

MOLISE

CASTLES AND MEDIEVAL FORTRESSES

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DEL MOLISE

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* WARNING

The itineraries highlighted on the map concern the castles that can also be visited inside. To book visits, please refer to the contacts listed on the penultimate page of this brochure.



Introduction

In Molise castles, fortified walls, urban and extra-urban towers, non-military but still protected buildings are the testimony of complex historical events deriving from the lack of a strong central power and from a predominantly mountainous territory. The castle, especially between the end of the ninth and the beginning of the eleventh century, assumed the dual function of controlling and managing the territory; an element destined to heavily influence the settlement and production structures of the areas dependent on it. The castle, often built on a previous settlement nucleus, becomes the pole around which the inhabited centers develop, while the external areas, which are not defensible, are uninhabited. The *Chronicon Vulturense* describes the region of the 8th century AD. as it is inhabited almost exclusively by "brigands" and wild animals, while the scarce population is concentrated in a few urban centers and along the main waterways. This situation is destined to change over time even if the settlement dynamics will always have a strong defensive connotation. The Lombard encastellation was born at the beginning of the eighth century to make the territories less vulnerable to attacks and raids by the Saracens. Among other things, the constructions of the castles of Civita di Boiano, Tufara, Cerro al Volturno date back to the Lombard period, then remodeled by the Aragonese, Roccamandolfi and Campobasso, the latter originally a watchtower covered by a walls from the Samnite period, enlarged and fortified in 1459 by the feudal lord Count Cola di Monforte. In 1042 Molise was conquered by the Normans who occupied various territories of the Count of Molise. In this period, with the consolidation of feudalism, many castles were built. The castle of Pescocostanzo, belonging to the D'Alessandro

dukes, stands on a rock and still preserves the drawbridge, the loopholes, the original stables. The castle of Torrella del Sannio, built between the 13th and 14th centuries, has a trapezoidal plan, with three circular towers along the perimeter walls. The castle of Castropignano, from the top of an inaccessible rock, dominates the Biferno Valley; Lombard fortress, in the 11th century it was transformed by the Normans into the residence of the Dukes of Evil. Then there are the castle of Monteroduni, today of the Pignatelli princes, and that of Cercemaggiore. The Castle of Termoli belongs to the period of the Swabian domination (early 13th century AD), the most representative defensive building of the Molise Adriatic coast, built in 1247 by Frederick II together with the surrounding wall of the Borgo Vecchio and the Tower. In the Angevin period and in the following one, other castles were built in Colletorto, Bonefro, Civitacampomarano, Venafro and Riccia, new defense techniques are born, as well as the urban walls are modified and fortified and the castles are restructured with the construction of circular towers and walls. With the transition to the Aragonese era, firearms were born that force the lords of the castles to find new defense techniques against cannon fire, therefore a new defense system is needed. In fact, to prevent the towers from falling and causing damage, they are halved and fire mouths built. The fights between the Aragonese and the Angevins became increasingly bitter and impetuous until the beginning of the sixteenth century and the castles were increasingly modified and adapted to new defense techniques. The war era therefore ends in this century and part of the castles is transformed by the lords into magnificent residences and stately homes, see above all the castle of the de Capua in Gambatesa.

Castles in the province of Campobasso

Civita di Boiano Castle

Behind the town of Boiano, on the buttresses of the Matese massif, stand the majestic remains of the castle of Civita di Boiano, one of the oldest in Molise. Its origin dates back to the Lombard period and it is possible to think that the existence of a fortified nucleus is to be connected to the important administrative function carried out by Boiano in this period: the city was in fact the seat of a steward, that is, of a territorial representation of the Prince of Benevento. The castle is mentioned in the *Registrum Federici II* in a document dated 1239, where the Swabian emperor ordered the executioner of Terra di Lavoro and the County of Molise to demolish the houses built near the Boianese castle and to provide for the maintenance of the fortress. Following the urban scheme, it can be seen that the fortified enclosure must have included at least four semicircular guard towers, of which today it is possible to recognize the perimeter and a few remains relating to their structure.

Despite the restoration work carried out by the Superintendency of Molise in the 1980s to restore the original forms, it is not possible to read in a clear and uniform way what remains of ancient Civita. The compositional scheme of the castle has been reconstructed in some parts, highlighting the presence of an entirely vaulted reception room, which once had to occupy a large part of the castle.



Bonefro Castle

The castle is located on the top of the hill in the ancient part of the town. It was called the "bel castel fuerte" by the Spaniards who occupied it in the 1500s. Its construction dates back to 1049 when southern Italy was conquered by the Normans. The story about the construction of the fief and the castle was the object of study by many scholars until it was established that around the fourteenth century these assumed the defined conformation still visible today in some parts of the building. After about 150 years the castle became a baronial residence. According to what is written in a Spanish document of 1531, the feud of Bonefro belonged to "de sancto vito" with the annexed castle consisting of four corner towers and a main tower in the middle. The fifth tower is presumed to have been

erected in the Swabian period in a place distant from the one where the castle once stood. Most likely this tower had different functions from the others included in the section of the fortress, that is, it was born as a revenge tower. This however fell into disrepair in 1888. With the passing of the centuries it was aggregated to the urban core so that a newly built building entirely covers the facade. From the Norman period the castle shows only the square plan and on each corner there is a cylindrical tower. Of the four, three are installed on scarp walls while one located to the south is placed in such a position that it overlooks the mother church. From the outside it is possible to observe a series of windows alternating with balconies while the entrance is defined by a pointed stone arch supported by two lions with side stone columns.



