

Chapter 15

UMBRIA

Umbria – the “Green Heart of Italy” – is a picturesque slice of mother nature’s paradise, filled with stunningly beautiful fairy-tale medieval towns. Covered with lush green forest and manicured fields, Umbria is bordered by Tuscany and Lazio, where Florence and Rome are located. The smallest regions of Italy at only 8,500 square kilometers, what Umbria lacks in size it makes up for in art, architecture, natural settings, outdoor sporting activities, delicious cuisine, intricate arts & crafts, welcoming people and a passionate way of life.

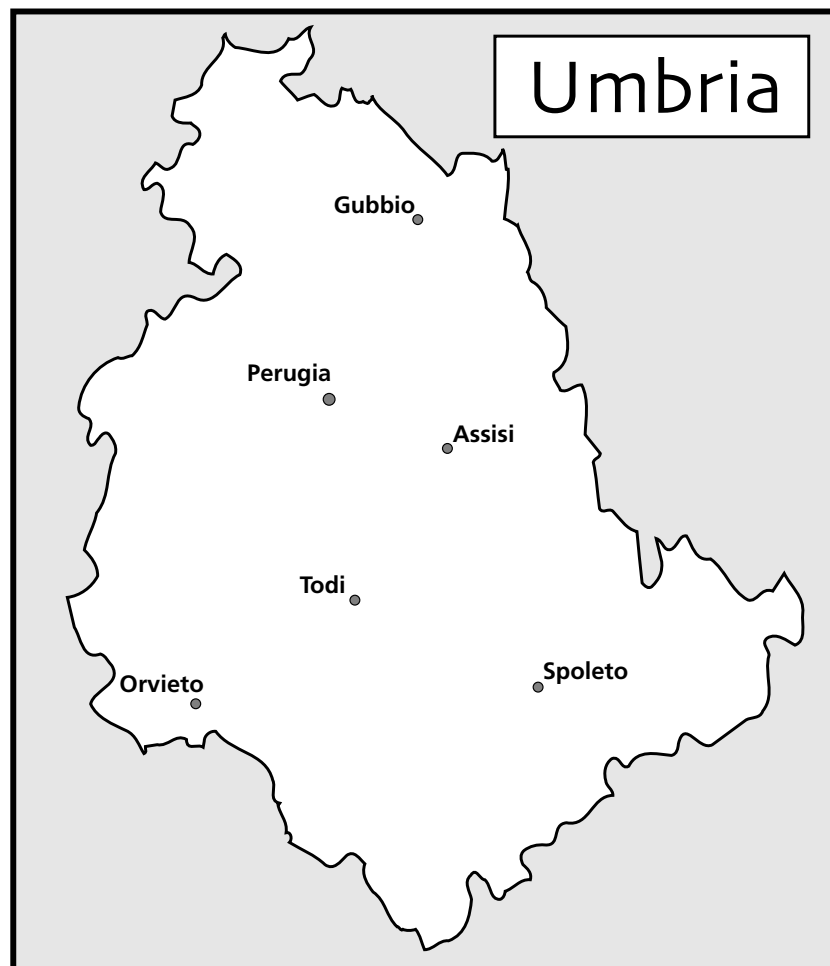
Even though it is one of only a few Italian provinces not touching the sea, Umbria’s mountains offer plenty of scenic splendor. Besides the natural beauty of the rolling hills and lush valleys, Umbria is filled with stunningly beautiful medieval towns such as the capital, **Perugia**. Spreading majestically over the ridges of a series of hills, Perugia is interlaced with winding cobblestones streets, an aqueduct turned walkway, ancient *palazzi*, Etruscan and Roman arches, and picturesque piazzas. Besides Perugia, the main towns of interest in Umbria include, **Spoletto, Todi, Gubbio, Orvieto, and Assisi**; each of which are rewarding destinations in and of themselves. Besides all the natural scenic beauty and scenic medieval towns, one of the main attractions of Umbria is that it is very lightly touristed (except for Assisi which is a major pilgrimage sight). Another is that Umbria is an incredibly inexpensive alternative to the crowding you find in the more well-known areas of Italy.

At most times of the year, when the rest of Italy is swarming with hordes of tourists, you can venture into Umbria and have it almost all to yourself. The locals still outnumber the visitors here.

In Umbria’s exotic urban settings you will find some wonderful Etruscan, Roman, Romanesque and Renaissance works of art and architecture. **Perugia**

has the imposing and historically significant Etruscan Arch and Roman aqueduct turned walkway. **Orvieto** has its extensive Etruscan Necropolises and an awe-inspiring cathedral. In **Gubbio** there are excellent examples of an ancient Roman temple, mausoleum, and theater just outside of an incredibly beautifully, well preserved and scenic medieval hill town. **Todi** as a whole is an inspiration and a wonderful respite from the hectic pace of modern life.

However, **Spoletto** is the jewel of the region. Second only to Todi in quality of medieval character, this ambient hill town is home to some of the best restaurants in Italy, a direct result of the fact that this town hosts the world-renowned **Spoletto Festival** every summer. But what sets Spoleto apart, not only from towns in Umbria, but from every place I have visited on the planet, is its immediate proximity to pristine, untouched, verdant natural settings. Just



across the Ponte delle Torre — a medieval aqueduct located only a few meters from the centro storico — which spans a deep gorge over to the hillside of Monte Luco, you will find an extensive array of hiking trails through deep forest, with scenic views and the peace and calm that only untouched natural settings can offer. Spoleto is a combination of quaint and colorful medieval setting, complete with cosmopolitan shopping and eating establishments, immediately next door to the purity of nature. A situation unique anywhere else in the world.

Umbria – Land of Truffles

Truffles (tartufi) have been described by epicureans as the ultimate indulgence, and if you have ever tasted a dish flavored with them you will realize that this is not only true, but is an incredible understatement. The **tartufo nero** (black truffle) is the more abundant and has a heartier flavor of the two varieties found in Umbria. The **tartufo bianco** (white truffle) is more subtle in flavor and expensive in cost, because it is found in less quantities. Gathered fresh from late September through December, you would be remiss not to savor any dish flavored with these tasty tubers if you venture to Umbria during that time.

Truffles grow wild and are discovered by trained dogs whose keen sense of smell allow them to locate these aromatic morsels despite the fact that the truffles develop over a foot underground. Most truffles are not very large, and weigh very little, but are incredibly expensive, sometimes more than \$300 per ounce.

The aroma of tartufi, or as the epicureans say, ‘perfume’, is tantalizingly delicious. Walk into any alimentari or salumeria where they are sold when in season, and the sapore (aroma) will overwhelm you.



The Romanesque style is evident in many of the cathedrals in the region, as is the Gothic style, which is particularly exemplified by the cathedral in Orvieto. The Renaissance also flourished and spread throughout the region which has also left us with some stunning architectural wonders. Umbria also boasts some of the Renaissance period’s early artists, including the most famous from the Umbrian school, **Pietro Vannucci** (better known as **Perugino**) whose works are exhibited in the National Gallery of Umbria and the Collegio del Cambio in Perugia. An old man when Michelangelo was emerging, Perugino’s reputation was negatively impacted by Michelangelo’s brilliance.

The medieval towns in Umbria are so well preserved, and are as yet relatively undiscovered, that a visit to the region is truly like walking back in time. Located in every town are prime examples of floating architecture, or *casa pensili* (hanging houses) – archways connecting rooms of buildings

located far above the level of the street. So if you want to taste all the flavor of medieval Italy without the congestion of tourists, be an savvy traveler and come to Umbria.

PERUGIA

The capital city of Umbria, the charming old medieval city of **Perugia** is a stunning place to visit. Besides being the seat of some major cultural institutions such as the National Gallery of Umbria in the Prior's Palace, and the home to a number of universities including one specifically for foreigners, Perugia also has the vitality and ambiance of true Italian city.

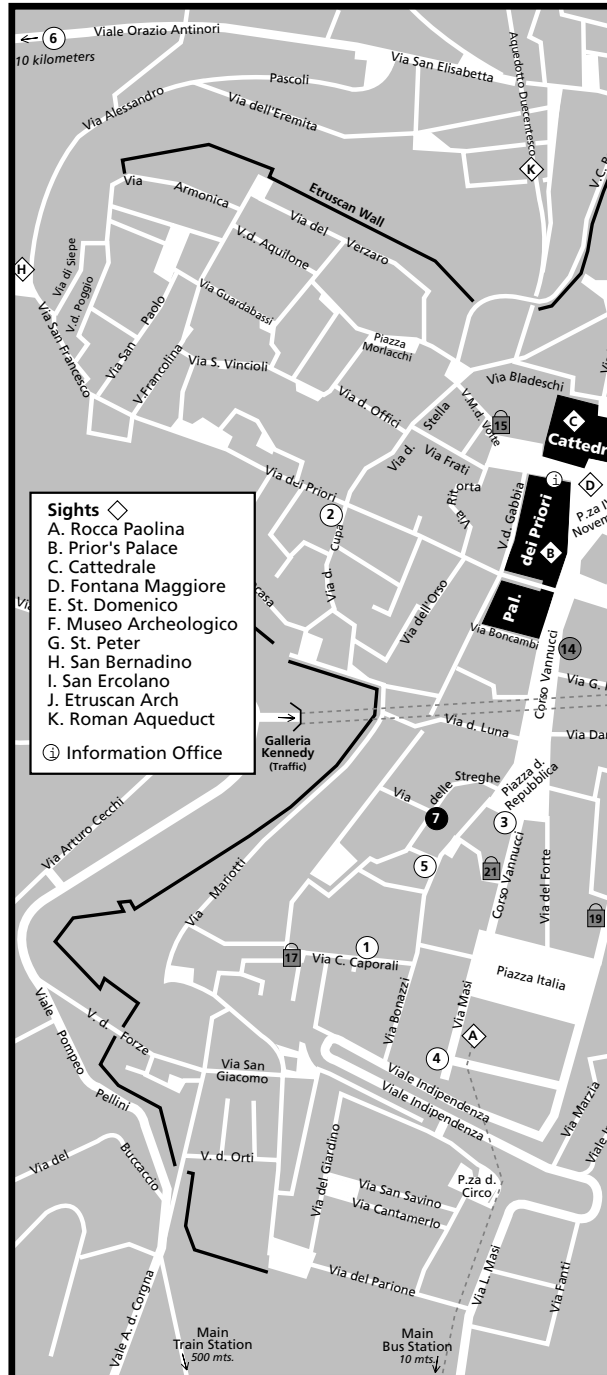
Perugia retains a quaint medieval charm with stunning old palazzi, winding streets climbing up and down the hills, with archways and buildings traversing the passageways. The main street, Corso Vannucci, and main square, Piazza IV Novembre, are the perfect place for a walk any time day or night, and is where you will find the majority of the population every night strolling along, munching on ice cream, socializing, before and after dinner.

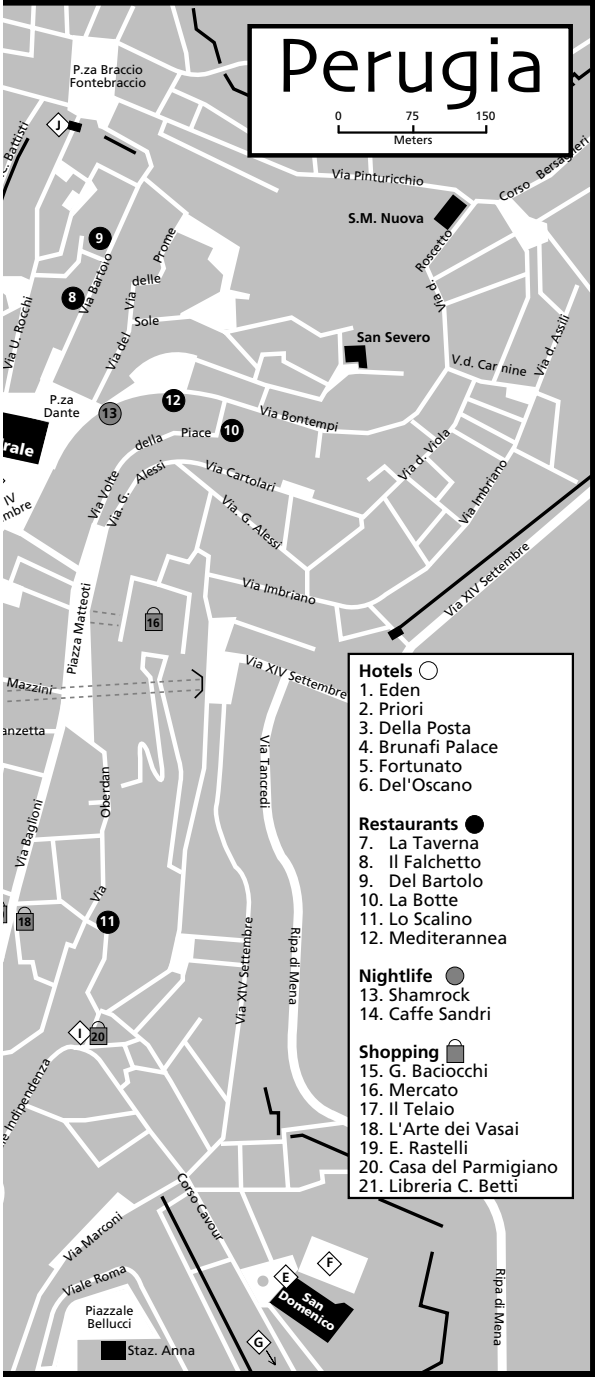
Most of the best shops are located in this area and in the evenings the area is filled with locals taking their evening stroll. A great sense of community thrives in Perugia making the city a fun and lively place to visit. Since it is located near many of the cities of note in the region, Perugia is a perfect place from which to take day trips to the other towns mentioned in this chapter. I cannot recommend this city enough. One of my favorites in all of Italy.

Brief History

Stretching over hilly ridges, Perugia has been the home of human development since prehistoric times. During the 3rd century BCE, Perugia became one of the twelve key cities of the Etruscan federation. After the Etruscans were defeated by Rome, the city was absorbed into the Roman Republic as a colony. Then when the Roman Civil War was won by Octavian, Perugia was razed because of its allegiance to Mark Anthony. Some years later it was rebuilt by Octavian, then Emperor Augustus who gave the city its name (Augustus Perusia).

Once Christianity became the religion of the Empire, Perugia followed suit and started its own diocese in the 5th century CE. Around this time the city was ruled by the Byzantine Empire since the Roman Empire had dissolved and split, until it came under the rule of the papacy in the 8th century. From the 11th century onward Perugia became a 'free' commune (meaning the nobles ruled and the serfs served, but the city wasn't under anyone else's yoke but their own). During the 12th and 13th centuries Perugia fought a series of battles for the control of the region with Chiusi, Cortona, Assisi, Todi and Foligno; and eventually ended up victorious after defeating Assisi in 1202, allowing the city to extend its reach over much of the surrounding area.





Despite dominating the region, internally Perugia was in turmoil. Different factions of nobles fought over the right to govern, never reaching a conclusion, until finally, caught up in their own power struggles, the entire social and economic fabric of the city became frayed. Because of this weakness, in 1540, the city was re-conquered by the forces of Pope Farnese and again came under the rule of the Papal States for three centuries.

Around 1840, a brief flirtation with freedom resulted in Napoleon's forays into the region, at which time the citizens took great pleasure in destroying the Rocca Paolina fortress (an oppressive symbol of papal control of the city) and threw the Swiss Guard out of the city. Twenty years later, on September 14, 1860, the city became part of the kingdom of Italy.

Arrivals & Departures

The reason that Perugia still retains much of its medieval charm is that even though it is in close proximity geographically to Rome and Florence, Italy's two main tourist centers, train schedules are not strategically coordinated between those locations. Whether coming from Florence or Rome, you will have to change trains in **Castiglione del Lago**, and most of the trains which come here are milk runs which tend to stop at every little town along the way.

