

BMTA: 25 editions and still going strong

The event is scheduled for November 2nd-5th, with this year also marking the anniversary of Paestum as a UNESCO World Heritage site

by Nicoletta Somma



Twenty-five is the key number assigned by Ugo Picarelli, director of the **Borsa Mediterranea del Turismo Archeologico**, to this year's event, taking place in Paestum from 2-5 November. "It's the 25th edition of BMTA and 25 years of Paestum as a UNESCO World Heritage site," states the manager.

And it was in fact in 1998 in Paestum when the founder and director of Leader Srl, owner of the BMTA brand, had the idea of founding BMTA.

An idea that pre-empted the UNESCO World Heritage Committee meeting on 5 December in Kyoto, during which the Cilento, Vallo di Diano e Alburni National Park, the archaeological areas of Paestum and Velia, and the Certosa di Padula were all added to the list.

"The BMTA," Picarelli emphasizes, "was designed to support the process of enhancing the site, which at that time was overshadowed in terms of recognition by the 'mozzarella di bufala' brand, to promote archaeological tourist destinations, facilitate

commercialisation and contribute to deseasonalisation."

Archaeological and cultural tourism

What is the current trend in archaeological and cultural tourism? "It is on the rise and in high demand internationally," says Picarelli. "However, I believe that Italy needs to win back European demand, which has been attracted over the last thirty years by our competitor countries on the Adriatic, in North Africa and Spain."

This is why the workshop on Saturday, 4 November, with European buyers selected by ENIT from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Spain and Switzerland, "aims to boost European and domestic tourism demand," explains the director.

"This includes domestic demand from specialist tour operators traditionally focused on outgoing tourism, but who, since the pandemic, have also shown interest in our beautiful country. The 'ArcheoIncoming'

section within BMTA," adds Picarelli, "increasingly characterised by experiential travel, will also allow Italian and foreign exhibitors to present archaeological tourism destinations and itineraries with their operators, DMCs, tourism consortia and tour operators for the first time in their own dedicated lounge."

Differences and new targets

The market has certainly undergone a change compared to the pre-pandemic period. "Cultural tourism is focused on unique, authentic experiences, even though the experiential aspect is already at the heart of the offer and sustainability," specifies the director.

"It is a new way to promote and experience tourism, along with an invitation to increase quality standards, renew and adapt facilities." Meanwhile, modern travellers are increasingly looking for emotional experiences and a need to satisfy knowledge requirements. "In other words, they are looking for experiences in places that reflect their personal values," says Picarelli. "For major archaeological attractions, it's essential to reflect on tourist flows. In this case, there must be a sustainable approach to visiting these places while respecting the cultural heritage. But above all, sustainable tourism means enhancing the area, rediscovering inland areas and appreciating a lesser-known heritage, which is still a part of our identity. Through the storytelling of lesser-known archaeological destinations, we can encourage the discovery of the area with a focus on a circular economy," emphasises the director. "Talking about cultural and sustainable tourism means addressing many aspects, not only environmental but also social and political. It's a broad and important discussion for the future of our regions and our planet."

To tap into new forms of demand, it's important to "focus on social media in communicating the artistic and cultural heritage of the regions, in order to increasingly engage young Millennials and Generation Z

with personalised activities to offer alternative, playful and educational value propositions. We need to use social media appropriately to establish 'authentic connections' with visitors, as an extension of traditional education."

Budgets and challenges

Whilst it's true that budgets have shrunk in terms of domestic demand, "which this summer once again favoured foreign destinations or, due to the crisis, stayed at home, international demand has seen an increase in spending capacity, especially towards mid-to-high-end offers."

And there are still some critical issues to be resolved. "For the southern regions this means mobility towards inland areas, high-speed rail, which still has years of waiting ahead, the expansion and construction of new airports, including the expected Salerno-Pontecagnano airport within two years, under the ownership of Naples Airport, which has already extended its name to 'Naples Salerno Airports,'" states the manager. "For the area south of Salerno, this means the development of an extraordinary region, the Cilento, with its coastal towns such as Acciaroli, Camerota, Castellabate, Palinuro, Scario, renowned for its Mediterranean diet but which for decades has been relegated to dated beach tourist season." *

Numbers and key players

The Ministry of Culture, with its 500m2, will host 13 workshops, 40 meetings with 110 speakers, including directors and officials, as well as managers of parks and museums. There will be stands representing the Archaeological Parks of Campi Flegrei, the Colosseum, Cerveteri and Tarquinia, Herculaneum, Paestum and Velia, Sibari, the Archaeological Museums of Naples and Reggio Calabria, the National Authority for Underwater Cultural Heritage, ALES, and the Italy Creative Europe Desk - Culture.

The Campania Region, with a 150m2 booth managed by the Department of Tourism and the General Directorate for Cultural and Tourism Policies, will promote the archaeological heritage of major attractions, and in particular the inland areas.

In the Exhibition Hall, there will be 16 regional territories, including the regions of Abruzzo, Calabria, Lazio, Marche, Molise, Puglia, Sardinia, Sicily, Tuscany, Valle d'Aosta, Friuli Venezia Giulia with the Aquileia Foundation, Umbria with

Secret Perugia, the Roma Capitale regional authority with the X Municipality and the Ostia Archaeological Park, the Autonomous Province of Trento, Visit Brescia representing the Italian Capital of Culture 2023, the Gal Sinis association, the Sa Corona Arrùbia Tourist Consortium, the Antica Kroton programme, the Municipalities of Naples, Gesico, Guamaggiore, Manduria, Nuxis, the Geomineral Park of Sardinia, and numerous other destinations, including 20 foreign countries (primarily South Korea with the city of Gochang famous for its megaliths, Cyprus, Cuba, Ecuador, Greece, Guatemala, Iran, Malta, and Tunisia).

For the first time the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Vatican City with the Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology will be there. Additionally, the Italian Automobile Club, ACI, will be present with sustainable mobility projects for inland areas and road safety education and training for young people. **N.S.**