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# THE SEA IN ABRUZZO

is



133 kilometres of coast where you will find golden sand, cool pine groves, cliffs, promontories and pebbly coves, lively fun-packed beaches or solitary shores if you want some peace and quiet. This is the seaside in Abruzzo, and without mentioning the many localities that have often been awarded the prestigious “Blue Flag” for clean waters, or the charm and proverbial friendliness of the people of Abruzzo, all against the backdrop of Europe’s greenest region.



From these beaches you can travel inland to a splendid landscape of nature, ancient villages and towns, castles, sanctuaries and abbeys, lakes and archaeological sites. What better or more unique way to enhance a seaside break.



# unforgettable

The twofold peculiarity of the coast and the actual geographical conformation of the Abruzzo hills, create an utterly unique tourist district that offers some exclusive traits: a coast that is the gateway to the entire territory and two very complementary local realities, coexisting in just a few kilometres of territory.

The pleasing diversity of this natural scenario is completed by the equally varied and authentic cuisine; many marina facilities; the extensive range of accommodation and leisure amenities; the artistic and cultural heritage surviving in the inland towns and villages; excellent cultural and art events; enchanting folk festivals. The major communication routes are located along these valleys, connecting the coast to the inland districts. These valley-floor roads are the underpinning to the region's road network; a grid that in less than an hour connects all of Abruzzo's inland and mountain areas via the SS16 Adriatica coast road and the A14 motorway. For tourists, therefore, this is a handy gateway into the region: from any coastal resort it is possible to visit the art towns and cities, castles and churches, archaeological areas, Parks and the Nature Reserves, simply by driving ten minutes inland. A luxury for anyone who prefers to make their holiday a shrewd combination of sea, culture, relaxation and nature. Mornings at the beach followed by long summer afternoons spent exploring the great and lesser marvels that the inland areas have to offer. The same valleys are an authentic itinerary through history, landscapes, wisdom and culinary delights.





**ABRUZZO’S DUAL SEA:  
A COAST WITH TWO FACES**

In proportion to the region’s relatively small surface, the coast seems endless: an astonishing 133 kilometres of beaches, lapped by clean waters and drenched in sun for months on end.

Many localities on the Abruzzo coast, both to the north and to the south, have often been awarded the prestigious “Blue Flag”, symbolizing and certifying clean waters and treasured ecological values.

The coast of Abruzzo lies in the three provinces of Teramo, Pescara and Chieti, and for decades has been considered one of the most important and popular tourist attractions in the region, a destination for seaside tourism from the late 1800s.

**Riviera North**

The coast is low and sandy from the mouth of the Tronto, which marks the Marche boundary, as far as the mouth of the river Foro, between Francavilla al Mare and Ortona.

The beach appears as a wide, regular strip of fine golden sand, with a shore up to 300 metres deep; in some stretches, typical Mediterranean maquis survives, with dunes marking the border between the beach and the green pine groves behind, offering resin-scented respite in their shade. A splendid and famous pine grove escorts the town of Pineto as far as its beach; a little further on thick umbrella and Aleppo pine groves embrace the mighty and enigmatic

Torre di Cerrano, once a watchtower and bastion against Moorish pirates. The heart of Pescara, for example, offers the large, valorized d’Avalos and Santa Filomena pine groves, the latter is now a State Nature Reserve that separates Montesilvano from its beach. It is a popular, lively coast, driven by an enormous selection of amusing, fun activities that make it enjoyable, and it offers plenty of accommodation and entertainment options. Perfect for families seeking large beaches and suitable facilities, for the younger age groups who want sport and nightlife, for singles or for groups of friends who want to socialize in an upbeat atmosphere, but also for the older age group seeking a slower pace of holiday, with amenities on hand.

**Riviera South**

The south coast starts to become rocky near Ortona, soaring out of the sea to form the stunning reefs of Punta di Ferruccio and Punta di Acquabella, Punta del Cavalluccio and Punta Aderci (or Punta d’Erce). In many spots, the coast is jagged with cliffs and small bays, concealing beaches and coves, combined with lovely pebbly areas for diving with goggles and flippers to gaze on the busy seabed, rich in marine life, always visible thanks to the clean waters. Amidst these tall cliffs and bluffs, we will discover the gentle Venere gulf, and slightly south the bigger, livelier gulf of Vasto, whose large beaches are sandy again, as far as the Molise border. The rolling hills in the neighbouring hinterland are farmed and glow with the colours of the crops, a striking backdrop to this sea and at times seeming to encroach on the shore,



guarded by its ancient “trabocchi” fishing platforms. In this district the small coastal towns are mainly little ports, and in the evening tiny local fishing boats dock here to unload the traditional crates overflowing with their catch, sold and served in the many family-run eateries. This is a romantic, snug coast, more natural and untamed, its charm enhanced by the peaceful niches of isolated coves and beaches protected by tall cliffs, and by the unique atmospheres of the little seaside towns. Gabriele d’Annunzio, adored the coast and spent periods here seeking inspiration, making it the scenario of his “Trionfo della Morte”.

### Sailing and ports

Sailing enthusiasts, in particular, will find excellent facilities for their boats along the Abruzzo coast: as well as countless storage and mooring facilities, and ramps found all along the coast, so that holidaymakers who bring small craft with them can enjoy the sea and thrills of the Abruzzo area, there are also several marinas installed along the whole shoreline, from north to south.

The ports begin at Giulianova, with excellent berthing and mooring facilities, followed by Roseto with a characteristic small marina; at the centre of the coast we find Marina di Pescara, one of the largest in the Mediterranean, and further south there are the important trade ports and marinas of Ortona and Vasto, with services connecting the splendid Tremiti islands, a Marine Nature Reserve, even just for day trips; between the two, Fossacesia, which has a newly-installed marina.





The biggest marina on the Abruzzo coast was inaugurated in 1989, in Pescara. The location, size and services offered, make it one of the most important modern marinas in the Mediterranean, whilst its strategic geographical position means it is well-placed to provide the widest choice of sailing destinations – Croatia, Greece, the Tremiti islands, the Gargano promontory and the Conero Riviera – and this has ensured its success. The marina has 180,000 sqm of water and 72,000 sqm of land and bridges, can berth about 1,000 boats, as well as offering dry docks for maintenance and repairs, nautical service companies and boat charter; there is also a large shopping area. The marina offers a full calendar of sporting and cultural events, all open to the public: regattas, motorboat competitions, concerts, fairs, markets, shows, charity events, sporting events of all types. The lovely marina is open to the public, and it is an interesting, enjoyable venue with excellent amenities: it is an excellent place to stroll on a summer evening, among the piers, boats (often luxury craft) and an assortment of shops, attracting countless visitors.



### Beaches and more

Anyone who wants simple leisure on their summer holidays can just lie back on the beach, bask in the sun and cool off in the sea, stroll around the green parks, gardens and lively seafront of an afternoon, sip a relaxing cocktail in the shady pine groves or on a terrace looking out over the sea, then savour a great fish-based supper in the restaurant of their choice. There is a carefree, happy mood in Abruzzo seaside towns, both day and night. The sea front, shaded with palm trees, pines and tamarisks, forms the perfect backdrop to the well-known summer pastime of a stroll to pick up an ice cream. Then the Abruzzo hills can offer many surprises to those who want to add a little something to their seaside holiday: in addition to the beauty of the numerous old towns and countless natural beauty spots, there is also the

memorable taste of traditional cuisine and the quality of the local products, all to be discovered in a fun-filled “treasure hunt”. Anyone seeking a dynamic and sports-based summer will be spoiled for choice with the vast selection of pastimes available, including sailing, windsurfing, canoeing and fishing, just to mention the most popular. Because Abruzzo’s coast, with all that hinterland of rolling farm hills, offers countless opportunities for enthusiasts of horse-riding, golf, mountain bike, cycling tourism, motocross, archery and many other sports. Lovers of water sports will certainly find the high, rocky coast to the south perfect for diving. There are also aqua parks, whose exciting fun activities add an extra dimension to seaside holidays. Each coastal town will offer numerous sports facilities, including tennis courts, five-a-side football, athletics tracks, gyms, with air-conditioned indoor and



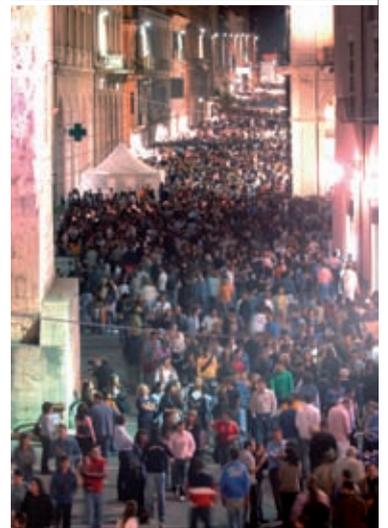
open-air structures at all the private lidos; hillside agritourism businesses, right behind the coast, also offer a range of open-air activities including archery, and excellent teaching farms for children. There are also many country stables and horse-riding centres for lovely excursions for experienced riders or for lessons for beginners who want to learn and enjoy the company of these friendly animals.

### **Around midnight**

Of course there is evening entertainment too, with plenty of places to while away the night: not just the classic round terraces set into the sea and trendy discos, but private lidos that also have disco evenings, and plenty of choice for whatever personal musical listening or dancing preference you have. There are lots of romantic nooks for dinners and for enjoying an ice cream by candlelight. For the younger age group: amusement arcades, pubs and theme venues for all types of music and drinks.

