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The journey to your roots

Italian Festa



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2024, a year to remember

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This is what "talea" means

The name Italea derives from "talea," a practice by which a plant is allowed to propagate. By cutting off a part of it and replanting it, a new life can be given to it.

Otranto APULIA



Otranto, Salento's pearl

A renowned tourist destination in the province of Lecce, it preserves Roman, Byzantine, and Aragonese influences

"Otranto is a pearl," Carmelo Bene once said during one of his unforgettable appearances on the Maurizio Costanzo Show. And he was right to describe the ancient Roman town of Hydruntum in this way. Its name originates from the Idro River (Hydrus), which flows near the city now known as Otranto. It is a pearl that preserves Messapian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Gothic, Norman, Swabian, Angevin, and Aragonese influences – a land of Salento olive oil, constantly in dialogue with the sea and merchants from the East. This is a land rooted in the legend of Aeneas, who is said to have landed at Porto Badisco, and in the tales of sailors who swear they have glimpsed sea monsters off the coast. Otranto is accessed through the Alfonsina Gate, which, along with the city wall towers (Duchessa, Ippolita, and the southwest tower), offers a striking example of military

architecture, the result of fortifications built by the Aragonese after the Turkish devastation of 1480. The Aragonese Castle is magnificent, with its original configuration dating back to the 15th century, followed by various modifications in subsequent centuries. It conceals intricate and mysterious underground passages. This fortification, commissioned by Ferdinand of Aragon and incorporating earlier Swabian structures, also includes improvements made by the Turks during their 1480 occupation. The small Church of San Pietro (10th–11th centuries) is also worth visiting, with its interior adorned with Byzantine frescoes of captivating beauty and an unmissable crypt. However, the true marvel of Otranto is the Cathedral of Santa Maria Annunziata, which houses the remains of 800 residents massacred by Ahmed Pasha in 1480 for refusing to renounce their Christian faith. The most eagerly awaited celebration of the year, dedicated to the Martyrs of Otranto, begins in late July and continues for two weeks. All these influences – shaped by wars, commerce, invasions, and religions – are reflected in the local cuisine, which blends peasant and maritime traditions with Eastern heritage. You absolutely must try the famous Puglian orecchiette pasta and the fresh daily catch, often enjoyed in a rich soup that graces the town's tables. To complete the discovery of this Puglian pearl, one must experience the pizzica, an ancient folk dance accompanied by tambourine music. Born as a therapeutic ritual to cure the effects of a tarantula bite, this tradition is steeped in culture and history, reminding everyone just how deep the cultural roots of Puglia truly are.



OTHER PLACES TO VISIT

To the south, the Zinzulusa Cave is a must-see. To the north, don't miss the area between Torre dell'Orso and Sant'Andrea.



HOW TO GET THERE

The nearest airport is Brindisi (74 km away). Otranto has its own railway station. By car from Rome: take the A24, then the A1/E45 towards SS 372, exit at Caianello, continue towards Benevento, take SS 16/SS 16 Adriatica to Maglie, and follow SS 16 Adriatica towards Otranto.

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Pienza TUSCANY

The "ideal city" in the heart of Val d'Orcia

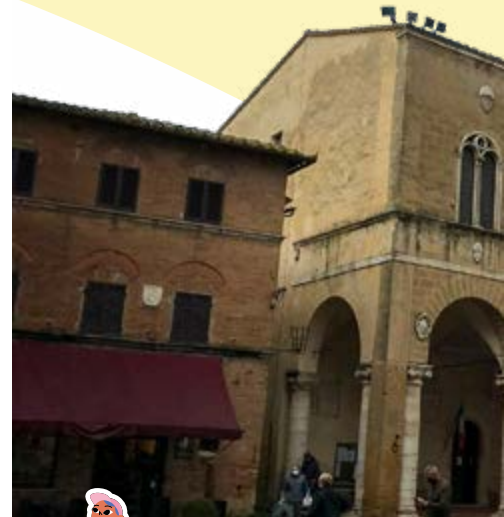
Built by Pius II in the mid-1400s,
Pienza is one of the Renaissance
jewels of our Country

Giovanni Pascoli described it as "born of a thought of love and a dream of beauty." Pienza is a small town in the heart of the Val d'Orcia, considered the embodiment of the Renaissance utopia of the ideal city.

Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996, it still conveys Renaissance urban principles through the rational organization of spaces and the harmonious perspectives of its 15th-century squares and palaces. It was built between 1459 and 1462 by Pope Pius II, born Enea Silvio Piccolomini in 1405 to a noble Sienese family. For its construction, Pius II imposed the architectural and philosophical principles of the Italian Renaissance. At the time, Corsignano was a fortified village, known since Roman times, and inhabited even earlier, as evidenced by traces from the Late Neolithic and Bronze Age.

Much of Pienza's remarkable historical and artistic heritage is concentrated in the picturesque square dedicated to the Pope. Here, the Co-Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta stands isolated and prominently, with an unusual north-south orientation (its façade faces north), reflecting the urban coherence sought by the Pope and architect Bernardo Rossellino. Opposite the cathedral is the Palazzo Comunale, while nearby are Palazzo Borgia, housing the Diocesan Museum (which displays exquisite Flemish tapestries from the 15th–16th centuries), and Palazzo Piccolomini, where visitors can explore the armory, the Pope's bedroom, the library, and the medal collection of Pius II and Pius III.

