

Abruzzo (Abruzzo)

General

Abruzzo (pronounced [a'bruttso]) is a region of Southern Italy, with an area of 10,763 sq. km. (4,156 sq. miles) and a population of 1.2 million as of 2017. Its western border lies 80 km (50 mi) east of Rome. Abruzzo borders the region of Marche to the north, Lazio to the west and south-west, Molise to the south-east, and the Adriatic Sea to the east.

The region is divided into the four provinces of Chieti, L'Aquila, Pescara, and Teramo. The areas and populations of the four provinces as of 2017 are:

- Chieti..... 2,588 km²..... pop. 396,190
- L'Aquila 5,034 km²..... pop. 308,876
- Pescara..... 1,225 km²..... pop. 318,701
- Teramo 1,948 km²..... pop. 308,769

L'Aquila is the Capital City of the region.

Geographically, Abruzzo is divided into a mountainous area to the west, which includes the Gran Sasso D'Italia, and a coastal area to the east with beaches on the Adriatic Sea. Abruzzo is considered culturally, linguistically, historically, and economically a region of Southern Italy, although geographically it may also be considered central. The Italian Statistical Authority (ISTAT) deems it to be part of Southern Italy, partially because of Abruzzo's historic association with the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

Abruzzo is known as "the greenest region in Europe" as one third of its territory, the largest in Europe, is set aside as national parks and protected nature reserves. There are three national parks, one regional park, and 38 protected nature reserves. These ensure the survival of 75% of Europe's living species including rare species, such as the small wading dotterel, the golden eagle, the Abruzzo (or Abruzzese) chamois, the Apennine wolf, and the Marsican brown bear. Abruzzo is also home to Calderone, Europe's southernmost glacier.

Visiting nineteenth-century Italian diplomat and journalist Primo Levi (not to be confused with writer and Holocaust survivor Primo Levi) said that "forte e gentile" (strong and gentle) best describes the beauty of the region and the character of its people. "Forte e gentile" has since become the motto of the region and its inhabitants.

History

Humans have inhabited Abruzzo since Neolithic times. A skeleton from Lama dei Peligni in the province of Chieti has been radiometrically dated to 6,540 bp. The name Abruzzo appears to derive from the Latin "Aprutium", although in Roman times the region was known at various times as Picenum, Sabina et Samnium, Flaminia et Picenum and Campania et Samnium. This region was known as Aprutium in the Middle Ages arising from four possible sources. It is a corruption of Praetutium, or rather of the name of the people Praetutii, applied to their chief city, Interamnaes, the old Teramo.

Until 1963 it was part of the *Abruzzi* region with Molise. The term *Abruzzi* derives from the time when the region was part of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the territory was administered as *Abruzzo Citeriore* (Nearer Abruzzo) and *Abruzzo Ulteriore I* and *II* (Farther Abruzzo I and II), that being nearer and farther from Naples, the capital of the kingdom. Abruzzo Citeriore is present day Chieti province. Abruzzo Ulteriore I comprised the Teramo and Pescara provinces; Abruzzo Ulteriore II is now the Province of L'Aquila. In this province is found the city of Corfinio (known as Corfinium in ancient Italy), the chief city of the Paeligni, 7 m. N. of Sulmona in the valley of the Aternus. The site of the original town is occupied by the village of Pentima. It probably became subject to Rome in the 4th century BC, though it does not appear in Roman history before the Social War, in which it was at first adopted by the allies as the capital and seat of government. It appears also as a fortress of importance in the Civil War, though it resisted Caesar's attack for a week (49 BC). These people were honored by Caesar as citizens of Rome. It is said that the name "Italia" came from this region because of ancient coins that have been found here that date from about the 1st century BC. These coins have the name "Italia" on them and are apparently proof of this fact. This theory of the origin of the name "Italia" is debated by scholars, archaeologists and history itself. There is much consensus however that the name "Italia" was originally given to the region of modern Calabria by the ancient Greeks during their foundation of Magna Graecia (Greater Greece) in southern Italy around the 8th century BC. It is also said by the Italian Government that Calabria was once called "Italia" by the ancient Greeks in honor of its inhabitants who

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were known as the "Itali". This occurred hundreds of years before the coins of Corfinio (Corfinium) were apparently minted. The late archaeologist Massimo Pallottino also claimed that the name was derived from the Italic tribes that settled in modern Calabria. But it was not until the time of the Roman conquests that the term was expanded to cover the entire peninsula.

