

**A GUIDE TO THE MALATESTA SEIGNORY**  
JOURNEY IN THE RIMINI HILLS



Sigismondo Malatesta, fresco by Piero Della Francesca

The territory of Rimini Province has two equally precious jewels: the coast from Bellaria Igea Marina to Cattolica, and the hills inland. Everyone knows the 40-kilometre coast and the many and outstanding visitor attractions of the Riviera, but fewer people perhaps are familiar with the hill country. The landscapes, villages, castles and fortresses of the fifteen municipalities which, like natural balconies, overlook Rimini Riviera deserve to be better-known. This is the territory of the Malatesta Seignory, so named because every corner bears visible traces of the House of Malatesta which dominated the area from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance.

This guide is intended to be a "tool" for travellers, for all the friends old and new who like staying in our region and meeting our people. We hope it will be a useful and valuable guide for anyone wishing to discover the treasures and the sweet life to be found in the Rimini hills. Anyone who would like their holiday to include the beauties both of nature and art, authentic flavours, and the charm of hospitality, now has something extra: this guide which will help you to discover the Malatesta Seignory.

Ferdinando Fabbri  
President, Provincia di Rimini



## SIGNORIA DEI MALATESTA

Getting to the Malatesta Seignory

By air: [www.riminiairport.it](http://www.riminiairport.it)

By train: [www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com)

By car: A14 Milano-Bari motorway



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please dial +39 before all the telephon numbers

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The Malatesta Temple (Rimini)



# A HISTORIC REGION

## Notes

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In the twelfth century the Malatesta family, from their fortresses in Verucchio and Pennabilli, began to consolidate their power over the Marecchia valley and the territory of Rimini.

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In the fourteenth century (from 1355) the Malatestas ruled Rimini and began to expand their lands in the regions of Romagna, Le Marche and Tuscany. Their contrasts with their neighbours, the House of Montefeltro, rulers of the Duchy of Urbino, became more bitter.

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The mid-fifteenth century saw contrasts and clashes between the two major representatives of the rival Houses, Sigismondo Malatesta and Federico da Montefeltro. Over a space of some years, these two powerful rivals renovated their entire defence systems, which included dozens of fortresses, castles and towers, many of them great works which have remained landmarks in European art and culture.

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After the defeat and death of Sigismondo (1468) the Malatesta family began to decline inexorably, until by the end of the fifteenth century their former lands were ruled by others.

Illustrations from  
the exhibition  
"Women of the  
Malatesta Dynasty"  
(Verucchio)



## DETAILS

All the lands which make up the present-day Province of Rimini have been united for centuries by a shared feature: they are the heart of an ancient historic region, the Malatesta Seignory.

From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, the House of Malatesta was one of the foremost in Italy, one of the great families which, with the Houses of Medici, D'Este, Gonzaga, Borgia, Montefeltro, and a few others, left a lasting impression on Italian and European culture.

For three centuries, from 1200 to 1500, the Malatesta Seignory consolidated its power; its several branches governed many cities in Romagna and Le Marche, and also some in Tuscany and Lombardy, while keeping its most powerful, famous, and warlike nucleus in the Rimini area.

In Rimini the House of Malatesta had its most outstanding personages, first among whom was Sigismondo Pandolfo (1432 - 1468), a military captain renowned for his courage, determination, and lack of scruples, but also for the outstanding works of art – such as the Malatesta Temple and Castel Sismondo – which dignify the city of Rimini.

In the territory of Rimini are found the most powerful fortresses, and from every hilltop fortified villages dominate the Adriatic Sea and the hills of Romagna and Le Marche. Here were fought the great battles and frequent skirmishes with their most dangerous enemies, the Montefeltro family, Dukes of Urbino. It was also a flourishing time for the arts; countless masterpieces can still be found in the castles, churches, museums and libraries of the Seignory. Frescos and architec-

## A HISTORIC REGION

ture, ceramics and sculptures, abound; both in towns and in country villages still surrounded by the stout walls which the Maltestas built everywhere, to strengthen the defences of their great little empire.

Contrasts with the Papacy, pressure from the Montefeltro dukes along the borders, and disputes and divisions within the family itself, brought to an end the power of the House of Malatesta early in the sixteenth century. Their lands and fortresses were subsequently held by many other rulers, including the Borgias and distant, powerful Venice, before reverting to the Church.

But the Seignory had been created, and the identity of the area had been shaped by the fortunes of the Malatestas. Three hundred years of history had changed these lands from being merely the edge of Romagna to being a recognisable historic region.

Today these lands include fifteen municipalities, corresponding almost exactly to the most important fortresses built between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The territory of the Seignory obviously includes the City of Rimini, capital of the Malatestas, and the towns along the coast (Rimini, Riccione, Bellaria Igea Marina, Cattolica and Misano Adriatico) but their history and attractions are described in other guide books.





The countryside near the Republic of San Marino

# LANDSCAPE AND IDENTITY

## Notes

The territory of the Seignory is flat country towards the coast (municipalities of Santarcangelo, Poggio Berni, San Giovanni in Marignano, Morciano).

Close to the plain, a backdrop of hills rising to a height of 400 metres or so. The remaining municipalities are all on hilltops just a short distance from the sea (Verucchio, Torriana, Coriano, San Clemente, Montefiore, Gemmano, Montescudo, Montecolombo, Saludecio, Mondaino, Montegradolfo).

The most salient feature of the landscape, then, is this "system of hills". The hills are largely planted with crops (grain, vineyards, olives, vegetables) but further from the coast there are ample "wild" stretches where oaks, poplars, willows, broom and wild flowers grow in profusion. The hills in the Marecchia valley are notable for impressive spurs of rock (Verucchio, Torriana), while the hills of the Conca valley are gentle and more rounded.

The less accessible places in the hills conceal surprising secrets of nature. The most outstanding are the Onferno caves and surrounding nature reserve (in the municipality of Gemmano); also of interest are the Oasis of Torriana-Montebello, Albereto wood (Montescudo) the Ventena valley (Gemmano-Montefiore), and Valmala (Mondaino).



Landscape  
in the  
Conca Valley

right  
the Caves  
of Onferno  
(Gemmano)



## DETAILS

Geographically speaking, we are in the very furthest corner of the vast Plain of Lombardy, and in the southern part of Romagna. To the north, the border with the province of Forlì-Cesena; to the south and west, the province of Pesaro (in the region of Le Marche) and the Republic of San Marino. The territory is delineated by two main valleys, the Marecchia Valley and the Conca Valley; between the two lies the smaller Marano Valley.

It may be easy to guess at the Malatesta Seignory's rich heritage of history and art; it is less easy to imagine the beauties of landscape and environment in a territory where human activities and nature maintain such a harmonious balance.

Especially in its more inland places, the Seignory still has beautiful countryside: the hill landscape is its distinguishing feature, where fields and habitations alternate, villages and hamlets are entirely surrounded by crops, and vast stretches of land are still left to spontaneous vegetation.

The northern part of the Seignory consists of densely-populated plain, but the countryside begins to show its characteristics close to Santarcangelo, becoming hill country at Torriana and Verucchio. The Oasis of Torriana-Montebello and the Ca' Brigida nature reserve in Verucchio are notable. The huge chalk cliffs on which stand fortresses and towers are characteristic of the Marecchia valley. In the central part of the Seignory, between the Marecchia and Conca valleys, is the Marano valley. In the centre of the valley is Coriano, and there is a fine river park. South of Coriano begin the hills delineating the Conca valley; the highest part still has natural wild wood-

land, such as **Albereto**, near Montescudo. This small but significant stretch of wooded bushland is rich in fauna and vegetation.

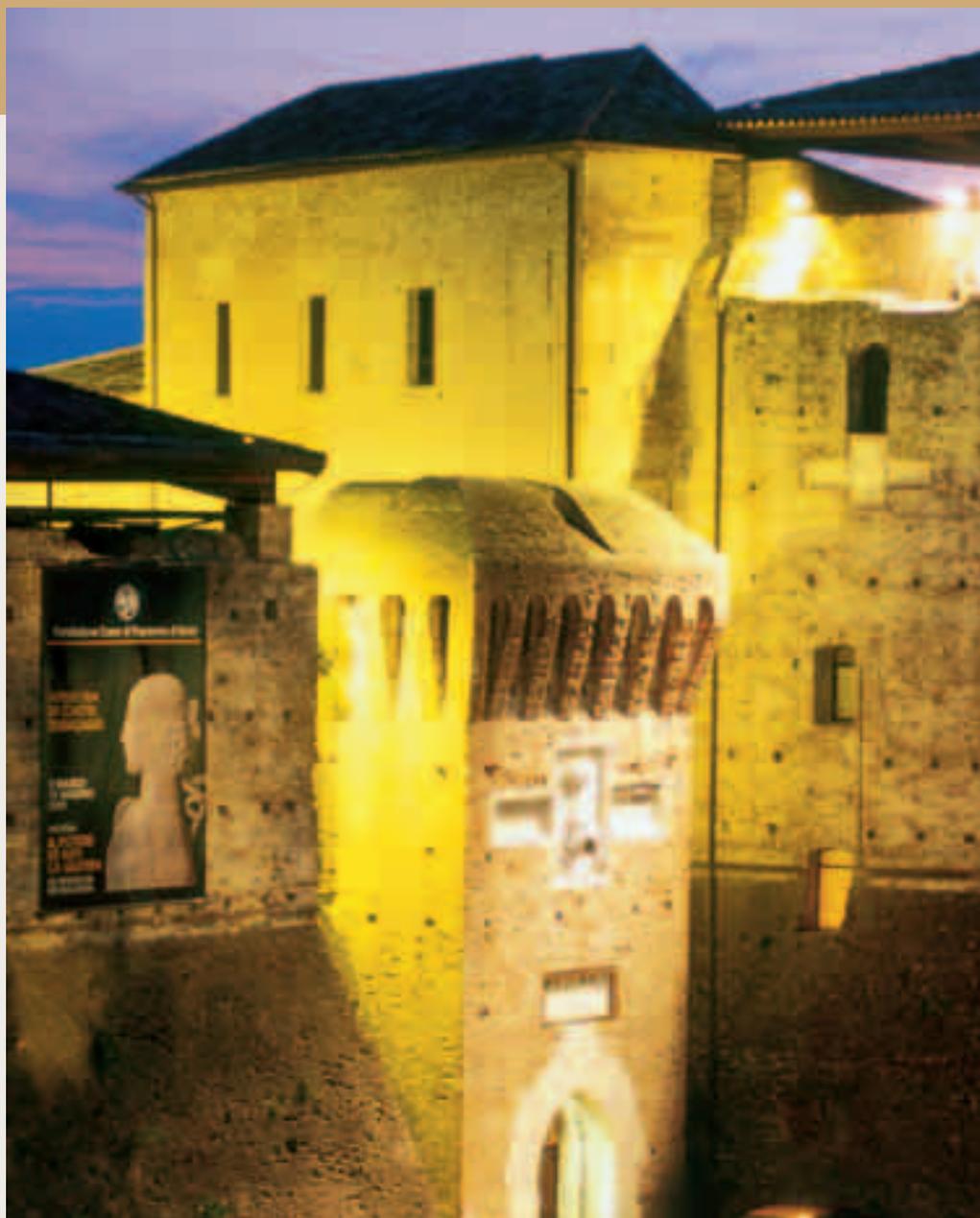
The Conca river flows into the sea at Cattolica; alongside its course runs a **fine track**, where you can see interesting stretches of riverside, crossing the territory of San Giovanni in Marignano, San Clemente and Morciano, ending at the feet of Montefiore hill.

You should certainly visit what we may call **the green heart of the Seignory**, which begins at the **Onferno nature reserve**, with **caves** and nature trails, covers the entire territory of Gemmano, and reaches to the **Ventena valley** between Gemmano and Montefiore where the hills are covered with chestnut woods, as far as Mondaino and Saludecio.

The Onferno caves and nature reserve are the most unusual and outstanding natural feature in the Seignory. The caves are very attractive and rich in interesting geological features and fauna. The little **Ventena valley between Gemmano and Montefiore** surprises the visitor with its wildness. Montefiore is special for a number of reasons, and offers the unique sight of olive trees and huge chestnut trees growing side by side, even at low altitudes.

An attractive spot, ideal for understanding the essence of this area, is **Valmala**, a stretch of land near Mondaino, where traces of man's presence many centuries ago enrich the well-preserved environment.





Castel Sismondo (Rimini)



# FORTRESSES AND CASTLES

## Notes

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One of the primary features marking the identity of the Seignory, distinguishing every town and village in it, is the great quantity of military architecture which we can still admire today. Vast fortresses, towers, fortified gateways, high city walls, all help to visualise the powerful defence system set up by the House of Malatesta in the three centuries of their rule.

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Notable traces of Malatesta fortifications are to be found in Rimini, Verucchio, Santarcangelo, Torriana, Montebello, Montefiore, Mondaino, Montegridolfo, Saludecio, San Giovanni in Marignano, Montescudo, Montecolombo, San Clemente, Coriano.

Malatesta Fortress,  
Verucchio

below right  
Malatesta Fortress,  
Montefiore



## DETAILS

Its fortresses are the backbone of the Seignory. They protected its settlements, served to keep control over the territory, and were the base for the military operations which the two principal representatives of the dynasty, Malatesta “the Centenarian” and Sigismondo Pandolfo, engaged in to gain power and to fulfil their vocation as warriors.

But these fortresses were also residences designed to impress, **fortified palaces** where important personages could be entertained, hunting parties lodged, banquets and receptions held; and so they had to be attractive and welcoming. They had to show the wealth and good taste of the **dynasty through works of art, frescos, fine architecture**. Fortunately, much of this rich heritage has survived.

Around the fortresses and within the defensive walls, **towns** grew up. The dwellings, churches, market places and towers together shaped the towns we see today: however much they may have been altered down the centuries, they have kept – for the most part – an evident Mediaeval and Renaissance stamp.

You will find in this guide a well-ordered directory of Malatesta tokens which make up a substantial itinerary. For descriptions and information, please see the notes relative to the various places.

## FORTRESSES AND CASTLES

Of course, your journey in search of the Malatestas must include what was considered the “royal palace” of the dynasty: **Castel Sismondo** in Rimini.

It was built by Sigismondo Pandolfo to display to the full his power; work began in 1437 and was officially completed in 1446. Today, only the central nucleus remains.

According to contemporary reports, in its time the fortress inspired a sense of grandeur, immense strength and wealth. The structure, the inscribed tablets, the coats of arms, all bear witness to Sigismondo’s taste; he also claimed the architecture as his own. The numerous rooms are today the venue for major exhibitions.



## FORTRESSES AND CASTLES

Localities	Great fortresses	Fortified villages
Rimini	Castel Sismondo. This was the "royal palace" built by Sigismondo - 0541 29192	
Santarcangelo di Romagna	Malatesta Fortress. Private, but can be visited. It dominates the historic core - 0541 620832	The districts of the old town All the upper part of the town with the various fortified gateways
Verucchio	Malatesta Fortress. The origins of the Malatestas, excellent restoration - 0541 670552	Historic core. The entire fortified town
Poggio Berni		
Torriana - Montebello	Guidi fortress. Private; can be visited. One of the best-preserved castles - 0541 675180	Montebello village. Finely preserved Mediaeval structure
Coriano		
San Clemente		
S. Giovanni in Marignano		Historic core.
Morciano di Romagna		
Montefiore Conca	Malatesta Fortress. The most imposing fortress; it dominates the Seignory - 0541 980035	Historic core. The old town is surrounded by walls
Gemmano		
Saludecio		Historic core. The urban layout is Renaissance
Mondaino	Fortress. Houses public offices	Historic core. Great walls and a grand fortress
Montegridolfo		Village. One of the best-preserved fortified villages in the Seignory
Montescudo		Historic core.
Montecolombo		Historic core.

Traces of fortifications and towers	Fortified country hamlets	Palaces
		Palazzo dell'Arengo
		Various <i>palazzi</i> in the historic core
		Various <i>palazzi</i> of the nobility in the countryside. <b>Marcosanti Fortress - Palace</b>
Torriana: remains of the <b>tower</b> . <b>Torriana Fortress</b> with fine outer structure. <b>Saiano Tower</b>		
Traces of walls and <b>castle</b>		
Towers and walls still very evident	Agello and Castelleale fortresses	
Traces of <b>defence walls</b> and fortified <b>entrance gateway</b>		
	Traces of the Abbey of San Gregorio	
Town walls	Onferno fortified village	
All <b>the walls</b> surrounding the town	<b>Cerreto Castle</b> <b>Meleto Castle</b>	Palazzo of noble family on the main street
All <b>the walls</b> surrounding the town		Palazzo of noble family on the main street
Notable <b>fortified gateway</b>		Palazzo Viviani
Of note the <b>tower</b> , the <b>ice-pit</b> , and traces of walls	<b>Albereto</b> fortified village	
Of note <b>the gate</b> , and the upper part of the town	<b>San Savino Castle</b>	



Ethnography Museum, Valliano (Montescudo)



# TRACES OF TRADITION

## Notes

To appreciate the richness of local cultural traditions, a visit to the Folk Museum in Santarcangelo and to the Ethnography Museum in Valliano di Montescudo is a "must".

Mills were one of the most important features of rural life: visitors wishing to learn about mills at first hand should see Moroni Mill in Poggio Berni, an ancient mill restored and in perfect working order.

Major traditional events - don't miss these! - include the Good Friday procession in Montefiore Conca and the enacting of the Via Crucis in Montegradolfo.

Many aspects of local tradition (cattle market, traditional food, crafts, etc) feature largely in the major fairs: San Martino fair in Santarcangelo (11 November), San Gregorio fair in Morciano (12 March), "Fira di quatorg" in Verucchio (September), San Michele fair in Santarcangelo (29 September) and Santa Lucia fair in San Giovanni in Marignano.

Among the various crafts, note the production of traditional terracotta ware in the workshops of the Conca valley (Montescudo, Montefiore) and of traditional fabrics printed with rust-dyed designs, found in Santarcangelo and Rimini. Numerous basket-weavers can also be found at fairs and festivals throughout the Seignory.

**Good Friday  
Procession  
in Montefiore**

below right  
printing rust-dyed  
motifs on fabric  
(Rimini)



## DETAILS

The Malatesta Seignory borders different regions, and this is evident in all its traditions. The Romagna region is much to the fore throughout the territory, but in the hills you begin to find traces of expressions and customs of Le Marche and the Montefeltro region.

We would warmly advise you to begin exploring popular culture with a visit to the **Folk Museum in Santarcangelo**. The Museum has fifteen sectors, plus archives and workshops, providing exact and detailed documentation of various aspects of life in southern Romagna. The objects on display are organised according to precise scientific criteria which enhance their beauty. Tools for rural labour beautiful not only in their functional forms but also in their decoration; painted farm carts; “caveje”, the decorated iron bars used to move the shafts of the carts; farmhouse furnishings; and the puppets which toured the market places providing entertainment.

A significant exhibition of folk objects is to be found in **Valliano, Montescudo**, in the **Ethnography Museum** which houses various local material, including pottery produced by workshops in the area.

**Among the most significant events derived from local folk traditions, we recommend:**

**The Good Friday Procession, Montefiore Conca**

- This is the most complete and complex popular ritual in the entire Seignory. It has distant origins, Mediaeval according to some; seventeenth-century, say others; in the nineteenth century it was already defined as ancient. The tradition has never been broken, and the present-day procession still begins on a hill overlooking the town and wends its way through the main streets, to arrive at the parish church and end with the deposition of a statue of the dead Christ in a church which for the occasion is designated the Holy Sepulchre. The procession takes place at night, by torchlight, and many people take part: people in costume, the confraternities in their robes and hoods, the town band, and a large crowd of followers. The Cyrenean, hooded and barefoot, carries the Cross throughout the procession. The various “figurants” in costume – apostles, Roman soldiers, angels, etc. – are recompensed symbolically with loaves of bread.

## Via Crucis Montegridolfo

- This is another nocturnal Good Friday procession, a tradition which was revived some years ago. Figures in costume walk through the evocative framework of the historic village.

## Carnival of Cerreto (Saludecio)

- This does not take place every year; when it does, it is in spring, rather than at the usual carnival time. Some of the ancient disguises used are extremely interesting, such as the "man covered with leaves", while the "man of straw" is an unusual conical structure, as much as 3 or 4 metres high, covered in straw, which is set alight at the end of the festival.

