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Where silence lives:

A journey into the heart of Garfagnana

Direct by

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There are places that do not ask to be visited. They ask to be listened to. Garfagnana is one of them.

Among ancient mountains, cliffside villages, and trails seemingly forgotten by time, there lies a rare space where the noise of the world fades away, leaving only the essentials: the breath of nature, the memory of its people, and the silent dialogue between past and present.

"Where Silence Lives" was born from an actual journey, but above all, from a quest. A quest for what survives far from the frantic pace of modern life: traditions preserved with simplicity, landscapes that need no explanation, and stories that live on through everyday gestures.

This documentary was made possible thanks to a community of supporters who chose to believe in the value of regional storytelling and the power of independent cinema. It is a shared journey, built step by step, rooted in the belief that to tell the story of a place means, first and foremost, to respect it and to let oneself be transformed by it.

Through images, sounds, and encounters, this documentary invites the viewer to slow down. To look without haste. To inhabit, if only for a moment, that silence which is not an absence, but a living presence.

Because in Garfagnana, silence is not empty: it is an ancient voice that continues to tell the story of who we are. And perhaps, by listening to it, we can rediscover something we thought was lost forever.

Bob Caprai

La Grotta del Vento (The Wind Cave) The Secret Breath of the Apuan Alps

Nestled in the heart of the Apuan Alps, where Garfagnana becomes wild and silent, the Wind Cave stands as one of the most complete examples of subterranean karst topography in Europe: a living landscape molded by water and time.



Its name reveals its nature. Powerful air currents sweep through the caverns due to the temperature difference between the interior and the exterior; inside the cave, the climate remains stable at around 50°F (10°C). Two openings—one at 2,106 feet (642 meters) and another above 4,593 feet (1,400 meters)—allow the mountain to "breathe." In the summer, cool air rushes out of the lower entrance; in the winter, the flow reverses. It is a slow, cyclical, ancient breath.

Known since antiquity as a mysterious "blowing hole," the cave was not explored until 1898, when a group of young boys from Fornovolasco guided a small girl through a narrow crevice that was impossible for an adult to fit through. Walking just a few feet was enough to

discover a hidden world opening up beyond the darkness.

Today, the natural entrance on the flank of the Pania Secca leads into an authentic underground museum. Water continues to create and nurture living stalactites and stalagmites, which are mirrored in crystal-clear pools. Tunnels smoothed over millennia lead down into silent abysses all the way to the *Pozzo dell'Infinito* (The Infinity Well), a 295-foot (90-meter) vertical drop where the rock becomes sheer and primordial.

The Wind Cave unfolds across three distinct environments: a mostly flat initial section rich in formations ; a second section traversed by an underground river ; and a third section featuring massive chambers and deep vertical drops. This represents a rare geological variety concentrated within a single accessible cave system.

Stepping back out into the daylight after crossing this hidden world permanently alters your perception of time and depth. Here, the mountain is not merely scenery: it is a living organism that breathes and silently continues to transform.

The Hermitage of Calomini: Suspended Between Rock and Spirit

Nestled like a precious gem into a sheer cliffside, the Hermitage of Calomini is not just an architectural marvel, but an experience that challenges both vertigo and time. Here, where limestone meets the sky, human hands worked with humility, carving a refuge of faith into the living stone that seems to float high above the lush valley below.

Unlike many historical landmarks that have been turned into museums, the Hermitage of Calomini keeps its original mission intact. It remains an active place of worship—a sanctuary where the breath of the mountain merges with the spirituality of those who live there and those who visit in search of peace. Its structure, partly built and partly natural, reflects centuries of Marian devotion and silent contemplation.

To preserve the spiritual integrity and tranquility of this unique sanctuary, we kindly ask you to carefully read the following guidelines:

- The hermitage stands in the striking setting of the Municipality of Fabbriche di Vergemoli, right in the heart of the Apuan Alps.
- As this is still a consecrated place of worship, respectful behavior is required at all times.
- It is essential to maintain absolute silence during your visit. Your respect is the primary form of protection for this sanctuary of faith.
- The hermitage is a prime destination for hiking enthusiasts. Several trails connect the surrounding villages to the structure, offering hikers natural vistas of rare beauty.
- Prepare for a walk immersed in greenery that will bring you face-to-face with the cliffside in an embrace of untouched nature.



