

Northern Umbria



Small towns with atmosphere seeping out of medieval, Roman and Etruscan walls. Generations of families who have been living in the same stone farmhouse for 200 years. Fields of vineyards, wildflowers, sunflowers and olive trees.

There are endless reasons to visit Umbria. It hosts more festivals, medieval tournaments, outdoor movies, concerts, parades, antique fairs and organic markets than any other place in Italy. Plus, the outdoor activities and walking trails can't be beaten. Tuscany's turn on the overcrowded tourist radar has little to fear from Umbria, which is most content to stay wholly off the beaten path.

Umbria is Italy's most rural region, and the only province that borders neither the sea nor another country. Yes, it has the rolling hills, ancient stone villas and expanses of vineyards you'd find in Tuscany, but Umbria is a less manicured place, its untamed geography scattered with jagged rock formations and snow-capped peaks.

In paintings of Umbria, you'll notice that not much has changed in the past, oh, 400 years or so. Northern Umbria's most popular draw – Assisi – still offers ample paths that wind through ancient pink-stone buildings, looking much the same as it did in the days of St Francis of Assisi in the 13th century.

Perugia's range of restaurants, cultural events, museums and churches gives it a historic yet cosmopolitan air. The hill town of Gubbio – famous for its *Corsa dei Ceri* on 15 May – feels otherworldly any time of year. But the heart of northern Umbria can be found in the smaller towns and countless tiny villages where one could get lost for days.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Take the human-birdcage **Funivia Colle Eletto** (p348) to Sant'Ubaldo church, perched on top of Monte Ingino above Gubbio
- Spend an hour reflecting on the life of St Francis in the crypt of Assisi's **Basilica di San Francesco** (p334)
- Sip on the famous Sagrantino or Montefalco Rosso at the vineyard of **Arnaldo Caprai** (p344) in Montefalco
- Stay on your own semi-private island in a youth hostel/*agriturismo* (farm stay accommodation) on **Isola Polvese** (p360) in the middle of Lake Trasimeno
- Try your hand at spinning ceramics on the wheel at **Maioliche Nulli** (p333) in Deruta



PERUGIA

pop 161, 390

One of Italy's best-preserved hill towns replete with museums and churches, Perugia is also a hip student town with a never-ending stream of cultural events and concerts. Within the city walls, little has changed architecturally for over several hundred years, and a few hotels and restaurants are in triple-digit ages. Culturally, however, Perugia is on the edge. Two major universities, a steady stream of foreigners and a thriving art scene ensure that Perugia melds the modern in with its past.

History

Although the Umbri tribe once inhabited the surrounding area and controlled land

stretching from present-day Tuscany into Le Marche, it was the Etruscans who founded the city, leading to its zenith in the 6th century BC. It fell to the Romans in 310 BC and was given the name Perusia.

During the Middle Ages the city was racked by the internal feuding of the Baglioni and Oddi families. In 1538 the city was incorporated into the Papal States under Pope Paul III, remaining under papal control for almost three centuries.

Perugia has a strong artistic tradition. In the 15th century it was home to fresco painters Bernardino Pinturicchio and his master Pietro Vannucci (known as Perugino), who would later teach the famous painter Raphael. Its cultural tradition continues to this day with

both the University of Perugia and several universities, including the famous Università per Stranieri (University for Foreigners), which teach Italian, art and culture to thousands of students from around the world.

Orientation

Old Perugia's main strip, Corso Vannucci (named after home-town artist Pietro Vannucci, aka Perugino), runs north from the top of Rocca Paolina, through Piazza Italia and into the heart of the city, Piazza IV Novembre, where you'll find the Fontana Maggiore and the cathedral. Almost every listing in this chapter is within a kilometre of here. *Urbano* (city) buses originate from Piazza Italia, while *extraurbano* (intercity) buses drop you off at Piazza Partigiani. From here, take a few sets of *scale mobili* (elevators) through the Rocca Paolina to reach Piazza Italia. If you have heavy luggage, watch out: *scale mobili* interchange with staircases up the steep hillside. From the train station it's an enormous hike, especially with that luggage, or a quick €1 bus ride, 1.5km up the hill to Piazza Italia.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

La Libreria (% 075 573 50 57; Via Oberdan 52;

h 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 4.30-8pm Sun) Stocks a selection of English-language books, as well as maps and Lonely Planet guidebooks in Italian and English.

Libreria Betti (% 075 573 16 67; Corso Vannucci 107; h 9am-8pm Mon-Sat) A good selection of English-language books, cookbooks, guidebooks and dictionaries.

EMERGENCY

Police station (% 075 572 32 32; Palazzo dei Priori)

INTERNET ACCESS

Over a dozen internet cafés have popped up recently, most charging around €1.50 per hour. If you're sticking around, ask for an *abbonamento* discount card from the café you frequent the most, which will save you about 15% on 10 hours. Many cafés now have Skype, with accompanying headphones and cameras.

Coffee Break (% 075 571 63 22; Via Danzetta 22; per hr €1, wi-fi free; h 9am-11pm Mon-Sat, 10am-11pm Sun) Buy anything from the café downstairs and use its (slow) wi-fi as long as you like.

Tempo Reale (% 075 573 55 33; Via del Forno 17;

h 10am-11.30pm) Central and friendly, with high-speed connection, ample opening hours and cheap long-distance telephone service.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Perugia Online (www.perugiaonline.com) Offers info on accommodation, restaurants, history, activities and sights. The main site, www.umbriaonline.com, lists information for every tourist town in Umbria in Italian or English.

LAUNDRY

67 Laundry (Via Fabretti; h 8am-10pm) Wash €3, dry €3, single-serve detergents €1.

LEFT LUGGAGE

Stazione Fontivegge (h 6.30am-7.30pm) Costs €3 per bag for the first 12 hours, then €2 every 12 hours thereafter.

MEDIA

Little Blue What-to-Do This free English-language booklet is a must-have for students or anyone staying longer than a few hours. Known as the 'little blue book', it's available at the Teatro del Pavone, the tourist office and newsstands. Find restaurants, housing suggestions, side trips and a description of local characters.

Viva Perugia – What, Where, When The *comune di Perugia's* monthly publication (€0.80 from newsstands) lists events and public-transport schedules.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Emergency doctor (% 075 34 024; h Sat & Sun & nights)

Farmacia San Martino (Piazza Matteotti 26) This pharmacy has a list of all the pharmacies that are open 24 hours.

Ospedale Silvestrini (% 075 57 81; S Andrea delle Frate) Hospital.

MONEY

Banks line Corso Vannucci. All have ATMs, known as *bancomats*. Cashing travellers cheques inside banks usually garners at least a 2% to 5% service charge, and establishments that accept them are becoming quite rare.

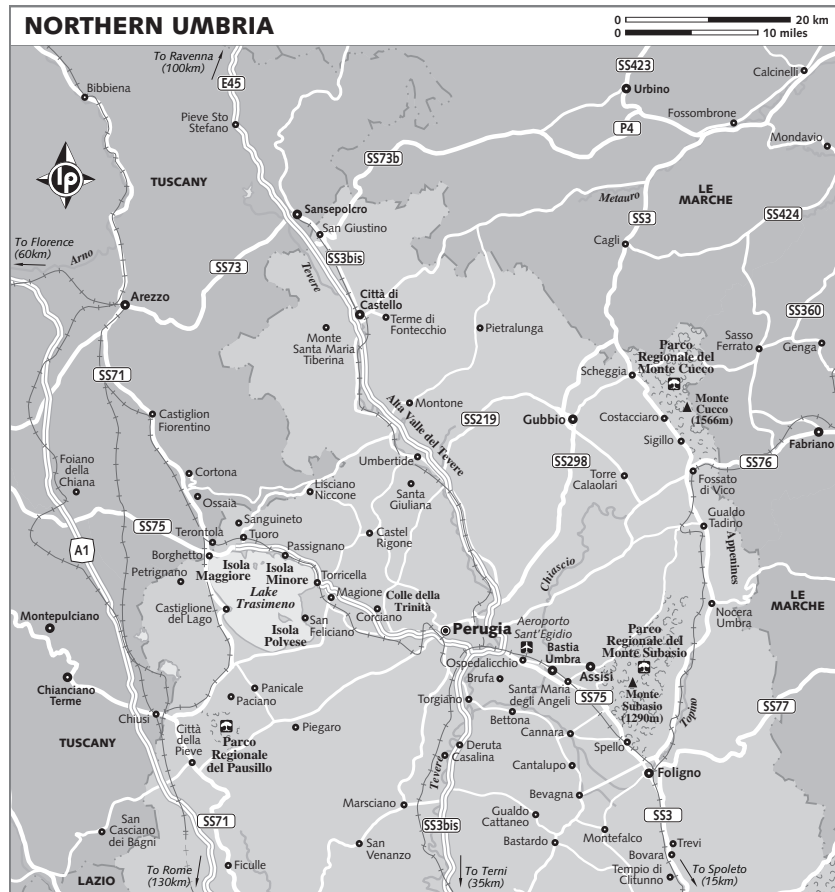
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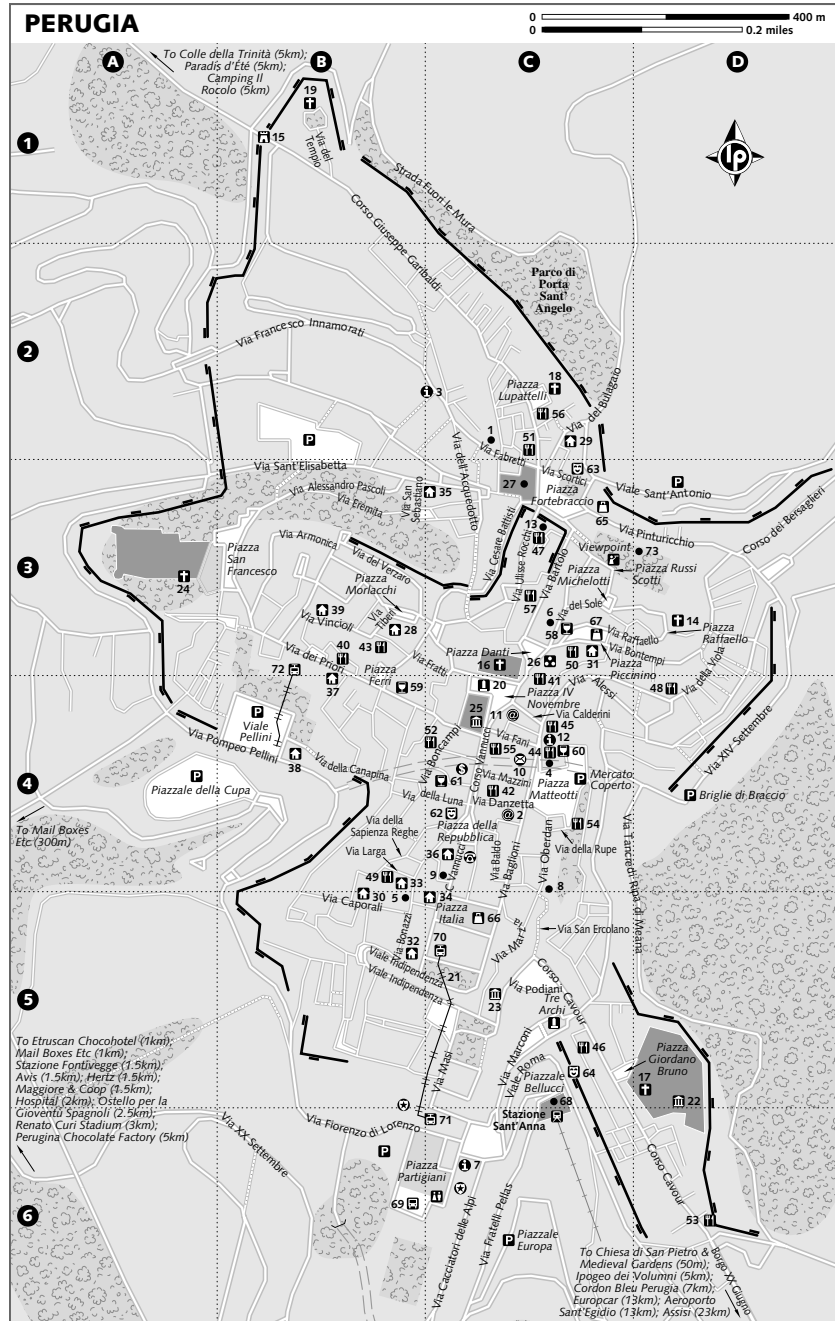
Mail Boxes etc (% 075 50 17 98; Via D'Andreotto 71) Uphill along a one-way street from the train station, or take bus no 7 and it's just past the Agip petrol station on the left. Ship packages home by FedEx, UPS or DHL here (make sure you're not shipping any perishables like meat or cheese; they'll most likely get confiscated). Staff will also wrap and box purchases for a small fee.

Main post office (Piazza Matteotti; h 8am-6.30pm Mon-Sat)

TOILETS

A growing drug problem in Perugia means it is probably safer to use the *bagni* (toilet)





inside a bar or restaurant and to steer clear of public toilets, where you might come across syringes.

TOURIST INFORMATION

eGeneration (% 075 585 23 87; www.egeneration.pg.it; Via Fabretti 48; h 10am-1pm & 3.30-6pm) Website and office have up-to-date information on concerts, arts and student events. Organises cheap trips to various Italian cities.

InfoUmbria (% 075 57 57; www.infoumbria.com in Italian; Piazza Partigiani Intercity bus station, Largo Cacciatori delle Alpi 3; h 9am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Private InfoUmbria, also known as InfoTourist, offers information on all of Umbria, and is a fantastic resource for *agriturismi* (farm-stay accommodation), festivals, sights, hotels and general information.

Tourist office (% 075 573 64 58; info@iat.perugia.it; Piazza Matteotti 18; h 8.30am-1.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) Famously unhelpful, the office nevertheless offers scads of tourist pamphlets (behind the desk) for hotels, activities, events etc. Also has the most up-to-date bus and train timetables.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Grifo Viaggio (% 075 572 48 41; www.grifoviaggio.it; Via Bonazzi 31/33; h 9am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-12.30pm Sat) Basic full-service travel agency.

Il Periscopio (% 075 573 08 08; Via del Sole 6) Arranges excursions, escorted tours and trips within Italy or abroad. The owner speaks fluent English and French.

A WALK BACK IN TIME

For a thorough self-guided archaeological tour from Etruscan to Renaissance Perugia, pick up the *Archaeological Itineraries* booklet at the Perugia tourist office. Plan on it taking about three or four hours, and wear comfortable shoes.

Sights
CORSO VANNUCCI

The centre of Perugia – and therefore the centre of Umbria – is Piazza IV Novembre. For thousands of years, it was the meeting point for the ancient Etruscan and Roman civilisations. In the medieval period, it was the political centre of Perugia. Now students and tourists gather here to eat gelato.

On the north end of the piazza is the **Cathedral of San Lorenzo** (% 075 572 38 32; Piazza IV Novembre; h 10am-1pm & 2.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun). Although a church has been on this land since the 900s, the version you see was begun in 1345 from designs created by Fra Bevignate in 1300. Building of the cathedral continued until 1587, and the doorway was built in the late 1700s; however, the main façade was never completed. Inside you'll find dramatic Gothic architecture, an altarpiece by Signorelli and sculptures by Duccio. The steps in front of the pink façade are where seemingly all of Perugia congregates.

INFORMATION	Oratorio di San Bernardino.....24 A3	Pizzeria Mediterranea.....50 C3
67 Laundry.....1 C2	Palazzo dei Priori.....25 C4	Ristorante dal Mi' Cocco.....51 C2
Coffee Break.....2 C4	Pozzo Etrusco.....26 C3	Ristorante Il Bacio.....52 C4
eGeneration.....3 C2	Rocca Paolina.....(see 21)	Ristorante Nanà.....53 D6
Farmacia San Martino.....4 C4	Sala dei Notari.....(see 25)	Ristorante Sole.....54 C4
Grifo Viaggio.....5 B5	Università per Stranieri.....27 C3	Sandri.....55 C4
Il Periscopio.....7 C6		TuttoStesso.....56 C2
InfoUmbria/InfoTourist.....8 C4		Wine Bartolo Hosteria.....57 C3
La Libreria.....8 C4	SLEEPING	
Libreria Betti.....9 C4	Albergo Morlacchi.....28 B3	
Main Post Office.....10 C4	Atena Service.....29 C2	DRINKING
Police Station.....(see 25)	Casa Spagnoli B&B.....30 B5	Bottega del Vino.....58 C3
Tempo Reale.....11 C4	Centro Internazionale per la Gioventù.....31 C3	Cinastik.....59 B4
Tourist Office.....12 C4	Hotel Brufani Palace.....32 B5	La Terrazza.....60 C4
	Hotel Fortuna.....33 B4	Lunabar.....61 C4
	Hotel La Rosetta.....34 C5	
	Hotel San Sebastiano.....35 C3	ENTERTAINMENT
	Locanda della Posta.....36 C4	Cinema Teatro del Pavone.....62 C4
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	Pensione Anna.....37 B4	Contrappunto.....63 C3
Arco Etrusco.....13 C3	Pensione Paola.....38 B4	Velvet.....64 C5
Cappella di San Severo.....14 D3	Primavera Mini Hotel.....39 B3	
Cassero di Porta Sant'Angelo.....15 B1		SHOPPING
Cathedral of San Lorenzo.....16 C3		Augusta Perusia Cioccolato & Gelateria.....65 C3
Chiesa di San Domenico.....17 D5	EATING	Mercato Mensile Antiquariato.....66 C5
Chiesa di Sant'Agostino.....18 C2	Bangladeshi Alimentari.....40 B3	Umbria Terraviva.....67 C3
Chiesa di Sant'Angelo.....19 B1	Bar Centrale.....41 C4	
Comitato Linguistico.....(see 7)	Caffè di Perugia.....42 C4	
Fontana Maggiore.....20 C4	Caffè Morlacchi.....43 B3	TRANSPORT
Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria.....(see 25)	Coop.....44 C4	Ferrovía Central Umbra.....68 C5
Giardini Carducci.....21 C5	Covered Market.....45 C4	Intercity Bus Station.....69 B6
Museo Archeologico Nazionale dell'Umbria.....22 D5	Enone.....46 C5	Scale Mobili.....70 C5
Museo di Palazzo della Penna.....23 C5	Il Cedro.....47 C3	Scale Mobili.....71 C6
Nobile Collegio del Cambio.....(see 25)	Il Gufo.....48 D4	Scale Mobili (Via dei Priori).....72 B3
Nobile Collegio della Mercanzia.....(see 25)	Il Segreto di Pulcinella.....49 B4	Scoutyrent.....73 D3

In the very centre of the piazza stands the **Fontana Maggiore** (Great Fountain). It was designed by Fra Bevignate, and father-son team Nicola and Giovanni Pisano built the fountain between 1275 and 1278. Along the edge are bas-relief statues representing scenes from the Old Testament, the founding of Rome, the 'liberal arts', and a griffin and lion. Look for the griffin all over Perugia – it's the city's symbol. The lion is the symbol of the Guelphs, the Middle Ages faction that favoured rule by the papacy over rule by the Holy Roman Empire.

PALAZZO DEI PRIORI

The Palazzo dei Priori houses some of the best museums in Perugia. The foremost art gallery in Umbria is the stunning **Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria** (National Gallery of Umbria; 90 /fax 800 69 76 16; Palazzo dei Priori, Corso Vannucci 19; adult/concession €6.50/3.25; 11 8.30am-7.30pm), entered from Corso Vannucci. It's an art historian's dream, with 30 rooms of artwork dating back to Byzantine-like art from the 13th century, as well as rooms dedicated to works from home-town heroes Pinturicchio and Perugino.

Also in the same building is what some consider the most beautiful bank in the world, the **Nobile Collegio del Cambio** (Exchange Hall; 90 075 572 85 99; Corso Vannucci 25; admission €2.60; 11 9am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat summer, 2.30-5.30pm winter), which has three rooms: the **Sala dei Legisti** (Legist Chamber), with wooden stalls carved by Giampiero Zuccari in the 17th century; the **Sala dell'Udienza** (Audience Chamber), with frescoes by Perugino; and the **Chapel of San Giovanni Battista**, painted by a student of Perugino's, **Giannicola di Paolo**. The **Nobile Collegio della Mercanzia** (Merchant's Hall; 90 075 573 03 66; Corso Vannucci 15; admission incl Collegio del Cambio €3.10; 11 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.50pm Tue-Sun summer, often closed afternoon winter) highlights an older audience chamber

from the 13th century, which is covered in wood panelling by northern craftsmen.

The **Sala dei Notari** (Notaries' Hall; 90 075 577 23 39; Piazza IV Novembre, Palazzo dei Priori; admission free; 11 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun) was built from 1293 to 1297 and is where the nobility met. The arches supporting the vaults are Romanesque, covered with frescoes depicting biblical scenes and Aesop's fables. To reach the hall, walk up the steps from the Piazza IV Novembre.

SOUTH OF CORSO VANNUCCI

At the southern end of Corso Vannucci is the tiny **Giardini Carducci**, which has lovely views of the countryside and hosts the antiques market. The gardens stand atop a once-massive 16th-century fortress, now known as the **Rocca Paolina** (main entrance Piazza Italia, entrances on Via Marzia, Via Masi & Viale Indipendenza; admission free; 11 8am-7pm). **Pope Paolo III Farnese** built the monstrosity in the 1540s, wiping out entire sections of what had been a wealthy neighbourhood. Now used as the thoroughway for the *scale mobili*, you can still see former homes of Perugia's powerful medieval families, capped with the bricked-over roof of the Papal fortress. Its nooks and crannies are now used for art exhibits throughout the year, and the last weekend of the month sees the antiques market.

PERUGIA CITY MUSEUM CIRCUIT

You can buy a combined ticket called the Perugia City Museum Circuit (adult/child/senior €2.50/1/2) at any of the three following sights; the ticket is valid for one week. First, you can venture down into the 3rd-century-BC **Pozzo Etrusco** (Etruscan Well; 90 075 573 36 69; Piazza Danti 18; 11 10am-1.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Apr-Oct, 10.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-5pm Nov-Mar, Wed-Mon except in Apr & Aug when open daily). The 36m-deep well was the main water reservoir of the Etruscan town, and,

more recently, the source of water during WWII bombing raids. The second stop is the **Cappella di San Severo** (90 075 573 38 64; Piazza Raffaello, Porta Sole; 11 10am-1.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Apr-Oct, 10.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-5pm Nov-Mar, Wed-Mon except in Apr & Aug when open daily), decorated with Raphael's *Trinity with Saints* (thought by many to be his first fresco) during the artist's residence in Perugia (1505-08) and frescoes by his pupil, Perugino dating to 1521. The third museum included is the **Cassero di Porta Sant'Angelo** (Scenic Tower; 90 075 41 67 0; Porta Sant'Angelo, Corso Garibaldi; 11 11am-1.30pm & 3-6.30pm Apr-Oct, 11am-1.30pm & 3-5pm Nov-Mar, Wed-Mon except in Apr & Aug when open daily). The panoramic view facing back on to Perugia is the main reason to come out here, plus it offers a historical briefing of the three city walls.

