



# Eastern Tuscany

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## Best Places to Eat

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- ➔ LAB Pasticceria (p258)
- ➔ Ristorante Da Ventura (p262)
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## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Borgo Corsignano (p265)
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## Why Go?

The eastern edge of Tuscany is beloved by local and international film directors, who have immortalised its landscape, medieval hilltop towns and laid-back locals in a range of critically acclaimed and visually splendid films. Despite this, the region is strangely bereft of foreign tourists (Cortona is a notable exception) and so offers uncrowded trails to those visitors who decide to devote a week or so to exploration here. The attractions are many and varied: spectacular mountain scenery and walks in the Casentino; magnificent art and architecture in the medieval cities of Arezzo, Sansepolcro and Cortona; one of Italy's most significant Catholic pilgrimage sites; and Tuscany's best *bistecca alla fiorentina* (chargrilled T-bone steak) in the Val di Chiana. Your travels may be solitary but they'll always be rewarding – a particularly unusual and felicitous combination.

## Road Distances

Arezzo	94			
Cortona	65	29		
Sansepolcro	76	38	52	
Poppi	132	36	62	71
	Assisi	Arezzo	Cortona	Sansepolcro

**DON'T MISS**

Close to the Umbrian border and well off the well-trodden tourist trail, the city of Sansepolcro is known for its handmade lace, its preponderance of neighbourhood churches and its wonderful Museo Civico.

**Best Museums**

- ➔ Museo Civico, Sansepolcro (p259) Home to three magnificent paintings by Piero della Francesca.
- ➔ Museo Diocesano, Cortona (p268) Has a small but sensational collection of religious art.
- ➔ Casa Museo di Ivan Bruschi, Arezzo (p257) Showcases an antique dealer's eclectic personal collection.

**Medieval Pageants**

- ➔ Giostra del Saracino (p257), Arezzo
- ➔ Palio della Ballestra (p262), Sansepolcro
- ➔ Giostra dell'Archidado (p269), Cortona

**Resources**

- ➔ **Arezzo & surrounds** ([www.benvenutiadarezzo.it](http://www.benvenutiadarezzo.it))
- ➔ **The Casentino** ([www.casentino.net](http://www.casentino.net))
- ➔ **Parco Nazionale delle Foreste Casentinesi, Monte Falterona e Campigna** ([www.parcforestecasentinesi.it](http://www.parcforestecasentinesi.it))

**Getting Around**

Arezzo is on the Florence–Rome train line, as is Camucia, a 15-minute shuttle-bus ride from Cortona's historic centre. Regional rail lines link Arezzo with the Casentino, and Sansepolcro with Perugia. Buses in this part of Tuscany are few and far between – you can travel from Arezzo to Sansepolcro via Anghiari, or from Arezzo to Cortona via Castiglion Fiorentino, but that's about it. To explore the Casentino and Val di Chiana, you'll need a car.

**THREE PERFECT DAYS****Day 1: Arezzo**

Two major films are set in Eastern Tuscany's major city, Arezzo. Spend the day exploring the historic streets and piazzas where Roberto Benigni filmed scenes of *La vita è bella* (Life is Beautiful). On your wanders, pop into both the *duomo* and the Pieve di Santa Maria and be sure to pay homage to Piero della Francesca's genius by viewing his frescoes in the Basilica di San Francesco's Capella Bacci, where Anthony Minghella shot the most memorable scene of *The English Patient*.

**Day 2: Della Robbia Trail**

This famous family of sculptors took ceramics way beyond teacups in the 15th century, creating magnificent devotional sculptures for churches throughout Tuscany. Visit the medieval monasteries at Camaldoli and La Verna in the Parco Nazionale delle Foreste Casentinesi, Monte Falterona e Campigna to admire masterpieces in glazed terracotta by the most famous member of the family, Andrea (1435–1525).

**Day 3: Val di Chiana**

Home to apple orchards, olive groves and lush pastures where porcelain-white Chianina cattle graze, the huge Val di Chiana is worth exploring when travelling between Arezzo and Cortona, or from either town to central Tuscany. Make your way off the beaten track to visit hilltop towns such as Castiglion Fiorentino, Foiano della Chiana and Lucignano.

**Off the Beaten Track**

- ➔ History buffs will love the unspoiled medieval hilltop town of **Anghiari**, near Sansepolcro, where the famous battle of the same name occurred in 1440.
- ➔ To visit a typical Casentinesi hill town, head to unassuming **Bibbiena**, between Poppi and Arezzo.
- ➔ The town of **Stia**, in the Casentino, has a pretty setting on the Arno and is known for its fascinating wool-making heritage.