

GUBBIO: AN ANCIENT MEDIEVAL TOWN

At the foot of the Ingino Mount in the province of Perugia rises Gubbio, one of the most ancient medieval towns of the Umbria region, as witnessed by the Tables of Gubbio (Tavole Eugubine). These are seven bronze tablets recovered in the XV century, written in the Umbrian language and containing information on the uses and customs of this beautiful city. It is a place rich in history, culture, art and old traditions.

The Buildings

In the picturesque square Piazza Grande there's **Palazzo dei Consoli**, one of the most impressive city palaces and symbol of the city. The building, which dates back to the XIV century, is in Gothic style and houses the civic museum that keeps the precious Tables of Gubbio. Here you also find the Praetorian Palace (Palazzo Pretorio), today the Town Hall. In front of the Cathedral stands the Ducal Palace, built in the XV century by the will of the Duke Federico di Montefeltro. Inside you can admire the small study (a faithful copy of the original one exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum in New York) and a beautiful courtyard consisting of a series of arches supported by columns and decorated capitals. Other interesting buildings are Palazzo del Capitano and Palazzo del Bargello.



The Churches

The Cathedral, which dates back to XII century, houses the relics of many Saints and Blessed people, including those ones of St. Mariano and St. Giacomo. The Church and Convent of St. Agostino houses some frescoes by Nelli, while inside the Church Santa Maria Nuova you can admire the Madonna del Belvedere. The Church and Convent of St. Francesco rises on the ancient house of the Spadalonga family; the Church of St. Giovanni is characterized by the Romanesque facade and bell tower. Visit the Church of St. Pietro, the Church of St. Domenico and the Church of St. Andrea or Monastery of St. Marziale. Outside the walls, you'll see the Roman mausoleum of Pomponio Grecino, the Church of St. Secondo, the Church of Madonna del Prato and the Church of Vittorina, where according to tradition St. Francis encountered the wolf. There's also the Roman Theatre, dating back to the 1 century BC and restored between the XIX and XX centuries. During summertime it offers many classical performances. If you're not afraid of heights, it might be worth climbing to the top of Ingino Mount (908 m asl) by cable car to admire the Cathedral of St. Ubaldo, which houses the remains of the Saint and the famous candles.

ROMAN THEATRE



Dating from the reign of the emperor Augustus, the Roman theatre of Gubbio in Umbria was the second-largest in the Roman Empire, second only to the Theatre of Marcellus in Rome.

The Theatre, accomplished with the contribution of the town's magistrate Gneus Satrius Rufus around 20 B.C., was built with large rusticated blocks of limestone.

The theatre of Iguvium (Iguvium was the name given to Gubbio at that time) is the chief relic of the ancient town, testimony of the importance of Gubbio at that time. The ancient town extended much farther into the plain, including the area where the Roman theatre is situated.

The theatre of Iguvium is not an amphitheater. Ancient Roman amphitheaters were either oval or circular in shape with a central stage surrounded by seating tiers, while Roman theaters – like the theatre of Iguvium – were semi-circular in plan. They differed not only in lay-out and characteristics, but also in function. While amphitheaters would feature races, gladiator combats

and executions, Roman theaters hosted events such as orations, plays and choral events. Therefore, Roman theatres sought to enhance the natural acoustics through their structure in semicircular form, while amphitheaters did not need superior acoustics and concentrated more on space and visual impact.

Besides its historical value the Theatre of Iguvium is also architecturally important because it is one of the earliest theatre built entirely upon two-storey hollow substructures.

The monument has in fact suffered significant damage through the centuries. After the fall of the Roman Empire the town of Gubbio was sacked by the Goths and what was left of the theatre was further dismantled because of the need for stone to rebuilt the medieval town.

“Studiolo” from the Ducal Palace



The Metropolitan Museum of Art has on display a complete studio from the Palazzo Ducale of Gubbio. Consisting of period woodworking from late 15th century Italy, the studio was commissioned for Federico da Montefeltro.

The “Studiolo” was commissioned by Duke Federico da Montefeltro, a major geopolitical force in North-Central Italy during his lifetime. In addition for being a capable military leader, Federico was noted for being a prolific patron of the arts; his activities, such as the employing of artists, architects, and writers resulted in him being given the moniker "the Light of Italy". Federico commissioned his first studiolo at his palace in Urbino, the House of Montefeltro's traditional seat of power; this feat was replicated when in 1478 he ordered the design and installation of a studiolo in an old palace he was rebuilding in Gubbio, which was under his control. The new room was designed by Siense artist Francesco di Giorgio Martini. Martini's design was executed by two Tuscan brothers famed for their work with interior woodworking, Giuliano and Benedetto da Maiano. The entire room was constructed in the da Maiano's workshop in Florence, after which it was transported to Gubbio for installation.

The studiolo remained in the Palazzo at Gubbio until 1874. The room was then purchased by a German art dealer and moved to Venice. The Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired the work in 1939 and had the studiolo shipped to New York City.

The studiolo consists of a number of wood panels fitted together. These panels are divided into twelve consecutive sections, surrounding the room on all sides. The artists' use of intarsia to render realistic, two-dimensional images of latticework cabinets, drawers, and siding is representative of the rediscovery of linear perspective in mid-15th century Italy. The extensive use of intarsia is particularly noticeable in the room, as the inlaid wood forms the contrast used to create the illusion of depth. In addition, paint and more intarsia is used to depict objects that a leader of Renaissance period would be expected to have in their study. Objects depicted include measuring instruments, a tropical bird in a cage, armor, books, and musical instruments. The studiolo's coffered wood ceiling is adorned with carved geometric designs. The room originally contained several paintings, but these were removed from the studiolo in the 17th century. Three windows provide lighting for the room.

ASSISI

What to See

Rocca Maggiore



The massive Rocca Maggiore sits at the tip top of Assisi. It's a 14th-century castle that is the perfect starting place for sightseeing because everything is, quite literally, downhill from there. From the Rocca Maggiore visitors can see Perugia to the North, Assisi below and the surrounding valleys beyond. Built by Cardinal Albornoz specifically to intimidate the townspeople, it's been expanded, pillaged, and restored again and again across the centuries. It's also said that the fearsome Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick I, aka Barbarossa, spent his childhood here.

Basilica of St. Francis



The Papal Basilica of Saint Francis is the mother church of the Order of Friars Conventional Minor, and it is located in Assisi. It is one of the most important places of Christian pilgrimage in Italy and it has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2000.

The basilica was begun in 1228 and both the Upper and the Lower Churches are decorated with the famous medieval frescoes by Cimabue and Giotto. The church was designed by Maestro Tedesco, and its construction was supervised by Elias of Cortona, one of the first followers of Saint Francis. In the Lower Church there is a large crypt supporting the Basilica.

The architecture is a synthesis of the Romanesque and Gothic styles, and sets many of the typical characteristics of the Italian Gothic architecture.

In each bay of the nave tracery and in the polygonal apse of the chancel there are stained Gothic windows with geometric tracery. The windows of the apse were probably created by German craftsmen active around Assisi at the end of the 13th century.

Although its stained glass windows are among the best examples of 13th century Italian glasswork, the main decorative feature of the Basilica are the frescoes used to conveying the Church message.