

ARBËRESHË CULTURE AND NORMAN SPLENDOR

From Civita to Morano Calabro,

on the discovery of the land of contrasts

[Civita - This town was founded in 1476 by Albanian refugees from Epirus]

When you explore Calabria, you must visit the unique Pollino National Park, which is considered the largest national park in Italy extending 196,000 hectares. This green area is located in the southern Apennine ridge between Basilicata and Calabria and is formed, from the Tyrrhenian to the Ionian seas, through rock formations of various origins, including the peak of Dolcedorme (7437 ft). The park has an incredible variety of elevations and fauna, with specimens of wolf, roe deer, otter and black woodpecker as the main species, and vegetation, which goes from the Mediterranean Sea level to high altitude plateaus.

[Raganello Gorges - These suggestive gorges with fascinating waterways are much appreciated by extreme sport fans]

Rivers and streams, such as Lao, Peschiera, Argentino, cross the valleys, digging evocative gorges into the territory with waterways of extraordinary charm and naturalistic value, such as that of Raganello, which slides between two rocky cliffs up to 2296 ft and can be reached by a steep flight of 615 steps. Every year in the Raganello Gorges, hundreds of hikers and extreme sports enthusiasts, such as canyon mountain sports and rafting, are attracted by the formation of the place that allows them to enjoy moments of pure adrenaline. Calabria is a land of contrasts: sea and mountains outline the terrain of untouched landscapes, between different civilizations and varied expressions of craftsmanship, folklore and traditions. It has been a region of passage, undergone assaults and conquests, and has been a destination for migrations. The most important mark on the territory is left by the Albanian community arbëreshë. Originating in Albania and from the Albanian groups of Greece, the arbëreshë settled in Italy between the fifteenth and the eighteenth century: many of them, during the Ottoman invasion, took the opportunity to emigrate to the safe lands of Calabria, the communities still surviving today in some municipalities in the provinces of Catanzaro, Cosenza and Crotona. In particular, the village of Civita was founded around 1476 by Albanian refugees from Epirus: here history and religion intertwine to deliver a folklore capable of conquering the hearts of adults and children. Even Lidia was moved by the village's charm and its dialect (the result of a unique mix between the language of the place and the Albanian roots of the community that settled there), but it was mainly the scents of this land that captured her, resulting in her recreating one of the most

fascinating salads in the area: Trebisacce blonde orange and Tropea red onion combined in a simple dish with an irresistible flavor. If you happen to come here, you must also visit the legendary Devil's Bridge, a single-arched construction, 853 ft high, attributed by popular tradition to the devil as a work deemed as "impossible". At the foot of Mount Pollino, though not part of the area of arbëreshë influence, there is a town equally rich in beauty and with a majestic past: the village of Morano Calabro. It boasts incredibly unique panoramic view of houses descending to the valley. At night, this village resembles a nativity scene shining with lights. The Normans built a castle whose ruins still embellish the historic center, ennobled by numerous churches, open spaces, steps and underpasses, arches, towers and buttresses, which recreate the enchanting atmosphere of distant, but never forgotten, times.

Fonte: "Il viaggio di Bastianich in Calabria"

Itinerario enogastronomico