

# MARATEA

and its hinterland

## A bespoke tour for explorers of beauty

Itineraries  
and enchantment  
in the secret places  
of a land to be  
discovered

# BASILICATA

**Maratea and its hinterland**

## Credit

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**Via del Gallitello, 89 - 85100 POTENZA**

### **Concept and texts**

Vincenzo Petraglia

### **Editorial project and management**

Maria Teresa Lotito

### **Editorial assistance and support**

Annalisa Romeo

### **Graphics and layout**

Vincenzo Petraglia in collaboration with Xela Art

English translation of the Italian original  
STEP Language Services s.r.l.  
Discesa San Gerardo, 180 – Potenza  
Tel.: +39 349 840 1375 | e-mail: info@stepsls.net

### **Image research and selection**

Maria Teresa Lotito

### **Photos**

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# BASILICATA MARATEA



## the itinerary







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Maratea and its hinterland

# Where the Tyrrhenian is a little bluer

Bordered by three national parks, the coast of Lucania which overlooks the Tyrrhenian Sea is an anthem to nature and its contrasts. The cliffs stand sheer over crystal-clear waters, pristine beaches, and delightful coves, while the surprises in store in the hinterland include glacial lakes and bijou hamlets.

## BRUSHSTROKES OF BLUE

The Maratea coast is a boundless fabric of evocative colours, just like this ...

**I**n antiquity the Greeks called it the "goddess of the sea", from "thea maris". Today it is known as the "Pearl of the Tyrrhenian". Names that provide an immediate idea of what Maratea is really like. It is Basilicata's only town on the Tyrrhenian, set on the Bay of Policastro,

with Campania to the north and Calabria to the south. This thirty-two-kilometre stretch of coast is one of the most beautiful in Italy, awarded Blue Flag status several times, and occupying one of the wildest, most unspoilt areas on the Tyrrhenian, protected by an anti-over-



# ATA BASILICATA

ian

## The towns to visit

Maratea

Rivello

Lagonegro

Lauria

Trecchina

Nemoli

building policy applying stricter controls than elsewhere. This exclusive yet discreet landscape is dotted with villas and buildings that generally have very little impact on the environment, blending perfectly into the surrounding vegetation. A corner of paradise framed by



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## Maratea and its hinterland

three of the most beautiful national parks in southern Italy: the *Parco Nazionale del Pollino* to the south east, and the *Parco Nazionale dell'Appennino Lucano Val d'Agri Lagonegrese* and the *Parco Nazionale del Cilento e Valle di Diano* to the north, in Campania. This is a land of unique and unforgettable contrasts, starting with the deep green of the luxuriant vegetation that sometimes rolls right down to the sea, creating a stunning picture against the blue water and sky. It is also a land of wonderful sunsets and dazzling Tyrrhenian light, white beaches alternating with jagged rocks that rise sheer out of the sea and form natural pools in striking

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### COLOURS AND HEADY PERFUMES

The coast has lush vegetation that rolls down to the multicoloured hues of the water's edge, steeped in the intense scent of blooms.





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An incredible palette of colours  
is the hallmark of this coast

## DREAM VIEWS

The jagged coast is a succession of cliffs overlooking the sea, beaches and fabulous coves.

shades of turquoise, which can only be accessed by boat or by taking steep footpaths. It is a place of heady scents and brightly coloured flora. Gorse, lilies, orchids, asphodels, euphorbia and many other types of flower, including the rare *Primula palinuri*, seem to vie to enrich the colourful palette of the coast as it slopes towards the sea. Juniper, heather, wild fennel and myrtle, prickly pears, pine and agave plants also grow here, and as you climb higher you will come across aromatic

plants and dense woods of turkey oak, hornbeam, holm oak, maple, and elm, which cover the Apennine mountains dominated by *Mount Papa* (2,005 metres), the highest peak in the *Sirino group*, and one of the highest in the region. At their feet lies the fertile *Noce Valley* with its excellent and abundant crops, including large *Massa* tomatoes, red onions, beans and many other natural delicacies. It is here that the last few sections of the Apennines suddenly plunge into the Tyrrhenian, breaking up into thousands of crevices and narrow inlets, filling the coastline with a succession of dizzying chasms, islets and coves of fine



### Here the last stretch of the Apennines into a thousand ravines



sand or shingle, rocky pinnacles and natural caves. They include the *Grotta delle Meraviglie*, in Marina di Maratea, one of the area's best natural treasures with its wonderful stalactite and stalagmite sculptures. It can be accessed by following SS 18 state highway, which runs along the entire coast, offering breathtaking views and connecting all the coastal towns in the

Maratea area. To the north, in the area that borders Campania, the hamlet of **Acquafredda** is unique for a succession of small beaches set between rocks and beautiful sea caves, including the *Grotta del Sogno*, one of the most impressive on the coast, *Grotta del Fogiario*, *Grotta di Zu Monaco*, and *Grotta delle Colonne*, near Punta dei Crivi, the rocky spur stretching into the sea, acting as a partition between Maratea and Sapri. We must also mention the *Grotta dei Pipistrelli* and the *Grotta del Dragone*, like rock cathedrals. There is a myriad of coves and beaches along this section of

#### NATURE FOR CAVERS

The many natural caves, a large number flooded by the sea, are a constant subject of study and exploration for cavers.





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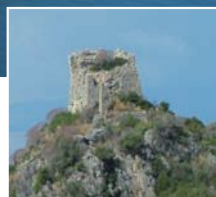
## tumbles into the sea, shattered

### PRISTINE BEACHES

Large or small, with or without facilities; there really is something for everyone.



coast, including *Anginarra* and *Luppa*: dark sand mixed with shingle and separated by cliffs. The *Grotta della Scala*, *Porticello* and *Marizza* beaches are also found here. Following the coast road south, we come to **Cersuta**, dotted with truly enchanting little beaches such as *Capo la Nave* and *Rena Car-ruba*, which can only be accessed via the sea, and the slightly larger *d'u Nastru* beach, just beneath the rocky spur that soars from the waters and is crowned by the *Apprezzami l'asi-no* tower, built in the sixteenth century like many other lookout



### AGAINST THE SARACENS

The many watchtowers that dot the coast were built to defend against sea attacks.