If you don't rent a car — which I recommend when visiting Umbria — once here, moving around the region can be cumbersome by either bus or train. Renting a car will be more expensive, but it will also allow you to visit remote little hill towns. You can visit Orvieto, Todi and Gubbio from Perugia by train, but a car is best. Gubbio can be easily accessed by bus but a car is also preferred. To visit Assisi both train and bus are good options. To visit Spoleto from Perugia the train is a good option. A bus schedule (orario) for the local line, **Autolinee Regionali**, and a train schedule (Orari Ferroviari) is available at the local tourist office in Piazza IV Novembre.

Orientation

Perugia's centro storico sits on top of the crests of five hills and looks somewhat like the claw of the city's mascot, the Griffin. At the base of the main hill surrounding the train station are more modern urban developments, which though unsightly will not detract from your visit to the quaint, colorful and character-filled old town. The centro storico is bisected by the **Corso Vanucci**, which runs from the cathedral to the **Piazza Italia**, which is where the buses from the main train station let you off. It is also where the escalator arrives — snaking up through the **Papal Fortress** (Rocca Paolina) — from the **Piazza Partigiani**, where the inter-regional bus terminal is located.

Umbria Websites

For up to date information about events and activities in Perugia visit www.perugia.com, the official website for the city. This site also has links for Assisi.com, Gubbio.com, Spoleto.com, Todi.com among others. Granted they are in Italian, but even so they will help you plan your trip. Another good site, this one with an English option is www.umbria.org.



Getting Around Town

Break out your hiking shoes, get a bottle of water and get ready to do some hiking. The only way to explore Perugia is on foot and since it is located on a series of hills, you are going to do some stair- and hill-climbing while here. Aware of this, the Perugini have built escalators in key locations throughout the town making the longer climbs more manageable, while still retaining the charm of this stunning medieval town.

One of the most interesting escalators is the one that comes from the main parking and bus area, **Piazza dei Partigiani**. These *scala mobili* (moving stairs) are underground and surrounded first by modern concrete walls. But these walls soon turn to ancient brick and you find yourself in the remnants of a 16th century underground fortress with vaulted passages, parts of old rooms, pieces of ancient passageways and an odd feeling that you suddenly went back in time. This place is the **Rocca Paolina** (see **A** on map), a fortress built by Pope Paul III in 1540 on the ruins of the Palazzo Baglioni, which was destroyed when the Papal States conquered Perugia. Then when the Papal States were expelled from Perugia, the new fortress the popes built was partially destroyed. Now the *scala mobili* offer a unique introduction to the city, very similar to an amusement park ride. With one defining difference – this is real. Interwoven with these escalators are small roads, even smaller stairways, Etruscan and Roman archways, and a pedestrian aqueduct, making Perugia a perambulating paradise.

Where to Stay

1. EDEN, Via Cesare Caporali 9, 06123 Perugia. Tel. 075/572-8102, Fax 075/572-0342. 50 rooms. Single E60. Double E80. All credit cards accepted. Breakfast included. **

A wonderful little two star just off the Piazza Italia where the buses from the train station stop, and the escalator from the bus depot empties. This hotel's main lobby is on the third and fourth floor of an old building. The rooms are spacious, clean and comfortable, come with televisions, and some have spectacular views. Even the rooms overlooking a quiet courtyard are great.

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The bathrooms come with blow dryer and courtesy toiletry set. An excellent two star hotel, with wonderful service, in a superb location at excellent prices.

2. PRIORI, *Via del Priori, 06123 Perugia. Tel. 075/572-3378, Fax 075/572-3213, Email: hotelpriori@perugia.com, Web: www.perugia.com/hotelpriori. 50 rooms. No credit cards accepted. Breakfast included. Single E55-70; Double E65-90. ***

Right in the center of town the decor here is 'old Umbrian' with antique furnishings, terra cotta tile floors and flowered drapes. The bathrooms come with blow dryer and courtesy toiletry set and are accommodating though a little cramped. One of the best assets of this place is their large terrace overlooking the rooftops of the city. In the summer the terrace is used for the buffet breakfast which includes juice, fruit, cereal, pastries and coffee and tea. A quaint two star right in the middle of things. Great place to stay at a good price.

3. LOCANDA DELLA POSTA, *Corso Vannucci 97f, 06123 Perugia. Tel. 075/572-8925, Fax 075/572-2413. Web: www.umbriatravel.com/locandadellaposta. 40 rooms. All credit cards accepted. Breakfast included. Single E100-115; Double E140-180; Suite E175-210. *****

This is the best hotel on the best street in Perugia, Corso Vannucci, the main promenade where all of Perugia comes out at night to promenade, young and old alike joined together in a community ritual of togetherness. The hotel is a 17th century palazzo that once was the old post office. Over the centuries they've had many a luminary stay here, including Frederick II of Prussia, Goethe, and Hans Christian Andersen. In 1990 the entire hotel was completely restored and every modern amenity was added. The hotel retains all of its charm and character, and each room is different from the next adding to the old world ambiance. The bathrooms are large and refined with all modern conveniences.

4. BRUNAFI PALACE, *Piazza Italia 12, 06123 Perugia. Tel. 075/573-2541, Fax 075/572-0210. Toll free in Italy 167/273-226. Toll free fax (USA) 1-888/661-0219. Email - sina@italyhotel.com, Web: www.summithotels.com. 94 rooms. All credit cards accepted. Breakfast included. Single E245; Double E300. ******

In the centro storico right next to the Rocca Paolina, this is an extremely elegant and attentive hotel. Recently the Palace Hotel Bellavista has been absorbed in the Brunafi, which resulted in the word 'Palace' being added to the name of the hotel. The ancient palazzo has been completely restored with all modern amenities while retaining its charm, elegance and ambiance. The entrance hall instantly transports you back in time with its tapestries and antique furnishings. The rooms are all differently furnished and are all comfortable and accommodating. A wonderful place to stay in Perugia.

5. FORTUNA, Via Bonazzi 19, 06123 Perugia. Tel 075/572-2845, Fax 075/573-5040. Web: www.umbriahotels.com/HFortuna. All credit cards accepted. Single E90-105; Double E115-135. ***

Situated in the *centro storico*, just off of the Corso Vanucci, this completely renovated hotel comes with all three star amenities. The second floor houses the breakfast room and evening bar area. The third floor has a nice sitting room with a fire place and there is a big terrace on the fifth floor overlooking the rooftops of Perugia. Wonderful little three star in an ideal location.

6. CASTELLO DELL'OSCANO, 06134 Locanda Cenerente, Perugia. 075/690-125, Fax 075/690-666. Web: www.umbria.org/hotel/oscano. 100 rooms. All credit cards accepted. Breakfast included. Castle: Only 11 rooms in the castle E210-290. Villa Ada: Double E110. La Macina: Weekly rates E300 to 625. Buffet breakfast included and is served in the dining room of the Castle.

Stunning. Incredibly beautiful. Amazing. Like something out of a fairy tale. Simply unbelievable. A great place to stay. If you have a car, and you have the means, stay here. Near Perugia, but set deep in the surrounding verdant, forested hills, this inspiring medieval castle presents an atmosphere of unparalleled charm and ambiance. There are three locations to choose from: the **Castle** (a medieval structure complete with towers and turrets that is simply but elegantly decorated and equipped with every comfort), the **Villa Ada** (a 19th century residence adjoining the castle that is more modern but no less accommodating), and **La Macina** (a country house down the hill from the other two structures, and comes with complete apartments and has an adjacent pool). A perfect place to spend a honeymoon or simply have the vacation of a lifetime.

Where to Eat

7. LA TAVERNA, Via delle Streghe 8. Tel. 075/572-4128. Closed Mondays, January 7-21 and all of July. All credit cards accepted. Dinner for two E60.

Not to be missed. Excellent atmosphere with its vaulted ceilings and arched doorways, simply superb food, and attentive service. Come prepared to have a great meal in authentically medieval surroundings. They make a tasty tagliatelle al ragu di anatra (pasta with duck sauce), linguini con pecorino e olio (pasta with pecorino cheese and oil), and crostini al tartufo nero (baked dough with black truffles). In fact if you come here in truffle season sample anything they make with them. This is an upper echelon restaurant — make sure you dress for the occasion — and most cognoscenti believe it the best in town. I concur.

8. IL FALCHETTO, Via Bartolo 20, Tel 075/573-1775. Closed Mondays. Open 12:30-2:30pm and 7:30- 10:00pm. All credit cards accepted. Dinner for two E40.

Pink tablecloths, vaulted brick ceilings, soothing music, oil lamps on every table, and attentive service all set the scene for a serene meal. In back is where the locals congregate and is a little more boisterous, but both front and rear receive tasty local recipes made with exquisite care and presented with a slight flair. The grilled vegetable antipasto is perfect to start with and the tagliatelle ai porcini (with mushrooms) or al tartufo nero (with black truffles) are both tasty pasta dishes. For seconds they have a number of tasty grilled and oven baked meats and fish.

9. OSTERIA DEL BARTOLO, *Via Bartolo 30. Tel. 075/573-1561. Closed Sundays and January 7-25. All credit cards accepted. Dinner for two E75.*

An elegant small place run by the effervescent and attentive Walter Passeri. They make their bread in-house as are the pastas and desserts. And as befits a restaurant in Perugia they create quality truffle dishes. The menu here changes constantly, but be assured you will receive a superb gastronomic experience. You need to make reservations and you must dress appropriately. Wonderful ambiance, creative cuisine and upscale prices.

10. LA BOTTE, *Via Volte Della Pace 33. Tel. 075/572-2679. Open 12:30-2:30pm and 7:30-10:00pm. Credit cards accepted. Dinner for two E25.*

This is a small, simple, down-to-earth trattoria, off the beaten path, down in the basement of a medieval building off a small side street, that serves a vast array and tasty pasta and meat dishes at incredibly good prices. Locals and travelers alike flock to this little hole in the wall because of the tasty food and accommodating family atmosphere. The entryway looks like a bar or café, but in the back under the white walls and vaulted brick ceilings you'll get some wonderful food, including penne alla vodka (with tomatoes, cream, meat and a touch of vodka), spaghetti alla carbonara (egg, cheese, bacon and peas), or my favorite, penne al panna e funghi (with a creamy mushroom sauce).

11. PIZZERIA LO SCALINO, *Via S. Ercolano 8. Tel. 075/5722-5372. Open 12:00-3:00pm and 7:00-10:00pm. Closed Friday afternoons. Dinner for two E20.*

A tiny local place whose entrance is located on the steps to the church of San Ercolano. A little cramped but comfortable, and frequented by the locals not only for the great pizza, but the warm and accommodating atmosphere. The pizza chefs prepares your pies in a small space in the dining area. Only a few varieties of pizza are available, a few salads, a couple of meat dishes, an excellent bruschetta for appetizer, but what the menu lacks in quantity, the food and local atmosphere makes up for in quality.

11. PIZZERIA MEDITERANNEA, *Piazza Piccinino 11/12, Tel 075/572-1322. Closed Tuesdays. Open 12:30-2:30pm and 7:30pm - midnight. Dinner for two E25.*

All they serve is pizza and it is so good and the atmosphere so electric that people line up to get it. Opening onto a small piazza just past the Duomo sits this festive little pizzeria. A small place with only two rooms, one of which has

the pizza oven, this is the favorite hangout for the younger set at night. They only serve pizza, so if you are in the mood for it, give this place a try. If you do not show up early you will definitely have to wait. To get on the list of diners, flag down a waitress and she will give you a number. If you do not want to wait, La Botte is just around the corner.

Seeing the Sights

A. ROCCA PAOLINA

Located in the Piazza Italia, this is fortress built by Sangallo the Younger by the order of Pius III as the Papal States emphatic display of dominance over the city of Perugia. An entire medieval neighborhood, as well as the Baglioni Palazzi were covered over to create this ostentatious display of papal authority which even today makes Perugini leery of the influence of the Pope. In 1860 the fortress was destroyed and what remains underground is now used as a totally unique exhibition space, and a conduit for the escalators from Piazza Partigiani.

B. PRIOR'S PALACE,

Corso Vannucci. *Tel. 075/574-1247*. Closed the first Monday of the month. Open 9am-7pm, holidays 9am-1pm.

Home to the **National Gallery of Umbria** on the third floor, the Prior's Palace is also known as the Town Hall and is an outstanding example of medieval architecture. As such is considered one of the most elegant and famous in all of Italy. Begun in 1293, it was completed in 1443 after the building was consolidated with other homes and pre-existing towers all under one huge roof.

The entrance on Corso Vannucci is through a round portal, almost underneath an imposing tower and guarded by two Griffins – the symbols of the city – sinking their claws into two calves. The entire facade on the Corso is quite imposing and rather fortress-like. Before entering, take some time to check out the ornamental entrance with its friezes, twisted columns, sculptures and ornamental foliage. The Atrium is inside the entrance off of Corso Vannucci and is a covered courtyard with pillars and vaults.

The entrance on the Piazza IV Novembre is just to the left of the tourist information office up a flight of stairs and through a pointed portal. Above the portal are bronze statues of a Griffin and a Lion – the symbol of an old ruling family, the Guelphs. Through the portal is the Sala dei Notari (Lawyer's Room), an impressive hall that has some exquisite frescoes and grandiose arches. The frescoes are some scenes from the Bible and Aesop's fables. Other rooms in the building include the Sala del Consiglio Comunale (City Council Hall), which contains a fresco by Pinturicchio, and the Sala Rossa (Red Hall) containing a mural by Dono Doni.

The National Gallery is the third floor and is a must-see in Perugia. It contains masterly examples of the paintings from the Umbrian school, which date from the 13th century CE to the 19th. Perugia's most famous artist, Perugino, is featured in rooms 12-14 with his *Adoration of the Magi* (room 12), *Miracles of San Bernardino* (room 13) and *The Dead Christ* (room 14). Also accessible off of the Corso Vanucci is the **Collegio del Cambio**. To the left of the facade of the Palazzo dei Priori, beyond the archway to the Via dei Priori are three portals, through which you can enter the fresco-laden room containing major works by the city's most famous artist, Perugino.

C. CATHEDRAL OF SAINT LAWRENCE

Piazza IV Novembre.

The steps on the left side of the building facing the Piazza IV Novembre is *the* place to hang out, whether it's sunny or not. You'll have to fight for space with the natives and locals alike, as well as some rather bold pigeons, but this is where you can sit and watch the life of Perugia pass by.

The building itself is an imposing Gothic church constructed between the 14th and 15th centuries CE. It still has an incomplete facade but nonetheless is beautiful. The main entrance is between Piazza Dante and Piazza IV Novembre and has a coarse stone facade with a massive Baroque portal and a large circular window above that. The left side of the building is decorated with ornamental masks by Scalza flanking the plain portal with its ancient wooden doors. Above the portal is the votive Crucifix placed here in 1539. To the right side of the portal is the 15th century pulpit of San Bernardino. To the left of the portal is the *Statue of Pope Julius III*, an intricate bronze by Danti from the 16th century.

The interior is divided by octagonal columns into one nave and two aisles. The Chapel of San Bernardino — to the right as you enter — which is enclosed by beautiful wrought iron railings, contains a stunning fresco by Federico Barocci. In the Chapel of the Holy Ring, enclosed by 15th century wrought iron railings — to the left as you enter — is a silver and gold plated copper tabernacle which contains the onyx wedding ring purported to have been worn by the Virgin Mary. Hmmm? A poor carpenter able to afford an expensive onyx ring? You be the judge of its authenticity.

