

Yet Still, It Moves

In Pisa since the tenth century the New Year has been celebrated on March 25th, the day of the Annunciation, nine months before Christmas day. At noon, a solar clock in Pisa's Duomo is hit by a ray of sunshine, lighting up a marble egg near the pulpit of Giovanni Pisano. The religious ceremony and the historical procession being held outside the church in the streets of Pisa should come to their conclusion at that very moment.

This year marks the 450th anniversary of Galileo's birth (15 February 1564). Galileo was Pisano, so it is appropriate that Palazzo Blu has prepared a special exhibit (curated by the University of Pisa and the National Institute of Nuclear Physics) entitled *Balle di Scienza*, or in English, *Vices and Virtues of Galileo's Scientific Methods*. Galileo taught us to observe natural phenomena and to make intelligent hypotheses based on our observation. Scientists have made enormous errors up to the present time. But making mistakes is part of the scientific process.

Galileo's (likely apocryphal) rejoinder to his Inquisitors – *Yet still, it moves* – referred to the Earth, a planet moving around the sun, and not fixed at the center of the Universe as the Church required. Galileo spent many years under house arrest because of his researches. Yet Pisa's Duomo is where (though probably this too apocryphal) Galileo developed his theory of pendulum movement while observing a lamp swinging from the ceiling. The Church, voice of authority. Scientific method, based on observation and hypothesis. Their conjunction makes for an very fine history lesson.

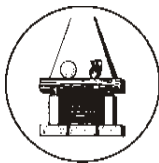


And for visitors, there can be no better time than Spring to be in Pisa. Here's just a few things to do, besides strolling along the Arno, visiting the University and climbing the Leaning Tower:

- Guided tours of the Piazza dei Miracoli (11.30 am from 22 to 25 March),
- The Flower Festival at Giardino Scotto (22 to 24 March),
- The Historical Procession leaving the city center at 10 am on 25 March, arriving at the Duomo at 11.30 am,
- The Galilean Tour at 3.30 pm on 25 March,
- Special open day at the Charterhouse of Calci (with its fascinating Natural History Museum, created in the 1500's by Ferdinando di Medici), 25 March,
- Bagni di Pisa's special access to the 18th century Hammam Grotto (Turkish Bath) at San Giuliano Terme, 25 March.

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