



ONE OF THE MOST ENCHANTING AND WELL-LOVED COASTS IN OUR PENINSULA

THE MAGIC OF VERSILIA

20 kilometres of sandy beach, shallow water and, right behind, the mountains reaching up to 1800m and even higher: this is Versilia, a tourist area bounded by the mouth of the Cinquale River to the North, by Lake Massaciuccoli to the South, by the Apuane Alps to the East and by the Tyrrhenian Sea to the West.

THE TOWNS

The clear sea, the sandy coast, the fertile plain dotted with vast pine forests, the gentle hills and the mountains white with marble, in perfect harmony combine into a wonderful landscape: this is the fabulous Versilia, either historic or touristic, as you prefer. Actually the "historic" Versilia is the one to be found only in the towns of Pietrasanta, Forte dei Marmi, Seravezza and Stazzema, while to the South the "touristic" Versilia also includes Viareggio, Camaiore and Massarosa. In this area, during the Pliocene era, groups of primitive Ligurians lived in natural mountain or even sea caves and, only after coming into contact with the Etruscan civilization, did they start working with metals. In 180 B.C., after the Liguri Apuani, the area was inhabited by Roman colonies from Luni and Lucca; the reclamation of the coastal area was then begun and some important public works were carried out as well as the construction of a few Roman villas alongside the Aurelia consular road, established in 109 along the route Pisa - River Magra. In the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D., as a consequence of the exploitation of the iron and lead mines and marble quarries, the living conditions improved in the region, also favoured by the evangelization that took place after the 5th century and the building of five Early Christian churches. In 570 the Longobards occupied the territory of Lucca as far as the Versilia River and took possession of the "fundi" of Roman origin that they grouped into "massariciae" or "masse", then changed them into fortresses that gave the names to a few towns.

VARIETIES OF CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

Versilia can generally boast quite a mild climate: in fact while the nearness of the mountains limit the great heat in Summer, the sea limits the rigours of Winter. All this makes this beautiful area become an ideal destination for tourists. In Spring and Summertime the fragrance of the chestnut trees, oleanders, tamarisks, honeysuckles and butterfly bushes mixes with the salty scent of the sea. Along the coast various pine forests extend for many kilometers and offer the opportunity to enjoy a great variety of pleasant activities such as horse-riding, tennis, biking, picnic, etc. Perhaps the best-known pine forest is the Parco della Versiliana at Marina di Pietrasanta, celebrated in some poems by Gabriele D'Annunzio. In the richly cultivated plains, the towns of Carrara, Massa, Pietrasanta, Camaiore are lined up in parallel to the sea and can boast the very famous lidos that seem to stretch as far as the eye can see on a broad and splendid sandy shore along the edge of the Tyrrhenian Sea. As the coast offers amusement and relaxation to its tourists, so does the hinterland which is astonishing for its nature, culture, history, traditions and art: it is also the ideal starting point for visiting the characteristic mountain hamlets located in the municipalities of Seravezza and Stazzema, that are the heart of the so-called "Alta Versilia". The Apuane Alps now form a very interesting tourist district, also thanks to the various opportunities they offer from a naturalistic, speleological and excursion point of view. This exceptional alpine landscape on the sea, enriched with an unbelievable variety of flowers and rare plants, is protected by a Natural Regional Park and is the ideal destination for nature lovers.

