

RIVIERA DEI CEDRI

From Diamante to Praia a Mare,
between the brilliant green of the valleys
and the blue of the crystalline sea

[Diamante - Located in the center of the 'Riviera dei Cedri', this pearl of the Tyrrhenian sea in the province of Cosenza is one of the most popular tourist destinations of the region]

In the splendid territory of the Alto Tirreno Calabrese, splashed by the Tyrrhenian Sea, you will find a stretch of land known as the Riviera dei Cedri. The name is obviously related to the cultivation of citron, a citrus fruit typical of this region. Due to the mild and temperate climate, which is not subject to strong winds and temperature changes, the citron has found its natural habitat in this territory, covering the valleys of this area in bright green. During the tour that led her discover of Calabria, Lidia Bastianich could not get over the lively color of these lands: fascinated by the colors and aromas, the famous chef has let her own imagination run wild by trying recipes based on this citrus fruit, an undeniable symbol of the area. The Riviera dei Cedri covers about 80 km including 22 municipalities, from Tortora (in the north) to Paola (in the south) via Santa Maria del Cedro, including also several mountainous areas close to the coast, on the slopes of the Orsomarso Mountains, in the Pollino National Park. Therefore, the region doesn't only consist of beaches, although those you can visit are truly enchanting, such as the beaches in Diamante, consisting of 5 miles of coastline with various combinations of sand and colors. In its crystalline sea, there is also the Island of Cirella, a picturesque island with wild flora. Diamante, the city of murals (over 200), is a surprising jewel, filled with craft shops and known for two other reasons. The municipality is in fact linked to the production of citron, hence the name of the most famous variety of citrus, the "smooth citron of Diamante". It is also connected to another of the iconic products of the Calabrian region, namely the chili pepper, marked with a festival in September. Scalea is one of the most popular seaside resorts in Calabria, with a striking historical center, situated on the steps up the hill, which preserves remains of ancient walls and picturesque alleys. The old part overlooks the new part along the coast, with a wide range of hotels. Beaches of dark sand and seabed, populated by gorgonians and starfish, are among the features that have made Praia a Mare one of the most famous tourist resorts. Here, it is possible to visit the other island of the region, the Island of Dino, an imposing rock spur famous for its intriguing sea caves. Praia a Mare is also the ideal destination for lovers of

extreme sports: along the nearby river Lao, they can go rafting, canoeing or go on a rubber dinghy.

[San Nicola Arcella - The Saracen tower is known as Torre Crawford, named after the American writer Francis Marion Crawford, who lived here in the early 1900s]

San Nicola Arcella, located on the edge of a precipitous cliff at 360 ft overhanging the sea, is a true place of paradise. The village is dominated in part by the ancient Saracen tower, known as Torre Crawford, and the Arco Magno, a splendid natural arch between land and water. However, if your goal is to relax and nurture your psychophysical wellbeing, you must head slightly inland and stop by the Terme Luigiane. Located between Acquappesa and Guardia Piemontese, they are considered the oldest in the region. Their biggest asset is thermal mud, known for its therapeutic efficacy that is due to its chemical-physical composition and the maturation process, with the clay part (humus and mineral salts) becoming enriched by "living algae". But the Devil's Finger is the true symbol of this place: The most sulfur-rich thermal waters of all of Europe flow from this rocky spur. On the nearby Tyrrhenian Sea, the Terme Luigiane have an unmistakable landmark: the high Scoglio della Regina, which is nearly a cliff, is the subject of numerous legends. From here originate the beautiful beaches of Intavolata and Acquappesa to the north, and of Guardia Piemontese to the south. The latter is a delightful village that continues to preserve the remains of its Waldensian origins and the use of the Occitan language. A striking aspect of the village is the two names given to its streets and alleys, one in Italian and one in dialect. Next to the center is the Porta del Sangue, named in memory of the massacre of the Waldensian minority in 1561. At the confines of the Riviera dei Cedri we find Paola, a town set on terraced steps that descend towards the sea. This municipality is known for religious reasons above all: it is here that, in 1416, Francesco Martolilla was born. He became San Francesco da Paola in 1519, patron not only of this town, but of all of Calabria. Founder of the Order of Minimi, the Sanctuary of San Francesco da Paola is dedicated to this patron. The Sanctuary rises in the upper mountainous region of the Saint's native city and his remains are kept there. The patronal celebrations are held from May 1st to May 4th with several parades on the streets and at sea. The cult around San Francesco is so deeply felt that Paola has become one of the main destinations of religious tourism and one of the most important in Southern Italy.

Fonte: "Il viaggio di Bastianich in Calabria"

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