

# VENAFRO

THE CHURCHES, THE MUSEUMS AND THE CASTLE

9



CAMERA DI COMMERCIO  
DEL MOLISE



# HISTORIC CENTER OF VENAFRO - PLAN



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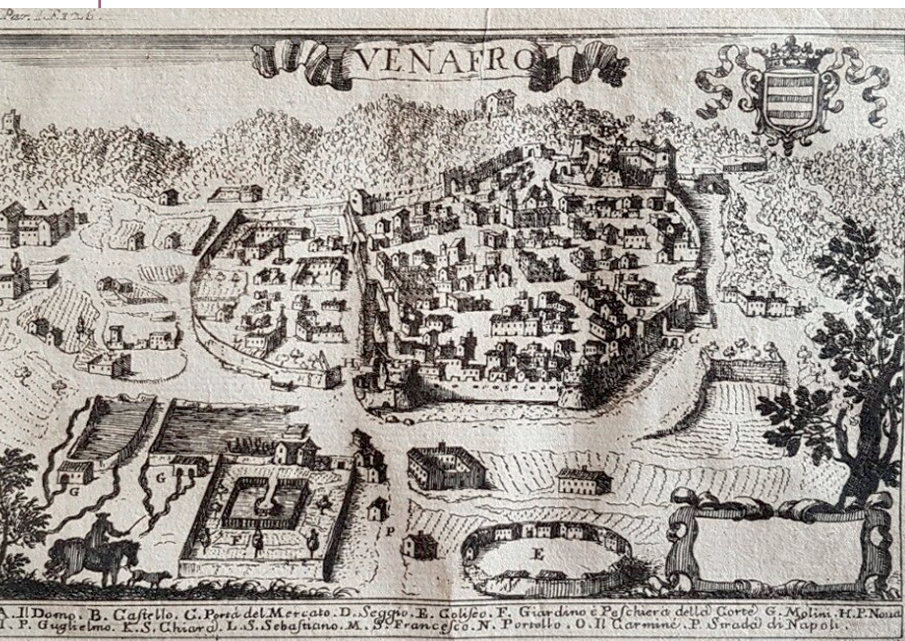
**27 USEFUL NUMBERS**

# VENAFRO

## The Churches the Museums and the Castle



CAMERA DI COMMERCIO  
DEL MOLISE



On the cover: Bell towers of Venafro (Ph. by F. Cappellari). On p. 3: The Venus of Venafro. Above: Venafro in a print from G.B. Pacichelli, *The Kingdom of Naples in perspective*, 1703. Below: "Venafro seen from noon" in the lithograph which highlights the quantity of olive trees on the slopes of Monte Santa Croce. Work of D. Cucinello (19th century). Left: Toga statue of the Imperial period and figure of Górgone in the Archaeological Museum. Below: Cyclopean walls in the locality of Madonna della Libera.



## Origins and the ancient *Venafrum*

Legend has it that Venafrum was founded by Diomedes, the mythical hero of Argos who fought in the Trojan War wounding Aeneas in battle and then he was a “hero of civilization” of Italy, where he is credited with having founded many cities, including Venafrum itself: we are in the 12th century BC. The origins of Venafrum are however very ancient. The first real urban settlement dates back to the Samnite era around the fifth century BC, as evidenced by the mighty cyclopean walls that surround the reliefs of Monte Santa Croce. The village was born at the foot of the mountain that dominates the wide plain crossed by the Volturno river. Already in the third century BC Venafrum was so much important that it minted its own currency. Then it came under the control of Rome after the latter had definitively defeated the Samnites at the end of the third Samnite war in 290 BC:



Roman town hall in 272 BC, *Civitas sine suffragio* in 268 BC, Prefecture in 263 BC, *Colonia Julia* in 59 BC, again deduced as a colony by Augustus in 14 BC. For about four centuries (III century BC-I century AD) Venafrum experienced a period of great splendor. It was the destination of the best Roman aristocracy (among those, also Attilio Regolo); an important manufacturing and above all an agricultural center where the

best oil of the time was produced; a town enriched by important public works and infrastructures such as the Roman aqueduct built by Augustus, the Roman theater, the amphitheater, the thermal baths.



