



MALATESTA & MONTEFELTRO: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE HILLS OF RIMINI



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MONTEFELTRO:**
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THROUGH THE
HILLS OF RIMINI

Province of Rimini

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Montefiore Conca
Saludecio
Mondaino
Montegridolfo

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NATURE

FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA

a complete province

The sea off the Riviera of Rimini is guarded by sentinels standing close by. In fact, just a short drive inland from the coast are the hills of Rimini and the mountains that characterize its "green sea". Few other provinces offer mountains, hills and the sea in such close proximity to each other. The former is an area largely shaped by the hand of man who has been cultivating it for centuries - receiving in return grapes, olives, wheat, forage and vegetables - though it retains areas of unspoilt woodland and spontaneous vegetation. The area has two main valleys, the Marecchia and Conca valleys that are interesting and attractive even in their more isolated spots, as well as a smaller valley crossed by the Marano torrent thanks to which a delightful river park has been created in Coriano. Gurgling, cascading water marks the source of the Marecchia river that springs from a field on Mount della Zucca, not far from the source of the Tiber river, where the region of Emilia Romagna borders with Tuscany. It descends to the sea with a torrential force that, after decades, is once again strong and





on the left
**Riviera of Rimini,
the beach**
above
**panoramic view
of the upper
Marecchia valley**

determined. It reaches the Montefeltro in Romagna, flowing close to the Republic of San Marino and then into the sea in Rimini, where it has been diverted to ensure the waters of the harbour always remain calm. The gaze is drawn to the gently rolling clay hills where sandstone spurs suddenly come into sight, rising along the riverbanks. These were not always here, but were formed by what is known as the *gravitational flow of the Marecchia* that brought them to this spot, drifting like rafts, from the Tyrrhenian Sea. Here they found stability on land once lapped by the sea. Of great environmental interest is the area near the gypsum rocks of the Vena del Gesso in Torriana, where visitors also find the *Protected Fauna Oasis*, and in nearby Verucchio at the *Ca' Brigida Oasis WWF Environmental Education Centre*. On the unspoilt green hills near Casteldelci is *Sasso Simone and Simoncello Nature Reserve* - 4,847 hectares straddling the provinces of Rimini and Pesaro and Urbino with its own Natural History Museum in Pennabilli - that boasts one of the largest turkey oak woods in Italy and two *mesas* that would not be out of place in Colorado.

The source of the Conca river is on Mount Carpegna, which stands over 1,200 metres above sea level and, as it is almost always snow-covered in winter, boasts good ski-lift facilities. The river crosses several municipalities in the province of Pesaro before flowing into the province of Rimini and emptying into the Adriatic Sea at Portoverde, in the municipality of Misano. In 1878, a dam was built across the river to form an artificial lake called the Conca Basin. The lake straddles two towns in the Rimini area; Misano Adriatico (in the village of Santa Monica, home to *Misano World Circuit* racetrack) and San Giovanni in Marignano. The lake is close to the A14 motorway, from where it is can easily be seen. It is now mainly used for agricultural purposes and is part of the *Conca River Park*. The foothills of the Apennines in the Conca valley are areas of outstanding natural beauty. Facing the Adriatic Sea, which lapped them millions of years ago, they are dotted with wheat fields, vineyards and olive groves renowned for their quality produce. Here too, by heading inland along the river it is possible to find unspoilt natural surroundings or take a walk through the chestnut woods of Montefiore Conca or Gemmano or along streams, where there are large areas of spontaneous vegetation with

alongside
**the Marecchia river,
Ponte Messa**



an infinite variety of trees and flowers, such as alders and numerous species of orchids. Gemmano boasts a rare and spectacular natural jewel that is interesting in terms of its geology and fauna. Given their naturalistic importance, Onferno Caves, part of a 123-hectare *Oriented Nature Reserve*, are protected. The caves that are home to one of the largest and most varied bat colonies in Italy are part of a karstic complex covering over 750 metres and were created by a waterway that carved the chalky rocks. Close by is the charming Ventena valley that lies between Gemmano and Montefiore Conca and in Mondaino the beautiful treasure troves of the Mala Valley and Arboretum - a 9-hectare botanical garden with 6,000 arboreal species and an *environmental education centre*. The high ground of the province offers spectacular panoramic views and the beautiful landscape is as important as any other monument, as indeed are the area's many ancient trees or arboreal "patriarchs".

IDENTITY AND HISTORY

TWO SEIGNORIES COMPARED

to
discover
more

The history of the hills of Rimini dates back centuries; it began with the important Villanovan settlements of Verucchio, before the invasion of the great Roman civilization. Yet it is the Middle Ages and Renaissance that really characterized the area, leaving indelible signs of their passing; signs that can still be seen in the urban layout, architecture and monuments of many towns and villages on the plains and in the hills of the province of Rimini. Between the 12th and 15th centuries, the destiny of two seignories - the Malatesta and Montefeltro - united this territory that owes them its incomparable beauty and wealth of art treasures. Both originally from the Montefeltro area, the families moved further afield in search of areas over which to exercise their seigniorial power. It was inevitable that expansion of their respective domains, occupying the north and south of the valleys, would lead to friction. Having controlled the Montefeltro for over 100 years, in the 13th century the Montefeltro family also received the county of Urbino. At the same time, the Malatesta (formerly the Malatesti) owned the area near Pennabilli and expanded towards Verucchio





above
**the Malatesta
Temple in Rimini**
on the left
**Sigismondo Pandolfo
Malatesta (a detail)**
in the fresco by Piero
della Francesca,
**Malatesta Temple
in Rimini**

origins of the seignories

and the mid-Marecchia valley. Rivalry intensified, finally exploding in the early 15th century under the enterprising and determined leaderships of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, lord of Rimini and Fano and Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, both vicars apostolic. Thus began a period of conflict between the two that led to numerous battles and clashes. Having gained the trust of the Pope, Federico had the better, whilst Sigismondo was excommunicated and lost everything, except his beloved Rimini.

The Montefeltro

The first member of the family was Count Antonio da Montefeltro, descendent of the Carpegna dynasty, a legendary figure who acquired his title as he was of noble descent. The Montefeltro covered an area near San Leo, once known as *Mons Feretrus* in honour of a temple dedicated to Jupiter Feretrius built there. His son, Montefeltrano, consolidated the name and prestige of the family, making it one of the most powerful in the region. Even when they became counts of Urbino they continued to live in San Leo and indeed, Guido I da Montefeltro, also known as “The Elder”, was born there in 1255. In his *Divine Comedy*, Dante Alighieri put him in the Inferno, in the eighth bolgia. In 1443, Pope Eugene IV appointed Federico’s father, Oddantonio II da Montefeltro, first Duke of Urbino, the city that became capital of the state and would become one of the most important towns of the Italian Renaissance. This was thanks mainly to Federico, who called to his court the greatest men of letters and artists of the period, like Piero della Francesca, Luciano Laurana and Francesco di Giorgio Martini, who built the splendid Ducal Palace. The decline of the city began when the capital was transferred to Pesaro in 1523.

above
**panoramic view
of San Leo**
below
view of Urbino





The Malatesta

The Malatesti also originate from the Marecchia valley; the first documents mentioning them, dating from the 12th century, concern landed property in southern Romagna and highlight conflict with the municipality of Rimini. The family had so much landed property it was able to control the roads inland of Rimini, basing its strongholds in Pennabilli and Verucchio, which dispute the honour of the family's origins. Their ancient kinship with the area's most illustrious and powerful feudal family - the Carpegna - was crucial. By controlling the territory, routes of communication, trade and agricultural production they began to put pressure on Rimini. They began a war that ended in 1197 following an act of reparation. The municipality of Rimini joined forces with the Malatesta, named them citizens, granted them a seat on the town's council (1206) and invited them to settle within its walls. Malatesta dalla Penna (Malatesta I Malatesta), who had held the role of podestà of Pistoia in 1223, was podestà of Rimini from 1230 to 1247. One well-known figure is Malatesta da Verucchio, "the centenarian", who was born in Verucchio in 1212 and died in Rimini in 1312. Given his age, he was known as Mastin Vecchio, as Dante recalls in his Divine Comedy (Inferno XXVII verses 46-48). He was the father of two of Dante's other characters, Paolo and Gianciotto, the deformed husband and murderer of his wife Francesca and brother Paolo. The road was now open to exercising absolute power over Rimini. In just a few decades, the family took over all civil and religious roles, removing all the town's organs from office. The family could count on considerable wealth and support, obtained through war and astute matrimonial choices and alliances. They did not however have a noble title and thus tried to gain credit by boasting ancient origins including Noah, Tarchon, Trojan hero and cousin of Hector and Aeneas, Otto III, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and Scipio the African, who Sigismondo Pandolfo - the most famous Malatesta and lord of Rimini from 1432 to 1468 - was a great follower of.

above
Pennabilli
below
Sasso Fortress,
Verucchio

sigismondo and his rimini

Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta became lord of Rimini and Fano in 1432 at just 15 years of age. For years he fought in military campaigns all over Italy, earning the fame and wealth he then used to make his capital and court worthy of the great seignories of the time. Thanks to him, Rimini has the honour of having the first Renaissance building ever - the *Malatesta Temple*, designed by Leon Battista Alberti and with frescoes by Piero della Francesca. It is the mausoleum of Sigismondo and his wife, Isotta degli Atti, but also that of Giorgio Gemisto Pletone, one of the philosophers of the nobleman's court. Sigismondo's aggressive nature played a key role in his glorification, but an equally important part in his downfall. The intricate political situation in Italy did the rest, leading to his decline at just 40 years of age. Failure to fulfil the commitments undertaken, disloyalty towards the Pope, whose policies he no longer shared, and military occupation of territories under the jurisdiction of the Montefeltro, loyal holders of the policies of the Church, meant he lost everything except the town that was the symbol of his power. Meanwhile, Federico not only took back what had once been his, but also extended his estate to the Malatesta castles. Sigismondo died aged 51; having led an army at just 13, he mainly spent the last years of his life supervising work on his temple. Like Urbino, Rimini was one of the capitals of the Renaissance, attracting great artists, men of literature and humanists. After Sigismondo's death, the town lost its key role, whilst other capitals remained protagonists for centuries to come.

federico da montefeltro

As stated in a bull by Pope Martin V, Federico III was the illegitimate son of Guidantonio da Montefeltro, lord of Urbino, Gubbio and Casteldurante and Count of Spoleto, and one of the ladies-in-waiting of his barren wife. He managed to become duke when his half-brother was killed in a palace plot. The Duchy of Urbino was a state entity of feudal origin, tied by obligations of vassalage to

Medal by Matteo de' Pasti with a portrait of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta (circa 1450). Municipal Museum, Rimini



the Papal State. It occupied the northern part of the Marche and Umbria and was established following transformation of the County of Urbino, founded two centuries earlier. It was powerful and stable and Federico had the determination and intelligence necessary to follow a personal strategy aimed at consolidating the duchy. He didn't have to wait long to achieve his goal. After fighting Sigismondo for 20 years, often in violent battles in which no holds were barred, and thanks to the support of Pope Pius II, who was set on eliminating the Malatesta seignory, he managed to finally defeat his bitter rival in 1463. Having achieved such splendour under the patronage of its leader, Rimini was now defenceless, whilst Urbino continued on its road to grandeur and glory under Federico. The latter's personal triumphs peaked when he was appointed captain general of the army of the Italian League and commanding officer of the armies of the King of Naples, the Duke of Milan and the Pope. These roles forced him to draw on all his expertise as a shrewd and prudent diplomat, always careful to assess all the possible consequences of his choices in order to gain the most benefit from his actions.

OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE ARCHITECTURE

CASTLES, FORTRESSES AND FORTS

To narrate the defensive history of the province, we should start in **Rimini** where the magnificence of the most famous Malatesta nobleman left a building that bears his name, Castel Sismondo. Begun in 1437 and completed 10 years later it became his palace where he entertained the leading intellectuals, philosophers and artists of the time between battles. All the greats came here like Filippo Brunelleschi, who helped design the castle itself, and later Leon Battista Alberti, Piero della Francesca, Matteo De' Pasti and Agostino di Duccio, who worked on the Malatesta Temple. Others included philosophers like Giorgio Gemisto, known as Pletone. Though only the central part remains, the large and imposing yet elegant castle narrates the wealth of the seignory and the taste of its lord. This was the family's residential palace although it loved to stay in its many castles around its extensive estate. One such castle was in **Santarcangelo di Romagna**, where Francesca resided in a splendid building renovated by Sigismondo, where he had created a rare example in Italy of a large residential tower. According to legend, this is the setting for the dramatic events involving Francesca and her brother-in-law and lover Paolo, made famous thanks to the V canto of Dante's Inferno. On the municipal territory, the **Tomba di San Martino** is a fortified farmhouse; built to defend production, only the main tower remains. Heading towards





above
**the remains of the
fortified farmhouse
Tomba di San
Martino dei Mulini,
Santarcangelo di
Romagna**

on the left
**Malatesta castle,
Santarcangelo
di Romagna**



the hills of the upper Marecchia valley there are many castles and towers that have stood here for centuries, ready to defend these lands and bearing witness to the events that took place here; the foot soldiers of the bordering families, the Malatesta and Montefeltro, fought bitter battles here that worsened under the great leaders that made the two seignories famous - Sigismondo and Federico. Although the river has shaped the valley landscape, the fortifications characterize its profile. These include Palazzo Marcosanti in **Poggio Berni**, a castle with two cylindrical towers and the remains of a noble fortress, and on the hillside alongside, the square tower of Scorticata, now called **Torriana**, all that remains of a fort built here due to its extraordinary position. Close by is **Montebello** castle - of particular importance due to the amazing number of cannons it has - with its very own legend linked to Azzurrina. Opposite is splendid Sasso Fortress in **Verucchio** that belonged to Mastin Vecchio, centenarian and founder of the family of Rimini mentioned by Dante. Mediaeval feasts and banquets are re-enacted here every August. On the left, soar the towered peaks of Mount Titano, symbols of the ancient **Republic of San Marino** that also has a variety of re-enactments in period costume. The river is overlooked by **Saiano** Castle, with its enigmatic Byzantine cylindrical tower, documented as early as 1183. On the rocky peak of **Pietracuta** are the remains of the Castle of Pietragùdola, formerly owned by the Carpegna family and precious bulwark in the bottleneck of the river, ideal for controlling passing troops. Close by is **San Leo** whose castle was designed by Francesco di Giorgio Martini, the Siena-born architect who lived in Urbino for over twenty years, working for the court of Federico da Montefeltro and bringing the indelible mark of the pure Renaissance to all the territory. Rising vertically on a rocky spur stands the splendid and solid fortress recalled by Dante in the IV canto of Purgatory. Although of ancient origins, almost certainly Roman, it was entirely renovated by di Giorgio Martini in 1475 who transformed it into the heart of the area's defensive system and made it unconquerable. Not far away, commissioned by Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, is **Maioletto** Fortress, with two jutting towers flanking the fine curtain wall. It stands on a peak of calcareous rock below which the ancient village of Maiolo was completely buried under a landslide in the 18th century. Opposite it is **Talamello** that retains its castle layout and

above
the village of
Montebello

below
Torriana Fortress



where the area's famous cheese is unearthed from its ditches. Climbing the valley, on the slopes of Mount Carpegna is **Scavolino** with its magnificent palace. Nearby is Pennabilli, a wealthy and powerful bishop's see, with the castles of Penna and Billi. In the same area is **Bascio** Tower, a solitary 12th-century square-based structure that overlooks the village of the same name, built as a lookout post for the castle that has since fallen into ruin. Further south is **Casteldelci**, *Castrum Ilicis* in ancient times, a well-preserved village next to which, on the mountain of the same name, stood the castle of Ugucione della Faggiola. Today, there are two towers; one is called "del Monte" and is a 13th-century circular lookout post and the other is the bell tower that originally had a defensive function before becoming the belfry of the nearby church of **Santa Maria in Sasseto**. Close by is **Sant'Agata Feltria** with its unusual Fregoso Fortress that overlooks the town from the top of Sasso del Lupo. The hand of di Giorgio Martino is clear in this building with its fairytale-like features, particularly in the two polygonal bastions that both fortify and adorn it. In the same area, protected by walls, **Petrella Guidi** is a charming fortified village that retains its 14th-century urban layout and has a tower next to the remains of the castle walls. The Conca valley offers a similar wealth of treasures.



Even in the plains, there are numerous fortresses and fortified villages like the delightful old town of **San Giovanni in Marignano**, well worth visiting for its defensive perimeter that is largely intact and the row towers of the ancient curtain wall, as well as splendid Massari Theatre. Heading up the valley leads to the village of **Montecolombo** with its wonderful keep and system of ancient gates - the first embattled and the second with a Gothic arch leading into the centre. Next is **Montescudo**, in a key strategic position and for this reason contended for years by the Malatesta and Montefeltro seignories, so much so it was considered one of the most important fortresses of the family from Rimini. Its importance can still be seen in various features, in particular the heavily sloping stone scarp walls, which had a dual defensive role, and the soaring 14th-century municipal tower. Just over two kilometres away is the charming fortified farming village of **Albereto** which has

on the left
a view of Talamello

on the right
a view of
Montecolombo

been well restored. Surrounded by lush greenery, it is of Roman origin and appears in documents dating from 1233. Its current layout is thanks to reconstruction work commissioned by Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta shortly before that carried out on Montescudo castle (circa mid-15th century), when a new town wall, moat and three circular corner towers were built. In **San Clemente** the ancient *fortress* is worth a mention, though only rare pentagonal jutting towers remain, whilst Malatesta walls still enclose the old town. Just outside the fortified farmhouse of **Agello**, which has remains of parts of the Malatesta walls and a small oratory, is **San Savino**, another small village with remains of Malatesta fortifications and circular towers, entered through a gate with a tall tower and coats of arms. Visitors should not miss **Montefiore Conca** as, though also fundamental for defensive purposes, it was one of the Malatesta's main residential castles and extremely popular with the family. Even from a distance, its historical and geopolitical importance is clear. It hosted kings and emperors and many splendid rooms remain, including those frescoed by Jacopo degli Avanzi, commissioned by Malatesta Ungaro (1327-1372). Recent restoration work has returned it to its former glory and it now boasts rooms that give a clear idea of court life, as well as some very interesting material found here, in particular extraordinary ceramics such as dozens of jugs, cups and basins, decorated with portraits and scrolls, Gothic letters and festoons and geometrical patterns and symbols. **Gemmano** is also worth well visiting. As it was crossed by the Gothic Line, it was completely destroyed during the Second World War but still has some remains of the town walls of what once was one of the most important bulwarks between the Conca and Ventena valleys, fortified by the Malatesta to staunch their enemies, the Montefeltro. The area has a lot to offer, thanks also to its *Nature Reserve* and *Caves*. **Montegridolfo** is another fortified village worth visiting that boasts excellent accommodation and restaurant facilities. Situated in a wonderful panoramic position, the town is surrounded by imposing walls fortified with towers. From 1200 to 1500 it belonged to the lords of Rimini although, as it was on the border between the Foglia and Conca rivers, it was often contended with the dukes of Urbino. **Saludecio**, which retains its original mediaeval layout, is surrounded by magnificent and imposing

panoramic view of
the Conca valley with
Montefiore Fortress



Renaissance walls with the only semi-octagonal bastion in the entire province. Just outside the town are two treasures worth seeing - **Meleto** and **Cerreto** both with ancient mediaeval fortifications. In **Mondaino** history is re-enacted in the *Palio del Daino* and the town has fascinating walls that embrace the village, of which almost all the perimeter and some of the thirteen towers remain, and a *palatium*, similar to the keep in Castel Sismondo in Rimini and commissioned by the same lord. It is quadrangular and has scarp walls, swallow-tailed embattlements and mediaeval underground tunnels. The town is entered via 15th-century Marina Gate, which faces the sea, and a surprise is guaranteed thanks to its elegant and unusual circular "square". **Coriano** is another castle with complete defensive walls. Inside are the remains of the Malatesta palace built in 1356 when *Villa Corliani* was incorporated in the territories of the Malatesta, following extension of the earlier fortress. Also owned by the Malatesta was the fortified farm of **Castelleale** in the municipality of San Clemente, an unusual example of mediaeval architecture. The Conca, Ventena and Marano valleys are dotted here and there with ruins of castles and fortified villages that are no less important, but now often forgotten by the main itineraries. This is a particularly charming area thanks also to its gently-rolling, lush green hills.

FAITH AND PLACES OF THE SOUL

SPIRITUALITY FROM PREHISTORY TO THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

prehistory

Fortresses carved out by prehistorical hands for ancestral rites bear witness to an ancient spirituality. Suffice to visit Torricella in the Marecchia valley near Novafeltria or Sant'Agata Feltria to see stones that narrate links with this land and its mysterious forces. This area was evangelized by Saints Leo and Marino, who stopped on Mount Feltro and Mount Titano respectively. Both Dalmatian stonecutters had an extremely strong spirituality and they founded the Christian communities of San Leo and San Marino. From as early as the first centuries after Christ, on the territory that is now part of the province, there were two diocesan buildings under **Rimini** and **San Leo**.

parish churches

The spread of Christianity led to the building of numerous parish churches. Called *pieve*, from *plebs*, in other words for the community, they were built along the main roads. Although many are mentioned in mediaeval documents, few remain. The oldest is the parish church of **Santarcangelo di Romagna**, dedicated to the *Archangel Michael*. A kilometre from the town,





above
**inside the parish
church of San Leo**
on the left
**the Chapel of Our
Lady of the Water,
Malatesta Temple
in Rimini**

it has all the characteristics of 6th-century Ravenna-Byzantine art. **Villa Verucchio** is home to the Romanesque-Gothic parish church of *San Martino* and in **San Leo** the 11th-century parish church dedicated to the *Our Lady of the Assumption* was built on a structure that was at least two centuries old, as indicated in the ciborium of *Duke Orso*, who commissioned it, where it is cited along with the construction period, between 881 and 882. Also along the Marecchia river is the late 12th-century Romanesque parish church of *San Pietro* in **Ponte Messa di Pennabilli**.

cathedrals

The most famous cathedral is the *Malatesta Temple*, the first example of Renaissance architecture commissioned by Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta in **Rimini** and based on a design by Leon Battista Alberti. It was never finished, due to the former's defeat (1463) and subsequent death (1468). Consecrated in 1173, the cathedral of *San Leo* in **San Leo** is a huge Romanesque-shaped building with a raised presbytery surmounting a large crypt that houses the lid of the sarcophagus of St. Leo. As in all ancient Christian religious buildings its apses face east, so the entrance is at the side. In 1577 a "new cathedral" was built in **Pennabilli**. Renovated several times during the 19th and 20th centuries, it joins the one in San Leo.

monasteries

Dedicated to St. Gregory, the oldest Benedictine monastery in the area was founded by St. Pier Damiani around 1060 in **Morciano**; just a few kilometres from the town centre, only extensive ruins remain. Founded in the 13th century in the heart of **Rimini**, one of the most important Augustinian monasteries has a church dedicated to *St. John the Evangelist*, known as the church of *Sant'Agostino*. It is one of the town's largest churches and its apse and bell tower chapel house some of the best examples of the "Rimini School of Art", one of the

parish church of
**San Pietro, Ponte
Messa di Pennabilli**



most important movements in northern Italy in the 14th century. The church and monastery in **Verucchio** are also Augustinian and today house the Museum of Villanovan Civilization. A masterpiece of the “fourteenth-century Rimini school”, the *Crucifix* came from the ruins of the Augustinian monastery of Poggiolo in **Talamello**; initially attributed to Giotto it is in fact by Giovanni da Rimini and is now in the parish church of *San Lorenzo*. Renovated from 1521 on, the church of *San Cristoforo* in **Pennabilli** (known as *Sant’Agostino*) houses a miraculous 15th-century image of Our Lady. The oldest Augustinian church in the Montefeltro is in **Miratoio**. Dating from 1127 but renovated several times since, it houses the relics of the Blessed Rigo da Miratoio, an Augustinian hermit who died in 1347. Pennabilli is also the birthplace of two other illustrious Church figures. The first is Father Francesco Orazio Olivieri, born in 1680, who embraced the Franciscan order and left in 1712 to become a missionary in Tibet. He arrived 4 years later, after an extremely difficult journey by sea and across the world’s tallest mountains that surround the kingdom of the snow, at the time cut-off from and unknown to the rest of the world. Under the guidance of a lama, he studied the Tibetan language and religion and translated several sacred



works from Tibetan, even writing an Italian-Tibetan/Tibetan-Italian bilingual dictionary with over 3,000 words - the first of its kind in a western language. As a sign of his appreciation, the 7th Dalai Lama first granted him permission to purchase land and build a monastery in Lhasa and then to preach and convert the faithful. The other key figure was Brother Matteo da Bascio, born in the village of Bascio, who became an Observant Franciscan in the monastery in Frontino and was ordained priest in 1525. Keen to return to primitive Franciscan rigour, he left the monastery and Pope Clement VII granted him the personal privilege to wear a long habit made of rough material (like the one St. Francis of Assisi had worn, but with a longer, more pointed hood), strictly observe the rule of absolute poverty, live like a hermit and preach freely. His example soon attracted many followers who wanted to rekindle the original spirit of Franciscanism and this led to the founding of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin (given this name due to their peculiar habit). Thanks to the support of Duchess Caterina Cybo of Camerino, the order was approved by the Pope on 3 July 1528 in his bull *Religionis zelus*. From as early as the 13th century, the Dominicans had a huge monastery in **Rimini** with a derelict church. There are remains of an imposing Dominican



monastery in **Pietracuta di San Leo** where an elegant complex was built in 17th-century thanks to donations from Rimini-born Giovanni Sinibaldi. The imposing façade, part of the cloister and church (1640) can still be admired. This is where the 14th-century *Crucifix*, now in the diocesan museum in Pennabilli, came from. The Congregation of the Hieronymites had monasteries and churches in all the area's main towns; those still standing are in **Saludecio** and **Sant'Agata Feltria**. The Franciscan message recalls the presence of the saint who in May 1213 was given Mount della Verna by Master Orlando de' Cattanei da Chuisi in **San Leo** and a monastery dedicated to *St. Igne* was built in 1244 in the same town, where he had been guided by a sacred fire. It has a fascinating cloister, bell gable and church dedicated to Our Lady. Continuing his journey towards Rimini, the saint stopped at the foot of the hill on which **Verucchio** stood, where there was

above
the **Franciscan church**
of **Villa Verucchio**,
with the ancient
cypress tree

on the left
Tibetan prayer
wheels, **Pennabilli**

a hermitage, and performed some miracles. He made a spring of water with beneficial properties burst forth and planted a dry cypress-wood pilgrim's staff. The hermitage became a monastery and is still a mystical and spiritual place in Villa Verucchio. Now 25 metres tall, after its tip fell off on 6 December 1980, and with a trunk circumference of 7.37 metres, the ancient *cypress* planted by St. Francis is in the cloister. The adjacent church has a 14th-century portal and houses a *Crucifixion* painted the same century by an artist of the "Rimini school". Franciscans are still present in Santarcangelo and Montefiore Conca too. **Rimini** recalls St. Anthony of Padua who, according to legend, performed the Miracle of the Fish and the Miracle of the Mule here to covert Patarini heretics. The *Temple of Sant'Antonio* in Piazza Tre Martiri was built in his memory in the 16th century. The *Malatesta Temple*, the area's most important Franciscan church, is also in Rimini and next to it is a monastery destroyed in the last world war. Monasteries still standing include the 16th-century ones in **Maciano** (Pennabilli) and **Montemaggio** (San Leo). The oldest Marian sanctuary in



marian churches and sanctuaries

the province is also Franciscan; dedicated to *Our Lady of Graces* it is close to Rimini on the hillside of **Covignano**. The most famous in the Conca valley is the *Sanctuary of the Madonna* in **Montefiore** that dates back to the 15th century when the hermit Bonora Ondidei commissioned a fresco of *Our Lady Suckling her Child* for one of the walls of a chapel in the woods. In 1409, the hermit left the chapel to the Franciscans, but all that remains is the wall with the holy image, still referred to as *Our Lady of Bonora*.

As it is crossed by the road leading pilgrims to Loreto, there are many churches dedicated to Our Lady in the Conca valley. In **Montegridolfo**, in the church built next to the pilgrims' hospital, superimposed frescoes have been recovered that give an insight into the cult of the Virgin. In the same area, in the village of **Trebbio**, is the Marian Sanctuary of the *Beata Vergine delle Grazie* whose origins are linked to the apparition of Our Lady to two farmers in 1548. The Marecchia valley also has a wealth of churches dedicated to Mary. In the Sanctuary of *Madonna delle Grazie* in **Pennabilli**, a 15th-century image of the Madonna is venerated in the Augustinian church; it became associated to miraculous events for the first time on the third Friday of March 1489 when it shed tears. In **Maciano** near Pennabilli another apparition of Our Lady was recorded in 1523. As a result, a magnificent Renaissance church dedicated to *Our Lady of the Olive* was built there and entrusted in 1552 to the Observant Franciscans, who built a monastery next to it. The other churches dedicated to Our Lady in the Montefeltro area include the *cemetery cella* in **Talamello** dating from 1437 and with frescoes by Ferrara-born artist Antonio Alberti, and the church of *Santa Maria di Antico*, built in **Maiolo** by Counts Oliva di Piagnano in the mid-15th century. It has an

a detail of the altar
piece by Pompeo
Morganti (1549),
church of the *Beata
Vergine delle Grazie*,
Montegridolfo

original portal and a glazed earthenware *Madonna with Child* in the presbytery by either Andrea della Robbia or his son Luca. There are Marian sanctuaries in Sant'Agata Feltria too; one in the Capuchin monastery and the other dedicated to *Our Lady of Succour*.

