

The rare wood of Apennines

PUBLICATIONS

- Riserve Naturali della provincia di Arezzo - Guida
Provincia di Arezzo, Edizioni Compagnia delle Foreste, 2016
- Riserve Naturali della provincia di Arezzo - Cartoguide
Provincia di Arezzo, Edizioni Compagnia delle Foreste, 2016
- Grande Escursione Appenninica (Vol. 1, Bocca Trabaria - Pracchia)
di Mirco Setti, Gruppo Editoriale l'Espresso - 2011
- Grande Escursione Appenninica. Carto-guida con cartine
aggiornate in scala 1:20.000
di Gianfranco Bracci, Edizioni Tamari Montagna - Padova, 2011
- Le Riserve Naturali della Valtiberina toscana e del Sasso
di Simone (DVD), Provincia di Arezzo, 2008
- Aree protette della Valtiberina toscana - Sentieri natura
Provincia di Arezzo e Comunità Montana Valtiberina Toscana, 2007
- Valtiberina Toscana - Edizioni Compagnia delle Foreste, 2004
- Carta dei sentieri 1:25.000 - Edizioni S.E.L.C.A., 2004

TOURIST INFORMATION

Visitor Centre with exhibition "Natura e Uomini"
Via Alpe della Luna, 4 - 52032 Badia Tedalda (AR)
Ph. 0575/714014 - mail: info@prolocobadiatedalda.it

Tourist Office of Valtiberina toscana
Via Matteotti, 8 - 52037 Sansepolcro (AR)
Ph. 0575/740536 - mail: info@valtiberinaitoscana.it

Unione Montana dei Comuni della Valtiberina Toscana
Ufficio Demanio Forestale
Via Pian Di Guido, 2 - 52036 Pieve Santo Stefano (AR)
Ph. 0575/799097 mail: demanio@valtiberina.toscana.it

Regione Toscana - Direzione Ambiente ed Energia
Settore Tutela della Natura e del Mare
Via A. Testa, 2 - 52100 Arezzo
mail: areeprotette@regione.toscana.it

ACCOMODATION

Inside or near the Reserve

	facilities	bed number	toilets	restaurant	Kitchen-ette
Hotel Santo Stefano	●	49	●	●	●
Open all year round - Via Tiberina, 95 - 52036 Pieve Santo Stefano (AR) Ph. 0575/797129 mail: info@hotelsantostefanoarezzo.it web: www.hotelsantostefanoarezzo.it					
Holiday house Ca' La Fonte	●	45	●	●	●
Open all year round - Passo di Viamaggio - Ca' La Fonte - 52036 Pieve Santo Stefano (AR) - Ph. 0575/750000 - 334/2314012 mail: all.soc@live.it					
Camper area Grey camper	6 places				
Open all year round - Strada La Verna - 52036 Pieve Santo Stefano (AR) Ph. 0575/799123 - 368/7838983					

GUIDEMAPS

Riserva Naturale
Bosco
di Montalto

Nature, information,
tour itineraries and path map

PROTECTED AREAS IN THE PROVINCE OF AREZZO

Aree Protette
della provincia
di Arezzo

Natura Reserve
Bosco di Montalto



Realized by the Province of Arezzo with the contribution of the Region of Tuscany.

VISITOR CENTRE
"Natura e Uomini"
Via Alpe della Luna, 4 - 52032 Badia Tedalda (AR)

CREDITS
Photos: VINCENZO GONNELLI, BARBARA ANSELMI, SIMONETTA CUTINI, WWW.ORCHIDARIUM.PL, LUIGI TORRESGIANI - Compagnia delle Foreste, Records of the ex-Nature Conservation Office of the Province of Arezzo
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HOW TO GET THERE
From the Viamaggio Pass (where you arrive from Pieve Santo Stefano going along the SP 50 or from Sansepolcro by the SR 258) take the dirt road to the Cerbaiole Hermitage (old "Sestinese" road). After 500 metres turn into the muletrack to Camerelle.

Etruria mobilità - www.etruriamobilita.it - Toll-free number 800.115605



Landscape

The landscape near Montalto is a pastiche of tree-lined hedges, meadows and old buildings.

Montalto Wood

The Montalto Wood is a precious relict of the Apennine forest which is rich in arboreous species and surrounded by beautiful grasslands with shrubs.



The European honey buzzard

The binomial name of this bird of prey (*Pernis apivorus*) derives from its peculiar diet based on bees, bumblebees and wasps.



Le Camerelle building

The abandoned building of Le Camerelle, along the muletrack leading to the Nature Reserve, appears in the 19th century maps as a farm.

