

The Medici Municipalities of the Prato Area

Poggio a Caiano and Carmignano

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POGGIO A CAIANO
AND CARMIGNANO

Poggio a Caiano and Carmignano are the Medici heart of the Prato area and a destination for unforgettable holidays in the name of art, culture and well-being. Those who visit these places, lying on splendid hills spread of vineyards and olive groves, will discover the heart of Tuscany where Lorenzo de' Medici and the Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinando I built, in the period of greatest splendor of the Florentine family, two splendid villas, today UNESCO heritage. In this



idyllic Tuscan countryside, you can visit and admire Medici villas, museums, Romanesque churches and Etruscan sites; you can cycle up and down the hills or walk the Medici Route. Stops are a must and not only for a proper rest but also to enjoy the excellent Carmignano DOCG wines, Vin Santo with biscuits, dried figs and many other delicacies in the numerous restaurants and farmhouses. So, have a good holiday in the Prato side of Montalbano!



Poggio a Caiano

Poggio a Caiano extends over the last foothills of Montalbano towards the Prato plain. It is an important crossroads on the edge of the plain between Florence, Prato and Pistoia both for its strategic position and for the presence of the superb Medici Villa, Unesco heritage, which with its beauty and its history makes this small town a real gem. To connect the Grand Ducal possessions, the Medici Villa of Poggio a Caiano with the Cascine Medicee park divided by the Ombrone River, in 1833 the Leopoldo II Bridge was built by the architect Alessandro Manetti, one of the first rope suspension bridges built in Italy. The bridge blown up in 1944 by the retreating German army, was inaugurated in 2019 after a meticulous and careful restoration and is now accessible on foot and by bicycle. In addition to the Villa, the municipality owes its

fame to the Still Life Museum which has been opened inside it since 2007. Attached to the Villa are the Medici Stables which, in addition to being a multipurpose space, house the Ardengo Soffici and Italian 20th century Museum. Although Poggio a Caiano developed mainly around the hill where the Medici Villa stands, there are other hamlets in the surroundings: Santa Cristina in Pilli, Bonistallo and Poggetto.





Filippo Mazzei (1730–1816)

Doctor, philosopher, diplomat and essayist, was born in Poggio a Caiano, but he was a “Citizen of the World”. A man with many lives who lived in ten countries on three different continents: surgeon in Florence, Constantinople and Smyrna, merchant in London, farmer and liberal activist in Virginia, writer and diplo-

mat in Paris, counselor of the king in Warsaw and friend of the first five presidents of the United States. Filippo Mazzei has held multiple roles and experienced two revolutions, the American and the French one, promoting not only the ideas and values of the Enlightenment but also what will be known as ‘Made in Italy’. Due to Mazzei’s contribution to American independence, Poggio a Caiano is twinned with the town of Charlottesville in Virginia (U.S.A.) since 1977.



Carmignano

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t covers an area of 38.59 sq km among the gentle hills of the Prato side of Montalbano.

In addition to the chief town Carmignano, there are several and important hamlets: Artimino, Bacchereto, Comeana, La Serra, Poggio alla Malva, Santa Cristina a Mezzana, Seano and Verghereto. Inhabited by man since the Paleolithic (about 20,000 BC) it was from the 7th to the 1st century BC seat of the important Etruscan center of Artimino and of other connected settlements, of which splendid archaeological monuments remain: the orientalizing Tumulus of Montefortini and Boschetti in Comeana (8th century BC), the necropolis of Prato Rosello in Artimino (6th century BC) and the archaeological area of Pietramarina. The finds of these areas are kept in the “Francesco Nicosia” Archaeological Mu-

seum in Artimino. Carmignano is therefore a charming area, full of surprises and able to offer various opportunities for visits: imposing villas among which the Medici Villa La Ferdinanda in Artimino, Unesco heritage, ancient churches such as that of SS. Francesco and Michele in Carmignano, which hosts the beautiful Visitation by Pontormo, the Parish Church of San Leonardo in Artimino, the Abbey of San Giusto al Pinone. In Seano, we find one of the most prestigious outdoor sculptural complexes in Europe dedicated to a single author: the Quinto Martini Museum Park. The local trattorias allow you to rediscover the ancient flavors of traditional cuisine and the many wine bars and farms to taste the excellent wine of the area, with the opportunity to read up on the history and production of the prestigious Carmignano wine at the Museum of the Vine and Wine.



The Visitation by Pontormo

It is located in the Parish church of SS. Michele and Francesco in Carmignano and is one of the highest masterpieces by Jacopo Carucci known as Pontormo, born in Pontorme (Empoli) in 1494. The Visitation, which dates back to 1528-1529, depicts the

meeting between Mary and Elizabeth who, wrapped in large cloaks appear as if raised on tiptoe. The two imposing figures are “duplicated” by two other female figures, seen from the front, with a motionless and absent gaze, witnesses of the prodigious event. On the left of the painting two other small figures, perhaps St. Joseph and St. Zacharias.



