

L'Aquila - Main sights

Although less than an hour-and-a-half drive from Rome, and a popular summer and winter resort with Romans hiking and skiing in the surrounding mountains, the city has not yet been heavily affected by foreign tourism.

In the highest part of the town is the massive Spanish fort (***Forte Spagnolo***), erected by the Spanish viceroy Don Pedro de Toledo in 1534. It is currently home to the National Museum of Abruzzo.

The Cathedral of San Massimo (Duomo) was built in the 13th century, but crumbled down during the 1703 earthquake. The most recent façade is from the 19th century, but after the earthquake of 2009 and subsequent aftershocks the transept and possibly more of the Cathedral has collapsed.

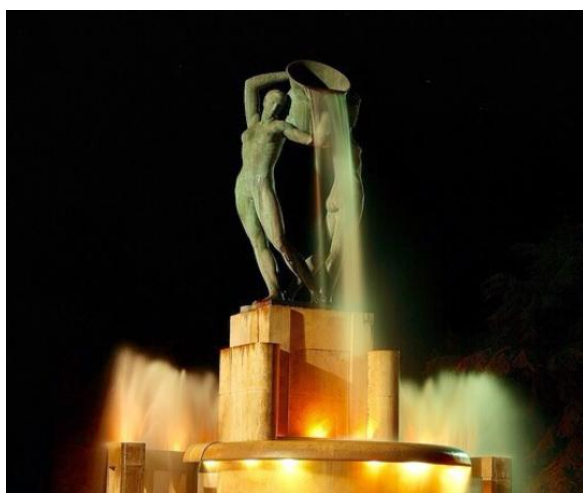
The church of Saint Bernardino of Siena (1472) has a fine Renaissance façade by Nicolò Filotesio (commonly called Cola dell'Amatrice), and contains the monumental tomb of the saint, decorated with beautiful sculptures, and executed by Silvestro Ariscola in 1480.

The church of Santa Maria di Collemaggio, just outside the town, has a very fine Romanesque façade of simple design (1270–1280) in red and white marble, with three finely decorated portals and a rose-window above each. The two side doors are also fine. The interior contains the mausoleum of Pope Celestine V erected in 1517. Many smaller churches in the town have similar façades (S. Giusta, S. Silvestro and others).

The town also contains some fine palaces: the municipality has a museum, with a collection of Roman inscriptions and some illuminated service books. ***The Palazzi Dragonetti and Persichetti*** contain private collections of pictures. Outside the town is the ***Fontana delle novantanove cannelle***, a fountain with ninety-nine jets distributed along three walls, constructed in 1272. The source of the fountain is still unknown.

A well-known city landmark is the ***Fontana Luminosa*** ("Luminous Fountain"), a sculpture of two women bearing large jars, built in the 1930s.

The surrounding area boasts Roman ruins (the important ***Roman city of Amiternum***), ancient monasteries, and numerous castles. The best-known of these is ***Rocca Calascio*** (used in the 1980s as the location for the movie *Ladyhawke*), which is the highest castle in Italy and one of the highest in Europe. Also nearby are several ski resorts like ***Gran Sasso d'Italia***, the highest of the Apennines where in its valley the movie *The Name of the Rose* was filmed in the end of the 1980s.



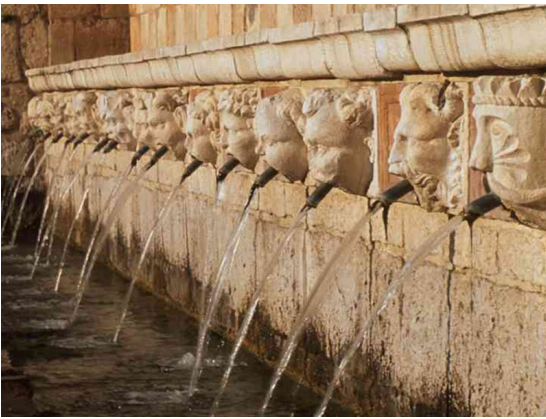
Fontana Luminosa



Piazza Duomo



The church of Saint Bernardino



Fontana delle 99 cannelle



Forte Spagnolo



Basilica di Collemaggio



Roman city of Amiternum



Rocca di Calascio



Gran Sasso D'Italia