

## Walk 35: ON MONTAGNA DEI FIORI NEAR ASCOLI PICENO

**Distance/time:** 9km; 3h

**Grade:** easy, with an overall ascent/descent of 480m; easy orientation; a short stony stretch after 20min needs a little care in wet conditions

**Equipment:** as pages 46-47

**Refreshments:** only in San Giacomo; none en route

**How to get there:** 🚗 south from

Ascoli Piceno (where Car tour 8 ends); in San Giacomo take the earthen road to Tre Maciare (to the left of the surfaced road down to San Vito). This ends after 3km ends at a little ski lift. No public transport  
**Walking map:** I Monti Gemelli, Carta dei Sentieri 1:25,000, Club Alpino Ascoli Piceno; available at the hotels in San Giacomo

The Montagna dei Fiori, the 'mountains of flowers', were named for the many crocuses which flower on these grassy slopes in spring. In the south the range rises steadily up to the flat panoramic 1814m-high summit of Monte Girella. From these treeless heights you can see for hundreds of kilometres on a clear day — all the way to the highest ranges of the Apennine peninsula and a long stretch of the Adriatic coastline. A special feature of these mountains are the primitive drystone stone huts, built from stones collected in the fields. For centuries these *caciare* were used as simple sleeping places for the itinerant herdsmen.

**Start out** from the little **lift station:**

walk back 300m along the unsurfaced road, then take a trail to the left. Descend a short way, past a building with a tiled roof, then gain height along the western hillside. You pass a first *caciare*, 50m below on the right. To the west you have a long view over the mountain ranges of the Monti Sibillini and Monti della Laga, both rising to around 2500m. The trail narrows to a path (20min) and descends for three minutes across stony terrain at the foot of a steep limestone cliff.

Climbing again, you walk through a small beech wood. At the end of the wood you emerge on the meadows of the high valley of **Vallone** rising to the southeast (35min). Following a pleasant path running along the grassy slopes 50m to the left above the valley bed, you gain height steadily. Another *caciare* comes up on the right. Veering right, you pass a third *caciare*, again on the right, and come onto a small **high plain** with a fourth *caciare* near a **round pond**. This pond doesn't dry up even in high summer, which

allows some tiny sweetwater crayfish to live in the water (1625m;

**1h15min**). To the south and west you enjoy a large panoramic view to Abruzzi, from near Montagna dei Campi (1718m) to far-off Corno Grande (2912m), the highest mountain in all the Apennines. Continue straight on for five more minutes on the path along the western hillside (☞: Sorgente Girella) and then veer right, to the edge of the mountain: now you can see how the rounded hilltops of the Montagna dei Fiori drop down with steep cliffs towards the Castellano Valley.

Return to the pond, then take the path which climbs the grassy slopes diagonally to the east (☞: Montagna dei Fiori). You rise onto a flat saddle (1764m; **1h50min**). Head right here, over treeless terrain; within 10 minutes you're on the flat summit of **Monte Girella** (1814m; **2h**), another superb panoramic view-point, from where a stretch of coastline also comes into view. Retrace your steps to the saddle, then take a faint trail straight ahead



Above: view from the Montagna dei Fiori to the west; left: a drystone caciare

across the open ridge (☞: 402 Tre Caciare). After having climbed gently for five minutes, you descend steeply into a hollow (1706m), where a more distinct trail begins. Follow this a short way uphill, to a ski-lift, and walk along beside it to a transmitting mast (**2h40min**). Past the mast, descend straight ahead across a steeply-sloping meadow. Cross a track, veer a little to the right, and continue to the edge of the woods, where you can pick up a woodland trail that begins by a little yellow signpost. Follow this downhill in the shade of beeches. After a left-hand bend you pass **Tre Maciare**, a hillock on the right with three more *caciare*. From here it's only 150m back to the starting point at the **lift station** (3h).

