

# La Collina Del Sole

## RECREATION



The Apuan Alps close to La Collina Del Sole

### WALKING SOLO AND WALKING WITH A GUIDE

This area is well known for beautiful walks and scenery, guests come from all over Europe and America to enjoy the fantastic scenery that is on offer. La Collina del Sole is surrounded by glorious walks, in various levels of difficulty, we have rugged mountains to the Orechiella National Park, The Tuscan Emilian Apennine National Park, the regional park of the Apuan Alps and a variety of Carrara marble quarries. Many picturesque walks with "Refugios" to eat at or to stay in. Many reminders of Italian culture and history are found whether in derelict villages, medieval outposts or shrines.

Climbing highlights are Mount Sumbra, Pania della Croce or you could opt for the gentle walks in Alpi di Sant Antonio and pop in for lunch at "La Betulla" or got to Refugio Santi in La Vetrice from Rennaio.

For WWII history fans who enjoy walking, you find disused bunkers, outposts overlooking the sea, you can also walk along sections of the "Gothic Line" which kept the Germans and Allies apart for a year towards the end of WWII.

Many of these walkways and "thoroughfares" date from medieval times if not before. They crisscross, this entire region linking old abandoned villages, churches, shrines, monasteries, disused frontier posts, garrisons. A lovely hermitage which can be visited and does delicious food is the Eremo di Calomini.

We have very close to home, a fully accredited guide who can take you on walking tours in our immediate vicinity as well as longer tours in our marvelously rugged mountain ranges and valleys. He is an expert in the local plants, habitat and animals, you can also request a translator if you would like to get the most out of your walk with him in the following pages you will find his suggestions and costs.

Should either of our guides be unavailable we have a few keen walker friends with very basic English could accompany you on walks. Call +44 797 960 6860 or email [chrissie@pearls.co.uk](mailto:chrissie@pearls.co.uk) to arrange. Our friends could walk with you to the chestnut woods [prate] which are above us or to Refugio Santi in La Vetrice, having driven to Rennaio, behind Barga, or to the Orti di Donna above Minucciano north of Pieve Fosciana.



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*Suggested walks starting at La Collina del Sole which you can enjoy solo or with an accredited guide.*

## *EASY and short*

**First Itinerary: Lupinaia: a walk through ancient chestnut woods, orchards and vineyards, lasts 2 to 3 hours. Departure can be in the morning or the afternoon  
Level: an easy walk for the whole family.  
Difference in height: 150m**

Departing from la Collina del Sole following medieval paved roads into Lupinaia's ancient orchards and chestnut woods, then into Lupinaia itself a medieval village, the walk goes down into vineyards and vegetable gardens. This walk offers majestic view points of the valley and the mountains beyond.



**If a guide is wished the price is €60 for a group up to 8 people. €10 for every extra person. This price includes an English speaking fully accredited guide.**

**Recommendations:** wear hiking boots or trainers bring a hat, sunscreen, water and a light refreshment if you wish.

## *EASY and short*

**Second itinerary: Ceserana, also known as the free town of "fools", the walk lasts 3-4 hours, departures can be in the morning or the afternoon.**

**Level: easy**

**Difference in height: 150 m**

Ceserana pictured here is Beautiful, starting from la Collina del Sole you walk on a medieval paved road to Ceserana. Historically the most important village of the area, It is known for its folk stories about the "foolish" people of this village, and how through these stories the villagers were able to gain independence in the middle ages, an unusual situation in those times.



