

# THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE IN LAZIO

Villa d'Este, Tivoli (Roma)



REGIONE  
LAZIO



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Ponte Sant'Angelo with view of the Castello (Rome)

I taly is the nation with the largest number of World Heritage Sites of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. Eight of the 58 Italian UNESCO World Heritage Sites are in Lazio. This priceless heritage includes the beauties of the region, from natural sites, such as the biosphere reserve of the Circeo National Park, the ancient primordial beech forests of Monte Raschio, and the Cimini Mountains, as well as the architectural wonders of the historic centre of Rome, the Villas of Tivoli, and the Etruscan archaeological sites of Tarquinia and Cerveteri. Lazio has also intangible heritage UNESCO Sites, such as the “Macchina di Santa Rosa” in Viterbo, the centuries-old transhumance, and the traditional Race with the Cannata in Arpino. These international awards to a heritage of history, culture, and memory, testify to the fact that Lazio is one of the richest regions in the world for its cultural, archaeological, and naturalistic importance. We have obligations regarding the beauties handed down to us and, as Government of the Region, we intend to respect them. We therefore aspire to preserve, where necessary to restore, and spread the heritage that our ancestors passed on to us. Jorge Luis Borges wrote: “From the height of my age, I have noticed that beauty, like happiness, is frequent. Not a day goes by when we are not, for a moment, in paradise.” The beauty of Lazio proves the poet right, reminding us every day of the paradise around us.

**FRANCESCO ROCCA**

President of Lazio Region





Necropolis of Cerveteri (Rome)

Lazio is a one-of-a-kind region, with a great variety of beauties concentrated in one territory. A heritage that has obtained, unsurprisingly, eight recognitions from UNESCO. Our region can offer visitors landscapes which, within a few kilometres, range from lakes and rivers to mountains and the sea, with over 360 kilometres of coastline. The beaches, from Northern to Southern Lazio, provide the opportunity of an immersion in beauty and biodiversity and find their maximum expression in the amazing Circeo National Park, a perfect symbiosis between sea and mountains, with breathtaking views. Marvels of centuries-old history, art and culture are found from the historic centre of Rome to all its surroundings, with impressive sites such as the Villas of Tivoli, the Etruscan Necropolises of Tuscia or the thousand villages scattered throughout the territory. Lazio is also a place of spirituality, perfect for a slow tourism, as evidenced by its routes such as the Via Francigena or the Cammino di Francesco. Our fascinating traditions, like the stunning “Macchina di Santa Rosa” in Viterbo, impress the traveller, as much as our cuisine based on healthy foods, grown in a mild climate, and our welcoming attitude. A journey in Lazio is an experience never to be forgotten, which leaves the visitor with the desire to return.

ELENA PALAZZO

Tourism, Environment, Energy Transition and Sport Councillor for the Lazio Region







Lake of Paola and Mount Circeo (Latina)





# BIOSPHERE RESERVE OF THE CIRCEO NATIONAL PARK

## (LATINA)

The Circeo National Park, an area of approximately 8,500 hectares, covers many environments: the Mediterranean dune of **the four lakes Fogliano, Monaci, Caprolace and Paola**, (the largest one), and the island of **Zannone** in the Pontine Islands Archipelago. The Park is one of the sites where the **Man and Biosphere Programme (Mab)** was developed, being one of the 727 biosphere reserves, where the biodiversity of the original environment is sustainably preserved. The reserve includes three marshy areas: the Piscina delle Bagnature, the Piscina della Gattuccia and the Lestra della Coscia. Here we can find many walking and cycling routes, from where to spot several species, such as fallow deer, wild boars, rabbits, foxes, or birds including the black-winged stilt, herons, and the peregrine falcon. In the background we can admire the **Circeo Promontory** profile, which recalls the sorceress Circe and the journey of Ulysses and his companions.



View of the historic centre of Rome



# THE HISTORIC CENTRE OF ROME, THE EXTRATERRITORIAL PROPERTIES OF THE HOLY SEE AND ST. PAUL OUTSIDE THE WALLS

(ROME)

