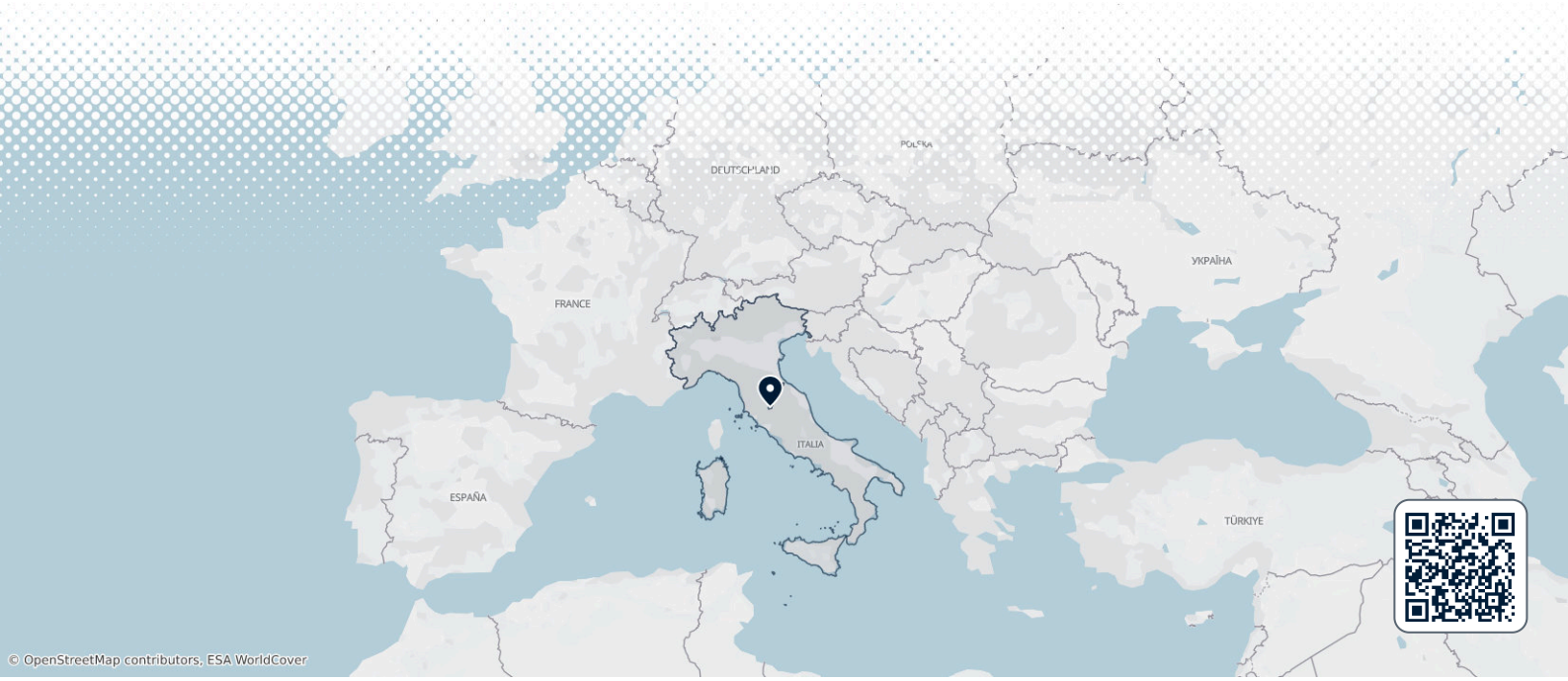


Montepulciano

Tuscany · Italy

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Montepulciano is a Renaissance hill town in southern Tuscany, on a long ridge between the Val d'Orcia and the Val di Chiana. Its main street climbs past stone palaces and churches to a broad square at the top of the hill. From the walls, you can see vineyards, olive groves and cypress-lined roads in every direction.

