

Ciao !!!

I have accepted the challenge to start writing an instruction book of Tuscany or “Toscana”, as we call it here at home. This is the first draft where I have collected few information and description of different areas of Tuscany.

Travellers and clients are always asking me information, recommendation, how Tuscany and its cities looks like and where they should go. I generally answer to new clients their trip expectation in order to suggest the best itinerary according to their likes and wishes. I hope the next pages will help all the independent travellers wishing to discover their own Tuscany in planning their trip and all my future clients to better understand where I suggest them to go.

I hope you will find the necessary information and tips you were looking for and maybe next year I'll add other sections on how to get around or money or a short vocabulary, weather or other necessity you may suggest me at alessandro@zuzzintuscany.com

Personally, I wish you the very best of Tuscany you choose to visit.
Buon Viaggio !!
(have a wonderful trip)!!

Alessandro Cecchi
“Tuscan Expert”

First of all I must remember to you all that Italy is divided into 20 regions, like English counties or American states.

Tuscany is one of them, divided into 9 provinces.
Each province is made up of comuni (cities or towns)
and frazioni (villages or hamlets).
The Capital City is Firenze (Florence).

These are the 9 Tuscan provinces:

Arezzo
Firenze (Florence)
Grosseto
Livorno (Leghorn)
Lucca
Pisa
Pistoia
Siena

And these are the cities and areas' information you can read in the following pages and use to plan your Tuscan adventure:

Arezzo
Chianti
Florence
Lucca
Maremma
Massa and Carrara
Pisa
San Gimignano
Siena
Val d'Orcia and Montalcino
Versilia
Volterra



Arezzo

Arezzo, the capital of the province with which it shares its name, lies between the Val di Chiana, Casentino, Valdarno and Valtiberina valleys.

Arezzo has an incredibly rich artistic heritage. Among the eminent figures born in Arezzo are the Roman Caio Clinio Mecenate, the fourteenth century poet Francesco Petrarck and the famous sixteenth century architect Giorgio Vasari. Still, the city succeeds in keeping old traditions alive, maintaining a perfect balance between the past and present.



Whatever the season, Arezzo is full of surprises. June and September present the Giostra del Saracino (Saracen Joust) and the Arezzo Wave Festival in July is ideal for lovers of rock music.

Originally an Etruscan town, Arezzo experienced periods of splendour during the Roman age and then again in the middle ages and during the Renaissance, as can be seen from the city's layout and architecture, dominated by a Medici fortress. The focal point of the city centre is the massive, trapezoid Piazza Grande (also known as Piazza Vasari). One of Italy's most beautiful piazzas, it is characterised by a unique mix of ages and architectural styles. The elegant 16th-century public fountains in the centre of the piazza are surrounded by magnificent buildings, notably that of the Fraternita dei Laici, completed in 1460. The Gothic lower part of the facade combines with a Renaissance style upper part, while the apse of the nearby Santa Maria parish church is Romanesque. This church also contains a valuable polyptich by Pietro Lorenzetti, which dates from 1320, and the facade is decorated with impressive mediaeval reliefs. The church is on Corso Italia, the historical spine of the mediaeval town. The impressive five-storey bell tower "of the hundred holes" gets its name from the before windows.

Farther along, the Via dei Pileati leads to the spire-decorated facade of Palazzo Pretorio, a 15th/16th-century building which was widened in the twentieth century. A little further along is the 16th-century house where the poet Francesco Petrarck is said to have been born on July 20, 1304. The Duomo of San Donato is an impressive building with an attractive staircase in front. This Gothic style cathedral (although it was completed in the 16th century) preserves many important artworks, including the multicoloured stain glass windows by Guillaume de Marcillat (17th century), the gothic arch of San Donato and the famous fresco by Piero della Francesca portraying Mary Magdalene. A short distance away is the Romanesque – Gothic church of San Domenico where Cimabue's 14th-century masterpiece, the Crucifixion, can be admired. Nearby is Casa Vasari, the elegant sixteenth century home of the artist Giorgio Vasari, which he personally decorated. Going back down Via Garibaldi, it is worth visiting the Gothic-Tuscan style church of San Francesco (13th – 14th century) with its incomplete stone and brick facade and 15th-century bell tower. The church contains the extraordinary History of the True Cross fresco cycle painted by Piero della Francesca (15th century) which has recently been brought back to its former glory thanks to advanced

restoration techniques.

The many museums in Arezzo include the Mecenate Museum of Archaeology in the former Olivetan Monastery of San Bernardo, which was partly built on the ruins of the 2nd-century Roman amphitheatre, of which the stalls and remains of the ambulatories are still visible. The museum houses many valuable Etruscan artefacts including the Attic red-figure krater depicting Hercules fighting the Amazons by Euphronios (500 BC), the amphora by the well-known Meidias painter, a large number of coralline or “sealed earth” vases - ceramic pottery made in Arezzo and painted in brilliant shades of coral, and numerous examples of worked gold found at burial sites, such as the Poggio del Sole necropolis near Arezzo.

The Museum of Mediaeval and Modern Art in what is known as the Palazzo della Dogana (Customs Building), contains paintings and sculpture which best represent Aretine, and Tuscan, art from the 14th to the 19th century.

Arezzo is home to some of the finest pieces of 15th-century Italian art: Piero della Francesca’s fresco cycle (an artist who is also famous for his treatises on figurative art and the theory of perspective) inside the basilica of San Francesco is the jewel in the crown of this “cultural goldmine” and truly unique historical centre.

Don't Miss:

The city’s tradition of working with gold stretches back to its Etruscan roots and for centuries has been a by-word for high quality Aretine products. Today this artistic tradition is on display in the city's workshops and jewellery shops. Jewellery is also on sale in the large and bustling Antique Fair held in Piazza Grande on the first weekend of every month. The fair is one of the largest in Italy and its stalls offer all kinds of items as well as the occasional bargain.

Special Events



The Giostra del Saracino dates back to at least the 13th century and is held every year in Piazza Grande. The official festival takes place on the first Sunday in September and is preceded by other displays on the second-to-last Saturday in June: the competition, which begins after the reading of the joust announcement and parade in traditional costume, consists of four pairs of knights (representing the city’s four rival districts) who compete by charging “Buratto, King of the Indies”, an

armoured figure on a stake representing the Saracen enemy. The winning pair is awarded the “Golden Lance” which is forged each year by the master goldsmiths of the city.

In September the tradition of gold working is honoured with the International Gold, Silver and Jewellery Trade Exhibition.

