



# TUSCANY

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL ITINERARIES

A Journey from Prehistory  
to the Roman Age



## ONCE UPON A TIME...

That's how fables start, once upon a time there was – what? A region bathed by the **sea**, with long **beaches** the colour of gold, rocky cliffs plunging into crystalline waters and many **islands** dotting the horizon. There was once a region covered by rolling **hills**, where the sun lavished all the colours of the earth, where olive trees and grapevines still grow, ancient as the history of man, and where fortified **towns** and **cities** seem open-air museums. There was once a region with verdant **plains** watered by **rivers** and streams, surrounded by high **mountains**, monasteries, and **forests** stretching as far as the eye could see. There was, in a word, **Tuscany**, a region that has always been synonymous with beauty and **nature**, art and **history**, especially Medieval and Renaissance history, a land whose fame has spread the world over.

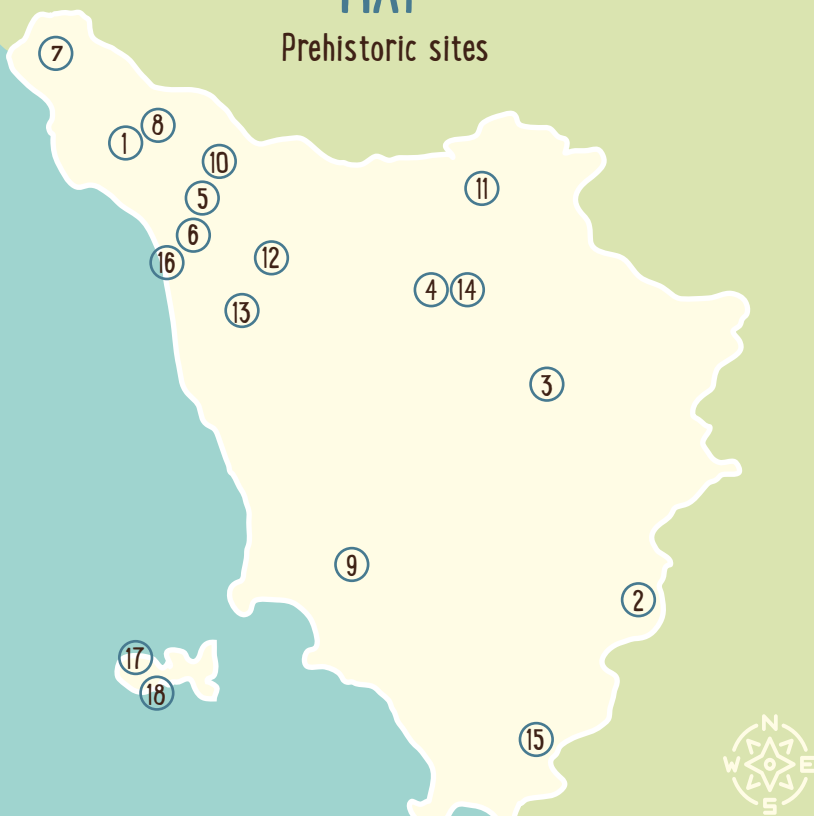
And yet, if we stop to look closely, this region offers us many more treasures and new histories, the emotion aroused only by beauty. Because along with the most famous places, monuments and museums, we can glimpse a Tuscany that is even more ancient and just as wonderful, bearing witness not only to **Roman** and **Etruscan** times but even to **prehistoric** ages. Although this evidence is not as well known as the treasures that has always been famous, it is just as exciting to discover. This **travel diary**, addressed to all lovers of Tuscany eager to explore its more hidden aspects,



aims to bring us **back in time** to discover these jewels. Because it is just during those remote ages – from prehistoric times to the Roman epoch, passing through the Etruscan era – that the seeds of a **culture** were sewn, of a **love of beauty** and a **way of life** that have created the Tuscany of today.

## - MAP -

Prehistoric sites



- 1 TECCHIA DI EQUI E MUSEO DELLE GROTTE DI EQUI TERME [TECCHIA DI EQUI AND EQUI TERME CAVERNS MUSEUM]
- 2 MUSEO CIVICO E PARCO ARCHEOLOGICO DEL MONTE CETONA [MONTE CETONA CIVIC MUSEUM AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK]
- 3 MUSEO PALEONTOLOGICO DI MONTEVARCHI [MONTEVARCHI PALAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM]
- 4 MUSEO DI STORIA NATURALE DI FIRENZE [FLORENCE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY]
- 5 GROTTA ALL'ONDA (MONTE MATANNA) [ONDA CAVERN (MONTE MATANNA)]
- 6 MUSEO CIVICO ARCHEOLOGICO DI CAMAIORE [CAMAIORE CIVIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM]
- 7 MUSEO DELLE STATUE STELE LUNIGIANESI DI PONTREMOLI [MUSEUM OF THE LUNIGIANA STELAE-STATUES AT PONTREMOLI]
- 8 SANTUARIO DELLA MADONNA DEL SOCCORSO (MINUCCIANO) [SANCTUARY OF THE MADONNA DEL SOCCORSO (MINUCCIANO)]
- 9 MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO DI MASSA MARITTIMA [MASSA MARITTIMA ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM]
- 10 MOSTRE PERMANENTI ARCHEOLOGICHE DI CASTELNUOVO GARFAGNANA [CASTELNUOVO GARFAGNANA ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS]
- 11 CENTRO DI DOCUMENTAZIONE SANTAGATA DI SCARPERIA [SANTAGATA DI SCARPERIA DOCUMENTATION CENTRE]
- 12 FOSSA NERA E MOSTRA ARCHEOLOGICA PERMANENTE DEL MUSEO DI PORCARI [FOSSA NERA AND PORCARI MUSEUM ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS]
- 13 MUSEO DI STORIA NATURALE DELL'UNIVERSITÀ DI PISA A CALCI [UNIVERSITY OF PISA AT CALCI MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY]
- 14 MUSEO E ISTITUTO FIORENTINO DI PREISTORIA "PAOLO GRAZIOSI" [FLORENTINE MUSEUM AND INSTITUTE OF PREHISTORY "PAOLO GRAZIOSI"]
- 15 MUSEO DI PREISTORIA E PROTOSTORIA DELLA VALLE DEL FIUME FIORA (MANCIANO) [FLORA VALLEY MUSEUM OF PREHISTORY AND PROTOHISTORY (MANCIANO)]
- 16 MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO E DELL'UOMO "ALBERTO CARLO BLANC" DI VIAREGGIO [VIAREGGIO MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND MANKIND "ALBERTO CARLO BLANC"]
- 17 SASSI RITTI DI MONTE CAPANNE [UPRIGHT STONES ON MONTE CAPANNE]
- 18 MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO DI MARCIANA [MARCIANA ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM]

## - TIME LINE -



### THE PALAEOOLITHIC OR OLD STONE AGE

- Lower Palaeolithic (2 million years ago)
- Middle Palaeolithic (120.000 years ago)
- Upper Palaeolithic (35.000 years ago)

2 million years ago



### MESOLITHIC

10.000 years ago



### NEOLITHIC

8.000 years ago



### THE METAL AGES

- Copper Age (3.500 years ago)
- Bronze Age (2.300 years ago)
- Iron Age (1.200 years ago)

3.500 years ago



## A VOYAGE THROUGH PREHISTORY

Let's try to stop the hands of a clock – like magic, as in a fairy tale – and make them turn backward, slowly at first, then spinning faster and faster. Suddenly everything around us seems blurred and hazy, because we are going **back in time**, as if in a science fiction film or book. And year after year, century after century, millennium after millennium, something amazing happens. Suddenly the hands of the clock stop and time begins to flow forward again, as if nothing had happened, and we look around to see where we are. This land we now call **Tuscany** is uninhabited; its hills and plains are covered with forests, nothing but trees wherever you look, as far as the eye can see. The rivers and streams have no banks or bridges, and the air resounds with the howls of wild animals. There are no cities or streets or squares, no noise of traffic. The sky is no longer streaked with long white jet streams and the night has become a dark blanket quilted with stars. This is the time when men lived in **caves**, gathered fruit from wild plants and hunted with weapons made of wood and chipped stone.



Double-sided tools from the Lower Palaeolithic age. Above, a diorama shows how a group of Neanderthal hunters lived in the caves.

It is the time when man first set foot on this land, never to leave it again. It is the time when man lived immersed in nature, it is **prehistory**.

## HUNTING FOR MAMMOTHS

Lunigiana is a frontier territory, stretching out around the Magra River basin, squeezed in between the Emilian Apennines, the Province of Liguria and the Mediterranean, a land of mountains overlooking the sea, a land of unique, unmistakable features. Still today, its history and traditions are perfectly preserved, as can be seen, for example, in the little town of Fivizzano, which the poet Carducci called 'a pearl lost among the mountains'.

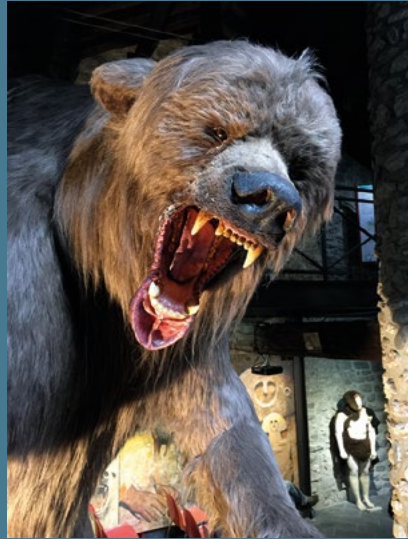
This is the **Valle del Lucido**, a wild, enchanted place dotted with the ancient medieval towns of Monzone, Equi Terme and Vinca. Traversing this valley, at the foot of the **Pizzo d'Uccello**, means plunging into ancient, unspoiled nature, filled with surprises. And this is how it must have looked to the first inhabitants of this zone, groups of **Neanderthals** who arrived in this territory during the middle Palaeolithic age, leaving traces of their passage from nearly 100,000 years ago.



Left, the entrance of the Tecchia, at the foot of the Alpi Apuane. Above, the tusks of a mammoth at the Museo Paleontologico di Montevarchi.

## WHO WAS NEANDERTHAL MAN?

He could almost be called a relative, a kind of distant cousin. He lived between 200,000 and 40,000 years ago and looked a little different from us, being shorter and heavier, with a high forehead and an important nose. He was a nomad who built seasonal camps, and the Valle del Lucido in Lunigiana was the ideal place for survival, with an abundance of water, caves and wild game. To see a life-size replica, you can visit the **Museo delle Grotte di Equi**, housed in an old water-driven mill, where you will also find the impressive figure of a cave bear (*Ursus spelaeus*). To explore a real Neanderthal campsite instead, you can go to the **Parco Archeologico naturalistico di Belvedere**, on **Monte Cetona**, where workshops and educational activities for all age groups, accompanied by guides, are held.



Models of the ancient cave bear and of Neanderthal Man at the Museo delle Grotte di Equi.



grottediequi.it  
preistoriacetona.it

The Valle del Lucido, lying within the **Alpi Apuane Regional Park**, is famous for the splendid grottos that have been carved out over hundreds of years by the slow action of water, dripping through cracks in the limestone. In the **Geoparco delle Grotte di Equi** you can visit, in addition to an itinerary that winds underground for nearly 500 meters, the **Tecchia di Equi**, a prehistoric site with a shelter and a cave in the mountainside about 30 metres deep. It is here that the Middle Palaeolithic hunters lived, chipping stone to make weapons and tools for work. Excavations have unearthed **implements** made



The entrance to the Tecchia di Equi, with the permanent exhibition "Not just bears lived in caves".

of **flintstone** and the **bones of Pleistocene animals** now extinct. They were the prey hunted by the Neanderthals and brought here to be butchered. At that time, an animal was not important for its meat alone but also for its fur, used as clothing, and its bones, furnishing material for objects of daily use and ornaments. Finds of animal bones also help to show us the conditions of the climate the cave men lived in - cold, temperate, or hot.



Left, fossilised remains of a cave leopard on display at the Museo di Storia Naturale di Firenze, from the Tecchia di Equi. Above, a Mousterian arrow, also from the Tecchia.

## LOOKING FOR PREHISTORIC ANIMALS: FROM MAMMOTHS TO WHALES!

The climate and the temperature change with the passage of time. In the Middle Stone Age, for instance, the Neanderthal hunters lived through a period of glaciation that covered much of Europe under a sheet of ice for long ages. We know this also from the remains of animals found in their shelters.

A famous example is the **mammoth**, with its thick coat and long tusks, whose remains have been found at several sites in Tuscany.

To see the reconstructed skeletons of mammoths, you can visit the **Museo Paleontologico di Montevarchi**, housed in the ancient Franciscan monastery of San Lodovico; and the rich palaeontological collection of the **Museo di Storia Naturale di Firenze**, which also displays the remains of sabre-tooth tigers, ancient birds, horses and even a great prehistoric whale.



The skeleton of a mammoth at the Museo Paleontologico di Montevarchi.



.....  
[museopaleontologicomontevarchi.it](http://museopaleontologicomontevarchi.it)  
[msn.unifi.it](http://msn.unifi.it)  
.....

