ISSUE #6

Veni | Vidi | Vici

CaesarTheDay
Retire Smart. Live Better

Your guide to conquering retirement in Italy

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Abruzzo: The Good, the Bad, and Wildly Underrated

Bentornati!

This month's issue is a little different. Yes, we're diving into Abruzzo — Italy's most under-sold, over-delivering region — but it also happens to be my birthday edition. Consider this both a gift to you (fresh retirement intel) and a subtle reminder that time doesn't slow down, so if you're planning an Italian escape, neither should you.

September in Abruzzo is a study in contrasts. The Adriatic beaches are rolling up their umbrellas, while the vineyards are pulling in their harvest. Up in the Apennines, shepherds still follow transhumance routes that predate Rome itself, and down on the Trabocchi Coast, fishermen climb into wooden huts on stilts to pull dinner straight from the sea.

What makes Abruzzo so compelling isn't just the scenery — though where else (other than California) can you ski in the morning and eat seafood on the sand by afternoon? It's that the region still feels Italian in a way many hotspots no longer do.

Affordable, grounded, stubbornly local. You won't find Tuscany's prices or Liguria's crowds here. What you will find is a region that could quietly be one of the smartest retirement plays in the country.

So light a candle (I'll handle the wish), pour a glass of Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, and let's unwrap why this overlooked slice of Italy deserves a serious look for your future.

-Cesare







Abruzzo: Italy's Best-Kept Middle Child

Abruzzo doesn't announce itself with postcards. Drive east from Rome and suddenly the land starts to fold into ridges, then explode into the Apennines — jagged peaks, gorges, and medieval hill towns clinging to stone like they've been rehearsing for a thousand years. Keep going and the mountains spill down into a coastline lined with sandy beaches and the odd trabocco — those spindly wooden fishing huts that look like a cross between a pier and a praying mantis. In between, the vineyards roll out red Montepulciano grapes and the valleys glow purple with saffron, as if Abruzzo were quietly hoarding luxuries under its modest surface.

The good is obvious once you stop comparing it to Tuscany or Umbria. Abruzzo's national parks cover a third of the region, meaning you can hike through wolf and bear country in the morning and still be home for lunch. Sulmona bursts with Baroque piazzas and sugar-coated almonds, while Pescara offers an Adriatic city life that still feels connected to the beach. Food here is unapologetically rustic: lamb skewers grilled over coals (arrosticini), pasta cut on wooden guitars, cheeses that taste like the pasture. The cost of living? Still lower than most of central Italy — more house, more view, for fewer euros.



The bad is also worth noting. Abruzzo has a reputation for earthquakes, and while life goes on, you'll hear locals talk about il terremoto with the kind of reverence usually reserved for saints. Transport is patchy once you leave the coast; those mountain roads that make villages picturesque also mean a grocery run can feel like an expedition. English is less common here than in the more tourist-saturated regions — a blessing if you want immersion, a hurdle if you don't. And bureaucracy? It's Italian, with an Abruzzese accent: slow, sometimes stubborn, and not in a hurry to meet your deadlines.

And then there's the inconvenient middle ground. Pescara has an airport, but international connections are limited. Some coastal towns empty out once the umbrellas fold in September, leaving a ghost-resort vibe until spring. In winter, snow is beautiful until you're shoveling it, and summer heat hits hard inland. Services vary: healthcare is solid in regional hubs like Chieti or L'Aquila, but in small villages you'll drive for more than an espresso.

But here's the thing: Abruzzo doesn't need to be perfect to be right. You can live in a mountain village where life is measured by church bells and chestnut harvests, or settle on the Trabocchi Coast where the sea dictates the day's rhythm. For retirees, Abruzzo isn't a compromise — it's a region that rewards you for choosing authenticity over gloss, and affordability over hype.

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Where Is Abruzzo?

Abruzzo is Italy's middle child — wedged between Rome's chaos and the Adriatic's calm, often overlooked, and quietly thriving when nobody's paying attention.

Geography

- To the west: Lazio and the capital, Rome, just 90 minutes away by car or bus.
- To the north: Le Marche, with its gentler Adriatic coast.
- To the south: Molise — the region Italians joke doesn't exist (but it does).
- To the east: 130 kilometers of Adriatic shoreline, from sandy stretches around Pescara to the rocky Trabocchi Coast near Vasto and Ortona.

Mountains dominate the western spine. The Gran Sasso rises to nearly 10,000 feet, one of the tallest peaks in the Apennines, while Majella National Park offers wild gorges and hermit caves. Between them lie valleys and plains that still feel rooted in agriculture — olive groves, vineyards, saffron fields.

How do you get there?

- By car: The A24 autostrada connects Rome directly to L'Aquila, Teramo, and the Adriatic.
- By rail: Trains run east–west between Rome and Pescara, and north–south along the Adriatic coast to Ancona and Bari. Inland villages are another story — expect buses or winding drives.
- By air: Abruzzo International Airport (Pescara) handles budget flights across Europe and domestic hops. Rome's Fiumicino and Ciampino airports are still the gateways for long-haul travelers.
- By ferry: Ortona and Pescara ports run routes to Croatia and sometimes Greece, handy for Balkan detours.