The Chianti area

The Chianti district of central Italy, located west of the Val d'Elsa and east of the mountains of the same name, is actually part of Tuscany. The district stretches between Florence and Siena, and the two historical cities have always claimed it as their own, as have the numerous medieval towns in between. Its unifying element is the world-famous Chianti wine, the area's most typical product, made mainly from the Sangiovese grape.

The area has long been considered the 'heart of Tuscany', and features splendid landscapes packed with vineyards, chestnuts, oaks and holm-oaks, pretty medieval towns, romantic castles and fascinating farmhouses. It is a hilly area, and the highest mountain is San Michele, which stands 893 metres high. The dispute about the actual boundaries of the area goes back a long way. Cosimo III, Grand-Duke of Tuscany, attempted to better define the Chianti in the eighteenth century. In the end, it was the area's wine producers who succeeded, when in 1924 they established the first association of Chianti wine producers in Radda in Chianti, a town in the province of Siena.

The history of the Chianti's origins and the area's wine-making tradition have made the Chianti area (the name of a river in Etruscan times) world famous. Its gently rolling hills boast extraordinary panoramas, dramatic gorges and picturesque roads. For those coming from Florence, the natural gateway to the land of wines is Impruneta. The town features important monuments like the crenellated bell-tower (13th century) and the basilica of Santa Maria (Romanesque in origin with subsequent remodelling) with its Treasury Museum, which contains precious jewellery, illuminated manuscripts and a fine marble bas-relief by Luca della Robbia. It is also the venue for two international events: the grape festival, held on the last Sunday of September, which features a parade of allegorical floats, and the Festival of San Luca in the month of October. Behind Florence on the road to Siena is the old medieval town of Greve in Chianti, which should not be missed. It has an ancient triangular piazza, which has always been the market place, and is now a focal point of the city's day and night life. It is surrounded by palazzos, porticoes and loggias, all converging on the parish Church of Santa Croce. In September the piazza hosts the most important wine show in Chianti. The city is dominated by the castle of Montefioralle, an ancient fortified town located on



a hill, from which there is a fabulous view. Not far away is Volpaia, a quaint medieval town built at the feet of a castle, and a historic wine production site. A little further down the road is Radda in Chianti, another medieval town that sprung up around the 14th-century church of San Nicolò and the majestic town hall (circa 1415). In addition to its fine city centre, Radda also offers guests two other little surprises. To the north and south of the city is the parish church of San Giusto in Salcio, located in a luxuriant valley

among the vineyards, and the parish church of Santa Maria Novella, which has a characteristic Romanesque façade and unusually decorated capitals featuring eagles and lions.

Continuing towards the Chianti mountain pass in the direction of Siena you come first to Gaiole, one of the most famous landscapes in Italy, and then to numerous farms and castles such as San Leonino and Fonterutoli.

What to do

The Chianti district is the ideal place for a journey through spectacular medieval towns, vineyards and an enchantingly sloping landscape. Every small town hides wine cellars, castles, farms and the famous black Cockerel brand, the symbol of Chianti par excellence. Visitors should not miss the chance to try the fine wine in one of the many wine bars located against nestled into the surrounding hills. The district's rolling landscape makes it ideal for mountain bike lovers, who can savour every last detail of the countryside. In the part of the Chianti near Siena, just outside Radda, it is worth visiting the Chianti Classico association (consorzio), which houses the Chianti Historic Studies Centre, where visitors can learn about the history of the famous wine and farming in the region.

The Centre has a well-stocked library, and often organises conferences and interesting seminars. If you choose to visit Chianti in the autumn, you might enjoy stopping off at Poggibonsi. Here, in October there is an event that aims to re-enact the ancient grape-pressing technique used in the hills. The competition pits seven districts against one another. The neighborhoods of Centro, Falco, Borgaccio, Cimamori, Romituzzo, Girata de' Preti and Orti compete for il Pigio, a demi-john decorated by a local artist, which goes to the team that produces the most must, and for the Zipolo, the upper part of the demi-john, which goes to the district that has produced the best show at the event.

Local gastronomy

After steak, ribollita is the most famous dish in Tuscan cooking. It is a traditional dish to use up leftovers. Its name derives from the fact that the main ingredients are cooked vegetables left over from the previous day, which are boiled together with the addition of stale bread seasoned with extra virgin olive oil. Other traditional dishes in the area are hors d'oeuvres such as toast with chicken livers, bruschetta with tomato, and capocollo salami from Siena, more commonly known as finocchiata. This salami's creation dates back to the time when spices were a very precious commodity, and pepper was rare and expensive.



The farmers needed to preserve the salami without using too much of the precious pepper, and they soon learned to use fennel seeds, which have antiseptic properties. Obviously no table is complete without the fine wine which bears the Chianti name.

Florence



Florence is Tuscany's busiest city, once which never ceases to amaze. In the words of Stendhal, it is a city of “subtle charm” that is not depleted by the importance of its most well-known treasures. It is the birthplace of some of modern history's greatest poets and artists , and continues to attract visitors from all of the world with its beautiful panoramas and its exquisite wines and cuisine.

Florence's temperate climate makes spring and autumn the best seasons to visit the city.

Ancient Florentia is an outdoor encyclopedia of history, architecture, painting, sculpture and literature. It is here that the "supreme poet," Dante Alighieri, was born in 1265, to whom the city is indissolubly tied. The basilica of Santa Maria del Fiore (better known as the Duomo) dates back to the end of the 13th Century, with renovation taking place during various periods. Located nearby is the church in which Dante first caught sight of Beatrice and, walking down the alleys, one can image the intense life once lead by the city's busy silk and wool dealers.

The Gothic bell tower is a brilliant creation by Giotto which embellishes the profile of the Duomo, imagined and created by Filippo Brunelleschi, among others, who designed the building's cupola. In front of the Duomo is the octagonal Baptistery (whose façade is a Carrara white and Prato green marble intarsia masterpiece) with its famous bronze Renaissance door defined by Michelangelo as “the door to paradise”.

Piazza Duomo is connected by Via dei Calzaiuoli to Piazza della Signoria, the centre of political power and urban life since the period of the medieval city-republics and location of the copy of the majestic figure of David by Michelangelo, the original of which is in the Accademia museum. For centuries, this marvellous statue has been facing the Loggia della Signoria, a true outdoor art gallery, and Palazzo Vecchio, the city's main monument of urban architecture in addition to being one of Italy's most important medieval public buildings. This is also the location of the entrance to the Uffizi Gallery, home to a large portion of Italian and foreign artistic heritage, including Botticelli's Primavera and Leonardo's Adoration of the Magi.

