

UMBRA DAY TRIPS

Gubbio



Gubbio sits on the side of one of the Umbrian valleys and like many other Umbrian cities, has a beautiful main piazza with a fantastic view of the surrounding countryside. You'll arrive in a big square; walk up Via della Repubblica and take a left on Via XX Settembre. After you see the Piazza Grande, walk back down XX Settembre to the end and cross a little bridge to the "cabinovia." Don't miss this open, bird-cage-like contraption (not for the faint of heart), which will give you a wild ride up to the top of the hill.

During the winter a huge Christmas tree is made by stringing lights on the slopes of Mt Ingino. It's claimed to be the largest artificial Christmas tree in Europe, a dubious distinction at best. Other than that, there's the perfectly Romanesque duomo and the well-preserved city wall (both free). If you're around on the 15th of May go see the Corsa dei Ceri, one of Italy's lesser known but most passionate festivals. It's a race between teams carrying the three giant, teak casks that have been around since the Gubbians were pagans. The three teams belt through the narrow streets and up the mountain as if there was a pot of gold at the top (instead of the seven-hundred-year-old embalmed body of Saint Ubaldo). The Corsa is a flurry of color and fun even if you don't understand what all the fuss is about. Later in the evening each team holds an open-air party with free wine for all comers.



GETTING THERE FROM PERUGIA:

By Bus: Estimated Travel Time - 1 hour and 10 minutes, E001 buses leaves from P. Partigiani. APM: Tel.075.506.781 www.apmperugia.it/canale.asp?id=1. Take dramamine before leaving.

By Train: Estimated Travel Time - 2.5 hours. You must change trains at Foligno, then go towards Ancona, stopping at Fossato di Vico, where you take a short bus to Gubbio (not worth the long ride). and go north.

By Car: Estimated Travel Time - 45 minutes. Take the E45 north.



LEARN MORE:

Tourist Office: Via Ansidei 32 - 075.922.0790

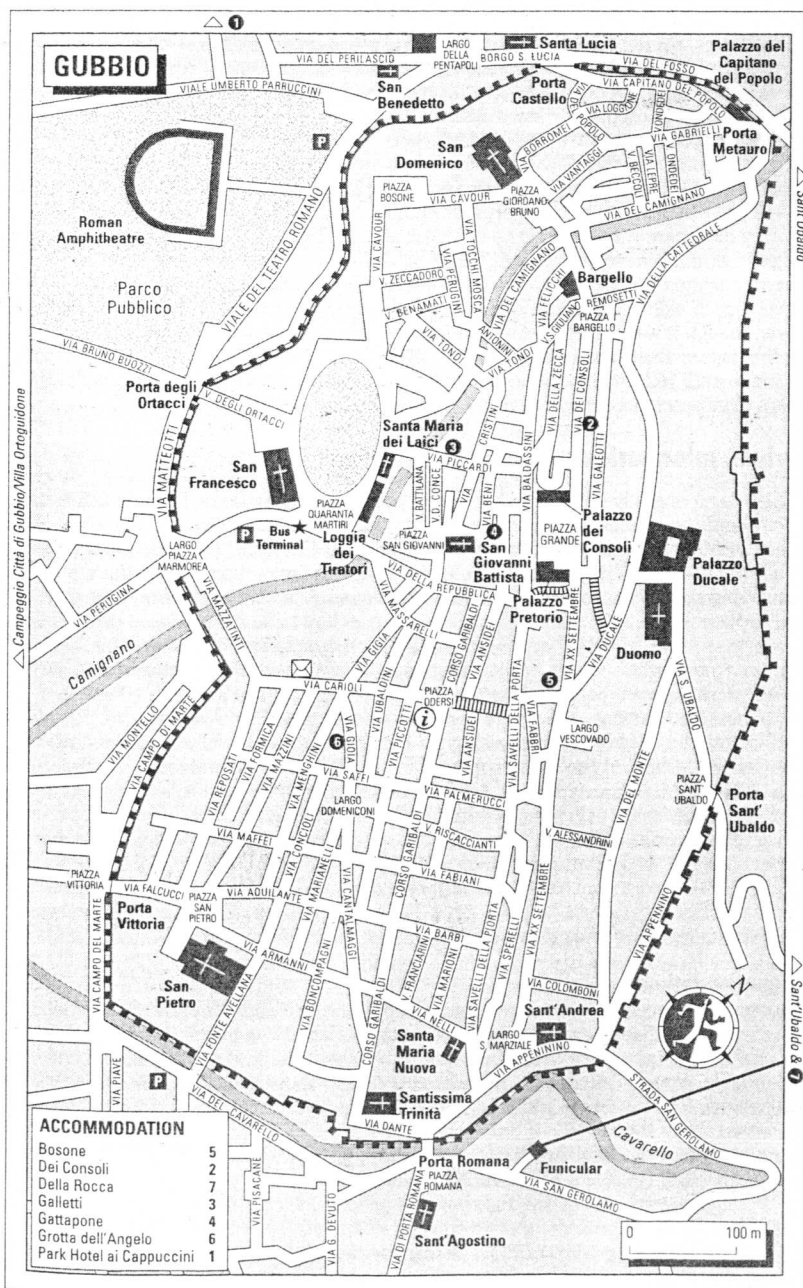
http://www.bellaumbria.net/Gubbio/maps-road-map_eng.htm

