

CENTRAL ITALY TRAVEL EXHIBITION

Travel itineraries in Marche, Umbria, Lazio and Abruzzo

Land, history, art, nature, wellness, wine and food

ART AND CULTURE

Lazio, Umbria and Marche

Journeying from one region to the next, small towns and varying landscapes give way to one another: destinations, hitherto unknown, that will satisfy every kind of tourist. Along these roads visitors will experience a true holiday, moving from town to town, enjoying new thrills and new flavours thanks to the skillful use of local products.

Rieti

Rieti (405 m a.s.l.) lies in a valley along the river Velino, shadowed by the massif Monte Terminillo. Writers from the classical era thought of Rieti as the geographical centre of Italy (*Umbilicus Italiae*). It was founded at the beginning of the Iron Age and later became part of the Sabina region. The town's strategic position along the Via Salaria (a very important road connecting Rome to the Adriatic Sea) accounted for its rapid growth. Eventually the Sabines had to make way for the Romans who ruled the city for many years and carried out important works such as the reclamation of the Lake Velinus. Rieti continued to grow until the Middle Ages, when it became a free commune and Papal seat. From the medieval era the town retains the urban structure of the old town centre and several monuments: the Cathedral, the Bishop's Palace, and the remains of the town walls, among others.

Leonessa

Leonessa (969 m a.s.l.) was founded in 1278 and for six centuries was part of the Abruzzo region, in the province of L'Aquila; only in 1927 did it become part of Lazio. The town was awarded the Orange Flag recognition by Touring Club Italiano. The town centre is characterized by medieval houses with low colonnades and 16th- and 17th-century noble mansions along the straight streets crisscrossing the town. In the 15th-century church of San Francesco, inside a gothic side chapel there is a grand 16th-century nativity scene with polychrome terracotta figurines. Leonessa is a popular destination for summer vacations and winter sports too ("Campo stella" ski area on the northern side of Mount Terminillo).

Cascia

Lying in the most mountainous area of Umbria, Cascia owes its relevance to the sanctuary dedicated to Saint Rita – one of the most important spiritual centres of the region and popular pilgrimage destination – but also to its welcoming atmosphere and good food. The town was founded during the Roman period and experienced the height of its splendour during the Middle Ages. Under the rule of the State of the Church it became an important stronghold on the border with the Kingdom of Naples. Saint Rita was born in 1382 and was canonized in 1900. Saint Rita has devotees all over the world and thousands of people visit her Sanctuary every year. Not far from Cascia, in Roccaporena, in the house where she was born mementos from her life are still kept.

Norcia

Norcia is a small jewel of a town where visitors can alternate between culinary and cultural outings. Its origins date before the Roman era; in 209 B.C.E. it was conquered and provided with walls. In the 13th-century another set of walls were built above the pre-existing ones and thus were the town's borders established. Its structure underwent several changes caused by a series of earthquakes. The town is most known because of Saint Benedict, the first Christian monk and founder of the Benedictine Order. The main

town square, dedicated to him, houses the Basilica of Saint Benedict (14th-century) and other buildings that are the expression of the town's civic and religious history.

Castelluccio di Norcia

Castelluccio (1451 m a.s.l.) enjoys an elevated position over three plains: Pian Grande, Pian Piccolo and Pian Perduto. The plateau is surrounded by gentle, grass-covered mountains that during the months of June and July become a breath-taking mosaic of colours thanks to the flowering of lentil fields, which produces a highly spectacular natural event that is widely renowned.

The Castelluccio di Norcia lentil is at the foundation of local economy: the geographical features of the land (poor soil and cold climate) make it small, supple and full of flavour, and it's identified and protected by the PGI label (Protected Geographical Indication).

Montemonaco – Montefortino – Amandola

These three charming small towns (Montemonaco is set at 988 m a.s.l, one of the highest towns in the Marche region) offer breath-taking panoramas spanning from the mountains to the sea. They are perched on the slopes of the Sibillini mountains and are the starting points of many excursions with beautiful views and rich with history: Monte Sibilla (2175 m), *Gole dell'Infernaccio* gorges, *Madonna dell'Ambro* sanctuary and the Abbey of St. Ruffino and St. Vitale.

Sarnano

Sarnano (539 m a.s.l.) boasts a very well-preserved medieval town centre, separate from the modern town centre, Piazza della Libertà. Old houses overlook steep, narrow alleys that lead to the main square, Piazza Alta, the highest point and centre of the medieval town. Piazza Alta is flanked by the Church of Santa Maria Assunta, which dates back to the 13th-century, and several medieval buildings: Palazzo dei Priori, Palazzo del Popolo (which houses the theatre Teatro della Vittoria) and Palazzetto del Podestà. Sarnano is also renowned for its spa centre, for winter sports facilities and for the Orange Flag recognition awarded by Touring Club Italiano.

San Ginesio

San Ginesio (696 m a.s.l.) was one of the most important communes of the March of Ancona (13th – 14th centuries) until it became part of the State of the Church. The medieval structure is almost completely preserved to this day, and the stone and brick walls, which were built between the 14th and 15th centuries, are of great interest. The façade of the Collegiate church is the only example in the Marche region of a particular branch of Gothic style called *Gotico fiorito*. San Ginesio is also called "The Balcony of the Sibillini mountains" because of its breath-taking panorama spanning from Monte Conero to the Sibillini mountain range. It was recognized as one of "The most beautiful villages in Italy"; in 2002 it was awarded the Orange Flag recognition by Touring Club Italiano.

Urbisaglia

Urbisaglia (310 m a.s.l.) is set on an elevated position overlooking the valley of the river Fiastra. It was born as a free commune during the Middle Ages and grew above the ruins of the ancient Roman town of *Urbs Salvia*. An imposing fortress towers over the old town centre. Urbisaglia owes its renown to the remains of the old Roman town: the cistern, the theatre, the amphitheatre and the cryptoporticus are still visible and

accessible to tourists. Urbisaglia has for several years been the recipient of the Orange Flag award and has also received recognition for its efforts in increasing and improving public green areas.

Abbadia di Fiastra

The Abbadia di Fiastra Nature Reserve is home to the Abbey of Chiaravalle di Fiastra, which was founded in 1142 by a group of Cistercian monks, who built it using materials removed from the ruins of nearby *Urbs Salvia*. The Abbey is one of the most relevant examples of Cistercian architecture in Italy. With its simple and stark style, the church reflects the order's way of life. The cloister connected the different areas of the monastery, including the chapter house. The Giustiniani Bandini Mansion is also of great interest: it is named after the last owners of the abbey. All around the monastery, the Nature Reserve offers footpaths, meadows, fields, streams and a 100-hectare wood.

Macerata

Macerata is a typical historical centre founded during the Middle Ages, in particular during the period of the Communes. Situated on a hill at 311 m above sea level, Macerata was founded in 1138 and grew over the centuries. Its historical centre is completely enclosed within 15th- and 16th-century walls and appears architecturally harmonious thanks to the widespread use of bricks. The town is known thanks to its University, founded in 1540, and to the Sferisterio Opera Festival, which every summer attracts visitors from all over the world.