Sanctuaries were often built to honour those who had been so pious in life to earn the title of "blessed". This happened in **Saludecio** where Amato Ronconi was born (13th century). He was a Franciscan tertiary and his body is venerated in the right chapel of the parish church of San Biagio, built at the end of the 18th century on a wave of enthusiasm following his official beatification (in 1776). It became a sanctuary in 1930. His cult was confirmed by Pope Pius VI who granted him the title of blessed on 17 April 1776 and his feast day is recorded in the "*Martyrologium Romanum*" as 8 May. The sanctuary dedicated to his memory is part of the *Museum of Saludecio and the Blessed Amato*. From the 13th century onwards there are reports of the miracles he performed for the devout who invoked his help. Built during Napoleonic occupation, the new temple has housed the mortal remains of the monk since September 1804 and has always attracted numerous pilgrims. Since 3 May 1930 his body, still magnificently preserved and clothed anew to mark the event of his solemn "recognition", has been lying in a glass case, a magnificent piece by artists from Faenza. The initial simple and austere iron case is next to it and bears witness to the prayers and miracles performed over the centuries. The rooms next to the chapel are covered in painted tablets and canvases depicting people praying before the figure of Blessed Amato with the words "for grace received". Miraculously, his coffin was unscathed when bombs dropped on Saludecio in 1944 tore the church apart. His most surprising miracles include protecting the town in times of danger. In 1991, the parish of San Biagio in Saludecio and the Pia Unione del Beato Amato (which replaced the confraternity of the same name in 1919) began to promote the process of canonization. Preliminary diocesan investigations recently concluded with the arrival of a *positio* by the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints and proclamation of sainthood is now eagerly awaited.

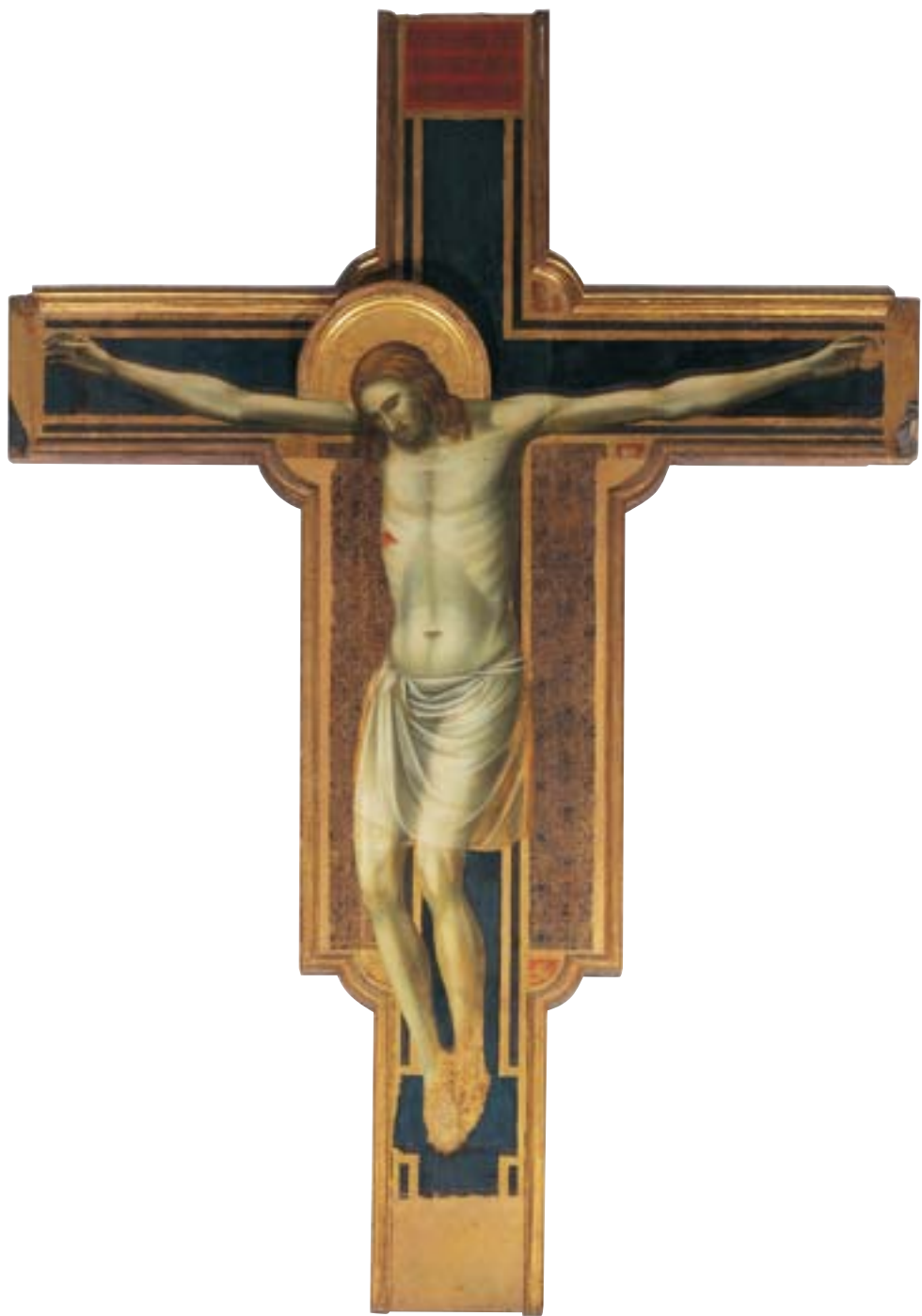
popular devotion

Other figures that have been given the title of blessed include Giovanni Gueruli, Gregorio Celli and Bionda da Verucchio (from **Verucchio**), Alessio Monaldi (from **Riccione**), Simone Balacchi (from **Santarcangelo**), Cipriano Mosconi (from **Saludecio**), Enrico Ungaro (from **Passano di Coriano**), the aforementioned Augustinian Rigo da **Miratoio** and the Franciscan Matteo da **Bascio**, founder of the Capuchin Order. Small and large chapels or sometimes just altars in the parish churches of their native villages house their relics and recall their life. Often their cult is based on popular legends and founded on rural religious devotion. The same happened for old saints from both dioceses in the territory, Arduino and Chiara from Rimini, and ancient patrons like Saints Innocence, Gaudenzo, Julian and Leo. Even in modern times, this part of southern Romagna has given birth to men and women who lived exemplary lives and whose holy actions and deeds are well documented compared to their predecessors: brother Pio Campidelli, sister Elisabetta Renzi, born in Saludecio, sister Bruna Pellesi and engineer Alberto Marvelli, venerable Carla Ronci and the servants of God sisters Angela Molari, Faustina Zavagli and Sandra Sabbatini are awaiting proclamation of sainthood.

GREAT ART

FROM LATIN SPLENDOUR TO THE EARLY RENAISSANCE AND CONTEMPORARY ART

Having attracted many illustrious figures since ancient times - from Dante to St. Francis of Assisi - the Rimini area still has some traces of their presence and what became masterpieces are hereby summarized. This is great art and starting with artefacts of the Etruscan-Villanovan period - wonderful jewels and amber housed in Verucchio Museum - and the Roman period - like the *mosaics* in the Surgeon's House in Rimini - numerous examples have survived the centuries. These include the works of what was called the "fourteenth-century Rimini school", founded after Giotto stayed in the area and painted, around 1303, a lost cycle of frescoes for the church of San Francesco in Rimini and a fine *Crucifix* that still exists. His scholars learnt a lot and used their skills to create wooden crucifixes, polyptychs and tablets now displayed in some of the world's greatest museums. They can also be found in Rimini, in the church of Sant'Agostino, for example, whose frescoes are the most important work left by the school and in various towns in the seignory. The first sacred Renaissance building was the Malatesta Temple that has an extraordinary fresco by Piero della Francesca of *Sigismondo kneeling before Saint Sigismondo*. The 17th century and the age of enlightenment left some invaluable pieces, including a canvas by the great Guido Cagnacci, a student of Carracci, friend





above
**14th-century
fresco of the Last
Judgement (detail)
from the church of
Sant'Agostino in**

**Rimini, now in the
Municipal Museum
on the left
Giotto's Crucifix,
Malatesta Temple,
Rimini**

of Guercino, and imposing Baroque collegiate churches. This grandeur has been confirmed in the modern and contemporary eras too. Morciano di Romagna, where the sculptor Arnaldo Pomodoro was born in 1926, has an emblematic piece dedicated to the futurist Umberto Boccioni whose parents came from the town. Many artists have chosen to live and work in the Marecchia valley including Tonino Guerra who was born in Santarcangelo di Romagna and now lives in Pennabilli. Both towns have itineraries marked by his art; called *The Places of the Soul* they include fountains, parks, gardens and installations that imitate his expressive style and evoke his poetry. Pennabilli is also home to a museum called *The World of Tonino Guerra*. Although he has always lived in Paris, where he has gained international fame and is known as the “master of the splendour of reality”, Ferdinando Gualtieri left an important collection of his work to Talamello where his mother was from; it is housed in the *Gualtieri Museum and Art Gallery*. In Santarcangelo di Romagna the rooms of the Monte di Pietà host exhibitions dedicated to its contemporary artists, in particular the maestro Federico Moroni who began a movement linked to children’s art that earned him a chair at several American universities and international fame. The same town hosts a group of British artists who recycle waste, turning it into works of art. Founded in London in 1986, the Mutoid Waste Company has been in Santarcangelo since 1991. Its name reflects the philosophy of its members; using various types of inorganic waste, like iron, plastic, rubber, fibreglass, aluminium, copper and brass, they create unique and unmistakable sculptures. Mutation is the key word that accompanies not only the design, but also the collection of materials and the techniques used, right through to the finishing touches to the project.

**“The World of
Tonino Guerra”
Museum, Pennabilli**



MAGIC AND MYSTERY

A FASCINATING JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

An air of mystery shrouds every part of the seignory. A sense of fascination exudes from its castles, villages and footpaths. Mystery is right at home here thanks to both natural coincidences and the hand of man, moved by incidental and spiritual needs and influenced by a dialogue with nature and its secrets.

rimini

The Malatesta Temple in Rimini emanates mystery and philosophical thoughts; its sculptures, bas-reliefs and decorations, even the planets and zodiac, can be explained in traditional religious terms, but can also be given a pagan interpretation. This is the interpretation favoured by one of the enemies of Sigismondo, Pius II who said the church was full of pagan gods and profane objects attributing this, to his discredit, to the lord of Rimini. In trying to untangle the muddled plot of any one of its parts, like the zodiac, the nine muses of Apollo or the “ten days of the universe”, the symbol of “money”, the temple seems to be a metaphor of the world and the 22 tarot keys may help to interpret its esoteric symbolism with some precision.





**chapel known as
“Chapel of the
Planets”: detail of a
bas-relief by Agostino
di Duccio, Malatesta
Temple, Rimini**



marecchia valley

In **Santarcangelo di Romagna**, mystery surrounds the origins and purpose of its many tufa caves; some say the God Mithras was worshipped in these underground grottoes, others that they were escape routes for the Malatesta.

An interesting event during St. Martin's Fair, traditionally a time for people to let their hair down, is the "grimace of the cuckolds" that were once publicly derided with serenades outside their houses. Today, bull's horns hanging on Ganganelli Arch give the sign by swaying when a "cuckold" walks underneath.

The fossils found in **Poggio Berni** on the bed of the Marecchia torrent are between 10 million and 10 billion years old; they have given life to the *Quarry Park*, a charming but mysterious itinerary that takes visitors back to a distant past.

In the municipality of **Torriana**, the castle of **Montebello** is home to the legend of Azzurrina. The young albino daughter of Ugolinuccio Malatesta, who fell into a gorge; although her body was never found,



her wails remain imprisoned within the walls.

Verucchio is also charged with mystery thanks to the Villanovan tombs unearthed there during excavations and exhibits in the *Archaeological Museum* that narrate the matriarchal system, trade with the East, amber and funeral rites and burials of these people, thought to be the forefathers of the Etruscans. The Malatesta fortress is linked to Mastin Vecchio, mentioned by Dante in his *Divine Comedy*.

San Leo is shrouded in the magic surrounding Count Cagliostro who, after frequenting the courts of Europe, was imprisoned as a heretic and died of mysterious causes in a cell in the castle where, to this day, inexplicable events take place.

The maturing of cheese in ditches under the mediaeval village of **Talamello** is a process that is only partly known; a mysterious transformation that takes place in the bowels of the earth.

above
**Count Cagliostro's
cell, San Leo Castle**

on the left
**tufa caves,
Santarcangelo
di Romagna**



In **Novafeltria**, dotted with gunpowder mills where smugglers stocked up on supplies, the former sulphur mine of **Perticara** is an endless source of tales and legends, whilst in **Torricella** a prehistoric sacrificial altar recalls the ancestral rites performed there. The legend of the angel's dance and divine wrath that followed is the popular explanation for the destruction of **Maioletto** castle. Events and geological disasters from the Middle Ages to the 18th century are shrouded in mystery, the same mystery that accompanies bread making, which **Maiolo** has decided to revive in its many old ovens. In the *Calculus Museum* in **Pennabilli** the concepts of mathematics are studied with the aim of diffusing awareness and knowledge. In **Torre di Bascio** the memory remains of Fanina Borbone of France, the wife of a Carpegna captain distraught by nostalgia for her beloved Paris. Nicola Gambetti, a man gifted with special healing powers, lived in **Monterotondo** near **Casteldelci**. With great difficulty he even managed to help Queen Margherita of Savoy give birth, after which she appointed him doctor. His brother Peppino is still remembered locally for his supernatural strength. On **Monte della Faggiola**, the mercenary leader, Ugucione Faggiola, hosted Dante in his castle during the latter's exile. Dante saw in him the "greyhound" capable of uniting the fate of Italy. Along the entrance to the remains of the

valconca valley

manor house, the *Fonte della Febbre* or *Fever Spring* sprang from Uguccione's tears of contrition. On Masso del Lupo, Fregoso Fortress is the fairytale castle of **Sant'Agata Feltria**, a town that has always been inhabited by hermits and mystics, as reflected in its numerous monasteries, some of which it is now possible to stay in. On Mount San Silvestro is the "bed" of the same name; in other words, an ablution tub used for pre-Christian rites.

Numerous wandering spirits seek shelter in **Montefiore Conca** Castle. In 1993, during an exhibition held there on the theme of witchcraft, a series of paranormal events occurred. Experts of the occult were called and confirmed the presence of the ghosts of a man and a woman. The former carried his head under his arm and was thus identified as Lorenzo di Berardo Coccolino, decapitated here in 1344 by Malatesta Guastafamiglia. The woman on the other hand appeared to be Costanza Malatesta Ungaro who was involved in a sex scandal. A similar phenomenon occurred in **Mondaino** where something paranormal disturbed local elections in 1987. The ghosts of two murdered lovers appeared before the policemen guarding the polling stations; the many experts of the occult who came to the town persuaded them to leave the castle. In the same municipality is the village of **Cerreto** that has its own ancestral rites, especially during the Carnival period, relived here through the masks and costumes of times gone by. There are also many legends surrounding the inhabitants, famed for their proverbial naivety. **San Giovanni in Marignano** dedicates *Witches' Night* to witches and their rites; held to mark the summer solstice, it is a night of magic and the occult, as well as music and spectacle.

**Maioretto Fortress,
upper Marecchia
valley**

FOOD AND FLAVOURS

MORE FLAVOUR AT THE TABLE

The province of Rimini offers a variety of great flavours that do not betray the characteristics of Italian regional cuisine, based on a wealth of products and foods that make it possible to create dishes to suit all tastes and pockets. The territory influences local flavours, dividing them between the sea and the countryside and further dividing the latter between the plains and the hills. In addition to this territoriality, there is a recognizable sense of cultural and historical belonging that began to take shape as early as the Renaissance period, thanks to the seignories of the Malatesta and the Montefeltro. Thus, if the Malatesta lands now offer traditional dishes prepared using excellent "*Colline di Romagna*" **extra-virgin olive oil PDO** - the Rimini area has the highest concentration of oil mills in Emilia-Romagna - accompanied by renowned, top-quality "*Colli di Rimini*" **DOC wines**, the Montefeltro area offers the natural products of the land including fragrant **truffles and mushrooms** that Sant'Agata Feltria celebrates in a fair held every Sunday in October. Mushroom varieties include the delicious **prugnolo** or St. George's mushroom, to which an important fete is dedicated in Miratoio di Pennabilli in June. Also excellent are the products prepared by skilled hands, yet still closely linked to the land, such as **Fossa cheese**, now famous throughout the world. It is matured for three months in sandstone ditches that give it its





above
Fossa cheese,
christened “Ambra
di Talamello” by the
poet Tonino Guerra
on the left
the delicious olives
of the hills of Rimini

unique flavour. The poet Tonino Guerra calls Fossa cheese “*Ambra di Talamello*” thanks to its colour and the fact that, like amber, it is guarded and protected by the earth. In November, when the ditches are opened and the cheese is ready for sale, its fragrance fills the mediaeval village of Talamello. Some time ago, cheese-maturing ditches also re-opened in Sant’Agata Feltria and Mondaino. Its fame does not overshadow that of other cheeses like **Pecorino** cheese, produced all over the hills of the province and matured in various ways including wrapped in walnut leaves, or soft cheeses like **Squacquerone** and **Raviggiolo**. The latter is made using full-fat cow’s, sheep’s and goat’s milk and is an extremely soft, milky-white cheese with a sweet, delicate flavour produced all over the Montefeltro from October to April. Celebrated in fairs held in October, the main fruits of the local hills are **chestnuts** with two famous varieties - Montefiore Conca and Talamello. The main crop grown here is **potatoes** with a small, but top-quality production to which Montescudo dedicates a popular fair in August. **Honey** is another important product (a fair is held in Montebello in September) and the varieties depend primarily on the cultivation of plants characteristic of the area such as clover, alfalfa and sainfoin, which bees adore, as well as other spontaneous varieties. Typical of the upper Marecchia valley, where there are many chestnut woods, is chestnut honey, a dark honey with a strong, slightly bitter flavour and a natural accompaniment to Fossa cheese. In fact, chestnut trees grow near the rocks the maturing ditches are carved out of. In terms of flavour, according to some experts this is the best accompaniment for Fossa cheese. The hilly area produces excellent **beef** and **pork** with the main breeds being the *Marchigiana* and the *Mora Romagnola* respectively. In Maiolo a fair is held in June dedicated to **bread** when ancient ovens, dotted all over the territory, are put back into use and the skilled hands of local bakers prepare wholesome bakery products, including local **spianata**, also made from bread dough. This should not be confused with **piadina**, which is popular all over the province and always served at mealtimes - it is thicker and softer in the north, for example in Santarcangelo di Romagna, and thinner and sometimes flakier in the south near Misano Adriatico and Cattolica. The tradition of piadina goes hand in hand with that of fresh pasta and homemade first courses that pave the way to succulent meat and fish main courses.

above
**typical local
piadina**

below
**cultivation of vines
on the hills of Rimini**



SPORT AND ACTIVE HOLIDAYS

MOVEMENT TO SUIT EVERYONE

Golf, horse riding, trekking, mountain biking, cycling tourism, climbing and free climbing are just some of the sports opportunities offered by the seignories. Indeed, the places where sport can be practiced are extremely attractive and handy. **Cycling tourism** enthusiasts can count on a consortium of well-equipped bike hotels that attract guests who come to take part in the numerous races open to the public held throughout the year. For **mountain bikers** the cycle paths along the Marecchia, Conca and Marano rivers are the first stops for anyone heading inland from the sea as the entire upper Marecchia valley is a haven for mountain bike enthusiasts thanks to its network of itineraries; varying in difficulty, they are ideal for amateur cyclists and experts alike. The Marecchia and Conca valleys are also ideal for **horse riding**. In the Conca valley, there are stables in Coriano, Mondaino, Montescudo and San Giovanni in Marignano from where a number of paths wind their way into the countryside. There are stables dotted around the Marecchia valley from Santarcangelo to Torriana and Novafeltria and there are fantastic itineraries that link up with “The Great Green Path” that runs along the entire ridge of the Marche Apennines from the Piceno area to Montefeltro. It is possible to cross the entire valley, starting from the highest part in the Sasso Simone and Simoncello





**delightful cycling
tourism and trekking
itineraries can be
found all over the
inland area of Rimini**

Nature Reserve that has a total of seven bridle paths. In addition, there are other circular paths that link accommodation facilities offering stables for horses, as well as food for riders. It is possible to reach the Adriatic coast from here via the cycle path along the valley floor that leads to Rimini. The Marecchia valley is also a great place for **free climbing** and **sport climbing** thanks to its rocky cliffs and ravines. There are so many places in Verucchio, San Leo, San Marino, Maiolo, Perticara, Pennabilli, Balze and Mount Fumaiolo that an itinerary has been set up; called the “vertical Marecchia valley” it also has a climbing school. The Marecchia valley is also fast becoming an important area for **fly fishing** and **catch-and-release** enthusiasts thanks to its clean waters, enchanting landscapes and the guarantee of a great catch. **Angling** is practiced in many lakes in both valleys, including the basins owned by the Italian Angling Federation in Poggio Berni. There is a similar offer in terms of **golf** with two 18-hole golf courses; one in Villa Verucchio and the other in San Giovanni in Marignano, each with a prestigious school, club house and other facilities. Finally, there are exciting opportunities for **trekking** and **walking** enthusiasts of all levels. There are marked paths in the key environmental areas such as near Montefiore Conca, Mondaino, Gemmano and Casteldelci and others in the Oasis of Torriana and Montebello, in the Nature Reserve of Onferno, where visitors will also find the caves of the same name, and in Sasso Simone and Simoncello Nature Reserve too. Yet more can be found in the *Biolta* areas of Maioletto, Mount San Silvestro and Mount Ercole, Mount Perticara and Mount Pincio and in the Marecchia valley between Ponte Messa and Ponte Otto Martiri. Visitors should also try other paths dotted all over the hills, some of which rise steeply to the highest peaks whilst others, near the plains, are much gentler.

**Riviera Golf,
San Giovanni
in Marignano**





RIMINI





ANCIENT RIMINI

Ariminum, as the Romans called it, is now the main city of the province of Rimini. It has a dual identity; a historical city with a wealth of art and treasures and a seaside resort, internationally renowned for its wonderful beaches and beach facilities and for being the birthplace of the great film director, Federico Fellini, who lived here during his youth. He celebrated Rimini in his films making parts of the town, such as the Grand Hotel and the village of San Giuliano, famous worldwide. Seaside tourism began in Rimini in the 19th century with the opening of the first bathing establishment and since then, development of the industry has been unstoppable. A new city grew up along the coast and with it came a strong entrepreneurial spirit. The two world wars caused long periods of stoppage, but Rimini showed its ability to recover. The number of hotels and other venues multiplied, promenades were marked out and furnished, coastal resorts were created and trade fair, conference and cultural facilities were built. Today, it is the undisputed European capital of seaside tourism, although for some time it has also become a popular destination for art tourism, a reward for its ancient and prestigious history. Thanks to the nearby Villanovan communities, Rimini was part of the Etruscan world, then the Umbrian and Celtic worlds too. There are traces of contact with the Aegean world and the occupation of the Senoni Gauls. Around the

3rd century, the city was caught up in the events that saw the Gauls and Samnites join forces against the Romans. In 268 BC, the latter stationed a legion and plebeian settlers from Rome here. The town's geographical position soon made it a bulwark against the advance of the Gauls and an outpost for conquering the area towards the Po valley. It quickly became an important communication route between northern and central Italy. Three of the most important Roman roads left from here; the *Via Flaminia* that linked Rome and Rimini, the *Via Emilia* that linked Rimini and Piacenza and the *Via Popilia-Annia*, a continuation of the Via Flaminia towards the north-east, which linked Rimini and Aquileia, passing through Ravenna. Although the port was very important it was in the city's forum that Julius Caesar pronounced the legendary phrase "the die is cast" to his legions after crossing the Rubicon. The city attracted the attention of several emperors, in particular Augustus and Adrian who built prestigious monuments like *Tiberius' Bridge* and the *Arch of Augustus*. Situated outside the walls, the latter is extremely important as it is the oldest Roman arch still standing and had a precise significance - "*here begins Roman peace and civilization*". Other key buildings include the theatre and 2nd-century elliptic amphitheatre. Once on the coast, it was built for battles between gladiators, but now hosts various events. The structure that best represented the city was probably the port and although nothing remains its position has been traced to near the railway station. In white Istrian stone, also used for the *Arch of Augustus* and *Malatesta Temple*, it was built by stripping monuments in Ravenna and the old port. The Municipal Museum offers an overview of city life as does the *Surgeon's House*, a dwelling dating from the 3rd century that was once near the coast and belonged to a Roman surgeon. A visit offers an interesting insight into the private life of a man, his work and his family. Splendid mosaics and a series of surgical instruments were found there and are now in the museum's archaeological section. Following the crisis of the Roman Empire, an important council was held in 359 by the emerging Christian community. The Greco-Gothic war led the population to abandon the city and only from the mid-6th century AD did it experience a period of tranquillity, under the protection of the Byzantine Empire. The Church then extended its power over the area, but the most important vestiges of the

on the previous page
**the Arch of Augustus,
Rimini**

on the right
**the archaeological
complex of the
Surgeon's House,
Rimini**

Middle Ages date from the municipal period when the *Arengo Palace* (1240) and great mendicant order churches were built. The Franciscan church hosted Giotto, who left a magnificent Crucifix, an example for the “fourteenth-century Rimini school”. During the Renaissance, it became the *Malatesta Temple* and is considered the first example of the period.

sigismondo and the rimini renaissance

The *Malatesta Temple* was designed by Leon Battista Alberti around 1450, commissioned by Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, lord of Rimini, whose family ruled the city with great authority and prestige from as early as the 14th century. The existing church was entirely covered by a splendid new exterior that was never finished. The original plan can be retraced in the bronze medals by Matteo de’ Pasti. The elegant and graceful interior was entrusted to skilled Tuscan craftsmen - the sculptures are by Agostino di Duccio





and the frescoes by Piero della Francesca. Also worth visiting is *Castel Sismondo*; owned by the powerful lord, it was begun in 1437 and completed in 1446. Although the central part can still be admired, the external walls have been destroyed and the moat has been filled in. This does not however detract from its majesty and elegance. Leonardo da Vinci visited Rimini, as engineer and military advisor of Cesare Borgia. He was struck by the joyful sound of the water pipes of the city's main fountain that later became *Pigna Fountain*. These harmonies pushed him to build a hydraulic organ that used water not only as a pump to press the air, but also to make the water play as it entered "earthenware vases". The idea has been reinterpreted with the realization of a piece currently on display in the city's Municipal Museum. In 1619 the first public library in Italy opened here; donated by the rich jurist Alessandro Gambalunga the library still bears his name. It was the century in which artists like Guido Cagnacci and Il Centino worked here, leaving behind great masterpieces. It is also when restoration work was carried out on one of the city's most imposing churches, the 13th-century *Church of Sant'Agostino*, filled with numerous works of art that add to its cultural importance. These include the apse and the belfry chapel, which boast a series of frescoes, dedicated to Our Lady and the life of St. John the Evangelist. Behind the main altar there is a Christ in Majesty and a Madonna of the "fourteenth-century Rimini school". There is little to comment on in terms of architecture as an earthquake destroyed numerous palaces, churches and homes. Between the 18th and 19th century the artistic life of Rimini was dominated by the Bolognese who restored, decorated and reconstructed the main buildings in the city and nearby. The port, lighthouse, fish market and slaughterhouse were rebuilt and the theatre, currently awaiting renovation, was inaugurated in 1856.

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**Pigna Fountain,
Piazza Cavour, Rimini**



THE MARECCHIA VALLEY





FROM THE HILLS OF RIMINI TO THE HISTORICAL MONTEFELTRO

Carved out by the river of the same name, this is a classic valley flanked on both sides by high ridges that overlook it and envelop it in a warm and harmonious embrace. Gurgling, cascading water marks the source of the river that springs from a field on Mount della Zucca, not far from the source of the Tiber river, near the border with Tuscany and descends to the sea with a torrential force that, after decades, is once again strong and determined. It reaches the Montefeltro in Romagna, flowing close to the Republic of San Marino and then into the sea in Rimini, where it has been diverted to ensure the waters of the harbour always remain calm. The gaze is drawn to the gently rolling clay hills where sandstone spurs suddenly come into sight, rising along the riverbanks. These were not always here, but were formed by what is known as the *gravitational flow of the Marecchia* that brought them to this spot, drifting like rafts from the Tyrrhenian Sea. Here they found stability on land once lapped by the sea. Here we find Verucchio, Torriana and Montebello, Mount Titano and its ancient republic and San Leo and the explanation for such varied and fascinating configurations. These sheer rocks were unconquerable and should have protected the fortresses built on their peaks had it not been for the wrath of God that fell upon some of them causing them to disappear as is the case, according to legend, of Maioletto. Although this land is ironically where the families

descend from - in fact, experts now agree both descended from the lords of Carpegna - it too felt the curse of being on the border between the lords of Rimini and those of Urbino. The lords of Urbino lived here as the family came from San Leo, from which they took their name. Before aspiring to Rimini, the Malatesta were the lords of Verucchio and Pennabilli where the founder of the family may have generated his descendants. As it was a borderland for centuries, the area is strewn with fortifications and battlements and incomparable military and defensive architecture can still be admired in **San Leo** as well as many other towns like **Sant'Agata Feltria, Pennabilli, Gattara, Casteldecì, Petrella Guidi, Maciano, Talamello, Maioletto, Pietracuta, Saiano, Torriana, Montebello, Poggio Berni, Verucchio** and **Santarcangelo di Romagna**. The monumental and artistic heritage is so rich it is today considered amongst the finest in Italy. Nature also plays its part; in particular, the river with its expanse of stones and a beach where, in the words of the poet Tonino Guerra, the "childhood of the world" can be found. There are also fields and woods that, as they climb, become impervious but generous with products such as excellent truffles and mushrooms that add fragrance to local cuisine and are celebrated in seasonal fairs and fetes. The upper Marecchia valley is the ancient heart of the Montefeltro and has always been a popular destination for illustrious figures; from Dante to St. Francis, Giotto to Otto I, Count Cagliostro to Felice Orsini, Ugucione della Faggiola to Saints Leo and Marino and Ezra Pound, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta to Federico da Montefeltro and Pope Clement XIV to the poets of the Santarcangelo school, like Raffaello Baldini and Tonino Guerra. Today it is a poet - the valley's own poet, Tonino Guerra, to be precise - who once again draws attention to the Marecchia river (*Maricula* or small sea for the Romans) and its valley filled with cool, echo-filled gorges such as **Canaiolo** in Pennabilli, streams with round stones like in a Zen garden as is the case of **Storena** in Pennabilli, fortresses amid the ravines that form the *Sea of St. Francis* in **Ponte Santa Maria Maddalena** and the delightful sound of water through the paddles of the abandoned mills of **Soanne**. Along with the invitation of the poet to discover what he calls a "diffused museum", is the invitation of nature and its enchanting landscape. The views from the mountains towards the sea or from the

on the previous page
**San Leo Fortress,
heart of the
Montefeltro**

on the right
**a view of Bascio,
Pennabilli**

coast to the Apennines is equally attractive, as is delving into the heart of the area and the heart of **Sasso Simone and Simoncello Nature Reserve** - 4,847 hectares in the provinces of Rimini and Pesaro and Urbino. It has one of the largest turkey oak woods in Italy and two mesas that wouldn't be out of place in Colorado. Few other places are as beautiful and powerful enough to win visitors' hearts forever. Its intense yet delicately-flavoured products - St. George's mushrooms, truffles, Fossa cheese, chestnuts, bread, polenta and cherries - are equally enticing and will delight hungry palates. On a more curious note, the valley is crossed by two railway lines. Although unfortunately only a few stretches were ever used, the first was built in the late 19th century and linked Santarcangelo di Romagna with San Leo, Urbino and Fabriano, whilst the other, dating from 1916, linked Rimini and Novafeltria, then called Mercatino Marecchia, and was open until 1960. It is quite well known as many people used it to travel to Rimini for work, study or for other reasons. One of the illustrious travellers to use this popular narrow-gauge railway was the American poet, Ezra Pound.