The Character of the Region

Abruzzo is big enough to feel varied but small enough that you can cross it in a morning. In one direction, you're skiing in Roccaraso; in the other, you're eating fried calamari on the Adriatic by lunch. It's both fiercely traditional — shepherd villages where dialects still rule — and quietly modern, with university towns and coastal nightlife that keep it from feeling frozen in time.

Bottom line: Abruzzo sits at Italy's geographic crossroads without ever being defined by them. It's a place you choose rather than stumble into, and that choice is exactly what makes it work for retirees.



Climate Snapshot: One Region, Two Italys

Abruzzo isn't a "one climate fits all" deal. The region splits itself in two: the coastal strip with its mild Adriatic weather, and the mountainous interior where snow actually sticks around long enough to justify skis and wood stoves.

This isn't Tuscany's steady sun or Sicily's Mediterranean monotone. It's more like living in two Italys at once — the seaside and the Alps, a 90-minute drive apart.

Here's how it breaks down:

🏖️ **Coastal & Lowlands (Pescara, Ortona, Vasto, Giulianova)**
Long, hot summers with humidity that never quite leaves, tempered by sea breezes along the Trabocchi Coast. Winters are mild — chilly mornings, but you'll still see locals in puffer jackets when it's 55°F. Rain falls in spring and autumn, rarely in dramatic storms.
Best for: Retirees who want an Adriatic beach lifestyle without the sticker shock of the Riviera.

⛰️ **Mountain & Hill Towns (L'Aquila, Castel di Sangro, Sulmona, Santo Stefano di Sessanio)**
Cooler summers that make August bearable, golden autumns with chestnut harvests, and winters that bring real snow — especially in ski towns like Roccaraso. You'll need heating, but you'll also get four distinct seasons.
Best for: People who actually like seasons, want lower housing costs, and don't mind driving mountain roads.

🌳 **National Parks & Interior Valleys (Gran Sasso, Majella, Valle Peligna)**
Wild, crisp air and cooler temps year-round. Autumn can feel like New England with grapes and olives replacing pumpkins. Winter brings fog and frost in the valleys, snow higher up. Spring is lush and green but short — summer arrives quickly.
Best for: Retirees who want space, hiking, and a less touristy rhythm.

🌬️ **The Winds & Quirks**
Abruzzo's coast catches occasional bora winds blowing down from the Balkans — dry, cold gusts that can drop temps fast. Inland, mountain weather changes in hours: sunny morning hikes can turn into fog and hail by lunch. Earthquake tremors, while part of life here, aren't weather — but they shape how buildings and people adapt.

TL;DR for Retirees

- Coastal living = mild winters, beach access, but summer humidity.
- Mountain life = snow, fireplaces, and lower costs — plus real Italian village culture.
- You'll need AC on the coast in August, heating in the mountains in January.
- Sunshine? A solid 250+ days a year, with enough variety to keep it interesting.

Abruzzo's National Parks: Nature as Infrastructure

Abruzzo doesn't just have parks. It is a park, or at least it feels like one. More than a third of the region is protected land — the highest percentage of any Italian region. That means wolves and bears still roam, eagles still wheel overhead, and you can walk into a forest that hasn't yet been sacrificed to resorts or high-rises. For retirees, that isn't just scenery. It's quality of life baked into the landscape.

The Big Three
🏞️ Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga – The roof of central Italy, where Corno Grande rises just shy of 10,000 feet. Think alpine meadows, high plateaus, and tiny stone villages like Santo Stefano di Sessanio. Skiing in Roccaraso is part of the package, but so are summer hikes and crisp autumns.

🏞️ Parco Nazionale della Majella – The "Mother Mountain," rugged and mystical. Hermit caves, gorges, and forests where monks once hid from the world. Today it's hikers, climbers, and retirees looking for affordable villages with views that would bankrupt you in Tuscany.

🐺 Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise – The oldest national park in Italy and still the most famous. Wild boar, Marsican brown bears, wolves, lynx — this is where Italy remembers it's not just olive groves and piazzas. Towns like Pescasseroli sit right inside the park, giving you wilderness outside your front door.

Outdoor Life as Daily Life

- In winter: Ski slopes like Roccaraso rival the Alps, without Alpine prices.
- In summer: Hiking, cycling, even horseback riding through valleys and ridges that still feel untamed.
- Year-round: Foraging, chestnut festivals, truffle hunts, and a rhythm of life that's tied to the land rather than the tourist calendar.

Retiree Reality Check
You don't have to be a hardcore hiker to benefit. Even small towns near the parks are cleaner, greener, and quieter, with lower rents than the coast. Services can be thinner, but Rome is never impossibly far. If you want your retirement to come with space, silence, and the occasional bear sighting (the friendly kind), this is where Abruzzo outshines everywhere else in Italy.

Earthquake Reality in Abruzzo

Abruzzo shakes. Everyone knows it, and everyone keeps living anyway.

Check building age and certification: Anything built or rebuilt after 2009 is generally anti-seismic.

Renters: Don't stress — the liability falls on the owner.
Owners: Get insurance. It's affordable and covers quake damage.
Everyday life: Tremors are more likely to rattle a wine glass than your long-term plans.

Locals treat earthquakes like weather: talk about it, shrug, move on. Retirees should, too — just don't skip the paperwork.



City by City: 12 Towns to Watch



Vasto

Hilltop views over the Adriatic with sandy beaches below and a centro storico that hums year-round. Cafés, markets, and the nearby Trabocchi Coast keep life lively without tourist overload. Housing is more affordable than in Tuscany or Liguria for similar sea views.

