



*Thanks for booking a holiday
at Casa Marginetta!*



We hope you have a lovely holiday in Tuscany! We have put together this information pack to help you enjoy your stay. It includes information on local restaurants, itineraries and interesting places to visit. We hope you find it useful.

If you would like to see other information in this pack that you think would be of interest, please let us know and we'll do our best to find out.

Your Information Pack

Welcome to Tuscany!



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Local Shops & Facilities

Chemist

(Farmacia): Piegaio

Opens Monday to Saturday 08:30 to 12:30 and 15:30 to 19:30

A notice is displayed showing the duty chemist for emergencies.

Note:

Aspirin and Paracetamol are only available from chemists. You won't find them in the supermarket. They are also ridiculously expensive! Take some with you instead. Paracetamol for children similar to Calpol is widely available from chemists and is called "Tichiapirina" – pronounced "Tikiapirina".

Baby milk is also fairly expensive in Italy. Some of the bigger supermarkets stock it, but it is mostly available from chemists, who also have ready made cartons of baby milk that may be useful if you run out while out and about.



Post Office

(Posta): Piegaio

Opens Monday to Saturday 08:15 to 10:30.

Closed afternoons and all day Sunday.

Longer opening hours are available at the post office in Diecimo.

Stamps are stocked locally by the post office.



General Store

(Alimentari): Piegaio

Lots of fresh produce and a warm welcome await you at the general store. Conveniently, matches and cigarettes are also stocked. Although some bars do sell them, elsewhere these are usually only available from licensed tobacconists where you will see a large 'T' outside.

Note food shops often close Wednesday afternoons. Other shops close half day or all day Mondays.



Butcher

(Macelleria): Piegaio

The traditional friendly local butcher will be pleased to serve you with deliciously fresh cuts of meat that will 'melt in your mouth'! So much nicer than the tasteless polystyrene-packaged stuff back home!



Bar

There is a small bar in just at the end of the road to Convalle, but most guests prefer to drink at 'La Fonte' or at the 'Blu Bar' in Piegai. All are easy walking distance.

Petrol Station

(Benzinaio): Q8 in Diecimo

Note: Stations on outskirts of Lucca are usually the cheapest.



Bank / Cash Dispenser

(Banco / Bancomat):

The nearest ones are at *Cassa di Risparmio di Lucca* in Pescaglia and Diecimo.

The most reliable one is at *Banca Toscana* next to Penny Market in Borgo a Mozzano

Supermarket

Penny Market

Via Ludovica Angolo, 55023 Borgo a Mozzano

Opens Monday to Saturday: 08:00 to 20:00 Sunday: 08:30 to 13:00 & 15:00 to 20:00

Esselunga

Loc. Marlia, Via del Brennero, Capannori

Opens Monday to Saturday: 08:00 to 21:00 Sunday: Closed

E. Leclerc in Gallicano

Carrefour in Lucca.

Smaller local shops tend to open Monday to Saturday around 09:00, close for lunch at 12.30/13:00 and re-open between 15:30 and 17:00, but this can vary widely depending on location and type.

Internet Café

Jaqueline's

via Vittorio Emanuele, 66

Ponte a Serraglio,

Bagni di Lucca.

Phone: +39 05831861501



Jaqueline speaks perfect English and will be delighted to help you get online. Offering fast Internet access at a reasonable price, a great selection of new and used English Books (over 2,000 titles) and a wealth of information on the area, means that you will probably want to drop in more than once if you plan on visiting Bagni di Lucca.

Whether you're searching for local culinary delights, untouched Tuscan villages, walks through the beautiful mountain terrain, or just need to know where you can get pampered, Jaqueline is in the know and will let you in on some invaluable information that can't be found in a guide book or tourist info centre.

Jaqueline's is a friendly place to browse the net, to send and receive emails and to print out that essential info you need on your travels. Why not send a few snaps to friends or post them on Facebook?

Sunday Opening

Bars and cake shops are often open on Sunday morning, but generally Sunday opening has only just started here. The ***E. Leclerc*** hypermarket in Gallicano opens all day and the ***Penny Market*** in Borgo a Mozzano opens except at lunchtime, but all other shops, including other hypermarkets, are normally closed. The exception would be in busy tourist locations like Pisa, Florence etc.

Important Telephone Numbers

General Emergency	113	Medical Emergency/Ambulance	118
Police (Carabinieri)	112	Fire	115
International Operator Enquiries	176	Operator	170
Directory Enquiries	12		

Doctors

Doctor Fabio di Bernardini  0583-835720
Via Comunale, 33, Borgo a Mozzano (LU) 55023

Doctor Luciano Sodini  0583-888059
Via I Maggio, 16, Borgo a Mozzano (LU) 55023

Doctor Gozio  0583-805319
Ponte a Serraglio, Bagni di Lucca

Taxis

Roberto Fontana  0583-804169

Silvano Politi  0583-87579

Giuseppe Ridolfi  329-4508001  0583-805230

Anna Tolomei  348-5150282  0583-867709

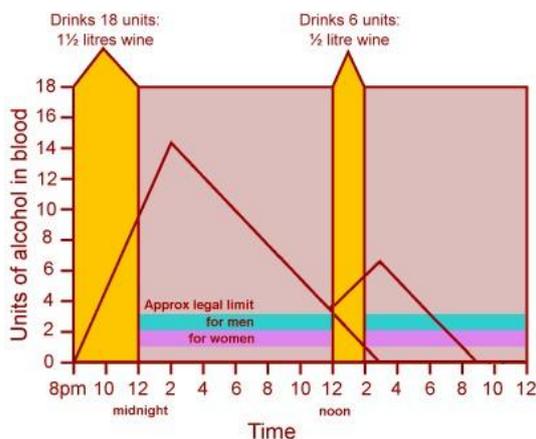
Please bear in mind the following:

- These taxi drivers are based in or near Bagni di Lucca. We have not managed to find any nearer.
- When you telephone, the person who answers may not speak English.
- For obvious reasons drivers will charge to come to Convalle to pick you up.
- Taxis are not cheap in Italy and whenever possible you should agree the fare before getting in.

Driving

Although it can feel like you're driving on a formula 1 racetrack at times, the roads in Tuscany are generally very good. The region has a well maintained network of motorways, which will get you to your destination quickly and when you're not in a hurry you can take more picturesque roads to explore the beautiful Tuscan countryside – our favourite being the SS222 from Florence to Siena.

In Italy everyone drives on the right hand side of the road and steering wheels are fitted on the left side of the car. Seat belts must be worn **and lights must be on** at all times when driving out of the towns and cities – this means on all local roads, highways and motorways. Even if Italians appear to ignore the rules, our advice is that **you** shouldn't risk it!



Italy is trying hard to clamp down on drink-driving and as always the advice is **not to drink alcohol at all** if you intend to drive. In Italy the blood alcohol limit has recently been reduced to 0.05%, which is practically half the UK/US figure of 0.08%.

Please bear in mind that if you drink at home in the evening you are **much more likely** to be over the limit the following morning than you would be in the UK/US. A litre of typical Italian wine contains 12 units and each unit of alcohol takes about an hour to leave the body!

Some other important things you should be aware of:

- Motorcyclists must always wear crash helmets even when riding scooters, mopeds etc.
- Non-residents are subject to hefty 'on the spot fines', for example:
 - Speeding 40km/h more than permitted €1,400.
 - Driving closer than the minimum safe stopping distance behind the vehicle in front €350

Renting a car

Theoretically you require an International Driving Permit (IDP) to rent a car in Italy, This is an official translation of your driver's license and Italy, by law, requires that you have one. However, in practice you can make a rental with a standard valid driving license, but you should take both parts.

You will find most of the international car rental companies and many local companies at Pisa Airport.

Generally, you will get a better price if you book in advance and internet bookings are probably the most competitively priced.

We used to use Hertz via Ryanair or Holiday Autos, but recently we have been getting great deals from CARHIRE3000.COM and the cars have been consistently clean, reliable and competitively priced - not surprising really as they work with the major operators anyway, but somehow manage to get a better price. They are particularly good at getting affordable rates for younger drivers. We recommend that you check their prices before booking elsewhere.

Regardless of which company you use, make sure you understand what is included in the price you pay and what your liabilities are. Minimum age to rent a car is 21 or 25 if you hire with some international companies.

It's also worth considering using Insurance4CarHire.com if you prefer to have an excess waiver as their product is very good value and much cheaper than from the car rental firms - especially if you drive abroad more than once a year.

Bringing your own car

If you decide to bring your own car, we recommend joining one of the main motoring organisations, such as [The AA](#). Their website has useful advice and tips when driving in various European countries.

They also offer [European Breakdown Cover](#) giving roadside assistance/emergency repair, 24 hr English speaking helpline, emergency car hire and accommodation and all at a great saving if you buy it online. They also have route planners, maps, guides and even emergency breakdown kits. These resources should get you to Casa Marginetta, safe and sound, ready for a relaxing holiday.

Motorways

The motorways – *Autostradas* – can be a quick way to get around and for some trips they're essential if you want to get to your destination without the journey taking forever!

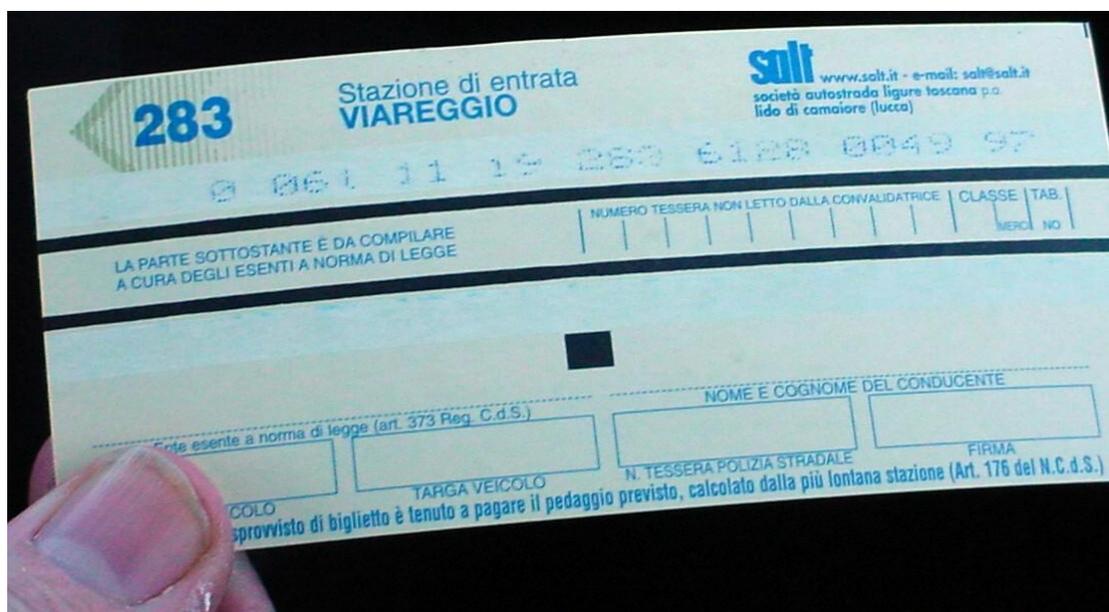
This is because, in Tuscany, the motorways cross bridges and cut through mountains whereas the ordinary roads meander left and right, up and over every breathtaking peak and down into each beautiful valley!

However, there is something vitally important that you should know as you enter any motorway:

- **Always** go through a ticket lane and take a ticket.
- **Never** go through a lane which **only** has the Telepass symbol.



Why? Well the fact is that once you enter the motorway system you can travel throughout Italy. So the ticket is your only proof of entry point. The bad news is that a Telepass-only lane will let you in without giving you a ticket, so once again **make sure you check for the biglietto/ticket symbol!!**



If you have no ticket then for obvious reasons you will be charged from the furthest entry point on the entire network. This is somewhere in the south of Italy and will cost you a packet! One of our guests made this mistake a few years ago it cost him over €100 cash on the spot for a €2 toll!! Be careful ☺

Parking

Parking in Tuscany is fairly easy except in big towns and cities. Some more tourist-oriented ones have large, car parks just outside the historic centres, but elsewhere street parking is organised and designated with signs.

Don't be tempted to randomly park in the street just because other cars are already parked there. Several guests have received unwelcome penalty tickets by parking just outside the Lucca 'walls' instead of driving in through one of the arches and parking in a designated area.

What's happening is that Lucca is a pedestrianised city. This means that parking spaces are in short supply. Some Italians who work in Lucca can't afford to pay to park all day at inflated prices and the police turn a blind eye to this. However, rental cars are easy to spot and they ticket them straight away so that tourists quickly learn the hard way! If you do get a parking ticket, it is worth knowing that you can pay the fine at any post office. If you don't pay the fine, rest assured your credit card will get billed by the rental company in due course along with a hefty 'handling fee'.

The *parcheggio* sign tells you that there is an off-street parking area to the right which accepts cars and vans. The sign with the *blue P symbols* indicates that paid street parking is also available for cars only. The *red circle sign* indicates that lorries, vans and cars towing caravans cannot go straight ahead.



Free Parking: White Lines



In many towns, white lines mark free parking bays on the street but they may be limited by time. The closest parking sign will tell you if you must set your parking disc to show the time that you arrived – *ora di arrivo*.

When you rent a car in Italy, it may already have a parking disc. If not, you can purchase one at a Tobacconist or petrol station. Ask for a *disco orario*. They are not expensive.

This is the typical parking disc that you buy in Italy. It is made from light cardboard and measures 4" by 6". After parking the car, spin the wheel so that the arrow points to the current time and place it inside your car on top of the dashboard so it can be seen by the parking police. In this picture the parking disc is set to 1pm = 13:00 on the 24 hour clock.

This photo shows a white line parking space on the street in Monterchi. This parking bay was free.

Notice how small the space is. We rented a compact car (not the smallest size, the next one up), a Volkswagen Golf. This is small enough to park easily yet big enough for the high speeds on the Autostrada.

Note: When parking in larger cities, like Florence, white lines can be for residents only. Check for signs when you park.





This parking sign says you can park for 90 minutes, Monday through Saturday, but you must display your parking disc and you cannot park here on Saturdays from 7:00am to 3:00pm because it is market day and you will be towed away if you do!

Note: Crossed hammers on a sign indicates these restrictions apply on working days only, i.e. not on Sundays or public holidays.

