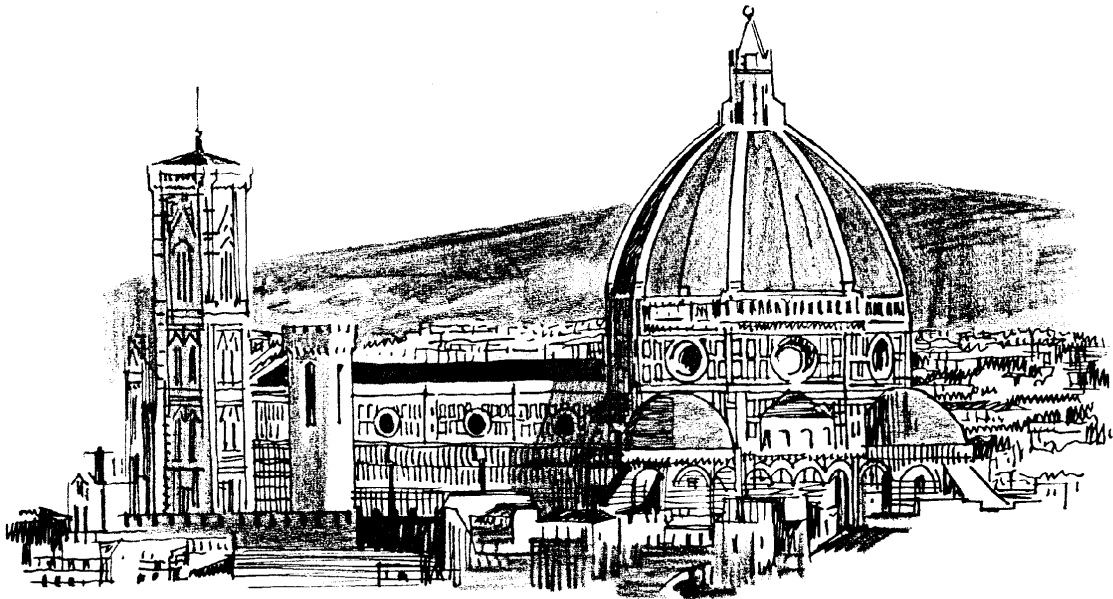


# TREASURES OF TUSCANY



Saturday 12 - Saturday 19 October 2019

Tuscany is renowned for its artistic heritage and landscapes with its enchanting hilltop towns. The medieval city of Florence is otherwise known as the birthplace of the Renaissance, with its churches and museums boasting artistic treasures from a vast array of painters, sculptors and architects. Our tour will include some of the highlights that Florence has to offer, whilst also exploring some of the many nearby towns such as Lucca, with its traditional Renaissance town walls, Pistoia, Arezzo and Prato. We will be based in the spa town of Montecatini Terme, which dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century and is famous for its warm saline springs.

## SATURDAY 12 OCTOBER 2019

*Independent arrangements to the airport.* We will depart on a scheduled British Airways flight to Florence, due to depart at 10.45 and arrive in Florence at 14.40 local time. On arrival we will be met by our coach and we will then travel to **Montecatini Terme**, where we will check in to a centrally located 4 star hotel for 7 nights' bed and breakfast accommodation. Montecatini Terme's tree-lined avenues, parks, smart shops and cafés give the town a genteel atmosphere. Once the private property of the Medici, the town is now the most fashionable watering place in Tuscany, with the old town high above where the stage-like sloping square is overlooked by a floodlit castle and becomes a great outdoor café at night.

After some time at leisure, **dinner** will be served in the hotel restaurant this evening.

## SUNDAY 13 OCTOBER 2019

After breakfast at the hotel we will travel to Florence, where we will be met by a local specialist guide and walk to the Uffizi Gallery. We will then enjoy a pre-booked visit to the Uffizi - Italy's greatest art gallery. The **Uffizi** was built between 1560 and 1580 to accommodate Duke Cosimo I's offices (*uffici*). Masterpieces by every major Florentine painter are displayed here in chronological fashion, enabling the viewer to trace the development of Florentine art from Byzantine to High Renaissance and beyond. The octagonal Tribune, decorated in red and gold, contains the works most valued by the Medici family. Among some of the numerous fine and famous works are Simone Martini's *Annunciation*, the unconventional *Holy Family* by Michelangelo, portraits by Piero della Francesca, Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, Titian's sensuous nude *Venus of Urbino*, and Caravaggio's early *Bacchus*. The broad corridors around the inner side of the building exhibit numerous fine Greek and Roman sculptures. Following our visit, **lunch** will be taken in a local restaurant.