## Middle Ages and Renaissance

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, Venafrò experienced a long period of decline, even if the presence of a bishop is documented in the 5th century. Submitted by the Lombards, sacked by the Saracens (867), only in the 10th century its rebirth began, coinciding with the growth of the influence of the two great monasteries of Montecassino and San Vincenzo al Volturno. In 954 Venafrò was *gastaldato* of the Principality of Capua. Precisely in this period, under Count Paldefrido, the Longobard keep was built which represents the first nucleus of the Venafrò Castle. After the Norman conquest, Venafrò was reduced to a sub-fiefdom until the advent of the Angioini, when Carlo I d'Angiò reconstituted the county. In the fifteenth century Venafrò experienced a new period of splendor. When, in 1437, Alfonso d'Aragona conquered the Kingdom of Naples, the fief of Venafrò was assigned to the Pandone family who kept it for about a century, from Francesco Pandone (1437) until the last count of the dynasty, Enrico, executed in 1528 in Naples for having betrayed Carlo V. To Enrico Pandone we owe important interventions in the castle, with the large and precious frescoes that represent the horses he raised

in life size. Antonio Giordano (1459-1530) is another great Venafrano lived and worked at this time, juriconsult and teacher of law at the Universities of Naples, Bologna and Florence, president of the University of Siena and advisor and "prime minister" of the count Pandolfo Petrucci. Antonio Giordano is cited in Machiavelli's "Principe" (chap. XXII) as an example of a "good minister". In the following decades Venafrò passed to the exponents of various families, with a long period (1533-1582) in which it was property of the Lannoy family. Between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there was a strong economic and demographic recovery of Venafrò, which in 1586 had more inhabitants than Isernia and Bojano and was already one of the most populous centers of the territory corresponding to today's Molise. In that phase Venafrò experienced a great urban development, with the creation of the splendid medieval village and a cultural and scientific flowering with important personalities.

*Below: Pandone Castle (Ph. F. Cappellari). Opposite page, top: Palazzo Cimorelli in the historic center and, below, the Allies enter Venafrò in December 1943.*



## Recent history

In 1734 Carlo III of Borbone established a royal residence in Venafro which he used in the frequent periods when he went hunting in the Torcino estate and which was also inhabited in the following decades by the Borbone. Venafro was affected by the political events linked to the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799 and the subsequent French occupation, a period in which the Civil Hospital was founded (1810). In the nineteenth century, under the Borbone, a bourgeois class was formed whose exponents established themselves in various fields of culture, science and administration. In Venafro, the future King of Italy Vittorio Emanuele stayed in the Cimorelli Palace the night before his meeting in Teano with Giuseppe Garibaldi. An illustrious Venafrano, Leopoldo Pilla, great geologist, university professor in Naples and Pisa, died in battle as a volunteer in Curtatone on May 29, 1848, killed by the Austrians in the First war of independence. After the Unification of Italy Venafro was detached from the Terra di Lavoro and aggregated to Molise. The Royal Decree in 1914 granted the title of "City" to Venafro. On March 15, 1944, Venafro was mistakenly bombed by the Allies who



mistook it for Cassino, causing dozens of civilian and military deaths, an event that earned the city the Gold Medal. In the twentieth century, especially after the Second World War, Venafro was affected by a period of great development which in the space of a few decades made it one of the most important centers of the Molise, with the birth of the industrial sector and the consolidation of agriculture and the service ones. Today Venafro is the fourth most populous center in the Molise, the second one in the province of Isernia. Until the 80s of the last century, it was a Bishopric: today it is part of the Diocese of Isernia-Venafro and the city Cathedral is co-Cathedral together with the Cathedral of Isernia.



