

Prato and Montemurlo

Tuscany that points to the future

www.pratoturismo.it

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visittuscany



Prato and Montemurlo

Prato and **Montemurlo** one after the other, lying on a teeming and busy plain, surrounded by mountains and hills in the heart of Tuscany, united by a common destiny that has made them famous worldwide for the production of precious and innovative fabrics, offer historical, artistic and landscape attractions of great importance. Going to these territories means making a real journey through time, through artistic itineraries to

discover treasures of the Etruscan era, passing through the Middle Ages and reaching the contemporary age. Their geographical position is strategic for visiting a large part of Tuscany; a few kilometers away you can find Unesco heritage sites (the two Medici Villas of Poggio a Caiano and Artimino), protected areas and cities of art among the most famous in the world, such as Florence, Lucca, Pisa and Siena.



A photograph of a modern building with a golden, ribbed, curved facade. The building features a white, arched entrance and a glass-fronted section. The sky is blue with some light clouds. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Prato
contemporary
city between
tradition
and innovation



It is the second city in Tuscany and the third in central Italy for number of inhabitants, it is a contemporary city capable of combining tradition and innovation in a synthesis that is always at the forefront, it is a real open-air laboratory. Whoever wants to have a vision of the future must look for it in Prato! Prato is the textile city par excellence, here creativity has found full inspiration in art and the most evident expression of this incredible

combination is in two highly representative museums of the city: the Textile Museum and the Luigi Pecchi Center for Contemporary Art. The city has written its history on the art of reuse, wool regenerated from rags has produced wealth, style, fashion; the art of reuse has entered its DNA and today, together with Milan and Bari, it has become a “City for circularity”. It is the city that redesigns itself through innovative solutions such as the Urban Jungle project, a real green revolution!



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rato is also history, art and tradition, with a historic center that will be a pleasant and unexpected surprise for everyone, starting with the imposing *Emperor's Castle*: the only testimony of Swabian architecture in central-northern Italy which, together with the *Basilica of Santa Maria delle Carceri*, dominates the beautiful Piazza delle Carceri, where the apse of the *Church of San Francesco* also faces. In Piazza del Comune, caressed from above by the loving gaze of its most famous merchant - Francesco di Marco Datini (1335 - 1410), is the *Palazzo Pretorio*, which in its imposing elegance houses the civic museum where you can admire masterpieces by Donatello, Filippo and Filippino

Lippi, Bernardo Daddi and Giovanni da Milano. Walking a few meters you arrive in the beautiful Piazza Duomo where the *Cathedral of Santo Stefano* is located, on whose façade stands the pulpit by Donatello and Michelozzo, while inside the splendid frescoes by Filippo Lippi are kept. From the Pulpit on the 8th of September, the Sacred Belt of the Madonna is shown to the citizens: a relic to which the people of Prato are particularly devoted. Next to the Cathedral, the *Cathedral Museum* where works by great artists such as Filippo Lippi, Donatello, Michelozzo and many others are kept. Do not miss the *Textile Museum*, located in the Former Campolmi Factory, a nineteenth-century production complex, an admirable testimony of industrial archeology.



The sacred Belt between history and legend

The story of the Belt of the Madonna, kept in the Cathedral of Prato, is a fascinating intertwining of truths and popular beliefs. According to tradition, it was delivered by the Madonna to San Tommaso and, after several passages, to the Prato merchant Michele Dagomari who, on his death, gave it to the head of the parish church of Santo Stefano. It is said that its miraculous fame inspired legendary thefts such as the most famous one of Giovanni di ser Landetto, known as Musciattino, who stole the relic in 1312 but was lost in the fog, which suddenly fell in defense of the relic.

Instead of arriving at the door of Pistoia, wandering around in the fog he had returned to that of Prato, where he shouted: “Opento to me, open to me Pistoia people: I have the Belt of the Prato people!”. He was thus captured and condemned to be cut off his right hand, which according to popular tradition, was thrown by the angry crowd on the facade of the church where an imprint still visible today remained. The story of the belt is told in a fascinating succession of images: from Bernardo Daddi, in the predella of the Palazzo Pretorio Museum to Agnolo Gaddi in the frescoes in the Chapel of the Belt in the Cathedral. The Sacred Belt is shown to the public five times a year: at Christmas, at Easter, the 1st of May, the 15th of August and at the end of the Historical Parade on the 8th of September.

