

Piedmont (Piemonte)

General

Piedmont (/ˈpiːdmɒnt/ *PEED-mont*; Italian: *Piemonte*, pronounced [pjeˈmonte]); is a region in northwest Italy, one of the 20 regions of the country. It borders the Liguria region to the south, the Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna regions to the east and the Aosta Valley region to the northwest. It also borders France to the west and Switzerland to the northeast. It has an area of 25,402 square kilometres (9,808 sq mi) and a population of 4,396,293 as of 31 July 2016.

Administrative Divisions

The region is divided into the 7 administrative provinces and 1 metropolitan city. The areas and populations of these provinces are:

- Province of Alessandria 3,560 km² pop. 431,885
- Province of Asti 1,504 km² pop. 219,292
- Province of Biella 913 km² pop. 181,089
- Province of Cuneo 6,903 km² pop. 592,060
- Province of Novara 1,339 km² pop. 371,418
- Metropolitan City of Turin 6,821 km² ... pop. 2,291,719
- Province of Verbano-Cusio-Ossola 2,255 km² pop. 160,883
- Province of Vercelli 2,088 km² pop. 176,121

Turin is the Capital City of the region.

Toponymy

The name Piedmont comes from medieval Latin *Pedemontium* or *Pedemontis*, i.e., *ad pedem montium*, meaning “at the foot of the mountains” (the Alps) attested in documents of the end of the 12th century.

Geography

Piedmont is surrounded on three sides by the Alps, including Monviso, where the Po rises, and Monte Rosa. It borders with France (Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur), Switzerland (Ticino and Valais) and the Italian regions of Lombardy, Liguria, Aosta Valley and for a very small fragment with Emilia Romagna. The geography of Piedmont is 43.3% mountainous, along with extensive areas of hills (30.3%) and plains (26.4%).

Piedmont is the second largest of Italy's 20 regions, after Sicily. It is broadly coincident with the upper part of the drainage basin of the river Po, which rises from the slopes of Monviso in the west of the region and is Italy's largest river. The Po collects all the waters provided within the semicircle of mountains (Alps and Apennines) which surround the region on three sides.

From the highest peaks the land slopes down to hilly areas, (not always, though; sometimes there is a brusque transition from the mountains to the plains) and then to the upper, and then to the lower great Padan Plain. The boundary between the first and the second is characterized by resurgent springs, typical of the Padan Plain which supply fresh water both to the rivers and to a dense network of irrigation canals.

The countryside is very diversified: from the rugged peaks of the massifs of Monte Rosa and of Gran Paradiso, to the damp rice paddies of Vercelli and Novara, from the gentle hillsides of the Langhe and of Montferrat to the plains. 7.6% of the entire territory is considered protected area. There are 56 different national or regional parks, one of the most famous is the Gran Paradiso National Park located between Piedmont and the Aosta Valley.

History

Piedmont was inhabited in early historic times by Celtic-Ligurian tribes such as the Taurini and the Salassi. They were later subdued by the Romans (c. 220 BC), who founded several colonies there including *Augusta Taurinorum* (Turin) and *Eporedia* (Ivrea). After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the region was successively invaded by the Burgundians, the Ostrogoths (5th century), Byzantines, Lombards (6th century), and Franks (773).

In the 9th–10th centuries there were further incursions by the Magyars and Saracens. At the time Piedmont, as part of the Kingdom of Italy within the Holy Roman Empire, was subdivided into several marches and counties.

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In 1046, Oddo of Savoy added Piedmont to their main territory of Savoy, with a capital at Chambéry (now in France). Other areas remained independent, such as the powerful *comuni* (municipalities) of Asti and Alessandria and the marquisates of Saluzzo and Montferrat. The County of Savoy was elevated to a duchy in 1416, and Duke Emanuele Filiberto moved the seat to Turin in 1563. In 1720, the Duke of Savoy became King of Sardinia, founding what evolved into the Kingdom of Sardinia and increasing Turin's importance as a European capital.

The Republic of Alba was created in 1796 as a French client republic in Piedmont. A new client republic, the Piedmontese Republic, existed between 1798 and 1799 before it was reoccupied by Austrian and Russian troops. In June 1800 a third client republic, the Subalpine Republic, was established in Piedmont. It fell under full French control in 1801 and it was annexed by France in September 1802. In the congress of Vienna, the Kingdom of Sardinia was restored, and furthermore received the Republic of Genoa to strengthen it as a barrier against France.

Piedmont was a springboard for Italy's unification in 1859–1861, following earlier unsuccessful wars against the Austrian Empire in 1820–1821 and 1848–1849. This process is sometimes referred to as *Piedmontisation*. However, the efforts were later countered by the efforts of rural farmers.

The House of Savoy became Kings of Italy, and Turin briefly became the capital of Italy. However, when the Italian capital was moved to Florence, and then to Rome, the administrative and institutional importance of Piedmont was deeply reduced and the only remaining recognition to Piedmont's historical role was that the crown prince of Italy was known as the Prince of Piedmont. After Italian unification, Piedmont was one of the most important regions in the first Italian industrialization.

Economy

Lowland Piedmont is a fertile agricultural region. The main agricultural products in Piedmont are cereals, including rice, representing more than 10% of national production, maize, grapes for wine-making, fruit and milk. With more than 800,000 head of cattle in 2000, livestock production accounts for half of final agricultural production in Piedmont.

