

TITLE

TRAIL P06 · GEO-BOTANIC · FONTEGRECA · MATESE REGIONAL PARK

The Sava Resurgence and the Cipresseta di Fontegreca

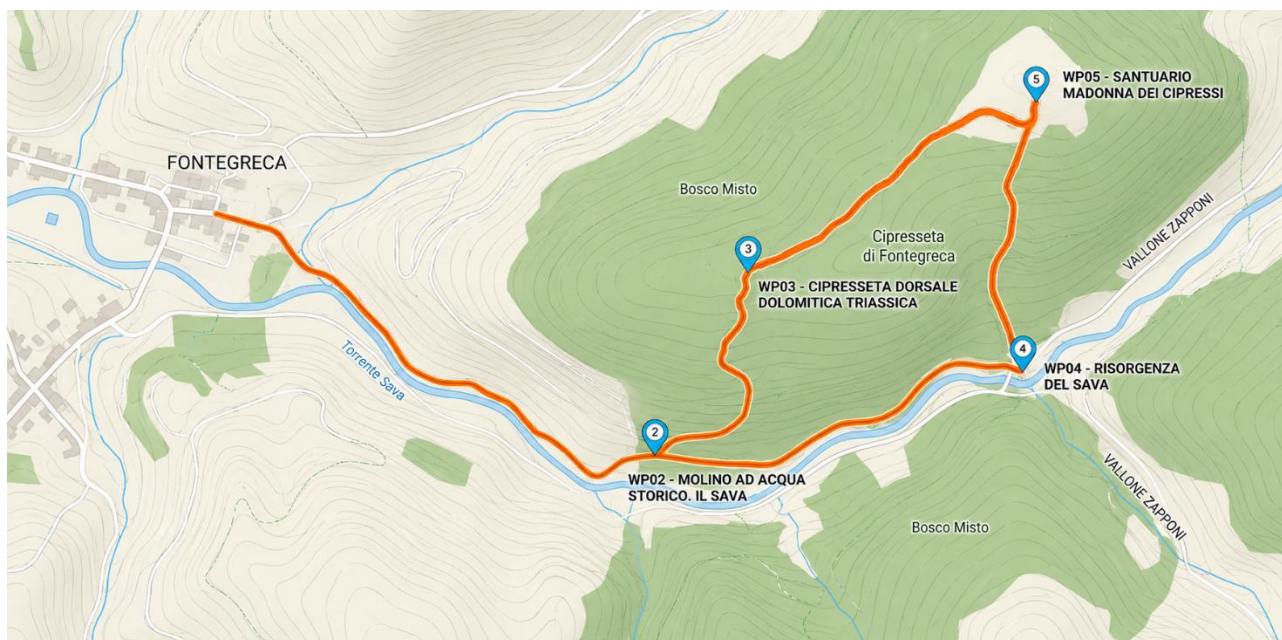
Triassic dolomites · Sava karst cycle · relict cypress grove unique in Europe - Best #1

TECHNICAL DATA

Length	Elevation Gain	Duration	Difficulty	Type	Season
3.92 km	+181 m	1.5–2 hours	Easy (T)	Loop	Year-round

ROUTE MAP - SCHEMATIC LAYOUT

SCALA ~1:15,000 · WGS84 · Provisional illustrative map.



GPX

Traccia breve 3.92 km. Riferimento: <https://it.wikiloc.com/percorsi-escursionismo/cipresseta-di-fontegreca-242958594>

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

DESC	Among the five best geo-tourism trails of the Matese (Best #1), this loop in the Cipresseta di Fontegreca offers the best combination of local identity, ease of access, and narrative quality. The Bosco degli Zappini (~70 ha) is the only cypress grove in the Mediterranean free of bark cancer (<i>Seiridium cardinale</i>), with specimens of <i>Cupressus sempervirens</i> var. <i>horizontalis</i> over 500 years old - under CNR study. The route crosses the Sava karst resurgence, the historic mill, and the Madonna dei Cipressi Sanctuary.
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POINTS OF INTEREST - TRIPARTITE GEO / FAUNA / HISTORY ANALYSIS

POI-01	Fontegreca Historic Centre - "Fossaceca" (580 m a.s.l.)
GEO	The village on marly limestones of the Lower Cretaceous (Aptian–Albian, 125–100 Ma). The impermeable substrate determined the abundance of springs - hence the name Fontegreca. The original place name "Fossaceca" indicates a doline or closed depression: karst morphology readable in the urban layout.
FAUNA	Common Swift, Crag Martin, Black Redstart on the historic facades. Rupicolous flora: Wild Caper, oregano, maidenhair fern.
HISTORY	Clock Tower in local limestone. The historic mills of Fontegreca were powered by the Sava stream, which guaranteed perennial flow thanks to the karst system. The name "Fossaceca" recalls a medieval defensive moat or a terrain morphology.

POI-02	Historic Water Mill - The Sava (590 m a.s.l.)
GEO	The historic mill (18th–19th century) exploited the constant flow of the Sava thanks to karst recharge: the Sava disappears into a swallow hole in the Gallo plain and re-emerges above Fontegreca. A concrete example of how underground karst produces mechanical energy at the surface.
FAUNA	Fire Salamander (<i>Salamandra salamandra</i>), Italian Stream Frog (<i>Rana italica</i>), freshwater crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> , protected species Ann. II Dir. 92/43). Common Kingfisher along the Sava.
HISTORY	Mechanism "a ritrecine" (horizontal wheel) typical of Apennine mills. The last miller of Fontegreca stopped using it in the final decade of the 20th century. The local limestone structure is partially conserved.

