WWW.ABRUZZISSIMO.COM

ISSUE NO. 60 • MARCH 2026

TRAVEL HISTORY CULTURE PEOPLE FOOD

ABRUZZISSIMO MAGAZINE

CONTENTS

ON THE COVER:

Anversa degli Abruzzi. Photo by Ingrid Paardekooper. Read the story on page 9.

LEFT:

A street in Castrovalva; a stone carving on the portal of the Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Grazie in Anversa degli Abruzzi. Photos by Anna Lebedeva. Read the story on page 9.

ABRUZZISSIMO MAGAZINE

www.abruzzissimo.com
editor@abruzzissimo.com

EDITOR & PUBLISHER
Anna Lebedeva
editor@abruzzissimo.com

COPY EDITOR
Linda Dini Jenkins

CONTRIBUTORS

Ingrid Paardekooper
Linda Dini Jenkins
David Ferrante
Anna Swann
Claudia Di Carlo

P*eriodico diffuso in via telematica non soggetto a registrazione ai sensi degli artt. 3 e 3 bis della legge n. 103 del 16 luglio 2012.*

Editor's Note

There is a place I especially love visiting in March: the woods of the **La Camosciara Nature Reserve** in **Civitella Alfedena (AQ)**. It is where the spring feels most vivid. Beneath ancient beech trees, carpets of snowdrops pierce last year's dry leaves and reach towards the spring sun. Wherever you look, their gleaming white flowers sway gently in the breeze. I will be posting photos of this magic place on ABRUZZISSIMO's Instagram page next week, so please check them out.

In this issue, we take you to another striking location: **Anversa degli Abruzzi (AQ),** a town gazing down into the deep ravines of the Sagittario Gorges. The narrow, serpentine roads are not for the faint-hearted but muster a little courage and you will be rewarded with magnificent mountain views, stories from the past, and honest cooking at local restaurant.

We have all heard the legend of the 99 castles that founded **L'Aquila** in the 13th century. As it turns out, the story is not entirely true. Read our fascinating article on the city's foundation, its fiercely independent spirit, and the many times **L'Aquila** has risen again from the rubble.

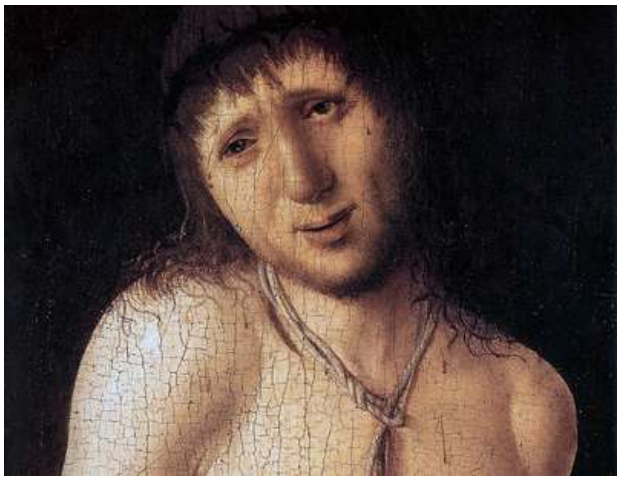
We continue our journey through Abruzzese dialects with the tongue twister *"Scine ca scine, ma ca scine 'n tutte no!"*, exploring its meaning and cultural context.

This month we also revisit the ancient, almost forgotten dish *pecora alla callara*, which, like many traditional Abruzzese recipes, was born of necessity and has in recent years returned as a delicacy. Have you tried Abruzzese-style carbonara by the well-known chef Davide Nanni? He has generously shared his recipe with our readers. He cooks it in the mountains over an open fire, though you can try it in the comfort of your kitchen.

Enjoy the March issue!

Anna Lebedeva
Founder & Editor

DIGEST OF RECENT REGIONAL NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS FROM ABRUZZO NEWSPAPERS



ECCE HOMO ARRIVES SOON IN L'AQUILA

A newly acquired 15th century painting by Antonello da Messina is soon arriving at the Museo Nazionale d'Abruzzo in **L'Aquila**. The small oil on panel, depicting an Ecce Homo on one side and Saint Jerome in the Desert on the other, was purchased by the Italian State at a Sotheby's auction for $14.9 million. This rare work, the last private *Ecce Homo* by Antonello da Messina, will be displayed at MUNDA, constituting a remarkable addition to **L'Aquila** in its year as Italian Capital of Culture. The painting's arrival is a major cultural event, marking the return to Italy of one of the last privately held masterpieces by Antonello da Messina, one of the country's most important Renaissance painters.

WIDESPREAD UNDECLARED EMPLOYMENT

In Abruzzo, around one in ten workers is employed irregularly, with more than 57,000 people working *in nero* and avoiding taxes. Out of a total workforce of 533,000, about 475,000 are formally employed, while more than 57,000 work off the books, placing the region ninth nationally for working off the books, at 10.8%. A recent report by the Cgia di Mestre shows that nearly 2.5 million Italians are employed 'in the black'. As a result of widespread tax evasion, Italians effectively spend almost six months of the year working to meet their fiscal obligations.

HOW MANY ABRUZZESI SPEAK DIALECT AT HOME?

A recent ISTAT report shows that 10.1% of Abruzzo's population speaks only or mainly dialect at home, while 85% use Italian with strangers. Italian use drops to 53% with friends and 47% at home, with dialect rising slightly in informal settings. Seven in ten residents know at least one foreign language, most commonly English, which 55.5% speak, though only 8% at an advanced level. Compared nationally, Abruzzo's dialect use is above average but lower than most southern regions.

In each issue of ABRUZZISSIMO, you'll find our column *Speaking Abruzzese*, where you can learn phrases from local dialects.

FROM PAPERS TO PROVISIONS: EDICOLE REVAMPED

Abruzzo is giving its struggling newsstands a lifeline. In the past 20 years, the region has lost nearly 43% of its *edicole*, and many owners now earn barely €1,000 a month, despite long hours. The new regional law allows newsstands to sell food, drinks, and other products, provide public services, and act as local delivery hubs. Funding and incentives will support innovation, modernization, and opening newsstands in small towns, aiming to preserve their place at the heart of local life.

EUROPES LONGEST WALKING TRAIL IN ABRUZZO

Abruzzo is now part of the Margherita Trail, Europe's longest walking route, stretching over 7,400 kilometres across Italy, Switzerland, France, and Belgium. In the region, it links **Ortona**, **Fossa**, **L'Aquila**, **Paganica**, **San Demetrio ne' Vestini**, and other towns celebrating Margherita d'Austria, the 16th-century Habsburg princess who governed L'Aquila and surrounding territories, fostering culture, the arts, and local heritage. Each stage has been kept under 20 kilometres to encourage slow walking. You can find information on routes and other details on the trail's official website.

CALASCIO OPENS SCHOOL FOR TRADITIONAL TEXTILES

The small town of **Calascio (AQ)** has inaugurated the Istòs School for advanced training in weaving, using local wool and plant fibres, led by Florence's *Fondazione Arte della Seta Lisio*. One- to two-week courses guide professionals and enthusiasts through traditional knitting, natural dyeing, and rural costume history and restoration. Weekend intensives welcome students, locals, and visitors to explore spinning, weaving, and advanced tailoring. The school is part of a wider regional project, backed by €20 million in funding, aimed at revitalising an area long affected by depopulation. See the programme on the foundation's website.

DID YOU KNOW?