Monforte Castle

With a square plan with residues of the truncated cone bases of the corner towers, it dominates the city of Campobasso from the top of a hill, sweeping the view up to the high Maiella and the Tavoliere delle Puglie. Some historians such as Masciotta, Ziccardi and Mancini, believe it was built during the Lombard domination and fortified during the Norman domination by the Counts of Molise, while Galanti, Perrella and Croce consider it to date from 1458, when Cola Monforte, feudal lord of Campobasso, rebelled against King Ferdinand I of Aragon, would have built it to ensure an efficient defense. Count Cola modified, enlarged and largely rebuilt the manor, perhaps destroyed by the earthquake of 1456, so as to appear as a new building. In 1458, he had the walls reinforced in a spiral along the slope of the mountain, equipping them with towers, until they reached the slopes, where he had a second

sturdy circle erected. Today the castle has an almost rectangular plan, a massive and imposing mass, the bases of truncated conical towers on three edges, the redondone, the square and raised keep on the whole body of the building. It also has a crenellated crowning, a few square windows, loopholes and an entrance with a drawbridge on the southern side. The restorations carried out on the perimeter walls accentuate the contrast between the exterior, which has returned to its original appearance, and the interior, largely empty and uncovered. The wing that overlooked the courtyard, which was accessed via the drawbridge, now appears as a large entrance courtyard. In the opposite wing on the ground floor is the Memorial of the Fallen in War. From here, through a narrow staircase, you reach the upper floor, from which you can enjoy a splendid panoramic view. Currently the owner of the castle is the Municipality of Campobasso.



Castropignano Castle

The castle of Evoli di Castropignano, so called by the family that owned it for the longest time, was built in the Lombard period. Under the Norman domination it underwent a series of transformations followed by numerous others throughout history. In 1930 Tirabasso wrote: "The castle had a very wide moat on the part of the town, which was filled in, a walled area and two large towers, one in defense of the main entrance and the other overlooking the scary precipice, which looks the Biferno." There must have been many rooms, divided into two different buildings, from different periods. The current state of ruin of the castle, which fell into disrepair with impressive speed over time, is now owned by the municipality and the subject of study and restoration. The imposing square structure is located about three hundred meters from the town

overlooking the Biferno Valley. Ancient walls once surrounded the town of Castropignano, where today there are the ruins of some towers in the vicinity of the ancient Convent of San Marco. The town also dominates a bell tower, which was originally a lookout tower.



Civitacampomarano Castle

The Civitacampomarano castle stands in the central part of the town. It was built during the fourteenth century during the reign of Charles of Anjou. The families that succeeded each other in the domain of the fiefdom were the Marchisio, the del Balzo, the Durazzo, the Marzano, the Zurlo, the di Sangro, the Carafa, the Ferri, the d'Avalos and the Mirrellis. The building has a quadrangular plan with cylindrical corner towers on truncated cone bases; the material used for the construction is limestone, arranged according to a series of rather irregular courses. Beccatelli, loopholes, narrow windows and a fourteenth-century portal on the right of the eastern front of the castle suggest that the building belongs to the typology of Angevin fortresses. Once there was a moat which was