Languages and Dialects

The regional accents of Abruzzo include Teramano, Abruzzese Orientale Adriatico and Abruzzese Occidentale. The first two form part of the dialect of southern Italy also known simply as "Neapolitan" due to the region having been part of the Kingdom of Naples and the Two Sicilies, while the Italian of L'Aquila Province is related to the Osco-Umbro dialect of central Italy, including the one of Rome. The dialects spoken in the Abruzzo region can be divided into three main groups:

- Sabine dialect, in the province of L'Aquila (central Italian dialects)
- Abruzzo Adriatic dialect, in the province of Teramo, Pescara and Chieti, that is virtually abandoned in the province of Ascoli Piceno (southern Italian dialects)
- Abruzzo western dialect, in the province of L'Aquila (southern Italian dialects)

Geography

Geographically, Abruzzo is located in central Italy and southern Italy, stretching from the heart of the Apennines to the Adriatic Sea, and includes mainly mountainous and wild land. The mountainous inland is occupied by a vast plateau including Gran Sasso, at 2,912 metres (9,554 ft) the highest peak of the Apennines, and Mount Majella 2,793 metres (9,163 ft). The Adriatic coastline is characterized by long sandy beaches to the north and pebbly beaches to the south. Abruzzo is well known for its landscapes and natural beauties, parks and nature reserves, characteristic hillside areas rich in vineyards and olive groves, and one of the highest densities of Blue Flag beaches.

Economy

Until a few decades ago, Abruzzo was a region of poverty in Southern Italy; over the past decades, however, it has developed to such an extent that it has escaped from the spiral of underdevelopment to become the 'first' region of the 'Italian Mezzogiorno'. This confirms its pivotal role in the national economic system. Since the 1950s, Abruzzo has had steady economic growth. In 1951, Abruzzo per capita income or GDP was 53% of that of Northern Italy, the nation's richest region. By 1971, Abruzzo was at 65% and, by 1994, per capita income was at 76% of Northern Italy's per capita income, giving Abruzzo the highest per capita GDP of Southern Italy and surpassing the growth of every other region of Italy. The construction of superhighways from Rome to Teramo and from Rome to Pescara opened Abruzzo to easy access, state and private investment in the region increased, and Abruzzo attained higher per capita education levels and greater productivity growth than the rest of the South. As of 2003, Abruzzo's per capita GDP was €19,506 or 84% of the national average of €23,181 and well outpacing that of the South (€15,808). The region's average GDP per capita was approximately 20,100 EUR.

The 2009 L'Aquila earthquake led to a sharp economic slowdown. However, according to statistics at the end of 2010, it seems that the economy of Abruzzo is recovering, despite the negative data regarding employment. In fact, at the end of 2010, Abruzzo's growth was 1.47%, which placed it fourth among the Italian regions with the highest annual growth rates after Lazio, Lombardy and Calabria. In 2011 Abruzzo's economic growth was +2.3%, the highest percentage among the regions of Southern Italy. The region is also the richest region of Southern Italy, with a GDP per capita higher than any other region of southern Italy (€21,574).

Abruzzo's industrial sector expanded rapidly, especially in mechanical engineering, transportation equipment and telecommunications. The structure of production in the region reflects the transformation of the economy from agriculture to industry and services. Although industry has developed strongly, it retains weak points due to the existence of only a few large businesses alongside a huge fabric of small and medium-sized businesses. Both pure and applied research are carried out in the region, where there are major institutes and factories involved in research in the fields of pharmaceuticals, biomedicine, electronics, aerospace and nuclear physics. The industrial infrastructure is spread throughout the region in industrial zones which have already been mentioned, the most important of which are Val Pescara, Val Sangro, Val Trigno, Val Vibrata and Conca del Fucino. A further activity worthy of note is

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seaside and mountain tourism, which is of considerable importance to the economy of the region. Agriculture, involving small holdings, has succeeded in modernising and offering high-quality products. The mostly small, agricultural holdings produce wine, cereals, sugar beet, potatoes, olives, vegetables, fruit and dairy products. Traditional products are saffron and liquorice. Most famous in the world is Abruzzo's wine Montepulciano d'Abruzzo; in the late 20th and early 21st century, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo earned a reputation as being one of the most widely exported DOC classed wine in Italy.