CORSO GIUSEPPE GARIBALDI

At the end of Via Ulisse Rocchi facing Piazza Fortebraccio and the Università per Stranieri are the ancient city gates, the **Arco Etrusco** (Etruscan Arch) dating from the 3rd century BC. The upper part is Roman and bears the inscription 'Augusta Perusia'. The loggia on top dates from the Renaissance.

North along Corso Giuseppe Garibaldi is the **Chiesa di Sant'Agostino** (Piazza Lupattelli; 11 8am-noon & 4pm-sunset), a church that boasts a beautiful 16th-century choir by sculptor and architect Baccio d'Agnolo. Small signs forlornly mark the places where artworks once hung before they were carried off to France by Napoleon and his men. Further north along the same thoroughfare, **Via del Tempio** branches off to the Romanesque **Chiesa di Sant'Angelo** (90 075 57 22 64; Via Sant'Angelo; 11 10am-noon & 4-6pm), one of Italy's oldest churches, dating back to the 5th and 6th centuries. The remnants are even older, however; it's said to stand on the site of a pagan temple, and several of its inside columns were taken from Roman structures.

ORATORIO DI SAN BERNARDINO

After the canonisation in 1450 of St Bernardino of Siena, who visited Perugia many times to preach, the local Franciscan order built a church to commemorate the saint. Designed by the Tuscan Agostino di Duccio in 1461, the **Oratorio di San Bernardino** (90 075 573 39 57; Piazza San Francesco; admission free; 11 9am-1pm & 3.30-5.30pm winter, to 6pm summer; mass 5.30pm Mon-Sat, 12pm & 5.30pm Sun) is one of the best examples of Perugia's early Renaissance masterpieces.

The bas-relief is layered with multicoloured marble, limestone, and terracotta angels and musicians. Do check out the exterior polychrome façade.

CORSO CAVOUR

The city's largest church is the **Chiesa di San Domenico** (90 075 573 15 68; Piazza Giordano Bruno; 11 8am-noon & 4pm-sunset), originally built in 1304, unfinished until 1458, and then rebuilt in the 17th century. Part of its interior cloisters date back to a former Romanesque church, but its enormous stained-glass windows arrived in the Gothic period. Legend has it that Pope Benedict XI, who lies buried here, died suddenly in Perugia in 1304 after eating figs poisoned by his nemesis.

The adjoining convent is home to the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale dell'Umbria** (90 075 572 71 41; Piazza Giordano Bruno 10; adult/concession €4/2; 11 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun, 10am-7.30pm Mon), which will boggle the mind with its collection of Etruscan and prehistoric artefacts – carved funerary urns, coins, Bronze Age statuary – dating back to the 16th century BC. The Cippo Perugino (Perugian Memorial Stone) has the longest Etruscan-language engraving ever found, offering a new window into the language.

Just west of Corso Cavour is the modern art museum **Museo di Palazzo della Penna** (90 075 577 24 16; Via Podiani 11; adult/concession €3/2; 11 10am-1pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 10.30am-1pm & 4-6pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar), as stunning for its palatial surroundings as for its artwork. Frescoes from the 18th and 19th centuries share space with 20th-century futurist Gerardo Dottori and German painter and sculptor Joseph Beuys, a radical ideologist whose artwork transcends social boundaries.

Just past the Porta di San Pietro is the 10th-century **Chiesa di San Pietro** (90 075 3 47 70; Borgo XX Giugno; 11 8am-noon & 4pm-sunset), entered through a frescoed doorway in the first courtyard. The interior is an incredible mix of gilt and marble and contains a pietà (a sculpture, drawing or painting of the dead Christ supported by the Madonna) by Perugino. Many of the paintings in this church feature depictions of biblical women.

Take a stroll or picnic at the **Medieval Gardens** (90 075 585 64 32; Borgo XX Giugno 74; admission free; 11 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri), entered behind the Chiesa di San Pietro. During the medieval period, monasteries often created gardens

THE PASSEGGIATA

One of the very best things to take advantage of in Umbria is the *passaggiata* (traditional evening stroll). No matter how big or small a town, locals and visitors of all ages take to the streets with friends or family, by themselves or, these days, attached to a mobile phone. Most towns in Umbria are built concentrically around a main square that might have started out as a Roman forum or medieval gathering place. Best of all, 'un *passaggio*' is free, doesn't require any preplanning and practically forces you to eat a double gelato. Think of it as improvised urban street theatre. In Perugia, watch as the students preen and flirt, jostling their way towards adulthood. In Orvieto, sit around the cathedral with older locals, who come to deliver Italian lessons to unsuspecting visitors. In Castelluccio, your *passaggiata* will most likely be shared with the town's herd of goats.

reminiscent of the Garden of Eden and biblical stories, with plants that symbolised myths and sacred stories.

Numbered locations through this garden include the following:

3 The Cosmic Tree, symbolising the forefather of all trees;

6 The Tree of Light and Knowledge;

7 The Tree of Good and Evil;

11 & 12 Medicinal and edible plants used for centuries;

16 Remnants from an ancient fish pond;

20 The Cosmogonic Ovation Spring (a lily-pod pond)

24 The exit of the Medieval Gardens, symbolising the elevation of man from the natural plane.

Be sure to check out the groovy alchemist's studio tucked into the corner near no 20, the Yggdrasil Incline.

OUT OF TOWN

About 5km southeast of the city is the **Ipogeo dei Volumni** (☎ 075 39 33 29; Via Assisana 53; adult/concession €3/1.50; ʘ 9am-1pm & 3.30-6.30pm Sep-Jun, 9am-12.30pm & 4.30-7pm Jul & Aug), a 2nd-century-BC Etruscan burial site. An underground chamber contains a series of recesses holding the funerary urns of the Volumni family. The surrounding grounds are a massive expanse of partially unearthed burial chambers with several buildings housing artefacts that haven't been stolen over the years. Take a train or APM bus 3 from Piazza Italia to Ponte San Giovanni and walk west from there. By car, take the Bonanzano exit heading south on the E45.

The trick for independent travellers visiting the **Perugina chocolate factory** (☎ 075 527 67 96; Van San Sisto; admission free; ʘ 9am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri year-round, 9am-1pm Sat Oct-Jan & Mar-May) is to either call ahead to arrange a guided tour, or simply latch on to a tour group (conducted in either Italian or English). After visiting the simple museum, you'll wend your way through an enclosed sky bridge, watching as the white-outfitted Oomp-, er, factory workers go about their god-granted talent for creating chocolate. Drive through the gates of the humourously nondescript factory entrance marked Nestlé, or take bus 7 to San Sisto.

Courses

Check with the tourist office for lists of all current classes in and around Perugia. **Comitato Linguistico** (☎ 075 572 14 71; www.comitatolinguistico.com; 3rd fl Largo Cacciatori delle Alpi 5) Catering to a more serious crowd, the lessons here are slightly more rigorous than at Università per Stranieri.

Two- and four-week courses start throughout the year, starting at €130 per week. The school can arrange private or family accommodation.

Cordon Bleu Perugia (☎ in Italian 075 592 50 12, in English 075 692 02 49; www.cordonbleuperugia.com; Via dei Lilla 3, Casaglia) Come for a three-hour beginners class or a week-long professional chef course on Italian cuisine. Day courses teach newbies how to make bread, pasta and Umbrian appetisers; and there's even a singles cooking course. Week-long courses cost €350 to €600.

Università per Stranieri (☎ 075 5 74 61; www.unistrapp.it; Palazzo Gallenga, Piazza Fortebraccio 4) This is Italy's foremost academic institution for foreigners, offering courses in language, literature, history, art, music, opera and architecture, to name a few. A series of degree courses is available, as well as one-, two- and three-month intensive language courses starting at €300 a month and semester-long accredited programmes for students.

Tours

Marco Bellanca (☎ 075 573 68 53, 347 600 22 09; bellsista@yahoo.com; 3/6hr for up to 16 people €100/200) Will meet guests in any town in Umbria, but specialises in art and history in Perugia and Assisi. Umbrian-born, fluent in German and English.

Festivals & Events

Perugia – and Umbria in general – has no less than 80 gazillion events, festivals, concerts, summer outdoor movies and *sagre* (traditional festivals). Check www.bellaumbria.net or www.umbria2000.it for details.

Umbria Jazz (☎ 800 46 23 11, 075 500 11 07; www.umbriajazz.com in Italian) This attracts top-notch international performers for 10 days each July, usually around the middle of the month. In the past, the festival has featured performances by hundreds of jazz greats, including Pat Metheny, the Buena Vista Social Club, Chick Corea and Al Jarreau. Single tickets cost €10 to €100, and week-long or weekend passes are also available. Be sure to check out Giardini Carducci during the day or any number of restaurants or nightspots for impromptu concerts.

Sagra Musicale Umbra (Holy Music Festival; ☎ 075 572 22 71; www.perugiamusicaclassica.com in Italian; ticket office Via Danzetti 7; tickets €7-50) One of the oldest music festivals in Europe. Begun in 1937, it's held in Perugia from mid- to late September and features world-renowned conductors and musicians.

Eurochocolate (☎ 075 502 58 80; www.eurochocolate.com) Most Perugini (Perugians) know to run, run far away from this most over-hyped of festivals, which often sees up to one million visitors. Held around the third week of October, hundreds of booths sell every known concoction of cacao, cocoa and chocolate. If you must, plan your hotel stay months in advance and don't even think of driving.

Sleeping

Perugia has a decent array of hotels and *pensioni* (small hotels), and is a good place to stay if you're visiting Umbria by train or bus, as many towns can be visited on day trips from Perugia. There's no reason to stay outside the historic centre: it's noisier, less charming and not much cheaper.

RENTAL ACCOMMODATION

Be warned that some apartment services in Perugia have a reputation for ripping off students looking for short-term accommodation, especially inventing problems caused by the renter that requires the landlord to withhold part or all of the deposit. A good way to deal with this is to carefully walk through the property beforehand with the landlord and take date-stamped photos.

Atena Service (☎ 075 573 29 92; www.atenaservice.com; Via del Bulagaio 38) can arrange accommodation from €200 per month for a shared room in an apartment, and from €550 per month for a one-bedroom apartment.

Il Periscopio (see p321) arranges accommodation for students, business travellers and long-term visitors.

There are also several ways to investigate rental accommodation yourself:

- ask at the tourist office, which can help with pricier weekly accommodation;
- check any newsstand on Wednesday and Saturday for *Cerco e Trovo* (I search and I find; €1.50) for apartment listings. Be sure to call before noon, as rooms go quickly;
- check posted flyers at the Università per Stranieri (opposite) or at eGeneration (p321);
- through word of mouth from other students, teachers or staff at the universities, or at *caffés* (cafés) or pubs.

BUDGET

Camping & Hostels

The city has two camping grounds, both in Colle della Trinità, 5km northwest of the city, which can be reached by taking bus 9 from Piazza Italia. Ask the driver to drop you off at the Superal supermarket, from where it's a 300m walk to the camp sites.

Camping Il Rocolo (☎ /fax 075 517 85 50; www.ilrocolo.it; Str Fontana 1/n, Loc. Colle della Trinità; per person €5-6.50, car/tent €3/5.50; ʘ Easter-Sep & during Eurochocolate; j) International newspapers, Skype

telephone connection, 24-hour hot showers and 100 shaded sites make this a safe choice, but there's also an on-site restaurant, friendly multilingual staff and plenty of extras (barbecue pit, TV area, bocce party, small market and proximity to a bus into Perugia).

Paradis d'Été (☎ 075 517 31 21; www.wel.it/cparadis; Strada Fontana Trinità 29/h, Colle della Trinità; per person €5.50-7, car/tent €3/5; ʘ Mar-Oct; s) This camping ground has 46 well-shaded sites in a park-like setting with a swimming pool. Facilities include hot showers, laundry sinks, bar and children's playground.

Centro Internazionale per la Gioventù (☎ 075 572 28 80; www.ostello.perugia.it; Via Bontempi 13; dm €15, sheets €2; ʘ mid-Jan–mid-Dec; j) If the 9.30am to 4pm lockout and the midnight curfew (no exceptions) don't scare you off, then you'll appreciate the sweeping countryside view and wafting sounds of church bells from the hostel's terrace, where guests often gather after making dinner in the well-stocked kitchen. Enjoy the 16th-century frescoed ceilings and tidy four- to six-person rooms.

Ostello per la Gioventù Spagnoli (☎ 075 501 13 66; www.ostellionline.org; Via Cortonese 4; dm/s/d/tr incl breakfast & sheets €15/22/34/51, towels €1, laundry €3) A few kilometres from the city centre is Perugia's main Hostelling International (HI) hostel. It's large (80 beds) and doesn't have the romance of the city-centre hostel, but it's clean, there's no curfew and the lockout is only 10am to 2pm. Take bus 9 and 10.

B&Bs & Hotels

Pensione Paola (☎ 075 572 38 16; Via della Canapina 5; s/d €33/52) It's a great bet if you want use of your own kitchen but don't want the lockout of the hostel. It has eight simply furnished rooms. Take bus 6 or 7 heading towards Piazza Italia and get off at the Pellini car park. Signs will guide you up the steps to the right. From the city centre, walk down Via dei Priori.

Hotel San Sebastiano (☎ 075 573 78 65; www.hotel sansebastiano.it; Via San Sebastiano 4; s €40-50, d €50-70, s with shared bathroom €25-40, all incl breakfast) Near Perugia's university is an old-school family-style *pensione*. Its side-street location guarantees a good night's sleep in its sparse rooms.

Casa Spagnoli B&B (☎ 075 573 51 27, 340 350 38 93; www.perugiaonline.com/bbspagnoli; Via Cesare Caporali 17; s €30-38, d €50-58, tr €60-75, all with shared bathroom) The motto is *semplice*: simple. Although the slightly cantankerous Spanish-speaking grandmother now runs daily operations, this

private-home B&B is still great value, and perfectly located near Piazza Italia.

Pensione Anna (☎ /fax 075 573 63 04; www.albergoanna.it; Via dei Priori 48; s €35-45, d €50-70, tr €54-80, with shared bathroom s €25-35, d €45-56; p) On the 4th floor with no elevator, this eclectic place is great if you want a central location that is quiet, but don't have a lot of heavy luggage.

MIDRANGE

Albergo Morlacchi (☎ 075 572 03 19; www.hotelmorlacchi.it; Via Tiberi 2; s €38-62, d €60-82; p) In a great location near the Università per Stranieri but quiet enough for visiting parents, this family-run two-star hotel is a popular choice. Rooms are furnished with simple but comfortable antique furnishings, and a few even have fireplaces.

Primavera Mini Hotel (☎ 075 572 16 57; www.primaveraminihotel.it; Via Vincioi 8; s €42-48, d €60-70, tr €84-90; a i) This central and quiet hotel run by a dedicated English- and French-speaking mother-daughter team is a fabulous find, quietly tucked away in a corner. The magnificent views complement the bright and airy rooms and common areas. All rooms come with private bathroom, telephone and TV, and breakfast is available (€3 to €6). Great value.

Etruscan Chocohotel (☎ 075 583 73 14; www.chocohotel.it; Via Campo di Marte 134; s €42-65, d €64-124; p a i s) The first hotel in the world dedicated to chocolate. Try items from the restaurant's 'chocomenu', shop at the 'chocostore' or swim in the rooftop pool (sadly, filled with water). Free on-site parking, lobby wi-fi and triple-paned windows make up for the location (on a busy street near the main train station).

Hotel Fortuna (☎ 075 572 28 45; www.umbriahotels.com; Via Bonazzi 9; s €69-98, d €99-128, tr €147; a i) In a location both quiet and central, this spotless hotel is partially housed in a building dating back to the 1300s. Ancient stone, frescoes and Venetian plaster walls accompany comfortable new furnishings, new parquet floors and (thankfully) modern bathrooms. Eschew the lower-priced doubles, as they're located in a musty reconverted one-star hotel with no air-con.

Hotel la Rosetta (☎ /fax 075 572 08 41; www.perugiaonline.com/larosetta; Piazza Italia 19; s/d/tr incl breakfast €85/130/174; p a i) You'll be so close to the centre of Perugia that you can practically crawl to most sights. Although the building is hundreds of years old, the décor is from the

19th century and 1920s. Updated with computer outlets, Sky TV and modern showers, and offering conference space and meeting rooms, the Rosetta is a business hotel where leisure travellers are just as comfortable. The hotel has a few free parking spaces; otherwise it'll cost you €20 in a nearby parking garage.

TOP END

Locanda della Posta (☎ 075 572 89 25; novelber@tin.it; Corso Vannucci 97; s €90-108, d €134-170; a) The service on our visit was less than friendly and the amenities scarce, but the location and heavy advertising keeps it full most of the year. You could save money by staying at the almost-centrally located Hotel la Rosetta or Hotel Fortuna, or upgrade for an experience of a lifetime at the Hotel Brufani Palace.

Hotel Brufani Palace (☎ 075 573 25 41; www.sinahotels.com; Piazza Italia 12; s €215, d €320, ste €440-850; p a s) One of Umbria's two five-star hotels, and a truly spectacular experience. Special touches include frescoed main rooms, impeccably decorated bedrooms and suites, a garden terrace in which to dine during summer, and helpful trilingual staff. Swim over Etruscan ruins in the subterranean fitness centre. It also has a 24-hour concierge, high-end Umbrian restaurant, wi-fi (€3 per hour) and is wheelchair accessible.

Eating

Because of the great number of students and tourists, the amount of places to dine in Perugia is staggering. The first days of spring when the mercury rises above 15°C or so (usually in March) sees dozens of open-air locales spring up along Corso Vannucci (the best two – Ristorante Il Bacio and Caffè di Perugia – are listed on p327).

BUDGET

Il Cedro (Via Ulisse Rocchi; meals €3; h 11.30am-3.30pm & 5pm-2am Tue-Sun) Those in need of a food product besides pasta should drop in for a quick kebab at what is reputedly the best in the city. The tiny tiled takeaway is run by a family from Lebanon, who serves up good, cheap and filling shawermas and kebabs to students, tourists and passers-by.

Tuttotesto (☎ 075 573 66 66; Corso Garibaldi 15; meals €9; h Tue-Sun) Beyond Perugia's pasta and meat focus is this casual university spot where professors and students debate Nietzsche over

sweet and savoury crepes, salads and *torta al testo* (Umbrian flatbread sandwiches).

Ristorante Il Bacio (☎ 075 572 09 09; Via Boncampi 6; meals €11; h 12.30am Thu-Tue) This rather cavernous *ristorante* and *pizzeria* sells good, cheap meals and also sets up a decent outdoor café on Corso Vannucci, but its selling point is that it's one of the only late-night restaurants in the historic centre.

Pizzeria Mediterranea (☎ 075 572 13 22; Piazza Piccinino 11/12; meals €11; h Wed-Mon) Perugini know to come here for the best pizza in town. A spaceship-sized wood-fired brick oven heats up pizzas from the simplest margherita to the 12-topping 'his and hers'. Add delectable *mozzarella di bufala* (fresh buffalo-milk mozzarella) to any pizza for an additional €1.60. It gets busy enough to queue, especially Thursday and Saturday nights.

Ristorante dal Mi'cocco (☎ 075 573 25 11; Corso Garibaldi 12; set meals €14; h Tue-Sun) Don't ask for a menu because there isn't one at this most traditional Perugian restaurant. Diners receive a set menu of a starter, main course, side dish and dessert. You may receive asparagus risotto in May, or tagliatelle (long, ribbon-shaped pasta) with peas and ham in November. Extremely popular with students, it's best to call ahead.

Il Segreto di Pulcinella (☎ 075 573 62 84; Via Larga 8; meals €18; h Tue-Sun) Come here for the only 'real' Neapolitan pizza in Perugia, as well as a beautiful selection of salads and pasta dishes.

MIDRANGE

Ristorante Nana (☎ 075 573 35 71; Corso Cavour 206; meals €23.50; h Mon-Sat) It's a good sign when approximately 47 members of the same family run a 15-table restaurant. Simply furnished with a small menu, the food is *nuovo italiano*: paté with Sardinian flatbread (€7) or *gnocchetti* in a pepper and radicchio cream sauce (€6.50). The wine list is equally impressive and affordable.

Enone (☎ 075 572 19 50; www.enone.it; Corso Cavour 61; meals €26; h 7pm-1am Wed-Mon) The new trendy hotspot on the Perugian dining and drinking scene. A mix between an *enoteca* (wine bar), restaurant and club, the vaulted brick walls hide all sorts of goings-on, such as live music (usually on Monday) and sushi made by a Japanese chef (usually Thursday). The regular menu features funky dishes like carrot and black truffle gnocchi in a parmesan basket.

Il Gufo (☎ 075 573 41 26; Via della Viola 18; meals €26; h 8pm-1am Tue-Sat) The owner-chef gathers ingredients from local markets and cooks up whatever is fresh and in season. Try dishes such as *cinghiale* (wild boar) with fennel (€9) or *riso nero* (black rice) with grilled vegetables and brie (€9). There are great salads for €5.

Ristorante Sole (☎ 075 573 50 31; Via della Rupe 1; meals €31;) Sure, there are better-quality restaurants in Perugia, but you're here for the view. The pasta's not bad, and the duck *carpaccio* with truffles and *grana* (granular cheese) might just trick you into thinking you came here for the food.

Wine Bartolo Hosteria (☎ 075 571 60 27; Via Bartolo 30; meals €32; h Thu-Tue) Descend a staircase into a low-ceilinged hobbitlike burrow that's lined with walls of wine bottles set around a handful of cosy tables. The chef does beautiful things with Chianina beef – stewed with Sangiovese or as a *carpaccio* with lemon over radicchio.

CAFÉS

Many of the restaurants that line Corso Vannucci open up pavement cafés in the warmer months. Don't expect the food to be top-notch, as you're paying for atmosphere.

Sandri (☎ 075 572 41 12; Corso Vannucci 32; h 10am-8pm Tue-Sun) When you enter into your third century of business, something must be right. Known for delectable chocolate cakes, candied fruit, espresso and pastries, the staff wrap all take-home purchases (picked up at the counter but paid for at the till), no matter how small, in beautiful red paper with a ribbon bow.

Caffè Morlacchi (☎ 075 572 17 60; Piazza Morlacchi 6/8; h 8am-1am Mon-Sat) Bring your bongo drums and leftist rhetoric to this most hip of establishments. Students, professors and expats nosh on international fare, sipping tea or hot chocolate during the day and cocktails at night.

Caffè di Perugia (☎ 075 573 18 63; Via Mazzini 10; meals €29; h noon-3pm & 7pm-midnight Wed-Mon) The fanciest sit-down café in town, its desserts are worth the high prices. It also serves a fine choice of basic pasta and meat dishes, and offers outdoor seating in summer and a smoking room indoors. Combine dessert and dinner with the *tagolini al caco con ragu di cervo* (pasta in chocolate sauce with deer).

Bar Centrale (Piazza IV Novembre 35; h 7am-11pm) A popular meeting place for students with an indoor salon and outdoor tables where you

can munch a *panini* (sandwich) and watch the students on the cathedral steps.