The Domus Vitrea, Gothic in style, preserves panel paintings by renowned artists of the time, such as Giovanni di Paolo, Matteo di Giovanni, Vecchietta, and Sano di Pietro. Other notable sites include the Church of San Francesco, the Ammannati, Gonzaga, and Cardinal Atrebatense Palaces, and the nearby Pieve of Corsignano. Not far from Pienza lies the Romitorio, a series of sandstone caves carved out by hermit monks. From Pienza, one can enjoy stunning views of the Val d'Orcia, framed by Monte Amiata, the Rocca of Radicofani, and the ridge where Montalcino rests. The landscape is fur-





OTHER PLACES TO VISIT

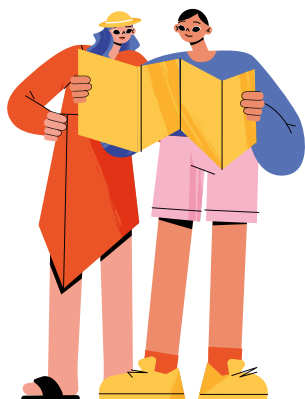
About 15 km from Pienza, Bagno Vignoni is a historic thermal village renowned for its main square, which is a large thermal pool. Here, you can bathe in the warm waters while surrounded by a charming landscape. Approximately 40 km away is Montalcino, famous for its Brunello wine, one of Italy's most prestigious labels. Visitors can tour the wineries and enjoy tastings, explore the historic center, and visit the medieval castle, which offers panoramic views of the Val d'Orcia.



HOW TO GET THERE

By car: from Florence, take the A1 highway south (towards Rome) and exit at Valdichiana-Bettolle, then continue for approximately 45 km to Pienza. From Siena, take the SS2 south and follow signs to Pienza (about 40 km). By train: the nearest railway station is Chiusi-Chianciano Terme, with connections to Florence and Rome. From there, buses or taxis are available to Pienza, located about 30 km away. Direct bus services also connect Pienza with Siena and other Tuscan towns.

ther enriched by vineyards, olive trees, fruit orchards around farmhouses, woods, and clay formations. Completing the area's attractions are the Monticchiello Castle, the Spedaletto Castle (originally built in the 12th century as a hospice for pilgrims), and the monastery of Sant'Anna in Camprena. Among Pienza's cultural treasures are its local festivals, especially the Fiera del Cacio (late August to early September), which celebrates the region's pecorino cheese and features the traditional game of Cacio al Fuso. As for culinary delights, don't miss pici (handmade pasta), Florentine steak, filet mignon with Montalcino red wine, spleen and liver crostini, as well as local cured meats and cheeses. With its mix of history, natural beauty, traditional flavors, and festive traditions, Pienza is sure to captivate everyone, from tourists to returning emigrants looking to reconnect with their heritage. All that's left is to book your trip.



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Genoa

The initiative was launched as part of the Italea project



The Emigration Museums Network comes to life

A network of Italian Emigration Museums to enhance the valuable knowledge they hold. This major initiative was presented at the International Congress "Italian Diasporas – Representation and Identity Issues," which took place from December 5 to 7 in Genoa, as part of the Italea Project, a program launched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote roots tourism.

«The heritage held by our Emigration Museums must be shared and made available to root travelers who come to visit the places from which their ancestors departed,» said Giovanni Maria De Vita, the Project Italea manager for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. «It should also be made accessible to the Italian

public, so they can learn and appreciate the history of emigration and realize the potential offered by this exceptional resource represented by the 80 million Italians abroad, who have reached the highest levels in the societies they live in.»

«We are in Genoa,» added Luigi Maria Vignali, Director General for Italians Abroad at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, «to strengthen the sense and importance of Emigration Museums in Italy. They are a heritage that must be valued to better understand the history of our emigration, which is still too little known.»

The creation of the network of Emigration Museums and roots tourism represents not only an economic opportunity but also a bridge between the past and the present, between those who remained in Italy and those who, over the decades, have built new lives abroad. As Paolo Masini, president of the MEI Foundation, stated: «This network and these initiatives are not just a tribute to our history, but an invitation to look to the future, to build new connections, and to enhance our roots in a global context.»

Masini also announced the creation of a bronze sculp-





Here and on the previous page are images from the "Diaspora Italiana" conference, during which the new network of Italian Emigration Museums was presented

ture titled "We Come From There," a hand pointing to Italy, symbolizing the passion, effort, and sacrifices of Italian emigrants. The work by Roman artist Dante Mortet will be three and a half meters tall and will be placed at the main ports of departure of Italian emigration.

In Genoa, the figures of the Italea Project were presented, which aims to attract Italians abroad and Italian descendants interested in discovering the places and traditions of their origins. Italea has created a widespread and dynamic network with 20 regional groups and 16 coordinators.

The website italea.com has already been visited by over 1.1 million people; nearly 5,000 travel or genealogy inquiries have been received, 368,000 views of the Italea Card site (which offers discounts, benefits, and promotions for those coming to Italy to discover their origins), and 11,252 members of the program. Additionally, 833 municipalities are involved, and 742 events have already been organized. Over 60 awareness-raising events in Italy organized by the regional Italeas to foster collaboration and exchange; 19 missions abroad in 13 countries with an estimated participation of over 1.5 million people.