In the past decade, tourism has increased, in particular concerning internal and European arrivals. Abruzzo is world-famous for his wildlife parks (Abruzzo National Park, Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park, Maiella National Park) and regional park (Sirente Velino) and 38 protected areas between oasis, regional reserves and state reserves and also in the inland mountainous region has several ski resorts equipped; also coastal tourism and resort is very developed, in particular be mentioned the Trabocchi Coast, a very picturesque stretch of coastline known for the ancient fishing machines that can still be seen by tourists. Abruzzo's wealth of castles and medieval towns, especially around the town of L'Aquila, has earned it in some quarters the nickname of "Abruzzoshire", by analogy with the "Chiantishire", nickname sometimes used to refer to the Chianti area of Tuscany, but Abruzzo is still off the beaten path for most visitors to Italy.

Demographics

Although the population density of Abruzzo has increased over the last decades, it is still well below the Italian national average: in 2008, 123.4 inhabitants per km², compared to 198.8. At the province level, the density is varied: as of 2008 Pescara is the most densely populated with 260.1 inhabitants per km², whereas L'Aquila is the least densely populated with 61.3 inhabitants per km², although it has the largest area. After decades of emigration from the region, the main feature of the 1980s is the immigration from third world countries. The population increase is due to the positive net migration, as since 1991 more deaths than births were registered in Abruzzo (except for 1999, when their number was equal). In 2008, the Italian national institute of statistics ISTAT estimated that 59,749 foreign-born immigrants live in Abruzzo, equal to 4.5% of the total regional population.

The most serious demographic imbalance is between the mountainous areas of the interior and the coastal strip. The largest province, L'Aquila, is situated entirely in the interior and has the lowest population density. The movement of the population of Abruzzo from the mountains to the sea has led to the almost complete urbanization of the entire coastal strip especially in the province of Teramo and Chieti. The effects on the interior have been impoverishment and a demographic ageing, reflected by an activity rate in the province of L'Aquila which is the lowest of the provinces in Abruzzo – accompanied by geological degradation as a result of the absence of conservation measures. In the coastal strip, on the other hand, there is such a jumble of accommodation and activities that the environment has been changed with negative effects. The policy of providing incentives for development has resulted in the setting-up of industrial zones, some of which (Vasto, Avezzano, Carsoli, Gissi, Val Vibrata, Val di Sangro) have made genuine progress, while others (Val Pescara, L'Aquila) have run into trouble after initial success. The zones of Sulmona and Guardiagrele have turned out to be more or less failures. Outside these zones, the main activities are agriculture and tourism.

Culture

The most important museum is Museo Archeologico Nazionale d'Abruzzo in Chieti housing the famed warrior statue Warrior of Castrano found in a necropolis from 6th century B.C.. Of cultural importance are the Cathedral of Teramo, its archeological museum and the Roman theater, the Castello della Monica, the astronomical Observatory, the famous L'Aquila Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio – with the remains of Pope Celestine V, the Museo Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Santa Maria del Suffragio, the Forte Spagnolo, the 99 Spouts fountain, Gabriele D'Annunzio's house in Pescara, Campi's Scala Sancta and its church, the church of Santissima Annunziata in Sulmona, the cathedrals of Chieti, Lanciano, Guardiagrele, Atri and Pescara along with the castles of Ortona, Celano and Ortucchio.