MARCHE AND VALNERINA

Art and Nature

This tour can be made starting from either Fabriano or Cingoli, and then through Visso and the Valnerina. It begins in the gentle, hilly landscapes of the provinces of Macerata and Ancona and ends in the Valnerina, an ancient route that connected Visso to Terni, the Adriatic Sea to the Tyrrhenian Sea, characterized by deep, narrow valley floors flanked by steep mountainsides.

ROUTE A

Fabriano

Fabriano (325 m a.s.l.), whose origin is very old, keeps a well-preserved historical centre and is surrounded by a beautiful natural landscape. This small city of art has been an important cultural hub since the 13th/14th centuries when, also thanks to the economic growth brought about by the paper trade, architectural and pictorial enterprises bloomed and changed Fabriano, thus giving birth to its own school of painting, the so-called “scuola fabrianese” (inspired by the refined traits of international gothic style) whose main representatives were Allegretto Nuzi and Gentile da Fabriano. Visitors can't miss the Paper and Watermark Museum, housed in the former monastery of San Domenico, which passes down the centuries-old tradition of paper production.

At a few kilometres' distance there are the Frasassi Caves, one of the most interesting cave systems in Italy.

Matelica

Matelica (354 m a.s.l.) lies in a broad valley where the Braccano creek joins the Esino river. The first settlement can be traced back to the Picente people, of whom several burial grounds have been unearthed. Under Roman rule, the town became a *municipium* in the 1st century C.E. Matelica was an important centre of wool cloth production. After the second world war many factories arose, especially in the metalworking sector. Thanks to its position and climate, this land is renowned for Verdicchio, a white wine with Controlled Denomination of Origin (DOC) that can be paired with many kinds of meal.

Castelraimondo

Castelraimondo is in the middle of an important junction between the towns of Camerino, San Severino Marche and Matelica. In the old town centre stands the Cassero, a defensive watchtower from the 14th century that is what remains of an old military fortress built by the Da Varano family, the ancient rulers of Castelraimondo. There are two other fortresses nearby that were part of the same defensive system: Castello di Lanciano and Rocca d'Ajello.

Camerino

Camerino lies on top of a hill overlooking a valley bordering on the Sibillini mountains to the south-east. Its elevated position made it possible for Camerino to experience a significant political, economic and cultural growth over the centuries. Its first human settlement can be traced back to the Umbri people, and it then became a *municipium* under Roman rule. Camerino became the seat of a bishopric as early as 465 and reached the height of its splendour during the rule of the Da Varano family, which lasted from the second half of the 13th century until mid-16th century. Here was born the most important school of painting in Le Marche and here was also founded in 1377 one of the most prestigious universities in Italy, who

contributed to the town's recovery after the second world war, after it had lost its political and cultural status. In 2009 Camerino was awarded the Orange Flag recognition by Touring Club Italiano.

Visso

Visso, situated in the heart of the Monti Sibillini National Park, is characterized by an extraordinary natural environment and an elegant medieval structure, surrounded by walls and fortified gates and rich in medieval buildings and Renaissance stone mansions. The valleys around the town have been inhabited since prehistoric times; Visso has always played a fundamental role in the commercial and social exchanges of the area thanks to its strategic position on the route that connects Camerino to Foligno and then goes on to Rome.

Visso is the seat of the Monti Sibillini National Park., created in 1993 with the aim of protecting the environment and promoting a sustainable socio-economic development of the area. The Park covers 70.000 hectares of land in the provinces of Macerata, Fermo, Ascoli Piceno in Marche, and in the province of Perugia in Umbria. The Monti Sibillini mountain range is characterized by steep sides, deep gorges and wide karst plateaus that are covered in snow in winter and sprinkled with flowers during the summer. Its highest peak is Monte Vettore (2476 m).

Visso is also famous for the local food: *pecorino* cheese made with local milk; *ciauscolo*, a spreadable spiced pork salami; lentils and spelt from Monti Sibillini; mountain mutton; trout from the Nera river and precious truffle.

ROUTE B

Cingoli

Cingoli is located in one of the greenest areas of the Marche and enjoys a particularly panoramic position at 630 m above sea level, east of the mountains dominating the valley of the Musone river. For this reason, Cingoli has earned over time the title of "*Balcone delle Marche*" ("The balcony of the Marche"). The area is renowned for its healthy climate and is characterized by a landscape where man and nature share a uniquely harmonious relationship. Cingoli today is the result of a complex, noble and glorious past that is still visible in the long shadows cast by the elegant old mansions that still dominate the town centre, its alleys and squares.

San Severino Marche

San Severino Marche was probably founded as a result of the demise of *Septempeda*, the ancient Roman town whose ruins can still be found in nearby Pieve. The area of the so-called Castello a Monte (also known as Monte Nero) towers over the whole town: it includes the Duomo Vecchio and Torre degli Smeducci, the symbol of the dominion of the Smeducci family who ruled here until 1426. There is evidence of human settlements from as far back as 944, but during the 14th century the population moved to the valley below the hill because of social and economic constraints, thus originating a new, late-medieval village that grew around the large *Platea Mercati*, now known as Piazza del Popolo.

Pollenza

Pollenza (344 m a.s.l.) is still surrounded by medieval walls that attest to its origins, but significant remains of a Roman-age *Pollentia* have been unearthed downhill from the town centre. Pollenza is renowned for its handicraft artisans, who have been passing on traditions and skills for five hundred years, first with ceramics and majolica, and finally with woodwork and antiques restoration. The exhibition "Antiquariato –

Restauero – Artigianato Artistico” (“Antiques – Restoration – Artistic Handicraft”) is held here every year: local workshops and studios show their products in the old town centre and cultural events and performances are held every night.

Treia

Treia (342 m a.s.l.) can still boast a very well-preserved historical centre; over the years, the town has developed lengthwise on a sandstone ridge along which the main road runs. From the main road, many smaller, narrower alleys descend towards the medieval walls. Treia was founded in the Middle Ages and was called Montecchio. The name *Treia*, reinstated in 1790, derives from the word “Trea”, which was the name of a Roman settlement that was situated lower than the current village, nearby the church of Santissimo Crocifisso, and that was destroyed in a barbarian raid.

Tolentino

Tolentino (228 m a.s.l.) is a city of art among the most famous and visited ones in Marche. It lies in a strategic position along the valley of the Chienti river. It was first a Picentes and then a Roman settlement. During the Middle Ages it reached a significant status as a free municipality thanks to commercial and manufacturing activities. In 1797 Tolentino was visited by Napoleon Bonaparte, who came here to sign the Treaty of Tolentino. Tolentino also houses the Museum of Caricature and Humour and the Biennial Exhibition of Humour in Art, an international event which attracts artists and cartoonists from all over the world. From a religious and artistic point of view, a tour of the town must include the Basilica of St. Nicholas of Tolentino and its Gothic chapel which is covered with a cycle of 14th-century Giottesque frescoes depicting episodes from the life of St. Nicholas. Today Tolentino’s economy relies on manufacturing industry, especially on leather manufacturing (Poltrona Frau).

