

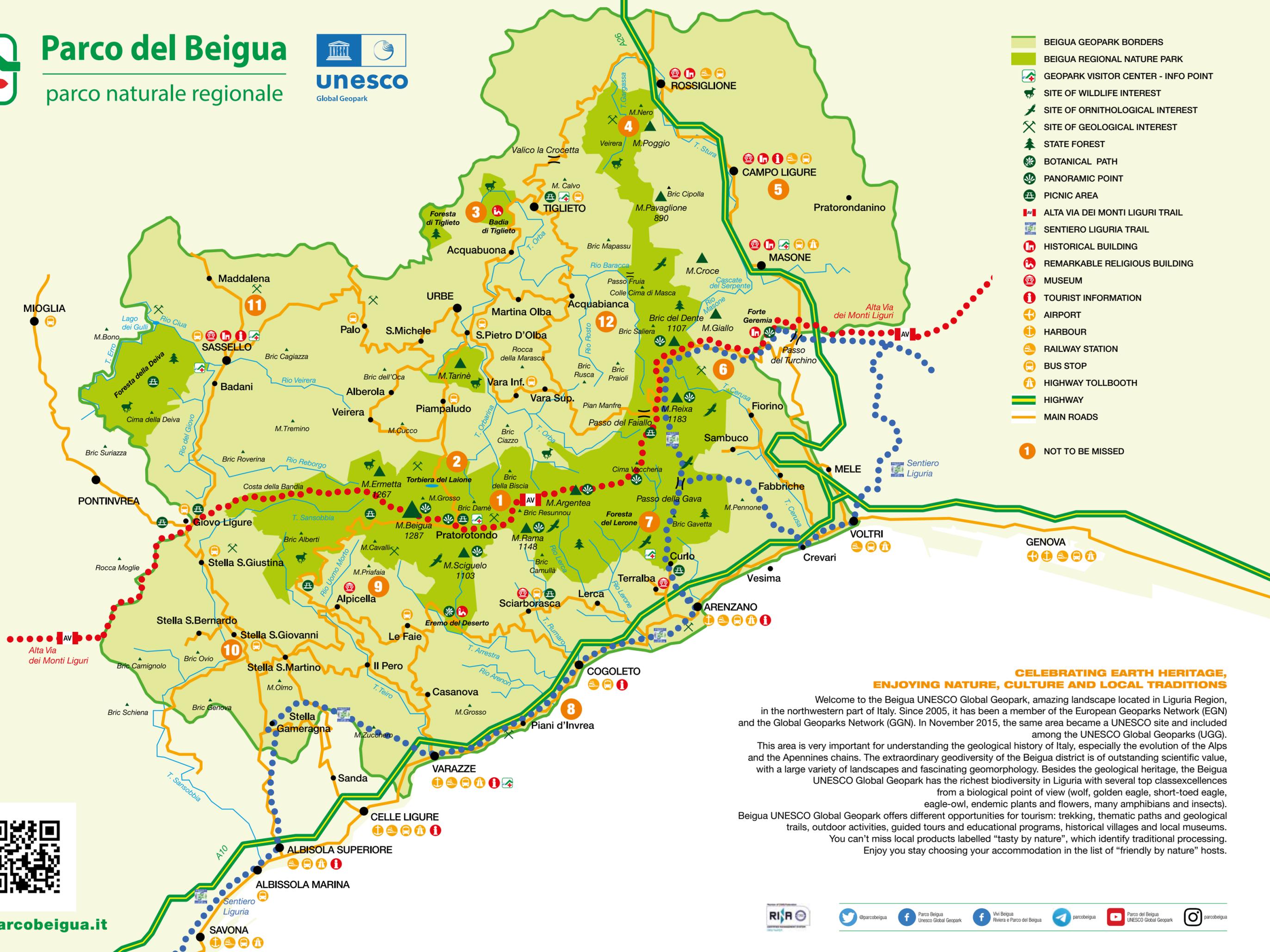


# Parco del Beigua

parco naturale regionale



- BEIGUA GEOPARK BORDERS
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- GEOPARK VISITOR CENTER - INFO POINT
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- HIGHWAY
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- NOT TO BE MISSED



## CELEBRATING EARTH HERITAGE, ENJOYING NATURE, CULTURE AND LOCAL TRADITIONS

Welcome to the Beigua UNESCO Global Geopark, amazing landscape located in Liguria Region, in the northwestern part of Italy. Since 2005, it has been a member of the European Geoparks Network (EGN) and the Global Geoparks Network (GGN). In November 2015, the same area became a UNESCO site and included among the UNESCO Global Geoparks (UGG).

