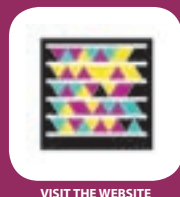


THE BACIO DEI CRISTI KISS OF THE CHRISTS

The rogation that takes place every year in Gavinana for the Feast of the Assumption is carried out to pray – according to ancient custom – for deliverance from disease, hunger, war, earthquakes and animal pests. The main rite calls for the two crucifixes heading two processions touch each other, or “kiss”, as a sign of peace and harmony regained. Kissing to make peace was a gesture that used for centuries in the turbulent, medieval Pistoia, land of factions – such as the Guelphs and Ghibellines, or the Whites and the Blacks originating from a local fight – and as such witnessed many deaths. It was not uncommon for the signs of peace – more or less spontaneous or sometimes forced – to be followed by a new war; perhaps the custom was born from just such a prolonged conflict between two “parties” in the small town of Gavinana when the people, tired of the following one faction or another, felt the need to make peace. A kind of Guareschi-style “small world”, but given Tuscany’s violent fourteenth century, before Florence imposed by force – and for its interests – lasting peace. The two sections of the procession leaving Gavinana separate and meet up again at the Gorgi bridge, where the two crosses are banged together: a manly hug and kiss, the signs – it was hoped at one time – of a definitive peace and which today remains a religious and folkloristic ingredient.



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ITINERARIES OF ART AND HISTORY

SAN MARCELLO, THE CAPITAL OF THE MOUNTAIN



**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 tosco emiliano" cofinanziato da Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri - Dipartimento per lo sviluppo e la competitività del turismo - e dalla Regione Toscana

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SAN MARCELLO, THE CAPITAL OF THE MOUNTAIN



The highest point of land in the San Marcello area is the summit of Mount Oppio, the natural watershed between the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian sides. So, by remembering the two main villages of Maresca and Gavinana, with the waters from the first running down to the Adriatic and those from the second to the Tyrrhenian. San Marcello is also a political



center of Pistoia's mountains, being the seat of the mountain community. Its origins are Roman as it appears to have taken its name from the consul Marcello who led the war against the Ligurians (II sec. BC); moreover, many of the praedial place-names in the area are Roman. In the Middle Ages there were repeated civil conflicts among the major rival families of Pistoia. During the Medici period, it housed the iron foundry, namely, a state monopoly that dealt with this important manufacture, which used the water power *in loco* to beat and forge tools, probably weapons at first and later in more peaceful times, tools. From swords to spades, you might say, or in other words, from war to peace, if we wish to idealize this transformation in a social key.

Much of the land and the town itself were enriched by the construction of the grand ducal road to Modena, which was inaugurated in the late eighteenth century. The mountains lost their centuries-old isolation and the town, crossed by the great road, became a stopover area, consolidating its central location. Another contribution to the economy was the construction of the Cini family paper mill, built using the most advanced methods at the beginning of contemporary times. Finally, in the early twentieth century, the Orlando family set up in Campotizzoro the Società Metallurgica Italiana, which for many decades (especially during the war years because it produced ammunition) provided many residents with opportunities for jobs – hence

for livelihoods and expectations. Another innovation was the FAP (Ferrovia Alto Pistoiese) that, between 1926 and 1965, connected Pracchia station on the Porrettana line to Mammiano with its narrow-gauge electric trains until it was made obsolete by the automobile. After World War II, even San Marcello was abandoned as the entire mountain population migrated. However, some handicrafts (especially in the metalworking sector) remained that in addition to tourism that today represents – with about 50.000 visitors per year – the major components of the local economy. Besides the fresh air, nature, food, and various opportunities for wellness, it has taken advantage of folkloristic events like, for example, the feast of Saint Celestine on 8 September, when



an air balloon is raised in memory of the eighteenth-century visit by Montgolfier brothers to the Cini family, and the *Bacio dei Cristi*. There are plenty of cultural attractions: the Ferrucci Museum of Gavinana (with the finds from the famous battles fought in 1530 by Francesco Ferrucci against imperial troops), the Pian dei Termini Astronomical Observatory, the suspension bridge between Popiglio and Mammiano Basso (perhaps the most longest in the world supported by cables), the fifteenth-century ironworks in Maresca where you can still see the mighty camshaft driven by water power used to hammer the hot iron.