Pay Parking: Car Parks

The larger towns have large pay car parks. Siena has one near the Fortezza. Arezzo has one just outside the town walls. They are all different. Usually you get a ticket from a machine or a person as you enter. Then, when you are



ready to leave, you take the ticket to a booth (on foot) and pay. You either pay a person or a machine. You get your ticket back and, when you drive out, you insert it into a machine which then opens the gate.

The worst thing is if you insert the card into the machine and the gate doesn't open and some attendant speaks to you in Italian through the speaker on the machine and you don't know what they are saying.

But, either you figure it out or eventually someone comes out and does it for you.

Hint: Try putting the card in a different way ☺

Pay Parking: The Parking Scratch Card



This way of paying for your parking wins our award for the most confusing and time consuming. It was so interesting, that I not only kept our ticket, but scanned it for you to look at.

You buy one card for each hour you want to park. Then you scratch off the date and the time. If you are staying for longer than one hour, you have to prepare cards for each hour and make each card good for consecutive time periods. This was quite a bit of scratching. My favourite part is that you even have to scratch off the year ☺

Instructions on the back are in Italian, English, French, and German.

Upon your arrival in the parking area:

1. Using a coin or a key, scratch the imprinted area on the ticket relevant to the year, month, day, hour and minute of your arrival.
2. Expose the ticket on the car's dashboard: this allows you to park for the period of time as indicated on the ticket's front side.

If only they could figure out some way that this was also a lottery ticket! That would make it more fun ☺

Pay Parking: Blue Lines



In most regions, blue lines denote paid parking. This photo shows a “blue line” parking space on the street in Arezzo.

You might have to buy a timed ticket from a machine. One machine sometimes serves several parking spots, so it may not be as close by as you’d expect! Look for a white P in a blue square.

Just to make matters even more confusing, sometimes you need to purchase the ticket at a nearby store instead of at a machine. Look on the parking sign – it will usually offer you a hint!

A chart on the machine tells you how much it costs per hour. If you’re really lucky you may find a machine which takes credit cards and/or banknotes, but most take only coins, so keep plenty of them in the car for this purpose.

Put enough money in the machine for the time you want and when you press the appropriate button a receipt is printed with the time you can park until. Change is rarely given. Put the receipt on the dashboard of your car.

If someone offers to help you park, first check that they are genuine and there is no pay machine. We were totally scammed in Florence at the Piazza Piave, about half a mile east of the Ponte Vecchia.

We drove into a car park just happy that we had survived the inner-city traffic, and this “nice” man guided us into a space. He asked if we wanted to stay all day. We said “yes please”.



He asked for €20, which we thought was a bit steep, but decided it was worth it not to have to keep looking for a space. He gave us a ticket that said €20, and we put it on the dashboard. However, when we arrived back at the car, we had received a €35 parking ticket ☹

To add insult to injury, we then found out that it only costs €10 to park for the day anyway ☹

If this happens to you then look for a machine and if you see one then say “no” to the “helpful attendant”! You could also look at other car dashboards to see what ticket they are displaying.

Alternatively, why not take the train like we now do to save all the bother of driving and parking in Florence?



Trains

Let the train take the strain!

Large towns and cities can be extremely busy and can resemble the dodgems. Parking can also be problematic and city centres such as Florence are often closed off to traffic altogether on selected days, especially in the summer. If you would rather avoid these problems and have a stress free visit, why not take the train?

The nearest station to Casa Marginetta is Diecimo-Pescaglia. You can park outside for free.

Either go from Diecimo-Pescaglia for services direct to Lucca and Pisa, or change at Lucca and/or Pisa for Florence and beyond. Timetables are displayed in the station and on platforms for local routes.

If you are going to Florence and have a car, you should also consider driving via Marlia to Altopascio, where you can park at the station free of charge and get straight on the Florence service.

Italian railways are cheap when compared to the UK and they have a simple philosophy – *low fares* for honest passengers and *high penalties* for cheats! The idea is that you'd have to be a complete idiot to even attempt to beat the system. However, this approach can leave a few pitfalls for foreigners, if you don't know the rules.

What you should know

Don't even **THINK** of getting on a train without a ticket! You may end up paying ten times as much, possibly with the added enjoyment of a nice trip in a police car if you can't pay up on the spot ☺



Tickets are generally sold undated and Italians often buy them 'in bulk' for use over several days, weeks, months or even years!

Before boarding the train, don't forget to stamp your ticket in the yellow machine.

If you don't you may get a heavy fine, because this is almost as bad an offence as not buying a ticket! The fine will set you back at least €10. Obviously, an unstamped ticket could theoretically be used more than once, so this is why they are so hot on it.



If you remember that you forgot to stamp your ticket after boarding the train, seek out a ticket inspector before they find you and explain – the fine is about half that way, and they may even let you off with a caution.

Breaks of journey are permitted free of charge, but be aware that you are expected to complete the whole journey within 6 hours of starting it, in order for your ticket to remain valid.

Buying tickets

Electronic timetables and ticket purchasing are available on www.trenitalia.com in English if you want to book journeys before you leave the UK and pay with your credit card. There is also a great internet café in Bagni di Lucca ([see page 4](#)) where you can do the same.

Please Note: If you want to book a ticket via the internet, Trenitalia have introduced an excellent Electronic Ticketing system which will now let you print out a valid ticket for use on the train. However, this is not yet available for local regional 'R' trains. Don't forget to carry your passport as proof of identity!

There is no such thing in Italy as a 'cheap day return'. The return fare is the sum of the two single fares and each single fare depends on actual distance of the route taken and the type of trains you travel on.

There are supplements for travelling on certain fast trains on some lines. This applies to all Inter City 'IC', Inter City Plus 'ICplus', Euro Star 'ES' services and some others too. Beware of penalties for travelling on more expensive trains when you change your schedule! Usually you will also need to reserve seats on most of these fast trains in order to travel on them.

Fortunately though, all the services from Diecimo-Pescaglia to Lucca and Pisa and from Lucca to Florence and Viareggio use low-cost regional 'R' trains. Fares for these journeys are therefore based solely on distance and so hopefully you shouldn't make any mistakes!

There is no ticket office at Diecimo-Pescaglia so you are supposed to go into Diecimo and seek out the little flower shop/tobacconist and buy your tickets there.

To make life easier, we have pre-purchased a number of regional open tickets and left them in the information folder at Casa Marginetta for you so that you can make your first journey without any fuss. The idea is that you should buy replacements at one of the main stations – e.g. Lucca, Pisa, Florence etc. or at the flower shop in Diecimo. Please don't forget!

Regional tickets are bought and used for the distance that you intend to travel. For example, a 20km ticket is good for a single journey to Lucca. For Pisa, you need a 50km ticket.



It is permitted to stamp multiple tickets at the same time and carry them together to make up the required number of kilometres (or more) for a single journey. However, please remember to use and stamp fresh ticket(s) for your return journey separately.

Sample fares

Standard single from Diecimo-Pescaglia to Bagni di Lucca	'R' only	€1.10
Standard single from Diecimo-Pescaglia to Pisa SR for the leaning tower	'R' only	€3.70
Standard single from Diecimo-Pescaglia to Pisa Central	'R' only	€3.70
Standard single from Diecimo-Pescaglia to Pisa Airport	'R' only	€3.70
Standard single from Diecimo-Pescaglia to Florence	'R' only	€6.30
Standard single from Diecimo-Pescaglia to Venice via Florence	'R'+ 'EN'	€28.80
Standard single from Diecimo-Pescaglia to Venice via Florence	'R'+ 'ES*A'	€48.30
Standard single from Diecimo-Pescaglia to Rome via Pisa Central	'R' only	€19.65
Standard single from Diecimo-Pescaglia to Rome via Pisa Central	'R'+ 'ES*City'	€43.20
Standard single from Diecimo-Pescaglia to Rome via Florence	'R'+ 'ES*A'	€51.90
Standard single from Diecimo-Pescaglia to Genoa direct scenic route via Aulla	'R' only	€10.30
Standard single from Diecimo-Pescaglia to Genoa via Viareggio	'R'+ 'IC'	€16.60
Standard single from Diecimo-Pescaglia to Genoa via Pisa Central	'R'+ 'IC'	€19.70
Standard single from Diecimo-Pescaglia to Genoa via Viareggio	'R'+ 'ES*City'	€21.60
Standard single from Diecimo-Pescaglia to Genoa via Viareggio	'R'+ 'ES*Fast'	€24.10

Sports

Swimming in Bagni di Lucca

[Distance: about 19.3km / 24 minutes](#)

Bagni di Lucca Villa has a large open-air swimming pool (open Jun-Sept, 10am - 7pm) with a smaller shallow toddler pool and a diving pool with 1 metre and 4 metre diving boards. All of these are fed with water from a thermal spring and are surrounded by deckchairs and sun umbrellas, use of which is included in the admission charge. Sun loungers are also available for an additional charge.



Admission is €7 for adults and €5 for children (3-13 years). As usual in Italy the use of swimming hats is compulsory. These are for sale, along with a selection of swimming costumes, in the reception area. We do also have a couple of these at Casa Marginetta.

Note that as there are no large lockers in the changing rooms it is not considered unusual if you take your clothes and other valuables to the poolside.

The serious swimmer should best avoid peak periods during the summer as the outdoor pool tends to get busy. The whole pool area can get a bit crowded on sunny afternoons, making it difficult to find somewhere to sit, so it's often advisable to arrive either before 11:30am or after 4pm.

There is a pleasant bar area above the pool with plenty of outdoor seating. A wide range of drinks and fresh snacks are available.

During the winter months the indoor pool and a smaller teaching pool are open. The larger indoor pool is generally split into lanes and although often some of these are often in use for swimming or fitness classes the pool usually has some provision for general swimming.

Tennis Courts in Bagni di Lucca

 0583-805342

Tennis Club Mirafiume, Via Roma, 55022 Bagni di Lucca (LU) [Distance: 19.3km - 24 minutes](#)

Court costs: €10.50 during the afternoon and €13.50 during the evening.
Open 9am ~ Midnight every day.

This tennis club is situated in Via Roma just outside Bagni di Lucca Villa. It has four courts.

Playground in Bagni di Lucca

There is a small park in central Bagni di Lucca, Via Casalini, with swings, a climbing frame and slide, trees to hide behind, local children to play with and plenty of seating for adults.

Cycling in Lucca

You can hire a bike easily and cheaply in Lucca and have a lot of fun cycling around the city walls. Why not try a tandem?



Winter Sports at Abetone & Cimone

[Distance: 55.4km - 59 Minutes](#)

From December to April, Abetone and Cimone are great places to ski or snowboard – especially Abetone if you are a complete beginner!

Ask any seasoned skier about the 'fun' they had endlessly sidestepping up the slope during the first day or so of ski school! Not so at Abetone! There the nursery slope has a rolling carpet traveller - a bit like the moving walkways you find at airports. This almost effortlessly helps you to get started and to have more of the excitement of skiing down, without the hassle, effort and frustration of trying to climb up.

Then, in most resorts, as soon as you can do a basic 'snowplough' you are taken to the 'dreaded drag lift'. This type of lift comes in three unpalatable flavours - a bare rope that you have to hold on to (the worst), a 'T-bar' on which you have to perch precariously - sometimes side-by-side with another person (scary) or a 'button' which goes between your legs (still horrible, but probably the least bad of the three).

With all of them, you have to quickly grab hold as it whizzes by without dropping your poles and brace yourself for the shock when moments later you are suddenly 'yanked' up the slope. If you are lucky and don't lose your balance straight away, then you then have to struggle to keep your skis together and going in a straight line all the way to the top.

Finally, you have to get off the lift and throw it away from you at exactly the right moment, quickly move out of the way of the next person following right behind you, avoid sliding back down the slope - and, of course, still keep your balance! For snowboarders it's even worse - you have to do the whole thing on one leg!!

Ask any skier or snowboarder what they think of drag lifts and they'll all say "horrible!". Everybody hates them and tries to avoid them whenever possible - even me! Despite this, as I said before, in most resorts these are the lifts that beginners have to use. Why? Probably because they're cheap. I can't think of any other reason!

So what happens when you take absolute beginners and force them to use the most difficult type of ski lift there is? Firstly, a lot of people fall off! Does this help your confidence? No! Is it fun? No! Secondly, a long queue develops. Every time a beginner falls, the lift has to stop and the poor unfortunate has to struggle to get out of the way before it can start again. This isn't much fun either! Freezing to death waiting in line for two-thirds of your skiing time is frustrating and not the best way to learn. Seeing person after person falling can also make you nervous! Then there's always the possibility too that someone may lose control on the slope and knock you off the lift! This happened to Trudi.

It's a fact - more people give up skiing because of bad experiences with drag lifts than for any other reason!

However, at Abetone, instead of drag lifts, they've invested in not just one but two chairlifts for beginners! With friendly staff to help people on and off, beginners get to ski a whole lot more and queue a whole lot less. Each time you ski down you get a 'buzz'. You have fun! You gain confidence! You get better! Then, you can rest your legs as the chairlift 'whisks' you back to the top. No falling down. No lift stopping. No long queues. No 'out-of-control' beginners skiing into you, because you're flying high above them!

What this means in reality is that the need to learn the skills of sidestepping and using drag lifts may safely be postponed until you have completely mastered all of the basics. This is a fantastic advantage and I cannot stress the benefits enough! It can make all the difference between hating the sport and loving it!

Most people are a little afraid at first. It's probably a good thing! Accidents are very rare, but mostly they happen to the over-confident and reckless! Even so, keeping the fear factor under control is very important!

If you've ever been a learner driver you'll understand that supposedly 'experienced' road users pushing, crowding or zipping around you can be intimidating. This is similar to what happens to beginners at most ski resorts. At Abetone though, they have cleverly placed the main nursery slope 'across the road'. Although it is extremely easy to get to, from a skiing point of view it is in effect entirely separated from the rest of the resort. This means that you are not going to become a human 'skittle' or 'slalom pole' for 'more advanced' skiers who are trying to keep up momentum to reach the lift. No-one is going to become annoyed if you get in their way because, unless they are beginners, they simply will not be on 'your' slope at all!

