



Independent walking tour (UMB2)

Wonders of Umbria - walking in the 'Green Heart of Italy'

Along the medieval pilgrim paths from Spoleto to Assisi



TRIP NOTES

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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 authentic and at least as beautiful and with a very interesting history! 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 & medieval town of Spoleto. You have ample time to visit these historic towns, the castles and also the many beautiful medieval monasteries along the pilgrim roads (and for two nights you can 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 the area!

You'll start your tour in the amazing city of Spoleto, in the south-eastern part of Umbria. Spoleto is one of central Italy's most fascinating art towns, with a very interesting history, which left beautiful traces. An important fortified Umbrian settlement, Spoleto became a Roman colony and was taken over first by Theodoric, king of the Visigoths, and then by the Byzantine Belisarius. In the early Middle Ages, it became the capital of the Lombard Duchy of Spoleto, and after it became an important town in the Papal State. Near Spoleto, the "sacred wood" of Monteluco, densely grown with evergreen ilexes, is a beautiful natural and spiritual area and a great area to walk.

From Spoleto you'll walk into the Valnerina, until recently an isolated area, which boast several nicely preserved medieval villages and a stupendous nature. Highlight of your visit is the walk to and through the incredible Marmore waterfalls, or 'Cascata delle Marmore', 'built' by the Romans. They stand at 165 m.in height with 3 massive drops making it Italy's biggest man-made waterfalls. The first person to write about the cascade was the Roman poet Virgil, but they rose to fame later, especially with the 17th century romantic movement. The poet Lord Byron is known to have been contemplating the falls for hours and hours.

You then continue your tour walking from village to village in the Valle Umbra, the heartland of Umbria, a full immersion in the mythical Umbrian landscape. At first you'll walk through forests and vineyards, then through the rolling hills covered with olive groves between the spectacular hilltop towns of Trevi, in a spectacular position above the valley and Spello, deemed one of the most beautiful villages, with again a stunning medieval centre, built on the Roman remains. Your tour finishes in the city of Assisi, where of course you'll have to visit the cathedral of St. Francis, with the amazing fresco's by Giotto, but also the rest of the centre and its surroundings make up from a great daywalk. The tour can easily be extended with a day or more in Perugia, the region's capital city, a beautiful and lively cultural capital.

A short detour can be 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!



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.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 1 – Arrival in Spoleto

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: Spoleto - Hotel ***

Approx. walking time: 1 hour + sightseeing time.

Day 2 – Round walk Spoleto & Monteluco

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 round walk 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: Spoleto - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 12 km. Approx. walking time: 4 h. + sightseeing time. Ascent & descent: +/- 450 m.

Optional extra day – along the old railway line to Norcia

Today's walk takes you on a great walk from the centre of Spoleto, along the old railway track, which once linked Spoleto to Norcia. You'll pass several beautiful churches and then walk through a pleasant countryside, alternated with forest. You cross several deep, impressive valleys, but being on a railway track, these can be crossed easily, and moreover with spectacular views over the whole plain of Umbria-. Upon reaching the medieval village of Eggi you have the time to look around, before returning to Spoleto (bus or taxi service available). The walk is relatively short, which allows you some time to wander around in beautiful Spoleto. There is an option to shorten the route if desired.

Accommodation: Spoleto - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 12 km. Approx. walking time: 5 h. + sightseeing time. Ascent & descent: +/- 550 m. (shorter options available)



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Day 3 – From Spoleto into the Valnerina

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 into the beautiful Nera valley. 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: Ferentillo, San Pietro in Valle - Hotel***

Total walking distance: 20 km. Approx. walking time: 6 h. Ascent & descent: + 1000 m./- 1050 m.

