



Provincia di Rimini

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MALATESTA & MONTEFELTRO



RIVIERA DI RIMINI

# CASTLES AND FORTRESSES IN THE RIMINI AREA FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE RENAISSANCE

travel notes



## Places to see and itineraries



- **Rimini**  
Sismondo Castle
- **Santarcangelo di Romagna**  
Malatesta Fortress
- **Torriana/Montebello**  
Fortress of the Guidi di Bagno
- **Verucchio**  
Malatesta Fortress
- **San Leo**  
Fortress
- **Petrella Guidi**  
Fortified village and castle ruins
- **Sant'Agata Feltria**  
Fortress Fregoso - museum
- **Pennabilli**  
Tower of Molino di Bascio  
Tower of Maciano
- **Gradara**  
Malatesta Fortress
- **San Giovanni in Marignano**  
Historical centre
- **Saludecio**  
Fortified village
- **Mondaino**  
Castle with Palaeontological museum
- **Montegrolfo**  
Fortified village
- **Montefiore Conca**  
Malatesta Fortress
- **Montescudo**  
Fortified village  
Castle of Albereto
- **Montecolombo**  
Fortified village
- **Monte Cerignone**  
Fortress
- **Sassocorvaro**  
Ubal dini Fortress
- **Macerata Feltria**  
Fortified village
- **Pietrarubbia**  
Castle
- **Carpegna**  
Castle of the Princes of Carpegna-Falconieri
- **San Clemente**  
Fortified country estate of Castelleale  
Fortified country estate of Agello

## Where we are



## Distances

Amsterdam 1.405 km  
 Berlin 1.535 km  
 Brussels 1.262 km  
 Budapest 1.065 km  
 Frankfurt, 1.043 km  
 Copenhagen 1.770 km  
 London 1.684 km

Munich 680 km  
 Paris 1.226 km  
 Prague 1.089 km  
 Stockholm 2.303 km  
 Warsaw 1.533 km  
 Vienna 887 km  
 Zürich 645 km

Bologna 121 km  
 Florence 165 km  
 Milan 330 km  
 Naples 586 km  
 Rome 325 km  
 Turin 447 km  
 Venice 270 km

**Castles and Fortresses  
in the Rimini area**  
from the Middle Ages  
to the Renaissance

## **Riviera di Rimini Travel Notes**

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INTRODUCTION  
**TWELVE  
QUESTIONS  
AND ANSWERS  
TO GET TO  
KNOW THE  
TERRITORY  
OF THE  
PROVINCE  
OF RIMINI AND  
ITS HISTORY**

## **1. What are the main characteristics of the territory of the Province of Rimini?**

The current territory of the Province of Rimini includes places which have for centuries been part of the dominion of the Malatesta family as well as others that used to be part of Montefeltro, or were occupied by the Montefeltro clan under the leadership of the Duke of Urbino. Several torrential rivers with wide, pebbly river beds add to the rich and varied profile of the region around the Riviera di Rimini. Two of these rivers are particularly important: firstly, the **Marecchia** that rises in Tuscany, at the Alpe della Luna, near the source of the Tiber. Secondly, there is the **Conca** with its source near Montefeltro, on the mountainside of the Carpegna. The valleys and estuary area of those two rivers, divided, or rather split by the Monte Titano (San Marino) constitute the Rimini territory which on the one side gently merges with the Po valley, and on the other is like a wedge between the Adriatic and the Apennines. It borders on the Marches and Tuscany and includes some of the Montefeltro area. Its borders in terms of historical and cultural terms, as well as in terms of the mentality of the people are not clear, sometimes indefinable, though, of course, the actual administrative ones are, although even those were modified in 2009 when the municipalities of the upper Marecchia valley, Casteldelci, Maiolo, Novafeltria, Pennabilli, San Leo, Sant'Agata Feltria and Talamello were added. If you are on the long straight stretches of the Via Emilia or Via Roma, you won't find any natural obstacles, and who is travelling in the sweet Conca valley will be hard put to say just exactly where they first set foot into the Montefeltro area in the Marches.

## **2. Why so many towers, fortifications and castles?**

The wealth of towers, fortifications and castles is still the most striking feature of the Marecchia and Conca valleys. Their origin lies in the disputes of the neighbouring and rivalling families of Malatesta and Montefeltro during the early and late Middle Ages that led to the fortification of all villages and strategic points, not only on the hilltops, but even those at the bottom of the valley such as mills, fords and bridges. As early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century, there is mention of the area described as the "region or province of the castles". Built with local stone, the fortifications fit into the landscape as if they rise from it, although without trying to seem natural: in fact, they proudly display their menacing purpose, often flaunting power they do not actually have. Their lines add to a landscape that is very varied and occasionally unbelievably picturesque with its seemingly untouched and wild hills and crests - which range from a rough scenery of limestone





to soft hillsides lush with vegetation and copses - and especially because of the occasional isolated huge hunks of chalk, and outcrops of scaly clay: as is the case on Monte Titano as well as on Sasso Simone and Simoncello, or, even closer, on the beautiful crag on which rests San Leo.

### **3. Who were the Malatesta family (or the Malatestas)?**

In the late Middle Ages, the seignory of the Malatestas was, together with the viscount's and the territory of the Scaligero family, one of the greatest of the peninsula, linked and related to the most important Italian houses as well as to other courts abroad. The family had ambitions of art patronage that made them equals to the **Este**, the **Gonzaga**, the **Medici** and the **Montefeltro** families.

### **4. Where did they exercise their lordship?**

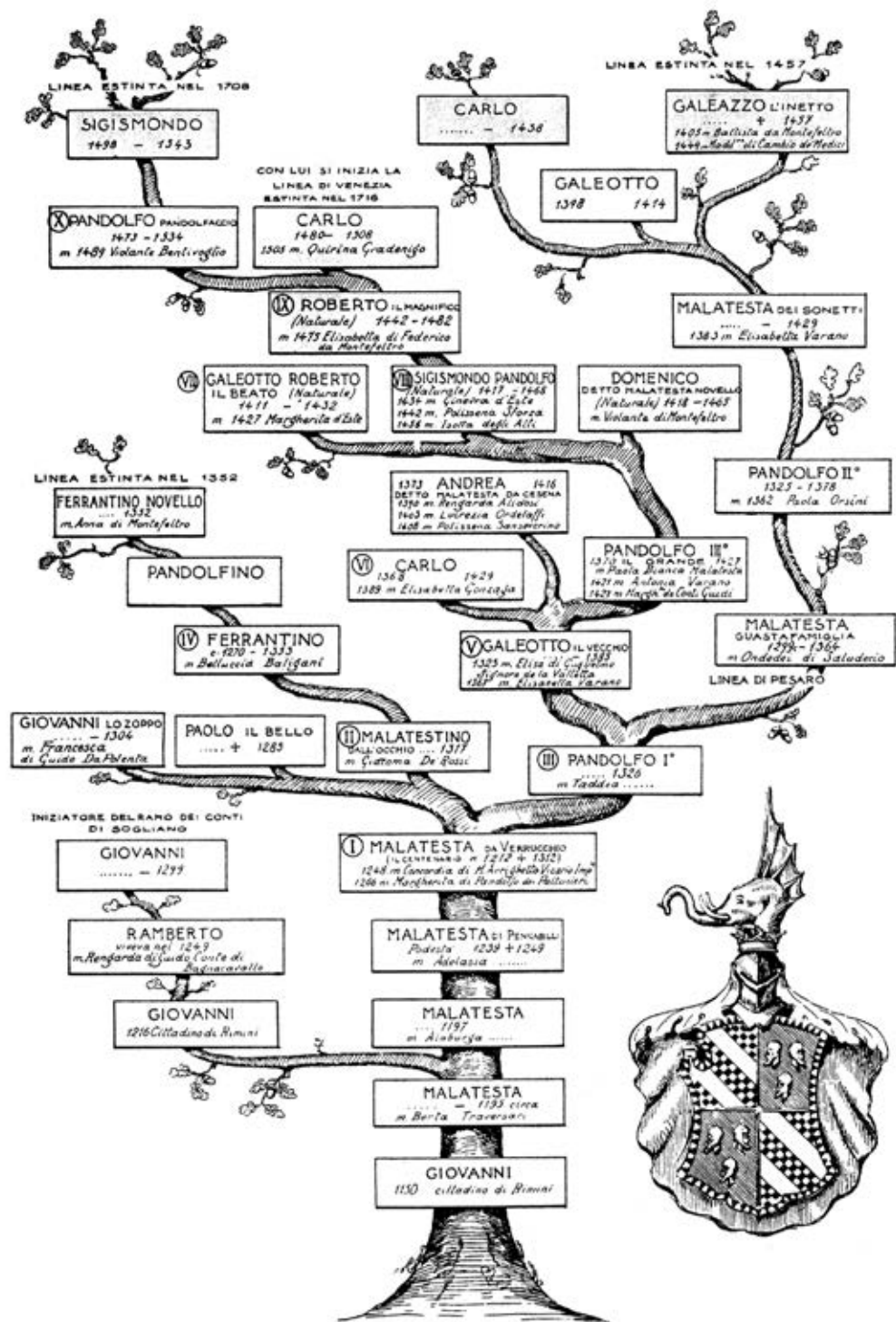
For about three centuries, their dominions were mainly in the Romagna, although one easily finds traces of the Malatesta presence in **Lombardy**, the **Veneto**, the **Emilia** and the **Marches**. The seignory of the Malatesta, come to power surrounded by papal dominions, therefore often found itself in opposition to the political and economic interests of papacy.

### **5. Where does their name come from?**

The most likely explanation is that **Malatesta** (literally, bad head) originally was a simple nickname which - certainly not in any flattering terms - referred to some particularly obstinate or mean person. It later became a proper name and was applied to all the family (often found in the Italian plural form, "**I Malatesti**" - the Malatestas). The name is actually quite appropriate as the history of the Malatesta family is not lacking its examples of cruelty (often especially heinous and strategically planned). They could turn against anyone - even close relatives and members of the family - who might have threatened (or did indeed threaten) the power of the leaders.

