

Saturnia

Saturnia was an ancient city in Etruria, about 23 miles northeast of Orbetello and the coast. Dionysius of Halicarnassus enumerates it among the towns first occupied by the Pelasgi and then by the Tuscans. A Roman colony was established there in 183 BC, and it was a prefecture, but otherwise little is known about it. Remains of the city walls, in polygonal style, still exist, to which Roman gates were added. Roman remains have also been discovered within the town, and remains of tombs outside, originally covered by tumuli, which have now disappeared, so that George Dennis, author of *Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria*, wrongly took them for megalithic remains. Pitigliano, some 12 miles to the southwest, is another Etruscan site.

The legend regarding the birth of Saturnia tells that the god Saturn, angry with the people who were always at war with each other, sent a thunderbolt to earth, giving life to a magic spring of warm sulphurous water which would pacify man.

Etruscans and Romans, who successively dominated it, loved it and, each in their own time took advantage of the thermal waters. In 1300 Saturnia, became the hideout of exiles and was razed to the ground by Siena.

Forgotten for several centuries, Saturnia was rediscovered in the second half of the 1800s when the land around the spring was drained and a thermal establishment built. In current times Saturnia is most famed for its thermal waters. Near the town, the copious sulphuric water (800 liters a second) gushes out at 37° into a large natural pool flowing to a suggestive waterfall and to a series of natural pools carved in the rock, in which each year thousands of people bathe. The thermal water has for years also served the efficient thermal plant in which, thanks to the water's properties, certain illnesses are cured.

Saturnia today is a town which, whilst maintaining its historic aspect, has given life to a very active thermal tourism, thanks both to the thermal complex which every year receives thousands of visitors, and the many tourist structures which have developed



around it.