Camerino

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Visso

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VALNERINA

Valnerina is the valley of the river Nera, which originates in the Monti Sibillini mountain range in Marche, crosses the mountainous area in south-east Umbria, reaches Terni and finally flows into the river Tiber near Orte. Valnerina covers land in the provinces of Terni, Rieti, Perugia and Macerata.

The valley is characterized by mountainous areas, narrow and meandering nooks, a unique vegetation and picturesque viewpoints.

The local economy is based on agriculture, sheep farming, truffle, trout and cured meats. The river Nera is also an excellent destination for river sports.

Vallo di Nera

Vallo di Nera originated during the Roman Age: its name was *Castrum Valli* or *Castrum Vallis* which could mean either “castle of the valley” or “castle of the wall”, i.e. a fortified place. The reference to the river Nera was added after the unification of Italy. Vallo di Nera emerges from the woodland in the form of its perfectly preserved, compact stone houses surrounded by imposing walls and ancient towers. The rows of stone houses are interrupted by steep, narrow alleys, arches and tunnels. Two symmetrical gates, Portella and Portaranne, allow access to the town which still maintains its medieval traits: slits, drains, narrow passages and alleys and stone portals. The village is the starting point of several biking, horse-riding or hiking trips of varying difficulty.

Spoletto

A short detour leads us to Spoleto, a town rich in imposing buildings that attest to the town’s status throughout the centuries. Although the town’s urban plan presents evident ancient Roman traits, its structure is most consistently reminiscent of the Middle Ages, because it was first a flourishing Lombard Duchy and then an important town in the State of the Church. On June 25th 2011 Spoleto was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, along with other six Lombard sites in Italy. Important sights are: Piazza del Duomo, the Cathedral, Ponte delle Torri (a 13th-century aqueduct), and the Rocca Albornoziana fortress. After the unification of Italy, with Perugia becoming the region’s main city, Spoleto lost its role as administrative centre but still succeeded in maintaining a certain status thanks to many cultural events (like Festival dei Due Mondi, held since 1958), that not only represent a significant source of income, but have also allowed Spoleto to gain international importance in artistic and cultural milieus.

Ferentillo

The area around Ferentillo marks a change in the landscape of Valnerina: from deep, narrow gorges, here the land changes into a valley with wide plains.

The town’s origin dates back to the 8th century: its history is closely related to that of the Abbey of San Pietro in Valle, for the defence of which two castles were built in 1200. Around the two castles two separate settlements grew: Matterella and Precetto, separated by the river Nera. The Abbey of San Pietro in Valle, not far from Ferentillo, is the most important evidence of the Duchy of Spoleto, and one of the most interesting abbeys from the Middle Ages. Inside the abbey there is a votive stone, a few architectural and sculptural fragments from the Roman period and other ages, several Roman and medieval sarcophagi. Next to the church there is a remarkable two-story cloister from the 12th century. Another interesting destination is the Museum of Mummies, housed in the crypt of the church of Santo Stefano.

Arrone

Towards the end of the 10th century, Arrone, a Roman nobleman, took possession of one of the rocky ridges in Valnerina and built a fortified castle there, the first nucleus of the town that would be named after him. Arrone can be divided into two parts: the upper part, called "La Terra", still maintains its medieval structure, whereas the part called "Santa Maria" grew outside the old town centre.

The land between Ferentillo and the waterfall Cascate delle Marmore is home to the Nera River Park, under the region's administration. It is an unmissable destination for sport lovers: many sports can be practiced here, including rock-climbing, which makes Ferentillo one of the most popular natural gyms in Italy and Europe, thanks to its important rock-climbing school. The river Nera is also the perfect place for trout game fishing, canoeing and rafting.

The man-made waterfall Cascate delle Marmore is a lovely destination that was already popular during the Roman period and celebrated by Grand Tour travellers. The waterfall is formed by the flow of the river Velino into the Nera, with a drop of 165 metres.

VIA SALARIA

History, Nature and Food

The Via Salaria is one of the consular roads built by the Romans; it runs from Rome to Porto D'Ascoli, a town on the Adriatic coast. Today it is known as SS4 (Strada Statale 4).

Unlike all other consular roads, that were customarily named after the one who ordered their construction, the Via Salaria was named after the reason it was mainly used for: transportation of salt from its production sites near the sea to the inner areas. On the Tyrrhenian coast, salt was produced mainly on the river Tiber's mouth, at the salt works (*Campus salinarum*) of Fiumicino and Maccarese. From a first track of prehistoric origin to its systematic reorganization under Augustus's reign, the modern state highway SS4 runs for 226 km on the same path, with minor detours, as the old Via Salaria, which included bridges, viaducts, retaining and terracing structures. The road runs across two main valleys: that of the river Velino (on the Tyrrhenian coast) and that of the river Tronto (on the Adriatic side).

By travelling on this road one can journey through central Italy to explore its nature and towns that are too often forgotten, but are actually at the heart of a true Italian experience.

Rieti

Rieti (405 m a.s.l.) stands along the river Velino in the wide Rieti valley, at the base of mount Terminillo. Among authors from the classical era it was thought of as Italy's geographical centre (*Umbilicus Italiae*). Rieti was founded at the beginning of the Iron Age and then became part of the Sabine nation. Via Salaria (an important road connecting Rome to the Adriatic Sea) passed through it, and this guaranteed the town's rapid growth. The Sabine people eventually gave way to the Romans, who then ruled the town and undertook important feats like the draining of the Lake Velinus. Its growth continued until the Middle Ages, when it became a free commune and a Papal seat. The town centre's plan is still that from medieval times, as are its most significant monuments: the Cathedral, the Bishop's Palace and the remains of the town walls, among the best kept in the Lazio region.

Cittaducale

Cittaducale (481 m a.s.l.) was founded in 1308 by king Charles II of Anjou; it belonged to the Abruzzo region and to the province of L'Aquila for more than six centuries then became part of the Lazio region in 1927. Cittaducale is the seat of the training school of *Carabinieri Forestali*, Italy's Corps of Forest Rangers. After an earthquake in 1703, the town was rebuilt but it still maintains most of its medieval structure: an elliptical plan with two perpendicular roads with a central square at their meeting point. The square is called Piazza del Popolo, and it is flanked by the town's most significant public buildings. Cittaducale's towers dominate the valley of the river Velino and offer a spectacular view on the surrounding mountains, including mount Terminillo (2216 m).

The source of the river Pescara. It lies within the borders of Cittaducale, and its mass flow rate is the second biggest in Italy. Water from this river flows partly into the river Velino, and partly into Pescara's aqueduct, a veritable feat of hydraulic engineering that carries water for 90 km to Rome where it satisfies almost all of Rome's water demand.

Terme di Cotilia (Cotilia's thermal baths, also known as Vespasian's thermal baths). The ancient thermal baths are still accessible in the small town of Caporio-Cesoni, under the administration of Cittaducale's municipality. The baths captured water whose healing properties were known even before the Roman age. Cotilia's icy water was especially therapeutic if drunk or used for bathing. The baths were used by emperor

Vespasian who died here in 79 C.E. Large sections of walls built in the *opus incertum* technique, a central large basin, a few rooms and a hallway leading to a nymphaeum are still visible.

