

Tivoli

Rome · Italy

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Tivoli is a hill town about 30 km east of Rome. It sits on the slopes of the Tiburtine Hills, where the Aniene river drops into a deep gorge before it reaches the plain. Wealthy Romans built country villas here for more than two thousand years, and their gardens, temples and ruins are the reason to come.

The town has two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: a Renaissance villa famous for its fountains, and the vast country palace of Emperor *Hadrian* on the plain below. A wooded park with waterfalls and Roman temples completes the set. Most visitors come on a day trip from Rome, but one night lets you see both villas without rushing. Tivoli suits travellers who like gardens, ancient history and easy trips out of the capital.

When to visit

April to June and September to October are the best months. The gardens are green, the fountains run strongly and walking is comfortable. July and August are hot, and the ruins of Hadrian's Villa have very little shade. Winter is cool and quiet, and the waterfall park is closed from late December to mid-February.

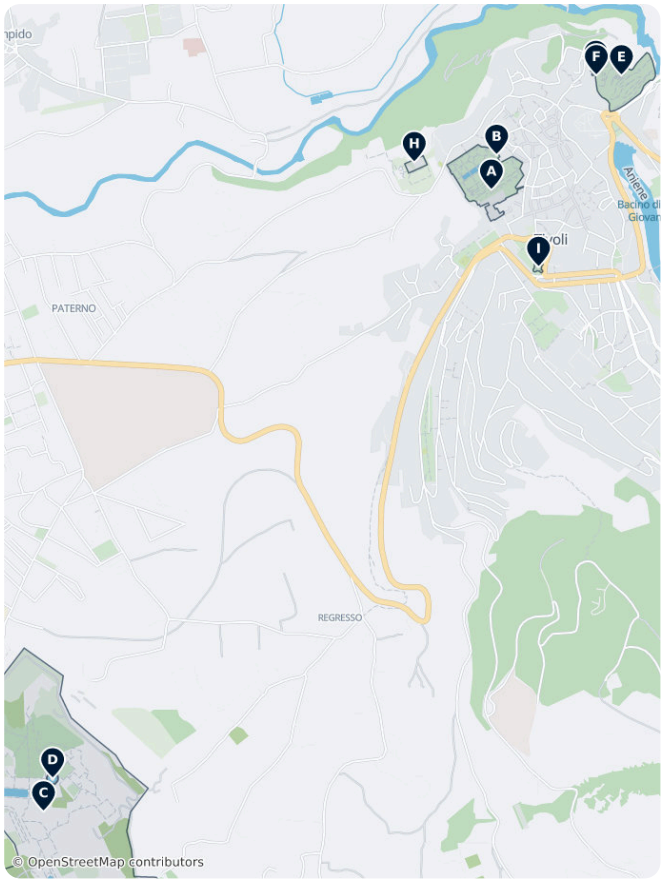
The biggest local event is the **Inchinata** religious procession on 14 and 15 August.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	12° / 15° Feels like 8°	4° / -2°	Dry air
February	Fair Fair for sightseeing	13° / 17° Feels like 9°	4° / -2°	Dry air
March	Good Good for sightseeing	15° / 20° Feels like 12°	6° / 1°	Dry air
April	Great Great for sightseeing	19° / 24°	9° / 4°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	24° / 29°	13° / 9°	Dry air · Calm winds
June	Great Great for sightseeing	29° / 35°	17° / 13°	23 sunny days · Calm winds
July	Good Good for sightseeing	32° / 37°	20° / 16°	27 sunny days · Calm winds · UV 8 (Very high) · Up to 5 days above 35°
August	Fair Fair for sightseeing	32° / 37°	21° / 17°	26 sunny days · Calm winds · Up to 7 days above 35°
September	Great Great for sightseeing	27° / 33°	17° / 12°	Calm winds
October	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 27°	13° / 8°	Dry air · Calm winds
November	Good Good for sightseeing	17° / 22°	9° / 2°	13 rainy days · Dry air
December	Fair Fair for sightseeing	13° / 17° Feels like 9°	5° / -1°	Dry air

Best months: April, May, June, September, October

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

Top sights



A Villa d'Este was created from the 1550s for Cardinal *Ippolito II d'Este*, with gardens designed by *Pirro Ligorio*. Terraces step down the hillside past dozens of fountains and hundreds of water jets, all fed by gravity alone. On Mondays it opens only in the afternoon.

