

Monte Conero

The *Parco del Conero* is located at the Adriatic Sea, between the province capital of Ancona and the pilgrimage place Loreto. When you look at Le Marche on the map, you can see the mostly straight coastline bulge. These are limestone cliffs of the *Parco del Conero*, with the 572 metre Monte Conero as its highest peak. Along the slopes at west and north side vines are growing and along the east side you can find some beautiful seaside resorts and charming fisherman's villages. In the middle of the park you will find some very quiet walking areas where you can enjoy the special flora and fauna. How about a visit to the *Badia di Santo Pietro*, a 10th century monastery hidden in the forest.

History

Thanks to the numerous deserted mines, the landscape is an open book for geologists. Monte Conero existed the same way as the Monte Sibillini in the west of Le Marche. It is formed of pushed up limestone layers that were once deposited in a shallow sea during the Jura period. The various limestone layers have different stratification so that one side of the hills is slightly sloping and rich of vegetation and the other one steep and bare. The limestone facades facing the sea have been subjected to coastal erosion which produces a spectacular view of steep, white chalk cliffs and sheltered bays with caves and creeks.

Hill walking

Monte Conero is a lovely, sloping, not too extreme area for hikers and bikers. The Parco del Conero has been established in 1987 to protect the flora and fauna as well as the cultural treasures such as the Badia di Santo Pietro. This 10th century monastery is a great target for hikers. Along the way you may even encounter one of Conero's many native animal species: the weasel, hedgehog, skunk, badger or fox. Wild pigs and deer are also quite common in the park, although they are exotic animals. Conero is also popular among bird watchers, because it is a stop-over place for birds of passage and many large birds, such as herons and birds of prey.

How to get there

Parco del Conero can be reached from the south via Sirolo, at 89 kilometres distance of Sopra e Sotto. Coming from the north, you enter the park via Portonovo which is at 96 kilometres of Sopra e Sotto.