



TUSCANY

UNIQUE VILLAGES TO LOVE

Itineraries, routes and paths among Tuscan villages rich in art, history and enogastronomy



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*Small villages certified as Borghi più belli d'Italia, Bandiere
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UNIQUE VILLAGES

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CONTENTS

14	ANGHIARI The battle and the lost painting	21	CASTELFRANCO DI SOPRA The landscape of fairies
15	BARBERINO VAL D'ELSA On the ruins of the ancient Semifonte	22	CASTELNUOVO BERARDENGA The butterfly village to visit by bicycle
16	BARGA Giuseppe Pascoli's nest	23	CASTELNUOVO VAL DI CECINA The village shaped like a pine cone
17	BUONCONVENTO The colours of terracotta and clay	24	CASTIGLIONE DI GARFAGNANA Sweet wildness
18	CASALE MARITTIMO Quietness near the Tyrrhenian Sea	25	CASTIGLION FIORENTINO Panoramas from the tower
19	CASCIANA TERME LARI Between culinary art and wellness	26	CERTALDO Boccaccio's "castle"
20	CASOLE D'ELSA The small treasure of Val d'Elsa	27	CETONA Peaceful beauty

AGES TO LOVE

28	CHIUSI Porsenna's labyrinth	47	PITIGLIANO On top of a tuff spur
29	COLLODI Pinocchio's village	48	POMARANCE The passion for theater
30	COREGLIA ANTELMINELLI Old-fashioned figurines	49	POPPI In the fabled Casentino
31	CUTIGLIANO Under the shadow of the chestnut trees	50	PORTO ERCOLE Caravaggio's landing point
32	FOSDINOVO Trame di Lunigiana	51	RADDA IN CHIANTI Chianti, a unique landscape
33	GIGLIO CASTELLO In the flow of never-ending water	52	RADICOFANI A station on the Via Francigena
34	LORO CIUFFENNA Lunigiana plots	53	RAGGIOLO Magnificently outdated
35	LUCIGNANO Flower battles	54	SAN CASCIANO DEI BAGNI The spas of the Grand Dukes
36	MASSA MARITTIMA The mining town	55	SANTA FLORA Water in the square
37	MONTALCINO <i>"Grapes make girls' legs beautiful"</i>	56	SAN GIMIGNANO A journey into the Middle Ages
38	MONTECARLO A castle between olive groves and vineyards	57	SARTEANO Between Val di Chiana and Val d'Orcia
39	MONTEFOLLONICO Washers of cloths and Vin Santo	58	SCARPERIA Where the blades shine
40	MONTEMERANO An enchanted corner of Maremma	59	SORANO Between ravines and ridges of tufa
41	MONTEPULCIANO The Poliziani of the noble wine	60	SOVANA Etruscan soul
42	MONTERIGGIONI The fortress on the Romea road	61	SUVERETO Vines sprinkled with sea salt
43	MONTESCUDAIO Sentinel over the Tyrrhenian Sea	62	TREQUANDA A castle between Siena and Chiusi
44	MURLO Etruscan people	63	VINCI Leonardo's village
45	PECCIOLI The breath of the art	64	VOLTERRA The town of alabaster
46	PIENZA The ideal town		

TUSCANY,

THE PLEASURE OF ROAMING AROUND VILLAGES

A long debate is currently open about sustainable tourism and exploitation of territories as a thrust towards economic recovery. Tourism works when combined with culture, because well-informed tourists nowadays are specifically asking to be able to live, in the places they travel to, an experience different from the one they normally

have in everyday life. Travellers want to be surprised and amazed, rediscover themselves when confronting Elsewhere. According to collective imagination, Tuscany is that Elsewhere that tourists coming, for example, from the Ruhr, the Midlands or Ohio are able, with a slight effort, to connect to an idea of beauty that is almost never under their eyes, before they personally experience it. But that Elsewhere is often



unknown even to Italians themselves: at least to those who have travelled abroad extensively but are unaware of the beauty just around the corner. Towers, castles, walled-up lands, landscapes, villas, abbeys, villages, the Apennines, hills and sea: we cannot possibly think of Tuscany as a single entity, there is indeed more than one, and they all contribute - each with its own colour and atmosphere - to paint a picture among the most fascinating in the art gallery of the world. Tuscany is there, before the eyes of everyone, neat and clear: Dante, the Middle Ages, castles, parish churches and scattered villages; Florence,

Towers, castles, walled- up lands

the Renaissance, fields, gardens and "landowner houses"; the Tuscan court, from the Medici to the Lorena; share-cropping, agrarian reform and a landscape of olive trees, vineyards, cypresses, gentle elevations; and then walled cities, market towns and "new

lands". But if our aim were to go in search of the very soul of this landscape to share it with our guests and visitors, then the first thing to do would be "roaming around villages": a pleasant activity that has also once again become very fashionable thanks to television programmes, magazines and the efforts of associations such as I Borghi più belli d'Italia and the Italian Touring Club, thanks to the project Bandiere





There are places where nature manages to provide us with masterpieces: the Chianti, the Amiata, the Colline Metallifere, the Val d'Orcia

When the Etruscan power waned, the ancient settlements adopted a Roman urban structure

Arancioni. The substantial endurance in a period of economic crisis and indeed the increase, in recent years, of tourism in small historical centres, owing mainly to foreign presences, has led the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism to proclaim 2017 "Year of the Villages", considering the development of a local tourism merging culture and innovation as economically strategic.

A CASTLE ON THE HILLOCK

Tuscany is one of the Italian regions with the highest concentration of villages. This obviously stems from its history. History that is deeply rooted in a very ancient time, roughly between the 7th and 5th century BCE, when the Etruscans founded settlements such as Populonia, Volterra, Chiusi, Sarteano, Sorano, Sovana, Pitigliano, Saturnia. The Vie Cave between Sorano, Sovana and Pitigliano

and the monumental tombs reproducing an Hellenistic age Etruscan temple at Sovana are a testimony of the imprint left by the Tyrrhenian people in this region. When the Etruscan power waned, the ancient settlements adopted a Roman urban structure. Once the Empire had collapsed and after the end of a long and desolate barbarian age, the countryside of the region started repopulating in scattered settlements and through manorial economy (in Italian “*curtense*”, from Latin *curtis*, “court”) which merged the economy of the Roman villa with an estate one, typical of feudalism. Starting from the 11th century CE, the manors evolve into hamlets. Approximately between 950 and 1150 the phenomenon of the first encastellation took place, i.e. the creation of castles on the territory as a response to domestic (power struggles) and external (raids of the Saracens) insecurity and as a consequence of demographic recovery and trades. The emergence of castles marks the resurgence of a whole civilisation. The relationships of the castles with the other cen-

The association I Borghi più belli d'Italia have certified twenty villages, the Touring Club Italiano more than thirty and one was even awarded as “Comune Gioiello d'Italia” (Pienza, which is also a Unesco World Heritage Site like San Gimignano and the Val d'Orcia). Some villages are at the same time among the Borghi più belli d'Italia and the Bandiere Arancione because they obtained both awards: Anghiari, Barga, Cetona, San Casciano dei Bagni, Santa Fiora, Pitigliano and Suvereto.

tres of rural power (manor, parish church and monastery) are at the base of the emergence of villages, which are almost all of medieval origin. In the context of encastellation, in fact, the first village structures develop, even though in a not uniform way: in the Casentino area, for example, centralisation of inhabitants around the castle of the landlord did not take place. Instead, every small village continued to live isolated and independent, producing its own defensive strategy: either through a small castle or placing houses against each other to build a barrier against enemies. In strategic points, the landscape began to be enriched with towers for control reasons and visual signals. But it was demographic growth and the increase in mouths to feed, in particular, to push part of the population that depended on the lords of the castle to settle, starting from the 12th century, in towers and tower-houses outside the fortified settlements. Slowly these tower-houses, which in their architecture echoed back to elements of military art (battlements, drains, brackets), turned into groups of crofts for the “lords in villa”, in farms and then in farm-houses. Unlike in other regions of Italy, in Tuscany fortresses and villages were almost never built in inaccessible mountain areas, but at an altitude ranging approximately between 400 and



600 meters, so as to exploit the agricultural land, pastures, woods and brooks. Generally the castle stands on a hillock, on high ground away from the valley floor, often tracing sites already chosen by the Etruscans. Crops such as vines and productive activities also moved upwards, and the image of a castle on the hillock is the postcard of Tuscany that spreads across the world. Perhaps in few other regions of Europe the landscape of the mid centuries of the Middle Ages remains so impressed in the memory. Soon even in Tuscany this landscape crumbled because, already starting from the 13th century, lowland areas began to be repopulated and some elevated castles were abandoned. How villages come to life. If the first encastellation had gathered in fortified villages a stable civilian population devoted to agriculture (cultivated areas were located close to villages), the second fortification phase, dated approximately between 1150 and 1350, changes the physical appearance and the urban features of Tuscan castles. Hamlets are transformed into "borghi" (villages); the urban structure is enriched with brick houses and small buildings that gradually replace wooden thatched houses. An urban bourgeoisie arises, the class of merchants and craftsmen becomes stronger and castles, fortresses and keeps are in contact with the towns that protect them or from which they defend themselves. The relationship with the environment and the mechanics of power change. "Our" villages were born. Some of these villages are created through the expansion of an original marketplace. Around the latter, merchants and craftsmen establish their stone dwellings, while goods are stocked more safely in the shops built under the arcade of the main square, as it happened in Greve in Chianti. Other villages are built from scratch as Florentine "terre nuove": this is the case of Castelfranco, which has a precise date of birth: 1299. To promote and monitor trade with the Valdarno, the Municipality of Florence attracted in this "new land" inhabitants from villages and farm-houses nearby, calling the great architect Arnolfo di Cambio as author of the project. Most of the villages fully preserve the urban structure that was shaped during the Middle Ages. Here are some examples of these ancient origins:

There are villages that speak for themselves, with voices dug syllable after syllable in the stone of which they are made of, soaked in time.

