



info@rome-limousines.com www.rome-limousines.com

UMBRIA REGION CASCIA, SANTA RITA SHRINE AND ROCCAPORENA FROM ROME PRIVATE DAY TOUR



TOUR DESCRIPTION

This Daily Excursion has been created for all those devoted to Santa Rita from Cascia and eager to discover the places where the Saint lived and where she used to pray, were she made her religious vow and the location of her holy burial spot. Moreover, you will see her native village, Roccaporena, and some sacred places like the house where she was born, the church where she got married, the house where she lived part of her life with her husband and the garden of miracle.

-CASCIA-

In the municipality of Cascia there was **Cursula**, a <u>Roman inhabited center</u> destroyed in the 1st century b.C. due to the barbaric devastations and earthquakes that have always disrupted the town and the surrounding areas. In the Middle Ages it was sacked by the Byzantines and the Lombards.

Established in common in the 12th century, Cascia was subdued by the Trinci family and later by Federico II. As common use of the Umbrian cities, it is during the Middle Ages that the city experienced its heyday.

Originally under the domination of the Folignate Lords, it later passed under the dominion of Frederick II of Swabia, and was subsequently contended without success by the nearby cities of Norcia, Leonessa and Spoleto.

Only on the threshold of the 16th century it was annexed to the Papal State, under whose rule it remained for less than thirty years, since then it maintained its independence. It was elevated to the rank of city in 1596 by Pope Clement VIII. It remained linked to the State of the Church except during the brief Napoleonic period. In 1809, during the French occupation, the territory of Cascia was dismembered to constitute the municipality of Poggiodomo; later, in 1850 it granted the village of Trimezzo to Cittareale, in the then Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, passing the state border between the two municipalities. In 1860 it was annexed, with all of Umbria, to the Kingdom of Sardinia, which became the Kingdom of Italy on 17 March 1861.

The Sanctuary

The Basilica, the Basilica inferior, the Monastery and the Penitenziera belonge to the Complex of the Shrine of Santa Rita da Cascia.

Rita from Cascia, was born Margherita Lotti (Born in Roccaporena, 1381 and died in Cascia, 22 May 1457), and was an Italian nun of the Eremitano Monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena, beatified by Pope Urban VIII in 1628 and proclaimed Saint by Pope Leo XIII in 1900.

The **Sanctuary of Santa Rita da Cascia** is a **religious complex of Cascia** in which Santa Rita and her mortal remains are venerated: the sanctuary is made up of different structures that cover places where the Saint lived and for the reception of pilgrims.

Originally the sanctuary was simply composed of a monastery and a small church that housed the urn with the remains of Saint Rita; at the beginning of the 19th century, the existing structures became inadequate due to the ever increasing number of pilgrims arriving in Cascia and it was thus, thanks to the will of Mother Maria Teresa Fasce, that the construction of a bigger sanctuary began, capable of responding to the needs of the faithful: the complex includes two Basilicas, a Monastery, several multi-purpose rooms and a Hostel.

The **Basilica** of Santa Rita da Cascia was strongly desired by Mother Maria Teresa Fasce. Construction work began in 1937 and was solemnly consecrated ten years later, in 1947, after many difficulties, above all of economic nature; the church, raised to a minor basilica in 1955, was built according to the engineer's Spirito Maria Chiappetta project plan and it is in the shape of a greek cross plan, characterized by four apses at the ends: in one of these opens up the **Chapel of Santa Rita** which houses the sarcophagus of the Saint. Incorporated into the basilica is also part of the old church, while the decorative elements, mostly paintings, were executed by artists such as Luigi Montanarini, Gisberto Ceracchini, Artemio Giovagnoni, Armando Marrocco and Ferruccio Ferrazzi.

The **Lower Basilica** of Santa Rita da Cascia, <u>originally the crypt</u> of the basilica, was inaugurated in 1988 and designed by architects Rosario Scrimieri, Francesco Genco and Maurizio Caproni: inside is the tomb of Mother Maria Teresa Fasce and the remains of the Blessed Simone Fidati, together with the eucharistic miracle; in the church there are works of art by Luigi Filocamo and Armando Marrocco.

