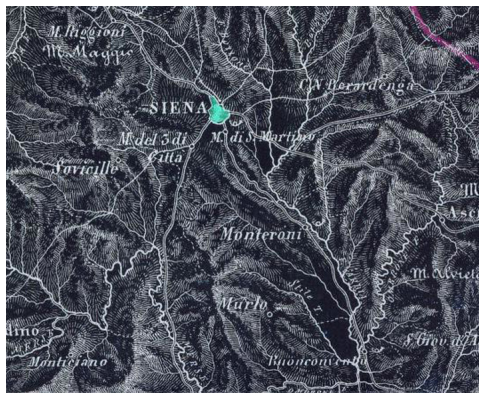


# SIENA

DISTANCE FROM THE BORGO: 30KM



The medieval city of Siena is a must-see destination with a memorable history, a world-class repository of medieval art and architecture, and the site of the famous Palio horse race held twice a year in the city's expansive public square, the Piazza del Campo.

Strategically located on the Via Francigena – the pilgrimage route from Northern Europe to Rome – Siena rose to greatness in the Middle Ages. The city flourished as one of Europe's largest cities from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, larger than Paris or London and rivaling Florence. Artistic projects proliferated, filling Siena with Gothic masterpieces.



The **Palazzo Pubblico** with its Mangia Tower offers an outstanding view of the city and its surrounding countryside. The palace houses a museum of Sienese painting, including Martini's Maesta, the Middle Ages' largest painting, and perhaps its most famous, Ambrogio Lorenzetti's Allegory of Good and Bad Government. In the surrounding city, a wealth of palaces and churches demonstrate civic and non-secular architecture. Siena's **Santa Maria Assunta**, a twelfth century cathedral, rivals Florence as a dictionary of Italian greats. Its collection includes sculptures by Michelangelo, Pinturicchio's frescoed Piccolomini library, and frescoes by Lorenzo Ghiberti, Donatello, and Jacopo della Quercia.



## Historical Overview:

The Sienese claim to have descended from the twin sons of Remus, whom Romulus expelled from Rome, and statues of the fabled she-wolf that suckled the twins as infants abound in the city. In 1348, the plague descended, killing three quarters of the Sienese population. This in combination with a banking failure left Siena a shadow of its former, powerful self. Centuries of struggle against Florence ended in 1555, when Siena was the last Tuscan city to fall to Medici Florence. Isolated, defeated, and subjugated during that period, Siena has become a wonderful historical showcase, a well-preserved medieval treasure from post-Renaissance Italy.

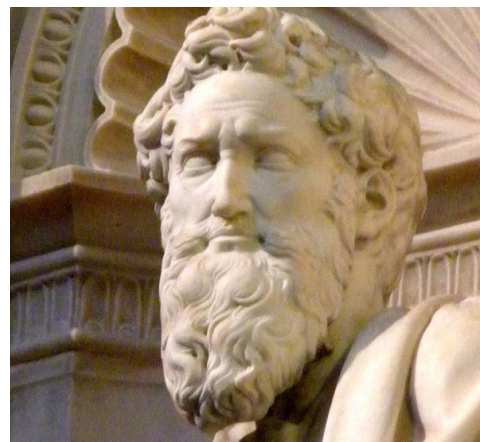
## Touring:

An ideal day in Siena could take many forms, but a delightful way to start is with a cappuccino or pastry at **Nannini** (<http://www.pasticcerienannini.it/en/>). Continue with morning visits to the Palazzo Pubblico or another his-

torical/artistic monument of your choice and most important, the **Duomo**, before taking lunch in a small restaurant off the tourist circuit. On a sunny day, you may opt for a picnic by a fountain or in the Campo. Work off your hearty Sienese lunch by exploring several of the town's contrade, the well-defined neighborhoods whose ancient rivalries form the heart of the vigorous competition of the **Palio** (<http://www.ilpalio.org/palioenglish.htm>). After shopping on the Banchi di Sopra you might finish with a tea or an aperitivo in one of the cafes lining the Campo.

