



COMUNE DI PONTASSIEVE

History, art and curiosities

PONTASSIEVE

da scoprire





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Servizio URP – Comunicazione Comune di Pontassieve

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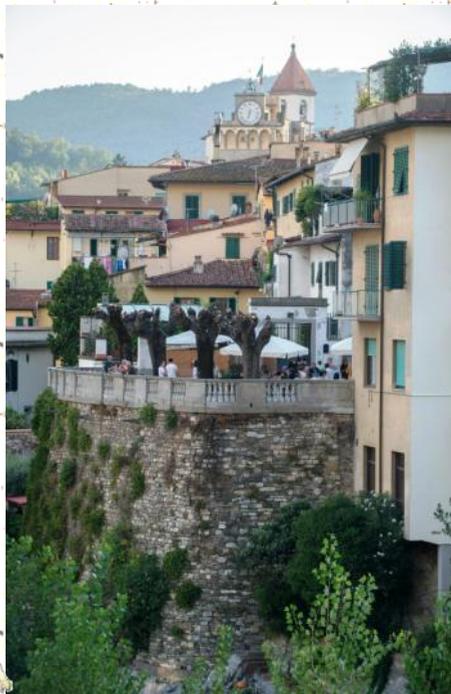
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PONTASSIEVE FLORENCE'S SOUTH-EASTERN DOOR

Pontassieve is a prestigious town in the countryside around Florence, a territory surrounded by rivers running down from the mountain ridges to the valleys, softened by the meandering shapes of our hills, living witnesses to the presence of man and our traditions: churches, castles, ancient villas give rise to an open-air museum all around this territory. Culture and nature combine in a single setting, among vineyards and olive groves, typical products and flavours.



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PONTASSIEVE SOME HISTORY BITES

Many archaeological finds are evidence that **Pontassieve** was dominated by the Etruscans, first, and the Romans afterwards. It was only in the Middle Ages that the old town grew in importance and value. Situated at the confluence of the rivers Sieve and Arno, Pontassieve was an area of particular interest to the Florentines who wanted to take full possession of this important river system. In 1357, the Florentines built a majestic castle here, named **Castel Sant'Angelo**, soon surrounded by many houses; the old borough was protected by high sheltering walls. Today, the only remains of the old castle are three gateways to the town: **Porta Fiorentina**, **Porta Filicaia**, (today the only original part is the arch), and **Porta Aretina**. The fourth gateway, **Porta del Capitano**, no longer exists. Over the years, the name, *Castel Sant'Angelo* was substituted by *Ponte a Sieve* due to the presence of a very important ancient bridge, the so called



Medici Bridge which provided a link to the road from Florence to the towns all around Mugello, Casentino and Arezzo. The first houses of the old town were built there, beneath the castle erected by the Florentines.

With the German occupation of our country in September 1943, and the subsequent arrival of the allies in southern Italy, Pontassieve became a strategic target because of its im-

portant train station, the street system and the railroad workshops.

Because of its position, Pontassieve was heavily bombed and only in 1951, following the war bombings and devastation, the town experienced a long rebuilding phase.



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PONTASSIEVE TODAY

Nowadays, Pontassieve has a population of almost 21.000 per 115 km² in the Valdisieve and Valdarno hill areas; the territory is composed of many villages and small centres. Despite its vicinity to Florence, the “modern” Pontassieve is only marginally made up of residential developments and production centres (5% of its territory); the larger section of its environment is an open area whose small businesses and farms developed and enhanced through the years.



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PONTASSIEVE OIL, WINE AND TYPICAL PRODUCTS

The most important typical products in Pontassieve are agricultural. Pontassieve is characterized by vineyards; **the origins of viticulture** on these hills are ancient and wines produced on our gentle hills were renowned even before the Grand Dukes era. Pontassieve mainly produces **Chianti Rufina** wine, the smallest geographic specification in the Chianti area.

The great development in wine-making in Pontassieve dates back to the beginning of this century, but thanks to the restoration of wine cellars and the specialization of the production systems that wine production has improved. After the DOCG (registered and guaranteed designation of origin) came into force, quantity was lessened and quality improved. Among the typical products of this territory, we must mention the olive-tree and, thus, the IGP (protected geographical indication) extra-virgin olive oil. **This olive oil is truly Tuscan** from the beginning to the end, from the single olive produced on our gentle hills to the final product, the extraction in the olive-press. There are other activities related to the land that are developing and improving in quality, such as livestock farming. The balance between



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tradition and innovation leads to a high quality production of **beef and pork**. Fruits and vegetables are more frequently produced in biological farms with biodynamic procedures. Among our typical products, **saffron** is regaining the full dignity it had in the Middle Ages, being one of the most important products of this territory to this date. Today, the small quantity, harvest and thread separation carried out by hand and the limited blooming period are the main reasons why Tuscan saffron is such a precious product on the market.

Preserving the memory and flavours of a territory is an extraordinary act of civilization. This is what most farms here do, more today than ever. To this we can add the growth of reception facilities. In Pontassieve, you can find many **holiday farmhouses** that represent the values of hospitality and tradition for tourists in a modern key.



