

Siena

Tuscany · Italy

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Siena is a hilltop city in southern Tuscany. Its medieval centre is one of the best preserved in Italy and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Brick palaces, steep lanes and Gothic churches spread over three ridges, and most streets are closed to traffic. The heart of the city is a shell-shaped square, where locals meet, eat and, twice a year, watch the Palio horse race.

The city was once a strong republic and a rival of Florence. That past still shapes daily life: Siena is divided into 17 neighbourhoods called *contrade*, each with its own flag, church and fountain. Two or three nights are enough to see the main sights at a slow pace and use Siena as a base for the Chianti hills and the Val d'Orcia. *Saint Catherine of Siena*, one of Italy's patron saints, was born here.

When to visit

Spring (April–June) and autumn (September–October) are the best times: mild days, green or golden hills and fewer crowds. July and August are hot and busy. Winter is cool and quiet, with short opening hours at some sights.

The biggest event is the **Palio**, the horse race around the main square on 2 July and 16 August. The city fills up for several days before each race with trial runs, dinners and parades. Book a room early if you want to be there, or avoid these dates if you prefer a quiet visit.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	9° / 14° Feels like 5°	1° / -4°	Dry air · Calm winds
February	Poor Poor for sightseeing	10° / 15° Feels like 6°	1° / -4°	Dry air · Calm winds
March	Fair Fair for sightseeing	14° / 19° Feels like 10°	3° / -3°	Dry air
April	Good Good for sightseeing	17° / 23°	6° / 1°	Dry air · Calm winds
May	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 29°	11° / 7°	Dry air · Calm winds
June	Great Great for sightseeing	29° / 35°	15° / 11°	Calm winds
July	Fair Fair for sightseeing	32° / 37°	18° / 14°	22 sunny days · Calm winds · Up to 7 days above 35°
August	Fair Fair for sightseeing	32° / 38°	18° / 14°	20 sunny days · Calm winds · Up to 6 days above 35°
September	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 32°	14° / 9°	Dry air · Calm winds
October	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 26°	10° / 5°	Dry air · Calm winds
November	Fair Fair for sightseeing	14° / 19°	6° / -1°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
December	Poor Poor for sightseeing	10° / 14° Feels like 6°	2° / -4°	Dry air · Calm winds

Best months: May, June, September, October

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

Top sights

Most sights sit within a 10-minute walk of each other. The cathedral area has a combined pass that covers several of its sites.



- A Piazza del Campo is the sloping, shell-shaped main square. Its brick paving is split into nine sections, a reminder of the Council of Nine that ruled the city. Sit on the paving and watch the light change on the palaces.
- On the square stands the B Civic Museum and Public Palace, Siena's Gothic town hall. Its rooms hold *Ambrogio Lorenzetti*'s frescoes of Good and Bad Government and *Simone Martini*'s Maestà.
- C Torre del Mangia rises 102 m from the town hall. Climb about 400 steps for a view over the square, the rooftops and the hills. Tickets are sold at the town hall for timed slots and often sell out, so go early in the day.
- D Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta has a striped black-and-white marble interior, a carved pulpit by *Nicola Pisano* and an inlaid marble floor. Most of the floor is covered for protection and shown only for a few weeks a year, usually including late summer and autumn. Inside, the Piccolomini Library has bright frescoes by *Pinturicchio* from the early 1500s.
- E Opera del Duomo Museum displays *Duccio*'s great Maestà altarpiece. From the museum you can climb the Facciatone, the unfinished wall of a planned larger cathedral, for one of the best views in town.
- F Santa Maria della Scala, opposite the cathedral, was one of Europe's oldest hospitals and cared for the sick and pilgrims for many centuries. Today it is a large museum with frescoed wards and an archaeological collection.
- G National Picture Gallery of Siena has one of the best collections of Sienese painting, from gold-ground altarpieces to the Renaissance.
- H Basilica of San Domenico is a large brick church on a ridge. It holds relics of *Saint Catherine*, and its terrace has a classic view of the cathedral.

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What to experience

These local traditions and moments are what make a visit to Siena different.

