

Parco Nazionale



dei Monti Sibillini

# The Grande Anello of the Sibillini

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Nine beautiful itineraries  
to discover the Park



# The Grande Anello of the Sibillini

Nine beautiful itineraries to discover the Park

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Nine days on foot in the Park discovering the natural environments, the multiplicity of landscapes and the priceless historical and cultural heritage of this area. The Grande Anello of the Sibillini is an itinerary of about 120 km that embraces the entire mountain range of the Park, is fully signposted and is divided into nine sections. Hiking shelters have been planned at the stage points of the route.

In what follows, we are describing the route as it unfolds in a clockwise direction, starting from Visso, the Park's headquarters, however it can also be completed starting from any point, or done in single stretches, for example over a day or two for a splendid weekend.

The entire route of the ring is active, but following the seismic events of 2016-17 some detours have been implemented along the route and some severely damaged shelters have been relocated to temporary structures.

All information is available and constantly updated on the official website [www.sibillini.net](http://www.sibillini.net)



For all the maps visit  
[www.sibillini.net](http://www.sibillini.net)

## Stage 1

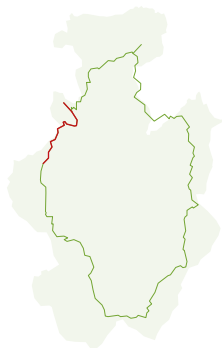
# Visso - Cupi

**Distance:** km 12.1

**Ascent:** m 800

**Descent:** m 432

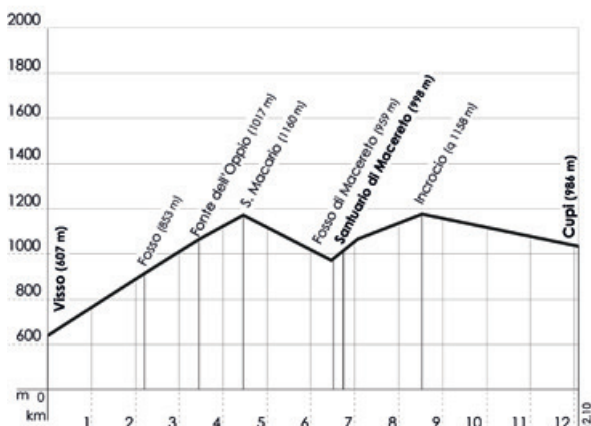
**Duration:** 4 – 4.30 hours



## The way of pilgrims and shepherds

This itinerary retraces a stretch of the ancient road of the “*Madonna di Macereta et Loreto*”, once traveled by pilgrims who walked from the Kingdom of Naples to the Sanctuary of Loreto and crossed the Sibillini during their journey. It starts from Visso, classified as one of the most beautiful villages of Italy and home to the Park. Shortly after embarking on the path you will come across Rocca di S. Giovanni, with its 24m tall keep tower and castle dating back to the 13th century.

Climb along the west side of Monte Careschio until the wide pastures of the Macereto plains suddenly appear, at the centre of which stands the homonymous imposing octagonal sanctuary, built in Bramante style. The landscape in this stretch is dominated by the arresting rocky cliffs of Monte Bove Nord (2112m), which fall with a drop of 700m over the Valle di Ussita and the Val di Panico, where the signs left by the Quaternary glaciers are clearly visible. Continuing the itinerary for another 5.5 km, one reaches Cupi, a small mountain village with an economy still linked to sheep farming. Along the way you can come across the signs of the presence of numerous animals, including the deer, whose evocative calls can be heard at the beginning of autumn.





Visso - historic centre (photo: Giorgio Tassi)



Visso - Sanctuary of Macereto (photo: Giorgio Tassi)

