



TUSCANY DELICIOUS SEA

A Coast of Treasures to Discover





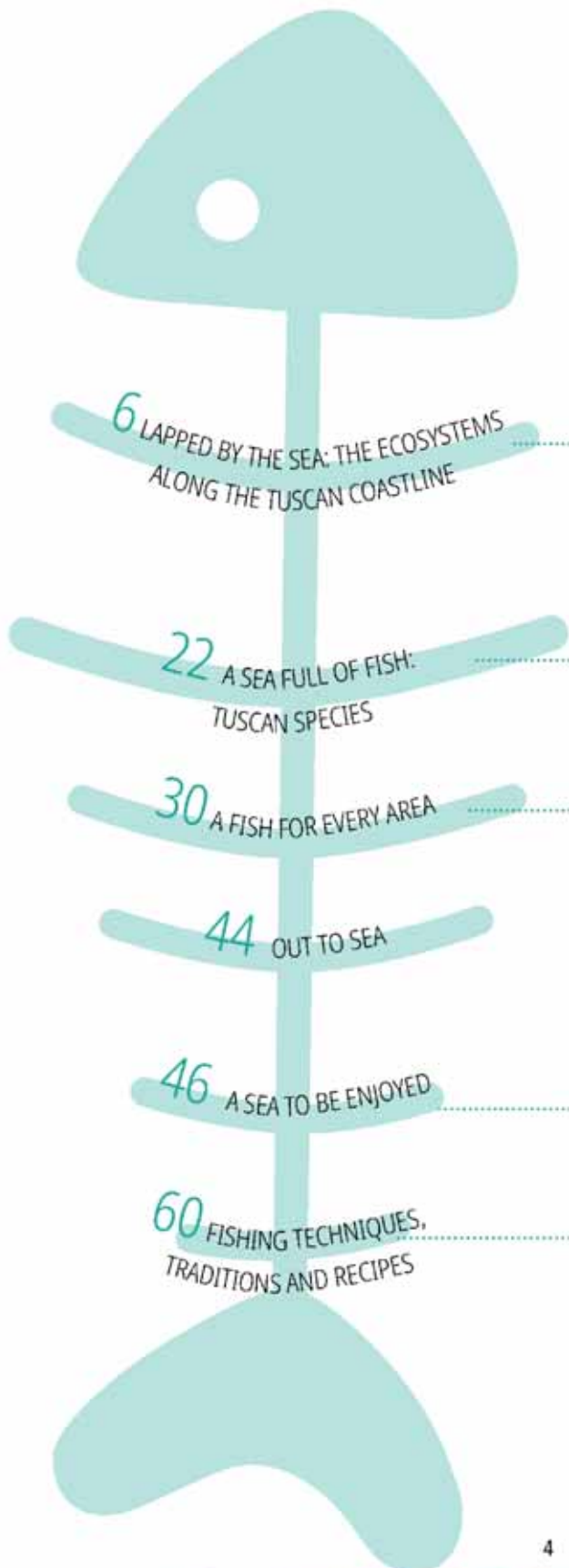


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Shaped roughly like a triangle, **Tuscany's** longest side draws a line between land and sea. The region is known for its historic cities packed with world-famous art and architecture, rolling hills covered in olive groves and vines, marble quarries and the language and irreverent wit of Dante, but its extensive coastline and archipelago of islands also have a rich story to tell. It is a story of millennia of co-existence between people and the sea, a story of navigation, trading and fishing, of encounters and exchanges, of traditions and flavors.

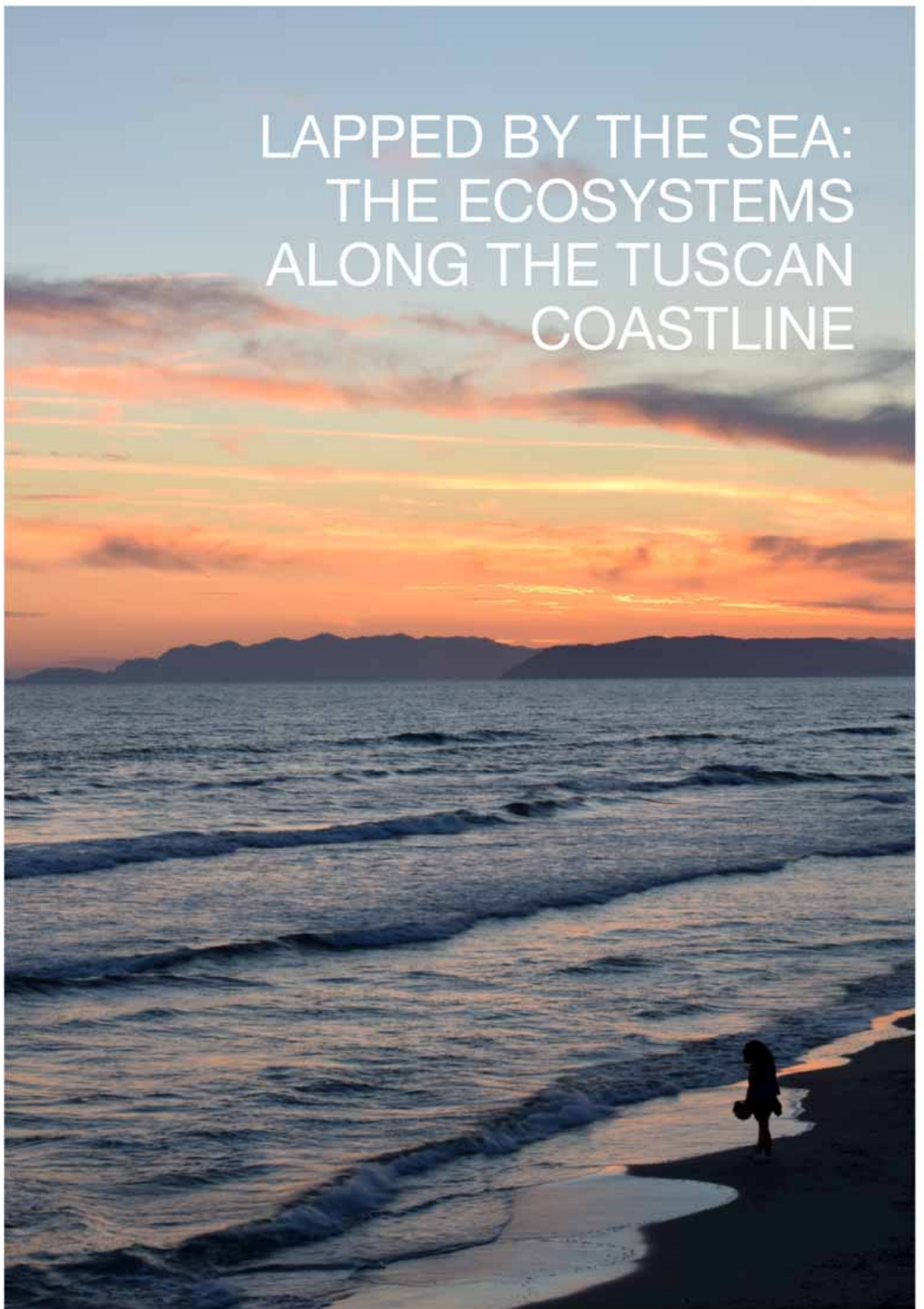
Along its length, the coastline is constantly varied, with long sandy beaches giving way to steep cliffs, bustling ports, river estuaries, jewel-like islands and placid lagoons. Some stretches are highly urbanized, while others remain wild. The sea dwellers are familiar with every inch of these ecosystems: Each species of fish, crustacean and mollusk has its own favorite area where it can find the ideal conditions for feeding, growing and reproducing.

A sea filled with fish is a sea that is alive. Without living seas, there would be no Earth. Caring for the environment is in everyone's interest.

Come now and travel down the coast and around the islands with us, learning about complex ecosystems, marine species, seafarers' tales and culinary traditions: a rich heritage, which must be preserved and passed on to future generations.



LAPPED BY THE SEA:
THE ECOSYSTEMS
ALONG THE TUSCAN
COASTLINE



NORTHERN COASTLINE:

THE APUAN COAST, VERSILIA AND THE MIGLIARINO, SAN ROSSORE AND MASSACIUCCOLI DUNES

The northern coast of Tuscany, from the Ligurian border down to Livorno, offers a long, unbroken stretch of sandy beaches, set against a backdrop first of the mountainous landscape of the Apuan Alps, then the verdant pine forests of Versilia. The sea floor slopes gently away from the coast here, making it a popular holiday destination for families.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, tourism has played an important part in the development of proper beach resort towns, still graced by Art Nouveau villas, grand international hotels, formal gardens and waterfront promenades.

Whether along the Apuan coast, from Marinella di Sarzana to Cinquale, or in Versilia, from Pietrasanta to Camaiore and Viareggio, or in the Migliarino, San Rossore and Massaciuccoli national park, the area has plenty to offer tourists—much more than just a pleasant climate and well-equipped beaches.



LAYERS BY THE SEA: THE EQUINOXIALS FOUND ALONG THE TUSCAN COASTLINE

MARBLE ON THE MOVE

Before tourism, ship building and marble transportation were the main activities in the coastal towns. As early as the 1st century AD, the Romans were sending the marble chiseled from quarries in the Apuan mountains down to Rome from what is now the Port of Carrara, known at the time as Luni. However, it was during the Renaissance that the demand for precious marble really boosted business along the coast. A new port was built and specifically equipped for shipping marble, while the port of Forte dei Marmi was added in the 18th century, named after the fort that guarded the shipments against raids by the Turks. Marble was a precious cargo, carried down into the valley on ox-drawn carts, loaded block by block onto small boats, then transferred onto large ships out at sea before being sent all over Europe.

This monumental task was made somewhat easier in 1876 by the opening of the Ferrovia Marmifera, the Marble Railway.

The Port of Carrara has maintained its strong trade links to the present day, favored by its strategic position close to the border with Liguria. In Forte dei Marmi, on the other hand, all that remains is the loading dock of the historic port, where the 19th-century iron crane, the *Mancina*, used for loading, has been turned into a spectacular monument to sea workers.

You need to go a little further south, into the heart of Versilia, to see evidence of the history of shipbuilding, although **Marina di Carrara** does now have a sizable luxury yacht-building industry. But historically Viareggio was the most important seafaring center.

Fishing boats known as *paranze*, *navicelle* and *tartane* were built here until well into the middle of the 20th century, as well as larger sailing ships for merchant use like brigantines, barcobestia (three-masted vessels) and the so-called scuneri (schooners). Then later came the luxury vessels.

The Alberto Gianni Maritime Museum illustrates this history well, with its extensive collection of nautical equipment, model boats, typical tools used by shipwrights and deep-sea diving artifacts. Located in the premises of the former fish market by the port, the museum gives a fascinating overview of all the many people involved in Viareggio's shipbuilding industry.

FISHING IN VIAREGGIO

With such a vibrant boat-building tradition, it stands to reason that the sea has always been seen as a resource within easy reach by the inhabitants of Viareggio, whose fishing fleet is one of the biggest in the region. Traditionally, fishing was carried out both at sea and from land, with long surrounding nets suited to the wide, flat coastline. The targets were oily fish and so-called "poor" fish, but also many species of sand-loving shellfish, like small clams known as *arselle* and razor clams. Viareggio's culinary traditions have proved up to the task of coming up with ways to make the most of this haul, with now-classic dishes like *pasta alla trabaccolara*, pasta with a fish ragù; *pancotto viareggino*, a seafood and bread soup; cuttlefish and chard risotto and a more delicate local variation of *cacciucco* (fish stew) that can even rival Livorno's more famous version.



Today, most of the fishing cooperatives and fishing fleets in Viareggio have banded together in the Cittadella della Pesca OP project, with the aim of building a complete supply chain from fisherman to consumer, handling all the stages with a view to economic and environmental sustainability. The underlying idea is to offer not only a quality product, but also an educational and sensory experience, able to create links between fishing and fish tourism, school canteens and top chefs.

The southern end of Versilia is home to the **Migliarino, San Rossore and Massaciuccoli nature park**, an interlude of uncontaminated nature along a coast marked by heavy urbanization and tourism infrastructure. The park includes 16 natural reserves to protect different ecosystems: beaches, a petrified forest, fragrant pine forests, woods of holm oaks and oaks, ponds and marshy areas home to waders and herons, and finally, in the sea, the Secche della Meloria (Meloria shoal) with

its extensive underwater forest of Posidonia (Neptune grass).

The coastal area is around 18 miles (30 kilometers) long and includes several protected sandy beaches: Lecciona, Bufalina, Bocca di Serchio, Lame di Fuori, Dune di Tirrenia. The dune ecosystem is extremely delicate, exposed to the combined action of wind and sea, as well as more recent anthropogenic pressure. Here you can find the typical flora of arid and salty soils (saltwort, European searocket, Italian starflower and juniper) and the nests of plovers, small birds that feed on insects and shellfish hidden under the sand.

Bathers are allowed to swim and use the beach if they take a few precautions, such as staying on the walkways to avoid trampling and damaging the dunes, remaining close to the water's edge, respecting signs and markers and keeping dogs on the leash.



PORT CITIES: LIVORNO AND PIOMBINO

Ports are coastal places where the transition from land to sea occurs, defined by buildings and structures specifically designed to allow movement and orderly exchange between the two worlds: docking, boarding, disembarking, unloading, dry berthing, and so on. It is no coincidence that the Italian phrase *"un porto di mare"* (a sea port) means a welcoming home full of comings and goings, open to all.

With over 300 miles (500 kilometers) of coastline, Tuscany is home to a large number of marinas, landing places and moorings, but the port activities of Livorno are on a whole other scale. Responding to the commercial, tourism and fishing needs of the region with a very extensive and well-equipped port, the city is also home to the Italian Naval Academy. Starting from the port area, you can walk along the promenade that leads west to the panoramic Mascagni Terrace, the perfect spot to stop and admire a classic sunset over the sea. This is a favorite route for outdoor sports enthusiasts, except perhaps on days when the Libeccio wind is blowing strongly.

Livorno's long relationship with the sea has resulted in fortified architecture, required to protect the precious cargo of the Tuscan Grand Duchy as it was delicately transported along the network of channels and canals that define the city center. The steps taken to integrate life on land with the water can be seen, above all, in Venezia Nuova, a district created in the 17th century to cope with the growth of the merchant sector: imposing buildings rise alongside canals, bridges, docks and *scalandroni*, typical stone ramps that connected the cellars and warehouses, located at water level, with the street.



THE VETTOVAGLIE CENTRAL MARKET

The sea takes center stage in the imposing Vettovaglie Central Market, built in the late 19th century and still the second-largest covered market structure in Europe in terms of size. Its *Sala del Pesce* (Fish Hall) is where producers and consumers meet. Shoppers can find fish and shellfish from all over the world here, but the real star is the local seafood, freshly caught that day. The vendors are extremely knowledgeable, providing information, advice and recipes. With fish this fresh, it's best to prepare it simply, discarding as little as possible. The market atmosphere is lively and friendly, with several stalls that have been run by the same family for generations. All kinds of other specialties are available as well as fish: A visit is highly recommended.

For a close encounter with the inhabitants of the sea, without the need for a wetsuit, you should once again return to the port for a visit to the Livorno Aquarium.

A wide variety of species are on display, with an emphasis on those typically found along the Tyrrhenian coast.

These include the well-known dentex and the lesser-known black sea bream, the iridescent peacock wrasse, the scarlet scorpionfish, the spotted catshark and the flat turbot.

The aquarium is not just a spectacular place to visit and marvel at the wide variety of fish, but also a hub for observation, study, education and protection, with the aim of promoting and conserving the great heritage of biodiversity in the local seas. It is home to the Information Point of the Tuscan Biodiversity Observatory, which supports the PELAGOS marine mammal sanctuary and the Tuscan network for sightings and strandings of cetaceans, sea turtles and elasmobranchs (sharks, rays, electric rays). One of its objectives is also to encourage environmental awareness and spread good practices for the peaceful coexistence of tourists and marine creatures in need of protection.

For an actual dip in the sea, the coast near Livorno has shallow waters that have made it a popular holiday destination since the 19th century. In the immediate vicinity, you can opt for the sandy beaches to the north, with the long coast of Calambrone, or the rocks to the south, towards the Calafuria Nature Reserve.

Located between the Ligurian and Tyrrhenian seas, **Piombino** is a smaller port, although historically of strategic importance due to the iron that used to arrive from the nearby island of Elba. The freight transport is still used exclusively by the steel industry, while the marina has continued to expand. This is, in fact, the most direct point from which to reach Elba, whose eastern tip is just 6 miles (10 kilometers) from the promontory of Piombino. There are also numerous departures for the other islands in the Tuscan Archipelago, as well as Sardinia (though not daily). Piombino also makes a good starting point for an island-

hopping holiday, passing, for example, from Elba to Corsica.

