



## Art Cities in Abruzzo

### CHIETI

So ancient that its origins blend with Mythology, Chieti, once the capital of the Italic people of the Marrucini, later a Roman city called Teate, boasts a magnificent panoramic position that must have already fascinated ancient populations in remote times. Today, it is an open-air museum with unmatched charm, waiting to be discovered.

Ready for a journey through history and art? Your visit can begin by crossing Porta Pescara, the only surviving gate of the eight that opened in the city's perimeter walls; built under the Angevin rulers in the second half of the 13th century, it features a typical Gothic arch from the XIII century with Angevin elements, and a more monumental second gate, widened in the XIX century in the Santa Maria district, characterized by a semi-circular arch.

The city was an important Roman municipality in the 1st century BC. To discover the Roman Chieti, you can start from the Roman Temples, the Roman Theatre (II century AD) and the cistern of the ancient baths. Do not miss the archaeological area of "La Civitella", where the Roman amphitheatre stands, and the museum, which holds an extensive collection of artefacts from prehistory and ancient Rome.

After you have uncovered the city's fascinating past, treat yourself to a taste of the local food and wine: try *maccheroni alla chitarra*, delicious home-made pasta with ragout, and *fiadoni*, soft pies with cheese, washed down with a glass of local wine.

Sightseeing:

- The impressive Cathedral of San Giustino, with a XIV-century bell tower, designed by Bartolomeo Di Giacomo. Inside, you can admire remarkable works of art, including a 1500 Flemish School Adoration of the Magi.
- The 16th-century Palazzo del Comune with a late medieval courtyard featuring a column supporting the statue of Achilles (a symbol of the city of Chieti).
- The Palace of Justice and Palazzo Mezzanotte.
- Corso Marrucino with the XIII-century Church of San Francesco della Scarpa, one of the oldest in the city. Built in 1239 in Gothic style on the remains of an ancient chapel, the church underwent major transformations over the centuries and is now closed for restoration.
- Palazzo de Majo, a monumental building and a compelling example of Baroque architecture in Abruzzo.
- Villa Frigerj, in the Villa Comunale, home to the National Archaeological Museum of Abruzzo, which displays valuable Italic and Roman artefacts from various parts of the region, including the famous Capestrano Warrior (6th century BC), now an iconic statue, one of the symbols of Abruzzo.
- The Museum Costantino Barbella (a XIX-century sculptor from Chieti), located in a wing of the XVII-century Palazzo Martinetti-Bianchi, hosts a collection of paintings, sculptures, and ceramics covering a time span from the XV to the XX century.
- The University Museum, housed in the “Arnaldo Mussolini” Palace, boasts several collections ranging from anthropology to palaeontology, and the history of medicine.



## **Pescara**

**Pescara is the youngest city in Abruzzo, born in 1927 out of the union of two smaller centres on either side of the river Pescara. It is also the most dynamic, a city without wrinkles, always in a hurry and looking to the future, as journalist Giorgio Manganelli (who was not from Abruzzo, but fell in love with it) once wrote.**

Discover the city of the Gabriele D'Annunzio ("il Vate"), with its beautiful marina, one of the largest in Italy, its top-notch museums and excellent bars and restaurants.

A tour of the city can start from Piazza della Rinascita, also called Piazza Salotto, because it is a lively "lounge", the trendy heart of Pescara; within a short walking distance, do not miss the CLAP Museum, created by the Fondazione Pescarabruzzo, which is entirely devoted to the art of comics, and houses a vast permanent collection of Andrea Pazienza's artworks.

The nearby Imago Museum is housed in the building of the former Banco di Napoli, an impressive example of Italian Rationalist architecture. Established by the Fondazione Pescarabruzzo, the three-floor gallery space boasts an outstanding permanent collection of modern and contemporary art, as well as interesting temporary exhibitions.

The Mediamuseum and the National Cinema Museum are also worth a visit: the latter is near the Cathedral of San Cetto (where Gabriele D'Annunzio's mother is buried) and will soon become a Cinema Museum and Workshop, named after the writer Ennio Flaiano, a famous citizen of Pescara.



## L'Aquila

The birthplace of **artists**, saints, kings, queens, and daring knights, L'Aquila has a centuries old history: it was founded between 1250 and 1254, and as the XIV-century chronicler Buccio di Ranallo tells us, King Manfred launched an assault upon it in 1259.