SELF-CATERING

Coop (Piazza Matteotti; 7am-8pm Mon-Sat) The largest grocery store in the historic centre, Coop sells all the staples, fruits and vegetables, and has a deli counter with fresh pasta and cheeses.

Covered market (Piazza Matteotti; 7am-1.30pm Mon-Sat) Found below Coop, you can buy fresh produce, bread, cheese and meat from this market. From Piazza Matteotti, head down the stairs of the arched doorway labelled 18A.

Coop (96 075 501 65 04; Piazza Vittorio Veneto; 7am-7.45pm Mon-Sat) This supersized supermarket has its own parking garage directly across from the main train station (two hours' free parking with validation).

Bangladeshi Alimentari (96 075 572 36 41; Via dei Priori 71; 11am-10pm) Just the basics, but check out those opening hours.

Drinking

Lunabar (96 075 572 29 66; Via Scura 1/6 at Corso Vannucci; 8am-2am Tue-Sun) Atmospherically equidistant between New York and Umbria, the city-centre lounge spins together frescoed, Venetian plaster walls with a grey and onyx bar and space-age restrooms. Smokers enjoy their own room and the hungry will appreciate the *aperitivo* (aperitif) selection.

Cinastik (96 075 572 09 99; Via dei Priori 36; 6.30pm-2.30am Mon-Sat) Feel very much like you're on the Continent in this swanky hot spot. Downstairs is pumping with sultry music and the mixed drinks are flowing. Upstairs is a little quieter (make sure you check out the coolest bathrooms in Perugia).

Bottega del Vino (96 /fax 075 571 61 81; Via del Sole 1; 7pm-1am Mon-Sat) A fire or candles burn atmospherically on the terrace. Inside, live jazz and hundreds of bottles of wine lining the walls add to the romance of the setting. You can taste dozens of Umbrian wines, which you can purchase with the help of sommelier-like experts.

La Terrazza (Piazza Matteotti 18a; 7 summer) Should you sit in the park and enjoy the view of the sun setting over the Umbrian hillside, or head into a darkened pub for a drink? Well, you can come here for both. On the back terrace of the building that houses the Coop and covered markets is this open-air bar, perfect for an evening *aperitivo*.

Entertainment

Much of Perugia's nightlife parades outside the cathedral and around Fontana Maggiore. Hundreds of local and foreign students congregate here practically every night, playing guitars and drums and chatting with friends. Tourists mix in easily, slurping gelati and enjoying this fascinating version of outdoor theatre. When the student population grows, some of the clubs on the outskirts of town run a bus to Palazzo Gallenga, starting around 11pm. Students get paid to hand out flyers on Corso Vannucci, so check with them or ask at the steps. Most clubs get going around midnight, so be warned on your way back into town: the *scale mobili* stop running at about 1am.

Cinema Teatro del Pavone (96 075 572 49 11; www.cinegatti.it; Corso Vannucci 67) A grand theatre now showing films – on Mondays in their original language (usually English) for €4. Come early to grab a box seat. During the summer, the owners run outdoor movies; check at the cinema for schedules and directions.

Contrappunto (96 075 573 36 67; Via Scorticci 4/a; 7 evenings until late Tue-Sun) What was a jazz club now opens its doors to all sorts of music. Jazz jams are just on Wednesday, but try live rock on Thursday, disco on Friday and world-famous DJs on Saturdays (until 5am). Food is available; try the huge antipasto plate for two to four people for €16.

Velvet (96 075 572 13 21; Viale Roma 20; 7 Tue-Sun) Come to where the beautiful people play. It opens around 10pm, but the well-dressed party here until the wee hours.

Perugia football team (96 075 500 66 41; www.perugia calcio.it; Renato Curi Stadium, Via Piccolpasso 48; tickets €2-40) Perugia Calcio has been knocking back and forth between Serie A, B and C, and ticket availability goes up (or down) with the tide, as does the gossip, a favourite discussion topic for Perugia's residents. Take bus 9, 11 or 13 to the Renato Curi stadium.

Shopping

Augusta Perusia Cioccolato e Gelateria (96 075 573 45 77; www.cioccolatoaugustaperusia.it in Italian; Via Pinturicchio 2; 10.30am-8pm Mon-Sat) Giordano worked for Perugino for 25 years. In 2000, he opened his own shop, creating delectables from the old tradition, including *baci* (hazelnut 'kisses' covered in chocolate) from the original Perugian recipe. Handmade chocolate bars come in boxes with old paintings of Perugia – great

OFF THE EATEN PATH

Many of the best Umbrian restaurants are outside of town, or in towns most visitors skip. These five restaurants are a bit far afield – from a truffle-lover's paradise in the hills above the Valnerina to a neighbourhood trattoria in often-missed Foligno.

I Quattro Sensi (p333) Although it's no more than 30 minutes from Perugia, Torgiano or Montefalco and Bevagna, the Relais Borgo Brufa's restaurant isn't terribly near anything but is a beautiful drive from just about everywhere. The wine list knows no boundaries, and never has shrimp tasted this tender.

Il Bacco Felice (p347) Well known by foodies from around the world, Salvatore's neighbourhood *osteria* (restaurant focussing on wine) in the often-overlooked town of Foligno attracts international food critics and casual friends alike.

Ristorante Country House L'Antico Forziere (p334) A few kilometres south of Deruta is a lovely enough country house with a restaurant that deserves all the praise it's garnered and more. After dishes like blueberry *cinghiale* (wild boar) or turnip pasta, be sure to partake in a dessert worthy of a photograph.

Ristorante Piermarini (p389) Signore Piermarini knows a thing or two (or three) about how to put together Umbrian ingredients. He is also a truffle hunter, olive farmer and cookery teacher, and his family has worked the land for generations. Ristorante Piermarini is well, well off the beaten path, located a few kilometres off the SS209 in the Valnerina town of Ferentillo, but it is well worth a day trip solely for the fresh *tartufi nero* (black truffles) with soft-boiled egg.

Vissani (p372) One of Umbria's only Michelin-starred restaurants, master chef Gianfranco Vissani cooks up meals as passionate as his mood. Judge for yourself whether Umbrians are right when they say he's overrated. Equidistant between Todi and Orvieto along Lago di Corbara down a private gated drive.

for gifts – or pick up some of the city's best gelato for yourself.

Mercato Mensile Antiquariato (Antiques Market; Giardini Carducci; 7am-6pm or 7pm) If you're lucky enough to be in Perugia on the fourth weekend of the month, spend a few hours wandering through this market around the Piazza Italia and in the Giardini Carducci. It's a great place to pick up old prints, frames, furniture, jewellery, postcards and stamps.

Umbria Terraviva (Organic Market; 96 075 835 50 62; Piazza Piccinino) On the first Sunday of the month, check out this market located along the side of the Duomo heading towards Via Bonanzi. You'll find all sorts of organic fruits, vegetables, and fabulous canned or packaged items to take home as gifts.

For the best boutique shopping in town, head down Via Oberdan from Piazza Matteotti (towards Corso Cavour). Above the windy pedestrian street hangs a banner announcing 'Via Oberdan – Shopping Street' and the thoroughfare offers jewellery, shoes, music shops, a bookshop and clothing both chic and thrifty.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Aeroporto Sant'Egidio (PEG; 96 075 59 21 41; www.airport.umbria.it), 13km east of the city, offers at least three daily Alitalia flights to Milan, plus

a new Ryanair service to London Stansted thrice weekly. A one-way or round-trip taxi to Sant'Egidio costs €25 from the city centre, or there's a extremely convenient bus line *Sulga* (96 800 09 96 61; www.sulga.it) that coincides with all arrivals and departures. The white shuttle buses (€3.50) leave from Piazza Italia about an hour and 10 minutes before a scheduled departure, stopping at the train station 15 minutes into the journey. From the airport, buses leave once everyone is off the planes with their luggage.

BUS

Several towns in Umbria have no train station, but several buses pick up the slack, except on Sunday, when it's impossible to get just about anywhere by bus.

Intercity buses leave from Piazza Partigiani (take the *scale mobili* from Piazza Italia). *Sulga* also offers a Perugia–Florence service (€10.50, 2½ hours) that runs once daily, except Sunday, leaving Perugia at 7.30am and Florence at 6pm (from Piazza Adua at Santa Maria Novella). Most routes within Umbria are operated by **APM Perugia** (96 800 51 21 41, mobile 0755731707; www.apmperugia.com) in the north and **SSIT** (96 074 267 07 46; www.spoletina.com) or **ATC Terni** (96 0744 40 94 57; www.atcterni.it) in the south. APM Perugia has recently upgraded its fleet with two-dozen ecologically friendly buses.

Buses head to Deruta (€2.60, 25 minutes, 13 daily), Torgiano (€1.30, 25 minutes, nine daily) by *extraurbano* or by city bus 5A, Assisi (€3, 50 minutes, nine daily), Todi (€4.30, one hour and 10 minutes, seven daily), Gubbio (€4.30, one hour and 10 minutes, 10 daily), Gualdo Tadino (€5.20, one hour and 20 minutes, five daily) and Lake Trasimeno towns (€3 to €4.70, 50 minutes to one hour and 10 minutes, six to 10 daily). To get to Narni or Amelia, take an ATC Terni bus from Piazza Partigiani or preferably the FCU train to Terni and switch there. Check the TV monitors above the terminals. To get to Spello, Foligno, Spoleto or Orvieto, it's best to take the train.

Current train and bus routes, company details and timetables are listed in the monthly booklet *Viva Perugia* (€1), available at the tourist office, hotels and some newsstands.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

From Rome, leave the A1 at the Orte exit and follow the signs for Terni. Once there, take the SS3bis/E45 for Perugia. From the north, exit the A1 at Valdichiana and take dual carriageway SS75 for Perugia. The SS75 to the east connects the city with Assisi.

You'll find three car-rental companies at the main train station, Stazione Fontivegge. All are open from 8.30am to 1pm and 3.30pm to 7pm Monday to Friday, and from 8.30am to 1pm Saturday.

Avis (☎ /fax 075 500 03 95; alvalrent@hotmail.com)

Hertz (☎ 075 500 24 39; hertzperugia@tiscali.it)

Maggiore (☎ 075 500 74 99; www.maggiore.it in Italian)

Airport Sant'Egidio also offers the following:

Europcar (☎ 075 692 06 15; www.europcar.it; 8.30am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-12.30pm Sat, by request Sun)

ARRIVING FROM FIUMICINO?

It's quite easy to take a direct bus from Rome's Fiumicino (FCO) airport to Perugia. Pick up a blue **Sulga** (☎ 800 09 96 61; www.sulga.it) bus across the street from international terminal C. From Monday to Saturday, there are four daily buses to Perugia (€15, 3½ to four hours) departing at 9am, 12.30pm, 2.30pm and 5pm, and two buses on Sundays and holidays at 12.30pm and 4.30pm. Heading back to Fiumicino, buses leave Piazza Partigiani at 6am, 8am and 9am Monday to Saturday, and 7.30am and 8.30am on Sundays and holidays. Several buses stop in Assisi. Check the website for details.

TRAIN

Although Perugia's main train station is named 'Stazione Fontivegge', the sign at the station simply reads 'Perugia'. It is on Piazza Vittorio Veneto, a few kilometres west of the city centre and easily accessible by frequent buses from Piazza Italia. The ticket office is open from 6.30am to 8.10pm (closed for lunch 12.50pm to 1.20pm), but you can buy tickets at the automated machines at any time of day with a credit card or cash. For train information, call Tren Italia (☎ 89 20 21). Most travellers won't make use of Perugia's other train stations – which are located in the suburbs – except for those visiting the Etruscan necropolis Ipogeo dei Volumni, walking distance from the Ponte San Giovanni station.

Perugia is on a spur line, so there's almost always a change in Foligno to the southeast or Terontola to the northwest. Regular trains

run to Rome (€10.10 to €18.45, 2¼ to three hours), Florence (€7.90 to €12.50, two hours) and Arezzo (€4.50, one hour and 10 minutes, every two hours). Within Umbria, it's easy to reach Assisi (€1.65, 25 minutes, hourly), Gubbio (€4.30, 1½ hours, seven daily, change in Foligno), Spello (€2.05, 30 minutes, hourly) and Orvieto (€6.10 to €6.80, 1¼ hours, at least every other hour).

About half of the tourist destinations in Umbria require a ride on the *Ferrovie Centrali Umbra* (FCU; ☎ 075 57 54 01; www.fcu.it in Italian; Stazione Sant'Anna, Piazzale Bellucci). These adorable graffiti-tied 'Thomas the Tank Engine' trains also head to Rome (switch in Terni). You must validate your ticket on board, not before boarding as with all other Italian trains.

Take the FCU south to Fratta Todina for Monte Castello di Vibio (€2.05, 40 minutes, 18 daily), Todi (€2.55, 50 minutes, 18 daily) or Terni (€4.40, 1½ hours, 17 daily). The Sansepolcro line heads north to Umbertide (€2.05, 45 minutes, 19 daily) and Città di Castello (€3.05, one hour and 10 minutes, 16 daily).

Getting Around

It's a steep 1.5km climb uphill from Perugia's train station, so a bus is highly recommended, essential for those with luggage. The city bus costs €1 and takes you as far as Piazza Italia in the historic centre. Be sure to validate your ticket upon boarding or you will be fined on the spot. If you haven't bought a ticket, you can buy one on the bus for €1.50. Buses 6, 7, 9, 11 and 15 run between the train station and Piazza Italia. Buy your bus ticket from the small green bus kiosk in front of the train station, in Piazza Italia, or at *tabacchi* (tobacconists) throughout the city. If you're going to stick around for a while, buy a 10-ticket pass for €8.60. The 'mini-metro' light rail system was supposed to have been finished by 2003, so expect it to be running by 2012 or so.

Give **Scootyrent** (☎ 075 572 07 10, 333 102 65 05; www.scootyrent.com; Via Pinturicchio 76) a call for scooter rental. For about €20 a day, you can feel like a real Italian, transporting yourself and taking your life in your hands, all at the same time.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Perugia is humourously difficult to navigate and most of the city centre is only open to residential or commercial traffic (although tourists may drive to their hotels to drop off

luggage). Rumour has it that parking police are more lenient on rental cars, but if you park illegally for too long you run the risk of getting towed.

Parking

Perugia has six fee-charging car parks: Piazza Partigiani and the Mercato Coperto are the most central and convenient, plus Viale Sant'Antonio, Viale Pellini, Briglie di Braccio and Piazzale Europa. The free car park is located at Piazza Cupa. *Scale mobili* or *ascensori* (lifts) lead from each car park towards the city centre, but take note: they don't operate 24 hours a day, and they usually stop between about midnight or 1am and 6am or 7am.

Parking fees cost €0.80 to €1.20 per hour, 24 hours a day, in the city centre lots. If you intend to use a car park frequently, buy a tourist *abbonamento* (unlimited parking ticket pass) from the ticket office at the car park. If you're just parking for a while, try the Coop (see p328) on Piazza Vittorio Veneto by the train station, where you can park free for two hours with any purchase. Also, many of the spaces near the train station charge only from 9am to 1pm and 4pm to 7pm Monday to Friday, including a car park just north of the station.

Call the information line (☎ 075 577 53 75) if your car has been towed or for general parking information.

Your best bet is simply to rent a car on your way out of Perugia.

TAXI

Taxi services are available from 6am to 2am (24 hours a day in July and August) – call ☎ 075 500 48 88 to arrange pick-up.

A ride from the city centre to the main train station, Stazione Fontivegge, will cost about €12. Tack on €1 for each suitcase.

TORGIANO

pop 5862

Fans of wine and olive oil will appreciate this town, a monument to these two most important Umbrian, and indeed Italian, products. Torgiano, just a 25-minute bus ride from Perugia's Piazza Partigiani, is famous throughout the world for its fine wines, and the Lungarotti family, the closest thing Umbria has to a ruling noble family these days, owns many of the local vineyards, the excellent wine museum and the second of Umbria's two five-star hotels.

TOP FIVE PLACES IN UMBRIA TO VISIT BY CAR

Castelluccio (p387) There are only two buses to this town: Thursday morning and Thursday afternoon, so driving is your best bet. It shouldn't be missed, especially in May and June when the Piano Grande is abloom with wildflowers.

La Scarzuola (p372) A hike from just about anywhere listed in this book, the beautiful drive here will set you in the mood to appreciate the stunning mystery of this combination garden-architectural monument-Franciscan monastery-concert theatre.

Lake Trasimeno (p356) It's possible to get here and around using the train and bus, but a car will allow you to meander through fields of sunflowers and olive trees.

Monte Castello di Vibio (p377) Many establishments will pick up guests at the Fratta Todina train station, but a car will get you out to Fattoria di Vibio *agriturismo* (p377) for a lunch that makes it worth renting wheels.

Wine region (p344) Vineyards are just starting to open tasting rooms to the public in the rolling hills surrounding Bevagna and Montefalco. Just make sure you have a designated driver!

THE LUNGAROTTI FAMILY

Founded in the 1960s by winemaker and patriarch Giorgio Lungarotti, the Lungarotti vineyard has become one of Umbria's most famous exports. After Giorgio's passing in 1999, daughters Chiara Lungarotti and Teresa Severini took over the family business and have become two of the most well-known women in Italian wine. With a lifetime spent in the vineyards around Torgiano and degrees in agronomy from Perugia's university, Chiara and Teresa have each taken on a sector of the family business. Teresa focuses on marketing and communications for the Lungarotti empire, while Chiara's knowledge of oenology and travel earned her the presidency of Italy's **Movimento Turismo del Vino** (www.movimentoturismovino.it), the Wine Tourism Movement. The Lungarottis own more land in Umbria than any other entity, but still maintain that Umbrian sense of community and family (in fact, the daughter of Giorgio's head carpenter is now Chiara's secretary).

Information

Tourist office (☎ 075 988 60 37; Piazza Baglioni; 11am-12pm & 2.30-5pm Tue-Sun) Pick up information on wine-tasting, the Strada dei Vini del Cantico (below) or the Brufa sculpture garden here.

Sights & Activities

The most important wine museum in Europe, Torgiano's **Museo del Vino** (☎ 075 988 02 00; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 31; adult/concession €4.50/2.50, incl Museo dell'Olio e dell'Olio €7, audio guide €2; 11am-1pm & 3-7pm summer, to 6pm winter) was started in 1974 by the Lungarotti matriarch, Maria Grazie. The 20-room former palace traces the history of the production of wine in the region back to Etruscan times. Displays of utensils, graphic art, wine containers and production techniques sit alongside a personal collection of photos from the 1950s.

With support from research institutes in Italy and abroad, the Lungarotti family helped organise the **Museo dell'Olio e dell'Olio** (☎ 075 988 03 00; Via Garibaldi 10; adult/concession €4.50/2.50; 11am-

1pm & 3-7pm summer, to 6pm winter), which opened in 2000. Contained in a series of medieval houses, the museum traces the production cycle of the olive, displays olive-oil accoutrements, and documents the culture and use of olives and how they relate to the economy, the landscape, religion, medicine, diet, sport, crafts and traditions.

Festivals & Events

In the second half of November, the **Banco d'Assaggio dei Vini** (www.bavi.it in Italian) – a dedicated wine-tasting demonstration – is an important event on the international calendar.

Sleeping & Eating

Al Grappolo d'Oro (☎ 075 98 22 53; www.algrappolodoro.net; Via Principe Umberto 22/24; s €50, d €90-105, all incl breakfast; p a s) One of the best hotel deals in Umbria, this is worth a stay just for the vineyard view from the pool. Smartly furnished 19th-century rooms have been upgraded with DSL, satellite TV, DVD, hairdryers and towel warmers.

Le Tre Vasselle (☎ 075 988 04 47; www.3vasselle.it; Via Garibaldi 48; rooms s €170, d €205-230, ste €270; p a s) One of Umbria's most exclusive restaurants is found in Torgiano: Le Melograne, housed in this luxury hotel (both owned by the Lungarotti family – are you starting to see a theme here?). The restaurant serves deluxe Umbrian cuisine (meals €90) amid luxurious furnishings and beautiful brick floors. Dishes include veal *carpaccio* topped with black truffles, and risotto cooked with Rubesco red wine produced by, of course, the Lungarottis. The fabulous features of the hotel, Umbria's second five star (Hotel Brufani Palace in Perugia is the first), including indoor and outdoor swimming pools and 300-year-old oak-beamed ceilings, are sadly met with several

unimpressive ones, including poor sound-proofing and three star-quality beds.

Ristorante Siro (☎ 075 98 20 10; Via Giordano Bruno 16; meals €24.50; 11 lunch & dinner) This old-school eatery is one of those spots where waiters and customers all know each other by name. The *antipastone al tagliere* (a huge board of antipasti; €15 for two) starter would feed a hungry family and *gnocchetti al rubesco e radicchio* (little gnocchi with rubesco wine and radicchio) takes advantage of the local wine. Home-made tiramisu to die for.

AROUND TORGIANO

Between Torgiano and Perugia Ponte San Giovanni is the hamlet of Brufa, formerly a *frazione* (defense town) of Torgiano. The countryside drive alone is worth a detour, but the added bonus is the 20-piece public sculptures that pop up along the drive into Brufa and at various points around town. On the *Strada del Vino e dell'Arte*, you'll see a series of sculptures, some over 6m high while others are a fraction of that. They were created each year by some of Italy's top sculptors starting in 1987. When in Torgiano, the tourist office's *In Viaggi* map of Torgiano carries an inset map of Brufa's sculptures.

For a truly magnificent experience, stay in sumptuous luxury at the newly refurbished **Relais Borgo Brufa** (☎ 075 98 52 67; www.borgobrufa.it; Via del Colle 38; s €95-130, d €125-180, ste €185-355; p a i s). Formerly a quiet, out-of-the-way country estate, the relais is now a homage to opulence. If the outdoor salt-water pool (more delicate on tanned skin) and architecturally designed suites seamlessly blending old and new aren't enough, its **Wellness Centre** (☎ 075 988 78 50; 11am-1pm & 2.30-8pm; treatments €30-75) is a quiet secret, but it is open to the public. The six treatment rooms have warm lighting, a mosaic Turkish bath with twinkling lights and a hydromassage pool. And there is the restaurant, **I Quattro Sensi** (meals €40), which is destined for greatness. In addition to elegant surroundings, food here is tastefully and ingeniously presented: porcini mushroom tempura, pumpkin soup with caviar, and shrimp softer than butter. The relais is less than a 15-minute drive to Perugia's Sant'Egidio airport.

For a lighter dinner, stop in at **I Birbi Osteria** (☎ 075 988 90 41; Loc. Le Casacce, Miralduoro di Torgiano; meals €30; 11 dinner Tue-Sun, lunch Sat & Sun, closed 2 weeks Nov, 3 weeks Jan) on a beautiful hill just east

of Brufa. A Tuscan/Umbrian couple hosts their extended family and friends in front of a great hearth. Sure, there's technically a menu, but go with the menu of the day, much of it local meats grilled over the wood-fired hearth.

