

RECANATI, LE MARCHE, ITALY

A brief guide



Index

Recanati

Historical outline

Cultural Heritage in Recanati

Museums in Recanati

Food and Wine

Going out

Useful services



RECANATI

“They arrived at Recanati shortly after two in the afternoon. The town was eight miles inland from the coast, built a millennium ago on a hilltop. The little car struggled up the winding road, past groves of olives, in the shadow of an ancient defensive wall, crumbling in places, that still encircled the town. As they climbed, the countryside spread out before them like a storybook land - the Adriatic to the east, the Apennines to the west, and neighboring towns shimmering in the sunlight on their own tophills, rising from the undulating plains below.”

(Jonathan Harr, *The Lost Painting*, 2005)

Recanati is a dignified town of medieval origin built along the ridge of a hill in the heart of Le Marche, halfway between the cities of Ancona and Macerata and close to the Adriatic coast. Surrounded by a lush and mostly unspoiled countryside, the town is a natural balcony overlooking the landscape of the region for miles.

Recanati is widely known in Italy for being the birthplace of writer Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837) and Opera tenor Beniamino Gigli (1890-1965), although it is still relatively unknown to foreigners. Here literary and musical legacy is entangled with painting and ancient architecture: the town has a remarkable cultural heritage and several museums which are all worth a visit. Of particular interest to art lovers is the Civic Gallery which displays some of the finest paintings in Le Marche and which is renowned among art historians for hosting the most famous paintings by Renaissance painter Lorenzo Lotto.

Recanati is located in the center of Le Marche and is therefore an ideal base for the exploration of the region. It combines an excellent accessibility (it is within easy reach of the A14 motorway and the Ancona Airport) with a peaceful and authentic environment.

A HISTORICAL OUTLINE

The development and economic growth of Recanati and its surrounding area has to be attributed to its water flows, the Musone and Potenza rivers and its numerous streams. When in the Pre-Roman age the Piceneans arrived there already existed small settlements dating back to older times.

Legend has it that Recanati was a Roman colony (in the XVI century the people of Recanati had 'Recina sum peperit romana colonia' inscribed beneath the city's coat of arms), however, the actual town was set up at the end of the XII century when the Lords of three hilltop towns decided to come together. The three hilltop towns (Monte Volpino, Monte San Vito and Montemorello) still preserve their original names and the old architectural style. In the Monte Volpino district it is still possible to admire a house flanked by an arch which dates back to its constitution.

At the beginning of the disputes for the Investiture, Recanati sided with Frederick II and, in exchange for its support was rewarded a licence to build a port between the mouths of the river Aspio and Potenza and granted exemption from duties. Evidence of the alliance with the Ghibelline are also the swallow-tail merlons of the Civic Tower. The Emperor's Gold Seal can still be admired at the Civic Gallery in the Villa Colloredo Museum and is one of the most important evidence of the presence of the Swabians in Italy. Later Recanati sided with the Bishops and the Pope and was granted the right to call itself a 'City' and to mint coins.

Famous for its Statutes, Fair and commercial activity, in part performed by the Jews, it welcomed Albanian and Slav immigrants allotting them farming land. The reputation of 'Justissima Civitas' ((City of Justice) was due to its magistrates, whose competence was often consulted even by the more important towns, and were often required to pronounce sentence.

Built on the ridge of a hill, it was protected by strong city walls, later reinforced by Francesco Sforza. The only way of entrance, which were closed by doors, were narrow openings. The Gate of San Domenico, Cerasa, San Filippo among the most characteristic, allowed access to the city center, where the Town Hall and the church of San Domenico represented the very heart of civic life.

The town was occupied by Napoleon in 1798 and annexed to the kingdom of Italy in 1808. After the Congress of Vienna it was returned to the Papal State, but in 1860 it was conquered by the Piedmontese army who were joining the troops of Garibaldi coming from the south - thus becoming part of the new Kingdom of Italy.

CULTURAL HERITAGE IN RECANATI

Lorenzo Lotto and the restless Renaissance painting

Recanati has a very important Painting heritage which spans from the middle ages, through the Renaissance, well into the XVIII and XIX century.

In the cloister of the church of Sant'Agostino you can admire the remaining medieval frescoes attributed to Carlo da Camerino (XIV century); the other frescoes were detached twenty years ago to be restored and preserved and are nowadays displayed in the Civic Gallery hosted in the Palazzo Colloredo-Mels. In the same cloister is to be found the tower of the "lonely sparrow", the medieval tower bell of the church so called after a poem by Giacomo Leopardi, which has made it an important landmark in the history of Italian literature.