Surrounded by the mountains the capital of Abruzzo will amaze you with its vibrant artistic and cultural life.

Begin your walking tour by Porta Napoli, the most imposing of the city gates, built in 1820. Follow Corso Federico II and you will see the magnificent Piazza Duomo, the city's main square, where a real masterpiece of XVIII-century architecture stands, the Church of the Holy Souls (Chiesa delle Anime Sante or Santa Maria del Suffragio).

Must-see in the city centre:

The Fontana Luminosa: created by the sculptor Nicola d'Antino in 1934, it shows two female figures holding the local water jug (*conca*).



The Spanish Fort, a fine example of XVI-century military architecture, now under restoration.

The Auditorium del Parco, a venue for cultural events, designed by archistar Renzo Piano.

Just outside the city centre, do not miss the *Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio*. Built between the 13th and 14th centuries on the site of an earlier place of worship dedicated to the Assumption of Mary, it became a pilgrimage site due to the presence of a miraculous image of the Virgin. Every year, the Basilica hosts the *Perdonanza Celestiniana*, a solemn rite recognized in 2019 as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, in which pilgrims who pass through the Basilica's Holy Door receive plenary indulgence, as decreed by Pope Celestine V. A precious blend of styles, the church features a stunning façade entirely made of local pink and white stone, arranged in a geometric pattern reminiscent of the famous *Fontana delle 99 Cannelle*, designed by Tancredi da Pentima in 1272.

If you are interested in modern and contemporary art, you should arrange a visit to the MuNDa Museum and the MAXXI (in the Baroque Palazzo Ardinghelli).

Archaeological sites in the environs of L'Aquila are also worth visiting; in particular, *Amiternum*, *Peltuinum*, *Aveia*, and the *Necropolis of Fossa* – which provides evidence of relevant Italic and Roman settlements in the area.

The local traditional cuisine is famous for its legume-based recipes, with lentil cultivation mentioned in monastic documents predating the year 1000. A regional highlight is the fragrant L'Aquila PDO saffron, known as Abruzzo's red gold. If you love bold flavours, do not miss the local liver sausages (*salsiccia di fegato*) and try a slice of *caciofiore*, soft sheep's milk cheese with an aroma reminiscent of artichoke and wild herbs, best served with *pane casereccio*, a rustic bread made with high-quality flour and natural sourdough. Don't leave the city without a sweet treat: *L'Aquila's soft nougat (torrone tenero aquilano)* is simply delicious, and lovingly handcrafted by the Nurzia family, who have guarded its secret recipe for more than a century.



## **Teramo**

Teramo is located in the northern part of Abruzzo, between the sea and the mountains, in a place of outstanding natural beauty and rich history. The Romans called it *Interamnina*, the “city between two rivers”, namely the Tordino and Vezzola; its ruins, D’Annunzio once said, bear witness to its ancient greatness.

Your visit can begin at the city’s most iconic site: the majestic Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta. Built 1158, it has undergone extensive restoration and is now in its original splendour, home to a spectacular array of art, from the beautiful altar, decorated by the XV-century goldsmith Nicola da Guardiagrele to the amazing Polyptych of Saint Augustine by the Venetian painter Jacobello del Fiore.

A few minutes' walk from the cathedral are the Roman Theatre, built in the II century AD and interesting archaeological sites, as well as the ruins of the Byzantine church of Sant’Anna dei

Pompetti (VI century), burnt by the Normans in 1155. You can also pre-book a visit to the House of the Melatino Family, which contains a bust of (probably) Septimius Severus and other artworks.

Before lunch, on a nice day, you might take a walk in the *Riverside Park*, a green route along the banks of the rivers Tordino and Vezzola, or go for a stroll in the Municipal Villa, formerly a botanical garden and today still rich in rare species of flora. Here you will also find the Civic Art Gallery (Pinacoteca Civica), which holds a good collection of artworks, from the XVII-century Neapolitan school to XIX-century local artists such as Pasquale Celommi.

When it's time to eat, Teramo and its environs are the most exciting food scene, a paradise for food lovers. Do not miss the local specialties, like the superb *Timballo teramano*, the *Scrippelle 'mbusse* and the wonderful *Bocconotti*.