THE HOLY VEIL OF MANOPPELLO

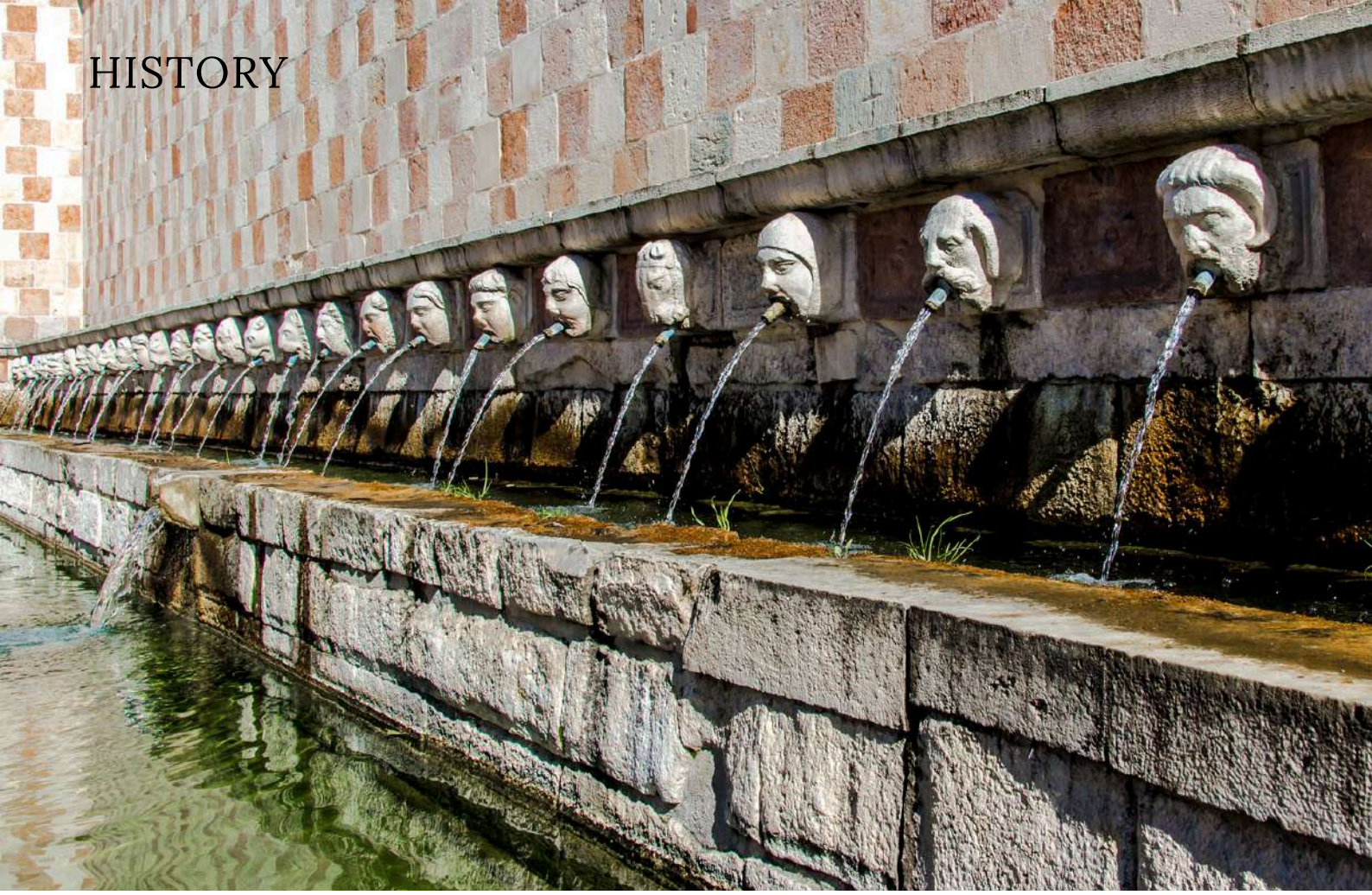
One of the most famous and enigmatic relics in Christianity is enshrined in the Basilica of the Volto Santo in **Manoppello (PE)**. The Holy Face veil, measuring roughly 17.5 by 24 centimetres, is translucent and fragile, and is believed to bear the true face of Jesus Christ.

According to tradition, it is the sudarium mentioned in the Gospel of John, the cloth laid on Jesus's face in the tomb, separate from the burial shroud. Some traditions hold that Mary placed the cloth on her son's face herself before His body was wrapped in the burial shroud.

What sets the Volto Santo apart is the image itself. The face appears alive, with eyes open. Scholars have noted that its proportions correspond precisely to those of the Shroud of Turin. Within Christian belief, the veil absorbed the first breath of the Risen Christ, imprinting upon itself a vivid and inexplicable image of His resurrected face.

The veil is said to have arrived in Manoppello around 1506, though its origins remain unknown.

Today, the relic draws thousands of pilgrims from across the world to the basilica. Each year, on the third Sunday of May and again on 6 August, the veil leaves the basilica in solemn procession, carried through the streets of the town, accompanied by pilgrims and local residents. For further details, see the Basilica of the Volto Santo's website. An episode of the recent Netflix docuseries *Mysteries of the Faith* explores the Volto Santo relic.



L'AQUILA AND THE LEGEND OF 99 CASTLES

By Anna Lebedeva

In the high basin beneath the Gran Sasso, at 731 metres above sea level, L'Aquila was born not once but twice. According to legend, 99 castles scattered across the territory around L'Aquila joined together in an act of collective will, each contributing a church and a square to the new city. It is a compelling tale but not strictly true.

At the beginning of it all was the *transumanza*, the seasonal migration of shepherds and their sheep flocks between mountain pastures in summer and lowland plains of Apulia in winter. "As some historians observed, notably the late Professor Alessandro Clementi, half playfully yet with conviction, the churches and palaces of L'Aquila smell faintly of sheep because they were financed by the wealth of transhumant flocks," says Giancaterino Gualtieri, an author and local history enthusiast based in L'Aquila.

After the collapse of the Roman Empire, long-distance transhumance declined, only to revive under the Normans and later the Swabians, who re-established a unified territory stretching from Abruzzo to Apulia, restoring the seasonal movement of flocks that connected mountains

Photos: Fontana delle 99 Cannelle in L'Aquila

and plains. “From around 1100, with a single authority guaranteeing safe passage, flocks could once again move seasonally: grazing on the rich summer pastures of the Gran Sasso, then descending to winter in the plains of Puglia,” explains Gualtieri. “Livestock meant wealth. The Latin word pecus, flock, gave rise to pecunia, money.”

THE FIRST FOUNDATION

The profits of transhumance were largely controlled by barons and feudal lords. An emerging mercantile class found itself excluded. The foundation of L’Aquila was, in essence, an anti-feudal gesture. Its promoters petitioned both pope and emperor for permission to create a free city, a place where trade in wool, leather, and livestock could flourish beyond baronial constraints. At first, both powers hesitated. A strong commune near the border of the Papal States was politically delicate. Earlier attempts to found the city had sought papal approval, but it was Conrad IV of Germany, then ruler of the Kingdom of Sicily, who finally authorised the unification of the castles of Amiternum and Forcona, formally establishing the city in 1254 at a site called Aquili (also known as Acculi, Acculum, or Aquilio, named for its abundant springs). Giancaterino Gualtieri says that the city’s name comes from this area of Acculi and its springs, rather than from the Swabian eagle (Aquila), as is often suggested.

But the new city lasted barely a few years. Manfredi, who by then became regent over the Kingdom of Sicily viewed the new settlement as a papal outpost planted too close to the frontier of his kingdom. The fledgling town, aligned with Rome, was besieged and razed in 1259. What stands today is the result of a second foundation.

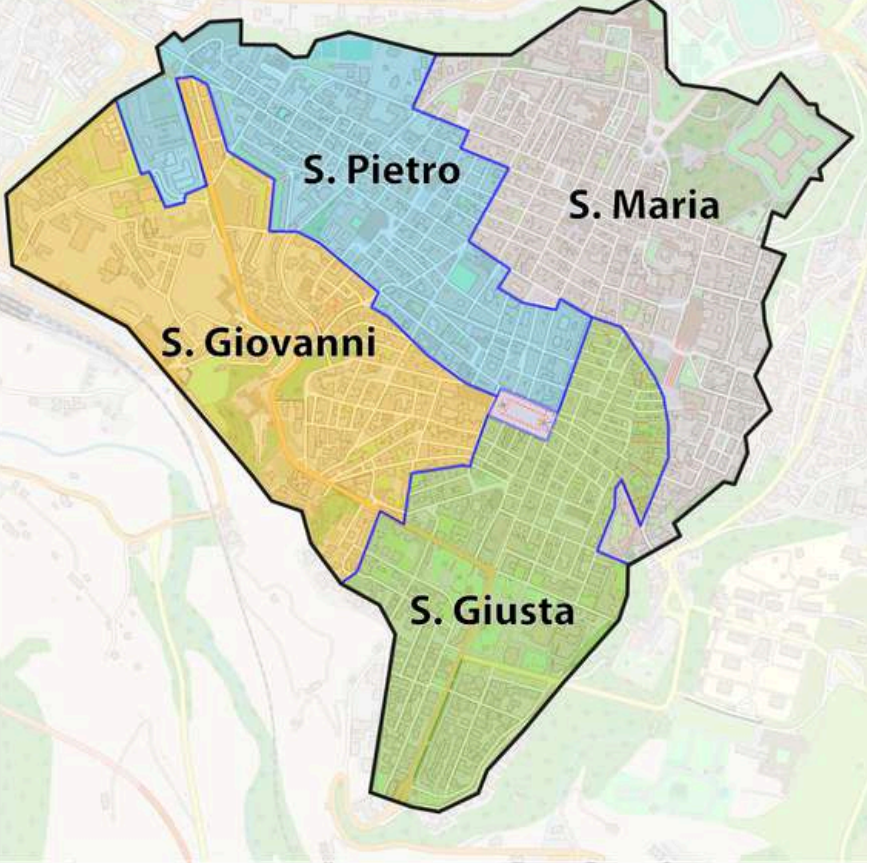
REBIRTH

The city’s rebirth, a few years later, was more carefully organised. Royal diplomas confirmed privileges and, crucially, divided the urban land into

A map of L’Aquila by Girolamo Pico Fonticulano from 1575 , which shows the city walls and 14 gates

plots, each assigned a house and an adjoining garden. This was not an incidental detail. The earliest Aquilans were largely farmers and shepherds. Their new city did not erase their rural identity; it reorganised it. The original plan included green spaces within the walls, unlike older towns where cultivated land lay beyond the perimeter.

