

# INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF SPELEOLOGY IN ARTIFICIAL CAVITIES HYPOGEA2015

Italy, Rome March 11/17, 2015 - [hypogea2015.hypogea.it](http://hypogea2015.hypogea.it) - [hypogea2015@gmail.com](mailto:hypogea2015@gmail.com)



## PROGRAM OF THE GUIDED TOUR "HYPOGEA OF THE ALBAN HILLS" MARCH 15, 2015

**Duration:** from 8.00 to 20.00

**Difficulty:** as specified for each hypogeum

**Participation fee:** included in the meeting participation fee

**The fee includes:** transfer by coach and daily insurance

**The fee does not include:** food and what not above specified

### THE ALBAN HILLS

Not far from the sea but above the marshy areas in the Pontine plane, the Alban Hills have harboured human settlements since time immemorial. Here are to be found agricultural and pastoral villages, imperial villas, convents, castles and towns whose inhabitants have deeply shaped the environment. From prehistory to the present, they have canalized the springs, terraced the steepest slopes and controlled the lakes level.

This natural and cultural heritage, consisting of works largely still in use, allows to study the territory with a depth and a latitude not possible in other regions of Italy. Not surprisingly, the speleological investigations of underground structures of anthropic origin carried out by the Center for Underground Research Egeria have produced a large amount of documents, aiming at protecting the works that the ingenuity of our ancestors has left us.



*The Albano Lake of volcanic origin (Photo Carlo Germani, CRSE Archive)*

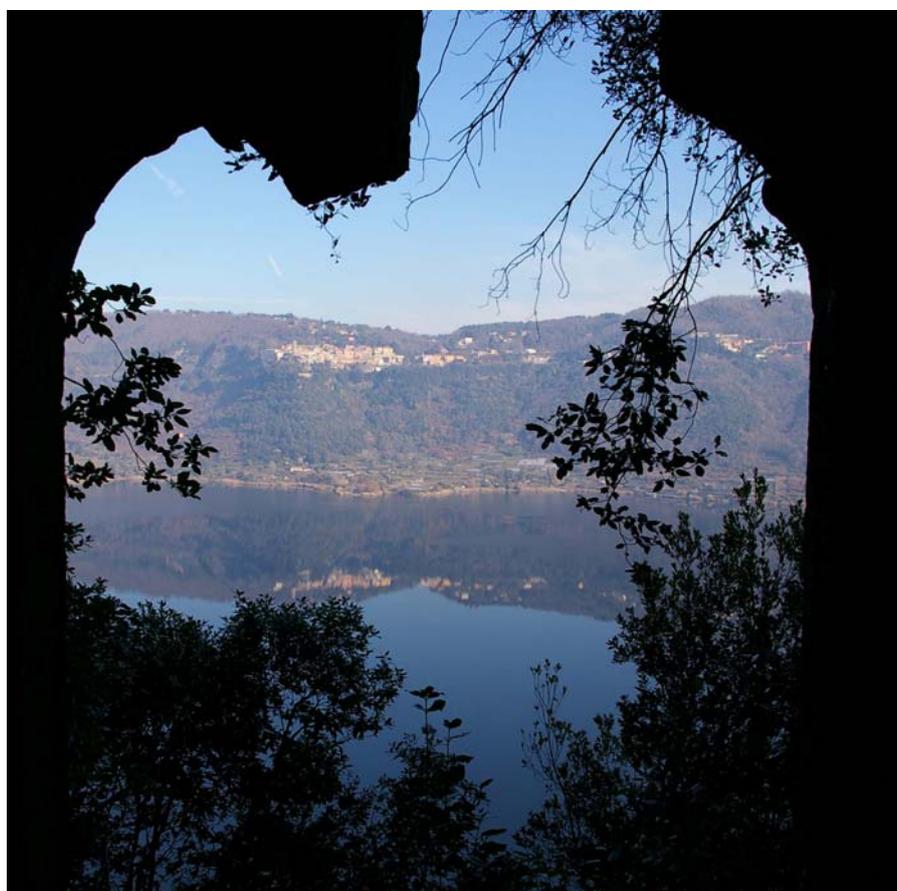
The Alban Hills, located a few km south-east of Rome, have been the center of the "Latium vetus", inhabited by Latin populations and by the ancestors of the Romans. Thanks to the mild climate, and from the II

century b.c.E. until past century, the Roman aristocrats have chosen these hills as the favourite site where to spend their leisure time, the latin "*otium*" (leisure). For this reason villas, baths and gardens have been built; all these structures needed water supply, in turn requiring complex systems of collection and transportation, mainly underground, a fact that has helped to preserve a large part of them until today.

