

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 P05 · NATURE-SPORT · SAN GREGORIO MATESE / CASTELLO DEL MATESE

Matese Lake Loop

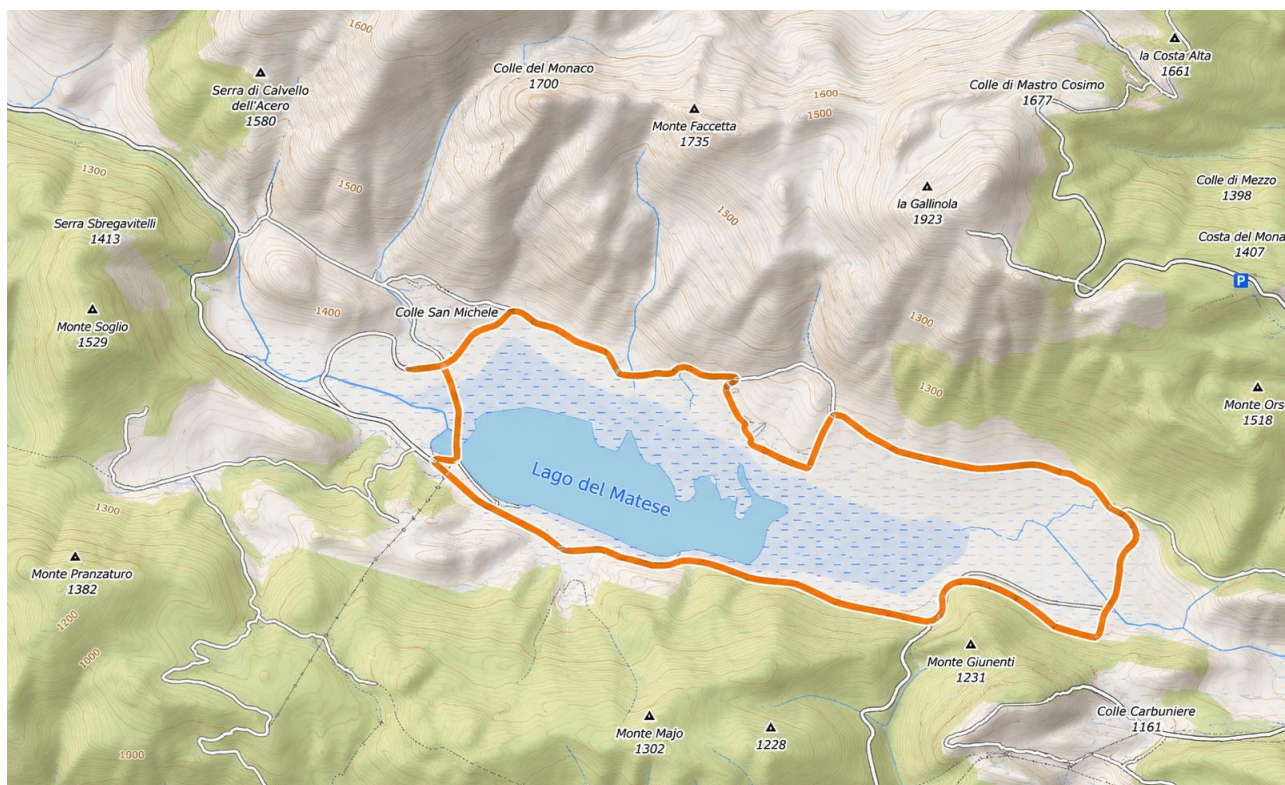
The highest karst lake in Italy · SPA/SAC · Monte Miletto (2,050 m) · Kayak · Nordic skiing

TECHNICAL DATA

Length	Elevation Gain	Duration	Difficulty	Type	Season
12 km	+180 / -180 m	3.5–4 hours	Easy (T)	Loop	April – Nov. (Nordic skiing in winter)

ROUTE MAP - SCHEMATIC LAYOUT

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



GPX

GPX 1.1 file attached: P05_Anello_del_Lago_Matese <https://it.wikiloc.com/percorsi-corsa/giro-lago-del-matese-110171676> - Loop track 12 km. South shore on SP asphalt, north shore on dirt track.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

DESC	Lake Matese is the highest karst lake in Italy (1,010 m a.s.l.) and the largest natural lake in Campania: 8 km long, 2 km wide, maximum depth 15 m. SPA (Special Protection Area) and SAC. At the foot of Monte Miletto (2,050 m). The 12 km loop follows the entire lakeshore, alternating panoramic asphalt sections (south shore, SP331) with silent dirt track (north shore). Active karst swallow holes naturally regulate water levels. In winter: Nordic skiing on SP331. Kayak and canoe on the south shore.
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POINTS OF INTEREST - TRIPARTITE GEO / FAUNA / HISTORY ANALYSIS

POI-01	Miralago Viewpoint - Karst Polje (1,010 m a.s.l.)
GEO	Lake Matese is a karst polje: a closed depression of tectonic and karst origin, partially flooded. The limestone walls of Monte Miletto (2,050 m, Upper Cretaceous) are reflected in the water. The seasonal level varies by 1–2 m, regulated by the swallow hole "Lo Scennerato".
FAUNA	Exceptional birdwatching: Ferruginous Duck (<i>Aythya nyroca</i> - protected species), Common Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>), White Stork (<i>Ciconia ciconia</i> - irregular visitor), Little Egret (<i>Egretta garzetta</i>), Black-crowned Night Heron (<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>) on migration.
HISTORY	The lake is the landscape identity of the Matese. Known since classical antiquity (Pliny the Elder cites it in the <i>Naturalis Historia</i>), it was used for wildfowl hunting and fishing by mountain communities.

