

FIESOLE



Totally charming, **Fiesole** is the most “noble” village in the vicinity of Florence. Ever since its foundation in 59 B.C., it shared its history with the neighbouring *City of the Flower*. Fiesole was also the victim of Barbarian invasions and was reconquered by Florence in 1125. This village was a **place favoured by the Medici family** and it was enriched by villas, gardens and palaces between the 18th and the 19th century. This was an important Etruscan centre, colonized by the Romans in 80 B.C., and an extraordinary archaeological and monumental heritage is a proof of its origins. In the **archaeological sphere**, one can still see long parts of **defensive walls**, dated from the 3rd century A.D. and the magnificent **Roman Theatre**, completed in the first half of the 1st century, right in the Imperial era. The theatre, with its **3000 seats**, hosts Opera performances during the prestigious *Estate Fiesolana*. Nearby we can find the **thermal baths**, the *calidarium* and the **sacred area** with ruins of a **Roman temple**. **Fiesole Archaeological Museum** keeps lots of pieces dated from the **15th century B.C.**, in the **Bronze Age**, and some **Etruscan and Roman** material from the countryside around, as well as urns, chalices, small bronze objects and architectural elements found in the archaeological zone. On the main square stands the **Palazzo Pretorio**, built in the 14th century and renovated during the following centuries. The old church of **Santa Maria a Primerana** is found on the square as well. On the other side of the square is the **Cathedral**, where the bishopric headquarters were located before Fiesole diocese was created. Its façade results from a radical 19th century renovation but the inside keeps the original style of the High Medieval period and contains lots of religious works of art.



In front of the cathedral is the **Palazzo Vescovile** (Bishop’s Palace), also built in the 13th century and renovated in the 17th century when the **Seminary** was added. In the centre of the village, the **Bandini Museum** is worth visiting. It keeps the collection of art lover Angelo Maria Bandini, containing objects of minor arts, sculptures and paintings in the Tuscan style. On the other hand, the **Musco Fondazione Primo Conti**, set in the artist’s magnificent villa, presents a big collection of his works, as the Florentine painter was a protagonist of the Futurist art era. It also keeps large archives of documents regarding *avant-garde* art from the early 1900s like posters and reviews. In another beautiful villa, Roseto, lived **Giovanni Michelucci**, one of the greatest Italian architects and urban planners, famous for his project of Santa Maria Novella train station in Florence and **the church on the Autostrada del Sole**. From the villa one can enjoy a superb panorama on the hills of the Arno valley right down to Brunelleschi’s dome. The villa was built at the beginning of the 19th century and is surrounded by a beautiful terraced garden planted with olive trees, vines and typical plants and trees from the Florentine countryside like cypresses, rosemary and fruit-trees. Inside the villa are kept sketches, models, photographs and drawings made by Michelucci in his lifetime. The **Villa I Tatti** hosted another renowned person, **Bernard Berenson**, an art historian and Italian Renaissance scholar who bequeathed the 16th century residence to **Harvard University** as a centre for Italian Renaissance studies. Berenson’s will was respected and his villa and very rich library are today open to scholars in history, literature, art and music who wish to specialize in the **study of the Renaissance**. The garden surrounding the villa following a project by architect **Cecil Pinsent** is also splendid. At the top of the hill, where the Etruscan acropolis used to be, stands the church of **San Francesco**, built in the 14th century as an oratory and then greatly altered. **From there one can enjoy a magnificent panorama of Florence lying at the foot of Fiesole hills.**



In the vicinity of Fiesole, you must stop by the hamlet of **San Domenico**. There you can find a 15th century convent where, according to the tradition, **Fra Angelico** lived as a monk. Several of his works are kept there, among other very precious works of art. Not far from San Domenico, the **Badia Fiesolana** deserves a visit. This was the cathedral of Fiesole until 1208 and it was largely restructured in the 15th century as wanted by **Cosimo de' Medici**. Inside are kept numerous works of sacred art. The **European University Institute** is currently located in the magnificent cloister of the old convent of the Badia.



The ideal starting point of any cultural tour is the large **Piazza Mino** where you find the **Duomo**, the **Palazzo Vescovile**, the **Palazzo Pretorio**, the **Seminario** and the old church of **Santa Maria Primerana**. From the square, you can walk up to the **beautiful terrace of San Francesco and its panoramic view** to then enter the **Etrusco-Roman area**. The square, set in the heart of the town, would have been Fiesole's centre in the Roman era. Its name recalls the famous 15th century sculptor, Mino da Fiesole, who was a student of **Rossellino** and of **Desiderio da Settignano**.



Duomo

The **Duomo** stands in front of the **Palazzo Vescovile** (Bishop's Palace). It was built between 1010 and 1028 as wished by Bishop **Jacopo il Bavaro** (1024-1028), who used his own funds for the building to help bishopric headquarters to regain dignity in Fiesole. And this is the reason why Bavaro had the body of **San Romolo** buried there and named the church after the saint. Along the centuries, the cathedral was subject to many changes and it was renovated in 1878-83. Built when the church was made bigger in 1213, the campanile is characteristic; shaped as a tower, it is 42,30 metres high and crowned with battlements that were added in the 19th century. One can enter inside the church through three doors presenting a stone architrave decorated with geometric patterns.



Built with square stones and no coating, the interior of the cathedral is **definitely Romanesque**; it is divided in three naves, with sixteen columns each different from one another, some topped by **magnificent capitals**. Sculptures are the main works of art to be found here since Fiesole was a quarry site (the **Maiano caves** were nearby) and most local artists dedicated themselves to this art. On the portal in the middle, the interior façade shows the *statue of St. Romulus*, a precious sculpture in polychromatic terracotta by **Giovanni della Robbia**, from 1521. The columns at the beginning of the central nave are decorated with two frescoes: one, dated to the 14th or 15th century, depicts *St. Anthony the Abbot*

and the other *St. Sebastian*, attributed to **Perugino**. The choir rises above the crypt where we can find the remains of the little town's Patron Saint. The **Salutati** Chapel is decorated with frescoes by **Cosimo Rosselli**, a painter who was a student of **Neri di Bicci**'s, mainly known for his altar retables. Here can be seen some of the most beautiful works by **Mino da Fiesole**, a bust depicting Bishop Salutati and an altar screen with the *Madonna adorante il Bambino, San Giovannino e i Santi Leonardo e Remigio*. The **Cappella del Sacramento** holds a **beautiful altar** and a **marble ciborium**, built according to **Paolo Ricci da Tito Brazzini**'s design. On a wall decorated with 20th century frescoes can also be found the story of **St. Romulus**' life, attributed to one of **Ghirlandaio**'s students.



