

AGNONE

THE MUSEUM AND THE PONTIFICAL
FOUNDRY OF MARINELLI BELLS

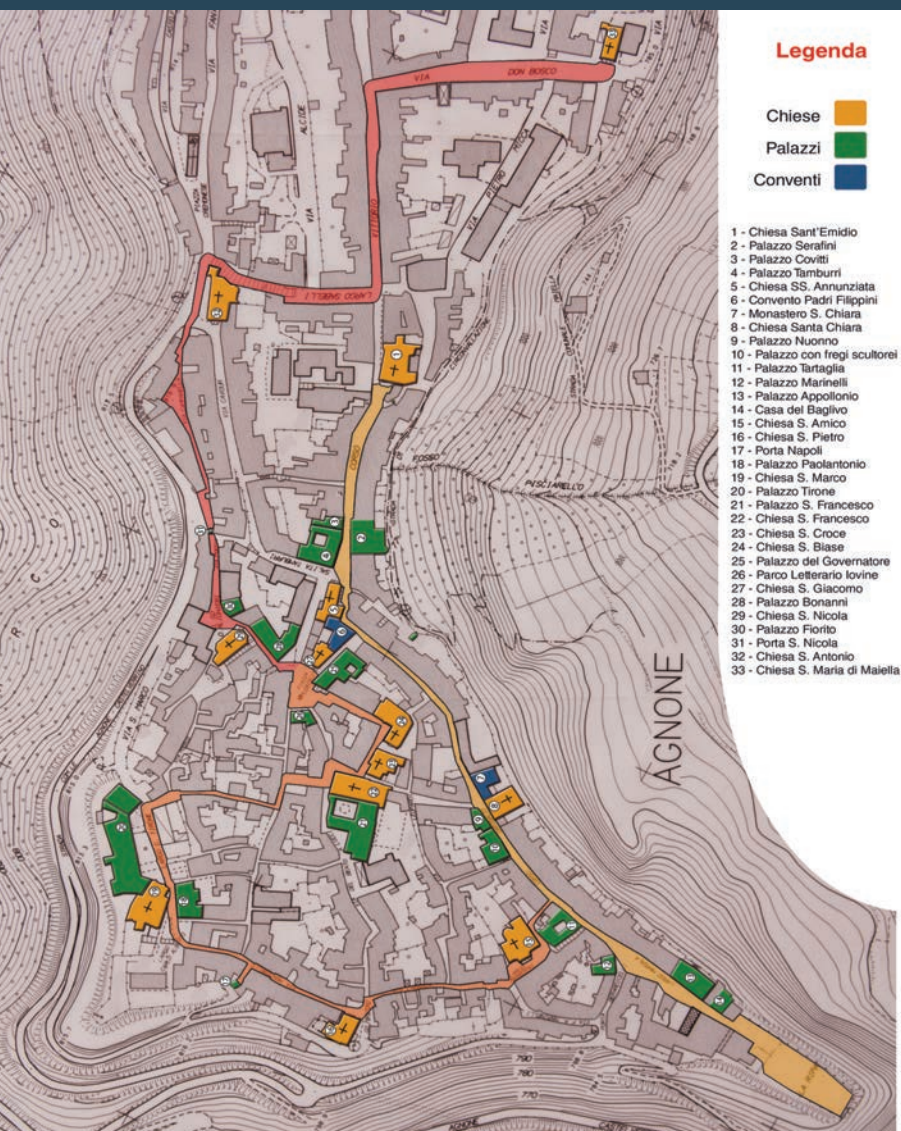
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CAMERA DI COMMERCIO
DEL MOLISE



MAP OF THE HISTORICAL CENTER OF AGNONE



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AGNONE

The Museum and the Pontifical Foundry of Marinelli Bells



CAMERA DI COMMERCIO
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A TOWN IN THE MOUNTAINS

To describe the artistic beauty and the millennium of history that reigns among the beautiful streets and squares of Agnone, it is necessary to reach it, leave the car and abandon oneself to the eyes. Stone portals and balconies with splendid railings, towering bell towers, magnificent churches, which exude art both in the external facades and in the furnishing and interior paintings. It is no coincidence therefore that this ancient *Città d'Arte* is among the municipalities of Italy to be able to boast of the *Bandiera Arancione*, the recognition of the Touring Club Italia that certifies the tourist-environmental quality of the locality. Agnone is in fact an "open air museum", where churches, portals, palaces, craft shops and the Marinelli Fonderia make this town unique at least within the Region. The town has its roots in the Samnite era, of which testimony are the remains of Cyclopean walls and numerous other finds, among which the very famous *Tavola* of the III century. BC, better known as the *Tavola di Agnone* and kept in the British

On the side, above: External view of the Pontificia Fonderia of Campana Marinelli. Below: A suggestive image of the interior. Below: Detail of the Venetian lion of Palazzo Nuonno.

