



A MOUNTAIN GRACED WITH A GENTLE PROFILE, CLASSICALLY SET IN TUSCANY

L'AMIATA AN ISLAND ON THE MAINLAND

A majestic dome of volcanic origin (1738 m) rises dominantly in Southern Tuscany, showing its gentle but strong profile from even far away, in the vast area of rolling hills. Centre of real life and culture, balanced between archaic times, industrial development and tourist vocation, for thousands of years the Amiata has been a land with its own geological, historical and natural characteristics.

THE MAIN MOUNTAIN

In ancient times, for thousands of years, an active volcano; now an isolated mountain of special characteristics, simple and natural. Mount Amiata can be seen from the Appennines and the motorway, as well as from the hills of Siena and the Tuscan Archipelago.

An unmistakable silhouette in the panorama of the Maremma, with its peak surmounted by a huge iron Cross and

often covered with snow, with forests of firs, chestnut and beech trees gently sloping down to the fields and the hard landscape of the Maremma on one side and the rolling Senese hills on the other. Its protected areas host particular species of fauna, such as the wolf, the hawk and the harrier eagle, and rare varieties of flora (the silver fir!) spread throughout six natural reserves; there are some rivers and 3500 torrents, with clear crystal water, that provide the water supply to Southern Tuscany. In winter Mount Amiata offers perfectly groomed slopes and well-equipped accommodation facilities able to satisfy even the most demanding skiers. Its flavoured and genuine typical produce are wine, oil, chestnuts, mushrooms, bilberries, strawberries and mountain honey. Mount Amiata is all this and even more.

The abundant spring waters gushing along the external borders of the Amiata have influenced the historical settlements that, in the 10th century, started a process of concentration and fortification of the villages along its perimeter, caused by the conflicts and struggles between the Papal State and the Empire.

The rule of the area by the main protagonists of the medieval local history - the powerful Monastery of the Badia di San Salvatore, the Aldobrandeschi, Count of Santa Flora, and the Commune of Siena that in the 13th century gradually extended its dominion over the whole area – is evidenced in the churches, the monasteries and the fortresses that still form the main features of the territory.

In the 16th century, the Amiata, the most populated area among the inhospitable surrounding ones, assumed the role of demographic support of the coastal regions infected by the malaria that caused lots of victims. But from 1700 onward, the population of the Amiata, subject to the continuous deterioration of the economical conditions, started to spoil the vast forests of chestnut and beech trees that had become the only and fundamental resource of the area, up to the mining exploitation of 1800.

Thanks to the deposits of sulphur and mercury, even known to the Romans and Etruscans, new mines were opened from mid -1800: the most important mine, settled at Abbadia San Salvatore, was the second world-wide for the production of mercury; it was closed in 1976.

After the end of the mining activities, the district of the Amiata is now developing new resources in the tourist field, also favoured by the presence of hydro-thermal springs exploited at the spas of Bagni Vignoni and San Filippo. The geothermal energy produced is also used for heating dwellings and greenhouses.

SPORT A 360°

The skiing district

The winter resort of Mount Amiata, a natural “gym” set in the vastest of European beech forests, offers various and modern facilities: 15 ski-lifts and cable car facilities leaving from four different places (Prato della Contesa, Marsliana, Prato delle Macinaie and Rifugio Cantore), 25 kilometres of down-hill ski slopes and 12 kilometres of cross-country ski slopes.

Ski trainers are available for children and beginners.

You can also enjoy pleasant excursions with the “ciaspole” (snowshoes), along the paths that go through the forests both in daytime or even at night.

Guided excursions can be booked and planned, according to the needs of the participating groups.

Information and booking:

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Excursions on foot

For passionate excursionists the area offers a great variety of paths even going through the protected areas, very interesting from an environmental point of view.

