



National Days of Italian Castles, XXII^o* edition Saturday 25th, Sunday 26th September 2021

From north to south, from east to west: **the peninsula of castles.**
19 regions to be discovered and rediscovered

A dense network of offline and online events:

free guided tours, walking visits, conferences and books presentations, concerts, food tasting, historical reviews and exhibitions, children activities

19 regions involved with a main site each and many collateral ones which are not just **castles** or **towers** but often **entire cities** like those of **Fossombrone** - a Marche region fenced borough suspended between Apennines and the Adriatic Sea - and **Laconi**, located in the heart of Sardinia island, all animated by free guided tours, book presentations, concerts, exhibitions, conferences and much more. These are the figures, in short, of the **National Days of Italian Castles 2021**, reaching the **22nd edition (the 2020 edition* has been canceled due to COVID-19 pandemics)** and set for September **Saturday 25 and Sunday 26, 2021**, organized by the **Italian Institute of Castles (IIC)**, scientific non-profit organization founded on 1964 in Milan by Piero Gazzola whose regional offices are present in all Italian regions.

Since 1998, the **National Days of Italian Castles** became **synonymous with the keenest tourism trends** throughout the Italian peninsula. Families, foreign visitors, schools and universities can devote themselves to an intense 'two days' of discoveries of **castles, fortresses, towers and other fortified architectures**, without forgetting the possibility of visiting **entire villages, walled cities and ramparts**: this appointment for enthusiasts of history, restoration and architecture, cultural tourism is so well established that it is often *sold out* in many of the interested locations.

Every year the sites chosen by the IIC volunteers in agreement with local authorities and other decision-making bodies including private owners **are different from the previous ones**, allowing visitors to **constantly enrich their knowledge** and **spend an open-air weekend even in less known places** in Italy or in their own city to visit fortified architectures often not open to the public where they can discover a building and its history told by experts and scholars, browse a

new book just presented, attend a conference, an exhibition or a concert, or know the state of the art of valorization and of public-private synergies.

Milestones of our civilization, these places and these architectures **tell the story of a country**, its socio-political transformations, **the richness and diversity** of its territories **along with the stories of people**, families and dynasties - brought to us thanks to the strenuous activity held by volunteers, students, young graduates, university professors, authors, essayists and experts, architects and restorers who personally conduct visits to sites identified with competence and passion.

The 22nd National Days of Italian Castles are designed and organized, as every year, by **Istituto Italiano Castelli**, a scientific non-profit organization that has been committed to safeguard and enhance the entire historical and cultural heritage of fortified architectures for 57 years now. To celebrate the **inestimable wealth of the Italian landscape**.

With **over 20,000 surveyed, photographed and studied sites** and with a capillary organization, **the non-profit organization designs and promote cultural and scientific activities all year round**, including the publication of **two editorial series** and a specialized magazine, **periodic meetings and conferences, discovery journeys, a prize for the most deserving degree thesis** on fortified architectures and *Il Castello si racconta*, a **photographic competition** dedicated to secondary school students. Not last, every year, numerous conferences as well as **courses** of 'castleology'.

There is a constant need to spread the knowledge of these testimonies of our past, which constitute one of the foundations of our historical and cultural identity, and this can happen both by highlighting its importance in public opinion and by stimulating the new generations to a better understanding of this extraordinary, fascinating and suggestive patrimony, whose consistency is second only to that of religious architecture.

It's true, today there is a strong excitement and interest from the institutions and the civil world around castles and fortified villages, but it must be remembered that the IIC began to deal with them since 1964, recognizing the importance of their protection and enhancement and their extraordinary potential in the life of our country when very few, if any, had looked at them least.

Strengthened by its history and its constant commitment, the IIC has also obtained for this edition of the National Days of Italian Castles the **patronage** of the **Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage** and Activities and Tourism (MiBACT) and **adhered to the [European Heritage Days](#)** which will be listing all the National Days of Italian Castles.