### **Easy to reach**

From the North or the South, the coast is easily reached thanks to the main railway line (Bologna-Pescara-Bari), the A14 Adriatica motorway and the SS16 Adriatica highway, all hugging the shore. The A24 Rome-L'Aquila-Teramo and the A25 Rome-Pescara motorways mean that the coast can be reached from the capital in less than two hours. The panoramic road from Caianello (the A1 Naples-Rome tollgate) cuts through Venafrò and arrives quickly at Castel di Sangro, so the coast and beaches of southern Abruzzo are less than two hours away; the alternative is to head for Sulmona and take the A25 from there to Pescara. Abruzzo Airport, located between Chieti and Pescara, now handles numerous flights each day, connecting Italy's main cities and several important foreign destinations. In summer, the port of Pescara has a ferry link to Croatia.







# ABRUZZO'S summer

**The coast of Abruzzo is a crown with many gems: towns on the sea, a dynamic reality enjoying ongoing development that over recent decades has succeeded in keeping one foot firmly anchored in the region's millenary history, and the other stepping into the future. A lively, brisk strip of settlements, lapped by the sea, alternating villages and large towns, skilled in offering tranquillity and relaxation at the right time. An enormous holiday destination that covers 130 kilometres, able to adapt its pace to the needs of tourists, so that they always feel at home.**

## **Martinsicuro**

Those arriving in Abruzzo from the North, along the Adriatica highway or on the A14 motorway, will find the little town of Martinsicuro, just to the South of the Tronto mouth, enjoying the pleasant task of welcoming visitors to the region's coast. Despite its initial impact making it appear like a modern seaside resort, its history is truly ancient – dating even to Roman times – and it has always been tied to the river that marks the border with the Marches. Even today, its massive tower looks out over the river; once a sturdy bastion that was part of frontier surveillance structures, but also used to issue alerts against the marauding Turkish pirates. There are a wide range of amenities for incoming visitors: hotels and campsites, beach facilities, with lots of holiday apartments to rent and a growing number of B&Bs. The nearby hills are home to a large number of agritourism farms, offering accommodation and catering, as well as several newly-built hotels. Together with its hamlet of Villa Rosa, this is an ideal spot for quiet family holidays, where relaxation on restful sandy beaches is guaranteed.

## *Exploring the valleys*

### **VALLE DEL TRONTO**

**The Tronto valley is the historical boundary between the Marches and Abruzzo. From Martinsicuro, which is the natural opening towards the sea, we can move towards the mountains, flanked to our right by the crest of hills that is the location of the fine old centre of Colonnella, in summer an important entertainment and art events venue, and Controguerra, which organizes a pleasant typical products fair. These hills produce some excellent wines and are the home of some of the most prestigious wineries in the province of Teramo. Further inland, it is worth trying to get as far as the fortress at Civitella del Tronto, an ancient and massive fortified citadel: an out-and-out war machine that dominates the territory from its hilltop. The village is old and lovely, the museum is fascinating and the panorama magnificent.**



# seaside resorts

## Alba Adriatica

Alba Adriatica rises at Val Vibrata's sea outlet, and the river Vibrata marks the municipal border with nearby Villa Rosa (part of Martinsicuro). Alba Adriatica is a recently formed municipality and is about ten kilometres south of the regional border with the Marche. In terms of accommodation, it is one of the best equipped destinations of the Abruzzo coast, with a large number of hotels, campsites, aparthotels, holiday rental homes and about 50 private lidos. The little town is popular mainly with families, who become faithful clients over the years. There is an excellent choice of restaurants, bars, ice cream parlours and night spots; almost all the private lidos are open into the night, offering music, dancing and shows. There are lots of discos in the town centre and in the surrounding area.

## Tortoreto Lido

The boundaries of Tortoreto, stretching south up to the mouth of the river Salinello, have now merged completely with those its neighbour Alba Adriatica, creating a single built-up area. It is a historical and very popular seaside resort, built in the early 1900s as the tourist district for the old town of Tortoreto Alto, which lies 3km up the hillside. The old town, a Medieval fusion of two small fortified hamlets, is worth visiting for the lovely churches of Santa Maria della Consolazione and Sant'Agostino. Tortoreto Lido is well-equipped to host tourists, with many hotels; large, modern campsite-holiday villages; agritourism farms; an extensive number of holiday rental homes and several B&Bs. Moreover there are about 20 private lidos, sports facilities and a

## TERAMO COASTAL CYCLE PATH

From Martinsicuro to Silvi, over 50km of cycle paths hug the entire Abruzzo shore in the province of Teramo, connecting all of the coastal towns and their

top attractions: beaches, bars, night spots, restaurants. The cycle path actually passes through each municipality, right on the coast, and crosses the river mouths thanks to charming, specially-built wooden bridges. So what better way to ensure uninterrupted enjoyment of the coast's entire summer offering that is not only safe and healthy, but totally relaxed too. By

day and by night, since summer seaside life never sleeps, with an endless range of places to while away the time, at the beach in the sun and then in pubs and disco bars in the evening.

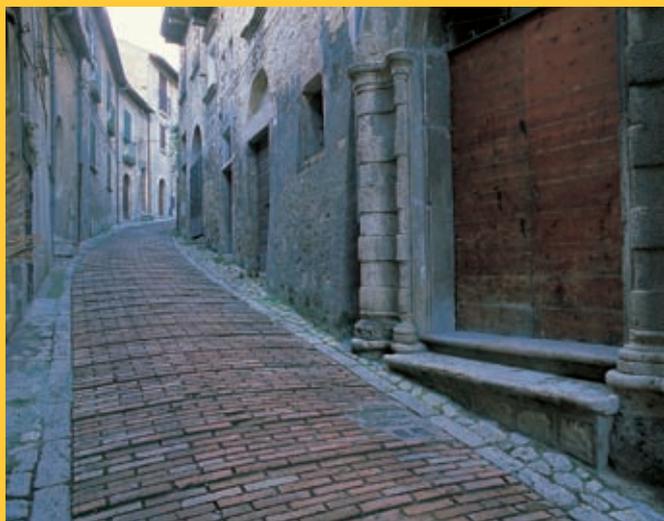




### *Exploring the valleys*

#### **VAL VIBRATA**

From Alba Adriatica, where the Vibrata river enters the sea, we travel inland, up the big valley to visit the many little towns on the hillside: Corropoli, with its famous abbey and the 'Palio delle Botti'; Nereto, opposite Sant'Omero and its Medieval church of Santa Maria a Vico; Torano Nuovo, with its famous wine and sausage festival; Ancarano, with its marvellous Renaissance statue of the Our Lady of Peace; Sant'Egidio alla Vibrata, with its countless clothing companies selling fashion items in their outlets; the mysterious abandoned village of Faraone Vecchio, with its slightly picaresque atmosphere.



nearby aqua park that make this one of the most popular tourist destinations on this stretch of coast.

#### **Giulianova**

Historically the oldest of the towns on the coast of Teramo and contender; with its neighbour Roseto degli Abruzzi, for the most densely populated. It comprises Giulianova Lido, the coastal settlement that developed in the 1800s, and the high town, of Roman and Medieval origins, that overlooks the Adriatic between the mouths of the river Salinello and river Tordino. Visitors and holidaymakers will find a wide variety of hotels and boarding houses, large campsites, aparthotels, plenty of holiday rental homes and several B&Bs. The hills right behind the Lido district are the location of various agritourism farms and country accommodation structures, some of a very high level. There are countless restaurants, several of which are famous for their excellent standards and serve traditional fish dishes, including the famous "brodetto alla giuliese" chowder. The hill restaurants, on the other hand, serve traditional rustic recipes. The wide, sandy beach has 45 private lidos and a handsome seafront, with a monumental centre, dating back to the 1930s. There are also an indoor swimming pool and countless other sports facilities. Giulianova has a large fishing port and an efficient marina for pleasure craft. In case of need there are a number of shipyards with large travel lifts for maintenance and emergency interventions on sailing craft. Those interested in art can visit the old town of Giulianova and its duomo of San Flaviano, the Madonna dello Splendore sanctuary, with its modern art annex, and the fascinating Medieval church of Santa Maria a Mare.

#### **Roseto degli Abruzzi**

Built between the mouth of the Tordino and that of the Vomano, Roseto is a little town that developed in the last century as an offshoot of ancient Montepagano, a historical village set on the hillside overlooking the sea. The coast around Roseto is one of the most well-loved and popular in Abruzzo, offering about ten kilometres of lovely, wide sandy beaches. There is a wide range of accommodation available



### Exploring the valleys

#### VALLE DEL TORDINO

From the mouth of the river Tordino, which is to the south of Giulianova, the valley appears very wide, traversed by the freeway and the old SS80 highway for



Teramo. Along the way we can take a detour to visit Mosciano Sant'Angelo, which offers tourists a really unique chance to gaze at stars with a real telescope that belongs to the Colle Leone astronomy observatory. Teramo is the provincial capital and its important old centre is in

itself worthy of an in-depth visit: this is a city of very ancient origins and apart from some splendid museums actually retains significant historical and monumental traces, like the Roman amphitheatre and fantastic mosaics; the majestic Medieval duomo with its gilt silver *paliotto* by Nicola da Guardiagrele – a masterpiece of religious goldsmithery. Travelling on towards the mountains we reach Montorio al Vomano, the gateway to the Gran Sasso-Monti della Laga National Park and venue of a lovely summer event dedicated to typical products from this territory.

including hotels, aparthotels, campsites, holiday rental homes and agritourism farms on the inland hills. The beach has a dozen or so private lidos and a little pier, as well as a small, handy marina at the mouth of the river Vomano. The ancient hamlet of Montepagano organizes an interesting summer wine festival, with stands featuring the best local wineries.