Santarcangelo di Romagna



worth knowing

A slow city - an international network of cities where living is easy.

One of the most attractive cities in Romagna, it is famed for its beauty and for being the birthplace of more intellectuals and artists than any other town in the province, including internationally-famous poets and screenwriters past and present. Even a former Pope - Pope Clement XIV Ganganelli - was born here as some monuments dedicated to him recall. Art, culture, history and traditions are right at home; visitors can sense this in its narrow streets and squares and in the numerous events that mark the seasons and have become a great attraction for tourists. Its historical centre is more alive than ever, thanks also to careful reconstruction work that has taken care to maintain the vestiges of the past. Despite having over 20,000 inhabitants, it still retains a village atmosphere that focuses heavily on hospitality and where there is a strong cultural identity. Despite this, it also has an international feel and has succeeded in updating its image to meet the challenges of the future. Proof of this is the famous *International Festival of Street Theatre* that back in 1971 brought the cultural ferment of those years to Santarcangelo. This has always gone hand-in-hand with international social and cultural development. In the same way, the town has managed to update its ancient fairs, renewing traditions and folklore to make them modern events that focus on the town's wealth of natural products and gastronomic specialities. Its wines in particular are famous and unsurprisingly, it is a *Wine City*. The first settlement dates from the Roman period and followed the foundation of *Ariminum*, around 268 BC. Its countryside was subject to centuriation and numerous ovens were built in the area. The consular road Via Emilia, which still cuts through the town, favoured trade and led to its transformation into an important commercial centre, a characteristic it has retained and that still makes it a popular destination for visitors and tourists. In the Middle Ages, the town stood on the hill called *Colle Giove* where the typical layout of a fortified village can still be seen. The elegant and graceful old town is dominated by the Malatesta Fortress as the family ruled here from the 13th century onwards. Although the

fortification already existed, it was extended and embellished by the Malatesta and the current structure is the result of this extensive reconstruction. Although the village grew considerably between the 17th and 19th centuries, it has maintained a good urban harmony. Noble buildings stand alongside more popular buildings to create a balance that makes the town particularly beautiful and attractive, also guaranteeing its inhabitants an excellent quality of life. In 1828 it received the title of city and it became an *art city* in 1984 - a title it is more than worthy of given its increasing dedication to hospitality.

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don't miss

Malatesta Fortress 14th century Visit by appointment only. The residence of the Colonna family, it took on its present aspect in 1447 under Sigismondo Pandolfo who consolidated it to withstand attacks from new weaponry.

Campanone Tower 19th century Although not the original tower that overlooked the oldest entrance to the first fortification (Old Campanone Gate 11th-12th century) it remains one of the town's symbols and an unmistakable part of its skyline.

Piazza delle Monache A delightful mediaeval square surrounded by fine buildings, with a rare mediaeval well and entrance to one of the most beautiful caves.

Cervese Gate 14th century Known as the "Salt Gate" because it leads onto the road that linked Santarcangelo and Cervia, famous for its salt marshes, it is the only remaining entrance to the second circle of city walls. Built by the Malatesta, it originally had a drawbridge, the guidelines for which can still be seen.

Tufa Caves Visit by appointment only. The old town is built on a network

on the previous page
Ganganelli Arch
during the "Balconies
in Bloom" event

on the right
ancient Marchi
workshop, famous
for its traditional
rust prints



of underground caves inside which there are circular rooms, narrow tunnels, wells and communication trenches of exceptional architectural importance. The entire hillside is criss-crossed by over 200 caves, all of which have been recorded. Despite the studies carried out, neither their origins nor their function is yet clear and many theories regarding these aspects remain. Without doubt, they form a fascinating underground city.

Collegiate church 18th century This is the city's main church and houses remarkable works of art including a wooden Crucifix by the "fourteenth-century Rimini school" and a piece dating from 1635 of *St. Joseph, St. Eligius and the Christ Child* by Guido Cagnacci, an artist born here in 1601.

Parish church of San Michele Arcangelo 6th century This fine, poetic building is one of the most important examples of ecclesiastical architecture from the early Middle Ages.

MET Museum of the Uses and Customs of the People of Romagna This is one of the leading museums in Italy dedicated to popular traditions. Its modern layout features exhibits and documents divided into various theme sections dedicated to wheat and wine production cycles, mills, printing on cloth, clothing, crafts and trades, the home, transport, the art of making stringed instruments, puppetry and much more.

MUSAS Historical and Archaeological Museum Housed in 17th-century Palazzo Cenci it has exhibits regarding the history and artistic expressions of the town and its surroundings including a polyptych by Venetian-born *Jacobello da Bonomo* from 1385.

Button Museum Inaugurated thanks to the passion of Giorgio Gallavotti who collected buttons from Italy and all over the world dating from 1700 to the present day, it offers a curious insight into the history of costume and is well worth seeing.

Sferisterio This is an area below the walls where the ancient ball game "*palla al bracciale*" (literally "*bracelet ball*") was traditionally played - it was even sung about by De Amicis. Today, exciting matches of another ball game, *tamburello*, have taken its place.

Ganganelli Arch Built in his native town in 1777, this is a triumphal arch that honours *Pope Clemente XIV* (1705-1774) and celebrates his election to office.

Fountain of the Underground Lawn and installations by Tonino Guerra Designed by the eclectic local poet and artist *Tonino Guerra*, the fountain combines cool water with poetic charm, as does his other work and installations found in various parts of the town. Called "Places of the Soul" they form an itinerary that is too beautiful and unique for visitors to miss.

Ancient Mangle 17th century Entrance fee payable. An extraordinary

17th-century working wheel press for ironing fabrics. The adjacent workshop produces traditional hand-painted fabrics using ancient “rust printing” techniques.

don't forget

A theatre festival that always looks towards the future

There's yet another reason to visit such a beautiful, welcoming and generous town. It is the summer theatre festival or rather, the theatre festival that invades every street, square and hidden corner of the city, its houses, cellars, gyms and caves every July. It has been returning promptly for over 40 years to help visitors relive the exciting and magical world of performance art. The *International Street Theatre Festival* offers Italian and European contemporary theatre companies a great opportunity to meet. Now known as **art theatre** it comprises several genres like avant-garde, experimental and research theatre. In its long history, the festival has never aimed to be merely a series of events, but a place to meet and exchange theatrical experiences that evolve, contaminate each other, interweave and are created. This is the real meaning of the festival and makes it unique; it is here that work is planned, created, organized and performed especially for this event. It has become a unique opportunity for those seeking real emotions, those who want to experiment new creative forms and discover apparently distant worlds that stimulate reflection and analysis and that, moved by cultural intentions, touch on great individual and social universal themes related to the fact we are part of a globalized and globalizing world. It therefore not only attracts experts, enthusiasts and young people, but also an often quite diverse and eclectic public. As shows are held in the evening, visitors can even bask on the beach all day long; unless, of course, they want to attend the many workshops or meetings included in the programme. Visitors merely wanting to take in the warm and lively cultural atmosphere can simply sit in a café or restaurant and watch the world go by. Over the decades great theatrical figures have participated from Nobel prize winner Dario Fo to Giorgio Gaber, from Laurie Anderson to the Living Theatre and from the Odin Teatret to maestros such as Eugenio Barba, Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski and Julian Beck; people who have written the history of contemporary theatre and are its heart and soul. All this seemed impossible in 1971, but the organizers showed great foresight and understood the festival needed to be building site, a workshop of ideas that could anticipate and understand existing and emerging cultural movements. Although times have changed, intentions have not and this is why the event remains popular.



events

Balconies in Bloom

May A weekend dedicated to flowers and gardening that brings the town to life with installations, exhibitions and events, as well as a popular competition.

International Street Theatre Festival

July One of the leading theatre festivals in Europe that is a workshop for the most important international experiences in avant-garde theatre.

Goblets of stars

August, first ten days Guided tasting of local DOC wines over two evenings dedicated to flavours and fragrances and with music and shows to entertain participants.

St. Michael's Fair

Weekend around 29 September Thanks to its origins as an ancient hunting fair, this is known as the *Bird's Fair* although it has now also turned its attention to nature, the environment, ecology and animals. It hosts an unusual singing competition for birds.

St. Martin's Fair

Weekend around 11 November This is one of the oldest and most important fairs in Romagna, documented as early as the 14th century and probably originally a Roman market. Traditionally known as the *Fiera dei Becchi* or *Cuckolds' Fair* as it was linked to rituals practiced here against the victims of adultery, it was also linked to a period of exemption from taxes and other duties. Today it features a large market and funfair and also numerous cultural initiatives. Santarcangelo is famous for its food and wine specialities and typical products play a key role at the fair.

Santarcangelo in Jazz

October A jazz festival with an artistic programme that focuses on a mix of different styles. A comprehensive journey that begins with classical foreign jazz before exploring new forms of jazz, from avant-garde to contaminations.

**the International
Street Theatre
Festival**



Poggio Berni

worth knowing

Its delightful and fertile countryside, as well as its gently rolling hills, which offer spectacular panoramic views, are dotted with important historical buildings. Some of these recall its vocation as a residential area and popular holiday destination, whilst others are structures that once served the community. In fact, there are several palaces and noble villas once owned by rich and powerful families next to other buildings linked to traditional local customs and culture like mills, some still in working order. Combined with the presence of accommodation facilities, their fairly high concentration makes a visit or stay in the area an interesting option. It has a lot to offer in geological terms too, with wonderful fossil deposits along the Marecchia river. A quarry park, *Cava Park*, has been created to testify to the hundreds of artefacts found here - mainly marine vertebrates that populated the sea that covered the area in the Pliocene epoch. In the old town, a fountain recalls one such fossil, an ammonite, an ancient snail that encloses the mystery of the world. The fountain is based on a design by local poet Tonino Guerra who works tirelessly to ensure the memory of these places is not lost. Inhabited since ancient times, this area was once ruled by the Malatesta whose presence is documented as early as 1197 and who succeeded in exploiting its productivity and wealth. Historically known as the "*Tomba di Poggio Berni*", Palazzo Marcosanti is on the road leading to the old town from Santarcangelo. Built when Poggio Berni was the administrative centre of a vast agricultural area, it is one of the best-preserved fortresses in the seignory and has magnificent 14th-century walls.

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don't miss

Palazzo Marcosanti 13th century Now a prestigious hotel and restaurant, it was once known as the “Tomba di Poggio Berni”, a mediaeval name given to fortified country residences. The bastions at the corners of the building are proof of its former role. It is one of the best-preserved Malatesta sites and dominates the Uso and Marecchia valleys. It has two 14th-century Gothic portals; the internal one has a chessboard, the Malatesta coat of arms.

Palazzo Tosi 14th century An interesting noble residence once owned by the Malatesta. Over the centuries it has undergone extensive renovation without losing its defensive nature, evident thanks to its compact and solid walls with characteristic openings

Palazzo Borghesi The noble Marcosanti family turned this into a sumptuous villa. Today it has an 18th-century chapel, a large park and precious 19th-century frescoes.

Palazzo Astolfi 18th century A charming residence built at the end of the 18th century by a high-ranking prelate who left his archbishop's insignia on its walls. Its mediaeval foundations can be seen in the cellar, where there is also an olive press. The rooms are decorated with authentic frescoes and the kitchen has a large oven. Today it is an elegant accommodation facility and holiday farm.

Church of Sant'Andrea Apostole 16th century On the right as the

on the previous page
**courtyard of Palazzo
Marcosanti**

on the right
**milling room at
the Sapignoli Mill
Museum**



road climbs towards the centre, it boasts a 17th-century altarpiece by the Romagna school with Our Lady and Saints and other pieces by contemporary local artists.

Piazza San Rocco In the heart of the old town it is worth visiting if only for the fountain by local poet Tonino Guerra. It is called the “Fountain of Memory” and recalls ammonite fossil deposits, like the one reconstructed at the base of the monument.

Sapignoli Mill Museum Recently renovated it is now a museum celebrating the art of milling and it can even be seen in action. The museum narrates how important the area was for the Malatesta as a reserve for their economic power and in particular, as the breadbasket of the seignory. A splendid building and gateway to the “Marecchia Valley Mill Route” it has several exhibition rooms in the former storerooms and stables, as well as a large millstone room. It also has a beautiful park covering over 5,000 m².

Moroni Mill In an area with a wealth of buildings linked to the art of milling this mill, which is situated along the river, is still in perfect working order.

Cava Park Dedicated to the fossil deposits that came to light in the Marecchia river bed this is a theme and educational park that has also made it possible to recover the quarry. The thousands of artefacts found here include fish fossils dating from 3 million years ago, including some species now only found in the tropical part of the Indian Ocean.

don't forget

The waterway that produced energy

Thanks to its position, with hills descending to the river, Poggio Berni has the peculiarity of boasting some ancient mills that are fortunately still in working order. Once extremely common, many mills have been turned into residential buildings or have been destroyed, but the area still has more than elsewhere. Two are still in working order and one has recently been turned into a museum narrating the history of places that were once so important to the local community. These buildings were powered by water drawn from ditches adjacent to the Marecchia river and used to mill wheat and other grains to obtain various types of flour. As mentioned, they were once fundamental not only from an economic point of view, but also in anthropological and social terms as many farming activities and rites were linked to them. In order to understand just how much of an architectural and technological masterpiece mills are, suffice to visit **Sapignoli Mill**,

which is now home to the *Molinology Museum* and houses a children's library. It is surrounded by a delightful park designed to host visits and parties. Seeing the water push through the gear mechanism, the millstone turn and the flour fall is like taking a journey into the past, whilst the large portico and thick walls remind us that what was produced here gave the community its livelihood and had to be well protected. **Moroni Mill** can also be visited, subject to booking at the municipal offices. It has a fully-functioning mechanism that has been operational since 1955. The water from the river that once powered five mills comes along what is known as Viserba canal. Although, as mentioned, few mills are in working order, the signs of their presence or what remains of them, indicate recurring types throughout the Marecchia valley.

events

Tagliatelle Festival

Sapignoli Mill Museum, June A festival dedicated to Romagna's most typical dish with food stands, an exhibition of agricultural products and a display of wheat milling.

Resounding Landscapes

June/July A music festival and ethnic street market.

Fairytales in August

From mid June to the end of August Animated theatre shows representing popular traditions from Italy, Europe and all over the world. For over twenty years, the event has attracted thousands of families with children, fascinated by the ancient art of puppetry. Accompanied by *Animated Readings* for young visitors.

Poggioincontri

June/July/August Plays in dialect, films under the stars, cabaret, concerts and meetings.

T-bone Steak Festival and Horse Fair

Mid-July Horse riding events, food stands, music and shows.



Torriana

worth knowing

First documented as early as 1141, the town was once known as “*Scorticata*”, a name that describes the geological configuration that has always hosted the castle, just like nearby Montebello. In a fairly distant geological past, these two imposing rocky spurs overlooking the Marecchia valley arrived from the Tyrrhenian Sea ending up here on the banks of the river. Their configuration was exploited during the Middle Ages when the invincible fortresses of Scorticata and Montebello were built. The centuries that followed did the rest, with villages, fortifications and castles constructed that enjoyed both the splendours of the seignory of the Malatesta and repeated battles with the Montefeltro, fought precisely because of the importance of possessing such key strategic points for controlling and defending the territory. The two villages have experienced differing fortunes; Torriana, its new name since 1938, has changed considerably in architectural and institutional terms, becoming a main municipal town, whereas Montebello has largely maintained its original charm, history and mystery. They are surrounded by an interesting and rich natural environment protected thanks to the *Fauna Oasis of Torriana and Montebello* and the *Marecchia Valley Naturalistic Observatory*, an environmental study and research centre. In Torriana, the 15th-century Malatesta fortress, subsequently owned by the Borgia and Medici families, underwent renovation work in the 20th century. According to legend, this is where Gianciotto Malatesta met his death in its dungeons. He is also sadly notorious for having killed the famous lovers, his wife Francesca and his brother Paolo. Montebello (“beautiful mount” in English) lives up to its name thanks to its delightful old town and ancient castle, famous for the legend of Azzurrina. Given its mediaeval layout, there is only one entrance into the village through a fortified gate that leads visitors into its wonderful atmosphere.

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don't miss

Torriana Fortress 15th century Only the exterior can be visited.

Dating from the Malatesta period, the fortress was extensively renovated in the late 20th century. The entrance gateway, two round towers, cistern, part of the walls and the keep are all original. Overlooking the fortress, in the old village of Scorticata, is the small church dedicated to St. Phillip and St. James that, thanks to its position on the highest part of the mountain, affords breathtaking views of the Marecchia valley. Precisely because it was built on this peak it controlled the surrounding area, signalling attacks to other lookout posts and to Verucchio opposite, creating a barricade across the valley.

Torriana Tower 13th century Recently renovated, it overlooks an extremely panoramic area.

The Water Tree This is a terraced fountain in Piazza S. Allende, in the heart of the current village. It was created by the poet Tonino Guerra to pay homage to the Marecchia river.

Montebello Castle 11th century Built in the early 11th century, this extraordinary construction dominates the village. Its elegance and severity bear witness to its initial defensive purpose and subsequent use as a noble residence, after reconstruction work in the mid-15th century. The keep is part of the original building, whilst the internal

on the previous page

**Sanctuary of the
Madonna di Saiano**

on the right

Montebello Castle



rooms and beautiful courtyard date from the 16th century when its current owners, the counts Guidi di Bagno, took over from the Malatesta, enfeoffed by the Pope in 1463. A visit reveals not only the delightful treasures it houses, but also its surprising legend. Rare pieces include fine furniture from various eras (14th - 18th century) and a collection of heavy strongboxes and chests, including one whose lid is an 11th-century Islamic tablet that, it is claimed, was brought back from the Crusades.

Saiano This fascinating solitary rocky spur rises from the water; on its summit stands an architectural complex in the heart of the *Nature Oasis*. The sanctuary stands on a rock and is where a miraculous Our Lady of the Rosary (16th century) is venerated by pregnant women in particular. Known as the Sanctuary of the Madonna di Saiano, it is surrounded by lush greenery and is mirrored in the lakes and water of the Marecchia river. Just a few ruins and a Byzantine-style cylindrical tower remain of the old fortifications. Following the prolonged insistence of the poet Tonino Guerra, a few decades ago the church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin of Carmel underwent restoration work acquiring an artistic bronze door created by the sculptor Arnaldo Pomodoro, known as the “door that collects sunsets”.

Torriana Weaving Museum and Workshop Set up following an artisan weaving course, it is now a museum that aims to study the techniques and various combinations of an ancient and fascinating art practiced since ancient times.

Marecchia Valley Naturalistic Observatory in Montebello Organized in two sections, it covers various aspects of the river and valley. On the first floor, natural environments are represented and in the aquaterrarium there are vegetable and animal species that populate the waters of the river. Meanwhile the top floor is dedicated to geological-geomorphologic aspects, with a large collection of fossils.

don't forget

The mysterious footsteps of Azzurrina

Montebello has one of the most beautiful castles in the Rimini area, but has even greater reason to attract visitors. This is a mysterious presence that does not always stay hidden away; indeed, it has been felt often over the centuries. Many know the story because it has featured in several TV reports and programmes. It is therefore time to reveal the mystery to those who have yet to hear it. For

centuries, little Azzurrina has sheltered in the fortress owned by the Guidi di Bagno; or rather, her ghost has, because she lived in the 14th century, although her existence was short and ended in the worst possible way, leaving her parents and family distraught. So distraught that they murdered the guards assigned to protect her. She is mentioned in an early 17th-century document that recalls her misfortune, logically and perhaps inevitably with some imprecision. Little Guendalina, daughter of the nobleman Ugolinuccio Malatesta, was an albino with fair skin and blue eyes and her hair is thought to have been dyed blue. During the summer solstice of 1375, as a terrible storm raged outside, she fell in the dungeons of the fortress as she was running after a rag ball that had rolled away from her. The underground passages were searched high and low, but her body was never found and indeed never has been. It is said that Azzurrina returns here every 5 years on the day of the summer solstice. What can be heard is very light, almost yearning weeping, whilst the sound of her hurried footsteps running across the floor echo all around. Over the years, several recordings have been made and many mediums have come here from all over Italy to talk to her ghost. Although we know nothing about her answers, what is certain is that to fuel the legend, the mystery must be kept alive and nothing must be revealed.

events

“Scorticata” The Hillside of Pleasure

Torriona, last week of July A celebration of flavours and good food. This tasty and intriguing event manages to mix local and international foods, artisans and professionals. There’s beer and wine tasting and cheeses, cold cuts, cakes, chocolate and oil are sold. As well as street food, there is great “cuisine d’auteur” and the extemporary creations of famous confectioners. An outdoor event with live music and street artists.

Honey festival

Montebello, first weekend in September The ancient village of Montebello opens its doors to the sweetest event of the year; a street market selling apiary products, typical local specialities and crafts. Visitors can even watch the fascinating process of extracting honey. The *Marecchia Valley Naturalistic Observatory* offers educational activities and study walks. Animation and shows accompany the two-day celebration.



Verucchio



worth knowing

The town has been awarded an *Orange Flag by the Italian Touring Club*. Thanks to its spectacular position - on rocky spurs just a short distance from the sea of which there are magnificent views from here - and its wonderful buildings that rise up on them and are clearly visible from the plains, the town attracts numerous visitors, fascinated and enchanted by its beauty. It is one of the capitals of the Malatesta and their prestigious history, based on successful battles and fortunate coalitions, began in its still imposing fortress, built by the family. This is where the Malatesta centenarian, Mastin Vecchio lived; considered one of the family founders he was even mentioned by Dante in his Divine Comedy. Verucchio is traditionally known as the “cradle of the Malatesta”, proof of its close links with the seignory that owned it for over 300 years from the 12th century onwards. These origins were keenly contested by Pennabilli that, as mentioned in the introduction, still claims to be the birthplace of the family. Verucchio probably represented one of the steps taken by this rich and increasingly powerful family in their attempts to conquer Rimini. Even if the family did not originate here, it is certainly where their reign of power began, which made it possible to consolidate the defensive buildings and develop residential ones, expanding the village with the addition of religious and civil buildings. A walk through the old town, which highlights the mediaeval layout, confirms the important role played by the Malatesta in its growth. Even in later centuries it continued to grow and prosper, gradually building a vocation for culture and tourism. Even long before the Malatesta, Verucchio had been an important town for a long period. Between the 9th and 7th centuries BC, it was home to the Villanovan civilization (or rather, the Villanovan-Verucchio), so-called after its inhabitants, the Villanovans, forefathers of the Etruscans. Various archaeological digs, some fairly recent, have unearthed numerous necropolises and settlements, bringing to light extraordinary artefacts that are extremely rare and thus invaluable. These include gold and amber jewellery, furniture, weapons and instruments that can now be found in the Municipal Archaeological Museum, in the ancient monastery of the Augustinian Fathers. It has

become an internationally renowned museum and is well worth a visit. Verucchio also boasts an 18-hole golf course, Rimini Golf Club, with a club house and practice course, that stands in a prestigious and delightful estate formerly owned by Caroline Amalia of Brunswick, consort of George IV, King of England, who lived here for some time and from whom it takes its name.

Tourist information

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don't miss

Malatesta Fortress 11th-16th century Known as “Sasso Fortress” due to its position on a rocky spur (or “sasso”) overlooking the town, valley and plains as far as the Adriatic, it was owned by the Malatesta from as early as the 12th century and its oldest ruins can still be seen in the dungeons. This is where Malatesta da Verucchio, known as the “centenarian”, was born. He was mentioned by Dante in the Inferno of his Divine Comedy as *Mastin Vecchio*, mercenary and conqueror of lands and cities and esteemed governor of Rimini where, from 1295 on the seignory began to develop its power, although the family kept Verucchio as a strategic garrison and bulwark against their enemies the Montefeltro. For this reason too, the fortress was extended in 1449 by the most important Malatesta figure, Sigismondo Pandolfo. Now the venue for conferences, cultural events, shows and exhibitions, the fortress can be visited throughout.

Village of Passerello In the 17th century the Convent of the Poor Clares was built on the ruins of the second Malatesta fortress, Passerello Castle, along with a Baroque church of the same name that can still be visited. Next to it, an ancient gate of the same name, built by Sigismondo in 1449, has been rebuilt using reclaimed material. Through the gate is the Pian del Monte, the site

on the previous page
**Malatesta fortress,
known as the “Rocca
del Sasso”**

on the right
**Wooden “throne”,
Municipal
Archaeological
Museum**



of Villanovan settlements that can be visited by appointment only.

Moat walls The splendid city walls have recently been renovated, restoring the might of the defensive system built by the Malatesta. A visit also affords breathtaking views.

Municipal Archaeological Museum In the mediaeval monastery of the Augustinian Fathers and adjacent 14th-century church of Sant'Agostino, this is an internationally renowned museum due to the rarity, quality and quantity of artefacts on display. These come from local necropolises dating from the early Iron Age. The artefacts found in the tombs date from between the 11th and 7th centuries BC and include elegant cinerary urns, precious gold and amber jewellery and other items and furniture that are unique in terms of style and preservation. These include weapons, helmets, buckles, ceramics and everyday items in wood, vegetable fibre, colourful wool and cotton clothes and food offerings.

Multimedia Archaeological Park This will link the museum and the most important necropolis site in Verucchio, making it possible to walk around the remains of the tombs and discover their layout and content. Using the latest multimedia technology, the project envisages the reconstruction of a Villanovan village with a typical cultivation area, educational vineyard (because grape pips were found in the tombs) and farm.

Collegiate Church 19th century Designed by the architect Antonio Tondini in the 19th century it has magnificent works of art including a wooden Crucifix (early 14th century) by an unknown artist of the "fourteenth-century Rimini school", a wooden crucifix on a shaped tablet painted by Nicolò di Pietro in 1404 and a canvas by Francesco Nagli, called *Il Centino* (circa mid 17th-century) *St. Martin giving his cloak to a beggar*.

Franciscan Monastery 13th century In Villa Verucchio, the church houses a precious fresco (Crucifixion), a masterpiece by the "fourteenth-century Rimini school" whose artists include the so-called "Maestro of Verucchio". Outside is a patriarch tree, the oldest cypress in Europe, which is about 23 metres tall and according to legend, was planted by St. Francis while staying in the area.

Parish church of San Martino 10th century Surrounded by ancient olive trees and at the foot of the rocky spur on which the old town is built, the Romanesque church is reached by descending towards Villa Verucchio. An example of severe Romanesque-Gothic architecture, it stood along the Roman *Iter Tiberinum* road linking Rimini and Arezzo.

don't forget

The forefathers of the Etruscans

Between the 10th and 7th century BC, what is referred to as the Villanovan civilization flourished in Verucchio. Their name came from the town of Villanova (Bologna), where the expert Gozzadini found the first burial site in 1858. The first finds in Verucchio date from 1613 and items have been collected in various digs held over the years and only suspended in 2009. Not only numerous necropolises, varying in terms of topographical aspects and from the point of view of funeral rites and items buried with the dead, but also a sacred area (with a votive well) and settlements with huts and ovens. Given the peculiarity of the exhibits - beautiful, extremely rare and of invaluable historical and archaeological importance - many experts think they are characteristic of the earliest phase of the Etruscan civilization, whilst others, given their uniqueness, refer to a *Verucchio Civilization*. The hundreds of tombs have in fact, unearthed extremely precious exhibits belonging to men and women who without doubt exercised a certain power over the surrounding territory; this is suggested by the splendid burials with sophisticated gold and amber jewellery buried along with the deceased. The latter are particularly precious as amber came from the faraway Baltic areas, was considered to have therapeutic properties and was given as gifts to high-ranking figures. Other finds include rare inlaid wooden thrones, exquisitely woven and dyed wool and cotton robes, arms, shields, helmets, bronze sculptures, wooden furniture like tables and footstools, ceramics, items for harnessing horses and fragments of carts. These exceptional finds are displayed in the Municipal Archaeological Museum, in the former monastery of Sant'Agostino. The quantity and quality of the material is astounding and offers a clear and precise insight into the uses, customs and trades and sophisticated technology available to these people, who had reached an extremely high level of civilization. An archaeological park is being planned to link the museum, the excavation sites and the fortress, with an itinerary that will lead visitors to the most important burial ground where an educational itinerary will be set up using the most modern multimedia technology. Furthermore, in the area near the ancient necropolis, a small Villanovan village will be created with a vineyard (numerous grape-pips were found in the tombs, bearing witness to local wine production even in ancient times) and educational farm.



events

Fira de Bagòin (Pig Fair)

Villa Verucchio, January Saturday evening and all day Sunday dedicated to fun and tradition. Music and food stands accompany the traditional butchering of pigs, called “smettitura”, with the meat used to prepare sausages, cutlets, liver with herbs, pork scratchings and a variety of salamis and cold cuts. These freshly-made products are served with polenta, *zavardone* (homemade pasta), chickpea and bean soup, wild green vegetables and cabbage. Visitors should also try traditional cakes such as *fiochetti* and *cantarelle*.

Verucchio Music Festival

July An interesting international music festival that has been held here for over twenty years; a top-quality and highly-professional event directed by composer and musician Ludovico Einaudi. Two events are held each evening with various unique and critically-acclaimed artists from Italy and the rest of the world. The underlying theme of the artistic choices is the great musical quality spanning all genres.