In the transition between the gothic and the renaissance, several movements of artistic renewal in central Italy, especially between Umbria and Le Marche, developed an art that, while embracing some of the innovative features characteristic of the Tuscan painters, in many ways carried the mark of medieval painting, with sometimes grotesque characters, an emphasis on decoration and an 'interest for the past'. Often labelled as 'Rinascimento eccentrico' (tr. Eccentric Renaissance), it includes true masters such as Carlo Crivelli and Ludovico Urbani, whose recently restored 'Polyptych of Recanati' is now displayed in the Museo Diocesano. Favoured by the high mobility of artists throughout Italy during the renaissance, this contamination of languages scattered true masterpieces throughout the papal state.

During the high Renaissance, Recanati gave birth to several artists and attracted many others, most notably the Venetian painter Lorenzo Lotto (c.1480 - 1556), who left here some of his best paintings that are today displayed at the Civic Gallery, where also remarkable works by Pietro da Montepulciano and Pomarancio can be admired. Lotto's works on display here are the Polyptych of San Domenico (1508), the Transfiguration (1512), the Pilgrim Saint James (1512) and the Annunciation (1527-29), one of the Lotto's most original creations, that alone would deserve a visit. This latter painting was originally painted for the small renaissance church of Santa Maria de' Mercanti in the old town main street Corso Persiani, just a few steps from the property. Crossing the central Piazza Leopardi, past the medieval tower you enter the Church of San Domenico that preserves the San Vincenzo Ferrer in Gloria (1513), the first attempt of Lotto at the technique of fresco.

The church of San Vito, whose facade of tortile columns in terracotta bricks is attributed to Vanvitelli, is worth a visit for its many paintings including some attributed to Guercino and Pomarancio. Further along, past the Palazzo Leopardi, you will find the Cappuccini church where you can admire the "Madonna dell'insalata", a painting of the XVII century attributed to Caravaggio and, on the main altar, a raffiguration of the Holy virgin by Pomarancio

Giacomo Leopardi and his literary legacy

Recanati is dearest to the hearths of the Italians for being the native town of Italy's greatest romantic poet, Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837), who was born here from a noble family and where he composed most of his oeuvre. The father Monaldo was extremely influential to the poet: perhaps a man of limited practical sense, he lost most of his patrimony in failed businesses, but assembled an expensive and extraordinary library that was opened to the public in 1812. Giacomo's loneliness, made worse by the formality of family manners (from the age of six, he was made to dress in black like his father), drove him into his father's library, where he read widely. By the age of ten, he no longer needed tutors, and by the time he was 17 he had mastered many areas of knowledge. He later referred to this devotion to study in a private letter to Pietro Giordani as "seven years of mad and desperate study during the period of my intellectual and physical formation. I tragically destroyed myself without remedy for my entire life, and I rendered my physical appearance miserable". In 1819 Leopardi tried to run away from home, but his father discovered his plan and stopped him. His isolation, physical suffering (which included temporary blindness), and the oppression of being confined in his household led him into depths of despair. But out of this dark period the poet, now in his twenty-first year, began to write with greater depth and maturity. In 1819, he wrote six of the early Idilli, including L'Infinito and Alla luna, all of them considered masterpieces of lyric poetry, and the following year wrote another patriotic poem, Ad Angelo Mai. Later in his life he travelled extensively around Italy but always returned to Recanati, failing to find himself at ease in the adoptive cities. In Florence he met Antonio Ranieri, a Neapolitan gentleman in exile, with whom he later visited Naples which his friend suggested would help him with its warm climate. In Naples he discovered a genuine passion for ice cream, the affection that Ranieri's sister Paolina showed him (in the Ranieris' villa Ferrigni on the slopes of Vesuvius), and the valued confidence of Basilio Puoti (the purista). He died of edema in Naples a few months later.

Recanati is today a monument to him and the streets of the old town still retain all the atmosphere that so much inspired his work. The Casa Leopardi, where the family still lives, is open to the public and here you can visit the marvelous library containing some 22,000 volumes, including rare antique volumes such as the first edition of the Encyclopedie by Diderot and Dalambert.

The Colle dell'Infinito park, where he used to retire in solitary contemplation, has been elected in

2001 one of the Italian Parks of Literature, protected areas where real itineraries can be traced through the landscape and territory inhabited and interpreted by writers of the past. UNESCO has pledged its support for the Parks of Literature and has lent its patronage to the project.

The 'Canti' by Giacomo Leopardi
(English translation by A. Kline)

Beniamino Gigli and the passion for Opera

Born in Recanati in 1890, the son of a shoe-maker and an opera buff, Beniamino Gigli was an Italian singer, widely regarded as one of the greatest operatic tenors of his time. Gigli made his debut at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City on November 26, 1920, in Mefistofele. Other roles he became particularly associated with included Rodolfo in Giacomo Puccini's *La bohème* and the title role in Umberto Giordano's *Andrea Chénier*, which he also recorded in full. Gigli rose to prominence after the death of Italian tenor Enrico Caruso in 1921. He was often called "Caruso Secondo," though he much preferred to be known as "Gigli Primo." In the local cemetery you can visit his mausoleum.