We can find out more about the tools the Neanderthals used and the places they lived in at an important prehistoric site near the town of **Camaiole**, close to the sea. It is the **Grotta all'Onda**, on the slopes of **Monte Matanna**, a great cavern with little streams of water flowing down its outer walls. In this place, amid the marvellous scenario of the **Alpi Apuane**, groups of **Neanderthal hunters** arrived during the Middle Palaeolithic age. Evidence of their presence is provided by flintstone tools and bits of bone from the animals they butchered, now in the **Museo Civico Archeologico di Camaiole**. The Grotta all'Onda is well worth a visit also for the splendid landscape surrounding it, for the geological and naturalist features encountered along the way, and for all the many testimonials left by man in this area; not only from the Stone Age, but also from the Bronze Age, the Middle Ages, and even from preindustrial workshops. It is an extraordinary way of reading the flow of time in a place that is a real open-air museum for visitors searching for traces of its past.



The Grotta dell'Onda was inhabited during the Middle Palaeolithic age.



Flintstone implements and, below, a cave man. In a replica at the Museo della Certosa Monumentale di Calci.



## BEFORE THE COMING OF MAN

They dominated the Earth for millions of years and their name means “terrible lizard”, because this is what their great fossil bones looked like to the people who first found them. The **dinosaurs** were actually a group of animals including many different species, not all of which lived in the same period. Some were as tall and long as a city bus, others as small as a chicken; some had long tails or necks, others were protected by shells, horns and stingers; some lived on plants, while others were ferocious predators with sharp nails and fangs; some were covered with scales, others with fur or feathers. And while all of them laid eggs, not all dinosaurs walked on four legs. Some ran on their hind legs, others swam in the sea with fins and still others flew through the air with wings made of thin flaps of skin. But what is certain is that around 66 million years ago a series of **great catastrophes**, probably caused by an asteroid striking the Earth, drastically altered their habitat, leading to their extinction. Was this a disaster? Not for us, because it is just starting from that time that **mammals** began to evolve and populate the planet.



The ancient **stelae-statues** are fascinating to everyone, both young and old. Carved out of great blocks of sandstone, easily found in the Magra valley, the stelae-statues were carved with human forms and features — the shape of the head, the neck, the eyes, and even the arms, and were then stuck upright in the ground.

In Europe there exist many similar objects, called menhirs, produced starting from the 3rd millennium B.C.; but the remarkable thing about the stelae-statues is that in Lunigiana, unlike other places, they were produced for a **vast span of time**, ranging from the end of the 4th millennium, in the Bronze Age, up to the arrival of the Romans, which marked the end of prehistoric times in this territory.

Who are the **mysterious personages** carved in stone that still today exert such potent fascination? No one knows exactly. Some of them may represent warriors, others aristocrats, and still others deities whose names have been lost forever. The female stelae-statues, recognisable by their breasts, wear ornaments and belts.

## STATUES FROM THE PAST

In much more recent prehistoric times, some peoples began to carve statues out of great blocks of stone and stick them up vertically in the ground. No one really knows why, although it may have been for some magical or religious purpose.

To see some of these mysterious stone statues, go to the town of **Pontremoli** in Lunigiana, where you will find the **Museo delle statue stele lunigianesi** in the **Castello del Piagnaro**, a fortification standing on the ancient Via Francigena, travelled by merchants and pilgrims in the Middle Ages.



The city of Pontremoli.  
in Lunigiana.



Stelae-statues from Lunigiana. in the Castello del Piagnaro at Pontremoli.

## TRY IT YOURSELF!

To make a little **stelae-statue** you will need a smooth, oblong stone (such as a river pebble), some acrylic paint, a little vase and a bit of soil (or gravel). Wash the stone to remove all the dirt and impurities, then let it dry. With the paint, draw facial features and arms on it, embellishing them with objects such as a sword or an ax. Then to set the statue upright, insert it in the soil (or gravel) in the vase.



the town of **Minucciano**. Here, from atop a hill with a view that sweeps as far as Lunigiana, objects dating from the Bronze Age have been unearthed, including stelae-statues now displayed in the Pontremoli Museum. Replicas of these statues have been placed on the lawn before the sanctuary.

The Apuan Ligurians were not, however, the only ones in Tuscany to carve stelae-statues; there is another one at the **Museo Archeologico di Massa Marittima**, in Maremma.

It is the so-called Vado all'Arancio stelae-statue, datable to the 3rd millennium B.C.



A stelae-statue from Vado all'Arancio. at Massa Marittima.



A Bronze Age axe.

**The Apuan Ligurians** – the people who inhabited Lunigiana for ages and carved the stelae-statues – have also left us the remains of their particular constructions, called **castellars**. They were typical fortified hilltop villages, usually overlooking roads, to defend and control the surrounding territory. To discover these places and admire a breathtaking panorama – to see with your own eyes what the Apuan Ligurians saw so many eons ago – you can go to the **Santuario della Madonna del soccorso in Garfagnana**, a splendid 18th-century hermitage built over the foundations of a 14th-century abbey, two kilometres from



## THE APUAN LIGURIANS

The Museo delle Statue Stele Lunigianesi, abounding in videos and explanatory materials, offers suggestions for excursions in the zone to find out more about the Apuan Ligurians, the ancient warrior people who inhabited this land, engaged in shepherding and metal-working. Other **castellars**, the imposing hilltop fortifications built with the inflow of the Apuan Ligurian civilisation, are found at Minucciano, on Monte Pisanino, at Tresana di Massa and at Pania di Corfino.

.....  
[statuestele.org](http://statuestele.org)  
.....



## ANCIENT ARCHERS

**Castelnuovo Garfagnana** is a splendid fourteenth-century walled town, standing along ancient roadways between the Apennines and the Apuan mountains. Here, where Ludovico Ariosto stayed from 1522 to 1525, in the Rocca Ariostesca that formed part of the ancient fortifications, you can learn the history of this part of Tuscany by visiting the **Mostra permanente dei Liguri Apuani**, devoted to the ancient people of the stelae-statues, and the **Mostra permanente del mesolitico**, displaying many prehistoric finds from this territory dating from the transition stage between the ancient age of chipped stone and the Neolithic period, when mankind became sedentary, engaging in agriculture and shepherding. In the vitrines of this museum, observing the little **flintstone tools** is like leaping back in time to 10,000 years ago, when these lands were roamed by groups of **Mesolithic hunters**, skilled at striking their prey from afar with their terrible new weapons: **bows and arrows**. The bows used by the Mesolithic hunters were made of wood and vegetal fibre, and little **flint arrowheads**, skilfully chipped to a long, narrow shape, were bound to the tips of their wooden arrows. The hunters also utilised flint to make cutting tools of triangular, rectangular or semicircular shape, sharpened on one side and used to cut meat, leather and materials of other kinds.



Educational materials at the Museo di Sant'Agata.



The painted horse of Lascaux tells of hunting in the Upper Palaeolithic period.

## CHIPPING

This is the technique used by prehistoric man to work **flint** – a stone consisting almost entirely of silica – to make tools and weapons. Many different chipping methods were used – direct or indirect percussion, with a stone or a chisel made of bone – but the objective was always the same: to obtain more or less long pieces with sharp edges, able to cut animal skins or to become perfect arrowheads. Many museums offer educational workshops where you can construct the various kinds of prehistoric flintstone tools, supervised by specialised personnel, as at the **Centro di Documentazione Sant'Agata** near Scarperia or the **Parco archeologico naturalistico di Belvedere** on Monte Cetona.



Example of chipping flintstone at the Parco archeologico del Monte Cetona.

Today everything that prehistoric people made of wood or plant fibres has been lost, gone forever; and so the bows used by the Mesolithic hunters can only be imagined, based on some of the prehistoric images that have survived to our own day. Of those weapons, nothing remains but the flint arrowheads, some of them only one centimetre long!

To touch these tools with your own hands and see how mankind lived at different prehistoric ages, go to Mugello, a few kilometres from Scarperia, a town famed for its artisanal production of knives. Here you will find the **Centro di Documentazione Sant'Agata**, housed in an ancient country church, which displays objects coming from all over Mugello, dating from the Lower Palaeolithic to the Bronze Age, as well as Etruscan and Roman materials. This fine collection clearly shows how very long this valley north of Florence has been populated by man, since the most remote ages.

On display here are materials coming from around Lake Bilancino, where a campsite of Upper Palaeolithic hunters dating from around 25,000 years ago, with places used for chipping stones and several hearths, has been unearthed. The ancient pollen found on this site shows that the landscape at the time

consisted mainly of prairies and swamps. But the most interesting thing about the Centro di Documentazione Sant'Agata is the chance it offers to make close contact with the prehistoric world. Along with the original flintstone tools are replicas of wooden implements that visitors can even pick up and hold. The itinerary continues outside, with the life-size replica of a **prehistoric vil- lage** showing how the Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers lived, with a hut used by Bronze Age farmer/stockbreeders, and a hut from the Iron Age, the period immediately prior to the flowering of Etruscan civilisation all over Tuscany.

[museisantagata.it](http://museisantagata.it)



Replicas of prehistoric huts at the Centro di Documentazione Sant'Agata.

## READING THE EARTH

On the plain of Lucca, in the township of Porcari, we find the **Fossa Nera** area, an important archaeological site that shows us, like an illustrated book, the ancient history of this territory. Reading layers of earth from top to bottom is, in fact, a journey through time back into the past.

On the upper stratigraphic levels lie the foundations of Roman farms (built from the 2nd century B.C. on and abandoned in Late Antiquity); descending a little further, we find the traces of an Etruscan settlement (from the 5th century B.C.); and lastly, in the lowest and oldest layer, we come upon the remains of a Bronze Age village. An excursion through the archaeological zone and the surrounding countryside – to the east and south of Lucca – is a real voyage through time, when we think that the borders of the cultivated fields today still reflect those of the **Roman centuriation**, when plots of land were

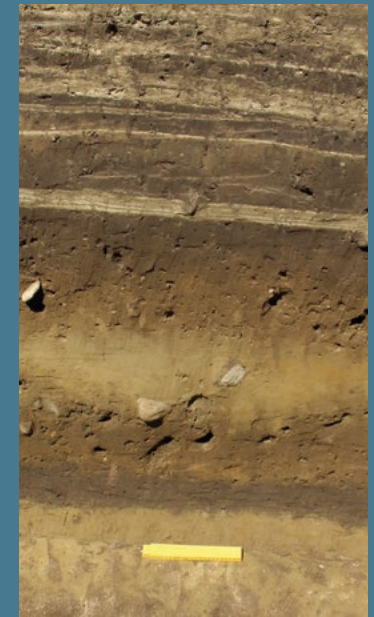
assigned to retired veterans of the Roman army; and that the ancient fabric of roadways, canals and ditches was once used by the Roman farmers who lived in the many farms of this land, devoted to agriculture since time immemorial.



The site of Fossa Nera and, left, one of the ceramics found by archaeologists.

## STRATIGRAPHY

Imagine slicing a cake in half. What would you see? The **layers** of course, which are not always the same thickness: the bottom layer is sponge cake, then comes chocolate, then another layer of sponge cake, followed by custard and sometimes frosting on the top. Their sequence not only makes our mouths water but also shows us how the cake was made: from the lowest layer – the oldest – to the highest, the most recent. And the land can be read in practically the same way. The lowest layers are the oldest, on which the others have gradually built up, to the most recent of all, the one we are standing on now. When **archaeologists** dig, then, it is as if they were journeying back through time. And they do it very carefully, because once a layer has been removed, it is destroyed forever (and with it all the stories it has to tell).



The various historical periods are indicated by many layers of colour, one above another.

The stratigraphy of Fossa Nera tells us that this area – called Auser in antiquity – was frequently inundated by **floods of the Serchio** up to 1,200 B.C., when a **village** of huts was built here. The materials unearthed here reveal many things about the daily life and material culture of this **Bronze Age** people.

**Grindstones** and **grinders** tell us, for instance, that the grain grown around here was brought to the village and pounded into flour. In other parts of the settlement instead, the remains of **vases** demonstrate the skill of potters, who worked clay to produce objects in many different shapes; vases, after firing in earthen ovens, were used to store food and water. Other artisans instead were skilled at smelting **metal** to make ornaments or other small items, while finds of precious **amber** tell us that merchants from distant northern lands travelled this far, probably along the many navigable branches of the Serchio.

For an even better idea of how highly skilled the Bronze Age artisans were, you can visit the **Mostra archeologica permanente del Museo di Porcari**, displaying materials found at **Fossa Nera** that give us a glimpse of the artisanal expertise, the natural tendency toward agriculture and the flourishing trade that developed over the following centuries and millennia.



Amber was used as an ornament already in prehistoric times.



Prehistoric pottery moulds, flintstone implements and a flour grinder, from the Museo della Certosa Monumentale di Calci.

