



GUIDEMAPS



Nature, information, tour itineraries and path map

PROTECTED AREAS IN THE PROVINCE OF AREZZO

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Nature Reserve Sasso Simone



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

VISITOR CENTRE

"L'evoluzione del paesaggio"
Via Marche - 52038 Sestino (AR)

CREDITS

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Photo northern wheatear: Snowmanradio - Wikimedia Commons

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Coordination: MAURO FROBNI
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HOW TO GET THERE

From Sestino: go along the road to Pesciano leading to the Refuge Casa del Re and the car park; the SP 49 and the road to Martigliano as far as the car park or the SP 49 and the SP 52 as far as the car park of Case Barboni (near Petrella Massana). From Pesaro-Sassocorvaro: turn near Monterone and continue to Martigliano. From Rimini-Navafeltria: turn in Ca' Raffaello or Molino di Bascio toward Case Barboni (except tourist coaches).

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

The two "Sassi" (rocks) floating between the valleys of the rivers Marecchia and Foglia



Case Barboni

A 16th century building embellished by a beautiful loggia, whose columns have probably been recovered from the ruins of the Abbey of San Michele Arcangelo, which is on the hilltop of Sasso di Simone.



Sea plantain

It only lives in clayey ravines in Tuscany. The Nature Reserve and the Crete Senesi are among the few Tuscan areas in which it appears.



The Sasso

The Sasso di Simone and the Simoncello are what remains of the limestone blocks consisting of shells and skeletons of sea organisms.



Northern wheatear

Species which is rare in Tuscany and lives in open environments mainly in ravine grasslands.



Leopard's Bane

This beautiful flower colours yellow the white limestone rock.



Small tortoiseshell

The small tortoiseshell appears in the grasslands full of flowers.



Hazel dormouse

A hazel dormouse in his winter nest, built with fresh leaves and grasses.



Yellowhammer

It is a rare bird whose population is falling also in the Nature Reserve of Sasso di Simone.

Gooseberry, ribes multiflorum and mountain currant

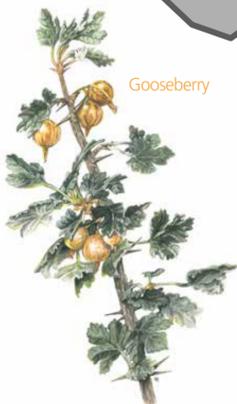
In the Nature Reserve there are 3 species of ribes: all of conservation interest.



Ribes multiflorum



Mountain currant



Gooseberry



Casa del Re

The refuge of Casa del Re is the main point of reference for several tour itineraries in the Nature Reserve.

TERRITORY



Tight between the Foglia valley to the south and the Marecchia valley to the west, the Nature Reserve is situated in the easternmost tip of Tuscany, surrounded by the territory of Marche. Almost marking the border of these two regions, the two "Sassi" rise above the surrounding hillside like two enormous boundary stones. Their peculiar location aroused religious and military interests. The flat top of the Sasso was probably the site of ancient pagan worship and around the year One Thousand, a Benedictine Abbey dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel was built there, near where today a large iron cross stands. Several centuries later, towards the mid-1500s, Cosimo de' Medici saw the Sasso as the ideal place to house the "perfect military fortress" aimed at controlling the boundaries of his territory. This project was definitively abandoned about a century later without the Città del Sole [Sun City] - as Cosimo had intended to call it - ever being completed and despite the Captaincy of Sestino had established its quarters there in 1575. The project was overambitious, moreover the severe winter temperatures of that period made worse the difficulties of building. All this resulted in the total abandonment of the citadel with the last of the military presence leaving it in 1663. Today, looking through the belt of enormous ash and maple trees which flank one side of the Sasso, one can still see the partially buried cistern for collecting water and the remains of the buildings. As well as these important historic ruins there is much in the Nature Reserve of geological and botanical interest in addition to very important species of fauna as regards conservation, many of which are associated with the pasture and farming activities still practised today.