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THE FIASCAIE

The art of making straw covered wine bottles is a tradition connected to the production of the wine flask in glass, which, in Tuscany, dates back to the 14th and 15th centuries. In the beginning, this job was a male art; it became a female occupation only in the following centuries. **Fiascaie** or **fiaschettaie** were the names of Tuscan women who, in small groups inside their homes or in their yards, just outside the door, covered the glass wine bottle with a straw basket. That job was an important integration to the income of many women, whose household budget would have been very low, otherwise. The entire activity performed by these **fiascaie** followed a precise ritual: the "trip" (la "gita"), was the way they walked there from home and back. With a small cart, they used to carry home the glass bottles to be covered with straw strings. Once back at home, they wet the straw to make it softer, then they patiently covered the bottles completing the final product at the end of the day. The most frequent bottle sizes were the "**toscanello**" or "**mezzo peso**", the former for the national market, the latter for the international one. The skilful hands of the **fiascaie** transformed them into original works. Through passion and skilful techniques, those products became the guardians of a precious product, an important fruit of our land.



Photo by Enrico Guerri

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PONTASSIEVE - THE OLD TOWN

Pontassieve grew and developed between the rivers Sieve and Arno. This important river system was of great interest to the close town of Florence and, in 1357, the Florentines built an impressive fortress there named Castel Sant'Angelo, surrounded by high sheltering walls. Through the years, the name Castel Sant'Angelo was substituted by Ponte a Sieve because of the presence of an old and very important bridge, built by the Medici family under the guide of Duke Cosimo de Medici. The bridge provided a link to the road from Florence to the towns in Mugello, Casentino and Arezzo.

SANSONI TROMBETTA PALACE



The Sansoni-Trombetta Palace, today seat of the town hall, is a mid-18th century building. Once heart of the political and social life under the power of the Anforti family, the building became property of the Trombetta family in the 19th century. This family became related by marriage to the Sansoni family from Leghorn, (hence the union Sansoni-Trombetta). The ceiling of a beautiful room inside

the building, the so-called heroines' room, is covered with important frescos by Fernando Fochi, showing heroic actions performed by famous women of the time. Inside the building, we find masterpieces by contemporary artists whose works were displayed in Pontassieve. The Sansoni book collection includes 1452 books, mostly from the 19th century and some rare editions from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

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FEMALE HEROISM IN THE TOWN HALL

The ceiling of the so-called Heroines Room is covered with important frescos by Fernando Fochi, a Florentine painter born in 1822: the Sansoni Trombetta family commissioned Fochi to carry out a cycle of frescos dedicated to heroic actions performed by women (The book "Glorious actions of Italian women" by Monica Bietti is dedicated to these).



From Greece to Italy: the *Trombetta* family coat of arms. In this fresco we can find the allegoric portrayals of Italy and Greece. At the women's feet, on the side of the Trombetta emblem, are the symbols of the intellectual greatness of the two countries: architecture, art, sculpture and philosophy for Greece; painting, poetry and geography for Italy. As a geographical identification of the symbols in the background of the fresco, you can see Florence surrounded by its hills and the sea by Corfù (birthplace of the Trombetta family).



You can admire *Stamira*, the lady from Ancona who set fire to the assault machines of the enemies of the Archduke Cristiano Magonza, who were attacking the town of Ancona. This is the main theme of one painting, but Samira also becomes a female emblem of love for the homeland.

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Ghita, a Florentine silk worker, is a poor widow who recruits the sixteen year old son into the town guards. It's a painful decision that respects the pacts of the Florentine Republic, asking for gold or children of age to support the republican cause. The woman pushes her son to fight and come back, announcing the liberation of the homeland, or to die.



Lucrezia Mazzanti. This woman from Figline Valdarno jumped off of the bridge in Incisa Valdarno to escape the mercenaries assaulting the Florentine Republic (1529-30) and the sexual assault by the violent Captain. It was an ultimate act, a one way plunge into the water of the river Arno to escape violence and sexual abuse. She chose to die with honour instead of leading a life full of shame.

Caterina Segurana. This painting shows a woman who grabbed the flag with the French lily from the enemy standard bearer's hands, and she then pierced him with the same flag. The context is the war between France and Spain in 1543 and the action of that brave woman enabled her hometown, Nice, to break free from the assault of the Spanish pirates.



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Luisa Strozzi. This painting tells the story of Luisa Strozzi, who died poisoned because she did not surrender to the sexual advances of Duke Alessandro de Medici. She is the symbol of Florentine aristocracy strenuously opposing the Medici rule.

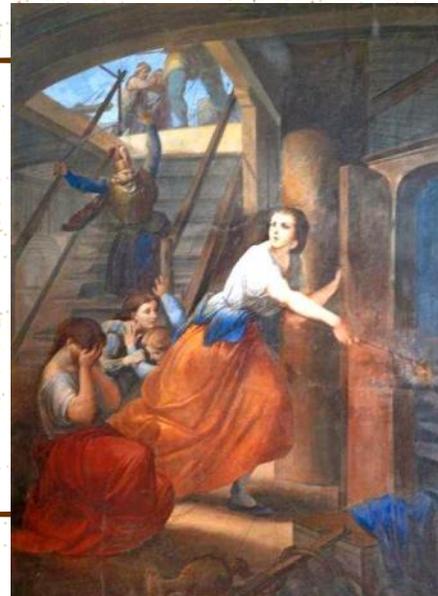


Giulia Aldobrandini.

