Volterra

Tuscany · Italy

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Volterra sits on a high ridge between the Era and Cecina valleys, about 30 km by road southwest of San Gimignano. It was one of the great Etruscan cities, and you can still walk in through an Etruscan gate. Most of the town you see today is medieval: grey stone palaces, narrow lanes and long views over bare clay hills.

Volterra is quieter than its famous neighbour and works well for one or two nights. It suits travelers who like ancient history, small museums and slow walks. The town is also known for alabaster, which local workshops still carve by hand. Readers of the *Twilight* novels may know it as the home of the vampire Volturi.

When to visit

May, June and September are the best months, with warm days and cool evenings. July and August are hot at midday, but the hilltop often catches a breeze. Winter is cold, damp and windy, with occasional snow, and museums keep shorter hours.

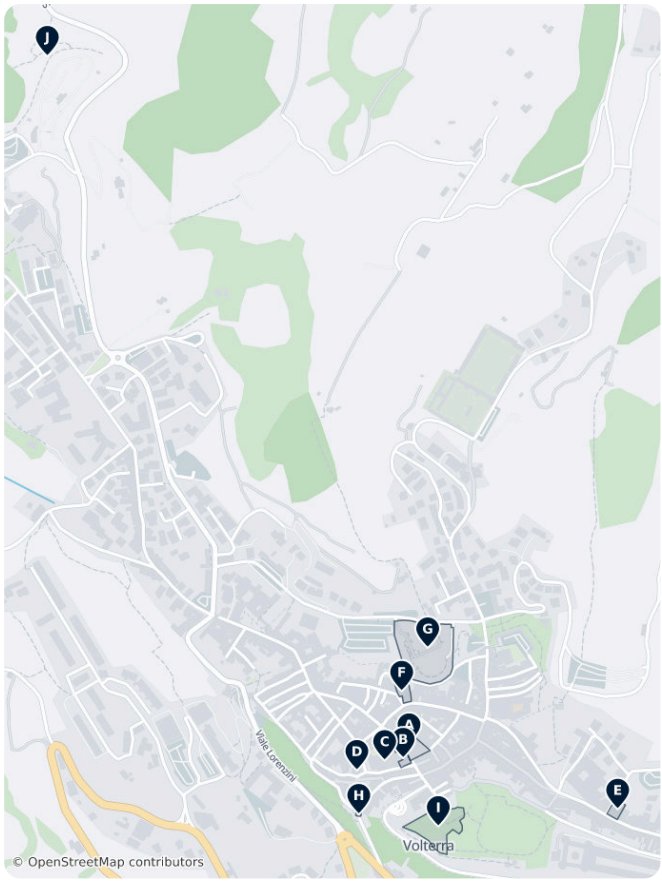
The biggest annual event is **Volterra A.D. 1398**, held on two Sundays in mid-August. The centre and the archaeological park go back to the late Middle Ages, with nobles, merchants, monks, musicians and jugglers in costume, plus food stalls, dances and games.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	8° / 13° Feels like 4°	2° / -3°	Dry air
February	Poor Poor for sightseeing	9° / 14° Feels like 5°	2° / -4°	Dry air
March	Fair Fair for sightseeing	12° / 17° Feels like 8°	4° / -1°	Dry air
April	Good Good for sightseeing	16° / 20° Feels like 12°	7° / 2°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	20° / 26°	11° / 7°	Dry air · Calm winds
June	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 31°	15° / 11°	Calm winds
July	Great Great for sightseeing	29° / 33°	18° / 15°	25 sunny days · Calm winds
August	Great Great for sightseeing	29° / 34°	18° / 15°	22 sunny days · Calm winds
September	Great Great for sightseeing	24° / 29°	15° / 10°	Dry air · Calm winds
October	Good Good for sightseeing	19° / 24°	11° / 6°	Dry air
November	Poor Poor for sightseeing	13° / 18° Feels like 10°	6° / 0°	14 rainy days · Dry air
December	Poor Poor for sightseeing	9° / 13° Feels like 5°	3° / -3°	12 rainy days · Dry air

Best months: May, June, July, August, September

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

Top sights



A Piazza dei Priori is the medieval main square, closed in by stone palaces. It is the natural place to start a walk.

