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Discover the Maremma

In light of the phenomenal popularity of Tuscany's Chianti area, the Maremma sometimes seems relegated to the role of the timid sibling—hesitant to trumpet its virtues too loudly, but endowed with considerable virtues nonetheless. Extending, by the broadest definition, from Pisa southward along the coast all the way to the border with the Lazio region, the Maremma is a realm of remarkably diverse landscapes and a varied cultural life that has evolved over the centuries to match.



Today, fields of oats, wheat, corn and sunflowers—together with the Mediterranean mainstays of vineyards and olive groves—reach across Maremman plains once covered by vast marshes. Woods of oak, pine and other species also claim stretches of the land, and clusters of hills rise

here and there, giving a great variety to the terrain.

As might be expected of such a length of coastline, the Maremma also offers its share of beautiful beaches—many retaining their natural splendor, yet “undiscovered” by the great numbers of visitors that head each year to the shores of Italy's Versilian Riviera.

A number of islands off the coast offer their own special allure.

Since the 1970s the Italian government has demonstrated a real interest in preserving the

unique, pristine landscapes of the Maremma by creating a number of regional and national parks and nature preserves. Among the Maremma's other attractions are the abundance of Etruscan ruins scattered throughout the countryside and scores of medieval hill towns rivaling those of Chianti.

The Doorways staff is happy to recommend any of a number of vacation residences in the Maremma. The photo above is taken from Podere Cavone.

Parco Naturale della Maremma

Of the Maremma's parks and nature preserves, the **Parco Naturale della Maremma** is one of the most beautiful, encompassing a 15-kilometer stretch along the Tyrrhenian coastline that is perhaps the best preserved coastal area in Italy. In exploring the park visitors can choose from different itineraries; marked footpaths lead through woods of pine, oak, ilex and elm and a ubiquitous Mediterranean scrub, or *macchia*, of myrtle and juniper bushes. The park is home to wild white long-horned cattle, deer, foxes, goats, wild cats, horses, wild boar and migratory birds, as well as numerous aquatic species. Visitors will also enjoy exploring the **Monti dell'Uccellina**, a small mountain range within the park—from the natural grottoes at Cala di Forno at the mountains' base to spectacular cliff top views at higher altitudes. Mountain paths lead past romantic ruins—the towers of once-proud castles and an 11th century Benedictine abbey.

Why the Maremma?

- ◇ Beautiful landscapes
- ◇ Pristine beaches
- ◇ Inviting islands
- ◇ Wildlife preserves
- ◇ Mountain walks
- ◇ Medieval hill towns
- ◇ Rodeos and festivals
- ◇ Etruscan ruins
- ◇ Spa towns

Other Parks and Nature Preserves

Those with a passion for bird watching will enjoy the **Lagoon of Orbetello**. About two hundred species are protected in the Lagoon's sanctuary by the World Wide Fund for Nature (and scores more at a second sanctuary at nearby Burano Lake). While in the area, a drive along the *strada panoramica* of the peninsular **Monte Argentario** is an ideal way to enjoy its wonderful landscapes—populated by wild orchids and dwarf palm trees as well as the more customary citrus trees, olive groves and vineyards.

Among the cluster of protected areas known as the **Parchi della Val di Cornia**, Poggio Neri stands out as being particularly well suited to hiking, cycling and horseback riding.

Farther inland, along the Maremma's easternmost boundary, **Monte Amiata** offers more hiking terrain in its wildlife preserve, the **Parco Faunistico del Monte Amiata**, not to mention stunning views in every direction.



NEAR PODERE CAVONE

Beaches of the Maremma



The Maremman coastline is absolutely riddled with inviting beaches, which are generally better preserved and less crowded than those of the Versilian Riviera—the popular seaside resort area on Tuscany's northwest coast. The sandy beach at **Albarese**, cushioned by a thick pine forest and nestled at the foot of the Monti Uccellini, has been called the most beautiful in Italy. Other fine beaches are found near the ancient Etruscan town of **Populonia**, in the bays of **Cala Martina** and **Cala Violina** south of Follonica, at the

resort towns of **Punta Ala** and **Castiglione della Pescaia**, and on the promontory of **Monte Argentario**. First-rate beaches are also found on a number of the fascinating islands off the Maremman coast, which boast not only beaches but a variety of other attractions. (Since 1996, many of these islands are protected—at least in part—by the **Parco Nazionale dell'Arcipelago Toscano**). Castiglione della Pescaia is also one of our favorite seaside towns. It's a high fortress hill town with a sailboat harbor and lovely restaurants.

