



MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY OF THE MATESE ZONE · PNRR M2C1 Green Communities · Investment 3.2 · CUP: E14H25000590006 Intervention No. 4 "Experiential Geo-Tourism of the Matese" · Item A - Mapping and Storytelling · Year 2026

TITLE

TRAIL P04 · GEO-NATURALISTIC · GALLO MATESE · CAI TRAIL 113

Trail of the Fairies - Campo Figliuolo and Fontana dei Palombi

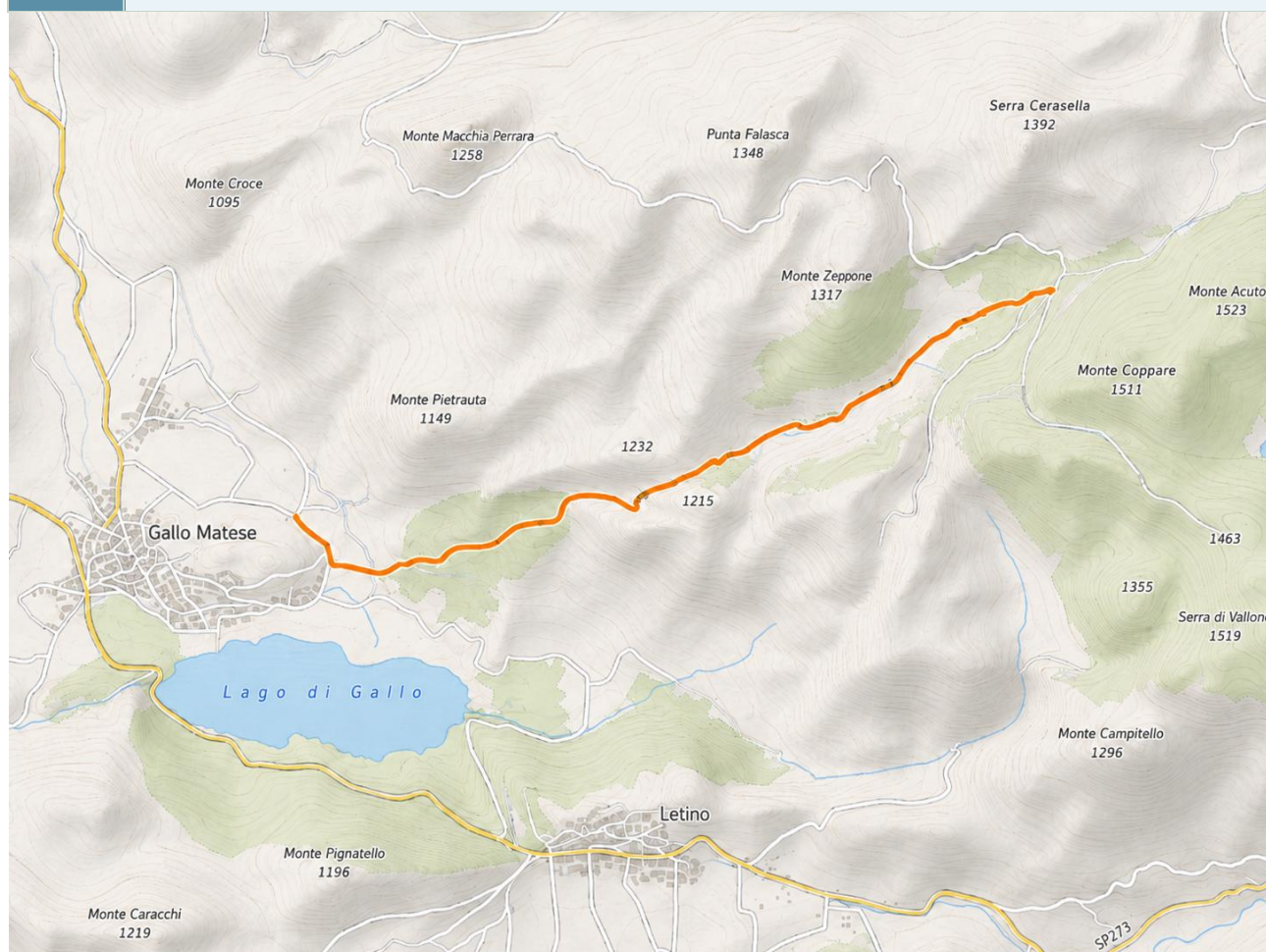
Karst swallow holes, centuries-old beeches, and wild horses on the Matese plateaux - Best #4

TECHNICAL DATA

Length	Elevation Gain	Duration	Difficulty	Type	Season
10.5 km out-and-back	+500 / -500 m	4.5–5.5 hours	Medium (E) CAI 113	Out-and-back - same route	April – November

ROUTE MAP - SCHEMATIC LAYOUT

SCALA ~1:15,000 · WGS84 · Cartographic processing.