Inside the gardens, B Fontana dell'Organo is a Renaissance water organ that still plays music, powered only by falling water.

C Hadrian's Villa lies on the plain about 5 km below the town. Emperor *Hadrian* built this huge country palace in the 2nd century AD, with baths, libraries, pools and temples spread over a wide area. Allow at least three hours and wear good shoes.

D Teatro Marittimo is one of the best-loved corners of Hadrian's Villa: a small round palace on an island, surrounded by a ring of water.

E Parco di Villa Gregoriana is a wooded park in the gorge of the Aniene. Paths lead down past caves and Roman ruins to the foot of a tall waterfall, then climb back up to the town. Expect many steps.

F Temple of Vesta stands on the edge of the gorge at the top of the park. This small round temple from the 1st century BC was a favourite subject of painters on the Grand Tour. The rectangular G Tempio della Sibilla stands right next to it.

H Santuario di Ercole Vincitore is a huge Roman sanctuary from the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, built on high arched terraces with its own theatre. Check its opening days before you go.

I Rocca Pia is a castle with round towers, built for Pope *Pius II* in the 1460s to control the town.

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What to experience

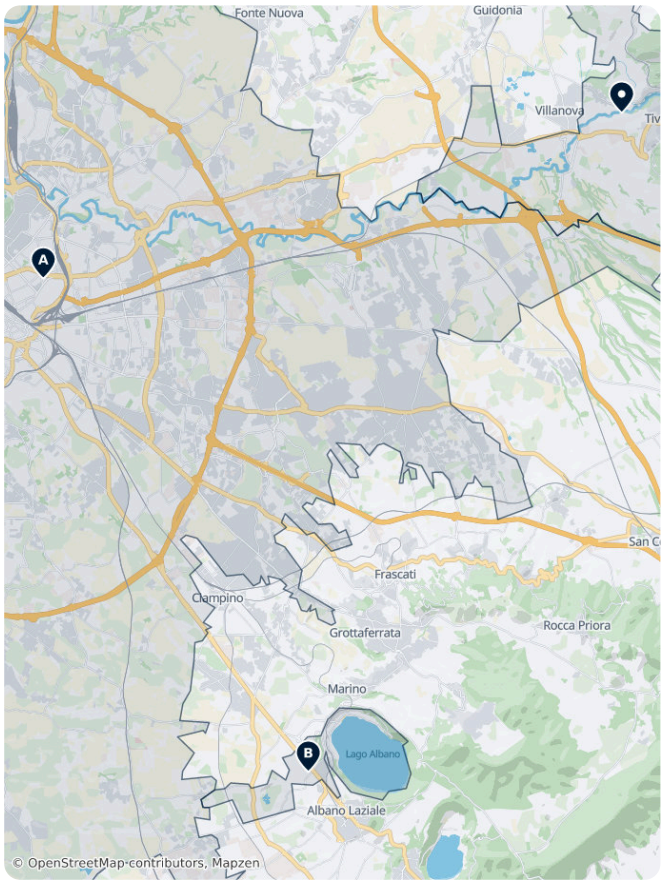
Water is the theme of Tivoli, and the best moments here are tied to it.

- Hear the water organ play: Fontana dell'Organo plays daily every two hours, starting at 10:30. Arrive a few minutes early to get a good spot.
- Visit the gardens after dark: on some summer evenings, Villa d'Este stays open late with events, and the waterfall park opens on Friday and Saturday nights from July to early September.
- Swim in sulphur pools: the Terme di Roma spa at Tivoli Terme, on the plain below the town, has large outdoor pools of natural sulphur water at about 23 °C. They open from June to September.
- Watch the Inchinata: on 14 and 15 August, two processions leave Cattedrale di San Lorenzo and Chiesa di Santa Maria Maggiore. They meet in Piazza Trento, where their sacred images bow to each other three times.

Day trips

Tivoli makes a good base for the hills and small towns east and south-east of Rome.