The town is best known for Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, a red wine aged in cellars dug deep under the old palaces. A visit suits travellers who like art, wine and slow days in the countryside. It is also a good base for the Val d'Orcia, Pienza and Montalcino. The Renaissance poet *Poliziano* was born here, and his name appears all over town.

When to visit

Late spring and early autumn are the best times, with warm days and green or harvest-coloured hills. July and August are hot, and the town fills with day visitors. Winter is cold for Tuscany at this height, with frosty nights and occasional snow, and some shops and restaurants close or keep shorter hours.

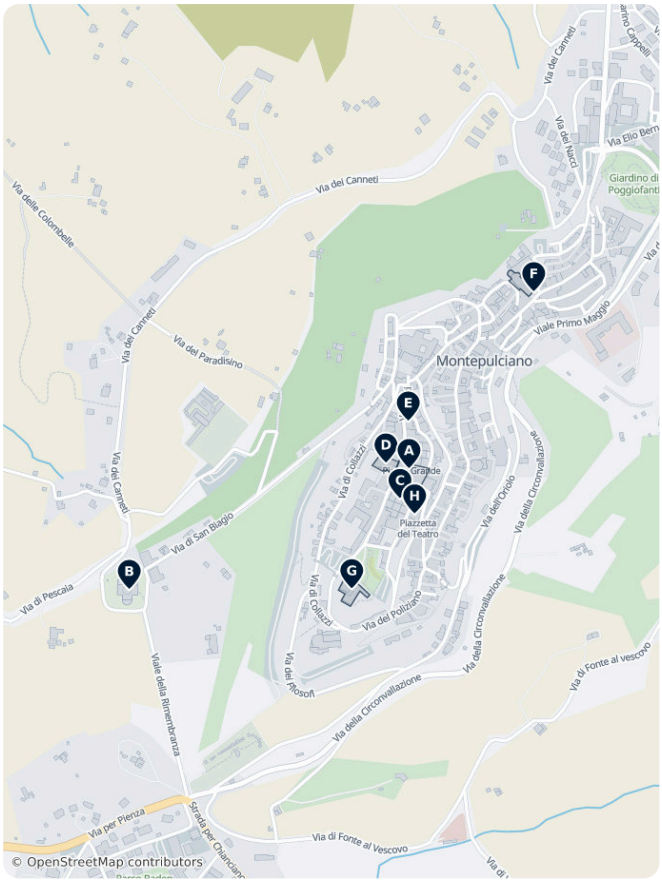
The biggest annual event is the **Bravìo delle Botti**, held on the last Sunday of August. Teams from the eight town districts push heavy wine barrels about 1.6 km uphill through the streets to the finish in Piazza Grande. The week before brings costume parades and dinners in each district. In July, the Cantiere Internazionale d'Arte, an arts festival founded by the composer *Hans Werner Henze*, fills the town with concerts and opera.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	7° / 12° Feels like 3°	0° / -5°	Dry air
February	Poor Poor for sightseeing	9° / 14° Feels like 4°	0° / -5°	Dry air
March	Poor Poor for sightseeing	12° / 18° Feels like 8°	2° / -4°	Dry air
April	Fair Fair for sightseeing	16° / 22° Feels like 13°	5° / 0°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 27°	9° / 5°	Dry air
June	Great Great for sightseeing	27° / 34°	14° / 9°	Dry air · Calm winds
July	Great Great for sightseeing	31° / 36°	17° / 13°	22 sunny days · Calm winds
August	Good Good for sightseeing	30° / 36°	17° / 13°	20 sunny days · Calm winds
September	Great Great for sightseeing	24° / 31°	13° / 7°	Dry air
October	Good Good for sightseeing	19° / 25°	9° / 3°	Dry air
November	Fair Fair for sightseeing	13° / 18° Feels like 9°	5° / -2°	12 rainy days · Dry air
December	Poor Poor for sightseeing	9° / 13° Feels like 4°	1° / -5°	Dry air

Best months: May, June, July, September

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights



A Piazza Grande is the town's main square, at the top of the hill. It is framed by the cathedral, the town hall and Renaissance palaces, with a decorated well of griffins and lions in one corner.