### **6. Where and when did the family come from?**

The first documents to mention the **Malatestas** are not



older than the 12<sup>th</sup> century. They concern estates in southern **Romagna** and mention unresolved disputes with the town of Rimini (the **Comune di Rimini**). The Malatesta family was originally a family of wealthy landowners who dominated the middle **Marecchia** valley and controlled the streets from **Rimini** into the hinterland, mainly operating from two strongholds: **Pennabilli** and **Verucchio**, which even today are proud of the fact that they were the cradle of the Malatesta family. However, in the first years, the ancient relationship to yet another feudal family from this area, one that was more illustrious and powerful, one that almost all the important clans from the Feretrano and Romagnolo mountains descended from, was probably more influential: the **Carpegnas**.

## **7. When and how did they become the rulers of Rimini?**

By the 1220s, the names of **Malatesta** family members had become pivotal figures in city politics. They represented the city in official documents and events, and thus we know that they supported the “Ghibelline” politics, that is, the position of the emperor. From 1239 to 1247, **Malatesta dalla Penna**, in 1228 appointed “podestà” (municipal leader, or mayor) of Pistoia, held the same position in Rimini, too. This opened the doors to absolute power over the city. In just a few decades, the Malatestas managed to acquire all civil and religious offices and step by step divested the city offices of all power without, however, abolishing the positions of power themselves completely. For this end, they fought, captured and executed anyone who posed a threat to their supremacy. From 1355 to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Malatestas ruled the seignory of Rimini with the approval of the Holy See.

## **8. What was the relationship with their neighbours, the Montefeltros?**

The Malatestas managed to extend their territory into the Marches up to Ascoli Picena, as far as Borgo San Sepolcro in Tuscany, and in the Romagna as far as Cesena. However, they could never get rid of their most powerful and astute neighbour: the Montefeltro family, who probably originally came from a background like themselves and had acquired their estates from the comital possessions of the Carpegnas. The opposition between the Malatestas



Top  
**Portrait of Sigismondo  
Pandolfo Malatesta by  
Piero della Francesca  
(c. 1451) today found  
at the Louvre Museum  
in Paris.**

Bottom  
**Bas-relief with the  
initials of Sigismondo  
(SI), Malatesta  
Temple.**

and the Montefeltros became more prominent during the mid-1400s when the heads of the two rivalling families were **Sigismondo** and **Federico**, and grew even more heated when the latter lord's son-in-law Alessandro Sforza managed to conquer the city of Pesaro and make it part of his territory (in 1445). The city had until that moment been part of the Malatesta dominion (ruled by one of Sigismondo's cousins, the inept Galeazzo Malatesta). While this acquisition allowed the Urbino lords direct access to the sea on their own grounds, it divided Sigismondo's territory into two parts: from now on his cities of Fano, Senigallia and Fossombrone in the Marche were cut off.

## **9. Who was Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta?**

**Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta** (1417-1468) was the son of Pandolfo III. Malatesta and his lover Antonia da Barignano and became lord of Rimini and Fano in 1432. His brother Domenico Malatesta received Cesena as his dominion. Sigismondos's reign was the period of the greatest splendour in the Malatesta history. He was married three times: his first wife was Ginevra d'Este, his second Polissena Sforza. Finally, in 1456, he was able to marry his lover **Isotta degli Atti**, lady and centre of attention of a very sophisticated court.

Early in his career, Sigismondo had already gained reputation as an able and daring military leader. The popes assured themselves of his talents several times; and he acted for them as bailiff as well as commanding the Venetian troops in the area against the Ambrosian Republic and Francesco Sforza, and the troops against the Ottoman Empire in 1465. In addition to this, he aided Florence in their resistance against the invasion of Alfonso V. d'Aragona. His relationship with his neighbour Federico da Montefeltro, duke of Urbino, could not have been worse: they communicated through weapons and insults only. However, Sigismondo was also a generous patron of the arts. His initiative brought Rimini what is now one of its most important and visited monuments, characteristic of the Renaissance period: the Malatesta Temple by Leon Battista Alberti. Sigismondo was at odds with Pope Pius II, formerly Enea Silvio Piccolomini. The final break came with the seizure of several castles the Pope wished to give to Malatesta's eternal rival Federico da Montefeltro. These conflicts eventually led to his open opposition and battle with the papal troops led by said Federico da

Top  
**Panorama view  
of Urbino.**  
Bottom  
**Gradara Castle,  
built from the 11<sup>th</sup>  
to 15<sup>th</sup> century.**

Montefeltro - and to his defeat. From that moment on, he was forced to help in the carve-up of his own territories that fell under church military rule and were governed by his enemy. He died at the age of 51. His body was buried in the tomb in the Malatesta Temple which remained unfinished just like his project of increasing his power and territory.

## 10. Who was Federico da Montefeltro?

**Federico da Montefeltro**, born in Gubbio in 1422 was probably a son of Guidantonio, lord of Urbino, and a lady-in-waiting. According to some researchers, he might also have been a son of Bernardino degli Ubaldini. He was, however, accepted as a legitimate son by Guidantonio and became the duke's heir when his step-brother Oddantonio died in 1444. He was educated at the court of **Vittorino da Feltre** in Mantova. Federico soon became the most accomplished and worthy military man of the peninsula - and the most well-known member of the Montefeltro family both for his political and artistic qualities. With him as a well-versed and generous patron of the arts, Urbino became an internationally renowned centre of the arts. In order to consolidate the political influence of his duchy, Federico forged an alliance with the Sforza family in Milan, and, to attain this goal, agreed to a marriage of convenience with young **Battista Sforza**, niece of the Duke of Milan. His ruthless politics at one time brought him excommunication from the church by Nicholas V. (revoked in 1450) and made Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta his lasting enemy.

Federico da Montefeltro, however, was intelligent and astute enough to forge an alliance with Aragon and to eventually follow the political direction of papacy. This choice brought him obvious economical and political advantages. He fought with Pius III Piccolomini and sought the decision in direct confrontation with the Malatestas to win the territory of the Marches (a bloody event which took place at the Castello of Gradara in 1463).

## 11. The challenge of the eagle and the elephant

For more than two decades, **Federico da Montefeltro** (whose coat of arms shows an **eagle**) and **Sigismondo Malatesta** (the **elephant**) were enemies to the core, often also in the pay of adversaries of greater power. The chronicles and documents of that time tell us more than







Top

**Panorama view with the fortress of San Leo in the background.**

Bottom

**View of San Leo and Maioletto from Talamello.**

the military history: the two commanders exchanged insults, challenged each other, schemed against each other, and did everything to discredit the other. They are parallel figures, even if their character and psychological make-up was very different. Sigismondo appears to have been more impulsive, boisterous, less diplomatic, a very good fighter, but less able to maintain useful relationships to favour or increase his power. He managed to make powerful and lasting enemies: the process against him instigated by Pius II which ended with an effigy burning on two squares in Rome is just one example.

Federico on the other hand, who was by no means less cruel (it seems he even had a hand in the murder of his step-brother), showed much greater diplomatic skill which helped him in ambiguous and dangerous situations. Prudence and balance were his qualities and allowed him to maintain and increase his power.

This task was facilitated by Sigismondo's mistakes: the latter broke treaties signed with the pope and invaded lands that had been returned to the Montefeltros. In the end, the lord of Rimini brought about his own destruction.

## **12. How did the Malatesta reign end?**

After the death of **Sigismondo**, his brother **Roberto the Magnificent**, an arrogant and cruel man, soon managed to get rid of his brothers and of **Isotta** (Sigismondo's wife). He thus became sole ruler of Rimini and eventually recovered some parts of the territory lost before, not least because he married **Elisabetta, Federico da Montefeltro's** daughter (1475). He was a great commander of troops and died prematurely in 1482 while fighting in the service of the pope, who had a large monument erected for him in St. Peter's in Rome.

In 1498, the nobles of Rimini plotted against Pandolfo IV, Roberto's son. The conspiracy failed and was followed by a furious vendetta the young lord who despised them led against them. He was, however, soon after forced to leave his city at the behest of **Cesare Borgia**, called **il Valentino**. In 1503 he returned briefly, only to sell his seignory to the **Venetians** who returned it to the Catholic church in 1509. **Pandolfo** until 1528 continued to try (unsuccessfully) to return as the lord of Rimini despite the hostility of the Riminese people.

CHAPTER I  
**RIMINI,  
THE SPLENDOUR  
OF A  
CAPITAL CITY**

**Rimini** was the most splendid of the Malatesta capitals and it was also the city which held this status for the longest time: the best and longest part of the Malatesta period began and ended here. But nowadays it is not so easy to see the traces of the Malatesta's dominion in the city. First of all they can be found in the mediaeval city walls which were built, re-built, restored, then lowered and eventually deprived of their moats and partially destroyed. The best-preserved parts of the mediaeval walls are to the south and east of the old town centre; these can be seen from via di Circonvallazione and the Cervi park, and are interrupted alongside the Augustus Arch, an ancient gateway on the east side of the city, transformed and embellished in 27 B.C. to honour the **emperor Augustus**. *Via Flaminia*, the road connecting Rome to Rimini, comes to an end here.

The town of San Giuliano is situated on the far side of the port and therefore across the river, which can be crossed using Tiberius Bridge (one of the grandest and best-preserved bridges from Roman times: 14-21 A.D.). The town is still typically mediaeval: it is dominated by the important church of San Giuliano, once a Benedictine abbey dedicated to San Pietro and rebuilt in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (one of the last masterpieces of **Paolo Veronese** depicting the 1587 Martyrdom of San Giuliano can be found at the main altar.) The presence and actions of the **Malatesta family** can be indirectly but consistently traced back to the many convents and churches of their religious orders: the Eremites, Franciscans, Dominicans, Humiliati and the Servites all emerged in the city during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. These were aided and protected by the Malatesta family, and received numerous signs of the family's generosity. To date, the only church in Rimini whose mediaeval structure remains intact is the *San Giovanni Evangelista* church, which once belonged to the Eremites of Sant'Agostino (and is therefore commonly referred to as Sant'Agostino), characterized by a high Gothic bell tower.

