



0. CORTONA - Story Preface

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A view of Cortona, a Tuscan town with a very long history reaching back into prehistoric times.

Cortona is a lovely town with the look and feel of “Old Italy.” Situated a few miles from the Tuscany-Umbria border, it overlooks a gorgeous countryside. With its narrow roads, olive groves and vineyards, the entire area provides a romantic setting for a summer holiday.

From its vantage point in central Italy, Cortona is midway between Italy’s east (Adriatic) and west (Tyrrhenian) coasts. Its nearest major cities are:

- Arezzo 20 miles (32 km)
- Perugia 32 miles (54 km)
- Siena 50 miles (80 km)
- Florence 62 miles (102 km)
- Rome 104 miles (166 km).

Cortona is built on the crest of Monte Sant-Egidio. Portions of the city walls date back to the time of the Etruscans. From the top of those walls, one can see the Valdichiana Plain, the mountains of Siena and the great expanse of Lake Trasimeno. From the face of those walls, ancient city gates still open to traffic from the winding roads below.

With its sweeping views, Cortona was home to medieval artists like Pietro Da Cortona (born Pietro Berrettini) who created magnificent works (including The Stoning of St. Stephan) for churches such as the San Ambrogio della Massima in Rome. (The St. Stephan painting is now owned by the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, Russia.)

A famous triptych (three-section) altarpiece by Fra Angelico, at the Museo Diocesano in Cortona, was damaged during WWII and restored between 1946-50. Its centerpiece is the *Madonna with the Child and Angels* (1435-36).

Another stunning Fra Angelico work - this one called the Cortona Altarpiece - features the Annunciation and six smaller pieces. It was prepared for the San Domenico church in Cortona and is also presently housed at the Museo Diocesano.

Cortona’s history, like other towns in Tuscany and nearby Umbria, is steeped in the lore of ancient and medieval tales. How far back in time does that history actually extend?

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/CORTONA-Under-the-Tuscan-Sun)

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Cortona - Under the Tuscan Sun

No one knows for sure when—or by whom—the Italian town of Cortona was originally founded, but it has been around for a very long time.

Historians believe it was once an Umbrian city which was conquered, then expanded, by the Etruscans. They called it “Curtun” and, in the 600s BC, Curtun joined the Etruscan League.

In the Roman era, the town was known as Corito. It was sacked and destroyed near the end of the Gothic War.

During medieval times, Cortona was a city-state. It had its own currency and, between 1324-1409, was ruled by the Ranieri-Casali family.

After Ladislaus of Naples conquered Cortona, in 1409, the town was sold to the Medici family in 1411.

Other periods of ownership, by other families, followed after the senior branch of the Medici family became extinct, around 1737.

By the time the Italian Wars of Independence were over, Cortona was part of the Kingdom of Italy.

Today it is part of Tuscany, an area of Italy where Florence is the regional capital.

This image provides a view of modern Cortona.

Image online via Visit Italy.

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Cortona - Map Locator

Image online, courtesy na.infn.it website.

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View of Cortona

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View From Cortona

Image online, courtesy the tuscany-villas.com website.

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View of the Area Near Cortona

Image online, courtesy hotelsincortona.com website.

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Cortona Countryside

Image online, courtesy sns.it website.

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Cortona Roads

Image online, courtesy the University of Notre Dame website.

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Cortona Area Map

Image online, courtesy viamichelin.com website.

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Cortona - Aerial View

Image online, courtesy the [cortona.com](http://www.cortona.com) website.

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Adriatic Sea - Map Locator

Image online, courtesy [newworldencyclopedia.org](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org) website.

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Perugia - View of the Town

Image online, courtesy the Xavier University website.

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Siena - Piazza del Campo

Photo depicted here by Ricardo André Frantz. Online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. License: CC BY-SA 3.0.

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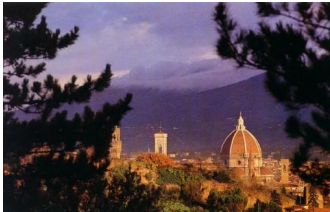


Cortona Altarpiece - by Fra Angelico

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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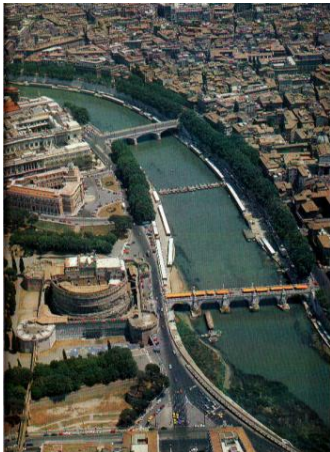
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Florence

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Rome - Aerial View

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Valdichiana Plain

Image online, courtesy the popcortona.com website.

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Lake Trasimeno - Photo

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Madonna with the Child and Angels - by Fra Angelico

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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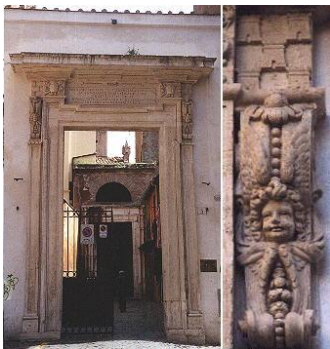
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Museo Diocesano

Image online, courtesy the cortonaweb.net website.

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San Ambrogio della Massima

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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The Stoning of St. Stephan - Painting by Pietro Da Cortona

Image online, courtesy Web Gallery of Art.

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Tyrrhenian Sea - Map Locator

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Umbria - Map Locator

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