

Accommodation difficulties and distance (54 km) meant that we had to base ourselves in Citta della Pieve for an extra night and use taxis to ferry us back and forth to the end and start of the walks. The first day was a walk to Montegiove which was a lovely 20 km stroll along the ridge and the second day was a 34 km walk to Di Doglio picking up from where we finished the first day. The walk to Montegiove while fairly easy did entail one short cut on a marked trail which went down into the valley and up to connect with the ridge. It was worth the deviation as we passed this 17th century church (dated by Carol) in an isolated area on the walk. There were no houses near the church or remains of previous homes. Bit of a mystery as to why it was sighted where it was. After the church we headed on down the track to the valley floor. Unfortunately, the track was not well-used; when we got to the bottom and the inevitable creek, we found blackberries obstructing our way. In my best imitation of Indiana Jones, I beat a path over the creek. Carol was still unhappy about going on the track because she was frightened that the blackberries would pull threads in her linen walking shorts -I ask you who wears linen shorts on a bush walk? So, in the style of all intrepid bushwalkers she took her shorts off and completed the challenging traverse in her undies. Now many of our walking friends will be familiar with the advantage of stripping down to your undies occasionally (Paul, Gayle and Dela to name just three) but Carol very quickly put her shorts back on when we heard some marauding pigs in the undergrowth and completed the walk with her pants on.

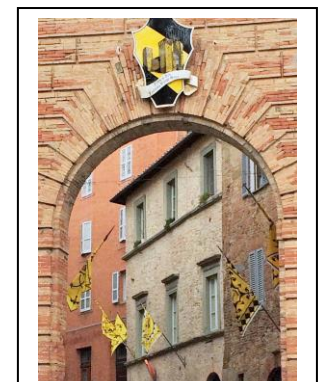


In the small village of Monteleone which we stumbled across on the walk, we explored its winding narrow streets down to the ramparts and came across a restored Fiat 500. As we were admiring it a couple of American tourists who also happened upon the village by chance engaged us in

conversation. This is one of them with Carol and car. This woman was from San Francisco and her friend was from Boston (she was camera shy). Both seemed like interesting people, and it would have perhaps been good to have a chat with them over a meal. But like so many encounters on this trip, it was all too brief. I wonder what has happened to Stefanie from France, did she get to Rome on time, did the Spanish walker (a teacher) develop some strategies to cope with his unruly middle school class and did the solo Brave Belgium walker get home safely. I couldn't have done this walk without staying in hotels and having my luggage transported but I think the walkers who stay in the pilgrim hostels get to know each other and share the joys and sorrows of their

own individual walk and because of this have a much more rewarding interpersonal experience.

On our arrival back at Citta della Pieve we discovered that the town had been decked out in black and yellow flags. This may be an omen for the 2017 AFL premiership winner. I hope for my young friend Tommy that it is a portent for a Richmond flag. When I next go into a church I will light a candle for Tommy's sake, I will choose one of those big churches that honour San Francesco as he was always a supporter of the underdog. San Francesco is naturally a very important historical person throughout



Umbria and there are lots of San Francesco's personal items on display. I came across this one which is reported as being one of the sack like robes that he wore. There is no better indication that San Francesco is on the side of the Tigers.

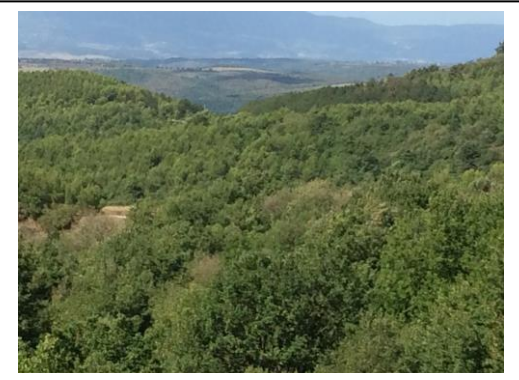


The second day of the walk to Di Doglio did not start well. Carol was taking care of the logistics and as I was being driven to the start of the walk, a dog charged out of the bush and jumped at the car baring its fangs at the passenger door window. It was one of those sandy coloured dogs they use to protect sheep in this region. It really put me on edge as I started the walk as I was in dense forest (made up mainly of oak trees) and was expecting something to charge out at me at any time. But I shouldn't have given it a moment's thought because for about two hours along a mountain road the only noises I could hear, except for the occasional car, were my own footfalls. There was even an absence of birdcalls.

The walk along the ridge continued with a few stiff climbs as I headed to today's height of 740 metres. This I believe would be a great area for bike riders.

This is typical of the views I had for most of the day. The whole area up on top of the range had the feel of a ski resort area closed for the summer, but I couldn't find any evidence that it actually snows in this region.

I had lunch in the little village of Ospedaletto, again all closed up except for one small grocery shop, then headed down to Di Doglio. I had chosen this route as it allowed me to take a short cut by walking down a very steep bush track then up out of the valley again to connect up with the white road, taking six kms



of the journey, meaning I only had to do 34kms instead of 40kms. As I got down to the bottom I came across a beautiful mossy gully in a small creek running through the valley. I was due for a rest so I decided to put my feet up and enjoy the peace and quiet. Alas within minutes I heard this horrific angry grunting noise, something of a cross between a bull's roar and a dog's bark. I wasn't sure what it was but there was a lot of noise in the forest and I had heard that wild boar could be dangerous, I hotfooted it up out of the valley, I think I climbed out of it faster than I climbed down. I made the right decision as there were plenty of pig prints on the track for the rest of the afternoon, this is obviously an area where they are very prolific. Why I was a little bit concerned was because from about 1:15 until I met Carol later at 5:30 I didn't see a person or a car, so if something did happen to me I was in a very isolated area, although the phone did work until around four in the afternoon. It certainly was a strange feeling being in the middle of one of the most popular tourist spots and not coming across anybody, in hindsight I shouldn't have gone into the area by myself, but I guess that is one of the ironies of life, doing the wrong thing and it turning out all right.

I arrived safely at our accommodation in Di Doglio (to quote our next host, quite famous in the area) and could look back on my walk for the day out of the bedroom window. I came from the mountains in the distance around the left of the hill in the foreground. It was a bit



frustrating at the end because I could see our hotel about 4 kms away but I knew the winding track to the hotel was 8 kms, but after the pig scare I wasn't going to bush bash my way in a straight line to the hotel. We have two days here and the rest day will be much appreciated.