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Discover umbria

Positioned in the very heart of Italy, the region of Umbria shares some qualities in common with Tuscany, its more familiar neighbor, yet distinguishes itself by unique landscapes, a rich culinary heritage and a strong identification with Italy's mystical past.

Rolling hills claim much of the Umbrian landscape, and olive groves and vineyards flourish, as in Tuscany, enhancing the region's reputation as a producer of quality wines and olive oils. But the Umbrian countryside also yields delicacies less commonly seen: wonderful truffles and special varieties of celery, lentils and wild asparagus give a unique character to the local cuisine.

Like Tuscany, too, Umbria claims its share of Etruscan and Roman ruins, along with well-preserved medieval hill towns (Gubbio, Todi, Spello and Spoleto being enchanting examples of

their kind), but when one traces Umbria's history a distinct mystical element emerges. From the passage of monks along the Via Flaminia in Roman times to the later lifetimes and legacies of St. Francis and St. Benedict, Umbria evolved to be and remains a *terra dei santi*, or "land of saints"—

rich with shrines, hermitages (even some in caves) and monasteries.

And many Umbrian towns are still livened each year by festivals in homage to their patron saints. So, come to Umbria to relax

amid the natural beauty of its mountains, lakes and protected parks. Come to enjoy wonderful meals. Or come as a pilgrim to follow in the footsteps of the saints. You won't be disappointed!

The Doorways staff is happy to recommend any of a number of vacation residences in the wonderful region of Umbria.



Why Umbria?

- ◇ Land of the Saints
- ◇ Tempting Truffles
- ◇ Outstanding Cuisine
- ◇ Artistic Beauties
- ◇ Lakeside Recreation
- ◇ Mountain Walks
- ◇ Medieval Hill Towns
- ◇ International Music Festivals

Perugia

As capital of Umbria's largest province, **Perugia** is a vibrant modern town with an attractive medieval center, closed to traffic. At the heart of town, in the delightful sloping Piazza Quattro Novembre, sits one of Europe's most important Romanesque monuments—the Fontana Maggiore. A series of carved marble reliefs by Nicola and Giovanni Pisano decorate the fountain's basins and hint at the high caliber of artwork found in several Perugia locales—notably the Galleria Nazionale and the Collegio del Cambio (which houses an extensive collection of works by Pietro Vannucci, or "Perugino"—a master of the influential Umbrian School of painting). Each July, large numbers of music fans swarm to Perugia for its international jazz festival, Umbriajazz. Yet, happily, there's no need to wait for July to enjoy the delicious chocolate confections at the local house of Perugia.

Perugia's Environs and the Lago Trasimeno

Just outside of Perugia, the **Ipogeo dei Volumni** is one of the most impressive Etruscan tombs ever discovered, and a delightful wine museum is found in the local village of **Torgiano**.

West of Perugia, near the border with Tuscany, lies Italy's fourth largest lake, the **Lago Trasimeno**. Popular with sports enthusiasts for its windsurfing, sailing and swimming opportunities, the lake also offers pic-

turesque locales for more leisurely pursuits. Picnicking is a delightful option all around Trasimeno, or on one of the lake's three islands, accessible by regular boat service. Trasimeno is full of carp, pike, grey mullet and perch, and excellent fish dishes are served in the local restaurants, including a traditional fish soup known as *tegamaccio*.



Assisi

As the birthplace of St. Francis, patron saint of Italy and founder of the Franciscan order, **Assisi** has become an oft-frequented pilgrimage site over the last couple of centuries. In the Basilica di San Francesco—greatly restored since the damaging earthquake of 1997—one finds some of the most important works of art in Italy; there, prominent artists such as Giotto, Cimabue, Martini and Lorenzetti all created frescoes inspired by the life of the saint.

Wandering Assisi's picturesque medieval streets, visitors will discover a number of other interesting religious monuments but, for a real sense of the monastic spirit of St. Francis, it is perhaps most interesting to visit the **Eremo delle Carceri**, a peaceful Franciscan monastery just outside of town, or the secluded church of **San Damiano**, where Francis is said to have received his divine calling.

Monte Subasio and the Central Hill Towns

To the east of Assisi, **Mount Subasio** rises to its summit. The mountain and surrounding area today enjoy the status of a protected regional park. Marked trails offer delightful opportunities for hikers, leading all the way up from Assisi, or down to **Spello** on the mountain's other side. Spello is an enchanting destination with peacefully winding streets and pink stone houses. Originally a colony on the ancient Via Flaminia—the old Roman road connecting Rome with the Adriatic—Spello is home to a number of interesting Roman ruins, including a couple of impressive gateways and



an *anfiteatro*.