In the apsidal conch, we can admire **Nicodemo Ferrucci**'s paintings, from the mid 1600s. On the high altar the very beautiful polyptych with the *Madonna in trono, il Bambino e i Santi di Bicci di Lorenzo* was donated by Bishop **Benozzo Federighi**. The **Cappella dei Canonici** displays a splendid altar screen in marble, a work by **Andrea Ferrucci**, from 1493, with the statues of *St. Romulus* and *St. Matthew*. **The sacristy**, built in the 18th century, keeps a *reliquary bust of St. Romulus*, from 1584. Made of silver, it is embellished by Leonardo Salutati's red mitre, in gold-laminated velvet. The origins of the crypt go back to the enlargement works from 1201-1256; fine stone and marble columns divide the building in three naves. The **baptismal font** in granite was made by **Francesco Tadda** (1569).



Palazzo Vescovile

Facing the Duomo, the **Palazzo Vescovile**, from the 11th century, was also commissioned by **Bishop Jacopo il Bavaro** and it was restructured and enlarged many times. The façade is dated to 1675. Inside, in the **bishop's chapel**, there are very beautiful frescoes by **Ghirlandaio**. In the chapel dedicated to Sant'Jacopo can be found the *Incoronazione di Maria in una Gloria di Santi*, by **Rossello di Jacopo Franchi**, who grew up in **Botticelli**'s workshop. Still inside, the **Oratorio di San Giacomo Maggiore** shows a painting by **Bicci di Lorenzo**. In the garden of the palace, one can still see a part of the Etruscan walls.

Seminario

A major feature in the lowest area of the square, the majestic **Palace of the Seminario**, dated from 1637, was also the object of many enlargements. The vault of the chapel of the Oratory, at the first floor, is decorated with frescoes and on the high altar one can admire a magnificent retable in terracotta from **Giovanni della Robbia**'s workshop, from 1520 and depicting the *Madonna con Bambino e Santi*.



Palazzo Pretorio

The highest part of the square is dominated by the **Palazzo Pretorio**, dated from the 14th century, rebuilt and enlarged in the 15th century. It shows a door with an architrave and a loggia with a façade covered with lots of *Podestà*'s coats of arms (1520-1808). Today it is Fiesole's **town hall**.



Santa Maria Primerana

Next to the town hall stands the church of **Santa Maria Primerana**, so called in memory of an old picture of the Madonna, in byzantine style. Historians already mentioned the presence of this church in 966, when Bishop Zanobi gave the image to the cathedral's canons. The façade got its present look in the 16th century: portal, niches and windows are in the Mannerist style; the decorations *a graffito* are attributed to **Ludovico Buti** (1592-1595). The porch was built later. In 1103, a papal bull from Pasquale II allowed Bishop Giovanni to take possession of the city. Thereafter, each newly elected *Podestà* had to swear loyalty inside this church, which had become the symbol of Fiesole's government and its respect of justice. In addition, it was in Santa Maria Primerana that every Easter Monday the canons used to elect the new *gonfaloniere* among members of the wealthy local families; he would start his duties during the first half of May.



The interior has a single nave closed by a transept. On the high altar, a small painting with the *Madonna col Bambino* by the **Maestro di Rovezzano** (13th century). The high altar was built in the 18th century following a drawing by **Bernardino Ciurini**. In the transept, we can see two votive bas-reliefs in marble by **Francesco da Sangallo**, one showing the artist's self-portrait (1542) and the other a portrait of **Francesco del Fede** (1575), as well as a work in glazed terracotta from **Andrea della Robbia's** workshop (*Crocifisso fra la Madonna, San Giovanni, la Maddalena e angeli*). The big wooden crucifix painted in the grotesque style from the 4th century is attributed to **Bonaccorso di Cino**. The faint remains of the wall frescoes are due to **Nicolò di Pietro Gerini**.



The walk up to San Francesco

You have to walk up to San Francesco to realize from the panorama that this is **one of the most beautiful places on earth**. The small steep road to San Francesco goes uphill between the bishopric building and the Seminario; then you find the **Cappelletta del Santo Sepolcro** (no visits allowed). Built in the 14th century, it was meant to imitate the structure of the Saint Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Inside are kept magnificent 14th century frescoes among which is a splendid *Deposizione*. The public garden, called the "garden of remembrance", was redeveloped following Giovanni Michelacci's project: it shows an area paying tribute to Fiesole's soldiers, killed in the war, and a monument dedicated to the carabinieri. Not far there is the church of **Santa Cecilia** where the headquarters of the Confraternity of the Misericordia used to be located. On the entrance door, Jacopo Carrucci, **Il Pontormo**, painted an effigy of the Saint the church is named after. The façade holds a small gravestone with a refined stone garland, dated from the end of the 15th century and in the interior, the walls are decorated with 16th century frescoes.