At L'Aquila's Santa Maria di Collemaggio every 28–29 August is celebrated the Perdonanza Celestiniana, remembering the indulgentia, issued by Pope Celestine V to any who, "truly repentant and confessed" would visit that Church from the vespers of the vigil to the vespers of 29 August. Sulmona's Holy Week is commemorated with big

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traditional celebrations and rituals, such as 'La Madonna che Scappa in Piazza', where a huge statue of the Madonna, carried by a group of Sulmonesi part of Confraternities, runs through the square towards her Son resurrected. At Cocullo, in the province of L'Aquila, is yearly held the 'Festa dei serpari' in which the patron saint's statue covered by snakes is transported in a procession, it attracts thousands of both Italian and foreign visitors. In many Abruzzo villages in January is celebrated the Anthony the Great's feast with massive and scenic bonfires. In the past, the region of Abruzzo was well known for the transumanza, the migratory movement of sheep principally south to the region of Puglia during the cold winter months. The Feast of St. Biagio, the protector of the throat and of wool dealers, is the most widespread in Abruzzo. One of the most interesting and engaging rites takes place on 3 February in Taranta Peligna where every year since the sixteenth century an evocative ritual is carried out, entailing the distribution of "panicelle", that are small loaves, made of flour and water, in the shape of a blessing hand, which are distributed to the faithful. Between the province of Teramo and L'Aquila, under the Gran Sasso Tunnel are found the Laboratori Nazionali del Gran Sasso(LNGS) of the INFN, one of the three underground astroparticle laboratories in Europe. Interamnia World Cup the largest international youth handball competition worldwide takes place on a yearly basis in Teramo. It will reach its 42nd edition in July 2014.

Abruzzo holds many of Italy's best-preserved medieval and Renaissance hill towns that rival those in Umbria and Tuscany. Abruzzo boasts indeed twenty of The most beautiful villages in Italy, 2nd only to Umbria which has 22. These awards are not just for aesthetic beauty but also are for art and culture, historical importance and livability. The abrupt decline of Abruzzo's agricultural economy in the early to mid-20th-century saved some of the region's most beautiful hill towns from the onslaught of modern development. Many lie entirely within regional and national parks. Among the most well preserved are Castel del Monte and Santo Stefano di Sessanio, which lie in the Gran Sasso National Park on the edge of the high plain of Campo Imperatore and nestled beneath the Apennines' highest peaks; both hill towns, which were ruled by the Medicis for over a century-and-a-half, have relatively little tourism. Between the two towns sits Rocca Calascio, the ruin of an ancient fortress popular with film makers. Both Monteferrante and Roccascalegna are two best-representing Abruzzo villages in the province of Chieti. Within the Gran Sasso National Park is also found Castelli, an ancient pottery center whose artisans produced ceramics for most of the royal houses of Europe. Civitella del Tronto played a crucial role in the history of the unification of Italy. The fortress of Civitella is today the most visited monument in the whole Abruzzo region. Other medieval hill towns located fully within Abruzzo's park system are Pacentro in the Maiella National Park and Pescasseroli in the Abruzzo National Park. Pacentro, which features a 14th-century castle with two intact towers, has been little touched by modernization. The Shrine of Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows, in the province of Teramo, with average of 2 million visitors per year is one of the 15 most visited sanctuaries in the world. Capistrano, a small characteristic town in the province of L'Aquila, is the hometown of Saint John of Capistrano, Franciscan friar and Catholic priest, as well as the namesake of the Franciscan missions San Juan Capistrano in Southern California, the mission Mission San Juan Capistrano (Texas) and the city of San Juan Capistrano in Orange County.

In the last twenty years, studies showed Giulia (the name of the city founded in 1471 by Giulio Antonio Acquaviva) was an example of Renaissance ideal city, following the experiment of Pienza (1462), and the new teaching of Leon Battista Alberti and Francesco Di Giorgio Martini. It's thought the project was realized by Baccio Pontelli in a first time and the same Francesco Di Giorgio Martini in a second, because of the bond between the founder of Giulia and the most important courts of the time (Urbino in specific). But these names has been retracted and studies are underway.

