

The village of Scanno (Photo ADA)

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●● DISCOVERING THE WONDERS OF THE REGION NAMED 'BEST PLACE WHERE TO LIVE'

The Green Region Has It All

Beautiful seaside, golden beaches, and marvelous mountains: Abruzzo has it all—and more. Ranked as one of the best places in the world where to live, this is a truly intriguing land, extraordinarily rich in natural beauty, great art, splendid urban architecture, secular traditions, and a culture enriched by hospitable people. Here, people pull their chairs out into the street, kids play outside, and people do their shopping at street markets. And the cooking revisits ancient recipes for preparing fish, lamb, goat, and wild boar.

by Goffredo Palmerini *

●● Abruzzo has an inexhaustible wealth of artistic gems, suggestive ancient traditions, and a wide variety of flavors. Its landscape ranges from the vertiginous white summits of Gran Sasso, Majella and Sirente to green hills quilted with splendid villages that drop off dramatically into the intense blue of the Adriatic. Abruzzo is full of woods, its nature untrammelled. A third of the region is protected, thanks to three national parks (Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo – the oldest in Italy – Parco del Gran Sasso and Parco della Majella), the regional Parco del Velino



The Majella massif in the Central Apennines (Photo ADA)



“After centuries of being labeled a harsh land of imposing and remote mountains where only gruff pioneers and shepherds could carve out a life, in the last few years Abruzzo’s appeal has been ascendant. Visitors discover a truly intriguing land, extraordinarily rich in natural beauty, great art, splendid urban architecture, secular traditions, and hospitable people.”



Vasto: Punta Aderci

* Goffredo Palmerini is a prolific writer and journalist, former deputy Mayor of L'Aquila and president of the Abruzzo chapter of ANFE (Associazione Nazionale Famiglie Emigranti). Author of several books on his region, he is one of the best-known “Brand Ambassadors” of Abruzzo in the world and its chief, though informal media relations strategist.

Sirente, and a large number of natural oases, earning it the nickname “The Green Region of Europe.” Paradise pure and simple, Abruzzo is home to many species of animals and birds that have survived the threat of extinction, as well as an extraordinary variety of plants. Abruzzo has always been a wild landscape, one of rare beauty. All who encounter it remain intrigued, forever mesmerized, almost bewitched, like countless foreign writers and travelers who visited the region and wrote fabulous passages about it. That is to say nothing of Abruzzo’s native sons and daughters, including Gabriele d’Annunzio, Ignazio Silone and Mario Pomilio, to name just a few who may be better known in the U.S.

Ranked Among the Best

Recently the *Huffington Post* published an article on the 12 best places in the world to retire. The American news outlet awarded Abruzzo fifth place, behind Algarve, Portugal; Cayo, Belize; Medellin, Colombia; and Pau, France, beating out seven beauty spots in Central America and Asia. According to *HuffPo*, Abruzzo stands out for its beautiful seaside, golden beaches, and marvelous mountains. The region’s human side doesn’t hurt either: without huge crowded cities, major industry or pollution, the air

“In Abruzzo all one needs to do is choose between climbing the sheer cliffs of Gran Sasso or playing winter sports in the mountains; between visiting the wonderful cities of art or exploring its enchanting villages; between lakes or rolling hills; between vast sandy beaches and the rocky shores on the green coast where an emerald sea is speckled with ‘trabuccos.’”

is healthy and the landscape dotted with vineyards, small towns, stone houses, and various castles. Here, people pull their chairs out into the street, kids play outside, and people do their shopping at street markets. The cooking revisits ancient recipes for preparing fish, lamb, goat, and wild boar.

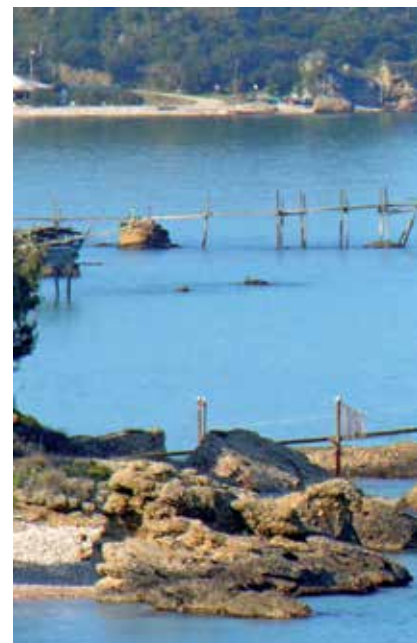
There are a host of other attributes that make Abruzzo one of the best places in the world to live, too, so the *Huffington Post*’s flattering assessment

should come as no surprise. After centuries of being labeled a harsh land of imposing and remote mountains where only gruff pioneers and shepherds could carve out a life, in the last few years Abruzzo’s appeal has been ascendant. The misconception stemmed from a dearth of transportation routes, which, in the past, made it hard for the region to develop.