### Grotta delle Meraviglie: a potholer's paradise

The cave was discovered in the early 1920s by workers from the SS18 construction site, who went to recovering a hammer that had fallen into a rock cleft. They suddenly found themselves looking at a stunning natural spectacle of waterfalls, with stalactites and stalagmites embroidering the cave, created by tireless, endless water action. It is one of the smaller but best-preserved tourist caves anywhere in Italy, with a vertical drop of about eight metres, resembling a room adorned with large columns, stalagmites and stalactites that have earned it the name of the "cave of wonders". Looking upwards you will see the beautiful filiform stalactites that speleologists call "spaghetti", so delicate that just a sound wave is enough to snap them. Visits: Cooperativa Mar-Ar-Ethea (Maratea, 14 Via Profiti; +39 0973 876338–876333/1119442).

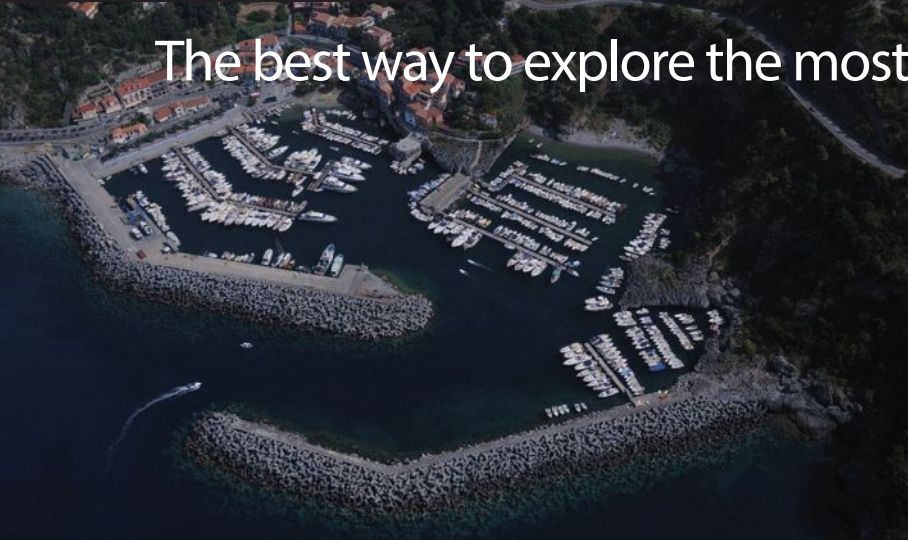


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Maratea and its hinterland

The best way to explore the most secret



towers on the coast for defence against Saracen raids. They include the *Crivi*, *Acquafredda*, *Filocaio*, *Santavenere* and *Caina* towers, all of which offer truly breathtaking views. Beyond Cersuta, in the direction of Maratea Centro, we come to **Fiumicello** with its beautiful beach, which is one of the largest on the Maratea coast, framed by the dense vegetation that extends down to the sea, and by caves where various prehistoric relics and animal bones have been discovered. The beach extends around the bay overlooked by Punta Santave-

## SEA AND SHORES TO EXPLORE

This is a true paradise for those who love sailing, discovering small, intimate coves and hidden gullies.





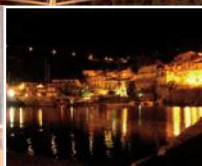
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corners of the coast is by boat



## IN THE HEART OF THE GULF OF POLICASTRO

Ideal for many excursions beyond regional boundaries because of its strategic position.



here, where the *Calicastro* and *Calicas-triddu* rocks rise from the water. Further south, in the **Porto** area, the pebbly *Maremorto* beach, the larger *Crivo* beach, and the little *Funnicu reggiu* and *d'i Vranne* beaches can only be accessed by sea. The *San Giorgio* and *Monacelli* caves, with their beautiful blue shades generated by the refraction of the sun's rays in a deep underwater fissure, can also be explored by boat. Seen from the sea, the coast offers some truly breathtaking sights. The dark shades of the water, caused by deep rocky beds, alternate with Caribbean shades creat-

ed by sandy patches, forming striking contrasts with the pale limestone rocks on the mainland, crowned by green vegetation.

*Maratea's picturesque marina* is well-equipped and even suitable for large craft. It is the starting point for numerous organized tours that visit the wildest and most unspoilt corners of the coast. A number of different facilities offer guided diving excursions (for both activities, info: APT Maratea, Piazza del Gesù 32, +39

## MARATEA MARINA

A quaint atmosphere for this marina, which is well-equipped and can accommodate even large boats.

Seek out beaches, coves and unspoiled

### A KALEIDOSCOPE OF SEABEDS

Coral, yellow sea fans and seagrass create spectacular underwater meadows.