GEOLOGY



The unusual landscape of Sasso di Simone and the wealth of fossils and minerals hidden in the limestone and clay aroused the curiosity of naturalists as early as the 18th century, when the first documented expeditions began. More recently the protected area has aroused the curiosity of researchers interested in studying the geo-morphological and tectonic phenomena associated with the formation of the Apennines. The tormented geological history of the Simone and Simoncello is in part similar and contemporary to those giving rise to the limestone spurs of La Verna and San Marino, to name the best known. About 15 million years ago (Miocene) the Apennines began to crumple and rise as a result of the enormous tectonic movements, mainly under the sea, which piled the rocky formations of previous periods one on top of the other. Among the formations affected by these movements there was that of the "Argilliti varicolori" (various coloured argillites), the same which today form the bare badlands around the Sasso. On the clays, in slow but continual movement towards the East, a shallow warm sea formed and it was very soon populated by briozaea, clams, echinidae and other marine animals. After a few million years the sea disappeared and over time the deposits on the seabed, mainly the shells and skeletons of these organisms, established themselves in the limestone. The clays continued to move, shifting onto them this enormous limestone plate as far as its current position where the rain, rapidly eroding the clayey deposits, unearthed it. Time and interior rock tension caused the limestone plate to fragment into the two great blocks of Simone and Simoncello and into the smaller one of Peschio. The relics of this long history include a multitude of marine fossils and minerals, collected today in the Visitor Centre of the Nature Reserve.

FAUNA



Thanks to this varied environment with the alternation of meadows, woods of different kinds, limestone rock and badlands, the Nature Reserve has a high degree of bio-diversity. Over 300 animal species have been enumerated so far, many of which based in open environments where it is easier and more gratifying for the visitor to sight them. The grasslands used as pasture are rich in dung beetles and many other types of insects, which are food for reptiles such as the Italian three-toed skink and rare birds such as the red-backed shrike, the northern wheatear, the tawny pipit, the woodlark and the common linnet. For many birds, the mountainous agro-pastoral environments, such as those of the Sasso, have become perfect refuges as a result of the mechanisation of agriculture and zootechny which has profoundly changed the landscape of hills and plains over the last decades. This Nature Reserve is in fact one of the few locations in central Italy where it is still possible to see the ortolan bunting and the yellowhammer, two of the species which have suffered most from the reduction of farmland all over Europe. Looking at the face of the Sasso and the rocky outcrops on its surface it is not hard to discern the rapid movements of the black redstart which lives in this environment as well as the rarer rufous tailed rockthrush, whose nesting in the Nature Reserve is now certain. A closer attention and a certain amount of luck is required however to recognise the many animal species living in the woods of the Nature Reserve, which are often identified only thanks to their songs, prints, excrements and remains of their meals. As is the case of the forest birds such as the marsh tit, the Eurasian bullfinch, the Eurasian nuthatch,

the short-toed tree creeper, the great spotted woodpecker, the lesser spotted woodpecker and the nocturnally active mammals such as the badger, the roe deer, the wild boar and the North-African crested porcupine. The high quality woods of the Sasso - directly connected with the extensive forests of Marche - also have an unusual and plentiful population of small mammals with rare species such as the Eurasian water shrew and the miller's water shrew, the bank vole, the European mole, the garden dormouse, the fat dormouse and the hazel dormouse. For the same reason, in these forest habitats still live the western polecat and the wolf, constantly present in this remote stretch of the Apennines.

The God Semo

Traditional theories explain that the Sasso was named after a hermit who took refuge on this mountain or after the Saint who - together with Leo and Marino - founded the famous towns of the same name perched on the rock. A more complex and recent theory goes as far back as the time of the Romans and the Sabini race. Already back in 466 BC there was in fact a feast celebrated in June dedicated to the pagan god Semo, the protector of sworn agreements and peace between neighbouring people. This cult - common to many areas of the Apennines - is also confirmed at a short distance from the Sasso where there may have been the natural altar where the "Semoni" high priests used to celebrate their divinity. This etymology finds further confirmation in the name "Seminico", given to two streams originating on the slopes of the Sasso, one of which runs through Tuscany and the other through Marche.

