



**Valdelsa
Valdicecina**

CRAFTSMANSHIP AND CONTEMPORARY ART

Handcraft traditions and contemporary art

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Valdelsa Valdicecina

One journey, thousands of years to be discovered

The Via Francigena and the Via del Sale, as two of the main communication routes during the Middle Ages, delineate an area in the centre of Tuscany where nature is virtually untouched and castles, fortresses and city walls dot the landscape. Here, travellers can learn more of great battles of the past and immortal artists, as well as plans for the future: renewable energy and the creation of a cultural and artistic contemporary heritage. Visitors can admire this cultural identity: made up of a common background, with many different facets, all of them ready to be discovered and enjoyed in the year's rich calendar of festivals, re-enactments and feasts.

Tourist Area Terre di Val d'Elsa e dell'Etruria Volterrana,

Municipalities of Casole d'Elsa, Castelnuovo Val di Cecina, Colle di Val d'Elsa, Montecatini Val di Cecina, Monteriggioni, Monteverdi Marittimo, Poggibonsi, Pomarance, Radicondoli, San Gimignano, Volterra.



Casole d'Elsa



Castelnuovo
Val di Cecina



Colle di
Val d'Elsa



Montecatini
Val di Cecina



Monteriggioni



Monteverdi
Marittimo



Poggibonsi



Pomarance



Radicondoli



San Gimignano



Volterra

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Regione Toscana



TOSCANA
PROMOZIONE TURISTICA

Ancient arts and crafts maintain the culture of this land: they act as a connection between the landscape and historical ingenuity.

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**Valdelsa
Valdicecina**

Routes through art, craftsmanship and architecture



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This is a land of art and architecture, of tradition and innovation. In Valdelsa Valdicecina, artisanal mastery has lived through centuries, slowly crossing paths with industrial efficiency. In the artisans' workshops, unique and unrepeatable pieces are created by hand: glass, stone and clay are worked on with great precision. Originality is on display in the modern buildings as well: designed by world-famous architects, in which the pioneering vision of contemporary shapes dovetails with the specific characteristics of the natural landscape, amidst rolling hills and smoking earth. This is a place, between ancient hamlets and the countryside, where visitors will find unique works of contemporary art by renowned names. These are the unconventional routes for discovering Valdelsa Valdicecina.

Facts and Figures

From the ancient towns to the valleys where the rivers Elsa and Cecina flow.

1 World Heritage site

11 Municipalities

91.682 Inhabitants

1.500 km² Surface of the area

358 m asl Median altitude





Crystal in Colle di Val d'Elsa

The ancient skills around glass and crystal work have forged the culture of the Colle di Val d'Elsa area, even earning it the name of **Bohemia of Italy**. Thanks to the vast deposits of sand, water and wood, glassmaking took hold and grew in these territories, turning from artisanal production to industry in the 19th century. To date, 95% of crystal production nationwide occurs here, and 15% of global production. High quality has always been the defining factor of crystal from Colle di Val d'Elsa and in 2008 a sustainable element was added; the main producers of the area started making lead-free crystal, which keeps its shine, its transparency and all those attributes which made this crystal famous across the globe. This culturally and economically relevant tradition is kept alive by the skilled artisans, who persist in producing high-quality crystalware in their ateliers, and by the **Crystal Museum**, which resides in an old glassworking location: here visitors can retrace the phases of the crystal working process, and learn the history and techniques of the ancient craft.



Volterra alabaster

Alabaster, also known as the **white gold of Volterra**, is a bridge across history: nowadays, as in ancient times, it is the pride and joy of this territory and is considered the most prized alabaster in Europe. White, luminous and elegant, this mineral (softer than marble) and its properties were known to the ancient Etruscans: it was mainly used for carving small artefacts. It comes to life with luminance when sunlight touches it, and that's why pieces made from Volterranean alabaster have an incomparable glow about them. Century after century, alabaster has been the prime material for ornaments and splendid sculptures, thanks to the skilled hands of master craftsmen, enriching ancient streets and buildings with the brilliant elegance that this mineral brings to any construction. The **Alabaster Ecomuseum**, housed in the unique 13th century Minucci Tower, displays the artistic and cultural importance of alabaster, in an exhibition that takes visitors on a journey through history, workmanship, techniques and materials, styles and even socio-economic implications of alabaster production: the magical stone of Volterra, the mineral that imbues every creation with enchantment.