Best for: Retirees who want coastal culture with steady local life.



Ortona

Castle on the sea, compact streets, and ferries to Croatia. Affordable housing and excellent seafood make it practical as well as picturesque. It feels lived-in, not polished for tourists, which means prices stay sane.

Best for: Retirees who want low-key Adriatic living.



Chieti

Roman ruins, a university vibe, and some of Abruzzo's best hospitals. Quieter than Pescara but close enough to share its airport and coast. It offers a rare mix of history and healthcare in one package.

Best for: Retirees who value services and slower pace.



L'Aquila

Ringed by mountains, rebuilt with resilience after the 2009 quake. Affordable, seasonal, and full of students and festivals. Winters can be snowy, summers cool, and the housing market is a bargain.

Best for: Retirees who want affordability and a sense of rebirth.



Castel di Sangro

Gateway to Roccaraso's ski slopes, with markets, restaurants, and a sporty mountain rhythm. Locals embrace the outdoors, from skiing in winter to cycling in summer.

Best for: Retirees who want an active alpine base.



Scanno

A lake town straight from a postcard — goldsmiths, cobbled alleys, and views that never get old. Tourism spikes in summer but the rest of the year is village life at its slowest.

Best for: Retirees who prize scenery and peace.

7% in Abruzzo: The Flat Tax with a View

Here's the thing about Abruzzo: the region is absolutely packed with towns that qualify for Italy's 7% flat tax regime. Coastal gems like Ortona and Vasto, mountain retreats like Sulmona and Scanno, and hill towns tucked between vineyards and olive groves — all of them tick the box.

But here's the problem: just because a town qualifies doesn't mean it's right for you.

Do you want a ski town where snow is guaranteed? A fishing village with ferries at your doorstep? A Baroque piazza that comes alive every festival season? Each of these lives looks great on paper, but only one will actually feel like home when you unpack your bags.

Find Your Sweet Spot



Click Here to see the Escape Map: 7% Edition

That's why I built the **Escape Map: 7% Edition** — a tool designed to cut through the noise and get you to the shortlist that fits your retirement reality.

With the Escape Map, you can:

- See every eligible town in Abruzzo (and beyond). Stop guessing, start browsing.
- Filter by lifestyle: coast, mountains, golf course, or walkable historic center.
- Match by services: hospitals, transport links, markets, and more.
- Cross-check with cost of living: because 7% isn't much help if the rent eats your budget.
- Find out what your heating bill is going to look like next winter.
- Access FAQs: answers to real questions about how the 7% regime works, who qualifies, and how to apply.

City by City: 12 Towns to Watch



Santo Stefano di Sessanio

Stone-built medieval village restored into a living museum. Services minimal, atmosphere maximum. Even daily errands feel like walking through history.

Best for: Retirees craving authenticity and silence.



Lanciano

Pilgrimage town with a walkable center, markets, and balanced services. Near both coast and mountains. It's spiritual, practical, and surprisingly lively for its size.

Best for: Retirees wanting practicality with heritage.



Penne

Terracotta roofs and olive groves midway between the Gran Sasso and the Adriatic. Traditional, affordable, and welcoming. Its central spot makes it a great base for exploring both mountains and sea.

Best for: Retirees who want rustic calm with access to both mountains and coast.



Roseto degli Abruzzi

Classic seaside town with long sandy beaches and modern conveniences. Busy in summer, steady but not empty in winter. It's simple, affordable, and doesn't pretend to be more than it is.

Best for: Retirees after simple Adriatic beach life.



Teramo

Unflashy provincial capital near both mountains and sea. Reliable services, affordable housing, and a solid local feel. It's the kind of place where you blend in rather than stand out.

Best for: Retirees who want a practical, no-hype base.



Atri

Hill town with Roman roots, Renaissance squares, and views over dramatic clay ravines. Cultural but quiet. The scenery alone could sell it, but the lifestyle is just as rewarding.

Best for: Retirees seeking history, scenery, and calm.



Pescara: Adriatic Hub with Sand Between Its Toes

Pescara isn't Italy's prettiest city — but it's one of its most livable. Modern, energetic, and practical, it sits on a long stretch of Adriatic sand with just enough grit to feel real. For retirees, it offers what few places in Abruzzo do in one package: an airport, hospitals, a seaside lifestyle, and a community that doesn't shut down in winter.

The Vibe
Pescara is beach umbrellas and espresso bars, shopping streets and seaside strolls. It's more cosmopolitan than quaint, with nightlife, festivals, and a younger energy that balances Abruzzo's many sleepy towns. The centro and lungomare are buzzing in summer, but locals keep the city running year-round.

The Practical Side

- Healthcare: Anchored by Ospedale Spirito Santo, plus private clinics.
- Services: Everything from supermarkets to ASL and Questura offices.
- Rent: €600–€900/month for a 1–2 bedroom apartment near center/beach.
- Walkability: High in central neighborhoods; daily errands are easy without a car.

Transport

- Airport: Abruzzo International (PSR) with budget flights across Europe.
- Rail: Direct to Rome, plus Adriatic line north/south.
- Bus: Strong city network and regional links.
- Car: Useful inland but not needed in town.

7% Flat Tax
The city is too large, but nearby towns like Atri, and Penne qualify — allowing retirees to combine tax perks with city access.