Set on the promontory of the same name, Piombino is home to a single sandy beach, Salivoli, across from a mainly rocky coastal strip, characterized by dense Mediterranean scrub of trees and shrubs. At one time, the presence of the sea was more of a potential threat than a resource: numerous watchtowers and the coastal path called “dei Cavalleggeri” (of the Light Cavalry) were constantly guarded by soldiers on the lookout for pirates and smugglers. Interestingly, the most common trade in the area was neither sailing nor fishing, but woodcutting and charcoal burning, thanks to the abundance of holm oaks, oaks and chestnuts.



LAYERED BY THE SEA THE ECOSYSTEMS FOUND ALONG THE TUSCAN COASTLINE



TUSCAN ARCHIPELAGO: THE SEVEN ISLANDS

The Tuscan archipelago is made up of seven islands running down in a line between the Tuscan coast and Corsica, where the Ligurian Sea meets the Tyrrhenian Sea. The largest in size is **Elba**, followed by **Gorgona**, then **Giglio**, **Capraia**, **Montecristo**, **Pianosa** and **Giannutri**. Seven jewels set in the sea, waiting to be explored by sailing from island to island.

MORE THAN JUST ROCKS AND STONES

All seven islands are offshoots of the fracture that, starting in the Triassic period, caused the separation of Pangea into the European and African continents. They were once linked to Tuscany by a narrow promontory which was later partially submerged, except for Capraia, the result of a volcanic explosion. Iron, found in abundance on Elba and Giglio, has attracted people here since ancient times, with pyrite, magnetite, hematite, quartz and beryl already mined by the Etruscans. The Greeks called the island of Elba “sooty” due to the furnaces where the ore was melted. The minerals were then transported to the mainland to be further processed and sold, resulting in a thriving metalworking industry along the Tuscan coast where the ports—now Livorno and Piombino—were located.

The main attraction of the archipelago is the islands’ wild and secluded nature, making them suited for relaxation and refuge. Indeed, before welcoming tourists they have been home to patrician domus residences, hermitages and penal colonies.

The history of the islands passes through the two villas of the rich Domitia Ahenobarbi

family in Giannutri and Giglio; along Elba’s pilgrim roads, which lead through chestnut trees to the ancient Hermitage of San Cerbone and to Santa Caterina, with its Orto dei Semplici planted with medicinal herbs; via the corridors of Napoleon’s house in Portoferraio; and down the paths that cross the ghostly landscape of the agricultural penal colony of Capraia, part of which is now a holiday farm with goats.

The relative isolation of the islands has been beneficial for the conservation of plant and animal biodiversity, which means the archipelago is now a protected area of extreme naturalistic interest, both on land and at sea. Where the original forests of holm oaks and cork oaks have been largely cut down to power the metalworking industry over the centuries, a flourishing Mediterranean scrub has taken over. There is broom and myrtle of course, but also fragrant lavender, wild rosemary and Phoenician juniper; flowering plants such as toadflax and sea lavender, and various wild herbs such as borage, wild garlic and Corsican mint.

This wealth of fragrances is captured in the honey that is produced on the islands and in the aromatic herbs that flavor the local dishes. The islands lie along the migratory route of many birds, which, amidst the sea cliffs, sandy dunes, Mediterranean scrub and solitary rocky outcrops, find the ideal environment for resting, overwintering or nesting: swallows and swifts, gannets, shearwater, cormorants and herring gulls. The peregrine falcon nests on the islands of Elba and Capraia, the wallcreeper on Giglio and Capraia, and the rare red-legged partridge on Pianosa. A special mention goes to the very rare Corsican seagull, the symbol of the national park that covers the archipelago.

The marine environment, however, is the jewel in the crown of the Tuscan Archipelago National Park, the largest protected area in the Mediterranean Sea and an important part of the PELAGOS cross-border project to protect the habitat of large marine mammals. The Cetacean Sanctuary, established by France, Monaco and Italy in 1999, covers a vast sea area that has proved to be the ideal habitat for certain marine mammals, attracted here by the specific concentration of phytoplankton they feed on. Sightings of sperm whales, fin whales, bottlenose dolphins, striped dolphins and common dolphins are frequent, especially in the summer period. There is no shortage of pilot whales and the lesser-known Cuvier's beaked whale; the presence of the rare monk seal is more sporadic.



LAURENCE DE LAUNAY / THE EDGE OF THE SEA THE ECOSYSTEMS FOUND ALONG THE TYRRHENIAN COASTLINE

A TREASURE TO SAFEGUARD TOGETHER

The ecosystem of the Cetacean Sanctuary requires monitoring, research and safeguarding activities that guarantee the safety of these large mammals without creating counterproductive competition for the continuation of human activities in the area: Restrictions on access, whether marine traffic, bathing, fishing or scuba diving, now create the conditions for conscious, responsible and respectful tourism, as well as for truly sustainable fishing. The incredible opportunity to see pods of dolphins in the wild goes hand in hand with the need to adopt a non-invasive way of viewing them: This is why access to some islands of the archipelago is subject to purchasing a ticket (Giannutri), allowed only in limited numbers (Pianosa) or restricted to reservations and organized tours (Montecristo). On Gorgona the rules are particularly strict given the presence of an active agricultural penal colony.

What makes the waters of the archipelago attractive to mammals and fish—and humans—is the high degree of oxygenation, which results in myriad forms of life, both animals and plants. This is thanks to the *Posidonia oceanica* (Neptune grass), which grows here in vast meadows amongst which bivalves, cephalopods and numerous fish commonly found in the Tyrrhenian Sea, such as bogue, salema, damselfish and peacock wrasse, live and reproduce.

Venturing further away from the coasts, one encounters even more underwater species, from the endemic shaving brush algae to swathes of sea fans, sea urchins, octopuses and abalone, seahorses, brown groupers and wrasse, as well as the increasingly rare red coral found off the coast of Giglio. With a little luck, dentex, sea bream and sea bass can be spotted, and maybe even tuna and swordfish.

Every two or three years, loggerhead sea turtles, *Caretta caretta*, choose sandy beaches on the islands (as well as other Tuscan coasts) to lay their eggs, a phenomenon that is carefully monitored by the Tuscan Biodiversity Observatory.



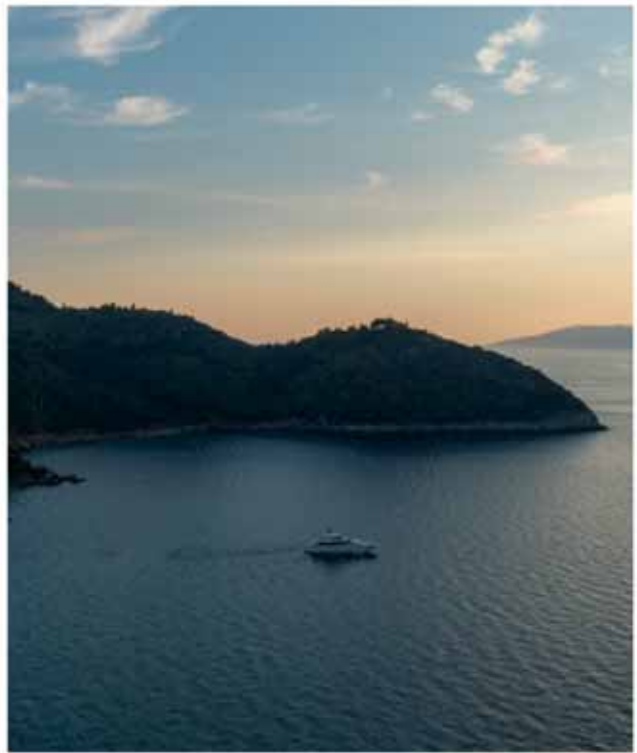
ROCKY COASTS: MONTE ARGENTARIO AND CALAFURIA NATURE RESERVE

The abrupt meeting of land and sea often results in spectacularly beautiful views and no places in Tuscany exemplify this better than Monte Argentario and the Calafuria Nature Reserve. Rugged and rocky, battered by winds, these places played a key defensive role in the past, and a series of watchtowers and fortresses dot the coast.

Immediately south of Livorno, between the Castello del Boccale and the Torre di Calafuria, rugged red sandstone rocks stretch to the sea, an offshoot of the reserve that starts from the Livorno hills covered in Aleppo pines and holm oaks, criss-crossed by a network of nature trails.

The Calafuria cliffs drop sharply into the sea, a rocky interlude between the intense green of the Mediterranean scrub and the iridescent blue of the waves and an ideal destination for coastal hikes and scuba diving. The coast, known as Il Romito, continues to the south in a jagged line, occasionally opening into pebbly or rocky beaches and retreating into the fascinating Calignaia canyon whose rugged sides are loved by goats.

The name Calafuria ("bay fury") comes from the fierce winds and strong sea currents that buffet the coast, constantly shaping the rocks above and below the waterline and creating



alveolar weathering which pits the rock and gives it the appearance of a sponge. Along the base of the cliffs are small quarries left from the extraction of sandstone blocks used for building since Etruscan times. Now partially flooded, they look like small swimming pools at the edge of the sea.

The Calafuria Nature Reserve protects both the wooded landscape of the inland areas and the marine ecosystem, which features red coral, here subject to monitoring, study and protection. The excessive exploitation of the local coral for jewelry making has led to the significant depletion of the seabed, prompting careful regulation of the tools allowed and amounts that can be taken.

At the opposite end of the region, close to the border with Lazio, the Monte Argentario promontory dominates the landscape, a vast granite outcrop in the sea, attached to the Tuscan mainland by two sandy isthmuses, known as *tomboli*.



Formed over thousands of years by the action of earthquakes and sea currents, the sandy isthmuses have transformed the block of rock into a peninsula that acts as a shield, protecting the calm landscape of the Orbetello lagoon that lies behind it.

FORTRESSES

In the past the main danger here was not the elements, but piracy. Protective towers were built on Monte Argentario and, with the Spanish State of the Presidi, imposing fortresses as well, some with a star-shaped or hexagonal floor plan. They bear witness to the strategic importance of the area to trade, thanks to its location halfway between the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and the Papal States.

The fortress of Porto Santo Stefano tells another story, that of the centuries-old local tradition of nautical art, through the permanent exhibition “Maestri d’Ascia” (literally, “masters of the axe,” shipwrights). Scale models of boats, nautical carpentry tools and photographs bring to life an age-old profession, as well as showing how many of the boats and fishing techniques are still in use today.

The sea has always shaped life on Monte Argentario, as is clear from its large fishing fleet and range of traditional fish dishes, including the fish soup known as *caldaro*, *tonnina* (salted fillets), *fiche maschie a stocchetto* (dried blue whiting) and the popular *schiaccia di acciughe e cipolle*, a flatbread topped with anchovies and onions.



A canning industry developed here, with factories for preserving sardines, anchovies and tuna, relying throughout the 19th century on the Porto Santo Stefano tuna fishery.

This centuries of familiarity with the water is reflected in the annual Palio Marinaro di Ferragosto, a challenge between the four districts of Porto Santo Stefano aboard typical fishing boats known as *gozzi*.

LAYERED BY THE SEA, THE ECOSYSTEMS FOUND ALONG THE TUSCAN COASTLINE



Over the years, fishing has been to some extent superseded by tourism as a key factor of the local economy: Porto Santo Stefano and Porto Ercole have high-end tourist resorts, historically known for celebrity sightings. This has, however, led to the fragmentation of the coast, which is not always easily accessible. To enjoy the scenic cliffs overlooking the sea, swim in hidden coves or explore the numerous caves carved out of the rock, you will have to hike a certain distance or rely on the boats that offer day trips to the most famous and beautiful beaches: Cacciarella and its Grotta del Turco, Cala Grande, Cala del Gesso, Cala del Bove or Mar Morto.

Whichever direction the wind is blowing, Monte Argentario will be able to offer a sheltered cove. Or for a day on the sand there are the long beaches of Giannella to the north, ideal for sailing and other water sports, and the dunes of Feniglia to the south, along the strips of land linking sea and lagoon.



THE TAGLIATA ETRUSCA

At the southeastern edge of the promontory, where the Feniglia isthmus connects to the mainland, lies Ansedonia, a rocky outcrop at the top of the long sandy coast that leads to Lazio. Along the high cliff dropping down to the dark-sand Torba beach can be seen two deep crevices insinuating themselves into the rock, creating a fascinating system of gullies and caves.

One, the Spacco della Regina, is the work of nature, while the other, the Tagliata Etrusca, was created by incredible human endeavor, but both perform the same function: preventing the stagnation of water and the accumulation of debris from the sea by assisting drainage. The Tagliata can be visited by climbing the steps that lead to the top of the cliff. Marks left by the stonemasons as they carved this incredible work of hydraulic engineering are clearly visible, and the water can be followed as it flows along artificial channels and into underground caves. Afterwards, return to the beach for a dip: The blackish sand, weighed down by tiny specks of iron, makes the water particularly limpid.





SOUTHERN BEACHES: THE ETRUSCAN COAST AND THE MAREMMA

The southern coast of Tuscany begins immediately after Calafuria and continues down to Talamone, on the border with Lazio, stretching along sandy beaches interspersed with gulfs, scenic coves and promontories. The 90-plus miles (150 kilometers) between the Etruscan coast and the Maremma, varied, fragmented and less densely populated, are of great naturalistic interest.

After the rocky sand beaches of **Castiglioncello** and the pure white limestone beaches of **Rosignano Solvay**, the coast continues from **Cecina** to **Marina di Bibbona** and **San Vincenzo** with fine-grained sandy beaches and shallow waters perfect for families. Here the land climbs quickly away from the sea, up hills covered by wide expanses of olive groves.

First the gulf of **Baratti** and then the promontory of **Piombino** act as a divider, ushering in a tract of rocky coastline with small coves, where sand alternates with rocks and pebbles. This is **Val Cornia**, which combines a spectacular seascape with places of intense historical interest and important natural environments.

THE ETRUSCANS AND THE SEA

Baratti offers not only a clear sea and sandy beaches sheltered by a dense pine forest, but also the Etruscan necropolis of the ancient port city of **Populonia**, a vast archaeological site overlooking the sea. At one time, the gulf was home to a busy port thanks to the maritime trade of iron from the island of **Elba**, but with the progressive erosion of the coastline, it fell into disuse and is now submerged under the gulf. Every now and again artifacts from the period emerge from the waters.

To the south of **Piombino** lies the **Sterpaia Coastal Park**, a protected natural area extending for 5 miles (8 kilometers). The beach is open to the public, the sand is fine and the seabed is shallow and slopes gradually. An extensive dune system, now constantly monitored, a strip of native pine trees and a centuries-old oak forest complete the park inland. Beyond this lies the gulf of **Follonica**, with its wide expanses of sand, cooled behind by a dense pine forest, which towards the southern tip rises up to a wooded and protected promontory, the **Bandite di Scarlino**, flanked by small, spectacularly beautiful coves, which are not, however, easy to access.

The beach of **Cala Violina** with its "singing" sand is one of the best known. It has a small curved beach with quartz grains and can only be reached by foot.



The Punta Ala promontory rises above the sea and is surrounded by water on three sides. A wild, densely wooded area, once a defensive stronghold, it discovered late its vocation as a tourist destination. Now one of the most elegant spots along the coast, it is particularly renowned for its well-equipped tourist port and a very popular yacht club, which organizes several prestigious regattas. It was Italo Balbo, who often flew over it during Italian Royal Air Force test flights, who recognized its beauty and paved the way for its success as a holiday resort from the 1930s onwards.

Leaving the promontory behind, the Maremma coast continues in a more or less straight line from **Castiglione della Pescaia** down to Talamone with a succession of sandy beaches, perfect for a day of swimming and sunbathing after exploring the wealth of Etruscan and Renaissance history, archeology and culture found inland. Though the Maremma is typically associated with the idea of land, with its herds of wild cattle, the Uccellina Mountains and typical dishes of wild boar and hare, water is also an important part of its identity. It not only has a long, well-known coastline, but also marshes, ponds, estuaries and the large lagoon area of Orbetello.

In **Marina di Grosseto**, the tartAmare association has been involved in the rescue, care and rehabilitation of injured, beached or accidentally netted sea turtles since 1993. The rescue center not only looks after turtles in difficulty, which may, for example, have got caught up in fishing nets, but also studies their reproductive biology, trying to identify and protect migratory routes and nesting sites. The presence of turtles is an indication of the state of health of the sea, so the association also educates and raises

awareness among local operators and tourists about how to use the sea and respect other forms of life, for example by proposing solutions for fishing and sustainable tourism.

Beyond the Maremma Regional Park, the rocky coastline returns at Talamone and Monte Argentario before finally reaching Capalbio, the last gem before crossing the border into Lazio. Above stands a very well-preserved and elegant medieval village, with below the marina, along with delightful beaches and waters popular with scuba divers. Just alongside the sea lies the coastal lake of Burano, a WWF oasis of major ornithological and naturalistic interest, where, depending on the season, it is easy to spot sandwich terns, bitterns and herons, as well as hawks, kingfishers and blackcaps.