Museum of London since 1873. Found in *Fonte del Romito* in 1848, in the territory between Agnone and Capracotta, the *Tavola* ended up in the hands of the Castellani collector and from there it passed by donation to the English Museum. However, an authentic copy is kept today in the Municipal office. Evidences of the Roman era in the San Lorenzo area and among the few Molise municipalities in the historical absence of a feudal institutional hierarchy, Agnone was a *Città Regia* in 1404. After the process of Spanish re-feudalization, the municipality differed in terms of considerable development of commercial activities as a result of the arrival of Venetian craftsmen in the wake of Landolfo Borrello of the famous feudal family of Pietrabbondante, who had served at the Doge of Venice. These artisans spread the goldsmith's art in Agnone, in addition to the working of copper (foundries in San Quirico) and iron, which still characterize - although in reduced forms - the prized local craftsmanship. The so-called "Quartiere veneziano" - the one once inhabited by Venetian artisans - still preserves beautiful vestiges of the time (mullioned windows, carved lions and decorative friezes).



ITINERARY IN THE HISTORIC CENTER

However, the churches are the most precious pieces of treasure chest: in the historical center only, a very short distance from each other, there are a dozen; others, rural, are present in the extended and fractioned territory.

St. Emiddio Church is a jewel of Baroque art. It was built around 1300; it opens with a refined portal in splayed stone with stylistic elements of the flowery Gothic and ostentatious rose window, touching the blue with an eighteenth-century bell tower with three orders. The interior has two aisles: the 14th century is on the left, which has an apse, a choir and a trussed ceiling; added in the fifteenth century the other on the

right, whose side wall consists of the walls that encircled Agnone in the Middle Ages. In Baroque style, stuccos, windows and wooden altars, precious sculptures by Amalia and Giovanni Duprè, and an artistic crucifix by Giulio Monteverde are preserved in the church. Also noteworthy is a *Cenacolo* with the statues of Christ and the 12 Apostles, life-size and attributed to artists of the seventeenth-century Neapolitan school. An artistic *croce viaria* flanks, on a heap of stones, the important portal.

On this page, from top to bottom: Interior, high altar and some side panels of St. Emiddio Church. Side: Facade with central rose window; the croce viaria; the majestic portal.





Emidiana Library preserves in particular the important manuscript “Statuta Capitula Terre Angioini” left in Agnone by St. Bernardino da Siena and St. Giovanni da Capestrano. A **Museum**

is also attached to the Library with coins, inscriptions, terracotta and other historical testimonies of the Agnonese territory.

On this page, from top to bottom: Precious “cinquecentine” volumes on the bulletin boards, and overall view of Emidiana Library.



BIBLIOTECA EMIDIANA
Parr. N.M. 1922



St. Francesco Church is magnificent in its drum dome and pleasant bell tower. Built in 1343 by Frati Minori and later enlarged and restored, it was consecrated in 1732. The Gothic portal to various orders of columns that end with Corinthian style capitals belong to the ancient church; the rose window is interposed between two small columns resting on two lions (recently closed with glass) and the ancient façade, restored in 1926 and on which it's the only epigraph A.D. MCCCCC. It was declared a "National Monument" in 1926 by the Reale Soprintendenza delle Arti Medioevale e Moderna degli Abruzzi, the frescoed vaulted system, the altars, a reliquary with strong Baroque inlays and some wooden sculptures from the XIV and XV century, the eighteenth-century frescoes by Paolo Gamba of Molise and the canvas of the Assunzione, belonging to the Fra Angelico *scuola*, are all valuable.



On this page, from top to bottom: Wooden altar in pure gold, central rose window, portal and the eighteenth-century fresco of the vault realized by the painter Paolo Gamba.

