messapi and Romans, to the medieval layout and baroque architecture of the historic center, is one of the places with the greatest archaeological and cultural potential of Puglia. Although the archaeological emergencies are referable to such an extended chronological span, the uniqueness and extraordinariness of this heritage are constituted by the high frequency of Palaeolithic archaeological sites in the area of the Regional Natural Park of Portoselvaggio and Palude del Capitano. A series of Landscapes sedimented between the rocks and the sea, from the tropical Cretaceous landscape of 72 million years ago, on which new research initiated by the Department of Biological Sciences (University of Alberta - Edmonton, Canada) are bringing new information to the Neanderthal landscape up to that of the first sapiens of Europe and one of the oldest Neolithic settlements on the peninsula, make this park a true District.

Within the Regional Natural Park "Portoselvaggio e Palude del Capitano" there are eight cave sites that have shown an intense frequentation first by groups of Neanderthals and then by sapiens; here are preserved the anthropic finds referring to the most ancient diffusion of anatomically modern Man in the European continent. This heritage constitutes a scientific potential and enhancement whose relevance and uniqueness is such that the Neretino territory is included among the main cultural nodes of the entire region of Puglia. The Museum of Prehistory of Nardò represents a window on the prehistoric attendance system of the coast. Located in the former convent of St. Anthony of Padua, it preserves most of the finds from archaeological research conducted since the early sixties of the last century, at all the caves located in the Regional Natural Park of Porto Selvaggio and Palude del Capitano. The high concentration of caves frequented by man during the Palaeolithic (caves and shelters of Capelvenere, Marcello Zei, Torre dell'Alto, Cavallo, Uluzzo C, Uluzzo, Bernardini and Serra Cicora A, in several of which continue the research by prof. ssa Lucia Sarti - University of Siena, Dr. Filomena Ranaldo - University of Siena and Museum of Prehistory of Nardò, Prof. Enza Spinapolice - Roma Sapienza, Prof. Stefano Benazzi - University of Bologna) makes the Park a unique context for the richness of landscapes and human history. This extraordinary heritage is now studied and recounted inside the Museum and the Park itself, giving back the narration of a landscape that, starting from the Cretaceous context of about 70 million years ago, continues with the karst processes that gave rise to the numerous coastal caves; it continues illustrating the organization of the territory due to the first human

population of Salento by Neandertal, which in some caves of the Park leaves its first traces over 100.000 years ago, and the successive reorganizations, correlated to the arrival of sapiens about 45.000 years ago, whose intense frequentation is attested in five archaeological sites, until the arrival, during the last phases of the Paleolithic, of new populations that leave trace also of their abstract thought through the representations engraved on pebble. After the end of the Paleolithic there is an early neolization of the territory that, already from about 7,500 years ago, appears to be frequented by communities of breeders and farmers who used the plateau of Serra Cicora as a necropolis (the archaeological investigations were conducted by Prof. Elettra Ingravallo - Unisalento). For the Bronze Age, the remains of the imposing wall structure still visible in the southern part of the Park, suggest that the area of Portoselvaggio had to be integrated into an articulated system of control and defense of the territory and coastal activities.

Harbor settlement of Messapic and Republican age

Located on the Ionian coast, a few km in the direction W from the center of Nardò, the site of Santa Caterina is configured as a natural landing place that over the centuries, in conjunction with the gradual growth of the settlement of Nardò, was provided with real port facilities and surrounded by a curtain wall. Among the oldest materials, there are sporadic findings of protohistoric ceramics that may indicate a more or less stable and organized human presence in this area already in the period between the Bronze Age and the subsequent Iron Age. Dates back to 1991, however, the important discovery of some ancient building works brought to light in correspondence of the shoreline following a violent storm. In particular, the remains in the foundation and part of the elevation of a masonry made of small square blocks bedded by the use of clay soil have been identified. The area within the perimeter of these structures revealed the presence of a collapse of roofing materials (tiles) mixed with small stones and frequent traces of burnt (ash). With regard to the fortification system, part of the ditch of Hellenistic age (length about 27 m, width 4.5 m) and a short section in the foundation of a coeval block wall in isodomic work (length 2.7 m) have been recognized. The fictile materials associated with the infrastructural works described above testify a more or less continuous occupation of the site in the chronological span between the 5th and 1st century B.C. and allow to distinguish two main phases of use of the port services: the first extends approximately from the second half of the 4th century B.C. to the first half of the following century, while the second concerns the late Republican age (2nd-1st century B.C.). The most representative ceramic classes among those attested in Santa Caterina are the Attic

ceramics, the black varnish and the banded ones. Also of interest are the numerous amphorae, which document in a direct and unequivocal way the intense commercial activities carried out in ancient times within the settlement: the typology of Greek-Italic amphorae prevails (IV-III century BC), while the Apulian productions are quite rare.

Rock settlement of the "Tagliate" (cuttings)

