



THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT MUSEUMS OF THE TOWN, BESIDES HOUSING A LARGE NUMBER OF WORKS OF UNDISPUTED ARTISTIC, CULTURAL AND HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE, ARE LOCATED INSIDE VALUABLE MONUMENTS, THE ANNUNZIATA CHURCH COMPLEX AND THE FORMER CONVENT OF SANTA CHIARA, BOTH FOUNDED IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND SUBSEQUENTLY ENLARGED AND RECONSTRUCTED.

THEY ARE NOWADAYS PRECIOUS EVIDENCES OF THE TOWN'S LONG HISTORY, THEREFORE YOU SHOULD NOT MISS THEM, IF YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW AND APPRECIATE SULMONA.



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SULMO MIHI  
**STORIA**  
EST

# The Museums

## A long history

**SULMONA**  
ABRUZZO  
ALL AROUND





05

# ANNUNZIATA CIVIC MUSEUM CENTRE

The Museum is situated in the Annunziata church complex and consists of the Arianna House (Domus di Arianna), the Civic Museum (Museo Civico) with its two wings, one for Archaeology and the other for the Medieval and Modern periods, and the Abruzzo and Molise Museum of Local Costume and Transhumance (Museo del Costume Popolare Abruzzese-Molisano e della Transumanza).

**Arianna House** [1]. An archaeological dig in 1991 unearthed a Roman house in one of the spaces in the complex which had been lived in from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. Visitors use a metal walkway fixed above the flooring to view the various rooms of what must have been an extremely well appointed dwelling. The first three, which were probably reception rooms of various kinds, still have their original mosaic flooring with white cube-shaped tiles edged with a double band in black, while two further rooms at the back were probably of practical use with rougher flooring in material known as *opus signinum*, stone and brick broken up into very small pieces then mixed with mortar and beaten down. A large number of fragments of wall paintings have been discovered and fitted together in the best way possible on large panels. Their technique suggests the so-called 'Third Pompeian Style' featuring, among other subjects, the *Sacred Union of Dionysius and Arianna* and the *Quarrel between Eros and Pan*. In the cabinets at the close of the house tour we see some of the artefacts which have been unearthed belonging both to the Roman era and to later medieval and Renaissance periods. The stratification of the site is particularly interesting, documenting as it does the different phases of its use over time.



01

**Civic Museum – Archaeological Wing.** This part of the museum is on two levels. First we have the long room on the ground floor devoted to objects from prehistory, early history and the pre-Roman period [2], while the upper floor level, accessible via a series of arcades, contains pieces from as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and from throughout the rest of the Roman era and beyond. On display are artefacts owned by the city and others from private collections as well as items from recent research and archaeological digs in the local area. Everything is exhibited in order of period and geographical location. The layout of the first room gives you the possibility to visit it either according general subjects or close examinations. The collection in the Roman room is divided thematically into the following four sections: 1. Sulmona and its territory; 2. religious places; 3. burial places; 4. the ancient city. Very impressive is the reconstruction of the *sacellum* of the Sanctuary of Ercole Curino [3], situated at the slopes of Mount Morrone, in the nearby village of Badia.



03

**Civic Museum – Medieval and Modern Wing.** This occupies five rooms, the first of which is called the *Cavalier's Room* ("Sala del Cavaliere") since it is the place where the equipment for the old jousting tournaments used to be kept. Nowadays sculptures in stone from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century are displayed there, including the most ancient sculpture representing the Latin poet Ovid to be found in his home city. The next room, known as the *Room of Giovanni from Sulmona* ("Sala di Giovanni da Sulmona") contains a collection of paintings on wood and wood sculptures, some of them among the most famous 15<sup>th</sup> century works from the Abruzzo region. Following on from this is the *Jewellery Room* ("Sala delle Oreficerie") with impressive local and Neapolitan jewellery works together with various frescoes. The *Registry Room* ("Sala dei Catasti") contains wood furnishings from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and a number of precious manuscript volumes, in particular a *City Land Register* ("Catasto Cittadino") dated 1376. Finally we have the *Celestine Room* ("Sala Celestiniana") with its display of an important group of fabric wall hangings from the nearby Abbey of Santo Spirito al Morrone [4].



