



EXCURSIONS AND ACTIVITIES TO SUIT ALL TASTES

SULMONA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS OFFER SOME OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPES OF THE ABRUZZO REGION, AND DISCOVERING THEM MAKES YOUR STAY IN THE TOWN EVEN MORE ENJOYABLE.

FROM SULMONA YOU CAN GO ON NATURE TRAILS, TRY HORSE TREKKING, SEE ANCIENT MOUNTAIN VILLAGES, VISIT PLACES OF ARTISTIC, GASTRONOMIC OR HISTORICAL INTEREST, OR TAKE PART IN WINTER AND SUMMER SPORTS.

ENCHANTING LITTLE VILLAGES, A NUMBER OF MEDIEVAL ABBEYS, CASTLES OR ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES ARE TO BE FOUND ALL AROUND, AND THE MOUNTAIN AREAS OF THE FAMOUS NATIONAL PARKS OF ABRUZZO, LAZIO, MOLISE, AND MAIELLA ARE WITHIN EASY REACH. CLOSE BY TOO ARE THE REGIONAL NATURE RESERVES OF THE SAGITTARIO GORGES, THE PESCARA SPRINGS, THE MOUNT GENZANA ALTO GIZIO AND THE SAN VENANZIO GORGES.

YOU CAN ALSO OPT FOR RELAXING RAMBLES IN THE HEALTHY AIR, TREKKING ALONG COUNTRY PATHS, FOR EXCITING MOUNTAIN BIKE RIDES, OR FOR SPECTACULAR MOTOR CYCLE TOURS ACROSS MOUNTAIN GORGES AND OTHERWISE INACCESSIBLE ROUTES. THE MOST DARING VISITOR CAN EVEN TRY PARAGLIDING, HANG-GLIDING, PARAMOTORING OR ZIPLINING.

SHOULD A DISH OF TASTY FOOD BE TO YOUR LIKING, YOU COULD DO NO BETTER THAN TAKE A DISCOVERY TRIP TO ONE OF OUR OLD-FASHIONED VILLAGES, WHICH ARE INEVITABLY WELL KNOWN FOR THEIR OWN PARTICULAR LOCAL FOOD ITEM OR TRADITIONAL AND AUTHENTICALLY RURAL DISH. THIS ENABLES THE VISITOR TO EXPERIENCE PLACES THROUGH TASTES AND AROMAS.

APART FROM THE OLIVE GROVES AND VINEYARDS THAT ABRUZZO BOASTS, THERE ARE ALSO NEW TASTES TO BE SAMPLED IN, OR VISITS TO BE MADE TO SMALL FARMS WITH EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES, MINI-CREAMERIES AND BEE-KEEPING WORKSHOPS.

THE NATURAL BEAUTY, COUNTRYSIDE AND TRADITIONS OF THE ABRUZZO REGION WERE OFTEN CELEBRATED BY POETS OF THE PAST, WHO ALSO WROTE ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF THE AREA WHOSE OFTEN STERN APPEARANCE BELIED THEIR GENEROSITY OF SPIRIT. THE POETS ALSO SANG OF THE JOURNEYS UNDERTAKEN BY THESE PEOPLE ACROSS AN AGE-OLD REGION IN WHICH TIME STOOD STILL.



foto: Max Verrocchi



foto: Eduardo Gentile



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foto: Luca Schiavo



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SULMO MIHI
VIA
EST

Excursions

from the city to the surroundings

foto: Lucio Le Donne

VILLAGE TOURS OF THE SAGITTARIO VALLEY

SULMONA / ANVERSA DEGLI ABRUZZI / CASTROVALVA / VILLALAGO / SCANNO

(round trip: 44 miles - full day trip)

The route which opens into the gorges of the River Sagittario is truly spectacular and allows you to stop off at several charming old villages which take you from the Peligna basin to the Abruzzo National Park. The first of these villages is **Anversa**, with the ruins of its 12th century medieval castle and its well known Nature Reserve of the Sagittario Gorges. Next, perched strategically on a spur on the mountain, is the tiny hamlet of **Castrovalva** with its few dozen residents. Then comes **Villalago** and the Hermitage of San Domenico. Finally we have Lake Scanno and the village of **Scanno** with its web of steep narrow streets and underpasses, its lordly houses and its baroque churches.