This afternoon we will visit **Santa Croce**, which hides a wealth of 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century masterpieces behind its neo-Gothic façade. There are radiant frescoes by Giotto and his pupil Taddeo Gaddi in the Bardi and Peruzzi chapels, and

in the cloister, Brunelleschi's Cappella de'Pazzi is a masterpiece of the Renaissance. The first true night scene of western art is depicted in frescoes by Gaddi in the Capella Baroncelli, and the museum houses yet more gems, including the magnificent *Last Supper* by Gaddi and Cimabue's *Crucifixion*. The vast and beautiful Franciscan church contains the tombs of many famous Florentines including those of Dante and Machiavelli, the famous classical tomb of Leonardo Bruni, and the monumental tomb of Michelangelo with three figures representing Architecture, Sculpture and Painting. At the end of the afternoon we will return to the hotel for an evening at leisure.

## MONDAY 14 OCTOBER 2019

After breakfast at the hotel we will travel to **Lucca**, where we will meet a local guide upon arrival. Lucca enjoyed its heyday in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the most incredible and flamboyant outcrop is the exuberant

**Church of San Michele**. Lucca still abounds in fortified dwellings, and the medieval quarter includes a beautifully preserved house (Torre Guinigi), the top of which affords wonderful views. The town's encircling groves of trees trace the line of the totally intact city walls, which provide a lovely walkway around the town.

This morning we will enjoy a guided tour of the old town, and visits will include the **Roman Amphitheatre**, set well below the street level, and the wonderful **Duomo**, dedicated to St Martin. The Romanesque Duomo has a beautiful ornate façade with sculptures by Guidetto da Como and a gigantic arched 11<sup>th</sup> century campanile. The interior is rich in art, and houses the Tomb of Ilaria del Carretto and a statue of St John the Evangelist by Jacopo della Quercia, Pietà by Bartolomeo di Giovanni and selected paintings by Ghirlandaio. **Lunch** will be served in a local restaurant.

This afternoon we will re-join our coach and continue to Camigliano for a visit to the **Villa Torrigiani** (*subject to availability*). Dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the villa is a fine example of baroque architecture and is highly distinctive for its multi-coloured façade. The colours are obtained by a variety of materials: stone grey and tuff

alternating yellow pillars and arches, marble statues of white, ochre plaster at the bottom with the upper part in white. At the end of the afternoon we will return to the hotel for an evening at leisure.

### TUESDAY 15 OCTOBER 2019

After breakfast at the hotel we will travel to **Florence**, where we will be met by a local specialist guide and walk to the basilica of **San Lorenzo**. Dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, San Lorenzo was the parish church of the Medici family and many of the principal members of the family are in fact buried here. Situated within the cloister of the church, is the Laurentian Library, containing the manuscripts and books which belong to the private library of the Medici family. It is also known as one of Michelangelo's finest architectural achievements.

Following our visit we will continue to the **Bargello**. The Bargello was constructed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century as the town hall, and has also seen service as a prison and the home to the chief of police. After extensive renovations, it was opened in 1865 as one of Italy's first national museums and now houses magnificent applied arts and sculpture, ranking second only to the Uffizi among

Florentine museums. Italy's finest collection of Renaissance sculpture includes works by Donatello, Michelangelo, Brunelleschi and Ghiberti, as well as superb bronzes by such masters as Giambologna and Cellini. Fine ceramics and rugs, beautiful early ivories, silverware and other *objets d'art* are among the museum's other magnificent collections.

There will be free time for lunch and the remainder of the afternoon will be at leisure in Florence. At the end of the afternoon we will return to our hotel in Montecatini for an evening at leisure.