Here is the list of Museums that have participated

Abruzzo

- Genti d'Abruzzo Foundation Onlus, managing entity of the Genti d'Abruzzo Museum - Pescara

Basilicata

- Museum of Lucanian Emigration - Lucanians in the World "Nico Calice" Center - Lagopesole (PZ)

Campania

- Surname Museum - Padula (SA)

Calabria

- The Ship of Sila - Spezzano della Sila (CS)
- Museum of the Sea, Agriculture, and Migrations - Cariati (CS)

Emilia-Romagna

- Documentation Center of Emigration from Parma - Bedonia - (PR)

Liguria

- International Museum of Italian Emigration - Genoa
- MuSel - Archaeological Museum and City Museum of Sestri Levante - Sestri Levante (GE)

Marches

- MEMA - Museum of Marchigian Emigration - Recanati (MC)

San Marino

- Museum of Emigrants
- Research Center on Emigration

Molise

- Municipal Museum of Migrations - Vinchiatturo (CB)

Piedmont

- Silvio Pellico Study Center ETS, Management Committee of the Regional Museum of Emigration of Piedmontese - Frossasco (TO)
- Regional Museum of Vigezzina Emigration in the World - Spazzacamino Museum
- Santa Maria Maggiore (VB)

Sardinia

- MEA - Sardinian Emigration Museum - Asuni (OR)

Sicily

- Aeolian Islands Museum of Emigration - Salina (ME)
- Iblean Museum of Emigration - Giarratana (SR)
- Caropepe Ethnological Museum of Valguarnera - Caropepe (EN)
- Ecomuseum - Petra d'Asgotto Nicosia (EN)
- Museum of Emigration of the Trapani Area of Santa Ninfa - Santa Ninfa (TP)
- Tempo Museum - Canicattini Bagni (SR)

Tuscany

- National Diary Archive
- Pieve Santo Stefano (AR)

Veneto

- MiM Interactive Museum of Migrations - Belluno

At the University of Calabria

The College hosted the International Conference on Roots Tourism - Social Science and Tourism providing a platform for discussion between academics and industry professionals

Roots Tourism: Italy at the heart of a global trend

In the landscape of contemporary tourism, the phenomenon of "roots tourism" is gaining increasing attention, representing a unique opportunity to reconnect with cultural and family origins. This type of travel offers emigrants and their descendants the chance to return to their places of origin, rediscovering a heritage that is not only personal but also collective. In this context, Italy, with its rich history of emigration, plays a leading role, and the Italea Project of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is positioned as a strategic element to promote and enhance this form of tourism.

It is on these premises that, from December 12 to 15, the University of Calabria hosted the International Conference on Roots Tourism – Social Science and Tourism, an event of international significance dedicated to this growing phenomenon. The conference, supported by the Ministries of Tourism, Foreign Affairs, and Culture, was an important platform for debate and exchange among experts, academics, and industry professionals. The Italea program has become a key reference for creating synergies between local, national, and international actors, with the aim of promoting roots tourism as a tool for socio-economic development. Under the leadership of Giovanni Maria De Vita, the project's director, Italea aims to facilitate dialogue between different communities, encouraging the enhancement of local traditions and cultural iden-

ties. «The goal,» De Vita said, «is to bring to the attention of 80 million people worldwide who have Italian roots, the places of origin of their ancestors. It's an opportunity to offer these people what Italy has to give, both in terms of its great industrial reality and as a well-established member of the European Union.»

This approach not only fosters the return of emigrants to their roots but also stimulates the local economy by promoting sustainable tourism practices that respect local communities. The promoters of this initiative are the Research and Study Center for Tourism at the University of Calabria and the University Observatory on Tourism at the University Federico II of Naples, supported by prestigious academic institutions and an internationally recognized scientific committee, including experts such as Tullio Romita, Antonella Perri, Fabio Corbisiero, and Philippe Clairay. «Calabria was one of the main partners in the project,» continued De Vita. «With the University of Calabria, we supported the first master's program for operators in Italian roots tourism. It is a collaboration that continues.»

The international roots tourism conference held in Calabria thus takes on dual significance, considering that Calabria has experienced a major migration flow in its history, especially in the context of the "return and rediscovery of the place of origin." «Despite the phenomenon of depopulation,» says De Vita, «this is a territory rich in opportunities, where there is great vitality among the people.» Italea specifically supports these initiatives through Italea Calabria, a group created in the region to provide services for roots





travelers and, above all, to engage with anyone operating in the area to raise awareness about the importance of developing this tourism product aimed at the descendants of Calabrians abroad, who are estimated to number around 10 million people worldwide.

The University of Calabria conference was therefore an important opportunity to delve into the dynamics of the "genealogical" tourism phenomenon, as it was referred to in various speeches, highlighting the importance of an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities that roots tourism offers. In our increasingly globalized world, rediscovering one's roots becomes not only an act of memory but also a way to build a more conscious and meaningful future through "future perspectives," such as those set forth by Italea, which has built an extensive network across the territory, with 20 regional groups and 16 coordinators, and over 1 million visits to its website, italea.com, as well as participation in the Italea Card.