But all that has changed in the last forty years with the creation of highways making it possible to travel from Rome to L’Aquila in an hour, and to Pescara, Chieti, Teramo, and other cities on the Adriatic in two hours. Now Abruzzo is at the center of Italy, thanks also to an airport connecting it to the rest of the country, Europe, and the world.



A wine region in Abruzzo (Photo: ADA)





Transumanza (transhumance) in the Abruzzo Apennines: the traditional twice yearly migration of sheep and cows from the highlands to the lowlands, and vice versa. (Photo ADA)

A cornucopia of surprising gems

Abruzzo's visitors – tourists are coming here in growing numbers – discover a truly intriguing land, extraordinarily rich in natural beauty, great art, splendid urban architecture, secular traditions, and a culture enriched by hospitable people. Now all one needs to do is choose between climbing the sheer cliffs of Gran

Sasso or playing winter sports in the mountains and high plains; between visiting the wonderful cities of art or exploring its enchanting villages (out of 253 listed in the exclusive Most Beautiful Villages in Italy Club, a whopping 22 are from Abruzzo); between lakes or rolling hills; between vast sandy beaches to rocky shores on the green coast where an emerald sea is speckled



L'Aquila: The Fountain of the 99 Cannelle. (Photo Mauro Vitale)

with 'trabuccos.' Beachgoers will find it all along Abruzzo's 100-mile long coastline. In short, visitors will discover that Abruzzo has a lot more variety than they might have imagined, perhaps under the illusion that it was still stuck in its centuries-long isolation. Instead they will find a striking, kind, and welcoming people and a cornucopia of surprising gems, as surprising as the discoveries archaeologists have made in the last two decades, digging up numerous necropolises intact. Rather than crumbling

funerary objects, they've turned up sophisticated ruins, precious jewels, and priceless ornaments, evidence of the Italic civilizations in the region. Indeed, centuries before Christ, the ancient populations of the region famously joined forces in order to fend off the Romans during the Social War, before eventually forming alliances with Rome and its citizens.

The Eagle Reborn

Since the Bronze Age, Abruzzo's historical importance has been embodied by places such as the region's capital city, L'Aquila, the queen of the Apennines. The city (its name means 'The Eagle' in Italian) is currently rising out of the rubble left by the disastrous 2009 earthquake, and is more beautiful than ever. One of the most precious artistic sites in Italy, its vast and important historic center is surrounded by almost 4 miles of city walls that have now been magnificently restored. L'Aquila's singularity dates back to its founding in 1254, when 99 surrounding castles (castrum) united, each doing its best to erect its own neighborhood in the new city, following an harmonious – rather than haphazard – urban plan. In the history of urban planning, L'Aquila was the first city to be fortified and constructed at the same time. It wouldn't happen



Traditional fishing machines called Trabucchi are a typical component of the Chieti area on the Abruzzo coast

again until 1703, when Saint Petersburg was founded. The second largest city in the southern Kingdom after Naples, L'Aquila enjoyed broad independence. It had its own laws, fiscal privileges, and the freedom to coin its own currency. For three centuries, until the middle of the 1500s, it was one of the most prosperous and important cities in Europe, trading wool and saffron. By the latter half of the 1400s, it had opened both a university and one of the first printing presses, thanks to a student who interned with Gutenberg, the inventor of the press.