LAYERED BY THE SEA THE ECOSYSTEMS FOUND ALONG THE TUSCAN COASTLINE



LAGOONS AND INLAND WATERWAYS: ORBETELLO AND THE ARNO ESTUARY

Behind the promontory of Monte Argentario, separated from the sea by the two sandy isthmuses, Giannella and Feniglia, lies the Orbetello lagoon, an aquatic environment of considerable naturalistic interest, not surprisingly protected by two nature reserves and a WWF oasis. Right in the middle of the water stands the town of Orbetello, resting on the natural isthmus that sticks out from the east and artificially connected to the Argentario promontory by the Leopoldina dam, built in the 19th century, which effectively divides the lagoon in half.

Covering about 10 square miles (27 square kilometers) and, on average, just 5 feet (1.5 meters) deep, the lagoon is an extremely fragile transitional ecosystem, with brackish waters of varying salinity, kept alive by the tides that oxygenate it through three channels. This sheltered wetland is the ideal habitat for fish and migratory birds, who stop to overwinter and nest during their annual migrations. The list of visiting birds is long, ranging from herons to little grebes and even spectacular pink flamingos, making for a truly unique concentration of bird life.



AN OASIS OF BIODIVERSITY

Hunting was allowed here until the 1960s, but the work of Fulco Pratesi, the founder of WWF in Italy, and the signing of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance in 1971 transformed the lagoon into a monitored, protected environment, highly valued for its uniqueness and its invaluable contribution to safeguarding biodiversity.

The Duna Feniglia Nature Reserve in the Levante lagoon and the Ponente Lagoon Nature Reserve on the Giannella isthmus, where the WWF oasis is found, create a protective cordon all around the expanse of water, helping to keep it safe and also offering visitors a unique place for observation, study and relaxation.

The lagoon is also a sheltered environment with shallow waters, ideal for fish and crustaceans who love mudbanks such as sea bream, sea bass, gray mullet and eels, as well as small, pale shrimp called *mazzancolle* and *femminelle* (small winter crabs).

This natural fishing area is now monitored and restricted, but has always been regulated by sustainable, selective fishing methods. Fishermen take advantage of the seasonal migration of fish to the sea during the breeding season and position themselves along the connecting channels to intercept them, choosing which and how many fish to catch. The local fishing cooperative, which now has the exclusive rights to fishing and aquaculture in the lagoon, guarantees respect, care and responsibility. Barriers

known as *lavorieri*, traps and different types of gillnets all fit seamlessly into the lagoon landscape, level with the surface of the water, preserving its flat and placid appearance. The boats of the fishermen on the surface of the water barely moved by the wind and currents, the shimmer of the fish caught in large nets, the birds in flight and the cylindrical outline of the only surviving water mill (of the nine that were once used to grind flour), create more than just a beautiful picture postcard: They are the sign of a precarious, but possible, balance between ecosystems.

In **Talamone**, at the southwestern end of Feniglia, a small but perfectly formed aquarium showcases all the fish species typically found in the Orbetello lagoon, divided between five micro-environments representing the exceptional diversity of the ecosystems that coexist in the lagoon, created by variations in salinity, underwater plant life and oxygenation.

Of particular interest is the collection of objects related to traditional fishing, such as a *burchiella* (a typical flat-bottomed boat), the fishing lights used for night fishing, an *arsellaio* (a rake for gathering clams) and many other tools, typical of lagoon fishing.

The mouth of the River Arno and the Navicelli channel merit a mention among the water environments near the sea, as do the coastal lakes of Burano and Massacciucoli, natural reserves for the protection of aquatic bird life. Built in the Medici era to aid the drainage of the river waters, which in the final stretch were marshy and subject to irregular currents, the Navicelli channel remained an important trade communication route between **Pisa** and **Livorno** until the 19th century.

Used in the following years as a simple drainage channel, it has recently returned to its function as a waterway, allowing access to

boats coming from the sea via Livorno and the transport of goods from the shipyards to the port. Leisure craft are also allowed through the canal, which is about 38 yards (35 meters) wide with an average depth of 11.5 feet (3.5 meters).

After the **Navicelli** channel branches off, the river continues its course towards the sea, joining it near **Marina di Pisa** at what is known as the **Bocca d'Arno**, the mouth of the Arno. The landscape here becomes both complex and serene: Against the backdrop of the Apuan Alps, the slow-flowing river merges into the sea as tamarisks and pine trees line its banks.

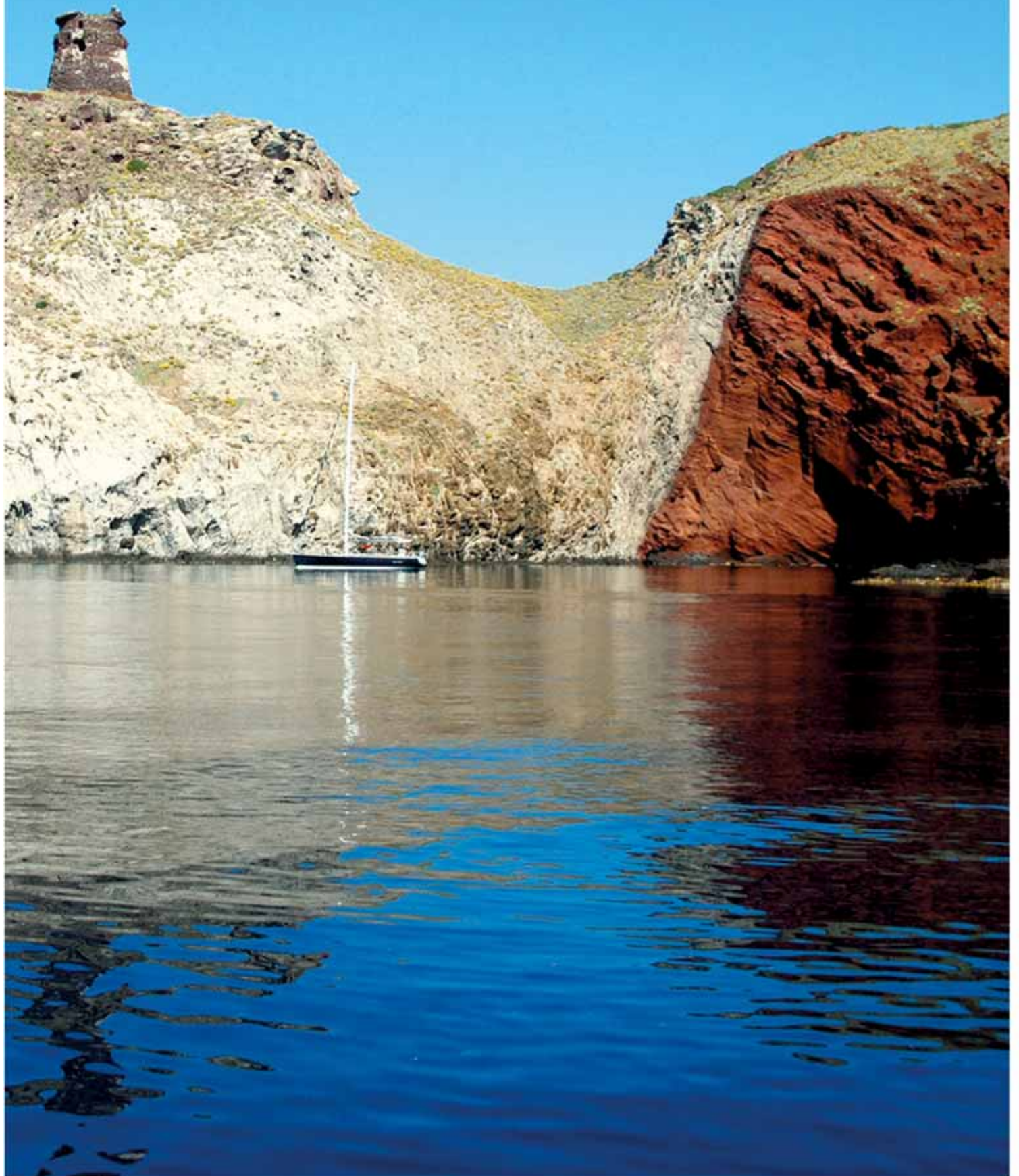
On the breakwaters where the River Arno flows into the sea, small wooden huts perch on stilts, with a counterweight on top supporting a large square net: These are the **Retoni**, fishing structures that were very popular in the period between the wars and still partly in use. Red mullet, squid, anchovies and musky octopus are caught here and taken to the small fish market in the port.

THE "CASA DEI PESCI" IN TALAMONE

The "Casa dei Pesci" (House of Fishes) arose out of an idea by Paolo Fanciulli, a Maremma-born environmentalist and fisherman. The aim of the project is to protect the marine environment by installing 100 blocks of marble on the seabed, in the area surrounding the Maremma park from Talamone to the mouth of the Ombrone, to prevent the illegal trawling that is damaging the ecosystem. So far, some have currently been installed and others are ready to be lowered into the sea. Artists from all over the world have supported the initiative by turning the blocks into sculptures, creating an underwater museum.



A SEA FULL OF FISH: TUSCAN SPECIES



Tuscany sits on both the Ligurian Sea and the Tyrrhenian Sea, which meet more or less in line with the promontory of Piombino. However, since fish do not respect borders—on the contrary, some undertake migrations of thousands of miles annually—there is no need to quibble about whether fish caught along the Tuscan coast are Ligurian or Tyrrhenian fish: They are simply Tuscan fish.

Eels, sea bream, sea bass, gray mullet, smelt and the small soft-shelled crabs known here as *femminelle* all live near the coast, or in lagoon waters. Even red mullet love the sandy seabed near the shore, as do the shrimp called *sparnocchi* and mantis shrimp (known as *cicale* in Tuscany).

The shallow sandy bottoms are home to curled picarel, bogue, weever and tub gurnard, and among the mollusks, wedge clams, murex, razor clams and musky octopus. Further down we find sole and rays.

Along the rocky coasts, the solitary croaker and the saddled sea bream roam, but also sargo, striped red mullet, wrasse, scorpionfish and moray and conger eels. Sea urchins, octopuses, lobsters, cuttlefish and squid hide among the rocks.

Further out to sea, there are large shoals of oily pelagic fish, like small anchovies and sardines, plus larger species, such as horse mackerel, dolphinfish, scabbardfish, amberjack, albacore, Atlantic bonito and swordfish, then hake and blue whiting.

For the most part, small or medium-sized fish, often difficult to eat due to the presence of bones or, in the case of shellfish, hard shells, have been stigmatized as poor fish, or the fish of the poor, and relegated to fish soups or sauces. In fact, **they all have good, if not excellent, nutritional properties, as well as outstanding flavor, consistency and versatility.**



These are not fish for “steaks,” providing large slices that can be cooked on the grill and served with a salad, but each one has delightful qualities when prepared properly. But there is no place for them in a world of standardized restaurants and increasingly industrialized kitchens, and they have been overtaken by a globalized supply of a few easily recognizable species, always the same: tuna, cod, swordfish, salmon, sole, shrimp, mussels, plus bream, snapper and grouper in Italy. The aggressive, concentrated fishing of these few species of fish and shellfish has the same effect as monocultures in farming: Natural resources are depleted. When a species faces extinction, the entire ecosystem pays the price. In the case of fish, this is a large and complex ecosystem, about which little is known, that covers 71% of the Earth’s surface.

Varying the fish that we eat is not only a question of safeguarding natural biodiversity, but also improving our diet. When flavors are all the same, everywhere in the world, this not only has a negative effect on the overall dining experience, but also results in the loss of knowledge, traditions, history and professions.

Fish are an often-invisible resource, one that is difficult to quantify, but by no means infinite. This is why it is imperative that fishermen work sustainably, taking on the role of guardians of the sea. They must **adopt selective and non-destructive fishing methods**, avoid capturing fish that are too small and immature, respect breeding seasons and adjust the number of fish they catch based on actual demand in order to prevent accidental catches, rejects and waste.

Consumers, meanwhile, should commit to buying local fish, accepting the fact that each fish, like each fruit, has its own season, and refusing fish that are undersized or at risk of over-exploitation.

In Tuscany, small-scale fishing is part of the local fishing tradition and involves the use of boats under 40 feet (12 meters) in length and selective fishing techniques that do not ruin the seabed: gillnets, pots, baskets and traps, hooks and harpoons. Nowadays, there are about 1,500 professional fishermen who annually catch something in the range of 11,000 tons of fish. The challenge is to improve this type of fishing in terms of quality and not quantity, by **creating an entire supply**





and cultural chain that combines fishing, diet, education, critical consumption and “slow” tourism. To this end, Tuscany has joined the EMFF 2014-2020 project, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, which supports those regions of the European Union that want to work on the issues of smart, eco-friendly fishing (and aquaculture), the sustainable and inclusive development of fishing communities, artisanal fish processing and seafood marketing.

Fishing tourism and fish tourism fit perfectly into this framework, providing the opportunity to experience the sea with greater awareness and understanding. What do these two fairly novel terms mean?

FISHING TOURISM is the opportunity to take an active part in fishing, accompanying fishermen on their boats (even for just a day). Tourists can learn about different species of local fish and traditional fishing techniques, as well as understanding the complex considerations made every time a net is lowered into the sea. Day trips generally include fun as well, whether a swim out at sea, touring parts of the coast that are difficult to access from land or a culinary tasting on board, because the fishing tourism boats are often equipped for cooking. This makes evident the link between the catch and the menu.

FISH TOURISM, on the other hand, refers to two different experiences: staying with fishing families, sharing meals with them and perhaps even helping out with some typical jobs (repairing nets, for example) or visiting restaurants run by fishermen, which only serve the catch of the day.

Climbing aboard a fishing boat to learn first-hand about the different types of fish and fishing techniques; supporting restaurateurs who invent a menu on the fly with what the sea has to offer depending on the season rather than cooking standardized, mass-market dishes using imported or frozen fish; respecting the sea by not intruding into areas where fish and other animals are reproducing; safeguarding the coastal ecosystems and avoiding behavior that can pollute marine waters, affecting the sea’s health: These are just some of the methods whose importance we all need to be more aware of, so we can avoid wasting a resource that is not just precious, but vital.



FISH SEASONALITY

IN TUSCANY



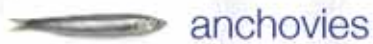
SPRING



mantis shrimp



red mullet



anchovies



cuttlefish



shrimp



sole



bogue



gray mullet



hake



SUMMER



Atlantic bonito



red mullet



anchovies



sargo



shrimp



sole



bogue



weever



gray mullet



hake

Like many other foods, fish are also seasonal. The Mediterranean Sea around Italy is home to numerous varieties of fish. Choosing fish that are in season benefits the environment and its equilibrium as well as ensuring the quality of what we eat. It's also less expensive!



AUTUMN

-  mantis shrimp
-  squid
-  Atlantic bonito
-  octopus
-  cuttlefish
-  blue whiting
-  sargo
-  codling
-  sole
-  bogue
-  weever
-  gray mullet
-  hake



WINTER

-  mantis shrimp
-  squid
-  octopus
-  cuttlefish
-  blue whiting
-  sargo
-  codling
-  eel
-  gray mullet
-  hake
-  palourde clams

VETRINA TOSCANA

Vetrina Toscana network

It is impossible to **eat well** unless **you take care of the land around you**. You can choose the best products, but if you do not respect nature, the result will never live up to your expectations.

Sustainability is one of the elements on which the Vetrina Toscana project is founded. For **over 20 years**, it has been promoting the typical products of the region. **Understanding how a product is created** and the history behind it not only increases respect for the product and for the landscape in which it is produced, but also encourages a greater awareness of the environment and sustainability.

Every area has a well-defined identity linked to food and wine that Vetrina Toscana (literally the "Tuscan Showcase") aims to protect, a cultural and material heritage that must not be lost, along with the incredible biodiversity of this region. Every typical dish can be located by its geographical origin.

One of the pillars of the project is respect for natural cycles, for **seasonality**, which also applies to fishing and is not just about enjoying a food when it is at its best, but also about not damaging the ecosystem and allowing the species to reproduce in optimal conditions.

Food and wine are an increasingly important resource for tourism and have such a significant impact that they are considered a fundamental part of a holiday. Food and wine tourism, in fact, not only allows tourist seasons to be extended and small villages and less well-known areas to be promoted, but also boosts the economic, social, and cultural development of a region. When you travel and eat the local food, you have a unique experience, in effect **"a trip within a trip."**

In respecting and promoting Tuscany and its culinary history, the project also acquires a cultural and educational value because it helps prevent the loss of that **historical memory** that is part of our genetic heritage and to pass on the traditions and diversity of flavors to future generations.