Malatesta Festivals

August Events and mediaeval dinners at the fortress that comes to life and is filled with melodies and poetry for a journey back in time, with figures in costume and period decorations. Banquet menus recall ancient recipes of the era of the Malatesta seignory.

Fair of St. Cross - Fira di ‘quatorg’

September This is an ancient food produce and livestock fair which now also boasts cultural and gastronomic events and even games, such as the *caratelle* race (small vehicles without motors). It is always held around mid-month and on Sunday it is possible to see cows being milked manually and fodder being prepared for them, horses being shod, honey being extracted and wine being racked off.

**Verucchio Music
Festival, directed by
Ludovico Einaudi**



San Leo



worth knowing

Has been awarded the title of one of “*The Most Beautiful Villages in Italy*” and an *Orange Flag* by the *Italian Touring Club*.

San Leo, a magnificent art capital mentioned by Dante Alighieri in the *Divine Comedy*, is the heart of the historical region of Montefeltro and the town that gave it its name. Famed for various historical and geopolitical events, it has been the location for documentaries and films, is a popular tourist destination and a jewel of the province of Rimini. Its extraordinary geological configuration, on a rocky mass with sheer sides, has determined its dual military and religious importance since prehistorical times, testified by precious architectural and artistic artefacts. The town was once called Monte Feltro, from *Mons Feretrus*, a name linked to the important Roman settlement built around a temple dedicated to *Jupiter Feretrius*. As early as the 3rd century BC, the Romans built a fortification on its highest point. The early Christian period (2nd century AD) was characterized by its evangelization following the arrival of Leo and Marino, two Dalmatian stonecutters who founded the Christian communities of San Leo and San Marino thus favouring the spread of Christianity throughout the area until the foundation of the diocese of Montefeltro. Leo is thought to have been the first bishop of the district and built the original memorial on which the parish church was constructed during the Carolingian period, then renovated in the pre-Romanesque period. In the 7th century a cathedral devoted to the cult of San Leo was built next to it. It was renovated in 1173, adopting a Romanesque-Lombard layout and was joined to the imposing Byzantine bell tower. In the 12th century the *civitas Sanctis Leonis* was an urban area consisting in a Bishop's Palace and clergymen's residence, the nucleus of the holy town, with other buildings commissioned by the Montefeltro who had settled here, arriving from nearby Carpegna in the mid-12th century. They took the name of the ancient city-fortress of Montefeltro-San Leo, a city that for two years from 962 had been the capital of Italy under the reign of Berengario II. To this day, the rigour and beauty of the old town have remained intact and it boasts a number of Romanesque buildings like the parish church, cathedral and tower, along with several

Renaissance buildings like the Medici Palace, which houses the elegant Museum of Sacred Art, the residence of the Severini-Nardini Counts and Palazzo Della Rovere, now the town hall. The heart of San Leo is the square named after Dante who stayed here, as did St. Francis, who was given Mount della Verna as a gift from Count di Chiusi. The fortress designed by Francesco di Giorgio Martini is on the highest peak and is where Giuseppe Balsamo, known as Count Cagliostro, was imprisoned in 1791 until his death 4 years later.

Tourist information

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don't miss

The Fortress of Francesco di Giorgio Martini It is named in honour of the Siena-born architect commissioned by Federico da Montefeltro in 1479 to redesign the layout of the mediaeval keep. Now a museum, it remains an important example of military architecture. During the late 14th century it was conquered by the Malatesta, who succeeded the Montefeltro. In 1502 the fortress was conquered by Cesare Borgia, called the Valentine, but a year later returned to the Montefeltro and in 1527 to the Della Rovere. In 1631, when it passed under the Papal State, it was turned into a jail where numerous Risorgimento patriots were imprisoned, although its most famous prisoner was Count Cagliostro.

Cathedral of San Leo 9th - 12th century Firmly anchored to the rock that supports it, it is on a site consecrated to prehistorical divinities. It is the best example of mediaeval architecture in the Montefeltro and one of the most important examples of Romanesque architecture in central Italy. Built in 1173, it includes the ruins of the early mediaeval cathedral dating from the 7th century when ancient Montefeltro, later San Leo,

on the previous page
**the impressive
fortress of San Leo**

on the right
**cloister of the
Monastery of
Sant'Igne**



raised to the status of *civitas*, became seat of the new diocese. It faces east and the entrance is on one side, topped by the sculpted busts of St. Leo and St. Valentine, from the ancient church. The crypt once housed the sarcophagus containing the remains of St. Leo, although now only the 6th-century lid with inscription remains.

Pre-Romanesque parish church of La Vergine Assunta 11th century This is the oldest religious building in the Montefeltro area and bears witness to its conversion to Christianity. The term parish refers to the community of this massif that St. Leo evangelized between the 3rd and 4th centuries. According to tradition, it was the saint himself who built the first church here. Rising high above the sheer rock, the façade faces east and can be entered via two side portals, both topped by a small blind loggia and with alternating two-coloured ashlars, a precise reference to Byzantine-Ravenna art. The columns and capitals were reclaimed from the Roman or late Antique periods. The candid ciborium with heavily sculpted capitals (881-882) is particularly precious.

Bell tower 12th century A solid and imposing monument, it is also the most isolated due to its impervious location. In fact, over the years it even served as a refuge for the Bishop and clergymen.

Palazzo Della Rovere 17th century Now the town hall, it was built for the Della Rovere family, who succeeded the Montefeltro. Its noble façade is embellished with sandstone motifs and adorned with a solid, rusticated ashlar-work portal and windows topped with gables in Tuscan Mannerist style.

Museum of Sacred Art 16th century In Palazzo Mediceo, the coat of arms with the lily of the city of Florence and that of Pope Julius II della Rovere are clearly visible. It houses 13th - 18th century sacred art exhibits, including a 14th-century *Madonna della Mela* by Catarino di Marco from Venice and a *Madonna and Child* by Frosino (1487-1493).

Palazzo Nardini 14th century Count di Chiusi met St. Francis here on 8 May 1213 and was so struck by the words of the saint that he gifted him with Mount della Verna.

Montemaggio Monastery of the Brothers Minor and church of Sant'Antonio Abate 16th century Next to the splendid Baroque church, it is organized around two cloisters. This mystical place boasts a cistern, octagonal well and delightful "snow-house".

Sant'Igne Franciscan Monastery 13th century Its foundation is attributed to St. Francis, as is the original name, linked to the miraculous apparition of the "sacred fire" that indicated the lost way. Consecrated in 1244, the church still has part of the trunk of the elm under which the saint preached.

Castle of Pietracuta The remains stand on the sharp rock that gave its name to Pietragùdola. It belonged to the Carpegna family, then the

Malatesta and the Montefeltro who had the fortress redesigned by Francesco di Giorgio Martini. It was home to Duke Federico and his consort Battista Sforza in 1462. It even passed under the ownership of San Marino before returning to the jurisdiction of San Leo. Close by is the delightful Renaissance **monastery of San Domenico** and adjacent church, commissioned by Giovanni Sinibaldi.

don't forget

Cagliostro and San Leo, an unbreakable bond

The town is linked to a figure who was somewhere between a healer and a sorcerer, a heretic and a freemason, an alchemist and a swindler who spent many dark years in the capital of the Montefeltro, accused of heresy and jailed by the *Holy Inquisition* despite his reneging and repentance. San Leo became famous thanks to its illustrious guest; fame it also deserved for its grandeur and ancient history, its position and its art. From when he was imprisoned there in 1791 until his death in 1795, the castle in particular was linked to the man known as *Count Cagliostro*, *Giuseppe Balsamo* born in Palermo in 1742. Federico da Montefeltro could never have imagined his magnificent residence, redesigned during the Renaissance by the gifted Siena-born architect Francesco di Giorgio Martini, would be remembered because of this controversial figure. However history is capable of this and more and there's little point trying to tackle the issue of who Cagliostro really was. The phenomenon has taken on astounding proportions in Italy and worldwide. Far better to leave the figure shrouded in the mystery that surrounded him during the age of enlightenment. Suffice to mention authors of the calibre of Dumas, Schiller and Tolstoy who drew inspiration from him for their characters. Goethe wrote that we should "consider Cagliostro a scoundrel and his adventures swindles", whilst the Venetian Casanova called him "a talented layabout who prefers living like a vagabond to an existence of hard work". The fact remains that the life of the Sicilian has always been a mystery; this continued even after death due to the disappearance of his body after burial near the fortress of San Leo. This mystery is fuelled by those who have written about him, who still follow him and who still put a bunch of red roses on the wooden bed in his cell every year on his birthday without ever being seen. His cell is called the "pozzetto" or "little well"; the only entrance was a small hole from which food was dropped and it has only one opening towards the outside. Barred by grating it forced the prisoner to look at either the cathedral or the parish church. He has been credited with many great feats, thanks to the benevolence of aristocrats and even kings and queens, but was also the victim of



swindles that led to his downfall. He brought a totally personal stance to freemasonry, interpreting and adopting a doctrine based on Egyptian rites to the order he had founded and was grand master of. An unusual son of the enlightenment who learnt little from it in terms of scientific and philosophical rigour, making cosmopolitanism his own. He lived without limits and San Leo celebrates his ever present memory.

events

Cherry Festival

Pietracuta, end of May The village has always offered its visitors the chance to take delightful walks along the river under cherry trees and now hosts a festival dedicated to the fruit. With food stands and music.

Minstrels of the World Festival - San Leo meets St. Francis

Last weekend in June An event dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi who stopped in San Leo in 1213 and was gifted with Mount della Verna. Two days of music, poetry and acting with acrobats and street artists, as well as conferences and meetings that bring the mediaeval village to life.

AlchimiaAlchimie

Around 26 August An event dedicated to the discovery of legends, traditions and myths linked to distant times and inspired by Cagliostro, adventurer and alchemist, who was imprisoned and died in San Leo on 26 August 1795.

Pugliano Festival

Every Monday in September An ancient fair that for over a century has been held along the provincial road in the village of Montecopiolo and crosses over into the nearby territory of San Leo. Although it is thought to have much older origins, it began in its current form towards the end of the 19th century and served a specific purpose - the sale and exchange of livestock. Despite the changes it has undergone since then, the latter still feature in the event. Ample space is dedicated to horses and cattle that in the meantime have become important breeds and are awarded prizes in an event of great cultural and zootechnical importance.

**a show during
the Minstrels of
the World Festival**



Maiolo

worth knowing

The curious and fascinating fortress known as *Maioletto* is easy to spot from even the most isolated part of the valley. It stands on a “raft” of rock that separates it from the land below. The current village however is not visible as it is located nearby, in a place called Serra; it replaced and inherited the name of the ancient castle destroyed one night in the 18th century under a terrible landslide. This was preceded by 40 hours of uninterrupted rain; an event that has always intrigued geologists and historians. Until then, Maiolo had been a bustling and flourishing village, overlooked by an imposing fortress that was a strategic site for the entire valley, which was damaged by an explosion in a powder storeroom. The fruit of popular beliefs and vivid imaginations this was said to be divine punishment for the “*angel's dance*” practiced there. Although nothing remains of the castle, there are two polygonal towers from the original fortress that close the curtain wall along which an elegant stone cable runs. The views from here are unprecedented, further confirmation of its former defensive role. The nearest town is San Leo and the capture of Maiolo was indispensable for laying siege to its fortress; indeed, Maiolo was closely linked to the town in the violent battles between the Montefeltro and Malatesta. It was not spared by history even in later years when documents regarding its history were destroyed in a fire at the municipal archives in 1737. Dotted with ravines, there are numerous old farmhouses in the countryside and attempts have been made to save their bread ovens. The area has thus become famous for its bread, produced using local flours and traditional methods and celebrated in a *Bread Festival* in June. Maiolo offers visitors the chance to take a journey through thousands of years of history and nature, seducing thanks to its beauty and extraordinary views, which span from Mount Fumaiolo to the Alpe della Luna, Mount Carpegna, the city of San Leo, the towers that crown Mount Titano and the castles of San Marino, as far as the Adriatic.

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don't miss

Maiolo Fortress Its strategic position means it has lost none of its charm. It bears witness to an intense period in the Middle Ages and Renaissance when it was a defensive bulwark. Yet it met a tragic end, as did the village that stood on the slopes of the mountain. Ruins of two towers with irregular base remain and give an idea of its imposing structure and impervious location. Although it is accessible to everyone, its steep sides make it ideal for climbers. The entire archaeological site and ravines below are extremely interesting and have been recognized by the European Community as a "Bioltaly" protected zone, with over 600 plant types recorded.

Church of Santa Maria di Antico Beyond Ponte Baffoni is the village of Antico and this temple, with essential lines adorned by a delightful portal and elegant rose window. Dedicated to Our Lady of Graces it welcomes the faithful with the loving embrace of a compassionate Madonna - a 15th-century high-relief - on the entrance lunette. Inside is the unexpected delight of a glazed ceramic *Madonna and Child* by Andrea or Luca della Robbia.

Church of Sant'Apollinare In the village of *Poggio*, it was built based on the early 15th-century churches of San Leo. After a landslide in the 18th century, the small temple became part of a larger church dedicated to St. Blaise. Bearing witness to its age are the stone

on the previous page
Maioretto Castle
on the right
**the ovens used to bake
homemade bread**



apse and the fresco contained therein of a *Madonna Enthroned with Child, Angels and Saints*.

Church of San Rocco Situated on the north side of the rocky spur, it hosts scout groups and other visitors. Inside it has a precious 16th-century fresco. A delightful foot path leads from here to the fortress.

The bread ovens These can be found all over by following road signs. They should ideally be visited during the *Bread Festival* at the end of June when they are all open.

Antico Castle and Church of San Giovanni Battista Standing in one of the most panoramic places, these are extraordinary lookout posts over the valley. The church houses various works of art including a 15th-century wooden statue.

don't forget

An unusual Bread Museum

Maiolo has an unusual museum; the *Bread Museum* is also special because it is “diffused”, in other words, it can be found dotted all over the municipal territory that has been recognized as a “Biolotaly” zone by the European Union because deemed extremely important in terms of its geology, environment and flora. It boasts over 50 ovens that were used to cook typical local bread and bakery products. Dotted all over the area, thanks to their key role in creating social cohesion these traditional ovens are considered precious artefacts that narrate about the area’s civilization and cultural heritage. Unfortunately, not all of them are still working, but most of them once again release the intense fragrance of freshly-baked loaves during the *Bread Festival*. They date back to the 19th century and have often belonged to the same families for generations. Once farmers, shepherds or woodcutters, these families have since started new activities alongside those of working the land or have dedicated their lives to other trades, but they have not destroyed their property. Built near the farmhouse or under a portico, traditional ovens consist in a brick baking chamber with an exterior structure in stone, for example marly limestone. One of their main features was that they served several family units and also took their name from the same. Used by families living in the same rural area, they were considered not only an indispensable place to cook, but also somewhere to exchange news and ideas. Few today know the secrets of how to cook or bake in these ovens. This is why the bread prepared is not sold, but only serves the visitors who come to the two-day celebration. Bread baked in these

ovens has great anthropological and social implications. Primarily because making bread was a unique opportunity to come together and entire families took part in the event. Even children adored it, learning from a very early age to knead bread into unusual shapes and symbols linked to ancient traditions. It was also an opportunity to bake *biscuits* that were often used as pocket-money for children who accompanied animals to pasture. Bread marked the daily cycle of work in the fields. Farmers would set off at dawn with a cloth sack containing bread, cheese and a flask of wine, eaten around 7.30 am. At midday, women would leave the home to take lunch to the fields, placing the bread in special baskets, and in summer, the evening meal, again with bread and wine, was often eaten in the fields too.

events

Bread Festival

End of June Two days dedicated to *bread* and its traditions, in particular those linked to home baking and baking in farmhouse ovens. Made using local flours and traditional methods it is the key feature of this interesting annual festival. As well as study events, with exhibitions and historical and artistic reports on the culture of bread, the festival focuses on the tasting of bread prepared by various bakers. The event offers visitors great opportunities to spend evenings in the farmyards of country houses with ovens where meals are prepared using bread, flowers and herbs. The festival is animated with music and shows.



Novafeltria

worth knowing

In the heart of the mid-Marecchia valley, in a largely flat area, this is a fairly new municipality that was established in 1907 and is now one of its main commercial and industrial towns. Its original name was *Mercatino Marecchia*, which referred to the important weekly markets held there. In 1942 this changed to Novafeltria to recall that it was historically part of the ancient region of Montefeltro and to link it to the idea of renewal. Its origins are distant and vague; an early inhabited nucleus dates from 1000 when the parish church of San Pietro in Culto was built during evangelization of the Montefeltro. Elegant Piazza Vittorio Emanuele overlooked by 17th-century Palazzo dei Conti Segni, now home to the town hall, boasts a Romanesque treasure - the Oratory of St. Marina. The entire municipal area is interesting, with a few outlying villages well worth visiting. These include Perticara, which is surrounded by a pine forest on one of the slopes of Mount Aquilone and was an important mining centre. Sulphur was extracted in ancient times, but the main vein was only exploited from 1917 onwards. It employed 1,600 men in what became an underground city with 100km of tunnels on 9 different levels. The activity ceased in 1964 and this had a devastating effect on life in the village and the thriving community of 5,000 residents, which had once boasted a theatre and cinema and had set up a Carnival society, town band and football team that played in the Italian third division. The *Sulphur Museum* keeps alive the memory of these past times. The area around Mount Aquilone is popular with hang-gliders and also offers delightful walks, through pine forests and chestnut woods, a poetic installation by Tonino Guerra called the *Green Zoo* and an adventure park for all the family called *Skypark*. In Perticara, the rocky cliffs are popular with free climbing enthusiasts.

Tourist information

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don't miss

Church of San Pietro in Culto Documented as early as 950, it was reconstructed in 1929, with a building imitating its shape, on the still visible foundations of the parish church.

Oratory of Santa Marina Situated at the top of steep steps, highlighting how it is almost grafted onto the rocky spur, it is a very slender and unusual Romanesque church.

Social Theatre Built in the 20th century it has Liberty accents with a fastigium with pinnacles on the outside and inside, pillars and columns supporting three circles with stucco ceilings.

Palazzo dei Conti Segni An elegant 17th-century building with a portico and three floors, it was the summer residence of the Segni Counts of Bologna. It now houses the town hall as well as Grand' Italia cafe, a unique venue with original Liberty furnishings.

Secchiano Thanks to its position, villas and manor houses flourished here. Proof can be seen in the many palaces now trapped by the development of the village. The parish church of Santa Maria in Vico still has Roman tombstones and inscriptions found at the site of the former Roman town hall. In the hilly part are the ruins of Sasso di Vico and Galasso Castles. Behind a curtain of houses is the tiny Piazza di Ca' Rosello or Ca' Roselli, with a small chapel in the centre.

Ponte Santa Maria Maddalena In this area, where the Marecchia river has rocky stretches and deep pools, visitors will find the ruins of two ancient mills. The bridge takes its name from a 16th-century chapel that once stood here.

Torricella This fortified mediaeval village reveals its past starting with the prehistoric sacrificial altar. A little further away, the village of

on the previous page
**the Oratory of Santa
Marina, in Piazza
Vittorio Emanuele
in Novafeltria**

on the right
**Palazzo dei Conti
Segni, which now
houses the Town Hall**



Libiano is worth visiting.

Perticara Thanks to Mounts Perticara, Pincio and Aquilone this village, inhabited as early as the Iron Age, is ideal for excursions, for climbing, on its gruelling rock faces, for hang-gliding and for Rambo-style fun at *Skypark* adventure park. The area dates from the protohistoric, Etruscan and Roman periods. Now disused, the mine where sulphur was extracted has left an indelible mark on the local community, a fact testified by the nearby village of Miniera and the large mining history museum *Sulphur* where a wealth of exhibits are housed in an unusual setting.

Miniera An interesting residential district for the mining workforce. Built in the late 19th century, the recreational facilities, store and church remain. It is worth visiting thanks to its evocative force.

Sartiano A castle that offers breathtaking views of the valley. The parish church of San Biagio houses wonderful works of art, including large altar pieces.

Uffogliano Although largely destroyed, the ancient castle can still be entered via a mediaeval road cut out of the rock. The church and rectory are fine examples of rural church architecture.

don't forget

Sulphur to remember work in the mine that marked the history of the town

The mine in *Perticara* was one of the most important in Italy, with 100km of tunnels on 9 levels. Active for many years, mining ended in 1964, but the place has not been abandoned. In fact, it lives on thanks to an important museum that narrates its long and complex history. Founded in 1970 by the Pro Loco Association in response to the requests of the miners to preserve the site, the *Sulphur Historical Mining Museum* is without doubt an exciting place and particularly interesting in terms of local social history. It was one of the first examples of industrial archaeology in Italy and aimed to exploit the material culture of the territory and bring to light a history common to the people of Europe that was fast disappearing from collective memory. Recovery began with the restoration of the buildings on the former sulphur site, called Certino and built by the Montecatini company from 1917 onwards, a period that represented the peak of mining production. In 2002 the new museum project became a reality and after research work lasting 30 years the wealth of exhibits acquired finally found a home in an unusual setting, close to Vittoria well, an ancient link with the immense underground city. The rooms are arranged based on an extremely powerful and evocative layout designed

according to various themes - from extraction to the fusion of sulphur - and culminating in the *Mine*; a place of great emotional impact and a faithful reconstruction of an underground tunnel. The *Sulphur Path* and *Workshops* illustrate daily work through the tools and equipment used. The museum houses various documents, drawings, photographs and film clips of the period. There are two sections that offer a greater insight into specific themes - a large collection of rocks and minerals and a collection of ancient scientific tools for topographical and environmental surveys.

events

The Night of a Hundred Bowls

June The heart of Novafeltria celebrates with the witches, in honour of the night of the summer solstice and St. John. With lots of music and shows.

Summer together

June, July, August Various events are held during summer for adults and children, such as:

- "Trame per parole accese": a presentation of books, music and theme tastings.
- Montefeltro Festival: concerts and operas.
- "Giocarlegendo": fairytales and other events for children.
- "Summer in health": events dedicated to healthy eating, Oriental medicine, alternative therapies, beauty, sport, fitness, massages and music.

Perticara in... fiorentina - Festival celebrating Marchigiana breed meat

Perticara, mid-August A delicious event dedicated to those who love the fragrance and flavour of freshly-grilled meat, in particular T-bone steak. There's also a market with typical food products, crafts and stands where visitors can try grilled T-bone steak, canapés and local cold cuts and cheeses. Dancing in the street with live band in the evening.

Festival of polenta and wild mushrooms and berries

Perticara, Sundays in September Polenta served with sausage sauce, wild boar or wild Porcini mushrooms and made using a flour that contains 13 different types of corn, milled and ground in water-powered mills, along with piadina, tripe and other local specialities, all washed down with DOC Sangiovese wine. There's also a street market, traditional games and animation.



Talamello

worth knowing

Clinging to Mount Pincio that protects it, it is flanked towards the river by rocky crags topped by the fortresses of San Leo and Maioretto that control the valley and nearby Novafeltria, the town it gave life to about 100 years ago. This left Talamello orphan of a large part of its territory and population. It once belonged to the della Faggiola family, enfeoffed by the Pope, before returning to the Church and the Malatesta. The site of numerous battles between the Malatesta and Montefeltro, an unusual event took place here in 1296; the Ghibelline Maghinardo Pagani led both the Riminese and Montefeltro together into battle against the Papal army and managed to conquer Talamello. However, this reign did not last long as the Pope soon regained possession. The same happened after excommunication of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, when he enfeoffed the Guidi di Bagno and the Malatesta di Sogliano. Production of gunpowder began in several mills near Talamello in 1490, ending in the 20th century. Some vestiges remains and the two octagonal storehouses in Campiano, dating from the 19th and 20th century, are particularly interesting. The intimate old town offers visitors a series of attractions in close proximity to each other. These include the fountain that adorns the square, the cemetery chapel with genuine 15th-century treasures and the splendid Crucifix by the “fourteenth-century Rimini school”. Also worth seeing is Amintore Galli Theatre, named after the father of the *Inno dei Lavoratori* (Anthem of Italian Workers) born here in 1845 who became a teacher, critic and esteemed composer; the building now houses the Gualtieri Museum and Art Gallery. The town hosts several events promoting typical local produce like the *Marecchia Valley Chestnut Fair* in October and in November, it becomes *Fossa Cheese* capital with a fair dedicated to this delicious product that local poet Tonino Guerra calls “Ambra di Talamello”.

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Talamello Pro Loco Association
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don't miss

Chapel (known as the cemetery chapel) A votive chapel commissioned by Bishop Giovanni Seclani in 1437, it is completely frescoed by one of the most famous artists of the period Antonio Alberti from Ferrara. The back wall shows scenes of the *Annunciation* and the *Madonna Enthroned*. On the cross vaults are the four Evangelists and in the corners the Doctors of the Church. In just a few square metres is most of the history of the Church; an extraordinary visual document and a rare and splendid late-Gothic example.

Church of San Lorenzo Dating from the 17th century and on the main square, it houses a fine 14th-century *Crucifix* for some time thought to be by Giotto, but since attributed to one of his scholars, Giovanni da Rimini. The church also has a 15th-century polychrome wooden *Madonna with Child* and another 16th-century wooden *Crucifix*.

Palazzo Rusticucci One of the most beautiful residences in the centre, its main architectural feature are its battlements, hence its nickname "the castle".

"The Splendour of Reality" Gualtieri Museum and Art Gallery
It is housed in the former Amintore Galli Theatre, named after the composer of the *Inno dei Lavoratori* born in Talamello, formerly the mediaeval church of Sant'Antonio Abate. It houses 40 pieces - a selection of both small and large oil paintings on canvas - donated to the town by internationally-renowned local artist Fernando Gualtieri.

Mount Pincio Covered in age-old pine forests and chestnut woods

on the previous page
a view of the village
of Talamello

on the right
the 17th-century
church of San Lorenzo
with the 14th-century
Crucifix by the Rimini
school



it is popular for excursions and outdoor activities such as hang-gliding and paragliding. Numerous paths climb the mountain offering walkers stunning views that span from the peaks of the Apennines in the Marche and on the Tuscany-Romagna border to the Adriatic Sea.

Ditches for “Ambra di Talamello” Unusual but fascinating holes dug into the sandstone where the alchemic transformation of Fossa cheese takes place during its three-month burial (from August to November).

Rock Garden A park created by recovering a quarry that is considered a leading example thanks to its achievements in terms of both the environment and tourism.

don't forget

The poet and Ambra di Talamello

According to legend, following defeat by the French in 1486, Alphonse of Aragon was given hospitality by Girolamo Riario, lord of Forlì. As the resources of the latter did not make it possible to sustain the troops for long they began to pillage from local farmers who adopted the habit of hiding provisions in ditches to defend them. In November, once the raids had ended and the armies departed, on unearthing the cheese they had hidden they discovered its characteristics had changed. Over the centuries, cheese has been buried in sandstone to preserve it from mould and give it a stronger flavour. Over the past few decades this ancient custom, which had been lost due to the arrival of the cheese-making industry and refrigerators, has been rediscovered. Today, it delights sophisticated palates all over the world, thanks to the unique flavour the earth gives it and its pungent aroma. Placing the cheese in ditches is no longer necessary, but this rite is still followed in order to pay homage to tradition. In August, the cheese is buried in cloth sacks in holes dug into the sandstone, cleaned and lined with reeds and straw, which can be entered from the houses in the old town. It is extracted in November and when the ditches are opened, the entire village is invaded by the aroma that hangs in the air for days as celebrations get under way. The cheese takes on an amber hue, hence the name the poet Tonino Guerra chose for it as, just like amber, it develops thanks to spending time underground. It has an irregular shape, is crumbly and has a slightly strong flavour. This is due to the anaerobic environment created inside the ditches that are hermetically sealed and where, over the three-month maturing period, the temperature is constant at between 17°C and 20°C, whilst humidity is close to 100%. In line

with tradition, in Talamello cheese is only placed in ditches once a year to guarantee quality is maintained. A festival dedicated to this cheese is held the first two Sundays in November, when it is sold and used to prepare traditional dishes; as well as grating it onto pasta or gnocchi, it can be eaten with fig jam or honey and accompanied by a sweet wine, raisin wine or *vin santo*. A consortium has been set up to protect the production chain and maturing processes, guarantee quality and safeguard against imitations that risk undermining its uniqueness.

events

Marecchia Valley Chestnut Festival

2nd Sunday in October A festival dedicated to the Montefeltro chestnut, an excellent variety typical of the area and already on the List of Traditional Italian Food Products. The presence of old chestnut woods covering about 40 hectares and with over 2,000 trees confirms it was cultivated as early as the Middle Ages thanks to the presence of monks. Visitors can try chestnuts “ballotte” (boiled) or “caldarroste” (roasted), as well as cakes and breads, first and main courses prepared using them as the main ingredient.

Fossa Cheese Festival

2nd and 3rd Sunday in November For several decades this has been the key festival in the Marecchia valley and the hills of Rimini. It was created to promote *Ambra di Talamello* as local poet and screenwriter Tonino Guerra calls it. Cheese is left to rest and mature in sandstone ditches dotted around the village. After maturing for three months, a period of time that gives it its unique flavour and aroma, it is sold and can be enjoyed in typical dishes created especially for the occasion. Each year another top-quality Italian food product is twinned with the cheese and also celebrated.



Sant'Agata Feltria

worth knowing

Legends and an idyllic setting - with a castle that looks like it has come straight out of a fairytale - make this town between the valleys of the rivers Savio and Marecchia one of the most characteristic in the Montefeltro area, thanks also to its wonderful cultural, natural, spiritual and gastronomic itineraries. The origins of Sant'Agata Feltria date from the pre-Roman period when farmers, shepherds and hunters settled in its forests; they may have been Solonates of central Italic origin. When in 600 AD a rock came loose from Mount Ercole, one of the most enchanting places in the Marecchia valley, it is said a church was built to St. Agatha around which the urban settlement developed. From the end of the 9th century on, the village belonged to various feudal lords, including the Malatesta, Montefeltro and finally the Fregoso, who gave their name to the 10th-century fortress restored by Francesco di Giorgio Martini in 1474. Under the Fregoso, new buildings were constructed in the old town including the 17th-century Palazzone that houses Angelo Mariani Theatre, one of the oldest in Italy and built entirely in wood. One of the most important Italian composers, Angelo Berardi, was born here and mentions his origins and local maestros in his work. The opinion of music experts is unanimous; his importance in the history of music is linked to the study of counterpoint, to the critical contribution of musical art and to his compositions. He was born around 1630 during the golden era of the town when it was flourishing and boasted an excellent, age-old music tradition that had already forged composers and "chapel masters", thanks also to the sensitivity and patronage of the Fregoso family. His fame has lasted over the centuries thanks to his work that consists in thirteen collections of practical music and six theoretical treatises. Sant'Agata is steeped in spirituality with a concentration of mysterious places like sanctuaries and monasteries. There are several places of great historical importance nearby including **Petrella Guidi**, a fascinating and enchanting fortified village. Don't miss the famous *White Truffle Festival* held here every year on Sundays in October.

