

Abruzzo: A Beginner's Guide

This short article covers most of the essentials you may need to know about Abruzzo.

Location

Abruzzo is one of the twenty regions of Italy and is located centrally, approximately 70 miles to the east of Rome. Its eastern border is curtailed by the Adriatic Sea, and if Italy is 'boot-shaped', then Abruzzo is located near the back of the 'knee'. The historic city of L'Aquila is the regional capital of Abruzzo.

The Abruzzo region is divided into four distinct provinces: L'Aquila, Teramo, Chieti and Pescara (the capitals of these provinces being the towns of the same names). These four provinces are further divided into 305 communes (or municipalities).

Landscape

Given that the Apennine mountain range cuts through the heart of Abruzzo it is no surprise that nearly two thirds of the region is mountainous and encompasses the tallest peak of the Italian peninsula - Corno Grande at 2912m. The restless internal forces that shaped the landscape of Abruzzo, remain restless and the region has suffered a number of major earthquakes over its history. This rugged landscape makes it a magnet for skiing, climbing and hiking enthusiasts. Sprinkled amongst the breathtaking hills and mountains of Abruzzo are dozens of medieval castles, ancient villages and monasteries.

National Parks

Abruzzo is rich in national and regional parks, these protected areas are the habitat of many rare flora and fauna including the chamois antelopes, Apennine wolf and Marsican bear. Here are some of the major parks:

Parco Nazionale del Gran Sasso e Monti della (Gran Sasso National Park). Further info: <http://www.gransassolagapark.it>

Parco Naturale Regionale Sirente-Velino (Sirente Velino Regional Park). Further info: <http://www.parks.it/parko.sirente.velino/>

Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise (The Abruzzo National Park, also Lazio and Molise. Further info: www.parcoabruzzo.it

Parco Nazionale della Majella (Majella National Park). Further info: <http://www.parcomajella.it/>

Transport

Abruzzo can be reached by air directly into Pescara (from Stansted, UK - www.ryanair.com) on the Adriatic coast, or by either of the two Rome airports from a variety of starting points in Europe and the States.

Once in Abruzzo the most convenient way to explore is by car, this ensures that you access all areas including the beautiful mountain villages. The A25/A24 autostrada that traverses Abruzzo is modern, kept in good repair and is generally light on traffic, the country and mountain roads vary in quality, so watch out for potholes.

If a car isn't an option then there are regular trains from Rome and Pescara into the heart of Abruzzo. Several bus networks also traverse the region, but ensure you check locally when these arrive/depart, tickets are usually purchased at a nearby 'tabacchi', and don't forget to validate them in the machine on the bus.

If, however, you do happen to get lost, the people of Abruzzo, who are invariably friendly and gracious, are sure to help you along your way.