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LEONARDO DA VINCI E LE VILLE MEDICEE

Meet the most celebrated genius of all times and his lands

*Beautiful landscapes, characterized by gentle hills and the constant presence of water, an extraordinarily rich artistic and cultural heritage, the **Montalbano** is a hills area that detaches itself from the Appennino and stands along the Arno river midway Florence to Pisa. Between the XVI and XVII centuries, about 4,000 acres were set aside by the Medici for the Barco Reale Mediceo, a vast area used as a hunting reserve of which today remain short sections of the perimeter wall. Several are the civil architectures and residential mansions that bear witness of the Medici's. Monumentally, artistically and historically they are a milestone in the history of Tuscany. Montalbano Agripark covers 16,000 hectares among the provinces of Florence, Pistoia and Prato, is the ideal place from which to visit all of Tuscany, being centrally located and close to the major art cities: Florence, Pisa, Lucca, Siena, near the sea and the mountains. The area is characterized by the presence of hills with the vine cultivated in the plains or in some terracing, olive spread on the higher slopes and chestnut woods, on top. Today is well known area for trekking experiences, wine and olive oil tasting and hunting area for the locals (wildboars).*



Leonardo Da Vinci

Much has been said of Leonardo da Vinci, but still he is indefinable. His illustrious figure inspires reverence and respect but still is hard to say anything about him that has not already been said. Without risking of falling in *clichés* we prefer not to say much but let you discover him through the lands and places of the journey starting from the village where he was born: Vinci. **Vinci** is surrounded by an extremely green landscape among vines and olives trees on the bottom of the Montalbano. The city was born as a possession of the Counts *Conti Guidi* during the first half of the XII century. The Castle of Vinci came under the dominion of Florence between 1254 and 1273 when it was transformed into a *Comune* and from 1372 it became the seat of a Mayor sent from Florence. In nearby Anchiano, Leonardo was born in April 15th, 1452 and spent his childhood here. His universal genius is intimately linked to the city. The *Castello dei Conti Guidi* still has its original nucleus preserved. The *Museo Leonardiano* dedicated to technical and scientific studies of Leonardo displays over 60 models of machines, each presented with specific references to the drawings and handwritten notes of the artist (7.000 pages left).

Ville Medicee, Unesco heritage cultural sites.

The image of Tuscany is perhaps best known associated to the Medici dynasty, Renaissance villas and the country residences. Several are the civil architectures and residential mansions that bear witness of the Medici's power created by the most influential architects of the time and today part of the World Historical Heritage. The Medici's house ruled between the XV century and the first half of the XVIII century; during this time, they constituted many of the *villas* that we are able to visit today. The area of Montalbano counts five of these wonderful architectural masterpieces in its territory. There is the medicean villa of *Poggio a Caiano*, made by Lorenzo de' Medici which has remained as the summer residence and it was the scene of important events in the family's history. "*La Ferdinanda*" villa is located in Artimino. Built by Ferdinand I, particularly fond of hunting and so conquered by the landscape to entrust for the project the famous Bernardo Buontalenti. The medicean villa of Cerreto Guidi dominates from the top of the hill in place of the castle that the *Conti Guidi* built in their times. It was ordered to be built by Cosimo de' Medici between the 1564 and 1567. It was intended as a strategic place to carry out political and administrative strategies in order to control the territory and to have a suitable abode for hunting as the Medici court loved to hunt in rich woodlands. The medicean villa at Montevettolini is located on the north side of the *Pieve di S. Michele Archangelo*. It was built by Ferdinand I and its realization made by the architect Gherardo Manchini. It has a more severe and imposing structure. On top of the northern side of the Montalbano the medicean villa *La Mágina*. The original core of the building consists of a fort, apparently according to the local traditions, built by Vinciguerra Panciatichi. The first inhabitant was Corrado Panciatichi in 1335 and after enlarged and bought by Francesco I who continued the father territory expansion plan. Anyway, the most impressive remains the one of Montelupo Fiorentino not yet declared Unesco since its destination to national jail by the central government. It is the biggest villa acting as fluvial port and represented a crucial operational site on the river Arno for fluvial transportation between Florence, many other powerful Tuscan cities and the sea, the republic of Pisa and the medicean port of Leghorn.

Are you fascinated by Leonardo and the Villas? Ask for information with no obligations!

We will be delighted to suggest typical accommodations such *agriturismo* or family B&B; rustic restaurants and *trattorie*, and the best itineraries according to your ideas, needs and the season you choose to enjoy your trip. See you soon!

Individual participation fee on request.

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