

Discover Abruzzo, Italy's Wild Heart

Tour Style: European walking holidays

Destination: Italy

Trip code: AHLCL

2 & 4



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Nicknamed Italy's wild heart, Abruzzo is a picturesque, unspoiled, and gloriously crowd-free region fuelled by picture-postcard villages, wildflower meadows, mountainous forests roamed by wolves and bears, and plentiful wildlife-watching thrills. Highlights include exploring corners of the lesser-known National Park of Abruzzo, exploring the cobbled streets of Scanno, and heading to the charming village of Barrea perched on the hillside above the waters of its namesake lake.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Full programme of guided walks led by local HF Holidays Leaders
- HF Holidays Tour Manager
- Comfortable accommodation
- Half-board (plus four packed lunches)
- All transport to and from walks
- Return flights from the UK including hold baggage and airport transfers

HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Exploring the Italian region of Abruzzo on foot
- Enjoying guided walks around the National Park of Abruzzo
- Learning about the local flora and fauna
- Visiting mountain villages and ancient beech forests
- Sampling excellent food and wine
- Experiencing a wilder side to Italy

ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival Day

Once you land in Naples, there'll be a transfer waiting to take you to Hotel Degli Olmi, which is around a two-hour drive from the airport. Enjoy some free time to settle in or explore the village, Villetta Barrea, where there are bars and cafés for you to take your pick from.

Day 2: Through Forest And Waterfalls

Option 1 La Camosciara

From Villetta Barrea to the Waterfall of the Nymphs

Distance: 7.5 miles (12km)

Ascent: 1,200ft (378m)

After a continental breakfast, we set off from the hotel crossing the Sangro river before winding our way up through mystical forests of rare black pine. Once we reach the road that follows the Scerto stream, we'll dip into the area known as La Camosciara, which takes its name from the herds of chamois that live on the high ridges. As you go, you'll find boards with descriptions of the native trees and bushes.

Eventually we reach the beech forest where the sound of crashing waterfalls cuts through silence. Then head back through forest clearings to the village of Civitella Alfedena where there's time to visit the wolf conservancy before gaining momentum downhill towards the lake and Villetta Barrea.

Option 2 Val di Rose

One of the national park's most famous walks.

Distance: 7.5 miles (12km)

Ascent: 2,800ft (870m)

After a short transfer across the lake to the charming town of Civitella Alfedena, we begin the walk by climbing from the top of the village taking in an array of landscapes including meadows, high pastures, beech forest and steep crags. And as we climb the valley, we drop down into a deep ancient beech forest with trees hundreds of years old.

Now we're in chamois country and if you're quiet you may get the chance to spot some of the herds hopping around the high crags. From the top the views of the surrounding mountains are magnificent. The return is via the secluded Valle Jannanhera back to Civitella Alfedena.

Day 3: Val Fondillo

Option 1 Val Fondillo

Distance: 5 miles (9km)

Ascent: 300ft (95m)

There's a short transfer to Pescasseroli from where we start our walk towards the blissful green valley, Val Fondillo. The path takes us from near the village centre up the Colli Bassi with accompanying views of the hilltop village of Opi.

We'll follow the 'tratturo', one of the ancient paths used by shepherds, below Opi to reach the entrance to Val Fondillo, which takes its name from the many springs here. There's a gentle climb to the periphery of the beech forest and a break at a clearing by the stream before heading back to Tornareccia spring. The beech forests of the Val Fondillo have been listed by UNESCO as an Ancient and Primeval Beech Forest of Europe since 2017.

Option 2 Val Fondillo to Monte Amaro

Distance: 5 miles (9km)

Ascent: 2,400ft (738m)

This trek starts at Val Fondillo but then veers off to climb the peak of Monte Amaro. It's a steep ascent that follows the crest of the mountain through beech forest and then out to the high pastures and across rocky outcrops to the summit at 1,850m. If you have a good head for heights, you'll be rewarded with lofty views of Monte Marsicano and the hilltop village of Opi down below.