The sixteen-year-old daughter of jurist and diplomat Silvestro Aldobrandini, exiled by the Medici Family in Urbino, refused to dance with Francesco Ferrucci, the notorious Fabrizio Maramaldo, declaring him a common killer.

Alessandra or Bellisandra Marsiglia.

The Venetian noble woman is portrayed in the scenario of the Nicosia (Cyprus) assault carried out by the Turks in 1570. After the Venetian expedition for the liberation of Cyprus failed, Alessandra set fire to three ships in order to avoid the sad dishonourable destiny of women from Cyprus, who were being enslaved and sent to Anatolia. After the ships had been burned, the sea swallowed the mutilated bodies of the Turks and of more than thousand Christian



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CHIESA DI SAN MICHELE ARCANGELO

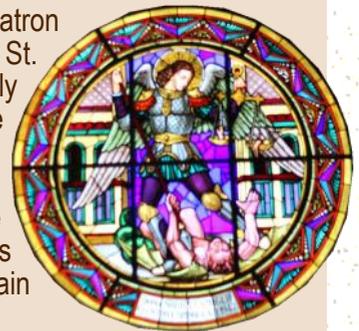
In ancient times the church was named "Sant'Angelo a Sieve" and dates back to the 13th century. It was completely rebuilt in the 18th century and was consecrated in 1788 thanks to the growing importance of the town and the railway line (connecting Florence to Rome). The 18th century building was destroyed during WW II, and restored in 1948 and 1971. The presbytery was



modified following the liturgical norms of the Second Vatican Council. Inside the church you can find a collection of 17th century paintings coming from abandoned churches in the territory. On the main altar, the beautiful painting **Madonna col bambino** (Madonna with child) by **Beato Angelico** used to be found but it is now in the Uffizi collection.

The patron saint in the mosaic

The 29th of September is St. Michael's day, patron saint of Pontassieve. According to tradition, St. Michael is commander-in-chief of the heavenly army of the angels who are faithful to God. In the Christian iconography, St. Michael is usually portrayed in the winged armour, with a sword to kill the devil, often in the form of a dragon. The church in the Vittorio Emanuele II square is dedicated to the Saint, who appears in the main rose window which has been recently restored.



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THE MEDICI BRIDGE

The Medici bridge was built in the mid 16th century, following the flooding of the river Sieve that destroyed the old stone bridge; Cosimo I Medici commissioned a new bridge to be built by Stefano from San Piero a Ponti and his son Tommaso. Pontassieve is actually named after the bridge which crosses the river

and made it possible to go from Florence to the villages and towns in Val di Sieve, Casentino and Valdarno. The Medici bridge was restored in 1788, thanks to the Archduke Pietro Leopoldo Lorena and afterwards, following the damage of WW II.

The bridge, connecting the old heart of Pontassieve to the close hamlet of San Francesco, is made up of two arches in red

bricks leaning on a strong stone pillar with the family emblem of the noble Medici family on the top. From the paved bridge, with the recent addition of artistic illumination, you can gaze on the most panoramic view of the town.



Under the bombings. *Between 9 December 1943 and 2 June 1944 Pontassieve underwent 16 bombing raids carried out by the Alleys' Air force: 472 planes dropped 929 explosive tons on to the town. Pontassieve was indeed considered a principal target because of its railway network connecting Milan to Rome and Florence to Forli. The first bombing targets were the railway bridge, the road bridge, the railway station and 75% of the houses, 95% of the industrial area and the monuments in the old town among which the beautiful Medici Bridge.*

Source **D.Mazzoni**, *Attraverso la bufera. Pontassieve tra guerra, Resistenza e ricostruzione (1943-48)*, Comune di Pontassieve, 1990.



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THE FOUR DOORS OF CASTEL SANT'ANGELO

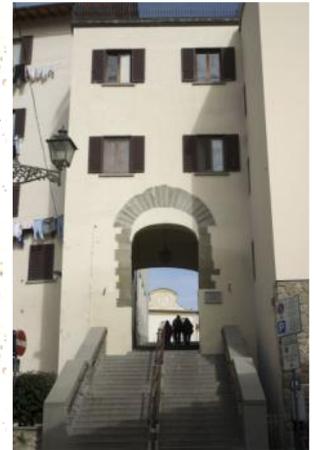
The origin of the castle dates back to 1357, when the Florentine Republic ordered the formation of a "fortified territory" in Val di Sieve, initially named "Castel Sant'Angelo" and "Ponte a Sieve" in the end. The building of the castle was challenging and lasted a long time, also because of the limited financial resources of the country people. The natural

shape of the land area was useful for the building of the castle. It was possible to take advantage of the perfect view on both the eastern and western sides and the difference in altitude to the South. Of the four original doors, only three

are left. To the south, **Porta Filicaia**, originally named "Porta a Sieve", was renamed in the 16th century when it

was rented by the Da Filicaia family. Today, the arch is the only part remaining of the original door. **Porta Fiorentina**, on the western side of the walls, was accessible by an old wooden drawbridge. To the East, **Porta Aretina** (also

named "the clock tower"); is the only one showing its original medieval embattled structure from the 14th century. The embattled crown of the door has remained unchanged through the centuries. The northern door was **Porta del Capitano**, placed in a strategic checkpoint. It was destroyed at the beginning of the 19th century.