#### Pineto

This is a singular town on the Teramo coast, because it is the only one to have a dense pine grove that shields it from the beach, Pineto, now a popular seaside resort thanks to its excellent tourist amenities, also developed during the last century, originally an offshoot of the ancient town of Mutignano, which lies on the hillside nearby. The architecture of the town is modern, enhanced by a number of handsome period villas, whilst the beach enjoys the unusual feature of its fine pine grove backdrop and also boasts about 40 private lidos. If we take the panoramic inland road, after nine kilometres we reach Atri, one of the most interesting of Abruzzo's old towns, famous for its splendid cathedral with frescoes by the Renaissance master, Andrea De Lizio. The Pineto-Atri road cuts through the fantastic erosions that created the Atri badlands, whilst near Borgo Santa Maria we will discover another unique geological phenomenon: the mud craters called "vulcanelli". South of Pineto, the elegant Cerrano tower looks seawards: this most famous of the Abruzzo coastal towers was used as a lookout point to spot marauding Saracen pirates, and is now the guardian of this splendid stretch of free beach.

#### Silvi Marina

Past the Cerrano tower, at the foot of the Città Sant'Angelo and Atri hills and badlands, we find Silvi Marina, another of the region's most popular seaside resorts, known mainly for being within easy hailing distance of Pescara. The town has a fine sandy beach and extensive facilities offered by about 70 private lidos. The tourist amenities are extensive and varied, with numerous boarding houses and B&Bs, a campsite and holiday rental homes. The lovely old town of Silvi Alta can

## Exploring the valleys

### VALLE DEL VOMANO

The river Vomano flows from the Gran Sasso Mountain range down to the sea, between Roseto degli Abruzzi and Scerne, a district of Pineto. Once called the “valle siciliana”, it is a real gateway to history, with many ancient villages and marvellous Medieval abbeys. We start at Morro d’Oro, with the great Santa Maria di Propezzano, amongst green vineyards; then there is Notaresco, with the evocative San Clemente a Vomano, in the district of Guardia Vomano; close by, on the valley’s same northern slope, we find Castelbasso, a small village and home of “Progetto Cultura”, a huge



summer contemporary art event; further ahead there is Canzano, homeland of that tasty turkey dish called “tacchino alla canzanese”, and with the lovely church of San Salvatore, with its priceless frescoes; on the opposite slope we can see the Montegualtieri tower, one of the only two triangular towers surviving in Abruzzo; continuing towards the

mountains we reach the neighbouring Mavone valley, skirting the offshoots of Castel Castagna, with the marvellous abbey of Santa Maria di Ronzano, decorated with a cycle of fabulous Medieval frescoes; lastly, the gates of Isola del Gran Sasso that lead towards the suggestive church of San Giovanni ad Insulam, also Medieval.

be seen as it looks out to sea, like a noblewoman on her balcony, and is quickly reached along a panoramic road with breathtaking views over the coast and the Adriatic sea.

### Marina di Città Sant’Angelo

Città Sant’Angelo, famous mainly for its picturesque old centre, with the famous collegiate church of San Michele, also has a tiny sea outlet, between the mouths of the river Saline and the Piomba torrent. The old town is about ten kilometres from the resort down on the coast, and the area has countless hotels as well as several famous agritourism farms.

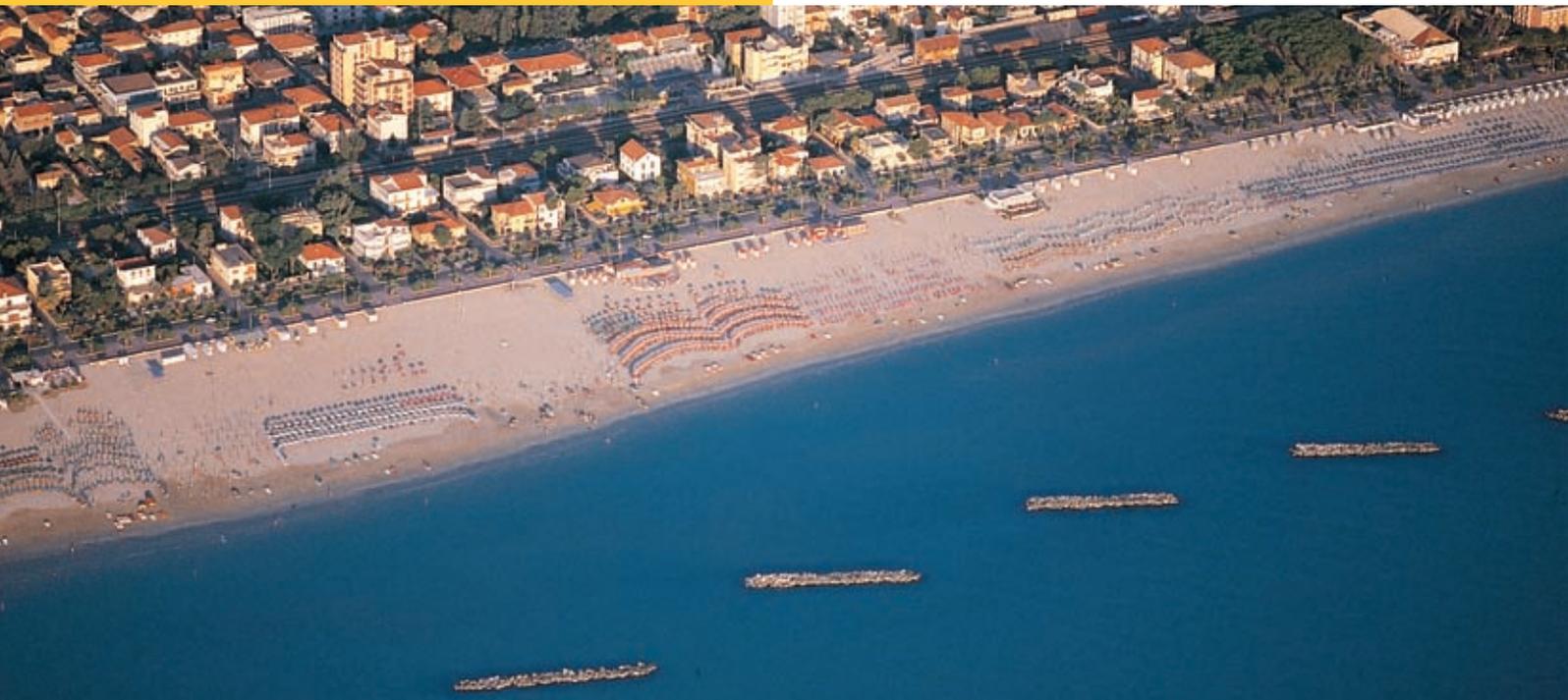
### Montesilvano

From an urban perspective the town has now merged into Pescara, connected by the long seafront and flanked by the lovely sandy beach. The seaside resort of Montesilvano stretches along the coast, south of the mouth of the Saline, and is one of the most popular and busy in all Abruzzo, especially for its ease of access and the countless cultural and recreational features offered by nearby Pescara. Tourist amenities are plentiful, with many large hotels, campsites, numerous holiday rental homes managed by estate agents, and about 40 private lidos.

**Just a few kilometres inland from the sea there are rolling hills, dotted with farms and villages, a gentle countryside, with its very human rows of orderly fields and crops. In the background, the impressive, cool outline of the jagged peaks.**

### Pescara

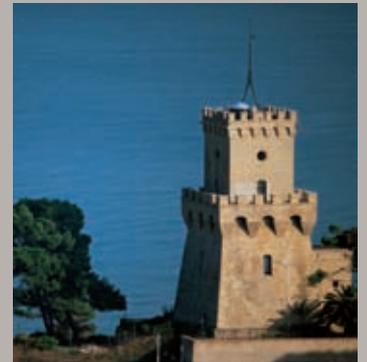
The administrative and commercial heart of this region: in a few decades it has become Abruzzo’s most densely populated city. It is also an excellent and very busy seaside resort, loved by tourists for its splendid wide beach that runs parallel to the urban fabric and nearby pine groves for about ten kilometres, integrating perfectly with them. Any tourist interested in some cultural stimulus will be delighted by the number of museums, the open-air theatre, and the important performing arts and culture events that highlight the Pescara summer, including the significant International Jazz Festival and the Premio



# THE CERRANO TOWER

This massive tower is located on a splendid stretch of beach between Silvi and Pineto, and was part of great coastal defence system, designed by the Spanish viceroys of Naples, Alvarez de Toledo and Parafan de Ribera – from the mid-1500s – to contrast the devastating Turkish attacks. Overall the system comprised a network of lookout towers arranged at regular distances along the entire coastline of the Kingdom of Naples, each visible to its neighbours so that danger could be signalled immediately.

The Cerrano tower was built in 1568 and has the typical silhouette of vice realm towers. Despite extensive interventions that have raised its height and extended its size, the original core is still clearly visible (two towers very similar to those that must originally have been found near Alba Adriatica – called the “Torre della Vibrata” – and that guarding the port of Vasto, at the Punta Penna headland). The garrison retained its watchtower functions until the end of the 17th century, and later became the property of the marquises of Cermignano. The original tower was a square-based truncated pyramid, with jetties set on sturdy corbels and three machicolations per side, to which a second storey was added in the early 20th century, comprising a square turret with merlons. This conversion work also modified the interior of the building, to create a staircase with several small rooms as deep as the thickness of the walls, with porthole windows. Further extension operations added an L-shaped wing to southeast; in 1982-83 it was restored and is now the location of a Marine Biology Laboratory.



