

IN AND AROUND AREZZO



The Tiber, the river that laps the town of **Sansepolcro** and appears as a naturalistic element dividing the two armies in the Battle between Constantine and Maxentius in the **Arezzo** frescoes, is described with particular affection and devotion by the English writer G. M. Trevelyan: "This reach of the great river, where it first leaves its mountains cradle, has a peculiar effect on the imagination...the line of a poplar wood shading the course of the Tiber...a clear stream of the blue and silver eddies".

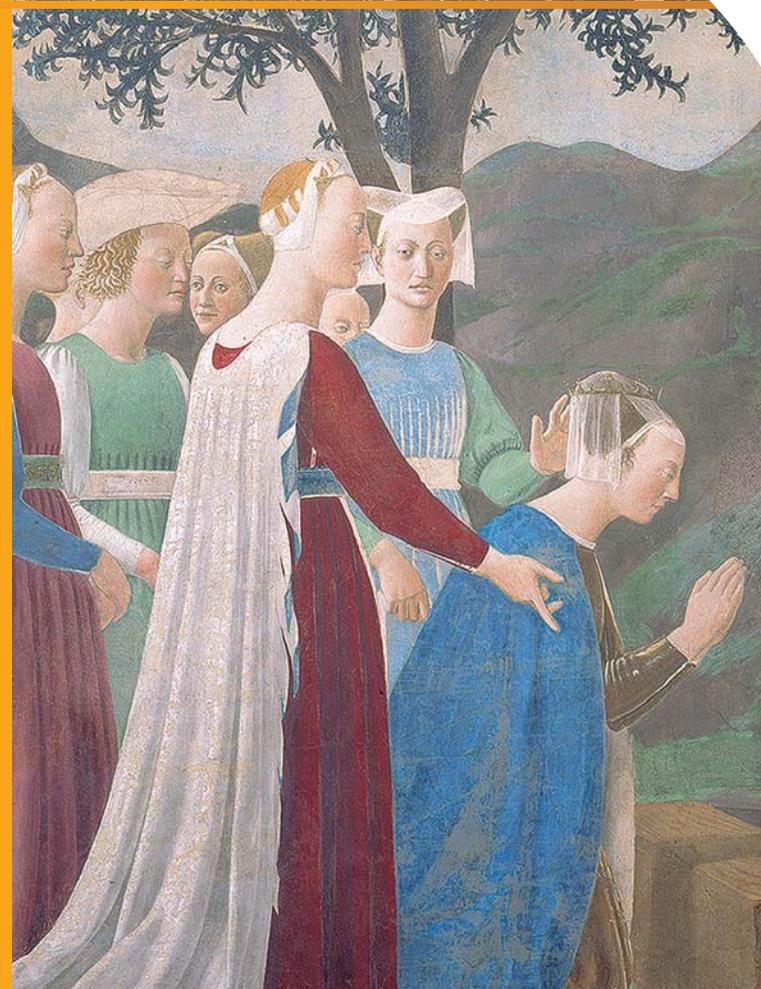
The ilex-cloaked hills that form the background to the scene showing the Queen of Sheba appears to have been a landscape very dear to Piero, a memory linked to the artist's childhood between the Val Cerfone and the Val Padonchia, between which was the birthplace of his mother, **Monterchi**, famous for the celebrated fresco of the Madonna del Parto.

The ploughed fields, the hills seen from the heights of Anghiari appearing like hillocks of colour, shifting with the change of the seasons, are arranged with graceful harmony and give the observer a sense of calm and grace. These are the same sensations that we perceive before the landscape of the Adoration of the Wood in the Arezzo cycle, or in the background of the Resurrection in Sansepolcro.



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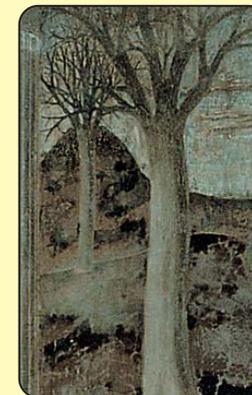
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PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA IN AND AROUND AREZZO

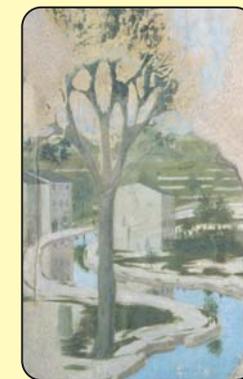
PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA

The itinerary through the province of Arezzo, in discovery of the works of **Piero della Francesca**, unwinds through the valley of the Tiber, the Valtiberina, taking in the towns of **Sansepolcro** and **Monterchi**, birthplace of the artist's mother, Monna Romana, and the city of **Arezzo**.



