In Tuscany, nature, culture, artistic and historic heritage have blended together for centuries. A treasure of exceptional universal value, including seven locations recognized by UNESCO as world heritage sites. Places that preserve beautiful art and landscape and guard the memory of a past which is an irreplaceable source of life for contemporary culture and an inspiration for future generations.

Places one should get to know and visit without being in a hurry, appreciating values which have always been loved by artists and intellectuals who have travelled and lived in this land.

This is the Tuscany we invite you to discover, taste, protect and love. A cultural heritage for all mankind, which here also appears through the expression and words of great authors who managed to grasp the essence of small villages, the atmospheres of towns and the beauty of nature.

Tuscany is waiting for you!
Fiorenza lily of power, spring shoot.
Springtime on the Arno.
The gracefulness of adolescents (no gracefulness in the world can surpass yours in April), living virgin constant breath, which blows fresh life into marbles and gives birth to Botticelli’s Venus…”

Dino Campana
Canti Orfici

Florence, whose extraordinary attractions are impossible to describe in a few words, is doubtless a many-faceted city of art: cradle of the Renaissance, mother to world renowned artists; birthplace of genius, a blend of gracefulness and history which emerge from every corner, every street, every piazza. Fiorenza, the city so well described by Campana in his lyrical prose, is Springtime of art and culture, and welcomes and knows how to satisfy every expectation of knowledge.

Florence: a new spring each time.

World Heritage because it is the masterpiece of creative genius

The whole town is in itself a unique work of art, an absolute masterpiece of human genius; the outcome of constant creation covering centuries. Arising from a Roman settlement, the birthplace of the modern Renaissance humanism, associated with events which were universal in their scope, it has preserved unscathed by time its churches, streets and palaces, which bear witness to the predominating cultural and economic influence of centuries. The centre from which the Renaissance burst out, it shows an important sharing of values expressed in a monumental, urban and landscape art which inspired art in Italy and around Europe. Here is the greatest concentration in the world of works by great artists, witnessing the exceptional cultural life of the city.
Friday, May 12, 1933.
The Arno swimming past with the usual coffee coloured foam.
Walked in the cloisters: this is true Italy, with the old dusty smell;
people swarming in the streets;
under the – what is the word for –
I think the word for a street that has pillars is Arcade.
All the colours here are white bluish marble against a very light saturated sky.
The tower leaning prodigiously …

Virginia Woolf
A Writer’s Diary

These are the words Virginia Woolf used to describe Pisa, in a page full of admiration for the city. Pisa, like Florence, was a destination for many British intellectuals at the turn of the century, fascinated by “la bella Italia”. This short quote renders the double character of Pisa: the “swarming crowds” of a town which had been a great maritime power, and the sacredness of the Piazza dei Miracoli which, with the Duomo, Leaning Tower, Baptistry and Campo Santo, can still fascinate incredulous visitors who feel overwhelmed when they step into the piazza.

You too can come and discover this Italian miracle!
To visitors who have come from afar, the borgo seems to slip suddenly into the countryside, through a gateway. It seems impossible to reach. However, if one manages to do so, it welcomes us into its lap, and we get lost in the concert of crickets and children’s cries. [...] Once we pass the San Giovanni gate, we feel as if we were in a court, not in a street. The piazzas too are courts, and one feels sheltered in every one of them.”

Walter Benjamin
City Images

This is how Benjamin described San Gimignano, an extraordinary example of a medieval town, located on a hilltop in the Elsa valley. The town centre stands out against the skyline, not only because of its location, but because of its famous house towers: their different heights proclaimed the power of the families living in them. A town protected by ancient walls, San Gimignano – or as many styled it, the New York of the Thirteenth Century – houses treasures of unspoilt magnificence and harmony which allow you to take a leap into the past.