## Churches and buildings of worship

### THE CATHEDRAL SANTA MARIA ASSUNTA

The construction of the Cathedral of Venafro dates back to the 4th or 5th century. The original plant has undergone several renovations over time. The church was radically transformed in the 11th century, in which a real reconstruction probably took place, and subsequently it was enriched with paintings and frescoes made between the 14th and 18th centuries; it has been a bishopric since ancient times. The occupation of the chair by Bishop Constantine in 496 is documented. The most remote elements highlighted by the current building can be dated to the end of the 11th century or the beginning of the 12th century, a period in which the Byzantine-inspired architecture was replaced with the Romanesque-Cluniac one of monastic



derivation. In addition to the impressive architecture, restored in the 60s of the last century, you can admire ancient frescoes of absolute value. It was a bishopric until the 1980s, when the Diocese of Venafro was united with that of Isernia. Today the Cathedral is the co-cathedral church of the Diocese of Isernia-Venafro. It has the privilege of having the *Porta Santa* since 1508.







*On the previous page, top and bottom: Facade and interior of the Cathedral. On this page: Frescoed walls.*

## CHURCH OF THE ANNUNZIATA

Over time, the belief has been consolidated that the foundation of the church and of the Confraternita dei Battenti that built it, dates back to January 1, 1387, the date on which the notary Cicco Antonio de Parma drafted the deed with which the prosecutors of the Confraternity submitted to the authority of the bishop the sacred building which at the time was already built. The church was enlarged in the 16th century with a series of interventions entrusted to master G. Battista Bifano (1591). In later times, further works and embellishments were carried out, including decorations dating back to the 17th century, and paintings and frescoes were commissioned. The altarpiece above the beautiful high altar depicting *The Annunciation* and attributed to Girolamo Imparato, an artist active between 1573 and 1621, is of great value. Other masonry works date back to the eighteenth century and gave the church its final shape and decorations with stucco and frescoes. Between 1757 and 1759 the



entire church was frescoed by the painter Paolo Sperduti, a pupil of Agostino Masucci in Rome, reported by Vanvitelli to decorate the Reggia of Caserta, where he actually worked together with Giacinto Diano, Fedele Fischetti and other painters. Sperduti's major work is the fresco in the vault of the hall, where the Virgin is portrayed at the center of a crowd of angels and saints crowding the empyrean. The side altars were enriched in 1771 by precious canvases, including three by the famous Neapolitan painter Giacinto Diano. A rare and precious late Gothic alabaster polyptych made in England with the representation in seven panels of the *Passion of Christ* was imported to Venafro from Naples, currently kept in the Pandone Castle. Stones and friezes from Roman buildings and, in particular, from the Roman theater of S. Aniello, were used to create the façade of the church. Today the church of the Annunziata, a valuable example of Baroque architecture, represents one of the most beautiful churches in the Molise for its grandeur, its structure and the richness of the decorative elements created inside.





*On the previous page: Church facade and organ. On this page: Central nave.*

## CHURCH OF CRISTO

In 1546 the testament of a devout citizen of Venafro left a house to be used as a church, that of the “*Santissimo Corpo di Cristo*”, to be used exclusively for the celebration of the Baptism, of the Eucharist and the *Unzione dei Malati*. Even today it is not difficult to recognize this church in what has become: the sacristy of the largest Church of Cristo, built in the mid-seventeenth century, a treasure chest of art, and until 1986, also of the “*Testa di San Nicandro*”, a precious fourteenth-century reliquary from the workshop, subtracted for horrible theft that deprived the barrel of Venafro of the seventeenth-century bust of the patron saint. This temple recently restored imposes the admiration of the visitor, while all its architecture has provided to warm the hearts of the faithful, who still today praise Christ Jesus greeting him in the evenings of the *Miserere* with the words of a memorable hymn.



## CHURCH OF SAN FRANCESCO

One could perhaps look for the church of Sant'Angelo mentioned in the *Bolla* of Alessandro III in the building prior to today's San Francesco, but it is still difficult to explain the transformation of the title into San Giovanni in Platea. The church of San Francesco already existed in 1332, because that is the date of the ancient bell, still existing, whose inscription reads S.P.F.G.E.O.P. II. HAEC BELL FACTA FUIT A. 1332. ET VERBUM CARO FACTUM EST. HABITAVIT IN NOBIS. RESTORED IN JOSEPHO DE COSTANZO DE TORA YEAR 1685 ET ITERUM RESTORED IN JOANNE FILIO SUO 1732

The bell tower still shows well the fourteenth-century structure, especially inside. In this church the well-known jurist Giovanni De Amicis,

*On this page, above: Church of Cristo (interior). Below: Facade. Left: Church of San Francesco (facade) and Church of Santa Chiara (main altar).*

found burial. He lived between the end of the 15th and the first half of the 16th century, professor of law in Naples and author of the *Consilia*, a fortunate work of jurisprudence, published in two editions in 1524 and in 1577.

