

Museo delle Genti d'Abruzzo - Ecomuseum of the Maiella Occidentale

The Museo delle Genti di Abruzzo is based in Pescara. Set up at the Commune's expense, it formally came into being in 1973 thanks to the collaboration of two voluntary cultural associations: ASTRA (association for the study of Abruzzo traditions) and Archeoclub di Pescara, which donated almost all the exhibits presently on display to the city of Pescara. The museum is housed in the basement of a sixteenth-century fortress, once a dungeon, in which a number of Abruzzo-born patriots died of privation during the Risorgimento.

The museum defines itself as an "unconventional" demo-ethno-anthropologic museum in which the exhibits provide an opportunity for a more comprehensive study of Abruzzo man, whose cultural identity has been shaped by the mountains (which occupy 65% of the regional territory), hence largely by a transhumant sheep farming economy over thousands of years ... a "museum cum discourse" which unfolds, room by room, with conceptual panels in which brief captions are followed by more in-depth descriptions'.

The 'speech' follows an itinerary which sets out from pre-history to reconstruct the ethnic formation of the area, especially in the Bronze Age, and its cultural continuity, concluding in the postwar years, which marked the end of a millenary economy based on self-production, now definitively overtaken by time and technology.

The first seven rooms of the Museo delle Genti di Abruzzo were inaugurated in 1991. Other rooms were subsequently added to reach the present total of 15. Besides dioramas and reconstructions (for example, the stone shepherd's shelter), they house many archaeological finds from various periods: those from antiquity include the remains of a Roman wall and many sealed African ceramics of the fourth-sixth centuries; those from the Byzantine-Longobard period include ceramics, remains of buildings and huts from the seventh and eight centuries; those from the medieval period include a large variety of ninth-century plain ceramics and walls; those from the period of the sixteenth-century Fortress, finally, include ceramics and painted majolica tankards.

The exhibition rooms, some of which are still in the process of being completed, are organised on a theme basis with careful attention to layout. The subjects dealt with in the different rooms comprise ethnic formation, the continuity of places of worship, the continuity of worship and religious objects, the shepherd's art and equipment, pastoral settlements and produce, transhumance, sheep folds and cheesemaking, wheat growing, harvesting and flour production, olive trees and hay, the vine and wine, the house (structure, furnishing and domestic life), linen and wool, everyday and ceremonial clothes and ornaments, traditional artistic crafts, the urban classes and the Risorgimento.

The museum includes an experimental educational centre, an audiovisual room, a multimedia gallery with interactive stations for in-depth analysis in the first rooms and an information-packed internet site. A centre is to be set up for documentation, research and study on ceramics in the Abruzzo. Along the exhibition itinerary, audio stations are being set up to transmit in automatic sequence songs from the Abruzzo agro-pastoral musical tradition.

The museum offers visitors the possibility of buying all-inclusive tickets which allow visits to the other two sites, the Castelli Majolica Collection of the Fondazione Paparella Treccia-Devlet in Pescara and the Museo delle Tradizioni e Arti Popolari in Picciano.

The museum is run by a committee, in which Archeoclub and Astra are both represented.