

**M**t. Vesuvius is the only active volcano in continental Europe, the most populated (20 municipalities with a total of 400,000 residents) and is also the most extensively studied volcano on Earth. The current shape of the volcano is the result of the continual alternation between "explosive" type eruptions, which have produced proclastic deposits, and "effusive" type ones, which instead have produced lava; the resulting volcanic structure is defined as volcanic stratum.

The earliest eruptions, which took place between 25,000 and 17,000 years ago, partly destroyed the most ancient volcano, Mt. Somma, within which the Gran Cono of Mt. Vesuvius later formed. The two structures as a whole are known as the Somma-Vesuvius volcanic complex and are a typical example of a fence layer volcano.

The highest point of Mt. Vesuvius reaches 1,282 metres above sea level. The current crater has a diameter of 650 metres and a depth of 230 metres. At the base of the crater there are a number of eruptive openings which discharged many of the streams of lava from 1631 up until 1944, the year of the last eruption. Today there are small fumaroles on the Gran Cono of Mt. Vesuvius, a sign of its dormant state.

Mt. Somma reaches a height of 1,132 metres above sea level, with Punta Nasone, and has a base diameter of approximately 15 km. The "fence" of Mt. Somma is well preserved on its northern part and the old crater edge has a succession of peaks known as *Cognoli*. On the external slope meteorological events over thousands of years have created numerous ravines. The southern enclosure, however, has now disappeared completely and in its place there is a flat area, called *Piano delle Ginestre*. Mt. Vesuvius and Mt. Somma are separated by a depression known as *Valle del Gigante*, itself divided into *Atrio del Cavallo* to the west and *Valle dell'Inferno* to the east.

The environment



**T**he Vesuvius side has a characteristic Mediterranean-type vegetation. Colonisation of the lava by vegetation happens thanks to a greyish-silver lichen called *Stereocaulon vesuvianum*, which prepares the ground for settlement by other pioneering species, and eventually *maquis* or scrub is formed. The Somma side instead is damper and is covered by mesophyll forest vegetation, with a prevalence of mixed woodlands of *Chestnut*, *Oak*, *Alder*, *Maple* and *Ilex* trees.

Over nine hundred plant species have colonised the volcanic complex over time; the current composition of its flora includes 610 species, among which 18 endemic ones of great interest, such as *Helichysium litreum*. Another interesting feature is the presence of twenty species of orchids and small nuclei of Birch (*Betula pendula*), remaining evidence of the mesophyll woodland that once covered the slopes of the volcano.

The fauna is interesting too. Some of the mammals that can be found are the *Wood mouse*, the *Stone marten*, the *Fox*, the *wild Rabbit* and the *Hare*. The most commonly-found vertebrates are birds, with about 140 species, among which the *Sparrow hawk*, the *Peregrine falcon*, the *Buzzard*, the *Redstart*, the *Wood Pigeon* and the *Imperial crow*. As far as amphibians are concerned there is a considerable *Emerald toad* population, while there are eight species of reptiles, among which the *Rat snake* and the *Aesculapian coluber*. There is also a large community of invertebrates, including 44 different species of butterflyes.

# Somma Vesuvius

Agriculture



**a volcano to be respected, a mountain to love.**

**S**ince ancient times man has settled at the foot of Mt. Vesuvius, because its fertile volcanic soil and temperate climate have favoured the emergence of thriving agriculture there. The extensive oak woods have slowly been replaced by vineyards and orchards, which are still the main crops farmed in the area today. Among the best-known products are: *apricots*, in a wide range of varieties, *cherries*, which are mostly grown at the foot of Mt. Somma, the famous *pomodorini da serbo*, cherry tomatoes that are kept all year long, hanging from the walls or ceilings in characteristic *piennoli*, and the giant *cauliflower* among the vegetable species. Vesuvius however, is above all a wine-growing area; one of its most renowned wines is the *Piedrosso*, which together with *Falanghina*, is the Vesuvian red and rose wine with a Controlled Denomination of Origin, while the white wine with the same denomination comes from the *Coda di Volpe* vineyard, which has ancient origins. The Falangina, Piedrosso and Coda di Volpe grapes are used to produce the famous *Lacryma Christi* wine.

