

The Apennines: Italy's Abruzzo National Park

Naturetrek Pre-departure Information



Abruzzo Chamois



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Pre-departure Information for Italy

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Before You Travel

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining any Naturetrek holiday that you are fully covered by personal travel insurance against any possible medical expenses, to include the cost of repatriation and the cost of air evacuation should this be necessary.

Naturetrek Ltd is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority. We recommend that you arrange travel insurance through Campbell Irvine Ltd by calling their travel enquiries help-line on 020 7938 1734 or by emailing their travel department at info@campbellirvine.com or online via the link from our website www.naturetrek.co.uk.

If you do not take out insurance with Campbell Irvine, which is specially tailored for our kind of travel, we ask that you send us the following details: the name of your insurance provider and a contact telephone number, your policy number, its expiry date, details of the sum insured for medical and repatriation cover and the emergency medical assistance telephone number.

The most common claim on travel insurance is for loss, or petty theft, of money or personal belongings. It is essential for an insurance claim to obtain an official report of notification of loss from the police, but in practice this can prove time-consuming, or almost impossible, and to obtain this report can sometimes severely disrupt your holiday. It is therefore sometimes best to accept the loss, unless it is significant, rather than face the ensuing disruption.

Passport & Visa Requirements

Citizens of EU countries require a valid passport to visit Italy, but do not need a visa. Citizens of other countries should check entry requirements with their nearest Italian Embassy/Consulate.

Airline & Baggage Restrictions

We normally use British Airways for this tour (London/Rome). Whilst British Airways baggage allowance is 23Kg per person, please bear in mind that luggage space in our minibuses will be limited and we would be grateful if you could try to refrain from bringing large, hard-shelled suitcases.

Please make sure that your baggage is clearly marked with your name, inside as well as outside, in case the labels get detached. For reasons of household security, we suggest that you put your home address only on the inside of your luggage for your outward journey. If possible, we would ask you to use soft hold all style suitcases or kitbags, as hard shell suitcases are much harder to pack into the vehicles. A small padlock will be useful to secure your kitbag or suitcase; light fingers may well find their way into an unlocked bag but petty thieves will usually think twice about slashing a bag to get at the contents.

Lost Luggage - With airlines and airports being busier than ever, there is always a risk of our clients' hold luggage being temporarily lost in transit. You will appreciate that there is little that Naturetrek can do about this; however, we do urge you to consider minimising any impact that 'lost luggage' can have on your holiday by taking such precautions as wearing some of your outdoor clothing on the flight and packing all essential items, and basic 'survival' clothing, etc., in your hand luggage.

Please bear in mind that, as Naturetrek holidays often visit remote areas, and we often cover large distances moving between different hotels, it is sometimes impractical for airlines to re-unite you with your baggage on tour. It is for this reason that you should ensure that your travel insurance makes provision for the purchase of replacement items should you need to do this in the event of your luggage being lost.

Your Safety & Security

Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/Italy> regularly prior to travel.

Security is rarely a problem on any of our trips; the vast majority of the people we come into contact with are scrupulously honest. However, it is only sensible to exercise caution when on holiday - do not take expensive jewellery or watches with you; do not flash your money around, and keep your money and passport somewhere safe, using the safe in room if available. Do not leave anything of value lying around where it can easily be picked up - i.e. look after your belongings!

Travel Money and Expenses

Currency

The Euro is the official currency of Italy.

Extra Expenses

On this tour you will not need a lot of spending money, except for optional drinks and other personal expenses. We would recommend carrying a small amount of Euros, together with your credit or debit card, for use at an ATM and for paying for your hotel tab at the end of the tour (the hotel accepts Visa and Mastercard).

Tipping

Our Naturetrek tour leaders do not travel in expectation of a tip (as can be the case in other parts of the world), although that is not to say that they would turn away a tip or gift that the group decide to offer them as a token of appreciation for their hard work. There is absolutely no pressure

or expectation to do so however, so we leave this in the hands of the group members to do as they please. We are sometimes asked what amount would be appropriate, but we do not think it is appropriate to give guidelines, since tipping is such a personal matter. This is why a group envelope, to which people can contribute anonymously, often works well.

Travel Health

Vaccinations

No special vaccinations are necessary for Italy although it is always worthwhile making sure your Tetanus jab is up to date. MASTA Travel clinics are located across the UK and provide a full range of travel immunisations. For your nearest clinic or to obtain a 'Health Brief' for your journey please visit www.masta-travel-health.com.

Other Medical Precautions

The only "medical precaution" that you might like to take is a small first aid kit to cater for blisters, headaches, coughs, colds, etc.