Discovering contemporary art



The itinerary can only start from the Pecci Center in Prato, the first in Italy to be built specifically to host and promote the international artistic avant-gardes. Built in 1988 on a project by the rationalist architect Italo Gamberini, it has been completely renovated on the futuristic project of the architect Maurice Nio. Today it has a collection of one thousand works by three hundred artists, including Mimmo Paladino, Mauro Staccioli, Jan Fabre, Lucio Fontana, Michelangelo Pistoletto. But contemporary art does not end in the museum because everywhere, in the city, as in the rest of the province, we find installations and testimonies of contemporary authors of absolute artistic value such as the famous Square shape with cut by Henry Moore, which has become the symbol of the city, the Exegi monumentum aere perennius by Anne and Patrick Poirier, the Mazzocchio by Ben Jacober and Yannik Vu, Waterbones Climbing in Transition State by Loris Cecchini, the Great Dreamer by Fabrizio Corneli, Prometheus Strangling the Vulture II by Jacques Lipchitz, The missing link in the chain that is not there by Marco Bagnoli and many others and in Montemurlo: the Time Machine, the Door of Memory, the Chapel of Light and the Factories of Art garden.

**Prato
and its
museums**



**Palazzo Pretorio
Museum**



**Textile
Museum**



**Cathedral
Museum**



**Lugli Pecci Center for
Contemporary Art**



**Datini
Palace**



**Museum
of Deportation**



**Leonetto Tintori
House/Museum**



**Planetary
Science Museum**



Montemurlo

Montemurlo is part of the Prato textile district and, like Prato, it is a place in constant evolution for innovation and sustainability. The rapid process of industrialization of the city in the 1960s has urbanistically transformed the plain while the foothills and hills retain their original appearance and atmosphere. Among harmonious architectures of villas and fortresses immersed in a suggestive landscape context, Montemurlo knows how to surprise the traveler who does not suspect such a concentration of small treasures, such as the *Borgo della Rocca* where the *Fortress of Montemurlo* (14th century) stands, while in the main square of the town there is the *Parish church of San Giovanni Decollato*, which houses paintings by Francesco Granacci, Giovanni Stradano, Matteo Rosselli and Gia-

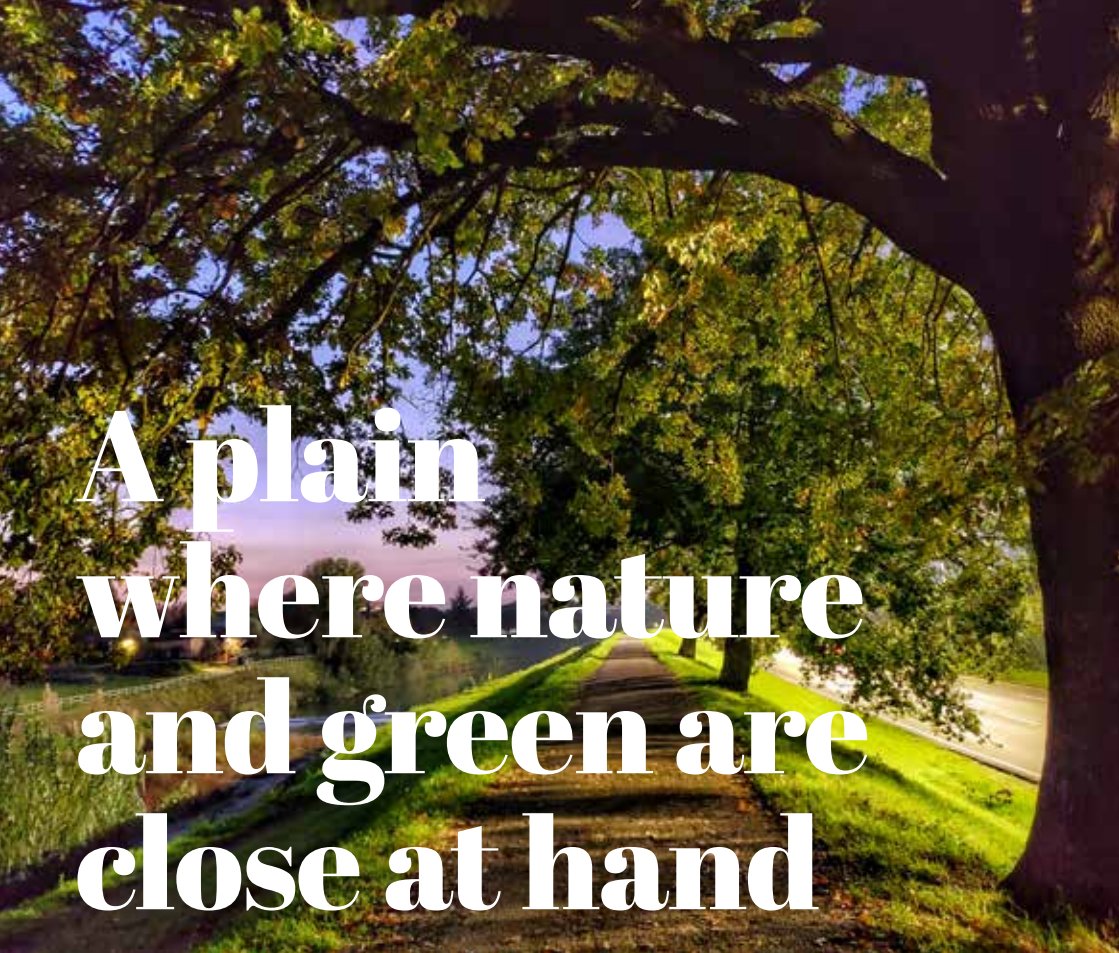
cinto Fabroni. Noteworthy are the splendid villas spread throughout the municipal area that belonged to the wealthiest Florentine families that found relief in these rich countryside: *Villa Pazzi al Parugiano*, *Villa del Barone* located on the slopes of Mount Iavello, *Villa Strozzi*, *Villa di Popolesco*, *Villa di Javello*, finally *Villa Giamari*, built in the sixteenth century, today the seat of the municipal library. Going towards Oste, inside an Italian garden, stands *Villa Scarfantoni*, built as an elegant middle-class residence at the end of the 19th century and equipped with a private chapel. Nature lovers will not fail to explore the *Protected natural area of Monteferrato* which, extending between Prato and Montemurlo, characterizes even more the vocation of green and sustainable cities of both territories, promoters of increasingly smart and green change projects.