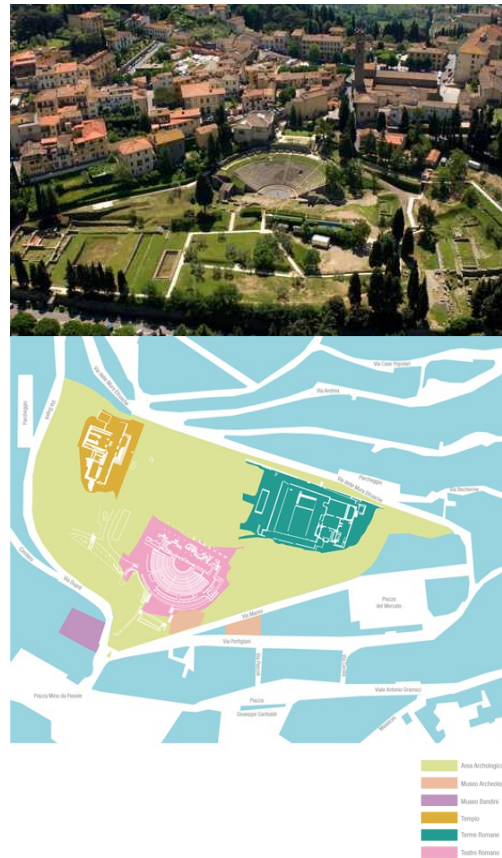


San Francesco

At the top of the hill, at the height of 346 metres, the convent and the church of **San Francesco** were erected in the place where there was first an Etruscan acropolis, then a Roman one and later in the Middle Ages a fortified castle destroyed by the Florentines in 1125. The origin of the complex goes back to 1225 when a small convent was built. A chapel attached to it in 1339 and named Santa Maria del Fiore became the property of a Florentine noble, Guido del Palagio, who put a lot of effort to get Franciscan monks to settle there. The **façade** goes back to the beginning of the 15th century and presents a suspended prothyron with an arch and a big round window circled by twelve stone rays. Unfortunately the numerous frescoes decorating the exterior are extremely damaged. The interior presents a nave characterized by large arches decorated with frescoes depicting various saints, dated from the early 1900s. Many beautiful works embellish the **four altars**, placed on the sides: *lo Sposalizio di Santa Caterina* by **Cenni di Francesco**, *l'Immacolata Concezione* by **Piero di Cosimo**, *l'Annunciazione* by **Raffaellino del Garbo** and the wonderful 15th century painting depicting *l'Adorazione dei Magi*, by an artist from **Cosimo Rosselli's** workshop. One gets access to the choir under an arch from the Renaissance era. On the walls, two 16th century **lunettes** representing **biblical scenes**, **emblems of the Franciscan order** and **San Bernardino's monogram** are admirable. The **sacristy** shows seven lunettes with, among others, paintings by **Baccio Maria Bacci** and a *Natività* in the **Della Robbia's** style. An inlaid altar from the 16th century enriches the **Cappella di Sant'Antonio**, where can also be found the precious **Manger in terracotta in the Della Robbia style** and a fresco attributed to a Florentine artist from the first half of the 16th century, illustrating the **meeting between St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominique**.

On the side of the sacristy is a **15th century cloister** with admirable works of art depicting St. Francis on its walls. Two other cloisters from the 14th and 15th century are adjacent to the church. St. Bernardino di Siena lived in the first one as the convent abbot from 1417 onwards. The convent also hosts a small **Missionary Museum** keeping **Etruscan, Roman, Egyptian and Chinese objects**. This complex encourages meditation in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity.

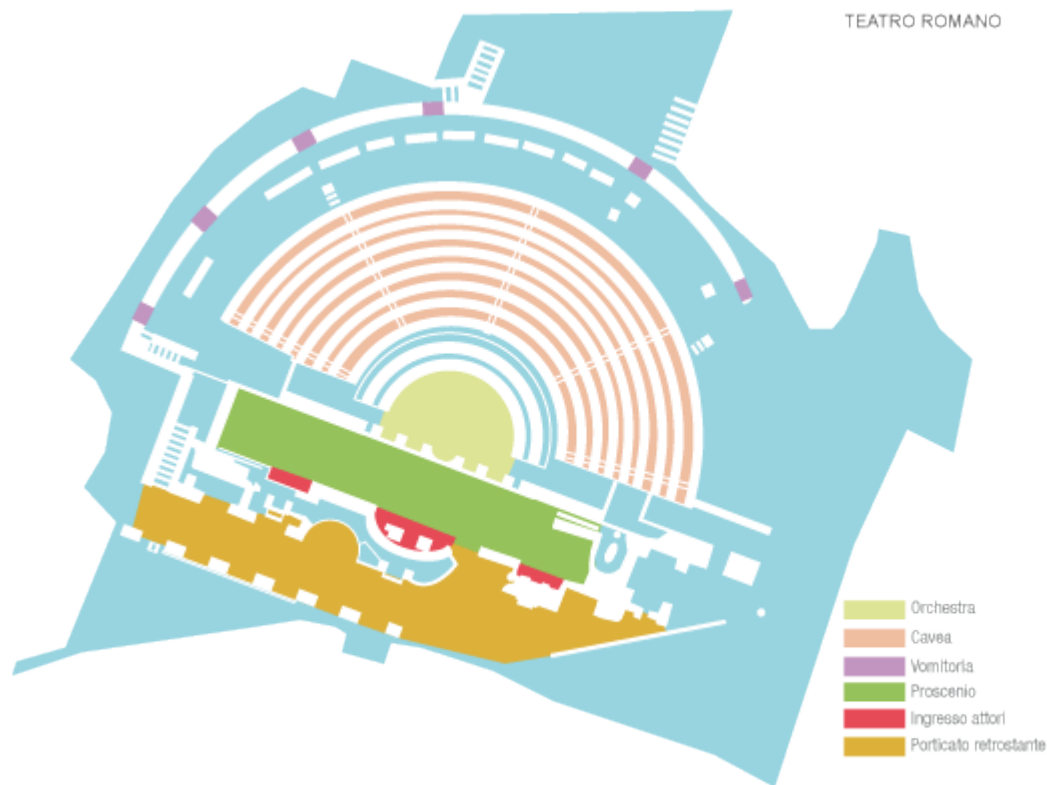
The archaeological zone of Fiesole



The archaeological zone of Fiesole is about three hectares big. With an irregular triangular shape, delimited in the north by Etruscan walls, it holds the **Roman theatre** (1st century A.D.), a sacred area with an **Etruscan temple** (4th century B.C.) on which was then built a **Roman temple**, in the 1st century A.D., following the conquest of the city, and finally the **Roman baths**, also dated from the first part of the Imperial period. In the **Lombard period**, between the 6th and the 7th century, the whole area was occupied by a vast cemetery.

The archaeological zone of Fiesole is the result of the progressive discovery of Etruscan and Roman monuments from the late 1800s until today. The first discovery of a monumental staircase goes back to 1792 but it is only long after that date that it was understood it was part of a Roman temple. Following the interest promoted by this discovery and inspired by local studies and research, antiquarians, scholars and history lovers, Italians as well as foreigners, started to come to Fiesole in search of the Ancient World. It was one of these people, the Prussian baron **Federico de Schellersheim** who started to uncover the Roman theatre in 1809. To avoid the zone from becoming a convenient place where to get building material, the uncovered remains of walls were reburied. In 1870, the archeological digs started again in the area of the baths, corresponding to the *frigidarium*. They were conducted by local history lovers stimulated by their studies and their search for antique objects to collect. The **city archeological Commission** was created in 1877 and the Museum opened in 1878. It got high attendance from the beginning as shown by the registration books, still kept today, with lots of visitors attracted by the display of Etruscan and Roman objects found in the digs. In the late 1900s, many pieces were discovered, like a tomb from the Lombard era, and some places paved with mosaics (maybe including a *domus*). In 1910 a staircase was discovered in the Etruscan/Roman area and in 1912 the digs increased in the area of the Lombard necropolis. After a long stop, the digs started again in 1954, identifying clearly both phases of life of the site, the Etruscan and the Roman. The temple is still being explored in some parts.