0973 876908), exploring the beautiful seabed with its deep crevices and multi-coloured coral, yellow sea fans and seagrass that create spectacular underwater meadows populated by bearded fireworms, starfish, crab, octopus, sea urchins, and many other species of fish such as sea bream, snapper, two-banded sea bream, grouper, grey mullet, and red sea bream. These deep waters also guard closely priceless treasures from the past, such as those discovered around the *Island of Santo Janni*. The finds made here now form one of the Mediterranean's most important collec-

tions of amphora and anchors, some of which can be seen in the permanent underwater archaeology exhibition "*Dal mare alla terra*", housed in the eighteenth-century *Palazzo De Lieto* (info: +39 0973 877676), in the historic centre of Maratea. From the port, by sea or by land, following the coast road to the south, you will come across the beautiful, varied beaches of **Marina di Maratea**. They include *Cala Jannita* with its dark sand, the rocky *Illicini* beach, the *Calavecchia* beaches, a thin strip of sand and rocks that opens out at the foot of another pine-covered cliff rising



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islands with rich, multicoloured seabeds



## TREASURE TROVE OF HISTORY

The sea continues to reveal relics, which are then displayed in the archaeological museum.

sheer out of the sea, and *Macarro* beach, completely immersed in green Mediterranean maquis. Maratea's coastline ends, just before the border with Calabria, at the hamlet of **Castrocucco**, home to the *Caina* tower perched on a dizzying rock that rises sheer out of the sea, which boasts one of the most beautiful views of the coast and the little coves formed by the jagged rocky walls nearby. *D'a Gnola* beach – at the foot of the Serra di Castrocucco and the ruins of the epony-

## The island of Santo Janni

An ancient tradition says that Odysseus, on his voyage back to Ithaca, stopped on this picturesque rocky islet whose seabeds have brought forth an incredible archaeological treasure, with hundreds of amphorae and numerous Roman anchors, mostly dating back to 300 BCE. This is because the island was used by the Romans for production and marketing of *garum*, a very popular and unusual sauce made from fish entrails. Evidence that this product was made on the island came to light in some ancient *opus signinum* tanks used to macerate the fish. The seas of Maratea continue to reveal important archaeological finds, like a recent discovery, in October 2009, of 200 amphorae of the 3rd–4th century BCE, just off the coast at over 600 metres in depth. The island is also the habitat of the *Podarcis sicula paulae*, a blue-brown Italian wall lizard, which is very rare and now a protected species, living in the most inaccessible rocky ravines.

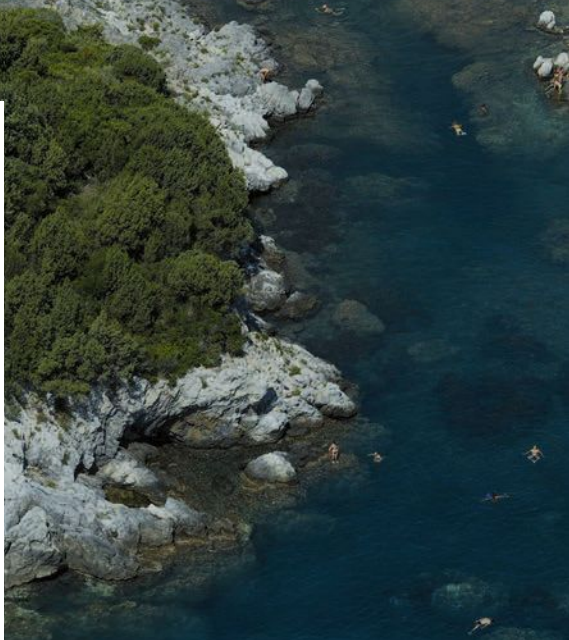




## Cliffs that plunge sheer into the colours of the sea and form turquoise



mous castle built in the High Middle Ages – is one of the biggest beaches on the coast, set amidst dunes and reeds that extend to the mouth of the River Noce, on the administrative border with Calabria. The mouth of the river is a charming natural scenario and provides the perfect habitat for kingfishers and grey herons. The remains of a *Roman villa* can be seen in the Capo la Secca area. The Castrocuoco shoals, between *Torre Caina* and the *U tuppo* promontory, earn their name from the rocks and shallow waters that have caused numerous shipwrecks over the centuries, leaving archaeological remains washed ashore





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sparkling natural  
pools



## NATURE AND HISTORY

Maratea is not only nature but also art and history that survive in many testimonials scattered across its territory.



## Maratea, a town of ancient roots

*The Pearl of the Tyrrhenian* offers not only stunning natural scenery but also an ancient history, which began as early as prehistoric times. Stone tools found in the hamlets of Massa and Brefaro and, above all, in the coastal caves of Fiumicello have been accurately dated by archaeological studies conducted in the 1950s, and testify to human presence here even 40,000 years ago. In the Timpa district, a hillock near today's marina, remains of huts were found, along with ceramic and obsidian tools, evidence of a settlement dating back to 1500 BCE. Over the years there have also been very interesting finds in many coastal caves of important animal fossils, and which reveal the various climatic phases characterizing this part of the Mediterranean.

by the sea. The spot can be reached after a walk of about a kilometre through the green that stretches down to the sea. Like the finds made on the Island of Santo Janni, these relics prove the important role played by Maratea in antiquity as a trading post and a place where vessels sailing the Mediterranean could restock with food and water. It is no coincidence that *ancient Maratea*, with its High-medieval urban layout based on an earlier Roman settlement, proved by numerous archaeological finds, was a citadel. Today, set against the blue of the sea, the fasci-

The village of Maratea is a wonderful natural

### SUSPENDED BETWEEN SKY AND SEA

Surrounded by greenery, a tangle of narrow lanes and houses overlooking the sea



nating ruins of these fortifications can still be seen on Mount San Biagio (644 metres above sea level). The old town, known as *Castello*, was destroyed during a long siege by the Napoleonic army in 1806. It was then that the population of Maratea moved permanently to **Maratea Centro**, also known as *Borgo* or *Maratea Inferiore*, founded in the Early Middle Ages just below the slopes of the mountain so that it would be invisible from the sea, safe from Saracen attacks. It is accessed by a panoramic winding road, which offers truly breathtaking views over the coast and the cliffs at ev-

ery turn. The little village is a labyrinth of paved streets lined with multicoloured houses, flower-filled balconies, elegant eighteenth-century buildings decorated with loggias and portals, and delightful little squares with cafes and small shops, which also host concerts, art exhibitions and cultural events, particularly in the summer. As dusk falls the village is transformed with its glittering lights, bustling bars and little outdoor restaurants where diners can savour traditional local delicacies in a truly romantic setting. The *Pietra del Sole* belvedere offers a stunning view, for miles on a clear day and at sun-