Furthermore, when considering the numbers, the involvement of the territory is extraordinary: 833 Roots Municipalities and 742 events already organized "to promote opportunities for collaboration and exchange, in a very satisfactory report that encourages us to continue our work." These positive results point to a promising future for roots tourism, with the aim of "continuing this project and maintaining communication with all the actors involved, this is our priority," concluded De Vita at the end of the second day of the International Conference at the University of Calabria.



Some moments from the conference held from December 12 to 15



Apulia

The initiative highlighted its value as a tool to strengthen the bond between Italians abroad, their descendants, and their places of origin



"Tornare a casa": Roots Tourism takes center stage in Lecce

On December 13 and 14, Lecce hosted the event "Tornare a casa" (Return Home), organized by Italea Puglia, an initiative that highlighted the value of roots tourism as a tool to strengthen the bond between Italians abroad, their descendants, and their homeland. Loredana Capone, President of the Regional Council of Puglia, opened the event with a speech emphasizing the charm of Puglia, «a place where people return for the smile of its people.» Capone also took part in the roundtable "Stories, Perspectives, and Best Practices of Roots Tourism in Puglia," held at the former Convitto Palmieri, a fascinating building in the heart of Lecce's historic center.

The meeting brought together institutions, associations, scholars, experts, and local tourism operators to discuss how to promote Puglia as a destination for roots travelers.

It was an opportunity for exchanging ideas and strategies to make the region more "roots-traveler-friendly," focusing not just on sightseeing but on offering authentic experiences that emotionally engage participants.

Capone described roots tourism as a mission, not just a project, capable of rediscovering the traditions, culture, and identity of the places. «Every activity is a bridge between the past and the present,» she said, referring to the events, workshops, and thematic paths organized by Italea, which aims to strengthen the bond between Pugliese people abroad and their homeland. The festival offered a rich program of activities, including meetings, workshops, and performances, allowing participants to immerse themselves in Puglia's traditions.



Some images from the event held on December 12 and 13



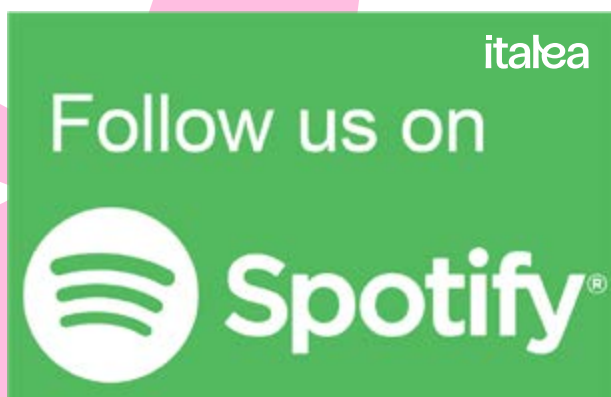
The afternoon of December 13 saw the involvement of experts and local institutions, such as Luigi De Luca, Director of the Biblio-Museum Pole of Lecce, and Marina Gabrieli, national coordinator of the Italea project. An important reflection also came from Michele Sperti of ANCI Puglia, who reminded the audience of the deep connection between Molfetta and Noicattaro with emigration to the United States, as well as the ties of Grottaglie with Switzerland and the cultural crossroads represented by the Madonna in gold dress in Surbo.

During the day, stories and testimonies from Puglia's territories emerged, told by those who lived through emigration or who are involved in promoting the region's intangible heritage.

Attilio Ardito, Italea's coordinator for Puglia, emphasized that these events were the result of a year of intense work aimed at coordinating local authorities and promoting roots tourism.

Gabrieli confirmed that, despite the conclusion of the year dedicated to Italian roots worldwide, the Italea program would continue to manage requests related to roots tourism and genealogy, helping Italian descendants trace their origins.

The program of activities continued in the following days with events such as the "Sung Walk" through the historic center of Lecce, the preparation of traditional "purceddhruzzi" (fried sweet pastries), and the "Community Weaving" workshop, where participants joined hands to weave a large basket, symbolizing family and community ties. The day concluded with the performance "La Santa Allegrezza," which combined songs, legends, and the art of puppetry, offering an emotional and authentic experience.



Rome

The Ennio Morricone Auditorium of the University of Tor Vergata, hosted the concert "Radici in Canto: Music, Return, and Identity"

Eighty million voices: the unbreakable bond between Italian-descendants and Italy



On December 3rd, the "Radici in canto: musica, ritorno e identità (Radici in Canto: Music, Return, and Identity)" choral concert took place at the Ennio Morricone Auditorium of the University of Rome Tor Vergata. The event blended music, culture, and memory with the aim of strengthening the bond between tradition and global outreach.

The evening's highlights included performances by the Gospel Choir of the University of Rome Tor Vergata, under the direction of Alberto Annarilli, and the Sidney Sussex Choir from the University of Cambridge, conducted by David Skinner. The event was supported by Italea Lazio, part of the broader Italea project.