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don't miss

Fregoso Fortress Now a museum, the fortress was built around the year 1000 but underwent radical transformation in the 15th century under Federico da Montefeltro, who entrusted the work to Francesco di Giorgjo Martini. His architectural intervention transformed the military bulwark into a noble residence for Federico's daughter, Gentile Feltria, who was given in marriage to the nobleman Agostino Giovanni Fregoso. On their arrival in 1506 the fortress was extended with the addition of new buildings and works of art, such as beautiful coffered ceilings on the first floor, monumental Renaissance fireplaces and a hexagonal chapel with 16th-century frescoes.

Collegiate church Built in the 10th century and extended in 1520 by the Fregoso, it has a 7th-century crypt. The side chapels are adorned with precious 17th and 18th-century inlaid and gilded ancones with many excellent pieces including a 16th-century wooden *Crucifix* of the German school and an altarpiece with *Madonna and Child with St. Anthony of Padua* by Giovan Francesco Nagli, known as Il Centino (1650).

Mariani Theatre It is now a museum dedicated to the director of the band of Sant'Agata, a friend of Giuseppe Verdi. One of the oldest in Italy, it is made entirely of wood with three orders of boxes adorned with decorations and images of illustrious figures. Its narrow cavea and ellipses and the small stage give spectators the intimate feeling

on the previous page
**Fregoso Fortress,
now a museum**

on the right
**Mariani Theatre, one
of the oldest in Italy**



of being in a court theatre. Its simple lines are balanced by arches that crown the entrance and canopy, which is on the front of the façade and acts as a municipal tower.

Monastery and church of San Girolamo The stone used to build it creates a chromatic balance with warm tones and an elegant cloister completes the innermost part. The church, formerly Our Lady of Graces, was dedicated to St. Jerome in the early 17th century when the Fregoso commissioned the magnificent *Altarpiece of the Saint* from the school of Pietro Berrettini da Cortona; it portrays the *Madonna with Child and Saints Jerome, Christina, Francis and Anthony of Padua* (circa 1640). The complex is now the St. Jerome Museum of Rural Arts. It has two sections; **sacred art** with furnishings and ornaments from the church and monastery and **rural art** that has social and educational objectives. As well as a display of old local handicrafts, there is a workshop where it is possible to study old trades.

Convent of the Poor Clares Dating from the 16th century, it houses a collection of parchments dating from the 12th - 14th centuries. It appears to have been created by St. Clare's sister who founded the order immediately after the order of St. Domenic, where Clare had taken up residence. From the same period, the adjacent church has undergone renovation work. It has rooms for overnight stays with the use of a kitchen.

Monastery of the Capuchins and Sanctuary Commissioned by the Fregoso in 1575, the church has a painting of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, whose numerous miracles over the centuries have been studied with the authorization of the Sacred Congregation of Rites in Rome. Her image is venerated to this day by the faithful. The monastery now often hosts groups.

Sanctuary of the Madonna di Soccorso Always supported by the local community, the church has the date 1609 on the entrance portal. Inside it has a beautiful gilded ancon portraying the miracle of Our Lady of Succour snatching a child from the devil. Our Lady of Succour has been venerated since ancient times by locals and several miracles have been attributed to her.

Snail Fountain This fountain, designed by Tonino Guerra and part of his itinerary *The Places of the Soul*, is a poetic ode to slowness and the needs of the soul.

Petrella Guidi Don't miss this enchanting village that has retained its original aspect. The stone houses lining the narrow cobbled streets are overshadowed by the tower, testimony to its indomitable and powerful former role. The castle gate has symbols of power sculpted on it, like the coats of arms of the Malatesta and the Church. Its origins are distant; in fact traces of Roman ruins have been found here. At the

foot of the tower there is a tribute to local poet Tonino Guerra and film director Federico Fellini and his wife, Giulietta Masina.

To See the Stars Again An itinerary to reflect on the story of Jesus, with a reconstruction of some of the most representative Evangelical scenes, designed to highlight their poignant relevance. Pieces by Italian and foreign artists are presented, creating an unusual diffused museum with stops at abandoned or disused sacred sites usually not included in standard itineraries.

don't forget

A jewel of a theatre

Its characteristic feature is that it is completely made of wood - from the cavea to the columns supporting the stage. This tiny and extremely old theatre dates from the early 17th century and its beauty and grace make it well worth visiting. In 1605, Orazio Fregoso, lord of Sant'Agata commissioned the Palazzone; it overlooks the square and an archaeological museum is being set up on its upper floors. The first order of boxes was started in 1723 by the Condomini company and was completed between 1743 and 1753 by Giovanni Vannucci, with the addition of the second and third orders. The entrance was created by eliminating the fourth box of the first order, so access to the stalls is at the side of the stage, a feature that makes it different to most theatres. The circles of the second and third orders are decorated using tempera and depict brocades and lace. On the proscenium there are oil-painted medallions of illustrious artists like Mariani, Monti, Goldoni, Alfieri and Metastasio. At the corners of the ceiling there are four other medallions with local historical figures; Ugucione della Faggiola, Ottaviano Fregoso and Ranieri and Agatone De Maschi. Worth noting is the proscenium curtain; it is a painting of the town by the 19th-century Faenza-born landscape artist Romolo Liverani. The musical and theatrical activity of the Mariani Theatre was of a very high level thanks to the guidance of the *Philharmonic Academy* a music society set up in 1838. In 1841, it engaged 20-year-old maestro Angelo Mariani from Ravenna, who would become one of Italy's most important conductors and after whom the theatre is named. It was during the 1920s that the theatre enjoyed its heyday and even *Rigoletto* by Verdi was performed here by the orchestra of La Scala in Milan. In 1986, the *Condomini company* gave it to the municipality that still runs it. A recording of the *Divine Comedy* was made here in 1993; it was read by Vittorio Gassman who stayed here for some time and encouraged the start of restoration work, which ended in 2002 and returned the Mariani Theatre to its former glory.



events

Mid-Lent Fair and Ancient Feast of Forgiveness

Two Sundays preceding Easter After a long winter, spring seems to be in the air and the village reawakens. This fair marks the return to normal working activities and is also a link to the traditional religious feast of forgiveness, in preparation for Easter.

National White Truffle Fair

Every Sunday in October A national event held every year for the past three decades that attracts numerous connoisseurs of the delicious and fragrant white truffle. Hypnotized by the “truffle”, as well as the famous tuber, stands sell all the autumnal products this generous Apennine area offers including mushrooms, chestnuts, honey, officinal herbs and other agricultural and pastoral products (like Fossa cheese, a tradition that has recently been rediscovered). The careful selection of products and the specialities present at the fair are a guarantee of wholesomeness and freshness and make this event one of the most important in the sector. Specialities made using truffles and mushrooms can be savoured in the restaurants and on the stands. The roads, squares and most characteristic areas of the village, which boasts the title of “*Truffle City*”, are filled with inebriating aromas. Several exhibitions and shows are held lasting the entire duration of the event.

The Christmas Village

Sundays and bank holidays in December before Christmas This is an important event for all those who love Christmas markets. There is an enchanting atmosphere as the streets of the mediaeval village are filled with the traditional sounds of bagpipes and there are handcrafted cribs on display on the oldest street. On the market square, visitors find Father Christmas’ house and his elves organize lots of events for children. Around this magical house there are two reindeer that pull a sleigh driven by a real Laplander. The restaurants serve food from a menu called “Advent Dishes”, prepared following local Christmas traditions and customs. There’s also an opportunity to taste food at the “manger”; a large covered and heated stand. There are more cribs around Fregoso Fortress.

**Monastery and church
of San Girolamo**





Pennabilli

worth knowing

The town has been awarded an *Orange Flag by the Italian Touring Club*. Built on the rocky outcrops of *Rupe* and *Roccione* that stand 629 metres above sea level, it still retains its mediaeval structure. It owes its urban layout to the union of two castles; *Billi* on *Rupe* and *Penna* on *Roccione*. Of ancient origins, it was inhabited by the Umbrians, Etruscans and Romans and developed around 1000, with the addition of fortifications, defences and religious buildings that created a delightful old town. It was a feud of the lords of Carpegna, before passing to the Malatesta of whom it claims to be the “*cradle*” - a fact hotly disputed by Verucchio. After the fall of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, here too Federico da Montefeltro came to power. Around 1300 the two independent municipalities of Penna and Billi united in a single entity, as can be seen in the municipal coat of arms that shows two towers with the eagle of the Montefeltro. In 1572 the seat of the diocese of Montefeltro, now San Marino-Montefeltro, was transferred here from San Leo by Gregory XIII; a presence that still heavily influences the small town from both a social and urban point of view. Proof of this is provided by its magnificent cathedral, the Sanctuary of the Madonna delle Grazie and the Convent of the Augustinian Sisters. The natural environment is characterized by *Sasso Simone and Simoncello Park*, part of which is in this territory. Vestiges of the past and the monumental and artistic heritage of the town and nearby villages create a prestigious cultural itinerary. Further proof of this are the numerous cultural events and shows held year round like the *National Antiques Fair* in July and *International Street Art Festival* in June. It also has several museums like “*A. Bergamaschi*” *Diocesan Museum of the Montefeltro*, *Mateureka Calculus Museum*, the *Museum of Sasso Simone and Simoncello Park*, the *World of Tonino Guerra* and *The Places of the Soul*, dedicated to the poet whose unusual creations can be found in Pennabilli and nearby and create a bizarre yet evocative poetic itinerary.

Tourist information

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don't miss

Cathedral Built in the 16th century to mark the transfer of the Bishop's see from San Leo to Pennabilli, it dominates Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, which is overlooked by Palazzo della Ragione, built by the Medici seignory and with the Peace Fountain at the centre; a fountain built on the spot where the union of the castles of Penna and Billi was signed.

Convent of the Augustinian Sisters Built in the 16th century on the site of the ancient castle of Billi.

Sanctuary of the Madonna delle Grazie 11th - 15th century
Housed in the former Augustinian church of San Cristoforo it has a flamboyant Gothic fresco of the *Madonna Enthroned with Child* that became miraculous when it shed tears for the first time on the third Friday of March 1489, since then known as "Beautiful Friday".

Village of San Rocco It deserves a visit to see the gate of the same name, Palazzo del Bargello, the Oratory and Hospital of Santa Maria della Misericordia, the ruins of the Malatesta castle and the lookout point.

Mateureka Calculus Museum Houses instruments, ideas and concepts of one of the most fascinating adventures of human thought and is one of the most popular Italian museums for school visits.

The Places of the Soul diffused museum Crosses the whole village and continues into the upper valley. It was created based on an idea by the poet and screenwriter Tonino Guerra and is a particularly evocative site.

The World of Tonino Guerra Museum In the marvellous setting of the basement of the Oratory of Santa Maria della Misericordia, it has a collection of work, books and films by the poet Tonino Guerra.

on the previous page
the mediaeval layout
of the old town centre
of Pennabilli

on the right
a view of the "Places
of the Soul" diffused
museum by Tonino
Guerra



Naturalistic Museum This is the museum and visitors' centre of the *Sasso Simone and Simoncello Nature Reserve*, set up to protect the inter-regional territory of extraordinary natural and landscape importance, characterized by hills, fields, pastures and birch, turkey oak and conifer woods.

“A. Bergamaschi” Diocesan Museum of the Montefeltro
A new layout for works of sacred art from all over the diocese opportunely saved from neglect and abandon. These include precious canvases by Il Centino and Cagnacci.

Romanesque church of St. Peter in Messa Built in the village of *Ponte Messa* in the 12th century it has been a sacred place since prehistorical times and a strategic point for the Roman *Iter Tiberinus*.

Miratoio At the entrance to the village, the 12th-century monastic church of Sant'Agostino has a remarkable Gothic portal and ancient frescoes. It houses the relics of the Blessed Rigo da Miratoio, an Augustinian hermit who died in 1347. Its famous ancient caves and grottoes are extremely curious.

Bascio Tower A solitary 12th-century construction with a square base, it stands on the hill overlooking the village. At its base are the carpets that make up one of Tonino Guerra's *Places of the Soul: the Petrified Garden*.

Andreuccio Lake The landscape of Soanne is particularly enchanting, thanks also to this delightful lake. The village has ruins of numerous mills celebrated by the poet Tonino Guerra.

Scavolino Ruins of the splendid 16th-century Palazzo dei Carpegna overlook the village.

Church of Santa Maria dell'Oliva and Franciscan Monastery In *Maciano*, this is a beautiful Renaissance complex. The church dates from 1529 and was entrusted to the Franciscans in 1552 who built the monastery alongside it.

Maciano Tower This 14th-century cylindrical tower is all that remains of the imposing castral defensive bulwark, once the residence of the Bishop and destroyed by Federico da Montefeltro in 1458.

don't forget

Poetic itineraries

Take a walk and breathe in the poetry in the air; this is where the poet and screenwriter Tonino Guerra has chosen to live. From Santarcangelo, where he was born in 1920, he moved to Pennabilli as a young boy with his parents who were traders. He spent several periods of his life staying there to breathe in the good air and try to ward off tuberculosis and it

is also where he retired in the mid-1980s. The migrations of his poetry and his fertile creativity have created places that bear his unmistakable signature, steeped in memories, ideas and imagination. He has grouped these under the name of *Places of the Soul*: a diffused museum that crosses Pennabilli and extends as far as the upper Marecchia valley. Before anyone began to talk about them, he created **The Orchard of Forgotten Fruits** and filled it with lost species of fruit bushes and trees, as well as works of art and other installations. It has a mulberry bush planted by the *Dalai Lama* during his visit to honour the local Capuchin monk Father Orazio Olivieri who evangelized Tibet in the 18th century. In the entrance there are sacred images reproduced by various artists that the poet has called **The Refuge of Abandoned Madonnas** to recall the small chapels that once stood on roadsides. **The Road of Sundials** can be found in the old town, whilst **The Petrified Garden** is in the village of *Torre di Bascio* where seven ceramic “carpets” look like they have been blown by the wind to the foot of the ancient tower. It is an evocative tribute to the men and women who lived in or visited the valley, from Giotto to Ezra Pound. **The Angel with Moustache** is a *Museum with a Single Painting* as well as items, sounds and lights that interpret the poem of the same name in the Chapel of the Fallen. **The Sanctuary of Thoughts** is an Oriental-style garden between the walls of the Malatesta Castle that invites visitors to practice meditation and inner dialogue. In Ca' Romano the poet has addressed his creativity towards reconstruction of a small church in the woods called **Our Lady of the Rectangle of Snow** because, according to legend, the “rectangle” of land was indicated by a divine sign. To find out more about the maestro, it is possible to visit the museum dedicated to him - **The World of Tonino Guerra** - in the basement of the Oratory of Santa Maria della Misericordia near his home, which houses a collection of his films and literary and pictorial work.

events

The Epiphany in Scavolino

6 January A procession in period costume with traditional singing and dancing.

Procession of the Jews

Good Friday An ancient re-enactment of the Passion of Christ.

Green market

May A market selling fruit, flowers and garden tools and furniture.



St. George's Mushroom Festival

Miratoio, last Sunday in May Attention focuses entirely on St. George's mushroom with food stands where visitors can try *tagliatelle* and other typical dishes prepared using it. Food is served until midnight and during the evening there are also games with prizes, exhibitions, shows, music and guided visits to the caves of Miratoio.

Street Artists - International Festival of Street Art

June An appointment you won't want to miss that brings an air of freshness and vivacity thanks to the fun world of street art, with clowns and various other acts. For the past 15 years, for 5 days the small squares and ancient streets have been filled with the best buskers and street artists including clowns, jugglers and mime artists. From the early afternoon to late at night the streets are alive with theatre shows, music, juggling acts, magic shows, contemporary circus acts, dancing and tight-rope walking. Up to 100 shows a day guarantee entertainment and a party atmosphere. The festival also hosts a quaint *street market selling the usual and the unusual*.

Pennabilli National Antiques Fair

July Over 40 editions of this prestigious event have been held, which is unique in the sector in terms of the quality of the goods sold. About 50 exhibitors come from all over Italy and even nearby European countries to sell period furniture, sculptures, paintings, jewellery, ceramics, icons, prints and furniture in the halls of Palazzo Olivieri. They are all carefully-selected and guaranteed one-off pieces covering a period that ranges from the 10th century BC to the early 20th century. Elegant, original and sophisticated are the three words that best describe *Pennabilli Antiques Fair*. Each edition also includes additional events of great cultural importance.

The ancient fruits of Italy meet in Pennabilli

October This event was created by Tonino Guerra to raise awareness of old varieties of plants, vegetables and vines and species of farm animals and attempt to protect and promote them. It includes conventions, conferences, book presentations, exhibitions and a street market selling top-quality agricultural products and crafts.

**the Buskers' Festival
"Street Artists",
held at the beginning
of summer**



Casteldelci

worth knowing

Occupying the last stretch of land to the south-east of the province, it stands out thanks to its natural beauty and is often referred to as the “green sea”. It is overlooked by *Mount Fumaiolo* where the *Tiber* river rises and close by is *Mount della Zucca* where the *Marecchia* river springs from, before other streams run into as it slowly descends the valley. It is an unspoilt area that has much to offer from an environmental point of view. It is the hilliest in the province, rising to 1,355 metres above sea level, making it the ideal destination for those who love nature walks. It has a wealth of paths and mule tracks that can be covered on foot, horseback or mountain bike. This Apennine landscape, with its primordial configurations, is scarcely populated with little more than 500 inhabitants. Although artefacts from the prehistoric and protohistoric period suggest much older origins, the first documents chronicling it date from the 12th century when it was referred to as “*Casale d’Illice*”, from the Latin *Castrum Illicis* or “fortification near the holm-oaks”. Explorations and digs on the territory have unearthed interesting remains of Roman colonization with a number of settlements with farms, artisan buildings and necropolises. Populated uninterruptedly for several epochs, thanks to the presence of perennial springs, it reached its moment of glory in the Middle Ages when its particular geographical position favoured fortified settlements. Worth mentioning are those of the della Faggiola lords, whose name comes from the mountains on which their fortresses stood and which it is said, derived from the birches that still cover them. This is where the famous commander, Uguccione della Faggiola was born in 1250. He would later host Dante Alighieri receiving in exchange, according to Boccaccio, a signed text of the *Inferno* dedicated exclusively to him. Prior to the rule of Uguccione and the other della Faggiola lords who governed until the 15th century, Casteldelci was controlled by the Montefeltro and it subsequently returned to them. By visiting this splendid area today and taking a walk through the old town visitors can savour the atmosphere of its prestigious past.

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don't miss

Ponte Vecchio At the foot of the village, it indicates the only entrance to the old town until the carriage road was constructed. Built in wood at the time of the Romans, it was then only the second bridge in the Marecchia valley, after Tiberius' Bridge in Rimini. Of mediaeval origin and with a single span it blends with the river landscape and the sandstone outcrops. Visitors cross it for a pleasant walk towards the old town.

Bell tower Situated in the village, it dates from the 12th century and had a defensive role. It then became the bell tower of the nearby church of St. Martin.

“S. Colarieti” House and Museum, “Ugucione della Faggiola” Archaeological Museum This is a typical intimate 16th century mountain residence with a fireplace and bread oven. In a renewed museum layout, it displays exhibits from prehistoric and protohistoric times, as well as others from the Roman era and the Middle Ages.

Village of Poggio Calanco A characteristic village of stone houses that can only be reached on foot and that stands in an extraordinarily picturesque position. It has been abandoned, which merely adds to its charm.

Senatello The village is near the spring of the stream of the same name. The façade of the former town hall bears the coat of arms duke Federico unveiled in 1474 to seal his rule.

Gattara In the past this was called Gattaia, from the Celtic “Gat” or

on the previous page
the bell tower, which
has become the tower
of the church of San
Martino

on the right
the small village of
Senatello, built near
the spring of the same
name



wood and its castle built in 1145 was the property of the Counts of Carpegna until 1817, even though it was involved in the battles between the Malatesta and Montefeltro. It has ancient origins; indeed, it was inhabited as early as the second Iron Age and numerous artefacts have been found, alongside Roman ones. The village is intact and behind it visitors are treated to unique panoramic views. It is characterized by a tower, all that remains of the castle defences and now the church tower, named after Our Lady of the Snows. Built in the 16th century on an existing construction, little remains of the original structure.

Campo Not far from Gattara, this is a small village of sandstone houses with a fascinating mediaeval layout.

Fragheto This quiet village has not forgotten its past; a massacre took place here when German soldiers struck with unprecedented violence on 7 April 1944 murdering local women and children and burning their houses. The reason for this retaliation was presumed hospitality given to partisans or failure to report their presence. In memory of the event an association *Il Borgo della Pace (The Village of Peace)* was founded here in 2004 and Casteldelci was awarded an Italian Medal for Civil Merit for this reason.

Ponte Otto Martiri Thus called in reference to the Nazi massacre that took place nearby in 1944. It stands in the Tuscan oasis that is part of the municipality of Badia Tedalda, not far from where the Senatello flows into the Marecchia river.

don't forget

Commander of this land, friend of Dante Alighieri

This lush green territory, now secluded and surrounded by the silence of the mountains, was once of fundamental importance for a powerful lord who would charge into battle from here, ready to mark the history of the Italian Middle Ages. He was Uguccone, born here in 1250 and member of the noble della Faggiola family, then lords of Casteldelci. They lived in castles built in the Middle Ages on the high ground; the most famous of these was Faggiola Nuova where, amid the bushes, the perimeter foundations of the castle residence remain. He was one of the main political figures of the early 14th century given his role as army commander, head of the Italian Ghibellines and astute negotiator between the Pope and the Emperor. Having been podestà and lord of Arezzo from 1308 to 1310, he was deputy of the Emperor Henry VII of Luxembourg in Genoa between 1311 and 1312 and was called to Pisa in 1313. At the head of the Pisan army, alongside Castruccio Castracani he conquered Lucca and in 1315 defeated the Guelph army in Montecatini.

A year later, the Pisans drove him out due to his tyrannical conduct and he was forced to flee. He retired to Vicenza, to the home of a friend Cangrande della Scala, who made him podestà and permitted him to keep this role until his death. The name of Uguccione is closely linked to that of Dante who, during his long exile, found hospitality in his castle in Castel delci. To show his gratitude, he sent him a signed copy of the canticle of the Inferno in 1307. Some experts of Dante believe Uguccione was the “greyhound” Dante describes in the first canto (*Inferno I*, verses 100-111), the allegorical personification of a hero destined to free humanity and in particular Italy from avarice and greed. Now old and tired, the commander often walked alone in the woods surrounding his castle. According to legend, one summer afternoon he dismounted his horse and sat down to rest in the shade of a huge oak. Having removed his heavy armour he leant against the trunk and as he was about to fall asleep St. Alberico - a hermit returning to his hovel - appeared to him. They talked at length and at the words of the saint, the lord repented for his cruelty and burst into tears. His tears fell to the ground from where a spring gushed forth. Since then, the spring water has been considered therapeutic; it is said to alleviate physical as well as spiritual malaise, calming arrogance and egoism in particular. The site, now called the *Fountain of Fever*, is to the east of the old town, not far from the source of the tributary, Senatello. For centuries it has quenched the thirst of its numerous visitors.

events

Farming and Livestock Fair

Village of Giardiniera, 1 May An age-old event for Marchigiana breed cattle farmers and horse riders who come here from all over central Italy. Attractions include horse rides and guided excursions, food stands with typical local products and an exhibition of local handicrafts.

All Saints' Feast

Village of Giardiniera, 1 November A traditional fair that has now become an extremely popular event with food stands, a market and an event for horse riders.

Feast of the Madonna del Piano

Village of Fragheto, last Sunday in June or first in July A celebration that brings people together. Emigrants and those who have moved away from this area return to eat and celebrate together near the church, where traditional religious rites are held.



MOUNT TITANO





THE ANCIENT REPUBLIC OF SAN MARINO

The **Republic of San Marino** is the oldest republic in the world and an excellent example of a representative democracy founded on civic independence and self-government. It is a unique model of democracy in Europe that UNESCO has declared a **World Heritage Site**. Covering just 61km², its territory is divided into 9 administrative districts called “castles”. The capital, San Marino, is on the top of Mount Titano, which stands 750 metres above sea level. It rises at the foot of the Central Apennines, with its three-peaked profile visible from afar. According to legend, a Dalmatian stonecutter called Marino sought refuge on Mount Titano to escape persecutions against the Christians by the Emperor Diocletian. Here, Marino founded a community that he left an ideal inheritance to: *“Relinquo vos liberos ab utroque homine”* (“I leave you free from the one and the other man”; in other words free from the Emperor and the Pope); a commitment the community has always upheld. The area was inhabited in prehistorical times; in fact, artefacts have been found dating from the Villanovan period. However, documents confirming the existence of a coenoby, parish church and castle date from the Middle Ages. As the authority of the Emperor diminished and that of the Pope was not yet deeply rooted, the desire of the citizens to have an independent form of government established

itself here as in other cities. The municipality and later the republic entrusted self-government to an assembly consisting of heads of families (called the Arengo). Today this communal assembly is the electoral body that votes for the Grand and General Council (or Parliament). In 1243, the first two consuls were appointed; these are the Captain Regents that still succeed each other in office every 6 months. The history of San Marino is interwoven with that of bordering Italian municipalities and many important battles were fought with the bishops of Montefeltro. However, the people of San Marino always had the better and managed to gain political and administrative emancipation. They fought alongside the Montefeltro seignory, their long-term allies, and were rewarded with expansion of the territory. In the Middle Ages this extended to close to Mount Titano and it remained that way until 1463 when, having joined the alliance against the excommunicated lord of Rimini, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, Pope Pius II rewarded them by giving them the castles of Fiorentino, Montegiardino and Serravalle. Faetano subsequently joined the territory spontaneously and it has remained unchanged since then. The Republic of San Marino has been occupied twice militarily, but only for a few months: in 1503 by Cesare Borgia and in 1739 by Cardinal Alberoni both of whom it managed to free itself from following their death. Napoleon was won over by this small independent state and offered it an "opening to the sea" that was wisely refused. After Bonaparte acknowledged its sovereignty in 1797, the republic had other important recognitions; in fact, despite modifying Europe, the Congress of Vienna respected the independence of San Marino. A definition dear to the people of San Marino is that given by the American President Abraham Lincoln when he was given honorary citizenship. In a letter dated 7 May 1861 he wrote to the Captain Regents: *"Although your dominion is small, nevertheless your state is one of the most honoured throughout history"*. Favoured by the use of the Euro as its currency and the fact a passport is not needed, a visit here offers extraordinary views both towards the Riviera of Romagna and towards the hills, spanning the Montefeltro, the amazing peaks painted by Piero della Francesca. The republic also has numerous monuments and works of art housed in elegant museums and churches, including

on the previous page
**view of Mount Titano,
with the first of the
three towers, known
as "Rocca"**

the 19th-century neo-classical Basilica of San Marino built on the ancient parish church. San Marino completes its offer with great food, philately and numismatics, shopping, exhibitions and events that include the historical re-enactments of age-old traditions. Each year, in summer, one of the most popular events is *Mediaeval Days* when the tiny districts of the old town undergo a complete metamorphosis becoming a sort of stage where the protagonists take part in parades in period costume, creating an atmosphere of colour, music and emotions. Musicians, actors, jugglers and jesters delight the public with entertaining street shows. For the entire duration of the event, the restaurants in the centre serve menus inspired by period recipes. With suffused lights and a warm atmosphere, the mediaeval market is a splendid backdrop where arts and crafts shops display their wares. Mediaeval traditions also come alive in the *Palio of Large Crossbows*; a competition between crossbowmen that takes place every 3 September during the feast dedicated to the founding saint. Provided for in the country's ancient statutes, the competition had the dual purpose of honouring St. Marino and ensuring the crossbowmen, competing against each other, maintained their skills; unsurprisingly, the crossbowmen of San Marino are still amongst the best in Italy. Etnofestival, a popular world music festival, takes place in July with groups from all over the world taking part. Every 6 months, on 1 April and 1 October, the republic hosts the fascinating and evocative investiture ceremony for the Captain Regents. The entire old town centre, which can also be reached by cable car, is well worth visiting, in particular St. Francis' Gate, the panoramic district, the Basilica, the Palazzo Pubblico, the State Museum, the church of St. Francis and adjacent museum and the three towers. Built between the 11th and 13th century and visible from a distance, the first tower is called *Rocca*, the second *Fratta* or *Cesta* and the third and most isolated, on the last peak of the mountain, is *Torre del Montale*. Just outside the city and only 20 minutes' drive from Rimini is the fantastic adventure park *San Marino Adventures*; a great place for children, adults, beginners and experts with 12 itineraries from 0 - 16 metres high.