# MARATEA BASILICATA

terrace over the sea, surrounded by greenery



set, when the fiery ball of the sun seems to sink slowly into the sea, lighting it up with magnificent shades of purple. Maratea is also known as the "town of 44 churches", as this is the number of holy buildings in the area, several of which are home to some wonderful artworks. The church of San Vito, the oldest in Maratea, built in the



## ALLURE FIT FOR AN ARTIST

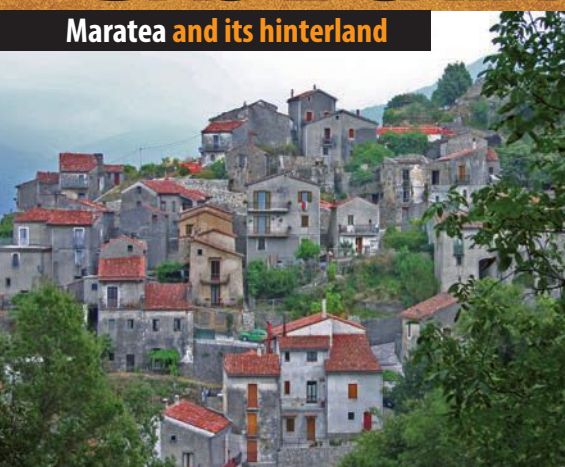
In the evening, the tiny village comes alive with the countless lights of restaurants and trendy venues, while during the day, the colourful lanes and small squares tingle with the scent





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Maratea and its hinterland



## Stately homes and lovely lakes

**Lauria** (photo below) is the birthplace of the Blessed Lenti-ni. In the village you will find the ruins of the medieval castle, the churches of San Giacomo Maggiore, with its tiled belfry, San Nicola and Santa Maria dei Martiri, and the Immacolata Concezione collegiate church, whose cloister encloses Roman columns. The centre of **Trecchina** (top photo) pre-serves its mansions with coats of arms and stone portals. At 1,089 metres in altitude, the sanctuary of Madonna del Soccorso, dates from the ninth century but was rebuilt in 1926, and inside has a sixteenth-century marble relief effigy of Our Lady. **Nemoli** (small picture below) is a tangle of alleys, steps and graceful eighteenth-century buildings with stone balconies, friezes and portals. **Just four kilometres ahead, the atmospheric Lake Sirino offers pleasant, re-laxing walks.**



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Alongside nature,



eleventh–twelfth centuries, with inter-nal frescoes painted in the fourteenth–seventeenth centuries, and the *church of Santa Maria Maggiore*, founded in the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries, al-though altered subsequently, are both in the old town. Also worth visiting are the seventeenth-century *Addolorata church* and the eighteenth-century *Immacolata church*, beneath which can be found the remains of the four-teenth-century *church of San Pietro*, with beautiful frescoes of the Apostles on the walls of the apsidal basin. The sixteenth-century *Annunziata church*



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you find art, culture and traditions



## LARGE PHOTO

A fascinating glimpse of Maratea.

## BELOW

The majolica cupola of the Annunziata church.



has a distinctive bell tower and dome clad in green and yellow majolica, as well as the two column-bearing stone lions framing the entrance portal, dated as medieval and originally from a church at Castello. The interior vaunts various artworks, including an altarpiece of the *Annunci-*

*ation*, attributed to the sixteenth-century painter Simone da Firenze. It is also worth visiting the nearby sixteenth-century convent of the Friars Minor with the adjacent *church of the Rosario*, which houses a number of priceless seveneenth–eighteenth-century artworks,



## THE "TOWN OF 44 CHURCHES"

Maratea is also known by this name, with that number of places of worship dotted across the area, some of which vaunt many art treasures.





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Maratea and its hinterland

The Tyrrhenian coast of Lucania is an



## THE WHITE GIANT

Measuring twenty-two metres in height and with an arm span of nineteen metres across, the enormous sculpture was installed in 1965.

the church of *Sant'Antonio* (seventeenth century), which forms part of the *Capuchin convent complex*, with its adjacent *chapels*

with Renaissance frescoes, and the little fifteenth-century *Calvario church*, with some interesting Renaissance frescoes. There are also numerous other religious buildings dotted around the various districts of Maratea and the countryside, some in isolated spots or on promontories that enjoy spectacular panoramic

views. The *basilica of San Biagio* is certainly the most majestic and can be reached from Maratea by following the winding SP103 provincial road, with its scenic switchbacks. Traditionally it is said to have been built on the site of an ancient pagan temple dedicated to the goddess Minerva in around the sixth-seventh century, presumably when Maratea Superiore was founded by a community of Basilian monks. It has been extended many times over the centuries and houses numerous works of art, such as the fresco of *Our Lady of the Pomegranate* (fifteenth century), beautiful



# ATA BASILICATA

anthem to nature and its contrasts

## CHRIST THE REDEEMER

The Redentore's towering silhouette on the summit of Mount San Biagio, reached through scenic, winding switchbacks.

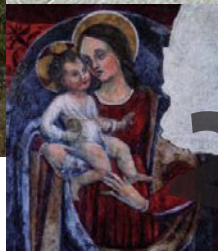
## THE CITADEL

At the foot of the Redentore statue, the ruins of ancient Castello.

marble bas-reliefs of the *Annunciation* (seventeenth century), and *Our Lady of Wisdom* (eighteenth century). The *Regia Cappella*, built in the basilica in the seventeenth century, houses the relics of Saint Blaise, patron saint of the town. Legend has it that they arrived miraculously from the sea, on the Island of Santo Janni in 732. An evocative four-day feast is held in the saint's honour, ending on the second Sunday of May each year.

