



Umbria & Le Marche

Includes →

Perugia.....	577
Lago Trasimeno	589
Todi.....	592
Assisi.....	594
Spello	601
Gubbio.....	602
Spoletto.....	605
Norcia & the Valnerina.....	609
Orvieto	611
Ancona.....	617
Parco del Conero	621
Urbino	622
Macerata.....	626
Ascoli Piceno	628
Monti Sibillini	631

Best Places to Eat

- La Taverna (p586)
- Osteria Eat Out (p600)
- Tempio del Gusto (p609)
- Ristorante Vespasia (p611)

Best Places to Stay

- B&B San Fiorenzo (p584)
- Alla Madonna del Piatto (p597)
- B&B La Magnolia (p614)
- La Cuccagna (p602)

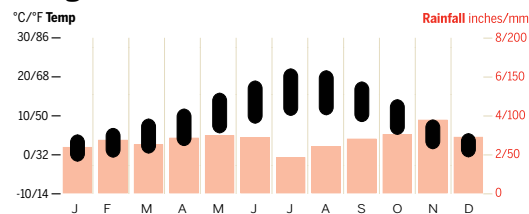
Why Go?

For years Italophiles have waxed lyrical about Tuscany's natural, artistic and culinary wonders, without so much as a passing nod to its neighbours, Umbria and Le Marche. How they have missed out! This phenomenally beautiful yet unsung region is Italy in microcosm: olive groves, vineyards, sun-ripened wheat fields stippled with wildflowers and hills plumed with cypress trees rolling gently west to the snow-dusted Apennines and east to the glittering Adriatic. In between, castle-topped medieval hill towns await, glowing like honey in the fading light of sundown.

The region scores highly on the artistic front, too, as the birthplace of Renaissance masters Raphael and Perugino, and sprightly composer Rossini. St Francis of Assisi, St Benedict and St Valentine all hail from here, making a pilgrimage to this area a profoundly spiritual one. So next time you glance at the map and your eyes alight on old-favourite Tuscany, why not press on east? You won't regret it.

When to Go

Perugia



Feb Celebrate all things truffle at Norcia's Mostra Mercato del Tar-tufo Nero festival.

May Make for Le Marche's beaches, as wild-flowers bloom on the Piano Grande.

Jun & Jul Get lost in music at the Spoleto Festival and Perugia's Umbria Jazz.

UMBRIA

Italy's green heart, Umbria is a land unto itself, the only Italian region that borders neither the sea nor another country. Removed from outside influences, it has kept alive many of Italy's old-world traditions. You'll see grandmothers in aprons making pasta by hand and front doors that haven't been locked in a century.

Separated from Le Marche by the jagged spine of the Monti Sibillini, it contrasts wild, in-your-face beauty with the gentle fall and rise of overlapping hills and wild-flower-flecked meadows. The Etruscans, Romans and medieval feuding families have left their indelible imprint on its pretty hill towns, where history seems to creep up on you at every corner – from the Gothic wonder of Orvieto to Assisi's saintly calling.

Foodies are in their element here, with the rich earthiness of the *tartufo* (truffle), fine cured meats from Norcia and full-bodied local wines finding their way onto menus.

History

Umbria is named in honour of its first inhabitants, the Umbri tribe who settled east of the Tiber around 1000 BC, establishing the towns of Spoleto, Gubbio and Assisi. They jockeyed for regional supremacy with the Etruscans to the west of the river – the founders of Perugia and Orvieto – until the 3rd century BC, when the Romans came marching through, conquering them both.

Following the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, the region spent much of the Middle Ages being fought over by Holy Roman Empire advocates (Ghibellines) and supporters of the Pope (Guelfs). Intriguingly, it was during this turbulent period that peace-loving St Francis came to prominence in Assisi.

Eventually the region became one of the Papal States, though this was not to its long-term benefit. Indeed, historians like to say that time stopped in Umbria in 1540 when the pope imposed a salt tax. The resulting war brought Umbrian culture to a standstill, which is partly why the medieval hearts of Umbrian towns are so well preserved.

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

USEFUL WEBSITES ON UMBRIA

Bella Umbria (www.bellaumbria.net)
Accommodation and restaurant listings for Umbria. Search for festivals and events by location or date.

Regione Umbria (www.regioneumbria.eu)
The official Umbrian tourist website.

Sistema Museo (www.sistemamuseo.it)
Get the inside scoop on Umbria's museums and upcoming events.

Umbria Online (www.umbriaonline.com)
Find information on accommodation, events and itineraries across Umbria.

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

i Getting Around

While having your own wheels certainly makes it easier to reach those off-the-radar hill towns and rural corners of Umbria, it is possible to get to many places by public transport with a little pre-planning.

Buses head from Perugia to most towns in the area; check at the tourist office or the bus station for exact details. **Trenitalia** (Ferrovie dello Stato; ☎ 892021; www.trenitalia.com) sparsely criss-crosses Umbria, but the regional bus company **Umbria Mobilità** (☎ 075 963 70 01; www.umbriamobilita.it) fills in the blanks.

Your first port of call for mountain biking and road cycling itineraries should be <http://bike.inumbria.it>.

Perugia

POP 162,100

Lifted by a hill above a valley patterned with fields, where the river Tiber runs swift and clear, Perugia is Umbria's petite and immediately likeable capital. Its *centro storico* (historic centre) rises in a helter-skelter of cobbled alleys, arched stairways and piazzas framed by magnificent *palazzi* (mansions). History seeps through every shadowy corner of these streets and an aimless wander through them can feel like time travel.

Back in the 21st century, Perugia is a party-loving, pleasure-seeking university city, with