



LIVORNO

One of the main seaports in Italy and the most important container port in the Mediterranean, Livorno's history has always been linked to its harbor and is a melting pot of languages, races and customs. The Medici family planned this Tuscan gateway to the Mediterranean Sea in the 16th century when Cosimo I named it the "Port of the Medici Family". Thanks to a special covenant, (it was a free port), ships from every nation were granted equal docking rights, and the resulting influx of Jewish and Moorish refugees contributed to the city's prosperity. By the end of the century its population had doubled due to the advent of a considerable number of immigrants who came to Livorno to escape religion and race prosecution. The Medici turned Livorno from a fortified village into a magnificent town equipped with fortresses, town walls and a system of canals. At the end of the 17th century the town underwent a period of great expansion, near the defensive pile of the Old Fortress, a new fortress was built together with navigable canals. In the northern part of town the new Venice district began to rise in 1629. Today it still preserves most of its original features such as the bridges, narrow lanes, the noblemen's houses and the canals which once linked the port to its storehouses and to the homes of its merchants.

The Via Grande, with its shops under the porticos, is the main street, leading to the Cathedral and on the sea-front to the Monument to the Four Moors, a 17th century group by Tacca and Bandini: the moors represent four Barbary pirates in chains. The entrance to the Medici Port is just opposite the monument. The Lantern Tower is a recent reconstruction of the original 14th century tower beneath which in the 16th century a lazaretto had been built. To the right one can see the massive Fortezza Vecchia (The Old Fortress) built by Antonio da Sangallo in 1534. Not to be missed in Livorno is also the Giovanni Fattori Civic Museum which contains a considerable collection of his works as well as works by other artists belonging to the Macchiaioli school.