

The **Garden of Ninfa** (Giardino di Ninfa), a **Natural Monument** in the [province of Latina](#), central Italy, is built on the ruins of the medieval town of Ninfa in the Pontine Marshes and is classified as one of the most beautiful and romantic gardens in the world.

Ninfa (Nymph) gets its name from a temple of the Roman era, dedicated to the **Naiad Nymphs** goddesses of spring water, which is still located in the garden.

The city of Ninfa was a large town strategically situated on the only road connecting Rome to the South of Italy. The Garden of Nifa is an English Garden built inside walls that protected the City.

In the 8th Century the land became the property of the Church and remained so until 1297, when the Pope decided to turn Ninfa into a private property that he gave to his nephew, a member of the Caetani family,

Ninfa remained in under the ownership of the Caetani family from 1297 to 1977.

In its heyday in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Ninfa had more than 150 houses, 7 churches, mills, a castle and a town hall, a population of 2000 and was surrounded by fortified walls with guard towers.

Alas, in 1382 Ninfa was destroyed in battle and the population fled to the mountains. Abandoned for centuries the area turned into swamp plagued by malaria.

In 1902, Gelasio Caetani visited the site, fell in love with the area and thought it a good place to construct a garden. It took him until 1921 to drain the swamp and recover the ruins from vegetal growth - building an Anglo-Saxon style garden, planting cypress trees, oaks, beeches, and restoring some ruins, including the baronial palace.

The garden as it is today was started by his Sister-in-Law, Marguerite (Chapin) Caetani – an American. Her Daughter – Lelia, born Paris 1913 - expanded the garden after WWII into what we see today.

Unfortunately, Lelia died childless in 1977 bringing to an end the Caetani legacy.

Before dying, Lelia created the Roffredo Caetani Foundation, named after her father, which continues to manage the garden and the castle of Sermoneta to this day.

There are some 1300 botanical species in the eight acres of landscaped garden set within 260 acres of parkland.

The site contains medieval ruins and many varieties of roses that climb on trees and ruins along the river and streams, making this a particularly charming place described as "the most romantic garden in the world".