



WHERE TO EAT

- "Ristorante Gallo d'Oro" Corso V.Emanuele, 54 – Tel. 0736/253520
- "Ristorante Tornasacco" Piazza del Popolo, 36 – Tel. 0736/254151
- "Ristorante Mastro Ciliegia" via di Vesta, 28 (Piazza S.Gregorio) – Tel. 0736/250034
- "Enoteca - Osteria Kursaal" via L.Mercantini, 66 – Tel. 0736/253140
- "Ristorante I Mille Sapori" fraz. Piagge, 295 – Tel. 0736/42368
- "Pub - Pizzeria Leopoldus" via Vidacilio, 18 – Tel. 0736/258857
- "Caffè Lorenz" - Piazza del Popolo.

A COFFEE – AN ANISETTE

- "Caffè Centrale" Piazza del Popolo, 9 – Tel. 0736/262203
- "Caffè S.Marco" via del Trivio, 60 – Tel. 0736/259369
- "Caffè Meletti" Piazza del Popolo – Tel. 0736/259626

WHERE TO BUY

- "Ceramiche L'Acerba" via Pretoriana, 65 – Tel. 0736/256454
- "La Coda di Paglia" typical crafts Corso Mazzini, 76 – Tel. 0736/257181
- "Gastronomia Enoteca Migliori" (stuffed and fried olives) Piazza Arringo, 2
Tel. 0736/250042

USEFUL INFORMATION

- Lodging "Ostello dei Longobardi" via dei Soderini – Tel. 0736/259007
- Market in Ascoli Piceno: Wednesday and Saturday in Piazza della Viola
- START Bus services San Benedetto Tr. / Ascoli P. – Tel. 0736/342227
- I.A.T. (Tourist information) – Tel. 0736/253045
- Ascoli Piceno town council: www.comune.ascoli-piceno.it

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

- Every third weekend of the month: Antiques market
- February: Carnival in Piazza
- July and August: Jousting of the Quintana – Tel. 0736/298223
- 25 April - 1 May "Fritto Misto" "Fried specialities"
- Spring Days organised by FAI (Italian Environmental Association)
- Festival of the Apennines - at weekends during the spring and summer
- August - "Ascoliva"
- Christmas: Live Nativity (Castel Trosino)

GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS

- Pinacoteca Civica - Civic Museum
- Museo Dell'Arte Ceramica - Ceramic Art Museum
- Biblioteca Comunale - Public Library
- Galleria D'Arte "O. Licini" - Art Gallery
- Museo Diocesano - Diocesan Museum
- Museo Archeologico - Archaeological Museum
- Museo Dell'Alto Medioevo- Forte Malatesta - Medieval Museum at Fort Malatesta
- Palazzo Dei Capitani



Via Angelini, 62/a - 63100 Ascoli Piceno - MARCHE - ITALIA

Info: Via Bianchi, 36 - 63074 San Benedetto del Tronto (AP)

Tel. (+39) 0735 780823 - Fax (+39) 0735 781145

www.rivierapicenedellepalme.it - E-mail: info@rivierapicenedellepalme.it



ASCVLVM PICENVVM

“The travertine of the houses shines but does not glitter, balance is not imposed, staying upright and together not for its weight but by virtue of its perfect line.”



ASCOLI

Ascoli Piceno represents without doubt one of the most beautiful cities of the Marche, we can even say that its ancient urban fabric, for its unitary and homogeneous structure and for its many towers and medieval bell towers, certainly make it one of the most characteristic examples of Italy. At the start of the twelfth century there were more than two hundred towers in Ascoli (without counting the bell towers); Federico II, in ransacking and burning the conquered city destroyed ninety one; in the 1600's there were still ninety standing; today there are fifteen. But were the towers in Ascoli built for defensive needs or for the vanity of the powerful? Maybe a little of each. And perhaps also for the independent spirit of the

Ascolans who could induce bishops and lords to build them to better tame the always latent rebellion.



However they form the most obvious characteristic of medieval Ascoli. These towers were 40, or more, metres high and were in general, noble, square buildings with thick walls made from blocks of travertine that often came from Roman ruins. Ascoli offers invaluable art treasures from every century, beginning from the Roman period not to mention the archaeological heritage dating back to the Picene civilization in the area between the eighth to seventh

centuries BC. And yet the deep fascination that the city offers to the person who knows how to “see” is mainly due to the architectural togetherness, whether formed by the severe facades of the great and marvellous palaces and churches or from the humble, but noble, houses in the narrowest, tortuous, of winding streets, called “rua” from the Roman “ruga” (wrinkle). In fact, it should be remembered that the ancient Asculum, after having lived through the Picene civilization, became a Roman colony and then in the Christian era it became a subject of the Church of Rome, naturally not without violent rebellions and communal aspirations of freedom bought and lost between the 12th-13th. Centuries AD. Every era has left numerous traces, the long journey through the centuries

