

Route Descriptions

This book contains route descriptions ranging from day trips to multiday megawalks, plus suggestions for other walks, side trips and alternative routes. Each walk description has a brief introduction outlining the natural and cultural features you may encounter, plus information to help you plan your walk – transport options, level of difficulty, time frame and any permits required.

Day walks are often circular and are located in areas of uncommon beauty. Multiday walks include information on campsites, mountain huts, hostels or other accommodation, and places where you can obtain water and supplies.

TIMES & DISTANCES

Times and distances are provided only as a guide. Times are based on actual walking time and do not include stops for snacks, taking photographs, rests or side trips. Be sure to factor these in when planning your walk. Distances are provided but should be read in conjunction with altitudes. Significant elevation changes can make a greater difference to your walking time than lateral distance.

In most cases, the daily stages are flexible and can be varied. It is important to recognise that short stages are sometimes recommended in order to acclimatise in mountain areas or because there are interesting features to explore en route.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Grading systems are always arbitrary. However, having an indication of the grade may help you choose between walks. Our authors use the following grading guidelines:

Easy – a walk on flat terrain or with minor elevation changes, usually over short distances on well-travelled routes with no navigational difficulties.

Moderate – a walk with challenging terrain, often involving longer distances and steep climbs.

Demanding – a walk with long daily distances and difficult terrain with significant elevation changes; may involve challenging route-finding and high-altitude or glacier travel.

TRUE LEFT & TRUE RIGHT

The terms ‘true left’ and ‘true right’, used to describe the bank of a stream or river, sometimes confuse readers. The ‘true left bank’ simply means the left bank as you look downstream.

Planning

Hiking is one of Italy's unsung joys. Thanks to the country's privileged EU status, along with its long tradition of recreational hiking overseen by the Club Alpino Italiano (CAI), outdoor-based trips here are easy to arrange and refreshingly low maintenance.

To the surprise of many, Italy has a huge network of efficiently organised trails that are clearly waymarked and lightly trammelled. The almost total lack of dangerous wild animals along with the abundance of towns, villages and *rifugi* (mountain huts) en route mean that point-to-point hiking is safe, easy to plan and anxiety-free. Public transport in Italy is similarly comprehensive and even the most obscure hikes to the most out-of-the-way villages have regular rural bus and/or train connections. Of the 59 hikes in this book only six are inaccessible by public transport (and two of these are doable without a car if you're prepared to walk a few extra kilometres to the start point).

Despite its lack of large-scale wilderness, Italy's countryside can offer plenty of tough technical hikes that will test athletes of Sherpa-like fitness (the Dolomites has long acted as a training ground for Himalaya-bound mountaineers). Advanced walkers can seek out the fixed protection *vie ferrate* (iron ways) in the Dolomites, or consider one of the many long-distance paths that follow ancient pilgrims' routes or circumnavigate glowering mountain massifs such as Monte Rosa. Outside the scope of this book are the rugged summit ascents of illustrious Italian mountains such as Mont Blanc, the Matterhorn, and Gran Paradiso; however, the guide lists some of the peninsula's more hikeable summits including Corno Grande (the highest peak in the Central Apennines), Mt Etna and Pizzo d'Uccello.

At the opposite end of the scale are the more undulating ambles: strolls through quintessential Italian countryside, enlightening (and educational) walks through history, and the scenic coastal treks that criss-cross the Ligurian and Amalfi littorals. Furthermore, many of the multiday walks in this guide have side trips, alternative finishes or short cuts enabling walkers of different abilities to cherry-pick their own itineraries.

While this particular book focuses primarily on hiking routes, the biannual Lonely Planet *Italy* guide provides cultural and factual details for those desiring more background information or a greater choice of sleeping/eating options. If you're focusing your hiking in one specific area, consider checking the more detailed Lonely Planet regional guides to *Tuscany & Umbria*, *The Italian Lakes*, *Naples & the Amalfi Coast*, *Sicily* or *Sardinia*.

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- A great Italian novel
- GPS
- 'Emergency' power bars
- Water bottle(s)
- Toilet paper
- Lighter
- iPod
- Spork (spoon-fork)
- Lightweight waterproof jacket
- This book
- Ear plugs (for *rifugi*)