**A**drive towards local development has to be a priority if culture and traditional activities are to be effectively exploited; also for promoting tourism in the area.

The Park Authority involves the local community in initiatives based on the rediscovery of and appreciation of cultural traditions and local production that symbolise work, the passion of the people of Vesuvius, the history and memory of the protected area. It works to make the territory competitive, even on the wider market, with its typical produce.

It is the Park Authority's inexorable aim to give cultural activities linked to the protection and promotion of anthropological and historical values, an essential social communication function, and a fundamental tool for promoting local cultures.

Many events of cultural interest are held in the municipalities of the Park during the year, and these belong to the communities that live within the Park. The strategic importance of the Park Authority's participation in these events has found expression in the promotion and rediscovery of popular celebrations, publicising such events effectively through the media.



**Vesuvius National Park**  
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tel. 081.8279460  
fax 081.8279460

**Forestry Service Station of Torre del Greco**  
tel. 081.8812097

**Forestry Service Station of San Sebastiano al Vesuvio**  
tel. 081.52761090

**State Forestry Company of Trecase**  
tel. 081.5372391

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**Regional College of Volcanological Alpine Guides of Campania**  
tel. 081.8811360  
fax 081.7775220

**Vesuvius Volcanological Observatory**  
tel. 081.7777149

**National Antiquarium**  
via Settembre, 15  
(location Villa Regalia)  
Boscotrecase  
tel. 081.5368795  
Open every day  
from 9.00am to 3.00pm  
Closed 1st January, 1st May and 29th December

**Museum of Rural Civilisation**  
via S. Maria del Pozzo  
Somma Vesuviana  
tel. 081.5318626  
Open every day  
from 9.00am to 1.00pm  
and Saturday and Sunday  
from 9.00am to 8.00pm

**Corral Museum**  
piazza Riformata, 6  
Torre del Greco  
tel. 081.8811360  
fax 081.7775220

**Vesuvius Museum of Pompeii**  
"Villa Bartolo Longo"  
via S. Bartolomeo, 12  
Pompeii  
Open every day  
from 8.00am to 2.00pm

**Pietrarsa Railway**  
Museum  
via Petrosina  
Pietrarsa  
tel. 081.722003  
Open Monday to Saturday  
from 9.00am to 3.00pm  
Closed Sundays and Public Holidays

**Mineralogical Museum of Campania**  
(Diseppio Foundation)  
via S. Circo, 2  
Vico Equense  
tel. 081.8019568  
Open every day  
from 9.00am to 1.00pm  
Monday afternoon

**Royal Mineralogical Università Federico II**  
Naples  
tel. 081.5473361/262  
Open Monday to Friday  
from 10.00am to 1.00pm  
Saturday and Sunday  
10.00am to 1.00pm

**Herculaneum Ruins**  
corso Resina  
Ercolano  
tel. 081.7390963  
Open every day  
from 9.00am until sunset  
Closed 1st January, 1st May and 29th December

**Opolenti Ruins**  
via Spadoliti, Torre Annunziata  
tel. 081.8621795  
Open every day  
from 9.00am to 1.00pm  
Closed 1st January, 1st May and 29th December

**Pompeii Ruins**  
piazza Esedra  
Pompeii  
Ruins Office  
tel. 081.88010214  
Open every day  
from 9.00am to 1.00pm  
Closed 1st January, 1st May and 29th December

**Nature History Culture**

**The Vesuvius National Park**  
a volcano to be respected, a mountain to love.

The Park is situated in the province of Naples, and extends 8,482 hectares across the territory of 13 municipalities: Boscotrecase, Boscotrecase, Ercolano, Massa di Somma, Ottaviano, Pollena Trocchia, Sant'Anastasia, San Giuseppe Vesuviano, San Sebastiano al Vesuvio, Somma Vesuviana, Terzigno, Torre del Greco and Trecase.