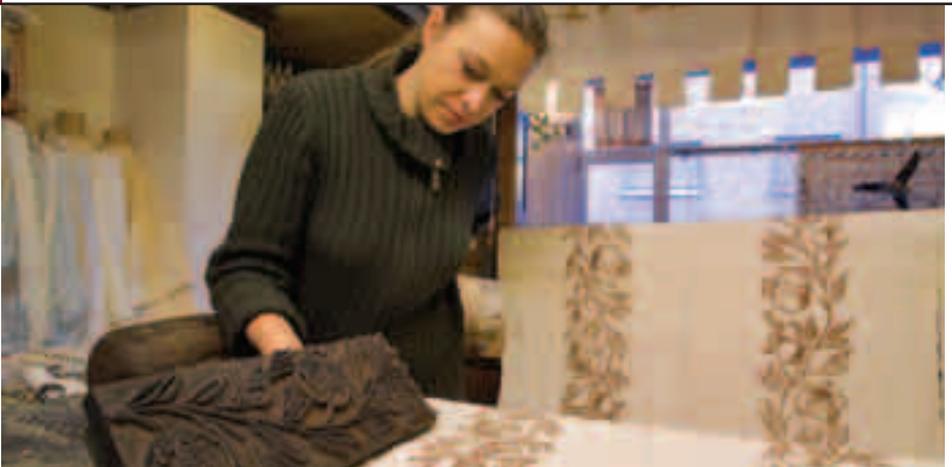
## Traditional fairs

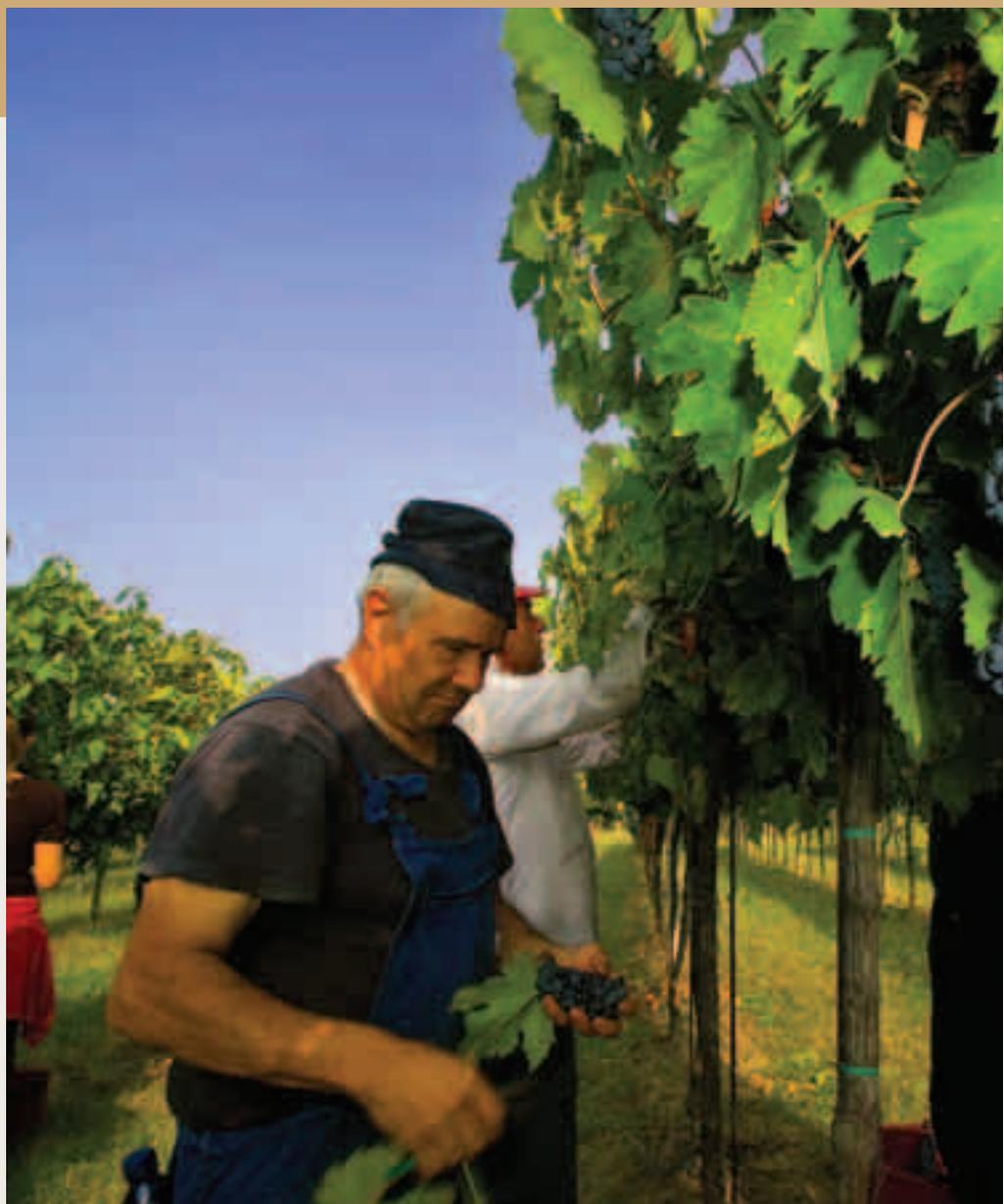
- Events which feature various aspects of popular culture are the major traditional fairs. The most important are the San Martino fair in Santarcangelo (11 November) and the San Gregorio fair in Morciano (12 March); but the "Fira di quatorg" in Verucchio (September), the San Michele fair in Santarcangelo (29 September) and the Santa Lucia fair in San Giovanni in Marignano also deserve a mention. These fairs mark the passing of the seasons, and the major markets, especially for cattle and agricultural machinery, are still meeting places for rural life. Each fair has its own traditional dishes and rituals.

Another feature of local tradition can be seen in the **farmhouses which have kept their original structure**. These are found in most country areas, but are most numerous in the area stretching from **Coriano to Montescudo, Montecolombo and San Clemente**, and there are interesting examples in the **Saludecio, Mondaino and Montegridolfo** area also.

There are fine collections of **ex voto and small panel paintings** in the traditional style at **Bonora church, Montefiore**, and at **Beato Amato Sanctuary, Saludecio**.

High quality craftsmanship is found in the **traditional fabrics printed with rust-dyed motifs**. Tablecloths, curtains, bedspreads and so on are decorated by hand, using wooden blocks to print the fabric with decorative motifs both rustic and refined. This craft became extremely popular in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the workshop which still operates in **Santarcangelo** has preserved a giant mangle dating from the seventeenth century.





Sangiovese Vines



# A SEIGNORY FULL OF FLAVOURS

## Notes

The wines and gastronomic specialities of the Seignory are included in the visitor circuit known as the "Food and Wine Route of the Rimini Hills", which includes oil mills, wine growers and producers, holiday farms, restaurants and craft shops.

Main produce: wine (Sangiovese, Trebbiano, Pagadebit, Cabernet Sauvignon, Rebola and Biancame), oil, sheep's milk cheese, honey, truffles.

There are about 40 wine producers operating in the territory of the Seignory. Some have the DOC "Colli di Rimini" protected origin label.

Over a thousand hectares of land are devoted to olives, and there are over 20 producers of extra-virgin olive oil; some have the DOP "Colline di Romagna" protected origin label.

The fifteen municipalities of the Seignory (excluding the coastal municipalities) number over two hundred restaurants, wine bars, trattorias, inns and holiday farms with restaurant.

Local food and wine is celebrated in more than 50 festivals which take place in every season and in every town and village throughout the Seignory.

Cooking piada bread.



## DETAILS

The Seignory is a border area where northern Italy gives way to central Italy; here the immense plain of Lombardy ends, and the Mediterranean lands begin. Consequently, although the cuisine of the Seignory is basically Romagna-style, it has also absorbed flavours and scents typical of Le Marche and the Apennines.

One of the most outstanding products is the **high-quality olive oil**, made throughout the Seignory. **Over a thousand hectares are devoted to olive-growing**, making the Rimini area the **foremost oil-producing area in the entire Emilia-Romagna region**.

**Wine**, too, has a long tradition, and in recent years has reached excellent standards. The Seignory is home to **Sangiovese** and **Trebbiano**, but some producers also stock their cellars with **Pagadebit, Cabernet Sauvignon, Rebola and Biancame**.

**Sheep's-milk cheese** is made in considerable quantity. There have always been flocks of sheep on the hills here, but their numbers were greatly increased in the 1970s when numerous Sardinian shepherds and farmers settled here and began producing cheese which is now unsurpassed in quality and variety and is known throughout Italy.

Other fine local products are **honey**, widely produced in the hills, and **truffles**, which have been found to grow far more widely in the valleys than was thought. Varieties found here include not

## A SEIGNORY FULL OF FLAVOURS

only the highly-prized Tuber magnatum Pico, but also prize white, prize black, smooth black and winter black, bianchetto and scorzone.

Other fruits of nature, smaller in quantity but certainly not lesser in quality, are **Montefiore chestnuts** and **Montescudo potatoes**, both of which have a distinctive flavour.

One of the main features of local cuisine is the famous **piada** bread, known to visitors as “piadina”. Whether teamed with pork products, local green leaf vegetables, **soft Squacquerone cheese**, roast meats or grilled vegetables, piada conquers every palate.

Local pasta dishes, a “must” for every visitor, include **passatelli**, **cappelletti**, **ravioli** and **strozzapreti**. And if you visit any of the weekly markets or traditional fairs and festivals, look for the stall selling the excellent **roast sucking pig**.

And of course, the sea is only a few minutes away from the hills, so fresh fish is to be found on every table throughout the Seignory. But this would need a whole chapter to itself; far better to sit down and eat!





Interior of a holiday farm



# A HOSPITABLE LAND

## Notes

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For information about all types of places to stay consult the sites:

[www.signoriadeimalatesta.it](http://www.signoriadeimalatesta.it)

[www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it)

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There is no shortage of welcoming hotels and guest houses throughout the Seignory. Notable both for quality and quantity are the holiday farms and bed & breakfast establishments which have seen a huge increase in recent years.

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For lovers of outdoor holidays there are camp sites and rest areas for camper vans.

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And don't forget that on the nearby coast (Rimini, Riccione, Bellaria Igea Marina, Cattolica, Misano Adriatico) there are over 2,400 hotels.



## DETAILS

Hospitality is an honoured tradition in all the lands of the Seignory, and every possible type of accommodation is to be found.

Hotels, inns, bed & breakfast, holiday farms, camp sites and fully-equipped rest areas for camper vans are found in both town and countryside. And the nearby coast, with over 2,400 hotels has everything you need.

Historic villages and ancient palaces of the nobility have been converted to make prestigious welcoming accommodation.

Many holiday farms offer a setting and style of hospitality still closely linked to the countryside and country life. Bed & breakfast establishments are found in both towns and small villages.

The Seignory also has two structures devoted to golf enthusiasts: Rimini Golf Club in Villa Verucchio and the Riviera Golf Resort in San Giovanni in Marignano.





By mountain bike in the Marecchia valley

# SPORT AND ACTIVITIES

## Notes

Cycling holidays are catered for through a well-organised network of “bike hotels” able to satisfy thousands of cyclists.

Dedicated maps and guide books show routes of varying degrees of difficulty, covering hundreds of kilometres.

There are a number of mountain bike routes.

Golf can be played on two 18-hole courses.

A network of hiking routes can be found in the higher hills.

Horse lovers can find stables offering both riding lessons and excursions or touring on horseback.



**Activities  
in the hills**



## DETAILS

The most popular sporting activity practised in the Seignory is without doubt **cycling**. The routes in the Malatesta country hills and the neighbouring Montefeltro region extend for **hundreds of kilometres on mostly minor roads with little traffic**.

**A number of maps and guide books have been published to make cycle touring easier.**

**Many hotels both on the coast and in the country are equipped to support groups of cyclists.**

There are also many routes specifically for **mountain bikes**, which follow tracks and paths deep in amazing countryside.

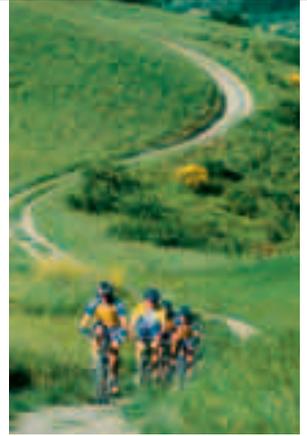
Another sporting activity which here is very well catered for is **golf**. There are **two 18-hole courses**, one at Villa Verucchio in the Marecchia valley and one at San Giovanni in Marignano in the Conca valley.

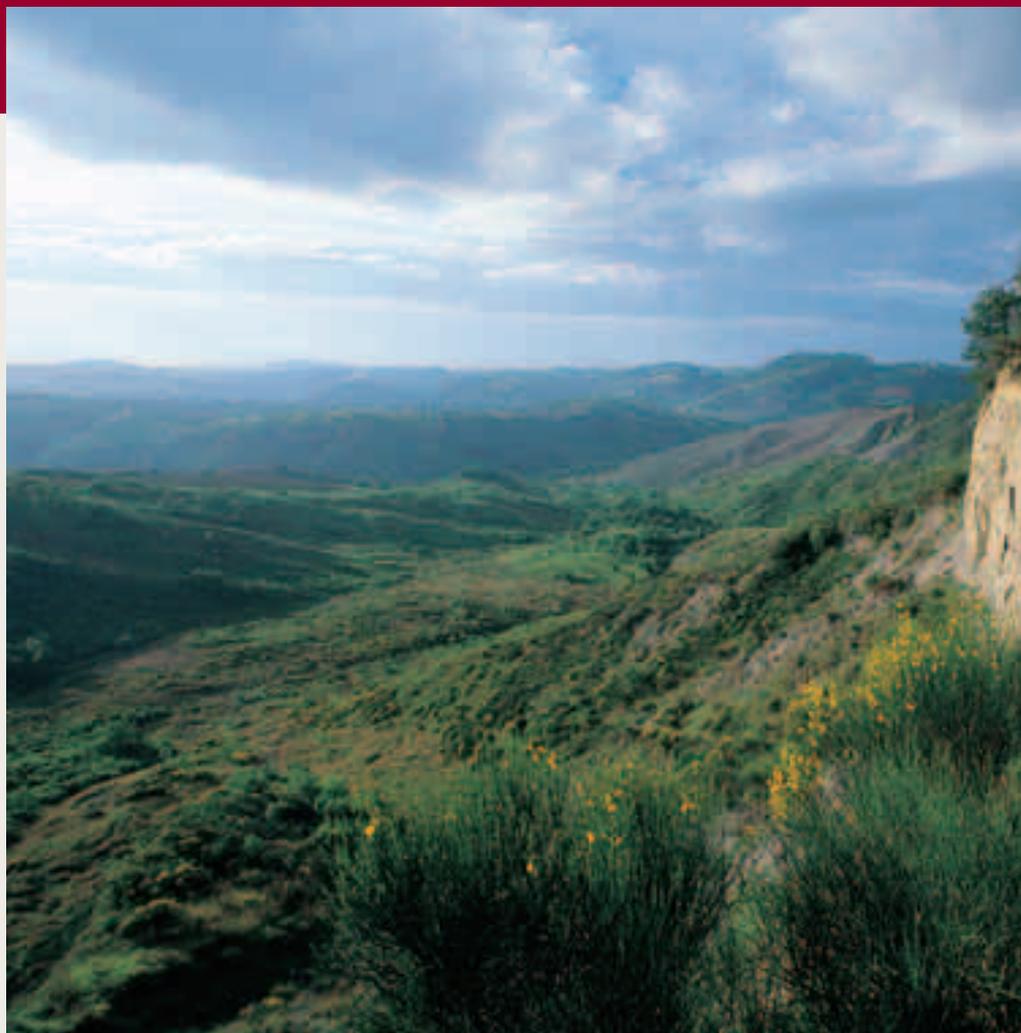
Both of these have accommodation in club houses, training, and all the best services typical of prestigious structures.

The hills and river banks throughout the Seignory are ideal for excursions on horseback. Especially in the hidden countryside among the highest hills there are many kilometres of horse-friendly tracks and unsealed roads. There are also a number of stables with top-level riding schools.

Walking enthusiasts will find a **good network of paths** on the higher hills.

There are trails marked by CAI (Club Alpino Italiano) of outstanding naturalistic and scenic interest, especially in the Torriana Montebello area and all the area from the Onferno nature reserve and caves to Montefiore and then to Saludecio and Mondaino. This area is ideal for medium and long-distance hikes.





View from a promontory in the Marecchia valley



## THE MARECCHIA VALLEY



On two neighbouring hills in the Apennine range are the sources of two rivers which have played a significant part in the ancient history and civilisation of Italy. The Tiber rises on Monte Fumaiolo and flows towards the Tyrrhenian Sea, becoming the great river of Rome; while the Marecchia rises on Monte Zucca, flows towards the Adriatic Sea and becomes the river of Rimini, one of the Roman empire's major cities.

On its way the Marecchia crosses the borders of three regions: Tuscany, Le Marche, and Romagna, and it also touches the border of a separate country, the Republic of San Marino. The valley, then, encompasses different lands, with different histories and culture, all reflected in the beauties of a territory which saw the historic confrontation of two great dynasties different in style: the House of Malatesta in the lower valley and the House of Montefeltro in the upper valley. The heritage of this confrontation is still there to see: a wealth of fine military buildings perched on great spurs of rock, still keeping watch over the course of the river.

## The Marecchia Valley



## DETAILS

The Malatesta Seignory in the Marecchia Valley consists of **four municipalities: Santarcangelo, Verucchio, Torriana, and Poggio Berni**. These four fortresses, together with Montebello, made up a defensive chain of primary importance for safeguarding the city of Rimini and for keeping watch over the fertile and productive farmlands. The towers and castles of the Marecchia Valley (Verucchio, Torriana, Montebello, Saiano; and also San Marino and San Leo) all share one very noticeable feature: they all **stand on harsh rocky outcrops** high above the surrounding countryside, and offer ample views in all directions, towards both the mountains and the sea. These imposing chalk rocks formed mighty **natural bastions**, ideal supports for invincible fortresses blending perfectly with the strategic heights they occupied, often enclosing within their walls part of the rock itself. Fortresses, these, which bore witness to bitter battles but also to great upheavals in civic life, leading to the origin and development of significant cities and towns.

The Malatesta Seignory, then, found here its **first and fundamental power base**, well represented by the numerous fortresses still to be seen in the Rimini region; but in the valley, in **Verucchio, there is another outstanding historic witness of a different kind**: an ancient people who inhabited these lovely lands thousands of years ago, leaving behind them artefacts of rare beauty, now on display to be admired in a museum which is the pride of the entire Marecchia Valley.

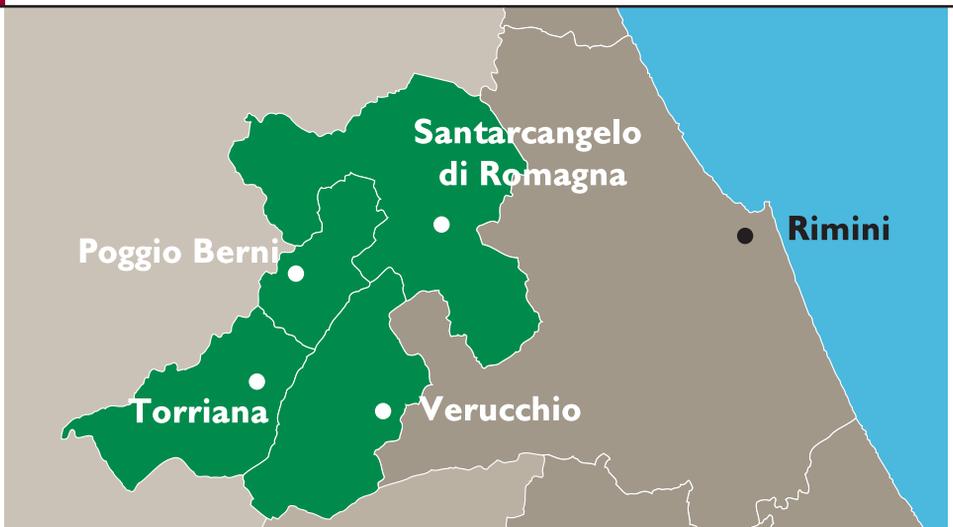
The source of the River Marecchia is **1,236 metres above sea level, on Mount Zucca**, on the

## THE MARECCHIA VALLEY

Tuscan side of the chain of mountains known by the dreamy name of **Alp of the Moon**. The downward path of the river carves out a valley with complicated territorial divisions, rich in history and monuments like few other valleys in Italy.

The course of the river begins in **Tuscany**, in the province of Arezzo; it crosses the noble **Montefeltro** region dominated by San Leo, touches the borders of the historic **Republic of San Marino**, and finally reaches the sea in the city of Rimini, marking the northernmost part of the Malatesta Seignory, the part which today is in Romagna. Three distinct regions, then, with three different cultures, close to but distinct from each other.

