

Historic Centre Of Urbino

PART II

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Urbino Cathedral

OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST IN URBINO

The central Church of Urbino is **Urbino Cathedral**, constructed by Bishop Mainardo in 1063 and dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Initially built in a Renaissance style in 1021, the cathedral was rebuilt in a neoclassical style by Valladier after the 1784 earthquake. It is currently the seat of the Archbishop of Urbino-Urbania-Sant'Angelo in Vado and is home to the famous Last Supper by Federico Barocci. The Oratory of the Santissimo Crocifisso della Grotta, also known as the Oratory of the Grotto, is located underneath the Cathedral of Urbino. It comprises four chapels constructed between the 16th and 17th centuries. The Chapel of the Resurrection houses a marble Pietà sculpted by Giovanni Bandini in 1597. Despite being almost a thousand years old, the cathedral has been well preserved thanks to numerous reconstruction efforts throughout the centuries. Since 1986, it has served as the seat of the Archbishop of Urbino-Urbania-Sant'Angelo in Vado, having previously been the seat of the Archbishops of Urbino.

The **Piazzale Roma** square offers a stunning city view and is home to a monument honoring Raffaello Sanzio, Urbino's famous son. The grand bronze statue was completed in 1897 by sculptor Luigi Belli and was initially placed in front of the Ducal Palace before being moved to its current site in 1947. Today, the monument is surrounded by trees, shrubs, and busts of famous individuals, creating a local civic Pantheon.





Piazza della Repubblica

Raphael's birthplace is on the steep road from Piazza della Repubblica to Piazzale Roma. Raphael, the renowned painter and symbol of the Italian Renaissance, was born in this historic house in the ancient center of Urbino on April 6, 1483. Today, the house serves as the location of a captivating museum showcasing a wide array of art, including paintings, sculptures, ceramics, and antique furniture. While many of these pieces are not directly associated with Raphael, they offer a fascinating glimpse into the era through a collection of objects, copies of his paintings, sketches, and tributes.

Piazza della Repubblica is the central square in Urbino and serves as the hub of the town's social and economic life. This central square is in the city's heart, nestled between two hills. From here, five main streets branch out: Via Mazzini, Via Cesare Battisti, Via Vittorio Veneto, Corso Garibaldi, and Via Raffaello. On the square's northern side stands the Raffaello College, established in the eighteenth century at the behest of Pope Clement XI. The Palace was intended to serve as a residence for the Fathers of the Pious Schools for their educational activities.

The Albornoz Fortress was built in 1367 by orders of Cardinal Albornoz. The old fortress was destroyed by insurgents in 1571 and rebuilt the following year. From 1858 to 1860, it was used as a border fortress between the states of the Church and those of Savoy. It is located at the highest point in Urbino and offers a 360° panorama view of the old town of Urbino and the nearby countryside. Throughout its history, the fortress has served as a military garrison, Carmelite monastery, and orphanage, and at one point, it was abandoned. Today, the interior of Albornoz Fortress houses the "Bella Gerit Museum," which displays archaeological finds and war equipment used between 1300 and 1500. The exterior space is a public park dedicated to the Italian Resistance Movement.





THE ORATORIES OF SAN GIOVANNI AND SAN GIUSEPPE

The rather ordinary Gothic façade of the early 20th-century **Oratory of San Giovanni** conceals a colorful and impressive cycle of frescoes covering the entire walls and ceilings. The brothers Lorenzo and Jacopo Salimbeni from San Severino Marche painted the frescoes between 1415 and 1416. They are an excellent example of the last stage of Gothic, known as "International Gothic." Luminous colors, intricate detail, and decoration characterize this style.



The Oratory of San Giuseppe is a series of two 16th-century small chapels that contain a sculptural complex featuring a human-sized stucco depicting the Nativity of Christ, created by Federico Brandani in 1560. This work is considered the oldest in the world and is accompanied by valuable decorations and artwork from the first half of the 18th century. The sculptural complex is displayed in a chapel lined with tuff to recreate the atmosphere of a cave, thanks to the patronage and donations of various members of the Albani family.

The Piazza Rinascimento is located east of the Ducal Palace and is renowned for its unique beauty, making it a popular tourist attraction in Urbino. At the square's entrance stands a grand Egyptian obelisk dating back to 560 BC, which was brought to Urbino in 1737. It

was the playing ground for a ball game called "Gioco del Pallone." This game was a precursor to the modern sport of tamburello. Gioco del Pallone was similar to "Calcio Fiorentino" (Florentine soccer), but by the 18th century, it started to resemble "Pallone col bracciale." This game was considered the main national sport in Italy until 1921, and its professionals were among the highest-paid athletes in the world, along with Japanese sumo wrestlers and Spanish toreadors.



The Church of San Bernardino degli Zoccolanti, built at the end of the 15th century just outside the historic center of Urbino, was designed by Francesco di Giorgio Martini. It was chosen as a mausoleum by Federico da Montefeltro. The Church is made of bricks and has a high, narrow facade with decorative bands, a travertine portal, and two windows with a small gable. The Latin cross nave has a barrel vault and a simple line dome with a rectangular apse. It is the final resting place of Federico da Montefeltro and his son Guidobaldo. Baroque marble sarcophagi are still near the entrance. The Church was victim to theft in 1811 when French invaders stole the painting Pala di Brera by Piero della Francesca, which is now displayed at the Brera art gallery in Milan.

The University-managed botanical garden in Urbino, established as a scientific institution in 1809 under Professor Giovanni De Brignoli's initiative, has a rich history dating back to the 13th century when it served as the main garden for Franciscan friars. The current neoclassical façade features a vaulted entrance adorned with frescoes and a polychrome stained-glass window leading to the garden. The outdoor space spans approximately 2200 square meters across three levels and has a central staircase and three ramps leading to various sectors. The greenhouse





The Piazza Rinascimento

houses an impressive collection of 709 genera, 2,731 species, and varieties, including 572 indigenous species.

The Albani family built the **Palazzo Albani** in the second half of the 15th century. Originally soldiers of fortune from Albania, the family became prominent in Urbino's administration and the Duchy. Eventually, Giovanfrancesco ascended to the papal throne in the 18th century. Alessandro and Annibale, nephews of Clement XI, were consecrated as cardinals during this period. In the early 18th century, particularly under Cardinal Annibale's patronage, the Palace underwent extensive renovation and expansion, encompassing the entire block. Ownership of the Palace remained with the Albani family until the mid-19th century, after which it endured a period of abandonment until the 1920s. Subsequently, the Renzetti family acquired the property, undertaking significant renovations. In 1998, the Renzetti family sold the Palace to the City University. Today, it houses university institutes and various academic facilities.

The monastery of Santa Chiara is an ancient, cloistered complex of the Poor Clare nuns of Urbino, known for its Renaissance architecture. It currently houses the Higher Institute for Artistic Industries of Urbino. Initially built in 1456, it became the ducal mausoleum in 1538. After the unification of Italy, it was used as a women's education institute and then a civil hospital. In 1970, the building became the Higher Institute for Artistic Industries seat. Restoration works were completed in 2011. During this time, the Montefeltro-Della Rovere family remains were moved to a temporary location within the building. □