Destroyed by the earthquake of 1805, the church of San Francesco was rebuilt again for the interest of the ecclesiastical authorities at the King of Naples Ferdinando II of Borbone, who in 1854 ordered its reconstruction which lasted until 1892, year where the Parrocchia of San Giovanni in Platea is located. The baroque portal is surmounted by the statue of the *Immacolata Concezione*, which embellishes the facade of the temple and heralds the architectural lines of the interior, where the great altar dominates, surmounted by the niche on which the admirable wooden statue of the *Vergine Immacolata* was placed, crowned in 1955 by Cardinal Mimmi of Naples with a precious crown obtained from the gold offered by the Venafрани.

## CHURCH OF SANTA CHIARA

It is the complex (Monastery and Church) where from 1627 (year of foundation) and up to the suppressive laws of the Regno of Savoia lived the Clarisse nuns of Santa Chiara, strictly enclosed. In 1895 it became the property of the public State and it was sold to the Municipality. The Monastery is attached to the Church, which has a series of frescoes with figures of saints and a central window. Through a large arched portal, within which a valuable grating is inserted, you enter first into the narthex compartment, then into the interior, which is rich in stucco decorations, valuable paintings; a refined pulpit and a beautiful marble altar are dominated by a beautiful grated window to which other lateral ones relate: that allowed the cloistered to participate in liturgical celebrations in a completely confidential manner. The Archaeological Museum is currently housed in the former Monastery.



## CHURCH OF PURGATORIO

The construction of this Baroque church is due to the archdeacon of the local Cathedral, Don Antonio Lombardi, who in his own will, dated 18 September 1722, ordered the two heir sisters to deliver after her death three hundred ducats to the canon Don Biagio Morra so that the construction of this church could begin. In addition to the precious Baroque stuccoes, this small temple is enriched by eighteenth-century altars: the main one, dated 1794, and the two lateral ones, contemporary, which cover the stucco originals below them. At the top of these altars the Venafrano bishop Francesco Saverio Stabile (1754-1792), great father of the diocese and of the poor, is clearly visible. Four canvases from the same period depicting the *Crocifissione* and the *Anime del Purgatorio* (center), the *Morte di S. Giuseppe* (left), the *Morte di San Francesco Xavier* (right) and the canvas reproducing the titular saints Simeone and Santa Caterina d'Alessandria are to be admired. The building has been remodeled several times, especially after the earthquakes of 7 and 11 May 1984.



There are also other religious buildings of some importance, including Santa Lucia al Borgo and San Sebastiano. A short distance from the Cathedral there are the church of Carmine, that of Sant'Antonio abate and that of San Paolo, an ancient parish church of Venafro (12th century).



*On this page, above: The Carmine church (inside). Above: Church of San Sebastiano. Alongside: Church of Purgatorio. On the side and in the text: Church of San Nicandro; lunette of the entrance portal. (Ph. F. Cappellari)*

## THE BASILICA AND THE CONVENT OF SAN NICANDRO

According to the Roman Martyrology, Saints Nicandro and Marciano, officers of the Roman army, converted to Christianity and, refusing to renounce their religion, together with Daria, Nicandro's wife, suffered martyrdom on June 17, 303 AD. in Venafro during the years of persecution ordered by Diocleziano. At the point where they were killed, just outside the city center, according to tradition, already after 313, the year of the *Editto di Costantino* which decreed freedom of worship, putting an end to the persecution of Christians, a church was erected in their honor. The three martyrs became the protectors of the city and they are currently also the protectors of the Diocese of Isernia-Venafro. The first written document certifying the existence of the church of Santi Martiri dates back to the time of Duke Arechi (758-778), who went to Venafro to take some relics from the church of San Nicandro and bring them to Benevento. In 955 the *Chronicon Vulturense* also mentions the church,