Antrodoco

Antrodoco is located along the river Velino; its name means “between the mountains” because it is surrounded by three mountains: Monte Giano (1820 m) to the east, Monte Nuria (1888 m) to the south, and Monte Elefante (2089 m) to the north. To the east the valley grows wider and becomes Piana di San Vittorino. It originated as a farming village but is now a summer destination with a small spa which exploits two sulphurous water sources. The water is used for both bathing and drinking, and has healing properties for the skin and the intestine.

The town is known for its pastry tradition: “*ciambelletti della sposa*”, small ring-shaped cakes similar to *taralli*, covered in egg white-based icing; “*ciambelletti al vino*”, wine- and anis-flavoured cake; “*copeta*”, a laurel-flavoured puff pastry filled with honey and minced walnuts and hazelnuts; “*tisichelle*”, a type of biscuit similar to *cantucci* from Tuscany; “*pizza di cacao*”, a soft cake; “*pizzicotti*”, irregularly shaped biscuits with dried fruit and chocolate. Antrodoco is also renowned for *marrone antrodocano*, a particular type of chestnut with the PGI mark that is found in the century-old woods in the Velino valley: it is used to prepare marron glacé and is the protagonist of a local food event held in autumn.

Gole del Velino (Velino gorges). The *Gole del Velino* (also known as *Gole del Sigillo*), in the province of Rieti and within the municipalities of Antrodoco, Micigliano and Posta, were created by the flow of the river Velino. These mountain gorges have been listed among the “Sites of Community Importance in Lazio”, and they have been defined by Touring Club Italiano as “perhaps the wildest and most evocative gorges in all the Apennine Mountains”. The gorges run for 14 km, flanked by cliff faces, karst sides and caves. Today a viaduct allows for the passage of the road SS 4 Via Salaria through the gorges. Via Salaria used to run through the gorges as early as in the Roman age; its presence left significant marks on the environment: the engineering efforts carried out to facilitate the road’s passage through the gorges are still visible.

Amatrice

Amatrice (955 m a.s.l.) stands on a rocky spur overlooking the confluence of the Tronto and Castellano rivers. The town’s urban plan dates back to before the Renaissance age, with seven curvilinear parallel roads (typical of the Middle Ages) oriented on the east-west axis. The widest main road is Corso Umberto I, intersected perpendicularly by other two roads. Other medieval traits can be found in the churches and other buildings, including the monumental civic tower, which we find references of as early as 1293 and has undergone many improvements throughout the centuries.

Amatrice is the birthplace of architect and painter Nicola Filotesio, also known as Cola dell’Amatrice, who is supposed to have designed the town’s centre. Filotesio was particularly active in Ascoli Piceno and in Abruzzo region.

L’Amatriciana. This traditional pasta sauce is Amatrice’s symbol: the recipe originated in the farming culture and is based on *guanciale* (cured pork cheek) and *pecorino* cheese. Amatriciana is now recognized as a pasta dish typical of modern Roman cuisine, and is among the best known and most cooked Italian recipes. The sauce was prepared by herders with what ingredients were available to them in the mountains where they followed the sheep during the seasonal sheep-herding period. The only ingredients they used were *guanciale* and *pecorino* produced by Amatrice farmers, so Amatriciana was originally a white sauce. Only later was tomato added. It became popular in Italy during the 19th century when inhabitants of Amatrice emigrated to Rome, following the crisis of the sheep farming tradition, and found work in the catering industry where they could pass on their families’ culinary tradition. The first Amatrice restaurant in Rome was opened in 1860 and it was called Il Passetto (“passage”), because one could go from Vicolo del Passetto to Piazza Navona passing through the restaurant.

Conca Amatriciana (Amatrice valley). The valley around Amatrice, formed by the river Tronto, is surrounded to the south and south-east by the Monti della Laga mountains and is punctuated by many small villages. This valley was probably already inhabited during prehistoric times and has constantly been the location of human settlements since the Roman period seeing as the Via Salaria passed through it. Several remains of buildings and tombs have been unearthed here. In the deepest part of the valley there is the artificial lake Scandarello, created when a dam was built across the river Scandarello, a tributary of the river Tronto.

Accumoli

Accumoli (650/1800 m a.s.l.) is a small town in the province of Rieti and covers 86,89 km². It's located in the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park and borders on the Monti Sibillini National Park. The consular road Via Salaria passes through its area, and the European Community has identified here four sites of strategic importance for biodiversity preservation. It borders on the regions Umbria, Marche, Abruzzo and on the town Amatrice.

WWF oasis "Lago Secco". This WWF oasis is of significant naturalistic importance, so much so that it is a Site of Community Importance and a Special Protection Area. The oasis covers 15 hectares of land and it consists of a body of water saved by the WWF in order to protect endangered animal and plant species existing since the Quaternary glaciation. In the oasis there are several nature trails, including the so-called "Sentiero Italia"; park areas; accommodation facilities; cross-country skiing trails and small lakes for game fishing.

Arquata del Tronto

Arquata del Tronto (580/2476 m a.s.l.) is the only European municipality shared by two natural parks: Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park to the south and Monti Sibillini National Park to the north. It borders with three other regions (Lazio, Umbria and Abruzzo) and is known for its medieval fortress towering over the town. It covers a mostly mountainous area characterized by steep sides; woods of chestnut trees, beech trees and firs; gentle slopes, natural "balconies", green fields and pastures. This area is known as the "magic side" of the Sibillini mountains because of the legends and stories surrounding it and the mysterious presences that are said to inhabit it. These are the mountains where old trails used to lead to the *Grotta della Sibilla*, Sibilla's cave, a prophetess in the Apennines, and to the *Lago di Pilato* lake: according to legend this is where the oxen-led cart carrying Pontius Pilate's body sank.

Acquasanta Terme

Acquasanta Terme (411 m a.s.l.) is 19 km away from Ascoli Piceno, along the Via Salaria. This town covers the most land in the province, second only to Ascoli Piceno. The land is mostly mountainous and is composed of many smaller villages.

Acquasanta Terme is located in the upper part of the Tronto valley, between the Sibillini mountains to the north and the Monti della Laga to the south. It is surrounded by centuries-old woods of chestnut trees, oaks, beech trees and silver firs. The surrounding mountains can be easily explored through several hiking trails.

Baths. As its name suggests, in Acquasanta there are sulphur springs around which many spas have been built, with natural basins filled with warm water. One of these basins receives much more water than the others and is therefore used for swimming. This water has countless therapeutic properties that have been known for centuries: during Roman times this area was known as *Vicus ad Aquas*.

