



THE SEA AND THE SANDY BEACHES FOR PLEASANT HOLIDAYS

## ISOLA D'ELBA

**E**lba is the pearl and the largest of the islands in the Tuscan Archipelago, the third Italian island. The crystal-clear blue sea, the white beaches and the green unspoilt nature are the frames for the eight communes of the island. The coasts are characterized by various landscapes: steep cliffs alternate with long sandy and pebbly beaches; the interior of the island is rich in tiny villages, ancient castles, archeological treasures, woods and chestnut woods. For all this, Elba Island is an enchanting place for amusing holidays and wellness.

### FINDING THE PAST

Elba Island is a small piece of land in the sea, rich in history. Its origin is told in a mythological story: Jason, going after the Golden Fleece, stopped at Porto Argon, now Portoferraio. In the 8th century the Etruscans exploited the iron mines of the island, an inexhaustible source of richness. Today you can still see some remains of Etruscan rule such as the necropolis, blast furnaces and hill-top villages. After the Etruscans came the Romans who inherited the iron richness and developed the granite resources. They also discovered the curative power of the mud of San Giovanni spa. Later, in the Middle Ages, the iron and granite mines were exploited by the "Repubblica Marinara di Pisa" that, like the Romans, left precious treasures such as the Fortezza di Marciana and the Castello di Volterrario. In the first half of 1500, Cosimo I of the Medicis built the fortified town of Portoferraio that was so perfect as to be called "Cosmopoli", a cradle of civilization and culture, an example of com-

mon sense and rationality. In the 18th century the island was ruled by Napoleon. During his exile, he increased the mining economy, developed the wine market, built some important road networks and turned a de-consecrated church into a theatre that still hosts performances and cultural events.

## **PORTOFERRAIO**

Portoferraio, whose history is 5 centuries old, is the main point of entry to the Island of Elba as well as its chief town. It is located on the northern coast of the island and has about 11,000 inhabitants. When you land at Portoferraio, you can soon admire the Torre del Martello in the Fortezza della Linguella and, in the town center, Forte Stella, the most ancient lighthouse in Europe, so called because of its star-shaped walls. In the hinterland there is the Villa dei Mulini, where Napoleon used to spend most of his time in Winter. The villa preserves many historical remains such as the island flag with three golden bees and the key of the town given to Napoleon by the mayor. In his main residence, Villa San Martino, it is possible to visit Napoleon's room embellished with the golden bees and the stars of the Legion of Honour. Annexed to the villa, the Demidoff Museum houses other Napoleonic curios. At the top of the town you can visit the Bastioni del Forte Falcone, that used to be the lookout of the town in the age of the Medicis. Down, towards the dock, some remains of a Roman Villa dating back to between the 1st century B.C. and the 1st century A.D., have accidentally been found after some excavations. They consist of the walls in "opus reticulatum" and a big external bath with tepidarium that bear witness to Romans' custom of taking advantage of the beneficial effects of baths and sauna baths. In the Chiesa della Misericordia there is the funeral mask of Napoleon to whom, on 5th May, every year, a mass for the soul is dedicated.

## **RIO NELL'ELBA**

Important mining center, Rio nell'Elba is an ancient hamlet rich in history and tradition. Its historic center is characterized by narrow lanes, balconies full of flowers and old washing place for clothes. Here it is possible to visit the hermitage of Santa Caterina, the Fortezza del Giogo, the Castello di Volterraio and the "Alfeo Ricci" Museum of Elba Minerals.

## **RIO MARINA**

Rio Marina is the second port of Elba Island. The surrounding mountains take the reddish colour from the mines of the area. Here you can visit the Oratorio di S. Rocco, the Torre Ottagonale, the "Circolo G. Tonietti" Museum of Elba Minerals, housed in the Town Hall, and the Parco Minerario, where you can observe the techniques of excavating and working the minerals.

## **PORTO AZZURRO**

Called Portolongone in ancient times, Porto Azzurro, situated on the Eastern coast of the island, overlooks the port and is characterized by narrow stone lanes and attractive spots. Quite interesting is the reproduction of a mine where, aboard a small train, it is possible to explore the mining world and the stonework.

## **CAPOLIVERI**

Capoliveri, whose name seems to be a derivation from the Latin "Caput Liberum", overlooks Portoazzurro and the Golfo Stella on the Southern coast of the island. Of singular beauty is the Santuario delle Grazie; in its interior you can admire paintings by Raffaello's school.

## **CAMPO NELL'ELBA**

Characterized by a long sandy beach, Campo nell'Elba is one of the best known towns of Elba. Here you can visit the granite quarries, the Romanic Chiesa di San Giovanni, the Romitorio di San Francesco and the Acquario and Museo Faunistico that hosts more than 2,000 varieties of fish.

## **MARCIANA MARINA**

Marciana Marina, whose ancient village is characterized by small houses looking down sheer to the sea, is the most famous town of the island. Thanks to the neighbouring chestnut woods, Marciana Marina was known as a center for the stocking and the refitting of ships. Significant is the Torre Medicea located near the quay.

## MARCIANA

A town rich in history, Marciana preserves, among its walls, the Fortezza Pisana, The Casa dei Principi Appiani, the "Casa Vada" (where Napoleon's mother lived), the Santuario della Madonna del Monte, the Fonte di Napoleone and the Archeological Museum that contains various Etruscan and Roman remains.

## THE NATIONAL PARK OF THE TUSCAN ARCHIPELAGO

The biggest Sea Park in Europe, it includes all the Livornese coasts and the Promontory of Argentario together with its seven islands: Capraia, Elba, Giannutri, Giglio, Gorgona, Montecristo and Pianosa. Along the coastline, the cliffs alterate with long beaches and promontories full of flowers.

Of fundamental importance is the preservation of this protected area, maintaining the identity of its territory and the surrounding sea, so that the Park of the Tuscan Archipelago could be proclaimed as a Patrimony of Humanity.

## RELAX AND SPORTS

Thanks to the large varieties in its landscapes and to its mild climate all the year round, Elba Island can meet the needs of any kind of sport lover.

The unspoilt seabeds and the natural caves are a Paradise for divers, while the ones fond of the waves can go sailing or canoeing. In the country there are tracks for horse-riding, biking routes and walking paths in the National Park. Free climbing on the rock faces or paragliding can be practised. There are tennis courts, football grounds and playgrounds for children. Equipped golf centers with professional trainers are available for golfers. At night you can enjoy yourself at the discoes, pubs and birrerie.

## CUISINE

Elba Island offers a lively and genuine cuisine. To meet the guests' demands, the simple local recipes have been revised, yet still maintaining their original taste.

The most appreciated dishes are the "stoccafisso alla riese, the "gurguglione" and the famous "caciucco". Among the best desserts there are the "schiaccia briaca" and the "sportella".

The dishes are accompanied by excellent local wines, provided with the D.O.C. label. We would like to mention, among the best known: Elba Bianco, Elba Rosso, Rosato, Ansonica, Moscato and Aleatico.

## GETTING TO ISOLA D'ELBA

**By car:** A12 Motorway Genova-Livorno, exit Rosignano. Follow SS Aurelia up to Venturina-Isola d'Elba, then towards Piombino Marittima.

**By train:** Piombino Marittima station Along Pisa-Roma line:  
get off at Campiglia Marittima station - Local connections to Piombino Marittima.

**By air:** Connections with various Italian and European Airports - Flight Information Office: "La Pila" Airport /Marina di Campo Tel. 0565 976011.

**By bus:** Connections from Milano to Piombino - Information and timetable: Tel. 02 801161.