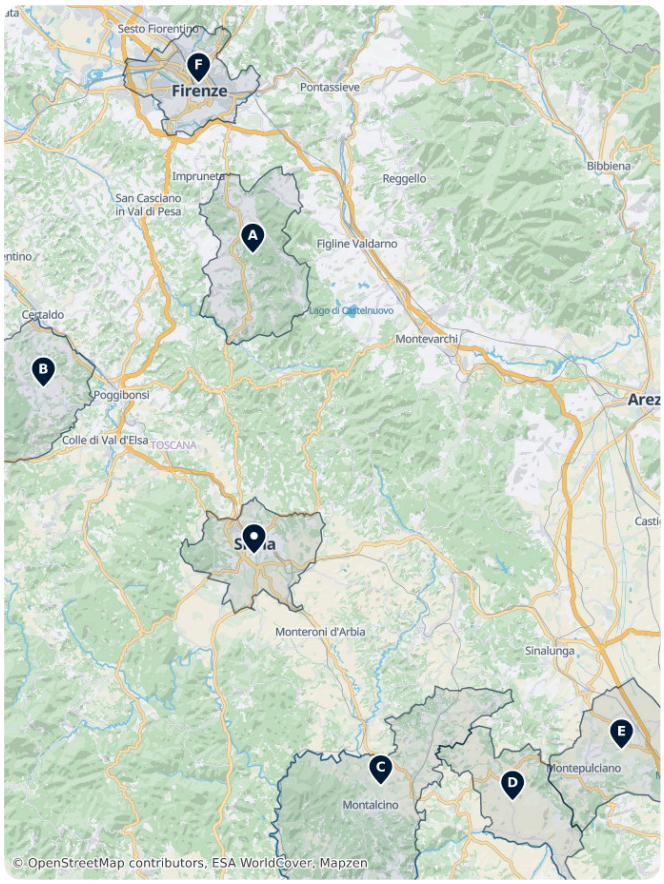
- **The Palio** (2 July and 16 August): ten of the 17 *contrade* race bareback horses three times around Piazza del Campo. The race lasts about 90 seconds. The days before are full of trial runs and contrada street dinners, and a long historical parade enters the square before the race. Standing in the centre of the square is free; arrive early and expect big crowds and heat.
- **Contrada life**: walk through the neighbourhoods and look for each contrada's flags, street lamps and small fountain. Some contrade open their museums on request or around the Palio.
- **Sunset on the square**: in the evening, people sit directly on the sloping brick paving of the square to chat, eat a gelato or watch the tower catch the last light.
- **The cathedral floor uncovering**: for a few weeks each year, usually including late summer and autumn, the inlaid marble floor of the cathedral is on show. It is worth timing your trip for it. The *Porta del Cielo* (Gate of Heaven) visit also takes you above the vaults and onto the roofs, with views inside and outside the cathedral.

Day trips

Siena is a good base for the hill towns and wine country of southern Tuscany. A car gives the most freedom, but buses reach the main towns from Piazza Gramsci.

Close by

- Monteriggioni (about 20 minutes by car, 15 km): a small village inside a complete ring of medieval walls with 14 towers. The open stretch of the wall walk on the south side needs a ticket and gives views over the countryside.
- Chianti (about 30–60 minutes by car): rolling hills, vineyards and stone villages such as Castellina in Chianti and Ⓐ Greve in Chianti. It is best explored by car, with a stop for a wine tasting.



Further afield

- B San Gimignano (about 1 hour 15 minutes by bus, often with a change in Poggibonsi): a hilltop town famous for its medieval stone towers.
- C Montalcino (about 1 hour by car): a fortified hill town, home of Brunello wine.
- D Pienza and E Montepulciano (about 1–1.5 hours by car): two Renaissance hill towns. Pienza overlooks the Val d'Orcia, a UNESCO-listed landscape of cypress-lined roads and farms. Montepulciano is known for its Vino Nobile wine. They are easy to combine in one day by car.
- F Florence (about 1 hour 15 minutes by rapid bus, about 1.5 hours by train): the Renaissance capital of Tuscany, if you have not seen it yet.

Where to explore

Siena sits in the heart of Tuscany, and many of the region's best-known towns are within reach.