In 1980 **Rome** was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site and, in 1990, the **extraterritorial properties of the Holy See and the Basilica of St. Paul outside the Walls** were included in the list. The historic centre of Rome features the most visited site in the world, the Amphitheater Flavius, known as the Colosseum, which hosted performances of great popular appeal, such as hunting and gladiator fights. From **the Colosseum** we continue up to the **Palatine Hill**, where, according to legend, Rome was founded. From here, we can admire the remains of the emperors' residences, the **Circus Maximus**, the arena where horse races were held, and the Roman Forum, at the base of the Capitoline Hill, with its famous square designed by Michelangelo Buonarroti. Following the course of the Tiber River, we reach the ancient Fatebenefratelli Hospital, which lies on the Tiber Island, and then continue to the **Church of San Giovanni Calibita**, the Synagogue and the Ara Pacis, symbol of the Augustan Empire. Following our itinerary, we arrive to the Aventine Hill. Here, through a lock in the gate of the Knights of Malta Priory, we can admire the St. Peter's Dome and, from the nearby terrace of the **Giardino degli Aranci, Piazza di Spagna and the Trevi Fountain**. Not to be missed is **Castel Sant'Angelo**, also known as Hadrian's Mausoleum, where you can walk through a fortified corridor; the Passetto, which connects the building to the Vatican City. At the top of the terrace stands the statue of the Archangel Michele, erected in 590 by Pope Gregory after his vision of the angel announcing to him the end of the plague epidemic. Not far away, we find St. Peter's Basilica, with the colonnade by Bernini, composed of 284 columns surmounted by 140 statues of saints more than three metres high, which, observed from the right perspective, seem perfectly aligned. The Basilica hosts masterpieces such as **Michelangelo's Pietà** and the Grotte Vaticane with St. Peter's Tomb, the Vatican Museums, and **the Sistine Chapel**. Finally, on Via Ostiense, we can visit the **Basilica of St. Paul outside the Walls**, with the Papal altar and Holy Door. It has always been a destination for pilgrims who came here to worship the remains of the apostle Saint Paul of Tarsus. Among the most extraordinary attractions, we can appreciate the five naves with granite columns, the cloister, the mosaics on the façade, the canopy over the tomb of Saint Paul and the archaeological area.





Villa d'Este, Tivoli (Rome)



# VILLA D'ESTE (ROME)

Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2001, Villa d'Este is found in **Tivoli, the ancient Tibur**. It was built for Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este, son of Lucrezia Borgia and governor of Tivoli in 1550, by the architect Pirro Ligorio. The three-storey Palazzo d'Este has an elegant façade and, under the loggia, a nymphaeum, which, in the past, housed the **Leda Fountain**, now exhibited in the Borghese Gallery in Rome. In the garden, a hydraulic system conveys the waters of the **Aniene River**, creating **water features and sound effects**. There, we also can admire caves, nymphaeums, fountains and sculptures dedicated to Greek myths. The monumental sites of Hadrian's Villa, the Sanctuary of Ercole Vincitore, the Mensa Ponderaria, the Mausoleum of the Plautii and Villa d'Este are part of "Le Villae", managed by the autonomous Institute **Villa Adriana and Villa d'Este**.









Basilica of St. Paul outside the Walls (Rome)



Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli (Rome)



# HADRIAN'S VILLA (ROME)

Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999, **Hadrian's Villa** was built in Tivoli between 118 and 138 AD by Emperor Hadrian, between the two tributaries of the Aniene River in order to better protect it. The Villa covered 120 hectares and included **spas, nymphaeums, pavilions and gardens**. The different buildings were connected by underground and surface paths and decorated with **statues, water features, precious marble, frescoes, and mosaics**. With the decline of the Empire, the Villa suffered several thefts and was left in state of neglect for many centuries, being used as a quarry for building materials. Only between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was **once again appreciated**, with its ruins emerging among the vines and olive trees. At the end of the nineteenth century, it became part of the Heritage of the Kingdom of Italy, and therefore underwent restoration. Recent works allowed accessible entrance and the touch panels, in Italian and English, make one of the most luxurious buildings rich in marble, the **Piccole Terme**, easier to be visited, as well as the **Hospitalia**, with black and white mosaic floors and geometric and floral decorations.





Necropolis of Monterozzi, Tarquinia (Viterbo)



