

# UMBRA DAY TRIPS

## Orvieto



Way down in the southwest corner of Umbria, Orvieto sits on a hill made of volcanic tufa rock and has marvelous views of the surrounding country side, as well as a funky duomo. It's also one of eighteen Italian cities in the movement "Città Slow," Slow Cities; among other things the member cities try to keep traffic and noise in the city center to a minimum, preserve local foods and wines, and keep their populations under 50,000. While you're there, try the great white wine, and take the cheesy "hidden Orvieto" tour of the grottoes that the Etruscans carved into the rock underneath the city. One of the coolest underground things in an enormous well carved into the rock on the orders of some sixteenth-century pope: it has interlocking staircases so that a continuous line of donkeys could ascend to get water and bring it back up without blocking each other. The facade of the cathedral is also a big tourist draw.



### GETTING THERE FROM PERUGIA:

- By Bus:** Estimated Travel Time - 2 hours  
One bus leaves from P. Partigiani, another from Marsciano  
APM: Tel.075.506.781 [www.apmperugia.it/canale.asp?id=1](http://www.apmperugia.it/canale.asp?id=1)
- By Train:** Estimated Travel Time - 2 hours. You must change trains at Orte (near Rome) and go north. Take funicular up to the city.
- By Car:** Estimated Travel Time - 1 1/2 hours. Take the E45 to Orte, then the A1 north.



### LEARN MORE:

Tourist Office: P.zza Duomo, 24 - 076.334.1772  
[http://www.bellaumbria.net/Orvieto/maps-road-map\\_eng.htm](http://www.bellaumbria.net/Orvieto/maps-road-map_eng.htm)

# Orvieto

ORVIETO sits on a spectacular table-top of volcanic tufa whose sheer sides fall 325m to the vine-covered valley floor – a cliff-edged remnant of the four volcanoes whose eruptions also bequeathed the soils that produce Orvieto's fine wines. Out on a limb from the rest of Umbria, the town is perfectly placed between Rome and Florence to serve as a historical picnic for tour operators, and tourists flood here in their millions, drawn by the **duomo** – one of the greatest Gothic buildings in Italy and home of some amazing frescoes by Luca Signorelli, recently unveiled after years of painstaking restoration. Once these have been admired, Orvieto is not especially exhilarating, though the *centro storico*, the views and the renowned white **wine** are enough to justify a night's stop.

The city is one of the most ancient in Italy, thanks to its irresistible site. Bronze and Iron Age tribes were present before it became **Volsinii Veteres**, or Velzna, a leading member of the twelve-strong Etruscan federation. In 264 BC the Romans displaced the Etruscans to present-day Bolsena, or Volsinii Novi – the place they abandoned becoming known as

**Urbs Vetus** (the old city), thus Orvieto. Its medieval influence was considerable, the independent *comune* challenging Florence and eventually claiming land as far as Monte Amiata in the north to the coast at Orbetello. Power and prestige remained high until the usual internecine squabbling, the Black Death of 1348 sounding the town's effective death knell. It passed to the Church for good a hundred years later and became something of a papal home from home – 32 popes in all were to stay in the city.

## Arrival, information and accommodation

Fast **trains** on the Rome to Florence run tend to bypass Orvieto, so you may well have to change to a slower connecting service at Orte or Chiusi. Orvieto's **station**, also the terminal for some out-of-town **buses**, is in the grim new town of Orvieto Scalo, a twisting three-kilometre drive from the old centre. The local #1 bus makes the trip every fifteen minutes via Piazzale Cahen to Piazza XXIX Marzo, a short way north of the **duomo**; the #2 and #3 run by marginally longer routes to the slightly more central Piazza della Repubblica; tickets for all three buses are on sale from the station bar – buy one for the return trip, too, as outlets are few. As a fun alternative, you could take the restored nineteenth-century **funicular** from the far side of the station forecourt. After rising through the trees and burrowing through the remains of the town's medieval fortress its end point is Piazzale Cahen; from here minibus A (every 15min) shuttles backwards and forwards to Piazza del Duomo – though it's an easy walk – while minibus B (every 20min) makes a circuit of the old town, touching Piazza XXIX Marzo and Piazza della Repubblica; bus tickets are valid for the funicular ride. Be sure to hang on to your bus or funicular tickets, as they earn you a reduction on admittance to the town's best museum, part of an enlightened policy to try and keep cars out of the centre.