First Aid Kit

Although your tour leader will carry a first aid kit, you should bring a few things with you which you can keep with you all the time in case of need. Please note that our leaders do not carry sterile needles / syringes and it is up to group members to decide whether or not to bring these along. The following list is intended as a minimum recommendation:

- Lip salve
- Soluble aspirin or paracetamol
- Plasters and gauze padding for wounds
- Antiseptic wipes or powder
- Antihistamine cream & tablets (for relief of insect bites)
- Lomotil / Imodium (only to be used in an emergency for mild cases of upset stomachs)
- Rehydration salts such as Dioralyte
- Insect repellent
- Anti-nausea or travel sickness tablets
- Tweezers and safety pins

European Health Insurance Card

British and EEA nationals should obtain a 'European Health Insurance Card' (EHIC) before leaving home. The EHIC is not a substitute for medical and travel insurance, but entitles you to emergency medical treatment on the same terms as the locals. You will not be covered for medical repatriation, on-going medical treatment or treatment of a non-urgent nature, for this you will

need to turn to your travel insurance. The EHIC is available free of charge by applying online at www.ehic.org.uk, downloading an application form from the same website and sending it to the address provided, or by telephoning the automated service on 0300 3301350.

Smoking

The overwhelming majority of Naturetrek clients are non-smokers. To enable them to enjoy their holiday in comfort (and fresh air!), we insist that smokers refrain from smoking in the proximity of all other group members, and whilst watching wildlife, at all times. In particular, smoking in any confined space – be it the lounge, dining room, minibus, bedroom (if shared with a non-smoker) or at any other group gathering – cannot be permitted and in signing our booking conditions you agree to accept these guidelines, and the right of all our tour leaders to dismiss from a tour any participant failing to respect them.

Practical In-Country Information

Accommodation & Food

We will be based in the very friendly and comfortable family-run Hotel Paradiso, on the outskirts of the town of Pescasseroli. You will be assigned twin or double rooms, although we would be happy to arrange a single room for you prior to departure, on receipt of the single supplement charge. All rooms have private facilities and the bathrooms have hairdryers. There is free Wi-Fi in every room and also in the lounge and reception areas. There are no kettles in individual rooms but there is tea/coffee machine in the dining room. Soap and shower gel are provided.

It will come as no surprise that pasta plays a substantial part in Italian recipes but nearly all regions have developed their own special dishes. Abruzzo is famous for wild mushrooms and especially truffles, as well as locally produced cheeses (such as *pecorino* and *caciotta*). For anyone travelling who requires a Gluten-free diet, this is not a problem here as the local Pharmacy and supermarket sell a range of products.

Italy has over 20 major wine regions, from Val d'Aosta on the French border to Sicily and Sardinia in the south. Wines are named after grape varieties or after their village or area of origin. In the Abruzzo region, the red Montepulciano and white Trebbiano grapes are used. The former is deeply coloured, quite tannic, with low acidity, while the latter is a yellow, semi-strong wine. Both are sold everywhere in the little hill towns of this area, and the hotel sells very good 'house' wines.

Drinking water precautions are rarely necessary in Italy, Aqua Non Potabile meaning that the water is not drinkable. The hotel water is both safe and excellent. There are many springs and fountains supplying drinkable water. Milk is pasteurised and dairy produce is safe. Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are all considered safe to eat.

During our day walks you will find it necessary to carry a full water bottle. Depending on your appetite or preferences you might also like to carry some extra "personal nibbles" such as dried fruit, chocolate or sweets. However, rest assured that whatever the size of your appetite you are unlikely to go hungry on this holiday!

A Typical Day

Throughout this holiday we will be based at the Hotel Paradiso. Breakfast and dinner will be served in the hotel and we will take picnic lunches – and perhaps the odd bottle of wine to keep us going through the day. We will generally take breakfast at around 8 a.m., and leave the hotel around 9 a.m. for a full day's wildlife watching with often optional pre-breakfast excursions to watch for mammals such as Marsican Brown Bear and Apennine Wolf. On some days we will have an early dinner before going out again for an evening watch.

Each day's walk, varying between two and 10 kilometres, starts only a short distance from the hotel and the furthest we travel is around half an hour. The walk up the Val di Rose is both long and steep (but taken gently), and many people find one or two walking poles very useful, especially for the descent. On our walks we will usually move at a fairly slow pace, allowing time to enjoy the flowers, birds, butterflies and mountain views. For the longer walks we will share the carriage of our picnics, so please reserve one corner of your daypack for an item or two!

Transport

For all transfers and excursions we will be using locally rented minibuses.

Electricity

220 volts AC, 50 Hz. Two-pin plugs are used.

Time

Italian time is GMT/BST + 1 hour

What to Pack

A spare set of casual clothes will be useful for dinner in the hotel. During the day walks you should wear comfortable and practical clothing. As mountain weather is so very variable, we recommend a number of thin layers rather than a few thick ones. Take old, well-worn clothes rather than rushing out to buy new ones. When watching from a view point for the Marsican Brown Bear and other mammals there can be quite a fresh breeze and standing still means that warm clothes are vital. Hats and gloves are advised as we wait and watch in the early mornings and evenings. Although it is the end of May moving into June, in this mountain region it can be very cold still. The following

list of clothing and equipment is intended to be fairly comprehensive. However, it is up to you to add or subtract to cater for your own personal requirements.