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XIV MARTIRI SQUARE

XIV Martiri Square is dedicated to the fourteen people who lost their lives on 8 June 1944, during a retaliation in the countryside around Pontassieve (Pievecchia). A German commando shot them because they had previously helped a group of partisans. The panoramic terrace overlooks the river Sieve and the beautiful Medici Bridge.

The old town alleys

From the central Via Ghiberti (Ghiberti Street), in the medieval heart of the town (Borgo), hidden alleys spread out leading to the banks of the river Sieve. They still preserve the ancient names related to the daily life of the time. The name, **Vicolo del Portuccio**, comes from a small inland port where ships docked in the past. The historic town laundry stood in this strategic place. The name, **Vicolo del Fangaccio**, comes from the path leading up to the hills; the etymology of the names, **Vicolo della Fonte**, (fountain alley) and **Vicolo della Sieve** (Sieve – the river – alley) are easily understood. The so-called **Via del Fossato**, embedded between the upper and lower part of the town, was the address of many craft shops of the town; **Vicolo del Fosso** (dike alley) was named after the pre-existing “borro del Manderino”, (common name for all existing alleys in Pontassieve).



GEO Museum and Study Centre



The GEO Museum is the first town museum with a collection of archaeological finds, photos and masks coming from all over the world. Placed in the heart of Pontassieve, it collects more than 200 finds donated by the press photographer, **Eugenio GEO Bruschi**, to our Municipality. Among them, you can find Etruscan urns from the Villanovan era to the Hellenistic time, ceramics of the 4th century from southern Italy, Roman, Greek and Egyptian finds and many other objects he found during his many trips abroad.

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FABRIZIO DE ANDRE' PARK

The park, named after the musician and artist Fabrizio De André, is in the southern area of Pontassieve, along the river Arno, far away from houses and traffic. Here you can have both lovely walks with your children or have fun with family pets. The park is the theatre of many cultural events - mostly between the months of July and September - such as dance contests, live concerts, parties, theatre, cinema and much more...



MADONNA DELLE GRAZIE AL SASSO SANCTUARY

The Madonna delle Grazie Sanctuary was erected in 1490 replacing a medieval Oratory. According to tradition, the Virgin Mary appeared in 1484 in front of two young shepherdesses on a rock nearby. The Virgin Mary cured their ill father. This rock, placed today under the major altar, gives the name to the Sanctuary, generally called "**Madonna del Sasso**" (Madonna of the rock).

The stone building, repeatedly restored over the centuries, is made up of an inferior and a superior oratory, the latter introduced by a 17th century portico.

Inside the church you can find a large collection of artwork and religious objects. In the inferior oratory, you can admire the small painting "Madonna delle Grazie" by



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Giovanni Bonintendi (The “Ceraiole”), painted in 1490.

In the superior Oratory, there is a collection of fine masterpieces: *Madonna with Saints* by Vignali (1621), *The passing of St. Joseph*, (unknown author, 17th century), *St. Isidoro*, (unknown painter from the 17th century), a *Crucifixion* by Benedetto Velico. The major altar (1504) stands on the far end of the church and is credited to a disciple of Sansovino. The altar underwent some alterations in 1702, the lateral columns were added and the central tabernacle was extended.

The building stands in the *Protected Natural Area of Local Interest, (ANPIL) in Santa Brigida*, where the *Cistus Laurifolius* blossoms. This protected plant is also named *Madonna’s flower*, because it coincidentally blooms in May which is Virgin Mary’s month. This flower is a protected plant species that is **only** present in this part of our country. Many beautiful trekking paths and walking tracks open up from the Sanctuary.



A WALK AROUND THE NATURAL PROTECTED AREA

The Protected Natural Area of Local Interest (ANPIL) Poggio Ripaghera- Santa Brigida – Valle dell’Inferno (Hell Valley) is 800 ha large and it lays over the residential area of Santa Brigida. From 400 meters to 914 meters above sea level, the area collects many different vegetal and tree species and an incredibly rich wildlife. The symbol of the Protected Area is the Cistus Laurifolius (Madonna’s flower), that is only present here and is found nowhere else in Italy. The ancient “butter caves” (burraie) have been rediscovered in recent time.

Recent research has highlighted the richness of this small heritage from the past, laying the foundations for their restoration.

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TENUTA BOSSI

The core of the Bossi estate is a majestic villa in the hills surrounding Sieci, bought in 1592 by the Tolomei family. It is one of the most important properties of the Florentine Gondi family. The oldest parts of this building belonged to the Quona family and stood close to San Martino castle, which was destroyed in 1143 by the Florentines in the war against the Guidi Earls, to whom the Quona



family members were vassals. The Bossi villa is near the Frescobaldi one, named Poggio a Remole, a former property of the Albizi family on the slopes of Bardellone hill. In 1427 the Bossi villa belonged to Bartolomeo di Andrea di Domenico, also named "forzerinaio". In 1546, following the sharing out of the inheritance among the Tolomei brothers, the building went to Paolo, and when he died in 1558, he left it to his son. In the second half of the Eighteenth century the Bossi villa was completely restored, expanded and decorated in a Baroque style. The small pre-existing chapel was transformed into a proper church with three altars, a big working organ and two lateral choirs, one for the family and the other one for the household staff. At the back of the church is also a big sacristy. This church holds the mortal remains of all Gondi members who owned the villa from that time on. The majestic mansion was also portrayed in a painting by the famous land surveyor Raffaello Paganelli, (1744-1810). The beautiful fields and woods surrounding the villa are 778 acres in size; corn, vineyards and olive groves are the main cultivations here.