04

**Museum of Local Costume and Transhumance.** In the *Bell Tower Room* ("Sala del Campanile") is an important ethnographic collection consisting of prints, costumes and some everyday objects largely associated with sheep farming. The first group of prints, about 160 in number, dates from 1790 to the period just before the Unification of Italy (1861) and includes etchings, lithographs, aquatints and water colours. The oldest were commissioned by the Bourbon King of Naples, Ferdinand IV, who wanted to make himself familiar with local costumes from the various provinces of his realm. The costumes on display are exclusively for women, since these remained more traditional, while the male ones gradually lost their distinctive features owing to the men moving around more for reasons of work and coming into more frequent contact with other communities.



02

# SANTA CHIARA CIVIC DIOCESAN CULTURAL CENTRE

The Santa Chiara Civic Diocesan Cultural Centre was opened at the end of 2002 in the former Convent of Santa Chiara in Piazza Garibaldi, the former Piazza Maggiore. It brought together Sulmona's Museum of Religious Art ("Museo Diocesano di Arta Sacra"), the museum Library, the city Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art ("Pinacoteca Comunale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea"), and a specially made *Nativity Scene* on permanent exhibition.

**Museum.** Its convent setting includes an old refectory with a *Last Supper* fresco and a "Poor Clares" Chapel with a medieval cycle of paintings depicting stories from the lives of Jesus and Saint Francis [5]. The museum collection houses works from the cathedral of Sulmona and from other churches in the city and diocese. These works date back to periods between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and include paintings on wood and canvas, sculptures in wood, fragments of tombstones, religious vestments, illuminated manuscripts and various jewellery [6] exhibits including some 14<sup>th</sup> century masterpieces in inlaid gold with the distinctive Sulmona stamp.

**Library.** The Library contains a large collection of volumes on subjects to do with the Abruzzo region and a rare set of printed books from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The location alone is worth a visit, particularly the Reading Room, situated as it is within what was once the conversation area for the cloistered nuns who lived there and still equipped with the "grating" through which they communicated with the outside world. Also still present is the revolving cylindrical drum ("ruota degli esposti") in which abandoned babies were once left to be cared for by the nuns. This can still also be seen on the outside of the building.

**Art Gallery.** The original collection consisted of a group of publicly owned works including the *Portrait of Panfilo Serafini* [7] by the painter Teofilo Patini and *The Woman from Scanno*, a marble sculpture by Costantino Barbella. Since then it has been augmented with donations from well known artists with links to Sulmona and with a collection from the city's Art and Culture Society "Il Quadrivio", which since 1974 has sponsored the "Sulmona Prize", known since 1993 as the "International Exhibition of Contemporary Art". Acquisition by the city of many of the prize-winning works has helped to augment the collection still further and the paintings, sculptures, sketches and prints it contains, works of some of the most appreciated contemporary artists, are constantly increasing in number.



07

**Nativity Scene** [8]. This is a remarkable construction entirely sculpted in wood and made up of more than 1100 separate miniature pieces covering a 12 square metre surface. The work of Enzo Mosca, it is a faithful and moving reconstruction of life and work in Sulmona at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century based on its creator's childhood memories and the stories that used to be told by old folk round the fire on winter nights. The work needs to be studied carefully in order to fully understand and appreciate the scenes it depicts and in order to be transported back to a now forgotten world here lovingly and nostalgically recreated.



08



06

## OTHER MUSEUMS TO BE FOUND IN THE CITY:

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK  
(PARCO ARCHEOLOGICO  
DEL SANTUARIO  
DI ERCOLE CURINO)**  
Badia District

**CONFETTI (SUGARED  
ALMOND) MUSEUM  
(MUSEO PELINO DELL'ARTE E  
TECNOLOGIA CONFETTIERA)**  
Via Stazione Introdacqua, 55

**NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM  
(MUSEO DI STORIA  
NATURALE)**  
Palazzo Sardi, Via Angeloni, 11

**MUSEUM OF THE IMAGE  
(MUSEO DELL'IMMAGINE)**  
Via Galilei, 10

