

Emblematic **M**editerranean **M**ountains  
as Coastal destinations of excellence  
(**EMbleMatiC**)

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**CASE STUDY, PP3**

**GRAN SASSO MOUNTAIN**



**Deliverable D 3.3.3**

**WP3 – Studying**

**Activity A3.3 Conduction of the in depth study of the criteria composing the emblematic dimension of the  
EMM**

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## SUMMARY

This case study is drafted in the framework of the WP3 “Studying” of EMbleMatiC project.

This document presents the recording of the elements of the emblematic dimension of Gran Sasso mountain, based on the template produced by PP4’s subcontractor (ETAM), approved and adapted by the project’s Study Scientific Committee (LP1, PP4, PP6, PP8).

This case study document will consist a reference document for **the overall in depth study of the emblematic dimension of the project’s touristic dimension** whilst it will constitute the emblematic dimension characterization document for Gran Sasso mountain.

The case study is operative in correlation with D.3.3.2-Report on participative workshop, results of which have been incorporated in it.

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### Executive Summary

In September 2015 the GAL Gran Sasso Velino enthusiastically joined the project proposed by the EMM network. The reasons why it participated are two: the first is that the objectives of the project correspond to the strategies that the LAG has implemented and is implementing in the current programming; The second is that it was a great opportunity for our mountain to enter a very large network and broaden the horizons of fame. The elements of the common strategy are those that lead to the development of original and exclusive tourism paths and responsible maintenance and strategies of an active and sustainable mountain area preservation. The analysis here is of a purely qualitative nature and was made on the basis of the cut recommended by the external contractor, so the territory of Gran Sasso was analyzed following all 10 criteria indicated, concluding that yes, the Gran Sasso is a very Emblematic Mountain.

## PART I

### 1.1 Introduction

The global importance of mountains is increasingly recognised : Europe has many mountain ranges, occurring in almost all parts of the continent; most European countries have at least some mountains. These mountains are very diverse at every scale, in terms of climate, ecology, economy and other characteristics. European mountain landscapes are cultural landscapes reflecting long-term interactions of human beings with biophysical systems. Europe's mountains cover nearly half of the continent area and are home to one fifth of the European population. Mountain areas are hotspots of biodiversity and agriculture has played a multifunctional role in defining and sustaining mountain biodiversity.

Starting from the awareness of the mountain's value in itself (biodiversity, landscape, ecosystem, water resources, cultural identity) we gathered information, emotions, stories, photographs, paths, data to represent a mountain through its strongest characteristics but also through its frailties and weaknesses. For many people, the mountain is an enemy, for others it is an element of identity, for others it is a great, absolute love. This route is part of a much wider project aimed at raising awareness of the value of the mountain among its peoples, among its "managers" and among its potential visitors.

After analyzing the elements of the project, the working group, headed by the Local coordinator, Maria Sulpizio, began collecting the material for writing the text. The work has been done by many hands, with the advice and collaboration of the other people working in the LAG, Roberto di Gianfilippo and Giovanni Hausmann. For some sections the draft was entrusted to the cooperative Il Bosso (Marta Picella, Filomena Spagnolo, Paolo Setta). Comparison of ideas, SWOT analysis and proposals on eco-itineraries emerged from the local meeting, where everyone suggested solutions and given the availability to initiate a concrete path of collaboration. The stakeholders are : local tourist association, representatives of the General Federations of Italian Commerce and Tourism, Gran Sasso Laga Park representatives, DMC (Destination Management Company) representatives, local producers, Slow Food Association representatives.

### 1.2 Physical and human geography of the mountain

#### The name

The name of the massif in the Roman era was Fiscellus Mons or Mount Ombelico (belly button) because of its central position on the Italian peninsula; later, during the Middle Ages, it assumed the name of Monte Corno that was used both to indicate the Great Horn, the highest peak, and to call the entire mountain range. Gradually, just in the middle of the twentieth century, in the topographic map of Contado and the diocese of L'Aquila, the current denomination, the Gran Sasso d'Italia, will appear. That is why some local populations still refer to the massif using the name Monte Corno (Horn). The territory of the Gran Sasso mountain range is entirely in Abruzzo, it is vast and belongs to the National Park of the Gran Sasso and Laga Laga Mountains, whose total extension is 150,000 hectares

#### Location, surface, distances to the main cities

From its most distant points, that is the Passo della Capannelle to the northwest and the Gole di Popoli to the southeast, the Gran Sasso mountain range measures about 50 km in length and 15 km in width with a perimeter of about 130 km. It borders on the territories of Fano Adriano, Pietracamela, Isola del Gran Sasso d'Italia, Castelli and Arsita to the north, on the Gole di Popoli to the east, on the plateau of Assergi to the southwest, downline of the city of L'Aquila, while it is limited by Campo Imperatore to south and downline from the Navelli plateau. It shares the west-northwest borders with the mountain range of the Monti della Laga and the lake of Campotosto. Taking the plateau of Campo Imperatore as a point of reference, the heart of the Gran Sasso massif, located about 1800 meters high, the distances from major cities are about 132 km. from Rome, 107 km. approximately from Pescara, 89 km from Ascoli Piceno, 46 km from Teramo and only 18,7 km from L'Aquila. The Gran Sasso is a barrier that naturally separates the two environments of Abruzzo: marine or Adriatic and mountainous landscapes. The massif has also a strong diversity between



the northern slope with steep walls, the Teramo slope, and the southern slope on the side of the city L'Aquila, made up of plateaus full of herbs from May to August.

### **Natural features**

As far as the natural elements are concerned, Gran Sasso is the only Apennine mountain with alpine and dolomite characteristics; is the largest plateau of the Apennine, in its territory there is the only perennial glacier of the Apennine, the Calderone, which is the second southernmost glacier in Europe. The major peaks are located in the northern part of the mountain range: the Corno Grande, which consists of four main peaks, the eastern (2903 m), the central (2893 m), the Cambi (2875 m) ; the western peak (2914 m), which is also the highest peak of all continental Apennines and the Corno Piccolo (2655 m).

The other peaks are also among the highest and most impressive of the Appennine mountains: Scindarella Mountain (m. 2233) and Monte Portella (m. 2385) with their spectacular glacial remainings; Mount Aquila (m. 2494); Monte Brancastello (2385) and Monte Prena (2561 m), where there are many canyons and, finally, Mount Camicia (2564 m), with the characteristic grassy southern slope.

In the heart of the massif there is the wide plateau of Campo Imperatore, the basin of Campo Pericoli, as well as deep valleys located between the peaks, such as Val Chiarino, Val Maone, Valle del Venacquaro and the Valle dell'Inferno. Going south from Campo Imperatore towards the village of Paganica, the intense Karst erosion originated several caves (Grotte) of different extension and depth (the Grotta a Male and the Grotta dell'oro). Other caves are also found on the northern slope, in the vicinity of Rigopiano (Grotta dell'Eremita e Grotta del Lupo) and cavities excavated by water in limestone rocks such as the Bandito cavity, the Elisa draw-well, and Pozzo dell'Inferno (the Hell draw-well). As far as the waterfalls in the area are concerned, the most important are the Vitello d'Oro waterfalls situated in the territory of the municipality of Farindola, considered perhaps the most spectacular of the massive Gran Sasso d'Italia, with a jump of about 28 m. Other important waterfalls are the Bisenti waterfall with a jump of about 70 m and the Ruzzo Falls both in the territory of the municipality of Isola del Gran Sasso.

### **Ecosystem types**

Situated in the central Italy the Gran Sasso mountain range includes two different biogeographical regions: the Euro-Siberian and the Mediterranean. This particular location, together with the lithological diversity of the mountain and the high altitude, makes this protected area a territory having a high biological value. In fact, about 2,300 superior plant species, that is more than one third of Italy's floristic heritage, live in the Park. As far as the animal species are concerned, amphibians represent an emblematic case: fourteen amphibian species are actually present, among which four species of newt have been also counted, which is a unique case in Italy. Furthermore, the Park's mountains function as a real biogeographical border between the North and the South of the Country: some Mediterranean species reach the northern limit of distribution, while others, especially plants and animals of arctic-alpine origin, reach the southern limit. The most typical environments of the Park consists of high altitudes, where most of the endemic plant and animal species can be found. Furthermore, the so called "glacial relicts" can be found in the highest altitudes, and they are represented by plants, insects and vertebrates as well, such as the meadow viper, the European snow vole, the common frog and the alpine newt. On the high-altitude areas there are well-adapted bird species, such as the Alpine chough and the red-billed chough, the Alpine accentor, the wallcreeper, the white-winged snowfinch, the water pipit, the rock partridge, with the peninsular populations being more sizable.

The noteworthy biological diversity of the Park can be also observed in the forests covering about half of the territory with several forest typologies, such as holm oaks, oaks, turkey oaks, manna ashes and hop hornbeams, aspens, chestnut trees and beech trees. The latter makes up the widest forest formations in which also the relict phytocoenoses can be found, such as the silver firs mainly situated on the Laga Mountains, the formations consisting of holly and yew and some birch stations. Vast are also the grazing areas, both the primary and the secondary ones: on the Park's southern side the herbaceous formations turn into real steppes, also due to the particular microclimate conditions. These formations are characterized by a marked eastern element both in the animal and plant community, among which also some endemic species have been observed. In these environments gather many bird species that are

diminishing in their European areas, such as the European nightjar, the greater short-toed lark, the ortolan, the crested lark.

### **Climate**

With regard to the climate, looking at the Campo Imperatore plateau, it is noted that in those areas the precipitation touches the value of 900 mm annually with a peak in the Autumn season and a rapidly declining trend descending towards the southern part of the plateau. Precipitation is snowing in the period between November and April with heavy snowfalls throughout the winter. The temperature is very stiff and stands at an average of -4 ° C in the coldest month (February) and + 11.2 ° C in the hottest month (August); in winter at the lower part of the plain you can easily reach temperatures of -25 ° C.



*Sculpture in memory of the tragedy of the shepherd and his children*

### **Major accidents occurred on the Gran Sasso**

During the winter of 1569, a large avalanche broke away from the slopes above the Portella pass: this is the first accident recorded on the Gran Sasso reported by the chronicles of Francesco De Marchi, an engineer and mountaineer (he was the first to climb the top of the Apennine mountains). The victims of the incident were 18, overwhelmed by the snowy mass following the exceptional rainfall of that winter. A most recent tragedy was around of Fonte Vetica, under Mount Bolza. It was October 13, 1919, when Pupo Nunzio a sheperd of Roio village was caught by a sudden

snowstorm.

With the shepherd died his two little children and the wife, who had desperately tried to reach them, and who had not suffered the pain. During that blizzard, 5,000 sheep died in the Gran Sasso mountain grazing lands. Ten years later, in 1929, it was the turn of two mountaineering students who were blocked by adverse weather conditions. Mario Cambi and Emilio Cichetti remained isolated inside the Garibaldi refugee, without the rescuers coming to it. Cicchetti died in an attempt to reach Pietracamela when he was less than 3 km from the town. In 1942, the famous Ampezzo guide, Ignazio di Bona, was overwhelmed by the avalanche in an attempt to help some skiers stuck in the snow. In the following years counted many deaths, mostly mountaineers, every year.

Other accidents in the area are related to human intervention: on September 15th, 1970, during the excavations for the construction of the Gran Sasso tunnel, the excavator "mole" caused the drilling of a natural underground water tank. High pressure causes the flooding of part of Assergi inhabited area. On August 16th, 2002, by INFN Laboratories in the Gran Sasso, a 50 liters of trimethylbenzene broke out, causing pollution of the aquifers of the massif. In the Summer 2016, due to an earthquake in the area, a part of the East wall of the Piccolo Corno Mountain crumbled, not causing damage to things or people. The tragedy of Rigopiano occurred in January 2017 in which 29 people lost their lives because of an imposing slaughter that dragged away an hotel and its guests

### **Administrative and economic issues**

The Gran Sasso mountain range is located in the Abruzzo Region; the provinces concerned are those of L'Aquila, Teramo and Pescara. As a whole, the area is extended to 44 municipalities that coincide with the GranSasso and Laga National Parks, but in our study a further skimmings were made, taking into consideration 36 municipalities, belonging to the nearest Gran Sasso area : 21 of L'Aquila Province (Barete ; Barisciano ; Cagnano Amiterno ; Calascio ; Campotosto ; Capestrano ; Capitignano ; Carapelle Calvisio ; Castel del Monte ; Castelvechio Calvisio ; L'Aquila ; Montereale ; Navelli ; Ofena ; Pizzoli ; Poggio Picenze ; Prata d'Ansidonia ; San Demetrio ne' Vestini ; San Pio delle Camere ; Santo Stefano di Sessanio ; Villa Santa Lucia) ; 6 Pescara Province (Brittoli ; Carpineto della Nora ; Civitella Casanova ; Farindola ; Montebello di

Bertona ; Villa Celiera) ; 9 in Teramo Province (Villa Celiera ; Arsita ; Castel Castagna ; Castelli ; Colledara ; Cortino ; Crognaleto ; Isola del Gran Sasso ; Pietracamela ; Tossicia).

