

Archaeology.

Discovering buried treasures

Thousands of years of history, peoples, and civilisation have left an archaeological patrimony in Umbria that is difficult even to quantify. Virtually every city and town, large and small alike, has traces of the ancient Umbrians, Etruscans, or Romans. Right in the centre of **Perugia**, for example, are the **Etruscan Arch** (or **Arco di Augusto**) dating to the 3rd century B.C. and the archaeological area of Piazza Cavallotti, with fragments of a Roman road. But the most important sites are the **Hypogeum of San Manno** at Ferro di Cavallo and the **Hypogeum of the Volumni** (2nd c. B.C.), **one of the most important Etruscan monuments in Italy**, situated in the vast necropolis of Palazzone (approximately 200 tombs, open to the public). A steep stairway leads down to the interior, built like a Roman house, divided into ten chambers; the cinerary urn of Arnth Velimnas Aules is splendid. In the National Archaeological Museum of Umbria, the Etruscan tomb of Cai Cutu has been reconstructed. In Assisi, a passageway underneath Piazza del Comune makes it possible to visit the ancient Roman Forum, with the original flooring and the remains of impressive inscriptions. Above, Piazza del Comune is dominated by the façade of the **Temple of Minerva** (1st c. B.C.), with six fluted columns and Corinthian capitals; the interior was extensively modified to make room for the 17th-century Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva. The territory of **Orvieto**, at the foot of the cliff, is dotted with **Etruscan necropolises** of the 6th century B.C. The two most important areas are **Cannicella** and **Crocifisso del Tufo**, which takes its name from a cross engraved in a chapel chiselled from the rock. About seventy small tombs can be seen. In the countryside, a



number of tombs of nobility have been brought to light, including the famous ones of Settecamini: the tombs Golini I and Golini II, or Tomba delle Due Bighe, both with pictorial elements, unfortunately ruined and then removed (currently on display in Palazzo Papale). In town you can see the ruins of an Etruscan temple. **Gubbio** preserves a large **theatre** from the 1st century B.C. (the arches of the first tier and some of the second are still visible), as well as the **mausoleum of Pomponius Greccinus**, a section of walls, and several Roman dwellings, or domus. The Museo Civico in Palazzo dei Consoli conserves the Eugubine Tables, dating to the 2nd-1st c. B.C., the main testimonial of the ancient Umbrian language.



The town of **Amelia** has an interesting Roman cistern (1st-2nd c. A.D.) formed by ten subterranean chambers, and ancient pre-Roman walls (6th c. B.C.) 800 metres long, erected with massive polygonal blocks of stone, a rare and extraordinary testimonial. One of the main features of the Museo Archeologico is the precious statue of Germanicus, found in fragments and reassembled with a long and painstaking restoration. **Narni** is the site of imposing remains of the **Bridge of Augustus** over the Nera river, the Formina aqueduct of the 1st century B.C. and still in use in 1924, a number of cisterns, sections of wall, and nearby the Fonte Feronia (4th-3rd c. B.C.). At **Corciano** extends the **Etruscan necropolis of**

Strozacaprioni and in the territory of **Montecchio**, the **necropolis of Vallone San Lorenzo** (6th and 4th c. B.C.). **Bevagna** conserves a **Roman temple**, which later became the Church of the Madonna della Neve, some remains of the Roman theatre and baths (2nd c. A.D.), with floor decorated with black



and white mosaics. **The wall of Spello** (Augustan age), with monumental gates, is one of the best preserved in Italy; outside the town is a sacred area where two walls of the sanctuary and a few vestiges of the amphitheatre and the theatre can still be seen. **Spoleto** abounds in Roman remains, often incorporated by the houses: the walls, **the theatre, the forum** (with paving stones, the Arco di Druso, and the temple of Sant'Ansano), a **beautiful domus**, and the remains of the amphitheatre. The most fascinating archaeological remains in **Todi** are the Nicchioni, large decorative niches built into an imposing support structure of the hill on which the historic town centre stands. **Terni** features a beautiful **Roman amphitheatre**, quite large and well preserved, now used for events and performances. In Castel Rubello-Porano you can visit the frescoed Etruscan tomb of the Hescanas. At **Avigliano Umbro** you

will be speechless as you wander through the petrified forest, composed of fifty amazing petrified trees dating back two million years.

Along the ancient Via Flaminia, not far from **San Gemini, are the ruins of Carsulae**, a Roman city of the 3rd century B.C.

The archaeological site is one of the most important and “choreographic” of the region, and is situated on a marvellous natural backdrop. The tour winds through the site following the remains of the Roman road, which in the urban centre is paved and flanked by sidewalks.

Near the Arco di Traiano (or Arco di San Damiano), an access point to the city, are two monumental tombs. Inside the walls, you proceed along the ruins of the vast forum (40 by 60 metres), with the bases of two small twin temples and the basilica with apse and three naves, then reach the Church of San Damiano, built over a Roman edifice. Off the road, you find the excavations of the amphitheatre and the theatre made of bricks, where you can distinguish the cavea, the first two tiers of seats, and the foundations of the stage.

Another fascinating archaeological site is **Otriculum (below the present Otricoli), a Roman city** built near a bend in the Tiber. Amidst the greenery you can admire imposing ruins, like the large structure that was the base of a building which no longer exists. Also of interest are the remains of the theatre, the amphitheatre, and baths (2nd c. A.D.), which yielded the polychromatic mosaic now on display in the Sala Rotonda of the Vatican Museum. The segment of Via



Flaminia brought to light is lovely: six metres wide and twenty-five metres long, it is covered with leucite paving stones. Outside the town, various sepulchral monuments have been found, including a niche tomb from the Imperial age, a massive tower tomb, and a round mausoleum; also nearby are a public fountain and nymphaeum (1st c. B.C.-1st c. A.D.).

There is also a **subterranean Umbria**: just switch your point of view and descend into the bowels of the earth to discover other archaeological treasures. **“Orvieto Underground”**, for example, **is a city below the city**, a labyrinth of tunnels, rooms, stairways, and cavities dug into the rock of the cliff over the course of more than 2500 years. The guided tour enables you to immerse yourself in echoes of the Etruscan era (when Orvieto was known as Velzna), the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. **“Narni Underground”**, too, promises excitement and unique perspectives, with a leap back in time and in the memory of the city.