

World Tourism Organization



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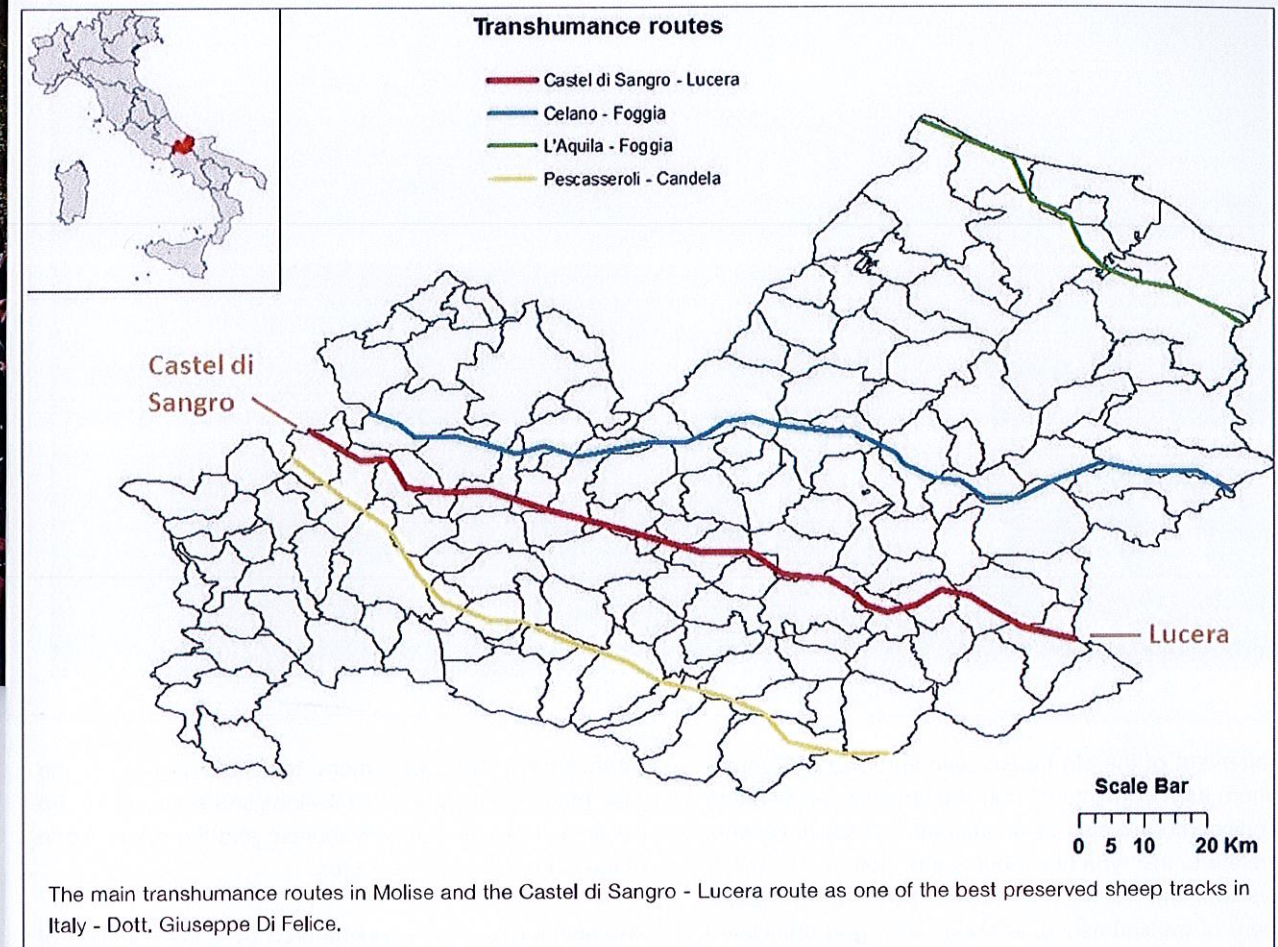
## Community-based tourism and walking tours along the old transhumance routes in Italy

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The territorial morphology characterising much of Mediterranean Europe determines a gradient in the vegetation growth that favours the move of the cattle on the pastures between the mountain barrier of the Pyrenees-Alps-Carpathians and the Mediterranean coast. This practice has had a great importance in human history with a strong impact on economic activities and influence on the social and cultural spheres of many Mediterranean populations, particularly in Central and Southern Italy. The extensive network of transhumance routes in the past centuries, and involving many thousands of people, has now almost completely disappeared due to the decline of transhumance. However, the region of Molise retains significant traces of both the tracks (tratturi) and the traditional landscapes associated with them. Molise holds the best preserved and most numerous compared to those of the neighbouring regions because it was the only one to be almost completely free of these routes. Molise is, therefore, the region with the most historic traces of transhumance landscapes.

The University of Molise worked for the assessment of the conservation of transhumance routes and their potential as a first step for an integrated tourism development.



over time and space, at the same time maintaining its authentic atmosphere and respect for the natural and cultural heritage of this small region, in addition to offering a real opportunity of employment for the young people.

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management of the old transhumance routes in Central-southern Italy, in which not only the tangible assets are to be considered but also those cultural and social aspects that relate to this type of economy and culture. The major routes and the connecting tracks appear as the basic element of transhumance, arranged as a grid articulated in multiple sequences, thus creating a dense network of greenways. Known over centuries as sheep tracks, they are also thought to be used as pilgrimage routes, and they are now experiencing new potentialities as cultural itineraries for community-based tourism, as proved by Cammina, Molise!, an event occurring every year in a summer week since 1995, characterised by walking in a friendly atmosphere in search for the local culture and landscapes, in a region traditionally associated to the transhumance routes and suited to rural tourism. From all over Italy and abroad, every year, hundreds of people come to walk the sheep tracks of Molise, living an existential experience of great intensity. Therefore, the event caught the interest of Trek, an Italian network with more than thirty hiking associations. For organizational reasons, the number of participants cannot exceed 250 people, a limitation meant to maintain the original communitarian spirit and to prevent a commercial use of the event, which is contrary to the aims of the cultural association organising it (named Terra, which means "The Land"). The number of requests is growing up and, even though many requests remained unsatisfied, in the last four years, the number of participants was more than 250. Tratturo Coast-to-Coast is another interesting initiative realised by the association

"Attraversoimolise", with many tours offered during the year. Many institutions, organizations and associations are involved in this kind of slow tourism and the revitalisation of the old transhumance routes.

The accommodation is guaranteed by a combination of hotels, bed and breakfast and other hospitality facilities offered in the region, according to a typical Italian accommodation form called *albergo diffuso*, an innovative concept of hospitality launched in the early 1980s as a means of reviving small, historic villages and town centres located off the beaten tracks. The itineraries are different every time and are selected together with local contacts, depending on the physical conditions of the paths, the contributions by local communities and service availability. The special features that characterise the offer are the strong relationship with the route companions, inspired by an intimate and spiritual environment, as well as the cultural exchange with the local communities that can be met along the path, and on the in-depth knowledge of manners and customs of the places you pass through. It is user-friendly, because it has been designed and is fed as part of a community dimension, inclusive and therefore able to discreetly put at ease even the walker on his first journey, whatever language you speak and however you think.

The University of Molise is at work to codify the distinctive characters of the formula, trying to verify if it can be assessed as a tourist product by becoming reproducible