

EXPLORING UMBRIA

with Dr Louise Marshall

Encounter Umbria, an Italian region known for its outstanding art and architecture and fascinating medieval history, sampling distinctive local cuisine and traversing tranquil landscapes

HIGHLIGHTS

- Walk in the footsteps of St Francis – a man who shaped the Middle Ages as well as the modern Church
- Understand the rich layers of history in Umbria, from Etruscan ruins to the Romans and Lombards
- Encounter world-class art and architecture with an expert, including works by Giotto, Filippo Lippi and Piero della Francesca, in Assisi, Perugia and Spoleto
- Appreciate the beautiful landscapes of Italy's 'green heart' on 4 guided walks, through rolling hills, tranquil medieval villages, olive groves and vineyards
- Savour the bounty of the Umbrian landscape with select gastronomic experiences, from local truffles to some of Italy's most highly-regarded wines

IN A NUTSHELL

DATES: 06-16 April 2025

ITINERARY:

Spoleto – 6 nights

Bosco Perugia – 4 nights

PRICE: \$10,350pp twinshare

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: \$950
for sole use of a double room

FITNESS: Above moderate: 4 x countryside walks over graded but unsealed paths, with inclines; standing in museums

GROUP SIZE: max. 16 places



Limelight Arts Travel Pty Ltd
Level 6, 84 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000
(02) 8599 4201
www.limelight-arts-travel.com.au

LIMELIGHT
ARTS—TRAVEL

OVERVIEW

One of the delights of visiting Umbria is how much of its cultural riches are presented in a landscape of great physical beauty, characterised by gently rolling hills – often covered by olive trees or vines for prestigious wines such as Sagrantino, Orvieto Classico or Grechetto – and distant mountains laced with a bluish haze that characterises the work of painters from the Umbrian School, from Pinturicchio and Perugino to the great Raphael. Significant archaeological sites are located alongside clear rivers and streams; picturesque medieval villages offer quiet squares in which to enjoy a meal of local delicacies, such as truffles, smallgoods and locally-grown vegetables.

In addition to its natural beauty and fine produce, Umbria's rich history is equally abundant, from medieval Lombard architecture and early Benedictine abbeys to the extraordinary legacy of St Francis of Assisi on Western piety and the visual arts.

This new 11-day tour program offers a comprehensive introduction to Umbria, including a select program of 4 half-day walks ranging from gentle to moderate. The tour is residential in style, meaning that hotel changes are minimal and there is time to feel a part of local life in neighbourhood bars and restaurants.

TOUR LEADER

Dr Louise Marshall is an art historian, with a PhD from the University of Pennsylvania and a research specialisation in Italian art of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. She is an honorary senior lecturer in the Department of Art History at the University of Sydney, where she taught for over thirty years.

Louise is a popular lecturer on Italian art history and has frequently presented on the subject at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, including in conjunction with the Italian Institute of Culture (Sydney), and at the National Gallery of Victoria. She has been invited to speak at international conferences in Europe and North America, and has often been interviewed as a specialist on Italian art by ABC Radio National.



From top: view of Assisi; Piero's powerful Resurrection; Umbrian vineyards; Lake Trasimeno



DETAILED ITINERARY

SUNDAY 06 APRIL – ARRIVAL (D)

The tour commences at 2.00pm at a meeting point (TBC) at Rome Fiumicino airport, coordinated to the early afternoon arrival of international flights. We then continue to Spoleto, where there is time to settle in before a welcome briefing and drinks with your tour leader, Dr Louise Marshall. Afterwards, we enjoy dinner near the hotel. Overnight Spoleto.