It also includes two European Community Sites of Importance, a Special Protection Zone, a Wilderness area and a National Forest Reserve; proof of the extraordinary natural and environmental interest that this territory attracts.

The Park is also guardian of a rich cultural and folkloric patrimony, comprising religious celebrations, dances, songs and music which testify the history of the people of Vesuvius, and highly regarded coral, lava stone and copper craftsmanship.



## The Vesuvius National Park

The Vesuvius National Park was officially designated on June 5<sup>th</sup> 1995, in order to protect the last-remaining active volcanic complex in Europe.

The aims of the Park are:

- > conservation of its fauna, flora and geomorphologic structures;
- > application of administration and environmental protection programmes;
- > promotion of educational, recreational and sustainable research activities;
- > reconstitution and defence of hydraulic and hydrogeological balances in the area;
- > promotion of traditional cultural, agricultural and craftwork activities.

The Vesuvius National Park nature trail network comprises 9 trails that let visitors discover all of the beauty and peculiar features of the Somma-Vesuvius volcanic complex. Each trail has been made safe using special engineering techniques, and signposted with information on the nature, geology and history of the trail. There are signs indicating the colour of the trail shown on the signpost at the beginning of the trail.



- Trail no.1: The Valle dell'Inferno (yellow)**  
 Location: municipality of Ottaviano  
 Starting point/Finishing point: Provincial road Ottaviano-Monte Somma  
 Typology: circular nature trail  
 Total length: 9972 m  
 Level of difficulty: high  
 Time required to complete trail: Short option: 2.45 hrs round trip Intermediate option: 4 hrs round trip Complete distance option: 9 hrs round trip  
 The Valle dell'Inferno separates the old caldera of Mt. Somma from Mt. Vesuvius and is engulfed by the lava from the last eruption in 1944, colonised by *Stereocaulon vesuvianum* lichen.
- Trail no.2: Along the Cognoli (blue)**  
 Location: municipality of Ottaviano  
 Starting point/Arrival point: Provincial road Ottaviano-Monte Somma  
 Typology: circular nature trail  
 Total length: 8134 m  
 Level of difficulty: high  
 Time required to complete trail: Short option: 2.30 hrs round trip Intermediate option: 4.30 hrs round trip Complete distance option: 8 hrs round trip  
 The trail climbs the ridges of the Cognoli di Ottaviano and the Cognoli di Levante; on these you can admire the most beautiful rope-like lava formation of the volcanic complex, carved with a deep fissure which is the habitat of numerous species of fern.
- Trail no.3: Mt. Somma (green)**  
 Location: municipality of Ercolano  
 Starting point/Arrival point: Provincial road Ercolano-Vesuvius  
 Typology: circular nature trail  
 Total length: 7650 m  
 Level of difficulty: high  
 Time required to complete trail: Short option: 1.30 hrs round trip Intermediate option: 3 hrs round trip



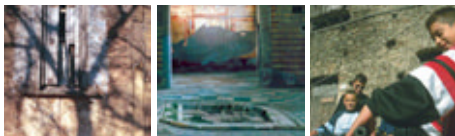
- Trail no.4: Across Riserva Tirone (orange)**  
 Location: municipality of Ercolano  
 Starting point/Arrival point: Provincial road Ercolano-Vesuvius  
 Typology: circular nature trail  
 Total length: 8413 m  
 Level of difficulty: low  
 Time required to complete trail: Short option: 3 hrs round trip Intermediate option: 5 hrs round trip Complete distance option: 7 hrs round trip  
 This trail follows most of the Tirone Alto Vesuvius Forestry Reserve established in 1972, and alternates between closed stretches of pine forest and ilex groves, and open stretches of maquis or scrub, and reaches the 1944 lava flow where the Gulf of Naples can be admired from.
- Trail no.5: The Gran Cono (red)**  
 Location: municipality of Ercolano  
 Starting point/Arrival point: Provincial road Ercolano-Vesuvius  
 Typology: circular nature trail  
 Total length: 3807 m  
 Level of difficulty: moderate  
 Time required to complete trail: Short option: 1 hr round trip
- Trail no.6: Along the Strada Matrone (violet)**  
 Location: municipality of Trecase  
 Starting point/Arrival point: via Cifelli  
 Typology: panoramic trail  
 Total length: 6877 m  
 Level of difficulty: high  
 Time required to complete trail: Short option: 2 hrs round trip