Bottom Line
If you want seaside living with services, healthcare, and connections, Pescara is the practical heart of coastal Abruzzo.



Sulmona: Baroque Heart of the Mountains

Sulmona is the kind of town people imagine when they dream of “authentic Italy.” Surrounded by peaks and set in a fertile valley, it’s historic, beautiful, and functional without losing its soul. Festivals, food traditions, and a walkable centro make it a rare mountain town where life is both charming and convenient.

The Vibe
Sulmona is Roman arches, medieval aqueducts, Baroque piazzas, and streets that always seem ready for a festival. It’s famous for confetti (sugared almonds) and traditions that pull locals into the piazza year-round. Life is slower here, but never static.

The Practical Side

- Healthcare: Solid local hospital; larger centers in L’Aquila or Chieti nearby.
- Services: Full town services, from shops to post offices to local government.
- Rent: €450–€700/month in the centro, lower in nearby villages.
- Walkability: Excellent — compact, flat, and easy to navigate on foot.

Transport

- Rail: Direct lines to Pescara and Rome, about 2 hours either way.
- Bus: Regional connections across Abruzzo.
- Car: Handy for mountain villages, but not needed for daily life.
- Air: Pescara (90 minutes) or Rome (2 hours).

7% Flat Tax
Sulmona qualifies, as do many surrounding villages — making it one of Abruzzo’s strongest retiree candidates.

Bottom Line
Sulmona blends history, scenery, and practicality. It’s a mountain town that delivers beauty and services in equal measure, without the isolation many inland villages bring.

Partner Spotlight: Learn Italian with Federica

Learn Italian before you move — and enjoy Italy from day one

When planning a move to Italy, there's so much to do that learning the language often gets postponed.

But starting before the big move makes all the difference: it allows you to feel at home, connect with people, and avoid the frustrations that many new arrivals face.

This brand-new, exclusive Italian course is designed especially for people preparing their dream life in Italy. A small group, a clear path, and guidance from a highly experienced teacher.
The course starts this week and places are very limited.



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FIND OUT MORE: HTTPS://ITALIANONTHECOUCH.IT/EN/



Wine, Food & Culture Highlights

Abruzzo doesn't need imported glamour — its traditions are as bold as its landscapes. From powerhouse reds to rustic lamb skewers, this is a region where the table is the center of life. Culture here is lived, not staged, and retirees will find themselves pulled in whether they're ready or not.

Wine: Bold, Rustic, and Surprisingly Refined

🍷 Montepulciano d'Abruzzo – The region's flagship red, deep ruby with dark cherry, plum, and a touch of spice. Affordable, reliable, and made everywhere — from coastal slopes to mountain valleys.
Pairs with: arrosticini, pasta alla chitarra, long lunches that stretch into naps.
Retiree tip: Buy from local cantine; even the table wine is shockingly good for the price.

🍇 Trebbiano d'Abruzzo – A crisp, citrusy white that thrives in the hills. Clean, food-friendly, and easy to drink daily.
Pairs with: grilled fish, stuffed olives, summer afternoons.
Retiree tip: Look for bottles from Valentini if you want a splurge — they're legends.

🍇 Pecorino – Not the cheese (though Abruzzo has plenty of that), but the white grape. Floral, zesty, and a little exotic, it's gaining fame beyond the region.
Pairs with: saffron risotto, seafood pasta, conversations about why this isn't more famous yet.
Retiree tip: Order it in restaurants — it's often the house white, and rarely disappoints.

Food: Abruzzo on a Plate

🍢 Arrosticini – Skewers of lamb grilled over coals, eaten by the dozen with bread and red wine. Rustic, addictive, and a ritual as much as a meal.

🍝 Pasta alla Chitarra – Egg pasta cut on a wooden "guitar" frame, usually served with rich ragù. It's comfort food with history baked in.

🌸 Zafferano dell'Aquila – Saffron so prized it's often called red gold. Used sparingly in risotti and stews, it gives Abruzzo's dishes an unmistakable elegance.

🍬 Confetti di Sulmona – Sugar-coated almonds arranged in elaborate bouquets, gifted at weddings, festivals, and just about any celebration.

🧀 Pecorino Abruzzese – Sharp, salty sheep's cheese that can be aged into something formidable. Pair it with honey or fig jam and call it dinner.





Wine, Food & Culture Highlights

Culture: Festivals, Faith, and Mountains

Abruzzo is fiercely traditional. Festivals aren't put on for tourists — they're for locals, and you're welcome to join. Expect medieval pageantry, religious processions, and enough food to collapse the strongest diet.

- Easter in Sulmona: The Madonna che Scappa procession, where the Virgin Mary "runs" across the piazza, is one of Italy's most dramatic religious events.
- Settimana Santa in Chieti: Among the oldest Holy Week processions in Europe, with haunting music and candlelit streets.
- Transhumance Festivals: Shepherd traditions celebrated each autumn as flocks move down from the mountains.
- Food Festivals: Chestnuts, truffles, saffron, olive oil — if it grows here, Abruzzo has a sagra to celebrate it.

Retiree Reality Check
Living in Abruzzo means these traditions aren't just calendar events — they become part of your daily life. You'll find yourself grilling arrosticini with neighbors, buying saffron from a farmer, or standing in a piazza as centuries-old rituals unfold around you.



