



CALLED "THE TIBET OF EUROPE" IT IS SET IN THE SOLITARY AND WILD GRAN SASSO

THE VAST PLATEAU OF CAMPO IMPERATORE

Campo Imperatore, one of the most singular and extraordinary mountain landscapes, lies at the centre of our peninsula, in the "Alte Vette" district, the heart of the National Park of Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga.

This boundless steppe environment, covered with snow in the long Winter months, makes you feel such exciting sensations as only the largest open spaces can offer you.

THE NATIONAL PARK OF GRAN SASSO AND MONTI DELLA LAGA

The National Park of Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga is a place gifted with riches: one of the biggest parks in Europe with rare animals and a great biological variety of flora, it can boast the vastest plateau of the peninsula as well as the most extended artificial lake in Italy at Campotosto and the southern-most glacier in Europe, Mount Calderone.

To let people benefit better from its peculiarities and natural resources of the territory, the Park area has been divided into 11 virtual Tourist and Cultural Environmental Districts. The aim is to improve the quality of life and the exploitation of this wonderful but hard mountain areas, through advancement and interventions for preserving its vast historical, environmental, cultural and economical heritage.

Among the infrastructures established to favour the development of the territory, we would like to mention the efficient road network that includes the "Motorway of the Parks" (A24 Roma - L'Aquila - Teramo) - connecting the Tirrenic side of the peninsula (A1 Motorway) with the Adriatic one (A14 Motorway) - and the Gran Sasso Tunnel that is very convenient and at the same time does not spoil the landscape.

Another way for reaching the zone is to drive along the former SS80 that connects L'Aquila, the main chief town of the region, with Teramo.

THE LONGEST HORSE-TRACK IN ITALY

The longest horse-track in Italy is 300 km long and runs around Gran Sasso through the provinces of Teramo, L'Aquila and Pescara as well as the territory of 8 out of the 11 districts. The routes cross the most striking landscapes of the protected area and are equipped with stopovers, hostels and shelter for horses. They can also be followed by mountain-bike or on foot.

CAMPO IMPERATORE

It is one of the most striking mountain landscapes in Italy, in the wild heart of Gran Sasso - "Alte Vette" District - where rocks and precipices alternate with ancient glacial valleys and moraines. Campo Imperatore, a marvellous environment of high altitudes rich in various species of fauna and flora, 20000 years ago was covered with a huge glacier that gave origin to various small lakes where herds of horses, cows and sheep are still used to watering. On the slopes of the mountains there are ancient villages, built with calcareous rock, and enchanting hamlets, among which we would like to mention Assergi, Camarda and Paganica.

Important tourist destination, Campo Imperatore is a huge plateau extending for 30 kilometres at 2200 metres of altitude, at the foot of the high peaks of Pizzo Cefalone, Corno Piccolo and Corno Grande (2912m, the highest mountain dominating the whole Apennine range). It lies in the province of L'Aquila - the ancient Sabina and then Roman town called Amiternum - unfortunately struck by the terrible earthquake of 2009.

At Fonte Cerreto (that stands at 1120m of altitude and is 2,5 kilometres from the exit of Assergi and 18 kilometres from L'Aquila) a cable-car - running all the year round - takes you 1000 metres up to Campo Imperatore in 7 minutes, where you can enjoy the highest ski-slopes in Abruzzo. Since the high altitude let the slopes be covered with snow for the whole winter season, it boasts various and the best equipped ski facilities: in fact, in the 1950s, when the practise of skiing started its development, the first ski-runs were established here and it was considered one of the biggest and most modern ski areas in Europe. In Summer a panoramic and easy route, stretching for 28 km amid small and big fields and green plateaus, takes you pleasantly to the largest area of Campo Imperatore where, besides a small church, you can see the Astronomic Observatory, run by the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, and the Giardino Alpino that has recently celebrated its fiftieth anniversary

THE SKIING AREA OF CAMPO IMPERATORE

The skiing facilities of Campo Imperatore offer ski-runs extending for 20 kilometres and equipped with modern ski-lifts able to carry up to 4,000 people per hour, and about 80,000 guests per year. The facilities include a cable-car, connecting Fonte Cerreto (1120m) with the skiing area of Campo Imperatore (2200m) with two cables, each of them hosting a hundred passengers, and rising 1000 metres in 7 minutes.

