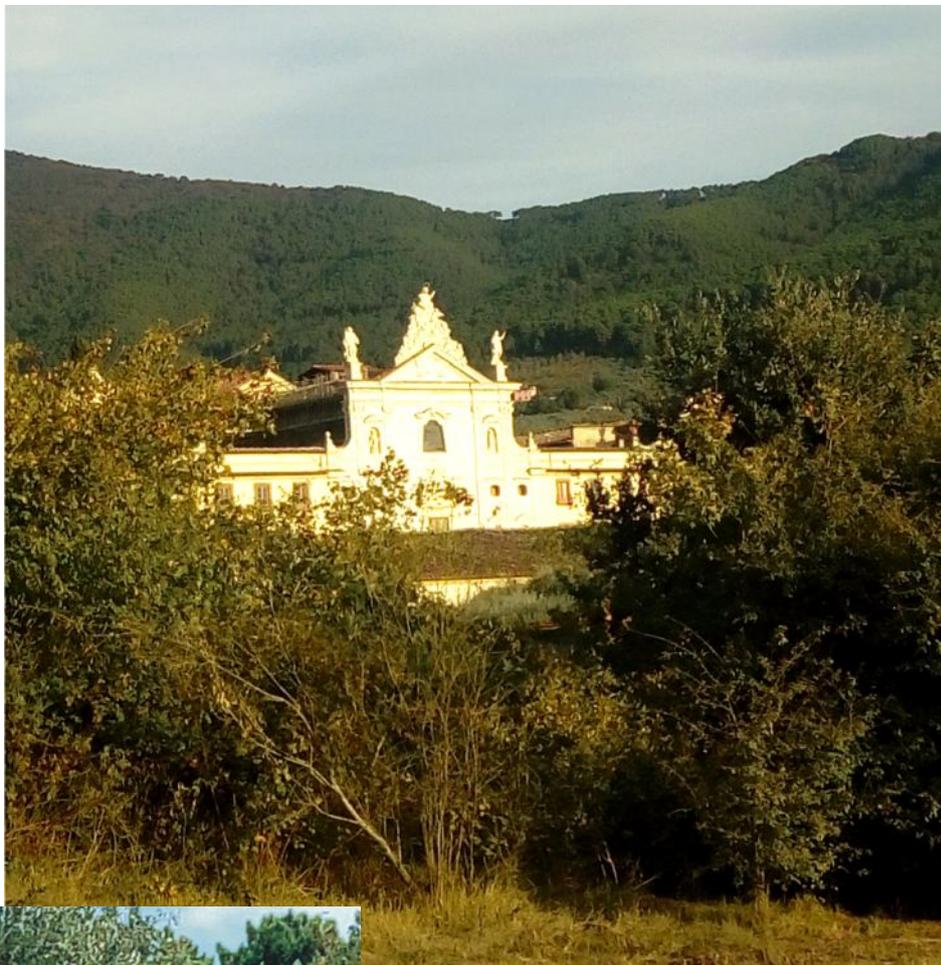


Visiting the Valgraziosa

How many of you have been dreaming of an escape from the busy life you lead? Wouldn't it be nice to relax in a corner of paradise! Well, you can and not too far from Lucca, through a tunnel leading towards Pisa and then a bend to the left, along a road skirting the mountains, until you reach the aptly-named Valgraziosa (gracious valley). These hills lush with olive trees separate Pisa from Lucca. It's fair to say that most Lucchesi have never visited this quiet place, with the majestic architecture of its Carthusian monastery (founded in 1366) known as *La Certosa di Calci*. It would be wonderful to stay here for a few days or longer, but the last monk left in 1969 and La Certosa was closed to habitation. We can, though, visit the cellars where the monks meditated and relaxed in peace, the refectory where they ate, the gardens, the canteens, etc.



On Saturday November 3rd, *Grapevine* is sponsoring a scenic trip to this region. Leaving Lucca from Porta San Pietro by private bus (11 am), we will arrive at Calci in 30 minutes and visit the *Certosa*. A guardian will unlock the doors so we can see how the monks lived and worked. Claudia Casoli and Norma Bishop, who have both written about the Certosa in *Grapevine*, will provide information in English and Italian.

Leaving La Certosa, our bus will take us through wandering lanes and tiny villages, a short 10 minute drive to a lovely hilltop restaurant, *Il Conventino*, at the village of Tre Colli. In this panoramic spot, after lunch some will want to linger over coffee and dessert, while others may want to take a walk along a hiking trail or through the village. Weather permitting, we may have coastal views stretching from Livorno to Pisa, and even to some islands. As for the food, these are the menus:

All-inclusive menù vegetariano: *pappa al pomodoro, sformatino di verdura, crostini e pasta fritta / primi piatti risotto ai*

carciofi, gnocchetti conventino (zucchine, pomodoro e pecorino di fossa) poi melanzane alla parmigiana, dessert, caffè e bevande. In English: tomato/bread soup, vegetable quiche, polenta with toppings, fried pasta dough, artichoke risotto, gnocchi with zucchini, tomato and pecorino cheese, eggplant parmigiana, dessert, coffee, and beverages.

All-inclusive menù di carne: *salumi, crostini, pappa al pomodoro e pasta fritta, maltagliati alla fattoressa (ragù e funghi porcini), tagliata di maialino con cipolle di Tropea, patate al forno, dessert, caffè e bevande.* In English: cold meats, polenta with toppings, tomato/bread soup, fried pasta dough, pasta with ragù and porcini mushrooms, pork with Tropea onions, roasted potatoes, dessert, coffee, and beverages.

After a bit of a walk, or a rest next to the “book crossings” tree, we will return to the Certosa to visit one of Europe’s oldest museums, created in the 1600s in Pisa and transferred to the Certosa site in the 1970s. It is filled with age-old curiosities of natural history.

Finally, Anna-Livia Walker will offer a brief harp concert in this magical setting, then our coach should have us back in Lucca by 5.30 pm.

All inclusive price: 65 euros.

A minimum of 20 people (max. 30) are needed to confirm.

Deadline for booking & payment, 18 October.

Please note: payment is non-refundable except for 50% up to 5 days before departure.

To book, email editor@luccagrapevine.com

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