

## **Tour of villas and gardens of the Renaissance. (1 day tour: Villa Lante, Palazzo Farnese, Sacro Bosco /or Ruspoli garden)).**

During the 15th and 16th century, Tuscia has long been a preferred place for the retreat of wealthy Roman families, a place where they could build grand villas and gardens.

**VILLA LANTE** in Bagnaia, a site which is considered the most excellent example of the best period in the history of garden design: the Mannerist phase of the Italian renaissance. It was designed for the Cardinal Giovan Francesco Gambara, who had a modern taste for outdoor living and eating. This villa was his summer retreat. The whole garden is perfectly proportioned and richly detailed: a square terrace subdivided into smaller squares, a water parterre, and a wonderful fountain in a central position. Entrance fee: 5 euros. Closed on Monday

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTD41Rk7Sc>

**PALAZZO FARNESE** in Caprarola. A massive and magnificent 500-years-old building, built on an unusual pentagonal plan by the wealthy and powerful Farnese family. This is a five-storey palace with 365 rooms built by the cardinal Alessandro Farnese to be his summer residence. Ceilings and walls are totally covered with frescoes glorifying this noble family and an entire room is frescoed with maps of the world as it was known to the 16<sup>th</sup>-century cartographers. Entrance fee: 5 euros. Closed on Monday

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBEL5PPUdbY>

**SACRO BOSCO** in Bomarzo. Another Renaissance garden contemporary to the other two above mentioned gardens, but this one was constructed with a different philosophy. The garden is populated by weird and fantastic sculptures of mythical creatures and eccentric architecture, providing a philosophical and literary journey. The link that follows has good pictures of the site and tells you something more about the whimsical creatures that populate the garden. Entrance fee: 9 euros open every day.

<http://www.romeartlover.it/Bomarzo.html>

**RUSPOLI GARDEN AND CASTLE** in Vignanello. It was originally a Benedictine convent built in the XI century, then became a fortress and eventually in 1531 it was given the form of a beautiful noble palace.

<http://www.castelloruspoli.com/familiaeng.html>

## **The Etruscan Civilization (1 day tour: Tarquinia (necropolis and museum), Vulci and Tuscania)**

Long before the days of Rome's greatness, Italy was the home of the Etruscans, a population far advanced in civilization. These people rose to prosperity and power, then almost vanished from recorded history, leaving unsolved many questions about their origin and culture.

**TARQUINIA** was one of Etruria's most important cities. The town lies on a limestone plateau west of Viterbo and it is one of the oldest cities belonging to the Etruscan League. This is also the best places to see Etruscan tombs painted with beautiful frescoes and amazing fresh colours representing lively scenes of daily life. The necropolis is made up of roughly 6000 tombs, 60 of which have paintings on their walls. The preservation of the paintings after so many centuries (the necropolis was used between the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 3<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) and with their colour almost intact, is due to the firmness of the limestone bed, which proved to be a perfect background.

Tarquinius has an excellent and interesting archaeological museum located in the splendid 15<sup>th</sup> century building Palazzo Vitelleschi. The museum contains a wealth of Etruscan treasure. Entrance fee for the necropolis + museum: 8 euros. Only necropolis: 6 euros Closed on Monday  
A walk through the historical city centre is also very interesting with its majestic and beautiful 12<sup>th</sup> century church of Santa Maria in Castello encircled by towers.

<http://www.italia.it/en/media/video/tarquinius-the-etruscan-capital.html>

**VULCI** lies between the province of Viterbo and Tuscany about 100km north-west of Rome and 16 km from the Tyrrhenian sea. Vulci was famous in the ancient world for trade, handicrafts, such as bronze vessels, jugs, tripods, and agriculture. The museum displays all the items found in the vast necropolis. The wealth of Vulci, in fact, is reflected in the richness of its tombs, the most famous of these is the Francois tomb found in 1857.

The *Vulci Parco Archeologico Naturalistico* has recently been instituted. You can walk along the ancient city streets of Vulci and visit the ruins of important monuments.

Entrance fee: 8 euros.

<http://www.vulci.it/mediacenter/fe/CategoriaMedia.aspx?idc=26>

**TUSCANIA** is a beautiful town with a history dating back 3000 years.

Beside the two most important Romanesque churches of San Pietro and Santa Maria Maggiore, the town houses an archaeological museum set up in 1984, which contains many Etruscan and Roman artefacts from the tombs around Tuscania. These include the complete collection of the family Curunas sarcophagi, the Amazzoni sarcophagus, the Vipiniana sarcophagi and many items found in the Pian di Mola and Ara del Tufo necropolis areas. The Museum also organises visits to the various tombs.

Entrance fee to the museum: free. Closed on Monday

Entrance fee to the necropolis: 2 euros.

