



Independent walking tour (VSF4)

Via di San Francesco

From Rieti to Roma

Along the 'Way of St. Francis' from the Valle Reatina into the Heart of Rome



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 genuine and at least equally beautiful! You walk from village to village, a full immersion in the mythical Umbrian landscape and the 'mystical' Valley of Rieti, the Valle Reatina, loved by St. Francis. At first through forests and vineyards, then through the rolling hills, covered with olive groves, between the spectacular hilltop towns of central Italy, like Trevi, Spello and Assisi.

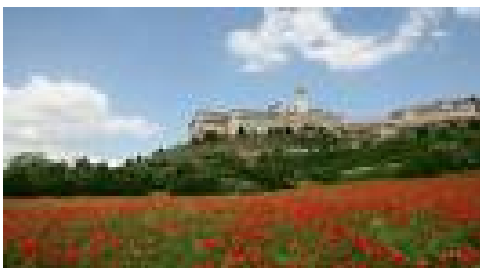
Moreover central Italy is a land full of cultural treasures, ranging from the world famous Assisi, with its impressive basilica dedicated to St. Francis, to lesser known small medieval towns like Trevi, Spello and Rieti, and of course the wonderful Roman town of Spoleto. You have of course ample time to visit these historic towns and of course also the many beautiful medieval monasteries along the pilgrim's 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 changed little for hundreds of years. Eastern Umbria and northern Lazio are still areas where you feel the genuine heart of Italy. You'll walk at an easy pace from highlight to highlight, taking in the best of Central Italy.

You'll walk along the extensive footpath network of the area, following the best parts of 2 long distance trails in the area, the 'Via degli Ulivi' ('Olive grove path') and the perhaps more famous 'Via di San Francesco' or 'Via di Roma', the medieval pilgrims' path from Assisi to Rome, one of Europe's most important medieval 'highways', and the Roman Via Flaminia, one of Europe's most important 'high ways' in Roman times.

You walk from village to village, fully immersed in the world-famed Umbrian landscape, covered with olive groves and scattered with picturesque small towns, past the beautiful Marmore Falls and the charming lake of Piediluco and you'll end your walk in the charming little town of Rieti. Walking here is an unforgettable experience!

N.B. This is a moderate tour which is suitable for those who have experience with walking and are in good general physical condition. Shorter options are possible on many days.

The walking times indicated are approximate and are given for the main route. The indicated walking times are 'net walking times', i.e. without stops. Therefore, calculate carefully the amount of time needed, based on your fitness and interests. Shorter and longer walking options are given for most days.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 1 – Arrival in Rieti

This stretch of the Via di San Francesco starts in the nice medieval town of Rieti. Rieti can easily be reached by train or bus from Rome (and other cities), and of course on foot from Assisi! Settle in your hotel and take your time to look around in this quiet laid-back provincial town, one of the capitals of central Italy, with an interesting history, dating back through Roman times, and flourishing also under the Papal rule, but still virtually unknown to tourism.

Accommodation: Rieti – Grande Albergo ‘Quattro Stagioni’ / B&B ‘Terrazza Fiorita’

Day 2 – From Rieti to Poggio San Lorenzo

Today’s walk starts from the centre of Rieti. From the northern, central part, you’ll cross the Roman bridge and walk the first few km. through the outskirts of Rieti. Follows a relatively flat section through the valleys of the Turano and Ariana streams, and then, in the afternoon you’ll walk up into a beautiful hilly area. There route ends in the beautiful medieval village of Poggio San Lorenzo.

Accommodation: Poggio San Lorenzo, Agriturismo ‘Santa Giusta’

Total walking distance: 22,5 km. Ascent & descent: +250 /- 350 m. Approx. walking time: 6,5 h.



Day 3 – From Poggio San Lorenzo to Toffia

Today, you will be walking the full day through the hills, with many ups & downs, but with a last section of almost 5 km, gradually downhill, towards the beautiful little village of Toffia. This village is not along the ‘official’ route of the ‘Via di San Francesco’ (which would bring you through a busier area), but is very much worth it, not only for the village itself, but also for the stunning Abbey of Farfa nearby!

The route crosses and roughly follows the Via Salaria, one of the most important Roman Roads, hence you’ll come across many roman artefacts, including a beautiful theatre.

Accommodation: Toffia, B&B

Total walking distance: 19 km. Ascent & descent: +300 /- 150 m. Approx. walking time: 5 h. + sightseeing time.

Day 4 – From Toffia to Montelibretti along the ‘Abbazia di Farfa’

Today, you you first walk down into the valley, and then with a short climb, you’ll reach the beautiful Abbey complex of Farfa, one of the most important Benedictine monuments of central Italy. Take your time to look around here, both in the Abbey itself, which features some stunning paintings, like ‘Giudizio Universale’ (‘Last Judgment’) by a Dutch painter, and the first paintings by the women, considered the first important female artist, Artemisia Gentileschi, but as well in the small village around the abbey. You then continue in southern direction and in a few km. you’ll reach the charming village of Fara Sabina. The route continues in southern direction, and along the villages of Montegrottone



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and Canneto you'll descend into the more densely populated valley – where also the Roman Via Salaria (now a highway) passes. After crossing this road, you'll walk the last 4 km. through the olive groves, and with a short climb you'll reach the nice village of Montelibretti.

