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### The City of Ascoli Piceno ▼

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### A Brief History of Ascoli Piceno

Ascoli Piceno is the capital of the homonymous province in the Marche region. The city lies at the confluence of the Tronto River and the Castellano stream, and is flanked on three sides by mountains. Built in travertine, a distinctive grey-hued stone extracted from the surrounding mountains, Ascoli is an ancient city whose foundation predates the military expansion of Rome. Settled by the Sabines, an Italic population, Ascoli prospered because of its strategic position along the Via Salaria (Salt Road), which still today connects the Latium region to the Adriatic coast. One of the symbols of Ascoli is the picchio (woodpecker), which legends trace back to the city's origins when the Sabines were allegedly guided to the area by following the picchio, the sacred bird of Mars. In 268 BCE, Ascoli, while retaining nominal independence, fell under the influence of Rome and became a *civitas foederata*. Tensions with Rome exploded in 91 BCE, when the Ascolani allegedly murdered the Roman proconsul and legate during a theater performance, thus sparking the social wars. An army was then dispatched which laid siege to Ascoli for two and a half years. Today it is still possible to find the acorn shaped lead missiles in the fields closest to the city and especially along the streambed of the Castellano where they have been driven by the rains. Although destroyed by the conquerors in 89 BCE, the result of the war was the expansion of Roman citizenship to all of the Italic peoples. Forty years later, Julius Caesar designated Ascoli the capital of the region and bestowed upon the city the appellation *Picenum*. In addition to the city's distinctively Roman urban plan, several monuments from this period have survived: Porta Gemina, Ponte di Cecco, Ponte Augusteo on the river Tronto, the remains of the Theatre and Amphitheatre, two temples - one of Corinthian order, the other probably of Ionian order - now absorbed by the Churches of San Gregorio and San Venanzio, as well as examples of Roman housing.

Following the fall of the Roman Empire, Ascoli was ravaged by the

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Ostrogoths and then by the Lombards (578 CE). After two centuries of Lombard rule, the city eventually fell under the influence and power of the ecclesiastic authorities. At this time, Ascoli Piceno was home to more than two hundred towers: today some fifty can still be seen. In 1189, Ascoli managed to become a free republican municipality, but this political change did not lead to stability. Reminders of the city's independence are present in the form of Piazza del Popolo (Square of the People) the Palazzo dei Capitani and the Quintana, Ascoli's famous jousting festival whose rules were laid down in 1378. Two of the city's most famous sons date from this period: Cecco d'Ascoli (1257-1327), a poet and astrologist whom the Florentines saw fit to burn at the stake, and Niccolò IV (1227-1292), the first Franciscan pope. (Today the city honors the former's memory through the Taverna di Cecco while the latter is remembered through the Pub Niccolò IV.) Unfortunate military ventures and foreign dictatorships defined the city's political reality for the next three centuries. In 1482, the city was compelled to submit again to Papal authority, which lasted until the Napoleonic wars. Subsequently, in 1860, it joined the Kingdom of Italy. In recognition of its staunch resistance against the occupying German forces during World War II, Ascoli Piceno was awarded the Medaglia d'Oro al Valor Militare.

With about 60,000 inhabitants, Ascoli Piceno is just the right size, small enough to project a friendly and intimate character and large enough to support a rich cultural life of music, both modern and classical and art, with museums and churches containing masterpieces, for example, by Carlo Crivelli, Guido Reni and Titian, and regular exhibitions of contemporary art. The city has never become a tourist center and, consequently, maintains a distinctly Italian character.

## **The City of Ascoli Piceno**

Ascoli Piceno is an extremely safe city. Walk around and explore it! Cross the bridges, ride the buses, visit the churches and museums. (We suggest to use Google maps to check the addresses).

### **Gyms (Palestre) and Swimming Pools (Piscine)**

Of the several fitness gyms (palestre) in Ascoli, the most economical and convenient is Palestra Malibù, located in Via G. Tranquilli, 32 (near the train station). There is a public swimming pool (piscina comunale) in Via Spalvieri, 12, which offers daily and monthly passes. A swim cap is required.

### **Hotels**

Ascoli offers various hotel options in the historical center:

a. Ostello de' Longobardi is a hostel in Via dei Soderini, 26.

