

Forest, flora and fauna

Geology, mines and minerals

Geothermal

Croce del Masso and Poggio alla Marruca



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Croce del Masso and Poggio alla Marruca



Type: Hiking | Difficulty: T | ↗ 50 m | ⇄ 1 km

Località di partenza e arrivo: -

A short but suggestive ring-route connecting the picnic area at “Croce del Masso” with the panoramic peak of “Poggio della Marruca”.

All of the walk is made on green rocks, the ophiolites: the path crosses short stretches of pine forest which, as you go upwards, give way to Mediterranean scrub. The hill is characterised by the presence of a peculiar flora, which adapted to the difficult conditions of survival in serpentine soils, rich in phytotoxic heavy metals and poor in nutrients.

Among the species present, one of the most outstanding is the rare *Stipa etrusca* which, together with other more colourful species, forms a veritable botanical garden in spring. From the top of the hill (489 m), your eyes will be treated to the superb panorama view of the famous “Valle del Diavolo” (Devil’s Valley), the area where the earliest geothermal and chemical industrial developed, but at the same time a place that brings to the mind Dante’s *Inferno* due to the many hydrothermal phenomena (which have been there since the ancient times), such as the famous boraciferous lakes. Looking eastwards you may see Rocca Sillana and the Siena area, looking northwards you will see Volterra and the Apennines and looking westwards you will see the immense Monterufoli forest.

Points of interest

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1. A botanical garden on serpentine in Poggio Marruca

Naturalistic feature

In spring, a paradise for botanists, a wonder for all. Poggio Marruca has extensive outcrops of ophiolites, represented here mainly by serpentine. The arid or steep slopes are home to a sparse shrub vegetation known as gariga, characterised by rare endemic herbaceous plants and beautiful blooms of irises, tulips and other species.



2. Viewpoint from Poggio alla Marruca

Viewpoint

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3. Picnic area, Croce del Masso

Picnic area with fire lighting