OTHER OPTIONS

Not far from Anversa degli Abruzzi is the village of Cocullo lying between the Marsica region and the Peligna valley, where every 1st of May the festival of San Domenico takes place. It is also known as 'The Festival of the Snake Catchers' and is famous for a statue of the saint draped with live snakes which have been caught locally being carried along as part of the procession. Also of interest is the Centre for the Study of Popular Traditions ('Centro Studi di Documentazione per le Tradizioni Popolari'), which is open the whole year round.



VILLAGE TOURS OF THE MAIELLA NATIONAL PARK

SULMONA / PACENTRO / CAMPO DI GIOVE / PESCOCOSTANZO / CANSANO

(round trip: 55 miles - full day trip)

The town of **Pacentro**, dominated by the Caldora Castle dating back to the 12th century, offers marvellous views over the Maiella mountain range and the Peligna basin below. If we then carry on along St. Leonard's Pass (Passo San Leonardo) at 1282 metres as far as **Campo di Giove**, we come to **Pescocostanzo** with its fascinating and well preserved old town centre. Also worth a visit here is the splendid Collegiate Church of Santa Maria del Colle towering above the neatly laid out streets where you can wander along and admire the various forms of architecture and local construction. From here we cross **St. Anthony's Forest** (Bosco di Sant'Antonio) with its ancient beech trees, and arrive at the village of **Cansano**, from where we finally make our way back to Sulmona.

OTHER OPTIONS

As an alternative trip: **Sulmona / Pettorano sul Gizio / Roccapia / Pescocostanzo / Rivisondoli** (half day trip).

Special attractions

- Campo di Giove**
- Civic Museum of Palazzo Nanni
- Museum of Local Traditions of Casa Quaranta
- Famous traditional Gialletto Campogiovese beans
- Cansano**
- Ocriticum Archeological Nature Park, with temples to Jove and Hercules and chapel of Ceres and Venus
- Documentation centre with findings from the Ocriticum archeological site and photo exhibition on Abruzzo emigration
- Lamb and cheese festival in August

Pacentro

- Festival of the Madonna of Loreto and Gypsy Race (gypsy in the local dialect indicates a barefoot runner), first Sunday in September
- Making of terracotta statuettes for the Christmas Crib and handcrafted work with Maiella white stone

Rivisondoli

- Living Crib, 5th January
- High mountain thermal spring facility, ideal for beauty treatment

Roccapia

- Special lamb festival called "al cutturo", second week of August

Villalago

- Underwater Crib, unique in Abruzzo and the whole of the Appennine region, set up beneath the clear waters of the Lake of San Domenico
- Restored working mill (near Fontevecchia), with original grinder and fulling mechanism for processing fabrics

Other attractions at Anversa degli Abruzzi, Pescocostanzo, Pettorano sul Gizio and Scanno form part of the "Taste Tour" (see below).



TOUR OF THE ABBEYS

SULMONA / CORFINIO / CASTIGLIONE A CASAURIA

(round trip: 49 miles – full or half day trip)

If you are a lover of medieval religious architecture, within a few miles radius of Sulmona you can visit three of the most significant monuments in the whole of the Abruzzo region. The impressive **Abbey of Santo Spirito al Morrone**, founded in the 13th century by the later-to-be Pope Celestine V, retains both its fine baroque facade and the 15th century Caldora chapel with its rich decoration and five internal courtyards. The romanesque **Basilica of San Pelino**, in the ancient bishopric of **Corfinio**, boasts some impressive religious artefacts including a notable 12th century pulpit. It is also well worth visiting Corfinio's Archeological Museum with many remains from an ancient Roman settlement, which is an ongoing subject of study with digging still taking place. In the **Abbey of San Clemente a Casauria**, founded in the year 871 and now considered one of the most significant artistic and architectural sites of the region, there are to be seen an ancient goblet, an early pulpit and an elaborate Easter candlestick.