The theatre



The theatre, which could host 3000 people, was built between the end of the 1st century B.C. and the beginning of the 1st century A.D., using stone extracted from the rocky slopes where the tiers of the *cavea* were progressively set to lean against. With its semicircular form it presents the characteristics of a Greek theatre. It is through passage-ways made of four walls (*vomitoria*) that people had access to the gallery (*crypta*), covered by a vault held by arches, or to another type of seats (*ima cavea*) not visible any longer. From there it was possible to go down to the tiers (*cavea*); the right hand side part is partially original while the one on the left has been rebuilt; the inflow of the public was facilitated by narrow staircases which divided the *cavea* in four areas. A space separated the *cavea* from the *orchestra* with its seats made of richly decorated marble where would sit the most famous people of the city and their distinguished guests. On the left and on the right, one can see the vaulted buildings which allowed the audience from below to enter; other seats were set above these passage-ways. The lower part was dedicated to the performance; there was the stage (*proscenium*), delimited in the front by a wall with a central niche (*pulpitum*) and behind by the wall of the *fronscena*. Nothing remains from the structure of the *fronscena*, which was organized on two levels and the height of which is hard to evaluate, although equal to that of the *cavea*. Nevertheless, the decorations displayed in Room 3 of the museum come from this area. In the *fronscena* three doors opened to let the actors onto the stage with the *porta regia* in the centre. On the sides of the stage there are other vaulted passages and spaces probably used for storage. The fragments of marble decorations discovered there prove that the building was still in use for a long time, being restored several times, the renovations made in the 3rd century being regarded as especially important in an epigraphic as well as a decorative point of view.

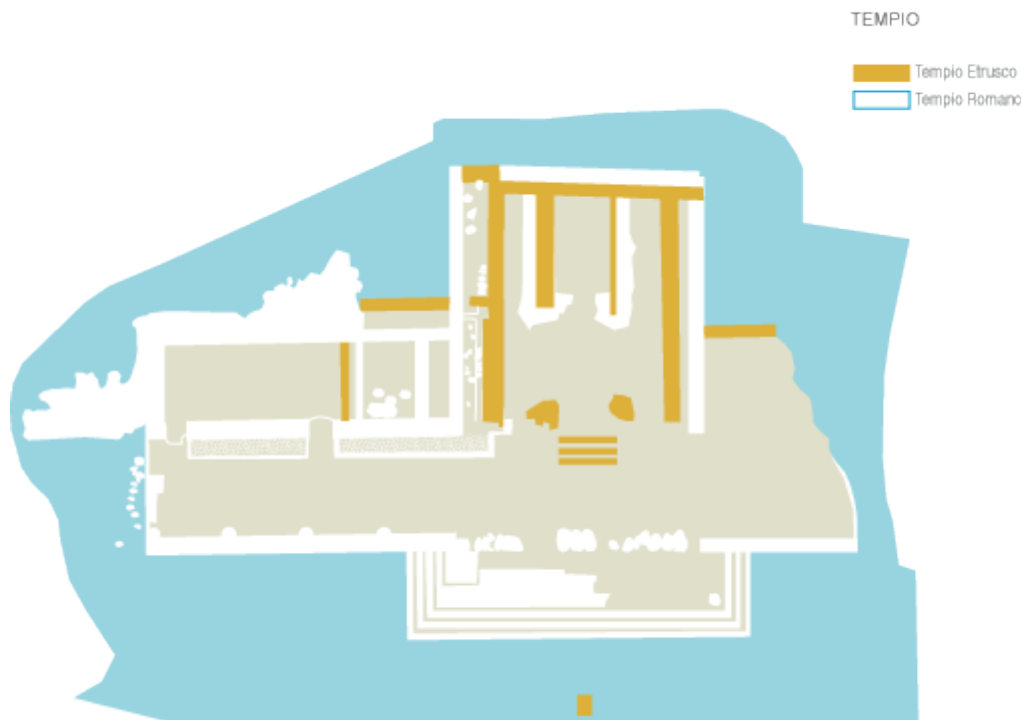
The Roman baths



The Roman baths are located in the East part of the archaeological site and they were built at the same time as the theatre: meeting spot for the local citizens it was a place dedicated to their body, mind and general well-being. The baths were constituted of two spaces: a covered one and one in the open air. **Arches** delimited the building on the north and south sides; the interior sides, most probably built with columns, overlooked the large space where were located **swimming-pools** of various sizes, a **cisterna** and an area for **gymnastics (criptoportico)**. The covered space was made

of three characteristic areas: the *frigidarium* (cool area), the *tepidarium* (area where the temperature was slightly warm), the *calidarium* (heated area). The *frigidarium* was characterized by the presence of a semicircular basin, most likely recovered with marble, separated by three arches from a front space where people could meet and chat: a niche opened out on this space where was found the marble base of a statue of Hercules as a child, displayed in Room 3 of the museum. The *tepidarium* was moderately heated: one oven only was able to introduce steam and heat into the premises. The *calidarium* was the warmest room of all: it was heated thanks to two ovens located right behind the east wall, which has been restored and can be seen today. The heat produced this way circulated underneath the floor raised on small terracotta pillars (*suspensurae*) and through openwork bricks set vertically along the walls, as if to form a tube (hence the Latin word *tubuli*). Today one can also recognize the *labrum*, a basin where to wash oneself after having heavily sweat, and the *laconicum* which was close to the walls making it the warmest basin. Like the theatre, this building was also renovated during the 3rd century A.D. but it started to decline in the 4th century A.D. when tombs were put inside the premises largely denuded. In the Lombard period, the zone was occupied by a cemetery one tomb of which is still visible today. Like for the theatre, the numerous despoilments caused many important parts of the building to be demolished; some of them were rebuilt in the course of the digs as of the late 1800s.