Within decades, the transformation was visible. Workshops in the new city multiplied, and trades proliferated. Contemporary chronicles list bakers, tavern-keepers, tailors, shoemakers, entertainers. The market square was paved in 1309, a costly investment that signalled commercial confidence; main streets were widened to accommodate growing traffic; and water infrastructure expanded, including the construction of an aqueduct in the early 14th century.



Photos: (above) a map of the historic *quarti* of L'Aquila; the city's banner with the quarti's coats of arms

THE LEGEND OF THE 99 CASTLES

The legend claims that 99 castles federated to create the city, each establishing within it a locale bearing the name and patron saint of the parent village. The number is alluring, one of those figures that carry symbolic weight across cultures. But the documents tell a different story. "The early territory of L'Aquila included around 60 - 70 castles, rather than the often-cited 99," says Gualtieri. Some monasteries, notably those controlling Bominaco and San Benedetto in Perillis, resisted sending inhabitants to the new city. Certain villages contributed labour or materials without settling within the walls. The city did organise itself into semi-autonomous quarters reflecting the geography of the surrounding basin. Each quarter gravitated around a church and square, oriented towards its place of origin.

Other legends have gathered around the city. Some have claimed that its urban plan mirrors that of Jerusalem, that churches and gates correspond to sacred topography in the Holy Land.

Such interpretations are imaginative rather than demonstrable. Medieval foundations often attracted symbolic readings, especially in retrospect. What is certain is that L'Aquila was conceived with coherence, its grid shaped by longitudinal and latitudinal axes, its quarters distributed with intent, but it took time for L'Aquila to become an important economic hub. "When Pope Celestine V was crowned at Collemaggio in 1294, chroniclers described L'Aquila, more than 30 years after its second foundation, as large yet sparsely inhabited, with empty plots awaiting construction," says Gualtieri.

The legend of 99 castles endures because it offers an image of unity: many villages, one city. From its earliest days, the city has balanced order and independence. Over the centuries, it has been repeatedly tested by earthquakes and destruction, yet each time it has risen again, rebuilding streets, walls, and public spaces while preserving the traces of its foundation.

SEE WHERE THE CITY BEGAN

To understand how L'Aquila took shape in the 1200s, it helps to walk the places where its founding vision is still visible in stone. These sites offer a clear starting point for reading the city's earliest chapter.

HISTORIC *QUARTI*

Since 1272, L'Aquila has been divided into four historic districts, or *quarti*, a structure that still shapes how residents describe their city. Each quarter was anchored by a *chiesa capoquarto*, head churches, linked to a founding castle: San Pietro a Coppito for Coppito, Santa Maria Paganica for Paganica, San Marciano for Lucoli and Santa Giusta for Bazzano. The four quarti are still represented by their individual coats of arms, which appear alongside the civic emblem on the city's official crest. Rebuilt over the centuries and after numerous earthquakes, these churches still stand within the historic centre today as reminders of the city's original division into four quarti.

THE MEDIEVAL WALLS

The medieval walls of L'Aquila mark the boundary of the historic centre and remain one of the clearest traces of the city's 13th-century foundation. Built from the mid-1200s and largely completed by 1316, the circuit extends for more than 5.5 kilometres, enclosing about 157 hectares. It follows the natural line of the hill and originally counted 18 gates. One of the most significant is Porta Bazzano, constructed during the Angevin refoundation launched in 1266. Today, some of the best-preserved sections can be seen along the eastern edge between Via Castello and Viale Collemaggio, while restored gates such as Porta Napoli highlight the scale and ambition of the original urban project. (You can find all the gates visible today by entering their name in Google Maps).

CIVIC TOWER

The *Torre Civica*, or Civic Tower, is the only surviving element of the 14th-century Palazzo del Capitano and today forms part of Palazzo Margherita on Piazza del Palazzo, home of the city hall. Although

Castello di Bominaco, one of the founding castles

lower than its original height, the tower is one of L'Aquila's oldest structures, already present at the time of the city's foundation in the 1260s. It once anchored the civic centre, housing the Captain of Justice, the municipal offices, and the Palazzo della Camera, while its bells regulated daily life, signalling council meetings and public announcements. Originally about 52 metres tall, the tower could oversee a 33-kilometre radius; today it rises to approximately 27 metres. Before the 2009 earthquake, the bell tolled 99 times at dusk, echoing the legend of the city's founding castles.

FONTANA DELLE 99 CANNELLE

At the lower edge of the historic centre, near the River Aterno, stands the Fontana delle 99 Cannelle, the city's best-known monument and one of its earliest monumental works, built by architect Tancredi da Pentima (a plaque at the centre of the fountain marks the start of construction in 1272). Originally a public washhouse, it was built in the area of Acculi, which gave the city its name. Famous for its "99 spouts," the fountain keeps alive the legend of the city's founding castles, though the number has changed over time through expansions and restorations.

FOUNDING CASTLES

Some of the founding castles still exist, though many are now in ruins. Remains can be seen in towns such as Ocre, Bominaco, Beffi, San Pio delle Camere, and Prata d'Ansidonia.

ANVERSA DEGLI ABRUZZI: BETWEEN DEEP GORGES AND HIGH MOUNTAINS

Text by Ingrid Paardekooper
Photos by Anna Lebedeva

Sitting on the cliffs above the Sagittario Gorges, Anversa degli Abruzzi (AQ) has long drawn travellers with its dramatic landscapes. Today, the town weathers depopulation with returnees, newcomers, and grassroots initiatives keeping its streets and traditions alive.

I first came to Anversa degli Abruzzi in 2012 to spend a few weeks working at an organic farm, La Porta dei Parchi. The dramatic landscape took my breath away the moment I saw it: a narrow road winding through the Sagittario valley, stone houses clinging above the gorge, mountains pressing close on either side, and the town shaped by its landscape. But it was not only the natural beauty that drew me in. On the farm, and later in the town, the welcome was warm and generous. Strangers became friends within days. In my spare hours I travelled across the region and was deeply impressed by the artistic and historical heritage of Abruzzo.

Photo: Anversa degli Abruzzi

After that first trip, I found myself returning to Anversa again and again. The friendships drew me back, but so did a growing curiosity about the town's history and living traditions. Eventually it felt natural to have a small base there rather than be a visitor.

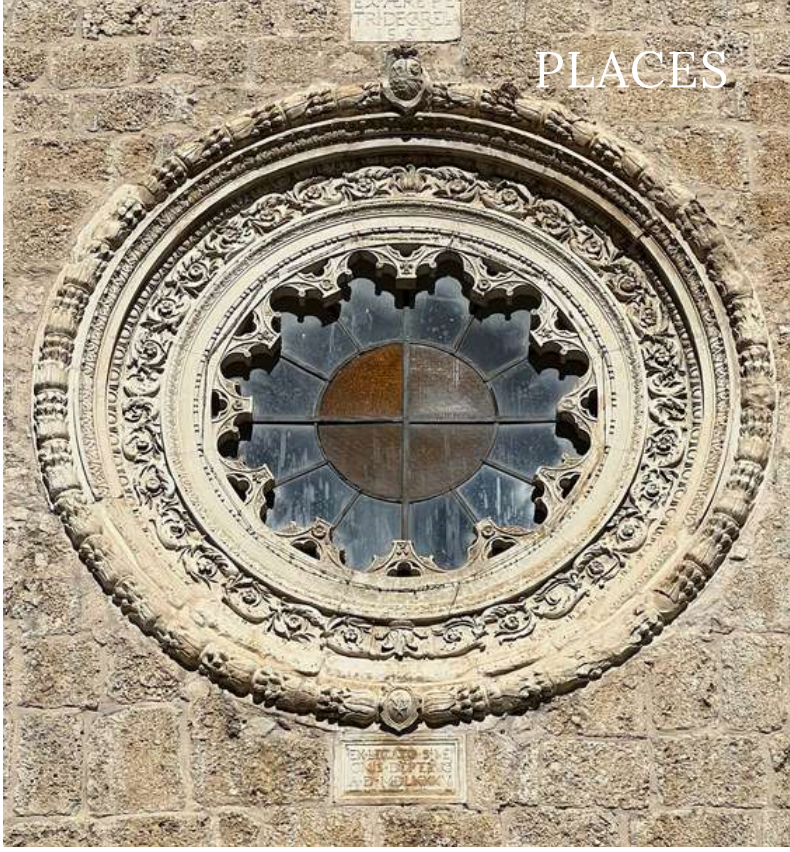
SHAPED BY MOUNTAINS

Set above the dramatic gorges of the Gole del Sagittario, between limestone cliffs and wooded slopes, Anversa degli Abruzzi seems cut from the mountains themselves. From the edge of the historic centre, the ground drops sharply into the rocky depths below, a reminder that here nature is not a backdrop, but the force that shapes the streets themselves. Halfway between mountain pastures and the Valle Peligna, the town's position has defined its history for centuries. Shepherding routes once crossed these slopes, linking upland grazing lands to the plain below, while the river gorge provided water and a natural line of defence.