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THE MARANO TORRENT



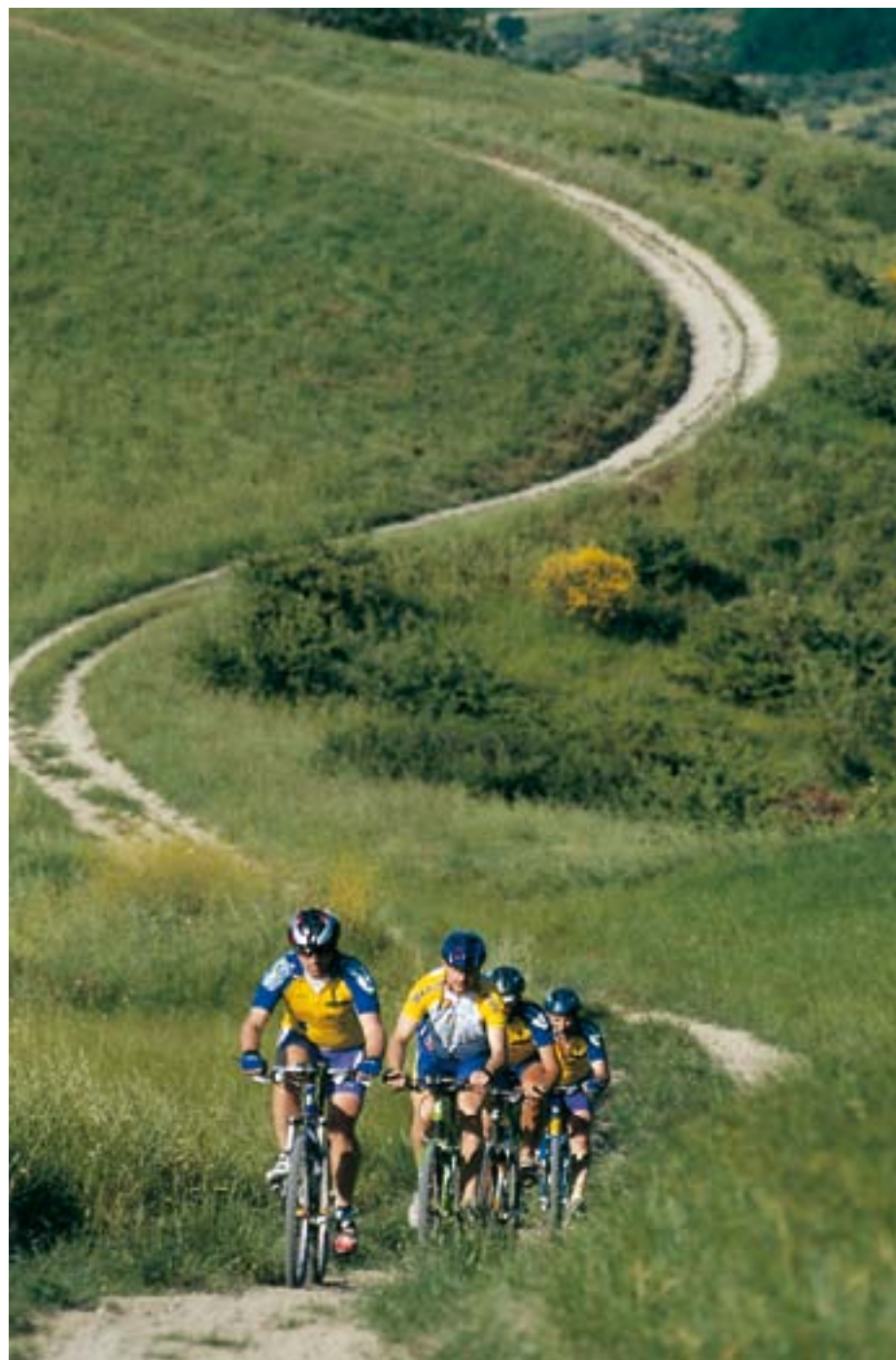


THE GENTLY ROLLING COUNTRYSIDE OF THE MARANO TORRENT

After the *Marecchia* and the *Conca*, the third most important waterway in the province of Rimini is the *Marano*. It forms a small valley that is of particular environmental and cultural relevance, with woody scrublands that are amongst the most important biotypes in the Rimini area, the remains of an ancient single woody curtain that once covered almost the entire area, interrupted only by the rocky outcrops and the bed of the torrent. The Marano rises on Mount Ghelfa (581 m above sea level), on the border with the province of Pesaro (in the municipalities of Montegrimano and Sassofeltrio) and the Republic of San Marino and winds its way to the Adriatic that it runs into after about 30km in Spontricciole, on the border between Rimini and Riccione. In between it passes through the municipalities of **Coriano** and **Montescudo**, crossing gently rolling hills, wide valleys and rounded ridges covered in trees and bushes. The area has a splendid wood with common oaks, white poplars and various species of willow in Fiumicello on the border with San Marino. The area is part of the beautiful *Marano River Park* that the municipality of Coriano has set up to promote the area. Following a meandering course, the river varies in size depending on the time of year. Being a torrent it follows rainfall trends, which means that it almost dries up entirely during the summer. In the valley part of the basin - a

part that ends in a very simple estuary - the waterway begins to follow a very winding course, with numerous wide bends. **Coriano** is the main town in the Marano valley. It is a surprising oasis of lush greenery and offers facilities for a number of outdoor activities. The area covered by the park begins in Ospedaletto and extends to the border with San Marino. It is popular for an infinite number of activities including walking, horse riding and cycling. The area includes a lake, which is popular for angling, and several stables. There is plenty to see in the surrounding area. Along the right side of the valley, Albereto wood in the municipality of **Montescudo** is particularly interesting; covering 25 hectares, it is a unique environment that produces wild blackberries, mushrooms, truffles and wild asparagus. In the same village, the splendid mediaeval castle (*Castrum Albareti*) was one of the settlements of the Malatesta seignory and offers magnificent views of the whole Riviera of Romagna, from Milano Marittima to the promontory of Gabicce. It can be easily reached on foot, bicycle or horseback thanks to paths that link, on the one hand, the Malatesta fortress of Montescudo and the castles of the nearby municipalities following the Conca river as far as Cattolica, and the course of the Marano, on the other, crossing the municipality of Coriano as far as Riccione.

A historical walk around the Marano in the area near Coriano reveals remains of seven mediaeval castles. The most important is the castle in the main town of Coriano, which has been extensively renovated. Other castles include Cerasolo, Passano, Mulazzano, Besanigo, Monte Tauro and Vecciano. Climbing towards the delightful old town of Montescudo, it is still possible to find traditional workshops that produce terracotta. Just a few metres across the San Marino border is Faetano lake where visitors can take part in or watch angling competitions or just spend pleasant days out, surrounded by lush greenery and unspoilt nature.





Coriano

worth knowing

Visitors to this countryside area, which lies just behind Rimini and the sea and is crossed by the Marano torrent, experience a sensation of harmony and lightness. Top-quality agricultural produce, in particular grapes and olives, characterize this rich and fertile land that has been inhabited and cultivated for centuries, as a number of artefacts and monuments testify, the first dating from the Iron Age. The remains of numerous ovens and villas narrate the dominance of the Romans from as early as the 3rd century BC. In 1202 an early fortification belonged to the Church of Ravenna, before quickly passing into the hands of the Malatesta family and in fact, Sigismondo Pandolfo rebuilt the castle in 1440. About a hundred years later, once the Malatesta had fallen from power, the Sassatelli from Imola took over and gave Coriano its coat of arms. This can be seen on the 16th-century entrance to the fortifications, although all that remains are the external walls, polygonal towers and double system of gates. The Sassatelli family were given jurisdiction over the entire Coriano area by Pope Clement VII in 1528. There are seven castles in the municipal territory, including the one in the town centre. Here, in a house within the castle, situated between the two gates, is the *Antiquarium*, a permanent exhibition of artefacts found in the area that also has a large “snow-house” in the courtyard. More recent events have also left their mark here; firstly, the *British War Cemetery* where 1,496 fallen soldiers rest in peace, most of them from the VIII British army. In 1944, nearby fields were the scene of battles between German troops and the allied forces trying to break through the Gothic Line. This is a place steeped in history a fact that will soon be rightly promoted thanks to the “Territorial Network System of the Gothic Line”, which local and regional bodies are in the process of setting up in order to support local cultural and historical heritage, in particular with regards to the Second World War. Giovanni Antonio Battarra was born here in 1714; he was one of the first scientific scholars of agriculture and although he was unaware of the fact, he invented the science we now call ethnography. Just a short distance from San Marino and many seaside resorts, including Riccione, it

offers excellent facilities for many outdoor activities such as walking, horse riding, cycling and mountain biking, especially in Marano Park, and offers visitors the flavours of the products of its land, primarily wine and olive oil, to which two important autumnal fairs are dedicated.

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don't miss

Castle 16th century The town walls with polygonal towers and the inner and outer gateways are part of the original Malatesta complex. Restoration work has highlighted the fortifications Roberto Malatesta, son of Sigismondo, introduced from 1468-82 to transform the castle into a residence.

Malatesta Antiquarium In a building situated between the two castle gateways, it has exhibits found during archaeological excavations in the area. They include ceramics dating from the 14th - 17th centuries, 15th-century glassware, metal arms and coins.

Parish Church of Santa Maria Assunta 20th century This imposing building with a large cupola and soaring bell tower was built following bombardments that destroyed the village. It houses a beautiful 14th-century wooden Crucifix. Following a diocesan bull it was declared the Sanctuary of the Holy Cross, with a celebration held every three years in September.

Church of the Madonna Addolorata 19th century Houses the

on the previous page
**the 16th-century
gateway to the
Malatesta complex**

on the right
**"Squisito!", the event
held at San Patrignano
dedicated to food
culture**



mortal remains of Blessed Elisabetta Renzi (1756-1859) and an *Our Lady of Graces* by an unknown artist.

Elizabethan Museum Adjacent to the church, the museum is dedicated to Blessed Renzi, founder of the religious order of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows that focuses on the education of young girls. It houses documents, objects and numerous pieces of lace and embroidery made in the convent-institute the museum is part of.

Municipal Theatre 19th century One of the few buildings to have survived the war and recently reopened under the name "*CORTE Coriano Teatro*", it was designed by a student of Luigi Poletti, who designed the now derelict Galli Theatre in Rimini. It has meeting and exhibition rooms and a catering area that promotes local wines and typical products.

Cerasolo, Parish church of San Giovanni Battista Has a magnificent stone *baptismal font* dating from 1572 and a 16th-century Madonna and Child, as well as paintings attributable to the "Romagna school" and beautiful frontals that used to be under the altars.

Mulazzano, Church of Santa Maria Assunta Rebuilt immediately after it was destroyed during the Second World War it retains a 17th-century wooden Crucifix and an 18th-century painting depicting *Our Lady of the Sun*, the object of particular popular devotion.

Sant'Andrea in Besanigo A village famous for the production of wine and its many typical restaurants. Entirely rebuilt after the war, the parish church has an original 18th-century painting of Our Lady of the Rosary.

Marano valley and Rio Melo valley Enchanting and beautiful areas that are ideal for nature walks. Boasting numerous facilities for various initiatives, Marano Park hosts an Ecology Fair in June.

Ospedaletto, San Patrignano This is where the *Drug Rehabilitation Centre of San Patrignano* is situated. Famous for its social commitment, the centre practices natural agricultural production, makes top-quality craft products and breeds race horses.

British Military Cemetery This is the final resting place for 1,496 Commonwealth soldiers that fell near here during WWII.

don't forget

A rehabilitation centre based on hard work

Coriano is home to *San Patrignano*, the largest drug rehabilitation centre in Europe; a centre whose mission is the rehabilitation of marginalized young people and drug addicts and their vocational training, linked in particular to specialization in the agro-alimentary sector but not only. Unsurprisingly, a passion for handicrafts has developed with the centre

and it is thanks to a firm belief in the importance of ancient crafts that the centre now produces furniture, textiles, gifts and fancy goods, wrought iron and food products, including excellent wines and delicious cheeses. *Vite* restaurant serves dishes created using ingredients that come almost exclusively from *San Patrignano Farm*: from cheeses to meats and cold cuts, from vegetables to fruit and from olive oil to great wines. But *Vite* is also a place where people can learn a profession; in the kitchen a top chef guides the youngsters in their training. Once a year, around the end of April and early May, the centre hosts *Squisito! Chefs, products, recipes, wines. An Italian itinerary*. The event began several years ago and has since become extremely popular; it is dedicated to Italian and international cuisine and food and wine in general and top chefs, food and wine experts, top-quality producers, critics and sommeliers are invited. The centre also breeds dogs and horses and the stables host outdoor and indoor events that attract some of the world's highest-ranking riders.

events

Squisito! Chefs, products, recipes, wines. An Italian itinerary

San Patrignano, end of April, beginning of May Conferences on the culture and economics of food, from nutrition to drinking well. Great chefs are on hand to reveal all their secrets. There's also the best of Italian food and wine, experiences and the most innovative and unusual flavours. With over 120 stands where visitors can try and purchase food and wine.

International Show-Jumping. Vincenzo Muccioli Challenge

San Patrignano, end of July, beginning of August A show-jumping competition that each year attracts some of the world's highest-ranking riders. It is one of the most prestigious and popular events on the international equestrian scene.

Sangiovese Fair

3rd Sunday in September An opportunity to taste new local wine and see local crafts, with food stands and other attractions. Wine production here is excellent and Coriano is part of the Italian "Wine City" circuit.

Olive and Autumnal Products Fair

3rd and 4th Sunday in November In these parts the production of extra-virgin olive oil is very important and the area has numerous olive groves and mills. The festival is an opportunity to taste and purchase produce and find out more about it.



Montescudo

worth knowing

A magnificent terrace on the foothills of the Conca valley that reach as far as the ancient Republic of San Marino and the border with the Montefeltro. Given its strategic position, ideal for controlling the territory, the Malatesta made it an important outpost. Its position was so favourable it not only attracted visitors, but also new inhabitants. The Conca and Marano rivers run through this fertile land and it is thanks to them that the Etruscans, Celts and Romans chose to settle here - it was even a stopping place during the Augustean age. Although *Montescutulum* is referred to in the diploma of Otto I to the Carpegna (962), it became fundamental to the Malatesta. It was strategic for their defensive system, given that the Montefeltro were close by, occupying nearby castles including Sassofeltrio. As the outpost had been contended at length by the two families, in 1460 Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta built a strong *fortress* there to shield the town of Rimini, as the tablet on the southern bastion confirms. Also imposing were the town's stone scarp walls, the site of an extraordinary find; an amphora containing 22 medals with an image of the Malatesta Temple in Rimini as it should have been built and another of Sigismondo. Also dating from the 15th century are the frescoes by the "Ghirlandaio School" in the Romanesque church in Valliano, a few kilometres from the centre. As well as belonging to Rimini, over the centuries it has belonged to the Republic of Venice, the Papal State and the Napoleonic Empire, as a plaque in the entrance of the municipal theatre and the colours of the French flag in the town's coat of arms recall. The heart of the old town is Piazza del Comune that has a well in the centre, but the town also boasts a garden on the bastion that affords views of the entire coast, a cylindrical ice-house and the top of the lookout tower that was linked to the fortress by underground tunnels. A jewel surrounded by lush greenery is Albereto, a rural fortified village of Roman origin that was also the scene of repeated battles between the Malatesta and Montefeltro. It too was reconstructed by Sigismondo, lord of Rimini.

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don't miss

Municipal tower 13th century A fine tower that, despite subsequent renovation work, has largely maintained its 14th-century structure.

Ice-house A rare example of an ice-house dating from the Malatesta period situated on the edge of the main square. The building technique used to construct it is very interesting.

Underground tunnels They once linked the fortress and the watch-tower.

Town walls The remains of the stout walls commissioned by Sigismondo and now fully renovated. Their height and slope were designed to make the castle invincible.

Castle of Albereto A small rural village surrounded by lush greenery with exemplary fortifications. Recent and precise restoration work has made it one of the architectural jewels of the seignory. Mentioned as early as 1233, the castle that is of Roman origin, was consolidated by Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta around the mid-15th century. With a rectangular layout, marked by steep scarp town walls and circular towers, it is crossed by a single road that leads to a panoramic terrace overlooked by the bell tower.

Albereto Wood About 25 hectares of beautiful woodland where visitors can rediscover this unspoilt environment.

Trarivi, Church of San Pietro now the “Church of Peace” and

on the previous page
the 14th-century
Municipal Tower

on the right
Church of San Pietro,
now the “Church of
Peace”, which houses
the Museum of the
Eastern Gothic Line



the Museum of the Eastern Gothic Line Once an ancient Romanesque-style parish church, it is now dedicated to brotherhood between the people who fought bitterly in these parts during the Second World War. One of the key events in the history of Italy and Europe took place along what is called the Gothic Line, which the Germans had built to defend the Po valley. Although it is currently being reorganized, the museum occupies two floors of the parish church and has a collection of photographic documents and exhibits linked to local battles. Once complete, it will also become part of the “Territorial Network System of the Gothic Line” circuit that local bodies are setting up in order to promote local historical and cultural heritage, with particular reference to the Second World War. Its fine 18th-century portico has some panels that document the history of the Church.

Valliano, Sanctuary of Santa Maria Succurrente 15th century and Ethnography Museum of Valliano Located in a village a few kilometres from the centre, the church has some important 15th-century frescoes amongst the finest and best-preserved of the Malatesta period, attributed to the “Ghirlandaio School”. The rectory houses a small but well-kept museum dedicated to farming culture from the start of the 20th century onwards. A clear layout helps visitors understand the artefacts and exhibits in relation to their purpose and place in popular local traditions. It is organized in various sections, including textiles and rust-printing, wine production, children’s games and the production of terracotta.

Santa Maria del Piano This village is at the heart of local terracotta production and several workshops produce traditional and more modern pieces.

don't forget

A museum to remember our origins

The countryside around Montescudo is still densely inhabited and agricultural activity has left its mark on the territory. The organization of the land, the small roads between farm holdings lined with bushes and the numerous farmhouses still dotted around the fields are the clearest signs of a farming past that has heavily influenced the economy and traditional culture. With the aim of documenting this past and thanks to important research carried out by some village school teachers years ago, Montescudo has collected lots of other “signs” including household items, work tools, games and items linked to farming life in general. Today, these have found an ideal home where they are promoted under every aspect. In the rectory

next to the Church of Valliano, which is surrounded by lush greenery and houses frescoes by the prestigious Ghirlandaio school, a small but extremely important ethnographic museum has been set up. The museum layout focuses attention on a peculiar aspect of the socio-economic organization of the territory; *the rural home as the centre of farming life*. With a mainly educational vocation, it offers visitors the opportunity to discover more about crafts, local uses and customs and the organization of rural life, which was based on rearing animals, primarily pigs, cultivating the products of the soil, beekeeping and wine production. The numerous sections focus on textiles and rust-printing on cloth, wine production (with barrels, earthenware jars and other utensils used in wine production), toys and games for infants and the local production of terracotta. In fact, the Montescudo area was and still is an important production zone for traditional terracotta containers such as jars, soup tureens, flasks, saucepans and various pieces of crockery. A visit to the museum is a way to discover more about this production, which the village of Santa Maria del Piano still wishes to keep alive.

events

Garagolo Fair

Santa Maria del Piano, Easter Monday A traditional event, with food stands and music, that celebrates this delicious seafood, called “garagolo” locally (pelican’s foot in English).

Potato Fair, Gnocchi Fair and Agricultural and Artisan Produce Fair

2nd weekend in August A fair held in the old town that is entirely dedicated to this popular tuber that, thanks to the nature of the soil here, has very special characteristics. Visitors can try the famous gnocchi, salt cod with potatoes and piadina, as well as unusual dishes like cakes and ice-cream made using potatoes. This is thanks to the numerous stands that also offer other local products like wine, honey and cheeses, all promoted by the special “Flavours of Montescudo” circuit that groups together numerous producers, restaurant owners and shopkeepers. With live music and a firework display.

Ferragosto Festival

Valliano, August bank holiday A traditional event with food stands, music and a firework display.





THE CONCA VALLEY



FROM THE HILLS OF THE MALATESTA TO THE LANDS OF THE MONTEFELTRO

Unlike the valleys of classical iconography, this wide valley is not closed in by ridges along its sides. The Conca river is sometimes hidden from sight as chains of lush green hills, dotted with towers and fortresses, come into view. These are the foothills of the Apennines that look out towards the sea that once lapped them millions of years ago. Wheat and forage grow abundantly in the fields and the vineyards, cultivated in perfect rectangles, are renowned for their quality, as are the extensive olive groves that produce genuine, wholesome oil. Europe's most popular beaches - from the family resort of Bellaria, to Fellini's Rimini, fashionable Riccione, sporty Misano and aristocratic Cattolica - are just a few kilometres away and can be admired from the town walls or tower-topped peaks, in an atmosphere of peace and contemplation. The history of these rich and fertile lands has not always been so idyllic. The lords that governed these parts also continually disputed them, with power games played out constantly behind each other's backs. At times deceit and betrayal rather than battles captured what would otherwise have been unconquerable and in the end, unexpected events or decisions taken in the seats of power often had the better. This is what happened to the Malatesta castles. Although their defensive structures had been extended and consolidated

over the centuries, after excommunication of the last lord of Rimini Sigismondo his bitterest enemies, the Montefeltro, came to power. From Urbino, they dominated one valley after another finally reaching this one, considered a key strategic position as it bordered rival Rimini and lay just behind the coast. It was precisely thanks to this position that, centuries later, in more recent times, the Gothic Line crossed this area. In an attempt to hold back the allied forces ready to free north Italy from Nazi Fascism, the Germans occupied the ridge and held on until they were worn down and the outcome of the Second World War was clear. The price paid in blood was extremely high and the municipalities of the Conca valley paid the highest price of all; indeed in some cases, such as **Gemmano**, they were wiped out completely. Places that have now become symbols of peace, documentation centres or prayer sites bear witness to these events. These include some military cemeteries, the Church of Peace in Trarivi and adjacent Museum of the Eastern Gothic Line and the Museum of the Gothic Line in Montegridolfo. Today this delightful area is an ideal destination for visitors wishing to discover its charm. The view on the horizon of the sentinel that was once the summer residence of the lords of Rimini is particularly impressive. This is **Montefiore Conca** and its fortress stands vigilant and alone, surrounded by the green countryside. Then there's the delicate profile of **Saludecio** with its walls and turreted gateways surrounded by hills. For history lovers there are many delightful villages such as **Mondaino** and **Montegridolfo** which were designed in the Middle Ages and are filled with works of art from prolific centuries. Those who love to discover wild places can head into the chestnut woods of Montefiore, the woods of Gemmano, the countryside near **Montecolombo** or **Montescudo**, the latter really more in the Marano valley, the Arboretum in Mondaino or **San Clemente**. Then there's Rio Ventena, a small waterway that runs almost parallel in the municipalities of Montefiore Conca and Gemmano. It rises on Mount San Giovanni and flows into the Conca just before reaching Morciano di Romagna. The small Rio Ventena valley begins in the Pesaro area and is scarcely populated, with small villages such as Valle Fuini di Ripamassana almost uninhabited. These were once the outlying villages of the former municipality

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**the green hills of
the Conca Valley
that overlook the sea**

of Castelnuovo, which no longer exists; its old town is uninhabited and its houses and churches are in ruins. The second stretch of the Ventena valley is in the province of Rimini and is lined with cultivated fields and woodland. The torrent flows through a wide corridor of spontaneous vegetation, with alders and various species of orchids, surrounded by hills and fascinating gorges. Footpaths invite visitors to go walking, horse riding or mountain biking and their reward is a multitude of flavours and aromas to delight even the most sophisticated palates, with top-quality products such as wine and olive oil accompanying cheeses, honey and piadina. Those who love contemporary art should visit 19th-century **Morciano di Romagna**, at the head of the valley, to enjoy a fine sculpture by Arnaldo Pomodoro, born here in 1926. It is dedicated to another great 20th-century artist, the futurist Umberto Boccioni whose parents were from Morciano. The town dedicates a 3-day celebration to him and his movement in July; called *Fu. Mo.*, meaning *Futurism in Morciano*, it includes cultural and art events, shows and food. Nearby **San Giovanni in Marignano** is also famous for its art, although this time it is for the art of fashion. This is where renowned companies like Gilmar, Ferretti and Iceberg have their head offices and produce their world-famous brands, making the town a leading economic production centre not only of the province of Rimini. By heading back up the valley to the source of the Conca, in the high mountains of the **Carpegna** - the highest peaks of the Apennines here - visitors cross a number of fortified villages that have lost none of their charm over the centuries; centuries during which they have often belonged to different rulers. Like Sasso Simone that in the hands of the Medici, lords of Florence, became the *City of the Sun*; its highest fortification was never built, all that remains today are traces on the access road, although there are drawings that give an idea of what it should have been like. Although the valley is now cut in two by the border with the Marche Region, this does nothing to detract from its beauty and harmony, the real heart and soul of this land.



Gradara



worth knowing

Province of Pesaro and Urbino, in the Marche region.

The village is one of “*The Most Beautiful Villages in Italy*” and has been awarded an *Orange Flag* by the *Italian Touring Club*.

Splendid and fascinating, the small town of Gradara is bewitching even from afar when, approaching along the motorway, it appears in all its elegance in the lush countryside dotted with olive groves and vineyards. The walls and castle have largely been preserved from the elements and the fortress and its fortified village are one of the best-preserved mediaeval complexes in Italy. The two circles of walls that guard it, the outer one extending for almost 800 metres, also make the fortress the most imposing. The castle stands on a hill at 142 metres above sea level; its keep and main tower are 30 metres tall and dominate the entire valley. Its position has always protected it and being close to the sea it was once an ancient crossroads for trade and people. In the Middle Ages it witnessed many battles between the Malatesta and Montefeltro seignories, always eager to conquer new lands and fortresses. It was the Malatesta that gave it its current aspect, constructing the fortress and double walls between the 13th and 14th century, built on a 12th century keep. Their rule ended in 1463 when Federico da Montefeltro conquered the fortress at the head of the Papal armies. Gradara then passed under the Borgia, Della Rovere and Medici families, confirming its role as theatre of war in the tumultuous history of the Papal states. According to legend, this was where the tragic story of *Paolo and Francesca*, made famous by Dante’s moving and impassioned verses, took place during the Malatesta reign. One of the two young lovers violently murdered was Francesca da Polenta, daughter of Guido Minore, lord of Ravenna, who in 1275 had married the son of Malatesta da Verucchio, lord of Gradara, Giovanni known as “The Lame” or Gianciotto; due to one of the laws of the period, as podestà of Pesaro he could not bring his family with him to the city he administered. The other was Paolo, her brother-in-law, who was equally young and beautiful. It was inevitable that love would

blossom between them and as Dante Alighieri wrote, it was a love letter that gave them the pretext to fall in love. As Francesca says in the words of the poet, *"kissed me on the mouth all palpitating, Galeotto was the book and he who wrote it: that day no farther did we read therein"*. The two were surprised by Gianciotto who killed them with his sword. Dante put Paolo and Francesca in his Inferno with the lecherous, condemned to divine damnation, but thanks to his verses he ensured they would be eternally commemorated, elevating them to symbols of love. Popular with tourists all year round, Gradara offers great facilities and typical inns serving traditional regional dishes from Romagna and the Marche. One such dish is *"tagliolini con la bomba"* - a name that derives from its preparation. An interesting initiative is *Middle Ages at the Table*, a day dedicated to mediaeval cuisine organized throughout the year and during which restaurants are transformed into period taverns.

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Gradara Fortress, one of the best-preserved mediaeval structures in Italy

on the right

Paolo and Francesca in a painting by Clemente Alberi, Municipal Museum, Rimini





San Giovanni in Marignano

worth knowing

Has been awarded the title of one of “*The Most Beautiful Villages in Italy*”

Two definitions can be used to introduce this area, which was once the granary of the Malatesta. It is a town with a wealth of industries and services that have developed on the plain after abandoning the town’s initial hilly position and a rich and fertile countryside crossed by the Ventena torrent. It has an orderly and harmonious landscape, covered in beautiful vineyards that produce quality wine. The coast is close and the edge of the village touches the edge of the resort of Cattolica. Its old town reveals the importance it had for the seignory of Rimini that developed its fortifications by extending the walls and creating a moat, fed by the Ventena. Within the walls, which have been reinforced towards to sea with two fine pointed bastions, the mediaeval urban layout offers regular blocks built around an open space, where the parish church of San Pietro was constructed in the 13th century. The gate to the north side of the walled village is the 15th-century municipal watch tower. This is where the “middle road” Via XX Settembre begins. Along the road it is possible to see numerous wheat ditches, a total of around 200 recorded underground storerooms for cereals, dotted all around the town. They bear witness to the economic history of this town that was initially a Roman settlement and then the property of the Benedictines. Today, the town’s economy is based on agriculture - the two key products are wine and cereals - and industry, in particular the hi-tech fashion sector. The industriousness of this community also translates into a number of eccentric events, fairs, markets and rallies that attract many tourists. According to local tradition but not only, *St. John’s Night* - the night between 23 and 24 June - is considered to be “witches’ night” and the popular celebrations held here last all week. Finally, the well-preserved Massari Theatre is a “jewel” in the town’s crown and hosts an annual programme worthy of the best stages.

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don't miss

The village, fortifications and towers Via XX September, known as “via di mezzo”, is the main road through the village and is lined with 18th and 19th-century buildings. It is entered from the square by crossing through the ancient gateway that is in fact, the 15th-century municipal watch tower. Along the street, paved in reclaimed cobblestones, circular stone inserts mark the underground granary ditches, of which over 200 have been recorded. The village is surrounded by defensive walls dating from the 14th and 15th century. Along the western side, restoration of the paving recalls the ancient moat.

Parish church of San Pietro Built on the municipal square around the 13th century it was renovated in the 18th century when the altarpiece with Saints Benedict and Mauro and a fine Rococo ancone were added to the main altar.

Augusto Massari Municipal Theatre This was originally the oratory of the Confraternity of the Rosary that became a theatre in the 19th century; although small, it is a classical Italian theatre with a U-shaped layout and two orders of richly decorated boxes. It always hosts shows and cultural events.

Church of Santa Lucia In line with tradition, during the Feast of St. Lucy (13 December), hundreds of candles brighten up the image

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**the defensive walls
surrounding the village
and the ancient,
restored moat**

on the right
**Augusto Massari
Municipal Theatre,
which hosts numerous
cultural events**



of the saint. The church has a 16th-century fresco of the Madonna and Child and a rare 18th-century organ with over 600 tin and wood pipes.

Church of Santa Maria in Pietrafitta 17th century Just two kilometres from the centre on the road to Tavullia, it was built on an existing structure. The fine external plaques and inscriptions bear witness to the miracles worked by the image housed here. Inside, there is an altarpiece depicting the Assumption of Our Lady, by the Rimini-born artist Giuseppe Soleri Brancaleoni (1750-1806) and a marble paving stone carved in the 9th century.

Church of Santa Maria del Monte 17th century A few kilometres from the town is this fine 17th-century religious building constructed to house the image of a Madonna that was considered miraculous. It does not have an aisle and the exterior is quite original as it is surrounded on three sides by a portico. Built in brick, thanks to its rounded arches framed by pilasters it permits visitors to see the interesting plaques that narrate the many miracles attributed to Our Lady.

Church of Santa Maria fuori le mura It was rebuilt in 1786, but houses a 15th-century fresco depicting the Madonna with Child.

