

6. THE MADONNUCCIA CHURCH AND THE SAN MARTINO IN CAMPO TRAIL - PG

The Madonnuccia Church

The modern-day church, known as the *Oratorio della Madonnuccia* [9], represents only a modest remnant of the original building, which existed from at least the second half of the fourteenth century. Today, the Madonnuccia chapel consists of a square room with a doorway and small portico at the front. It underwent a long period of abandonment, uncared for and exposed to the weather and to vandals. This situation of neglect only came to an end in the mid-seventies, when the parish priest Don Ivo Mastroforti saw to it that the church was stabilised and restored. Large swathes of the painted areas were lost, and in some parts (like the clothes of the Virgin), the underlying preparatory sketches have been exposed. Despite this (and despite their exposure to the damp), the cycle of frescoes is still in decent condition. On the wall behind the altar (fig. 1), Maria is seated among the clouds with the baby Jesus in her lap, surrounded by a halo of shining light and the winged heads of seraphs. To her left is Saint Bernardino of Siena and on her right is Saint Christopher, with the Christ Child on his left shoulder. The background consists of a hilly landscape. The left wall (fig. 3) has a painting of Saint Martin on his horse as he tears his coat to share with a beggar, while the right wall (fig. 2) depicts Saint George on horseback as he attacks the dragon (no longer visible) and frees the princess. The latter image, unfortunately, is in very poor condition. Finally, the ceiling shows fragments of grisaille decoration, with medallions and cornices of classical style. In 1981, Sylvia Ferino Pagden suggested a date of 1485 for the frescoes, attributing them to Andrea d'Assisi (also known as *l'Ingegno*). The attribution and date proposed by this scholar were later accepted and echoed by Lunghi Todini and, more recently, by Corrado Fratini and Laura Teza. Despite this, there are still many unanswered questions about the figure of the mysterious *Ingegno* and the authorship of many works of art, including these frescoes, is still shrouded in doubt and uncertainty.

The San Martino in Campo Trail. From mines to fine art.

The San Martino in Campo trail is a loop route that includes many sites of interest. It consists entirely of level ground, leading walkers along both paved and unpaved roads. It passes through the centre of San Martino in Campo, which is notable for the presence of the Castrum [1] (14th century), with its square floor plan and four angular towers. The parish church [2] of San Martino in Campo dates from the second half of the 1800s, and is one of the so-called "*Chiese Leonine*" which were refurbished thanks to the future Pope Leo XIII. Inside, the altar is decorated by the fourteenth-century fresco of the *Madonna della Scala*. To this day, a celebration of the *Madonna della Scala*, who is deemed to be miraculous, is held on the third Sunday of every May. At the centre of the town is the 18th-century Villa dei Donini [3], built by the counts of the Donini family from Florence. Today, the villa is home to the hotel La Posta dei Donini. The area of San Martino in Campo once held a lignite deposit [4] from the Pliocene epoch. In the early 1900s, with the development of steelworks, it became expedient to extract the lignite for use in the industry as a fuel. So San Martino, like other parts of Umbria, became the site of a lignite mine which remained in use until 1946 when, after the Second World War, lignite was replaced by other fuels and the mine was closed.