- Palestrina: about 35 minutes by car. An old hill town built over a huge Roman sanctuary, with a museum known for its large Nile mosaic.
- Frascati: about 35 minutes by car. A Castelli Romani town known for its hillside villas and local white wine.
- A Rome: about 1 hour by regional train to Roma Tiburtina, or 35 to 60 minutes by car, depending on traffic.
- Subiaco: about 40 minutes by car, deeper in the Aniene valley. Two Benedictine monasteries cling to the cliffs, one built around the cave where *Saint Benedict* lived.
- B Castel Gandolfo: about 45 minutes by car. A lakeside town above Lake Albano, with the papal summer palace and its gardens.



Where to explore

Tivoli is part of the area around Rome, and it combines well with the capital and the hills south of it.

- The capital: Rome is less than an hour away, and most visitors stay there.
- The region: Lazio also has Etruscan towns, volcanic lakes and beaches.
- The Alban Hills: Castel Gandolfo, the lakeside town of the popes' summer residence.

Getting there

- **By air**: Rome Ciampino is the closest airport, about 40 km away (35 to 45 minutes by car). Rome Fiumicino is about 75 km away (about 1 hour by car). By public transport, go into Rome first and change at Roma Tiburtina.
- **By train**: regional trains run from Roma Tiburtina to Tivoli in about 1 hour. Tivoli station is across the river from the old town, about a 15-minute uphill walk from the centre. Trenitalia
- **By bus**: Cotral buses run from Ponte Mammolo station on Rome's metro line B to Tivoli in about 50 minutes to 1 hour. Some stop near Hadrian's Villa on the way. Buy your ticket before boarding, online or at a ticket office or tobacconist. A ticket bought from the driver costs more and needs exact change. Cotral

Getting around

- **On foot**: the old town, Villa d'Este and the waterfall park are all within a 10-minute walk of each other. Streets are steep, and there are many steps.
- **To Hadrian's Villa**: it is about 5 km below the town. Local CAT buses (line 4 and 4X) run from the town centre to the villa entrance, and some Cotral buses stop nearby. Buy CAT tickets at bars and tobacconists before boarding. A taxi takes about 15 minutes.
- **Waterfall park**: the entrance is at Largo Sant'Angelo and the exit is near Temple of Vesta, so you do not need to walk back the same way.
- **Cycling**: not practical. The town is on a steep hillside, and the roads to the plain are busy.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The old town and Villa d'Este are compact but steep, with many steps; Hadrian's Villa is 5 km away on the plain.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

The town sits on a steep hillside and the roads down to the plain are busy, so cycling is impractical.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?** Not for the town itself, which is best on foot. A car helps if you want to see Hadrian's Villa and the town in one day, or explore the hills nearby.
- **Getting here**: the A24 motorway from Rome has a Tivoli exit, but the old Via Tiburtina is often slow with traffic.
- **Parking**: use the paid car parks and street spaces on the edge of the old town. Hadrian's Villa has its own paid car park.
- **Restrictions**: the lanes of the old town are narrow and partly closed to visitor traffic. Park outside and walk.

Food & drink

Tivoli eats like Rome, with pasta such as cacio e pepe and amatriciana, roast meats and artichokes in spring. The local specialty is the pizzutello, a long, pointed table grape grown on the terraces around the town. It ripens in late summer and has its own local festival. Olive oil from the surrounding hills is also good.

The best area to eat is the old town between Cattedrale di San Lorenzo and Temple of Vesta. Several restaurants here have terraces above the gorge, with views of the temple and the waterfall park. Near Hadrian's Villa there is little choice, so bring water and a snack for a long visit.

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

Tivoli is a safe town. The main risk is pickpockets on crowded buses from Rome and at busy villa entrances in high season.

Take care on the steps and paths. The waterfall park has steep, uneven paths with many steps, and the stone in the villa gardens can be wet and slippery near the fountains. In summer, Hadrian's Villa is very hot and open, so bring water, a hat and sunscreen.

History

The Romans called the town Tibur. It began as an independent Latin town and a rival of early Rome, then became a favourite Roman country retreat. Generals, poets and emperors built villas on the cool hillside. Santuario di Ercole Vincitore, a huge terraced sanctuary, shows how rich the town was in the last centuries BC. Pale travertine stone from the quarries below Tivoli was used to build the Colosseum and, much later, St Peter's.