DERUTA

pop 8687

Just south of Perugia is an ancient 'company' town known for one thing: majolica ceramic technique. The Etruscans and Romans worked the clay around Deruta, but it was not until the bright blue and yellow metallic-oxide majolica glazing technique was imported from Majorca in the 15th century that the ceramics industry took off.

Contact the local **tourist office** (☎ 075 971 00 43; Piazza dei Consoli; 11am-12pm & 2.30-5pm Tue-Sun) for general information or details about additional accommodation.

Prices for ceramics in Deruta can be lower or higher than towns like Gubbio or Assisi, but realise what you're getting (ie either pricier quality handmade items at boutique outlets or cheaper, mass-produced factory knockoffs at the larger operations). For the best quality, head to a smaller shop that follows the centuries-old Deruta traditions.

Try **Maioliche Nulli** (☎ /fax 075 97 23 84; Via Tiberina 142; 11am-1pm & 4-7pm), where Rolando Nulli creates each item by hand, while his brother Goffredo, wife Tiziana or son Luca finishes them with intricate paintings, specialising in classic medieval designs. If they're not busy and you ask nicely in Italian, they might even bring you downstairs and teach you to throw a bowl on the wheel. They'll even package and ship your purchases anywhere in the world. Parking's available. Bring your camera!

You can get a taste for the genuine article at the **Museo Regionale della Ceramica** (☎ /fax 075 971 10 00; Largo San Francesco; adult/concession/child under 6yr €3/2/free; 11am-1pm & 3-6pm or 7pm, Wed-Mon only winter), in the former Franciscan convent. The history of the production of pottery in Deruta from the 14th century until the beginning of the 20th century is presented here, along with an explanation of the development of the special glaze, including some splendid examples.

Maioliche CAMA Deruta (☎ 075 971 11 82; www.camaderuta.com; Via Tiberina 112) is one of the biggest operations in town, but is also one of the most respected in Deruta. It sells wine and food,

LA STRADA DEI VINI DEL CANTICO

La Strada dei Vini del Cantico (www.strada.deivinidelcantico.it) is one of Umbria's four wine routes, encompassing the tourist route of Torgiano, Perugia, Bettona, Canara, Spello, Assisi, Todi and Marsciano. Tourist offices in all eight towns carry maps and brochures listing the vineyards, hotels, *agriturismi* and restaurants of particular interest to wine lovers. Follow the map by car (or, for the brave, by bicycle) to find ancient archaeology, stone farmhouses, stunningly beautiful landscapes and plenty of spots to quench the thirst of anyone who comes to Italy to eat, drink and enjoy the view.

as well, and offers almost everything online, which it also packs and ships.

At **Scuola d'Arte Ceramica** (☎ 075 97 23 83; www.scuoladarteceramica.com in Italian; Via Tiberina Sud 330), intermediate and expert ceramists will get a thorough lesson in Derutan techniques over several days or even weeks. Courses are usually taught in Italian but some popular summer courses have an English translator.

For a great and cheap meal, try **Hotel Ristorante Asso di Coppe** (☎ 075 971 02 05; SS3bis/E45, Km 73,400; meals €22), a place populated by locals and serving basic but delicious Umbrian cuisine.

Just south of Deruta in the village of Casalina is **Ristorante Country House L'Antico Forziere** (☎ 075 972 43 14; www.anticoforziere.com; Via della Rocca 2, Loc. Casalina di Deruta; r €85-100, ste €125-150; p a s), a charming country house with several well-decorated rooms in an enviable position to reach most of northern Umbria (although a tad close to the highway). However, the restaurant (meals €32) is what brings travellers (and food critics) in the know out here. Three brothers perform magic with dishes such as turnip pasta with leek and poppy seeds and saffron risotto with cinnamon pork. Don't even think of leaving before trying (and photographing) the dessert sampler. Closed on Mondays.

APM buses connect the town with Perugia (€2.60, 25 minutes, 13 daily).

ASSISI

pop 26,452

The spiritual capital of Umbria is Assisi, a town more tied to its most famous son than anywhere else. St Francis of Assisi was born here in 1182 and preached his message throughout Umbria until his death in 1224.

To visit Assisi now is to see it almost as Francis himself saw it. Except, of course, for the millions of pilgrims and tourists now attempting to share in the same tranquillity as you.

History

Assisian history dates back to 1000 BC, when Umbrians built small settlements in the hospitable countryside. It has bounced around between almost a dozen ruling factions since, including Roman rule as far back as 295 BC and Ostrogoth invaders in the 6th century. In the 13th century when Assisi was a free commune, the Ghibelline (pro-Empire) residents often fought against its Guelph (pro-Papacy)

neighbour, Perugia. One such soldier was the future St Francis of Assisi.

Orientation

Piazza del Comune is the centre of Assisi. At the northwestern edge of this square. Via San Paolo and Via Portica both eventually lead to the Basilica di San Francesco. Via Portica also leads to the Porta San Pietro and the Piazzale dell'Unità d'Italia, where most intercity buses stop, although APM buses from smaller towns in the area terminate at Piazza Matteotti. Train riders arrive at Piazza Matteotti by shuttle bus (€1) from Santa Maria degli Angeli.

Information

EMERGENCY

Police station (☎ 075 81 28 20; Piazza del Comune)

INTERNET ACCESS

Bar Sabatini (☎ 075 81 62 46; Via Portica 29b; per 30min €3; h 8am-8pm) Internet facilities.

LAUNDRY

Acquazzura (☎ 075 804 09 27; Via San Bernadino Siena 6, Santa Maria degli Angeli) A self-service laundromat between the train station and basilica in Santa Maria degli Angeli.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Hospital (Ospedale di Assisi; ☎ 075 81 39 1; Via Fuori Porta Nuova) Hospital about 1km southeast of Porta Nuova in Fuori Porta.

POST

Post office Porta Nuova (h 8am-1.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12.30pm Sat); Porta San Pietro (h 8.10am-6.25pm Mon-Fri, 8.10am-1pm Sat & Sun)

TOURIST INFORMATION

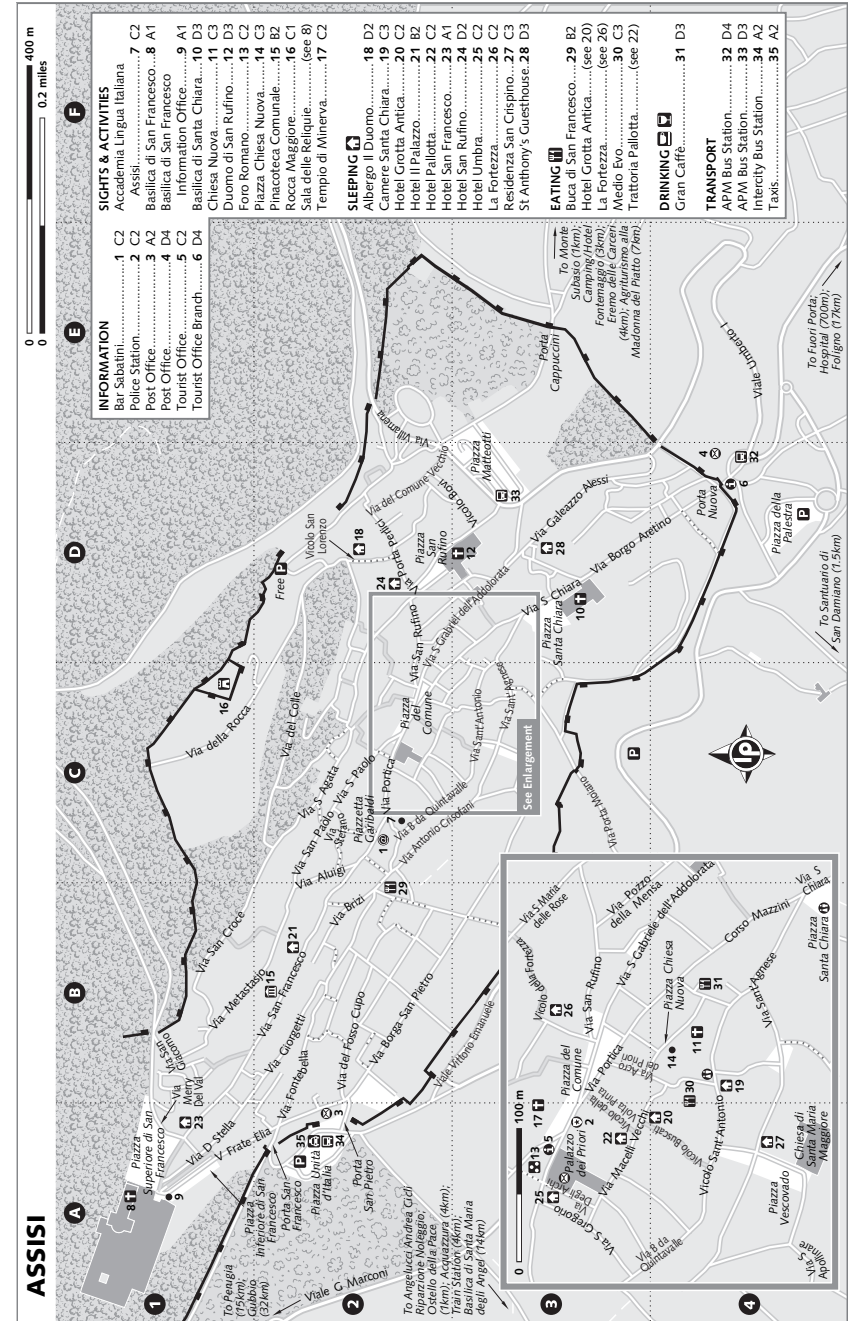
Tourist office (☎ 075 81 25 34; info@iat.assisi.pg.it; Piazza del Comune 22; h 8am-2pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Sun summer, 9am-1pm Sun winter) Also a branch office outside Porta Nuova from Easter through October.

Sights

BASILICA DI SAN FRANCESCO

The **Basilica di San Francesco** (☎ 075 81 90 01; Piazza di San Francesco) has a separate information office (☎ 075 819 00 84; www.sanfrancescoassisi.org; h 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat) opposite the entrance to the lower church.

The basilica saw heavy damage and four deaths during a series of earthquakes on 26



September 1997. Years of painstaking restoration – including piecing together frescoes from crumbled bits, some not much larger than a grain of sand – will probably go on until at least 2010.

The basilica was built on a hill known as Colle d'Inferno (Hell Hill). People were executed at the gallows here until the 13th century. St Francis asked his followers to bury him here in keeping with Jesus, who had died on the cross among criminals and outcasts. The area is now known as Paradise Hill.

The **upper church** (h 8.30am–6.50pm Easter–Nov, to 6pm Nov–Easter, to 7.15pm holidays) was built just after the lower church, between 1230 and 1253, and the change in style and grandiosity is readily apparent. One of the most famous pieces of art in the world is the 28-part fresco circling the walls. The fresco has been attributed to Giotto and his pupils for hundreds of years, but the question of who produced it is now under debate within the art-historian community. The fresco starts just to the right of the altar and continues clockwise around the church. Above each image is a corresponding biblical fresco with 28 corresponding images from the Old and New Testament (possibly painted by Giotto, or Pietro Cavallini, who might or might not have painted the fresco cycle). The frescoes in the basilica literally revolutionised art in the Western world. All the gold leaf and flat iconic images of the Byzantine and Romanesque periods were eschewed for natural backgrounds, people of all classes and a human, suffering Jesus. This was in keeping with Francis' idea that the human body was 'brother' and the earth around him mother and sister.

These fresco painters were the storytellers of their day, turning biblical passages into *Bibliae Pauperum*: open public Bibles for the poor, who were mostly illiterate. The scenes in St Francis' life were tied to the scenes as a way to translate the Bible through images. For instance, the fifth fresco shows St Francis renouncing his father, while the corresponding biblical fresco shows the disobedient Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The **lower church** (h 6.30am–6.50pm Easter–Nov, to 6pm Nov–Easter, to 7.15pm holidays) was built between 1228 and 1230. The stained-glass windows are the work of master craftsmen brought in from Germany, England and Flanders during the

13th century, and were quite an architectural feat at that time.

In the centre of the lower church, above the main altar, are four frescoes attributed to Maestro delle Vele, a pupil of Giotto, that represent what St Francis called 'the four greatest allegories'. The first was the victory of Francis over evil, and the other three were the precepts his order was based on: poverty, obedience and chastity.

Lorenzetti's triptych in the left transept ends with his most famous and controversial, *Madonna Who Celebrates Francis*. Mary is seen holding the baby Jesus and indicating with her thumb towards St Francis. On the other side of Mary is the apostle John, whom we're assuming is being unfavourably compared with Francis. In 1234 Pope Gregory IX decided that the image was not heretical because John had written the gospel, but Francis had lived it.

Cimabue was the most historically important painter who worked in this church because he was the only artist to get a first-hand account from St Francis' two nephews, who had personally known the saint. In the *Madonna in Majesty*, in the right transept, much has been tampered with, but Cimabue's intact depiction of St Francis is considered the most accurate. Francis appears peaceful and calm in this painting. The first biographer of St Francis, Thomas of Celano, wrote in the middle of the 13th century that Francis was an eloquent man, of cheerful countenance and of a kindly aspect.

One of the most moving locations in the basilica complex is downstairs from the lower church: the crypt of St Francis, where the saint's body has been laid to rest. Bench seating around the tomb allows for quiet reflection.

The basilica's *Sala delle Reliquie* (Relics Hall; % 075 81 90 01; h 9am–6pm, 1–4.30pm holidays) contains items from St Francis' life, including his simple tunic and sandals and fragments of his celebrated *Canticle of the Creatures*. The most important relic here is the Franciscan Rule parchment, the *Book of Life* composed by Francis.

CHURCHES & MUSEUMS

Basilica di Santa Chiara (% 075 81 22 82; Piazza Santa Chiara; h 6am–noon & 2–7pm summer, to 6pm winter) is 13th-century Romanesque church, with steep ramparts and a striking façade. The white and

pink stone that makes up the exterior here (the same stone that makes many buildings in Assisi look like they glow in the sunlight) came from nearby Subasio. The daughter of an Assisian nobleman, St Clare was a spiritual contemporary of St Francis and founded the *Sorelle Povere di Santa Chiara* (Order of the Poor Ladies), now known as the Poor Clares. She is buried in the church's crypt. The Byzantine cross that is said to have spoken to St Francis is also housed here.

From the basilica, take Via S Chiara back to Piazza del Comune, once the site of a partially excavated **Foro Romano** (Roman Forum; % 075 81 30 53; Via Portica; adult/child incl Pinacoteca €3/2; h 10.30am–1.30pm & 2–6pm summer, to 5pm winter). Some of the shops on the piazza open their basements to reveal Roman ruins. The **Chiesa Nuova** (% 075 81 23 39; Piazza Chiesa Nuova; h 6.30am–noon & 2.30–6pm summer, 6.30am–noon & 2–6pm winter) was built by King Philip III of Spain in the 1600s on the spot reputed to be the house of St Francis' family. Mass is said daily at 7am, with an extra service on holidays at 10am.

The **Tempio di Minerva**, facing Piazza del Comune and Palazzo dei Priori, is now a church but retains its impressive pillared façade with six fluted columns dating back to Roman times. The turn-of-the-millennium pagan temple, dedicated to the goddess of peace, is featured as the backdrop to the *Homage to the Simple Man* fresco in the Basilica's upper church. Heading northwestwards up Via San Francesco, the city's **Pinacoteca Comunale** (% 075 81 20 33; Palazzo Vallemani, Via San Francesco 10; adult/child incl Foro Romano €3/2; h 10am–1pm & 3–6pm 16 Mar–15 Oct, 10am–1pm & 3–5pm 16 Oct–15 Mar) displays Umbrian Renaissance art and frescoes from Giotto's school.

Dominating the city, with an equally dominant view of the valley, is the massive 14th-century **Rocca Maggiore** (% 075 81 52 92; Via della Rocca; admission €2; h 10am–sunset), an oft expanded, pillaged and rebuilt hill fortress offering 360-degree views of Perugia. Walk up windy staircases and claustrophobic passageways to reach the archer slots that served Assisians as they went medieval on Perugia.

The 13th-century Romanesque **Duomo di San Rufino** (% 075 81 60 16; Piazza San Rufino; h 7am–noon & 2.30–7pm, to 6pm winter), remodelled by Galeazzo Alessi in the 16th century, contains the fountain where St Francis and St Clare were baptised. The façade is festooned with grotesque figures and fantastic animals.

FRANCISCAN SITES

Around 1.5km south of the Porta Nuova, the **Santuario di San Damiano** (% 075 81 22 73; admission free; h 10am–noon & 2–6pm summer, 10am–noon & 2–4.30pm winter, vespers 7pm summer & 5pm winter) was built on the spot where St Francis first heard the voice of Jesus and where he wrote his *Canticle of the Creatures*. You can visit the original convent founded by St Clare in 1212 here, as well as its cloisters and refectory.

About 4km east of the city is **Eremo delle Carceri** (% 075 81 23 01; admission free; h 6.30am–7.15pm Easter–Nov, to sunset Nov–Easter), the hermitage that St Francis retreated to after hearing the word of God. The *carceri* (prisons) are the caves that functioned as hermits' retreats for St Francis and his followers. Apart from a few fences and tourist paths, everything remains as it was in St Francis' time. Eremo delle Carceri is a great jumping-off point for walks through Monte Subasio or picnics under the oaks.

A quick walk from the train station is the imposing **Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli** (% 075 8 05 11; Santa Maria degli Angeli; h 6.45am–1pm & 2.30–8pm summer, 6.15am–1pm & 2.30–7.30pm winter), built between 1565 and 1685 around the first Franciscan monastery and tiny Porziuncola Chapel. Perugino fans will appreciate his intact Crucifixion, painted on the rear wall. St Francis died at the site of the Cappella del Transito on 3 October 1226.

Activities

St Francis buffs and nature lovers will appreciate the plethora of strolls, day hikes and overnight pilgrimage walks leading into and out of Assisi. Many make the trek to Eremo delle Carceri or Santuario di San Damiano on foot. The tourist office has maps for those on such a peregrination, including a route that follows in St Francis' footsteps to Gubbio (18km).

A popular spot for hikers is nearby Monte Subasio. Local bookshops sell all sorts of walking and mountain-biking guides and maps for the area, and the tourist office can help with brochures and maps as well.

Bicycle rentals are available at **Angelucci Andrea Cicli Riparazione Noleggio** (% 075 804 25 50; www.angeluccicicli.it; VG Becchetti 31) in Santa Maria degli Angeli and at **Ostello della Pace** (p338).

Courses

Accademia della Lingua Italiana Corsi di Lingua e Cultura Italiana (% /fax 075 81 52 81; www.aliasisi.it; Via San Paolo 36) runs a variety of courses, including

POOR MR POPULAR: ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

How did a small-town guy become the most beloved saint of Catholics? It's your classic riches to rags tale. Young Francis of Assisi had charm, wit, a place in his father's booming textile business, and a flair for fashion that impressed even his fellow Italians. But all that didn't save him from a year in jail for joining an attack on rival city Perugia c 1201. He emerged spoiling for a fight, and signed on to fight a war in Naples. But when he had a dream in Spoleto telling him to turn back, he returned to Assisi a changed man. He began giving away money to lepers, and took cloth from his dad's warehouse to raise funds for his church. Outraged, his dad threatened to cut him off – but Francis shocked everyone by embracing poverty. The former fashionista threw off his clothes, donned an Umbrian peasant robe and moved into a hut.

Others soon followed his example, including a local teenage heiress named Clare, who hacked off her hair, devoted herself to Francis' rule of charity and poverty, and soon led the first Franciscan convent. Francis set off on a gruelling trip that sounds like *The Mediterranean on a Shoestring* gone horribly wrong, with mixed success winning converts – the French were unimpressed, and the bemused Sultan approached by Francis in the midst of a Crusade in Egypt set him firmly on his way. Meanwhile, his following was growing back home. His care of the terminally ill started several hospices; his legendary kindness to animals inspired some of Europe's first known animal hospitals; and his love of nature led to organised conservation efforts. Francis was canonised soon after his death in 1226, and named the patron saint of ecologists, merchants, lepers, animals and pretty much everyone else.

Italian language, culture, singing, painting and cooking. It also offers free preparation for the CILS (Italian teacher abroad) course. There's a maximum of 12 students per class and costs start at about €300 for two weeks of instruction.

Festivals & Events

Settimana Santa (Easter Week) Celebrated with processions and performances.

Festa di Calendimaggio (starts 1st Thursday after 1 May) Colourful festival which celebrates spring in medieval fashion.

Festa di San Francesco (3 and 4 October) The main religious event in the city.

Marcia della Pace (1st week in October) This is Europe's largest peace march. It began in 1961 and attracts more than 150,000 pilgrims who walk the 24km route between Perugia and Assisi.

Sleeping

Assisi has a phenomenal amount of rooms, which ensures the best prices in any Umbrian town popular with tourists. Keep in mind that in peak periods such as Easter, August and September, and during the Festa di San Francesco, you will need to book accommodation well in advance.

The tourist office has a complete list of private rooms, religious institutions (of which there are 17), flats and *agriturismi* options in and around Assisi and can assist with book-

ings in a pinch. Otherwise, keep an eye out for *camere* (rooms for rent) signs as you wander the streets.

BUDGET

Camping/Hotel Fontemaggio (☎ 075 81 23 17; www.fontemaggio.it; Via Eremo delle Carceri 8; per person/tent/car €6/5/3, dm/s/d/tr/q €20/35/52/72.50/96, 4- to 6-person bungalow with kitchen €32-110) The sort of place St Francis himself probably would have stayed. A full complement of bungalows, camp sites and hotel rooms offer up a bed for just about any taste. On the way to Eremo delle Carceri, it's a beautiful walk into town, but the restaurant might just keep you for the evening.

Ostello della Pace (☎ 075 81 67 67; www.assisihostel.com; Via Valecchie 177; dm incl breakfast €15-17; h 2Mar-9Jan; p i) Assisi's HI youth hostel is lovingly family run, in a beautiful and quiet location, and has great pillows. It's on the shuttle-bus route between Santa Maria degli Angeli and Assisi. There's a laundry room for guests. Full and half-boards are available or, if you prefer, just packed lunch (€6.50) or dinner (€9.50).

Albergo Il Duomo (☎ 075 81 27 42; www.hotelsanrufino.it; Vicolo San Lorenzo; s/d €36/47) Owned by the same folks who run the two-star San Rufino, this is a lovely one-star choice on a quiet alleyway just a stone's throw from the Piazza del Comune. For this price there aren't too many extras, but the nine rooms are understandably popular, so book ahead.

Hotel Grotta Antica (☎ 075 81 34 67; www.bellaumbria.net/hotel-grottaantica; Via Macelli Vecchi 1; s/d €35/50) The price is not a mistake. Perfectly located on a tiny side street less than 30m from the Palazzo del Comune, it's a wonder these rooms are also clean and hospitable. Abele speaks fluent English and Spanish, and takes care of the seven simple rooms and the restaurant of the same name (see p340).