The original Malatesta stock, it appears, came from here; whether from Pennabilli or Verucchio is uncertain, and both places contend the honour. What is not in doubt is that here the family took its first steps to fame. So the Marecchia Valley is important from every point of view: the road running through it, the one-time Via Maior, joins Rimini – and thus the Adriatic coast – to the Tyrrhenian coast. The fortresses along the valley are rare examples of splendid military architecture, and **the environment is still unspoilt and extremely interesting**.





**Tufa caves**

Rimini > 10 km • 15 min

Riccione > 22 km • 30 min

Bellaria > 11 km • 15 min

Cattolica > 30 km • 40 min

Misano > 26 km • 35 min

ALTITUDE M 44



## SANTARCANGELO DI ROMAGNA



Santarcangelo is an attractive and important little town which has kept its own particular features and has maintained strong links with its past and its traditions.

The old town centre is a lively place of well-kept houses and mansions, excellent restaurants and wine bars, narrow streets leading to little squares where there is always something going on.

The atmosphere is that of a large village where life has kept its rhythm and its identity; visitors at once sense a "town" atmosphere which can only be Romagna.





## THINGS TO KNOW

Santarcangelo grew up in **Roman times**. Historians tell us that the first settlement took place just after the foundation of nearby Rimini, about 268BC. The territory of Rimini was parcelled out among the settlers, marking out the surrounding countryside. The building of the great road, the Via Emilia, which now cuts through the town, encouraged commerce and so the population increased.

The heart of the historic town is set on a gentle hill named Colle Giove, the Hill of Jupiter; here you can still see the distinctive layout of a **mediaeval fortified village**. The Middle Ages left an indelible mark on the upper part of the town, dominated by the usual fortress, a strategic defence bastion rising from the surrounding plain. In the twelfth century the village was already fortified; the Malatesta lords who governed here from the thirteenth century onwards enlarged and enriched the castle. Santarcangelo's role as a town of the first importance, acquired in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, was consolidated still further in later times; during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the original town developed and grew, **while still keeping its enviable urban harmony**. Noble and popular features integrated perfectly with one another, giving rise to what today is without a doubt not simply **one of the most extensive but also one of the most interesting and evocative historic centres in the Rimini region**. The entire urban layout is noteworthy, and sets off to perfection numerous **well-kept town houses and palazzi once residences of the nobility**.

In 1828, Pope Leo XII conferred on Santarcangelo the title of City; and in 1984, the town received the title of **Art Heritage City**.

**Malatesta Fortress**

14th century  
via Rocca  
Malatestiana  
Open by prior  
arrangement  
081 5751828

This fortress-residence belongs to the Colonna family. The castle took on its present appearance in 1447, during the rule of Sigismondo Pandolfo; the keep (built in 1386) was much reduced in height, and three stout polygonal towers were added to the corners of the main building. These alterations made the fortress better able to withstand attack by early artillery.

**Capuchin****Convent**

17th-19th century  
via Cappuccini

The convent occupies a splendid panoramic position just a short distance from the Fortress.

**“Campanone”****Tower**

19th century

In the centre of the upper town. Although built as recently as 1800, this 25-metre high tower is the heart of the town and one of its symbols.

**Piazza delle  
Monache and  
Piazzetta Galassi**

Among the prettiest of the town's squares, surrounded by fine buildings. In the centre of Piazza delle Monache stands a rare mediaeval well.

**Porta Cervese**

14th-15th century.  
via Porta Cervese

One of the town's several mediaeval gateways.

**Tufa Caves**

6th-15th century  
via C. Ruggeri  
Visits by prior  
arrangement

The old town of Santarcangelo is built over a network of beautiful, mysterious caves; the hollow spaces inside them are of notable architectural merit. The entire Hill of Jupiter is criss-crossed by over a hundred tunnels. Experts are still undecided about the various uses and purposes of these artificial caverns which make up a complete subterranean town – wine cellars, storage space, places of worship? Today, some of these caves are open to visitors, who are invariably fascinated.

**Collegiate Church**

18th century  
Piazza Balacchi

This is the town's main church. It was completed by the architect Buonamici in 1758, and today houses notable works of art.

Here you can see:

- Altarpiece by Jacobello da Bonomo, 1385
- Crucifix of the 14th-century Rimini School
- St Joseph, the Christ Child, and St Eligius by Guido Cagnacci, 1635
- St Ignatius Loyola in Ecstasy

## THINGS TO SEE

Marchi historic dye-works



A glimpse of the Malatesta Fortress



The upper town

Caveje in the Folk Museum

**Ganganelli Arch**

18th century

Piazza Ganganelli

Huge triumphal arch built by the citizens of Santarcangelo in 1777 in honour of Pope Clement XIV (1705–1774), a native of the town.

**“Pieve” church of St****Michael Archangel**

6th-7th century

via Celletta Dell’Olio

This fine Romanesque building is just out of the town centre; it houses some valuable relics.

**MET****(Museo degli usi e costumi delle genti di Romagna)****Folk Museum**

via Montevecchi 41

0541 624703

This is one of the foremost museums of folk traditions in Italy. The up-to-date layout features different sectors: grain production cycle, mill, hemp production cycle, printing on cloth, folk costumes, blacksmith, village trades, wine production cycle, the farmhouse, country transport, lutist’s workshop, puppets, etc; and each sector contains exhibits and documents of notable interest. A visit to the Folk Museum will help you to understand more fully the identity and the traditional culture of this part of Romagna. There are interesting outdoor features, too, including a traditional “kitchen garden”.

**MUSAS****Archaeology Museum**

Due to open in spring 2005, this Museum will bring together numerous objects, unique treasures precious because of their close links to the town’s history. Housed in the splendid setting of the restored Palazzo Cenci, in the historic core of Santarcangelo, Musas was designed to show the historic, artistic and cultural tokens illustrating the history of the town and its territory.

**Marchi****Historic Dye-Works**

via Cesare Battisti, 15

0541 626018

Traditional fabrics printed with rust-dyed folk motifs are produced here, using sophisticated traditional methods. Notice the mangle, a very rare – possible unique – specimen of working mangle dating from the seventeenth century.

**Sferisterio**

In times past, this arena was used for a particular ball game known as “palla al bracciale”; now it is used for the game of “tamburello”.





A performance at the "Santarcangelo dei Teatri" festival



## DON'T MISS



### **International Theatre Festival Santarcangelo dei Teatri - July**

One of Italy's foremost theatre festivals, dating from 1971. Since then, it has continued to be a workshop and display window for the most significant international experiences of street theatre and avant-garde theatre.



### **San Michele Fair week end of 29 September**

Santarcangelo's other main fair; known also as the Bird Fair, since it was originally a fair mainly for the hunting and shooting confraternity. Nowadays the accent is on nature, ecology, and animals. It offers many opportunities to try the tasty local cooking.



### **San Martino Fair weekend of 11 November**

One of the most varied fairs in Romagna, already famous in the fourteenth century. It has kept its lively traditions, and features a large market, a funfair, and numerous cultural events. This is an autumn fair with its own symbolic significance, an occasion for meeting friends and neighbours before the long winter. Traditionally, chestnuts are eaten for good luck, washed down with new Cagnina wine. The world of farming is well-represented, as are food and wine, in the sector entitled "La Casa dell'Autunno".



### **Small Antiques Market 1st Sunday of every month Piazza Ganganelli**

A busy and popular market with numerous stalls. Many of the things on sale are of local provenance.



*For further information  
on places to visit and events*  
**IAT Tourist Office** 0541 624270  
**Proloco** 0541 621510  
[www.comune.santarcangelo.rn.it](http://www.comune.santarcangelo.rn.it)  
[www.signoriadeimalatesta.it](http://www.signoriadeimalatesta.it)  
[www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it)

## AUTUMN FAIRS

Two historic fairs which used to open the autumn season have survived until today. **St Michael's Fair**, which takes place at the end of September, traditionally had close links to hunting, and one of its major activities was the sale of various live decoys. The world of decoys and bird-calls, and of the bird-trainers who tamed them, is a world in itself, mixing techniques ranging from harsh coercion to an almost affectionate relationship with the decoy birds, who must sing their best. An unusual and fascinating sight can be seen at dawn on the morning of the fair, as cages large and small are lined up and a real singing competition takes place with a jury awarding the victory to the most brilliant decoy bird.

The other major fair is **St Martin's Fair**, which takes place during the week including November 11th, St Martin's day and an important date in the calendar in Romagna and in Italy generally. This was the day on which agricultural contracts were renewed, guaranteeing (or not) the presence of the tenant farmer on the land. It was also the day for tasting new wine and chestnuts, but above all it was the day when winter really began, a difficult and in some ways mysterious season marked by numerous festivities harking back to ancient rituals. St Martin's fair is also known throughout Romagna as the "Horn Fair" or "Cuckolds' Fair". Historians have put forward a number of ideas, but no one really knows the origins of the traditional link between St Martin, horns, and the victims of adultery. Some maintain it is a reference to demonic presences, which had to be exorcised at the beginning of winter, and so the day turned into a small carnival, with a "cuckolds' race", much drinking, mocking songs and sexual innuendo. The sexual and demonic elements mingle, and the horn-wearing cuckolds are their synthesis.

Even today it is customary to set two giant ox horns over the imposing eighteenth-century arch marking the entrance to Santarcangelo, and legend has it that the horns move every time a cuckold passes beneath them. And believe it or not, hardly anybody ever walks under the arch!

SANTARCANGELO DI ROMAGNA  
FIERA DI  
SAN MARTINO





**Malatesta Fortress**

Rimini > 14 km • 20 min

Riccione > 26 km • 35 min

Bellaria > 22 km • 30 min

Cattolica > 34 km • 45 min

Misano > 30 km • 40 min

ALTITUDE M 330



# VERUCCHIO



When you go up the Marecchia valley, leaving the plain and the coast behind you, you very soon begin to see great spurs of rock overlooking the river bed. On the first of these spurs stands Verucchio, in a spectacular position giving views all along the Romagna coast and as far as the foothills of the Apennines. And highest of all stands the massive fortress, dominating the little town where the Malatestas began their history and their conquests. A Malatesta capital city, then, but also a town with a history many thousands of years old, the history of a gracious people of refined tastes, who today live on in the town museum where artefacts of outstanding beauty, unique in Italy, are on display.





## THINGS TO KNOW

Between the ninth and the seventh centuries BC, Verucchio was home to a **highly civilised people**, probably of Etruscan origin, who have left us amazingly refined examples of art and culture; a **people known as the Villanovians**. A number of archaeological digs have **brought to light rare and beautiful** finds: woven fabrics, artefacts in wood and bronze, ceramics, precious gold and amber jewellery, arms, and objects of everyday use. The great throne of inlaid wood recovered during the excavations, is almost unique. All these beautiful things are on display in the Archaeological Museum housed in a former convent: both the artefacts themselves, and the setting, make this a museum of international standing.

After the splendours of the Villanovian civilisation, other splendours came to Verucchio in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, under the Malatestas. Verucchio is traditionally known as the **"cradle of the Malatestas"**, suggesting the privileged links between the House of Malatesta and the town of Verucchio. The Malatestas ruled here for three centuries, strengthening its defences and enriching it with civic and religious works.

The old town centre is still visibly **mediaeval in layout**, and there are many monuments to admire from this and later periods, signs of a rich history which today attracts many visitors.

**Malatesta Fortress**

12th-16th centuries

via Rocca, 42

0541 670222

This is one of the largest and best preserved Malatesta fortresses; additions and alterations in various architectural styles, carried out between the 12th and the 16th centuries, are superimposed and integrated with one another. The Fortress is also known as the Castle of the Rock, because of its position on top of a huge spur of rock, rising high above the town and dominating the entire valley. The fortress has been a Malatesta possession since the end of the twelfth century; here was born "Mastin Vecchio", one of the founders of the family (it was he who consolidated the power of the family by moving to Rimini). He is mentioned by Dante in the Divine Comedy.

In 1295 the Malatesta Seignory became prominent in Rimini, but Verucchio remained both strategically and culturally important. In 1449 the greatest figure in the history of the Seignory, Sigismondo Pandolfo, commissioned the part of the fortress next to the thirteenth-century tower. Inside you can see the Great Hall, various rooms used for exhibitions and cultural events, the great Keep with its panoramic terrace, and the dungeons.

**Passerello fortress  
and gate**

The Malatestas had another castle in Verucchio: the Passerello fortress, built on the rock opposite the main fortress which still stands.

The Monastery of the Poor Clares, at present undergoing restoration, was built in 1600 on the ruins of the Passerello fortress.

Next to it, the ancient gate, partly demolished in 1964, has been rebuilt using the original materials.

A sightseeing route through the mediaeval town, along the fortified San Giorgio walls, begins here.

**Walls of the Moat**

These are the mediaeval walls which you can walk along, starting from the church of St Augustine. They have been carefully restored, and give a very good idea of the defences built by the Malatestas. Excellent views and attractive buildings can be seen.

**Piazza Malatesta**

The town's main square. Here you can see the Palazzo Comunale (Town Hall) and other eighteenth and nineteenth-century buildings.

**Ancient spring and  
Malatesta well**

At the entrance to the town is the spring which has been supplying Verucchio with water for many centuries. Recent exploration has brought to light two cisterns with domed covers and a well, all dating from the fifteenth century.



Archaeology Museum

### Archaeology Museum

via S.Agostino, 14  
0541 670222

The Museum is housed in the Monastery of the Augustinian Fathers, founded in the 14th century, and contains a collection of international standing, one of the jewels – and one of the greatest surprises – of art and culture in the Rimini region. The rarity and the great beauty and elegance of the exhibits (found in tombs of the Etruscan-Villanovian period, 9th-7th century BC) make this a collection not to be missed. The burial sites found in the Verucchio area rank with those of Tuscany and Latium, and have yielded artefacts and furnishings little short of unique for their style and excellent state of preservation, for the collection includes artefacts in wood and containers of woven fabric or vegetable fibre. Of all the exhibits on display, the most outstanding is perhaps the wooden throne adorned with carved human figures.

The setting too is notable: the Monastery of the Augustinian Fathers – including the church of St Augustine - is an architectural jewel.

### Collegiate Church

piazza Battaglini

One of the Cathedrals of the Marecchia valley, designed by the local architect Tondini in 1883. Inside, there are notable works of art:

- Wooden crucifix by an unknown artist of the 14th-century Rimini School.
- 15th-century Venetian-school Crucifix painted on wood by Nicolò di Pietro in 1404.
- Painting on canvas of St Martin giving his cloak to the beggar, by the artist Centino (Francesco Nagli), dating from the mid-17th century.

### Franciscan Convent

13th century  
via Convento  
(Villa Verucchio)

The convent is situated in the lower town, Villa Verucchio. In the church, Santa Croce, can be seen a Crucifixion, one of the masterpieces of the 14th-century Rimini School.

In the cloister stands a monument of nature: a cypress tree 23 metres high, believed to be about seven centuries old; legend has it that St Francis of Assisi himself lit it. This convent is believed to be the oldest Franciscan building in Romagna; founded, according to local tradition, in 1215.

### Romanesque "Pieve" (ancient parish church)

10th century  
via Pieve

The church stands at the foot of the rocky spur supporting the fortress, and can be reached by taking the road down towards Villa Verucchio. This Romanesque building dates from about 990.



The golf course



Cycle tracks



## DON'T MISS

### **Malatesta Festival** August

For several days in August, the Malatesta Festival brings to the town centre a historic atmosphere, with pageantry, jousting knights, great banquets, and feasting both for the court and the people. The event always attracts large numbers of visitors, uniting entertainment with historic reconstruction.

### **Rosa Fresca Aulentissima** May

Exhibitions, conferences, competitions, markets and courses all devoted to roses. All the most atmospheric corners of the town become a triumph of flowers.

### **Verucchio Festival** July

Top-class ethnic music and new musical trends. Every year the festival features a selection of artists and groups of outstanding international significance.

### **"Quattorg" Fair** September

A fair with ancient origins, an excellent opportunity to sample traditional cooking and buy local produce.

### **Fira de Bagoïn (Pig Fair)** January

The name says it all! This fair celebrates the animal most appreciated in local dishes.

Verucchio **has a very well-equipped golf course with 18 championship holes and 7 executive.** Rimini Golf Club is open all year, and has an attractive club house and a practice course where lessons for beginners and newcomers to the game are held. The entire structure is set within the beautiful "Amalia" farm and vineyards.

**Excellent local products are wine** (a number of local growers produce fine Sangiovese, Trebbiano and Albana) and oil.

 For further information  
on places to visit and events:  
**Proloco- IAT Tourist Office** tel. 0541 670222  
[www.verucchio.net](http://www.verucchio.net)  
[www.signoriadeimalatesta.it](http://www.signoriadeimalatesta.it)  
[www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it)

## REFINEMENT AND CIVILISATION

Historians and scholars now know that thousands of years ago, between the 9th and 7th centuries BC there lived in Verucchio and the surrounding area a flourishing community which has been named the **"Villanovian Civilisation"**.

Hundreds of tombs discovered in the Verucchio area have yielded not only finds unique in their archaeological value but also an entire aesthetic and symbolic, material and spiritual world, a world so rich, complex and refined that some experts talk about a specific **"Verucchio civilisation"**. As long ago as 1613, contemporary reports tell us, during excavations made in order to lay the foundations of a convent, a number of large urns were found, containing ashes which appeared to be human remains burned in accordance with pagan customs. Many more tombs have been discovered since then, both casually and during planned excavations, culminating in the discovery in 1972 of 126 tombs including two outstanding princely burials. Traces of buildings, huts and furnaces, have also come to light.

But what is so special about these findings? Many things; and especially the fact that although these artefacts come from tombs, they have an extraordinary sense of life, conveyed by their mystery and pure beauty. Visiting the museum is a strange sensation at first; you wonder whether you are seeing the creations of an ancient tribe of farmers and warriors or the works of a new **"tribe"** of contemporary artists, designers and goldsmiths all speaking the same coherent language.

Observe the exquisite taste of the ceramics; the clean refined lines of the amber, gold, and bone jewellery; the amazingly modern-seeming fabrics and buckles; the tribal sumptuousness of a carved wooden throne, still complete. Look carefully at the small bronze statues; at a wooden table which seems to have come straight from a futuristic furniture designer; the shields, swords and helmets; and do not forget the more humble objects, rare and touching witnesses to daily life: the remains of a basket made from vegetable fibre, the incredible handle of a fan. What men were these, to produce such artefacts? As you will have gathered, Verucchio Museum is not just a store of **"things"**: it really has much to tell us.



Exhibits from the Archaeology Museum



Palazzo Marcosanti

Rimini > 16 km • 20 min

Riccione > 28 km • 35 min

Bellaria > 17 km • 25 min

Cattolica > 36 km • 40 min

Misano > 32 km • 40 min

ALTITUDE M 153



## POGGIO BERNI



The territory of Poggio Berni, partly situated on three small hills which are the continuation of the hill of Santarcangelo, has a distinguishing feature: the variety of historic buildings dotted around the countryside. Here you can find great houses of notable beauty and fascinating history, but also rural buildings of outstanding interest, with many features illustrating the traditional culture of these lands.

The historic houses include aristocratic mansions and villas whose origins go back many centuries, once the property of the most powerful local families; while the rural buildings are mostly mills, which once served a vast agricultural area still to be seen around the main centre. The great number of both historic houses and mills in such a relatively small area is unusual, but the two features are in effect two sides of the same coin: both bear witness to the wealth generated by this fertile and densely populated countryside.



Palazzo  
Astolfi



## THINGS TO KNOW

This part of the Malatesta Seignory perhaps did not need great castles, since it was protected by the mighty fortresses of Santarcangelo, Torriana, and Verucchio. Still, it was highly desirable territory, both **fertile to farm and beautiful to look at**, with its views of hills and rivers. And so numerous **small castles sprang up, together with vast fortified mansions and sumptuous villas**.

These buildings were primarily residential, but at the same time were required to provide protection for their noble owners and ensure some degree of control over the surrounding countryside. The Malatesta family, obviously, were a notable presence; there is evidence of their influence as long ago as 1197, and it was here - with the help of their fertile and productive farmlands - that they built the foundations of their later fortunes, both political and financial, in the territory of Rimini.

Complicated family relationships and the system of dowries meant that the various mansions of Poggio Berni passed through the hands of many of **the great Italian dynasties**: during and after the Malatesta age, the Houses of Montefeltro, Della Rovere, Medici-Lorraine, Gonzaga, and Doria, all held possessions in this region.