Gubbio

High, remote GUBBIO has the most beautiful medieval appearance of the northern Umbrian towns – indeed it is so well preserved that guides and the local tourist blurb promote it as the Umbrian Siena. It's not quite that, but the streets are all rosy-pink stone, the monuments worthwhile, and the medieval nooks and crannies as endearing as any in Italy. Better still, the countryside around is gorgeous – the forest-covered mountains of the Apennines rearing up behind and the waters of the Camignano gorge tumbling through the town itself. A broad and largely unspoilt plain stretches out in front of the town, the whole natural ensemble – especially on grey, windswept days – maintaining the image of Gubbio as a resolute mountain outpost. Its charms are not surprisingly attracting ever greater numbers of visitors, and on a summer morning the streets can be heaving. Come off-season, however, or stay the night, and you'll see the town in a different light.

Some history

Local folklore insists that Gubbio was one of the first five towns built after the Great Flood. It was actually founded by the Umbrians around the third century BC, later passing to the Etruscans, for whom it marked the easternmost limit of their territorial ambitions. Several



bronze slabs, the **Eugubine Tablets** – now in the Museo Civico – survive as memorials to both cultures, some of the most important archeological finds of their type (see p.473). The Romans, inevitably, followed, building the colony of Iguvium at the edge of the plain, where a sprinkling of monuments and the gridiron plan of their streets survive to this day. Barbarian raids subsequently saw Gubbio's focus move up the hillside, whose steep terraced slopes form the town's present-day heart.

In the medieval period, Gubbio maintained a strategic importance as the pivotal town between Rome and Ravenna, its *comune* achieving a status that rivalled Perugia. The population grew to 50,000 – twice its present number – the town's wealth and size providing not only the wherewithal to build its vast civic palaces, but also the impulse towards artistic and cultural innovation. Umbria's first school of painting developed here, as did a ceramic tradition which continues to the present day – the market in pricey ceramics largely panders to sightseers. From about 1350 the papacy and Gabrielli nobility jostled for power, though it was the Montefeltro dukes of Urbino who wrested eventual control, ruling the town virtually unchallenged from 1383 until 1508. Gubbio remained in the Duchy of Urbino until 1624, then became part of the Papal States, perhaps one reason why it still feels a town apart, not properly a part of either Tuscany, Umbria or the Marche.

Arrival, information and accommodation

Gubbio is most easily approached by **bus** from Città di Castello or Perugia (ASP) and by **car** on the very meandering cross-country SS298 road from Perugia. There are also direct bus connections once a day to both Rome and Florence. The nearest **train station** is at Fossato di Vico, 19km south on the Rome–Foligno–Ancona line; there are ten connecting shuttle buses to Gubbio from Monday to Saturday, six on Sundays.