MONDAY 07 APRIL – ANCIENT MONASTICISM IN UMBRIA (B, L)

Western monasticism is inseparable from Umbria, from the Syrian monks who took refuge in the mountains in the early Middle Ages and inspired Benedict of Norcia to the renovation of monastic ideals by Francis of Assisi. Today we explore different sides of early Christianity and monasticism in Umbria. We begin the day with a visit to the **basilica of San Salvatore**, an early Christian church that took its architectural inspiration from the Late Roman world. We then continue to the **Vallo di Nera**, an isolated valley until the creation of the modern tunnel through the mountains, where we visit a beautiful Romanesque church with famous fourteenth-century frescoes chronicling the penitential movement of the 'Bianchi' (from their white robes) which swept Italy in 1399. Next we travel to **Scheggino**, a well-preserved fortified medieval hamlet, where we enjoy time to stroll and a welcome lunch. In the afternoon we continue to the nearby **Abbey of San Pietro in Valle**, a place of repose for the Lombard dukes of Spoleto who patronised the institution for centuries. The monastery church is celebrated for its beautifully preserved Romanesque frescoes recounting Old and New Testament stories along the walls of the nave, a pattern that derives from Early Christian churches in Rome that we will see repeated again at Assisi. (*NB*: at the time of publication, the abbey is closed for restoration, so our visit is pending its re-opening to visitors.) Returning to the hotel, there is a talk by Louise. Evening at leisure. Overnight Spoleto.

TUESDAY 08 APRIL – WALK #1 & THE ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF SPOLETO (B, L)

We begin the day with a transfer to the village of **Eggi**, where we visit the picturesque church of San Michele with its well-preserved fourteenth and fifteenth-century frescoes covering almost every inch of wall space. From here, we continue to Bazzano Superiore to commence our first walk, along the **Via di San Francesco** through meadows and groves of Aleppo pines. Our coach meets us in a small village to take us to a nearby restaurant for a country lunch, before we return to Spoleto. In the mid-afternoon, we take a **guided walking tour of Spoleto**, commencing at the fortress and making our way down through the city to visit the cathedral – with the last work of renowned Florentine Renaissance painter Filippo Lippi – and to view the remains of the Roman city in the lower town. The evening is at leisure. Overnight Spoleto.



WEDNESDAY 09 APRIL – MONTEFALCO & BEVAGNA (B)

Today we visit two wonderfully preserved medieval towns. We begin by travelling to **Montefalco**, the 'balcony of Umbria', superbly situated on a hilltop commanding spectacular views across the valley. Here we visit the **Church of San Francesco**, which preserves an impressive fresco cycle by Florentine painter Benozzo Gozzoli retelling the life of the founder in vivid and engaging detail. After our visit, there is time for lunch and shopping – linen is one of the specialities of Montefalco – before we enjoy one of the region's other highlights: the red wine of Montefalco, especially the highly sought-after but rare Sagrantino. After a **tasting at a winery**, we continue to **Bevagna** for a **guided tour** of medieval workshops that preserve traditional methods and equipment for various forms of craft. In the late afternoon, there is time to enjoy Bevagna's medieval streets and for an aperitif in one of its local bars or wine cellars. Returning to Spoleto, the evening is at leisure. Overnight Spoleto.

THURSDAY 10 APRIL – WITH ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI & WALK #2 (B)