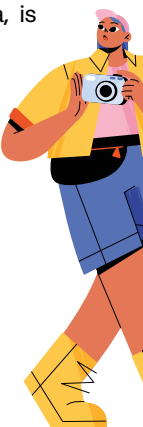
The evening opened with welcoming remarks from the Rector of Tor Vergata University, Nathan Levaldi Ghiron, and Giovanni Maria De Vita, Head of the

Roots Tourism project at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the concert, De Vita emphasized the importance of the Italian diaspora worldwide, stating: «It's no surprise to find an Englishman of Italian origin among the Cambridge choir members performing today at Tor Vergata University. There are over 80 million Italian descendants worldwide, actively contributing to all sectors of the societies they live in.»

One of the choristers of the Sidney Sussex Choir, Italian-English Luca Zucchi, shared his personal story: «I am half-Italian and I live in London. My grandfather was from Abruzzo, lived in Rome, and emigrated in the 1960s, first to South Africa and then to London. My grandmother's family, the Calzecchi Onesti, comes from the Marche region, although she grew up in Rome before emigrating. Visiting Italy is a wonderful experience—it's the most beautiful country in the world, rich in culture, art, and architecture. Its music is extraordinary, and I'm delighted to be here singing with the choir.»

The initiative, as explained by Giovanni Maria De Vita, is part of the broader Italea project, which has already achieved significant milestones in recent months: «We have surpassed 1.1 million visitors on the italea.com website and received numerous requests for roots travel, genealogical research, and experiences involving traditions in small Italian villages. This encourages us to continue collaborating with Regions, municipalities, and our regional Italeas, such as Italea Lazio, which facilitated this event.»

Giovanni Maria De Vita



Puglia celebrates tradition and its stories of emigration in Winterthur

The city hosted the "Festival of Pugliese Roots in Switzerland: discovering Grottaglie between Murgia and Salento"

Puglia celebrated its traditions and many stories of emigration in Switzerland as part of the Roots Tourism initiative. The event in late November in Winterthur was a success: the Federation of Pugliese Associations in Switzerland (FAPS) marked 2024, the Year of Italian Roots Worldwide, with the "Festival delle Radici Pugliesi in Svizzera: alla scoperta di Grottaglie tra Murgia e Salento (Festival of Pugliese Roots in Switzerland: Discovering Grottaglie Between Murgia and Salento)," part of the Italea Project.

The festival, held at the Zentrum Grütze, was supported by the Puglia Region and aimed to engage the community in re-discovering the craftsmanship and culinary delights of the Pugliese region. Highlights included a ceramics workshop led by the master ceramists of "Cocci d'autore" ("coccio" means crock) and the orecchiette-making workshop.

The event also hosted "Italea Puglia: The Festival of Pugliese Roots," the itinerant festival aimed at showcasing and promoting the authentic traditions of Italy's heel. After touring various locations across the region, from Gargano to Salento, the festival made its debut abroad.

«The Italea project targets second- and third-generation Italians and Italian descendants interested in discovering the places and traditions of their origins,» said Giovanni Maria De Vita, Embassy Counselor and Head of the "Roots Tourism" Project at the Directorate General for Italians Abroad of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, who was present at the event on Saturday. «Italea provides a set of targeted services to facilitate roots journeys in Italy, designed for those wishing to explore and reconnect with the places, culture, and way of life they've heard so much about.»

«These are often small towns, far from major tourist hubs. Our goal is to welcome these special tourists in the best possible way,» De Vita concluded. «We want them to feel at home. We are here to let them know that a community is waiting for them. It's also important that the communities abroad recognize what Italy has to offer.»



The conference "Memory, Identity, Return" was held at the University of Messina. The focus of the meeting was on the Sicilian communities abroad.

Root Tourism in Sicily: a state of play

Rediscovering the value of Sicilian communities abroad, networking the associations that maintain ties with Italian descendants overseas, and creating a strong interaction between Root Tourism and tourism policies. These were the key points discussed during the conference "Memoria, Identità, Ritorno (Memory, Identity, Return)" held on December 3rd at the Aula Cannizzaro of the University of Messina, organized by the Messina Tourism Bureau to assess the state of Root Tourism in Sicily.

«The root tourist doesn't travel to see but to feel, to experience emotions,» this was the starting point for investing in the sector's potential, creating synergies, enhancing operational tools, and ensuring that the 80 million Italian descendants worldwide rediscover their ancestors' places and reconnect with the culture, traditions, and identity of their land of origin.

After the welcome speech by the Metropolitan Mayor of Messina, Federico Basile, and the introduction by Professor Filippo Grasso, vice president of MTB, Giovanni Maria De Vita, the Embassy Adviser and head of the Italea Project at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, outlined the characteristics of the initiative aimed at attracting Italians abroad and Italian descendants who want to discover the places and traditions of their origins, providing a set of services to facilitate travel to Italy.

De Vita focused on the impressive numbers registered in 2024 by Italea. The Italea.com platform offers a range of ser-





vices and information for travelers discovering their roots, and it is also a crucial tool for rebuilding those bonds between the “land of the grandparents” and new generations. To promote Root Tourism, it is essential — as discussed during the conference — to network both among institutions and with associations and communities. Experts also delved into aspects related to the economy of return tourism, the need for training tourism operators, and the digitization of municipalities.