## Stage 2

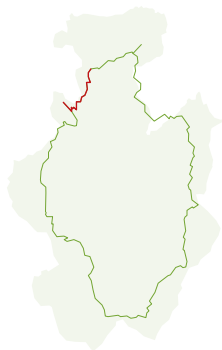
# Cupi - Fiastra

**Distance:** km 9.8

**Ascent:** m 495

**Descent:** m 723

**Duration:** 4 – 4.30 hours

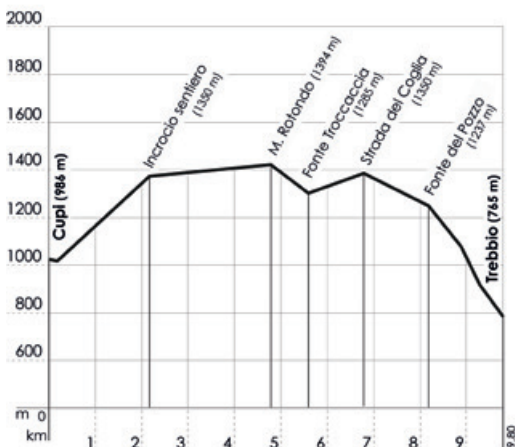


## Open spaces

The first part of the route crosses an environment characterised by mountain meadows rich with different species of grasses. In addition to the multicoloured blossoms of rock roses, forget-me-nots, elder-flowered orchids and many other species, in springtime the limpid white petals of poet's narcissus appear in the cooler meadows, while the wild mushrooms form their characteristic circles that local tradition considers "the work of the witches".

The area is populated by rock partridges and many birds of prey such as kestrels, buzzards and the majestic golden eagle. The second part of the itinerary offers splendid views that open onto the upper Valle del Chienti and the Camerino basin, enclosed between two gentle mountain ridges that extend towards Mount S. Vicino and Mount Catria.

The descent from Monte Cogliia towards Fiastra winds through stretches of beech and oak woods, with evocative views of the azure lake of Fiastrone and the surrounding small villages.





Fiastra - Castrum Flastrae, Church of S. Paolo and the Fiastrone Lake (photo: Giorgio Tassi)



Poet's narcissus (photo: Stefano Marchegiani)

## Stage 3

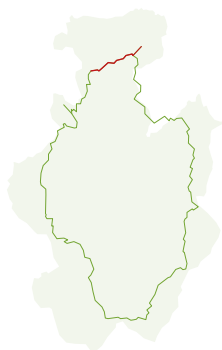
# Fiastra - Monastero

**Distance:** km 9.1

**Ascent:** m 518

**Descent:** m 528

**Duration:** 3.45 – 4.15 hours

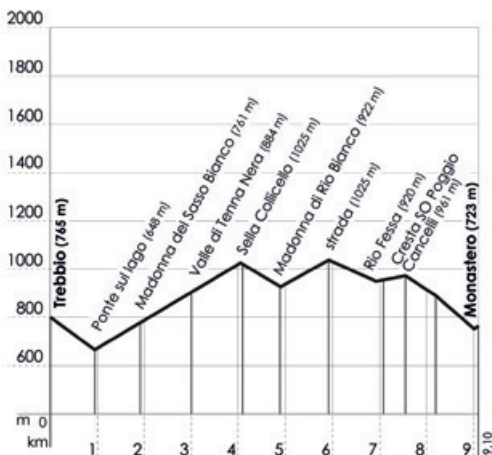


## The valley of hidden monasteries

This itinerary crosses the wide ridge that descends into the Fiastrone valley from Punta del Ragnolo and Pizzo di Chioggia, passing through different environments of extraordinary naturalistic interest and grandiose scenarios of wild beauty.

Along the route there are panoramic views of the most inaccessible and deepest stretch of the valley, where the rushing waters of the river have cut into the limestone, forming an impressive gorge. Birds of great naturalistic interest nest on the cliffs, such as the peregrine falcon and the wallcreeper, while the woods are populated by many mammals including wolves, roe deer, wild cats, porcupines, badgers and foxes.

From the path you can see the ruins of Col di Pietra (13th century), and ancient "Roccaccia", a ruined fortress that stands as if to guard an area rich in ancient history that includes the Abbey of S. Salvatore a Monastero (sec. XI), and the Grotta dei Frati, located vertiginously above the Fiastrone gorges. The cave was inhabited from the 13th to the 16th century by the Clareni monks (dissident Franciscans), who were eventually forced to abandon due to hostility from the local population.