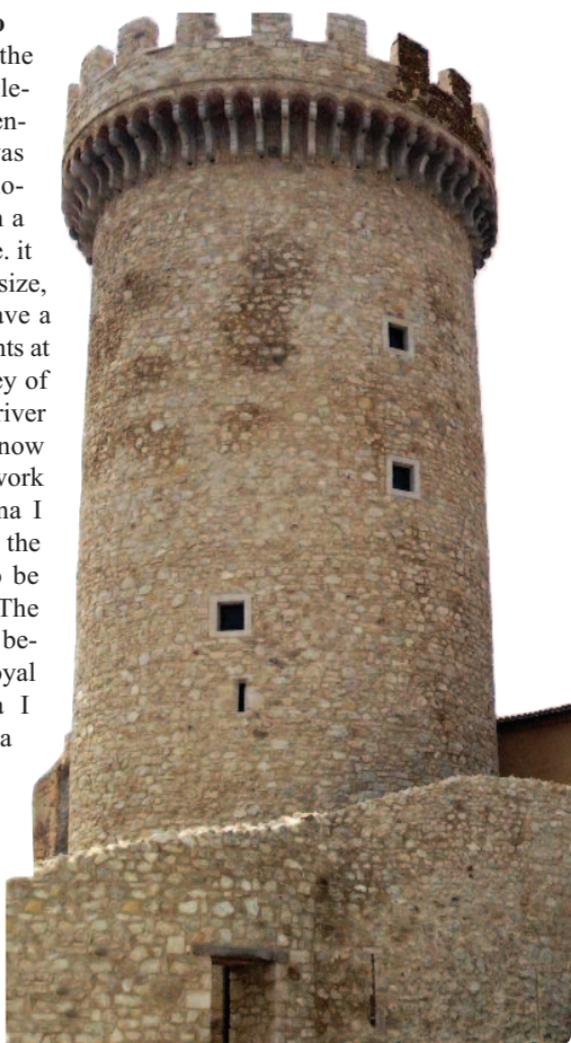


filled in 1795, to open the current road that joins the ancient town to the more recent one. Following the earthquake of 1805, a third tower of the castle, the one located on the north-east side, collapsed and was never rebuilt. The coat of arms on the façade belongs to the Paolo di Sangro family, who in the first half of the 15th century obtained the fiefdom from Alfonso I of Aragon as a reward for having abandoned the rebel Count of Carpignano, Antonio Caldora, to his fate. The coat of arms consists of a shield supported by a griffin with upside down Angevin lilies. In 1809 the castle was sold by the heirs of Duke Mirrelli to Gaetano Tetta, who in 1829 sold it to Giuseppe Roberti of Montefalcone del Sannio. The castle is currently owned by the Ministry for Cultural Heritage, which has overseen its restoration in recent years.



Angevin Tower of Colletorto

The first written records of the existence of the town of Colletorto date back to the 13th century. The Angevin Tower was built during the reign of Giovanna I of Anjou probably on a pre-existing Norman structure. It has a circular plan, of robust size, 25 meters high. The walls have a series of corbels and battlements at the top. It dominates the valley of torrent the S. Maria and the river Fortore valley. We do not know the exact year in which this work was built, but since Giovanna I reigned from 1343 to 1382, the year of its construction is to be traced back to around 1369. The latter is the most certain date because, as it is noted from a royal document, Queen Giovanna I turning her attention to this area then deserted and destroyed by the looting carried out by the soldiers of Louis of Hungary, it is thought that to protect and repopulate it she ordered that a tall and majestic tower surrounded by a massive castle (current Municipality) to guard and defend the area against enemies. The interior has several floors, each equipped with a fireplace, around which the troops warmed up in the freezing winters. There is also the so-called "trabucco", which was used to throw the corpses of soldiers or those of tortured prisoners. Next to it was the castle, on whose ruins the Marquis B. Rota had the marquis palace built, much larger, with two entrances on the two side floors. Over the centuries the Tower passed from owner to owner until it became the property of the D'Antini family, who donated it to the Municipality in 1959.



Carafa Castle of Ferrazzano

The castle stands on the extreme south-western edge of the urban terrace and dominates a vast territory. As reported in the epigraph placed on the entrance portal, the building was erected by the will of Geronimo Carafa between 1494 and 1504, presumably on the remains of an older fortress, whose origin should be ascribed to the Norman age. The central body has an irregular polygonal plan, due to the need to adapt the wall structures to the morphological configuration of the site, with two small square towers on the south-west side and two circular towers on the north and east sides. In

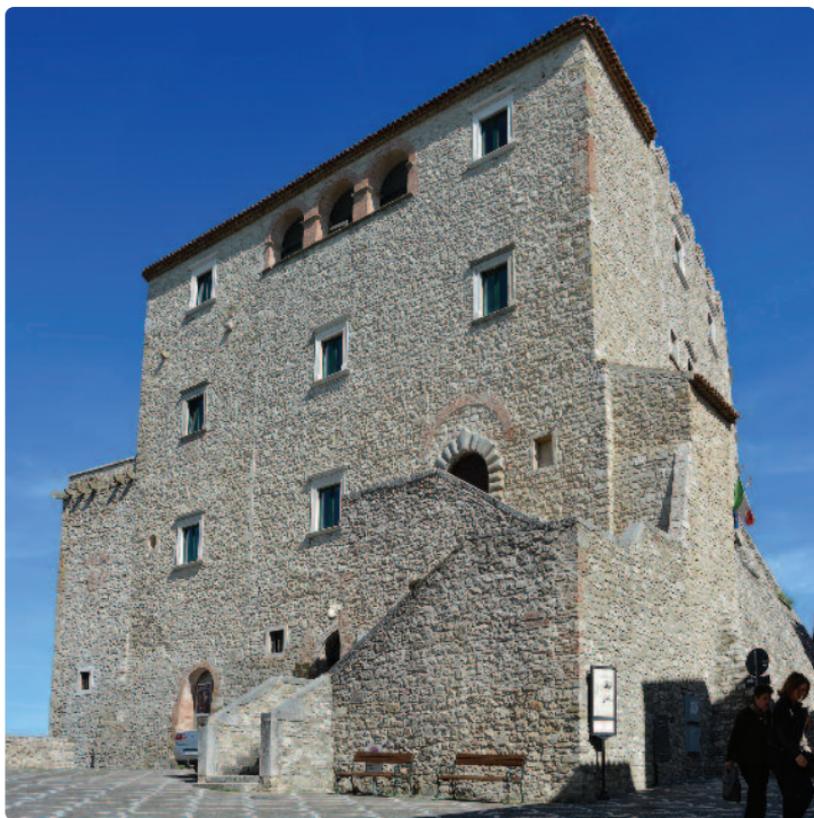


1619, by the will of Scipione de Curtis, the castle was the subject of general consolidation interventions in the entire structure and the embankments of the towers were strengthened. As evidence of these works, an epigraph was placed in the internal courtyard. Other renovations followed the popular uprisings of 1646 and 1713. At the time of the repairs of the damage caused by the earthquake of 1805, we owe the current configuration of the castle. One of the most important interventions was the conversion of the drawbridge into a stable. The castle today is privately owned and interventions have been made that have changed the internal division of the spaces.