**Palazzo Marcosanti**

late 13th century  
via Ripa Bianca, 441  
Open by prior  
arrangement

This is the ancient "Tomba" of Poggio Berni ("Tomba" was the name given to a fortified country residence); it would have been the main administrative centre for the territory. Although it has undergone many alterations over the centuries, and is now a venue for prestigious receptions and similar events, it still has many interesting features of its past and is one of the best-preserved fortified mansions in the entire Seignory, in a fine position between the Uso and Marecchia rivers. There are beautiful exterior and interior walls, and two ogival doorways dating from the early 14th century. The palazzo takes its present name from the family who bought it in the 19th century.

**Palazzo Tosi**

early 14th century

Another rare example of a fortified aristocratic residence, once a Malatesta possession. Numerous alterations have brought about a gradual transformation; however, the thick walls with their characteristic apertures clearly show that the original purpose of the building was defensive. The 19th century alterations are much in evidence, and include a door with neo-Gothic decoration, the banisters of the great stairway, and the façade of the chapel.

**Palazzo Borghesi**

various periods  
via Cornacchiara 1450

This building, it seems, stood next to the Convent of the White Friars, active here about five centuries ago. It was perhaps a bishop's residence originally, but later, the noble Marcosanti family, owners of much of the surrounding territory, turned it into a sumptuous villa. Still to be seen are notable 19th-century frescoed ceilings, an 18th-century chapel, and a vast park, typical of aristocratic estates of the period.

**Palazzo Astolfi**

late 18th century.  
Piazza S.Rocco 11

Originally called Palazzo Giliendi, it was built towards the end of the 18th century by a high-ranking prelate who had his archbishop's symbols put on the walls. Earlier foundations, perhaps mediaeval, can still be seen in the cellars, but it is the 18th-century features which are the most interesting: the façade, the inner courtyard, and the park. Of note also the frescos in the interior rooms, the kitchen oven, and the 19th-century olive press set up in the cellars. Today, Palazzo Astolfi houses an elegant restaurant.

**Moroni Mill**

Via Santarcangiolese,  
3681  
Visits by prior  
arrangement  
0541 629515-629540

The best-preserved of the numerous mills which once flourished in the Poggio Berni area. It has not been in use since 1955, but its machinery is still in working order. It has been restored, and the exterior is especially beautiful. Guided visits to the interior can be booked, to see this outstanding "component" of local traditional economy and culture.

**Church of Sant'Andrea  
Apostolo**

Via Roma, 9

Interior: a 17th-century altarpiece depicting the Virgin with saints Andrew, George, Rock and Charles Borromeo.

**Piazza San Rocco**

Fountain of Memory, by Tonino Guerra



The countryside near Poggio Berni



## DON'T MISS



### Fairy Tales in August

July/August

Puppet theatre in Palazzo Marcosanti.



### Easter Monday Festival

Easter Monday

Traditional Easter Monday "afternoon tea".



### Summer Fair and donkey race

July

Music, food stalls, traditional games, and fireworks make a background for the donkey race.

You can visit the "**Cava**" park (guided visits by prior arrangement with the Town Hall Tourist Office), an area of considerable scientific interest, where many fossils have been found. The park was created to safeguard this exceptional fossil deposit.



For further information  
on places to visit and events:

**Proloco** tel. 0541 629559

[www.vallemarecchia.it](http://www.vallemarecchia.it)

[www.signoriadeimalatesta.it](http://www.signoriadeimalatesta.it)

[www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it)

## MILLING AND GRINDING

*In traditional culture the world of mills, where corn and other grain were ground to obtain various flours, was a special world. It was a world of technological changes, ranging from ancient water mills to those where the millstones were driven by primitive but powerful internal combustion engines; and it was also a world of human and commercial relations. In short, the mill was one of the foundations not merely of the economy but also of rural and popular culture. Sadly, nearly all these mills, often genuine masterpieces of architecture and technology, have disappeared, their structures altered, millstones dispersed, machinery destroyed. Poggio Berni, because of its strategic position, was the centre where grain from all over the rich surrounding agricultural land was gathered and ground. There is a note referring to this municipality, which states:*

*"a characteristic feature of the Poggio Berni area are the water mills, using water power to drive the heavy wheels which turned the millstones.*

*These mills have great historic and cultural significance for the area. The "Viserba" canal supplied the water which powered five mills. Their present state, or what remains of them, suggests hydraulic, technological and domestic features common to the entire Marecchia valley; and even though new and different necessities for living space, access of means of transport to the buildings and to the operation rooms, together with some small typological adjustments, have brought about alterations to the five mills, we can still read (...) the features of a substantial long-standing immutability.*

*The names of the mills are:*

**Mulino Pantano**

**Mulino delle Pere**, now Ronci

**Mulino La Molinella**, now Bronzetti

**Mulino del Palazzo**, now Sapignoli

**Mulino dell'Osteria**, now Moroni

*This last is the most complete and prized of the mills in Poggio Berni; it has an important milling apparatus still in working order though at rest; it ceased to function about 1955. The Municipality of Poggio Berni has aided the restoration of the building, which can now be visited by groups and school parties, by prior arrangement with the culture department."*

*Moroni Mill is really beautiful, both its external architecture and the interior: visitors can appreciate the technological solutions which transformed the grain into flour, and at the same time experience the particular atmosphere characteristic of these places which played such a large part in country life in former times.*



Mulino Moroni



**Montebello Fortress**

Rimini > 21 km • 25 min

Riccione > 32 km • 35 min

Bellaria > 22 km • 25 min

Cattolica > 40 km • 45 min

Misano > 37 km • 40 min

ALTITUDE M 456

# TORRIANA MONTEBELLO



The two fortresses of Torriana and Montebello stand perched on two of the rocky cliffs so typical of the Marecchia valley, excellent natural defences in times of war and invasions. Invincible fortresses which witnessed the splendours of the Malatesta Seignory and the bitter battles against the castles and troops of Montefeltro, the adjoining region which includes the middle and upper parts of the valley.

Torriana has been much altered and is now the main administrative centre, while the village of Montebello is almost intact; the silence of centuries has made the village a precious island of history and culture.

There are mysterious legends too, and the richness of the environment has led to the creation of a nature reserve complete with a study and research centre.





## THINGS TO KNOW

The present name of Torriana has been in use only since 1938; its former name was less sweet-sounding, but described vividly the harshness of this spot, clinging perilously to the bare rock. “*Scorticata*”, it was called: scraped or scratched, we would say in English; and it is this name we find chronicled as far back as 1141. The limestone rock must have looked more bare then than it does today, so that the fortress could hardly be distinguished from the rock itself. It was an important fortress, standing guard over the ancient Via Maior, the road up the Marecchia valley, strategically vital since it was the main link with the Montefeltro region and with Tuscany.

It is said that **Gianciotto Malatesta**, notorious for having ended the tryst of his wife Francesca and his brother Paolo by putting both to the sword, met his own death in the dungeons of Torriana Fortress.

The Malatestas ruled the castle, which later passed into the hands of other great Houses such as the Borgia and the Medici. Today, there are still some traces of the original fortifications encompassed within a recent building.

By contrast, the history of **Montebello** and its beautiful, fascinating fortress, is an open book. The military character of the place must have been recognised even in remote times, since its name derives from Mons Belli, the Mount of War. There is only one road into the village, guarded by a fortified gate, and the village is wholly mediaeval in its layout. Today, as in times past, it is one of the most outstanding places in the Malatesta Seignory.

**Torriana Fortress**

via Castello, 15  
Visits by prior  
arrangement

Much restored in the 1970s. Little remains of the original Malatesta fortress which, together with that of Verucchio, formed a barricade right across the valley: the main gateway, two round towers, the cistern, part of the walls and of the keep. High above the fortress, on the highest part of Mount Scorticata, stands the little church of St Philip and St James. The view over the Marecchia valley is wonderful.

**Torriana Tower**

Can be visited  
any time

This stands on a peak overlooking the surrounding territory, allowing signals to be sent to a number of lookout posts. The view is of course incomparable, and the remains of the 13th-century tower have been restored.

**The "Water Tree"**

This is the name of the fountain which graces the main square of the village. It is a fanciful creation by the poet and screenwriter Tonino Guerra.

**Montebello  
Fortress**

via Casale di  
Montebello  
0541 675180  
Entrance fee  
payable

This is certainly one of the most interesting historic buildings in the whole of the Malatesta Seignory. All the various alterations and additions made over the centuries can be very clearly seen; some strictly for military purposes, others carried out to adapt the fortress to its new role of aristocratic residence. The keep and part of the fortress belong to the original building and date from the year 1000. The aristocratic residence dates from the latter part of the 15th century when the Malatestas were replaced by the Counts Guidi di Bagno, who still own the castle. There are many surprises in store for visitors to the castle, which is full of treasures and secrets. There are fine pieces of furniture dating from the 14th to the 18th centuries, and there is a notable collection of strong-boxes and chests, including a painted coffer said to date from the time of the Crusades. Mysterious tunnels and dark passages, deep wells and strange happenings, have nourished the legend that the castle is haunted by the ghost of Azzurrina, the daughter of the retainer, a little girl about five years old with strange bluish hair, who disappeared without trace in 1375 in the underground passages of the castle. It is said she still wanders within the castle walls.

**Church  
of Our Lady,  
Saiano**

An unusual group of buildings on the summit of a rocky peak rising straight up from the river bed, within the bounds of the nature reserve. Little remains of the original fortifications, apart from a round tower presumably from the Byzantine period. The church, dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, can be reached on foot. Inside the church is a 15th-century plaster statue of the Madonna and Child, much venerated by the women of the valley, who called on her to protect them in childbirth. The bronze door of the church was designed by the sculptor Arnaldo Pomodoro.



Saiano



## DON'T MISS



### Honey Festival

1st Weekend in September

A festival dedicated entirely to this gift of nature, produced locally. You can sample local honey and honey products, choosing from the many different types on offer.

### The "Water Tree" Festival



2nd Saturday in July

Music and meetings around the fountain.

### Scorticata, the Hill of Delights July



A modern, innovative "village fair" aimed at a younger public interested in the prestigious and creative dishes that Romagna cuisine can produce. Info 0541 675220

Torriana and Montebello are surrounded by lush green countryside, and the local "Comunità Montana" association has created a **network of paths, well-kept and well-signposted, for hikers, mountain bikes, and horse-riders**. The paths cover the entire territory, with links to Verucchio and the middle and upper Marecchia valley, and are interesting not only to nature enthusiasts but also to history lovers, since they pass close to a number of historic buildings. **One of the best walks is to the Church of Our Lady, Saiano**. The **Torriana – Montebello Nature Reserve** deserves a special mention. Founded in 1993, the reserve protects an area important for a number of reasons: geological (chalk formations); botanical (oak woods, orchids, water plants); and above all for its fauna.



For further information  
on places to visit and events:

**Proloco** tel. 0541 675402

[www.vallemarecchia.it](http://www.vallemarecchia.it)

[www.signoriadeimalatesta.it](http://www.signoriadeimalatesta.it)

[www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it)

## A LITTLE GHOST

Montebello Fortress “rises solitary on the left bank of the Marecchia, in a fiercely isolated position”, writes Weleda Tiboni, with the river in the valley “broadening into a wide loop all around the huge rock”. Visitors go to Montebello for the undisputed beauty of the spot and to savour the harmony of the mediaeval village. And they go mainly to see the imposing fortress, “reaching towards the sky from the centre of a natural amphitheatre, surrounded by space filled with airy light.” Many visitors go to learn more about the story of the most famous ghost in the Malatesta Seignory. Her name is **Azzurrina**.

“Azzurrina could not have found a better place than Montebello to make her fairytale – legend – truth grow through time. Her little voice is safely guarded in a mighty fortress belonging to the Guidi di Bagno family. There are references to Azzurrina (...) in an early seventeenth-century document, which relates – with all the possible and logical omissions – the sad story of little Guendalina, daughter of Ugolinuccio Malatesta. On the day of the summer solstice in 1375, she disappeared in the underground passages of the fortress while chasing her rag ball; and ever since then, every five years at the summer solstice, her voice is heard once more.” (Valeriani-Bravetti)

The legend has interesting details.

The child is believed to have been albino, with very pale skin, blue eyes, and hair dyed dark blue to disguise her “anomaly”: hence the name Azzurrina, Little Blue One. The guards who were supposed to be keeping watch did not find her in the underground passages; they searched for her during the following days too, but still failed to find her and were condemned to death. And so of course some say that every five years – and at other times too – her cries and sighs and light footsteps can still be heard and her slight figure appears among the castle walls. Recordings, film, and the intervention of mediums, have all been used in an attempt to document something, but ghosts, as we know, are often shy and fleeting.



Interior, Montebello Fortress



A stretch of the River Conca



## THE CONCA VALLEY

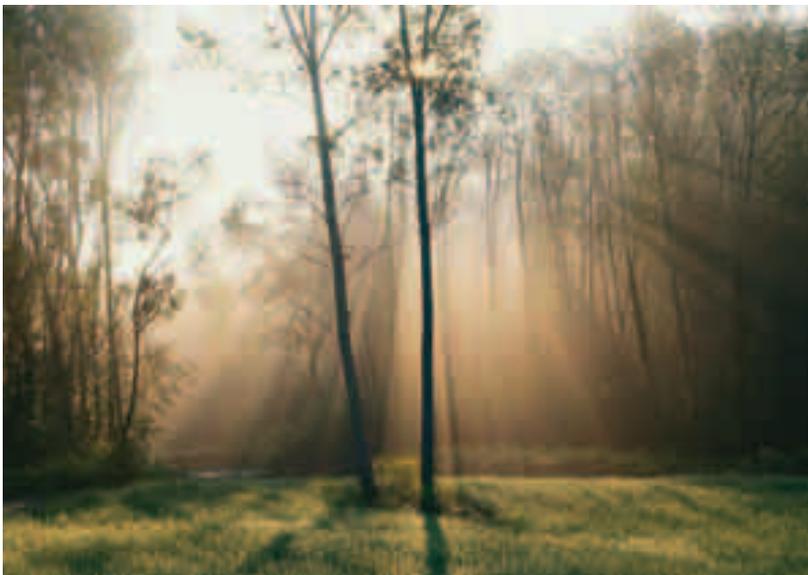


The source of the River Conca is a small anonymous spring on Mount Carpegna in the historic Montefeltro region in Le Marche; it flows into the sea in the Romagna region between Cattolica and Misano Adriatico.

In ancient times its waters must have often been ruinous, since Roman writers defined it "rapacious": when in flood it covered wide stretches of ground and carried away everything in its path.

It is still a seasonal torrential stream today, alternating periods of drought with impressive floods, and its rapacious nature is still evident at times. And yet the lands of this valley look so peaceful, all gentle rounded hills with villages on their summits.

But the warrior spirit can be felt here set: many castles still border the lands of Urbino, whose powerful lords the Montefeltro family were a continual threat to the Malatestas (and vice versa). All this can be clearly read in the fortresses and towers, the fortified villages and small towns which often retain recognisable and at times intact mediaeval and Renaissance forms.



## THINGS TO KNOW

The River Conca, known in ancient times by the name *Crustumium*, rises in Le Marche, at a height of about 1,400 metres, on Mount Carpegna. The river begins its course in the province of Pesaro and then enters the Malatesta Seignory, carving its way through the hills and widening out into a broad plain stretching as far as the beaches of the Adriatic, to enter the sea between Cattolica and Misano. The Seignory numbers eleven towns and villages in the Conca Valley: Gemmano, Mondaino, Morciano, Montefiore, Montegridolfo, Montescudo, Montecolombo, Saludecio, San Clemente, and San Giovanni in Marignano; and we should include Coriano, although this is actually in the Marano valley. The Conca valley is unusual in that it is both gentle and wild at the same time; its distinguishing feature is a harmony between the activity of mankind and the working of nature; a harmony still tangible in the combination of historic settlements, agriculture, and wild natural areas.

The Conca valley is a region of beautiful hills reaching out towards the Apennines, always gentle, never harsh, where fields of corn alternate with vineyards and olive groves, occasional chestnut woods, and oak woods on the edges of meadows used for pastureland. The hills are often crowned with villages, stretched out along narrow ridges or perched on the top of jutting peaks. Visitors to the valley are often pleasantly surprised by the beauty of the countryside and by the views, where the sea is

never out of sight and the hills and distant mountains are a constant backdrop. The Conca valley is a region where the land itself still has a fundamental and decisive role to play in creating an environment of great beauty; other significant factors are the valley of the **Marano**, the third in importance in the Rimini area, and the **Ventena** valleys, Gemmano and Saludecio, small but of outstanding natural beauty.

History too has played a crucial part in defining the shape and the life of the Conca valley, determining the alternating fortunes of the various towns and villages. Fortresses and fortified villages are scattered throughout the region, guarding the perilous **borders with the Duchy of Urbino**, which made both its military might and its artistic and cultural influence felt in the surrounding territory. In these **fortresses** the Malatesta lords resided for much of the year; important meetings took place here, deciding the destiny of the Seignory. Some of the fortresses were more like royal palaces – Montefiore, for instance, where heirs to the House of Malatesta were born and where princes and Popes were received as guests; or Mondaino, where peace treaties were drawn up and signed.

Works of art and of mankind mingle with masterpieces of nature, some of them most unusual, such as the **Onferno Caves**.

In short, the Conca valley is a place filled with interesting towns and villages to explore, but it is above all landscape: beautiful scenery to admire and to enjoy.





Fortified village walls

Rimini > 10 km • 10 min

Riccione > 7 km • 10 min

Bellaria > 22 km • 25 min

Cattolica > 16 km • 25 min

Misano > 10 km • 10 min

ALTITUDE M 102

# CORIANO



The countryside around Coriano is delightful: fields planted with vines and olives, scattered farmhouses and ancient villages still inhabited and lovingly preserved. Visitors to this part of the Malatesta Seignory sense that they are in a rich countryside where life has always been pleasant, for thousands of years; and certainly there are enough tokens and monuments from the past to support this belief. The sea is very close – Rimini and Riccione stand on the borders of the valley – and if you look towards the mountains you will see the unmistakable outline of the three peaks of San Marino. Strictly speaking, Coriano is not situated in the Conca valley, but is instead the main town in the valley of the Marano, a seasonal torrential stream which makes its way down from the hills marking the border between San Marino and Le Marche, covering 30 kilometres until it comes to the beaches between Rimini and Riccione. This valley is a surprise to the visitor, a little green island so close to the busy towns, a beautifully-kept island offering a wealth of outdoor activities.



Entrance  
gateway  
to the  
fortified  
village



## THINGS TO KNOW

Life in Coriano must have been good even as far back as the Iron Age, 800 years or so before Christ, to judge from the number of objects found in the neighbourhood which can be dated back to the Villanovian civilisation. Certainly the Romans found it a good place to live when they founded the present settlement about the third century BC, as can be seen from the numerous remains of villas and brick kilns. There are records of the castle as long ago as 1202, when it belonged to the church of Ravenna, but very soon afterwards its history began to be closely linked to nearby Rimini and to the Malatestas, leading to the building of a fine fortress in 1440. In 1528, after the fall of Malatesta power, the little fortress was restored to the Sassatelli family from Imola, whose coat of arms can still be seen on the entrance gateway. This family was granted jurisdiction over the territory of Coriano by Pope Clement VII. Coriano's history includes events far more dramatic than this, for it was the scene of a harsh encounter during the Second World War: in 1944 the countryside around Coriano was scarred by the ferocious battle between the Allies and the German troops over the "Gothic Line", a powerful defence system set up by the German troops who occupied the area. Coriano was the theatre for two battles: the first between the 3rd and 6th of September, which saw the German forces victorious, and the second from the 12th to the 16th of September, which gave the victory to the Allies, enabling them to reach Rimini and penetrate the Lombardy Plain. The outcome: thousands of deaths and very great damage to the village.

**Walls and arches  
of the Malatesta  
fortified village**

16th century

Of the original Malatesta complex there still remain some outer walls, the outer gateway and the inner gateway with tower. Restoration work has made these remains "legible", tokens of the fortifications built by the Malatestas in the plains close to Rimini.

**Santa Maria  
Assunta parish  
church**

via Pedrelli, 2

An impressive building begun after the disastrous bombardment of Coriano during World War Two, and inaugurated in 1956. The exterior features a huge dome and a bell tower 47 mt high. The interior, spacious and full of light, houses a graceful 13th-century wooden crucifix and various fine statues of the Virgin and saints. A diocesan bull proclaimed the church a Sanctuary of the Holy Cross, with a feast day every three years on the third Sunday in September.

**Madonna  
Addolorata church**

via Malatesta, 4

The church, built in the early 19th century, houses the mortal remains of Blessed Elisabetta Renzi and a painting of Our Lady of Grace by an unknown painter.