Although Abetone offers excellent ski schools, for absolute beginners it's a recognised fact that there's no quicker, better or safer way to learn the basics than with a private tutor. Of course you can do this in most resorts, but the big difference at Abetone is affordability. Beginners are strongly advised to book at least a couple of 'get-you-started' lessons upon arrival in the resort or by fax beforehand. It is not safe for you or others to try to ski without any prior instruction!

The tutors at Abetone by and large charge very reasonable rates for anything from an individual to a small group. They will offer times to suit your convenience, and you can pay for as much or as little time as you need!

We have negotiated some special rates for weekday afternoon group lessons with [Scuola Sci MonteGomito](#) who have several really friendly English-speaking instructors available. Brilliant!

Daily and afternoon passes at Abetone are some of the cheapest anywhere in the world and, for those days when you're only going to be on the nursery slope, they're cheaper still! On weekdays, even an adult afternoon nursery slope pass costs as little as €15. Ski or board all day for less than €20!

Compare this with the cost of going to XSCAPE in Milton Keynes, Leeds or Glasgow where just **one hour** of recreational skiing on snow a fraction of the size of Abetone's nursery slope and using the 'dreaded drag lifts' will set you back between £16 and £21!

See for yourself here: www.xscape.co.uk/

When you're ready to go 'up the mountain' at Abetone, the system of 'zoned' passes let you discover the exhilaration of skiing and snowboarding at a price you can easily afford. Progress from slope to slope trying out each zone at your leisure until finally you are ready for the 'Abetone Multipass' - the best value all area access pass ever! Adult UK passport holders can go everywhere all day from just €24,50 or for five weekdays from €102. Child UK passport holders up to 10 can go everywhere all day from just €22 or for five days from €88.

See for yourself here: <http://www.skituscany.com/pdf/multipass201011.pdf>

Staying at Casa Marginetta offers you, the independent traveller, the option to pick and choose when and for how long you wish to use the facilities. You're not stuck in the resort and you're not obliged to ski every day if you fancy doing something different or if the weather turns bad. Affordable daily passes let you skip a day if you fancy a rest or don't like the look of the weather - without wasting any money. Why not take time out at the weekend when Abetone is at its busiest to visit Lucca, Pisa or Florence instead and chill out?

Comparing prices with other resorts around the world you'll find that you can enjoy so much more for so much less at Abetone. For example, do you really want to pay €5 or more for a small bottle of water in a French resort like 'Les Trois Valées' when you can pay around €1 in Abetone?

With five mountains, four resort 'zones' and eleven brand new lifts installed in recent years, at Abetone you won't get bored. Added to this there are some lovely mountain bars in picturesque locations serving yummy Italian food and drink at prices you can easily afford even for the whole family!

Even compared to the supposedly 'cheap' new Eastern European resorts which are becoming popular like Kranskja Gora in Slovenia, Abetone has many more lifts, mountains and slopes to enjoy, is higher in altitude with better chances of good snow, has superior provision for beginners as described above ... and costs less too. Amazing!

Buy some basic winter sports gear before you go. As a minimum you should take a waterproof jacket, waterproof trousers or salopettes, and thermal underwear. We find Matalan, Additions and Asda offer some good stuff at reasonable prices, or why not look on eBay? As with all resorts, designer gear in fancy shops costs an arm and a leg!

Reasonably priced ski and snowboard hire is available as there are plenty of rental shops in the resort. We have negotiated some fantastic rates with Scuola Sci Monte Gomito for [equipment hire](#) which make it virtually pointless bringing your own skis. If you have them though, we recommend bringing your own boots and helmet.

If you want to bring your own equipment, we provide a ski-iron, but please bring your own wax and edging tools. We also have a ski bindings DIN chart for setting up release tensions, but this is not meant to be a substitute for asking a professional to do this. Any rental shop will service and/or set up skis and snowboards for you for a modest charge.

We also provide two locking magnetic ski-racks free of charge. These are fantastic! They fit onto the roof of your rental car without any fuss and mean that up to five of you could comfortably hire a cheap, Group B car (e.g. Ford Fiesta) and safely carry the skis and/or snowboards on the roof.

Between them the two racks will carry five pairs of skis or four snowboards or combinations in-between. We have had five adults in a Ford Fiesta and five pairs of skis on the roof without too much discomfort!!

During winter months, carrying snow chains with you up to Abetone is a legal requirement and police sometimes 'stop and search' vehicles to check that you have them – even if conditions suggest that you don't need them – because the weather can change quickly! It's a sensible precaution anyway and although we have rarely had to fit them, when required they definitely do ensure your safety!

You should check the tyre size on your rental car and verify whether or not we already have a [set of chains](#) to fit. If we do, then they are free of charge for you to use. If not then you will have to buy some.

However, we will be happy to refund the cost of snow chains of a size that we don't already have provided that you leave them at Casa Marginetta when you depart and send us the chain size number and receipt when you return the key. As chains cost around €100 a set, this could be a big saving!

One year we made the mistake of assuming that every Ford Fiesta has the same size tyres and got caught out! We broke a set of chains because they were too small! Look for 'Catene di Neve'. The car accessories shop 'Piemme Autoricambi SNC' on the right on the main road from Diecimo to Borgo a Mozzano is very convenient and they are remarkably friendly and helpful. We bought the snow chains and magnetic racks there.

Places to Visit



‘Devil’s Bridge’

[Distance: 14.6km - 18 minutes](#)

‘Ponte della Maddalena’ - ‘Madeleine’s Bridge’ which is better known as ‘Ponte del Diavolo’ – ‘Devil’s Bridge’ is located near Borgo a Mozzano in Lucca province. This ancient bridge over the Serchio river remains freely open to the public.

Devil’s bridge is a beautiful example of a classic medieval ‘donkey back’ bridge with a peculiarity that makes it truly unique: Five asymmetric arches with a central one that reaches a height that defies architectonic ingenuity!

The bridge was commissioned around 1100 by the then powerful and influential Countess Matilde di Canossa (1046-1115).

However, the current aspect is due to the reconstruction carried out around 1300 by Castruccio Castracani (1281-1328), sire of Lucca in the early 14th century.

The legend of the bridge

Once upon a time a respected master builder lived in a village on the banks of the Serchio River. The inhabitants of the village approached him, asking him to build a bridge to connect their village with the one across the river.

He immediately set to work, but he soon saw that the work was not progressing as quickly as he’d promised his fellow citizens it would and, being a man of his word and one who always fulfilled his obligations, he became very unhappy and desperate.

He continued to put great effort into the work day and night so as to finish the task within the time allowed for in the contract, but the work continued to proceed very slowly while the days flew by.

One evening while the builder was sitting alone on the banks of the Serchio looking at the work and thinking of the shame and discredit he would suffer for not having completed it in time, the devil appeared to him in the form of a respectable businessman. He went straight up to the builder telling him that he’d be able to finish the bridge in a single night.

The man didn’t believe what the devil was saying, but listened anyway, and in the end accepted his proposal. Naturally the devil wanted something in return: the builder was to undertake to give him the soul of the first person that crossed the bridge when it was completed.

The builder accepted and the following day the village had its beautiful bridge that can still be seen today in Borgo a Mozzano.

The people were stunned and unable to believe what had been accomplished, and went to congratulate the craftsman who ordered them not to cross the bridge before sunset.

In the meantime, the builder got on his horse, a little worried if the truth be told, and set off for Lucca to ask the Bishop for advice. At that time the Bishop was Saint Frediano.

The Bishop listened to the builder's story and then told him that sadly since he had freely made a bargain with the devil and sinned in the eyes of God, there was no choice but to allow the devil to take the soul of the first person to cross the bridge.

The builder was shocked at this, but offered to sacrifice himself to eternal damnation for the salvation of others.

Recognising the goodness in the man standing before him, the Bishop then offered the builder a pig and instructed him to let it cross the bridge first, before any man, woman or child.

This was done and the devil, furious at having been tricked, threw himself into the waters of the Serchio, and has not been seen in the area since.

Pisa

[Distance: 41.8km - 57 minutes](#)

See the leaning tower before it falls down! Now re-opened and with the scaffolding removed at last, it makes an interesting climb, and the panoramic view from the top is wonderful!



Access to the tower is by 'timed tickets'. This keeps groups small, avoids any queuing and gives you a chance to try the excellent café opposite whilst you are waiting for your turn!

If you want to climb to the topmost part, we suggest that you resist the urge to be too polite – if you let too many people go ahead of you or wait for others to descend then you may find yourself refused access by the guide as 'time has run out'. This happened to us!

Beware: The climb is not safe for young children and so recently a ban on children under eight 8 has been introduced. For adults and older children though, it's perfectly fine.

Note: Don't miss the beautiful Duomo (cathedral), next door to the tower.

Lucca

[Distance: 22.3km - 30 minutes](#)

Our nearest city. Lucca is a wonderfully cosmopolitan place with some spectacular boutiques! Delicious freshly-baked foccacia bread is a treat, and there are plenty of restaurants, cafés and bars to tempt you! Lucca is not on a hill but the medieval 'Walls' that surround it remain intact and are a fabulous sight to see.



Now they are used for the daily "passegiata" when people go for an afternoon walk around the city. Why not hire a bike or tandem and cycle around?!

Don't miss the oval shaped 'piazza anfiteatro' and the 'torre guingini' with ancient oak trees growing out of the roof. A strange sight! You can climb to the top and get a spectacular view of the city and some good photos! Young children *are* permitted to climb this tower and it is relatively safe to do so.

Florence

[Distance: 100km - 1 hour 30 minutes](#)

If it's your first visit to the city don't miss the Duomo (cathedral), the Ponte Vecchio and perhaps visit the Uffizi Gallery if the queue isn't too long! If you plan ahead, you can telephone in advance and book tickets that will avoid the need to queue. There is a booking fee but it allows 'timed access' which you decide and we believe there is also a discount for children. The telephone number to book is 055 29 48 83.

You can also book a guided tour of Vasari's corridor, a secret passage between the Uffizi and Palazzo Pitti that runs along the Ponte Vecchio. Built so that the Medici family didn't have to mingle with the people in the street going between their palaces. Please be aware that this is only open for 4 months of the year and there is limited admittance. The telephone number to book is 055 26 54 321.

You may also wish to visit one of their many Villas outside Florence at Castello – Villa la Petraia, has terraced gardens and a glass covered courtyard with 17th century frescoes.

If you are tired of the usual tourist stops try the Salvatore Ferragamo Shoe Museum above their store in Via Tornabuoni, which has shoes and lasts of Hollywood's most famous feet and the story of Ferragamo.

There are also several other designer shops in this area.

If you are looking for a larger store look for Rinascente (in Piazza della Repubblica) or Coin (between the Duomo and Piazza Signoria). Piazza Signoria is where a replica of the David statue stands guard over the entrance to Palazzo Vecchio. If you have seen the film "A Room with a View" you'll no doubt remember this Piazza.

The view over the city and Ponte Vecchio from Piazza Michelangelo is also worth seeing. Perhaps a visit at sunset would be a lovely way to finish off a trip to the city.

Bars with loads of style are:

Rivoire

On the corner of Piazza Signoria

Gigli

Piazza della Repubblica (up from the Duomo)

If the prices sitting down stretch your wallet, just stand at the bar like the locals. Most bars have nibbles out around cocktail time, just before dinner so around 6pm onwards.

A couple of restaurants:

Trattoria Gozzi

San Lorenzo market, opposite the church.

Lunchtime eating place. Great food, great prices, busy so get there early for lunch. There are also lots of small affordable restaurants in the piazza behind San Lorenzo market. Can't book, just turn up.

Cibrèò

 0552-341100

Via de'Macci, Sant'Ambrogio **Closed Sundays & Mondays from 25th July to 4th September**

This is an extremely high-class restaurant so is at the other end of the scale. This is reflected in the prices. But if you are looking for an extra special meal at lunch or dinner, this internationally renowned restaurant might fit the bill. Booking is advisable. If you're working to a budget try their "Trattoria" next door – similar menu at lower prices.

Bagni di Lucca

[Distance: 20.9km - 26 minutes](#)

One of the oldest and most famous towns in the province of Lucca, Bagni di Lucca is easily reached off the S12, just past Devil's Bridge. This once-grand spa town has always been known for its curing waters, appreciated even in Roman times.

Bagni di Lucca was frequented for centuries by noblemen and famous people and became known as the land of princes and poets. It became extremely fashionable during the 19th century when it became the meeting place for such distinguished people as the poets Byron, Shelley, Browning, Lever, Giusti, Monti, Carducci, Pascoli, Montale, writers such as Dumas, musicians such as Strauss, Listz, Paganini, Puccini, Mascagni and politicians, saints and popes. Heine described it as "a true and proper sylvan

paradise. I have never found a valley more enchanting, even the mountains are nobly formed and not bizarre and Gothic like those in Germany.”

The English came to know Bagni di Lucca as the ‘Switzerland of Tuscany’ and its prestige at that time led to the construction of an Anglican church, an important suspension bridge, the Ponte delle Catene, a neo-classical temple and the Villa Demidoff, the casino, where roulette was invented in 1837, the “Circolo dei Forestieri”, the foreigners club, now an upmarket river-front restaurant and numerous important villas immersed in greenery.

Also characteristic are the feudal and medieval structures of the mountain villages, rich in history, traditions, legends, and some with Romanesque parish churches, such as Vico Pancellorum and Pieve di Controne.

Today Bagni di Lucca is a charming town, straddling the river Lima, with all amenities such as bars, restaurants, banks, post office, many shops, a market on Wednesdays and Saturdays, supermarkets, chemist, public swimming pools and tennis club. It has a population of about 7000 and is situated 152 metres above sea level. The landscape surrounding the town is verdant and woody and the inhabitants are renowned for their relaxed and friendly attitude.

Ponte delle Catene

Designed and built in oak and chains by the Lucchese architect Lorenzo Nottolini in 1842, the Ponte delle Catene (bridge of chains) was possibly Europe’s first ever suspension bridge. The bridge has recently undergone a complete refurbishment thanks to funding from the World Monuments Fund – a worldwide programme for the preservation of cultural heritage.

Puccini

While a student Giacomo Puccini came to Bagni di Lucca to play in a dance band at the Teatro Accademico and at the Sala Ducci. He was paid between 10 and 15 lire for the evening, and often arrived early to dine at a friend’s house, not being able to afford to eat out. Years later he returned several times to Bagni for a summer holiday, as did every well-to-do Luccan of his generation.

