

Ascoli Piceno

Places worth seeing

The history of Ascoli Piceno goes back to before the Romans. Piceno indicates the Picene culture in the Le Marche. Other cities in the environment indicate this era as well, such as Loro Piceno. Like Urbino and Macerata, Ascoli belongs to the top 3 of cities that are worth visiting in Le Marche. In the middle ages, the city had over 100 towers. Today there are only a few left near the Via dei Soderini. Together with the splendid squares, the two-layer Ponte Augusteo Roman bridge and two unbelievable galleries they form the cultural highlights of an otherwise very pleasant and charming city.

Piazza del Popolo

By far the loveliest square in Le Marche is the Piazza del Popolo. In the evening, Italians parade the inlaid marble along the illuminated arcades. On one side of the square is the San Francesco church with the Loggia del Mercanti attached to it. As the church was built between the 12th and 15th century, it is a roman-gothic style. Behind the church is a monastery with a very photogenic fruit and vegetable market. On the west side of the piazza is the roman-style Palazzo dei Capitani neighbored by the famous Caffè Meletti.

Piazza Arringo, Duomo & Museo Archeologico

Another lovely square is the Piazza Arringo, with fountains, the duomo (cathedral) and the archaeological museum and pinacoteca (see below). This museum has a rich collection of Picene cultural objects from Le Marche and the Roman days. The local cathedral, the Cattedrale di Sant'Emidio, has a bright blue ceiling full of candle holders. The polyptych of Carlo Crivelli from 1473 is one of the top pieces shown in the church. Don't forget to visit the church crypt too. It is like a wood of pillars through which you can see the 15th century underground cemetery.

Pinacoteca

Piazza Arringo

One of the finest exhibitions of medieval art can be found in the Pinacoteca at the Palazzo del Comune. This is where you find other works by Carlo Crivelli, like the triptych of Madonna with child, and works by his pupil Pietro Alemanno. There are also works by Titian (Sint Fransiscus receiving the stigmata) and Guido Reni's Annunciation from 1628. The *galleria* even offers 19th and early 20th century art, like Romolo del Gobbo's bronze statue of the flying Paolo and Fransesca.

Galleria d'Arte Contemporanea

Corso Mazzini 90

This *galleria* is the place for modern art lovers. Besides varying exhibitions on local artists, the museum has an extensive permanent collection of paintings and sculptures by Severini, Morandi and Trubbiani. Also Osvaldo Licini, born in Ascoli himself, is richly represented with among others the Paesaggio con l'uomo from 1925.

Acquasante Terme

Sixteen kilometres south west of Ascoli Piceno lies the ancient spa Acquasante Terme, or baths of holy water. Traditionally they are Roman baths with thermal water rich of minerals. Overlooking the city is the medieval castle Castel di Luco, built in the 11th century. Acquasante is located along the famous Roman Via Salaria, which used to lead from Rome to the Adriatic coast. Two old bridges are still in tact: the Ponte Romano and the Ponte di Quintodecimo.

Restaurants

- *Del Corso*, Corso Mazzini 277-279, tel 0736 256760. Modest restaurant in an old palazzo. Tasty and aromatic fish dishes. One fork for the pleasant location by Michelin 2009, and a 'bibe gourmand' for good food at a reasonable price. Menu €

29-44. Closed from 15 August up to and including September, Sundays and Mondays. Mastercard and Visa accepted. Reservations desired.

- *Gallo d'Oro*, Corso Vittorio Emanuele 54, tel 0736 235520. Classical Italian rural-style restaurant serving local dishes and products. Terrace for eating outdoors. Two Michelin forks for the very pleasant entourage. Menu € 28-36. Closed from 20 up to and including 26 **August?**, Saturdays during lunch hours and Sundays. Mastercard, Visa, American Express and Diners accepted.
- *Palazzo Guiderocchi*, Via Cesare Battisti 3, tel 0736 244011. Restaurant with terrace in an annexe of an old palazzo. Classical cuisine. Menu € 24-36. Closed on Tuesdays. Mastercard, Visa, American Express and Diners accepted.

How to get there

Either route to Ascoli Piceno from Sopra e Sotto will take you about an hour by car. You can take the big(ger) road via Comunanza (45 km), along the foot of the Apennine mountains, or the shortest route (38 km) via Force.