MUSEUMS IN RECANATI

Library of Casa Leopardi

The library comprises more than 20,000 volumes, most of which were collected and arranged by Monaldo Leopardi, the father of Giacomo.

The library's current layout does not reflect the exact original disposition, due to the recent introduction of necessary security measures. The arrangement of volumes and mementoes has, however, remained largely unaltered since the time of the library's foundation, as the index cards compiled by Monaldo and his children testify. Nowadays the library is entered by passing through several ante rooms which host the growing body of critical essays, editions and translations of Giacomo Leopardi's work.

OPENING TIMES

Autumn–Winter 9,30-12,30;14,30-17,30

Spring–Summer 9,00-18,00

La biglietteria chiude 30 minuti prima dell'orario di chiusura.

Closed: 25 December and 1 January.

CASA LEOPARDI

Via Leopardi, 14

62019 Recanati (Macerata)

Tel. e Fax +39 071 757 3380

www.giacomoleopardi.it

e-mail casaleopardi@giacomoleopardi.it

Museo di Villa Colloredo-Mels

Since 1998 the historical-artistic patrimony of the Municipality of Recanati has been exhibited in the noble villa 'Colloredo Mels', a building of remarkable artistic value surrounded by a large park. The collection has works of art and artefacts dating back to the period between the XIII and XIX centuries. They all relate to the history of Recanati, which for centuries was a commercial centre of great importance in the Adriatic area. Notable among the oldest objects is a carved walnut panel from the choir of the church of Sant'Agostino, dating back to 1396, signed by the master Ludovico da Siena and a polyptych by the painter Giacomo di Nicola from Recanati (early XV century). The real masterpieces, the pride of the picture gallery, are the works by Lorenzo Lotto: starting from the monumental polyptych painted in 1508 for the church of San Domenico, we pass to the *Trasfigurazione* which originally hung over the high altar in the church of Santa Maria of Castelnuovo (c.1512), and then on to the small painting of San Giacomo Maggiore and in pride of place the *Annunciazione* painted for the local merchants' confraternity, perhaps the most famous work by the Venetian painter. A documentary and artistic-historical section on the XVIII and XIX centuries completes the collection. It enables us to put into context the place and time in which Giacomo Leopardi was born and lived. There is also a collection of modern and contemporary works of art, mostly by local artists.

VILLA COLLOREDO MELS

Via Gregorio XII, 62019, Recanati

Tel. 07177570410

E-mail : spaziocultura@virgilio.it

Museo Diocesano

Located next door to the bigger museum hosted in the villa Colloredo-Mels, this one is an hidden gem for medieval art lovers. The collection includes several outstanding pieces, some of them of exceptional importance for the artistic history of the Marche. Among the others the paintings and the polyptychs of Ludovico Urbani (San Severino Marche, b. 1460, d. 1498) and Giacomo di Nicola da Recanati (b. 1441, d. 1466); the XVII cent. paintings of Guercino and Sassoferrato; some remarkable wooden staves dating back to the XIII century.

MUSEO DIOCESANO

Via Gregorio XII, 62019 Recanati (Mc)

The Gigli Museum

Hosted in the upper floor of the town hall in the central piazza leopardi, the museum is a must for Opera lovers and displays personal items, pictures, opera costumes and a unique press release of the great tenor who was born in Recanati. Between 1935 and 1951 he recorded 300 records, interpreted 61 opera lyrics and acted in 16 films. He performed at the Metropolitan in New York for twelve consecutive seasons and brought the Italian 'bel canto' all over the world, but always remained attached to his native land.

OPENING TIMES

Tuesday-Friday 10.00-13.00

Saturday-Sunday 15.00-20.00

MUSEO BENIAMINO GIGLI

Piazza Leopardi, 13

Tel.: ++39.07175871

FOOD AND WINE

The gastronomic tradition is an integral part of the cultural tradition of Le Marche. Generally in Recanati, and especially in the old town, the cuisine is mostly meat-based and prepared with products still coming directly from the countryside. The variety can be overwhelming but three typical products are recommended by the Macerata Tourism authorities.

VINCISGRASSI - a rectangular oven pasta covered in a béchamel sauce of giblets, brains, mince meat, mushrooms and a glass of wine.

CIAUSCOLO - a type of sausage made from pork which is ground three times and seasoned with salt, pepper and garlic. Excellent if spread on fresh or toasted bread.

LOCAL PECORINO - sheep's milk cheese eaten after 4 or six months maturation as a table cheese or used for grating after a year when it is firmer and more tasty.

Restaurants

Within short walking distance:

Hotel la Ginestra

Family-run hotel with a restaurant overlooking the public gardens. Delicious local food (try their "tagliatelle alla norcina" with black truffle), warm environment and good prices.