- **Art cities**: Florence is the region's capital and its biggest art city.
- **Hill towns to the north and west**: San Gimignano with its tower houses, and Volterra, an Etruscan and medieval town on a high ridge.
- **Wine country**: Greve in Chianti in the Chianti hills, and Montalcino and Montepulciano to the south.
- **Val d'Orcia and beyond**: Pienza in the Val d'Orcia, and Cortona, a hill town further east near the border with Umbria.

Getting there

- **By air**: the nearest airports are Florence Airport (about 70 km) and Pisa Airport (about 150 km). From Florence Airport, take the tram into Florence and continue by bus or train. From Pisa Airport, the People Mover shuttle runs to Pisa Centrale station, with trains to Siena in about 2 hours. Rome Fiumicino has a few direct buses a day.
- **By train**: regional trains link Florence and Siena in about 1.5 hours, some with a change in Empoli. From Rome, change in Florence or Chiusi. Siena station sits below the old town; take the escalators from the shopping centre opposite up to Porta Camollia, or a city bus. Trenitalia
- **By bus**: the fast bus from Florence takes about 1 hour 15 minutes and stops at Piazza Gramsci, right at the edge of the historic centre. This is often more convenient than the train. Long-distance coaches also link Siena with Rome.

Getting around

- **On foot**: the historic centre is compact but hilly, with steep lanes and steps. Walking is the only practical way to see it. Wear comfortable shoes.
- **Escalators**: escalators link the car parks and the station area to the old town, including from the Santa Caterina and San Francesco car parks and from the station to Porta Camollia.
- **Buses**: Autolinee Toscane runs the city and regional buses. On most buses you can tap a contactless bank card or phone on the reader when you board. You can also buy tickets at tobacconists, newsstands, the ticket office under Piazza Gramsci or in the operator's app. Autolinee Toscane
- **Taxi**: there is a rank at the station, and Piazza Indipendenza near the main square is a common pick-up point. You can also call the radio taxi. Ride-hailing apps are of little use here.
- **Cycling**: the steep hills and narrow lanes make cycling impractical in the centre.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The compact historic centre is mostly car-free and best seen on foot, but streets are steep and stepped.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

Steep hills and narrow cobbled lanes make cycling impractical in the centre.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: not for the city itself, which is best on foot. A car is the best way to explore Chianti and the Val d'Orcia.
- **Restrictions**: the historic centre is a **ZTL (limited traffic zone)** with camera enforcement. Do not drive in without a permit; fines arrive by post months later. Ask your hotel before you arrive if it offers access.
- **Parking**: use the large car parks at the edge of the centre, such as Il Campo, Santa Caterina, San Francesco and Fortezza-Stadio. Expect about €2 per hour. Several have escalators up into town. Street parking outside the walls uses meters.

Food & drink

Sienese cooking is simple and hearty. Look for *pici* (thick hand-rolled pasta), often with garlic and tomato sauce or ragù, and *ribollita* (bread and vegetable soup) in the cooler months. Local cured meats come from the Cinta Senese pig. Siena is also famous for its sweets: **panforte**, a dense cake of nuts, honey and spices, and *ricciarelli*, soft almond biscuits.

The lanes just off the main square have many restaurants, but those with a view of the square charge more for the setting. For better value, walk a few minutes into the side streets, for example down towards Fontebranda or into the lanes east of the square. Wine bars across town pour Chianti Classico and Brunello di Montalcino by the glass.

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

Siena is a safe city for visitors. Normal care with bags and phones is enough, especially in crowds on the main square and during the Palio.

- **Palio crowds**: the square fills hours before the race and gates close. There is little shade, no easy exit and few toilets. Bring water and a hat, and do not bring small children into the centre of the square.
- **Steep streets**: the stone paving is slippery when wet. Take care on the steeper lanes.
- **Restaurant bills**: a cover charge (*coperto*) per person is normal and should be listed on the menu.

History

Siena grew rich in the Middle Ages from trade and banking on the Via Francigena, the pilgrim road to Rome. As an independent republic, it fought Florence for control of Tuscany. In 1260 Siena won a famous victory over Florence at the Battle of Montaperti.

