



Abruzzo & Molise

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Best Mountain Towns

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Best Hikes

- ➔ Sentiero della Libertà (p637)
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Why Go?

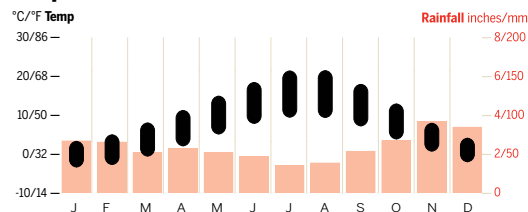
Bisected by the spinal Apennines mountains, Abruzzo and Molise make up Italy's forgotten quarter. Natural attractions rather than cultural colossi are the primary draw here. A major national park building effort in the 1990s created an almost unbroken swathe of protected land that stretches from the harsh, isolated Monti della Laga in the north to the round-topped Majella mountains further south.

Dotted in their midst are some of Italy's most eerily picturesque mountain villages. Indeed, sometimes a visit here feels like a trip back to the 1950s, to a world of wheezing trains, ruined farmhouses and pastoral poppy-filled fields. All this is good news for prospective walkers who share the region's ample paths with sheep dogs, mountain goats, abundant bird life and the odd, rarely sighted, human being.

Sulmona is the best base for mountain excursions, Pescara on the Adriatic coast satisfies those with traditional beach urges, while little-explored Molise invites stopovers in coastal Termoli.

When to Go

L'Aquila



Jan & Feb Grab some skis or a snowboard and head to one of the Abruzzo-Molise ski areas.

Jul Sulmona boasts jousting during its medieval festival, while Pescara hosts a major jazz festival.

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

Abruzzo & Molise Highlights

- 1 Breathing in the pure mountain air of **Pescocostanzo** (p640), a small town with big mansions.
- 2 Taking a walk through history on the Sentiero della Libertà in the **Parco Nazionale della Majella** (p640).
- 3 Keeping an eye out for rare Marsican bears while hiking in the **Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise** (p643).
- 4 Feeling the call of the wild as you climb **Corno Grande** (p636), summit of the Gran Sasso and the Apennines' highest peak.
- 5 Finding a fine family-run trattoria in the little-visited *centro storico* (historic centre) of **Isernia** (p648).
- 6 Catching a bus up through the craggy **Gole di Sagittario** (p643) gorge between Sulmona and Scanno.
- 7 Double-taking at hyper-realistic Roman busts in the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale dell'Abruzzo** (p646) in Chieti.

