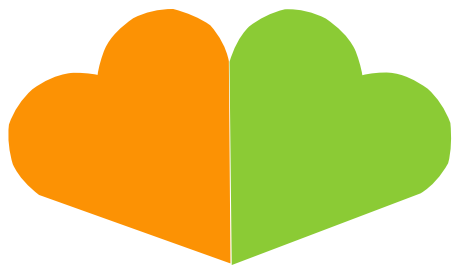
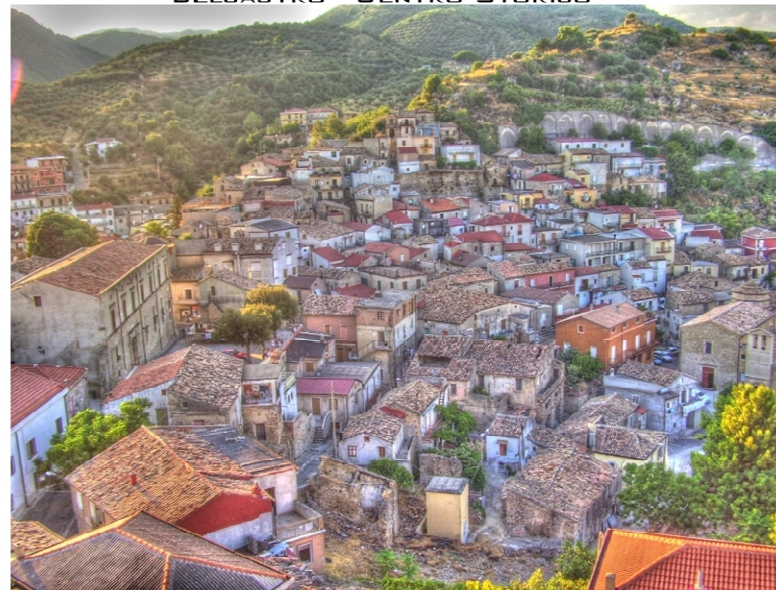


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Guida Turistica—Belcastro 2009
A Cura di Raffaele Piccolo e Carmine Stanizzi
Traduzione di Rita Lodari

BELCASTRO - CENTRO STORICO



Belcastro
Città d'Arte



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Belcastro is a beautiful old village of “enotrian” origins in the province of Catanzaro. Belcastro counts 1509 citizens and is located 535 meters above sea level. Its territory, which extends to 52.78 sq. km, expands from the south-eastern slopes of the Sila Piccola to the Ionian coast, where within walking distance several village resorts can be found. The location of the site allows you to reach the sea or the mountains in a few minutes. Within an half an hour's drive, you can reach famous seaside resorts such as Porto Kaleo, Le Castella, Isola Capo Rizzuto, and Crotona. At the same time, on the opposite side and within the same period of time, we may be able to reach Catanzaro Lido, Copanello, the archaeological park of Squillace, and Soverato. The village of Belcastro stands on a rocky spur at the top of which stands the medieval castle of the Counts of Aquino. The town building structure is typical of the medieval village, where the characteristic alleys of the old part of the village alternate with areas of new construction in the lower part. Particularly numerous are churches of different ages.

On the left side of the country there is "valle di Nasari", a tributary of the river Crocchio. The territory also includes a strip of land that overlooks the Ionian Sea, called Fieri or "Condoleo".





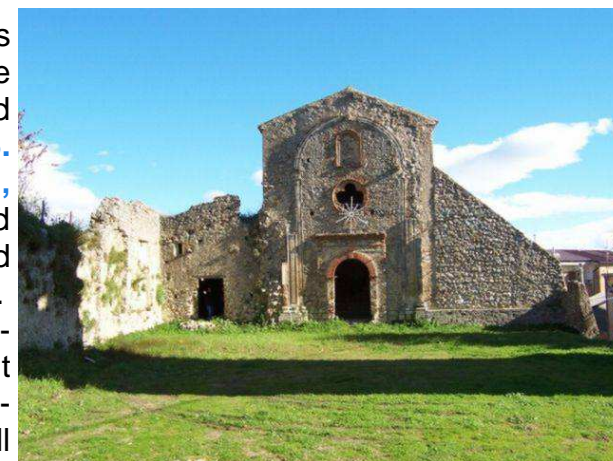
The country is surrounded by extensive olive tree groves, from which fine oil is obtained, while descending towards the coast, there are cereal crops.

