



Perugia City Walk (allow 2-3 hours)

Walking time: 56 minutes, lots of steps and some steep climbs.

Perugia is the capital of Umbria but is often overlooked by tourists heading for nearby Assisi. Anyone attempting to enter the city by car will soon start to feel that the Perugians are determined to prevent visitors from reaching their amazing medieval city centre. For this reason I have included detailed instructions to help you negotiate the one-way system and its seemingly arbitrary sign posting.

The walk includes several stops and the actual time will be much longer than the stated walking time. I suggest aiming to arrive at about 9.30 in the morning; this leaves plenty of time to visit the *Collegio di Cambio*, the *Etruscan Well* and the church of *San Severo* before they shut for lunch.

To Find the Car Park “Parcheggio Partigiani”

First get to the *Prepo* exit on the motorway around Perugia, have a look at a map before you set off because the roads from different directions join in some fairly bizarre junctions with limited sign posting. If you are coming from *Umbertide*, *Assisi* or *Todi*, keep following signs for *Perugia* and the exit is directly after the second tunnel. If you are coming from the direction of *Lake Trasimeno*, you go through several tunnels and *Prepo* is the junction after *San Faustino*.

Once at the *Prepo* exit, the task of finding the *Centro Storico* begins. At times, you may see signs for the *Centro* pointing in different directions to my instructions; ignore them. If you have come from the direction of the *Lake*, turn right at the end of the slip road and pass under the motorway. Traffic from the other direction feeds into the road at this point and there is an obligatory right turn around the *Perugia Plaza Hotel*.

Once around the hotel, move across into the left-hand lane and continue to the T-junction at the top with traffic lights. Turn left here and get into the right hand lane. The right lane feeds around to the right (uphill again), next to a sign for the *Centro*. Continue uphill until you come to a traffic light with a no-entry sign ahead of you. Turn left here (there is also a sign for the *Piazzale Europa* car park). Get into the right hand lane and you come to a T-junction on a sweeping curve; turn right here.

Keep going for the next 1.2km along the tree-lined road (ignore signs for the *Piazzale Europa* car park). The road briefly becomes single lane and one-way before opening out into 3 lanes. Get into the left-hand lane and shortly after, turn left into the *Parcheggio Partigiani*, (Partisans' Car Park). You may have to wait a few minutes to get in.

Walk Synopsis

A-B From the car park head up into the *Underground City*.

B-C Follow the *Corso Vannucci* to the *Palazzo dei Priori* and then *Piazza IV Novembre*.

C-D A short walk takes you to the *Etruscan Well*.

D-E Another short walk takes you to *San Severo* and an early fresco by Raphael.

E-F Head through narrow alleys to a great view from *Piazza Gio Battista Rossi Scott*.

F-G Go down some steps and arrive at the *Etruscan Arch*.

G-H Go past the *University for Foreigners* to the medieval aqueduct.

H-I Climb the aqueduct.

I-J Head through streets and alleys arriving at the *Oratorio di San Bernardino*.

J-C Climb back to the *Corso Vannucci*.

C-B-A Visit the *Galleria Nazionale dell' Umbria* and then return to the car park.

Start (A)

0:00

Leave the car park, (take your ticket with you) and head for the pedestrian exit, walk straight along the underground corridor following signs for *Centro* and *Scala Mobile* (escalator). At the end of the corridor, turn left onto an escalator. Immediately after this, go up a ramp directly in front of you. Turn right and go up the next escalator, at the top, you walk past some market stalls; it is now 3 minutes since you left the car park. Follow the footpath, you enter a tunnel and ride a series of escalators taking you up. 4 minutes from the stalls you arrive in the *Underground City* (B).

The Underground City

0:07

The *Underground City* is an extraordinary sight, vaulted brick ceilings have been constructed over medieval streets, houses and churches. This is all that remains of the *Rocca Paolina*, the papal fortress built to subdue the city by Pope Paul III. In 1540 the Pope deliberately provoked the Perugians, who were led by the bloodthirsty Baglioni family, into a revolt. He achieved this by breaking his promise not to raise the tax on salt. In doing so, he could finally end the city's independence from *Rome*. He could also avenge himself of the murder of a Papal envoy, committed six years earlier by a member of the Baglioni family. The Papal army quickly captured the city and once all the nuns of the city had kissed his feet the Pope built the *Rocca Paolina* straight over the houses of the Baglioni and their neighbours.

The *Rocca Paolina* was torn down in 1860, when Garibaldi liberated the city from Papal control. A year earlier, the Swiss Guard massacred around two thousand citizens who were participating in a pro-unification demonstration. After Garibaldi had captured *Perugia*, the Papal soldiers were escorted out of the city to prevent the citizens from getting their revenge.