In the apse and the chapel of the bell tower, one can still admire frescoes from the first part of the fourteenth century by unknown artists from Rimini (probably the **Zangolo** brothers, **Giovanni** and **Giuliano da Rimini**): these depict Christ and the Virgin Mary in la Maestà, and the stories of San Giovanni Evangelista and the Holy Virgin. There is also a splendid Crocefisso (Crucifix) retablo, while the magnificent Giudizio Universale (Last Judgement) piece, originally painted in fresco form on the triumphal archway, is kept in the City Museum, together with other pieces from the same period. In the first half of the fourteenth century, **Rimini** witnessed the development of a painting school characterized by an early appreciation of the art of Giotto. Its originality consisted in the use of a



Top  
**Malatesta Temple,  
the large crucifix  
painted by Giotto for  
the Franciscan church.**

Bottom  
**Detail from a 13th  
century fresco  
in the apse of  
Saint Augustine's  
church in Rimini.**

tender, sweet, traditionally Byzantine colour scheme which, complemented by taste, creates a form of expression with lyrical inclinations: however, its works are not free from acute naturalistic observations and iconographic extravagancies, showing the ease with which these artists deal with subjects like tradition and the freedom of thought with which they accepted Giotto-style innovations. The Rimini "school" was very active in the early fourteenth century in all of **Romagna**, as well as in **Marche, Emilia and Veneto** and generally all the lands where the **Malatesta family** were present.

It is believed that the Malatesta family commissioned Giotto to paint Rimini's Franciscan church at the end of the thirteenth or in the very early part of the fourteenth century (although dedicated to San Francesco the church was known as the Malatesta temple, and from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it became the city cathedral). The only element of the church to survive is his large lifelike Crocefisso. To directly attribute full responsibility for Giotto's activity in Rimini to the Malatesta family may seem as if we are guessing; or perhaps not, if one considers that the circles in which the Tuscan painter moved were those associated with the Malatesta family: the high court and the great Guelph families linked to the Curia, the House of Anjou and the Franciscans. In **Rimini** the **Malatesta family** had bought a great deal of property, and between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries they developed the houses offered to them by the Town Council, which were situated in a strategic position near the cathedral and the porta del gattolo, looking out over the hinterland and towards their historical estate in the **Marecchia** valley. Almost all of the great architecture which dated back to the early years of the Malatesta's presence and rule of **Rimini** has now disappeared or been radically transformed.

The ancient cathedral too, Santa Colomba, was destroyed (the only remainder of construction from that period to survive being a part of the enormous vestry-bell tower, in piazza Malatesta, which dates back to the fourteenth century). Other than the aforementioned Augustinian church, which underwent considerable transformation, another feature from this period which stands out is the Town Municipality complex: the Arengo building, with large multi-mullioned windows and beautiful early Gothic archways, dates back to 1204; the Podestà building was built in



Top  
**Rimini, view of  
Piazza Cavour with  
the Amintore Galli  
theatre in the  
background,**

**the Palazzo del  
Podestà and the  
Palazzo dell'Arengo  
on the right.  
At the centre the  
statue of Pope Paul V.**

Bottom  
**Rimini, Sismondo  
Castle, the ancient  
fortified palace  
Sigismondo 1437-1446)  
built in Rimini.**

the fourteenth century but substantially restored and redesigned at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A considerable part of the city's public, civil and religious life took place in the Malatesta building, the cathedral and the municipality buildings. And it was also in this area, the real city hub, that the city's economic activity took place: the lawyers' benches and those of the Jews and the city market, which took place in the vicinity of the ancient fountain, in front of the Arengo building.

A "Malatesta itinerary" in Rimini might depart exactly from this ancient square of the Municipality or from the fountain (now piazza Cavour), which was then near the ruins of the primitive Cathedral, the main residence of the **Malatesta family** (Castel Sismondo) and the Sant'Agostino church. Crossing the corso d'Augusto, one easily reaches the piazza Tre Martiri, the city's ancient forum since Roman times, and then dipping down towards the sea, one comes across the Malatesta Temple.

We do possess an extraordinary "portrait" of half of the fifteenth century in Rimini under the Malatesta: it is a bas-relief sculpted in his usual refined way by **Agostino di Duccio** into an end-panel of the Malatesta Temple and depicts Cancer, the zodiac sign of the city and its leader, **Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta**.

## **Castel Sismondo, a city for the court**

Only a few unconfirmed traces remain of the great Malatesta house built in the thirteenth century near porta del gattolo, and these can be found in the castle **Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta** commissioned in the fifteenth century, and which has now completely disappeared except for its central nucleus. Its present condition is not the result of the changes undergone in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (when an attempt was made to transform it into a modern fortress) or the air raids of the last war, but has more likely been due to the disastrous demolitions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which led to the destruction of several buildings, especially the city walls and the exterior ramparts, and to the closing of the moats. In the latter part of the twentieth century the castle was the subject of an important restoration project: it now **plays host to prestigious art exhibitions** and other important events.





Top  
**Rimini, Sismondo  
Castle, the Malatesta  
coat of arms with the  
elephant's head and  
the Malatesta emblem  
above the portal.**

Bottom  
**The castle.**

**Sigismondo** began the construction of the castle on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 1437, the second-last Wednesday of Lent, at 6.48pm: the date and exact time had probably been painstakingly decided upon by the court astrologers. He announced its conclusion in 1446, a year which proved particularly lucky for him: but actually work was still in progress in 1454, and the castle may never have been finished according to the original plans, which show it as being dominated by a large bridge house.

The Malatesta lordship enjoyed considerable economic prosperity in 1437, and **Sigismondo**, who had only just turned twenty but already been a church Gonfaloniere for three years, enjoyed great personal fame as leader of mercenaries (not to mention the high wages he received for this office). The castle was conceived as a palace and a fortress, a seat to be worthy of the court and garrison, and was also to represent the power and supremacy of the city. A whole compact district was set up in order to construct the castle and to fuel the aura of respect it would need to command in order to function properly. This district included buildings and houses, but also an Episcopate, a convent and the baptistry of the nearby cathedral. Court writers celebrated **Sigismondo** as the architect of the project, and he is also said to be the author of the great marble epigraphs on the walls of the building. If by "architect" we mean inspirer, creator, co-ordinator or the person who commissioned the work according to precise requirements and ideas, then this title may be deemed fitting: in fact **Sigismondo's** distinct way of thinking regarding the art of war and his experience as leader of mercenaries were well-known. In any case he would have had to make use of the skills of various professionals and specialists; we know that one of the most important of these was the consultancy provided by **Filippo Brunelleschi**, just after work began. In 1438 Brunelleschi was in **Rimini** for a couple of months and carried out a lengthy series of on-site inspections in the main forts of the Malatesta in **Romagna** and in the **Marche** province.

Even today, although diluted by time, the building still has a certain charm, thanks to its large square towers and powerful scarp walls which must have then been awe-inspiring as they loomed skywards from the bottom of the moat; **Roberto Valturio** was exactly right in comparing them to pyramids because of their inclination and their grandeur.



**Rimini,  
the Malatesta  
Temple by  
Leon Battista Alberti.**

The entrance towards the city, which was preceded by an embankment and a double ravelin with drawbridges over the moat, is today still decorated with a coat of arms composed of a typical shield with chequered bands, topped by a crest bearing a crested elephant's head alongside a rose with four petals: a fine quality relief inspired by Pisanello and sculpted by an artist who was probably Venetian given its Gothic inclinations. The words "Sigismondo Pandolfo" feature to the right and left of the coat of arms in tall, decorative, lower case Gothic letters. Set in the wall between the coat of arms and the marble portal is one of the castle's dedicatory epigraphs bearing a solemn text in Latin sculpted in lapidary characters (one of the earliest examples of the "Rebirth" of classical characters): it states that **Sigismondo** erected the building from its foundations in 1446 for the people of Rimini, and declared that it would be named after him, Castel Sismondo. His brazenness in describing the castle as ariminensium decus can only be admired, when it is enough to observe the location of the building's towers, all facing the city, to see that the castle was conceived primarily to defend him from potential revolts by the people of Rimini, rather than to defend the city itself from outside attacks: it was as if he considered the memory of the rare seditions of the past as a much larger threat than any possible impending dangers posed by external enemies. Bearing in mind this concept and the period in which the city was being identified and the state represented by the lordship, it follows that Castel Sismondo should be seen as symbol and defence of the lord's status on a personal level, and certainly not as symbol and defence of the city and the state.

**Sigismondo** died on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October, 1468 in his beloved castle; we do not know when he had begun to live there on a regular basis but can guess that he was already staying there in 1446. His chancellery and guard had certainly already been installed there early on and the castle had immediately become the place where official ceremonies and receptions were held: in fact right from the beginning the castle had become the exclusive seat of the court, which was then full of poets, musicians, scholars, learned men, painters and coin engravers, sculptors and architects from all over Italy.



Top  
**Rimini, interior of the  
Malatesta Temple.**

Bottom left  
**Cherubs by Florentine  
sculpture Agostino di  
Duccio holding plaques  
with the coat of arms or  
heraldic symbols of the  
Malatesta family.**

Bottom right  
**Bas-relief by Agostino  
di Duccio showing  
angels carrying the  
Malatesta symbol.**

## **The Malatesta Temple: Sigismondo's unfulfilled dream**

Ten years after having initiated the construction of the castle which he had wanted to be called after him, **Sigismondo** began to have a family chapel built for him in the church near the burying place of all of his predecessors: **San Francesco**. Although it was decorated by **Giotto** at the beginning of the fourteenth century, this church was of modest architecture (only one area, covered by a gable, with three apsidal shrines) and it was located in a rather remote area, even if it was near the ancient square of the forum, the Roman centre of the city (nowadays called piazza Tre Martiri).

The structure of the new chapel was simple and extremely traditional, with a large Gothic archway opening in the right side of the church, a cross vault and high, narrow windows. It was soon joined by another chapel, equally simple and traditional, commissioned by **Isotta degli Atti**, Sigismondo's young lover. The design of both chapels may have been based on a Malatesta family chapel built a century before on the same side of the church, near the apse. The construction work carried out to create these two chapels lasted for more than three years, and must have seriously compromised the stability of the old building, which Sigismondo decided to transform at his own expense in 1450 to fulfil a vow made during his victorious Tuscan campaign against Alfonso d'Aragona, as confirmed in the Greek epigraphs on the sides and the dedication engraved on the facade.

**Matteo de' Pasti** was commissioned as architect for the project and **Agostino di Duccio** was the sculptor. The former had been recruited at the **Estensi**, in **Ferrara**; he was an illuminator and coin engraver from Verona who was educated by **Pisanello**, and his work showed a late Gothic tendency. **Agostino di Duccio's** work too displayed refined Gothic inclinations which he further developed in Venice, although he had been taught by **Donatello**. The picturesque, stately interior of the building reflects the Gothic tastes of the court in its display of splendour, opulence and the refined, elitist culture which mainly exalted **Sigismondo** as the ultimate lord, leader of mercenaries and patron. The effect created is the result of the collaboration of the two aforementioned artists, and the implementation of suggestions made by the court humanists.