Information for the public: National Days of Italian Castles, XXII^o edition*

Saturday 25/Sunday 26 September 2021 (main days: events will stretch on the entire month)

Age of the non profit: 57 years **Members:** 1400

Researched castles: around 20.000

Website (Italian): <http://www.istitutoitalianocastelli.it/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Istituto-Italiano-dei-Castelli-419457754930754/?fref=ts>

Hashtag: #giornatenazionaleideicastelli2021



The fortified architectures are the second national asset after the religious ones: inestimable architectural and cultural heritage, they're open once a year with free events and guided tours to accelerate or promote territorial development

Fabio Pignatelli della Leonessa, architect, **President of Istituto Italiano Castelli (IIC)**: 'Every year we try to show hidden or never seen places, or to rediscover them with new eyes: we also inaugurate restructured architectures or try to repopulate sites related to the current history of our country.

Within the past two editions of the National Days of Italian Castles we'd welcomed thousands of local and national visitors happy to rediscover some places in the country yet damaged by recent heart-quakes but full of potentials and already re-booting (Abruzzo, Marche); in many other Italian regions our volunteers designed multiple itineraries adding collateral sites to the main one where to enjoy free guided tours and other activities.

In the year of pandemics, we've been forced to cancel the National Days within a few weeks from their deployment (traditionally they're falling every May) because of the different epidemic situation in each Italian region and of the heterogeneity of the involved sites. Over the lockdowns, we've pursued online all our activities offering an intense roster of conferences, conversations and learning programs which have been well welcomed by our members and our external visitors. Also for the 2021 National Days of Italian Castles we will offer either online and offline contents - these latter will apply all the health protocols established by the authorities. For those who will be not ready yet to travel and to join physical events, we will offer the conversations happening onsite also in streaming plus videos, documentaries and virtual tours. We'd also renewed our website and enforced our presence on social networks (with a keen eye on Instagram to approach younger audiences). **We restarted all our activities in presence**: not only the National Days but also the dense roster of educational travels, the Final Dissertation Award and the Photographic Award dedicated to younger students - 'Il Castello si racconta' - and our courses.

On 2021 edition we're going to celebrate sites conjugating outstanding historical and landscape values and for the first time our volunteers designed itineraries involving the totality of the territory of the region around our designated

sites in order to increase the permanence of the visitors and the aficionados who can continue with extended tours of other nearby fortified architectures.

The IIC members of **Abruzzo** valorize more architectures in two different provinces of the region, **L'Aquila** and **Chieti**.

They propose **Navelli** in the first: a fortified village on the plateau with the same name located in a stretch of the territory, Prata d'Ansidonia, rich in fortified presences.

A new local IIC delegation has been funded in the same region in the second province (Chieti): Citeriore, where the largest youth IIC generation is accounted (11 spanning from 15 to 23 years old) and where two castles will be open to visits, animated by cultural programs (**Monteodorisio** and **Palmoli**). **Cupello, Fraine, Torrebruna** and **Casoli councils**, further to the ones where the two above mentioned castles are located, adhered to the new delegation.

Basilicata region members will open the doors of **Moliterno Castle** while in **Calabria** the **Rocella Jonica fenced city hanging on the sea with its Carafa Castle and Palace**. The **privately owned Montechiarugolo Castle** will be the main site in **Emilia Romagna** with a **concert** and a **conference**; **Friuli Venezia Giulia** will open **Gemona Castle** with a roster of activities including '**illustrated living fairy tales**' for children.

Campania animates the spectacular encircled village of **Taurasi** and is the region where there will be more collateral events - including visits and round tables - which will take place during the Days involving the castles of **Agropoli, Circello, Teano, Teggiano**. **Naples** celebrates the September of the Neapolitan castles. **On all weekends of the month free guided visits to Castelnuovo, Castel S. Elmo** and the **Aragonese walls**. In **Castel dell'Ovo**, extraordinary opening of the Campania headquarters of the Italian Institute of Castles: in addition to guided tours, video projections on this and the other Naples castles.

Lazio invites to discover the **Palazzo and Archaeological Museum of Fortuna Primigenia in Palestrina** (Rome), half owned by the Italian Ministry of Culture and **half still a private residence, which will be open for the occasion**.