The Battle of Montemurlo

It took place on the 2nd of August 1537 between the Florentine exiles, led by Baccio Valori and Filippo Strozzi – respectively owners of the Villa del Barone and Villa Strozzi – and the troops of Cosimo I de 'Medici. The exiles, led by Filippo Strozzi, were barricaded inside the village and the Fortress, but they could do nothing against the army of Cosimo I, formed by 10.000 soldiers. The battle also had an echo in the surrounding plain and in the neighboring villages, which were on the alert for a possible attack by Cosimo. The battle

was followed by the unification and pacification of Tuscany under the Medici. Therefore, rather than a moment of war, the Historical Parade that recalls the battle intends to celebrate an event that opened the way for the peace of this village and of the all Tuscany. The Historical Parade takes place every year on the last Sunday of June in the hamlet of Oste and it consists of several events preceding the parade: "The Renaissance day" in the Park of Villa Giamari, the Renaissance Banquet inside the Borgo della Rocca or the Tumble of circles and barrels in Piazza Don Milani in Montemurlo, where the districts of Montemurlo challenge each other in a race against time.



A plain where nature and green are close at hand

A short distance from the city center, hikers and nature lovers can explore the Calvana Mountains surrounding Prato, the Park of Galceti at the foot of Monteferrato, the Cascine Medicee, the Bisenzio river park.

The Cascine Medicee, south of Prato, are today a splendid park of about three hundred hectares. Built in the fifteenth century at the behest of Lorenzo the Magnificent, they were the agricultural estate adjacent to the Medici Villa of Poggio a Caiano.

The Park of Galceti, which covers an area of eight hectares and is surrounded by a protected area of six hundred, is the largest green area in Prato. The Center for Natural Sciences finds its ideal venue within the park. www.csn.prato.it

The protected natural area of Monteferrato, between Montemurlo and Prato, offers a unmistakable Tuscan landscape, with a hilly belt and areas with specific geological and naturalistic features, such as the ophiolitic area of Monteferrato from which was extracted *the green marble of Prato* also called *serpentine*, widely used since the Middle Ages to enrich the facades of the most be-

autiful Tuscan churches: the Baptistery of Florence, the Basilica of San Miniato al Monte, the Badia Fiesolana, the Cathedrals of Prato, Florence and Siena, the bell tower of the Florence Cathedral and many other monuments also from the Gothic period and up to the Renaissance period (Santa Maria delle Carceri in Prato, the facade of Santa Maria Novella in Florence).