POI-02	"Lo Scennerato" - Active Swallow Hole (1,010 m a.s.l.)
GEO	The swallow hole "Lo Scennerato" (dialect for "lo scannato" = the throat) is the main hydrological regulator of the lake. During periods of low lake level (late summer) it is visible from the north shore. A didactic geosite for explaining deep karst and the connection between high-altitude lakes and valley-floor springs.
FAUNA	Perimeter wetlands with reedbeds: Common Reed Bunting, Great Reed Warbler, Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>). Lataste's Frog (<i>Rana latastei</i> - Po-Apennine endemic, anomalous presence at altitude: study ongoing).
HISTORY	Local tradition attributed the disappearance of the lake water to supernatural forces. Only in the 20th century did hydrogeology map the karst conduits connecting the lake to the valley-floor springs.

POI-03	North Shore - Springs and CycloLake (1,010 m a.s.l.)
GEO	Silent dirt track between meadows and white willow and white poplar woodland. Perennial springs fed by snowmelt (Nov.–Apr.). The "CycloLake of the Matese" is one of the rarest high-altitude cycleways in Southern Italy.
FAUNA	Common Kingfisher, Grey Heron, marsh orchids (<i>Dactylorhiza sambucina</i> and <i>D. maculata</i>) in the damp meadows in May. Water Vole (<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>) on the lake shores.
HISTORY	The north shore was used for mowing the mountain meadows (fallow). Even today some families of S. Gregorio Matese maintain the civic use of the lakeside pastures.

POI-04	Rifugio dell'Esule (1,050 m a.s.l.) - Logistics Base
GEO	The refuge is situated on the SW slope of the lake, at the highest point of the route. From here depart the ascent paths to Monte Miletto (2,050 m) and Monte La Gallinola (1,923 m): the two highest peaks of the Matese, both in Cretaceous limestones with rudist and fossil outcrops.
FAUNA	The refuge area is the best observation point for spotting Roe Deer (<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>) at dawn. Apennine Chamois (<i>Rupicapra pyrenaica ornata</i>) occasionally on the walls of M. Miletto.
HISTORY	Rifugio dell'Esule (1,050 m a.s.l.) is managed seasonally from May to October. Booking mandatory for overnight stays. It is the logistics base for the Great Traverse of the Caserta Matese (P09).

GEOHISTORY OF THE PLACE

Narrative	Pliny the Elder wrote of this lake: "amnis Sarnus... lacus Matese" - the waters of the Matese, mysterious and inexhaustible source. The lake has always been the strategic water resource of the Matese: fishing, watering place, water mills. Today it is SPA and SAC, but for the communities of S. Gregorio Matese and Castello del Matese it remains the geographical and identity heart of the mountain.
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EXPERIENTIAL PACKAGE

PACKAGE PKG-05	"The Lake of Lakes" - Nature Loop and Outdoor Sports at Lake Matese
Target: Families from age 5, cyclists (MTB/e-bike), birdwatchers, school groups. Partial PMR accessibility (south shore)	The highest karst lake in Italy: waterfowl, active swallow holes, kayak and, in winter, Nordic skiing. An accessible loop with a variety of outdoor activities year-round.
Duration: 3.5–4 h (hiking) / 1.5 h (cycling)	Difficoltà: Easy (T) - adatto da 5 anni
Periodo: April – November / Sci nordico: Dicembre – Marzo	Mobility: On foot or by bike - loop. Miralago Viewpoint car park (41.4060°N, 14.3480°E)
Features:	Guided loop + Birdwatching with binoculars + Kayak/canoe (booking required) + Nordic skiing (winter) + Refuge visit + Bilingual brochure SPA/SAC

SAFETY WARNINGS

	Active swallow holes near the shores: do not approach during flood periods. North shore: mixed surface. Strong wind in winter. Rifugio Esule: booking mandatory. ☎Refuge: +39 0823 1923501.
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ACCESS AND LOGISTICS

Start	Miralago Viewpoint car park, SP331/SP181 (41.4060°N, 14.3480°E).
By car	From Piedimonte Matese: SP181 towards Lake Matese (~25 km, 35 min).
Facilities	Rifugio dell'Esule (May–Oct). Kayak/canoe hire, south shore.

IDENTIFIED ISSUES

Issues	Description	Priority
Safety	Active swallow holes near the shores: do not approach during flood periods. Strong wind in winter.	MEDIUM
Accessibility	North shore: dirt track accessible only by bike or on foot. South shore: SP asphalt (PMR accessible).	LOW

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
- www.komoot.com - Lago del Matese – Ciclolago del Matese giro ad anello

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 P05

Wikiloc

Loop around Lake Matese - paved and dirt roads (suitable for cycle tourism)
<https://it.wikiloc.com/percorsi-corsa/giro-lago-del-matese-110171676>

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