

## Hike 1

# The Perinaldo Circuit



*Uniting sections of 3 footpaths, the Balcony Path, the Clarence Bicknell Trail and the route to San Bartolomeo in a gentle circular walk through woodland and along a ridgeway. With extensive views to the mountains and the coast, with a stop at the 10<sup>th</sup> century church of San Bartolomeo, allegedly built by the famous heretics, the Cathars, and occupying a peaceful, dramatic position.*

### Access

Drive up to Perinaldo and follow the road signs for the Carabinieri building, located at the east, top end of the village. There is a large free car park to the left of the building with views back down to Apricale. From the car park go up the steps in the wall and go left along the road bridge above the car park. On the right there is a notice board with a map of the area you will be walking, as well as some information about the flora and fauna. Follow this road as it climbs up along the ridge out of Perinaldo, passing various villas, keeping on the ridge, mainly on the Apricale side, until you find the footpath and signpost marked in the direction of San Pancrazio .



**Grade. Easy**

**Height gain: 280m**

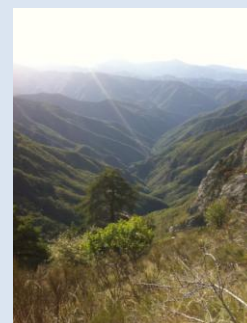
**Recommended period : All year, except the hottest months.**

**Distance: 10 km**

**Duration: 3 to 3.5 hours walking time**

## Description

The footpath climbs steadily, at first along the north side of the ridge in a mixed woodland of pine, chestnut and holm oak with the clinging tree moss and evergreen holly bushes, indications the cool, humid location, with its welcome freshness, especially if walking in the hotter months. The path becomes a wide mule track at points, at least hundreds of years old, with huge regular shaped blocks and then shrinking to a narrower mountain path again. After about an hour of this pleasant woodland climb, we emerge onto the top of the ridge, with views down the seaward slope to Monaco and, if a clear day, further along the French Riviera to Cap Feratt. This side, facing the sea, has different vegetation with a colourful undergrowth of arbutus , broom and rock rose. You soon reach the ruined church of San Pancrazio (855m )and a picnic area. The views from the church are obscured by the trees but climb the rocky escarpment behind the ruin-be careful when you slide back down!- you will get a nearly 360° view, to the north of the 2000m mountains of M.Torragio and M.Petrivecchia, to the left the higher French peaks of M. Bego and M.Capelet, to the east M.Bignone, and to the south- the Mediterranean! You now know why this is named the Balcony Path.



After a pleasant pause take the path to the right indicated to San Bartolomeo , going through another rocky area and then steeply down to a delightful newly restored path through the extensive forest on the west side of of M.Caggio, a mountain both sacred to and an important defensive location for the Ligurian hill tribes. On this peak there are

many ruins, covered over by centuries of undergrowth, some recently uncovered by a fire, of an ancient fort and menhirs, or standing stones. A clear path follows a mostly flat route, with 2 or 3 steep inclines, around the side of the mountain through thick woods, past dry stream beds, with views down to an evocative, completely wooded and unspoilt valley below. After another hour of gentle hiking the path emerges from the trees and slightly rises onto a flat col, location of the 10<sup>th</sup> century church of San Bartolomeo (708)m. A stunning location with the extensive range of the Maritime Alps visible to the north and the Principality of Seborga, in a dominant position above the sea, only a hours walk away below. This fascinating village has the story that this Church and ones in the nearby village itself were built by the famous heretical sect, the Cathars, inheritors of the earlier Gnostic Christian tradition, perhaps when they had to flee French persecution, far from their more extensive stronghold in the Landeoc region of France. Enjoy the feeling of this special natural/man-made place before taking the path down signposted to Perinaldo, with lovely views of that village framed with the mountains behind.

At first the path is narrow and passes though a grassy area, then enters another woodland where it crosses a small bridge over the Caggio stream, that in the spring has pools big enough for having a quick refreshing dip! You soon reach the end of the path that climbs up onto a flat driveable track that leads back to our starting point. Be careful if doing this circular route in the hotter months as this last section has little shade. However after another hour you reach back to the village on the same road above the car park. A circular walk to be savoured at a gradual pace.

