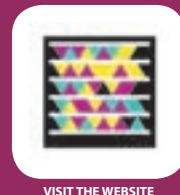


## RADAGAISUS: WHO WAS HE?

He was the leader of the Ostrogoths, who entered Italy in the early fifth century. Eager to reach Rome, the Ostrogoths had crossed the Apennines, immediately finding their way to the Roman town of Pistoia. After having conquered and sacked the town in 406, they again took up the road south, but around Fiesole, were counterattacked by the Roman army led by Stilicho (a general of barbarian descent). The Ostrogoths were defeated and Radagaisus killed, but it was too late for Pistoia. The signs of ruin left behind (the Roman villa burned, the internal road structure disrupted) are still archeologically visible. It can thus be said that, for Pistoia, the Middle Ages (whose beginning is recognized as 476 when the last Western Roman emperor was deposed) can be antedated by several decades. In the crypts of San Mercuriale (a former nunnery, now seat of the court offices) the remains of a wall hastily built to resist an attack have been found. In its structure, there are also some drum columns attributable to an ancient temple, the remains of the Roman civilization, which was being overtaken by a new one.



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PROVINCIA  
DI PISTOIA

**INFO POINT**  
Abetone + 39 0573 60231  
Cutigliano + 39 0573 68029  
Pistoia + 39 0573 21622  
[info@pistoia.turismo.toscana.it](mailto:info@pistoia.turismo.toscana.it)

**TEXT**  
Lorenzo Cipriani  
**PHOTOS**  
APT - Italia Turistica Marco  
Melodia - Katrin Fox  
**TRANSLATION**  
Studio Blitz - Pistoia  
**GRAPHIC DESIGN**  
Studio Phaedra

ITINERARIES OF ART AND HISTORY

# THE CITY OF PISTOIA

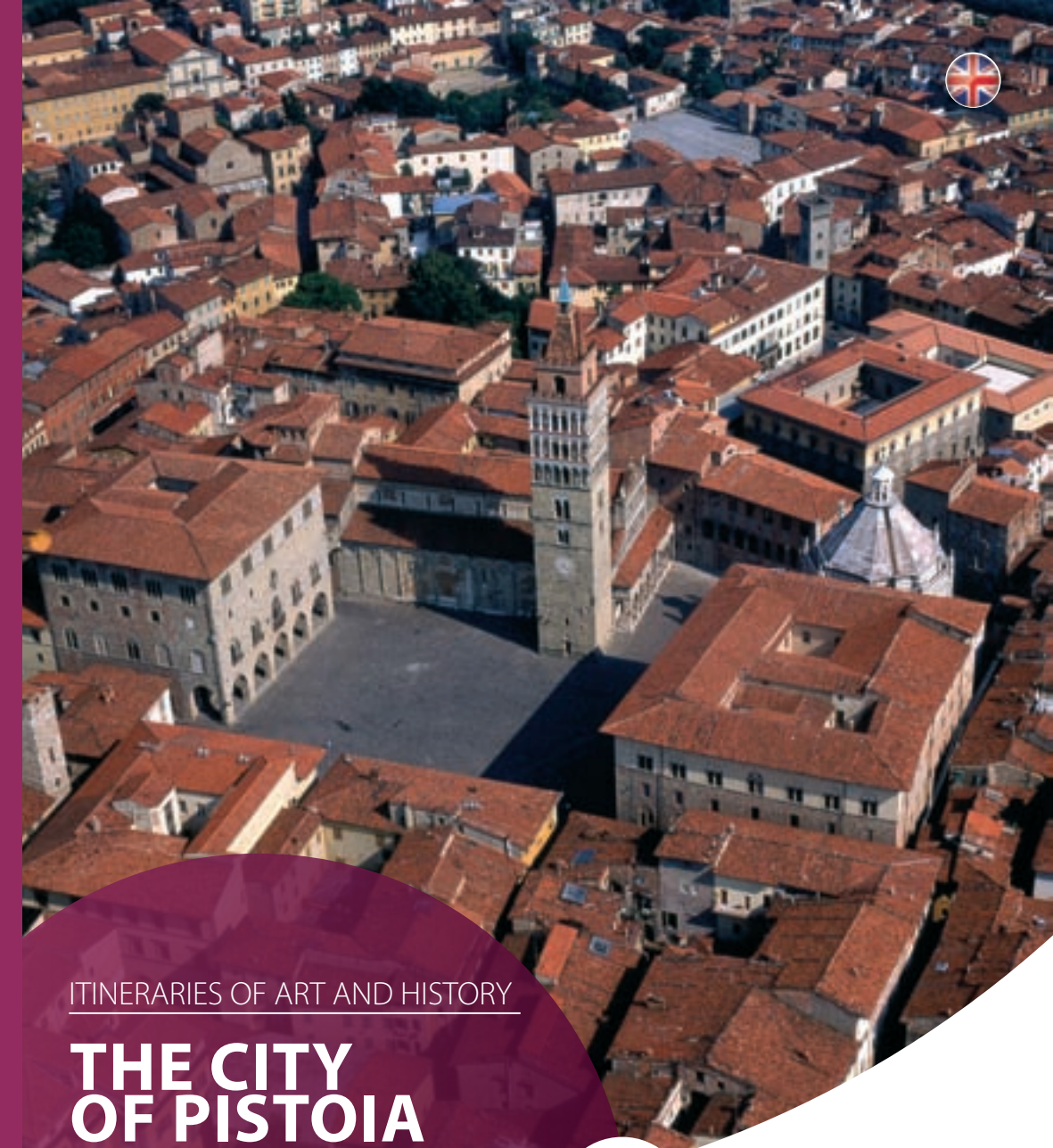
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**AGENZIA  
PER IL TURISMO**  
ABETONE PISTOIA  
MONTAGNA P.S.E.