**Santa Maria  
Assunta church**via Castello, 4  
Mulazzano

Built to replace the church destroyed in World War Two, this church is rather square and traditional in style. Inside the church is a 17th-century wooden crucifix and a painting about two centuries old depicting Our Lady of the Sun. This painting is an object of special devotion which culminates in the Feast of Our Lady of the Sun held on the fourth Sunday in September.

**San Giovanni  
Battista parish  
church**via I Maggio, 98  
Cerasolo

A sacred building of very ancient origin, and one of the Coriano area's artistic jewels. The interior has fine works of art, including a stone baptismal font dating from 1572 and a 16th-century stone Madonna and Child, and numerous paintings of the Romagna School including Our Lady of the Sun, Our Lady with St Bernardino, and a Madonna of the Rosary. Also of note are the artistic altar frontals which once stood under the altars. The church also has an 18th-century organ built by Francesco Masconi of Coriano. A visit to the church will reveal other interesting works of art.

**Malatesta  
Antiquarium**

via Malatesta

In a house in the village is a permanent exhibition with the various artefacts found during archaeological excavations in the area. Among the materials on display are numerous ceramics dating from the 14th to the 17 centuries, 15th-century glass, metal armour, and coins, all of which enable the visitor to visualise what life was like in the village.



The countryside around Coriano



## DON'T MISS



**River Park festival**  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in June



**Mediaeval pageants and jousting**  
July

Mediaeval-style contests and jousts in historic places in the Coriano area.



**Sangiovese Fair**  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in September

Presentation of new local wines (which in this area are excellent) and local crafts.



**Olive Fair and Traditional Autumn Produce - 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Sundays in November**

The olive oil produced in Coriano is one of the best in the Rimini area. At this fair, you can taste and buy oil, and there are also meetings and conferences about farm produce and local crafts.

All of the **Marano Park** is ideal for **sports and outdoor activities**, such as cycling and walking. The park has **picnic areas**, and **wooden chalets for meetings and exhibitions**.

**Coriano produces fine wines**, some of them ranking among **the best in Italy**. (**Coriano forms part of the national Wine Cities Route**). The local **olive oil** is also excellent, and can be bought directly from the producers at local mills.



For further information  
on places to visit and events:  
**IAT Tourist Office** tel. 0541 656255  
[www.prolococoriano.it](http://www.prolococoriano.it)  
[www.signoriadeimalatesta.it](http://www.signoriadeimalatesta.it)  
[www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it)

## ABBOT BATTARRA

In a pleasant corner of the countryside around Coriano, in the hamlet of Pedrolara, you can still see the house which, in the mid-18th century, was home to one of the most fascinating and extraordinary figures in local culture. **Abbot Giovanni Antonio Battarra** was a man of many interests and great strength of character; his combative personality often led to clashes with fellow-citizens, colleagues, and the authorities, both over questions of science and for personal reasons.

Battarra was an abbot; a man of religion, though rather an absent-minded one; he was an outstanding botanist (a rare mushroom is named for him), an excellent engraver, an agronomist, an expert (he liked to say) in hydraulic engineering, and a very keen hunter. Many of his works are still appreciated today, excellent engravings and scientific treatises. Among these last is one perhaps written "for amusement" which made him famous throughout Italy. *Pratica Agraria, Country Customs*, was published in 1778, making him the first to write about popular Romagna traditions. It contains a "dialogue" as he calls it, entitled "Of the Customs, Vain Observances and Superstitions of Rural Romagna people". In this part of his book, Battarra has the farm labourers talking to their master, describing a great number of ancient, mysterious traditions. Speaking of the particular care and attention necessary after childbirth, Cilia, one of the country women involved in the dialogue, says :

"Then there is the care of the child for eight or ten days, and in this time no-one should see it, especially not the poor people who come to the house begging for charity; these people should not be received; as soon as you see them, give them something and send them away quickly."

Master: And why?

Cilia: Because of the Witches who sometimes come in that disguise, and cast the evil eye, or act some witchcraft, drinking the child's blood and killing it little by little. The evil eye kills adults too, how much more so these little ones.

Master: And what remedy is there for this evil?

Cilia: The remedy for the evil eye in adults is to take a *Piantindomina* plant, and for three successive mornings the sick person must piss on it. If the plant dries up, the victim will live; if not, he will die."

It is evident that here we have a first-class ethnographic document which has "photographed" a world where the ancient popular country culture was still untouched by external influences.



An old image of St Antony Abbot, protector of livestock



The walls of the village

Rimini > 15 km • 20 min

Riccione > 10 km • 15 min

Bellaria > 31 km • 35 min

Cattolica > 17 km • 15 min

Misano > 13 km • 15 min

ALTITUDE M 170



## SAN CLEMENTE



We are in the hills, looking out towards the sea, among cornfields and vineyards renowned for their quality.

We are in a little village with a vast territory around it, including fertile well-kept farmlands and country hamlets where people live and work. The most-visited beaches in Europe – Rimini, Riccione, and Cattolica – are close by, and yet this is a place of peace and tranquillity, ideal for relaxing, and a good starting point for visiting the inland countryside, especially for visitors coming from Rimini to see the Conca valley.

The Prince of these lands is good Sangiovese wine, and the wine from San Clemente is known for one of the best wines in Romagna.





## THINGS TO KNOW

San Clemente too played its part in the history of the Malatesta Seignory. This is not a border area, however, so it was a fairly peaceful place in the time of the Malatestas, and the fortifications here were neither as massive nor as crucial as elsewhere. Still, there are evident traces of the past.

The layout of the old town centre was determined by the **defensive buildings**: the present perimeter is still determined by **the walls and ramparts**, altered here and there but still clearly visible. The **entrance gate** itself, though altered in recent times, takes us back to an age when the town was completely fortified.

A number of small country villages in this area still have interesting traces of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, including **Agello** and **Castelleale**, both of which are only a few kilometres from San Clemente. San Clemente, being an older centre with jurisdiction over a wide area, has long disputed control over the Conca valley with Saludecio and Montefiore, two other important towns in the middle valley.

Today, farming is one of the most flourishing activities, but San Clemente also offers interesting initiatives **in food and wine**, and the town works hard to preserve its traditions, including the works of **Giustiniano Villa**, the **cobbler-poet** born here in 1842, rightly considered one of the most significant voices in Romagna folk culture.

**Church of  
San Clemente**

Piazza Mazzini, 1

Built in 1836 over the 14th-century monastery church, of which a few traces still remain in the interior. It was designed by Luigi Poletti, the famous Papal architect who also designed the Municipal Theatre in Rimini. The interior has a painting by Giovanni Battista Costa, an interesting 18th century artist, depicting the Holy Family.

**Piazza Mazzini  
The Friars' Well  
(1370)**

Around the square stand the church, the Town Hall, and the town gateway, with a Baroque tower.

**Walls with  
quadrangular  
ramparts**

via del Castello

Malatesta memories are still alive, woven into the urban fabric of San Clemente. As in the past, the Malatesta walls still surround the historic heart of the village and the complex known as Castelleale, a few kilometres distant, one of the rare examples in the Rimini area of a building which was at the same time a large farm and a fortified residence. It was built in 1388 by Leale Malatesta, Bishop of Rimini. Though the partial destructions and rebuildings of successive centuries have greatly altered the original structure, its mediaeval origins can still be discerned by the attentive observer.

**Fortified farmhouse  
of Castelleale  
14th century**

Hamlet of Castelleale

A rare example of a fortified rural settlement; a few traces of the mediaeval buildings still survive.

**Fortified farmhouse  
of Agello**

Hamlet of Agello

Another tiny fortified village surrounded by beautiful countryside





Vineyards in San Clemente



## DON'T MISS

### **Once Upon a Time**

End of May/beginning of June, for seven/ten days

An event centring on cultural and gastronomic traditions. The "Palio Gastronomico" is a contest between the town and its suburbs, each trying to outdo the others in producing typical local dishes. There is also a dialect poetry contest, judged both by a panel of experts and by the public.

### **Wine Festival**

Mid-May

In an area so devoted to the production of good wine, there simply has to be a competition for the best red wines from San Clemente and the country round about. A good excuse for a party, and also for tasting and buying the best of the year's production.

### **Notes di...vine**

June - July

Series of evenings devoted to good wine and good music.

San Clemente proudly bears the title "**city of wine**"; there are many producers of Sangiovese wine, including a number of DOC protected origin wines. The wines vary subtly in type and flavour, depending on the position and soil-type of the different vineyards, some high in the hills overlooking the sea, others on clay soil near the river. If you want to buy Sangiovese or other wines, just take a run into the country and **look for the producers**.

**i**

For further information  
on places to visit and events:

Proloco tel. 0541 980768

[www.sanclemente.it](http://www.sanclemente.it)

[www.signoriadeimalatesta.it](http://www.signoriadeimalatesta.it)

[www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it)

## POETRY IN THE MARKET PLACE

*Giustiniano Villa, who was born in San Clemente in 1842, has left a profound impression on popular culture in the Rimini area and throughout Romagna. By trade he was a cobbler, but his artistic leanings and his desire to speak his thoughts led him to become less and less a shoemaker and more an authentic "poet of the market place."*

*His poems in dialect, probably composed from memory as he worked at his awl, began to be published on "flyers" around 1875. Villa would sit on a chair and declaim his amusing but profound poems, and then for a few centimes he would sell "the paper" to the ever larger audience of farm workers, labourers, and a few enlightened members of the middle class. His public loved him, and would surround him eagerly, first in the crowded market place during the weekly markets and local fairs, and then in the streets of Rimini, Santarcangelo, and numerous villages in the Montefeltro and Pesaro areas. He became quite famous and many imitated him; many more memorised his long "stories" written in the lively dialect which distinguished the worker classes.*

*Most of Villa's poetry is in the form of dialogues or "contrasts" between farm labourer and master, where the master, in polished Italian, tries to squeeze the greatest possible amount of work out of his tenant and impose his own ideas, while the labourer replies in clear and witty words, often very explicit, illustrating his wretched condition, his modest yet unsatisfied needs, and his desire to change things. But Giustiniano also wrote many poems about the wars which disfigured his times, about political elections and iniquitous taxation. And there are also atmospheric "descents into hell" in which the Bard of San Clemente, like his colleague Dante, finds himself in the nether world and encounters a whole gallery of personages, all categories of "exploiters of the common people".*

*His poetry did not die after his death in an accident in 1919; many people tried to emulate his unusual trade of "poet of the market place", but no-one has matched his bravura and his kindly but intense passion in trying to imagine a world which would deal more fairly with all its inhabitants.*



Giustiniano Villa



**Piazza Silvagni**

Rimini > 21 km • 20 min

Riccione > 10 km • 15 min

Bellaria > 32 km • 35 min

Cattolica > 3 km • 5 min

Misano > 7 km • 10 min

ALTITUDE M 30



## SAN GIOVANNI IN MARIGNANO



We are in the middle of the Conca valley plain, just a few miles from the beaches at Cattolica, and all around us are the hills.

The fortunes of San Giovanni are closely linked to farming in this plain, a rich and fertile land still a patchwork of tidy, well-worked fields. Here grain and wine are plentiful and of excellent quality. Ancient fortifications still remaining, and the very layout of the town, are indicators of how important the place was in the age of the Seignory.

Today, San Giovanni is a lively little town, where much goes on in the old centre: fairs and markets, and once a year around the witching night of St John's Day (between the 23rd and 24th June) all the mystery and charms of witchcraft come to life once more.





## THINGS TO KNOW

Numerous **Roman remains** have been found in and around San Giovanni, and there are many **traces of the Middle Ages**, when much of the land around the river Conca was reclaimed.

But here, as in all the other towns in the area, it was in the age of the Malatestas that San Giovanni developed, taking on the features which still distinguish it today. San Giovanni was known as **"the Malatesta granary"**, which immediately tells us what role and what significance the town had in the context of the Seignory.

It was an extremely valuable agricultural centre, and this is evident from the **traces of walls and fortifications dating from the 12th and 13th centuries**, and from the huge number of underground **grain stores** found throughout the town.

Over the centuries, the vocation of San Giovanni as a producer of plentiful, high-quality cereal crops has given rise to a lively community which nowadays draws its wealth in part also from avant-garde industries in the high-fashion sector and in other up-to-date sectors of productivity.

**Via di Mezzo**

via XX Settembre

The main street through the town, lined with 18th- and 19th-century town houses. You enter the street from the main square, through an ancient gateway with a tower. A number of narrow little streets lead off the main street; the whole town centre is well worth visiting. Of note are the stones, set into the paving, which seal the underground grain stores: there are 200 of these.

**Remains of fortifications and towers**

via XX Settembre

Traces of the 14th/15th-century defensive walls can still be identified.

**Massari Municipal Theatre**

via Serpieri

A miniature jewel of a 19th-century theatre, beautifully decorated, tells us that there was plenty going on in the town during the 1800s. The theatre is still much in use today.

**Church of Santa Lucia**

Piazza Silvagni

Should be visited especially at the time of St Lucy's fair (December 13th). Candles in their hundreds light up the image of St Lucy, protector of the eyesight.

**Church of Santa Maria**Outside the walls  
Borgo della Scuola

Rebuilt in 1786, but the interior still has a 15th-century fresco of the Virgin and Child.

**Church of S. Maria in Pietrafitta**

18th century

The church was rebuilt over the preceding structure in 1730. Of note are the altarpiece depicting the Assumption of the Virgin, by the Rimini painter Giuseppe Soleri Brancaloni (1750-1806) and a stone carved with a cross and various decorative motifs. This fragment must have formed part of the pavement, since the carving, dating from the so-called barbarian age (early 9th century) is worn away.

**Church of S. Maria del Monte**

17th century

This church dates from 1699. The local people greatly wished to honour the cult of an ancient image of the Virgin and Child which was probably in the much older preceding church. Of the ancient building, only a small chapel remains, with the prodigious image of the Madonna of the Mount, whose face is dark-skinned. The interior of the church is very plain and simple and probably included materials still in good condition recovered from earlier buildings. The external tablets and engravings are very touching, narrating the prodigies of the miraculous image.



Church of Santa Lucia



## DON'T MISS

 **"Old and Older", antiques market**  
Every 4th Sunday of the month  
(August excepted) - Piazza Silvagni.

 **The Witches' Night**  
Week centred on June 24th  
Culture and entertainment combined make a rich event recalling ancient rites and traditions connected with the summer solstice, long believed to be closely linked to witches and their doings. Entertainment, exhibitions, market stalls, and themed decorations all round the town turn these summer nights into nights of charm and mystery.

 **Santa Lucia Fair - 13th December**  
The only survivor of the many agricultural fairs which once took place in San Giovanni (more than fifteen, it seems). Market, exhibitions, Christmas decorations, local farm produce and wines.

 **Bacchus Meets Venus - March/April**  
Course/entertainment in tasting wines linked with different styles and types of art: music, cinema, theatre.

 **Love in the Village - July**  
Evenings devoted to the theme of love, with cultural events, music, cinema and theatre. Evocative scenery enhances a visit to the town centre.

 **New Year for Wine - September**  
The event that marks the beginning of the autumn season and the vintage. San Giovanni ("City of Wine") has prestigious wine vaults and promotes cultural events recalling the agricultural traditions of the area.

Don't forget that San Giovanni is a member of the national association of "Cities of Wine" and produces some of the best wines in Romagna.

*For further information  
on places to visit and events:*  
**Proloco** tel 0541 955145  
[www.marignanoweb.it](http://www.marignanoweb.it)  
[www.signoriadeimalatesta.it](http://www.signoriadeimalatesta.it)  
[www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it)

# THE WITCHES' NIGHT

St John's night, the night between the 23rd and 24th of June, is traditionally known in Romagna (and not only in Romagna) as **"the witches' night"**.

This belief has very ancient origins connected with the festivities for the summer solstice, held to be a moment of great magic power.

It was said that witches were particularly active this night and could be seen as they met at crossroads or under large trees. You could stand at the crossroads with a wooden fork wedged under your chin; this was sufficient to ward off the witches, whose malign powers made themselves felt in country life almost ever day. The dew which fell on the fields this night was believed to be miraculous; clothing and household linen wet with this dew would be safe from moths, and garlic which had "taken the dew" was held to have medicinal properties. The water drawn from the well early in the morning made for good eyesight and a healthy body.

But San Giovanni in Marignano also has another "muse" to inspire this festival which for many days enlivens the historic core: her name was Artemisia. A local artist, Mario Manganelli, has studied the vicissitudes of this fascinating personage, a traditional wise woman and healer who could also be defined a sorceress or white witch, who lived in San Giovanni in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. She seems to have been well-known in the surrounding area, and many flocked to undergo the trial or ritual of the oil of San Giovanni which was said to identify, and to some extent neutralise, the evil eye and evil spells.

Artemisia is still remembered today; her house is in the centre of the village.



The Witches' Night



**View of the town**

Rimini > 20 km • 30 min

Riccione > 11 km • 15 min

Bellaria > 36 km • 45 min

Cattolica > 11 km • 15 min

Misano > 10 km • 15 min

ALTITUDE M 85

# MORCIANO DI ROMAGNA



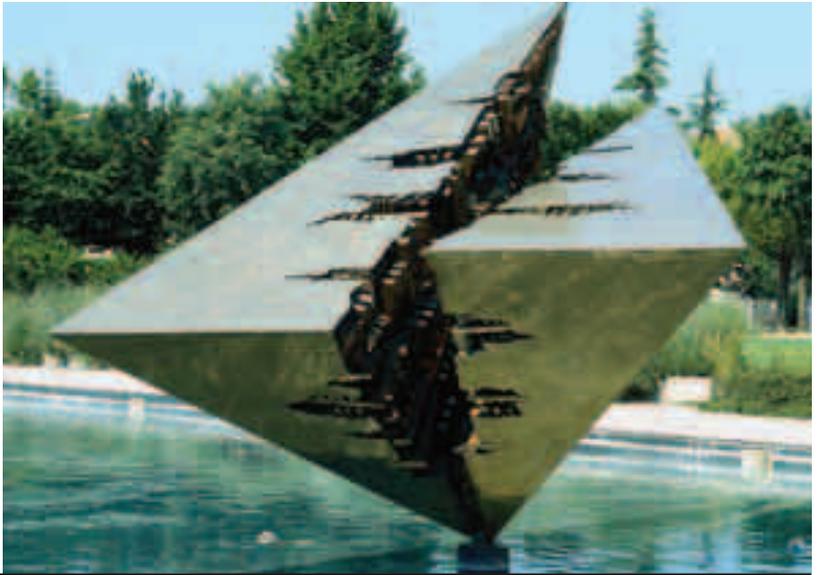
The Conca valley has a modern capital: Morciano. The little town boasts ancient origins, but has developed mainly over the last 100-150 years, becoming the largest trade and services centre in the valley.

The town's importance as a trading centre – partly determined by its favourable position right at the foot of the hills and at the crossing place of the numerous roads leading down to the plain – is evident from the fact that one of the most important fairs in the whole of Romagna, has been held here for centuries.

The present structure of the town – wide streets laid out in a grid – dates mainly from the early 20th century, and some of the buildings have a vague “art nouveau” atmosphere. The town markets are always crowded and colourful.



"Wing  
Beat"  
sculpture  
by Arnaldo  
Pomodoro



right  
St Gregory's  
Fair

## THINGS TO KNOW

The Romans lived here in this attractive plain; farms, villas and settlements have left traces all around the countryside.

There is information about a people, the **Gens Murcia or Marcia**, who held lands here and who gave their name to the town.

The **Abbey of St Gregory**, a monastery founded here by St Peter Damian in 1061, probably determined the development of Morciano in the Middle Ages, since it appears that the first major markets and the first fairs originated around the Abbey, moving later to the village which grew up on rising ground close to the river Conca.

Morciano was long subjected to Montefiore and San Clemente, both of which watched closely the flourishing trade taking place on the plain. Morciano, however, naturally wished to be autonomous, and became a Municipality with its own independent administration through a decree issued by Pope Pius IX in 1857.

**Remains of the  
Abbey of St  
Gregory**

on the road to  
Cattolica

You can still make out the structure of the abbey; some buildings have kept their historic features, though now encompassed within a much-altered complex. The abbey ruins are a few kilometres from the present town centre, on the road to Cattolica.

**Historic  
core  
Piazza Umberto I**

This is the oldest part of the town, and still has its village atmosphere. It seems there were fortifications on lower ground by the river; some traces can still be seen.

**Church of St  
Michael Archangel  
Chapel of the  
Blessed Virgin**

Piazza Boccioni

St Michael's is the little town's parish church, and the nearby chapel dates from the 18th century.

**"Wing Beat"  
Sculpture by  
Arnaldo Pomodoro**

Piazza Boccioni

A fine work by the well-known contemporary artist, born in Morciano, set in a square named for the artist Umberto Boccioni, one of the foremost exponents of Italian Futurism, also native to Morciano.