The badger

The badger is an animal active at twilight when it comes out of its burrow dugged in the wood.



Broadleaf helleborine

This orchid is a common plant in the woods of the Nature Reserve.

The orange lily

The orange lily grows in the edge of the wood and in grassy meadows. It is a protected species.



The whitebeam

The whitebeam is on the steep and rocky sides of Montalto. It is also called "farinaccio" for its white duvet which covers the lower part of its leaves.



The Monastery of Cerbaiole

The Franciscan monastery of Cerbaiole stands on a limestone spur.



The sycamore maple

It is one of the many tree-like species which grow in the woods of the Nature Reserve.



TERRITORY



With its 20 hectares the Montalto wood is the smallest of the seven Nature Reserves in the province of Arezzo. Its perimeter circumscribes the northern slope of the unmistakable Montalto, a wooded mountain little more than 1.000 m high which stands out distinctly from the gentle hills surrounding the Viamaggio Pass.

In this small area, extends a wood rich in species and old trees which has grown undisturbed for more than half a century. From the Viamaggio Pass one arrives easily at the Nature Reserve along the Vecchia Sestinese, a panoramic unmade road which follows the ancient route of the road connecting Pieve Santo Stefano with the grand duchy's customs in Viamaggio and with Sestino and the Romagna region.

This route, also marked out in the 18th century maps, crosses pastures and cultivated lands that have been used for centuries, as the ancient farm buildings of Camerelle and La Fabbrica testify. Here also stands the hermitage of Cerbaiole, a beautiful ancient building perched on a rocky outcrop, whose origins date as far back as the year 706, constructed by the Longobard Tedaldo who at that time controlled this part of the Valtiberina valley.

A few years later the hermitage was given over to the monks of Badia Tedalda and, subsequently, in 1216, it was donated to St. Francis. Today, after its post-war restoration, the hermitage houses a Franciscan Institute for women.

GEOLOGY



Montalto, with its almost pyramidal shape, contrasts sharply with the surrounding landscape dominated by gentle rolling downs. The mountain is in fact entirely composed of a resistant block of marly limestone, uncovered by the erosion of the surrounding argillites.

Both the limestone (belonging to the Monte Morello Formation, also known as "Alberese") and the underlying argillites (attributed to the Sillano Formation) formed in a deep oceanic environment during the initial phases of the closure of the Piemont-Liguria Ocean, which subsequently led to the uplift of the Apennine range. The harsh spur of rock where the hermitage of Cerbaiole is built not far away has the same geological composition.

The rainwater which filters into the highly porous Alberese limestone forms various springs at the foot of the mountain where it comes into contact with the underlying waterproof argillites. This abundance of water has been used for centuries for the watering places of grazing sheep and cattle, today still widespread in Valtiberina. In the surroundings of the Nature Reserve, one of these springs is directed to the fountain of the Camerelle farmhouse while another supplies the fountain along the path leading to the hermitage of Cerbaiole.

FAUNA



Notwithstanding the small size of the Reserve, the complexity of its landscape causes the presence of species typical of both forest and open environments. The conservative forest management encourages the natural processes of decomposition so that the soil and the forest litter are most welcoming to a myriad of invertebrates and small mammals. Walking around the Reserve one may come across the typical piles of earth left by the European mole which digs tunnels to feed on worms and other small soil animals.

On the ground, between the leaves and the dead wood, live snails, spiders, beetles and other insects, searched after by the common shrew and the Eurasian pygmy shrew, small insectivore mammals who testify the excellent health of this forest ecosystem. Even the bank vole, a quite rare forest rodent, is an excellent environmental indicator since it lives only in diversified woods rich in fruits, mushrooms and other vegetable food also enjoyed by wild boars, roe deers, badgers and North African crested porcupines which prefer however to supplement their diet with nocturnal excursions to the surrounding meadows.

The wood, with its old trees full of cavities, is the ideal habitat for the short-toed treecreeper, the Eurasian nuthatch and even for larger birds such as the tawny owl. In the branches of the sturdier trees build their nests the common buzzard and the honey buzzard, birds of prey which can be observed during the day as they patrol the meadows surrounding the Reserve. Walks inside the woods are accompanied by the noisy chirping of the coal tit and the marsh tit, small and agile forest passe-

riformes which populate the crowns of the trees together with the Eurasian bullfinch, the firecrest, the chiffchaff and the Bonelli's warbler. In spring it is easy to see the red-backed shrikes in the bushes of dog rose and singleseed hawthorn which dot the pastures and edge the paths, while in springs and temporary puddles alpine newts and Italian stream frogs gather.