The **Monastery of Santa Rita da Cascia** is the place where the saint lived her experience of monastic life for more than forty years and also the place where she died: built in the thirteenth century, it was originally dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene. It was enlarged during the 18th century and still houses nuns of the Augustinian community. In the monastery is possible to observe some fundamental places from the life of Saint Rita, such as the **Cloister**, with the **Well**, the **Vine**, which according to tradition sprouted from a wood by the work of the Saint, and the characteristic **holes on the wall**, lair of the wall bees. **The ancient choir** contains XVI century frescoes and paintings of the XVII and XVIII century, displaying scenes from the Saint's life. Yet, **the Oratory** where Saint Rita received the stigmata, several cellas, one of which belonged to the Saint, and others that contain objects belonging to her such as the **wedding ring** and various sarcophagi, the **rose garden** recreated to commemorate the miracle of the rose and figs.

The most important relic is the "Cassa Solenne" or "Solemn Coffin" that for almost three century housed the body of the Saint.

The **Penitentiary** is an Italian religious building belonging to the complex of the Sanctuary of Santa Rita da Cascia. Built on a project by architects Rosario Scrimieri, Francesco Genco and Maurizio Caproni, it was inaugurated on 10 May 1986. Inside it is possible to carry out the sacrament of Confession.

The building is made up by several rooms and works as a connection hub between the lower Basilica and the upper Basilica, and whose access is via a helical staircase from the apse of Santa Rita.

To the side of the entrance is "la fonte della vita" or "the source of life", a symbolic fountain created by Armando Marrocco consisting of a split

rock through whose cracks the water flows, from which a group of bronze doves drinks.

The entrance portal of the Penitentiary is made up of bronze panels depicting the four cardinal virtues: justice, symbolized by the scales; the fortress, symbolized by a lion; prudence from a burning brazier; temperance from a windmill. At the entrance, in the Sala dell'Accoglienza, there is a mosaic by Armando Marrocco whose theme is a rainbow, a sign of alliance between God and man and the sculptural group in travertine of the Prodigal Son, also by Armando Morocco

From the Reception Room we then move on to the Room of Preparations for Confessions, to the Room of Individual Confessions and finally to the Thanksgiving Room, where there is a statue of the Redeemer completed by a group of flying seagulls, also by Marrocco.

The Penitentiary is open to the public only on occasions of high turnout.

The **Sala della Pace** (Room of Peace) was created to accommodate pilgrims on the most frequented days at the sanctuary: it is a multipurpose space, inaugurated in 2008 by Monsignor Riccardo Fontana and able to accommodate about seven hundred people; the room, which takes its name from one of the cornerstones of the life of Saint Rita, is often used for the celebration of Holy Mass.

As the Basilica, even the **Home of Spiritual Exercises and the Hotel delle Rose** were strongly wanted by Madre Fasce: in the first, gatherings of prayer groups are held with the possibility of staying overnight in its fifty-five rooms, while in the second, originally called Casa del Pellegrino, the pilgrim is given the opportunity to stay in Cascia, in a structure of one hundred and sixty rooms.

History of the overall renovation work

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the steady increase of pilgrims visiting the reliquary with the remains of Saint Rita, made the old

church unsuitable for hosting such a large number of people: this was how Mother Maria Teresa Fasce, today blessed, abbess of the nearby monastery of Santa Rita da Cascia where Saint Rita had lived for more than forty years, promoted the construction of a new church suited to the needs of the faithful; the main problem to start the work was the total lack of funds. The first offers, in addition to a donation from Pope Benedict XV, were collected through the press of a newspaper, called Dalle Api alle Rose, which soon received considerable success and which called attention to Cascia helping to move an ever increasing number of pilgrims, who in turn left offerings to build the new temple.

However, the costs for the realization of the project plan, laid down by the architect Armando Brasini, were too high comparing to the real economic possibilities and so in 1931 the project was downsized: Mother Fasce, after asking Don Luigi Orione for advice, wrote to the pope of the time, Pio XI, who donated a large sum of money and commissioned his own engineer, Maria Spirito Chiapetta, to design and direct a new project plan, then modified by the architects Giuseppe Calori and Giuseppe Martinenghi. The first stone was laid on June 20, 1937 by Cardinal Enrico Gasparri; the work ended up in 1947, with a solemn consacration that took place on May 18th of the same year; on 1st August 1955, at the behest of Pope Pius XII, the church was elevated to a minor basilica.

