**Marche Religious Tour**

Duration: 4 days

**Day 1: Loreto – Ancona (Km. 30)**

Visit the Sanctuary of the Holy House of Loreto, the main place of worship in the region.
Inside we find the Holy House that is a part of the house of the Virgin Mary, which, according to tradition, was transported from Nazareth to Italy by angels at the end of the 13th century.

Drive on to Ancona, capital of the region and province. The name of the city derives from the Greek word “ankon”, elbow, which recalls the particular morphology of its coast. During the guided tour, you can admire numerous churches and palaces of great historical and artistic interest: St. Ciriaco’s Cathedral, a wonderful Romanesque-Gothic Basilica built on the foundations of an Italic temple, the Romanesque Church of Santa Maria della Piazza, the remains of the Roman amphitheatre, the triumphal Arch of Trajan at the end of the harbour, the Church of San Francesco alle Scale and the Loggia dei Mercanti in Venetian flowery Gothic style, the Anziani’s Palace, the Church of St. Domenico, the sixteenth century Ferretti and Bosdari Palace, which respectively house the Archeological Museum of the Marche and the Municipal Picture Gallery and the nineteenth century Theatre of the Muse. The heart of the city is the central Piazza Roma with its fountain of horses.

**Curiosity**

* In Loreto, the tattoos fashion is 500 years old, although with a different meaning. Tradition tells that during the Crusades, soldiers tattooed the religious symbols of their faith in order to be recognized by the infidels and to guarantee themselves the ecclesiastical burial, at the time denied to those who succumbed in battle and did not present symbols of their religion. The tattoo was therefore a mark of recognition that represented Christianity. In the same way, pilgrims from all parts of Europe gathered after the long journey of faith and had the memory of such devotional ardour imprinted on their skin. Near the sanctuary of Loreto, therefore, there were various tattoo artists, called “markers”.
* The rite of the blue ribbon of the Madonna takes place in Loreto. These ribbons are about a metre and a half long and the nuns, after having blessed them by placing them on the walls of the Holy House, give them to pregnant women or those who wish to have child, so that they tie them around their bellies and pray intensely to Our Lady. In this way, they will be blessed with a serene pregnancy or a future birth.

**Day 2: Ancona – Urbania – Urbino – Corinaldo – Ancona (Km. 236)**

Departure for Urbania, where we will visit the Dead’s Church. The church owes its name to an extraordinary discovery made inside: 18 perfectly preserved bodies without previous mummification processes. We will then continue to Urbino, Unesco World Heritage Site. The first stop is the Ducal Palace, a majestic building of 15th century origins that with its about 300 rooms has been described already in the 16th century as a “city in the form of a palace”. Leaving the palace you will visit the Cathedral.
The visit ends in Piazza della Repubblica.

On the way back to Ancona, we will make a stop in Corinaldo, home of the sanctuary dedicated to Santa Maria Goretti, who was born and lived here until the age of six. Maria was born in Corinaldo on October 16, 1890. Given the conditions of misery, in 1897 her family moved to the Roman countryside to look for work. The Goretti family shared the house with the Serenelli family, their father and son Alessandro. The latter, in his twenties when Maria was 12 years old, tried a few approaches with her, which Maria refused because of her deep faith in God. On July 5, 1902, in the face of Maria’s refusal, Alessandro struck her repeatedly with an awl. Maria died the following day, not before she had told her mother that she had forgiven her murderer, who, after spending 27 years in prison, met Maria’s mother and reconciled with her.

**Curiosity**

* Because of the strong symbolic value of the burial of the remains of the mother of St. Maria Goretti and her attacker inside the Church of Corinaldo, in the jubilee year of mercy the sanctuary was called “House of Forgiveness”.

**Day 3: Ancona – Montefortino – Urbisaglia – Ancona (Km. 243)**

Departure for Montefortino, where we will visit the sanctuary of the Madonna dell’Ambro, the second most important in the Marche region. The sanctuary rises in the Sibylline Mountains, 650 meters above sea level, in the place where the Madonna, around the year 1000, appeared to a shepherd girl named Santina, deaf-mute since birth. Following this episode, Santina miraculously acquired the use of the word.

Continuation to Urbisaglia, where we will admire the Abbey of Chiaravalle di Fiastra, one of the most important and best preserved monuments in Italy of Cistercian architecture, a very high testimony of the presence of the Cistercians in the Marche region. Return to Ancona.

**Curiosity**

* The sanctuary of the Madonna dell’Ambro is called “the little Lourdes of the Sibylline” because of the similarities with the most famous French sanctuary: both are located in a valley in the middle of the mountains, next to a river, and in both places Madonna had appeared to little girls.

**Day 4: Ancona – Osimo – Recanati – Return (Km. 40)**

In the morning, we will reach Osimo, where there are two important places of worship. The first is the Basilica of San Giuseppe da Copertino, the second is the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin of Our Lady of Sorrows of Campocavallo, a pilgrimage destination known for the image of the Madonna that is kept there, who, oh the day of Corpus Christi in 1892, cried ad moved her eyes. This event was repeated for almost 10 consecutive years.

Continuation to Recanati, city of poetry. We start form the eighteenth-century Leopardi’s Palace, the poet’s birthplace, still inhabited by his descendants and located in Piazza “Sabato del villaggio”. From here, a marked path leads to Mount Tabor, the famous “hill of infinity” from which you can admire an enchanting panorama. The church of Sant’Agostino: its bell tower is the ancient tower sung in the Lonely Sparrow. Continuing on you arrive in the centre, Piazza Leopardi, where behind the monument dedicated to the great poet, stands the City Hall. Return to your place of origin.

**Curiosity**

* As a token of thanks to St. Joseph of Cupertino, many students donated their dissertations to the sanctuary.