## SAN BIAGIO

In the basilica of the relics of Saint Blaise are kept alongside numerous works of art, such as the fifteenth-century *Madonna del Melograno*, *Our Lady of the Pomegranate*.



## Maratea and its hinterland



### The "San Biagio Argument"

One of the highlights of the patron saint festivities, which reach their peak on the second Sunday in May, this procession carries a silver statue of the saint, draped in a purple cloth, along the mountain path that connects "Maratea di suso", the upper town and home to the sanctuary that is its home all year round, to "Maratea di giuso", the new Maratea. The two have always quarrelled over the origins of the feast and the draped cloth represents the protector's neutrality with respect to this dispute.



### A BYGONE AGE

The ruins of the old town offer unique panoramic views, with the sea in the background.



The basilica is just a short walk from what went on to become a symbol of Maratea, the huge statue of Christ the Redeemer, which is the second largest statue of Christ in the world, the largest being the work on Corcovado, in Rio de Janeiro. It measures twenty-two metres in height and its arms measure nineteen metres across. The face alone is three metres wide. It was installed in 1965 by the Florentine sculptor Bruno Innocenti on the far edge of the mountain, where its dazzling white silhouette (made from white concrete and Carrara marble chippings) contrasts against the blue sky and sea, literally dominating the entire Bay of Policastro. It can be seen from every corner of the coast, with its arms outstretched, almost as if seeking to enfold the land, sea and sky in an embrace.

At its feet are the ruins of the ancient town, further enhancing this highly evocative setting. In the vicinity of the basilica of San Biagio, the *small Madonna degli Ulivi church*, an ancient Basilian hermitage with a frescoed interior, is worth visiting. If you now continue along the SP103 provincial road you will find the hamlets of **Santa Caterina** and **Massa**, renowned for their mozzarella and caciocavallo cheese, as well as for their huge juicy tomatoes. From here, turning onto the SP131 provincial road, you will find the hamlet of **Brefaro**, surrounded by wonderful woods. Here the mood changes dramatically from a typical seaside atmosphere to the rural and more solitary sites of Maratea's fascinating inland region. This area is often overlooked by vis-



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The dazzling white silhouette of the statue of Christ the Redeemer embraces sky, sea and land

## CLASH OF THE TITANS

The massive statue is second in size only to that of Corcovado in Rio.

## Skiing the peaks of Sirino with the blue sea in the background



### AT THE SEA WITH SKIS AND GLOVES

Less than an hour from the beaches you can ski at over 2,000 metres on the beautiful slopes of Mount Sirino.



itors, despite preserving the authentic traditions of this corner of Basilicata. Numerous paths wind their way around the hills, some following ancient livestock tracks to and from the summer pastures, leading to panoramic points on the coasts and the beautiful surrounding mountains. One of the paths travels from Brefaro to Mount Serra Polino, where you can enjoy a breathtaking view over the surrounding mountains in the foreground and the sea in the background. This is just a taste of a journey within a journey, travelling from the wild and fascinating charms of the

sea through beautiful hilltop villages to the wooded and unspoilt landscapes of Mount Sirino. In less than an hour's drive, you climb from the beaches, at sea level, to ski slopes at more than 2,000 metres, where winter skiers glimpse the blue sea in the distance as they descend. From Maratea, following the SP3 provincial road towards Trecchina and then



### HEAVEN FOR THE PALATE

The inland area is a treasure of intense flavours of a bygone era, including delicious cheeses.



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## **BIJOU TOWNS**

Rivello, with its beautiful urban structure, is one of the region's bijou villages.

the SP585 state highway and the SP27 provincial road, you reach **Rivello**, a beautiful picture-postcard village with elegant buildings and the bell towers of its ancient churches and chapels. Some of these preserve typically Byzantine characteristics, such as the attractive semi-cylindrical apses decorated with pensile arches. For many years this settlement was fought over by the Lombards and the Byzantines, causing it to devel-



## **TREKKING AND NATURE**

The pristine mountain landscapes behind the coast are a trekker's paradise.



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Maratea and its hinterland

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**ABOVE:** The façade of the mother church of San Nicola. **FACING NEXT PAGE AND BELOW:** views of Rivello, surrounded by dense forests.