that's now a cemetery basilica whose current structure dates back to the 10th-11th century, superimposed on the pre-existing building. It was erected on the spot where the remains of the Santi Martiri were buried, which remained hidden for over 15 centuries. The Frati Cappuccini Leone Patrizio, superior of the convent of San Nicandro since 1928, and Angelantonio Carusillo, starting from December 1930, began to dig secretly under the main altar of the Basilica and they found the sarcophagus which housed the re-



mains of San Nicandro. The crypt was then excavated under the altar in which the bodies of the Martiri are kept and which is now a pilgrimage destination for thousands of faithful especially in the three days (16, 17, 18 June) of solemn celebrations in honor of the Martiri. In 1573 the Convent was founded next to the Church and since that time

the custody of the remains of the patron Saints has been entrusted to the Frati Cappuccini. The

Church has some works of absolute value, such as the monumental walnut complex with beautiful inlays that covers the entire presbytery [an eighteenth-

century work by Fra Berardino da Mentone (in the century Pietro Campana), in which the table depicting the three Martiri with St. Francesco, the work of the Flemish painter Dirk Hendricks (1550-1618)], and the fresco in the lunette of the main portal, depicting the *santi Martiri*, made in 1949 by the Molise artist Amedeo Trivisonno.





*On this page: The church of San Nicandro (interior and wooden altar). (Ph. F. Cappellari)  
On the left: A young photo of Padre Pio and the French Military Cemetery.*



## PADRE PIO IN THE CONVENT OF SAN NICANDRO

In Venafro, in the Convent of San Nicandro, lived Padre Pio of Pietrelcina. He was sent here just over a year after his consecration as a priest, after a medical examination in Naples following which the Molise doctor Antonio Cardarelli had given him a few months to live. He stayed in Venafro for about 40 days, from mid-October until the beginning of December 1911. Here he had the “visioni” and was visited several times by the devil in the strangest ways. The ecstasies of the *santo Frate*, the apparitions and the mysterious events that happened in those days were described in detail by the other friars who witnessed them. Today in the Convent of San Nicandro a Museum area has been rebuilt, as faithful as possible to the structure and shape that the Convent could have had in 1911 when Padre Pio stayed there. The cell shows the exact measurements, the arrangement of the original furnishings and some objects that belonged to Padre Pio such as the complete Mass apparatus and the bedroom apparatus with a habit, a white glove and a brown one. In this area there are antiques from the Convent dating back to the 1700s and 1800s.



## THE FRENCH MILITARY CEMETERY

The French Military Cemetery was built in 1946. There are about 6000 graves of soldiers of the Corps Expeditionnaire Français, of which about two thirds of Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian origin, as well as other Africans who died largely during the battle of Cassino and in bypassing of Montecassino (1943-1944). Here the burials of Miano were later transferred. A monument has been erected inside the cemetery that explicitly recalls the North African minarets, decorated with blue ceramic tiles, which stand out against the white of the walls, and with some inscriptions. Inside there are some tombs, one of which to the *unknown Muslim soldier* and three dedicated to soldiers with a name (a Tunisian, an Algerian, a Moroccan). All the tombs are arranged on the North-East South-West axis, with the tombstones facing North-East, with the exception of some tombs, placed behind the minaret, of Jewish soldiers (recognizable by the six-pointed star on the tombstone) and animists (which have a stylized sun on the tombstone). This arrangement suggests the possibility that the fallen Muslims, if they placed on their right flank, have their faces turned towards Mecca.



## Museums



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### THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

Venafro is rich above all in evidence from the Roman era - an age in which it experienced a period of great splendor -, many of which are preserved in the important archaeological Museum of Santa Chiara, that is housed in the imposing and splendid Monastery completed in 1654 thanks to the donation of a noble Venafrano. In the Museum there are all kinds of finds from the various “domus”, from the rustic villas, from the Roman theater of Sant’Aniello and from other sites. Among other works, there are currently preserved the famous *Venus*



