

The picturesque village of San Leo

It is situated in the Emilia-Romagna region and is reachable from Rimini in about 50 minutes by car.

– For those coming from the north via the A14 Bologna motorway, the recommended exit is Taranto Valle del Rubicone.

– While for those arriving from the south via the A14 Taranto-Bologna motorway, it is advisable to take the A14 Rimini Sud exit.



For all information on activities in San Leo and opening hours:
<https://www.san-leo.it/>

Above a huge rocky outcrop stands the beautiful village of San Leo with its fortress, entirely surrounded by walls.

It is reached via a single road cut into the rock. Here, in the 3rd century, San Leo arrived and founded a center for the spread of Christianity that quickly expanded throughout the surrounding region.

The village retains an architectural heritage of considerable value, such as: the Romanesque-Lombard Cathedral, the pre-Romanesque Pieve, the bell tower, and the fortress.

Dante Alighieri, Saint Francis of Assisi, and the Count of Cagliostro stayed here.

The village of San Leo is a highly sought-after destination for tourists.

Not to be missed!



Pieve di Santa Maria Assunta

1) The Pieve is the oldest religious monument in the territory of Monte Feltro, dating back to the ninth century.

The outer masonry of the church is made of sandstone and limestone. The church is accessed through two portals on the two sides of the building. The Pieve, dedicated to Santa Maria Assunta, stands on the original church of San Leo.

Its interior is divided into seven bays relating to different liturgical functions. The division of the aisles starts from a pair of columns, one of pillars, and so on. The interior walls were certainly plastered and decorated with paintings and frescoes, but were drastically erased by restorations over the years.

The interior of the church houses a beautiful wooden crucifix from the 16th century, a crypt, and the ancient baptismal font.

Is still considered today one of the most fascinating medieval monuments in central Italy.



The Cathedral of San Leone

2) The construction of the first early medieval Cathedral dates back to the 7th century. Formerly, the Cathedral was not isolated as it is seen today, but was instead flanked by the bishop's palace, the seat of the canons, guesthouses, and a hospital.

These buildings probably formed a fortified religious citadel. To this day, it is not known why the new Cathedral was built.

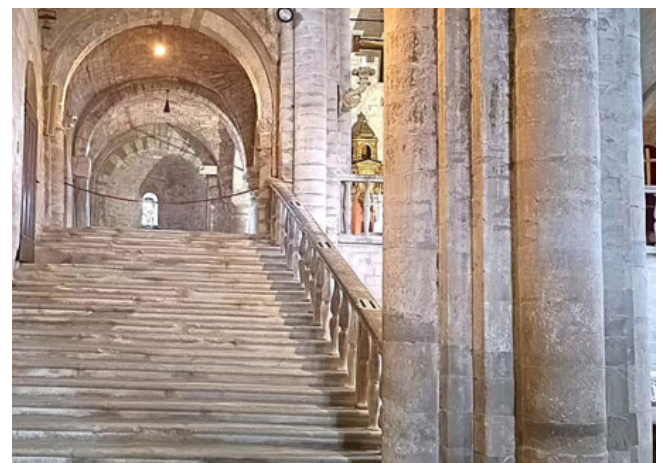
The entrance is located on one side, as the Cathedral's facade is situated on a steep rocky slope. Above the entrance are the sculpted busts of San Leone and San Valentino, originating from the old cathedral.

The aisles are bounded by marble pillars and columns and house, in addition to the Corinthian capitals from the 3rd century, numerous Romanesque capitals with various figurative

decorations. On the altar is placed a relic of San Leo.

The crypt is the oldest part of the Cathedral, on its left is the lid of the sarcophagus of the saint. However, the sarcophagus has been empty since 1016, when Emperor Henry II removed the sacred body, now preserved in the church of San Leo in Voghenza (Ferrara).

The Cathedral of San Leo is undoubtedly an indelible symbol of history.



The bell tower

3) The tower stands out on the top of the mountain, built directly on the rock base, like all the monuments of this village. Its square perimeter measures 8.30 meters per side and rises to about 28 meters in height. Its outer walls are mainly made of ocher and white sandstone. This monument blends perfectly with the rock on which it is erected.

It features two windows on each side that allow the sound of the bells to spread throughout the valley. Its interior has a circular plan that rises up to the bell chamber, accessible by a wooden staircase.

The tower is visitable, comfortable shoes are recommended as the climb to the top of the bell tower is challenging.

From up there, you can enjoy a 360-degree panoramic view that extends far.

At the foot of the tower, you can admire the ancient stone basins known as “saints’ beds”. A visit is recommended.



The fortress

4) The Renaissance fortress is situated on a huge rocky outcrop and overlooks the village of San Leo.

This fortress became famous for the characters it hosted over time, such as the Count of Cagliostro, alchemist and healer, and Felice Orsini, patriot of the Risorgimento.

Considered an important testimony of military architecture, the Romans, understanding the impregnability of Mount San Leo, built an initial fortress, which was contested by several peoples in the Middle Ages. It was rebuilt in the 15th century under Federico Montefeltro, with the renowned architect and engineer Francesco di Giorgio Martini tasked with redesigning the fortress according to the new requirements of war, thus reaching the peak of a war system. From 1631, it was adapted into a prison, creating narrow cells from the military quarters, where,

among others, Count Cagliostro and Felice Orsini were imprisoned. It continued to function as a prison until 1906.

Today, the fortress is used as a museum open to the public. Visitors can admire cannons, halberds, crossbows, armor, and a collection of 19th-century weapons. The most visited spot is the “well,” a cell located in the square turret, where Count Cagliostro was imprisoned for four years for heresy.



Belvedere Park

5) The small Belvedere Park, surrounded by a wooden fence, hosts a war memorial in its

center. Around it, some benches are arranged to allow visitors to rest and enjoy the peace of the place. The view from the park is truly breathtaking, spanning across the entire Marecchia Valley to the Adriatic coast, from Cesenatico to Rimini.

The fountain of San Leo

6) At the foot of the park is the ancient spring of San Leone, of probable Roman origin. In ancient times, a canal was built to channel water to the mill, which is now disappeared. Protected by ancient masonry, fresh water considered sacred springs from the rock. Outside, a niche has been created where a statue of San Leone in copper sheet is placed. The spring is accessible by following the 'San Leone loop', the path that follows the perimeter of the lion rock, where currently stands the parish church. Places that speak.



In the center of the square stands the neoclassical fountain, built in 1893. It is considered a meeting point for both locals and tourists. Legend has it that the water from this fountain has miraculous properties because it is said that even San Francesco d'Assisi quenched his thirst there.

In the village, you can find bars, restaurants, some craft shops, a small grocery store with local products, and a bakery.

The churches always remain open even in winter, as does almost always the tower. Discover this charming village.