Historic Core



## DON'T MISS



### St Gregory's Fair

Week centred on March 12th

This fair brings in visitors from much of Romagna and Le Marche. A millenary tradition heralding the arrival of spring, and an opportunity to see one of the greatest trading events in Romagna.

The fair's agricultural origins are well-represented in the cattle market, horse fair, and exhibition and sale of farm machinery. But there are also hundreds of stalls selling everything you can think of; plus a funfair in the town centre and numerous improvised wine bars in every street.

Local food and wine are at their best. Ten days of entertainment and exhibitions for all tastes. The fair is not just a commercial event, but a genuine "rite of spring".



### Morciano Antico

Early December in the Exhibition Centre.

Entrance fee payable

Antiques fair of national importance. Exhibitors come from all over Italy, and there are fine items of considerable value.

The river Conca flows close by the town, and there is an **attractive river park** which can be reached from Via Stadio.

Along the river bank there is also a fine cycle track (**the Valconca cycle track**). Starting from Cattolica, the track passes by San Giovanni in Marignano, touches Morciano, and continues towards the upper valley.



For further information  
on places to visit and events:

Proloco 0541 957630

[www.comune.morciano-di-romagna.rn.it](http://www.comune.morciano-di-romagna.rn.it)

[www.signoriadeimalatesta.it](http://www.signoriadeimalatesta.it)

[www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it)

# A THOUSAND YEARS OF FAIRS

*The history of Morciano is indisputably linked to the great **Fair of St Gregory** which is held on March 12th, and nowadays also on the two weekends around that date and the intervening week.*

*The origins of the town and its subsequent development all rise from the commercial prominence which Morciano gained and still maintains today.*

*It appears that over a thousand years ago the fair was held near the ancient Abbey of St Gregory, (hence the name), a religious building which figured very prominently in the history of the lower valley: some remains can still be seen just outside the town, on the road for San Giovanni in Marignano and Cattolica. The fair eventually moved away from the protection of the Abbey walls, and began to take place in the old village of Morciano which stands on a slight rise on the bank of the Conca river. It became a meeting place for cattle merchants from a wide area reaching as far as the Montefeltro region, and until the early 1900s thousands of cattle and large numbers of horses were bought and sold here.*

*Today St Gregory's Fair is one of the foremost traditional fairs in Romagna and one of the major spring fairs, possibly linked to even more ancient rites of spring. It is still a cattle market, and an important meeting place for horse dealers.*

*And of course it has all the trappings of a modern fair: a huge market for plants and agricultural machinery, a giant funfair, and hundreds of market stalls selling everything you can think of, including some local foodstuffs which reflect old traditions. It is still customary to eat dried figs at the fair, and these have strong propitiatory and sexual associations. Perhaps this too is an indication of ancient rites of spring.*



An ox decked out for St Gregory's Fair



**Malatesta Fortress**

Rimini > 29 km • 35 min

Riccione > 17 km • 20 min

Bellaria > 42 km • 45 min

Cattolica > 17 km • 20 min

Misano > 17 km • 20 min

ALTITUDE M 385

# MONTEFIORE CONCA



Once the mediaeval capital of the Conca valley, this remains one of the best-preserved towns in the Seignory.

It has a special atmosphere; perhaps it is the mighty fortress with its severe outline, visible even from the coast, or perhaps it is the woods and countryside around the town, the craftsmen in their workshops, the flowers along the streets, the ancient rituals, or the splendid view of the Apennines and the Romagna coast: or perhaps it is a combination of all these which give the town its charm. Here history and nature have made a perfect marriage.

It is no coincidence that Montefiore forms part of the prestigious "Most Beautiful Small Towns in Italy" trail. The town offers plenty of entertainment, festivals, concerts, and art exhibitions. Montefiore today is creating its future as a hospitable town where ancient treasures are displayed in a new way.



San Paolo  
Church



## THINGS TO KNOW

Montefiore has yielded tokens of a very remote past: **Iron Age remains have been found on Mount Faggeto**, and **Roman remains on the plain of San Pietro**. But the period in history which still lives on in the town is the Middle Ages, the Malatesta age. The structure of the old town centre revolves around the fortress which dominates it; the narrow streets of the mediaeval fortified village wind around the foot of the fortress, converging on the one and only entrance gateway. The walls bear witness to the building works carried out by the Malatestas to strengthen the fortress, making it both an invincible bulwark against the neighbouring duchy of Urbino and an elegant residence worthy of the princes and Popes who visited Montefiore.

The fortress was built in the mid-14th century. **Galeotto "Belfiore" Malatesta** was born here in 1377, and in 1342 Sigismondo Pandolfo further strengthened the building, favouring the development of the village. When the Malatestas fell from power, Montefiore – in common with all the other castles in the Seignory – passed from one ruler to another: the House of Borgia, the Venetian Republic, and **Costantino Comneno, Prince of Macedonia**, an ambiguous and much-opposed personage of Byzantine descent; he died in Montefiore in 1530.

The splendours of the Malatesta age saw the founding of monasteries, mansions, and churches, and the growth of a wealthy community; when all this came to an end, Montefiore gave up its dominion over the valley, and in the centuries that followed, became that peaceful, lively little town which we can see today.

**Malatesta Fortress**

0541 980035

The mightiest symbol of Malatesta power in all the Conca valley, and perhaps the most unusual; its geometric lines are incomparable. It stands on a high promontory; on a clear day you can see the whole sweep of the coast from Ravenna to Fano.

The highest terraces give views to the Apennine hills, and San Marino seems almost close enough to touch. When the air is really clear, they say, you can see Mount Velebit in Dalmatia, on the other side of the Adriatic Sea.

Little is known about the founding of the fortress, but by 1337 Malatesta Guastafamiglia had already made it a notable military and residential complex, and in 1347 Louis the Great, King of Hungary, stayed here with all his court. Malatesta Ungaro added to the already impressive residence, commissioning the fine coat of arms which can still be seen at the entrance to the castle, and the frescos of battle scenes and portraits of classical heroes, rare masterpieces for the time (1370) which have miraculously survived. Some detached frescos now hang in a room with fine cross-vaulting; others are still in their original position, in a room no longer accessible.

Many famous personages stayed here: Sigismund King of Bohemia, Popes Gregory XII and Julius II, and the nobles and military commanders who had dealings with the Malatestas.

Sigismondo Pandolfo considered the fortress invaluable for keeping an eye on the lands governed by his great enemy Federico da Montefeltro. Notice the fine well, dated 1300, in the castle courtyard.

Overall, the fortress is still partly in need of restoration work.

Numerous exhibitions are held here, all the year round.

**Church  
of San Paolo**

14th century

Montefiore parish church. Exterior and doorway date from the 14th century. Inside is a fine wooden crucifix of the 14th-century Rimini School, a fresco of the Virgin and Child by Bernardino Dolci (15th century) and the splendid altarpiece showing Our Lady of Mercy, by Luzio Dolci (16th century).

**Curina gateway**  
14th/15th century  
with later alterations.

The entrance to the original fortified village. Fine exterior and beautiful interior, now the town council room. On the front is a coat of arms of Pope Pius XII.

## THINGS TO SEE

Porta Curina

below right, Frescos in the Hospital Church



**Hospital Church**

15th century

via XX Settembre

A little church once part of the ancient hospital. Inside, remains of a fine fresco cycle attributed to Bernardino Dolci, where scenes of the Resurrection of the Dead; Heaven; and Hell, are still recognisable. Notice also the wooden crucifix and the little picture of Saints Rock and Joseph with the Child Jesus.

Also kept here are the symbols of the Passion used in the Good Friday procession.

**Church of  
Our Lady of  
Bonora**

(various periods)

via Santuario, 116

One of the most important and best-known places of worship in the Rimini area. The image of the Virgin suckling her Child dates from the 1400s; for centuries the moving simplicity of the image has been admired and venerated by thousands.

There is an interesting collection of ex-voto offerings. The church dominates the Ventena valley and is surrounded by green woods.

**Pottery workshop**

Via Roma

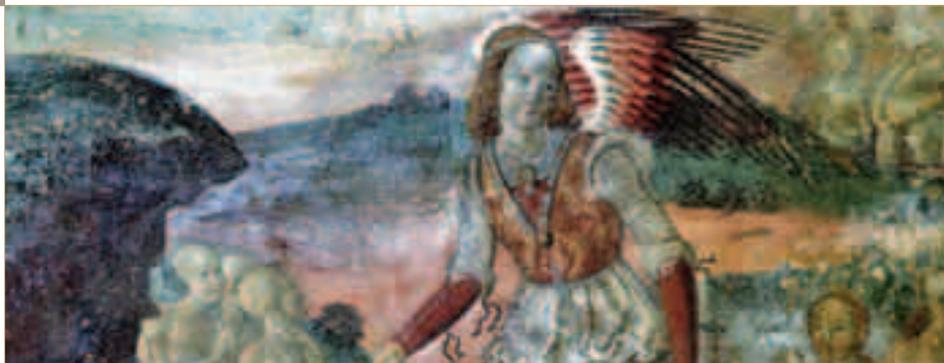
This craft shop is a piece of folk history and tradition.

The wood-fired stove is like the mediaeval stoves, the wheels are foot-operated, and the techniques in use are ancient and fascinating.

**Town walls  
walk  
and Porta Nova  
Park**

The walls surrounding the town have recently been restored and the road running by them makes a short but rewarding walk in outstanding natural scenery.

Near the attractive Porta Nova gateway, also restored, you can walk up to the park (accessible also from near the Fortress): this is one of the most spectacular green spaces in Romagna.





View of the historic core



## Good Friday Procession

Good Friday

Centuries-old religious ritual. Participants are always in costume, and roles are handed down in families.

All the figures of the Passion of Our Lord appear: Christ, the Apostles, the Cyrenean, Pilate and the Roman soldiers, angels and the devout women who followed Christ to Calvary.

The town band also takes part, as do the religious confraternities wearing their robes.



## "Rocca di Luna" (Fortress by Moonlight)

July

Three days, or rather nights, around the full moon: entertainment, exhibitions, market, good things to taste, in honour of the Moon, inspiration of madness and romance. Moonlight and shadows combined create a very special atmosphere.



## A Taste of Montefiore

October/ November

- Healthy Eating

1st Sunday in October

conferences, exhibitions and tasting of characteristic local and organic produce

- Chestnut Fair

the following Sundays

A fair dedicated to the autumn fruit which grows in quantity in the woods around Montefiore. Some chestnut woods are centuries old. Unusually, many grow low in the valley next to olive groves; for this reason Montefiore is mentioned in many studies of Italian vegetation.



## Olive Festival

1st and 2nd Sunday in November

this takes place at Serbadone di Sotto



## Nativity Pageant

Christmas time

The town's historic core becomes the setting for a re-enactment of the birth of Jesus. The ancient walls, torchlight and firelight, and figures in costume together create an enthralling atmosphere.

A number of attractive tracks for walkers and mountain bikes start from Montefiore, crossing the surrounding countryside, an exceptional mix of wild land and cultivated land. Fascinating and spectacular signposted paths lead to the Ventena valley and Gemmano.

Pottery workshop

Every type and technique of traditional Romagna pottery in one shop, keeping alive a vanishing craft. Working and firing techniques in use are centuries old, and customers come from all over Italy to buy plates, pitchers, flasks, and other objects.

Montefiore is proud of its olive oil; the olive groves are in an ideal position and the oil is excellent. There are two oil mills producing a fair quantity of oil, using mostly locally-grown olives.

Excellent cheese is made here, scrupulously following organic methods.

Local chestnuts can be bought in season from the village shops.



For further information  
on places to visit and events:

**Proloco** tel. 0541 980189

[www.comune.montefiore-conca.rn.it](http://www.comune.montefiore-conca.rn.it)

**IAT Tourist Office** (seasonal) tel. 0541 980035

[www.signoriadeimalatesta.it](http://www.signoriadeimalatesta.it)

[www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it)

## GOOD FRIDAY

*From a book published in 1828:*

*"The acts of 15th February 1767 (...) tell us that in Montefiore it was a very ancient religious custom to carry Christ taken down from the Cross in procession on Good Friday, which was once a day of rest in those Lands (...) and that in 1767 the Confraternity of the Hospital, wishing to render more decorous this Holy Function and at the same time kindle pious reflections in the Faithful, employed D. Filippo Romagnoli to produce a magnificent Bier on which to place the Dead Christ; and a corresponding Canopy, also diverse Symbols of our Divine Redeemer's Passion, beginning in 1769 to introduce children dressed as angels, holding in their hands one of these Symbols with its appropriate Words".*

*This is the most direct and best-known account of the Good Friday procession held in Montefiore, a dramatised rendering characterised by theatrical touches and numerous traditional elements. The event is well known throughout the Rimini area and the Conca valley, and always well attended.*

*The procession is performed by cloaked and hooded figures from the various religious congregations carrying torches, and by various figures fulfilling determined roles which are traditionally handed down, whenever possible, through the same families, all native to the town. The central figure is the Cyrenean who bears the Cross, traditionally seen by many as the figure of Christ. It is his part to carry the heavy Cross for much of the route, flanked by numerous Roman soldiers. In addition to the soldiers, the figures of the pious women, Pontius Pilate, Barabbas, Caiaphas, Judas, and certain of the apostles are also represented, and numerous figures of angels carrying the symbols of the Passion.*

*The figure of the Dead Christ is carried under an antique canopy, and at the end of the procession comes the town band, followed by crowds of onlookers. The procession begins about nine in the evening at the friars' convent overlooking the town and descends through the streets of the historic core, reaches the ancient parish church close to the Fortress, and descends further to end at the little church of the Sepulchre, where the participants receive their Good Friday bread. The light of the torches and braziers, the costumes of the participants, the music of the band and the splendid setting, make this perhaps the most evocative and deeply felt rite in the Malatesta Seignory.*



Scenes from the Good Friday procession



**Gemmano and its countryside**

Rimini> 25 km • 30 min

Riccione> 20 km • 20 min

Bellaria> 30 km • 40 min

Cattolica> 20 km • 20 min

Misano> 15 km • 20 min

ALTITUDE M 404



# GEMMANO



The most unspoilt natural environment in the Seignory is to be found here.

Hills covered with wild vegetation vie with neat farmland; every bend in the road gives a new and different view; every variation of season, time of day, light and darkness.

It is a treasury for nature-lovers where the traces of man are few and the countryside is still protagonist.

And then there are the Onferno Caves and the surrounding Nature Reserve, the only one of its kind in the Rimini area, interesting to learn about, fun and easy to visit. Gemmano is the ideal place for nature-lovers, where country excursions and holidays have a special charm.



Carbognano

Church

below right

detail

of the caves



## THINGS TO KNOW

There are many Roman remains in the countryside around Gemmano: at San Pietro in Cotti, in an attractive plain mid-way between Gemmano and the neighbouring municipality of Montefiore, there was a significant settlement, probably one of the most important imperial villas in the Rimini hinterland. Scholars even attribute the name of the town to the Geminiana family, who are mentioned in a number of inscribed tablets found locally.

From 1233 to 1356 Gemmano was a possession of the Municipality of Rimini; it then passed to the Malatestas. The high hill on which it is situated lends itself perfectly to fortification: it is in a fine position, dominating all the plain and much of the land and hills of the Duchy of Urbino. So it is not surprising that here, as on every hill-top in the Malatesta lands, there rose a fortress with a small village attached. At the beginning of the 16th century the Venetians took power here, but in 1518 Gemmano was once more under the Municipality of Rimini. There are few traces of the outer walls, now restored, and only the layout of the town can be recognised, for in 1944 this was the theatre for a terrible battle between the Allies and the German troops over the Gothic Line, and the town was largely destroyed by bombardments. Also of interest, for their rural character, are two small villages in the countryside around Gemmano: Marazzano, where traces of walls and ramparts can still be seen, and Onferno, which has now been entirely restored as the fortified village it became after its destruction by Federico da Montefeltro in 1496.

**Onferno Nature  
Riserve  
Museum Onferno**

Onferno  
Via Castello 83  
0541 984694

A museum of nature, for exhibitions and teaching purposes.

There is information on vegetation, fauna, and geology, and also a botanical garden. This is all attached to the Onferno Caves Visitor Centre in the former parish church of St Columba, the departure point for the best excursions to the caves and surrounding area.

**Onferno Caves**

Onferno,  
Via Castello 83  
0541 984694

The Onferno caves are a very valuable karst complex first explored in 1916. An underground stream has carved its way through the limestone rocks, making tunnels, caverns and halls covering about 750 metres altogether.

About 400 metres are open to the public, a spectacular "route" through huge rooms with rare "knolls", broad corridors hollowed out by the stream, and one of the largest and most varied colonies of bats in Italy. At the exit from the caves is another 400-metre route among rocks, water, small cavities and beautiful vegetation.

The whole visit takes about an hour; guides and equipment are supplied by the Visitor Centre. On the promontory above the caves is the village of Onferno, once a little country castle, now used as a place of reception and refreshments.

**Orientata Nature  
Reserve**

Onferno

123 protected hectares of outstanding naturalistic value, rich in dense vegetation and rare wild animals, and geological formations of limestone rocks and gullies. An attractive and varied environment, well-signposted, ideal for excursions and nature watching, provided due care is taken.

Main routes include the Madonna della Pioggia path, the Faggia path, and the botany trail.

**Carbognano Church**

Carbognano

A fine example of a delightful little country church, immersed in green surroundings. Here an attractive image of Our Lady is venerated.





The centre of Gemmano



## DON'T MISS

### **Noodles and wild boar festival**

**Around August 15th**

A typical village festival centring on food: robust local dishes, especially pasta with sauce made from the wild boar found in the nearby valleys.

### **Onferno Caves Festival**

 **1st Sunday in October**

Dancing to the orchestra and fresh fish for all: a way of celebrating the caves and their importance to the village.

### **Excursions in the Ventena valley**

This little valley between Gemmano and Montefiore is miraculously wild and unspoilt for an area so close to the busy tourist resorts of the coast.

The Ventena stream runs through a broad stretch of wild plants and trees, including the rare alder and many wild orchids; attractive hills and ravines surround it.

The valley is one of the oldest and most surprising tracts of landscape in the province.

There is an excellent network of well-signposted paths, ideal for walking to the surrounding villages. The area is also popular with mountain bikers.

**i**

*For further information  
on places to visit and events:*  
**Centro Visite Riserva Naturale Orientata**  
tel. 0541 984694 - 854060 (Town Hall)  
[www.comune.gemmano.rn.it](http://www.comune.gemmano.rn.it)  
[www.signoriadeimalatesta.it](http://www.signoriadeimalatesta.it)  
[www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it)

## A COOL UNDERWORLD

*"Inferno" was the original name of the present-day Onferno. The name certainly comes from the caves which were already famous in ancient times and evidently seen as mysterious even then, frightening but also fascinating. There are even some who believe them to have been the actual place which inspired Dante when he describes the structure of Hell in his Divine Comedy. In former times this huge subterranean space must have seemed inaccessible and dense with disquieting mysteries.*

*Today there is nothing remotely "infernal" about these caves, but they have lost none of their mystery and fascination which derive from the natural beauty of the caves themselves and the surrounding environment, now a protected nature reserve. Today the caves are seen as a "fun place" where you can learn to treat Nature with the respect it deserves, while you enjoy the beauty of these unusual surroundings.*

*The guides who accompany visitors tell them: "The route through the caves begins at an altitude of 290 metres and descends to a depth of 70, and enables you to explore the subterranean system. You can admire these fascinating spaces, smooth polished ceilings, a chalk "waterfall", the chimney with its "cave pearls" and the greatest knolls in Europe: giant crystal masses on the ceiling of the Quarina hall. The route is partly paved and partly natural, and you are advised to proceed with caution; it crosses canyons and follows narrow passageways, but since there is an entrance below and an exit above, the caves are well-ventilated. They are composed of gypseous rock and were formed by the erosion caused by infiltrations of water seeping through layers of earth differing in compactness, permeability and solubility. These are karst caves with an underground stream and a series of cavities on varying levels, linked to one another by tunnels, narrow passages, and clefts. The water, flowing over the surface of the cavities it has made, has created here and there strangely shaped concretions of calcium salts.*

*The cavern has purposely dim lighting, because it is home to a valuable colony of about 4,000 bats, including six different species, some of notable scientific importance since they are believed to be in danger of extinction. In summer they can be observed engaging in reproduction, and you can see the first flight of the little ones. This is a good opportunity to come face to face with the chiropterans and dispel a commonplace superstition: they feed on insects, not blood! The visit is guided by staff who supply visitors with helmets and torches before starting. It is advisable to wear comfortable shoes with firm soles, since the damp can make the ground slippery, and you will need a warm sweater or k-way even in summer: the temperature in the caves is about 12-14 degrees."*

*So, even though you go down into hell, you will stay cool!*



The Onferno Caves



## Saludecio

Rimini > 30 km • 40 min

Riccione > 20 km • 25 min

Bellaria > 35 km • 50 min

Cattolica > 15 km • 20 min

Misano > 17 km • 20 min

ALTITUDE M 348



# SALUDECIO



In this part of the Seignory the hills are gentle, with long ridges ideal for building castles and villages combining defence with the best of civic development. From 1500 to 1800, Saludecio was the most important centre in this part of the Conca valley.

