

THE CITY OF PISA

The Renaissance-style **Piazza dei Cavalieri** is open for visits just a few minutes from the Tower. A symbol of the Medici rule over the city, it was commissioned by Cosimo I in honour of the Order of Knights of St. Stephen and was designed by Vasari. It houses the most important buildings and churches of Grand Ducal Pisa, in particular the **Palazzo dei Cavalieri**¹ (also called Palazzo della Carovana) with its majestic façade.



The very identity of medieval Pisa is echoed throughout its historic centre, teeming with a dense network of alleys. The street of **Borgo Stretto**² once united two bridges that allowed passage on the waterways Auser (today Serchio), to the north of the city, and Arno to the south. This is where the **Church of San Michele in Borgo**³ is located, an example of the rich patrimony of Pisan churches,

with its beautiful façade featuring an intriguing detail: early 17th-century inscriptions by students singing the praises of the candidates running for University Rector.

The **San Matteo National Museum**⁴ on the Lungarno Mediceo houses important collections of medieval Pisan paintings and sculptures, wood carvings and illuminated manuscripts.

The **Palazzo Reale National Museum**⁵, formerly a summer residence of the Medici family, displays period furnishings and tapestries as well as a collection of arms from the Gioco del Ponte. It also houses a plaster cast gallery and a collection of paintings by Antonio Ceci.



Other churches worth a visit are **Santo Sepolcro**⁶ on the Lungarno Galilei, built on an octagonal plan inspired by the model of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and the peculiar **Church of Santa Maria della Spina**⁷, built in 1230, a remarkable example of Gothic art in Europe.

The origin of the name can be traced back to the fact that a "spina" (thorn) from the crown worn by Christ at his crucifixion, was preserved here. Another must-see church is the **Chiesa of San Paolo a Ripa d'Arno**⁸, also by the riverside.



Out of town but equally impressive is the Romanesque **Basilica of San Piero a Grado**⁹, where, according to legend, the apostle Peter landed in 44 AD. The monumental three-aisle interior is impressive; the outside features three apses at one end and a fourth apse in place of the façade at the other.

Illustrious names from the Italian science tradition can claim Pisa as their birth city, including mathematician Leonardo Fibonacci, physicist Antonio Pacinotti, and the world-famous **Galileo Galilei**, father of modern science.

Evidence of Galileo's presence in Pisa can be found in numerous spots around the city, in a kind of itinerary that recalls important moments of his life. It sets off from the Leaning Tower, where the scientist carried out the free fall motion experiment, and the Cathedral, where a lamp led him to discover the isochronism of the pendulum, to then reach the house where he was born on 15 February 1564.

The next ports of call on the tracks of Galilei are the **Museum of Calculation Instruments**¹⁰, which houses several of his instruments, including the *geometric and military compass*, and the **Domus Galilaeana**¹¹, which conserves two autographed letters.

Today the city of Pisa still holds its place as a centre of excellence in the field of research thanks to its prestigious **University** (founded in 1343), the **Scuola Normale Superiore** in the Piazza dei Cavalieri, the **Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna** and the **National Research Council (CNR)**.



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The Lungarni

Pisa's **Ancient Maritime Republic** has a great deal to offer besides the renowned Tower and is well worth a few days' stay, just enough time to take in all of its gems. The city grew and developed in and around the inlets of the Arno, which lend the view of the Lungarni and the majestic grand ducal buildings, Romanesque and Gothic style churches and the overlooking Medieval and Renaissance fortifications. The allure of the **Lungarni**¹² has featured in works by such authors as Byron, Shelley, Montesquieu, Leopardi, Carducci, D'Annunzio and Foscolo.

The Lungarni are especially spectacular at night with the lights from the lamps and buildings reflecting on the water of the river. On the evening of June 16th, in celebration of the patron saint, the outline of the buildings and bridges are decorated with thousands of lights; this is the magical atmosphere of the *Luminara* (illuminations).



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The **Gioco del Ponte** (Game of the Bridge) is also held on the Lungarni. This famous historical commemoration entails a long costume parade, after which the two town districts of *Tramontana* and *Mezzogiorno* challenge each other to a test of strength where they try to push a heavy cart on rails into the opposing field.

The patron festival, held as part of the **Giugno Pisano** events, draws to a close with the **Regatta of San Ranieri**

a boat race which is a legacy of the prestigious tradition of Pisa's Maritime Republic. This tradition can also be traced to the more recently established (1956) **Regatta of the Ancient Maritime Republic**.

Beyond the tower... another Pisa

There is an entire city to discover beyond the Tower and here are just a few suggestions. This other side of Pisa treats visitors to interesting attractions, an alternative to the classic sightseeing at the Piazza dei Miracoli.

