## Mount Novo San Giovanni

With its 1306 metres, Mount Novo San Giovanni constitutes a true natural monument. Towering above the forest of Montes and the thousand-year-old holm oak forest of 'Sas Baddes', this limestone mountain has peaks of over 70 metres and offers a spectacular view over many of Sardinia's historical regions – Gennargentu, Limbara, Supramonte, Orgosolo, Urzulei, Mount Corrasi, the Gorropu gorge, the coast of Baronia and even Corsica. The top of the mountain is covered in rocky boulders and ridges, where several endemic species grow, such as Ribes sardoum subsp. Sandalioticum and Alyssum tavolarae.

Mount Novo San Giovanni owes its name to a neighbouring municipality acquiring this area and the ancient church that used to be on the top, built on an earlier pagan worship site now disappeared.

On its right, to the southwest, is Mount Fumai, a pyramid-like limestone formation about 10 metres higher than Mount Novo San Giovanni and with the same geological origin. Mount Fumai is isolated on all sides, which makes it extremely prominent and recognisable from afar.

The path to reach the top (allegedly dating back to prehistory) starts from the *Ilodei Malu* forest barracks and passes by the natural spring of *Funtana Vona*, source of the Cedrino, the most important river in northeastern Sardinia. This easy, family-friendly trail can be done on foot or by bike and meanders through oak and holm oak forests, with remains of charcoal kilns still visible along the road.

This area has a rich fauna which includes wild boars, wildcats, dormice, martens, hares, foxes and even mouflons, as well as eagles, common ravens and peregrine falcons, which can be spotted hovering around the peaks of both mountains. Near the base of another mountain, which Orgosolo people call 'Monte de Santu Juvanne', the woodland gives way to asphodels and rockroses, with some cattle grazing along the bends.

Reaching the top, you will see a natural stone staircase shaped by centuries of winds and rainfall, which leads to two mountain refuges used by hikers and a wooden hut that during the summer serves as a watchtower for the firefighting campaign. In the final stretch, amidst the gravel of the path, you can find some carved stones, remains of pots, tiles and utensils, which bear witness to the culture and traditions of past civilisations.

Other traces of past human settlements can be found all over the forest of Montes, showing that man has lived here since the dawn of time. A stone's throw from the forest of 'Sas Baddes' are the nuraghe called 'Mereu' (Intro 'e Monte) and 'Presethu Tortu', whereas the village of 'Sa Senepida' features the so-called two Tombs of the Giants.

The whole area of Mount Fumai is incredibly rich in century-old remains: these include the ruins of a medieval village and sheepfolds dating back who knows how long, not to mention even older examples, such as the structure of the nuraghe 'Funtana Vona', also known as 'Su Nuragheddu', a megalithic circle perched on a rock spur.

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