A two centuries-long history. Nowadays, the Bossi villa is the family house of one of the most important historic Florentine families. According to tradition, the Gondi family comes from the noble Filippi family. Dante describes them in his Canto XVIII of the Paradiso (Divine Comedy) as some of the oldest inhabitants of Florence. Baccio Filippi was conferred the knighthood by Charlemagne in 787. The emblem of the Gondi family, (an arm holding a club and two clubs forming St. Andrew's cross which frames the family saying "non sine labore"), reminds of their warlike origins. The Gondi family founder was Orlando di Bellicozzo, a descendant of Braccio Filippi who was a member of the Florentine City Council in 1197. Both the Italian and the French family branches had political and religious personalities, among their members, who held important public offices during the centuries.

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SAN MARTINO A LUBACO CHURCH

The San Martino a Lubaco church stands by the crossroad with the old road connecting the ancient colonies of Monteloro, Pagnolle, Santa Brigida, Fornello, Doccia and Montefiesole. The place name "Lubaco" probably comes from the Latin adjective "opacus", that is, "shady", likely because of its hidden position on the western side of



the hill. The building was erected on the foundations of an older minor church and gained the title of "Pieve" (parish church) only in 1526. It has a Romanic structure without columns (they were destroyed in the 18th century). The main entrance presents a descending staircase to enter the building. It is a rare example of a sacred building which you enter by "walking downstairs". In the middle of the right wall you can find

the 11th century baptistery, carved out of a single piece of stone. The sober building has one central aisle and is closed by an apse. A copy of a painting by Benedetto da Empoli and a painting portraying the Saints Domenico and Agostino by an unknown Florentine painter of the 17th century hang on the bottom of the apse. Above the main entrance you can admire two paintings by Silvestro Pistolesi. These are the portraits of St. Martin (outside) and a holy Eucharist (inside the church). The main entrance also presents a big rose window in glass and lead with the image of Martin, the Patron Saint. The roof by the apse is surmounted by a belfry with two bells.



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SAN MINIATO A PAGNOLLE CHURCH

The small 12th century church is located in the mountains above the springs of the river Falle, to the west of the Sieci stream, along the way from the Monteloro church to San Martino a Lubaco. It was mentioned for the first time in a papal bull of Pasquale II in 1102. In 1301 it became a parish church and afterwards, in 1606, it passed under the patronage of the Guadagni Marquises. The building has a typical Romanic structure with a precious wooden roof truss. On the sides of the only central aisle you can admire two beautiful confessionals, with stone arches. The entrance portico was later built in the 16th century, and the bell tower is decorated with particular battlements.

Dante and Beatrice met here for the first time

The San Miniato a Pagnolle church stands close to the Portinari Villa and 500 yards from a house that belonged to the Alighieri family. It is situated in the middle of an imaginary triangle, whose base is formed by Dante and Beatrice's houses and at the top is this small country church. Dante did not spend his young years exclusively in Florence; presumably he grew up on the hills around his town. One of the places he loved most (as you can read in the book "Dante Alighieri" by Richard Warrington Baldwin Lewis) was his family house in Pagnolle, on the hills all around Pontassieve. Who knows if this church was a Sunday morning set for the spark of love for one of the world's most famous love stories?



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SAN GIOVANNI BATTISTA A MONTELORO CHURCH

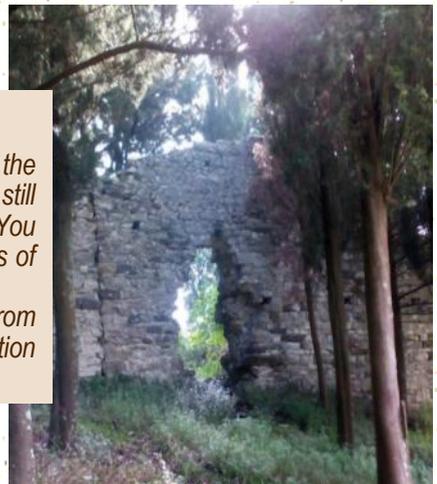


Mentioned for the first time in a papal bull of Pope Celestino II in 1143, this church has Romanesque origins and has belonged to the bishops of Fiesole since the Middle Ages. Although its structure was completely renovated in the 17th century, its original form is still there for all to see, thanks to careful restoration works carried out between 1959 and 1962. One of the three tower bells dates back to 1259. The access door to the rectory is surmounted by the **Monteloro emblem** - (the name reminds us of the abundant presence of gold in the village) - made between the 16th and the 17th centuries. Close to the church you can visit the remains of the old Monteloro castle.

The Castle Walls

The majestic though unstable remains of the central tower of the ancient Monteloro Castle still stand next to San Giovanni Battista church. You can detect traces of the square perimeter walls of the ancient building.