Like many inland towns in Abruzzo, Anversa took shape in the medieval period under feudal rule. Its Norman castle once dominated the settlement, and a stark fragment of its tower still rises at the top of the town. Successive historic eras, along with frequent earthquakes, can be read in the layers of the town's architecture.

Religious life centred on two churches that still anchor the community. The Renaissance parish church of Santa Maria delle Grazie stands on Anversa's main piazza and still serves as the main parish church, while the older Romanesque church of San Marcello, dating to the 12th century and dedicated to the town's patron saint, was built on the edge of the medieval town, below the walls erected by the Norman rulers.

Photos: Anversa degli Abruzzi



Photos: (above) the portal of the Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Grazie; the *rosone* window of the church

Anversa was long a centre of skilled trades that persisted well into the 20th century. Among these was a tradition of ceramic production dating back at least to the late Middle Ages. Archaeologists have found the remains of workshops and kilns connected with local ceramics and maiolica, a legacy still reflected in the street name Via Santa Maria delle Fornaci.

Toponyms in the surrounding countryside, including Pincera, suggest that bricks were once fired here as well, especially in the clay-rich area near the *calanchi* — the steep gullies carved by rain and slow erosion. Woodworkers, ironworkers, and other artisans also contributed to the economic life of the town.

THE HEART OF THE TOWN

One place I always return to is the main piazza, in front of the Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Grazie. It is the social heart of the town and the first place I go to when I arrive back in Anversa. Along one side of the piazza, there are two bars which from early morning to evening are the town's informal meeting place. Locals exchange news and visitors stop for a drink or gelato. In a small mountain community, such spaces are important. The bars are not simply businesses but social anchors where you can feel the pulse of town life. Close by, the historic restaurant La Fiaccola, run by the Di Cesare-Marcelli family, is another familiar gathering point where meals turn into long conversations and shared celebrations.

Modern Anversa counts only a few hundred permanent residents. Like many mountain towns and villages across Abruzzo, it has experienced decades of depopulation as younger generations leave in search of work elsewhere. But here, many families with roots in Anversa — including descendants of emigrants, especially from the United States — return to their grandparents' homes for brief or extended stays. There are also newcomers like me, drawn by the town's charm and atmosphere, who have bought holiday homes. Between March and November, the streets can feel far busier and more animated than the official population figures suggest. I have been told that, counting both

permanent and part-time residents, more than 20 nationalities are represented here, especially in the warmer months.

BEYOND TOURISM

Many tourists visit the town, but it is grassroots initiatives that offer real hope for the future. Recently, younger residents who have chosen to stay permanently have launched projects aimed at keeping village life alive despite demographic challenges. The group *Donne Rurali* — a network of young women who live locally, run small businesses, and organise community activities — is committed to preserving traditional skills and passing them on to the next generation.

Anversa also hosts social initiatives such as the therapeutic community *Il Castello*, supporting people with psychiatric and social rehabilitation needs. The centre has also welcomed Erasmus trainees from Antwerp in Belgium — a small but meaningful link between the large port city of Antwerp (Anversa in Italian) and its much smaller namesake in Abruzzo.

Few stories illustrate modern Anversa better than the organic farm and agriturismo *La Porta dei Parchi.* Founded by Nunzio Marcelli and Manuela Cozzi, who years ago set out to revive traditional Abruzzese pastoral culture, the farm has taken a different path from the widespread abandonment of sheep farming. Today, the farm is a sustainable enterprise, producing cheeses, wool, and other traditional goods, while welcoming visitors, students, and volunteers to experience it firsthand. Their daughter Viola, her partner Matteo, and their son Jacopo are also involved in running the enterprise.

I was one of the volunteers who, like many others from around the world, came to work at La Porta dei Parchi through WWOOF (Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms) in exchange for food and accommodation. We rolled up our sleeves, helping with daily tasks and learning the rhythms of mountain agriculture. Over the years, La Porta dei Parchi has built a broad international community connected to the valley, with many former volunteers falling for Anversa and its people and returning long after their first stay.

THE HAMLET OF CASTROVALVA

Anversa holds a place in Italian literature thanks to Gabriele D'Annunzio, whose tragedy *La fiaccola sotto il moggio* (*The torch under the bushel*) drew inspiration from the area. However, the most internationally recognisable artistic connection can

Photos: (below) the ruins of the castle in Anversa degli Abruzzi; Porta Pazziana in the town

be found in the small hamlet of Castrovalva, administratively part of the municipality of Anversa degli Abruzzi.

Looking down into the gorge, high above the Sagittario valley, Castrovalva appears almost unreal from a distance, its tightly clustered houses clinging to the rock, with a steep road zigzagging up the mountainside.

The tiny hamlet gained worldwide fame in 1930 when Dutch graphic artist Maurits Cornelis Escher depicted it in one of his most celebrated lithographs. During a journey through Abruzzo in 1929, Escher travelled through the Sagittario valley with Swiss painter Giuseppe Haas-Triverio, exploring remote villages on foot and, where necessary, with the help of local guides and pack donkeys (for more about his visit read our article in the April 2024 issue link). He visited Castrovalva, where he made drawings that later became famous prints. From these studies was born the famous lithograph Castrovalva (1930), now part of the collection of the National Gallery of Canada and regularly displayed in the Escher Museum in The Hague. The image perfectly captures the dramatic vertical landscape and the almost unreal geometry of the village.

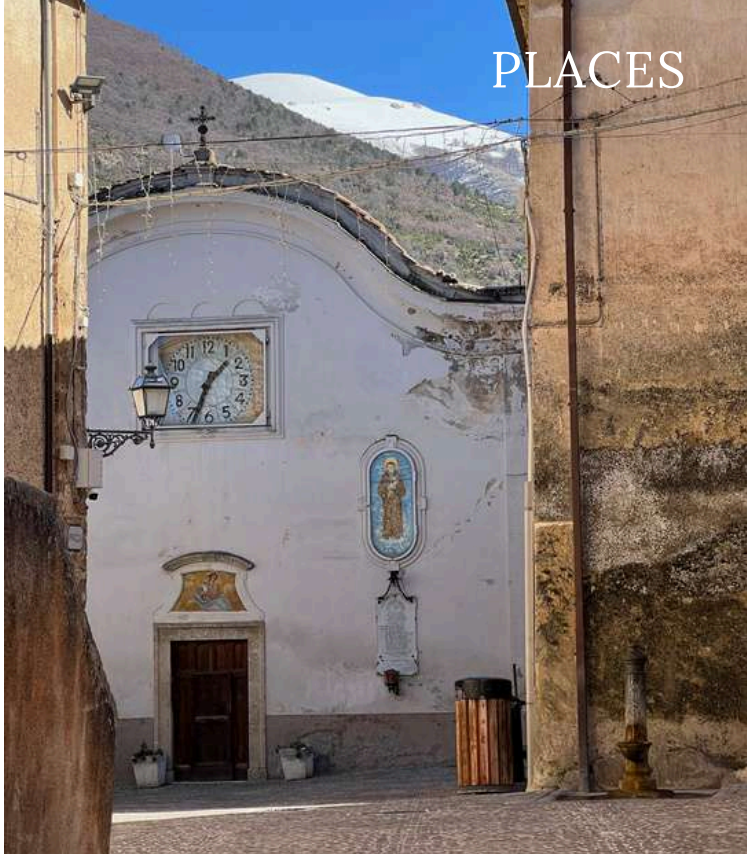
Castrovalva also has a connection to a modern celebrity: Chef Davide Nanni, known for his outdoor "wild cooking" videos filmed in the mountains around Anversa and Castrovalva. His social media videos, in which he prepares hearty, traditional dishes over an open fire, have earned him a wide following. Recently, he made a warm and memorable appearance in the National Geographic series *Tucci in Italy*, in the episode dedicated to Abruzzo, cooking for Stanley Tucci. The 'wild chef' returns during the warmer months to cook at his family's restaurant, *Il Nido d'Aquila*. (You can find a recipe from Davide's kitchen at the end of this issue).

Today, only a handful of families live full time in the hamlet of Castrovalva, but it comes alive in summer, as people return to their family homes and city dwellers seek relief from the heat. The hamlet offers a bar, a small food shop, several holiday rentals, and a mountain refuge with a kitchen.

