

Macerata: a Journey You Can't Miss

Benedetta Grasso (February 10, 2010)



[Marche_1266365451.macerata-c](#) [2]

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The limpid blue water of the Adriatic sea crashes on the shore, and on a beautiful summer day, the beaches are crowded with families and young people having fun, while sail boats disappear in the horizon. Meanwhile, inland a man walks alone on a solitary hill, remembering the words of the poet Giacomo Leopardi, "sempre caro mi fu quest'ermo colle". The music flourishes accompanying a colorful choir of dancers in an ancient theatre, while in a small village in the mountains two old men enjoy some liquor and bread with olive oil and cheese.

These idyllic images are some of the many experiences that the region of Le Marche offers and what makes people call this place "the whole of Italy in one region", or in this case in one province, that of [Macerata](#) [3].

Le Marche is one of the 20 regions of Italy and gets its name from marca (march), the most important of which is the medieval March of Ancona.

Somewhat secluded and divided by its mountainous regions, Le Marche occupies a central place in the country, combining at once the specialties of a very unique region with the best of the Italian qualities of life. Macerata, the biggest city in the province is an ancient and fascinating town, home of interesting historical figures such as [Matteo Ricci](#) [4], a Jesuit priest who lived for years in China while the Ming dynasty was in power; he developed the study of geometry as well as cartography and brought precious objects from the Far East that can still be seen nowadays. Macerata also gave birth to famous modern celebrities such as [Dante Ferretti](#) [5], who worked with Fellini, Tim Burton and prominent Hollywood directors as a visionary set designer.

The most famous monument is the Sferisterio, a place you cannot miss if you are a true opera fan. It's one of the most prominent architectural structures of the late European Neoclassical Style; built in 1820, it is an enormous arena with an incredible view and perfect acoustics.

To honor this charming spot in New York, the director of the Italian Government Tourist Board/North America Riccardo Strano hosted an event on February 9 that presented the Province of Macerata in its best features, qualities, strengths, and culinary and artistic gifts. The videos and slideshows offered a summary of the topic, whether linked to food or music or nature, through pictures and short clips.

The most effective clip is a widely famous advertisement, sponsored by Le Marche region, featuring the actor Dustin Hoffman reading and rehearsing the lines of the poem "Infinito" by Giacomo Leopardi, playfully stumbling over the words while declaring them with his loud voice and gestures,

accompanied by powerful music and the sweeping landscapes in the background, the beauty, the depth and wonder of this land.

This ad was at first criticized, when it first premiered on the web and TV, by many people who didn't want a "foreigner" reading a national linguistic treasure. It must be said, though, that ironically, the true power of this ad can actually be seen in an event like this, in which the choice of the actor, the creative set up of the commercial and the images have a much stronger impact on the viewer.

Italians might be jealous of their own poets and own performers, or they might laugh when Hoffman butchers some words, or feel betrayed by their more famous counterparts in the USA, but the real message of the commercial all comes down to this: can you appreciate these "treasures" as much as the Italians already do? Can you make those words your own, feel them in your head and on your tongue without translating them, but still re-interpret them as a tourist?

It makes perfect sense to sell Italy abroad through one of the most important International actors and it was a success in New York City where the audience awed in admiration.

At the Rockefeller Center many journalists, members of important Italian and tourism-related associations and the delegation from the Province of Macerata convened for a press conference, while also celebrating the 50th anniversary of the first delegation of the [Accademia Italiana della Cucina](#) [6] here in New York.

The director of the Italian Government Tourism Board/North America Riccardo Strano, who has a particular connection with the region, praised his homeland and introduced the guests: Franco Capponi, Maurizio Lombardi, Giovanni Ballarini, Francesca Baldeschi Balleani as well as the famous chef [Lucio Pompili](#) [7] and various representatives of enterprises, crafts and products from the region.

Consul General Talo' enthusiastically announced the event by saying: "the more I learn about this Province, the more I want to explore it."

Mr. Franco Capponi, President of the Province of Macerata, gave a detailed account of his region made up of 57 townships, all of which are historical. "We want to open up to new tourists" he added "And we feel strongly that we can offer to the Americans exciting itineraries and great emotions". Mr. Capponi pointed out how his province has among the longest life expectancy in the world, due to the high quality of life and the safety of the area. This is, in fact one of the safest places in Italy, with the lowest crime rate. Macerata's area is also a very green and environmentally friendly zone, getting the highest ratings for its beaches ([Bandiera Blu](#) [8]) and its mountains. Famous for its vibrant cultural life, it also shines in terms of hospitality. Naturalistic and enogastronomic tourism are expanding the region's economy and attracting more and more people.

The CEO of the famous [Sferisterio Opera festival](#) [9] and of Mirrus, Agenzia di Promozione Arena Sferisterio, Maurizio Lombardi, followed the presentation of a short montage of the best moments of the opera season. The festival this year will open on July 29 and its theme is "To the Greater Glory of God" to celebrate the fourth centenary of Matteo Ricci's death and the program spans from Gounod's "Faust" to Verdi's "La Forza del Destino" .

Mr. Lombardi said: " Opera is an inimitable form of art, and as well as Marche becomes a container of excellence and magic. It's the magic of an Italy off the beaten path, far from the highway and the more mainstream attractions."

Francesca Baldeschi Balleani, director of the NY delegation of the [Accademia Italiana della Cucina](#) [10], was accompanied by the President of this cultural institution of the Republic of Italy Giovanni Ballarini, who told the audience how important it is to preserve "ephemeral arts such as music and cuisine" and how crucial the role of gastronomic culture is in a place like Marche. "The realm of gastronomy is recognized by the [Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities](#) [11] (Ministero dei Beni Culturali) not by the [Ministry of Agriculture](#) [12]; gastronomy is culture, an expression of the conscious and unconscious aspects of our people."



The Accademia started in Milan in 1953 and immediately expanded abroad, placing its first flag in New York fifty years ago. There are over 200 delegations in Italy and 40 abroad, especially in the Americas. He added: "The Italian cuisine has many advantages, it's healthy and it has very strong cultural background. Also, it's simple, but not easy. It's very difficult to be simple but our chefs manage to do so."

Chef Lucio Pompili took us from the more general ideas about Italian cuisine to the specifics of Adriatic cuisine, that of the Marche region, filled with lots of fish specialties, vegetables and farm animals from the country-side.

"The goal of chefs is to stimulate the growth and production, to build a bridge towards the future. A cuisine is like a language, a way of expression: it's always evolving", he concluded.

Some of the local enterprises talked about their products and a quite unique object was shown: a wooden record player made up of actual musical instruments. The arm is made from a violin bow, for example, and the music is enhanced, almost as if it were live music playing.

This instrument worked in a similar way like this promotional event...bringing us closer to this Italian treasure.

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[3] <http://www.comune.macerata.it/>

[4] <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13034a.htm>

[5] <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0274721/>

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