On the plateau there are the chair-lift Fontari Campo Imperatore, with four-seats, that can carry 2200 passengers per hour and the chair-lift Scindarella, with four-seats, established in 2003, that can carry 2400 passengers per hour and reaches Mount Scindarella at 2200 m above sea level; besides these there is a ski-lift for children and beginners rising from 1900 up to 2200m.

The chair-lift Fontari runs every day in every season, while in Summer the chair-lift Scindarella works only on special occasions.

Also at Montecristo, the valley below Campo Imperatore, at 1450 metres above sea level, there are some ski-lifts and shorter ski slopes that should be renewed soon, following a project for the improvement the area.

People fond of winter sports can benefit from nine variously difficult and long downhill ski-slopes.

They can also enjoy various "fuori pista" routes along the canyons of Gran Sasso, the most famous of which is the "Tre Valloni" stretching from Hotel Campo Imperatore to Fonte Cerreto, at the foot of the cable-car.

There are some cross-country ski runs in the area, among which one going around the chair-lift Fontanari. Some others, more difficult, stretch towards Racollo di Santo Stefano di Sessanio and Vetica di Castel del Monte, where national and international competitions are organized every year.

The area is also the ideal setting for enjoying some adventurous sports. Rich in peaks, it offers the opportunity to practise - both in Summer and Wintertime - gliding, paragliding and hang-gliding.

Summer sport activities include hiking, trekking or free-climbing, mountain bike, archery, horse-riding and cycling.

You can avail yourselves of Alpine and C.A.I. Guides
C.A.I. Sezione dell'Aquila,
via Sassa N° 34 -
Tel. 0862 24342.

CAMPO IMPERATORE: ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES

Besides the hotels of Monte Cerreto, you can enjoy a comfortable stay also on the plateau of Campo Imperatore.

Campo Imperatore Hotel is a four-star hotel located in a panoramic place on Gran Sasso, close to the ski runs, with 40 rooms equipped with every kind of comfort.

It is also perfectly suitable for hosting meetings, conferences and wedding celebrations.

In every season the mountain landscape offers you suggestions to fill your days with varied and pleasant activities, such as skiing on the slopes in Winter and horse-riding in Summertime.

The hotel was built in the 30s in the national-fascist style, with a rectangular layout and a semi-cylindrical shape - reminding you of the letter D of "Il Duce" - and is historically famous. On 26 July 1943, Benito Mussolini was taken here and after 48 days, on 12th September, freed by the Germans under General Harald Mors's orders.

The "Quercia" operation was composed of 90 soldiers carried there on gliders drawn by two "Storks Fieseler F1" aircrafts, with the support of two bombers. Without any resistance, Mussolini was taken away and transferred in Germany. The room that hosted the "Duce" - Room 220 - and bears witness to that particular historic time, can now be visited.

Hotel Campo Imperatore

67100 L'Aquila (AQ) - tel. 0862 400000.

info@hotelcampoimperatore.com

Ostello Campo Imperatore, situated at Pratoriscio, can accommodate 42 people. It has a restaurant, a self-service and a bar. Tel. 0862 400011.

Rifugio Montecristo

Monte Cristo 2, 67100 - L'AQUILA (AQ) - Tel. 0862 606177.

FLORA AND FAUNA OF THE PARK

The Massif of Gran Sasso dominates the boundless pasture lands of Campo Imperatore: it is the paradise of the eternal snows, of the rocks and the wind, of the untouched and imposing nature exceptionally rich in special flora and fauna. The experts of the Ornithological Post of Campo Imperatore constantly monitor the local birdlife all the year round.

