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Trekking tour to Montagnola and the Craters of 2001

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The south flank of Etna is where very strong and continuing eruptions took place in 2001. The lava flows destroyed most of the skiing infrastructure and have also destroyed parts of the village around the Rifugio Sapienza. Nowadays this area is another attraction for tourists. If you want to escape the masses and want to explore the Etna's lateral craters on your own, you can leave the road and climb the Montagnola. This crater was formed in 1763 and is an interesting destination in itself, last but not least because of the grand view you'll have from there. But if you take the way back almost straight south towards M. Silvestri Superiore and Inferiore - the crater twins on both sides of the main road - you'll even make a journey through time: at approx. 2.150m you'll arrive at two very young craters, which were still steaming hot on their surface in Oct. 2002 - one year after their eruptions. From there, you can follow a trail close to the black lavastream that has formed in that time, back to civilization. Although this area has been rather calm during our visit, make sure the local conditions are ok for the tour.



Photos: ["Hot" 2001 Crater, Montagnola seen from the village](#). Starting point: [the village around Rifugio Sapienza \(seen from Montagnola\)](#). [The S-ridge of Montagnola seen from the top](#), [the summit of Montagnola](#), [the rim of Montagnola's crater](#), [impressive colours on your descent, looking back to the descent route](#)



Rating:
+++++

ascent: **750m** Start: **Rifugio Sapienza, 1.892m**

Destination: **Montagnola, 2.638m**

Difficulty: med

Trekking descent: **750m** End: **Rifugio Sapienza**

Walking Time: total 4 hours, 0,5h on the road to the begin of the ridge at 2.100m, 1,5h to the top. Descent 2h to the Rifugio.

Directions:

From the old cable car station follow the road northwards, until you reach the lower parts of the second cable car "capannina" at approx. 2.100m. You should see to your left an old lava stream and just behind it, the foot of the S-ridge of Montagnola. After crossing the old lava you'll observe that the ridge is built of two lateral lines of rock, with sand and debris between them. Find your own way and ascend further, until you reach a flat part of the ridge. Nice place for a rest. Now ascend further and soon you'll see Montagnola and the rest of the ridge clearly in the north. The way is a lot easier now to walk on. Just below the southern rim of Montagnola's crater you'll remark a big, yet short lavatunnel. To your right, the ridge leads you further towards the southern, the lower rim of the crater. Once you arrived there, it will take another twenty minutes to take the steep and at times exhausting ascent to the northern rim, which marks the highest part of Montagnola and has a couple of geological instruments on top. From the top we took a direct descent line onto the saddle that lies east, just below the summit, and turned straight S when we reached it. You'll find yourself now walking on the right and below of the rim/ridge of Montagnola. Use this for orientation and find your own trail. After a while you'll be close to the craters of 2001 (gas emissions might occur, hot surface just below the debris layer) and will eventually get on an unmarked trail in the ashes. This takes you further towards the craters. From there you'll remark a much better visible trail on your left, that follows the 2001 lava stream towards M. Silvestri Superiore and leads finally back to the main road.

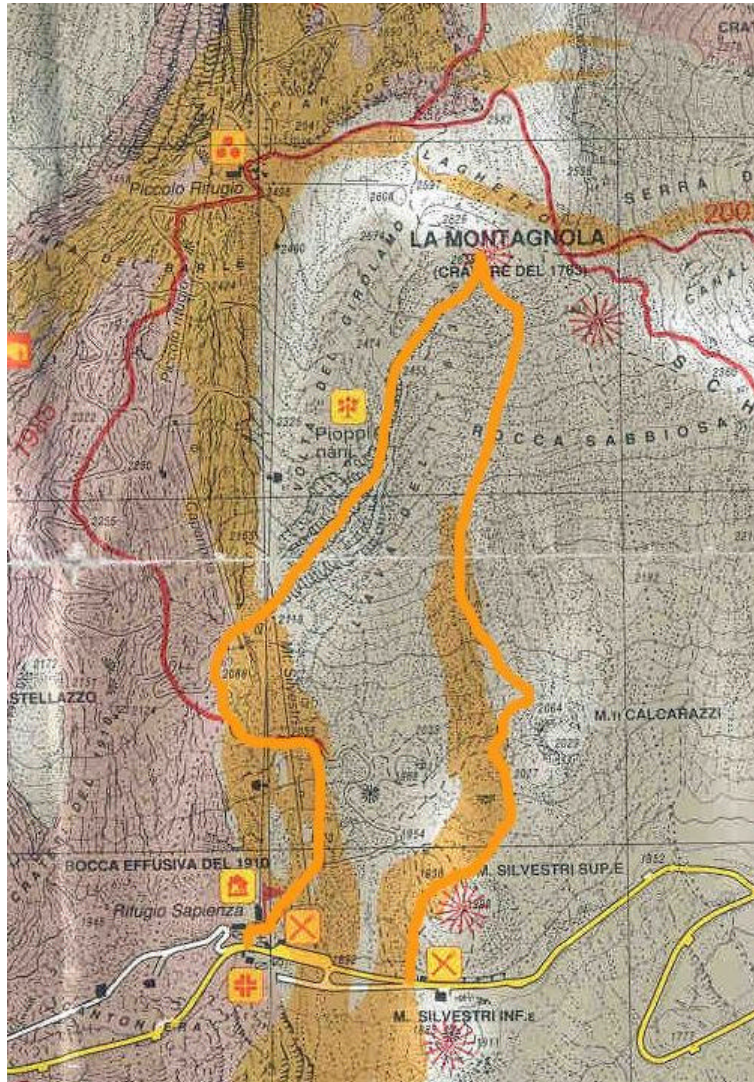
Classification: med, distance 7km. Carry enough water with you. Exhausting ascent.

Base: Rif. Sapienza

Marking: the trail is not marked at all and its head might be a little hard to find. Orientation can be difficult. Compass, Map and Altimeter needed.

Maps:

e.g. "Mt. Etna - carta escursionista altomontana", S.EL.CA. Firenze (1:25.000)
[Map of the tour \(1:25.000\) 153k](#)



Travel Season: Spring till late Autumn

Notes: As Etna is a very active volcano, the tour described might either not be possible due to actual eruptions or might change its character completely because roads and/or trails might be destroyed by lava. Anyway, if the conditions are fine, the tour can also be extended to a complete crossing of Etna in a S-N direction towards Piano Provenzana. Simply descent northwards from Montagnola and walk towards the road. Follow it northwards and it will lead you to Torre del Filosofo. From there the road will bring you towards the Central Crater region and from there you can descend on the road to Piano Provenzana.

Links:

- Parco dell'Etna [Official Pages Detail Map](#)
- GVP-USGS - [Weekly Volcanic Activity Report](#)
- [Etna- vista sul Vulcano](#) by poseidon.it
- [the Etna pages](#) by Boris Behnke
- [Webcam Etna - Sorveglianza Visiva](#)
- [Etna pages](#) by Stromboli Online
- another [Etna map collection](#) by Alain

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last revision: Monday, December 09, 2002 copyright [www.therucksack.net](#)