He also used to stop here on his way to Abetone, where he owned a house. In 1909 he stayed at the Grand Hotel delle Terme and there composed the second act of ‘La Fanciulla del West’. In 1920 he spent several weeks at the Hotel Vittoria and had his decisive meeting with Adami and Simoni that launched ‘Turandot’.

The Casino

The elegant casino in Bagni di Lucca is famous for inventing roulette in 1837. It was closed in 1953 but has recently been restored to its former glory and attempts are being made to regain its licence, which was transferred to Venice.

The Thermal Baths

The spas in Bagni di Lucca were already important during Ligurian, Lombard, Roman and Etruscan times. By the 12th century the spa was so famous that Countess Matilda of Tuscany made it more accessible by improving the surrounding roads and constructing the Devil’s Bridge at nearby Borgo a Mozzano. During the 15th century the reputation of the spas was high enough to raise Bagni di Lucca to the same level as the spas at Karlsbad, Spa, Baden and Vichy throughout Europe. Today the nineteen hot springs still flow from the slopes of the Corsena hill and the therapeutic value of the waters remains incontestable. The waters reach temperatures up to 54 degrees centigrade and all sorts of treatments are available to cure respiratory problems, traumatic injuries, gynaecological and fertility problems, nervous conditions, and problems of the arteries and rheumatism. Some of the baths are good for the skin and others for general health and well-being. There are also three thermal swimming pools for public use.

Grotta del Vento – The Wind Cave

Grotta del Vento, 55020 Vergemoli (LU)

e-mail: info@grottadelvento.com

☎ 0583-722024

Distance: 30.1km - 34 minutes

www.grottadelvento.com

Situated in the centre of the Apuan Alps' Natural Park, this is one of the most complete European caves, presenting an extraordinary variety of phenomena, the most unusual of which is a natural breeze which blows through the cave due to the presence of a second (unused) entrance. The speed and direction of the breeze is dependent on the temperature gradient between the two entrances and yet inside the cave the temperature is a pleasant 10.7°C (53°F) all year round.

Following illuminated and easy-going trails, expert speleological guides will show you the many wonders of the underground world: from shining stalactites and stalagmites to polychrome flowstone, alabaster draperies, crystal-brimmed lakes, underground water-courses and bizarre forms of erosion.

There are three itineraries: the 'first' (one hour) proceeds horizontally and is characterized throughout by splendid calcareous formations; the 'second' (two hours), which also includes the first, visits a small underground river and its charmingly vast environment; the 'third' (three hours) consents a complete visit of the cave and easily follows several perfectly vertical tracts.

The Wind Cave is open to the public every day of the year (excluding Christmas Day). From April 1st to November 1st and on Sundays and public holidays of the remaining period, the times are as follows:

1st itinerary (one hour): 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

2nd itinerary (two hours): 11, 15, 16, 17

3rd itinerary (three hours, complete tour): 10, 14

On weekdays between November 2nd and March 31st only the 1st itinerary is in operation. Tours start at the following times: 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

Bar facilities can be found next to the ticket office, as well as a large selection of minerals, fossils etc.

Cecina Acqua Village Water Park

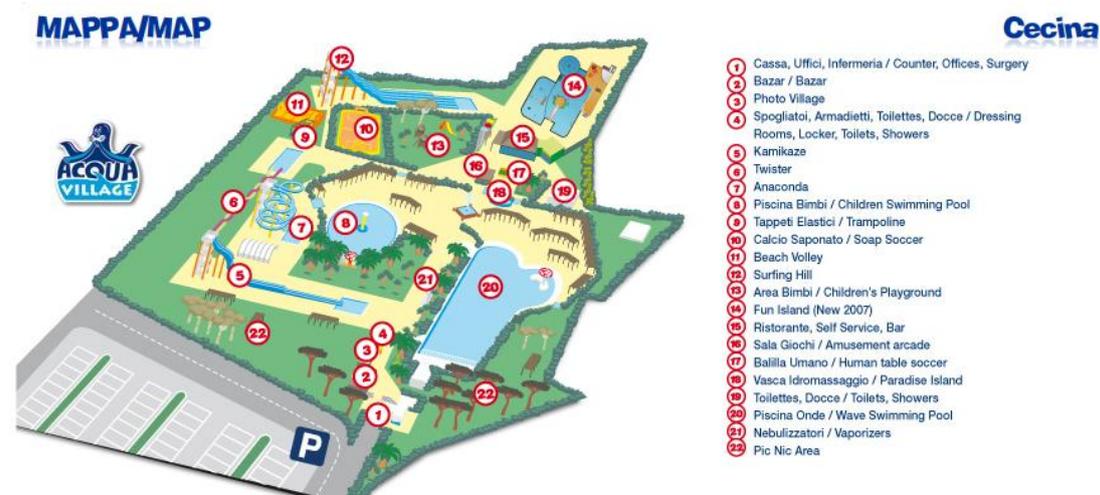
Via Tevere, 25, 57023 Cecina Mare (LI)

info@acquavillage.it

☎ 0586-622539

Distance: 110km - 1 hour 31 minutes

www.acquavillage.it



Entrance: Children under 3 are free. Children 3-11 are €14 any day, €10 after 15:00.

Adults are €20 at weekends and on bank holidays, €18 at other times and €14 after 15:00.

Parking is free. Open 10am ~ 6pm every day throughout the summer from June.

This fabulous water park is choc full of exciting slides, chutes, and a wave swimming pool to boot! There are trampolines, beach volleyball, surfing, amusement arcade, 'soap soccer' and even a human 'table football' game! A picnic area, bars and restaurants too cater for every need.

Located just south of Livorno, the park is little more than an hour and a half from Casa Marginetta.

Collodi and the 'Park of Pinocchio'

Via S. Gennaro, 3, 51014 Collodi, Pescia (PT)

 0572-429342

Distance: 33.8km - 43 minutes

www.pinocchio.it

The village of Collodi has also developed into a recognised tourist destination, not least because of the 'Park of Pinocchio'.

Collodi is located near Pescia from which Carlo Lorenzini, the author of "The Adventures of Pinocchio", took his 'pen name'. Incidentally, his book has the greatest number of copies in print second only to the Bible and the Koran!

The Park of Pinocchio could not have been created anywhere other than in Collodi, where the picturesque medieval village has maintained its centuries-old appearance almost intact, with its maze of old houses clinging to the hillside in a cascade that stretches down to the majestic Villa Garzoni and its beautiful eighteenth-century landscaped Garden. It was here that Carolo Lorenzini's mother was born, and that the writer spent many a childhood day at his grandparents', the Orzalis.

The captivating imaginative power of "The Adventures of Pinocchio" draws its strength from this magical setting, which casts its spell far and wide and has made this story into a masterpiece transcending all bounds of time and space. Collodi is at one and the same time an apparition from the land of fable and a concrete work of man, in which history is brought to life through our imagination.

Established over a span of thirty years, between 1956 and 1987, 'The Park of Pinocchio' is not a traditional amusement park. Rather, it is a creation of fantasy, a collective work by renowned artists which weaves a dreamlike web around those who stroll along its paths, inspiring in visitors the impression of experiencing a living story amid enjoyment of the unspoilt pearls of nature blended with the harmonious beauty of art. However, it is more suited to adults than children.

The Park, together with other important cultural activities, is one of the achievements of the "Carlo Collodi" National Foundation, an educational institution that is registered as a non-profit organization.

The centuries-old hill village or castle of Collodi, whose existence is attested as from the end of the XIIth century, probably originated in much the same manner as innumerable other medieval hill villages and castles. Military considerations were no doubt the main factor that drove the population living in the valley (where there are traces of a small more ancient settlement known as Debbia) to set up a fortified settlement on the hill that towered above, known as Odo or Odolo's Peak, a toponym of clearly Germanic derivation.

Yet although situated in an excellent strategic position, Collodi had the ill fortune to be located on the boundary between lands belonging to the rulers of Lucca and those of Florence, a dilemma that resulted in its being contested between the two powers for over a century, from 1329 to 1441.

After suffering numerous sieges repeated sacks, Collodi became a fortified outpost of the Republic of Lucca, with an economy based on olive-growing and the utilization of water from the Pescia Minore (or Pescia di Collodi) stream to drive water wheels, olive presses, silk and paper mills.

One of the most striking features is the structure of the picturesque old hill village, which today as in days of yore is explorable only on foot. It is a veritable cascade of little stone houses clinging to a steep hillside. High at the top rises the ancient Rocca or Castle Keep, matched at the bottom by the majestic Villa Garzoni.

As one wanders through the maze of narrow paved streets, lined by houses with intact medieval façades and doorways, the road winds its way upwards, past the remains of the medieval fortifications,

until it finally reaches the Church of San Bartolomeo (XIIIth century) at the top of the hill. The interior contains a number of valuable works of art.

A sixteenth-century painting depicting “the Virgin Enthroned” attributed by some art historians to the School of Raphael, a wooden sculpture of the “Virgin with Child” dating from the fifteenth century, a terracotta plaque from the same period depicting Santa Lucia (School of Matteo Civitali), and a fifteenth century wooden sculpture by San Bartolomeo (School of Jacopo della Quercia).

Siena

[Distance: 161km – 2 hours 9 minutes](#)

Hilltop town. Lots of good value restaurants especially the small family run ones. Have a look round and take your pick. Don't miss the Duomo (cathedral) and the library inside, which has wonderful medieval manuscripts! One of the few places you can see them. It also has a lovely baptistery round the back. Check dates for the Palio horse race in the main square usually held twice during the summer (July & August). If you go, expect to find enormous crowds. If you can handle being jostled entrance to the centre of the piazza is free (standing room only). Otherwise there is seating around the edge of the track by ticket only. You could always watch it on TV! Worth a visit, the atmosphere is electric. The bareback horserace is taken very seriously by the locals. It's not just a tourist attraction.

Monteriggioni

[Distance: 148km – 1 hour 53 minutes](#)

Lovely walled village. Just before Siena on the Florence - Siena “superstrada”. Has a medieval festival each summer.

Arezzo

[Distance: 172km - 1 hour 57 minutes](#)

By car or train. The centre of town is pedestrianised so you'll have to park a little way out of the centre. It has a lovely old town centre at the top of the hill with a pretty piazza, which has a fountain in the corner.

If you're looking for something to eat or drink try the **Antica Fiaschetteria** wine bar. Go up Corso Italia in the centre of town and half way up turn left into Via de'Redi, the wine bar is on your right. Lovely rustic interior, good nibbles or more substantial food if you'd rather have a meal. Relaxed atmosphere. You can just go in for a glass of wine and read the newspaper if you like - in Italian of course!

Or have a coffee in style in either **Caffe dei Costanti** (used in the Roberto Benigni Film “Life is Beautiful) in Piazza San Francesco (don't miss the newly restored frescoes by Piero della Francesca in the church opposite), or further up Corso Italia on the right in **Carratura** a bar/pasticceria. There are also one or two restaurants off the side streets on the way up the Corso.

If you just want a quick snack try the pizza in the small take-away in Piazza S. Michele on the right, half way up Corso Italia.

Montepulciano

[Distance: 207km - 2 hours 22 minutes](#)

Famous for its wines. There are lots of wineries to visit in the heart of the town. Or just buy a bottle from a small local supermarket. Park in the car park on the right once you're up near the entrance to the town.

Walk up through the gate and wind up the steep road to the main piazza at the top of the town. There are nice bars on the way as well as underground passageways to visit (at one of the shops at the beginning “sottterraneo”). If you fancy having a coffee with a bit of class don't miss the original Liberty style café called “Poliziano” half way up the hill. The town has lovely countryside views.

Cortona

[Distance: 213km - 2 hours 23 minutes](#)

Lovely hilltop town. Worth a visit perhaps on the same day as Perugia/Lake Trasimeno.

Lake Trasimeno

[Distance: 219km - 2 hours 27 minutes](#)

One of the few lakes in Central Italy. Ferries go between various islands from different points around the lake. Castiglione del Lago is pretty or you can just picnic by the lake if you like, or get a snack or pizza in one of the pizzerias or bars on the lakeside.

Perugia

[Distance: 247km - 2 hours 46 minutes](#)

Lots happening as the city has a university for foreigners. Don't miss the underground city. Opposite end from the Duomo. Take the road down the hill, shortly afterwards on your right is a large entrance. There's a gallery and the underground city.

Montalcino

[Distance: 203km - 2 hours 50 minutes](#)

Hilltop town famous for its great wines. There is a fortress at the top of the town where you can taste the many different types of Brunello and Rosso di Montalcino together with plates of ham and cheese. They also have a shop if you want to take one home or visit one of the family vineyards along the road up to the town. The town has beautiful views across the valleys below. There are several small restaurants around the town some have lovely views over the valley.

Walking Itineraries

Within the Pedogna Valley

Walking around the village of Convalle is a pleasure in itself, going along ancient cobbled paths, under stone arches and peering into various nooks and crannies! In addition, the short walk up to the church is not too taxing and offers some wonderful views!

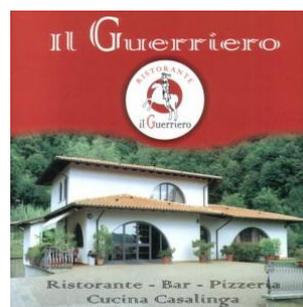
Convalle lies within the municipality of Pescaglia, which was first mentioned in a ninth-century document. As early as the fourteenth century, it already had its own podesta and took part in the procession of Santa Croce di Lucca with a flowered candle.

The village of Pescaglia retains many traces of its mediaeval past; particularly noteworthy are the parish church, the town hall, “the Madonna della Solca” (Madonna of the Pebble), a very ancient fresco venerated in a little oratory north of the village.

In addition to Convalle, the present municipality of Pescaglia includes some typical villages full of interesting Romanesque churches and towers: Fondagno (the village whose church is the centrepiece of the view from Casa Marginetta), Gello (with a beautiful Romanesque belfry and an ancient baptismal basin font), Monsagrati (with an important Romanesque church), Castel di Roggio and, above all, Loppiglia, where you can admire the beautiful “Villa Malpigli”.

Somewhat beyond sensible walking distance but well worth driving to and then exploring on foot are Vetriano with the “Guinness Book of Records” acclaimed “Smallest Theatre in the World”, the fabulous “Il Guerriero” restaurant and Colognora, embellished by sixteenth-century palaces and an interesting “Chestnut tree museum”.