The municipalities or villages are characterized by being mountainous and semi-abandoned, with a small presence of inhabitants (from the smallest, Carapelle Calvisio with only 89 inhabitants to the most inhabited as Isola del Gran Sasso, with 4773 inhabitants). Among them, however, it is the city of L'Aquila (69399 inhabitants) which is only 17 km from the base of the Gran Sasso cableway in Assergi, a part of the Municipality of L'Aquila. Overall, therefore, the considered area has 107350 inhabitants, of which 64% in the city of L'Aquila and the remaining in the neighboring small towns.

In mountainous areas, poorly populated, territorial integration has been driven by polarization in providing basic public services (health, education) and private business activities. When the population decline has rendered unsustainable provision of these services at the municipal level, these have tended to focus on the main communes of the areas. The industrial structure of the area is characterized by a marked dualism: a small and highly qualified group of medium/ large companies and a vast majority of companies below nine employees.

The system of large enterprises is located in 2 strategic areas: space (Alenia Thales) and pharmaceuticals (Sanofi and Dompè); these companies have generated a little linked industry but very high quality results, and they have also consolidated a profitable relationship with the University of L'Aquila.

The rest of the economical sector is characterized by a significant presence of SMEs, active mainly in traditional sectors (construction, crafts, commerce) and endogenous entrepreneurship. In the area concerned, the importance of tourist activities in the municipalities of the parks is also evidenced by the high presence of hotel and out-of-hotel facilities (more than one quarter of the regional total). In the area, most active tourism companies (80.6%) are related to the accomodation servicedes and food sector (restaurants), although there are a number of creative, artistic, entertainment and transport activities.

However, there are a lot of direct tourism companies (accomodation and food services), while the presence of companies indirectly linked to tourism (transport, brokering, entertainment, sports) is rather low: we are still far from a structured and complete tourist proposal. Compared to similar protected areas in other regions, the Gran Sasso area park shows a significantly higher level of attractiveness than in the South of Italy, but below the national average. Agriculture also plays an important role in the area, with a weight of added value produced in the sector of 4.8%, compared with 2.9 at regional level.

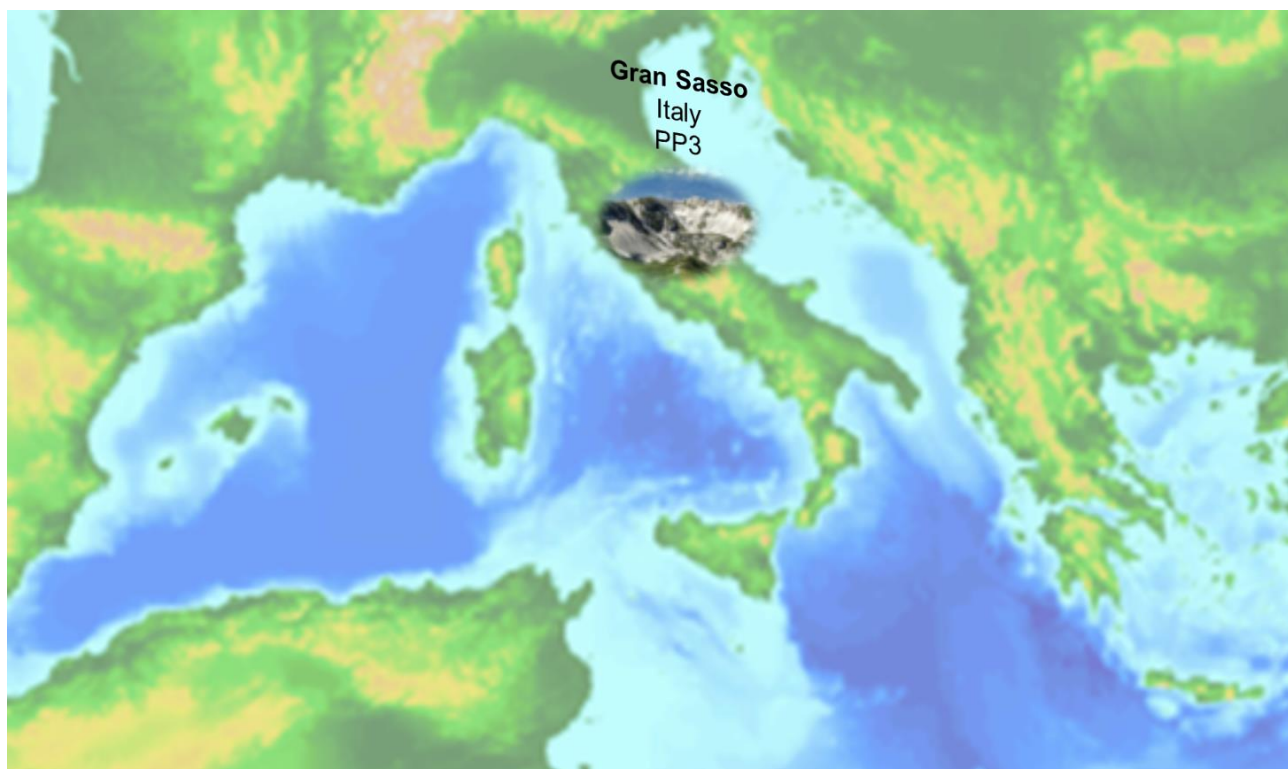
According to the latest Census of Agriculture of Istat (National Institute of Statistics), in 2010 there were more than 10,300 farms, accounting for about 5% percent of the regional sector. The size of farms in terms of total agricultural area appears significantly higher a regional level, reflecting the type of extensive exploitation of the area predominantly practiced in the area (over three-quarters of the surface total farms are intended for meadows, permanent pastures and forests).

The Gran Sasso brand has only been partially used or marketed. In 2015, the first mountain district of Italy was established, the Gran Sasso Tourist District recognized by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism and Tourism. The birth of the District aims to enhance the local communities involved in the district for sustainable tourism development through the development of strategic development programs; to promote the national and international level of the brand of the Gran Sasso and the neighboring territories. As far as area management structures are concerned, they are the Destination Management Company which represent the territorial operational tools for implementing regional tourism policies. They deal with the management of events, activities, tours, transports, commercial and destination sales and product proposals. These are the subjects of reference for external demand (trade, tourists, companies) and for internal ones (receptive and catering operators, guides, transport). DMCs also have the task of managing booking services and developing new services and technologies for the tourist's enjoyment of the territory. The Gran Sasso Park has adhered to the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, which is the subject of the Strategic Tourism Plan for Italy, the most important tourism valorisation instrument that the National Parks have undertaken successfully.

The quality of the transport infrastructure is quite good: the park is reached by motorway both from the north / south line (A14) and from the east / west line (A24). The airports are from Rome (Ciampino and



Fiumicino) and the small Pescara airport. Not usable is the railway network, as it is very obsolete. As an alternative to the railway, there is a quite efficient public and private bus transport (up to L'Aquila). However, internal areas are poorly connected and access routes to the park or the countryside can only be accessed through a private service (private car or minibus).



### 1.3 Spatial cohesion

A concise description of Gran Sasso would be most correct with a definition of it as an anthology of the Euro-Mediterranean landscape, since its boundaries embrace a concentration of natural environments that have no paragon in the rest of Europe, if we consider any other equally limited territory: there is a Mediterranean coast with the most varied habitat (sandy shores, dunes, marshes, pine groves, shoreline maquis, cliffs, stacks, low pebbly shores); a hill belt with every level of human settlement, precious wetlands (river and lake oases) and fascinating geological features; a vast mountain zone, often with intact nature, also with a wide variety of habitats (forests, prairies, mountain lakes, enormous karstic highlands, canyons, cascades, grottoes, peaks and highaltitude environments that are quite alpine in nature, glaciers). This astonishing array of unspoiled and often wild habitats are the home to rare and precious species that Gran Sasso is committed to protecting, so the area is an extraordinary biolaboratory for the preservation of nature and ecosystems, far ahead of the rest of the world in the courage and determination of its decisions. The area has, however, been a shrewd administrator of its environment, especially inland, protecting its heritage of towns and villages, farmlands, monuments, art and culture assets, traditions. The writer Ignazio Silone, one of the greatest interpreters of regional identity, said that “the Abruzzese have been embraced by a quite unique shared fate, typified by the tenacious devotion to their economic and social methods, even beyond any practical use, which would be inexplicable if it were not taken into account that the constant factor of their existence is precisely the most primitive and stable of elements: Nature.” A few striking words, closely-woven with concepts, that outline how this “ability to preserve” is deep-rooted in thousands of years of contact with a tough, challenging environment that can change swiftly from a mother

into a stepmother unless its inhabitants avoid overexploiting it. This is the real secret of this region. This extensive ability to protect natural and anthropical (in other words crafted by humans) landscapes and habitats, has given Gran Sasso territory an overall (including the cultural and environmental heritage that is safeguarded here) trait – quite evident to those who journey through it. We can say that it resembles a multisite museum, a “permanent open-air exhibition” of a wide range of themes: ecology, geology and geomorphology, history of human settlement of the territory, of ancient urban planning and spontaneous architecture, the history of farming and the countryside, the history of military and defensive architecture, religious architecture, monastic communities, sheep-rearing.



*A sight of Santo Stefano di Sessanio Village*

There are countless types of landmark or monument, be it a castle or an ancient village, an old centre or an outlying building, a church or a monastery, a hermitage or a shepherd settlement, an agrarian or pastoral landscape, a natural monument or a biotope, and they are not only varied but also well-preserved, and above all, still generally part of their original scenario, in other words, the context – also well-preserved – where they were created. This is a rare, quite unique trait, because it allows us to understand at a glance the underlying meaning behind the relationship that binds each landmark to its setting: a country church and a sheep track, a dominant castle and the territory that it watches over, a shepherd settlement and pastures, a watch tower and its pass, a feudal mansion and its village, farming settlements and their county, are just some examples, a puzzle of pieces integrated into the landscape in a very obvious and unexpected way.

The geomorphological structure determines a noteworthy climate-vegetational diversification. As a consequence, there is also a remarkable variety in the agricultural landscapes, bearing witness to the centuries-old traditions and to a sometimes difficult relationship between men and nature.

As much significant are also the high-altitude cultivations; the vegetable gardens along the Tirino river; the vineyards in the Ofena hollow, also known as "forno d'Abruzzo" (meaning "Abruzzi's oven") due to the particular hot-humid microclimate; the olive groves in the Pescara's side, that thanks to the altitude are naturally free from parasites; the almond groves in the southern side, that were once linked with the oil economy.



*A picturesque image of the vineyards on the slopes of Gran Sasso*

In the cultivated fields on terraced slopes, on the wide valleys, ancient cultivations have survived such as the lentils of Santo Stefano di Sessanio, the cicerchia of Castelvechio Calvisio, the Camarda cicerchiola, the black or red chickpeas of Navelli and the pastinaca of Capitigano, an ancient species of carrot, the mountain apples, the spelt

wheat. The Montepulciano d'Abruzzo wine varietal has appeared and has been differentiated around the sixteenth century at the foot of the Gran Sasso.

All the rural area and the valleys have a uniformity from a cultural point of view because they have been designed and shaped in the past by the ancient trails of transhumance: they almost slavishly follow the pre-existing Roman and medieval trail network. Sheep tracks were used to give the flocks the opportunity to move from the high-mountain pastures of Campo Imperatore towards Tavoliere delle Puglie during the cold winter months.



## PART II

### *C1 Proud local people*

The Gran Sasso is perceived by the local population as "our" mountain. The mountain itself is a source of cultural identity and reveals the sense of belonging to the territory; at the same time, it is an icon as the highest peak of the Apennine range. It is an obligatory passage between the Mediterranean and Europe since the dawn of time. The rocky and altering shape of the Abruzzese mountain has forged, to some extent, the characteristics and personality of the inhabitants themselves: just as we are faced with the grandeur and purity of the mountain, at the same time we discover the particular characteristics of the people of Abruzzo. Strength, dignity, courage, tenacity and generosity are the distinctive characteristics of a population that has had to forcibly tear away from the hostile nature (the difficult climatic conditions of mountain areas) the land and the spaces to survive. Thus the populations are proud of their mountain and partly represent their characteristics.

Chamois hunters and merchants were the first frequenters of the steep rocks of the "sleeping giant", hard to reach.

The Gran Sasso is a condensation of fascinating stories, spells and landscapes: it creates magical atmospheres for the myriad of Italian and foreign visitors!