Wine cellars A visit to the prestigious wine cellars of San Giovanni is a must. The town has been part of the *Wine City* circuit for some time, thanks to the top-quality wine produced in the entire region. Some cellars also offer very interesting cultural visits.

Riviera Horses Riding Centre A great new centre covering almost 10 hectares dedicated to equestrian events (mainly show-jumping). Includes a riding school, horse therapy facilities and stables.

Entomological Museum Housed in the former slaughterhouse, the exhibition was created in collaboration with the *Conca Valley Naturalistic Study Centre* with the aim of identifying, studying and raising awareness regarding the naturalistic heritage of the Conca Valley, in particular through the study of insects and other terrestrial arthropods.

don't forget

The magic of the arrival of summertime

According to local tradition, but not only, St. John's Night, the night between 23 and 24 June, is known as "*witches' night*". This is an extremely old, popular belief linked to the celebration of the summer solstice, a day of change that for centuries has been seen as a very magical moment. It was said that it was possible to see

witches on this night as they would meet under large trees and at road junctions. People could simply stand at crossroads with a wooden fork wedged under their chin and this was enough to ward off the witches, whose malign powers were feared by the farming community. The dew that fell on the fields that night was believed to have almost miraculous properties; clothing and fabric soaked in this dew were safe from moths, garlic that had been left out “in the dew” was thought to have even greater healing properties. Water drawn from a well early in the morning made for good eyesight and a healthy body. However, San Giovanni in Marignano has another reason that inspires the celebrations held in June in the old town. Her name was *Artemisia* and she was a fascinating character and traditional healer - so under certain aspects, a sorceress or “good witch” - who lived in San Giovanni between the late 18th and early 19th centuries. She was well-known in the surrounding area and many people flocked here from all around to take part in the ritual of the oil of St. John, thanks to which she discovered jinxes and “spells” and promptly neutralized them. Today, Artemisia is still remembered and her former house is in the old town; it is where local artist Mario Magnanelli lived and worked and some of his pieces are housed there.

events

Witches’ Night

June An important event that combines culture and entertainment to recall ancient traditions and rites linked to the summer solstice, long thought to be a magical moment and linked in particular to the activity of witches. Events, exhibitions, street markets and installations all around the village.

Wine New Year

September An event that marks the start of the autumn and the grape harvesting season. San Giovanni is a wine city and along with visits to its prestigious cellars also organizes events that recall agricultural traditions.

Feast of St. Lucy

13 December and the Sunday preceding it The only one of the numerous ancient agricultural fairs still held. With a street market, exhibitions, Christmas decorations, agricultural produce and typical local foods.



Morciano di Romagna

worth knowing

By taking a walk through the town centre, visitors can breathe in its nineteenth-century atmosphere, with the urban austerity and architectural severity typical of the period between the two centuries. It is the Conca valley's benchmark town thanks to its development that has transformed it over the past 150 years into its largest trade and services centre. The town has always had this vocation, proof of which lies in the numerous fairs held here since ancient times; in particular, St. Gregory's Fair that has always marked the arrival of spring and is still one of the most important in Romagna. The town's favourable position, at the foot of the hills of Montefeltro, not far from San Marino and at the junction of roads leading to the coast, has without doubt played an important role in its development. The streets in the old town, laid out in chequerboard style, and its austere features make it a great place for a break or for shopping, perhaps in one of its popular street markets, once held daily. In fact, even the Romans chose the area for this reason, building farms and settlements of which some ruins remain. The name of the town itself seems to derive from the Marcia family that built a community here. It was during the Middle Ages that the town really flourished thanks to the Abbey of St. Gregory, the monastery founded by St. Pier Damiani in 1061. It was around this time that the first important markets developed, before transferring to the village built on the hillocks overlooking the Conca. Mentioned in the Codex Bavarus in the 8th, 9th and 10th centuries, it became a "castrum" around 1000, as certified by several documents. It was a rural castle that defended the inhabited village and a place where the territory's products were collected. It only became a municipality in 1857 when a Papal decree united the territories that had belonged to Montefiore Conca (those to the right of the river) and San Clemente (to the left), to which it had initially been "aggregated". It was the construction of a bridge over the Conca in 1870 that gave it its role as a link between the Montefeltro, the Conca valley

and the Rimini area. This was increasingly consolidated thanks to the growing circulation of people and goods, transforming its agricultural economy into one founded on the services industry. Thanks to the construction of a pasta factory, a silkworm farm and a wool mill the population grew and the depopulation of the hills did the rest. It is the seat of the “St. Gregory in Conca” Dante Centre, founded in order to study, raise awareness and diffuse details of the life and works of Dante Alighieri. The centre works mainly in the wider territorial area, in particular in towns in the Conca valley.

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don't miss

Remains of the Abbey of St. Gregory 11th century On the road to Cattolica, about two kilometres from the centre, it is situated on the right bank of the Conca whose valley was a religious and economic benchmark. Fairs were once held in its cloister. It lost some importance after the Napoleonic troops closed it in 1797. The few remains of walls have been incorporated in more recent buildings, but the structure of the monastery founded by St. Pier Damiani in 1061 is still visible.

Wing Beat by Arnaldo Pomodoro In Piazza Boccioni at the centre of the fountain, a sculpture by the famous contemporary artist Arnaldo Pomodoro, born in Morciano. He dedicated it to the futurist artist Umberto Boccioni who also has local origins.

on the previous page
**the Town Hall with
its characteristic
central scroll balcony,
overlooking Piazza
del Popolo**

on the right
**the livestock market
during St. Gregory's
Fair**



Church of San Michele Arcangelo 18th century This is the town's parish church and is situated in the old town on piazza Umberto I. It was built in 1794 after the original church had been destroyed by floods.

Chapel of the Blessed Virgin 18th century Situated in front of the parish church, this is a small chapel with an octagonal-shaped interior.

Piazza del Popolo Shaded by tall pine trees, it was once quite large and hosted fairs and markets until the town hall, with a watch tower and central balcony with scrolls, was built here. At the centre, there is a fountain dating from 1901 portraying Mercury and lion-like masks.

Mills Evidence of their presence in the area since ancient times - in 1662 the Conca river powered sixty-six - is provided by some fine examples of great historical interest. These include *Malatesta Mill* and *Rossi Mill*, also built by the lords of Rimini, whilst others can be found in nearby municipalities.

don't forget

From a fair to a commercial town

The history of Morciano and the *Fair of St. Gregory*, held in the town every year on 12 March and the week around that date, are inextricably linked. The origins of the town and its development over the centuries have centred on the commercial importance of the ancient fair. Initially it was held next to the ancient *Abbey of St. Gregory*, hence the name of the fair, a religious complex that was extremely important for the history of the lower Conca valley. Its ruins can still be found outside the village, on the road towards San Giovanni in Marignano and Cattolica. From the abbey, the fair moved to the village, which had begun to develop on the raised bank of the river. From the early 20th century, thousands of heads of cattle and horses would descend the nearby hills and mountains and for the entire area, including the Montefeltro, this was the main trade centre. St. Gregory's Fair is still one of the most important traditional spring fairs in Romagna. To this day, it has a livestock market and meetings are held that attract horse dealers and "horsemen", although times have changed. Like all modern fairs, it now also includes a large market with agricultural machinery and plants, hundreds of stands of all kinds and a funfair. It is tradition at this time to eat "dried figs", a legacy of archaic and propitiatory rituals. Taking part is a bit like reliving the atmosphere of times gone by when people only came together on very rare occasions.

events

St. Gregory's Fair

Week around 12 March Attracts visitors from Romagna and the nearby Marche region. It dates back hundreds of years and traditionally announces the arrival of spring. Its farming origins are not betrayed and it still hosts a livestock market, a horse show and a market selling agricultural machinery and plants. Impromptu "inns" spring up all along the streets to serve the best local products.

Fu. Mo.

Last weekend in July A three-day event dedicated to the futurist artist Umberto Boccioni whose parents were born here. Entitled *Fu. Mo.* - which stands for *Futurism in Morciano* - it is dedicated to him and his famous movement and includes shows, art, cultural events and gastronomy.

The Gluttons' Fair

November Dedicated to the promotion and sale of typical Italian and foreign food products, this fair brings together producers and traders in the food and wine sector and gives them the chance to meet good food enthusiasts.

Morciano Antico

Trade fair pavilion, November An antiques fair and market that has succeeded in becoming one of the leading events in this sector in Italy thanks to the expertise of exhibitors from all over the country and reasonable prices.

Affari Privati - Private Business

Trade fair pavilion, November This is an opportunity for those who want to sell what they have lying around in their cellars or attics and that will certainly find enthusiastic buyers.

Expò Elettronica

Trade fair pavilion, November This is a large fair promoting the best electronic articles and new ideas, as well as older pieces and collectable items.



San Clemente

worth knowing

This is a Malatesta village that soon reveals its past history. In fact, it can be seen in the city walls and the remains of the fortress with polygonal towers, built by Sigismondo Pandolfo, lord of Rimini. Next to the north-east tower there is a snow-house, whilst the gateway tower still shows the signs of the steps that housed the beams of the drawbridge and the boundary curtain wall has swallow-tailed merlons. Time in the village is marked by an 18th century stone clock face and an artistic ceramic clock face, created by the sculptor Giò Urbinati, both on the municipal tower. The name of the municipality comes from an illustrious figure in the history of the Church; Clemente, bishop of Rome, third Pope after Peter from 88 to 97 BC and author of the “Letter to the Corinthians”. Documents chronicling the “castrum” date from 962 when Otto I gifted it to the Counts of Carpegna. It then passed to the Malatesta and on their downfall to the Republic of Venice and then to the Church. The old town is enclosed by walls and crossed by a single road that leads to Piazza Mazzini flanked by both the municipality and the parish church, built in the 19th century on an existing 14th-century structure. Next to it is the eastern gate, on which a plaque commemorates an illustrious citizen, the dialectal poet Giustiniano Villa who was born here in 1842. He was one of the best known travelling bards in Romagna, decanting its beauty and focusing on social justice. Tranquillity and peace reign in this village as it was only marginally involved in the struggles between the seignories. Thanks to its position, it enjoyed a degree of serenity that led it to control the middle Conca valley. Several small outlying country villages have interesting mediaeval and Renaissance remains. These include the fine complexes in Agello and Castelleale, a few kilometres from the centre. As well as a flourishing agricultural activity, the village now also focuses on typical local food and wine products and initiatives designed to maintain traditions. Wine is the prince of this area that produces excellent Sangiovese di Romagna and an important festival focuses on local production; unsurprisingly, the municipality is part of the Italian Wine Cities Association.

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don't miss

Church of San Clemente Built in 1836 on the 14th-century monastery church, of which a few traces remain in the interior, it has a single nave adorned with columns and houses a canvas of the Holy Family by Giovanni Battista Costa, an interesting Rimini-born 18th-century artist. The main altar is in scagliola with a statue of St. Clement. The right chapel is dedicated to the Crucifix and the one opposite to the Holy Family. Under the presbytery there is a cistern dating from 1370 called the "Friars' Well".

Piazza Mazzini The only road through the old town leads here and the square is overlooked by the parish church, the town hall and the entrance gate to the Baroque municipal tower, with a plaque dedicated to the poet Giustiniano Villa, one of the fathers of local dialectal poetry.

Walls and bastions Remains from the Malatesta period are still present and included in the urban fabric of San Clemente. The walls with polygonal bastions still embrace the centre and give it its mediaeval identity.

Agello, fortified farm Another tiny but noteworthy fortified village surrounded by beautiful countryside. Closed and isolated, it is at the bottom of the slope on which the main town stands. The "Tomba di Agello" was first mentioned in the 14th century.

Cevolabbate Here there are "*houses with workshops*" and small, plain houses with just a couple of rooms, as was tradition.

on the previous page
**the quiet Malatesta
village in the mid-
Conca valley**

on the right
**the original 18th-
century Marian
chapel**



Marian chapel This is an elegant and unusual 18th-century Marian sanctuary chapel that is particularly fascinating thanks to both its shape and position.

Castelleale 14th century A fortified mediaeval village founded in 1388 by Leale, Bishop of Rimini and a member of the Malatesta family. Partial destruction and rebuilding over the next centuries extensively modified the original structure, but its origins can still be discerned by an attentive and expert observer.

don't forget

A cobbler with a talent for poetry

San Clemente was the birthplace in 1842 of a figure that has left a considerable mark on popular culture in the Rimini area and Romagna in general, the poet, Giustiniano Villa. He was a cobbler, but his artistic vein and his determination to express what he thought made him into a veritable “*street poet*”. His dialectal poems, which he memorized as he worked, were first printed around 1875 when they began to circulate on the first sheets of paper. He would stand on a chair to recite his poems that were often sarcastic, but always deep and meaningful. After recital, he would sell the printed sheets to his public, mainly farmers and workers with a few enlightened members of the middle-class, who would reread them on their farms or at festivals. They were regulars at the markets and fairs he travelled to, some of which were even held in faraway towns like Rimini, Santarcangelo and many villages in the Montefeltro and Pesaro areas. He became famous and part of Romagna tradition. Many imitated him, learning his poetic stories and essays written in dialect by heart. Halfway between a storyteller and a troubadour he was so good at writing in dialect that it could be understood by everyone. His poems were like a witty and frank conversation, sometimes one of contrast like that between a landowner and a farmer, the former speaking in Italian and the latter replying in dialect. Villa was very sensitive to the reality around him and never failed to deal with topics of a civil nature such as war, political elections and taxes. He died in an accident aged 77 but his poems remain and keep alive the memory of the bard of the poor who defended them against injustice and oppression to the bitter end. A popular and successful *dialectal poetry competition* is held in his honour every year.

events

Like Once Upon a Time

End of May, beginning of June An event that focuses on food and wine and cultural traditions with two distinct appointments: the *Gastronomic Palio* that sees the various outlying villages battle it out in presenting popular local dishes and the *Dialectal Poetry Competition* in honour of the local poet Giustiniano Villa that is participated by poets whose creations are judged by the public and a group of experts.

Wine notes

June and July A series of events dedicated to the promotion of wine and good music. San Clemente is part of the “Wine City” circuit, has numerous producers and many of its Sangiovese wines have been certified as DOC. There are several varieties due to the different position of the vineyards and the characteristics of the soil they grow on - from the highest ones overlooking the sea to those on more clayey soils near the river.



Montecolombo

worth knowing

After separation from Montescudo in 1815 following an edict issued by Pope Pius VII, this Malatesta castle became an independent municipality. In terms of its fortified layout this village in the Conca valley, on the left bank of the river, is no exception to the norm and has managed to preserve stretches of fortifications, at the same time retaining its lush surroundings. The overall effect is one of serenity and harmony and its mediaeval terraces offer splendid views over the plains and the sea. Although the village had belonged to Rimini since 568, the Malatesta seignory was only present from 1271 onwards. In this area it was exposed to attacks from the upper Conca valley, which was ruled by the Montefeltro. This is why work was carried out on the castle, on an existing structure dating from the year 1000. Along with nearby Montescudo it formed a barrier blocking the attacks of Federico of Urbino. In fact, if lost, the castles would have left the way open to conquering the Rimini plain. A visit around the old town allows visitors to take in the mediaeval atmosphere and panoramic views. The 18th-century public washing trough is a rarity in terms of workmanship and type; known as “overflowing” for the tubs placed at gradually decreasing heights. Down in the valley, in the village of Taverna, there is another interesting washing trough built a century later that has also miraculously stood the test of time. The nearby countryside has magnificent vineyards and olive groves that produce excellent grapes and olives. From Montecolombo it is easy to reach San Marino and, by taking the road along the valley floor, the foothills of the Apennines, towards a territory where the characteristic features of the low hills slowly give way to woodland and pastures. San Savino also has its own fortress overlooking the main road.

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don't miss

Old town The village has a clearly mediaeval structure and its system of ancient gateways is particularly interesting. Access must have been extremely tough due to an initial crenelated barrier controlled by a solid, circular tower and a clock tower. The second barrier had a lancet archway that leads into the village. Also worth noting are the walls, now surrounded by dense vegetation.

Public washing troughs There are two magnificent examples of these ancient structures, which have been carefully restored. These were places where people used to socialize, as well as being indispensable for the community. The first has an "overflow" structure, due to tubs placed at decreasing heights and is just outside the village along an attractive path of flint stone steps. Called *Via Acquabona* it is of mediaeval origin and links the villa and the village. The second dates from 1874 and is in the outlying village of Taverna.

Church of San Martino This is the parish church and houses a beautiful 18th-century painting of St. Martin by Brancaloni.

Palazzo Orlandi-Contucci Dating from the 16th century, but renovated in the 19th century it was once the keep of the castle that was the residence of the captain of the military garrison and local lord. In the 18th century it became the property of the Contucci family, originally from Montecolombo. From the end of the 19th century onwards, the family had no more male heirs, but their name was saved by the descendents, starting with the last son-in-law who

on the previous page
**the fortified layout of
the village**

on the right
**San Savino Castle,
on the ridge road that
leads to Rimini**



was related to Giacomo Leopardi. It is the second largest building in the old town after the one that houses the town hall.

Town hall This is in one of the most imposing buildings in the old town, with a wing that dates from the 18th century. Facing west, the new wing was once a church dedicated to Our Lady of the Snow.

Castle of San Savino In the village of the same name, it stands on a ridge road that leads to Rimini. It is a beautiful village with some interesting buildings and castle walls.

Taverna and Osteria Nuova As it was an ancient tradition in these parts, there are still ceramic workshops open in these two small villages where potters have always produced terracotta pots and pans, crockery and containers that can still be purchased.

Monte Colombo Lake This is where the *Associazione Dare* and the *Leo Amici Foundation* are based. The *Ragazzi del Lago* or “Guys from the Lake” as they call themselves, manage a holiday farm, an organic farm, a top-level hotel resort with medical centre and spa, a restaurant and a theatre that stages great musicals each year. The community also has an art academy, a recording studio and two theatre companies; as well as a professional company, Carlo Tedeschi, the Italian actor and director who guides the young people, has set up another one with academy students. Until thirty years ago there was only a lake here whereas today there is a village, the *Piccolo Paese del Lago* or “a small village in a world of its own” as the young people call it. It was founded thanks to the work of Leo Amici. He was born near Rome and was a lay Catholic with great faith. After having held meetings throughout Italy and overseas and helping hundreds of people, he ended up here in the early 1980s to give life to his dream - to found a village dedicated to love, peach and brotherhood. He died here in 1986.

don't forget

A variety of environments and flavours

From Coriano one of the most beautiful and panoramic roads of the Malatesta seignory leads to San Savino and from there to Montecolombo. The road runs along the ridge, revealing all the splendour of this well-preserved rural environment with its delightful but intensely cultivated fields, where the olive trees and vines bear excellent quality fruit, the farmhouses recall those of times gone by and farm life has a decidedly traditional pace. It is interesting to note the perfect balance that has been maintained between the intervention of man and the hilly environment, with

the three characteristic peaks of the Republic of San Marino in the background. The best way to appreciate this rural environment and the colours and fragrances of the seasons is to take a walk or cycle ride here. At this slower pace it is even easier to enjoy the historical roads, including the “road of the washing troughs”. Given their historical and artistic importance, the most interesting itinerary links the two public washing troughs. This network of small roads, which have been recovered and made practicable, lies between Via Acquabona and “Strada per la Fonte” and between Via Castelrotto and Ca’ Balducci. Tall trees shade several stretches of the road that along its length reveals just how ingenious people were in ancient times. Of great importance in terms of environment, landscape and nature, the first two link the washing troughs in Montecolombo and Taverna. Via Castelrotto crosses the countryside downhill from the castle and takes its name from a popular legend that narrates of a late Roman fortification built on the high ground that dominated a long stretch of the river Conca. It is of great natural and environmental importance as it is flanked by huge, age-old trees and offers views over Calamino Park, a woody area with a wealth of fauna such as roe deer, squirrels and foxes. Owned by the municipality, it covers about 15 hectares. The food and wine products and the good food served in its numerous holiday farms and restaurants mirror this hilly area’s unique variety of environments.

events

Tripe and Strozzaprete Festival

July A typical village fete dedicated to two traditional dishes - strozzapreti, handmade twisted pasta, and tripe, a main course that requires long cooking. The dishes are accompanied by the area’s famous olive oil, excellent local wines, music and ballroom dancing.

Musicals at Leo Amici Theatre

Montecolombo Lake With a programme that spans the entire year, original Italian musicals are staged under the direction of Carlo Tedeschi; the underlying theme is always that of spreading the values of peace, brotherhood and love.



Gemmano

worth knowing

The *highest part of the Conca valley* in the province of Rimini is bursting with greenery; the lush, natural surroundings are spectacular and the hills covered in spontaneous vegetation. It is a haven of silence and light that offers spectacular views and is well worth visiting, especially for those who love pastoral settings. The municipality is also home to the *Onferno Caves*, part of the *Onferno Nature Reserve*. These unusual natural caves, which are easy to reach and can be visited, are of regional and national importance. They offer visitors the pleasant surprise of seeing a place that is unique and enchanting both in terms of its geological conformation and its singular inhabitants - over 6,000 bats, almost six times more than the number of citizens. History has also left its mark and in the countryside near San Pietro in Cotto, in a beautiful area of flatland that borders with Montefiore there are traces of a diffused settlement related to the intensive exploitation of local agricultural resources; it includes farmhouses and urban-rural villas. The origins of the castle date from the late Middle Ages and despite the devastation caused by the Second World War are still visible, thanks also to the descriptive itinerary that accompanies visitors. From 1233 to 1356 Gemmano was part of the municipality of Rimini before passing to the Malatesta. In the early 16th century the Venetians ruled and in 1518 it returned to Rimini. Two other castles in the nearby countryside - Marazzano and Onferno - are also very interesting. They have been completely renovated following destruction at the hands of Federico da Montefeltro in 1496. The village also paid the consequences of being on the Gothic Line; for this reason it is an important place of memory that will become a key element in the "Territorial Network System of the Gothic Line" that local and regional bodies are setting up to promote the area's cultural and historical heritage, with particular reference to the Second World War.

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don't miss

Old town centre The heart of the town boasts the church of San Lorenzo and the town hall, both enclosed within the ancient walls (11th century) that have recently been renovated. A little further away, the oratory of Our Lady of Graces, extremely dear to the locals, dates from a later period.

Carbognano church A small rural church in a delightful setting in the village of the same name where the faithful come to venerate a 16th-century image of Our Lady.

Flatland in San Pietro in Cotto This is near the Conca river and is an area that has brought to light important archaeological finds dating from between the Republican age and the early Middle Ages. A centre where people had come together is recognizable, along with a system for working metal and a monumental building complex with heated rooms, mosaic-covered tub and marble panelling dating from the Republican-Imperial era on the main road. Finally various late Antique and early mediaeval settlements have been found including an ancient roadway, whose surface has undergone a series of subsequent restoration work with bricks, cobblestones and gravel.

Onferno, Oriented Nature Reserve, Visitors' Centre, Museum and Caves The reserve covers 273 hectares that are protected due to their naturalistic importance given the presence of chalk veins and calanques, as well as its rich vegetation and fauna with many rare wild animals. Its floral heritage is also worthy of note with over 420 species and subspecies. The area includes a museum that promotes exhibits

on the previous page
**the green municipality
of Gemmano, the
highest point in the
Conca valley in the
territory of Rimini**

on the right
**Onferno Nature
Reserve, which
covers an area
of 273 hectares**



and educational activities to explain the caves and the reserve from the point of view of its fauna, geology and vegetation. It is linked to the visitors' centre that is housed in the parish church of Santa Colomba. The caves are a karstic complex of notable importance; they were first explored scientifically in 1916 by the speleologist Quarina. A small underground stream carved out these chalky rocks giving life to tunnels, rooms and narrow gorges that extend for 750 metres underground. About 400 metres of this spectacular itinerary are open to the public. A guided visit, with equipment provided by the Visitors' Centre, is particularly interesting.

Onferno On the promontory that overlooks the caves, the village was once a rural castle to all effects and purposes. It has since been renovated and now offers accommodation facilities.

Marazzano A rural castle of which some traces of the walls and ramparts remain.

don't forget

The only natural caves in the Rimini area

These can be found in the *Oriented Nature Reserve* and their peculiarity is the fact that they host a community of dwellers that is far larger than the number of inhabitants of the municipality. The site is called *Onferno*, a name that in 1810 replaced the original "Inferno" or "Hell" as it was deemed to be too diabolical by the Bishop of Rimini, Gualfardo. The reason is soon clear; it is a complex of caves that extends for 750 metres into the heart of the chalk veins of the Conca valley. The caves have been famous since ancient times when they were considered so mysterious they earned themselves the name "Inferno". They are populated by a colony of over 6,000 bats, belonging to six different species. They are all harmless and some are of great scientific importance as they are considered endangered species. Some experts believe these caves inspired Dante for his description of hell in his *Divine Comedy* and they claim there are 80 analogies between the places described in that work and the caves, starting with the entrance. Furthermore, considerable evidence exists of Dante's stay in these parts during his exile. What is certain is that the large underground space, once largely inaccessible, caused great anxiety and fear. Although nothing "infernal" remains, they are still fascinating. These beautiful caves are part of a natural context that is equally interesting and now protected thanks to the huge *nature reserve*. The caves can be visited by following an itinerary that descends from an altitude of 290 metres to 70 metres and allows visitors to explore the underground system of caves and admire this

enchancing environment. In some parts the ceiling is smooth, in other parts it is dotted with crystals; there are limestone waterfalls, vents with "cave pearls" and some of the biggest mamelons in Europe. Although visitors cross underground canyons, collapse chambers and narrow passageways, the presence of a lower entrance and an upper exit favours excellent ventilation. The composition of the caves is that of chalky rock because they originated from the erosive action of infiltrated water on layers of soil of varying compactness, permeability and solubility. Of karstic morphology, they have an underground waterway and a series of cavities at various levels, linked by tunnels, narrow passageways and ravines. By flowing over the surface of these cavities, the water has created bizarrely-shaped concentrations of calcium salts. Lighting is muted to respect the precious colony of bats that lives here and that can be seen in the summer, especially in June when reproducing. In their first ten days of life, the young are carried by their mothers as they hunt for food and are then put in a protected place guarded by adult females. This is a great opportunity to see bats close up and above all, to overcome those old wives' tales about them - they do not cling to hair and they feed on insects not blood! Visits are guided by expert staff that provide visitors with helmets and torches before they enter. As the humidity inside the caves can make walkways slippery, wearing sturdy shoes is highly recommended, as is something to cover up with as, even during the summer, the temperature is steady at around 12°C - 14°C.

events

Gemmano & Flavours

4th Sunday of the month from April to October From morning through to evening, the village hosts a market of food produce with tasting of typical local products. Each event is accompanied by live music, prizes and meetings.

Pappardelle and Wild Boar Sauce Festival

Mid-August This is a typical food festival with hearty local dishes, in particular handmade pasta such as pappardelle - a wide, fresh pasta ribbon - served with wild boar sauce, made from locally-hunted animals. Thousands of visitors are drawn to this event during which local housewives prepare fresh pasta using over 7,000 eggs. With music and entertainment too.



Montefiore Conca



worth knowing

Has been awarded the title of one of “*The Most Beautiful Villages in Italy*” and an *Orange Flag* by the Italian Touring Club.

The sight of its fortress, an imposing Malatesta building overlooking the Conca river valley, is quite literally breathtaking and the village, with its mediaeval layout, is equally fascinating and interesting. It is surrounded by woodland and gently rolling countryside, with the coast in the background and the sea on the horizon. Montefiore is a destination worth visiting at any time of year: in winter when the peaks surrounding it are white and there are living nativity scenes within its 14th-century walls, in spring when the countryside is in bloom and Easter rites take visitors back in time, in summer when the squares and courtyards of the fortress are filled with the sound of music and singing and host a variety of art festivals and shows and in autumn when the intoxicating fragrances and flavours of the earth, including chestnuts and extra-virgin olive oil, abound. *Castrum Montis Floris* is documented for the first time in the 12th century in a concession made by Pope Alexander III to the Church of Rimini. Its origins are however much older and there have been numerous finds dating from the Iron Age and the Roman period. The historical period that has left most traces is the Middle Ages, thanks to the presence of the powerful Malatesta family that purchased all rights to Montefiore from the Municipality of Rimini and the Pope in 1322, turning it into an exclusive family asset. As well as reinforcing the castle, the family also adorned it and it became both an imposing defensive bastion and a summer residence for the family, with all the commodities of a city palace. Galeotto Belfiore, a member of the Malatesta, was born here in 1377 and it also hosted illustrious figures such as Popes and Emperors. The village had a number of palaces, churches and monasteries of which some vestiges remain. After the fall of the Malatesta, the Borgia family reigned followed by the Republic of Venice and the Prince of Macedonia, Costantino Comneno, who died here in 1530. Then, as elsewhere in Romagna, it was the Church that dominated. It offers visitors all they need; as well as the beauty of its landscape and monuments, in particular the

fortress, it is possible to retrace old itineraries on foot, horseback or by bicycle. A stay is rewarded with excellent accommodation facilities and Montefiore is also a *Comune Amico del Turismo Itinerante* (*Friend of Itinerant Tourism Municipality*).

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don't miss

Malatesta fortress Although built in a previous period one date is certain - 1337 - when Malatesta Guastafamiglia turned it into a military bastion that was also a residence, a place where people could rest and meet. Indeed in 1347, it played host to Andreas, King of Hungary with his entire entourage and later Popes Gregory XII and Julius II, Sigismund, Emperor of Bohemia and numerous other nobles and lords of the time. Another leading figure of the seignory, Malatesta Ungaro, commissioned the coat of arms at the entrance to the castle and the fine frescoes in what is called the Emperor's Room. These unusual pieces are the work of Jacopo Avanzi and depict a battle scene with foot soldiers. The entire building has recently been renovated and has become even more imposing and beautiful, offering visitors the atmosphere of times gone by and an insight into the historical-architectural stratifications that have characterized it, exalting the artistic culture of the 14th century. These include the original roof, which can be admired by climbing to the highest part of the fortress that also offers stunning views of the Adriatic and the hills. Exhibitions and art events are held at the castle each year.

Permanent exhibition "Sotto le tavole dei Malatesta".