At the top of the escalators, turn right down *Via Bagliona*, the underground street. After a minute you emerge through a door into the open air, walk down the steps and then turn around. The door you walked through is set into an arch, the *Porta Marzia* (Gate of Mars). The lower blocks date back to the Etruscans and the upper part is Roman. The Pope's architect, Sangallo the Younger, liked the arch so much that he dismantled it and incorporated it into the walls of the fortress. Originally, it would have been the city's southern entrance.

0:08

Return through the gate and make your way back up *Via Bagliona*. You can spend a while wandering around the fortress. Once you have finished, go straight past the escalators that you arrived on, and you come to another escalator going up to the right. This takes you up to *Piazza Italia*; all the buildings here date to the period after the demolition of the *Rocca Paolina*, the 1860's and 70's.

0:10

If you came straight here from the *Porta Marzia*, the walking time is 2 minutes. Cross the large grassed roundabout in the middle of *Piazza Italia* and head straight towards the wide pedestrian street directly in front of you. This is the *Corso Vannucci*, named after

Perugia's most famous painter, Pietro Vannucci (also known as Perugino). The width of this road is exactly the same as the main streets found in excavations of Etruscan settlements.

0:12

After 2 minutes, you should be alongside the most impressive building in Perugia, the Palazzo dei Priori, (the medieval city hall and still seat of local government today). The size and grandeur of the building is testimony to Perugia's wealth as an independent city-state in the period before Papal rule.

0:14

It's time for a break, I recommend *Bar Sandri* on your right (closed Mondays), easily recognisable by the impressive display of chocolate cakes in the window. If the weather is nice, sit at a table in the street and a waiter will come out and serve you. The hot chocolate (*cioccolata calda*) is made on the premises and is not to be missed. There are no toilets in the bar, if you need to go, look for a WC sign pointing down a street just to the left of the *Palazzo dei Priori*.

The Collegio del Cambio and the Collegio della Mercanzia

Now it is time for some serious art. A small door in the *Palazzo dei Priori* (opposite *Bar Sandri*) leads to the *Collegio del Cambio* (open Mon-Sat 0900-1230 1400-1730 Sun 0900-1230), the meeting rooms of the moneychangers' guild. The main room contains the finest frescoes by Perugino (Pietro Vannucci) in *Perugia*. It's worth buying the more expensive ticket; this allows you to visit the chamber of the merchants' guild (*Collegio della Mercanzia*) afterwards.

A fresco is painted straight onto a thin layer of fresh (*fresco*) plaster; the paint is actually absorbed into this surface. It is skilled work as mistakes are hard to rectify and the plaster has to be painted before it dries (the artist prepares a small section of fresh plaster each day). The frescoes in the *Collegio del Cambio* compare figures from Greek and Roman history and mythology with their biblical counterparts. For good measure, astrological symbols are thrown into the overall design on the ceiling. The linking of pagan and Christian symbols and ideas was common in the 15th Century (Perugino received the commission in 1499).

Renaissance thinkers looked back to the civilisations of *Greece* and *Rome* to rediscover the knowledge lost in the Dark Ages. In the 1500's, the threat to the Papacy from Protestantism led to a much narrower, strictly Christian view of what was acceptable in works of art. In the middle of the south wall, there is a self-portrait of a well fed Perugino in a red hat and painted to look as if it is a picture hanging on the wall. Incidentally, a very young Raphael may have assisted Perugino with these frescoes, although there is no documented evidence. It is thought that Raphael could have been the model for the prophet Daniel.

There is a chapel dedicated to St. John the Baptist beyond this room; the frescoes are not by Perugino and the quality is not as high, although children usually enjoy looking at the gruesome picture of St. John's decapitation. On leaving the *Collegio del Cambio*, turn left and walk past the main entrance to the Palazzo, a large arch, and look for another, much smaller door. This is the entrance to the *Collegio della Mercanzia* (open Mon-Sat 0900-1230 1400-1730 Sun 0900-1230), the chambers of the merchants' guild. Use your ticket from the *Collegio del Cambio* to enter. The room doesn't take long to look around but is decorated with impressive wooden panelling and inlays.

Piazza IV Novembre

Turn left on leaving the *Collegio del Cambio* and a minute later you are in the *Piazza IV Novembre*, the centre of the city (C). The *Duomo* and the *Palazzo dei Priori* face each other across the square. The Piazza is dominated by a medieval fountain, the *Fontana Maggiore*. It dates to 1277 and was made by the sculptors Nicola Pisano and his son Giovanni.

