

Tuscany

Is a region in central Italy with an area of about 23,000 square kilometres (8,900 square miles) and a population of about 3.8 million inhabitants (2013). The regional capital is Florence (Firenze). Tuscany is known for its landscapes, history, artistic legacy, and its influence on high culture. It is regarded as the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance and has been home to many figures influential in the history of art and science. Tuscany is a popular destination in Italy seven Tuscan localities have been designated World Heritage Sites: the historic centre of Florence, the Cathedral square of Pisa, the historical centre of San Gimignano, the historical centre of Siena, the historical centre of Pienza, the Val d'Orcia, and the Medici Villas and Gardens. Roughly triangular in shape, Tuscany borders the regions of Liguria to the northwest, Emilia-Romagna to the north, Marche to the northeast, Umbria to the east and Lazio to the southeast. Tuscany has a western coastline on the Ligurian Sea and the Tyrrhenian Sea, among which is the Tuscan Archipelago, of which the largest island is Elba. The Etruscans (Latin: Tusci) created the first major civilization in this region. Soon after absorbing Etruria, Romans established the cities of Lucca, Pisa, Siena, and Florence, endowed the area with new technologies and development, included extensions of existing roads, introduction of aqueducts and sewers, and the construction of many buildings, both public and private. Pilgrims travelling along the Via Francigena between Rome and France brought wealth and development during the medieval period, The conflict between the Guelphs and Ghibellines, factions supporting the Papacy or the Holy Roman Empire in central and northern Italy during the 12th and 13th centuries, gave rise to several powerful and rich medieval communes in Tuscany: Arezzo, Florence, Lucca, Pisa, and Siena. One family that benefitted from Florence's growing wealth and power was the ruling Medici family. Its scion **Lorenzo de' Medici** was one of the most famous of the Medici. The legacy of his influence is visible today in the prodigious expression of art and architecture in Florence. Initially, under Cosimo, Piero the Gouty, Lorenzo and Piero the Unfortunate, the forms of the republic were retained and the Medici ruled without a title, usually without even a formal office. These rulers presided over the Florentine Renaissance.



Florence

Was a center of medieval European trade and finance and one of the wealthiest cities of that era. It is considered by many academics the birthplace of the Renaissance, and has been called "the Athens of the Middle Ages". Its turbulent political history includes periods of rule by the powerful Medici family and numerous religious and republican revolutions. From 1865 to 1871 the city served as the capital of the Kingdom of Italy (established in 1861). The Florentine dialect forms the base of Standard Italian and it became the language of culture throughout Italy due to the prestige of the masterpieces by **Dante Alighieri**, Petrarch, Giovanni Boccaccio, **Niccolò Machiavelli** and Francesco Guicciardini. The city attracts millions of tourists each year, and UNESCO declared the Historic Centre of Florence a World Heritage Site in 1982. The city is noted for its culture, Renaissance art and architecture and monuments and also contains numerous museums and art galleries, such as the **Uffizi Gallery** and the **Palazzo Pitti**, and still exerts an influence in the fields of art, culture and politics. Due to Florence's artistic and architectural heritage, it has been ranked as **one of the most beautiful cities in the world**. Florence also plays an important role in Italian fashion, and is ranked in the top 15 fashion capitals of the world furthermore, it is a major national economic centre as well as a tourist and industrial hub.



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Pisa

Although it is known worldwide for its **leaning tower** (the bell tower of the city's cathedral), the city contains more than 20 other historic churches, several medieval palaces, and various bridges across the Arno river. Much of the city's architecture was financed from its history as one of the Italian maritime republics.

Knights' Square (Piazza dei Cavalieri), where the Palazzo della Carovana, with its impressive façade designed by Giorgio Vasari may be seen together with **Santo Stefano dei Cavalieri**, a church also designed by Vasari. It had originally a single nave; two more were added in the 17th century. It houses a bust by Donatello, and paintings by Vasari, Jacopo Ligozzi, Alessandro Fei, and Pontormo. It also contains spoils from the many naval battles between the Cavalieri (Knights of St. Stephan) and the Turks between the 16th and 18th centuries, including the Turkish battle pennant hoisted from Ali Pacha's flagship at the 1571 Battle of Lepanto. Also remarkable is the **The Pisa's Ancient Ships Archaeological Area**: A museum of 10,650 square meters - 3,500 archaeological excavation, 1,700 laboratories and one restoration center -, that visitors can visit with a guided tour