The Hermitage is not reached solely by your steps, but by turning your awareness to everything that surrounds you.

A Bridge of Many Legends: The Devil's Bridge

Among the oldest and most evocative landmarks of Garfagnana stands the *Ponte della Maddalena* (Magdalene Bridge) in Borgo a Mozzano, universally known as the *Ponte del Diavolo* (The Devil's Bridge). Built between the 11th and 12th centuries, likely during the reign of Countess Matilda of Canossa, the bridge spans the Serchio River with an unmistakable silhouette: four asymmetrical arches culminating in a massive, soaring central span that dominates the waterway with an elegance as daring as it is surprisingly harmonious.



One of the most deeply rooted legends in local tradition has formed around the bridge, mirroring similar folklore found across Europe for such striking architectural feats. The story goes that the master builder, realizing he could not complete the work within the agreed deadline as the project neared completion, grew desperate. He supposedly struck a deal with the Devil: in exchange for the help needed to finish the bridge in a single night, he would surrender the soul of the first creature to cross it at dawn.

According to the most popular version, the master builder outsmarted the demon by sending a dog across first (or a pig or a goat, in other variations).

Outwitted and enraged, the Devil either threw himself furiously against the bridge without being able to destroy it, or, as another popular tale claims, plunged into the waters of the Serchio River, vanishing forever.

Myth aside, the Magdalene Bridge stands as a true masterpiece of medieval engineering and one of the most iconic symbols of northern Tuscany. Situated along the *Via Francigena*—the ancient pilgrimage route to Rome—it served for centuries as a strategic passage, resting place, and site of devotion for travelers, merchants, and pilgrims alike.

Even today, whether reflected in the waters of the Serchio amidst autumn mists or illuminated by the low light of sunset, the Devil's Bridge preserves its magic intact: a presence suspended between history and legend, capable of evoking a remote and mysterious era.

Monte Forato: A Natural Wonder

On the border between Garfagnana and Versilia, in the heart of the Apuan Alps, lies one of Italy's most singular natural spectacles: Monte Forato (The Perforated Mountain). Its peak, sitting at an altitude of 4,012 feet (1,223 meters), is pierced by a natural rock arch—an elliptical opening measuring roughly 100 by 65 feet (30 by 20 meters). Over time, the erosive force of water carved this window into the limestone ridge, creating a breathtaking frame looking out at the sky.

The most celebrated phenomenon tied to Monte Forato is the so-called "double sunset." Twice a year, near the spring and autumn equinoxes, the setting sun aligns perfectly with the natural arch, creating a rare and mesmerizing optical effect. From the village of Fornovolasco in the valley below, onlookers can watch the sun disappear behind the peaks, only to reappear for a few precious moments through the hole before night finally falls. This phenomenon, which was highly likely known and revered as far back as prehistoric times, continues to draw astronomy enthusiasts, hikers, and photographers from all over Europe every year.



Monte Forato is also shrouded in legend. It is said that the mountain's characteristic shape was born from a violent clash between San Pellegrino, a hermit who lived in the Apennines, and the Devil. Infuriated by the saint's devotion, the Evil One reportedly struck him with a slap so powerful it sent him spinning three times. Pellegrino retaliated with a punch (or a slap, depending on the version) so monumental that it hurled the Devil straight into the Apuan Alps, piercing right through the rock and creating the enormous natural arch visible today.

For hikers, Monte Forato can be reached via well-marked trails starting from Fornovolasco or Palagnana. The route, immersed in Mediterranean scrub and the chestnut forests of the Apuan Alps, offers stunning vistas and leads directly to the natural arch, which opens up to a 360-degree panorama stretching from the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Apennines.

Ultimately, Monte Forato is not merely a geological marvel, but a place where nature, myth, and astronomy converge into an unforgettable experience.

Garfagnana Epic: Where the Journey Continues

Every place tells a story. Garfagnana holds many, woven into its mountains, rivers, villages, and legends that time has failed to erase.



The *Garfagnana Epic* was created to gather and share these narratives, transforming the region into an experience to be explored with curious eyes and a slow pace. It is more than just a route through extraordinary locations; it is an invitation to discover what makes this land unique: the authentic bond connecting nature, memory, and community.

Because the true wealth of Garfagnana is not found solely in its landscapes, but in the emotions it leaves behind in those who choose to journey through it.

The trip ends here. The experience, perhaps, has just begun.