



Museum of Prehistory of Tuscia and of the Farnese Fortress of Valentano



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REGIONE LAZIO



Comune di Valentano



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MUSEO della
PREISTORIA
della TUSCIA
e della ROCCA
FARNESE



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The Museum of Prehistory of Tuscia and the Farnese Fortress, inaugurated in 1996, is set up in the splendid rooms of the monumental Farnese Fortress, symbol and heart of the village of Valentano.

The fortress

The centuries-old history of the Farnese Fortress of Valentano is all told in the stones that make up its walls. At first it was a place of defence and sighting, it was then used, starting from 1354, as the residence of the Farnese family. In 1649, the year of the destruction of the City of Castro, it passed into the hands of the Apostolic Chamber and subsequently became a granary and prison of the Valentanese community. In 1730 it was granted to the order of Dominican nuns, becoming a cloistered monastery. Between 1867 and 1870 a garrison of Papal Zouaves found accommodation in the west area. After the Dominican nuns moved to Gubbio around 1930, the Municipality destined the Farnese Fortress to host the elementary schools of the town, while reserving some rooms for private homes. The complex was definitively abandoned in 1957 and only in 1979 began the long process of recovery and restoration of the entire structure that led, in 1996, to the opening of the Museum.

The courtyard

The courtyard, with lower portico and upper loggia, was built in 1488 on the occasion of the wedding between Angelo Farnese, son of Pier Luigi the Elder, and Lella Orsini of Pitigliano. It is perhaps one of the most significant interventions carried out by the Farnese family in the Fortress. In the so-called **Courtyard of love** the capitals of the lower colonnade cover a particular significance, many of which are still visible, decorated with auspicious motifs and depicting the coats of arms of the two families.

The well

The well, originally located outside the fortress and used by the entire Valentanese community, was an-

nexed to the Palace following the construction of the "Court yard of love". Subsequently, the travertine ring was built, designed by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, to whom we also owe the projects of the fireplace of the ducal hall and some portals and window frames of the palace.

The tower

The gaze of anyone who arrives in Valentano is captured, from afar, as well as by the high bell tower of the Collegiate Church of St. John the Evangelist, by the characteristic **octagonal tower** of the Farnese Fortress. Dating back to 1296, it was originally connected to the fortress by a drawbridge and completed by a wooden roof. At the time of stay of the papal Zouaves it was used as a penalty cell, as evidenced by the drawings and writings made by the imprisoned soldiers still visible on the walls. Today the tower, about 26 meters high, is completely accessible up to its top and offers all visitors the opportunity to admire the surrounding landscape, from Lake Bolsena to the caldera of Latera, up to see the Tyrrhenian Sea.

Paul III's loggia

The large loggia was built by Paul III after his election as pope in 1534. Located on the upper floor of the building and overlooking the garden and roofs of Valentano, the portico is composed of eleven arches supported by brick pillars.

The Holy Stairs

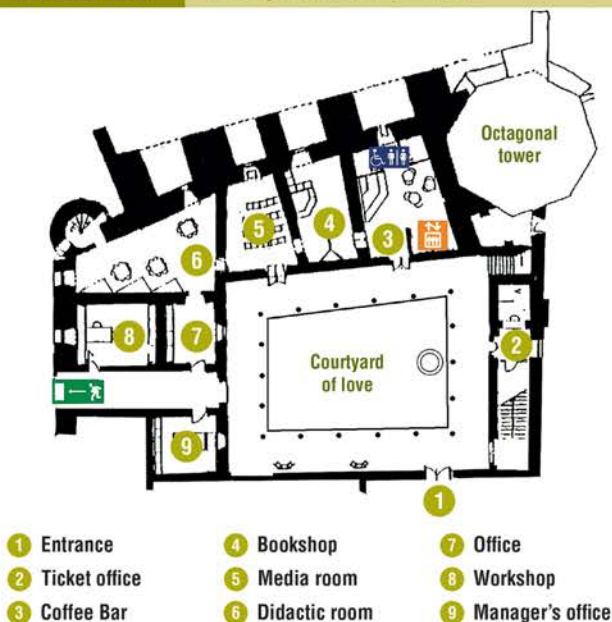
Built after 1731 at the behest of the Dominican nuns on a precise reproduction of the **Holy Stairs** of the Church of St. John Lateran, it was obtained from the staircase that originally led to the private apartments of the Farnese family on the second floor of the Fortress. Frescoed with scenes from the Passion of Christ, it housed at the end of the staircase an ancient wooden crucifix, now replaced by a reproduction, coming from the destroyed church of the City of Bisenzio.