Details

The church, located almost on the top of the hill of Sant' Agostino and whose access to the churchyard is allowed by a short staircase, has a façade covered in white Tivoli travertine set between two spiers crowned by two small bell towers surmounted by iron crosses; in the central part there is the only entrance portal to the church supported by an architrave on which a salute to the saint is carved:

"Hail Rita, vase of love, bride of Christ painful you, from the thorns of the Savior, beautiful born as a rose".



The columns that support the architrave and which frame the wooden portal in the center, are decorated with bas-reliefs by Eros Pellini, depicting the life of Saint Rita; in the upper part of the facade there is a large window, decorated with a cross supported by six angels and ending with a tympanum below which the date of the end of the construction work is carved. On the left side, protected by a bronze gate, is the portal of the old church of Santa Rita.

Internally, its greek cross plan is divided into four apses and it is surrounded by a colonnade that supports a Women's Gallery or Matroneo (the women's gallery, or tribune, is a balcony or a loggia placed inside a building and originally intended to accommodate women, and the name Matroneo derives precisely from "matron"), which runs along the entire perimeter of the structure: on the walls, where narrow windows decorated with colored glass open up, obtained by Armando Marrocco and Silvio Consadori, the stations of the Via Crucis, by Eros Pellini, in white marble, are positioned; then we have a walnut pulpit, sculpted by Emilio Monti; the flooring at the center of the church is of polychrome marble depicting the coat of arms of Pope Pius XII. In the **central area is a painting, in neo-Byzantine style**, by Luigi Montanarini, which covers an area of about three hundred square meters and starts from the dome to continue along the lantern, the sails and the four pillars; in the dome is depicted the dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit, and the glory of the Augustinian Saints; in the sails, surrounded by angels, the figures of Saint Rita, Saint Augustine, Saint Clare from Montefalco, Saint Nicholas from Tolentino, Blessed Simone Fidati, Saint Giovanni, San Facondo, the blessed Giuliana da Cornillòn and San Tommaso from Villanova; on the four pillars the transit, the canonization and the works of Rita are painted, in addition to the elevation of the church to Basilica.

In the entrance apse is the fresco by Silvio Consadori, dating 1956, depicting the *Adoration of the Cross* and, by the same author, is the pictorial decoration of the triumphal arch, where the *Prayer of Jesus* is shown in Gethsemane and the *Return of Women from Calvary* in the women's gallery, with scenes from the life of Jesus such as the *flight into Egypt*, the baptism in the Jordan, the fall under the cross.

The main apse, corresponding to the presbytery, aligned with the entrance, was redone in 1981 and access is via steps in pink aurora marble, the same material also used for the flooring:

the **High Altar** is formed a crystal plate that rests on grapevine branches made of gilded bronze;

the **Tabernacle**, by Giacomo Manzù, has an oval shape and is decorated with ears of corn, vine shoots and a rose.

The **paintings** were commissioned to Luigi Filocamo and the *Last Supper* is represented in the Conch, in the Triumphal Arch are the *Sacrifice of Isaac* and the *Passover* and along the Women's Gallery, we find several *Augustinian saints*. The area of the high altar is completed by a **Crucifix and a Bronze Eucharistic lamp** similar to an olive branch.

On the left side there is the **Apse of Santa Rita** with a fresco in the vault by Ferruccio Ferrazzi depicting *Christ seated on a throne and Saint Rita at his feet* surrounded by *angels;*

in the Triumphal Arch two episodes from the life of the saint, the recovery from the stigmata on the forhead and Rita's pilgrimage to Rome in 1450 and finally along the women's gallery are depicted the theological and cardinal virtues;

in the same environment there is also an eighteenth century canvas of the Madonna del Buon Consiglio and the parchment of the decree of the elevation of the basilica church.

In the same apse, the chapel of Saint Rita, in neo-Byzantine style, has also been obtained, bordered by a wrought iron grille: the body of the saint is housed in a glass case, in turn placed in a sarcophagus, built in 1930 and placed in its current position on May 18th, 1947. The sarcophagus has a marble base, carved by Eros Pellini and on the sides the four angels of the cardinal virtues, namely *temperance*, *fortitude*, *justice and prudence*; the work is completed with a votive lamp, created by Artemio Giovagnoni and donated in 1981 by the municipality of Cascia.