Only a part of the archaeological area is open to visitors; specifically, some remains from Roman times and a visitors' itinerary leading to the site of the extinct lake of Sesto or Bientina, which was later to cover the land again. However, the **Museo di Porcari** offers **educational itineraries** to explore for yourself the prehistory of these places. Here you will find a replica of the village, the living quarters and the kiln where pottery was fired, and then weapons for hunting, stone-working tools, implements for cultivating the soil, and weaving looms. Scenes from everyday life that, thanks to the activities of experimental archaeology, transport us all, both children and adults, over an enormous span of time.

.....  
[museoporcari.it](http://museoporcari.it)  
 .....

## HOW HAS THE TERRITORY CHANGED?

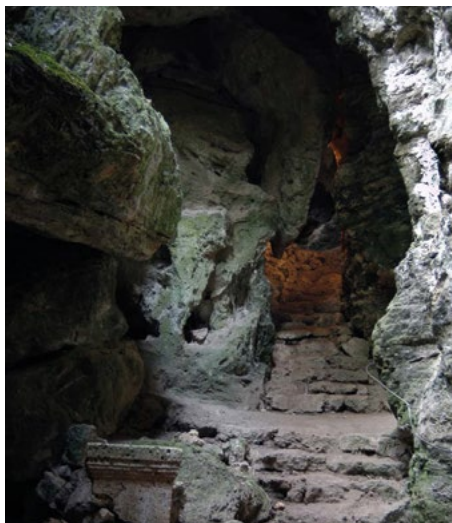
The easiest way to find out is to examine the remains of the fossil plants and bones of the animals that lived here. And you can do this at the **Certosa Monumentale di Calci di Pisa**, a vast structure founded in 1366 and enlarged over the centuries, which now houses the **Museo di storia naturale dell'Università di Pisa**. A visit to its important **palaeontological collection** shows us how the flora and fauna changed at different epochs. Without forgetting the room – a favourite of children, and not them alone – devoted to the **evolution of mankind** and the one with the dinosaur skeletons!



.....  
[msn.unipi.it](http://msn.unipi.it)  
 .....

Want to get a good look at the studio of an archaeologist like Indiana Jones and the remains of many prehistoric animals? Visit the Museo della Certosa Monumentale di Calci.

If you would like to explore a re-constructed village from the Bronze Age, or a Neanderthal campsite, you should know that some of the most important archaeological discoveries in Italy have been made at a place in Tuscany. At **Cetona**, an ancient fortified town at the foot of Mount Cetona, lying between Val d'Orcia and Val di Chiana, exceptional traces of prehistoric times have been found. With a museum, an archaeological park and an archeodrome, you can experience at first hand the prehistoric epochs documented in this area. In the **Museo civico per la preistoria del Monte Cetona**, housed in the Palazzo Comunale, every stage of the archaeological site is documented, from the Middle Palaeolithic age, when **Neanderthal man** lived in caves on the mountain, leaving as traces of his passage stone implements and the bones of butchered animals, through the Neolithic and the Copper Age, up to the intense populating



In the Parco archeologico del Monte Cetona you can see a Bronze Age village and a Palaeolithic village, and participate in educational activities in the archaeological field.

of the **Bronze Age** when the groups of human beings that settled here built huts, lived in shelters under rocks and buried their dead. And we discover too that at an even earlier age – long before the arrival of man – this mountain was an island surrounded by the sea, as shown by the abundance of marine fossils in the area!

On Monte Cetona is the **Parco archeologico naturalistico di Belvedere**, where guided tours lead through lighted caves, once used as dwelling places. Here there is a life-size replica of a Bronze Age village with huts that can be entered and sections devoted to the artisanal activities of the time – from making vases out of clay, to using furnaces for smelting the metals used to make implements – and a Palaeolithic campsite in a little natural hollow. It is the **Archeodromo di Belvedere**, not far from the caves.

## TRY IT YOURSELF!

To make a **prehistoric vase**, get some clay, some little seashells and a few pointed objects, such as wooden sticks. The first step is to knead the fresh clay to soften it, then mould it with your hands into the shape of a vase. After having done this you can decorate the sides of the vase– inspired by some of the many images to be found on internet – by imprinting them with the seashells or by incision with a sharpened stick, to form waves, triangles, circles, and so on. And now the little vase is ready to become a perfect pencil holder!



Flask-shaped vase from the Copper Age.

## PREHISTORY IN THE MUSEUMS

Traces of prehistoric man are found not only in caves and shelters beneath boulders, but also in the museums of many towns and cities: from the **Museo e Istituto Fiorentino di Preistoria "Paolo Graziosi"** in Florence to the **Museo di Preistoria e Protostoria della Valle del Fiume Fiora** at Manciano, and the **Museo Archeologico e dell'Uomo "Alberto Carlo Blanc"** in Viareggio. This great historic heritage is one of the many treasures of Tuscany.



The cave bear displayed at the Museo Fiorentino di Preistoria.

[museoflorentinopreistoria.it](http://museoflorentinopreistoria.it)

The prehistoric traces lead on to the **island of Elba**, the biggest island in the Tuscan Archipelago.

Ancient sources and archaeological excavations tell us that this island always played a leading role in the maritime trade of the **Mediterranean**, as well as for the iron extracted from its mines. Jason and his Argonauts – say the ancient sources – stopped here, and cleaning their skin with scrapers, as was the custom with the Greeks, caused drops of sweat to fall onto the beach, spotting the white pebbles; this was the Chiaie beach, near **Portoferraio**, where still today we can see the black and grey drops mingled with white pebbles on the beach, and can imagine the Greek ship with the Argonauts sailing away over a crystalline sea. During the Bronze Age, villages were built in the western part of the island, along the ridges of **Monte Capanne**, a place that has not changed much since then, with a breathtaking panorama. This society of shepherds and farmers lived in round huts with dry-stone foundations and wooden walls, using grinders and grindstones for grain, along with spindles and spools for textiles, vases for boiling milk and many other objects displayed in the **Museo archeologico di Marciana**.



A view of Monte Capanne, on the Island of Elba, inhabited since prehistoric times.

On Monte Capanne we also find the mysterious **Sassi ritti**, or upright stones, which are **menhirs** erected vertically in the soil, traceable to an ancient cult of the sun. And gazing around it is clear that time has swept away the people and their ancient habitats, but not the beauty of these places, still intact today.



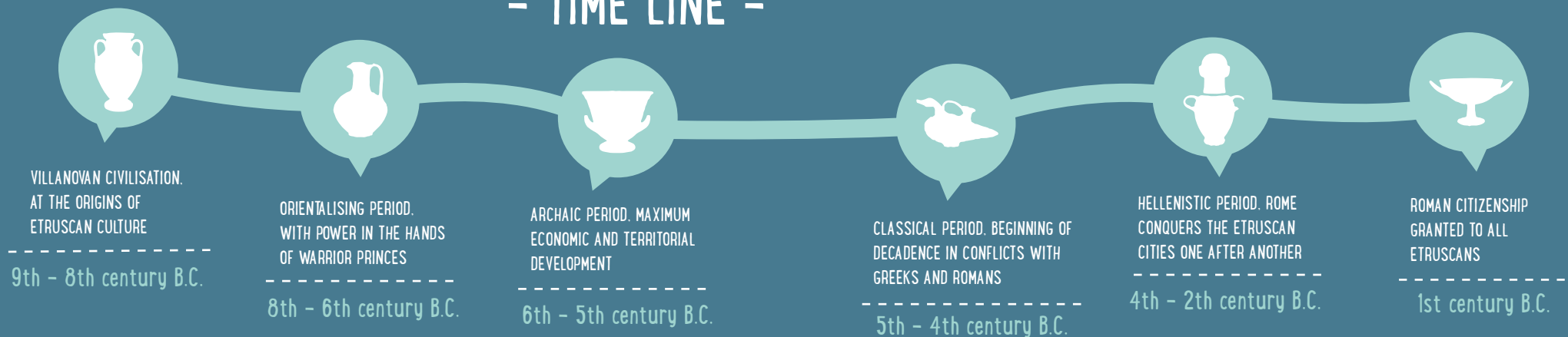
The famous Sassi Ritti of Elba, menhirs from prehistoric times.

## - MAP - Etruscan places



- |    |  |    |  |
|----|--|----|--|
| 1  | AREA ARCHEOLOGICA DI VETULONIA E MUSEO CIVICO ARCHEOLOGICO "ISIDORO FALCHI" [VETULONIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL CIVIC MUSEUM]  | 12 | AREA ARCHEOLOGICA DELL'ACCESA [ACCESA ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE]   |
| 2  | MOSTRA PERMANENTE FRONTONE DI TALAMONE (ORBETELLO) [TALAMONE PEDIMENT PERMANENT EXHIBITION (ORBETELLO)]  | 13 | MUSEO DELLE ARTI IN GHISA DELLA MAREMMA DI FOLLONICA [FOLLONICA MUSEUM OF CAST IRON ARTS IN MAREMMA]   |
| 3  | MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO DI SCANSANO E PARCO ARCHEOLOGICO DI GHIACCIOFORTE [SCANSANO ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM AND GIACCIOFORTE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK]   | 14 | TUMULO DEL MOLINELLO (ASCIANO) [MOLINELLO TUMULUS (ASCIANO)]   |
| 4  | MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO DI SATURNIA E NECROPOLI DEL PUNSTONE [SATURNIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM AND NECROPOLIS OF PUNSTONE]  | 15 | ANTIQUARIUM DI MURLO [MURLO ANTIQUARIUM]   |
| 5  | PARCO ARCHEOLOGICO "CITTÀ DEL TUFO" DI SORANO E SOVANA [SORANO AND SOVANA ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK "TUFA CITY"]   | 16 | MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO NAZIONALE ETRUSCO DI CHIUSI E MUSEO CIVICO "LA CITTÀ SOTTERRANEA" [NATIONAL ETRUSCAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF CHIUSI AND CIVIC MUSEUM "THE UNDERGROUND CITY"] |
| 6  | MUSEO CIVICO ARCHEOLOGICO DELLA CIVILTÀ ETRUSCA DI PITIGLIANO E MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO ALLAPERTO "ALBERTO MANZI" [PITIGLIANO CIVIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF ETRUSCAN CIVILISATION AND OUTDOOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM "ALBERTO MANZI"] | 17 | MUSEO CIVICO DI SARTEANO E NECROPOLI DELLE PIANACCE [SAREANO CIVIC MUSEUM AND NECROPOLIS OF PIANACCE]  |
| 7  | CENTRO DI DOCUMENTAZIONE DI SCARLINO [SCARLINO DOCUMENTATION CENTRE]   | 18 | MUSEO CIVICO ARCHEOLOGICO DELLE ACQUE DI CHIANCIANO TERME [CHIANCIANO TERME CIVIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF THE WATERS]   |
| 8  | MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO DEL TERRITORIO DI POPULONIA (PIOMBINO) [TERRITORY OF POPULONIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM (PIOMBINO)]  | 19 | MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO DI PECCIOLI [PECCIOLI ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM]  |
| 9  | MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO E PARCO ARCHEOLOGICO DI BARATTI E POPULONIA [ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK OF BARATTI AND POPULONIA]  | 20 | AREA ARCHEOLOGICA DI ROSELLE [ROSELLE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE]   |
| 10 | MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO NAZIONALE DI FIRENZE [FLORENCE NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM]  | 21 | AREA ARCHEOLOGICA DI PIETRAMARINA [PIETRAMARINA ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE]   |
| 11 | MUSEO DELL'ACCADEMIA ETRUSCA E DELLA CITTÀ DI CORTONA [ACADEMY MUSEUM OF ETRUSCAN CULTURE AND CITY OF CORTONA]   | 22 | MUSEO ETRUSCO "GUARNACCI" DI VOLTERRA [VOLTERRA ETRUSCAN MUSEUM "GUARNACCI"]   |
|    |  | 23 | MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO COMUNALE "FRANCESCO NICOSIA" DI ARTIMINO [ARTIMINO CIVIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM "FRANCESCO NICOSIA"]   |
|    |  | 24 | AREA ARCHEOLOGICA DI GONFIENTI [GONFIENTI ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE]   |
|    |  | 25 | TOMBA DELLA MULA E TOMBA DELLA MONTAGNOLA DI SESTO FIORENTINO [TOMB OF THE MULA AND TOMB OF THE MONTAGNOLA AT SESTO FIORENTINO]  |
|    |  | 26 | LAGO DEGLI IDOLI DEL MONTE FALTERONA [LAKE OF THE IDOLS ON MONTE FALTERONA]  |
|    |  | 27 | MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO DEL CASENTINO (BIBBIENA) [CASENTINO ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM (BIBBIENA)]   |

## - TIME LINE -





## TUSCANY AT THE TIME OF THE RASENNA

Strolling along the paths of southern Tuscany, immersed in wild, flourishing nature, you may be struck by the intense odour of the Mediterranean maquis, fragrant with myrtle and wild fennel. And when you stop, there suddenly appears among the bushes the bluish gleam of the sea. This is **Maremma**, an untamed landscape beloved for its beauty and traditions, once the heart of Etruria, the homeland of the **Rasenna**, as they called themselves, or **Tusci**, as the Romans called them. And **Tuscia** was their land.