Siena can warrant years of exploration. Indeed, for the art lover, no other location in Italy can offer a greater wealth and quality of medieval works than within Siena's protective walls. Its Roman grid is a maze of concentric circles and spidery arteries radiating from the central **Piazza del Campo**, one of Europe's largest and most picturesque piazzas. Its fan-shaped paving is divided into nine sections, representing the nine magistrates who represented Siena's various guilds in government during the city's most prosperous years in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. At the top of the fan is the **Fonte Gaia**, a monumental fountain whose name celebrates the "gaiety" when the city's network of fountains were completed in 1348. Also in the Campo one finds Siena's most characteristic monument, the **Palazzo Pubblico** (0577292226; open daily 10-7; with its Mangia Tower and museum of Sienese painting, including Martini's *Maesta* and Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Allegory of Good and Bad Government*).

In the surrounding city, an array of palaces and churches demonstrate civic and religious architecture. Siena's Duomo, **Santa Maria Assunta**, (0577283048; open daily 7:30-7:30; <http://www.operaduomo.siena.it/eng/index.htm>) is a twelfth century cathedral whose collection includes a pulpit by Nicola Pisano and Arnolfo di Cambio, sculptures by Michelangelo, Donatello, and Bernini, Pinturicchio's frescoed Piccolomini library, and frescoes by Lorenzo Ghiberti and Jacopo della Quercia. The entire marble floor is carved in cartoon allegorical figures and Biblical scenes, although to reduce wear, much is covered except during the period from mid-September to mid-November when it is possible to view them in their entirety. The **Capella della Madonna del Voto** is the design of Bernini and includes two of his statues as well as an altar with angels by his design. Beside the chapel is a wall of votive offerings for prayers answered which include a few by winning jockeys in the Palio horse race







The Duomo's museum is next door. Here one can see Duccio's *Maesta*, the largest painting from medieval times and among the most famous. End your tour of the **Museo dell'Opera del Duomo** (Via della Canonica, 1; <https://operaduomo.firenze.it>) by climbing the incomplete westwork of what would have been Italy's largest cathedral had not the plague and various banking failures so crippled the city. The skeleton of the never-realized church stands today as a reminder of the city's former greatness.



Also of interest is the **Papesse** (Via di Cita 126), one of Siena's only Renaissance buildings, which was commissioned by the great humanist Pius II for his sister. The building is of architectural interest and offers the least exacting aerial view of the city because an elevator takes you to its top floor loggia, from which you can see across to the Duomo and down into the Campo. The Papesse houses a contemporary art museum with changing exhibits. Across the street is the **Palazzo Chigi-Saracini** (Via di Cita 82) a Gothic building of particular elegance that houses the Accademia Chigiana (<http://eng.chigiana.it/>) with a small art collection including works by Boticelli and Donatello. Throughout the year, the Accademia holds musical programs in its fabulously ornate neo-eighteenth century concert hall as well as elsewhere in the city and surrounding areas. Further up the Via di Cita and left on the Via San Pietro leads to the **Pinacoteca Nazionale** (<http://www.pinacotecanazionale.siena.it/>) in the Palazzo Buonsignori. This painting gallery displays the development of Sienese painting starting in the twelfth century and through the Renaissance, with works by Duccio, the Lorenzetti brothers, and Il Sodoma.

Siena's **San Domenico** and **San Francesco** churches represent the two great medieval orders, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, and their size suggests the power and wealth these groups once represented in the city. San Domenico, where Saint Catherine is supposed to have received the stigmata, houses the Capella di Santa Caterina ([http://www.basilicacateriniana.com/index\\_en.htm](http://www.basilicacateriniana.com/index_en.htm)) and a reliquary with her head. There are also important works by Pietro Lorenzetti, Matteo di Giovanni, Lippo Memmi, and Andrea Vanni, a friend of Catherine herself. San Francesco (Piazza S. Francesco, 6) boasts no such intriguing reliquaries, but does house several detached frescoes of note by Sassetta and the Lorenzettis.