Inviting Islands

Elba, just a few kilometers from the mainland port of Piombino, is famous as the site of Napoleon's exile in 1814 after his defeat at Leipzig. Visitors can tour the two villas where he resided. A highlight of Elba is the hike to the summit of Monte Capanne for splendid views. On the mountain one also finds two delightful villages well worth a visit—Poggio and Marciana Alta. The much smaller isle of

Capraia is favored by many for its wildly beautiful volcanic terrain, crisscrossed with footpaths, and the skin diving opportunities in its rocky coves. Farther down the coast, south and west of Monte Argentario, the islands of **Giglio** and **Giannutri** offer sandy beaches and some lovely natural landscapes protected as part of the Parco Naturale.



Highlights of the Area

Etruscan History

It is no small part of the Maremma's appeal that the region is fairly steeped in its Etruscan heritage. Vast and mysterious necropolises remind us of both the longevity and the mortality of humankind. The hill top town of **Vetulonia** in the Maremman province of **Grosseto** is founded on the site of one of the most vital Etruscan cities, dating from the late 9th century B.C. Etruscan ingenuity is evident in the many objects of terracotta, bronze, silver and gold recovered from its tombs and currently housed in museums in Grosseto and Florence. Nearby **Roselle** is the site of another important excavation. Here visitors can walk along the ruins of the 5 meter-high wall that completely surrounded this



Etruscan town in the 6th century B.C.

Passing through Grosseto on its way across the Maremma and down into the region of Lazio is the modern version of the **Via Aurelia**—the Roman road built around 241 B.C. to link Rome to the Etruscan towns along the coast. North of Grosseto, the Via Aurelia takes us into the vicinity of **Populonia**, once an important Etruscan port and today a charming medieval town with a huge necropolis on its perimeter. Following the road south from Grosseto we encounter the Etruscan towns of **Cosa**, **Saturnia**, **Sovana** and others before crossing the border into Lazio—home to the major sites at **Tarquinia** and **Cerveteri**.



CAMININO

Massa Maritima and Other Highlights

Of the many appealing towns and villages scattered across the Maremma, **Massa Marittima** is one of the most enchanting—boasting an outstanding Duomo and perfect triangular medieval piazza, as well as an intriguing history as a mining town. From the triangular Piazza Garibaldi, visitors enjoy breathtaking views in every direction. Rising all around the town are the picturesque “metalliferous hills,” which yield not only scenic riches but a wealth of iron, copper and lead ores that has been mined by locals since Etruscan times.

Not least of all, Massa Marittima is known for the Festival of the Girifalco—a semi-annual cross bow contest between residents of the town's various districts, who don traditional costumes for the celebration.

The Maremma's “inland” attractions are hardly limited to the charms of Massa Marittima. Located in the vicinity of the

Parco Naturale della Maremma, **Magliano in Toscana** distinguishes itself by its splendid 14th and 15th century fortifications, crowned by seven semi-circular towers, and by the beautiful ruins of the 11th century church of San Bruzio a few miles outside of the town walls.

Further east, towards the border with Umbria, **Saturnia** has enjoyed fame since Roman times as a spa town, and the Etruscan village of **Pitigliano** impresses with its dramatic position on a rocky outcrop, overlooking a gorge on three sides. Like Massa Marittima, Pitigliano is associated with an annual local festival—celebrating the joys of the Grape each September.

In fact, quite a variety of festivals take place in Maremman localities throughout the year—from the summer marine festivities held in many coastal towns to the Rodeo at Albarese.



***We hope you will enjoy
discovering the Maremma!***

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