In the 2nd century AD, Emperor *Hadrian* built his huge palace at Hadrian's Villa, where he copied buildings he had seen on his travels. After Rome fell, the town shrank and the villa was stripped for its marble and statues. In the Middle Ages, a Roman building on the old road became a church, which you can still see as Tempio della Tosse.

The popes later ruled Tivoli. *Pius II* built Rocca Pia in the 1460s, and Cardinal *Ippolito II d'Este* created Villa d'Este a century later, using statues and marble taken from Hadrian's Villa. In 1826 a flood of the Aniene destroyed part of the town. Pope *Gregory XVI* then had the river diverted through tunnels, which created the great waterfall in Parco di Villa Gregoriana. Painters and writers on the Grand Tour came to draw the temples and cascades.

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

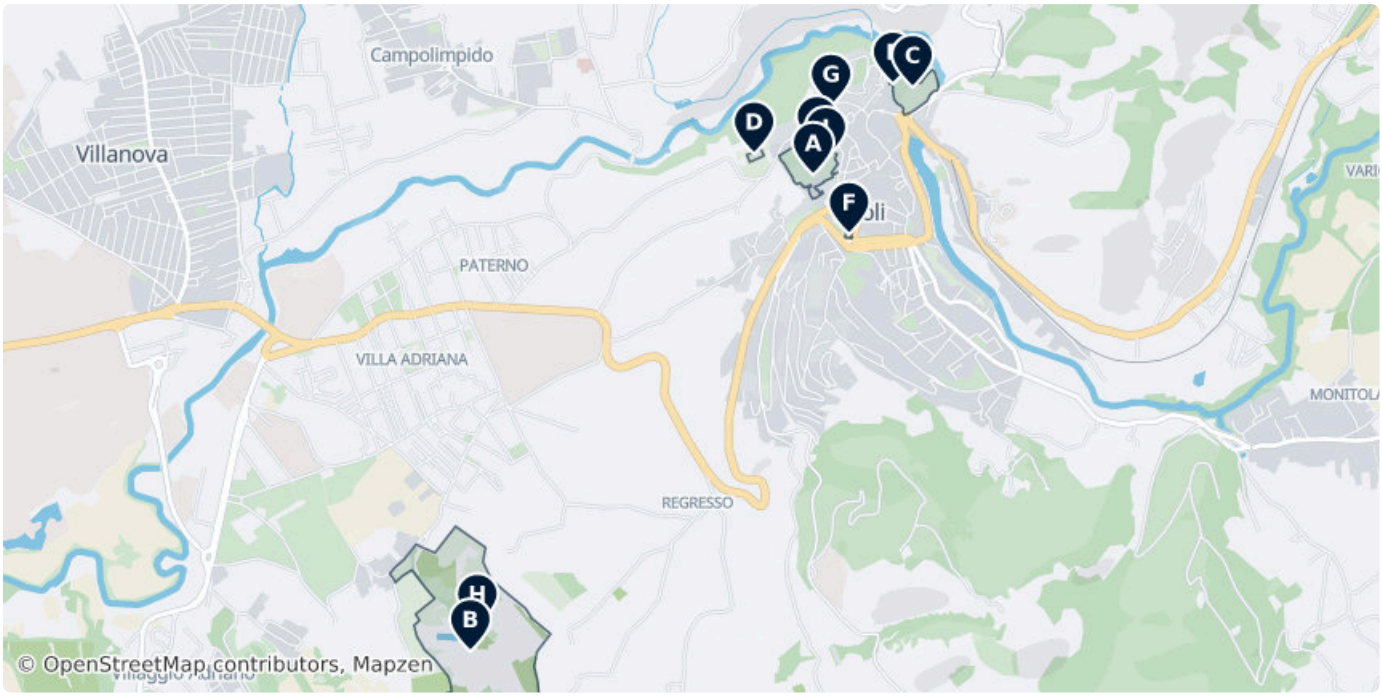
Italian

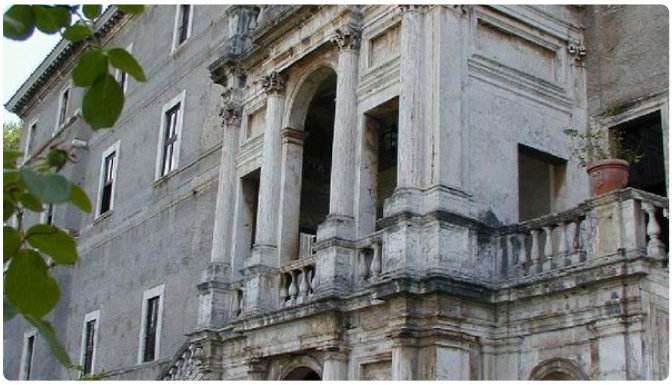
TAP WATER

Safe to drink

Tivoli Essentials

Located on the Aniene River, Tivoli contains two UNESCO World Heritage sites: the 16th-century Villa d'Este, famous for its Mannerist gardens and hydraulic fountains, and the sprawling 2nd-century Hadrian's Villa, which once served as the imperial retreat for Emperor Hadrian. The town also features the Parco di Villa Gregoriana, known for its 120-meter Great Waterfall and Roman ruins, alongside the 15th-century Rocca Pia fortress and the massive Santuario di Ercole Vincitore, a significant example of Roman Republican architecture.





A Villa d'Este

Historic Renaissance villa known for its extensive gardens and elaborate fountains, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