Over 1,000 restaurants, 320 shops and more than 300 producers make up the biggest regional network of this kind in Italy. The project raises the profile of restaurants, shops and quality food production that express the **identity of the area** and promotes **food and wine culture** as a tourist attraction at no cost to businesses.

Manifesto of Values of the Vetrina Toscana

Vetrina Toscana is a project run by the Region of Tuscany and Union of the Tuscan Chambers of Commerce which promotes restaurants, producers and shops. This network of people and businesses is united by common principles and goals: to add value to Tuscany's gastronomic products and identity through the specific features of its local destinations and the quality of its food products, in line with responsible and sustainable tourism.

1. Our food represents authentic cooking that highlights regional traditions. Tuscany is a brand that enriches our work.
2. Food tells our story. Our dishes and products play a key role in tourism. When I eat something I want to understand more about where I am.
3. Food has social and environment value. It must be respected and never wasted.
4. Using local products supports the local economy and creates a circular model.
5. Nature must be respected and never forced. We cook seasonal dishes.
6. Hospitality is an art. It's a lifestyle, a form of respect towards everyone we meet.
7. Typical products are a guarantee of genuineness for visitors and enshrine the connection with our local identity.
8. The landscape is a shared resource and must be protected. We prefer organic or integrated agricultural products from a short supply chain. The more local a product is, the more the flavour is maintained in the food we eat – and the less we pollute.
9. The environment around us, the culture, history and products are unique and our source of wealth. They make us who we are.
10. Quality is a value.

Discover restaurants with a seafood menu at



A FISH FOR
EVERY AREA



NORTHERN COASTLINE

RAZOR CLAMS

Razor clams are bivalve mollusks, typically found on shallow sandy seabeds which they keep clean by constantly filtering the water through their two outer siphons. Their long, pale, narrow body is protected by a smooth, slim shell, which resembles the case of a small flute and is either yellow or light beige in color, making it well camouflaged in the sand. The grooved razor shell, *Solen marginatus*, is known in Italian as *cannolicchio* or *cappalunga*.

A shy animal, it flees rapidly at the slightest disturbance, relying on the foot at the lower end of the shell, a highly developed muscle that allows it to burrow itself in the sand in a matter of seconds, dragging the whole shell with it. This is how it stays moist even at low tide. A characteristic pile of sand, marked by a small figure-of-eight depression, signals the presence of a razor clam in the sand.

Scanning the surface of the foreshore after a high tide while searching for these tiny marks is undoubtedly the most popular method adopted by amateur pickers, but for the professionals, it is by no means the most profitable. They tend to use rakes and water-jet dredgers, but these require extensive authorizations since they are very invasive and potentially damaging to the ecosystem. The shellfish harvested with these methods also retain a lot of sand, demanding lengthy cleaning.

Razor clams should be brought to the kitchen while still alive, so that they are easier to purge. The edible part of the razor clam (the foot) can then be extracted and the internal organs trimmed off. Brief cooking will help prevent the clams becoming hard and rubbery. Typical preparations include steaming, baking in a gratin or sautéing for a pasta sauce.





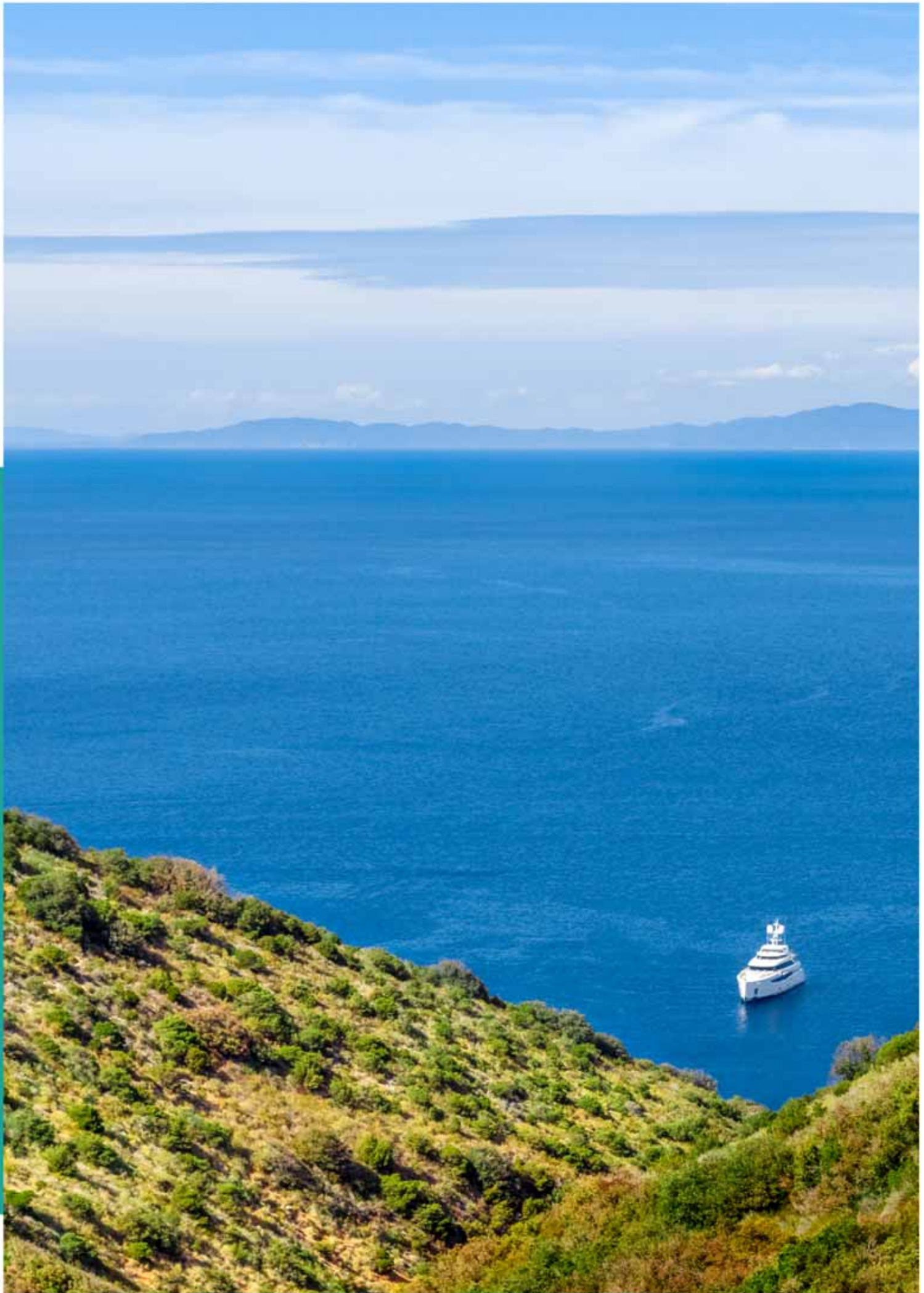
Spaghetti ai coltellacci Spaghetti with Razor Clams

Given their elongated, blade-like shape, it comes as no surprise that razor clams are known locally as *coltellacci* (from the Italian word for knife, *coltello*). To eat this typical spaghetti dish from Viareggio in a restaurant, however, all you will need is a fork and a hearty appetite, as the chefs will remove the clams from their shells and clean all the sand.

The recipe calls for the razor clams to be sautéed with oil, garlic and chili pepper. Wine is added and cooked off, then tomato, while the pasta cooks in boiling water. *Spaghetti ai coltellacci* is emblematic of the Versilia coast, where the southwest *libeccio* wind blows in from Provence and causes storm surges, washing up piles of driftwood, seaweed, shells and other mementos from the sea onto the beaches, an assortment of odds and ends that are known as the *lavarone* (literally “the big wash”).

FUN FACT: THE “LAVARONE” CELEBRATED IN MUSIC

Die-hard Viareggians can be seen in winter, bucket in hand, hunting in these piles of marine detritus for tasty shellfish that have been ripped from the bottom of the sea by the force of the current. It is such a common sight that it has even inspired a song—“Il Cha Cha Cha dei Coltellacci”—which is still played during the town’s famous carnival. To its composer, Adriano Barghetti, it seemed as if the razor clams and their precarious existence at the mercy of the currents bore a strong resemblance to the people of Viareggio, who live from hand to mouth, forever dependent on the whims of the sea, with no certainty: A strong gust of wind is all it takes to leave them high and dry, exposed with no protection. Fortunately, there is no lack of self-irony in Tuscany: “We are all razor clams and whenever there’s a storm we all end up in the lavarone. But, luckily (...) our Libecciatea isn’t just a wind, it’s a gang that all of a sudden wears you out and gives us the illusion for a month that the whole world is made of card. So every razor clam, when this cha-cha is over, with a cleaner and less ugly face, will end up in the usual pasta.”



PORT CITIES

RED MULLET

Commonly found in the Tyrrhenian Sea, red mullet love temperate, shallow waters. Small (no more than 10 inches or 25 centimeters long), with an elongated body, large eyes, two long barbels which it uses as sensory feelers, dorsal fins set wide apart and a forked tail, they belong to the large Mullidae family, and their color varies widely from species to species.

The paler red mullet, *triglia di fango* (*Mullus brabatus*), can be found along the Tuscan coast, as can the striped red mullet, *triglia di scoglio* (*Mullus surmuletus*), which is bright red with distinctive markings. The biggest difference, however, lies in their habitat: The red mullet prefers sandy and even muddy seabeds, which it carefully explores with its barbels in search of the small invertebrates it feeds on, while the striped red mullet prefers rocky seabeds with swathes of Neptune grass. Since the latter swims in more oxygenated waters, it is preferred by chefs.

A typical catch for small-scale fishers, the red mullet tend to be caught in static gillnets or with a line. Whether living on muddy seabeds or in the rocks, these fish are always delicious; their flavor of the sea has been appreciated for centuries.

When it comes to nutrition, red mullet provides amino acids, a high proportion of Omega 3 fats, vitamin B3 and a variety of mineral salts and has low levels of dangerous pollutants such as mercury, thanks to its comparatively short life cycle and light diet. Its flesh is delicate and easy to digest, but spoils quickly, so red mullet should be consumed fresh and cooked only briefly. It is often pan fried, grilled or used in sauces. Those with an awareness of red mullet's



nutritional qualities will not waste any part of the fish and usually cook it with the bones, so as to maintain as many of the precious proteins as possible. If the fish is filleted, the bones can be saved and used to make a good stock to flavor other dishes. The liver and egg sacs should also not be wasted; the liver can be chopped and sautéed with the flavor base at the start of cooking, while the egg sacs should be added at the end of cooking.

Triglie alla Livornese Livorno-Style Red Mullet

Red mullet can always be found on market stalls in Livorno, but peak supply is in the winter months. The fish regularly appears on restaurant menus, or is typically cooked at home in this simple and authentic preparation. Tomatoes and garlic are sautéed together, then the fish is added whole and cooks in the sauce. A sprinkling of parsley at the end is as fancy as it gets.



FUN FACT: A DISH STEEPED IN HISTORY

It seems likely that this recipe originated in a Sephardic Jewish cookbook, where it was called “Mosaic Red Mullet,” or more simply “Red Mullet with Tomato,” and was typically served at Jewish New Year’s lunches. These Jewish origins of a typically Livornese dish should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with Livorno’s history. Of course, ports by nature are the crossroads of the world, but politics also played a part in opening the city to all. Wanting to transform what was then a village into a trading city that could help fulfill its political ambitions, in 1591 and 1593 the Grand Duchy of Tuscany enacted a series of laws (known as the Livornine Laws) aimed at encouraging a mass influx of “all merchants from any nation, Ligurians from east and west, Spanish, Portuguese, Greeks, Germans, Italians, Jews, Turks, Moors, Armenians and Persians.” The promise of special economic treatment and freedom of worship did not take long to produce results and the population grew significantly in just a few years, as merchants were soon followed by sailors, fishermen and craftsmen like shipwrights, rope makers and other artisans with trades linked to the port activities. Perhaps it was even the Sephardic Jews, originally from Spain, who first brought tomatoes to Livorno and introduced them into the kitchen when they still were nothing more than an exotic curiosity in Italy. The fruit soon became an integral part of the local culinary repertoire, and even makes an appearance in the city’s most famous dish, *cacciucco*, named after the Turkish word *küçük* (small) and also invented in the wake of the famous laws. Both *triglie alla livornese* and *cacciucco* entered the canon of Italian cuisine thanks to their inclusion in the famous 1891 cookbook by Pellegrino Artusi, *La scienza in cucina e l’arte di mangiar bene* (“Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well”).



TUSCAN ARCHIPELAGO

SQUID

We need to be clear here: In Tuscany, *totano* (the Italian name for the European flying squid) is the name used for the common squid (more usually *calamaro* in Italian). So if you order *totano*, what you'll get is *calamaro*. And that's a good thing, because of the two, the common squid is more tender and highly prized.

Generally found from the North Sea to the coasts of north Africa, the squid is also common throughout the Mediterranean, including in the Tyrrhenian Sea. The cephalopod mollusk has no shell and its shape vaguely resembles a closed umbrella. Either red or pinkish in color, it is generally no more than 25 inches (60 centimeters) in length. With two wing-like fins, eight arms and two tentacles, it can move through deep waters thanks to a siphon which sucks in water and expels it out, propelling the squid forwards. Like the cuttlefish, it has an ink sac which it

uses for defense and which is used in cooking to *dye al nero* dishes a deep black.

Squid eat fish, crustaceans and other mollusks, capturing them with their two long tentacles and bringing them to their mouth, which has a strong beak. Since they come to the surface at night, this is often the time chosen by fishermen to catch squid, provided the moon is out. Nets are kept fairly shallow in the water, then dragged slowly. During the day, lines are used, with a few squid hooks and lead weights.

Squid have firm, elastic flesh, very low in fat and rich in iron, sodium, calcium and magnesium, plus group A vitamins. Before cooking, the eyes, beak and innards need to be removed. The squid should be washed thoroughly to eliminate any traces of sand.

The smallest specimens are usually fried while the bigger ones can be grilled, stewed or, taking advantage of their pouch-like shape, stuffed and baked in the oven.





A FISH FOR EVERY AREA

Totani ripieni di formaggio di capra Goat's Cheese-Stuffed Squid

Squid appears everywhere on menus throughout the Tuscan archipelago. There are even two annual festivals dedicated to squid on the islands of Giglio and Capraia, during which fishing competitions are held on land and at sea and outdoor kitchens set up for tastings.

On Elba squid is prepared *alla diavola* and on Giglio stewed with potatoes and sweet onion. On Capraia, however, the squid follows its own path, and often ends up stuffed with the island's most typical product.

On this rocky island, farming and winemaking are often quite rightly defined as "heroic" undertakings, but the environment is perfect for hardy goats.

Goat's milk ricotta and a creamy sauce made from zucchini, pistachios and almonds are used to stuff the squid for a "surf and turf" combination, an effective reflection of a rugged island surrounded by blue seas that locals call *U' Scogghiu* (the rock).

FUN FACT: THE GOAT ISLAND

At one time, the prisoners from the island's penal colony would look after the goats, supplementing their diet with goat's milk and cheese. Now that the prisons have been shut, the tradition is being continued by a small but very active local business which restarted goat farming on the island in 2016. Chamois goats from the Alps were brought to the island and adapted well to the climate and environment. While grazing around the island, they keep the green areas tidy at no cost and, in the meantime, enrich their milk with the very specific aromatic notes of the typical wild plants like helichrysum, mastic, myrtle, fennel, wild garlic and rosemary. The resulting fresh and aged cheeses have excellent nutritional and sensory properties and are beginning to make a name for themselves beyond Capraia.



ROCKY COASTS

BLUE WHITING

Though a pelagic fish, the blue whiting also loves deep water. Common in the northeast Atlantic, the blue whiting is also found all over the Mediterranean Sea. It belongs to the same family as cod, but looks more like a hake. It has a slender, elongated body, compressed on the sides, with a grayish-blue color on the back that fades to white on the belly. It has three distinctive dorsal fins, a small mouth with a prominent jaw and very large eyes. This last feature has earned it the nickname of *ocialone* (literally "big eye") in the Friuli region. It feeds on small fish and crustaceans which it hunts in waters with sandy and muddy seabeds.



It can grow up to 5 feet (a meter and a half) in length, but is on average about 10 inches (25 centimeters) long. Blue whiting are fished with hooks and longlines, trawl nets or, better still, gillnets, which is always the least invasive method and more suited to respecting the size limits allowed. It is forbidden to catch fish that measure less than 8 inches (20 centimeters) long. Blue whiting do not just end up on market stalls and in kitchens, but are also turned into fish meal for feeding to livestock.

A lean fish, low in sodium and cholesterol, it is a good source of iodine, selenium and B12. Its flesh is delicate and flakes easily, which is why it is usually used in stews, so that the flavor can be boosted by spices and herbs, or coated in flour and fried quickly to stop it from breaking up. It has a lot of bones.



