

## **DISCOVER ABRUZZO THROUGH HERMITAGES AND VILLAGES**

**June 6-13, 2026**

The Celestine hermitages are one of Abruzzo's most treasured attractions. They present a combination of art, culture, and nature, and offer one of the most beautiful spiritual experiences a hiker could have in the Maiella National Park: the Mother Mountain for the people of Abruzzo, where nature can be enjoyed in its wildest form.

The sacredness that has always hovered over the Maiella mountain finds its greatest expression in these remote places. Nestled in the rock, these places are steeped in mysticism and open onto landscapes of unique beauty. Secluded in the mountain's ravines, they were chosen as prime locations for meditation, offering an astounding experience of being one with nature in all its vastness and magnificence.

A quintessential mountainous land, the highest peaks of the Apennines enclose perennial snowfields and breathtaking scenery. Celebrated as Europe's green region, the resplendent beauty of this area is also seen in the sea that is wild and pristine. The sea of Abruzzo, stretching over 100 km of coastline, offers a variety of natural landscapes: from the soaring cliffs of Punta Aderci, declared one of Italy's most beautiful beaches, to the ancient Abbey of San Giovanni in Venere, which from Fossacesia has overlooked the Adriatic for over a thousand years. One of the first tourists to discover the beauty of the sea of Abruzzo was the famous Pescara-born writer Gabriele d'Annunzio, who, in the late 19th century chose San Vito Chietino, town of the broom flowers, as his holiday haven. Here there is a stretch of interchanging scenes of natural beauty - the sea on the one hand and the verdant hills that surround and frame monuments and cities renowned for their immense culture and art.

## **Schedule: DAY 1 Saturday June 6**

We arrive late in the evening to meet Luigina at Pescara Airport. Transfer by bus to Sulmona. Check-in at the Hotel Santacroce. Overnight stay in Sulmona.

## **DAY 2 Sunday June 7: Rocca Calascio, Santo Stefano di Sessanio, and Castel del Monte**

After breakfast, we transfer to Santo Stefano di Sessanio. It is considered "One of the Most Beautiful Villages in Italy". Indeed, it is a stunning village nestled among the mountains, sitting adjacent to the high plain of Campo Imperatore. From here, we set off on a beautiful and easy hike that will take us to Rocca Calascio where we can admire the Lady Hawke Castle, used in the famous film starring Michelle Pfeiffer. After the hike, we will tour the village of Santo Stefano and then move on to nearby Castel del Monte, the star-shaped town, known also as the town of witches! We will wander through the streets of this quaint village exploring the characteristic "sporti" - or tunnels - that cross several streets in the village.

Return to Sulmona. Dinner and overnight stay.

**Route length: 6 km / Elevation gain: +400 m / Duration of hike: 3 hours**

## **DAY 3 Monday June 8: Truffles, the Stiffe Caves, and the Oratory of San Pellegrino**

After breakfast, we transfer to Hotel Arimannia in Caramanico Terme, a farmhouse nestled in a truffle field where the owners will tell us about this precious tuber as well as the saffron they grow in the area. We'll go truffle hunting on foot accompanied by trusted dogs trained for this type of activity. It will be a truly unique and memorable experience. We will enjoy a hearty lunch featuring truffles and saffron harvested on the farm. Then we will move to Bominaco to explore its castle and, especially, the Church of Santa Maria Assunta and the richly frescoed Oratory of San Pellegrino. Finally, at the end the day we will visit the Stiffe Caves. Technically speaking, they can be defined as an "active resurgence", meaning a cavity from whose entrance emerges a stream which previously flowed on the surface. The cave's sinkholes are located on the Rocche Plateau. The largest of these sinkholes is Pozzo Caldaio. The tourist trail is approximately 700 meters long and features a river that creates spectacular waterfalls and lakes within the cave. Numerous limestone formations such as stalactites, stalagmites, flowstones, and columns can also be seen. Return to the hotel. Dinner and overnight stay.

## **DAY 4 Tuesday June 9: The Heart-Shaped Lake, the Hermitage of San Domenico, and the Gorges of Sagittarius**

After breakfast, we transfer to Scanno to begin our trek around the heart-shaped lake. The hike is easy, starting in the village of Scanno and reaching the Hermitage of Sant'Egidio via the Sentiero del Cuore (Heart Trail), from where we can enjoy a panoramic view of Lake Scanno with its distinctive heart shape. The Hermitage is a place of worship, dear to the residents of Scanno as the saint saved the town from the plague in 1656. After admiring the panoramic view of Lake Scanno, we'll descend to lake level to walk to the Hermitage of San Domenico in Villalago. Here, we'll feast our eyes on the emerald green waters of the Lake of Saint Dominic, a man-made lake created in the 1920s with a dam on the Sagittarius River. Once we reach Villalago, we'll descend into the shade and quiet of the woods until we reach the Lake of Saint Dominic and, more specifically, the hermitage which bears the same name. We will learn about the life of Saint Dominic the Abbot, who is still venerated today in Cocullo. St Dominic chose these shores as the dwelling place for his contemplative spirit. At the end of the excursion, we'll take a walk in Scanno. We'll then stop at the historic café/pastry shop where Pan dell'Orso originated to try this typical Abruzzo dessert. At the end of the morning hike, after a lunch break, we'll take a second, easy walk through the Gorges of Sagittarius, a spectacular nature reserve run by the WWF. Here, the gentle sound of the Sagittarius River will accompany us on a relaxing stroll.