Here, among the quite unknown but most charming species, there are about 200 up to 300 couples of the Alpine chaffinch, as well as the biggest colony in Italy of choughs; beside you can see the redstarts, the wheatears, the linnets and other more, while the steep rock faces and the wild cliffs are home to an ornithological community that includes the mountain swallow, the blue rock thrush, the woodpecker, the peregrine hawk, the raven and the golden eagle (six couples have been counted).

In the southern area of Gran Sasso, characterized by a continental climate with poor precipitation and a vast temperature range between Summer and Winter, the steppe - a typical vegetation that features the continental regions of Eastern Europe and Asia - extends and is home to the sparrow, the tawny pipit, the partridge and, among the birds of prey, the harrier eagle, a small eagle very able at preying on snakes. Of course the fauna of the place is also rich in mammals, such as the Apennine wolf, the roe deer, the deer, the chamois of Abruzzo and some specimens of bear.

The region of the Park is also one of the European areas with the highest biological variety of flora and can boast 2400 species of vegetations, many of which are exclusively typical of this region.

Very different is the variety of the vegetation on the peaks and along the slopes of the Park.

The most precious flora grows at the highest altitudes and includes, besides various "glacial relicts" coming from the European and Asiatic steppes and from Balkan mountains, some endemic plants (Androsace di Matilde, Adonide ricurva, Viola della Majella e Stella Alpina) that have made the Park become one of the most interesting Mediterranean floristic areas.

While the Gran Sasso, especially along the side towards Aquila, features a vast extension of pasture lands, the Monti della Laga are mostly covered with woods: oak groves and chestnut woods at the lowest altitudes, beech woods from 1000 to 1800m, yews, maple trees, hollies, limes and ash trees, witch-elms, silver firs and birches. The bilberry bushes form a moor amidst the high woods and the pastures.

CULTIVATIONS AND TYPICAL PRODUCTS

The Park is an immense source of handicraft and folklore as well as of local and high-quality food and wine, exploited and promoted through interesting tourist-cultural itineraries. Among the cereals and legumes cultivated on this hard territory, there are some rare old species such as the "solina", an ancient kind of wheat, and the "cicerciola", a legume no more cultivated elsewhere. Various products are already well-known in Italy and also abroad.

The beans from Paganica

The beans of Paganica are typical products that deserve to carve a niche in the market. Thanks to the fertile soil and to the water available for irrigation, a cultivation of vegetable produce has developed on this land over time.

Since these kinds of beans ("fagioli a pane" and "fagioli a olio"), both climbing plants, are not chemically treated, they can be included in the group of the biological products.

The lentils from Santo Stefano di Sessano

The lentils of Santo Stefano di Sessano, dark brown coloured and small in shape with a rough and scratched surface, are famous all over Italy for their taste.

Always biologically produced, they belong to an ancient and rare kind of products, cultivated only in parched land on high mountain (1200 - 1450 m), and can be conserved a long time without losing their characteristic taste.

The saffron: the red gold from L'Aquila

The production area of the saffron is essentially the spectacular plateau of Navelli, on the sidelines of the Park. In the past the cultivation of the saffron (*crocus sativus*) was a very important trading resource.

Now the saffron stigmas are variously used especially in pharmacopoeia to treat some diseases, as well as excellent spices and natural colour for clothes and food.

The chestnuts from the Laga Mountains

Already present before the last Glacial Age, the chestnut tree was planted here again during the Iron Age, in order to benefit of its rich fruit. The best chestnuts in the territory of the Park are the "marroni dei Monti della Laga", from the most ancient chestnut groves.

The chestnuts, also appreciated by the Romans, especially the ones growing along the Via Salaria that used to run from Roma to Ascoli Piceno, are now appreciated all over the world.