### **Tour of lake Bolsena (1day tour: Bolsena, Montefiascone, Capodimonte)**

This lake has a record: it is the biggest lake in Europe formed inside the crater of an extinct volcano.

**BOLSENA** is a lovely hill town overlooking the lake. Its tourism-related fame is also due to the nearby ancient roman road called "Via Cassia" that for centuries has been connecting (without using the modern A1) Rome to Florence. For centuries Bolsena was used as a strategic stopping point for pilgrims on their way to Rome. One of these pilgrims was called Peter, he was from Prague and in 1263 he was overcome by a doubt: the real presence of the body of Christ into the consecrated wafer. On his way back from Rome, after a pilgrimage, he stopped in Bolsena and celebrated the Mass: 25 drops of real blood came out of the Host and stained a linen cloth which was on the altar. This is universally renowned as the miracle of Corpus Christi.

It is possible to visit the **archaeological area** dating back to the pre-Roman time. Few steps far from the Roman ruins, we find the **archaeological museum** set up inside the imposing the castle of Monaldeschi della Cervara.

The historical centre preserves its medieval structure and it is nice to take a walk through its narrow and picturesque streets.

Bolsena is the birthplace of Saint Cristina, the daughter of a Roman prefect, converted to Christianity under the emperor Diocletian. She faced martyrdom and a beautiful Basilica dedicated to her was built on her graveyard in the XII century.

In 1263 the miracle of Corpus Christi happened in the church of Saint Cristina

Under the church it is possible the visit in the catacombs with 1,000 burials.

Entrance fee to the archaeological area: free.

Entrance fee to the museum: 5 euros. Closed on Monday

Entrance fee to the Basilica: free

Entrance fee to the catacombs: 4 euros

<http://velzna.forumfree.it/?t=46552560>

**MONTEFIASCONE** is located on the highest point of the ridge surrounding Lake Bolsena. The view from fortress is magnificent.

In the Middle Ages Montefiascone was an important town. Frequented by popes and churchmen, the town was one of the main stage posts on the Francigena way. In the 13th century, the Roman Catholic popes decided to fortify the area, and a big fortress was built on top of Montefiascone hill. Known as ‘Rocca dei Papi’, the old castle became the residence of papal governors in the 14th century.

The church of San Flaviano was built between the 11th and 14th century and rises on the site of an older church dedicated to the Virgin. The church has a complex architecture with two floors.

In the church it is possible to see the grave of the prelate John Defuk, a wine lover and gourmand: He enjoyed so much the local dry wine EST EST EST that decided to stay in Montefiascone forever, where it is said he died of too much wine. Local wineries offer wine tasting for free.

**CAPODIMONTE** lies on the shores of Lake Bolsena, with its splendid Farnese Fortress that overlooks the town and the beaches below. The fortress was home of Giulia Farnese, called “Giulia la bella”, the beautiful mistress of pope Alexander IV Borgia and close friend of the pope’s daughter, Lucrezia Borgia.

The little village was also a favourite summer destination of many Popes.

From April to September it is possible take a boat that circumnavigates the lake and its two beautiful islands Martana and Bisentina, both rich in art and history.

### **CIVITA di BAGNOREGIO**

One of the most amazing sites in Italy. This medieval village is nicknamed “the dying town” as it suffers from a serious geological erosion and it is isolated in the middle of a vast valley. The only way to reach the little hamlet, where only 10 people live, is through a foot bridge, which works as a filter to modernity: no traffic, no stress, no noise.

### **Viterbo and the surroundings area.**

Viterbo is the main city of the province. Its moment of glory was in the 13<sup>th</sup> century when it became the seat of the papal court. The medieval core of Viterbo is still preserved and protected by its mighty city walls. It is worth to visit the beautiful papal palace and the cathedral and take a stroll in the medieval quarter called San Pellegrino.

Viterbo is also famous for its thermal baths. It is known that during the Middle Ages this spa town had some famous visitors, such as Pope Gregorius IX in 1235 and Boniface IX in 1404. Today Viterbo continues this tradition and it is possible to try a facial with local volcanic mud or a stream bath in an ancient cave, where hot mineral water from Bullicame spring splashed down a waterfall to a pool under your feet. <http://www.termedeipapi.it/index.php?zn=leterme&subzn=video>

The visit of the historical centre of Viterbo can be enriched with two interesting sites: the Cistercian abbey in San Martino al Cimino (<http://www.romeartlover.it/Martino.html>) and the Renaissance church of Santa Maria della Quercia (<http://www.romeartlover.it/Querce.html>)

In the months of April and May in the nearby village of Vitorchiano it is possible to have a free tour in an amazing garden growing peonies. The nursery is 15 hectares large, and it is home to the world's largest collection of tree and herbaceous peonies (over 200,000 plants). <http://www.centrobotanicomoutan.it/index.asp?lang=en>