Look up... you are already in the past

World Heritage because it is a unique city sized art collection

This is a unique case of a medieval city, since – within a limited area – it contains all the typical structures of urban life: piazzas and streets, houses and buildings, wells and springs. Art, architecture and history blend together, taking us back to the medieval atmosphere of its 14 perfectly preserved towers (out of 72 original ones), which rise proudly over the buildings, a memory of rival factions always ready to fight each other. It was a stopping point for pilgrims on their way to Rome, who then as now made their way through the “town of beautiful towers” along the Via Francigena.
Historic Centre of Siena

“... A sound of bronze falls from the tower: the parade moves on to drums amidst drums which beat the glory of the contrade. [...] and amazement invades the shell of the Campo …”

Eugenio Montale

Palio

The contrade of each quarter, the Mangia Tower, Piazza del Campo which comes alive for the Palio: Eugenio Montale’s poetry describes the scenery of Siena, town of eternal amazement. With its rich artistic and monumental heritage, Siena spreads out around the main, shell-shaped piazza. The town still preserves its medieval features; it is laid out in 17 contrade which every year challenge each other during the famous horse race, and which are the location of unmissable palaces and museums ensconced among the alleys of the town.

What are you waiting for? Rush to Siena!

World Heritage because it is a masterpiece of dedication and inventiveness

It preserves the features and quality of an extraordinary medieval town, it is a masterpiece of dedication and inventiveness, since the buildings were designed to fit the urban structure and to be proper to the surrounding landscape. It is an original example of figurative civilisation in architecture, painting, sculpture and town planning: the layout of the town and its growth, uninterrupted through the centuries, were guided by a single design which preserved its ancient splendour. It is rich in monuments and works which bear witness to the very high expressive and aesthetic capacity of its artists, who were an important cultural influence on Italy and Europe.
Historic Centre of Pienza

“Remember that it is only by going off the track that you get to know the country. See the little towns – Gubbio, Pienza, Cortona, San Gimignano. (And don’t, let me beg you, go with that awful tourist idea that Italy’s only a museum of antiquities and art. Love and understand the Italians, for the people are more marvellous than the land).”

E.M. Forster
Monteriano

These are the suggestions Philip makes to Lilia, the main characters in the novel Monteriano. During his stays in Tuscany, Forster, well known for his novel A Room with a View, especially loved “minor towns”, including Pienza, the ideal city thought up by Enea Silvio Piccolomini, who later became Pope Pius II. An example of architectural perfection, born, as the Pontiff himself wrote, «to leave a monument to the lasting memory of his origins», Pienza is a masterpiece of Renaissance town planning which, from its strategic position, dominates the whole Orcia valley. But Pienza is not only a utopian city; it is a real city with its own flavours and traditions. “Pecorino di Pienza”, sheep milk cheese with a strong and tasty flavour, is well known.

Get lost and find yourself again in Pienza!

**World Heritage because it is the ideal Renaissance city.**

It represents the first attempt to apply the ideas of Renaissance humanism to town planning. The medieval borgo was turned into a monumental centre by a decision of Pope Pius II, and it is the exemplary realisation of a new vision of urban space. The centre became a symbol of architectural and Renaissance perfection. An ideal town with spaces and scenery of thrilling beauty.
The winding road leading from Siena to the Orcia across the wavy sea of rain-washed clay which in March takes on a light coat of green is a timeless road, an open road which, with its twisting curves, points to the heart of the enigma.”

Mario Luzi
Su fondamenti invisibili

The Orcia Valley is one of those territories which, with its famous cypress trees and medieval sites, leaves a lasting impression in collective imagination. Crossing rolling hills where here and there the ancient walls of nestling towns emerge, and exploring its winding streets, one loses oneself in the scenery and in beautiful details. As the verses of the Florentine poet Mario Luzi show, time is a missing dimension in the Orcia valley. There is only a road to follow.

Follow the road: discover the Orcia Valley

World Heritage as the quest of beauty when designing a landscape

An outstanding example of Renaissance landscape which illustrates the ideals of good government of the Italian city-state and the quest for beauty underlying its conception. A landscape of rare beauty alternating hills, villages, country churches and farms, winding white roads and rows of cypress trees which inspired many artists and deeply influenced the development of ideas on landscape design.
Medici Villas and Gardens

“... hills of Tuscany, with their famous estates, villas, villages which are almost cities, in the most moving countryside that exists.”

Fernand Braudel
The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II

The fourteen villas and gardens of the Medici family, spread through the Tuscan countryside, are an outstanding example of aristocratic country mansions, dedicated to free time, arts and knowledge. Evidence of a new kind of settlement no longer built on the model of medieval fortifications, but which sees the surrounding territory as a pacified area, where residential architecture and natural elements of the environment blend together. They contributed to the birth of a new aesthetics, and set the pattern for a lifestyle which spread widely around Renaissance Italy and throughout modern Europe. Incarnations of the political, economic and aesthetic ambitions of the Medici family, the Tuscan villas and gardens were places where the characteristic ideals of the Italian Renaissance emerged, and represent an extraordinary example of cultural patronage.

