



Clockwise from top left:

Admiring the architecture of Castel Sismondo

A flower market

The Cinema Fulgor, where Federico Fellini discovered his passion for film

One of the more discreet statues in the Tempio Malatestiano

Ravioli at the Grand Hotel

Street art, Rimini style

Obligatory Cinquecento shot

Outside the Tempio Malatestiano

Outside the Cinema Fulgor

Nightlife in the Borgo



Images by Abigail King unless otherwise stated



48 HOURS IN...

# Rimini

There's so much more to Rimini than just its beaches – the city was founded by the Romans and boasts a full 2,000 years of history. And, of course, it was the place where it all began for Federico Fellini, writes **Abigail King**

It's Friday night, so it's cinema night. Amid the flickering lights that dance along the wet street stones, I can hear something. Footsteps, for sure, in heels and black leather, and the carefree laughter that welcomes in the weekend. But there's something else here in Rimini, something that follows me into the deep red curtains of the Fulgor Cinema, mingling amid the sweet song of popcorn and the hush of anticipation that settles over the crowd.

Is it too fanciful to imagine that it's a whisper from the past? "Talking about dreams is like talking about movies. Years can pass in a second, and you can hop from one place to another." Those words come from Federico Fellini, the Italian director responsible for *La Strada* and *Nights of Cabiria* and perhaps the most famous film about Italy of all time: *La Dolce Vita*.

Yet this little cinema in a small street in Rimini was where it all began. For this is Fellini's hometown, and this cinema was where he used to hand out promotional playbills in exchange for free tickets, and spend hours watching story after story unfold.

So it made sense to me to start our 48 hours in Rimini right here, and to let the stories of this coastal highlight of Emilia-Romagna unfold over the next couple of days.





WHAT TO SEE AND DO

AMINTORE GALLI THEATRE 1

Piazza Cavour, 22  
[www.teatrogalli.it](http://www.teatrogalli.it)  
 The Galli Theatre reopened in 2018 after a hiatus of 75 years, the consequence of heavy bombing in the Second World War. See a show, or just take a tour and stop for a coffee in the atmospheric café.

THE FELLINI MUSEUM 2

Castel Sismondo  
 Piazza Malatesta  
 Palazzo del Fulgor  
[www.fellinimuseum.it](http://www.fellinimuseum.it)  
 Rimini celebrates the life of Federico Fellini in three areas across the city. Through letters, drawings, photos and scripts, the museum creates a multimedia experience to bring you closer to *La Dolce Vita*.

THE ARCH OF AUGUSTUS 3

Corso d'Augusto  
 One of the oldest surviving Roman arches and one of the largest of its kind. The Arch of Augustus marks the end of the Via Flaminia from Rome and you can still read the Latin inscriptions that were placed here when it was built, in 27 BC.

BORGO SAN GIULIANO 4

Look out for bright murals in eye-popping colours, and dine amid tumbling flowers, peeling paint and an unforgettable atmosphere of romance.

CINEMA FULGOR 5

Corso d'Augusto, 162  
[www.cinemasfulgor.com](http://www.cinemasfulgor.com)  
 Cinema Fulgor has been beautifully restored and screens movies on a regular schedule. Part of the new Fellini museum. Look out for additional exhibitions and displays.

CASTEL SISMONDO 6

Castel Sismondo, Piazza Malatesta  
[www.riminiturismo.it](http://www.riminiturismo.it)  
 The outer walls and the moat may be gone, but the stocky walls of Castel Sismondo still make an impression. Built as a home and a fortress for a Renaissance-era mogul, today it houses art exhibitions, concerts and part of the Fellini museum.