Day 4 – Through the Valnerina to the Marmore Waterfalls

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: Ferentillo, San Pietro in Valle - Hotel***

Total walking distance: 18 km. Approx. walking time: 4,5 h. + sightseeing time. Ascent & descent: + 150 m./- 350 m. (shorter options available)

Day 5 – Along the 'Sentiero degli Ulivi' to Trevi

Today you first make a short transfer to Poretta (or Eggi as a 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, covered with beautiful olive groves and 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 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 nice restaurants in the old town centre or at your hotel.

Accommodation: Trevi - Hotel * /******

Total walking distance: 12,5 km. Approx. walking time: 4,5 h. + sightseeing time. Ascent & descent: + 400 m./- 500 m.

Optional extra day in Trevi

In case you opt for the long walk starting from Eggi you can as well end today's walk with a drink near the mythical springs of the Clitunno River and pay a short visit to the area. You can then be picked up by a taxi from here and will be brought to your hotel in Trevi. The next morning you will then do a beautiful roundwalk from Trevi, which includes the walk, from the Clitunno springs to Trevi.



Day 6 – Along Mt. Subasio from Spello to Assisi

From Trevi you have a short transfer to the old Roman town of Spello, one of the most charming towns in the area. From here walk uphill through the old town centre, located on a ridge. After the medieval town walls you continue uphill along the ridge, through the olive groves. 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 Eremo 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: Assisi - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 15 km. Approx. walking time: 6 h. + sightseeing time. Ascent & descent: + 1000 m./- 850 m. (shorter options available)

Optional extra day: From Spello along the Roman aqueduct to Collepio

It's worth it to spend an extra night in Spello, by many considered to be one of central Italy's most beautiful villages. In that case you'll be brought from Trevi to Spello and after settling in your hotel in you can make a beautiful walk which brings you in the marvellous valley just behind Spello. You'll follow the old Roman aqueduct, with stunning views over the whole valley. Your goal for today is the charming village of Collepio, where you can opt to have lunch. You can travel back to Spello by bus (optional transfer) and take your time to wander around in beautiful Spello. In alternative there is an option for a beautiful walk back to Spello.

Accommodation: Spello - Hotel */******

Approx. walking time: 3 h. + sightseeing time.

Day 7 – Exploring Assisi

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: Assisi - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 5 km Approx. walking time: 2 h. + sightseeing time. Ascent & descent: + 100 m./- 400 m. (longer options available)

Day 8 – Departure from Assisi (optional walk to Perugia)

End of the tour. From Assisi town centre there are buses to the train station for travelling on to your next destination.

Optional extra day – Perugia

It's worth it to spend an extra night in Perugia, the region's capital and one of the most lively and international cities, thanks to its 'Università per Stranieri', the best place to learn Italian. It is an amazingly beautiful city with a charming medieval town centre. You can directly walk to Perugia from Assisi (luggage transport on request) or travel by public transport to Perugia and make a great roundwalk through the town and its surroundings.

Accommodation: Perugia, Hotel */******



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TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

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

Dinners are included on the arrival night in Spoleto, the first night in the abbey of San Pietro (in a fine restaurant) and the first night in Assisi. On the other nights, 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.

UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMMODATION

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

INCLUDED

- 7 nights' accommodation – BB/HB
- 2 nights in Spoleto*** - 1 HB + 1 BB
- 2 nights in Valnerina*** - BB
- 1 dinner in medieval taverna at Abbazia San Pietro in Valle
- 1 night in Trevi*** - 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 (or better)
- GPS tracks for each day
- 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



LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderate (2/3): Mostly easy walks, though some involve uphill walking, sometimes steeply and on paths with rough surfaces. On some days there are stretches that 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 the hot sun on dusty or stony tracks.

FOOTPATHS & WAYMARKING

Footpaths: 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 need 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.

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 8. A short transfer brings you to the train station (included), where you can travel onto 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 !

It is also possible to extend your tour with one more day in Spoleto, an extra day in Trevi, a day (or more) in Spello, as well as a few days in Perugia, the regional capital, a beautiful and lively city. Please ask us for the possibilities.

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