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Montepulciano guide: flights, hotels and restaurants

Montepulciano's best hotels and restaurants, and information on how to reach the Tuscan town.

By Lee Marshall
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Restaurants in the Piazza Grande Photo: ALAMY

WHERE TO STAY

If you can afford the rates — from 150 euros per room per night, depending on period and length of stay — the **Locanda di San Francesco** (piazza San Francesco 3, tel 00 39 0578 758725, www.locandasanfrancesco.it), run by the family that owns the top-notch Valdiplatta winery and housed in a former oratory attached to the church of the same name, has to be the number-one hotel choice. Decorated in warm, antique style, the four bedrooms all have spectacular views out across the walls to the surrounding countryside.

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For value in the centro storico, it's difficult to beat **La Terrazza di Montepulciano** (via Pie' al Sasso 16, tel 00 39 0578 757440, www.laterrazzadimontepulciano.it). The décor may

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be on the dowdy side, but the garden courtyard is lovely, and double room rates start at 90 euros.

There are also two very special rural hotels within a five-mile radius. **Hotelito Lupaia** (loc. Lupaia 74, tel 00 39 0577 668028, www.lupaia.com, doubles from 240 euros) is a sort of glam agriturismo done out in camp, theatrical style, but warm and charming for all its extravagance; while **Follonico** (Casale 2, 53049 Torrita di Siena, tel 00 39 0577 669773, www.follonico.com, doubles from 100 euros) is a smart, designer farmhouse owned and run by a

simpatico Italo-German couple, with just four rooms and no pool — something that helps to keep prices down to reasonable levels.

WHERE TO EAT

Down by San Biagio, **La Grotta** (loc. San Biagio 15, tel 00 39 0578 757607, average 65 euros a head with wine, closed Wed) is the fancy option for dinner (they even do fish — rare in this meaty corner of Tuscany). But I prefer less pretentious centro storico trattorias such as little **Osteria dell'Acquacheta** (via del Teatro 22, tel 00 39 0578 717086, average 35 euros a head with wine, closed Tue), not far from Piazza Grande, where hearty soups, pasta with porcini mushrooms from nearby Monte Amiata, and hunters' dishes like cinghiale in dolceforte (wild boar with, believe it or not, chocolate, spices and candied fruit) are the order of the day.

The Locanda di San Francesco (see above) has a jazzy wine bar overlooking the square, **E Lucevan Le Stelle**, which is my favourite place for an evening aperitivo in Montepulciano; it also serves cheese and salami platters and salads. In Monticchiello, you should book ahead for one of the outside tables at **La Porta** (via del Piano 1, tel 00 39 0578 755163, average 40 euros a head with wine, closed Thur), a lovely osteria just inside the walls where the rootsy Tuscan menu includes such specialities as farro (spelt) with saffron and truffles, or feगतelli (pork liver) with cannellini beans. Their wine list is excellent.

Perhaps my favourite village osteria, though, is **La Botte Piena** (piazza Cinughi 12, tel 00 39 0577 669481, average 30 euros a head with wine, closed Wed) in pretty Montefollonico — at the end of a lovely two-and-a-half hour off-road walk from San Biagio. Not only is it great value for money, but the rigorously traditional food — from bean soups to salt cod stewed with chickpeas — is just excellent, and the wine list is amazing for such a modest establishment.

GETTING THERE

It's a two-and-a-half-hour drive to Montepulciano from Rome's two airports, Fiumicino (BA, Alitalia and easyJet) and Ciampino (Ryanair), and around the same from Pisa. The closest airport is tiny Perugia, just over an hour away — but this ties you to Ryanair and Stansted, and flights are only daily in the summer.

Don't be fooled by the promise of "Montepulciano Stazione" — this glorified shed is actually seven miles out of town and not all the trains that stop there are met by buses. If you're arriving by public transport it's a much better idea to take a train to Chiusi-Chianciano Terme (timetables at www.trenitalia.com), on the main Rome-Florence line, and pick up an LFI bus from there (timetables at



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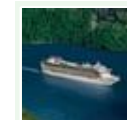
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