Also please note the 16th century multi-colored stained glass windows by Arrigo Fiammingo and the 16th century carved choir seats. In the right transept are the tombs of Pope Martino IV, Pope Urbano IV and Pope Innocenzo III as well as the marble sculpture of Pope Leo XIII.

D. FONTANA MAGGIORE

Piazza IV Novembre.

The **Great Fountain** (Fontana Maggiore) is the monumental heart of medieval Perugia, built between 1275 and 1278 with the decorative sculp-

tures created by Nicola and Giovanni Pisano. Topped by a bronze basin, the fountain has an upper stone basin held up by slender columns topped with a variety of capitals.

This basin consists of 24 red marble panels separating some of the Pisano brother's statues which depict scenes from the Bible, historical and mythological figures, and some saints. The lower basin has 50 panels on which are depicted the months of the year, the signs of the Zodiac, scenes from the Old Testament, the founding of Rome and Aesop's fables.

E. BASILICA OF SAINT DOMENICO,

Via Cavour. Open 7:00am-noon & 4:00-7:00pm.

An imposing Gothic church built in the 14th century then rebuilt in the 17th with a huge campanile (bell tower) and separate attached cloisters (not open to the public). On the bare facade is the elegant 16th century portal above a double flight of stairs. The interior is enormous and plain, a simplicity that gives it a peaceful and rather calming effect on the soul. Some elegant pieces include the 18th century organ and the splendid tomb of Pope Benedict XI. The apse is lit by a large, 23 meter high 15th century window. Most of the frescoes that adorn the walls have not survived the test of time. In every chapel there are exquisite paintings depicting a variety of religious themes, as well as a number of crypts containing personages of importance in Perugia.

F. MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO NAZIONALE DELL'UMBRIA,

Via Cavour. Open 9:00am-5:00pm. Holidays 9:00am-1:00pm. E2.

To get to this museum go through the archway to the left of San Domenico, into the internal courtyard, go down the right portico to the entrance upstairs. The museum wraps around the 1st floor of the courtyard and contains many interesting archaeological relics culled from the many excavations in Umbria. You will find Etruscan, Roman and more recent artifacts. A simple, little museum that is worth a short visit.

G. BASILICA OF SAINT PETER

Borgo XX Giugno. Open 7:00am-noon & 4:00-7:00pm.

Located quite a ways from the centro storico through a rustic working class neighborhood, down the Corso Cavour past St. Domenico, through the Porta San Pietro and along the Borgo XX Giugno. The Basilica of San Pietro was built in the 10th century on the site of an even older cathedral. The church is dominated by a beautiful 15th century campanile. You enter the church through a rather run-down but at the same time elegant porticoed courtyard. Oddly enough there is a bar/café just off of the courtyard where you can grab a refreshment after your long walk over here.

The dark interior contains a single nave with two aisles divided by 18 Roman columns. This church, in contrast to San Domenico, is elaborate in its

decoration — very much like San Ercolano — and has a wealth of art work, most of which is rather difficult to see without night vision glasses since the lighting is so poor even on the brightest day. Give your eyes time to adjust and take the time to view magnificent frescoes and paintings adorning virtually every inch of space on the walls. The sacristy contains some works by Caravaggio and Perugino, and the Chapel of the Sacrament has a *Pieta* by Perugino.

Behind the altar, through the intricately carved 17th century choir is a small terrace at the back of the church overlooking an incredibly panoramic view of the surrounding countryside. Take the time to get back here and admire the view, and savor the wood carved choir and doors that lead here.

H. ORATORY OF SAN BERNADINO

Piazza San Francesco. Open 7:00am-noon & 4:00-7:00pm.

The date this building was completed (1461) can be seen on the facade in roman numerals (MCCCCLXI). Masterly crafted by the Florentine Agostino di Antonio di Duccio, the facade is a wonderful series of sculptures of saints in the Perugia-Renaissance style. The 15th century Gothic interior contains the Tomb of Beato Egidio and an ancient 4th century CE Roman-era Christian sarcophagus. In an adjacent building entered through the annex of the Oratory of St. Andrew you get to the Baldeschi Chapel, which houses the Tomb of Bartolo da Sassoferrato, an important 14th century Perugian leader, teacher and lawyer.

I. CHURCH OF SAN ERCOLANO

Via Marzia. Open 7:00am-noon & 4:00-7:00pm.

Dedicated to the patron saint of Perugia, San Ercolano, this church stands on the exact spot where he was martyred when the Goths seized the city in 547 CE. This 13th and 14th century Gothic church is a small octagonal structure with large pointed arches going around it. The interior is accessed through a beautiful double staircase built in 1607. Though more intricate in detail than the original structure, the staircase is the first initiation into the exceptional beauty of this medieval church. At the high altar is a noteworthy Roman-era Christian sarcophagus that contain the remains of San Ercolano. Around the dome are some exquisite frescoes dating to the 16th century which depict a number of scenes from the Bible. Every inch of these walls are covered with frescoes and bas-relief work.

J. THE ETRUSCAN ARCH

Piazza Fortebraccio.

Also known as the **Arch of Augustus**, the original structure was built in the 3rd and 2nd century BCE. Later there were Roman-era additions as well as some during the 16th century. This huge and imposing structure is bordered by some of the old walls of Perugia, clearly indicating the lengths attackers

would have to go through to sack the city. Comprised of two powerful Etruscan towers, the right one lowered by an invasion, while the one on the left has an enticing patio on the top and a Roman fountain on the bottom. Above the gate is a sentinel arch, so named because that is where the guards for the city would keep watch. It has since been walled up and now is part of the structure to the left.

K. ROMAN AQUEDUCT

Via di Aquedotto.

What used to be a functioning aqueduct is now a pedestrian street. This may be your only chance to walk along an ancient aqueduct, so take it while you have it. Lining the aqueduct are quaint little homes. Also from this height you get to look down onto other streets and passageways, offering an interesting perspective of this mountain city.

Nightlife & Entertainment

The nightlife and entertainment in Perugia mainly consists of congregating in and around the **Corso Vannucci**, going for a stroll, grabbing an ice cream cone — the preferred social lubricant in Perugia — and meeting with friends at one of the many cafés that line the Corso. This lasts from before dinner through the meal hour and well into the evening, and is especially crowded on Saturday nights when everybody and their grandmother is out for a walk. You will find young and old, well-off and beggars, wild and conservative, families and singles, all connecting despite their differences. Sadly, such community interaction is extremely rare in the U.S. and could help to explain the overall breakdown in American society.

There was a time when the Perugini allowed cars to drive on the Corso Vannucci; but back in the '70s, realizing the detrimental effect cars were having on their community, they put a stop to that practice by closing the street to traffic. Because of this appreciation for maintaining spaces where community can thrive, places such as the Corso Vannucci exist all over Italy. Along this street there are plenty of restaurants, cafés, and pubs in which to stop if refreshment is needed. Two that we recommend are listed below.

13. SHAMROCK, *Piazza Danti 18. Tel. 075/573-6625. Open 7:00pm - 2:00am.*

Great Irish atmosphere. Medieval vaulted ceilings coupled with dark wood furnishings, brass accents, and authentic Irish knickknacks gives this place a true feel of the Blarney. Definitely the best pub atmosphere in Perugia. Located down a dark medieval alleyway in the basement of one of the oldest buildings in the city, just across from the main entrance to the Cathedral. They serve a full complement of ales and have a good bar menu as well as snacks like chips, pretzels and peanuts.

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14. CAFFÉ SANDRI, *Corso Vannucci 32. Tel. 075/61012. Open 7:00am - 11:00pm daily.*

The authentically Perugian place to grab a cappuccino or a bite to eat on the Corso Vannucci. Their window displays are tantalizingly spectacular with fruit tarts, cheeses and other delicacies enticing you inside. Sandri is Perugia's landmark café and a local favorite. The frescoed ceilings remain intact and the proprietors come from the same Swiss family, the Schucan's, who founded the café over 130 years ago. When in Perugia, you have to at least stop in for a look.

Shopping

The main pedestrian street **Corso Vannucci** is also the best shopping street in Perugia. Along its route and around its periphery — mainly the parallel streets of **Via Baglioni** and **Via G. Oberdan** — you will find traditional little shops offering a wide variety native arts and crafts as well as local and international fashions.

15. I LEGNI DI GIUSEPPE BACIOCCHI, *Via Maeste delle Volte 8. Tel. 075/57-26-080.*

This artists' shop is located in the basement of a medieval building. Carved wooden figures are his stock in trade and they are simply wonderful. A perfect place to pick up some small gifts for friends, or buy one of his larger magnificent carvings.

16. MERCATO COPERTO, *Open 7:00am-1pm Monday-Saturday.*

Located off of the Piazza Matteotti and through the Palazzo Capitano del Popolo is the covered market of Perugia, which offers dry goods of leather and other crafts in the upstairs section, and fruits, vegetables and other foods on the downstairs.

17. IL TELAIO, *Via Bruschi 2B. Tel. 075/572-6603. Closed Monday mornings. Open 9:30am-1:00pm and 4:00-8:00pm. All credit cards accepted.*

Off the beaten path, this place sells local hand-crafted linens, pillow cases, sheets, tablecloths and everything associated with fabrics and textiles. A wonderful shop to find unique products from Umbria.

18. L'ARTE DEI VASAI, *Via Baglioni 32. Tel. 075/572-3108. Open 9:30am-1:00pm and 3:45-8:00pm. Closed Sundays. All credit cards accepted.*

If you don't want to venture all the way to Deruta to find ceramics, this store has by far the best selection available in Perugia. The perfect place to find hand-crafted, distinctively hand-painted ceramics, bowls, mugs, cups, plates and more.

19. MAGAZZINI DI EGIDIO RASTELLI, *Via Baglioni 17-29. Tel. 075/57-29-050. Open 9:00am-1:00pm and 4:00-7:50pm. Closed Mondays.*

Large cartoleria with all sorts of distinctly unique Italian notebooks, pens, calendars, day planners, sketch pads, and everything else for office, home or school.

20. CASA DEL PARMIGIANO REGGIANO, Via San Ercolano 36. *Tel. 075/573-1233*. All credit cards accepted. Open 7:30am-1:30pm & 4:30-8:00pm.

This is the best place in Perugia to find those exquisitely tasty, pungently aromatic, uniquely Umbrian culinary delight, tartufi. They vacuum seal (sotto vuoto) purchases for you so that they stay fresh.

Bookstores

21. LIBRERIA C BETTI, *Via del Sette 1*. Open 10:00am-1:00pm and 4:00pm-8:00pm.

This tiny bookstore carries a small selection of English language books to the right just as you enter.

Excursions & Day Trips

The other towns listed in this chapter (Orvieto, Todi, Gubbio, Assisi and Spoleto) can all be considered day trips from Perugia, but at the same time, each of these places could be destinations in and of themselves. Deruta, however, is so much closer to Perugia, that it really is the only true day trip.

DERUTA

Located 15 kilometers outside of Perugia, **Deruta** is the generally considered the ceramics capital of Central Italy — something nearby Cortona over the border in Tuscany would dispute heartily. The old town situated on a hill overlooking the valley of the Tiber is beautiful. Unfortunately the new part of the town — which is parallel to and along the Via Tiberina — is a slipshod, unplanned eye sore. So skip the eye sore, and head into the beautiful little hill town filled with the largest selection of **fine ceramic pottery** anywhere.

Don't come expecting any bargains. All you will get here is a large selection. Not really a place to spend much time, except for pottery shopping.

Getting There

By bus is the only way, other than by car, to get to Deruta. Pick up the bus schedule at the information office in Perugia. Buses are infrequent and as a result you need to plan to ensure that you can get there, have time to look around, then be able to catch a bus back.

Practical Information

Festivals

- **Good Friday procession** – La Desolata
- **Mid-July Rock Music festival** – Rockin' Umbria
- **First two weeks of September** – Sagra Musicale Umbria (musical recitals in Perugia's churches)

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- **End of October/Beginning November** – Jewel And Antique show
- **2–5 November** – All Souls Fair

Laundry

Le Bolle, Corso G. Garibaldi 43. Open every day 8:00am-10:00pm. Attendant on duty from 2:00-4:00pm & 7:00-10:00pm. Self-service laundromat that is computerized and fully automated. Wash cost: E3 for 8kg (15lbs), E5 for 16kg. Wash takes 25 minutes. Drying cost: E3 for 8kg and E5 for 10kg. Free detergent. If the attendant is not present, call 075/41644 and she will pop down and give you some.

Onda Blu, Via Pinturicchio 102. Open 8:00am-10:00pm every day. Self-service laundromat located near Porta Pesa that is fully automated. Wash cost: E3 for 6.5 kg. Takes 30 minutes. Drying cost: E3 and takes 20 minutes. Detergent costs E3.

Tourist Information

The **tourist information office** is located in the Piazza IV Novembre next to the stairs leading up to the Prior's Palace. Open from 9:00am to 1:00pm and 3:00pm to 6:00pm, *Tel. 075/573-6458 or 572/-3327*. They have useful maps, and all the information you need for buses, trains, walking tours, etc.

SPOLETO

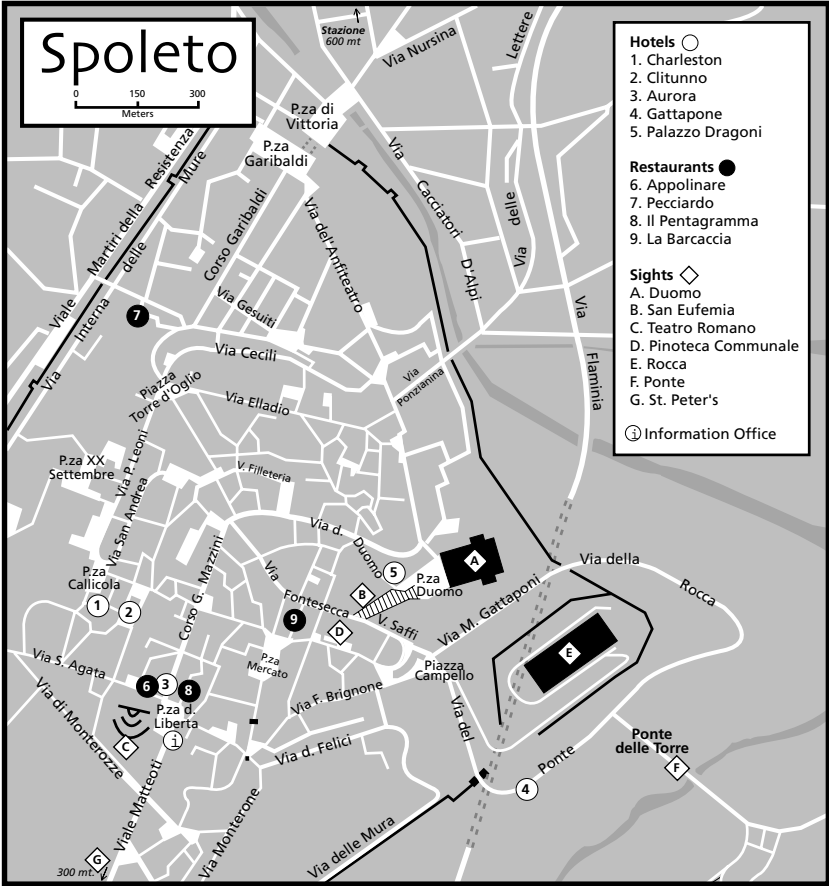
Spoletto is an amazing destination because of the combination of medieval charm, natural setting, excellent restaurants, cosmopolitan shops and art galleries, few tourists, and incredibly friendly and accommodating locals. The ancient medieval town itself, with its winding streets, old buildings is like something out of a fairy tale.

Even though this is one of the better preserved medieval towns in all of Italy, Spoleto is still only lightly touristed. That is except during the world-famous **Spoletto Festival** held in June every year, when tens of thousands of tourists descend here to savor a two week extravaganza of performing arts.