Further insights were provided by the testimony of the Mayor of Limina, Filippo Ricciardi: a municipality with 731 residents but over 1,300 members in the AIRE registry, as well as contributions from travel agencies and tourism operators. The numerous initiatives carried out in 2024, the Year of Italian Roots Worldwide, have raised awareness of the need to coordinate actions locally and network. With these goals in mind, the Messina Tourism Bureau promoted the creation of the Metropolitan Network of Municipalities for Root Tourism, which in less than a year has become a strategic and operational tool and a governance model that has garnered interest and support from many other local communities, both Sicilian and beyond, and aims to provide stability to this important sector in the years to come.

The story

Their lives have always run parallel between the United States and Argentina. Now, thanks to Italea, they have finally crossed paths.

Two continents, two cousins, and a journey of roots

Connie and Rosalba in Abruzzo

Pedro, 66 years old, has always been from Fara San Martino, in Abruzzo, despite his name possibly causing some confusion. Born in Buenos Aires, he moved back to the small town in Italy, in the province of Chieti, with his family when he was just two years old. This return quickly solidified his connection to his Abruzzese roots, unlike his cousins Connie (Consuela) and Rosalba, who remained far away: the first in Pennsylvania, USA, and the second in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Although their stories were intertwined by family ties, they had always remained parallel. Connie's mother is from Fara San Martino, and her father is from Palena, just a few kilometers away; in contrast, Rosalba's mother is from Palena, in the same Region, and her father from Fara San Martino. The two cousins had never met, but they had often shared with Pedro and his sisters, Paola and Sonia, their desire to return to Italy, perhaps at the same time, to finally meet in person. Pedro seized the opportunity of the Year of Italian Roots in the World to turn this dream into a reality. With the help of his sisters and without revealing too much to his wife, he organized a special meeting within a month: travel, hospitality, and two olive trees as symbols of rebirth and connection.

After the long journey from the Americas, Connie and Rosalba arrived at Pedro's house on the same evening, unaware of each other's presence. They spoke different languages, but the silence was filled with a long, heartfelt hug, full of emotions.

After the surprise wore off, the following day was dedicated to official ceremonies, with the support of Italea, a project promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation to encourage root tourism and strengthen ties with Italian communities abroad.

In the Council Chamber, Mayor Antonio Tavani and President Antonio Di Maio warmly welcomed the cousins, joined by Emanuele Grotto, a representative of the La Visceglia Association, which coordinates Italea's activities in Abruzzo. After an introduction to ongoing initiatives, the sym-

Connie and Rosalba, the cousins





bolistic moment arrived: the planting of two olive trees in the Peace Forest, a space dedicated to those returning, so that the bond with one's roots can continue to grow.

With a gift of a publication about the municipalities of Abruzzo, the mayor emphasized the importance of this trip, hoping that the meeting between Connie and Rosalba would inspire all Abruzzese communities around the world. The return to Fara San Martino was not only a moment of family reunion, but also a powerful symbol of how root tourism can create bonds that transcend distance. The emotion of two cousins embracing for the first time in a small Abruzzese community becomes the universal story of a diaspora that never forgets its origins.

Friuli Venezia Giulia

Actor and educator Gianluca Da Lio presents the genealogy workshop for children and their families

The "Roots Journal": a journey through time to discover your origins

Christmas is about family, roots, and connections. And also gifts. That's why a journal to share memories could be an original and valuable present this year. In Friuli Venezia Giulia, someone has gone a step further: creating a family tree is not just an enriching experience but also one that fosters creativity, memory, and a sense of belonging. It's not "just" about writing a family's history.

