



WONDERS OF UMBRIA

Great mountain scenery and medieval towns in the Green Heart of Italy - Spoleto, Valnerina, Norcia, Trevi, Spello & Assisi

walking through the 'Green Heart of Italy', along the medieval pilgrim paths from Assisi to Rome, through enchanting landscapes, from highlight to highlight



TRIP NOTES 2016

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GENIUS LOCI TRAVEL - The Real Spirit Of Italy



INTRODUCTION

Italy has a 'Green Heart' where it is a real pleasure to walk through the lovely countryside – not as famous as the Tuscan landscape, but perhaps more genuine and at least as beautiful! You walk from village to village, a full immersion in the mythical Umbrian landscape. At first through forests and vineyards, then through the rolling hills between the spectacular hilltop towns of Trevi, Spello and Assisi.

A short detour is made to the wonderful high plain of Castelluccio, near Norcia, with its extensive meadows, fields of wheat and wildflowers. Walking here in spring is an unforgettable experience!

Moreover Umbria is a land full of cultural treasures, ranging from the world-famous Assisi, with its impressive basilica dedicated to St. Francis, to lesser-known little medieval towns like Trevi, Spello and Norcia, and of course the wonderful Roman town of Spoleto. You have ample time to visit these historic towns and also the many beautiful medieval monasteries along the pilgrim roads. For two nights you stay in one of the most beautiful monasteries.

However the emphasis of the tour is to enjoy the countryside, the rolling vineyards, the poppies in spring and the wild cyclamen in autumn. Most of all, many of the views have barely changed for hundreds of years. Eastern Umbria is an area where you can still feel the genuine heart of Italy. You'll walk at an easy pace from highlight to highlight, taking in the best of Central Italy.

Your tour finishes in the city of Assisi, but can easily be extended with a day or more in Perugia, the region's capital city, a beautiful and lively cultural capital.

This is a moderately easy tour which is suitable for those who have some experience of walking and a good general physical condition. You walk through the extensive footpath network of the area, roughly following the traces of the medieval pilgrim path from Assisi to Rome and the Roman Via Flaminia, one of Europe's most important 'highways' in Roman times.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 1

Arrival by train in Spoleto and transfer to the hotel (either by private taxi or public transport). Your hotel is located in the heart of the old town, known for its beautiful churches and many Roman monuments. It is also a very pleasant town for an afternoon walk or evening stroll. Depending on your arrival time, you could go for a quick visit to the town centre. In the evening you eat at the hotel restaurant. The famous 'Ponte delle Torri' is a marvel illuminated at night!

Accommodation: Hotel Clitunno – Spoleto.

Total walking time: around 1 hour + sightseeing time.

Day 2

The first day walk initially takes you through the whole of the historic town centre of Spoleto to its fortress. Then you walk across the impressive 'Ponte delle Torri' bridge, a unique aqueduct, to the other side of the valley, onto the hill of Monteluco. Here you make a very pleasant roundwalk through the forested hills, with wonderful views of Spoleto and its surroundings. The hill of Monteluco is considered a 'holy mountain' and many of the trails are linked to the spiritual history of the area. Here you can discover the 'holy forest' with its many grottoes, and wander around medieval chapels through a pleasant wooden landscape. Then you descend back into the valley of Spoleto again and return to the old town past the medieval chapel of San Pietro.

Accommodation: Hotel Clitunno – Spoleto.

Total walking time: around 4 hours + sightseeing time (5 hours with extra option).

Day 3

After breakfast you begin your long walk, which will bring you into the Valnerina, the wonderful valley of the Nera River. First you cross the Ponte delle Torri again, but now you follow the beautiful path along the aqueduct, with great views of Spoleto. Then you follow the waymarked trail into the small valley of the Val Cieca, the 'blind valley', uphill towards the Castelmonte Pass. From here the path goes downhill again and in the early afternoon you reach the hamlet of Cese. Continue the walk through the forested hills and, towards the end of the afternoon, you reach the beautiful abbey of San Pietro in Valle, now a historical country residence. You'll be staying here for the next two nights. In the evening you have a nice meal right here at the abbey restaurant.

Accommodation: Hotel Abbazia San Pietro in Valle - Ferentillo.

Total walking time: around 6 hours (circa 2 h. less if you opt for a transfer).