A narrow door leads to the so-called "**Church of Blessed Rita**", that is the old church, incorporated in the new one, which housed the body of the Saint from 1577 to 1947 and used for the prayers of the nuns of the

nearby convent; damaged by an earthquake in 1703 insomuch that the body was kept for four years in a warehouse in the garden of the monastery, was then partly demolished to build the new temple: the entrance portal and some altars, completely restored in 1994, still survive. Originally the basilica also used to have a crypt, later transformed into a new church, called the Lower Basilica.

Lower Basilica

This structure was originally the crypt of the basilica of Santa Rita da Cascia, from which it was built on its foundations in 1947: the transformation into a church took place only subsequently, according to the project of the architects Rosario Scrimieri, Francesco Genco and Maurizio Caproni and inaugurated the 19th May 1988, with the solemn consacration by Monsignor Antonio Ambrosiano. The entrance to the basilica is through an opening of the lateral façade of the above basilica and internally it appears as in its greek cross plan, with a single nave: on the main altar there is a painting by Luigi Filocamo, depicting the Sacred Heart of Jesus, while below the table is a marble panel depicting the Last Supper by **Eros Pellini**; the area is completed with a *processional cross* and an ambo in polychrome marble made by Armando Marrocco and some statues by Pellini. On the right side of the transept is the chapel dedicated to the blessed Simone Fidati: beneath a stone altar are the monk's bones, while a tabernacle holds the Eucharistic's miracle; on this side it is also possible to access a room that gathers the ex voto. On the left side of the transept is the chapel of Mother Teresa Fasce: the body of the blessed rests in a glass case placed at the center of the chapel and behind her it is possible to observe some relics that belonged to the abbess. The left arm of the church is completed with a painting representing St. Mary Magdalene, painted by Cesarino Vincenzi. Along the left side of the basilica there is a small chapel dedicated to the adoration of the Eucharistic.

On the way to Roccaporena there is a statue of Santa Rita.

The great devotion of the Lebanese people to Santa Rita in Cascia is represented by the statue of the saint carved in Lebanese stone and placed at the entrance to the city.

The monument, financed by the devoted Sarkis Sarkis and created by the well-known Lebanese artist Nayef Alwan, was inaugurated in October 2015, after being blessed by Pope Francis, in St. Peter's Square in Rome.

-ROCCAPORENA-

Roccaporena is a fraction of the municipality of Cascia, in the province of Perugia.

The village is located at a height of 707 m, at the end of a small gorge, about 6 kms from Cascia. According to the Istat 2001 census data, it is inhabited by 73 residents.

The town has existed since the Middle Ages, when, between 1371 and 1381, Rita Lotti, then Santa Rita da Cascia was born. In 1939 the <u>Opera di Santa Rita</u> was founded to promote the cult of the Saint, to cure and make to know his memories in Roccaporena, to do charitable works on his example by setting up an orphanage. The traditional isolation of the places was interrupted in 1950, when the road (the only one) connecting Roccaporena to Cascia was inaugurated.

Things of interest

Scoglio di Santa Rita (XIV century)

It is a rock where according to tradition the saint prayed intensely so as to leave imprints of the knees and elbows. The rock lies on the top of a rocky spur, about 120m above the base of the valley. In 1919 the rock was incorporated into a chapel, rebuilt in 1979 following an earthquake.

-Via Crucis, a religious path that climbs from the bottom of the valley up to the rock, artistically illuminated at night.

House of Saint Rita (XIV century)

The documents of the beatification process do not provide certain date regarding the house in which Rita was born. Cardinal Fausto Poli (born in

Usigni, Poggiodomo, trusted man of Pope Urban VIII) when he decided to establish a place of public worship in Roccaporena in which Rita was venerated, had the marital home converted into a chapel, a clear sign that the birthplace was not it no longer existed, perhaps destroyed by the earthquake of 1599. The first to mention the house where the Blessed was born was Father Nicola Simonetti from Maltigliano, one of the first biographers of the Saint. In 1697, after seeing the marital one transformed into a chapel, he identified the birthplace, which maintained the ancient name of the "Mancini house". In 1629 Cardinal Fausto Poli consecrated the entire area as a chapel; inside there is a canvas by the Neapolitan painter Luca Giordano (17th century).