Psst…I've got something new cooking! And It's Better Than Nonna's Gnocchi!!

I've spent the past month (and many sleepless nights) building something I wish had existed when I first started untangling the Elective Residency Visa: **Visto Facile** *(Easy Visa)*.

What is it?
A web application built to guide you every step of the way through the ERV process.
Every requirement.
Every document.
Every deadline.
ven how to organize your accordion file before the consulate.
The only thing it won't tell you is what to wear to your consulate appointment. (But Virtual Caesar AI might.)

Why Beta?
This is the very first time I'm pulling back the curtain. I need **real ERV planners** — to kick the tires, tell me what works, flag what doesn't, and help me make this bulletproof.

That's why I've opened a tiny beta test: just 25 spots. And I want to build it organically and not throw money at Zuckerberg's algorithm.

That's why I'm opening just 10 beta tester spots. Small. Scrappy. Personal.

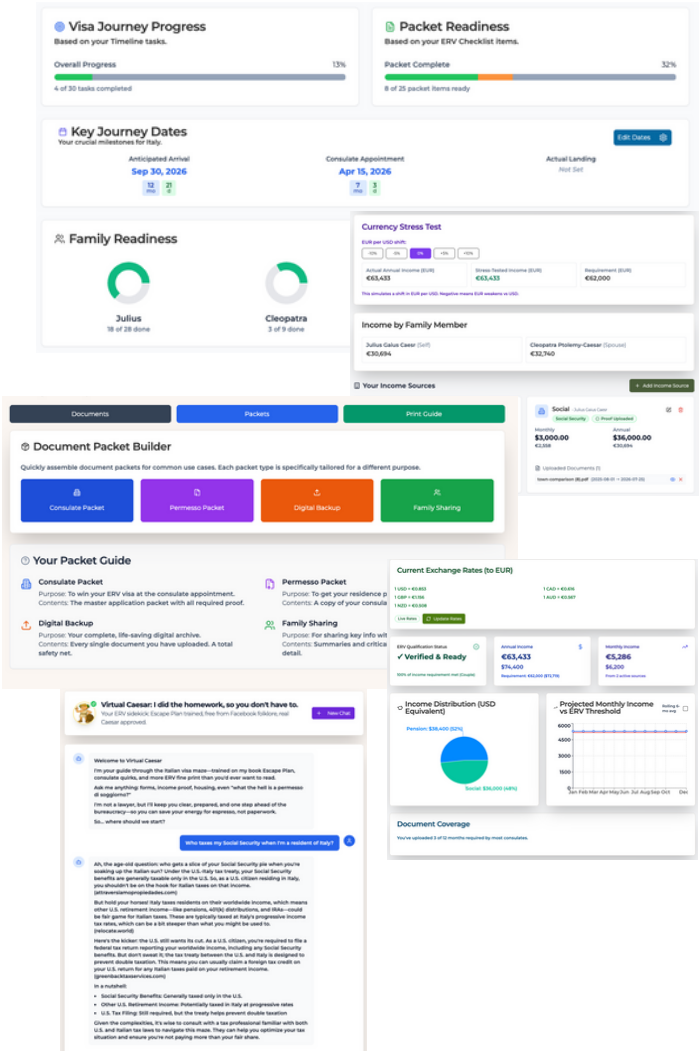
As a beta tester you'll get:

- Lifetime access to Visto Facile Ultimate (a $279 value) - with Virtual Caesar AI
- Discounts on my books and services
- Early access to new features before anyone else
- Special rewards every time you share on social media:
  - 🎁 Exclusive resource packs
  - 🏷️ Discount codes to pass on to friends & family
  - ⭐ Recognition in the CaesarTheDay newsletter

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Help build it. Keep it for life.

(Or at least until your biggest paperwork is deciding red or white at aperitivo.)



Veni | Vidi | Vino



Montepulciano d'Abruzzo



The region's workhorse red — and also its pride. Deep ruby, full-bodied, with notes of dark cherry, plum, and a little earthiness. It's hearty without being heavy, the kind of wine you can drink every day without apology. The best part? Even supermarket bottles can surprise you.
Pairs with: arrosticini, pasta alla chitarra, Sunday lunches that stretch into dinner.
Retiree tip: Small cantine often sell it by the jug — cheap, unpretentious, and better than most $20 bottles back home.

Trebbiano d'Abruzzo



Clean, crisp, and citrusy, Trebbiano is Abruzzo's everyday white. It's simple on the surface, but in the right hands (see Valentini or Masciarelli), it can reach elegance. A true food wine: light, refreshing, and rarely steals the show — it just makes the food shine brighter.
Pairs with: grilled fish, fried calamari, lazy seaside afternoons.
Retiree tip: Seek out DOC bottles; they're still inexpensive and widely available.

Pecorino



Not the cheese, though it pairs brilliantly with it.
Pecorino is a white grape that nearly vanished until locals revived it, and now it's a star. Zesty, floral, sometimes with a hint of tropical fruit, it's more characterful than Trebbiano and increasingly popular.
Pairs with: saffron risotto, seafood pasta, good gossip.
Retiree tip: Try it as the house white at trattorie — odds are it'll be crisp, local, and cheap.

