

## Vallinfreda:

*listen to the stories, taste the flavors, meet the people*

### THE PLACE

Vallinfreda is a municipality, at about 50 km. northeast of Rome, surrounded by natural reserves (Parco Regionale Monti Lucretili, Parco Regionale Monti Simbruini, Riserva Naturale Monti Cervia e Nervegna).

FLORA AND FAUNA - The territory of Vallinfreda, which covers 16.82 sq km., is very attractive in terms of herbal, flora and landscape. Despite the modest altitude extension and the massive presence of limestone marl, one can detect an interesting diversity of environments especially of the mountain type, but with a significant influence of the Mediterranean type.

Going up in the mountain level we find various types of forests according to the different exposure. On the southern side, deciduous woods of mixed oak



are more frequent, where depending on the ecological characteristics may prevail Roverella or Cerro, along with other types of oak such as Rovere and Leccio. In the cooler slopes there are mixed forests of deciduous hardwood representing the most widespread type of vegetation in the area. This forest is perhaps the most beautiful due to the richness and variety of woody plants. The fauna of the territory is extremely varied. Among the mammals there are Porcupines, active only at night. Their natural habitat is represented by open forests and scrubland. They live in small groups in large and deep holes or caves; the Badgers, who live both in forest areas with open ranges. It is also easy to

meet squirrels, wild boars, weasels. Among the birds we find the Golden Eagle, a pair is present near our territory (nests on Mount Pellecchia); the Jay, the Nuthatch and the Green Woodpecker. Among the reptiles stands out the presence of the Viper, found in arid environments especially in open slopes. Recently made his reappearance on the territory even the Wolf.

PEOPLE - The population has grown to 1200 inhabitants in 1921 and then declined after World War II to the current 320 inhabitants, due to the emigration toward Rome.

During the summer time many natives return to Vallinfreda at their parents' home, which represents a continuity of social relations and traditions and a bridge between different generations (grandparents, parents and sons). It is not difficult to be sitting in the square to talk about past summers while younger people are experiencing their summer. Or enter the bar and see photos of old football teams, while the new football team is preparing for the championship.

You can sit and listen to a story told by an elderly person, or you can get busy and help keep clean the village or organize the next event or take a mountain bike and take a ride in the mountains

### THE HISTORY

Vallinfreda was established firstly as a settlement and then as social community, as a military defence and observation nucleus against banditry, and then developed in an agricultural town. The foundation dates back certainly before the birth of St. Benedict (who lived between 480 AD. and 547 AD), in as the prelate was given it by some noble Marsican whose lordship - at the time - stretching up to where we now find Vicovaro Mandela (the first mention of Vallinfreda existence is contained in a papal bull of 706 AD, where it is mentioned among



the possessions of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Scholastica).

The position of Vallinfreda between the the Longobard Duchies of Spoleto and Benevento is testified by the church dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel - the Longobards were responsible for the development and growth of the worship of the Archangel from Monte Sant'Angelo in the Gargano to the rest of Europe. A legend tells of the Frankish King Pepin who crossing Vallinfreda and rested in a cave that took its name.

After a long series of events lasted about a thousand years, at the beginning of XVI century Vallinfreda, together with the nearby town of Portica was part of the possession of Colonna family.



At that time Pope Clement VII had given his support to the Kingdom of France in an attempt to alter the balance of power in the region, and free the Papacy from dependency, i.e. a growing weakness to "Imperial domination" by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. The army of the Holy Roman Emperor defeated the French army in Italy, but funds were not available to pay the soldiers. The 34,000 Imperial troops mutinied and forced their commander, Charles III, Duke of Bourbon and Constable of France, to lead them towards Rome. Rome was torn by war between the fraction of the Orsini and the Colonna; The family Orsini was on the side of the Pope, while



the powerful Cardinal Pompeo Colonna had sided with Charles V. Valerio Orsini took part in the defence of Rome, during the sack of the city on 6 May 1527 and, in command of 200 knights defended vainly Ponte Sisto. During the retreat from the city he collected a body of veterans and, when travelling to the Marche, in revenge destroyed a number of castles belonging to the Colonna family, including the town of Portica. The inhabitants of Portica, including Bencivenga family, then took refuge in Vallinfreda, which experienced in this period a significant increase in population and urban size.

Around 1551 Mons. Pompeo Zambecari, bishop of Sulmona and son of Giovanni

Zambecari, bought Vallinfreda by Laura Colonna and sold it almost immediately to Brancaleoni family who in turn gave it shortly afterwards to Cenci family (before the severe financial difficulties of this family that preceded the tragedy of the young Beatrice) between 1554 and 1582 to the time of Francesco, grandfather of Beatrice.

