

Viareggio – The City of Carnival

From a small fishing village to one of Tuscany's best known seaside destinations



The sea on one side, and the white peaks of the Apuan Alps on the other, Viareggio has a unique and stunning location. Stroll through the charming streets, take an ice cream on the Promenade or in the pine forest, go to the sea in the Darsena or the wilder sea at Lecciona - almost in Torre del Lago. Eat fish in a typical seaside trattorias, enjoy the calm weather and salty sea air enjoyed by so many visitors over the centuries.

The important city of Versilia, born as a gateway to the sea of Lucca, owes its name to the royal road, that in the Middle Ages went from the city of the walls to the sea. Dating from 1172, when Lucchesi and Genoese - allies against Pisa - built the first fortification in the city, the Torre Matilde as a bulwark against pirates. Thus arose the tower in the original city district alongside the Burlamacca canal, still an ideal berth for fishermen.

The evolution of Viareggio from a simple port to a city was a slow process. Only in 1819 did the Duchess Maria Luisa of Bourbon have the first dock built, and with an inhabited center the rank of city was established. In 1822, Viareggio was already beginning to show its vocation as a tourist destination, thanks to the visit of Napoleon Bonaparte's sister and immediately Viareggio became a fashionable seaside resort.

In addition to tourism, Viareggio has attracted lovers of the figurative arts, including the architecture of the Civic Museums of Villa Paolina and the refined art-deco decorations found throughout the city. Stroll along the Promenade and stop into Café del Casino or Caffè Margherita once frequented by Giacomo Puccini.

Viareggio means Carnival, and every year since 1873 one of the most famous and spectacular events on the planet is staged over four Sunday's in a row. Visitors flock to admire the famous papier-mâché floats featuring huge caricatures that bring the world of politics and entertainment to the Promenade. After the parade, the fun continues with parties filled with masks, music and dance throughout the four neighborhoods of the city.

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