Nearby **Montefalco**, sometimes referred to as the "balcony of Umbria"—distinguishes itself by the spectacular views it offers over much of the region. No fewer than eight saints were born in Montefalco, among them St. Clare, first sister of the Franciscan order. The town also harbors an exceptional art gallery and is famous for its excellent red wines, including Sagrantino and Rosso di Montefalco. (Yet another prized local substance—a pungent, particularly green olive oil—is produced at nearby **Trevi**.)

Spoletto

Once a prominent Roman colony along the Via Flaminia, the medieval town of **Spoletto** is positioned breathtakingly over a wooded gorge. Visitors can gain a splendid view over the gorge by strolling across the monumental 14th century bridge known as the Ponte delle Torri. Spoletto is known world wide for its prestigious international music festival—the Festival dei Due Mondi, which has a corresponding American component

held in Charleston, West Virginia. Each year, the last concert of the Spoletto festival is held in the Piazza del Duomo (Spoletto's Duomo is the loveliest in central Italy), while many of the earlier events take place in the beautiful Caio Melisso, a wonderful 19th century example of the 18th and 19th century chamber theatres that have been painstakingly restored all over Umbria.

Gubbio and the Northern Landscapes

Set upon a lower slope of Monte Ingino, **Gubbio** enjoys a verdant backdrop as enchanting as its medieval streets and handsome *palazzi* of locally quarried, light gray stone. Visitors can climb or hop a cable car up Ingino for magnificent views back down over the town. Gubbio is famous for its annual festival—the Festa dei Ceri—during which giant floats in the form of candlesticks are paraded through the town in honor of

patron saint and bishop, St. Ubaldo.

Northern Umbria is home to many beautiful landscapes and nature preserves. The **Upper Tiber Valley** is decidedly picturesque. The **Parco Naturale del Monte Cucco** has 30 marked trails traversing a lovely cluster of limestone mountains, while the hills a bit farther south around **Gualdo Tadino** offer dramatic climbs through the Valle del Fonno.



Orvieto, Todi and Highlights of the “Grand Tour”

Two of Umbria’s most popular towns, **Orvieto** and **Todi**, are connected by a lovely scenic road following the Lake of Corbara and the Tiber River through a lush green stretch of countryside. Orvieto is a striking town of pre-Roman origin, overlooking the



river valley from its elevated position on the rim of an ancient volcano. An awe-inspiring Gothic Duomo is the premiere attraction, although the white wines of the region have contributed no less to the fame of Orvieto’s name.

Todi too claims an impressive hillside

location overlooking the Tiber, but has a more intimate appeal. Its steep old streets and central Piazza del Popolo appear much as they did in the 13th century. A walk through Todi’s lovely public gardens leads to Santa Maria della Consolazione, which has been called Italy’s most perfect Renaissance church.

A number of tiny towns near Umbria’s southern border have enjoyed great favor since the days of the “Grand Tour” in the 18th and 19th centuries. **Narni** and **Amelia** enchant with their picturesque Roman ruins and **Terne** draws visitors by virtue of the Cascade delle Marmore, a beautiful series of waterfalls extolled by Lord Byron.

Norcia and the Beauty of the South

In Umbria’s mountainous southeastern corner, visitors may be surprised to stumble onto one of the culinary capitals of Italy. **Norcia** is famous for its truffles—the rare subterranean fungi that are hunted by specially trained dogs and incorporated into the local cuisine or sold at hefty prices in gourmet shops worldwide. Norcia’s cheeses are also widely acclaimed—as are its pork products such as sausages and salami. But the town is not known for food alone; St. Benedict, founder of the Benedictine order and patron saint of Europe, was born in Norcia and was profoundly influenced by hermits living in local caves. These caves can still be seen near a monas-



tery just outside of town.

The landscapes around Norcia are sublime. To the east, toward the region of Le Marche, rise the **Monti Sibillini**, magical mountains crowned by a vast upland plain known as the **Piano Grande**. Excellent walking and even hang gliding opportunities are afforded by the slopes and plain, which, in springtime, are blanketed with rare varieties of flowers. To the west is the **Valnerina**, a beautiful green valley providing a sumptuous bed for the Nera River. The Valnerina is full of wonderful villages—tiny localities existing since the Middle Ages—endowed with castles, fountains, and peaceful churches and monaster-