Photos: (below) a bar in Castrovalva; (right) a street in the hamlet

WHY I RETURN

I now spend extended periods in Anversa degli Abruzzi each year, usually between March and November — typically a few weeks at a time, and five to six weeks in the summer. Since I still have a full-time job in the Netherlands, I cannot stay longer for now, but I hope to spend more time there once I retire. What I value most in Anversa is the balance between the unhurried pace of daily life and the closeness of the community: coffee on the piazza, conversations that stretch into the evening. I treasure the friendships and connections I have made here, which have given me insight into the town's life beyond what a casual visitor ever experiences — all set against a striking mountain backdrop.



Ingrid Paardekooper is a Dutch writer with a background in classical languages, history, and education. She founded the website In Abruzzo*, wrote* Abruzzo, het groene hart van Italië*, the first Dutch-language cultural guide to the region and leads academic cultural tours in Italy.*

Photos: (from top clockwise) Chiesa di Santa Maria ad Nives in Castrovalva; a street in the hamlet; a street in Anversa; a votive shrine in Anversa.

Photos: (from above clockwise) the carved lintel of the Casa del Templare; Chiesa di San Marcello; cheeses from *La Posta dei Parchi* farm; a flock of sheep at the farm (photos via *La Porta dei Parchi*/Facebook)

WHAT TO DO AND SEE IN ANVERSA DEGLI ABRUZZI

WALK IN THE TOWN

Near the **Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Grazie**, beside the fountain, a town map shows the main landmarks. Climb the steps to reach the ruins of the Norman castle and fragments of the 12th-century defensive walls. Down the main street and through the maze of narrow streets, **Porta Pazziana** served as the entrance to the medieval quarter. Its small square is lined with merchant houses with external staircases, used to display goods for sale. Take a closer look at the house number 10, the ***Casa del Templare***, and you will see a 14th-century stone lintel carved with a weathered open compass and floral motifs. Further down a narrow street, a belvedere opens onto a breathtaking view of the gorge, the towering mountains, and the hamlet of Castrovalva perched above. To the right, along the town walls, the *Case dei Lombardi* stand as reminders of the era when powerful Lombards ruled Anversa. Back in the main piazza stop for a coffee at **Bar Belprato** or **Bar L'Angolo Delle Grazie** and some peoplewatching. As Ingrid Paardekooper notes, Anversa's allure lies not only in its monuments, but in its lively atmosphere.

You can pick up brochures about the town and its surroundings at the **tourist information point**, open for most of the week in summer on Via Santa Maria delle Grazie, 14, beside the main church. From there, you can also arrange a visit to the **Antica Fornace**, the old kiln where local ceramists once worked.

SAMPLE LOCAL PRODUCE

Ristorante La Fiaccola serves traditional dishes highlighting local truffles, cheeses, and lamb. The grilled pecorino with honey and almonds and the gnocchi in a rich cheese sauce are particular standouts. A short drive from the town, **La Porta dei Parchi farm** sells its renowned cheeses: fresh and aged pecorino, ricotta smoked over juniper wood or flavoured with rosemary. In summer, guests can stay in the agriturismo's cosy rooms

or glamping yurts by the river. During the high season, the farm's restaurant serves excellent seasonal dishes with vegetables from their garden, free-range pork and sheep meat, and wild mountain herbs.

VISIT THE SAGITTARIO GORGES

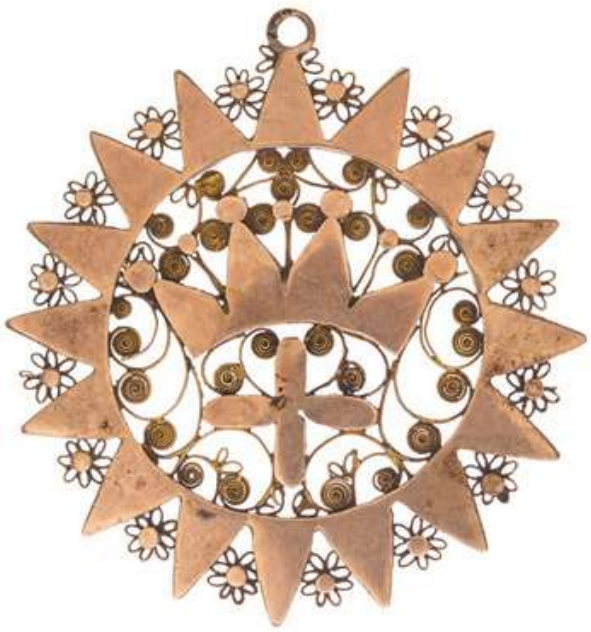
Follow the signs for the Oasi WWF Gole del Sagittario from the town centre, down to the river. Recognised as a Regional Nature Reserve in 1997, the protected area covers 450 hectares within the dramatic limestone gorges shaped over millions of years by the Sagittario River. The oldest rock outcrops date back around 200 million years, while the most recent are about 5 million years old, before the entire area finally emerged above sea level. At the base of the gorges, abundant springs feed the river, while a network of 30 kilometres of trails winds through the reserve (see the itineraries here).

You can stroll under the shade of trees along the river, have a picnic at the equipped area beneath a grand oak, or take on more challenging hikes into the gorges and surrounding mountains. Despite recent budget cuts that have left the reserve with just three staff members, with the help of Erasmus Plus volunteers from across Europe they keep the trails maintained and organise many events.

EXPLORE CASTROVALVA

It's just a 10-minute drive from Anversa, though the road winds through hairpin bends and a narrow tunnel. In summer, parking in the hamlet can be scarce, so walking from Anversa is a good alternative. The trail begins at the riverside picnic area and climbs up to the hamlet, with the round trip taking around three hours.

Photos: in the hamlet of Castrovalva



LA PRESENTOSA: A TALE OF LOVE AND COMMITMENT

By Linda Dini Jenkins

From the first mention by Gabriele D'Annunzio in 1894, to the intricate work of contemporary artisans, *la presentosa* remains a symbol of Abruzzo's romantic traditions and delicate craftsmanship.

When I came to Sulmona in 2010, I noticed two things right away as I walked down the corso: the unavoidable displays of colorful and very tempting *confetti* — and the unusual, stunning intricate necklaces in jewellery shop windows. I quickly came to learn that these were *presentose*, the traditional star-shaped filigree baubles all wrapped up in tales of love and commitment.

HISTORY

While the tradition of *presentose* goes back at least to the 17th or 18th century, it wasn't until 1894, when the Abruzzesse writer Gabrielle D'Annunzio mentioned them in his masterwork, *The Triumph of Death (Il trionfo della morte)*, that they were made famous. He writes, "Two heavy gold rings hung from her ears and on her breast lay the *Presentosa*: a large filigree star with two hearts in the middle. The precious metal, bought with the constant effort of many generations, kept for years and years in profound safety, only brought out for every new wedding day. . ."

Photos: Two presentose from the 1800s displayed in the Museo del Costume d'Isernia. Photo from the booklet "La Presentosa"

The *presentosa* is a truly Abruzzesse treasure. It is believed that *presentose* were once only known in Molise (once a part of Abruzzo) and in the Frentana and Peligna areas of Abruzzo. While some kind of "one-strand openwork" was widespread, it was only the goldsmith workshops of Sulmona and Pescocostanzo which originally produced the two-stranded version. Other cities — Agnone and Guardiagrele — are cited as being among the oldest centers of this kind of work, while other production centers included L'Aquila and Scanno.

To me, the most striking thing about the *presentosa* — apart from its long and storied history — is its remarkable filigree work, whether the piece be the traditional metal pendant or the more contemporary "*tombolo*" version, using exquisitely worked lace instead of metal. When artisans talk about filigree, what they mean is the technique of working fine strands of gold or silver, braided or twisted, into the desired shape. Originally, the technique called for hammering the twisted strands of metal flat to create a cross-section resembling rows of ears of corn. However they are fashioned now, they make a beautiful statement for necklaces, earrings, and brooches and uses far less gold (or silver) than if they were solid pieces. As a result, the workmanship simply shines!

If you've seen *presentose*, you've probably noticed the wide variety and sizes that they come in: metals of silver, yellow gold, rose gold, and now even lace filigree in place of metal. But more than that, you'll see necklaces and other pieces bearing a single heart, two hearts, and entwined hearts, sometimes with a moon. Symbols of eternal love. Ahh, how romantic!

SYMBOLS

The conventional wisdom goes like this: one heart is said to symbolise the unmarried woman, or a piece that a mother gives to her daughter. Two hearts suggest that the wearer is engaged, and that the piece was a gift presented from her intended. Two hearts entwined or joined by a half moon suggest that the woman is married, and that the partners are linked to each other.

