

# ABOUT SAINT VALENTINE AND TERNI



CHIARA SEVERINI · TRAVEL · FEBRUARY 5, 2020



Di Valerio Clementi – Opera propria, CC BY-SA 4.0, [link here](#)

Just an hour away from Rome, Terni can be easily reached by train. So, what's a better excuse than Valentine's Day to go and see something new?

Geographically speaking, Umbria is at the very heart of Italy. Saint Valentine (*San Valentino*) is originally from a town located in the south of the region, Terni. Isn't this a singular coincidence, considering what the saint is internationally known for?

Saint Valentine's day is a popular celebration that is particularly special for the inhabitants of Terni, who indeed worship him as their patron saint.

On [the website dedicated to this famous religious figure](#), a catchy subheading reads “Every day is Saint Valentine’s day,” but of course February is when the town properly commemorates this world famous bishop from the Roman times. On February 14 — as it commonly happens around Italy when the patron saint of the town is celebrated — a big fair brightens up the roads of Terni. The Sunday before, the couples who are planning to marry that year can exchange their wedding vows in front of the urn of Saint Valentine and receive a blessing from the bishop. Also, the basilica can be visited, and love messages are left in Saint Valentine’s well.

*Tomorrow is Saint Valentine’s day, / All in the morning betime, / And I a maid at your window, / To be your Valentine*

— Ophelia in *Hamlet*, Act 4, Scene 5, Shakespeare

Although it’s not easy to find reliable information about the life of the saint, his worship has always been strong and widespread. Saint Valentine’s day has represented the celebration of love for centuries, and even Shakespeare used the expression “be your Valentine.”

There are a couple of legends that describe *Valentino* as a bishop devoted to the happiness of young couples: apparently, he used to give a flower to all the boys and girls who paid him a visit, as a wish for a joyful union. It is also said that he joined in marriage Sabino and Serapia, whose love was hampered by their parents, because the young man was a Pagan while she was a Christian. Apparently, Serapia was very ill and Sabino told *San Valentino* that he couldn’t live without her. The bishop, therefore, blessed them, prayed the Lord to listen to their plea, and the two lovers left this world to live together for eternity.

## Terni and its surroundings

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Seemingly, Terni was founded around 2,500 years ago: [its Latin name](#), *Interamna Nahars*, tells us that it is a town “between two rivers,” and that water has always represented an immense wealth for this place. The

rivers that surround Terni provide energy for various hydroelectric power stations as well as for the steel industry, which saw its birth in the 19th century.

But the biggest and most spectacular expression of the power of water which you can witness around here is the Marmore Falls: thanks to the engineering skills of the Romans — who needed to prevent floodings and the swampings of the area — since 271 BC these waterfalls dive down amidst the valley with a mesmerizing strength. They are among the highest in Europe, and you can enjoy them from different angles and views: there are, in fact, six trails you can take to explore the *Marmore*.



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In the area of the *Parco Fluviale del Nera*, there are tons of other activities you can do with your partner, family, or friends: you can go trekking, hiking, climbing, canoeing, kayaking, rafting or exploring hamlets, little villages and towns. For example, you could take a trip to *Narni*, which the Romans knew as *Narnia* — after which the *Chronicles of Narnia* are named.

If you're looking for something different, you can head to Montegabbione and book a visit to the *Scarzuola*. There's a small Franciscan convent, next

to which the architect Tomaso Buzzi built a citadel, his personal version of the ideal town: several theatres lead the way to the climax, represented by the Acropolis, a conglomerate of overlapping buildings and symbols.

Terni — and, more in general, all of Umbria — enthrall their visitors with unique places where humans with their history, architecture, and activities, seem to perfectly fit into the surrounding nature. So, if you're planning to celebrate Saint Valentine, and you *take to heart* a different kind of tourism more attentive to the hidden gems and stories, consider visiting the places where *Valentino* and his contemporaries lived long before us. You'll love them.