

Notes on the territory, Ascoli Piceno and Offida

The territory interested by the mobility takes place in the district of the two National Parks of Parks of Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga and Monti Sibillini which represent, jointly, the widest European protected area. The district is localized at the heart of Italy where the four regions of Marche, Abruzzo, Umbria and Lazio share administrative borders. From an historical perspective this territory is also renowned as the District between the two kingdoms: the Papal State and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (until 1861).

Masterpiece of nature and culture, the district of Two Parks (Region Marche, Umbria, Lazio, Abruzzo) along with the Adriatic coast, are extremely rich as regards geological, environmental, anthropological and cultural heritage. The Gran Sasso d'Italia, with its 2,912 m of altitude represents the roof of the Apennines, while is also significant the Monte Vettore's altitude with its 2476 m., the highest peak of the Monti Sibillini National Park. Nature proves to be very rich in biodiversity and ecosystems with the 2,364 vegetal species, 50 species of mammals (among which the wolf, porcupine, wild cat, the increasingly rare marten, the snow vole, the recently reintroduced deer), 150 bird species (among which the golden eagle, peregrine falcon, eagle owl, the goshawk, the sparrow hawk, the rock partridge, the woodpecker, the snow finch, the chough), more than 20 species of reptiles and invertebrates, among which the meadow viper and the Chirocefalo of Marchesonii, the small crustacean that lives exclusively in the lake of Pilate in the top of Monte Vettore. The water, flowing copious and pure from the mountains' slopes, feeding rivers and lakes, is a guarantee of health for both nature and men that have been inhabiting and shaping these territories for thousand years. In every historical age, men supplemented nature with their admirable works, offering us beautiful villages still in good conservation status, with their churches, abbeys and castles, streets, caves, necropoles, that since prehistory and Roman age have reached us shrouded in mystery and fascination.

The Region has planned the promotion of its own image on the fact of being the only Italian region "to the plural." Being plural for the great variety that characterizes the territory as well as the population, the culture and the economic activities, the folklore as the traditions. The wine regional patrimony is without doubt the emblem of the "plural region" and particularly are its more than 150 present traditional products (DOC, DOCG IGP). The territory is characterised by a large number of tiny villages, each endowed with historical, architectural, archaeological, artistic and traditional heritage.

Twenty DOC and DOCG wines accompany the typical fish or meat dishes of the local kitchen. In the Region every hill has its wine and to every mutation of the landscape corresponds more intense and definite aromas: from that of the fresh fish of the Adriatic to the "tasty" cheeses, meats, olive oil, pasta and meats of the sweet hills, up to the mountains of the Appennino where the strong tastes of the meats predominate, along with the appreciated black truffles and mushrooms.

The region also offer interesting opportunities to cross real itineraries through the places of the industriousness and the typical craftsmanship, famous outlet of the Italian style. The "tipicità" meets with the "made in Italy" shopping, in a pleasant and advantageous experience: a new way to explore the territory and to rediscover the excellences of the best local productive realities.

All the citizens living in this region, are heirs of a great wealth (cultural and natural heritage) and at the same time custodians of what can be defined the regional identity. The history of the traditions, is also the history of an incredibly various territory in his limited extension. Contaminations of every type have woven in the centuries without cancelling it, but producing from this mesh-up new traditions and new way of life. In agriculture, in breeding, in the kitchen, generally in every human activity, we assist to an explosion of different models, resulting in an unrepeatable density of traditions, hard to be listed and all extremely alive ones;

traditions that make the Brands the most modern example of difference and tolerance produce comfort and high quality of the way of living.

The region has become one of the country's most important 'Made in Italy' districts, it is where many of the most prestigious and famous fashion brands are made, icons of Italian style. A journey through this surprising territory is, therefore, also a great occasion for enjoying a veritable fashion tour into the heart of the Marche lifestyle, seeking out the many outlets and stores featuring the most renowned domestic and international brands. Shopping here is pleasant both for the experience and when it comes to being kind to your wallet. It's a new way to explore the region and discover the exquisite quality the local craftsmen are capable of.

Ascoli Piceno

Ascoli was founded by an Italic population (Piceni) several centuries before Rome's founding on the important Via Salaria, the salt road that connected Latium with the salt production areas on the Adriatic coast. In 268 BC it became a *civitas foederata*, a "federated" city with nominal independence from Rome. In 91 BC, together with other cities in central Italy, it revolted against Rome, but in 89 BC was reconquered and destroyed by Pompeius Strabo. Its inhabitants acquired Roman citizenship, following the developments and the eventual fall of the Roman Republic. During the Middle Ages Ascoli was ravaged by the Ostrogoths and then by the Lombards of King Faroald (578). After nearly two centuries as part of the Lombard Duchy of Spoleto (593–789), Ascoli was ruled by the Franks through their vicars, but ultimately it was the bishops that gained influence and power over the city. In 1189 a free republican municipality was established but internal strife led dramatically to the demise of civic values and freedom and to unfortunate ventures against neighboring enemies. This unstable situation opened the way to foreign dictatorships, like those of Galeotto I Malatesta (14th century), initially recruited as a mercenary (*condottiero*) in the war against Fermo, and Francesco Sforza. Sforza was ousted in 1482, but Ascoli was again compelled to submit to the Papal suzerainty. In 1860 it was annexed, together with Marche and Umbria, into the newly unified Kingdom of Italy.

Offida

The origins of Offida are debated. In its territory have been found tombs of the Piceni (7th-5th century BC) and Roman remains; however, the town is known only from 578 AD when the population, fleeing the Lombard invasion, founded several castles in the area, included that of Offida. The true first historical mention dates to 1039, when the Abbey of Farfa received the castle of Ophida, being confirmed in 1261 by Pope Urban IV. During the war between the communes of Ascoli and Fermo, Offida sided for the latter. In the early 16th century Offida signed a truce with Ascoli while, in the same period, all the lands of the Farfa Abbey went to the Papal States. From the late 19th century the economy, from a wholly agricultural one, started to rely on handicraft also.