Belcastro is easy to reach from the SS 106, just past Cropani Marina and before reaching Botricello, take a left on the road to the Sila Piccola and reach the village in a few minutes. Take a look at a map.



Itinerario turistico

After the first houses of the village, on the right you will find **Chiesa della SS. Annunziata**, commonly called dell'Annunziata, and constructed in 1610. The Church was recently restored. It can be easily identified by its high bell tower in Romanesque style.



Originally the church had three naves and was a pretty impressive complex, to which a hospice for pilgrims and a "Mount of marriages for poor girls" were attached. Destroyed by the earthquake of 1783, today are visible, over the ruins outside, the apse, with architectural pediment stone, where the original solution of the high altar, built in the bottom of the presbytery, profiled in stone and decorated, was carved by master



stonemason Antonio Rogliano. The significance of this altar, the only one in Calabria, is the architectural style that marks the transition from religious to civil architecture. Because of its singularity the church is the topic of many studies. Attached to the church is a Romanesque bell tower.



Proceeding to the main street of the village one comes to the Church of **St. Maria della Pietà**, known as the Pietà, which holds an icon of Madonna and Child, of Byzantine making (1000-1200) which probably came from the cathedral, and three baroque sculptures that once adorned the church of the Annunziata (S. Anna, the Angel of Annunciation and the eternal Father); of considerable interest is the facade with prolonged portal acute arch stone profile of the XV century.

The church, which until 1631 was named San Pietro Apostolo, it was rebuilt and extended based on an agreement



between the canon holder Don Scipione Vivacqua and the brothers of the Congregation of the Pietà.



Of great interest is the church of **S. Thomas** which, following his beatification (15 August 1333), was constructed, October 18 1334, in the same room in the castle where S. Thomas is said to be born, as written in the initial construction document request, "Istrumento", for this pro tempore by the Bishop Gregory and extended by the apostolic notary Girolamo Cavallo. Inside is a large fresco of the saint and one noble coat of arms in marble, used as a seat.

From the courtyard of the castle, visitors can explore with their eyes the Gulf of Squillace:



From Le Castella to Soverato, as if you were on a large balcony overlooking this immense and beautiful landscape and enjoying its sight.

Refreshed after the long but pleasant tour of the village, visitors, walking down from Via Grecia, which was the Byzantine medieval neighborhood and the Jewish ghetto of ancient times, may return to the main square of the village (Poerio) and enjoy a refreshing drink at one of the two bars of the square. The village, in addition to the production an greatly appreciated oil which can be purchased from many manufacturers, offers a wide range of home-processed meats and olives prepared in different ways (in water, oil, pickled, baked). At Christmas time a very typical cake, called pittanchiùsa, is made with walnuts, raisins, cinnamon and other spices, while at Easter time, the cuzzùpa is the traditional dish.



mal font, in green marble from the sixteenth century, was replaced by Magella Well castle.

Following a recent renovation, surfaced the old truss placed by Monsignor Ricciulli, dating to 1627 and on the two side walls of the nave two frescoes, one of the late Renaissance era, and perhaps another of the Baroque period. The first, located on the right wall of the external nave portrays s. Nicholas of Myria in a big arched niche framed with floral motifs. The second fresco, located on the left wall, which is also a niche because of clumsy restoration work, is completely ruined and a crucifixion can be barely identified on the background. A few more niches and slotted windows of different ages have also surfaced.