Also worth mention on an art and historical tour of the city are the palaces built by Monte dei Paschi di Siena, the world's oldest bank in continuous operation. Sienese banking families traded with pilgrims on the Via Francigena as far back as the twelfth century, although **Monte dei Paschi** dates to the fifteenth when it was a lending institution as the city recovered from its fourteenth century crash. Its three attached Renaissance palaces on the Piazza Salimbeni of the Banchi di Sopra house its offices and the bank's extensive art collection.



Finally the church of **Santo Spirito**, located off the beaten track on the Via dei Pispini houses a chapel by Il Sodoma that is worth seeing. A nice spot on sunny days is Siena's **Orte dei Pecci**, the large garden behind the Palazzo Pubblico and the Loggia dei Mercanti where in the summer there is often a falconry show starting at 2:30.



Siena is a city full of worthy sightseeing destinations; one of its most distinct pleasures however, is its cohesiveness and character. With that in mind, one would do well to take time to wander its characteristic streets with no particular destination in mind. A notable street found on one such wandering, behind the campo between the Banchi di Sotto and the Via S. Martino, is a tiny enclosed vicolo (alleyway.) As its name, Vicolo degli Orefici suggests, the street once housed Siena's jeweler's district. Sienese jewelers in the fourteenth century, known for translucent polished enamels, chose to work from here thanks to the protective quality of the narrow, dead-end street.

#### **Ninety seconds when the entire city stops:**

If what you seek to experience abroad is an authentic slice of life, little can top Siena's Palio race, held every July 2 and August 16. On these days, the city's historic neighborhoods, called "contrade," compete in a no-holds-barred, bareback horserace around the city's main piazza, the Campo, which is covered in dirt and lined with protective mattresses for the occasion. Passions are high and the city pulsates with the combined excitement of its 60,000 inhabitants and many visitors. For ninety seconds, the thousands of spectators hold one collective breath as the horses make three breakneck trips around the Campo and a new champion is crowned. This is the stuff of legends: every year is the sort of miraculous triumph of which the members of that particular contrada will tell for the rest of their lives.



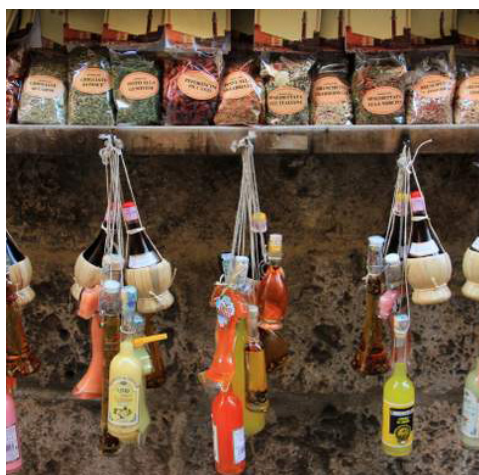
The race is, however, merely the culmination of a year-round cultural phenomenon. Siena is the only place in the world where by tradition, all Christian children are baptized twice, first in the customary individual ceremony, second in a once-yearly collective baptism held in his or her contrada's historic fountain and chapel. There, on the day of that particular contrada's patron saint, the year's worth of new babies are baptized into the contrada. It is a title that is carried with pride through a lifetime. It is said that to a Sienese, one's contrada supersedes any other titles or obligations, besides those to one's immediate family. It is easy to see the tight control of Sienese life imposed by the contrade, visibly in the brightly colored flags that mark each neighborhood and the crowds of children who gather in the streets, practicing cadences and flag tossing for the honor of representing their contrade in upcoming parades. Less visible, the Sienese will tell you that the contrade are responsible for the city's low rates of drug use and idleness among teenagers, for civic pride and upkeep, and even for well-stocked blood banks in the city's hospital. It is a society that fiercely takes care of its own.

### Shopping:

While Siena's shopping generally does not mirror the haute offerings of Florence, there is one upscale designer boutique, **Abbigliamento Cortecci** on the Banchi di Sopra (27; <http://www.corteccisiena.it/banchidisopra.html>) and several good shoe and leather stores, including chains like **Furla**. The main commercial area begins at the Piazza Salimbeni and continues down the Banchi di Sopra toward the Campo. From there you will find a few stores with luxury items down the Banchi di Sotto and a few more up the Via di Cita, but this is a place to concentrate on local specialties. The area around the Duomo boasts several good pottery stores jam packed with hand-painted wares, as does the Via Mattioli on the southern edge of town. Look for Ceramiche Santa Caterina (<http://digilander.libero.it/ceramicheartistiche/fabbrica.html>).