TEMPIO MALATESTIANO 7

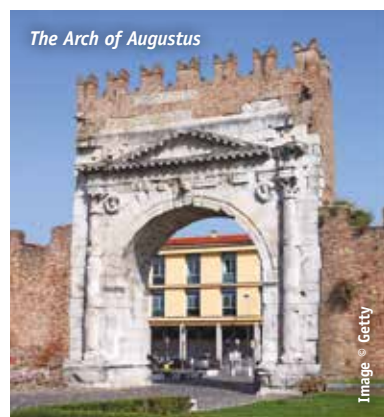
Via IV Novembre, 35  
 The unfinished cathedral church of Rimini stores a few surprises amid the muted frescoes and elegant stone sculptures.

SANTARCANGELO DI ROMAGNA 8

Just 10km north of Rimini, Santarcangelo di Romagna makes a good destination for an afternoon visit by e-bike. Check out its Grotte Tufacee Comunali and the Marchi Artisan Printing House, a 300-year-old family business with a formidable original printing press.



Piazza Tre Martiri, the Square of the Three Martyrs



The Arch of Augustus



Perfectly adequate for city sight-seeing

DON'T MISS

**THE STREET ART**  
 Do take time to go and see the street art on the walls of Borgo San Giuliano, just across the river from the Old Town. This isn't the globalised graffiti styles you will see elsewhere but rather something unique to Rimini. Here you can retrace images from Federico Fellini's masterpieces and also learn the faces of the fishermen who used to live here before the sunbeds and parasols arrived.

THE MORNING AFTER

Our Saturday morning begins, as all good stories do, at the beginning. Or close to it, anyway... At the Arch of Augustus that stands in the centre of Rimini. Rimini itself was founded by the Romans in 268 BC as a vital communications point between the north and south of the peninsula. The Arch of Augustus arrived a little later, in 27 BC, and remains one of the oldest Roman arches to have survived. It reminds me of a

*Tablecloths flutter like flags beneath expert hands as coffee is served*

wedding cake and a fairytale castle mixed together, with faded red brick battlements on top. Teetering above the fluted columns and Corinthian capitals stand four shields: Jupiter and Apollo on the side that faces Rome, and Neptune and Roma on side that faces Rimini.

This arch marked the end of the Via Flaminia, which led over the Apennine Mountains from Rome to Rimini, or Ariminum as it was back then. And that's not the only name change in a city that's thousands of years old.

From the arch, it's a quick walk through the Old Town to Piazza Tre Martiri. This beating heart of the centre welcomes solitary bicycles at daybreak and thronging crowds by coffee time. The clocktower glows a sweet orange at sunset, watchful as lamps glimmer and diners flow across the piazza, the centre of which is distinctively marked by cobblestones into a star shape.

It's a pretty, peaceful place. But that wasn't always the case, as the naming conventions show. Once,

Italians knew this square as Piazza Giulio Cesare, the place where Julius Caesar uttered those immortal words *iacta alea esto*: let the die be cast.

For it was near here that Caesar and his army crossed the Rubicon, an act of war, and then marched his troops towards Rome. Centuries after this momentous event, the city erected a statue on the piazza and gave the meeting point his name. A few hundred years after that, they changed it to Piazza Tre Martiri. And to understand why they did that, we need to time travel again.



"Profane things" at the Tempio Malatestiano

THE THREE MARTYRS

Now we're in the embers of the Second World War. Mussolini's forces have failed and the Allies are pushing up through Italy from the south, but the Nazis still occupy the land of their former allies in the north. Three young Resistance fighters have organised to sabotage a threshing machine near Rimini in a bid to halt the Nazi supply chain. They are caught and executed in this very piazza. Hence the name change, to the Square of the Three Martyrs.

All of which is hard to imagine today. Students throng between the covered walkways, moving with a lightness and restlessness that hasn't yet faded with age. Cafés spill onto the streets, their tablecloths fluttering like flags beneath expert hands as coffee and sugar-dusted biscuits are served.

But Rimini hasn't finished with the past just yet. We walk a few more blocks and enter the cool white sanctuary of the Tempio Malatestiano. It's like walking into a temple dedicated to bleached lavender, with columns and sculptures in cool blue and sweet lilac. It stands as the unfinished cathedral church of Rimini, an homage to St Francis. Yet folklore tells a different story.