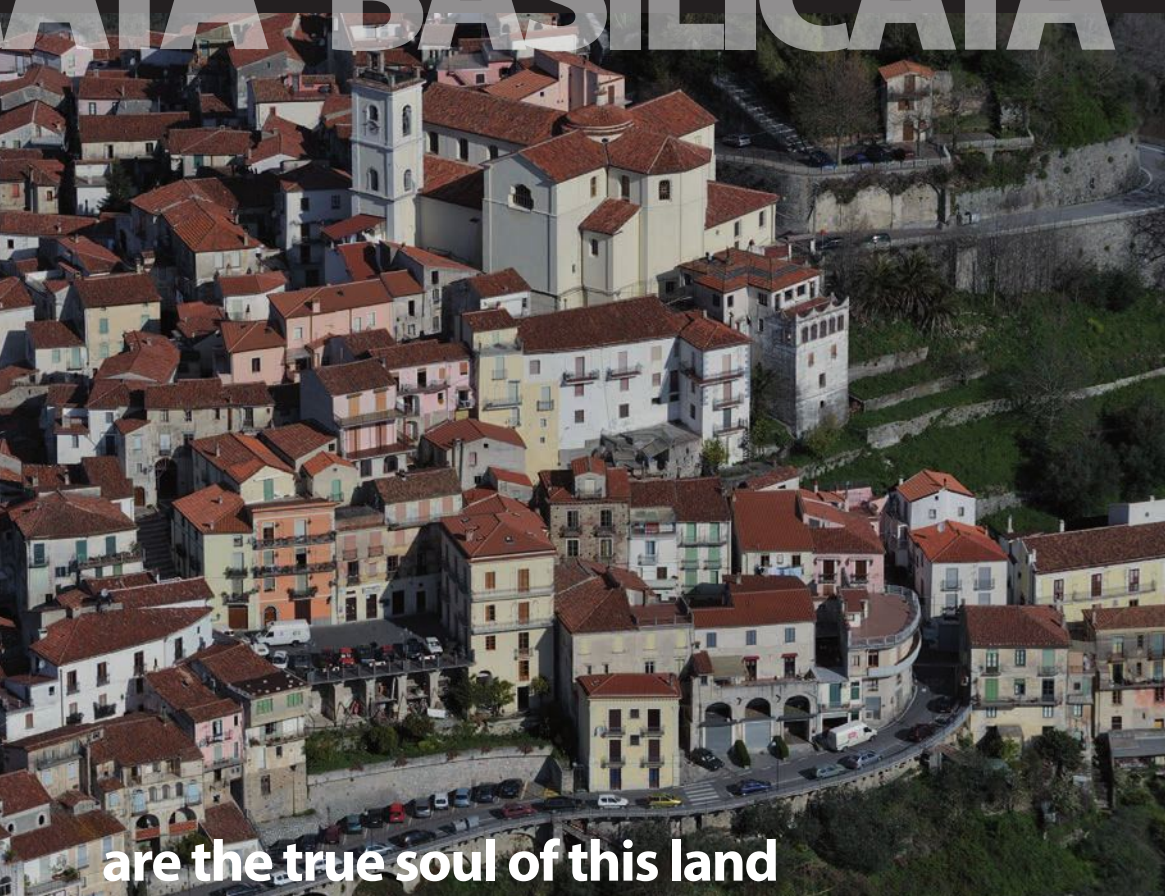
## The inland areas

op into two separate cores over the centuries: the upper part around the *mother church of San Nicola*, with its Latin rites, the oldest part of which dates back to the ninth century even though it has since been altered and enlarged; the lower part that developed around the *church of Santa Maria del Poggio*, with its Greek rites, which dates to the same period as the "rival" church of San Nicola and is characterized by its beautiful apse and transepts built sheer onto a small cliff. Despite being a small town of only three thousand people, the surrounding district vaunts twenty-three





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## are the true soul of this land

religious buildings, including churches and chapels. These include the *Annunziata church*, whose interior is adorned with a triptych fresco of the fourteenth century and a painted, carved stone *Annunciation* group of the 1500s. There is also the

*chapel of Santa Barbara*, with its distinctive semi-cylindrical apse, some fourteenth-century pictorial decoration and sixteenth-century frescoes by Giovanni Todisco and his pupils. Walking around the lanes of the old town

### INTRICATE UPS AND DOWNS

The village is a tangle of narrow streets and hanging staircases with narrow passageways.





## Rivello, with its pleasing urban structure, overlooks the Valle del Noce



### SANTA MARIA DEL POGGIO

A church of the Greek rite, dating back to the ninth century and built sheer on a small cliff.

you will enjoy the timeless atmosphere of the narrow passageways between the houses, leaning into each other, with just the occa-

sional gap that reveals charming glimpses of the surrounding landscape. In the eastern part of town the *Sant'Antonio convent*, built in the sixteenth century and remodelled over time, has a portico with a decorative segmental arch stone portal and a handsome wooden door. Entering the annexed church, you will find a fine seven-

teenth-century choir with lovely carvings and several canvases of the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries. In the convent cloister, once entirely frescoed, you will note fragments of the original paintings by Girolamo and Giovanni Todisco, with scenes taken from the Old and New Testaments. Giovanni also painted the beautiful *Last Supper* fresco (1599) that decorates the refectory. Moreover, the monastery is home to the permanent exhibition (info and booking required: town hall +39 0973 46190) “Greci ed indigeni tra Noce e Lao” [Greeks and Natives from the Noce to



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**CONVENT OF SANT'ANTONIO.** This splendid Renaissance building is found just out of town and is home to an interesting permanent archaeological exhibition.

the Lao], dedicated to interesting archaeological finds from the Serra Città and Piano del Pignataro districts. Here a burial (sixth century BCE) and brick kilns (third century BCE) were brought to light and document the relationship between the Greeks and the populations that inhabited the area before they settled here, deeming it to be a source of profitable trade and remarkable mutual enrichment. From Rivello, re-





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Maratea and its hinterland



## The mystery of the Mona Lisa: truth or fiction

She has become the most enigmatic smile of art history and more than any other work by Leonardo, many theories and unanswered questions surround her figure. Some sources say that the scheming noblewoman died of a sudden illness in 1506, when she was in Lagonegro accompanying her husband, the wealthy merchant Francesco del Giocondo, on a business trip in southern Italy. And that her remains rest here, in the church of San Nicola. We may never know how much is truth and how much is fiction, but the mystery of the incredible story of this woman remains and adds to the charm of Lagonegro.



# BASILICATA

**LARGE PHOTO:**  
Lagonegro.

**SIDE:**  
Il Lago Sirino.



## All of the Lagonegro

turning to the SS585 state highway and then taking the SP26 provincial road, it will take 20 minutes to reach **Lagonegro**, whose name derives from "Lacus niger", meaning a lake of black water (which has now disappeared). The settlement has a picturesque medieval urban layout, hugging a crag, with coiled streets embracing its buildings, occasionally interrupted by steep steps and narrow passageways. All around there



### MYTH OR TRUTH?

Tradition says that Leonardo's enigmatic muse is buried in the church of San Nicola.