On the square, B Palazzo dei Priori was begun in 1208 and is the oldest town hall in Tuscany. Inside you can visit the historic council rooms.

Just behind the square, C Basilica Cattedrale di Santa Maria Assunta has a gilded coffered ceiling and a rare 13th-century wooden sculpture of the Deposition. The octagonal D Battistero stands opposite its main door.

E Museo etrusco Guarnacci holds hundreds of Etruscan funerary urns carved in alabaster and local stone. Its best-known pieces are the thin bronze figure called the *Ombra della Sera* and the terracotta Urn of the Spouses.

F Pinacoteca e Museo Civico is the town's art gallery. Its highlight is the dramatic *Deposition* painted by *Rosso Fiorentino* in 1521.

G Teatro Romano dates from the 1st century BC and was uncovered in the 1950s. You can see it for free from the road along the walls above, or buy a ticket to walk among the ruins.

H Porta all'Arco is an Etruscan city gate from the 4th to 3rd century BC. Three worn stone heads still look out from the arch.

In the hilltop park, I Acropoli etrusca shows the foundations of two Etruscan temples and a large Roman cistern.

On the western edge of town, J Le Balze are steep, eroding clay cliffs. Over the centuries they have swallowed churches and Etruscan tombs.

A combined 72-hour Volterra Card covers the main museums and archaeological sites. Musei di Volterra

Volterra – Plan Your Trip

Turn the places from this guide into a real itinerary, with smart routing, time estimates, and everything you need for a perfect trip.

3M+ downloads · 4.6 stars · 15 years of trip planning

App Store · Google Play

Scan to download the app

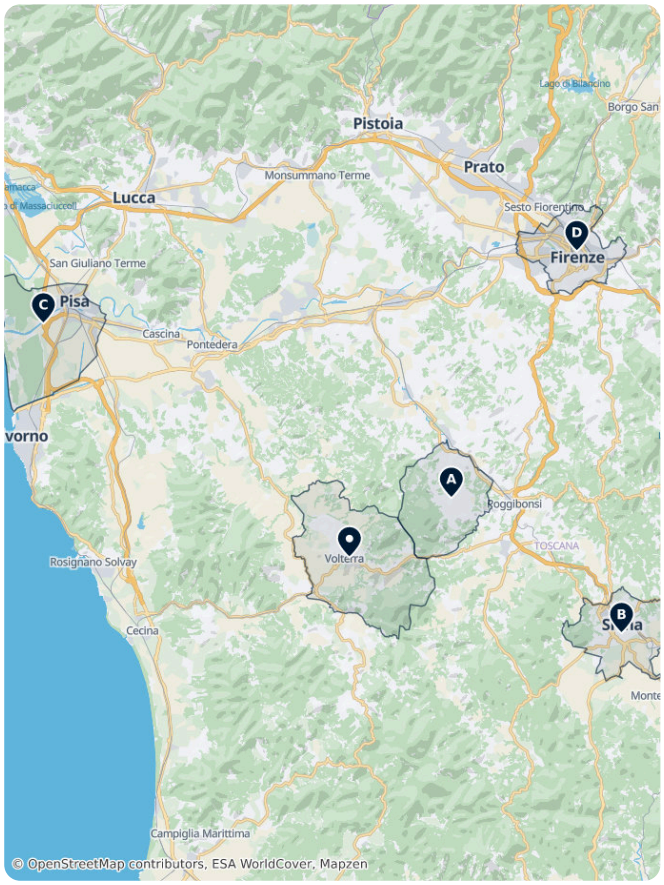
What to experience

Some of the best moments in Volterra are tied to its crafts and its views.