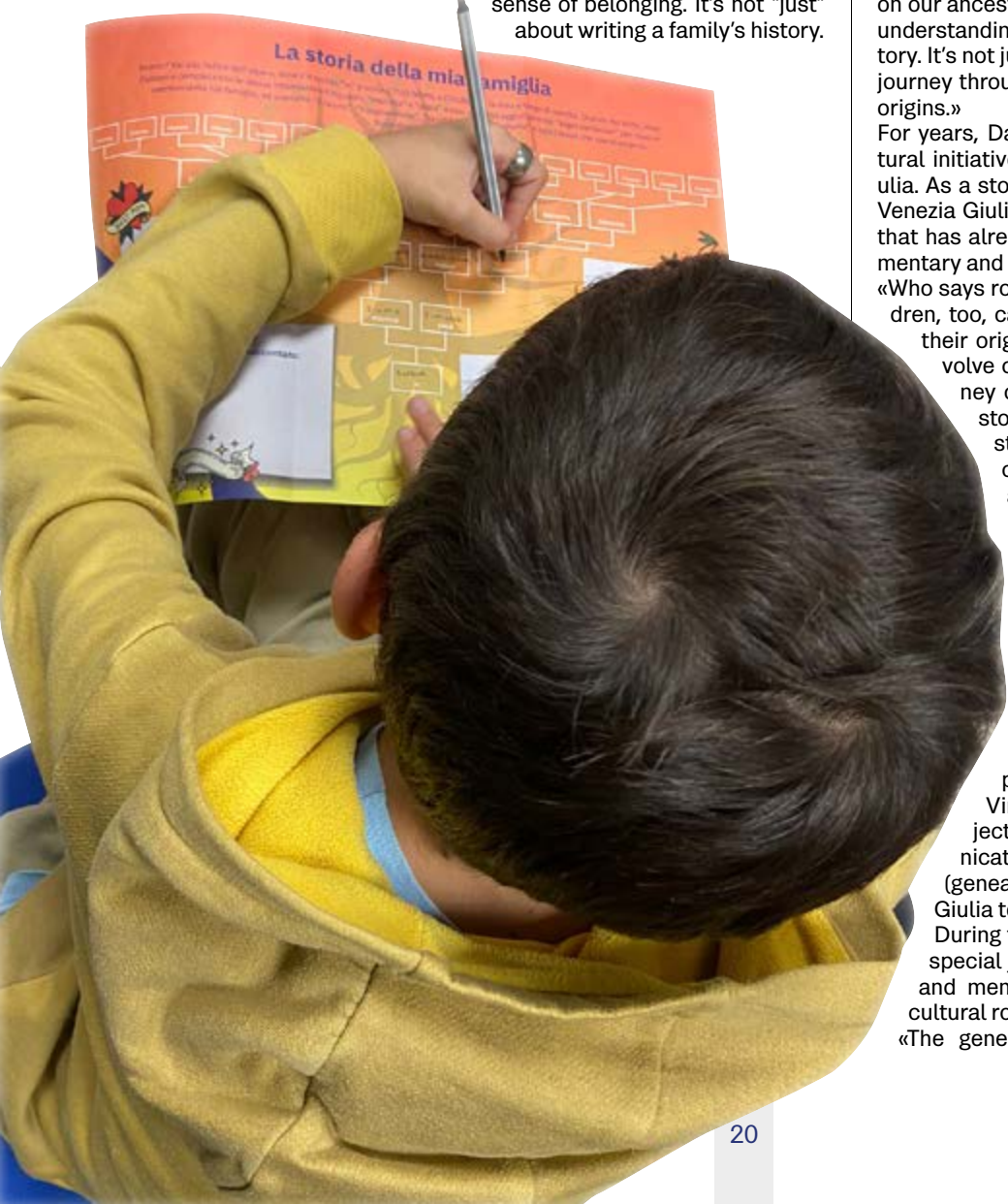
«A family tree is an essential tool for understanding one's roots and identity,» explains Gianluca Da Lio, an actor and cultural and theatrical trainer. «Exploring family connections allows us to rediscover stories, traditions, and values passed down through generations. Moreover, a family tree gives us the opportunity to reflect on our ancestors' experiences, offering a deeper understanding of our personal and collective history. It's not just a list of names; it's an emotional journey through time that helps us discover our origins.»

For years, Da Lio has directed artistic and cultural initiatives in Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia. As a storyteller, he shares how Italea Friuli Venezia Giulia developed a fascinating initiative that has already achieved great success in elementary and middle schools: "My Roots Journal". «Who says roots tourism is only for adults? Children, too, can explore the fascinating world of their origins. We created this project to involve children and their families in a journey of discovery about their ancestors' stories. Through creative workshops, storytelling, and hands-on activities, children can explore their roots in a fun and educational way,» Da Lio explains.

The initiative in Friuli Venezia Giulia is a genealogy and storytelling workshop designed for children, young people, and their families. The project was made possible thanks to a collaborative team effort involving Loris Basso, President of Italea Friuli Venezia Giulia, who first believed in and promoted the initiative, alongside Virna Di Lenardo (storyteller and project manager), Chiara Tegon (communication manager), and Claudio Diacoli (genealogist) from the Italea Friuli Venezia Giulia team.

During the workshop, participants create a special journal filled with stories, drawings, and memories to explore their family and cultural roots.

«The genealogy workshop for children, My





Some images from the workshop dedicated to creating the "Roots Journal"

Roots Journal, has already been well-received in Udine, Resia (in the province of Udine), and other towns in Friuli Venezia Giulia,» Da Lio shares. «It has also been tested with adults, and the results were equally moving. The journal works like a travel document where participants fill in their details. But it's much more than that: it becomes a kind of treasure map—a family tree to complete with the help of one's family, rediscovering stories, memories, objects, and even fairytales. The workshops are tailored to two age groups: one for children aged 8 to 11 and another for preteens aged 11 to 13. Through drawing, storytelling, and engaging activities, each participant creates a unique journal that celebrates their family's history and the traditions of their region.»

Creative writing and illustrations recount family traditions, connecting the present with the past through festivals, recipes, and local stories. So far, the formula—a one-hour session where storytellers engage with children—has proven highly successful. The initiative is now poised for international expansion, with a successful "pilot project" already carried out in Canada.

«Our project partners (Ente Friuli nel Mondo, AR-LeF – Regional Agency for the Friulian Language, Associazione Giuliani nel Mondo, and Sloveni po Svetu – Union of Slovenian Emigrants from Friuli Venezia Giulia) are currently working on translations into various languages: Friulian, Slovenian, local dialects, as well as English, Spanish, and Portuguese,» Da Lio explains.