Few figures have had as great an influence on Western Christianity as Francis of Assisi, a charismatic reformer of the late medieval church who founded a new kind of religious order dedicated to poverty and preaching in the language of the day rather than in Latin. Francis was also known for his passionate devotion to the sufferings of the crucified Christ – whose wounds were believed to have been imprinted on his own body, transforming him into an 'alter Christus', another or second Christ. Today we explore his life and influence, with our visit to his birthplace of **Assisi**. We begin with a guided tour of the **basilica of San Francesco**, the extraordinary double church erected above his tomb. This is a veritable treasure house of Italian art, with works by the best painters of the day in both the upper and lower churches, including Cimabue, Giotto, Simone Martini, Pietro Lorenzetti, as well as a team of Roman artists responsible for famous frescoes of the life of Francis in the Upper Church. After a lunch break, we enjoy a walking tour of the city's monuments, including the Romanesque **cathedral** and the **basilica of Santa Chiara**, the burial church of St Clare of Assisi, Francis' follower and founder of the Clarissan order of Franciscan nuns. We then make the short walk down into the valley to visit the **Sanctuary of San Damiano**, built on the location where Francis and Clare set up one of their earliest communities and where, later in life, Francis composed his *Canticle of the Creatures*. From here, we make another **walk down through countryside and along the pilgrims' route** for approximately 5km. Arriving at **Santa Maria degli Angeli**, we visit the grand sixteenth-century church built to enclose the ninth-century Porziuncula. It was in this small church that a young Francis became inspired to set aside the goods of the world to live a life of voluntary poverty, and where, his body wracked as a result of this vow, he would die some twenty years later. Returning to the hotel, the evening is at leisure. Overnight Spoleto.



FRIDAY 11 APRIL – SPELLO & FOLIGNO, AND WALK #3 (B)

We begin the day with a visit to **Spello**, a delightful hill town whose residents take great pride in a springtime display of potted flowers and gardens along the medieval laneways. Our tour of the town includes a visit to the collegiate church and the **Baglioni Chapel**, a masterpiece by Pinturicchio in which the artist showcases his mastery of classical ornament derived from the recently discovered paintings of Nero's Golden House, as well as lush landscapes – and includes his own self-portrait as a painting inside a painting. After a break for lunch, we visit the remains of a **Roman villa** outside Spoleto that preserves more than 500 square metres of mosaic floors. We then undertake a **walk across the plain to Foligno** (approximately 2 hours in duration). This Umbrian town is little visited by tourists, but its cathedral contains a masterpiece by Perugino, and the Trinci Palace is a wonderfully preserved example of a Renaissance ruler's residence, complete with rare secular fresco cycles that are intended to both instruct and delight. Returning to the hotel, the evening is at leisure. Overnight Spoleto.

SATURDAY 12 APRIL – PERUGIA (B, D)

Perugia was a thriving city in the Middle Ages and Renaissance and evidence of this heritage is abundant. Today we travel the short distance to Perugia, on the way to our next base in northern Umbria. On arrival, we undertake a **walking tour of Perugia's old town centre**, including a visit to the **Collegio di Cambio** (hall of the banker's guild) with its intact audience hall frescoed by Perugino. After a break for lunch, we visit the **National Gallery of Umbria**, whose collection includes key works by Pinturicchio, Piero della Francesca and Fra Angelico. After exploring the collection with Louise, we continue to our accommodation in Bosco Perugia. This restored monastery alongside the Tiber river now boasts lovely gardens and a swimming pool. Dinner tonight is in our hotel. Overnight Bosco Perugia.

SUNDAY 13 APRIL – CITTÀ DI CASTELLO & PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA (B, D)

Today we take advantage of our proximity to south-eastern Tuscany to take a closer look at two exceptional artists from the region. Our first stop is at **Città di Castello**, where we visit the **Pinacoteca Comunale** to view its collection of late medieval and Renaissance art. This includes works by Signorelli and Raphael. We then continue to the **Fondazione Burri**, with the finest collection of works by Italian mid-century artist Alberto Burri. Locally born, he became renowned for his inventive use of modern materials, including tar, hessian sacks, plastics and modern ceramics. After a break for lunch, we continue to **Sansepolcro** where we appreciate the delicate beauty of Piero della Francesca's recently restored masterpiece, *The Resurrection of Christ*. Continuing to nearby **Monterchi**, we admire Piero's beautiful **Madonna del Parto**, a moving portrayal of the pregnant Virgin. Returning to the hotel, we have dinner together. Overnight Bosco Perugia.