The Medici villas

The Villa in Poggio a Caiano is the one you come across first coming from Prato. Commissioned by Lorenzo the Magnificent and built on a project by Giuliano da Sangallo between 1484 and 1520, it was the summer residence of the Medici and the scene of important events in their dynastic history. Between 1865 and 1871 (the period in which Florence was the capital of the Kingdom of Italy) Vittorio Emanuele II and the Countess of Mirafiori, known as “the beautiful Rosina”, stayed there. The villa overlooks a large park with an adjoining neoclassical lemon house and the stables that now house the Ardengo Soffici and Italian 20th century Museum.





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verlooking the hills and vineyards of Montalbano, in a dominant position on the hill that had already hosted a sacred area at the time of the Etruscans, is La Ferdinanda Medici Villa, built in 1596 at the behest of the Grand Duke Ferdinando I de' Medici, on a design by Bernardo Buontalenti. Born as a hunting house, it was completed in just four years and represented a sort of link between the various landed properties of the family, a place dedicated to the humanistic otium of arts and poetry.





Museums

Still Life Museum

Housed since 2007 on the second floor of the Medici Villa of Poggio a Caiano, it is dedicated to still lifes and paintings of naturalistic subjects coming from the collections of the Florentine galleries and belonging to the Medici. The Florentine Bartolomeo Bimbi is the absolute champion in the museum, of whom fifty-nine works

are exhibited, including his famous samples of the fruits produced in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany which depict, in detail and with scientific precision, the countless qualities of citrus fruits, grapes, pears, peaches, cherries, apricots, apples, figs and plums which, between the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, were produced in the countryside and gardens of Tuscany.

Ardengo Soffici and Italian 20th century Museum

Located inside the Medici Stables, it represents, together with the book collection kept in the library dedicated to Soffici, a fundamental center for the knowledge of this protagonist of the twentieth century culture. The paintings made between 1904 and the Sixties allow the visitor to follow the creative arc and the stylistic contribution of this artist with a European character.



Archaeological Museum Francesco Nicosia

Located in the village of Artimino, the museum documents the important Etruscan settlement that flourished in the area from the 7th to the 1st century BC. The wealth of this settlement was connected to the control of land trade and confirmed by the discovery in the tombs of luxurious artifacts that attest to the high social, economic and cultural level achieved by the local elite from the seventh century BC. The museum exhibits artifacts found in the necropolis of Prato Rosello, Comeana, Artimino and Pietramarina. Of considerable value are the grave goods by Grumaggio, with the large crater decorated with red figures with Dionysian scenes, the bronze vases for the preparation

of wine, the three bucchero censers from the 7th century BC, an extraordinary turquoise glass bowl, perhaps originating from the Middle East and finally, the funerary equipment of a young warrior. In Comeana, a visit to the princely tumulus of Montefortini is a must, a monumental artificial hill that hides two large burial chambers. In Artimino you can visit the necropolis of Prato Rosello with its five tumulus, while on the top of Montalbano stands the archaeological area of Pietramarina from where, on clear days, you can see the sea.



Quinto Martini Museum Park

The park is dedicated to Quinto Martini, sculptor and painter born in Seano and introduced to art by Ardengo Soffici, of whom he was pupil and friend. Designed by the architect Ettore Chelazzi, it stands on a green area of over 30,000 square meters along the Furba stream, in the evocative natural setting of the Carmignano hills in Seano. Inaugurated in 1988, it represents one of the most prestigious outdoor sculptural complexes in Europe dedicated to a single author. In the Park there are 36 bronze sculptures by the author cast from works created between 1931 and 1988.



The Museum of Vine and Wine

It is located in the center of Carmignano and tells the story of the wine produced in this area, a story wisely represented by about 800 fine bottles, cabrei and ancient maps of farms and estates, agricultural tools and finds testifying to the fame of Carmignano wine from ancient times to today. The most important document is undoubtedly the regulation of the Grand Duke Cosimo III de' Medici which established strict production standards for Carmignano wine, an example of how the times in the denomination of controlled origin were anticipated.





