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## Orvieto: The Case for a Base in Italy

Story by Cheri Newton, Photography by Kim Newton

Italy is a top travel destination for Americans. Fueled by our love of Italian food, our appreciation of Italy's ancient history and art, and our attraction to its exquisite landscapes, we go there in droves. But here is a little secret—Tucson has a special relationship with the quiet walled city of Orvieto, situated atop a cliff of volcanic tuff, in Umbria, which makes it the perfect base for our Italian adventures.

The connection evolved from an ongoing study-abroad program started in 2002 by University of Arizona professor Dr. David Soren, Regents Professor of Anthropology and Classics, and two Italian archaeologists, Alba Frascarelli and Claudio Bizzario. The program grew to include other disciplines, like art, architecture, English, Italian, and photojournalism. In any given year, 50+ students and faculty from UArizona live in Orvieto for 5-week periods. The locals have grown accustomed to folks from the Old

Members of the procession in celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi pass through the Piazza Duomo in downtown Orvieto. The procession dating from the Middle Ages takes place every June and commemorates the presence of the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus in the elements of the Eucharist.

Pueblo. Thus, we have an instant welcoming home in Italy.

Orvieto has ancient Etruscan beginnings (between the 9th and 3rd centuries BCE). Its earliest history can be explored via tours of the many underground caves utilized by that ancient civilization, as well as at the Civic and Etruscan Museum "Claudio Faina" and Orvieto National Archaeological Museum. Much evidence of Etruscan life was wiped out when the Romans claimed the area in 264 BCE, but the remains of the Temple Belvedere, dedicated to the Etruscan god Tinia, can still be explored in the Piazza Cahen area. Above Orvieto's labyrinth of mysterious caves, a town grew and thrived in the medieval



## Great Escape

The Duomo di Orvieto (Orvieto Cathedral) towers above the city.

and Renaissance eras.

A relic of a linen said to be stained by a bleeding sacramental bread in the 13th century, residing at Orvieto's famous duomo (cathedral), is an expression of Orvieto's importance to Catholicism. The relic is displayed during a procession during the Feast of Corpus Christi.

Several popes lived within Orvieto's protective walls during Roman conflicts, and the papal palace, now used as a venue for conferences, still stands, overseeing a lively twice weekly farmers market in Piazza del Popolo.

Expect to meld into Orvieto's way



People walk in the rain along the Corso Cavour, the main street of Orvieto, toward the Torre del Moro, a clock tower built in 1200 CE. After climbing its 265 steps, visitors are greeted with a 365° view of the city and surrounding countryside.

of life here. Situated in the "green heart" of Italy, Orvieto is part of the slow-food movement, thanks to its former mayor Stefano Cimicchi, who revitalized the infrastructure of the town and introduced the concept, paving the way for Orvieto to comfortably share its fine wines, traditional foods, and culture with the world. Enjoy people watching over an espresso at one of many cafés around the market.



Two Italian restaurants in Oriveto's Piazza del Popolo host diners on their patios.



Stefano Galanelli, one of the owners of Il Vincaffé, prepares a plate of assorted meats and cheeses at this wine-bar restaurant in the medieval section of Oriveto.

The idea of staying in one place on holiday and then taking day trips from that base is not a new one. Lying neatly between Rome and Florence and serviced by dependable direct train service to both, the commune provides an ideal home base. Rome is an hour and 17 minutes away, and Florence is just over 2 hours away.

When you arrive in Oriveto take the famous funicular up to your new home away from home. In the evening, explore the many wonderful restaurants on the cliff. Antica Cantina, in Piazza Monaldeschi, is a favorite that my husband, Kim, and I enjoy. The fare is always fresh, seasonal, and local. The English-speaking owner, Cecilia Stopponi, will gladly

Anthropology Professor Claudio Bizzarro guides University of Arizona study-abroad students through the labyrinth of caves under Oriveto. Tours are available to the general public.



make tantalizing suggestions. For the local pork roast (porchetta) and wild boar (cinghiale), another restaurant we favor is Tucson-friendly L'Oste del Re, on Via del Duomo. For lighter fare, or just high-quality wine, hang out comfortably at Il Vincaffé on Via Filippeschi. Open late, this is just the right place to get over jet lag or to enjoy their jazzy music and local cheese and prosciutto boards.

One of the best ways to settle into the pleasant feeling of slow city living is to alternate your day trips with stay-at-home days in Oriveto, exploring its incredible historic nooks and crannies, as well as a multitude of specialty shops with local foods, clothes, and art. You cannot get lost as you wander the

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**The deadline for the September 2024 issue is August 1.**  
**The deadline for the October 2024 issue is September 1.**



**KILONOVA** *continued from page 35*  
Using ARizona Observatories).

When gravitational wave detectors sense an event, artificial intelligence is used to determine whether the event is terrestrial or cosmic in origin. If the event is cosmic, an alert is issued containing a probability of a binary neutron star collision/merger and identifying the area of sky where the event occurred.