Intervento realizzato all'interno delle azioni previste dal progetto interregionale (L.135/2001 art. 5) "Valorizzazione comprensorio sciistico toscano emiliano" cofinanziato da Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri - Dipartimento per lo sviluppo e la competitività del turismo - e dalla Regione Toscana





# THE CITY OF PISTOIA

Pistoia was founded at the foot of the Apennines in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. by Roman legions that were conducting a war against the Ligurians. The early camp – later a fortified citadel – was built on the fluvial terrace created by the torrential deposits where Piazza del Duomo is today. The city grew and was administratively placed in the *VII regio*, but the orderly Roman town plan was disrupted when, in 406, Pistoia was captured and partly destroyed by the Gothic leader Radagaisus. For almost the next two centuries there is no official record of the city's existence, which had also been a Roman *municipium*. In the late VI century was the conquest by the Lombards, who were then followed by the Franks. Thus a lasting Germanic im-

print was given to the city's customs, characteristics, traditions and laws. The center of the city's power was no longer on Piazza del Duomo, but on La Sala, the Lombard name indicating the seat of authority. It is undeniable that the Christian cathedral existed before the year 1000, in whose parvise the market took place. The bishop was a powerful lord, and traces of the feudal castle are still visible in the old Bishop's Palace. The very early establishment of a free commune created conflict with the bishop as a revolutionary institution superimposed itself on the sacred ones of the empire and the papacy. When the bishop was strong and intelligent, like the Vallombrosan Atto, the conflict was very sharp, even arriving to the point of excom-

munication (1138). Later, however, an agreement was mediated that, on one hand, observed respect for the Church and, on the other, made it clear that civic self-government was now well-established. Indeed, having brought a holy relic of one of the most venerated saints, James the Greater, to whose Spanish sepulcher crowds of pilgrims flocked, made our city a pious stopover destination for the many travelers who passed along the nearby Via Francigena, an important medieval road axis. Pistoia was filled with hospices, inns, eateries, moneychangers and banks, acquiring fame and wealth.



Pistoia's prosperous medieval period was relatively brief: By the beginning of the XIV century, the joint pressure of the stronger nearby communes of Florence and Lucca was already being felt. Within a few decades, our city fell into the "hands", as was said at that time, of Florence, which was constructing its regional state. Some important visual reminders remain, set in place as a sign of the dominion state, like the image of the Florentine lion (*the Marzocco*) found in some public places. The modern history of the Pistoia area from that time on always took place in the shadow of the Dominante. Its contempo-



rary history began after the end of the Medici dynasty, and especially with the advent to the grand ducal throne of Peter Leopold of Lorraine (1765). The face of the ancient city changed profoundly in this period due to the reforms imposed by the Jansenist bishop Scipione de' Ricci as well as the construction by the nobility of palaces in the center. During the Risorgimento, Pistoia underwent six hard years of Austrian occupation (1849-55). With the 1860 plebiscite, it became part, together with all of Tuscany, of the unified Kingdom of Italy. Its con-

temporary history continued into the 1900s, a century of profound changes and tragic events that also touched Pistoia.