Sites of art and history

Pisa's artistic evolution continues to this day, revealing itself in locations that are dedicated to contemporary art that enriches the city, blending well with the very earliest settings. The mural **Tuttomondo**¹³ by the American artist **Keith Haring**, the largest work ever produced in Europe, can be seen on the wall of the **Convent of St. Anthony**. While *La Porta della Sapienza* by the great artist Pietro Cascella and the fountain at Piazza della Stazione by Arnaldo Pomodoro are wonderful examples of sculptural art.

The **Graphics Museum**¹⁴, in the Palazzo Lanfranchi on the Lungarni houses the collections of the *Department of Prints and Drawings of the University of Pisa Art History Department*.

Palazzo Blu¹⁵, formerly *Palazzo Giuli Dell' Agnello*, on the Lungarno Gambacorti is one of the city's most impressive buildings, thanks to its three floors and the elegant 16th century style façade. Its history is intertwined with that of the city: it was built in the second half of the



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14th century and underwent substantial extension works in the 16th century. Renovated and managed by the *Pisa Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio*, today it is a centre of cultural promotion, featuring large exhibition spaces accommodating the art collection of the Fondazione.

The **Ancient Ships Excavation Site**¹⁶ is located a short distance outside of the walls of the medieval city, in the direction of the sea. This is an actual site of excavation, research and restoration.



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Green areas

The **Orto Botanico**¹⁷, botanical garden, of the University of Pisa was created in 1544, making it the oldest university botanical garden in the world.

It wasn't always in its present location, however: it was founded at the *Arsenale Mediceo*, Medici shipyard, on the right banks of the river Arno.

The **Giardino Scotto**¹⁸ is another relaxing green zone in the city centre that interlaces history and nature. The garden was created by Giovanni Caluri at the beginning of the 19th century for the Scotto family, who had acquired the fortress from Pietro Leopoldo di Lorena in 1798.



Piazza dei Miracoli



The Piazza del Duomo in Pisa is universally admired. Here visitors can admire all the monuments of religious life and which the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio called 'due to their beauty and originality': the Cathedral, the Monumentale and the Leaning Tower. The Piazza del Duomo was declared a World Heritage Site in 1987.

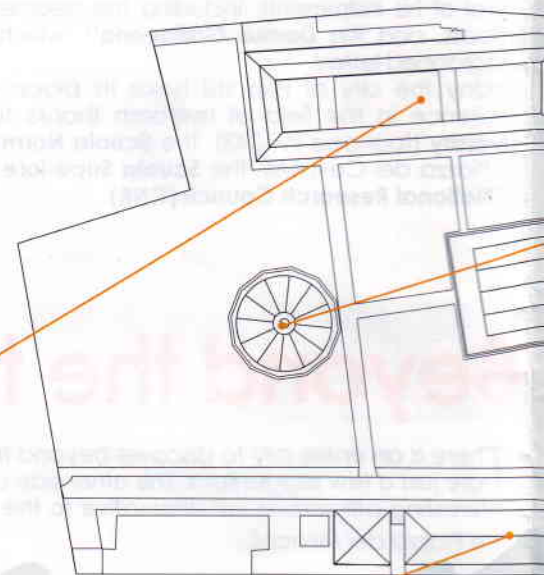
The Piazza is a pedestrian area and is of its definitive appearance in the 19th century. **Alessandro Gherardesca**, who oversaw the restoration of the Piazza, was responsible for the Leaning of the Tower, the most famous monument in Pisa. The silt soil on which its foundations were laid, just in the 1990s reduced the leaning by around 10 cm. The Piazza again opened to the public, albeit with more restrictions.

The nucleus of the Piazza is the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta. Building began in 1063. The Baptistry, dedicated to *St. John the Baptist*, is on the north of the Cathedral. Its interior is a circular space that only covers the internal round of pillars. It is the largest baptistry in both Italy and the world.

Camposanto

At the northern edge of the Piazza is the **Camposanto**. Legend has it that it was built around a layer of earth brought to Pisa by sea from the Holy Land after the Second Crusades in the 12th century. It is a rectangular cloister structure in florid gothic style.

During the Second World War an artillery round landed on the lead roof causing the perimeter walls to melt and sag, along with their marvellous frescoes, including the *Triumph of Death*. Restoration works commenced immediately after the war and are still underway today. When the frescoes were peeled away from the wall preliminary drawings of the frescoes were uncovered and can be seen today on display in the Museo delle Sinopie.



Museo delle Sinopie

A roof fire at the Camposanto Monumentale in July 1944 brought about the dilemma of how best to conserve the frescoes of the Camposanto and their sinopie (preliminary drawings), brought to light once again in 1947 by the first "tearings" of the overlying paintings.

The current museum structure is on the south side of Piazza dei Miracoli, opposite the Camposanto, and was set up between 1976 and 1979 in a specially restored pavilion of the early hospital, **Ospedale di Santa Chiara**. The museum is spread over a metallic structure comprising platforms and screens connected by a lift. The works are displayed on panels on the walls or hung on trusses.

