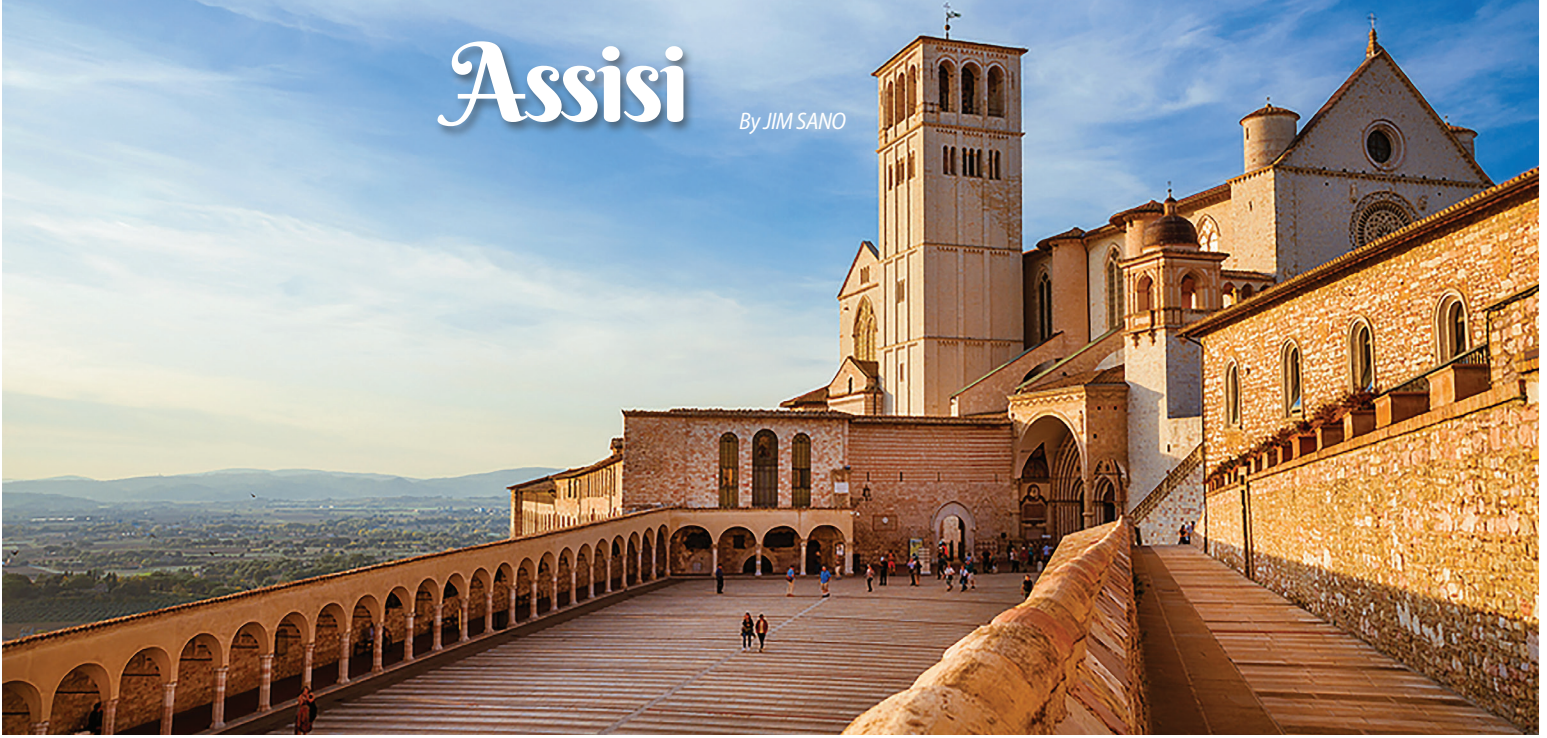




Assisi

By JIM SANO



Basilica of San Francesco

Assisi is a charming small town in the Umbria region of central Italy. It is famous for being Saint Francis and Saint Clare's birthplace and has a rich history as a center for religious and spiritual activities that date back to Roman times. Frequent conquests and sieges from conflicts between the Germanic and Byzantine peoples marred Assisi's medieval history. This turbulent era led to the construction of numerous castles in the area, including Rocca Maggiore. It is conceivable that the violence and turmoil during this period influenced Saint Francis' yearning for peace in his hometown and his mission to propagate a message of worldwide peace.