Ceramic art

From skilled craft to art: ceramic objects, sculptures and artworks abound in the Valdelsa Valdicecina, as tradition is reinterpreted in a modern key. The past is not forgotten but celebrated: **prestige ceramics** are on display in many of the ancient stone alleyways of these historical towns. Artistry has overtaken the antique craft: local potters and ceramicists have always bolstered their creativity with the best techniques, such as the ancient *ingobbio*, producing fine majolica ceramics with designs in paint or graphite. Centuries of artistic tradition flow through the hands of these master craftsmen: the **Pomaranze Castle** was the birthplace of ceramic factories, which subsequently became of major importance in the area and beyond, starting in the 1500s. Furthermore, archeological digs in **Volterra** have brought to light certain artefacts that confirm that this city was a hub of ceramic production since Etruscan times. In **San Gimignano**, the tradition is honoured by a detailed miniature reproduction of the town itself in the 13th-14th century, which visitors can admire in the San Gimignano 1300 museum.

Crafts of excellence

This land has roots reaching back to remote history and a creative soul: in the meeting of tradition and skill, Valdelsa Valdicecina is embodied in manual art.

MANUFACTURE

Ancient crafts and skills

In the ancient town of **Colle di Val d'Elsa**, with its splendid panoramic views of the Tuscan countryside, visitors can dive into the intact mediaeval atmosphere, and rediscover the historical figure of the **master glassworker**: the crystal workmanship of this town has reached global success. The skilled hands of the masters of Colle have been moulding glass since the year 1300 at least, bringing to light everyday objects such as glasses and chalices, as well as true **works of art**: a summary of their experience, their creativity and their ability. Known with good reason as the **City of Crystal**, Colle di Val d'Elsa boasts ateliers that produce unique pieces to this day, opening their doors to curious visitors of all ages, sharing the secrets of their fascinating profession. This is also the land of an even more ancient craft: **alabaster maker**. In **Volterra**, alabaster processing can trace its roots all the way back to Etruscan times, when it was used to fashion elegant cinerary urns and other small objects. This stonecraft halted during the Middle Ages, bloomed again in the Renaissance and became an **international excellence**, maintaining this position up to the present day. Strolling through the delightful streets of the ancient town of Volterra, visitors can admire the quality

of the craft: stepping over the threshold of ateliers and workshops frozen in time, where objects and sculptures born of the delicate beauty of Alabaster are preserved. Volterra is also known for the art of goldsmithing, whose roots go back thousands of years: the Etruscans were the first to work gold with great mastery, creating jewellery and accessories; their style is still visible today in the Volterranean goldsmith creatures. Since ancient times, the manual artists of **pottery** have also bloomed in Valdelsa Valdicecina, finding it an ideal land for their abilities and creativity. Century after century, ceramic creations have made the towns of **San Gimignano**, **Volterra** and **Pomaranze** a landmark, even abroad. In the historic centre of Pomaranze, visitors can admire the restored **ancient kilns**, and enter the workshops where historical **potters** (or *vasai*) would turn clay into cups, bowls and other objects of daily use. Similarly, in Volterra and San Gimignano visitors will encounter ceramic workshops showing small and large artistic creations, uniting history and innovation. Crystal, alabaster and ceramics: these past excellences still leave their mark of art and tradition on the whole of the Valdelsa Valdicecina, a land which offers the unmissable chance to reach out and touch the craftsmanship that has survived thousands of years.



The contemporary route through Valdelsa Valdicecina

An open-air museum, where the new language of contemporary art merges with nature and history, telling the story of this multifaceted land.