This said, **cars** aren't prohibited in the old town, but finding a parking space is a tall order. There are car parks in Piazzale Cahen and off Via Roma just to the west, but you may be best off parking in the big free car park on the east side of the station and taking the bus or funicular to the old town. Another alternative is to park at Campo della Fiera, below the southwest corner of the old town, where you can pick up local buses #2 or #3 on their run from the station to Piazza della Repubblica; **pedestrian escalators** up to the centre also run from this point.

The excellent and very helpful **tourist office** at Piazza del Duomo 24 (Mon–Fri 8am–2pm & 4–7pm, Sat & Sun 10am–1pm & 3.30–6.30pm; ☎0763.341.772 or 0763.342.562) operates a free **accommodation service**; in addition to the hotels, it has details of a few private rooms and a dozen or so bed and breakfast **agriturismo** options in hamlets scattered around the town. Usually, hotels are pretty easy to find in the centre of town. If you run into problems there are a dozen or so cheap, modern but characterless places in Orvieto Scalo. All but one of the local **campsites** are some way out. The *Benvenuti a Orvieto/Welcome to Orvieto* pamphlet has just about all the extra practical information you'll need.

## Hotels

**Istituto SS. Salvatore**, Via del Popolo 1 (☎0763.342.910). You can stay cheaply with the nuns in this central Dominican convent, but the minimum stay is two nights and there is a 10pm curfew (9pm autumn and winter); 14 rooms with and without bathrooms. ②

**Duomo**, Vicolo di Maurizio 7 (☎0763.341.887). An excellent central 17-room two-star option in the first alley to the left of the **duomo**: some cheaper rooms without private bathroom. ③

**Posta**, Via Luca Signorelli 18 (☎0763.341.909). First choice amongst the cheaper central hotels, 2-min from the **duomo**, with a garden and 20 cool, quiet and pleasant rooms with and without private bathrooms. ③

**Filippeschi**, Via Filippeschi 19 (☎ & fax 0763.343.275). Moderately priced 15-room three-star located just west of Piazza della Repubblica. ④

**Corso**, Corso Cavour 343 (☎ & fax 0763.342.020). A good but slightly pricey three-star hotel close to the Corso's intersection with Via di Montemarte: just 12 rooms, all with private bathroom. ⑤

**Italia**, Piazza del Popolo 13 (☎0763.342.065, fax 0763.342.066). The biggest central hotel, with 45 three-star rooms, and thus likely to have space in an emergency. ⑤

**Reale**, Piazza del Popolo 25 (☎ & fax 0763.341.247). Slightly less expensive three-star than the neighbouring *Italia* if you go for one of the handful of cheaper rooms without private bath. ⑤

**Virgilio**, Piazza del Duomo 5–6 (☎0763.341.882, fax 0763.343.797). Celebrated for its perfect position, though only a handful of the relatively modest 13 three-star rooms actually have views of the **duomo**. ⑤

**Maitani**, Via Lorenzo Maitani 5 (☎0763.342.012, fax 0763.342.011). The best and most central of Orvieto's quartet of four-star hotels if you're splashing out – and with 40 rooms there's a good chance of space. ⑥