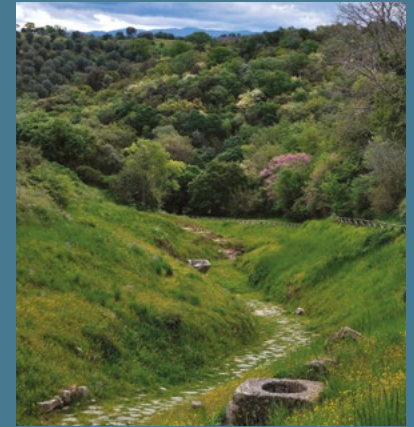
These were the Etruscans, a people whose culture, art, and way of life have moulded the territory of Tuscany, becoming a vital part of it. And looking around, in these places that archaeologists and historians call Etruria proper, it really seems that time has stopped at that epoch, during the centuries when Etruscan cities were rich and powerful.



Bronze statuette for the domestic cult, coming from the Domus dei Dolia in Vetulonia. 3rd century B.C.  
Above: grave goods from an Etruscan tomb, at the Museo Civico Archeologico delle Acque di Chianciano.

## THE LEGENDARY TWELVE!

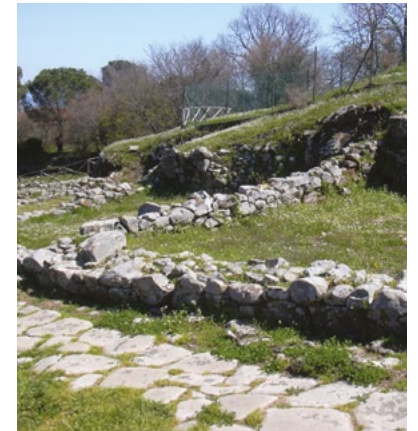
What are we talking about? About the most important Etruscan cities that, according to the Greek historian Strabo, formed the so-called **Dodecapolis**, a kind of military and economic alliance. Many of these city-states are still found today in Tuscany: Arezzo, Populonia, Roselle, Volterra and of course Vetulonia. By marking them on a map, we can see just where ancient Etruscan civilisation developed.



A street paved with flagstones in Roselle.

## IN THE HEART OF ETRURIA

The fertile plane north of Grosseto was a great salty lake, navigable and connected to the sea in Etruscan times. It was **Lake Prile**, and only a faint trace of it remains today in the **Riserva naturale della Diaccia Botrona**, at the foot of **Castiglione della Pescaia**. Beside this ancient lake stood the legendary city of **Vatl**, today's **Vetulonia**, a site that was long sought for by archaeologists. As in other Etruscan city-states, the wealthy nobility controlled the agricultural economy of the area and the roadways, obliging merchants to pay customs duties whenever they crossed its territory. The Etruscans in fact never came together to form a single state. Their cities, united by a common language and culture, always remained **independent**, like the *poleis* of ancient Greece, each of them following its own destiny.



Above: the archaeological zone of Vetulonia.  
Below: bronze fragment of a candelabra in the shape of a horse, from the Domus dei Dolia in Vetulonia. 4th century B.C.



Still today we can climb the hill of **Vetulonia** to see a splendid panorama and recognise the ancient bed of Lake Prile. Here we find sections of **Cyclopean walls**, while the ancient **acropolis**, the heart of the city, was converted into a castle in the Middle Ages. To understand the splendour of the aristocracy that governed Vetulonia, we must visit the **Museo civico archeologico "Isidoro Falchi"** to see the objects taken from the rich necropolises in the area: amber, imported Greek pottery, jewellery, fibulae, helmets and weapons.



Cinerary urn in the shape of a hut. 9th century B.C., at the Museo Civico Archeologico di Vetulonia.

## MYTHS AND FABULOUS MONSTERS

Fascinated by ancient mythology? Then you must see two very special Etruscan relics: the terracotta architectural works illustrating the myth of Medea, at the **Museo Civico Archeologico di Vetulonia**, and the splendid **Frontone di Talamone**, a pediment illustrating the myth of the Seven against Thebes, displayed in the Caserma Umberto I at Orbetello. The more courageous can even make a visit to the **demon with the red hair**, from the Tomb of the same name in the **Necropolis delle Pinnacle di Sarteano**. It is a monstrous god of the underworld driving a chariot drawn by two lions and two griffons. And in the chamber behind it, where the sarcophagus was laid, a three-headed serpent and a hippocampus will be waiting for you.



Detail of three-headed serpent. from the wall paintings in the Necropoli delle Pianacce. at Sarteano.

[museosarteano.it](http://museosarteano.it)

## TRY IT YOURSELF!

The chimera is one of the many mythological monsters formed of parts from different animals: the body and face of a lion, the head of a goat on a snake-like back and tail. At least this is how the **Chimera di Arezzo**, one of the most famous Etruscan statues, appears. Why not invent a mythological monster yourself? With the body of a tortoise, the head of a dog, the wings of a bat and the claws of a tiger, for instance. Let imagination reign! You can draw and colour it however you like, or model it in clay. And don't forget to give it a name.



The Chimera of Arezzo. an Etruscan bronze statue from the 5th century B.C., at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze.

From the town of Vetulonia we can walk down to the **archaeological zone** to see the remains of buildings from Etruscan and Roman times. Still further down is the **necropolis** with tombs dating from the 7th century B.C. Walking along the **Via dei Sepolcri** is an unforgettable experience for both children and adults. Among the olive trees rise the high mounds of tombs – the Belvedere, the Pierre, and the Diavolino II – that we can visit, entering the narrow dromos leading to the burial chambers. Inland Maremma too has many treasures of archaeology, primarily **Scansano** and its **Museo Archeologico Comunale** housed in Palazzo



The entrance to the Tomba del Diavolino. in the Necropolis of Vetulonia.



Pretorio. Displayed here are exceptional finds from the site of **Ghiaccio Forte**, a structure dating from the late 4th century B.C. used for ritual purposes. Here statuettes in terracotta and in bronze demonstrate the skill of the ancient craftsmen. Not far away is Saturnia, famed today as then for its **thermal waters**, where history and nature join hands to create an unforgettable spectacle. We can visit the **necropolis of Puntone**, dating from the 7th to the 5th century B.C., as well as ruins from Roman times. Saturnia, in fact, met with the same fate as the other Etruscan cities, becoming Roman at a certain point in its history, as exemplified by the well-preserved paved



Water vase covered by a bowl, used as cinerary urn, from Vetulonia. 8th century B.C.

section of the Via **Clodia**, with the ruts left by merchants' wagons still visible today.



A section of the Via Clodia, near Saturnia.

[museoisidorofalchi.it](http://museoisidorofalchi.it)  
[museidimaremma.it](http://museidimaremma.it)

## THE CITIES OF TUFA

The southern part of Toscana seems moulded in **tufa**, the typical local stone. In Etruscan times this area was full of villages, over which the medieval towns developed. But to anyone arriving here for the first time, the most striking feature is the network of **roadways carved deep in the rock** that have linked these little centres since antiquity. Exploring the **tagliate** is a thrilling experience, considering that these deep ditches were slowly carved out by water seeping through the tufa and then became real roadways.

In the town of **Sovana**, the **Centro di documentazione**, housed in Palazzo



The Via Cava of San Rocco, one of the ancient Etruscan roads carved out of the tufa.

Pretorio, displays interesting Etruscan finds from this area, and models of the **necropolis of San Sebastiano** and the **Tomba dell'Ildebranda**, one of the most beautiful Etruscan funerary monuments to come down to us. Obligatory for lovers of great discoveries, this time from the early Middle Ages, is the treasure found in 2004 in the **Chiesa di San Mamiliano** during restoration. It is a hoard of no less than 498 gold coins dating from the 5th century A.D., often romantically called the treasure of the Count of Montecristo, the hero of Alexandre Dumas's

famous novel. It seems in fact that the French author was inspired by the folktales of the time in writing his book! Outside the town is the **Parco archeologico "Città del Tufo"**, created to promote the extraordinary historic and naturalistic heritage of the territory. To walk along the foot of the steep rocky walls, below the tombs, is a unique experience. The path leads from the **necropolis of Poggio Felceto to the Tomba dell'Ildebranda**, carved directly out of the tufa on three sides to replicate the architecture of a temple on a podium. The tomb, excavated in 1924, dates from the 3rd-2nd century B.C. and is named for Ildebrando da Sovana, who became pope under the name of Gregory VII in the 11th century. Our walk continues as far as the **necropolis of Poggio Prisca**, site of the Pola tomb and that of the Demons, from the 3rd century B.C., both rich in sculptural decoration.

In this area visitors can see various types of **Etruscan funerary architecture** – tombs with colonnaded facades, aedicules, dice and semi-dice – whose bright colours have been slightly dimmed by centuries of ageing and weathering. When they were built, in fact, the tombs were **painted** in brilliant

colours standing out clearly against the yellow and grey tufa stone and the green vegetation. But despite the passage of time, the deep **vie cave** continue to cut through the territory, like the **via cava di San Sebastiano**, with walls rising to a height of 20 metres, **or** the so-called **Cavone**, whose walls are covered with vegetation.



The monumental Tomba dell'Ildebranda.

At Sorano too we can admire chambers carved out of tufa stone and used by the local people for millennia. There are Etruscan tombs, but also columbaria and dwelling places from later ages.

[leviecave.it](http://leviecave.it)

## CITIES OF THE DEAD

In the 7th century B.C. the Etruscans began to build those great necropolises that we can visit today. They are real cities of the dead, with streets, walls, gates, and tombs of various kinds where the deceased was buried either alone or with his family. They can be **aedicules**, in the shape of a temple, as in the San Cerbone Necropolis at Populonia, or hypogean, dug out of the earth, as in the Necropolis delle Grotte, or **tumuli**, mounds covered with earth, as in the Tomba della Montagnola at Sesto Fiorentino.



An aedicule tomb. from the Necropolis of San Cerbone. In the Parco Archeologico di Baratti e Populonia.

Not far away, on a high rocky spur, stands the town of **Pitigliano**. After having wandered through its narrow streets, charged with history and tradition, we can visit the **Museo Civico Archeologico** to see grave goods from the Orientalising age coming from the nearby necropolis of **Poggio Buco** – the site, open to visitors, is found along the road to **Manciano** – and then descend to the **Museo Archeologico all'aperto "Alberto Manzi"**, an archaeological park where visitors plunge headlong into the past. The open-air **Museo Archeologico all'aperto** is a thrilling experience for one and all. It presents a replica of a typical **Etruscan house** consisting of three rooms with a portico, as well as a residence from the Bronze Age, a round hut, which represents the first urbanist layout in the territory. From here, walking through a via cava, we leave the "city of the living" and head for the "city of the dead": the **Etruscan necropolis of Gradone**, with a burial place where visitors feel they are reliving an ancient funeral ceremony.



[comune.pitigliano.gr.it](http://comune.pitigliano.gr.it)

## MERCHANTS AND PERFUME

In the vicinity of the Talamonaccio promontory, near **Talamone**, the remains of a temple dating from the 4th century B.C. have been found. It faced the sea, probably designed to appear as a strikingly beautiful and majestic sight to sailors and merchants coming from afar. Below it, on the waters of the **Orbetello lagoon**, many species of birds fly here to nest. And it is here at **Orbetello** that we can admire the splendid **frontone del Tempio di**



Detail from the pediment taken from the Etruscan temple of Talamone. Above, the coast north of Orbetello with the Rocca di Talamone in the background.

**Talamone** – now housed in the **Caserma Umberto I** – surely one of the most beautiful terracotta pediments surviving from classical antiquity. Dating from 150 B.C., it illustrates the myth of the Seven against Thebes.

At **Scarlino**, in the **Pian di Palma** locality, excavations have brought to light a **rural farm** with a necropolis beside it, called **Poggio Tondo**, datable to the 7th-6th century B.C. Many precious ceramic objects have been found here, most notably ointment jars that contained the famous perfume of Corinth, at the time a rare imported item, and other perfumes produced by Etruscan artisans, the height of fashion at the time, as well as cosmetic cases and vases of various kinds. The farm's simple main building was surrounded by roofed sheds for storing grain and by cultivated fields. In the farm, clay weights for weaving looms, in the shape of a truncated cone, have been found. Today these weights are displayed in the vitrines of the Centro di Documentazione di Scarlino, a fine collection showing how people lived and worked in Etruscan times.

[orbitelloturismo.it](http://orbitelloturismo.it) - [museidimaremma.it](http://museidimaremma.it)

## THE PERFUMES OF ETRURIA

In antiquity **perfumes** and **ointments** were sold as precious goods. The Etruscans imported them to the Italian peninsula, buying them in the emporiums where ships from Greece and Asia Minor docked. Ointments and perfumes soon became the height of fashion among the nobility, and the Etruscans too began to produce them. Still today, in most of Tuscany's archaeological museums, we can see the different shaped vases such as the long *alabastron* and the rounded *aryballos*, often decorated, that contained them.



Ceramic vases for perfumes and ointments, at the Museo Civico Archeologico delle Acque di Chianciano.