Top  
**A Malatesta medal, created by Matteo de' Pasti showing Leon Battista Alberti's original plans for the temple.**

Bottom  
**Malatesta Temple, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta worshipping San Sigismondo, by Piero Della Francesca (1451).**

**Leon Battista Alberti** was the figure responsible for the exterior architecture. In about 1450 he conceived an exceptionally innovative marble facing which was completely different from the style employed inside the building. Discarding completely all Gothic and decorative elements, Alberti in fact gave full reign to the ancient Roman style of architecture, reproducing many of its elements and furthermore attempting to recuperate the very concept of architecture as a dignified celebration of man, and as the exaltation of his intellectual nobility.

Unfortunately the very part of the building which was to have been its most important, original feature, was never completed, namely the apse, conceived as a round dome which might have resolved or at least softened the obvious mismatch between the exterior and the inside of the building. In order to get an idea of how Alberti's design would have unfolded we must look at a coin cast by **Matteo de' Pasti**, which shows the two styles of the building and the great dome which was to have risen at the end of the nave. Alberti's intervention, with his new proposals of ancient forms, reinvented and shaped to give a modern feel, fully justifies the use of the term "Temple" with reference to this Christian (and Franciscan) church since the fifteenth century.

The decoration inside the temple does not feature traditional fresco paintings but instead centres on the elegant sculptures of **Agostino di Duccio** and marble facings, embellished with multi-coloured and golden details. The only fresco painting with figures is almost hidden in the small sacristy between the first two Malatesta chapels; it depicts Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta kneeling before San Sigismondo, king of Borgogna, and is by **Piero della Francesca**, who signed and dated it (1451). At first glance the subject may appear to be an entirely traditional devotional scene, with the lord before his holy protector. However, Piero's interpretation is actually to be considered an innovation due to the content, the completely free, natural, "secular" relationship between the two figures, immersed in a calm light and in a rationally constructed setting, the forms, which are simple, regular, harmonious and which express for the first time ever the humanity and dignity of the characters depicted as well as their intellectual nobility and physical beauty. The forms also identify divine and earthly power by stressing the concept of dignity and rationality common







Rimini, Malatesta Temple. Detail from the chapel of the planets, or the Zodiac chapel,

with the memorial to honour bishop Sebastiano Vanzi (1556).

to both the holy king and his devote subject. Alberti had not yet begun his renovation of the Temple when **Piero della Francesca** signed this fresco painting and so it was the first example of the “true” Renaissance period in **Rimini** and **Romagna**; an example which showed the prince in a good light, confused artists who were interested only in aesthetic opulence, invited scholars to allow a chink of humanity to spark in their arid research, and an example which announced a utopian future, determined by reason and comforted by poetry.

The enchanted silences and meditated pauses of **Piero della Francesca**'s style, and perhaps also the foreboding of the new era which they represented probably interested very few in the court of Rimini. Instead Gothic fantasy and traditional grandeur were surely the order of the day, being part of a style which triumphed in the sculptural decoration of the Temple's chapels using decorative shields and garlands, festoons hanging from the architraves, fabrics and swags painted on the tombs.

In this setting the fine bas-reliefs by **Agostino di Duccio** become precious and extremely elegant. Polite little angels chase each other and joke around; baby angels sing and play melodic songs; Virtues and Sybils excitedly flaunt their symbols and elegant drapery; Apollo and the Muses, the Planets and the Constellations form a picturesque party with their incredible exotic costumes (except for Venus, who triumphs naked in the sea amongst a flock of doves). Everything can be explained in traditional religious terms, including the strange planet and zodiac signs, which are not present as bizarre horoscopes but simply to exalt the perfection of heaven as created by God. However, a touch of malice and hostility was all that was needed in order to find paganism and atheism everywhere. In this way, **Pius II**, one of Sigismondo's staunch enemies, stated that the church was full of pagan deities and profanities and he held it up as an example in an attempt to discredit the lord of Rimini. Sigismondo had clearly explained in the Greek epigraphs on the outside walls that the temple was dedicated to “immortal God and to the city” as thanks for the perils which had been avoided and for the victories reported in the “Italian war”; and, in the beautiful classical inscription on the facing he had emphasised that he had had the church built “(to fulfil) a vow”.

Work on the Malatesta temple forged ahead until towards

1460, when **Pius II** became increasingly hostile towards **Sigismondo**, who was as valiant a mercenary leader as he was a terrible politician. The economic crisis and papal excommunication in 1461 were followed by the defeat and reduction of the state in 1463; and in this way work on the great building ceased forever. It remains incomplete even today, both outside and inside and the fact that it was never finished is a clear reminder of Sigismondo's bad luck, the basic fragility of his power and the inconsistency of his ambitious dreams of glory. In fact the very temple itself can be considered a dream, a dream which was never fulfilled: a dream belonging to **Sigismondo**, who had wanted to build a splendid temple to the glory of God and the city of Rimini, but most of all to render his own name and dynasty immortal; a dream belonging to **Leon Battista Alberti**, who had wanted to build a monument to man's intellectual nobility; and a dream belonging to the Humanists too, who believed that the dramatic contradictions of time could be hidden under a veil of intelligent cultural findings and refined works of art.

### **Art at the decline of a great lordship**

The Malatestas were great patrons of art. The last work of art commissioned by Sigismondo Pandolfo, on his return from the expedition in Morea was probably the "Pietà" (Dead Christ Supported by the Madonna and St John) by **Giovanni Bellini**: the painting is today the absolute highlight among the masterpieces kept in the City Museum. It is an example of magnificent painting and poetry, thanks to the elegance with which the figures are defined on the black background, outlined softly but clearly, modelled by a constant, subdued light and bathed in warm, subtle colour. Christ's lifeless body appears to conceal the mystery of death; the baby angels who hold him up seem to hide the key to the mystery of life. The painting is deeply, profoundly moving, and the emotions it produces in the viewer exalt a sense of dignity and human beauty which cannot be suppressed even by pain or death.

The City Museum contains several other testimonies of the Malatesta period, such as ceramics from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, frescoes, coats of arms, fragments of tombstones, sculptures and a series of beautiful medals cast by **Matteo de' Pasti** for **Sigismondo** and **Isotta** halfway through the fifteenth century. There is also an important altarpiece from the ruined church of San Domenico, whose creation was commissioned to **Domenico Ghirlandaio** by the last lord of Rimini, Sigismondo's nephew **Pandolfo IV Malatesta**,

nicknamed "il Pandolfaccio". It depicts the saints Vincenzo Ferreri, Sebastiano and Rocco with the whole Malatesta family kneeling at their feet (**Pandolfo IV** with his wife **Violante Bentivoglio**, his mother **Elisabetta Aldobrandini**, and his brother **Carlo**).

It appears to be a kind of fulfilment of a vow for the fact that the family had been spared by the plague.

This altarpiece was the last act of patronage in the Malatesta period, by then in its twilight stage. The City Museum contains only a few pieces dating to this period, the most important of which is a series of ceiling boards belonging to Sigismondo's son, **Roberto il Magnifico**. These originate from one of his palaces in Rimini and are decorated with coats of arms and initials. With a visit to the Museum where these Malatesta pieces have been collected and are preserved, we come to the end of our short tour which has led us past the city walls and the mediaeval town centre with the Municipal buildings, Sismondo Castle and the Malatesta temple.

However, any visitor who may want to go for a pleasant walk on the Covignano hills behind **Rimini** can see yet another beautiful Malatesta church. This is the parish church of San Fortunato, decorated with a stone coat of arms by **Roberto Malatesta**, to whom we can attribute the Renaissance-style renovation of the facing. This church had belonged to the abbey of Santa Maria di Scolca, commissioned at the beginning of the century by **Carlo Malatesta** and destroyed after the Napoleonic suppressions so that the ruins could be sold as building materials. Carlo Malatesta's coat of arms remains in the centre of the coffered ceiling in the simple, well-lit nave decorated with seventeenth century stuccoes. In this church we can also admire pieces which have nothing to do with the **Malatestas** but which are some of the most interesting pieces in the city, such as the board by **Giorgio Vasari** depicting the Adoration of the Magi (in the apse), painted in 1547; and an interesting set of frescoes by **Girolamo Marchesi da Cotignola** and **Bartolomeo Coda**, which date back to 1512 (in the chapel of the sacristy).

In front of the church there is a beautiful square of Renaissance proportion, from which one can see the sea and a part of the Malatesta territory towards the **Marche**, stretching from the **Gabicce** headland to the first castles, which crown the hills in the **Valle del Conca**.

CHAPTER II  
**THE MARECCHIA  
VALLEY: FROM  
SANTARCANGELO  
TO SAN LEO**

## **Santarcangelo and its fortress**

The road to take for this route, which leads along the Valmarecchia up to San Leo, is via Emilia from Rimini. After a few kilometres it reaches **Santarcangelo di Romagna**, built on a hill between the rivers Marecchia and Uso and one of the best preserved and most pleasant towns of the area thanks to its sober construction and picturesque little streets that climb up the hill and open onto silent squares. The old town is still largely enclosed by fifteenth century walls, restored and partly rebuilt under Sigismondo Malatesta in 1447, who ordered the addition of some marble epigraphs. The construction of the Rocca (the Fortress) is owed to him as well: built on one end of a hill next to a great tower ordered by **Carlo Malatesta** in 1386. This tower was extremely high; as a matter of fact it was one of the wonders of Italy for its height, according to the writers of the time. Even a century later, it still continued to amaze onlookers for its grandeur and beauty but, by this time, assaults were made mainly with bronze mortars instead of wooden catapults and Sigismondo did not hesitate to lower the tower. He used the bottom part as an angular keep for a new fortress (partly built with the recovery material obtained from the demolition), it has a rectangular form with polygonal towers, apt to host a good garrison, as suggested by the restlessness and intolerance of the people from Santarcangelo towards the Malatesta Seignory, and the need to guard continuously the lower course of the Marecchia and Uso rivers and via Emilia in the proximity of Rimini.