3 Piazza Trento, Tivoli 00019, Italy (41.96265, 12.79612)

Jan Mo–Su	08:30–16:45
Feb Mo–Su	08:30–17:15
Mar Mo–Su	08:30–18:00
Apr Mo–Su	08:30–19:15
May-Aug Mo–Su	08:30–19:30
Sep Mo–Su	08:30–19:00
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B Hadrian's Villa

Ancient Roman archaeological site featuring extensive ruins, sculptures, and pools from Emperor Hadrian's imperial retreat. It is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

00019, Italy (41.94120, 12.77537)

Oct-Jan Mo–Su	08:30–17:00
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Apr Mo–Su	08:30–19:00
May-Aug Mo–Su	08:30–19:30
Sep Mo–Su	08:30–19:00

levillae.com, +39 0774 382733

Nov-Dec Mo–Su 08:30–16:45

villae.cultura.gov.it/i-luoghi/villa-deste/, +390774332920



C Villa Gregoriana

Historic nature park featuring waterfalls, ancient Roman ruins, and scenic trails commissioned in the 19th century.

00019, Italy (41.96660, 12.80215)

Apr-Oct Tu–Su 10:00–18:30
Mar Tu–Su 10:00–16:00

fondoambiente.it/luoghi/parco-villa-gre... , +390774332650



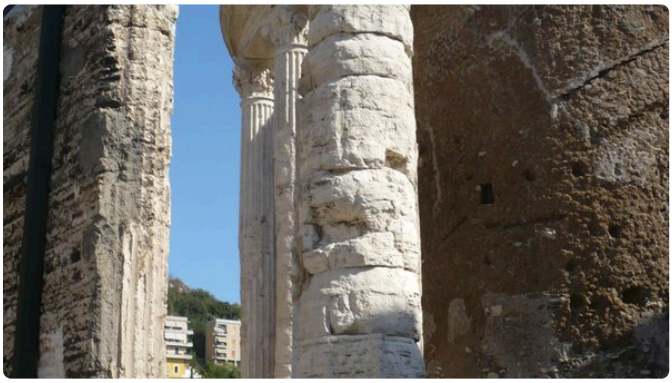
D Santuario di Ercole Vincitore

A 1st-century BC Roman temple complex and one of the largest examples of Republican architecture. It once housed a theater and a massive temple dedicated to Hercules, built on a series of arched substructures overlooking the Aniene valley.

(Unnamed Road), 00019, Italy (41.96360, 12.79255)

Mo–Su 11:00–17:00

villaadriana.beniculturali.it/index.php, +39 0774 382733



E Tempio della Sibilla

A rectangular Roman temple from the 2nd century BC located on the acropolis of Tibur. It features Corinthian columns and overlooks the waterfalls of the Villa Gregoriana.