B Tempio di San Biagio stands alone on a lawn below the walls, about a 10-minute walk downhill. This domed church in pale travertine was designed by *Antonio da Sangallo the Elder* and begun in 1518.

C Cattedrale di Santa Maria Assunta has a plain, unfinished brick facade. Inside, the main altar holds a large gilded altarpiece of the Assumption by *Taddeo di Bartolo*, painted in 1401.

D Palazzo Comunale is the Gothic town hall on the square, remodelled in the 15th century. Its tower is open to visitors and gives wide views over both valleys.

E Museo Civico e Pinacoteca Crociani fills a medieval palace near the square. It shows Sienese and Florentine paintings, glazed terracottas and Etruscan finds from the area.

F Chiesa di Sant'Agostino is a church on the main street with a Renaissance facade attributed to *Michelozzo*. Across the small square, a clock tower is topped by a figure of Pulcinella who strikes the hours.

G Fortezza Medicea sits at the highest point of the hill. The fortress was first built by Siena and later rebuilt under Florentine rule, and it now hosts events and exhibitions.

H Teatro Poliziano is a small horseshoe-shaped theatre completed in 1796. It is the main stage of the town's July arts festival.

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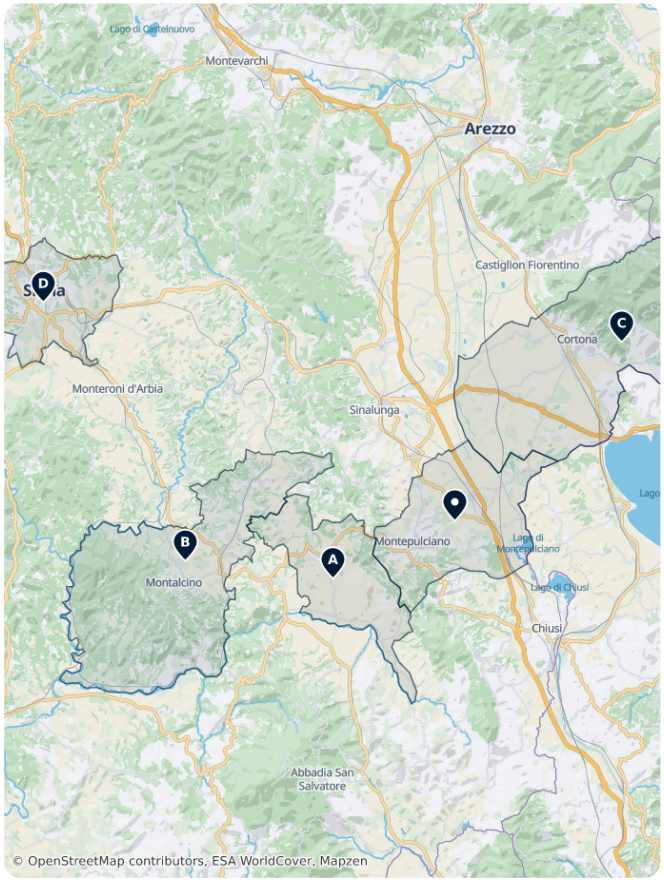
What to experience

The best moments here are tied to the town's festivals, views and countryside.

- **Watch the Bravìo delle Botti**: on the last Sunday of August, cheer the barrel pushers on the steep final stretch to Piazza Grande.
- **Walk down to San Biagio at sunset**: follow the cypress-lined road downhill from the walls to Tempio di San Biagio, when the stone glows gold in the evening light.
- **Hear the Pulcinella clock strike**: wait in front of Chiesa di Sant'Agostino for the figure on the clock tower to strike the hour.
- **Catch a concert at the summer festival**: in July, the Cantiere Internazionale d'Arte puts on opera, concerts and theatre in Teatro Poliziano and the squares.
- **Hike the wetlands of Lake Montepulciano**: a small nature reserve in the valley has boardwalks and birdwatching hides.