Another favourite walk of former guests is up and over to Fiano. Walking beneath the trees in dappled shade is a treat, as are the views of Convalle and the countryside all around.



A short walk down the Pedogna valley will take you to Cella, the native village of Giacomo Puccini's family, which now contains, inside the musician's house a small, though interesting, museum with relics, genealogical trees, photographs, letters and scores. In the bedroom, you will also see the little dress in which all the members of the Puccini family used to be baptised. The museum also includes a library and archives accessible only to researchers. Such is Puccini's reputation that no matter where you are, most Italians you meet will know of Pescaglia because of him.

Cella has a beautiful restaurant. The Puccini Restaurant offers typical dishes prepared with products linked to the culture and life of the land.

Wide and sunny dining rooms immersed in a pleasant and comfortable atmosphere are the ideal place to taste cooking made with love and passion. This restaurant offers a unique and inimitable experience, but sadly you will normally need to pre-book with them as they are rarely open at random. www.puccinirestaurant.it



Other walks

There are many different routes all through the hills and countryside. There are several that are not too long and they are often a circuit bringing you back more or less to your starting point. In most cases you will need to drive to the starting point and walk from there. We have books at the house with recommended trails and there are some walker's maps too.

Hiking/trekking boots and socks and preferably long trousers are recommended as the terrain can be rough and you may occasionally find the odd snake around (vipers). Take plenty of drinking water. It is also recommended to keep to the country tracks and especially the marked routes. Red and white striped markers with a reference number indicate a route that you will find on the "Club Alpino Italiano" maps, available in many newsagents.

Here we suggest some of the most well-known routes, inviting you to discover others, taking care to equip yourselves with detailed maps and adequate hiking equipment. It is also advisable to check the type of terrain, the distance, the weather forecast before starting an itinerary at the local information office, CAI office or at www.cai.it

L'anello delle Panie - The Pania Ring-route

Average Journey Time (TMP) 6.00 hours.

The hiking excursion starts at the location of Piglionico. Leave your car near the small chapel, then take the CAI track n.7 to the Rifugio Rossi (Rossi Shelter - TMP 1.15 hours) from which, take the CAI 126 directions upwards for another hour in the Vallone dell'Inferno, where you reach the top of Pania della Croce the "queen" of the Apuan Alps (1859m above sea level). The track then descends to the Foce di Mosceta and the Rifugio del Freo (the Freo Shelter). From here, take the n.9 track and then the n.127 which leads you back to your destination by walking around the Pizzo delle Saette.

The Monte Argegna loop

Average Journey Time (TMP) 2.30 hours.

From Guicugnano you will find a nice trail marked "Garfagnana Trekking" that reaches the Argegna plateau and the Sanctuary of Madonna della Guardia. The path now follows the paved road to Giuncugnano to reach Passo di Tea. For centuries, Tea was the boundary line of 3 nobile states (of D'Este, Lucca and Florence) and the only passage that linked Lucca and Parma before the opening of new routes along the valley. From the Tea meadows, there is another nice trail, marked as "sentieri del gufo" (owl's paths) and lined by ancient hedges. It descends to Percaldino, Gambrano and back to Giuncugnano.



L'anello Orto di Donna - The Lady's Garden Ring-route

Leaving your car at the end of the paved road which leads to Orto di Donna near the Rifugio Donegani (Donegani Shelter) you find the CAI n. 180 directions to the Foce di Giovo. From here with a short deviation you can reach the summit of Pizzo d'Uccello only advised for expert hikers. Instead, our tour continues on the CAI n.179 indications under the rock-face of the Cresta Garnerone and the Grondilice, until you reach Cava (Quarry) n.27, where the "marble" road from Orto di Donna finishes. Here you can find the new Apuan Alps Park shelter. Continuing along the CAI n.179 direction passing near the bivacco (bivouac) K2 until the Foce di Cardeto. At this point the CAI n.178 track descends into the beech woods to return to your starting point.

L'anello del Monte Forato – Monte Forato Ring-route

Average Journey Time (TMP) 5.00 hours.

From Fornovolasco the CAI track n6 ascends to the Foce di Petroschiana, passing near the Tana che Urla (cave) and the Sorgente della Cheisaccia (spring). From the Foce, an unmarked track although clearly evident, takes you along the crest of the mountain passing near the arch of Monte Forato (1223m above sea level) then reaching Foce di Valli. The alternative route is marked with CAI n.131 which descends slightly to a lower quota and leads to the same location to foot of the southern side of Pania della Croce. From here the direction indicated by CAI n.130, passes a few remote houses then back to Fornovolasco. A shorter itinerary is to descend from Monte Forato by the CAI n.12 until you reach the CAI n.6 again and continue back to Fornovolasco.



Airone 1 to Parco dell'Orecchiella - Airone track 1 to Orecchiella Park

Average Journey Time (TMP) 5.00 hours.

From the Visitor's Centre, the track indicated in yellow and blue reaches the Rifugio Isera (Isera Shelter) and the road going up to the botanic garden. From here, descend to the right in the direction of Pruno, an ancient pastoral location with typical "caselli" local huts covered in "rye" straw. The track ascends to the massive Pania di Corfino, first reaching a terraced area looking on to Vallone delle Grottaacce then on to a wild fascinating environment. After reaching the southern rock point you come to La Fonte dell'Amore and the pastoral area of Campaiana. The track crosses through the woods then on to the grasslands then reaches the Pania summit (1603m above sea level). After the Sella, descend into the Bocca dei Lupi not far from the Rifugio Isera and then to the Visitor's Centre.



Sentiero Natura di Campocatino to Eremo di S. Viano – Campocatino Nature Track to S. Viano Hermitage

Average Journey Time TMP 2.30 hours.

An easy ring-route track which permits you to follow the sides of the Campocatino natural depression basin dating back to the glacial era. Walking along the first part among the "caselli" local pastoral huts and the once cultivated terraced areas, you reach the beech woods at the foot of the north-western face of Mount Roccadaglia. Walk on until the impressive south-eastern rock point. Reaching the gravel track which leads back to Campocatino you can choose the ring-route (TMP 1.30 hours) or take the mule track which descends to the Eremo di S. Viano (S. Viano Hermitage) nestled into the rock-face over-looking the Arnetola Valley.

Touring Itineraries

From Convalle you can easily reach famous historical centres such as Chianti, Lucca, Florence, Pisa, the Apuan Riviera, the Versilia area, La Spezia and the Cinque Terre by public transport. Aside from the fabulous and not-to-be-missed Chianti Tour, the itineraries suggested here will enable you to discover small villages and towns, natural environments full of rare beauty and the fascinating “hidden Tuscany”.

Chianti Tour

The route from Florence to Siena through ‘Chianti Country’ on the SS222 is possibly the most scenic journey you can make in Tuscany.

Take the A1 motorway towards Florence. Exit from motorway at Incisa, start at Rignano sull’Arno, head towards Grassano, Impruneta, San Casciano in Val di Pesa, Badia a Passignano, Montefioralle, Greve in Chianti, Panzano in Chianti, Castello di Volpaia, Radda in Chianti, Badia a Coltibuono, Gaiole in Chianti, Castello di Meleto, Castello di Ama, Castello di Brolio, Villa a Sesta, San Gusmè, Castelnuovo Berardenga

NB. You can do the tour the opposite way round ie: starting at Colonna del Grillo and Castelnuovo Berardenga or if you want to shorten this trip join up with the Chianti road (SS222) by taking local roads via Figline Valdarno or through Montevarchi through Cavriglia to Badia a Coltibuono.

After leaving the motorway and going through Rignano sull’Arno you get to **Impruneta**, where there are the best producers of Florentine terracotta. Then head towards San Casciano Val di Pesa. Here, within the Massanera farm is the **Consorzio Compagnia Cinta Senese** whose restaurant organises tastings of products made from the Sienese Cinta, a breed of pig that is used to make good quality hams that are distributed throughout the area. The most typical is the “finocchiona” (salami with fennel seeds).

15 km south of San Casciano is **Passignano**. There is a shop here called **La Bottega** outside the abbey, which sells the best Antinori products. They sell Super Tuscan wines like “Tignanello” and “Solaia” and also a ‘97 “Brunello di Montalcino, Pian delle Vigne” which is a very good year. If you are looking for a local wine they have “Chianti Classico Riserva Badia a Passignano”. They also sell “Vin Santo” (a sweet dessert wine made with dried white grapes) and stock frozen newly pressed olive oil in ¼ and ½ litre containers that you can defrost at any time of the year to give the aroma and taste of newly pressed oil. Next to the shop is an **Osteria** (restaurant) that serves regional dishes accompanied by great wines.

Then you go through Montefioralle to **Greve in Chianti**. In the main piazza under the arches there is a butchers called **Antica Macelleria Falorni**. It sells local Tuscan beef. Apart from meat it also sells different types of hams, including cured wild boar ham “prosciutto crudo di cinghiale” and “pecorino” cheese (sheep’s cheese – a Tuscan favourite), which is aged in a cellar underneath the butchers shop.

You can also taste some of the best wines and oils of the area.

Heading on, you come to **Panzano**. There are several shops here worth visiting, starting with the bakers **Forno Badii**, where you can buy typical unsalted Tuscan bread which accompanies hams and “pecorino” cheese perfectly. **Da Fontodi** have an excellent extravirgin olive oil and **La Cipressaia** a local farm, has marvellous pecorino cheese. Cheeses aged between 2 and 6 months travel the best.

Dario Cecchini (butcher) is perhaps the most famous person in Panzano (has appeared on Italian TV). As well as selling local beef (certain cuts are 8cm thick), they also sell homemade specialities. Every Sunday during the local market, the shop hosts wine and “crostini” (toasted bread with different toppings) tasting.

Slightly off the main road is **Castello di Volpaia**, which is worth a visit for the beautiful views and also some of their local products; the local wine is – Riserva Coltassala and they also make a Vin Santo.

They also sell honey, fig jam and aromatic vinegar.

A few kilometres to the south is Radda in Chianti. In the old town there is a wine shop called **Vignavecchia**. As well as Chianti Riserva they have a wine called Canvalle – a wine made from Sangiovese and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes. From Radda you can easily get to **Fattoria di Monteverdine** farm where they make a wonderful wine made purely from Sangiovese grapes.

As you follow the road towards Gaiole in Chianti you catch sight of the castellated tower of **Badia Coltibuono**, where for nearly one and a half centuries the Stucchi Prinetti family have been one of the most renowned producers of Chianti. They produce Sagioveto and a great Chardonnay called Sella del Boscone. Badia a Coltibuono is also famous for the four types of vinegar it produces, the most prestigious being the Balsamic vinegar Balsamico Lorenza de' Medici.

On leaving Gaiole in Chianti you can see Meleto castle (12th century). Shortly after Meleto castle there is a junction. If you turn right you can visit **Castello di Ama**, where they make a great Chianti Classico Vigneto La Casuccia and a Merlot L'Apparita. If you turn left you can visit **Castello di Brolio** (you can walk around the grounds of the castle for a small entrance fee) the home of Baron Ricasoli the inventor of the modern day Chianti.

They produce very good Chianti Classico and a wonderful Chardonnay Torricella Toscana.

Then head towards Castelnuovo Berardenga and then Colonna del Grillo. Just before Castelnuovo is the village of St. Gusmè. It has beautiful views over the surrounding countryside.

At the junction at Colonna del Grillo there is a restaurant/bar called “Bivacco” tel: 0577 352009 if you want to stop for dinner before returning home. It has good food at reasonable prices. In the evening they also serve pizza and there is a large seating area outside in the summer. If you go a few kilometres further ahead at the junction for Monte benichi is “La Leccarda” restaurant. It serves a buffet style meal (eat as much as you want) for a set charge per person (excl. wines). Great estate wines served from their own winery.

You'll see it from the road. Just before the junction.

Galliciano - Grotta del Vento - Barga - Castelvecchio

The itinerary from Galliciano town that reaches the Grotta del Vento (The Wind Caves), beside the Turrone torrent, offers views of rare beauty, we suggest you visit with short detours the village of Verni and the medieval rock fortress in Trassilico. The Eremo di Calomini (the Calomini Hermitage) is nestled into the bare rock-face. Soon after is the Trombacco lake, narrow between the deep rock gorge. At Fornovolasco,



the road ascends into the woods and after a few minutes you find the Grotta del Vento, one of the most well known group of caves open to tourists in the world. The magical underground world of the karst cavities is available in three different guided itineraries. Pathways and staircases permit you to admire stalactites and stalagmites, alabaster drapes and underground streams and rivers. An alternative itinerary is to return to Galliciano by the high road from the Grotta del Vento which reaches Vergemoli, the local council town. From Galliciano you can reach the medieval city of Barga where the narrow stone paved streets of the historical old city quarter, the renaissance palaces and buildings, take you to the high part of the city and the impressive romanescque “Duomo” (Cathedral) where you have one of the most beautiful panoramic views of the Apuan Alps chain. Not far from Barga, is Castelvecchio Pascoli, where it is possible to visit the poet Giovanni Pascoli's Museum residence.

Serchio Middle Valley

This area offers important historical centres such as Coreglia Antelminelli, known as one of the most beautiful Italian “borghi” (village) with its Museo delle Statuine di Gesso (Chalk Figurine Museum), the Ghivizzano Castle, Bagni di Lucca a thermal spa town, Ponte del Diavolo (Devil's Bridge) at Borgo a Mozzano and the Orrido di Botri and Balzo Nero Natural Reserves. In the Valle Pedogna Reserve, there are some notable points of interest: Vetriano has the smallest theatre in the world. In Colognora di Pescaglia, you can find the Museo del Castagno (Chestnut Museum) and at Celle Puccini, the museum residence of the great musician Giacomo Puccini, where he spent his childhood holidays. The itinerary from Pescaglia to Fabbriche di Vallico permits you to visit some “ferriere” iron-foundries which are still operative like the ironworks Galgani, the one at Aiola or at Gragliana. The hammers powered by water still forge the iron in the century old tradition, making agricultural tools and the “testi” (round metal flat irons) an indispensable accessory to cook the famous “necci” with ricotta cheese, the “crisciolette” of the “focacce leve” simple local traditional dishes.