Nearby are the Arno River and, stretching across it, the Ponte Vecchio. The bridge was designed by Vasari to connected the buildings on the right bank with Palazzo Pitti on the other side of the river, and was used by the Medici family as a reserved and protected route to reach their residence.

Palazzo Pitti is the city's most monumental building and is home to the Palatina Gallery (with works of art by Giorgione, Raffaello and Tintoretto). Behind Palazzo Pitti are the Boboli gardens, a classic Italian garden, decorated by statutes and fountains and a true outdoor museum in which it is easy to imagine the magnificence of life at court amid grottos, water jets and rare plant species.

During the years in which Dante “invented” the Italian language, Giotto revolutionised painting by introducing perspective, visible in the famous suspended Crucifix in Santa Maria Novella - a Gothic masterpiece built by Dominican architects and home to the extraordinary fresco by Masaccio. The Peruzzi and Bardi chapels in the Santa Croce church, one of the most renowned in the city, preserve other important frescoes by this artist. The celebrated David by Donatello and the bust of Bruto by Michelangelo are just a short distance away in the Bargello National Sculpture Museum.

Don't miss ...

Visitors should put on a romantic “paglia” (straw hat) and go for a stroll down the cobbled lanes of the hills surrounding the city to enjoy a sunset over the Arno, a popular sight with 18th-century English tourists. Florence is also a center of Italian style: a stop in Piazza della Repubblica for an espresso in one of its characteristic cafés, followed by shopping in the elegant stores of Via della Vigna Nuova and Via Vacchereggia, is an absolute must.

In addition, the Ponte Vecchio is exclusive home to goldsmiths and silversmiths, and further along Via Calimaia is the area of the Mercato Nuovo, where all sorts of artisan items can be found, from souvenirs to ethnic products.



Not far away is the Porcellino fountain, a bronze wild boar fondly referred to by Florentines as the "little pig," and at whose feet traditionally a coin is thrown and a wish is made. If you are looking for other items typical of Florentine craftsmanship such as silver, dressed stones, straw and inlaid wood, take a stroll down the medieval streets along the Lungarno between the Grazie and Carraia bridges.

Day Trips

Many worthwhile, charming destinations can be easily reached from Florence, such as Fiesole and its sweeping views, Badia and its archaeological site, Castello and the Medici villa (inside the Accademia della Crusca) and Villa della Pietraia. To the left of the Arno River, in the Fiesole hills, is Viale dei Colli, which climbs to the top of the hill and offers visitors a marvellous panorama. The best spot in the city to enjoy the view is Piazzale Michelangelo, embellished with bronze statues; we recommend going at sunset after the souvenir stands have closed to admire the Arno River changing colours. Or mingle with the Florentines enjoying a stroll along the large boulevards of Cascine Park, or in the Albereta and Villa Favard parks. Here, surrounded by the scent of Linden trees, visitors can follow the guided gym courses and relax in tranquil surroundings.

Useful Information and Advice

Cars are prohibited in Florence's downtown area. Going for a stroll is enjoyable and all the city's main attractions can be reached by a short walk. Cars can be left in the area's numerous car parks located between the Viali della Circonvallazione and the beginning of the Limited Traffic Area.

Special Events

The auspicious “scoppio del carro” (explosion of the cart) takes place on Easter Sunday in the Piazza Duomo to commemorate the deeds of captain Pazzino dei Pazzi

Lucca

In the heart of northwest Tuscany, just a few kilometres from the coast of Versilia and less than an hour's drive from Florence, Lucca is situated on a flat area called the Lucca Plain, surrounded by the Apennines and the Apuan Alps. The 15th- and 16th-century walls surrounding the city are still standing today: almost 5 kilometres enclosing the Medieval town centre, which brims with history, art and a maze of streets where the tradition of old master craftsmen lives on. Lucca is referred to the "city of 100 churches" due to its host of religious buildings, many from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, in addition to an abundance of the bell towers and convents inside the city walls.



No matter the season, Lucca offers tourists a wide variety of delights aside from its many churches and city buildings: in winter, you can spend time shopping in Via Fillungo, which has always been the commercial heart of the city. In warmer weather, you can cool off in the shade of the green vegetation of the hills on the Plain, amid parish churches and villas. Autumn is a time for flavours and good food, while a visit to the city Botanical Gardens or the grounds of the many villas surrounding the city are ideal activities in spring.

Lucca still has its Medieval heart, which has withstood the transformations of its urban fabric, alongside the network of streets created by the Romans during the 2nd Century BC. Artefacts of both periods overlap and intertwine: if you visit the site where the Roman amphitheatre once stood, you will find the Market square and its perfect elliptical shape which reflects the original layout, surrounded by buildings built close to the city walls. Admiring the façade of the Pisan Romanesque-style cathedral of San Martino also means looking at the former location of the forum.

The façade is distinguished by a large portico and three rows of loggias, while the portals are adorned with 13th-century reliefs.

Inside, the building guards impressive funeral monuments, including that of Ilaria del Carretto, a masterpiece created by Jacopo della Quercia in 1408, along with 17th-century frescoes of immense value. Another typical Pisa-Lucca style church is San Michele in Foro, which also has a façade adorned with loggias and marble: on the outside, huge arcades look to the bell tower decorated with small arches. Among the most popular streets of Lucca, Via Guinigi boasts original Medieval buildings, with their characteristic towers, constructed in the 14th-century. Starting with Piazza San Michele, the lively city centre, wanderers enter the 17th-century section of the city.