The Etrusco-Roman temple



The **temple** is located at the bottom of the slope in the west part of the area, on the opposite side to the baths. In the Roman period it was connected by a road still partly visible today. Before the Roman temple there was an Etruscan one, built in the 4th century B.C. on the ruins of an archaic sanctuary which has mostly disappeared. During the 1st century A.D., the Hellenistic-Etruscan building got destroyed by a fire maybe provoked during the Roman conquest of Fiesole led by **Lucio Porcio Catone** in 90 A.D. The Etruscan temple in Fiesole is one of the few where you can still see the vertical projection even if partially. It was smaller than the Roman temple with a simple plan: a *cella*, sacred room keeping the image of God, between two side rooms (*alae*), likely used for storage, behind a colonnade accessible from stairs which are still there today. The floor was made of clay and the walls of the *cella* were covered with a red coating. It is from the *cella* that come the votive objects, coins and small bronze statuettes which are displayed in Room 3 of the museum. In front of the temple there used to be an altar, the copy is still visible today and was placed at the Roman

level instead of at its original one. The building was covered by a two-sided roof in flat tiles; parts of its pediment with a relief decoration is still remaining: one element representing the torso of a warrior could suggest that the decoration topic was a battle scene outside Thebes walls. The characteristics of the votive objects and the presence, for example, of a small bronze statuette of Minerva could also make one think that the sanctuary had been dedicated to a salutary god. Among the few remains of the archaic Etruscan sanctuary can be found important fragments of the architectural decoration such as pieces of polychromatic antefixes with the head of a **Gorgone**. The Roman temple, with its more massive foundations, incorporated the Etruscan temple keeping the same arrangement and the same plan: a *cella*, two *alae*, a front part with a colonnade and a stairway, notably bigger than the previous one. The temple was enlarged on the south side with a rectangular space, similar to a *stoà* for pilgrims. In the Etruscan period as well as in the Roman one, an altar used to be in front of the temple. At the place where the altar was discovered signs of the road renovations which occurred during the last Imperial period (3rd century A.D.) and had recovered the Roman staircase from the first period. Although what happened to the building at the end of Antiquity is not clear, the whole area was the site of a vast cemetery during the Lombard period. It was discovered between 1910 and 1912, with tombs containing interesting tools made of iron, glass, bronze and ceramics, and today displayed in the museum (Rooms 7 and 8).

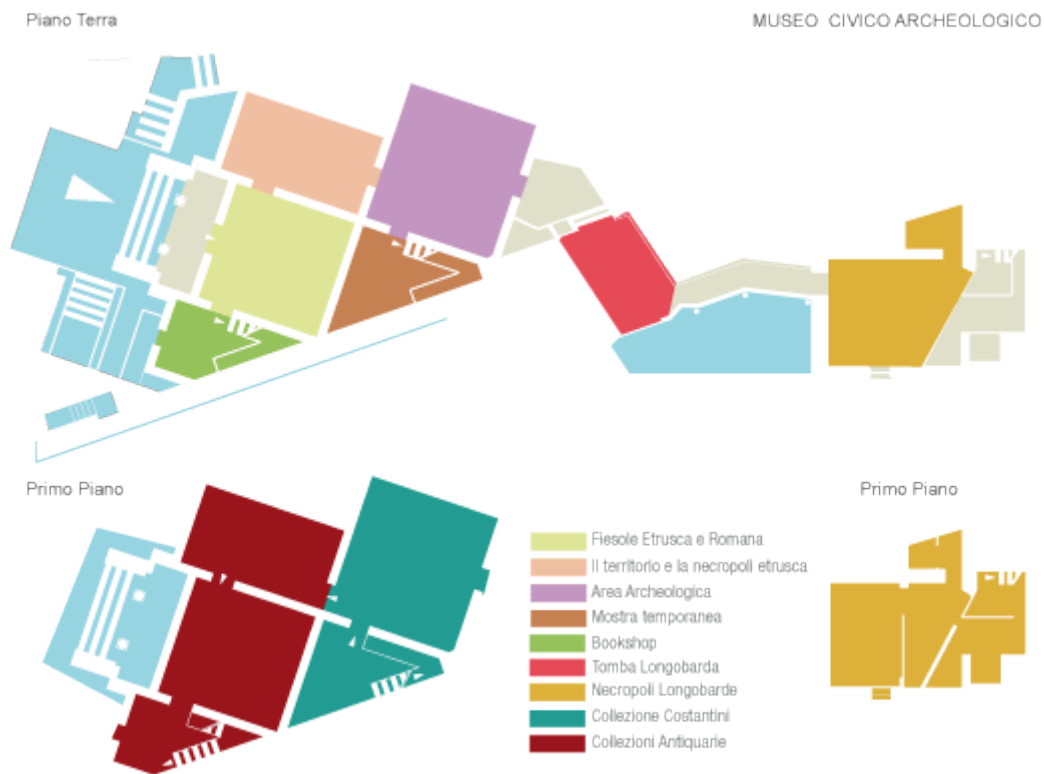
The Lombard necropolis

In this part of the Lombard cemetery (VIth-VIIth century A.D.) set in the area of the Etrusco-Roman temple, the digs were conducted between 1910 and 1912 by Edoardo Galli, the Inspector for the *Soprintendenza alle Antichità d'Etruria*. The tombs covered the entire space with a bigger density in the area corresponding to the old *cella*; its structure must have been still visible in parts at the time the cemetery was set there. In fact, the cemetery used to cover the whole of the present archaeological zone, since other tombs were discovered during the digs of the baths. One of them is still visible near the *cryptoporticus*. The tradition also mentions the discovery, at the beginning of the 19th century, of two especially rich tombs in the high part of the theatre. During the digs carried out before 1910, and mainly between 1927 and 1930, tombs were found in the area between the theatre and the temple. All tombs showed a simple structure, with walls made of small stones pressed dryly together or with plates, and a stone slab to cover them, following a building technique that was typical in the end of Antiquity and in the Middle Ages. It was also noticed that material coming from old Etruscan and Roman buildings got frequently used again. Thanks to the typology of some buckles (*fibbie*) found there, it has been possible to establish that the cemetery was used ever since the end of the 6th century and for all the 7th century A.D. At the moment, only one weapon has been found on the space of the necropolis: the point of a spear coming from tomb 4, dated from the second half of the 7th century.

The surrounding walls

Fiesole is set in a special location, still obvious today, and which was reinforced by a powerful ring of walls with a length of about 2.5 km. The best kept parts are in the north (presently via delle Mura Etrusche) and in the east (via Adriano Mari). Once fallen under Rome's domination, the city of Fiesole lost for a long time any strategic importance. Nevertheless the old Etruscan walls did not get demolished and were greatly used to be inserted according to new urban concepts which, from the first Imperial period, planned for more massive buildings than before. There is little information on the following periods; parts of walls were still standing at the end of Antiquity (see the text written by Procopio di Cesarea on the Greek-Gothic war during the second half of the 6th century A.D.), during the Lombard period as well as in the Middle Ages when the Florentines found them to be the major obstacle to conquer Fiesole. Because of such greatness, their building was attributed to mythologic Giants, and their partial destruction was decided as soon as the town was defeated. The first set of walls, about 250 metres long, is found immediately under the archaeological area, on the north side of town. Walls are also buried under the streets. Another part, 150 metres long, is found near Borgunto hill, as well as small segments in flower and vegetable gardens. These walls used to go back up towards the south-east, outside the tombs of the necropolis, on the via del Bargellino side, where parts of them are still visible. On this side of the hill which had other buildings, these are mainly retaining walls. Another important part of the walls is found near the convent of San Girolamo, very different from the others and probably built by other workmen; it is possible that these walls did not belong to the original enclosure. Other parts of the walls can be seen on the hill of San Francesco and there too, they could be related to complex urban terracing imposed by the steep terrain. Local sandstone and *pietra serena*, characteristic in the Fiesole hills, were used for the building of the walls.