Photos: (top) a folkloristic group wearing presentose, 1923; a wedding collar, 19th century. Photos from the booklet "La Presentosa"

Adriana Gandolfi, an anthropologist and author of the booklet, *La Presentosa*, says that all these theories are unfounded. "The *Presentosa* was produced in a wide range of styles. Back then, goldsmiths didn't put their brand on the pieces, so they did their best to set themselves and their creations apart from others developing unique styles easily attributable to the maker," explains Gandolfi. "Many *presentose* were fashioned in accordance with customer's wishes: hearts dripping blood or shedding tears of Passion; hearts surmounted by flames or locked toge-

ther with a key. In my book, there is a photo of a *presentosa* with a sailboat, which, most likely, a man gave to his betrothed before leaving on a long journey overseas."

The name "*presentosa*" derives from the word "*presenténze*" — the engagement announcement. A man would gift a *presentosa* to a young woman he intended to marry. "Like all traditional jewellery, the *presentosa* had a clearly defined function: it communicated that the woman was engaged," explains Adriana Gandolfi.

PEOPLE'S JEWELLERY

It turns out that wedding contracts from the early 19th century, drawn up by the notary Domenicantonio Aloè from Guardiagrele, mention two *presentose*: one with coral and another studded with rubies, most likely, both belonging to well-off families. Small, plain designs cost little and even a man of small means could afford one. Generally made of low carat gold (8 and 12 carats) for economic reasons and, using the filigree technique (which allows for considerable savings on raw material costs), the monetary value clearly isn't the most important aspect of the *presentose*. "Rich families commissioned bigger, more elaborate *presentose* decorated with precious stones and inserted in intricate multi-strand wedding necklaces

Photos: (below) a *tombolo* lace *presentose* from Scanno by Oreficeria Di Rienzo; (lright) modern day presentosa from Scanno by Giuliano Riccitelli

Often, these wedding collars (called *la corona del petto* — the chest crown) had three-to-four *presentose*, added by one generation after another," says Gandolfi.

NEXT GENERATION

Today's goldsmiths are hard at work creating new twists (pun intended) on *La Presentosa*. *L'Amorino* from Scanno is an intricate design of cupids and crowns, often offset by stones on the points. *La Pescarina* from Pescara was created in 2000 as a new tradition, inspired by creatures of the sea, especially the starfish. The *Sgarbizio* represents Castel di Sangro. La *Pulsatilla* was inspired by a flower from Roccaraso, and many jewellers continue making *Il Cuore D'Abruzzo*, an ancient symbol, carried by shepherds in the 1700s, which often held a lock of their beloved's hair.

Linda Dini Jenkins is a travel planner and author of several books. Her new book, How Way Leads on to Way, is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press.

"La Presentosa" by Adriana Gandolfi (text in Italian and English) is available on Amazon.

The Smithsonian Institution is running an online lecture "*The Gold Traditions of Abruzzo: Italian Craft, Culture, and Identity*" on March 25 where cultural historian Viviana Altieri explores the origins, meanings, and social significance of traditional gold jewelry from Abruzzo.

Plan a perfect ABRUZZO ADVENTURE

Book a trip-planning consultation with ABRUZZISSIMO

"Planning a trip to Abruzzo can be time-consuming. Treat yourself to an easier journey. I'll help you save hours of research and find the local gems that guidebooks often miss. Living here gives me a deep knowledge of the region, so I can share practical, insider advice on where to stay, what to see, and how to make the most of your visit."

Anna Lebedeva

Editor of Abruzzissimo Magazine

BOOK A PERSONALISED ABRUZZO TRIP-PLANNING CONSULTATION

LIFE ON THE UPSIDE IN TOCCO DA CASAURIA

By Linda Dini Jenkins

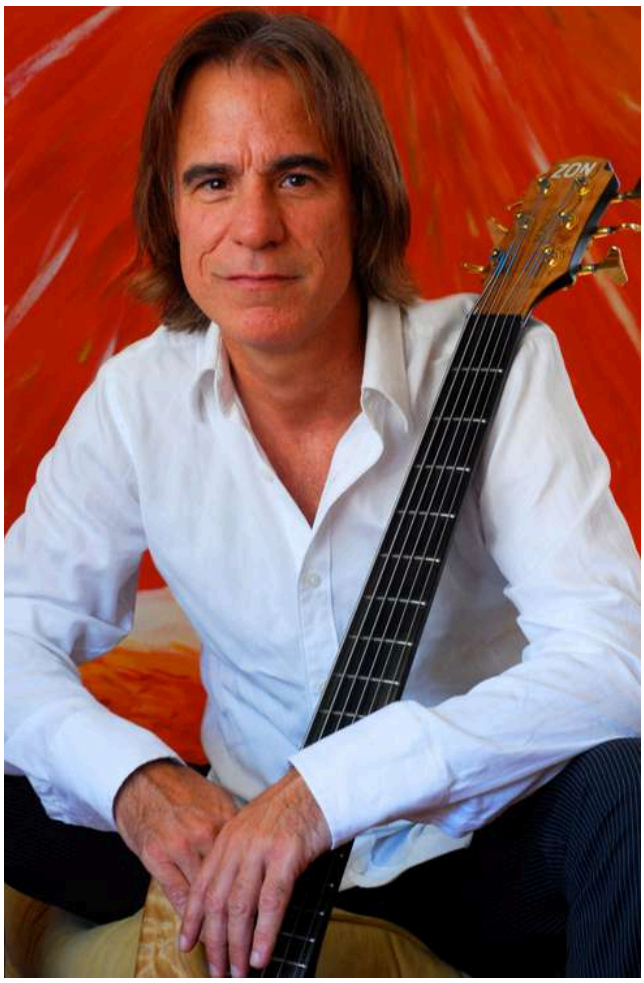
San Francisco native Dewayne Pate is a highly accomplished bass guitarist and composer who brought his talents to the American roots music scene here in Italy more than 20 years ago. Two years ago, he and his wife moved full time to Tocco da Casauria — and the beat goes on.

Born and raised in the Bay Area, Dewayne's first gigs were as a teenager, playing in his grandfather's country western band, so he has a long history of performing. He wanted to play guitar in his high school's jazz band, but they needed an electric bass player more, so he switched instruments and the rest, as they say, is history. He studied with jazz bassist John Patitucci and then with jazz fusion bass icon Jeff Berlin at the Musicians Institute in Los Angeles before going on the road with the likes of Patrick and Robben Ford, Arturo Sandoval, Sons of Champlin, Huey Lewis, Boz Scaggs, and Tower of Power.

"I was so busy working as a sideman that it took me 14 years and a pandemic lockdown to find time to record my latest album as a leader," he notes. That album, *On The Upside* — featuring guitar great Robben Ford, drum phenom Dennis Chambers, Chris Cain, David Garibaldi, and a host of others — comprises funk, blues, and jazz fusion, and includes five of his original compositions.

FIRST TOURING, THEN SETTLING DOWN

While Dewayne has no Italian roots, he toured Italy many times over the years and has played with many well-known artists. Twenty years ago, he played with blues guitarist Chris Cain at the Campli Music Festival in Teramo. He brought his wife, Christiane, on that trip and together they went on a little trip



Dewayne Pate

around the region after the gig. Born in Dessau, Germany, she is a retired preschool teacher.

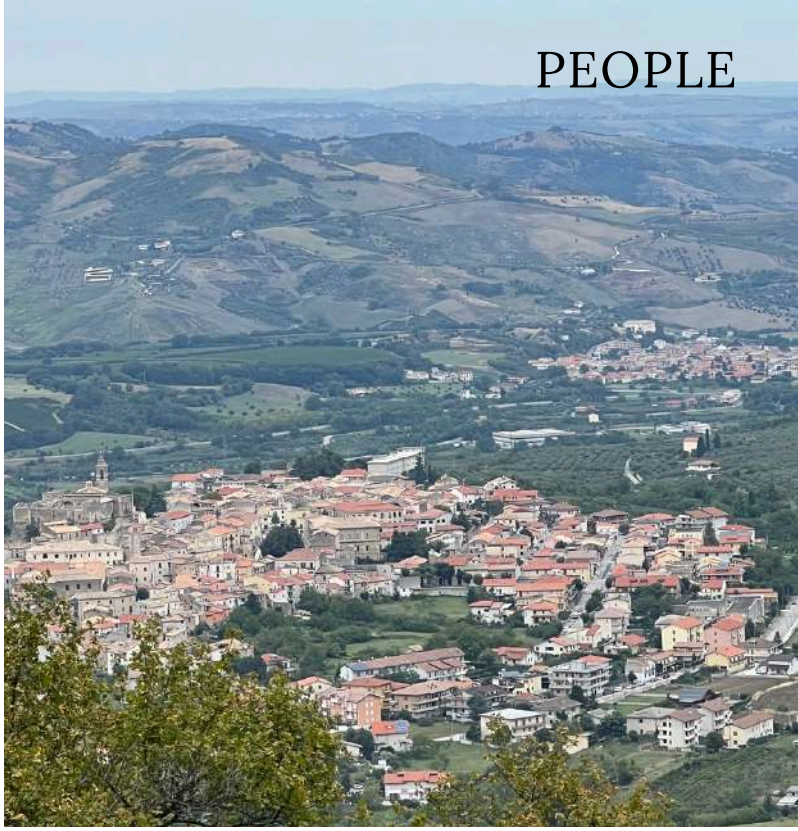
When they saw the castle of Rocca Calascio, they thought they might be able to live in Abruzzo one day. Fast forward to three years ago, and their search for a home began in earnest.