GPX

GPX 1.1 file attached: P04_Sentiero_delle_Fate.gpx. Confirmed CAI 113 track. GPX out-and-back - return on same route. Reference track: <https://it.wikiloc.com/percorsi-escursionismo/gallo-matese-sentiero-delle-fate-campo-figliuolo-e-fontana-dei-palombi-168915055>

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

DESC	The iconic trail of the Campania Matese Regional Park (Best #4 - confirmed CAI 113). Starting from the north shore of Lake Gallo (824 m a.s.l.), it climbs through century-old beeches and "speaking stones" - moss-covered erratic boulders - to the karst plateaux of Campo Figliolo (~1,200 m), with an endorheic basin and wild horses grazing. It ends at Fontana dei Palombi (1,173 m): nine basins hand-carved in limestone in 1914. Over 30 user tracks on Wikiloc (2021–2025). The route is out-and-back - the available GPX covers the outward leg only, the return is on the same track.
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POINTS OF INTEREST - TRIPARTITE GEO / FAUNA / HISTORY ANALYSIS

POI-01	Lake Gallo - Sava Swallow Hole (824 m a.s.l.)
GEO	Artificial lake (1961) on a karst doline. The Sava stream - which feeds the lake - disappears into a swallow hole in the plain below and re-emerges above Fontegrega: the most didactic karst geosite of the Matese. Turquoise waters due to high calcium carbonate concentration. Underground gallery of 18 km towards the Capriati power plant.
FAUNA	Mallard, Common Coot, Grey Heron, Common Kingfisher, Moorhen. Occasionally Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>) on migration.
HISTORY	The Gallo Lake dam was built in 1961 for hydroelectric production. The Sava swallow hole was known to local shepherds as "the hole where the river disappears": a geographical enigma solved only by 20th-century hydrogeologists.

POI-02	Beech Forest - "Speaking Stones" (850–1,100 m a.s.l.)
GEO	The carbonate monocline of Monte Gallo is built from Triassic–Jurassic limestones and dolomites. The moss-covered erratic boulders - "speaking stones" of local tradition - are limestone blocks detached by Pleistocene glacial cryoclastism. The beech forest is the climax woodland on deep limestone substrate.
FAUNA	Black Woodpecker (<i>Dryocopus martius</i>), Eurasian Jay (<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>), Short-toed Snake Eagle (<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>). In late spring: Common Cuckoo (<i>Cuculus canorus</i>). Apennine Wolf (<i>Canis lupus italicus</i>) - documented presence in the Matese.
HISTORY	The beech forest of the Trail of the Fairies is one of the most frequented woodlands of the Matese: over 30 GPS tracks on Wikiloc (2021–2025) testify to the growing popularity of the route. The "speaking stones" enter local folklore as the houses of the fairies said to inhabit Campo Figliolo.

POI-03	Campo Figliolo - Endorheic Basin (1,200 m a.s.l.)
GEO	Karst plateau with endorheic basin: surface drainage disappears into underground karst conduits. The stream of Campo Figliolo does not drain outward but "swallows" its waters. An ideal landscape feature for explaining surface karst: the water that falls does not leave - it vanishes into the mountain.
FAUNA	Wild horses grazing (Persano and mixed breed). Harrier, Kestrel, Hoopoe (<i>Upupa epops</i>) in summer. Enormous variety of mountain Lepidoptera in June–July.
HISTORY	Campo Figliolo was summer pasture for the transhumant shepherds of the Volturno Valley. The oral tradition of Gallo Matese speaks of "fairies" who would dance on the plateaux at night, hence the trail's name.

POI-04	Fontana dei Palombi - Hydraulic Structure (1,173 m a.s.l.)
GEO	Monumentalised karst spring: water emerges from the Triassic dolomitic limestones after an underground journey of several kilometres. The nine basins carved in limestone in 1914 are an example of how underground geology becomes a visible public asset.
FAUNA	The Common Wood Pigeon (<i>Columba palumbus</i>) - from which the name "Palombi" derives - frequents the area. Cold, clear waters with rare macroinvertebrates.
HISTORY	Built by hand in 1914 by local masons. On the boundary between Gallo Matese, Letino, and Roccamandolfi. Water available for refilling. The date carved on the main basin recalls an era when mountain karst water was the only source available for shepherds and their flocks.