The IIC **Liguria** section designed a **walking itinerary dedicated to Imperia** and its **Porto Maurizio** - one of the two main parts (the other is Oneglia) into which the city is divided. The heart of the visit is **Parasio**, a medieval historic center with its peculiar spiral structure full of churches, ancient buildings, gardens, alleys and breathtaking views of the sea and the mountains. A visit to **Villa Grock** will complete the tour: the exteriors and the sumptuous park are heterogeneously styled with Baroque, Rococo, Art Nouveau influences and Eastern evocative echoes while the interiors are predominantly *déco*.

Lombardy animates **four sites in three different provinces over two weekends**: on 17 September a visit to the rare example of the **twin castle of Grosio**

(Sondrio): **a fortified complex consisting of the two castles** of San Faustino and the *castrum novum* which hosts the initiative of the Istituto Italiano Castelli dedicated to secondary schools: the **award ceremony of the photographic competition 'Il Castello si racconta' dedicated to secondary schools**.

On 18 September, a guided tour of the **Tower of Castionetto di Chiuro** (Sondrio) is combined with a walking and tasting experience.

On the weekend of the **National Castles Days (25-26 September 2021)**, two **protagonists: the** Pavia Castle with a conference on the *Grand Tour* and the Lombard castles also in streaming; the **Scaligero Castle of Sirmione** which with its imposing size controlled the southern area of Lake Garda. **For the occasion, the dock will be exceptionally reopened**, closed since the beginning of the pandemic, and a virtual visit to the ongoing restoration site of its external walls will be presented.

The **Marche** members invite to discover or rediscover **Fossombrone**, an ancient town of Roman origins, halfway between the Adriatic and the Apennines, where Renaissance features are intimately linked to ancient Rome, where the enchantment of unspoiled nature is married with the charm of art. **The best way to get to know Fossombrone is to walk its streets**: wandering through alleys, arcades and stairways to discover its secrets and appreciate its unique charm. **The IIC members of this region invite you to four guided tours**, the first dedicated to the **Malatesta Fortress**, the second dedicated to the **Upper Court and the Archaeological Museum and Pinacoteca**, the third to the **Church of San Filippo**, the fourth to the **Casa Museo and Cesarini Picture Gallery**.

The **Molise** section invites this year to discover the **Monforte Castle in Campobasso** where for the entire duration of the National Days the members who have studied it lead the visits. At the same time, the social network of the IIC host a documentary on the Castles of Molise full of aerial shots and comments from the Institute's experts.

It will also be possible to visit the **Castle D'Alessandro of Pescolanciano** thanks to the collaboration of the Intramontes association: the manor houses the permanent exhibition on Molise castles.

Puglia section celebrates the National Days of Castles in the **Castle of Trani**, a site that combines historical and environmental value through a guided tour and a meeting on Saturday Sept. 25, *The Castle of Trani: restoration and redevelopment*, which tells the story and the various restoration interventions. The guided tour will be accompanied by a virtual video visit on the IIC social networks.

Sardinia rediscovers one of the most beautiful villages in Italy, **Laconi**, located in the heart of the region close to Barbagia with the **Aymerich Park** where the rare tree species and an exceptional historical-landscape guided tour will be accompanied by the discovery of the castle of the same name which dates back to the 11th century as well as a vast network of other events to dedicate a whole weekend to the island. On the two days 25 and 26 September, various scientific, educational and recreational initiatives are scheduled, including **a conference dedicated to the complex theme of accessibility of the fortified heritage**. **The students of**

the National Boarding School of Cagliari **will accompany visitors** to discover the ruins of the medieval castle, supported by qualified personnel for a visit that is truly 'for everyone'!

The members of the **IIC Sicily** offer **two itineraries in the region**.

In **Messina** history and culture lovers can book an unforgettable walk combined with a visit to the **Castle of the Fort SS. Salvatore** alongside the external walkway on the seaside walls of Messina Harbour and the **Montorsoli lantern**. The sites, of which the lantern is the oldest lighthouse in Italy, are both owned by Italian Navy and therefore are **normally not accessible to the public**. The authority maintains this heritage with great care and **on August 9, 2019** opened the **new permanent public lighting** of the walls which has been designed by Istituto Italiano Castelli, Sicily Section (Messina Delegation) with the collaboration of Italian Navy.