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of Venafro, a beautiful statue of the Antonine period (2nd century AD), a rare example in Italy of a copy of a Hellenistic Venus that has survived complete with the head; two imposing male statues complete with heads (mid 1st century AD) which probably represent the emperors Augusto and Tiberio; the great "*Tabula aquaria*" of the Augustan period, which reports the rules contained in the famous *Editto di Augusto* issued precisely to regulate the construction and management of the large aqueduct of about 30 kilometers (of which large tracts can be vi-

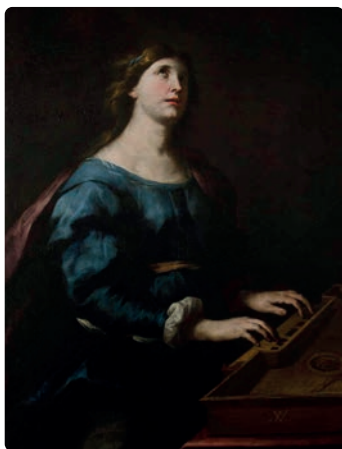
sited) that the emperor had built between 17 and 11 BC to bring water from the sources of the Volturno to Venafro; the tombs of the Samnite necropolis discovered in Pozzilli (VII-IV century BC); the famous *Scacchi* of Venafro, long considered to be the oldest chess in the world (perhaps II-IV century A.D.), later and recently dated to the 10th century. A.D. (980 AD) thanks to the radiocarbon dating which makes it the oldest chess in Italy and among the oldest in Europe. A wing of the Museum is dedicated to the finds from the excavations of the great and important Benedictine Monastery of San Vincenzo al Volturno. The splendid 17th century church of Santa Chiara is annexed to the Museum.

*Side: Internal cloister, Tabula Aquaria and Archaeological Museum set-up. Above: Venafro's chess pieces and precious objects from the excavations of San Vincenzo al Volturno.*



## THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CASTELLO PANDONE

In Venafro, “*gateway to Molise*”, at the meeting point with Lazio, Campania and Abruzzo, the National Museum of Castello Pandone is presented to the public, the result of the work of the territorial structures of the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities and for Tourism. The tour is divided into two sections: the castle, a “*museum of itself*”, with its urban, architectural and decorative values culminating in the cycle of frescoes on the first floor and the exhibition on the second floor of frescoes, sculptures, canvases, drawings and prints, in an itinerary that documents the chronology - from the Middle Ages to the Baroque - and the different cultural orientations of clients and artists in Molise. One of the objectives was to highlight the qualities of the Molise artistic testimonies starting from the general reconsideration of the center-periphery relationship in a historical perspective of complementarity. Works of the Regional territory, protected within Castello Pandone, were compared with others owned by the State, coming from the deposits of the Capodimonte and San Martino Museums in Naples, the National Gallery of Ancient Art in Rome and the Reggia of Caserta.



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## The Pandone Castle

Historical sources from the Lombard period inform us that a castle already existed in Venafrò in the mid-ninth century, conquered and destroyed in 860 by the Arab Emir of Bari Sawdan. Defensive needs and territorial garrison led to the reconstruction of the structure which is also mentioned by sources from a later period. Enrico Pandone transformed it into an elegant Renaissance residence with the construction of a large loggia and an Italian garden. He is also responsible for the cycle of frescoes created between 1521 and 1527 consisting of portraits of his favorite horses, life-size, which make the Castle of Venafrò unique, a destination for scholars and art historians. After the violent death of Enrico Pandone, executed for having betrayed Charles V, the Castle of Venafrò passed to various noble families (Lannoy, Peretti Savelli, from Capua). At the time of Giovanni di Capua, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the decorative

bands of the noble floor made in view of the marriage with Maria Vittoria Piccolomini date back, never celebrated for the untimely death of di Capua. Subsequently it underwent further changes of ownership and transformations. In 1979 it was purchased by the then Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Heritage, then progressively restored and refurbished and finally opened to the public. Since 2012 it has been the seat of the National Museum of Molise. The Castle has now returned to its splendor and it is fully enjoyed by visitors, several thousand every year, who can admire its grandeur and elegance. Conventions and seminars are held here and it is used for exhibitions and shows. On the second floor, works by important artists such as Luca Giordano and Francesco Solimena are exhibited. There is also preserved the famous and very precious late Gothic alabaster polyptych from an English workshop representing the *Passione di Cristo*. The polyptych comes from the Church of the Annunziata where it was stolen in the 1980s; fortunately it was recovered and welcomed in the rooms of the Castle.