Piazza IV Novembre

Art historians often cite the realistic style (influenced by Greek and Roman sculpture) of these sculptors when they look to the roots of the Renaissance and the end of the Gothic. Gothic is the Northern European medieval style; the name is derived from a sneering association in the mind of Renaissance man with barbarian invaders from the north.

Again, Christian symbolism is freely mixed with astrological signs and Greek and Roman mythology. Look for the signs of the zodiac and the corresponding labour of the month, (locals still kill their pigs in December). Others to look out for are the lion and griffin (the symbol of Perugia). Scenes from Roman legends and Aesop's fables can be found next to the biblical images of the Garden of Eden and Samson and Delilah, as well as representations of science and the arts. The upper basin has statues representing *Perugia* and the surrounding countryside. Walk around the fountain and the corners of the panels on the upper and lower basins never converge, this is deliberately intended to draw your eye around it.

Take a look at the façade of the *Duomo*. The arches on the left, the *Loggia di Braccio Fortebraccio*, were built in 1423 by the powerful mercenary and Lord of Perugia of the same name (see *Montone* walks). Unless you have a particular interest in Italian cathedrals, the interior is not worth exploring.

The pulpit to the right of the entrance was specially built for the Franciscan preacher, San Bernadino di Siena. He was so popular that the crowds could not fit into the *Duomo* and he addressed them in the square. Later on in the walk, you come to the *Oratorio di San Bernadino*, a church dedicated to his memory. The statue of the Pope, Julius III, may seem a little strange in a city where the Papacy

was so unpopular; he did away with many of the harsh taxes that Paul III imposed on the city and was the one Pope that the Perugians liked.

Pozzo Etrusco (Etruscan Well)

0:15

Leave the square to the right of the *Duomo*. This takes you into *Piazza Dante*, cross the road on your right (this is disguised as a pedestrian area until you notice the cars) and 2 minutes from *Piazza IV Novembre*, you will come to the entrance to the *Etruscan Well*. Look for a sign for the *Pozzo Etrusco (D)* above the entrance to an alley on your right.

0:17

Walk down the alley and go in the entrance door on your left. Keep your ticket, it will also allow you access to the next point of interest on the walk, the fresco at the church of *San Severo*. If it is a busy day, you may have to wait a while because only six people are allowed on the bridge over the well at any one time. The well is huge, and supplied the whole of the city with water in Etruscan times; it would seem that Roman engineering skills developed with Etruscan knowledge.

San Severo

When you leave the *Etruscan Well*, turn right at the end of the alley and walk across the right side of *Piazza Piccinino*. Look for the wellhead on your left; you were standing under it a few minutes ago. You enter *Via Bontempi* and 2 minutes after leaving the *Pozzo Etrusco*, take a left up *Via Raffaello*, a narrow street. A minute later, you arrive at the next point of interest on the walk, the church of *San Severo (E)*.

0:20

In a side-chapel of the church, you will find a fresco started by the young Raphael and finished after his death by Perugino, his former teacher. Before he had completed the fresco, Raphael was called to *Rome* and left it unfinished. In 1521, a year after Raphael died; Perugino finished the fresco, already aware that his former pupil had outshone him. The difference between the top and bottom of the frescoes is noticeable, Perugino was clearly in decline in his final years; think of the frescoes he painted at the height of his career in the *Collegio del Cambio*.

Turn right as you come out of the chapel, *Via Raffaello* turns into *Via dell'Aquila*, this is a short stretch under some vaults and then you take a left up the steps of a narrow alleyway. 3 minutes from *San Severo*, you arrive in the triangular *Piazza Biordo Michelotti* (look for the sign behind you on your left). Take the road down to the right out of the piazza, after a minute, the road curves left and you come to *Piazza Gio Battista Rossi Scotti (F)*. Piazza seems to be a bit of an exaggeration; it is little more than a road with a wide pavement. However, along the edge of the piazza, there is a fantastic view of rooftops, churches, walls and hills. Don't lean too far over the wall, it's a long drop below.

Arco Etrusco (Etruscan Arch)

0:24

Once you have finished admiring the view, continue along the piazza and head down the wide steps directly in front of you. The steps double back on themselves a couple of times and 2 minutes later, you come to a junction with a steep road. Turn right and follow the steps down. A minute later you arrive at the busy *Piazza Fortebraccio*. Cross the road you have just walked down, pass a fountain on your left and you come to the *Arco Etrusco (Etruscan Arch)*; the most impressive entrance to *Perugia (G)*.