Castle "di Capua" of Gambatesa

Located on the edge of the historic center to the north, it dominates the Valle del Tappino towards which its corner towers with a quadrangular base protrude. There are no historical references relating to the castle, while the information referring to the fief of Gambatesa, which already existed towards the middle of the 12th century, when the Gambatesa was feudal lords, is very exhaustive. The first extension of the original nucleus probably belongs to this period, which was born as a watchtower and defense tower in the period prior to the feud. The first intervention concerned the construction of a body of the building, which was grafted onto the outer half of the north side of the tower, from which it diverged slightly to the east. Subsequently, the west wing was built which, overlapping this side of the tower, gave the whole the characteristic "hairpin" planimetric shape. The two corner towers date back to the same period. After 1484, when the fiefdom was entrusted to the lords of the Capua family, an advanced building was





built on the north side which, by closing the two pre-existing wings, completely incorporated the original nucleus: the castle was modified in the division of the interior spaces and the facades were enriched with

new openings with precious stone frames. The Gambatesa castle is characterized by a rich cycle of frescoes that unfolds on the walls of the first floor and probably, judging by the surviving decorative frag-



ments, also on the upper floor. The inscription affixed to one of the doors of the castle hall bears the name of the artist who created the pictorial cycle: "Donatus omnia elaboravit". It is Donato di Cupertino, operating in 1550 under Vincenzo di Capua, Duke of Termoli. The entrance to the castle has an entrance hall with three-vaulted roofs, of which only one preserves the fresco depicting a series of mythological scenes in the sails, among which in particular the "Rape of Europe" is emphasized, and along the ribs, festoons of flowers and fruits. Through a short passage with vaults painted with star motifs, you enter the main hall, entirely frescoed on all four sides with mythological scenes. The uniqueness of this cycle of frescoes lies in the relationship with contemporary Roman painting, at a time when the Molise area, which had long been subject to the Kingdom of Naples, was completely gravitating within the artistic production of that city.

Castle "di Capua" of Riccia

There are no certain dates on the construction of the Riccia castle, but the building is almost certainly going back, like so many other Molise defensive settlements, in the Lombard era. In Capua they did the following changes. Between 1510 and 1515 the castle was completely renovated by Bartholomew III, who made it a mighty fortress with a comfortable palace inside, almost certainly taking advantage of the existing buildings. Through the drawbridge, which has now disappeared, you cross the defensive moat that surrounds the walls and enter the dwelling, after passing a solid and linear portal, at the top of which the emphatic Latin inscription "Bartolomeo de Capua, Count of Altavilla, he built this castle for pleasure and at his own expense, to defend this place and his fortunes, to guard against all fury of war in the year of human freedom 1515. If you are a guest, please come in. Flee, if enemy. Do not attempt the wrath of Jupiter." Next to the en-



trance stands a low defense tower, dominated by the main tower, which had the function of a lookout, given its dominant position over the entire Valle del Fortore, and constituted the main keep of the castle which is today the symbol of the country. The Tower stands on the edge of a rocky overhang close to the Succida stream. Almost twenty meters high, it has a cylindrical plan and a crowning of stone corbels on top. Inside, three rooms overlap, each with a quadrangular window.

The entrance, on the other hand, can be reached thanks to a short iron staircase. The water tank, dug entirely into the rock under the tower, which was used for the building's water supply is significant. Other underground areas, perhaps prisons or the armory, have been unearthed. The residence of the princes within the perimeter walls must have been very welcoming and elegant: this is

testified by the numerous finds from the Renaissance period (portals, fireplaces, friezes with the weapons of the feudal lords), which can be admired both in the historic center and in some houses private. The reconstruction of the interiors is provided by the historian Amorosa: a rich library, frescoed rooms, fine furniture. The palace was the object of the devastating ire of the riccese population during the republican uprisings of 1799 and a fire completely destroyed it.

Swabian Castle of Termoli

The castle of Termoli was built at the time of Frederick II of Swabia, as was once read on the epigraph which was lost during the demolition of one of the buttress towers. It was written that Frederick II had the fortress built in 1247, seven years after the sack of the Venetians on the Molise coast. According to some



scholars, its construction dates back to the second half of the 6th century AD, when the city became part of the Duchy of Benevento, but there is no archaeological evidence of this. During the Norman domination Termoli was endowed with a port, which assumed a certain strategic importance and which was strengthened in the Angevin period. The castle of Termoli, better defined the "Torre castellata", is today a fortified bulwark reaching out towards the Adriatic, enclosed by a wall with access from the mainland, and defended by a 13th century watchtower. The square tower with corbels crowning rises at the north-west corner of the ancient city walls, on a truncated pyramidal escarpment bulwark, ending at the corners with four small cylindrical watchtowers. In later times the castle partly lost its role as an essentially military work: this happened when, with the establishment of the Spanish domination, the internal and external dangers were considerably reduced. Several feudal families of Termoli including the di Capua, the Gambatesa, the Pignatelli and the Cattaneo.