Accommodation: Montelibretti, B&B 'I Due Gelsi' (o centro)

Total walking distance: 18 km. Ascent & descent: +500 /- 550 m. Approx. walking time: 5 h.



Day 5 – From Montelibretti to Monterotondo

Today's walk goes towards Rome, and you'll definitely can see its influence already, but the walk goes mostly through the rolling hills, covered with forest and olive groves. Although you are approaching the city, you'll be almost the whole day in the countryside! Until, towards the end of the walk, you'll pass the main 'Autostrada' and enter the outskirts of Monterotondo. The town has a nice medieval centre, where you'll settle for the night.

Accommodation: Monterotondo, B&B

Total walking distance: 18 km. Ascent & descent: +250 /- 300 m. Approx. walking time: 4,5 - 5 h.

Day 6 – From Monterotondo to Monte Sacro (Roma)

Today's walk takes you into the outskirts of Rome. Although you are already very close to Rome, you'll be walking through a nice nature area most of the time, the Marcigliana nature reserve. The walk goes through the rolling hills, with a few ups and downs, but with a general downhill bias. You'll end the walk in the Monte Sacro district, mostly built between WWI and WWII, with a clear rationalist influence.

Accommodation: Monte Sacro (ROMA), Hotel * / B&B**

Total walking distance: 18,5 km. Ascent & descent: +200 /- 300 m. Approx. walking time: 4,5 h.

Day 7 – From the Monte Sacro into the Heart of Rome

The last stretch of the Via Francigena leads you through the heart of Rome to the St. Peter's cathedral, the final destination of this tour! The area is of course almost completely urbanised, but you'll be surprised by the amount of nature along the route we have chosen for you. You walk through a number of 'urban parks', but more similar to nature areas, literally penetrating into the heart of Rome. Our proposed route, first follows the banks of the Aniene River, and then brings you into Villa Ada, one of Rome's largest parks and then into the Villa Borghese, perhaps Rome's best known park. Along the beautiful 'Pincio' alley you'll walk down into the heart of Rome along the Spanish Steps, and then along the Piazza Navona and Pantheon, you'll reach the Tiber River, which you cross, over the Ponte Sant'Angelo. You'll walk past the Castle Sant'Angelo, and then you will finally be face to-face with St. Peter's! The monumental 'Via della Conciliazione' leads to the great square, where thousands of pilgrims have gathered over the centuries. You can breathe in the atmosphere and look back on a great accomplishment!

Accommodation: Roma, Hotel San Pietro / B&B Vatican Art (or similar)

Total walking distance: 10-15 km. Ascent & descent: +100 /- 100 m. Approx. walking time: 4 - 6 h.



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Day 9 – Departure from Rome

End of the tour. Unless you booked an extension, after breakfast you travel back home.



N.B. Between Rieti to Rome, we offer the possibility to follow the beautiful route developed and managed by a Dutch group of 'Pilgrims', the 'Franciscaanse Voetreis', perhaps more beautiful than the 'official route'. This route passes at Greccio, Stroncone, the sanctuary of Sacro Speco and Poggio Mirteto, before rejoining 'our' route at the Abbey of Farfa.

TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

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

No dinners are included; you will be free to make your own dinner arrangements.

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

- 1/2 nights in Assisi*** - BB
- 1 night in Spello**** - BB
- 1 night in Trevi*** - BB
- 1/2 nights in Spoleto*** - BB
- 1 night in Ferentillo/San Pietro in Valle*** - HB
- 1 night in Piediluco*** - BB
- 1 night in Poggio Bustone*** - BB
- 1 night in Rieti*** - BB
- Extensive route notes & maps, with description of the route & tourist information
- GPS tracks for each day



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- 24/7 assistance
- Luggage transport (if requested)
- 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

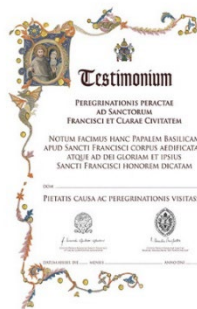
Moderate (2/3): Mostly moderate walks, which involve uphill walking, sometimes steeply and on paths with rough surfaces. Some stretches that are difficult for those suffering from vertigo (but NOT dangerous!).

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. The journey involves some walking uphill, sometimes on paths with rough surfaces.

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 / GPX-tracks.



ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in ASSISI. Assisi can be reached by train from Rome or Florence. A pick-up service can be arranged from the station to the hotel (about 10 minutes away).

Departure: The tour ends after breakfast in RIETI on day 9. There is a direct train to Rome.

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