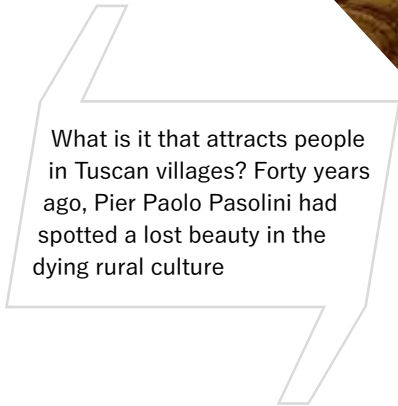




Anghiari “was born” in 1181 with the reconstruction of the town walls destroyed six years earlier by Arezzo; Suvereto developed from 1201, when it obtained by the Aldobrandeschi counts, lords of the castle, the Charta Libertatis with economic and political concessions; Montemerano originated from the fortress and the walls built by the Aldobrandeschi after the village came under their control, around 1010; Castiglione di Garfagnana arises with its encastellation inside the city walls in 1170, after the conquest of the castle by the Lucchesi; Scarperia, like Castelfranco, is a 1299 foundation of the Municipality of Florence, which needed a fortified settlement by the Apennines crossing of Giogo.

IN THE DARK GREEN OF CYPRESSES AND PALE GREEN OF OLIVE TREES

Let us have a closer look at the villages of Tuscany. Here we present the «certified» villages of this region, i.e. all those that have obtained a recognition of quality based on shared and public parameters. Hence they are small towns that have been visited, subjected to survey, evaluated and therefore are able, unlike others, to pride themselves on a «brand» that guarantees excellence. The association I Borghi più belli d'Italia have certified twenty villages, the Touring Club Italiano more than thirty and one was even awarded as “Comune Gioiello d'Italia” (Pienza, which is also a Unesco World Heritage Site like San Gimignano and the Val d'Orcia). Some villages are at the same time among the Borghi più belli d'Italia and the Bandiere Arancioni because they obtained both awards: Anghiari, Barga, Cetona, San Casciano dei Bagni, Santa Fiora, Pitigliano and Suvereto. What is it that attracts people in Tuscan villages? Forty years ago, Pier Paolo Pasolini had spotted a lost beauty in the dying rural culture. He was yearning for a country that was historically diversified and rich in peculiar cultures: the nostalgia for a “country of storms and primroses”. If consumer society has eradicated man from the land, we believe that it is the attachment to a generous land like Tuscany - that yields oil, wine, fruit, meat, cold cuts, cheeses and today offers tourism, culture, art and econo-



What is it that attracts people in Tuscan villages? Forty years ago, Pier Paolo Pasolini had spotted a lost beauty in the dying rural culture



These are the villages...

mics - that still keeps life going in the villages: where we can lose ourselves in the joy of pure sight enjoyment because everything we see has a meaning, a reason, an order in the chaos of the world. What is it that has designed such a beautiful agrarian landscape? What is it that makes wonderful the white ridge roads, with vineyards halfway on elevations, woods at the top of the ridges and scattered peasant houses in the crofts? Everything has an answer in this small universe that is both rural and refined, rustic and elegant, Florentine yet belonging to the countryside, urban yet provincial. Idealised, expanded, imagined, evoked, we like to think that the Tuscan one is the same landscape behind the Gioconda. Mona Lisa's family was originally from the town of Greve in Chianti: on account of this, there are people who believe that the background of the famous painting is detectable between the villages

of Panzano and Montefioralle. There are places where nature manages to provide us with masterpieces: the Chianti, the Amiata, the Colline Metallifere, the Val d'Orcia. There are villages that speak for themselves, with voices dug syllable after syllable in the stone of which they are made of, soaked in time. There are roads that, with their ups and downs, multiply horizons in unexpected perspectives, revealing parish churches and lonely abbeys, farm-houses and farms, crofts and terracing. In the dark green of the boundary-marking cypresses and the pale green of olive trees, the stare lights up and the raking light exalts the geometry of a landscape that seems to be made for quelling anxiety. The quiet dust of the countryside paths lays on ancient stones, and happiness reverberates behind the windows of an inn. This is Tuscany. These are the villages where, in alleys paved in stone that carry the fragrance of wood oven-baked bread, it seems to live in a smooth cage, in which one gladly wants to be shut just to flee and then return.



Anghiari

The battle and the lost painting



The memory of the painting, in the drawings of the master and in reproductions of colossuses such as Rubens, to date at the Louvre

Known for their fighting spirit, the citizens of Anghiari from the top of their high village seem to look with haughtiness to the plain below.

As if over there the ghosts of warriors who participated, on the 29th of June 1440, in a battle between armies that went down in history because "imagined" by Leonardo da Vinci, were still lurking around

The magistrates of Florence, in fact, entrusted the Tuscan genius with the task of painting the Battle of Anghiari to decorate the halls of Palazzo Vecchio with paintings that reminded of the main endeavours of the Republic. Damaged by an artificial drying process, the painting was lost, not before becoming for a few

years a "universal school" for how famous and taken as an example it was. Thus, Anghiari shines with a reflected light for an absence. The aura of mystery, made ineffable by the magic of time, still penetrates the medieval sights recalling resplendent passions, feverish hours. Unbreakable stronghold owing to its powerful thirteenth century walls, Anghiari dominates the upper Tiber valley. Abandoned the swords, today it's bicycle rides. The Intrepid is a vintage non-competitive bicycle tour which takes place in October. It is also a journey into the history and landscape of a territory rich in castles, ancient parish churches, medieval bridges and natural scenery to explore with the slow pace and cadence of pedal strokes. To be seen, in the Museum of Palazzo Taglieschi, is a wooden Madonna by Jacopo della Quercia (15th century) and, in the ancient church of the Badia (1105), the wooden late fourteenth-century crucifix of Nordic features that draws attention because of the strange thong. Until a short time ago it was also adorned with real hair.

Barberino Val d'Elsa

On the ruins of the ancient Semifonte



**The jewel-village of elliptical shape
was born and developed along the
Strada Regia Romana that linked Rome
with Florence**



It is on the ruins of the most powerful Semifonte, destroyed by Florence in 1202, that a place of rest and relief was born for the Romei pilgrims that in the 14th century, after the diversion of the Via Francigena towards Florence, found in Barberino a well-known hospital, as well as inns and churches where they could relieve themselves from their labours and put body and spirit to rest

In the same way, in the outskirts of the village, the pilgrims themselves, taking the road to the Val d'Elsa and Siena, could take a break and find comfort in the Pieve di Sant'Appiano, which also today's visitors can reach in few steps walking along the old road. This pari-

sh church is one of the most ancient in the Florentine countryside, fascinating especially for the matching of the oldest parts of stone, dating back to the 11th century, with the late-Romanesque brick ones. Its Antiquarium gathers Etruscan evidence found in the area and paintings of sacred subject. Walking in the surrounding nature, it almost feels as if we could hear a tale of the sad history of ancient Semifonte which, daring to challenge the supremacy of the lily-city, was sentenced by Florence to total destruction and perpetual abandonment. A current project to make it, together with other surrounding places, a landscape park, casts new light and splendour on that ancient sentence and on the ruins of the old fascinating town, still hidden in the vegetation.

Barga

Giuseppe Pascoli's nest



In Castelveccchio, Pascoli resides until 1912, today we can visit the House Museum of Giovanni Pascoli still retaining its original furniture

The house on the hill of Caprona made a dream come true: to rebuild in a place of relaxing beauty that nest which had been destroyed in San Mauro di Romagna with the violent death of his father

Barga was the right place, located on verdant hills framed by the Apuan Alps and the Apennines, where the hours going by sounded like a voice inviting him to rummage among the humble things in order to discover arcane correspondences. In the nest of Barga, Pascoli

cultivated his love for Latin poetry, re-visiting the classical world with modern sensibility. Here he oversaw the editing of the *Myricae* collections, composed the *Songs of Castelveccchio*, and here he rests in peace together with his sister Mariù. The façades of many buildings show small stone sculptures depicting anthropomorphic faces. Originally they were considered propitiatory of fertility. Today the tradition persists of making a wish while holding the index and middle fingers of the right hand on them. It is said that the wish will be fulfilled. Venturing into the driveways and alleys of the village, the visitor will reach the "Ar-ringo's Green" to have an aerial view of the millenary *Duomo* in the screeching of swallows that suddenly hurtle through a patch of sky between the houses, at the knelling of the hour that goes with their steps. Barga is immersed in the green and rustic beauty of Garfagnana, well cloaked in healthy and fragrant forests, dotted with ancient hamlets whose lights twinkle in the dark woods at night.

Buonconvento

The colours of terracotta and clay



Behold the village of terracotta, brick and “Crete Senesi”, on clay-rich hills, farms and scattered parish churches, good ground for excellent white truffle



A fraud in a medieval tavern described by Boccaccio in the Decameron.

A discussion between heretics. A floral and modernist twist on the façade of a house: fresh air among the dominant medieval forms

The sternness, sweetness and smile seen on the faces of the Madonnas painted by Sienese artists on wood and frescos preserved in the Museum of Sacred Art. The products of a fertile country, pride of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany. The footsteps of pilgrims echoing on the ancient Via Francigena. The colour of the “crete” (clayey hills) in autumn, under a never-ending sky. An intimate corner of landscape: an old farm, a

cypress, the curve of a white road. All this is Buonconvento and its territory. The strong thirteenth-century defence walls once enclosed the entire village. Even today, the road that cuts across it is dedicated to the family that counted among its members a couple of heretics, contestants of some church doctrines during the 16th century. Via Soccini is also the noblest in the village, the one overlooked by the corridors of power of major landowners: the Podestarile palace with its civic tower of the 14th century, the Town Hall with its beautiful brick façade and the awe-inspiring seventeenth-century palace of the Taja family. Be careful when venturing in Via Oscura: you could enter the Middle Ages and never come back.

Casale Marittimo

Quietness near the Tyrrhenian Sea



Not far from the sea, behind Cecina, behold Casale, refuge for those seeking relaxation from city life, with a mild climate, rich in mineral waters and wild game

Already the ancient Etruscans had settled in the area: the archaeological excavations revealed remains of a 6th century village on the hill nearby and a burial complex in the necropolis of Casa Nocera

Let us not think, however, that over the centuries the settlement has had an easy life, between pirate raids and unhealthy air. But it is mainly thanks to the progressive reclamation of coastal marsh, occurred during the 19th century, that today the inhabitants of Casale, as well as tourists in search of peace and quiet, can enjoy a village with a high quality of life at a short distance from sea, beaches and pine groves. Ascending to the castle via a ramp that looks to the sky, a curious visitor can take a look at the ancient Clock Tower and the house of the Camerlingo, one of the oldest in the village, in order to then pleasantly take refuge in some open wine bar between the beautiful stone houses on display. The counter won't certainly be lacking neither of a good glass of local white, Montescudaio or San Torpè, nor of the even more typical cantuccini, in the sweets basket.