The city's golden age came under the Council of Nine, a government of merchants that ruled from the late 1200s to the mid-1300s. They built the Palazzo Pubblico, the Gothic town hall, and finished paving Piazza del Campo. Artists such as *Duccio*, *Simone Martini* and the *Lorenzetti* brothers created a distinct Sienese style of painting. The Black Death of 1348 killed a large share of the population. It also stopped work on a giant new cathedral. Its unfinished wall, the Facciatone, still stands next to the cathedral.

Siena surrendered to Spanish and Florentine forces in 1555 after a long siege, and soon became part of the Medici state. Its decline in the following centuries is one reason why so much of the medieval city survives today. The bank Monte dei Paschi di Siena, founded in 1472, is often called the oldest bank in the world still operating.

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

Siena's Timeless Treasures

Siena’s historical landscape is defined by its medieval fortifications and religious landmarks. This collection highlights the city's 16th-century Fortezza Medicea and numerous preserved city gates, including Porta Romana and Porta Fontebranda. Significant religious sites feature Gothic and Renaissance architecture, such as the Basilica of San Domenico and the 15th-century Basilica dell'Osservanza. For panoramic perspectives, the Via Bruno Bonci Viewpoint offers clear vistas of the city’s red-tiled skyline and historic core.





A Basilica of San Domenico

Also known as Basilica Cateriniana, this beautiful Gothic church is definitely worth visiting for its splendid interior.

Piazza San Domenico, 53100 Siena, Italy (43.31982, 11.32678)

Mo–Su 09:00–18:30

basilicacateriniana.com, +39 577 286848



B Church of Santa Maria dei Servi

This beautiful Catholic church, built in the 13th century, is worth visiting for its unique wooden altarpiece and a large collection of...

4 Piazza Manzoni, Siena 53100, Italy (43.31516, 11.33817)

+39 577-222-633



C Basilica dell'Osservanza

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6 Piazza della Libertà, Siena 53100, Italy
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1 Piazza della Libertà, Siena 53100, Italy
(43.32172, 11.32306)



F Porta di Fontebranda, Siena

The Porta di Fontebranda or Fontebranda Gate is one of the last remaining gates in the medieval walls of Siena.

68 Via di Fontebranda, Siena 53100, Italy
(43.31868, 11.32635)



G Porta San Marco, Siena

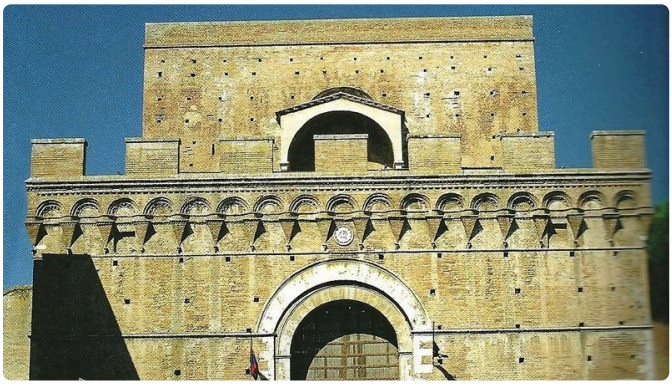
Porta San Marco is the remnant of one of the gates found the medieval walls of Siena, region of Tuscany, Italy.

2 Via del Nuovo Asilo, Siena 53100, Italy (43.31192, 11.32510)

H Via Bruno Bonci Viewpoint

This place is known for offering spectacular views of the whole city. Be sure not to forget your camera and to snap some imposing picture.

7 Viale 25 Aprile, Siena 53100, Italy (43.32039, 11.32408)



I Porta dei Pìspini, Siena

The Porta dei Pìspini or Gate of the Water-spout is one of the portals in the medieval walls of Siena, region of Tuscany, Italy.

160 Via dei Pispini, Siena 53100, Italy (43.31732, 11.34239)



J Porta Tufi, Siena

The Porta Tufi or Tufi Gate is one of the remaining portals in the medieval Walls of Siena.

1 Strada dei Tufi, Siena 53100, Italy (43.31168, 11.33289)



K Porta Laterina

A 14th-century gate within Siena's medieval defensive walls, providing historical access to the city's western district.