A splendid example of architecture from this era can be seen in Palazzo del Podestà, with a large portico on arcades, and Palazzo Mansi, which hosts the national Pinacoteca art gallery, exhibiting period furniture and the Camera Degli Sposi (bridal chamber), furnished with precious silks and embellished with gilt stuccoes. Other rich Renaissance or Baroque buildings include Palazzo Pfanner, whose large outdoor staircase lead to some of the most suggestive grounds in Tuscany, adorned with statues and lemon trees. Don't forget to visit the church of San Frediano, built during the 12th century and modified during the 13th century. The façade is embellished by a Byzantine-inspired mosaic portraying the Ascension; inside, you will find marble works by Jacopo della

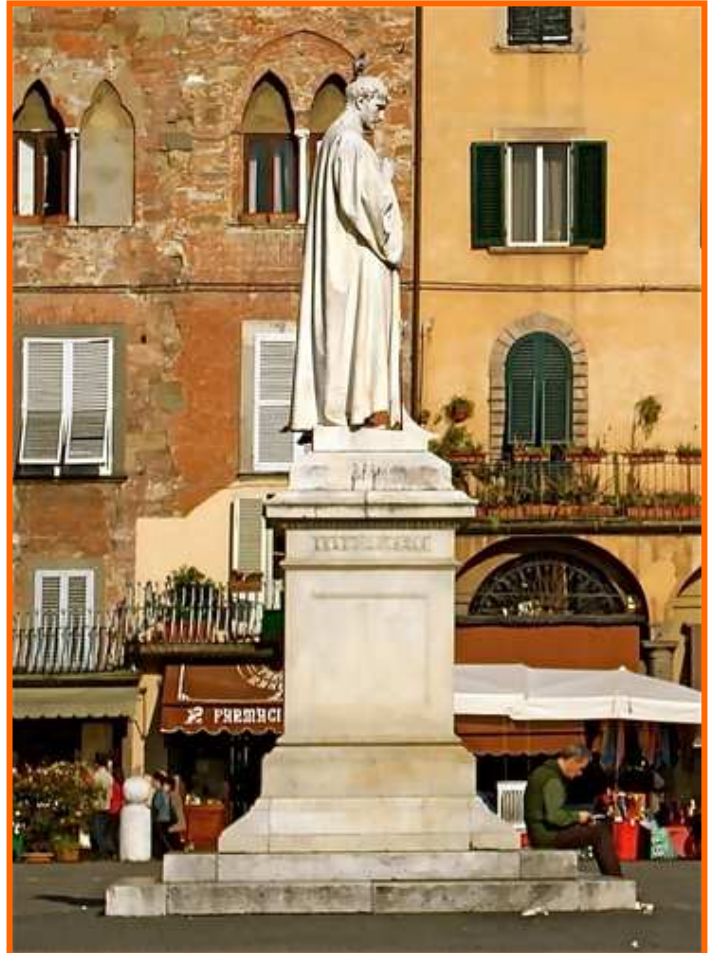
Quercia. Art Nouveau lovers will be delighted with the decorated shop windows along Via Fillungo.

Don't miss ...

Unlike many other Italian cities, Lucca still has its 16th-century walls, which are now the symbol of the city and of its history, marked by resistance to external threats. The huge city walls are almost 5 kilometres in length; consider that the bottom of the walls are 30 metres thick. Early in the 19th century, Maria Luisa di Borbone transformed the upper part of the walls into a path, planting hundreds of tall trees along it. Today, the city walls are a public park, affording a unique view of the city and the surrounding hills.

Day Trips

The city is surrounded by the Lucca plain, an extensive area of flat land enclosed by hills. The terrain here is mostly farmland and it is dotted with over 300 villas and centuries-old parish churches. The villas, summer residences of Luccan merchants and nobles, built around the 15th-16th centuries, are enclosed in luxurious grounds and gardens, decorated with fountains and surrounded by walls and elaborate wrought-iron gates. Don't miss a visit to Villa Oliva, Villa Grabau and Villa Mansi. The countryside



around Lucca also features a large number of parish churches - Christian places of worship to celebrate communion - prevalently from the High Middle Ages, which were built along waterways, where at that time the busiest roads met, in an attempt to spread Catholicism outside the city walls.

Special Events

An unusual time to visit Lucca is when Lucca Comics is held, the most important Italian comics fair, which takes place every year between late October and early November. In July, Piazza Napoleone hosts its Summer Festival, with performances by international music stars. In spring, the eighteenth edition of the Lucchesia Old Camellias Exhibition Market is held between 17th March and 1st April, with exhibitions, conventions on the theme, performances and visits to the gardens of the Lucca Plain.

Maremma area

The Maremma is a vast stretch of green straddling the central Italian regions of Tuscany and Lazio. This largely flat coastal area runs from the mouth of the river Cecina in Tuscany down towards Civitavecchia in Lazio.

The area is divided into three distinct parts: the richest and largest is the central area surrounding Grosseto and is considered the "true" Maremma. To the south lies Maremma Laziale (part of Lazio) and to the north is Maremma Pisana, within the Province of Livorno. Maremma is one of the least populated areas of Italy and much of it is still wilderness.

The Maremma, Tuscany's green heart, is a marvellous combination of green parks and azure sea. To visit here is to delve into centuries of history in the bewitching - and often wild - woods, valleys, mountains, sea, rivers and old towns.



The region's history stretches back to the Etruscan and Roman period, when it was home to a number of important towns (Tarquinia, Populonia, Cosa and Vetulonia). With the fall of the Roman Empire, however,

the period of prosperity came to an end and the whole abandoned region slowly became marshland. For centuries the Maremma was almost completely submerged: the high dunes and "tomboli" (sand spits) along the coast block the flow of water to the sea.

Although reclamation projects were started by the Grand Dukes of Tuscany, these were only finally completed in 1930 and the area once again became economically viable. Today agriculture and tourism are the lifeblood of the local economy; the natural parks, magnificent coastline, and extraordinary Etruscan, Roman and Mediaeval archaeological treasures attract many visitors.

If the Tuscany's bucolic charm is famous all over the world, it owes its reputation to the Maremma (from the Latin 'Maritima Regio'). The countryside, largely protected as Natural Park land, is home to an infinite variety of flora and fauna and offers enchanting vistas. The province of Grosseto alone contains 13 Natural Reserves along with a number of WWF Oases.

Maremma's greenery is the backbone of Tuscany, stretching from the hinterland behind the Uccellina Mountains to the sea near Principina. Here the woods yield to the Tyrrhenean Sea and a 160 km coastline of sunny beaches (often enclosed by pine trees) and high cliffs. The broad inlet that is the gulf of Follonica has splendid beaches in Martina bay, Punta Ala and Violina bay, and continues down to the strands at Castiglione della Pescaia (set at the foot of its namesake, the Rocca Aragonese, this old fishing town is one of the best known towns in Maremma) and Marina di Grosseto. Further south, at the Orbetello Lagoon, famous for its golden sands, the waters and land offer enchanting visual plays.

The green Argentario promontory that stands out against the sea is an exclusive tourist spot. Continuing down to the Lazio border brings you to the Capalbio coastline (with a characteristic historical town), immersed in Strawberry Tree scrub - since Roman times the preferred holiday location for emperors and powerful noble families, today it is an exclusive, alternative holiday destination.