View over the Fiastrone Valley (photo: Michele Sensini)



The panorama from Monte Frascare (photo: Franco Tassi)

## Stage 4

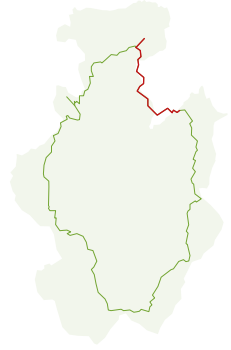
# Monastero - Garulla

**Distance:** km 18.3

**Ascent:** m 863

**Descent:** m 743

**Duration:** 5.45 – 6.15 hours

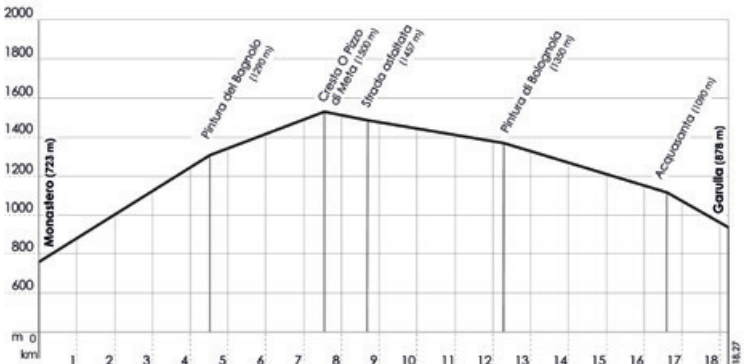


## From the peaks to the sea

Much of this itinerary takes place along a wide ridge whose eastern slope falls into the hills of the Fermano and Piceno, forming slabs of rock and sunken valleys, while the western slope, dotted with pasture meadows and cultivated fields, descends gently over the Fiastrone valley.

Vast plateaus, called Prati di Ragnolo, stretch over the top of the ridge. In the spring they bloom spectacularly in a show of particularly interesting and flamboyant species, such as *Viola eugeniae*, elder-flowered orchids, Apennine cinquefoils (also known as potentilla), clover, common sainfoin, peonies and various species of gentian.

Here one will likely hear the song of Eurasian skylarks and observe the kestrels hovering immobile in mid-air, in their typical position sometimes called “the holy spirit”. The sharp crests of the Sibillini and deep incisions of the valleys form a dramatic backdrop to the meadows, whereas looking to the east, the harmonious hills of the Marche undulate all the way to the Adriatic coast, where one can spot the silhouette of Monte Conero. Beyond the pass of Pintura di Bolognola one crosses a beech forest hanging over the wild Valle Tre Santi and continues to the hills that slope down from Monte Castel Manardo (1917m) towards Amandola and the Valle del Tenna.





Elder-flowered orchid at Prati di Ragnolo (photo: Gessica Ribichini)



View of Monte Rotondo as seen from the Fonte dell'Aquila (photo: Giorgio Tassi)

## Stage 5

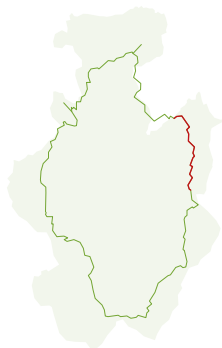
# Garulla - Rubbiano

**Distance:** km 9.7

**Ascent:** m 440

**Descent:** m 510

**Duration:** 3.45 – 4.15 hours



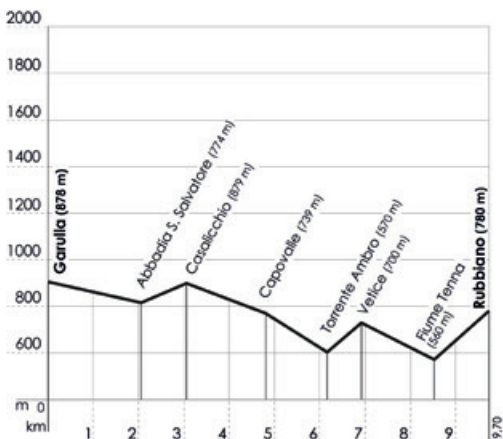
## Where the hillside and the mountains meet

The route crosses the captivating valleys of the Ambro and Tenna with a series of ascents and descents.

The landscape alternates between forest and small fields. Oak and chestnut groves grow where arenaceous marlstone soil prevails, while higher up the mixed woods gradually give way to beech forests.

