



Lucca & vicinity

Romanesque to Renaissance in northern Tuscany

7–13 April 2026 (MM 913)

7 days • £ 2,850

Lecturer: Dr Flavio Boggi

A leisurely exploration of one of the most beautiful and engaging of Tuscan cities.

Exceptional ramparts enclosing a city rich in sculpture, painting, and Romanesque architecture.

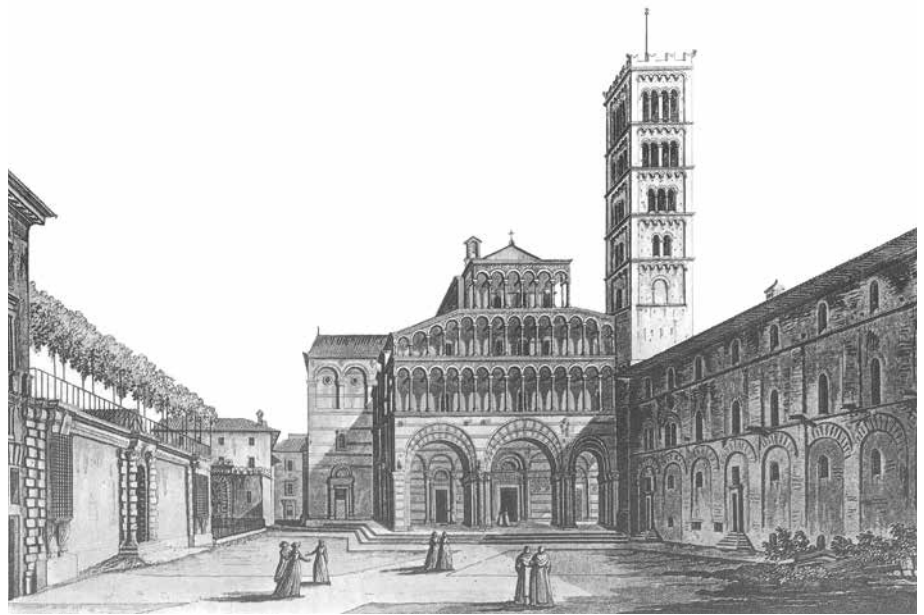
Excursions to Prato, Pistoia, Pisa and Barga. Work by renowned masters including Filippo Lippi, Donatello and Jacopo della Quercia.

Nowhere in Tuscany can claim to be undiscovered. Some places are more undiscovered than others, however, and for no good reason Lucca is one of the most underrated of ancient Tuscan cities. Many know of its exceptional attractions, but few allow themselves the opportunity to get to know it properly. Only by staying for several nights, and by allowing time to absorb, observe and reflect can real familiarity develop – not only with its historic fabric and works of art but also with the rhythm of life of its current inhabitants. For Lucca is not a museum but an agreeable and vital lived-in city.

To the approaching visitor, Lucca immediately announces its distinctiveness and its historical importance, while at the same time secreting the true extent and glory of its built heritage. The perfectly preserved circumvallation of pink brick, ringed by the green sward of the grass glacis, is one of the most complete and formidable set of ramparts in Italy.

Unlike many Tuscan cities, Lucca sits on the valley floor. This feature and the traces of the grid-like street pattern – albeit given a medieval inflection – betray its Roman origin. Within the walls, the city is a compelling masonry document of the Middle Ages. There is a superb collection of Romanesque churches with the distinctive feature of tiers of arcades applied to the façades. There is good sculpture, too, including the exquisite tomb of Ilaria del Carretto, and some quite exceptional (and exceptionally early) panel paintings. Looming over the dense net of narrow streets are the imposing *palazzi* of the mercantile elite, including some grand ones from the age of Baroque.

The Romanesque theme of the tour is continued on the excursions to the nearby cities of Prato, Pistoia and Pisa, where the



Lucca, San Martino, engraving c. 1800

style has its greatest manifestation in Tuscany in the ensemble of cathedral, baptistery and campanile (the now not-quite-so-leaning tower) at Pisa. Likewise, medieval sculpture features prominently in all these places.

The Renaissance is represented by some of the best loved works of the Florentine masters – by Filippo Lippi and Donatello at Prato cathedral, for example, and by the della Robbia workshop in Pistoia. There are also visits to several small towns and to a country villa of the 18th century.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly at c. 8.30am from London Heathrow to Pisa (British Airways). On the way to Lucca visit the Romanesque basilica of S. Piero a Grado.

Day 2. Lucca. Visit the cathedral of S. Martino, a Romanesque church with important sculptures (tomb of Ilaria del Carretto) and paintings, and the Villa Guinigi, a rare survival of a 14th-century suburban villa and now a museum with outstanding medieval panel paintings. In the afternoon drive to the Villa Torrigiani, which has a 19th-century landscaped garden with a sunken garden from the 17th century.

Day 3. Prato. Drive inland to Prato, a city that built its wealth on cloth-working. The medieval cathedral has outstanding Renaissance

sculpture and painting, notably Donatello's pulpit with dancing putti and the Filippo Lippi frescoes. Visit also the Museo di Palazzo Pretorio, open after a long period of restoration, housing works by both Lippis, among others.

Day 4. Barga, Lucca. Drive up through forested hills to Barga, a delightful little town with a fine Romanesque cathedral at its summit. In the afternoon visit S. Michele in Foro and S. Frediano, one of the finest Romanesque churches in Lucca, with façade mosaics and chapel tombs sculpted by Jacopo della Quercia. Some free time.

Day 5. Pistoia. The exceptionally attractive town of Pistoia has important art and architecture. Buildings include the octagonal baptistery and the cathedral, both at one end of the main square, and the Renaissance hospital, Ospedale del Ceppo. Sculpture includes the pulpit in Sant'Andrea carved by Giovanni Pisano, one of the finest Gothic sculptures south of the Alps, and a unique silver altarpiece in the cathedral, the product of 150 years of workmanship.

Day 6. Pisa. In the High Middle Ages Pisa was one of the most powerful maritime city-states in the Mediterranean, the rival of Venice and Genoa, deriving great wealth from its trade with the Levant. The 'Campo dei Miracoli' is a magnificent Romanesque ensemble of cathedral, monumental burial ground,

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continued

campanile ('Leaning Tower') and baptistery, all of gleaming white marble. Among the major artworks here are the pulpit by Nicola Pisano (1260) and the 14th-century Triumph of Death fresco.

Day 7. Lucca. Fly from Pisa to London Heathrow, arriving at c. 2.00pm.

Lecturer

Dr Flavio Boggi. Art historian specialising in medieval and Renaissance Italian art. He trained both in Scotland and Italy and is now head of the department of Art History at University College Cork, Ireland. He has published widely on the artistic culture of Tuscany. He is also interested in Emilian painting and has co-written two books on the Bolognese artist Lippo di Dalmasio.

Practicalities

Price. Two sharing: £2,850 or £2,510 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £3,220 or £2,880 without flights.

Included: flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus 319 & 321); travel by private coach; hotel accommodation; breakfasts, 1 lunch, 4 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation. Hotel Ilaria, Lucca (hotelilaria.com): an excellently situated 4-star within the city walls, with friendly staff. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use, but do vary in size.*

How strenuous? There is quite a lot of walking, much of it on roughly paved streets. There is a lot of standing in churches and galleries. The tour is not suitable for anyone who has difficulties with everyday walking and stair climbing. Average distance by coach per day: 39 miles

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.