### WEDNESDAY 16 OCTOBER 2019

After breakfast at the hotel, we will travel by coach to the ancient city of **Pistoia** and embark on a walking tour with a local guide. Pistoia is one of the region's main cities, and has a chequered history of conflict during medieval times. Thankfully, the Pistoia which one finds today is far more tranquil, and our tour will focus upon the principal buildings in the town. The Pisan-

Romanesque Duomo is located in the heart of the historical centre and is easily recognised by the large campanile, which was initially built as a watchtower. The interior houses several tombs and a magnificent silver altar, which has over 600 biblical statues. Close to the Duomo is the octagonal 14<sup>th</sup> century **Baptistry**, with its green and white marble façade. It was designed by Andrea Pisano and the doorway has carved figures of John the Baptist and St Peter. Pistoia also has several important churches, including the **Chiesa di San Francesco**, with frescoes by Pietro Lorenzetti, and the **Chiesa di Sant'Andrea**, whose pulpit is one of Giovanni Pisano's masterpieces.

Following our morning of visits in Pistoia, we will continue by coach to **Prato**. **Lunch** will be served in a local restaurant upon arrival. We will visit the **Duomo**, with its famous pulpit by Michelozzo and Donatello before continuing to the outskirts of Prato for a visit to the **Villa di Poggio a Caiano**, one of the most famous of the Medici villas. Designed in 1485 by Giuliano da Sangallo for Lorenzo 'Il Magnifico', it was his favourite country retreat. Today, it houses two museums: one dedicated to the historic apartments and the Museum of Still-Life. We will see the little 17<sup>th</sup> century theatre, and the most famous room, the Salone, designed in 1513-21 to celebrate the Medici's return to Florence. Its magnificent frescoes are by Andrea Del Sarto, Pontormo and Franciabigio. At the end of the afternoon we will return to the hotel for an evening at leisure.

### THURSDAY 17 OCTOBER 2019

After breakfast at the hotel we will travel to **Florence**, where we will be met by a local specialist guide and walk to the **Church of Santa Trinità**. Commissioned by Vallombrosan Benedictine monks, the church was founded in the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Originally located just off the ancient city walls, the church was incorporated into the city centre when the second walls were built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. We will continue to the **Church of Santo Spirito**. This church was the project of Filippo Brunelleschi, with building commencing in 1444. The church houses important works of art by Michelangelo (the wooden crucifix) and by Filippino

Lippi and Sansovino. Our morning will conclude at the **Santa Maria del Carmine**, which is predominantly Baroque, replacing a 15<sup>th</sup> century church which was almost entirely destroyed by fire in 1771. The transept chapels from the earlier church survive, one of which is the famous **Cappella Brancacci** with a series of frescoes by Masaccio and his older colleague, Masolino, depicting the life of St Peter. The chapel was often visited by later artists such as Leonardo and Michelangelo, who came to study Masaccio's pioneering work. **Lunch** will be served in a local restaurant.

The remainder of the afternoon will be at leisure in Florence. At the end of the afternoon we will return to our hotel in Montecatini for an evening at leisure.

#### FRIDAY 18 OCTOBER 2019

Our morning will begin in **Arezzo**, which is one of Tuscany's wealthiest cities whose prosperity is based on a thriving jewellery industry. War damage led to many of the medieval alleys being replaced by broad avenues, but Arezzo retains some outstanding sights, including the arcaded Piazza Grande by Vasari. We will meet a local guide on arrival and visit the 13<sup>th</sup> century Gothic-Franciscan **Church of San Francesco**, to view one of Italy's greatest fresco cycles - the *Legend of the True Cross*

by Piero della Francesca, in the Bacci Chapel in the apse. The beautiful frescoes depict the writings of the *Legenda Aurea* by Jacopo da Varazze and were fully restored in the 1990s. There will be free time for lunch.

This afternoon we will re-join our coach and return to our hotel in Montecatini. The remainder of the afternoon will be at leisure. A **farewell dinner** will be served in a local restaurant this evening.

#### SATURDAY 19 OCTOBER 2019

This morning we will check out of our hotel and travel to the outskirts of **Florence**. We hope to arrange a **guided tour** of the **Museo Stibbert**. Located on the hill of Montughi, the museum was founded by Frederick Stibbert, and features a vast collection of artefacts, predominantly armoury dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Following the visit we will re-join our coach and travel to Florence airport, for our return scheduled British Airways flight to Edinburgh, due to depart at 15.30 and arrive in Edinburgh at 17.25 local time.

*Independent onward travel arrangements.*

*Please note that as this tour has been planned many months in advance, the final itinerary may vary slightly from the above.*