In 312 b.c.E. the Appian way was built, reinforcing the close relations among Rome and the Alban Hills, especially with the areas of the lakes Nemi and Albano, a connection still strong nowadays.

Pompey, Cicero, Tiberius, Domitian and Antoninus Pius had their villas not far away, so that the Alban area became the seat of a refined culture, inclining towards the Greek world and differing from the official Roman culture. We know of the existence of at least 50 among villas and other structures, of which only a few have been studied in detail.

After the fall of the Western Roman empire (476 c.E.), the area became depopulated and the only sign of some continuity in housing is given by the burials of the V-VI century at the Orti of S.Nicolas. The invasions that took place one after the other gave origin also on the Alban Hills to the process known as "*incastellamento*": the inhabitants looked for shelter in fortifications on high grounds. Various noble families built here their strongholds, around which over the centuries developed the villages known at present as "*Roman Castles*".



*The Nemi Lake of volcanic origin (Photo Carlo Germani, CRSE Archive)*

There is no other reliable information on this area until the XII cen., when a few small monastic communities near lake Nemi are mentioned in some papal Bulls. In the following centuries the Nemi area, and in general the Alban Hills, follow the fate of the papal State and become the theater of the fights among the Pope and the noble Roman families. At the same time, the Hills harboured the rich country dwellings of the papal nobility, all equipped with parks and fountains. In the XIX cen. the Nemi area still preserves its charm and it is often the destination of tourists and travelers, among which Byron, so to become one of the important destinations of the Grand Tour. As well known, this was the tour of Europe that the offspring of rich North-European families used to do when reaching majority.

*Lo, Nemi! navell'd in the woody hills  
So far, that the uprooting wind which tears  
The oak from his foundation, and which spills  
The ocean o'er its boundary, and bears  
Its foam against the skies, reluctant spares  
The oval mirror of thy glassy lake;  
And calm as cherish'd hate, its surface wears  
A deep cold settled aspect nought can shake,  
All coil'd into itself and round, as sleeps the snake.*

[Byron, *Childe Harold's pilgrimage*, canto IV, CLXXIII]

In between the XIX and the XX centuries the Nemi crater, still all wooded, gave the initial inspiration to J.G.Frazer (1854-1941) for his most famous work " *The Golden Bough* ", a fundamental, even if discussed, text in the studies of archaic religions.

The Second world war has not too severely touched the area, anyway causing deaths, destruction and the disastrous burning of the two ships attributed to Caligula, which had been taken out of the lake since only a few years, and were exhibited in the Museum of the Nemi ships. Today asphalt and cement are spreading in the surroundings of Rome and have reached the Alban Hills. Only the establishment of the regional Park of the Roman Castles has enabled to stem the definitive destruction of the sceneries dear to Ovid and Byron.

## PROGRAM

### THE ALBAN DRAIN OUTLETS

The drains were carried out to control the level of the lakes Albano and Nemi, which have no natural outlet. Beside this control, the implemented works made available a large water reservoir which could be used for watering or to operate mills and factories. The technical and planning difficulties were impressive, but they have been overcome notwithstanding the limited means available.



*Incile (inlet) of the Albano drain (Photo Carlo Germani, CRSE Archive)*

## THE ALBANO DRAIN (CASTEL GANDOLFO)

**Difficulty:** None, sportswear advisable

The Albano drain outlet is the most famous among the various ones found in the Alban Hills, and is also the only one of which something is known by historic sources. Livy dates it to the beginning of the IV century b.c.E.: according to the Delphic oracle, Veio would not be conquered (by the Romans) as long as the lake Albano overflows from its banks. Also Dionysius of Alicarnassus (I,66) mentions it reporting Livy's text, but at the same time suggesting that the drain may be older. The study by Piranesi, full of technical details and beautiful engravings, greatly contributed to its fame. The tunnel is 1450 m long. At present the Albano drain is the object of a three-year program of speleological studies, carried out by Hypogea in cooperation with the Superintendence for the Archeological Heritage of Lazio and the Roman Castles Park.

Aim of the visit to the Incile (inlet) is to share with the participants the first results of the investigation, in view of future deeper technical and scientific studies, and of the establishment of a scientific committee.