*Opposite page: Painting, wooden statue of Christ and interior of the National Museum Castle of Venafrò. On this page: Aerial view of Pandone Castle. (Ph. F. Cappellari)*





*Above: Frescoes of horses in the rooms on the main floor of the Castle.  
On the next page: Two installations in the rooms of the Winterline Museum.*

## THE WINTERLINE MUSEUM

The Winterline Museum was inaugurated in 2008 and it is managed by the Association of the same name made up of enthusiasts and experts who have created a permanent exhibition focused on finds of historical interest concerning the Second World War. In the historic Palazzo de Utris, in the heart of the historic center, unique and original finds are exhibited; they were found in the area between Venafro and the Mainerde, the scene of fierce battles during the Second World War, a territory crossed by the fighting line called the Winterline. Weapons, uniforms, tools, objects of common use: during the visit to the War Museum it is possible to relive, thanks to the exhibition that faithfully reconstructs environments and situations, moments of life at the front. The exhibition is accompanied by a *narration* that illustrates historical events and characters and it allows the visitor to deepen and learn about



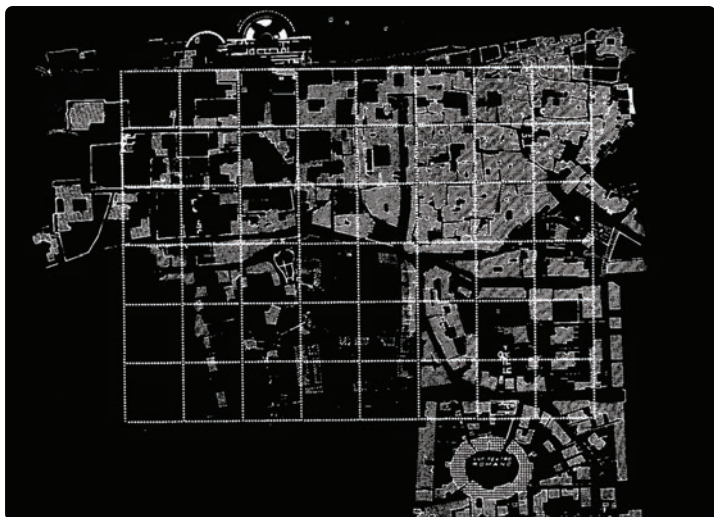
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the events that characterized the Second World War, in particular the territory of western Molise. Openings are guaranteed by reservation or on the last Sunday of each month (5.30 pm-8.00 pm).



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## Roman vestiges



### THE AMPHITHEATER

The *Verlasce* amphitheater (or *Verlascio*) to Roman times, an ellipse-shaped istance with an external perimeter (greater diameter approximately 110 meters, smaller diameter approximately 85 meters), was capable of accommodating up to 15 thousand spectators. Its existence and use are documented at least from the first century. A.D. Gladiator games, naval battles and other competitions were held there. Subsequently the Roman plant was transformed and adapted to the rural context and the agrarian physio-

gnomy of the city. Two-storey terraced rooms were created and used as a stable in the lower part and as a barn in the upper part. The realization of these interventions is attested at least to the seventeenth century; an inscription given the construction of one of the buildings in 1624. Today the *Verlasce* complex is the subject of restoration and enhancement interventions by MIBAC; a part is already usable and open to visitors.

*Above: Plan of the Roman city of Venafrum. Below: The Verlasce Amphitheater today and as it appeared in a late 19th century photo. Side, top: Graphic reconstruction of the theater. Bottom: The pulpitum area.*







## THE THEATER

The Roman theater was built upstream of the town in the locality of Sant'Aniello and modified and enlarged until the second century; it dates back to the same period or to a phase preceding the construction of *Verlasce*. The construction techniques are from the late Republican period or at most from the very early days of the Empire. In its first construction phase it consisted of a flight of steps, leaning against the mountain, which exploited the natural slope, which included an *ima*

and *media cavea* separated by a *praecinctio*, and was closed at the top by a portico. A first major expansion dates back to the period of the Flavian dynasty (69-96 AD); later in the Antonine period (2nd century AD) the hemicycle was built which is grafted directly into the structures of the theater. The front of the scene is about 60 meters; while the auditorium could hold about 3,500 spectators. The theater can be visited. Further excavations could bring to light structures of the theater currently only partially surfaced.