The mole

The mole eats invertebrates which live in the soil, but digging long tunnels it can damage vegetable gardens and gardens.



IDENTITY CARD OF THE PROTECTED AREA

Municipality: Pieve Santo Stefano
Area: 20 ha
Established: March 18, 1998
Management: Region of Tuscany in collaboration with the Unione Montana dei Comuni della Valtiberina Toscana

VEGETATION



The Montalto wood owes its naturalistic importance to the wide forest diversity characterising it. In just 20 hectares one encounters a variety of forest types and arboreal species now difficult to find as a consequence of a centuries-old use affecting most of the Apennine woods which has inevitably led to a reduction of their bio-diversity and complexity. The difficult and rough morphology of the Montalto mountain has contributed on the contrary to limit the silvicultural activities, with their definitive abandonment for more than half a century ago.

The altitudinal belt in the Nature Reserve, from 800m to little more than 1,000m, marks the transition between the turkey oak wood and the beech one, which are distributed depending on the exposure and the soil, enriched by many other arboreal species. The beech wood covers the limestone part of the mountain together with the Italian maple, the sycamore maple, the common ash, the hop hornbeam, the turkey oak, the littleleaf linden and the Scotch laburnum, forming an extremely varied and rich wood. Maples, ashes and lindens become predominant in the areas where the landslide matter has accumulated, constituting a relatively rare forest association in the Apennine (the *Tilio-Acerion*), where the rare wych elm also appears. At the foot of Montalto, where the morphology is gentler and the argillites of the Sillano formation dominate, there is an attractive mixed wood of turkey oak and European hornbeam, the latter particularly fond of fertile and moist soils.

The European beech is also very common while the common ash and the common yew appear less frequently. Even the un-

dergrowth reserves some surprises with regard to rare species, with unusual grasses such as the mouse plant (*Arisarum proboscideum*), forest orchids like the bird's nest orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*) and the broadleaf helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*), shrubs like the spindle tree (*Euonymus latifolius*) and the dwarf honeysuckle (*Lonicera xylosteum*). In these woods there are littleleaf lindens, wych elms, common whitebeams and laburnums of an exceptional size for these species, elsewhere periodically cut down.

A minimal part of the Reserve is occupied by shrubs such as blackthorn, singleseed hawthorn and dog rose which enclose an area formerly devoted to pastures and perhaps farmland. However, around the Reserve shrubs and meadows are dominated or dotted by large hedge maples.

Flowers with heating

The Mouse Tail plant flower (*Arisarum proboscideum*) is a unique species of the Apennines, protected by law, which grows only in the best preserved woods. It belongs to the same family of the more well-known callas and, like these, it has a cylindrical inflorescence, contained in a cap which is not a real flower, but an altered leaf. Everything is contrived to encourage the insect pollination: inside the cap, the inflorescence produces nectar and heat, thanks to peculiar chemical reactions. Insects, attracted by the scent and the warmth, enter inside and while agitating to find the way out they stain themselves with pollen, which then they will deposit on other plants.



TOUR ITINERARIES

The Montalto wood is on the GEA (Great Apennine Excursion) route, here coinciding with the CAI path no. 2 which links up the Viamaggio Pass to Ponte alla Piera, near Anghiari. While these paths are freely accessible, excursions inside the Nature Reserve are allowed only with a guide, because paths are not marked. Please contact the guides of the Nature Reserve before your visit.

Visit to the woods

Length max: 4 km
Travel time: 1-3h

The guided tour, with various variations, can be arranged directly with the guides and starts from the S.P. 50, crossing meadows and pastures to reach the northern slope of Montalto, in the heart of the Nature Reserve. Here it is possible to advance in the wood and observe some of the monumental specimens of trees characterising the protected area. Through a wood of turkey oaks and European hornbeams, the route reaches Camerelle and from here returns back to the point of departure, in a loop-shaped circuit and following the same path as the outward journey.

Montalto and Cerbaiole

Length max: 4,5 km
Travel time: 1h 30'