- Watch alabaster carvers at work: several workshops along Via Porta all'Arco and nearby streets still shape the stone by hand. Ecomuseo dell'alabastro explains how the stone travels from quarry to finished piece.
- Walk the walls at sunset: follow the road along the northern walls, above the Roman theatre, as the light falls on the Cecina valley.
- Learn about the prison theatre: Fortezza Medicea is still a working prison and is closed to visitors. Its inmate theatre company, the Compagnia della Fortezza, was founded in 1988 and has toured major Italian theatres.

Day trips

Volterra sits in quiet country, so most day trips are easiest by car.



- Colle di Val d'Elsa — ≈30 min by car. A hill town with a long upper street of old palaces and a tradition of crystal glassmaking.
- Larderello — ≈40 min by car to the south. A geothermal area with steam rising from the hills, power-plant cooling towers and a museum about geothermal energy.
- A San Gimignano — ≈40 min by car, or a direct bus in summer. The medieval town of stone towers and Vernaccia white wine.
- B Siena — ≈1 hour by car, or by bus with a change in Colle di Val d'Elsa. The Gothic city of the Campo square and the striped cathedral.
- C Pisa — ≈1 hour by car, or by bus and train via Pontedera. The Leaning Tower and the Field of Miracles.
- D Florence — ≈1 h 20 min by car, or by bus via Colle di Val d'Elsa. Long for a day, but possible.

Where to explore

Volterra fits easily into a tour of Tuscan towns and cities.

- **Hill towns**: San Gimignano, Montepulciano, Pienza and Montalcino.
- **Cities**: Siena, Pisa, Florence and Lucca.
- **The coast**: Cecina is the nearest beach town, west down the Cecina valley.

Getting there

- **By air**: Pisa airport is the closest, about 65 km away (≈1 hour by car). Florence airport is ≈1 h 20 min by car. Without a car, travel from Pisa to Pontedera by train, then take the bus.
- **By train**: there is no station on the hill. The usual rail gateway is Pontedera, on the Pisa–Florence line, with regular buses up to Volterra. Trenitalia
- **By bus**: Autolinee Toscane runs the regional buses. The main routes come from Pontedera and from Colle di Val d'Elsa, where you change for Florence and Siena. In summer a direct bus also runs from San Gimignano. Buses arrive at the edge of the old town. Autolinee Toscane
- **By car**: regional road SR68 links Volterra with the coast near Cecina and with Colle di Val d'Elsa. Road SR439 comes up from Pontedera.

Getting around

- **On foot**: the walled centre is compact and best seen on foot. Expect some steep lanes and cobbles, especially near the walls and the park.
- **Buses**: you only need buses to leave town. Buy tickets in the Autolinee Toscane app or at a ticket office, or tap a contactless bank card when you board and again when you get off.
- **Cycling**: the centre is too steep and paved for easy riding. The quiet roads in the surrounding hills suit fit road cyclists and e-bikes.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The walled centre is compact and easy to explore on foot, with some steep, cobbled lanes.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

Too steep and paved for easy riding in town; the quiet hill roads around it suit fit road cyclists and e-bikes.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?** You do not need one in town. A car is the easiest way to see the countryside, since bus links are slow and infrequent.
- **Restrictions**: the historic centre is a **limited traffic zone (ZTL)** watched by cameras. Do not drive through the gates unless your hotel has registered your plate.
- **Parking**: use the paid car parks around the walls, such as Porta Fiorentina, Viale dei Filosofi, Stazione and Gioconovo. Rates are about 2 € per hour or 10–12 € per day, charged from 8:00 to 20:00. Enter your plate at the meter, and use the EasyPark or MyCicero app to extend your time.

Food & drink

Volterra cooks hearty inland Tuscan food. Look for pappardelle with wild boar sauce, thick vegetable soups and grilled meat. The local sheep's cheese, Pecorino delle Balze Volterrane, has protected status. In autumn, truffles from the nearby woods appear on many menus.

Most restaurants and wine bars cluster along Via Matteotti, Via Guarnacci and the lanes around Piazza dei Priori. Volterragusto, an autumn food festival, fills the centre with local produce.

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.