Lago di Vagli - Oasi Lipu Campocatino - Lago di Gramolazzo

This itinerary leads you into the heart of the Parco delle Alpi Apuane, highlighting its peculiarities. Along the road to Vagli Sotto, you can see the artificial lake of Vagli which hides the submerged village of Fabbriche. When the lake is drained, the ancient village, founded by ironmongers from Brescia, comes hauntingly to life. A must to visit is the San Regolo Parish Church, the Casa Abrami Museum and S. Agostino, a romanesque church (XI century). After going up to Vagli di Sopra, you soon reach Campocatino: an ancient pastoral area located on the sides of fields at the foot of Monte Roccandagia, which now is the LIPU Oasis. A track, easy to walk along, shows you the natural characteristics of this basin formed in the glacial era. About a 30 minute walk takes you to the S. Viano Hermitage. From Campocatino you descend to Gorfigliano the artificial lake's green waters reflect the profile of the highest mountain in the Apuan chain, Monte Pisanino.

Valle di Arni - Isola Santa - Altopiano di Careggine

Castelnuovo, with its romanesque “Duomo” (Cathedral) and the Ariost Fortress is the commercial and administrative centre of the valley animated every Thursday since 1430, by an open air market. From the market-place, the provincial road leading to the Versilia area flanks the Turrite Secca, a typical Apuan Alps torrent, narrow in a gorge. After a few kilometres, you reach the Lago di Isola Santa (Isola Santa Lake), where an uninhabited hamlet, with typical style buildings and stone slated roofs, lies on the banks. Continuing along the road, the scenery changes to the rock-faces of Monte Sumbra, with the “Marmite dei Giganti”, characteristic rock erosions caused by water on the stone. At the Tre Fiumi the principal road ascends to the Galleria del Cipollaio (Cipollaio Tunnel) leading to Forte dei Marmi and the Versilian Coast, along this road, at Levigliani it's possible to visit the wonderful cave Antro del Corchia whereas on the right, the road leads to Arni and the Galleria del Monte Pelato (Mount Pelato Tunnel) and the Passo del Vestito (Vestito Pass) and Pian della Fioba where a worthwhile visit is to botanic garden “Pellegrini”. From this height the view sweeps over the coast, the marble quarries of Carrara to the Golfo di La Spezia (La Spezia bay) and Portovenere. On the return journey, a little before Isola Santa, you can find the road leading up to Capanne di Careggine and the Maesta' della Formica then down to the Careggine village situated on a plateau where you can enjoy a splendid panorama. Here in the winter season, you can ski and during the other seasons you can walk along fascinating paths and tracks in century old chestnut woods. When you arrive at Poggio, you must visit the small romanesque church S. Biagio.



Castaglione di Garfagnana - S. Pellegrino in Alpe - Pieve Fosciana



From Castelnuovo, following the provincial road SP72 of the Passo delle Radici (Radici Pass) you reach, after a few kilometres, Castiglione Garfagnana a fortified town. You can visit the fortress by booking at the [Pro loco](#), it was defended by an ample circular wall. After a few kilometres you come to Cerageto, Sassorosso and Casone di Profecchia, the winter sport locality along the Passo delle Radici (1529m above sea level), where the road continues to the Emilian region, Driving to the right you reach S. Pellegrino in Alpe; where the panorama opens onto the valley and the Lucca plain. A must to visit is the historical museum “Don Luigi Pellegrini” and the Sanctuary with the remains of the Saints Pellegrino and Bianco. The itinerary descends in the direction of Chiozza returning to Pieve Fosciana, where you can visit a still functioning water mill and the thermal spring of Pra' di Lama, which has hot sulphurous water appreciated by the local people for its therapeutic properties. Taking a short detour from Pieve Fosciana you can reach thee Lago di Pontecosi (Pontecosi Lake) where you can relax and enjoy or participate in animated water events.

Parco dell'Orecchiella - Fortezza di Verrulole

The Orecchiella Natural Reserves are the pride of the new Tosco-Emiliano National Park. A territory with a landscape of rare beauty. Here deer, mouflon, wild boar and wolves and many species of birds some migratory and others who have found their home in an ideal habitat can be seen. The royal eagle who has always been present on the Pania di Corfino, extends his hunting territory up to the summits of Monte Prato and Monte Vecchio, The Orecchiella Park Visitor centre with its Natural History Museum, has a projection room and various stands with local products on sale. This Park can be reached from Castelnuovo by following the directions for Villa Collemandina and Corfino. An “easier” pathway reaches the fauna observation areas where you can see deer, mouflon, bears and roe deer. The mountain flower garden with wonderful summer flowers, the botanic garden “Pania di Corfino” will fascinate wildlife lovers. The itinerary to visit follows the road to S. Romano in Garfagnana, through the villages of Caprignana and Orazaglia, until you arrive at Verrucole, where you can reach the magnificent Fortress, recently restored, by a short walk. Here you can take part in medieval and historical events.

Argegna - Giuncugnano - Sillano

From Piazza al Serchio, the commercial centre of the high valley, following the SR445 road to the Passo dei Carpinelli (Carpinelli Pass), you travel through ample cultivated fields of “farro” (spelt), the cereal which has been recognized with the official I.G.P. hallmark, used in many of the local Garfagnana dishes. After the Pass you descend into the Lunigiana valley, famous for its castles, and the mysterious Statue Steli (Steli Statues). Further up you come to the plateau of Argegna with its Madonna della Guardia; a white Sanctuary situated on the great high field. Lower down in the valley is Giuncugnano, from here following the main road to Magliano and Pontecchio you come to the centre of the Parco Nazionale dell'Appennino (Appenine National Park). Here you find great forests extending in all directions. Nearby are the villages of Dalli di Sopra and Dalli di Sotto leading to Sillano and the SP Pradarena road. If you take a short journey upwards you reach the historical Pradarena Pass which connects the Garfagnana region to the Reggio Emilia Province, whereas if you descend, you terminate the itinerary at Piazza al Serchio.

Villas & Gardens

Why not visit one of the many grand Villas just outside Florence, several have stunning views over the city with glimpses of the “Duomo” and the many spires towering over the city skyline. Some like Villa la Petraia at Castello have a guided tour of the fabulous interior that includes a glass-covered courtyard with 17th century frescoes around the walls, used as a ballroom and a tiny family chapel with beautiful frescoes. Upstairs, are the many royal apartments used by the King of Italy. On a hot day a stroll through the landscaped woodland behind the Villa would be a treat in itself.

Villa Gamberaia

www.webspace.it/villagamberaia/

The villa is set in the hills above Florence in Settignano and has beautiful views over the city and the Arno. It is renowned for its splendid gardens that are acclaimed by leading landscape architects and garden historians. The villa in fact appears in Edith Wharton’s book “Italian Villas and their gardens”. It was completed in the early 17th century by the Florentine noble Zanobi Lapi. The gardens have a cypress allée, bowling green, mymphaeum, grotto garden, woods, lemon terrace and a water parterre enclosed by a majestic cypress arcade. The topiary art was created by American born Mathilda Ledyard Cass, Baroness Von Ketteler. Today, the villa belongs to the heirs of the Luigi Zalum family. The gardens are open to the public and an entrance ticket is payable. Ring the bell at the main entrance.

Villa Castello

www.mega.it/eng/egui/monu/vcast.htm

The villa was acquired by the Medici family in 1477. The villa was sacked in 1527 and the family were run out, but they returned to rule Florence again and Cosimo 1 began restoration work and additions to the villa (carried out by the architect Vasari). Tribolo was called from Bologna in 1537 to design the gardens. Botticelli was commissioned to paint two masterpieces for the family villa: “Il Trionfo della Primavera” (1477-78) and “La Nascita di Venere” (1485 ca), which now hang in the Uffizi gallery in Florence. Terraces stretch out towards the hills, there are grottos, nicchie, ninfei, statues and fountains adorn these beautiful gardens.

The villa was gifted to the state by the Savoy family in 1919. The Villa is now open to the public and a small entrance fee is payable.

Villa Petraia

www.mega.it/eng/egui/monu/petra.htm

The villa forms part of the same estate as Villa di Castello and was originally a medieval tower owned by the Brunelleschi family. It was acquired by Cardinal Ferdinando de’Medici in 1575, who completely renovated and added to the tower to create this splendid villa that was used as the summer residence by the Medici, who also held court here in the 17th and 18th centuries. The entrance courtyard was covered in glass in the 19th century so that it could be used as a ballroom. It is decorated with frescoes by Volterrano (17th century) depicting the Medici family at the height of their powers.

The grounds are a splendid example of an Italian formal garden and were designed by Tribolo. It was the third to be planned after Castello and Boboli. The garden is on several levels linked by steps. There are terraces of roses, wildflowers and pear trees, with the smell of lemon and thyme on the breeze. It has boxwood hedges and a lawn with terracotta pots of citrus fruits and statues leads onto a panoramic terrace overlooking Florence. Nursery gardens are surrounded by topiary hedges cut into animal shapes. The main garden is divided into eight large flower beds, which were used for cultivating vegetables and for botanical experiments, one of the Medici family’s favourite sciences. The upper garden is planted with an ornamental woodland of oaks, cedars, pine and plane trees laid out by landscapist J. Fritsch.

The villa was gifted to the state by the Savoy family in 1919 and is now open to the public with guided tours of the royal apartments throughout the day. A minimal entrance ticket is payable and includes entrance to both Villa Petraia and Villa Castello. They are situated close together.

Opening hours and entrance prices for the state owned gardens are available on line. www.ambientefi.art.beniculturali.it

Antique Markets

Arezzo

The first Saturday and Sunday of every month all day. If you want to avoid the crowds go around lunchtime and if you go on Saturday morning you can catch the weekly market too, which is held in Via Veneto slightly out of town, turn right out of the station and walk around the outside of the old town wall. The market is further up on the right.

The antique market is very big and is held up in the old town around the lovely medieval piazza. It's worth a visit if you like browsing and bargain hunting. Don't miss the lovely terracotta shop at the top of the town in the main piazza. It's called **Ariete** and has just about everything you can think of in terracotta.

Siena

Collectors market. The third Sunday of every month. Piazza del Mercato.

Local Restaurants & Pizzerias

Although Casa Marginetta's kitchen has everything you're likely to need to prepare meals yourself, it's fair to say that at least half the reason for coming to Tuscany is to taste the fabulous food on offer! After all, you are supposed to be on holiday!

What's more, Convalle is located within the Pedogna valley which is also known by local reputation as 'La Valle di Gastronomia' – the 'Valley of Gastronomy'.

Italians travel from miles around to dine in the wide choice of reasonably-priced restaurants. Most are on or near the valley floor, but some exquisite gems are tucked away up in the hillsides! You won't be disappointed!

If you are travelling with a young child, please be aware that not many restaurants have high chairs, so you should take ours with you. Note: Baby changing facilities are also rare wherever you go, but there is sometimes a large disabled toilet, so if you can, use this. It saves you getting in too much of a tangle!

La Fonte



☎ 0583-359815

Località Trebbio, 34, Convalle, Pescaglia (LU) **[Distance: 0.9km - 1 minute \(walking: 10 mins.\)](#)**
www.RistoranteLaFonte.com

This restaurant, only a short stroll from Casa Marginetta, has become the firm favourite of ourselves and our guests ever since it was acquired and completely renovated by Daniela, a friendly Scottish/Italian lady who naturally speaks perfect English. La Fonte offers a good variety of traditional Italian dishes in attractive surroundings and at very reasonable prices. In addition to delicious meats such as peppered steak, pork and lamb chops etc., it is sometimes possible to enjoy half or a whole freshly roasted baby chicken if you order a day in advance. There are many delicious starters too - a particular favourite being the prawn and pumpkin risotto. Excellent pizzas are cooked in the log-fired oven and – unusually – are served every day that the restaurant is open. A take-away service is also offered. When not too busy and subject to ingredient availability, Daniela will also prepare non-menu dishes on request. Why not try the 'Casa Marginetta Special Calzone'? This pizza is loaded with plenty of mozzarella cheese, salami, ham, bacon, onions, tomatoes and garlic, before being folded over and drizzled with tomato purée, then baked to perfection in the traditional pizza oven. Irresistible! If you like sparkling white wine, ask for Daniela's 'Special Prosecco'. What a wonderful clean taste – and such good value! You may even be offered a complimentary glass of Daniela's home-made Limoncello with the bill if you mention 'Casa Marginetta'.

Closed Tuesday.

Molin della Volpe

☎ 0583-359045

Località Molin della Volpe, Gello (LU) **[Distance: 3.5km - 4 minutes \(walking: 42 mins.\)](#)**
info@molindellavolpe.it **www.molindellavolpe.it**

Our second-nearest restaurant is located in Gello, a few yards up the road towards Puccini's house in Celle. This classy restaurant is a huge converted former paper mill. The machinery is exposed and has been preserved as museum pieces. There is a Pizzeria on the first floor, and a restaurant on the second floor. Food and wines are excellent. Luigi is in charge of the food and cares passionately about it. The Molin is a firm favourite with Italians as it offers a good variety of traditional dishes in stunningly beautiful surroundings. However, it is a little bit more expensive than its competitors and so we have only rarely eaten there ourselves. Why not give it a try?

Closed Wednesday. Tuesday, Thursday and Friday open for dinner only. Possibly closed some other weekdays too in winter.

Puccini

Località Celle, 55064 Pescaglia (LU)
info@puccinibb.it

 0583-359184  328-9279077
Distance: 10km - 4 minutes (walking: 42 mins.)
www.puccinirestaurant.it

The Puccini Restaurant offers typical dishes prepared with products linked to the culture and life of the land. Wide and sunny dining rooms immersed in a pleasant and comfortable atmosphere are the ideal place to taste cooking made with love and passion. This restaurant offers a unique and inimitable experience, but sadly you will normally need to pre-book with them as they are rarely open at random.

Valentino

Località Cima, 1, Fiano, 55064 Pescaglia (LU) **Distance: 4.5km - 5 minutes (walking 62 minutes)**

 0583-38182

Located in the nearby hillside village of Fiano not far from Convalle on the scenic alpine route to Viareggio, this restaurant offers possibly the lowest prices in the region. It seems that you can order pretty much anything on the menu – all 7 courses if you wish – mix and match dishes with your friends and drink as much wine and mineral water as you like and the bill will still come to €17 a head! It's also supposed to be good for Sunday lunches and many ex-pats wouldn't go anywhere else! However, this restaurant is not one of our favourites as we definitely felt like 'outsiders' when we went there the first time, so we haven't been back since. Nevertheless, if you've got a lot of hungry mouths to feed and you want to do it cheaply then maybe you should give it a try! Let us know your opinion if you do!