Prestigious **Palazzo San Francesco** seats the **Civica-Labanca Library**, which today holds a patrimony of over 30,000 volumes and in which there is the ancient collection of the Archivio di Stato from 1200 to 1700. The Convent (dated 1769) presents a remarkable access portal in Rococo style that leads into a delightful cloister. Next to the ostentatious portal there is a modest plaque bearing the date of 1648, testimony of the *peste nera* that claimed victims here too. In the current home of the *Frati Cappuccini* seventeenth-century paintings of the Neapolitan *scuola* are preserved, depicting the *Ricevimento delle Sante stimate*, and the one comforted by the Angels. The palace is also home to the *Consiglio comunale* of the town.



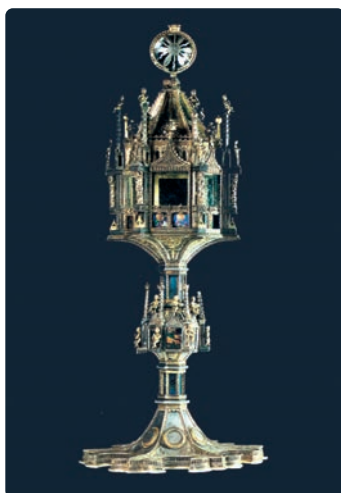
St. Marco Evangelista Church is very attractive due to its Romanesque portal and because it preserves the St. Cristanziano statue, saint patron of the town, whose cult - together with that of St. Emiddio - was imported by merchants from Ascoli who marketed the copper products from Agnone. Built in 1144 by Count Odorisio Borrello and his son Gualtiero, in addition to the high altar in polychrome marble, one can appreciate Baroque altars with wood inlays, wooden statues of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and an important gilded silver monstrance, believed to be a fifteenth-century work by the goldsmith Giovanni da Agnone, a pupil of Nicola da Guardiagrele. The relics of





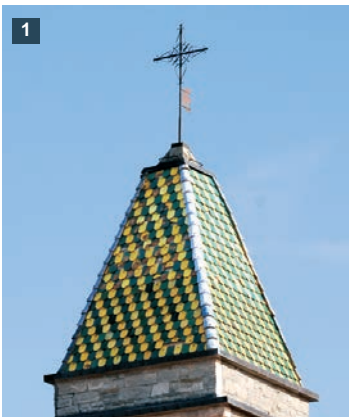
the lawyer protector of Agnone, Santa Teodora, are also kept in St. Marco, the main town temple.

On this page, from top to bottom: Exterior, interior and monstrance from the 1400s. Beside: Ancient volumes of the Library, eighteenth-century portal and internal cloister of Palazzo San Francesco.



Other buildings of worship: St. Nicola Church (1), with a trapezoidal plan, whose characteristic is a bell tower with the majolica cusp of the sixteenth century, which can be glimpsed from afar; **St. Pietro a Maiella Church (2)**, late-Baroque construction with a façade in visible square stone, and **St. Pietro Apostolo one (3)** (10th century), which is the oldest church in the town and which continues to host the ancient tradition of the “Pastorale” on November 21 of each year; **St. Amico Church (4)**, once a dependency of the Benedettino Monastery in San Pietro Avellana; **St. Antonio Abate Church (5)** dating back to the 12th century, which has a horizontal front lined with a Gothic portal and a late-Baroque window; here there are richly decorated altars, silverware and paintings from the 18th century, in addition to wooden choir and organ in inlaid wood; **St. Croce Church (6)**, built in 1446 and

disturbing in its portal which bears three skulls topped by a cross in local stone. It contains works of Agnonese craftsmanship. In **St. Chiara Church (7)** there are the astonishing jealousy finely carved in wood by the artist Nicodemo De Simone, a central wooden altar and reliquaries in gilded wood; the homonymous Monastery of 1249 is added to it. **Annunciazione o del Carmelo Church (8)**, built in 1505 with the annexed Confraternita del Carmine, is adjacent to the ancient **Convent of the Frati Filippini (9)**, where it is a cloister which is the occasional seat of cultural meetings. In the lively **Piazza Plebiscito**, formerly Piazza del Tomolo, furnished with a nineteenth-century fountain, there is also **St. Giacomo Church (10)**, built in the 13th century, with the adjoining Confraternita della Trinità, whose bell tower is however dated 1895.