By whatever means you arrive, you'll find yourself outside the medieval heart of the old town – probably in the **Piazza Quaranta Martiri**, site of the **bus terminal**. There's a pay **car park** at this point (except Tues, when the town's weekly market is held here). Other **parking** can be found nearby off Viale del Teatro Romano, close to San Domenico, and farther afield in Via del Cavarello near Porta Romana to the east. Dominating the old town's skyline above the piazza is the colossal bulk of the **Palazzo dei Consoli**, while on the hill above to the east sits a second landmark, the **Basilica di Sant'Ubaldo**, connected by a steep lane from the top of town or a funicular from Porta Romana.

There's a **tourist office** at Piazza Odersi 6, off the central Corso Garibaldi (Mon–Sat 8.30am–1.30pm & 3–6pm, Sun 9.30am–12.30pm; ☎075.922.0693 or 075.922.0790, fax 075.927.3409). Apart from banks and cash machines, **currency exchange** is available at the **post office**, Via Carioli 11 (Mon–Sat 8.30am–6pm; ☎075.927.3925), while telephones are to be found at Via della Repubblica 13 (Mon–Sat 8am–9pm, Sun 9.30am–12.30pm).

Accommodation

You shouldn't have any problem finding a place to stay in Gubbio, though the place gets busy, and many of the **hotels** cater to well-heeled Italians. If you don't mind being out of town, enquire at the tourist office about the twenty or so **agriturismo** options dotted around the countryside close to Gubbio – there's some great accommodation, for example, in Vallingegno, 14km south of Gubbio just off the Perugia road, including four apartments in a converted abbey, the **Abbazia di Vallingegno** (☎075.920.158). Extra help with finding a hotel is available from the local **hoteliers' association**, GOTE, whose offices are at Via della Repubblica 11-13 (☎075.922.0066). The places listed below are in ascending order of price.

HOTELS

Galletti, Via Piccardi 1 (☎075.927.7753). The only one-star, with just 7 rooms; overlooking the river; has a reasonable restaurant with a picturesque terrace. L15,000 less without own bath. ②.

Grotta dell'Angelo, Via Gioia 47 (☎075.927.1747, fax 075.927.3438). Reliable 18-room two-star, with a passable restaurant; all rooms with private bath at identical prices to the **Galletti**. ②.

Dei Consoli, Via dei Consoli 59 (☎075.927.3335). One of the best locations – in an atmospheric street – but only 9 rather plain two-star rooms (all with private bathroom), so try to book ahead. Best are the quieter rooms away from the street. Closed Jan & Feb. ②.

Della Rocca, Monte Ingino (☎ & fax 075.922.1222). A little out-of-town three-star hotel; to get there from the centre, take the funicular or walk up to Monte Ingino and follow the signs from the Basilica. ③.

Gattapone, Via G. Ansdei 6 (☎075.927.2489, fax 075.927.2417). First choice among the slightly pricier places; renovated central three-star hotel in a quiet medieval building off Via della Repubblica, with 18 spacious rooms (small bathrooms) and a peaceful garden. ③.

Bosone, Via XX Settembre 22 (☎075.922.0668, fax 075.922.0552). This sizeable old-world three-star, full of frescoes, medieval vaults and antiques, offers a touch of luxury. ③.

Park Hotel ai Cappuccini, Via Tifernate (☎075.9234, fax 075.922.0323). Major-league hedonism (swimming pool, sauna, garden, gym), in an elegantly converted fourteenth-century monastery. Set in parkland just outside town. ④–⑤.

CAMPSITES

Città di Gubbio (☎ & fax 075.927.2037). Large 100-pitch site with swimming pool in a good setting, in Ortoguidone, 1.5km south of town, off the Perugia road. Open April–Sept.

Villa Ortoguidone (☎075.927.2037). The only four-star campsite in Umbria, it's expensive, and with only 12 pitches you will be lucky to get a space. Close to, and part of, the **Città di Gubbio** site. Open April–Sept.