Ancient churches and abbeys

The most significant ones date back to the medieval period. They were located at the crossroads of travelers and pilgrims and each still retains a special charm, first of all the Abbey of San Giusto, in its sober and imposing Romanesque style, surrounded by rich vegetation at the foot of Pietramarina peak. The abbey, now a national monument, was the reference point for many travelers, like the nearby hermitages of Sant'Alluccio and San Baronto. It is said that to guide the travelers lost in the winter season was a bell, called “the Lost”, which rang out at sunset. Another particularly suggestive church, a real Romanesque jewel, is the Parish church of San Leonardo in Artimino, probably built in the 10th century and partially restored in the

12th, apparently at the behest of the Countess Matilde di Canossa. Also not to be missed is the church of San Michele in Carmignano, which houses the Visitation by Pontormo. Other Romanesque masterpieces spread throughout the territory are the 12th century church of San Pietro in Verghereto, the church of Santa Maria Assunta in Bacchereto, built around the year 1000, the small parish church of San Lorenzo in Montalbiolo, also from the 12th century, and the churches of San Pietro in Seano and San Michele in Comeana, from the 10th and 13th centuries. Finally, the 11th century church of Santa Cristina in Pilli should also be mentioned and that of Santa Maria Assunta in Bonistallo, documented since the thirteenth century, in which the bowels of Francesco I de' Medici and Bianca Cappello were buried in jugs.



Siege of the Villa

Every year, on the third weekend of September, Poggio a Caiano and its Villa commemorate the Grand Duchess Giovanna d'Austria who, during a stay, waiting to get married with Francesco I de' Medici, to show satisfaction with the good welcome given to her by the local people, ordered a free distribution of wine from the fountain of Mascherone, positioned on the perimeter wall of the Medici villa. The three days of celebrations re-propose this event with the distribution of wine, performances and installations from the Renaissance period and a full program of cultural and gastronomic events.

www.assedioallavilla.com

Recurring events

Feast of S. Antonio

January - Poggio a Caiano

Festival delle Colline

July - Poggio a Caiano and Carmignano

Poggio in Vetrina

every thursday in July - Poggio a Caiano

Calici di Stelle

August - Carmignano

Siege of the Villa

September - Poggio a Caiano

Feast of S. Michele and Donkey Race

September - Carmignano

Benvenuto Fico Secco

October - Carmignano

Ancient Fair of Carmignano

December - Carmignano



Feast of San Michele

On the 29th of September is the feast of the Patron Saint of Carmignano and also the culmination of the feast that for three days sees the town divided into four distinct districts: that of the Archangel (Light Blue), that of Art (Green), that of the Lion (Yellow) and that of the Tower (White), which challenge each other with allegorical floats. During the festival there is also the Donkey Race whose outcome, together with the score received for the parade, determines the final winner.



A territory to visit slowly

The Montalbano area is smooth and sunny, a real surprise for those who love walking in nature without excessively challenging routes. The Medici Route from Prato to Fucecchio is the ideal route for those who want to enjoy slowly this wonderful territory, rich in art, history and nature and also a connection point with the Wool and Silk Route, which from Prato reaches Bologna, and the Via Francigena that intersects it in Fucecchio.



www.viamedicea.it



A territory to taste

Wine is certainly one of the musts of the area, or rather Carmignano di Wine. In Carmignano wine was produced since the Etruscan and Roman times, as evidenced by the discovery of vases inside some Etruscan tombs. The quality of Carmignano wine has always been highly appreciated over the centuries: the famous Prato merchant Francesco di Marco Datini, at the end of 1300, bought Carmignano wine at a high price for his cellar in Prato (recently brought to light). Furthermore, the Carmignano wine production area was chosen by the Grand Duke Cosimo III de' Medici (in 1716) as one of the four wine-growing

areas of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. The "Motu proprio Decree" and the "Bando" in fact regulated production, geographical limits and the trade of wines produced in these areas with precise rules, constituting the first existing "DOC" in the world. Today Carmignano wine is appreciated all over the world so much that the Carmignano Riserva 2016, produced by the Piaggia farm, received the recognition of the best red wine in Italy by the Gambero Rosso guide. Carmignano has beaten all the flagship wines of the peninsula, including that Sassicaia, which in the 2015 version, was declared number one in the world by Wine Spectator!

Carmignano extra virgin olive oil boasts a long tradition and a production of excellence; it has obtained the “Toscana” PGI recognition, with the additional geographical mention of “Montalbano”. The dried fig is a dotted fig of excellent quality but it is above all the drying and appicciamiento technique, typical of Carmignano, that makes the difference, so much so that since 2001 the Carmignano dried fig has its own disciplinary and is a Slow Food protected product. The product, the result of an almost familiar process, is usually put on the market during the Ancient Fair of Carmignano, on the first Tuesday in December, when the typical sugary efflorescence (“bruma”) has formed on the surface of the “picce”.



How to get to

POGGIO A CAIANO AND CARMIGNANO

FOR THOSE COMING BY CAR

A 11 Prato Est and Prato Ovest exits
SP 66 Florence-Pistoia

FOR THOSE COMING BY BUS

LAM blue line

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P.zza Matteotti, 31 - 59015 Carmignano (PO)

Ph. +39 055 8712468, info@carmignanodivino.prato.it

Toscana



PRATOTURISMO

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

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