If the religious architecture is splendid, although not all the churches are opened to the public, civil architecture is no less valuable, which includes **ancient buildings** of significant historical and artistic importance (**Palazzo Nuonno, Palazzo Fioriti, Palazzo Tirone, Palazzo Paolantonio, Palazzo Apollonio, Palazzo Bonanni, Palazzo Santangelo**), as well as magnificent stone portals and wrought-iron balconies, true masterpieces emerging from the burning forges of the past, which adorn streets and squares of the historic center. The bright color of the geraniums in summer, which intertwine between the railings; the whiteness of a lot of snow in winter; the tasty local gastronomy and the refined Agnonese bakeries add attraction to the town.

On this page, from top to bottom: Palazzo Bonanni, Palazzo Nuonno, goldsmith's workshop on the lower floor of the Palazzo, and precious gold jewelry from the Agnonese goldsmith tradition.



PONTIFICIA FONDERIA OF CAMPANE MARINELLI

Agnone owes its fame above all to the presence of the oldest artisan company in the world, the Pontificia Fonderia of Campane Marinelli. Attached to the millenary Fonderia, where everything has remained unchanged and the complex art of bronze casting is perpetuated, there is the rich **Museum**, named after **Giovanni Paolo II**. Here a copious number of working tools, precious casts for the decoration of small and large bells, clappers and above all the largest collection in the world of bells built from the year one thousand up to the present day, are exposed. The Museum also contains the memories of the bells and of the grandiose **Concerti** realized by Marinelli over time, such as those for Santuario of Pompei, Montevergine, Madonna dell'Arco, Abbazia of Montecassino, Basilica of San Paolo in Rome, San Giovanni Rotondo, Torre of Pisa and in every continent. Precious documents, photos and ancient texts enrich the exhibition suggesting numerous in-depth themes.

In this page: Interiors of Fonderia Marinelli and bells casting.



BELL PROCESSING

To build a bell, very complex procedures, centuries of experience and processing time of about 3 months are required. The procedure is that was in use in the Middle Ages and it uses the same times, means and materials. It starts with the construction of an elaborate model composed of *anima*, *falsa campana* and *mantello*.



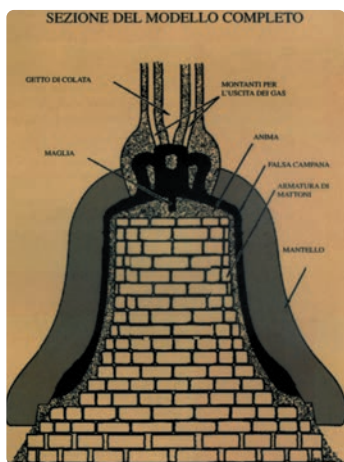
1 - *anima*: with a rotating wooden shape a brick construction covered with clay is prepared corresponding to the inside of the bell.

2 - *falsa campana*: with the same partially modified shape the *anima* is sprinkled with different layers of clay until obtaining a polished surface of the desired thickness. Dedicatory inscriptions, images and artistic friezes in wax are applied.

3 - *mantello*: on the *falsa campana* several layers of clay of different refinement and consistency are still applied up to obtain a thick covering moon.

Mantello is lifted, the *falsa campana* is destroyed and put back on the *anima*. The model is buried in the casting ditch where the metal is melted at 1200 ° C. Bronze for bells is an alloy composed of 78 parts of copper and 22 of tin. The liquefied bronze is poured into the individual shapes thus filling the free space created between *anima* and *mantello*. After a slow cooling, the bell is extracted from the casting ditch; finally, freed from the *anima* and from the *mantello* is cleaned and chiselled. The iron clapper is then applied and the musical test is performed.

On this page, from top to bottom: Photographic reconstruction of the various phases of processing the bell. Below: Section of the complete model.



