

## On the footprints of St. Francis (La Verna To Assisi)

Even if you are not religious, or not christian, the life and iconography of St. Francis, and his Cantico delle Creature probably impressed you. You can start reading the most famous part of it (first part about God and final part about Death has been cut, you can easily find on internet):

Praised be You, my Lord with all Your creatures  
Especially our brother, Master Sun  
Who brings the day and the light  
that warms us he that is beautiful and radiant  
In all his splendour!  
He brings meaning of You, O Most High..

Praised be You, my Lord  
For Sister Moon and the Stars;  
In the heavens You have made them  
Precious and beautiful.  
Praised be You, my Lord  
Through Brothers Wind  
And air, and clouds and storms,  
And all the weather,  
Through which You give sustenance Your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord  
For Sister Water;  
So very useful, and humble  
And precious, and chaste.  
Praised be You, my Lord  
For Brother Fire,  
Through whom you brighten the night.  
He who is beautiful and gay  
And vigorous and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord  
For our sister Mother Earth  
Who feeds and governs us,  
And produces various fruits  
And coloured flowers and plants

S. Francis, the saint of poor people, who refused the richness and presumption of roman church, lived between 1182 and 1226. Born in a rich family of Assisi, was a bald guy, but in 1204, he had a vision and he lost his taste for his worldly life, So began preaching on the streets, and soon amassed a following and founded a new company of friars. In 1224, he received the stigmata making him the first recorded person to bear the wounds of Crist

passion. He died during the evening hours of October 3, 1226. During his life, he built several monasteries, and more grew up after his death to guest his friars.

You can visit the famous monastery of La Verna (24 km from Bibbiena) where he received stigmata: it is an impressive building on a rock overlooking the Casentino valley and Appennines. To feel a natural experience in the spirit of St. Francis, you can walk along the footpath that climb to the top of the mountain, Mount Penna, 1,283 m, it is an easy walk in a breathtaking wood of beech trees (*Fagus sylvatica*) that is nowadays a part of the Casentino Forests National Park. Into the monastery you can find a corridor with paintings illustrating the life of St. Francis, a chemistry and shop and, in the church, glided ceramic masterpieces of Della Robbia.

On the other side of La Verna mountain, driving a narrow road but with a perfect asphalt (maintenance is done to use it for a famous Rally car race) you find in a few km a cottage offering good (but not very cheap) meals and a panoramic view, then you go down to the Valtiberina, where you pass close to the lake and dam of Montedoglio and can stop in San Sepolcro (32,5 km from Chiusi della Verna) to visit the town, the Resurrection Fresco of Piero della Francesca (1450) and the **Aboca Museum**, the original and the only **Herb Museum** that has rediscovered the history of the millenary relationship between Man and Herbs and is passing it down to future generations: museum, shop, art library and the possibility of educational laboratories. Set in Palazzo Bourbon del Monte, Via Niccolò Aggiunti 75 52037 Sansepolcro (AR) Italia, Tel. +39 0575 733589 | Fax +39 0575 744724  
Opening hours: summer, 10 to 13 and 15 to 19.

You can even spend a visit to the middle ages town of Anghiari (about 10 km of good road) but if you are following the footprints of S. Francis, drive directly to Assisi, (85 km of a good road taking about 1 hour of your time), the road set in a green valley famous for tobacco harvest). You cross Città di Castello and are in the Umbria region, follow the E45 till Collestrada, then take the SS75 to arrive in Assisi. That was the birthplace, but even the place where the Saint died, it is a famous destination for pilgrimages, where you can: buy "Punto Assisi" embroideries and painted terracotta works, mainly looking to be made elsewhere, or just visit the Chiesa Maggiore, a Unesco sight, showing paintings of Cimabue, Giotto, Simone Martini. Giotto painted there the life of St. Francis.

If the place is overcrowded as usual, drive to the top of Subasio mountain, and then down on the other side, to Spello (white road, 25 km), a magnificent little village of the middle ages, but of a Roman origin and with Roman walls and famous octagonal towers. Here you find the Norberto gallery, if you are tired of old paintings of Madonne and Saints. If you are not tired about, look for Pinturicchio's masterpieces.

For shopping addicted, a tip is to reach Foligno (7 km), here you can find the products of the Caprai family: the Cruciani producing embroidered bracialet and home linen, the Arnaldo Caprai winery with his Sagrantino di Montefalco and the Cruciani cashmere factory. S.S. Flaminia Km.148 Foligno (Pg) tel +39 0742 39251

More, the area is famous for truffles and salami and also snails and pagliata (calf bowels) are a food experience. On the way back, if you have time, you can stop in Perugia, on the Trasimeno lake or in Arezzo. (160 km, 2 hours drive, but the road is good)