In 1294 in L'Aquila, with Francis of Assisi in attendance among others, Celestine V was crowned pope. One of the most luminous spiritual figures in history, Celestine instituted the first Christian jubilee, the 'Perdonanza', which, thanks to a papal bull honored by local authorities, has been celebrated annually for 722 years in L'Aquila. Celestine V, the first Pope to resign his post five months after being elected, has made a powerful impact on Abruzzo's spirituality. His magnificent hermitages were bravely carved out of the rock of Majella and Mount Morrone, and, in the 1400s, his spirituality was reinforced by the Franciscans, San Bernardino da Siena, and San Giovanni da Capestrano. L'Aquila is now a vibrant cultural center, home to prestigious



Lago Barrea
(Photo: ADA)



Anversa.
(Photo: ADA)

institutes of music, theater, and film; a research university; and a nuclear physics laboratory located underneath Gran Sasso, where scientists all over the world study the origins of matter in the absence of cosmic rays.

Beyond L'Aquila

Heading away from L'Aquila in the direction of Pescara and the Adriatic, you'll encounter wonderful Romanic churches

along the road skirting ancient Tratturo, where flocks of sheep were once herded across nearby region of Puglia. Inside the churches are extraordinarily beautiful frescoes, paintings, and sculptures. Who would have thought that so many fine artists could have been born in a place believed to be as isolated and backward as Abruzzo was, artists who have no reason to envy the greats of the 14th century and

Renaissance. Not to mention major goldsmiths, carpenters, potters. Their works turn up on treasure hunts through small country churches, monasteries, magnificent cathedrals, in places like Sulmona, Chieti, Atri, Teramo, Tagliacozzo, Penne, Giulianova, Città Sant'Angelo, Ortona, Guardiagrele, Lanciano, Vasto, and other centers.

Once in Pescara, you find yourself in the "jewel of the Adriatic," a lively, dynamic city that trades freely with towns and cities on the Balkan coast. As a transport hub, it serves a large commercial and industrial area that stretches as far as Chieti, a beautiful ancient city that, like Pescara, has a good university.

The strip of hills in Abruzzo is dominated by a series of orderly vineyards; the region produces excellent wines that compete at top levels around the world. Wine is one strong suit of the region. Others are oil, pasta, salami, and traditional sweets. Abruzzese cuisine revolves around excellent, grass-fed meat as well as tasty legumes and vegetables. Land around Fucino Lake is farmed. The region's long tradition of great cooking owes a debt of thanks to the famous cooking school at the Villa Santa Maria. Excellent places to taste Abruzzo cuisine can be found in the city of Teramo and in the countryside. Get going, Abruzzo's waiting for you! ●●

My L'Aquila

by Mario Fratti*

I was born in L'Aquila- July 5/1927. A beautiful city up in the clouds. Pure air, snow for three months a year. A pleasant environment. Serene families enjoying life, what life offers them. Not much. I loved Theatre but I had chance to see only three or four performances a year. I was always at the Library (Sotto i Portici), reading hundreds of books, thousands of plays. My two brothers (Gustavo and Fernando) were often there. My father Leone had no time for the Biblioteca Tommasi but he bought papers everyday. He gave them to us. He suggested we should read newspapers every morning to know what is happening in the world and in our Abruzzo. What can I say about the qualities and shortcomings of the Abruzzesi? There is a ritual description of the inhabitants of our Region. "*Forti e Gentili*" (strong and gentle).

I never gave importance to that Motto. Only lately I realized it is true. All my teachers and friends have those qualities. I realized that those qualities are in me too. It is very easy for me to be kind and cordial with everyone. An enjoyable pleasant way of communicating warmth and friendship. Strong? Like many of my friends I do not smoke, I do not drink, I never used drugs. Healthy mind in healthy body. Another quality of strong people? Persistence. We have that. In my lectures I tell young people that they will all probably be rejected nine times out of ten when trying to achieve they aspirations. I tell them "Don't be discouraged. Persist". Many contact me years later and tell me they have succeeded. Shortcomings of the Abruzzesi who are still living in Italy and the Abruzzesi who live in NYC? They love to enjoy a good dinner with families and relatives. They seldom find the time to go to the Theatre. They do not know what they miss. They miss discovery and knowledge.