We would recommend the trail round the Amiata that boasts a natural landscape of breathtaking beauty: it consists of a 64.3 km-long route, sketching a ring around the ancient volcano, that starts and ends at Abbadia San Salvatore, also connected to the surrounding stone hamlets through well marked slip paths.

It is recommended that you go walking along the pleasant “sentiero della castagna” (chestnut path) that reaches a few farmhouses of remarkable interest.

Many of these routes can also be covered by mountain-bike, even if the five tracks climbing up Mount Amiata are recommended for expert cyclists only.

Trekking

Along the marked paths, those who love hiking can reach the most interesting localities of the district of Siena or Maremma. Since 1996 a route Firenze-Siena-Roma has been established and, in 25 stages, through the forests of the Amiata, it connects the main Tuscan city with the capital.

The Parco Faunistico del Monte Amiata, lying in a remarkable naturalistic landscape, is the ideal environment for coming to know various species of fauna and flora, also thanks to the most modern exposing methodologies.

The park is even the setting for interesting educational activities.

In the forested area below the perimeter of the park, there lies the “Sentiero Natura”, an interesting track of average difficulty. Specialized operators are also available for organizing horse-riding treks.

Escursioni a piedi

Per chi ama le escursioni a piedi, è veramente molto ricca la rete attrezzata dei sentieri che ricamano la zona, addentrandosi spesso nelle aree protette di importante interesse ambientalistico.

Segnaliamo il periplo dell’Amiata, che si snoda in un contesto naturale e paesaggistico spesso di grandiosa bellezza: si tratta di un percorso di 64.3 km. con partenza e rientro ad Abbazia San Salvatore, che disegna un anello attorno all’antico vulcano, collegandosi mediante bretelle ben segnalate con i circostanti borghi di pietra.

E’ anche particolarmente piacevole percorrere il sentiero della castagna, che tocca case coloniche di notevole interesse.

Molti di questi percorsi sono anche adatti per cicloturismo su mountain-bike, mentre le cinque strade che salgono verso il monte Amiata sono consigliate solo a ciclisti provetti.

Trekking

Lungo gli itinerari segnalati gli appassionati di trekking possono spingersi verso le località più interessanti del Senese o della Maremma.

Dal 1996 è predisposto un sentiero Firenze-Siena-Roma che, attraversando le foreste dell’Amiata, in 25 tappe collega il capoluogo toscano con la capitale.

Il Parco Faunistico del Monte Amiata, collocato in un’area di raro pregio naturalistico e paesaggistico, costituisce l’ambiente ideale per conoscere specie animali e vegetali attraverso metodologie espositive moderne. E’ utilizzato anche per l’organizzazione di interessanti attività didattiche.

Nell’area boscata sottostante il perimetro del Parco si snoda il Sentiero Natura, un interessante percorso organizzato adatto ad un trekking mediamente impegnativo. Operatori specializzati organizzano anche percorsi di Trekking a cavallo.

PLACES TO BE VISITED

In a magical scenery featuring medieval castles, fortresses and stone hamlets that deserve to be visited, you can find the villages that are considered the jewels of the Amiata, both in the Province of Siena (Piancastagnaio, Castiglione d’Orcia, Abbazia San Salvatore and Radicofani that boasts a fortress of Lombard origin dating back to 973) and in the Province of Grosseto (Santa Fiora, Arcidosso, Castel del Piano).

PIANCASTAGNAIO

With its Franciscan Convent of San Bartolomeo, founded in 1278, the characteristic village of Piancastagnaio (772 m) is a resort set among beautiful woods and dominating the Valle del Paglia. The church that features the typical Franciscan structure of late 1200, has a single nave, a chapel with a cross-vault and a saddle roof with wooden trusses.

Gothic in style is also the near Church of S. Maria Assunta, built in the 12th century (inside you can admire a few Baroque altars and a christening font, made of volcanic rock, of Senese manufacture).