## Campsites

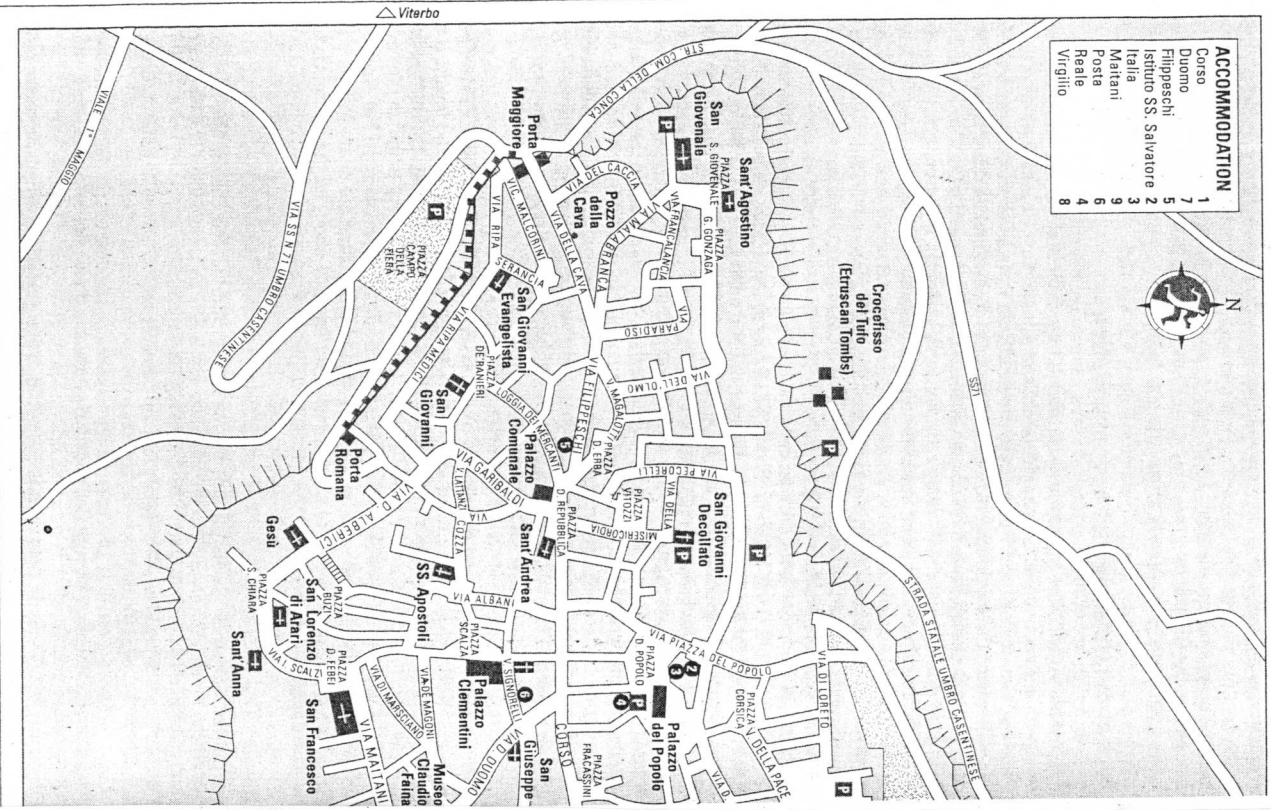
**Agricampaggio Sossogna**, Rocca Ripasena 61 (☎0763.343.141). Small site 7km west of Orvieto, with limited tenting space. Open May to mid-Oct.

**Orvieto** (☎0744.950.240). Smart three-star site on the Lago di Corbara shore, reached by the SS448 Todi road; it's a couple of kilometres' walk from the *Scacco Matto* (see below). Open all year.

**Scacco Matto** (☎0744.950.163, fax 0763.950.373). Basic one-star site by the Corbara lake; take the bus for Civitella del Lago (two daily) or Narni (six daily; alight at Baschi). Open April–Sept. Has a few rooms to rent as well. ②

**ACCOMMODATION**

Corso	1
Duomo	7
Filippeschi	5
Istituto SS. Salvatore	2
Italia	3
Martani	9
Posta	6
Reale	4
Virgilio	8



△ Train Station, Orvieto Scalo & Campitesse

**ORVIETO**