A millennium of history for a dynasty of foundries

Among the dynasties of the numerous ancient bell founders in Agnone, Pontificia Fonderia Marinelli is where this ancient art has been handed down from father to son continuously for eight centuries. In **Marinelli Museum**, in fact, a rare example of a Gothic bell is preserved, which according to tradition has been melted about a millennium ago in Agnone. It is probable that large bronze bells were even merged before 1200, precisely in Marinelli workshop. It is certain that in 1339 Nicodemo Marinelli, "Campanarus", signed a refined bell of about 2 quintals for a church of the Frusinate. A history spanning a millennium that of the Marinelli's, made up of alternate fortunes and complex vicissitudes. The most significant experience dates back to 1924, the year in which Pope Pio XI granted the Marinelli family the privilege of portraying the Emblema papale. Difficult moments such as those related to the Second World War were not lacking, during which the requisition of bells was underway for war reasons. Furthermore Palazzo Marinelli was occupied by the various foreign troops, who availed themselves of it as headquarters using furniture, tools and important documents of the Fonderia to feed the stoves. Hard years were those



© Fonderia Marinelli

On this page, from top to bottom: Pasquale and Armando Marinelli, Foundry owners; Merger in the presence of Pope Giovanni Paolo II (19.03.1995) and owners and workers of the Foundry in a period photo.





© Fonderia Marinelli

On this page, from top to bottom: The patent that allows the effigy of the Papal coat of arms; the bells of the Abbazia of Montecassino recast and installed by the Marinelli after the destruction of World War II; workers intent on cleaning and chiselling in an old photo.

of the post-war period but soon the activity resumed with intensity thanks to the restoration of the churches and the restoration of the bell towers. In 1949 Fonderia Marinelli was assigned the task of melting the bells of the Abbazia of Montecassino, which was being rebuilt after the disastrous bombing. Unfortunately in 1950 a devastating fire forced the Marinelli's to abandon the old headquarters and to build a new workshop in the premises of an ancient granary. It is still here that bells are created for the most famous and loved churches of Christianity destined for every latitude of the Earth. The conferral of Medaglia d'Oro to the Fonderia Pontificia Marinelli by the Italian Republic President Luigi Einaudi, dates back to 1954.

So the work of the Marinelli founders continues unaltered both in terms of production technique, which is that of the Middle Ages, and due to undisputed expertise, passion and professionalism.



© Fonderia Marinelli



“GIOVANNI PAOLO II”
HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF THE BELL

AN INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM

The Museum is an international point of reference and at the same time a laboratory: **library, archive, video library, conference room, projection space** are a forge of work and studies **on the art of bells**, in which scholars and founders are compared to discuss training activities professional and to deepen interesting fields of research such as the remote origins of the sacred bronzes, the different uses, the evolution of processing techniques and of the plants respecting tradition.

On this page: Ticket office, shop and overview of the Museum. On the next page: Some views.





Itinerary in the Museum

The guided tour starts by stopping in front of the entrance portal, which reproduces the bronze poster of the “Tavola Osca” of Agnone from the 3rd century. B.C. As soon as you enter, at the ticket office, small bells, artistic bronzes, bas-reliefs, mortars available for sale are exposed on the left. On the right there are souvenir bells inspired by various events, destined for political, sports and entertainment figures. The monumental staircase leads to the Conference Room where an introductory video is shown.

On the left, in the large windows, there are the tools useful for the working, the birth and the functioning of a bell.

The unaltered construction process, long and laborious, is shown in detail by expert guides. You can admire the great photos of the previous abandoned laboratory after a disastrous fire, the Pontifical coat of arms with which the Marinelli’s are allowed to bear since 1924 and the *family tree* dating back to the thirteenth century. Entering the great “gallery”, the long itinerary shows large and small recent and very ancient bells,







fused by the Marinelli's and other Italian founders: they are "the voices of the Angels" that have accompanied the millennial history of the Communities through their chimes. In addition to a rich photographic and documentary exhibition, the collection includes the autograph signature of Pope Giovanni Paolo II affixed to the clay on the day of his visit to the Fonderia (19 March 1995); reproductions of important bells such as that of the Second Vatican Council, made voluntarily and in memory of the Popes (including that of the Giubileo 2000, today in Giardini Vaticani); historic bells such as that of Perestroika, which foretold the world the meeting between Gio-



vanni Paolo II and Michail Gorbachev, Soviet head of State, a symbolic moment in the end of real Communism, and that of Unità d'Italia centenary (1961) to which the bell produced for the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of its proclamation, has been added.

On this page: Reproduction of the Tavola Osca (III century b. C.); Commemorative stamp of the Jubilee 2000, dedicated to Historical Museum of the Bell; Details of the Museum. On the previous page: various museum sections.



