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# ***PISA, THE CITY OF THE LEANING TOWER***

*The origins of Pisa remained a mystery until some archaeological remains from the 5th century BC proved the existence of a city at sea, trading with Greece and Gaul. Moreover, in 1991, the presence of a necropolis unearthed during excavations in the Arena Garibaldi confirmed the city was an Etruscan settlement.*

In 180 BC, **Pisa** became a **Roman colony** known as *Portus Pisanus* (remember that it was originally a seaside town, the shore moved west due to the alluviums of the **Arno** and **Serchio** rivers); about one century later, it was converted into a *municipium* and **Emperor Augustus** changed the name to *Julia Obsequens*.

Pisa survived the fall of the **Roman Empire** and became the main trading center of the upper Tyrrhenian Sea; in the 11th century, it gained fame as one of the four main Italian **Maritime Republics**

and underwent a period of expansion that lasted until 1284, when its fleet was dramatically defeated by the Genoese squadron at the **Battle of Meloria**. At the beginning of the 15th century, the city was occupied by the **Florentines** and after almost a century of sieges and battles (in the meantime, Livorno had become the major port of Tuscany) it definitively fell under the rule of [Florence](#) and followed the destiny of the **Grand Duchy of Tuscany**.

After suffering enormous damage during **World War II**, Pisa was gradually and patiently rebuilt and nowadays it is a quiet provincial university town, famous all over the world for its most visited and photographed landmark: the **Leaning Bell Tower**. Contrary to what you might read in many guide books, the Tower is unstable because it was erected on a clay soil affected by groundwaters, not because “something went wrong with the project”. A **UNESCO World Heritage Site** since 1987, **Piazza dei Miracoli** is recognized as one of the main centers for Medieval art in the world and besides the Leaning Tower, it houses Pisa's top three monuments: the **Cathedral**, the **Baptistry** and the **Monumental Graveyard**. Be sure to also pay a visit to **Piazza dei Cavalieri** (Knights' Square) rebuilt in the Renaissance style by **Giorgio Vasari** and home to the most important buildings of Grand Ducal Pisa:

the **Palazzo della Carovana**, the **Church of the Knights of the Holy and Military Order of St. Stephen** and the **Clock Palace**.

Don't miss the Gothic **Church of Santa Maria della Spina**: besides being beautiful, it is considered one of Europe's most remarkable examples of Gothic architecture. Take a stroll beneath the **Borgo Stretto** Medieval arcades and look for the **Church of San Michele in Borgo** and **two other less famous leaning towers**: the first one is situated at the southern end of *Via Santa Maria*, the second halfway through the *Piagge* riverside promenade. Should you like to take a rest far from the tourist routes, head towards the **Giardino Scotto**, a splendid public garden located near the new **Citadel**. Don't forget to check the [Palazzo BLU exhibition schedule](#): besides the permanent collection, the museum holds extraordinary temporary exhibits.

### Did you know that...

In June 1989, **Keith Haring** painted his last public work in Pisa, on the rear wall of the **Church of Sant'Antonio Abate**; this huge, colorful mural is called “**Tuttomondo**” and is located 2 minutes walk from Pisa Centrale Railway Station.

Would you like to climb all the steps up to the top of the Leaning Tower without waiting and queuing? Contact [www.ciaoflorence.it](http://www.ciaoflorence.it) for details and book their [group tour to Pisa and the leaning tower](#)!