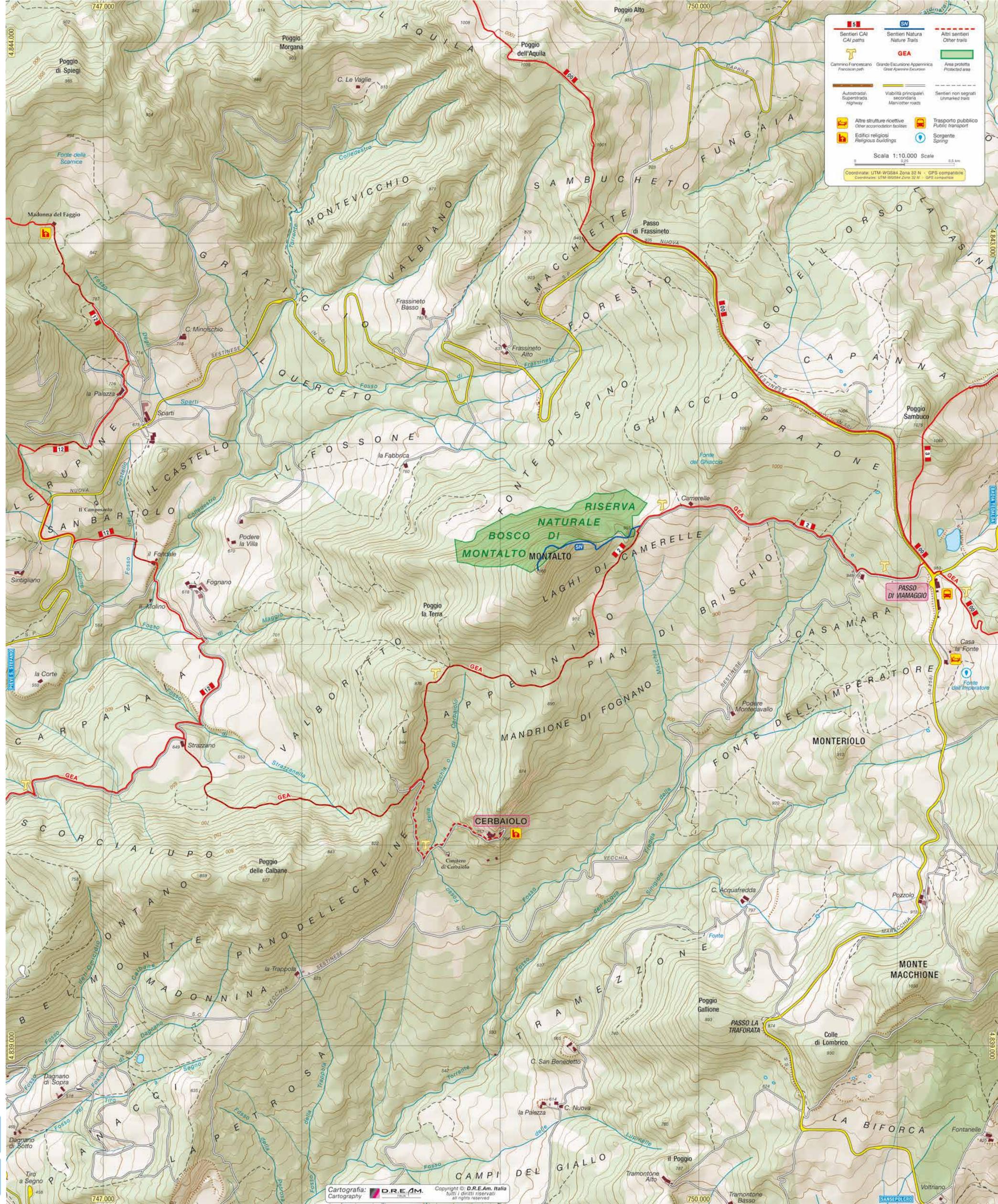
If you could not find a guide, for a pleasant walk around the perimeter of the Reserve you can go along the CAI path network. From the Viamaggio Pass to the starting point of the unmade road toward Pieve Santo Stefano (Vecchia Sestinese), you can follow the trails signed as GEA and CAI no. 2, which lead to Casa Camerelle and continue to the foot of Montalto, across pastures with shrubs and woods. About 500 metres further on, after the attractive stone fountain, a mule-track branches off to the left and leads rapidly to the hermitage of Cerbaiole. The return journey can be made by retracing your steps or going along the Vecchia Sestinese as far as the Viamaggio Pass.



THE GREAT COMMUNICATION ROUTES OF THE APENNINES

The Reserve can be one of the stops on a GEA route trip lasting several days, for which we recommend to consult specific maps and the available bibliography. The GEA is a long and famous path running all along the northern Apennines from the Tuscan border with Liguria (Due Santi Pass) to the border with Marche (Bocca Trabaria), also touching on the crests of the Apennines near Arezzo.

Along the GEA, if you have at least two days available, you can combine the visit to the Montalto wood with a trip to the Nature Reserve of Alpe della Luna, going on the GEA route from the Viamaggio Pass as far as the ridge. Near the Montalto woods you can easily reach the Poggio delle Calbane, one of the optically reliefs near Pieve Santo Stefano.



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