# CERVETERI AND TARQUINIA (ROME)

UNESCO World Heritage Sites since 2004, the two Necropolises are an **exceptional testimony of the Etruscan culture** and the only example of urban development in pre-Roman Italy. The description of everyday life on the frescoes of the tombs testifies to a rich **agriculture, refined arts, metalcraft, and engineering techniques** acquired from the Phoenicians. In the **Necropolis of Monterozzi in Tarquinia**, in the province of Viterbo, a great number of paintings illustrates the evolution of this civilization. The Tombs can be visited, including those of the Hunter, the Lioness, the Leopards, and the Bacchae. Here we also can admire the **archaeological area of the Doganaccia**, with the two monumental tombs of the King and Queen, dating back to the first half of the seventeenth century BC.. Also noteworthy is the **Museo Nazionale Tarquinense di Palazzo Vitelleschi**, which houses splendid sarcophagi belonging to noble families and an elegant clay sculpture of winged horses. In the Etruscan **Necropolis of the Banditaccia** in Cerveteri, in the province of Rome, approximately 20,000 monumental tombs are preserved. It is almost certainly the largest Necropolis of the ancient world and a faithful reproduction of a town. It is a unique example of civic architecture about six centuries old, immersed in a park with ancient streets and lanes. Finally, we visit the **Museo Nazionale Archeologico Cerite in the Castello Ruspoli**, in the centre of the modern part of town, and follow the cultural steps of ancient Cerveteri from the 9th century BC. until the age of romanization.





Old Beech Forest of the Cimini Mountains, Soriano nel Cimino (Viterbo)





# ANCIENT PRIMORDIAL BEECH FORESTS (VITERBO)

Two ancient primordial beech forests were declared UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 2017.

The first is the **depressed old beech forest of Monte Raschio in Oriolo Romano**, on the Viterbo side of the Parco Naturale Regionale di Bracciano-Martignano, where beech trees grow at a much lower altitude than usual, hence the name “depressed beech forest”. The microclimate of the area has preserved the forest in excellent condition, with enormous, monumental trees. Being an old-growth forest, it has been considered, from an ecological point of view, a virgin site.

The second **ancient beech forest lies in the Cimini Mountains in Soriano nel Cimino**, in the province of Viterbo. It is one of the ten beech forests extending from Tuscany to Calabria and part of the “Diffused Site of Centuries-old Beech Forests” from thirteen European countries: Germany, Croatia, Italy, Bulgaria, Spain, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary, Austria, Belgium, Romania, Ukraine and Albania.



The "Macchina di Santa Rosa", Viterbo



# THE “MACCHINA DI SANTA ROSA” (VITERBO)

In 2013 it has been included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage among the “**Festivals of Big Machines carried on Shoulders**”, which support cultural identity and traditions. **The carrying of the “Macchina di Santa Rosa”** is the most important festival in **Viterbo**. It celebrates the transfer of the Saint's body in 1258 when, according to tradition, PPope Alexander IV, resident in Viterbo, had three times a dream of a little girl named Rosa, who had been buried for seven years in front of the Church of Santa Maria in Poggio. The event consists of a historical procession with 300 participants carrying the relic of the girl's heart on September 2, and the transport of the Macchina di Santa Rosa, **carried on shoulders by a hundred “porters”** in white and red uniforms, on the evening of September 3, along a route of approximately one kilometre through the narrow lanes of the historic centre. Not to be missed is the **Museo del Sodalizio dei Facchini di Santa Rosa**, near Piazza San Pellegrino, the heart of the perfectly preserved medieval quarter:







# TRANSHUMANCE

Declared UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2019, the transhumance dates to the 3rd century BC., when, in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean Region, **the shepherds seasonally moved their flocks** along sheep tracks to different climatic areas. The transhumance method is among the most sustainable and efficient ones. During the more-day journey there were **staging posts**, where to stop and rest. **The vertical** transhumance involves a change in altitude within a rather limited area, for example, climbing mountain paths. **The horizontal** one involves major movements from a geographical area to another, crossing countryside, hills, and mountains. Spring and Autumn holidays mark the beginning and the end of the transhumance, when shepherds share food, rituals, and stories, accompanied by **improvising, singing poets** and the sound of **shawms**, and introduce the younger generations to sheep farming, a tradition still practiced in Central and Southern Italy. Among the many transhumance routes in Lazio, those that passed through Amatrice, in the province of Rieti, or Ceccano, in the province of Frosinone, are the most famous. Until the 1950s, thousands of sheep grazed the Amatrice Mountain, whereas today many sheep tracks have become paths and trekking routes.





The race with the Cannata in Arpino





## THE RACE WITH THE CANNATA IN ARPINO (FROSINONE)

Declared UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2023, the **Cannata Race in Arpino** is a **women only** traditional competition. The competitors challenge each other by running with the ciocie, the typical shoes of the Ciociaria shepherds, while balancing on their head, on a ring-shaped cloth, a terracotta container filled with water, the cannata. The participants must run for **280 metres** without spilling the water or touching the container, under penalty of exclusion. The cannata is the symbol of Arpino, hometown of Cicero, and of the whole of Ciociaria.