7 Piazza del Tempio di Vesta, Tivoli 00019, Italy (41.96675, 12.80097)



F Rocca Pia

Fifteenth-century papal fortress built on the site of an ancient Roman amphitheater to secure military control over the Aniene river valley. This national monument served as a defensive structure, barracks, and prison before being restored and opened to the public.

2 Viale Trieste, Tivoli 00019, Italy (41.95999, 12.79830)

+3907745589



G Tivoli Cathedral

Tivoli Cathedral is a Roman Catholic cathedral, dedicated to Saint Lawrence, in Tivoli, Lazio, Italy. It is the seat of the bishop of Tivoli.

8 Via della Canonica, Tivoli 00019, Italy (41.96575, 12.79721)



H Teatro Marittimo

A circular, island-like retreat within Hadrian's Villa, enclosed by a moat and a ringed portico. This private sanctuary served as Emperor Hadrian's personal study and living quarters, accessible only by retractable bridges.

00019, Italy (41.94234, 12.77579)

villaadriana.beniculturali.it/index.php



I Fontana dell'Organo

A 16th-century water organ within the gardens of Villa d'Este. It uses a sophisticated hydraulic system to push air through pipes, playing musical compositions triggered by the flow of water.

13 Via Campitelli, Tivoli 00019, Italy (41.96385, 12.79636)



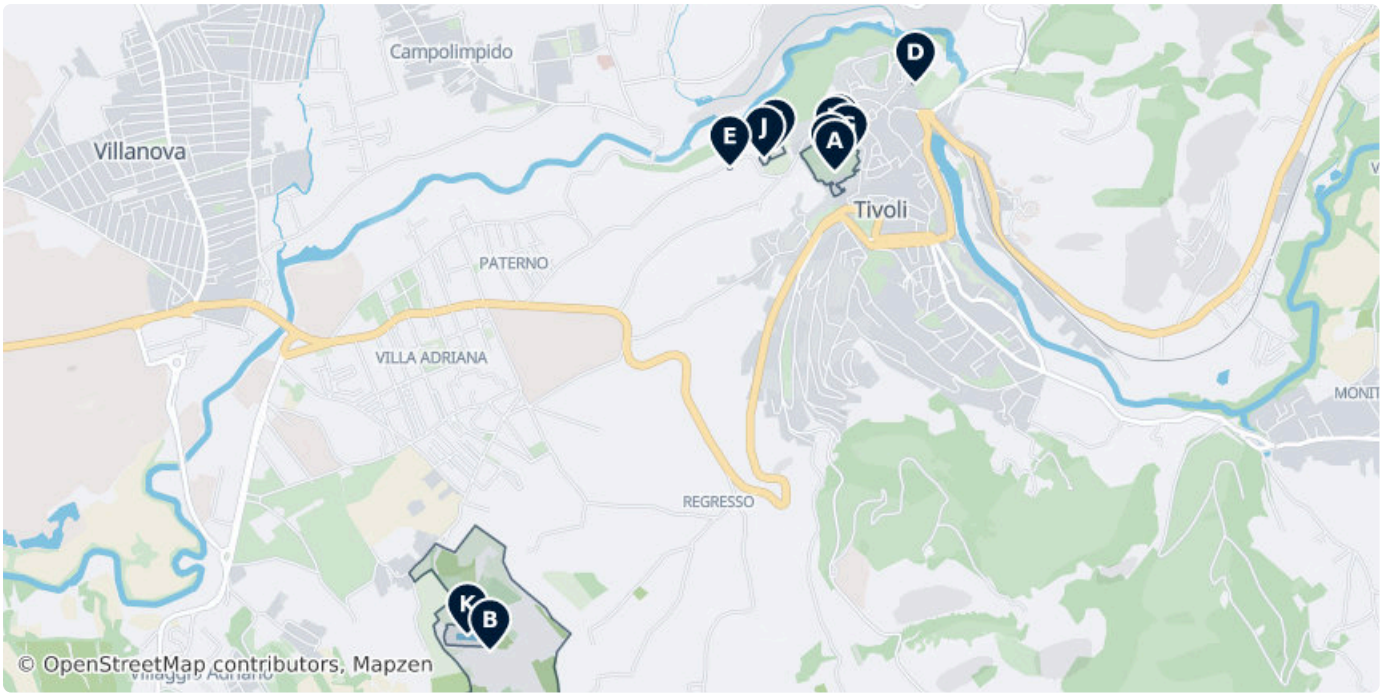
J Fontana dell'Ovato

An oval-shaped Renaissance fountain designed by Pirro Ligorio in the Villa d'Este gardens. It features a semicircular basin fed by water from the Aniene River, framed by statues of nymphs and a rustic grotto.