Archaeological finds from excavations at the fortress

The castle hosts an exhibition dedicated to the archaeological

on the previous page
a contemporary art
installation with
the backdrop of the
Malatesta fortress

on the right
"Battle of the
Knights", a fresco by
Jacopo Avanzi in the
Emperor's Room



studies carried out between 2006 and 2008. These unearthed extraordinary Malatesta ceramics from the building; dozens of jugs, cups and basins decorated with portraits and scrolls, Gothic letters and festoons, geometric patterns and symbols. The colours of the pieces - blue, yellow, ochre, copper green and manganese brown - reflect those of the landscape that can be admired from here.

Church of the Hospital of Mercy Built in the old town around 1470 to serve the small hospice for pilgrims the *Hospital of the Well*, as was common in every village. It has some interesting frescoes of the period; the series on the internal walls, which has recently been renovated, is attributed to Bernardino and Ottaviano Dolci and shows scenes of the resurrection of the dead, the last judgement, heaven and hell. The holy procession held every year on Good Friday always ends here, where various symbols of the Passion are kept.

Sanctuary of the Madonna di Bonora A short distance from the village is the most famous sanctuary dedicated to Our Lady in the diocese of Rimini. Its origins can be traced back to the work of a lay hermit, Ondidei di Bonora. In a will drawn up in 1409, he left his property and the chapel in which he had commissioned an image of *The Virgin Suckling her Child* to the Franciscan tertiary. The sanctuary, which was completely renovated in the early 20th century, developed around this miraculous image of Our Lady that dominates the main altar. The sacristy is of particular interest as it houses an extensive variety of ex voto, evidence of the deep popular devotion to this site.

The walled village and walkway around the walls Walking around the fortified village is like savouring the magic of history. After passing through Gothic-style, 14th-century Curina Gate, dominated by the coat of arms of Pius XII Piccolomini, visitors will find the parish church of San Paolo, the town's patron, on the right. It houses a beautiful Crucifix of the "fourteenth-century Rimini school" and interesting figurative pieces. On the left is the ancient pottery workshop, with its original wood-fired kiln. Continuing toward the fortress is the entrance to Porta Nova Park; an area that often hosts outdoor shows whose backdrop, on the horizon but almost in reach, are the Riviera and the sea. This is a fascinating itinerary, from both an urban and environmental perspective.

The Malatesta Municipal Theatre A small jewel that has recently been restored to its former glory. Built in the 19th century it has a U-shaped layout with two circles.

don't forget

A castle that reveals the culture of the fourteenth century

Montefiore, former residence of the Malatesta seignory, is one of the area's most fascinating and eloquent realities, capable of narrating the history and customs of the period from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. It is thanks to its wonderful old town that it is part of "*The Most Beautiful Villages in Italy*" circuit. It is dominated by the fortress, an austere and imposing sentinel that stands on the highest promontory overlooking the coastline from Fano to Ravenna. It is well worth a visit, thanks also to the recent renovation work carried out by the Office of Monuments and Fine Arts and Landscape of Ravenna, in collaboration with the Office of Monuments and Fine Arts of Emilia Romagna and the municipality. This work consolidated the building and made the entire complex practicable, opening up places that were previously off limits. Despite being subjected to various phases of construction, destruction and reconstruction, the castle offers an insight into 14th-century architectural and artistic culture. This is true now more than ever. As well as being fully accessible, renovation has added an essential detail to fourteenth-century castle architecture and an important page of art history. Excavations have brought to light buildings linked to the oldest phases of the fortress and archaeological research has unearthed a large number of often excellently-preserved exhibits. Some jugs are of the oldest enamelled majolica in north and central Italy and there is other 14th and 15th-century majolica produced in Pesaro and Faenza. There is also a lot of glassware, mainly Venetian-made glasses and bottles, as well as coins, tools and arms. Finally, there are more prestigious items such as a 14th-century bronze seal with a double matrix. The variety and quantity of material found offers an insight into life in the castle from many points of view; court life, trades and military activity. Restoration work has opened up rooms that were previously inaccessible, such as the *Emperor's Room*, which houses extremely rare paintings depicting a heroic cycle attributed to the Bologna-born artist Jacopo Avanzi. It is one of the most unusual pictorial works of art attributable to Malatesta patronage: a veritable rarity as it is the only remaining piece of the 14th-century decorative apparatuses of the Malatesta depicting a profane subject. Another fundamental find regards the roof of the castle; by climbing onto the present roof it is possible to see a splendid part of the original, magnificent gable roof.



events

Good Friday procession

Good Friday For hundreds of years, Good Friday has been celebrated in Montefiore with a dramatic procession with numerous participants including hooded members of the congregation, the Cyrene carrying the cross, Roman soldiers, angels and other important figures from the Passion of Christ. It leaves from the monastery on Mount Auro and ends at the hospital church. The costumes, torches and band make this rite an important event in popular local culture and religion.

Fortress of the Moon

July Held during the week of the full moon, this three-day celebration includes events such as theatre shows and initiatives, music, poetry and animation. The entire old town, the Malatesta fortress, the squares and the streets become the ideal setting for moments of serenity and contemplation in a delightful atmosphere.

Chestnut Festival

Sundays in October This celebrates a fruit found in the ancient chestnut woods that have grown at a fairly low altitude, bordering with the olive groves. Chestnuts are cooked in a variety of ways, but there's also music, dancing, shows, a food market and unlimited wine from the village fountain.

Living Nativity Scene

Christmas period The old town becomes an evocative stage for re-enacting the birth of Jesus. The general public follows the nativity scene around the ancient walls, in the torch light and amongst characters in costume. An enchanting and magical moment and one of the most popular re-enactments in Romagna. A Christmas market is held on Sundays and bank holidays in December.

**Gothic-style 14th-
century Curina Gate**



Saludecio

worth knowing

The fine profile of this elegant town underlines its 19th-century austerity; unsurprisingly, the *800 Festival* is held here every year in August. Thanks also to its cultural vocation and ability to experiment in a decidedly favourable environmental and historical-architectural context Saludecio has a lot to offer. Surrounded by gently rolling hills, the town centre alternates elegant palaces and important religious buildings with simple houses. Its favourable position meant it was popular even in ancient times, as traces of the Roman period and early Middle Ages highlight. For three centuries, from the 13th century onwards, the Malatesta made it one of their production and defensive strongholds in their conflict with the Montefeltro. The family consolidated the fortress and walls that still characterize the layout of the old town. This mediaeval structure includes a maze of alleyways enclosed within walls and two monumental gateways that defend it towards the sea and the inland area. This is why, even after the downfall of the lord - the fragile balance collapsed in 1462 when Federico da Montefeltro occupied Saludecio, wrenching it away from Sigismondo and entrusting it to the Church - it maintained its key role with powerful families building palaces and important churches. Local intellectuals and artists gained great fame; proof of this lies in the activity in the area of Guido Cagnacci who left several works of art of inestimable value. This continued until the 19th century, which began splendidly and proceeded in the same way. In fact, institutions and administrative services began to open and soon turned it into the valley's main town. An important role in town life is played by Blessed Amato Ronconi, who lived here in the 13th century and to whom the sanctuary and museum are dedicated, and the devotion of the faithful who have followed him for centuries. The town's desire to promote hospitality is clear thanks also to events such as *Saluserbe*, which has also given rise to the Italian Garden near Montanara Gate, and the *800 Festival*; with *murals* painted on the walls of the houses during the festival that means the village has become part of the "*Città dei muri dipinti*" or "*Towns with Painted Walls*" circuit.

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don't miss

Marina Gate 14th century A fine tower structure with lancet archway; this is the entrance to the village and leads to the main square.

Belvedere This is a panoramic balcony overlooking the sea and encompasses the Monument to the Fallen (1928), the fountain and the square dedicated to Santiago de Compostela. Viale dei Tigli begins here and leads to the Italian Garden and Rimembranze Park in Porta Montanara.

Piazza Beato Amato Ronconi With a regular layout, the square dates from the period of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta; it is the heart of the town and is overlooked by the parish church and the town hall.

Town Hall Houses several cultural institutes such as the **Theatre**, the **Library** and the **Permanent Exhibition of Giuseppe Garibaldi memorabilia**, soon to be the **Risorgimento Museum**. It was built on the remains of the ancient Malatesta fortress of which traces of the walls are still visible.

Parish church of San Biagio (1930) Sanctuary of the Blessed Amato 18th century The imposing structure with a centralized layout, in perfect neo-classical style, stands on the site of an ancient mediaeval church within the walls. Given its size, the wealth of pieces it contains and the presence of the mortal remains of Blessed Ronconi it is considered the cathedral of the Conca valley.

on the previous page
the tower structure
of Marina Gate that
leads onto the main
square

on the right
"The Procession of the
Blessed Sacrament"
by Guido Cagnacci
in the Museum of
Saludecio and the
Blessed Amato



Saludecio and Blessed Amato Museum Communicating with the church, this is a treasure chest of furniture, vestments, church furnishings, devotional items and ex voto linked to the cult of the Blessed Amato, as well as great works of art like the *Beheading of John the Baptist* by Claudio Ridolfi known as “Il Veronese” 1605, *The Procession of the Holy Sacrament* by Guido Cagnacci 1628 and *St. Sixtus Pope* 1628 in the church.

Municipal Tower 14th century A mediaeval tower that characterizes the town’s skyline.

Monastery of the Hieronymites 17th century Part of the church building, it has a fine classical portal and is an important complex in the upper part of the town.

Montanara Gate 14th century Opposite Marina Gate, this is also fortified but less imposing. It faces towards the Apennines to control the Montefeltro.

Murals A multicoloured and unusual open-air museum winds its way through the narrow streets and squares of the old town of Saludecio revealing 19th-century inventions: each summer murals are painted during the 800 Festival on the walls of the houses of the village (about 50 pieces) by the artists of the “*Genius Loci - Ar.Per.C.*” (Artistic and Environmental Cultural Association of Castellabate-Salerno). Thanks to these precious characteristics, Saludecio is now one of the main towns in AssIPaD (Italian Association of Painted Villages) and Res Tipica.

“N. Copernico” Astronomic Observatory In the countryside of Santa Maria del Monte, two telescopes search the skies; one is dedicated to scientific research, whilst the other is open to the public.

Meleto Castle A fascinating fortification in the village of the same name just a few kilometres from the centre. It is surrounded by stretches of old walls, with a large internal courtyard. It is like a balcony overlooking the Adriatic, situated in a panoramic position in the valleys of the Tavollo and Foglia rivers.

Cerreto Castle An outlying village in the Ventena valley that has an intimate beauty. Surrounded by greenery, it retains traces of the mediaeval fortified structure with the village dominated by the municipal tower that has become the church bell tower. Ancestral Carnival rites have been recovered here, animated by the strange stories of its inhabitants and archaic masks such as the ivy-man, the old woman, the counts and the clown and the straw cone, which is set alight in a climate of general hilarity.

don't forget

Devotion and history entwine in this fascinating town

Having a patron who is “blessed”, as recognized by Pope Pius VI on 17 March 1776 after a standard canonization process, has brought Saludecio considerable benefit. Amato Ronconi was born in 1226 and as a young man decided to live the Gospel in the genuine Franciscan spirit by frequenting the nearby monastery of Formosino. Indeed, St. Francis had always inspired the repentant and charitable existence of Amato who, in order to imitate the saint, chose to lead a roving lifestyle, firstly nearby and then further afield even going to the sanctuary of Santiago de Compostela in Spain five times. He wore a pilgrim's tunic, tied with a leather lace with a knapsack for collecting alms. Around his neck he had a shell that only pilgrims of Santiago had the privilege of wearing as proof of their journey that demanded great respect. When he wasn't travelling, his home became a hospice for pilgrims who he welcomed and fed. If supplies ran out, he would perform miracles like the one with the turnips; some turnips had been planted in the garden in the morning and when he sent someone to pick them later that day they were already huge. He soon became a point of reference for the rich and poor, not only due to the miracles he performed, but also because he would intercede on behalf of the faithful. During his fifth pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, an angel predicted his death. When he returned home, he donated all his worldly goods to the Benedictine monastery of San Giuliano in Rimini and died in 1292. When exposed to the faithful, instead of decomposing, his body emanated a delightful, rose-scented fragrance and many, when they touched it, regained their health. From the day following his death, people began to call him blessed, a title he officially earned in 1776. The temple that now houses the body that attracts pilgrims was built in his honour during the difficult years of Napoleonic occupation. The adjacent museum is now also dedicated to him. The preliminary phases for sanctification closed with the publication of the *positio* by the Sacred Congregation of the Causes of the Saints. The most amazing miracles of the saint related to his protection of the town in moments of danger and the coffin housing his body remained intact even in 1944 when bombardments demolished the sanctuary.

events

800 Festival

First ten days in August One of the most popular events in the Rimini area for over thirty years and a real feather in its cap. This initiative is



an event that includes music, dance, prose, shows, street artists and exhibitions inspired by everything that characterized the 19th century and has made Saludecio famous throughout Italy. It also hosts an antique and craft market, outdoor inns, artists and painters. Each year the festival is dedicated to a European capital and a specific theme.

800 Festival Events

Throughout the year Under the aegis of this now famous “quality label” various “19th-century” initiatives are held throughout the year (including conferences, meetings and theme dinners), dedicated in particular to **Garibaldi** and the **Risorgimento**. **“800. NNT NeroNotte Teatro”** is a small but important festival at Meleto Castle dedicated to nocturnal atmospheres and 19th-century literature; a permanent showcase for the many facets and artistic expressions of “theatre noir”.

Saluserbe

25 April and thereabouts For over 20 years it has been one of the most popular spring events for naturopathy and alternative medicine enthusiasts. The event is dedicated to nature, herbal medicine and the environment and has become a benchmark in the regional panorama of events on the theme of organic food, alternative medicine, bio-architecture, sustainability and the recovery of traditions. The programme is diversified and ideal for the general public; it addresses both specialists and enthusiasts as well as the curious. As well as conferences and meetings, there are art exhibitions and craft demonstrations. The Spring Market is held along the narrow streets and in the squares of the town, with refreshment points serving theme menus.

Homo viator, the pilgrim of the stars

End of May, old town centre and house where Blessed Amato Ronconi was born This recent event focuses on the historical and cultural figure of the Blessed Amato Ronconi, patron of Saludecio and pilgrim on the roads of mediaeval Europe towards Santiago de Compostela. It focuses on a series of cultural and artistic initiatives including conferences, meetings, exhibitions, concerts and shows.

antiques market and shows on the streets of the centre during the 800 Festival



Mondaino

worth knowing

The approach to this village in the mid-Conca valley is both surprising and thrilling; a village with an elegant semi-circular square, the setting for films and exciting historical re-enactments, within its walls. It has a strong musical imprint, thanks to the presence of a band and an accordion factory owned by the Galanti brothers. It is surrounded by unspoilt scrubland and fields where deer once pastured; indeed, they can still be seen near here and gave the town its name - “monte dei daini” or “mountain of roe deer”. This is where the Etruscans succeeded the Umbrians as they expanded towards the plains. Then the Romans staunchly resisted the invasion of the Gauls and established the legend that linked the town’s origins to the figure of Diana, goddess of hunting and the woods, the moon and witches. In the Roman era there was a temple here in her honour, as the remains of *Vicus Dianensis* recall. The village’s new name *Mons Damarum*, which subsequently became Mondaino, was attributed to the spread of Christianity. It quickly gained geopolitical importance when the Malatesta made it a stronghold on the border with the Montefeltro, dukes of the area in the upper Conca valley and Urbino, only 25 kilometres away. The family from Rimini had ruled here since 1289; it consolidated the walls and gates making the fortress, which hosted political meetings like the peace pacts signed initially by Carlo Malatesta and Antonio da Montefeltro in 1393 and then by Sigismondo Pandolfo and Federico in 1459, more imposing. Unfortunately, these agreements were short-lived as three years later Federico conquered Mondaino and gave it to the Church. This did not however, lead to its downfall as it remained one of the key castles in the Conca valley. Although it has maintained its original layout over the centuries, civilian and ecclesiastical architecture has been added. This is now best seen by entering Marina Gate and walking around the districts that host an accurate historical re-enactment in August. Visitors can enjoy nature, art and culture thanks to the beautiful museums that narrate its history from the remotest geological eras. There is a truly magical place not far from the town centre; called *Arboretum* it is a park

with an environmental documentation centre, theatre and two guest quarters that can host those who come to follow art, communication and nature itineraries. Fabio Tombari lived in the municipality; his books were authentic bestsellers during the 1930s and 40s with ironic studies of provincial life that has largely remained the same. One such example is *I Ghiottoni* narrated by him (he wrote both *I Ghiottoni* and *Frusaglia* here). The town's traditional food products include truffles, collected in autumn and celebrated in a fair at the end of November, as well as olive oil and Fossa cheese.

Tourist information

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Mondaino Pro Loco Association
via Montebello, 36
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www.paliodeldaino.it

don't miss

Marina Gate 15th century This is the delightful gateway to the village that dates back to modernization work carried out on the defensive structure by Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta.

Piazza Maggiore 19th century This is the most scenic "square" in the province thanks to its semi-circular shape: a wide exedra with neo-classical portico. As central Via Roma leads from here it is affectionately known as the "frying pan square". This is the heart of the town with the Malatesta castle, a treasure trove of art and history, looming ahead. It is the site of competitions between the districts in the *Palio del Daino*.

Malatesta Castle 14th - 15th century Fundamental for the seignory, it

on the previous page

**Marina Gate,
commissioned by
Sigismondo Pandolfo
Malatesta**

on the right
**Piazza Maggiore
during the fascinating
Palio del Daino**



retains its *palatium*, which was extended and refined by Sigismondo. The bulky structure has a quadrangular layout with “scarp” walls and swallow-tailed merlons. Although he did conquer it, Federico da Montefeltro said it was “a strong and important place that on no account can be conquered”. It houses the town hall and the Palaeontology Section of the Museums of Mondaino. In the Durantino room on the top floor there is a fresco of *Our Lady Suckling her Child* by Bernardino Dolci (15th century) detached from the Convent of the Poor Clares. This leads to a terrace that offers an overview of the town and spectacular views spanning from the peaks of the Apennines to the Adriatic. In the basement, there are two mediaeval tunnels created for military purposes and for supplying water.

The walls The external streets of the old town offer views of these imposing walls that once had 13 turrets.

Convent of the Poor Clares A large complex with numerous buildings from various periods and a delightful garden. The small church has some 17th-century wooden crucifixes.

Parish church of San Michele Arcangelo 18th century Built on an ancient temple dedicated to Diana it has 15th - 16th century pieces and delightful coeval altar frontals.

Former Monastery of San Francesco Just outside the town on the hillside of Formosino it dates from the 13th century and is where Santarcangelo-born Pope Clement XIV was a monk.

Museums of Mondaino: Palaeontology Section Its rooms house fossils from local rocky deposits once lapped by the sea and dating from up to 12 million years ago. Particularly interesting are the fish fossils and rare vegetable exhibits. **Mondaino Majolica Section** Has a selection of mediaeval and Renaissance majolica pieces found in Mondaino, once an important production centre twinned with the nearby schools of Urbino, Casteldurante, Pesaro and Rimini. **Portaia Tower** A faithful reconstruction of a watch station dating from 1450.

Galanti factory Just a short distance from the old town, this is where the accordions that delighted America were made. Until a museum is built here, anyone wishing to visit the factory should contact the local Pro Loco association. It is particularly exciting to enter the magical atrium that contains accordions that will be housed in the future museum.

Arboretum Park A few kilometres from the village, in Bordoni, this is a botanical garden covering 9 hectares that specializes in trees and bushes with over 6,000 plants, two woods, small forests, a pond and marked footpaths. It is also an *Environmental Education Centre* open to visitors where study and research projects are held.

Arboretum Theatre and Guesthouse The new theatre looks like a leaf resting on a lawn; the entire building has been designed to be in harmony with the environment. Many unknown and illustrious guests come here to outline art, communication and nature *Itineraries*: a series of meetings for diffusing expertise and know-how on scenic art and visual art, words and emotions, landscape and culture. Both are run by the Arboretum Association.

Val Mala In the beautiful countryside, crossed by paths of great natural and cultural interest, this area is of particular environmental and historical prestige.

don't forget

A fascinating palio that ensures memories live on

In August the village is transformed, decorated with banners and coats of arms and filled with straw and hay stacks, cages, weapons and farmyard animals. The aim is to re-enact the past in order to promote the present. There could be no better way to achieve this than through the *Palio del Daino* that has become popular even outside the region. In this faithful re-enactment, the main event is surrounded by an infinite number of other extraordinary situations. The celebration attracts and fascinates visitors, enveloping them in an evocative and spectacular atmosphere. Its success is not only linked to the beautiful scenery of the village; the main attractions are the number of events and the care with which each is organized. The entrance through Marina Gate is triumphant with horsemen, soldiers, damsels, jesters, magicians, falconers and musicians all magnificently dressed in the fashions of the 15th and 16th centuries. With the sound of traditional music and the voices of street sellers ringing in their ears, visitors are welcomed by figures in period costume who lead them around the village where each cellar, workshop and building is decked out as a hospital, quarantine station, bakery, inn, brothel, gun shop or glazier's shop. Visitors are invited to change their money into ancient coins so their journey into the past is as real as possible. They will find areas where they can relive the trades of falconers, farriers, blacksmiths, shepherds and wool merchants, all displaying their art. The lords parade through the village as the palio begins, during which its four historical *contrade* or districts - *Borgo, Castello, Contado, Montebello* - compete. As well as sight, the sense of smell is captured by the aroma of medicinal herbs and spices that fill the air and the appetite is whetted thanks to



the fragrance of roasting meat and roast suckling pork, grilled mushrooms and freshly-baked cakes. Visitors can try typical local foods, ranging from meats to cheeses, vegetables and piadina. Few other events are quite as enjoyable as this and it deserves special praise.

events

Latinus Ludus

May-June This is a competition for students based on translation from Latin and is held in honour of Father Sebastiano Sanchini, tutor of Leopardi.

Mondaino Music Festival

July Held for over thirty years, it is dedicated in particular to marching bands.

Palio del Daino

Mid-August The town's districts challenge each other in the Palio in celebrations that last four days with games, events and installations that help visitors relive the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

Fossa Cheese, Truffles and Ceres

Two Sundays in November A market selling typical local produce such as olive oil, honey, cheeses and Fossa cheese, traditional production of which has recently been recovered, and the white truffles of the hills of Rimini.

“Arboretum” Art Itineraries

Arboretum, all year round The theatre and guesthouse constantly host workshops, seminars and shows on themes linked to scenic art and communication.

**the narrow streets of
the village crowded
with tourists during
summer events**



Monte Grido

worth knowing

It is part of the “*The Most Beautiful Villages in Italy*” association.

This delightful and welcoming village, a castle mentioned as early as the 11th century, is largely intact and entirely protected by tall walls with a single entrance way and with a tower over the 16th-century gate. It has a unique structure that careful restoration work has left largely unchanged. It is like an open-air museum whose history and architecture are almost too affected. This has made it a benchmark for hospitality in the hills of Rimini, attracting elite tourism. In fact, the availability of excellent accommodation facilities invites visitors to enjoy a peaceful and tranquil atmosphere where culture plays a key role. This offer does not neglect the importance of memory thanks also to numerous museums, delights the ear thanks to music events and the sight given its prestigious works of art. As it is situated between the Conca and Foglia valleys it faces towards the Marche region and has always borne the consequences, often being caught up in the conflict between the powerful seignories of the Malatesta and Montefeltro. This area was the site of many battles and its people were constantly subjected to forays, incursions and ambushes. Despite the seignory of Rimini doing everything to consolidate its barriers and build defensive structures, the seignory of Urbino refused to lay down its arms. The village was destroyed several times; the worst of these occurred in 1336 although it was promptly reconstructed with taller walls and the addition of four turrets by the Malatesta who ruled here until the 16th century. After three centuries of domination by the Malatesta it followed the fate of the surrounding area, passing under Duke Valentino Borgia, the Venetian Republic and the Papal State.

Tourist information

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Montegridolfo Tourist Information Office

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don't miss

Town walls Built by the Malatesta family, they are imposing and consolidated thanks to fine turrets. On arriving at the castle, it is necessary to flank them in order to reach the only entrance. The area affords beautiful views of the sea and the hills.

Castle gateway This elegant opening, topped by a turret, dates from the 16th century. The tower is accessed via an elevated walkway and passing through the gate leads to the square, overlooked by the town hall. At the centre is Viviani chapel, with a copy of the Black Madonna, that replaced the 13th-century church that was destroyed.

Old town The urban layout has remained mediaeval and consists in narrow quarters, some of which are covered. Walking around the village gives an idea of its former harmony that the new shops and restaurants do not detract from.

Palazzo Viviani An interesting and attractive building that stands on the remains of the fortress. Today it houses a prestigious hotel and restaurant with conservatory and park. It owes its name to a nobleman from Urbino who was appointed cavalier by Napoleon.

Church of San Rocco 14th century The oratory is just outside the walls. It has a simple shape with Gothic portal. It was once called the church of Santa Maria or the hospital church because, as was the custom of the time, it was adjacent to the pilgrim's hospice. The frescoes it houses are dedicated to Our Lady, oddly superimposed

on the previous page
**the ancient village of
Montegridolfo, fought
over by the powerful
seignories of the
Malatesta and the
Montefeltro**

on the right
**the 15th-century
gateway to the castle,
topped by a tower**



on the same portion of wall. Three images of the Madonna painted in different centuries create three portrayals that can now be seen separately. They are the *Madonna with Child Enthroned and angels between Saints Rocco and Sebastian* by an anonymous artist from the Marche (1427 or 97), another piece attributed to local artist Girolamo Marchesi (1520-25) and a canvas by Guido Cagnacci (1623).

Church of San Pietro 20th century Situated along the road that leads to Trebbio, it was built on the remains of a Romanesque church of which unfortunately nothing remains. A 15th-century fresco of Christ on the Holy Cross also shows nearby castles.

Museum of the Gothic Line Housed in a renovated bunker under the walls, it has memorabilia found locally and linked to the destruction of the Gothic Line, as well as photographic material and documents.

Trebbio, Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine delle Grazie 16th century An outlying village with numerous restaurants, it has always been popular with pilgrims since the church was built on the site where the Madonna appeared. Dating from the same period is a canvas depicting the Apparition of Our Lady painted in 1549 by Pompeo Morganti di Fano. Worth noting are the details that came from the depositions of those who saw the apparition and the landscape, where Montegridolfo castle can be seen. Although it has been extensively renovated, the current building retains an 18th-century layout.

don't forget

Respect for the memory of a country at war

By following the narrow street below the wall visitors reach the Goth's Line Museum and from there eleven shelters, one of which can be visited accompanied by a guide. It is possible to see where the battle of Montegridolfo took place and where the German defences were broken down (31 August - 1 September 1944). The museum has adopted the original name given by Hitler to the defensive line that ran across the Apennines from Massa Carrara to the Adriatic Coast of Pesaro, *Götenstellung* or Goth's Line, and was built on the site where the Germans set up an observation point towards the Foglia valley from where the allied forces would have attacked in order to move towards the Po valley. Having held off the advancing allied forces for as long as possible, the line finally fell but with heavy losses: about 75,000 German and 65,000 allied soldiers died, were wounded or were missing in action. This was a dramatic event for Rimini and the surrounding area; it was one of the key battles of the Second World War, fought out by 1,200,000 soldiers using thousands of planes, cannons and tanks. Exhibits in the museum

are organized in two sections. In the first, the itinerary begins with a British military “gospel” placed in a soldier’s upper uniform pocket close to his heart and continues with wartime mementoes donated by local citizens such as compasses, shrapnel, gas masks and many weapons. It ends with photographic material, displayed following the chronological sequence of events. In the second section there are models of allied and German military vehicles and the walls are covered in propaganda from the 1943-45 period, including posters, flyers and postcards of both Italian-German and allied production, displayed following a thematic criteria and accompanied by captions on the theme of war propaganda. The itinerary ends with a symbolic memento; a metal cartridge in the nest of a great tit. Thanks to the volunteers who also designed the museum, guided visits are organized along with workshops and seminars. The museum is a one of the most important elements in the “Territorial Network System of the Gothic Line” that local and regional institutions are realizing in order to promote the area and highlight its historical and cultural heritage, with particular focus on WWII.

events

Stations of the Cross

Good Friday About a hundred people in period costume re-enact the Passion of Christ. The torch-lit procession begins from the church of San Rocco and winds its way through the narrow streets of the old town.

A Castle of Voices

July and August Attracts many top names from the world of opera and concerts. During the festival’s music events, the narrow streets of the old town are pervaded by a dreamlike atmosphere.

Montegridolfo Liberated

End of August Historical re-enactment of the battle to liberate Montegridolfo, with Second World War military vehicles around the streets of the village and participants in period uniforms.

New Olive Oil on the Table

2nd Sunday in December An event for those looking for top-quality extra-virgin olive oil and an opportunity to find out more about excellent local production. Cultivation of olives on these hills has been well-documented since ancient times and even features in the town’s coat of arms. An award is given to the year’s best producer and there are theme conferences, as well as an opportunity to taste oils.







How to get here

By plane

Rimini - International Airport "F. Fellini" **4.5 km** from the city centre

Forlì - International Airport "L. Ridolfi" **40 km**

Ancona - International Airport "R. Sanzio" **90 km**

Bologna - International Airport "G. Marconi" **100 km**

Distances

Amsterdam, 1,405 km
 Berlin, 1,535 km
 Brussels, 1,262 km
 Budapest, 1,065 km
 Copenhagen, 1,770 km
 Frankfurt, 1,043 km
 London, 1,684 km
 Munich, 680 km
 Paris, 1,226 km
 Prague, 1,089 km
 Warsaw, 1,533 km
 Vienna, 887 km
 Zurich, 645 km



By car

Rimini is connected to the north (Bologna/Milan) and to the south (towards Bari) via the A14 "autostrada" (motorway)

Four exits:

Rimini Nord
 Rimini Sud
 Riccione
 Cattolica

Distances

Bologna, 121 km
 Florence, 165 km
 Milan, 330 km
 Naples, 586 km
 Rome, 325 km
 Venice, 270 km

By train

The Riviera is well-connected to the rest of Italy. There are train lines from Milan to Bologna/Bari and via Ferrara and Ravenna to Rimini.

Distances

Rimini-Bologna: 1 hour
 Rimini-Florence: 2 hours
 Rimini-Rome: 4 hours
 Rimini-Milan:
 less than 3 hours

Regione Emilia Romagna



Provincia di Rimini





Provincia di Rimini

www.riviera.rimini.it