

This route ascends the Eastern side of the Sibillini range, using the natural gorge carved by the Torrente Tennacola. This river has been tapped for its natural spring water, so it is often now dry in places. Most of the Valle Tre Santi actually lies outside of the National Park, and this walk only goes into the Park very briefly, at its Western extreme. However, it is still a very beautiful area, with many splendid locations to appreciate.

The paths followed by this route are sometimes indistinct, with some rough footing and places which can be slippery in wet conditions. Use of a compass is required.

Total Time: 5.0 hours Total Ascent: 775 metres Total Distance: 13 km

Abbadia di Piobbico (point 1) to point 2 – 1.0 hours

Point 2 to Pintura di Bolognola (point 3) – 1.5 hours

Pintura di Bolognola (point 3) to point 4 – 1.25 hours

Point 4 to Abbadia di Piobbico (point 1) – 1.25 hours

Getting to the start (20 minutes by car from Amandola; 120 minutes from Norcia)

From the West (Norcia), you can use your CAI map as a road map to reach Sarnano. From Amandola, head North along the main SS78, until you get to Sarnano. Once in the centre of Sarnano, take the road alongside the car park which heads South-West out of the town, into the mountains, towards the skiing resort of Sasso Tetto. After four kilometres, you arrive at the small community of Margani (not signed). Here, you take the small left turn to Abbazia di Piobbico and Giampereto. This junction is on a sharp right hand bend in the road and is easy to miss. If you reach the hamlet of Stinco, you have missed the turn off.

From Margani, follow the small tarmac road for one kilometre until you reach the 11th century church of Abbazia di Piobbico. Park your car near the cemetery.

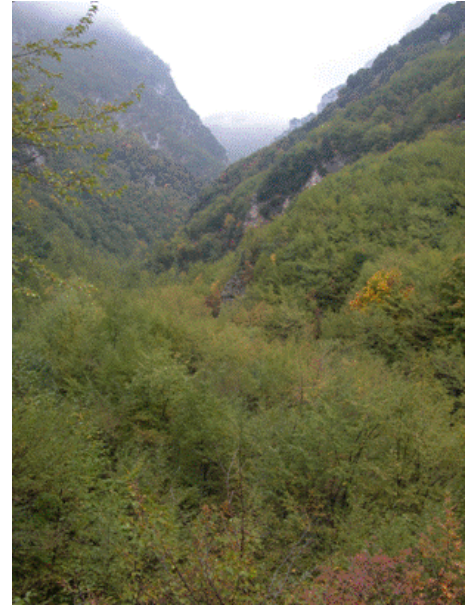
Note that the church is shown as ‘Abbazia’ on signs, but as ‘Abbadia’ on the maps.

From ① to ②

From the bend in the tarmac road, near the cemetery, follow the small white road West (a blue sign points to ‘Cese’) which climbs and soon turns South. Continue on this track, ignoring the turn right, for just under one kilometre, until you arrive at the small hamlet (just a few houses) of Le Cese. Follow the track past the houses, until you arrive at the last house in the hamlet, where a decorated sign for ‘3 Santi’ points right to a path going up the hill behind the house. Take this path and go up and around the house and out onto the hillside beyond, heading South.

After a few hundred metres, passing through some pretty scrubland, you arrive at a steep track coming down the hillside, which is not marked on your CAI map. Turn left onto the track and go downhill for around 30 metres, then take the path which goes right to continue South-West along the Valle Tre Santi. You now enter a wooded area with a fence on your left and signs for a truffle reserve on your right. The cliffs of the North side of the valley dominate the right hand side of your path.

After a few hundred metres, your path approaches the course of the river Torrente Tennacola at the bottom of the Valle Tre Santi. Cross the course of the river and follow the track which climbs and twists up the South side of the valley. After 100 metres you pass a track on the left which leads to a set of gates, and after a further 100 metres you arrive at a junction of tracks. Go right at the junction, heading up the valley along a track signed for both routes ‘3’ and ‘15’. Continue straight along this track, ignoring the track which goes left to climb higher up the valley and the one which goes right down into the bottom of the valley. After a couple of hundred metres you will arrive at a large stone water trough and spring.



View up the Valle Tre Santi

From ② to ③

Continue on the track passing to the left of the stone trough. The track soon narrows to become a path, and begins to climb steeply as the valley closes in above to become a rocky gorge. You will pass one junction where a path goes right, up the North side of the valley, but you stay left, in the ravine of Torrente Tennacola. The path now twists in the gorge, crossing the course of the river a number of times, but always staying close to it. In some places, you have to follow the river bed, so take care on slippery rocks.

At its narrowest point, the rock walls of the gorge are just a few metres apart. In this section, you will pass a fork in the gorge, where a waterfall has cut into the rock on the left. This waterfall supplies most of the water for Torrente Tennacola, and the remainder of the main gorge you follow is usually relatively dry.