Day 4: Scanno

You'll have the chance to explore Scanno, one of the prettiest mountain villages of Abruzzo. Its remote location and harsh winters mean life was isolated until relatively recently. There's time for a stroll around its steep and winding cobbled streets, which will give you a glimpse into the past as it's been preserved pretty much as it was. Scanno is famous for its filigree jewellery and lacemaking, which you can still see in some of the little shops in town.

Option 1 and 2 Sentiero del Cuore – Path of the Heart

There are various options from 2 miles (3.5km) to 6 miles (10km), from 600ft (200m) to 800ft (275m)

Spend the morning mooching around the shops in the historic centre of Scanno and scoping out your lunch options at one of the many bars and restaurants dotted around the village. Then after lunch, meet up with your guide for an afternoon walk.

We'll take the path from the village down to Scanno Lake following an old mule track where the slopes of Monte Genzana eventually come into focus. After crossing through woods and fields, we'll arrive at the lake where there's a spot for a refreshing dip if you fancy.

We'll start climbing again towards the Hermitage of Saint Egidio from where you can look out over the lake – you'll notice it's shaped like a heart.

Day 5: Free Day

Spend the day as you wish. There's the hotel garden you can relax in or nearby Lake Barrea where there are beaches you can swim from. Stretch your legs with a walk along the lake to the town of Barrea to visit the castle and take photos of the view across the mountains embracing the lake.

Alternatively, walk up to Civitella Alfedena and visit the Wolf Museum to learn about these elusive inhabitants of the park and perhaps see the family of wolves that live in the conservancy.

For those who would like to do another walk, there are paths leaving the village of Villetta Barrea and climb the mountain behind, or there are easier loops around the lake.

There are also buses to nearby Castel di Sangro where there are shops and restaurants, sports facilities, and pleasant walks along the river Sangro.

Day 6: Pescasseroli

Option 1 Monte Tranquillo

Distance: 6 miles (10km)

Ascent: 1,300ft (440m)

From the national park's headquarters in the little town of Pescasseroli, your guide will fill you in on the wildlife living in the surrounding mountains, including the Marsican bear.

Then we set off on a gentle walk to Monte Tranquillo, passing through pastures and woodland. Firstly, we enter La Difesa, an area of forest used for grazing animals dotted with pollarded trees and clearings. A climb up to the sanctuary of Monte Tranquillo is next, which stands tall at 1,637m, where legend has it the Madonna rested during a long journey.

Option 2 Creste di Iorio

Distance: 10 miles (16km)

Ascent: 2,500ft (775m)

This loop is one of the top walks in the National Park of Abruzzo starting from the little town of Pescasseroli. We'll wander through beech forests to high pastures where the path then undulates atop the crests of the various peaks of La Rocca at about 1,800m. You'll tread the line along the border between the regions of Abruzzo and Lazio where the views from the top of the ridge across the whole Marsica region towards the regional park of Sirente Velino are breathtaking.

Day 7: Barrea

Option 1 Lake Barrea – Valle Jannanghera - Civitella Alfedena – Villetta Barrea

Distance: 7 miles (12km)

Ascent: 750ft (220m)

A short transfer will take us to the picturesque village of Barrea perched on the hillside above the lake. Wind your way up to the castle along its cobbled streets from where you can gaze out over lake and surrounding mountains. We'll then start our walk that will take us into the forest to the Jannanghera Valley and the tranquil spring where there's time to stop for a refreshment. The undulating path continues above the lake until you reach the village of Civitella Alfedena, then twists back down to the lake again.

Option 2 Barrea – Lago Vivo

Distance: 6 miles (10km)

Ascent: 1800ft (550m)

This walk starts above the town of Barrea and climbs quite quickly to reach a natural terrace from where there are panoramic views across to Monti della Meta and Monte Petroso, which at 2,249m is the highest in the national park. And if you're lucky, you might just catch a glimpse of the chamois hopping about on the steep cliffs here.

A little further along we stop at Lago Vivo, fed by the melting snow and dominated by the surrounding mountains. Its name ('Alive Lake') comes from the fact that it changes shape all the time depending on how much water there is. The path then descends through the deep and silent Valle dell'Inferno (Valley of Hell) where legends abound.