"I have a few musical friends in Italy," he says modestly. "Two or three years ago I came to play with Luca Giordano and Chris Cain." It was on the tour that Dewayne and his wife looked at some of the houses they had seen online. They bought their place in Tocco da Casauria in December 2024 and, although Dewayne continues to tour

in the US, they have moved in for good. And someday, if they're lucky, their furniture and clothes will move in too; for now, they're stuck in Rotterdam, waiting for "red tape" issues to be resolved.

THE TOWN THAT FITS THE BILL

Their house hunting wish list included a small walkable town with easy access to both the coast and the mountains. They didn't want to take on a major restoration, and they wanted an outdoor space with a great view. The house they bought was previously owned by two women from the UK — Lynn and Donna — who had totally renovated it. "It was very modern, and move-in ready," notes Dewayne. "We saw it online, took a week to look around the area, and decided this was the one."



Tocco da Casauria. Photo by Anna Lebedeva

Tocco da Casauria has an expat community of about half a dozen Americans and a few Brits and Australians. Dewayne says it's a small, friendly community and that the locals are very warm and helpful — even if he and his wife don't speak Italian well yet. "That's certainly a challenge at times, but anybody under 30 would prefer to work on their English with us," laughs Dewayne.

Located in the province of Pescara, Tocco da Casauria has about 2400 inhabitants and is famous for being the home of the very powerful digestivo, Centerba. In fact, the Toro Liquori company has been making the product since 1817, keeping alive the tradition of distilling natural herbs. It is also a rich wine-growing region, with several stellar producers of Montepulciano d'Abruzzo and Cerasuolo varieties nearby, and is famous for its olive oil, made from the Toccolana variety.

IN TUNE WITH THE COMMUNITY

Their favorite part of town is basically right outside their front door, Dewayne says. "We've got an overlook of the valley below and a view of the castle and main church in town." There's a nice organic market about a minute's walk away, and another on the way to Torre dei Passeri, both of which keep them well-fed and healthy. When he's not practicing his bass, Dewayne gets caught up on reading, explores the local sights and, of course, does home improvements.

He is very excited about having a good local music scene. "There's live music at least once a month at Cantina101 Ristorante, right in town, he says. "The owner, Vicenzo, is a sax player, and he and his wife Ludovica attract some terrific talent to their place. American roots music — jazz and blues — is so popular throughout Europe, and it's no different right here."

The future looks upbeat for Dewayne, who plans to spend more time (when he's not touring) meeting the musicians who pass through and reciprocating by bringing more music and musicians over from the States. He's got a few gigs already planned for 2026, starting on April 10 in Sulmona with the Luca Giordano Band. The full touring schedule is available on his website and Facebook page. And when he's back home, Dewayne and Christiane will be enjoying life together in Abruzzo from their terrace with a great view!

Linda Dini Jenkins is a travel planner and author of several books. Her new book, How Way Leads on to Way*, is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press.*

SCINE CA SCINE, MA CA SCINE 'N TUTTE NO!

By David Ferrante

"Yes, of course… but yes, entirely? No!" It is the expression that, in Abruzzo, applies an elegant brake to excess. At first it sounds like wholehearted agreement, almost enthusiastic. Then comes the second half, shifting the tone: all right, agreed… but let us not overdo it. It is what people say when someone is pulling the rope too tight, when enthusiasm turns intrusive or a request strays beyond measure. The rhythm of it softens the refusal, wrapping firmness in a kind of verbal courtesy. You can hear it at family tables, in village squares, in shops where familiarity allows honesty without offence.

In Abruzzese communities, long shaped by a culture of restraint and limits, excess rarely finds approval. The mountains teach balance; the countryside teaches thrift. Everything must remain within its proper proportion. So this phrase becomes a form of social calibration, a way of saying "stop" without raising one's voice. It carries irony, almost a musical lilt, yet within it lies a clear boundary.

It reflects a mindset that favours moderation and regards excess with suspicion, whether in words, demands or behaviour. It is a yes that already contains its limit, an agreement that guards its own threshold. Because in Abruzzo much can be granted; but when it is too much, it is simply too much.

"Sc" is pronounced like "sh" in English (e.g., in "shoes").

David Ferrante is a writer, sociologist, and passionate researcher of Abruzzo's culture and traditions.

QUICK STOP

MEET THE WOLVES OF CIVITELLA ALFEDENA

In **Civitella Alfedena (AQ)**, a few steps from the town centre, the *Area Faunistica del Lupo Appenninico* offers an extraordinary chance to watch one of Abruzzo's most elusive predators up close. On four hectares of open reserve, a lively wolf pack prowls, plays, and naps just a few metres away, safely behind a fence, letting visitors witness their world like nowhere else.

The reserve opened in the 1970s, but its current pack was renewed about ten years ago with the arrival of Dacia, a female rescued wolf, and another wolf found injured in Scontrone (AQ). Nursed back to health by the staff of the Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, they have since become the core of the pack. A few years ago, they delighted everyone with the arrival of several wolf pups born in the sanctuary.

Adjacent to the reserve, the museum explores the wolf's biology, behaviour, and its complex relationship with humans. Exhibits feature old photographs of hunters, traps, and firearms, alongside immersive displays that recount the legends and history surrounding these enigmatic animals.

You can enjoy a picnic just across the road from the sanctuary, at a few tables that offer views of the town, the surrounding mountains and, in the distance, Lake Barrea. The *area faunistica* is open to the public free of charge, while the museum is usually open in the morning and afternoon, with hours that vary by season (more details here).

EASY TRAILS

ALONG THE ALENTO TO TORRE DI POLEGRA IN SERRAMONACESCA

- **Length:** about 5 km
- **Time:** one hour each way
- **Starting Point:** park on the road near the Abbazia di San Liberatore a Maiella in Serramonacesca (PE)

This trail, marked as Sentiero D3, runs along the Alento River linking the **Abbey of San Liberatore a Maiella**, a magnificent example of Abruzzese Benedictine architecture, with the ruins of **Torre di Polegra**.

The path runs through thick woodland and stays close to the river past small waterfalls, pools of improbable turquiose colour, and wooden footbridges (wobbly at times!). The first part of the trail runs below the rock face and bears witness to centuries of erosion. There you will see three early medieval caves or tombs (*tombe rupestri*) cut directly into a limestone wall. No written records or reliable local traditions explain the origin of the rock-cut tomb complex. It likely belonged to a small group of hermits who, between the 8th and 9th centuries, used the site as a place of worship.

Further up the trail crosses the stream and continues towards Torre di Polegra, an ancient fortification built on a hill with a steep drop to the Alento below. From the ruins, the valley opens out across the Pescara province, thick with vegetation.

The trail runs over dirt and gravel, with only occasional rocky patches. After rain, some sections can turn slick underfoot, so dry days are best. In high summer, though, the shade along the river makes this an ideal escape from the heat. Officially, swimming in the Alento is not allowed. Unofficially, when temperatures rise, it is hard to resist jumping into the cold, clear pools, as many locals and tourist do.

FROM THE SHEPHERDS' CAULDRON

By Anna Swann

Take a tired old sheep, drop it in a soot-blackened copper pot, and let it simmer over the fire for hours. Not exactly the opening line of a gourmet recipe, right? Yet in Abruzzo, that humble start transforms into *pecora alla callara*, an ancient shepherd's stew that has become a delicacy nowadays.

Pecora alla callara takes its name from the *callara*, the large copper cauldron blackened by years of smoke, the workhorses of rural kitchens and on pastures where shepherds cooked over open fire. It is a reminder of pastoral life and the centuries-old practice of transhumance, when shepherds moved their flocks seasonally from the mountains of Abruzzo to the plains of Puglia. Along those drove roads, animals sometimes collapsed from exhaustion, were injured, or simply grew too old to sell. Waste was not an option. Tough, fibrous meat had to be made edible.

Before the real cooking began, the meat was often hung to age for up to three days. Then came an initial boil to remove excess fat and temper the strong smell typical of older sheep. Only after this cleansing stage did the proper preparation start. The meat, traditionally cooked on the bone, went back into the *callara* with dry white wine and already boiling water.

There is no recipe as such. Shepherds used what they had on hand: rosemary, thyme, bay leaves, juniper berries gathered from the mountains, garlic, onion, carrot, celery, black pepper, and a touch of chili. No elaborate sauces. Tomato is absent from the earliest versions and appears only later, especially in parts of the Marsica and the Chieti area, reflecting changing tastes.