"Pagan gods" at the Tempio Malatestiano



The restored ceiling of the Teatro Galli

During the height of the Renaissance, local magnate Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta commissioned reconstruction of the work, hiring Leon Battista Alberti as the architect. The exterior seems a rather plain affair, with blocks of stone and muted adornments and hardly a hint of scandal. But inside, the situation changes.

Naked bodies abound. In sculpture, of course, not in the flesh, but a disproportionate number have their hips set at eye level for visitors. History talks about Malatesta's excommunication from the Church, the rumours about his lover, and the serious depletion of his funds. As for the Tempio Malatestiano itself, in the words of Pope Pius II, it is "full of pagan gods and profane things." And it's worth a visit just for that.

THE CURTAIN RISES

From the Renaissance, we travel to the late 19th century, and the glamour of the Amintore Galli Theatre, dripping in cream and gold. The theatre reopened its doors in 2018, a full 75 years after they were closed when everything that stood behind them was destroyed by bombing. Standing beneath the russet-coloured columns at the entrance, I try to imagine how

DON'T MISS

**LA NOTTE ROSA, OR PINK NIGHT Rimini**  
 celebrates summer in early July with music, fireworks, open air performances – and turning everything pink. This is the city's own take on the *Notti Bianche*, the White Nights, you will see up and down the coast here. Turn up with a pink wig, pink clothes and pink lipstick and you're sure to fit right in.

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL ELISEO 9

Lungomare Pinzon, 130  
 Bellaria Igea Marina  
[www.hoteleliseo.com](http://www.hoteleliseo.com)

HOTEL ELIOS

Lungomare Pinzon, 116  
 Bellaria Igea Marina  
[www.hotelelios.com](http://www.hotelelios.com)

Right on the beachfront, two charming, family-run hotels with a Mediterranean atmosphere. Located in Bellaria Igea Marina, a seaside resort close to Rimini town, both hotels offer accommodation to suit every need, the perfect spot to relax for a few days.

DUOMO HOTEL 10

Via Giordano Bruno, 28  
[www.duomohotel.com](http://www.duomohotel.com)

Tucked away in the heart of the Old Town, the DuoMo Hotel is anything but old. Designed by Israeli architect Ron Arad, everything from the bar to the reception to the rooms challenges preconceptions. Bronze, teak and PVC curve and blend from floor to ceiling in the 43 rooms of this 4-star property.



Modern living at the DuoMo Hotel

GRAND HOTEL RIMINI 11

Parco Federico Fellini, 1  
[www.grandhotelrimini.com](http://www.grandhotelrimini.com)

The Grand Hotel certainly lives up to its name with a sweeping entrance, fountains and sense of Belle Epoque elegance with its Liberty-era façade. The hotel is set in a restful location right on the seafront and close to Rimini's historical centre. It has a large outdoor pool and terrace, free wifi, free parking on site, and a restaurant open all day with buffets available for breakfast and lunch.

ISUITE 12

Viale Regina Elena, 28  
[www.i-suite.it](http://www.i-suite.it)

The iSuite Hotel is a business-class hotel with a focus on sleek white design. Set in an elegant environment overlooking the Adriatic Sea, it features 122 rooms, each with individually controlled air conditioning, LCD TV sets, free wifi and satellite TV channels.