**If a guide is wished the price is €60 for a group up to 8 people. €10 for every extra person.**

**The price includes an English speaking fully accredited guide.**

**Recommendations:** wear hiking boots or trainers, hat and sunscreen, some water and light refreshment.

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## A little challenging

**Third Itinerary: Le Prade: the mountain woods and meadows.**

**Duration: 6 to 7 hours - Departures early in the morning.**

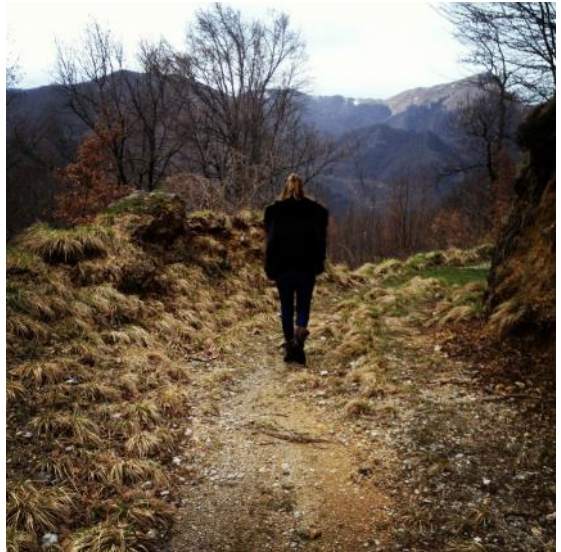
**Level: Intermediate.**

**Difference in height: 600m**

From la Collina del Sole the first stage is a hike up-hill on an ancient trail surrounded by a thick chestnut wood. After a couple of hours you reach the beautiful mountain meadows of Le Prade, the traditional summer grazing land for local cattle, surrounded by old chestnut and beech woods. Here we suggest a picnic and rest. The return walk down is on a broad gravel road back to la Collina del Sole. There are beautiful mountain views to be seen and with a bit of luck you will see wild animals such as deer, wild boars, hawks and foxes.

**We suggest a guide for this for €130 for a group up to 8 people with an English speaking fully accredited guide, €10 per extra person.**

**Recommendations:** wear hiking boots, long trousers and a hat. Bring a backpack with sunscreen, water, lunch and extra treats.



## Challenging

**Fourth Itinerary: in the Apuan Alps: MONTE FORATO.**

**Duration: 6 to 7 hours (5 hours walk and 45 minutes' drive each way).**

**Level: A challenging walk suitable for children over 12 years old.**

**Difference in height: 600m**

Departure from la Collina del Sole, followed by a 45 minute drive, once at the village of Fornovolasco, walking commences through a chestnut wood by following a medieval path that still connects the Garfagnana valley to the seaside and was used by the salt pirates. This path is called the "iron road" and has been in use since roman times, it was used during WWII to transport iron from Garfagnana to the coast where it was shipped all over Europe. You will find WWII reminders and fortifications of the "Gothic Line", a border between the Nazis and the Allies. You will be also be shown the entrance of a magnificent natural cave called "the screaming shelter" which is part of the wider cave system of the Apuan Alps. During the second part of the hike the walk goes through a beech grove where you might see wild boar,



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wild goat, deer and hawks. At the top you can stand in front of the 30 meter opening in the mountain created by water and wind, and can look through to the Mediterranean. For the more adventurous a walk can be arranged atop the slender arch above the natural opening. During the walk you will be able to stop for questions, food, a rest and photos.

**We recommend a guide for this walk for €130 for groups of up to 10 people.** You can drive your own car following the guide in his car. If helpful the guide is able to take up to 3 people in his car at an extra cost of €20.

**Recommendations:** wear hiking boots and a hat. Bring a backpack with sunscreen, water, lunch and extra treats.



## Challenging

**Fifth Itinerary: in the Apuan Alps and Pania della Croce**

**Duration: 6 to 7 hours (a 5 hour walk and 40 minutes' drive each way).**

**Level: A challenging trek yet suitable for children**

**Departure: early in the morning (best between 6 and 8 am).**

**Difference in height: 700m**

We recommend a guide for this, starting at la Collina del Sole you first drive to the starting point called Piglionico. You are at a height of 1100m. Walking through a magnificent beech grove by climbing wide rock stairs. From this point you can see a man's profile on the top of the mountain range, the walk continues on a meadow which covers the north face of the "nose". You will reach "Rifugio Rossi" a mountain refuge point with a small restaurant and a few beds, the height here is 1609m. For those who are comfortable with challenging hikes there is an opportunity to walk a further 45 minutes up to the top of the mountain along a path called "the channel of hell" where often in summer you can still see some snow. Once at the top you can view the Mediterranean on one side and the Garfagnana valley and the Apennines on the other.



**Price for a guide is €130 for groups up to 10 people.**

**Transfer to and from the trail starting point:** you can drive your own car following the guide in his car. The guide is also available to take up to 3 people in his car at a total extra cost of €20.