Casciana Terme Lari

Between culinary art and wellness



It is a new municipality, born in 2014 from the merger of Casciana Terme and Lari, ideal destination for a weekend of wellness, culture and oeno-gastronomy



Firstly, we relax at the Casciana spas, taking advantage of the beneficial properties of Acqua Mathelda, the thermal water springing from the source to a constant natural temperature of 35.7 degrees

The thermal complex was built by Federico di Montefeltro in 1311 and today it presents a beautiful neoclassical façade, added in 1870. In Lari, the ancient village, we visit the Castello dei Vicari, the enormous Medicean fortress in which, rumour has it, witches were processed and prisoners tortured. Wandering around the halls of the manor house, recently restored, we can almost still hear

the cries of those tormented spirits. To distract us from this Inquisition atmosphere, there are all the delicacies that this beautiful medieval village offers to us, from the famous Martelli artisan pasta factory, which exports pasta throughout the world, to the hand-made sausages. The pleasantness of the cultural visit and the harmonic quietness of the place permeate the minds of visitors. In a perfect union between history, tradition and physical and spiritual well-being, we take advantage of the place to taste a good Chianti and feast on cherries, during the homonymous festival which in May celebrates the sweet red fruit, of which this flourishing land is rich.

Casole d'Elsa

The small treasure of Val d'Elsa



In hills planted with vines and olive trees, the ancient Etruscan village offers a landscape full of history and of great suggestion

Bypassing rumps and hills of the Val d'Elsa, a bit isolated from the main road between Colle and Volterra, we meet the ancient castle of Casole d'Elsa, in its own way the prototype of all Tuscan villages, no perspective excluded

Immediately visible on reaching the village, here's part of the wall circle on which the famous military architect Francesco di Giorgio intervened in the 15th century with two sturdy towers. In the beautiful square stands the Palazzo della Propositura, location of the

Civic Museum of Archaeology and the Collegiata. Walking through the historical centre, harmonious and lively, we stop in different shops of typical local products. We let ourselves, finally, get fascinated by the numerous contemporary art installations. In the main street are the Palazzo Pretorio, with its beautiful parade of coats of arms on the façade and the Rocca, today location of the Town Hall and the Town Museum. Within the latter, we reach the Small Tower to enjoy its privileged panoramic point and admire from there the hills and valleys of the surroundings, of incomparable charm, and the whole village, with its farm-houses and its parish churches, among the most beautiful of the Sienese countryside. We go up to the hamlet of Monteguidi, travelling in time and in the places in which the writer Carlo Cassola set his novel *Bébo's Girl*. On the second Sunday of July, the citizens of Casole involve us with passion and commitment in the celebrations of the Palio, inferior to Siena's one only by fame.

Castelfranco di Sopra

The landscape of fairies



The crags, created by erosion, draw a yellowish, almost Arizona-like landscape, if it were not for the green spots of ravines. This natural area is the “Landscape of fairies”



While the built part of this Florentine “terra nova” which is at the origin of the walled town of Castelfranco appears tidy, geometric, according to a chequerboard pattern of orthogonal axes, the natural part - a sort of Monument Valley in miniature - is bizarre, fantastic, unreal: as equally unreal are the backgrounds of the paintings and drawings by Leonardo da Vinci that, according to several scholars, seem to trace back to the crags area

Emotions continue on the old road of Setteponti, dotted with Romanesque parish churches, farm-houses, tower-houses, small hamlets, while in the village of Castelfranco, in order to revive the

lost beauty, one needs to go looking for two Madonnas: the one of the Andrea del Sarto school and the one of the Master of Cassone Adimari (called “the Splinter”). The latter is located in the church of the Abbey of San Salvatore in Soffena (1394), which rises up just outside the village with its adjoining convent, whose cloister is noteworthy. The designer of Castelfranco, according to Vasari, would have been the famous architect Arnolfo di Cambio. Certainly the Florentine footprint is entirely visible, not only in the urban layout but also in some houses on the first section of Via Maestra, dating back to the founding of the “terra nuova” (1299) and altogether similar to the terraced houses in the historical centre of Florence.

Castelnuovo Berardenga

The butterfly village to visit by bicycle



Already in the Middle Ages the village has its borders included between the Bozzone brook and Ambra river, between the upper Chianti and the river Bientina up to Taverna d'Arbia

Behold Castelnuovo. On one side, toward the west, we can see the hillside vineyards of the Chianti Senese; on the other, toward the east, the territories "della Berardenga", named after the noble Berardo, who lived in the 10th century

On one side, farm-houses and vineyards as far as the eye can see, on the other,

arid lands with fields and cypresses. On top of a hill between the Ombrone river and Malena brook lie the remains of the castle. All the surroundings are worth a visit, because the territory of Castelnuovo is vast and rich in historical places. We set out on the white streets to reach tiny villages, churches, hamlets, villas and farms. Even better, we ride a bicycle and will be among the hills of Chianti, whistling that happy tune that's in our head, almost like an old cinema comedy. The municipality is, in fact, part of the Cycling Park of Chianti, which promotes secondary paths, suitable for cycling. We go through Pacina, Baia Monastero, Montalto and San Gusmè, with ancient parish churches, castles and forts, and Pontignano, with the impressive Certosa from 1343. If we make our way to Montaperti, behold a tuft of cypress trees and a small pyramid in commemoration of the famous battle won by Siena against Florence in 1260, mentioned by Dante Alighieri.

Castelnuovo Val di Cecina

The village shaped like a pine cone



The historical centre of this village of Etruscan origin, which was born on the borders of Sienese territories, encloses itself in walls and gets fortified under the Republic of Pisa



In a sunny day we stroll along the narrow streets paved in stone of the village shaped like a pine cone, our gaze towards the valley, and immediately its panorama offers really suggestive glimpses

It is already Autumn, but the weather is still beautiful, ideal for an excursion around Castelnuovo, in the thick chestnut woods covering the surrounding landscape, colouring it with yellow, red, brown. You walk up to the Pavone brook, with its two splendid Renaissance bridges. But equally enjoyable are walks

in the village, with its taste of Middle Ages. The parish church houses a crucifix of the beginning of the 14th century, precious work of the sculpture school of Pisa. If we go up to the hamlet of Sasso, where the valley of the river Cornia begins, it is possible to observe the natural phenomenons of the "putizze" (cold gas exhalations) and of the "fumaroles" (gaseous emissions accompanied by steam), expressions of the intense geothermal activities that has characterised for millennia the subsoil of these areas. We can terminate our walk in this place, admiring the remains of an ancient Etruscan spa.

Castiglione di Garfagnana

Sweet wildness



“Land of wolves and robbers”: this way Ludovico Ariosto called Garfagnana when he arrived there in 1522 as commissioner of the Este

Today's visitor is actually bewitched by such wildness, particularly because it has not surrendered to concrete

Nature indeed resists with harsh, conflicting landscapes: the village of Castiglione is walled and lost in the woods, surrounded by mountains: border territory. The defiant death on the wooden Christ's face in the church of San Michele, the thirteenth-century Madonna of the altarpiece by Simone Giuliano,

still archaic in the features and the more modern, girlish one with a shade of melancholy chiselled by Vincenzo Civitali in the church of San Pietro are figures of this austere land, image of a different Tuscany, more bitter and mountainous than sweet and hilly. In the depths of the brown eyes of the Madonnas of Lucca, of this sweet wildness, one can distinguish the passing of time, solidified in the austere coats of arms of the municipal building. A window lit in the village invites us to the touching tranquillity of being up here: in the village of thrown-in houses at the top of a hill, with its fortress, the mighty walls and the towers, signs of a still-living Middle Ages. The gentle names of the two towers of the Brunella, within the walls, and Campanella, in the castle, should not make us forget that this was the most important castle of the Republic of Lucca defending the border against the Duchy of Modena, on the important road that from here crosses the Apennines towards the lands of “Lombardia”.

Castiglion Fiorentino

Panoramas from the tower



**In the middle of the Arezzo countryside,
behold the village, on a not-too-high
hill, with its 13th century walls**



The bubbling of the water streams accompanies the walk like crystal clear music in the background while, immersed in the wonderful landscape of the fertile Valdichiana, we follow the road that reaches the historical centre of the village

Around, olive trees and vineyards as far as the eye can see, and where cattle of the famous Chianina breed graze. Looking to the east, we'll lose ourselves in the fog of the Pre-Apennines mountains. Left behind the towers that delimit the historical centre, we arrive in the Town Hall square, the heart of the village from which, under the arches of the Loggia Vasari (1513), we can admire the beautiful Val di Chio. Continuing the walk up to the archaeological area of the keep, stopping to rest in the public garden that

surrounds the tower. Sections of a wall circle from the 4th century BCE confirm that this was an Etruscan area. By climbing to the top of the keep tower, we can enjoy a splendid sight of the village, the Val di Chiana and the Val di Chio. And after having enriched our spirit by visiting the six churches within the walls and the collections in the Pinacoteca Civica at the church of Sant'Angelo, we soothe and comfort ourselves at lunch, ordering in some local restaurant a nice cut of Chianina meat, accompanied by a glass of excellent Tuscan wine. In the air there is still the echo of the voice of Roberto Benigni, that in the initial stage of his famous "Life is beautiful" reaches the walls of the village by car, while he's mistakenly thought by the castiglionesi to be King Vittorio Emanuele III.

Certaldo

Boccaccio's "castle"



"Certaldo is a castle located in our countryside which, although small in size, was once inhabited by noble and wealthy men"

So wrote in his Decameron the illustrious Giovanni Boccaccio about his birthplace, Certaldo, which today consecrates his memory

Not only through the house that hosted the poet in the last years of his life but because, strolling along the streets of the town, every corner, each step or loggia, every brick house seems to accommodate some character come out

of the very Decameron, ready to give us a first-hand gossip. And it is precisely the castle mentioned by Boccaccio the most interesting part of the village to visit, especially for tourists who love art and events of the past. Passing through the narrow streets and small squares scattered here and there in upper Certaldo, in the perfect preservation of the medieval urban pattern, we arrive at Palazzo Pretorio, right on top of the hill. The Church of the Saints Jacopo and Filippo houses the tomb of Boccaccio, while in the Church of the Saints Tommaso and Prospero was recomposed the Tabernacolo dei Giustiziati, realised by the famous Benozzo Gozzoli. Also noteworthy is a visit to the lower part of Certaldo, that took shape thanks to the strategic position of the village on the Via Francigena. The impressive flow of wayfarers, raised by the road leading to Rome, was bearer of novelties, often of cultural influences and materials: Certaldo as alphabet of styles and contaminations.