# ATA BASILICATA



## area is a triumph of genuine, tasty foods

are thick beech and chestnut woods that cling to Sirino's steep slopes. The oldest part of the village unfolds around the ruins of the feudal *castle* while the outline of the *church of San Nicola* (9th–10th century, although modified over the ages) dominates the entire hamlet. Inside there are interesting works of art produced between the 1500s and 1700s, including two sculptures by Altobello Persio, depicting a *Crucifix* and a *Virgin with Saint John*. Local folk beliefs say that this is the burial place of *Mona Lisa*, painted by the genius *Leonardo da Vinci* and known throughout the world

for her inscrutable smile. Indeed, some sources state that *Leonardo's* enigmatic model died in **Lagonegro** in 1506. Other studies refute this argument, as often happens in these cases, where there are always arguments for and against, but the charm of this mysterious figure remains intact and she still casts her spell unchallenged. Not far from the town centre, with the sixteenth–eighteenth-century *Trinità*, *Madonna delle Grazie*, *Crocifisso*, *Sant'Anna* and *Rosario* churches, in the countryside you will come across the *monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli*. Its church vaunts a precious

## Lake Laudemio regional reserve will take you for a dip into glaciation



### ICONS OF FAITH

The effigy of the Our Lady of Sirino, at the Madonna della Neve chapel.

seventeenth-century canvas by Mattia Preti depicting the *Meeting of Saint Francis of Assisi with Saint Dominic*. Then, on the slopes of Sirino at 1,629 metres above sea level, there is also

the seventeenth-century *Madonna della Neve chapel* which is home to the image of *Our Lady of Sirino* throughout the summer, brought here in a lovely procession from Lagonegro. The town is also the starting point for the trip to the

enchancing *Lake Laudemio*, which is about fifteen kilometres along the SP26 provincial road in the direction of Moliterno. The lake is protected by its own nature reserve, at 1,525 metres above sea level, and is Europe's southernmost lake of glacial origin. The setting is quite lovely and offers plenty of opportunities for trekking, both at a relaxed pace or following upward trails of different degrees of difficulty. There is something for everyone, even reaching the tallest peaks, passing stunning flowering meadows in spring or enjoying cool, wholesome air in summer, far from



# ATA BASILICATA



**THE PALETTE  
OF AUTUMN**  
Lake Laudemio,  
1,525 m asl.



**ABOVE:** The atmosphere and colours of autumn tinge the forests and mountains, ideal for good hiking.  
**BELOW:** Lake Laudemio in a winter version, perfect for cross-country skiing.

coastal heat. Or why not choose autumn, for its thousand shades of red, yellow and orange bathing the woods, or winter, with its heavy snowfall and excellent slopes for downhill or cross-country skiing, the latter looping around the lovely lake basin with its reflections of the surrounding majestic, snow-capped peaks.



## Laudemio, Europe's southernmost glacial lake

With its stretch of water covering a basin of morainic origin, Lake Laudemio marks the southern expansion limit in the Quaternary period (the most recent geological era characterized by at least five major glacial stages) of glaciers that remained active until about ten–twelve thousand years ago. The glaciers carved out the present seabed and influenced the surrounding vegetation that today is typified mainly by beech and alder woods that thin out as the altitude increases towards the Sirino ridges, slashed by strong winds. In the eponymous reserve there are several rare plant species, including *Vicia sirinicae* and *Astragalus sirinicus*. Many secrets are revealed in the Parco tematico sulla Geologia “Il Micromondo” a geology theme park on the shores of nearby Lake Sirino (info: [www.ilmicromondo.com](http://www.ilmicromondo.com); +39 0973 40632; +39 333 8624732), with videos, animated miniatures, and tours offering a journey to the centre of the Earth.

## ECHOES FROM THE PAST

### Maratea, a story of heroic resistance



It is no secret that the people of Maratea were proud of their roots and of the amazing places in which they lived, and their bold resistance against invaders is also well known. Indeed, there are several historical events in which the citizens of Maratea showed all their courage, including in 1284, when the upper town stood as Basilicata's only Angevin stronghold in the war of the Sicilian Vespers. Above all, it was the so-called "Resistance of Maratea", in 1806, that showed the worth Maratea, however. The battle was fought during the French invasion of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, when Lauria and its surroundings saw the massacre of 4,000 soldiers of Napoleon's army led by General Jean Maximilien Lamarque against 1,000 Bourbon rebels led by Maratea's Colonel Alessandro Mandarini, who had previously ordered the evacuation of the civilian population for its safety. The siege lasted several days until 10 January 1806, when Mandarini realized that if the French defeated him, they would slaughter the population so he sought an honourable surrender and General Lamarque accepted the terms. This battle, of significant historical value, sadly decreed the permanent abandonment of Castello, as the upper part of Maratea was known and of which only ruins now remain.

## HOW WHERE WHEN

### How to get there

Maratea can be reached by land, from the Tyrrhenian side, along the Salerno-Reggio Calabria motorway, exiting at Lagonegro Nord. From here, follow the SS585 state highway and the SP13 at the Trecchina turnoff. By sea, the marina coordinates are 39° 59' 16" N – 15° 42' 59" E. Info and berth bookings: +39 0973 876859 (harbourmaster's office); +39 0973 877307; [www.marateaporto.it](http://www.marateaporto.it).



### Art, music and cinema

Maratea offers a rich and varied summer calendar of events, of which the most interesting are: Io, Isabella International Film Week, a festival revolving around women, and the Maratea International Film Festival, both devoted to great cinema. There are also classical and light music concerts, dance, theatre, exhibitions and other events as part of Maratea Scena. Info: APT Maratea, Piazza del Gesù, +39 0973 87690832.