- Trail no.7: Il Vallone della Profica (brown)**  
 Location: municipality of San Giuseppe Vesuviano  
 Starting point/Arrival point: via Profica Palata in Santa Maria La Scala  
 Typology: agricultural trail  
 Total length: 1718 m  
 Level of difficulty: low  
 Time required to complete trail: Complete distance option: 1.30 hrs round trip  
 This trail crosses a variety of environments: cultivated fields, which exemplify the ancient link that exists between the people of the Vesuvius area, the fertile volcanic soil, and deciduous woods and pine forests, ideal habitats for the abundant *Vesuvius avifauna*.
- Trail no.8: Il trenino a cremagliera (light blue)**  
 Location: municipality of San Sebastiano al Vesuvio  
 Starting point/Arrival point: via Panoramica Fellapane  
 Typology: educational trail  
 Total length: 690 m  
 Level of difficulty: low  
 Time required to complete trail: Complete distance option: 1.30 hrs round trip  
 This trail crosses woodland and maquis, reaching the typical grey-coloured tongue of lava of 1944 covered in *Stereocaulon vesuvianum*. Along the trail you can see hydraulic works that the Bourbons carried out in the area around Vesuvius.
- Trail no.9: Il fiume di lava (grey)**  
 Location: municipality of Ercolano  
 Starting point/Arrival point: Provincial road Ercolano-Vesuvius at via Osservatorio  
 Typology: educational trail  
 Total length: 690 m  
 Level of difficulty: low  
 Time required to complete trail: Complete distance option: 1.30 hrs round trip  
 This trail crosses woodland and maquis, reaching the typical grey-coloured tongue of lava of 1944 covered in *Stereocaulon vesuvianum*. Along the trail you can see hydraulic works that the Bourbons carried out in the area around Vesuvius.

## The Park municipalities

boscoreale boscotrecase ercolano massa di somma ottaviano pollena trocchia sant'anastasia san giuseppe vesuviano san sebastiano al vesuvio somma vesuviana terzigno torre del greco trecase



**Boscoreale** Farming town famous for its fruit and wines, but also for the *Antiquarium*: a museum that was opened in 1991 and gives the chance to admire and discover the natural environments of Vesuvius and the daily life of the inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum before the fatal eruption of 79 AC. Numerous testimonies of the *Ville patrizie*, the imposing *Villa Regina* stands out among these.

**Boscotrecase** A town very close to the ruins of Pompeii, that became a starting point for the ascent up to the crater in the twenties, when the *strada Matrone* was opened. It is currently a base for visits to the Tirone-Alto Vesuvio Nature Reserve. There is an interesting church in the town centre; the church of the *Ave Gratia Plena*, built in 1688. It is one of the oldest places of worship in the Vesuvius area.

**Ercolano** Via Vesuvio starts in this municipality. This provincial road, which crosses the path of the lava flow of 1944, arrives at the Vesuvius Observatory and ends at the foot of the Gran Cono. The *Miglio d'oro* (Golden Mile) crosses this town, with its splendid eighteenth century noble residences. It is best known, however, for its famous and extraordinary ruins and the air of millennial history that you can almost breathe when you visit here.



**Massa di Somma** Situated at the foot of the volcano, most of this municipality was destroyed by the 1944 eruption, as was the nearby town of San Sebastiano, and there is therefore a prevalence of modern architecture. The ancient church of the *Assunta* (Our Lady of the Assumption) is in ruins, but some well-preserved Vesuvius farmhouse can be found around the town.