**Other things to see:**

- The Church of Sant'Antonio
- The Church of the Madonna delle Grazie
- The Archaeological Museum
- Castello della Monica





## Lanciano

Your walking tour of the beautiful town of Lanciano begins from its very heart: the Piazza del Plebiscito, with the the *Universitas Lancianese*, the XI-century Cathedral of Santa Maria del Ponte.

From the Bridge of Diocletian you can discover Lanciano Underground, an interesting archaeological tour across corridors, passages, and chambers beneath the ancient square and the magnificent Church of San Francesco. Built in 1258 in Romanesque-Burgundian style on the site of the Church of San Legonziano (VII-VIII century), this church is a pilgrimage destination and holds the relics of the oldest recorded Eucharistic miracle in the Catholic world.

Other places to visit in Lanciano:

- the old quarters (Lanciano Vecchia, Civitanova, Sacca, and Borgo).
- The city walls and the Porta San Biagio.
- The Fenaroli Theatre.
- The churches of *San Biagio* (XII century), *San Giovina* (XVI century), *Santa Lucia* (XIII century), and *San Nicola* (XV century)



- The *Fountain of the Borgo* (XVI century) and the *Civitanova Fountain* (rebuilt in 1825)

If you want to try the local cuisine, there is a great choice of delicious food and a wide variety of restaurants or traditional *osterie*, serving the traditional *rintrocilo*, handmade pasta with meat sauce and pecorino cheese, and the savoury *rape strascinate* with a glass of Montepulciano d'Abruzzo wine.



## Sulmona

Sulmona is a charming town, located in an area of outstanding natural beauty, the Peligna Valley. It is also culturally rich: once called the “Siena of Abruzzo”, for the wealth of churches and historical buildings, it is most famous for being the birthplace of the poet Ovid “*Sulmo mihi patria est*”, he wrote, “*gelidis uberrimus undis*” (Sulmona is my homeland, rich in cool waters).

The grandeur of Roman *Sulmo* can still be felt in sites such as the **Domus of Ariadne** (1st century BC–2nd century AD) and the **Sanctuary of Hercules Curinus** (4th–2nd century BC), nestling at the foot of Mount Morrone.

Must-see

places

in

Sulmona

### **The Civic Museum Complex of the Annunziata**

### **The Cathedral of San Panfilo**

### **The Church of San Francesco della Scarpa,**

**The Abbey of Santo Spirito al Morrone**, also known as the **Celestinian Abbey**, located in the hamlet of Badia about 5 km from the city center. It's the starting point of the **Sentiero dello Spirito** (Spirit Trail), a 70-kilometer trekking route that connects all the Celestinian hermitages of the Morrone and Maiella mountains. Pope Celestine V chose Sulmona as the seat of his religious order and founded his abbey as well as the small Hermitage of Sant'Onofrio on the Mount Morrone.

Before lunch or dinner, enjoy your shopping on **Corso Ovidio**, where can you also buy the local speciality, the *confetti* (sugared almonds). There is also a museum dedicated to the art of making confetti, an old tradition dating back to the XIV century.

Food in Sulmona is delicious: for dessert, beside the confetti, you can try the *ferratelle* (waffle-like cookies) and the *cassata sulmonese*. Try the regional pasta dish as well, the *maccheroni alla chitarra* with lamb ragout, or *sagne e fagioli* (hand-cut pasta with beans), and, of course, the iconic *arrosticini* (grilled mutton skewers).

**Have a wonderful stay!**

### **Other places to see in Sulmona:**

- The **Medieval Aqueduct**
- **Palazzo Sanità**
- **Porta Romana**
- The **Church of Santa Maria della Tomba**
- The **Civic and Diocesan Cultural Center of Santa Chiara**
- The **Fountain of the Old Man (Fontana del Vecchio)**
- The **Giostra Cavalleresca** (Knightly Joust)







## National Parks and Marine Protected Areas

With three national parks and one marine protected area, Abruzzo holds a unique cultural and civil record in environmental protection in Europe. Inaugurated on September 9, 1922, the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise is Italy's oldest protected area, home to natural wonders such as five ancient beech forests, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2017. On the Maiella, a UNESCO Global Geopark since April 2021, there are 95 geosites, including sites of international relevance.

### National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise

#### Overview

Founded in 1922 and officially established by Royal Decree the following year, the park has a variety of flora and fauna typical of the central Apennines, including endemic or rare species. For its exceptionally beautiful natural landscapes, it attracts over a million visitors annually.

