

## Giuseppe Scopelliti: “The sun in the heart of Europe”

Calabria is a region brimming with potential. It is positioned in the centre of the Mediterranean and serves as a gateway port to Italy and bridge between Europe and North Africa. Calabria also boasts a wealth of natural and cultural heritage that is hard to rival. It has a long, unspoiled coastline, pristine mountain preserves, a fascinating, rustic hinterland and captivating historical cities. It also an ancient region, rich in history and culture and boasts a unique and delightful cuisine, distinct from that of other Italian regions. Having come into office in March 2010, we are eager to harness this massive potential to the benefit of Calabria's citizens and those who invest here. Our administration is determined to set real change in motion with a two pronged scheme for regional development centred on infrastructure and tourism development. The effects of this far-reaching scheme will ensure steady economic growth in Calabria for at least the next thirty years. It is based on intelligent investments of E.U funding for regional development which will finally close the gap between Calabria and its European neighbours. I am determined to create a positive investment climate in Calabria by reducing bureaucracy, increasing legality and re-training our population to instil a culture of entrepreneurship. The Regional Government is eager to enter into active partnerships with the private sector to stimulate economic growth in the region. The Region is open to foreign companies wishing to invest as our administration sees this as one of the best ways to drive Calabria's economy forward. One key development area representing great opportunities for growth and investment in the region is tourism. The region's popularity with tourists is growing fast and tourist infrastructure is failing to keep pace. This means that the opportunities abound for tour operators, hotel chains and cruise and cruise port companies. That said, the Region is committed to environmentally sustainable and socially responsible tourism. We also want to create a culture of tourism where the tourist is considered a guest to be welcomed and treated with respect and courtesy. The Region is working very hard to promote this attitude towards tourism throughout Calabria. Calabria offers great untapped riches for tourists to explore: three magnificent National parks, 800 kilometres of virgin coastline and a fascinating history and contemporary culture. Calabria has five different areas (Tropea and Costa degli Dei, Land between two Seas, Krotoniate, Arenile d'Aspromonte and Reggio Calabria) which will be valorised according to their touristic peculiarities. Calabria is eager to share its beauty and richness with the world. The growth of the tourism industry in Calabria is an opportunity not to be missed, neither by investors nor by the visitors themselves.



Panoramic view of Reggio Calabria, one of the most beautiful city of Calabria region

# INFRASTRUCTURE AND TOURISM Calabria's dual carriageway to success

Giacomo Mancini, Councillor for Budget and National and Municipal Planning for the Region of Calabria commented as follows regarding the region's future: “We are aware that in the past our region has, unfortunately, been viewed in a negative light inside and outside of Italy. Our priority is to invite the world to witness the beauty of this region and help realise its great potential. Our region is now being lead by a young, committed and dynamic president and a team of dedicated young ministers committed to change.” Calabria, the “toe” of the Italian peninsula has all the right ingredients to experience a tourism revolution. The region, which juts out into the Mediterranean, boasts spectacular coastline: the Tyrrhenian Sea on the west and the Ionian Sea on the east. The rugged coastline is a picturesque and quintessentially Italian landscape with sheer cliffs, fishing villages, coves and secluded white sandy beaches. The coastline easily rivals that of nearby Campania and Puglia in terms of its beauty but receives a fraction of visitors that these regions enjoy. The “Costa degli Dei” or Coast of the Gods, so named for its mythic proportions, is considered one of the most beau-

tiful stretches of Italian coastline. This pristine coastline, interspersed with quaint villages, white beaches, rocky cliffs and secluded coves is a protected national heritage area. The rugged coastline of Calabria is largely unexplored by tourists, untouched by developers and offers excellent opportunities for real-estate investment by people seeking their very own home in the sun. Incidentally Calabria enjoys the longest summer in Italy and a pleasant climate year round making it a perfect base for people from sun-starved northern climes to drink in the climatic and cultural warmth of the southern Mediterranean. The coast of Calabria has escaped the over-development that has blighted so many other areas along Europe's Mediterranean coastline and the regional Government is determined to develop the tourist industry responsibly to keep the region's unspoiled beauty intact.

