

Matera plays host to 'Living Nativity Scenes' / Nine performances during festive season

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Matera - The 'Living Nativity Scenes' Festival in Matera's rock-cut Sassi districts is even more special this year, featuring a dozen caves lit from below in the Murgia plateau in the Park of the Rupestrian Churches.

The soft lighting is powered by the sun, explained Luca Prisco, the director of the Matera Convention Bureau, at a press conference that Mayor Domenico Bernardi and Park Agency President Giovanni Mianulli also took part in.

This new lighting follows the approval of the Basilicata regional government's Environmental Incidence Assessment (VINCA).

The festival started with a performance on December 8, one of nine taking place up to January 6, 2024.

One of the highlights was the December 9 show, which coincided with the 30th anniversary of the Sassi and the Park of the Rupestrian Churches of Matera being admitted to UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites.

That night featured the ceremony for the twinning of Matera with Greccio, in the province of Rieti, which for 800 years has been continuing the tradition of staging nativity scenes that was started by Saint Francis of Assisi.

A 'videomapping' show in Piazza San Pietro Caveoso recreated the meeting between Saint Francis of Assisi and Pope Honorius III.

The Living Nativity Scene, directed by theatre director Giampiero Francese, stretched out over a four kilometre course, starting from the city centre and going through the Sasso Barisano and the Sasso Caveoso and featured 200 professional actors, extras and members of theatre companies from various regions.

Organizers said 400 bus-loads of visitors had booked.

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