0:27

To properly admire the arch, walk straight past it and cross the road on your right. A minute after arriving at the piazza, you should be standing on the path outside the large red brick building, the *Università dei Stranieri (University for Foreigners)*, this is the best place to get a good view. The large stone blocks at the bottom are Etruscan, dating to the 2nd Century BC, the top part of the arch is Roman and the loggia on the top left is Renaissance.

If you visit the *Galleria Nazionale Dell' Umbria* at the end of the walk, you will see a fresco of *Perugia* painted before the loggia was added. Note the inscription "Augusta Perusia" at the top of the arch. The Emperor Augustus captured the city in the power struggle following the death of Julius Caesar; note the size of the lettering, clearly the emperor considered himself to be far more important than the city.

A Medieval Aqueduct

0:28

Turn around and walk away from the arch, keeping the *University for Foreigners* on your left. Turn left onto *Via Ariodante Fabretti*, the footpath along here is narrow and then finishes altogether. Traffic is only allowed in one direction at a time along this stretch. After maybe 200m without the footpath, turn left onto the pedestrian *Via Aquedotto (H)* It is 2 minutes since you left the *University for Foreigners*.

0:30

Via Aquedotto was a medieval aqueduct carrying water to the *Fontana Maggiore*, the medieval fountain you saw earlier on. You may be surprised to see that the water flowed uphill; the water was piped from a source higher than the fountain. The siphoning action was aided by a steady reduction in the pipe diameter; this increased the water pressure along the length of the aqueduct.

Walking along the aqueduct is a wonderful experience. You can look down into gardens and onto rooftops and should you wish,

straight into houses. At the time of writing, there is a rude message on one fridge to confront those looking in. I'm not sure it has the desired effect, since I look out for it every time! The aqueduct ends in a set of steps. 8 minutes from the start of *Via Aquedotto*, you arrive at the top (**I**); turn right onto *Via Baldeschi*.

0:38

Via Baldeschi leads to *Piazza Felice Cavalotti* almost straight away. Continue in the same direction over the piazza and then along *Piazza Morlacchi* (again, this is more of a road than a piazza). After 2 minutes, you come to a junction in front of the *Uffici Tributi* (Tax Office). Turn right here and then immediately left onto *Via Aquilone*, you then pass a building on your right called the *Università Degli Studi* (University of Studies).

0:40

One minute later, turn left onto *Via Francolina* and then immediately right onto *Via della Tartaruga* (Tortoise Street). 2 minutes later, turn left at the end of *Via della Tartaruga* and after about 20 metres, turn right down some steps. You have to turn left at the bottom of the steps onto *Via delle Siepe*. The sign is at the far end of the street; when you get there it is 3 minutes from the top of the steps. Turn right and a minute later you will find yourself facing two churches with a large grassed area in front.

The Oratorio di San Bernardino

0:47

In good weather, this is a popular meeting place for students from the University. The smaller church on the left is the *Oratorio di San Bernardino* (**J**); it is dedicated to the popular preacher for whom the pulpit on the outside of the *Duomo* was built. Cross the grass and a minute later you are standing in front of the church. Have a good look at the façade (inside it's quite plain).

The marble reliefs on the façade were sculpted by the artist Agostino di Duccio; they show scenes from the life of San Bernardino. The sculptor is not the Sienese Duccio di Buoninsegna, the famous medieval painter, but a Florentine artist of sufficient fame to have had an attempt at carving the block from which Michelangelo eventually sculpted David. When you look at the carvings, note the one where the preacher orders the Perugians (well known for their love of fighting) to burn their weapons. As the weapons burn, the Devil flies out of the fire. This has parallels to the "Bonfire of the Vanities" which occurred later on in Florence under the influence of the Dominican preacher Savonarola. Instead of weapons, the Florentines burnt their luxury items.

Leave the church and return the way you came, after 2 minutes, you pass *Via della Siepe* on your left. Ahead, you can see a large tower; these were common in medieval Italian cities and were the fortified houses of the aristocracy. As the merchant classes became more powerful, cities began to control the surrounding countryside. The aristocratic families found themselves owing allegiance to the new city-states.

0:49

Fortified towers within the walls of a city, especially when owned by powerful families with their own interests to pursue, presented too much of a threat to the new rulers. Most were pulled down, if you visit the *National Gallery of Umbria* after the walk, there is a fresco of the *Perugia* skyline which shows many of these towers (the same fresco which depicts the *Etruscan Arch* without the Renaissance loggia). One minute later you pass beside the base of the tower, continue walking up the street and 6 minutes beyond this, you pass under an arch and emerge back onto the *Corso Vannucci near the Piazza IV Novembre* (**C**).