Because of this festival Spoleto has some of the best restaurants in all of Italy, quaint little artisans' shops selling exquisitely created local crafts, and little galleries and studios filled with locally produced painting and sculpture that is of top quality. But that's not all. The main distinguishing feature about Spoleto is that it offers instant access to inspiring natural settings.

Just across the **Ponte delle Torre**, an old medieval aqueduct turned walkway, you are in untouched, pristine nature, laced with hiking trails that snake around the surrounding mountains, and through small local hill towns. In very few places in the world can you go from a quaint medieval town, filled with cosmopolitan amenities, to untouched natural settings after a five minute walk.

Situated on green hillside near the lower border of the Umbra Valley, Spoleto was founded by the original Umbrian people, Later it came under Etruscan influence and eventually was absorbed into the Roman Empire around the 3rd century BCE. Its claim to fame during that period came during the second Punic War, where it played a major role in repelling Hannibal's attacks. After the fall of the Roman Empire, Spoleto was a flourishing Lombard capital, then fell under papal influence and became one of the Pope's summer residences. During the rise of Perugia's power it came under that city's jurisdiction; and with Perugia and Todi in the 14th century it rose up against the excessive and abusive powers of the popes. During Napoleon's sojourn in Italy, Spoleto became one of his local capitals and eventually was absorbed into the newly formed state of Italy on September 17, 1860.



Arrivals & Departures

From Perugia the train leaves every hour and takes an hour to get here. From Rome, the schedule is more erratic but the trip takes only a little over an hour and a half. Check with your local information office for specific schedules.

Orientation

Spoletto is spread up a hillside with the defining structures being the spire of the **cathedral** and the imposing **Rocca** behind it. To the east up the hill is the **Duomo** whose **piazza** is a central focus of the town. The town's tiny roads twist and turn around the undulation of the hillside, so it's best to use a map or have a compass available to keep yourself on the right track.

Getting Around Town

Spoletto is made for walking, with twisting cobblestone streets and winding staircases leading through quaint medieval passageways. Be prepared to hike up and down hills, but the effort will be worth it since the surroundings will instantly transport you back to a simpler place and time.

Where to Stay

1. CHARLESTON, Piazza Collicola 10. Tel. 0743/223-235, Fax 0743/222-010. Email: info@hotelcharleston.it, Web: www.hotelcharleston.it. 18 rooms. Per person E95-125. All credit cards accepted. Half board included. ***

In the centro storico, this 17th century palazzo represents a classic blending of the old and new. The common areas are very large and simply furnished and the rooms are comfortably sized with modern 'antique' furnishings. The bathrooms are small but come with hairdryer and complimentary toiletry kit. Buffet breakfast is served in the summer on a small terrace area. Apart from the private garage, guests also have at their disposal a sauna, two bars, and a reading room. The hotel also offers hiking and biking excursions for those that request it at an extra charge. A great place to stay in Spoleto. And if you are wondering about the name of the hotel, Charleston, South Carolina hosts a Spoleto festival every year. The hotel's name comes from that connection.

2. CLITUNNO, Piazza Sordini. Tel. 0743/223-340. Fax 0743/222-663. Web: www.hotelclitunno.com. 38 rooms. Per person E45-75. All credit cards accepted. Breakfast included. ***

Located near the Teatro Romano and recently renovated (1994), the Clitunno offers a pleasant mix of the old and new. The best rooms are furnished with the 'faux' antiques with tiled floors and oriental rugs covering them. The others are accommodatingly comfortable with more modern furnishings. The bathrooms are small but well appointed with all manner of amenities, including a phone. A good hotel in a good location.

3. AURORA, Via Appolinare 3. Tel 0743/220-315, Fax 0743/221-885. Email: info@hotelaurospoleto.it, Web: www.hotelaurospoleto.it. 40 rooms. Single E50-70; Double E60-90. **

A great two star right next to the Teatro Romana and just down from the Piazza del Mercato, the heart of the centro storico. This hotel is bucking for three star status and as such they are a superb two star, with clean and comfortable rooms and excellent service in an ideal location. The bathrooms are a little small and will need to be upgraded if they want to achieve that extra star, but in terms of price/quality this is a great find.

4. GATTAPONE, Via del Ponte 6, 06049 Spoleto. Tel. 0743/223-447, Fax 0743/223-448. 14 rooms. Standard Single E85-95; Superior Single E112-125; Standard Double E100-145; Superior Double E155-180. Breakfast E12. ****

Set in a magical location overlooking the green valley and the medieval aqueduct that traverses it. All the bedrooms overlook this picturesque scene and is the reason to stay here. The standard rooms are a little on the small side, but are comfortable and come with baths and showers so you can luxuriate in the tub after a long day of hiking through the mountains. I would suggest springing for the Superior rooms, which are located in the modern extension and offer more space. There are two comfortable bar areas, as well as two terraces below where sheep sometimes wander. This hotel, in its pristine natural setting, is only a short walk to the centro storico. If you are inspired and have the means, without a question, this is *the* place to stay in Spoleto.

5. PALAZZO DRAGONI, Via del Duomo, 13, 06049 Spoleto. Tel. 0743/222-220, Fax 0743/222-225. Web: www.initaly.com/hisres/palazzo/palazzo.htm. 15 rooms, 9 suites. Double E120-270. All credit cards accepted. Breakfast included. ****

This historic inn just steps from the Duomo, dating from the 14th century, has been lovingly restored and maintained through the years. In fact, the original stone foundations that you can see in the basement date from before 1000 CE, when the residence was two separate structures, with a street running between them! Ask to see it. The common room features vaulted ceilings, as do a number of rooms, with lovely rugs and a medieval feel. The rooms are spacious and charming, and the view from most rooms is incredible, looking out over the rooftops of historic Spoleto. You can see the spire of the Duomo and the walls of the Rocca from the lovely breakfast room on the top floor. Service is friendly and efficient. If you want to feel like you've stepped back into medieval times, this is the place to stay.

Where to Eat

6. APOLLINARE, Via S. Agata 14. Tel. 0743/223-256. Closed Tuesdays. All credit cards accepted. Dinner for two E60.

In the heart of Spoleto situated in what was at one time a Franciscan convent, in a short period of time this place has garnered a measure of culinary

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respect. The ingredients they use are all local but the way they prepare them is in the *cucina nuova* style. They get creative with their dishes so don't expect anything simple and traditional here. Do expect great atmosphere and imaginative food, though at elevated prices. A great place to come if you are into exploring the pleasures of the palate and are not concerned with the effect it has on your wallet.

7. PECCIARDA, *Vicolo San Giovanni 1. Tel. 0743/221-009. Closed Thursdays. No credit cards accepted. Dinner for two E35.*

Exquisite food, attentive service, great local atmosphere in a completely out of the way location, and all at prices that are easy on the pocketbook. This place is fantastic. A real slice of Spoleto. You have to come here if you are in town. Some of the simple but tasty dishes they serve include *gnocchi ripiena* (ricotta cheese dumplings), *stragozzi ai funghi* (local home made pasta with a spicy mushroom sauce) *pollo "alla Pecciarda"* (chicken stuffed with succulent herbs and spices), or a superb *arrosto misto* (mixed grilled meats).

8. IL PENTAGRAMMA, *Via T. Martani 4/6/8. Tel. 0743/223-141. Closed Mondays and January 15-31. All credit cards accepted except American Express. Dinner for two E40.*

With a new owner and a new cook this place is going through a rebirth, not that it was bad to begin with. It's just that now it's fantastic, with great local food and a serene musical atmosphere, at good prices. Try some of their *frascarelli con pomodoro e basilica* (pasta with tomatoes and basil) or *tagliatelle ai funghi porcini* (pasta with porcini mushrooms). For seconds the *petto di tacchino e purea di fave* (turkey breast with pureed fava beans) is rather tasty. They also make some great lamb dishes. To try a little of everything they have an abundant sampler menu for E25 per person, which gives you antipasto, pasta, main course and dessert. This is one of Spoleto's best restaurants.

9. LA BARCACCIA, *Piazza F.lli Bardier 3. Tel. 0743/221-171. Web: www.caribusiness.barcaccia. Closed Tuesdays. Credit cards accepted. Dinner for two E35.*

Located just off of the Piazza del Mercato, the heart of the centro storico, in an isolated piazza of its own, this restaurant offers typical local dishes at good prices. They specialize in cooking with truffles and grilling a wide variety of meats, especially veal. Everything they serve is stupendous and the ambiance is rustic and charming. For primo, try the *tortellini al tartufo* (meat filled pasta with truffle sauce), the *tortellini panna e funghi* (meat filled pasta with cream and mushrooms) or the *spaghetti alla carbonara* (with bacon egg, parmesan and pecorino). A great place to eat while in Spoleto.

Seeing the Sights

A. DUOMO

Rising up from the picturesque main square, the spire on the bell tower

next to the Duomo acts as a beacon. The bell tower was constructed in the 12th century, with stone material removed from ancient Roman ruins. The Romanesque Duomo, built at the same time, has an imposing facade that is preceded by a portico built at the turn of the 16th century. The facade has five Rosetta windows and a mosaic created by Solsterno from 1207 above which are three more Rosetta windows.

The interior (open November-February 8:00am-1:00pm & 3:00-5:30pm; March-October 8:00am-1:00pm & 3:00-6:30pm) is simple with a nave and two aisles. You will find a variety of religious art including some magnificent works by Pinturicchio in the Chapel of Bishop Erolì.

B. SAN EUFEMIA

Located near the Duomo, this is one of the finest examples of simple Umbrian-Romanesque architecture. Constructed in the first half of the 12th century, the facade is basic but inspiring, with a portal window and a sweep of arches on the crown. The interior is white, austere and stark and is divided into three parts – one of which being the women’s section above the main floor where women had to sit so as not to distract the men during services. Devoid of much finery, this church is a wonderful example of the piety and beauty of simplicity.

C. TEATRO ROMANO

A well preserved first century CE construction, located just off of the Piazza della Libertà and surrounded on one side by the stables of the 17th century Palazzo Ancaiani. The **church of Santa Agata** occupies what once was the stage area. Also included with the price of entry (E2) is access to the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (Via S. Agata, 9:00am-7:00pm; holidays 9:00am-1:00pm) which has a few interesting pieces, including artifacts from a warrior’s tomb, jewelry, pottery and other material from the Bronze Age through the Middle Ages.

Outside, the Teatro Romano is a wonderful example of how architecture from different eras has been intertwined into the pastiche of daily life in Spoleto. Another example of that is the **Arco di Druso Minore** and **Arco Romano** nearby. These are two Roman-era arches have been completely incorporated into the surrounding buildings.

D. PINOTECA COMUNALE

Up the Via del Municipio from the Piazza del Mercato – which used to be a Roman Forum – is the Palazzo Comunale with its tall tower, small piazza and large flag out front. Begun in the 13th century and renovated in the 18th, this palazzo is now home to the Pinoteca Comunale (admission E2.5, open 10:00am-1:00pm & 3:00-6:00pm, closed Tuesdays) which contains a small but captivating local museum. My favorite part is the display of old mint pieces that

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were used to make coins. As you enter, prior to going up to the museum, take a little time to admire the frescoes in the entrance way. Across from the palazzo are some delightful medieval houses set among winding little streets, which should be wandered if you are here.

Included in the price of entry is also access to the remains of an old Roman House, which I found infinitely more interesting than the little museum upstairs. Located to the left of the building, on the Via Visiale, is an excavated Roman home purported to be the home of the mother of Emperor Vespasian. Also included in the price of admission is access to the **Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna** (Piazza Sordini 5, 10:00am-1:00pm & 4:00-7:00pm, closed Mondays) with a limited but interesting display of local modern art pieces.

E. ROCCA

This fortress stronghold dominates the view over Spoleto. Finished in the second half of the 14th century, from here you can get wonderful panoramic photos of the town and valley. Once a residence of the popes and other aristocracy, it has since been used as an army base and was a prison until 1982. In 1983 the process of restoring back to its former splendor began. Today you can go on brief guided tours (admission E5, open 3:00-6:00pm Monday-Friday, 10:00am-noon & 3:00-6:00pm Saturday and Sunday). The Rocca is being prepared to house a museum relating to the medieval duchy of Spoleto. The guided tour is well worth the price despite the limited material available.

F. PONTE DELLE TORRE

Past the Rocca is one of the most incredible sights I have ever seen in Italy, a medieval aqueduct spanning a gorge and leading to a pristine, verdant hill covered with hiking trails. This 13th century span connects two hillsides and is 230 meters long and 76 meters high and has towering piers and narrow arcades, which cast incredible shadows over the valley in the late afternoon light. It no longer carries water but serves as a foot bridge over the valley. Because of this sight and where it leads, it makes Spoleto a must-see destination when in Italy.

On the Via della Ponte on the way to the aqueduct, is a little bar, **La Portella**, that has tables set out on an overlooking with views of St Peter's. This is a good spot at which to relax anytime day or night.

G. ST. PETER'S

Located just outside of the old walled city, and visible from the Ponte delle Terme, is this fine church built between the 12th and 13th centuries. The beautiful but simple facade is embellished with numerous ornamental bas-relief decorations. There are three portals in the lower level, the center one surrounded by most of the ornamentation. The interior of the church is divided

into three parts and was renovated and updated in 1669. This church, though plain, is one of the most important monuments in the region.

Other churches of interest inside the city walls are San Nicolo, San Filippo, and San Domenico.

Shopping

Spoletto does not have many international boutiques — yet — but what they do have are wonderful little shops selling typical works by local artisans. There are unique stores selling ceramics, fabrics, antiques, handmade notebooks as well as shops catering to the needs of the locals like alimentari, salumerie and more. There are also numerous galleries and artists' studios filled with a diverse array of paintings and sculptures. The best shopping is along the **Corso G. Garibaldi**, up the **Via Salaria Vecchia**, and all around the **Piazza del Mercato**.

Practical Information

Festivals

Spoletto Festival, Mid-June to mid-July. *Email: tickets@spoletofestival.net, Web: www.spoletofestival.net.* A world-renowned festival filled with music, dance, cinematography, theater, art exhibits and more, that goes on every day for a month. An arts extravaganza that has no equal.

Other festivals include:

- **February and March** – Carnival of Spoleto
- **Week After Easter** – Week of the High Middle Ages
- **September** – Experimental Season of Lyrical Opera
- **December 14, 15, 16 and January 1** – Nativity and the Living Crib

Tourist Information

To arrange day trips, find out about bus tours, find train or bus information, get maps, or detailed walking tour information, book a hotel or simply get general information about Spoleto, the **tourist office**, Piazza della Liberta 7, *Tel. 0743/49890, Fax 0743/46241*, is the place to visit.

GUBBIO

Gubbio is an ancient medieval town that majestically spreads out along the wind-swept ridges of **Mount Ingino**, with the **Torrente Camignano** river flowing through the settlement. This incredibly beautiful little town was founded by the ancient Umbrian people and eventually taken over by the Etruscans, as chronicled to in the **Eugubine Tablets** — the Rosetta Stone for ancient central Italian languages, culture and history — which are located here in Gubbio.

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These seven bronze tablets give illuminating insight into how the city was run between the 3rd century and 1st century BCE, and are partially written in the Umbrian language – which is a derivation of Etruscan – and simultaneously in a rudimentary form of Latin.

In 295 BCE, Roman rule began and the town remained safe and secure until the end of the empire, like many of the towns in the region. Then it was destroyed during the Gothic wars of the 5th century CE and eventually came under Lombard control in the 8th century CE. By the 11th century the town was a free, independent commune and as such began to grow in power and importance. This situation instantly led to conflicts with Perugia, another strong city-state in the region, which conquered Gubbio handily in the 12th century. Then the city fell under papal control, which was not as benevolent as one might imagine – it was actually quite despotic. The Dukes of Urbino grabbed control for two centuries, then the Papal States reaffirmed their dominance in 1624 until the city was annexed into the new Italian state in the 1860s.

