Calabria – the Boot's foot - extends in the area where the Italian peninsula becomes increasingly narrow and suddenly stretches to East. Travellers coming from north enter a region surrounded by the sea and innervated by mountains, to feel they have plunged into a place of reality and myths, expectations and concrete facts mainly witnessed by coasts, which have played a vital role in the region's history. Only a few kilometres after Pollino mountains, Praia a Mare and Scalea beaches appear on the Thyrrhenian Sea. A few kilometres ahead, after Spezzano hills, the Sibari plane extends over the Ionian Sea. Two different, opposing, though close seas compete for the image of Calabrian coasts. However, the fact that no place in this region is more than fifty kilometres away from the coast is what makes this territory extraordinary and unique. No more than thirty kilometres, as an average. The more you go south, the shorter this distance becomes. The Apennines start from the Pollino massif, crosses the Sila plateau, rises on the Reventino and Mancuso mounts, which are a bridge over the Calabrian isthmus, rises again on the Serre massif and ends on the Aspromonte, a big mountain shaped as a goose paw which faces the Etna mount and Aeolian Islands. If these mountains did not exist, one could cross the region in the twinkling of an eye. Its three big plains - Sibari, Lamezia, and Gioia Tauro are a fertile land of citrus plantations, while gentle hills offer an extraordinary oil and chestnuts at higher altitudes. With its 780 kilometres of coasts, Calabria boasts an indisputable supremacy of continued contact with the sea.
A large, varied boundary with the low Ionian beaches which stretch from Rocca Imperiale to Sibari Lakes and Punta Alice, in Crotone province, up to Capo Colonna, and more, after the Gulf of Squillace – with Copanello reefs – through Punta Stilo and, after Bruzzano Zefferio reefs, through Capo Spartivento, the 38th Parallel, up to Reggio Calabria, and heads north the Boot from Scilla to Capo Vaticano, cross the harbour of Gioia Tauro, and the Gulf of Sant'Eufemia along the Riviera dei Cedri and ends at Lido di Tortora. 780 kilometres of changing, overlapping landscapes. This wonderful land recalls Graecia Magna and its civilisations, which culture - developed with the outstanding civil, cultural, and artistic levels reached by its several coastal cities – has always been one of the strongest spiritual suggestions of the European populations. It's not without reason that Calabria and Graecia Magna have always been considered as one single entity from the times of Cicero through Lenormant, from Ancient Rome through a long period of the 1800s. In fact, the region periplus is full of the remains of Sibari, Crimisa, Petelia, Squillace, Caulonia, Locri, Regio, Metauro, Melissa, Ipponio, Terina, Temesa, Clamping, Sidro, Lao. And much more. The cultured, keen travellers who reached Calabria between 1700 and 1800 found a region speaking through remains and memories which faced both seas and subsequently faced a tough mountain landscape. Talented writers such as Denon and Douglas reached Calabria. This land was a birthplace for Cassiodoro, Gioacchino of Fiore, Barlaam of Seminara (who taught Petrarch Greek), Leonzio Pilato (the first person to translate Iliad and Homer's Odyssey from Greek into Latin), Bernardino Telesio, Tommaso Campanella, Mattia Preti, Umberto Boccioni, Corrado Alvaro, Raf Vallone, Leopoldo Trieste, Aroldo Tieri, Mimmo Rotella, Renato Dulbecco (still living), Gianni Versace. During the Greek era, the Greek landed on Calabrian coasts, stole the Bruzi’s land (who were forced to fold toward the inland and northern territories), and mingled with other indigenous populations, giving birth to a mixed race which would become extremely florid during the following
centuries. Between the VI and V Century B.C., the Greeks flourishing colonies that earned the name of Graecia Magna (Great Greece), some of which so important as to surpass their mother country.