Even this fortress, which unfortunately has completely lost its summit of brackets and merlons, is adorned with inscriptions in ancient language and Latin epigraphs according to a humanistic style that was just starting to establish itself at that time. The keep, the base of the great fourteenth century tower by Carlo Malatesta, is accessed from the courtyard, moving along a picturesque cobbled paving under which there is a medieval cistern that is still functioning. Part of the tower's ancient winding staircase is hidden in the enormous masonry: it allowed independent communications between the various floors (four have survived today). **Galeotto Roberto Malatesta**, named the beato (the saint), nephew and successor of Carlo and brother of Sigismondo and Malatesta Novello, died in a room of this tower at the dawn of 10<sup>th</sup> October 1432 when he was just 21 years of age. Some imaginative nineteenth-century writers have set here the events that led to the "crime of honour" of Gianciotto who killed **Paolo il Bello** and **Francesca da Rimini**.

Top  
**Santarcangelo,  
the Malatesta  
fortress.**

Bottom  
**A walkway on the  
battlements of  
Montebello Castle.**

The view onto the countryside from the terrace of the keep is stunning: the Marecchia valley opens up to the hills and San Marino on one side, and reaches Cesena and the sea on the other. A careful observer can discern the parish church, a one-nave Byzantine basilica, built in the sixth century next to a roman village close to the river. It is the oldest and best preserved church of all the Romagna area.

### **Torriana and Montebello between landscapes and fortifications**

Moving along the Santarcangelo road, the itinerary first arrives at **Poggio Berni** where Palazzo Marcosanti stands as a valuable witness of the Malatesta period and a rare example of a fortified residence. After leaving Poggio Berni, just before Ponte Verucchio, on the right, we can take the steep road that leads to **Torriana** (formerly **Scorticata**) where the remains of a fortress stand out. This was a very strategic location for the control of the territory and it explains the care with which Sigismondo formed and empowered the defences that are now peaceful and extraordinary balconies overlooking an extremely picturesque and enchanting landscape, “a mixture of valleys, mountains, land, villas and sea”, as monsignor Gian Maria Lancisi, the archiater of pope Clement XI wrote in 1705.

Today we appreciate the landscape values of the position at the time of the Malatesta family, the hill of Torriana, together with that of Verucchio, on the opposite bank of the Marecchia river, constituted an important fortified barrier: it was made, however, in order to be impassable and to send information to Rimini (by fire and smoke) on the vast territory that it managed to control, both towards the sea and towards the hills of Romagna and the Marches as well as San Marino.

After leaving Torriana, **Montebello** is worth a visit, it is a lovely fortified village with an interesting fortress, reworked several times (belonging to the marquises of Bagno). The views onto the valley of Marecchia and the valley of Use are magnificent from the terraces. Those visitors who love legends can listen to the story of Azzurrina, the young girl who died tragically in the fortress.







## **Verucchio, one of the “cradles” of the Malatestas**

Moving down the valley we go over Ponte Verucchio to cross the river Marecchia. Our destination is **Verucchio** on the other bank, which contends with **Pennabilli** for the honour of being the cradle of the Malatesta family. In Rimini, already around the year 1220, Malatesta dalla Penna was coming forth as head of the family and, at his death, in 1247, his son, Malatesta da Verucchio, took over. Probably Verucchio represented only a stage of the rapprochement to the town for this increasingly powerful and rich family. However, their “cradle” is located here in the mid-valley of Marecchia. Besides, Verucchio and Pennabilli have a similar structure: they extend on saddlebacks crossed by a road and dominated Marecchia with two fortresses each.

In **Verucchio** a convent is located in one of two fortresses (called “*del Passerello*”), which is practically destroyed; but the other one, called “*del Sasso*”, is solid and visible and still towers over the town and territory. Regardless of its many adjustments and restoration work this tower is, together with those of Montebello, San Leo and Santarcangelo, one of the most interesting in the whole valley. From the information on two beautiful inscriptions we gather that **Sigismondo** fortified it in 1449, adding a great scarp and reorganizing the buildings around the central formwork. Some excavations have revealed large hypogea and imposing structures dating back, perhaps, to the twelfth century, however much prior to the interventions made under Sigismondo. Even the beautiful square-shaped stone tower dates back to earlier times, the face is extraordinarily precise and partly complete. In 1975, an ancient path was reconstructed that, protected by the keep, falls steep from the side of the cliff: it was used to connect the territory during emergencies. The halls of this fortress have undergone many changes and transformations in order to adapt it to the needs of the small court of Zenobio de’ Medici, Ippolita Comnena, Leonello and Alberto Pio from Carpi, who held the feud of Verucchio from 1518 to 1580, and to the needs of a small theatre built inside it during the eighteenth century.

Verucchio was lost by Sigismondo in 1462 after a wearing siege. The “*Rocca del Sasso*”, it was well equipped and defended by

The fortress of San Leo rises at the highest point of an enormous rock dominating the Marecchia Valley.

the troops and refused to surrender to **Federico da Montefeltro**, who was forced to resort to one of his stratagems of which he was an expert: a letter with the false signature of **Malatesta Novello** anticipating the arrival of reinforcements. Indeed, the reinforcements arrived, but it was too late. The castellan noticed that they were soldiers of **Federico** in disguise.

## The impregnable Fortress of San Leo

After leaving Verucchio by going left on the Marecchiese road, we reach **San Leo**. The ancient Mons Feretri, is, in a certain sense the “historical” capital of **Montefeltro**, to which it gave its name, and perhaps this is the place of origin of the Montefeltro dynasty, that, throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, have contended it with the **Malatesta**. Of course, this is a place with a great strategic importance for the domain of the hinterland, and for this reason, it was already at the centre of a long conflict between Lombards and Byzantines. We must remember that the fight of Berengarius II against Emperor Otto I ended here in San Leo after a long siege with the conquest of the city by the latter and the capture of his opponent on 26 December 963.

The view of the landscape is understandably famous: San Leo, built on a limestone cliff with steep sides, is dominated by a fortress which was almost impregnable and rebuilt by **Francesco di Giorgio Martini** for **Federico da Montefeltro**. We are before one of most complete and well-preserved military buildings of Renaissance.

The construction of a first small fortress in masonry is ascribed to Desiderio, King of the Lombards (eighteenth century), after that, for some centuries, at least since the ostrogothic invasion, the stone of San Leo, thus shaped, had been a natural fortress.

The Fortress has two sufficiently distinct parts, despite the uniformity that Francesco di Giorgio had tried to give to the array of buildings dating back to different periods. The Renaissance architect had added, ex-novo, the residential wing and the round towers connected by a huge hull-shaped wall with brackets.

Visitors can experience a journey back in time. Even if,





Top

**San Leo, interior view of the church dedicated to San Leo (cathedral).**

Bottom

**San Leo, view of the convent and church of Sant'Igne, said to have been founded by Saint Francis of Assisi.**

besides and even more than in the fortress, the signs of most genuine Middle Ages can be found in the parish church and the Cathedral, two extraordinary examples of Romanesque architecture.

The view becomes breathtaking in “Piazza d’Armi” (the Square of Weapons), bounded by the two towers, by the perimeter fence and the keep walls. Looking out, one has a view onto the built-up area with its grid of streets converging to the square in the centre. We are only at six-hundred and fifty metres above sea level, and yet, so isolated and separate from the hills arranged around like a crown, the Fortress seems suspended between heaven and earth.

During the visit, the “pozzetto”, a small well, arouses some curiosity, as well as the narrow cell where the legendary occultist and adventurer famous throughout Europe, **Giuseppe Balsamo**, better known as **Cagliostro** was imprisoned from 1791 to 1795, the year of his death.

San Leo preserves even an important proof of the passage of **Saint Francis** who here received the mount of La Verna from Count Orlando de Cattani, Lord of the Fortress of Chiusi. The founding of the convent of **Sant'Igne**, in a forest at the foot of the cliff, is ascribed to Saint Francis. The convent, with a beautiful cloister with octagonal doves and the small church dedicated to the Virgin, surely deserves a visit.

CHAPTER III  
**THE MARECCHIA  
VALLEY: FROM  
TALAMELLO  
TO PENNABILLI**

## **Talamello, treasures for the eye and the palate**

Leaving San Leo, one retakes the Marechiese road in the direction of **Pennabilli**. Before arriving at Novafeltria, it is recommended to take a detour to the right to visit the characteristic village of **Talamello**, a treasure trove of excellent works of art and of Ambra, the pit-aged cheese well-loved by gourmets. For a number of years, the castle was under the dominion of first **Galeotto** and then **Carlo Malatesta**, but Pius II Piccolomini made it into a fief of the **Guidi di Bagno** and the **Malatesta di Sogliano**. In the sanctuary of San Lorenzo one can admire a fourteenth-century crucifix attributed to **Giovanni da Rimini**, while in the cell of the cemetery one will find frescoes dated 1437 and painted by **Antonio Alberti da Ferrara**.

Descending from Talamello, one crosses **Novafeltria** which, although modern, also preserves valuable testimonies to the past. An example is the Romanesque Chapel of Santa Marina, dating to the twelfth century. Note that the bell gable was added to the structure in the sixteenth century.

## **Maiolo and Maioletto, legends and ruins**

Once past Novafeltria, on the left one sees **Mount Maioletto**, crowned by the remains of a Malatesta fortress, of which only a single scarp wall and two polygonal bastions survive. The fortress was destroyed by a stroke of lightning in 1639 which hit the gunpowder storeroom. A few restored ruins are all that remain of a fortress that was once one of the most difficult to conquer in all of Valmarecchia and Montefeltro.

**Maiolo**, a fortified village that rose up under the protection of the mountainside, was contested at various times by the Faggiolani family, the Bishop of Montefeltro, the Church, the Malatesta family and the Montefeltro family. It was completely destroyed by a landslide on 29 May 1770, and the damage caused by this catastrophe is still visible today on the side of the mountain. According to legend, this was an act of divine punishment for a sinful “angelic dance” that took place within the castle walls.

To enjoy the landscape of this area, which is one of the most suggestive of Montefeltro, enjoy a walk along the paths that lead from the valley bottom and the town to the fortress. It is worthwhile to make a stop at the village of Antico, which has a Romanesque church dedicated to





Top  
**Maioretto, ruins  
of the Malatesta  
fortress.**

Bottom  
**Sant'Agata Feltria,  
Rocca Fregoso rising  
on a huge block  
of sandstone.**

Saint Mary. The portal is one of the most beautiful in Montefeltro and has a sculpted lunette featuring the patron saint of the church, the Virgin Mary. On the inside of the church one finds a glazed terracotta Virgin Mary of the Graces, attributed to Luca della Robbia.