OTHER INTERESTING RELIGIOUS MONUMENTS

The **Celestine Hermitage of Saint Onofrio** in Sulmona; the **Abbey of San Liberatore a Maiella** at Serramonacesca; the **Cistercian Abbey of Santa Maria Arabona** at Manoppello Scalo; the Abbey of Santo Spirito a Maiella; and the **Celestine Hermitage of San Bartolomeo in Legio** at Roccamorice.

Special attractions

Corfinio

- Roman mausoleums
- 'Antonio De Nino' Civic Archeological Museum and Lapidarium
- 'Don Nicola Colella' Archeological Park consisting of the San Giacomo Plain, Italic Temple and Sanctuary of Saint Ippolito



VILLAGE TOURS OF THE ABRUZZO NATIONAL PARK

SULMONA / BARREA / CIVITELLA ALFEDENA / PESCASSEROLI

(round trip: 104 miles - full day trip)

In only 45 minutes, you find yourself as though by magic in the fabled and breathtaking landscapes of the Abruzzo National Park. All around there are thick beech forests, tiny lakes with reflected in them the wildest mountains of the Central Apennines, and charming little villages such as **Barrea** with its picturesque lake, the medieval **Civitella Alfedena**, and the town of **Pescasseroli**, which houses the Park's visitor centre. You can go on delightful rambles to places like the **Camosciara** Nature Reserve or the **Val di Rose**, or attempt more difficult walks along the many well maintained paths.

Special attractions

Barrea

- Antiquarium of 'Civiltà Safina'
- Castle

Civitella Alfedena

- Area frequented by lynxes
- Museum and area of wolves

Pescasseroli

- Animal zone of the Abruzzo National Park, with facilities for care and recovery for injured animals in the Park
- Palazzo Sipari (birthplace of the philosopher Benedetto Croce)

TASTE TOURS

OLIVE OIL

'Everything my daughters touched was transformed into grain, or into pure wine, or into olives, Minerva's berries', wrote the Latin poet Ovid, who was born in Sulmona in 43 BC. He was celebrating the fine quality olives which are still produced in specific parts of the region such as **Bugnara**, **Introdacqua**, **Pacentro**, **Pettorano sul Gizio**, **Prezza**, **Raiano** and **Vittorito**.

The lower slopes of the mountain range which encircles Sulmona is rich in silver olive groves. The trees are hundreds of years old and yield olives of different types. They are named *rustica e gentile* ('rustic and kind'), varieties said to match the character of the local population.

Special attractions

In the San Venanzio Gorges at **Raiano**, known as the Città dell'Olio ('City of Oil'), you can go to the picturesque

Hermitage of San Venanzio, perched over the Aterno River; you can also visit the Fantasia olive ancient press and in the warmer seasons try the olive oil ice cream and other flavours offered, all made with local organic ingredients.

At **Bugnara** the ancient Palazzo Alesi Villapiana olive press has been restored, and there are also other modern presses at **Raiano**, **Prezza** and **Vittorito**, where you can enjoy tastings and make purchases. At **Pettorano sul Gizio** the Industrial Archeology Park is of interest with its ancient workshops (three horizontal mills and a felt mill and copper works), all water-driven, and also Cantelmo Castle with its own local museum. Typical dishes of this area are *Cazzarielli e Mugnoli*, small dumplings made with flour and water and dressed with locally picked greens. *Mugnoli* also taste good when conserved in oil and served as a side dish or tasty starter.

Taste tips

At Bugnara, sheep's cheese festival in June; at Campo di Fano (Prezza district), Sulmona red garlic festival in July; at Pacentro, *polta* festival (local peasant dish unique to this area with legumes and green vegetables stir fried with oil, garlic and chili peppers) in August; at Pettorano sul Gizio, festival of *Polenta Rognosa* ('messy polenta') on 6 January, with polenta cooked in copper pans and served in slices dressed and baked in the oven – followed by the Taste Festival (*Sapori in Festa*) in August; at Prezza, artichoke and olive oil festival in May; at Raiano, cherry harvest festival in May/June

WINE

The poet Ovid often mentions the produce of the fertile land in which he was born and in his work there are also references to the abundance of water and above all to the grapes and the wine in the area. The villages of **Pratola Peligna**, **Prezza** and **Vittorito** constitute an area that has always had its own grape harvests and produced fine red wines such as *Montepulciano d'Abruzzo* and white wines such as *Trebbiano* and *Cerasuolo*, the latter unique for its cherry colour.