A FISH FOR EVERY AREA

Fichemaschie a stocchetto Dried Blue Whiting

Around Monte Argentario, tradition calls for blue whiting to be dried in the sun to turn into *fichemaschia a stocchetto*, a specialty of Porto Ercole. It is a simple product, eaten by the fishermen when times were hard, as they sold the more valuable fish in the market and kept the less-popular blue whiting that no-one else wanted for themselves. After filleting and salting the fish, they left it to dry in the air whilst they were out at sea, before returning to the shore after a few days at sea. This system provided an emergency food supply for when times were hard, when the dried fish could be used as a main ingredient in home cooking.

The classic combination is blue whiting and potatoes, prepared according to a variety of recipes which could also include tomatoes, rosemary, wine, chili, onions or garlic.

In effect, this poor man's version of salted cod, over time has earned its own annual festival, celebrating both its historical role in local food traditions and a growing appreciation of this previously neglected fish.

Fichemaschie a stocchetto is closely linked to its place of origin, and the only way to try the dried fish is to come to Monte Argentario.

FUN FACT: AN ORIGINAL NAME

There are several theories about the bizarre name, *potassòlo*, by which the fish is known in these parts. Some claim that, in the past, this was the name given to small and not particularly virile men, compared to the imaginary ideal of the big, strong man, because the dried blue whiting was the inferior version of stockfish made with the more highly prized cod. Others, however, claim the exact opposite, that the name was attributed to overly masculine women, who were considered second-class citizens, just like the poor *potassòlo*. Whatever the case, this fish perfectly exemplifies the oxymoron of being poor but good, an overlooked treat for true connoisseurs.



SOUTHERN BEACHES

ATLANTIC BONITO

The Atlantic bonito's scientific name, *Sarda sarda*, suggests an affinity with the sardine, but this fish actually belongs to the same family as tuna and mackerel, lying somewhere between the two in terms of size and weight.

An excellent swimmer thanks to its elongated, highly streamlined shape, the fish has two well-defined dorsal fins close to each other and a large forked tail. Atlantic bonito swim in large shoals and rarely venture very deep. This pelagic fish is a keen hunter of anchovies and sardines. To this end, it has a wide mouth with a very prominent lower jaw to help it swallow its prey, as well as lots of sharp teeth. The color of its skin camouflages it to some extent against the play of light on the surface of the sea.

The back ranges from blue to light blue with hints of green, while the sides are silvery, streaked with diagonal black bands. The Atlantic bonito lives in temperate or warm waters and can be found all over the Mediterranean, moving to specific areas depending on the seasons (Tuscany in fall and late spring). Traditional fishing, using large mesh gillnets, which have less impact and are more selective in terms of the size of the catch, is preferable to the trawl nets or drifting longlines used by large fishing boats.

Smaller and much less expensive than tuna, it definitely deserves more attention than it receives. Like all oily fish, the bonito is rich in Omega-3s, as well as iron, iodine and vitamins A and D. Its firm, white flesh has few bones and is delicious and very versatile in the kitchen. It can be roasted, grilled, fried, stewed or used in sauces for pasta. It is also excellent served raw as carpaccio or tartare, which showcases its distinctive, slightly acidic flavor.





Palamita sott'olio Atlantic Bonito in Oil

Atlantic bonito has long been preserved in oil as a way to avoid wasting the large numbers of fish that would remain on the boat once the more popular anchovies had been sold. A good supply of jars also meant that the fishermen always had something to put on the table, even when they could not go out to sea or the day's fishing had produced nothing.

This homemade delicacy has numerous local variations on the flavorings used, but of course always calls for olive oil, thanks to the fact that Tuscany has an abundance of extra-virgin olive oil (now with a PGI designation). The fish is cleaned and cut into large chunks, then boiled in salted water and vinegar for an hour before being deboned and left to dry. Then it is ready to be placed in glass jars with the extra-virgin olive oil. The most typical recipe calls for the addition of peppercorns, bay leaves, chili and cloves.

Even now, Atlantic bonito in oil is mostly produced for home consumption or to give to

friends, although small production chains are springing up to bring fishermen, processors and retailers together. There should be a much wider market for the product, given the ubiquitous cans of tuna that line supermarket shelves. What is necessary, first and foremost, is educating the public about food.

FUN FACT: CRAZY ABOUT BONITO

Since 2000, the town of San Vincenzo has organized an event called *Tutti Pazzi per la Palamita* ("Everybody's crazy about bonito"), which is intended to spread the word about traditional, local fishing businesses. The event has developed out of work done by Slow Food with several local chefs with the aim of promoting the true value of a fish with great potential, one that should be recognized in its own right and no longer seen as inferior to tuna.



LAGOONS AND INLAND WATERWAYS

EEL

The eel is a strange fish. It combines a snake-like appearance with the characteristics of an amphibian, as well as an incredible metamorphic ability that allows it adapt, over its lifetime, to salty, brackish and freshwater habitats, changing sex and size depending on its environment.

The eel has a very long cylindrical body, slightly flattened on the sides towards the tail, very small pectoral fins and a characteristic dorsal fin which is fused to the caudal and anal fins, forming a sort of single, very elastic ribbon. The pointed head has small eyes and a mouth with a protruding jaw and orderly rows of sharp teeth. These carnivorous fish have a very varied diet, ranging from insect larvae and worms to shellfish and fish. They are covered with a slimy skin which varies depending on its age, sex and size.

Mysteries remain about the lives of eels. Their complicated reproductive cycle involves the laying and hatching of eggs in the salty waters of the Sargasso Sea, a long journey by the fry towards the coasts of their final destination (from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean) and then up rivers to settle in lagoons, lakes or other freshwater streams. Here they become shy and nocturnal, colonizing muddy bottoms, dark gullies and murky waters, far from sources of light.

In Orbetello, there is an ancient tradition, still very much alive today, where access to the lagoon is temporarily blocked by installing barriers called *lavorieri*. These channel the fish towards static gillnets, pots and fyke nets, a system that allows only the correct size and number of eels to be selected and captured live.

The eel has oily flesh, packed with vitamins A and E, phosphorus and potassium. It is generally cooked either by grilling or roasting, but it is also delicious stewed, fried and marinated.

At one time, the fry of eels were also dredged in batter and fried. These baby eels, which swim up the Arno river in the winter, were called *ceche*, or locally *cee*. Their fishing, however, is now rightly prohibited due to the damaging effects on the species' reproduction, threatening its survival.





Anguilla scavecciata Marinated Eel

The 250 years of Spanish rule around Orbetello, Monte Argentario and the Tuscan Archipelago have left their mark on the local culinary traditions, as exemplified by the name of one of the most traditional dishes prepared with eel.

The word *scavecciata* clearly derives from the Spanish *escabeche*, used for foods that are fried then dressed with a sauce of vinegar, chili and garlic. This tradition in turn comes from the Arabic custom of marinating meat in vinegar, spices and raisins. This effective system for preserving cooked food proved very popular in Italy, with examples from across the peninsula, such as the Neapolitan *zucchine in scapece* and the Ligurian *boghe in scabeccio*. The technique is always the same, but different herbs and spices are used depending on the place: mint, saffron, sage, etc.

In Orbetello, they use rosemary. The eel is thoroughly cleaned, gutted and cut into large chunks, then fried in olive oil. In the meantime, the *ascio* is prepared by heating wine vinegar, crushed garlic, chili pepper and rosemary, then poured over the eel. It should be left at least one, if not two days, before being eaten, but around here it can also be preserved in jars for longer storage.

FUN FACT: TASTING TIPS

The locals recommend pairing *anguilla scavecciata* with a glass of Ansonaco, the typical wine from the nearby Argentario area and the island of Giglio. This distinctive wine, the bright gold color of nectar, is produced from vines that grow clinging to the steep rocky terrain. It has a pervasive scent with intense notes of ripe fruit: an experience not to be missed.



OUT TO SEA



The towers and fortifications along the Tuscan coast are a reminder of a time when the sea was a source of danger and constant monitoring was needed to repel raids from pirates and other enemies. Today, however, the region welcomes seafarers with open arms, providing them with a large number of well-equipped places to come ashore. There are three options for landing a boat: *porti turistici* (marinas), *approdi* (landings) and *ormeggi* (moorings).

Porti turistici host leisure craft, offering not only shelter and moorings, but also a series of additional services, linked to long-term moorings and the local tourist infrastructure.

Approdi are places where recreational boaters can stop within a multi-purpose port. Like marinas, they are equipped with services suitable for medium-to-long stays. Publicly owned, they are overseen by the port authority that manages the port as a whole.

Lastly, **ormeggi** are lightweight structures, owned by the state, for the arrival, mooring and departure of small boats and leisure craft in certain coastal areas.

The operations allowed are mooring, haulage, launching and dry berthing, with only a minimum of services guaranteed (electricity and water). For moorings, anchoring should be avoided so as not to harm the natural seabed.

These facilities can be located in harbors, dockyards, bays or coves, with services naturally varying depending on the setting. In Tuscany, experiencing the sea in all its nuances and occasionally coming ashore, for a stopover or to explore the mainland, has never been easier.

Recreational boaters are advised to travel safely and behave responsibly to protect the marine ecosystem. The number 1530 can always be contacted for emergencies at sea.



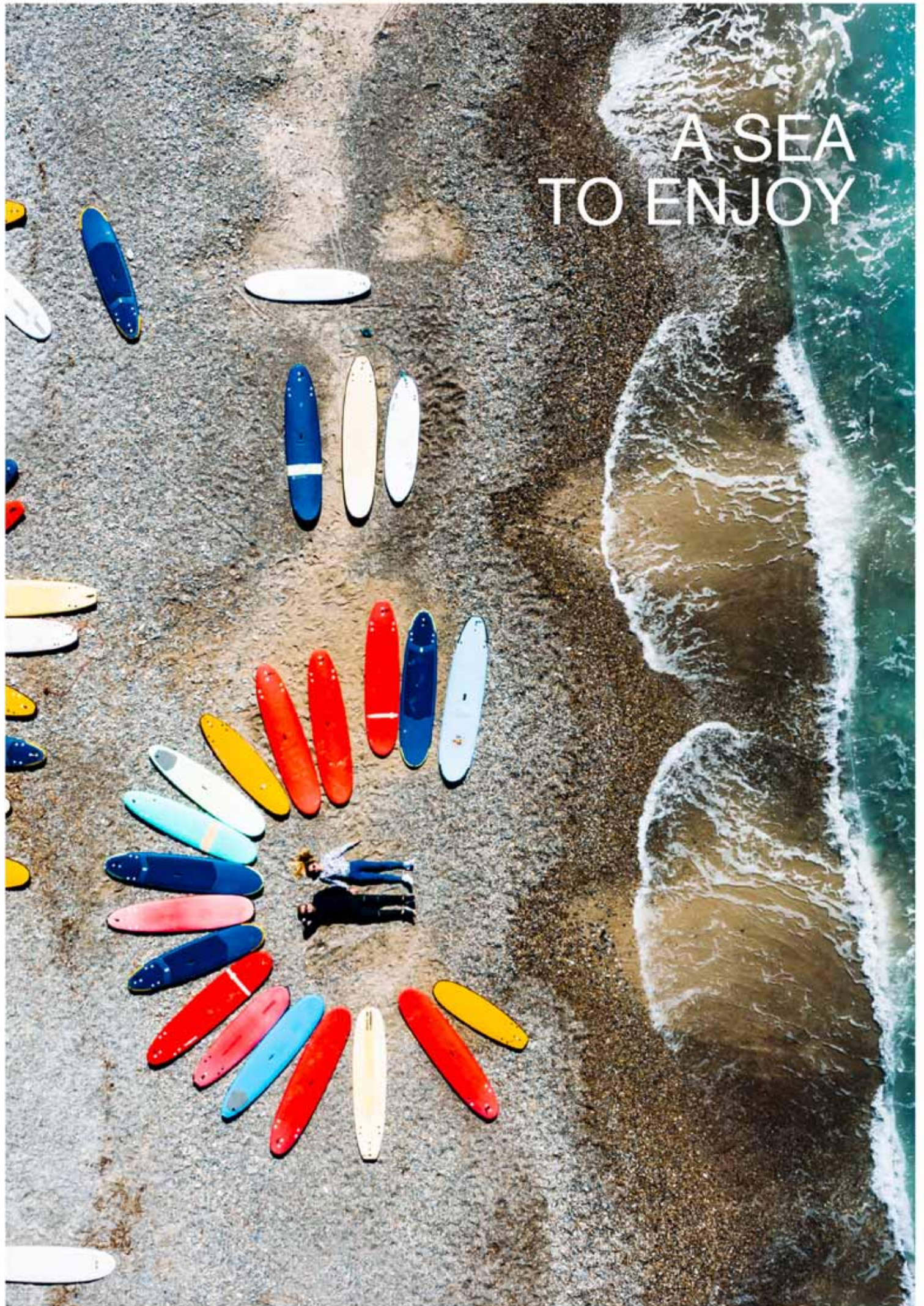
KEY

- PORTS OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE
- PORTS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE
- INFRASTRUCTURE ON THE SMALLER ISLANDS OF THE TUSCAN ARCHIPELAGO

- MARINAS
- TOURIST LANDINGS
- MOORINGS WITH THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A MARINA/TOURIST LANDING

Source: Region of Tuscany - Masterplan of Tuscan Ports

A SEA
TO ENJOY



NORTHERN COASTLINE

Fishing tourism

The Viareggio pier, where many amateur fishermen spend their days with a fishing line, is the departure point for boats that take small groups of tourists out for a day. Within a couple of hours, they reach the open sea, where the anchor is dropped and different fishing techniques are put into practice: gillnets, longlines, pots or rods. Catering is provided on board by the crew, always using "poor fish," cooked according to traditional local seafaring recipes.

The same boats also organize trips to spot dolphins or take divers to dive sites. Further north, the fishing boats that depart from Marina di Carrara allow you to "cross over" into the Ligurian Sea, towards Palmaria island, for example.

Sea watching

The Ce.Tu.S. center in Viareggio is a non-profit association that monitors, protects and studies the colony of bottlenose dolphins that live in the stretch of sea off Versilia and the islands of the archipelago, inside the PELAGOS Sanctuary, a marine protection area stretching from France to the Tyrrhenian Sea. The researchers (marine biologists and naturalists) accompany small groups of enthusiasts on eco-tourism excursions lasting a day or more aboard quiet, pollution-free sailing boats, equipped with underwater cameras and hydrophones for recording sounds underwater. They offer a truly unique opportunity to closely observe the behavior of dolphins and other cetaceans crossing the Tyrrhenian Sea.



Water sports

Versilia has always been a pioneer in water sports: from free diving to deep-sea diving in the 1950s, the arrival of the first scuba diving clubs in Italy in the 1960s and '70s and the first national surfing contest the following decade. Holidaymakers can choose from a wide array of water sports, both on and under the sea, and will be spoiled for choice in Viareggio, Forte dei Marmi and Pietrasanta, where a whole host of schools, associations and beach clubs awaits. The most popular diving destination is the area around the island of Gorgona and the nearby Secche della Meloria.

The stretch of sea between Tirrenia and Calambrone is also popular with surfers, especially in the winter, when there are no swimmers about and a southwest wind blows in, creating some big waves. Be careful if there's a swell!

The place to go for sailing enthusiasts is Marina di Massa, with its small historic sailing club offering 190 mooring places and a packed calendar of regattas.

A SEA TO BE ENJOYED





Hiking

An extensive network of well-signposted paths, with educational panels and small bird hides, crosses the Migliarino, San Rossore and Massaciuccoli park. Some of the routes are accessible to all, with well-trodden paths, walkways with handrails, tactile panels and other sensory experiences.

You can also rent canoes and paddle out onto the calm water of Lake Massaciuccoli for some birdwatching.

Thalassotherapy

Near Forte dei Marmi, not far from the sea, the Versilia Thermal Baths make use of the local resources to stimulate the circulation, drain and detox the body and purify and nourish the skin, with bathing and hydro massage in salso-bromo-iodic water, mud packs with peat extracted from the nearby Lake Massaciuccoli, scrubs with marble powder from the Apuan Alps... Versilia from head to toe!

Bicycle touring

A 17-mile (28-kilometer) cycle path, all on the flat, hugs the coastline between Marina di Massa and Viareggio, featuring plenty of places where cyclists can hop off and go for a swim.

If that doesn't tire you out, you can carry on as far as Lake Massaciuccoli by following Viale Puccini. For more experienced cyclists, or those with e-bikes, the Viareggio-Colonnata circular route is also worth mentioning: a true sea-to-mountain route, perfect for exploring Versilia, which includes a total elevation gain of 3,280 feet (1,000 meters) spread over about 55 miles (90 kilometers) of track.



