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UMBRIA REGION ASSISI AND SAINT FRANCIS TOUR FROM ROME PRIVATE DAY TRIP



TOUR DESCRIPTION

Dear friends, this tour is designed for travelers who wish to spend a day exploring significant sites of Italian Christianity. You will visit the birthplace and home of Saint Francis, the Patron Saint of Italy, who devoted his life to Jesus by renouncing his possessions in favor of a life characterized by austerity, poverty, and great sacrifices.

An English-speaking driver will meet you and take you to the Umbria Region, where you can enjoy the picturesque natural landscape filled with gentle hills, medieval villages, and charming farmhouses.

-ASSISI-

The city was founded during Roman times, but its fame and significance really began in the Middle Ages. In the 13th century, when the Basilica of St. Francis was constructed just outside the city center, the town of Assisi had already been established using local pink and white stones from Mount Subasio.

San Francis died in 1226 and one year later Pope Gregory IX gave order to construct a church in memory of Francis.

-St. Francis's Basilica-

The first church built was the inferior structure, upon which a superior one was later constructed. The church was consecrated in 1253 by Pope Innocent IV, and the overall work was completed in 1367. The greatest painters of the time were commissioned to decorate the walls and ceilings of the building.

The sepulcher of Saint Francis, located in the crypt, was discovered only in 1818, although the saint had already been buried in the church in 1230, before its inauguration. The exact location of the tomb was never revealed to prevent barbarians and pirates from stealing the holy remains.

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-The inferior Basilica-

On the sidewalls, there are frescoes depicting scenes from the life of St. Francis and the Passion of Jesus, created around 1260 by a painter known as the "Master of Francis."

Above the altar, in the spandrels, is the apotheosis of St. Francis, also by the same painter.

In the right transept, you can see frescoes concerning the life of Jesus, created by the renowned artist **Giotto**, while the left transept features decorations by **Lorenzetto**.

-Superior Basilica-

The artwork is distinguished by its decorative scheme, which is divided into two main sections. The frescoes in the apse and transept were created by **Cimabue** and his workshop, while those on the main nave and vaults are attributed to **Giotto**.

The sidewalls of the main nave are divided into three strips: the lower section depicts the life of St. Francis, while the central and upper bands feature scenes from the Old and New Testaments.

An elegant wooden choir, crafted by **Domenico Indovino**, is positioned against the wall of the apse, which is adorned with paintings that illustrate the life of the Virgin Mary.

The façade of the church is constructed from local stones and features a large double rose design, reminiscent of the famous **Cosmati style**. This structure is a clear example of Italian-Gothic architecture.

Inside, the upwarded single nave is characteristic of monastic design. It reflects elements of French Gothic architecture and symbolizes the spirituality of the Saint.

- CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA DEGLI ANGELI -

It was one of the most significant places in the life of San Francis.

Built by the end of the 16th century, the church, the 7th world's largest building, was conceived to house and unite the structures of the famous convent called **PORZIUNCOLA**, where the Saint chose to live, where he founded his Religious Order, and where he died in October 3th 1226.

Pope Pius IV commissioned the construction of this magnificent edifice, whose project plan was entrusted to **Galeazzo Alessi** and completed one century later with the construction of the huge cupola.

Inside the enormous church, exactly beneath the vast cupola, is the old oratory called "**Chapel of Porziuncola**", while the right transept is called "**Chapel of the Transit**", where, behind the still original door, the stretched down lifeless body of the Saint was found.

Noteworthy is the "**Chapel of the Roseto**", whose name comes from a legend in which Francis would have made a plunge in a rose field and the thorn would have suddenly disappeared.

Inside the convent of the Porziuncola, there is a "**Painted Crucifix**" (13th c.) and a portrait of Francis made by an unknown painter who later came to be called "**master of San Francis**".

-SHRINE OF SAN DAMIANO-

This is another significant place in the life of Francis, the church of San Damiano. Here, in 1205 the Saint would have heard a voice which said :<< Francis, go and restore my church which is threatening to fall>>.

According to the reporter of the time, these words were uttered by the crucifix today held in the church of Saint Claire.

The edifice indicated by the wooden crucifix was that of the future church of San Damiano, then restored by Francis and his companions.

Here too, Claire founded the convent where Francis would compose the *Cantico*.

Apart from the spiritual value of the site, the shrine is worth visiting from an artistic-architectural point of view, due to the splendid oratory of Claire, the cloister frescoed by Eusebio da San Giorgio, and by the dining room.

-SAINT CLAIRE CHURCH-

The second largest church in Assisi was built in 1257 and consecrated eight years later by Pope Clement IV. The body of Saint Claire had already been buried there in 1260.