Ascoli Piceno

Ascoli Piceno (154 m a.s.l.) is located on an alluvial terrace bordering on the Apennines, 25 km away from the Adriatic Sea. Ascoli Piceno originated with the Picente people, then became *Asculum* under Roman rule. Its structure dates back to the Middle Ages but is based on the Roman one. Over the centuries many religious and secular buildings were erected in the Romanesque, Renaissance and Baroque styles. Its historical centre is the largest in Marche and it was built almost entirely using *travertino* marble, a calcareous sedimentary rock extracted in the area, which makes this one of the most admired historical centres in the region and in central Italy thanks to its artistic and architectural value. Ascoli Piceno is also known as “the town of a hundred towers” because of its many patrician towers and bell towers. Piazza del Popolo, built in the Renaissance period, is considered one of the most beautiful in Italy. It is flanked by Ascoli’s most significant buildings: Palazzo dei Capitani, the historic café Caffè Meletti and the church of San Francesco. Piazza Arringo is Ascoli’s oldest square: it is flanked by the medieval Baptistery of San Giovanni, the Cathedral of Sant’Emidio with its crypt, the Bishop’s Palace and the Palazzo dell’Arengo, where the civic art gallery is housed.

Pictorial art. Carlo Crivelli’s arrival from Veneto (15th century) marked the beginning of an art movement that then spread throughout the Marche thanks to his disciples: Vittore Crivelli, Pietro Alemanno and Cola dell’Amatrice (Nicola Filotesio), a talented artist and architect who then became a disciple of Signorelli and Michelangelo after leaving in Ascoli many traits of Renaissance architecture. Carlo Crivelli’s works can be found in the civic art gallery, in the Cathedral of Sant’Emidio and in the diocese’s museum.

La Quintana. La Quintana is a horse race held every summer since 1955. Each joust is preceded and followed by elegant parades featuring some fourteen hundred participants in period costumes. The event is based on old statutes dating back to the 14th century.

Ascolana olives. Ascoli is also the town of this famous delicacy created in Ascoli Piceno but known and loved in Italy and abroad. Green olives are soaked in brine and stuffed with a soft meat mix. They are generally served with other fried foods. The recipe dates back to the year 1800. According to historical research, cooks working for noble families invented the meat filling in order to make use of the large quantities of meat that were made available to them from their farms.

Anisetta Meletti. It’s a natural liquor derived from the distillation in a discontinuous alembic of aniseed and other spices. It is produced following an original recipe created in 1870 by Silvio Meletti. The Meletti family still owns the original recipe of this world-renowned specialty from the Marche.

NATURE

All over these four regions, nature gives the best of herself with the Monti Sibillini and the Gran Sasso mountain ranges. Along the old tracks where shepherds and farmers used to tread, tourists can now discover new villages, vistas and landscapes; new vegetation and wildlife; new folk and culinary traditions.

MONTI SIBILLINI NATIONAL PARK

The Monti Sibillini National Park was created in 1993 with the aim to protect the Monti Sibillini mountain range, which stretches over two regions (Marche and Umbria), four provinces (Ascoli Piceno, Fermo, Macerata and Perugia) and 16 municipalities. The Park is the meeting point of many culinary traditions: the sheep-farming culture meets the centuries-long tradition of meat curing – for which Umbria is most popular – and agriculture, with key crops such as the Castelluccio lentil.

The Sibillini mountains rise in the heart of Italy; at 2476 m, Monte Vettore is the highest peak. According to legend, this is the land of mythical Sibilla, and it is here that the Monti Sibillini National Park was created in 1993. It extends for over 70.000 hectares and its main purpose is to protect the range's environment, encourage a sustainable socio-economic development and make it accessible to as many people as possible. Biodiversity is one of the Park's key traits: wolves, golden eagles and many other native species inhabit it. This biological variety, along with abbeys and medieval historical centres spread like crowns around the mountain slopes, are the constituting elements of an ancient and evocative world where time seems to have stopped to pay homage to such extraordinary beauty. The Park was not created to impose restrictions, but to recover the values that make up the Sibillinis' naturalistic, cultural and historical identity, with the aim of guaranteeing a rational and lasting development of the area, keeping constantly mind that what we see today is but the result of thousands of years of careful and valuable efforts to integrate the workings of nature with those of men; efforts that must be passed down to future generations.

The Park offers a wide variety of trails, many of which follow the paths that shepherds used to cross to get to the higher pastures and grasslands. The Monti Sibillini National Park is accessible to everyone, but it offers also more difficult destinations for expert hikers. When travelling by camper, motorbike or car, one can explore the Park by following the "Grande Via del Parco", a route of over 190 km through existing roads that offers a satisfying journey of several days. The Grande Via route is divided into four legs: from Visso to Fiastra, from Fiastra to Amandola, from Amandola to Arquata del Tronto, and finally from Arquata del Tronto back to Visso. The Grande Via is connected to six ring routes that allow a thorough visit of the whole park, with a total of 450 km.

Another popular route is the "Grande Anello dei Sibillini", a ring route that can be made hiking or bike-riding, in four or five days, moving from one mountain lodge to the next for an overall 120 km. Another 14 smaller ring routes can be travelled in a day. They all used to be tracks used by farmers, woodcutters, mules, shepherd and pilgrims.

The Sibillinis can be the ideal destination for mystery lovers, too: the mountains and their hidden places are the birthplace of the legends of the Sibilla in her double role of prophetess and seductress.

The Sibillini mountains are the place where excellent food is produced: cold cuts (several pork cuts like *coppa di testa*, *lonza*, *capocollo*, salami, hams); cheese (*pecorino*); honey, truffles, mushrooms, chestnuts, chickpea, wild pea, trout raised in the river Nera, flour (wheat flour, corn flour and *roveja* flour), bread baked in wood-fired oven, biscuits and, finally, two traditional liquors to be enjoyed at the end of a meal: *mistrà* and *vino cotto*.

Municipalities

Province of Macerata

Acquacanina, Bolognola, Castelsantangelo sul Nera, Cessapalombo, Fiastra, Pieve Torina, San Ginesio, Ussita, Valfornace, Visso

Province of Ascoli Piceno

Arquata del Tronto, Montegallo, Montemonaco

Province of Fermo

Amandola, Montefortino

Province of Perugia

Norcia, Preci

GRAN SASSO AND MONTI DELLA LAGA NATIONAL PARK

The Gran Sasso/Monti della Laga National Park was created in 1993; it's the third largest protected nature reserve in Italy.

It covers 150.000 hectares of land over three regions (Marche, Abruzzo and Lazio), five provinces (L'Aquila, Teramo, Pescara, Ascoli Piceno and Rieti) and 44 municipalities. Its many habitats, mountains and architectural and historical traits make this a wonderful destination for every season. The Park includes three mountain ranges: the Gran Sasso, the Laga and the Monti Gemelli. The Park is also home to the highest peak in the Apennines, the Corno Grande (2912 m), and their only glacier, the Calderone, which is also the southmost European glacier.

This area has been inhabited for millennia: significant traces of human settlements of exceptional historical and cultural value can still be found here, from the Neolithic to the Roman period, from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance: archaeological sites, castles, fortified villages, churches, abbeys, hermitages and mills. A cultural heritage living side by side with a veritable treasure of nature: old town centres, archaeological sites, castles, shrines, abbeys, small churches perched on rock outcroppings, hermitages and caves dotting the breath-taking mountain landscape of the Park made of forests, springs, waterfalls, meadows, plateaus, sharp ridges and spectacular rocky cliffs. A natural heritage coexisting with the human one: handicraft, local food and wine products and folklore, all to be promoted and protected.