Clothing

- Walking boots 1 pair (Lightweight Boots are adequate)
- Trainers 1 pair (all purpose wear)
- Casual shoes For evening hotel wear
- Underwear & socks Including 2 pairs of walking socks
- Shirts & blouses 2+
- 'T' shirts 2+
- Long Trousers 2
- Short Trousers 2
- Light jumper 1
- Heavy jumper/fleece 1
- Waterproof Jacket 1
- Waterproof trousers 1
- Warm jacket 1
- Sunhat 1
- Hat and gloves 1 for the early bear watching!

Equipment

- Binoculars
- Daypack / small rucksack
- Large water bottle
- Washing & shaving kits
- First aid kit
- Sunglasses & sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Camera & accessories
- Walking pole(s)
- Relevant field guides
- Map(s)
- Reading material
- Notebook / diary
- Telescope (optional)
- Mug, plate, knife, fork and spoon each for your picnic lunches

And most importantly, your money, passport and e-ticket!

Background Information

Geography

Italy is situated in Europe and attached, in the north, to the European mainland. The Alps, to the north, separate Italy from Austria, France, Switzerland and Slovenia and contain some of the highest mountains in Europe. The country stretches for some 1,100 kilometres from the Alps, south-east into the Mediterranean. The Abruzzo National Park is situated in the heart of the central Apennine mountain chain, some 128 kilometres due east of the capital, Rome. This mountainous area lies mostly at a height of between 900 and 2,200 metres. The valleys comprise meadows or cultivated land while the lower mountain slopes are partly clothed in beech and pine forests. On the higher slopes, woodland gives way to flower-rich pastures. We will make our way to Pescasseroli nestled in the valley of the River Sangro. The national park itself was established in 1923 and covers 1,100 square kilometres (including the outer protection zone). It is one of the last refuges of the Marsican Brown Bear and Apennine Wolf. It is also dotted with *borghi*, hilltop villages with intricate streets and ancient buildings little changed over the centuries.

Reading list

This list is a general guide to those books we consider to be most interesting and informative. It is by no means an exhaustive list, so if you find a book that merits inclusion please let us know so that we may add it to our list. Reference books on birds, mammals and natural history greatly add to the enjoyment of a natural history holiday to such a rich area, and there are now many excellent websites to assist identification. Any prices listed here are subject to change. Good internet sites for books are Natural History Book Service on www.nhbs.com or Amazon on www.amazon.co.uk.

Collins Bird Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe

Svensson, Mullarney & Zetterstrom (HarperCollins, 2nd edition 2009)

This guide claims to be the ultimate guide to birds providing all information needed.

hbk £24.99, pbk £16.99

Birds of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East: a photographic guide

Jiguet, Audevard & Williams (Princeton University Press, 2017)

A comprehensive pocket-sized photographic guide to every bird species in Europe.

pbk £24.95

Collins Field Guide: Butterflies of Britain and Europe

Tolman & Lewington (HarperCollins, 1997)

A completely new guide following on from the original by Higgins & Riley. An invaluable guide for anyone with an interest in butterflies.

£25.00

Butterflies of Britain and Europe: a photographic guide

Hahtela, Saarinen, Ojalainen & Aarnio (A&C Black 2009)

An excellent pocket-sized guide

Please be aware that there is no single field guide that covers the plants of this area. The alpine guide is useful for some of the mountain species; others are found in the Mediterranean and in the Northern European guides. A useful website is:

Flora Italiana: <http://luirig.altervista.org/flora/taxa/floraindice.php>

Collins Guide to the Alpine Flowers of Britain and Europe

Grey-Wilson/Blamey (HarperCollins, 2001)

A completely rewritten new edition with over 64 new colour plates illustrating every species found in the mountainous regions of Britain and Europe.

Out of print

Collins Guide to the Wild Flowers of Britain & Northern Europe

Fitter, Fitter & Blamey (HarperCollins, 1996)

An expanded edition of an old favourite.

£14.99

Wild Flowers of the Mediterranean

Blamey/Grey-Wilson (HarperCollins, 2004 2nd edition)

Very good value and well worth obtaining if you are particularly interested in plants. Over 2,500 plants are described with over 1,500 of these beautifully illustrated by colour paintings. There are also many useful line drawings.

pbk £18.99

Collins Guide to the Grasses, Sedges, Rushes & Ferns of Britain & Northern Europe

Fitter, Fitter & Fitter (HarperCollins, 1995)

£16.99

Abruzzo – the Brandt Travel Guide (2010)

£14.99

ISBN-13: 978 1 84162 270 5

Maps

For maps of Italy, we recommend that you try www.amazon.co.uk, The Map Shop, Worcestershire www.themapshop.co.uk or tel: 01684 593146 or Stanfords in Bristol and London, www.stanfords.co.uk or tel: 0117 929 9966 (Bristol) / 0207 836 1321 (London).

A Final Word

We want you to enjoy your trip to the full. We have done our best to ensure that you are suitably prepared for it, but if you do have any questions before you go, please do not hesitate to ask them. We are always trying to improve the quality and interest of our holidays, and we will send you a simple questionnaire after the tour to complete, which we would be very grateful if you could

return to the office at your convenience. If you wish to contact us about anything, we will be very pleased to hear from you.