Cetona

Peaceful beauty



The simplicity with which the stone of its buildings blends with the pictorial landscape represents the wonder of Cetona

It is sufficient to climb the narrow cobbled streets called "coste", because they flank the mountain, or enter the "citadel", the ancient clump of houses dominating the Renaissance square, to seize the poetry of this place, a "joy of peaceful forms" in the words of Piero Grassini

The walls, once developing in three circles, today preserve in the round tower of Rivellino, dating back to the mid-16th century, the most important trace of the third circle. The urban structure is affected by the warlike events of the medieval period, when Cetona had to tread cautiously between Siena and Orvieto, towns that competed for its possession by means of war. This valley dotted with parish churches and glittering with olive,



pine and cypress trees, in the past has enchanted intellectuals and travellers like Bernard Berenson, Romain Rolland, Paul Bourget and in the present offers a more prosaic shelter, in ancient houses of the village or in farm-houses of the countryside, to celebrities from the worlds of economics, culture and fashion. The writer Angela Bianchini has lived in Cetona for many years in the house once belonging to the painter Lionello Balestrieri, and a secluded dwelling houses Guido Ceronetti, desecrating writer who writes: "Here and now already almost the entire countryside through mechanical agriculture, agrochemistry, monoculture, money, its abandonment, the fading of its infinite voices, is well the eve of Italoshima" (Albergo Italia, 1985). Yet, with its peaceful beauty, Cetona is the right place to "provide calm and respite for the hotel of malaise" into which our life has turned.

Chiusi

Porsenna's labyrinth



Chiusi, the city deriving from the Etruscan Chamars, rich and most powerful under the reign of Porsenna

Situated in the extreme south of the province of Siena, at the border with Umbria and next to that with Latium, Chiusi is the perfect destination for all those who want to immerse themselves in history, but it is also a simple land, generous and full of traditions

The Cathedral of San Secondiano, built by bishop Florentinus in the mid-6th century, is one of the oldest churches in Tuscany. Remodelled several times over the course of the centuries, it still

preserves the original architecture of the Paleochristian basilica. The statue of Saint John the Baptist in the majestic baptismal font is attributed to Sansovino. The Cathedral Museum collects material of great value of the early, medieval and modern Christian era, even if its fame is linked mainly to the splendid collection of Benedictine illuminated manuscripts of the second half of the 15th century, from the Abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore. From the museum we go down to Porsenna's labyrinth, network of tunnels, according to tradition burial of the great Etruscan king, but actually remains of the aqueduct that, crossing the village, reaches the tank under the bell tower of the dome. The visit ends in the bell tower, from whose top we can admire a splendid landscape. Just a few kilometres from the historical centre, you will find the lake of Chiusi, one of the more interesting passage points along the "Path of the Reclamation".

Collodi

Pinocchio's village



Hamlet of Pescia, between Florence and Pisa, at the margins of the Valdinievole behold our village, famous to have given the name to Pinocchio's author, Collodi

All Collodi, sliding down a hillock, watches with admiration its villa, the wonderful garden, one of the most beautiful that is possible to see in Italy, and the Pinocchio Park

The village is all here, proud of its jewels, and of the illustrious personality Carlo Lorenzini, the Collodi. To Pinocchio is dedicated a park of art, architecture, game and environment. Inaugurated in 1956, it evokes the novel through sculptures, mosaics and architectures from great Italian artists, inspired by the adventures of the wooden puppet. Outside of it stands the



highest wooden statue of Pinocchio in the world, a unique carpentry work and beloved by children. If Pinocchio Park represents contemporary creativity, the complex of Historical Garden and Villa Garzoni show us the signs of an aristocratic past. The Garzoni Counts were lords of the village and of the wide surrounding territories for centuries. The villa and garden were born from a desired transformation by Garzoni of what once was a medieval fortress. An enchantment of the eighteenth century arrived to us almost intact: a monument to artistic taste and well living, to water (whose abundance is characteristic of the area) and to the green, to the ability to create from nature extraordinary scenography.

Coreglia Antelminelli

Old-fashioned figurines



**Coreglia from Latin Corrilia is
"land of flowing", of passage, border
between medieval Lucca with Pisa
and Florence**

The village rests on a long ridge of the Apennines, surrounded by a multitude of chestnut trees climbing back towards the settlement. It has been loved by painters, poets, philosophers and classical philologists, all attracted by the framing of the Apuan Alps and of the Apennines

Here the expression "Christmas nativity scene" has a meaning of its own: "Between Christmas and Epiphany - writes Guglielmo Lera, creator of some local literary prizes - Coreglia covered

by snow and swept by northerly winds is a town in oblivion, with the caves of the Penna that look like a nativity scene and the Alps like a cushion intended for the stars". After visiting the two ancient churches of San Martino, pre-Romanesque, and San Michele, built in the year 1000 just beside the fortress and the tower (transformed into a bell tower), we go to Palazzo Vanni to see the Museum of Gypsum Figurine and Emigration. Coreglia is in fact known for the activity of "figurinai" (figurine-makers) which, already remarkable in the 18th century, intensified in the next one, leading numerous families to perform this activity in the main cities of Italy, but also Germany, France, Switzerland, Britain, Sweden. Before going abroad, the figurinai gathered in "fellowships" which also included young boys recruited in the village and who were tasked with selling the "gessi" on the road. Among the masterpieces there are eighteenth-century cats coloured through candle smoke and a large Christmas nativity scene of the late 19th century.

Cutigliano

Under the shadow of the trees



Sandstone and chestnut wood are the elements of this village of noble grace, ancient and sought holiday resort



Cutigliano is located in the Apennines of Pistoia, at the foot of the Abetone, in the ski resort area of Doganaccia. It is located in the green of woods under the shadow of chestnut trees and beeches and between clear water springs

Squares and paved streets preserve the memory of the government of the Captains of the Mountain, marked by force on the coats of arms on the palace which housed them. On the edges of scrubs lived here in the 19th century a shepherd poetess, Beatrice Bugelli, who wanted to be the voice of nature. Her poetry was spread along the mule tracks, where shine the fruits

of the undergrowth. Before his stay at Abetone, even Giacomo Puccini lived here, host of Villa Magrini. They used to come to Cutigliano for the "comfortable walks among the shady woods of chestnut trees", wrote in 1887 marquis Carega for his readers that were also the first hikers. Here arrived a painter as well, one evening in 1570: forced to stop in the village due to an abundant snowfall that had him seized during the journey home. He paid his hospitality debt by painting the picture hanging behind the high altar in the church of San Bartolomeo. The characters that animate the canvas are men and women of Cutigliano really existed, taken as a model by the artist, Bastiano Vini from Verona.

Fosdinovo

Lunigiana plots



The only certified village in the province of Massa Carrara, Fosdinovo, from the Middle Ages to the 18th century, was the small capital of an independent marquisate held by the noble family Malaspina that here settled at the beginning of the 14th century

Even here, as everywhere else in Lunigiana, we breathe history, and the high walkway between the Ghibelline battlements of the castle allows you to grasp the great location on the Val di Magra in which this village stands

Residence and political centre of the family, the Castle of Malaspina is the symbol and the main attraction of Fo-

sdinovo. The historical commemoration that takes place in July is not a usual re-enactment of the Middle Ages, but a way to feel the breath of the stone, which has lasted for seven hundred years, indeed more, because the Malaspina restored and enlarged a castle which was already a couple of centuries old. In one of its rooms seems to have found hospitality Dante Alighieri. Coming to places like this is a matter of urgency. It's the desire to escape from the short time of commitments, of immediate deadlines, of daily news, and enter into a long time, linked to the memory of those who lived here in these houses, under these beams, between these walls. So there you have it, Galeotto Malaspina, lord of Fosdinovo: in his sepulchral monument of 1367, in the parish church dedicated to San Remigio, French saint whose cult spread in Italy through the Via Francigena. Here is the building in which there was the Old Mint. And there, the Malaspina Theater with its daises of inlaid wood on which the dust of time has settled.

Giglio Castello

In the flow of never-ending water



Giglio is a land of sea captains, artists and musicians. We get there in summer, with the refreshing sound of our sandals

We climb up to the castle for the evening ritual of cellars, bars, restaurants, and when at last the night covers everything with silence then the swashing of the sea is suddenly back again

Centuries spent in the flow of endless water have chased away the fear of Turks from the island: Saraceno and Barbarossa are, nowadays, only names of some local entertainment. However, everything continues to be wonderfully shifting and indifferent in the middle of this clearest sea. From the solid granite walls of Giglio Castello, the eye ranges over other emerged lands - Giannutri, the mysterious Montecristo, Pianosa farther away - while former seamen paint naïve paintings with colourful sailing boats. In



Giglio the winds, weather, the little land with its inconsistent yields are rulers. Everyone who comes here gets charmed by a dark energy. The ones who leave have the suspicion of having lost it. Whoever goes back experiences the relief of finally releasing it. Everything changes: dry walls, pergolas and fish traps are not built any more and fishermen no longer darn their nets. Maybe even words don't taste like salt any more, since sailing boats lost their bright horizon. But Giglio is still there: still there is the castle built by the governors from Pisa in the 12th century; there are still cellars where, between chatters, a good glass of Ansonaco, product of the vineyards near the lighthouse or somewhere else, is offered to the visitor; and again the lights are switched on for the festival of San Mamiliano, who in 1799 helped the population to drive away the Tunisian pirates.

Loro Ciuffenna

In the fragrance of iris



At the beginning it was the “Etruscan cerva” (Cefa, meaning “she-deer”, from which Ciuffenna) that used to run in the woods of Pratomagno. Then the medieval bridge over the waters of the Ciuffenna was built

Around the village of Loro there are oak, chestnut and pine forests. And then the sight of field flowers in the meadows of Pratomagno. There are parish churches with apses facing east, where the sun rises

In the parish church of San Pietro a Gropina, one of the most beautiful in Tuscany, masterpiece of Romanesque art, a labyrinth of symbols introduces us to a great journey in the mysteries of the

world. The languid death of Christ in the Pietà by Carlo Portelli (1561) safeguarded in the church of Santa Maria Assunta, which carries engraved in the lintel the year 1333, also helps us approaching those mysteries. The ancient mansions, the narrow streets, the outline of the mountains led to meditation artists such as Venturino Venturi, who here found the voice of the brook, the compact note of the owl, the sweetness of awaiting women. The territory of Loro reaches across the whole western flank of the Pratomagno mountain district. At the foot of the mountain rest villages, churches and forests of remarkable beauty. In the lowest part lie the purple cultivations of iris whose flowers, sometimes even white and reddish, accompany us along the Via Setteponti that leads straight into the province of Florence. The processing of iris is eminently artisan: the harvest is manually cleaned of leaves and roots in order to preserve the root stock, the part used in cosmetic field for the production of perfumes and in herbal medicine.