- b. The Guiderocchi (<http://www.palazzoguiderocchi.com/en/index.html>), in Via Cesare Battisti, 3, is a beautiful 4-star hotel with reasonable rates.
- c. The Hotel Gioli ([http://www.hotelgioli.it/presentazione\\_eng.htm](http://www.hotelgioli.it/presentazione_eng.htm)), in Viale de' Gaspari, 14 is another 4-star hotel.
- d. Residenza 100 Torri (<http://www.centotorri.com/>) is a new 4-star hotel located in Via C. Mazzoni, 6.
- e. Albergo Piceno ([www.albergopiceno.it](http://www.albergopiceno.it)) is a new 3-star hotel located in Via Minuccia, 10.
- f. Cantina dell'arte ([www.cantinadellarte.it](http://www.cantinadellarte.it)) is an economic hotel located in Rua della Lupa, 8.

### **Internet and Wi-Fi**

There are several internet points in town – one in Piazza Bonfine, a computer inside the bustling Rinascita bookstore in Piazza Roma, and one in Via della Fortezza. For wireless internet access, there is:

Caffè Pretoriano, in Via Pretoriana, just up from Piazza Roma;  
Murphy's Pub, in Piazza Arringo 31.

You have to sign in (they have different procedures), but there is no direct charge for access although you are expected to consume something while there. The rule of thumb is to spend 2-3 euro per hour of use.

### **Mail Boxes and Post Offices**

Mail boxes are painted red or blue and usually have one slot for local mail (per la città) and one for everywhere else (tutte le altre destinazioni). You will see them mounted outside Tabaccai and post offices. Remember that stamps may also be purchased at a Tabaccaio. Post Offices (Ufficio Postale) are marked with a "PT" sign. There are several throughout the city. The central one has continuous hours and is located in Via Crispi near your apartments.

### **Market (Mercato)**

Wednesday and Saturday mornings the downtown market is open. On the third weekend of each month there is the Mercatino dell'antiquariato (antiques) in the Chiostro di San Francesco and downtown piazzas.

Weekday mornings there is a fruit and vegetable market in Piazza delle Erbe and an open market in Piazza Roma.

### **Movie Theaters (Cinema)**

Multisala Odeon, viale Federici, 82 (tel. 0736.255552)  
Multisala Piceno, largo Manzoni, 6 (tel. 0736.254605)

### **Museums (Musei)**

Pinacoteca Civica, Palazzo Comunale, Piazza Arringo - Tel. 0736.298213, Open: Mon.-Sun. AM

Museo Archeologico Statale, Palazzo Panichi, Piazza Arringo - Tel. 0736.253562, Open: Mon.-Sat.

Museo Diocesano, Palazzo Vescovile, Piazza Arringo - Tel. 0736.252883

Contains works by Crivelli, P. Alemanno, Cola dell'Amatrice, P. Vannini.

Museo di Storia Naturale 'A. Orsini', Cartiera Papale, via della Cartiera, 1 - Tel. 0736.277538

Galleria d'Arte Contemporanea 'O. Licini', Polo Culturale di Sant'Agostino - Tel. 0736.248630

Museo-Biblioteca 'Francesco Antonio Marcucci', via San Giacomo, 3 - Tel. 0736.259952

Museo dell'arte Ceramica, Chiostro di San Tommaso.

## **Tabaccaio**

For local bus tickets, stamps, phonecards, matches, etc. Look for the "T".

## **Theater (Teatro)**

Teatro Ventidio Basso, via Trivio, 50

Teatro dei Filodrammatici, currently closed for renovation

Travel Agencies (Agenzia Viaggi)

Tickets for START bus service to Rome may be purchased at Cameli Tours, at the Train Station.

CTS Travel is a student travel agency located in Piazza Roma.

## **Transportation In and About Ascoli Piceno**

### **Bus Information**

City buses are run by START S.p.A.

Single tickets (corsa semplice) cost €1.00.

Bus service in the Marche (to and from San Benedetto del Tronto) as well as to Rome is provided by START S.p.A. Tickets may be purchased at the ticket office at the bus stop (Train Station). You can check the bus schedule at: [www.startspa.it](http://www.startspa.it). For general information, the toll free number (numero verde) is: 800.44340. To make reservations departing from:

Ascoli Piceno 0736.342243

Roma 06.4460567

San Benedetto del Tronto 0735.75981

Fermo 0734.229903

### **Taxi Information**

Taxis are white in Italy. You cannot hail them, but instead must go to a designated taxi stand. It is not necessary to tip. In Ascoli, taxis are located at:

via XX Settembre @ Piazza Roma (0736.259084)

Piazza della Stazione, 1 – Train Station (0736.42444)

### **Train Information**

The main train station is in San Benedetto del Tronto. Ascoli Piceno is a spur station off the Adriatic coast line. You can reach the San Benedetto del Tronto station by bus or train (both leave from the train station). The schedules for trains departing from Ascoli as well as for travel throughout Italy are found online at <http://www.ferroviedellostato.it>. Tickets must be validated before boarding the train.

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