has respected them; and man, despite having made additions and modifications, as well as new constructions, has tried more than ever to respect the old, harmoniously embracing the various styles. How could this happen? It is all due to the travertine stone which does not flake or crack, that the weather covers with its patina but is unable to attack it, the stone that abounds in the Ascoli hills and which was always used by the architects of the gracious centre: it's not by chance that it is defined as the “city of “travertine”. In fact, almost all of the Ascoli monuments are supremely severe, greatly



enhanced by the white-grey travertine, which has become dark grey over the centuries. It is said that Ascoli has to be discovered; its spirit, its essence, is above all off the beaten track, where it almost surprises us with graceful or ornate mullioned windows, in its austere, ancient churches, inside the cosy interiors of its houses. It is a city that fascinates and whose charm is enhanced by the scenic countryside, a city that once known cannot be forgotten.



P.za dell'Arringo





Porta Tufilla



Teatro Ventidio Basso 1846

Madonna
con bambino
del Crivelli



Palazzo dei Capitani





VISITING ASCOLI

In Piazza dell'Arringo: The Palazzo dell'Arringo and the Palazzo del Comune (XII and XIII c.), with Sala dell'Arringo, a very rare example of a large internal room of civil construction, and Pinacoteca, composed of hundreds of works of art. The Palazzo Arcivescovile (XV c.), and the Museo Diocesano with ancient paintings, sculptures, sacred tapestries, precious jewelry, frescoes by Marcello Fogolino of Vicenza (1547). The Duomo, dedicated to S. Emidio of Trier first Bishop of Ascoli, fifteenth century structure, with facade by Cola dell'Amatrice (1530-1540), inside a grandiose Polyptych by Carlo Crivelli (1473), very rare Antependium in silver foil with 27 scenes of the life of Christ (XIV c.), Wooden Choir (sec. XV); in the grand crypt below the Cathedral, amongst other things, is a magnificent Roman sarcophagus that holds the remains of S. Emidio, and a marble group by Lazarus Giosafatti (S. Emidio baptizing Polisia). The Baptistry, a pure 12th. century Romanesque structure, is mentioned in major books of Italian Art history. The Palazzo Panichi, a fifteenth century building and home to the Archaeological Museum, has numerous examples from the Paleolithic, Neolithic, Bronze, Iron, Picena civilization, Roman, early Christian and Lombardic ages.



In the Piazza del Popolo, one of the most beautiful and elegant squares in Italy, is the Palazzo dei Capitani del Popolo, a Romanesque 13th. century palace modified in the 1500's by Cola dell'Amatrice, which has an imposing portal supporting a shrine with a statue of Pope Paul III by Simone Cioli of Florence. The church of S. Francesco, (1262-1371), one of the most noble and largest gothic buildings of all the Marche. On the left side are the sixteenth century Loggia dei Marcanti and then the great gothic portal with the statue of Pope Julius II. Nearby the valuable structures of the colonnades of the cloisters, fourteenth century Chiostro Minore and the sixteenth century Chiostro Maggiore.



In Corso Mazzini we find the Romanesque church of San Venancio, built on the site of a Roman pagan temple of which significant elements are incorporated in the new building, and then the 14th. century Church of St. Agostino with its beautiful Renaissance portal. From Rua Morelli we reach the nearby thirteenth century church, Chiesa di S. Tommaso, with a lovely gothic style cloister. The oldest bell of Ascoli (1286) is in the tower. The Porta Romana or Gemina entrance to via Salaria dates from the first century BC; the medieval walls, with a second larger gate, were built using materials of Roman buildings. Here, near the little Romanesque church of Santa Croce, we see the remains of what was once the Roman Theatre. Traveling along the Via delle Torri, we meet the wonderful fourteenth century church of San Pietro Martire (with seventeenth century portal) and immediately after (by via delle Donne) the church of Santi Vincenzo ed Anastasio, a beautiful Romanesque building set above a sixth century crypt. The unfinished facade is divided into 64 squares, at one time covered with frescoes. Via dei Soderini, one of the most characteristic medieval streets of Ascoli, the notable Casa Longobarda, a 12th. century private house, and the millennial Torre degli Ercolani, the highest and most beautiful tower in the city. Borgo Solesta, a picturesque old quarter with its towers, its little houses, medieval churches, the thirteenth century gate Porta Solesta joined to the Roman bridge of the classical Augustan period and the romantic Rua delle Stelle. Following via di Solesta, Via Cairoli and via Vidacilio. We arrive at the church of Santa Maria Inter Vineas (IX century) with one of the most characteristic Romanesque bell towers and rare frescoes of the thirteenth century. A few metres further along lungo Tronto to reach Porta Tuffillà, opened in 1553 by Camillo Merli; graceful Loggia of three Tuscan style arches. Palazzo Malaspina, on Corso Mazzini, a powerful and beautiful sixteenth-century building, houses the Galleria d'Arte Grafica Moderna, with a collection of prints and drawings of the greatest contemporary Italian artists. Romanesque twelfth century Basilica of San Vittore. Church of San Gregorio, in via Tornasacco, from the Romanesque period, a temple was built incorporating the classic pagan tetra-style of the Augustan period, the Temple of Vesta. On the facade the Pronao Romano columns whilst the ancient walls are still visible on the other external walls. The present church is largely formed by the internal cell of the temple With typical and beautiful trappings in the Opus Retiiculatum style as in Rome or Pompeii.