Lucignano

Flower battles



**As a cap on the top of a hill,
Lucignano has a shape of such
harmony and beauty, that it could
be taken as a model of perfect
medieval village**

Looking at the village from above, the eye can only be struck by the spotty roof covers of the houses, which draw long and narrow circles, as a shell, building an elliptical drawing of concentric rings

Entering the historical centre, the lively atmosphere that typical product shops give to the place surrounds and infects the visitor who, while arriving in the main square, gets lost between the Renaissance palaces of the Strada dei Cavalieri. But Lucignano is also narrow streets and houses of bricks of mediocre craftsmanship because, despite its



unity and harmony, the village has not been able to avoid, during the centuries, that human game of parties which causes inevitably settlements to divide in "up-town" and "down-town". Yet today, no matter what social class we belong to, in spring, in Lucignano thousands of flowers fill the sky and fly over our heads, tossed by the inhabitants of the quarters that parade through the streets of the town centre on floats. Accompanied by musical groups and joyful vivacity, they kick-start a true and proper "flower battles": it is the traditional spring festival or Maggiolata, that the inhabitants of the place, but also tourists, are impatiently waiting for the whole year.

Massa Marittima

The mining town



On a hill at about twenty kilometres from the sea lies the town of Massa Marittima, in a territory whose history is tied to the mines of the Colline Metallifere, exploited since prehistory

Over the centuries the town has always based its economy on the richness of its deposits, until the slow decline of mining activity began, in the Seventies of the last century. Today the memory is preserved in the Museum of the Mine, which provides a faithful reconstruction of the mining environment

Massa Marittima has an artistic and cultural heritage which arose in particular between the 13th and 14th century, period of maximum splendour of the town. The beautiful cathedral dedicated to San Cerbone, one of the most significant examples of Romanic and Gothic art in Italy, overlooks piazza Garibaldi. Still nowadays large sections of the walls are well preserved, like almost all of the numerous gates. Very evocative are the paths, one along the outer side of the walls of Cittavecchia, and the other between the gate of San Francesco and the Convento delle Clarisse in Cittanuova. Massa today looks to the future, but has not lost memory of its past. A monument in the Parco della Rimembranza is dedicated to Garibaldi, who is said to have been helped by some young massetani to reach Cala Martina. And, twice a year, an impressive historical procession with over 150 participants invades the streets, on the occasion of the folkloric event of the Balestro del Girifalco.

Montalcino

“Grapes make girls’ legs beautiful”



On a ridge of the Val d'Orcia stands Montalcino, home to the Brunello, one of the most famous and appreciated Italian wines in the world, as well as the first to obtain in 1980 the DCG certification

Everything in this village tastes like its grapes, each brick has the colours of its secular tradition. Even the ancient Rocca, built by Siena in 1361, today houses a winery dedicated to the world of Brunello

And with a glass of this nectar of the gods in our hand, we also feed on music and theatre, thanks to the shows hosted in the courtyard. Montalcino is in fact full of art, and is among the most ancient centres for ceramic production in the whole of Tuscany. The Convent of Saint Augustine is the location of the



town museums. In a green valley at a certain distance from the village we find the abbey of Sant'Antimo. We might say it looks like a French church, so high, all vertically built, in travertine and alabaster. The works began in the second half of the 12th century. Griffins, eagles, fantastic animals, geometric motifs write stories on the portals of the building and on the capitals. Despite being a place rich all year round in events, folklore and traditions, by far the most outstanding of these is the Tournament for the opening of the hunting season in mid-August, consisting in an exciting shooting gallery competition in which the targets are faithful reproductions. The prize is a silver arrow which evokes the ancient tradition of the homage of the wild game to the lord of the castle.

Montecarlo

A castle between olive groves and vineyards



The village built in 1333, was called Montecarlo in honor of Charles IV of Luxembourg, who liberated Lucca from the Pisans

While we climb up the streets of Montecarlo, paved with large stones, between row of flowered houses, we immerse ourselves in the history of its ancient hills, when between Lucca and Montecatini Terme still a real village wasn't there

When, in the XIV century, the territory of Lucchesia passed into the hands of John of Bohemia, the inhabitants of the place have titled the new suburb to his son Carlo, and it is thanks to this gesture

that in 1333 the emperor decided to build on the hill of Montecarlo the powerful fortress which for centuries had a fundamental role in the war between Pisa and Florence, and it remains today the undisputed gem of the village. The houses of Montecarlo are beautiful, of a well educated nobility. The square is a large balcony overlooking the most diverse part of geography in Tuscany: flat, rivers and towns, distant mountains and isolated wooded rumps. Of the old drawing, in addition to the streets, there are two access gates and massive ruins of the fourteenth-century castle, tightened around the most ancient fortress and entirely surrounded by walls. The olive groves and the vineyards of the hills that embrace the place produce an oil of high quality and a special wine: the White of Montecarlo, which arises from the vinification processes in which some producers, toward the middle of the Nineteenth Century, introduced French technologies, giving the product a delicious taste, since then the key of the notoriety of the village in the oenological field.

Montefollonico

Washers of cloths and Vin Santo



The name of the village comes from the latin fullones, cloths washers. With water mills that moved heavy clubs, cloths were beaten and clean



On the top of a hill, between the Val di Chiana and the Val d'Orcia, there is a charming stone village, which developed between the XII and the XIII century and still today preserved homogeneous and intact

The historic center is in fact protected and enclosed by imposing thirteenth century walls, terracotta and stone, and accessed by crossing one of the original three doors, still well preserved, among which stands out the door of Triano. Entering among the narrow streets and contorted and low houses and rustic, we reach the Palazzo Pre-

torio, with its bell tower and beside a marble well of the Seventeenth Century. Little far away, the romanesque parish church of San Leonardo, with a notable portal round arched with columns and capitals sculpted.

In the medieval frame of the village during the holidays of 8 December, takes place the traditional food and wine event Would you like a dash of Vin Santo? during which visitors are welcomed in the old cellars, opened for the occasion. Offer the Vin Santo is in fact one of the most ancient Tuscan hospitality gestures, and today as then, is offered in small doses as a really valuable product.

Montemerano

An enchanted corner of Maremma



Medieval village in Etruscan land, its historical centre is nested between three circles of walls, on top of a hill full of olive and cypress trees

The village is small - not more than six hundred inhabitants, including those in the few post-war houses surrounding it and in the surrounding crofts – but it deserves one to take their time to get to know it

Starting from the Castle square, enchanted scenery made of light and stone, jewel of spontaneous architecture, uninterrupted sequence of stone buildings with arched loggias, terraces and

flowered windows, roofs at different levels that create a game of lines and volumes of natural, extreme elegance. On the right side of the square, which looks like a postcard or a film set and that, on the contrary, is all authentic, lies the “Palazzo”, noble building surmounted by a quadrangular tower of the Sienese keep. The village is inhabited, it's not a museum: over the last thirty years it has been completely restored, but it was not “made as good as new” according to the even-too-widespread (and often induced) taste of “the good old times”, as in a script for an advertisement of jams and tarts. People live there and they live well, Montemeranesi by birth and “foreigners” alike who have chosen to stay here: they work during the day and in the evening they meet for an aperitif or dinner, between a chat and a glass of Morellino, a plate of Tortelli with wild boar ragout and a tasty ciaffagnone with pecorino cheese and honey (for the recipe, please address the village women).

Montepulciano

The Poliziani of the noble wine



"Montepulciano is the King of every wine" wrote Francesco Redi in 1685 in his work Bacchus in Tuscany. There can be no talk of Montepulciano without remembering his noble wine

The first document which tells about it dates back to 789. In 1350 the rules for its trade and export become known. Noble wine worthy of the most exclusive canteens, today it proudly displays the most excellent origin awards

The town is located at the top of a hill and is all lined up along a central axis, the "corso". Walking along that, we di-

scover that it actually has different names. We get lost in the alleys that reveal quiet and silent corners still undecided whether to belong in the Middle Ages or in our times. Here the hours flow calmly, with no hurry, they seem to walk back to the time of King Porsenna, regarded as founder of the city. Going back in the history and cultural fervour that animate the village, in the historical centre we find the birthplace of Poliziano (1454), greatest Humanist poet and philologist protected by the Medici. "Poliziani", in his honour, are called the citizens of Montepulciano. During the summer the town attracts tourists from all over Tuscany for its rich calendar of events. Starting with the Cantiere Internazionale d'Arte, with concerts and shows, and closing with the Bruscello, a popular representation of religious or chivalrous theme. Finally the Bravio, a singular challenge among the eight Contrade of the town, in which people compete by pushing barrels, symbol of the noble wine of Montepulciano.

Monteriggioni

The fortress on the Romea road



**«...upon its round enclosing walls
Monteriggioni crowns itself with
towers» this passage of Dante's Inferno
testifies to how in the 13th century
already our village, although still
only a small fortress along the Strada
Romea frequented by pilgrims, was
appreciated and well-known**

*Inside the walls, which adapt to the
altimetric curves of the hill, the houses
block, made of low houses which slightly
exceeds the height of the waist, is set on
a quadrangular pattern, with three tracks
parallel to each other and a large square,
rightly considered the most beautiful among
the small squares in Tuscany*

On one of the sides of the main square
stands the church of Santa Maria As-
sunta, in Romanesque-Gothic style. It is



mentioned as a parish church already in
the 14th century. Let's not forget that
in the territory of Monteriggioni stands
from the beginning of the 11th century,
long before the turreted village, one of
the most important religious buildings
of the whole Val d'Elsa: the Badia dei
Santi Salvatore, Cirino and Sebastiano,
otherwise known as Badia a Isola, com-
missioned around the year 1000 by a
noblewoman of Lombard origin, Lady of
Monte Maggio and Val di Strove, in aid of
the pilgrims. Thousands and even more
are the treasures of art and nature that
hide in the territory of Monteriggioni: its
position between ancient Etruscan, Ro-
man, Mediaeval and modern paths has
made it a formidable "wonder park" to
investigate with passion and by all me-
ans: on foot, on horseback or by bicycle.