PORT CITIES

LIVORNO

Boat trips

Water is an integral part of the urban landscape in Livorno and one of the most interesting ways to explore the city. The itinerary along the network of Medici canals covers all the sights, from the Fortezza Vecchia to Venezia Nuova (New Venice), with the opportunity to view fortresses, historic cellars on the water's edge, the 17th-century palaces of rich merchants and ingenious aquatic architecture and engineering solutions. You'll also pass under the Voltone in Piazza della Repubblica, the only square in Italy built over a watercourse, and can stop at the Vettovaglie Central Market. The entrance is unusual: A large staircase leads to the cellars, then into the market from the basement.



A SEA TO BE ENJOYED

Fishing tourism

For a more active boating experience, you can alight at the Darsena Vecchia, in front of the Monument of the Four Moors, where the city's fleet of fishing boats is moored. Here you can join small group trips out to sea, led by fishermen who use traditional, environmentally sustainable fishing methods. A favorite destination is the Secche della Meloria Marine Protected Area, where a rocky bank emerges from the sandy seabed, creating a peaceful environment carpeted with Neptune grass, in which various fish species seek refuge during the breeding season.

The trips generally include an afternoon departure to lower the nets and a return trip the next morning to raise the nets, unravel them and check to see what has been caught, with a first-hand lesson in fish identification. The trips are also a good opportunity to take a swim offshore, sunbathe away from the beaches and, of course, enjoy a lunch cooked onboard with the catch of the day.



PIOMBINO

Hiking

Paradoxically, the best way to discover the sea around Piombino is... from the land!

Trail 302, known as the Via dei Cavalleggeri, runs from Calamoresca to Baratti along the promontory's ridge and coastline.

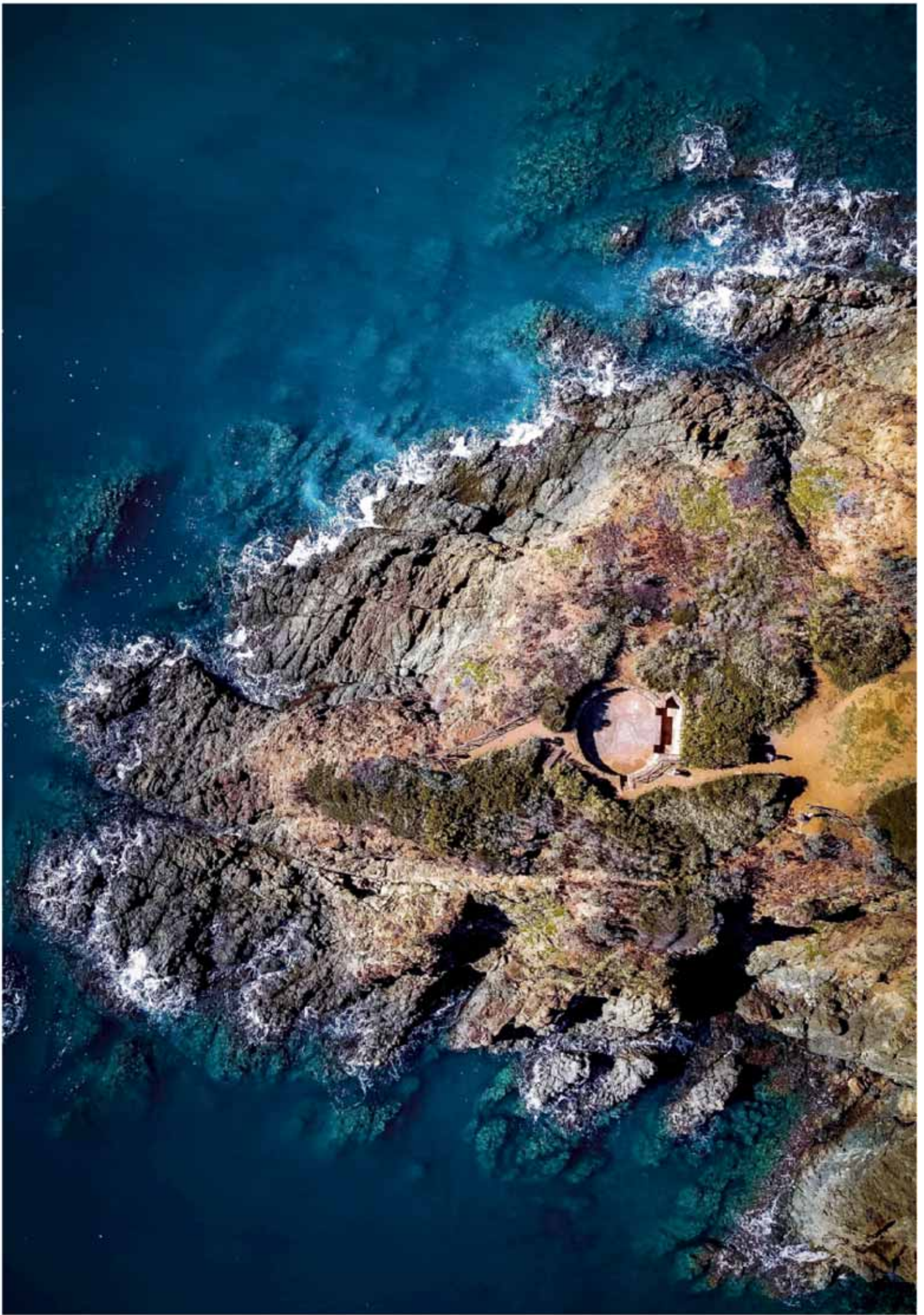
The route is very varied, with forests of pine, holm oak, cork oak, strawberry trees and mastic interspersed with fragrant swathes of broom and myrtle and dotted with archaeological remains. There are lots of panoramic views towards the islands and paths down to isolated coves with crystal-clear water. The complete route is not for everyone (about 6 miles or 10 kilometers, one way), but even just a section is worth the reward of the spectacular landscapes and unspoiled nature all year round.



Snorkeling

The starting point for hiking, Calamoresca, is also a good destination for snorkelers. Here, the rocky seabed and the clear water allow you to spot plenty of examples of the typical local sea life without too much effort, while sunset brings a rainbow of colors.

The Salivoli town beach has fine sand, and is perfect for children who want to spend hours in the sea.



TUSCAN ARCHIPELAGO

The island of Elba, the largest in the archipelago, is equipped for sports and leisure activities all year round, whether windsurfing or diving, mountain biking or multi-day trekking, photo safaris or trips down mines. Active days can finish with the treat of a dip in the sea. There is no shortage of sea-related leisure pursuits on the other islands as well. Expert guides, organized tours and customized programs are easy to find, and in some cases obligatory. Here are some suggestions.

Whale and dolphin watching

Going out by boat with an expert guide is the safest way to get close to the areas where you are most likely to spot whales or dolphins and also avoid the risk of wandering into waters that are off limits to boats for environmental protection reasons. Tours generally involve a small number of participants to minimize disturbance, and this makes it easier to get close. Scheduled departures leave from Elba and Capraia, as well as various locations along the Tuscan coast, including Marina San Vincenzo, Viareggio and Porto Santo Stefano.



Snorkeling and scuba diving

ELBA Perhaps the best-known scuba diving destination on the island of Elba, where there is no shortage of diving opportunities, is the Coralline di Capo Fonza: a long wall of rock with a sheer vertical drop down to the sandy seabed, along which you can admire branches of coral, yellow and white sea fans, moray eels, crabs and other crustaceans, grouper and, with a bit of luck, sunfish.

GIGLIO There are diving sites all around the island. Experienced divers can brave the strong currents at Punta delFenaio, below the lighthouse, to dive down to depths of 230 feet (70 meters) and admire an incredible expanse of sea fans, sea slugs, anemones, sponges, sea urchins and rare basket stars. At the opposite end, Punta del Capel Rosso, which is less deep, gives you the opportunity to spot shoals of Atlantic bonito and amberjack among spectacular red sea fans. There are diving schools and well-equipped boats in both Giglio Campese and Giglio Porto.

CAPRAIA In front of the town, between the cave under the tower and the Torretta al Bagno, lies the so-called Blue Mile, a stretch of sea reserved for swimming and protected by buoys, where you can dive, snorkel and swim along the coast for almost a mile and a quarter (2 kilometers), there and back. You can also dive all around the island, joining trips organized by the local diving school on special dive boats. There are numerous places to dive, especially off the eastern coast, which is more sheltered. Here the calmer water allows you to explore the sea in total safety and rewards you with plenty to see.

GIANNUTRI offers divers access to meadows of Neptune grass and ancient wrecks.

PIANOSA Be aware that it is only possible to dive independently from the Cala Giovanna beach, while you must join an organized trip for the beautiful Cala dei Turchi.

Hiking

MONTECRISTO The only activity you can do on this island is hiking, making it a paradise for anyone who loves walking and enjoying the incredible spectacle of the sea from above.

ELBA The GTE route, the Grande Traversata Elbana, runs across the island from northeast to southwest, starting from Cavo, with stops in Porto Azzurro, Marina di Campo and Marciana, before arriving in Pomonte or Patresi. The entire route would take 5 to 8 hours of walking a day for a total of four days, going up and down between the sea and the mountains, offering an incredible panorama of landscapes, natural habitats and history. The highest point is Monte Capanne, 3,343 feet (1,019 meters) above sea level. The less fit can take a panoramic shortcut and reach the peak with the fast cablecar that departs from Marciana.

Fishing tourism

CAPRAIA Sea trips with fishermen are allowed, in compliance with the limits imposed by the park on the number of hooks per line, drift fishing or longline.

It is also possible to buy sea bream and sea bass reared in aquaculture systems directly in the sea, near the coast, using sustainable methods: small numbers of fish, natural oxygenation thanks to strategic positioning along the sea current lines and no use of antibiotics or other medicines.



GIGLIO The island offers both traditional fishing tourism (accompanying the fishermen on a trip to lower the nets, then eating the catch together) and professional fishing tourism (actively participating in hauling in the nets and getting first-hand experience of what the work involves). Alternatively, you can hire a boat with fishing equipment and a crew.

Fish tourism

CAPRAIA In the evening, the fish shop on the pier turns into an open-air kiosk, the ideal destination for a stroll at the end of the day to enjoy a seafood appetizer made using the catch of the day.

Thalassotherapy

ELBA At the San Giovanni Thermal Baths, near Portoferraio, the sea is used for beneficial purposes: inhalations and dips in sea water with a high iodine content, anti-cellulite algae wraps, mud packs from the salty basins with high mineral concentrations, as well as salt rooms, saunas, whirlpools and more. Excellent if you suffer from rhinitis, joint pain, rheumatism and skin conditions, but also good for the body in general.



ROCKY COASTS

CALAFURIA

Hiking

From Livorno, you can walk south along the seafront, passing through Calafuria, to explore the system of watchtowers built to defend the coast against pirate attacks. A circular sea-mountain route is more challenging but incredibly interesting, leading from the Castello di Boccale on the coast to Castellaccio along the Fosso Maroccone ridge, passing by the panoramic fire-fighting tower of Montaccio, before going back down Via del Telegrafo. With a maximum elevation gain of 300 meters, the itinerary is suitable for hiking and mountain biking.

Snorkeling and diving

The little gulf of Calafuria is very popular with scuba diving schools because the sea floor slopes gently down from the pebbly beach to the sandy bottom, making it possible to teach diving techniques gradually, one depth at a time.

As well as being easy to access, the waters of Calafuria offer you the chance to swim among the swathes of Neptune grass, submerged rocks covered in coral and small caves. It is common to spot dentex, bream, barracuda and various crustaceans. Even simple snorkeling can be a greatly rewarding experience.



MONTE ARGENTARIO

Fishing tourism

In Porto Santo Stefano and Porto Ercole, small groups of tourists can join fishing trips on traditional small fishing boats like those known as *paranze*. Departure early in the morning, breakfast on the boat while sailing along the promontory, fishing with environmentally friendly methods and lunch on board with whatever has been caught: anchovies, turbot, salema, scorpionfish, white sea bream, striped sea bream, cuttlefish... The sea decides the menu! A swim is often included.

Diving

The waters around Monte Argentario are perfect for scuba diving and there is no shortage of diving schools. The best karstic coves and caves along the promontory are usually reached from the water, while a favorite destination for divers are two rocks that emerge from the sea: the Argentarola rock to the northwest and the Isolotto off the southwest coast.

A very popular diving destination, with two

submerged stalactite and stalagmite caves, Argentarola has vast expanses of floating yellow and red sea fans, as well as shoals of red damselfish, grouper and barracuda. At the Isolotto, on the other hand, you may spot moray and conger eels, feather stars and nudibranchs. In both cases, the seabed is home to lobsters and delicate red coral branches. Make sure to just remember: You can look, but never touch!

Water sports

Monte Argentario's long coasts are perfect for water sports. The beaches along the isthmuses are generally more popular for windsurfing, kitesurfing and paddleboarding, while sailing boats venture off the promontory. There are numerous schools and associations that hire out equipment and organize courses and trips out to sea, including one in Porto Ercole specially designed to introduce children to the trades associated with the sea.



Trekking

The Monte Argentario area is also a highly recommended destination for anyone who loves walking. There are short routes that, in just over half an hour, lead from the top of the cliffs to some amazing coves, and other more challenging ones that cross the promontory and allow you to discover its geological and naturalistic diversity. The latter includes the Monte Argentario circular route that explores the western side of the promontory, running from Santo Stefano to Torre di Capo d'Uomo, passing Poggio Spadino on the way out and Torre dell'Argentiera on the way back. With plenty of uphill and downhill sections spread out over 7 hours of walking, it is not for everyone, but it is certainly the best way to get a good feel for the nature of the place, walking high up on the ridge overlooking Cala Piccola with a truly spectacular panoramic view.

Some trails are also suitable for mountain biking and horse riding, but make sure you keep an eye on the signs to avoid getting lost.



SOUTHERN BEACHES

Fishing tourism

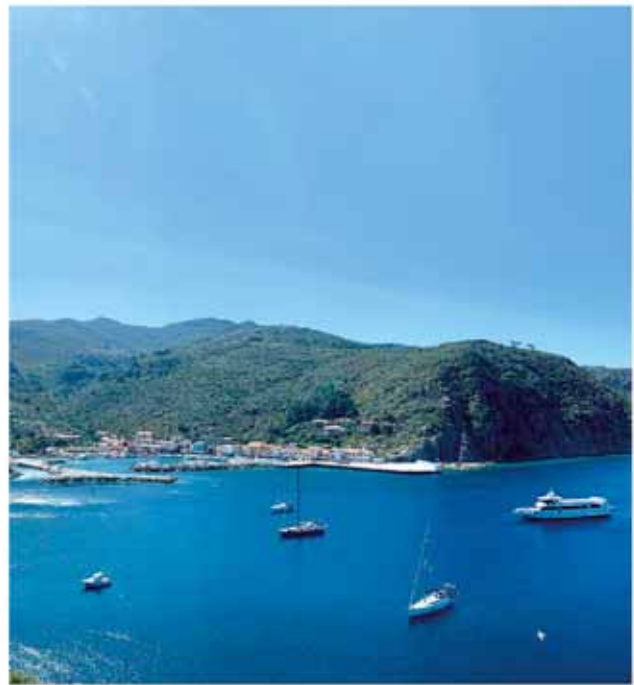
The Maremma was one of the first places to promote fishing tourism in Tuscany. If you want to give it a go, there are early morning departures from Talamone. During the boat trip, you will discover sea caves and cliffs where seagulls and peregrine falcons nest and hear stories of pirates and other seafarers, but once in position, against the backdrop of the Uccellina Mountains, the nets are lowered and the ones from the previous day are raised. The haul will be different every day, depending on the season, currents and many other factors, meaning the lunch menu will be decided on the day.

Fish tourism

A fish-based culinary culture can be found all along the coast, with numerous seafood restaurants supplied daily by local fishing boats. Take a seat under the pergola of the rustic kiosk in Riotorto to enjoy the set menu of the day, or on the terrace of one of the fine-dining restaurants in Marina di Bibbona and Cecina—including a Japanese fusion option—to sample the local specialties.

Water sports

You can take part in kitesurfing, surfing, windsurfing, paddleboarding and wing foil courses or rent the necessary equipment along the entire Etruscan coast, especially in Bibbona, Castagneto Carducci and Vada (Rosignano Marittimo). Surfing and sailing are available at Baratti.



Snorkeling and diving

Snorkeling at Baratti and the nearby Buca delle Fate is a rewarding experience. Here you can spot sea bream, sea bass, salema, octopus and white seabream. If you go scuba diving, you may also see grouper, spiny lobsters, common lobsters, moray eels and barracuda, as well as rocks dotted with starfish and sponges. Just contact the diving schools in the marina for guided diving excursions. The seabed is also suitable for snorkeling in Torre Mozza, near Follonica. The long, straight underwater reef off the beach is thought by some to be a stretch of the ancient Via Aurelia, though only fish and octopus travel along it now.