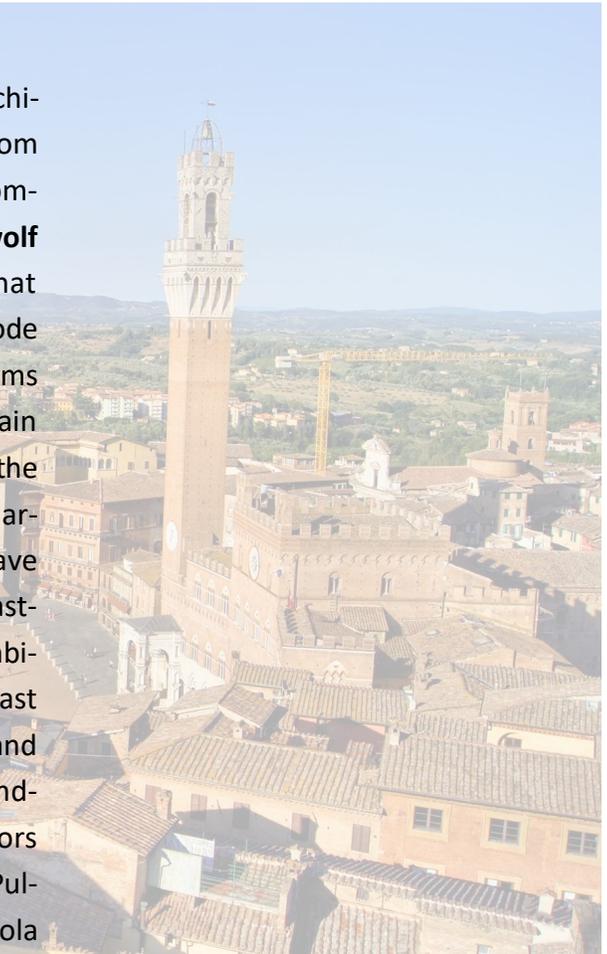
Siena

According to local legend, Siena was founded by Senius and Aschius, two sons of Remus and thus nephews of Romulus, after whom Rome was named. Supposedly after their father's murder by Romulus, they fled Rome, taking with them the statue of the **she-wolf suckling the infants** (Capitoline Wolf), thus appropriating that symbol for the town.[citation needed] Additionally they rode white and black horses, giving rise to the Balzana, or coat of arms of Siena with a white band atop a dark band. Among the main sites there is for sure the Siena Cathedral (Duomo), begun in the 12th century, is a masterpiece of Italian Romanesque–Gothic architecture. Its main façade was completed in 1380 with a nave oriented northeast-southwest. A proposed expansion of the eastern transept would have transformed the church into an ambitiously massive basilica, the largest then in the world, with an east-west nave. However, the scarcity of funds, in part due to war and the Black Death, truncated the project. Two walls of this expanded eastern transept remain; through an internal staircase, visitors can climb for a grand view of the city. The Siena Cathedral Pulpit is an octagonal 13th-century masterpiece sculpted by Nicola Pisano with lion pedestals and biblical bas-relief panels. The



inlaid marble mosaic floor of the cathedral, designed and labored on by many artists, is among the most elaborate in Italy. The Sacristy and Piccolomini library have well preserved Renaissance frescos

by Ghirlandaio and Pinturicchio respectively. The Museo dell'Opera del Duomo contains Duccio's famous Maestà (1308–11) and various other works by Siennese masters. More Siennese paintings are to be found in the Pinacoteca, e.g. 13th-century works by Dietisalvi di Speme. The **Piazza del Campo**, the shell-shaped town square, unfurls before the Palazzo Pubblico with its tall **Torre del Mangia**. This is part of the site for **the Palio horse race**. The Palazzo Pubblico, itself a great work of architecture, houses yet another important art museum. The **Palazzo Salimbeni**, located in a piazza of the same name, was the original headquarters and remains in possession of the Monte dei Paschi di Siena, one of the **oldest banks** in Europe.



San Gimignano

a small walled medieval hill town in the province of Siena, Tuscany, north-central Italy. Known as the **Town of Fine Towers**, San Gimignano is famous for its medieval architecture, unique in the preservation of about a dozen of its tower houses, which, with its hilltop setting and encircling walls, form "an unforgettable skyline". Within the walls, the well-preserved buildings include notable examples of both Romanesque and Gothic architecture, with out-



standing examples of secular buildings as well as churches. The Palazzo Comunale, the Collegiate Church and Church of Sant' Agostino contain frescos, including cycles dating from the 14th and 15th centuries. The

"Historic Centre of San Gimignano" is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**. The town also is known for saffron, the Golden Ham, and its white wine, **Vernaccia di San Gimignano**, produced from the ancient variety of Vernaccia grape which is grown on the sandstone hillsides of the area.