Special attractions

At **Vittorito**, known as the Città del Vino ('City of Wine'), you should visit the ancient wine cellars and the wine museum; at **Prezza** there is a wine cellar hewn into the rocks and at **Pratola Peligna** you can stroll through the vineyards. There are visitor tours of all the high quality wine establishments in the area. Then at **Pratola Peligna** you can also visit an enterprise where hand-made pasta is produced and see how pasta used to be made everywhere. You can have a taste of the quality honey produced in another establishment and also go to the Sanctuary of Saint Maria della Libera, which is visited by pilgrims from all over the region.

Taste tips

At Vittorito, wine festival in August; at Pratola Peligna festival of 'Le Uve dei Peligni' with art, music, culture and wine tasting in the old town centre, in August.

DAIRY PRODUCTS

'September, come on, it's time to migrate. Now in the lands of Abruzzi my shepherds leave the folds and go down to the sea ...' (Gabriele D'Annunzio)

Grass covered paths, ancient pastures once full of flocks of sheep, men, guard dogs, all still remain in our region, sometimes crossing or travelling parallel to modern highways which lead down from the hills to plains touching enchanting mountain villages where natural and man-made beauty have lived in harmony for centuries. A tantalising gastronomic journey is from the Sagittario Valley to the plateaus ('Altopiani Maggiori') via **Anversa degli Abruzzi**, **Scanno** and **Pescocostanzo**, offering the chance to try those dairy products which are a basic element of the local cuisine and are never missing from the dinner table. These products are an essential part of any search for those tastes which are the most genuine and typical elements of the identity of a people rooted in the transhumance tradition.

Special attractions

Anversa degli Abruzzi dominates the final stretch of the picturesque Sagittario Gorges where the limpid waters of the Cavuto Springs flow out. The village gave inspiration to the Abruzzi poet Gabriele D'Annunzio, who chose the place as a setting for his 'La Fiaccola sotto il moggio' ('The Flame under the Bushel') and for this reason it is the home of the D'Annunzio Literary Park.

Scanno is a mountain village in the area of heart-shaped Lake Scanno, where still today elderly women wear traditional local dress and a celebration of this takes place every 14th of August ('Catenaccio') evoking the village's ancient marriage rite. Of great interest are the Wool Museum and the goldsmiths and bobbin lace shops.

Pescocostanzo is remarkable for the beauty which breathes from all its elaborate stonework, from every piece of wrought ironwork it produces, from every piece of bobbin lace in its Museum and from every piece of watermarked jewellery in its goldsmiths' shops.

Taste tips

At **Anversa degli Abruzzi** we advise a visit to a bio-agritourism establishment that produces sheep's cheese, juniper ricotta and sheep salami; **Scanno** is renowned for its cow's and sheep's milk cheese, best tasted with the local honey, and boasts the traditional *Pan dell'Orso*, *Mostaccioli* and other sweet foods local to Scanno; **Pescocostanzo** has large pasture meadows which surround the place and contribute greatly to its wholly salubrious environment and to enjoyment at table of the freshest possible cheeses - ricotta, scamorza, fiordilatte, caciocavallo.

ACTIVITIES TREKKING

There are many trekking routes of varying distance and difficulty in the area immediately around Sulmona. These are available at any time between Spring and Autumn.

Sulmona / Passo S. Leonardo / Monte Morrone

After a 30 minute drive to St. Leonard's Pass, you can walk to the summit of Mount Morrone (2061 metres) along a path of intermediate difficulty in around 3½ hours. The descent takes around half an hour less.

Mount Morrone offers breathtaking views on to the slopes of the nearby Maiella mountain and of the whole of the Peligna Valley.