VEGETATION



The territory of Sasso di Simone, like many other areas of the Apennines, has been inhabited by man since prehistoric times, so the changes to the landscape and vegetation have been deep-seated and prolonged. The great changes began mainly in the late Middle Ages, around the year 1000, when the Abbey of Saint Michael the Archangel governed many lands. The green grasslands of the Reserve, including those on the peak of the Sasso, are the clearest evidence of this phase which witnessed the transformation of broad areas of forest into fields and pastures, used and expanded right throughout the 19th century. Their continuous and at times excessive use caused an increase in erosion and the advance of badlands. From halfway through the 20th century, owing to the abandonment of agricultural crops and the decrease in pastures, woods retook possession of some abandoned lands, but some fields of crops and wide grasslands still remain and their conservation is one of the primary objectives of the protected area. In spring, excursions to the grassland peaks offer an excellent opportunity to see orchids, larkspur, lilies and daisies, while on the sparse grasslands and badlands, not so generous in terms of blossoms, there are species which are not very colourful but of high value in terms of conservation such as the goose tongue (*Plantago maritima*) and the Masquillieri's restharrow (*Ononis masquillieri*). Going on to the Sasso, its rocky face and the enormous accumulation of detritus at its feet present further botanical rarities to the careful observer, among masses of stone and rocky shelves there are highly specialised rock species: the olive daphne (*Daphne oleoides*), the snowy mespilus (*Amelanchier*

PUBLICATIONS



Guida escursionistica del Parco naturale del Sasso di Simone e Simoncello (in ristampa)
Edizioni Parco Interregionale del Sasso Simone e Simoncello.
Riserve naturali della provincia di Arezzo - Guida
Provincia di Arezzo, Edizioni Compagnia delle Foreste, 2016
Riserve naturali della provincia di Arezzo - Cartoguida
Provincia di Arezzo, Edizioni Compagnia delle Foreste, 2016
Carta escursionistica 1:25.000 - Parco Interregionale del Sasso Simone e Simoncello
Edizioni S.E.L.C.A. - D.R.E.A.M. Italia, 2015
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
Carta dei sentieri - Edizioni S.E.L.C.A., 2004
Valtiberina Toscana - Edizioni Compagnia delle Foreste, 2004

TOURIST INFORMATION



Visitor Centre "L'evoluzione del paesaggio"
Via Marche - 52038 Sestino (AR)
Ph. 0575/772642

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

Municipality of Sestino
Piazza G. Garibaldi, 1, 52038 Sestino AR
Ph. 0575/772718 - 772206 mail: info@comunedisestino.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 |
|--|------------|------------|---------|------------|--------------|
| Alpine Refuge and Wilderness hut Casa del Re | ○ | 18+6 | ○ | ○ | |
| ○ In the final stage of the award process | | | | | |
| Località Casa del Re - 52038 Sestino (AR) | | | | | |
| Hostel Monterone | | 9 | | | |
| Località Monterone 13/b - 52038 Sestino (AR) | | | | | |
| Hostel Pesciano | | 11 | | | |
| Località Pesciano 16 - 52038 Sestino (AR) | | | | | |
| Open all year round. Ass. Visit Sestino Ph. 338/3656145 - 338/1454978 mail: info@visitsestino.it web: www.visitsestino.it | | | | | |
| Holiday house San Gianni | | 20 | | | |
| Open all year round. Località San Gianni - 52038 Sestino (AR) Ph. 339/3726135 mail: info@sangianni.it web: www.sangianni.it | | | | | |
| Il Casale dei Barboni | | 14 | | breakfast | |
| Open all year round. Località Case Barboni - 52038 Sestino (AR) Ph. 366/4096846 mail: casabarboni@eutelia.com web: www.casabarboni.it | | | | | |
| Holiday farm Il Quercione | | 10 | | | |
| Open all year round. Località Civitello - 52038 Sestino (AR) Ph. 338/7438099 mail: info@agriturismollquercione.it web: www.agriturismollquercione.it | | | | | |
| Il Casale di Montondo | | 8 | | on request | |
| Open all year round. Ph. 338/9656145 Località Monte Rotondo, San Donato 41 - 52038 Sestino (AR) mail: info@casalemontondo.it web: www.casalemontondo.it | | | | | |
| Refuge Serra Battiroli | | 10 | | | fireplace |
| Open all year round. Loc. Serra Battiroli - 52038 Sestino (AR) Ph. 0575/799097 mail: demanio@valtiberina.toscana.it | | | | | |
| Bed and Breakfast Ca' Valenzano | | 6 | | | |
| Open all year round. Ph. 334/2628427 Loc. Valenzano, Via Lucemburgo 11 - 52038 Sestino (AR) mail: cavalenzano@gmail.com web: www.cavalenzano.com | | | | | |
| Holiday farm Il Podertino | | | | | |
| Open all year round. Loc. Podertino - Frac. Lucemburgo, 18/B - 52038 Sestino (AR) Ph. 333 7545475 - mail: rosmundigl@gmail.com | | | | | |
| Holiday farm Sasso di Simone e Simoncello | | 6 | | | |
| Open all year round. Loc. Case Barboni - Petrella Massana, 18/B - 52038 Sestino (AR) Ph. 338 3302689 Mail: edoardot@eutelia.com web: www.agriturismosassosimoncello.it | | | | | |
| Camper area | | 5 places | | | |
| Open all year round - Strada sestinese, c/o stadio - 52038 Sestino (AR) Ph. 0575/772206 | | | | | |