Day trips

Montepulciano sits between two of Tuscany's most scenic valleys, so many famous towns are close. A car gives the most freedom, as bus links between the villages are infrequent.



- A Pienza — ≈20 min by car. A small Renaissance town planned by *Pope Pius II*, with views over the Val d'Orcia and shops selling local pecorino cheese.
- **Chiusi** — ≈30 min by car. An old Etruscan town with a good archaeological museum and painted Etruscan tombs nearby.
- **Bagno Vignoni** — ≈30 min by car. A tiny spa village whose main square is a large pool of steaming thermal water.
- **Castiglione del Lago** — ≈30 min by car. A walled town on a headland above Lake Trasimeno, just over the border in Umbria.
- B Montalcino — ≈40 min by car. A hilltop town with a fortress, home of the Brunello red wine.
- C Cortona — ≈40 min by car. A steep Etruscan and medieval town with wide views over the Val di Chiana.
- D Siena — ≈1 hour by car; public transport takes 2 hours or more. The great Gothic city of the Campo square and the Duomo.

Where to explore

Montepulciano combines well with other classic Tuscan stops on a longer trip.

- **Nearby hill towns**: Pienza, Montalcino and Cortona.
- **Further afield**: San Gimignano, Volterra and the Chianti town of Greve in Chianti.
- **Cities**: Siena and Florence.

Getting there

Montepulciano stands on a hilltop with no railway in the old town. Most visitors arrive by car, or by train and bus.

Getting around

- **On foot**: the old town is about 1.5 km long, from Porta al Prato at the bottom to the fortress at the top. The main street is steep and paved with stone, so expect a steady climb.
- **Buses**: Autolinee Toscane buses link the town with its two railway stations and nearby villages. Buy tickets in the at bus app, at a tobacconist or ticket office, or as part of a Trenitalia train and bus ticket. Autolinee Toscane
- **Cycling**: the old town is too steep for casual cycling. The country roads below suit fit road cyclists and e-bike tours.

- **By air**: Perugia Airport (PEG) is the closest, about 1 hour by car. Florence Airport (FLR) is about 1.5 hours by car, and Rome Fiumicino (FCO) just over 2 hours. From Florence or Rome, continue by train and bus as below.
- **By train**: the most useful station is Chiusi-Chianciano Terme, on the main line between Florence and Rome, served by regional trains. Smaller Montepulciano station, in the valley north-east of town, has a few regional trains on the line from Siena. Buy a combined train and bus ticket to "Montepulciano Centro". Trenitalia
- **By bus**: Autolinee Toscane buses run from the square in front of both stations up to the old town. Buses to Siena take about 2–2.5 hours, usually with a change at Buonconvento. Autolinee Toscane
- **By car**: take the A1 motorway to the Valdichiana exit, about 20 minutes from town.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The old town is compact, about 1.5 km end to end, but the main street climbs steeply on stone paving.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

The old town is too steep for casual cycling; the surrounding country roads suit fit road cyclists and e-bikes.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?** Yes. A car is the easiest way to reach the town and to explore the Val d'Orcia and its wineries. You will not need it inside the walls.
- **Restrictions**: the whole historic centre is a **limited traffic zone (ZTL)** with camera-controlled gates. Only authorised vehicles may enter, and fines are sent automatically.
- **Parking**: use the numbered paid car parks around the outside of the walls. Pay at the machines on site. Those near Porta al Prato at the bottom of the main street fill first in summer, so arrive early.