Hotel San Rufino (☎ 075 81 28 03; www.hotelsanrufino.it; Via Porta Perlici 7; s €44, d €54-60, tr €68) A small hotel owned by the same family as Il Duomo, this is around the corner and just as quiet. Sweetly decorated rooms all come with direct-dial phone and TV. It also offers cradles for babies, plus breakfast is available (€5).

St Anthony's Guesthouse (☎ 075 81 25 42; atoneassisi@tiscali.it; Via Galeazzo Alessi 10; s/d/tr incl breakfast €35/55/75; p) Look for the iron statue of St Francis feeding the birds and you've found your Assisian oasis. Rooms are austere but welcoming and six have balconies with take-your-breath-away views. Gardens, ample parking, an 800-year-old breakfast salon and an ancient Door of Death make this a heavenly choice. Like most religious accommodation, it has a two-night minimum and 11pm curfew.

○ **Camere Santa Chiara** (☎ 075 81 34 67; camere.santachiara@yahoo.it; Vicolo Sant'Antonio 1; s/d/tr/q incl breakfast €35/55/65/75) Depending on which of the eight rooms in this brand-new hotel you choose, you might sleep on top of a glass-covered Roman ruin, watch a TV propped up on a medieval wall or enjoy breakfast on your private patio. Curl up with a book, head phones or DVD in the video library or, if you're feeling social, have a drink at the piano bar. Bring your car here first, and staff will show you where to park nearby for free.

MIDRANGE

La Fortezza Hotel (☎ 075 81 24 18; www.lafortezzahotel.com; Vicolo della Fortezza 2b; r with/without breakfast €65/52) Seven simply outfitted rooms offer guests a comfortable respite at this charming and intimate hotel run by the well-known Assisian Ciocchetti family, popular restaurateurs and hoteliers for decades. The stone building is up a stone staircase, quietly tucked above the Piazza del Comune and the hotel's extremely popular restaurant (see p340).

Hotel Pallotta (☎ 075 81 26 49; www.pallottaassisi.it; Vicolo della Volta Pinta; s/d/tr incl breakfast €40/65/75) Yet another great-value hotel right in the heart of

Assisi. Rooms are as modern as they are ancient; medieval walls and shuttered windows coexist with tile showers and wall-mounted TVs. Be sure to check out the view from the top floor.

Hotel San Francesco (☎ 075 81 2281; www.hotelsanfrancescoassisi.it; Via San Francesco 48; s €52-100, d €70-130, all incl breakfast; a) For travellers who are looking for a serious view of the basilica, you need only look out most windows for a postcard shot. If your view isn't perfect enough, head to the rooftop deck with a view of the basilica with Monte Subasio as its backdrop. Amenities include satellite TV (with BBC, CNN, France 2), mini-bar, elevator, hairdryer, double-pane windows and a hotel shuttle service that will come and collect you at any of the car parks (you can also drive in and drop off your luggage first). Fill up for a hearty day of sightseeing at the enormous breakfast buffet. There are also discounts in the low season and for children.

Hotel Umbra (☎ 075 81 22 40; www.hotelumbra.it; Via Degli Archi 6; s €72-85, d €96-125, all incl breakfast; i) It's physically impossible to spend the night here without imagining what life would have been like in these buildings over the last few centuries. The 25-room hotel has been in the same family since the turn of the last century, when it was cobbled together from almost a dozen medieval buildings. Antique furnishings complement a cosy fireplace inside, while the grapevine-shaded terrace is there for your after-dinner grappa.

Hotel Il Palazzo (☎ 075 81 68 41; www.hotelilpalazzo.it; Via San Francesco 8; s €90-105, d €125-160, all incl breakfast; h closed Nov, Jan & Feb) The rooms in this lovely 15th-century palazzo, half of which is occupied by the owners (descendants of the original occupants), have been restored in the simple elegance that Italians are famous for: white walls, terracotta floors, a few pieces of fine old furniture in splendidly carved wood, and beautiful carpets. Despite its central position, the hotel is also very quiet and filled with light. The only disadvantage is that there are a lot of stairs to negotiate.

TOP END

Residenza San Crispino (☎ 075 815 51 24; www.sancrispinoresidence.com; Via Sant' Agnese 11; ste €130-200; p) Assisi's happiest guests seem to stay at this peaceful historic residence, which receives a constant stream of raves, and for good reason. Rooms are medieval old but have been upgraded with kitchen-

ettes to blissful apartment suites named after St Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures* – Brother Sun, Sister Water etc. If the short stroll to the Basilica di Santa Chiara or monastic-quiet garden hasn't calmed you down quite enough, jump on one of the shuttles to the 'beauty farm', where relaxing massage treatments await.

Eating

RESTAURANTS

While we normally recommend staying away from hotel restaurants, most of Assisi's better restaurants (even the more inexpensive ones) are part of hotels.

Grotta Antica (☎ 075 81 34 67; Vicolo Buscatti 6; meals €16) Abele – hotel proprietor, lawyer and chef – is from Liguria, so you can rest assured that although there are only a handful of menu items, you needn't look past the pesto dishes for a cheap and filling main course. His wine prices can't be beaten anywhere in Assisi.

La Fortezza (☎ 075 81 24 18; Via della Fortezza 2b; meals €22; 1 Fri-Wed) This family-run restaurant off Piazza del Comune serves traditional Umbrian dishes and flame-roasted meats, as well as those from Trentino, and a good selection of local wines. Credit cards are accepted.

Trattoria Pallotta (☎ 075 81 26 49; Vicolo della Volta Pinta; meals €23; 1 Wed-Mon) Head through the Volta Pinta (Painted Vault) off Piazza del Comune, careful not to bump into someone as you gaze at the 16th-century frescoes above you, into this gorgeous setting of vaulted brick walls and wood-beamed ceilings. All the Umbrian classics are cooked here: rabbit, home-made *strangozzi* (round stringlike spaghetti), even pigeon. Readers have assured us its selection for vegetarians is excellent.

Medio Evo (☎ 075 81 30 68; Via Arco dei Priori 4; meals €28; 1 Thu-Tue) Traditional Umbrian dishes are served in fabulous vaulted 13th-century surroundings, including rabbit stew (€12) and truffle omelettes (€10). The early 6.45pm opening time is geared for, and highly appreciated by, non-Italian tourists.

Buca di San Francesco (☎ 075 81 22 04; Via Brizi 1; meals €29; 1 Tue-Sun) Sample traditional Umbrian dishes and specialities of the house in an elegant medieval setting. Choose from bruschetta, local sausage, *spaghetti alla buca* (house-speciality spaghetti made with roasted mushrooms), gnocchi and home-made deserts, and from the extensive wine list with the help of one of Assisi's only sommeliers.

SLEEPING (AND COOKING) ABOVE THE FRAY

○ **Agriturismo alla Madonna del Piatto** (☎ 075 819 90 50; www.incampagna.com; Pieve San Nicola 18; d €80-115; 1 Mar-mid-Nov; p) This B&B/agriturismo has seen many upgrades since its inception as a shepherd's outpost some 700 years ago. It's now a refurbished stone farmhouse with heated terracotta-tile floors, six double rooms, an open fireplace, and a working farm and olive orchard. Set in verdant hills, it's not unusual to see wild boar or pheasants stroll on by. The multilingual Letizia runs the most magnificent cooking classes out of her small kitchen for guests or visitors (in Italian or English); see p310.

CAFÉS

Gran Caffè (☎ 075 815 51 44; Corso Mazzini 16; 1 8am-midnight) This elegant place has the most fabulous gelati, mouth-watering pastries and cakes, and a great selection of drinks. Try the *tè freddo alla pesca* (iced tea with peach) on a hot day, or choose from a selection of delicious hot chocolates and coffee when the weather is cool. Remember it costs much more to sit.

Shopping

Assisi is a good town for shopping as many shops stay open during siesta. The closer you get to the Basilica, the tackier the souvenirs – Franciscan friar shot glasses and nuns playing poker – but meander off the beaten path for leather, ceramics and clothing. Open-air markets take place in Piazza Matteotti on Saturday and Santa Maria degli Angeli on Monday.

Getting There & Away

Assisi is extremely easy to reach, by bus or train. Although Assisi's train station is 4km west in Santa Maria degli Angeli, shuttle bus C (€0.80) runs between the train station and the APM bus station on Piazza Matteotti every half-hour. Tickets are available in the *tabacchi* at the station and in town. Assisi is on the Foligno–Terontola line with regular services to Perugia (€1.80, 25 minutes, hourly). You can change at Terontola for Florence (€9.40 to €15.20, 1¼ to 2¾ hours, 10 daily) and at Foligno for Rome (€9.40 to €16, two to 2½ hours, hourly).

APM Perugia (☎ 800 51 21 41; www.apmperugia.it) runs to Perugia (€3, 50 minutes, nine daily) and Gubbio (€5.20, one hour 10 minutes, 11 daily) from Piazza Matteotti. The buses all start at Piazza Matteotti and a few stop at Porta Nuova on the way to Perugia. **Sulga** (☎ 800 09 96 61; www.sulga.it) buses leave from the intercity bus station at Porta San Pietro for Florence (€11, 2½ hours, one daily at 7am) and Rome's Stazione Tiburtina (€16.50, 3¼ hours, three daily).

To reach Assisi from Perugia by road, take the SS75, exit at Ospedalichio and follow the signs.

Getting Around

A shuttle bus (€0.80) operates every half-hour between Piazza Matteotti and the train station. Normal traffic is subject to restrictions in the city centre and daytime parking is all but banned. Six car parks dot the city walls (they are connected to the centre by orange shuttle buses), or head for Via della Rocca where, for the price of a short but fairly steep walk, you should be able to find free parking.

For a taxi, dial ☎ 075 81 31 00, or head to Piazza Unità d'Italia's taxi stand.

SPELLO

pop 8580

Sometimes it seems like it's just not possible for the next Umbrian town to be any prettier than the last. And then you visit Spello. It's often passed by as tourists head to nearby Assisi or Perugia, but the proliferation of arched stone walkways and hanging flower-pots make it well worth a visit, especially in spring when the whole bloomin' town smells of flowers.

Information

EMERGENCY

Police station (☎ 0742 65 11 15; Piazza della Repubblica)

INTERNET RESOURCES

Bella Umbria (www.bellaumbria.net/spello) A private tourist website with information on accommodation, history and events.

www.comune.spello.pg.it The city website

MEDICAL SERVICES

Doctor (☎ 0742 30 20 16) Can locate a local doctor.
Farmacia Bartoli (☎ 0742 30 14 88; Via Cavour 63; 1 closed Sat morning)

POST

Post office (☎ 0742 3 00 81; Piazza della Repubblica; 1 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12.30pm Sat)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Pro Loco (tourist office; ☎ /fax 0742 30 10 09; prospello@libero.it, Piazza Matteotti 3; 1 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-5.30pm) It can provide you with a list of accommodation and has maps of walks in the surrounding area, including an 8km walk across the hills to Assisi. Purchase a city map here for €0.50.

Sights

Perhaps the best sight in all of Spello is to head up to the **Arco Romano**. From here you can get the best view of the **Anfiteatro Romano** (closed to the public) – the amphitheatre used for spectacles thousands of years ago in Roman 'HisPELLUM' (the Roman name for modern-day Spello) – and the surrounding countryside. Nearby is the **Chiesa di San Severino**, an active Cappuccin monastery with a Romanesque façade.

As you enter Spello, you'll come across Piazza Kennedy, the main entrance to the town, with a partially Roman gate, **Porta Consolare**. Further into town, Piazza Matteotti features two enormous churches: the austere **Chiesa di Sant'Andrea** (1 8am-7pm), where you can admire *Madonna with Child and Saints* by Bernardino Pinturicchio, and a few doors down, the 12th-century **Chiesa di Santa Maria Maggiore** (1 8.30am-12pm & 2-7pm Mar-Oct, until 6pm Nov-Mar). You'll also find the town's real treat, Pinturicchio's beautiful frescoes, in the **Cappella Baglioni**. The fresco is in the right-hand corner as you enter, behind glass, but be aware that you need to pay to illuminate the fresco. This is done not just to make money; constant light damages the paint. Also of note is the Cappella's exquisite floor (dating from 1566) made of tiles from Deruta. The **Pinacoteca Civica** (☎ 0742 30 14 97; Palazzo dei Canonici, Piazza Matteotti; adult/concession €4/3; 1 10.30am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 10.30am-12.30pm & 3-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) shows off Spello's artistic, religious and architectural past.

Continuing through to town, you'll reach **Piazza della Repubblica**. Further along, in the same piazza as the Palazzo Comunale, is the **Chiesa di San Lorenzo** (1 8.30am-12.30pm & 3-7pm summer, to 6pm winter), with a collection of sacred works. At the far north of town is yet another imposing church, **Santa Maria di Vallegloria**, built in the 1320s in Gothic style with frescoes by

Spacca. The **Torre di Properzio** (Porta Venere) stands guard over the western Roman walls. Named after the Roman poet Propertius, the gate and its towers are a hodgepodge of Roman, medieval and 20th-century reconstructionist architecture.

Activities

The Pro Loco (and the tourist office in Assisi) has a badly drawn map called the *Passeggiata Tra Gli Ulivi*, a walking route between Spello and Assisi down the Via degli Ulivi (Road of Olives). It's not a long walk (8km) and passes through scenery of flower fields and ancient gnarled olive trees, but you will be walking on a lightly trafficked asphalt road for a spell. Stop in (by foot or car) at the Azienda Agricola

Ragani (☎ 0742 30 11 56; www.oloragani.com; Via degli Ulivi 8), which is open sporadically to the public, but a lucky few passers-by will have a chance to taste its renowned olive oils.

Festivals & Events

Spello, like nearby towns, has no shortage of festivals:

L'Infiolata del Corpus Domini (usually in June) The most beautiful and best smelling festival in Spello. Takes place on Corpus Domini, the Sunday 60 days after Easter. Those familiar with Semana Santa in Guatemala and other Latin American countries will recognise the similar *alfombras* (flower carpets) that decorate the streets presented in colourful artistic displays. If you want to enjoy it, come on the Saturday evening before to see the floral fantasies being laid out (from about 8.30pm) and participate in the

festive atmosphere. On the day of the festival, the Corpus procession commences at 11am, but beware – it can become extremely crowded. Make sure you have already made hotel reservations well in advance, or alternatively, just travel in from Assisi or Perugia and visit for the day's celebrations.

Sleeping

Del Prato Paolucci (☎ 0742 30 10 18; Via Brodolini 4; s €35-45, d €50-62; p) Located just outside the city walls, these are the least expensive rooms in town. However, you'll have a perfectly acceptable bathroom, TV and phone, and a few rooms have views. Call ahead and the gregarious owners will pick you up at the train station.

Residence San Jacopo (☎ 0742 30 12 60, 333 223 28 99; www.residencesanjacopo.it in Italian; Via Borgo di Via Giulia 1; mini-apts for 2/3 people €62/93) This vacation house saw its first incarnation in 1296 as the hospice of San Jacopo, a way station for pilgrims heading to Compostella in Galicia. Much has been rebuilt over the last eight centuries and San Jacopo is as comfortable as it is charming. Seven mini-apartments feature a kitchenette, bathroom and TV, and are furnished with rustic antiques. Vanya, the owner, also runs a nearby *enoteca*, and knows everything about local wine and delicacies.

Trattoria Albergo Il Cacciatore (☎ 0742 65 11 41; www.ilcacciatorerestaurant.com; Via Giulia 42; s €50-60, d €75-90, tr €95-115) This place has 21 rooms that are spread over three floors that are large and modern, and plainly furnished in 'business casual', some with a small sitting area. Ask for a room with a view. There's also a great restaurant (closed Monday) with a large terrace that's perfect for a summer lunch amid a panoramic view.

Albergo del Teatro (☎ 0742 30 11 40; www.hoteldelteatro.it; Via Giulia 24; s €60-85, d €90-110, ste €200-220, all incl breakfast) This 18th-century building is enviably located in the middle of Spello and pleasantly outfitted with a sitting room and fireplace, terraces with hill-top views and updated guest rooms.

Hotel Ristorante La Bastiglia (☎ 0742 65 12 77; www.labastiglia.com; Via dei Molini 7; s €70-105, d €80-155, tr €110-185, ste €210-300; p a s) This place has been welcoming well-heeled pilgrims, bicyclists and tour participants for decades. Three classes of rooms open the stunning grounds to a larger swathe of the travelling public, all of whom enjoy seasonal breakfast (Italian style, so quite small) on the terrace.

Eating

Il Giardino di Spello (☎ 0742 30 14 45; Via Centrale Umbra 36; tapas €4.50; h 7am-midnight Tue-Sun) Near the train station and main bus stop is a one-stop quick meal stop. For just a few euros, diners on the cheap can load up on tapas. Tack on two more euros for Spello's best home-made gelato.

Bar Giardino Bonci (Via Garibaldi 10; mains €6; h 7am-10pm Fri-Wed, to midnight summer) This simple bar has decent light meals and gelati, but the best thing is the back veranda, where you could while away hours admiring the view.

Il Molino (☎ 0742 65 13 05; Piazza Matteotti 6/7; meals €29; h Wed-Mon) Owned by the Hotel Palazzo Bocci, the Molino is set in a 700-year-old building. It specialises in truffles, legumes, winter game meats, wild asparagus and cooking with local mountain-grown herbs.

Hotel Ristorante La Bastiglia (☎ 0742 65 12 77; Via dei Molini 17; meals €55; h Fri-Tue & dinner Thu) Connoisseurs come from all over the world to dine here. The food is beyond outstanding and a rare example of Umbrian nouvelle cuisine. Who would have thought blood and gnocchi would go together, or pigeon and puff pastry? But they do, and artfully so.

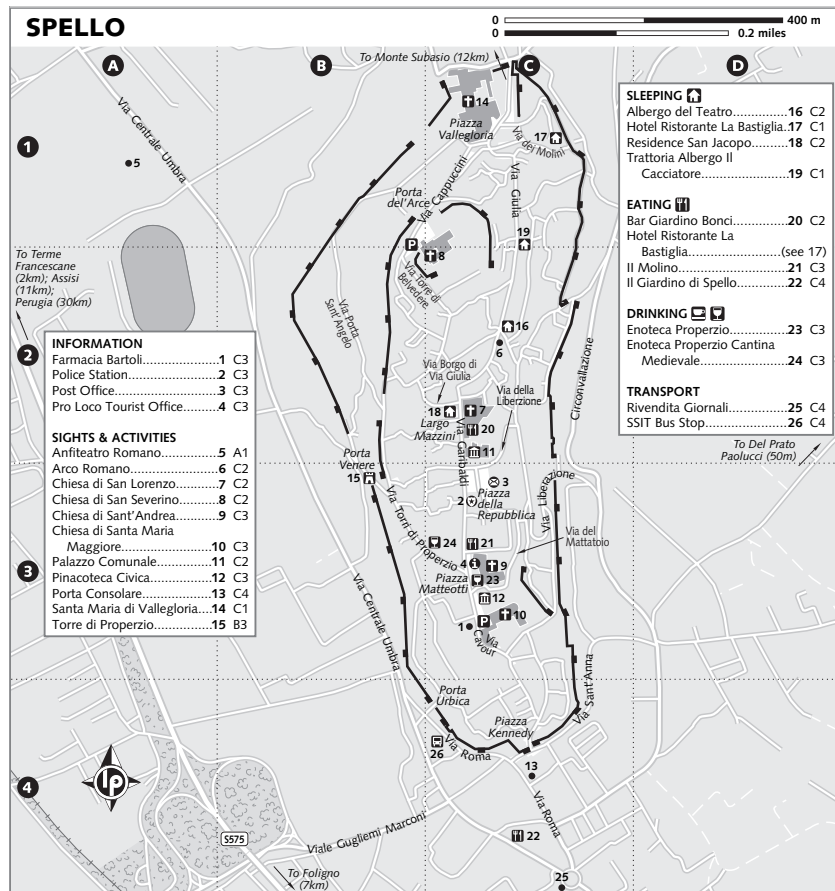
Drinking

Enoteca Properzio (☎ 0742 30 15 21; www.enoteche.it; Palazzo dei Canonici, Piazza Matteotti 8/10; h 9am-11pm Apr-Oct, 9am-8pm Nov-Mar) Umbrian vineyards aren't usually open to the public, so one of the only chances visitors have of tasting several wines at once without breaking the bank (or getting sloshed) is to stop off at an *enoteca* in town. And there's no better place in Umbria to do so than here, where for €30, you can try a half-dozen Umbrian wines while snacking on cheese, prosciutto and bruschetta. For €144, you can have a dozen bottles shipped abroad.

Enoteca Properzio Cantina Medievale (☎ 0742 30 16 88; Via Torri di Properzio 8a) This is a more intimate bar around the corner, is set in a medieval vault and sells many edibles.

Getting There & Away

Spello is directly on the train line between Perugia and Foligno, so trains run at least hourly to Perugia (€2.30, 30 minutes) and Assisi (€1.30, 10 minutes). Spello is on the SS75 between Perugia and Foligno. The station is often unstaffed, so buy your tickets at either



the self-service ticket machine or at the newsstand **Rivendita Giornali** (Piazza della Pace 1).

LA STRADA DI SAGRANTINO

Wine connoisseurs are not the only ones who would enjoy the tourist-friendly 'route of Sagrantino wine'. It is one of four Umbrian driving (or, for the brave, bicycling) wine routes that follow signposted roads through stunningly beautiful landscape filled with vineyards, castles, sunflower fields and five charming villages. The two main towns in the area are the postcard-perfect burghs of Montefalco and Bevagna, but meandering countryside roads through Gualdo Cattaneo, Giano dell'Umbria and Castel Ritaldi are equally charming. All tourist offices near the region carry Strada del Sagrantino brochures with detailed driving maps, vineyards and *enoteche* (restaurants that offer wine tasting), or find information on accommodation (including *agriturismi* and B&Bs), restaurants, public transport and history at the region's tourism website www.stradadelsagrantino.com (in Italian, English and German).

Montefalco

pop 5693

The ancient town of Montefalco looks as if it grew, along with the local vines, out of the

ground organically. Known as the *ringhiera dell'Umbria* (the balcony of Umbria), the perfectly perched village sits atop a hill with a view so lyrically beautiful, it practically begs for an ode. As if that wasn't enough, Montefalco is the headquarters for the distinctly Umbrian red, Sagrantino di Montefalco. Imbibe in the main square, Piazza del Comune, in no less than four *enoteche* (Enoteca L'Alchimista has a good reputation).

The most important building in Montefalco is the **Museo Civico San Francesco** (☎ 0742 37 95 98; Via Ringhiera Umbra 6; adult/concession €5/2; 10.30am-1pm year-round & 2.30-5pm Nov-Feb, 2-6pm Mar-May, Sep & Oct, 3-7pm Jun & Jul, 3-7.30pm Aug, closed Mon Nov-Feb). The museum is housed next to the deconsecrated St Francis Church, with a 'narrated' fresco cycle by the painter Benozzo Gozzoli, who was the first Umbrian painter of the 1400s to use perspective to paint human form. There's also a decent *pinacoteca* (picture gallery), plus tools from a medieval monastic vineyard. Ask for the well-written guides in Italian, English and French.

