



Abruzzo & Molise

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Locanda Sotto gli Archi (p625)
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Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Sextantio (p625)
- ➔ Locanda Alfieri (p636)
- ➔ Le Torri Hotel (p628)

Why Go?

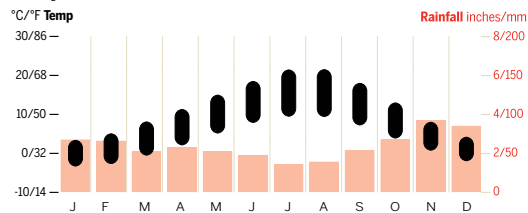
A stunning mountain region little known to foreign visitors, Abruzzo is an area of unspoiled natural beauty and back-country charm. Only an hour from Rome, it feels like a world apart with its great Apennine peaks, still, silent valleys and pretty hilltop towns. To the south, Molise offers more of the same, albeit on a smaller, less dramatic scale.

The landscape is extraordinary. In the region's three national parks, thick forests and flowering meadows give way to high barren plains and snowcapped granite peaks, and wolves and bears roam free in the vast beech woods. A mecca for outdoor enthusiasts, it offers wonderful hiking, skiing and mountain biking, while the coast boasts beautiful sandy beaches.

Across this verdant landscape, there's a string of cultural gems to discover. Pescocostanzo's baroque centre and Sulmona's historic *palazzi* (mansions) testify to past glories, while isolation has ensured the survival of age-old customs such as Cocullo's bizarre snake charmers' procession.

When to Go

L'Aquila



May Cocullo's unique snake festival involves a statue, procession and writhing nest of snakes.

Jul Sulmona's square fills with prancing horses and jousting during this medieval tournament.

May, Jun & Sep Wildflowers, pleasant summer sun – perfect conditions for hiking.

Abruzzo & Molise Highlights

- 1 Breathing in the pure mountain air of **Pescocostanzo** (p627), one of Abruzzo's hidden jewels.
- 2 Spending a night in the village of **Civitella Alfedena** (p630), where bears, wolves and lynx inhabit the surrounding mountains.
- 3 Driving or hiking the high windswept plateau of **Campo Imperatore** (p624), Italy's 'Little Tibet'.
- 4 Feeling the call of the wild as you climb the **Corno Grande** (p624), summit of the Gran Sasso and the Apennines' highest peak.
- 5 Travelling back in time as you walk through the ancient Roman town of **Saepinum** (p635).
- 6 Driving through the breathtaking **Gole di Sagittario** (p628) between Sulmona and Scanno.
- 7 Marvelling at the many imposing hilltop castles, such as **Rocca Calascio** (p624).

