CORTONA



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.

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

From its vantage point in central Italy, <u>Cortona</u> is midway between Italy's east (<u>Adriatic</u>) and west (<u>Tyrrhenian</u>) 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 <u>Valdichiana Plain</u>, the mountains of Siena and the <u>great expanse</u> of <u>Lake Trasimeno</u>. 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 <u>Pietro Berrettini</u>) who created magnificent works (including <u>The Stoning of St. Stephan</u>) for churches such as the <u>San Ambrogio della Massima</u> in Rome. (The St. Stephan painting is now owned by the <u>Hermitage</u> in St. Petersburg, Russia.)

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

Another stunning Fra Angelico work - this one called the <u>Cortona Altarpiece</u> - features the <u>Annunciation</u> 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 <u>Umbria</u>, 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

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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Media Stream



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

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View of Cortona

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View From Cortona

Image online, courtesy the $\underline{\text{tuscany-villas.com}}$ website.

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View of the Area Near Cortona

Image online, courtesy hotelsincortona.com website.

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Cortona Countryside

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Cortona Roads

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Cortona Area Map

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Cortona - Aerial View

Image online, courtesy the <u>cortona.com</u> website.

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Adriatic Sea - Map Locator

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Perugia - View of the Town

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Siena - Piazza del Campo

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Cortona Alterpiece - by Fra Angelico

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Florence

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Rome - Aerial View

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Valdichiana Plain

Image online, courtesy the popcortona.com website.

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<u>Lake Trasimeno - Photo</u>

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<u>Madonna with the Child and Angels - by Fra Angelico</u> Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Museo Diocesano

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San Ambrogio della Massima

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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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Umbria - Map Locator

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