The layout of the town is very Roman with its structured grid pattern and is quite medieval with its ancient buildings, old city walls, and winding streets and steps flowing up and down the mountain. Also added onto this atmosphere are plenty of more 'modern' Renaissance towers and palazzi mingling with Gothic churches, making Gubbio a stunningly beautiful, 'can't miss' town if you are in Umbria.

The main handicrafts in Gubbio are ceramics as well as wrought iron work, carpentry, and copperware. The main flourish in the cuisine comes from the pungently aromatic white truffle that graces the local dishes mainly in autumn and winter. Gubbio loves a party and has a number of fun medieval festivals to enjoy, especially the **Corsa dei Ceri-Candle Tower Race** held on May 15th, replete with costumes and contests. This festival is on par with the best festivals in Italy. In this reenactment of an ancient tradition, separate sections of the city carry enormous wooden towers topped with wax statues of saints (Ubaldo, George, Anthony and Abbot) on their shoulders through the town, then up to the Basilica of San Ubaldo on Mount Ingino. Despite the Christian trappings, the festival is rooted in pagan rituals celebrating the coming of spring and each saint represents ancient pagan gods of fertility.

Another festival of note, this one on the last Sunday in May, is the **Palio della Balestra** – a crossbow competition. In this festival, archers dressed in period garb vie for an accuracy title. Complete with exciting pageantry, this is a fun festival to witness. Also, from July to mid-August, classical plays are performed in the Roman Theater outside of the main city walls.

Arrivals & Departures

Gubbio can only be reached by car or bus. There is no train service. The bus schedule from Perugia is infrequent. Despite that, Gubbio is a great

destination in and of itself, and can also be a quick day trip from Perugia. A bus schedule (orario) for the local line, **Autolinee Regionali**, is available at the local tourist office in Piazza IV Novembre in Perugia.

Orientation

Gubbio is 40 kilometers north-northwest of Perugia. It is separated into two different sections, upper and lower. In the lower section life revolves around the circular **Piazza Quaranta Martiri**. The upper town is centered on the **Piazza Grande**. Surrounding this piazza are most of the main sights of the city.

Getting Around Town

The best way to get around Gubbio, like most Umbrian towns, is by walking. Inside the old city walls the tiny medieval streets lend themselves to exploration by foot. But since it is nestled along a hillside, you should be prepared for some arduous climbs while you explore.

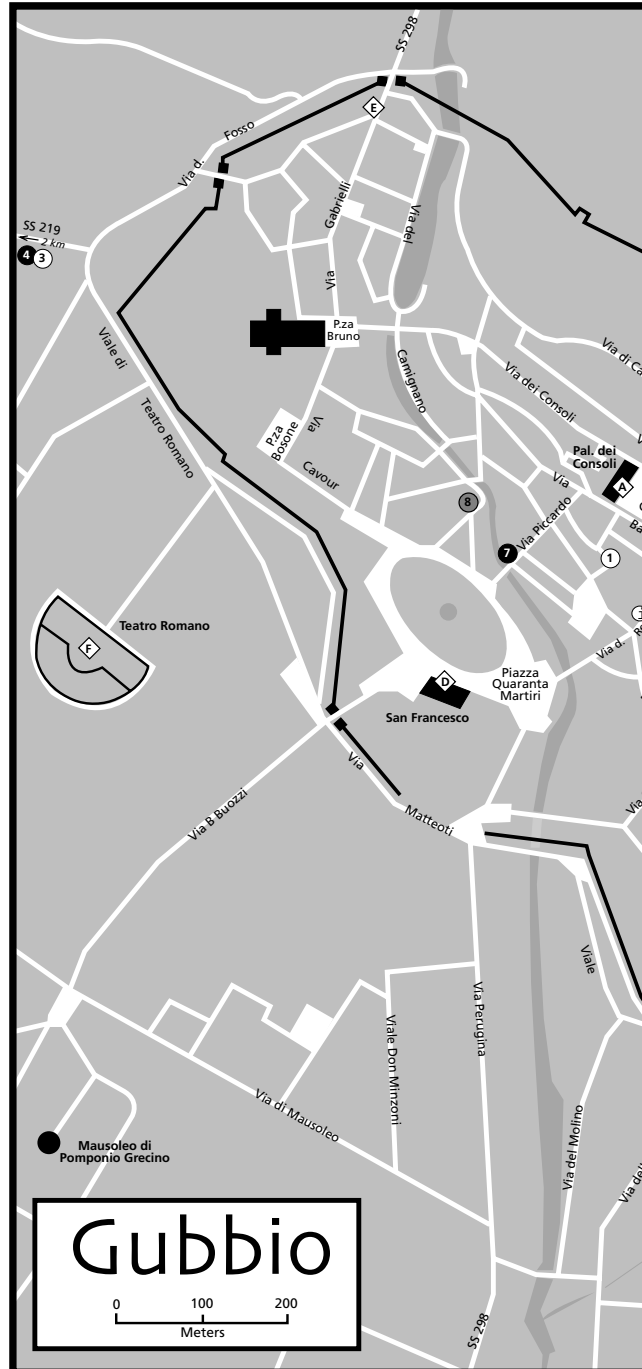
Where to Stay

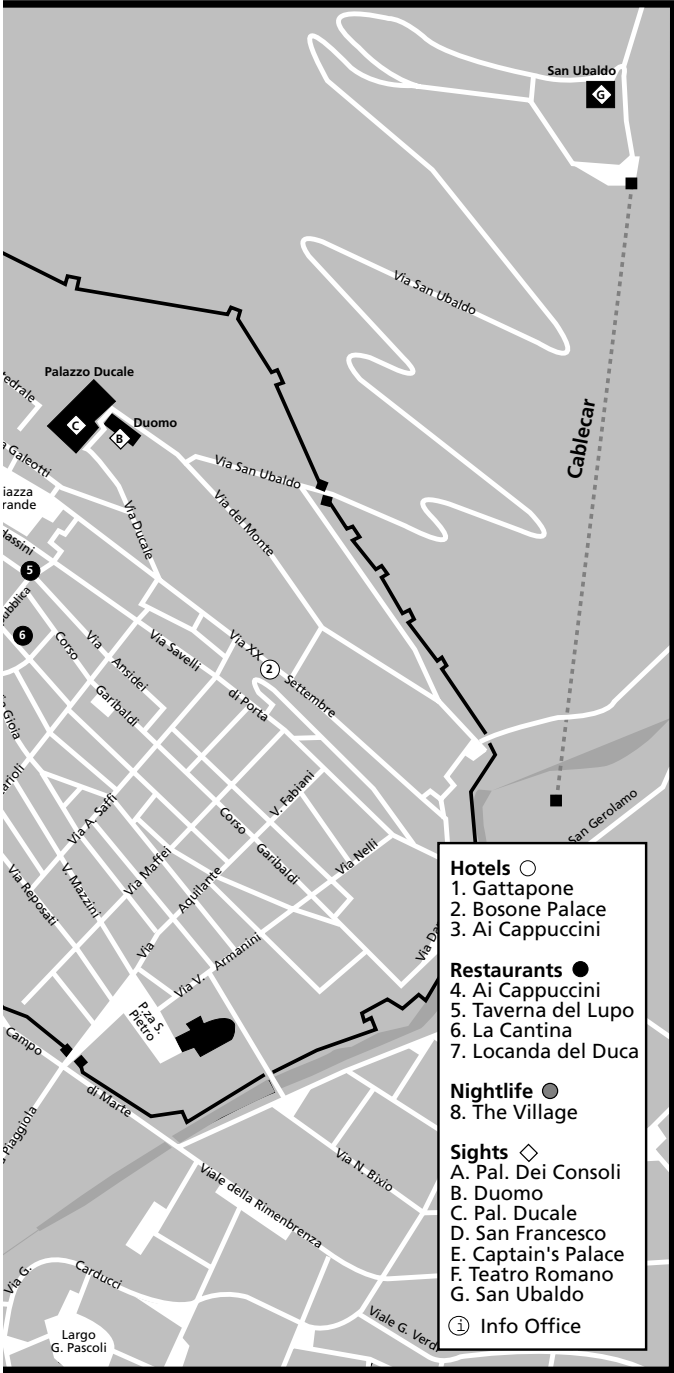
1. GATTAPONE, Via Ansidei 6. Tel. 075/927-2489, Fax 075/927-1269, Email: hotelgattapone@mencarelligroup.com, Web: www.mencarelligroup.com/ing/hotelgattaponeing/gattapone.htm. Closed January. 28 rooms, all with bath. Single E70-90; Double E90-110. All credit cards accepted. Breakfast included. ***

In an ancient building in the center of Gubbio, close to the Piazza Grande and the Palazzo dei Consoli, this old and respected hotel has recently been granted another star rating, and deservedly so. The general impression of the entire hotel is one of cleanliness, and every room is accommodatingly comfortable and come with air-conditioning, heat, mini-bars, telephones and TVs. Breakfast is either served in your room or at a nearby restaurant, Il Taverna del Lupo (see restaurant section below) that is owned by the same family, Mencarelli. A good place to stay in Gubbio.

2. BOSONE PALACE, Via XX Settembre 22. Tel. 075/922-0688, Fax 075/922-0552, Email: hotelbosonepalace@mencarelligroup.com, Web: www.mencarelligroup.com/ing/hotelpalaceing/bosonepalace.htm. 35 rooms. Single E70-85; Double E85-105. All credit cards accepted. Breakfast included. ***

Located in a 16th century building, this hotel is also run by the Mencarelli family. Maintaining an old world charm and ambiance while offering all modern amenities, the entrance is elegant with aristocratic red divans and a scenic stairway leading up to the guest rooms. Spacious and comfortable, the rooms are decorated with antique furniture and parquet floors covered with oriental rugs. Though on the small side, the bathrooms all have showers and





come with a complimentary toiletry kit and hair dryer. An elegant hotel right in the middle of the old city.

3. AI CAPPUCCINI, Via Tifernate. Tel. 075/9234, Fax 075/661-109. Web: www.venere.com/umbria/gubbio/aicappuccini. 100 rooms. Single E170; Double E210-270. All credit cards accepted. Breakfast included. ****

Located a kilometer outside the walls of the old city this hotel was once a convent back in the 1600's. While still maintaining the charm of the old structure, the renovations of 1990 have brought this excellent four star hotel into the modern era. Some of the rooms are the old cells the monks used, updated for your comfort of course, and some are located in a new addition to the older structure. Many rooms are around the periphery of a quiet relaxing park area; all are spacious and perfect for relaxing, as is the swimming pool, sun deck and sauna. If you want to stay in the lap of luxury in Gubbio, stay here.

Where to Eat

4. AI CAPPUCCINI, Via Tifernate. Tel. 075/9234, Fax 075/661-109. Closed Mondays. All credit cards accepted. Dinner for two E75.

The cuisine is traditional Umbrian which means you'll find truffles, cheese and meats in most dishes. Try their maniche ripiene di ricotta zucchine peperoni e pomodoro (cylinders of pasta stuffed with cheese, zucchini, peppers and tomatoes). For seconds try their succulent petto di anatra tartufato (breast of duck with truffles). A charming atmosphere with seating inside and outside in the park terrace.

5. IL TAVERNA DEL LUPO, Via G. Ansidei 6. Tel. 075/927-4368. Closed Mondays. All credit cards accepted. Dinner for two E70.

Run by the Mencarelli group that seems to have a firm grip on the accommodation and culinary options in Gubbio, beyond a doubt this is the best food and most welcoming atmosphere in Gubbio. I recommend trying the menu sampler at E35 per person since you'll get a full meal complete with antipasto, pasta, main course and dessert. The menu consists of traditional Umbrian cuisine: pasta, truffles and meat. The ambiance is charming, romantic, and upscale. Come dressed appropriately and be prepared to pay for the privilege.

6. LA CANTINA, Via Piccotti 3. Tel. 075/922-0583. Website: www.gubbio.com/lacantina. All credit cards accepted. Dinner for two E35.

Great atmosphere and wonderful food. This place seems to be crowded all the time and for good reason – it is an excellent restaurant. There are some tiny tables set up just before the entrance in their own little cortille, but the place to be is inside in their expansive and rustic dining hall. Try some tasty tagliatelle al funghi porcini (with mushrooms) or al tartufo (with truffles). For seconds they have meats of all sorts, especially veal, as well as great pizza. A down-to-earth, fun place to eat.

7. LOCANDA DEL DUCA, *Via Picardi 1. Tel. 075/927-7753. All credit cards accepted. Dinner for two E25.*

This is a friendly and irreverent restaurant in a quaint old neighborhood, which serves tasty pastas and meats, but they are really known for their exquisite pizzas. The interior is rustic, set with a wood beamed ceiling; there's a small garden terrace overlooking the small river that flows through Gubbio. A good choice, a little off of the beaten path, and they are open until midnight if you need a late night snack.

Seeing the Sights

A. PALAZZO DEI CONSOLI

Looking out over the town this imposing structure sits at the east end of the Piazza Grande and is the architectural and monumental core of the city. Ringed with some Renaissance *palazzi*, one of which is the **Palazzo Pretorio**, from this piazza you can get some stunning panoramic views.

The Palazzo dei Consoli is really two 14th century buildings, architecturally associated but clearly distinct. Simple and elegant, the palace is graced with a magnificent Gothic portal, in front of which are a set of steps that face out onto the piazza. The facade is divided by vertical pilaster strips, topped with turrets over which looks a small bell tower.

Also known as the Palazzo dei Popolo, the building now houses the **Picture Gallery** which has some paintings from Gubbio dating from the 14th and 16th centuries; and the **Archaeological Museum**, which houses the seven historically significant **Eugubine Tablets**, the Rosetta Stone for Central Italy. These tablets have a corresponding Umbrian language text, which evolved alongside the Etruscan, and a rudimentary form of Latin. There are also some interesting ancient archaeological finds like stone ceramics and coins. Not laid out and catalogued like the Smithsonian, but interesting and educational nonetheless.

B. DUOMO

A simple austere brick cathedral built in the 12th century, located up the hill from the older Roman town. The facade is graced with a plain circular window above a pointed portal. The interior is in a Latin cross plan and has one nave and many pointed arches supporting the ceiling. Simple and plain inside, except for the paintings and frescoes of the 16th century Umbrian artists along the walls, the church also has an incredibly detailed altar space, organ and choir. This cathedral is a wonderful example of austere medieval beauty.

C. PALAZZO DUCALE

Located directly across from the Duomo, this is a prime example of Renaissance architecture. Built in 1470 on the site of an older Lombard palace, this building contains a splendid internal courtyard surrounded by porticos. In

the basement there is an archaeological excavation of the alterations made atop the building during the Renaissance. The palace's foundation can be seen as can segments of the original plumbing. Fragments of medieval ceramics found during the excavations are also on display.

The rest of the museum, upstairs, is really just a set of whitewashed walls, scattered antique furnishings, restored pieces from local churches, and an occasional modern art exhibit to fill up the space. Save the E2 cost of entry and buy a drink at The Village instead (see below under *Nightlife*), unless of course you are keenly interested in medieval plumbing.

D. CHURCH OF ST. FRANCIS

Located on the large Piazza Quaranta Martiri, this church was built in the 13th century with a bare facade, a Gothic portal and a small rose window. There is an octagonal campanile at the right side of the church.

The interior has one nave and two aisles. When the sun streams in through the large pointed windows along the sides and the colored windows in the apse, this church simply glows. The attached cloisters evoke images of times past and should be visited if open. Other churches of possible interest to visit in the town, though much simpler in ornamentation, are San Secondo, San Giovanni, and San Pietro.