For centuries mountaineers, hikers, mid-mountain guides, art narrators and scientists admirably describe unrepeatable emotions and sensations.

After all, the Gran Sasso d'Italia is a great, inestimable container of nature and culture that lets itself be discovered according to the infallible rules of natural elements. To be respected in all circumstances.

### *C2 Institutional recognition*

The territory of the Abruzzo region is strongly protected and bound through a complex and intricate system of national and regional protected areas (parks) both in mountainous and in the coastal areas. In addition there are a number of safeguards at Eu and national level.

The mountain range of Gran Sasso, along with the Gemelli Mountains, is the National Park of Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga. The Park area is vast and covers the territory of 3 Regions, 5 Provinces and 44 Municipalities, with about 150,000 hectares

Due to the geographical location of the Gran Sasso, it is considered a territory between the euro-Siberian and Mediterranean region, resulting in an extraordinary wealth of plants and animal species and a large variety of ecosystems. The area that we are considering is subjected to environmental protection by the Park. The areas of the Park are divided according to the classification of National Law 394/91.

- A AREA- integral reserve, where the natural environment is preserved in its integrity
- B AREA- a general- reserve, which is prohibited building new construction works, to make buildings renovations, to carry out land-use transformation. It is sometimes possible to use the existing production structures and the provision of strictly necessary infrastructures can be permitted. The Park carries out natural resource management interventions. It is possible to carry out a renovation of existing structures
- C AREA- Protected area where ecosystem integrity is preserved. In this area can continue farming activities, according to traditional uses and organic farming. The harvest of natural products is allowed and the production and safeguarding of quality craftsmanship is encouraged.
- D AREA - Economic and social promotion area where are promoted the processes of integration between nature and culture.
- D2 and D3 sub areas - which coincide with the areas of municipal regulations, in harmony with landscape plans.

The Park Plan incorporates local planning as regards the identification of historic centers, areas of economic expansion, production and service.

In addition to the environmental constraints of the Park, the Gran Sasso area is subject to the following safeguards:



- SIC
- Natural Reserves
- ZPS
- IBA

Within the boundaries of the Park are recognized 14 (SIC – Sites of Community Interest) as laid down in EU Directive no. 43 of 21 May 1992 (92/43 / EEC) on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora, also known as the Habitats Directive.

The Protected Area is also recognized as a Special Protection Zone (SPA), according to the Directive no. 409 of 2 April 1979 (79/409 / EEC) known as the Birds Directive.



*The Gran Sasso Laga Park logo with its with its symbols: the Appenine Chamois and the Warrior of Castrano, a tall limestone statue of a Picene warrior, dated to around the 6th century BC. It was discovered accidentally in 1934 in the Village of Castrano.*

### Other awards or certifications

The Ospitalità Italiana brand is a certification promoted by the Chambers of Commerce to evaluate the quality of accommodation and food services in Italy. The goal of certification is:

- Support and value Italian Restaurants in the World in promoting the Italian agri-food product and respecting the quality standards typical of Italian Hospitality.
- Create a network that allows events to be used to enhance the provenance of typical products.
- Use the network to ensure the authenticity of typical brands (PDO / IGP) through the realization of promotional events of Italian production excellence.

Currently, out of 52 certified companies, 21 are in the Gran Sasso area. (Source: isnart - National Institute, <http://www.10q.it/>).

The most beautiful villages in Italy - The Association of "The Most Beautiful Villages of Italy" has set itself around the goals of protecting, promoting and developing the recognized municipalities as the most beautiful villages in Italy. To be admitted to the Club of "The Most Beautiful Villages of Italy" and use the trademark, each municipality has to fulfill certain criteria - indicated as essential requirements in the "Quality Charter" and the "Regulations". Currently, in the Gran Sasso area, there are 5 small municipalities that have the certification: Santo Stefano di Sessanio, Castel del Monte, Navelli, Pietracamela, Castelli.



Map of "Tratturi" (itineraries of Transhumance) that from Abruzzo went to Puglia. The area beneath the Gran Sasso is affected by the Tratturo Magno route (highlighted in red colour) and Cinturelli Montesecco route (in blue colour)

UNESCO APPLICATION - From 1/06/2006 started the application of "The Transhumance: I tratturi" to UNESCO World Heritage, presented by the Ministry for the Environment with the regions of Abruzzo, Molise, Campania and Puglia. The paths of Transhumance are also recognized at national level by the Laws of the

Italian state as elements of cultural, historical, archeological value.

"The Paths of Forgiveness" collect the religious itineraries that start from L'Aquila to the area of the district and which trace the path of personality of absolute importance to Christianity, from Pope Celestino V to Pope John Paul II. It is a part of a big national project, promoted by Italian General directorate of Tourism that has recognized the various, religious and non-religious walks, in Italy and in the Abruzzo Region.

[<http://www.turismo.beniculturali.it/cammini/viaggio-nella-storia-dabruzzo>].



### C3 Reputation

The Gran Sasso has been known since the mid 1500's: with the first climb to the summit of the Corno Grande, Captain De Marchi opened the way to the knowledge of this mountain. Centuries later, at the end of the eighteenth century, on the wave of mountain tourism that originated in the Alps, also in Abruzzo thanks to the activities of the CAI in Rome, Gran Sasso knew an intense tourist activity both under the hiking and climbing profiles in the rock and ski resorts, attracting users of remarkable fame as, indeed, this was the only mountain station in the entire Apennines mountain range.

To measure the notoriety of Gran Sasso and its area, we report the data carried out in the Nature and Culture Report, 2016, Ministry of the Environment, where are highlighted the results of researches on web and social networks. Gran Sasso's reputation is very close to the average of the other national parks. In fact, by consulting the synthetic index of notoriety, the area scored a score of 22 points, one more than the national average. Going to compare the results obtained from the protected area with those of the individual municipalities, typical products of the territory and cultural heritage, some of the elements are going to be emphasized. For example, with regard to monthly searches done on Google, the Gran Sasso (with its 720 searches) is below the majority of indoor locations (L'Aquila, Santo Stefano di Sessanio, ...).

Among the most popular food products are saffron and ratafia (a local cherry liqueur), while Rocca Calascio is one of the best-known cultural assets in the park area. Also the number of Trip Advisor reviews is quite low and often the main topic concerns the city of L'Aquila.

Gran Sasso's numbers on YouTube are definitely more encouraging. In fact, the videos are over 27,600 (the average of the National Parks is about 19,000), second only to L'Aquila (the tourist component is, however, residual compared to that related to the tragic and media-relevant seismic events of 2009) and saffron, the main ingredient of many video-recipes on this platform.



*A beautiful sight of Campo Imperatore Plateau*

#### **C4 Legends and myths**

In this section we give some insights about some legends related to the territory, from the Maya myth to other local legends. Other details are given as to the presence, in ancient times, of hermits and saints who populated the territories around the Gran Sasso. In the whole Abruzzo, given its particular physical conformation and its isolated position, there is a widespread presence of hermitages and how these are an integral part of the culture of local populations as well as cultural and spiritual heritage globally. A specificity that makes these places an indispensable stage both cultural and religious and naturalistic.

**The origin of the name** - By the two higher massifs, Gran Sasso and Majella, a touching legend was born. It tells the sad story of Maja, the most beautiful goddess of Pleiadi, and of hers only son, so high to be called "The Giant". Seriously injured in battle, the Giant was in the end of life. Maja, desperate, asked for help to an oracle that talked about a miracolouse herb growing only on a very high mountain beyond the sea. The brave Maja faced the long sea vojage with her son landing in the port of the ancient town of Ortona. Finally they arrived there taking refuge in a cave on the mountain, but the giant exhausted from the long journey died in the arms of his mother. Desperate Maja buried her son on the Gran Sasso and, ever since, her profile took the shape of a "sleeping giant". Maja went crazy with pain and began to wander down to the mountain in front, from where she could see the place where her son was buried and she settled there. At his death the locals called that place, in her honor, Majella. All the mountainous mountain range magically took the form of a bent woman who watched her lying son. Even today, the sound of the wind on the Majella takes Maja's desperate lament.

**Castel Del Monte: The Witches** - Until the first half of the last century, the belief in witches was alive in the country: a mixture of beliefs, superstition and religiousness typical of the peasant world. In particular, it was thought that when a child



*Castel Del Monte*



was ill (with the poor medical knowledge of time) and could not heal it, the blame was witches who were "sucking blood on the baby." In order to free him from the evil, the mother, the baptismal comrade, and other neighborhood women made nine (or seven) nights of vigil, past those who took the sick and went in procession on the streets of the country. The women had to cross silently seven strokes in the same night to get to a cross where the "possessed" cloths were beaten with a stick and burned to drive the witch out of the baby's body. Some random healing reinforced the belief.

**San Franco of Assergi** – He was the son of rich breeders of Roio and, after primary studies, he entered the Benedictine monastery of San Giovanni in Collimonto and stayed there for twenty years, then left the monastery and retired to a lonely place. He first lived in the forests of Lucoli, then in the mountains of Abruzzo and on the Gran Sasso mountain range and then moved to the mountains around Assergi. According to popular legends, many miracles were carried out by the saint: resuscitated rams, wolves wounded, and the ability to sprinkle water from the rock. He saved a baby from the mouth of a wolf who had kidnapped him and convinced him to return it to his mother. In fact, San Franco is often represented with a wolf close by that holds a child between the jaws.

**The legend of the Shrine of Madonna d'Appari di Paganica** - It is said that the Madonna Addolorata, with the dead Christ in her lap, appeared to shepherd Maddalena Chiaravalle, while she led the herd in the pasture along the banks of the river Rajale. The Virgin asked the young shepherd that a shrine would be erected in his name. In a short time, the village population first built a votive branch dedicated to the Madonna, and then a little temple built on the rocky massif. Between the 14th and 15th centuries the façade was built and, later, the structure was expanded with the opening of the openings towards the Raiale stream (1519).



*The castle of Rocca Calascio*

**Calascio: The Legend of Re Marrone** - In a time far away, populated by castles and knights, Re Marrone was Lord of Rocca Calascio, while the neighboring lands of St. Mark's belonged to the King of the Crowns. For border issues between their properties, the relationship between the two worsened up to declare war, which took place without major battles, but experienced so many small episodes of violence. A war without victorious or defeated but which nevertheless caused hunger, hardship, destruction of crops and theft of livestock. The only clash was the one on the Battle Hill that forced Re Marrone to repair within the walls of Rocca Calascio, chased by King of the Crown soldiers. Then began a grueling siege for ten long years. The food reserves progressively exhausted and when the Russians believed the yield was now inevitable, the oldest farmer suggested to Re Marrone a stratagem. It was gathered milk from all sheep, goats, cows, donkeys, and horses of the country, including that of the women who gave birth, and it was made with the milk a huge form of "cacio". This was dropped from the walls to be delivered to the King of the Crowns with the clear message that the besieged had plenty of food and could still withstand a long time. Far more convenient for both factions



in the fight would be to end an unnecessary war and ultimately end peace. So it happened and people finally found serenity and prosperity.

**Gran Sasso Raid** - At Campo Imperatore we find a hotel built in the 1930s, in a rational style, on the design of the Italian engineer Vittorio Bonadè Bottino, author in the same years of hotel structures in Sestriere and the hotel Principi di Piemonte in Turin. The hotel, however, became particularly famous in 1943, since, following the fall of Fascism and the subsequent arrest of Mussolini, it was chosen as a prison for the former head of the government waiting to deliver it to allied forces. Mussolini was taken to Campo Imperatore on August 28 after having been held prisoner in the island of Ponza and Maddalena, unlike which Gran Sasso appeared a safer and inaccessible place, so that the duce, feeling ending, tried to kill cutting the veins. On September 12th, however, with a surprise action that took the name of Gran Sasso Raid (Operazione Quercia, in Italian), some gliders with a hundred German paratroopers managed to land on the plaza in front of the hotel and release the prisoner between the amazement and disorientation of the Italian soldiers who did not hinder the operation in any way.

### C5 Power of inspiration

Music - The majesty, the harshness and the charm of the Gran Sasso inspired hundreds of popular songs of the Abruzzo tradition: "The echo of the mountains of Abruzzo"; "From Gran Sasso to Majella"; "Ju abbruzzu, la partenza dei pastori (Abruzzo, the departure of shepherds)

*"Gran, Gran Sasso, che parli con le stelle, le lacrime che asciughi son sempre quelle, Grande Sasso, conserva il tuo mistero e ogni sogno fatto, lo vivrò davvero»*

"Great, Gran Sasso, talking with the stars the tears that are drying are always those, Gran Sasso, keep your mystery and every dream I mad, will really live" it is the lyrics of a song by a popular Italian singer, Ivan Graziani (1945 - 1997), who has dedicated many songs to the Gran Sasso.