Selecting among the local foods can be one of the highlights of shopping in Siena. **Nannini** (Banchi di Sopra 24) houses a great selection of local specialty desserts like cantucci, ricciarelli, and panforte. For a truly colorful spot where the owner tends to put on a great show, try **Antica Pizzicheria** al Palazzo della Chigiana (Via di Città 93/95.) Antonio de Miccoli's shop is as typical as one could possibly want, with meats and dried pastas hanging from the ceiling and a row of hearty men in white coats waiting on customers from behind the





counter. For something more upscale, try **Morbidi** (Banchi di Sopra 73/75), a cafe and deli whose owners produce quality artisan cheeses and salamis, as well as a good number of sauces and interesting condiments to take home. **The Medici Fortress** in the northwest corner of town houses the **Enoteca Italiana**, with one of Italy's largest national wine collections of some one thousand wines. You can sample from the three dozen or so bottles they open daily. If you choose not to venture so far from the historic center for wine, try the **Enoteca San Domenico** (Via del Paradiso 56) which has a reputation for stocking quality wines from small producers. They also make their own panforte, fruit and nut cake.

One of the highlights of shopping in Siena is the enormous market that envelops the area between the Piazza Gamschi and the Fortezza in the northwest corner of town every Wednesday. People from all around the province come here to do their weekly shopping. Large strips of stalls devote themselves to housewares, toiletries, belts, clothes, jewelry, and shoes. On the back stretch of **La Lizza**, as the market area is called, is a row of florists. Down the steps toward the fortress leads to the food section of the market. Here, Sardinians sell fresh buffalo mozzarella and green grocers display an enormous range of produce like Sicilian blood oranges and sun-dried tomatoes. There is also a good amount of cooked meat, fried vegetables, cheese, and other snacks that would make for an excellent picnic.

### Dining:

Lunches in Siena can range from the simple to the elegant. If you prefer something light that lets you spend more time exploring Siena, you can put together a picnic from one of the food stores listed below or a panino from a bar, then proceed to one of the contrada fountains to eat. One nearby option is the Torre contrada's modern fountain, recognizable by a bronze elephant with a tower on its back, located on the Via di Salicotto two blocks behind the Palazzo Pubblico in the Campo and overlooking Siena's communal garden, the Orto dei Pecci.

**Light options:** **La Fontana della Frutta** (Piazza Indipendenza) is a beautiful grocery store one block off the main drag with plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, dried bulk foods, and a stuffed-to-the-brim case of prepared foods and desserts. This is a favorite spot to gather a picnic lunch for the nearby Campo. **Morbidi** (Via Banchi di Sopra 73/75) is a Siena institution



just steps from the Campo. **Morbidi** has the foods one would expect from an Italian deli case and plenty of canned sauces and jams for souvenirs and presents. The downstairs dining room has a good buffet. **Caffé Alfieri** (Via di Pantaneto 51) is a bar that offers elaborate coffee drinks, a case with several pastas or pizzas heated up to order, and a sandwich bar from which you choose bread, cheese, meat, vegetables, and sauce. They also make great salads.

**Restaurants:** A favorite destination for an elegant, sit-down lunch is **Osteria Le Logge** (Via del Porrione 33; 057748013; [http://www.giannibrunelli.it/italiano/osteria\\_start.html](http://www.giannibrunelli.it/italiano/osteria_start.html)) This restaurant, owned by a Montalcino vintner and his wife, attracts a well-heeled Italian crowd. The space is beautiful and meticulously done, like eating in a British tea room. The food is a mix of Tuscan classics and more adventurous options, all seasonal. The dining room is not large, so be sure to make a reservation if nothing else will do.