A little after the waterfall, the gorge begins to open out again, and bears right (North-West). You now enter a steep sided valley, with a rocky floor through which are cut a number of gullies. Continue to follow the gullies, staying in the valley floor and climbing steeply. You might spot a path going left out of the valley, but ignore this. Your path is vague over the rocky ground, and you will have to scramble over the loose rocks and occasional debris brought down by avalanche. You can look out for the few red paint markers indicating you are on the path, but they aren't easy to spot! As you climb higher along the valley, the footing becomes surer, and the path moves towards the right of the valley centre, passing a couple of small areas of artificially flat ground – probably created when the water source was tapped. After a few hundred metres of climbing along the valley, you arrive at a steep wooded slope. Here, the path heads North, climbing diagonally up the slope. As you climb higher, the path performs some wide turns and zigzags to gain height, before heading West and into a mature woodland. The path through the large trees is vague, but you continue to climb, heading West-South-West, and after around 200 metres you will arrive at the western edge of the woodland. Follow the path across a small area of scrubland and enter Pintura di Bolognola.

Continue West-South-West along the tarmac and concrete streets, past the holiday villas, until you arrive at the large parking area in front of the Hotel Pintura. There are refreshments available in Pintura di Bolognola at peak times, but this predominantly skiing town is surprisingly quite on all but the busiest summer days.



The small hamlet of Le Cese

From ③ to ④

Your return East along the Valle Tre Santi follows the route of the Anello long distance path, high on the South side of the valley, along the slopes of Monte Berro.

From the South-East of the parking area in Pintura, head East-South-East along the white road, following the red and white markers for the Anello. You will soon arrive at a fork, where a track heads right, South-East uphill. Keep left here, and continue along the Anello, passing to the left of the woodland.

You now follow the Anello along this same white road for around four and a half kilometres. At first the track descends gently, then climbs gently for half a kilometre as it heads South into a wide valley. After rounding the South side of the valley, you again start to descend, and this continues until you leave the white road. A few forestry and agricultural tracks join your route, but you stay on the main track.

This leisurely section of the route gives you the opportunity to enjoy the scenery of the Valle Tre Santi, and the Eastern Sibillini hills.

Continue on the track until, after four and a half kilometres, you see a track cut sharply left (North), with signs for the Anello. Here, note that the Anello is not as shown on the CAI map, but continues further along the white road, as shown on your sketch map.

From ④ to ①

Leave the white road and turn left onto the track, still following the Anello. After around 150 metres, you reach a junction, where the Anello goes right onto a path, and a rough track goes left steeply uphill. Leave the Anello and turn left, following the track up the hill and back down the other side, now heading North. Continue to descend along this track, ignoring a small track which joins from the left, for a few hundred metres, until you arrive at a level grassy area, at the top of a rise. Here, the track bears left, through a chain barrier (which may be dropped), but your path goes to the right, into a gully at the side of the grassy area, heading North-East and continuing downhill.

Keep following the gully downhill, with a fence on your right. After just over 100 metres, you enter a small beach woodland, and a little further on a minor track crosses your path (the incorrect route of the Anello, marked on your maps). Keep on the more major path, heading North.

After a further 50 metres, your path turns to the right (East), where a small track joins from the left. Follow the path right, and continue in the deep gully as it twists back to the North, then West, and then back to the North again, always going downhill. Your path becomes a rough forestry track, and a few similar tracks join from time to time, but continue downhill and North. After a few hundred metres passing through the forestry area, you arrive at a clear fork. Take the left fork, heading North-West.

You are now on a more major forestry track, descending steeply at times. Again, a few tracks join yours, but keep going downhill, heading in a Northerly direction. Since you are passing through an active forestry area, it is possible that the tracks might change. You need to keep heading downhill and to the North.

Continue on this track, always downhill, for around a kilometre. The track then begins to level, and you walk along the right side (East) of two large fields, and another track joins from between the two. You soon pass a small pine plantation on the right, after which another track joins, keep left at this fork. After climbing slightly, you again descend steeply, until after half a kilometer you join a white road. Note that this white road is incorrectly marked on your CAI map, but the sketch map shows its true route.

Go left on the white road, still heading North, passing a track to the left which is marked as routes '3' and '15'. After 100 metres the white road bears left to approach a small group of buildings (Casale Calcagnoli), where there is a small shrine and spring. Here, the road becomes tarmac, and you follow it North for just over one kilometre, through Mezza Villa and Giampereto, then downhill back to Abbadia.



The Anello long distance path, between points ③ and ④.

Key:

- The route of this walk.
- Selected paths and tracks marked on the CAI map.
- The route of the Anello long distance path
- ▨ Boundary within the Park
- ▧ Boundary of the Park
- Tarmac road as marked on the CAI map
- Minor roads and white roads, marked on the CAI map
- Where features differ from the CAI map.