The park covers 50,500 hectares, stretching into Molise and Lazio. The Abruzzo portion, accounting for three-quarters of the park, is located in the province of L'Aquila and includes the municipalities of Alfedena, Barrea, Bisegna, Civitella Alfedena, Gioia dei Marsi, Lecce dei Marsi, Opi, Ortona dei Marsi, Pescasseroli, Scanno, Villavallelonga, and Villetta Barrea.

Rich and diverse vegetation thrives in this wonderful place. In lower, sunnier areas, field maples, ash trees, hornbeams, downy oaks, holm oaks, wild plums, hawthorns, wild roses, and brambles can be found.

Ground-level blooms include "Lady's slipper" orchids, Marsican iris, red lilies, and many species of wild orchids. Higher up are oak forests, wild apple trees, rowan trees, and other broadleaved trees. Near the peaks, ancient beech forests—now UNESCO World Heritage Sites—give way to juniper and mountain pine shrubs, and alpine grasslands on the highest slopes.

The park's biodiversity is equally rich in wildlife. You can meet the Marsican brown bear (the park's symbol) here, as well as the Apennine wolf, and the Abruzzo chamois, but also deer, lynxes, foxes, wild boars, badgers, beech martens, weasels, and Southern squirrels.

The park also offers you the chance to see a variety of birds, such as golden eagles, buzzards, falcons, eagle owls, little owls, griffon vultures and the very rare white-backed woodpecker.

The heart of the National Park is the town of Pescasseroli, known for its excellent tourist facilities. The surrounding area is rich in history, whose traces you can see in the fascinating necropolises of Barrea and Amplero, for example, and the Samnite acropolis of Alfedena. The charming villages of Bisegna, San Sebastiano, Gioia Vecchio, Opi, Villetta Barrea, Barrea (with its lake), Civitella Alfedena and Scontrone are worth your time too. Do not miss the magnificent Scanno, famous for its age-old traditions of goldsmiths and lacemaking, and its lake, an ideal place for canoeing, windsurfing, birdwatching, and leisurely cycling.

With over 150 hiking trails and around ten nature paths, the park offers countless opportunities for trekking, horseback riding, and mountain biking. Educational facilities include the Birds of Prey Center in Barrea, Chamois Wildlife Areas in Opi and Bisegna, Wolf and Lynx Wildlife Areas in Civitella Alfedena, the Insect Museum, and the Roe Deer Area in San Sebastiano.

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## Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park

“As close to Tibet as you can find in Europe”

### Overview

Covering 150,000 hectares, this is one of Italy's largest national parks, established in 1995. It extends into Lazio and Marche, while its Abruzzo section spans the provinces of Teramo, L'Aquila, and Pescara and includes 41 municipalities. Its territory is mountainous with almost alpine-like scenery, comprising two distinct ranges: the Gran Sasso d'Italia massif and the Monti della Laga.

The Gran Sasso is Abruzzo's iconic mountain, with the highest peaks in the Apennines: Corno Grande (2,912 m), Corno Piccolo, Pizzo d'Intermesoli, and Monte Camicia. It hosts the Calderone Glacier, the only glacier in the Apennines and the southernmost in Europe. To the south lies Campo Imperatore, a breathtaking plateau — Europe's own Tibet.

The park is home to about 2,300 higher plant species, as well as a wide variety of animals, including the chamois, the Apennine wolf, and the Marsican brown bear.

While enjoying the natural wonders of the park, you can also walk into the footsteps of history in

- the province of Teramo, with its Medieval hamlets in the midst of the Laga woods, its fortresses and magnificent Medieval castles, such as Castel di Luco and Piano di Roseto. There are many picturesque villages to visit in the area, such as Castelli, known for its fine ceramics, Isola del Gran Sasso, Cortino, Valle Castellana, Tossicia, Pietracamela.
- The province of L'Aquila, with its postcard-picture villages, like Santo Stefano di Sessanio, Castel del Monte, Campostosto (which has a large lake as well), and Calascio, with its splendid castle. The city of L'Aquila itself is worth a visit.
- The province of Pescara, which offers wonderful views (from the Tower at Forca di Penne, for example) and attractive villages, such as Farindola, famous for its delicious pecorino cheese.

### Maiella National Park — UNESCO Geopark

**“Maiella wilderness, one of Europe’s top wildlife reserves”**  
**Overview**

Established in 1995, the Maiella National Park covers 74,095 hectares and includes 39 municipalities in L'Aquila, Chieti, and Pescara provinces. The park also encompasses the Morrone ridge and the Pizi mountains, forming one of Europe’s top wildlife reserves.