A capital city in miniature, where tiny houses stand next to opulent mansions, creating a style both popular and aristocratic still visible today.

A large church, almost a cathedral, overlooks the square; an attractive little museum narrates the history and art of the town; the walls are surrounded by tree-lined avenues and well-tended gardens; and the streets are brought to life in the summer in a series of events and festivals.





## THINGS TO KNOW

Men have lived in these hills since ancient times: hardly surprising, for the land is fertile, the climate pleasant, living is easy, and the landscape is beautiful.

There are echoes of Roman times and the early Middle Ages in Saludecio, and the town became rich and powerful enough to survive the fall of the Malatestas. It was one of the main defence centres and most flourishing communities in the Seignory, and this is still evident today. In the 13th century, Saludecio was home to the Blessed Amato Ronconi, a major religious figure famous in the area and still the object of popular devotion. In common with all the other castles in the area, Saludecio lived through centuries of dispute between the Houses of Malatesta and Montefeltro, from the 13th to the 15th century, and this period saw the building of a fortress and stout walls surrounding the town centre.

Unlike many other Malatesta possessions, Saludecio's fortunes did not decline with the fall of the dynasty: other powerful families built great mansions, local intellectuals became famous, a large, handsome church was built, and even in the 19th century the town continued to grow and develop, becoming the capital of the Conca valley, while keeping intact its original structure.

Today, farming and tourism ensure that Saludecio remains one of the major centres of the Seignory, and its well-consolidated tradition of mural paintings has made it widely known.

**Porta Marina**  
14th century

The town's main gateway, a fine building from the time of Sigismondo Pandolfo; with the surrounding buildings, it gives a good idea of how the village fortifications looked then.

**Piazza Beato Amato Ronconi**

You enter this square from Porta Marina. On one side is the parish church, on the other the Town Hall; in the background the old village and Municipal Tower.

**Parish church of San Biagio, Sanctuary of the Blessed Amato, Museum of Saludecio and of the Blessed Amato**

Piazza Beato Amato Ronconi  
0541 982100

Its size and its fine 18th -century architecture have earned this church the name of "little cathedral".

It shelters the mortal remains of the much-venerated Blessed Amato, and contains numerous works of art.

The adjoining Museum of Sacred Art has a collection including furnishings, vestments, and fine ex-voto offerings.

The entire complex is a veritable art gallery, where the following works are found:

- Beheading of John the Baptist, by Claudio Ridolfi known as "il Veronese", 1605
- Saints Joseph, Sebastian, Rock, and Anthony of Padua, by Bernardino Guerrini, 1610
- St Sixtus Pope in Ecstasy, by Guido Cagnacci, 1628
- Procession of the Holy Sacrament, by Guido Cagnacci, 1628
- St Anthony Abbot and St Anthony of Padua, by G. F. Nagli, known as "il Centino", 1660
- Virgin and Child with Saints, by Sante Braschi, 1704
- Our Lady of Consolation, by Giuseppe Soleri Brancaleoni, 1802
- St Blaise (San Biagio), by Father Atanasio da Coriano, 1800

**Town Hall**

Piazza Beato Amato Ronconi

The Municipal Office and various cultural institutions are housed in this Palazzo built on to the remains of the castle. Some traces of the original Malatesta walls can still be seen inside the building, which at one time served as a prison. Notice the fine exterior colonnade.

## THINGS TO SEE

Interior  
Museum  
of Religious  
Art



### **Palazzo Albini**

16th century

via Roma

Privately owned

Not always open for viewing. The main door opens on to a splendid colonnaded courtyard. The ground floor is open to visitors during the Ottocento Festival.

### **Municipal Tower**

14th century

via Beato Amato, 1

0541 869701

One of the mediaeval towers characteristic of Saludecio, adorned with the town coat of arms.

### **Church of the**

**Hieronymite**

**Fathers**

via Piero Albini, 15

One of the major churches in Saludecio, with 18th -century works of art.

### **Convent of the**

**Hieronymite Fathers**

17th century

via Piero Albini, 15

Attached to the church of the same name, making an attractive complex in the upper town. Contains interesting traces from the time of its foundation in 1640.

### **Porta Montanara**

14th century

via Roma

The fortified gateway towards the hills and the Apennines. From here the Malatestas kept watch on their historic adversaries, the House of Montefeltro.

**The Scented Garden**

Porta Montanara

Just outside the Montanara gate is this fine Italian garden planted with scented flowers and herbs in geometric beds, making a feast of scents and colours.

**Largo Santiago de Compostela**

Dedicated to the Blessed Amato Ronconi and his pilgrimages to Santiago. A fine viewpoint, and the setting for the fountain and the Monument to the Fallen. From here you can walk along the beautiful tree-lined avenue following the walls.

**Mural Paintings**

A curious and colourful open-air art gallery complete with explanatory panels and tablets invites you to explore the little squares and narrow streets of the historic core. There are over 40 paintings by ARPERC artists on the walls of houses.

This is a lively still-growing cultural tradition renewed every year during the Ottocento Festival, when the artists paint new murals for a large public, showing their historic and symbolic significance.

**Church of Sant'Ansovino**

via Sant'Ansovino, 1

The church of the little village with the same name, on the road to Morciano.

**Oratorio of the Blessed Amato Hospital**13th century  
via Ospedale

Another spot dedicated to the Blessed Amato Ronconi, pilgrim and protector of the village, already venerated in the 14th century.

**N.Kopernik Observatory**via Pulzona, 1708  
0541 857026

Guided observation of the heavens: with the help of experts, whole evenings can be organised, devoted to discovering the marvels of the starry sky.

**Cerreto Castle**

Cerreto

A most attractive country village, with notable traces of mediaeval fortifications. A short distance from Saludecio, beyond Mondaino, in the delightful scenery of the Ventena valley. A visit gives a good idea of what life was like in a country village until quite recent times. Cerreto is well-known in the Rimini area for its Carnival and for the funny stories told about its inhabitants, now very few.

**Meleto Castle**

Meleto

Another little fortified village close to Saludecio with interesting traces of its original structure.



Ottocento Festival



## DON'T MISS

### **Ottocento Festival** 1st week in August

One of the major summer festivals; for over twenty years people have been coming from far and wide to join in ten days of entertainment, music, exhibitions and banquets celebrating every aspect of the 19th century.

Antiques and crafts markets, street scenes, taverns in the streets and in the spectacular cellars of the houses, artists from all over Italy, all contribute to make the Festival fun and fascinating.

[www.ottocentofestivalsaludecio.it](http://www.ottocentofestivalsaludecio.it)

### **Salus Erbe – Herbs of Health** On and around 25th April

A celebration of Nature and especially of herbs and herbal remedies, and organic food and farming. The event includes exhibitions, conferences, and a spring market.

[www.saluserbe.ottocentofestivalsaludecio.it](http://www.saluserbe.ottocentofestivalsaludecio.it)

There are interesting walks in the area around Cerreto Castle and in Montepetrino towards the Ventena valley. Well-kept countryside offers fine views, especially in spring and autumn. Excellent routes for hikers and mountain bikes.

*For further information*

*on places to visit and events:*

**Proloco** tel. 0541 981152

**IAT Tourist Office** (seasonal) tel. 0541 981345

[www.ottocentofestivalsaludecio.it](http://www.ottocentofestivalsaludecio.it)

[www.signoriadeimalatesta.it](http://www.signoriadeimalatesta.it)

[www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it)

## STRANGE TALES

Saludecio has an island: here in one of the loveliest landscapes in the Seignory, separated from Saludecio by the lands of the nearby municipality of Mondaino, is **the village of Cerreto**. This is an administrative enclave, a country hamlet which for obscure reasons has remained part of Saludecio municipality. But this alone does not make Cerreto “different”; there are other features which make it special.

Until quite recently – in living memory – there were strange tales, current throughout the Conca valley and beyond, about the inhabitants of Cerreto, or rather their misfortunes.

Nowadays, only a handful of people live in this fortified village which has kept intact its ancient architecture, but at one time it had a large and very lively population, held by many to be – let us say, eccentric. The tales told about Cerreto always make fun of the villagers for their absurd ideas and comic vicissitudes. The most famous tells of a well full of polenta and ends with all the villagers drowning in the well as they dive in to taste it. There are many more tales, including one of a wooden cannon which was intended to shoot at a nearby village but instead exploded – obviously – in situ, and another which narrates the utter brainlessness of the villagers. The villagers decide that the only way round this problem is to go and buy brains in the nearest city, Rimini. A small group, chosen by the most expert among the villagers, sets off on foot and gets half-way there; then towards evening, tired and discouraged, they decide to go back home. When they get there they tell their friends and neighbours, anxiously awaiting their return, that they have made the first part of the journey and will do the remaining part the next day!

There are dozens of stories like this, but Cerreto is also famous for another traditional event which, historians have shown, is not unconnected to these ridiculous tales. A centuries-old Carnival takes place here, featuring archaic primitive-seeming characters including men completely covered in leaves and the artefact known as the “man of straw”. This carnival still takes place today, though not necessarily every year, some time in spring. If you wish to see it, it is advisable to make enquiries beforehand; but with or without the carnival, Cerreto is definitely worth a visit.



The "Man of Straw" which features in Cerreto Carnival



**Mondaino**

Rimini > 30 km • 35 min

Riccione > 20 km • 25 min

Bellaria > 42 km • 45 min

Cattolica > 15 km • 20 min

Misano > 17 km • 20 min

ALTITUDE M 400



# MONDAINO



Mondaino stands on a hilltop in the middle Conca valley, where fallow deer once roamed and there was a temple to Diana, goddess of hunting and of woodland.

The "hill of the deer" became a fortified village, a Malatesta stronghold on the borders of the rival Duchy of Urbino.

Fortified walls and gates and a mighty fortress all bear witness to a past which is brought to life every summer in wonderfully evocative pageantry, one of the most spectacular festivals in the Seignory and indeed in Emilia-Romagna.

Successive centuries too left their mark on Mondaino: an unusual circular market place, fine mansions and churches.

The surrounding countryside, farmland and Mediterranean scrub, is very green and peaceful, attractive in every season.



Piazza  
Maggiore  
during  
the Palio  
del Daino



## THINGS TO KNOW

The name Mondaino tells us something of the town's history. The **temple to Diana** which stood here in Roman times was important enough to have given its name to the settlement, Vicus Dianensis.

The advent of Christianity changed the name to Mons Damarum, **Deer Hill**, which then became Mondaino.

The military and civic importance of the town grew under the **Malatestas, who already governed here in 1289** and saw it as a **favoured place for signing treaties with their bitter enemies the Montefeltro family**, lords of the magnificent city of Urbino, a mere 25 kilometres away. The walls of Mondaino have seen assaults and battles, but also high-level political meetings; first between Carlo Malatesta and Antonio da Montefeltro in 1393, then **Sigismondo Pandolfo and Duke Federico of Urbino in 1459**. The peace treaties they signed, however, never lasted for long, and in 1462 Federico captured the fortress of Mondaino and donated it to the Church.

In the centuries that followed, Mondaino continued to be one of the major centres in the valley, as is evident from the **fine semi-circular 19th-century market place**, several mansions built by the nobility, and the close-knit community spirit which keeps the old town very much alive.

**Porta Marina**

This fine gateway, the entrance to the town, is attributed to the alterations made by Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta to the town's defensive structure.

**Piazza Maggiore**

19th century

The most unusual market place in the area, and the most interesting of 19th-century piazzas; semi-circular with a neo-Classic portico, it was designed by the architect Francesco Cosci. The main street of the town leads into the market place like a handle, giving rise to the townspeople's affectionate nickname, "Frying-Pan Piazza".

This is the heart of the old town, and the scene of the annual "Palio del Daino" historic joust and pageant.

**Malatesta****Fortress**

14th-15th century

Town Hall

Piazza Maggiore, 1

0541 981674

(Municipal offices)

The fortress was one of the mainstays of the Malatesta defence system, a strategic place for keeping an eye on dangerous nearby castles and on the movements of the enemy Montefeltro troops.

The exterior rests solidly on a mighty scarp wall ornamented with elegant Ghibelline merlons.

Sigismondo strengthened the entire defence system during his reign; the outer walls had 13 towers. Federico da Montefeltro described the castle as "strong and imposing, and invincible".

Today the walls can be seen from the streets outside the town centre (a walk here is well worthwhile).

Inside the Fortress are the municipal offices and cultural institutions.

Two features of the castle not easily accessible are the terrace at the top, giving incomparable views of Romagna and Montefeltro, and a series of secret passages in the foundations, used for military purposes. In a room of the castle is a fresco of Our Lady by Bernardino Dolci (15th century).

**Permanent Exhibition****of Mondaino Majolica**

via Secondaria Levante

0541 981674

An interesting collection of Renaissance majolica; Mondaino was an important centre of production.

**Convent of the****Poor Clares**

via Roma

A large complex with buildings of various periods and an attractive garden inside the walls. Much of the complex is still in need of restoration and is not accessible, except during the Palio del Daino.

The little church, opening off the main street, has 17th-century wooden choir stalls and crucifixes.

## THINGS TO SEE

### Porta Marina

Below, Scenes from the Palio

below right, Altar-frontal in the church of San Michele Arcangelo



**Parish church  
of San Michele  
Arcangelo**

via Roma, 31

An attractive, spacious 18th-century church with fine works of art from the 15th and 16th centuries, and three attractive altar-frontals finely decorated using a historic technique. The ancient temple to Diana is said to have stood here.

**Former Convent of  
San Francesco**

via Belvedere  
Fogliense

Just outside the town centre, on Formosino hill, stands this complex dating from the 13th century. Here Sigismondo Malatesta and Federico da Montefeltro signed their peace treaty in 1459, and here Pope Clement XIV took the Franciscan habit.

**Palaeontology  
Museum**

in the  
Fortress

Piazza Maggiore, 1  
0541 981674

The Museum is inside the Fortress and contains fossils found in and around Mondaino, a fine collection with some spectacular exhibits including 21 species of fish, and animals and plants four million years old.

The particular rock type and fossilisation process has left outstandingly clear traces of the organisms captured.

A number of guides and publications are available, dealing with the various scientific aspects of research and display.





## DON'T MISS



### **Palio del Daino**

August

For four days, the different "contrade" (districts) vie with one another in games, challenges, and contests of mediaeval and Renaissance inspiration. Various entertainments, pageantry, and ceremonies surround the different events. The old town centre makes a wonderful backdrop, and places not normally accessible to the public are opened for the occasion and transformed to make taverns, wine cellars, and places of entertainment. Great attention is paid to scenery, lighting, costumes, and all the gastronomic features of the event, one of the major and most evocative events in the Seignory. Entertainment, food and wine, and craft markets are all much appreciated by the numerous visitors.

[www.terrediconfine.it](http://www.terrediconfine.it)



### **Music Festival**

July

A small but interesting musical event featuring local and national groups.



### **The "Arboretum" Courses**

Workshops for theatre and communication, attracting participants from all over Italy

info 0541 25777

[www.arboreto.org](http://www.arboreto.org)



### **Latinus Ludus**

May-June

A Latin translation contest for students, in memory of Father Sebastiano Sanchini, who was preceptor to the poet Leopardi.

info 0541 981674 - [www.mondaino.com](http://www.mondaino.com)



### **Bachus Truffles and Venus**

mid-November

Exhibition and sale of the highly-prized white truffle found in the Rimini hills.

Info 0541 869046 Pro Loco Mondaino

[www.terrediconfine.it](http://www.terrediconfine.it)



### **Santa Bibiana Fair**

November/December

Fair with sale of typical produce (oil, honey, cheeses) of Mondaino and the Rimini hills. Ceremony of uncovering the highly-prized cheese matured in special pits. Christmas market with local craft products.

Info 0541 981674 - [www.mondaino.com](http://www.mondaino.com)

Mondaino is surrounded by attractive countryside with numerous signposted paths and tracks of notable naturalistic and cultural interest.

The Valmala area is especially fine, and should be explored in company with a handbook describing its natural and historic features.

There is also a former arboretum, seven hectares of Mediterranean flora, now used for seminars and theatre workshops.

The Palio del Daino market offers many opportunities for buying unusual, well-made artefacts, from perfect replica arms to musical instruments, from baskets to period footwear.

**i**

For further information  
on places to visit and events:  
**Proloco** tel. 0541 869046 - 981291  
[www.terrediconfine.it](http://www.terrediconfine.it)  
[www.mondaino.com](http://www.mondaino.com)  
[www.signoriadeimalatesta.it](http://www.signoriadeimalatesta.it)  
[www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it)

## TERRESTRIAL MEMENTOES

Mother Earth seems to be particularly generous to Mondaino. The rocks in the area have yielded *rare fossils from millions of years ago*, and the local earth, sculpted by the hands of skilful *craftsmen of mediaeval and Renaissance times*, took the form of *beautiful ceramic wares*. Today the earth aids in the production of a recent but already famous speciality, formaggio di fossa: local cheese left to mature in special pits which were once grain stores.

Let us begin with the fossils. These were found in diverse types of rock and today are on display in a well-organised Palaeontology Museum in the historic setting of the fortress. Walter Landini has written: "in the past, the discovery of fossilised remains contributed greatly to the enrichment of the collective imagination, supplying new, unusual elements, often conjuring up historic memories, fuelling myths and legends, and arousing curiosity. There are footprints of fossil vertebrates, said to be the prints left by the devil during his nocturnal visits; ammonites (extinct molluscs) interpreted as petrified serpents; valves of "rudista" (bi-valvular extinct molluscs) associated with dragons' teeth. There are splendid specimens of fossilised fish preserved on limestone plates, offered as gifts in some places of worship. There are no specific references to Mondaino in popular local culture, and its name figures in palaeontology chronicles only from the 19th century, to be exact in 1832, when Vito Procaccino Ricci noted the presence of <mummied bodies>". There are so many fossils in Mondaino, and in nearby Saludecio and Montefiore too, some of them quite spectacular and intricately detailed, impressed in the soft Tripoli stone, and one scientist said in 1880:

"the presence of ichthyolites in Mondaino has long been known to all naturalists, and travellers who come here hoping to collect them will see how easy it is to satisfy their desires." Today, Mondaino Museum has over twenty species of fish, and also many molluscs, rare plants, and still more rare remains of birds.

Another exhibition, located in a nearby street (Via Secondaria Levante), offers a representative selection of historic ceramic wares found in the town centre and surrounding area.

The pieces on display are of great beauty and variety, and it is very interesting to see that what emerges from these pieces is the existence of an individual school of pottery which, although it has its own distinctive features, shows affinities with the great schools in nearby areas: Rimini, Urbino, Casteldurante, and Pesaro. This is a discovery of considerable interest, both for experts and for anyone trying to understand the real historic and artistic significance of Mondaino in mediaeval and Renaissance times. And as for the "buried" cheese of Mondaino, it must be said that the three months it spends maturing underground lend it a special, distinctive flavour which puts it on a par with other famous fossa cheeses found elsewhere in Romagna and Le Marche. Excellent: the proof is in the eating!





Entrance Gateway, Montegrolfo

Rimini > 38 km • 35 min

Riccione > 26 km • 20 min

Bellaria > 50 km • 50 min

Cattolica > 20 km • 20 min

Misano > 23 km • 20 min

ALTITUDE M 290

# MONTEGRIDOLFO



The Malatestas defended their Seignory by means of a chain of fortresses close to one another, keeping watch over the bordering lands of the hostile Duchy of Urbino. Montegridolfo guards the ridge which separates the Conca valley, on the Romagna side, from the Foglia valley in Le Marche.

A fortified village entirely surrounded by stout walls, its entrance protected by a tower with a mediaeval gateway, carefully and completely restored in recent years, this is a place where the past lives again to grace hospitality, tourism, and culture.



Streets in  
the village



## THINGS TO KNOW

Montegrolfo was neither an elegant residence nor a military settlement; it was simply a keep, a walled quadrangle with a gateway tower, built for defence. Within this enclosure dwelt craftsmen and well-to-do farmers.

The origins of the name are uncertain; it probably derives from a Germanic word meaning rough or scrubby.