Food & drink

Montepulciano is above all a wine town. Vino Nobile di Montepulciano is a red wine made mainly from Sangiovese, called Prugnolo Gentile here, and in 1980 it was one of the first Italian wines to gain DOCG status. Local menus feature thick hand-rolled pici pasta, Chianina beef, pecorino cheese from nearby Pienza and Vin Santo dessert wine.

For something distinctive, visit one of the historic wine cellars carved into the rock under the palaces along the main street and around Piazza Grande. Many offer tastings. For a coffee, Caffè Poliziano has a 19th-century interior and a terrace over the Val di Chiana. The quieter side streets have better value than the busiest stretch of the main street, and the farm restaurants and wineries in the countryside are worth the drive for a long lunch.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Pizza Margherita
Thin-crust pizza topped with tomato, mozzarella, and basil, invented in Naples and still best there.

DINNER

Spaghetti alla Carbonara
Pasta with egg, cured pork cheek (guanciale), pecorino cheese, and black pepper, a Roman classic.

Risotto alla Milanese
Creamy saffron-infused rice dish from Milan, often served alongside braised veal shank.

Lasagna · Lasagne al Forno
Layered baked pasta with ragu, bechamel, and cheese, a staple of Emilia-Romagna cooking.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Prosciutto and Cheese · Prosciutto e Formaggio
Cured ham paired with regional cheeses, a common antipasto plate found nationwide.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Gelato
Dense, slow-churned Italian ice cream, traditionally lower in fat and air than American-style ice cream.

Tiramisu · Tiramisù
Layered dessert of coffee-soaked ladyfingers and mascarpone cream, dusted with cocoa.

DRINKS

Espresso · Caffè
A short, strong shot of coffee drunk quickly, usually standing at a bar counter.

Wine · Vino
Italy is one of the world's largest wine producers, with regional styles from Piedmont's Barolo to Tuscany's Chianti.

Aperol Spritz
A bittersweet orange aperitif mixed with prosecco and soda water, a staple of the early-evening aperitivo.

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Safety & health

Montepulciano is very safe, and violent crime is rare. The main nuisances are summer crowds and the occasional pickpocket in busy spots, so keep an eye on bags and phones.

The streets are steep and paved with stone, so wear good shoes and carry water on hot days. If you plan to taste wine in the cellars, do not drive afterwards; Italian drink-driving limits are strict.

History

Montepulciano began as an Etruscan settlement, and a local legend says it was founded by *Lars Porsenna*, king of nearby Chiusi. In the Middle Ages, rich farmland and its position between two valleys made the town a prize for its powerful neighbours, Siena and Florence.

After long struggles, Montepulciano came under Florence for good in the early 16th century. Colonna del Marzocco, topped by the lion of Florence, still marks that change of side. Florentine rule brought a building boom. Architects such as *Antonio da Sangallo the Elder* designed palaces along the main street and on Piazza Grande, and Sangallo designed Tempio di San Biagio just outside the walls.

Wine has been made here for centuries, and many palaces still have their old cellars underneath. The square also appears in the 2009 film *The Twilight Saga: New Moon*, where it stands in for Volterra.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Italy at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