Volterra – Plan Your Trip
Turn the places from this guide into a real itinerary, with smart routing, time estimates, and everything you need for a perfect trip.
3M+ downloads · 4.6 stars · 15 years of trip planning
App Store · Google Play
Scan to download the app

Safety & health

Volterra is a very safe town, and crime against visitors is rare. The main risks are physical: steep, worn stone streets become slippery in rain, and winter winds on the ridge can be strong.

At Le Balze the cliff edges are unstable, so stay behind fences and on marked paths. In summer, carry water and a hat, as there is little shade on the walls.

History

Volterra began as Velathri, one of the strongest cities of the Etruscans. Its huge stone walls enclosed far more ground than the later medieval town, and the city controlled the farmland, salt and minerals of the valleys below. Porta all'Arco and the temple foundations of Acropoli etrusca come from this time, while the urns in Museo etrusco Guarnacci show how its people honoured their dead.

Under Rome the town became Volaterrae and gained Teatro Romano. In the Middle Ages it was a free commune, and Palazzo dei Priori was built as the seat of its government. Rivalry with Florence ended in 1472, when Florentine troops sacked the town in a dispute over alum mines. The Medici then built Fortezza Medicea to control it.

Alabaster carving grew into a major trade in the 18th and 19th centuries, with Volterra pieces sold across Europe and beyond. In 1944, local people filled Porta all'Arco with paving stones to stop retreating German troops from blowing it up.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Italy at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

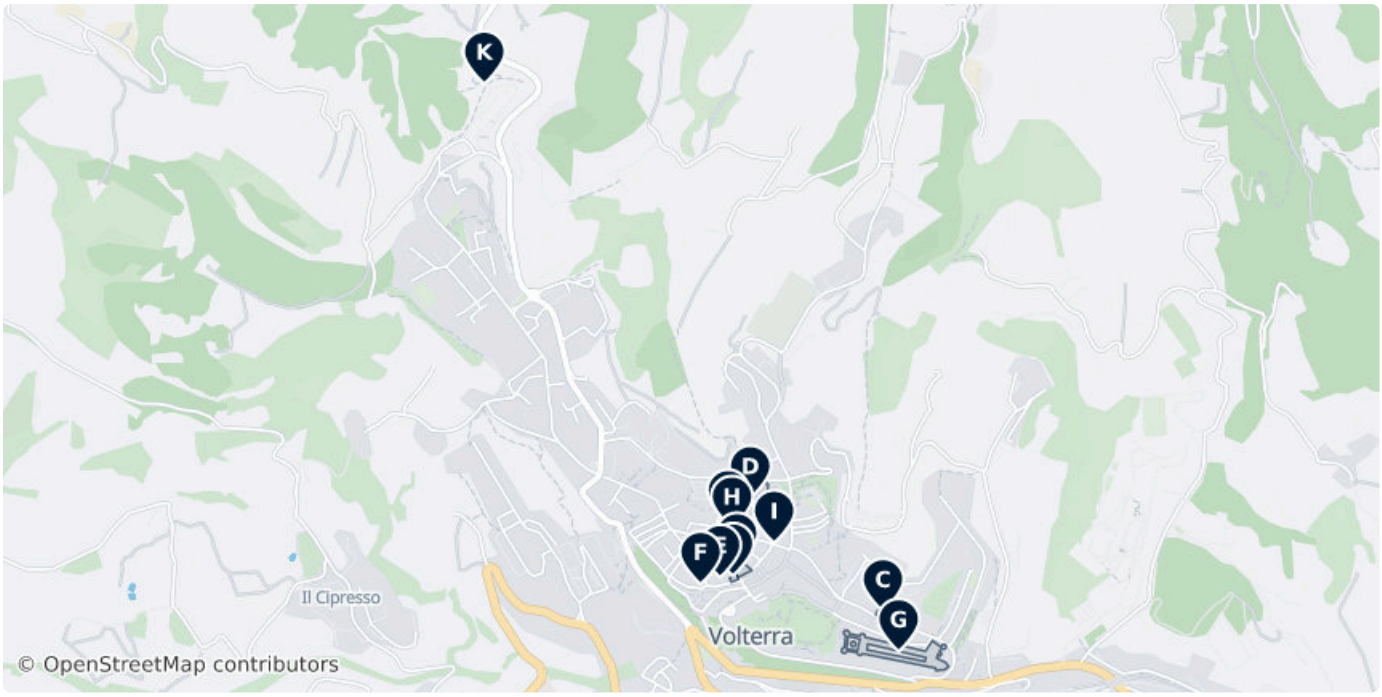
Type C / Type F / Type L
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Italian