Torella del Sannio Castle

There is no precise historical information on the castle of Torella del Sannio. During the Angevin domination it had as feudal lords the owners of the fief of Spinete and only from 1467 did it pass from the Sanfromondo to King Ferrante I of Aragon. In 1495 the fiefdom passed to the di Capua, lords of Riccia. The castle stands in the center of the town on a low level area and has a roughly trapezoidal plan with irregular sides. The shape of the three towers placed at the corners of the large structure is linked to the typology of the Angevin period, judging by the height of the towers and their elongated circular shape. In the Renaissance era it underwent transformations, such as the expansion of the openings, which became real balconies on the south and west sides, where the main entrance is currently located. The building was purchased by the Ciamarra family in the early nineteenth century and was the home of choice for the multifaceted twentieth-century artist Elena Ciamarra. It is a national monument, listed as a historic building, and is also part of the Italian network of house-museums; recently it also obtained the ministerial bond.



Tufara Castle

The castle of Tufara, of presumed Lombard origin, is today on a spur of tuffaceous rock, emerging to guard the Fortore Valley on the border with Puglia. The first sure news from the Borrellian Catalog dates back to the era of Norman domination. The source reports that Tufara was a fief of the Marzano family since the 12th century and that the castle was the subject of an assignment made by Guglielmo di Marzano, in 1299, to his wife, as a pledge of the dowry received. In 1245 the fortified building was dismantled by order of Frederick II of Swabia. The Gambatesa-Monforte family, feudal lord of Tufara around 1300, was responsible for the construction of a new curtain wall with scarp walls in which a series of machicolations opens. Other works are



carried out by Decio Crispano, lord of Tufara in the second half of the sixteenth century: this thesis is supported by the stone coat of arms with the arms of Crispano, flanked by the initials D and C on the west side of the building and by the traces of corbels on the western curtain. The building has a "bean" plant and the originality of the shape was certainly determined by the conformation of the rock, which is arranged at a very open angle. The perimeter is characterized by scarp curtain walls on three sides, while on the fourth the masonry is flanked by two towers, between which the main entrance opens. Over the centuries, the castle passed to the Candida family, the Crispano, the Carafa, the Pignatelli, the Ruffo and the Nardacchione families, to become currently municipal property.



Castles in the province of Isernia

Sanfelice Castle of Bagnoli

Raised on a limestone boulder guarding the valley of the Vella stream, its original inaccessibility makes it, with the rock church of San Silvestro, one of the bastions of beauty in Bagnoli del Trigno. Typical medieval fortress perched, inaccessible on three sides, with mighty walls to repel enemy attacks, probably the original structure stood unaltered until the second half of the 16th century, when the fiefdom was acquired by the Sanfelice family, who preserved it remains until the subversion of feudalism, modifying the primitive layout several times with the enlargement of the north and west sides and obtaining, on the noble floor of the west side, a Renaissance-style loggia. Subsequently, it fell almost in a state of ruin in less than a century, it was sold in 1985 to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, which subsequently oversaw the restructuring through the Superinten-

dency of Molise. A polygonal structure due to the trend of the underlying rock, its massive perimeter walls, without openings, are made of stone, while the entrance is located on the side: it is accessed via a cobbled ramp, which runs alongside part of the building and leads to a door with a round arch. Of the original building, after the restoration works, only the perimeter walls and the internal load-bearing walls remain today.





Caldora Castle of Carpinone

Currently the castle has an irregular pentagonal plan, dominated by a crenellated front between the two cylindrical towers that overlook the town, characterized by one of the most evocative historic centers of Molise, and which follow the course of the rocky terrain. Nothing original is left inside. Built around the 10th century, overlooking the Carpinone river, it was destroyed by Frederick II of Swabia in 1223 after the definitive defeat of Tommaso Celano. It was then built again in the 14th century, by the Evoli family and enlarged and enriched by the famous leader Giacomo Caldora and his son Antonio. The latter chose the castle as his home. Privatone the Caldora in 1442, the last owners were the de Riso.

Rocchetta a Volturno Castle

The castle, once belonging to the Battiloro family, today presents itself in a guise that dates back to about two centuries ago, although, as evidenced by the ancient origin of Rocchetta (XII century), its foundation should date back to the same period, having underwent radical renovations over the centuries. Rectangular in plan, the structure rises on the living rock with a south entrance, on the edge of a cliff on the right the curtain wall thickens, forming a sort of tower. It has a two-story development, with rather small rooms including the kitchen with a huge fireplace. The access door to the garden, on the east side, is surmounted on the lintel by what remains of a noble coat of arms. It has been in ruins for years.



Cerro al Volturno Castle

Located in a dominant position at over 500 meters above sea level, the castle of Cerro with its mighty bulk controls the entire upper Volturno Valley at the point where it has the greatest bottleneck. Since ancient times the imposing rock mass, on which the castle will later be built, has been used as an observation and control point for the entire valley. In fact, it is believed that the Benedictine monks of the nearby abbey of S. Vincenzo, founding the castrum Cerri, reused the ancient fortified enclosure built by the Lombards on the same limestone spike. The original plant therefore dates back to the 10th century, and it had the shape of a quadrangular enclosure, inside which the agricultural products of the territory were kept. At the end of the 15th century the superb manor took on its present appearance at the behest of Count Federico Pandone, of the Venafrò family, who had the three bastion towers built which greatly accentuated the character of an impregnable fortress. In 1525 Frederick's successor sold it to Manfredino Bucca, who remained a feudal lord until

1552. At the beginning of 1600 the castle, passed from different hands, became the property of the Colonna family. Lucrezia Tomacello, wife of Filippo Colonna, prince of Sonnino, embellished it and strengthened the walls, as recalled by the plaque dated 1623 placed on the entrance portal. The Colonna family sold the castle to the Spinola family of Sesto Campano, who in 1688 gave it to Antonio Carafa di Traetto, a family who kept it until the subversion of feudalism.