If you are looking for somewhere special to stay in the area, try **Villa Zuccari** (☎ 0742 39 94 02; www.villazuccari.com; San Luca di Montefalco; s €95-170, d €110-240, ste €190-320; p n a s). The most recent Zuccari family lineage (the first ones inhabited this house in the 16th century)

turned this ancestral home into a hotel, as it felt a tad large. Now, guests in 34 unique guest rooms and suites can know what it feels like to sip champagne on one's own private balcony or bathe in an in-suite Jacuzzi tub under a frescoed ceiling. But it's the welcoming service that gains praise from guests the world over. Exit the SS3bis at Trevi/Montefalco and follow signs for Madonna della Stella, towards Montefalco.

Thirty metres from Montefalco's main entrance, **Villa Pambuffetti** (☎ 0742 37 94 17; www.villa.pambuffetti.com; Viale della Vittoria 20; s €88-150, d €140-260, ste €160-200, all incl breakfast; 1 Feb-Dec; p a s) is another unique place for an overnight stop. Hippie nobility reigns over this country house. She, a chef; he, a sommelier – together, they run the 'shabby chic' noble villa. Each of the 15 rooms is decorated with antiques, used by the family before they turned the estate into a hotel in 1992. Alessandra's cooking courses are reason enough to stay, as all recipes are from her own cookbook.

The basic **Hotel Ristorante Ringhiera Umbra** (☎ 0742 37 91 66; www.ringhieraumbra.com; verziere@tiscali.it; Via Mameli 20; d €75, q €150, all incl breakfast) has a fantastic, inexpensive restaurant located in a cosy stone-and-brick cave, and serves excellent *strangozzi* with truffles and Sagrantino sauce.

SSIT buses (☎ 0742 67 07 47; www.spoletina.com) travel from Montefalco to Foligno (€3.20, 30 minutes, eight daily) and Perugia (€4.40, one hour, three daily). Buses go between Bevagna and Montefalco (€2.20 to €3.40, 20 to 40 minutes, five daily), some direct and others through Foligno.

Bevagna

pop 5023

If a visitor had only one day to spend in Umbria, Bevagna wouldn't be a bad choice. The town was once named the most beautiful village in Italy, and the townsfolk do seem a little happier here. Ancient city walls ring the main drag, Corso Matteotti, and everything listed is within about a 10-minute walk of the square, Piazza Silvestri. Bevagna began first as an Umbrian settlement, then became Etruscan and eventually a Roman municipium on the Via Flaminia. For visitors, Romanesque churches, *enoteche* and a dearth of tourists add to the charm.

The **Pro Loco tourist office** (☎ 0742 36 16 67; pbevagna@bcsnet.it; Piazza Silvestri 1; 1 9.30am-1pm &

2.30-7pm) can help with accommodation and wine-tasting. The **post office** (☎ 0742 36 15 68; Piazza Matteotti; 1 8.10am-1.25pm Mon-Sat) is on the next square. Parking just outside the city centre is free.

The **Pinacoteca Comunale** (☎ 0742 36 00 31; Corso Matteotti 70; adult/concession €5/2; 1 10.30am-1pm & 3-7pm summer, 10.30am-1pm & 3-5.30pm or 6pm Tue-Sun winter) features a rudimentary exhibit on local archaeology and ceramics.

The ticket price for the *pinacoteca* also includes entrance into the **Roman Mosaic Museum of Antiquities** (☎ 075 572 71 41; Via di Porta Guelfa; 1 10.30am-1pm & 3-4.30pm Tue-Sun), featuring a well-preserved tile floor from ancient Roman baths. There are also the remains of an old Roman theatre, and a Roman and medieval wall, plus a monastic winery.

At the end of June, Bevagna goes medieval with the **Festival of the Gaite**. For two days, the town goes back in time a few hundred years. Artisans give demonstrations on the crafts of the day – glass-blowing, candle-making, ironworks – dressed in period attire.

If you happen upon the area during the last third of August and fancy eating a mollusc or three, the little town of Cantalupo di Bevagna celebrates its **Sagra della Lumaca** (Festival of the Snail), with snail dishes cooked in every way imaginable (snail pasta, bruschetta with snail sauce, roasted snails, snail antipasti etc), as well as exhibits, dancing and general slug-related merriment. Accordingly, you'll find *lumache* (snails) on the menu at many restaurants (including Coccorone in Bevagna; see p346).

SLEEPING & EATING

Agriturismo/Camping Pian di Boccio (☎ 0742 36 01 64; www.pianidiboccio.com; per person/car/child/tent €6.50/2.50/3.25/6, 2-/6-person apt €57/140; p s) This multifaceted camping ground has archery, a swimming pool and a pizzeria, and nine rustic but comfortable apartments that come with firewood, fully equipped kitchen and TV. Kids will love summer evenings, where they can dance, bowl or gather at special events with new international friends. The *agriturismo* produces its own olive oil, jam and tinned goods, and raises barnyard animals. You'll find it 4km southeast of Bevagna.

Enoteca and Locanda Piazza Onofri (☎ 0742 36 19 20, 335 718 89 03; www.enotecaonofri.it; Piazza Onofri 2; mini-apt €80-130; 1 enoteca Thu-Tue) For one-stop shopping, the always cheerful Assù runs this

MY KINGDOM FOR A GLASS OF WINE

Oenophiles might want to plan an Umbrian trip to coincide with 'Cantina Aperte', the last Sunday in May when all vineyards are open to the public. Unlike neighbouring Tuscany or wine routes in Australia or the US, most Umbrian vintners are not normally open to the public. Cantina Aperte is the only chance for those buying less than, say, 10 cases to descend upon smaller vineyards. Check with the **Centro Agro Alimentare** (www.umbriadoc.com) for information. The rest of the year, the best place to try wine is at an *enoteca* (wine bar; try Spello's Enoteca Properzio; p343) or by the glass at a restaurant.

Next to Torgiano's Lungarotti (see p331), the second most famous vineyard in Umbria is **Arnaldo Caprai** (☎ 742 37 88 02; www.arnaldocaprai.it; Loc. Torre di Montefalco; 1 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat), the wine-makers who single-handedly brought the now-famous Denominazione d'Origine Controllata e Garantita (DOCG) Sagrantino back from obscurity. The Caprai vineyard has just built a beautiful new tasting room and is one of the few vintners in Umbria open to the public on a regular basis. Plus, if you love the wine (we suggest the white fruity Grechetto and the earthy Sagrantino), you're in luck: Caprai is one of the largest Umbrian wine exporters and distributes its goods in about two-dozen countries, from Australia to Brazil and Korea to the US. To reach the winery, follow the signs on the road towards Bevagna to Località Torre di Montefalco

On the road out of Bevagna heading towards Spoleto, stop by **Paolo Bea** (☎ 0742 37 81 28; www.paolobeat.com; Loc. Cerrete 8; 1 Sun summer) for a true tasting experience. The family creates four special wines, which you can taste for €18 along with home-made bruschetta and crostini. It also sells its own olive oil and Parmesan. During the summer, a harp player entertains visitors on Sunday. The vineyard is also open when the owners are home and not busy.

delicious restaurant and good-value hotel in addition to her wine shop, La Bottega di Piazza Onofri. You only have to stumble upstairs after dinner to relax under arched stone windows, or feel free to cook up a light meal in your own kitchenette.

Ristorante Hotel L'Orto Degli Angeli (☎ 0742 36 09 67; www.ortoangeli.it; Via Dante Alighieri 1; r, ste & apt €220-350; p a s) Try to peek at the hanging gardens of this prestigious residence and not want to spend a week. The hotel has had one of the most stunning historical renovations. The higher the room price, the more lavish the details: antique-laden sitting rooms, gold-trimmed canopies, stone or marble fireplaces, grotesque frescoed ceilings. The restaurant menu changes weekly, but you're guaranteed it will be Umbrian dishes made with local produce. The home-made *strangozzi* is truly excellent. The restaurant's closed on Wednesdays.

La Bottega di Piazza Onofri (☎ 339 374 57 05; 102 Corso Matteotti 102; meals €4-8; h 10.30-3.30pm & 6-9pm Thu-Tue Mar-mid-Jan) Head to this central location to enjoy a selection of home-made small meals served up by Assú of Enoteca and Locanda Piazza Onofri fame. She pours about a half-dozen tasting wines each day (purchased by the glass).

Coccorone (☎ 0742 37 95 35; Largo Tempestivi; €29; h Thu-Tue) Secretly hidden along a quiet side street, Coccorone has tables outside where you can enjoy the stone walkway. Bring out your adventurous side for the menu, heavy on game and unusual meats, such as *rabbit alla cacciatori* (Italian sauce with green peppers), pigeon and snails.

La Farfalla (Piazza Garibaldi 13a; h 8.30am-1pm & 3pm-midnight, Wed-Mon) Head here for your chance to try Sagrantino wine-flavoured gelato. You can also sample *cacio e pera* (sheep's milk cheese and pear) and *cannoli* (a type of pastry), which are all home-made by a jovial Sicilian family.

Getting There and Away

SSIT buses (☎ 0742 67 07 47; www.spoletina.com) head from Bevagna to near the train station in Foligno (€2.60, 20 minutes, six daily), where you can continue on to the north towards Perugia or to the south towards Spoleto. Buses travel between Bevagna and Montefalco (€2.20 to €3.40, 20 to 40 minutes, five daily), some are direct and others go through Foligno.

TREVI

pop 8125

Trevi has miraculously avoided any sort of bowing to Umbria's burgeoning tourist industry, and would feel downright foreign to anyone just coming from San Gimignano or Siena. Trevi allied itself with Perugia against Spoleto during the papal rule – it was a papal state until the Unification of Italy. It witnessed several exciting firsts: the first press association and the first pawn shop. Nowadays, you can actually hear the z-z-z-zip as it rolls itself up for siesta, and nary a local soul ventures out between 1pm and 4pm. The town calls itself a 'Slow City' (see the boxed text, p370), and residents pride themselves on its utter mellowness. Greenish-grey olive trees swathe every inch of hill-side around Trevi, and the olive oil here is reputedly some of the best in Italy.

The **Pro Loco** (☎ /fax 0742 78 11 50; www.protrevi.com; Piazza Mazzini 5; h 9am-1pm & 3.30-7pm) is run entirely by volunteers, so be warned you might find it closed sporadically.

Trevi was a theatre town, all the way back to Roman times. The **Teatro Clitunno** (☎ 0742 38 17 68; Piazza del Teatro) remains the town's most important gathering point. Remnants of concentric rings of a Mura Romana (Roman Wall) and a Mura Medievali (Medieval Wall) still encircle the historic centre of the town. The **Museo della Civiltà dell'Ulivo** (Olive Museum; ☎ 0742 33 22 22; h 10.30am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun summer, closed Tue-Thu winter) is a must-see while in the area, as it details the history of olive-oil production in Umbria for millennia. For something a little more contemporary, the **Flash Art Museum** (☎ 0742 38 19 78; Palazzo Luncharini; free admission; h 4-7pm Tue-Fri) has a funky collection of multimedia modern art.

Antica Dimora alla Rocca (☎ 0742 38 54 01; www.hotelalarocca.it; Piazza della Rocca 1; s €70-122, d €85-174, ste €176-251, all incl breakfast; p a i) is a breathtakingly decorated hotel, with palatial furnishings and frescoed hallways. It feels palatial for a reason: the hotel was actually built in the 1500s as a prince's palace. Check the website to get a 20% (or more) midweek discount.

Albergo Ristorante Il Terziere (☎ 0742 78 359; www.ilterziere.com; Via Coste 1; s €50-65, d €70-100, all incl breakfast; p s), a beautiful hotel and restaurant outside the city centre, is just behind the parking area in Piazza Garibaldi. An impressive upgrade makes four of the 12 rooms feel modern rather than austere, with DSL

and Sky TV in each room. At the restaurant (open Thursday to Tuesday), be sure to try the gnocchi in Sagrantino sauce and its signature home-made *tagliate* pasta.

Named after its location as the old post office, **La Vecchia Posta** (☎ 0742 38 54 01, rooms 333 392 47 37; www.lavecchiaposta.net; Piazza Mazzini 14; s €35-50, d €50-70, ste €70-90) is a charming restaurant (meals €27, open Friday to Wednesday) with a few rooms to let. The *strangozzi* and truffles or chicken in porcini cream should satisfy just about any taste. The candied pear dessert with mint and chocolate sauce is legendary.

Maggiolini (☎ 0742 38 15 34; Via San Francesco 20; meals €26), a beautiful restaurant, is best in summer when you can dine alfresco on several reasonably priced truffle dishes and home-made pasta.

Bus services to Trevi are spotty, so take the train, as it is conveniently located along the main line to Perugia (€3.05, one hour, hourly), Assisi (€1.80, 30 minutes, hourly) and Spoleto (€1.55, 15 minutes, hourly).

FOLIGNO

pop 54,381

If you've come to Foligno, you've landed in the centre of the universe... especially if you decide to play billiards. Although Foligno is a commercial city now and has lost some of its charm and history to industry (and, in 1997, to a devastating earthquake), it is a transport hub with good shopping, an excellent youth hostel and a restaurant that requires a visit.

At the **tourist office** (☎ 0742 35 44 59; www.comune.foligno.pg.it/cultura/serviziotoristico in Italian; Corso Cavour 126; h 9am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun), no-one speaks English, but there's information behind the desk for Foligno, as well as for the surrounding towns of Bevagna, Gualdo Cattaneo, Montefalco, Spello and Trevi. It's located near the Porta Romana.

The cathedral is in Piazza della Repubblica, in which St Feliciano is buried. The building dates from the 12th century and is a hodgepodge of many architectural styles, from Roman-Gothic to 16th-century Renaissance additions. There are some stunning 16th-century Vespasiano Strada frescoes. In the same square is the worthwhile **Palazzo Trinci** (☎ 0742 35 07 34; admission free; h 10am-7pm Tue-Sun), which has some paintings and frescoes from the 15th century.

The Trinci family was part of the *seignories* (feudal lordships), which ruled over much of

papal-controlled Umbria in the later medieval period. (You'll notice buildings all over Umbria named after these families: the Baglionis in Perugia or the Vitellis in Città di Castello.) The Trincis paid Ottaviano Nelli to decorate their palace – although they didn't score like the Vitellis in Città di Castello, with Raphael and Giorgio Vasari. There's a small museum (descriptions in Italian only) in the palazzo, which features some of the historic costumes you'd find at the Quintana festival.

If you're in the area during the beginning of June or in September, the main festival is **La Giostra della Quintana** (☎ 0742 35 40 00; www.quintana.it), a medieval equestrian tournament reinvented from the 1400s. Ten neighbourhoods vie against each other in a friendly jousting competition complete with elaborate velvet-and-lace traditional costumes, and dishes from the 15th century.

Ostello Pierantoni (☎ 0742 34 25 66; www.ostellionline.com in Italian; Via Pierantoni 23; dm/f/s incl breakfast €15/17/22; h reception 7am-noon & 2pm-midnight), only 500m from the train station, is a full-service hostel with 199 beds, washer/dryer, internet facilities, an outdoor garden, bike rental, access for people with disabilities and a restaurant. It feels like a palace with its frescoed, echo-high ceilings, but it was actually a monastery for some extremely comfortable monks.

○ **Il Bacco Felice** (☎ 0742 34 10 19; Via Garibaldi 73; meals €0-60; h Tue-Sun) The walls are held up by graffiti, books and bottles, but this neighbourhood joint has reached a mythic level fitting for a town that calls itself 'the centre of the universe'. The godhead figure, then, is Salvatore Denaro (p72), the chef and owner who will turn away anyone on a mobile phone or to whom he takes a disliking. Tourists Salvatore dislikes often subsidise the meals of those he does, so check your bill at the end to find out how you measured up. Don't worry for lack of a menu; diners might find fava beans from his garden and organic locally grown pork one day and Chianina beef the next.

Il Barbablu (☎ 0742 35 46 97; Via Umberto I 46; pizza slice €1) On the way to the hostel is this fantastic cheap pizza place. Try the corn or zucchini.

Getting There & Away

Many public transport users will go through Foligno at some point. If you arrive by train and are switching to a bus, head out of the train station down Viale Mezzetti. The main

Martiri; 7.15am-noon & 3.30-7.30pm). It features impressive frescoes by local artist Ottaviano Nelli. Built in a simple Gothic style in the 13th century, it has an impressive rose window. Wander into the **Chiostro della Pace** (Cloister of Peace) in the adjoining convent to view some ancient mosaics and stroll around the peaceful garden.

In the western end of the medieval section is the 13th-century **Palazzo del Bargello**, the city's medieval police station and prison. In front of it is the **Fontana dei Pazzi** (Fountain of Lunatics), so-named because of a belief that if you walk around it three times, you will go mad. On summer weekends the number of tourists actually carrying out this bizarre ritual is indeed cause for concern about their collective sanity.

Southwest of Piazza Quaranta Martiri, off Viale del Teatro Romano, are the overgrown remains of a 1st-century-AD **Teatro Romano** (075 922 09 22; admission free; 8.30am-7.30pm Apr-Sep, 8am-1.30pm Oct-Mar). In the summer, check with the tourist office about outdoor concerts held here.

Festivals & Events

Gubbio is host to many colourful festivals: Corsa dei Ceri (Candles Race) A centuries-old event held each year on 15 May to commemorate the city's patron saint, Sant'Ubaldo. It starts at 5.30am and involves three teams, each carrying a *cero* (these 'candles' are massive wooden pillars weighing about 400kg, each bearing a statue of a 'rival' saint) and racing through the city's streets. This is one of Italy's liveliest festivals and has put Gubbio on the map.

Palio della Balestra Held on the last Sunday in May, this annual archery competition involves medieval crossbows, in which Gubbio competes with its neighbour San Sepolcro. The festival carries over all through the year in tourist shops, which are alive with crossbow paraphernalia.

Sleeping

The tourist office has an extremely thorough list of all accommodation options that are available throughout the area.

Città di Gubbio & Villa Ortoguidone (075 922 20 37; www.gubbiocamping.com; Loc. Ortoguidone 49; per person €5.50-9, tent €7-9, car €2.50, 2-/4-person apt €30-100; 1/2 Easter-Sep; S) In addition to the full-service four-star camping ground, there are also stunning apartments in an old stone manor house with TV, beautiful wooden furnishings and private bathroom. July and August vis-

its require a one-week stay. From the SS298, follow the signs for 3km to 'Agriclub Villa Ortoguidone'.

Maestro Pie Filippini (075 927 37 68; Corso Garibaldi 100; per person €20) Six basic rooms serve up to 16 guests in this religious accommodation. A few have bathtubs, and there's an open salon for reading. There's a minimum two-night stay and 10.30pm curfew, and advance reservations are required.

Residenza di Via Piccardi (075 927 61 08; e.biagiotto@tiscali.it; Via Piccardi 12; s/d/mini-apt incl breakfast €30/55/60; 1/2 closed 2 weeks in Feb) Step through the arched gate into the romantic garden of this period residence. Share an amorous breakfast for two in the garden or cook up a simple dinner in the mini-apartment's kitchenette. Family owned, the characteristically medieval stone building has cosy rooms decorated in cheery florals with all the basic comforts. Great value.

Ristorante Hotel Grotta dell'Angelo (075 927 17 47; www.grottadellangelo.it; Via Gioia 47; s €38-42, d €55-60; 1/2 closed 2 weeks in Jan) While it is mostly a popular restaurant with all sorts of truffle dishes and a beautiful garden, the Grotta dell'Angelo also serves up a few basic rooms for rent. Spotlessly clean and pin-drop quiet at night, the hotel is owned by a multigenerational family, so it openly welcomes guests with small children.

Hotel Bosone Palace (075 922 06 88; www.mencarelligroup.com; Via XX Settembre 22; s €80-90, d €110-140, f €160-190, ste €184-230, all incl breakfast; p a) Fancy a fresco with your breakfast? How about staying in a room once frequented by Dante Alighieri? The patrician Bosone family enjoyed Dante as a guest several times. The place went through a complete renovation in 2005 to move from three-star to four-star category, deservedly so. All rooms have minibar, satellite TV and phone in the bathroom, and many have gorgeous views of the surrounding valley. For the experience of a lifetime, think about getting an upgrade to a Renaissance Suite.

Relais Ducale (075 922 01 57; www.mencarelligroup.com; Via Galeotti 19; s €110-130, d €155-178, ste €230-265, all incl breakfast; p a) Owned by the same savvy group that runs the Bosone Palace, the Relais is a step up – literally, as it's several storeys straight up from the Piazza Grande – and lavishly, as it's a fully outfitted, grand four-star hotel. Smallish rooms are detailed with the finest additions – satellite TV and towel warmers, and sheets so warm and snugly that you'd

better set an alarm, as you're liable to sleep through the decked-out buffet breakfast. The junior suite dates back to the 15th century, with a balcony that may drive one to look for boiling oil to pour over. Near this suite is where you'll find the secret stone passageway that was used by guests of the Duke of Montefeltro – it helped them avoid the above-ground ruffraff as they made their way to the palace.

Eating

Ristorante Fabiani (075 927 46 39; Piazza Quaranta Martiri 26; meals €27; 1/2 Wed-Mon) A fabulous spot to sit on the back patio and enjoy the garden for a few hours. The selection here is vast, and it offers a rotating €15 tourist menu or a €20 *menù gastronomico* of whatever is in season. Stop in on Thursday or Friday for its fish specials.

Ristorante La Fornace di Mastro Giorgio (075 922 18 36; Via Mastro Giorgio 2; meals €40; 1/2 Wed-Mon) Named after Gubbio's most famous medieval ceramicist (whose oven still graces one of the restaurant's ancient walls), Mastro Giorgio is our favourite place for a special occasion (not just for the 500-item wine list, either). The seasonal menu includes modern takes on traditional dishes: venison *carpaccio* wrapped with salt, olive oil and asparagus, and its signature dish, a *stinco* (veal shank) stewed to falling-off-the-bone perfection.

Taverna del Lupo (075 927 43 68; Via Ansidei 21; meals €40; 1/2 Tue-Sun) Il Lupo was the wolf that St Francis domesticated, a wolf that supposedly came back to this restaurant to dine. He made an excellent choice. The atmosphere is sophisticated, if a bit stiff, and diners will feel more comfortable smartly dressed. Most ingredients are locally produced in the surrounding Apennines, including its cheese, truffles and olive oil. Set aside at least two hours for a meal.

Drinking

La Madia di Giuseppe Enoteca (075 922 18 36; Via Mastro Giorgio 2; 1/2 10am-midnight Thu-Mon, Wed dinner) Fairly new on the scene in Gubbio is this stone-walled *enoteca*, one of the rare locations in Umbria where guests can sample several different glasses of wine. But it is not just for drinking – beautiful plates of nibbles (€5 to €14) such as prosciutto and cheeses, bruschette and sweets grace the café tables. What's more: they sell a selection of local goods for you to take away and enjoy, too.

Shopping

Leo Grilli Arte (075 922 22 72; Via dei Consoli 78; 1/2 9.30am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun) In the Middle Ages, ceramics were one of Gubbio's main sources of income and there are some fabulous contemporary samples on sale in this crumbly 15th-century mansion.