57 Via Paolo Mascagni, Siena 53100, Italy (43.31456, 11.32446)

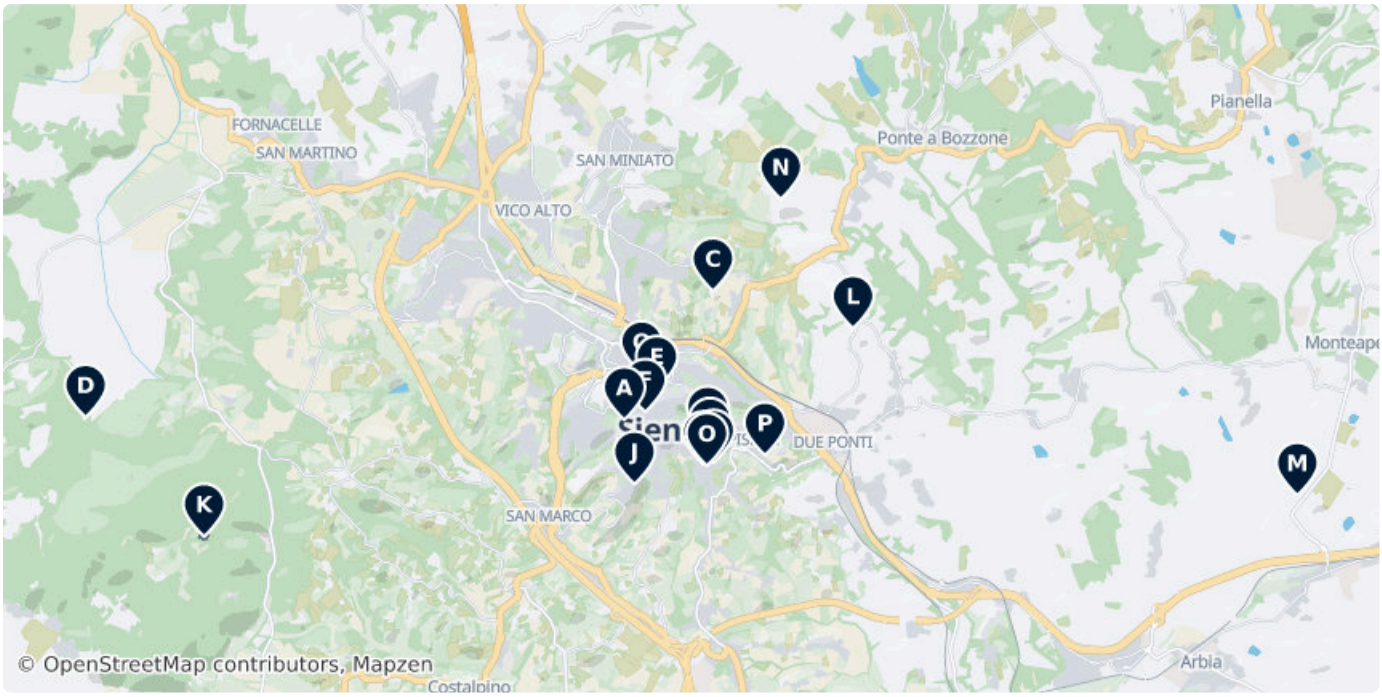
L Porta Romana, Siena

Porta Romana is one of the portals in the medieval Walls of Siena. It is located on Via Cassia in Siena, region of Tuscany, Italy.

Via Roma, 53100 Siena SI, Italy (43.31330, 11.33945)

Sacred Spaces and Churches

Siena's religious landscape features a diverse collection of architectural styles, from the massive Gothic Basilica of San Domenico to intimate Renaissance oratories. This selection includes the 15th-century Basilica dell'Osservanza on the city's outskirts and the historic Eremo di Lecceto, a significant Augustinian site. Visitors can explore unique features such as the 13th-century wooden altarpiece in Santa Maria dei Servi and the Baroque interiors of San Raimondo. These sites showcase centuries of Sienese history through frescoes, sacred art, and varied Romanesque and Baroque structures.





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D San Leonardo al Lago, Monteriggioni

San Leonardo al Lago is a Roman Catholic church in the neighborhood of Santa Colomba, within the municipal limits of Monteriggioni, a few...

(43.32008, 11.24926)

polomusealetoscana.beniculturali.it/in... , +39 0577 317021

E Oratorio di San Rocco, Siena

The Oratory of San Rocco is a small Roman Catholic prayer hall or independently standing chapel, located on via Vallerozzi in Siena, region...