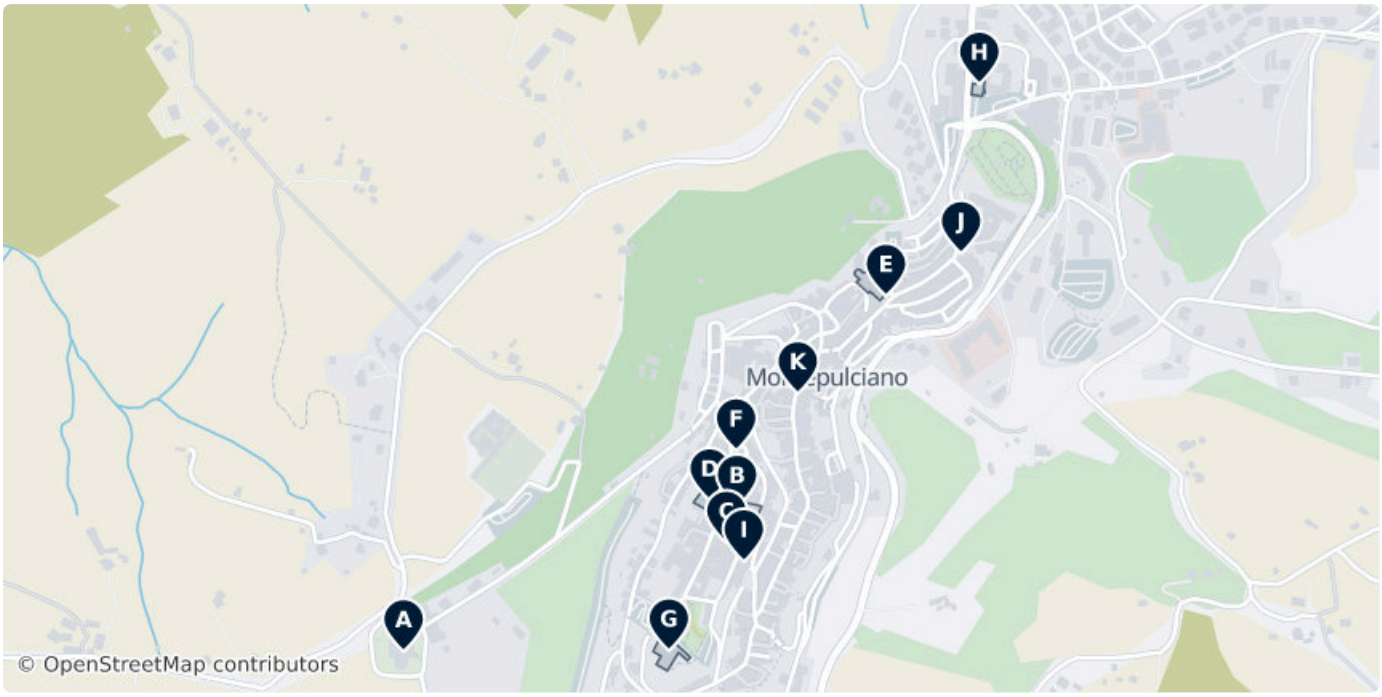
Type C / Type F / Type L
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Italian

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Montepulciano's Unmissable Treasures

Montepulciano is a Renaissance hill town between the Val d'Orcia and the Val di Chiana. This selection covers its main square and the buildings around it, the pilgrimage church of San Biagio below the walls, the town's other key churches, its civic museum and fortress, and a historic café.





A Tempio di San Biagio

A domed Renaissance church in honey-coloured travertine, built on a Greek-cross plan by Antonio da Sangallo the Elder just below the town walls.

Via dei Canneti, 53045 Montepulciano SI, Italy
(43.09076, 11.77468)

tempiosanbiagio.it



B Piazza Grande

The town's main square at the top of the hill, framed by the cathedral, the town hall and Renaissance palaces, with a well decorated with griffins and lions.

Piazza Grande, 53045 Montepulciano SI, Italy
(43.09275, 11.78099)



C Cattedrale di Santa Maria Assunta

The cathedral on Piazza Grande, with an unfinished brick facade and a large gilded altarpiece by Taddeo di Bartolo inside.

8 Via di San Donato, Montepulciano 53045, Italy (43.09226, 11.78079)



D Town hall of Montepulciano

The Gothic town hall on Piazza Grande, remodelled in the 15th century. Its tower can be climbed for wide views over the surrounding valleys.

Vicolo Danesi, 53045 Montepulciano SI, Italy (43.09284, 11.78047)



E Church of Saint Agostino

An Augustinian church on the main street, with a Renaissance facade attributed to Michelozzo.