The Abbey of S.S. Vincenzo and Anastasio is completely immersed in greenery and appears just after the village of Garulla. This ancient structure, which we know already existed in 1044, is a tangible sign of the presence and importance of monasticism on the Sibillini. At Capovalle the view opens onto the lush Ambro valley, dominated by the imposing mass of Monte Priora and the Balzo Rosso, a vertical spur of red sedimentary rock more than 300 meters high. Beyond the ridge of Monte Priora one can see the elegant silhouette of Monte Sibilla, with its characteristic band of reddish rock called "La Corona" ("The Crown").

At Campi di Vetice there are more distinctive cultivated fields, in this case seemingly suspended between the deep valleys of the Ambro and Tenna. Lastly, as one heads up towards Rubbiano, one passes through the narrow entrance to the Gola dell'Infernaccio, a profoundly evocative gorge.





Ford for pedestrians across the Tenna river (photo: Toni Galdi)



Stretch of the Grande Anello at the foot of the Balzo Rosso (photo: Franco Tassi)

## Stage 6

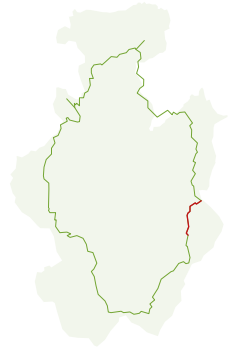
# Rubbiano - Colle

**Distance:** km 13.6

**Ascent:** m 863

**Descent:** m 743

**Duration:** 5 – 5.30 hours

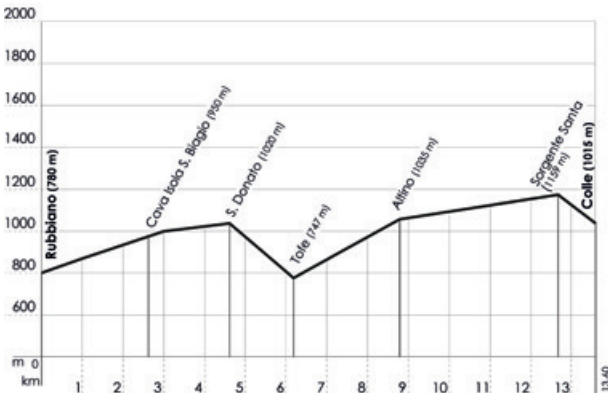


## Between the sacred and the pagan

Arid grasslands prevail in the first part of the route, only to fade into woods and cultivated and abandoned fields, the latter still recognisable by the traces of ancient terracing.

After passing the hamlet of Isola S. Biagio the view opens onto the Aso valley, “guarded” by the town of Montemonaco, which in turn overlooks the Sibillini mountain range and the hills of the Piceno stretching out to the sea. Along the course of the river Aso there is the ancient church of S. Maria in Casalicchio (13th century), from which one can ascend to the village of Altino. Continue in front of the long and sharp ridge that climbs from Monte Banditello to the top of Monte Vettore (2476 m), the highest mountain of the Sibillini. Monte Sibilla (2173 m), the “magical” mountain in which the Grotto of the Faeries and kingdom of the mythical Apennine Sibyl is located, stands on the opposite side of the Aso valley.

Along the route you will come across the church of Santa Maria in Pantano (late 8th century), which has been severely damaged by the 2016 earthquake. Its frescoes depict both Sibyls and prophets together, highlighting the ancient and frequent custom of combining Christian and pagan icons. Monte Torrone and the imposing east side of Monte Vettore dominate this last stretch of the route.





View over the landscape surrounding Montegallo (photo: Gessica Ribichini)



Monte Vettore seen from the fields of Monte Oialona (photo: Gessica Ribichini)