The Archaeological Museum



The first section of the museum is dedicated to pieces discovered in the urban zone. Among the most meaningful elements: small Etruscan-archaic votive bronze statuettes and a large funeral stele in *pietra serena*. In the other rooms are found pieces coming from digs done in the archaeological area: marble friezes and sculptures from the theatre and the baths, Etruscan votive pieces from the temple of Minerva, clay antefixes and the torso of a lioness in bronze, which may have been part of a group of sculptures from the Etruscan era. The visit ends with the Lombard section showing many funerary objects and a tomb which was totally rebuilt. On the first floor is found the Antiquity section with Attic ceramics and some from the Magna Graecia, from the **Costantini collection**, bowls, coins and sculptures, mainly coming from Rome and displayed in this museum when it first opened.

Room 1 – Etruscan and Roman Fiesole

In this room are displayed pieces from Protohistory to the Roman period, coming from Fiesole and its surroundings: everyday life objects and mortuary equipment in ceramics and in bronze. One can also see there hellenistic black varnish pottery dated from the 3rd-2nd century B.C., found during the digs held when the Etruscan walls in the northern side were renovated. Presenting a specific interest for the history of Etruscan Fiesole are the small bronze statuettes of the offering bearers, dated from the 5th century B.C. and found during the digs conducted in a temple at the south of the town. Some of them wear the characteristic conical hat (*tutulus*), a long and tight dress (*chitone*) and typical oriental shoes with the end curved up in a long point (*calcei repandi*). In their right hand, several of them hold a pomegranate, known as goddess Persephone's holy fruit in the underworld; others have the palms of their hands turned downwards in a gesture of prayer to the infernal divinities. The other display cases contain Etruscan and Roman objects coming from various parts of the town. The marble statues of Isis and Osiris are from the Imperial Age, with a date estimated to the 3rd century, while the tombstone in *pietra serena*, found in the vicinity of Fiesole, goes back to the Etruscan period. With a date estimated between 480 and 460 B.C., its front face is divided in three panels representing at the top a banquet scene, in the centre a dance and in the bottom part two lions killing a deer.

Room 2 – Objects from Fiesole area and other places



Dated from the Etruscan period are the funerary objects found in the tombs of the necropolis which was located in via del Bargellino, immediately outside the walls in the east side. The pieces go back to the 4th century B.C. but the tombs were still used throughout the whole Roman period. The small votive bronze statuettes found in various parts of the territory are, however, the only vestiges remaining of some small sanctuaries situated in the surroundings of the ancient town. But definitely Roman are the four funerary inscriptions on *pietra serena*; three come from the area where is now Piazza Garibaldi and the fourth from the Badia Fiesolana area. The first three refer to the members of the same family. The marble bas-reliefs from the Imperial Era do not come from the Fiesole territory. On one of them is represented a “camillus”, a sacerdotal assistant, kneeling in the midst of a sacrificial ceremony. In the centre of the room stands a big cylindrical cist made of lead, decorated in the top half by six panels with embossed patterns. It is not certain what the use of this object dated from the 2nd or the 3rd century A.D. was: it could have been a container for water or solid matters. It would have been used again, afterwards, as a cinerary urn since at the time of discovery it contained burned bones and ashes. A big funerary epigraph in travertine with the oldest reference to be to Isis Capitolina’s cult has recently been placed in this room.

Room 3 – Archaeological area



In this room are gathered the main pieces coming from the digs of the buildings in the archaeological area: the theatre, the baths and the Etrusco-Roman temple. In some display cases are also shown a few objects from the Roman period found during digs conducted near the present via Marini and where were uncovered the imposing Etruscan terracing structures visible outside rooms 5 and 6. In the centre of the room, we can admire the extraordinary bronze torso of a she-wolf or a lioness. Where and when it was made remains uncertain and it is currently estimated it could date back to the Etrusco-Hellenistic period, 4th-3rd century B.C., when Fiesole reached its major splendour. On the left wall are displayed some of the marble slabs used to decorate the Roman theatre; both heads at the entrance of Room 5 also come from the sculpted decoration of the building: a man’s head in the style of the Emperor Claude’s period (1st century A.D.) and a woman’s head, from the same time, representing Messaline. In the next display cases, there are parts of the temple: vestiges of architectural decoration in painted terracotta, some votive objects estimated from a period situated between the 5th and the 3rd century B.C., containing statuettes of offering-bearers and some small bronze ones representing parts of the body. There are only a few things regarding the digs of the baths; among those, we can see the base of a marble statue depicting Hercules as a child which was found in the *frigidarium* and would date to the 1st-2nd century A.D.

Costantini Collection - Room 1



The **Professor Costantini**'s rich collection contains Attic, Etruscan and Greek ceramics currently displayed in two rooms of the museum. Among the objects to see in this room are three Attic *hydriae* (vessels for water) with black figures (6th century B.C.). As an example of objects decorated with red figures in the mid-5th century is found a big *stamnos* (vessel for liquids) depicting Poseidon's abduction of Amymone, one of the Danaids. Also displayed is a richly decorated cup. Among the Apulian ceramics are found two very large *hydriae* with red figures and a characteristic bright polychromy, dated probably to 320-310 B.C. Also Apulian is a large jug decorated with red figures depicting a complex scene having Alceste as the main character, standing in front of an altar with her children, and thanking Heracles to have taken her back from Hell. Other gods are easily identifiable, like Persephone holding a torch, Hermes with his high shoes and Aphrodite with her crown (second half of the 4th century B.C.). Coming from the same culture is the *loutrophoros* (big funerary urn) decorated with the mythological scene of Andromeda freed by Perseus.