SITE SPECIFIC Art in and around ancient towns

Valdelsa Valdicecina is dedicated to experimentation and creativity: numerous contemporary art projects have brought world-famous artists here to produce extraordinary work. As visitors walk the streets and the squares of the ancient towns, or *borghi*, they will come across curious site-specific installations, which relate to the surrounding landscape and merge the language of innovation with the rich local history. Thanks to *Arte all'Arte*, work by **Kiki Smith**, **Anish Kapoor**, **Cai Guo-Qiang** and **Mimmo Paladino** is now displayed in important locations in San Gimignano, Colle di Val d'Elsa and Poggibonsi, while various sculptures reside in the historical centre of Casole d'Elsa.

LAND ART Experiencing the landscape

The hills that surround Volterra are custodians of surprising and unexpected works of land art that appear after each bend in the road. These, of course, are the **geometries of Mauro Staccioli**: installations built over the years, eventually giving rise to the review known as *Volterra: luoghi d'esperienza 1973-2009*. Born and raised in the city of alabaster, Staccioli merged his art with the urban fabric, everyday life and millennia of local history: this marriage across time is displayed in the **classic and regular lines** of his artwork, which appear neutral, but hide great sophistication. These geometries, scattered over the countryside and the town of Pomarance, come together in an ideal path, an intimate journey through the artist's experience.

town, such as the Cassero of the Medicean Fortress and the train station. **San Gimignano**, home to the Galleria Continua and the Arte Continua association, also hosts projects from *Arte all'Arte*: *Il Riposo del Tempo* (The Resting of Time) by Luisa Rabbia, a mosaic decorating a splendid mediaeval fount; *La Sedia Davanti alla Porta* (The Chair Before the Door) by Joseph Kosuth; as well as an artwork by Anish Kapoor in the bastion of the Sant'Agostino convent. Our *Manhattan of the Middle Ages* also hosted an environmental art project: *Affinità. Five Artists for San Gimignano*. It brought permanent artwork by Eliseo Mattiacci, Jannis Kounellis, Giulio Paolini, Nunzio and Luciano Fabro into the World Heritage historical town centre.

San Gimignano also has an impressive Public Gallery of Contemporary Art, with a beautiful selection of paintings by masters of the Italian 1900s, and an entire section dedicated to the painter Raffaele De Grada, who started the collection in the Gallery. The historical centre of **Casole d'Elsa** is also full of sculptures, installations and decorative ceramics, adorning *piazze*, streets and alleys, while the **Volterrano countryside** becomes the backdrop for Mauro Staccioli's geometries: these works of land art and their classical lines contain profound stories, anchored to the artist's personal experiences, bringing to light the series *Volterra: luoghi d'esperienza 1973-2009*. This is the area where *Volterra 73*, a project that changed land art in Italy forever, was first held.



OPEN AIR ART Sculptures, installations and street art

The towns nestled along the Valdelsa Valdicecina are real treasure troves of art, often evoking the Middle Ages, sometimes even more ancient eras, when the Etruscans walked these lands. However, inside the old stone walls of these towns, as well as throughout the countryside, visitors might find some unexpected artworks with a surprising, and contemporary, story. Over the years, various **contemporary art projects** have brought great names from the international scene to try their hand at open-air and site-specific artwork: free from the halls of museums and made specifically to reside in, and dialogue with, the precise spot where they are placed. This increases the value of the territory and creates new paths of meaning: a new interpretation of classic Tuscany. The **non-conventional** itineraries exploring these locations are an unmissable experience in this land of wonders. The ten editions of *Arte all'Arte*, organised by Arte Continua, have bestowed permanent artwork on the area, especially in the towns of Colle di Val d'Elsa, Poggibonsi and San Gimignano, where work by important names can be admired, such as those by **Anish Kapoor**. Strolling through the streets and alleys of **Colle di Val d'Elsa**, exploring both the upper and lower parts of the city, visitors will come across artwork such as the *Cistern of via della Porta Vecchia* by Marisa Merz; the *Porta Nuova* by Tadashi Kawamata, built on the ancient entryway into the city; even *La Voce che si indebolisce* (The weakening Voice) by Ilya Kabakov, located in the panoramic context of the Sapia Bastion. The sculpture *Concrete Block* by Sol Lewitt, in the garden of the Archaeological Museum, evokes the skyline of