During the Roman era and following the Roman conquest - III Century B.C., these territories were called "Brutium". Excluding some allied cities which did not suffer the Roman authority, most part of the region was not able to recover the prosperity it had enjoyed once. Graecia Magna polis were thus bound to lose their power by creating alliances (in some cases) or undergoing a colonisation process by the Romans. Reggio Calabria – where the Corrector, Governor of Regio III Lucania et Brutii colony - remained the last stronghold for the Greek language and culture. Its harbour linked the region to Rome through the Popilia road. When the Roman Empire fell, Calabria was ravaged during Gothic wars between the Gothic and Byzantine populations. The latter defeated the Lombards. Eventually, the Byzantines aggregated the Brutii region to their Salento territories, thus creating the Calabrian Dukedom. Subsequently, the Byzantine supremacy through Southern Italy was divided into the following areas: Thema of Langobardia, with Bari as capital city, and Thema of Calabria, with Reggio as capital city. This territory inherited the name "Calabria" which was previously used to indicate the Salento peninsula. During the early Middle Ages, inhabitants were forced toward the inland territory due to pestilences and pirate raids which threatened coastal cities and lasted until the end of the XVIII Century.
Several hill and mountain strongholds were built in the Calabrian inland with towns located in rearward, inaccessible places which allowed to promptly sight enemy boats and bolt access roads. During the IX and X Centuries, Calabria was a border land between the Byzantines and Arabs who had settled in Sicily. These populations contended for the territory for a long time, and the peninsula was subject to raids and fights, depopulated and disheartened, though important Greek monasteries remained as true strongholds of Greek culture. However, the Norman Altavilla family put an end to that long struggle. In 1061, Calabria passed to the Normans. Robert Guiscard, Duke of Calabria, and Roger, Count of Calabria, shared that land. A government was set up by local Greek magnates. The territory expanded to Apulia, which caused the end of Byzantine power. Robert confirmed Reggio as the capital city of the Dukedom of Apulia and Calabria, as well as the Calabrian head city of justice, and appointed himself Duke. Roger became Count of Calabria as a vassal of his brother Robert, with Mileto as the head city. In 1098, Pope Urban the II appointed Roger a papal nuncio, thus turning the Altavilla dynasty into the precursor of future kingdom of Naples – kingdom of Sicily - which would rule Calabria until the unification of Italy. The kingdom of Naples also suffered several dominations: Spanish and Austrian Hapsburg; French Bourbon, and Napoleon's General Gioacchino Murat for a short period, who was executed in Pizzo. Aspromonte hosted a famous battle during the Risorgimento, when Giuseppe Garibaldi was injured. A hollow tree where Garibaldi rested to be healed, as a traditional tale goes, can still be seen at Gambarie, today a ski resort.
Calabria Region counts 5 provinces and 409 municipalities over a 15,080 square-metre area. The territory is extremely varied with a wide choice of different landscapes: from mountain to hills and wonderful beaches. Catanzaro is the region chief city. Calabria counts about 1,993,274 inhabitants.

**Catanzaro**

Catanzaro province hosts 80 municipalities with 368,923 inhabitants and a 154.3 pop/km² density. This central province borders on all other four provinces. Its most important cities are: chief city Catanzaro, and Lamezia Terme, the third city in the region by number of citizens. From the geographical point of view, this province is varied due to its mountains, plains and hills. A variety of colours which enrich ever-changing landscapes. The Sila plateau, rich and fertile Lamezia plain, Catanzaro's Serre, Gulphs of Sant'Eufemia and Squillace characterise this zone geographically, with several archaeological sites – such as Terina and Scolacium – as well. A legend goes that the hamlet of Copanello di Staletti hosts Cassiodoro's tomb. Several tourist attractions are available: Villaggio Mancuso, a Swiss haven of Sila Piccola, Nocera Terinese, where the evocative ritual of Vattienti takes place during the Holy Week; Gizzeria, Falerna, Curinga beaches, Caronte thermal station, Soveria Mannelli, Decollatura and Carlopolì weather stations, Sersale's Valli Cupe rich in waterfalls and canyons, the elegant lidos of Copanello and Soverato. Typical products are: Serrastretta chairs, Cortale beans, Cicala chestnut, Monte Covello water. One may also admire several places of worship such as the Madonna of Porto di Gimigliano, Madonna delle Grazie of Torre di Ruggiero, Madonna del Ponte of Squillace, the Collegiata of Cropani. Catanzaro was a birthplace for Mimmo Rotella and Renato Dulbecco.
Cosenza

Cosenza is the broadest and most densely populated province of Calabria with 155 municipalities and 732,615 inhabitants – a 110.2 pop/km² density. Its Northern border is adjacent to Basilicata, with which this province shares the Pollino massif. At its centre, after the Crati valley, the wide Sila plateau lies and overtops Cosenza, the chief city. At North, down to the valley from Pollino mount, one can go rafting along the Lao river. A continued series of appealing beaches are available from Praia a Mare to Diamante - where the Pepper Academy can also be found, from Belvedere Marittimo to Amantea crossing Cetraro, Paola – St. Francis’ city – and Guardia Piemontese, where the Luigian thermal resort is located. More important thermal resorts are placed along the Thyrrenian coast such as the Sibaritide. The Ionian zone starts at Castrovillari, a nerve centre in Pollino area. Castrovillari is a stone's throw from Cassano allo Ionio, a main centre of the flourishin Sibari plain along with Corigliano (with its important Ducal Castle and Schiavonea harbour) and Rossano (with San Nilo church, a perfect example of Byzantine art, and Codex Purpureo). This plain is also famous for its archaeological settlements and artificial harbour. Among the places of worship, Santa Maria delle Armi in Cerchiara di Calabria, Santa Maria del Pettoruto, San Francesco di Paola, Santa Maria della Matina in San Marco Argentano, the Minster of the Maddalena in Morano Calabro, the Cathedral of Cosenza, the Florense Abbey of San Giovanni in Fiore. Bernardino Telesio was born in Cosenza, Giocchino da Fiore was born in San Giovanni in Fiore, and Vincenzo Padula was born in Acri.

