

ATESTINO PATH n. 3

LENGTH: 22 Km

DIFFERENCE IN ALTITUDE: 1000 m

WALKING TIME: 8 hours

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: none, but good training is necessary.

BEST SEASON: winter and spring

Geology. The middle and the southern side is characterized by the most known sedimentary and volcanic rocks of the Euganean Hills: the *Biancone* between Monte Fasolo and Monte Rusta; the *Scaglia Rossa*, which covers the calcareous plateaus surrounding Arquà Petrarca and Valle San Giorgio; the Euganean Marl covering the volcanic summit of Monte Gemola. Among the volcanic rocks we find the rhyolite on Monte Piccolo and Monte Ventolone and the trachyte on Monte Rusta.

Flora. On the eastern slope of Monte Piccolo grows the holm-oak (*Quercus ilex*), the most characteristic example of Mediterranean vegetation, the pubescent oak (*Quercus pubescens*), the cane apple (*Arbutus unedo*) and the heather. The northern slopes are characterized by the presence of the chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) and numerous and big woods of this plant are mostly found on Monte Piccolo and Monte Ventolone. Climbing upwards, towards Monte Orbieso, we cross a wood of flowering-ashes (*Fraxinus ornus*), hornbeams (*Ostrya carpinifolia*), pubescent oaks as well as smoke trees (*Rhus cotinus*), we will also find chestnut and oak woods. Particularly beautiful, in Spring, is the sight of the almond trees in blossom along Monte Fasolo path. Not far from Valle San Giorgio the landscape is characterized by fields surrounded by hedges; on the plateaus of *Scaglia Rossa* there are unfruitful meadows (*vegri*) where rare flowers such as orchids grow.

Fauna. Due to its length, if we follow the path we walk through a great number of *habitat*, from the chestnut wood to the *vegri*, which are inhabited by a vast range of species.

On the *vegri* lives the praying mantis (*Mantis religiosa*), which catches insects, making use of mimicry and by means of its raptorial legs. There are also flower coleopteran and predatory insects, such as ladybirds of typical colours and magnificent butterflies like the macaon swallowtail (*Papilio machaon*). It is the ideal habitat for birds such as the skylark (*Alauda anversis*) and the ortolan bunting (*Emberiza hortulana*), which nest on the ground, while the small bushes give shelter to the shrike (*Lanius collurio*), the stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*) and the whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*). The winter is the hunting season for birds of prey such as the buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) and the kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*). Among the animals which are related to man and which live on cultivated lands are the brown hare (*Lepus europeaus*), the quail (*Coturnix coturni*) and the pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*), many are found on Monte Fasolo. This area hosts the wild boars (*Sus scrofa*), which have been brought there by man and now they have found an ideal habitat in the Euganean area. In the wettest soils, at the foot of Monte Orbieso and on the *calto* of the Volpare, you can meet several amphibians such as the fire salamander (*Salamandra salamandra*) and birds like the grey wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*) which feeds on small water invertebrates.