## The domain of the guitar and rare fauna

In August, Lagonegro hosts its international guitar festival, attracting leading musicians both from Italian and foreign music scenes. Concerts are held in various locations in the town and there is also a musical interpretation contest for guitars. Info: [www.chitarrafestival.it](http://www.chitarrafestival.it). The "Giada" zoological park, on the outskirts of Lagonegro (Contrada Oriello, +39 0973 21767), is home to native fauna and some specimens of exotic animals, popular with children.

## Seventh heaven for the palate

There are many opportunities to sample the rich local gastronomy, of course, with numerous festivals throughout the year. In August, Rivello celebrates its *soperzata*; Lagonegro its hard *fri-sella* savoury biscuit, and Nemoli its trout, not to mention its Mardi Gras polenta at Carnival time. Lastly, Trecchina, in October, holds its chestnut fair. For all dates, which change from year to year, check with the Maratea APT tourist office: +39 0973 876908.



## Lagonegro delicacies

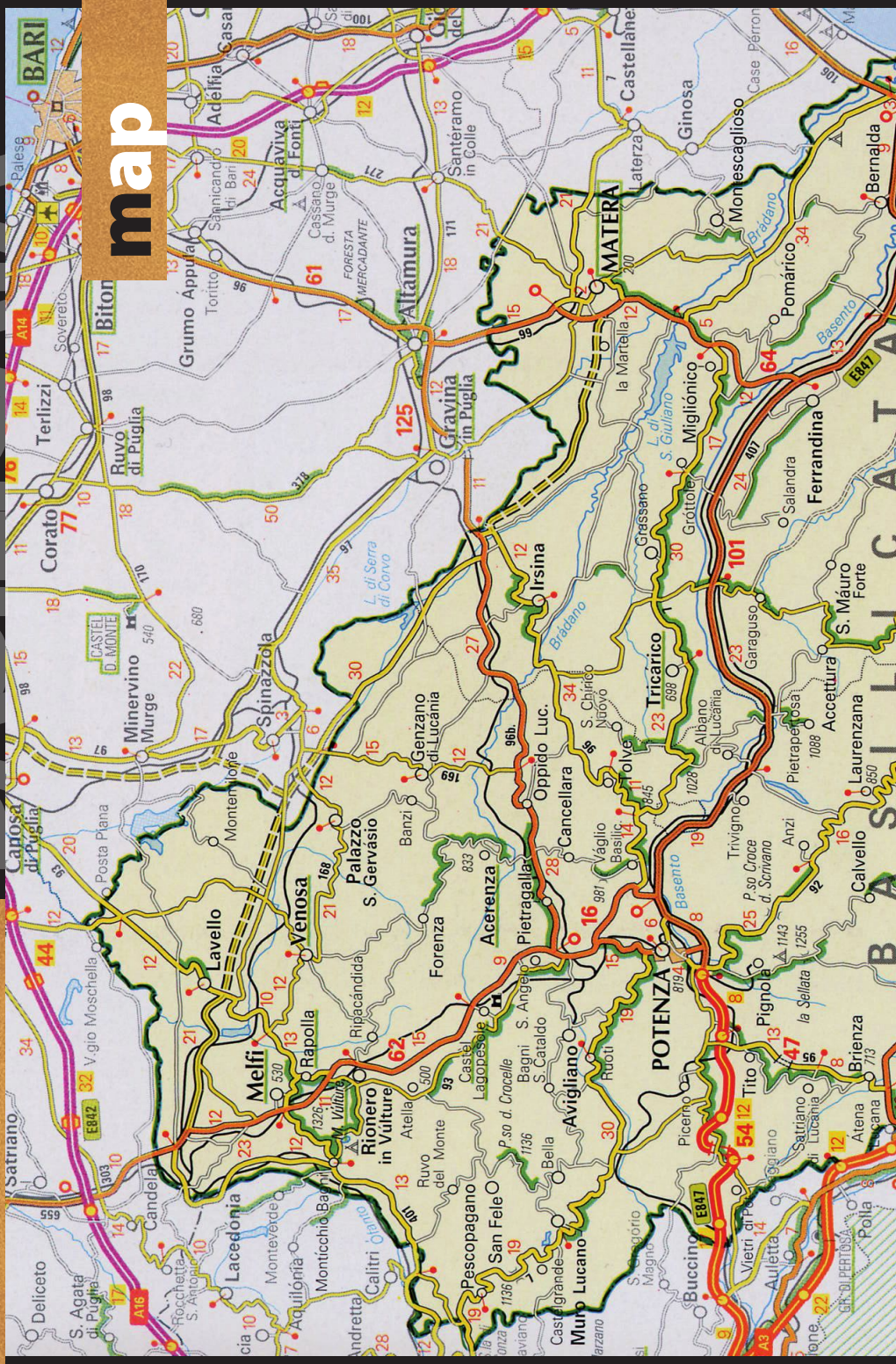
There is a wide range of fine local fare, ranging from juicy tomatoes and excellent Massa mozzarella, to Maratea's succulent seafood of which the most noteworthy is octopus and potato soup. Then there is Rivello "*soperzata*" cured meat; Trecchina walnut and chestnut patisserie, *rosolios* and liqueurs; tasty trout and eels from the lakes of Laudemio and Sirino; Lauria bakery products, including wheels of dark bread, and last but not least, delicious Lagonegro chestnuts.

## Crafts and ancient trades

It is fortunate that Maratea and Lagonegro have safeguarded many ancient crafts, which create eye-catching items that can be purchased directly from artisans or in markets held in the area. The most typical are the wicker artefacts, pottery and the figurines made in Maratea with sea stones. Rivello is known for its leather, wrought iron and copper, as is Nemoli, which is also known for the carving of wood.



















## **Basilicata Tourism Promotion Authority**

### **Potenza**

Via del Gallitello, 89 - Tel.: +39 0971 507611

### **Matera**

Via De Viti De Marco, 9 - Tel.: +39 0835 331983

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