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hanks to the numerous footpaths and an articulated network of cycle paths, the Prato plain connects with the Bisenzio Valley and the Medici municipalities of Poggio a Caiano and Carmignano. From Prato starts the *Via della Lana e della Seta/Wool and Silk Route*, a 130 km long hiking route with 6 stages which, crossing the Bisenzio Valley, reaches Bologna and the *Via Medicea/Medici Route*, an itinerary among the Unesco heritage villas of Poggio a Caiano, Carmignano and Cerreto Guidi, which connects the city with Fucecchio and the Via Francigena. Prato and Montemurlo are also crossed by the *Route of San Jacopo*, a religious itinerary

that enhances an ancient road route more than two thousand years old, the Via Cassia - Clodia, which connects the cities of Florence, Prato, Pistoia, Pescia and Lucca, forming a stretch of the Way to Santiago de Compostela. The Route of San Jacopo in Tuscany crosses a territory made unique by the frequency of exceptional historical, artistic, naturalistic and religious testimonies. It crosses the Protected Area of Monteferrato, climbing to the highest point of the stage (Mount Lopi) and then continuing through the countryside on the Via Baronese to the Fortress of Montemurlo. Then it crosses the Agna river on the historical bridge near the Villa di Smillea, to reach Pistoia and Lucca.



From the ancient cedars a fairytale garden is born along the Bagnolo stream

The garden was born from some trunks of old fallen cedars which, thanks to the skill of real wood artists, have taken on a new shape, becoming fairy-tale sculptures depicting gnomes, giant mushrooms,

owls, eagles, turtles and benches that recall the villages and even a miniature of the Fortress of Montemurlo. The sculptures, which peep out among the cypresses, seem to come out of fairy tales, characters that stimulate the imagination of children and evoke ancient memories in adults. The garden is open and available to those who want to take a dip in a fantastic world, perhaps enjoying, on summer evenings, the fresh air from the flowing of the Bagnolo stream.



eatPRATO and the flavors of the territory

In Prato and Montemurlo there is no shortage of gastronomic excellence and quality products, starting with the Biscuits of Prato, famous all over the world and heritage of the collective memory of the city, the Prato peaches cakes, the Prato Mortadella PGI, a Slow Food protected product, which recently has found a new and original version produced with the meat of black pigs of the “Macchiaiola” breed, a niche in the niche. Speaking of

excellence, one cannot forget the bread, indeed the Prato Bozza and all the baked goods made with Gran Prato flour, craft beers, and other excellent products of the territory such as the very original Vermouth of Prato, Carteano and Filettolo oil, Montemurlo oil which is celebrated every year during the Oil Festival which promotes one of the flagship products of the Montemurlo food industry. The event is held in the Borgo della Rocca, that is the ancient and characteristic part of Montemurlo overlooking the mo-



dern town. Another excellence of Montemurlo is the Pinot Noir produced in the Villa di Bagnolo by the Marquises Pancrazi, a very original wine born from a lucky mistake caused by an exchange of grape variety, the Pinot instead of the Sangiovese traditionally grown in those areas. Thanks to this mistake, an excellent wine is produced, so much so that, in 2020, the Pinot Nero Vigna Baragazza vintage 2015 obtained the coveted 4 vines assigned by the Italian Sommelier Association to the best wines.



www.eatprato.it

All this and the best of local food and wine and pastry are promoted with numerous activities during the eatPRATO events.

Recurring events

Chinese New Year

January/February - Prato

Libri d'Italia

from March to July - Prato

Prato Campus Week

April - Prato

Prato Marathon

April - Prato

Datini Week

May - Prato

Historical Parade

June - Montemurlo

Wheat festival

June - Montemurlo

eatPRATO

June/December - Prato

eatPRATOWalking

Spring/Autumn

Prato Estate

from June to September - Prato

Prato Abetone

July - Prato

A Spasso con l'Oste

July - Montemurlo

Settembre Prato è Spettacolo

September - Prato

Contemporanea Festival

September - Prato

Historical Parade

September - Prato

Palla Grossa

September - Prato

Montemurlo Art and Work

September - Montemurlo

Chestnut festival

October - Montemurlo

Oil festival

November - Montemurlo

Pratofestival

December-January - Prato



How to get to Prato

FOR THOSE COMING BY CAR

A1 Calenzano-Sesto Fiorentino exit
A1 connection A11 Firenze Nord
A11 Prato Est, Prato Ovest exits
SS 325 Prato-Bologna

FOR THOSE COMING BY BUS

Blue line LAM-MT from Firenze
Shuttle bus from Pisa airport

FOR THOSE COMING BY TRAIN

Bologna-Florence, Central Station
Florence-Viareggio, Central Station,
Porta al Serraglio Station
www.trenitalia.it

How to get to Montemurlo

FOR THOSE COMING BY BUS

Purple line bus from Prato

FOR THOSE COMING BY CAR

A11 Prato Ovest exit

PRATOTURISMO INFOPOINT

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Toscana



PRATOTURISMO

Prato Tourist Area includes the municipalities of:
Prato, Cantagallo, Carmignano, Montemurlo,
Poggio a Caiano, Vaiano, Vernio

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