The Park is home to countless peculiar foods and wines that share a deep bond with this unpolluted and often harsh land. These products are the main ingredients of a type of cuisine that has jealously kept a close and vital relationship with its territory, a relationship that reveals, district by district, the history of agriculture and sheep farming traditions, of nature and its fruits, woods and their undergrowth and meadows, passed down with care and passion from one generation to the next.

There are many routes that can be made hiking, horse-riding, bike-riding or car-riding. There are trails at high altitude that lead to the Corno Grande (*Campo Imperatore* plateau), to Monte Gorzano and the highest peaks: these can only be safely attempted in summer. But there are other excursions of varying levels of difficulty. Hundreds of trails have been created thanks to Club Alpino Italiano, a few of which are of considerable length, like for example "Ippovia del Gran Sasso" and "Sentiero Italia". There are also panoramic foothill trails among medieval towns and olive groves, and themed trails that lead to hermitages, waterfalls, springs, castles, burial grounds and local food and wine production sites. Many of these trails are only walkable in spring and in autumn, while others can also be attempted in winter, provided one is equipped with traction cleats or skis in case of snow.

Municipalities

Province of L'Aquila

Barete, Barisciano, Cagnano Amiterno, Calascio, Campotosto, Capitignano, Carapelle Calvisio, Castel del Monte, Castelvechio Calvisio, L'Aquila, Montereale, Ofena, Pizzoli, Santo Stefano di Sessanio, Villa Santa Lucia degli Abruzzi

Province of Teramo

Arsita, Campli, Castelli, Civitella del Tronto, Cortino, Crognaleto, Fano Adriano, Isola del Gran Sasso d'Italia, Montorio al Vomano, Pietracamela, Rocca Santa Maria, Torricella Sicura, Tossicia, Valle Castellana

Province of Pescara

Brittoli, Bussi sul Tirino, Carpineto della Nora, Castiglione a Casauria, Civitella Casanova, Corvara, Farindola, Montebello di Bertona, Pescosansonesco, Villa Celiera

Province of Rieti

Accumoli, Amatrice

Province of Ascoli Piceno

Acquasanta Terme, Arquata del Tronto

COLFIORITO REGIONAL PARK

This natural park reveals a landscape of wide plateaus with gentle hills and alternating woods, pastures and fields, where agriculture coexists in harmony with nature. *Piani di Colfiorito* (“Colfiorito Plains”, also known as “Altopiani Plestini”) are made up of seven karst valleys once occupied by lakes. *Palude di Colfiorito* (“Colfiorito Marshland”) is now the only place in the plateaus where water can be found all year long, with only minor seasonal level fluctuations. The other plains are only temporarily flooded after rainfalls. The marshland is a landmark for many bird species that come here to nest: for this reason in 1995 the administration of Umbria region decided to protect this area by creating a Regional Park. It is included in the Ramsar Convention, which marks its international value, and has been designated as a Special Area of Conservation by the European Community because of the many species of birds living here.

The Park includes nine municipalities in the province of Perugia:

Foligno, Bevagna, Gualdo Cattaneo, Montefalco, Nocera Umbra, Sellano, Spello, Trevi, Valtopina.

FOOD AND WINE

Everywhere in central Italy local food is anchored to the history of the land and the activities of the people that have lived here. These food products are the main ingredients of a cuisine that has jealously kept a close and vital relationship with its territory, a relationship that reveals, district by district, the history of agriculture and sheep farming traditions, and a sustainable and healthy exploitation of the fruits of agriculture and of nature. The four regions exert considerable influence over one another: journeying from one region to the next, one may find the same recipe with only minor variations.

The Monti Sibillini Park stretches along the border between Marche and Umbria; it's the meeting point of many culinary traditions: the sheep-farming culture meets the centuries-long tradition of meat curing for which Umbria is most popular and agriculture, with key crops such as the Castelluccio lentil.

The Sibillini mountains are the place where excellent food is produced: cold cuts (several pork cuts like *coppa di testa*, *lonza*, *capocollo*, salami, hams) and most importantly – given the area's sheep-farming tradition – cheese (*pecorino*, *ricotta* both soft and aged, goat cheese and mixed cheese). But that is not all the Park has in store: this uncontaminated land offers also ancient varieties of apples, excellent honey, truffles, mushrooms, chestnuts, chickpea, wild pea, trout (raised in the river Nera), flour (wheat flour, corn flour and *roveja* flour), bread baked in wood-fired oven, biscuits and, finally, two traditional liquors to be enjoyed at the end of a meal: *mistrà* and *vino cotto*.

Lenticchia di Castelluccio (Castelluccio Lentil)

The plateau of Castelluccio is a wide expanse of grass and flowers at an altitude of 1400 metres. Part of the area, divided into Pian Grande, Pian Piccolo and Pian Perduto, is cultivated by farmers specialized in the lentil crop, an ancient legume that can grow without difficulty at high altitudes and doesn't need to undergo chemical treatments. The lentils of Castelluccio are small and their colour varies from dappled green to light brown; they are full of flavour and don't need to be softened in water before being cooked. They are used in many local recipes and are particularly appreciated because they don't lose their husks and don't disintegrate after being cooked.

Ciauscolo

This peculiar "spreadable salame" (also known as *ciavuscolo* or *ciabuscolo*) is the most typical salame of the Marche region. According to the traditional recipe it is made from pork meat cut from the belly, ribs and shoulder with a high percentage of fat. The ingredients are then spiced with salt, pepper, garlic, fennel and grated orange zest, and are then finely ground so that the result is a soft, homogenous sausage. The *ciauscolo* is then hung and left to dry in a cool and dry place. There are many versions: *ciauscolo* from Ascoli Piceno, for example, is less fat and more solid, whereas the recipe from Macerata results in a fatter and softer salame.

Cheese

The mountain area and the land around it are ideal for the production of cheese made from sheep's milk. Its production is the result of the classical cheesemaking process: lamb or goat rennet is added to freshly drawn milk. According to a very old tradition in the area around Visso, milk should be flavoured with a small bunch of herbs (thyme or wild thyme) before being curdled. After the curd is cut into very fine grains, the cheese is then heated and hand-pressed on the traditional wooden board called *fascera*. Then the aging period starts: during a first stage the cheese is washed often with lukewarm whey, then it is placed in a cool cellar where it can be left to rest up to two years. Other cheeses made from cow milk or goat milk and mixed cheeses are produced, too. Soft cheeses are also of excellent quality, especially *ricotta* that is used as filling for cakes or for *ravioli*.

Mela Rosa dei Sibillini (Sibillini Pink Apple)

Pink apples have always been grown in the Sibillini mountains. They are very small, irregularly shaped and slightly squashed with a very short stalk. They're greenish with nuances varying from pink to purplish red. Their flesh is slightly acidic and sugary, their fragrance intense and aromatic. This crop had been almost completely abandoned; their cultivation restarted just a few years ago. They used to be valued and sought-after because they can be kept for long periods of time: they are harvested within the first ten days of October and keep perfectly until April.