Human presence here dates back to the Palaeolithic: caves, shepherds' inscriptions, tholos huts, and numerous hermitages are the vestiges of a **deep-rooted interaction between nature and culture**. The Maiella, **seen as a sacred, maternal mountain, takes its name from Maja, goddess of crops**.

**Its altitude (30+ peaks over 2,000 m), ruggedness, and climate make it a biodiversity hotspot. It is home to an incredible diversity of animals, including wolves, bears, chamois, otters, roe deer, red deer, and 130 bird species (among them, the golden eagle, the peregrine falcon, the eagle owl, the lanner falcon, the goshawk, and the dotterel). Over 1,700 plant species are recorded, with many endemic plants as well.**

**Places to visit in this area:** Pacentro, Caramanico Terme, Guardiagrele, and Pescocostanzo **with its baroque and Renaissance charm**. There are also some interesting sacred sites in the area, including the **Abbey of San Liberatore a Maiella, the Celestinian Hermitage on the Morrone, the Heracles Curinus Sanctuary,, the Church of San Tommaso in Salle and many others.**



**The Park was designated a UNESCO Global Geopark on Earth Day 2021 and is now part of a network promoting geodiversity protection, education, and sustainable development in cooperation with local communities. The goal is to raise awareness of the value of geodiversity and foster best practices in conservation and tourism.**

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## **Torre del Cerrano Marine Protected Area**

<b>A</b>	<b>biodiversity</b>	<b>paradise</b>
<b>Overview</b>		

Established in 2009 by the Ministry of the Environment, the Torre del Cerrano Marine Protected Area (MPA) features typical sandy Adriatic seabed and some submerged rocky areas. It hosts a wide range of marine species and a rich set of underwater flora, including the Adriatic gastropod, the *Trivia adriatica*, and the *Sabellaria hancocki*.

The coastal dunes harbour rare species of insects, like the *Scarabeus semipunctatus* and the *Lamprinodes pictus*, and bird species such as the Kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), which nests here from April through late September. There is also a remarkable variety of vegetation, including the sea daffodil (*Pancratium maritimum*) and the sand spurge (*Euphorbia psammogeton*).

Just offshore lies what researchers believe to be the ancient Roman port of Hadria.

The Cerrano Tower (between Silvi and Pineto, within the province of Teramo), was built as a defence against Turkish and Saracen attacks and has remained intact since the times of the Kingdom of Naples. It now hosts the International Veterinary Training Center, a Marine Library, and a Sea Museum.

Recognised as a Site of Community Importance within the EU Natura 2000 network, the MPA contributes significantly to the maintenance of sandbanks, submerged *Sabellaria* bioconstructions, and the biodiversity of the sand dunes.



## All the Magic of Winter in Abruzzo

### Description

Winter is just around the corner, and after the first snowfall, Abruzzo is ready to kick off the new ski season on December 8th, the day of the Immaculate Conception. With its 21 resorts and 9 ski areas, Abruzzo is the perfect place for snow lovers, offering a wide range of winter sports – from alpine skiing to snowshoeing and cross-country skiing – adventurous experiences such as ice climbing, and various activities, including snowkiting, snow tubing and sleddog.

Among the top destinations for winter sports fans is Roccaraso, a ski resort in the province of L'Aquila. It has been a favourite of ski lovers for over 90 years and listed by *Forbes* magazine as one of the top spots for a perfect snow holiday. In fact, Roccaraso is also the birthplace of Italian Alpine Skiing, where Italy's first skiing competitions were held in 1929.

The Ovindoli and Campo Felice ski areas are also very popular, especially among snowboarders and cross-country skiers. They are among the best-equipped snow parks for freestyle snowboarding in Central Italy.

There are many other destinations for winter sports lovers in Abruzzo, including Prati di Tivo and Passolanciano-La Majelletta. Find more and stay updated, download our free Ski Abruzzo app.

### Sport & Adventure

From horseback riding along the Gran Sasso Trail to rock climbing in the Sangro Valley, from thrilling rafting down the Aventino River to adrenaline-pumping bungee jumps over the Orta River, outdoor activity in Abruzzo is not just a goal—it's a means of fully experiencing the incredible natural beauty of this magical land.



