Herr’s a review of the Spoleto Convent I found while nosing around the internet:

Instituo Bambine Gesu – a 16th century convent

Quiet, basic, clean... WONDERFUL!

No TV in the rooms, no blaring radios, no loud parties. GREAT staff. This is just a wonderful place to really GET AWAY from it all.

Even if you're not Catholic, you will find peace and love here that will truly calm your soul.

I highly recommend it. Especially to those who are looking for someplace special and who don't have a lot of money to spend.

Unique Quality: The convent dates back to the 1600's and history pervades every square inch!

You would think a place this old would be "spooky", but the vibes here are just too full of peace and love to ever be anything but truly wonderful.

And the sisters are all so very kind and sweet. Sorella Chiara and her staff are available at every request. They are very proud of their convent and it shows! The breakfast is geared toward those who want to get out and see the wonders of this great city so it is small, but packed with energy foods! If you want a sit-down feast, you need to go somewhere else. Chances are, you won't have time to sit around at the convent. There's too much sight-seeing to do!

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History of Spoleto, Italy

The origins of Spoleto, located along the slopes of the hill Saint Elias, date back to the late Bronze Age, as shown by some remains of the necropolis, found in the perimeter of the city.

In the 5th and 4th centuries BC the Umbrians occupied the territory, and the city became a "castrum" (Fortress), with the construction of the so-called “Cyclopean walls”, made of huge blocks of polygonal limestone.

Spoleto in Roman times

In 241 BC Spoleto became a colony, and it was raised by the Romans, due to its loyalty, to the rank of “Municipium”. In fact, Spoleto showed loyalty to Rome especially during the Second Punic War, opposing the army of Hannibal (247-182 BC), who was advancing to Rome after defeating the Romans at the Battle of Lake Trasimeno.

Cicero (106-43 BC) called Spoleto "strong and illustrious" (Severus Minervius, see below).

There are many ruins that testify to the Roman presence in the city, like the Arch of Drusus (38-9 BC) and Germanicus (16 BC-19 AD), Roman Theatre (first century AD) and a house attributed to Vespasia Polla (born in 15 c. BC-first century AD), mother of Emperor Vespasian (9-79 AD).

In the fourth century AD Spoleto became an Episcopal seat, as is evidenced by the basilica of San Salvatore, one of the oldest churches in the city.

After the Romans

After the fall of Roman Empire, the Lombards conquered Spoleto, which became the capital of the largest and most powerful of the duchies of Median Italy. Then after the Lombard rule, the duchy passed
to the Franks, under whose rule it began a gradual decline and in 1155, according to tradition, Spoleto was destroyed by Frederick Barbarossa (1122-1190).

In the Municipality Age, the city was fought over between the Empire and the Church State, to which it was later subject under the papacy of Innocent III (1160 ca.-1216) in 1198 and, finally, in 1247. During this period of domination by the Church State a second wider circle of walls was built, in which the medieval urban structure was developed, which gave it the appearance of a fortress.

Transformed into a Municipality, Spoleto was torn apart inside by the fratricidal conflict between the Guelphs and Ghibellines, until, with the action of Cardinal Albornoz (1310-1367), the disputes were sedated and, thanks to the powerful prelate, it had also a significant increase in fortifications, because Cardinal Albornoz commissioned Gattaponi (1300-1383), a famous military engineer, to build the “Albornoz Fortress”, which became the seat of the city governors.

At the end of the 15th century Spoleto was ruled by a famous exponent of the powerful Borgia Family, or Lucrezia Borgia (1480-1519), daughter of Pope Alexander VI (1431-1503) and sister of Cesare Borgia (1475-1507).

During the Napoleonic period, Spoleto was taken from the direct dominion of the Pope and governed as a republic closely linked to the French, assuming a role of some importance as chief town of the Trasimeno Department. After the Restoration it was restored to the Church State until the “Risorgimento” period, which saw the city very engaged in the struggle for the unification of Italy.

It entered into the Kingdom of Italy in 1860. Today the city is a major tourist centre, of high cultural value and open to initiatives that have become known internationally.

**Things to see when you visit Spoleto**

Spoleto is an important and popular historical town dating back to Roman times that is located in the southern part of the Umbria region of central Italy. The town contains numerous important monuments including a Roman theatre, an imposing fortress, a cathedral and several important churches.

A visit to Spoleto can start from the Piazza del Duomo, in the upper part of town and surrounded by Renaissance buildings, the Cathedral and Fortress.

**Spoleto Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta**

The Romanesque style Spoleto Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta was started around 1175. The present façade was completed in the early 13th century, while the tower dates from the 12th century and the “portico” was added in the late 15th / early 16th centuries. Several sculptures adorn the portico and the interior of Cathedral.

On the facade, in addition to the central rosette there are also remarkable Byzantine style mosaics with the "Blessing Christ enthroned between the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist."