What To Do

Maremma's natural and cultural heritage make it an ideal destination: visitors can soak up the wealth of art and architecture, nature lovers can explore the countryside on foot, by bike, or on horseback, and the thermal baths and health spa at Saturnia will suit those in need of a little pampering.

The Metallifere hills around Grosseto are covered with thick woods of Turkey, Downy and Holm oak as well as Chestnut and Beech trees. Pietra, Marsiliana and Farma are some of the numerous Natural Parks here and the latter has a sizable population of otter. The Maremma was known to the Etruscans and Romans as a rich source of iron, copper, lead, zinc and talc. The mediaeval town of Massa Marittima is the area's most important mining town and its heritage is celebrated in the Museo della Miniera. Other mining centres include Monterotondo Marittima, Pontieri e Roccastrada. The Ombrone, Albegna and Fiora river valleys are also worth visiting to see Italy's oldest Neolithic settlements at Poggio Lucio and Poderi del Buffalo (dating from 20,000 years ago) which are surrounded by dozens of early Bronze Age villages. Other interesting archaeological visits include the small hill-town of Montemerano, the Etruscan necropolis at Puntone, the Roman fortifications at Poggio Murelle and the remains of Etruscan houses at Doganella and Ghiaccioforte. The Ombrone valley also boasts the Roselle Archaeological Park.



Not far from the hills of Grosseto is the only real mountain in lower Tuscany – l'Amiata, the highest extinct volcano in Italy at 1736 m. Its slopes are studded with interesting mediaeval towns (Arcidosso, Castel del Piano, Santa Fiora, Seggiano), while its upper reaches are covered with a magnificent Chestnut, Fir and Beech forest stretching to the Monte Labro and Monte Penna nature reserves and the WWF Oasis at Bosco Rocconi, home to important birds of prey, including the Lanner falcon, one of the rarest in Europe.

The countryside gradually changes as you follow the river Fiora towards the sea. "Vie cave" (ancient paths cut into the tufa rock by the Etruscans) begin to appear among the fortified mediaeval towns of Pitigliano and Sorano, the Romanesque churches, and Etruscan necropoli at Sovana and Poggio Buco. Vitozza is located here in the commune of Sorano, and is one of Italy's most important rocky settlements: 180 hypogea inhabited from prehistoric times right up to the eighteenth century. The tufa rock is distinctive of this part of the Maremma, and the area includes the thermal baths of Saturnia, famed both for its 37° sulphurous waters and breathtaking waterfalls.

Massa Carrara

The province of Massa Carrara: a marble pearl within Apuane Alps. Located in the north of Tuscany, on the Gulf of Poets, with the mighty Apuane Alps as a background, this region is a continuously changing panorama of unforgettable sights and experiences.



Massa...

The city of Massa had its moment of peak growth during the 16th century, when Alberico I of the Cybo-Malaspina family established several villages of Roman and Medieval origin in order to support the important copper and marble extraction activities. After his death, power shifted to the Baciocchi family and then to the Estense Duchy. After the Italian National Reunification, Massa became capitol city of the Massa and Garfagnana provinces, now called Massa-Carrara. In 1923, Garfagnana became part of the province of Lucca, in exchange for Valdinievole, which was annexed to the newborn Pistoia province. Today the Massa-Carrara province is appreciated for its marble extraction activity and for its beaches, which draw huge numbers of summer tourists.

...and Carrara

Generated from the 'curtis de Cararia', it became a Feudal State in 963 and a Free Commonwealth in 1261. After the Seignory of Castruccio Castracani, it passed to the Visconti family and then to the Malaspina family. Ever since, Carrara has been bound to Massa.

The Lunigiana

Here stood the ancient city of Luni, a major passageway for traveling armies. The Lunigiana also includes part of the province of Sarzana, a region full of history-filled valleys, 14th-century castles, and quaint villages. This area has preserved its distinct dialects and cultures, each very different from the other, weaving together a unique patchwork of tradition. The ancient medieval village of Fosdinovo overlooks the Magra and Luni Plain; its Malaspina Castle is the most visited in all Lunigiana. This historic landmark hosts concerts, exhibitions, and cultural happenings, and it the headquarters of a trekking school.

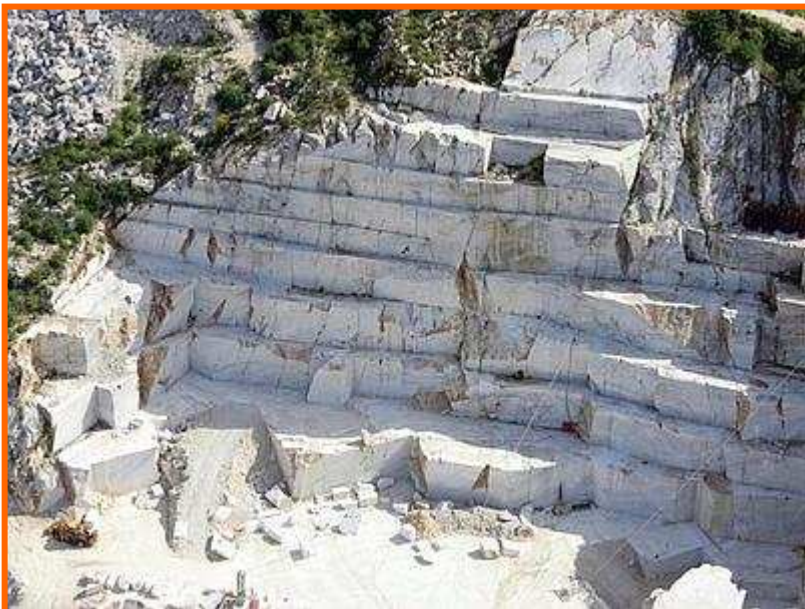
In Aulla you can visit the Brunella Fortess, named after its remarkable dark colour, built upon a rock in the early 15th century, and the Natural History Museum.

Upon crossing the Cerreto Pass, you arrive in Fivizzano, where you can visit the Print Museum and Verrucosa. In Filattiera, the small rural church of Pieve del Sorano combines the Lombard and Tuscan Romanic styles, both showcased in the awe-inspiring and monumental Apse. From here it is a pleasant walk to Pontremoli, where guests can visit its museum of the Stele Statues, located in the Castello del Piagnaro.

The Marble

Sculptors and sculpture lovers alike can't miss a visit to the characteristic marble workshops in Carrara. Exhibitions dedicated to famous names of contemporary sculpture and happenings regarding the art of marble processing are frequent. Your discovery of the marble quarries should start from the Civic Marble Museum, continue on to the spectacular marble quarries, across the Vara bridges and inside the tunnels carved into the rock.

