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DISCOVER ENCHANTING LUNIGIANA, A LAND OF IMPERVIOUS MOUNTAINS, CRAGGY CASTLES AND GHOSTLY ATMOSPHERES

There's still some dispute over the origin of the word “Lunigiana”: some people say that it takes its name from Luni - a Roman town which became the main urban center of the northern coast of Tuscany - other people believe that it derives from the crescent-shaped outline of the Magra Valley (which obviously resembles a moon), others suggest that the region was inhabited by "those who

worshipped the moon". As if to combine history and myth, the current symbol of Lunigiana is a crescent moon held in the claw of a bear.

The **Lunigiana** is definitely distinct from the typical landscape of Tuscany, it lies north of the **Versilian Plane**, which basically was a swamp until the 18th century and in fact it basically separates **Liguria** and **Emilia Romagna** from the rest of **Tuscany**. Known for its **wilderness**, **beautiful valleys**, **impervious mountains**, **craggy castles**, **ancient legends** and **ghostly atmospheres**, should you look for a non-conventional Tuscany tour, we honestly think that it could be the perfect destination for you.

The first stop on your itinerary could be **Pontremoli**, a small town in the province of **Massa-Carrara**, which is believed to have been first settled around 1000 BC. Once here you can visit a large number of **churches**, the **bridge** across the river, several **historic buildings** and the magnificent **Castello del Piagnaro**, one of the largest castles of the entire Lunigiana. The **Museum of the Stele Statues** has been arranged inside this fortress and contains many stone structures found in the surrounding area, reflecting the histo-cultural heritage of the zone. About 10 kilometers away also stands the **Pieve di Santo Stefano**, one of the most beautiful Romanesque churches in Tuscany, in the midst of a cemetery and with the headstones crowding the walls (creepy!).

Another small town which deserves a visit is surely **Villafranca in Lunigiana**, built at the confluence between two streams and well known for its **ethnographic museum** arranged in a mill; not far from here (about 30 km) you can visit **Fivizzano**, a walled town known as **“The Florence of Lunigiana”** because of its historical, cultural, economic and political links with Florence. Look for the botanical garden named **Orto Botanico dei Frignoli**, the **city walls** of the 16th century, the **baroque fountain** in the main square and the neighbouring medieval **Castello della Verrucola**.

Two more places to include in your itinerary: 1) **Equi Terme** - a small village famous for its **prehistoric caves** and for being also a **spa town**. 2) **Fosdinovo** - the seat of one of the branches of the **Malaspina Family** - with its breathtaking **haunted castle**.

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