FORTE DEI MARMI: THE VIPS' COUNTRY

One of the most appreciated seaside resorts on the Tyrrhenian coast, Forte dei Marmi (or Warehouse of Marble, as it used to be called in 1800) spreads around the wharf established in 1500 for the loading of marble and protected since 1788 by a small fortress, built at the will of Leopoldo I of Lorena - Grand Duke of Tuscany with the aim of protecting the place and foster the settlement of the population. The modern town has a grid-like layout with tree-lined roads that lends it a fashionable and relaxing look. Noble and diplomatic people, businessmen, artists and important personalities have their own magnificent villas here, sheltered by the greenness of the pine forest, and are used to spending holidays on the fine sand of Forte. In the district called "Roma Imperiale" there are some villas designed by some of the best architects in Italy such as Michelucci, Giò Ponti, Pagano as well as Villa Agnelli, now Hotel Augustus with a tunnel leading to the shore, and the oldest Italian disco, the famous "Capannina di Franceschi", opened in 1929. Many are the opportunities to practise every kind of sport: biking, the most practised also favoured by a very large number of safe cycle tracks, tennis, gym, sailing races, windsurfing, skating, horse-riding, golf and, for those who are fond of mountains, trekking in the Parco delle Apuane or climbing up to their best known peaks. The Summer is also rich in various events: feasts, exhibitions, mountain fairs and sport events. Every morning, in the town centre, you can do your shopping at the famous local street market or in the elegant shops and boutiques, or even visit galleries of art and antiques. You can also take advantage of organized tours to visit the marvellous towns of Tuscany (Pisa, Lucca, Firenze, Arezzo, Siena, etc.) and look for the most famous historic and artistic monuments as well as old delicacies and very interesting local traditions.

VERSILIA GOLF CLUB

Even if the Versilia Golf Club lies on a sort of territorial island that belongs to the Commune of Pietrasanta and, in small part, to the Commune of Forte dei Marmi, it is a real gem in the whole Versilia. It was opened on 22 June 1990 and, obviously, it was very different from the present one that can boast 18 holes designed by Marco Croze. Since 1998 it was turned into the Versilia Golf S.p.A. that has improved the structure with a better grass fairway and renewed facilities and has also redesigned hole number 13. They are now carrying out a few new projects, whose realization started in and has been going on since 2003, aimed at creating an elegant and comfortable accommodation area, provided with a Wellness and Fitness Center.

PIETRASANTA: THE LITTLE ATHENS

Pietrasanta, a worldwide famous center for the working of marble, is historically considered as the chief town of Versilia. Called "The Little Athens" because of its artistic and cultural richness, it is embellished by various sculptures by famous contemporary artists (F. Botero, I. Mitoraj, A. Messina, J. Folon and many others). Also the other Communes of Versilia are worth visiting: the Pievi di Seravezza and Stazzema, the Art Nouveau façade of the palaces at Viareggio, the ancient ruins of Massarosa, the Badia and the Pieve of Camaiore and various other interesting monuments to be discovered during your stay in Versilia.

CAMAIORE

Camaiore lies in a vast hollow at the foot of the first spurs of the Apuane Alps, bounded from the sea by a range of gentle hills that divides it from the coastal plain. Only 8 km of easy roads divide Camaiore from Viareggio and Marina di Pietrasanta, 16 km from Forte dei Marmi and 24 km from Lucca. Various villages are situated on the surrounding mountains and deserve to be seen. After a tour of the historic center of Camaiore, you can visit the adjacent Badia Benedettina and then, driving along the provincial road towards Lucca, you can then reach Gambitelli and Pieve.

The Pieve di Camaiore

At Pieve you can admire the Romanesque Pieve dei SS. Giovanni e Stefano, built in the 12th century, that has a campanile and a range of mullioned windows with two lights. Inside it, there is a baptismal font made from a Roman sarcophagus of the 3rd century A.D.

La Badia di Camaiore

Just outside the center, heading towards the mountains, there is the Badia di S. Pietro, founded by the Benedictine Monks, typical Romanesque architecture with a nave and two aisles and a campanile. You can enter it through a magnificent portal dating from 1300 that also preserves a small part of the walls that used to surround the convent.