Piazza Michelozzo, 53045 Montepulciano SI, Italy (43.09566, 11.78380)



F Museo Civico e Pinacoteca Crociani

The civic museum in a medieval palace, with Sienese and Florentine paintings, glazed terracottas and Etruscan finds.

Via Ricci 10, 53045 Montepulciano, IT (43.09353, 11.78097)

Tu Closed

museocivicomontepulciano.it/it/, +39 0578 717300



G Fortezza Medicea

The fortress at the highest point of the hill, first built by Siena and later rebuilt under Florentine rule.

Via San Donato, 53045 Montepulciano SI, Italy
(43.09077, 11.77970)



H Sant'Agnese

The church of the town's patron saint, Agnes of Montepulciano, just outside the northern gate, Porta al Prato.

Via Francesco Redi, 53045 Montepulciano SI, Italy
(43.09859, 11.78557)



I Teatro Poliziano

A horseshoe-shaped theatre completed in 1796, the main venue of the town's summer arts festival.

Piazzetta del Teatro 6, 53045 Montepulciano, IT
(43.09200, 11.78111)

fondazionecantiere.it/it/teatro-poliziano, +39 0578.757089

J Colonna del Marzocco

A column topped by the Marzocco lion, the symbol of Florence, near the northern end of the main street.

17 Piazza Girolamo Savonarola, Montepulciano 53045, Italy
(43.09625, 11.78522)



Caffè Poliziano

A historic café on the main street with an Art Nouveau interior and a terrace overlooking the Val di Chiana.

(43.09432, 11.78213)

Mo–Su 07:00–00:00

caffepoliziano.it, +0039 0578 758615

Churches and Sanctuaries

Montepulciano's churches range from the Renaissance Tempio di San Biagio below the walls to the cathedral on Piazza Grande, Michelozzo's Sant'Agostino and the sanctuary of the town's patron saint, Agnes. Two quiet rural sanctuaries in the surrounding countryside complete the list.





A Tempio di San Biagio

A domed Renaissance church by Antonio da Sangallo the Elder, set alone on a lawn below the town walls.

Via dei Canneti, 53045 Montepulciano SI, Italy (43.09076, 11.77468)

tempiosanbiagio.it



B Cattedrale di Santa Maria Assunta

The cathedral on Piazza Grande, home to Taddeo di Bartolo's gilded altarpiece of the Assumption.

8 Via di San Donato, Montepulciano 53045, Italy (43.09226, 11.78079)



C Church of Saint Agostino

An Augustinian church with a Renaissance facade attributed to Michelozzo.

Piazza Michelozzo, 53045 Montepulciano SI, Italy (43.09566, 11.78380)



D Sant'Agnese

The sanctuary of Saint Agnes of Montepulciano, the town's patron, outside Porta al Prato.

Via Francesco Redi, 53045 Montepulciano SI, Italy (43.09859, 11.78557)

E Madonna del Cerro

A small countryside sanctuary in the eastern part of the municipality.

(43.08300, 11.88406)