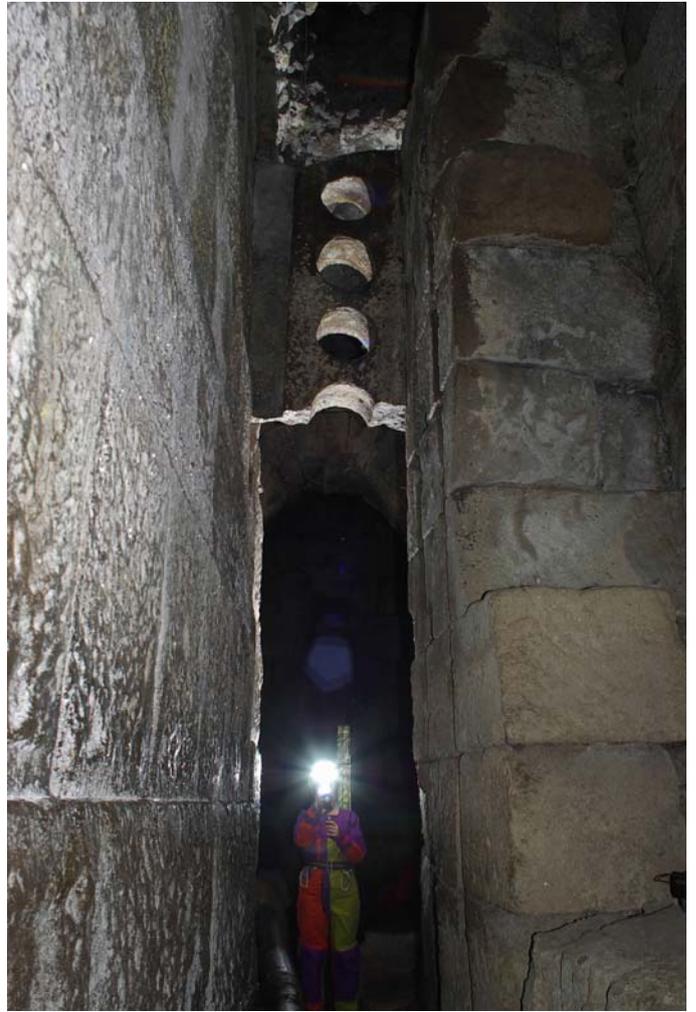
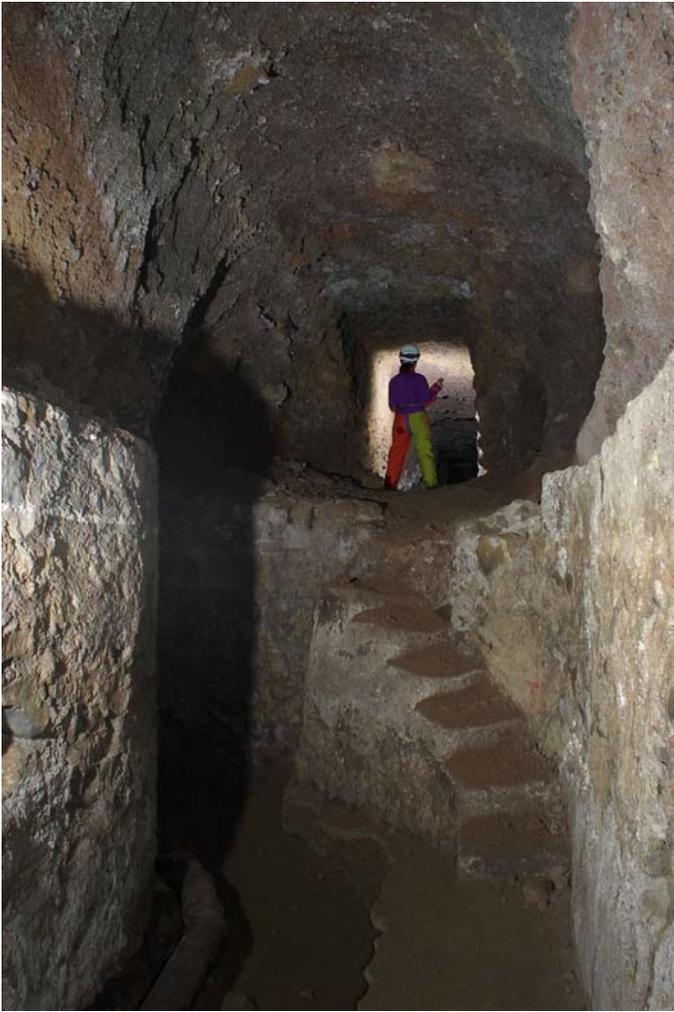
*The Albano drain outlet (Photo Marco Vitelli, A.S.S.O. Archive)*

## THE NEMI DRAIN (NEMI)

**Difficulty:** the crossing of the drain does not require special speleological techniques; equipment: helmet with LED light and boots.