Poetry: Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863 - 1938), famous Italian poet of Abruzzo origin, devotes a famous poem to the shepherds of Abruzzo and Transumanza.



A sight of Campotosto Lake

Lesser-known poet, Francesco Giuliani (1890 - 1970), who is born, and spends much of his life, at Castel del Monte (Aquila). He belongs to the ranks of poetry pastors, and dedicates most of his poetic work to the mountain, to the shepherds' life, and to the Gran Sasso.

Films - Many films have been filmed in the area of Gran Sasso since the 1960s by Italian and international authors.

The whole valley under Gran Sasso has often been an exceptional scenario for films and advertising, including: Serafino (1968); They called it Trinity (1970) and "... continued to call it Trinity" with Bud Spencer and Terence Hill (1971), "The Desert of Tartar

People" with Vittorio Gassman and Philippe Noiret (1976), "A Pure Formality" by Giuseppe Tornatore; "That's Life" with Aldo, Giovanni and Giacomo (1998), Another film is the Event Horizon of Daniele Vicari, selected for the Cannes Film Festival in 2005, and the documentary Men and Wolves, turned right on the Gran Sasso mountain and the shepherds' world, but even with the most recent trip to Italy, Venice film Festival 2006 documentary film about the changes in the world since the war worker.; "Diary of a Mountain Guardian" (2009), "Italian Homicide" (2017); commercials with exceptional testimonials (including

Leonardo DiCaprio) and also some Elisa video clips. "Still feel (a sense of you) and Simona Molinari (In the air).

Nearby, and in particular at Rocca Calascio and Castel del Monte were made films internationally renowned, "Krull" by Peter Yates 1983; "King David" (1985) by Bruce Beresford with Richard Gere, Edward Woodward; "Ladyhawke" (1985) with Matthew Broderick, Rutger Hauer and Michelle Pfeiffer, "The name of the rose" with Sean Connery (1986); "The Barbarians" is a 1987 American-Italian sword and sorcery film directed by Ruggero Deodato; "The American" with George Clooney (2010) and some footage from "One Step From Heaven" (2016).

Painting - Teofilo Patini (1840-1906) is a painter of Abruzzo origin, very well-known and listed among the first painters to dedicate themselves to the so-called social painting of the Italian nineteenth century. Among his works there are many paintings depicting life scenes of shepherds devoted to transhumance which, due to economic changes, underwent a significant reduction in those years, casting into despair and poverty those who had until then had a dignified life.

It is also worth mentioning a huge bibliography of ascents and climbs on the Gran Sasso d'Italia from the work of De Marchi (the first ascension of the Great Horn in 1573) to our day.

Photography - Vincenzo Mazza, landscape photographer and trainer in photography and digital video works at various educational institutes in Rome, won the Assergi and Gran Sasso (2010) award, in the Assergi and Gran Sasso Aquilano category.

Mauro Tronto, photographer, winner of the International Garden Photographer of the Year (IGPOTY) award in England, with a picture of Lake Campotosto (Gran Sasso). LandscapesD'Abruzzo is a photo community, born on Facebook in 2008, with the aim of promoting Abruzzo's landscape beauty. It tells stories about Abruzzo on Social Media, through the eyes of thousands of local and visiting photo-lovers, sharing their shots: the most photographed landscapes are those of Gran Sasso and Campo Imperatore.

### C6 Picturesque landscape

*A "deafening" silence surrounded by majestic mountains and pristine meadows where man can rediscover the fascination of adventure to touch a summit. Gran Sasso is a place of rare and unspoiled beauty. An unforgettable journey along gravelly and sloping paths that everyone can modulate on their own energies, choosing the difficulties and distances that suit their own little personal challenge.*

*The sensation is exactly this: when the clouds are lowered, making invisible the high peaks of the massif, it can happen that you come across steps that are dug in the stone leading straight into a cloud where the next step is inscrutable and you have the feeling to access the gates of paradise.*

Just look at the mountains to capture the richness of landscapes. In no area of Italy and perhaps of the world, so many ancient and diverse landscapes can be observed in such a narrow space that they sink their roots in the Italic period. The southern sector of the Gran Sasso is a monument to the history of Mediterranean agriculture and pastoral care: open fields, saffron, almond trees, olive groves and vineyards, terraces, high altitude pastures, defenses, arborated arable land, alternate and overlap as a unique and unrepeatable landscaping mosaic. The Massif of Gran Sasso d'Italia overlooks the surrounding landscape and stands out on the emerald and enchanting pastures of Campo Imperatore and Voltigno. The light is reflected in the innumerable streams



*A sight of Corno Grande peak from Pietranzoni Lake*



and torrents flowing through the rock to fall into the valleys with resounding waterfalls, which in the winter are frozen and form magical and ancestral figures. The traditional agriculture has favored the formation and preservation of agrarian landscapes of great and extraordinary cultural and environmental value. The southern slope of Gran Sasso d'Italia is a unique value element in the Italian and European contexts for the diversity, complexity and harmony of rural landscapes, which are extraordinarily diversified and integrated into a limited territorial context.

The historical evolution of the mountain identifies itself with the history of transhumance, an ancient phenomenon of seasonal migration of men and flock, which has assumed dimensions and extensions perhaps unique in the history of humanity, through which, since the primordial times, exploiting the great Abruzzo highlands (and among these predominant Campo Imperatore and Campo Pericoli) as summer pastures and Tavoliere delle Puglie as winter pasture. The transhumance has a history dating back certainly before the third century BC. C. In addition to the number of archaeological sites scattered along the path of the great tratturi (remember Peltuinum along the Tratturo Magno), there are numerous citations of such use in the Latin texts. In confirmation of the deep pastoral roots of L'Aquila and its neighboring areas, the right to civic use is still prevailing on the mountain pastures. Even transhumance walk along the Tratturo Magno continued until the '50s; soon after he began a short period of use of wagons for the movement of livestock from Peoples to Poggio Imperiale and other Apulian ports. In this natural and economic-social context, through a process of contamination and sedimentation, a civilization has emerged from the deeply different origin and culture.

A true epic that has reached the most powerful and complex expressions, a millennial activity that has conditioned the territory, designed communication routes, formed generations of men, enriched the mountains of prestigious buildings and valuable works of art. Close to the summer pastures and along the cliffs, the ancient streets of transhumance, there are large and prestigious abbeys, precious medieval and Renaissance churches, which together with the magnificent villages, castles, towers and archaeological areas are representative of a part conspicuous in the history of Italy and constitute a unique and inimitable historical-artistic heritage.



*Sheperd at Campo Imperatore*



*Edelweis of Gran Sasso*

### **C7 Particular ecosystems**

The area includes two different biogeographical regions: the Euro-Siberian and the Mediterranean. This particular location, together with the lithological diversity of the mountain and the high altitude, makes this protected area a territory having a high biological value. In fact, about 2,300 superior plant species, that is more than one third of Italy's floristic heritage, live in that area. As far as the animal species are concerned, amphibians represent an emblematic case: fourteen amphibian species are actually

present, among which four species of newt have been also counted, which is a unique case in Italy. Furthermore, the mountains function as a real biogeographical border between the North and the South of the Country: some Mediterranean species reach the northern limit of distribution, while others, especially plants and animals of arctic-alpine origin, reach the southern limit. The most typical environments consists of high altitudes, where most of the endemic plant and animal species can be found. Furthermore, the so called "glacial relicts" can be found in the highest altitudes, and they are represented by plants, insects and vertebrates as well, such as the meadow viper, the European snow vole, the common frog and the alpine newt. On the high-altitude areas there are well-adapted bird species, such as the Alpine chough and the red-billed chough, the Alpine accentor, the wallcreeper, the white-winged snowfinch, the water pipit, the rock partridge, with the peninsular populations being more sizable.

The noteworthy biological diversity can be also observed in the forests covering about half of the territory with several forest typologies, such as holm oaks, oaks, turkey oaks, manna ashes and hop hornbeams, aspens, chestnut trees and beech trees.

Vast are also the grazing areas, both the primary and the secondary ones: on the Gran Sasso southern side the herbaceous formations turn into real steppes, also due to the particular microclimate conditions. These formations are characterized by a marked eastern element both in the animal and plant community, among which also some endemic species have been observed. In these environments gather many bird species that are diminishing in their European areas, such as the European nightjar, the greater short-toed lark, the ortolan, the crested lark.

We cannot forget the large animals living in the area, especially those being of great natural interest. One of them is the Apennine chamois, which was reintroduced in 1992 and is present today with more than one hundred specimens on the Gran Sasso mountains; the Apennine wolf, with more than thirty specimens, that has come back to prey on deers and roe deers, whose populations are increasingly growing. Recently, also the Marsican brown bear has been seen again, which shows the strong commitment of the Park Authority in the safeguard and enhancement of an extraordinary and unique territory. The extension of the area inside the Park, the variety of its ecosystems, the wide woody surfaces and the proximity with other protected areas make the Gran Sasso area the ideal territory for the conservation of the large animals including species of remarkable natural value. The deer is the subject of a reintroduction program to improve the functionality of the forest ecosystems of the Park, where also the Marsican brown bear appears sometimes.

In this area there are many typical characters of the alpine mountains, such as pointed peaks, valleys, moraines, cirques and valleys shaped by quaternary glaciation. The north-eastern side has steep rock walls, all spikes, pinnacles and deep grooves; the southern slope, close to the limestone massif, is made up of Karst plateaus. Descending south, from Campo Imperatore to Paganica, intense karst erosion has given rise to many caves of different extension and depth (Male and Gold Caves). Other caves are also found on the northern slope, in the vicinity of Rigopiano (Eremita Cave and Wolf Cave) and abysses such as the Pozzo Bandito, Pozzo Elisa, and Pozzo dell'Inferno. On some level you can



*Apennine chamois*



admire the Karst ponds such as Barisciano, Passaneta, Racollo, San Pietro, Filetto, Assergi, Sinizzo and Lago Sfondò. Gran Sasso also offers a wide variety of lakes:

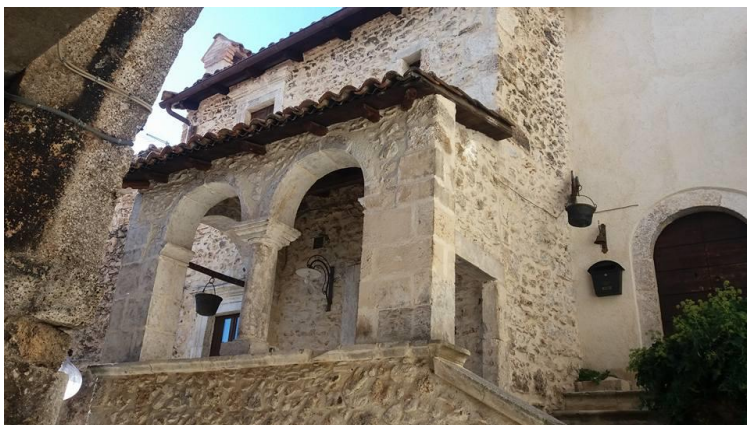
- Campotosto Lake (the largest artificial lake in Abruzzo)
- Capo d'Acqua Lake
- Pietranzoni Lake
- Calascio Lake

There is also a considerable presence of water that, through the limestones of the Karst floors, descend to the valley, creating many rivers and fountainheads. Among these are the sources of the Vitello d'Oro, the Rio Arno, the Acqua Fredda, the Brigante, Angri, the Acqua Santa and the Fonte Vetica- The major rivers of the area are: the Fino, the Tavo, rising from the Vallone d'Angora, on the east side, and the Tirino on the western side.

### **C8 Mediterranean cultural identity**

Gran Sasso area has countless villages: tiny settlements of brick and stone houses that huddle together, with miniscule humpback lanes, solid wood doors whose lintels are carved with family bearings and often very ancient dates, steps worn down by centuries of homecomings, with archways and vaulted passages, ceilings blackened by smoke. Villages resembling little families of houses where relatives lived for centuries, and friends stayed friends from one generation to the next; where each family had a witty, often wicked, sobriquet, passed down to descendents over so many years that no one could remember why grandfather's grandfather earned it in the first place. Almost all of Abruzzo's inland settlements, crouching closed on their peaks, were built at least as early as the Middle Ages, but many of them are even older and date back to the Italic- Roman period. So the Abruzzo we know today was "moulded" in the Middle Ages: in fact, over the many centuries of the medieval period, the region acquired the unique, striking appearance that it has somehow preserved unaltered to the present day, and which makes its landscape so special, as if suspended in time. Abruzzo's ancient mountain and inland villages were built in hard stone and mortar, without any visible wood, expressing the bond with stone that was so typical of Mediterranean

construction culture. The result is often stunning: a perfect fusion of bare mountain stones and the towns that emerged amongst them, camouflaged perfectly, the physical expression of the union between nature and humankind.