Baronial palace of Fornelli

In the 16th century the fiefdom belonged to the Pandones, later it belonged to the Caracciolo, Dentice and Carmigano families. The town of Fornelli shows two phases of construction: the first consisting of the baronial palace, the lookout tower and the church, with access to the fortress from a main door, once equipped with a drawbridge and moat, and a secondary door of emergency exit; the second phase concerns the subsequent expansion, also equipped with defensive walls, access doors and cylindrical lookout towers on an embankment base with slits. Inside the town walls, the houses wind through narrow alleys, al-

ternating with wider walkways that sometimes have vaulted passages and suggestive panoramic views. As soon as you cross the main entrance to the village, on the right, is the ancient baronial palace, now owned by the Laurelli family, which is the most significant building in the historic center.

Vastogirardi Castle

A particular type of fortified village, i.e. without a fortress in the same way as other examples in the Province of Isernia (Scapoli, Santa Maria Oliveto, Roccaravindola), the castle has two access doors: a main, grandiose one, on which the coats of arms of the noble families who held



the fiefdom, and a celebratory inscription of the Petra family, the last owner, who carried out the building changes made during the 17th century; a secondary one, less noble, overlooking the countryside behind it. Inside it is peculiar the presence of a singular court in polished white stone, still partially inhabited, which is one with the fortified walls, and the church of San Nicola di Bari, fifteenth-century in its layout with a modest bell tower and loggia.

Macchia d'Isernia Castle

The castle stands in the heart of the historic center, dominating the main square with its escarpment base. It rests its foundations on a fortress built in Norman times for defense purposes.

Around the first half of 1100 the building was the residence of Clementina, daughter of Roger II the Norman, king of Sicily, who married Ugone di Molise. It has massive walls and is refined by a columned loggia, open on the facade facing the square, and by a cylindrical corner tower, which is accompanied in the upper part by the same column motif.

The graft of the drawbridge with wooden supports on the inside is still preserved today in the main entrance. On the west side is a quadrangular tower decorated in the upper part by a brick rose window, probably from the Renaissance period. Subsequent transformations took place over the centuries by the various feudal lords, who took turns in the Macchia d'Isernia fiefdom, up to 1600 Macchia Saracena. Currently the main property of the castle is of the de Jorio Frisari family, who holds the title of Count of Bisceglie and Patrizio of San Vincenzo al Volturno.



Macchiagodena Castle

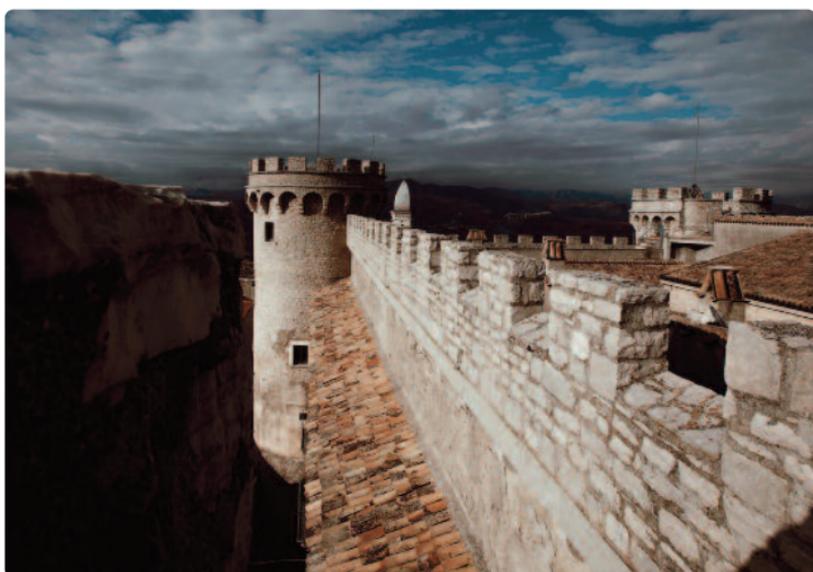
Macchiagodena Castle was built on a limestone spur, near the town's mother church. The building, with a polygonal plan, today retains the bases of the perimeter walls and two sturdy towers made of exposed squared stone blocks. The entrance is located on the south-east side and is protected by the eastern tower. The numerous transformations of the building have prevented us from proposing precise hypotheses on the origins of the castle. The surviving documentation, however, allows us to date the castle at least to the Angevin period, during which a small triangular fort was built on the rocky spur of Macchiagodena, subsequently enlarged and transformed into a residential building. In the enclosure of the ancient castle there is a group of statues and other stone sculptural material, such as the large lion located on the eastern side, dating back to the 13th century. In 1457 the fiefdom went to Sci pione Pandone,



count of Venafro and in 1520 it passed to Enrico Mormile. The feudal lords who followed one another in the lordship were the Costanza in 1537, the Cicinelli, the Sanfromondo, the del Tufo and from 1585 the Caracciolos. At the time of the subversion of feudal rights in 1806, the possession of the castle belonged to the Marquis Centomani family. The castle today is in a fairly good state of conservation and belongs to the municipality.