In the Gothic-Romanic style Carrara Dome you'll find frescoes and sculptures from 14th and 15th centuries, and an important piece by Bergamini. Nearby the town centre is the "Parco della Padula," with its intoxicating scents and expert landscaping, home to the 19th-century Villa Fabbriotti. In Campocecina, upon the Apuane Alps, you can admire the Quarry of the Poets: in honor of the 2002 biennial, quotes from famous poets and scholars have been carved on its walls. The Park of Memory, where statues from the 14th International Sculpture Symposium dedicated to the "Shoah" are displayed, is also of great interest. In August, you can assist in the reenactment of the Lizzatura, the ancient method used by quarrymen to transport marble blocks back to the valley, essentially sliding them over soaped wood with the help of oxen. All of this, of course, takes place against the spectacular background of the marble quarries and steep towers.



For lovers of interesting local gastronomic tradition, it is impossible to miss the famous Sagra del Lardo (lard festival) in Colonnata. Nearby the marble quarries, Marina di Carrara is a popular beach destination.

Festivals and Traditions

The Sanctuary of Lunigiana is a frequently visited spot from Easter to September, and Solemn feasts are celebrated on the day after Easter, the day of the Lord's Ascension, on July 2nd, Assunta (Assumption) Day, in addition to the six monthly pilgrimages of Fatima, from May 13th to September 13th of every year, which find participants walking to the Madonna del Monte. On the final pilgrimage, on the 13th of October, the final destination is the "Madonna di Fatima" church in Groppoli. The area's summer events schedule is quite rich. Between July and August, charming events such as 'Torano Night and Day' in Torano, where marble sculptures produced by local artists are on display in the town's streets and squares.

Pisa

Pisa is one of the provincial capitals of Tuscany. It is situated a few kilometres from the mouth of the Arno river, which flows through the city, and around 100 kilometres from Florence.

The open air museum otherwise known as the Piazza dei Miracoli is an UNESCO World Heritage site. The Piazza's famous Leaning Tower along with all the artistic treasures contained in its churches and museums, makes Pisa one of the most attractive cultural destinations in Italy, certainly not to be missed for fans of Tuscany. The city reached the height of its splendour during the period of the Maritime Republics. Birthplace of Galileo Galilei, one of the fathers of modern science (1564-1642), today its pride is the Scuola Normale Superiore, one of the most famous educational and research institutions in Italy.



The city can be visited at any time of the year, but it is during the spring that it shows its sweetest and most charming side. Pisa's vicinity to the sea makes its climate mild, and therefore also pleasant in winter. A stroll through the churches and buildings that flank the two banks of the Arno, or a visit to the city's museums – such as Museo delle Sinopie (fresco sketches) and Museo dell'Opera del Duomo (artwork from the Cathedral complex) and Museo Nazionale di San Matteo – is a pleasant way to spend time in the winter months.



The best place to start a visit to Pisa is in the Campo dei Miracoli (Field of Miracles), a metaphysically harmonious square and home to the city's three most emblematic monuments. The most famous of these is the Leaning Tower, actually the bell tower of the adjacent Duomo, which, since its construction in 1173, has defied the sloping land and law of gravity. The white marble of the cylindrical tower stands out against the green lawn in the piazza, where its arched base starts.

It continues to rise for six floors of small loggias that mirror the external decoration of the Cathedral. The Duomo, also in white marble, boasts engraved bronze doors which open onto a bright interior, containing various important works, including a 14th-century Gothic pulpit by Giovanni Pisano and a large 13th-century mosaic in the apse basin. The Baptistery, an impressive circular building in Romanesque style, dates back to the 12th century. Pisa's tower is a symbol of the wealth and power

of the former Maritime Republic. After its decline, which began with a defeat by its rival Genoa,

and no longer on the sea due to natural phenomena, the city rediscovered its greatness under the Florentine Medici family, who made a center of Renaissance art and a prestigious university city.

Fittingly, most of the rest of the city bears the mark of the Renaissance style. Piazza Cavalieri, the old heart of the Maritime Republic, contains harmonious 16th century buildings, mainly commissioned by the Medicis and designed by Giorgio Vasari, including Palazzo Cavalieri, home to the Scuola Normale Superiore and the Palazzo dell’Orologio (Clock Building), with its façade characterised by a large arch uniting the two separate buildings. From here, along the porticoed streets such as Borgo Stretto, visitors will encounter the ambience of Renaissance Pisa. The Chiesa di San Michele in Borgo impresses its powerful Pisan Romanesque-Gothic façade, and continuing on across the Arno by way of Pisa's oldest bridge, the Ponte di Mezzo, the Medici part of the city beckons. As an added bonus, the view of the buildings which flank the river is wonderful.

Special Events

Pisa was an important Maritime Republic in the Middle Ages. Over the centuries a great deal of sand was carried away by the Arno, permanently moving the city away from the sea. But the Pisans do not bear a grudge against the river; every year they light its course, its bridges and the buildings that flank it with more than 70,000 tiny lanterns, to celebrate the renewed relationship between the Arno and the city. The Luminara di San Ranieri is celebrated on the evening of June 16th, which in addition to being the feast of the city's patron saint, also celebrates Pisa's symbolic marriage to the Arno. Other special events include the Regata Storica of the Maritime Republics (every four years) and the Gioco del Ponte, featuring two opposing sides in 16th century costumes competing on Ponte di Mezzo on the last Sunday in June.

San Gimignano

This emblematic town in the Tuscan province of Siena is located approximately 30 kilometres northwest of the city of Siena, atop a high hill in the Elsa Valley. San Gimignano is one of the most charming Italian Medieval towns, and it can be seen from quite a distance, perched high upon its hill with its tall spires standing out against the peaceful Tuscan sky. Thanks to the city's natural and cultural wonders it is listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Visiting it means taking a trip back in time, to the dramatic, romantic period of the Italian City-States.

This towered town is pleasant to visit at any time of year. During the winter visits to churches and museums can be interspersed



with an espresso and panino break, perhaps at one of the numerous outdoor markets featuring the local agricultural products and wines the town is famous for. Spring and summer visitors can go one step further in their explorations of the historic centre and do something adventurous, such as climbing the stairs to the top of the towers.