GEOHISTORY OF THE PLACE

Narrative	The Sava is a strange river. It rises on the plateaux, flows through the valley, then disappears. The shepherds of Gallo Matese who watched it swallow itself into the earth could not explain it: the mountain drank the water. For centuries this remained a local mystery, fed by stories of fairies and underground creatures. Today we know that the Sava's water travels through karst conduits in the Triassic dolomites and re-emerges above Fontegreca, kilometres away. But the magic of the place has not diminished: Campo Figliolo, with its wild horses and its meadows enclosed by limestone walls with no visible exit, is still a place where time seems suspended.
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EXPERIENTIAL PACKAGE

PACKAGE PKG-04	"Where Does the Water Go?" - Karst GeoTrekking on the Trail of the Fairies
Target: Experienced hikers, families from age 10, upper-school groups (with guide)	The iconic trail of the Campania Matese: swallow holes, beeches, wild horses, and the mystery of the disappearing water. Over 30 GPS tracks confirm the popularity of the route.
Duration: 5–6 h total	Difficoltà: Medium (E) - CAI 113
Periodo: May – October	Mobility: On foot, out-and-back. Start Via Oriente, Gallo Matese (41.4630°N, 14.2360°E)
Features:	Walking lesson on swallow holes and endorheic basins · Photography workshop on karst landscape · Fauna and pastoralism storytelling · Fresh water at Fontana dei Palombi · Tasting of Gallo Matese products

SAFETY WARNINGS

	Unstable rocks - risk of sprains. Non-slip trekking footwear mandatory. Trekking poles recommended on descent. Water available at Fontana dei Palombi. 📶CNSAS: 112.
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ACCESS AND LOGISTICS

Start	Via Oriente, Gallo Matese (41.4630°N, 14.2360°E). Roadside parking.
By car	From Capriati a Volturno: SP towards Gallo Matese (~20 km, 35 min).

IDENTIFIED ISSUES

Issues	Description	Priority
Type	Out-and-back: return on the same track. The Wikiloc GPX covers the outward leg only.	MEDIUM
Safety	Unstable rocks. Trekking footwear mandatory. Poles recommended on descent.	HIGH

WEB REFERENCES

- geo-matese.it - Geo-Matese Platform (Item B, Specification M4)
- www.parcoregionaledelmatese.it - Matese Regional Park Authority
- www.wikiloc.com - GPS hiking tracks of the Matese
- www.sentieroitalia.cai.it - Sentiero Italia CAI
- geoportale.mite.gov.it - ISPRA/MITE Geoportal: geosites, Natura 2000 habitats
- www.borghipiubelliditalia.it - Most Beautiful Villages of Italy
- www.opentopomap.org - Free topographic maps WGS84
- www.regione.campania.it/turismo - Campania Tourism
- <https://it.wikiloc.com/percorsi-escursionismo/gallo-matese-sentiero-delle-fate-campo-figliuolo-e-fontana-dei-palombi-168915055> - Traccia di riferimento P04

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Mountain Community of the Matese Zone (2026) - Special Contract Specification, Intervention No. 4. CUP E14H25000590006.
- CAI Club Alpino Italiano (2020) - Trail classification and waymarking standards.
- ISPRA (2019) - Italian geosites. Rome: ISPRA Reports 307/2019.
- Amato V. et al. (2014) - Geomorphology and late Quaternary evolution of the Matese Massif. Geomorphology, 214.
- Grimaldi S. et al. (2018) - Hydrogeological characterization of the Matese karst aquifer. J. Hydrology, 556.
- EUROPARC (2019) - Loving them to death? Sustainable tourism in Europe's Protected Areas.

GPS TRACKS AND MAPS ON OUTDOOR PLATFORMS - VERIFIED LINKS P04

Wikiloc	Trail of the Fairies - Campo Figliuolo and Fontana dei Palombi (Gallo Matese) - main track https://it.wikiloc.com/percorsi-escursionismo/gallo-matese-sentiero-delle-fate-campo-figliuolo-e-fontana-dei-palombi-168915055
Wikiloc	Trail of the Fairies from Lake Gallo Matese - Campo Figliolo, Fontana del Campo and Palombi (alternative) https://it.wikiloc.com/percorsi-escursionismo/sentiero-delle-fate-dal-lago-di-gallo-matese-campo-figliolo-fontana-del-campo-e-fontana-dei-palombi-210736143

⚠ Tracks on Wikiloc/Komoot are user-uploaded and may differ from the official route described in this data sheet.