

A DAY IN AREZZO

Arezzo lies about 60 Km south of Florence and is a lively agricultural and now also industrial province.

It was once one of the most important of the 12 cities of the Etruscan Confederation, but from the 3rd Century BC it became a faithful ally of Rome. A supporter of the Ghibelline faction, it was frequently at war with the Florentines through the centuries and engaged in the famous battle of Campaldino in 1289 against the city of Florence. It was defeated and finally in 1348 Florence gained control of the city.

Arezzo was famous for its earthenwares and was also the birth-town of many famous characters in history such as Petrarch, Guido D'Arezzo, the inventor of the musical scale, Spinello Aretino the painter, Giorgio Vasari the artist and art historian.

Piero della Francesca, Legend of the True Cross: Church of San Francesco. (Ticket office next to the church, Visits from 9am to 6 pm. Last entrance 5.30 pm. Entrance ticket 6 Euro.)

By far the most important work of art in Arezzo, is the cycle of frescos known as **The Legend of the True Cross, by Piero della Francesca**, the great artist of whom so few works survive today. The cycle was restored recently and it is to be found within the church of San Francesco (St Francis)

The frescos are painted on the walls of the choir at the end of the great nave surmounted by wooden beams typical of the Franciscan austere style. A general view of the two upper registers of the restored frescos can be seen from the nave but there is a cordoned area on the side of the chapel to permit better viewing.

Piero presumably painted the cycle between 1448 and 1459 although the dates are debated. The frescoes illustrate scenes taken from the *Legenda Aurea* by Fra' Jacopo Varagine (13th century) and the time span runs from The Death of Adam to the Battle of Chosroes in the 7th Century AD. Note the beautiful depiction of the Queen of Sheba, the Dream of Constantine and the magnificent Annunciation.

On the Corso Italia take a look at the stunning **Pieve di Santa Maria (opening times 8am to 1pm and 3.30 pm to 18.30 pm)** one of the most beautiful examples of Romanesque churches in Italy, with its intricate façade. The interior of mellow sandstone is highlighted by the sun filtering through the mullioned windows. In the presbytery you can admire the Polyptych by Pietro Lorenzetti.

The Cathedral or Duomo (opening times 8.00am-12.30 am and 3.30 pm to 6.30 pm)

It was started in 1278 and finally terminated in 1510 whilst its façade was added much later in 1914.

The church is very beautiful if poorly lit. However the highlights are undoubtedly the fresco of the Mary Magdalene by Piero della Francesca on the north aisle and the Assumption by Andrea della Robbia in the Lady Chapel.

The Church of San Domenico on the Via Sassoverde, in a pretty square of lime trees, was founded in 1275 and is an interesting stylistic mixture with a Romanesque portal, a Gothic Belltower and in interesting selection of fresco fragments in the interior. Notice especially the Madonna and Child by the school of Duccio di Buoninsegna the great Sieneese artist, the Annunciation by Spinello Aretino and the Crucifixion by Cimabue, master of the great Giotto.

Casa del Vasari, Via XX Settembre (opening times from 9am to 7pm weekdays only, Sat and Sun from 9 am to 1 pm. RING THE BELL TO ACCESS) The visit to Vasari's home is an

optional though it adds a human touch to the visit as it is always fun to visit a home. Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) , to whom we owe so much that we know about the artists who lived during the Renaissance, and so many great works and engineering feats (such as the famous Vasari Corridor which runs across the Ponte Vecchio in Florence) finished doing up his house in 1540 after having purchased the building.

Several of the rooms have ceiling paintings by him whilst other rooms (such as the kitchen) were painted by artists in his circle such as Alessandro Allori and Raimondo Zaballi.

FOOD for the SOUL and FOOD for the BODY!

Given that you will be spending the better part of a day in Arezzo, we thought we would give you a suggestion as to where to eat.

Our favourite and very popular with the Arretins is a funny little trattoria called l'Agania and is in Via Mazzini n° 10. Tel. 0575 295381 - 0575 296699 - Fax 0575 295381 info@osteriagania.it closed on Mondays.