### **The charm of Petrella Guidi**

On the right bank of the Marecchia river rises the enchanting village of **Petrella Guidi**, now almost deserted but with a nearly intact medieval structure, dominated by a ruined fortress that features a grand tower built by the Tiberti family between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. On the walls of this tower, the original white plasterwork is still intact in many places, testifying to the fact that ancient fortifications were plastered and painted, rendering the colours of the family heraldry clearly visible from the countryside. The Malatesta family coat of arms (of **Galeotto**) is preserved on the gate of the wall, flanked by the coats of arms of the **Oliva** family, which held it with Malatesta protection until the beginning of the fifteenth century, and of the Church (the crossed keys).

### **Sant'Agata dominated by the fortress**

Proceeding past Petrella on the little road, one arrives beyond the ridge at **Sant'Agata Feltria**, in the valley of **Savio**, dominated by a beautiful Malatesta fortress built on a rocky terrain called the "Rock of the Wolf". The fortress was modified by **Federico da Montefeltro**, who added a bastion designed by **Francesco di Giorgio Martini**, then elevated by the Fregoso family, the last feudal lords. The fortress was first built around the year 1000 by Count Raniero Cavalca di Bertinoro and, due to its position on the border, acquired strategic importance. Together with the fortresses of San Leo and Maiolo, it became the most advanced point of the northern defence system of the future duchy of Urbino. In 1430 Sant'Agata Feltria (today noted for the white truffle festival that takes place in October) was given in Vicariate to the Malatesta family, which held it until 1463, when the fortress of Sant'Agata Feltria and the castles



Top  
**Pennabilli, valley of the Marecchia river.**

Bottom  
**Pennabilli, the garden of forgotten fruits of poet and scriptwriter Tonino Guerra.**

of Upper Montefeltro were re-conquered by Federico da Montefeltro for the Holy See.

## **In Pennabilli of the two castles**

From Sant'Agata Feltria one takes the road leading to **Pennabilli**, a town born in the fourteenth century from a fusion of the castles of **Penna** and **Billi**, located, respectively, on the rocky outcroppings called Roccione and Rupe. The two fortresses, of clear strategic importance, were always at the centre of struggles for territorial supremacy, in particular between the **Malatesti** and the **Montefeltro**. Today, the ruins of these castles are nearly indecipherable, featuring traces of cisterns. On Roccione, the remains of a polygonal bastion recall fifteenth century Malatesta construction. The ruins of the Rupe fortification serve to partially support the monastery of the Augustinian sisters, built at the beginning of the sixteenth century using stones taken from the destroyed fortress. In the inhabited area, there are still remnants of the boundary wall and two reworked gates with the Malatesta and Feltro coats of arms: testimony to the passage of this site from the Malatesta family to the Montefeltro family, which occurred definitively in 1462, the year before the defeat of Sigismondo Malatesta by the papal militia commanded by Federico da Montefeltro.

In Pennabilli, chosen city of **Tonino Guerra**, this author, poet and screenwriter thought up the so-called "Places of the Soul", indoor and open-air museums designed to stir the visitor's imagination and soul. In the centre of the town we find "The Garden of the Forgotten Fruit", "The Sanctuary of Thoughts", "The Street of the Sundial", "The Moustachioed Angel" and "The Refuge of the Abandoned Madonna". In the area surrounding Pennabilli, there are numerous places preserving monuments of interest.

In **Molino di Bascio** a single tower survives from the ancient and majestic castle that dominated the Valle del Marecchia below. At the foot of the tower is "The Petrified Garden", another "Place of the Soul", composed of "Ceramic Carpets" dedicated to historical figures that were either from Montefeltro or knew it.

Top  
**Panorama view  
of the hills  
of Casteldelci.**

Bottom left  
**Casteldelci,  
the bell tower.**  
Bottom right  
**Molino di Bascio,  
square-based**

**tower from the 13th  
century, keep of a now  
demolished castle. At  
its base, Tonino Guerra  
shot his film Petrified  
Garden in 1992.**

Another tower survives in **Maciano**: the castle to which it belonged was razed to the ground by Federico da Montefeltro in 1458, in the context of his endless struggle with Sigismondo. In Maciano one will also find a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary of the Palm and of the Olive, the portal of which is dated 1529.

In **Ponte Messa**, the Romanesque parish church is worth a visit, built at the end of the twelfth century by Lombard masters commissioned by the local nobility.

From Pennabilli one can travel as far as **Casteldelci**, the last municipality of the province of Rimini at the Tuscan border. This village of medieval origin was the birthplace of Ugucione della Faggiola, the celebrated mercenary captain who played host to Dante Alighieri. Of the numerous fortifications that were present in the past, which were built due to its strategic position, remain only the Torre Campanaria (an eighteenth-century elevation on the remains of a fortress), the Torre di Gattara and the Torre del Monte.



CHAPTER IV  
**THE CONCA  
VALLEY: FROM  
GRADARA TO  
MONTEGRIDOLFO**

In the second half of the fourteenth century, the Malatesta family, having consolidated their Lordship and obtained the official post of “vicars” of the Pope, modified several fortresses to render them suitable for hosting their court, the richness and refinement of which by that point rivalled the great courts of central Italy. Gradara and Montefiore, most especially the former, were not only nearly impregnable fortresses but also sumptuous temporary residences, vacation homes in today’s parlance, particularly during the periods most favourable to hunting.

### **Gradara: a vacation palace**

**Gradara** is a grand castle that functioned both as a defensive structure and as a sumptuous residence. Like Montefiore, this was an allodial property of the Malatesta family, which is to say a true possession, gained by purchase, not by papal concession. As a defensive structure it should be considered in direct relation to Rimini and as a system with the fortresses of **Gabicce**, **Casteldimezzo** and **Fiorenzuola**, on the coastal hills, and of **Tavullia** in the interior. **Malatesta Guastafamiglia** bequeathed Montefiore and Gradara, respectively, to his sons **Malatesta Ungaro** and **Pandolfo**, in 1364. Pandolfo was a friend of Petrarch and the father of the **Malatesta of the Sonnets** who died in the fortress of Gradara in 1429. Of Pandolfo we know that he was interested in painting as well as poetry (he sent a painter to Petrarch to make a secret portrait); of Malatesta we know that he recruited artists in Florence (among whom was the young Lorenzo Ghiberti) to decorate his residence in Pesaro. The fresco decorations featuring the heroes of antiquity and ancient battles documented in the castle of Gradara and in the palace in Pesaro were probably owing in great part to Pandolfo, and they may have been very similar to those commissioned at Montefiore by Ungaro.

In the fortress of Gradara, fifteenth-century frescoes still remain, featuring heroes and battles, but these are owing to the Sforza family, which was in possession of the castle from 1463. Already at the entrance of the town one can see the coat of arms of **Alessandro Sforza** (together with those of **Guidobaldo II Della Rovere** and **Vittoria Farnese**) on the ancient gate, while on the gate of the fortress itself triumphs a beautiful inscription of **Giovanni Sforza**, commemorating an important restoration of 1494. The castle certainly needed it, even if **Sigismondo Malatesta** had already compensated for the damage caused by the heavy siege of **Francesco Sforza**, who in 1446 tried in vain to seize it for his brother Alessandro, who had just become the

Top  
**The hills on the coast  
of Gabicce.**

Bottom  
**Rimini, City Museum,  
Paolo e Francesca  
discovered by  
Gianciotto; a painting  
by Clemente Alberi  
(1828).**

lord of Pesaro (1445) with the connivance, and in fact the complicity, of **Federico da Montefeltro**.

On the whole, both the town, encircled by a crenelated wall, and the fortress are in a good state of preservation and retain many original elements, notwithstanding numerous restorations (those that were carried out in the 1920s are ungainly, despite being necessary). The fortress is accessed via a drawbridge, after passing through a series of successive defensive elements; the internal quadrangular courtyard is decorated on three sides with a portico and loggia (from the early fourteenth and late fifteenth century), and with the coats of arms of **Pandolfo Malatesta** and **Giovanni Sforza**. In a corner one finds the stark and ponderous keep, which at one time stood alone and is clearly the most ancient part of the entire complex. Near the middle of the eighteenth century, the standing corpse of a warrior in head-to-toe armour was found beneath the pavement, where today one finds a picturesque torture chamber. He was perhaps condemned to die, three hundred years earlier, by suffocation under a mound of earth. The keep was certainly used as a prison and as a court: the inscription on the exterior of the window of the lower room names it as the “antidote to dishonesty”.

From the courtyard one enters the chapel, graced with a beautiful blue and white majolica altarpiece by **Andrea della Robbia** that depicts the Virgin and Child and four saints (in the predella one finds the Annunciation, Saint Francis receiving the stigmata and Saint Mary of Egypt receiving communion from an angel). A sixteenth-century staircase leads to the upper floor, where one may view rooms furnished in the eclectic style of an antiques collector, with “medieval” decorations that are patently and often irritatingly false, datable to the first decades of the twentieth century. Also entirely false is the so-called Bedroom of Francesca, which in the 1920s was stocked with all of the elements needed to create a “set” (a bed and a book-stand, curtains and a trapdoor, a secret passage, a balcony, and etc.) that might render plausible the tragedy of the “two in-laws” which, if it really happened, happened elsewhere.

It was Dante Alighieri to tell us, in the fifth canto of the *Inferno*, of the love between the two in-laws **Paolo il Bello** and **Francesca da Polenta**, and of the tragic end wrought by the hand of the betrayed husband, **Gianciotto** (Giovanni “ciotto”, which is to say “injured”). **Gianciotto** and







**Paolo** were brothers, sons of the **Malatesta** who **Dante** called “Mastin Vecchio”. The marriage between Gianciotto and Francesca was part of a preordained plan between the **Polentani** and the **Malatesti** meant to reinforce the Malatesta dominion in **Romagna**. The tragedy, if it really happened, would have taken place between 1283 and 1284 in **Rimini**, in the Malatesta family residences (although the location of the betrayal and the act of revenge is claimed not only by Gradara, but also by **Pesaro** and **Santarcangelo**).