L'Aquila and its Piazza
del Duomo

*Internationally acclaimed playwright and drama critic. Author of many works, he is best known for his musical *Nine* (inspired by Fellini's famous film, 81/2)

●● **DINING THE ABRUZZO WAY: MEET ROSANNA, YOUR PERSONAL CHEF IN NEW YORK**

Culinary Wonders of Abruzzo

With her devastating smile and torrent of energy, Rosanna di Michele began her culinary “emigration” from Abruzzo, eventually landing in New York and the greater metropolitan area. Careful to preserve tradition, Rosanna serves up the genuine flavors and gastronomic treasures of her homeland.

by **Otylia Coppola**

●● Brought up among pots and pans, the smells of basil and fresh-cooked pasta, and the flavor of authentic tomatoes, Rosanna is used to gathering around a table for good food. “When I was a young girl, my job was to cook for my little sisters,” she says. “While my friends were cooking for their dolls, I had real people to feed, since my parents were at the restaurant.”

You can see where this is going, right? A young girl grows up to run the family restaurant. Wrong. Rosanna decided to pursue a different thing altogether. Yet she never abandoned her passion for cooking.

What is sometimes taken for granted is the courage it takes to leave a secure job and try cooking not only for Italy but New York, the city of her dreams.

Rosanna Cooking’s American Adventure

“During dinner one summer, one of my guests was an American couple. They were getting their first taste of dishes from my region. That August evening is when my American adventure began.”

Partly for fun, partly as a challenge to herself, Rosanna invented a new world: she began traveling to New York to cook for the couple and hold events.



Her first was at the Marymount School. “On those occasions, I realized that my simple, authentic recipes with real Abruzzese flavors were piquing people’s interest.”

So, trip after trip, as she got to know more and more people in the American community, Rosanna realized that the great city, the image of which she’d grown up with on the TV, might have room for her and her brand of Abruzzese cooking.

“Both in my kitchen and my day-to-day life,” she says, her eyes shining, “I try to combine my experience in Italy with my experience in New York. The result is a perfect mix of New York scruple and organization, and the carefree flair of nostra bella Italia.”

Abruzzo: the Rugged and the Gentle

Abruzzo is often overlooked by people who, right or wrong, are only familiar with the country’s famous cities, Venice, Florence, Rome. Yet once you encounter Abruzzo, you’re not likely to forget it. The *Huffington Post* recently called the region, with its mountains on one side and sea on the other, “the world’s fifth

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Rosanna on i-Italy TV

If you missed it on TV, scan the QR code to watch the video or go to [YouTube.com/italy](https://www.youtube.com/italy)

factor into our local products and have spawned our 'surf and turf' cuisine. Obviously, change is synonymous with growth, and Abruzzese cuisine is constantly evolving. For example, its use of spicy chili pepper. You could never do our dishes without it, but increasingly it is used as a final touch, to make our dishes mild..." Nevertheless, one characteristic of Abruzzese cooking is to respect tradition. "Our mountains and sea are the foundation of many recipes handed down from generation to generation to preserve our customs. Some examples are Campotosto mortadella, Solina bread, Ventricina dell'alto Vastese (Vasto-style sausage), Seven Virtues Minestrone. Then there's Mazzaferata di Cupello artichoke, Bocconotti, Ricotta cheesecake, Caciocavallo di Grotta, Aquila-style salami, Mosto Cotto, Vasto-style soup..."

Rosanna could keep going

Of course you could speak as highly about the wine, beginning with Montepulciano di Abruzzo, one of the best know wines in the world, and lighter rosés like the famous Cerasuolo. For a long time, Rosanna has collaborated

“One major characteristic of Abruzzese cooking is to respect tradition. Our mountains and sea are the foundation of many recipes handed down from generation to generation to preserve our customs. And no doubt our natural resources factor into our local products and have spawned our 'surf and turf' cuisine

with the Abruzzese company Collefrisio, becoming the brand's ambassador and promoting good quality reds and whites.

"We also have Trebbiano, the most widely planted varieties of white grape in the region. And then there's



Drying Spaghetti alla Chitarra (Photo ADA)

Pecorino, an excellent wine that has been called "a red disguised as a white"; our region holds the record in Italy for producing the most Pecorino. Falanghina IGT is one of the oldest varieties – probably the oldest in the world – and was adopted by our neighbors in Campania. It can be found in

Abruzzese cellars at its most pure. In recent years Abruzzo is producing a lot of sparkling wine, too, i.e., the classic Abruzzo DOC Spumante." We hope you'll get a chance to sample one of Chef d'Abruzzo Rosanna Cooking's dishes soon!



The Abruzzo countryside (Photo ADA)

