



## Is This for Real?

### **Absolutely! Time to visit Spello (in the Umbria Region).**

Only occasionally do tourists stop in Spello; it's little known (most people go to Assisi, which is close by) and not part of the "usual" travel itinerary. But it is, after all, rated as "one of the most beautiful villages in Italy."

There are only 6,000 inhabitants—tiny in a country of over 56 million people. But it's the small-town charm that captures the tourist. There's a lot of walking on the cobblestone streets and tiny alleyways with profusions of flowers.

And speaking of flowers, let's take a look at Spello's *L'Infiorata*—the festival of flower art.

It's a religious festival in June (the ninth Sunday following Easter) and it's the time when tourists, mostly Italians, descend upon Spello. The main streets are carpeted with flowers. Petals from thousands of different-colored flowers and aromatic herbs are used to create art--usually religious figures. It takes a small army to pluck the petals off and get the flowers ready.

The areas are cordoned off and a week's worth of preparation is laid out on the streets in just one night. On that night, almost a thousand people work non-stop to create carpets and pictures made of flowers along the town's narrow streets. The result is a unique, one-mile-long path of beautiful floral creations with an explosion of colors and scents.



*Townsppeople plucking petals*



*And more ladies disecting petals*



*Putting the petals on the design*

The next day, a religious procession passes over the images that adorn the streets. It is truly one of the simplest yet spectacular festivals in Italy.

This tradition of a carpet of flowers dates back to 1831. People with houses facing the main street were asked to keep the street free from rubbish and to spread flowers and greenery on the street as a "carpet" for the religious procession to walk on. Eventually, the simple spreading of flowers and greenery started to improve, simple designs began to emerge. Those then became more sophisticated and bigger compositions. Artistic impression began to take over and the carpet of flowers started reflecting social messages as well.

There are two videos below. The first shows some of the village of Spello, images of the completed designs and the religious procession.

### **The overall town and festival**

This video shows a few more photos of the flower-lined streets and the small army of people needed to place the petals into the pattern and bring

the entire plan into an amazing piece of art. It takes strong knees (and a young body). In the video, you will also see that the patterns they use are labeled with “rosamarino,” or “rosa,” etc. so they know exactly which petals must be put where into the design. They are so meticulous that they use tweezers to clean up or move individual petals. (You can skip the message in Italian at the beginning by using the scroll bar at the bottom of the screen.)

### **Putting it all together**

This same religious festival is held in many other parts of Italy, Rome and Noto (in Sicily) among them. But this village is by far the prettiest and most charming!

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