19 Vicolo Campitelli, 00019, Italy (41.96336, 12.79689)

Tivoli Editor's Choice

Located on the outskirts of Rome, Tivoli showcases two millennia of architectural evolution. This selection features the sprawling 2nd-century ruins of Hadrian's Villa, a massive imperial retreat, and the 16th-century Villa d'Este, renowned for its Mannerist gardens and hydraulic fountains. Highlights include the Sanctuary of Hercules Victor, the round Temple of Vesta above the Aniene gorge, and specialized fountains like the Organ and Neptune fountains, illustrating the town's historic mastery of water and engineering.





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levillae.com, +39 0774 382733

Nov-Dec Mo–Su 08:30–16:45

villae.cultura.gov.it/i-luoghi/villa-deste/, +390774332920



C Santuario di Ercole Vincitore

Large Roman religious complex from the 1st century BC. Built on terraces overlooking the Aniene River, it originally featured a temple, a theater, and a large plaza used for trade and religious ceremonies.

(Unnamed Road), 00019, Italy (41.96360, 12.79255)

Mo–Su 11:00–17:00

villaadriana.beniculturali.it/index.php, +39 0774 382733



D Temple of Vesta

Small round Roman temple from the early 1st century BC on Tivoli's ancient acropolis, standing high above the Aniene gorge and the waterfalls of Villa Gregoriana.

Traforo di Miollis, 00019 Tivoli RM, Italy (41.96660, 12.80098)



E Temple of the Cough

Circular Roman structure from the 4th century, later converted into a Christian church in the 10th century. It features a well-preserved dome with a central oculus similar to the Pantheon.

24 Strada degli Orti, 00019, Italy (41.96285, 12.78980)



F Fontana dell'Organo

A 16th-century water organ within Villa d'Este. It utilizes a sophisticated hydraulic system to generate musical sounds by forcing air into organ pipes using falling water.

13 Via Campitelli, Tivoli 00019, Italy (41.96385, 12.79636)



G Fontana dell'Ovato

Renaissance fountain at Villa d'Este featuring a semi-circular basin and a water curtain. It is adorned with statues representing the local landscape and the Tiburtine Sibyl.

19 Vicolo Campitelli, 00019, Italy (41.96336, 12.79689)



H Fontana del Nettuno

The most prominent fountain in Villa d'Este, redesigned in 1927. It features high-reaching water jets and reflects the architectural symmetry of the upper terraces.

15 Via Campitelli, Tivoli 00019, Italy (41.96372, 12.79615)



I Fontana dei Draghi

Built in 1572 in honor of Pope Gregory XIII, this fountain features four central water-spitting dragons. It serves as a key focal point of the Villa d'Este gardens.

00019, Italy (41.96294, 12.79587)



J Teatro

Ancient Roman theater located within the Sanctuary of Hercules Victor. It was used for performances and religious gatherings during the late Republican era.

