

## **MONTEMONACO**

**Altitude:** 980 m

**Population:** 750

### **Location**

Montemonaco is found opposite Monte Sibilla, a sacred mountain for the pre-Roman population, home of the legendary footsteps of the mythical and fantastical kingdom of the sorceress Alcina.

### **Origins of the name**

The name probably derives from the Benedictine monks who made their home here in the late Middle Ages. However according to legend recorded by Colucci, the ancient name for the village was Mons. Daemoniacus, due to the tenacious survival in the area of pagan cults linked to Sybil's Grotto and Pilate's Lake.

### **Historical Interest**

The village was founded, according to legend, by Benedictine monks, the first colonisers of the eastern slopes of the Monti Sibillini. When, in the second half of the XII century, the various habitations dotted along the end of the mountain chain enjoyed independence, Montemonaco became their dominant settlement.

Though it enjoyed a large slice of autonomy, it became part of the Presidiato Farfense with its seat at Santa Vittoria in Matenano; then for a short period it was included in the lands of the Prefecture of Norcia; finally from 1586, it became part of the Presidiato di Montalto Marche. It fought bitterly against the expansionist aims of Arquata del Tronto, Montefortino, Montegallo and Norcia and against the attempts at domination by the knights Francesco Sforza and Niccolò Piccinino.

In 1860 it was annexed by the Kingdom of Italy of Vittorio Emanuele II.

### **Itinerary**

From piazza Roma (1), a panoramic terrace from which one can enjoy a splendid view as far as the Adriatic, walk up via Italia, until reaching the town hall, with the civic tower (3) dating from the 1300s and restored in 1549 by Cardinal Farnese; then carry on uphill as far as the two churches of San Biagio intra moenia (XV century) and San Benedetto Abate (XIII century) (3). Inside the latter is a beautiful painted crucifix from the Marche school dating from the end of the fifteenth century, a fresco from the Crivelli school, depicting Christ on the cross between the Virgin Mary and S. Lucia, a silver relic holder from the XVI century, which holds the remains of the arm of S. Benedetto and is the work of Cristoforo Quarantotti, goldsmith of Norcia; also valuable is the doorway, dated 1546, which constitutes an interesting indication of the work of the Master Lombard Builders. Leaving the church take the tree-lined road that crosses the large public gardens (4), from where one can observe the remains of the castle walls, (5) three towers positioned along it and an evocative panorama of M. Vettore and M. Sibilla (6). Proceed along to S. Biagio Gate (7), whose external is original while the internal arch was subsequently rebuilt. Once through the gate turn left, where after a few metres is the Parco Monteguarnieri (8), a large lawn, ideal for outdoor games and from where there is a splendid view which stretches from the Adriatic Sea to the mountains of Abruzzo. Proceed along via Pazzaglia and the little streets which wind along within the ancient borgo of Capocastello between the houses of the nobility of Montemonaco and on to the piazza Risorgimento (9) opposite

the civic tower. Slightly lower down on the right steps lead to via Roma; from here, walking down to the left, through the streets of the Borgo one can observe the ruins contained within the wall of the San Lorenzo Gate (10). Exit from here and turning left the route returns to the point of departure.