

Abruzzo

Pontoon Beech

Estimated age:
many centuries

European Beech
(Fagus sylvatica Linné)

Municipality: Villetta Barrea
(AQ), Passo Godi

Circumference of the trunk:
8.60 m

Height: 24 m

This beech grows in the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise, in a dense beech forest in Pontone, which can be reached by taking the road from Villetta Barrea to Scanno, near the Godi Pass. It is easy to find, as it is only a five-minute walk from the tarmac road along a path that leads into the woods. The huge trunk is probably made up of several stems that originated from the same old stump and gradually merged as they continued to grow. In fact, the characteristic feature of this species and other forest species such as chestnut, hornbeam and some oaks is that, in response to cutting, they produce “suckers”, i.e. shoots or stems that grow directly from the base of the tree, sometimes even directly from the roots. It is hard to tell how old this tree is, but it is likely to be a few hundred years at least. Nearby, other large beech trees, centuries old but younger than this great Patriarch, are waiting to replace the colossal tree, which is probably the “father” and “grandfather” of all the beech trees in this part of the forest.