

# ASSOCIAZIONE GROTTI TURISTICHE ITALIANE (A.G.T.I.)

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Man's habitual presence in caves does not belong to recent history, in fact man lived in caves for thousands of years, and even when he left them his ancestral relationship with the underground world never really ceased. Evidence of refined artistic skills dating back to the Upper Paleolithic era (fifteen thousand years ago) can be found in the wall paintings found in renowned caves, such as the *Cueva de Altamira* (Spain), discovered in 1879, and the *Grotte Henri Cosquer* (France), discovered in 1991. Ancient Greek mythology, with its myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, which is also mentioned by Plato in his *Convivium* hardly needs to be mentioned. Among the several pagan rites carried out in caves it is worth mentioning the *Mithraic Mysteries*. It was not only pagans who placed the *Underworld* in the bowels of the earth, it is sufficient to mention the *Inferno* by Dante Alighieri.

However these are stories which belong to the past. The use of caves for scientific, exploration and tourist purposes dates back to about 200 years ago and started in the territories which used to belong to the Austrian Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary, whose best-known cave is the *Postojnska jama*. Today there are thousands of show caves around the world.

In Italy show caves are associated with the *Associazione Grotte Turistiche Italiane – A.G.T.I.* (Italian Show Caves Association), which is a member of the *International Show Caves Association (I.S.C.A.)*. Furthermore, Italian scientific and exploration speleology is grouped together either under the *Società Speleologica Italiana – S.S.I.* (Italian Speleological Association) or the *Commissione Speleologica del Club Alpino Italiano – C.A.I.* (Speleological Commission of the Italian Alpine Club), which is in charge of the *School for Exploration Technique* in particular. The *Corpo Nazionale Soccorso Alpino e Speleologico C.N.S.A.S.* (National

Alpine and Speleological Rescue Corps) operates within the *C.A.I.* and rescues injured people both in the mountains and in caves. The *International Union of Speleology (U.I.S.)* is an international body under which all speleological activities are grouped together and which also includes a Commission for the protection of show caves.

## **WHAT IS THE ASSOCIAZIONE GROTTI TURISTICHE ITALIANE?**

The *Associazione Grotte Turistiche Italiane – A.G.T.I.* (Italian Show Caves Association), founded in 1994, was created to satisfy the need for the operators in this sector to exchange mutual experiences in the management, technical and promotional fields in order to choose the best solutions and thereby discard the ones that had led to negative results.

The main objectives of the *A.G.T.I.* are:

1. To promote and popularize the main aspects of surface and underground karst phenomena.
2. To analyse all problems directly or indirectly involved in the organization of show caves.
3. To protect the environment of show caves and the surrounding karst sites.
4. To promote an overall image of show caves capable of attracting more and more visitors to the underground world.
5. To continually search for better solutions in order to meet the above-mentioned goals and optimize services offered to visitors.

*A.G.T.I.* is also a guarantee of quality: not all the caves can join the Association. In order to be accepted they have to meet specific requirements, such as:

- easy and practicable paths to walk along safely, without having to use torches or special clothing,

- an efficient and reliable electrical lighting system,
- correct information on the part of guides,
- taking the necessary precautions to preserve the environment,
- precise opening hours and periods in order to ensure that visits are carried out according to schedule.

**THE ASSOCIATION HAS 24 MEMBERS, 16 OF WHICH ARE MEMBERS OF THE I.S.C.A., WHICH MEANS THAT 20 % OF THE I.S.C.A. MEMBERS COME FROM ITALY.**

Every year over one million people from all over the world come to visit the caves which belong to the Association. All the best-known caves in Italy are members of the A.G.T.I.

The architect Alessio Fabbriatore, who is also the director of the Grotta Gigante, has been the president of A.G.T.I. since 2009.

In August 2010 A.G.T.I. introduced a bill before the Italian Parliament for the development of tourism in caves and the rearrangement of some legal aspects concerning Italian show caves.

At the beginning of 2010 the new brochure was printed, in which you can find a description of each A.G.T.I. cave member.