Thalassotherapy

In Marina di Castagneto, just a stone's throw from the sea, a former summer camp surrounded by dunes and Mediterranean scrub has become a modern thalassotherapy facility, which takes advantage of the combination of the sea, climate, seaweed and mud to offer two-hour relaxation and well-being sessions.

The program includes five saltwater pools, pure and rich in iodine, plus different

algae treatments, with a moisturizing and remineralizing effect. Mud taken from the sea, rich in plankton and fragments of seaweed, which is applied to relieve joint and muscle tension.

Hiking

The Sterpaia Coastal Park, south of Piombino, is crossed by a circular two-hour route suitable for all ages, accessible and well signposted, with explanatory panels, wooden walkways and some bronze sculptures. From San Vincenzo, on the other hand, you can walk up 3 miles (5 kilometers) of footpaths to the San Carlo hill, at the foot of Monte Calvi, from where various nature paths branch off. These can be explored on foot, horseback or mountain bike.

The Corbezzolo trail has several variations, suitable for all levels of fitness, including a climb up to the local massif for the fit. From the sun-soaked coast, you quickly pass into a wooded karst landscape full of surprises, dotted with numerous caves and holes.

Volunteers of the sea

The tartAmare association and its rescue center run volunteer summer camps along the Tuscan coast between the Cornia River and Principina a Mare. The mission: to identify, protect and monitor the nests of the Caretta caretta turtle. Participants must be at least 18, love sea turtles and enjoy the sea, long walks on the beach and life in contact with nature.



A SEA TO BE ENJOYED



LAGOONS AND INLAND WATERWAYS

ORBETELLO

Hiking and biking

The 12 miles (20 kilometers) around the lagoon can be walked or cycled, or, if you are slightly less ambitious, you might be happy just to tackle the stretch that crosses the Duna Feniglia Nature Reserve on the southern isthmus, which offers all the highlights. There are huts for watching water birds on the lagoon side and splendid dunes covered in the now rare sand vegetation on the sea side. The path winds through a forest of pine, cork oak and holm oak, where you may well spot deer, foxes and the green woodpecker. On the Giannella isthmus, the WWF Oasis has organized three walking routes to admire the over 250 species of birds that live on this strip of land and water.

Fishing tourism

The Orbetello fishermen's cooperative has been in existence since 1946 and has the exclusive rights to farm, catch and sell the lagoon's fish. Having been here for generations, no-one is better prepared to tell you all about this fragile ecosystem, the centuries-old fishing techniques and typical fish species. To this end, they organize boat trips, during which it is also easy to spot water birds and fishing boats at work. The play of light between sky and water gives you the sensation of floating on a mirror.



Fish tourism

The cooperative also organizes early-evening boat trips with drinks and snacks, while their restaurant on the Ponente Lagoon serves sea bass, sea bream, gray mullet, eels, shrimp and crabs, transformed into the most characteristic dishes of the Maremma fishing tradition. The only exception to the "zero food miles" rule is the Atlantic bonito, which travels just a short distance from the waters of the Tuscan Archipelago and has a long local tradition. In addition to the restaurant, there is also a tasting room where you can buy bottarga, smoked mullet and prepared sauces.





A SEA TO BE ENJOYED

NAVICELLI

Fishing tourism

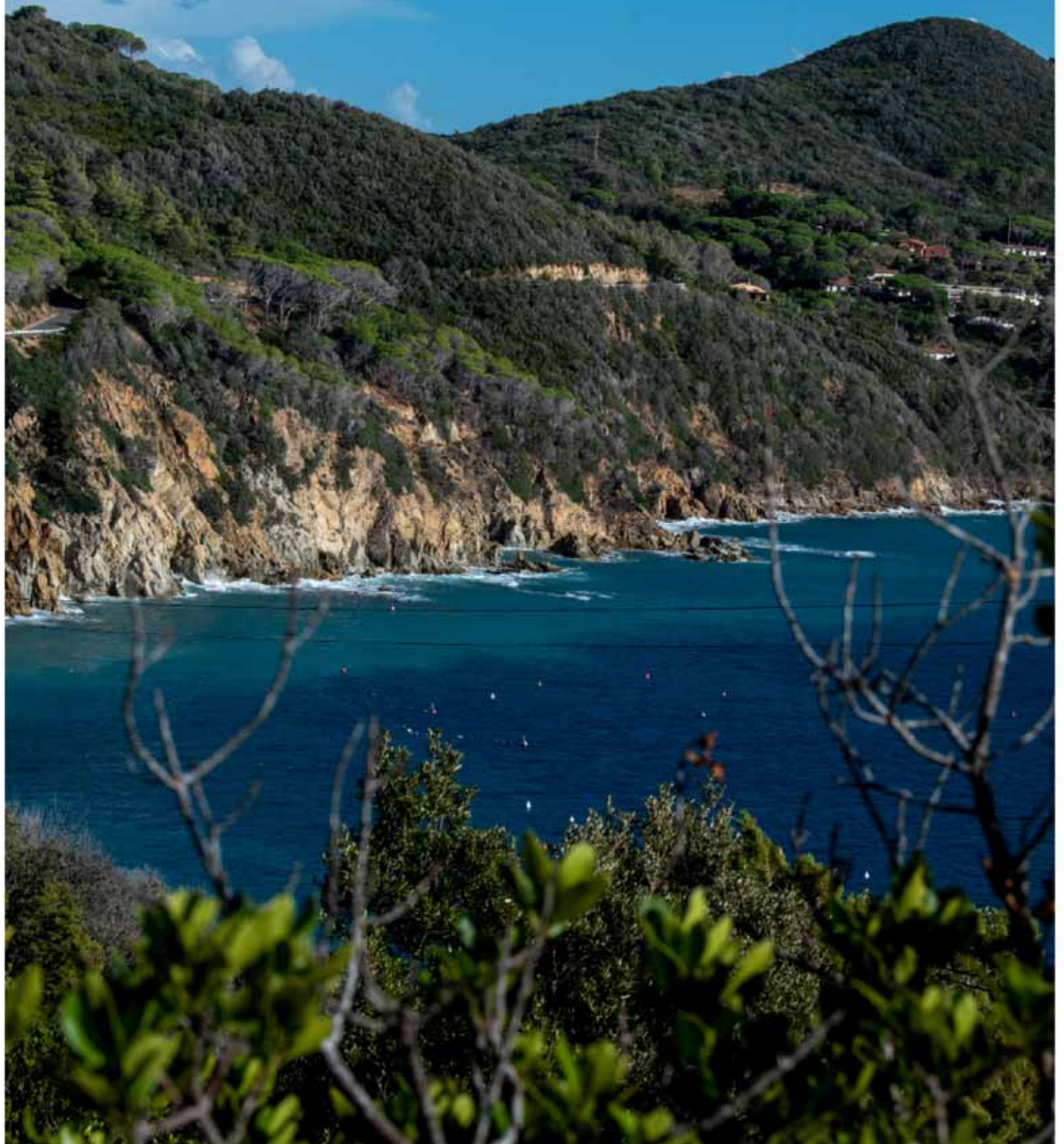
The Retoni di Boccadarno fishing huts can be rented for the day. You can take advantage of the expert guidance of a fisherman or have a go on your own. Each hut has room for up to five people and the spartan furnishings include a table, pantry, camp beds and a small kitchen. Take some oil and a pan with you, ready to prepare a delicious fish fry!

Cycling

You can reach the mouth of the River Arno by pedaling in complete tranquility along the Trammino cycling path, following the old local railway line which, until the 1960s, took the people of Pisa to the seaside: 8 miles (13 kilometers) on the flat, suitable for everyone. Recommended stops: the Romanesque Basilica of San Pietro Apostolo in Grado, with a vast cycle of frescoes from the 14th century.



FISHING TECHNIQUES, TRADITIONS AND RECIPES



SAND

The sandy seabeds are constantly in motion, making it impossible for plants to take root there. In compensation, however, they are home to many different microorganisms and worms, annelids and crustaceans, on which feed the sand-dwelling fish, aptly known as *grufolatori* ("snufflers"). To swim close to the bottom, they have developed a flat belly, and sometimes broad, wing-like pectoral fins.

Along the Tuscan coasts live rays, sole, picarel, bogue, striped sea bream, moray eels, conger eels, barracuda, bluefish and red mullet, as well as small musky octopuses, related to common octopuses, and a large number of bivalve mollusks, sea snails and slugs, which burrow in the sand and filter the water. These include razor clams, wedge clams, carpetshell clams, mussels and the unusual murex (or spiny dye-murex), which in ancient times was used to extract Tyrian purple dye.

Fishing methods

Small-scale fishing on sandy coasts is done mainly with bottom longlines, long cables to which at least a hundred hooks are attached in a row, with a weight to keep them secured to the seabed, or with a trawl net from the shore, surrounding nets and by trawling further out. For shells, rakes in the form of typical nets with teeth or blades that sink a few inches into the sand are used. Only razor clams are harvested by diving, with a stick with a sort of cone on the top which is inserted in the holes in the sand that give away the presence of the mollusks.

In the kitchen

Sand-dwelling fish are often all served together. Red mullet, gurnard, weever and scorpionfish are needed to prepare a proper *pasta alla trabaccolara*. This recipe, originally from the Marche region, arrived in Viareggio in the early 20th century. It was brought by fishing families who had migrated from San Benedetto del Tronto in search of a better life, bringing the fishing boats called *trabaccoli* with them.



The small, imperfect or discarded fish left unsold at the end of the day are cooked with garlic, onion, parsley, tomato and wine and served over short pasta. This delicious first course has now become a true classic of Tuscan cuisine.

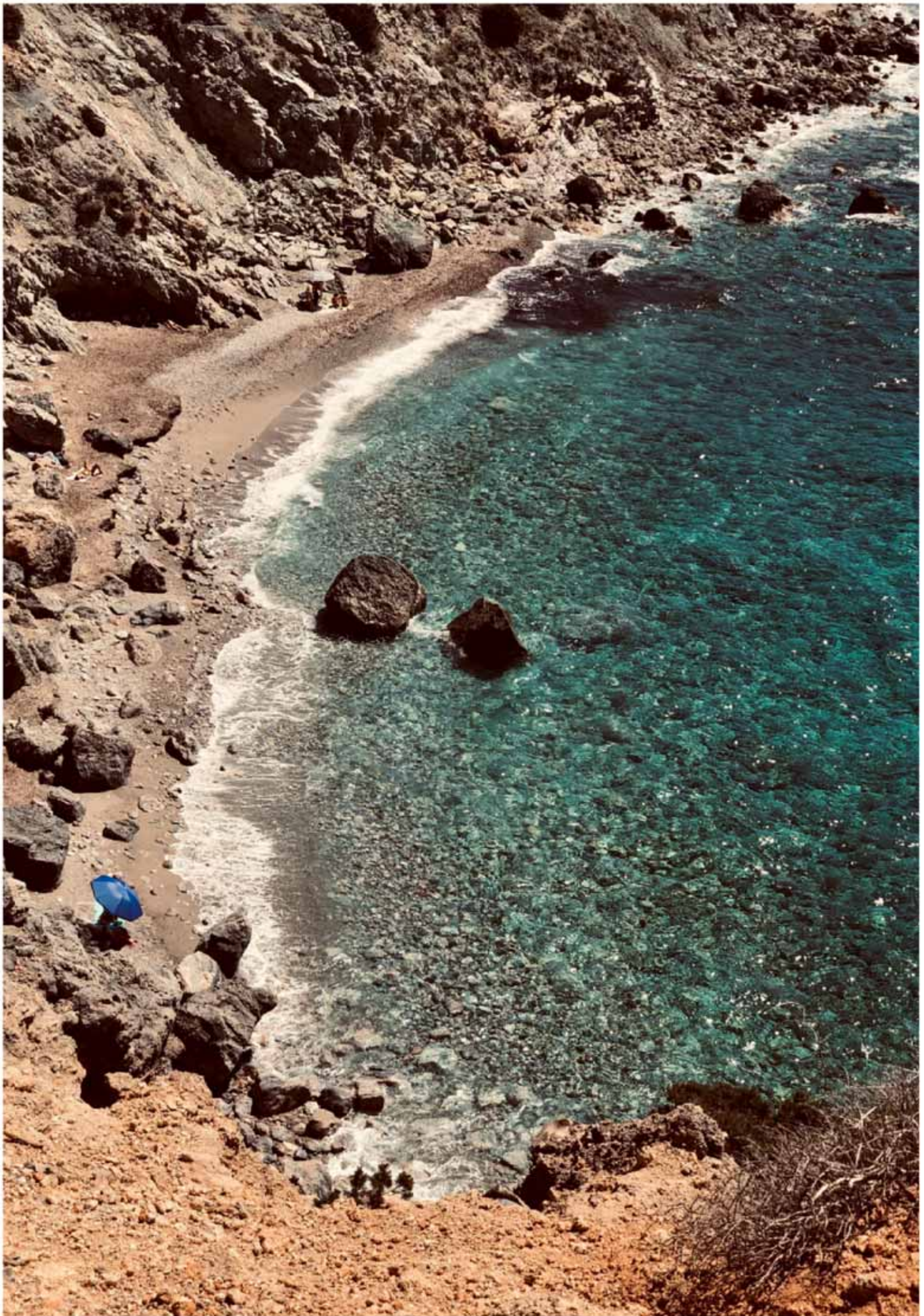
Frittura di paranza takes its name from another type of coastal fishing boat. It is also prepared based on the saying “the more the better”: lots different small fish, dusted in semolina flour and then plunged into boiling oil until crisp and delicious.

A mixed seafood fry is in fact a typical dish served all along the Italian coast and never follows a specific list of ingredients. Local variations are dictated by what the sea has to offer in a certain area (or season) and by preferences for one herb or another. In Tuscany you will most likely find red mullet, sole, scorpionfish, damselfish, hake, conger eel, anchovies and gurnard.

On the island of Elba, spiny dye-murex is chopped up and used to sauce spaghetti or linguine, while razor clams are more typical in Livorno. Wedge and carpetshell clams are also served over pasta, but their small size means they are left in the shell.

Mazzancolla (known here as *sparnocchio*) lives on sandy seabeds along shallow coastal areas. This medium-size shrimp spends the day hidden in the sand and only comes out at night. When still small, it prefers plankton-rich lagoon waters or river estuaries, but once it reaches adulthood, it settles on the seabed. Once caught, with nets or pots, chefs are spoiled for choice on how to cook the crustaceans, since there are so many recipes available. The most typically Tuscan preparation may well be *sparnocchi con fagiolo schiaccione* (shrimp with Schiaccione beans) from Versilia: a perfect combination of “surf and turf” ingredients.





ROCKS

The rocky coastlines are home to an amazing variety of fish which love to congregate among the vegetation of Neptune grass, sea fans and red and green seaweed: peacock wrasse, rainbow wrasse, scorpionfish, blenny, comber, bogue, striped red mullet, tub gurnard, Atlantic stargazer, monkfish, weever, painted comber, goby. The rocks are also the ideal habitat for bivalves, sea snails and slugs, sea urchins and starfish, crustaceans such as lobsters and crabs and cephalopods: cuttlefish, octopuses, squid and flying squid. The characteristic which all these rock-dwelling creatures have in common is their remarkable ability to camouflage themselves: rough and ridged shells to hide among the rocks, highly colorful skin to blend into the floating branches of the underwater forests, pliant shapes to help adhere to the rock.

Fishing methods

This can make fishing in rocky areas quite complicated, as does the highly delicate nature of a harsh and jagged seabed that must be explored carefully to avoid destroying

and disturbing it, for example through the indiscriminate use of drag nets, chisels, scrapers or rakes. So take care and be inventive!

Fishing is usually done from a skiff, a small, fast, easy-to-handle boat, suitable for maneuvering around rocks and narrow recesses. Pots and various types of traps are used, but also a line, sinker and specific hooks for mollusks such as cuttlefish, squid and octopus that hide in the rocks, or more amateur systems such as floats for fishing for croakers in Monte Argentario. The technique normally used is drift fishing or light trawling. It is important to remember that on rocks, you do not catch shoals of fish, just a few specimens, and they must be drawn out of their hiding places. Dangling traditional bait in the water is not enough to tempt an octopus, a cautious and intelligent animal. You can try using artificial light (or go out on nights with a full moon), or gently sway the fishing lines to convince the animal to come out into the open and away from the rock.

Rock fishing is very popular. Enthusiasts flock to Giglio at the end of the summer in search of amberjack and dentex. The elderly islanders, however, fish from the dock and





along the coasts virtually all year round, using just a simple line and hooks.

In the kitchen

Those few little fish that do end up biting—perhaps peacock wrasse, picarel, scorpionfish and some crabs—will go in a pot with water, onion, celery, a tomato and seasonal herbs. Short pasta or broken-up spaghetti is added after half an hour, and the soup is done. A dish that can be found in every home on Giglio and which restaurants now also proudly serve.