the lost towers of the upper part of Colle. The *UMoCA - Under Museum of Contemporary Art*, by Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang, is particularly well integrated with the urban landscape. This public art project brought to life a small new museum of contemporary art, located under the arches of the San Francesco bridge and flagged by a neon sign. This unusual exhibition space was part of the 'Everything is Museum' project, and Cai Guo-Qiang made two other 'MoCA': the DMOCA (Dragon Museum of Contemporary Art) in Japan, and the BMOCA (Bunker Museum of Contemporary Art) in Taiwan. The artist chose to locate the UMoCA under the San Francesco bridge as a symbol of connection between the past and the future, and as a bridge between cultures. The artist **Kiki Smith** is responsible for the three statues (from the *Color Still* series) previously shown under the arches of the UMoCA and currently spread around the local towns: in Colle di Val d'Elsa visitors can find the *Red Girl*, (surrounded by light bulbs made of local crystal) placed inside the elevator of the 'Baluardo' cable car. The *Yellow Girl* is in the splendid Rocca di Montestaffoli in San Gimignano, while the third, *Blue Girl*, is located inside the Cassero of the Medicean Fortress of Poggibonsi. The town of **Poggibonsi** is where contemporary art has really found its footing, in two separate movements. One on hand, the DOTS project has coloured several public spaces with countless murals and fantastic works of street art; on the other hand, projects organised by *Arte all'Arte* have left site-specific sculptures and artwork. An example: *I Dormienti* (The Sleepers) by Mimmo Paladino are displayed at the mediaeval river source Fonte delle Fate (Fairies' Spring), where the rising water alternately reveals and hides them. Visitors will also come across the curious 'seven pixelated men' (as they are affectionately known by locals) part of the series *Making Space, Taking Place* by Antony Gormley. Taking the appearance of real citizens of Poggibonsi, these sculptures populate some of the most important and busy locations of the

Architecture and urban renewal

Contemporary outlines, industrial traces and wonders of nature meet in the visionary creations of great architects. History and innovation are the two faces of this fascinating land, where centuries of tradition meet an unexpected desire for experimentation.



POMARANCE Larderello, architecture and steam

The **industrial village** of Larderello lies close to the geothermal plant, which traces its origins back to the start of the 1800s. The surrounding residential area was designed by the architect **Giovanni Michelucci**, who was invited to plan the urban layout during the Fifties. As Michelucci himself said, the design process was long and laborious, but the end result is one of the most important examples of industrial villages in all of Italy. An unmissable stop is surely the **Geothermic Arena**, at the foot of an ex cooling tower inside Larderello Plant 3: it is used as a stage for shows and theatrical performances.

VOLTERRA Saline di Volterra and the Nervi Warehouse

Saline di Volterra owes its name to the rich soil it is built on, which is abundant in rock salt deposits. The production centre – heart of this small town – holds the record for its salt, purest in Italy, known and traded since ancient times. The **Magazzino Nervi** is a must-see: a notable warehouse building, designed last century by famous **Pier Luigi Nervi**. At the time, the planning of this building was highly innovative, proving the brilliant genius of this young visionary architect. The warehouse is sometimes the backdrop for cultural events and exhibitions, but its most fascinating and unusual asset is surely the **salt fall**.