Cerasuolo d'Abruzzo



Abruzzo's answer to rosé, but don't call it light. Made from Montepulciano grapes, it's a bold pink that tastes of cherries, strawberries, and summer itself. Locals drink it year-round — chilled in summer, lightly cool in winter. It has more weight than Provence rosé, making it a proper food partner.
Pairs with: antipasti spreads, pizza, or anything you'd eat outdoors.
Retiree tip: Order it on tap in local osterie — it's often cheaper than water.



Pasta alla Chitarra con Ragù Abruzzese

The Pasta That Sings (Literally)

Abruzzo's signature pasta isn't rolled, it's played. The "chitarra" is a wooden frame strung with wires like a guitar. Sheets of egg pasta are pressed over it, sliced into square strands that cling to ragù like they were born for it. The ragù itself is hearty — often lamb or beef slow-cooked with tomatoes and a splash of Montepulciano.

Ingredients

- 400g fresh pasta alla chitarra (or tagliatelle if you must cheat)
- 300g lamb or beef, diced small
- 1 carrot, 1 celery stalk, 1 onion (finely chopped)
- 400g tomato passata
- 1 glass Montepulciano d'Abruzzo
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 50g grated pecorino
- Salt, pepper, bay leaf

Method:

1. Sauté the onion, carrot, and celery in olive oil until soft.
2. Add meat, brown well, then deglaze with wine.
3. Stir in passata, bay leaf, salt, and pepper. Simmer gently for 90 minutes.
4. Cook pasta alla chitarra in salted water until al dente.
5. Toss pasta with the ragù, top with pecorino, serve immediately.

Wine Pairing: Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, naturally — big enough to stand up to the ragù.



Ferratelle (Waffle Cookies)

Sweet, Crisp, and Impossible to Stop At One

Ferratelle are thin, patterned cookies pressed in an iron that looks like a waffle maker designed by an artist. They're lightly sweet, crisp at the edges, and sometimes flavored with anise or lemon. Every family has a recipe, and every tin disappears faster than you expect.

Ingredients

- 3 eggs
- 150g sugar
- 100ml olive oil (or melted butter)
- 250g flour
- Zest of 1 lemon (or a splash of anise liqueur)
- Pinch of salt
-
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Method:

1. Beat eggs with sugar until pale. Add oil and lemon zest.
2. Fold in flour and salt until smooth.
3. Heat ferratelle iron (waffle iron if you don't have one).
4. Drop spoonfuls of batter, press until golden and patterned.
5. Cool on a rack — or eat hot with coffee.

Wine Pairing: Cerasuolo d'Abruzzo for a playful twist, or Trebbiano if you like it crisp.





Healthcare & Infrastructure: Function Over Flash

Healthcare & Infrastructure: Mountains, Medicine, and the Middle Ground

Abruzzo doesn't have Milan's hospitals or Rome's rail hubs — but for a region that's equal parts coastline and wilderness, it holds its own. The trick is knowing where the services are anchored and planning your life around them.

Healthcare Access: The Anchors

- L'Aquila: Regional capital with a major hospital (San Salvatore) that covers advanced care.
- Chieti: Ospedale Clinicizzato is a university hospital with a wide range of specialists.
- Pescara: Ospedale Spirito Santo, one of the region's largest, plus private clinics.
- Smaller Towns: Local hospitals and clinics exist in Sulmona, Teramo, and Lanciano, but specialized care often means a drive.

Pharmacies are plentiful and function as the first stop for minor ailments. Dental care is private and affordable compared to U.S. standards.

Transport, Roads & Connectivity

- Trains: East–west line links Rome to Pescara; coastal line runs north–south along the Adriatic. Inland service is slow and sparse.
- Buses: Regional buses fill gaps but often run on rural schedules — practical, not punctual.
- Driving: A car is almost essential inland; roads are winding but generally good. The A24 autostrada makes Rome reachable in under two hours.
- Airports: Abruzzo International (Pescara) handles domestic and budget European flights; Rome's airports cover long-haul needs.

Digital Life

- Fiber internet: Widely available in Pescara, Chieti, and L'Aquila.
- ADSL/mobile data: Common in smaller towns; speeds vary in mountain villages.
- Mobile coverage: Generally strong along the coast, patchier in valleys.

Nature as Daily Infrastructure

- Abruzzo's parks and protected land are more than scenery — they shape daily life. Walks, hikes, chestnut foraging, truffle hunts, and festivals rooted in agricultural cycles keep communities active. This "soft infrastructure" doesn't show up on spreadsheets but matters just as much as broadband or buses.

Bottom Line:

- Stick close to the anchors (Pescara, Chieti, L'Aquila) for healthcare and services; drift into smaller towns if you're willing to trade convenience for scenery and lower costs. I

- nfrastructure here isn't flashy, but it's functional enough to support a comfortable retirement — provided you embrace a little Italian patience.

Scouting Trips: Test-Drive Your Retirement in Abruzzo

Moving abroad isn't a Pinterest board — it's a life. The only way to know if Abruzzo really fits is to come walk the piazzas, taste the wine, and see how it feels when the church bells echo through the valley at 7 a.m. A scouting trip takes the dream off the screen and puts it under your feet.

Why a Scouting Trip Matters

- Maps aren't reality: Google Street View doesn't tell you what the bakery smells like, or how busy the piazza gets on Saturday.
- Numbers need context: €500 rent sounds great until you see the stairs leading to the third-floor walk-up.
- Lifestyle is personal: The same town can feel "peaceful" to one retiree and "isolated" to another.