Entering the cathedral, on the right, there is the “Eroli Chapel”, with a fresco by Pinturicchio (1454-1513), who painted some scenes of the 'Madonna and Child with Saints', on a background which features a typical Umbrian view. The interior of the church is of Baroque style, with floor mosaics in the central nave and an apse in the Romanesque style.

From the Piazza del Mercato in Spoleto you reach Corso Mazzini, where there is the Roman Theatre, built in the first century AD and now used for concerts and ballets.
Church of San Ansano

From the "Freedom Square" and going back towards the upper part of the city you can see the Church of San Ansano. The church interior has a nave with a series of frescoes, among which is the "Madonna and Child", a late work by Giovanni di Pietro (called the “Spagna” 1450-1528) and a pupil of Perugino (1450-1523).

Underneath the church is the crypt of St. Isaac. The crypt was built in the 11th and 12th centuries and has three naves with vaulted ceilings supported by columns and capitals from the 8th-9th centuries. On the walls and the apse there are important remains of 13th century frescoes with scenes from the life of St. Isaac.

Arch of Drusus and Germanicus

Outside the church some remains of a Roman Temple are visible, dating from the first century AD. Next to the church of St. Ansano is the Arch of Drusus and Germanicus. This was built in 23 AD in honour of Drusus Minor and Germanicus, the son of Tiberius (42 BC-37 AD), and consists of blocks of squared stone with some decorative elements.

Church of San Gregorio Maggiore

In the lower part of Spoleto in Piazza Garibaldi you can see the 11th century Romanesque Church of San Gregorio Maggiore. Admire the church facade then head inside to see the three naves and walls decorated with antique frescos. Some scenes from the life of ‘Santa Abbondanza’ are painted in the Chapel of the Innocents.

Above there are three arches of Romanesque style, and the remains of a fresco painted in the early 14th century and attributed to Giovanni di Corraduccio (1390-1437). The earliest paintings in the church date from the 12th century and show religious scenes, such as "Stories of Passion" and "St. Gregory and Saints".

Not far from the Church of Saint Gregory is the Roman Amphitheatre, used for public games in the 2nd century.

Spoleto city walls

It is also interesting to visit the Spoleto city walls - the oldest wall is located in the upper part of the city.

The lower layer of the wall consists of large polygonal blocks of limestone, dating from the 4th century BC (i.e. pre-Roman times) while the middle part of the walls is of square blocks and includes the remains of a watchtower, dating back to the foundation of the colony in 241 BC. The top layer, of smaller blocks, was added in the second half of the first century BC.

The medieval walls that surround the base of the hill of the city and are also well preserved.

Basilica of San Salvatore
Outside the medieval walls, the oldest church in Spoleto is the Basilica of San Salvatore, dating from the 4th century and the most important of the paleo-Christian monuments of Umbria and Italy.

The façade of the basilica has three richly decorated portals while the interior has three naves, divided by Doric columns. In the presbytery there are high Corinthian columns supporting a dome. The main apse is circular, flanked by two square side apses.

**Church and Monastery of St. Ponziano and Church of Saint Peter**

Also in this part of Spoleto you should visit the Church and Monastery of St. Ponziano, dedicated to the patron saint of town. The church, with three naves and three apses, was built in romanesque style in the 12th century.

Also to see is the Church of St. Peter, a building that dates from the 5th century and was extended from the 12th to 13th centuries. The façade with three portals and three rosettes is characterized by various panels carved with bas-reliefs in which various saints and events are represented, using medieval symbolism drawn from the Old and New Testaments.

On top are Saints Peter and Andrew next to two bulls (symbols of sacrifice); in the central rosette of the façade, four symbols of the Evangelists are shown (the eagle for St. John, angel for St. Matthew, bull for St. Luke and lion for St. Mark).

Ten stories from the New Testament are shown below, and the so-called "Medieval Bestiaries", in which the vices and virtues of man were exalted through allegorical stories (e.g. the "death of the righteous and the sinner", "the lion and the woodcutter", "the lion attacking the soldier," "vocation of Saints Peter and Andrew", “fake dead fox and crows”, "the wolf and the lamb" and, finally, the "lion fighting the dragon").

**Traditional cuisine of Spoleto**

All that history and exploring will have left you hungry so we suggest you finish your tour by sampling the local cuisine...

"Spoletium" as Spoleto was originally known is a city of ancient historical and cultural traditions, carried forwards in the culinary traditions today with a focus on authenticity and high quality local products. Thes include as the "bruschetta", crostini, toasted bread and flavoured with Umbrian olive oil with and black truffle of Spoleto.

The "Strangozzi" (homemade pasta), grilled meats and roasts, pork or chicken are the simplest dishes and popular throughout Umbria. We also suggest you try the famous “Crescionda”. The Umbrian cuisine is also famous for its wines such as the Sagrantino, the red of Montefalco and the Grechettio, among the best white wines of the area.