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CATERINA POMINI



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## ASSISI, WHERE THE SPIRIT OF ST. FRANCIS LIVES ON

*Famous all over the world for being the place where St. Francis and St. Clare were born in the second half of the 12th century, Assisi – province of Perugia - stands on the western slope of Monte Subasio and is home to the mother church of the Franciscan Order: the Basilica di San Francesco d'Assisi, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since the year 2000.*

Founded by the **Umbrians** around 1000 BC and conquered by the **Etruscans** about five centuries later, by the Battle of Sentinum the town passed into the hands of the **Romans** and became part of the Duchy of Spoleto in the early Middle Ages. In the 12th century, **Assisi** turned into an independent Ghibelline commune and was involved in a series of battles with Guelph **Perugia** until annexation to the **Papal States**. In the first half of the 19th century, the remains of **St. Francis** and **St. Clare** were

recovered and the town became one of the most important pilgrimage destinations in Italy and the world.

### An overview of Assisi's main sights

The first stone of the **Basilica di S. Francesco d'Assisi** was laid by Pope Gregory IX himself on 17 July 1228, two years after Francesco's death; completed in 1253, it comprises the upper church, the lower church and a crypt, where the remains of the loving friar were interred in 1818. It is Assisi's most famous landmark and **one of the greatest repositories of Early Renaissance fresco painting**; although heavily damaged by the terrible earthquakes of 1997, it was thoroughly restored and reopened to the public.

The 13th century **Basilica di Santa Chiara** is home to the remains of **Santa Chiara d'Assisi** (St. Clare) – friend, follower and protégé of St. Francis. It has a beautiful facade with a **wagon wheel rose window**, massive lateral buttresses and a simple Gothic interior.

Much venerated as the place where Francesco died on 3 October 1226, the **Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli** was built between 1569 and 1679 and enshrines the **Porziuncola** – the Romanesque little church where St. Francis understood his vocation.

Also known as the **Duomo di San Rufino**, Assisi's cathedral was built in the 12th century and is believed to be the site of the **ancient Roman forum**. St. Francis, St. Clare and many other Franciscan original followers were baptized in this church.

The **Convent of San Damiano** stands just outside the Assisi walls and is known as the place where **St. Francis received his miraculous calling** (1205) and St. Clare died (1253). Less crowded than the other Franciscan sites, it is an important stop on the pilgrimage to Assisi.

The **Carceri Hermitage** is perhaps the most fascinating place of Assisi and rises on the green slopes of Monte Subasio; formerly a small oratory, it is well worth visiting for its Medieval architecture but makes also a **good departure point for magic walks in the woods**.

Every stone of Assisi emanates a bright aura, it is a very special place where you can really perceive a **strong energy** all around you; besides being the undisputed home of St. Francis and St. Clare, it is also rich in **Roman ruins** and dominated by a **massive medieval fortress**.

If you are visiting [Florence](#) and you feel like going on a [group tour to Assisi](#), contact [www.ciaoflorence.it](http://www.ciaoflorence.it) for details.