One of the most interesting aspects of the works of Piero della Francesca, whether they are frescoes or panel paintings, is the landscape to which the artist devotes ample space in his works. Who has not paused for a moment to observe and submit to the attraction of those natural or architectural backgrounds which are to be found in the frescoes of the **Legend of the True Cross** in Arezzo or the **Resurrection** in Sansepolcro? The attraction that this aspect has always exerted, inspiring poets to pen noble verses and writers to impassioned prose, is well-known.

Even today, the descriptions of the great travellers could guide the visitor through the works of Piero della Francesca, allowing him to discover that practically nothing has changed. The beautiful views, the daring foreshortenings, the barren and rocky mountains of the Valtiberina are those described in 1581 by Michel de Montaigne on a journey from Sansepolcro to Arezzo, via the La Scheggia pass, landscapes immortalised in the background to the Resurrection.



SANSEPOLCRO

Piero della Francesca was born in Sansepolcro around 1418-20, and the **Museo Civico** of the town houses four works by the artist.

1 - The Polyptych of the Misericordia, tempera on panel, was commissioned from Piero by the Sansepolcro Compagnia of the same name in 1445. The central panel of the painting shows the Madonna of Mercy, or Misericordia, sheltering the community of the commissioners and the faithful beneath her mantle, as in a large tabernacle, with men on the left and women on the right.

2 - The Resurrection is a large fresco painted by Piero della Francesca on the central wall of the Council Chamber. This work, considered to be among the most representative of the artist, is the human and spiritual expression of the rebirth of Christ. Strong and solemn, the figure of the Saviour dominates the scene. In the background the artist has chosen to represent the dawn, the beginning of a new day, raised to a symbol of the dawn of life.

3 - The fresco portraying **St. Julian** was discovered in 1954 in the old church of Sant'Agostino, later dedicated to Santa Chiara. The saint, portrayed with a youthful appearance, is wrapped in an elegant red cloak which stands out against the background of antique green imitation marble.

4 - The detached fresco showing **St. Louis**, originating from the Palazzo Pretorio, shows the saint dressed in a Franciscan habit with a richly decorated bishop's cope; in the background is a fake niche of precious red and green marble.



MONTERCHI



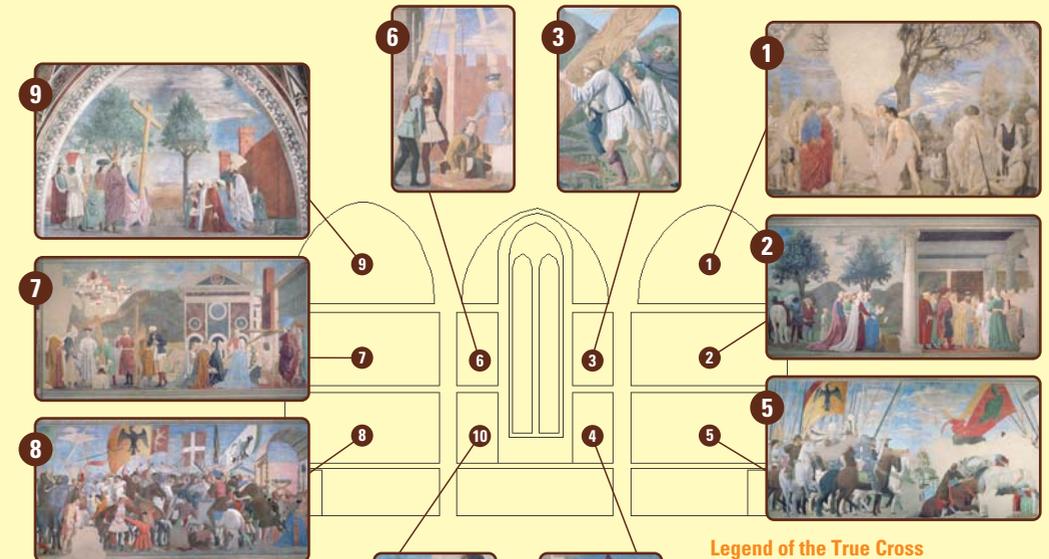
Leaving Sansepolcro the itinerary continues in Monterchi, in the Val Cerfone. For this little town, perched on a hill on the border with Umbria, Piero della Francesca painted the extraordinary fresco of the **Madonna del Parto** for the ancient church of Santa Maria a Momentana. Since 1991 the fresco has been housed in a small museum. The iconography of the expectant Virgin gives the image an impressive sacred monumentality. The Madonna is an expression at once human and divine. At her sides are two angels, their hands holding back the curtains of the tent to reveal the Virgin, dressed in a simple blue dress and white smock with her hand resting on her swollen womb.



In the **Cathedral of Arezzo**, at the top of the north aisle, is the fresco showing **St. Mary Magdalene**. The light enhances the colours, the white and red of the mantle, the green of the dress and the rosy cheeks. Mary Magdalene, one of the artist's most beautiful figures, is striking for her facial expressiveness and the penetration of her lowered gaze.