Even a step further upscale is **Tullio ai Tre Cristi Enoteca Ristorante** (Vicolo di Provenzano 1/7; 0577 280608; <http://www.trecristi.com/>) A few blocks from the Campo, find Tre Cristi by following the signs starting in the Piazza Tolomei on Banchi di Sopra. A fixed menu based on whatever fresh seafood the chef is preparing on a particular day is offered, along with a la carte fare. The service is attentive, the pace slow, and the food elegant. Many locals consider this to be the best restaurant in Siena and its slightly out-of-the-way location make it less of a tourist destination.



For a hearty family atmosphere and a lower price, there are many options. Try **Trattoria la Torre** (7-9 Via Salicotto; 0577287548) right behind the Campo for an open kitchen-dining room, excellent handmade pasta, and a vigorous welcome. Another good option along the same vein is **Cane e Gatto** (Via Pagliaresi 6; 0577220751) for Tuscan cooking with a slightly new edge and a friendly mood. A favorite for a light but relaxed lunch is Enoteca I Terzi (Via dei Termini 7; 057744329; <http://www.enotecaiterzi.it/en/index.htm>) Enoteca I Terzi is not only a destination for a wine lover, although its list of wines by the glass offers plenty of chances for enjoyment. Rather, it is an excellent spot to escape the crowds of Siena for a lunch that can be as light or as decadent as one might want.





### Special events:

The biggest event of the year is the **Palio** on July 2 and August 16, with events leading up to the big races taking place in the week before. Two months after each race, the winning contrada celebrates with a feast in the streets, for which tickets are on sale ahead of time. The Onda (wave) contrada celebrates the Festa di San Giuseppe on March 19. Go for the fried rice fritters. Each contrada arranges its own children into a procession for the Festa della Madonna on September 8.

Siena is full of special musical performances, particularly in the summer. The Accademia Chigiana hosts events year round (057722091; [www.chigiana.it](http://www.chigiana.it)) and a prestigious classical musical festival in the summer called Estate Musicale Chigiana. Siena Jazz (0577271401; [www.sienajazz.it](http://www.sienajazz.it)) takes place in July and August, alternating events between Siena and the surrounding towns, including Buonconvento. In summers, the Orte dei Pecci garden behind the Campo hosts various events. Falconry shows can be arranged for groups daily at 2:30 (3334499345.) In June, “Music Behind the Tower” concerts are free every evening at 7:30, or include dinner for 10 euros.

### Arriving in Siena:

The quickest road to Siena (35-40 minutes; about 27 km) is the Via Cassia/SR2. Take a left from Buonconvento at the petrol station and follow the signs for Siena. You will stay on the SR2 the entire time, with a brief bypass around Monteroni d’Arbia that begins in a roundabout about 10 km after you start on the SR2. After the bypass, go straight several more kilometers until you reach the first stoplight you see. Signs will point left to Siena Parking and Florence. Straight goes to the Porta Romana. Here, you have a choice: Left for parking at Il Campo, Santa Caterina, Stadio, Fortezza, and others. Straight will eventually take you to parking at San Francesco and to the train station. Suggestions for parking lots follow below.

### Parking:

The narrow, medieval streets of Siena’s city center are closed to non-residential vehicles. Luckily, a collection of parking lots and decks surround its walls, with an average cost of 1.60€ per hour. Take a ticket to enter and pay by inserting the ticket in the machine before you return to your car.



**Il Campo:** This is a large parking deck several blocks behind the Campo. Exit left off the SR2 at the stoplight, bear right, and continue uphill for several minutes and follow the signs.

**Santa Caterina:** This parking deck is very conveniently located and the uphill climb into town is made easy by an escalator complex. After parking, walk uphill about 150 meters through the town gate. Turn right where a small white sign shows a staircase denoting the “scalamobile” (moving staircase.) The escalator is in a new, brick and glass building. Six flights deposit you immediately below the Duomo.

**Fortezza/Stadio:** If walking must be kept to a minimum, this lot has the advantage of depositing you on the same level as the center of town and thus avoiding any hilly climbs. To access the lot, turn left on the S2 and follow the signs carefully for Parking Stadio or Fortezza.