15 Strada degli Orti, 00019, Italy (41.96326, 12.79187)



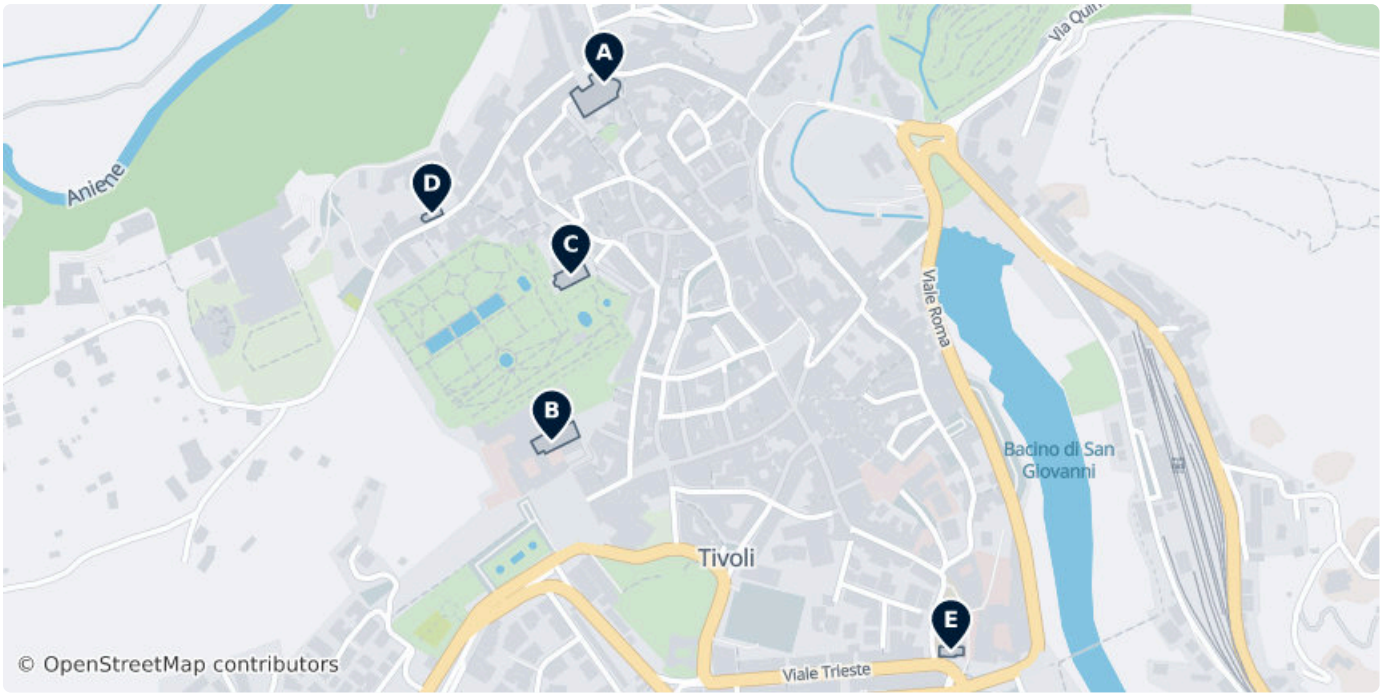
Pecile

A large, 232-meter-long rectangular pool at Hadrian's Villa. Inspired by the Stoa Poikile in Athens, it was originally surrounded by a high wall and a covered portico.

00019, Italy (41.94191, 12.77400)

Historic Churches

Tivoli's churches span more than a thousand years, from early medieval foundations to Baroque redesigns. This collection highlights the town's most significant religious sites, including the Romanesque San Silvestro with its medieval frescoes and San Pietro alla Carità, built over an ancient Roman villa. Together they show a side of Tivoli beyond its famous villas.





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B Chiesa di Santa Maria Maggiore

Adjacent to Villa d'Este, this church features a 14th-century Gothic portal and a Cosmatesque floor. It houses a notable 13th-century triptych of the Madonna and Child.

12 Via Boselli, Tivoli 00019, Italy (41.96211, 12.79650)



C Chiesa di San Pietro alla Carità

One of Tivoli's oldest religious sites, built in the 5th century over a Roman villa. It features a 12th-century bell tower and an authentic Cosmatesque mosaic floor.

9 Via Campitelli, Tivoli 00019, Italy (41.96380, 12.79676)

E Chiesa di San Giovanni Evangelista

This 15th-century church contains significant Renaissance frescoes attributed to the school of Antoniazzo Romano and Melozzo da Forlì. It was historically linked to the town's main hospital.

4 Via Antonio Parrozzani, Tivoli 00019, Italy (41.95998, 12.80196)

D San Silvestro

A 12th-century Romanesque church distinguished by its apse frescoes depicting the legend of Constantine and Pope Sylvester. The interior retains its original basilica layout with ancient columns.

107 Via del Colle, Tivoli 00019, Italy (41.96442, 12.79486)

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