ovalis), the alpine buckthorn (*Rhamnus alpinus*), the eastern leopard's bane (*Doronicum columnae*), the small Sedum, the houseleeks and the Canterbury bells, strongly rooted in the cracks of the rock.

In the forest areas of the Nature Reserve too, the influence of man dates far back: the more easily accessible woods such as the oak woods in the southern part were intensively exploited for timber and grazing to the point that the Grand-duke put constraints on their use. The mixed woods which flank the northern slope of the Sasso, more impervious and inaccessible, on the contrary, retained a high degree of naturalness and diversity: ashes, maples of various species, turkey oaks, mazzard cherries and littleleaf lindens grow on the fertile soil which has developed among the limestone masses accumulated at the foot of the face. Here and in the dense turkey oak plantation which joins Simone to Simoncello live at least three species of currants, extremely rare shrubs in the Apennines, as well as the spindle tree (*Euonymus latifolius*), the rare mountain cornflower (*Centaurea montana*), the interesting herb-paris (*Paris quadrifolia*) and dozens of other herbaceous species of considerable interest in terms of conservation.

IDENTITY CARD OF THE PROTECTED AREA



Municipality: Sestino
Area: 1.604 ha
Established: July 10, 1996
Management: Region of Tuscany in collaboration with the Unione Montana dei Comuni della Valtiberina Toscana.

EQUIPPED DEPARTURE POINTS

Sestino and the Visitor Centre

The town of Sestino, point of departure of many tour itineraries, can be reached via the S.R. 258 from Sansepolcro or the S.P. 50 from Pieve Santo Stefano. From Sestino starts the road (fork to Pesciano) which leads to the car park near the Casa del Re refuge, inside the Reserve, hub of the hiking trails. The Visitor Centre of the Nature Reserve, in the centre of the town, is the place to go to get information, ask for publications or to further your knowledge of the protected area by panels, scenographic reconstructions, fossils and mineral displays.

TOUR ITINERARIES

The Sasso di Simone is the junction of a dense network of nature trails coming from the Tuscan side and from Marche. As a result it's possible to choose between short itineraries and those lasting several days, staying in local accommodation. The best time for visits is spring, in May and June, when the florescence is at its most and the weather is not too hot. Whatever the season is, you should remember that after a day of rain the clayey trails can become inaccessible and slippery. In some periods of the year the upper part of the Reserve is not accessible on account of military training: ask for information at the Visitor Centre.

From Casa del Re
Length: 7 km
Travel time: 2h 30'

This is the classic route to reach the Sasso if you don't have much time available. From the Casa del Re refuge, where you can park nearby, the path skirts the valley of Seminico and climbs up through sparse woods and shrubbery as far as the bottom of the Sasso, where it opens onto spacious meadows on which groups of cattle graze. The short route that leads from the bottom to the top of the Sasso is an antique paved mule-track - built to serve the military fortress - restored in 2015. On the way back you can take the path going towards Case Barboni which goes through the "flow" of limestone blocks at the foot of the rocky face and continues on the badlands, turning then towards Monte della Scura so as to quickly return to Casa del Re.