The cooking time was 6-8 hours and the fire had to remain constant, neither raging nor dying. The broth was skimmed repeatedly and fat removed with care. The result was a dense, almost gelatinous stew, the meat falling apart into strands, enriched by marrow and connective tissue dissolved into the liquid.

Historically, *pecora alla callara* was cooked with every bone intact, which intensified the flavour. Today, some *trattorie* choose boneless cuts to meet modern preferences for leaner, milder dishes. Yet in mountain *agriturismi* and at summer food festivals, the older method still holds.

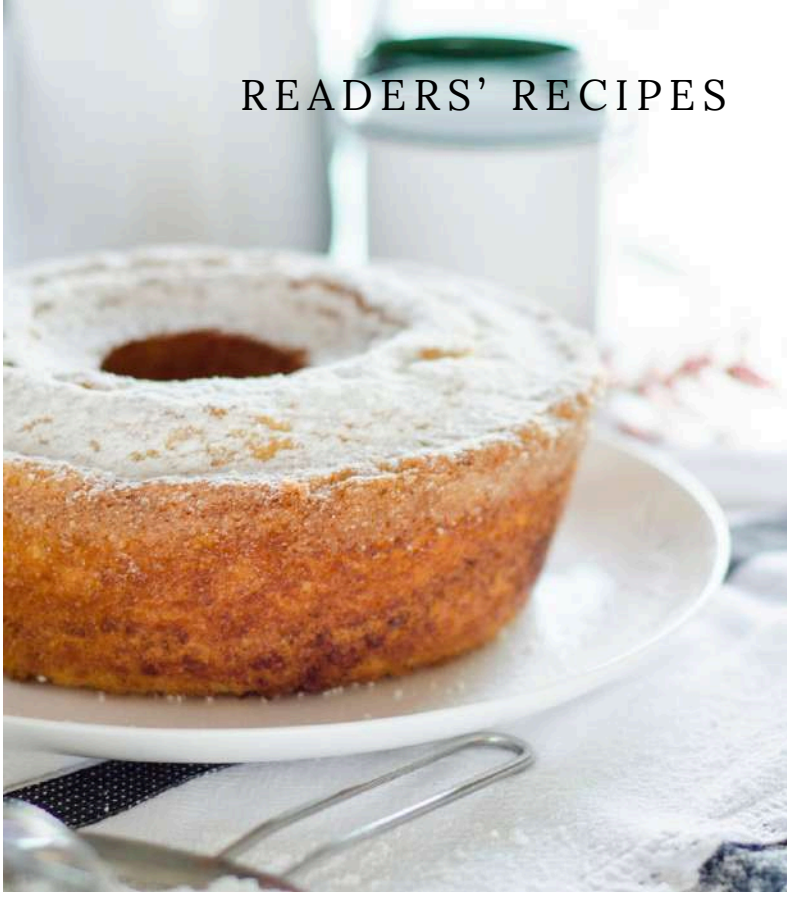
What began as a pragmatic response to hardship is now recognised among Abruzzo's traditional agri-food products (*Prodotti Agroalimentari Tradizionali* (PAT)). In the province of Teramo, the dish is known as *pecora alla callara*. Around L'Aquila, the same preparation answers to *alla cottora* or *cutturo*. In the Marsica area, you may hear *ajo cotturo*.

WHERE TO EAT PECORA ALLA CALLARA

Some traditional restaurants still offer this ancient dish on their menu. You can order it in **Taverna de Li Caldora** in Pacentro (AQ) and **Fattoria Galasso** in Pescara. In the bioagriturismo **Valle Scannese da Gregorio** in Scanno (AQ) the flavour is particularly robust, perfumed with mountain herbs and cooked slowly like in the old days (in the photo). In summer, some mountain towns host festivals dedicated to the dish: *Sagra degli Gnocchi e della Pecora alla Callara* in **Carpineto della Nora (PE)**, *Sagra della Pecora alla Callara* in **Isola del Gran Sasso d'Italia (TE)**, *Sagra delle Pecure allu Cutture* in **Pacentro (AQ)** and *Sagra del Coatto* in **Arsita (TE)**.

YOGURT AND LEMON CIAMBELLA

By Claudia Di Carlo



Almost every bar in Abruzzo, whether in small villages or larger towns, serves a generous slice of *ciambella* for breakfast. In some, you can ask for a smear of Nutella, *crema di pistacchio*, or jam on top. It is not a dessert unique to Abruzzo, but for me, it brings back memories of my childhood: my mother, Santina, would bake it on Sunday mornings to enjoy after lunch, and it would last a few more days for breakfast or as a *merendina*, an afternoon snack.

There are many variations of *ciambella* — chocolate, cocoa, or plain — but for the readers of ABRUZZISSIMO, I want to share my mother's quick and simple recipe, made with fresh lemon zest and yogurt. We were fortunate to have a lemon tree in our garden, so the zest was always bright, fragrant, and full of flavour, giving the cake a delicate, uplifting aroma. Nowadays, I always use lemons with *buccia edibile*, not waxed or treated with chemicals.

INGREDIENTS

Makes 6–8 portions

- 4 eggs
- 180 g sugar
- 200 g plain yogurt
- 130 g sunflower oil
- 350 g all-purpose flour
- 1 packet of vanilla sugar (or 1 tsp vanilla extract)
- 1 packet of baking powder (about 16 g)
- Grated zest of 1 lemon
- Icing sugar, for dusting

PREPARATION

In a large bowl, begin by beating the eggs and sugar together until the mixture becomes light, pale, and fluffy, taking care to incorporate plenty of air for a soft, tender cake. Sift the flour and baking powder together, then gently fold them into the egg mixture in stages, using a spatula and careful movements so as not to deflate the batter.

Next, add the yogurt, sunflower oil, vanilla extract, and the freshly grated lemon zest, folding everything together until the batter is smooth, well combined, and fragrant with citrus. Prepare a bundt or ring cake pan by greasing it thoroughly with butter or oil, then lightly dusting it with flour to prevent sticking. Pour the batter into the prepared pan, spreading it evenly with a spatula.

Bake in a preheated fan oven at 180°C (356°F) for approximately 30 minutes, keeping an eye on it, as ovens can vary. Test for doneness by inserting a skewer into the centre of the cake; it should come out clean or with only a few moist crumbs attached.

Once baked, remove the cake from the oven and allow it to cool in the pan for several minutes before gently turning it out onto a wire rack.

When completely cool, dust the top generously with icing sugar to add a touch of sweetness and a delicate finish.

CARBONARA D'ABRUZZO FROM DAVIDE NANNI

By Ingrid Paardekooper

Davide Nanni has become known across Italy for his videos of traditional Abruzzese dishes cooked over an open fire, outdoors, with the mountains around Castrovalva as his backdrop. "*J sò wild!*" ("*I am wild*", in a mix of dialect and English) he exclaims as something hearty simmers over the fire. His family runs an *agriturismo* and restaurant, *Il Nido d'Aquila*, in Castrovalva.

I am fortunate to know Davide personally and asked if he would share one of his recipes. He generously agreed to publish his version of *carbonara*. In place of the Roman *guanciale*, he uses lamb, aromatic herbs, and fresh pasta, a nod to Abruzzo's long pastoral tradition.

The recipe below has been lightly adapted for publication and draws on the version he includes in his cookery book *A Sentimento*, as well as the filmed demonstrations available on his Instagram channel.

Il Nido d'Aquila is open from Easter Sunday on weekends and public holidays until 1 July, daily from 1 July to 31 August. Lunch only.

INGREDIENTS

Serves 2

- fresh egg pasta (*tagliolini* or similar for two people)
- 120 g lamb, finely diced
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 2 eggs
- 140g grated *pecorino* cheese
- a splash of white wine
- extra virgin olive oil
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- mixed mountain herbs (such as thyme, sage, marjoram or bay)

PREPARATION

Warm olive oil in a pan and gently soften the onion. Do not rush this stage — the base should be fragrant but not browned.

Add the diced lamb and cook briefly, allowing it to seal while keeping the meat tender. Season with salt, pepper and the herbs.

Pour in a little white wine and allow it to reduce. Let the lamb cook slowly until soft and aromatic, adding a small splash of water if needed.

Meanwhile, cook the fresh pasta in well-salted water until just tender.

Beat the eggs together with grated *pecorino* and plenty of black pepper to form the *carbonara* mixture.

Drain the pasta and combine it with the lamb.

Remove the pan from direct heat before stirring in the egg and cheese mixture, loosening with a little pasta water if necessary to obtain a creamy sauce rather than scrambled eggs.

Serve immediately (if desired and when available, with shavings of local truffles).

NEXT ISSUE
APRIL

ABRUZZISSIMO
MAGAZINE

NEXT ISSUE IN YOUR INBOX ON APRIL 5

Subscribe to ABRUZZISSIMO here

DONATE TO SUPPORT ABRUZZISSIMO