Art and nature: the perfect combination

The historian Braudel was right: Tuscany’s hills hide beautiful estates and lordly mansions which make its countryside unique. Evidence of the power of the Florentine noble family, the fourteen Medici villas and gardens express the typical style of Humanism and Renaissance, which sought to adapt the concept of beauty to Man. Villas and gardens – summer residences for the Medici but also political fortresses – mark the borders of the Grand duchy of Tuscany, and do not forget perfect harmony between the human work and the land people live in.

World Heritage as a model of cultural and artistic patronage

The fourteen villas and gardens of the Medici family, spread through the Tuscan countryside, are an outstanding example of aristocratic country mansions, dedicated to free time, arts and knowledge. Evidence of a new kind of settlement no longer built on the model of medieval fortifications, but which sees the surrounding territory as a pacified area, where residential architecture and natural elements of the environment blend together. They contributed to the birth of a new aesthetics, and set the pattern for a lifestyle which spread widely around Renaissance Italy and throughout modern Europe. Incarnations of the political, economic and aesthetic ambitions of the Medici family, the Tuscan villas and gardens were places where the characteristic ideals of the Italian Renaissance emerged, and represent an extraordinary example of cultural patronage.
Words on the Tuscan heritage are by:

**Dino Campana**
Italian poet born in Moradi in 1885, died in Scandicci in 1932. Despite a tormented life, he was an undisputed genius. In 1914, with great difficulty, he published the collection *Canti Orfici*, which made his avant-garde poetry known and appreciated.

**Virginia Woolf**
Famous British essay writer who lived between the nineteenth and the twentieth century (London 1882, Rodmell 1941). Her main novels include *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *Orlando*. Committed to the struggle for equality between sexes, she wrote the famous essay, *A Room of One’s Own*.

**Walter Benjamin**
German philosopher, writer, translator and literary critic who lived between 1892 and 1940. He developed a thesis on the philosophy of history involving a revolutionary break with the present and a return to the theological, Messianic and sacred tradition of the “redemption” of Man. Most of his essays were collected in *Gesammelte Schriften* and *Briefe*. Other works published in Italy: *On Hashish* and *Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century*.

**Eugenio Montale**
Nobel prize for literature in 1975, he was one of Italy’s greatest twentieth century poets (Genoa 1896, Milan 1981). His best known collections, *Ossi di seppia* and *Occasioni*, bring out the distinguishing feature of Montale’s poetry: the concept of male di vivere, “the malaise of life”, associated with highly symbolical language. Other works worth mentioning are *La bufera e altro*, *Xenia* and *Satura*.

**Edward Morgan Forster**
British writer, considered to be “a conservative modernist” (London 1879, Coventry 1970). His novels include *Room with a View*, *A Passage to India*, *Howards End*, which became very successful films.

**Mario Luzi**
Important twentieth century Tuscan poet and author (Caselle di Firenze 1914, Florence 2005). His poetry belongs to the so-called “Hermetic Florentine” current. His most famous collections include *Onore del vero*, *Su fondamenti invisibili*, *Viaggio terrestre e celeste de Simone Martini*. In 2004 he was appointed a lifetime senator by the President of the Italian Republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi.

**Fernand Braudel**
Held to be one of the greatest twentieth century historians (Luméville-en-Ornois 1902, Cluses 1985). Braudel was a leading figure of the École des Annales, which studies civilisation and long term changes, as opposed to the history of events. He wrote *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* and *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400–1800*. He was the director of the sixth section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études of Paris and first president of the International Institute for Economic History “F. Datini”.

**Unesco’s Tuscany is a Patrimony for Humanity**

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**Historic Centre of Florence (1982)**
**Piazza del Duomo of Pisa (1987)**
**Historic Centre of San Gimignano (1990)**
**Historic Centre of Siena (1995)**
**Historic Centre of the City of Pienza (1996)**
**Val d’Orcia (2004)**
**Medici Villas and Gardens in Tuscany (2013)**

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**Grandi autori della Toscana**

**Dino Campana**

**Virginia Woolf**

**Walter Benjamin**

**Eugenio Montale**

**Edward Morgan Forster**

**Mario Luzi**

**Fernand Braudel**