From Case Barboni
Length: 6 km
Travel time: 2h

From the car park of Case Barboni, climb up to the characteristic hamlets and then take the No. 61 CAI (Italian Alpine Club) path until it intercepts the No. 17 CAI path towards the Sasso. You can take the same route back to the departure point or go through Monte della Scura, in this case follow the Reserve paths or cover a round trip to stop at the Casa del Re refuge (about one extra kilometer walk).

From Martigliano
Length: 10 km
Travel time: 3h 30'

From the car park of Martigliano, once past the town, cross the meadows used for grazing until you arrive to the CAI paths No. 17 or No. 7 and from here continue towards the Sasso. You can take the same route back to the departure point. A short distance after the rest area of Casa Nuova dei Prati, we recommend you to make a small detour (1km) to reach Peschio, an unusual and extremely panoramic limestone outcrop.

The clays and the Sasso from Miratoio
Length: 14 km
Travel time: 5h

This is a circuit suitable for those who have an entire day available. After leaving the car at the "Case Barboni" car park, go for about 3km along the S.P. 52 and reach Miratoio, in this village take the No. 17 CAI path, which skirts a badland area, until the "Sassi", where it is highly recommended to stop in the summit of Sasso di Simone and enjoy the panorama. Go back to Case Barboni along the No. 61 CAI path. Between Val di Ceci and Miratoio is recommended a detour toward the wonderful valley of Torbellino, as far as San Gianni (an extra hour).

LONGER TRAILS

If you have at least two days free it's possible to plan longer itineraries with arrival and departure in different places. Obviously you will need to provide yourself with the nature trail maps of the area.

From Monterone and Fusigno as far as Casa del Re
Length: 13 km
Travel time: 5h

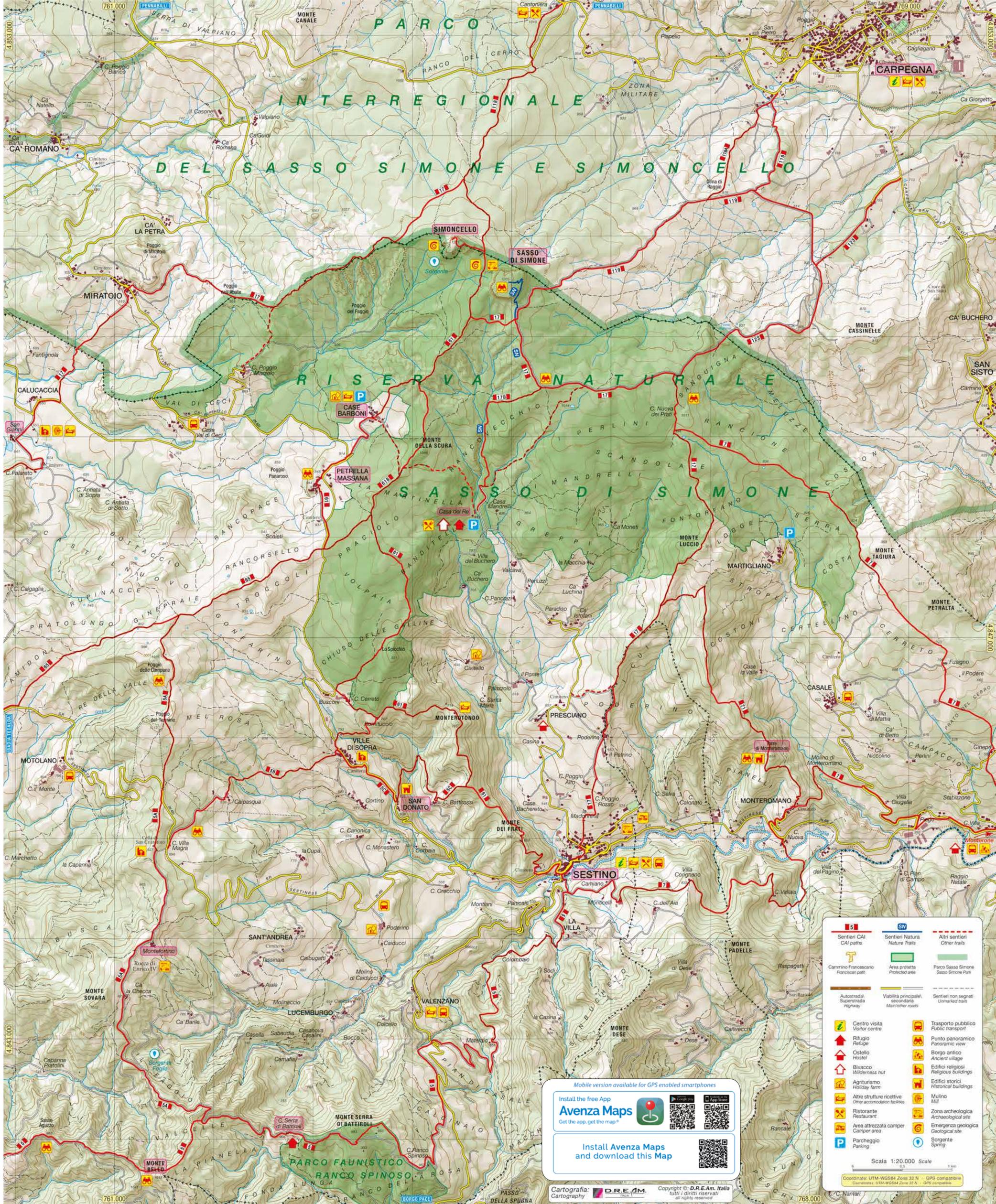
The eastern part of the Reserve, as far as the slopes of the Sasso, is crossed by the No. 7 CAI path which you had better take from the village of Monterone, an ancient fortified settlement, several kilometres after Sestino along the S.P. 49. From Monterone the path climbs up toward Fusigno (ruins of the castle) and joins the No. 17 CAI path leading to the Sasso. From here you reach Casa del Re.