Truffle

Many local recipes are made with truffle, both white and black. The Norcia and Spoleto black truffle ("Tartufo Nero di Norcia e Spoleto") is highly prized: it is easily recognizable from the other types thanks to its black and rough skin and its black-purple flesh with white veins. Its size can vary from that of a nut to that of an orange. Its fragrance is very pleasing and delicate. It is harvested next to oaks, hornbeams, hazelnut trees and holm oaks from December until March. In the province of Ascoli, the areas around Montemonaco, Smerillo, Amandola and Montefalcone are particularly rich with truffles. In the woods one can find also white truffles (very rare and prized, harvested between October and December) and summer truffles (harvested from June to August).

Honey

Depending on the flower the nectar is collected from, honey can have varying colours, characteristics, flavours and names; that is why in central Italy there are acacia honey, chestnut honey and wildflower honey. In order to obtain a good quality honey, an unpolluted environment and spontaneous flowerings in abundance are key ingredients. Honey is very much like a reflection of this land, in that it represents the wide plateaus covered in legumes and its temperate climate during spring and summer that allows for prolonged flowerings.

Ascolana olives

Ascoli is the town of this famous delicacy created in Ascoli Piceno but known and loved in Italy and abroad. Green olives are soaked in brine and stuffed with a soft meat mix. They are generally served with other fried foods. The recipe dates back to the year 1800. According to historical research, cooks working for noble families invented the meat filling in order to make use of the large quantities of meat that were made available to them from their farms.

L'Amatriciana

This traditional pasta sauce is Amatrice's symbol: the recipe originated in the farming culture and is based on *guanciale* (cured pork cheek) and *pecorino* cheese. Amatriciana is now recognized as a pasta dish typical of modern Roman cuisine and is among the best known and most cooked Italian recipes. The sauce was prepared by herders with what ingredients were available to them in the mountains where they followed the sheep during the seasonal sheep-herding period. The only ingredients they used were *guanciale* and *pecorino* produced by Amatrice farmers, so Amatriciana was originally a white sauce. Only later was tomato added. It became popular in Italy during the 19th century when inhabitants of Amatrice emigrated to Rome, following the crisis of the sheep farming tradition, and found work in the catering industry where they could pass on their families' culinary tradition. The first Amatrice restaurant in Rome was opened in 1860 and it was called Il Passetto ("passage"), because one could go from Vicolo del Passetto to Piazza Navona passing through the restaurant.

WINES AND LIQUEURS

Verdicchio

Verdicchio di Matelica is a DOC class wine produced in Matelica, Esanatoglia, Gagliole, Castelraimondo, Camerino, Pioraco in the province of Macerata, and in Cerreto d'Esi and Fabriano in the province of Ancona. This limited area produces a versatile white wine with a vibrant colour. Verdicchio di Matelica can be paired with complex and structured white meat dishes and with pasta courses with meat or seafood sauces. It also pairs well with cured meats and cheese, especially with *ciauscolo* and fresh *pecorino*.

Rosso Piceno

Rosso Piceno is the most common red wine in the Marche, produced in the hilly region that runs from Senigallia to Ascoli Piceno. It combines well with cured meats, meat-based pasta courses, legumes, boiled and roasted meat and wild game.

Pecorino

This white grape is a native Marche variety that can be found mostly in the Piceno region, but also in Abruzzo. It owes its peculiar name (related to *pecora*, "sheep") to the fact that the areas where it is cultivated were dedicated to sheep farming. It has only very recently been rediscovered. This variety favours hilly places, cool and elevated. It partners perfectly with seafood and white meat, but also with local cold cuts typical of this area.

Passerina

This variety too has been recently rediscovered. It is found mainly in the Piceno region and in Abruzzo. The bunch has small grapes that are often pecked by sparrows (in Italian *passero*), hence the name. It matches well with seafood-based recipes. There are also the *Passito* and *Spumante* versions.

Montepulciano d'Abruzzo

Abruzzo plays a significant role in the red wine production sector; the quality of its red wines has greatly improved over the last few years. The main protagonist in Abruzzo viticulture is undoubtedly Montepulciano, which finds here the ideal conditions to shine at its best. The province of Teramo has only one DOCG title, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo Colline Teramane, a red wine with a preponderance of Montepulciano grapes.

The most cultivated white wine varietal are *trebbiano abruzzese*, *pecorino*, *bombino bianco*, *trebbiano toscano*, *manzoni bianco*, *malvasia di Candia*, *passerina* and *pignoletto*. In Abruzzo there are also many native wine varietals such as chardonnay, pinot blanc and pinot gris, merlot, cabernet franc and cabernet sauvignon, pinot noir.

Vino cotto

Vino cotto (literally "cooked wine") is a typical product from Marche and Abruzzo. It is produced in the hilly and foothill areas in the provinces of Ascoli Piceno, Fermo, Macerata and Ancona; *vino cotto* from Loro Piceno is particularly prized. It is found also in Abruzzo, where it too has been recognized by the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies as a traditional Italian regional food product. As transpired in a Ministry of Agriculture report from the late 19th century, the province of Teramo was the first to experiment this new type of wine-making; the report also stressed how *vino cotto's* flavour improves with every passing year.

Mistrà Varnelli

Mistrà, a typical product from Marche, is what is known as *ammazzacaffè*, literally "coffee killer", because it is consumed after coffee to "kill" its taste. It is produced by alcoholic distillation with added flavouring with green anise found in the Sibillini mountains or with wild fennel and fruit (apple, orange). It used to be made in every farming home, where it was also used to make cakes. *Mistrà Varnelli* passes on this tradition with a product that has gained large popularity first in Marche then in all of Italy. *Mistrà Varnelli* is a special dry aniseed, a liqueur that has ancient origins and owes its fortune to a special and secret anise processing.

Mistrà Varnelli can be considered the best coffee “corrective”; when consumed straight it is also an excellent digestif; it is not bitter and can be consumed also on ice cream or in cold water as a thirst-quenching drink.

Anisetta Meletti

It's a natural liquor derived from the distillation in a discontinuous alembic of aniseed and other spices that bring out the fresh flavour of Mediterranean green anise. It is produced following an original recipe created in 1870 by Silvio Meletti and still owned by the Meletti family.

Vernaccia

Vernaccia di Serrapetrona is a DOCG sparkling red wine. It is a rare and peculiar wine that is produced in a limited area that embraces a few towns in the province of Macerata, in Marche. The wine-producing area covers Serrapetrona, Belforte del Chienti and San Severino Marche. The wine is produced from a local grape variety, Vernaccia Nera, and can be found in both a sweet and dry style. Vernaccia is considered one of the best grape varieties in Marche today, although its production is limited. The wineries devoted to the production of this sparkling red wine are also very few in number. It matches well with fancy biscuits and with any kind of dessert with fruits of the forest jam.

OIL

Umbria Oil

Thanks to the land's features and climate, the oil produced in Umbria is of excellent quality. Olive groves cover mostly hilly areas within 250 and 450 metres of altitude. There many types of cultivar, among which the most important are the Moraiolo, Frantoio and Leccino. According to current regulations, the “Umbria” Denomination of Protected Origin includes five geographical sub-denominations: “Colli Assisi-Spoleto”, “Colli Martani”, “Colli Amerini”, “Colli del Trasimeno” and “Colli Orvietani”.