Collection Costantini – Room 2



In this second room dedicated to the Costantini collection are displayed Corinthian and Attic ceramics, with black and red figures, Etruscan potteries with black figures, “*impasti and bucheri*”, Apulian objects in ceramics with red figures, Daunian ceramics and with red figures from Campania, Gnathia as well as pieces in black varnish ceramics. In this room there is one of the most precious objects of the collection, dated between 530 and 520 B.C.; it shows a battle scene with a hero getting ready to fight under Athena's vigilant and protective gaze. Dated from the beginning of the 5th century, one finds two *lekythoi*, typical funerary urns. One is in the shape of a cylinder and is covered with white *engobe*; it shows a female face between two Doric columns; the other one, with red figures, presents a sitting **Eros** holding his lyre in his hand. In the Attic collection of red figures, one can see a *pelike* (vessel for liquids), from 470 B.C., decorated with a complex scene showing the Minotaur's murder by the Athenian hero Theseus helped by Athena and Arachne. We can also see two big *kylikes* (dishes), heavily renovated, one representing a discobolus and the other one a javelin thrower. However it is to the Etruscan world that belongs the *hydria* with red figures and banquet scenes, an obvious imitation of the Greek production with black figures from the end of the 6th century B.C. The collection with ceramics coming from other zones of central and southern Italy is also rich with Daunian ceramics made in today's Puglia region. Others come from Campania, from workshops in Capua and Cuma; among the ceramics from Gnathia, one has to notice small jugs for perfumed oils and ointments.

The Bandini Museum



Canon **Angelo Maria Bandini**'s collection has enriched Fiesole with an exceptional heritage of artworks including **paintings from the 13th to the 15th century, sculptures in glazed terracotta from the Della Robbia's workshop and a few Byzantine works.** The creation of a museum to display these works, open in 1913, proved the importance of the collection made by this outstanding person, born in Fiesole in 1726, who after several trips to Europe and Italy, became the librarian of the **Biblioteca Marucelliana** and then of the **Biblioteca Laurenziana**, where he was in charge of the monumental catalogue regarding Greek, Latin and Italian manuscripts. He was a member of various academies and retired in Fiesole, in the small Sant'Ansano church where he died in 1803, leaving his collection to Fiesole bishop and chapter.

The golden background paintings - Rooms 1 and 2



The collection of paintings with a golden background displayed in both rooms is one of the first expressions of the nascent taste for painters called "Primitivi", inspired by the erudite culture in the second half of the 18th century. Here we can find works by the **Maestro di Gagliano** and other great painters from the second half of the 13th century, by the **Maestro della Santa Cecilia** with a *Madonna e Bambino in trono tra la Maddalena e San Francesco*, as well as a *Flagellazione e Cristo deriso* by **Taddeo Gaddi** and **Bernardo Daddi**, **Giotto's** disciples. The second half of the 14th century is represented by many painters from the workshop of **Andrea di Cione** called l'**Orcagna**. The *Madonna del Parto* by **Nardo di Cione** is one of the masterpieces present in this room. It is a painting with three iconographic themes: the theme of the *Madonna del Parto* holding a book with one hand and the other one resting on her pregnant belly, the theme of *Queen Celi* in a sun halo, standing on the moon and holding a crown of stars, according to the description of the Apocalypse, and finally the theme of the *Madonna of Misericordia*. Traditional iconography shows the Virgin protecting the faithful under the folds of her mantel while here the donor is kneeling to her right. And we find an inscription saying: "**AVE REGINA MISERICORDIA DI ME MADRE DI PIATA CHE SON MISERO SERVO VIRGHO VIRGINIS**". The glass depicting the *Pietà*, painted and engraved with gold, following a drawing provided by **one of Giotto's gifted helpers**, is very rare. In the second room there are more works in the Florentine Gothic painting style by artists from the second half of the 14th century like **Giovanni del Biondo** and **Lorenzo di Bicci**. The other paintings are by 15th century painters among which are: **Lorenzo Monaco**, **Giovanni dal Ponte**, **Bicci di Lorenzo** and **Neri di Bicci**. Also important are the works by some of Fra Angelico's disciples like **Andrea di Giusto Manzini** and **Domenico di Michelino**. **Jacopo del Sellaio** was **Filippo Lippi's** student and the museum displays his work depicting *San Girolamo, Santa Maria Maddalena and San Giovanni Battista nel deserto*, as well as his painting on the *Trionfi*, the only profane work in this collection, which is a faithful pictorial transposition of Petrarch's work. In the end we find the retable with the *Incoronazione della Vergine e Gerarchie Celesti* by **Maestro dei Cassoni Campana**, a French artist who worked in Florence in the first quarter of the 14th century, and two panels from a polyptych made by one of **Roger Van Der Weyden's** disciples.

Della Robbia - Room 3



Bandini was a collector with great sensibility and the **Della Robbia's terracotta works** displayed in this room prove it. Among the most important ones has to be mentioned the *Sant'Ansano* by **Andrea della Robbia**, one of Bandini's favourite works to which he assigned a special place in the museum he had set up in the small church of Sant'Ansano. It is to **Luca della Robbia il Giovane** that has to be attributed the tondo with a **San Giovannino** whose face was painted "a freddo" while the rest is varnished. A piece of great quality in this collection is the mirror frame with a garland, likely to have been made in **Giovanni della Robbia's** workshop around 1520. Also displayed are works by **Benedetto Buglioni** and his nephew **Santi**; the first one is the author of the lunette depicting the encounter of *Gesù e il Battista fanciulli*, the second made the delicate *Sant'Agnese*.

The new acquisitions – Room 4



This room contains artworks from the Bandini Collection which have been recently restored and others coming from various parts of the vast Fiesole diocese's territory. Among the latter ones, the big tondo by **Luca Signorelli** depicting the *Madonna col Bambino tra i Santi Girolamo e Benedetto*, estimated from 1500 and coming from Castel di Poggio near Fiesole. The retable by **Botticini** with the *Madonna col Bambino tra Santi*, dated 1480 according to the inscription in the bottom part, comes from Fiesole surroundings, whereas it is unknown where the *Madonna col Bambino* made by one of **Perin del Vaga's** disciples comes from. Only recently displayed after a careful restoration there are some marble consoles, the work of a Florentine sculptor from the first half of the 14th century, and reshaped by Bandini to hold the altar of Sant'Ansano oratory, as well as a work in bronze stained stucco attributed to **Giambologna**, the *Adorazione dei pastori*. After a careful restoration by the *Opificio delle Pietre Dure* following its discovery, a very beautiful *Madonna col Bambino*, attributed to **Filippo Brunelleschi** is also now part of the Bandini Museum collection.