ABBADIA SAN SALVATORE

Amongst dense chestnut forests, on the eastern side of Mount Amiata, Abbazia San Salvatore (829 m) is a resort established around the abbey founded in high Middle Ages, an example of the process of castles setting in the area between the 10th and 13th centuries. Of the ancient “Castrum de Abbatia”, has been preserved the medieval hamlet of remarkable urban and environmental interest, isolated and mostly intact.

SANTA FIORA

Rising on the edge of a precipice and rich in tourist attractions, Santa Fiora (687 m) is amongst the most untouched resorts of the area. The ancient hamlet boasts medieval dwellings settled at the foot of the Aldobrandeschi Castle, that became the seat of their dominion (11th-15th centuries) extended over almost the whole current Province of Grosseto. Via Carolina leads to the ancient Church of S. Fiora and S. Lucilla, whose façade is embellished with a Romanesque rose window and a late-1500 portal. The interior has a nave and two side aisles, the central ceiling with trusses and is decorated with works to be ascribed to Andrea della Robbia.

CASTEL DEL PIANO

Castel del Piano (637 m), like the other villages of the Amiata, reveals its fortified medieval origins. The tourist facilities benefit of a modern centre with tree-lined streets, placed side by side with the ancient urban centre, itself divided into an area mostly dating back to 1500, beside the main road, and the medieval hamlet standing above.

The clock tower is at the entrance of the most ancient hamlet, where you can admire late-Renaissance palaces, the medieval structure of the buildings and the Church of S. Leonardo founded in 1400.

ARCIDOSO

Arcidosso (679 m) lies in a semi-circle around the Aldobrandeschi Castle. A beautiful clock gate, a Gothic structure with three arches surmounted by a small campanile, is at the entrance to the ancient hamlet that boasts a network of winding and sloping lanes flanked with dark and grouped buildings. It is worthwhile visiting the Church of S. Leonardo, built in the 12th century and altered in the 16th and 17th centuries. Overlooking the village there is the Rocca Aldobrandesca, a complex of medieval structures partly ruined, among which you can see a tower with battlements, now the venue for cultural events.

LE MACINAIE: A HOTEL ON MOUNT AMIATA

The Hotel has 17 lovely rooms and welcomes its guests with a warm atmosphere. It is set in an enchanted clearing surrounded by woods, up to the extinct volcano Amiata loved by the Etruscans, overlooking the Val d'Orcia, the land around Siena, the Maremma and the green Umbria of Orvieto, but only one hour's drive from the sea. A refuge for celebrating important events with your family, your children or friends, for a romantic adventure, for business meetings or to stay by yourself: a hotel on your scale. The Amiata is an extraordinarily rich land.

You can stay there for a month and find that every day there is something new and interesting to be discovered. Within an area extending about 25 km from the hotel, you can experience various opportunities for entertainment. The Hotel is a privileged starting point for interesting tours in the area.

ALBERGO LE MACINAIE

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Cousine

IFLAVOURS OF YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Over the centuries, the Amiata has developed its economy on a human and natural scale, based on the resources offered by the territory, from the pastures along the hills and the valleys, to the products of the mountain forests. Today's tastes and flavours, a real delight for our palettes, are still the same as those of the past: oil, wine, mushrooms, truffles, meat and ham of the best quality. The star of oil production is the "Olivastra Saggianese", that produces a medium-bodied oil recognisable by its intense fruity aroma.

Mushrooms are also amongst the main ingredients of the local cuisine, whose various species characterize the tasty "zuppa Amiatina".

Besides the game and wild boar meat, of superb quality is the "cinta senese", a local breed of pigs from which they prepare excellent sausages, salami and hams. The food is accompanied by the DOC wines of the Amiata and surroundings: Montecucco, Orcia, Nobile, Brunello and Morellino.

Gettin to Amiata

By car: From Siena SS 2 Cassia towards Roma, exit Abbadia San Salvatore.
From Grosseto SS 223 towards Siena, exit Paganico

By plane: Firenze Airport

By train: Siena station - Bus connection.

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