Porta Solesta e Ponte Romano

Excursions: Castel Trosino, ancient Lombardic stronghold.
Colle San Marco, the "balcony" over the city and the Valle del Tronto.

HISTORY

Once, many centuries ago, a part of the Marche was called Piceno, the land of the Picentes, the people of the woodpecker. "The cool winds swirled the snow in the highlands of Colfiorito, when the Picentes came, behind the flight of the woodpecker. They looked out from the Apennines, using their hands as visors, and watched the sea lit by the morning sun..." Then came the Piceno spring when the streams swelled from the melting snow and the meadows bloomed with anemones and cyclamen. They were peaceful people of Sabine ancestry of Sabellic ("wise people") who had left their homeland in spring to fulfil a sacred transmigration. They were led by the divine bird which would give them their name for ever.

They were devoted to farming the land and preserving herbs; they knew very well how to work metals and in their rest time loved embellishing their tools or making ornaments for their women. They were eminently peaceful men until events were to force them to forge armour and weapons. "The shade of the vines and olives welcomed the peaceful people who were pressing around... and who would not have known weapons if they had not to defend themselves." In the Ascoli territory, there lived a sort of small, peaceful confederation of Piceno-Sabellic tribes that headed Asculum, the largest town. They were surrounded by aggressive nations, and felt particularly threatened by the Gauls who had already occupied the entire region north of Ancona and who were tending to spread increasingly towards the south. To defend themselves from formidable opponents they believed it better to accept an alliance with the already powerful Rome. Therefore they made the alliance and in 295 BC helped the Roman legionnaires in the battle at Sentium, inflicting a tremendous defeat on the Gauls and also the Umbrians. According to folklore, the Roman Senate

**Picena bowl
VII century BC.**



sent settlers to the new military occupied area, first at Sena Gallica (Senigallia), then more to the south, penetrating the territory of the alliance as conquerors. This illegal penetration could not but shake the Picenti, the meek and pacifist people that they were, and in 269-68 BC they were in a war against the Romans. Defeated, they are forced to submit while the whole territory comes under Roman jurisdiction. Piceno is invaded during the second Punic War and devastated by the troops of Hannibal. But this time the inhabitants give valuable help to the Romans, defending their land and their homes. Instead during the 3 years of social war, the Ascolani played a notable part in the fight against Rome, because it was the fulcrum for the revolt, the signal for insurrection was sent out from Ascoli, with the massacre of Roman magistrates attending a show in the city theatre. Three Piceno cities, Ascoli, Faleria and Fermo (the latter two did not join the insurrection but were witness to two great battles) passed definitively into history, as well as the names of the chief captains that led the opposite armies: Generals Silio and Mutilio, the magistrates T.Afranio, Mario Egnatio, Q.Pompedio, C.Papio, M.Lamponio, Irio Asinio, Vetticcatone, C.Vidacilio who was born in Ascoli, P.Ventidius (father of the future general and consul Ventidius Basso) on the Picena side and by "Soci Italici"; Mario, Silla, Catone, Lucio Giulio Cesare, Publio Rutilio, Servio Sulpicio, Gneo Strabone on the Roman side. Ascoli was especially pinned for the wrath of the Roman Senate and the Consul Gneo Pompeo Strabone was sent to lay siege. Ascoli resisted heroically for many months. These matters manifested the most sublime evidence of military values and ingenuity on both sides; history is full of tragic events and supreme sacrifices



Piceno helmet

such as that of Vidacilio, the extreme defender of Ascoli who, when recalled urgently from the front with Puglia, sprang with 5,000 men against 70,000 besiegers opening a path to return to the city and reorganizing the defence to the bitter end. But the day came when he realized that all was lost, took his leave from the tattered remains of his cohorts and went to the stake. The city was forced to surrender then, overwhelmed by the crushing force of the assailants (89 BC). And so died the terrible Italic rebellion, the "Wolf" surpassed the "Bull" and the centralising principle choked liberal federal aspirations, relieved because they had never intended to create a separate state but demanded the application of the Constitution of Rome in their territories, the domain of a sovereign people with a municipal oligarchic constitution. But the struggle was not in vain, it was not yet over and already they had secured from Rome the sharing of many rights, chief among them Roman citizenship to allies and even to distant provinces. The blood of Ascoli was fruitful for this tormented Italy, Vidacilio and his group of martyrs for common liberty. At the time of the deadly civil war between Caesar and Pompey, the Ascolani sided with the latter, since the Pompeia family was originally from Ascoli. But for this reason the city was again besieged by Julius Caesar and once again had to capitulate, partly because people Anconetano and Macerata had enthusiastically welcomed the legions of Caesar