Day 4

Today you leave the abbey, heading west. You now walk through the narrowest part of the Nera valley, which until not long ago was almost completely cut off from the outer world and therefore virtually untouched. Past several charming hamlets, following the pilgrim trail from Assisi to Rome, you reach one of the wonders of central Italy: the Marmore Falls. These waterfalls, about 165 metres high, offer a unique visual and acoustic experience. And the most intriguing fact about them is that they are actually manmade, built in Ancient Roman times... You can make a wonderful roundwalk in the area, walking from viewpoint to viewpoint. After some time for contemplation or a drink you return either by bus or private taxi to your base at the abbey.

Accommodation: Hotel Abbazia San Pietro in Valle - Ferentillo.

Total walking time: around 5 hours + sightseeing time.



Day 5

In the morning you are picked up by your private taxi for a transfer to the wonderful little village of Preci. From there a beautiful route leads up to the majestic abbey of Sant'Eutizio, one of the most beautiful in the region. You then follow yet another medieval mule track, which initially ascends steadily up the hillside, with great views over the valley below. Once you reach the Ancarano Pass, the views open up over the plain of Norcia and a beautiful descent brings you straight to the town walls of this wonderful little town, the birthplace of St. Benedict.

Accommodation: Hotel Grotta Azzurra – Norcia.

Total walking time: around 3,5 hours + sightseeing time (5,5 hours with extra option).

Day 6

Today you make a wonderful roundwalk into the heart of the Sibillini Mountains, starting from Norcia. You walk partly through forested areas, partly through a pretty rural landscape. Then you walk a stretch along the ridge, with great views over Norcia and the Piano Grande ('Great Plain'), with its meadows full of wildflowers – spectacular all year round, but especially in spring. Your path leads you to the tiny village of Castelluccio, overlooking the Piano Grande. Then you descend back to Norcia, along an equally beautiful path. To shorten the walk you can also opt for a transfer to gain some altitude.

Accommodation: Hotel Grotta Azzurra – Norcia.

Total walking time: around 3,5 hours + sightseeing time (5,5 hours with extra option).

Day 7

Today you first make a short transfer to Poretta (or Bazzano Superiore, if you wish to make a slightly longer walk). From either of these you can start your walk in a northern direction, again along the medieval trails that link Assisi to Rome. Depending on the walk you wish to make (more or less ups & downs) you can opt for a route through the hills, scattered with remains of medieval castles and walled hamlets, or descend into the valley and discover the mythical springs of the Clitunno River, believed to be divine waters in Roman times. Your goal for today is the beautiful little town of Trevi, one of the most charming in central Italy, overlooking the Valle Umbra and famous moreover for its crystal-clear spring water. Here you settle in at your hotel for the night in one of the quiet, comfortable rooms. In the evening you can dine in one of the nearby restaurants in the old town centre or the one at your hotel.

*Accommodation: Hotel ***/**** – Trevi.*

Total walking time: around 4,5 hours + sightseeing time (6 hours with extra option).

Day 8

From Trevi you'll have a short transfer to the old Roman town of Spello, considered to be one of the most charming in the area. Take your time to have a coffee here and then walk uphill, all the way through the old town centre, located on a ridge. After passing the medieval town walls, the ridge continues and you continue your walk uphill, now through the olive groves. Depending on your energy levels you can opt either for the walk over the ridge of Monte Subasio, or stay at a lower level and walk through pleasant countryside (recommended), with great views over the valley and the town of Assisi, yet another highlight of this tour and the goal for today. In the afternoon you reach the Eremito delle Carceri, the place where St. Francis, and many others after him, sought spiritual relief - now a beautiful little monastery with a nice surrounding garden. From here you have the possibility of either continuing the walk all the way down or taking the bus to downtown Assisi, where you will stay for the last two nights.

*Accommodation: Hotel *** – Assisi.*

Total walking time: around 6 hours + sightseeing time (longer option: + 1,5 – 2,5 hours).



Day 9

After breakfast you can take your time to look around. The town is full of highlights, among which, of course, is the World Heritage Site Basilica of San Francesco d'Assisi (St. Francis), with its wonderful frescos by Giotto. But the other churches, the Greek temple in the central square and the underground Roman Forum are all worth a visit too. For those who want to do another short walk to conclude their walking holiday in style, we recommend taking the bus to the Eremo delle Carceri where you can start climbing up Mt. Subasio. Here a beautiful roundwalk around natural springs and small chapels can be made, before heading back down to the historical heart of Assisi for the final meal in Umbria.