Apart from interventions such as the Bedroom of Francesca, which is an expression of a decadent, late-Romantic taste more inclined towards the serial novel than to historical testimony, the structure of the fortress is authentic in substance, as are many of the Renaissance fresco decorations: those of the dressing room of Lucrezia Borgia (who was the wife of Giovanni Sforza for a number of years), of the room of the cherubs and of the arcaded loggia, in which some sculpture fragments are also preserved. The real charm of the building is found however in its complexity, in the stratification of its parts, in the grandiosity of its structure and in its relationship with the fortified village and the surrounding landscape.

### **San Giovanni in Marignano, the Malatesta granary**

From Gradara one travels in the direction of **Cattolica** and from that coastal town one turns toward the interior, almost immediately arriving at **San Giovanni in Marignano**, of Benedictine origin, with fourteenth- and fifteenth-century walls and access towers. The historical centre, beneficiary of a recuperation effort, displays a medieval urban structure. The territory was developed in the twelfth century and became the Malatesta “granary”. This vocation is testified by the more than three hundred underground grain stores located throughout the historical centre.

Leaving San Giovanni, one takes the road for **Morciano di Romagna** and from here there is a choice of two itineraries, a short one and a longer one that leads beyond the Romagna border. For the shorter itinerary, take the road that leads to **Saludecio, Mondaino** and **Montegridolfo**. Here we find ourselves in a border area of high strategic value, and therefore carefully fortified.

Top  
**Saludecio, Malatesta  
stronghold.**

Bottom  
**Mondaino, the  
semicircular portico  
of Piazza Maggiore.**

## **Saludecio and its palaces**

In **Saludecio**, which always circulated within the orbits of Rimini and the Malatesta family, but had its own lords (the Ondidei, killed by a rival family in 1344, possibly at the instigation of the Malatesta family), few traces remain of the ancient fortress. These are incorporated into the nineteenth-century Town Hall, the exterior of which is decorated with the fourteenth-century Malatesta coat of arms. The town which developed between the Montanara and Marina gates (which date to the time of Sigismondo) is enclosed by Renaissance walls and has many important palaces to show. The neoclassical church of San Biagio has nothing to do with the age of the Malatesta, but is worth a visit; it is also the sanctuary of Beato Amato Ronconi and has an adjoining museum.

## **The “secrets” of the fortress of Mondaino**

At the end of the thirteenth century, **Mondaino** fell under the dominion of the Malatesta family, and in 1462 it was re-conquered by Federico da Montefeltro on behalf of the Church. The boundary wall, northern gate and fortress (now the town hall), on a large scarp foundation, form an exceptionally picturesque nucleus, thanks in part to a spectacular nineteenth-century square, semi-circular in shape and featuring an arcade. A long and steep underground tunnel that ran from the fortress to the river was recently traced and partially excavated: it may have functioned as an escape route or as a secret passage used for sending messengers. In the literature on fortifications one reads frequently about secret passages, but this is the only one, for now, to be documented by a find. The second floor of the castle hosts a palaeontological museum featuring finds from the area. In the second half of August, the Middle Ages and Renaissance are brought back to life by the Palio del Daino.

## **Family quarrels in Montegridolfo**

In the early fourteenth century, Saludecio and Mondaino, as with the other villages in the area, were the theatre of struggles within the





Malatesta family, specifically between the cousins **Ferrantino Novello**, **Galeotto** and **Malatesta Guastafamiglia**; the first being the son of Ferrantino and nephew of **Malatestino dall'occhio**, the latter two the sons of **Pandolfo I** (Malatestino's brother). These struggles were resolved by the defeat of Ferrantino, who was allied with the Montefeltro family and established a sort of personal Lordship on the hills of Romagna towards Urbino. An entire village fell victim to these struggles, **Montegridolfo**, which is this itinerary's point of arrival. It was completely destroyed in 1337 by Ferrantino and rebuilt five years later by Galeotto and Malatesta according to a clearly defined urban plan that remains substantially intact. On the prominent embankment and regularized by high scarp walls, the modest buildings are carefully aligned along three parallel streets. One enters the village through a single gate-tower with a drawbridge, now modified. From the area opposite the habitation rose a small fortress, the remains of which are partially absorbed by a palace (now transformed into a hotel): this may be the one generously given by Cesare Borgia, called "the Valentine", to his most beloved "scoundrel", Don Micheletto, in 1503. In the final decade of the last century, the whole village was painstakingly restored towards improved tourism.

Just beyond the ancient inhabited area rises the little church of San Rocco, with fifteenth- and sixteenth-century frescoes depicting the Virgin and Child with Saints Sebastian and Roch, and a seventeenth-century altarpiece repeating this subject, by Guido Cagnacci. In the valley of the Conca are other notable frescoes from the last quarter of the fifteenth century: a Virgin and Child Enthroned with musician angels in Mondaino (now in the Town Hall, but originating from the convent of the Clares), and a fragmentary decoration depicting the Last Judgement and Paradise in the little church of the Hospital of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy of Montefiore.

CHAPTER V  
**THE CONCA  
VALLEY: FROM  
MONTEFIORE  
TO CARPEGNA**



For a longer route along the valley of the River Conca follow the indications for **Montescudo** and **Montecolombo**. Then, on arrival at the crossroads for **Osteria Nuova**, turn off and proceed as far as **Montefiore Conca**.

## **The Montefiore residence**

**Montefiore Conca** is plainly visible from Rimini and all along the coastal plain. It dominates the central **Conca** and **Ventena** valleys as the strongest and most coherent link in the Malatesta chain of defence. To comprehend its strategic importance, it is enough to compare this fortress to others in the Montefeltro area such as those at **Tavoletto** or **Sassofeltrio**. It is possibly the most characteristic of the Malatesta castles with its prismatic shape, and strange almost surrealistic appearance. No wonder, therefore, that on his travels in the area **Giovanni Bellini** was struck by its clean-cut geometric aspect, compact and crystalline, to the extent that he portrayed it in the background of at least two of his paintings. In recent years the castle has been the object of complex operations of consolidation, seismic protection and restoration for the delight of visitors who can now view the older parts of the building, formerly inaccessible. Even in the thirteenth century the building must have already been of considerable size and functional efficiency, with a tower erected slightly apart from a residential palace, both of which were protected by a wall surrounding a courtyard and a cistern situated on top of the hillside. During the next century the site was considerably extended so that the walls surrounded the whole village to form a large defensive area which included the fortress. We have records of various works of restoration and modification carried out by Sigismondo, and even before that by **Ungaro Malatesta**, who was fond of this building and commissioned a worthy crested coat of arms in stone which is still in place, as well as paintings, some of which have miraculously survived. In the large "Emperor's Room" (which was next to a Throne Room and a Pope's Room) there are some portraits of classical heroes and two fragmentary frescoed battle scenes by Jacopo Avanzi dated at about 1370. They are the only remnants of the paintings which decorated the Malatesta private buildings. There are records of other frescos and paintings belonging to their residences and castles in Pesaro, Montelevecchie, San Costanzo at Fano, Brescia, Rimini and Gradara, but no traces of them remain today.

It is worth a climb up to the highest terrace of the castle from where the visitor will be rewarded by a stupendous panorama stretching

**Montefiore Conca  
with its impressive  
castle stands on one  
of the highest hills of  
the Valconca valley.**

from the sea to Montefeltro. In recent years, archaeological research has brought to light a considerable quantity of artefacts, many of which are in excellent condition: several enamelled tankards among the most antique examples in central-northern Italy, fifteenth and sixteenth century ceramics produced in Pesaro and Faenza. During the years when the Malatestas were at the peak of their power, many important personages were guests at the castle: Louis the Great, king of Hungary, Sigismondo, king of Bohemia, Pope Gregory XII, Pope Julius II and others.

Before leaving the historic centre of Montefiore, take a look at the buildings forming a semi-circle below the castle and the parish church with its fine Gothic portal and fourteenth century crucifix of the Rimini school. In the Middle Ages the gateway to the village was complete with a drawbridge. It still bears the coat of arms of Pope Pius II Piccolomini and that of Cardinal Legate Niccolò Forteguerri: in 1464 (after the defeat of Sigismondo Malatesta) these replaced the existing Malatesta coat of arms.

Retracing your steps back from Osteria Nuova, proceed on to **Montecolombo** and then to **Montescudo**, two well-established centres on the left bank of the river, which (together with **Gemmano**) were almost destroyed during the last war.

### **Sigismondo's treasure at Montescudo**

At **Montescudo**, the imposing walls of the castle, with their large inclined escarpments, could withstand any attack. On the southern bastion a large marble plaque sculpted with the traditionally careful disposition of the words and choice of characters, bears a solemn Latin inscription. In it, **Sigismondo** relates how he founded and erected this great castle as a protective "shield" for the city of Rimini in 1460. Dominating the centre of the Conca Valley and the torrent valley of the Marano, directly facing the enemy fortifications of San Marino, this fortress was effectively a key element in the Malatesta defence system, truly a protective shield for the city of Rimini, to which it is linked by a convenient road along the ridge, only about twenty kilometres long.

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 1954, during restoration work on the eastern wall of Montescudo, twenty-two medals bearing the effigy of Sigismondo





Top

**Montescudo, castle walls.**

Bottom

**Montecolombo, gate to the ancient district.**

were found. They are part of a famous and truly stupendous series, struck in bronze by **Matteo de' Pasti**, around the middle of the fifteenth century. Further similar finds have come to light in other places, concealed inside the walls of Malatesta constructions; we know that the rulers of Rimini used to conceal suchlike articles inside castle walls to preserve the memory of their names and faces even after an eventual destruction of their architectural feats. Certainly, such considerations could not be understood by the common people who told tales about such deposits and thought of them as treasure trove: various legends about treasure hidden inside the walls of Malatesta castles were in circulation even in Sigismondo's time.

**Albereto castle**, a construction of ancient origin which was further strengthened by Sigismondo Malatesta, rises just a few kilometres from Montescudo. Recent accurate restoration has enabled it to rank once more as one of the architectural pearls of the Malatesta era. Of note are the typical Malatesta "scarp walls", three round towers and the bell tower. The ample terrace has an enviable view over the valley to the coast.

## **The village of Montecolombo**

**Montecolombo** has maintained its mediaeval character over the centuries and entrance into the village is made through an embattled gateway in the form of an ogival arch. It came under Malatesta dominion in 1271 and is surrounded by walls and ramparts. In the nearby hamlet of San Savino the restored walls of a small castle dating back to the time of Sigismondo Malatesta can be seen.