**Recommendations:** wear hiking boots, a hat. Bring a backpack with sunscreen, water, lunch and snacks.



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## FUNGHI HUNTING



This is not recommended for beginners as Funghi are notoriously difficult to find and you can easily get disorientated in the woods unless you are with a guide. We know of an accredited guide, who has "eyes in his feet". Some locals augment their income by selling Funghi and will not readily divulge good spots to each other let alone visitors, however if you would like a good walk with a possibility of finding some funghi, make sure you buy your "Funghi hunting" permit at the Ponte Bar located at the entrance to our area from the main road, there will be people checking permits up in the Prate where the funghi are found.



There are some attractive looking mushrooms which would make you very ill so please make sure that you check with the guide or Maria whether the mushrooms you have picked are edible.



For further information on trekking contact the tourism coordinating centre [Centro di coordinamento de Turismo] in the Piazza delle Erbe 1, Castelnuovo di Garfagnana. Tel 0583 65169 [www.turismo.garfagnana.eu](http://www.turismo.garfagnana.eu) they have maps and calendars which list all the events that happen in the area. They can book Refugios if you wish to embark on serious walking with overnight stays. Open from 9AM - 1PM and 3-7PM from June to September and 9-1AM and 3 - 5.30PM from October to May.

They have a good selection of maps both free and for sale, which will show the local towns, the official footpaths and Refugios where you can eat and stay, plus a list of guides and recommended routes.



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## RIDING



Centro Ippico Venturo  
Localita Murella di Sotto 338a,  
Castelnuovo di Garfagnana, 55032  
Telephone + 39 0583 65 605

The riding school and excursion company that we recommend is Venturo. The owner Sylvano [easily contactable on his mobile phone +39 3284 818 821] can organize riding lessons in the afternoon or excursions in the morning of two or four hours. Excursions are best in the morning as it is cooler; previous riding experience is essential. It is important to book ahead, the cost is around € 20 per hour per person. Remember to request American or English saddle as you prefer.  
To find them go to Pieve Fosciana, follow signs to the Bowling. Their entrance is just opposite the Bowling centre.

## CHILDRENS PLAYGROUND

There is a small children's playground with swings at the end of the drive as you join the road going up to Lupinaia and down to Migliano.

## TENNIS COURTS

Tennis Club  
Via Puccini - Castelnuovo di Garfagnana  
Telephone +39 0583 63 9174  
[www.tenniscastelnuovo.vai.li](http://www.tenniscastelnuovo.vai.li)

There are several courts which can be booked, mainly outdoors and one covered. You can also book a coach. They are located near the Castelnuovo Pool.



## FISHING

The most peaceful and satisfying place to fish for local trout is Isola Santa having obtained a permit from the local Bar. Isola Santa is a tranquil spot. It was once a thriving village which was flooded in order to create a hydroelectric plant, the dam was built downriver and only the higher houses remained out of water they in turn were abandoned and the area became like an enchanted forest. Gabrielle who runs the bar has repopulated the lake with local trout, and has restored much of the derelict village in the traditional style. He is also a magnificent cook, so you could get a good meal into the bargain. To book please call his mobile number 333 709 5763 or 0583 639408.



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## MOUNTAIN BIKE RENTAL



Speak to Roberto of Cycli Mori, Localita Pantaline in Castelnuovo di Garfagnana [0583 644 551 ] The shop does all manner of repairs of Mountain Bikes and also rents them out.

Located in the Business Park between Castelnuovo and Pieve Fosciana. If you would like to rent a Mountain bike either for an adult or a child, speak to Roberto, he can rent on a daily basis or a weekly basis. Costs go approximately from €18 per day to €35 per week for a child and €70 per week for an adult.

## SPORTS CARS aka VA VA VOOOOM

Italian + Speed = Ferrari, Lamborghini, Maserati and Ducati. Most of the grand speed marques of Italy are based in Modena and Bologna and have good museums which you can visit, they also have factories showcasing their history and technology. Modena houses the Marzaglia track and the beautiful Panini Maserati collection of vintage Maserati cars and motorbikes all in working condition.