*Detail of a house in the hamlet of Castel del Monte*

The exposed stone houses, seemingly interlocked to create a great, compact wall of protection, creates this look of a fortified settlement, telling us of the urgent, endless need for defence, so typical of Abruzzo's long Middle Ages that for specific historical reasons linked to the area, continued almost to the end of the eighteenth century. These houses,

also called case-mura (houses that form a wall), are easily recognizable as they have very few external windows, and those they do have are found on the higher floors. The urban plan is similar in all these settlements: at the top we usually find the castle, then lower down, a square with the main parish church. From this pinnacle, terraces of houses huddling together as if for protection, sharing side walls, wind down towards the valley. The settlement, with its groups of houses and narrow lanes, would become one with the castle in times of enemy attack. If stone is the main construction material used in the inland areas, as

we travel out towards the coast and discover the beautiful, farmed hillsides rolling down to the sea, we pass through villages where the stone slowly makes way for brick. The hillside villages, including those looking out to sea, have medieval origins and may even date back to the Italic-Roman period, although their evolution has been more distinctive than that of the inland settlements. Here the sea has fostered the development of trade and the Renaissance also left its mark, influencing above all architecture and town planning, but always in harmony with the traditional spirit of these places. Walls and gateways protect quaint villages, characterized by the warm colour of their ancient brickwork. Countless handsome aristocratic mansions, churches and private houses stand side by side, leading to squares, which may be large and noisy, or tiny and snug, built around a water fountain.

Today, a visit to these ancient villages is a journey to a world suspended in time, for they are places where the passing hours are cadenced by the ticking of the belfry clock. Here, to find something or someone, you just ask the first person you meet in the street or knock on any door, which will always have the key left out in the lock. Here, everyone is on first name terms and the down-to-earth attitude of the locals will allow you to mix freely and informally with them all. Here, the pace of life will let you rediscover forgotten pleasures, and local cuisine and delicacies are a memorable surprise. This is a compact world, where the leisurely, time-honoured way of life is always warm and welcoming, even on a freezing winter's night redolent with aromas of logs burning in the hearth, and where human warmth, so scant elsewhere, still reigns supreme. A visit to an Abruzzo town or village is a really meaningful experience: it will offer you a different perspective of life and the chance to leave behind the pace of the city, to empower yourself of your time once more. Here, you will rediscover the forgotten feeling of a walk along the lanes, steeped in the scent of smouldering wood, sauce simmering on the stove, freshly-baked bread, flower-laden balconies. Here, you can stop and chat with strangers and be invited in for coffee and homemade cake, or even to stay for lunch. Here, you can sit on a wall in the square and bask in spring sun, chatting with the old folk who will tell you all the latest gossip. Here, you will soon feel like one of the locals. Then there is the food: traditional dishes made with local produce, which people are used to eating every day. Here, you can meet the craftsmen in their tiny workshops, selling the objects they make using ancient local methods and techniques passed down from generation to generation.



*In the picture, an example of hand-made Pasta ingredients, which can be found in restaurants and in private homes.*



*The great variety of dairy products that can be found in small shops*



### C9 Sustainability and anthropogenic environment

The first vulnerability of the area is related to its position as it rests on a micro-tectonic plaque called "Adriatic" that coincides with the West with the Apennine ridge, moves north to the eastern Alps and then goes back to the south along the Balkans and West Greece. This kind of "headland", part of the African plaque, drives against the European plaque and friction generates that kind of earthquake.

Two strong earthquakes have provoked hundreds of casualties, one in 2009 in L'Aquila and the other in 2016 at Amatrice, both in the Apennine area at the foot of the Gran Sasso. Another element of vulnerability is given by climate change, which on the one hand determines the melting of the Calderone glacier and an ever-increasing snowfall in the winter months, on the other a change in ecosystems, as some plant species are disappearing.

Other vulnerabilities can be attributed to human intervention, as often because of the high heat, there are periods of drought which causes the risk of mountain fires on the one hand (only summer 2017 occurred two in the Campo Imperatore area and very serious) and damage to the agriculture and fauna in the area.



*There are some great mountain bike trails from which you can see in the distance the peak of the Corno Piccolo*

As far as the infrastructure is concerned, the area is crossed by the Gran Sasso tunnel and the highway that connects it to Rome (west direction) and to the sea (east direction). The rest of the road system is quite old, with small local and provincial mountain roads. Regarding the great tourist infrastructure, there are only ski resorts in Campo Imperatore (the Gran Sasso cable car) and the ski resorts of Prati di Tivo. The territory is all subject to environmental constraints and it is not allowed to carry out large or small infrastructural works unless

approved by the park. However, at present, no infrastructure work is planned, but only existing maintenance work.

In the high areas of the Gran Sasso, where there is a strong zootechnical vocation, the situation is as follows:

- (a) there are no adequate infrastructures;
- (b) the few existing infrastructures are not restructured and usable, for example for sporting and / or naturalistic tourism;
- (c) there is no evidence of the quality of livestock;
- d) operators are not able to network.



*The entrance to the tunnel excavated under the Gran Sasso, on the north side of the Teramo / L'Aquila motorway. A little curiosity: the National Institute of Nuclear Physics, an international research center, has its labs under the Gran Sasso Mountain and the entrance is from the tunnel*

Nature, ecosystem and environmental conservation are very variable and fragile elements: climatic variations and human intervention are constant threats to the conservation of natural environments.

In our area we still have a substantial lack of infrastructure and services, poor coordination that strongly penalizes the territory. The Park itself, as a body of protection, often imposes rigid constraints that prevent the survival of traditional activities (sheep-farming, dairy production, agriculture) and often does not fulfill the function of controlling and managing the natural heritage, causing disinterest, conflicts and dissatisfaction of the inhabitants. In order to avoid catastrophic events (in the summer a major fire has devastated some wooded areas), the park should also play a more active role of surveillance and control. The accesses to the summit are 5.

### C10 Historic places

Inhabited since millennia, the territory around Gran Sasso preserves traces and evidences of great historical-cultural value. A very rich and varied heritage going from the Neolithic Age to the Italic and Roman period, from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, integrating finds, archaeological sites, castles, fortified villages, churches, abbeys, hermitages and mills. Our exploration starts from L'Aquila, a cultural center and main road for the ancient economic life, and continues in an ideal path, touching the archaeological sites of the area and ancient sites worthy of being mentioned. The starting point of the trip to discover the historical sites is the city of L'Aquila: the road grid is the same that was drawn at the time of the Foundation in the Middle Ages. The whole city has many interesting aspects: the great basilicas, churches, palaces, fortifications, squares, fountains, museums, libraries, archives, concert halls, theaters, ancient neighborhoods, 'great culinary tradition. More than 1,300 buildings, subject to cultural heritage constraints, constitute the enormous richness of the city, with buildings that interweave the Middle Ages, Renaissance, Baroque, Neoclassical and Novecento. Among them, the medieval complexes of the Novantanove Cannelle Fountain and the Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio, the sixteenth-century Spanish Fort, home of the National Museum of Abruzzo, and the Renaissance and Baroque Basilica of San Bernardino da Siena, are well-known.

S. Maria di Collemaggio (built on 1288) is a large medieval church in L'Aquila, central Italy. It was the site of the original Papal Jubilee, a penitential observation devised by Pope Celestine V, who is buried there. The church, which therefore ranks as a basilica because of its importance in religious history, sits in isolation at the end of a long rectangular sward of grass at the southwest edge of the town. The church is a masterpiece of Abruzzese Romanesque and Gothic architecture and one of the chief sights of L'Aquila.



*Santa Maria di Collemaggio, in L'Aquila*

Beside the church is the sixteenth century cloister with its ancient well and the fifteenth century refectory. In the Basilica each years is celebrated, on August 29, the so-called "Forgiveness", an extraordinary indulgence. A parade, starting from the town hall leads in front of the Holy Door, where the Mayor delivers the Bull of institution to the Bishop.



It is situated on a hill from where the Great Tratturo that led from L'Aquila to Foggia left. The Collemaggio Basilica is linked to the Transumanza: at one time the flocks were grouped near the Church to start the path of the Tratturo Magno, from L'Aquila to Foggia. In recent years, a group of experts and historians have relaunched the idea of the retrieval of Tratturi.

Along the path that we have traced, we find some archaeological sites: the Necropolis of Fossa, Amiternum, Peltuinum which we will briefly illustrate. The vast necropolis of Fossa has been the subject of numerous excavations that have so far brought to light about 500 graves explored in an area of over 2000 square m. The different types of graves, and equipments document the characteristics of the different phases of use of the necropolis. In the first phase (VIII-IX sec.aC) identified in the early Iron Age, the type of graves are characterized by a strong monumentality: huge graves are installed in the area, bounded by circles of stones, of variable-size between eight and fifty feet in diameter, intended for adults. With the late Hellenistic period (II-I century BC.) A return to well-represented monumental forms is documented, chamber tombs made of stone and subterranean, for the deposition of more individuals. Among the objects found in burial tombs there are death beds made of wood and leather items decorated by foil bone finely worked.

The archaeological site of the Roman city of Amiternum is divided into two areas related to the theater and the amphitheater divided by the river Aterno. The area occupied by the city is bordered to the north and south by the areas destined to the necropolis of which there are remains of the funerary monuments of great wealth. In the early imperial age the construction of the theatre brought to the functional adjustment of the settlement. In the second half of the century, the amphitheater was built which preserves the entire ellipse. The brickwork is related to the construction phase, while striking operations of restoration and consolidation of the structures are dated to the second and fourth centuries.

On the outskirts of Prata Ansidonia stands the ancient city of Peltuinum built by the Vestini. You can see the walls and part of the western gate and the theater that is strangely located outside the walls. You can also see what the town square was with the basis of a temple which was probably dedicated to Apollo. The city of Peltuinum was crossed by the Claudia Nova Road, which corresponds to the cattle track. We preserve the remains of long stretches of walls and also part of Of the public buildings certificated by the sources, live preserve only the theatre of the Augustian age, which, unusually, is outside the walls. The auditorium cave a as in Amiternum, is obtained in part by exploiting the natural slope and has a diameter of 58m.



*Detail of the San Pellegrino Oratory*

During our trip, we encounter a jewel of Romanesque architecture and one of the few places with painted walls of the 13th century, the Church of Santa Maria Assunta and San Pellegrino, in the village of Bominaco.

The church of Santa Maria Assunta dates from the early twelfth century. The plant has three naves with round arches on columns with three apses. The simple and austere façade has a single portal surmounted by a later window with a round arch. Inside there are masterpieces such as the pulpit dated 1180 and the pulpit

dated 1184. The oratory of San Pellegrino was founded by Charlemagne, and rebuilt in its present form in 1263, clearly influenced by the Cistercians is a single room with a rib vault divided into the liturgical use of the Calendar.

**Our territory is also rich of castles and fortresses, that are about 38 only in the selected area, but we want to talk about the most famous and emblematic settlements:** Rocca Calascio Castle, Piccolomini Castle in Capestrano and the Spanish Fortress in L'Aquila.

**Rocca Calascio Castle** is a square fort with circular sloping corner towers and a male shoe center square. It is situated about 1500 meters above the sea level and it is one of the highest fortifications in Italy. The key strategic role exercised by the central square tower, once isolated, was enhanced around the second half of the fifteenth century, when the fort, after being united for a long time to the ancient Barony of Carapelle, afterwards passed under the dominion of the Piccolomini, which strengthened the protection, transforming the current mighty fortress. According to National Geographic Magazine, it is one of the 15 most beautiful castle in the world.

**Piccolomini Castle (Capestrano)** was built replacing a Medieval fort, of which remains the central tower. Several families, like Acquaviva, Piccolomini, and Medici, modified the building up to the current structure, completed in 1485. Now the castle is used as city hall and it was deeply restructured in 1924. Capestrano Village is also famous for the Warrior of Capestrano, a tall limestone statue of a Picene warrior, dated to around the 6th century BC. The statue stands at around 2.09 m. It was discovered accidentally in 1934 by a labourer ploughing the field, along with a female statue in civilian attire, called Lady of Capestrano.

In the 15th century, L'Aquila had become the second most powerful city in the Kingdom of Naples after Naples itself: there were half a million sheep, wool and saffron were exported throughout Europe; all this was lost when the Aquilans, during the war between the French and the Spaniards for the throne of Naples, sided with the French. In 1504 Aquila was occupied by the Spanish conquerors, though in 1527 the French recovered the city with the support of the citizens and the surrounding town. One year later Viceroy Philibert of Orange, ruling for King Charles V of Spain, finally defeated the Aquilan rebels and ordered the city to build a fortress, the so-called **Spanish Fortress**, in the highest spot North of the city. In the following 30 years the heavy taxes necessary to build the fortress impoverished the city, which in 1567 begged the Spaniards to stop the construction; the Royal Court granted the request, and works were interrupted, so parts of the castle were never completed. The fortress had cost an enormous sum for the times, and Aquila was obliged also to sell the thick silver case containing the body of St. Bernardino of Siena. The fortress, which had been built not to defend the city, but to control it (its cannons pointed to the city) and to be a completely self-sufficient structure, was never used in a battle.