Sulmona / Campo di Giove / Monte Amaro

To travel from the undulating hinterland of Abruzzo to the far off coast of the Adriatic Sea, you can take the half-hour drive from Sulmona to the Fonte Romana area near Campo di Giove and from there proceed uphill on foot for around 5 hours to the top of Mount Amaro, at 2793 metres the second highest peak in the whole of the Apennines. On the way up your eyes will feast on a wonderful almost lunar landscape and the view from the top needs to be seen to be believed, a true 360° panorama. To get back following the same route takes around 4 hours.

Other mountain routes

The **Altopiani Maggiori** area which lies between Sulmona and the Sangro river basin; the **Serra Rocca di Chiarano** and **Mount Marsicano**, both of which are to be found between the Maiella National Park and the Abruzzo National Park; and finally **Mount Genzana** with the **Serra Sparvera**.

FOR LOVERS OF OUTINGS ON HORSEBACK ...

Sulmona / Pacentro

Taking an easy path, within two hours you can reach Pacentro, a very pleasant spot, included in the official list of "The Most Beautiful Villages in Italy", and offering a panoramic view of the whole Peligna Valley.

OTHER OPTIONS

A number of riding schools offer horseback activities in natural surroundings among vineyards, olive groves and paths in the localities of the Peligna Valley, the Sagittario Valley, the Subequana Valley, the Plateaus (Altopiani Maggiori) and the Tirino Valley.

... OR ON A DONKEY

During the summer season, donkey trekking is available in the neighbourhood of Introdacqua (Mount Genzana area).

Special attractions

Introdacqua

- 12th century medieval tower
- Panoramic view over Monte Plaia
- Thanksgiving Festival, 2nd Sunday in November
- Special Solina spelt and wheat grown from biological culture; local certificated variety of onions

FOR WINTER SPORTS' LOVERS

A large number of skiing zones and installations are located in the area. The famous skiing zone of the **Alto Sangro** and the **Altopiano delle Cinque Miglia (Monte Pratello – Aremogna – Pizzalto – Pescocostanzo Vallefura)** is only 22 miles away and has over 60 miles of slopes with the most up-to-date snow facilities provided and 38 miles of cross-country skiing trails. The **Campo di Giove** slopes (alpine skiing) are 10 miles away. The slopes and trails of **Scanno** (alpine and cross-country skiing) 20 miles away.

OTHER OPTIONS

At Roccaraso there is the Palaghiaccio, a multi-purpose facility also used for international ice skating and hockey tournaments. In the Pescocostanzo Vallefura district there are activities such as free riding, night time skiing and snowshoeing.

AND FOR THE MOST ENTERPRISING VISITORS

Rock Climbing at nearby Roccamorice (34 miles away), with more than 200 routes available and also in other localities in the region.

Canoeing and kayaking, on the River Tirino about 15 miles from Sulmona and on the River Aterno in the Pescara area.

Wind surfing and canoeing on the lakes of Scanno and Barrea.

Sky sports: hang gliding, paragliding, paramotoring, panoramic two-seater gyroplane rides, off Mount Morrone for example.

Bungee jumping, from the Salle bridge, with a 90 metre jump and first bounce of 65 metres.

Zipline Maiella, in Pacentro, freefall of almost 100 metres at 778 metres, with up-to-the-minute facilities.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Archery in the nearby town of Villalago.

Seasonal fishing on the Sagittario, Tirino and Gizio rivers and sport fishing on the many small lakes situated in the surrounding area: Pratola Peligna (Lake Ponte la Torre); Pettorano sul Gizio (Lake Conca); Bugnara (La Fenice); Lake Scanno.

Panoramic tours in cable cars for 6 or 10 people, among the most up-to-date in the whole of Europe. They allow visitors to have an intimate mountain experience in summer, with mountain chalets open in winter, and e-bike tours organized in the districts of Alto Sangro and Altopiano delle Cinque Miglia.

Historic train tour an evocative journey on the tracks of the "Transiberiana d'Italia", crossing spectacular mountain landscapes and transporting you to discover villages, crafts, typical gastronomy and local traditions.