Adjacent is the "Garden of the Miracle", likely linked to the last days of Rita's earthly life, portrayed in the bronze sculpture by Rodolfo Maleci made in 1941. The statue represents the Saint gravely ill with her cousin. She listens the feeble voice whisper her last desire: "bring me a rose and two figs from my little garden". In January is not possible to find rose blossoming and two figs. The cousin going into the garden, really finds what Rita had disired. A writing from the 1600's mentions the events.

Sanctuary of Santa Rita (1948)

Designed by the architect Oreste della Piana. The entrance is preceded by a porch that include a statue of the Saint dressed as peasant. The interior has three naves, the apse and the walls are adorned with mosaics. In two side chapels there are six painted and multicolored glass windows made in 1966 by the Milanese artist Amalia Panigati. In the church there is also the leather mantle which, according to tradition, belonged to Rita.

Church of San Montano (XIII century)

Where Santa Rita married her husband Paolo di Ferdinando. The interior has two naves covered by cross vaults; the apse is enriched by some 15th century frescoes.

Lazzaretto

Originally a hospital where the Saint treated several patients.

To all those customers eager to know other places nearby, we remind them that it is possible, by agreements with the driver, to add a visit to Spoleto.

-SPOLETO-

Spoleto is undoubtedly one of the most important and significant Umbrian cities, not only for its position, at the foot of Monteluco mountain, and for the grandeur of its monuments, but also for the international reputation that was born with great travelers of the past, continues today with the cosmopolitan audience that from 1958 to today crowds the Spoleto festival.

The first settlement in Spoleto was founded by the Umbrians in the highest part, where the fortress would later arise: traces of the cyclopean walls of the 4th century b.C. can still be met in this area. After the Roman period, the importance of Spoleto was due to the layout of the Via Flaminia, along which passed all the peoples who came down from Rome from the north. It became the seat of a Lombard duchy, Spoleto was then an important municipality. The city was marked by the establishment of numerous monastic orders and preserved its prosperity over the centuries.

Arch of Druso

The Arch of Drusus rises along the cardo of the ancient Roman Spoleto, which together with the Decumanus formed one of the two road axes of the Etruscan-Roman cities.

This arch from the first half of the 1st century AD was erected to celebrate the memory of the son of the emperor Tiberius. Following the cardo you reach the market square, once the ancient city forum.

Piazza del Mercato

As already mentioned, in Roman times it was the heart of the city of Spoleto. Today too, is exactly the heart of the town but with different functions. The magnificent 17th century fountain built by Pope Urban VIII, built with recycled materials, immediately stands out. On a corner of the

square are the Palazzo Comunale, of medieval origin, and, on via Fontesecca, a basilica of Roman origin. The art gallery is set up in the town hall built on the remains of a Roman house, whose excavations can be visited.

Roman Theatre

At the end of Corso Mazzini there is Piazza della Libertà where are the remains of the Roman theater dating back to the 1st century a.D. The theater had a capacity of 3000 spectators and was brought to light in the nineteenth century. In the nearby monastery of Sant'Agata, one of the oldest sacred complexes in the city, the National Archaeological Museum is now housed, the most interesting finds of which belong to the pre-Roman period.

Duomo

It is the cathedral of Spoleto, famous all over the world because it is the splendid choreography of the Spoleto Festival.

The church, built and consecrated at the end of the 12th century, is dedicated to the Assumption, and stands on the site where there were at least two previous sacred buildings.

The façade, undoubtedly one of the greatest results of the Umbrian Romanesque style, is divided into three orders and is the result of at least three different construction phases.

In fact, that of the original project reflected the basilica layout, and the bell tower probably also belongs to this stage;

the pediment with the **mosaic of Solsterno (1207)** and the **three upper rose windows**, which frame the original underlying one, belong to a second construction phase (beginning of the 13th century), it is one of the most beautiful of all in central Italy.

The portico, which closes the lower order with the valuable central portal, was added at the end of the fifteenth century.

Before entering the church, above the central portal, on the counterfaçade, the bronze bust of Urban VIII made by Gianlorenzo Bernini in 1640 is noteworthy. The interior of the church, renovated in Baroque form in 1648, has a latin cross plan divided into a nave and aisles by a colonnade, and houses several valuable works.