WHERE TO EAT

**LA MARIANNA** 15  
 Viale Tiberio, 19  
**www.trattorialamarianna.it**  
 This warm and friendly *trattoria* sits just over the ancient Tiberius Bridge in the romantic Borgo part of Rimini. It claims to be the oldest restaurant in the city, and you'll find fried fish and salted squid dishes along with fragrant *piadina* breads.  
 € €

**GRAND HOTEL** 14  
 Parco Federico Fellini  
**www.grandhotelrimini.com**  
 The Belle Epoque atmosphere of the Grand Hotel complements the high quality food here, and together they create a remarkable sense of occasion. In between palms, pools and a Liberty façade, you can dine on organic produce by either joining a buffet in the ballroom or a picnic beneath the summer sky.  
 € € €

**EAST COAST EXPERIENCE** 15  
 Viale Ortigara, 78-80  
**www.ecerimini.it**  
 Dine on the open sea in this intimate setting aboard a boat for just your own group. Chefs serve handmade ravioli stuffed with ricotta, along with hearty antipasti and a lightly sweet *zuppa inglese*.  
 € € €



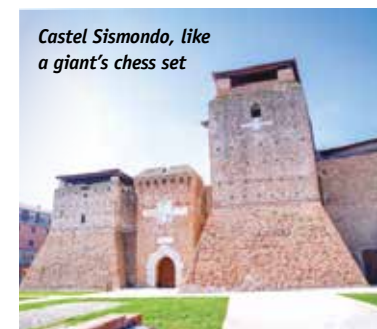
Map data © 2021 Google



The Tiberius Bridge, il Ponte di Tiberio



Santarcangelo is only an e-bike ride away



Castel Sismondo, like a giant's chess set



Brunch menu at the Grand



Rocca Malatestiana, Santarcangelo

it was for so long: a scar from the Second World War, a decaying heap of bomb-damaged rubble.

The party had begun here in 1857 with a performance of *Aroldo* by Verdi. A crowd of thousands gathered in all their finery and music, and song and story rose between the chandeliers. And that sense of jubilant celebration is now back, with performers on the boards and audiences in seats. We were out of luck to catch a real performance,

*In pops of turquoise, lemon and tangerine, the crumbling walls bring Italian dreams to life*

but did have time to explore. I walked along the swooping and swerving terraces, running my hands over the polished wooden edges, listening for the memory of a song.

In the end, we settle for a different kind of show. I order coffee and a light bite in the airy Teatro café and sit on the steps, watching

the crowds rise and fall through the Piazza Cavour outside.

In the afternoon, we meet a friend at Castel Sismondo. And it's back to the Renaissance with the infamous Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta. Square-edged towers and walls jostle together like overbearing chess pieces at Castel Sismondo on the edge of Rimini's Old Town. This was the former home of Malatesta, with work beginning in March 1437 and then rumbling and rambling on

for a further fifteen years. During this time, several architects became involved, most notably Filippo Brunelleschi, the man known as the world's first modern engineer.

Over the next few centuries, the external walls were demolished, the moat filled, and then the *carabinieri* moved in as Sismondo became a

barracks in the 1800s. Today the castle hosts international exhibitions and events for local museums.

For the evening, we crossed the crumbling yet chunky stone Bridge of Tiberius to enter Borgo San Giuliano on the other side of the Marecchia River. Once considered the wrong side of the tracks, in the dimming and dipping sunset light, this seafaring community reminds me of Fellini and his sense of magic.

And I'm not the only one. Between the winding passageways of tumbling flowers, peeling paint and creeping ivy, I find murals. Mural after mural of dreamy street art. Not the kind with skulls and death and scrambled, jagged letters, but rather images of fishermen and whales and the kiss of *la dolce vita*. In pops of turquoise, lemon and tangerine, the crumbling walls bring Italian dreams to life.

They stem from the Festa del Borgo San Giuliano, a festival that began in 1979 and that takes place every two years in September.

DON'T MISS

**ESCAPE TO THE HILLS BY E-BIKE**  
 When you've had your fill of the coast, pedal your way through the countryside to Santarcangelo with its mysterious caves and its "blood of Jupiter" Sangiovese wine.

► **KEY TO RESTAURANT PRICES** (full meal per person, not including wine)  
 € Up to €25  
 € € € €26-€50  
 € € € € More than €50

Combining music, food, theatre and fireworks, artists would create new murals by painting over the ones that came before.