*The Capestrano Warrior*

A symbol of Abruzzi and its identity - Capestrano Warrior was accidentally discovered in summer 1934 during the works in a vineyard, downstream the town it has been named after. The statue was sculpted by Aninis. The character it represents, Naevius Pompuledius, is a man armed with sword, knife, a couple of spears and disc-armor, probably dating back to the 4th-5th century BC.

The inscription on the pillar tells us that Naevius Pompuledius was one of the last kings of the people of Abruzzi. The sculpture has been obtained from one only block of calcareous stone and is 209cm high, except the base. The head covering, very wide, is an hemisphere-shaped crown fixed in the middle. The face features are stylized for someone, while for others are a protective or funerary mask. Near the heart, a couple of discs, the so-called Kardiophilakes,

protect chest and back. The waist is wrapped up with a large belt divided into five strips. The military equipment consists of: a long sword with handle decorated with a double line of human figures, cross hilt, and a scabbard with the representation of a couple of quadrupeds; a knife overlapping the sword; an axe whose very long handle recalls a scepter. The shinbones were probably protected by greaves, and the feet by shoes and straps under the malleoli. The inscription is written vertically on one line, to read from the bottom to the top, with a Sabellic language similar to the one of the stele in Penna S. Andrea and very similar to the Osco-Umbrian language.

### *Synthesis of the extraordinary-emblematic characteristics of the mountain*

Taking into account all of the above considerations, we can briefly state that the Gran Sasso satisfies all 10 emblematic criteria, as follows.

C1- Proud local people - Strength, dignity, courage, tenacity and generosity

C2- Institutional recognition – The area is completely protected under national Law (park) and it is full of SIC (Communitarian Interest Sites) and Natura 2000 sites. There is an application for the Paths of Transhumance to Unesco Committee

C3 – Reputation - Gran Sasso is largely tied to the niche tourism of climbing, both in skiing and climbing, on the peaks. Only in recent years is the knowledge of both the national and international knowledge of the Gran Sasso as a protected area.

C4 - Legends and myths - Myth and legend tangle up with the history of the origins of the Gran Sasso, starting with the name (Maja's legend), continuing with the many legends related to saints, hermits and monasteries. Popular religion, linked to festivals and traditions still evident today and practiced by local people, comes from ancient legends and myths that gained strength from some sites such as the hermitage of St. Franco, linked to the archaic cult of the taking of waters and lavavers, and toponyms in which the overlapping of pagan cults and legendary characters to Christianity can be recognized.

C5 – Power of inspiration - The majesty, the harshness and the charm of the Gran Sasso inspired hundreds of popular songs of the Abruzzo tradition

C6- Picturesque landscape - Gran Sasso is a land to discover, which makes its landscape a great asset. It is no coincidence that the coat of arms of the Region is a Italic shield divided into three transverse bands: white, like the peaks of the snow-capped mountains; green; like the gentle inland hills and blue, like the sea. There are infinite glimpses and lights and ancient settlements in the uncontaminated territory that make the landscape extremely rich and picturesque

C7 – Particular ecosystem - Its particular location, together with the lithological diversity of the mountain and the high altitude, makes this protected area a territory having a high biological value. In fact, about 2,300 superior plant species, that is more than one third of Italy's floristic heritage, live in the Park. As far as the animal species are concerned, amphibians represent an emblematic case: fourteen amphibian species are actually present, among which four species of newt have been also counted, which is a unique case in Italy.

C8 – Mediterranean cultural identity – There is a "civilization of transhumance" still recognizable in its essential elements on the ground and archive documentation. It has left us a legacy of a dairy-related tradition. There is also a wide range of typical agricultural products that are strongly linked to the culinary tradition of the places.



C9 - Sustainability and antropogenic environment - The Gran Sasso, fully protected area, can be considered a sustainability laboratory, as its current state is geared towards development which retains the activities, without altering the natural environment, social, artistic and does not restrain the development of other social and economic activities present on the territory. Thanks to the strong environmental and cultural constraints (superintendence of cultural heritage), the territory has preserved its integrity and there are very few works that have impacted the environment.

C10 – Historic places - From fortified valley settlements, all the castles surrounding L'Aquila, which find the highest expression in the Spanish castle, are the memory of a past in which it was necessary to have a thorough check on the entire territory stretching from the coast Adriatic to the first slopes of the Gran Sasso massif. The same conformation of the fortifications represents a power image capable of discouraging devastation by small corps of brigands and reassuring local populations. The castle of Roccalascio represents an iconic iconic that adequately characterizes the whole landscape. Finally, archaeological sites, abbeys and hundreds of ancient churches. This is the Gran Sasso.

#### **The emblematic characteristics of the mountain are:**

- ✓ the uniqueness of the ecosystem and the presence of protected animal and plant species “C7 Particular ecosystems”
- ✓ a fascinating mountain of the Country, unique picturesque co-existence between mountainous and sea landscape. “C6 Picturesque landscape”
- ✓ territory entirely belonging to the park and thus protected “C2 Institutional recognition”
- ✓ countless types of landmark or monument, be it a castle or an ancient village, an old centre or an outlying building, a church or a monastery, a hermitage or a shepherd settlement, an agrarian or pastoral landscape, many traditional villages “C10 Historic places”
- ✓ branding in food culture (typical products), slow tourism, slow food presidia, tourism “C8 Mediterranean cultural identity”
- ✓ a “Mountain linked to two popes” “C3 Reputation”.
- ✓ the majesty, the harshness and the charm of the Gran Sasso inspired hundreds of artists and climbers “C5 – Power of inspiration”
- ✓ wild and poorly antropogenic environment, uninhabited villages “C9 - Sustainability and antropogenic environment”
- ✓ many legends related to saints, hermits and monasteries “C4 - Legends and myths”

The globally unique characteristics of Gran Sasso are:

- Unique ecosystem; geological, naturalistic and anthropological value
- high peak of Appennine mountain range
- the southernmost glacier of Europe
- rural and mountainous landscapes in harmony with human intervention
- wild and uncontaminated environment

#### **10 key words with reference to the mountain**

Wildness; transhumance; earthquake; biodiversity; park; traditional foods; sustainable and slow tourism; land of castles and fortifications; land of saints and warriors; picturesque landscape.

## PART III

### III.1 Tourism infrastructure and supply

The accommodation facilities offered by the area are hotels and non-hotel structures like rental accommodation, campsites, farmhouses, hostels, shelters and bed & breakfasts. A large part of Gran Sasso territory is located within the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park and is therefore characterized by a high tourism potential. According to an analysis carried out by CRESA using ISTAT data of 2011, the municipality of Santo Stefano di Sessanio (AQ), Castel del Monte (AQ) and Pietracamela (TE) show a high tourism density index of 3684,7, 313,2 and 2019,7. The accommodation supply of these villages is highly concentrated in non-hotel sector. Analysis of the ISTAT data on accommodation capacity for 2015 shows the presence of different types of structures on the territory. On a total of 300 structures belonging to the municipalities of Gran Sasso area 32% are bed & breakfasts, 25% farmhouses, 23% rented housing, 15% hotels, 2% shelters while campsites, hostels and holiday homes appear to be only 1%. A second analysis of the same ISTAT data shows a capacity of 5360 beds, considering the availability of hotels and non-hotel structures. On a total of 5360 beds, 3513 beds are located into the L'Aquila territory (2333 beds in the only municipality of L'Aquila, the capital of the region), 1554 beds into the Teramo territory and 293 beds into Pescara area of Gran Sasso. The form of tourism practiced in these areas is mostly based on outdoor activities; during the summer those who love adventure have the chance to enjoy mountaineering, hiking, climbing, horseback riding, mountain biking, hang gliding and paragliding. Many of the hiking routes are accessible in spring and autumn, some are accessible even in winter but it is necessary to use specific equipment such as skis and crampons due to the presence of snow. It should be considered that the altitude of the mountains is one of the most attractive aspects and the territory of the Gran Sasso has a considerable summer attendance for the presence of Corno Grande, the highest peak of Appennines. The tourism supply in the winter season is mostly related to alpine skiing and snowboarding thanks to the presence of two regional ski resorts: Campo Imperatore and Prati di Tivo. The Campo Imperatore ski area is located at 2128 meters above sea level and is the highest in the center of Italy. The Prati di Tivo ski area is on the north side of the Gran Sasso at a height of 1465 m. There are also other winter activities like ski mountaineering, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. There is, in addition, the importance of tourism in Campotosto lake, the second largest artificial lake in Europe. It is an excellent place to practice windsurfing, kitesurfing and kayaking. It is pleasant going through this territory along the Gran Sasso Horse Riding Trail, a 320 km long route that you can cross on foot, by bike or horseback enclosed by fairytale landscapes. The horse trail goes around the Gran Sasso Mountain, crosses the territory of three different provinces and aims to promote the development of services through the creation of a network characterized by farms and equestrian centers. A large part of paths are also suitable for mountain biking and there is a cycle-tourism route linking the villages of Campotosto, Assergi, Santo Stefano di Sessanio, Castelvechio Calvisio, Calascio, Isola del Gran Sasso, Prati di Tivo and Pietracamela. Typical agro-food production represents one of the most important strengths of these areas, it often happens to meet with dairy farms and sale points of local farmers when moving between villages. In this way the tourist can taste the traditional products and come into direct contact with producers and the identity of the places. Sites of architectural and historical interest play a key role in this area, there are many well preserved perched villages, as well as castles, towers, historic palaces, fountains and museums. Apart from their value in environmental, landscaping and artistic terms the castles of Rocca Calascio, Bominaco and Piccolomini Castle of Capestrano have become tourist attractions. The weaknesses identified include the lack of information and support for the visitor who wishes to know, discover and live the territory; so many of the possible activities remain unknown because of the absence of visitor centers. There isn't also an appropriate coordination system for the design and implementation of tourism at national and international level. In the last few years a range of events have been created in this area to provide an integrated tourist offer by promoting around 200 cultural, economic, natural and gastronomic events. All these initiatives aim at creating a territorial

promotion network to make know all the summer events and to facilitate access to the mountain and to the services offered by the Gran Sasso.

### **III.2 Tourism operators**

The Experiential Tourism (not only as guided hiking, trekking, Nordic walking, snowshoe walking , mountain biking, canoe and kayak tours, etc., but also as local animation services, environmental education, cultural and artistic events etc.), is not very widespread and it is often focused on the high season (during the summer). The lack of informations (about the resources and the available services), the lack of qualified infrastructures (for sports, conferences, accommodation, information, etc.) and the lack of qualified and well-established tourism societies require a training course for all the potential tourism operators who will choose to begin a professional and qualified career in the field of tourism. Improving the accommodation system is the first step, because it requires a shorter time than the improving of the infrastructures system, whose time is definitely longer. The actual hotels have different structural features and offer very different tourism services. Their quality standards are often below market required level. So, in the last new years, new types of rural accommodation were born: agri-tourisms, agri-campings, country houses, alberghi diffusi, ancient houses transformed into B&B, which are very characteristic and deeply-seated around the area. These new forms of tourist attractions can attract the upper mid tourism users, more demanding, interested and interesting. Analysing the data coming from official sources and from local direct sources we can see that the major part of the tourist flows go to the mountain; in particular to the area of Campo Imperatore (L'Aquila), District of Baronía di Carapelle (Santo Stefano di Sessanio, Castel del Monte), Valle del Tirino (Capestrano, Bussi sul Tirino), Prati di Tivo (Pietracamela - TE), Campotosto (L'Aquila) di Prato Selva (Fano Adriano - TE), Isola del Gran Sasso (TE), District of the Grandi Abbazie and Farindola (PE) and finally to the Valley of Aterno which is the link between the Area of Gran Sasso and the Area of Sirente Velino. The most attractive hiking tourist routes are in the highest altitude, which require mountain guides. They are in L'Aquila, Assergi- Fonte Cerreto and Pietracamela, where there are several hiking schools. The most requested tourist tours to the Villages of the area and the routes discovering its natural beauties are in the following destinations:

- in the Alte Vette, getting from the mountain tourist station of Campo Imperatore or from Prati di Tivo (for hiking and mountain climbing);
- in the Valle del Tirino (Capestrano, Ofena, Villa Santa Lucia and Bussi sul Tirino) to live tourist experiences in canoe and kayak along Tirino river, bike-riding tasting typical food, hiking and riding along one of the most beautiful river in Italy;
- in the District of Baronía di Carapelle for hiking, mountain biking tours and guided horse riding across the Villages of Santo Stefano di Sessanio, Rocca di Calascio, Castel del Monte, Castel vecchio Calvisio and Barisciano, with the wonderful natural frame of the Altopiano of Campo Imperatore;
- in the District of the Grandi Abbazie for hiking and guided tours across the naturalistic landscape of Voltigno, the historical monuments and the Villages of Carpineto della Nora, Britoli, Farindola, Montebello di Berona, etc.