### Exploring the valleys

#### VALLE DEL SALINE –TAVO

From Marina di Città Sant'Angelo to the gates of Montesilvano, the Saline river valley opens into a lovely hill itinerary that on the right skirts historical Città Sant'Angelo, with its fine Dark Ages collegiate, then meets the rivers Fino and Tavo near Cappelle sul Tavo, famous for the "Palio della Pupa" folklore event. Hugging the course of the Tavo we cross into Pescara olive oil territory: here oil is produced in the age-old manner, achieving extraordinary quality levels that have brought it national renown. Like in Moscufo, with its Medieval



church of Santa Maria del Lago and the famous ambo; Loreto Aprutino, with its traditional festival of "St Zopito and the kneeling ox"; the church of Santa Maria in Piano decorated with a fantastic 1400s *Universal Judgement*; the lavish Acerbo Museum of Castelli pottery; Penne, with its many churches, especially Baroque, its museums and a

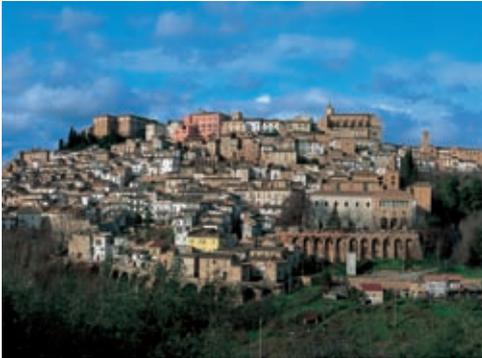
suggestive historical summer pageant; lastly, Pianella, with the lovely Medieval church of Santa Maria Maggiore.

Flaiano awards. The tourist amenities in Pescara include a large number of hotels and about 80 private lidos, plus the six sailing clubs, four indoor swimming pools and, above all, the huge *Marina di Pescara*, certainly the most important and largest pleasure-craft port on the Abruzzo coast, but also one of the biggest in the Mediterranean. Sailing charter services operating out of this port offer the chance to spend fantastic yachting weekends. It is paired with a port canal for fishing vessels, where the ferry service for Croatia also docks; there are also several river landings for small pleasure craft. The beaches offer a wide array of sports facilities and storage for small sailboats, windsurf boards and canoes. Nightlife is definitely jumping, with a huge choice of quite different restaurants and all sorts of night spots for every taste and trend. The Pescara *movida* has emerged in the key district formed by two parallel streets in the old town: via delle Caserme and corso Manthonè, the location of the birthplaces of both Ennio Flaiano and Gabriele d'Annunzio. Here, after the sun sets, restaurants (several of very high quality), pubs and fashionable night spots buzz with life. Later on the seafront also fills with people: here almost all the private lidos transform into discos at night, attracting thousands of night owls. The nerve centre of Pescara is Abruzzo Airport, served by Italian and foreign airlines, connecting the region with flights to several destinations across the globe.

#### Francavilla al Mare

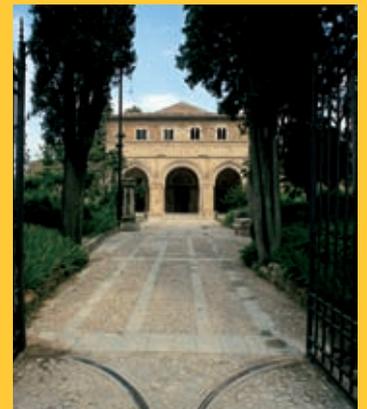
This is one of the oldest seaside resorts on the Adriatic coast, which was already famous in the late 1800s. It is just a few kilometres from Pescara and Chieti, located on the Adriatic, between the mouths of the Alento and Foro rivers, and has wide sandy beaches for relaxing family holidays. There are plenty of hotels, campsites and holiday apartments to rent, whilst the surrounding countryside has other types of accommodation, like B&Bs and agritourism farms. The beach amenities are provided by about 60 private lidos and there is also a yacht club; services include yachting day trips to explore the nearby "Trabocchi" Coast; a small marina is being built and is scheduled to open in 2009. The proximity of the two provincial capitals offers alternatives for sun seekers who have spent the morning on the beach, but want to continue the day with some culture or shopping, or even just a drink: the two centres can be reached quickly for visits to monuments, attending events and getting around the many stores. The famous convento Michetti, home of the circle founded by the renowned





### Exploring the valleys VALLE DEL PESCARA

The river Pescara, after which the provincial capital is named, enters the sea right in the city centre, flowing down from the mountains along a valley that widens so much in the final part that it seems almost to be a plain. The Tiburtina Valeria is the ancient Roman consular road that leads towards the suggestive Intramonti gorges, which open into inland Abruzzo. The first, and most important, city we encounter is Chieti, whose ancient origins go back to pre-Roman times, and whose splendid old centre is a treasure of churches, mansions and, above all, museums of excellent quality, including the Museo Archeologico Nazionale (home of the Capestrano Warrior) or the Museo della Civitella, the ultra modern and spectacular showcase for the city's relics of many thousands of years of history. Just upstream of Chieti we find the magnificent Brecciarola golf club, then there is Cepagatti, with its curiously-named Alex Longobard tower; Rosciano and Nocciano, with their castles, and the hamlet of Villa Badessa, where Easter is celebrated with a Byzantine rite; the hills opposite are the site of Manoppello, with its splendid Cistercian abbey of Santa Maria d'Arabona and the Volto Santo sanctuary, which keeps a famous relic that was even acknowledged by pope Benedict XVI; also on the left we find Alanno and Pietranico, with lovely, pure Abruzzo Baroque churches; on the hills opposite, we see the marvel of the Medieval abbey of San Clemente a Casauria, one of the bulwarks of Benedictine presence in central Italy; just before this we will see Scafa, with the Lavino's astonishing sulphur springs, and Bolognano, with the spectacular erosion phenomena (called 'cisterna', 'luchi' and 'marmitte'), etched out of the rock by the waters of the river Orta; finally we will find Tocco da Casauria, where the famous Centerbe liqueur is made; then the thrilling Intramonti gorges lead to the spa town of Popoli, dominated by a handsome castle.





painter Francesco Paolo Michetti and Gabriele d'Annunzio, is located in the high town, which is also the location of MUMI (Museo Michetti), which organizes important art exhibitions.

### **Ortona**

This lovely town is set on a tall cliff, sheer over the Adriatic and is famous most of all for its

history, tied to a port that has always been one of the most important in Abruzzo. Despite the town centre being heavily damaged during WWII (a terrible battle was fought through its streets and Churchill defined it "the Stalingrad of Italy"), it is nonetheless worth visiting for its cathedral (San Tommaso), the Aragonese castle and the churches of Santa Maria delle Grazie and Santissima Trinità. From its high terrace, Ortona overlooks its port and the Adriatic, with the splendid Passeggiata Orientale promenade. Visitors are offered good hotels, campsites and about 15 lidos, as well as a marina. Nearby, along the high bluffs, there are some marvellous coves like Acquabella and Ripari di Giobbe, whereas the inland area offers good agritourism facilities and a countryside rich in vineyards and wineries producing excellent wines, so a great opportunity for buying some typical products.

### **Marina di San Vito**

The marina is dominated by the lovely old centre of San Vito Chietino, set above the Adriatic; this seaside resort is a charming, quiet locality on the Chieti coast, between Ortona and the Punta del Cavalluccio point. The charming beach is pebbly and shaded by handsome sandstone cliffs. Just south of the town we find Villa Italia and the other places so loved by Gabriele d'Annunzio, who spent long periods here (where he wrote and set "Il Trionfo della Morte") or in the company of his circle of artist friends. Marina di San Vito has a several hotels and campsites,

### **Exploring the valleys**

#### **VALLE DELL'ALENTO AND VALLE DEL FORO**

**Francavilla al Mare is the gateway to small, but lovely valleys: the first is the Alento, skirting the lower part of Chieti to the south and leading to various destinations, including Bucchianico, the birthplace of San Camillo de Lellis, of whom significant relics are kept in the popular sanctuary dedicated to him. The easy valley-floor road provides a fast connection to several of the most charming areas of Majella National Park, including Guardiagrele, Pretoro and Majelletta.**

**The other valley is set south of the little coastal town and is crossed by the River Foro. Exploring the area we**



**can visit Miglianico, with the second large golf course on the Abruzzo coast, or we can continue towards the mountains, encountering Fara Filiorum Petri, a fine town of ancient Longobard origins; Pretoro, on the road to Mount Majella and the home of several**

**workshops specializing in woodcraft; Rapino, pottery capital of Chieti territory, with dozens of potter workshops, where artisans still work applying timeless local tradition; finally, Guardiagrele, an important art town with great monuments, two interesting museums and unique cake called "Sise delle monache".**



as well as various restaurants serving some very tasty fish dishes. The little town is perfect for a quiet beach holiday: a niche away from the hustle and bustle of the big busy resorts. The “Trabocchi” coast starts at Marina di San Vito, named after the striking fishing platforms that make the area unique in Italy and which so inspired the “Vate”, as d’Annunzio was called.