## THE PALAZZINA LIBERTY

The Palazzina Liberty was designed by the engineer Gioacchino Luigi Mellucci and it is one of the most characteristic buildings in Venafro thanks to its architecture and location in the city lake. In the nineteenth, with the advent of the Liberty style, the appearance of the "Peschiera" mill took the shape of a castle on the lake, but inside it retained its ancient production plant. In the 1920s, like most of the mills in the area, the mill was converted

into an electrical control unit used for lighting Venafro. In fact, in 1924, as highlighted by De Vincenzi in his 1989 essay, the Venafro electro-agricultural company was created, with its registered office in Naples, with the aim of creating and distributing energy to neighboring territories. The hydroelectric plant also provided energy, for Hp. about 15, at the F.lli Gamberale and Dott. Amodio pasta factory based in Venafro. With a deed drawn up by the notary Giuseppe Tozzi of Naples, on 31 August 1935, the president of the electro-agricultural company of Venafro, ing. Girolamo P. Maglione, was Tommaso, communicated to the Provincial Office of Corporations the cessation of the activity of the electricity production and milling industry, due to the merger of the business. It was replaced by the company Molisana per Imprese Elettriche based in Naples, which operated the structure until the post-war period, and then ceased its activity. At the closure of this company too, part of the Palazzina Liberty was converted into a cinema through the demolition of an attic and the creation of a gallery for the public. Today the structure performs new functions of a social and cultural nature for the city and beyond.



*Above: Night view of the Palazzina Liberty mirrored in the waters of the lake below. Below: Events hosted in the structure.*



## *Info and Useful Numbers*

### **MUNICIPALITY OF VENAFRO**

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### **Archaeological Museum**

Corso Garibaldi, 10 - Venafro IS

[www.musei.molise.beniculturali.it](http://www.musei.molise.beniculturali.it)

[drm-mol@beniculturali.it](mailto:drm-mol@beniculturali.it)

**Tel. +39 0865 900742**

whole: € 3,00

Integrated with Pandone Castle € 5,00

Reduced: € 2,00

Timetables:

See page

[www.musei.molise.beniculturali.it/musei](http://www.musei.molise.beniculturali.it/musei)

### **Pandone Castle National Museum**

Via Colle - Venafro (IS)

**Tel. 0865 904698**

[www.castellopandone.beniculturali.it/](http://www.castellopandone.beniculturali.it/)

[drm-mol@beniculturali.it](mailto:drm-mol@beniculturali.it)

whole: € 4,00

Integrated Archaeological Museum

€ 5,00 Reduced: € 2,00

Timetables:

See page

[www.musei.molise.beniculturali.it/musei](http://www.musei.molise.beniculturali.it/musei)

Guided tours and educational workshops  
by appointment

**Me.MO Cantieri Culturali APS**

### **Winterline Museum**

Palazzo De Utris - Venafro IS

Tel. +39 339 7014272 (Luciano)

Tel. +39 389 9037935 (Donato)

[winterline.venafro@gmail.com](mailto:winterline.venafro@gmail.com)

[www.winterlinevenafro.it](http://www.winterlinevenafro.it)

[www.facebook.com/WinterlineVenafro](http://www.facebook.com/WinterlineVenafro)

Openings guaranteed by reservation or on  
the last Sunday of each month (17.30-20.00);  
access for the disabled is possible after  
contacting the managers.

**Editorial realization** **Volturnia Edizioni Piazza Santa Maria, 5 - Cerro al Volturno (IS)**

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**Texts taken from:** *Venafro - Guida Breve alla Città, Volturnia Edizioni, 2018*

**Layout and graphics** Tobia Paolone **Photos** Tobia Paolone, Franco Cappellari, Dario Ottaviano, Antonio Sorbo, Mibact - Direzione regionale Musei Molise, Archivio Museo Winterline Venafro.

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