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MELO AND CAPITELLO LAKES

Length: 7km

Difference in altitude: 550mt

Max elevation: Capitello lake (1.930mt)

duration: 3h30m/4h

Difficulty degree: E+ (Medium)

Last modification date: May 2022

Starting and arrival point: Bergerie de Grotelle (1.380mt)

Mountain group: Massif du Monte Rotondo

Type of route: Round trip with variant

Premise: *The ascent to the Melu and Capitello lakes from the Bergerie de Grotelle is one of the most popular but also the most beautiful treks in Corsica. Located above 1.000mt with a maximum height of 1.930mt, the route remains cool in summer although it is almost entirely exposed to the sun and for this reason it is good to take the necessary precautions with an hat, sunscreen and water (there is a source near Melu lake).*

The route should not be underestimated, length of 7km is not excessive but progression is continuous and sometimes steep with jumps of smooth rock equipped with chains and fixed ropes and metal ladders. The rocky ground alternates with stony areas where a stiff shoe can make the difference.

The natural spectacle is immense, the lakes dominate the valley of La Restonica in a unique setting in the heart of Corsica, a wild but at the same time relaxing place especially on the edges of Melu lake where you can relax in the magnificent meadows by the lake listening to the sound of flowing water and being able to cool off at the source di Natale (Christmas) located near the Melu refuge.

How to get there: Along the T20, a road that runs through Corsica from north to south, you reach Corte where, near the roundabout, you turn towards Avenue du Neuf Septembre, which you follow until you cross the bridge over the Restonica river. After the bridge, turn left along the entire magnificent D623 which goes up the Gorges of La Restonica to the end where the Bergerie de la Grotelle restaurant is located. Paid parking (3 €).

Description: On the right side of the Bergerie de la Grotelle starts the well-marked path with park signs that begins to go up towards Melu lake. The path goes up the right side of the stream (hydrographic left) along a first stretch of wood full of firs and pines. Leaving the wood, the path becomes more rocky and bumpy until you reach the Bergerie du Melu (1.500mt, 20m/30m from the start) where there is the crossroads that steeply climbs the right side (orographic left) of the valley towards Col de Chiostru and the Gorla lake. Leave the crossroads and continue along the bottom of the valley until you reach an altitude of approx. 1.545mt. in a wider and more panoramic area where there is the crossroads for the ascent to Melu lake, it is possible to choose two ascent routes for the lake, the one on the right (orographic left) that is steeper with stretches of smooth rock equipped with fixed chains and ropes and two metal ladders or to the left (orographic right) for a less steep but bumpy path surrounded by vegetation. It is possible to evaluate one of the routes for the ascent (the steepest) and the other for the descent.

Turn right passing close to a pile of rocks, following the yellow signs you pass a slab of rock along the path that immediately becomes steep. You pass close to a cross until you reach a fixed chain where it's necessary to pass carefully, especially in the presence of other hikers (avoid queuing for pictures). After passing the chains, you reach the most comfortable metal ladders. After the stairs, the path descends becoming more comfortable and easily reaching the beautiful Lake of Melu (1.711mt, 1h/1h20m from the start) near a rocky spur with signs.

Go along the northern perimeter of the lake in a westerly direction along the path that leads to the Melu Refuge where the Surghjente di Natale (Christmas source) is nearby where you can drink and cool off. Behind the source the valley

continues towards the highest Capitello lake, following the path that initially climbs the right side of the valley and the river (orographic left) along a steep and sometimes bumpy path. At an altitude of 1.850mt the path crosses the stream to go up the opposite side, you pass flat areas where there is the crossroads that go up the steep rocky area to the north up to the Brèche de Gorja and the lake of the same name, you leave the crossroads continuing along the valley, overcome steeper sections with rock jumps equipped with other chains beyond which you reach the coast of the beautiful Capitello lake (1.930mt, 20m/30m from Melu lake) embedded in the rocks in a magnificent alpine scenery. The panorama dominates the valley of La Restonica and the underlying lake of Melu. Beyond Melu the highest peak in the area, the round mountain which with its 2.622mt is the second peak of Corsica, to the south of the lake the rocky areas allow you to see a path that climbs up to the ridge along which the GR20 passes the most famous trekking in Corsica and one of the most beautiful and coveted in the world, to the north of the lake you can enjoy the magnificent peak that dominates the waters, the Capitello peak (2.185mt) behind which Lake Gorja (1.852mt) is hidden.

For the descent, follow the forward path backwards to Melu lake and the rocky spur with signs. Leave the path you went up on the outward journey and continue along the edge of the lake, fording the stream of La Restonica which emerges from it to the opposite side of the valley. Following the signs you enter a very bumpy path that runs along the Mediterranean vegetation, the slope is never excessive but the bumpy ground does not help. You quickly reach the wide area traveled on the outward journey where you cross the stream rejoining the outward path and backwards you reach the Bergerie du Melu first and finally the starting point at the Bergerie de la Grotelle.