Via Calcagni 2, Recanati

Tel: 071-980355

Emilio

Probably the most genuine restaurant in the old town. Has been run by the same family for more than half a century. Cuisine in town doesn't come more genuine than this! Excellent value for money in a non-pretentious environment.

Via Belvedere 6, Recanati

Tel: 071-981291

La Torre Antica

A quiet family-run restaurant within the public gardens serving local food and very good pizza. In summer they make use of a very wide terrace overlooking the valley and the Apennines: perfect for an easy dinner with panorama.

Piazzale B. Gigli, Recanati

Tel: 071-757294

Borgo Antico

A more sophisticated option serving traditional food with a modern twist in a vaulted medieval space.

Vicolo Dell'Achilla 2

Tel: 071-7574286

Within short driving distance:

Da Dario

Excellent seafood and very good service. Located directly on the beach between Portorecanati and Numana, this is one of the local gems if you like crustacea and fish.

Via Scossicci 9, Porto Recanati (MC)
Tel: 071-976675

Il Diavolo del Brodetto

By now a legend, this place is perfect to taste the famous "Brodetto di pesce" typical of the coast of Le Marche.

Via Emilio Gardini 10, Porto Recanati (MC)
Tel: 071-9799251

La Scaletta

Excellent pizza at good prices.

Via Loreto 39, Porto Recanati
Tel: 071-9799313

Della Rosa

Excellent seafood restaurant in the heart of Sirolo.

Corso Italia 39, Sirolo (AN)
Tel: 071-9330689

Monte Conero

A hearty trattoria immersed in the splendid Conero landscape. Doesn't serve fish but delicious country food.

Via Monte Conero, Sirolo
Tel: 071-9330592

Da Silvio

Perched over the cliffs of the Coner riviera and overlooking the stunning bay of San Michele. Come here for a late afternoon swim and then pop up in the restaurant for amazing seafood.

Via Spiaggia San Michele - 60020 - Sirolo (AN)

Osteria del Moro

The clientele is a mix of lorry drivers and sophisticated locals, which can only mean that the food is great and the prices contained. The indoor rooms are elegant rustic while in summer you can eat outdoor under their lovely pergola. Country food (no fish).

Strada Regina 75, Potenza Picena (MC)
Telefono: 0733-870032

GOING OUT

Teatro Persiani

The municipal theatre is named after Giuseppe Persiani, an opera composer born in Recanati at the end of the XVIII cent. and who reached a wide celebrity throughout Europe in the first half of the XIX century. The theatre has been restored to its original splendour in recent years and offers a theatrical season managed by the Piccolo Teatro of Milan.

Sferisterio - Macerata Opera Festival

The Sferisterio in Macerata (about 20 minn. drive from Recanati) hosts a world renown Opera Festival, second in Italy only to the one hosted in Verona.

It was built in neoclassical style in the XIX century to host a handball game very popular at the time. In 1921, as the first presentation of what would become the Macerata Opera Festival, Pieralberto Conti staged Aida paid for by the soprano, Francisca Solari. This was followed by all parts of the arena, both front- and back-stage, being renovated and electricity introduced.

Today it holds an audience of over 3,000. The opera season includes classics such as La Traviata, Macbeth, Norma. It is possible to book online.

USEFUL SERVICES IN RECANATI

Hospital "SANTA LUCIA"

P.le A. da Recanati, 2 Tel. 07175831
Emergency Tel.0717572008

National Emergency Line Tel.118

Pharmacies

Farmacia Comunale Recanati Asfc P. Recanati
Viale Grazie 39/A, 62019 Recanati
Tel: 071-7574304

Farmacia Desiderio Annalisa
Piazzale Europa, 62019 Recanati
Tel: 071-7571355

Farmacia Poeti Mario
Piazza Leopardi 8, 62019 Recanati
Telefono: 071-981056;

Farmacia Recchioni L. M. & C. Snc
Corso Persiani 67, 62019 Recanati
Telefono: 071-981353;

Farmacia Verdecchia Alessandro
Via Calcagni 31, 62019 Recanati
Telefono: 071-7574264

SURROUNDINGS

The convenient location of Recanati allows visitors to easily enjoy all the amenities of the region.

It is only a short drive away from the cliffs of the Conero Riviera, boasting the beautiful villages of Portonovo, Sirolo and Numana, the best beach resorts this side of the Adriatic. The sanctuary of Loreto or the Opera Festival of Macerata are within a short driving distance, while the towns of Urbino or Ascoli Piceno are also within an easy reach. Several smaller and less famous towns like Cingoli, Montelupone, San Severino Marche or Offagna are all gems worth a visit.

Among the many tourist guides in english, we recommend 'The Rough Guide', which, to our knowledge, has the most extensive coverage of the Marche area.