Montescudaio

Sentinel over the Tyrrhenian Sea



Suspended between land and sea, the “mountain of shields” is a small village of Val Cecina that, from its old walls, looks onto the Tyrrhenian Sea and its islands castellane

Sentinel is the beautiful turret of Guardiola, panoramic point where the thoughts are made uncertain between quiet hills and sea adventure

In those stone-paved alleys that carry the scent of wood oven-baked bread, it seems to live in a smooth cage, in which one gladly wants to be shut just to flee and then return. The warm breeze accompanies the gaze on olive trees, rows of vines, fruit trees and it is not difficult

to imagine the goddess of abundance coming from the countryside with a basket full of the palatable products of this land: wine, oil, bread, could cuts. From the Castle square, in days when the sky is clear it is possible to catch sight of the islands Gorgona and Capraia and, if one is lucky enough, even the northern tip of Cape Corso. Letting our gaze wander down the surrounding walls, there are the hundred huts of the village below with their characteristic roofs covered with Tuscan tiles. Near Via del Borgo is located the Civic Tower, whose lower part dates back to the 12th century: it was the access point to the medieval castle, near which stood the house of the tax collector. Along the perimeter of the castle we can observe the impressive city walls, up to 15 meters high, which retain the original masonry in the northern and the southern sections, and in particular in the Guardiola, the only remaining watchtower. Nothing is missing in Montescudaio: it is part of the national associations City of Wine, City of Oil and City of Bread.

Murlo

Etruscan people



**The village, on a sunny hill
between the basin of the Arbia and
the Maremma, is located at the
boundary between the cultural and
artistic influence of Siena and its
Etruscan origin**

In Murlo, influences of medieval art and civilisation, but also traces of wars, riots, stories of ancient populations, tombs and cults of the Lucumoni people

It is said that for its isolation, Murlo and its inhabitants have inherited and maintained a direct descendants from the Etruscans, also scientifically demonstrated through genetic analyses carried out on the current inhabitants. You can admire testimonies of the Etruscan origins of the town at the local museum Antiquarium, situated in the historical cen-

tre inside the Bishop's Palace. Not only a collection of findings, but a cultural-historical trip inside the princely residence of Poggio Civitate. There you can observe statues of male figures, animals, sphinxes, a gorgon, friezes depicting various moments of the primitive family life. The village is tiny, entirely included inside the vaguely triangular shape perimeter of the walls of the 12th century, on which a curtain of buildings was juxtaposed. Being in the woods and valleys of the surroundings, our suggestion is to take the fascinating path that runs on the track of the old railway line for "La Befa", with different stopping points and the possibility to get closer to places of lignite mines with their labour village.



Peccioli

The breath of the art



**On the top of a hill,
along the Valdera, Peccioli is a bit of
a manifesto of Tuscany**

*There are found all its ancient characters,
tradition, but happily married with modernity
and the pleasure of living, to do culture*

Crossing the harvest and the lively town center, you arrive to Piazza del Popolo, where we find the parish church dedicated to San Verano (or better to say, its terga, because the square is overlooking the back of the building) and the Palazzo Pretorio, of medieval

architecture in which today is hosted the original museum of Russian icons, most of them coming from the collection of Francesco Bigazzi, dating back to the XVIII-XX. Moreover, wherever you walk in this village where we breath history and, especially, art: not only thanks to the prestigious signs of the past, but because, from any part of it reaches the visitor in every corner of the village will be face to face with contemporary art installations. From 1991 onwards, in fact, Peccioli has called a series of international artists to embellish the city with their works, to enrich its monumental heritage, penalized by the destruction of the medieval castle during the last war. The art is in the air everywhere, even in the fractions of the surroundings, you can easily reach, plunging into the Tuscan landscape. In the nearby Legoli you can visit the chapel with frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli dating back to 1480, while at Libbiano is located the Galileo Galilei Astronomical Observatory.

Pienza

The ideal town



Pienza, papal city, sits on its noble hill, facing the undulations of the Val d'Orcia dotted with farm-houses and cut-through by ancient pathways

Renaissance town, it is a perfect model of Humanistic urban planning and architecture, even now unspoiled in its structure. Since 1996 it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site



The credit goes to Pope Pius II, in the days Enea Silvio Piccolomini, an idealistic pontiff, born from a noble family and lover of the canons of classical beauty. He tried to make Pienza his "ideal town", leaving to posterity one of the most significant examples of rational urban design of the Italian Renaissance. The beauty of the town lies primarily in its square, that suddenly opens in

the narrow space between the medieval buildings. The project is a work by the architect Bernardo Rossellino who managed, lying to his patron about the huge expenditure that would have been required for its realisation, to provide humanity with monuments of priceless value and beauty. Among them the Cathedral, a "crystal temple", well-lighted thanks to a wonderful game of lights coming in from the large windows of the apse. The square is small but, owing to the ploy of perspective opening and the squared paving, akin to the paintings of Piero della Francesca, appears vast and majestic. Beside the Cathedral stand the Papal Palace and the Bishop's Palace. In front, conversely, the Palazzo Pubblico.

Pitigliano

On top of a tuff spur



**Suspended on its tuff cliff
in verdant valleys, this village is a
magic vision, a revelation**

*People who drive along the S.S. 74
Maremma heading towards the sanctuary
of the Madonna delle Grazie cannot
resist pulling over, charmed and almost
incredulous for the sight stretching in front
of them: Pitigliano, the suspended village*

The settlement of Pitigliano, totally built in tuff, is integrated into the landscape with such a compactness that it is almost impossible to separate the work of man from that of nature. Here, over the centuries, men have preferred digging to

building. Thanks to the ease of working of the volcanic rock, here a "civilisation of tuff" was born, a mark of which was left by the Etruscans, the people of the netherworld, and by Jews, the people of the Law. Digging tenaciously down into the bowels of the earth, the Etruscans built tombs, hypogea, tunnels and the mysterious "vie cave" (hollow ways): their world was the half-light of dungeons, as if only by entering the earth core through rock-cutting they could grasp its profound spirituality, defeat the fear of death and go back to the light of the sun. Also the Jews, who lived at Pitigliano for five hundred years, located their worshipping sites in the caves. Still nowadays the spectacular village of Pitigliano hides within itself another underground town, made of rugged speakers, galleries and tunnels for water drainage, columbaria with pigeon-holes, stables, cellars and ancient cave-houses turned into warehouses. In this setting are still preserved vats, barrels, presses, crushers.

Pomarance

The passion for theater



Mountains, rivers, woods not to finish, the large and small towns, etruscan and medieval: it seems that it is here that the beauties of Italy are grouped



Any road we take to arrive at Pomarance is a pleasure, a discovery, a marvel

In the surroundings, even before we arrive at the center of the town itself, stand out numerous medieval villages, churches, castles, ruins of ancient settlements of thermal and mining. Visit Libbiano, Micciano, Montegemoli, Montecerboli, Serrazzano, Lustignano, San Dalmazio, perched on a rugged and wooded hills. On all dominates the imposing fortress of Rocca Sillana, dating back to the centuries XI-XVI, one of the most significant examples of military tuscan architecture, recently restored and it can be visited. And here we are, therefore,

in the urban center of Pomarance, with its parish church of the XII century, the square of the Pretura, beautiful nineteenth century buildings of Via Roncalli. Pomarance has a weakness for the theater, with its refined theaters De Larderel and Dei Coraggiosi, and with the great Palio delle Contrade, wherein each September the "rioni", after the traditional parade through the streets of the center, join a challenge of blows of theatrical performances. Extensive forests, water courses, rare ecosystems, remains of mining activities characterize the territory and the system of natural reserves. At the "Masso delle Fanciulle", we will have a swim in a bathing stretch of rare beauty of the river Cecina.

Poppi

In the fabled Casentino



**This village is famous for its castle,
which bears the signature of the
famous architects family Di Cambio
and is the prototype of Palazzo
Vecchio in Florence**

A microcosm of venerable hermits, innkeepers, friars, jugglers, penitents, abbesses, converted and Madonnas that, in Fiabe fantastiche by Emma Perodi (1892), act in the same backdrop of the Casentino, drawing a different Tuscany: not the Florentine, Renaissance one, but one that opens the way through the Apennines, toward the borders of Romagna

It is in the very Casentino area where, in the first centuries of Christianity, there were monks who spent their lives collecting and writing legends of saints, that the devil reve-

als himself with fleeting apparitions, eyeing us from stables or materialising himself when we're half-asleep. And even if this is no longer the case, we still feel mysterious presences in the woods surrounding the parish churches and castles of Casentino. Among these castles, the one in Poppi maintains its romantic "aura": its bulk overlooks the valley, visible from all neighbour locations and is the expression of the warrior spirit of its founders, the Guidi Counts, uncontested lords of Casentino until 1440, when the betrayal of one of them opened the road to Florentine possession. The existing walls and the four (originally five) village gates had already been built for about thirty years when, on 11 June 1289, the battle royal of Campaldino, one of the most important of the Middle Ages, to which Dante Alighieri also participated, took place in the plain beneath Poppi: Florence versus Arezzo, i.e. Guelphs against Ghibellines. Two are the things that must be seen in the castle: the Rilliana library, filled with 25000 antique volumes, manuscripts and incunabula; and the fourteenth-century cycle of frescoes attributed to Taddeo Gaddi, a pupil of Giotto.

Porto Ercole

Caravaggio's landing point



**«How ancient the land
of Hercules might be, everyone can
understand from its very name»
says an ancient text**



*«We head towards the harbour that is named
after Hercules», writes in 416 CE Rutilius
Namatianus, and we almost forgot that from
the sea came life but so did fear and death,
which appeared as Barbarossa and his
Barbary pirates*

The watchtowers along the coast and the Spanish strongholds on hills seem to act as a crown for this village reflected in the silvery sea, where Caravaggio came to put an end to his life on 18 July 1610. The beaches lapping the promenade on the port are still there, hosting small boats at anchor for the winter. It is from here that our gaze turns to the village under the impressive fortress, from which the walls descend into the sea. The

American poet Robert Penn Warren wrote of Porto Ercole: «To a place of ruined stone we brought you, and sea-reaches. / Rocca: fortress, hawk-heel, lion-paw, clamped on a hill. / A hill, no. Sea cliff, and crag-cocked, the embrasures commanding the beaches / Range easy, with most fastidious mathematic and skill». Piazza Santa Barbara, which rises above the fifteenth-century bastion of the protectress of bomb engineers, offers a panoramic view of the harbour. The cavity inside served as munitions depot and allowed ships to upload and download by accessing directly from the sea. The Governor's Palace, designed in Renaissance style by Baldassarre Peruzzi, which later became the residence of the Spanish Government, looks onto the square.