Return to the hotel. Dinner and overnight stay.

**Trail length 1: 8km / Elevation gain: 300m / Duration of hike: 4 hours**

**Trail length 2: 2km / Elevation gain: 0m / Duration of hike: 1 hour**

## **DAY 5 Wednesday June 10: Sulmona, winery visit and canoeing on the Tirino River**

After breakfast, checkout and transfer to Sulmona's city center for a guided tour of this beautiful town, famous for its sweets and the Running Madonna followed by a guided tour and tasting at the winery. Next, we'll head to the Tirino River for a canoe trip on what is considered Italy's most beautiful river. It's the perfect way to relax with its crystal-clear water, lush vegetation, and rich wildlife. After the canoe trip, we continue to Caramaico Terme, where we stay for 2 nights. Dinner and overnight stay.

## **DAY 6 Thursday June 11: The Orfento Valley**

After breakfast, we set off on foot from the hotel for a trek through the Orfento Nature Reserve. The Orfento Valley is one of the most beautiful and best preserved in the Maiella, thanks to the establishment of Orfento as a Nature Reserve, which, despite already being within a National Park, further protects its naturalistic value. On this trek, we'll ascend its middle-to-lower reaches, starting near the village of Caramanico Terme. This valley will captivate with its enchanting views, between rocks carved by the perennial flow of water, and lush vegetation, making it one of the greenest and most pristine valleys in the Maiella. The dense vegetation of oaks, hornbeams, and maples provides shelter for a rich protected fauna. At the end of the hike, there will be free time to stroll around the village of Caramanico.

Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

**Route length: 11 km / Elevation gain: +450 m / Duration of hike: 5 hours**

## **DAY 7 Friday June 12: The Hermitage of San Bartolomeo and Santo Spirito Valley**

After breakfast, checkout and transfer by bus to the Hermitage of Santo Spirito for a guided tour of the splendid Celestine Abbey. We will hike into the Santo Spirito Valley, where we'll admire the Hermitage of San Bartolomeo in Legio. For nine years, the hermitage was home to Pietro da Morrone, the future Pope Celestine V. The hermitage still manages to preserve the hermit spirit of the times and of the people who inhabited it. Continue to Vasto, overlooking the sea.

Checkin to Hotel dei 7 in Vasto. Enjoy a traditional fish dinner and overnight stay.

**Trail length: 11 km / Elevation gain: +350 m / Duration of walk: 4 hours**

## **DAY 8 Saturday June 13: Boat trip and departure**

After breakfast, checkout. Boat trip along the Trabocchi Coast. Transfer to Pescara and free time for a stroll in the city of Gabriele d'Annunzio, one of the most famous poets of the 20th century.

**Transfer to the airport. Farewell and end of services.**

## **INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION FEE**

- **€1,240 sharing a double/twin room.**
- **Add €150 for single room supplement**
- **BOOK YOUR OWN FLIGHTS**

### **The fee includes:**

- 7 nights' half-board accommodation (water and ¼ bottle/ glass of wine at dinner included) in a hotel with a swimming pool in a twin/double room
- Private minibus transfers for the entire tour (with driver, fuel, and parking included)
- Tour and hiking guide for the entire tour
- Canoe hire on the Tirino River
- Entrance ticket to the Stiffe Caves
- Truffle hunting and truffle and saffron lunch (day 3)
- Visit to a winery with wine tasting and an aperitif with typical products (cured meats and cheeses)
- Boat trip with lunch and aperitif on board, drinks included (see day 8)
- Guided tour with a licensed tour guide of Sulmona, Castel del Monte, Bominaco, and the Santo Spirito a Maiella hermitage
- Technical organisation of trip

### **The price does not include:**

- flights
- 4 packed lunches
- entrance fees to tourist sites, museums, and other places where an entrance fee is required
- tourist taxes (city tax)
- single room supplement of €150 (limited to 4 rooms)
- anything not expressly indicated in "The price includes"

**Please note:**

The guide reserves the right to cancel the excursion in the event of inclement or unpredictable weather. Hiking shoes are mandatory, unless otherwise indicated. The guide reserves the right to preclude participation in a hike unless hiking shoes are worn. The guide also reserves the right to change the route and/or destination of the excursion based on weather conditions, the type of group being accompanied, or any other reason the guide deems valid to justify such changes. The guide is responsible for calibrating the excursion pace based on the group's fitness level, even at the expense of reaching the planned destination.

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**Hotel Santacroce Meeting**

[www.hotelsantacrocemeeting.com](http://www.hotelsantacrocemeeting.com)

Hotel Arimannia in Caramanico Term

[www.hotelarimannia.it](http://www.hotelarimannia.it)

**Hotel dei 7 in Vasto**

[www.hoteldei7.it](http://www.hoteldei7.it)