Crotone

Crotone is the far-east province of Calabria, with 27 municipalities and 172,950 inhabitants – a 100.8 pop/km² density. Chief city Crotone boasts an ancient Graecia-Magna tradition and was a home country for philosophers, mathematicians, and distinguished personalities such as Pythagoras, Filolao, Alcmeone, Milone. This city offers a noble, far tradition. This is where Graecia Magna started and still lives, a reason of pride for all the inhabitants of Crotone. This mythical city was founded for a divine order. Capo Colonne still hosts a remain of such a past with the Hera Lacinia temple, one of the most important sacred places in antiquity as votive offers coming from several Mediterranean areas and found in this zone still testify. These can be found in a rich archaeological museum. The province is also known as Calabria's granary and as the land of Gods' nectar. Here, the renowned Cirò wine has been produced for centuries. Stretching from Punta Alice to Le Castella, its coast is full of naturalistic oasis from the Neto river outfall to the Nature Reserve of Isola di Capo Rizzuto. The inland territory hosts several historical and cultural places. Cerenza – former Acerenza - Santa Severina, an enchanting village with its stately castle and artistic value of its ancient diocese; Petilia Policastro, where the Santa Spina Sanctuary lies; Cirò Marina, ancient Krimisa, and its Saracenic Markets; , Strongoli, ancient Petelia, Belvedere
Spinello with its saltmines; Cotronei with its hydroelectric stations; Carfizzi, where Arbëresh writer Carmine Abate was born.

**Reggio Calabria**

Reggio Calabria is the far south province of Calabria, with 97 municipalities and 565,866 inhabitants - a 177.8 pop/km² density. Reggio province was one of the most flourishing centres of Graecia Magna culture and power. Moreover, several distinguished personalities were born in Reggio province such as philosopher Tommaso Campanella, composer Francesco Cilea, Constantinople archimandrite Barlaam, a master for Boccaccio and Petrarch, famous musicians such as Mia Martini, Loredana Bertè and Mino Reitano, painter, sculptor and leader of the Futurist artistic movement Umberto Boccioni, the famous designer Gianni Versace, great writers and reporters such as Corrado Alvaro, Leonida Rèpaci and Saverio Strati. Placed a few kilometres away from the North-Western boundary of Reggio Calabria province, Locri Epizephiri founded 680 b.C., was one of the most flourishing cities in Graecia Magna. Plato described this city as “a flower of Italy by nobility, richness, and glory of its people”. More cities were founded by the Locri populations during the V Century b.C.: Maropati, Hipponion, Medma, Taurianum, and Metaurum. Going west, toward the Thyrrenian coast, Rosarno rises on the remains of ancient Medma. Going south and past Gioia Tauro harbour, Palmi and Bagnara can be found. Along the Viola (violet) coast, the castle of Scilla stands on a breathtaking landscape with Sicily on the background. Reggio Calabria lies here. After leaving the wonderful Pentedattilo stronghold and ascending toward the Aspromonte massif, Bova can be found, the core of Greek language and culture in Calabria.

**Vibo Valentia**

Vibo Valentia reached the status of chief city recently, in 1992, from a part of Catanzaro province. It counts 50 municipalities and 168,894 inhabitants a 148.2 pop/km² density. This city was founded by the Italic population of the Oscan and subsequently became a Greek, Bruttii and finally Roman colony. During the Roman empire, Valentia was the only existing harbour between Naples and Sicily and then turned into one of the most important Southern Italian cities, until the fall of the Roman Empire, when the city also decayed. Valentia suffered several barbarian raids and was finally destroyed in 983, and only experienced a renaissance after more than two centuries, when the Normans arrived. The Swabian dynasty also meant further development which lasted until the Napoleonic control. With the Bourbons leading the kingdom of Sicily, Valentia suffered a period of economic and social decay which only ended with the annexation to the Kingdom of Italy. Vibo Valentia coast is the most attractive Calabrian coast for tourists, with Pizzo, Capo Vaticano and Tropea. Behind the coast, a top-class gastronomic area lies with Tropea red onion, the 'nduja sausage of Spilinga and pecorino cheese of Monte Poro. From Nicotera toward the mountain and
crossing Soriano Calabro, one can visit the Serre, a crossroads of different religions thanks to the famous Carthusian Coenoby and an important example of industrial archaeology such as the Bourbon arms factory of Mongiana.