

Abruzzo, Italy

The romantic boot of [Italy](#) is known for its varied geography, with something for everyone's taste from plentiful seacoast, inland hills speckled with dreamy medieval towns, and alpine peaks. If you love it all and just can't decide which one is for you, in Abruzzo you don't have to. It encompasses all of this, and more.

Abruzzo is in the center of Italy, with its western border a mere 31 miles from Rome. Long considered part of southern Italy politically and culturally, it enjoys a central location that is bordered by the Adriatic Sea on the east, Le Marche on the north, Lazio on the west, and Molise to the south. It is an expansive territory of closely held traditions, vast natural splendor, picturesque towns, and miles of seashore.

Retire In Abruzzo



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With castles, fortresses, historic art-adorned cities, perfectly charming stone towns on hilltops, and more than a third of the region protected as park land, there are plenty of things to enjoy in Abruzzo. A well-known wine country produces one of Italy's famous vintages, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, along with other stellar varietals, and you won't have to look far to find wineries to visit. Vine-stripped hills extend from the mountain foothills towards the Adriatic Sea, with classic central Italy landscapes like you see on postcards.

There are three national parks that offer an abundance of outdoors sports and activities, so you can indulge in hiking, skiing, mountain biking, climbing, or paragliding in the many mountain zones. If water sports are more your thing, Abruzzo boasts 80 miles of coastline, with sandy expanses and some lovely coves where the hills meet the sea. Golfers will delight in the region's three clubs, while culture seekers will enjoy the art, theater, and events offered throughout the year. Abruzzo also has universities in Teramo, Chieti, Pescara, and L'Aquila which infuse the vibrant student presence and activities into the mix.

The primary appeal comes in the form of beautiful smaller cities and towns. Built on hills with monuments, palazzi, and cobbled streets, if you visited without knowing the region, you might think you were in [Tuscany](#). Places like Penne with its

tidy lanes, bustling weekly market, beautiful stone-built buildings, and upscale atmosphere exude the aura that you come to expect in a hill town in the more famous region of Italy. Sweet Sulmona with its Roman history and urban plan was the birthplace of the Roman poet Ovid and has a remarkably elegant and upscale look and feel to it. It is also the sweetest place in Abruzzo with its confetti candies; the fancy sugar-coated almonds. Lovely towns dot the hilltops that skirt the border with Le Marche, offering the same landscapes but with lower prices. Seaside towns like Ortona and Vasto give views and year-round life in easy reach of the water, while Pescara is a modern city with a commercial port, rail connections, and airport. What it lacks in charm it makes up for in verve and life, with clubs, action, and shopping.

Lifestyle in Abruzzo



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Whether you want a night at the theater or a simple bocce ball game (is a ball sport, similar to boules) you'll find both here. An evening passeggiata (leisurely stroll) and a pre-dinner drink are cherished traditions, while centuries-old festivals, including medieval palio (horse racing) events, and religious processions are still carried on. There are also food festivals that let you enjoy the area's specialties at low prices, along with dancing and socializing. From grape harvests, chestnuts, sausage, fresh fish, and the myriad pasta dishes, you'll find a festival for it in Abruzzo.

While much of the region holds its rural roots close to heart, it doesn't mean culture is overlooked. There are beautiful velvet-draped opera theaters in Sulmona, Teramo, and Chieti that offer full schedules of shows, concerts, and operas. There are also plenty of churches adorned with excellent artwork, and museums scattered in nearly every sizable town.

Outdoors enthusiasts will be in heaven in Abruzzo. The region is home to Italy's largest national park—the Gran Sasso, along with two other sizable national parks and a couple of nature preserves. There is no lack of mountain biking, hiking, horse riding, climbing, skiing, and fishing. Those looking for nature's curative remedies will delight in the mineral-rich hot springs, and accompanying spas found here. And, so much coastline, there are plenty of beaches and coves to satisfy everyone's taste. This is where you find the distinctive trabocchi, old-time wooden fishing platforms. Some are still in use and make picturesque backdrops for your day of sun and surf.

Cost of Living in Abruzzo



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With the low cost of living, this is an ideal region for those who want the slower pace and beauty of Italian life while sticking to a budget. There are plenty of inexpensive festivals and annual events for affordable fun, and even the theater shows aren't pricey. With the area's rural farms, you'll find excellent seasonal produce; and local fishermen bring in fresh catches regularly which you'll find in markets around the region. The no-nonsense Abruzzese love their traditional trattorias that serve good food at equally good prices. Pizza and beer for two will cost you about \$20; breakfast of cappuccino and cornetto, (the Italian croissant), is just \$2.50. A day at the beach, with a colorful umbrella and lounge chairs runs about \$14.

Get a haircut and style for \$25, or even less in some towns. A manicure will run you about \$12 and a pedicure just \$22. A season ticket for a nine-show theater series in Pescara is listed at only \$110, while a popular musical in Sulmona's sophisticated historic theater costs \$27. A bus ticket to Rome from Pescara, Teramo, or Chieti runs between \$9 to \$14 one way, while a train ride to Venice starts at \$37. Excellent wine is found everywhere for just a few dollars a bottle, or you can take your jugs to the wineries and fill them up with table wine for a mere \$2 a liter. And, if you're in Ortona, you can enjoy free-flowing wine absolutely free at the wine fountain. What's not to love about Abruzzo.

The Relaxed Lifestyle



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Part of Italy's appeal is the laidback lifestyle it offers, and Abruzzo is no exception. The largest city is Pescara, with a population of about 325,000. Even there, life doesn't feel frenetic. Smaller towns offer relaxed living but without forsaking con-

veniences; even villages have the necessary services for daily life, and the provincial cities are never far away. If you want to get away from it all, mountain hamlets offer seclusion surrounded by nature. But the most appealing places are those in the hills, between the mountains and the sea, so you can enjoy the best of both worlds.

But let's not forget the people. The Abruzzesi are a big part of what makes Abruzzo special. In our travels in the region, we've been offered coffee by strangers, given samples of homemade cheese, and, once when we were lost, were led down the mountain by a farmer who wanted to make sure we didn't take a wrong turn. One friend who spent her childhood summers in Abruzzo swears, "The Abruzzesi are strong, steadfast, and generous to a fault." They will go out of their way (sometimes literally) to help and welcome you.

Indulge in the Joy of Discovery



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Because Abruzzo is off most travelers' radars, you'll get to feel the joy of discovering places that aren't full of tourists. There are many gems that will surprise and delight you. Why not set your sights on towns like Scanno, known for its goldsmiths, set near a heart-shaped lake where the ancient dress and festivals are still alive. Or wander the cobble streets of Penne, with dignified palaces and beautiful churches lined up within the ancient city gates. Ortona is a worthy choice, the alluring old town and Spanish fortress resting above the sea. Pretty Pacentro has the region's oldest castle, along with tall towers and a striking setting surrounded by parks and mountains. Cozy Corropoli is a compact but cute town amidst stripes of vines and olive groves. There are dozens of unheralded places to explore. Wherever you choose, you'll enjoy the pace, the hospitality, and the striking beauty of Abruzzo.