In addition to the coastline Calabria offers a surprising wealth of exquisite inland beauty. It is one of Europe's greenest regions, with some of the largest uninterrupted expanses of virgin forest on the continent. The Pollino National Park stretches from coast to coast across the breadth of

northern Calabria. It is a dense wilderness harbouring a variety of flora and fauna, much of it unique to the region. This includes the Apennine wolf, roe deer and the rare European pond terrapin. Calabria straddles the Apennines and in Pollino National Park the splendour of this mountain range can be fully appreciated. It offers impressive vistas of craggy peaks, pine forests clinging precariously to steep rugged inclines, mountain streams and waterfalls. For those interested in caving, the park has a number of very interesting cave systems. A number of low-impact accommodation options and a system of marked trails for trekking and exploration are offered. Other parks in this verdant region are the Sila National Park and the Aspromonte National Park. The Sila National Park contains wild forests, beautiful lakes and mountain reliefs. The park is also home to a number of tiny, isolated villages where time has stood still and a real sense of Calabria's deep past can be felt. The timelessness of the area is no better captured than in the ancient Forest of Giants, where centuries old pines tower loftily above you as you stroll in the lush undergrowth. The Aspromonte National Park occupies the tip of Calabria and is

characterised by mountainous peaks of up to 2000 metres. These maritime mountains offer impressive views of the sea which surrounds them. From the peaks of the Aspromonte National Park even Mount Etna in Sicily and the Volcanoes of the Eolian Islands can be glimpsed in the distance. This park is ideal for trekkers in search of beautiful and unspoiled mountain trails and vistas but is also suited to the more sedate traveller who can enjoy the clean mountain air, bracing sea breezes and the numerous villages where traditional craft work still flourishes. But Calabria is not only about unspoiled natural beauty. Another draw for travellers is its significant human heritage. To the Greeks Calabria formed part of Magna Grecia, the outer ring of Greek civilization, and its crystalline shores are featured in Greek epics and myths like Homer's Odyssey. Several important Greek towns flourished on the coast of Calabria. Surviving from this era are the magnificent Riace Bronzes, two life-size cast bronze statues depicting bearded Greek warriors from the classical period in Greek sculpture. The statues, dating from around 455 BC, are in excellent condition. They are housed in the Museum of Magna Grecia in Reggio Calabria, Calabria's capital city, and have become symbolic of that city. Apart from the bronzes Reggio Calabria offers many other fascinating treasures. Its privileged position sandwiched between the mountainous hinterland of the Calabrian Apennines and the crystal blue waters of the straights of Messina afford the city some magnificent views from its charming historical centre. Calabria has remained in relative isolation for centuries being largely cut off from the developments that have so fundamentally altered the way of life in Italian regions to the north. For this reason Calabria preserves a traditional and measured approach to life that has been lost in more industrialised regions. The distinctive cuisine of the region reflects this heritage. The cuisine is strictly seasonal and festivals all over Calabria celebrate distinct regional produce when it comes into season and Calabria developed a cuisine which emphasises preserving food. In the mountainous region this has resulted in a wealth of local regional specialties like hams, sausages, salamis and cheeses like Pecorino which are prized throughout Italy. Along the coast fresh fish is abundant and the meaty swordfish remains a particularly popular choice. Other distinctive products are the piquant



Giacomo Mancini, councillor for budget and Giuseppe Scopelliti, president of Calabria Region

## REASONS TO INVEST IN CALABRIA

Calabria is on the verge of a tourism boom. In the January – August period of this year 1,184 million tourists visited the region. This represents an 8 % increase as compared to the same period last year. It also increased the number of English tourists, 115 % in 2009. The region has 800 kilometres of virgin coastline and one of the mildest climates in Europe which makes visiting it a pleasure year round. Apart from the coast the region has some of Europe's wildest mountain and forest reserves. Tourism inland, visits to the national parks and to the region's distinct mountain villages, is up 15 % this year. Calabria's mountains represent massive potential for the development of adventure and trekking tourism. It has a fantastic historical heritage and a unique contemporary culture and cuisine to appeal to the cultural tourist. The Region has an ambitious strategy to boost tourism in the next years and plans to invest 200 billion euro in tourism improving tourist infrastructure and facilities and stimulating growth in the sector. The region is serviced by low cost airlines which link it to important European cities. The tourism sector in Calabria is young and underdeveloped and represents massive potential for growth and a sure return on investments.