If you, like one of our previous guests, would like to drive a Ferrari F430 Challenge or another supercar on the track of Maranello we recommend you use [www.emiliadelizia.com/ferrari-and-lamborghini-factory-tours/super-car-test-drives](http://www.emiliadelizia.com/ferrari-and-lamborghini-factory-tours/super-car-test-drives). Our guest commented "They were very helpful and the drive was professionally executed. Expensive, but a great experience! ... It was a blast! ... The drive over the mountain was fun, and took around 2 hours" He also advises planning the trip well in advance, it takes a full day to do the test drive, see the Ferrari museum, Lamborghini museum and factory tour in Sant' Agata Bolognese, which were both very good, you can also see the Maserati museum.



[www.lamborghini.com/en/heritage/museum](http://www.lamborghini.com/en/heritage/museum)



[www.museo.ferrari.com](http://www.museo.ferrari.com)

If you enjoy the 2 wheel drive experience and wish to hire a Ducati, or a Moto Guzzi, Central Italy Motor Tours [www.cimt.it](http://www.cimt.it) in Pisa will arrange it. They also carry other 2 wheel wonders like a Triumph, BMW or Suzuki motorcycles. We have had fabulous feedback from the previous guests who have cycled around La Collina del Sole on their Ducati... Va VA VOOOM



DUCATI Factory in Bologna - [www.cimt.it/index.htm](http://www.cimt.it/index.htm)

[http://www.ducati.com/history/editorials/the\\_ducati\\_museum\\_\\_thrilling\\_history/index.do](http://www.ducati.com/history/editorials/the_ducati_museum__thrilling_history/index.do)

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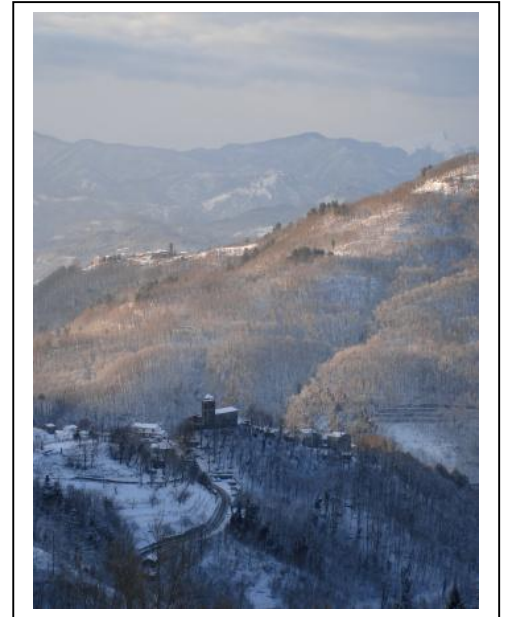
## SKIING - Our favourites

### Abetone

Abetone at one and a half hours drive from La Collina del Sole is a well-known winter sports resort in Tuscany, located in the province of Pistoia. It has over 50 kilometers of runs and 17 ski lifts, it comprises four valleys with a high percentage of intermediate and advanced level runs. Abetone has bars, shops, hotels and restaurants. You will see the back view of Abetone if you walk to Refugio Santi from Rennaio behind Barga.

In Abetone the main ski areas are Val di Luce, Valle dello Scoltenna, Valle del Sestaione and Val di Lima. An 18 kilometre circuit is available for cross-country skiing and snow shoe or Nordic walking, and a snow park for snowboarders. There are snow machines to ensure snow coverage. There is a children's snow play area, they have a sledging area and an early skiing piste with a conveyor belt to take young learners up the slope. The Scuola Sci Montegomito offers equipment hire and a ski and snow boarding school. Equipment hire is also available from shops and the ski school in the resort.

To get to Abetone from La Collina del Sole head towards Bagni di Lucca, and follow signs to Abetone making for the border with Emilia Romagna on the SS12.



The best internet link we have found is <http://www.onthesnow.com/toscana/abetone/ski-resort.html>

### Cimone

At 2,165 meters above sea level, it is the highest point in the northern Apennines and is located in Emilia Romagna. It has more than 50 km of linked trails, 31 slopes, and 21 ski lifts. It has two snow parks for snowboarders. Its snow-making equipment guarantees that almost two-thirds of the slopes have snow. Cimone has over 50% advanced ski runs, almost a quarter expert level runs and just over 20% intermediate runs. Cimone can be reached from La Collina del Sole by heading to Pieve Fosciana and then to Passo delle Radici, follow on to Modena you will find directions to Cimone.



