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**CORENO AUSONIO E IL SUO PERLATO: EVOLUZIONE DI UN DISTRETTO  
MINERARIO E POSSIBILITÀ DI SVILUPPO SOSTENIBILE**

Area tematica: Cultura ambientale e sviluppo sostenibile

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In the southeastern sector of the Latium region, several quarries are opened in the “Limestones with bryoans and lithotamnia” formation of Langhian to Elvetian age. This formation outcrops in the Eastern Aurunci Mts., which represent the remains of a Mesozoic carbonatic shelf. The Eastern Aurunci Mts. belt is characterized by a NW-SE-trending (“apenninic”) elongation and a SW-trending dipping, and it is separated from the Western Aurunci Mts. belt by the River Ausente valley.

The commercial name of the “Limestones with bryoans and lithotamnia” in this area is “Coreno Perlato”. The mining district of the Perlato encloses six municipalities: Coreno Ausonio, Ausonia, Castelnuovo Parano, Esperia, Pignataro Interamna, and San Giorgio a Liri. The economy of the area was mainly agricultural until the ‘50s, when the development of the mining industry started to grow up. Nowadays, the “Consortium for the exploitation of the Coreno Perlato” promotes the diffusion of this decorative stone all over the world: in fact, up to the 80 % of the whole Perlato production is sold abroad. In 1991, the regional council of Latium acknowledged the Perlato with the denomination of “Ornamental stone”, together with the “Peperino” of Vitorchiano and the “Travertine stone” of Tivoli. At present, the Perlato trade mark is registered and six varieties of this stone are available on the market.

The aim of this work has been the definition of the geological and lithotechnical characteristics of the Perlato, hand in hand with the reconstruction of the evolution of the mining activity. An overall picture of the Perlato and its exploitation conditions has been achieved. This allowed:

- i) to acknowledge the Perlato stone as an economical factor of primary importance in the southeastern Latium;
- ii) to recognize the Geosites of the Eastern Aurunci Mts.;
- iii) to put these Geosites into a network, by creating a “Geological itinerary across the Eastern Aurunci Mts.”;
- iv) to define the possible relationships between this Geological itinerary and the neighboring tourist networks.

The Geological itinerary is based on four Geosites. They are localized next to Sant'Andrea del Garigliano, Vallemaio, Coreno Ausonio, and SS. Cosma e Damiano villages, respectively. The sites of the Geological itinerary have been selected in order to represent all the main aspects of the Eastern Aurunci Mts.: in fact, these sites result to be of lithological, paleontological, tectonical, hydrogeological, as well as of mining interest.

The proposed “Geological itinerary across the Eastern Aurunci Mts.” is characterized by the following values:

- I) it represents in an exemplary way the whole geology of the Eastern Aurunci Mts.;
- II) it depicts the development of the mining activity of this area;
- III) it marks the strict relationships existing between the Perlato stone (geological-didactic value) and its exploitation (industrial archeology and present mining activity);
- IV) it joints the main villages of the area, with their noteworthy historical and cultural heritage.

In a more enlarged framework, the Geological itinerary can be linked to other tourist circuits, of which the closest to the study area are:

- a) Montecassino Abbey and Cassino town (religious, archeological, historical, cultural, and leisure interest) towards the north;
- b) Natural Regional Park of the (Western) Aurunci Mts. (naturalistic interest) at the west;
- c) Natural Regional Park of Roccamonfina (naturalistic interest) and Suio Thermae (leisure) at the east;
- d) archeological site of Minturnae towards the south.

Thus, the “Geological itinerary across the Eastern Aurunci Mts.” can be a useful instrument for supporting the territorial planning.