SAGUARO receives information about the event and checks with a database of known transient phenomena to vet any candidates it finds, using a proprietary algorithm. If the vetted candidate has not been seen before and may be a kilonova, SAGUARO can provision the Kuiper and Bok telescopes—on Mount Bigelow and Kitt Peak, respectively—to start coordinated mapping of the most promising area of the sky for the kilonova's optical counterpart, a supernova. Using a template of comet and asteroid observations provided by UArizona's Lunar and Planetary Lab's Catalina Sky Survey, astronomers can image any patch of sky in which anything new has appeared since the most recent survey. If the image is promising, they send the transient-event coordi-

nates to a spectrograph on the MMT Observatory atop Mount Hopkins or to the Large Binocular Telescope on Mount Graham to verify a kilonova detection. Such rapid follow-up can be accomplished only with multiple telescopes, high-availability wide-field and spectrographic instruments, and clear skies—criteria all met in Southern Arizona.

In the best-case scenario, a search can be started within a minute of a vetted candidate alert, and spectral verification can be achieved within 6 hours, says Sand. LIGO has just begun its fourth observing run, and Sand and colleagues wait with bated breath for the alert that will trigger the intense search for the next—and second-ever observed—kilonova.

For further details on SAGUARO, check out [as.arizona.edu/saguaro-project-and-multi-messenger-astronomy](http://as.arizona.edu/saguaro-project-and-multi-messenger-astronomy) and [arxiv.org/pdf/2310.08624](http://arxiv.org/pdf/2310.08624).

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**GREAT ESCAPE** *continued from page 15*

town's ancient streets and small lanes, although in some moments, especially after the day's tourists leave, you may wonder what century you are in, as you can almost hear the whisperings of its past inhabitants. If you walk or run the city's perimeter, bring your drawing pad or travel diary, because you likely will feel inspired by the views and ambience.

You can rent a car in Orvieto for your longer day excursions to Assisi, nearby wineries, and Tuscan villages. When you return to Orvieto, enjoy that feeling again. You are home with the people who genuinely care that you are there with them—your home away from home.

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**TATTOOING DAWKINS**

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early to meet with Khasse, Dr. Robinson, and Dawkins. "The vet likes that the owner is in the room with the dog, and I thought that was a very beautiful approach," Pichet says.

It took 45 minutes to do both eyes. "It went very, very well," says Pichet. "You can see the dog is no longer in pain. ... I'm so glad I got the opportunity to do this, and I would love to do it again."

Khasse says Dawkins is doing well. "My vet was excellent in keeping track of him and checking [him] while [he was] under [anesthesia]," she adds. "[Dawkins] does not look like the same dog. It took about a week to recover from the surgery, ... and he's just doing great." 🐾

**Tom Leyde** is a local freelance writer. Comments for publication should be addressed to [letters@desertleaf.com](mailto:letters@desertleaf.com).

**Conservation and Coexistence**

Conservation efforts are essential to safeguard rattlesnakes and their habitats for future generations. Public education and outreach programs play a crucial role in dispelling myths and misconceptions surrounding rattlesnakes, promoting coexistence, and fostering a greater appreciation for these remarkable creatures. By embracing conservation initiatives and adopting responsible stewardship practices, we can ensure that rattlesnakes continue to thrive in the Sonoran Desert for years to come.

In the intricate tapestry of life that is the Sonoran Desert, rattlesnakes occupy a unique and indispensable niche. As symbols of resilience and adaptability, they remind us of the delicate balance that sustains desert ecosystems and the interconnectedness of all living things. 🐍

**Rowan Cassarly** is a marketing strategist at the Cooper Center for Environmental Learning. Comments for publication should be addressed to [letters@desertleaf.com](mailto:letters@desertleaf.com).

**SONORAN SAGE**

*continued from page 16*

say it's an evolutionary development to avoid detection.

**Human-Wildlife Conflict**

Despite their ecological importance, rattlesnakes often face persecution and habitat loss owing to human encroachment and fear. Encounters between humans and rattlesnakes can result in conflict, with negative consequences for both parties. Rattlesnake bites, though relatively rare, can be life-threatening to humans if left untreated, and retaliatory killings can perpetuate a cycle of fear and misunderstanding. At Camp Cooper, we teach students to admire and respect these desert neighbors from a distance, and we watch as they peacefully pass by. It is important to remember that we share a home with these amazing animals, and if left alone, the rattlesnake is harmless.