The proximity to Rome, the protected natural reserves and landscapes which award the region as the greenest in Europe, the presence of some of the most beautiful Italian villages, its rich and heterogeneous gastronomy along with a long history of deep-rooted local tradition and authentic Italian culture make Abruzzo rank fifth among the Italian regions by tourist arrivals after Calabria, Marche, Sardinia and Trentino. In 2010, arrivals totalled 6,381,067 Italian and 925,884 foreign.

In 2015, the American organization Live and Invest Overseas included Abruzzo in the list of World's Top 21 Overseas Retirement Havens. The study was based on such factors like climate, infrastructure, health care, safety, taxes, cost of living and more.

There are three universities in the Abruzzo region:

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- University of L'Aquila
- University "G. d'Annunzio" of Chieti and Pescara
- University of Teramo

Harvard University bases an intensive summer Italian language and culture program in Vasto, a resort town on Abruzzo's southern coast.

Cuisine

Renowned for its variety and richness due to the heterogeneity of its territory, Abruzzo's cuisine is among the best in Italy. In 2013 the Italian organization, Confesercenti, surveyed the foreign tourists and determined that Abruzzo is the best Italian region in which to eat. Both the agricultural and coastal aspects of Abruzzo have contributed to its cuisine. Due to the mountains, much of Abruzzo was isolated from international influence until the 20th century. As a result, the region's cuisine remained unique. Popular dishes include:

- *Spaghetti alla chitarra*, flavored with peppers, pork, goose or lamb.
- *Gnocchi carrati*, flavored with bacon, eggs and pecorino cheese
- *Scrippelle*, a rustic French-style crêpe served either *mbusse* (a type of soup) or used to form a sort of soufflé with some ragù and stuffed with chicken liver, meatballs, hard-boiled eggs, and cheese
- *Pastuccia*, a polenta stew with sausage, eggs, and cheese
- *Arrosticini*, a skewered lamb dish
- *Pecora al cotturo*, lamb stuffed with a variety of mountain herbs and cooked in a copper pot
- Lamb cooked whole in a bread oven
- *Agnello cacio e ovo*, a lamb-based fricassee

Seafood is also popular, especially in coastal areas. The variety of fish available to the area has resulted in several fish-based *Brodetti* (broths), coming from such places as Vasto, Giulianova, and Pescara. These broths are often made by cooking fish, flavored with tomatoes, herbs, and peperoncino, in an earthenware pot. Rustic pizzas are also very common. Some of these are:

- *Easter Pizza*, a rustic cake with cheese and pepper from the Teramo area
- *Fiadoni* from Chieti, dough of eggs and cheese well risen, cooked in the oven in a thin casing of pastry
- A rustic tart pastry filled with everything imaginable: eggs, fresh cheeses, ricotta, vegetables, and all sorts of flavorings and spices.

Also from Teramo are the spreadable sausages flavored with nutmeg, liver sausages tasting of garlic and spices. The *ventricina* from the Vasto area is made with large pieces of fat and lean pork, pressed and seasoned with powdered sweet peppers and fennel and all encased in the dehydrated stomach of the pig itself. Atri and Rivisondoli are famous for cheeses. Mozzarella, either fresh or seasoned, made from ewe's milk, although a great number of lesser known varieties of these cheeses can be found all over Abruzzo and Molise.

The sweets of Abruzzo are world-famous and include:

- *Confetti*, sugar-coated almonds, from Sulmona
- *Torrone Nurzia*, a chocolate nougat from L'Aquila
- *Parozzo*, a cake-like treat made from a mixture of crushed almonds, and coated in chocolate.
- *Ferratelle* (also known as *Pizzelle*). A wafer cookie, often flavored with anise
- *Croccante*, a type of nougat made from almonds and caramelized sugar, often flavored with lemon

Best-known is the extra-virgin olive oil produced in Colline Teramane (Teramo hills), marked by the quality level DOP and considered one of the best in Italy.

Renowned wines like Montepulciano DOCG and Trebbiano d'Abruzzo DOC are judged to be amongst the world's finest. In 2012, a bottle of Trebbiano d'Abruzzo ranked No. 1 in the top 50 Italian wine award.

The region is also well known for the production of liquors such as Centerbe, Limoncello, Ratafia and Genziana.

Above information obtained from Wikipedia, 2018