12TH STAGE - EUROPEAN TRAIL CORRIDOR E/1 .

IRPINO TRACT.

PERTINENCE IRPINIA TREKKING AVELLINO.

SAN MARTINO V.C. (315 mslm) - SORGENTE MAFARIELLO (850mslm) - PIANO DI LAURO (1250 mslm) - SORGENTE ACQUA FREDDA (1278 mslm) - QUATTROVIE (1252 mslm) - ACQUA DELLE VENE (1200 mslm) - RIFUGIO FIE TOPPO DEL MONACO (1160 mslm).

San Martino Valle Caudina has 4,840 inhabitants and is located at 315 mslm, at the foot of the Partenio Regional Park and is crossed by the Caudino Torrent. The 9th-century Lombard Pignatelli della Leonessa Castle dominates the historic center. It was restored first by the Normans and then by the Swabians and Aragonese. It retains its original layout as a medieval fortress.

The Borgo is enriched by the 17th-century Ducal Palace of the Pignatelli della Leonessa families, the medieval Fountain with obelisk, and the 18th-century Collegiate Church of St. John the Baptist. The 15th-century Church and Monastery of St. Catherine, now a Franciscan Convent, is worth visiting. The territory of San Martino V. C. is the historical setting of the defeat of the Romans by the Samnites within the Valley known for the " Forche Caudine."

The route begins at the municipal headquarters and crosses the entire Piazza to turn left into a narrow alleyway that leads us to the orographic right bank of the Torrente Caudino. We follow the watercourse on a nice cobbled stretch with the imposing view of the Castle on the right. You leave the Centro Storico and enter a slightly uphill municipal road. After a while you leave it, turning left and immediately right past two small houses and onto a narrow dirt road with a nice dry stone wall on the left side.

You cross cultivated fields until you reach the end of the dirt road and intersect the previous municipal road, which you follow keeping to the left uphill. After a short stretch we turn right, passing in front of the Masseria Ciesco farm and entering an ancient mule track. We now find ourselves in the midst of chestnut groves and climb gradually until a narrowing of the treading surface turns the mule track into a path that climbs more steeply and with narrow hairpin bends.

It intersects, at a bend a wide dirt road that we follow to the right, still uphill but with less slope. We always cross chestnut groves, keeping the Caudino Creek on our right, but a little distant. We reach an apex from which begins a descent that leads us to intersect the paved road that we follow slightly downhill to the right. After a while we leave the road and turn left onto a dirt road with somewhat slippery ground that brings us to a Refuge. We cross the road and continue on terrain entering a pine forest with several picnic tables and benches.

We find ourselves at Fonte del Mafariello, considered among the purest in Campania. After a brief pause we continue on a slightly downhill paved road turning right until we reach a bend where we enter an uphill dirt road that takes us to the Rosa Mistica, where, among the rocks, the Madonna is venerated. We continue winning a section with a good slope with some hairpin bends until we enter a wide dirt road that we follow until we reach a fork.

Here you turn right, still on the dirt road, and after a while you come to a steep section that is a bit bumpy due to the dripping water that has caused stones of a certain size to surface. The dirt road softens and after a short while a small plateau is encountered. In this area intensive cutting has been done that has distorted the harmoniousness of the place.

Continue keeping the plateau on the left and start climbing again with a few hairpin bends passing the Trave di Fuoco locality from where the dirt road ends and you take, on the left, a dusty path that passes among the beech trees. This leads to an iron cross at the very beginning of the Piano di Lauro, which runs all the way to the right. After another short pause near the cross we continue by turning left, still on a path, which leads us to the highest spring in the whole Partenio group, Acqua Fredda ( 1278 mslm).

Here, in the summer of 1878, the meridionalist Giustino Fortunato stopped at this spring topped by a Badger, which still towers over the mouth of water. Fortunato left Cervinara early in the morning and arrived in Avellino at nine in the evening. After filling our water bottles, we continue slightly downhill, still on the trail, and then begin to climb, leaving out a detour to the left.

The course alternates small descents with as many ascents. You meet a slightly more open area and keep to the right to continue on trail. Shortly after, disregard a dirt road that descends to the left and continue straight ahead. We are about two hundred meters of elevation gain below the crest of the Partenio group.

We begin to descend with a good gradient and on a small path until we reach the lowest point that takes us over a deep valley, and then climb again, with equal gradient, on the opposite side. This is a somewhat challenging section. Having reached the opposite side, we start to descend gently and pass another narrow, short gully, staying on the inner side ( 20 meters long ).

Immediately after, taking a few steps on our left, we can see part of the north side of the Park, as well as an overview of the Caudina Valley. We continue slightly downhill and after about 10' we reach the locality Quattrovie, where on the left descends a path that goes to Mafariello, on the right another one leads to Ciesco Bianco, while our path, after crossing the road, proceeds slightly on the right.

The entire Quattrovie - Piano di Lauro section, during the past centuries and until the 1950s, was used as a route for transporting snow with mules. In fact you can still see, just below or above the path, the ancient Neviere ( spaces without vegetation, semicircular ) . This activity, along with the Charcoal Works, provided employment for hundreds of workers. From the Piano di Lauro, still on trails, the snow was transported to Roccarainola (NA), from where it was loaded onto wagons and taken to Naples for processing and transformation into large cubes of ice.

We continue to a small plateau, always keeping to the right, and then climb a little by passing a small gully, after which with a traverse we reach the apex of this section, from which we begin to descend. We follow a zigzagging course on a narrow and somewhat steep path that takes us to the lowest point (1002 mslm), making us conquer 250 mt of elevation gain in a short time.

Having passed the stream bed, almost always dry, among small rocks, we pass to the opposite side where a climb begins, at first a bit challenging and then in a gentler way that makes us cross the whole W W F Oasis of Pannarano known as "Montagna di Sopra." Continuing, on the left side, we can admire a centuries-old beech tree called " the Monk's Beech ". After a while we come to a small wooden hut, home of the Oasis.

We go up a few more meters and arrive at the Fonte Acqua delle Vene spring, where we can drink very fresh water. We continue keeping to the left and next to a beech tree we begin to face the last stretch. Still on path we cross a small plateau and then begin an ascent following the ridge line between small rocks. We conquer about one hundred meters of elevation gain and reach the top of Toppo del Monaco, from which begins a gentle descent, still among beech trees, to Rifugio FIE Toppo del Monaco (1160 mslm), where the Stage ends.

DIFF. E - DIST. km 16 - DISL. uphill mt 1380 - downhill mt 535 - DUR. h 6.30 .

In the opposite direction DISL in ascent mt 527 and in descent mt 1372. DUR h 6,00.

 Maximum altitude mt 1278.

WATER ON THE ROUTE : YES.