Versilia

The Versilia is a part of Tuscany in the north-western province of Lucca and southern part of Massa-Carrara, which is renowned for the production of the famous **white marble**, and is named after the Versilia river. Known for fashionable Riviera resorts. **Viareggio** is the largest City after Lucca on the coast, renowned for its **Carnival**. The famous composer **Giacomo Puccini** lived in the nearby Torre del Lago and frequently hunted around the lake; today the Puccini Festival is held there annually in celebration.



Lucca

founded by the Etruscans became a Roman colony in 180 BC.. The rectangular grid of its historical centre preserves the Roman street plan, and the Piazza San Michele occupies the site of the ancient forum. Traces of the amphitheater may still be seen in the **Piazza dell'Anfiteatro**. The walls encircling the old town remain intact, even as the city expanded and modernized, unusual for cities in the region. Initially built as a defensive rampart, once the walls lost their military importance they became a pedestrian promenade, the **Passeggiata delle Mura Urbane**, a street atop the walls linking the bastions.



Orcia Valley

added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites, its gentle, cultivated hills are occasionally broken by gullies and by picturesque towns and villages such as **Pienza** (rebuilt as an "ideal town" in the 15th century under the patronage of Pope Pius II), **Montalcino** a hill town known for its Brunello di Montalcino wine together with **Montepulciano** and its Nobile wine. Theater of many pictures filmed by great directors like Fellini, Zeffirelli, Bertolucci, Hoffman and Ridley Scott.

Pienza

Before the village was renamed to Pienza its name was Corsignano. Enea Silvio Piccolomini, a Renaissance humanist born there into an exiled Sienese family, who later became Pope Pius II, had the entire village rebuilt as an ideal Renaissance town and renamed it after himself to Pienza which mean "city of Pius" The rebuilding was done by Florentine architect Bernardo Gambarelli (known as Bernardo Rossellino). The Town, situated between the towns of Montepulciano and Montalcino, it is considered the "**touchstone of Renaissance urbanism**". Main sites to see are Piccolomini Palace, the Cathedral, Palazzo Vescovile, Palazzo Comunale and the Church of St. Francis together with a breathtaking view of the valley and the romantic small streets. Pienza it's also famous for its **pecorino cheese** production, all over the world.



Montalcino

The hill upon which Montalcino sits has probably been settled since Etruscan times. The town takes its name from a variety of oak tree that once covered the terrain. The first walls of the town were built in the 13th century. **The fortress**, built in 1361 atop the highest point of the town, though the town itself was eventually conquered, the fortress itself never submitted, an admirable feat, considering the size of the Siense and Florentine forces that besieged Montalcino at varying intervals. During medieval times the city was known for its tanneries and for the shoes and other leather goods that were made from the high-quality leathers that were produced there. As time went by, many medieval hill towns, including Montalcino, went into serious economic decline. In the case of Montalcino, gradual economic decline has recently been reversed by economic growth due to the increasing popularity of the town's famous wine **Brunello di Montalcino**, made from the sangiovese grosso grapes grown within the comune. The number of producers of the wine has grown from only 11 in the 1960s to more than 200 today, producing some 330,000 cases of the Brunello wine annually. Brunello was the first wine to be awarded Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita (DOCG) status. It must be aged five years prior to release, 6 years for the Riserva,



Montepulciano

is a major producer of food and drink. Renowned for its pork, cheese, "pici" pasta, lentils, and honey, it is known worldwide for its wine. Connoisseurs consider its **Vino Nobile**, which should not be confused with varietal wine made from the Montepulciano grape, among Italy's best. Since the Second World War, tourism has been a significant aspect in the economy of the urban part of the commune. Many of the streets are designated as car-free. Most of the shops and restaurants are on the main street, which stretches from Porta Al Prato to Piazza Grande for 1.5 kilometres (0.9 mi). The main landmarks include: **Palazzo Comunale: city hall** designed by Michelozzo recalling the Palazzo della Signoria (Palazzo Vecchio) of Florence. Palazzo Tarugi, attributed to Antonio da Sangallo the Elder or Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola. It is entirely in travertine, with a portico which was once open to the public. Santa Maria Assunta Cathedral, or the Duomo of Montepulciano, constructed between 1594 and 1680, includes a masterpiece from the Sienese School, a massive Assumption of the Virgin triptych painted by Taddeo di Bartolo in 1401. A competitive "barrel race through the city" called the **Bravio delle botti** has been held on the last Sunday of August since the 14th Century. It's amazing also to visit the City underground, Montepulciano is not stunning only outside, but also inside! There is a whole another world under the town! The caves and tunnels under the town used to connect the grand palaces and were surely also perfect escape ways! Today a perfect environment for ageing wine. Almost all wine shops in town have their bit of the underground wonders. Visit **Montepulciano underground wine cellars** for free! At the end of the tour you will pass by the wine shop, where you can taste and buy the wines. Simple tastings are often free.



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