## Stage 7

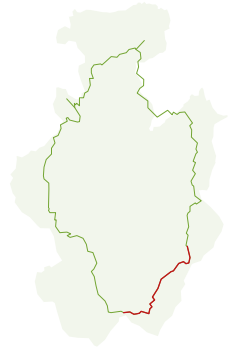
# Colle - Colle le Cese

**Distance:** km 18.6

**Ascent:** m 650

**Descent:** m 190

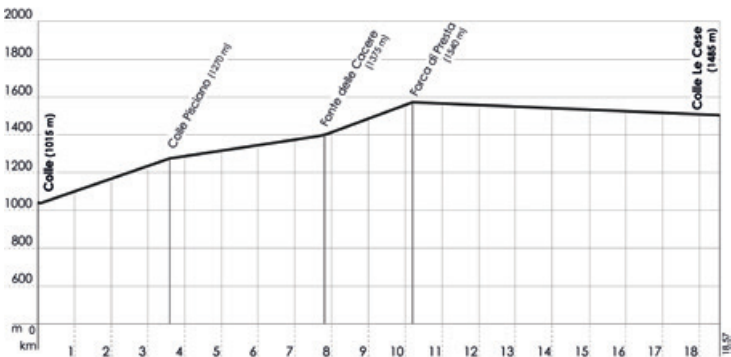
**Duration:** 5.30 – 6 hours



## The valley of the two parks

The first part of the itinerary winds around the feet of the imposing eastern side of Monte Vettore, which towers over the small hamlets of the Montegalgo municipality. From the mountain's crest ditches and gullies of glacial origin drop sharply downwards, conveying fresh spring and meteoric waters into the basin of the Fluvione stream, a tributary of the Tronto river. One then continues along the "sentiero dei mietitori" ("path of the harvesters"), a path that was once traveled by labourers who went at night to "make assembly" in these mountain villages, waiting for the arrival of the landowners at the first light of dawn in order to be hired for the harvest. Along the path the view opens onto the lush and wild Monti della Laga that are part of the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park and that border with the Sibillini Mountains National Park near Arquata del Tronto. The area is one of many within the Park that are home to the majestic golden eagle, a species that has several nesting pairs within the Park. From the pass of Forca di Presta continue for about 3 km, up to the "Belvedere" on the Path for All NT2, which can also be used by wheelchair.

Once you reach the Belvedere, continue until you reach the Colle le Cese shelter.





Forca di Presta and Monte Vettore (photo: Gessica Ribichini)



The Belvedere "refuge" on Path NT2, one of two Paths for All (photo: PNMS)

## Stage 8

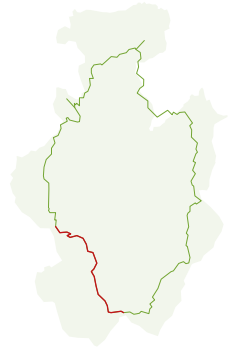
# Colle le Cese - Campi

**Distance:** km 19.5

**Ascent:** m 449

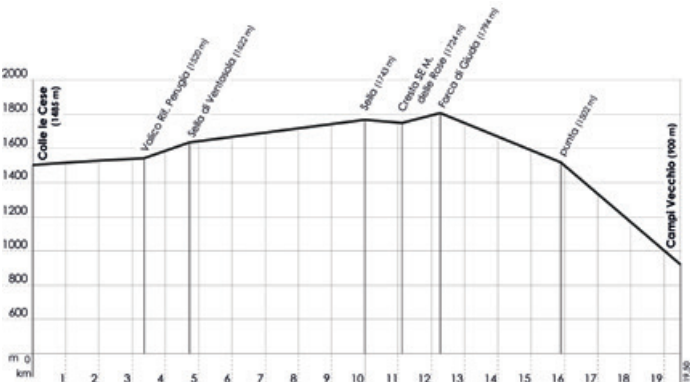
**Descent:** m 1089

**Duration:** 6 – 6.30 hours



## Around the great highland plateaus

The first part of this long itinerary runs along the gentle mountainous ridge that overlooks the Castelluccio plains to the east, and the plain of Sant Scolastica to the west, some 600 meters below. These two plains together are the two main tectonic depressions of the Sibillini. The spectacular Piani di Castelluccio, comprising the Piano Grande, Pian Piccolo and Pian Perduto, constitute a vast “closed” basin located at 1300 m above sea level. From the eastern edge of the Piano Grande the “Coasts of Monte Vettore” rise imposingly with a single leap of almost 1200 m, up to the sharp crest of the Cima del Redentore (2449 m); the northern side, on the other hand, is overlooked by the charming village of Castelluccio, whose economy is still mainly based on the breeding of sheep and cattle and on the cultivation of their well-known lentil, even though the town was also severely affected by the 2016 earthquake. Beyond the saddle of Forca di Giuda (1794 m), which is the highest point of the entire Grande Anello of the Sibillini, the view opens onto the Valle del Campiano, where the natural environment is admirably integrated with the traces of millenary human presence, creating a landscape of rare harmony, dotted with sacred places, villages and castle ruins perched on the slopes of the mountains, such as that of Castelfranco (1370). One then arrives in the charming medieval village of Campi Vecchio, where the signs of the earthquake are still very evident.