POI-03	Cypress Grove - Triassic Dolomitic Ridge (640 m a.s.l.)
GEO	The cypress grove develops on Triassic dolomites and dolomitic limestones (Upper Triassic, ~220 Ma). The deepest soils - where the cypress is most vigorous - are limestone matrices comparable to terra rossa. Along the Sava, more fertile alluvial soils develop. Direct readability of the rock → soil → vegetation relationship.
FAUNA	The Bosco degli Zappini (~70 ha) is the only cypress grove in the Mediterranean free of bark cancer (<i>Seiridium cardinale</i>) - under CNR study. Specimens of <i>Cupressus sempervirens</i> var. <i>horizontalis</i> over 500 years old. Habitat of Great Spotted Woodpecker and Eurasian Jay.
HISTORY	The cypress grove is mentioned in the historical documents of the Mountain Community as the "sacred wood" of the Madonna dei Cipressi. Legend holds that the trees were planted by pilgrims in fulfilment of a vow.

POI-04	Sava Resurgence - Hydrological Geosite (620 m a.s.l.)
GEO	The interpretive key of the entire route: the Sava disappears into a swallow hole in the Gallo Matese plain and re-emerges above Fontegreca. The route allows narrating the complete cycle: disappearance → underground journey through the dolomites → resurgence. An exceptional didactic example of karst water circulation.
FAUNA	Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) recorded in the Sava downstream of the resurgence (sightings 2022–2024). Dragonflies: <i>Calopteryx haemorrhoidalis</i> , <i>Gomphus vulgatissimus</i> . Spring with constant temperature ~8°C.
HISTORY	The Sava resurgence is the point where geology becomes local history: the water that "returns" was the one that the shepherds of Gallo had watched disappear. The karst hydrological cycle is still today the basis of Fontegreca's water economy.

POI-05	Madonna dei Cipressi Sanctuary - Stratigraphic Unconformity (680 m a.s.l.)
GEO	At the Sanctuary is the first major stratigraphic contact of the Fontegreca system: the marly limestones of the Lower Cretaceous rest in angular unconformity on the massive limestones of the Upper Jurassic (Malm, 163–145 Ma). The discontinuity surface is visible on the rock face east of the Sanctuary - a unique didactic opportunity.
FAUNA	Hoopoe (<i>Upupa epops</i>) in the open areas of the sanctuary in spring. Terrestrial orchids: <i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i> , <i>Orchis provincialis</i> in the surrounding meadow (April–May).
HISTORY	The Sanctuary is the destination of an annual pilgrimage (8 September). Tradition holds that the Madonna appeared to a shepherd boy among the cypresses. 18th-century frescoes inside. The integration of faith and natural landscape is the thread running through the geohistory of Fontegreca.

GEOHISTORY OF THE PLACE

Narrative	Fontegreca takes its name from its springs: "fons graeca" - the Greek spring. Or perhaps "fonte greca" in the sense of "abundant spring", according to another etymology. Water is the thread running through the history of this village: the water of the Sava that drives the mill, the water of the cypress grove that emerges from the dolomites, the water of the Sanctuary that heals according to tradition. The cypresses of the Bosco degli Zappini have survived everything: medieval felling, poaching in subsequent centuries, the disease decimating cypress groves throughout the Mediterranean. They have been here for 500 years and they are unique: no other cypress grove in Europe is immune to bark cancer.
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EXPERIENTIAL PACKAGE

PACKAGE PKG-06	"Stone, Water, Cypress" - Geo-Botanic Trail at Fontegreca
Target: Families (from age 3), school groups all levels, cultural tourists, botanists, geologists	Il laboratorio geo-botanico del Matese: cipresseto relitto, ciclo carsico del Sava, mulino storico e Santuario. Tutto in soli 3.92 km accessibili a tutti.
Duration: 2–3 h	Difficoltà: Easy (T) - adatto da 3 anni
Periodo: Year-round (ottimale primavera e autunno)	Mobility: On foot - loop. Sanctuary picnic area car park (41.4587°N, 14.1898°E)
Features:	Guided geo-botanic visit + scientific narration of the cypress grove + rock/soil laboratory for schools + listening to the soundscape of the Sava + tasting of local products + equipped picnic area

SAFETY WARNINGS



Slippery near the water. Do not damage the historic cypresses (CNR scientific heritage). Closed-toe shoes. Public fountain at the sanctuary. Municipal contact: 0823 944104.

ACCESS

Start	Madonna dei Cipressi Sanctuary, Fontegreca (41.4587°N, 14.1898°E). Picnic area car park.
TPL	Line 17-CE at the Fontegreca junction.
Emergencies	CNSAS: 112.

ISSUES

Issues	Description	Priority
Uniqueness	The cypress grove free of bark cancer is a scientific site of exceptional value. Avoid activities that may damage the bark of the oldest trees.	HIGH
GPX	Wikiloc Track: https://it.wikiloc.com/percorsi-escursionismo/cipresseta-di-fontegreca-242958594	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
- www.regione.campania.it/turismo - Campania Tourism
- <https://it.wikiloc.com/percorsi-escursionismo/cipresseta-di-fontegreca-242958594> - Traccia P06 (Migliore #1)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Mountain Community of the Matese Zone (2026) - Special Contract Specification, Intervention No. 4. CUP E14H25000590006.
- CAI (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.

GPS TRACKS AND MAPS ON OUTDOOR PLATFORMS - VERIFIED LINKS P06

Wikiloc	Cipresseta di Fontegreca - confirmed GPS track, short and accessible route https://it.wikiloc.com/percorsi-escursionismo/cipresseta-di-fontegreca-242958594
Komoot	La Cipresseta di Fontegreca - loop in the Matese Park · 3.07 km · 1h18 · Easy https://www.komoot.com/it-it/smarttour/e1338964690/la-cipresseta-di-fontegreca-giro-ad-anello-nel-parco-regionale-del-matese

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