The archipelago cuisine specializes in cephalopods: octopus, cuttlefish and squid, stuffed, fried or stewed. An annual festival is dedicated to **squid** on Capraia, where they are often stuffed with breadcrumbs, eggs, garlic and parsley, browned in oil with onion and chili and then braised with tomato. The recipe from Versilia is similar, with the addition of white wine. Minced anchovies can also be added to the squid stuffing.

In Livorno, **cuttlefish** are cooked in *zimino*, a dish similar to ones found in Liguria, which achieves a fine balance of ingredients from land and sea: The cuttlefish, cut into large

chunks, are browned in oil with garlic and chili then stewed with white wine, blanched chard and a little tomato.

Octopus is boiled in Elba, cooked with onion, chili and lots of tomato in Piombino and doused with generous amounts of alcohol in Livorno, where it is first seasoned with onion and bay leaf before the addition of two large glasses of red wine. Back in Elba it is also prepared *in galera* (literally “in prison”): sealed in a closed pan and slowly steam-cooked with garlic and parsley.

Rock fish, however, mostly end up in soup, roasted in the oven with potatoes (especially amberjack, snapper and wrasse), in mixed seafood fries or over spaghetti together with octopus and mussels.

Tuscan **mussels** come from sustainable mussel farms along on the east coast of Piombino, opposite the Torre del Sale, run by a young but very active cooperative. In the kitchen they can be found in *cacciucco*; cooked in the Livorno style, with garlic, parsley, tomato and white wine; or stewed with saffron as they do in Lido di Camaiore.



SEAFOOD SOUPS

Ribollita, pappa al pomodoro, acquacotta...

Tuscany is the land of soups and the region's coastal cooking is no exception. **Cacciucco livornese** reigns supreme, a dish with such a well-established identity that the five c's in its name have been turned into the "5 C" certification: Characteristic, Classic, Cooked with Care and Competence.

Like many seafood dishes, *cacciucco* is the result of a meeting of cultures in a cosmopolitan port; its name seems to come from the Turkish word *küçük* ("small"). The dish evolved at the end of the 17th century and combines many types of fish, without one dominating: the perfect way to use up any small, low-grade fish left unsold at the end of the day.

There is no official recipe, because precise amounts are not important. What counts is the method and general sense of the dish. Garlic and sage are lightly fried in oil with a pinch of chili pepper to taste, then chunks of octopus and cuttlefish are added, plus tomato and red wine. After the liquid has reduced, the

fish is added gradually in order of consistency, either whole or in large pieces depending on the type. The fish used to make *cacciucco* vary with the seasons and even the day, because whatever the sea has to offer is incorporated: dogfish, Atlantic stargazer, scorpionfish, gurnard, weever, monkfish, houndshark, gobies, moray eels, conger eel and so on. If the cuttlefish have eggs, these are also added to the pan to add body. Mantis shrimp and mussels are the last ingredients to be added. As the soup cooks, a few ladlefuls of strained fish stock, made from bony fish and herbs, are added. It is then finally brought to the table and served over slices of toasted, garlicky bread, carefully dividing the fish between the bowls before pouring over some of the broth.

💡 FUN FACT: THE DIGESTIVO

At the end of the meal, the people of Livorno like to wash everything down with a *digestivo*, or *digestif*, known as *ponce*. This typical local hot drink dates back to the 18th century, when it was invented using a newly popular product from the Indies, coffee, flavored with rum, sugar and lemon.





Viareggio's *cacciucco* has no sage, wine or fishbones and very little garlic. The oldest recipes list only fish and cuttlefish, without any other shellfish, but the real difference with Livorno's version is the type of fish used: sand-welling fish in Viareggio and rock-dwelling fish in Livorno. Some say that the Viareggio version is lighter on the palate and stomach, whereas others consider it to be a poorer version of the more noble dish from Livorno. The only solution is to try them both. In Tuscan cooking, the term "*cacciucco*" can also be used to describe dishes with a mixture of legumes and vegetables that have nothing to do with the sea.

Southern Tuscany has its own rival to *cacciucco*: Monte Argentario's *caldaro* takes its name from the cooking pot that fishermen used to take on board with them. Fish were tossed into this pot as they were caught along with some sea water, now replaced by much tastier fish broth. Onion is used instead of garlic, and octopus tentacles are curled in boiling water before being added to the soup, plus a dash of white wine—always the local Ansonica.

Whether *cacciucco* or *caldaro*, these fish soups offer a whole meal in a bowl, a concentration of flavors and fragrances, rich in Omega-3s, protein and vitamins. It would take forever and a day to list all the infinite varieties of seafood soups, broths and stews found in the region, but we would like to mention two dishes that were typically prepared on board fishing boats to accompany the day's catch: *bordatino* and *pancotto*, both originally from Pisa. The first is a soft polenta, at one time made from buckwheat and now from corn, with a flavor base (*soffritto*) incorporating whatever ingredients were available at the time, and always beans, while the second recycles stale bread, transforming it into a simple, nutritious dish to which pecorino cheese and herbs can be added.

 **FUN FACT: MUST-HAVE INGREDIENTS**

Whatever the type of soup, there are two accompaniments that should never be missing: unsalted sourdough bread (*pane sciocco*), baked in a wood-fired oven, the slices rubbed with garlic, and extra-virgin olive oil. Without these two classic Tuscan additions, no local dish can be said to be complete.



LAGOONS AND INLAND WATERWAYS

A healthy lagoon is home to a large variety of fish species, all of which are good to eat: bream, bass, gray mullet, smelt (known here as *calcinelli*), eels, mantis shrimp and small crabs called *femminelle*.

These species tolerate variations in salinity and can live in salty, brackish or even fresh water. They like shallow, muddy seabeds and are biologically conditioned to lay their eggs in the sea. The proximity between the sea and the lagoon plays to their advantage, allowing freedom of movement through the outlet channels. When the high tide enters the lagoon, the fish, attracted by the saltwater, move through the crowded outlets into the sea, especially during the breeding season.

Fishing methods

Local fishermen, who are well acquainted with these comings and goings between the sea and the lagoon, position themselves at the entrance to the channels, setting up

temporary high-tide barriers, known as *lavorieri*, which intercept the outgoing fish and channel them into a series of consecutive chambers with no escape. The fish suitable for capture are selected and all the others—small, immature or surplus to requirements—are released. This ancient fishing method, dating back to Etruscan times, is complemented by gillnets (three consecutive rows of nets with gradually narrower meshes), the *martavello* (a fyke net) and woven traps, all used for selective, sustainable fishing. This means no by-catch or discards because the quantity and quality of the catch are regulated early in the process, while the fish are still alive.

What's more, the life cycle of each species is respected, so fishing is seasonal: mantis shrimp in winter and spring; *femminelle* and *calcinelli* (small crabs and smelt) in winter only; gray mullet, eels and sea bass throughout the year.

This pursuit of balance between economic needs and respect for nature is why fishing in Orbetello can be called truly sustainable, and is sustainable along the entire supply chain, which includes hatcheries, fishing, environmental improvements, food service and processing.



In the kitchen

Fish that arrive from such a well-monitored and protected environment invariably meet the Slow Food criteria of being good, clean and fair.

Let's start with the best of the best, which in Orbetello means bottarga produced with eggs from the gray mullet (*Mugil cephalus*) following a strictly artisanal process. This ancient technique, probably of Arab origin, demands great dexterity in order to extract the eggs without breaking the thin sac that protects them. They are then salted and dried in several stages that last about two weeks. The finished product looks like a long, dark-pink, slightly flattened sausage, compact and slightly moist. The bottarga is eaten as an appetizer, thinly sliced and dressed with lemon and oil, or grated over pasta, usually spaghetti. With its intense, distinctive flavor, not unlike truffle, a simple grating is enough to add a touch of character to any dish. Try some toasted bread topped with a poached egg and shavings of bottarga, perhaps paired with a glass of Maremma Ansonica.

Another distinguished visitor is the eel; an intrepid ocean swimmer in the breeding season, during the rest of the year it lurks shyly near the lagoon bottom. Eels are caught in gillnets hung on mobile, cross-like structures known as *crocioni*, and typically served during the winter. In fact eel is a traditional Christmas and New Year's dish in various regions of Central and Southern Italy. In Orbetello, eel is served *scavecciata*, fried and then marinated in vinegar, or *sfumata nera*, a complex preparation finished off by smoking over a fire.

There was a time when the eel was such a common fish that even the very young fry ended up in the pan: The transparent young eels would be sautéed with garlic and sage,



or coated in batter and fried. But their fishing is now banned due to its enormous impact on the reproduction of the species. The young of oily fish (whitebait) are also subject to similar restrictions.

Pots are used to catch *femminelle*, small sand crabs caught during the winter period, when they have shed their old shells and the new shells are still soft and edible. In and around Venice these small crabs are known as *moleche* and generally fried, but in Orbetello they are used to make a flavorful soup with potatoes, cauliflower and tomato.

Sea bream and sea bass are abundant in the lagoon and along the coast. Demand is so high for these well-known, popular fish that they are often farmed. But intensive aquaculture, often unsustainable and environmentally damaging, is avoided in Orbetello. Instead, the young fish are bred then released into the lagoon once large enough. Their movement is not limited and they are not artificially fed, which means healthier, happier fish—and consumers. In Tuscany, you can start your lunch off with a *risotto alle spigolette*, a sea bass risotto seasoned with nutmeg and tomato, and finish with sea bream dusted with flour and roasted in the oven with potatoes, garlic and rosemary.



DEEP SEA

Pelagic fish live in large shoals out in the open sea, in the depths during winter and closer to the surface in the summer during the breeding season. They are generally known collectively as *pesce azzurro* ("blue fish" in Italian) because of the color of their skin, which acts as camouflage in the water.

Some, like anchovies and sardines, are small, and despite being exploited by the fishing industry they are not yet endangered due to their high, fast reproduction rate. Others are medium in size, like dorado, horse mackerel and scabbardfish, while larger species, with firm and compact flesh, include amberjack, albacore, Atlantic bonito, plus some swordfish in the archipelago. Blue whiting, mackerel and hake are also pelagic.

Fishing methods

Due to their gregarious nature, they are easy to catch in static gillnets, such as wide-meshed *palamitare*, or surrounding nets. Trawling and driftnets, on the other hand, are

considered harmful to the seabed or not very selective, leading to much of the catch being discarded or too much by-catch, including a worrying number of cetaceans. *Palamitare* are a passive fishing system where the nets are lowered into parts of the sea where shoals pass and fishermen wait for the fish to be caught in them. Surrounding nets, or *ciancioli*, are usually used at night to cordon off the fishing area, then the circle is gradually tightened until the fish are closed inside a sort of large net bag.

In the kitchen

From a dietary point of view, all these fish are packed with protein and Omega-3s and are low in cholesterol. These common fish tend to be well known to consumers, who like them because they are easy to cook and very nutritious. In Tuscany, even the less well-known blue whiting and Atlantic bonito have a long culinary history, the former typically dried and the latter packed in oil.

Many pelagic fish lend themselves to preservation in salt or oil, making them very successful commercially. **Marinades** with vinegar or lemon, on the other hand, allow



fresh fish to preserved for less time but produce very tasty results.

These fish lend themselves to many different preparations, particularly as appetizers. On Giglio, for example, slices of Atlantic bonito are boiled in water with a whole lemon and orange, then marinated in vinegar and finally dressed with a little olive oil and minced garlic, fresh chili pepper, bay leaf and rosemary. Bonito can also be used to make an excellent tartare, flavored with pickled onions, honey and lemon. Amberjack and dorado are also eaten raw in tartare, while in Livorno, **anchovies** are prepared simply by filleting and marinating them for a day in vinegar and lemon, then covering them with thinly sliced rings of fresh onion. This recipe is also sometimes used for horse mackerel.

More complex preparations involve cooking followed by marinating. On Elba, **sardines in scabeccio** are fried and covered with a sweet-and-sour sauce made by sautéing onions, garlic, rosemary, thyme and pine nuts. Vinegar is poured over and raisins are added, then the dish is left to rest for a few hours before serving. This is a recipe with a clear Sephardic Jewish influence and probably dates back to the time when Tuscany was a Spanish protectorate.





From Massa to Monte Argentario, the Tuscan coast and the region's islands offer adventures and spiritual journeys, medieval villages and cultural treasures, water sports and cycle paths, wedding venues and beaches: something for every traveller, of every age.

Tuscan Coast – Tuscan Islands is a pilot tourism development project along the coast which through thematic and integrated itineraries aims to create a sustainable tourism model that can be rolled out at a national level.

Key elements include cutting emissions with new transport services, drastically reducing the amount of waste produced, promoting best practices and respecting and conserving biodiversity.

The region's many Blue Flag beaches, a sign of their excellence and sustainability, and 900 plastic-free beach clubs are the first tangible results of this approach.

The Tuscan Coast - Tuscan Islands project aims to increase, enhance and promote these efforts. Find out more at



TASTING NOTES - NOTES FROM THE SEA 

15 horizontal blue lines for writing notes.





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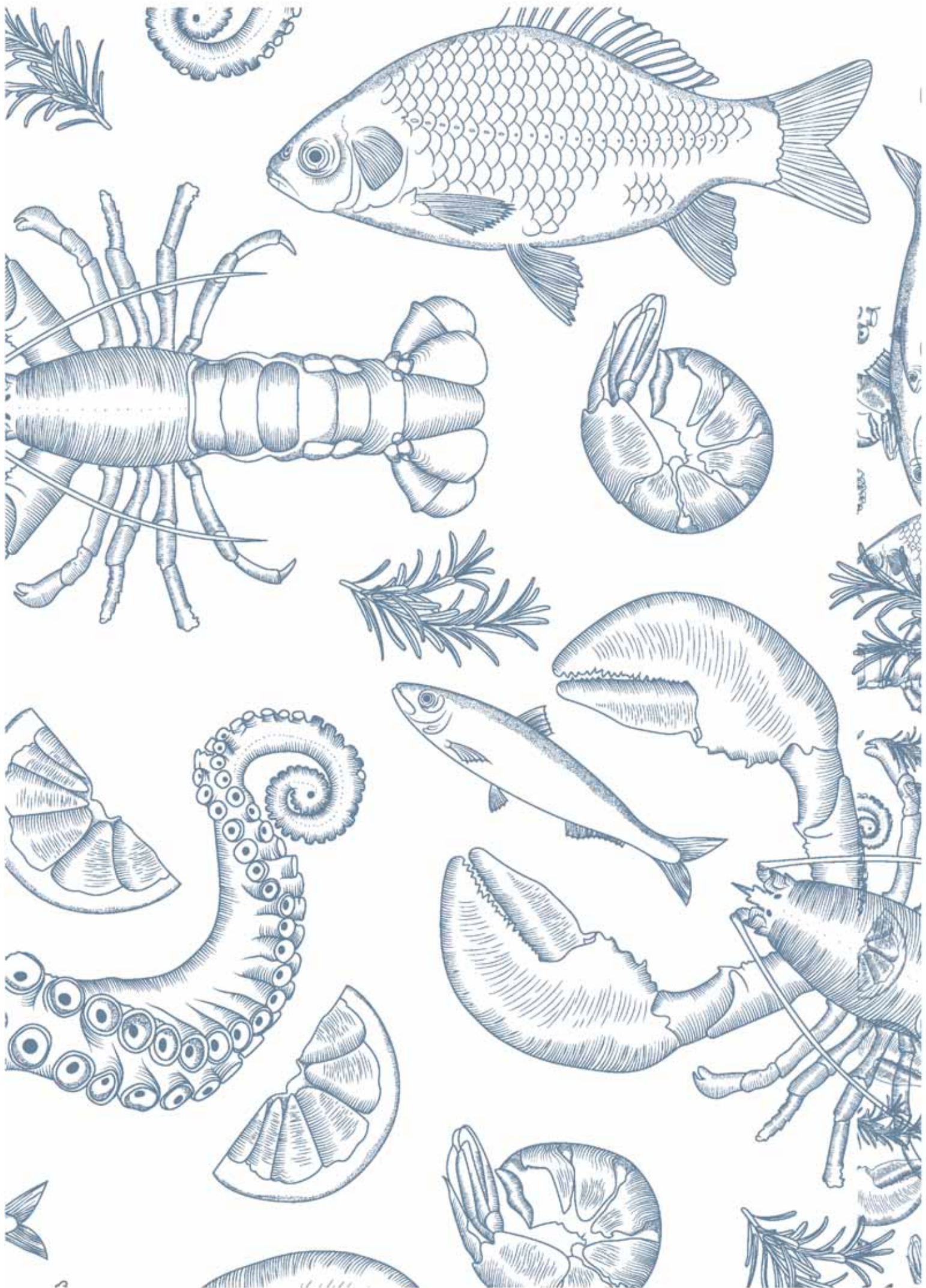
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