E. CAPTAIN OF THE PEOPLE'S PALACE

Located on Via dell Capitano del Popolo #6, near the outskirts of this small town, this 13th century building is rather plain, but what's inside is memorable. Home to the **Museum of Torture Instruments**, you can just imagine the displays. They are educational, enlightening and a refreshing reality check concerning the relative safety of modern life.

F. ROMAN THEATER

Located just outside the old city walls, this ancient theater is considered to be one of the largest and best preserved in Italy. Now converted to a verdant park, this old theater is also home to live productions through July and mid-August. Separated into four wedge-shaped sections by flights of stairs with many of the ruins rebuilt and solidified, you really feel as if you've walked back in time.

G. BASILICA OF SAN UBALDO

At the summit of Mount Ingino lies the terminus for the traditional Corsa dei Ceri, the ancient tower up the hill. It can be reached by cable car from the station through the Porta Romana (an immense tower construction evoking a definite medieval feel) or by walking the length of the Corsa dei Ceri through the Porta San Ubaldo. I suggest that route only for the most fit.

Built in the 1514, worthy of note is the engraved marble altar and the glass coffin containing the well-preserved body of St. Ubaldo. The three wooden towers used in the Corso dei Ceri festival are on display here year round. On the hillside above the church are the remains of the 12th century Rocca.

Nightlife & Entertainment

8. THE VILLAGE, *Piazza 40 Martiri #29. Tel. 075/922-2296.*

Art, history, architecture and the surrounding natural setting, coupled with a warm, friendly atmosphere make The Village is the place to come for late night festivities in Gubbio. Located in a renovated old church, I can't think of a better place to come with friends or to meet new ones. They serve Bass and Tenents on tap at E4 a pint and serve some basic Italian-style pub food.

Practical Information

Tourist Information

To arrange day trips, find out about bus tours, find train or bus information, get maps, or detailed walking tour information, book a hotel or simply get general information about Gubbio, the **tourist office** is the place to go, *Piazza Oderisi 6, Tel. 075/922-0693 or 922-0790, Fax 075/927-3409.*

TODI

An ancient and attractive city surrounded by medieval walls, and filled with quaint winding streets, **Todi** rises up among green hills above where the Naia flows into the Tiber. Put this little town on your Umbria itinerary.

Mostly enclosed within the perimeter of the old town walls in a roughly triangular layout, Todi is wonderfully apart from the advance of time, and has yet to succumb to the invading hordes of tourists. There is only one hotel in the centro storico, and a small bed and breakfast which means that the residents of the city still far outnumber the tourists, a situation you will find true all over Umbria, but especially so in Todi.

Todi, like all of Umbria, is not a place to pursue frantic sightseeing forays. Todi has a refreshingly gentle feel to it, and is still untainted by the hustle and bustle of frenetic tour groups trying to suck up the Italian experience as if it were a giant Slurpee. Todi is a town where you can fit right into the flow of real Italian life, wander unobtrusively among the friendly locals, sit with them in the parks as their children play, or smile with them in the piazzas as they pantomime one of the scenes in life's play. This is a place to undertake casual meandering, not only around the hilly cobblestone streets lined with medieval homes – some set into old Roman and Etruscan walls. Todi is also a place to rest and be rejuvenated in a fairy tale setting.

Founded by the Tutere, an ancient Umbrian people, and heavily influenced by the Etruscans who settled along the banks of the Tiber, Todi

eventually fell under Rome's control during the 4th century BCE and became known as Tuder. When the Roman Empire collapsed, the city underwent its share of destruction from the Goths and Byzantine Empire.

Beginning in the year 1000 it became an independent commune, during which time it extended its domain as far as Amelia and Terni in the 13th century. But then it became part of other empires again in the 14th century, eventually ending up in the hands of the Papal States. When Napoleon was in control of the Italian peninsula, Todi was an important government seat. After Napoleon it once again came under papal jurisdiction, then was incorporated into the Italian Republic in 1860.

Arrivals & Departures

Todi is difficult to get to because the train and bus schedules are erratic. Also, the train station is a ways out of town (take the bus "C" from Piazza Jacapone) and is on a small regional line, which means the trains move much slower and stop at every town along the way. Check with the information office for schedules.

If you are taking the train into Perugia, be aware that Perugia has three different train stations. Trains from Todi stop first at Porta S. Giovanni station in Perugia, then go onto an even smaller station called **Perugia Santa Ana** (which is where you get off, since it is near the escalators up to the center), but they do not stop at the main train station in Perugia.

Orientation

Located 45 kilometers from Perugia, Todi is a small triangular shaped town sprawled along the crest of a hill. The skyline is dominated by Santa Maria della Consolazione in the lower part of town and the Chiesa di San Fortunato in the upper part. The Piazza del Popolo is definitely the central focus of the town around which are situated most of the major sights.

Getting Around Town

The only way to get around town is by walking. The town is small but even so, getting from the lower part of town to the upper can seem long because of the steep uphill grade. Be prepared to hike while here.

Where to Stay

1. RESIDENZA SAN LORENZO TRE, Via San Lorenzo 3, Six rooms, four with bath. Tel. & Fax 075/894-4555, Web: www.todi.net/lorenzo. Holiday Jan. 15 – Feb 28. Single without bath E75; Single E80; Double without bath E80; Double E110. Breakfast included. No credit cards accepted.

Located on the upper floor of a quaint palazzo just off of the Piazza del Popolo, this is a great place to stay in Todi. Though not technically a hotel, I

would categorize this bed and breakfast-style residence as a three star, despite the lack of mini-bar and TV in the rooms. What this place lacks in unnecessary modern amenities is more than made up for with its charm, ambiance and incredibly scenic panoramic views. There are two rooms that open onto the most breathtaking vistas you can imagine. Each room is furnished with antique furnishings, which adds to the ambiance, but make sure you specifically request one of the two rooms with a view and your stay here will be stupenda (stupendous).

2. FONTE CESIA, Via Lorenzo Leony 3, Tel. 075/894-3737, Fax 075/894-4677. Email: fontecesia@fontecesia.it. Web: www.fontecesia.it. 37 rooms. Single E115; Double E140-160. All credit cards accepted. Breakfast included. ****

Situated in a noble and antique building in the center of Todi, this is an excellent small town four star hotel. Opened in 1994, they have made the decor antique to add a touch of old world character. The rooms are spacious, very comfortable and come with every necessary modern comfort, though the bathrooms are minuscule. Their sundeck is a great place to relax as are the downstairs common areas. A good place to stay in Todi.

Where to Eat

3. UMBRIA, Via San Bonaventura 13. Tel. 075/894-2390. Closed Tuesdays and at the end of December. All credit cards accepted. Dinner for two E55.

Where before the food here was average, now it is really good. And before where the service was surly it has come to be professional. I think you'll like the tagliatelle ai funghi (pasta with local mushrooms) or the spaghetti agli 'strioli' (spaghetti with an tasty herb only grown locally). For seconds the salami di cinghiale (wild boar) is a succulently tasty local sausage. An excellent choice while in Todi.

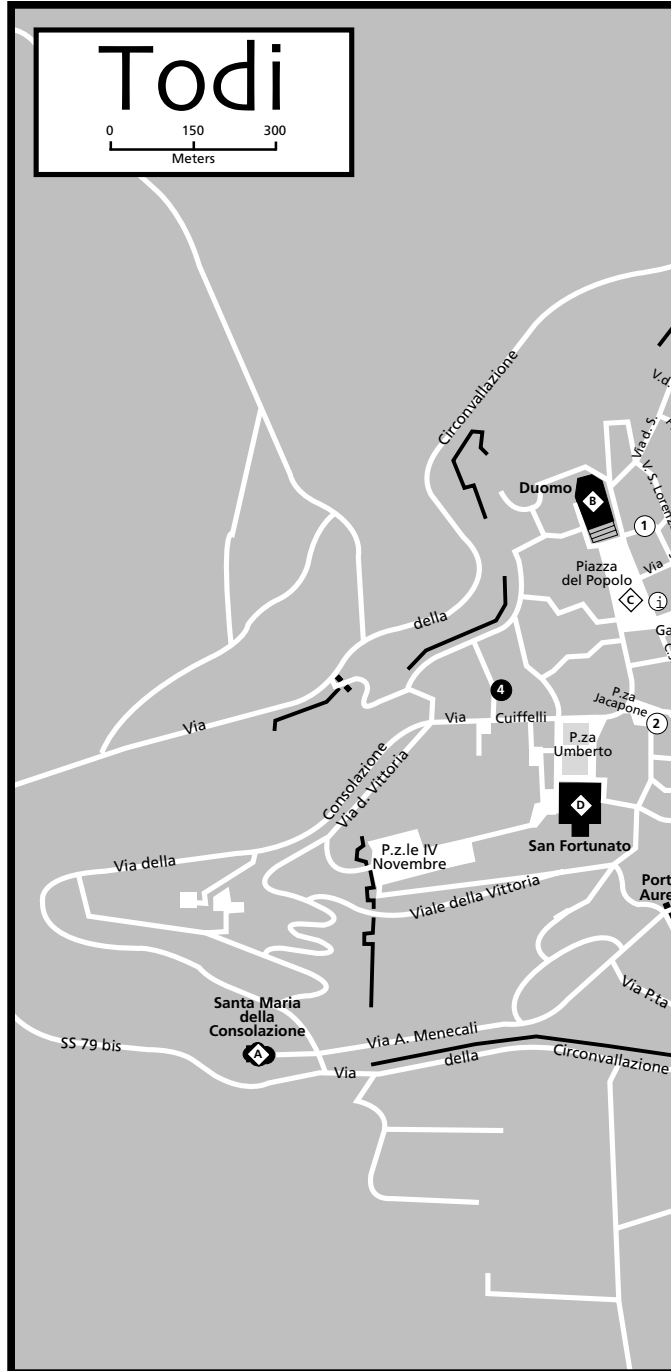
4. LE SCALETTE, Via delle Scalette 1, Tel. 075/894-4422. Closed Mondays. Open 12:00-2:30pm & 7:00pm-1:00am. Dinner for two E35.

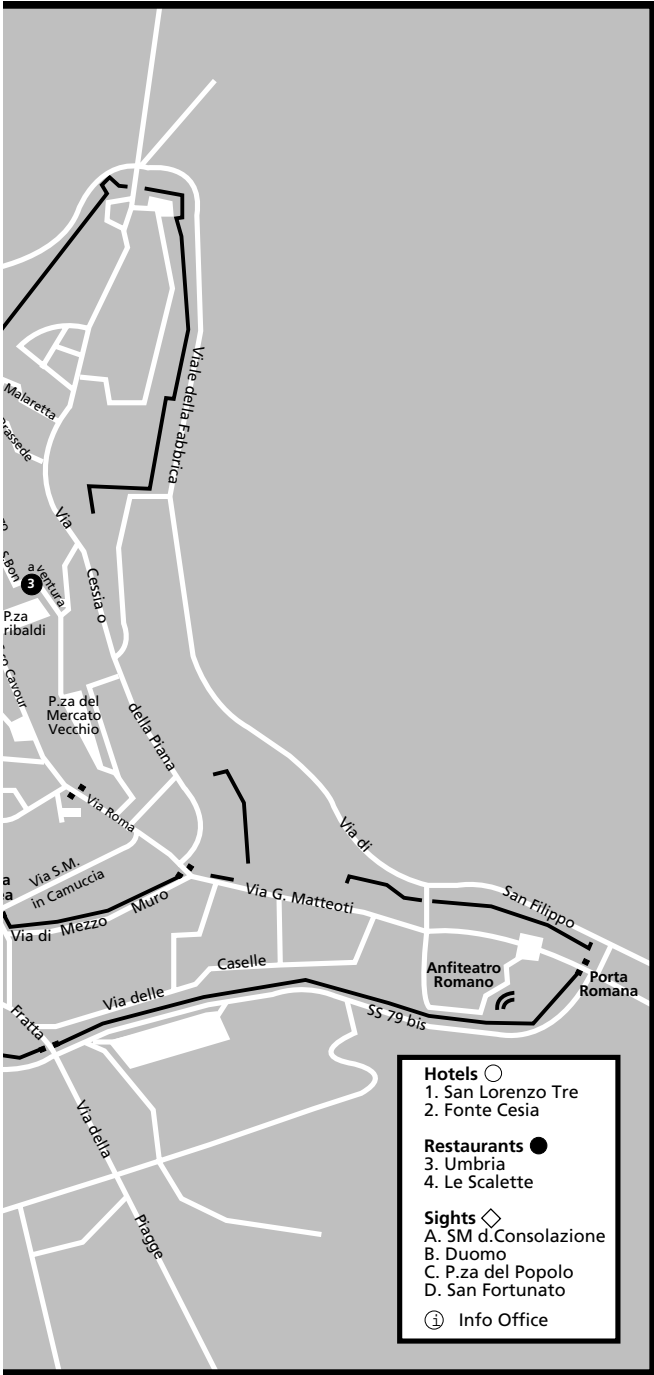
This is a menu that has something for everyone, whether it's pizza, pasta, meats or vegetarian servings. They have terrace seating with some panoramic views, as well as a quaint medieval interior to add to this place's rustic charm. Here you will find authentic local atmosphere, excellent regional cooking, and attentive service, which will all translate into a wonderful meal. Try their cappollini al tartufo nero (stuffed pasta with truffle cream sauce), or any of their pizza's.

Seeing the Sights

A. SANTA MARIA DELLA CONSOLAZIONE

Located a little ways outside of the city walls, this is a must see location when in Todi. A delightful example of Renaissance architecture, begun in 1508





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and finished almost a century later, this lovely church, like San Fortunato, stands out from the diminutive skyline of the town. In the shape of a Greek Cross with a large central dome there are four apses each crowned with its own half dome.

B. DUOMO

This church dominates the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II (also known as the Piazza del Popolo). The rectangular facade with three Rosetta windows and the same number of Gothic portals is simple yet refined. Flanking this facade is the robust bell tower that was once used as a military watchtower.

The interior is divided into three sections. In the left aisle is an interesting bronze of San Martino by Fiorenzo Bacci. The counter facade has a 16th century fresco of the *Last Judgment* by Faenzone. Unfortunately it has not been well preserved but is still powerful. Please also take note of the wooden choir behind the altar, as well as the two paintings portraying *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*, to the left and right of the altar, done by Spagna. For E7.5 you can get a ticket to see the crypt which is a rather non-descript underground area but interesting for medieval history buffs.

C. PIAZZA VITTORIO EMANUELE II (PIAZZA DEL POPOLO)

Besides the aforementioned Duomo, also located in the extensive Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II (more commonly known as the Piazza del Popolo) are the Palazzo dei Priori, Palazzo del Popolo, and Palazzo del Capitano. An extensive piazza that is the heart of this small town, it is located on the site of an ancient Roman Forum and is one the most beautiful medieval squares in all of Europe. Dominated by the Duomo and surrounded by numerous monumental palaces. it transports you back in time.

Across from the Duomo is the turreted **Palazzo dei Priori**, built in the 14th century then joined together with some pre-existing buildings. The trapezoidal shaped tower was originally much higher, but through wars and erosion it remains in its truncated form today. The bronze eagle, the symbol of Todi, that stands out above the second order of windows was made by Giovanni di Gigliaccio in 1339.

The Palazzo del Capitano is a 13th century construction with a set of stairs leading to the second story entrance. The building is the site of the **Roman-Etruscan Museum and Civic Picture Gallery**. There are a number of Roman and Etruscan artifacts that have come from the surrounding area with terracotta and bronze work. In the Picture Gallery you will find fine paintings by many Umbrian and Tuscan artists, as well as gold and ceramic work.