In **Piazza Armerina**, in the province of **Enna**, IIC members open a **private castle** of ancient origins and rediscover the historic center of the city which occupies a plateau and the sides of Mount Mira dominated by the bulk of the cathedral and, overlooking the southern slope, by the Aragonese castle. The gaze - the members of the non-profit organization remind - extends to the castles of Mazzarino, Butera, Enna, Troina and other fortified settlements, which no longer exist today.

The **IIC Tuscany** organizes a series of **guided and open air walking tours** to **26 medieval Florentine towers** preceded by a conversation on the ancient city gates.

The **IIC Trentino Alto Adige** section chooses to highlight **Castel Trostburg**, which will be the site of a free guided tour and conference: the manor houses an exhibition of the entire history of the regional castles. Also in this region, the members of the IIC have prepared further itineraries of castle culture.

Umbria IIC section proposes a visit to **Montecolognola**, a delightful medieval village with a castle overlooking Lake Trasimeno in a strategic position: it retains its primitive appearance almost intact, the walls and entrance doors date back to the early fourteenth century.

Montecolognola had been chosen on the occasion of the 2019 National Days by the local IIC volunteers with the aim of starting the restoration of some frescoes of valuable pictorial value found in the parish church of S. Maria Annunciata. **The works have started but, as the funds destined for the completion of the conservative intervention are not sufficient**, the Board of IIC Directors of the Umbria Section has unanimously expressed itself to propose again Montecolognola on 2020 with the aim of further raising public awareness both of the knowledge of the site and the urgent need to complete the restoration.

The **Veneto** IIC members - which in recent editions have celebrated restorations by opening the gates of places often closed for decades recording flattering numbers of visits for each involved site - this year invites to discover (or rediscover) the **Fort of San Felice** (Chioggia) immersed in the extraordinary landscape of the Venetian lagoon. This fortified architecture is the subject of a complex and innovative resto-

ration intervention that uses the MOSE system's compensation, conservation and environmental redevelopment measures.

From the lagoon to the mainland, the **castles of Thiene** (September 17) and **Roncade** complete the itinerary of this region.

The fate of each castle is different from that of the noble palaces always located in the city center and for the most part have survived the events remaining intact. The fortifications, precisely because of their historic defensive and offensive function, are on the edge: in the mountains or in the hills. For this reason, most of them have been abandoned, destroyed by wars, or even by wicked architectural projects. Very rarely they are inhabited because living in a fortification, as well as being inconvenient, is too expensive. In the most fortunate cases they have been reconverted to accommodation facilities, or have been restored to be returned to the public, but many continue to be closed: the Castles Days therefore give the time to discover and appreciate them, perhaps taking advantage to build different itineraries in unknown and wonderful corners of our country to which otherwise we would not have thought.

With more than a thousand members and a headquarter in every Italian region, we take care of an often unrecognized heritage and are unique in the Italian non profit landscape for longevity and for the quality of the represented interests.

We do not perform this task only with the more challenging appointment of the year to be organized - the **Days are the result of an incredible teamwork of volunteers and enthusiasts, scholars and teachers** - but also through the **careful and daily relationship with local authorities, Ministries and other stakeholders** to also help in understanding the 'needs' of **these particular architectures of which our country is the richest in the world**. And the **less sensitive to valorization**.

We are working, together with other non profits and NGOs also dealing with heritage to try to lighten the tax burden on these architectures and above all to study how to stack these assets that have spaces so special for their function - now lost and therefore difficult to be classified in the tax schemes for properties.

Despite the enormous difficulties that the pandemic has caused on our budgets and on the interaction with our partners, we have followed up on several projects already in the pipeline. For example, **together with non-profit associations that deal with the enhancement of the Italian historical heritage such as ADSI, Ville Venete and others, IIC has signed a protocol that among other things provides for the creation of a bi-annual inter-associative committee** which will allow our voices to be more audible to both national and local decision makers. '

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