

Franciscan sites in Gubbio

Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria (or *Vittorina*), where Francis tamed the wolf

According to tradition, it was here that Saint Francis tamed—using the sign of the cross—the wolf that had been terrorizing the city around 1222. This miraculous episode, recounted in the *Little Flowers* (*Fioretti*), is one of the most famous in the world, and its historical veracity has long been a subject of debate; many scholars believe it involved a real animal. Upon first arriving in Gubbio, the friar from Assisi had no fixed abode; it was not until 1213 that Blessed Villano, the city's bishop, granted the friars permission to establish a base at the ancient church of Santa Maria della Vittoria. The original structure of the small church dates back to the 9th century, built on the very spot where the people of Gubbio had defeated the Saracens—hence the name *Vittorina* (Little Victory).

Church of San Francesco della Pace, where the wolf lived

Erected in the first half of the 17th century on the site where—according to popular tradition—the Wolf of Gubbio lived until its death, the church remains under the care of the *Università dei Muratori e Scalpellini* (Guild of Masons and Stonecutters), the very organization that oversaw its construction. Inside, one can see the stone (now serving as the altar table) upon which Francis is said to have preached to the people of Gubbio and brokered the pact between them and the wolf.

Church of San Francesco

Among the first churches dedicated to the "Little Poor Man" (St. Francis) is the Church of San Francesco in Gubbio. Its construction was strongly desired by the local people immediately after the saint's death. It is one of the largest churches in Umbria; one of its chapels houses the remains of the old merchant's warehouse where—according to tradition—Francis's "rediscovered" friend Spadalunga clothed him in his first habit, the very habit of the order that would go on to spread across the globe. Standing beside the church is a friary so vast that it is known as *Centocelle* ("Hundred Cells").

Church of Caprignone

On the ruins of a late 11th-century church—and a small pagan temple located north of the current Pieve di Caprignone—the Franciscans built a larger church and a small friary; both structures became part of the Gubbio Franciscan custody right from their inception. Today, the small church remains visible, while the few surviving traces of the monastery allow one to discern the structure's original orientation and size. Legend has it that, in 1223, this small church hosted the first chapter of the Franciscan Order to be convened outside Assisi.

Hermitage of San Pietro in Vigneto

Traveling along a gravel road strewn with pebbles, one comes across the Benedictine monastery of San Pietro in Vigneto. Situated along the municipal road that connected Assisi to Gubbio in the thirteenth century, the abbey resembled a fortification more than a religious building. Built by the Benedictines using materials salvaged from the ruins of a pagan temple dedicated to Mars Cyprius, it served as a perfect refuge for pilgrims who, exhausted by their journey and hunger, would catch sight of it from the valley floor.

Abbey of Vallingegno

Standing tall on the hill at Vallingegno, this abbey is mentioned in documents dating back to the twelfth century. Many events in the life of Saint Francis are linked to this imposing structure, which is clearly visible even from a distance. A widely accepted theory, for instance, identifies the abbey as the place where Francis sought shelter after being attacked near Caprignone. However, the prior's initial welcome was far from warm: the monks found themselves facing a filthy, shivering beggar in rags and assigned him the duties of a kitchen helper.