Saint Francis dedicated his life to serving God through aiding the poor and relinquishing his family's wealth. In 1208 AD, he established the Franciscan order, renowned for its worldwide message of peace and tolerance, deeply influencing Assisi and its surrounding region. The Franciscan religious order played an important role in developing and nurturing the arts and humanities in Assisi. They established many monasteries and churches, now significant parts of the town's historical and cultural heritage. Today, the town has several museums and cultural centers dedicated to

preserving the Franciscan order's legacy. Assisi is also a renowned destination for spiritual tourists and is known for hosting events promoting peace and interreligious dialogue. The historic center of Assisi and its iconic monuments earned UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 2000, showcasing the unique blend of history, culture, and breathtaking natural surroundings.

Among these sites is the Basilica of San Francesco. This remarkable landmark church is a masterpiece of art and architecture and played a significant role in the city's development. It is widely considered the crowning glory of Assisi's historic center and serves as a testament to the region's lasting legacy of the Franciscan order.

The Basilica of San Francesco is a complex consisting of two churches built on top of each other in the 13th century. The Upper Church, also known as the Basilica Superiore, was consecrated in 1253 and is known for its Gothic style and beautiful frescoes depicting the life of Saint Francis. It is also home to the Cripta di San Francesco, the tomb of Saint Francis, and remains a place of reverence for many Catholics. The Lower Church, or Basilica Inferiore, was constructed between 1228 and 1230 and has a more austere appearance. It is decorated with frescoes by some of Italy's greatest artists, including



Rocca Maggiore

Giotto, Cimabue, Lorenzetti, and Martini. The Basilica of San Francesco is an important landmark in developing Italian and European art and architecture. Its frescoes are among the most famous works of art in Italy.

In addition to the Basilica of San Francesco, Assisi boasts other significant Franciscan sites, such as the 14th-century Basilica of Santa Chiara, where the tomb of Saint Clare, a devoted companion and disciple of Saint Francis, is located, and the Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli.



Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli

Saint Clare of Assisi was a significant figure in the city, a spiritual pupil of Saint Francis, and the founder of the Order of Saint Clare. At 18, she left her wealthy family to join Francis at the Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli.

The Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli, built in the 16th century, contains the Porziuncola. This little chapel was erected under Pope Liberius (352-366) and was the original home of the Franciscan order where Saint Francis prayed, ministered, and died. The St Maria Sopra Minerva Basilica, San Damiano training monastery, and the Cathedral of San Rufino, where Saint Francis and Saint Clare were baptized, are additional Franciscan sites in Assisi.



Porziuncola



Basilica of Santa Chiara

Other landmarks in Assisi's center include the Church of San Pietro, Santa Maria Maggiore, the Renaissance fort of Rocca Maggiore, and the Carceri Hermitage, a series of caves where Saint Francis and his companions once lived. The chapel of Santo Stefano, the oldest house of worship in Assisi, is also part of this UNESCO site.

The iconic landmarks of Assisi are a testament to the enduring legacy of the Franciscan order in the region and offer visitors a unique insight into the history and culture of the town. The Franciscan message of love, compassion, and humility has had a lasting influence on the town of Assisi and its people and continues to attract followers worldwide. The town's rich history and cultural significance, along with its beautiful natural surroundings, make it a must-visit destination for anyone interested in the history and culture of central Italy. □



Cathedral of San Rufino



St Maria Sopra Minerva Basilica



San Damiano Training Monastery