The mortadella from Campotosto

The mortadella of Campotosto - dark, tender and delicious - is a rare gastronomic speciality of Campotosto, lying in the Central Apennines, along the sides of the biggest artificial lake in Europe, at the altitude of 1300m, between the Mounts Laga and Gran Sasso. Made with the best lean pork meat, with a piece of lard inside, it is smoked with oak or beech wood and then dried in the North wind.

The "pecorino" from Farindola

A natural and traditional biologic product, the "pecorino" from Farindola is the gastronomic star of the Park, richly flavouring of herbs and milk. It is made with the milk of a typical breed of sheep called Pagliarola Abruzzese, that regularly goes for pasturing along the hillsides in Winter and on the mountains in Summer.

Produced since the Roman age, it has become one of the best Italian cheeses and is granted a certificate by the Consorzio di Tutela e Valorizzazione del Pecorino di Farindola.

ANCIENT SAVOURS OF GRAN SASSO

Ditta Ugo de Paulis s.a.s. - Tel 0862 68422 – Fax 0862 68334

Salami of their own production according to local recipes.

The fundamental secret of the production of these delicious salami from Norcia is the meat of pigs bred according to the traditional method, together with the ancient way of working it totally by hand: salami, "lonze", "cicolane di carne e di fegato", "pancetta arrotolata e tesa", "guanciali" and "Cuore di Paganica"- a new product with a delicious and tender taste, made with the best part of ham.

MOUNTAIN EVOLUTION

Those who really love the mountains, not only the simple downward slopes, but also like to penetrate the wild places of the Parks of Regione Abruzzo, can avail themselves of the school of mountain "Mountain Evolution" whose staff is formed by professionals, Alpine and excursionist guides from Abruzzo.

Various sporting options are proposed: trekking with the snow-shoes to approach the winter season, ski-touring along the peaks of the Apennines, ice climbing and dry tooling on the most beautiful ice-falls after a training stage, trekking, climbing on the main rock and ice cliffs, varied difficult excursions.

MOUNTAIN EVOLUTION -TE). Tel. 347 7661126., Via Largo Giardetti Matteo e Amedeo 5 – 64047 Pietracamela (TE). Tel. 347 7661126.

www.mountainevolutions.com - E-mail: mountainevolutions@libero.it

Cuisine

Grazie ai prodotti del territorio, frutti di una sapienza antica, i piatti locali che si gustano nella zona, sono genuini, appetitosi e cucinati con amore.

GNOCCHI ALLO ZAFFERANO

Versare gli gnocchi in acqua bollente salata. Appena tornano a galla, scolarli e metterli in una ciotola.

Sciogliere in acqua bollente lo zafferano in fili.

Fondere il burro in una padella con la salvia.

Appena è spumeggiante, versare gli gnocchi e lo zafferano. Impiattare e spolverizzare con del parmigiano.

Getting to Campo Imperatore

By car: A24 Motorway Roma-L'Aquila-Teramo - exit Asserigi. A25 Roma-Pescara - exit Bussi.

By train: Roma-Pescara railway line

By plane: Pescara Airport or Roma Airport.

TOURIST INFORMATION

CENTRO TURISTICO GRAN SASSO

Tel. 0862 606829 0862 606847 - fax 0862 608783

Staz. di Valle tel. 0862 606143 - Staz. di Monte tel. 0862 400007

(impianti di risalita) Funivia del Gran Sasso

Tel. 0862 606143 - 0862 400007

Scuola di Sci Tel. 0862 400012

SERVIZI E ASSISTENZA A CAMPO IMPERATORE mt. 2200

Noleggio attrezzature sportive - Sci - Snowboard - scarponi - ecc.

Posto fisso Polizia di Stato - Carabinieri - Guardia di Finanza

Soccorso Alpino - Protezione Civile,

Guardia Medica e Pronto soccorso.

ENTE PARCO NAZIONALE DEL GRAN SASSO E MONTI DELLA LAGA

Via del Convento – 67010 Assergi (L'Aquila) Tel. 0862 60521 - fax 0862 606675

www.gransassolagapark.it