What You'll See in Abruzzo

- The Coast: Sandy Pescara, elegant Vasto, and fishing-hut dinners on the Trabocchi Coast.
- The Mountains: Sulmona's Baroque piazzas, Scanno's storybook lake, Castel di Sangro's ski-town energy.
- The Middle Ground: Hill towns like Lanciano, Atri, and Penne where authenticity and affordability collide.

What I Provide

- Custom Itineraries: No two trips are the same — your interests set the route.
- Balanced Stops: Coastal, inland, and mountain towns so you can compare lifestyles.
- Practical Guidance: Which ones qualify for the 7% flat tax, where hospitals and markets actually are, and what rentals look like up close.
- Insider Tools: Every trip comes with a private Notion site — maps, schedules, notes, and updates you can access on your phone.

What You Won't Get

Tour buses. Sales pitches for relocation packages that cost you more than the entire move. "One size fits all" itineraries. This isn't a holiday brochure — it's your retirement test-drive.

📍 **First consultation is free.** We'll sketch out your trip goals, budget, and timeline.

👉 **Start your scouting trip → www.caesartheday.com/services**

And to see what you'll get instead of a generic AI-Generated List check out my custom itnerary built just for you:
https://www.caesartheday.com/scouting-trip-italy-itinerary

Cost of Living: Affordability with a View

Abruzzo doesn't get the glossy magazine spreads that Tuscany or Amalfi do — and that's exactly why it's still affordable. Housing costs are grounded in local incomes, groceries come from the next valley over, and even eating out feels reasonable. The further you move inland or uphill, the more your budget stretches.

Retiree Reality Check

- Coastal towns & cities (Pescara, Ortona, Vasto): €1,400–€1,800/month buys a comfortable lifestyle with services, healthcare, and seaside living.
- Inland hubs (Sulmona, L'Aquila, Chieti): €1,200–€1,500/month with room to spare for festivals, wine, and day trips.
- Small mountain villages (Scanno, Santo Stefano, Penne): €1,000–€1,300/month for rustic charm and peace — but budget for a car.



Category	Pescara (Coast)	Sulmona (Inland)	Mountain Village
Rent (1–2 bed)	€600–€900	€450–€700	€300–€500
Utilities	€130–€180	€110–€150	€90–€130
Groceries	€300–€400	€250–€330	€220–€280
Transport	€50–€100 (bus/train)	€70–€120 (car/bus)	€100–€150 (car)
Dining Out (2 ppl)	€35–€60	€25–€45	€20–€35

Why it Works

- Housing: Rentals are aligned with local salaries, not international hype. Even in Pescara, long-term apartments stay reasonable.
- Groceries: Markets sell what's grown nearby — olives, grapes, saffron, lamb — keeping prices steady.
- Dining: Pizza, wine, and a seaside view can cost less than a Starbucks back home.
- Healthcare: Public system covers basics cheaply; private specialists are a fraction of U.S. costs.

Bottom Line:
Retiring in Abruzzo doesn't mean cutting corners. It means living in a place where the math still works — where a pension or Social Security check stretches far enough to cover not just bills, but a few indulgences too.

Pros & Cons for Retirees: Is Abruzzo Worth It?

Abruzzo doesn't market itself like Tuscany, and it doesn't glitter like the Amalfi Coast. That's the point. Retiring here means trading hype for honesty, and if you know what matters most to you, the trade usually works in your favor.



PROS:

- **Affordable living:** Rent, groceries, and dining out remain among the lowest in central Italy. €1,200–€1,500/month is realistic comfort in most towns.
- **Two Italys in one:** Coast and mountains are less than an hour apart. Ski in the morning, eat seafood on the beach by afternoon.
- **Healthcare anchors:** Strong hospitals in Pescara, Chieti, and L'Aquila keep essentials covered, with Rome a short drive for advanced care.
- **7% flat tax options:** Dozens of qualifying towns, many with real infrastructure, not just villages on a hillside.
- **Authenticity:** Festivals, markets, and traditions feel lived-in, not staged for visitors.

CONS:

- **Earthquakes:** This is seismic country. Buildings are rebuilt to modern standards, but tremors are part of life.
- **Patchy transport:** Coastal connections are fine, but inland buses and trains run on their own time. A car is close to essential in smaller towns.
- **Language barrier:** English is less common than in Tuscany or Rome. Great for immersion, tougher if you're not comfortable with Italian.
- **Seasonal extremes:** Coastal humidity in August, mountain snow in January. Retirees who want "perpetual mild" may find it challenging.
- **Bureaucracy:** Small-town offices run at small-town speed. Patience isn't optional.



Final Take: Is Abruzzo Right for You?

Abruzzo isn't a place you stumble into — it's a choice. A choice to trade international gloss for something closer to the bone. Here, life is measured in market days, harvests, and festivals that still belong to the locals. The sea is never far, the mountains are always in view, and the costs haven't yet been rewritten for Instagram.

It's not perfect. You'll curse the bus schedule, wonder why the Questura shuts down when you need it most, and feel your first earthquake with a mix of awe and unease. The humidity sticks in August, snow piles up in January, and English won't always save you in the town hall. But these are edges, not dealbreakers.