D. SAN FORTUNATO

Rising up above the town this Gothic church (hours: winter 9:30am-12:30pm & 3:00-5:00pm; summer 8:30am-12:30pm & 3:00-7:00pm) was

built between the 13th and 15th centuries. The half-completed facade overlooks the top of a scenic but fatiguing series of steps and their accompanying green space. There are three portals, the middle one richly decorated with a variety of colonnades, and is flanked by two statues of *Gabriel* and *Virgin Mary*. The other two are smaller versions of the middle.

The interior can be described as majestic but plain, with its three grandiose naves and the cross vaulting, and stark white walls. The wooden choir behind the altar is as extensive as in the Duomo but it is more accessible and visible here. Unfortunately some the fine frescoes are only in fragments now, as preservation work was not started until this century. But even if the interior art work is a little decayed, the serenity of the space is spiritually invigorating.

E. PARCO DELLA ROCCA

Near San Fortunato is the Parco della Rocca, where you have nice panoramic views, peace and quiet — when there aren't any kids running around — a place to picnic and cuddle, a rose garden to stimulate your nose, all of which make you feel as if you are on top of the world. The peaceful sense of continuity and permanence that Todi evokes is personified by this little park and the residents who frequent it.

Practical Information

Festivals & Fairs

- **March-April** – Antiquarian Exhibition of Italy
- **June-July** – National Antique Fair
- **September 8** – Festa di S. Maria della Consolazione
- **September** – Todi festival
- **October 14** – Festa di San Fortunato (Patron saint of Todi)
- **November 11** – Fair of St. Martin

Tourist Information

To arrange day trips, find out about bus tours, find train or bus information, get maps, or detailed walking tour information, book a hotel or simply get general information about Todi, go to the **tourist office**, Piazza del Popolo 39, *Tel. 075/894-2526*.

ORVIETO

Orvieto is one of Umbria's best cities to visit. Just over the border with Lazio, the province that Rome is in, the stunning city of Orvieto rests picturesquely on the top of a hill bordered by protective cliffs, waiting for you to arrive.

One of the most beautiful towns in all of Italy, Orvieto has a rich array of winding medieval streets and stunning architecture. The town is also famous for the wonderful Orvieto wine that flows from the local vines, as well as the

tasty olive oil from the nearby olive groves. Besides its culinary pursuits, the town also is a ceramic center. Local artisans, especially the immensely talented Michelangeli, also create intricate wood carvings as well as delicate lace.

The first inhabitants of Orvieto were Etruscan, after which the city became a protectorate of the Roman Empire. With the empire's decline, Orvieto underwent the inevitable spate of barbarian invasion. It then became a free commune in the 12th century CE and enjoyed a period of artistic and political advancement, until the Papal States suppressed it into their fold in the 14th century. When Napoleon Buonaparte conquered it, he made it an essential center of his dominion until Orvieto was absorbed into the Kingdom of Italy in 1860.

Arrivals & Departures

Orvieto is accessible from Rome by a train which runs every two hours, starting at 6:12am and ending at 8:30pm, and takes an hour and twenty minutes. Returns start at 9:00am and end at 10:30am. Once at the train station you then take the funicolare (cable car) up the hill to the Piazzale Cahen. By the funicolare station is where St. Patrick's Well is located so stop there before you head up into town.

From the station catch the bus 'A' — which should be waiting for you as you exit the funicolare since the bus is timed to its arrival — to the Piazza Duomo and the information office. Or take a taxi. From the Duomo you can get to all sights, hotels, and restaurants.

Orientation

Located on the top of a hill surrounded by cliffs, the **Corso Cavour** divides the city east to west. On the east is the **Piazzale Cahen** and the **Fortrezza** — built in 1364 and now a pleasant public garden with fine views over the surrounding valley — where the funicolare arrives, and at the west is the **Porta Maggiore**.

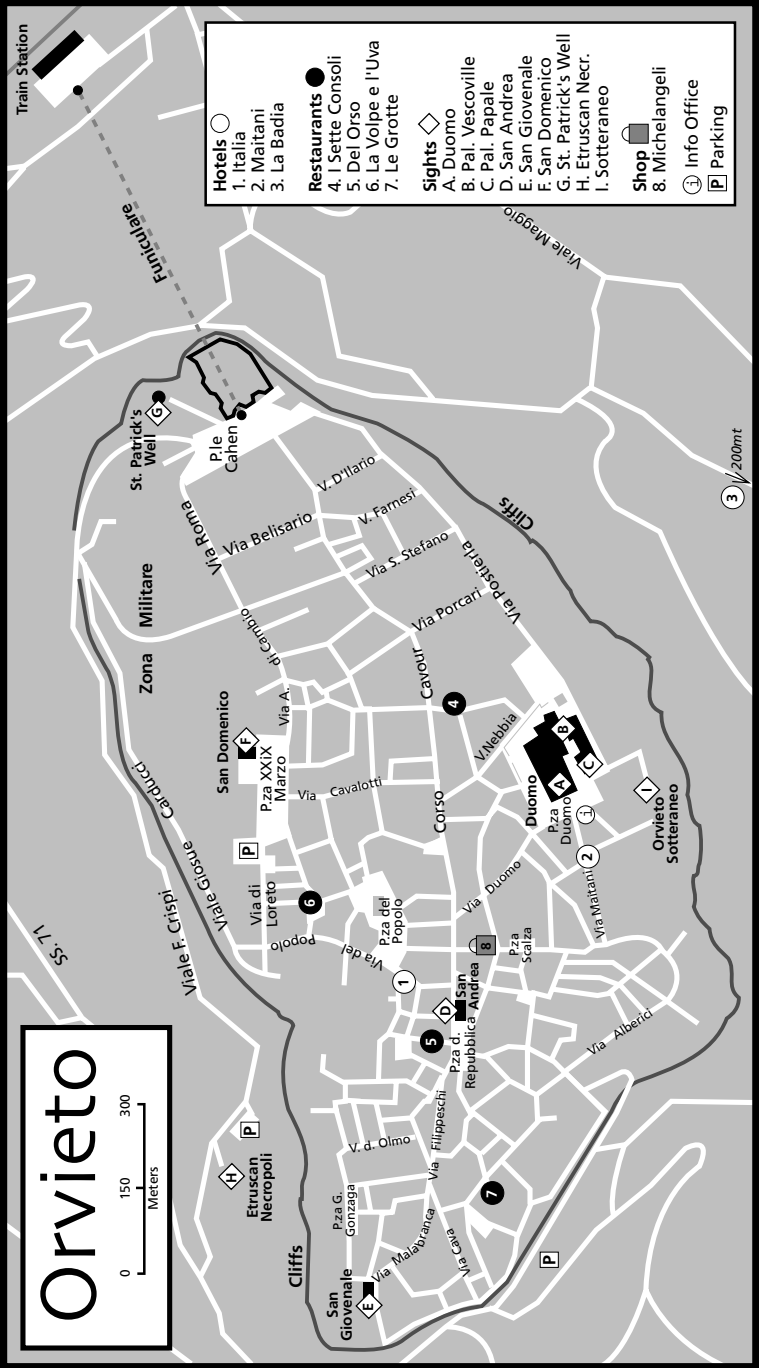
Getting Around Town

This town is easy to walk since being on the top of a bluff it is mainly flat. Once you take the funicolare up from the station there won't be many more serious hills to traverse.

Where to Stay

1. ITALIA, Via di Piazza del Popolo. Tel/Fax 0763/42065, Email: hotelita@libero.it, Web: www.bellaumbria.net/grand-Hotel-Italia. 42 rooms. Single E70; Double E100-110. Credit cards accepted. Breakfast included. ***

This 18th century palazzo in the centro storico of Orvieto offers you a pleasant stay right in the heart of things. The spacious rooms and relaxing



common areas are furnished in a classic but comfortable style, with antiques and a floral theme throughout. The best rooms are those facing the small courtyard (cortile), but all come with every three star amenity. The only real drawback other than that is the minuscule bathrooms. Besides that, this is a wonderful place to stay in Orvieto.

2. MAITANI, Via Lorenzo Maitani. Tel 0763/42011, Fax 0763/660-209. Web: www.argoweb.it/hotel_maitani/maitani.uk.html. Closed January 6-26. 40 rooms. Single E80; Double E130. Suite E150-180. All credit cards accepted. Breakfast E10. ****

If you want a serene atmosphere you'll find it here in this antique palazzo in the centro storico, only a few steps from the magnificent Duomo of Orvieto. The rooms are all different from one another but are furnished for comfort and style. The bathrooms are all modern, though a wee bit tiny compared to North American standards. There is ample public space downstairs in the lounge/bar area, where you can put your feet up at the end of the day. A wonderful place to stay while in Orvieto, in an ideal setting.

3. LA BADIA, Tel 0763/301-959 or 305-455, Fax 0763/305-396. Web: www.labadiahotel.it. All credit cards accepted. Single E125; Double E300. ****

An unbelievably beautiful 12th century abbey at the foot of Orvieto is home to this incredible hotel that has only recently opened for business. Here you will be treated to one of the most unique and memorable experiences in the entire world. The rooms are immense, the accommodations exemplary, the service impeccable, and the atmosphere stupendous. For a fairy tale vacation stay here. Also make sure that you eat at least once at their soon to be world-renowned restaurant offering refined local dishes in an incredibly historic and romantic atmosphere.

Where to Eat

4. I SETTE CONSOLI, Piazza San Angelo 1/a. Tel. 0763/343-911. Closed Wednesdays and February and March. All credit cards accepted. Dinner for two E40.

This is one of the best places in town with a comfortable local atmosphere, and a beautiful garden for dining during good weather. If you don't want to make a decision about the food you can order from a series of fixed price menu options that offer you a variety of dishes to sample, and all at good prices. Everything here is fresh and local, especially their salami and cheese, which come in a tasty antipasto platter.

5. TRATTORIA DEL ORSO, Via della Misericordia. Tel. 0763/341-642. Closed Monday nights, Tuesdays and February. Visa accepted. Dinner for two E40.

Deep in the heart of Orvieto, nestled down a small side street is this small trattoria passionately operated by Gabrielle (doing the cooking) and Ciro

(greeting and seating) where you can find genuine and simple Umbrian cuisine. You should start with the magnificent bruschetta (garlic bread) and proceed to the luscious fettucine alfredo. For seconds there are plenty of meat and vegetable dishes, as well as omelets to choose from. The desserts are home made, so you have to save room for at least one. A great place to sample the local flavor.

6. LA VOLPE E L'UVA, *Via Ripa Corsica 1. Tel. 0763/341-612. Closed Mondays and From July 15 to August 15. American Express and Visa accepted. Dinner for two E35.*

The food, friendly atmosphere and low prices really packs in the customers. Their antipasto salami plate (salumi misti locali) features all sorts of local favorites. The gnocchetti con olio pepe e pecorino is a superb mixture of pepper, oil and pecorino cheese over small potato gnocchi. For your entrée you should consider ordering the arrosto di maiale alle erbe (tasty roast pork marinated in herbs) that literally melts in your mouth, or the delicious pollo alla cacciatore (chicken hunter style) or agnello sulla griglia (grilled lamb). For dessert there is good selection of cheese and fruit as well as a rich, creamy chocolate mousse (mousse di cioccolato).

7. LE GROTTE DEL FUNARO, *Via Ripa Serancia 41. Tel. 0763/343-276. Closed Mondays. Dinner for two E40.*

Literally situated in a series of grotte (caves) carved into the tufa layer upon which Orvieto sits, this place offers you a unique dining experience to go along with their delicious food. The whole point of coming here is to eat downstairs in the caves, so avoid the terrace. They have a well rounded menu, but in truffle season that aromatic tuber is featured prominently and any dish seasoned with it should be sampled if you are here from October to December. Try Le Grotte when in Orvieto. You will not be disappointed.

Seeing the Sights

A. DUOMO

Stunning! Elegant! Mesmerizing! No words can really describe this amazing cathedral, located in the Piazza del Duomo, whose facade is covered with bas-reliefs, colorful mosaics, and radiating frescoes. The pointed portals on the facade literally jump out at you, and the rose window — flanked by figures of the Prophets and Apostles — is a treasure to behold. Bring binoculars to admire all the intricate detail, since the facade is an entire museum in and of itself.

Most of its ornamentation was created between the 14th and 16th centuries. The bronze doors are contemporary works by Emilio Greco (1964). A museum featuring more of his art is situated on the ground floor of the Palazzo Papale to the right of the Duomo. Above and beside the doors are the Bronze Symbols of the Evangelists. The exterior side walls are alternating horizontal layers of black basalt and pale limestone in the distinctive Pisan

style. This same style is translated into the interior, covering both the walls, and the columns which divide the church into a nave and two aisles. The christening font is the work of several artists and is stunning in its intricacies. The apse is lit by 14th century stained glass windows by Bonino and contains frescoes by Ugolino di Prete Ilario.

In the right transept behind an artistic 16th century wrought iron railing is the beautiful Capella Nuova, which contains Luca Signorelli's superlative Last Judgment. It is purported to be the inspiration for Michelangelo's Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel. A must see, since it is also considered one of the greatest frescoes in Italian art. The chapel also contains frescoed medallions depicting poets and philosophers ranging from Homer to Dante.

B. PALAZZO VESCOVILLE

Located to the right and at the rear of the Duomo, restored in the 1960s, it now houses the **Archaeological Museum** (open 9:00am – 7:00pm, Holidays 9:00am-1:00pm; admission E2), which has a collection of material excavated from the Etruscan Necropoli that are located nearby the city. A simple, basic introduction to the history of the region.

C. PALAZZO PAPALE

Situated to the right of the Duomo, this was once the residence of a long line of popes when they came to visit the city. This building dates back to the 8th century and is also known as the **Palace of Bonifacio VIII**. On the ground floor you can find the **Museum of Emilio Greco** (open 10:30am-1:00pm and 2:00-6:00pm in winter and 3:00-7:00pm in summer) exhibiting numerous works by this fine sculptor from Catania. On the first floor is the **Cathedral Museum**, which displays miscellaneous works of art, mostly from the Duomo or about the Duomo.

D. SAN ANDREA

On the edge of the Piazza della Repubblica, this plain church is best known for its dodecagonal campanile, a twelve-sided bell-tower. This masterful architectural complement to the church has three orders of windows and a turreted top section. Built between the 6th and 14th centuries on the site of a pre-existing early Christian church, the interior is a single nave with two aisles, a raised transept and cross vaults. The wooden altar by Scalza is worthy of note, as is the pulpit. Situated below the church and accessible by appointment are some ancient ruins dating from the Iron Age up to the medieval period.

E. SAN GIOVENALE

Originally a Romanesque building San Giovenale was reconstructed in the 13th century with Lombard features. The massive square bell tower dwarfs

this plain and sturdy looking church. The interior is a simple design with one single nave and two aisles. Note the Romanesque high altar intricately decorated with bas-reliefs as well as the frescoed walls of the Orvieto school from the 13th to the 16th century. This part of town is the ideal location to take relaxing walks, filled with stunning panoramic vistas.

F. SAN DOMENICO

Set back from the Via Arnolfo di Cambio in a less inspiring part of town, this church is famous because St. Thomas Aquinas taught here, and the desk at which he performed his lectures is still inside. You should also take note of the 13th century Tomb of Cardinal de Bray by Arnolfo di Cambio, as well as the Petrucci Chapel built by Michele Sanmicheli, which is below the main church and entered from the a door on the south wall.

G. ST. PATRICK'S WELL

Open daily from 9:00am to 6:00pm, this well, **Orvieto Sotteraneo**, and the **Duomo** are the most famous sights in Orvieto. Built by Antonio Sangallo the Younger for Pope Clement VII, the well served as a reservoir for the nearby fortress if the city was ever put under siege. Hence it is also known as the Fortress Well. Its ingenious cylindrical cavity design was completed in the beginning of the 16th century. Going to a depth of 62 meters, there are two parallel concentric staircases (each with 248 steps ... go on and count them if you want). The water carriers with their donkeys used one spiral staircase for going up and the other for going down. Each staircase has a separate entrance and is ringed by large arched windows. In the public gardens above the well are the overgrown remains of an Etruscan temple.