Finally, we can find the tasting wine and food tours,

- in the Highest Area of Aterno (Capitignano e Cagnano Aterno ) for mountain grain and legumes;
- in the Valle del Tirino (Capestrano and Ofena) for local wine and oil;
- in the Baronía of Carapelle (Santo Stefano di Sessanio, Castel vecchio Calvisio, Calascio and Castel del Monte) for pecorino cheese, ricotta, lentils and chickling vetch;
- in the Land of the Grandi Abbazie, for the pecorino cheese of Farindola, wine and the moscatello of Castiglione a Casauria;
- in the Altopiano of Navelli (San Pio delle Camere and Navelli) for the saffron, the red gold of Abruzzo.



### III.3 Tourism demand

The tourist development in Abruzzo benefits of his geographical position that generates significant tourist flows. Crossed by the Adriatic line and adjacent to the metropolitan areas of Rome and Naples, this area is easily accessible from Adriatic coast and Tyrrhenian regions. The presences flow of Abruzzo accommodation facilities in the period 2001-2008, which had grown at a higher rate than the national average, in the last years have shown a pronounced bending. In Abruzzo and in the object area has been the consequence of 2009 's earthquake, a very important natural events, which have also led to a drastic contraction on accommodation offer, generating not only a contraction in the supply of beds, but also fear for the people, also seen recent episodes of the same nature in other neighboring Apennine areas. In 2013 admissions were down compared to 2008 and the decline mainly reflected the domestic visitors. Decline of foreign tourists was less pronounced in 2015 and amounted around 14% of the total. The main country of origin of foreign visitors remains Germany, followed by Switzerland, Netherlands, Sweden and Norway. The middle length of stay in the good season is 4.6 days, higher than Italian trend, which stops at 3.69 days. This is due to the strategic location of the Gran Sasso to coast, allowing to alternate experiences to be played during the day. In winter, stay drops to 1.2 days. This area is a privileged destination for families with children under 12 years and for groups under 30 years old and over 65. There is also a distinction to the summer and winter phases. The summer respected the previously stated, but in the winter the target is set on people amoung 20 and 55 years.

The main attraction of the area is the mountain in all its meanings, in summer for trekking, mountain biking, etc. (see other dedicated sections) or simply visit the fortified mountain villages. The presence in the area of only two ski resorts for the winter season, and the question that Campo Imperatore has many problems related to the basic services, accessibility and weather conditions often prohibitive, decreases drastically the stay to 1 day or for a weekend. The users came from nearby Lazio region, or coastal areas of the same Abruzzo. In winter, except in exceptional cases, foreign tourism is almost non-existent. The daily middle expense in this area is around 98 € per night (overnight stays and meals), with oscillations that depend absolutely on the type of accommodation chosen. The most popular destinations in the area are:

- Rocca di Calascio
- Santo Stefano di Sessanio
- Campo Imperatore plateau
- Santa Maria di Collemaggio- L'Aquila (under renovation)
- Tirino Valley- Tirino River- Capestrano
- Stiffe Caves- S Demetrio ne' Vestini
- Bominaco
- Campotosto Lake
- Prati di Tivo
- Castelli (earthquake issues)
- Pietracamela (earthquake issues)

### III.4 Tourism impact

To create an authentic and attractive identity of the GRAN SASSO area, it is necessary to promote cultural politics, involving all the operators working in the area, forming and occupying the new generations so that they can choose and stay as protagonists. One of the main aim to pursue is to develop a strong and unique imagine of this area, which can be identified as the brand of the Gran Sasso territory. It should be in the Abruzzo regional context, but it should be also refered to a limited territory with specific environmental, cultural and referring to the tourist supply of The Gran Sasso destination. It is necessary to develop a unitary marketing system, since today the tourists are essentially free and curious: they are not depending on the usual channel of the tourist supply, but they choose the final destination thanks to other channels (word of mouth, social networks, etc.). The local operators should organize themselves and gather together according to similar and common elements to increase the potential capability of the local system to create

and distribute holiday package to the final market: the creation of a tourism consciousness by the local communities is fundamental to develop a common policy of tourism development. Nowadays, most of the tourists know this area almost exclusively for the Naturalistic, and the food and wine Tourism, but the present local resources allow to develop other types of product which already seem to be interesting for other tourists (experiential outdoor activities, art and culture, hermitages and castles, etc.). New forms of tourism allow to extend the tourism season and to create new professional figures. The culture of hospitality and tourism has grown in the private sector, while it has decreased in the public one, because the tourism products have an inner human element which is impossible to standardize and to duplicate as a typical model. The accessibility to the area is difficult, because of the local geography and the lack of the work maintenance of the viability system. So it is important to improve the connections to the Abruzzo airport in Pescara, to the main railway stations, and to support the local mobility improving the public connection services. Other important actions to improve and optimize the tourism product are :

- the maintenance of the path network and of the billboard and road signs to facilitate the connection from the coast towards the inland;
- the creation of GPS tracks of the paths, with – eventually – the Located based system.

The ACCESSIBLE TOURISM CAN BE IMPROVED, increasing the supply addressed to specific targets, such as the disabled people. For this reason, the use of the joelette should be improved, to allow to everybody to enjoy the same experiences, although in different ways. All these aforementioned actions could produce the following results:

- increase of the number of the tourists;
- increase of average number of available beds;
- gain of the number of the days of visiting ;
- deseasonalisation of the tourist flows;
- professional employment of the new generations ;
- tourists coming from different countries;
- more accessible Villages;
- increase of economies of scale.

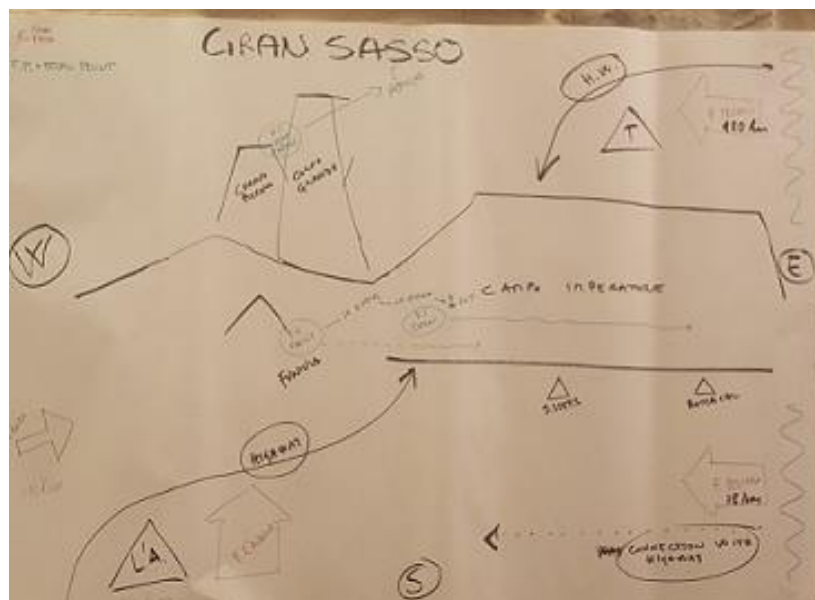
### **III.5 Public infrastructure and services**

The most important road to reach the Gran Sasso from outside the region is the Autostrada A24 or Autostrada dei Parchi ("Parks Motorway"), the ease and convenience of access to the area encourage tourists to visit the destination. The motorway exits of Assergi and Colledara allows a direct access to the main places of Gran Sasso. The Autostrada A25 Roma–Pescara is a motorway which allows travel from Rome to Pescara in Italy and it is the shortest road between the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic Sea. In this area an important road is also the State Road SS 80 that connects the territories of L'Aquila and Teramo provinces. It is also possible to reach Campo Imperatore from the village of Farindola via the State Road 151. In addition, the presence of local and provincial roads creates a network linking the different villages and places of the territory. It should be considered that the area of Gran Sasso is affected by hydrogeological instability and rockfalls events; excluding the motorway network, some stretches of road are falling apart and that could compromise the traffic safety. It is often difficult to reach the main urban centers of the valleys in short a time and there is inadequate maintenance of the road surface. As far as access to the territory by public transport, the villages are served by regional bus lines departing from the main town of every province while it is possible to reach them from Pescara and Roma by train and local bus services. The closest airports are: Fiumicino Airport (Rome), Ciampino Airport (Rome) and Abruzzo International Airport (Pescara). The fastest way to reach the main localities of the area is the car, travelling by public transport takes a very long time as it is not frequent and not guaranteed on public holidays. Not far from the motorway exit of Assergi it is possible to get on the Gran Sasso cable car, one of the longest in Europe: the western side of Campo Imperatore (2128 m) can be reached via cable car running from Fonte Cerreto (11250 m) and takes only 7 minutes to complete the journey. As far as stable geographical coverage of mobile communications across the mountain area, a survey carried out by coverage maps of the main

Italian GSM network operators shows that there is a good coverage with strong signal in the tourist areas, such as the ski resorts of Campo Imperatore and Prati di Tivo. The mobile phone signal is stable but sometimes very weak in most mountain villages of the area. The roads connecting the main mountain villages of this territory have a very weak signal and sometimes completely absent, there often isn't mobile phone coverage. Most of the shelters and many of the hiking trails that reach the mountain tops have no signal, only in a small number of cases the signal is weak. About the emergency management and rescue requests, 118 is the only health emergency number. Some municipalities, surrounding the valleys of Gran Sasso, have health districts able to provide primary care services; they are present in the municipalities of Barisciano, Montereale, San Demetrio and Civitella Casanova. During pre-holidays, holidays and during the night, the non-stop assistance service is available. The Mountain Rescue Service of Italy, is provided by CNSAS a voluntary agency that provides nationwide mountain search and rescue operations in difficult terrains in close cooperations with the Medical Air Rescue Service 118, with Meteomont army Team and Police of Italy under the phone number 112- EU standard integrated emergency service. The main missions are search and rescue, avalanche response, first aid, surveillance of mountain areas, prevention of accidents, and public safety. The use of helicopter (hissing) is often used to quickly act and to bring aid into inaccessible areas, the injuries are being transported to the hospital of L'Aquila or Teramo. Rescue operations require a high degree of training and they are performed by highly specialized squads. The presence of the National Alpine and Speleological Rescue Corp represents an important strength in the mountain emergency management.

### III.6 Partner's perception of the tourism vision of their territory

The tourism strategy is addressed towards an eco-friendly approach, keeping in mind that most of the territory of Gran Sasso and Abruzzo is protected. The idea is to differentiate the offer according to the different target groups to which the offer is directed. The first thing to do is locate the Focal Point. They will be of three types: FP A - with a target targeting families who like to be in the open air but who can't face a demanding journey; FP B - addressed to people of average experience who are able to deal with somewhat more complex paths; FP C - which targets experienced people who know the mountain.





## PART IV

### IV.1 SWOT analysis regarding the implementation of an emblematic slow tourism product (eco-itinerary)

The table below shows the conclusions of the reflections during the local meeting.