This area is very important for understanding the geological history of Italy, especially the evolution of the Alps and the Apennines chains. The extraordinary geodiversity of the Beigua district is of outstanding scientific value, with a large variety of landscapes and fascinating geomorphology. Besides the geological heritage, the Beigua UNESCO Global Geopark has the richest biodiversity in Liguria with several top classexcellences from a biological point of view (wolf, golden eagle, short-toed eagle, eagle-owl, endemic plants and flowers, many amphibians and insects).

Beigua UNESCO Global Geopark offers different opportunities for tourism: trekking, thematic paths and geological trails, outdoor activities, guided tours and educational programs, historical villages and local museums. You can't miss local products labelled "tasty by nature", which identify traditional processing. Enjoy your stay choosing your accommodation in the list of "friendly by nature" hosts.





### 1 DISCOVERING THE BLOCKFIELD IN PRATOROTONDO AV

A unique viewpoint along the path called **Alta Via dei Monti Liguri** at 1,100 metres above sea level, at Pratorotondo, in the heart of the Beigua Geopark, where you can enjoy spectacular panoramic views of the Ligurian Gulf. From here you can see the stretch of the watershed between the Po valley slope and the Tyrrhenian side, which is closer to the coastal line compared to the entire Ligurian arch. You can also observe the typical morphology of the ridge sector and the southern slope of the Beigua massif overlooking the sea and the coastal strip in Arenzano, Cogoleto and Varazze. Really fascinating the **blockfield** in Pianfretto geosite; extraordinary large accumulation of boulders which testifies the summit crumbling due to cryoclastisc processes. In springtime the watershed area is plenty of wonderful flowering of endemic species as *Viola bertolonii* and *Daphne cneorum*.

### 2 A SHOWCASE FOR GEODIVERSITY AND BIODIVERSITY

Piampaludo area is simply one of the most fascinating sites in the heart of the Beigua UNESCO Global Geopark. You can find something special at the **Laione peat bog** which is a site of great importance from a naturalistic point of view, where amphibians like the alpine newt, the crested newt and the fire salamander have chosen as their habitat. A little further North you can observe a nice example of **blockstreams**. It is a curious geomorphological feature which modified the forms of the local landscape at a particular time in the geological evolution of the area when the climate must have been much colder than it is now. **Blockstreams** are accumulations of large blocks which were incorrectly defined glacial deposits for a long time. Most of them have a tubular shape and rounded-off edges, sign of very small movements during the past. Also very interesting some wetlands nearby where you can find reptiles like the grass snake; aquatic insects such as the great diving beetle and the dragon-fly; very precious insectivorous small plants as the *Drosera rotundifolia*.



### 3 ENJOY CALM AND PEACE IN THE ANCIENT CISTERCIAN ABBEY

Established in 1120, in the middle of a green plain in Tiglieto, it was the first **Cistercian abbey** built outside the borders of France and then the first in Italy. The so-called **Badia di Tiglieto** is a mixture between features of the Ligurian Romanesque and those of the French pre-Gothic typical of Cistercian architecture; the Church, the Monastery and the refectory are on the three sides of the cloister, closed on its fourth by fields. In the Middle Ages, Friars from Cîteaux favoured the cultural and economic development, working the fields in the area and involving local community in agriculture, breeding and forestry activities. In recent years the monastic complex has been restored and open to visitors. A ring route, suitable for pleasant walks or for Nordic Walking in all seasons, starts from the abbey following the banks of the Orba river between forests and meadows until it reaches the ancient Romanesque bridge with five arcades.