*The castle belonged to the Bishops of Fiesole from the Middle Ages, maybe as a result of a donation by the **emperor Lotharios** (years 823-855).*



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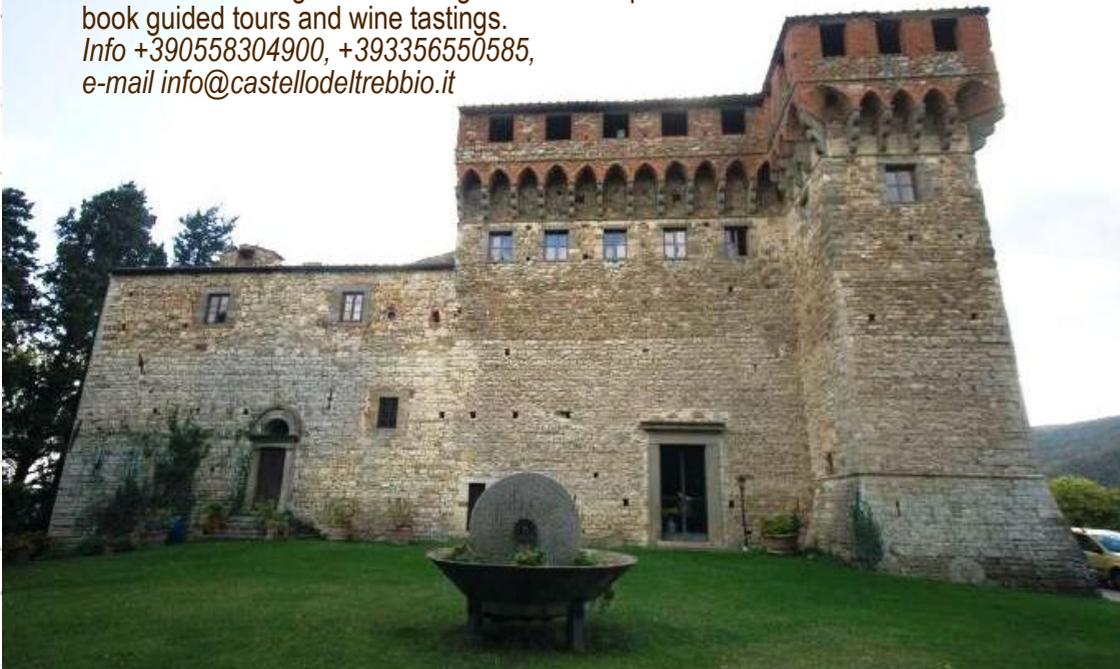
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THE TREBBIO CASTLE



The Trebbio Castle was first built by the Florentine Pazzi family in 1184; it was probably erected around an older core and took on the current aspect between the 12th and the 13th centuries. Its position on a mountain crest reflects in a minor and respectful tone the majestic fortress the Guidi family had erected on Monte di Croce (on the eastern side, beyond the valley). The story goes that this noble Florentine family engaged in the famous conspiracy against the Medici family (**Congiura de'Pazzi**) discussing the details of the killing of Giuliano and Lorenzo de Medici inside the Trebbio Castle in 1478. After the conspiracy failed, the killers and their partners were captured and executed and the castle, together with the enclosed goods, was temporarily confiscated. In the basements of the castle, it is possible to visit the old prisons, which currently include the old clay jars used for the storage of extra virgin olive oil in past times. The current owners book guided tours and wine tastings.

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Torre a Decima Castle:

the unsuccessful conspiracy

Inside the Trebbio castle, in 1478, the Pazzi family planned the famous **Pazzi Conspiracy** in order to kill the brothers Giuliano de' Medici and Lorenzo il Magnifico (the magnificent Lorenzo). On Sunday 26 April



1478, during the Holy Eucharist in Santa Maria del Fiore cathedral, Francesco de' Pazzi and Bernardo Bandini took advantage of all the people kneeling down at the presentation of the consecrated host to stab nineteen times Giuliano de' Medici in the back. His brother, Lorenzo, assaulted by the priests Antonio Maffei and Stefano de' Bagnone, though lightly wounded in his neck, was able to run for his life taking shelter in the sacristy. The Pazzi Conspiracy was completely unsuccessful; killers and supporters were captured and executed. Lorenzo de' Medici became the only Lord of Florence. The story goes that, after the conspiracy failed, Torre a Decima became the Pazzi family's precious shelter.



TORRE A DECIMA CASTLE

The Torre a Decima Castle was erected at the base of Croce Mount, close to Molino del Piano, in the heart of the old Conti Guidi domain. This majestic building, following the end of the Saltarelli family, became property first of the Salviati family, and then of the Pazzi family who owned the building until the middle of the last century. The castle, whose origin dates back to the 12th – 13th century, still preserves its ancient tower and elements of the medieval defensive walls. In the 15th century, beautiful Renaissance porches and a loggia adorned the inside building, and the external walls were surrounded by stone ramparts. The nearby medieval chapel is dedicated to St. Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi who lived there in the 16th century. The story goes that after the unsuccessful conspiracy in 1478, Torre a Decima became a safe place for the Pazzi family to take shelter in. The castle was severely damaged during the Second World War and immediately after the war it was completely restored. Today the castle is a private residence and the outside is open to visitors.