Monte Vettore as seen from the Castelluccio di Norcia Pass (photo: Michele Sensini)



Cerasa Valley seen from Forca di Giuda (photo: Giorgio Tassi)

## Stage 9

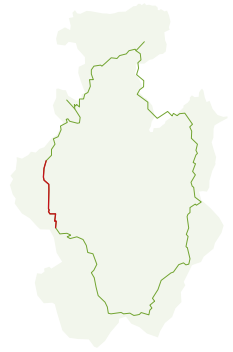
# Campi - Visso

**Distance:** km 9.5

**Ascent:** m 345

**Descent:** m 585

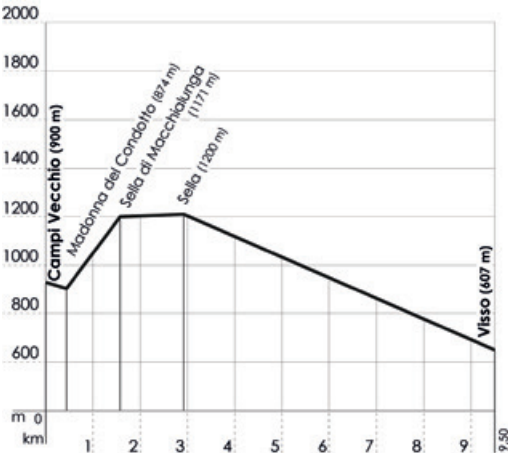
**Duration:** 3.30 – 4 hours



## The lonely shepherd huts between Norcia and Visso

Going up to the pass located at 1200 m between Monte Lungo and Monte Macchialunga, one enters the basin of the Casali dell'Acquaro, one of the least frequented areas of the Park, between rarely used pastures and few cultivated fields. Some of the huts scattered among the meadows are still used for pastoral activities, whereas agriculture is scarce at these altitudes and is mainly based on the cultivation of lentils, wheat and forage.

Then begins the descent into the wooded valley of Visso, once the most important communication route with the ancient historic center of Norcia. The vegetation in this landscape shifts between particularly vivid colours with each season: in autumn, the golden yellow and the intense red of the maples stand out; in winter, the shiny red berries of the dog rose stand out against the white of the snow; in the spring, plants such as cyclamen, primroses, violets and liverwort bloom in the undergrowth; finally, in summer, the compact green of the foliage moves with dances of light and shadow. This is the scenery through which the Apennine wolf moves silently.





The panorama from Monte Moricone (photo: Giorgio Tassi)



The towers of Visso (photo: PNMS)

# Shelters

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At each stage of the route there is a hiking shelter or mountain cabin, also known as a refuge. Constructed by the Park thanks to the recovery and renovation of pre-existing buildings with traditional techniques, these shelters are run with particular attention paid to the most valuable aspects of the surrounding territory. Each refuge aims to offer a high-quality welcome, excellent hospitality, and traditional cuisine based on the use of local products. The shelters can be reached by car and are able to offer qualified hospitality to people with limited mobility. Due to the 2016 earthquake, some shelters were condemned, the Park builded temporary hiking shelters.

Along the Grande Anello of the Sibillini there are also other accommodation and catering facilities that can function as additional important pit stops, some coinciding exactly with the itinerary, and others in proximity to the hiking circuit.