Closed Wednesday.

La Tana

Località La Tana, 8 55064 Pescaglia (LU)



 0583-358017

Distance: 5.4km - 6 minutes (walking: 67 mins.)

Located between Piegaiolo and Diecimo on the valley floor, there's a warm welcome and some fine cuisine to be enjoyed at La Tana. The ambiance is somewhat lacking due to fluorescent strip lighting – some have uncharitably likened it to a transport café – but it's fair to say that they have the best home-made tortelli that we have ever tasted! Follow this with any of the succulent main courses and wash it all down with a litre or two of the house vino bianco frizzante (semi-sparkling white wine) for around the same price as water and you have a very enjoyable meal for an exceptionally reasonable price. A tasty free appetiser of ultra-thin and crispy pizza is sometimes served before your starter. At weekends, you can also choose from a wide selection of pizzas. An English menu is available and on Saturday nights, a friendly English-speaking Scottish/Italian waiter works there too.

Closed Monday in summer and some other weekdays too in winter.

Il Guerrierio

Località Grabbia, 1, 55064 Vetriano (LU)



 0583-358163

Distance: 10.1km - 12 minutes

Tucked away in the hillside village of Vetriano, this fabulous restaurant should not be missed. Despite the seemingly never-ending journey, keep going – it's worth it when you get there! This restaurant offers good food in superb surroundings at highly reasonable prices. Your friendly host has something on the menu to suit every taste and on warm evenings you can optionally eat 'al fresco' on the terrace outside. The home-made tortelli is different to La Tana's, but some would say equally as good! The mixed grill contains enough meat to feed an army. Then again you could choose the €20 fixed-price menu which includes an appetiser, *the* tortelli, *the* mixed grill, your choice of dessert, wine (or mineral water) and coffee! Starve yourself all day to do it justice! Wild boar casserole is another tasty option when in season. At weekends, you can also choose from a wide selection of pizzas. An [English menu](#) is available (we translated it for them) and you should look out for the complimentary savoury doughnut-style appetiser – tasty!

Closed Monday in summer and Monday – Thursday in winter.

Antico Locanda di Sesto



Via Ludovica, 1660, Sesto di Moriano, Lucca.
info@anticalocandadisesto.it

☎ 0583-578181

[Distance: about 15km](#)

Constructed in 1368, Sesto's ancient inn is more than twice as old as Casa Marginetta! *That's OLD!*

Whilst the building is full of character though, it's the fantastic hospitality offered by your host Lamberto and his family together with the wonderful food that finds this restaurant ranked #1 on Trip advisor out of 188 restaurants in Lucca gaining an exceptional 92% recommendation rating - *despite the fact that it's not even IN Lucca!!* [[TripAdvisor Review](#)].

Several of the staff speak English and their menu is full of tasty delights. If you are a steak aficionado, here the meat is sourced from a rare breed of cow, located near Florence, and cooked over olive wood, ensuring that the outside is cooked to perfection with a wonderful grilled flavour, whilst the inside is still moist and tender.

They also offer a unique and inexpensive house wine made from grapes grown in their own vineyard.

Reasonably priced overall, this is a restaurant that you should not miss. Do, however, consider popping in, 'phoning or emailing to book a table in advance during busy periods as otherwise you may be disappointed.

Closed Saturday in summer and possibly some other weekdays too in winter.

La Mora



Via Ludovica 1748, Sesto di Moriano, Lucca.

☎ 0583-406402

[Distance: about 15km](#)

Located just a few yards away from the restaurant above, this former stagecoach station now serves classic Lucchese food. Start with the minestra di farro (soup made with emmer, a grain that resembles barley) with beans, or the exquisite homemade tacconi (a thin, short, wide pasta) with rabbit sauce. Another favourite is La Mora's rendition of cacciucco (a Livornese fish stew) which is succulent and not to be missed. The wine list offers some great wines from the area, as well as from just about everywhere else in Italy.

Closed Wednesday, Jan. 1-15, and June 15-30.

Da Sandra

Località Valsozza, 1, 55020 Fabbriche Di Vallico (LU)

[Distance: 18.3km - 21 minutes](#)

Beyond Pescaglia in the hillside village of Fabbriche di Vallico, this new restaurant is receiving rave reviews from all that have tried it – but we haven't been there ourselves yet so we have no idea of 'phone numbers, credit cards accepted etc. Let us know your opinion if you go!

Closed Wednesday.

Restaurants in Other Areas

Lucca

Buca di Sant Antonio



Via della Cervia 3, San Michele, Lucca

0583-55881

Distance: about 25km

It's been around since 1782, and you can understand why. Located in Lucca's old town, the staying power of the place is the result of its superlative Tuscan food, brought to the table by highly professional waiting staff. A white-walled interior hung with copper pots and brass musical instruments provides a classy, comfortable setting for enjoying the menu, which ranges from the simple but blissful tortelli lucchesi al sugo (meat-stuffed pasta with a tomato-and meat-sauce) to such daring dishes as roast capretto (kid) with herbs. Reservations essential.

Closed Monday, 2 weeks in January and 2 weeks in July. No dinner on Sunday evening.

Il Giglio



Piazza del Giglio 2, Duomo, Lucca

0583-494058

Distance: about 25km

Just off Piazza Napoleone, this restaurant is a place for all seasons, with a big fireplace in the dining room and an outdoor terrace in summer. A 2003 refurbishment spruced up the carpets and the walls while maintaining the 19th-century charm. The menu comprises Tuscan favourites such as farro garfagnino (a thick soup made with grain and beans) and coniglio con olive (rabbit stew with olives). Amiable white-jacketed waiters speak knowledgeably about the wine list.

Closed Wednesday and 15 days in February. No dinner on Tuesday evening.

Osteria del Neni



Via Pescheria 3, San Michele, Lucca

0583-492681

Distance: About 24km

Hidden on a side street near Piazza San Michele in Lucca's old town, this delightful little place offers up tasty treats in a cozy space with paper place mats, wooden tables, and walls sponged in two different shades of warm orange. All the pasta is made in house, and if you're lucky enough to find ravioli spinaci ed anatra in salsa di noci (stuffed with duck and spinach, with a creamy but light walnut sauce), by all means order it. The menu changes regularly; in summer this splendid food can be enjoyed 'al fresco'. Reservations essential.

Closed Sunday and January.

All' Olivo



Piazza S.Quirico1, Lucca

0583- 496264

Distance: About 24km

<http://www.luccaonline.it/clienti/allolivo/index.html>

Located in one of the more secluded areas of the historic centre, the restaurant dates back to the 1940s. After changing from one ownership to the next, the restaurant was acquired by husband and wife team Antonella Antonimi and Corrado Petretti, who renovated the building and turned it into a fine eatery. The Olivo offers its customers two cosy dining rooms and an open air veranda, especially popular in the summer months. The menu is marked by local Lucchese specialities and seafood dishes. Some local products are spelt, cooked with Lucchese beans, rabbit cacciatore, and soups prepared following special long-standing recipes. The restaurant also offers a wide selection of seafood choices to choose from. Worth special attention is the "Gran Piatto di Mare caldo", a combination of steamed fish, with crustaceans and prawns, dressed with superior local olive oil. The restaurant makes its own fresh pasta and desserts and has a comprehensive wine list. The chef is Giancarlo Marchi, but his wife Antonella also contributes to preparation of the dishes by purchasing only the finest quality ingredients. Reservations recommended.

Opening hours: 12:15 - 3:00 pm, 7:30 - 11:00 pm. Closed Wednesday.
Holidays: between January and February.

Locanda l'Elisa (Il Gazebo)    
Via Nuova per Pisa 1952, Lucca.

 0583-379737
Distance: About 31km
www.locandaelisa.com

Located near the main road between Pisa and Lucca, a stay at this hotel could evoke home -- that is, if home is a neoclassical villa with a lush garden a short ride from the city! The restaurant, Il Gazebo, a former Victorian conservatory, merits a visit even if you're not staying here. Sicilian chef Corrado Spinola offers two menus (one typically Tuscan, the other less rigidly so) and two divine tasting menus (one meat, one fish) in either "piccolo" or "grande" portions. Somewhat pricier than many of its competitors.

Closed January 7 - February 11.

Pisa

La Mescita    
Via Cavalca 2, Santa Maria, Pisa

 050-544294
Distance: about 41km

High, vaulted ceilings and stencilled walls lined with wine bottles provide the simple decor at this trattoria. There's nothing simple, however, about the menu, as chef-owner Stefano Saviozzi and his wife, Elisabetta Bauti, turn out highly inventive, Tuscan-spirited dishes. The constantly changing menu draws produce and inspiration from the market just outside the door. Unusual primi (first courses) include garganelli all'uovo con il guanciale croccante e passata di fagioli bianchi (egg pasta with fried bacon and puréed beans), which gives new meaning to the idea of pork and beans. Desserts are not to be missed: save room for the ricotta montata col cioccolato fuso (fresh sheep's milk cheese topped with chocolate sauce).

Closed Monday, 3 weeks in January and last 3 weeks in August. No lunch Tuesday.

Osteria dei Cavalieri    
Via San Frediano 16, Santa Maria, Pisa

 050-580858
Distance: about 41km

This charming white-walled osteria a few steps from Piazza dei Cavalieri is reason enough to come to Pisa. The chef does it all - serves up grilled fish, pleases vegetarians, and prepares tagliata (thin slivers of rare beef) for meat lovers. There are three set menus - from the sea, garden, and earth - or you can order à la carte; at lunchtime, piatti unici (single plates) offer a quick alternative. Service can be a bit rushed, but try to linger over your wine anyway. Finish your meal with a lemon sorbet bathed in Prosecco (dry sparkling wine), and walk away feeling you've eaten like a king at plebeian prices.

Closed Sunday, July 25 - August 25, December 29 - January 7. No lunch Saturday.

Vineria alla Piazza
Piazza delle Vettovaglie 13, Santa Maria, Pisa.

Distance: about 41km

Translated, the name means, "wine store on the square," and the food here is as straightforward as the name: a simple blackboard lists two or three primi as well as secondi. When the kitchen runs out, the offering is erased from the board and a new one added -- a guarantee the food is made-that-moment fresh. The primi are particularly good, especially the light-as-a-feather polenta gratinata al gorgonzola (corn meal mixed with Gorgonzola and run briefly under the broiler). Reservations and credit cards not accepted.

Closed Sunday.

Florence

Il Cibrèo

Via de'Macci, Sant'Ambrogio, Florence.

Closed Sunday and Mondays from July 25 – September 4.

 055-2341100

La Baraonda

Via Ghibellina, Florence.

Closed all day Sunday and Monday lunchtime.

 055-2341171

Ristorante Mirò

Via San Gallo, Florence.

Closed Sunday.

 055-481030

Le Piramidi

Via di Rosano 198, Pontassieve, Florence.

Closed Sunday and Monday.

 055-6519000

4 Leoni

Via Vellutini 1R, Florence.

 055-218562

Buca Lapi

Via del Trebbio 1, Florence.

Closed Sunday.

 055-213768

Lungarno

Borgo San Jacopo 14, Florence.

Closed Sunday.

 055-27261

Harry's Bar

Lungarno Vespucci 22, Florence.

Closed Sunday.

 055-2396700

Donnini

Via di Rimaggio 33, Bagno di Ripoli, Florence.

Closed Wednesday.

 055-633335

Becco Fino

Piazza Scarlatti, Florence.

Closed Monday.

 055-290076

Coco Lezzone

Via del Parioncino 26, Florence.

Closed Sunday.

 055-287178

Divinus

Via dell'Orto, Florence.

 055-223094

Siena

Le Logge

Via del Porrione, Siena.

Terrace seating in summer.

 0577-48018

Osteria del Ficomezzo

Via dei Termini, Siena.

Closed Sunday.

 0577-222364

La Certosa di Maggiano

Strada di Certosa

 0577-288180

Enoteca I Terzi

Via Termini 7, Siena.

Closed Sunday.

 0577-44329

Santorotto

Via Trento 173, Sinalunga, Siena.

Closed Tuesday.

 0577-678608

Conte Pazzo

Via Maresca 1, Trequanda, Siena.

Closed Tuesday.

 0577-662079

Arezzo

La Buca di San Francesco

Via San Francesco 1, Arezzo.

Closed Monday and Tuesday.

 0575-23271

Villa San Cornelio

Via di Castelsecco 27, Arezzo.

 0575-360684

Borgo San Piero

 0575-350115

Carraturo

Corso Italia 6, Arezzo.

Closed Tuesday.

 0575-355757

Mario

Viale Michelangelo 86, Arezzo.

Closed Monday.

 0575-24310

Il Saracino

Battifolle, Arezzo.

Closed Sunday.

 0575-363144

La Lancia d'Oro

Piazza Grande 18, Arezzo.

Closed Monday.

 0575-21033

Cortona

Tonino

Piazza Garibaldi 1, Cortona.

Closed Tuesday.

 0575-630500

Antica Trattoria

Piazza Signorelli, Cortona

Closed Wednesday.

 0575-631191

Il Cacciatore

Via Roma, Cortona.

Closed Wednesday.

 0575-630552

Osteria del Teatro

Via Maffei 2, Cortona.

 0575-630556

La Fonte dei Frati

Closed Tuesday.

 0575-601370

La Loggetta

Pescheria, Cortona.

 0575-630575

Marino

Terontola, Cortona.

 0575-67578

Chianti (around Giaole)

Lo Sfizio

Gaiole in Chianti.

Closed Tuesday.

 0577-749501

Ristorante Carloni

Gaiole in Chianti.

Closed Wednesday.

 0577-749549

Castello di Spaltenna

Gaiole in Chianti.

 0577-749483

Il Papavero

Barbischio, Chianti.

Closed Monday and Tuesday lunchtime.

 0577-749063

L'Alto Chianti

Castagnoli, Chianti.

Closed Monday.

 0577-731008

Badia Coltibuoni

Badia Coltibuoni, Chianti.

Closed Monday.

 0577-749031

Il Carlino d'Oro

San Regolo, Chianti.

 0577-747136

Thermal Springs

These are possibly one of the best-kept secrets in Tuscany. The whole region is full of thermal springs that have been used for their curative powers as far back as Roman times.