PONTASSIEVE

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PONTASSIEVE - THE AREA

SANT'ANDREA A DOCCIA CHURCH

Evidence of the presence of the church of **Sant'Andrea a Doccia** dates back to the beginning of the 11th century. The "Montaperti book" (1260) and the tables of the tithes (1247-1303) described it as the baptistery for all the people coming from the nearby churches of Novoli, Farneto, Sieci, Strada, Montalto, Galiga and Fornello. The building underwent profound changes over time and the wall structure is the only original part of its medieval architecture that we can still admire today. The church was entirely restored in the 17th century and again in 1921. The front portico was later renovated between 1968 and 1972. The artistic heritage of the church includes the paintings Madonna with child, St. Anne, St. Andrew and St. John the Baptist (Ghirlandaio school, 1503), a clay tabernacle from the 16th century credited to **Andrea della Robbia** himself.



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PONTASSIEVE - IL TERRITORIO

SANTA BRIGIDA CHURCH

The building has a simple façade with a single doorway with a window on top of it. According to tradition, the church stands on the cave where St. Brigida lived as a hermit in the 10th century. The building was renovated in the 14th century and it was restored and enlarged as early as 1686. In 1938 the apse was expanded with the addition of a new Romanesque extension. After the Second World War, in 1953, the church was renovated under the supervision of the architect Guido Morozzi.



The cave of the Saint

St. Brigida from Ireland came to these places to visit her brother Andrew, Archdeacon of the bishop of Fiesole. After the brother's death, the Saint secluded herself in a cave where she lived as a hermit, praying and leading a mystic life for many years, feeding herself only on herbs and vegetable roots. According to tradition, the present church was built by the population just above the Saint's cave, where her body is supposed to lay.



PONTASSIEVE

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PONTASSIEVE - IL TERRITORIO

THE WINDMILL



The windmill in **Monterifrassine** stands on a crest at a crossing of a group of hills. It was built in **the first half of the 19th century**, restored in 2000 and put into operation thanks to the support of the Municipality of Pontassieve with the EU partnership and the engineers and experts from Italy, Holland and Germany. The careful and complete restoration of the windmill, achieved in only one year, was based on the of the preserved elements and the research on other existing “tower” windmills. The internal part of the windmill is a

fascinating “Leonardo da Vinci machine”: visits can be booked at Fattoria di Lavacchio, +390558396168.



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The San Lorenzo a Montefiesole church was erected close to the ruins of the Florentine bishops' castle that dominated the church itself. It was one of the oldest and most important churches of this area, already mentioned in a document dating back to 1190. The church still preserves its original Romanesque structure with the exception of the wall opposite the main entry and the bell tower. Inside the building, you can appreciate a painting of the **Virgin Mary** from the end of the 14th century attributed to Antonio Veneziano. It is interesting to notice how the church is perfectly aligned with two other buildings of high spiritual energy: the monastery in Montesenario and the Madonna del Sasso sanctuary.

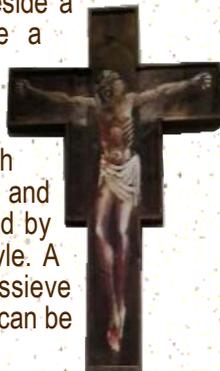
SAN LORENZO A MONTEFIESOLE CHURCH



SAN MARTINO A MOLINO DEL PIANO CHURCH



Mentioned as far back as the 15th century, this church was erected beside a road leading to the Torre a Decima castle. The original building was rebuilt towards the end of the eighteenth century in keeping with the original octagonal plan and an elegant loggia, supported by columns in the classical style. A painting by the Pontassieve painter, **Massimo Cantini**, can be admired in the church apse.





COMUNE DI PONTASSIEVE

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PONTASSIEVE - THE AREA

GRICIGLIANO MONASTERY

The “Gricigliano fortress”, initially property of the Guadagni family and afterwards of the Captains of Orsanmichele, was bought in 1478 by **Niccolò di Ugolino Martelli**. From the last decades of the 15th century, thanks to the family's efforts, the building previously in ruins became a modern and refined country mansion. A new part of the garden, in perfect romantic style, was added in the first half of the 19th century and was provided with water falls, caves and a small wood. The property was donated in 1973 to the **Benedictines of the Fontgoubault** abbey, who were the founders of the Monastery dedicated to St. Mary. In the Nineties the villa became seat of the Association “Cristo Re Sommo Sacerdote”, (King Christ and High Priest), whose members train seminarians and support the activities of missionary evangelization.



Curiosity: Water games

The hallmark of the Gricigliano garden is definitely water. Caves and richly decorated fountains make the external part of the garden, (built in the 16th and 17th centuries) fascinating and unique. The architecture of the water games recreates apparently

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GRICIGLIANO MONASTERY

*natural and spontaneous forms, with **unexpected perspectives** on the surrounding environment. What makes this villa a unique place is also the visual relationship between the rich peach garden and the building's façade. Fluidity is a link between water and building elements and makes this a magical place, a little known gem in this area.*



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SAN GIOVANNI BATTISTA A REMOLE CHURCH

A mention of the building is already present in an old document dating from 955. Between the 12th and the 13th centuries a new church was erected in the place of the ancient one with a three aisle structure that was very similar to the existing one. During the 18th century, the church became property of the Albizi family, who altered the internal aspect of the church plastering the beautiful stone walls. These walls were then restored bringing its Romanesque aspects back to light. In the year 1300, during the fights between the black and white Guelphs, **Corso Donati** chose the church as meeting point for his soldiers, and was so doing able to prevent the supporters of the rival Cerchi family from returning back to Florence.