## THE ETRUSCAN FORGE

The **mining district** that stretches from the promontory of **Populonia** to the **Island of Elba** has often been called this. Since remote antiquity, iron has been extracted here and brought to the mainland, in the **Gulf of Baratti**, a little bay of rare beauty.



The Necropoli delle Grotte, in the Parco Archeologico di Baratti e Populonia.

And the history of this area is incredibly inter-

esting! Here the great **tumulus tombs** of wealthy Etruscan princes were built. And it was here, in the following centuries, that the **industrial quarters** of the Etruscan artisans stood. These artisans, probably without thinking about it, began to throw scrap from the iron they produced onto these great mounds, burying them and transforming the coast into a kind of lunar landscape. In the 3rd century B.C., at some places along the coast, these huge piles of scrap iron rose 10 metres high, while the air became stifling and the darkened sky was streaked with columns of smoke. The territory around Populonia must have looked like this to anyone arriving there. And yet it was just that mountain of iron that preserved the tumuli beneath it, letting them survive intact to our own day.

To know the history of the territory, we can visit the **Museo Archeologico del Territorio di Populonia a Piombino** to see the rich grave goods from the Val di Cornia necropolises and the splendid silver amphora salvaged from the sea in 1968, as well as an interesting centre of experimental archaeology. Today, in the Gulf of Baratti, nothing remains of that industrialised past but some pieces of scrap iron still lying on the ground. On the promontory, inhabited since the 9th century B.C., stands **Populonia** – the ancient Pupluna – an important Etruscan city known since antiquity for its intense **metallurgical activity**. Here was the acropolis with its public buildings and temples.



The silver amphora of Baratti.

Lower down were the industrial level, the artisans' quarters and the port, where cargoes of metal arrived. From the **16th-century castle**, in the town, the gaze sweeps over a long stretch of coastline; we can visit the **Museo Archeologico** and the excavation zone. Descending toward the sea, we enter the **Parco Archeologico di Baratti e Populonia**, with the **Necropolis of San Carbon**. It is here, in the 19th century, that the first tombs were unearthed, including the splendid Tomb of the Funeral Beds and Tomb of the Chariots, over 30 metres in diameter.



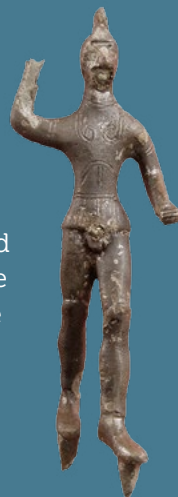
Amphorae displayed at the Museo Archeologico del Territorio di Populonia. in Piombino.

Along the path called the **via del ferro** that leads through the city's ancient industrial quarter, with its humble dwellings and deplorable hygienic conditions, we enter the nearby forest, following the **via delle cave** to the quarries that provided the blocks of stone used to construct the city's buildings and its funereal architecture.

[parchivaldicornia.it](http://parchivaldicornia.it)

## TO ARMS!

The metals were used to forge the **arms** and **armour** of the Etruscan warriors. There was the light infantry, that is, foot-soldiers, and then the archers and axmen, but the most fearful were the heavily armoured **hoplites**, who wore helmets with cheek-guards to protect the head and ears, breastplates and shin-guards on their legs; they carried a shield for defence and a lance and sword for attack. To see these terrible weapons, used in combat and parades, visit the **Museo Archeologico di Firenze**, the collections of the **Museo Civico di Vetulonia** or the grave goods of the warrior prince coming from the Trestina-Tarragoni tomb, displayed at the **Museo dell'Accademia Etrusca e della Città di Cortona**.



Bronze warrior from the 5th century B.C., coming from the Lago degli Idoli.

Iron- and metal-working were not confined to the Gulf of Baratti alone. Many place names reveal the intense metallurgical activity of the entire zone since antiquity. This is the case of the **Val Fucinaia**, well worth a visit to see one of the very few surviving examples of an ancient **smelting furnace**. Their type of structure and materials were, in fact, subject to deterioration. These exceptional remains, with a combustion chamber and above it, an area for the metal, are found at **Madonna di Fucinaia**, on the road to **Campiglia Marittima**. The town of **Accesa**, near Lake Accesa, in the midst of the **Grossetano metal hills**, also tells of Etruscan metallurgy and artisans. Dating from the 7th-6th century B.C., it is a rare example of a village built to house workers in the mines. Another industrial quarter with furnaces for metallurgical processes is found at the archaeological site of **Rondelli**, whose products are now displayed at **Magma**, the **Museo delle Arti in Ghisa della Maremma di Follonica**. Easy to consult and strikingly presented, the Magma display presents the metallurgical, artistic and technological history of the territory, in a visit that is a perfect conclusion to a voyage through this metal-working land.



Bronze horse's bit decorated with seahorses, datable to the 8th century B.C., from Vetulonia.

[parchivaldicornia.it](http://parchivaldicornia.it)  
[museidimaremma.it](http://museidimaremma.it)  
[magmafollonica.it](http://magmafollonica.it)

## ETRUSCAN POTTERY

The **Crete Senesi** are low hills south of Siena, famous for the grey and bluish colour of the clay they are made of – the "creta" – and their solitary cypresses. Here, not far from **Asciano**, is the **Tumulo del Molinello**, a great aristocratic tomb, and a little further on **Murlo**, a medieval town that grew up near an Etruscan settlement. Materials from this important archaeologi-



Pottery moulds coming from the Etruscan site of Gonfienti.

cal zone can be seen at the **Antiquarium**, housed in Palazzo Vescovile, which displays objects found on the territory, particularly at the site of **Poggio Civitate**, where a great princely residence has been unearthed. **Chiusi**, in Valdichiana, the city of the legendary Etruscan king Lars Porsenna, was one of the first to clash with Rome. It was famed in antiquity for its production of **funerary sculpture**, exported to many other cities: inscribed pillars, urns, sarcophaguses carved in bas-relief and splendid artworks with scenes of war or daily life. In the rich **Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Chiusi**, we can admire vases of many shapes used during banquets, such as the bucchero-ware *oenochoe*, the typical pitcher for pouring wine. And just from Chiusi, datable to the 6th century B.C. but now displayed at the Museo Archeologico di Firenze, comes one of the most surprising examples: an *oenochoe* with a spout in the shape of a bull's head! Many curious facts about the Etruscans can be discovered in this museum. There are female figures of **mourners**, women who wept and despaired during the funerals of aristocrats; and then **canopic vases**, dating from the 7th-6th century B.C., earthenware jars with

a lid in anthropomorphic form that contained the ashes of the dead. **Bucchero ware**, the typical pottery produced in Etruria, black and shiny to resemble metal, appears in many forms.



A terracotta antefix in the shape of Minerva's head, from the Acropoli minore di Vetulonia, 4th century B.C.



Above, the cowboy of Murlo, so-called for his original hat.



An oinochoe in bucchero ware, with a bull's head, coming from Chiusi.

[comune.murlo.si.it](http://comune.murlo.si.it)

## DINING WITH THE ETRUSCANS

The opulent **banquets** held by aristocratic families were called symposia. The guests reclined on a kind of bed called *kline*, to converse and listen to the music of an *aulos*, the Etruscan flute; but above all to drink from their *kylikes*, goblets for **wine**, which was mixed with water in a great basin called a *krater*. The wine, very strong and very expensive, had to be made to last as long as possible! And then there was **food**: beef, wild game and bread. But the most amazing thing about the Etruscan banquets was the presence of **women**, who here in Etruria, unlike Greece and Rome, could not only dine with their husbands but also attend public ceremonies, theatres and games.

An unprecedented example in history, whose first steps were taken right here in the ancient Tuscan cities.



An ancient symposium, in a replica at the Museo Archeologico di Chianciano Terme.

## ANIMALS, MONSTERS AND SACRED WATER

Our visit to Etruscan Chiusi through the subsoil along the fascinating itinerary of the **Museo della Città Sotterranea** – secret chambers used for different purposes over the centuries – concludes at the **necropolis**, a little outside the city, with its painted tombs. The wall paintings in the **Tomb of the Monkey**, from the 5th century B.C., are truly astonishing, depicting refined musicians, athletes and of course the monkey the tomb is named for. Equally striking is the painted **Tomb of the Colle Casuccini**, decorated with a frieze depicting games, a chariot race and a banqueting scene. Not only exceptional examples of the pictorial art, these images also give us crucial information on the daily life of the Etruscans, their customs, beliefs and mythology, information that would otherwise have been lost forever. But the Etruscan paintings at Chiusi are not the only ones in Tuscany.



**Sarteano**, a little town that grew up around a medieval castle between the Val di Chiana and the Val d'Orcia, has an interesting **Museo civico** and, not far away, a place that provides a fascinating view of the world of the dead imagined by the Etruscans. It is the **necropoli delle Pianacce**, where excavations up to now have brought to light a sacred precinct and 21 tombs, dating from the 6th to the 2nd century B.C. One of the most interesting tombs is called the **Infernal Quadriga**, for the splendid, original paintings decorating its chambers. Dug out of travertine, it has a long *dromus* – the entrance corridor – and a host of images: griffons, lions, dolphins and a terrifying three-headed monster, as well as the quadriga driven by a demon from the other world, with red hair waving in the wind and bloodshot eyes.

The demon portrayed on the Tomb of the Infernal Quadriga.

.....  
[museosarteano.it](http://museosarteano.it)  
 .....

If instead we take the road from Chiusi to **Chianciano Terme**, famed today as it was then for its thermal waters, we will be following in the legendary footsteps of King Porsenna, who went to drink water from these sacred springs. The **Museo Civico Archeologico delle Acque**, housed in an old 19th-century granary, offers an itinerary through the historical roots of the territory. Along with a rich collection of Etruscan canopic jars, one of the



The Museo Archeologico di Chianciano Terme possesses materials coming from the Etruscan necropolises in the area.

world's largest, are the remains of an Etruscan sanctuary from the 4th century B.C. discovered near the Silene spring. In the museum's main hall is a replica of a pediment from an Etruscan temple of the 2nd century B.C. decorated with statues and friezes.

It too was found in the vicinity of a spring called **I Fucoli**, still in use today, showing how past and present are interlinked by water in this territory. Particularly significant are the replicas, notably those of the burial chambers from the 7th century B.C. found in the **necropolis of Foce-Tolle** and of rural settings, such as a farm from the 2nd century B.C. unearthed near the town, with implements used in producing wine.

But anyone interested in great archaeological discoveries must also visit the



Weapons and pottery in the Museo Archeologico di Chianciano.



Etruscan dolia (jars) displayed at the Museo Archeologico di Peccioli.

medieval town of **Peccioli**, where there is a little hill called **Le Serre**. At its top, from where Pisa and Volterra can be seen, an amazing discovery has been made: a well 10 metres deep and 5 metres wide, filled to the brim with materials from Etruscan times datable from the 6th to the 4th century B.C. Humble pottery for everyday use, tableware imported from Greece, animal bones, bronze and iron objects, gold jewellery, all showing traces of fire. What a riddle for archaeologists! The answer is likely a fire that destroyed a sacred precinct or temple where all these ritual objects were kept. And since they were sacred objects, the local Etruscan population, instead of destroying them – no one wanted to risk the vendetta of some deity! – preferred to bury them in that well.

.....  
[museoetrusco.it](http://museoetrusco.it) - [fondarte.peccioli.net](http://fondarte.peccioli.net)  
 .....



The archaeological zone of Primo Melone, at Cortona.

## FORTIFIED CITIES

**Cortona**, one of the most ancient and powerful Etruscan cities, stood at the meeting place of major roadways. It is surrounded by an imposing belt of walls whose original foundations appear beneath the medieval ones in some places. The view from here is magnificent, sweeping as far as Lake Trasimeno. And it is from here that one of the longest and most important surviving texts in the Etruscan language comes. It is the **Tabula**

**Cortonensis**, a thin sheet of bronze datable to the 2nd century B.C. found in the **Le Piagge** locality. It is a sales contract stipulated between Peru Scevas and his wife Arntlei with members of the gens Cusu, named Velche and Laris, for the purchase of land in the vicinity of Lake Trasimeno. The Tabula is kept at the **Museo dell'Accademia Etrusca e della Città di Cortona**, which possesses another extraordinary archaeological finds: a **bronze chandelier**, unique of its kind, decorated with silenes and sirens. The **Museo di Cortona** also displays grave goods from the **tumuli del Sodo**, a locality on the Rio Loreto, outstanding among them the **Tumulo del Melone II**, dating from the 6th century B.C. It has two vestibules and eight burial chambers, while its back is adorned by a **monumental altar** with decorations and a stairway, the only example ever found in Etruria, perhaps used in funerary rites.



The Etruscan bronze chandelier of Cortona.



The terraced altar of the Tumulo II del Sodo, at Cortona.