In 'Istromento Fusco' of May 11, 1582 is stated that the ownership of the castle of Vallinfreda passed to the Muti family; then, certainly before 1592, it was sold to the Theodoli family that held it until 1630 when Pope Urban VIII, by decree of July 31, authorized Mons. Theodoli selling Vallinfreda to the Prince Marco Antonio Borghese.



Vallinfreda was touched by the Campaign for the liberation of Rome in 1867 with the passage over its territory of the soldiers of Giuseppe Garibaldi. A sign of his passage is witnessed by a marble bust that the citizens of Vallinfreda dedicated to the "Hero of Two Worlds" in the little square named after Garibaldi.

Vallinfreda remained property of the Borghese family, as last "private" possession, until 1927, with administration conducted on-site from the ancient family Bencivenga, which for several centuries was serving the previous families. The culmination of these changes of ownership occurred in February 1927 when the part of the territory of Vallinfreda still owned by the Borghese family, passed definitively to the City of Vallinfreda.

Vallinfreda stood out for its contribution of troops to the country during the First and Second World War, as evidenced by the war memorial in the town square

### THE FOOD

**SAGNE** - With "sagne" it is indicated a type of pasta typical of the cuisine of a wide area of Abruzzo, the Ciociaria and other mountain areas of Lazio. Both regions have recognized this paste as a traditional food product.

It is characterized from a mixing based on water, flour and salt, which denote its origin as poor country food (it was in fact the "everyday" pasta as opposed to fresh pasta with eggs, usually consumed during holidays, and named "fettuccine"). But today it is not unusual to add some eggs to the dough.



The typical size of sagne is rhombic; according to the intended use or the area is, however, present such as flat strips or in the form of small square, a maximum of one centimeter from the side.

This type of pasta is usually intended for the preparation of the dish "pasta with beans", sometimes declined in the variant that includes the addition of pork rinds. It is very common the use of chickpeas; in such a case it is

distinguished by the appearance similar to a soup, due to the extreme fluidity of tomato sauce accompanying the pasta.

**PIG** - Once every family bred at least one pig to make salami, sausages, bacon, but especially lard which was the only condiment used all year round. Pig was really the Swiss Army knife of country cooking

The lard was preserved whole, having been well salted and peppered. Cutouts of lard were melted by the fire. Lard liquid was used primarily to preserve dried sausages. In fact, these were placed in pots, then were filled with liquid lard, which hardened, once cooled, and turned white and the sausages were preserved for long months, not being in contact with the air (no refrigerators available at that time).

From the head of the pig were removed "guanciali" (cheek muscles) and were dried in. In this way they were used as a condiment or were eaten as ham. The rest of the head was cooked. Front shoulders could be used both for making sausages or hams. Back legs became undoubtedly excellent ham or salami.



From the upper back were made steaks. The bones were used both to make the broth, or for obtaining soap. The bristles were collected and were used to make brushes or were inserted into the tip of the twine by sewing, because better entered in the eye of the needle. The tail and the fat adjacent to it, served to grease the boots, especially during the winter. The skin, once removed the bacon, served to grease the saws. With blood it was made the "sanguinaccio" and with the lungs and entrails a type of sausage.

### PLACES TO VISIT

- La Rocca with Romanic Portal
- Parish Church of St. Michael the Archangel (XVI century), with Romanino painting (XV-XVI century);
- Oratory of SS. Crucifix (XV century);
- Bencivenga Palace (XVI century), baroque;
- Cave of King Pepin, located inside the nature trail "the Costa Tiglia"
- Park Villa Tortima, small park area of outstanding beauty. Inside there are particular tree species including Sequoia and Pino Silvestre.
- The natural area "Le Aie", green recreational area

- Vallinfreda Astronomical Station - The SCAE group (High Energy Cosmic Group) of Rome University "La Sapienza" has an observing facility near Vallinfreda. The telescope is a Newtonian 50 cm f/4.5, built by GAMBATO, powered by an FS2 system, housed in a sliding-roof building. The telescope is presently dedicated to monitoring of BL Lacertae objects, with special care for simultaneous observations with space-born instruments. The telescope is not only a research site: guided visits for groups and schools are organized after reservation. Lectures on the most interesting topics in astronomy are also delivered.



- Birthplace of Fra Diego Oddi, the recently beatified friar who lived in the hermitage of San Francesco in Bellegra until 1871;



**Comune di Vallinfreda**  
*Città Metropolitana di Roma Capitale*



**ASSOCIAZIONE VOLONTARI "SAN ROCCO"**  
**VALLINFREDA ONLUS**