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Volterra Highlights

The medieval heart of Volterra: its civic palaces, cathedral, Medici fortress and the great Etruscan museum.





A Palazzo dei Priori

Begun in 1208, this stone town hall is often called the oldest in Tuscany, and its tower looks out over the hills.

1 Piazza dei Priori, Volterra 56048, Italy
(43.40182, 10.85943)

comune.volterra.pi.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT...



B Piazza dei Priori

This pedestrian square forms the civic and historical heart of medieval Volterra.

3 Piazza dei Priori, Volterra 56048, Italy
(43.40206, 10.85957)



C Guarnacci Museum

This museum houses a unique collection of Etruscan antiquities alongside ancient books.

Via Don Minzoni 15, 56048 Volterra (43.40096, 10.86439)

Mo–Su 10:00–18:30

comune.volterra.pi.it/musei/museo-etru... , +39 0588 86347



D Roman Theater

Uncovered during excavations in the 1950s, this ancient archaeological site reveals the city's Roman past.

Piazza Caduti Martiri dei Lager Nazisti, 56048 Volterra, Italy (43.40367, 10.86000)

comune.volterra.pi.it/flex/cm/pages/Se... , +39 328 0707834



E Volterra Cathedral

This Roman Catholic cathedral is dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

15 Via Giusto Turazza, Volterra 56048, Italy (43.40178, 10.85900)

animadivolterra.it



F Baptistery of Saint John

Standing directly in front of the cathedral, this thirteenth-century religious structure features a distinctive octagonal design.

Piazza S. Giovanni, 2, 56048 Volterra PI, Italy (43.40161, 10.85836)



G Medici Fortress

Perched on the highest point of the hill, this historic fortress overlooks the town.

51 Via di Castello, Volterra 56048, Italy (43.40000, 10.86491)



H Art Gallery and Civic Museum

This civic museum showcases a collection of works by Italian masters alongside coins and pottery.

Via dei Sarti 1, 56048 Volterra, IT (43.40294, 10.85940)

comune.volterra.pi.it/flex/cm/pages/Serv... , +39 588 87580

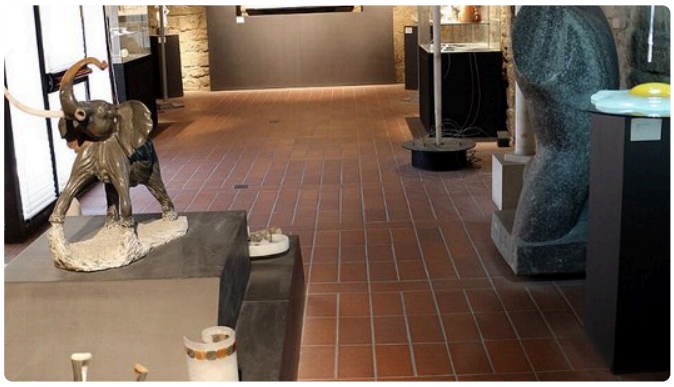


I Viti Palace

The former residence of an alabaster trader, this historic palace now welcomes visitors as a museum.

Volterra (43.40260, 10.86079)

palazzoviti.it, +39 58884047



J Alabaster Museum

A museum in a medieval tower-house that follows Volterra's alabaster from the quarry to the craftsman's workshop.