In the Chapel of SS. Sacramento at the base of the dome surfaced the original stone crown, the work of stonemasons from Belcastro dating from 1626. From surveys carried out during the

final paving, there are some places in the floor below that have not yet been explored. Over and above the Cathedral is the **Castello dei Counts of Aquino**, with its massive square Mastio with three floors leading down to the remains of the



perimeter walls with square and semi-cylindrical towers, (XIII-XV centuries) as well as additional scrap, added by the Aragoneses. There was also a cinquecentine Magella Well in local hexagonal stone crowning, with arches and carved noble coats of arms, which was recently placed in the church as a baptismal font.



Walking toward the center of the village, you arrive in the main square of Joseph Poerio, where you will find the church of **San Rocco**. The church was built in 1645 by Duke Francesco Belcastro Sersale, as the family chapel; the portal with columns in a rectangular stone is the work of local stonemasons from the XVII century, has suffered over time many remakes, the latest of which occurred in 1998. The layout consists of a simple miniature structure.



Next to the church is the majestic **Palazzo Poerio** (1000 sq. meters), so named after the last feudal



lords, but built by the family of the dukes Sersale; it is also commonly known as building Cirillo, after one of the feudal lords who at one time came in possession of the feud. The building was built by Duke Francesco Sersale in 1645, after the earthquake which that year destroyed much of the village and the castle, causing 61 casualties. The palace, seen from the adjacent Piazza San Tommaso exhibits beautiful arched doors, flanked by columns, rectangular windows with a indented profile stone frame, and the side façade on Piazza Poerio decorated by a stone Baroque balcony; from the entrance hall of the building two arched



stone staircases lead to upper floors. From Poerio Square, the tourist itinerary can take several directions.

Walking toward the Piazzetta Margherita you can admire the imposing “Albero della Libertà”, the “Freedom Tree”, planted by Baron Poerio during the Neapolitan Republic and then move to the fountain in Caria, from the Byzantine era, with pure water from a thousand years old flowing spring, or you can advance on to the Via Castellaci between characteristically medieval alleys and stairways.



Returning to Piazza Poerio, you immediately enter the Piazza s. Thomas Aquinas, from where you can admire the entire western part of the Marquis of Crotone, all the way to the sea. You will proceed towards Via Lamia and then over to Castle Street. At the top of the road there is the **Church of San Michele Arcangelo** - the former Cathedral.

Built on a Latin cross, facing east, the building boasts perspective views from the XV – XVI centuries, which even with the subsequent remakes, still is a prevalently Romanesque style structure. Three portals open in the front gables, with stone decorations and sculptures of cherubs and small masks, designed by local artists which some date back to the sixteenth century; however, a date stamped in black on a column to the right of the Chapel of SS. Sacramento, bears the year 1626. It is believed that the portals do not date



back to end of the sixteenth century, but to the date that appears on the column of the church.

To the right of the church there is the square shaped high bell tower, topped with an octagonal polygon. The interior of the church is a basilica with three naves and apses. Before 1957



the walls of the two outside aisles were each enriched by three baroque altars, on the right there were those of s. Lucia and s. Antonio, (now removed), and S. Thomas, which still exists; on the left standing alone remains the **altar of the Immaculate**, while the other two, the altar of the S. Addolorata and s. Filomena, were discarded. Over the central arch is the bishop's coat of arms of Archbishop Orazio Schipani (1591 - 1595) with Baroque-inspired decorations, and below is the wide wooden choir seat, commissioned by Bishop Antonio Ricciullo to local artisans.



In the apse on the left is the Chapel of SS. Sacramento, where you will find fine inlaid marble altar from 1774, once enriched by pale “cinquecentine”. In the apse on the right there is the chapel of St. Michele, in which you will find a beautiful statue of the saint, dating to the eighteenth century. On the left side on the central altar is the seat of the elected, built in 1634. The church has also other statues dated 1700-1800: s. Joseph, s. Vito, Saints Medici, s. Anthony, the dead Christ, the risen Christ and s. Lucia. The baptis-