San Gimignano was founded by the Etruscans, and began to develop between the

9th and 12th centuries, thanks to trading privileges due to the nearby crossroads of the Via Francigena and Via Pisana. It witnessed its period of maximum prosperity at the beginning of the 13th century, when it became a free City State. During a spell of intense fighting between the Guelphs and Ghibellines in 1351, the town it lost its autonomy to Florence.

The two main gates to the town, Porta San Giovanni (south) and Porta San Matteo (north), are also the names to the two main streets which lead to the heart of San Gimignano. The 13th-century Piazza della Cisterna, with its triangular shape, got its name from the well in the centre of the square; it is flanked by numerous towers and buildings erected by the aristocratic families of the era. Living remnants of one thousand years of history and the former prosperity of the town, the towers were a symbol of power and success, and thus the reason the families constantly competed with each other to build ever taller ones. At its utmost splendour there were seventy-two towers in the city, although only thirteen remain.

A few steps further lies the Duomo, one side of which is home to the Collegiata and the Capella di Santa Fina, with the containing Palazzo del Podestà, the base of San Gimignano's first tower, Torre Rognosa. A visit to the Museo Civico in Palazzo del Popolo is a must (with important Tuscan paintings from the period between the 13th and 15th centuries) as is a stop at the churches of San Piero and Sant'Agostino. There is an interesting 15th-century fresco in Palazzo del Popolo depicting the life of the saint in 17 scenes.

Don't miss...

The view from the top of San Gimignano's towers over the town and surrounding countryside is unique. The main observation point is inside Palazzo del Popolo, seat of the municipality, where the entrance to Torre Grossa (54 meters high) is located. From the tiny Piazza delle Erbe, dominated by the two Torri Salvucci, it is possible to climb up to the panoramic castle of Montestaffoli, a public park and meeting place for local artists. Here, from a small, accessible tower, the most beautiful and charming view of the city can be enjoyed.



Useful information

The area inside the city walls is closed to vehicles. Thus cars should be parked in one of the lots outside the gates leading to the centre. Despite the numerous parking spaces, it may be difficult to find a place during high season.

Special Events

Among the numerous local festivals and events, the following absolutely mustn't be missed: February's Carnival with its parade of floats and masked characters; the "Ferri delle Messi" in June, a historical performance in the streets of the city animated by street singers, musicians, actors, archers, and stands with Medieval arts and crafts; the "Le vie dello zafferano" saffron exhibit and market at the end of October; and the "De Excellentia Olei" extra virgin olive oil exhibit and market in November.

Siena

Siena is situated in Tuscany, around 70 kilometres south of Florence. It stands on three knolls located in the centre of a vast hilly area between the Arbia and Elsa rivers.

Siena is a unique example of a Medieval city: Piazza del Campo, the *contrade*, or neighborhoods, which surround it and all of the architecture are of such historic and artistic importance that the city was put on the World Heritage List by UNESCO. Tourist will find that the city is full of enchanted corners and alleyways which seem embedded in the past. These charms, in addition to the polite and cordial nature of the Sienese and the excellent cuisine of the area, make Siena a must-visit Tuscan destination.

Almost any period of the year is suitable for visiting Siena. If winter is the season of culture, with many events – such as exhibits and theatre – organised by local institutions, summer is dominated by the Palio horse race, which is held on July 2 and August 16.

Historic arch-enemy of Florence and trading city par excellence, Siena still has the same appearance it had at the time of its greatest splendour in the 13th and 14th centuries. Narrow streets wind around Piazza del Campo, the city centre, with its peculiar shell form and brick pavement. Slightly sloping towards the Gothic Palazzo Pubblico (now home to the Museo Civico, which contains some of the best works of the Sienese school of painting), the square is flanked by Medieval buildings and their towers and battlements, with the 102 metre high Torre del Mangia standing out and



offering a wonderful view. In the centre of the piazza stands Fonte Gaia, a reproduction of a 15th century work in marble by Jacopo della Quercia; the original is housed in the Museo Civico. The first banks opened for business in nearby Via dei Banchi. This street is also the origin of the word “bankrupt” (bancarotta in Italian meaning broken bank): Siena's banks were actually smashed when business was bad. Palazzo Piccolimini has an exhibit of a series of painting on wood

panels depicting scenes of everyday life, created to protect the ledgers on the shelves. The Loggia della Mercanzia, where bankers and merchants negotiated, also tells the story of a rich and active city.

The Duomo, which dominates the square of the same name, is a true masterpiece of Gothic Romanesque architecture, with its elaborate façade, impressive dome and 13th-century bell tower in black and white stripes, like the side of the building. The Duomo is in the city's "terzo", the oldest part of Siena. Its interior houses a vault decorated in blue dotted with stars, and a long series of masterpieces, including a 13th-century pulpit by Nicola Pisano, the Libreria Piccolomini frescoed by Pinturicchio (1502-1509) and a marble floor divided into 56 squares with religious and secular scenes.

Opposite the Duomo stands Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala (home to the Museo Archeologico Nazionale), while next to it sits the Museo dell'Opera Metropolitana with works from the Duomo, including the famous Maestà by Duccio di Buoninsegna, a masterpiece of Siennese painting created at the beginning of the 14th century, and the Madonna con Bambino, a round bas-relief by Donatello. Other masterpieces are on display in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, housed in Palazzo Buonsignori, which is full of works from the Siennese school and other Tuscan artwork in general.

Useful information

Almost all of the historical centre is closed to private cars. Tourists heading to hotels are allowed through if they have a reservation or pass. Thus, cars need to be left in the convenient and numerous paid car parks around the city which are connected to the centre by shuttle bus. It is important to note that in high season it is often difficult to find parking in the streets closest to the centre, like the ring road, or near the city gates.

Special Events

The real essence of the city and the Siennese spirit is the Palio delle Contrade, which is raced every year on July 2 and August 16 in Piazza del Campo, and dates back to the Middle Ages. Twice a year the Siennese set aside business and compete with each other on horseback to win the Palio, a silk cloth which bestows prestige and fame on the winning contrada. The contrade still follow this custom of joining forces to combat their historic enemies, and on the days of the Palio, the Piazza del Campo is filled to bursting with people and cries of joy and despair. Thanks to the raw way in which it's experienced by Siena's entire population, this is a show which has no equal in the world, just as much today as in the past.



Val D'Orcia (Orcia river valley)



The Val d'Orcia Park was classified as a Natural Protected Area of Local Interest thanks to the efforts of various communities in the area, determined to protect their heritage and to systematically promote the development of the territory and its economy.