Radda in Chianti

Chianti, a unique landscape



**Radda, in the heart of the Chianti,
is part of a landscape shaped
by the slow action of the
hand of the man from the
relationship between nature and
culture, and for this reason dwelling
of a community and its history**

*Sitting at a table on the outdoor
terrace of some farm or farmhouse,
we contemplate at the sunset light the
enchanting panorama of the Chianti territory.*

*On the table a bottle just uncorked of that
full-bodied red juice that takes its name from
the hills where it is born*

The village, historically extreme defensive bulwark of the boundaries of Florence towards the Sienese territory, has not experienced changes in the urban system in the course of the centuries, maintaining the beautiful elliptic plant, marked by the walls and by the traces of two ancient access ports. It offers itself the visitor letting him pass quickly along the winding main street but leaves us the possibility of a journey more meditated in the network of alleys, which lead to the discovery of the most hidden corners. Of absolute importance, just outside the village you can find the former convent of Santa Maria al Prato, today house of the Foundation for the Protection of the Territory of the Chianti Classico, with the Church of origin fourteenth century which houses a beautiful wooden altarpiece late fifteenth century, the work of the painter Neri di Bicci, depicting the Virgin on the throne with the Child, flanked by the Saints Nicholas, Giovanni Battista, Maddalena and Antonio Abate.

Radicofani

A station on the Via Francigena



**Crossed by the ancient
Via Francigena, which is the main
road axis, the medieval village
is surmounted by a volcanic cliff,
on which stands a large fortress
built in 1154 and then transformed
by the Medici**

*We climb up there to fully enjoy
the incredible views*

We move in the historical center, to discover the small great treasures of the churches of San Pietro and Sant'Agata which preserve inside them five works by Della Robbia. Strolling through the streets of the Jewish Quartier, take a look at the rest of the ancient village, until we arrive at the charming monumental station "Bosco Isabella", a romantic garden-esoteric built by the family Luchini at the end of the Nineteenth Century. Along the Via Francigena, built by the famous grand-ducal architect Bernardo Buontalenti for the Grand Duke Ferdinando Doctors in 1584, we find the great "Osteria Grossa". Used up to the end of the nineteenth century as a post station and change of horses, has hosted over the centuries, in addition to a large number of travelers and pilgrims, numerous illustrious personalities, among which Mozart and Charles Dickens, during their travels in Italy. In front of the post station, we admire the magnificent Fontana built for Ferdinando I to watering the horses.

Raggiolo

Magnificently outdated



The Small Village presents itself with the simplicity of one that has well more than millennial roots. Tales of Langobards, feudal lords and the remains of the fourteenth-century castle of the Guidi Counts testify to that

Stories of proud mountain people, whose only wealth originated from brook water - exploited in time by the forges for iron working, sawmills and mills - and by chestnuts, so much important in the local economy that one way of growing them has been named after the village, "raggiolana"

Raggiolo is a world on its own that especially tells stories of colonies from Corsica, called by the grand dukes of

Tuscany to repopulate the ancient castle destroyed in the 15th century. The Corses are the true ancestors of the inhabitants of Raggiolo: jealous of the inviolability of the territory, with life set by dried chestnuts, familiarity with the woods, transhumance in Maremma. And with miserable times to withstand in the cold of winters spent eating chestnut polenta, boiled chestnuts and cheese. Everything is stone-made in Raggiolo: the steep and difficult paved roads, the bridges on impetuous brooks, water springs, mills and lavatories, some chestnut drying kiln remained among the many that used to be there, the houses apparently all identical due to the essentiality of the structure yet arranged on levels and with different perspectives to follow the mountain slope and go along with it. The daily rhythm is still set by the bell of the church of San Michele Arcangelo. Every thirty minutes, the bell clapper reminds the inhabitants about the passing of time with ancient sounds, nowadays rare in a city. Everything in Raggiolo is magnificently outdated.

San Casciano dei Bagni

The spas of the Grand Dukes



Here in San Casciano everything is nature and wellness, and the thermal waters dear to the Etruscans, their discoverers, are still flowing



The Romans, echoing the custom of their predecessors, went to spas to treat - as the poet Horace says - liver and biliary diseases. In the 17th century, mineral and sulphurous waters started being in vogue again with the Grand Dukes of Tuscany, who gave to the spa building its current configuration

The way in which San Casciano dei Bagni presents itself today is that of a castle with walls and tower. The castle is a fake from the 20th century, but well integrated in the surrounding environment. From the belvedere of Piazza Matteotti we can admire one of the most beautiful views of the Tuscan countryside. Inside the village, numerous palaces and churches remind us of the importance of this place. The restorative and hea-

ling presence of the thermal springs was worth a detour from Radicofani, on the Via Francigena, to San Casciano. One who made such a detour was, in 1581, Montaigne, who noted it in his *Journal de Voyage en Italie*. Entering the narrow alleys with significant names such as Via della Pace e Via del Silenzio, we go down to a gate in travertine blocks, the most difficult to storm because at the top of a steep rise. If we move to the other side of the village we reach the sixteenth-century oratory preserving a fresco by Pomarancio. Also worth a visit are the surroundings of the hamlets Figghine, Palazzone and Celle sul Rigo. The Sagra dei Pici (festival of pici, a local variety of pasta) taking place in the latter certainly contradicts the intent of the *remise en forme* of the spas.

Santa Fiora

Water in the square



Located on the southern slope of Mount Amiata, the village develops on a hill and is divided into three "terzieri", Castello, Borgo, Montecatino, descending from the chestnut woods to the springs of the Fiora river

The Castello terziere, the oldest, has a medieval square dominated by the ruins of Aldobrandeschi fortifications and from the sixteenth-century palace of the Sforza Cesarini Counts, today municipal seat

Between the frescoes of the school of the Cavalier d'Arpino and the Museum of mercury mines of Mount Amiata,

one can easily grasp the peculiarities of this place where, in Piazza San Michele, there is a sculpture of the Saint trampling on the devil. Once we have visited the parish church of Santa Flora and Lucilla, which houses one of the largest collections in the world of "rob-biane", glazed terracottas by Luca and Andrea Della Robbia, we enter through the medieval Porticciola (small gate) in the Borgo terziere, and then in the area of the ghetto where once stood the synagogue. From Porta San Michele we will finally arrive in the Montecatino terziere, where the abundance of water had favoured, in the past, the emergence of some factories. Here our attention is drawn to an unexpected water body: the splendid sixteenth-century Peschiera which, according to Cesare Brandi, seems a tale place, unforgettable and it alone worth the trip. Next to the Peschiera, we notice a vast garden-park of Sforza age and the 17th century church of the Madonna delle Nevi rising above the springs of the Fiora river, visible under a glass floor.

San Gimignano

A journey into the Middle Ages



The village, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is known in the world for its towers as the “Manhattan of the Middle Ages”



In San Gimignano on whatever day, perhaps at dusk, in the streets of stone fading in the dark leaving the towers their last breath of light, it is not difficult to be impressed by its intact appearance of the twelfth-thirteenth century

We arrive almost as foreigners, going up the road that gives substance to the town. From the gate, then up through the contrada San Matteo until the core, with two squares: the religious with the Dome and the civil, called Della Cisterna, with noble houses. The Via Francigena, main road for pilgrims heading to Rome, crossed the inhabited area from north to south. Also for this reason the 13th century was the moment of greatest economic fortune of the town and its countryside, thanks to the saffron trade throughout Europe. In the 14th

century followed, however, a steep decline, which led in 1351 to the submission of the town to Florence. The 14th and 15th centuries were fundamental, however, from an artistic point of view, due to the presence in the town of numerous masters, from Siena or Florence, called especially from religious orders to embellish their possessions: San Gimignano is filled, thus, with works of Barna da Siena, Bartolo di Fredi, Taddeo di Bartolo, Benozzo Gozzoli. It is peculiar how the very decline and marginalisation that the town has suffered until the 19th century have created the conditions allowing for the extraordinary crystallization of its medieval appearance: that is the reason why today San Gimignano is counted among the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Sarteano

Between Val di Chiana and Val d'Orcia



From the nineteenth century pharmacy, which was the cultural cenacle of the country, to the small eighteenth-century Teatro degli Arrischianti, Sarteano shows immediately its value

Worth the trip since here to the beautiful Annunciation by Domenico Beccafumi in the church of San Martino: realized in 1546, two years after the famous painter complained in a letter that he was not yet paid

The village has the good fortune of being in a beautiful territory, that puts together the uncontaminated Val d'Orcia, coffer of biodiversity, and the wonderful landscapes of the Val di Chiana. Conscious of living in a blessed place in the ancient heart of central Italy, 5thousand inhabitants were able to constitute a thirty associations, all culturally alive and busy even where one would expect only peace, silence and perhaps boreorgi-



vadom. On the contrary: Sarteano is bubbling of activity, it has a vibrant theatrical and musical scene (the Accademia degli Arrischianti, founded in 1731, was refounded thirty years ago), it attracts artists and preserves its craftsmen. Visited the palaces of the most ancient and important families, and the castle around which arose the village, it exits from the historical center to climb along Monte Cetona, whose slopes are dotted with small settlements, ruins, sources, streams. The toponyms remind us of the ties with history, with the ancient families, with water. The charm of these paths is not given only by the beauty of nature, but also from their ancient bond with the man: first by the Etruscans and then the pilgrims and wayfarers directed along the Via Francigena.

Scarperia

Where the blades shine



A village with an iron core, barely softened by the Renaissance paintings scattered in palaces and churches, or by the poetic verses of Margherita Guidacci, who so much loved this village

Just a few kilometres from Florence, in rolling hills, tall cypress trees, and against a background of mountain peaks and passes, lies the territory of Mugello and Val di Sieve.

It is a landscape of woods providing black truffles and mushrooms and which invites us to discover parish churches and villages.