San Domenico



There is no way one can leave without a visit to **San Domenico**, a small village located below Fiesole. It was named after the San Domenico church and the convent where Dominican friars have lived since the 15th century. Giovanni Dominici, the convents' general vicar in the early 1400s, asked the Florence bishop at the time to give him part of a vineyard in a place called Vignale, which was agreed in 1405 and it is in 1407 that the building of the church started. Thanks to the Florentine noble Barnaba degli Agli's bequest, the Dominican friars were able to complete the building of their home which was consecrated in October 1435. Other families gave their financial support to the building works but only the Agli coat of arms was put on the door. The vaulted arches, adjacent to the refectory, were built in 1486 and show characteristic small ionic columns, attributed to **Brunelleschi**. In 1491 **Girolamo Savonarola** set the first stone for the building of another wing to the church. In 1493, the architect **Giuliano da Sangallo** had two chapels built. Today they still keep some of the most precious works in the religious complex. Florence prior, **Paolo Dazzi** had a tomb-like monument in front of the chapels, with a manger behind an ironwrought gate. Two other chapels were added afterwards. Following patron **Cornelia Salviati's** wish (she was the Venetian merchant Giovanni Martini's widow) a magnificent painting of the *Vergine col Bambino e due Santi* by **Pietro Perugino** was placed in the last one but it was transferred to the **Uffizi Museum** in 1786. In 1501, the original structure of the apse was destroyed to create space for the present choir of the high altar. Other works started in 1507 and two other chapels were built. One of them keeps a beautiful *Annunziata*, a masterpiece by **Fra Angelico**. Other works by this painter are kept in the chapter room in **San Domenico's** convent: a *Crucifix* on a fresco from 1430 and a wall painting depicting the *Madonna col Bambino*.

The Badia Fiesolana

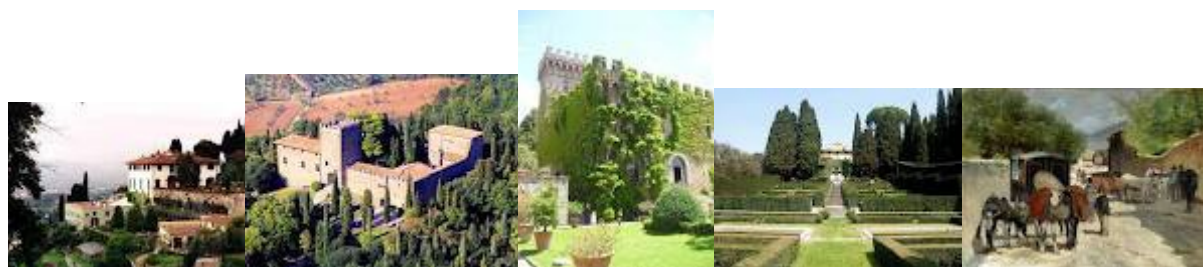


Going down towards San Domenico near the Mugnone river, we find the very ancient religious building of the **Badia Fiesolana**, built in **white and green marble in the same Romanesque style** as the Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence. This was Fiesole cathedral until 1023 and one of Cosimo the Elder's favourite churches. He had it enlarged and embellished between 1456 and 1464. Also recalling the church of San Miniato al Monte in Florence the white and green marble coating should have covered the entire façade but the Medicean patron's death caused the suspension of the works and those regarding the façade were never resumed. This façade is composed by two parts. The bottom part has three blind arches set on columns topped by capitals with stylized flowers. In the centre there is a simple portal with an architrave decorated with three rose-windows and topped by a decorated lunette. Under the lateral arches, in addition to the lunettes, partition panels in white marble are topped by decorated cornices with precious inlaid roses in polychromatic marble. Above, an unbroken stone console marks the partition with the top level of the façade. This level presents vertical rectangular panels in white marble with, in their centre, three little windows topped by a tympan. A series of marble stripes with geometrical patterns closes the top part of the façade.



The interior, lovely and in harmony, has a single nave and eight chapels, all decorated with 17th century frescoes. The paintings of *San Girolamo in preghiera* and *il Martirio di San Bartolomeo*, probably both from artists belonging to Caravaggio school, are remarkable. One of the altars in the stone transept presents a *Flagellation* from the 17th century and a *Crucifixion* by **Bernardino Campi** from the 16th century. The high altar, in polychromatic marble, was built by Cennini and the high chapel where it is located has an epigraph with the Medici coat of arms and the date of 1466 recalling the end of the works. Two doors in *pietra serena* made by Francesco di **Simone Ferrucci** dated from the mid 1400s allow access to a small chapel decorated with frescoes on the *Annunciazione* by artists from **Raffaellino del Garbo's workshop** and to a vestibule with a marble washbasin from 1461. In the chapel dedicated to the writer Ugo Ometti, whose remains are preserved there, we can admire a sculpture representing the *Madonna col Bambino* from **Jacopo della Quercia school** as well as a *Deposizione* by **Raffaello Botticini** placed on the altar. The Badia Fiesolana had also a convent where Cosimo the Elder used to stay every now and then. In 1753 it became the headquarters of the *Accademia dei Georgofili*. In 1778, the religious order was suppressed, the complex got dismantled and some artworks were dispersed. In 1876, the Scolopi friars (Christian Schools Friars) transformed the convent into a school; when they got transferred in 1972, the building became the **European University Institute**.

Castles, villas, tabernacles and panoramas



Fiesole's surroundings are especially attractive. One can find there old grottoes in *pietra serena*, pines and cypresses mainly planted by English tourists who have become the owners of properties and villas since the late 1800s; one also finds there the lovely roads treasured by the **Macchiaioli painters**, tabernacles, castles and farms as well as magnificent panoramas on Florence. **Castel di Poggio** is one of the most characteristic feudal fortified residences in the territory; it was partially demolished with the dungeon notably lowered down by the Florentine Republic in 1348. It was then restored following criteria inspired by Romanticism at the end of the 19th century. The castle of **Vinciagliata** also belonged to famous families such as the Visdomini, the Usimardi and the Alessandri. Fallen in ruins it was acquired, restored and partly rebuilt in a neo-Gothic style by **Giovanni Temple Leader** in the mid 1800s. Among the villas has to be mentioned the villa "**Riposo dei Vescovi**", so called because the bishops used to stop by there when they travelled between Florence and Fiesole. It was restructured by the Dutch painter **Nieuwenkamp**. The **Villa Medici**, often reshaped, was built by **Cosimo the Elder** on the base of **Michelozzo's** plans and **Lorenzo il Magnificent** made it the headquarters of the **Platonic Academy**, receiving artists and intellectuals.



There are also many foreign universities and institutions in Fiesole territory, such as **Bernard Berenson's foundation** at villa "**I Tatti**", **Georgetown University** at villa "**Le Balze**", **Stanford University** at villa "**Il Salvatino**". There are also some Italian institutions like the **Fondazione Primo Conti** for the *avanguardie storiche del Novecento* at villa "**Le Coste**", the **Foundation Giovanni Michelucci** and **Fiesole School of Music** at villa "**La Torraccia**".