### **Rocca San Giovanni**

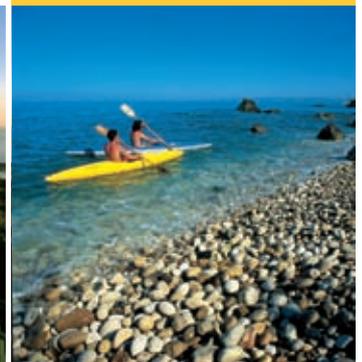
Set just on the shoreline, this municipality enjoys ownership of one of the loveliest stretches of the “Trabocchi” coast, which is now becoming quite famous for its refined fish restaurants, often hosted aboard the famous *trabocchi*, ancient and complex fishing platforms that reach out into the sea like giant insects.

### **Fossacesia Marina**

Beyond San Vito and before reaching the mouth of the river Sangro, we find Fossacesia Marina, a small fishing village that nonetheless has some interesting amenities. Most of the tourist facilities are south of the rocky shore of Punta Cavalluccio, a lovely and well-preserved point on the coast, famous for its distinctive *trabocchi*, the striking and apparently delicate wooden platforms supported by stilts that reach several metres out to sea, and which are used for fishing. The big Punta Cavalluccio gulf rolls down to the mouth of the Sangro and is dominated by the lovely Cistercian abbey of San Giovanni in Venere, which overlooks the sea in a truly enviable position. Fossacesia Marina has niche tourist accommodation facilities: several hotels, a campsite, holiday rental homes and B&Bs, as well as six private lidos. The hillsides in the immediate vicinity complete the choice with several agritourism farms. Again here we find an excellent place for anyone seeking a holiday resort where the sea is clean and the pace is quiet, slow and relaxing, where they can enjoy the sun and local nature.

### **Torino di Sangro Marina**

It confirms the distinctive features of this stretch of Chieti coast, which offers the chance to enjoy a holiday in close contact with nature at its





best. The resort is to be found south of the mouth of the Sangro, and just nine kilometres inland we will find Torino di Sangro itself, worth visiting just to see the 1500s San Salvatore parish church. The road that leads up to the town skirts one of Abruzzo's most suggestive coastal woods. The marina accommodates tourists in several hotels, campsites and holiday rental homes.

#### **Lido di Casalbordino**

Not far from the mouth of the river Sinello we encounter a quiet resort called Lido di Casalbordino, which offers the tourist a fine sandy beach, several hotels, a campsite and three private lidos. Just a few kilometres inland we reach the old centre of Casalbordino (seven kilometres from the beach), the Madonna dei Miracoli sanctuary and the remains of Santo Stefano in Rivomare, once a Benedictine abbey. Lido di Casalbordino is also a good starting point for those who want to attempt a good excursion along the coast, to reach the spectacular rocky coast of the Punta Aderci Nature Reserve.

#### **Vasto and Marina di Vasto**

Vasto is the last of Abruzzo's great coastal towns: it is actually located at the far south of the Abruzzo coast. The old centre clings to a hill that dominates the gulf, boasting a millenary history as it

#### **Exploring the valleys VALLE DEL SANGRO**

The slow flow of this river, which enters the sea between Marina di Fossacesia and Torino di Sangro, has gradually opened up one of the region's widest valleys. A journey inland from here is to explore the heart of Abruzzo, as far as the Altopiani Maggiori. The journey will first of all show us a huge number of picturesque old towns, in an excellent state of preservation and with many works of art: Atessa, with a lovely cathedral and the most ancient Medieval centre; Casoli, hugging



its spur and overshadowed by its castle; Roccasalegna, whose grim rock is the foundation for one of Abruzzo's most spectacular castles (now the scenario for many summer events); Tornareccio, famous for its excellent 'scamorza' cheeses, with the stunning ruins of the fortified Italic settlement of Pallanum, dominating the

entire Sangro valley from the peak of Mount Pallano like an eagle's eerie; Bomba and Colle di Mezzo, on the mid-slope, with their panoramic vista of great lake Sangro, with its excellent sport and accommodation infrastructures; lastly, a series of small old towns typical of the mid Val di Sangro, each one clinging astonishingly to a rock that soars unexpectedly from the terrain: Pennadomo, Pietraferrazzana, Monteferrante, Villa Santa Maria, the chefs' homeland. From here the valley narrows, climbing towards the Altipiani Maggiori, and crossing one of Italy's truffle zones, whose centre is Quadri.



was founded in the Italic period and was later conquered by the Romans. We should visit mighty Palazzo D'Avalos with its Museo Civico and archaeological collection, the cathedral, the churches of Santa Maria Maggiore, Carmine, Sant'Antonio and San Pietro. Also renowned is the local "brodetto alla vastese" fish chowder. The shoreline, with a great sandy beach at Marina di



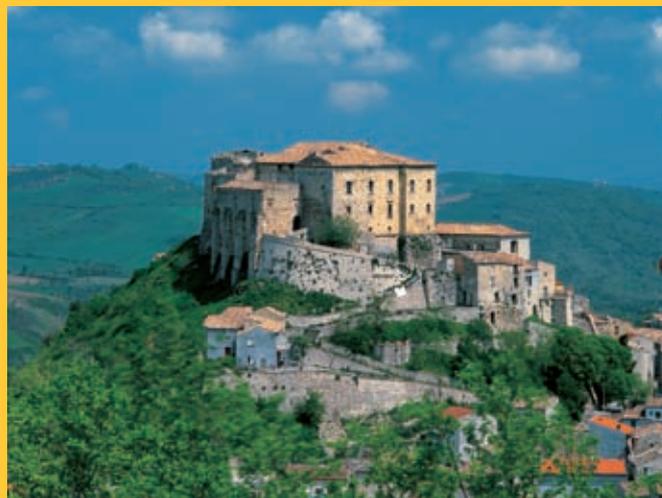
Vasto, stretches down to the mouth of the river Trigno, and is certainly the most extensive and varied in the region, so a natural magnet for appreciative tourists. North of the built-up area we find the Santa Maria della Penna coastline and the rocky coast of Punta Aderci, now a coastal Nature Reserve. Vasto has a large number of accommodation facilities, various agritourism farms, several B&Bs, campsites and about 30 private lidos, as well as an indoor swimming pool and a well-equipped marina. Just few minutes from the old centre, on a cool hillock, the town also offers the fun alternative of huge aqua park with its slides, pools, games, as well as evening and night events.

### San Salvo Marina

Geographically the last town in the region, but definitely not in importance: San Salvo Marina lies right on the Molise border; in view of the mouth of the river Trigno. This quiet seaside town has a fine sandy shore with about 20 private lidos and offers niche accommodation that relies on several hotels and campsites, as well as the usual holiday rental homes, B&Bs and agritourism farms further inland. Just five kilometres inland towards the hills, we will find San Salvo, the municipal seat, and continuing along the road we can visit several towns of Abruzzo's Upper Vasto area, and more in the Molise region, which overlook the Trigno Valley.

### Exploring the valleys VALLE DEL SINELLO

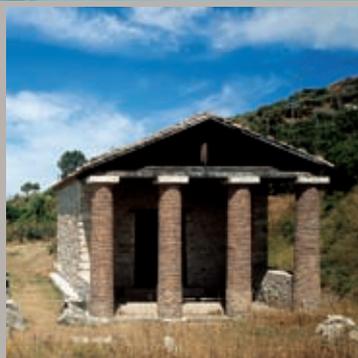
From Fossacesia Marina the journey up the Val Sinello and an exploration of the lovely towns, each set on a hilltop, leads to the discovery of lovely landscapes and typical old centres (Monteodorisio, Carpineto Sinello, Guilmi, Liscia, Montazzoli, Roccaspinalveti), as well as delving into an area with some of the region's most unique culinary traditions. The standard-bearer of the typical produce of the Vasto hinterland between the Oseno and the Trigno rivers, is a fantastic aromatic and slightly spicy cured pork called 'ventricina'. More traditional spots to visit are Liscia and the grotto-sanctuary of San Michele, still today the site of rock and water worship of Neolithic origin.





*Exploring the valleys*  
**VALLE DEL TRIGNO**

The course of the river closes Abruzzo and marks the border with Molise. The valley-floor road leads to Isernia and on to Naples, connecting the many small towns and villages along the hill, all very picturesque. One of the most interesting is Schiavi d'Abruzzo, with its two Italic temples, one of which has been totally rebuilt.





Of the many unique, wonderful things to see on the Abruzzo coast, there are the famous and picturesque “fishing machines”, located to the south and called *trabocchi*. These are basically fishing huts built entirely of wood and arranged on platforms (from where the fishermen cast their nets into the sea) supported by stilts; there is a long, hazardous walkway, also set on stilts, which connects the shore to the hut and which may be many metres in length. The best time to admire these spectacular fishing devices is on a stormy day, when their astonishing ability to resist rough seas is most evident, despite their fragile, unstable appearance. The origins of the *trabocchi* are uncertain and it is not easy to establish exactly when they were invented. We might imagine they were built so that fish could be caught without going out to sea, since it is easier to fish from a standing position on a walkway connected to dry land.

There is a unique historical note regarding that concept: the first document to speak of the Abruzzo *trabocchi* dates back to 1400 and is signed by father Stefano Tiraboschi, a Celestine monk. In his “Vita Sanctissimi Petri Celestini”, the monk described the time that Pietro da Morrone spent in the monastery of San Giovanni in Venere, in Fossacesia – almost three years, from 1240 to 1243 – and states that the saint climbed the hills to admire the sea “dotted with *trabocchi*”. From this it can be inferred that in 1240 (or at least at the time the biography was drafted) these fishing machines were already widely used. However, researchers do not all agree with this interpretation and some suggest that the original *trabocchi* were invented centuries later.