## ETRUSCAN WALLS

All of the Etruscan cities were surrounded by **defensive walls**, but only some of them have survived to our own day, often reutilised and rebuilt in Roman and Medieval times. To admire these grandiose architectural works, you can go to **Fiesole** or to **Cortona** (where a gate with two barrel arches has also survived), to **Volterra** or to the archaeological site of **Roselle**, one of the best conserved and most beloved by the travellers who ventured as far as Maremma to see ancient ruins in the 18th and 19th centuries. Equally noteworthy are the walls of **Pietramarina**, an archaeological and naturalistic area near **Carmignano**, where an Etruscan town inhabited from the 8th to the 1st century B.C once stood. The walls, strikingly impressive, are almost 3 metres wide and as high as 2 metres in some places, in a virtually unique example of Etruscan walls with no superstructures added later.



Another rich and powerful city was **Volterra**, whose great **belt of walls** appears immediately upon approaching the city. Observing the walls of this city is like glancing through a history book, a long mosaic of different epochs and techniques made up of interlocking stones. But most striking of all is seeing how the Etruscan walls extend beyond the medieval ones, with some sections far from the city today, clearly indicating its illustrious past. Our amazement continues when, to enter the city, we pass through its ancient gates: **Porta Diana**, dating from the 3rd-2nd



The Arco di Volterra gate, dating from the 4th century B.C.

Above, a section of the walls at Roselle.

century B.C., and **Porta dell'Arco**, from the 4th-3rd century B.C., protected by three deities whose features have been deleted by time. A visit to the city continues over what was once the **acropolis**, containing the remains of Etruscan buildings, and goes on to the **Museo Etrusco Guarnacci** to see the wealth of finds from this territory, notably the rich collection of **cinerary urns** for which Volterra was famous. The ashes of the dead were placed in urns with decorated lids illustrating the exploits and the features of the ancient aristocracy. We cannot leave Volterra without admiring the artisans who work in **alabaster**, the local stone, used by the Etruscans to produce marvellous objects. This is a tradition that has continued unbroken for nearly three thousand years.



The funerary urn of the spouses, at the Museo Etrusco Guarnacci in Volterra.

[cortonamaec.org](http://cortonamaec.org) - [comune.volterra.pi.it/musei](http://comune.volterra.pi.it/musei)

## ETRUSCAN WRITING

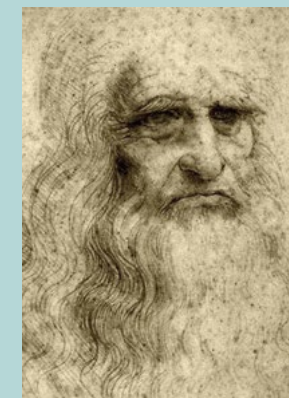
We are accustomed to write from **left to right**, in a system our language inherited from classical Latin. But that's not the only way to write! Some languages are written from right to left, and others even from top to bottom. And Etruscan? This ancient language was not always written in the same way, but changed its **orientation** over the centuries. The most ancient Etruscan inscriptions were **boustrophedonic**. This strange word means that the writer proceeded in alternative manner, first to the right and then to the left, like an ox ploughing a field. Later, and this is the case with most of the inscriptions that have come down to us, it became customary to write from right to left, as was usual in many ancient languages. Only the most recent inscriptions - before the language died out entirely - run from left to right, as in English.



The Etruscans adopted the Greek alphabet for writing.

## TRY IT YOURSELF!

Want to learn to send secret messages? Then do as the Etruscans did. Try to write in printing running from right to left, in the opposite direction from usual. And not this alone. The letters should be reversed too, turning to the left. It won't be easy at first but all you need is practice. And to read the message? Nothing could be simpler, all you have to do is hold the sheet up to a mirror and everything will drop back into place as if by magic. This technique was used by one of the greatest artists and inventors in the history of mankind, he too born in Etruscan territory: **Leonardo Da Vinci**.



Leonardo Da Vinci often wrote from right to left.

## DAILY LIFE

In the medieval town of **Artimino** we find the **Museo Archeologico "Francesco Nicosia"**, containing remarkable grave goods coming from the necropolises of Prato Rosello, from the Tumulo di Montefortini at Comeana and from the site of Pietramarina. In the fascinating halls of this museum we journey back to Etruscan times to discover their daily life and their cult of the afterlife. In the vicinity of the **Villa Medicea La Ferdinanda**, near the town, the remains of houses and a temple have come to light. Guided paths lead us to the necropolises of **Prato Rosello** and **Comeana**, to see the Boschetti tumuli and the Tumulo di Montefortini, a real artificial hill with a diameter of 70 metres.

Still in this area, at the confluence of the Bisenzio and the Marinella streams, one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of recent years was made. It is the ancient **Gonfienti**, a big city inhabited from the 6th to the 5th century B.C., situated on the



The great domus in the archaeological zone of Gonfienti.



road that linked this part of Etruria to the Emilian side of the Apennines. The city, discovered in 1997 – and still being excavated – is laid out in an **urban grid** with streets meeting at right angles, the same system used later by the Romans in founding their colonies. Rectangular houses with central courtyards have been unearthed, and the archaeologists are certain that they will gradually yield new information on the Etruscans' way of life. One of the houses has an intact roof made of roofing tiles arranged just as they are today in many Tuscan towns. In this case too, it is clear how many traditions and techniques used in Tuscany today are rooted in ancient times.



Replica of the roof of an Etruscan house, from Gonfienti.

[parcoarcheologicocarmignano.it - gonfienti.it](http://parcoarcheologicocarmignano.it - gonfienti.it)

## ETRUSCAN HOUSES

As you can imagine, there were various kinds of houses, differing over the centuries and according to the wealth of the families that owned them. An important example is the so-called **Casa dell'impluvium**, at **Roselle**. It is one of the oldest examples of a house with an impluvium, a central basin in the atrium for collecting rainwater, a system that was later to be used extensively in the Roman domus.

Not far from Florence, then a little trading post controlled by the powerful Etruscan city of Fiesole, **Sesto Fiorentino** has two fine examples of Etruscan architecture. The **Tomba della Mula**, with a round chamber dating from the 7th century B.C., is covered by the largest false cupola in northern Etruria known so far.



The Lago degli Idoli, on Monte Falterona, an ancient Etruscan religious site.



Discovered in the 15th century during the construction of Villa Pecchioli, into which it was incorporated, its name is linked to the popular tradition that a solid gold mule lies buried somewhere nearby. Not far away is the well-preserved Tomba della Montagnola, it too with a false cupola, dating from the 7th century B.C. Another surprising discovery awaits us in an out-of-the-way place, on **Monte Falterona**, where the **Arno** has its source.

On the muddy banks of a little lake, now called **Lago degli Idoli**, some **650 bronze votive statuettes** from the Etruscan age came to light. This was a sensational discovery at the time, but Grand Duke Leopoldo II was uninterested in buying the statuettes, which were dispersed everywhere, to the Louvre in Paris, the British Museum in London, the Hermitage in St. Petersburg and even the National Gallery in Baltimore. The artistic heritage of the region, spread throughout the world with these ancient bronze statuettes, conveys the message of how much beauty and history are always to be found in Tuscany.

Fortunately, recent excavations have brought to light still more bronze statuettes, on display at the **Museo Archeologico del Casentino in Bibbiena**.



Above and at top, two Etruscan bronze statuettes coming from the Lago degli Idoli.

[arcamuseocasentino.it](http://arcamuseocasentino.it)

Our journey to discover this ancient civilisation ends here, but it is only the beginning for anyone who wants to follow the tracks of the **Etruscans**. Every corner of Tuscany, in fact, conserves more or less evident traces of this people, in a museum, a private collection, a building, a belt of walls or a necropolis hidden among the olive groves.

# - MAP -

## Roman places



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1 MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO NAZIONALE DI FIRENZE [FLORENCE NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM]</p> <p>2 MUSEO DI PALAZZO VECCHIO E LOGGIA DELLA SIGNORIA (O DEI LANZI). FIRENZE [MUSEUM OF PALAZZO VECCHIO AND LOGGIA DELLA SIGNORIA (OR DEI LANZI), FLORENCE]</p> <p>3 GALLERIA DEGLI UFFIZI, FIRENZE [GALLERY OF THE UFFIZI, FLORENCE]</p> <p>4 ANTIQUARIUM DI VILLA CORSINI A CASTELLO [ANTIQUARIUM OF VILLA CORSINI AT CASTELLO]</p> <p>5 COMPLESSO MUSEALE E ARCHEOLOGICO DELLA CATTEDRALE DI LUCCA [MUSEUM AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREA OF THE LUCCA CATHEDRAL]</p> <p>6 MUSEO NAZIONALE DI VILLA GUINIGI, LUCCA [VILLA GUINIGI NATIONAL MUSEUM, LUCCA]</p> <p>7 PIAZZA DELL'ANFITEATRO A LUCCA [PIAZZA DELL'ANFITEATRO, LUCCA]</p> <p>8 MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO NAZIONALE "GAIO CILNIO MECENATE", AREZZO [NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM "GAIO CILNIO MECENATE", AREZZO]</p> <p>9 SOTTOSAGRATO DI SAN FRANCESCO E PALAZZO LAMBARDI, AREZZO [SOTTOSAGRATO OF SAN FRANCESCO AND PALAZZO LAMBARDI, AREZZO]</p> <p>10 VILLA DELL'ORATORIO A LIMITE SULL'ARNO [VILLA DELL'ORATORIO AT LIMITE SULL'ARNO]</p> <p>11 AREA ARCHEOLOGICA E MUSEO CIVICO ARCHEOLOGICO DI FIESOLE [FIESOLE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL CIVIC MUSEUM]</p> <p>12 AREA ARCHEOLOGICA DI VALLEBUONA, VOLTERRA [VALLEBUONA ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE, VOLTERRA]</p> | <p>13 VILLA DEL VERGIGNO, MONTELUPO FIORENTINO [VILLA DEL VERGIGNO, MONTELUPO FIORENTINO]</p> <p>14 VILLA DEI VENULEI AL LAGO DI MASSACIUCCOLI [VILLA DEI VENULEI AT LAKE MASSACIUCCOLI]</p> <p>15 CAMPOSANTO MONUMENTALE A PISA [MONUMENTAL CEMETERY, PISA]</p> <p>16 BAGNI DI NERONE A PISA [BAGNI DI NERO, PISA]</p> <p>17 MUSEO DELLE NAVI ANTICHE DI PISA [MUSEUM OF THE ANCIENT SHIPS, PISA]</p> <p>18 AREA ARCHEOLOGICA DI CASTELSECCO-SAN CORNELIO [CASTELSECCO-SAN CORNELIO ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE]</p> <p>19 AREA ARCHEOLOGICA DI ROSELLE [ROSELLE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE]</p> <p>20 MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO E DARTE DELLA MAREMMA, GROSSETO [MAREMMA MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND ART, GROSSETO]</p> <p>21 AREA ARCHEOLOGICA E MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO NAZIONALE DI COSA [COSA ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE AND NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM]</p> <p>22 VILLA SETTEFINESTRE, ANSEDONIA</p> <p>23 VILLA DELLE COLONNE, CAPALBIO</p> <p>24 VILLA DELLE GROTTE, ISOLA DELBA [ISLAND OF ELBA]</p> <p>25 VILLA DELLA LINGUELLA, ISOLA DELBA [ISLAND OF ELBA]</p> <p>26 BAGNI DI AGRIPPA A PIANOSA [BAGNI DI AGRIPPA ON PIANOSA]</p> <p>27 CATAcombe DI PIANOSA [PIANOSA CATACOMBS]</p> |
|---|--|

# - TIME LINE -



ROMULUS FOUNDS ROME AND BECOMES ITS FIRST KING. THIS IS THE MONARCHIC AGE

735 B.C.



TARQUIN THE SUPERB IS EXILED. REPUBLICAN ROME IS FOUNDED

509 B.C.



OCTAVIAN AUGUSTUS BECOMES THE FIRST EMPEROR. ROME BECOMES AN EMPIRE.

27 B.C.



FALL OF THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE

476 A.D.



## ON THE TRACES OF THE CAESARS

The thought of **Florence**, for most people, brings to mind Santa Maria del Fiore and Ponte Vecchio, Piazza della Signoria and the Basilica of Santa Croce. And yet beneath the Medieval and Renaissance city known to all lies a more ancient one that is just as fascinating – it is the Roman **Florentia** – whose remains can be found not only in museums but also in the city's streets and squares. Although these traces may be well concealed, suffocated by stone and the passage of time, they are all are treasures waiting to be discovered.