A journey through time, from Prehistory through the Middle Ages and arriving at the Modern age, to understand the evolution of the landscape of Tuscia.

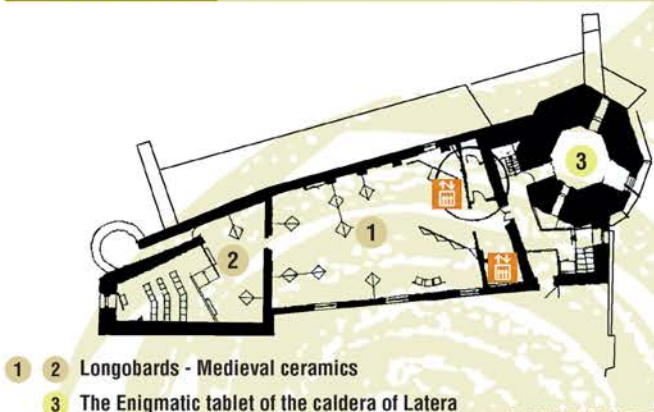
Ground Floor

Reception and Services



Second Floor

Farnese Fortress and Enigmatic tablet



The Prehistory of Tuscia

The exhibition itinerary on the first floor, accompanied by an articulated didactic-communicative apparatus, tells of the environmental, socio-economic, and cultural transformations that took place in Tuscia during Prehistory and Protohistory.

In this section it is possible to admire the artifacts from the most important sites of the territory, dating back to an era between the Lower Palaeolithic (about 800/900 thousand years ago) and the Early Iron Age (between the ninth and eighth centuries BC). In the rooms are exposed numerous stone and metal utensils, ceramic pottery, objects of personal ornament. Of great interest, among other finds, are some engraved Palaeolithic pebbles, singular productions of "prehistoric art", and the section dedicated to the pile-dwelling site of Lake Mezzano, now submerged, dating back to the Bronze Age.

The Etruscan Collection D'Ascenzi

The collection, located in the room on the first floor of the Octagonal Tower, was donated in 2005 to the citizens of Valentano by Bishop Giovanni D'Ascenzi; it consists of one hundred and forty finds coming mostly from the areas of Vulci, Tarquinia and Cerveteri. The collection is composed of several nuclei of various consistencies that cover a rather wide chronological span, from the early stages of the Etruscan civilization to late antiquity. Among the many artifacts on display it is possible to admire some Etruscan-Corinthian ceramic productions of considerable value.