**Ottaviano** This farming town at the foot of Mt. Somma was for many years a sought-after holiday destination. It is dominated from above by the Castle, where Pope Gregory VII was given hospitality in 1085 and that was destroyed by Carlo D'Angio in 1304, to later be rebuilt from 1567 onwards by Bernadetto de' Medici. There are still a number of seventeenth and eighteenth-century churches here, amongst which the impressive *Sanctuary of San Michele Arcangelo*.

**Pollena Trocchia** This area comprises two municipalities, and Trocchia is undoubtedly the most attractive of the two, with its picturesque mediaeval district. In the *Congrega del SS. Sacramento* (Congregation of the Holy Sacrament), there is still a splendid organ dating back to 1793. In Pollena, the most important monument is instead the *neoclassic parish church of San Giacomo* (St James) in the central piazza Amodio.



**Sant'Anastasia** still has an interesting historical centre, and is famous for its copper craftwork. The parish church of *Santa Maria la Nova* is its most noteworthy monument. A short distance away from the centre is the *Sanctuary of the Madonna dell'Arco*, where every Easter Monday the traditional pilgrimage of the *fujenti* (barefoot pilgrims who run to the sanctuary) takes place, bringing together thousands of Christians from all over the Campania region.

**San Giuseppe Vesuviano** This town has endured the volcano's fury on several occasions, and was completely covered by ash during the 1906 eruption. Its most significant monuments worth visiting are the church of the *Virgine Madre di Dio* (Virgin Mother of God), built in the second half of the eighteenth century at the will of the farmworkers, and the *Sanctuary of San Giuseppe* (St Joseph), with its splendid neo-classical façade.

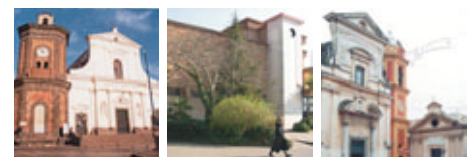


**San Sebastiano al Vesuvio** is the nearest of the Vesuvius towns to Naples. It was razed to the ground by the last eruption in 1944; today it is predominantly modern in its appearance, having been rebuilt. An imposing white dome, which dominates the town centre, identifies the eighteenth-century church of *San Sebastiano*, which miraculously escaped the disastrous eruption.

**Somma Vesuviana** still has an interesting historical centre; the *Casamale* is the town's oldest district: it is still surrounded by Aragonese walls, and the castle ruins and the splendid *Collegiata* can be found here. Below the built-up area of the town is the fifteenth-century church of *Santa Maria del Pozzo* and the nearby *Museum of Rural Civilisation*, which brings together 3200 everyday objects and approximately 3000 photographs on agriculture in the Campania region.

**Terzigno** Terzigno This eighteenth-century town gets its name from the third stream of lava or "third fire" that destroyed the strata of the volcano in 1631. Among the monuments worth visiting here are the *Tempio dell'Immacolata*, unveiled in 1758, the remains of the church of *San Francesco* (St Francis) and the stately *Villa Bifulco*. Terzigno also boasts a traditional and well-known wine production.

**Torre del Greco** is the most heavily populated town in the protected area, and particularly well-known for coral production. However there are other sites of historical importance worth visiting here, such as the neo-classical church of *Santa Croce*, the *Palazzo Vallalonga*, the *Isea Villa del Cardinale*, and the *Villa Porta*. Not to be missed either, are the breathtaking view offered from the Convent of the *Carmalidoli della Torre* and the *Villa delle Ginestre*, where Giacomo Leopardi was given hospitality.



**Trecase** is a small town at the foot of Mt. Vesuvius. Its historical centre boasts the sixteenth-century church of *Santa Maria delle Grazie* and the *Villas Langella, Filippone, Lebano e Ruta*. Guided tours of the enchanting cluster pine and ilex forest leave from the Forestry station at Trecase, at the heart of the nature reserve, while around the built-up area a number of small craters can be seen here and there, dating back to the eighteenth century.