The first *trabocchi* come into view after Ortona, when the Abruzzo coastline starts to change from the low, sandy beaches of Teramo and Pescara, to a more rugged and jagged profile. The steep cliffs alternate with small coves and many great outcrops of rock. Gabriele d’Annunzio was bewitched by this

area – in his tragedy “The Triumph of Death”, written in the quiet of his villa concealed amongst the cliffs on this stretch of coast, he wrote “The chain of promontories and crescent-shaped gulfs rendered an image of a succession of offerings, with each inlet holding a cereal treasure. The broom spread its golden mantle over all the coast. A heavy cloud of fragrance rose from each bush, as from a thurible. The air inhaled was as pleasing as a drop of elixir.” Villa Italia, where the “Vate” (as d’Annunzio was known) wrote his verses, still exists: an easy path leads from the gate of the villa down towards the sea and reaches almost to the Capo Turchino structure, one of the most important along the entire coast and referred to in “The Triumph of Death” as a “machine [...] that seemed to have a life of its own”. A little further ahead, on the main road, the Dannunziano promontory can be found on the left: the most scenic spot in the area and occupied only by a few houses and a restaurant. A little further south, after the Vallevò hamlet, the Punta del Cavalluccio *trabocco* can be seen, beyond the railway line. The beautiful pebble beach and nearby *trabocco* are iconic symbols of this stretch of coast.





# ABRUZZO, there's nowhere like it

What will surprise the tourist arriving in Abruzzo for the first time is that in just a few kilometres, the landscape changes from sunny beaches to soaring Apennine peaks and that astonishing, untamed and unspoiled beauty is to hand, flanked by villages, castles, abbeys, lakes, Parks and Nature Reserves. All inland towns and villages offer a continuous calendar of events like historical pageants, patron saint festivals, open-air dances, folklore performances, concerts, fetes and culinary stands that add sparkle – and flavour! – to the simplest, most down-to-earth evening! There are countless structures, in all of these locations, for welcoming and supporting visitors, offering a warm Abruzzo greeting that makes each holiday unique.

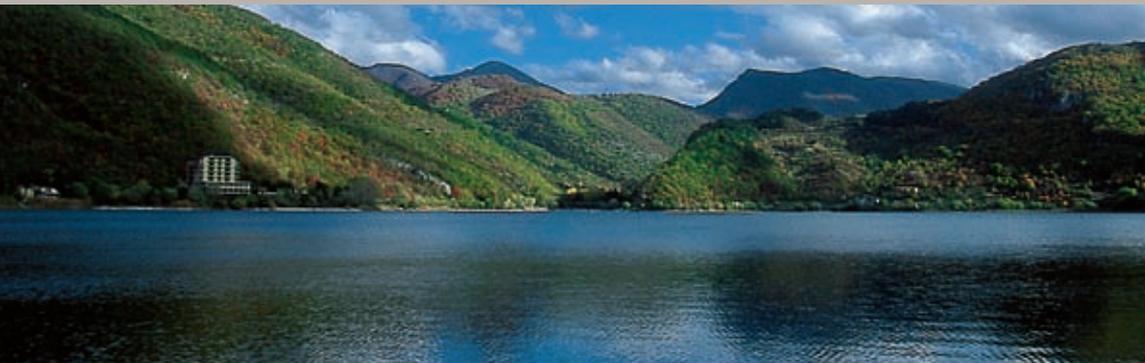


## LAKE BOMBA



The lake is in a valley surrounded by tall peaks and tiny, attractive hamlets, and was created by damming of the river Sangro near the unusually-named town of Bomba. The area offers extensive accommodation facilities (camp sites and hotels), both on the lakeside and in the neighbouring towns. It is a great place to go mountain biking or hiking along the banks, or even sailing in a rented boat. The towns nearby are also picturesque and interesting.

## LAKE SCANNO



Lake Scanno, the most attractive and popular of the Abruzzo lakes, fills a vast basin at 922 metres asl, between two interesting old towns – Villalago and Scanno – at the foot of Montagna Grande's dense woods, on the boundary of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park. Together with the nearby historic town of Scanno, the lake is the Sagittario valley's main tourist attraction. It attracts tourists who enjoy its environment and its climate, swimming near its shores or renting a pedal boat to float on its waters, and some even surf and canoe.

## LAKE CAMPOTOSTO



Lake Campotosto, in the province of L'Aquila, is the largest of the lakes in Abruzzo. In very cold winters, the surface will freeze over completely. The 40km perimeter of the lake is a firm favourite in fine weather for hiking and trekking, for cycling or even just for a romantic sunset stroll, where a visitor might stumble on badgers, hares, pheasant or foxes.

## LAKE BARREA



Lake Barrea was created in the Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo following damming of the river Sangro. The three towns that overlook the lake – Barrea, Civitella Alfedena and Villetta Barrea – have lost none of the spirit of ancient Apennine settlements. Numerous excursions start at lake Barrea, including some accompanied by guides, walking up into the mountains to discover the Park's extensive fauna and flora.

# GRAN SASSO E MONTI DELLA LAGA NATIONAL PARK

Gran Sasso's rocky massif comprises the limestone slopes of Corno Grande and Corno Piccolo, stretches off to the Campo Imperatore plateau and to the north is embraced by magnificent beech woods. The mountain is extremely popular with trekkers, climbers and skiers. Less well-known is the Monti della Laga range, spectacular in spring with its abundance of water. Protected since 1995, the two massifs are a perfect journey through Abruzzo's nature and traditions. Fauna is enjoying a great recovery here.



# MAJELLA NATIONAL PARK

Rugged, mighty Majella, its western slopes sheer and compact, rolls upwards into the Femmina Morta plateau, and on the east is furrowed by Abruzzo's wildest canyons. The Park also includes the Morrone and Pizi Mountains ramparts. Legacies from the past include Prehistoric settlements, sanctuaries, inscriptions left by shepherds, caves and blockhouses used by brigands and soldiers, *tholos* huts built amongst the fields and pastures. Human history plays a key role in the appeal of this Park.



# ABRUZZO, LAZIO E MOLISE NATIONAL PARK



Bear tracks in the woods, wolf prints in the snow, chamois shadows amongst the rocks. The blossoming of spring and summer flowers, the Karstic landscapes, the beech woods. Abruzzo National Park was opened in 1922, and even today attracts a million visitors each year. Apart from the fauna and flora, its main appeal is the rugged orography of the mountains, as well as its lovely Medieval villages, necropolises and sheep tracks. An extensive network of Visitor Centres, nature trails and wildlife areas are available to tourists. In winter, the path becomes an excellent trail for snow shoes or skis.

## SIRENTE-VELINO REGIONAL PARK



The Sirente-Velino Regional Park is little more than an hour from Rome and is easily reached from anywhere in Abruzzo. On a clear winter day the snow-capped peak of Mount Velino is clearly visible from the Janiculum Hill. Although Velino and Sirente are not as tall as Majella and Gran Sasso, they are just as interesting as the greater massifs. The taller slopes have a barrier of rock; the gravel pits are a habitat for many rare botanical species. These mountains, popular with skiers for the ski runs at Ovindoli and Campo Felice, are much appreciated by trekkers too. What is more, the Park protects more than valuable species and habitats, it is also the location of interesting traces of the past: archaeological areas, towers and castles, medieval villages, convents and country churches, all still well-preserved, to be encountered as we explore the entire territory.



**The main resorts on the coast offer a vast range of afternoon and evening entertainment. Often, during the busy summer period, the range of entertainment and pastimes on offer looks like an endless programme of events: great open-air event for the holiday period.**

**Nightlife**

All kinds of venues for dinner and after are found in all the seaside resorts: restaurants, pubs, wine&disco bars, discos, clubs and trendy venues; private lidos that also have music and disco evenings. Shows and concerts are generally organized so that they do not overlap, and tourists can be sure to have at least two different options every day. The events scheduled in each resort are flanked by those planned in the cities nearby (none more than 10km away), which include exhibitions, concerts, events and shows of all types.

**Shopping**

The larger towns are excellent for all kinds of shopping, with numerous stores. Moreover, Abruzzo has several important fashion

and accessories manufacturers whose value-for-money outlets are extremely popular with tourists who come on shopping trips. During the week, coastal towns buzz with their open-air markets, selling typical local food specialities, craft products, antiques and modern wares. Furthermore, each town has its weekly market, held in the main square and usually in the morning, a fun alternative to sunbathing at the beach and a chance to rummage amongst the stalls on the lookout for bargains for all pockets and tastes.

**Food and wine festivals**

During the summer, a huge number of events and festivals are held to promote typical local products and traditional recipes. The outskirts of every tourist resort, especially around the hills and foothills whose

# THE BILLBOARD



towns are centuries old and steeped in their original rustic and farming traditions, are papered with dozens of posters advertising events for sampling traditional local cuisine in even the tiniest of neighbouring hamlets. The hills may be the heart of this carefree and entertaining tradition of food festivals, focused mainly on the fruits of the earth and stock farming (the most famous dish is the renowned *arrosticino*, thin skewers of barbecued mutton, consumed piping hot!), but the coast also offers countless gastronomic appointments linked to fish and traditional Abruzzo seafood dishes, of which the most famous is certainly *brodetto di pesce*, in its various recipes, which change slightly from town to town.