*Accommodation: Hotel *** – Assisi.*

Total walking time: around 3,5 hours + sightseeing time (5,5 hours with extra option).

Day 10

End of the tour. From Assisi town centre there are buses to the train station, where you can find regular trains to Rome and Florence.

TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

Accommodation is generally on a bed and breakfast basis in good 3-star hotels and 2 nights in a historical residence (4-star level). All rooms have en-suite facilities.

For the arrival night in Spoleto, the first night in Norcia, the first night in Assisi and the first night in the abbey of San Pietro you will be on a half-board basis. When dinners are not included, you will be free to make your own dinner arrangements. You can either eat at the premises of the hotel or choose from the wide choice of restaurants in the area. Your accommodation holder can give you good tips.

No picnic lunches are included in the tour price, but these can be prepared for you by the accommodation holders, or materials for picnics can be purchased in the villages where you'll be staying.

Nights 1 & 2: The first two nights you stay in the wonderful little town of Spoleto, full of Roman and medieval history, in a nice 3-star hotel (with good restaurant) right in the historical centre.

Night 3 & 4: You stay in an exclusive hotel in the ancient abbey of San Pietro, located in the green valley of the River Nera, the Valnerina. A wonderful and quiet setting.

Nights 5 & 6: These nights you stay in a nice 3-star hotel in the historical centre of the quaint town of Norcia. On the premises of the hotel there is a good restaurant which serves local specialties.

Night 7: For one night you stay in the historical town of Trevi, overlooking the Valle Umbra. Depending on your choice, you stay in either a nice 3-star hotel with a big garden, or a beautiful 4-star hotel in the historical centre.

Night 8 & 9: The final nights are spent in a nice 3-star hotel in the centre of Assisi. It is set in a quiet location, yet at walking distance from all the main monuments.

UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMMODATION

It is possible to book an upgrade in some of the places en route. Details and prices on request.



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LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderately easy (2): Mostly easy walks, though some include walking uphill, sometimes on paths with rough surfaces. On some days some stretches are difficult for those suffering from vertigo (but NOT dangerous!). On these days alternative options are available. Extensions or shortcuts are also possible on many days.

Fitness: High standard of fitness is not necessary but you should be able to walk for up to 5 hours a day in hot sun on dusty or stony tracks.

FOOTPATHS & WAYMARKING

Most paths are well maintained, but during the season some paths can get overgrown (*we are in continuous contact with local authorities to keep the paths clean – please help us by providing your feedback on the quality of the paths*).

Waymarking: A large part of the route is waymarked – with different signs, explained in full in the route notes. Elsewhere you have to follow the route descriptions provided together with the maps. With these you will always be able to find your route. Most paths are well maintained, but the journey involves some walking uphill, sometimes on paths with rough surfaces. The paths around Norcia - especially around the Piano Grande - may have some snow on them during early spring and late autumn.

INCLUSIONS :

- 2 nights in Spoleto*** - 1 HB + 1 BB
- 2 nights in San Pietro in Valle*** - 1 HB + 1 BB
- 2 nights in Norcia*** - 1 HB + 1 BB
- 1 night in Trevi**** - 1 BB
- 2 nights in Assisi*** - 1 HB + 1 BB
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1 : 25.000 scale
- 24/7 assistance
- Luggage transport
- Private transfers as specified

NOT INCLUDED:

- Departure taxes
- Visas
- Travel Insurance
- Drinks and meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional additional tours or activities
- Tips
- Items of personal nature



ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in SPOLETO. Spoleto can easily be reached by train from Rome (about 1 hour by train). A pick-up service can be arranged from the station to the hotel (about 10 minutes away).

Departure: The tour ends after breakfast in ASSISI on day 10. A short transfer brings you to the train station (included), where you travel back to either Perugia (extension), Florence or Rome, all easily reachable.

TOUR VARIATIONS

EXTRA NIGHTS

It is possible to include extra nights in any of the accommodations 'en route'. Extra walking and/or sightseeing options will be provided !

A SHORTER 8-DAY VERSION OF THIS TOUR IS AVAILABLE.

It is also possible to extend your tour with a few days in Perugia, the regional capital, a beautiful and lively city.

Also extra nights in either Florence or Rome can be booked at the end of the tour. Details and prices on request.



GENIUS LOCI TRAVEL wishes you a pleasant journey!