We have found two good sites for Cimone they are: <http://www.cimonesci.it> and <http://www.onthesnow.com/emilia-romagna/cimone/ski-resort.html>





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## OPERA

Do you feel like a spot of Opera while you stay at La Collina del Sole? We have discovered quite a few places which might be of interest to you, from the little known and extremely cozy Opera in Vetriano to the Arena in Verona.

### Vetriano Opera

Vetriano is the smallest public theatre in the world at 71 sq. Meters. Located in the village of Vetriano di Pescaglia near Lucca. Its first performance was in 1891. It is funded by FAI (Fondo per l'Ambiente Italiano - a private not for profit organization) which is dedicated to protect elements of Italy's physical heritage.

The "teatrino" in Vetriano was built in 1890, when an engineer called Biagini donated his barn to build a theatre; at the time the town had a population of 400 people. Italians have LOVED opera for centuries and most small towns had an Opera house or Theatre. Vetriano was founded when a group of 18 people from the same village bankrolled its construction with a deposit of two lire up front and then fifty cents per month until the work was completed. The "teatrino" became an important cultural center for the village. However, after WW II the theatre fell into disrepair. In 1997 the Biagini inheritors donated their share of ownership of the theatre to FAI, a year later restructuring work began. The architect was Guglielmo Mozzoni and the "teatrino" was officially reopened on the 28th September 2002. To find out which Operas are being performed you will have to contact FAI directly as there is a very small number of seats available. Their website in Italian is



[www.the-differences.it/web\\_uk/component/sobi2/?sobi2Task=sobi2Details&catid=13&sobi2Id=87](http://www.the-differences.it/web_uk/component/sobi2/?sobi2Task=sobi2Details&catid=13&sobi2Id=87)

### Teatro Alfieri di Castelnuovo

This is our local theatre/Opera house. Teatro Alfieri in Castelnuovo di Garfagnana had a similar story to most town theatres in Italy. It became a cinema for a few years, then it began to fall into disrepair, until on the 25 April 1997 it was re-opened and is now the home of the theatre group "Lo Stanzone delle Apparizioni". They perform classical and modern plays, comedies, hold concerts of both classical and modern music.



For further information their website is <http://teatrovittorioalfieri.com/stagione.html>

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## Teatro dei Differenti Barga Opera and Jazz

It was first built in 1668, reached its peak in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and was restored in 1998. It hosts the Opera Barga Festival during the month of July and the Jazz Festival in August, which is worth going to. The Teatro dei Differenti seats 289 people. Throughout the year the Theatre puts on both traditional and modern plays, however during the Opera Festival in July, the main artistic aim of the festival is to perform works from the Baroque era like "Gli equivoci nel sembiante" by Alessandro Scarlatti composed in 1679, it also presents operas by Vivaldi and other modern authors.



For further information their website is [www.comune.barga.lu.it/CULTURA/TEATRO/STORIA.HTM](http://www.comune.barga.lu.it/CULTURA/TEATRO/STORIA.HTM)

## Puccini Festival Opera in Torre del Lago

For world class Opera and an assured seat it is easy to go to the Opera in Torre del Lago, which specializes in operas by Puccini. He is considered by some the father of Italian Opera, Puccini lived and composed many of his masterpieces in Torre del Lago; like Tosca, La Traviata, La Bohème and Madame Butterfly. The Festival starts in July and runs to September. The Opera is in the open air although the orchestra is covered. Rain can interrupt the performance. If you are thinking of going we recommend you book early, and get there 3.5 hours beforehand to soak up the atmosphere and have a meal before the performance.



<http://www.puccinifestival.it/website/eng/livello1.asp?area=5&ID1=35#>

## Arena di Verona

THE most spectacular Opera experience in Italy has got to be the Arena di Verona. Verona is a 4 hour drive North East from La Collina del Sole, driving via Parma. The season starts in June and ends in early September. The Arena di Verona is an extraordinary venue for Opera, held in the open air in a functioning Roman Coliseum in the center of the town.



For "Showmanship" the most impressive opera to see at the Arena is AIDA as they have many live animals in the production, including at times elephants.

The very comprehensive website for the Arena di Verona is [www.arena.it/en-US/HOMEen.html](http://www.arena.it/en-US/HOMEen.html)