The keep was built about the year 1000, but the exact date is not known; in 1148 it belonged to the Rimini Abbey of Saints Peter and Paul, and it became a Malatesta possession at the end of 1200. Unfortunately, Montegrolfo Castle found itself caught between the two warring Seignories, the Malatestas and the Montefeltro family of Urbino, and was frequently under attack. During one assault, in 1336, considerable damage was inflicted by Ferrantino, who had allied himself with the Montefeltro against his Malatesta cousin.

The Malatestas began to rebuild the castle the following year, putting up higher walls protected by four bastions. The castle remained in Malatesta hands until 1500, when it came under the rule of Duke Valentino Borgia. He was defeated in 1503, and Pandolfo Malatesta then sold the territory to the Venetian Republic, which ceded it to the Papal State six years later.

**The Gateway**

This is the fortified entrance to the village: the fine gate dates from 1500 but has been altered over the years. The gateway is guarded by a tower, and there are traces showing the existence of a drawbridge.

**Fortified village**

The layout is mediaeval, the rampart surrounded by stout walls and bastions. Within the walls, the village is a huddle of narrow streets, on to which open large mansions and small houses.

The Town Hall is next to the gate; the other building of note is Palazzo Viviani, now a high-class hotel and restaurant, which stands on the foundations of the fortress.

The village has kept its harmony through the changes of centuries.

The view from the walls is splendid, encompassing the coast from Rimini to Pesaro, and the lower Foglia valley.

**Church of  
San Rocco**  
14th century  
via Borgo

Once known as the church of Santa Maria, or as the Hospital church, because it stood next to the leper hospital, the Oratory of St Rock stands just outside the walls and houses three works of art painted one on top of the other in different centuries on the same piece of wall. Restoration work has detached and separated the three paintings, giving us invaluable records of different styles and periods in the treatment of the same Marian subject.

The three paintings are:

- Virgin and Child Enthroned, with Saints Rock and Sebastian, by an unknown artist from Le Marche (1427 ?);
- Virgin and Child Enthroned, with Saints Rock and Sebastian, by Girolamo Marchesi (1520-1525);
- Virgin and Child with Saints, by Guido Cagnacci (1623).

In 1987 the Oratory was enriched with 14 terracotta tiles representing the Stations of the Cross, decorated in high relief by master craftsman Guerrino Bardeggia.



## THINGS TO SEE

Palazzo Viviani

below: Shops in the village

right: Church of San Rocco



**Gothic Line  
Museum**

0541 855320 - 855054

The Museum is located outside the walls, in a bunker-like structure; exhibits include documents, newspapers, Nazi and Fascist propaganda posters, matched with similar exhibits from the Allied forces and the National Liberation Committee, as well as a vast collection of photographs and audio-visual materials (films, slides, videos).

**Church of San  
Pietro**

20th century

via San Pietro

Nothing is left of the original Romanesque building; the present church was built in 1962 on the site where two previous churches once stood. Inside the church is a fresco, a Crucifixion by an unknown 15th-century Romagna artist, discovered by chance in 1949.

**Trebbio di  
Montegridolfo.  
Shrine of  
Our Lady of Grace**via Beata Vergine  
delle Grazie, 13

Famous throughout the area, this shrine has been a place of worship since 1548, and is still much visited by devout believers. Of the original construction only the image of the Virgin remains, a fine work representing the Apparition of Our Lady, painted by Pompeo Morganti of Fano in 1549. The background of the painting is especially interesting, since it shows the fortified village of Montegridolfo and the surrounding countryside. The present church was built in the mid-18th century and contains valuable furnishings of the period, including an image of Our Lady of the Rosary dated 1751, and an organ loft.





Evening in the village



## DON'T MISS

### **Via Crucis Procession** Good Friday

For the last twenty years, about a hundred participants in costume act out the Passion of Christ. The procession begins at the church of San Rocco and makes its way through the streets by torchlight, ending in the village square.

### **A Castle Filled With Voices** July-August

The Castle hosts a music festival starring the human voice and featuring well-known opera singers. There are also concerts of instrumental music, both classical and modern.

### **New Oil on Your Table** 2nd Sunday in December

An important event for local producers and for all lovers of top-quality olive oil. A prize is awarded to the best oil of the year, and conferences and tasting sessions are held. Along the village streets many exhibitors have olives and oil to suit every taste, and there are dishes exalting this excellent ingredient.

**i**

For further information  
on places to visit and events:  
**Proloco** tel. 0541 855320  
[www.signoriadeimalatesta.it](http://www.signoriadeimalatesta.it)  
[www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it)

## THE GOTHIC LINE

MonteGridolfo has devoted a **museum**, housing much documentation, to the Gothic Line.

This name, Gothic Line, recalls a crucial moment in the history of Italy and Europe, a dramatic time in which a horrific number of human lives were sacrificed to bring closer the end of World War Two and liberate Italian territory from the Nazi troops.

"The Gothic Line was a line of defence built by the German troops in 1944 to prevent the Allies from reaching the Plain of Lombardy: breaching it would have meant that the Alps and Germany would have been within reach. Known also as the Green Line, it stretched from Massa-Carrara to Rimini (or to Pesaro, according to some studies), cutting the country in two. The line was 320 kilometres long, and up to 30 kilometres wide in some places. It was equipped with various defence systems, including mine-fields, barbed wire entanglements, anti-tank ditches, trenches, dugouts, and bunkers for artillery and machine-guns. The Gothic Line was attacked by the Allies in September 1944, and although they managed to break through the first line of defences in several places, they were unable to complete the attack. Their great losses, together with difficulties in obtaining the reinforcements and supplies necessary to continue the attack and the arrival of harsh weather, forced the Allies to wait out the winter. When the Anglo-American offensive began again, the Gothic Line finally collapsed, but by now it had already fulfilled its purpose of holding up the Allied Forces' advance as long as possible. It has been calculated that Germany lost about 75,000 men – dead, wounded, or missing – along the Gothic Line, and the allies about 65,000." One of the most dramatic events in the offensive took place in the Rimini area. The historian Amedeo Montemaggi asserts, "The Battle of Rimini employed the largest number of armed forces of any battle ever fought on Italian soil, and was one of the most crucial, and overlooked, battles of World War Two, fought by 1,200,000 soldiers and thousands of aeroplanes, cannons, and tanks."

All the territory of the hills close to Rimini was involved in the fighting.

MonteGridolfo Museum recalls this event in an exhibition of wartime materials and numerous newspapers and written documents enabling the visitor to gain an understanding not only of the military vicissitudes but also of the political propaganda of the times. The exhibits include the personal equipment of some of the soldiers who took part.

Filmed material from World War Two concerning places in the neighbourhood can also be seen.



Detail of the Gothic Line Museum



**The walls of Albereto**

Rimini > 18 km • 20 min

Riccione > 24 km • 30 min

Bellaria > 32 km • 35 min

Cattolica > 24 km • 30 min

Misano > 25 km • 35 min

ALTITUDE M 386

# MONTESCUDO



Montescudo is situated in the middle Conca valley, on the borders of the Malatesta Seignory, close to the Republic of San Marino and the Montefeltro region.

The village stands on the ridge separating the plain of Rimini from the road leading towards the foothills of the Apennine mountains, dominated here by Mount Carpegna.

This is a crucial strategic position; strategic once for keeping watch over the territory, strategic now for the visitor wishing to learn something of the more remote corners of the Seignory.

The terrain here is mostly farmland, with a few scattered farmhouses, and villages which have preserved their ancient structure. Local crafts are very much alive, and the local cooking is full of pleasant surprises.



The centre  
of  
Montescudo

below right  
Albereto



## THINGS TO KNOW

These fertile lands, in a fine position where two rivers (the Conca and the Marano) run, were of course the site of very ancient settlements; artefacts discovered suggest that the Celts and Etruscans dwelt here. Certainly the Romans settled here; at the time of the Emperor Augustus they established a post house, strategically placed for guarding the first stretch of the road from Rimini to Rome. A document dated 962 AD, a Diploma from Otto I to the Carpegna family (the oldest and most powerful family in the Conca valley) refers to Montescutulium. Soon afterwards, the Middle Ages would see the rise of Malatesta power.

The Malatestas gave Montescudo an important role in their defence system, since it stood close to the borders of the lands belonging to the warring Montefeltro family, who had placed towers and fortresses on all the surrounding hills, including Sassofeltrio, just a few kilometres away. In 1460, Sigismondo Pandolfo built a stout fortress in Montescudo, to protect the city of Rimini, as we learn from a tablet on the southern bastion. Restoration work on the town walls brought to light a splendid reminder of those times: an amphora containing twenty-two medals depicting the Malatesta Temple in Rimini and Sigismondo Pandolfo himself.

Also of considerable importance is the fortified village of Albereto, another valuable Malatesta creation.

**Municipal****Tower**

13th century

A fine tower which has kept its 14th-century structure despite alterations.

**Ice-Pit**

via S. Paolo dell'Olmo

A rare mediaeval "ice-house" on the edge of the main square, very interesting for the building technique used.

**Underground****Tunnels**

These led from the Fortress to the watch-tower.

**City Walls**

Remains of the stout walls built by Sigismondo; very high and sloping, they were designed to make the town invincible.

**Albereto fortified village**

Albereto

0541 984240

A fine example of a small fortified country village: recent careful restoration work has made this one of the Seignory's architectural jewels. Already mentioned as long ago as 1233, the fortifications were strengthened by Sigismondo Malatesta about the mid-15th century. The city walls are an outstanding example of Malatesta scarp walls, and the three stout round towers, the bell tower and the belvedere are all admirable. The belvedere gives a breathtaking view of Rimini Riviera.

**Albereto Wood**

About 25 hectares of attractive woodland which can be visited on foot. Rare plants grow here, and the environment is unusual given the altitude.





**Shrine of  
Valliano**

Hamlet of  
Valliano

The Shrine is located in a most attractive country spot. Inside the church are fine 15th-century frescos, among the finest and best-preserved in the Seignory, by the School of Ghirlandaio.

**Valliano  
Ethnography  
Museum**

Hamlet of Valliano  
0541 984076

The rooms next to the church house an attractive small museum of rural life. The modern layout enables visitors to "read" the exhibits in relation to their purpose and their place in local country traditions

**Trarivi  
Peace Church**

Hamlet of Trarivi

Once an ancient parish church. Now much restored and converted into a Church of Peace, a monument to Brotherhood among peoples who in this area fought one another bitterly during the Second World War.

The Eastern Gothic Line Museum, attached to the church, has mementoes of these tragic events.





Potato Festival



## DON'T MISS



### Potato Festival

2nd Sunday in August

A rich and varied village festival dedicated to this excellent local product and to the numerous ways of cooking it. Many visitors come to sample the delicious cooking and enjoy the entertainment.

Montescudo is famous for its potatoes, which have a distinctive consistency and flavour owing to the nature of the terrain, and are ideal for making gnocchi. The Potato Festival is an opportunity to try this and many other, often unusual, dishes featuring one of the best products in Emilia Romagna. Other local produce (wines, honey, cheeses) feature in the special "Flavours of Montescudo" Route, which brings together producers, restaurateurs, and vendors.

The hamlet of Santa Maria del Piano has long been a centre for the production of terracotta ware. Visit the various shops, where you can still find a few traditional pieces and a wide choice of modern pieces.



For further information  
on places to visit and events:  
**Proloco** tel. 0541 984788  
[www.comune.montescudo.rn.it](http://www.comune.montescudo.rn.it)  
[www.signoriadeimalatesta.it](http://www.signoriadeimalatesta.it)  
[www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it)

## TRADITIONAL COUNTRYSIDE

*The countryside around Montescudo is still home to many families, and farming has left its mark everywhere. The arrangement of the lands, the lanes running between one property and another, flanked with hedgerows, and the many fine farmhouses scattered among the fields, are the most visible traces of an agricultural past which has strongly influenced the local economy and cultural traditions. Many years ago the teachers in the village schools carried out valuable research into the history of the village, putting together not only documents, but many significant objects relating to the home, work, play, and country living in general. Today all these objects have been brought together in a setting which enhances them both aesthetically and as documentation.*

*In the vicarage attached to **Valliano** church, a church deep in the green countryside, housing fine frescos, an Ethnography Museum has been opened, small but very well-organised and most interesting. "Montescudo Museum is laid out in such a way as to draw attention to one particular aspect of local socio-economic structure: the farmhouse seen as the heart of rural life. Principally didactic in its aim, the Museum enables visitors to learn about the trades, habits and customs of the country people, and their rural way of life based on animal breeding – chiefly pig farming – and on the fruits of the earth, bee-keeping and wine-growing."*

*There are sections dealing with weaving cloth and printing it with the traditional rust-dyed motifs; wine-growing (including barrels, flagons and other equipment); toys and games relating to country childhood; and local terracotta production. Traditional terracotta containers such as pitchers, soup-tureens, flasks, cooking pots, and various types of dishes have always been made in Montescudo and continue to be produced today. The Museum is a good place to start for anyone interested in terracotta, for here you can learn which forms are the oldest and which colours the most traditional.*



Ethnography Museum



**Montecolombo**

Rimini> 20 km • 25 min

Riccione> 22 km • 30 min

Bellaria> 34 km • 35 min

Cattolica> 22 km • 30 min

Misano> 23 km • 30 min

ALTITUDE M 315

# MONTECOLOMBO



The village of Montecolombo has preserved intact its harmony down the centuries.

Like all the other Malatesta settlements, it rests on a gentle hill overlooking the river and the plain. The old centre has kept many features of the original fortified village surrounded by open green spaces.

It can be clearly seen that the village formed part of the intricate Malatesta defence system, guarding the surrounding lands against attack from the upper reaches of the Conca valley.

The surrounding countryside is a beautiful tapestry of olive groves and vineyards. The area was one of the "through roads" of the Seignory; urban settlements and farms are especially well integrated.

San Marino is easily reached from here, and the road along the valley bottom leads straight to the foothills of the Apennines and towards terrain which soon leaves behind its lowland features to become woodland and pastures.



The historic  
core of  
Monte-  
Colombo



## THINGS TO KNOW

The fortunes of Montecolombo have always been closely linked to the history of Rimini. The village was already under the rule of Rimini in 568 AD, and in 1271 was a Malatesta possession.

The Malatestas made various alterations to the castle dating from the year 1000 which, together with the neighbouring fortress of Montescudo, was meant to form a stout protective barrier along a ridge of hills giving speedy access to the plain of Rimini.

The hamlet of San Savino, now part of Montecolombo, also has its own little castle, guarding the main road and the surrounding hills.

In 1815 Montecolombo became a municipality, with its own independent administration, under an edict of Pope Pius VII.

**Historic core**

The village has preserved its mediaeval structure; there are fine entrance gateways overlooked by a massive round tower, and the encircling walls, now surrounded by dense vegetation, are notable. The clock tower also forms part of the complex. The various alterations and additions made over the centuries have not detracted from the harmonious appearance, and it is easy to visualise life as it once was in the village.

**Historic wash-houses**

These historic buildings, once a most important feature of country and village life, are today very rare. There are two, carefully restored, in Montecolombo: one close to the village and one in the nearby hamlet of Taverna. The wash-house close to the village is reached by following the attractive street of broad flintstone steps leading from Villa to Borgo. There are records of this wash-house dating back to the 18th century: it has a number of basins of decreasing height, overflowing into one another. The Taverna wash-house dates from 1874 and its pure water comes from the same source as the water of the well in the village centre.

**Church of San Martino**

The Parish Church. Inside is a fine 18th-century painting of St Martin, by the artist Brancaleoni.

**San Savino fortified village**

Hamlet of San Savino

This pretty hamlet standing on the road leading along the crest of the hill towards Rimini has kept its attractive atmosphere and its vitality. Some fine buildings remain, including the walls of the fortified village, restored to show their original structure. There are splendid views over the plain and part of the Conca valley.



San Savino



## DON'T MISS



### **Tripe and Noodles Festival**

July

These two sturdy country specialities are at the centre of a typical village festival where eating and dancing are the main ingredients. Stewed tripe is a well-known dish; "strozza-prete" noodles less so. These twisted pasta shapes, typical of this region, are best eaten with strongly-flavoured sauces.

Some local producers make excellent **olive oil**, and fine **wines** are also to be found. There are a number of Sangiovese DOC Superiore vintages, and other wines obtained by particular vinification processes, such as the **outstanding Passito**. The wine vaults are attractive and worth visiting, especially those in San Savino.

There are still **terracotta workshops** near the hamlets of Taverna and Osteria in the valley bottom. The whole area has a long tradition of potters who supplied the whole valley and much of the Rimini area with the household vessels, jars and cooking pots which they produced. Traditional pieces are still sold today.



*For further information  
on places to visit and events:*  
**Proloco** tel. 0541 984591  
[www.signoriadeimalatesta.it](http://www.signoriadeimalatesta.it)  
[www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.rimini.it)

## MEMORIES WRITTEN IN WATER

*The story of the Montecolombo wash-houses is a story with a happy ending. In times past, every small town and village had its wash-house, but in most cases these were destroyed or left to fall to ruin. Those of Montecolombo have instead been lovingly restored and now stand as a tribute to history: a small tribute, but rare and fascinating.*

*Building a wash-house was no mean feat, requiring the work of both an architect and a hydraulics expert. Once completed, it was one of the most important meeting places in daily village life, central to the sense of community shared by the village women who met here to do the washing. Here they could speak more freely than at home; here they could sing their traditional songs and exchange ideas.*

*The recovery and restoration of two wash-houses in the Montecolombo area has also led to the "restoration" of the surrounding terrain, now made available to the public.*

*The first wash-house is close to the historic core; you can reach it on foot by following an old paved way or by a country lane which is a nature trail in its own right; it starts at Ca' Mini. Records of this wash-house date from the 18th century, but its structure of overflowing basins suggests that it is probably older. The basins are close to the source of Rio Calamino, a small affluent of the river Conca. Restoration work has brought to light both 18th-century terracotta pipes and later cast-iron pipes.*

*The second wash-house is in the hamlet of Taverna, a handful of houses in the valley bottom. This one can be dated exactly as far as its present form is concerned: 1874. The water supplies the fountain in the centre of the village before flowing into the basins of the wash-house; good pure water which must have filled the pitchers of every house in the village and refreshed every traveller who passed through Taverna en route for the upper Conca valley.*



Montecolombo wash-house

## The Food and Wine Route of the Rimini Hills



### The Food and Wine Route of the Rimini Hills

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#### Contributing members

- Province of Rimini
- Chamber of Commerce
- Professional Associations
- 20 Municipalities  
of the Province of Rimini

The Food and Wine Route of the Rimini Hills is determined by the Adriatic Sea and by two valleys, the Conca valley and the Marecchia valley. It begins close to the beaches and stretches to the hills, castles and historic villages of the hinterland. This is a territory waiting to be discovered, and the Food and Wine Route of the Rimini Hills was set up here: olive oil mills, wine growers and producers, farms, restaurants, craft workers, public bodies (Municipalities, Provincial Administration, Chamber of Commerce) and professional associations all participate. Every producer offers something different, and the sum of these tells the story of this land. Wine and olive oil are the leading products in this corner of Romagna, ideal travelling companions on a journey to discover typical local products and tasty traditional dishes ranging from meat to “sky-blue” Adriatic fish; from pork products to cheeses; from piadina to typical sweetmeats; from truffles to honey to chestnuts. And all this is accompanied by numbers of craft workers making traditional articles, and by the innate sense of hospitality of Romagna people. To travel the Food and Wine Route of the Rimini Hills is also to travel in time, discovering the heritage left by past centuries, savouring the changing scents and colours of the seasons, and listening to the people.

Every landscape is the expression of what nature and the work of man have created together, everything you taste goes back to the roots of the flavours of nature and knowledge combined.

Hospitality, culture and tradition, wine and food: all these and much more are to be found when you follow the Food and Wine Route of the Rimini Hills.



## Wines, typical produce, and crafts

<b>Wine</b>	Colli di Rimini DOC – Certified origin Romagna wines
<b>Oil</b>	Colline di Romagna DOP certified origin extra-virgin olive oil
<b>Meat</b>	Sucking pig, Mora Romagnola, Romagna beef cattle
<b>Cheese</b>	Fossa, raw sheep's-milk cheese, fresh cow's milk and sheep's-milk ricotta, Squacquerone
<b>Fruit</b>	Montefiore chestnuts, Romagna strawberries, nectarines
<b>Vegetables</b>	Montescudo potatoes
<b>Truffles</b>	Black and white
<b>Pastries</b>	Saba, Savor, Bustrenco, Piada dei morti
<b>Typical bread</b>	Piadina Romagnola, Bizulà, home-baked bread
<b>Honey</b>	
<b>Liqueurs</b>	Walnut liqueur
<b>Crafts</b>	Rust-dyed hand-printed cloth











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