From Montecolombo, following the indications for **Taverna** and **Santa Maria del Piano**, the road leads to the upper Conca Valley as far as Carpegna. The first place along the road is Mercatino Conca and in the nearby hamlet of Piandicastello there was a Malatesta fortress destroyed in 1462 by Federico da Montefeltro.

## **Monte Cerignone, a fifteenth century fortress**

Leaving Mercatino Conca behind, you will come to **Monte Cerignone**, where, on a massive spur of tufaceous rock, yet another

Top  
**Monte Cerignone,**  
view towards  
the village.

Bottom  
**The fortress of**  
**Sassocorvaro,**  
commissioned  
by **Federico da**  
**Montefeltro.**

castle rises which would obviously have been contended by the Malatesta and Montefeltro families. Monte Cerignone was already an important centre during its period under Malatesta domination, when the fortress was strengthened and the walls were extended.

After the defeat of the Malatestas in 1464, the castle was taken over by the Montefeltro family and work was done on it under the direction of **Francesco di Giorgio Martini**. Today the building appears compact over the ancient castle, enclosed all around by walls and having two ramps of access. Notwithstanding transformation work carried out in the XVII and XIX centuries, the fifteenth century character of the construction has remained more or less unaltered.

### **Sassocorvaro, a castle as patron of the arts**

Before reaching Carpegna, it is worthwhile to make a deviation and visit the famous Ubaldini fortress at **Sassocorvaro**, one of the most original in Italy, which also had work done on it by **Francesco di Giorgio Martini**.

The plan of the castle evokes the shape of a turtle (an animal with an impenetrable shell) and, on account of its shape and numerous innovations aimed at rendering it impregnable, it has been studied in most books on the history of architecture. More than 10,000 works of art (including "The Tempest" by Giorgione, "The Ideal City" and many other works by famous artists such as Raffaello Sanzio, Piero della Francesca and Carlo Crivelli) were safeguarded and hidden here by the Superintendent of the Fine Arts of Pesaro and Urbino during the years 1943-1944, to prevent them from being illegally taken away by Nazis retreating back to Germany.

### **Macerata Feltria, object of a historic struggle**

To reach the final destination of this itinerary at Carpegna, the road goes on to **Macerata Feltria** and then to **Pietrarubbia**. **Macerata Feltria** was another of the places object of an extenuating struggle between **Sigismondo Malatesta** and **Federico III di Montefeltro**.

Originally the township was loyal to the Malatestas, but, in







Top

**Macerata Feltria, a little town on the border between the Malatesta and Montefeltro territories.**

Bottom

**The castle of Pietrarubbia dating back to the year 1000.**

1463 it finally came under the dominion of the Montefeltro family. Historic buildings include the Residence of the Podestà (XII century), the Civic Tower, the walls and the Castle dating from the same century, the Church of St. Francis and the Church of St. Joseph of the XIV century, Palazzo Evangelisti, now Mazzoli, of the XVI century.

## **The impervious Pietrarubbia**

You cannot leave the area without going up to visit the impregnable eagle's nest perched on the reddish rock and known by the name of **Pietrarubbia**. The first overlord of this rocky refuge, from which you can enjoy a breathtaking view, was a member of a Guelphs family, the Counts of Montecopiolo, from whom the Montefeltro family trace their origins. The castle, in such an evidently strategic position, was also involved in the perennial struggle between the two neighbouring rival families.

Although towards the end of the XIV century Pietrarubbia was still a Malatesta outpost, it finally passed under the control of the Montefeltro family and became an integral part of their defensive system after Federico came to power. Of great artistic interest are the Church of St. Sylvester (1,000) with its marble altar and rose window by the sculptor **Arnaldo Pomodoro** (born in Morciano di Romagna and honorary citizen of Pietrarubbia) and the restored sixteenth century Palazzo del Vicariato, now converted to accommodate visitors.

## **Carpegna, home of ancient aristocracy**

After leaving Pietrarubbia, the road now leads on to **Carpegna**. The village lies at the foot of Mount Carpegna (1,415 m) and the nearby rocky crags of Sasso Simone and Simincello (1,204 and 1,221 m).

The territory is on the border between Tuscany and Montefeltro and in the Middle Ages there was a Benedictine Abbey in the ample valley beneath Sasso Simone. Then, in 1566, Cosimo I de' Medici erected a powerful fortress there. In the village, the attention of the visitor is immediately attracted by the imposing residence of the princes

Top  
**Coriano, the  
Malatesta castle.**

Bottom  
**Coriano, coat of arms  
of the Sassatelli still  
discernible above  
the main gate into the  
castle.**

Carpegna-Falconieri (one of the most ancient families of the Italian nobility from whom both the Malatestas and the Montefeltros claim their descent) who still live there. It was built in 1675 by Cardinal Gaspare Carpegna who commissioned the architect **Giovanni Antonio de' Rossi** to draw up the plans. During World War II it was used (as also the castle of Sassocorvaro) to safeguard works of art taken from principal Italian cities.

It is interesting to know that the County of Carpegna, by imperial concession, remained an independent feud until 1819 when it was incorporated into the Papal States. In the church dedicated to St. Leo, built in 1203, there is a painting of the Virgin of the Milk, a work Pasquale Rotondi has attributed to **Evangelista da Piandimeleto**, Raffaello's first maestro.

## **Returning towards Rimini: Coriano and Castelleale**

Returning towards Rimini, just a few kilometres from the Riviera, stand the beautiful hills of **Coriano** where fields, vineyards and olive groves alternate on the gently rolling slopes dotted here and there by farmhouses and small churches and willows and poplars planted on the banks of the torrents that deeply mark the territory.

Before reaching the town, coming from Croce di Montecolombo, a secondary road on the right heads deep into the small valley of the Rio di Mordano, as far as Scaricalasino Bridge. It re-emerges and continues steeply as far as **Castelleale**, an outlying hamlet of **San Clemente** and a fortified farm that once belonged to Bishop **Leale Malatesta** who died here in 1400. Looking carefully at the exterior of this small settlement it is possible to note 14<sup>th</sup>-century walls and arches, ancient windows with stone jambs, the remains of a perimeter wall and a tower with a pointed arch door. To the rear there are still remains of the carriage entrance, flanked by another smaller pedestrian entrance, both with an elegant pointed form.

On the hills opposite, but still in the territory of San Clemente, there is a similar settlement to Castelleale, which is perhaps even older. **Agello** is a small Malatesta village with perimeter walls, a single entrance dominated by a tall tower and a small religious building called an oratory.



At **Coriano**, there are the remains of a castle with scarp walls, curtain walls with brackets and a doorway crowned by the coat of arms of the Sassatelli family from Imola who held the feud of Coriano from 1528 to 1580. There are also visible remains of an ancient drawbridge. The internal access to the fortified polygonal area is of more ancient origin and has a tall archaic tower over the doorway which still flaunts part of its battlements. The castle has been almost completely restored recently and now houses an Antiquarium (small museum) containing artefacts , objects and fragments of pottery, which came to light during the restoration work.

Nearby you can also visit **San Clemente**, a place that in recent years underwent interesting restoration work and a upward revaluation of the castle and moat surrounding. The city walls around the village and the two pentagonal fortified towers remain largely intact even today. The castle gate structure still shows the contact points for the large beams that held the drawbridge. On the surrounding walls, the swallowtail battlements that once crowned the walls can still be discerned under the superstructure built later. The little village has two clock faces to tell the time: an old, stone one (from the 13<sup>th</sup> century) and a more recent ceramic one made by Riminese artist Giò Urbinati. Both are found at the top of the “citizens’ tower”.



INFO

## **RIMINI**

### **Castel Sismondo (Sismondo Castle)**

Piazza Malatesta  
Comune di Rimini  
site of exhibitions and events

## **MARECCHIA VALLEY**

### **San Leo**

Fortezza (Fortress)  
Via Battaglione Cacciatori  
Phone: 0541 916306; 800 553800  
www.san-leo.it  
info@sanleo2000.it

### **Sant'Agata Feltria**

Fortress and castle of Petrella Guidi  
info@petrellaguidi.it  
www.petrellaguidi.it

### **Santarcangelo di Romagna**

Rocca Malatestiana (Malatesta Castle)  
Via Rocca Malatestiana, 4  
Phone: 081 5751828  
associazione@sigismondomalatesta.it  
www.sigismondomalatesta.it

### **Torriana/Montebello**

Rocca dei Guidi di Bagno  
(Castle of the Guidi di Bagno Family)  
Via Casale di Montebello  
Phone: 0541 675180 - 3384893342  
info@castellodimontebello.com  
www.castellodimontebello.com

### **Verucchio**

Rocca Malatestiana (Malatesta Castle)  
Via Rocca, 42  
Phone: 0541 670222; 0541 670552  
ufficioiat@prolocoverucchio.it  
www.prolocoverucchio.it

## **CONCA VALLEY**

### **Coriano**

Castle Antiquarium  
Via Malatesta  
Phone: 0541 656255  
info@prolococoriano.it

### **Mondaino**

Rocca (Fortress)  
Piazza Maggiore, 1  
Phone: 0541 981674  
www.mondaino.com  
location of the city offices

### **Montefiore Conca**

Rocca Malatestiana (Malatesta Castle)  
Via Roma, 2  
Phone: 0541 980179; 0541 980035  
www.castellomontefioreconca.it  
castello.montefiore@dominocoop.it

### **Gradara**

Rocca Malatestiana (Malatesta Castle)  
Piazza Alberta Porta Natale, 1  
Phone: 0541 964115  
www.gradara.org  
info@gradara.org

### **Monte Cerignone**

Rocca Feltresca (Feltresca Castle)  
Phone: 0722 75350 (Montefeltro museums)  
uff.turismo@cm-carpegna.ps.it  
www.museimontefeltro.it

### **Sassocorvaro**

Rocca Ubaldinesca (Ubaldini Castle)  
Phone: 0722 75350 (Montefeltro museums)  
www.museimontefeltro.it  
uff.turismo@cm-carpegna.ps.it

### **Carpegna**

Palazzo dei Principi  
piazza Conti  
tel. 0722 77326  
www.carpegna.it

**Please note: before calling on one of the above places, please call them directly to find out about the opening hours, seasonal changes and entrance fee information**