The construction of the drain goes back to still unknown times; it is generally placed between the end of the VI century and the beginning of the V century b.c.E.. Contrary to the Albano drain, the system Nemi-Ariccia is not mentioned by ancient historical sources. Starting from the years '90 of past century, intensive speleological investigations were carried out (Castellani, Caloi, Dragoni); the campaign was completed in the years 2002-2003 by the Center for Underground Research Egeria. The tunnel, 1653 m long, was carried out with the technique of "blind excavation", starting from two opposite points of the mountain.

The starting points were fixed with the method of the "*coltellatio*" and the meeting point was found out by "hearing contact". On the lake Nemi emperor Caligula (12-41 c.E.) built leisure ships for his court; the models can be seen at the Museum of the Roman ships, together with the remains of the temple of Diana *Nemorensis*.



The drain of lake Nemi (Photo Carlo Germani, CRSE Archive)

### THE NIMPHAEUM DORICO (CASTEL GANDOLFO)

Difficulty: none, sportswear advisable

The water arrives at the Nymphaeum from a canal carved into the rock, which was supplied by one of the aqueducts in the Albano crater and by a set of water tanks and hydraulic ducts located on the back of the overlying central back wall. Water plays and small water-falls made the structure pleasant also in the hottest months. Mentioned in the I cen. b.p.E. and rediscovered in 1723, it is credited to emperor Domitian. It is a unique work due to the presence of several coverings (*opus reticulatum*, *opus coementicium* and *opus mixtum*) and styles (Doric and Ionic).

### THE NIMPHAEUM BRIGANTINO OR OF DIANA (CASTEL GANDOLFO)

Difficulty: none, sportswear advisable

The Nymphaeum is located in a natural cave, which may be dated to Domitian time (end of the first century), and therefore related to the imposing ensemble of Domitian's alban villa. In 1841 unauthorized excavations, later under the control of the Camerlingo, unearthed many statues and mosaics, some of which are now at the pontifical villas in Castel Gandolfo. The Nymphaeum Bergantino is named after an old owner, according to Lugli, or else, the name derives from the corruption of the word "brigantino", a type of sailing ship: in fact, the nymphaem cave could be used as shed for boats. Recently, the regional Park of the Roman Castles has started works for the restoration of the Nymphaeum.



*The drain of lake Nemi: calcareous concretions on the tuff (Photo Carlo Germani, CRSE Archive)*

### THE CATACOMB OF SAN SENATORE (ALBANO)

**Difficulty:** none, sportswear advisable

The catacomb is located at the XV mile of the Appian Way, under the convent of Saint Mary of the Star, and is one of the most important catacombs in southern Lazio. The Catacomb of San Senatore, beside being devoted to the cult of the local Martyrs and a burial place, has been also an important cult center for the religious life of residents and pilgrims. The burial area, starting from the IV and V centuries, was the main graveyard of the Christian community in Albano and, according to some scholars, also of Ariccia.

Initially used as a *pozzolana* quarry, the site was then recycled as a burial ground. As such, it was used from the third century to the twelfth century. Its lengthy lifespan is probably due to one of the underground room's use as an *ecclesia*, that is, a place of worship, first for early Christians worshipping the local martyrs and then to the presence of a nearby monastic community. The earliest written records regarding the catacombs of San Senatore in Albano come from the early fourth century: the *Depositio Martyrum* mentions August 8<sup>th</sup> as the anniversary of the passion of the martyrs Secondo, Carpofo, Vittorino and Severiano, all of whom are buried in Albano. The seventh century *De Locis* describes this place as the burial site of Senatore and Perpetua's bodies.



*The Catacomb of San Senatore (photo courtesy R. Libera)*

The ancient galleries lead straight onto the Appian way, and, despite the radical changes later applied to the facade of the cave overlooking the *Regina Viarum*, it is possible to reconstruct the presence of at least five different entrances. There are, in two areas of the Hypogeum Christian, a series of well-preserved frescoes. One of these frescoes, the oldest, is the Christ standing between St. Peter, St. Lawrence, St. Paul and another unknown figure. The "Historic crypt", believed to be the catacomb area within which were kept the martyrs' relics, contains a series of paintings ranging between the V Century and the upper Middle Ages. When visiting the front of the apsis, on the wall to the left appears is a painting portraying, over a sky-blue background, a young Christ seated between that of six other figures, only Peter and Paul are identifiable. The apse of the historic crypt contains a fresco depicting Christ between the busts of the Virgin and St. Smaragdo. Next to the apse also the image of a young saint, whose portrait is possibly attributed to St. Senatore.



*The Catacomb of San Senatore (photo courtesy R. Libera)*