**Piazza della Repubblica**, thronged with people, sounds and colours, is the heart of **Florence**. According to tradition, it is on this site – now ringed with elegant cafes – that the city was founded as a Roman colony in 59 B.C., on the basis of the *lex Iulia*, the agrarian law that let **Caesar** assign farmland to veterans of the wars. And as often happened with Roman colonies, from that little village of soldiers, a city grew up. Its great expansion occurred however in the 2nd century A.D. with the rebuilding of the **Hadrianic age**. On the site of today's Piazza della Repubblica was the **forum**, the crossroads of the city's main streets, the *cardo maximus* (today's Via Roma



Above, an intaglio with the image of Hadrian, from the Museo Archeologico di Firenze. Top, the Roman Lion in the Loggia dei Lanzi.

and Via Calimala) and the *decumanus maximus* (today's Via del Corso and Via Strozzi). The forum was the economic, political and religious centre of the city. Here stood the **temple of Jupiter Capitolinus**, now lost, although some of its marble column capitals can be seen in the church of **San Miniato al Monte**, overlooking Florence. And here was the **public well**, where the citizens came to get water, which remained in use up to the early Middle Ages. But where are the traces of Roman Florentia? Some lie buried beneath the modern city, such as the **amphitheatre** that stood near **Piazza Santa Croce**. Only its shape has remained, an ellipse that can be followed along Via Torta, Via de' Bentacordi and Piazza dei Peruzzi. Other traces, instead, are still visible, such as the **theatre** from the 1st-2nd century A.D that has come to light beneath the city's most important building, **Palazzo Vecchio**; part of the orchestra, the entrance corridor and the passages under the tiers of seats are open to visitors. With a diameter of about 100 meters, the theatre is estimated to have held up to 10,000 people, showing how big the city had become by then.



Above, outstanding among the Roman marble statues in the Tribuna degli Uffizi is the Medici Venus, dating from the 1st century B.C. Top, Piazza della Repubblica is the ancient Roman forum of Florentia.

## MARBLE AND STATUES

If you like Roman statues, don't forget to visit the **Tribuna degli Uffizi**, designed by Bernardo Buontalenti, and the **Antiquarium di Villa Corsini a Castello**, north of Florence, where many Roman artworks that had been stored for years at the Museo Nazionale Archeologico and in the Uffizi are now displayed.

[piccoligrandimusei.it](http://piccoligrandimusei.it)



In the Cortile dei Fiorentini, at the Museo Archeologico di Firenze, relics from Roman times are displayed.

In Florence, however, it is not buildings alone that recall the Roman age. In **Piazza della Signoria**, under the **Loggia dei Lanzi**, alongside the Renaissance masterpieces of Giambologna and Cellini, are the ancient statues of Patroclos and Menelaos – from the Flavian age – and the figures of women standing against the back wall, all coming

from excavations in Rome. Other fine examples of Roman statuary are found in the **Galleria degli Uffizi**. They are the marble works collected by the Medici, most notably the Medici Venus, the Wrestlers group and the Spear Bearer by Polyklitus, as well as the famous marble Wild Boar donated by Pope Pius IV to Cosimo I de' Medici, whose replica in bronze, called the Porcellino, is found at the **Loggia del Mercato Nuovo**. In conclusion, a visit to the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** is indispensable, to see the Roman cameos and bronzes collected by the Medici and Lorraine families, as well as the extraordinary Cortile dei Fiorentini, containing Roman architectural remains discovered in late 19th-century excavations; and for the chance to see the museum's masterpieces of Etruscan art, such as the Orator and the Chimera of Arezzo.

[museicivicifiorentini.comune.fi.it](http://museicivicifiorentini.comune.fi.it) – [uffizi.it](http://uffizi.it)  
[museoarcheologicoconazionaledifirenze.wordpress.com](http://museoarcheologicoconazionaledifirenze.wordpress.com)

## SEARCHING FOR THE LOST AMPHITHEATRE

**Lucca** welcomes us, surrounded by its splendid 16th-17th century walls. As was the case with Florence, this Roman city grew up from a colony – founded in 180 B.C. – and the ancient forum is still today one of the main squares: **Piazza San**



The Idolino of Pesaro, a bronze statue from the 1st century B.C., at the Museo Archeologico di Firenze.

**Michele**. But we must go on to **Piazza San Martino** to see relics of the Roman era, in the **Complesso Museale e Archeologico della Cattedrale** with the early Christian church of Santa Reparata built in the 4th century A.D. Inside it, around the Baptistery, are the remains of the floor of a *domus* from the 1st century A.D. Other fascinating places

are the **Chiesa di Santa Maria della Rosa**, containing a well-preserved section of the ancient Roman walls, and the **Museo Nazionale di Villa Guinigi**, with architectural fragments and ceramics coming from the territory. But the symbol of Lucca is **Piazza dell'Anfiteatro**. Dating from the 1st-2nd century A.D., this ancient amphitheatre had the classic elliptical shape and could hold nearly 10,000 spectators. With the fall of the Western Empire, the amphitheatre became a quarry of building materials; anyone could take all the stones



he wanted, until houses were built on the ruins, following the shape of the ancient structure. The layout of the piazza today is the work of the architect Nottolini, who had some of the buildings inside it demolished in the mid-19th century, clearly revealing the shape of the ancient amphitheatre and creating one of the world's most unusual public squares.

[museocattedralelucca.it](http://museocattedralelucca.it) - [luccamuseinazionali.it](http://luccamuseinazionali.it)

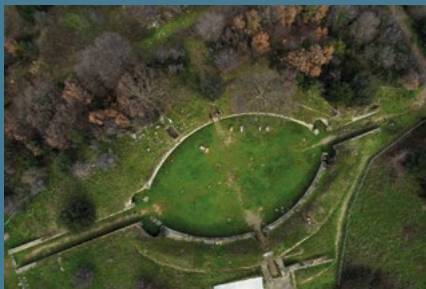


Above: Piazza dell'anfiteatro in Lucca. Left: the Ancient Civilisations Room at the Museo di Villa Guinigi.

## GLADIATORS AND FEROCIOUS ANIMALS

Every big Roman city had an amphitheatre where **public spectacles** were held: fights between gladiators and the terrible venationes, encounters with ferocious, exotic beasts: lions, crocodiles, tigers, bears, even hippopotamus and seals! In Tuscany, some Roman amphitheatres are still clearly recognisable, like the ones at **Roselle** and **Arezzo**.

Others instead have been reutilised or demolished, their stones carried off to construct new buildings. Two of the strangest examples of **lost amphitheatres** - which are however still clearly evident - are the one in **Florence**, whose oval shape is replicated in the curving streets between Piazza Santa Croce and Piazza San Firenze, and the one in **Lucca**, whose shape survives in the centrally located **Piazza dell'Anfiteatro**.



The Roman amphitheatre in the archaeological zone of Roselle. Below: the remains of the amphitheatre in Arezzo.

A Roman amphitheatre is still visible today in **Arezzo**, an ancient Etruscan city conquered by the Romans in 295 B.C. that became a military outpost of Rome against the northern populations. Here we find the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale "Gaio Cilnio Mecenate"**, housed in the 16th-century Monastery of San Bernardo. Built on the ruins of a **Roman amphitheatre** from the 1st century A.D., this building imbued with history possesses a remarkable collection of ceramic, mosaic and sculptural art. The ancient Arretium is recalled in the sources for its great military aid to Rome, and as the birthplace of Gaius Cilnius Maecenas, a supporter of Emperor Octavian and head of a famous circle of intellectuals that included Vergil and Horace. Without forgetting the famous Arretina Vasa, the typical coral-coloured tableware, decorated in relief, invented and produced right here in Arezzo from the 1st century B.C.; the workshops have been found at various



places in the city. It was brought all over the known world by the Roman legions, and some fragments of Arretine ware have even been found in India! The city abounds in relics from Roman times, but two sites in particular deserve a visit. The first is the Archaeological Area of the **Sottosagrato di San Francesco**, where ancient walls and a domus lavishly decorated with mosaics and marble have been found. The second is the mosaic unearthed at **Palazzo Lambardi**, called "little sea", whose many subjects range from aquatic birds to dolphins.

[museistataliarezzo.it](http://museistataliarezzo.it) - [comune.arezzo.it](http://comune.arezzo.it)

## ROMAN MOSAICS

The Romans decorated public and private buildings with mosaics, whose brightly coloured tesserae were made of various materials: marble, travertine, basalt and glass paste. Some of the most beautiful in Tuscany are found in the Domus dei Mosaici at Roselle, in the Villa delle Grotte on Elba, and in Arezzo, at the Sottosagrato di San Francesco and at Palazzo Lambardi. Noteworthy mosaics have also been recently unearthed in the Villa dell'Oratorio at Limite sull'Arno, near Florence. They depict animals along with geometric and plant motifs, in a great aristocratic villa that probably belonged to Vettius Agorius Paetextatus, who was Governor of Tuscia and Umbria in the 4th century A.D.



Roman mosaic with Triton and Nereid, displayed at the Museo Guinigi in Lucca. Above: an Arretine vase.

## ROMAN THEATRES

In **Fiesole**, nestled between the hills of San Francesco and Sant'Apollinare, we can admire a splendid landscape and the remains of the city's ancient past. Following the **Cyclopean walls** built of squared blocks, erected in Etruscan times but utilised in the following centuries as well, we enter the **archaeological zone** not far from the central Piazza Mino. It conserves many relics of the Roman age, including a **theatre** still in use today, built along the side of a natural slope. Amazingly, this structure continues to be utilised, after so many

centuries, for its original purpose, and people sitting in it today can admire the same panorama as those who – 2000 years ago! – sat on these same tiers of seats. Further down we find the **baths** datable to the 1st century B.C. with chambers for hot and cold water, swimming pools and a steam-production system, as well as the remains of a **temple** probably dedicated to Minerva, built over an ancient Etruscan religious site. Our visit can conclude at the **Museo Civico Archeologico**, which sends us on a real journey back in time, from the Etruscan age to the time of the Lombards, who settled in Fiesole.



The archaeological zone in Fiesole contains the ruins of thermal baths (above) and an theatre (below) still used today for performances.

.....  
[museidifiesole.it](http://museidifiesole.it)  
 .....

## TO BE OR NOT TO BE?

In ancient times the theatre, both comedy and tragedy, was greatly beloved by the public. And certainly just as much by the Romans as by the Greeks, considering that the works of Plautus and Terentius are still studied and performed today! In Tuscany, if you want to sit in an original *auditorium* – the part of the theatre assigned to the spectators, while the stage is called the *orchestra* – you can visit the theatre in **Fiesole** or the one in **Volterra**, which could hold nearly 2000 spectators. Both of them are still used today for events of various kinds.



## EXPLORING VILLAS

**Montelupo Fiorentino**, situated on the banks of the Arno River, is a town famous for its production of ceramics. This tradition has lasted unbroken since Renaissance times when, in the 15th century, it was the majolica production centre for Florence. In the nearby Pulica locality is the **Roman Villa of Vergigno**, an estate dating from the 1st century B.C. that reached its maximum splendour in the 2nd and 3rd century A.D. In addition to its residential quarters and agricultural buildings, a **kiln** has been found, where bricks and amphorae were fired, then left to dry in the nearby drying chamber. Another villa from Roman times open to visitors is found near **Lago di Massaciuccoli**, a lake – now a nature reserve – famous for its hundreds of species of birds. On the slopes of Monte Aquilata are the ruins of the **Villa dei Venulei** dating from the 1st century A.D., where you can see the ruins of the villa with its thermal system and visit an antiquarium displaying the remains of splendid mosaics. For children, there are workshops and educational itineraries.

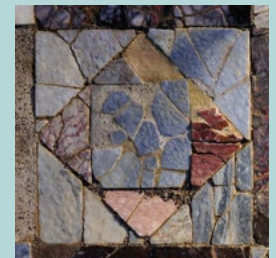


The Roman Villa dei Venulei. In the vicinity of Lake Massaciuccoli.

.....  
[museomontelupo.it](http://museomontelupo.it) - [www.comune.massarosa.lu.gov.it](http://www.comune.massarosa.lu.gov.it)  
 .....

## TRY IT YOURSELF!

Want to make a mosaic? You will need some sheets of paper in different colours, a pair of scissors, a stick of glue, a pencil and a sheet of stiff cardboard. First of all, make the tesserae by cutting the coloured paper into little pieces. Then draw whatever image you want on the sheet of cardboard. It can be either realistic, such as a piece of fruit or an animal, or geometric, like a series of triangles and squares. Now glue the little coloured pieces onto the drawing following the outlines of the drawing, and here is your Roman mosaic!



Detail of a Roman mosaic from the Domus dei Mosaici at Roselle.

## ANCIENT SHIPS

In **Pisa** the traces of Roman times lead us to the **Camposanto monumentale** in Piazza del Duomo, containing marble sculptures and sarcophaguses, and to the **Bagni di Nerone** near Porta Lucca, thermal baths from the 1st century A.D. that belonged to the Venuleii family, the same aristocratic gens that owned the villa in the vicinity of Lake Massaciuccoli. But Pisa has also been the scene of one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of recent years: the **ancient Roman ships**.



Above. one of the Roman ships found in Pisa. Below. votive offering coming from Castelsecco.

The first of these Roman ships that sank in antiquity was found in 1998, during work on the Pisa San Rossore railway station, at the point where a canal in the centuriation ran into the Serchio River. After this, some **30 ships** dating from the 3rd century B.C. to the 7th century A.D. have been found, not only perfectly preserved due to a total lack of oxygen, but also still loaded with all their cargo: coins, amphorae and jewellery, in addition to everyday objects used by the sailors during navigation, such as ropes, wicker baskets, leather objects and corks for the amphorae. A real treasure chest of archaeology to be discovered by children and adults thanks to a guided itinerary.