Monteroduni Castle

The Pignatelli castle is among the most beautiful in Molise both for its architectural structure and for its state of conservation and position, located on the top of the town. Its planimetric structure has a slightly trapezoidal shape. The castle is surrounded by a ravelin and the main entrance opens onto a large, tree-lined garden; in the reception room there is still the terracotta flooring



with the coat of arms of the Pignatelli della Leonessa family, the last feudal lords of the castle. In the hall there is a large marble fireplace and a wooden ceiling painted in tempera with chivalrous motifs. Cultural and musical events take place regularly here. The Pignatelli castle was originally a Lombard fortress, quadrangular in shape and equipped with towers. In the Norman period it was restored and strengthened with four round corner towers. The plaque walled up at the entrance and listing the duties to be paid for the passage of the county, testifies to the role played by the castle during the sixteenth century, when it belonged to the Afflitto family. Few traces of the ancient medieval fortress, today the castle is therefore a luxurious residence owned by the municipality.

Pescolanciano Castle

The ancient village, surrounded by walls, was already looked to the north by the castle in the 11th century which, like all fortresses of the Norman era, had the characteristic round towers at the corners. The building, which was accessed via a drawbridge hovering over a deep ra-

vine, must have been the backdrop to the war events that marked the transition from Norman to Swabian domination in southern Italy. One of the first lords of the place, Ruggero da Pescolanciano, served among the followers of Frederick II, from whom he was commissioned, in 1223, to leave for a punitive expedition against the castle of Carpinone. Under the successive owners, and especially at the time of the lordship of the d'Alessandro, one of the most powerful families of the Neapolitan kingdom, the severe fortification was gradually transformed into a luxurious mansion. The drawbridge thus became fixed, the battlements gave way to an open loggia on the town, the towers disappeared, all incorporated into the walls except one, which is still today a belvedere from which the gaze sweeps across the entire Trigno valley. The dukes, living at court, always kept up to date with the new trends in the artistic and cultural fields. A member of the family, Giuseppe, born in Pescolanciano, was a poet in that imaginative style so popular in Baroque Naples. The best known artists were called to decorate the



chapel, in which now, unfortunately, only one valuable painting remains, the work of a pupil of Solimena. In the eighteenth century, the D'Alessandro family did not even escape the charm of the most fashionable experiment in the courts of the time and set up a ceramic factory in Pescolanciano, calling you to work skilled workers in the royal factory of Capodimonte. The castle is located in one of the areas of the Sannio richest in historical testimonies and in 1846 it hosted Teodoro Mommsen, a famous archaeologist who in the welcoming rooms of the manor was thus able to rest from the efforts of the excavations of Pietrabbondante, to taste the good local cuisine and to recover from the fright caused him by some brigands.

The Roccamandolfi Castle

The first information on the existence of the castle dates back to 1195 and refers to the siege placed by the troops of Emperor Henry VI on the Count of Molise Ruggero. Despite these events, the castle subsequently returned to the hands of Ruggero's family. In 1223 it was destroyed by the will of Frederick II of Swabia who had forced Giuditta, daughter of Ruggero, to surrender.

Later the castle became a refuge for heretics and for this reason it was finally razed to the ground by order of Charles of Anjou in 1270. The structure of the ancient castle follows the morphological characteristics of the site. It was built in some places, taking advantage of the outcropping rock of the mountain that overlooks the town, and in others with land fillings that have delimited the perimeter. The current curtain is delimited by low walls in well-squared ashlars and by five towers that occupy some sides of the fortified settlement; access to the castle is made possible by the presence of a ramp on the eastern side, supported by side walls. It leads into a rectangular room with a control tower at one of its corners. Judging by the presence of other curtain walls, the castle must once have had numerous other rooms. The best preserved part is the one on the southern side, where you can see a type of masonry with substantial quantities of cement mortar used to remedy the small size of the stone blocks. The castle can be considered in some places in a state of ruin. Over time it has undergone a slow but gradual work of erosion, which has irremediably changed its appearance.



Roccapiprozzi Castle

Roccapiprozzi is mentioned in the Angevin Regests of 1320 with the name of Rocca Piperocii, which without a shadow of a doubt can be identified with the current fortified village. The fortress rises in its center and the perimeter structure has an irregular shape conditioned by the natural course of the rock spur on which it develops. The cylindrical tower is the most striking element of the defensive complex and currently has a crown of corbels on top on which a plumbing defense floor rested.