What you get in return is a retirement that feels real. A glass of Montepulciano in the piazza with neighbors who know your name. Lamb skewers charred over coals while mountains glow pink in the evening light. A lifestyle where your budget stretches and your calendar is filled with festivals instead of bills.

If your dream is polished perfection, Abruzzo will frustrate you. If your dream is authenticity with a few quirks, this might be the region that finally makes retirement feel like living again.

Caesar's Secrets: Renting in Italy — Furnished, Unfurnished, and the Fine Print That Could Undo You

Renting in Italy isn't hard — until you assume it works like the U.S. or UK. It doesn't. Between arredato (furnished), parzialmente arredato (semi-furnished), and non arredato (unfurnished), landlords and tenants often mean completely different things. If you don't know the drill, you'll be standing in your "new apartment" staring at bare walls, no kitchen cabinets, and a single light bulb dangling from a wire. Welcome to Italy.

Step 1: Understand What You're Signing For

- Arredato (Furnished): Usually comes with basic furniture and a functioning kitchen, but quality varies wildly. Sometimes it's lovely; sometimes it's a hand-me-down graveyard.
- Parzialmente arredato (Semi-furnished): Almost always means you get the kitchen cabinets and sink, often without appliances. Wardrobes may be included. The rest is up to you.
- Non arredato (Unfurnished): Think stripped. No kitchen, no wardrobes, no lights, sometimes no shower curtain rod. You're fitting it out from scratch.

Pro tip: Italian kitchens are modular. When tenants leave, they often take the entire kitchen with them — cabinets, counters, appliances. If the ad doesn't say "cucina presente," assume you'll be buying one.

Step 2: Know the Lease Types

- 4+4 Contract: The standard long-term lease, renewable after 4 years. Often requires proof of residency and income.
- 3+2 Contract: Medium-term with slightly more flexibility and usually lower rent.
- Transitorio: Short-term (12–18 months max) meant for temporary stays — good for "test drive" expats, but can't always be extended.
- Tourist/Seasonal Rentals: Weekly or monthly; expensive, but move-in ready. Fine for scouting trips, terrible for long-term budgeting.

Step 3: Deposits, Documents, and Paperwork

- Deposits: Usually 2–3 months' rent upfront, plus the first month.
- Documents: Passport, codice fiscale, proof of income (pension, Social Security, savings), sometimes Italian tax returns.
- Registration: All leases must be registered with the Agenzia delle Entrate. If the landlord balks, walk away — unregistered leases mean no tenant protections.
- Cedolare Secca: A flat-tax option for landlords. If your contract is under this regime, it usually means simpler terms for you, too.

Step 4: Inspections and Expectations

- Fixtures & Appliances: Check everything. Is there a stove? Fridge? Heating system? Many places still rely on propane tanks.
- Condition Report: Document with photos. Italians can be fussy about deposits, and "that was already cracked" won't hold up without proof.
- Condo Fees (Spese Condominiali): Many apartments come with monthly building fees — covering cleaning, maintenance, sometimes heating. Always ask before signing.

Caesar's Secrets: Renting in Italy — Furnished, Unfurnished, and the Fine Print That Could Undo You



Step 5: Reality vs. Romanticism

- Urban Hubs (Pescara, Chieti, L'Aquila): More furnished options, higher turnover, easier logistics.
- Hill/Mountain Towns: More likely to be unfurnished, sometimes requiring you to bring your own kitchen.
- Coastal Villages: A mix — often semi-furnished, especially if geared toward locals rather than tourists.

Step 6: Your First Year Strategy

- If you're testing retirement, go furnished or semi-furnished. It'll cost a little more, but you'll avoid the headache of outfitting a home you may not keep.
- Once you're settled and know your town, consider unfurnished. Buy a kitchen, make it yours, and invest in furniture that actually fits the space.

Where a Notaio Can Save You Headaches

Notai aren't just for big real estate deals — they can also step in for long-term rental contracts. Why bother? Because a notaio isn't your lawyer or the landlord's; they're a neutral public officer whose job is to make sure the contract is legal, registered correctly, and doesn't hide clauses that could bite you later.

For example:

- Confirming registration: All rental contracts in Italy must be registered with the Agenzia delle Entrate. A notaio can verify it's actually done, not just promised.
- Clarifying terms: Some landlords sneak in "updates" that shift costs (repairs, condo fees) to the tenant. A notaio makes sure obligations are balanced.
- Protecting your deposit: If the contract's fuzzy on when/how it's returned, a notaio can insist on clear language.

Do you need one for every rental? No. Many standard leases are straightforward. But if you're signing a 4+4 contract in a small town where English isn't common, or the landlord's cousin "drafted the lease," having a notaio look it over is cheap insurance compared to years of headaches.

...One More Thing

Grazie for sticking with me to the end.

If you're reading this far, it means you're invested. You've found value here, maybe a spark of inspiration, maybe just a reminder that your Italian dream is worth chasing. Either way, thank you — I don't take your time lightly.

If you'd like to help me spread the word, I'd be grateful. Consider this my birthday present.
One click below and you can share this issue with your circle. Who knows — maybe they're also dreaming of Abruzzo, or Italy, or just a life lived differently.



Click to Share

And of course, if you're ready for the chicche — the good stuff reserved for insiders — consider becoming a Member. Members get access to the full archive in flipbook format, plus tools and resources to make your move smoother.

Until next time — alla prossima,

-Cesare