Among them we find Scarperia

Here everything tells about sharp blades, i.e. “knives, shears and pocket-knives”, whose production guaranteed fame to local craftsmen, from the Middle Ages until the mid-18th century. From the humble soup kitchen knife to the valuable blades of noblemen, from the faithful tool used in fieldwork to the dagger as a pledge of love or symbol of loyalty: the entire cutlery art has found in Scarperia his Vulcan's antrum. The village, born as a Florentine outpost on the road to Bologna, later became an important market and a resting place by exploiting its position. Today it is still cut across and divided in two by the road that leads to Bologna, around which the buildings have created an urban pattern with a vaguely rectangular shape, enclosed by walls spaced out with square towers. The heart of the fortified settlement is the Palazzo dei Vicari, residence with a fourteenth-century structure, austere and towered on the side facing the square and a fortress on the rear.

Sorano

Between ravines and ridges of tufa



The village, already inhabited in Etruscan, stands on a tufa spur that dominates the valley of the Lente river



In the Eighteenth century the cliff was fortified to the north of the village, called Sasso Leopoldino. The neighborhoods close to the Sasso already at the beginning of the twentieth century began to see their populations drift away, due to the progressive erosion of the block of tufa

In 1929 a royal decree provided the population to transfer in another place, fortunately never happened, otherwise today Sorano would not exist more. The stabilization of the phenomenon of erosion and the rehabilitation and reuse of numerous houses uninhabited

and crumbling, have saved this extraordinary village. If you look at the district at the Porta dei Merli, with the houses perched overlooking the river, the impression is that of an ensemble suggestive and organic: what a romantic sensitivity would call "quaint". With the definitive consolidation of the cliff, Sorano has returned to live. Closed to the south by the powerful Orsini Fortress and to the north by the rocky crest of the Sasso Leopoldino, the village at the top of the latter opens in a terrace that allows an impressive view on the underlying village, surrounded by deep ravines, and on the ridges of tufa that delimit the other side of the river.

Sovana

Etruscan soul



Within its walls, Sovana hasn't got noteworthy palaces, friezes or ornaments, but small, old and humble houses from the 12th and 13th century, which like in no other place make us feel like living the very Middle Ages

The village, therefore, with its Etruscan past, undergoes a slow Romanisation after the conquest of Vulci (280 BCE). Its historical centre develops during the Middle Ages near the necropolis

The Etruscan presence is testified mainly by the necropolis with its tombs carved in tuff, whereas the charm of the "strada di mezzo" (middle road) that

cuts across the village is entirely medieval: the religious and civil buildings concentrated in so little space demonstrate the importance, in feudal times, of this place of few houses that once was a town, the main centre of a vast county, fortified garrison, birthplace of a Pope. Sovana is all curled up between the fortress and the Dome, monuments that symbolize the political power of the Aldobrandeschi family and the spiritual one of the Church. Impressive ruins, such as the cut-off keep, remain of the Rocca Aldobrandesca, inserted within the medieval walls. From the gate of the Rocca we enter the main square, surrounded by the thirteenth-century Palazzetto of the Archive with a vault-shaped bell tower and clock tower, and the church of Santa Maria, Romanesque and Gothic, with a splendid Romanesque ciborium, unique in Tuscany. On the western strip of the tuff spur dominating the valley of the necropolis rises the Dome, casket of art treasures. Deep in the forest, the Tomba Ildebranda is the most suggestive Etruscan funeral monument in Tuscany.

Suvereto

Vines sprinkled with sea salt



Red and grey are the colours of the village, of its stones, cobblestones and roofing tiles. All around, hills have the colours of vineyards, the nuances of olive trees and the various shades of green of the woods

We arrive in Suvereto from the sea, driving on the Aurelia road along the Coast of the Etruscans and then heading inland roughly between Piombino and Venturina

In the landscape of this part of Tuscany, suspended between the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Colline Metallifere, Suvereto, with its old houses, ancient roofs, artisan shops, is like an enduring old trunk. The olive trees have wrinkles that echo the ones of some Etruscan faces of local elders. Here the osmosis is total between man, stone and earth. Etruscan (Populonia is just behind the corner), rural, walled-up Maremma land. Inside these well



preserved walls and out into the countryside, there is today a whole multitude of cellars, crushers, farms, farms, restaurants. Suvereto is no longer the sad and wretched village of the end of the 17th century, almost abandoned because of the stench of stagnant water and malaria which made Maremma "bitter", including the upper part of the Livornese. The houses of Suvereto, with their façades of local stone mixed with recovered materials gathered from ground, cobblestones, flagstones and streets, express the rustic spirit of a rural community that does not want to waste and gets straight to the point. It is the sobriety of the countryside that, after an apnoea of centuries, has returned to live among the rows of vines, olive trees, cypresses, palms and the ancient cork oaks after which Suvereto was named.

Trequanda

A castle between Siena and Chiusi



Trequanda, as many Tuscan villages, rests on a hill surrounded by dense woods and tidy cultivations of olive trees and vineyards. It arose in function of the castle, on the road that linked Siena to Chiusi

The meaning of the name is obscure, but it sounds good and is nice, just as you read it arriving at its delicious station, down in the valley of the Asso

Its walls are almost intact even if, of the three original doors only two re-

main: Porta al Sole and Porta al Leccio. In front of Piazza Garibaldi stands the old castle Cacciaconti, with an imposing cylindrical tower and fronted by a charming Italian garden. Not far away is the church of Saints Peter and Andrew, from the facade in ashlar whites and blacks, inside which preserves a fresco of the Sodoma, a terracotta statue attributed to Sansovino and the urn with the relics of the Blessed Bonizzella Cacciaconti, to whom is dedicated a village festival in May. Outside the historic center, immersed in a grove of holm oaks and cypresses, is located a colombaio of the end of the Eighteenth Century. Built at the time of the Grand Duke Leopoldo, it is a rare building in its genre, of proportions carefully designed and built with refined artisan craftsmanship. Around the town, but distant many hills and small valleys are the fractions Castelmuzio, compact lump of houses that still lives of the richness of the olive groves, and Petroio, small capital of terracotta.

Vinci

Leonardo's village



The village, sheltered during the centuries by its castle founded by the Guidi Counts around the year 1000, is almond-shaped and a special place where everything speaks of Leonardo

On the personality and the works of the great inventor are focused most of the attractions of this village, although it is not less endowed with other beautiful landscapes and monuments

Olive groves and vineyards spread their delights everywhere in the fertile coun-

tryside surroundings, while sumptuous villas lie behind the thick curtains of cypresses and pines. The visitor who comes in this village will not neglect the Museum and the Biblioteca Leonardiana, hosted in the fortress of the Guidi Counts. The museum, one of the most important and most visited in Tuscany, preserves a wide and prestigious collection of models of inventions of the great genius: behold a projecting device, a helicopter, a parachute, hydraulic machines and military ones... dozens of models of tools for the most varied uses, presented with precise references to the drawings and the handwritten annotations of the artist. Walking through the alleys and trails we come, then, to the green countryside in where Leonardo wandered in contemplation, while his tireless mind sought inspiration for ever new and curious applications. We will finally reach, along the ancient "strada verde" (green road), the hamlet of Anchiano, where we can visit the birthplace of the great man of Vinci.

Volterra

The town of alabaster



"Town of wind and rock", writes of Volterra Gabriele d'Annunzio; town "hard, iron-made, open to the sun and to the winds as an ancient tragedy", as described by the critic Cesare Brandi

Volterra can be seen from afar, high up there, in a part of Tuscany with few trees and valleys open like a book

It stands on a cliff, Volterra: with a single glance you can admire the magnificent erosions of the Balze (crags), dramatically tangible sign of the unstoppable erosion of the rock that holds the town. Already dominated the heights of the Valdera and Val di Cecina the ancient Velathri, chief town of one of the twelve Lucumonie of Etruscan territory, that was already surrounded by walls in the 5th century BCE. Essential is a visit to



its Guarnacci Etruscan Museum, among the richest in Italy. The subsoil of the city is rich in rock salt and gypsum. Gypsum is present in different forms and one of these is alabaster, true resource of the city and of its craftsmen. On entering the Minucci house-tower, today eco-museum of the alabaster, we discover every secret of it. Curled up inside the walls, finally, the historical centre: the beautiful squares and sloping streets, the tower-houses, merge the medieval charm with the remote one of the ancient founders, by attracting over the centuries writers, poets and directors who, inspired by the exceptionality of the village, far from Tuscan stereotypes, have made it part of their works. The fortress, symbol and instrument of Florentine power, stands on the highest point of the city.



Conventional Signs
Roads
Railways
(canals)

THE MAP OF THE VILLAGES

TUSCANY





- | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 1 ANGHIAI | 12 CASTIGLION FIORENTINO | 25 MONTECARLO | 39 RADICOFANI |
| 2 BARBERINO VAL D'ELSA | 13 CERTALDO | 26 MONTEFOLLONICO | 40 RAGGIOLO |
| 3 BARGA | 14 CETONA | 27 MONTEMERANO | 41 SAN CASCIANO |
| 4 BUONCONVENTO | 15 CHIUSI | 28 MONTEPULCIANO | DEI BAGNI |
| 5 CASALE MARITTIMO | 16 COLLODI | 29 MONTERIGGIONI | 42 SANTA FIORA |
| 6 CASCIANA TERME LARI | 17 COREGLIA | 30 MONTESCUDAIO | 43 SAN GIMIGNANO |
| 7 CASOLE D'ELSA | 18 ANTEMINELLI | 31 MURLO | 44 SARTEANO |
| 8 CASTELFRANCO DI SOPRA | 19 CUTIGLIANO | 32 PECCIOLI | 45 SCARPERIA |
| 9 CASTELNUOVO | 20 FOSDINOVO | 33 PIENZA | 46 SORANO |
| BERARDENGA | 21 GIGLIO CASTELLO | 34 PITTIGLIANO | 47 SOVANA |
| 10 CASTELNUOVO VAL DI | 22 LORO CIUFFENNA | 35 POMARANCE | 48 SUVERETO |
| CECINA | 23 LUCIGNANO | 36 POPPI | 49 TREQUANDA |
| 11 CASTIGLIONE DI | 24 MASSA MARITTIMA | 37 PORTO ERCOLE | 50 VINCI |
| GARFAGNANA | 25 MONTALCINO | 38 RADDA IN CHIANTI | 51 VOLTERRA |



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