H. ETRUSCAN NECROPOLISES

Located on either side of the city the foot of the tufa cliffs, the **Necropolis of the Tufa Crucifix** is to the north and the **Necropolis of Cannicella** is to the south. Each date from around the sixth century BCE. Well preserved but ransacked and looted a long time ago, these tombs nonetheless are something to visit while in Orvieto. It's not often that you can come face to face with something that was created almost 2,500 years ago. Inquire at the information office about the ways and means to visit them.

I. ORVIETO SOTTERANEO

If you do nothing else here, make sure that you sign up to go on one of the guided tours of the subterranean passages that snake underneath the entire city. Guided tours are held every day starting at 11am and go until 6pm, and cost E5. Inquire at the information about the times for the tours in English. At last inquiry they were at 12:15 and 5:15pm. Recently excavated and opened for tourists, the tours of these caves under the city take you on a journey through history,

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including Etruscan wells, a 17th century oil mill, a medieval quarry, ancient pigeon coops and much more, all thoroughly narrated by well-trained guides. These tours are an extraordinary trip back in time and shouldn't be missed.

Shopping

In general there is great shopping in Orvieto, but without the same run-of-the-mill, cookie cutter, international name brand stores you find in most tourist locations. There are many small artisans' shops, unique boutiques, ceramics re-sellers, all of which add to the rich local flavor that Orvieto cultivates. One store in particular you simply must visit is:

8. MICHELANGELI, *Via Gualverio Michelangeli 3B, Tel. 0763/342-660, Fax 0763/342-461. All credit cards accepted.*

An incredible store filled with intricately carved wooden sculptures, toys, figurines, and murals of the most amazing and appealing designs. A ideal store in which to find the perfect gift or keepsake. Michelangeli's work is slowly becoming recognized around the world. It is rustic but refined, and at the very least you should stop in the store, check out the displays, take a look through his portfolios and treat the experience as you would a museum.

Practical Information

Tourist Information

To arrange day trips, find out about bus tours, find train or bus information, get maps, detailed walking tour information, book a hotel, get general information about Orvieto, or book a guided tour for Orvieto Sotteraneo, the **tourist office**, Piazza Duomo 4, *Tel. 0763/301-507 or 301-508, Fax 0763/344-433*, is the place to go.

ASSISI

Dramatically situated on a verdant hill highlighted by olive groves and cypress trees reaching right up to the city walls, the beautiful medieval city of **Assisi** stretches majestically along the slopes of Mount Subasio. Today Assisi still bears the mark of a robust little medieval town, at least that part which is still encompassed by the old city walls. This stunningly beautiful little Umbrian hill town is a center for art and culture, a major religious pilgrimage site, and a heavily touristed location. As a result, be prepared for crowded streets.

Sadly, some of the town's charm was instantaneously leveled when an earthquake struck in 1997, causing severe damage to the city's structures, especially the Basilica of St. Francis. Many of Giotto's fine frescoes were destroyed in this natural catastrophe. An extensive renovation of the church has just been completed as of going to press. Assisi is a wonderful destination, but you may still find scaffolding and supports in place to secure certain structures of historic significance.

The home of **St. Francis**, Assisi is an original Umbrian settlement, after which it became a part of the Etruscan federation, and later was incorporated into the Roman Empire. In the 3rd century CE it became a Christian town. After the fall of the Roman Empire it was destroyed by the Goths in 545 CE, conquered by the Byzantine Empire and eventually fell into hands of the Lombards.

Incorporated into the Duchy of Spoleto, it became an independent commune in the 11th century and achieved great success in the 13th century. During this period of freedom and economic success, St. Francis was born here in 1182 and **St. Clare** in 1193 (a daughter of a rich family, and a contemporary and disciple of St Francis of Assisi, she founded the order of Poor Clares. She died in Assisi in the convent she founded in 1253).

After the 13th century the city became part of the Papal States, then Perugia, then Milan, and finally fell under the control of the powerful Sforza family. And eventually, as a result of internal strife, Assisi was re-incorporated into the Papal States in the 16th century until it became a part of the new state of Italy in the 19th century.

Arrivals & Departures

Assisi can be somewhat difficult to get to by train or bus, so if you don't rent a car, which is recommended so you can take in all the splendor of Umbria, expect at least a two hour train trip from Rome, or an hour and a half train or bus trip from Perugia. Buses and trains leave every hour and half to two hours from Perugia and are infrequent from Rome. Contact the local tourist office in Perugia for a more detailed schedule.

Orientation

Assisi is directly between Perugia and Foligno, about 13 kilometers from the former. The town is dominated by the **Basilica of San Francesco** on the northwest end. The core of the city surrounds the **Piazza del Comune** with many major sights in an around the square. All streets in the town seem to lead to this piazza, so it is almost impossible to get lost while in Assisi.

Getting Around Town

Assisi, like most Umbrian towns, is made for walking. Many of the smaller streets and the winding staircases are off-limits to cars, but you do have to contend with hills. So bring your walking shoes.

Where to Stay

1. SAN FRANCESCO, Via San Francesco 48. Tel 075/812-281, Fax the same. 44 rooms. Single E80; Double E150. All credit cards accepted. Breakfast included. ***

Located near the cathedral, this classic three star hotel is right in the center

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of things. Some of the rooms have grand views of the cathedral. If you want one you need to request it with your reservation. All rooms have plenty of space and are comfortably furnished with a mixture of antiques and more modern furnishings. This is a good small town three star, a little on the rustic side, with an intimate terrace overlooking the cathedral, a quaint bar area, and a rather well respected restaurant.

2. FONTEBELLA, *Via Fontebella 25. Tel. 075/816-456, Fax 075/812-941. Web: www.venere.com/it/assisi/fontebella. 43 rooms. Single E70-140; Double E95-215. Visa and Mastercard accepted. Breakfast E9. *****

Almost in the center of Assisi with great views over the valley, this is a very nice four star that won the Premium Hotel Award in Italy in 1998. The common areas are spacious and accommodating. The bathrooms are not too big but do come with all modern amenities. The rooms are relatively spacious and comfortable and are designed with a regal yellow and black color scheme. The breakfast buffet, served outside on the terrace in good weather, is quite a spread and is worth the extra money. A fine hotel with all the accoutrements of four star quality. And their restaurant, Il Frantoio, is pretty good too.

3. SUBIASO, *Via Frate Elia 2, 075/812-206, Fax 075/816-691. Toll free in Italy 167/015070. 61 rooms. Single E130; Double E200. All credit cards accepted. Breakfast included. *****

This is the place to stay in Assisi. Almost right at the foot of the Basilica di San Francesco this hotel has some breathtakingly panoramic views over the valley from the balconies of some of the rooms, as well as the sun terrace and garden terrace areas. All rooms are uniquely furnished with attractive antiques and are spacious and comfortable. There are a number of common rooms where you can relax and unwind, and the garden terrace, which houses the restaurant in the summer, is a perfect spot to grab a quiet meal.

4. IL PALAZZO, *Via San Francesco 8, 06081 Assisi. Tel. 075/816-841. Web: www.perugiaonline.com/ilpalazzo/. 40 rooms. All credit cards accepted. Single E55-85; Double E95-125. ***

The Palazzo Bindangoli-Bartocci — in which the hotel resides — was built in the 1500s and still retains its quaint medieval charm. It is perfectly situated between the Basilica of St. Francis and the main square, Piazza del Comune. The foundation of the building is a mixture of stables, storehouses, and inns that were in use in the 12th century. Each room is different in size, shape and antique furnishings but all are decorative and comfortable. In some rooms you have the original oak and beams for ceiling supports. The third floor rooms enjoy a view over the Spoletana valley. Without a doubt this is the best two star in town, and is pressing hard for three star status.

Where to Eat

There are a large number of restaurants since Assisi is such a tourist destination and pilgrimage site. These are my choices for the two best:

5. LA FORTREZZA, *Piazza del Comune. Tel. 075/812-418. Closed Thursdays and in February. All credit cards accepted. Dinner for two E40.*

In an ideal location right up a small side street from the main piazza, this is a superb local restaurant attached to a two star hotel of the same name. For appetizers, their prosciutto crudo con bruschetta (ham with garlic bread) is superb. For the pasta dish try the succulently rich ravioli alla ricotta e tartufo nero (ravioli with cheese and black truffles) or the tasty pappardelle alla ragu di agnello (pasta with lamb sauce). For the main course its tough to decide between their succulent meat dishes like filetto di vitellone al misto cotto (veal), petto di faraone in crosta (breaded wild chicken breast), the coniglio (rabbit) or piccione (pigeon). A great atmosphere with a wide variety of superb food at more than acceptable prices.

6. TAVERNA DE L'ARCO DA BINO, *Via San Gregorio 8. Tel 075/812-383. Closed Tuesdays, January 8-31, and July 5-15. All credit cards accepted. Dinner for two E55.*

A pleasant, upscale, local place with great atmosphere — vaulted brick ceilings and woodsy wrought iron decor — as well as simply scrumptious food. Try not to miss this place. The specialty of the house is veal and lots of it. And they make it in a variety of different ways, including al tartufo nero (with black truffles), al gorgonzola (with gorgonzola cheese), alla brace (roasted), all'aceto balsamico (with balsamic vinegar), con funghi parmigiano e rucola (with mushrooms and parmesan), as well as a number of other preparations. To start off your meal try their bruschetta al tartufo nero di Assisi (garlic bread spread with black truffles). They also make an excellent fettucine al profumo di bosco (smoked wood-flavored pasta with mushrooms and truffles), which was my favorite, as well as other succulently tasty pastas.

Seeing the Sights

A. BASILICA OF ST FRANCIS

Majestic and picturesque, the basilica and its accompanying cloistered convent have graced this rural landscape for many centuries. The basilica is split into two levels; the lowest is reached from the Piazza Inferiore di San Francesco which is currently being held up — after the earthquake of 1997 — with unsightly but necessary wood and iron brackets and scaffolding. In itself it is an enchanting open space, with a series of quaint 15th century arcades. The lower Church was built between 1228 and 1230 while the Upper Church was built from 1230 to 1253. The church is dominated by the huge square bell tower built in four layers, completed in 1239, with arches gracing the top section.

The **Lower Church** is entered through an intricate double portal surmounted with three rose windows. Inside consists of a single nave divided into five bays with a boule transept and a semi-circular apse. Even in the dim light the star-spangled blue vaults between the arches is stunningly beautiful. The

remains of St. Francis are located in a stone urn in the crypt, which is down a staircase located in the middle part of the nave.

The side chapels are all wonderfully decorated with 13th century stained glass windows. On the right you can find the Chapel of St. Stephen, then the Chapel of St. Anthony of Padua and finally the Chapel of St. Mary Magdalene with frescoes by Giotto. In the Chapel of St. Martin on the left you can find some significant frescoes, including *Madonna, Child and Angels* by Cimabue as well as *Life of Christ and St. Francis* by Giotto on the right. The Chapel of St. Nicholas also contains some stunning frescoes by Giotto.

The **Upper Church** is reached — since the earthquake in 1997 it has been off-limits but may have reopened — by steps leading from the lower piazza. The facade faces the town of Assisi and looks over the wide lawn of the Piazza Superiore di San Francesco and has a pure linear Gothic look. The one embellishment is the large rose window staring out at the town. The interior of this level is bright and airy, in contrast to the lower section. It consists of one nave with a transept and a polygonal arch, with stunningly colorful frescoes by Cimabue decorating the walls of the apse as well as the transept.

The inlaid wood choir by the altar is a fantastic piece to admire. It was created between 1491 and 1501 by local artist Domenico Individi. The upper part of the nave is adorned with 13th century stained glass windows. Under the gallery, the walls were covered with some of the most magnificent examples of Giotto's work until the earthquake shook them loose and disintegrated them to powder. Sadly, this whole church is being pieced together, but work may well be complete by the time you visit — and these fantastic frescoes will be available for viewing once again.

B. CATHEDRAL OF SAN RUFFINO

Commonly known as the **Duomo**, the beautiful Romanesque facade is divided into three sections. The uppermost is triangular with a pointed Gothic arch; the middle is divided vertically by pilasters and is decorated with three fine rose windows and myriad carvings; and the lower section has three portals, the left of which is used to enter the church. To the side of the Duomo is the massive bell tower adorned with small arches at the top and an off-set clock on the same level as the top layer of the church.

The interior was renovated in the 16th century and consists of a nave and two aisles. The baptismal font in the right aisle was used to baptize St. Francis, St. Clare, St. Agnes, and St. Gabriel. Assisi definitely is a hotbed of sainthood. The apse contains an outstanding 16th century wood choir. The crypt is a must see. Situated underneath the cathedral, and once part of an earlier church, you can find a Roman sarcophagus which used to contain the remains of San Ruffino. Just down the road from here past Piazza Matteoti is a Roman amphitheater worthy of a short visit.

C. BASILICA OF SANTA CLARA

Classically Gothic, this 13th century church dominates the piazza of the same name. Attached to the left side of the building are three large flying buttresses with a slender bell tower rising up from the apse. The facade is decorated with two closed horizontal bands, is divided into three levels, and has a wonderful rose window and a plain portal flanked by two lions.

The interior is in the form of a Latin cross with a single nave and is as simple and bare as the outside. A good place to come for soul-enriching peacefulness. The crypt, reached by a flight of steps, contains the remains of St. Clare in a glass coffin. In the chapel of St. George is the painted cross which supposedly spoke to St. Francis when it was located in the Church of St. Domain. Located here beyond a lattice window are the remains of St. Clare.

D. CHURCH OF SAN PIETRO

Located just inside the city walls, near the Basilica of St. Francesco, this Romanesque-Gothic 13th century church is built on the site of a previous Catholic place of worship. The facade is rectangular with two orders and beautiful in a simple way. The upper level has three rose windows, and the lower has three portals. The interior contains one nave and two aisles, and has some 14th century frescoes and the ruins of some tombs of the same century. For simple beauty and peaceful serenity this is a fine church to visit.

E. PIAZZA DEL COMMUNE

Located in the heart of the old town, built on the site of an old Roman forum and in the midst of some ancient medieval buildings, is the center of Assisi, the Piazza del Comune. The 14th century **Prior's Palace** houses the town council offices, the **Municipal Picture Gallery** contains Byzantine, Umbrian and Siense frescoes, the turreted 13th century **Palazzo del Capitano del Popolo** has the 14th century **Municipal Tower** rising out from it.

Next to that is the **Church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva**, built in the first half of the 16th century over the ancient Temple of Minerva. The facade is all ancient Rome from the Augustan period of the first century BCE, while the rest of the building is medieval.

F. CASTLE OF THE ROCCA MAGGIORE

Pass by the Roman Amphitheater as you go out the Perlici Gate to begin the climb up to this imposing fortress, which once served as protector over the city of Assisi. Built after the Lombard occupation, the fortress with its imposing ramparts and towers completely dominates the town below. A perfect place for kids of all ages to explore a medieval fortress.

Practical Information

Festivals

- **3rd and 4th of October** – Festival of St. Francis, Patron Saint of Italy
- **May Day celebration** – Calendimaggio
- **June 22nd** – Festival of the Vows
- **1st and 2nd of August** – Festival of the Pardon

Tourist Information

To arrange day trips, find out about bus tours, locate train or bus information, get maps, walking tour information, book a hotel, or simply gather general information about Assisi, the **tourist office** at Piazza del Comune 27, *Tel. 075/812-450, Fax 075/813-727* has all that information.