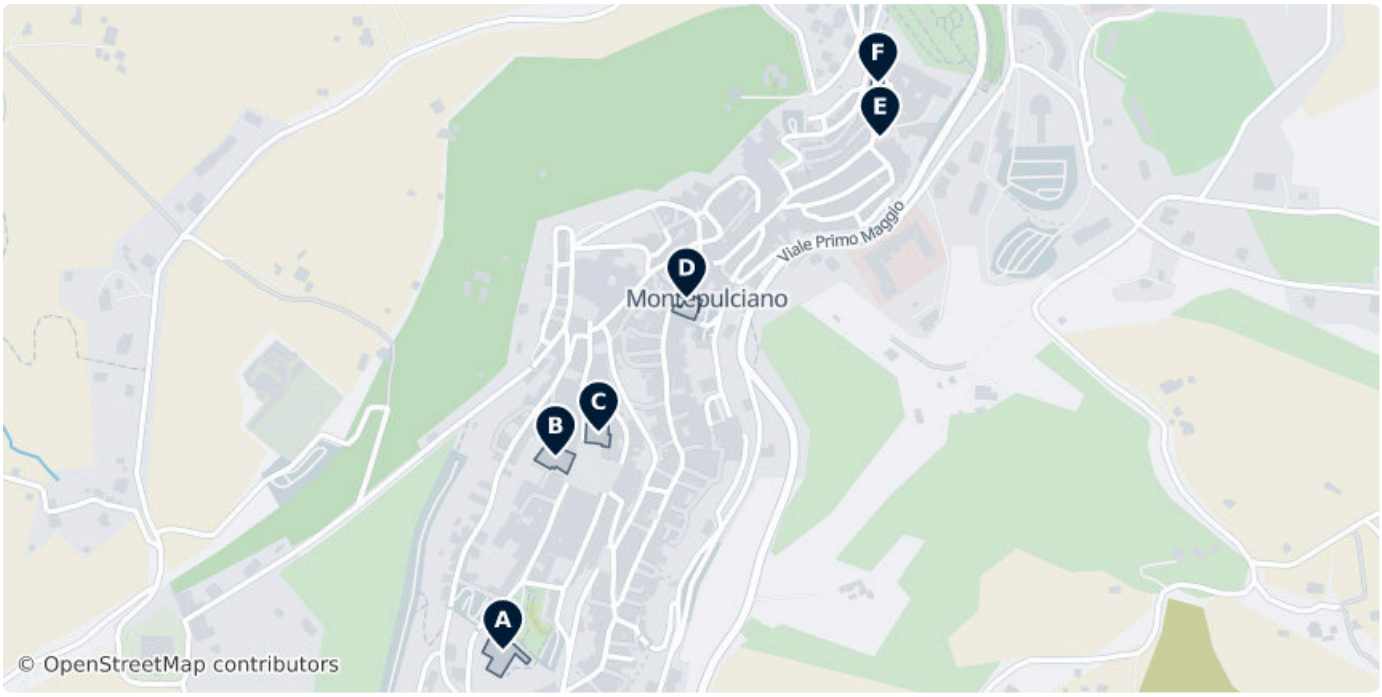
F eremo La Maddalena

A secluded hermitage in the hills south-east of the town.

6 Via dei Poggiardelli, 53045, Italy (43.06512, 11.79612)

Palaces, Gates and Fortress

Montepulciano's main street climbs past Renaissance palaces built by noble families once the town came under Florentine rule. This list covers the fortress at the top of the hill, the town hall and palaces on and near Piazza Grande, the Marzocco column and the northern town gate.





A Fortezza Medicea

The fortress at the highest point of the hill, first built by Siena and later rebuilt under Florentine rule.

Via San Donato, 53045 Montepulciano SI, Italy
(43.09077, 11.77970)



B Town hall of Montepulciano

The Gothic town hall on Piazza Grande, remodelled in the 15th century, with a tower open to visitors.

Vicolo Danesi, 53045 Montepulciano SI, Italy
(43.09284, 11.78047)

C Palazzo del Capitano

The medieval seat of the town's captain of justice, on the north side of Piazza Grande.

(43.09310, 11.78110)

D Palazzo Cervini

An unfinished Renaissance palace on the main street, built for the family of Cardinal Marcello Cervini, later Pope Marcellus II.

(43.09453, 11.78239)

E Colonna del Marzocco

A column topped by the Marzocco lion, the symbol of Florence, marking the town's alliance with the Florentine Republic.

17 Piazza Girolamo Savonarola, Montepulciano 53045, Italy
(43.09625, 11.78522)

F Porta al Prato

The northern gate of the old town, where most visitors arriving from the car parks begin the climb up the main street.

Via di Gracciano nel Corso, 53045 Montepulciano SI, Italy
(43.09683, 11.78519)

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