Day 8: Departure Day

It's the final day – we'll depart for Naples Airport, which is about a two-hour drive away.

ACCOMMODATION

Hotel Degli Olmi

The Hotel Degli Olmi is a friendly, family-run hotel close to the centre of the village of Villetta Barrea in the heart of the National Park. Dario, who is in charge of the kitchen, trained with the famous Italian chef Niko Romito and the family are justly proud of his cuisine which is all home made using organic and local produce and featuring Abruzzese dishes as well as better-known Italian favourites. There's a comfortable lounge and bar to relax in and also a pleasant garden where you can enjoy watching the sun go down with a glass of local Abruzzo wine.

Food & Drink

Breakfast

Cereals, yoghurt, home-made cakes, pastries and biscuits, eggs, ham and cheese.

Dinner

3-course meal with three choices of first course and main course. There will always be a vegetarian option. They can accommodate vegan, gluten free and allergies as long as they know beforehand.

(NB: there is also an outdoor solar heated pool but we can't guarantee that it will be open before 1st June as night-time temperatures are still very cool in May. But if it's warm enough they will open it. It normally closes again in mid September.)

All rooms have:

- free wifi
- fridge
- telephone
- TV (Italian channels only)
- safe
- private shower (no rooms have baths)

The hotel is located in the village of Villetta Barrea and just a short walk from Lake Barrea where there are

places to swim. There are bars and small shops in the village. Villetta Barrea is famous for its stags that roam around the village and especially in September and October its quite possible for bears to come down to the village too.

Standard rooms have windows and can be on the first or second floor

Superior rooms all have balconies

USEFUL HOLIDAY INFORMATION

Joining Instructions (With Flights)

Book your holiday 'with flights' and you can choose to depart from a range of UK airports* to your destination. For latest flight times and prices please call us on 0203-974-8865 or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk

If you choose to book your flights with us, we automatically include return transfers between the destination airport and hotel.

Joining Instructions (Without Flights)

Alternatively, tailor your journey to suit you by booking your holiday 'without flights' and you'll have the freedom to book your own flights from your local airport.

If you choose this option, transfers are not included in the price. However, below are some suggestions to help you reach your destination:

Shared group transfer

You can still purchase a seat on our group airport transfer, but you must arrive in destination prior to the main group. It is your responsibility to book flights which allow enough time to meet our shared transfer.

Please note, all flight times are subject to change. If your arrival and/or departure time changes and no longer fits our group transfer, we will be unable to delay departure for you. Should this occur, we will refund you the cost of the transfer and you can either make your own way to the accommodation or we can book a private taxi transfer (at your expense). HF Holidays cannot be held responsible for your onward travel if you are unable to meet the transfer coach.

Private taxi transfer

Depending on your destination, we may be able to arrange a private taxi transfer for you. Please call us up to 5 weeks in advance to enquire about availability and costs for this option on 0203-974-8865.

*Subject to availability

Essential Information

It's best to be prepared for all weather conditions. To make it easier, here is a list of items you should consider packing.

Essentials

- Walking boots
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Insulated jacket/top
- Walking clothing
- Walking socks (plus spares)

- Sunhat
- Gloves/mitts and warm hat
- Water bottle (minimum 2 litre capacity)
- Headtorch
- High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30)
- Sunglasses with a dark lens
- Rucksack (15-30 litres)
- Mobile phone
- Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.)
- Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy
- UK Global Health Insurance Card (**formerly known as EHIC**)

Recommended

- Collapsible walking poles
- Swimwear and travel towel
- Snacks
- Dry bags
- Rubbish bags
- Insect repellent

Optional extras

- Camera
- Sit mat
- Flask for hot drinks
- Durable lunch box
- Gaiters
- GPS device

Useful Information

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so, and advise us of the insurance company and policy number.

We work with Campbell Irvine to provide you with competitive single and annual multi-trip insurance. Please see our website for more information and details of how to contact them for a quote:

<https://www.hfholidays.co.uk/about-us/booking-information/insurance>.

For more information about healthcare abroad and its costs, please visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/>.

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY

These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred.

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected

changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

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