«The workshop lasts an hour and involves asking questions that help participants uncover and write their family's history. After the session, children continue exploring at home, asking par-



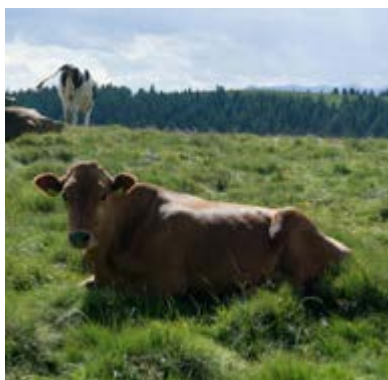
ents for answers to complete their family tree. Through this initiative, we've discovered fascinating stories—grandparents or great-grandparents who emigrated abroad or ancestors with non-Italian origins. This project could be particularly meaningful for Italian descendants abroad,» Da Lio adds. «Friuli Venezia Giulia was the perfect region to launch this initiative, given its rich tapestry of intertwined stories and cultures. Writing a family's history, which then becomes a community's story, sends a message of peace.» «Many regional Italeas have expressed interest in this activity,» he concludes. «Both Puglia and Sardinia want to implement this workshop for children. We're thrilled because we believe in this project and continue to pursue it with passion.»



Experiences

From Aosta to Potenza: Italy offers immersive activities with the aim of evoking memories and emotions

Trento



Discovering alpine farming and dairy traditions

The “High-Altitude Milk” herder workshop in Trentino takes you on a journey to explore alpine farming, including the summer migration of livestock to mountain pastures and the production of high-altitude dairy products. This practice was the most important economic activity in the Trentino-Tyrolese region until the mid-20th century, with its rise and decline closely linked to the migratory dynamics of Alpine valleys. In Trento, you'll discover how some of the finest local gastronomic products are made, learn about the history and traditions of life on mountain pastures, and appreciate the ongoing benefits of alpine farming for both animals and the natural environment.

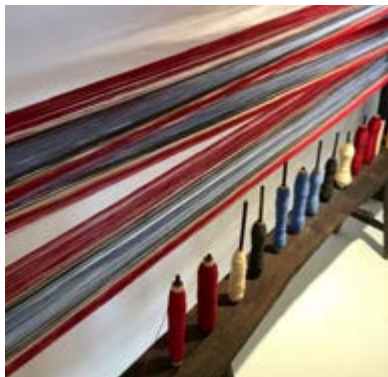
Potenza



The sound of snow and the voice of shepherds in Basilicata

In the heart of the Lucanian Apennine National Park – Val d'Agri – Lagonegrese lies the Sellata – Arioso ski resort, located over 1,200 meters above sea level. Those who love snowshoeing can immerse themselves in the stunning setting of the lush Lucanian forests, which stretch up to the summit of Mount Volturino and lead to the Fossa Cupa and Arioso springs. It's an opportunity to explore enchanting landscapes and snow-covered mountain trails. The experience concludes with a tasting of traditional products: Podolica cheeses, Podolica beef, Lucanica sausage, and fine wine, all staples of Lucanian tables, accompanied by the cheerful rhythms of a traditional accordion.

Perugia



Explore hemp art at the Museum of Sant'Anatolia di Narco

At the Museum of Hemp in Sant'Anatolia di Narco, in the province of Perugia, you will discover the themes of hemp cultivation and its use both in domestic and industrial contexts. The museum displays tools for processing and weaving, as well as a rich collection of textile artifacts from the area, donated by local families. The workshop you can take part in will be a journey to uncover the value of a plant that was abandoned and then rediscovered, precious for the land, for traditions, and for artisans. During the museum visit, a guide will accompany you, helping you interact directly with the tools on display.

Aosta



The millennia-old history of the Megalithic area

What are the characteristics that define mountain identity? Populations tend to recreate characteristics similar to their place of origin in all the settlements they establish. In the Aosta Valley, this has been happening for over 6,000 years. The Megalithic Area of Aosta stands as an irresistible invitation to explore the hidden depths of the city, revealing its soul steeped in millennia of history. This extraordinary place houses the largest megalithic area in Europe, transforming the site into a living museum. With a guided tour, you'll follow a path that intertwines the past and present.

Genoa



A workshop to preserve the Ligurian linguistic tradition

Ligurian, or the Ligurian language, is the set of languages spoken in the territory of the ancient Republic of Genoa. Ligurian is not a dialect of Italian, but a true Romance language, a variation of Latin, just like Italian, French, and Spanish. Hearing Ligurian in casual conversations, reading its millenary literature, and listening to its songs and theatrical performances provides a unique emotion, especially when remembering that these Ligurian languages were the ones spoken by our grandparents, great-grandparents, and even further ancestors, since ancient times. In this workshop, it's possible to rediscover lost sounds and recover traditions that no longer exist today.

Alvito



Artisanal nougat: a journey into sweet excellence

For almost two centuries, Alvito has been the place of choice for the production of artisan nougat. Here, nougat is handmade and packaged, combining candied fruits, white marzipan, and glaze. This delight is available in several variations: from the classic white version to the chocolate-covered one, the enveloping flavor of coffee, almond nougat, and the irresistible sour cherry variant. The ancient pastry shops of the town in the province of Frosinone are not only where these delicacies are made but also places of knowledge. Visitors can immerse themselves in the preparation processes of traditional recipes, savoring high-quality products that change with the seasons.

italea

The journey to your roots



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