MONDAY 14 APRIL – DERUTA (B)

As we have seen in Montefalco and Bevagna, Umbria is proud to preserve a number of traditional arts and crafts. Today we visit **Deruta**, a town that has been producing a particular style of brightly coloured tin-glazed ceramics for centuries. It still maintains a healthy export market beyond Italy for its majolica-ware. We will visit the local art gallery, which includes an early fresco by Perugino and important paintings by Foligno artist Niccolò Alunno, and then explore the art in local churches, including the confraternity church of St Anthony Abbot with a late fifteenth-century fresco of the Virgin protecting the town from plague. Our visit continues with a visit to the **Ceramics Museum**, where we trace the evolution of Deruta's famed craft. We then continue into the countryside to enjoy lunch together at a farm-style restaurant, before returning to the hotel. The later afternoon and evening are at leisure, with dinner together in the hotel. Overnight Bosco Perugia.

TUESDAY 15 APRIL – LAKE TRASIMENO & WALK #4 (B, L, D)

Today we enjoy the landscapes along the border between Tuscany and Umbria. We begin with a visit to the **Sanctuary of Mongiovino**, built in the sixteenth century in honour of a miraculous painting of the Virgin Mary. From here we'll commence our **walk across gentle hills** to **Panicale**, one of the 'most beautiful villages in Italy' due to its well-preserved medieval streets and walls. Here, we visit a small museum showcasing the lace handiwork of local women and enjoy the ambience of the medieval hamlet over a well-earned coffee. We then travel to **Lake Trasimeno**, the site of one of Rome's greatest defeats at the hands of Hannibal but today a tranquil location for a lakeside farewell lunch. On our way back to the hotel, we stop in at the village of **Corciano** to see a plague banner by Perugian painter Benedetto Bonfigli and an **altarpiece by Perugino** depicting the Assumption of the Virgin, with his usual control of elegant gesture, drapery and aerial perspective. Returning to the hotel, we have dinner together. Overnight Bosco Perugia.

WEDNESDAY 16 APRIL – DEPARTURE (B)

Our tour concludes this morning with a coach transfer to Rome. We anticipate arriving at Rome airport at 12.00pm, in time to check in for mid-afternoon flights.



INCLUSIONS

- 10 nights' accommodation at 4* hotels
- All breakfasts and 9 lunches or dinners
- All ground transport, guided tours and entrance fees to sites as mentioned in the itinerary, and tipping
- Talks by and expertise of an Australian tour leader throughout
- Practical assistance of a tour manager throughout

HOTELS

Hotel San Luca 4* Spoleto, 6 nights

<https://www.hotelsanluca.com/en/index>

A stylish family-run hotel, with bright rooms each decorated in a warm and personal style. The hotel's location on the edge of the historic centre of Spoleto is perfect for our excursions by coach, and a nearby escalator into town makes dining easy on our evenings at leisure.

We have selected Comfort rooms that overlook the garden or the internal courtyard.

Relais San Clemente 4* Bosco Perugia, 4 nights

<https://www.relais.it/en/>

A comfortable 4* resort-style hotel, located in the countryside along the Tiber river outside Perugia. The location is convenient for our coaching excursions, and the hotel offers a swimming pool, delightful gardens and a well-regarded restaurant specialising in Umbrian cuisine.

We have selected Classic rooms that overlook the garden.

NB: hotels of a similar standard may be substituted.

TOUR DETAILS

DATES

06-16 April 2025

TOUR LEADER

Dr Louise Marshall

ITINERARY

Spoleto – 6 nights

Bosco Perugia – 4 nights

PRICE

\$10,350pp twinshare

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

\$950 for sole use of a double room

FITNESS

Above moderate: 4 x countryside walks over graded but unsealed paths, with inclines; standing in museums

GROUP SIZE

Maximum 16 places

DEPOSIT

\$1,500pp at the time of booking

FINAL PAYMENT DUE

21 January 2025

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

By booking on this tour, you accept our terms and conditions, which can be found on our website:

<https://www.limelight-arts-travel.com.au/terms-and-conditions-tours>