The website has been completely renewed and many foreign languages will be introduced: [www.grotteturistiche.it](http://www.grotteturistiche.it)

After the last general assembly (September 2010) a Special Commission headed by Alessio Fabbriatore was established in order to organize a national school for the certification of tour guides for Italian show caves. The general assembly decided that all A.G.T.I. show cave guides must wear a high-visibility jacket during cave visits in order to be easily recognized by visitors.

A.G.T.I. also decided to organize a “Bat Weekly” every year in order to arouse people’s and institutions’ interest in the fact that there are fewer and fewer bats in Italy. The zoologists from the Natural History Museum of the University of Florence (Italy) designed a special artificial roost, the bat box, to give shelter to the most common bat species in our towns during the summer time. A.G.T.I. would like to suggest that a “Bat weekly” be organized not only by Italian caves but also by other I.S.C.A. caves.

**Special reductions**

Visitors who have already visited an A.G.T.I. cave are entitled to a reduction. Don’t forget to keep the ticket: you will be given a special discount on your visit to the next cave!

**A.G.T.I. Members**

- Grotte di Oliero (Valstagna – Vicenza)
- Grotta Gigante (Sgonico – Trieste)
- Grotta di Bossea (Frabosa Soprana – Cuneo)
- Grotte di Toirano (Tirano – Savona)
- Grotte di Borgio Verezzi (Borgio Verezzi – Savona)
- Grotte Antro del Corchia (Levigliani – Lucca)
- Grotta del Vento (Vergemoli – Lucca)
- Grotte di Frasassi (San Vittore di Genga – Ancona)
- Grotta del Cavallone (Lama dei Peligni – Taranta Peligna – Chieti)
- Grotte di Val de’ Varri (Pescorocchiano – Rieti)
- Grotta di Collepardo (Collepardo – Frosinone)
- Grotte di Pastena (Pastena – Frosinone)
- Grotte di Castelcivita (Castelcivita – Salerno)
- Grotte dell’Angelo (Pertosa – Salerno)
- Grotta di Santa Croce (Bisceglie – Bari)
- Grotte di Castellana (Castellana Grotte – Bari)
- Grotta Zinzulusa (Castro Marina – Lecce)
- Grotta di Nettuno (Alghero – Sassari)

Grotta di Ispinigoli (Dorgali - Nuoro)  
Grotte del Bue Marino (Dorgali - Nuoro)  
Grotta del Fico (Baunei - Ogliastra)  
Grotta Su Marmuri (Ulassai - Ogliastra)  
Grotte di Su Mannau (Fluminimaggiore - Cagliari)  
Grotte Is Zuddas (Santadi - Cagliari)

### **Board of Governors**

President: *Alessio Fabbricatore* - Grotta Gigante (Trieste)  
Vice-president: *Maurizio Pace* - Grotte di Castellana (Bari)

### **Councillors**

*Emiliano Babboni* - Grotte Antro del Corchia (Lucca)  
*Claudio Calzoni* - Grotta del Fico (Ogliastra)  
*Francescantonio D'Orilia* - Grotte dell'Angelo a Pertosa (Salerno)  
*Elio Berardino Ginnetti* - Val de Varri (Rieti)  
*Vittorio Verole Bozzello* - Grotta del Vento (Lucca)

### **Auditors**

*Barozzi Gabriella* - Grotte di Borgio Verezzi (Savona)  
*Virgilio Gay* - Grotte dell'Angelo a Pertosa (Salerno)  
*Giulia Monaco* - Grotte di Castellana (Bari)

### **Arbitrators**

*Fabio Forti* - karst expert, "Eugenio Boegan" Cave Commission of the Società Alpina delle Giulie, sezione di Trieste del Club alpino italiano.  
*Peter Štefín* - past vice-president of I.S.C.A., Postojnska jama (Slovenia)

Contact: [info@grotteturistiche.it](mailto:info@grotteturistiche.it)

Secretary's Office:

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