and Ascoli was by then isolated. As usual, Antonio and Octavian send new settlers to the Agro Piceno; then, at a later time, the new domain is administered in municipalities and prefectures. Under Augustus, Ascoli starts to become one of the great markets of Central Italy, becoming increasingly important, and at the beginning of the fourth century A.D. we find it the capital of Picenum Suburbicarium. During this century Eremio from Trier evangelizes the area. In the meantime serious events occurred: 476 witnessed the inglorious fall of the Roman empire, a sunset which was preceded and followed by the barbarian invasions. All Piceno, and the Ascolano in particular, was invaded by the Lombards, but without having to endure the horrors encountered by the great centres of the Veneto. Ascoli was the only city that was able to resist the Lombards, but finally, in 578, it too was conquered and partially destroyed; it, and all of the Piceno territory, became part of the Duchy of Spoleto. The Lombard Dukes lost power to Charlemagne but Asolano did not suffer the domination of the imperial counts for long, because shortly after the conquest, in 774 to be precise, Charlemagne made a county of Ascoli and all the territory around it as far as the sea, which he then donated to Pope Adriano I. But the people of Ascoli Piceno were always distinguished in every era for their civic pride and desire for independence, so that, after defeating two treacherous attacks by the Saracens they also rebelled against the Bishop-Count and in 1135 was proclaimed a free city. The Swabian Emperor Frederick II was able to re-subjugate the city in 1242 after a long and fierce siege. At the death of Manfred (1266), the city, with all adjoining territory, came under the control of the Holy See but retained most of the legal systems and institutions it had when it was a free city. This allowed it to rise to great prosperity despite the struggle against Fermo over the port at the estuary of the Tronto. It is during this period that occurred one of the most bizarre stories that the history of Italian literature can remember. It regards, Francesco Stabili, better known as Cecco d'Ascoli (1269-1327), famous antagonist of Dante Alighieri. Having a versatile mind he studied Latin and Greek literature, philosophy, theology, mathematics, astronomy and medicine gaining a deep culture in all these sciences. He taught logic, astrology and medicine at the University of Bologna. In 1322 he professed astrology and necromancy so he was brought to trial and tortured by the Inquisition. He was condemned for heresy and suspended from teaching. In 1326 we find him in Florence as an astrologer, again imprisoned and this time was burned alive for heresy in the Piazza della Signoria. Some of his writings, including "The Acerba", escaped the fire. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, neither Ascoli, nor the other centres of today's province were immune to guerrilla warfare between the Guelphs and Ghibellines, giving, each time, an opportunity for local landlords, or foreign princes, to step in and take possession. The capital, however, always managed to liberate itself after a while and regain freedom. So few months of rule by Dalmonte in 1318 and that of Galeotto Malatesta 1349-1351, or the less than a year of Filippo Tibaldeschi (1360), or even less in Ascoli of the Duke of Atri in 1404; a little longer for the Lordships of Francesco da Carrara, 1414-1426, and Francesco Sforza until 1433. Heroically, the city resisted pressure from the Church who wanted to regain its ancient possession, but in 1472 the papal government had every right against resistance, and punished the obstinate rebel by deriving it of all privileges previously granted. However, the city was again granted some of these in 1482 with the seal "Libertas Ecclesiastica." In vain, during the second half of the sixteenth century, Ascoli tried again to rebel against Papal rule: it did not succeed and resulted in having to give up any autonomy and resign themselves to subjection. The population, tired of fighting, led a quiet life after that, if not a little monotonous and obscure, but that allowed them to peacefully devote themselves to agriculture, trade, small industries and beautifying the city with works of art. It is for this peaceful life that both the capital and the other smaller towns of the Ascolano, could almost keep their medieval appearance, or Renaissance, intact. The serenity and peace lasted until 1799; in that year the area succumbed to the occupation of the French troops and the pillaging that ensued. Then Napoleon reorganized the Italic conquests and Ascoli Piceno found itself heading the Department of Tronto. With the restoration of the old governments, Ascoli in 1815, with the adjoining area, returned to the Church and a few years later became the capital of one of the six papal delegations of the Marche. Finally on the 17th December 1860 it became part of the Kingdom of Italy and Royal proclamation as capital of one of the four provinces of the Marche.

Picena writing



Roman helmet - 240 A.C.

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Lombard gold fibula