Getting There & Around

APM (075 800 51 21 41) buses run to Perugia (€4.30, one hour and 10 minutes, 10 daily), Gualdo Tadino (€2.60, 50 minutes, 10 daily) and Umbertide (€3, 50 minutes, three daily). Buses depart from Piazza Quaranta Martiri.

The closest train station is at Fossato di Vico, about 18km southeast of the city. Hourly APM buses connect the station with Gubbio (€2.60, 30 minutes). From Fossato di Vico, hourly trains take about 30 minutes to Foligno (€2.55), where you can switch for other cities, including Perugia (€4.50, 1½ hours, hourly).

By car or motorcycle, take the SS298 from Perugia or the SS76 from Ancona, and follow the signs. Parking in the large car park in Piazza Quaranta Martiri costs €0.80 per hour.

Walking is the best way to get around, but APM buses connect Piazza Quaranta Martiri with the funicular station and most main sights.

AROUND GUBBIO

South on the SS3, on the way from Parco Regionale del Monte Cucco, **Gualdo Tadino** is a fairly industrial town. Although it doesn't offer much in the way of tourist attractions, it does have the best-named site: the 13th-century **Rocca Flea**, a former fortress that now houses art exhibits. One of the town's major industrial outputs is ceramics; in August it celebrates a month-long exhibition of ceramics. Slightly more enticing than its neighbour Gualdo Tadino, **Nocera Umbra** is mostly known for its spring water, and still has a few vestiges from the past. Its most notable monument is the prominent **Torre dei Trinci**, a medieval tower that was built by the *signiory* Trinci family.

PARCO REGIONALE DEL MONTE CUCCO

East of Gubbio, this park is a haven for outdoor activities and is dotted with caves, many of which can be explored. It is well set up for walkers, rock climbers and horse riders, and has many hotels and *rifugi* (mountain huts).

Costacciaro, accessible by bus from Gubbio (€1.95, 30 minutes) via Scheggia or Fossato di Vico, is a good base for exploring the area and is the starting point for a walk to the summit of Monte Cucco (1566m).

Monte Cucco is a fantastic place to go caving or spelunking. The Monte Cucco karst system is the largest in Italy and the fifth-deepest in the world (922m). Sinkholes, wells and dolines create unique geological formations and lush habitats for various species of birds and plants.

Club Alpino Italiano (CAI) produces a walking map *Carta dei Sentieri Massiccio del Monte Cucco* (€12), for sale in local bookshops and newsagents. The free *Monte Cucco Park: Country Walks through History* booklet is available in English at *rifugi* and tourist offices throughout Umbria. Use this as a guide to the best of Umbria's nature and history. The booklet describes in detail 11 walks in the area that take you through some of Umbria's most picturesque terrain, more alpinelike than the typical rolling hillside. The guides detail the estimated time needed while walking at a good pace, the presence of water sources on the trail and at least four hours and are far from civilisation, so take lots of water and emergency supplies). If you don't have your walking gear, Tour 6 is a 62km driving route through ancient abbeys and monasteries in the region.

The Centro Escursionistico Naturalistico Speleologico (☎ 075 917 04 00; www.cens.it in Italian; Via Calcinaro 7A, Costacciaro) can help with information about exploring local caves, walking and mountain-bike routes. You can also get information at the park office (☎ 075 917 73 26; parco.montecucco@libero.it; Via Matteotti 52, Villa Anita, Sigillo). Online, look for information at www.parks.it/parco.monte.cucco.

The Camping Rio Verde (☎ 075 917 01 38; www.camp.ingrioverde.it in Italian; per adult/car/child/tent €5/2.50/3/4.50) camping ground, 3km west of Costacciaro, offers horse riding (€13 per hour, in summer), rock climbing and caving. Many *agriturismo* establishments in the area can also arrange horse riding. Be warned that if you come here on a weekend in August, the rates sometimes more than quintuple. A good mountain inn is the Rifugio Escursionistico Dal Lepre (☎ /fax 075 917 77 33; Pian del Monte, Sigillo, Montecucco; per person incl breakfast €15), which also features a decent restaurant.

It is possible to hire mountain bikes at the Coop Arte e Natura (☎ 075 917 07 40; Via Stazione 2)

in the village of Fossato di Vico, about 8km southeast of Costacciaro.

CITTÀ DI CASTELLO

pop 38,476

Most travellers to Umbria don't make it terribly far north of Perugia, but those who do will be rewarded with the area known as Museum Valley for its extraordinary collection of art and history. The area surrounds the Tiber River, so is known as the Alta Valle di Tevere, and the history is laid on thick, especially in the largest and most central town: Città di Castello.

The town is surrounded by some pretty awful suburbs, but if you can look past this, it has a beautiful historic centre, many grand buildings and the second-most important art museum in Umbria after the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria (p322) in Perugia.

Note: don't come to Città di Castello on a Monday. Most museums are closed, as are many restaurants.

History

Known as Tifernum Tiberium in the Roman era, Castrum Felicitatis (Town of Happiness) in the medieval period and Città di Castello today, it actually has neither a castle nor is a city. The town was economically depressed until the 1960s, but is now known for its thriving paper, book, ironworks and furniture industries. The town's favourite son is Alberto Burri, and two galleries proudly display much of his lifetime's work. (The town's current favourite daughter is actress Monica Bellucci.)

Orientation

The entire town, including its historic centre, is within a valley, so it's almost all on flat ground and easily walkable (a rarity in Umbrian towns). Apart from the cobblestones, people using wheelchairs should have few problems getting around here.

From the train station, walk straight ahead for 200m. Turn right under Porta Santa Maria Maggiore and take Corso Vittorio Emanuele to Piazza Matteotti. Driving is mostly forbidden in the walled city, but there's plenty of free parking just outside the walls, mostly around Porta San Giacomo and Piazza Garibaldi.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Libreria Paci (☎ 075 855 43 41; Piazza Matteotti 2; 11 9am-1pm & 4.30-8pm, Tue-Sat) Has English- and

German-language books, as well as a growing collection of maps and Lonely Planet titles.

EMERGENCY

Police station (☎ 075 852 92 22; Piazza Garibaldi)

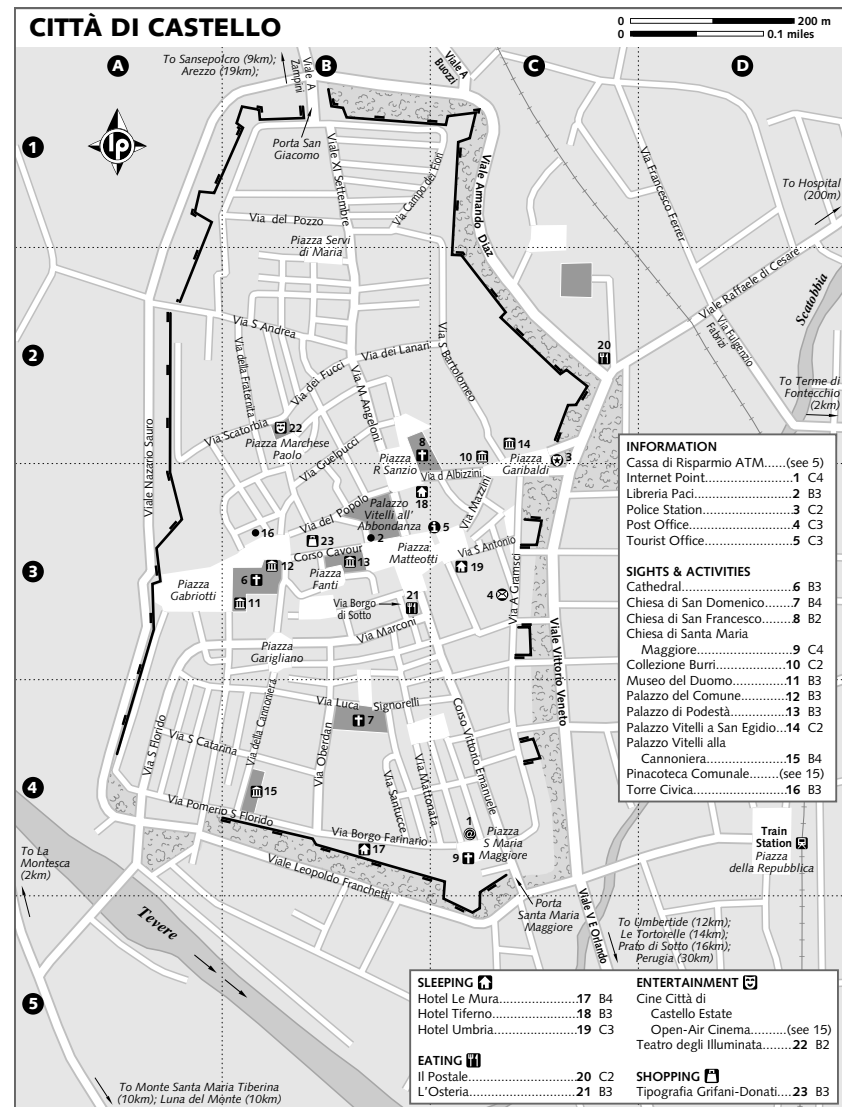
INTERNET ACCESS

Internet Point (☎ 348 398 55 753; Via Mazzini 8;

per hr €1.50; 11 8am-11pm) Phone calls to the US, UK or Australia cost €0.15 per minute, €0.25 to mobile phones.

INTERNET RESOURCES

cdcnct (www.cdcnet.net) This is the official *comune* (city-state) site. It contains English-language sections on history and art.



MEDICAL SERVICES**Hospital** (☎ 075 8 50 91; Via Angelini)**MONEY****Cassa di Risparmio** (Piazza Matteotti 3a) This bank's ATM is the most convenient, to the left of the tourist office.**POST****Post office** (☎ 075 855 3529; Via Gramsci; 𠂆 8.15am-5pm)**TOURIST INFORMATION****Tourist office** (☎ 075 855 49 22; info@iat.citta-di-castello.pg.it; Logge Bufalini, Piazza Matteotti; 𠂆 9am-1.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun)**Sights**

The collection at the **Pinacoteca Comunale** (☎ 075 855 42 02; Via della Cannoniera; adult/child/concession €5/1.50/3; 𠂆 10am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm, Mon-Sat), in the imposing 15th-century **Palazzo Vitelli alla Cannoniera**, is filled with paintings from the masters who lived here when Città di Castello was the second most important artistic centre in Umbria, behind Perugia. Luca Signorelli painted his *Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* here in 1498. Raphael also painted in Città; two of his works still stand in the *pinacoteca*. Ask for the information booklet in English, which will guide you through the paintings, giving explanations and context to the more prominent works. A cool astrological fresco cycle graces the staircase, with depictions of Apollo and the muses, erudites and emperors, seahorses and winged cherubs. The halls include wall frescoes from Cristoforo Gherardi, depicting historical subjects, such as Hannibal, Caesar and Alexander the Great.

Collezione Burri (☎ 075 855 46 49; Palazzo Albizzini, Via Albizzini 1, secondary exhibit at Ex Seccatoio del Tabacco, Via Pierucci; adult/child/concession €5/2/3; 𠂆 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Tue-Sat, 10.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Sun) houses Alberto Burri's main collection. The artist began his art career in 1946 after a stint as a prisoner of war in Texas. His contemporary work with paint and physical materials has been immensely popular throughout the world. His early work influenced the New Dada and Pop Art movements, and artists such as Rauschenberg, Christo and Jasper Johns credit him as an inspiration. A secondary exhibit of mostly larger pieces is housed in an old tobacco-drying warehouse – a site in itself to see – and is closed from November to March, except by special requests made three days in advance.

Not much remains of the original Romanesque cathedral, but the building houses some treasures. **Museo del Duomo** (Museo Capitolare; ☎ 075 855 47 05; Piazza Gabriotti 3/a; adult/child/concession €5/2/3; 𠂆 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-7pm Tue-Sun summer, 10am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Tue-Sun winter) holds the most impressive collection of sacred artefacts in all of Umbria. In the same building is the **Palazzo del Comune**, the governmental seat of the Alte Valle del Tevere for the past few centuries. Also take a look at the statuesque **Torre Civica** (Piazza Gabriotti), the city's bell tower that dates back to medieval times, which is temporarily closed for renovation.

Città di Castello also has many other impressive buildings. Facing the main square Piazza Matteotti is the **Palazzo di Podestà**, with a façade by Nicola Barbioni. The **Chiesa di San Francesco** dates back to 1291; there's a copy here of Raphael's *The Marriage of the Virgin*, which he painted in Città when he was quite young. The painting was a forced gift to one of Napoleon's generals, who moved it to Milan. **Chiesa di Santa Maria Maggiore** dates from the 1400s and also has some fine frescoes. The **Palazzo Vitelli a San Egidio** is a stately home, dating from the 1500s, built by the Vitelli family. The ceilings feature frescoes in the grotesque style. **Chiesa di San Domenico** was built in 1271 by Dominican friars and features an impressive display of frescoes by painters in the Umbria school.

Festivals & Events

Mostra Mercato Tartufo e Prodotti del Bosco During the first week in November, the town plays host to this festival dedicated to the area's ubiquitous white truffle. Farmers and growers bring every type of truffle product that is imaginable to this epicurean trade show, as well as honey, mushrooms and many other local delicacies available to sample.

Sleeping

La Montesca (☎ 075 855 85 66; Loc. Montesca; per person €6.50-8, per tent €6-6.50, per car €2.50-3; 𠂆 May-Sep; p s) This fully stocked camping ground has its own restaurant and swimming pool, and is surrounded by the verdant hills of the Alte Valle del Tevere. It is wheelchair accessible and dogs are allowed.

Luna del Monte (☎ /fax 075 857 00 54; camping@tline.net; Voc S Pietro 10, Monte Santa Maria Tiberina; adult/child/car/tent €6/4.50/2.50/6; 𠂆 Jun-mid-Sep; p s) A bit further afield but worth it for the fantastic hill setting. The camping ground has a swimming pool, children's playground and bocce.

WHERE MOTHER EARTH WOULD STAY

○ **Agriturismo/B&B Le Tortorelle** (☎ 075 941 09 49, in English 347 975 4467; www.letortorelle.it in Italian; Loc. Molino Vitelli 180, Umbertide; per person incl breakfast €40; p s) It means 'the turtle doves', and you will most certainly find peace here. The iron gates lead you to this small family-run farm specialising in the production of wheat, aloe, herbs and organic salves. You can either volunteer in exchange for room and board as part of the World-wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF – see www.wwof.org) programme or chill out as a guest. Learn to make organic pasta, wine or cheese, or luck out by arriving in time for a pizza from the outdoor wood-fired brick oven. Teresa and Aldo will pick you up at the train station in Umbertide, on the Sansepolcro line between Perugia and Città di Castello. See also p312.

Hotel Umbria (☎ 075 855 49 25; www.hotelumbria.net in Italian; Via S Antonio 6; s/d incl breakfast €35/55) The least expensive hotel within the city walls, Hotel Umbria is a fairly charming place to spend the night and is well located. All rooms have bathrooms with showers, satellite TV and IDD telephone. Phone ahead, as it sometimes hosts raucous school groups.

Hotel Le Mura (☎ 075 852 10 70; www.hotellemura.it; Via Borgo Farinaro 24; s/d incl breakfast €48/80; a i) Located along the ancient city walls, this modernist hotel isn't the most charming, as it caters to both business and leisure travellers. It does offer an array of comforts – satellite TV, internet access (€0.50 per 30 minutes), minibar, hairdryer, king-sized bed and a rather good restaurant.

Terme di Fontecchio (☎ 075 852 06 14; www.termedifontecchio.it; Loc. Fontecchio 4; hotel s €52-60, d €74-90, hermitage s incl breakfast €150-170, d €175-200; p a s) This spa resort has a well-priced hotel on its expansive park grounds, two restaurants, a pizzeria and a seven-room hermitage-cum-hotel, all within a few kilometres of Città di Castello. The hotel has 90 modern rooms with internet access, Sky TV, minibars and firm mattresses. The hermitage feels a world away, as ancient stone walls coexist with elegant antiques and low oak-beamed ceilings. The 'well-being centre' offers single-session treatments or day- or week-long curative retreats filled with shiatsu massage, therapeutic mud baths and thermal pool gymnastics. There's a two-night minimum booking, with a one-week minimum in August.

Hotel Tiferno (☎ 075 855 03 31; www.hotel.tiferno.it in Italian; Piazza R Sanzio 13; s €95, d €156, all incl breakfast; p a i) Opened in 1985, this is one of Città di Castello's top hotels. The building was a monastery for the nearby Chiesa di San Francesco, then became a palace in the 17th century and is now a four-star hotel. Rooms still

include period details of the building's past lives but have been modernised with artwork by Burri. Each room has a hairdryer, minibar and satellite TV, and has been soundproofed. Room service is offered.

Eating

L'Osteria (☎ 075 855 69 95; Via Borgo di Sotto; mains €5.50-13.50) Nothing fancy, but good typical Umbrian food. Friday features fish specialities. Try the asparagus when it's in season (late spring to early summer).

Il Postale (☎ 075 852 13 56; Via Raffaele di Cesare 8; 3-course menu €30-40; 𠂆 Tue-Fri, Sat night, Sun) If there's such a thing as *nouvelle* Umbrian cuisine, this is the place to try it. The husband and wife team at Il Postale serves dishes such as duck with fennel compote, or carp with hazelnuts. Specialities include its lentil dishes and, of course, truffles.

Entertainment

Teatro degli Illuminati (☎ 075 855 50 91; Via dei Fucchi) This civic theatre features musicals and all kinds of live-arts performances.

Cine Città di Castello Estate (☎ 075 852 92 49; adult/child €5/4) During the summer, the *pinacoteca*'s lawn is the perfect place to take in an open-air film. All genres of movies are shown – from Harry Potter to art-house Italian films. Movies are usually screened on Friday and Saturday at 9.15pm from July to the end of August.

Shopping

Retro Antiques & Old Things Market On the third weekend of every month the town hosts this market in Piazza Matteotti. It's not as big as the one in Perugia, but it's still a great place to get a hands-on history lesson (and to purchase unique gifts not found anywhere else).

Tipografia Grifani-Donati (☎ 075 855 43 49; Corso Cavour 4; 𠂆 8.30am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat) Sells

paper and artwork using the same printing techniques as when it opened in 1799. It has a small museum on the 2nd floor.

Getting There & Away

Città di Castello is just east of the E45. The Ferrovia Centrale Umbra railway connects Città di Castello with Perugia (€3.05, one hour and 10 minutes, 16 daily) and onto Todi (€4, 1¼ hours, 10 daily).

LAGO DI TRASIMENO (LAKE TRASIMENO)

It would have been easy for drop-dead gorgeous Lake Trasimeno to become a holiday haven for busloads of Northern European sunseekers, à la the coast of Le Marche. Granted, you'll find plenty of such folks during the summer months, but the majority of the area – outside Passignano and a strip leaving San Feliciano – has thankfully eschewed the Stalinist high-rise mono-architecture of such Adriatic holiday villages. *Agriturismi* cover the hills like the omnipresent sunflower, historic Castiglione del Lago folds travellers in gently to allow room for all and everyone respects the delicate ecology of the precious lake.

Outside of overcrowded August, relaxed visitors enjoy the water sports, local cuisine, never-ending walking trails and Umbria's best hostel, located on its own practically private island.

The region known as Lake Trasimeno is made up of eight different *comuni* (municipalities): Castiglione del Lago, Città della Pieve, Magione, Paciano, Panicale, Passignano, Piegara and Tuoro. Castiglione del Lago and Panicale are the most pleasant places in which to spend a day or two, while Città della Pieve is a further drive but chock-full of artwork for the connoisseur.

Orientation

Two major highways skirt the lake, the SS71 heads from Chiusi to Arezzo on the west side (in Tuscany) and SS75bis crosses the north end of the lake, heading from the A1 in Tuscany to Perugia. Public-transport users can arrive easily by train into Magione, Torricella and Castiglione del Lago, and by bus from Perugia.

Tourist offices can provide you with fold-out maps, such as *Le Mappe di Airone per il Trekking* or *Le Mappe di Airone per il*

Cicloturismo. The walking guide has 13 maps and the *cicloturismo* (cycle tourism) guide has six maps. The *Kompas Lake Trasimeno* map (€6.95) is extremely thorough for both sightseers and walkers.

Information

INTERNET RESOURCES

Trasimeno 2005 (www.lagoTrasimeno.net) The area's best website, with restaurants, hotels, itineraries and history.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Emergency First-aid Castiglione del Lago (☎ 075 9 52 61); Passignano & Tuoro (☎ 075 829 87 51)

POST

Post office (⌚ 8.10am-1.20pm Mon-Fri, 8.10am-12.30pm Sat) Castiglione del Lago (Via F.lli Rosselli); Città della Pieve (Via Veneto 6); Passignano (Via Rinascita 2); Tuoro (Via Baroncino 1)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Città della Pieve tourist office (☎ 0578 29 93 75; www.cittadellapieve.org; Piazza del Plebiscito;

⌚ 10.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-6pm summer, 10am-2.30pm & 3.30-6pm winter)

Panicale tourist office (☎ 075 837 80 17; www.lagodarte.com; Piazza Umberto I; ⌚ 10am-12.30pm & 3.30-7.30pm Easter-Oct, closed Sun winter) Offers tours of the town's major sites at 10.10am, 11.30am, 3.40pm, 5pm and 6.10pm in summer.

Pro Loco Passignano (☎ 075 829 62 11; Piazza Trento e Trieste 6, Passignano; ⌚ 10.30am-12.30pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-12.30pm Sun)

Trasimeno Area/Castiglione del Lago Tourist office (☎ 075 965 24 84; www.castiglionedelago.it; Piazza Mazzini 10, Castiglione del Lago; ⌚ 8.30am-1pm & 3.30-7pm Mon-Sat & 9am-1pm Sun) The most comprehensive tourist office in the region, it will help make hotel and *agriturismi* reservations, and offers a host of maps and advice on walking and biking trails and water sports.

Sights

PANICALE

Perched on a hill with an expansive view of the lake, the entire town of Panicale is one giant fortress. In the *La Chiesa di San Sebastiano* is Perugino's *Martyrdom of St Sebastian*, painted by the master in 1505. In the background of the painting is a landscape of the lake as it looked in Perugino's day. If you look closely, especially at the bottom of the painting, you'll see what's known as the *tratteggio* restoration technique, where artists create tiny vertical

SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE

In the 13th century, Italy's burgeoning *comuni* (city-states) were in a bit of a bind: they had active governments and prosperous citizens, but not much in the way of armies. So, they outsourced to the medieval Italian cross between a cocaine cartel warlord and a rock star: independent contractors known as the *capitani di ventura* (captains of fortune or luck) or *condottieri* (leaders of mercenary soldiers). These fickle mercenaries' allegiances were so easy to gain with promises of riches and fame that they were known to switch sides *during* battle. Umbria gave birth to many *condottieri*: Erasmo di Narni (1370-1443, known as Gattamelata), who served Florence, Venice and the pope before becoming dictator of Padua; Boldrino da Panicale (1331-91), who fought for Florence against Pisa, for Pisa against Florence and was sometimes paid a salary to make him stay away from a city; and Bartolomeo d'Alviano (1455-1515), whose adventures you can follow at the Museo Storico Multimediale Bartolomeo d'Alviano e i Capitani di Ventura (see p396), which is located outside of Amelia and find out how he led his troops into battle even after his death.

brushstrokes to fill in damaged artwork. The result is seamless from far away but art historians can tell what is original and what has been restored. In 2005, art historians discovered another fresco in the church, *Madonna in Trono con Angeli Musicanti*, which they have attributed to Raphael.