AREZZO

The itinerary through the homelands of Piero then proceeds to Arezzo where it terminates. The Bacci chapel in the **Basilica of San Francesco** houses the fresco cycle of the **Legend of the True Cross**, the masterpiece which the artist painted for the Franciscan church between around 1452 and 1466. The subject of the cycle is taken from the *Legenda Aurea* written by Jacopo da Varazze in the thirteenth century. Among landscapes dear to the artist and painted architectures, we find Arezzo itself, perched on the hilltop, and Sansepolcro with its buildings arranged in perspective like scenographic backdrops. Elegant and geometrically perfect figures gracefully accompany the observer through the story, scene after scene.



- Legend of the True Cross
Iconographic layout**
- 1 - The Death of Adam
 - 2 - The Adoration of the Wood – The Meeting of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba
 - 3 - The Burial of the Wood
 - 4 - Constantine's Dream
 - 5 - The Battle of Constantine and Maxentius
 - 6 - The Torment of the Jew
 - 7 - Discovery and Proof of the True Cross
 - 8 - The Battle of Heraclius and Chosroes
 - 9 - The Exaltation of the Cross
 - 10 - The Annunciation

SANSEPOLCRO

Museo Civico*
Via N. Aggiunti, 65
Tel./Fax 0575 732218
Access for the disabled
museocivico@comune.sansepolcro.ar.it

Opening hours:
• 15 June - 15 September
9.30/13.30 - 14.30/19
• 16 September - 14 June
9.30/13 - 14.30/18
Closed: New Year's Day,
Christmas Day

Ticket prices
• Full price € 6.00
• Reduced price € 4.50 (adults aged between 19 and 25; adults over 65; groups of more than 10 persons)
• Reduced price € 3.00 (young people aged between 10 and 18)
• Free: children under 10; the disabled and accompanying persons; police; journalists

Sansepolcro District Tourist Office
Via Matteotti, 8
Tel./Fax 0575 740536
infosansepolcro@apt.arezzo.it

MONTERCHI

Museo "Madonna del Parto" *
Via Reglia, 1
Tel./Fax 0575 70713
No access for the disabled
museomadonadelparto@comunemonterchi.com

Opening hours:
• April - October
9/13 - 14/19
• November - March
9/13 - 14/17
Closed: Christmas Day

Ticket prices:
• Full price € 3.50
• Reduced price € 2.00 (students over 14)
• Reduced price € 2.50 (groups more than 15 persons)
• Free: young people up to 14; pregnant women; inhabitants of Monterchi; invalids; the disabled

* Opening hours and ticket prices are those communicated by the museums to the Agenzia per il Turismo di Arezzo on 1 July 2008.

AREZZO

Basilica di San Francesco*
Cappella Bacci – Legend of the True Cross
Access for the disabled

Ticket office and Bookshop
Piero della Francesca - Online bookings
Piazza San Francesco, 4
Tel. 0575 352727 - 0575 299071
Fax 0575 302001
www.apt.arezzo.it
pierodellafrancesca@apt.arezzo.it
Access for the disabled

Ticket office and Bookshop
Piero della Francesca
Opening hours:
• November-March: Weekdays 9/18
Sundays and holidays 10/18
• April-October: Weekdays 9/19
Sundays and holidays 10/19

Visiting Hours Legend of the True Cross
Every 30 minutes, groups of 25 persons
• April-October:
Monday-Friday 9/18.30 - Saturday 9/17.30
Sunday 13/17.30
• November-March: Monday-Friday 9/17.30
Saturday 9/17 - Sunday 13/17
• Closed on: New Year's Day - 13 June
4 October - Christmas Day

Ticket prices including booking fee
Booking obligatory
• Full price with booking
(€ 4.00 + € 2.00) = € 6.00
• Reduced price with booking
(€ 2.00 + € 2.00) = € 4.00
- European Union citizens aged between 18 and 25
- Teachers in State Schools

• Free with booking (€ 0.00 + € 2.00) = € 2.00
- European Union citizens aged under 18 or over 65
- Teachers and students in the Faculty of Architecture and Literature and equivalent Institutes (History of Art and Cultural Heritage disciplines)
- Employees of the Ministry for the Cultural Heritage and Activities
- Authorised Tourist Guides of the European Union exercising their profession
- Groups of public or private schools of the European Union accompanied by their teachers
• Free
- Childrens aged under 6
- The disabled and accompanying person

Booking of guided tours of the Legend of the True Cross
Tel. 0575 352727 - Fax 0575 302001
pierodellafrancesca@apt.arezzo.it

Arezzo Tourist Information Offices
Piazza della Repubblica, 28
Tel. 0575 377678 - Fax 0575 20839
www.apt.arezzo.it
info@arezzo.turismo.toscana.it

Welcome Centre and Tourist Information
Via Ricasoli
Tel. 0575 377829