Piazza Minucci, 56048 Volterra, Italy (43.40310, 10.85927)

Mo–Su 10:30–17:00

comune.volterra.pi.it/flex/cm/pages/Serv... , +39 588 87 580



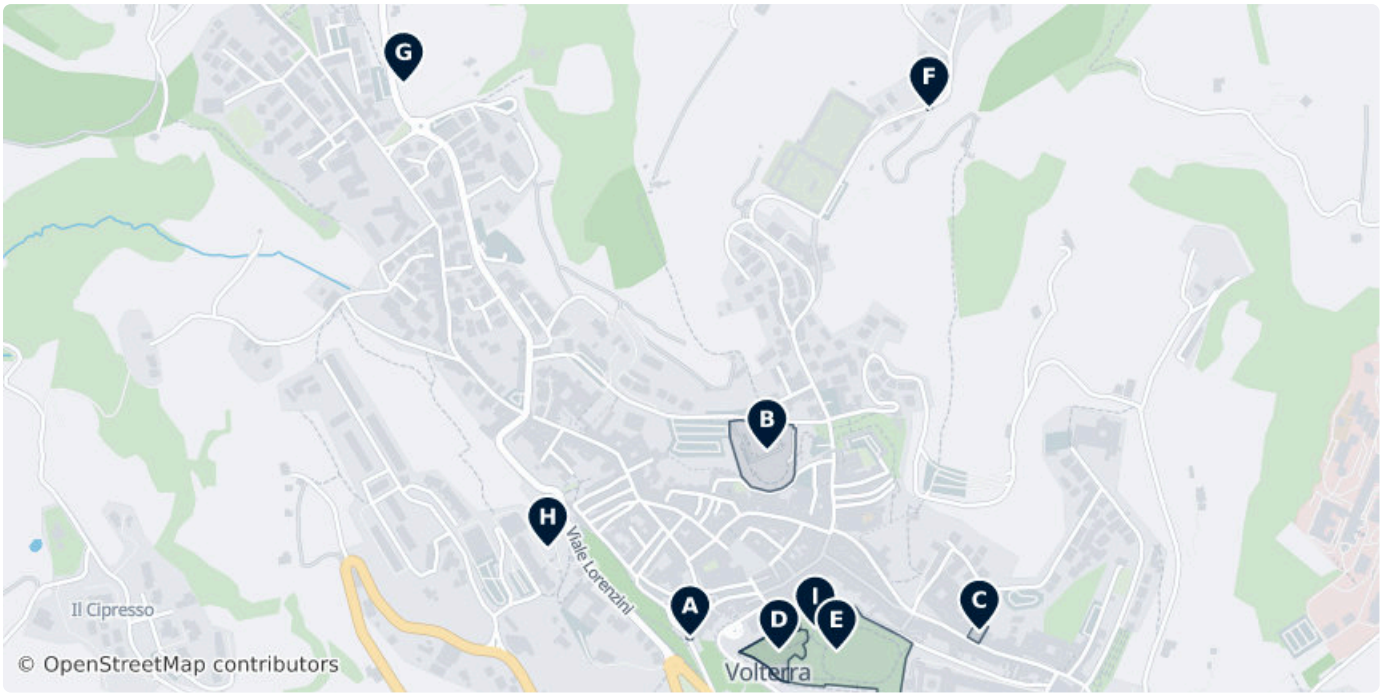
Le Balze

Steep, eroding clay cliffs on the western edge of town that have swallowed churches and Etruscan tombs over the centuries.

Strada Provinciale 15 Volterrana, 56048 Volterra PI, Italy
(43.41361, 10.85121)

Etruscan and Roman Volterra

Gates, walls, ruins and relics from ancient Velathri and Roman Volaterrae.





A The Etruscan Gate

Dating to Etruscan times, this ancient gateway offers a historic walk into the city with scenic surrounding views.

60 Via Porta all'Arco, Volterra 56048, Italy
(43.40087, 10.85841)



B Roman Theater

Discovered during archaeological excavations in the 1950s led by Enrico Fiumi, this ancient ruin site preserves the remains of the Roman city.