The water is often at a temperature of more than 30°. The spa centres whether big or small are well organised and well kept. They usually consist of one or several outdoor pools with water of different temperatures depending on the proximity to the out source. The water in different areas has a different mineral content hence the link with different curative qualities. For example the water at Terme di San Giovanni in Rapolano Terme, rich in sulphur, is said to be beneficial for skin conditions and is also used for inhalations to help ears, throat and bronchial tubes.

They are often located in lovely country locations and some have great views such as Bagno Vignoni. Apart from being great for relaxing and your general health they are also fun and enjoyable. What better way of spending a day, soaking in the hot water, then sunbathing in the soft Tuscan breeze around the pool. They are well worth a visit.

If you fancy taking things a bit further, check out their beauty and health programmes. Many offer massages and mud treatments. Usually a Doctors visit (on location) is required before you begin your day. But it usually only consists of answering a few questions relating to your health. The spas are very popular with Italians and can be quite busy in August.

Centro Termale Bagni di Lucca 
Piazza S. Martino 11, 55021 Bagni di Lucca, Lucca.
terme@termebagnidilucca.it

 0583-87221
Distance: about 25km
www.termebagnidilucca.it

The “Centro Termale Bagni di Lucca” consists of 2 hydros:

The Jean Varroud and Casa Boccella spas specialise in the cure of arthrorheumatic, bronchopneumonia, vascular and gynaecological pathologies. Unique in their kind, two natural steam grottoes also characterise the Terme with a temperature that oscillates between 40°C and 47°C.

In the new wellbeing centre of the Terme di Bagni di Lucca, specific programmes have been created for toning, relaxing and purifying the body by means of the “ancient deterging” of the roman baths, with mudpacks, massages and treatments with essential oils and creams based on the thermal waters, rich in mineral salts and precious substances for the body.

Here is a list of some others. Occasionally some have a day or afternoon when they close – if you want to be sure call to check before going.

Terme di San Filippo
Loc. San Filippo 23, Castiglione d’Orcia
termesfilippo@tin.it

 0577-872982

Terme di Chianciano
Via delle Rose, Chianciano
termechianciano@ftbcc.it

 0578-68111

This is a major spa centre with several spas.

Aqua Santa Spa
Piazza Martiri Perugini
Open all year round

Parco Fucoli Spa
Viale G. Baccelli
Open April – October

Sillene Spa
Piazza G. Marconi
Open all year round

Physiotherapy Centre
Piazza G. Marconi
Open all year round

Inhalation Centre
Viale Roma
Open all year round

Relaxation Centre
Piazza G. Marconi
Open all year round

Sorgente Sant'Elena
Viale della Libertà 112
info@termesantelena.it
Open from April – November

☎ 0578-31141

Bagni di Petriolo
Terme Salute Ambiente, Monticiano
info@termesaluteambiente.com
Open from April – November

☎ 0577-757104

Terme di Montepulciano
Sant'Albino di Montepulciano, Via delle Terme 46
info@termemontepulciano.it
Open all year round

☎ 0578-7911

Bagni delle Galleraie
Terme Salute Ambiente, Loc. Le Galleraie, Radicondoli
info@termesaluteambiente.com
Open May - October

☎ 0577-793151

Terme di Rapolano
Antica Querciolaia, Via Trieste 22, Rapolano Terme
infoterme@termeaq.it
Opening times:
Winter: 10.00 – 18.00 Summer: 10.00 – 19.00
Sat: 10.00 – 23.00 Fri & Sat: 10.00 – 24.00

☎ 0577-724091

Terme di San Giovanni
Loc. Terme di San Giovanni, San Giovanni
Info@termesangiovanni.it
Open from May – October 9.30 – 19.30

☎ 0577-724030

Fonteverde Thermal Centre
Loc. Terme 1, San Casciano dei Bagni
fonteverde@termedisancascianobagni.it
Open all year round

☎ 0578-58023

Bagno Vignoni
Compagnia delle Terme, Piazza del Moretto 32, San Quirico d'Orcia
bagnovignoniterme@tin.it
Open from June - October

☎ 0577-887365

Factory Shops Plus

Terranuova Bracciolini

For nearly everything you can imagine in terracotta including small decorative pots perfect as small gifts go to the Terracotta yard just past Terranuova Bracciolini.

Go past Terranuova and go around the large roundabout following signs for Montevarchi. Once off the roundabout then filter left and follow signs for Levane.

Turn left and filter right. Turn right at the end of this road. Go around the corner and the Terracotta yard is on your left just after the corner.

Prada Factory Shop – called “SPACE”

Levanella

Sometimes gets very busy. If so, there is a ticket system. Take a numbered ticket from the machine and wait till your number comes up to get in.

If you are used to Prada shop prices you'll find the prices here a bargain – if you're not you may find them expensive.

Large factory shop and nice bar next door (If the prices leave you breathless you can at least buy yourself a cappuccino!)

Follow signs to Levane. At the crossroads (traffic lights), turn right towards Montevarchi. Go straight on at the next set of traffic lights (about 2 kms) turn right, then first left. The factory shop is at the bottom of the road on your left.

Pratesi Shoes

Ambra (road between Bucine and Siena)

Hand crafted leather shoes in both mens and ladies styles. Prices from around €50. Also have some accessories e.g. Handbags, belts often jackets too.

Follow signs for Levane. Go straight on at the crossroads to Siena. Ambra is about 20 km. The factory shop is on the main road just before a corner on your left as you come into the village. You pass through Ambra on the way to Siena.

The Mall

 055-865775

Via Europa 8, Leccio, Reggello

Yves St. Laurent, Bottega Veneta, Giorgio Armani, Loro Piana, Sergio Rossi and Gucci.
Hours: Mon-Sat 9am-6pm, Sun 3pm-7pm

Dolce & Gabbana

Loc. S. Maria Maddalena 49, Incisa Valdarno

2 mins away from The Mall
Hours: Mon-Sat 9am-7pm, Sun 10pm-7pm

Fendi

 055-834981

Via Pian Dell'Isola 66/33, Rignano sull'Arno (FI)
Hours Mon-Sat 9.30am-6.30pm, Sun 2.20pm-6.20pm
Call to check opening hours as they often change.

Hints & Tips

Saving Money

We've discovered a great new money-saving tool – the [CaxtonFX Euro Card](#)

With this card we've saved loads of money on our Euro transactions ... here's why:

- This card acts as a VISA card and with it you can pay for goods and services in Eurozone countries without any charges or fees. What's more, you can even use it in ATMs to draw out cash without any charges or fees, so now there's no need to carry wads of cash around as you can just draw out what you want when you need it!
- The card costs you nothing – [CaxtonFX](#) do not charge a fee, only a £10 deposit is taken when you apply. This is added to your overall balance when you load your card for the first time. Secondary cards are also available if you want, but these do cost £5 each.
- The exchange rate offered by [CaxtonFX](#) is amazingly good – better by far than any bureaux de change, bank credit or debit cards, the post office and other pre-paid cards we have looked at!
- Your money changes into Euros at the moment you top up. This means that you can monitor exchange rates e.g. at [XE.com](#) and transfer money as and when you think it's best without having to worry about the rates being terrible when you're on holiday. This is also a great way to save-up your holiday spending money over several months if you wish.
- You can quickly top up by text message if you run short of money anytime whilst abroad. A simple process let you control the transfer of extra funds from your bank account if you need to.
- No risk of anyone draining your bank account through fraudulent activity as only money on the card can be spent and in any case you can quickly block the card by 'phone if it gets lost or stolen.

Ryanair

It is a fact that Ryanair offer a very reliable service at extremely competitive prices. However, in order to keep their fares low, they try to generate extra income in other ways. The purpose of the hints and tips in this section are to help you avoid contributing to some of their 'revenue-generating schemes' and to get the best out of your flying experience!

1. Flying with Hand Baggage only

Ryanair have introduced a policy of charging for all checked-in baggage, so if you are able to travel with up to 10kg of hand baggage each and with nothing to check-in, then you will pay the least amount.

You will also then be required to perform a web check-in and can pay a small premium for priority boarding if you wish.

In short, what this means is you will be able to check-in from home from 15 days up to 4 hours prior to your scheduled flight departure and print out a boarding pass. You can arrive at the airport as early as you like and because you don't need to wait for check-in to open, you can instead go straight through security, making the most of the duty-free shopping facilities and generally having a less stressful experience. Then, when the time comes to board, you will be boarded first and therefore will have the pick of the seats available.

Additionally, should you suffer a disastrous delay on your journey to the airport, provided that you can get to the departure gate before the flight finishes boarding, you will still be able to fly, whereas passengers needing to check-in will be refused if they arrive less than 40 minutes before the scheduled departure time. In the past we have been refused check-in ourselves even though the inbound flight was running late and hadn't even landed!

For most holidays, don't forget to also check in for your return flight before you leave home. If you do forget, then visit [Jaqueline's](#) in Bagni di Lucca to sort this out!

Please take great care to ensure that your hand baggage complies with the stated dimensions of 55cm x 40cm x 20cm and weighs no more than 10kg.

With so many people travelling with hand luggage only, space in the overhead lockers is at a premium and so Ryanair are being especially picky about this.

Recently at Pisa on our return flight whilst queuing to go through security, every item of hand luggage had to be put in the measuring device in front of a Ryanair employee. People with bags that didn't comply were unceremoniously turfed out and made to go to the Ryanair sales desk in order to pay to check the bag in at the €135 second bag high season rate. They weren't happy!

Ryanair have even started selling approved Samsonite hand baggage on their site for £69/€79 [here](#) so that now they can claim that there is 'no excuse' for non-compliance.

2. Checked-in Baggage

If you decide that you need to check-in some baggage, then please bear in mind the following:

You will still need to perform a web check-in and then at the airport you will need to queue up at the general Ryanair desk allocated for 'bag drop' rather than looking for a desk associated with your flight.

You are allowed to pre-book 1 bag per passenger each way of up to 15kg for £15/€15 (low season), £20/€20 (high season) or up to 20kg for £25/€25 (low season), £30/€30 (high season) each way and to pre-book a second bag per passenger of up to 15kg for a further £35/€35 (low season), £45/€45 (high season) .

Ryanair does not allow 'pooling' of checked-in baggage allowances, so if one of you has, say 18kg and the other has, say 12kg then you will still have to pay for the excess 3kg even though the overall total is only 30kg unless you book the heavier bag at the 20kg rate. You can't even 'pool' allowances between your own first and second bags.

If you fail to pre-book baggage then you will be stung at the airport for £60/€60 (low season), £100/€100 (high season) for the first 15kg bag or £75/€75 (low season), £105/€105 (high season) for the first 20kg bag and a whopping £105/€105 (low season), £135/€135 (high season) for a second 15kg bag per person each way. Bear in mind that if you can find a computer terminal and log on to Ryanair's web site more than 4 hours before the flight departs then you can still add baggage at the pre-booked prices.

3. Excess Baggage

Excess baggage is VERY expensive on Ryanair. A staggering £20/€20 for every kilo and they WILL charge you!!

No one bag may weigh more than 30kg even if you are prepared to pay excess baggage charges.

Click [here](#) for the latest details. Invest in a set of [digital luggage scales](#) and take them with you so that you don't get caught out on the way home!

4. Sports Equipment

If you intend to take items of sporting equipment including but not limited to large fishing rods, golf clubs, bicycles, scooters, surfboards, bodyboards, snowboards or skis with you then, based on our experience, you are advised to pre-book 'sports equipment' at a fixed charge of £50/€50 per item per flight. Click [here](#) for the latest details.

We have found that if you squeeze two pairs of skis and one or two pairs of boots into a double ski bag then you can usually get away with paying a single charge. By taking the bindings off and carrying them in normal baggage, one of our guests even managed to get four snowboards in a bag for a single charge as the weight allowance is up to 20kg!

If you have pre-booked and pre-paid in this way then it's less hassle for the check-in staff just to let it go if it's 20kg or less. This has always worked for us!

On the other hand, if you don't pre-pay, then check-in staff have to write out a payment slip and send you off to the Ryanair payment desk. You have to queue up, pay, and then go back to check-in again.

This is irritating for them, for you and for passengers behind you. Whilst they are enduring this hassle, they may decide to get picky and go through everything with a fine-toothed comb. They may even decide to treat it all as excess baggage and charge you a small fortune! Take it from us, however it works out, this is grief and expense that you don't want or need!

Ski boots are a grey area. They are usually quite heavy and therefore use up a lot of your checked-in baggage allowance. Until recently we used to carry them as hand baggage, but recently they became classed as "deadly weapons" and have to go in normal or sports baggage instead.

5. Board at the Rear of the Aircraft

It never ceases to amaze us how few people board the aircraft from the rear. This usually results in a better choice of seats and far quicker boarding without the need to queue behind and squeeze past other passengers.

6. In-flight Food and Drink

For obvious reasons, in-flight refreshments are chargeable and are not cheap, but you are allowed to consume your own (non alcoholic) drinks and food on board. Nevertheless, if we happen to be enjoying a low-cost flight, we generally make a point of buying stuff on-board as we feel that we are getting such a good deal that we really don't mind paying a little extra! Their sandwiches are really excellent. Anyway, it's your choice.

Note: Recently, Ryanair have started insisting that all shop purchases must also fit inside your one piece of hand luggage, so do make sure that any food or drink you buy will fit inside or in your coat pockets.

7. Check, check and check again!

Ryanair have a habit of 'moving the goalposts' just when you least expect it, so our advice to you is to keep checking so that you don't get caught out. Although the information presented here was correct at the time of writing, it has probably changed by now! Click [here](#) for the latest details.

You should also anticipate that you will fall foul of at least one of their 'trip hazards' and if you don't then consider yourself to be *very lucky* – after all, this is the way that they make their money!

You didn't *really* think that they could offer flights that cheap, did you? 😊😊

... and finally



We hope you have a great holiday and find this information useful. If you happen to eat in a great restaurant or visit somewhere interesting, please let us know. We are always updating this information pack.

Also if you'd like to comment on your stay or find things have changed we'd be grateful if you'd drop us a line at: info@CasaMarginetta.com

Please leave a note in the visitors' book. Everybody likes to read the comments and suggestions of others but sadly so many guests seem to forget to write in it themselves!

Hope to see you again.

Buone Vacanze!