All information is available and constantly updated on the official website [www.sibillini.net](http://www.sibillini.net)



Rifugio di Tribbio (ph PNMS)



Rifugio di Garulla (ph Edgardo Giacomozzi)



Temporary hiking shelter of Colle di Montegallo (ph PNMS)

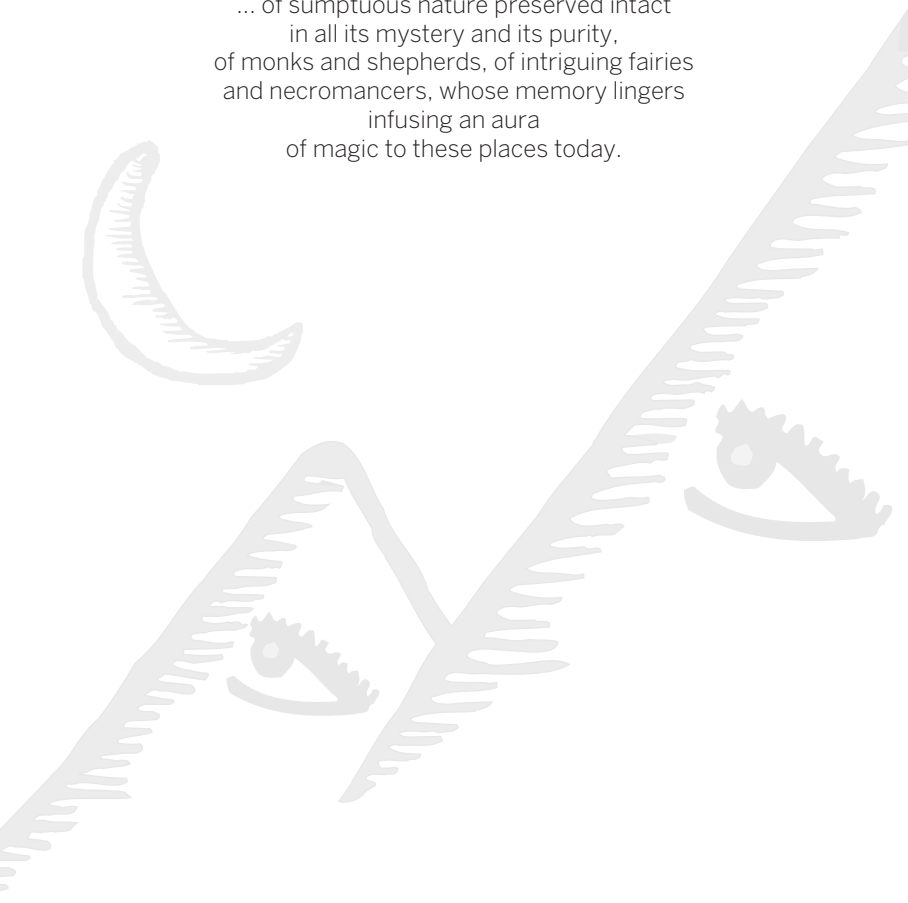


**The Grande Anello of the Sibillini**  
**An unforgettable experience**

# Our mountains recount a story...



... of sumptuous nature preserved intact  
in all its mystery and its purity,  
of monks and shepherds, of intriguing fairies  
and necromancers, whose memory lingers  
infusing an aura  
of magic to these places today.



# The Grande Anello of the Sibillini

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A park open to all, in every season: this is the goal that led to the conception of the Sibillini National Park's actualisation strategy.

By following the **La Grande Via del Parco**, a route that runs along the border of the protected area of the Park, which can be traveled by bicycle, camper, car or motorbike, it is possible to visit and experience thousands of different facets of the Park: from the richness of the natural environment to the 16 municipalities of the Sibillini. Each town boasts a **Nature Trail**, dedicated to families and novice hikers, along which one can enjoy extraordinary landscapes.

**Paths NT1** and **NT2** are designed for use by everyone, including people with mobility restrictions such as wheelchairs.

The magical world of the peaks is reserved for more experienced hikers and can be reached by picking a route from the rich tapestry of **Hiking Trails**. Mountain bike lovers can choose between the **Grande Anello Bike**, which allows one to discover the Park along an itinerary of 174 km to be covered in 4-5 days, or the **14 MTB itineraries**, to be covered in one day.

The heart of the hiking system is, however, the **Grande Anello of the Sibillini**, an extraordinary itinerary that allows you to fully experience the magic and emotions that the land of the Sibyl can give to each visitor – and is what we're about to describe below.

Parco Nazionale



Monti Sibillini



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