### 4 ADVENTURE IN THE GARGASSA VALLEY CANYON

Not far from Rossiglione, the **Gargassa Valley** offers places of pure beauty, among quiet small lakes, fascinating rock formations and a spectacular canyon. You can walk through the Gargassa Valley following the geological trail (ring route). In this very special place of the Beigua UNESCO Global Geopark the typical ophiolitic rocks give way to the conglomerates, in which water dug curious shapes. The presence of serpentine, a dark green rock cropping out on the bottom of ponds, gives the stretches of water a fascinating emerald tone. Here geodiversity reaches its top and vegetation goes along, varying according to the different geological substratum: from mixed woods on metamorphic rocks to thin pine forest on serpentinites to bare canyon walls in conglomerates where growing conditions are really extreme. In the middle of the ring route the ancient human presence is still clear: in the old village of **Vereira** pre-industrial activities show the past exploitation of these places for the glass production.



### 5 WELCOME IN THE HISTORIC VILLAGE OF CAMPO LIGURE Liguria

A majestic castle looks over the red roofs of the houses and the frescoed **palaces of Campo Ligure**, for centuries the feudal realm of the Spinola family, nowadays recognized in the prestigious list of "Most beautiful historic villages in Italy". The **Castle**, meant to protect the village, dates back to X century. During the centuries, the body and the surrounding walls underwent several changes and recent restoring favoured its use for cultural events. The best view of the village can be seen from the medieval bridge which crosses the Stura river. Almost in the town center, the rich 17th century oratory of S.S. Sebastiano and Rocco holds one of the most attractive Christmas cribs in Italy. Campo Ligure is also the Italian capital of **filigree**, still crafted in the many workshops of the village and exhibited in the "Carlo Bosio" Museum of Filigree, which hosts unique masterpieces from all over the world.



### 6 PASSO DEL FAIALLO AND FORT GEREMIA AV

Another wonderful area where you can enjoy amazing landscape and a wonderful view walking along the Alta Via dei Monti Liguri trail. **Passo del Faiallo** is a very good start point for excursions and trails of the Beigua UNESCO Global Geopark, also important for wildlife and geomorphology features in the steep slopes of the Cerusa Valley. Going to eastwards you can reach **Fort Geremia**, an impressive nineteenth-century fortress which rises on the crest of the mountains behind Voltri, the far western end of the City of Genoa. The fort was built by the army of the Kingdom of Italy to control the Passo del Turchino and the nearby valley; it could host more than one hundred soldiers and it was armed with eight big guns. Today the Fort Geremia is managed by the municipality of Masone which, thanks to a recent restoration and conservation work, has transformed it into a rural refuge with part-time custodian for the Beigua Geopark's visitors and a stop point along the Alta Via dei Monti Liguri trail.

### 7 BIRDWATCHING IN THE LERONE VALLEY

During the whole spring and the early autumn, Beigua Geopark is visited by thousands of birds of prey. The sight is simply great, just look at the sky with a pair of binoculars or scopes. Diurnal birds of prey (as short-toed eagles, honey buzzards, marsh harriers, black kites) and storks are abundant and easily recognizable. Hundreds of birdwatchers meet in the southeastern area of the Geopark, on the hills of Arenzano, Cogoleto and Varazze, to admire these extraordinary **bird migration**, together with a considerable flow of passerines. A big part of the Geopark area is recognized as Special Protection Area ("Beigua Turchino") according to the EU Birds Directive because of the presence of many of the most important species of birds living or flying through Italy. A real paradise for **birdwatching!** Not to miss the **Ornithological Center** located in Arenzano, località Case Vaccà, dedicated to ornithology and the **Ornithological Trail** with interpretative panels nearby.