The façade is simply adorned with a main portal topped by a Gothic rose window, while the right side is supported by three massive brick buttresses. The building features alternating bands of pink and white local stone.

Inside, the right transept showcases beautiful frescoes depicting “*scenes from the life of Saint Claire*”, which date back to the 13th century. Additional interesting frescoes are found on the left side and date from the 15th century. The chapel of “**Holy Relics**” houses the famous **Crucifix** from the 13th century, which originates from the San Damiano church. According to ancient chronicles, it was this crucifix that instructed Francis to restore the church.

-ST. RUFINO-

From Santa Chiara Church, a steep hill with steps leads to the Cathedral of **Saint Rufino**, a medieval church built in the middle ages on a *sacred roman area* and then rebuilt in the 11th c. by the archbishop Ugone upon a lengthy building site ended in 1253, year in which the church was consecrated by pope Innocent IV. Less famous than the others but, it is worthy of visiting for the splendid façade, an umbra-romanico artwork, framed by three horizontal orders:

- in the first lower one there are the three portal gates decorated by lions and surmounted by bas-relief lunettes;
- in the second one there are three big roses with the symbols of Evangelists;
- the third one is a pediment with Gothic arch. On one side stand out the bell tower with double arched window, part of the old church.

The interior, designed in a basilica floor plan and renovated in the 16th century, still features the **Baptismal Font** where Claire and Francis were baptized. It also includes a **Wooden Choir** from the 15th century and the Franciscan Underground Oratory, where Saint Francis would retreat before preaching to pilgrims.

Next to the church is the “**Museo della Cattedrale**,” which houses architectural elements from the previous church, a collection of frescoes from the “**Oratory of St. Rufinuccio**,” and paintings from various churches.

In the churchyard, a plaque marks the spot where the house of Claire once stood.

To the left of the church, there are ruins of a **Roman theater and amphitheater**.

The Roman amphitheater, constructed in the first half of the 1st century AD, retains its elliptical layout, which is highlighted by the arrangement of medieval houses and a travertine wedge arch. The arena consists of a built section alongside a garden area. Within the arena, several buildings designed for tourist accommodation provide a panoramic view of the entire archaeological site.

Eremo delle Carceri, is the location where Saint Francis of Assisi and his followers went to pray and meditate. Situated 4 kilometers from Assisi and at an elevation of 791 meters above sea level on the slopes of Mount Subasio, the Carceri Hermitage is close to several natural caves that have been visited by hermits since the early Christian era. It was donated by the Municipality of Assisi to the Benedictines; the latter then gave it to Saint Francis, so that he could "imprison" himself in meditation.

From the cathedral, you can easily reach the heart of the city, **Piazza del Comune**, which reflects its most recent restoration (beneath the square, is the site, and the remains of the ancient Roman Forum of the old Assisi). The square is centered around the so-called "**Temple of Minerva**," built in 30 B.C. and originally dedicated to Hercules. It was later transformed into a church, Santa Maria sopra Minerva, in the 15th century.

The square is also enclosed by two important edifices: **the Palace of the Captain of People, and the Palace of Priori, both dating back the 13th century.**

On the right, the Arch of Volta Pinta opens up, adorned with frescoes from the 15th century. Just a little downhill, the Arco dei Priori leads to the Chiesa Nuova, which was built in 1615 by Filippo III of Spain, following a Greek floor plan on the site where Saint Francis was born. It is here that Francis famously stripped off all his clothes to make his renowned sacrifice in the name of poverty and Jesus Christ.

Restaurant selected by Michelin Guide

La Locanda del Cardinale, Piazza del Vescovado 8, Assisi.

From €45 to 90-Stone arches of a medieval house and suspended on the remains and mosaics of a Roman domus already make the experience unforgettable. If - then - we add a modern and refined cuisine where the territory is enhanced, we just have to book! Phone +39 075 815245

Benedikto, via Eremo delle Carceri 1/a Assisi On the edge of Assisi's historic center, in the refined setting of the Nun hotel, Benedikto offers a selection of traditional Umbrian products, but the culinary offerings are fundamentally creative, courtesy of the talented chef Enea Barbanera (his apricot, pine nut, and rosemary dessert is excellent). In good weather, dinner on the terrace overlooking the fortress of Assisi becomes a romantic experience. Phone +39 075 813163 -Modern, Italian contemporary-

Restaurant selected by Tripadvisor

Nonna Nini, via San Rufino 4, Assisi

Phone + 39 320 913 0509

Vegetarian options, Vegan options, Gluten free options

Osteria Monte Frumentario, via San Francesco 4, Assisi

Phone +39 350 968 6600

Vegetarian options