In 1740 a devastating flood damaged the church: the road previously passing in front of the church main door was diverted to pass behind the apse, the way it is today, in the shape of an "s" line.

Today, the elegant bell tower is made up of six window levels: single-lancet windows in the first two levels, double-lancet windows in the following three and again single-lancet windows in the bell cell. At the beginning of the right aisle there is a **baptistery in coloured marble dating from 1753**, surrounded by a stone balustrade from the 15th century and behind it you can find a clay statue of St. John the Baptist from the beginning of the 16th century. A collection of many other valuable paintings is also present in the church.

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PONTASSIEVE - THE AREA



SANTA MARIA A FORNELLO CHURCH

The church was erected on a hill below the old Quona castle, destroyed in 1143 by the Florentines in the war against the Guidi Earls, whose vassals were the Quona family members. The two saints, Martin and Justin, are portrayed on the front of the building, just above the tympanum, on each side of the cross. The church was expanded at the end of the 16th century and again restored at the beginning of the past century. The medieval bell tower was rebuilt in 1855, planned by Giuseppe Gondi, owner of the close Bossi Villa.

SANTA MARIA A FORNELLO CHURCH

The church is mentioned in the 1276 "Tithe book" ("Decima") under the name *Sanctae Mariae ad Furniculum*. Placed on the southern side of Monte di Croce, the church was property of the Guidi family, first, and of the Florentine Archbishop, afterwards. It was consecrated on 15. August 1398, as mentioned on a headstone inside the church and completely restored in 1702, together with the presbytery.



MONTEBONELLO TOWER

The church tower was the medieval watch-tower of the ancient "**castrum**" and is the only remaining part of an old castle of the 11th century. On 16 February 1944, during WWII, three bombs hit this area; many houses were damaged but the tower stood untouched. It still stands today, beautifully surrounded by a group of houses forming a small village.

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PONTASSIEVE - THE AREA

SANT'EUSTACHIO IN ACONA CHURCH



The church, also mentioned with the name “**Sant’Eustachio in Jerusalem**”, was completely rebuilt by Cosimo II Medici in 1552 not far from the ruins of the previous building, according to an inscription carved in a stone on the front

of the church. The present building has a single nave plan, covered by a barrel vault ceiling with late baroque decorations.

A recipe everyone talks of

Culture is food, too. That’s the case with “penne all’aconese”, (a first course pasta recipe). Who doesn’t recognize this recipe today as a symbol of this territory? It’s a recipe invented and patented by Alberto Moretti and it has been appreciated for more than thirty years by people coming from all over Tuscany to Acona. It has also been awarded a prize by Luciano Artusi, one of the greatest traditional cooking experts.



SANTA MARIA IN ACONA CHURCH

The present building, completely renovated, has no signs of its original Romanesque structure, apart from some parts in stone. Very interesting is a fragment in sandstone on the front of the building on the right side of the church.

The Cerchi family in Acona. *The Cerchi family came from Acona, before moving to Florence and becoming one of the most powerful families in the city. Mentioned in Dante’s Divine Comedy, from the 13th century on the Cerchi owned their banking society they lead as a family business. Today the only trace of the Acona castle, mentioned in a document dating back to 1079, can be found in its transformation into an ancient villa which underwent numerous changes over the years.*

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MONTE GIOVI PARK

The park extends down the slopes of Monte Giovi and is dedicated to the Partisan Resistance in World War II. Between 1943 and 1944 it was the gathering of those who fought against the Nazis and the Fascists. Annually, in July, the park, with its monuments and symbols of historical Memory, becomes the theatre of the “Festival of the Partisans and of Youth”.

The Etruscans on Monte Giovi

On a small plateau at the top of Mount Giovi, (992 m.), the archeological site has been known since 1970s thanks to the discovery of three bronze statuettes, about 2000 arrowheads and a javelin dating back to the 5th and 4th centuries BC. In 2010, the Etruscology department of the University of Florence carried out a research and discovered an Etruscan settlement with living evidence from the Bronze Era to the Hellenistic period. Among the many structures found during the digs, the most important one is the majestic 2 meter wide defense wall all around the site, belonging to the first settlement when Fiesole was fortified at the top of the mount to control the Apennines' passes and restrict the recurring Celtic raids.



PIEVECCHIA

The Pievecchia Villa is a mid-19th century building, with a typical nineteenth century Florentine design. On 8 June 1944, a group of Nazi soldiers shot fourteen people from Pontassieve on this spot. The building is currently a private house but the wall where the fourteen men were fired upon still shows the bullet holes. Next to the execution wall you can see some memorial plaques commemorating these men's innocent deaths. Following this massacre, the Municipality of Pontassieve was awarded the Civil Merit Bronze Medal in 2005 by the President of the Italian Republic.