VIAREGGIO: CARNIVAL CITY

In comparison with the other towns of Versilia, the history of Viareggio follows a different route through history: in ancient times it was an area totally covered by inhospitable marshes, today it is an elegant town on the Versilia coast, with its flowered avenue running for 3 kilometres along the shore. Viareggio has some enchanting surroundings with two vast pine groves and is an appealing destination for Italian and foreign tourists, also thanks to its avant-garde places. Its name comes from the "Torre di Via Regia" erected by the Lucchesi around the 15th century when the harbour, after being constructed in natural shape of the mouth of the river Burlamacca, started working. Even if its economic development has been based on shipbuilding of fishing boats at first and now expensive boats and yachts, tourism is what has brought success to the town. With the arrival of Napoleon's age, on the initiative of noble and rich men attracted by the mild climate and sea bathing, Viareggio was enriched with new magnificent buildings. At the end of 1800, along the coast, together with new magnificent examples of Art Nouveau architecture, some celebrated lidos were already open so that at the beginning of 1900 their bathing huts numbered about 3000, evidence of the continuous development of a well-established Italian seaside resort. Something else which is also continuously growing is the fame of the Carnival: it first started in 1873 as a simple parade of floats and groups of people in fancy dress; over time it has transformed itself into a world-wide famous event whose giant papier-maché figures and floats, created by specialised artisans, represent a range of themes from political and social satire to current events. Now, Viareggio's Cittadella del Carnevale, a new area established to the north of the city that hosts 16 enormous hangars, a theatre and a multimedia museum, can grant visitors, all the year round, the opportunity to come into contact with the magical carnival-like atmosphere and the fascinating traditions that it involves. Another important appointment with tradition is the "Premio di Letteratura", established by Leonida Rapaci and devoted to the development of Italian literature.

VERSILIA

THE THERMAL WATERS IN VERSILIA

The list of the Thermal Waters in Tuscany is really long and is worth knowing. Since Roman times on, thermal waters have spread more and more in Tuscany and have often become synonymous with tourism to people who have longed for wellbeing from every point of view. Reached in a very short time from every town of Versilia, there are Thermal Waters with therapeutic benefits, mud for treatments or natural caves where sulphurous water and water containing sodium, bromide, iodide, etc. create a water vapour producing an effective thermal aerosol. Besides all this, water flowing from the mountains is often put into bottles directly from the spring, to be sold and tasted all over the world.

TORRE DEL LAGO PUCCINI

Sunny beaches, shadowy pinewoods and a peaceful lake: this is Torre del Lago Puccini bounded by Lake Massaciuccoli and the Tyrrhenian Sea, the Apuane Alps and the National Park of Migliarino-San Rossore-Massaciuccoli. It is still a much appreciated resort and also an ideal starting point for those who would like to discover in depth the neighbouring historic towns of Tuscany. Along the lakeside and only a short way from the Maestro Puccini's villa, that still preserves the artifacts and the memories of his life, since 1930, every summer, an opera season takes place in the open-air that benefits from the charm of its location and meets with outstanding success.

Cuisine

Tuscany also plays the role of the host to good food, in the imaginations of travellers. Its cuisine is simple and at the same time rich in traditions and full of old flavours. The dishes are cooked with the produce offered by the vegetable gardens and woods together with local meat, seafood, extra-virgin olive oil, special bread and wine much appreciated by connoisseurs.

In Summer, along the coast as well as in the hinterland, on the occasion of various Village Fairs, you can taste the specialities of the local cuisine. In the province of Lucca they are used to proposing the "castagnaccio" and the "necci farciti di ricotta", cooked with chestnut flour from the Garfagnana that is also called "farina di neccio", the "minestra di farro", that is not only very good but also very healthy, the "infarinata", the "risotto al piccione", the "rosticciana di maiale", i "funghi trifolati", the "befanini", biscuits shaped like little animals, stars, hearts, etc., and the "bruschetta", slices of toasted bread covered with varied sauces such as olive sauce, truffle sauce, tuna sauce, etc. to be served as appetizers. La "torta di ceci", that at Pisa and at Livorno is called simply "torta", at Massa and Carrara is named "calda calda" and in Versilia "cecina", is especially cooked at the pizzeria where they are used to serving it also cut into slices.

Getting to Versilia

By car: A12 Motorway Genova-Livorno exit Massa/Versilia **By train:** Station Forte dei Marmi from: Ventimiglia or Torino-Genova-Pisa-Firenze-Roma line / Genova-Parma-Bologna line / Milano-Livorno line

By plane: Pisa International Airport - there are taxis, buses and train services connecting it to the coastal towns in a very short time.

A.P.T.

Pizza Mazzini - Palaz. delle Muse - 55049 VIAREGGIO
tel. +39 0584 48881 - Fax +39 0584 47406 - E-mail: info@aptversilia.it - www.aptversilia.it