

Urbino

Places worth seeing

By far the biggest tourist attraction in Le Marche is Urbino. It's a lovely walled city on a mountain top, very lively thanks to the university which has been in Urbino since 1507. Urbino was at its cultural peak during the Renaissance which ended the 'perspectiveless' middle ages. Hometown of the famous painter Raphael (his birthplace still to be seen at the Via Raffaello 57). Even today many paintings from the renaissance are to be seen in the Galleria Nazionale della Marche, such as those of Piero della Franesca, Bellini, Ucello and Raphael himself.

Palazzo Ducale

The palace of the duke of Urbino, Federico Montefelcro, was built in 1465 and is one of the examples of Renaissance architecture. Luciano Laurana, the architect, was assisted by the famous painter Piero della Franesca. The palace entrance leads directly to the pretty court Cortile d'Onore, with wall covered in brickwork patterns. Then the palazzo accommodated an impressive library which now forms part of the Vatican library.

Galleria Nazionale della Marche

A must for lovers of Renaissance paintings, typical for their breakthrough in the art of painting due to the use of perspective. Paintings worth seeing are i.e. Piero della Franesca's 'Madonna di Senigallia', Giovanni Bellini's 'Sacra Conversazione', Raphaels 'La Muta', a six-part piece by Paolo Ucello and a 'Ideal City' by an unknown 15th century master. The palazzo itself is quite worth visiting as well, like the extraordinary rooms Sala delle Nozze di Federico and the duke's office. On the top floor there is also a 17th century triptych by Sassoferrato.

The two oratorio's

Via Barocci

The Oratorio di San Giovanni and the Oratorio di San Guiseppe, two small but charming churches are next to each other on the Via Barocci. The first church has some extraordinary beautiful Gothic fresco's featuring the life of John de Baptist painted by Jacopo and Lorenzo Salembini in 1416. Many pictures remarkably show a little dog! The other church is less striking and houses a sinister piece by Federico Brandani in a specially constructed model cave.

Restaurants

- *Vecchia Urbino*, Via del Vasari 3-5, tel 0722 4447. Regional cuisine served in an informal atmosphere. Two Michelin forks for the pleasant surrounding. Menu € 39-56. Closed from 1 up to and including 10 July and Tuesdays. Mastercard, Visa, American Express and Diners accepted.
- *Nene*, Strada per Campus Sogesta, tel 0722 350161. Three kilometres outside Urbino situated in a renovated farmhouse. Quiet and rural-style restaurant serving local specialties. Possibility to eat outdoors on the terrace. One Michelin fork for the pleasant entourage. Menu € 28-36. Closed on Mondays. Mastercard, Visa, American Express and Diners accepted.

How to get there

Although not quite close to Sopra e Sotto, Urbino is absolutely worth visiting. By motorway it is 193 kilometres one-way. So, many people who are coming to Le Marche by car visit Urbino or the nearby in a mini-state of San Marino during a stop-over on their way to or from their holiday destination.