The rocky settlement in the locality "Tagliate" has several caves located along the two rocky ridges of a tuff quarry about 9 hectares wide and deep compared to the level of the surrounding plateau on average a little more than 2 m; it is located near the road that leads from Nardò to Masseria Morige (Galatone), in what in the past was the feud of Pompiliano. On the side of the road and at the edge of the rocky ridge there are the ruins of a small church with a barrel vaulted ceiling and a bell tower with a sail, which kept near the wall of the altar, now collapsed, a fresco depicting a Madonna and Child dating back, most likely, to the thirteenth century; the building was partially demolished by lightning in 1976. The typologies present are clearly differentiated between the two ridges, and seen as a whole the various crypts of the settlement present a complexity of aspects and a remarkable morphological variety. In the rocky spur below the church, the north-eastern one, on a front of about 75 m, there are 3 rooms (in addition to part of a further room mostly demolished) dug in regular form, single rooms, just over a couple of meters high, with niches and crosses engraved inside. The rooms on this side of the hollow propose a rather homogeneous typology, with the walls obtained in the tuffaceous bench and the keystone closed by a row of tuff ashlar; room C, larger and in a central position with respect to the settlement, and probably also room B, could have had a cultic destination. The last structure on this side of the complex is a cistern, partly excavated in tuff and partly built, of parallelepiped shape, probably more recent than the other rooms of the same rocky ridge. Among the different rooms you can see stairs carved into the rock and tanks for the collection of rainwater. On the south-western side of the rocky ridge there are two other groups of caves, each consisting of three units. Here the typologies are more heterogeneous, with more ancient and other modern episodes: there are two circular rooms with trullo roof, four rectangular rooms with stone ashlar vaults (more or less similar to those of the north-eastern spalto), and a cave entirely dug into the rock, as well as some probable ovens. All the rooms have niches and alcoves inside, while on the jambs and lintels are engraved numerous Greek crosses.

TRADITIONAL EVENTS

a. Religious events

Feast of San Biagio

Period: first decade of February

The martyrdom of Saint Blaise, which took place around 316, is linked to the Armenian refusal to abjure the Christian faith. The legend reports that he was beheaded, after having been tortured for a long time with iron combs that torn his flesh. The instrument of martyrdom was taken as a symbol of the saint and since it was similar to those used by wool carders and weavers, these categories wanted to designate him as their protector.

As usual, therefore, the ancient rite of the blessing of the throat, awaited by the faithful and the population of Nardò and neighboring villages on Saturday, February 3, the day in which the martyr saint Biagio, venerated in the church of Santa Teresa, is celebrated.

Feast of Saint Gregorio Armeno

Period: February 20th

A rich program of religious rites in honor of St. Gregory Armenian, the Patron Saint of the City, to whom the days of February 18, 19 and 20 are dedicated as per tradition. The procession with the Patron Saint crosses the entire city, but cultural events such as art exhibitions and musical events also take place.

Feast of St. Joseph

Period: 19th March

The feast of St. Joseph, which sometimes just before Easter, is the first feast of spring, linked to memories of old traditions, some of which have disappeared, such as the taulàte de S.. Giseppe* (the tables with the rich lunch for nine poor people served by a devout mistress) and the pagnuttelle blessed with the ritual massaccìciri bbullente/ca fuma de li piatti sbitterrati, eaten on the eve and called to Lecce cìceri e ttria: homemade taglierini mixed with chickpeas and with some fried taglierini chopped on top.

b. Other events and manifestations

- **Historical cavalcade and fair of the Crowned in August**
- **Salento Book Festival between July and August**
- **The night of the itinerant taranta festival in August**

- **South Wine Festival in August**
- **Tour of Gusto Street Food Festival in August**
- **Legumes in celebration between September and October**
- **The Moons and Wine San Marino Celebrating in November**

NATURE

Regional nature park "Porto Selvaggio e Palude del Capitano"

The Park is located in the territory of Nardò and represents one of the main green lungs of the province of Lecce. The managing body is the Municipality of Nardò. It covers 1,122 hectares, of which 300 of pine forest, and 10 kilometers of coast, both high and low, uncontaminated overlooking the Ionian Sea. The area includes three sites of Community interest (SCI) "Torre Uluzzo", "Torre Inserraglio", "Palude del Capitano", and numerous areas of archaeological and paleontological interest.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Here visitors can find a beautiful landscape with archaeological sites, coastal towers (Torre dell'Alto, Torre Uluzzo and Torre Inserraglio) and the numerous caves and shelters frequented since the Middle Paleolithic (about 110.000 years ago), including the Grotta del Cavallo (in the bay of Uluzzo. Here the Uluzziana culture was discovered, dating back to about 35,000 years ago), that of Capelvenere, the Riparo Zei and the site of Serra Cicora dating back to the sixth millennium BC. In Frascone, an ancient fishing village probably dating back to the Roman imperial age (1st century B.C.) has been identified and investigations are in progress. A further important point of interest is represented by the area of the Captain's Marsh which is a relevant karst phenomenon represented by various resurgences in the shape of a doline full of brackish water, locally called "spundulate", which have a characteristic vegetation. The underwater environment of the Park includes cavities often larger than those outside, such as the Grotta delle Corvine: it is the most spectacular for size and richness of marine biological species.

TOURISM SERVICES

a. The receptivity

The official website of the Municipality of Nardò lists a total of one hundred accommodation facilities of any type, including about ten hotels. The most represented typology is room rentals followed by vacation homes. The official list of b&b lists instead 92 structures on the municipal territory, while the farmhouses reported are 24. This official census differs however from the offer really available on the market, which also uses direct sales channels or tourist brokerage platforms. On the Booking platform there are 268 accommodation facilities in the territory of Nardò, mostly vacation homes (100) and apartments (92), followed by b&b (39), room rentals (14), villas (12), hotels (7) and farmhouses (6).

b. Catering

A total of thirty catering establishments are surveyed on the entire Nardò municipal territory, considering both the historical center and the coastal area. To these establishments are to be added, of course, the restaurants housed in the hotels and other hotels, as well as bars, fastfood and take-away restaurants.

A search on the actual offer available on Tripadvisor lists a total of 139 results for restaurants of all types, including bars, cafeterias and street food establishments.

c. Information Point

The I.A.T. of Nardò (Information point and tourist reception) is located in Piazza Salandra, inside the sixteenth-century Sedile, a monument recently renovated and equipped with the most modern technology at the service of tourists.

Project Partner