THE ‘NDOCCIATA

The Agnone ‘*Ndocciata* is undoubtedly linked to the Christmas tradition largest fire ever known in the world. It takes place at dusk late **evening of December 24**, a day symbolic of tradition and now opportunity for thousands of tourists from everywhere. Those who have had the good fortune to witness this spectacular procession of fire and sparks, tell of a long and endless emotion, indescribable if not experienced. The origin of the tradition of the fire that burns on Christmas Eve in the *capital* of Alto Molise certainly derives from the pagan rituals, widespread throughout the Indo-European world, linked to the winter solstice date. Many more “fires” of the Apennines, Abruzzo and Molise the traditional ‘*ndocce* (dialect phoneme which means “big torch”) thus have their roots in rituals dedicated to the sun and its yearly cycle endorsed by

On this page: ‘Ndocciatori carrying ‘Ndocce (torches) along Corso Vittorio Emanuele on their shoulders. On the side: Corso Vittorio Emanuele is now a river of fire.

Christianity and now, this case, the flame in honor of the God who is born, Christ the Light and Saviour of the world. From spontaneous rural rituals just a few decades, Domenico Meo well explains in his studies, has evolved into its present form called ‘*Ndocciata*. On the evening before sunset, at least eight hundred carriers meet at the northern entrance of Agnone. The signal for the lighting of the giant flares, and the departure is given by the ringing of the largest bell in Agnone, located on the steeple of St. Antonio, the town’s tallest. The procession starts. In front of all the groups there are banners and animated scenes of country life especially women and children. The children start to be taken aside with single ‘*ndocce*, sometimes slightly smaller than the torches for adults only. The carriers are just men wrapped in their dark large cloaks and in a predetermined order. They carried torches on their shoulders; spectators crowd the main street in the town. While the ap-





plause is roaring, the memory of many dates back to that December 8, 1996, when in honor of John Paul II the Agnesi "burned" Piazza San Pietro, honoring the Holy Father - who had visited Agnone a year and a half earlier - on the occasion of the fiftieth of his priesthood. The words of the Pope, exceptionally facing the window of his studio at night, were full of emotion and gratitude. *"Thank you for this show, thanks for the bonfire of the brotherhood. - said the Pontiff among other things - Thanks to the beloved city of Agnone [...] May the fire transform you into bearers of joys for Christmas, to Agnone and to Molise everything."* To facilitate the presence of tourists to the traditional fashion show of the Christmas Eve, the date of December 8 has been added for years. But the date of the heart remains that of December 24th. At dusk, before the original and suggestive Living Nativity curated today by the Franciscan Cultural Cenacle.

On this page, from top to bottom: Some moments of the 'Ndocciata in Agnone. Below: The historic parade of 'Ndocce in Piazza San Pietro (Rome).



INFO AND USEFUL NUMBERS

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museo@campanemarinelli.com
Web: Marinelli Bells

Timetable for guided visits
to the Museum

Winter time: Every day

Closed on Sunday afternoons

- 12:00 and 16:00

Summer timetable (August only):

Every day

- 11:00 am, 12:00 am

- 11:00 am, 12:00 am

4:00 pm, 5:00 pm

Publishing realization: Volturνια Edizioni Piazza Santa Maria, 5 86072 Cerro al Volturno (IS) - Tel. 0865 953593 - 339 7909487 www.volturνιαedizioni.com - [info@voltur尼亞edizioni.com](mailto:info@volturνιαedizioni.com)
Texts and images taken from "Agnone Guida Utile" ©Voltur尼亞 Edizioni, 2011; Opuscolo promozionale della Pontificia Fonderia Marinelli, Edizione 2018. Layout and graphics Tobia Paolone - Photos Tobia Paolone, Archivio Voltur尼亞 Edizioni, Archivio Fonderia Marinelli Agnone, Piero Barbella, Paola Patriarca Translations (Translations.com) Copyright © 2019 Camera di Commercio del Molise & Voltur尼亞 Edizioni. Project: Discovering Molise. Edition promoted by Camera di Commercio del Molise. President Paolo Spina - Referent Gemma Laurelli.



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- 2 MAB Unesco reserve "Alto Molise"
- 3 The Swabian Castle and the old village of Termoli
- 4 The archaeological Area of Altilia/Sepino
- 5 The monumental complex of San Vincenzo al Volturno
- 6 Agnone, the museum and the Pontifical Foundry of Marinelli Bells
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