### Events

Over recent decades, events that draw holidaymakers along the Abruzzo coast have increased significantly. We can choose from theatre reviews, art exhibitions, dance events, classical music concerts, alongside traditional festivals in seaside villages, as well as sports events, concerts and music festivals, as well as mega pop music

events. It would be impossible to mention them all, but Abruzzo's summer culture calendar really peaks in July, when the awards commemorating Ennio Flaiano, the famous Pescara writer, are announced in the city, during a several-day event. The award categories of cinema, theatre, books and television draw a great number of international figures to Abruzzo each year. The awards scenario also stretches to Vasto, where the "Histonium" (from the town's ancient Roman name) literary prize has been organized for a number of years. The town also recognizes artists from all over Europe with its "Vasto d'Arte" Prize. If July focuses a cultural spotlight on Pescara, August has a truly extensive calendar. For the last 10 years and more, the coast has shown its theatrical calling and proved to be the ideal venue for important events. Pescara's large open-air theatre, named after Gabriele d'Annunzio, is set in the heart of a beautiful pine grove opposite the beach, and is the venue for major national theatrical companies that perform popular plays here. Similar events are also organized in Giulianova and Montesilvano. Further north, the annual date worth remembering is Tortoreto's Children's Theatre

# great shows every day!



Festival, held just off the sea front and featuring jugglers, clowns and stilt walkers, and Sant'Omero's Festival of Comic Theatre. In the musical field, the Abruzzo summer offers a lavish calendar, which embraces all genres, and really does meet the demands of all manner of tastes with some quality art and entertainment. The tiny little piazzas in Vasto's old centre host the most famous names in an International Organ Music Festival that began over 30 years ago; the "Pietre che Cantano" classical music festival is set in the enchanting Medieval setting of Ocre and the Medieval villages of the Aterno valley. Jazz is also well represented by the Pescara Jazz Festival, the oldest of Italy's open-air jazz events, and by the Festival Vasto Jazz. Blues fans will be happy with some important summer dates like Aventino Blues, involving numerous municipalities in the mid-Chieti area valley of the same name. Younger visitors can choose from an even wider and more varied range of events: top pop singers play regularly in the region, as do big Italian and international names, scheduled regularly by the local councils. In summer, many private lidos arrange discos evenings and beach parties, entrusted to the most popular DJs. A few years ago, Teramo began organizing an extraordinary "Notte Bianca" all-night event, boasting a huge number of events that attract tens of thousands of visitors.

### Exhibitions

Coastal towns offer a wide range of museums and exhibition venues: in Giulianova the MAS (Museo d'Arte dello Splendore); in Roseto the Villa Comunale; in Pescara the Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Vittoria Colonna, the Museo Cascella and the Museo delle Genti d'Abruzzo; the Museo Michetti in Francavilla al Mare; Palazzo Farnese in Ortona and Palazzo D'Avalos in Vasto, to name only the most famous. In summer they become the venue of significant exhibitions and cultural events. Important rendezvous are also organized with painting, sculpture and photography in more unusual contexts, like town squares, old centres, castles, deconsecrated churches and even closed factories, as well as in private art galleries. One of the most important events is "Castelbasso Progetto Cultura", an annual art exhibition that began over ten years ago, on show through July and August in the Medieval town of Castelbasso, on the Teramo hills. The works of famous international artists, shown in old storerooms and in the exhibition building, offer a broad spectrum of shows and cultural events that contribute to the success of this festival. For some years, the village of Montone has been organizing a festival known as "Tra il sole e la luna", featuring performing arts, street theatre and works of local artists on display in the old centre.



### Applied Arts Festivals

In the summer there are many events that aim to promote Abruzzo's applied arts, but one worth mentioning is the "Mostra dell'Artigianato" in Guardiagrele, which has been running for 40 years. Each summer it presents and rewards the best of regional production. Also very successful are the applied arts fairs organized in the lovely *Marina di Pescara* scenario, focusing on the promotion of gold and jewellery which in Abruzzo enjoy a great tradition and are known for their originality.

### Traditional Festivals

The season of religious festivals honouring saints who protect the coastal and hilltop towns set away from the shore, opens at the port in Pescara, with a great sea procession to celebrate St Andrew, protector of fishermen. It has been a tradition for over 150 years, for fishermen compete before the procession for the honour of carrying the statue of St Andrew on their boats, and the winner leads the procession on the last Sunday in July. The date is a chance to enjoy a fireworks display at sea and sample dishes at one of the biggest fried fish festivals on the mid-Adriatic coast. Processions at sea, with countless decorated fishing boats, are also during Giulianova's Madonna del Portosalvo Festival in August, at nearby Tortoreto Lido and at Vasto, but here the "guest of honour" is St

Michael the Archangel. Francavilla al Mare's festival honouring St Franco attracts young people from the entire region because the closing concerts are generally held by top Italian pop stars, but also because the unique fireworks display at sea is magnificent, and the spectacle lasts over an hour. Vasto hold its historical "Toson d'Oro" pageant, with pomp and ceremony commemorating the decoration conferred by the Emperor of Austria on Cesare Michelangelo d'Avalos, Marquis of Vasto, in the 1700s. In Vasto "Ferragosto", as the feast of the Assumption is known in Italian, starts with a morning event, when craftsmen and vendors descend from all over the country, and even from abroad, to the main square, where they sell bells of different sizes and shapes. Since the most important inland towns are at most an hour's drive from the coast, it is worth remembering that they too organize great events during the summer: There is only room for the most famous here: the exciting "Giostra Cavalleresca" in Sulmona, on the last weekend in July and the first in August; the "Perdonanza Celestiniana", held in L'Aquila on 28 and 29 August each year; the spectacular Renaissance costume procession narrating the "Mastrogiurato" story, in Lanciano on 1 September. More recently, but nonetheless unique, are Popoli's pageants and Medieval fairs, dedicated to the Cantelmo family and the crossbow tradition, with events held in the town in mid-August.





# ABRUZZO'S

# tradition of

**From May to September, hundreds of hotels, guesthouses, camping facilities, Aparthotels, B&Bs and private apartments for rent are ready to welcome tourists, offering a wide range of options, with potential for meeting the requirements of even the most demanding tastes.**

**The Abruzzo coast has extensive accommodation facilities that can cater for great waves of tourists in peak holiday periods, with quality standards that do not falter under pressure.**



# hospitality

The strength of the amenities on the Abruzzo coast is the sheer variety: large luxury hotels, family-run boarding houses, B&Bs, agritourism holiday farms on the hills but with a sea view, an extensive circuit of rental homes, campsites, holiday villages and aparthotels.

The hillsides of the immediate hinterland and the coastal settlements provide equally interesting tourist facilities with country houses, agritourism farms, holiday rental homes and villas, B&Bs. They are excellent alternatives for enjoying both the sea and the countryside: these sites are often only a 10-minute drive from the beach, but are more economical and they offer the chance to get away from the bustling pace of the seaside towns to enjoy the quiet of the countryside and small old town centres. Lastly, there is a wide choice of holiday rentals: a solution that has the advantage of letting you enter into the spirit and pace of local life.



# TREASURES of skills

**One of the things that makes holidays in Abruzzo even more enjoyable is without doubt the chance, once back from the beach, to go shopping, relax and treat yourself to the exquisite local crafts and tasty food and wine specialities: two cultures that boast an age-old tradition with origins at times that are rooted in history.**

## CRAFTS

Abruzzo crafts are the result of age-old skills that developed from a combination of manual ability in producing useful objects with a taste for decoration and rudimental design, typical of an industrious and creative people close to their land. In fact, *genius loci* is that priceless added value that renders a craft product intrinsically different from the mass-produced item, raising the former to a spiritual plane and the latter to one of sheer materiality. In the hands of the Abruzzo craftsman, clay and iron, gold and lace, copper and stone, wood and wool, leather and fabrics, all come to life. In many parts of Italy the tradition of manual crafting and applied arts was abandoned during the period of industrial development. Fortunately, here in Abruzzo it survived and tradition lives on, side-by-side with the future.



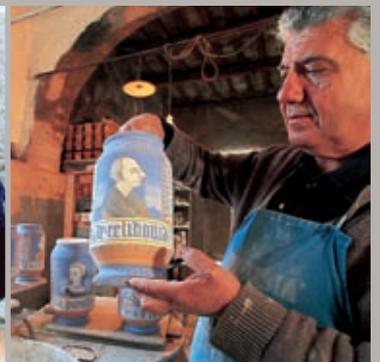
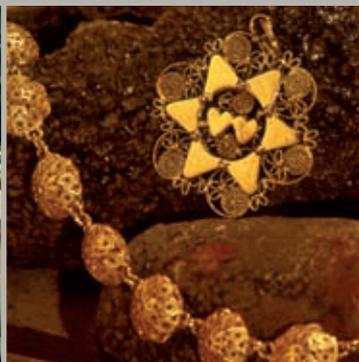
Important fairs dedicated to Abruzzo's crafts (the foremost being that held in Guardiagrele, which began almost 40 years ago) promote the best of these products and make them easier to find and purchase.

## Pottery

Production of pottery is one of Abruzzo's major typical crafts and the production capital is Castelli, in the Gran Sasso foothills, famous for over four centuries as one of Italy's main majolica districts. Castelli became famous thanks to 1600s and 1700s dynasties of master potters, families like the Grue, Gentili, Cappelletti and Fuina; nowadays, the art of Castelli pottery is kept alive by dozens of workshops, where excellent products can be purchased and many of them have points-of-purchase along the coast. Craft pottery is also widespread around Rapino, at the foot of Mount Majella.

## Gold and silver

Gold and silversmithing became famous thanks to the splendid products manufactured by Medieval artists, like those of Guardiagrele and Sulmona, and even today it is still very important in Abruzzo, especially in Pescocostanzo, Scanno and Sulmona, where tourists can purchase traditional jewellery and filigree. The most well-known jewel of them all is the *presentosa*, a love token pendant with two entwined hearts at its centre for wives or brides, and a single heart for the unattached.



