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English guide

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Vendicari in a day: wetlands, tuna fishery and the most beautiful beach in Italy

A day in the **Vendicari Reserve**: from the **wetlands** with birds to the **tuna fishery** and the **Sveva Tower**, from the beach of **Vendicari** to **Calamosche**, the bay awarded as the most beautiful in Italy. For each stop, find what to see and a practical tip.

DURATION

One day

6-7 hours with breaks

STOPS

6 stops

about 5.6 km

GETTING AROUND

On foot on dirt paths, for about 4.

4 km each way between the tuna fishery and Calamosche. You can arrive by car.

ONLINE VERSION WITH MAP

www.marzamemi.com/itinerari/vendicari-in-un-giorno

STOP 1 OF 6

The entrance to Vendicari and the wetlands

Recommended time: 40 minutes

A marsh in the Vendicari Reserve with vegetation and birds

The **Vendicari Wildlife Sanctuary**, established in **1984**, is a stretch of coast between **Noto** and **Marzamemi**, with beaches, wetlands and historical remains. It has **five entrances**: **Eloro**, **Marianelli**, **Calamosche**, **Vendicari** (the main entrance, also called «centre» or «Tuna Fishery») and **Cittadella**. This itinerary starts from the **central** entrance, from which you can reach the tuna fishery, tower and beach in the same loop.

From the entrance, a path leads in a few minutes to the sea, through the vegetation. Along the way, you will pass the **wetlands**, five ponds parallel to the coast, averaging **30-40 centimetres** deep: from north to south they are **Piccolo, Grande, Roveto, Sichilli and Scirbia**. The Pantano Piccolo is the only one that never dries up, as it has brackish water springs.

Here you can observe **water birds**, including **flamingos**, from a distance without disturbing them. There are observation hides.

A TIP

Bring **water, a hat and comfortable shoes**: the paths are **fully in the sun**. The ticket is paid and the hours change between summer and winter: **check beforehand**.

STOP 2 OF 6

The tuna fishery of Vendicari

Recommended time: 40 minutes

The brick chimney and the stone pillars of the Tonnara di Vendicari

The first thing you see is the **brick chimney** of the **tuna fishery**, and next to it a row of **stone pillars** without a roof: these were the warehouses where tuna was processed. It can only be reached **on foot** after entering the reserve.

Tuna fishing here is ancient. The current tuna fishery has origins that sources date back to the **17th or 18th century**, and for a period it was controlled by the **Nicolaci** family. In **1914**, during a resurgence of fishing, it was leased to **Antonino Modica Munafò**, who built the facility you see today, with a large chimney and modern equipment for processing and canning tuna.

The two world wars damaged it, and in **1944** the activity ceased.

> **A TIP**
> Walk among the pillars and look at the structures **without climbing**: they are fragile. Respect the prohibitions and signs.

STOP 3 OF 6

The Sveva Tower

Recommended time: 25 minutes

The Swabian Tower on the Ionian Sea in the Vendicari Reserve

A little further on stands the **Sveva Tower**, by the sea, at the northern tip of the gulf. The name recalls the Swabian era, but sources date it to the **15th century**: it was built to **protect the coast from Saracen raids** and to defend a goods depot, and continued to serve for centuries. In the 16th century, it was included in a coastal lookout system designed by Spanish engineers.

After the earthquake of **1693**, it suffered damage and interventions, and in the 19th century it was used as a **stable and depot** for the tuna fishery. Scenes from the **Commissario Montalbano** were also filmed here.

Next to it is the **visitor centre** of the reserve.

> **A TIP**
> At certain times, you can climb the **spiral staircase** to the **panoramic terrace**: from up there, you can see the tuna fishery, the islet and the sea together. **Check** if it is open.

STOP 4 OF 6

The beach of Vendicari

Recommended time: 60 minutes

The beach of Vendicari

The **beach of Vendicari** is the largest in the reserve: long, **entirely sandy**, with dunes and reeds behind, the **islet** in front and the ruins of the tuna fishery almost entering the water.

Between sand and sea, a **barrier of Posidonia algae** forms, about five metres thick: it can be crossed without problems and behind it is **crystal clear water**. Moving towards the tower, the coast becomes rocky.

A good part of the beach is **forbidden to the public**, as it is a place for **the nesting of the Caretta caretta turtle**.

A TIP
Do not enter the fenced areas and take your rubbish away: the nests are very fragile.

STOP 5 OF 6

The coastal path to Calamosche

Recommended time: 50 minutes

The coastal path with the rocky coast and vegetation towards Calamosche

From the tuna fishery, the path continues **north** for about **4.4 km**, following the coast and passing by the wetlands. After the tower, the stretch becomes **rocky**: you cross a **cove** and arrive at a **hut** that marks roughly the halfway point, with the **Pantano Piccolo** on the left.

In about **forty minutes**, you reach **Calamosche**. The route is beautiful but **without shade**: the vegetation is low and the sun is strong.

> **A TIP**
> Set off **calmly and with water**: the return is on the same path, so save energy for the way back.

STOP 6 OF 6

Calamosche

Recommended time: 90 minutes

The bay of Calamosche between the two rocky headlands, in the Vendicari Reserve

Calamosche is the most famous beach in the reserve: a small sandy bay of about **200 metres**, enclosed between **two rocky headlands** that shelter the sea from currents. In **2005**, the Blue Guide of Legambiente named it **«the most beautiful beach in Italy»**.

On the sides, there are **caves and natural cavities**, and the sea is almost always calm. From here, you can exit the reserve from the **Calamosche entrance**, about **twenty minutes** on foot, a path of about **1.2 km**, or return the way you came.

> **A TIP**
> In high season, the bay fills up: **arrive early** or outside the weekend. If you exit from the Calamosche entrance, remember that **your car is at the other entrance**: plan ahead.

Frequently asked questions

How much time is needed for the reserve?

For the described tour, between the tuna fishery, tower and Calamosche, you need **a whole day**: the path between the tuna fishery and Calamosche is about **4.4 km each way**. If you have less time, you can see the **tuna fishery, tower and beach** in **two or three hours**.

Which entrance shall I choose?

The **first time** the entrance **Vendicari centre**: from there you can see the tonnara, tower, wetlands and a beach. The others are **Eloro** (to the north), **Marianelli**, **Calamosche** and **Cittadella** (to the south). Near each entrance, there is a small car park.

Do I need a ticket? And what are the opening hours?

Yes: you enter through the entrances and pay a ticket, with **different times** in summer and winter. Check the updated times and rates before you go. You can also pay by card.

Can I swim anywhere?

Yes, at the open beaches, but **part of the beach at Vendicari is prohibited** for turtles. **Marianelli** is the wildest, also frequented by naturists; **San Lorenzo** is just outside the reserve and has some services.

What can I see with more time available?

To the south, from the central entrance, the **archaeological path** leads to **Trigona** (Byzantine church), to a **Byzantine necropolis** and to the **Cittadella dei Maccari**, a Byzantine village from the 6th century. To the north, from the **Eloro** entrance, there are the remains of an ancient Greek city, with a small theatre.

Route map

The numbers follow the order of the stops. The map shows no commercial businesses.

Practical information

DURATION
One day (6-7 hours with breaks)

GETTING AROUND
On foot on dirt paths, for about 4.4 km each way between the tuna fishery and Calamosche. You can arrive by car.

BEST TIME
Spring and autumn, or in summer **early morning**: the paths are fully exposed to the sun.

TOTAL WALKING
about 5.6 km

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