

An extract from the forthcoming Cicerone guidebook  
**Walking in Abruzzo** by Stuart Haines  
(pub July 2011, £14.95)



In 30 full and half-day route descriptions, the complete guide covers all the wonderful walking country to be found in Abruzzo.

We hope you enjoy this free sample walk.  
To give us your comments, or if you would like to be contacted when the book is published, please email [info@cicerone.co.uk](mailto:info@cicerone.co.uk).



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## WALK 12

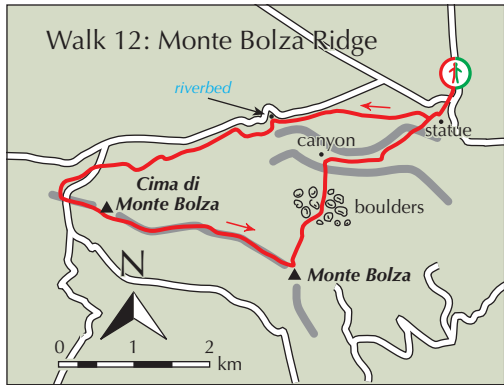
### *Monte Bolza Ridge*

<b>Walking time</b>	6hrs
<b>Difficulty</b>	2 (route probably snowbound from November to Easter)
<b>Ascent/descent</b>	500m/500m
<b>Distance</b>	14km
<b>Map</b>	Gran Sasso d'Italia (1:25,000), Club Alpino Italiano (CAI) – Sezione dell'Aquila
<b>Start</b>	Road junction with two wooden butcher's shops in the centre of southern Campo Imperatore
<b>Access</b>	See Walk 9 for how to reach the junction
<b>Parking</b>	Junction at the wooden butcher's shop to the east of the road

When climbing up to Castel del Monte, beyond Ofena, on the southern approach to the high plain of Campo Imperatore, the eye is constantly drawn to the striking pyramid on the skyline that is Monte Bolza. It looks like a great peak to stand on and take in the world – but it seems too steep and rocky, with no obvious access.

This route is a marvellous combination of high and low – on one hand it takes in the perfect airy ridge connecting the two peaks of Monte Bolza, and on the other offers an enclosed exploration of the great meltwater canyon on the plain. The ridge affords commanding views across the Campo and mountains that hem it, and of the distant Maiella and Abruzzo National Park peaks. Contrastingly, the wide gravelly floor and steep cliffs of the canyon evoke a remote and cut-off desert world. Being under 2000m, this route also has the advantage of being accessible when other routes are impractical – a mountain ridge for days when you want to relax a little!

Head south-west towards the ridge, which forms the skyline, passing a butcher's shop on the left and keeping the road on the right. Follow 4x4 tracks into a depression with a large watering trough.



The statue is a memorial to a shepherd, with his children and dog, lost in a blizzard as he struggled to reach the shelter of his cottage.

Climb up behind and walk to the arresting white **statue**. From the statue walk north-east across grassland for about 1km to intersect the tarmacked road. Turn left and walk along the road for about 500m to reach the **riverbed**. Leave the road and go down into the riverbed.

Turn a little leftwards to join a 4x4 track on the other side of the bed. Follow it along the hillside parallel to the road (about 50m to the right). The track drops into occasional side-valleys, but then draws away leftwards, climbing steadily towards the bottom of the steep slope dropping from the ridge and Cima di Monte Bolza. When you are directly beneath its line, turn left and begin to climb.

The ascent is steep and unremitting, but unthreatening. A poorly defined path can be followed. Some 400m higher the angle eases and the ground becomes rockier. Soon you are on the **Cima di Monte Bolza** – the day's high point at just under 2000m and a wonderful crow's nest from which to survey almost the entire Campo and highest mountains of the Apennines.

The **views** are spectacular. To the north-east lie the adjacent peaks of Monte Prenna and Monte Camicia. To the north, unmistakable Corno Grande stands magnificently at the end of the Campo. To the south-west the



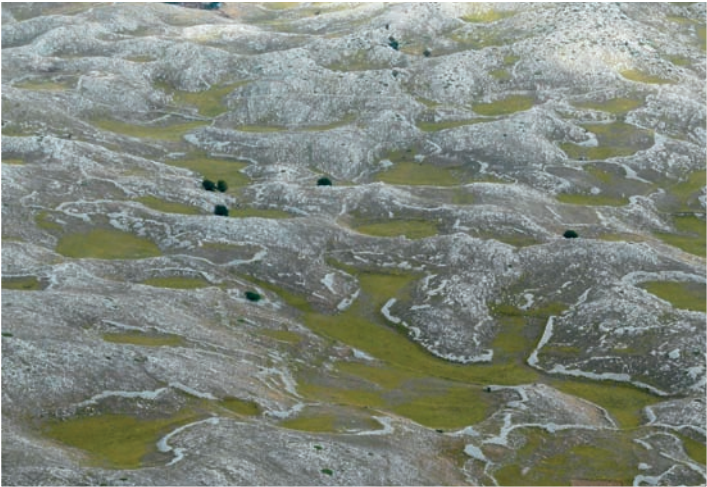
ruined castle of Rocca Calascio sits on a rocky crest, with the great north-east wall of Monte Sirente beyond.

*On the Monte Bolza Ridge*

To the south-east the rounded grassy ridge runs almost level to Monte Bolza at the far end. Set off along it, kinking left at the first sub-peak to keep on the ridge proper.

On approaching **Monte Bolza**, the ridge narrows and a few pinnacles stand in the way. Turn them on the left, and then the right, if you can't go easily over. The small summit block is approached slightly to the right and up a little gully. There is a big boulder to finish and a memorial plaque just beyond.

The splendid **view** south is fully revealed. The roofs of Castel del Monte seem close by, with the broad Capestrano valley beyond and much lower. In the far distance lie the peaks of the Maiella massif, the Sulmona valley and the ranges of south Abruzzo. To the south-east, the Adriatic can be glimpsed beyond the far corner of the Campo. At the foot of the mountain is an amazing landscape of grassy pools lying among grey stony hummocks.



*Grassy pools and stony  
hummocks below  
Monte Bolza*

You are likely to be barked at by creamy Abruzzo sheep dogs.

Ignore them and keep as far away as is reasonable, and they will be happy.

Go back a little to the biggest gendarme and turn right. Descend the steep north-east slopes of the mountain directly and carefully, without a path, aiming for the nearest large boulders at the bottom. It might be a little easier to the right, next to a rock wall, but nothing is too daunting if taken slowly. Reach the **boulders** and easier ground and continue in the same direction towards the canyon.

Find a distinct path and possible paint splashes in a side-valley leading north-east to the **canyon**. Turn right and walk along the gravelly bottom of the valley, following it downstream. Occasional paint splashes might be noticed, but just stay in the riverbed. Pass by cliffs, buttresses and side-valleys. Shepherds use the canyon and its side-valleys as shelter for their shacks and pens.

At the point where the valley opens out, leave it by a rising 4x4 track on the left. Pass over grassy mounds and pasture to the big water trough, the **statue** and welcome refreshment huts a little beyond.