Piedmont is one of the great winegrowing regions in Italy. More than half of its 700 square kilometres (170,000 acres) of vineyards are registered with DOC designations. It produces prestigious wines as Barolo, Barbaresco, from the Langhe near Alba, and the Moscato d'Asti as well as the sparkling Asti from the vineyards around Asti. Indigenous grape varieties include Nebbiolo, Barbera, Dolcetto, Freisa, Grignolino and Brachetto.

The region contains major industrial centers, the main of which is Turin, home to the FIAT automobile works. Olivetti, once a major electronics industry whose plant was in Scarmagno, near Ivrea, has now turned into a small-scale computer service company. Biella produces tissues and silks. The city of Asti is located about 55 kilometres (34 miles) east of Turin in the plain of the Tanaro River and is one of the most important centers of Montferrat, one of the best known Italian wine districts in the world, declared officially on 22 June 2014 a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Alba is the home of Ferrero's chocolate factories and some mechanical industries. There are links with neighboring France via the Fréjus and the Colle di Tenda tunnels as well as the Montgenèvre Pass. Piedmont also connects with Switzerland with the Simplon and Great St Bernard passes. It is possible to reach Switzerland via a normal road that crosses Oriental Piedmont starting from Arona and ending in Locarno, on the border with Italy. The region's airport, Turin-Caselle, caters domestic and international flights. The region has the longest motorway network amongst the Italian regions (about 800 km). It radiates from Turin, connecting it with the other provinces in the region, as well as with the other regions in Italy. In 2001, the number of passenger cars per 1,000 inhabitants was 623 (above the national average of 575).

Tourism in Piedmont employs 75,534 people and currently comprises 17,367 companies operating in the hospitality and catering sector, with 1,473 hotels and tourist accommodations. The sector generates a turnover of €2,671 million, 3.3% of the €80,196 million which represents the total estimated spending on tourism in Italy. The region enjoys almost the same level of popularity among Italians and visitors from overseas. In 2002 there were 2,651,068 total arrivals. International visitors to Piedmont in 2002 accounted for 42% of the total number of tourists with 1,124,696 arrivals. The traditional leading areas for tourism in Piedmont are the Lake District – "Piedmont's Riviera", which accounts for 32.84% of total overnight stays, and the metropolitan area of Turin which accounts for 26.51%.

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In 2006, Turin hosted the XX Olympic Winter Games and in 2007, it hosted the XXIII Universiade. Alpine tourism tends to concentrate in a few highly developed stations like Alagna Valsesia and Sestriere. Around 1980, the long-distance trail Grande Traversata delle Alpi (GTA) was created to draw more attention to the many remote, sparsely inhabited valleys.

Since 2006, the Piedmont region has benefited from the start of the Slow Food movement and Terra Madre, events that highlighted the rich agricultural and viticultural value of the Po valley and northern Italy. In the same year, Piemonte Agency for Investments, Export and Tourism was founded in order to strengthen the international role of the area and its potential. It was the first Italian institution bringing together all activities carried out by pre-existing local organizations operating for the internationalization of the territory.

Education

The economy of Piedmont is anchored on a rich history of state support for excellence in higher education, including some of the leading universities in Italy. The Piedmont valley is home to the famous University of Turin, the Polytechnic University of Turin, the University of Eastern Piedmont and, more recently the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute.

Demographics

The population density in Piedmont is lower than the national average. In 2008 it was equal to 174 inhabitants per km², compared to a national figure of about 200. It rises however to 335 inhabitants per km² when just the Metropolitan City of Turin is considered, whereas Verbano-Cusio-Ossola is the less densely populated province (72 inhabitants per km²).

The population of Piedmont followed a downward trend throughout the 1980s. This drop is the result of the natural negative balance (of some 3 to 4% per year), while the migratory balance since 1986 has again become positive because of an excess of new immigration over a stable figure for emigration. The population as a whole has remained stable in the 1990s, although this is the result of a negative natural balance and a positive net migration.

The Turin metro area grew rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s due to an increase of immigrants from southern Italy and Veneto and today it has a population of approximately two million. As of 2008, the Italian national institute of statistics (ISTAT) estimated that 310,543 foreign-born immigrants live in Piedmont, equal to 7.0% of the total regional population. Most immigrants come from Eastern Europe (mostly from Romania, Poland, and Bulgaria) with smaller communities of African immigrants.

Government and Politics

The Regional Government (*Giunta Regionale*) is presided by the President of the Region (*Presidente della Regione*), who is elected for a five-year term and is composed by the President and the Ministers, who are currently 14, including a Vice President (*Vice Presidente*). In the last regional election, which took place on 29–30 March 2010, Roberto Cota (Lega Nord) defeated incumbent Mercedes Bresso (Democratic Party). In 2014 Cota chose not to stand again for President and the parties composing his coalition failed to agree on a single candidate, resulting in a landslide victory for Sergio Chiamparino, a Democrat who had been Mayor of Turin from 2001 to 2011.

Languages

As in the rest of Italy, Italian is the official national language. The main local languages are Piedmontese, Insubric (spoken in the eastern part of the region), Occitan (spoken by a minority in the Occitan Valleys situated in the Province of Cuneo and the Metropolitan City of Turin), and Franco-Provençal (spoken by another minority in the alpine heights of the Metropolitan City of Turin), like in the Susa valley and Walser (spoken by a minority in the Province of Vercelli and Province of Verbano-Cusio-Ossola).

Above information obtained from Wikipedia, 2018