Inside there are many side chapels; as the major altar, they are the work of Giuseppe Valadier, new-classical architect from commission of pope Paul VI.

As soon as you enter, on the right, **the Chapel of Bishop Costantino Eroli** opens; set up in 1497 and entirely frescoed by Pinturicchio. Notable are the frescoes of the small apse of the chapel depicting the *Eternal Father* and Angels, Madonna and Child, the Baptist and Saint Stephen, but the series of characters from the Old Testament on the vault is also interesting.

The chapel has housed a large baptismal font from the first half of the 16th century, decorated with eight bas-reliefs in white stone, representing scenes from the life of Jesus, from the Nativity to the Wedding at Cana, transferred on an unspecified date to the former church of Santa Maria of the Manna d'Oro.

The other cycle of frescoes (1467-69) of particular value is that which takes place on the walls of the apse, by which **Filippo Lippi** is the author. The subject are some scenes from *the life of Mary*, including the *Annunciation*, the *Transitus of Mary*, the *Nativity* scene and the *Coronation of the Virgin*.

The sarcophagus of the Tuscan author, Filippo Lippi, is also preserved in the church, but the body is no longer found here.

On the sides of the apse there are two chapels of the **Holy Icon and of the Sacrament.**

In the first one there is an image of the *Virgin* attributed to **San Luca.** On the left, to the side of the transept is the **Chapel of the Relics**, in which there is a wooden statue of the 14th century depicting the *Madonna and Child and an autographed letter of Saint Francis* to the disciple Leo. Also on the left, at the beginning of the nave, there is a Cross by **Alberto Sotii**, painted on parchment applied on a panel bearing the date of 1187.

The fortress

In 1359, when the city was the outpost of the state of the church launched to the reconquest of Umbria, Cardinal Albornoz, legate of Pope Innocent IV, ordered the construction of a military fortress on the highest point of the city, the Sant'Elia hill, and wanted it connected to the Monteluco hill behind it with a portentous bridge that still today crosses the Tessino valley. The fortress has a rectangular plan built around two courtyards, the Corte d'Armi and the Cortile d'Onore, both surrounded by defensive towers. Over the centuries, illustrious personalities such as Lucrezia Borgia have lived in the fortress, today reachable on foot or with a shuttle that leaves from Piazza Campello. After being used as a prison for over a century, until 1984, the fortress has undergone a long restoration work. Behind the fortress extends the majestic Ponte delle Torri, which with its 10 arches crosses the Tessino stream for a length of 230 meters and a height of over 70. The date of construction is not certain, and it is probable that the current one is the evolution of a Roman aqueduct-bridge. At the center of the bridge, a window offers a spectacular panorama over the valley.

Michelin Restaurants in Spoleto

Restaurant San Lorenzo, Piazza Sordini 6 Spoleto- from €25 to 70 -If the internal room is elegant and bright, the external space set up on a square in the historic center becomes more convivial; renowned for its seafood dishes, there is no shortage of proposals more tied to Umbrian traditions-Phone +39 0743 223340

Restaurant Apollinare, via Sant' Agata 14, Spoleto – from €35 to €55-Set between walls dating back to 1200, it is an intimate and romantic corner of the oldest Spoleto. Stones and exposed beams, elegant furnishings, the kitchen takes Umbrian traditions to great and exciting levels, to which the young cook adds some fish dishes. In the dining room, the proverbial courtesy of the kind wife-

Phone +39 0743 223256

Restaurant II tempio del Buon Gusto, via Arco di Druso 11, Spoleto – from €30 to €40-

-Four small rooms, one more romantic and enchanting than the other, for a memorable evening in the heart of Spoleto. Some Umbrian dishes, but most of the proposals are the result of the creativity of the cook-Phone +39 0743 47121

Tripadvisor Restaurants in Cascia

Trattoria Il Grottino da Orlando, via Roma 18 Cascia

-Italian, Mediterranean, soups-Phone +39 0743 76420

Restaurant Tipico, via Roma 16 Cascia

-Italian, Mediterranean, soups-Phone +39 338 700 7729

Ristorante Il Caminetto, via Vespasia Polla 1, Cascia Italian, vegeterian-soups-Phone +39 0743 71525