### 8 TAKE A WALK ALONG THE OUTSTANDING COASTLINE SENTIERO LIGURIA

**Lungomare Europa** is a scenic promenade of about five kilometres connecting the municipalities of Varazze and Cogoleto. Along the path, you can admire the typical **Mediterranean scrub** and the various **geomorphological processes** such as the marks indicating the variations in the sea levels in the past or those related to the tectonic movements that have shaped the present morphology of the coast. Around Varazze the coastal strip is made up of pale coloured rocks, called **metagabbros** with greenish patches (pyroxene minerals) mixed to prevalently whitish ones (plagioclase minerals). Approaching Cogoleto, the cliffs suddenly become very dark, almost black, pointing out a different substratum, characterised by rocks rich in ferrous minerals, called **serpentinites**. Likewise fascinating is the **underwater landscape** with colourful marine organisms as well as very interesting geological and geomorphological features. An ideal spot for snorkelling and diving.



### 9 ROCK ENGRAVINGS IN ALPICELLA AND MOUNT BEIGUA DISTRICT

Fascinating signs in the rocks, mysterious witnesses of life in the past. The symbolic significance of the Beigua massif is demonstrated by the presence of several stone carvings. These **rupestrian engravings** are predominantly etched into the hard-wearing ophiolitic rocks, whose origin is lost in history, from the Neolithic period, to the Iron Age and finally to the early Middle Ages. A lot of rocks engravings were found nearby **Alpicella** and **Mount Faie**, but also in the **upper Orba Valley**, near Piampaludo. As a confirmation of the primitive presence of different cultures, iconographically different samples have been recorded along both sides of the watershed. On the Tyrrhenian side, spindle-shaped carvings called polissoir and cupels prevail, while more articulated and stratified in time symbols, with crosses, phi anthropomorphics, rayed discs and geometric figures, can be seen on the Padana valley side. The most important finding is the marvelous decorated rock called "Written Stone", hidden in the wood nearby the peak of **Mount Beigua**.



### 10 STELLA, BIRTHPLACE OF A BELOVED PRESIDENT

With origins dating back to the Middle Ages, Stella is also known for being the birthplace of Sandro Pertini, one of the most beloved Presidents of the Italian Republic. The village of San Giovanni hosts the house-museum where you can find memorabilia and testimonies donated over time by family, friends, famous artists or simple citizens to keep alive the memory of the President. Several hiking trails starts from the five villages that form the municipality of Stella to reach, at high altitude, the route of the Alta Via dei Monti Liguri. At the caves on the height of Corona, in the village of Stella San Bernardo, there are also interesting karst findings.

### 11 DISCOVERING A FOSSIL CORAL REEF

Jumping 28 million years back in time! That happens if you visit the outcrop at Maddalena - Ponte Prina which is a very important **palaeontological site** with one of the richest Oligocene coral fauna, in very good conservation conditions and quite large. The coral bioconstructions set directly on the ophiolitic substratum that was clearly modeled by the sea. These bioconstructions are dense agglomerations of corals of different genres and species which lived in shallow sea environments. These small bioconstructions failed to form a real cliff as they were crushed by coarse sediments carried into the sea by rivers of torrential character during phases of strong erosion on the land. A subsequent limited increase of depth is testified by deposition of fine-grained sediments (silt and sand) and by the presence not only of corals, but also of foraminifera, calcareous algae and mollusks. A faithful reconstruction of this environment and very interesting fossil samples are visible at the **Palazzo Gervino Geopark Visitor Center**, in the historic center of Sassello.



### 12 RURAL ARCHITECTURE IN URBE

Across upper Val d'Orba run the paths on which salt was transported in ancient times and, in recent times, iron; here you can find wild nature intermixed with rural buildings. The municipality of Urbe consists of five villages still preserving traces of historic settlements. **Olba San Pietro**, at the confluence of the Orba and Orbarina rivers, has grown around the 17th-century bridge and the traces of the ancient ironworks. In **Acquabianca** the rural chapel of Gattazè remains as the only surviving element of a larger residential nucleus that also included the Palazzo di Caccia. It has a characteristic circular stone structure and was erected by the Raggi Marquises, owners of the nearby Badia in Tiglieto. **Martina, Vara Inferiore and Vara Superiore** are surrounded by chestnut woods and gable roofed buildings scattered across the meadows, showing a rich heritage of rural architecture.