Piazza Caduti Martiri dei Lager Nazisti, 56048 Volterra, Italy
(43.40367, 10.86000)

comune.volterra.pi.it/flex/cm/pages/Se... , +39 328 0707834



C Guarnacci Museum

This museum houses a unique collection of Etruscan antiquities and historical books.

Via Don Minzoni 15, 56048 Volterra (43.40096, 10.86439)

Mo–Su 10:00–18:30

comune.volterra.pi.it/musei/museo-etru... , +39 0588 86347



D Acropoli etrusca

The foundations of two Etruscan temples and a Roman cistern on the highest part of the hill.

7 Piazza Martiri della Libertà, Volterra 56048, Italy (43.40067, 10.86024)



E Parco Archeologico "Enrico Fiumi"

The town's main park, on the hilltop beside the fortress, with the Etruscan acropolis inside it.

Via di Mende, Volterra 56048, Italy (43.40066, 10.86144)



F Porta Diana

The ruined jambs of an Etruscan gate on the old road north, outside the medieval walls.

30 Via Porta Diana, 56048, Italy (43.40881, 10.86335)

G Cinta etrusca

Stretches of the huge Etruscan wall circuit, which enclosed far more ground than the medieval town.

Via Padre Eugenio Barsanti, 56048 Volterra PI, Italy (43.40918, 10.85249)

H Terme "Guarnacciane"

18bp Viale Trento e Trieste, Volterra 56048, Italy (43.40221, 10.85547)

comune.volterra.pi.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT...

I Cisterna romana

(43.40101, 10.86100)

DATA SOURCES

Map data	© OpenStreetMap contributors, ESA WorldCover, Mapzen
Data	© OpenStreetMap contributors, Wikidata, Wikipedia, Tripomatic, Official websites

IMAGE CREDITS

- Palazzo dei Priori — "Palazzo dei priori di volterra, stemma del benino 1489" by Sailko, cc-by-2.5
- Piazza dei Priori — "Volterra-Piazza del Priori" by Jean-Christophe BENOIST, cc-by-2.5
- Guarnacci Museum — "Museo guarnacci, sarcofacogo etrusco in stile chiusino 01" by Sailko, cc-by-2.5
- Roman Theater — "Volterra-TheatreRomain" by Jean-Christophe BENOIST, cc-by-2.5
- Volterra Cathedral — "Artista toscano, deposizione del duomo di volterra, 1228 circa, 02" by Sailko, cc-by-3.0
- Baptistery of Saint John — "Battistero di San Giovanni, Volterra-8305" by Raimond Spekking, cc-by-sa-4.0
- Medici Fortress — "Volterra Castello1" by Giorces, pd
- Art Gallery and Civic Museum — "Descent from the Cross (Deposition from the Cross) title QS:P1476,en:"Descent..." by Rosso Fiorentino, pd
- Viti Palace — "870VolterraPalIncontriViti" by Geobia, cc-by-sa-3.0
- Alabaster Museum — "Ecomuseo dell'alabastro, 02" by Sailko, cc-by-3.0
- Le Balze — "Balze di Volterra (PI)" by Alex2015Genova, cc-by-sa-4.0
- The Etruscan Gate — "Portadell'arco" by Genuae, pd
- Roman Theater — "Volterra-TheatreRomain" by Jean-Christophe BENOIST, cc-by-2.5
- Guarnacci Museum — "Museo guarnacci, sarcofacogo etrusco in stile chiusino 01" by Sailko, cc-by-2.5
- Acropoli etrusca — "Etruscan Acropolis - Volterra, Pisa, Italy - March 25, 2016" by Giorgio Galeotti, cc-by-4.0
- Parco Archeologico "Enrico Fiumi" — "Etruscan Acropolis - Volterra, Pisa, Italy - March 25, 2016" by Giorgio Galeotti, cc-by-4.0
- Porta Diana — "Porta Diana (Volterra) 01" by Mongolo1984, cc-by-sa-4.0

A free travel guide — not for sale. Travel guide generated with AI on November 23, 2026. Text and layout by Tripomatic, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, available under the ODbL. Photos are under their own licences, as credited on this page.