1 Piazzetta Ezio Felici, Siena 53100, Italy (43.32306, 11.33147)

F San Pellegrino alla Sapienza

San Pellegrino alla Sapienza o della Sapienza is a Gothic style, Roman Catholic church located at the intersection of via della Sapienza...

99 Via delle Terme, Siena 53100, Italy (43.32065, 11.32980)

G Santuccio Church, Siena

The Church of the Santuccio or Chiesa del Santuccio, is a small, Renaissance-style, Roman Catholic church located on Via Roma 69 in Siena,...

69 Via Roma, Siena 53100, Italy (43.31534, 11.33967)

H San Raimondo, Siena

San Raimondo, also called San Raimondo al Refugio, is a Baroque style, Roman Catholic church located on the intersection of Via del Refugio...

4 Via del Refugio, Siena 53100, Italy (43.31658, 11.33912)

I San Gaetano di Thiene, Siena

The narrow church or oratory of San Gaetano di Thiene is found in the middle of via dei Pispini in Siena, Italy.

71 Via dei Pispini, Siena 53100, Italy (43.31779, 11.33880)

J Santi Pietro e Paolo, Siena

The church of Santi Pietro e Paolo is a Baroque style, Roman Catholic church, located on Via San Marco in the contrada of Chiocciola, in...

27 Via delle Sperandie, Siena 53100, Italy (43.31308, 11.32825)

K Monastery of the Holy Saviour

The Monastery of the Holy Saviour at Lecceto in Tuscany, was the principal House of the order of the Hermit Friars of Saint Augustine in...

Strada di Lecceto, 53100, Italy (43.30759, 11.26630)

L Sant'Agnese a Vignano

Sant'Agnese a Vignano is a Renaissance-style, Roman Catholic church located in the village of Vignano just outside the walls of the city of...

57 Strada di Busseto, 53100, Italy (43.32938, 11.35972)



M Chiesa di Sant'Ansano

Located in the locality of Dofana within the municipality of Castelnuovo Berardenga.

3/B Piazza Sant'Ansano a Dofana, 53019, Italy (43.31191, 11.42366)

N Chiesa di San Paterniano

A Roman Catholic building situated in the Le Tolfe area, northeast of Siena's historic center.

5 Strada delle Tolfe, 53100, Italy (43.34291, 11.34932)

O Oratorio della Compagnia della Santissima Trinità

Located on via di Valdimontone, this oratory belongs to the local confraternity and serves as the church for the Valdimontone contrada.

4 Via di Val di Montone, Siena 53100, Italy (43.31501, 11.33869)

P Chiesa di Sant'Eugenia

Situated outside the Porta dei Pispini, this church is dedicated to Saints Eugenia and Victor.