In 1996, the Val d'Orcia Society was formed in order to

carry out this project, made up of the municipalities of Pienza, Montalcino, Castiglione d'Orcia, San Quirico d'Orcia and Radicofani as well as the Province of Siena and the Amiata Mountain Association.

The society's aims are multiple but harmonious: to promote eco-sustainable local development projects that fully respect the natural landscape, to increase awareness of the area's ethno-anthropological, cultural and environmental heritage, to encourage the production and marketing of local products ranging from hand-crafted objects to agricultural products, foods and wines by instituting a DOC seal of quality, and to promote various kinds of tourism by providing adequate incentives.



Montalcino

Anyone who loves good food and good wine has heard of Montalcino. The popular wine produced in the Sienese hillside vineyards overlooking the Ombrone and Asso valleys is known as Brunello di Montalcino.



The town, originally an Etruscan and Roman village, now features a splendid medieval layout. Encircled by a stone wall and dominated by a 14th-century fortress in the shape of a pentagon, the old town centre contains the Palazzo dei Priori, now the Town Hall, a fine loggia with two Gothic stone archways and a notable civic and diocesan museum containing

extraordinary works of Sienese art.

Versilia area



Versilia is in the Tuscan province of Lucca. It covers the area between the slopes of the Apuan Alps to the Parco Naturale Migliarino-San Rossore-Massaciuccoli and includes the Tyrrhenian coastline from Forte dei Marmi to Viareggio.

The Versilian coastline is characterised by long beaches with extremely fine sand, facing the Tyrrhenian Sea. Some stretches of beach contain fascinating coastal dunes, like for example those between Viareggio and Torre del Lago.

Ever since the 1800's, Versilia has been a favourite holiday destination for Italians, and historically enjoyed a particular popularity with writers, poets, journalists, intellectuals and artists. Even now, many of the country's VIPs could never dream of summer life without the refined Forte dei Marmi scene. The great composer Giacomo Puccini lived and worked in Torre del Lago, just 6 km inland from Viareggio on the shores of Lake Massaciuccoli. Gabriele d'Annunzio had a villa in Marina di Pietrasanta, where he wrote one of his most famous lyrical poems, "La pioggia nel pineto". The 19th century poet Giosu  Carducci was born in the small inland town of Valdicastello, where his original modest home has been turned into a museum.

What to See

Versilia has a rich variety of attractions to make a holiday here an enjoyable and cultured experience, ranging from its natural resources to its vast wealth of artistic treasures.

Versilia's coastline is one of the most traditional, elegant and long-standing seaside holiday areas in Italy and owes its splendid appearance to luscious vegetation and fresh pinewoods which provide the backdrop to marvelous sandy beaches.

The most famous pinewood is the Parco della Versiliana, located in Marina di Pietrasanta, near the small town of Fiumetto. It covers an area of 80 hectares with a dense forest of centuries-old evergreens; in the middle of the park stands the 19th-century villa of the Marquis Ginori Lisci, one of the first buildings along this stretch of coastline, behind which you can see the pine seed factory, open until 1960 and now under conservation. The villa is now public property and is used to host exhibitions and cultural meetings, thereby continuing the long-standing tradition that has always made Versilia the favourite haunt for Italian intellectuals on holiday. It should come as no surprise that one of the most authoritative Italian literary prizes is awarded here: the Viareggio.



Among Versilia's most important holiday spots are the chic and exclusive Forte dei Marmi, the port of Viareggio with its beaches, excellent facilities, harbour and docks, and last but not least are Marina di Pietrasanta and Lido di Camaiore.

Forte dei Marmi has always been a symbol of refinement and fashionable society life, with its luxury villas surrounded by greenery, its charming town centre encircling the remains of the fortress and the famous restaurants and clubs, all of which have left their indelible mark on Italian social history.

Very little remains today of what gave this town its name, that is the fortress built in 1788 by the Archduke Leopoldo I (who recovered the surrounding land) and the port where the marble coming from the inland quarries was loaded onto ships for export. Ever since the 1800's, when it was discovered, this little haven has been loved by European artists and intellectuals and has enjoyed a lively cultural life that centres around literary gatherings and the famous International Festival of Satire, which has its own Museum, housed in the old fortress.

Versilia is the ideal place for a fashionable holiday, where relaxation and society life marry perfectly: beaches, fashionable cocktail bars, discos, excellent restaurants and museums...all the resorts have bathing establishments renowned for their elegance but also boast every kind of sports and leisure-time facilities.

Versilia, however, is not just the seaside: it is also the peace and quiet of woodland pathways, the purity of its chestnut woods, the serenity of the green hills and the smell of the olive trees surrounding the area.

You can enjoy a visit to the nearby caves (including the Corchia cave, the most important karst cavern in Europe, and the Grotta del Vento) and to the beautiful tranquility of Lake Massaciuccoli, an ideal place for birdwatching, located inside a vast Nature Park with the Migliarino shrubland and the San Rossore estate. The best way to enjoy Versilia is by bike, or for those who love adventure sports, hang-gliding, para-gliding or trekking.

Culture: Valdicastello is near Pietrasanta on the way to Lucca, where you can visit the birthplace of Giosuè Carducci. Just 6 km from Viareggio is Torre del Lago, where the composer Giacomo Puccini lived from 1891 to his death and found inspiration for composing his lyrical works. Today you can visit his tomb and villa, now turned into a museum. The Festival Pucciniano takes place here in summer inside the amphitheater on the banks of the lake, just opposite the former home of the great composer.

Entertainment: the fun in Versilia lasts all night and especially during the summer it attracts tourists from all over Europe with its fashionable haunts.

In winter, you cannot miss the Carnevale di Viareggio, whose parades and celebrations last four weeks and close with a fantastic fireworks display which attracts millions of visitors every year from all over the world. The unceasing work of the craftsmen who build the Carnevale's traditional floats can be seen first-hand by visiting the workshop-hangar to the north of town.



Volterra



Volterra is a marvelous, unforgettable place that owes some of its splendour to the wild surrounding landscape. The town is situated between Siena and San Gimignano and is just adjacent to the wooded Metallifere hills and the rocky abyss of Balze.

This ancient Etruscan town has always been famed for its alabaster work. Although during the 4th century BC the town was surrounded by imposing walls, only a few

traces of this evocative construction remain today. Volterra was originally dominated by the Romans and later became a free city state, only to be conquered again by Florence. Later its fortunes improved with the arrival of the Lorrainese. The town's history is evident in its magnificent and typically Tuscan medieval town layout which features a town wall, narrow streets, various squares, churches and palaces.