Then, in 1994, the Borgo chose a Fellini theme, and because the residents loved the artwork so much they changed the tradition. Now the pictures remain, dreamlike and charming, an everlasting vision of the Italy people would like to share.

In the *trattorie*, that vision continues with some of the finest and homeliest foods from Emilia-Romagna. We dined on homemade *piadine*, handmade *capelletti* and the hard Talamello *fossa* cheese, served with figs and honey.

The next morning was a liltingly lazy Sunday in Rimini, and, at last, we arrived at the coast. It's a short walk, or an even shorter bicycle ride, from the Old Town to the sea, travelling to the Belle Epoque era at the aptly named Grand Hotel.

Palms surround the Art Nouveau façade, while five-star rooms overlook the sea and staff guard the only private beach in Rimini. Inside, waiters glide between 18th-century furniture from France and Venice, and well-dressed guests linger beneath Murano glass chandeliers framed by marble interiors. My film friends tell me they've seen this place before, as the background to Fellini's 1973 picture *Amarcord*. Italy designated it a national monument in 1994.

Brunch arrives with flair. A rainbow of sliced melon, fresh prawns, white tablecloths, water and wine and the rose-tinted memories of a more decadent era.

Well fed, we while away the afternoon on e-bikes, riding over the gentle hills to Santarcangelo di Romagna. At the start of the journey, I can't see the point of electronic assistance. By the end, however, I don't know how I'd ever have managed without it. We have travelled, according to the map, from sea level to the peak of Mount Jupiter, or Monte Giove.

SECRET CAVES

Once there, we find our old friend Sigismondo Malatesta again. The Malatesta Castle rises high above the rolling green landscape, but our time is spent largely below the ground in the series of secret caves here. The Grotte Tufacee Comunali, as they are called in Italian, link shadows and cobwebs into an intricate network where locals still store their wine. And it's no ordinary wine. Sangiovese translates to "the blood of Jupiter", and it's a hearty red drink that serves to make the cycle back to Rimini that much more dreamy.

But when all is said and done, Rimini's character is intrinsically linked to the sea. Back on the seafront, we walk past the 1960s boomtown of pretty parasols in

baby blue and lemon and onto the narrow boardwalk that leads to our host for the night: a small boat, a chef, and some big dreams.

For tonight, we dine upon the waves. As we feast on *sfiziosi e colorati, ravioli di ricotta* and *zuppa inglese*, the small boat skates on the waves, and we watching them turn from blue to autumn to silent black.

Away from the lights of Rimini, it's easy to look up at the sky. To think about the waxing and waning passages of time and to let our eyes linger on the other kind of stars. ■

DON'T MISS

**THE PAGANELLO**  
 Rimini's very own ultimate frisbee competition takes place over Easter weekend and draws thousands of entrants from all around the world.

GETTING THERE

► **BY PLANE**  
 Rimini's closest airport is just a few miles away at Federico Fellini International Airport (RMI.) While transfers from RMI into Rimini's Old Town are quick and easy, many visitors find it easier to fly into a busier airport in Italy and then travel by train from there. Bologna is the closest big city and is well served from London. From Bologna, the train takes only one hour and costs around €9. Other options include flying into Venice, Rome, Florence or Pisa and taking advantage of the excellent rail connections from there.

► **BY ROAD OR TRAIN**  
 You can add Rimini to a road trip through Emilia-Romagna, while also stopping off at Ravenna, Forlimpopoli and San Marino. However, in Rimini itself, it's not useful to have your own wheels. Italy's rail service has excellent connections between Rimini and other main cities. Bologna is the closest point and trains travel regularly, taking only around an hour.

► **GETTING AROUND**  
 You don't need any transport to travel around Rimini Old Town and into the Borgo: it's best enjoyed on foot. It's around half an hour to the coast but a wonderful way to get around is to hire a bicycle and cycle there or into the countryside instead.