[navipisa.it](http://navipisa.it)

## A HIDDEN TREASURE

Not far from Arezzo is the archaeological zone of **Castelsecco-San Cornelio**, from where a splendid panorama opens out. On this height, where an Etruscan temple already stood, an imposing dry-stone wall was built in the late Hellenistic age. It served to sustain a great building used for religious rites, as shown by the altar found in the orchestra and the many votive offerings unearthed.



## DIVING INTO THE PAST

In southern Tuscany there is a place where you can take a walk on original Roman roads and admire the many ruins that are left. This is the archaeological zone of **Roselle**, a member of the ancient Etruscan league – the **dodecapolis** – and then, after the Roman conquest, an important city in the Empire. Strolling through the ancient streets of Roselle



Above. view of the Roselle archaeological zone and below. the ruins of the Basilica dei Bassi.

is an extraordinary experience for everyone, both children and adults. It is a real **voyage back in time** through layers of history that slowly built up one above another; from traces of the Villanovan Age to the maximum splendour of Etruscan times, from the Romanising of the city to its decadence in the Middle Ages, up to its abandonment in the 16th century, which crystallised the traces of the various cultures and societies. The archaeological area greets us with its spectacular **Cyclopean walls** – built by the Etruscans in the 6th century B.C. over an even older belt of walls from the 7th century – encircling the whole area for an extent of 3270 meters. Strangely enough, the walls and the amphitheatre are the only structures that have never been buried over the centuries, arousing the admiration of travellers in the 19th century, who



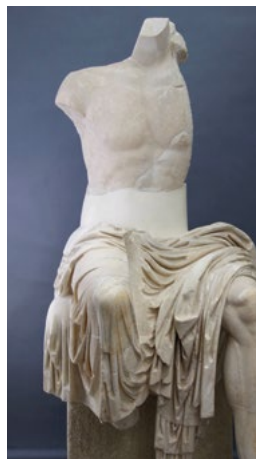
struggled through thick vegetation purposely to see them. To reach the ancient city of Roselle visitors today must pass – just as in antiquity! – through one of the seven original gates and then turn onto the **decumanus**, which leads to the forum. Along this ancient street, the furrows dug out by wagon



Statue of Livia (above) and of Augustus (below). from the Roselle area. now at the Museo Archeologico di Grosseto.

wheels can still be seen. Still on this street we find the **ancient baths**, an important meeting place in the Roman city, with an early Christian church that was built over them in the following centuries. Continuing along the decumanus, past the **tabernae**, the ancient shops, we arrive at the city's centre, the **forum**, crossroads of the decumanus and the **cardo**, and site of the **basilica**, the great edifice that housed the law court. From here we can continue to explore the area, turning into the **cardo maximus** to find other buildings unearthed during excavations, such as the **Domus degli Augustales**, dedicated to the cult of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, from which come two colossal statues of the Emperor

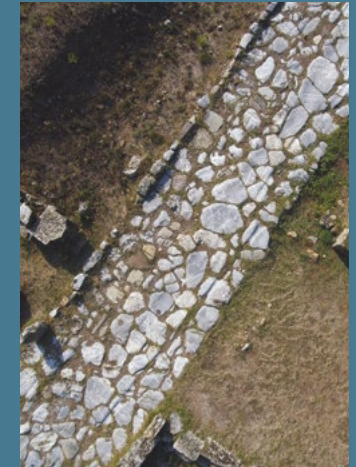
Claudius and the Empress Livia, the wife of Octavian Augustus; and the **Domus dei Mosaici**, a typical Roman house with a central atrium and an impluvium, a basin for collecting rainwater. Continuing northward we find the **basilica of the Bassi** and one of the most fascinating places in the whole city: the **amphitheatre**, dating from the 1st century A.D. This imposing building was covered by a **velarium**, a kind of movable curtain to protect the public from sun and rain – whose stone bases can still be seen. The archaeological area is fascinating not only for its extraordinary Roman and Etruscan ruins – such as the house with an impluvium and the building surrounded by a precinct, probably a temple – but also for the striking naturalist beauty of its setting. The itinerary can then extend as far as **Grosseto**, with a visit to the **Museo archeologico e d'arte della Maremma**. Here, alongside ceramics and grave goods from the various necropolises in the territory, the most important Etruscan and Roman finds from Roselle are displayed, including the colossal statues coming from the Domus degli Augustales.



[archeotoscana.wordpress.com](http://archeotoscana.wordpress.com) - [maam.comune.grosseto.it](http://maam.comune.grosseto.it)

## CARDO AND DECUMANUS

When the ancient Romans founded a colony, they traced two perpendicular axes, a kind of cross with the forum at the centre, site of the major civic and religious buildings. In this layout, already used for the *castra*, the military camps, the two main streets – with the secondary streets branching off of them – were called the **cardo maximus**, running north-south, and the **decumanus maximum** – running east-west. All of the cities founded by the Romans were laid out like this, and in many cases we still follow their course today without realising it, since they are frequently the best known, most crowded streets of the city, as in Florence, Lucca, Pistoia and Arezzo.



Section of an ancient Roman street in the Roselle archaeological zone.

In the Province of Grosseto is another fascinating archaeological area. It is the city of **Cosa**, overlooking the sea on the Argentario promontory, founded by the Romans to control the territory after their victory over Vulci in 280 B.C. Its hilltop position is strategic, and the view from the archaeological zone is magnificent. Here we find a fortified citadel with the ruins of a temple, while lower down are the remains of the forum with its buildings. In this area is the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale**, which displays many objects found here. Along the coast instead, near Ansedonia, is the *portus cosanus*, the port of Cosa, now buried. Here we find the **Spacco della Regina**, used to regulate the flow of



One of the gates of the ancient city of Cosa.

Here we find the **Spacco della Regina**, used to regulate the flow of



water in the lagoon. It is a natural split in the rock, where some bulkheads were installed. This hydraulic system was then replaced by the so-called **Tagliata**, a canal no less than 80 metres long. In the vicinity of Cosa the remains of Roman villas have been discovered, such as the **Villa Settefinestre e delle Colonne**, showing that many wealthy aristocratic families chose to build their country homes in these splendid places.

.....  
[archeotoscana.beniculturali.it](http://archeotoscana.beniculturali.it)  
 .....



Above: the Tagliata Etrusca, a hydraulic system built by the Romans on the promontory of Ansedonia. Below: the remains of the Roman Villa delle Grotte, on the Island of Elba.

## MARE NOSTRUM. "OUR SEA"

This is how the ancient Romans called the Mediterranean, and many traces of that distant past can be found in the Tuscan archipelago. On the **Island of Elba**, clearly visible when arriving by sea, are the ruins of the **Villa delle Grotte** not far from Portoferraio. Inhabited from the 1st century B.C. to the 1st century A.D., it was an opulent residence adorned with marble and mosaics, with three spacious gardens, one of them overlooking the panoramic seaside, where the great poet Ovid is said to have strolled. Another Roman residence open to the public is **Villa della Linguella**, on the Gulf of Portoferraio, it too dating from the 1st century B.C. After

having been abandoned in the Middle Ages the building, unlike Villa delle Grotte, was encapsulated in the **Torre del Martello**, a part of the Medicean Fortress. We disembark on **Pianosa**, another island in the archipelago, whose name comes from the Latin *planasia*, meaning flat. And this island is really flat. The highest point is only 29 metres above sea



level. Here the Emperor Augustus held his nephew Agrippa Postumo, the son of his sister Julia, in luxurious confinement. Of the great villa built purposely for that enforced sojourn there remains only the maritime part, called **Bagni di Agrippa**. Remaining from this great building complex are the ruins of a theatre, a thermal system, some reception rooms and basins for raising fish, one of which contained artificial islands and was surrounded by a peristyle. On Pianosa we also find **catacombs** dug out of a rocky bank, datable between the 4th and the 6th century A.D., bearing exceptional testimony to Christian origins. The dense network of tunnels, with 700 burial places, 500 loculi and 200 underground passages, is one of the most complex catacombs ever found north of Rome.

.....  
[infoelba.it](http://infoelba.it)  
 .....



The goods most often transported by Roman ships were amphorae filled with wine, olive oil and garum (a kind of fish sauce). Above: an amphora found in Pisa.

Although this journey to discover Roman-age Tuscany has reached its end, there are many other treasures from Roman times in the region. Let's take a last look at the islands in the archipelago, with their striking beauty. On the **Island of Gorgona** we find the **Villa dei Limiti**, filled with mosaics and wall paintings, whose remains have been encapsulated in later buildings. On the **Island of Capraia**, along the road leading from the port to the castle, we can see the ruins of a villa from the imperial age, rebuilt and inhabited in later centuries by Christian monks. On the **Island of Giglio**, at Giglio Porto, are the remains of a great villa built on the coastal rocks in the Bagno di Saraceno locality, with pools for raising fish. And on the **Island of Giannutri**, at Cala Maestra, we can recognise the ruins of an ancient Roman port with the wharf and a big warehouse for the many goods that passed from here. And it is from that ancient Roman port, overlooking the blue waters of the Tyrrhenian Sea, that we set sail for the mainland.

Editorial project: **Libri progetti educativi and Toscana Promozione Turistica**

Editor: **M. Cristina Zannoner**

Editorial coordination: **Roberta Masselli**

Texts: **Fabio Leocata**

Translation: **Catherine Frost**

Graphics and pagination: **Tommaso Vignoli**

Technical Department: **Michele Andreuccetti**

Photographs: © Archivio Libri progetti educativi; © Giunti Editore; © Alles/Pixabay, p. 1 (above); © Wolferl/Pixabay, p. 1 (below); © Archivio Museo Civico per la Preistoria del Monte Cetona, pp. 4 (above), 15, 20; © Museo e Istituto Fiorentino di Preistoria, pp. 4 (below), 14 (below), 21, 22; © Emiliano Burzagli/Wikimedia Commons, p. 5 (above); © Comune di Fivizzano, p. 5 (below); © AlterEco Soc. Coop., p. 6; © Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per le province di Lucca e Massa Carrara, autore Paolo Nannini, p. 7 (above); © Museo di Storia Naturale dell'Università di Firenze - Sezione di Geologia e Paleontologia, p. 7 (below left); © Massimo Pasquali, p. 7 (below right); © Museo Paleontologico di Montevarchi, p. 8; © Civico Museo Archeologico di Camaiore, p. 9 (below left); © Museo di Storia Naturale, Università di Pisa, pp. 9 (below right), 18 (below), 19; © Angelo Ghiretti, Museo delle Statue Stele Lunigianesi, Pontremoli, pp. 10 (below), 11; © Fæ/Wikimedia Commons, p. 12 (below); © Sailko/Wikimedia Commons, pp. 13, 54 (below), 55 (above), 56, 61 (below), on the cover; © Centro Documentazione Archeologica Sant'Agata, Scarperia, pp. 14 (above), 16; © SfmMarit/Wikimedia Commons, p. 17 (below); © Joakant/Pixabay, p. 23 (above); © Franco De Simone - infoelba.it, p. 23 (below); © Museo Civico Archeologico delle Acque di Chianciano Terme, pp. 26 (above), 34, 39, 40 (below), 41 (left); © Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio delle province di Siena, Grosseto e Arezzo, autore Paolo Nannini, pp. 26 (below), 27 (above and below), 30 (above), 37 (above), 38 (below left), 43 (above), 54 (above), 57 (below), 59, 61 (above); © Gabriele Delhey/Wikimedia Commons, pp. 27, 29 (below); © Archivio Museo Civico Archeologico Isidoro Falchi, Vetulonia, p. 28 (above); © su concessione del Polo Museale della Toscana - Museo Archeologico di Firenze, pp. 29 (above), 38 (below right), 50 (below), 52, in the cover; © Tulumnes/Wikimedia Commons, p. 30 (below); © Parchi Val di Cornia SpA, pp. 32 (below), 35, 36 (above); © Museo Archeologico del Casentino "Piero Albertoni", Bibbiena, pp. 36 (below), 47 (above right, below); © Gruppo Archeologico "L'Offerente", pp. 37 (below), 45 (below), 46; © Archivio Fotografico Fondazione Peccioliiper, p. 41 (right); © MAEC, Museo dell'Accademia Etrusca e della Città di Cortona, p. 42; © Matteo Tani/Wikimedia Commons, p. 47 (above left); © Dezalb/Pixabay, p. 50 (above); © Waldo93/Pixabay, p. 51 (above); © Paolo Villa/Wikimedia Commons, p. 51 (below); © SaverioGiusti/Pixabay, p. 53 (above); © su concessione del Polo Museale della Toscana - Firenze, pp. 53 (below), 55 (below); © Ionelamaria/Wikimedia Commons, p. 57 (above); © Museo delle Navi antiche di Pisa, pp. 58 (above), 63; © Archivio fotografico MAAM, Grosseto, p. 60; © Sintakso/Wikimedia Commons, p. 62 (below). The publisher is willing to settle any amounts due for images whose source has not been determined.

© 2017 Toscana Promozione Turistica



[www.visittuscany.com](http://www.visittuscany.com)



CM69353P



Regione Toscana



**TOSCANA**  
PROMOZIONE TURISTICA