From one Reserve to another (two days)

From Sasso di Simone it's possible to reach the Nature Reserve of Alpe della Luna on foot, leaving from Casa del Re or from Case Barboni along the No. 65 CAI path. At Poggio delle Campane there are two possibilities: the easier one reaches Monte Maggiore along the No. 5A CAI path, which is more or less at the same altitude, or along the No. 5, with a stop at the Serra Battiroli Refuge or with detours to the refuges in Riseco and Monterano; the more difficult route reaches Monte dei Frati along No. 17 and, after a stop at Badia Tedalda, along the No. 19. A further alternative is to take the No. 5 path from the bridge over the Foglia in Sestino, so as to visit the wildlife park of Ranco Spinoso too.

From the Reserve to the Park

From the Reserve of Sasso di Simone you can go on to the Cantoniera Pass along the CAI paths no. 17 and 118 or go back to the "Sasso" through the CAI path no. 119 (take it near Carpegna) or through the CAI paths no. 121, 95 and 17 (passing through Miratoio).



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| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Sentieri CAI CAI paths | Sentieri Natura Nature Trails | Altri sentieri Other trails |
| Cammino Franciscano Franciscan path | Area protetta Protected area | Parco Sasso Simone Sasso Simone Park |
| Autostrada Superstrada Highway | Viabilità principale, secondaria Main/other roads | Sentieri non segnati Unmarked trails |
| Centro visita Visitor centre | Rifugio Refuge | Trasporto pubblico Public transport |
| Ostello Hostel | Bivacco Wilderness hut | Punto panoramico Panoramic view |
| Agriturismo Holiday farm | Altre strutture ricettive Other accommodation facilities | Borgo antico Ancient village |
| Ristorante Restaurant | Area attrezzata camper Camper area | Edifici religiosi Religious buildings |
| Parcheggio Parking | Mulino Mill | Edifici storici Historical buildings |
| | Zona archeologica Archaeological site | Emergenza geologica Geological site |
| | Sorgente Spring | |

Scala 1:20.000 Scale

Coordinate: UTM-WGS84 Zona 32 N - GPS compatibile
Coordinates: UTM-WGS84 Zone 32 N - GPS compatible