101 Strada di Sant'Eugenia, Siena 53100, Italy (43.31612, 11.34705)

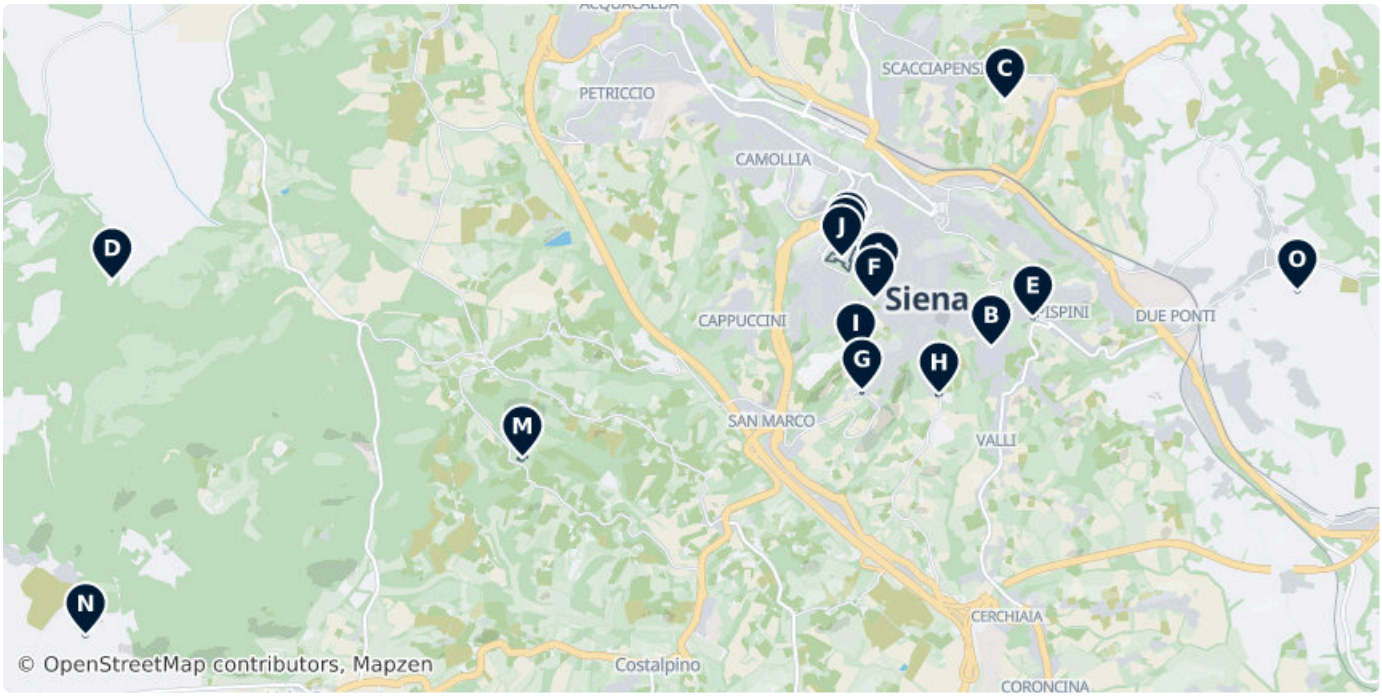
Q Chiesa Anglicana di San Pietro

A 19th-century Anglican place of worship catering to the English-speaking community in Siena.

36 Via Giuseppe Garibaldi, Siena 53100, Italy (43.32461, 11.32930)

Siena's Historic Fortifications and Basilicas

Siena’s architectural landscape is defined by its well-preserved medieval walls and significant religious structures. This collection features prominent basilicas like the Gothic San Domenico and the 13th-century Santa Maria dei Servi. The list also highlights the city's defensive history through its surviving medieval gates, such as Porta Pispini and Porta Tufi, and the imposing 16th-century Fortezza Medicea. Beyond the city center, fortified sites like Castello di Belcaro and the Quattrotorri castle offer insights into the strategic importance of the Sienese countryside.





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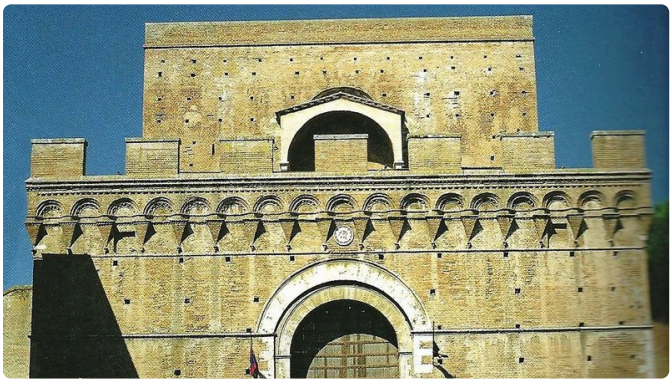

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Medieval gateway built into the city's defensive walls to protect the historic center.

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10 Piazza della Libertà, Siena 53100, Italy (43.32276, 11.32369)

M Castello di Belcaro

The Castello di Belcaro is a Renaissance villa built at the site of a Castle once belonging to the Republic of Siena in Tuscany.

(43.30700, 11.29075)

Mo–Su Open 24/7

N Palazzaccio di Toiano

Medieval fortified structure located in the Toiano district of the Sienese countryside.

Strada di Mugnano, 53018, Italy (43.29394, 11.24656)

O Quattrotorri

Medieval castle characterized by its four corner towers, situated on the outskirts of the city.

36 Strada di Pieve al Bozzone, 53100, Italy (43.31927, 11.36914)

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