SPAS AND WELLNESS

Central Italy is rich with rivers and waters that have left a mark on the land by creating gorges, springs, small waterfalls and natural pools. These bodies of water have often healing properties that have been acknowledged since ancient times and have therefore been exploited for therapeutic purposes and to promote psychophysical well-being. For centuries these thermal destinations have been welcoming visitors who need treatments or who simply want to experience a few days of complete wellness and relaxation in a modern and efficient facilities.

Sarnano (Macerata)

Sarnano (539 m a.s.l.) boasts a very well-preserved medieval town centre, separate from the modern town centre, Piazza della Libertà. Old houses overlook steep, narrow alleys that lead to the main square, Piazza Alta, the highest point and centre of the medieval town. Piazza Alta is flanked by the Church of Santa Maria Assunta, which dates back to the 13th century, and several medieval buildings: Palazzo dei Priori, Palazzo del Popolo (which houses the theatre Teatro della Vittoria) and Palazzetto del Podestà. Sarnano is also renowned for its spa centre, for winter sports facilities and for the Orange Flag recognition awarded by Touring Club Italiano.

Terme di San Giacomo

In addition to its breath-taking landscape and numerous art pieces, Sarnano can also boast a renowned spa centre with quality waters like San Giacomo water (low mineral content, bicarbonate calcium water), Terro water (salt-sulphurous water) and Tre Santi water (bicarbonate calcium water). Sarnano's spa centre with its modern equipment can be used for prevention, rehabilitation and aesthetic purposes. During the last few years Terme San Giacomo has added new services to its guests – the Wellness Centre, an indoor thermal pool with massaging water jets, an outdoor thermal pool with solarium and flats available for guests looking for a spa, cultural, wellness or relaxing vacation.

Tolentino (Macerata)

Tolentino (228 m a.s.l.) is a city of art among the most famous and visited ones in Marche. It lies in a strategic position along the valley of the Chienti river. It was first a Picentes and then a Roman settlement. During the Middle Ages it reached a significant status as a free municipality thanks to commercial and manufacturing activities. In 1797 Tolentino was visited by Napoleon Bonaparte, who came here to sign the Treaty of Tolentino. Tolentino also houses the Museum of Caricature and Humour and the Biennial Exhibition of Humour in Art, an international event which attracts artists and cartoonists from all over the world. From a religious and artistic point of view, a tour of the town must include the Basilica of St. Nicholas of Tolentino and its Gothic chapel which is covered with a cycle of 14th-century Giottesque frescoes depicting episodes from the life of St. Nicholas. Today Tolentino's economy relies on manufacturing industry, especially on leather manufacturing (Poltrona Frau).

Terme di Santa Lucia

Terme di Santa Lucia are on a hill 3 km from Tolentino, adjacent to a centuries-old thick wood. The spa centre includes a Beauty Farm that follows the latest trends in dermocosmetics and aesthetic medicine and offers treatments with the most advanced cosmetic technology available; a Rehabilitation and Physical Therapy clinic with modern machinery; a Sport Medicine clinic; a Diagnostic and Treatment Center for rhinogenic deafness and a special ward dedicated to inhalation therapy for children, equipped with toys and colourful décor.

Acquasanta Terme

Acquasanta Terme (411 m a.s.l.) is 19 km away from Ascoli Piceno, along the Via Salaria. This town covers

the most land in the province, second only to Ascoli Piceno. The land is mostly mountainous and is composed of many smaller villages.

Acquasanta Terme is located in the upper part of the Tronto valley, between the Sibillini mountains to the north and the Monti della Laga to the south. It is surrounded by centuries-old woods of chestnut trees, oaks, beech trees and silver firs. The surrounding mountains can be easily explored through several hiking trails.

As its name suggests, in Acquasanta's subsoil there is sulphurous, salt and sulphate water that feeds the treatment wards of Acquasanta's spa centre.

Terme di Acquasanta

Acquasanta's spa is renowned for the quality of the treatments it provides: mud therapy, inhalation therapy, baths and pools with massaging water jets. Acquasanta's waters are salt-sulphurous and are particularly recommended in case of respiratory problems, rhinogenic deafness, ear diseases, arthritis and especially respiratory diseases.

The spa includes a wellness centre, built with the characteristic local stone and equipped with steam room, Turkish bath, minipool with massaging water jets, sensory showers, massages and treatments, sulphur pool and an area dedicated to beauty treatments.

Cerreto di Spoleto (Perugia)

Cerreto di Spoleto enjoys a particularly handsome position, with the river Nera flowing at the base of its castle among cultivated fields and river woods with willows, poplars and alder trees. Cerreto is made up of ten *frazioni* and is named after the many forests of Turkey oaks (*cerro*) that grow around it. It's a perfect destination for walks surrounded by woods and horse-riding or biking trips. Cerreto is also known as "Città dei Ciarlatani" ("*Town of charlatans*"), as it is named in the 1612 *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, the first ever dictionary of the Italian language. The *Ecomuseo del Ciarlatano* houses historical documents and theatrical reinterpretations of this particular figure.

Bagni di Triponzo

The ancient Triponzo Baths have only just recently been reopened in the suggestive location of Valnerina. They are the only baths in Umbria that are fed with sulphur, calcium-rich water that, no matter the season, keeps a constant temperature of 30°C. The extensive baths are completely surrounded by the woods; their waters have therapeutic effects on the body and the psyche and accelerates the body's cells' regenerative capacity. The baths are equipped with four thermal pools, areas for individualized treatments, solarium, steam room, Turkish bath, *tepidarium*, sensory shower, ice waterfall, relax area, bar and restaurant.

Cittaducale

Cittaducale (481 m a.s.l.) was rebuilt after an earthquake in 1703, but it still maintains most of its medieval structure: an elliptical plan modelled after the traditional *Castrum Romanum* with two perpendicular roads with a central square at their meeting point. The square is called Piazza del Popolo, and it is flanked by the town's most significant public buildings. Cittaducale's towers dominate the valley of the river Velino and offer a spectacular view on the surrounding mountains, including mount Terminillo (2216 m).

Terme di Cotilia

The baths, also known with their Roman name, *Aquae Cutiliae*, are halfway between Castel Sant'Angelo, where there are the modern baths, and Cittaducale, where there is a thousand-year old thermal spring that has been renowned for centuries for its therapeutic properties.

The ancient thermal baths are still accessible in the small town of Caporio-Cesoni, under the administration of Cittaducale's municipality. The baths captured water whose healing properties were known even before the Roman age. Cotilia's icy water was especially therapeutic if drunk or used for bathing. The baths were used by emperor Vespasian who died here in 79 C.E. Large sections of walls built in the *opus incertum*

technique, a central large basin, a few rooms and a hallway leading to a nymphaeum are still visible. In 1981 the construction of the modern spa facility was started upon the remains of the Roman baths. The modern spa distinguishes itself for its thermal approach to the most varied diseases. There are many types of water: carbon hydrogen sulphide, bicarbonate-sulphate and alkaline earth; they represent an exception not only on a regional level, but also on the national one thanks to the specific conditions that originate them.