ARCHITECTURE Ancient sites and modern architecture

Amidst the mediaeval and Renaissance *palazzi* of the ancient towns, there lives and prospers a modern soul, which can be seen in elegant and sometimes unusual buildings. **Contemporary architecture** in Valdelsa Valdicecina tells the story of an industrial calling, alongside traditional artisanal production; thanks to urban renewal projects, **renowned architects and planners** have also been brought in. As well as the contemporary artworks, the 'artists' buildings' are a way to explore this land along unconventional routes, full of surprises. Strolling through the lower part of **Colle di Val d'Elsa**, known by locals as 'Colle Bassa', visitors will end up in **Piazza Arnolfo**, the heart of the town: named for the famous architect and urbanist Arnolfo di Cambio, who lived in the second half of the 13th century: he was responsible for important projects such as the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore and Palazzo Vecchio, both in Florence. The whole square and the adjoining areas were the subject of an important renewal project directed by Jean Nouvel, who brought in internationally-renowned names in art and architecture such as Daniel Buren, who is responsible for the paving design. Just a few steps away stands the Bank designed by Giovanni Michelucci, which summarises a vision of the town: the volumes, cantilevered to an iconic bright red structure, seem to float over a covered square, while the contrast between stone and steel symbolises the double soul of Colle di Val d'Elsa: historical and industrial. Michelucci himself was behind the most successful projects that brought the industrial soul of the **geothermal area**

into dialogue with this territory clouded by steam. Functional buildings rise on the edge of the area known as Valle del Diavolo (Devil's Valley) – which inspired Dante's *Inferno* according to tradition – and counterbalance the modern architecture of impressive places of worship. Rising over the skyline are the **cooling towers of Larderello**, in the area of Pomarance, whose turrets topped with steam are visible from afar, guiding visitors. The Larderello project was pioneering: the workers' village was developed at the start of the 19th century, at the behest of Francesco De Larderel, who was the first to realise the enormous potential in geothermal energy after arriving from France. The idea of a convenient marriage between life and work is still visible in the layout of the residential complex. The linear and functional architecture tells the story of worker families who lived here, opening a fascinating window onto the recent past of this area. The church of the Madonna of Montenero is also inside the workers' village: one of the most modern churches of the whole area, dating back to the early 19th century and renovated last century by Michelucci, whose work can also be found in **Sasso Pisano**. The Lagoni Chapel, built at the end of the Fifties, clearly shows some Michelucci influence in its design, which represents the architect's ingenuity. The solid layout and straight lines seem to counterbalance the incessant change of the sulphurous vapours that gush straight out of the earth, only a few hundred metres away. The area around Volterra also hosts an architectural masterpiece nestled amongst its hills: the Magazzino Nervi (Nervi Warehouse), designed by Pier Luigi Nervi in the area of **Saline di Volterra**. The heart of the place is the fascinating salt fall, cascading from the roof of the warehouse to create a candid mountain, like half of a magic white hourglass.

COLLE DI VAL D'ELSA Architecture in Colle di Val d'Elsa

Colle di Val d'Elsa has a double identity: the higher part of the town preserves the mediaeval soul, while the lower part shows its modern side, with buildings by great architects known around the world. **Jean Nouvel**, as well as pitching in with the design of Piazza Arnolfo, is the author of the cable car system that connects the lower Colle to the *Baluardo*, a vast panoramic terrace which leads to the higher, more ancient part of the town. In the tunnel leading to the elevator, which is an ex-air raid shelter, visitors can find the artwork *Red Girl* by Kiki Smith. A short distance away from the square stands the futuristic headquarters of the Monte dei Paschi di Siena Bank, built by **Giovanni Michelucci**, master of 20th century architecture.

SHOWS Events and festivals

The many faces of contemporary art are on show in the festivals and events of the Valdelsa Valdicecina, bringing a breath of fresh air to the streets of the towns. One example is **Nottilucente**, the event that lights up the nights of San Gimignano, transforming the city into a magical spectacle of lights, sounds and shows, where culture and creativity are at the forefront. Colle di Val d'Elsa also hosts important events such as **Liberacollarte** and the **Architecture Festival**, which fill the town with artistic performances and happenings. The **Radicondoli Festival** and Destinazione Sud Festival bring artistic and cinematic experimentation to the town, with exciting events for amateurs and enthusiasts.