<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Threats</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of awareness in the local community of the value of the whole architectural, cultural and environmental heritage;</li> <li>2. There is no system of tourism-related services;</li> <li>3. Depopulation of rural and mountainous areas that compromises the management and protection of the areas themselves;</li> <li>4. Lack of service provision for businesses and people, especially in tourism;</li> <li>5. Poor use of innovative marketing strategies and ICT</li> <li>6. lack of collaboration between public and private bodies, operating and managing heritage</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Presence on the territory of a great architectural heritage in good conservation status</li> <li>2. Harmonized anthropization with the naturalistic context and landscape;</li> <li>3. Relevance in the tourism field of the theme of the outdoors connected to the enjoyment of architectural, cultural and environmental assets.</li> <li>4. Presence of associations and professionals providing tourism services and volunteer associations in the cultural branch;</li> <li>5. Systematic collection of information (websites, publications, thematic APPs) on the archaeological, historical and cultural heritage of the territory</li> <li>6. Presence of a discreet technological innovation and new models of promotion and management of architectural and cultural heritage</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Absence of short-term programming, followed by poor financial capacity</li> <li>2. Overlapping and fragmentation of competences and responsibilities in the management and safeguard of architectural, cultural and environmental heritage;</li> <li>3. Absence of a structured and unified communication plan</li> <li>4. Poor valorisation and accessibility of the heritage</li> <li>5. Widespread degradation of part of the rural and mountainous architectural (private and public) heritage (such as mountain shelters, cantonier houses, former railway stations) and lack of a restoration plan</li> <li>6. Excessive fragmentation of local policies that impede the implementation of a systemic and coordinated approach</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recovering cultural values and making it a strong instrument of the territory;</li> <li>2. Make the best use of new tools and good practices for planning, designing and operating in an integrated and transversal way, avoiding sectoral actions.</li> <li>3. Recover and valorize the existing heritage in a sustainable way;</li> <li>4. Promoting systemic actions, using existing networks to boost competitiveness and sustainability;</li> <li>5. Make the best use of new young professionals who are able to create multidisciplinary connections between cultural, architectural and environmental heritage, especially for a large tourist promotion</li> <li>6. Encourage greater connections between the coast and the mountain to enhance the tourist offer</li> </ol>

### IV.2 Indication of ideal locations for an eco-itinerary and possibilities to engage stakeholders

### Just a few tips for the definition of an ecoitinerary

- It is a journey in a territory respecting its existing characteristics and peculiarities
- It is an offer that combines mountain and nature; food and biodiversity; culture and experience
- It is implemented according to the sustainability criteria

### **1<sup>st</sup> Itinerary From Passo delle Capannelle to Campo Imperatore**

From the Valico delle Capannelle, you go down to Arischia and S. Vittorino, which preserves the vestiges of the ancient Amiternum. Going to Street n. 80 you will reach the city of L'Aquila. Aquila is a city of art rich in monumental buildings, among which are the Basilica of S. Maria di Collemaggio (13th century), the 99 Cannelle (XIII century) Fountain, the Basilica of S. Bernardino da Siena (XVI century) and the Spanish Fortress.

After passing through Paganica, the Valle del Torrente Raiale goes to the impressive Santuario della Madonna d'Appari (14th century).

Upstream of the Raiale Gorge, from Camarda you can go up to Filetto, with the nearby Abbey of SS. Crisante and Daria (XII-XIII century), reachable on a path that goes on towards Assergi or towards the Rofano and Ruzza mountains. This is the way to the fortified village of Assergi, headquarter of the National Park Authority's Directional Center.

The valley is home to numerous human settlements since prehistoric times, such as the Amare Cave, of archaeological and speleological interest, and the pastoral village of S. Pietro della Jenca, where the first "Sanctuary of Blessed John Paul II".

The suggestiveness of the valley is accentuated by the presence of the nearby hermitages of St. Franco and the Spring from which the Saint caused the miraculous water to emerge, as well as from the places of worship of S. Clemente, S. Antonino, S. Maria della Croce and S. Maria del Vasto. The remains of the latter are included in the most recent structures of Masseria Cappelli, built between 1750 and 1800, together with other farms that constituted a system of organic exploitation of the land and which also affected the nearby Valle del Chiarino, crossed by beautiful trails, partly accessible both on horseback and mountain

bike, leading to the Corvo Mountain, S. Franco Mountain and Ienca Mountain.

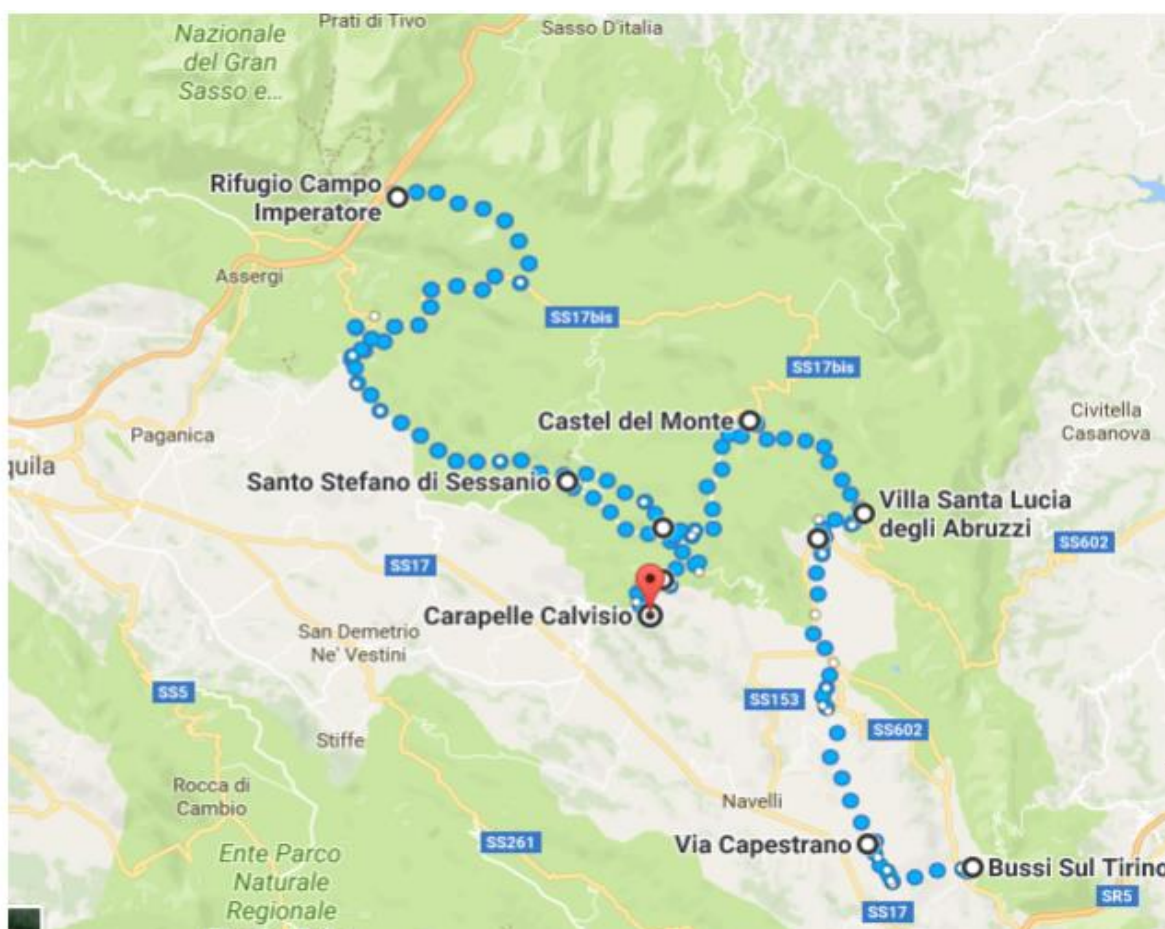
From here, you can easily head for the resorts of Fonte Cerreto, the Gran Sasso and Monte Cristo funicular, with Alpine Skiing Tracks and cross-country skiing. The road finally opens onto the immense Campo di Imperatore and rises up to the historic Hotel, in the center of the highest



Abruzzo ski resort, the stage of the "Sentiero Italia" and a starting point for numerous hiking routes, mountaineering on the central massif of the Corno Grande, also by the nearby Rifugio "Duca degli Abruzzi". Do not miss the view of the prestigious Alpine Garden of Campo Imperatore.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Itinerary: " Along the Way of Saints and Warriors "**

The itinerary is located in the area of the Tirino Valley/Terre della Baronia and includes the Municipalities of Bussi sul Tirino, Capestrano, Ofena, Villa Santa Lucia, Castel del Monte, Santo Stefano di Sessanio, Calascio, Castelvechio and Carapelle Calvisio. The area represents the heart of the Gran Sasso-Laga National Park, a charming corner of Abruzzo, rich in history and characterized by a unique dualism, the Valley of the Tirino River, overlooking the Fortress of Calascio, the majestic and fascinating stronghold of Baronia. The itinerary consists of several stages and can be used both by walkers and by lovers of the two wheels.



### **Description of the route:**

- Bussi sul Tirino Village is the southern gate of the Park, it represents the beginning of the route; before leaving it is recommended a stop at Santa Maria di Cartignano, a church linked to the history of the Benedictine colonization. The itinerary begins along the banks of the Tirino River and as it moves away from the town of Bussi in the direction of the town of Capestrano. Immersed in the greenery and the sounds of the river, you reach the majestic St. Peter's Church at Oratorium, one of the most beautiful of Abruzzo, in addition to being particularly charming and mysterious.

The itinerary allows you to reach the village of Capestrano, where particular attention is given to the Piccolomini Castle and to the Franciscan monastery of San Giovanni. Of remarkable historical interest is also the necropolis of Capestrano, where was discovered the famous Italian statue of art: the Capestrano Warrior. Going down the valley and walking along the shores of Tirino, between crystal clear waters and



uncontaminated nature, head towards Capodacqua, where you can take a break at the lake of Capo d'acqua, which along with other two springs give rise to the Tirino River. Between cultivated land and the presence of the majestic village of Capestrano that overlooks the valley, you go to the next stop, Ofena.

- Ofena: known as the "Abruzzo oven", for the high temperatures that can be reached in the summer season. Among the historical-cultural emergencies are worthy of attention the Capuchin Convent, St. Nicholas Church and the Church of St. Peter in Criptys with fifteenth-century frescoes and Romanesque double-arched windows. From the village of Ofena, crossing a valley, we climb to the town of Villa Santa Lucia.
- Villa Santa Lucia: The small town is located at an altitude of 900 meters. There are several testimonies left during transhumance in these territories, and from here, continuing along an ancient path of transhumance, climb to Castel del Monte, in the heart of the Park.
- Castel del Monte: the center perched in the mountains, also called the "shepherd's capital", was the real fulcrum of transhumance. In addition to important historical-cultural emergencies such as the Church of San Marco Evangelista, the oldest and most important of the country, there is a museum path dedicated to the history and tradition of the country. From Castel del Monte you proceed towards Campo Imperatore.
- Campo Imperatore: from the hamlet of Castel del Monte, crossing magnificent high altitude pastures, surrounded by the highest and majestic peaks of appennines, you arrive at Campo Imperatore. It is recommended a stop at Lake Racollo. The itinerary allows you to climb the Vado di Corno (1924 meters) to admire the high peaks of the Gran Sasso massif, or turn towards the hamlet of Santo Stefano di Sessanio.
- Santo Stefano di Sessanio: one of the most fascinating villages in the park, the central medieval nucleus is characterized by an impressive cylindrical tower called the Medicean Tower which, destroyed by the 2009 Aquila earthquake, is currently being reconstructed. Santo Stefano di Sessanio was a very important center for wool trade. A visit to the village and its traditional shops is recommended. From the village crossing Val Pareta, you arrive at the Church of Santa Maria della Pietà and follow the suggestive Rocca di Calascio. Then go down to the ancient hamlet of Calascio, where is worth visiting the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, also called Church of San Francesco, continuing along the path that goes through Piano Buto to reach Castelvechio Calvisio.
- Castelvechio Calvisio: medieval village at an altitude of 1067 meters overlooking the beautiful Tirino Valley. The country is characterized by a particularly elliptical shape, with narrow streets and houses that develop on multiple levels. The route continues through the Fonte Rapone area and arrives at Carapelle Calvisio.
- Carapelle Calvisio: perched and surrounded by forests of oaks and pines; characterized by extreme tranquility and serenity. The country still retains some of its medieval walls. Particular attention is paid to the Church of St. Francis of Assisi for the remarkable frescoes of the '400s and' 500s.

**Stakeholders that could be involved** in the supply of the eco-itinerary are: bodies from private and public sector of the territory, as associations of professionals, hoteliers, local entrepreneurs, mountaineering clubs and associations that work in the mountain, National Park authority responsible for the area management, DMC, Slow Food. All the above stakeholders participated in the workshop that carried out in October.

## ANNEX

### Photographs















### Self-evaluation table

CRITERIA		Score
C1 Proud local people	1-10	8
C2 Institutional recognition	1-10	9
C3 Reputation	1-10	5
C4 Legends and myths	1-10	8
C5 Power of inspiration	1-10	6
C6 Picturesque landscape	1-10	9
C7 Particular ecosystems	1-10	10
C8 Mediterranean cultural identity	1-10	10
C9 Sustainability and anthropogenic environment	1-10	8
C10 Historic places	1-10	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10-100</b>	<b>83</b>

1 very small, 2-3 small, 4-5 medium, 6-7 high, 8-9 very high, 10 paramount

**Arguments:** The table shows the results of the local meeting and the interventions of each participant, with the weighted average for each emblematic criterion. As can be seen from the data scores, the working group considered that the proposed criteria could be representative of the mountain and that the Gran Sasso is actually an "Emblematic Mountain". The assigned score is also the result from a comparative analysis of the suggestions of participants in the working group and the results of the Case study.



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