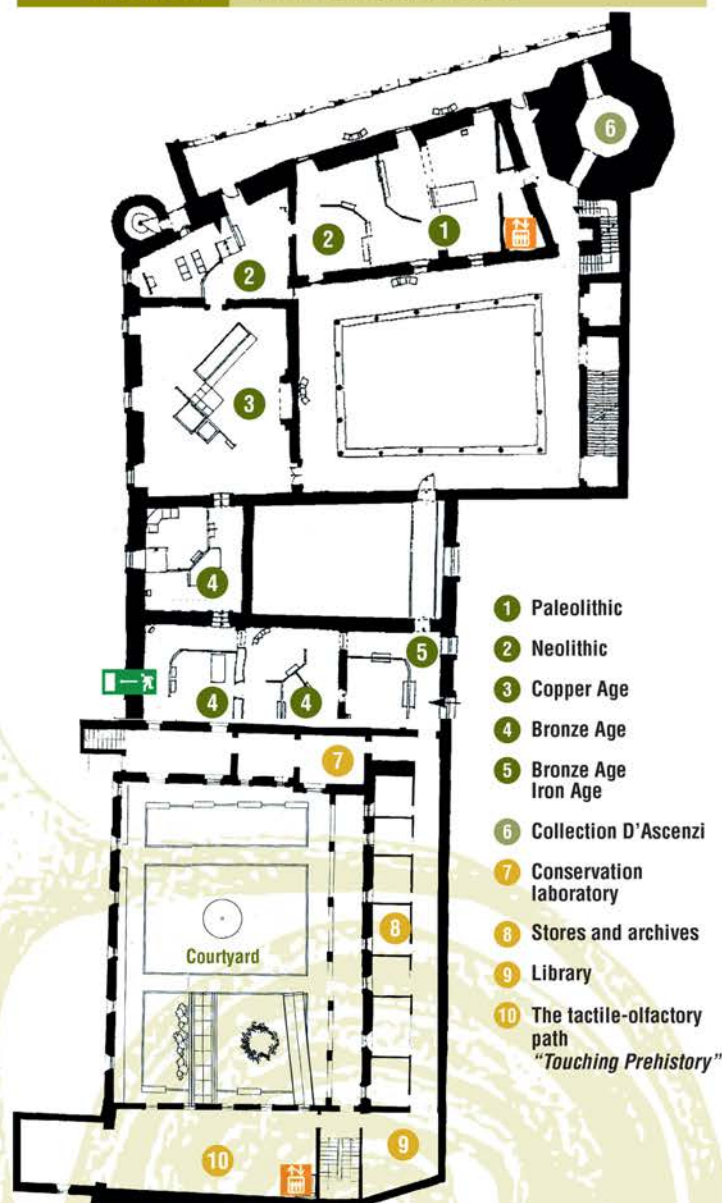
The Farnese Fortress

On the second floor of the fortress the exhibition is dedicated to documenting the development of Valentano and its territory from the Early Middle Ages (about the seventh century AD) to the modern age.

The showcases contain a rich collection of ceramics, found in the so-called *butti* (ancient wells used as trash cans since the Middle Ages) and in the numerous archaeological deposits formed outside the city walls, especially around and

First Floor

The Prehistory of Tuscia



inside the Farnese Fortress. Of particular value is the "wedding plate", decorated with the united coats of arms of the Farnese and Orsini families, made on the occasion of the wedding celebrated in Valentano in 1519 between Pier Luigi Farnese and Gerolama Orsini of Pitigliano.

The workshops and the tactile-olfactory path "Touching Prehistory"

In the eastern arm, on the first floor of the Farnese Fortress, areas have been created for the conservation of archaeological finds, restoration, research, and documentation.

Alongside these environments, since 2011, the innovative tactile-olfactory path "Touching Prehistory" has been open to the public. The exhibition, accessible for small groups or schools by reservation, enable the exploration of the themes related to the archaeology of the most ancient peoples thanks to exhibition solutions that make possible tactile and olfactory experiences feasible on tools, works of art, replicas of bone remains and natural fragrances. A journey of the senses that ends with the singular physical experience of entering the reconstruction, almost in real size, of a Bronze Age hut.

The enigmatic tablet of the caldera of Latera

In the room on the second floor of the Octagonal Tower is kept and exposed to the public the tablet of the caldera of Latera.

The "enigmatic tablets" are small artifacts in terracotta or, more rarely, in stone, dating back to the Bronze Age, which bear imprinted or engraved on their sides particular geometric signs, whose meaning is not yet completely clear. This extraordinary find was found in the early nineties of the last century within the district of the caldera of Latera, in Vallone, a few km from Valentano, and is the only specimen of the kind so far found in Lazio and among the few known in the whole of central Italy. Scholars propose several theses on the meaning to be attributed to these objects, the most probable hypothesis is that it may be some communication system, active at least between the XXI and XIV century BC.