# and savours

## Wrought iron and copper

Iron and copper have been fashioned throughout Abruzzo since the Italic period. Wrought iron is popular mainly for bedsteads, chandeliers, fences, candelabras, braziers; the copper is used for pots and pans, and the distinctive urns used for centuries by women to take water home from the fountain. The capital of this artisan production is Guardiagrele, at the foot of Mount Majella, although good quality items are also produced at Pescocostanzo, Lanciano, Ortona, Vasto, Tossicia and Scanno, and are available directly from their makers in the markets and fairs of all Abruzzo seaside towns.

## Stone

Majella limestone, known for its warm hues, is the leading player in Abruzzo's fine Medieval buildings. Even nowadays stone carvers and sculptors play an important role in the economy of several towns at the foot of Abruzzo's "mother mountain", in particular Lettomanoppello, Pretoro, Pennapiedimonte and Pacentro. Softer and easier to model is Laga sandstone, which has also developed an interesting craft sector.

## Textiles

The abundant production of wool in Abruzzo developed an important regional textile industry. One famous item is the *taranta*, a brightly coloured blanket in heavy wool, patterned with ancient designs. One of the most famous Abruzzo textile products is elegant bolster lace from Scanno, L'Aquila, Canzano and Pescocostanzo.

## Hide and leather

Abruzzo has been the homeland of livestock farmers since the dawn of history and the region has retained significant leather crafting industries. The skilled hands of Abruzzo's craftsmen transform raw material into bags, belts and other objects,

produced in many local regional towns. The saddles made in L'Aquila are famous worldwide and are used by riding enthusiasts throughout Europe.

## Vegetable fibres

The use of vegetable materials (reeds and marsh plants, wicker and straw, willow-tree branches and olive-tree shoots) to plait hampers and baskets, stools, brooms, carpet-beaters and many other objects traditionally used in domestic activities, is still preserved in a great number of agricultural and mountain centres of the region, and are some of the most popular purchases made by tourists.

## FOOD AND WINE

Abruzzo cuisine derives from age-old traditions and the recipes handed down from generation to generation. The dishes reflect the variety in the region's food culture: exquisite coastal recipes, linked to fishing and the sea; inland recipes, linked to agriculture and the products of the land; and mountain recipes, linked to sheep-rearing and livestock farming. A wide selection of restaurants and trattorias are found along the entire coast, offering more than acceptable standards, and some reaching truly remarkable peaks of excellence, well-known amongst connoisseurs. The choice of a restaurant on the Abruzzo coast is child's play, from restaurants listed in the most prestigious international gourmet guides to family-run trattorias by the sea or agritourism farms that grow and serve their own produce. The restaurants on the coast are mainly for seafood which, as a rule, is prepared using classic local recipes, often varying from town to town. A typical example is the *brodetto*, a characteristic fish chowder prepared in every seaside town, but using different ingredients and procedures, so that each location has its own version. On the other hand, the fertile countryside immediately behind the coast offers restaurants and trattorias that serve mainly dishes and products of the rural tradition. One of the most popular of these is the *arrosticino*, a tasty, surprising skewers of barbecued mutton, which are famous worldwide.





**No other Italian region has equalled the leaps and bounds made by Abruzzo to improve its wines in recent years. The proof lies in the growing interest being encountered in all European markets for the region's DOC products (whites, reds and rosés): Abruzzo's best wineries have collected numerous awards and recognition in the last few years.**



### **Wines**

Abruzzo's traditional vines are Trebbiano d'Abruzzo for white wine and Montepulciano d'Abruzzo for red. Although there has been a recent recovery of minor cultivars that include Passerina, Pecorino and Cococciola.

The most important production district is at the foot of the mountain chains, for instance in the Pescara valley, between Popoli and the capital, the foothills of Teramo, Pescara and Chieti, the Peligna and Ofena basins. The DOC wines produced in the region are Montepulciano d'Abruzzo red (including the rosé known as Cerasuolo), an aromatic and sturdy red that is dry to the palate; Trebbiano d'Abruzzo, a dry and delicately scented white wine; Controguerra, both red and white, and specific to a precise district of Teramo.

Many wineries are located inland, a few kilometres from the coast, and are the perfect excuse to linger there late in the afternoon, after a day at the beach.

### **Liqueurs**

The most famous of the distillates produced with Abruzzo mountain herbs is the very strong (72 proof) *Centerbe*, from Tocco da Casauria, a locality at the foot of Majella. Also typical of the area

is *Genziana*, an excellent digestive liqueur produced through the infusion of bitter gentian roots in alcohol, as also *Ratafia*, a sweet, dense and very aromatic sour cherry liqueur. *Aurum*, a liqueur made from prized wines enriched with citrus essence, is produced at Pescara, whilst many inland towns still produce traditional local bitters made from mountain herbs.

### **Extra virgin Olive Oil**

In the provinces of Teramo, Pescara and Chieti, the olive tree is a familiar figure across the gentle rolling hillsides. The PDO extra-virgin olive oil produced in these areas (in particular at Loreto Aprutino, Campoli, Moscufo, Lanciano, Fossacesia and Guardiagrele) is on a par with the best Italian oils and continues to reap new successes at international trade events. A traditional homemade condiment that is now very popular in restaurants is called *olio santo* and may have some surprises in store for unwary diners who sample the first pressing olive oil in which hot chilli pepper has been soaked.

### **Pasta**

Abruzzo is home to a capital of Italian pasta production: Fara San Martino, a town at the foot of Majella's eastern slope, where



**The flavours of Abruzzo cuisine are deep-rooted in the region's history, in centuries of experience in farming the land, rearing livestock and processing raw materials.**

the presence of ultra pure mountain water fostered the development of a flourishing pasta industry from ancient times and nowadays its products are exported worldwide. Home-style pasta is a normal item in all Abruzzo towns and restaurants; it can be bought *appena ammassata* (freshly prepared) almost anywhere. The most famous handmade pasta is *maccheroni alla chitarra*, whose name comes from the wooden frame threaded with fine steel wires (the *chitarra* or "guitar") used to cut the mixture, and is an object owned by every Abruzzo family. Typical pasta here includes Bisenti *Maccheroni alla molinara*, Chieti *sagne*, Lanciano *rentrocele* and Popoli *tondini*. *Scrippelle*, from the Teramo area, are Abruzzo's savoury version of the crêpe, and are eaten in broth or used to make *timballo*.

### Cured meats

Pork processing here produces some excellent hams and a wide range of charcuterie, beginning with the classic sausage, including a tasty liver variety, often preserved in oil or in lard. The most typical cured meat products include delicious Campotosto *mortadelline* (called "mule's balls"); Torano sausages; the Frentano *salsicciotto*; a soft spreadable Teramo *ventricina* and a compact version made in the Chieti area.

### Cheese

The most common stock in Abruzzo is still sheep and this explains the significant role played by fresh and ripe *pecorino* cheese, as well as by ewe's milk *ricotta*, in regional gastronomy. One noteworthy version of such cheese is fresh, aromatic Teramo mountain *giuncata*. Farindola is the production centre for the eponymous *pecorino*. A combination of cow's and ewe's milk is used to produce *caciotta*, sometimes flavoured with hot chilli pepper. Cow's milk is used to make traditional *scamorza* - which in Abruzzo may well be called "*mozzarella*"-, which is eaten raw, grilled or baked. At Rivisondoli and Pescocostanzo, wonderful *caciocavallo* and *mozzarella* variations like *trecce*, *bocconcini* and *fiordilatte* are made from raw milk.

### Vegetables

Abruzzo's leading agricultural products include pulses, which acquire unique qualities thanks to the mountain terrain where they are grown. Then there are "historic" cereals (now rediscovered and very popular) like spelt, barley and solina wheat. Sulmona's red garlic has been famous for centuries, not only for its quality, but also for its curative properties.



### Truffles

Abruzzo is a leading Italian truffle producer: for years it was overshadowed by the historically more established markets of Alba and Norcia, but the region is now coming into its own with prime crops. Marsica, Teramo, upper L'Aquila and the mid-Sangro valley are the main production areas. Apart from being used in cooking, the precious tuber is also used to aromatize sausages, oils and cheeses.

### Saffron

The heart of one of Abruzzo's most interesting traditional products is on the Navelli plateau, between the Gran Sasso and the Sirente massifs. L'Aquila PDO saffron is made from the stigma of *Crocus sativus*, left whole and dried, and taken from flowers grown in the municipalities of Navelli, Civitaretenga, Caporciano, San Pio delle Camere and Prata d'Ansidonia: it is said to be the best in the world.

### Honey

Excellent and aromatic honey is produced almost everywhere in Abruzzo, which is a leading manufacturer. The tastiest varieties include those made from thyme, chestnut and acacia blossom.

### Patisserie

Traditional patisserie in Abruzzo includes *mostaccioli*, *caggiunitt'*, *ferratelle* or *nèole*, *cicerchiata*, *zèppole* and *taralli*, all of which were once only made by hand at home, but nowadays they can be purchased from bakers and patisseries.

Confectionery worth sampling includes Sulmona sugared almonds, L'Aquila chocolate nougat and *libretti* (made with dried figs) found in Chieti and the province of Teramo. Another characteristic cake is the *Parozzo*, much extolled by Gabriele d'Annunzio, and there are also two types of *bocconotto*: the Frentano recipe and the Teramo recipe.



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