Galleria Nazionale dell' Umbria (National Gallery of Umbria)

0:56

Now it's time for more art. The *Galleria Nazionale dell' Umbria* (open daily 0900-1900, closed on the first Monday of each month) is housed within the *Palazzo dei Priori* and contains more work by Perugino, as well as altarpieces by Fra Angelico and Piero della Francesca. Turn left onto the *Corso Vannucci* and almost immediately, turn left again through the main entrance to the *Palazzo dei Priori* (the Gothic arch you passed earlier in the walk).

Walk straight on to the back of the building and you will find the ticket office through an entrance on your right. The ticket office for the museum is located here, well away from the gallery, which is located on the third floor. Once you have your ticket, you need to get to the gallery, there is a small lift near the ticket office or you can use the stairs near the entrance.

For those seriously interested in the development of Umbrian Art and its Sienese influences (many of the painters who worked at Assisi were Sienese), the first rooms display medieval art. I don't tend to linger here, I get a little bored looking at Crucifixions and paintings of the Madonna con Bambino, but feel free to take your time.

In room VIII, you will find an altarpiece by Fra Angelico (the museum uses his other name; "Beato Angelico"). Although he was a Renaissance painter, he was still influenced by the late medieval style, combining the newly mastered perspective with gold leaf and flowery backgrounds.

In room XI, you will find a sculpture of the Madonna and Child by Agostino di Duccio, the artist who carved the façade of the *Oratorio di San Bernardino*. The Madonna, especially, is surprisingly modern in style.

Turn around and you are confronted with, what in my opinion, is the museum's greatest masterpiece, an altarpiece from the church of St. Antony di Padua by Piero della Francesca. Piero della Francesca was a mathematician and his paintings demonstrate his interest

in perfect perspective. He was a teacher of Perugino and you might notice his influence in Perugino's paintings further on in the Gallery. The Tuscans and Umbrians both like to include him amongst their painters because the town where he lived, Borgo Sansepolcro, once Umbrian, was sold by the Pope and became part of Tuscany.

In room XV, there is a series of eight paintings from Perugino's workshop on the left and another, larger painting on the right. The paintings on the left show the miracles performed by San Bernardino di Siena, the popular preacher. The painting on the right, an Adoration of the Magi, painted around 1470, shows a much younger Perugino than the one you saw earlier, staring straight out of the crowd.

In room XXI, the walls are frescoed with scenes from the siege of *Perugia* by the Goths. Although the siege took place in AD 547, the cityscape is decidedly medieval. Note the *Etruscan Arch* minus the Renaissance loggia and the numerous fortified towers within the city. The fresco shows Perugians having thrown a calf, stuffed with grain over the walls in a desperate last attempt to trick the Goths into thinking there is still plenty of food within the city. There is also a small painting by Perugino above a large altarpiece. Often overlooked by visitors due to its size and position on the wall, Christ in Pity (Imago Pietatis) is one of the best Perugino paintings in the Gallery.

The gallery has recently been extended down onto the next floor there are several paintings by Perugino of varying quality here. One painting shows the subject framed within a structure of simple design in order to demonstrate his skills of linear perspective (this is probably the influence of Piero della Francesca). Many of Perugino's paintings use this format; he had a vast workshop, which churned out commissions to order. He was not going to waste time developing a new arrangement for each client. The saccharine sweetness of the faces and effeminate male figures may not be entirely to modern tastes, but they appealed to the Pre-Raphaelite school of painters in England, who held Perugino's style in high regard

Perugino was also one of the first painters to develop aerial, or "birds-eye" perspective. This technique dispenses with lines running towards a vanishing point; instead it tricks the brain into recognising distance by colouring the furthest objects and parts of the landscape in shades of blue. The next time you view any Tuscan or Umbrian landscape, look at the further hills and you will see that they appear to be a washed-out blue. Leonardo da Vinci went on to perfect this technique, he knew Perugino when they worked as pupils of Andrea Verrocchio in *Florence*.

Near to the exit, there are a few paintings of the Rocca Paolina enabling you to see what the fortress looked like. If only the Perugians in 1860 had realised what a potential tourist attraction they were tearing down!

When you have finished in the gallery, make your way back to the *Corso Vannucci*. You can wander the busy shopping area in the centre, have lunch, or make your way back to the car (turn right onto *Corso Vannucci* and retrace your steps).

End

Leaving *Perugia* by car can be as difficult as entering it. If it is your first visit, I recommend following signs to *Firenze* and *Roma* until you reach the Autostrada, these signs are the least likely to disappear and leave you lost in the one-way system.



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