This collection is the most extensive cycle of 14th - 16th century graphics in existence. There are marvellous preliminary drawings by **Buonamico Buffalmacco**, **Francesco di Traino**, **Spinello Aretino**, **Taddeo Gaddi**, **Benozzo Gozzoli** and other artists. Some of the most significant sinopie are the *Triumph of the Death*, the *Last Judgement*, the *Storie di Anacoreti* and the *Crucifixion* by Francesco di Traino, the *Theological Cosmos* by Piero di Puccio and the *Storie Bibliche* by Benozzo Gozzoli and his workshop.

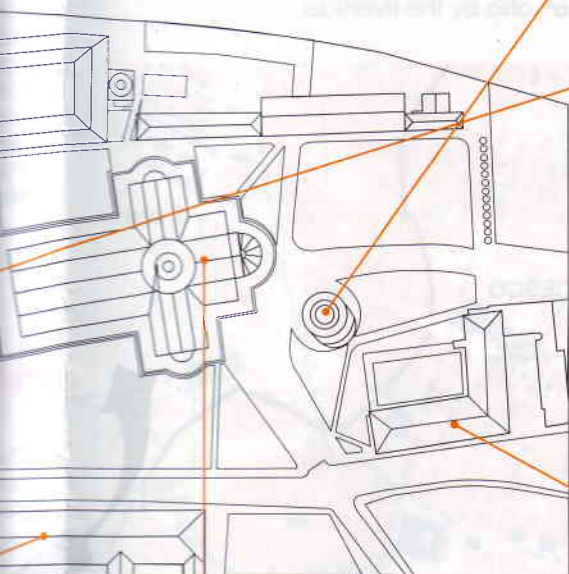
Cathedral

An open space outside of the ancient cathedral is the Piazza dei Miracoli. Works began in the wake of the successful expedition to the Cathedral, dedicated to Santa Maria Assunta. The religious structure would centre on the Piazza. Later, under the design and direction of the architect, the nave was lengthened and the spl...

versally known by the name **Piazza dei Miracoli**.
uments that make up the centre of the town's
gabriele d'Annunzio once defined as *miracles*,
the Cathedral, the Baptistry, the Camposanto
er. The Piazza was classified as a **UNESCO** World

nd is covered by a large lawn. It only assumed
n century, mainly through the work of architect
saw the restoration of the famous monuments.
amous bell tower in the world, is due to the sandy
laid, just three metres deep. Consolidation works
around 40 centimetres and the Tower was once
th more limited access than previously permitted.

hedral, a splendid marble cathedral dedicated
egan on the five-aisle Latin cross plan structure
St. John the Baptist, rises in front of the western
a previous, smaller baptistry that used to be to
or is an unusual truncated cone-shaped dome
pillars. With a circumference of 107.25 m, it is the
world.



Leaning tower

The first stone of the Leaning Tower was set during the commemoration of the Assumption on 9 august 1173. While the signatures of the creators of the other monuments in the Piazza can be traced, the Bell Tower is not signed; an intriguing detail that fuels the debate on its first creator and first decade of the Bell Tower. In 1185 sinking and the resulting leaning halted works for almost a century. **Giovanni di Simone**, who had been engaged on the *Church of San Francesco* with its bold bell tower in those years, was entrusted to carry on the works. Thanks to the architect's extraordinary skill in containing the effects of the inclination, the works continued until the date of the navel defeat of the Meloria in 1284. The seventh and last ring of the Bell Tower, used as a bell tower cell, was conceived and produced by **Tommaso Pisano** around the mid-14th century.

Baptistry

Construction of Pisa Baptistry was begun in 1153 by **Diotisalvi**, architect of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The monument was renovated in 1278, according to an inscription between two pillars of the building. There is little information on the exact working methods used or on how the baptistry was built in its current form. The baptistry is surrounded by archlets decorated with heads and sculptures believed to be by Nicola and **Giovanni Pisano** and considered to be some of their most important works. At the centre of the monument is a beautiful baptismal font; the 1260 pulpit by the great **Nicola Pisano** is set close to the altar.

Museo dell'Opera

The Pisa Museo dell'Opera del Duomo is housed in a 13th century building in Piazza dei Miracoli, just a few metres from the Leaning Tower. It was first opened in 1986 to house the artefacts removed from the Cathedral and the Baptistry, while ensuring both their protection and greater public use and accessibility.

The works by **Tino di Camaino** and Giovanni Pisano are particularly impressive, including the ivory *Virgin with child* sculpted by Giovanni in 1300 for the high altar of the Duomo.

ancient walls was chosen as the setting for
egan under the direction of **Buscheto** in the
tion to Palermo in 1063. His conception of
anta Maria Assunta, meant that the entire
tre on the large dome. One hundred years
ection of another great architect, **Rainaldo**,
the splendid façade produced.



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