Craft fans will appreciate the **Museo del Tulle** (Lace Museum; ☎ 075 83 78 07; Chiesa Sant'Agostino; ⌚ 10am-12.30pm & 4.30-7pm Jun-Sep, Fri-Sun winter & by appt), with examples of traditional lace and tulle from the area, housed in a deconsecrated frescoed church. If you want to buy lace, head to San Michael Sq No 2 and ring the doorbell. If she's home, Fede Boldrino, who jokes she is the wife of Boldrino da Panicale (see above) and is nearly the right age, still creates lace-work by hand.

The **Museo della Chiesa della Sbarra** (admission €2; ⌚ 9am-12.30pm & 3-5.30pm), in the church of the same name, offers an up-close view of church vestments, statues and altar regalia from the past five centuries. Of particularly creepy note are the relic boxes filled with the bones of saints. Entry here is payable at the lace museum.

The Teatro Cesare Caporali is an 18th-century theatre, beautifully designed, which has concerts all year long. During the summer, the Musica Insieme Panicale runs a series of concerts from July until September, in addition to the Mosaico Sonoro free concert every Thursday in the main square at 9pm.

CASTIGLIONE DEL LAGO

Castiglione del Lago's history dates back to an Etruscan settlement and is now a popular (but not overwhelmingly so) tourist destina-

tion. In the 7th century, the town became an important defensive promontory for the Byzantine Perugia. It was fought over and traded between the papacy, the emperor and various territories for about 1000 years.

An ancient ducal palace, **Palazzo della Corgna** (☎ 075 965 82 10; Piazza Gramsci; admission incl Rocca del Leone adult/concession €3/2; ⌚ 10am-1pm & 4-7.30pm Mar-Oct, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) houses an important series of 16th-century frescoes by Giovanni Antonio Pandolfi and Salvio Savini. It was built in the 16th century by Jacopo Barozzi, who incorporated parts of ancient houses once owned by the feudal Baglioni family from Perugia.

A covered passageway connects the palace with the 13th-century Rocca del Leone (Fortress of the Lion), a pentagon-shaped fortress built in 1247 and an excellent example of medieval military architecture. Seen from the lake, rearing up on a rocky promontory, it cuts a striking pose.

ISOLA POLVESE

There's not much to do in Isola Polvese, which, to those who seek out its tranquillity, is its charm. The main attraction is that the entire island is a scientific and educational park. Many school groups come here to use the environmental labs that are devoted to teaching preservation of biodiversity and sustainable technologies. Make sure you visit the Garden of Aquatic Plants, to see biodiversity at work. Also of interest are the Monastery of San Secondo and the Church of St Julian. There are also remains of a 14th-century castle. The only inhabited building is the Fattoria Il Poggio hostel (see p360).

CITTÀ DELLA PIEVE

Città della Pieve is culturally and geographically considered part of Lake Trasimeno, but it's about 20km to the south. Although he became known as 'Il Perugino' (the Perugian), the famous Renaissance painter Pietro Vanucci was born here in 1445 and his paintings are all over the town. Buy a 'museum circuit' ticket at the tourist office or one of the museums listed below for €4.

The *Cattedrale di San Gervasio e Protasio* houses Perugino works and was developed from the ancient baptismal church (known as a *pieve*). Perhaps Perugino's most famous work in his home-town is *Adoration of the Magi*, on view at the *Oratory of Santa Maria dei Bianchi* (admission €2; h 9.30am-12.30pm & 4-7.30pm Mar-Oct, 10am-12.30pm & 3.30-6pm Nov-Mar).

The head of the della Corgna family was appointed as governor of the town by his uncle, Pope Julius III, and subsequently commissioned artists to paint works for the town, known then as Castel della Pieve (it was elevated to a city in 1600). The frescoes located in the statuesque *Palazzo della Corgna* (% 0578 29 81 85; Piazza Antonio Gramsci 1; admission €2) include ones by Il Pomarancio and Salvio Savini. It is now a library that is open to the public, so feel free to step inside and have a wander around.

ISOLA MAGGIORE

The lake's main inhabited island, Isola Maggiore, near Passignano, was reputedly a favourite with St Francis. The hill-top *Chiesa di San Michele Arcangelo* contains a Crucifixion by master painter Bartolomeo Caporali. The island is famed for its lace and embroidery production and you can see examples in the *Museo del Merlotto* (Lace Museum; % 075 825 42 33; Via Guglielmi, Isola Maggiore; admission €3; h 10am-1pm & 2.30-6pm), near the port.

SAN FELICIANO

This working town still sees fishermen leave to trawl for fish in the morning (see opposite to join them). Although primarily a strip of hotels catering to northern Europeans on a sunny holiday, San Feliciano's main draw is the *Fishing Museum* (% 075 847 92 61; www.museodelapesca.it in Italian; Via Lungolago della Pace e del Lavoro 20; adult/child/concession €3/1/2; h 10.30am-1pm & 3.30-7pm summer, 9-11pm Jul & Aug), which showcases fishing techniques from ancient times to modern day.

PASSIGNANO

Passignano is the most holiday-ish of the Trasimeno towns, with many restaurants, hotels, gelato joints and souvenir shops. The medieval castle on the top of the hill is closed to visitors, but the view from in front of it is as good as it gets. Check out the 16th-century *Chiesa della Madonna dell'Uliveto* (% 075 82 71 24; h 5-7pm Wed & Thu, 4-8pm Fri & Sat, 10am-noon & 5-7pm Sun) on the road to Tuoro. Inside, the sanctuary features a *Madonna* by Bartolomeo Caporali and a decorated holy water trough. A must-see for anyone stopping here on the last Sunday of July is the *Palio delle Barche* (Boat Race), when groups of neighbourhood men carry a heavy boat to the castle on the top of the hill.

TUORO

The only reason to visit Tuoro, otherwise a rather sleepy residential area with a handful of decent hidden *agriturismi* in the surrounding hills, is to take a drive through the grounds of the Battle of Trasimeno (see the boxed text, opposite). Stop off at the **Tuoro tourist office** (City Library % 075 82 52 20; h 9am-12pm & 4-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12pm Sat 12 Jun-12 Sep) to check out the permanent exhibition before heading out around town. There is an archaeological connect-the-dots walking or driving tour of the battlefield, signposted by 12 numbered stops, describing the events that took place 2300 years ago.

Also visit *Field of the Sun* (Campo del Sole), a group of 27 contemporary sand sculptures made by celebrated artists and looking like a modern-day Stonehenge. You will find it near Loc. Navaccia Lido, close to the lake's edge.

MAGIONE

You may end up here if you suddenly realise that you need a heap of groceries or a mosaic table. It's the commercial centre of the lake and, as such, not terribly interesting. However, the train stops here and it does have a fascinating castle. Originally constructed between 1160 and 1170, the Templars used Magione's fortified abbey as a hospital for crusaders going back and forth to fight in the crusades in Jerusalem. The Knights of Malta took the abbey from the Templars and, to this day, still own it. You can drive up to the *Castle of the Knights of Malta* (% 075 84 38 59; admission free), which is open in summer only.

HANNIBAL V ROMANS

During the second Punic War between Rome and Carthage, Lake Trasimeno was the site of one of the deadliest battles in all of Roman history. Roman troops led by Consul Caius Flaminius were set up around the area that is now Tuoro. Quite the wartime strategist, Carthaginian general Hannibal made it look as though he was just passing by on his way to Rome, as nonchalantly as one can with 50,000 troops, 9000 horses and 37 elephants. Hannibal's men even lit a series of torches far from the lake, leading Flaminius' forces to believe the Carthaginians were too far away to be a threat. Under the cover of the lake's typical misty morning, Hannibal ambushed so expediently that the Romans hardly had time to suit up, killing over three-fifths of Flaminius' 25,000-strong army. A local stream ran with the blood of Flaminius and his soldiers for three straight days, earning the new name Sanguinetto (the bloody).

Festivals & Events

As with the rest of festival-happy Umbria, Lake Trasimeno hosts countless events throughout the year:

Art & Culture festival In Città della Pieve over the first weekend in June.

Palio delle Barche Held on the last Sunday in July. Passignano's annual boat race of a different sort; see opposite.

Palio dei Terzieri This showcases the town's Renaissance past with some serious revelry, including acrobatics, fire-eating and archery. Held in mid-August.

Activities

Popular activities at the lake include hiking, wine-tasting, camping, water sports and *dolce far niente* (the sweet enjoyment of doing nothing). Many also go for the culinary delights. The locals are very proud of their excellent produce, most notably their high-quality DOC (Denominazione di Origine Controllata) wines (see p74) and DOP (Denominazione d'Origine Protetta, or Protected Denomination of Origin) olive oils. If you are interested in following the Strada del Vino (Wine Route; see p75) of the Colli del Trasimeno (Trasimeno Hill district), the *Associazione Strada del Vino Colli del Trasimeno* (% 075 58 29 41; www.montitrasimeno.umbria.it in Italian) produces a brochure with suggested itineraries. It lists open cellars, which means you can stop by and try wine, but you almost always need to call ahead. You can also pick up this brochure at the tourist office in Castiglione del Lago. Look out, too, for the guide to local restaurants, *Trasimeno a Tavola*, which includes sample menus and price guides, also available from the tourist office.

Do as the locals do, with a day of fishing (% 075 847 60 05; www.albatrasimeno.it in Italian; Via Alicata 19, San Feliciano; fishing per person €55), for eel, trout, perch, tench and carp, out on the lake. Two

people at a time can join locals for a four-hour angling or early morning fishing trip. After reeling in your catches at dawn, the fisherman can guide you to restaurants that will cook up your fish using traditional recipes. Book at least one day in advance. Nature trips (for up to 10 people €90) are also available.

For a fun cultural and gastronomic experience, don't miss the weekly markets, which have all sorts of fresh local produce and basic goods. They take place from 8.30am to 1pm at the following locations: Castiglione del Lago (Wednesday), Magione (Thursday), Tuoro (Friday) and Passignano (Saturday). Ask at each town's tourist office for more information.

Ask at one of the tourist offices for a booklet of walking and horse-riding tracks. Horse-riding centres include the *Maneggio Oasi* (% 0337 65 37 95; Loc. Orto, Castiglione del Lago) and *Poggio del Belvedere* (% 075 82 90 76; www.poggiodelbelvedere.it; Via San Donato 65, Loc. Campori di Sopra, Passignano), which also offers archery courses if you're feeling particularly medieval.

Canoe, windsurfing and sailboat rentals can be found in Castiglione del Lago at *La Merangola* (% 075 965 24 45; Loc. Lido Arezzo) or in Tuoro at *Belneazione Tuoro* (% 328 454 97 66; Loc. Punta Navaccia). *La Merangola* also has a small beach and restaurant, and turns into a *disco-teca* (disco) at night.

Sleeping

The Lake Trasimeno area is filled with every type of lodging imaginable, including no less than 151 *agriturismi*.

For a full list of places to stay in this area, pick up a brochure from the local tourist office, check www.umbria2000.it or consult the Umbria Infotourist Map. The map is available from *InfoUmbria* (Map p320; % 075 57 57;

HOSTEL? AGRITURISMO? HOW ABOUT BOTH?

○ **Fattoria Il Poggio** (☎ 075 965 95 50; www.fattoriaisolapolvese.com; Isola Polvese; dm/f incl breakfast €15/17; 1 Mar-30 Oct, reception closed 3-7pm; j) Besides being impeccably run, you would hardly ever know you're staying in an HI youth hostel. This former barn has dorm, doubles and family rooms all with views of the surrounding lake. Kayaks, private beaches, games, TV with DVDs, and laundry room are all on offer. Groups can book in the low season by appointment only. Meals are also available (€10). Last ferry to Isola Polvese leaves San Feliciano around 7pm. See also p312.

www.infoumbria.com in Italian; Piazza Partigiani Intercity bus station, Largo Cacciatori delle Alpi 3, Perugia; 1 9am-1.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat), where staff will also help you make reservations.

BUDGET

Camping Badiaccia (☎ 075 965 90 97; www.badiaccia.com; Via Trasimeno 191, Bivia Borghetto; per person €5.50-7, tent €5.50-6.50, car €2-2.50, 3-16-person bungalows €35-93; p i s) Practise your Dutch while playing tennis, table tennis or *bocce*, eating at the surprisingly good *ristorante/pizzeria*, or swimming in one of three pools (one hydromassage and just for adults). The camping ground is paradise for families, but the childless can enjoy renting a kayak, bicycle or paddleboat, exercising in the fitness room, and the excellent beachfront location. For a small fee, staff will pick you up at the Terontola train station; the camping ground is located just south of the SS75 on the SS71.

Paola's B&B (☎ 075 573 08 08, 335 624 72 40; Città della Pieve; per person €30-50) For an authentic Italian experience, stay in Paola's home. She rents out two rooms in her 17th-century apartment (be sure to ask for a peek at the frescoes in her daughter's bedroom). Paola also offers cooking and Italian lessons (usually at the same time). During winter, she cooks in her open-hearth fireplace. Paolo speaks French and a bit of English.

La Casa sul Lago (☎ 075 840 00 42; Via del Lavoro, Torricella; dm €18, s €25-30, d €50-60, all incl breakfast; j) Comfortable enough to want to spend a few nights, or a few weeks. The private rooms could be in a three-star hotel, and all rooms

have access to every amenity known to hostkind: laundry, bicycle rental, wi-fi, internet access, home-cooked meals, bar and private garden... all within 50m from the lake. A short walk from the Torricella train station but not near much else.

Il Torrione (☎ 075 95 32 36; www.trasinet.com/iltorrione; Via delle Mura 4, Castiglione del Lago; r incl breakfast €65-70; 1 Mar-10 Nov) Romance abounds at this artistically minded tranquil retreat. Each room is decorated with artwork painted by the owner and a private flower-filled garden overlooks the lake, complete with chaises longues from which to watch the sunset. Rent the 'tower' mini-apartment, complete with kitchenette, for an amorous hideaway.

MIDRANGE

La Torre (☎ 075 95 16 66; www.trasinet.com/latorre; Via Emanuele 50, Castiglione del Lago; s €50, d €60-80; a) The price is right at this central three-star hotel, a renovated palace. The rooms are a tad sterile but fully outfitted with TV, minibar and telephone, and the owners run the yummy bakery below.

Hotel Da Sauro (☎ 075 82 61 68; fax 075 82 51 30; Via Guglielmi 1, Isola Maggiore; r €80) This family-run establishment has just 10 rooms in a rustic stone building. It's found at the northern end of the main village on the island, not far from a private beach. The restaurant downstairs is very popular, so expect a lot of noise at meal times. This is a great place to try local fish.

Hotel Miralago (☎ 075 95 11 57; www.hotelmiralago.com; Piazza Mazzini 6, Castiglione del Lago; s €68-76, d €88-93, tr €108-113; 1 closed mid-Jan-mid-Mar; a) The Miralago is central, and top-floor rooms have magnificent lake views. It's rather austere (besides the plush fabrics), but it has amenities such as satellite TV and room service. There's also a good restaurant downstairs – La Fontana (a perennial favourite).

Agriturismo Madonna delle Grazie (☎ 057 829 98 22; www.madonnadellegrazie.it; Voc Madonna delle Grazie 6, Città della Pieve; d B&B €90-120, half-board €130-180; p n s) The largest and most commercial of Umbria's organic *agriturismi*. Very popular with Italian families on holidays, the establishment is truly a working, family-run farm producing wine, olive oil, honey, meats and jams, all used in its meals. Rooms can be a tad 'rustic' (translation: sparse) and it's not cheap, but it does come with horse riding, archery, bicycle rentals and a stunning location.

TOP END

○ **Relais Alla Corte del Sole** (☎ 075 968 90 08; www.cortedelsole.com; Loc. I Giorgi, Petrignano; d €166-230, ste €225-340; p a s) You'd swear you must have seen this astonishing hotel as the backdrop of a period drama – a soulful chat in front of a private in-room fireplace, chess and brandy in the fabric-draped *orangerie* (with its 360-degree countryside view), or a lovers spat in the floral garden behind the olive-tree thicket.

Casa San Martino (☎ 075 84 42 88; www.tuscanyvacation.com, San Martino 19, Lisciano Niccone; d with 3-night minimum €100-160, per week for up to 8 people €2000-3000; p s) Come with one or seven of your best friends to this farmhouse in the hills north of the lake. The main building is impeccably decorated with terracotta-tile floors, wood-beamed ceilings and an open-hearth fireplace, and comes with a completely stocked kitchen, washer and dryer, and four bedrooms (three with bathrooms). Outside is a pool facing an expansive countryside view (with a few castles

thrown in) and a stone barbecue grill. The building is often rented out weekly during the summer (a three-night minimum booking applies otherwise), but in the low season it opens as a B&B offering cooking and fresco painting classes.

Eating

The main specialties of the Trasimeno area are *fagiolina* (little white beans), olive oil and wine. In addition, you'll find many fish dishes, such as carp *in porchetta* (cooked in a wood oven with garlic, fennel and herbs) and *tegamacchio*, a kind of soupy stew of the best varieties of local fish, cooked in olive oil, white wine and herbs.

La Cantina (☎ 075 965 24 32; Via Emanuele 93, Castiglione del Lago; mains €6.60-13.20; 1 Tue-Sun) Not only is this well-priced restaurant fabulous – a stately interior with a lovely outdoor terrace for summer dining – but there's also an adjacent *magazzino* (shop) where you can sample and buy the area's best wine, olive oil

HOONEYMOONING IN UMBRIA (ON ANY BUDGET)

Whether you are travelling on a shoestring or with platinum purse strings, Umbria offers a vast array of romantic getaways to suit any price point, especially in the areas surrounding Lake Trasimeno.

Fattoria Il Poggio (opposite) You don't need to spend a lot of *soldi* (money) to have a romantic tryst. For less than the cost of most bridal bouquets, you can spend a few nights in your own room on this private island's hostel in Lake Trasimeno, kayaking, dining with your fellow hostel mates and wandering through the abandoned castle. Romantically placed benches allow for quiet moments alone.

Il Torrione (opposite) Climb up a set of pirate-ship steps to your personal honeymoon tower cottage, where you just might be tempted to skip going sightseeing to sleep in until noon, cook lunch in your kitchenette and dine outside in the sunshine on your private terrace. This superb artist-designed bed and breakfast is located just a stone's throw away from the main square of the eminently wanderable Castiglione del Lago – the most congenial town on Lake Trasimeno.

Relais Alla Corte del Sole (above) The only worry that honeymooners might have at this wonderful spot, is why they didn't get married here as well. Walking distance from the Tuscan border in the Lake Trasimeno *borgo* (hamlet) of Petrignano, this beautiful former monastic village offers every romantic amenity available in one picture-perfect package – sweetly scented gardens, romantic in-room fireplaces, a glass enclosed circular *orangerie* from which to write your thank-you notes and, for exhausted newlyweds, organised excursions that leave the planning to someone else.

Relais Borgo Brufa (p333) Even if you don't stay in the Imperial Suite with its gold-plated bed and in-room swimming pool, the candlelit Turkish sauna, scrumptious restaurant and quintessential countryside views are just as sumptuously decadent. Staff even pick guests up at Perugia's Sant'Egidio airport, which is located about 15 minutes away.

Villa Zuccari (p344) After spending a year or more planning your nuptials, wouldn't it be nice to have someone take care of you for a while? The noble family that runs Villa Zuccari are expert hosts, excelling in taking care of all their clients' needs, which honeymooning couples will especially appreciate at this most romantic of hotels. The palatial rooms (some with in-room Jacuzzi tubs or stone balconies), excellent restaurant and private garden with heated swimming pool might just tempt you to stick around. If you do decide to venture out, Montefalco's restaurants and *enotecas* (wine bars) are just minutes away.

and treats. Try the delicious trout with local *fagiolina* (€8.20).

L'Acquario (☎ 075 965 24 32; Via Vittoria Emanuele 69, Castiglione del Lago; set menu €25; 🗨 Thu-Tue) This rather refined restaurant is a great place to try out the local carp *in porchetta* fresh from the lake or have an appetiser of eel in *tegamaccio*.

La Locanda di Gulliver (☎ 075 952 82 28; Voc. I Cucchi, Petrignano; meals €27) Even if the food wasn't absolutely fantastic (which it is), the drive out here would be reason enough to stop in. Housed in an old brick farmhouse near sunflower-draped fields of yellow, the inventive menu features gems like *cinghiale* (wild boar) bruschetta with local olive oil, eel and yellow pumpkin risotto, and tagliatelle with local smoked lake fish. Did we mention the homemade pizzas, hot out of the brick oven?

Le Grotte di Boldrini (☎ 075 83 71 61; Via Virgilio Ceppari 30, Panicale; meals €28; 🗨 7.30-10pm) Umbrian-style comfort food abounds at this hill-top trattoria in Panicale, above the lake. Meats are grilled on an open fire, perfect for a chilly day, and fresh fish is served on Fridays. Try the decadent macaroni in *norcina* (from Norcia) cream sauce with spicy sausages (€7).

Da Settimio (☎ 075 847 60 00; Via Lungolago Alicata, San Feliciano; meals €28; 🗨 Fri-Wed Jan-Oct) If you stay on Isola Polvese, you'll most likely pass by this restaurant near the ferry terminal in San Feliciano. It doesn't look like much, but lo-

cals know it as the best fish restaurant in the area, handed down from father to son for four generations. Try the *risotto alla pescatora* (fisherman's risotto) or the appetiser of 'fried little fishies'.

Getting There & Around

APM buses connect Perugia with Passignano (€3, one hour and 10 minutes, nine daily) and Castiglione del Lago (€4.60, one hour and 15 minutes, nine daily). Trains head from Perugia around hourly to Torricella (€1.80, 25 minutes), Passignano (€2.30, 30 minutes) and Castiglione del Lago (€3.30, one hour, nine daily).

APM (☎ 800 51 21 41) also operates ferry services. The company has offices on the waterfront at each town, where you can pick up a timetable. From approximately Easter until the end of September, hourly ferries head from Passignano to Castiglione del Lago (€4, 40 minutes), San Feliciano to Isola Polvese (€3.10, 10 minutes) and Castiglione del Lago to Isola Maggiore (€3.70, 30 minutes). Ferries stop running at 7pm.

You can rent bicycles at most camping grounds, Fattoria Il Poggio (p360) or La Casa sul Lago (p360) or at these outlets:

Cicli Valentini (☎ /fax 075 95 16 63; Via Firenze 68b, Castiglione del Lago)

Marinelli Ferrettini Fabio (☎ /fax 075 95 31 26; Via B Buoizzi 26, Castiglione del Lago)