This first phase dates back to the early fourteenth century, while the turreted walkway with the crenellated sling dates back to a few decades later, which has the simple function of a rampart for the cylindrical tower called Maschio. This can be deduced from the absence of flooring and the presence of slits and circular holes for firearms, which are distributed along the perimeter of the walls. From the floor it was not possible to directly access the Keep. The connection was in fact made by means of an external retractable staircase. Once the fortress, due to its geographical position on the border between Lazio and Campania, represented the pivot of defense of the Molise territory.



sure with houses leaning against each other, which also act as a defense. News of the existence of this castle dates back to the Norman era: in the Borrelliano Catalog we read of a certain Guglielmo di Pesclo, who owned Pesclum et Cantalupum in the second half of the 12th century. In the sixteenth century, to the Spinelli family, in 1610 Pesche passed to the de Regina and subsequently to the Pisanelli and Ceva Grimaldi, the last owners of the fief. The entire fortified complex, in an evident state of decay, is owned by the municipality.

Pesche Castle

The castle, of Norman origins, is identified with the fortified village of Pesche, which develops on the slope of Monte San Marco and overlooks the town in a very suggestive position. The structure of the "enclosed" castle is peculiar in Molise, very similar to that of the castles of Abruzzo. Numerous cylindrical towers are evident within the perimeter of the walls. The inhabited area of Pesche instead extends on the slope and integrates with the castle-enclo-



Pandone Castle of Venafro

Located to the north-east of the town, the Pandone castle dates back to the Lombard period (10th century) in its original nucleus. Its appearance was therefore that of a fortified quadrangular enclosure, a fundamental element in the defense and control system of the plain below and the transit towards the upper Volturno valley. Overlaps subsequent to this period appear to

be the quadrangular towers with the addition, at the time of the Durazzo family, of three circular towers; the crenellated sling with two walkways, inside which 12 loopholes were made that can be used by cross-

bowmen, archers and arquebuses, and the Keep, which dominated the eastern side, overlooking the access to the castle. These interventions made it an almost impregnable stronghold. At the beginning of the 16th century, the castle underwent major transformations by Enrico Pandone, count of Venafro and Boiano and a lover of court life, who made it a real luxury residence. It



was Pandone who wanted the construction of the Renaissance loggia, which fits into the turreted layout of the western corner, which is accessed via an aerial staircase. The Renaissance garden to the east and the magnificent horses frescoed in relief in the rooms on the main floor of the building, also wanted by Pandone, are the other source of pride of the Venafro castle. The entire cycle of frescoes is of exceptional

value, as in no other residence of the local small nobility of the 16th century it is possible to admire works of this type. “Unknown artists came [...] between 1521 and 1527 to paint life-size, room after room, the

most beautiful specimens of Enrico Pandone's stable. The horses are portrayed with elegant harnesses and marked with Enrico's fire brand”. Today the Pandone castle belongs to the Superintendency of Molise, which has overseen a series of renovations that have made it accessible to the public and an important reference point for local and regional cultural initiatives.



PANDONE CASTLE OF VENAFRO

MIBACT contact person Tel. 0865 904698
 drm-mol@beniculturali.it

Entrance: from Tuesday to Sunday
 08.15 - 19.15 - closed on Monday
 Cost: Full € 4.00 - Reduced € 2.00

DI CAPUA GAMBATESA CASTLE

MIBACT contact person Tel. 0874 719261
 drm-mol@beniculturali.it

Entrance: from Tuesday to Sunday
 08.15 - 19.15 - closed on Monday
 Cost: Full € 3.00 - Reduced € 2.00

CIVITACAMPOMARANO CASTLE

MIBACT contact person Tel. 0874 431352
 drm-mol@beniculturali.it

Admission: Sunday 10.00 -13.00 and 17.00-
 20.00 (from May 1st to September 30th) -
 10.00-13.00 and 15.00-17.00 (from October
 1st to April 30th). Monday-Saturday visits by
 appointment (minimum groups 10 people)
 Cost: Full € 3.00 - Reduced € 2.00

MONFORTE CAMPOBASSO CASTLE

IN CIMA Association contact person
 Tel. 327 4992312

Admission: winter hours: From October to
 March, Morning 09.00-13.00 Afternoon 15.00-
 17.00 Summer hours: from April to September,
 Morning 09.-13.00 Afternoon 15.30-19.00

CIVITA DI BOIANO CASTLE

Boiano Municipality Contact
 Tel. 0874 77281 Free admission

BONEFRO CASTLE

Refurbished to civilian homes

SANFELICE CASTLE OF BAGNOLI

Municipality of Bagnoli del Trigno
 0874 870107 It can be visited on request

CASTROPIGNANO CASTLE

Municipality of Castropignano 0874 503132
 It can be visited free of charge on request

CALDORA CARPINONE CASTLE

Municipality of Carpinone
 0865 93499 private

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Municipality of Cerro al Volturno
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Municipality of Colletorto 0874 73121
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Historic inhabited residence

BARONIAL PALACE OF FORNELLI

Municipality of Fornelli 0865 956132
 Historic inhabited residence

MACCHIA D'ISERNIA CASTLE

Contact person: Giulio de Jorio Frisari
 Tel. 329 8064200 It can be visited on request
 Historic inhabited residence

MONTERODUNI CASTLE

Municipality of Monteroduni 0865 491586
 can be visited on request

PESCOLANCIANO CASTLE

Intramontes Association
 info@intramontes.it 351 7995074
 can be visited on request

ROCCAMANDOLFI CASTLE

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ROCCAPIOZZI CASTLE

Historic inhabited residence

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Inhabited Historic Residence 0874 76308
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TUFARA CASTLE

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