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**Barberino Val d'Elisa:** The earliest document of the village is to be found in the Passignano Abbey in 1054. The development of the hamlet goes back to the first decades of XIII c., after the Florentines destroyed Serravalle in 1202. In the following century Florence settled there a military defensive structure, including it within the Florentine Republic. From 1303 it has become the political and administrative place of a Vicariate. The village still shows the fortified medieval structure, partly surrounded by walls and towers of the XIII c. The village has 2 entrance doors, the Florentine and the Sienese connected by the old Francigena trail (Cassa), the Pretorio Palazzo, the Cosca and the pilgrim hospital of the 1365, the S. Bartolomeo Church. Within the walls moreover the famous tower-houses and narrow streets, some of which covered make the village really worth visiting. Amazing landscape.

**Castellina in Chianti:** It's the place of the most interesting Etruscan ruins of the area: 4 underground tombs of VII-VIII c. in Montecatini, Renchies and Vignale. The village in XIII c. becomes property of the noble family of Trebbio and Guidi who submitted themselves to Florence in 1193. Due to its location between Florence and Siena the village was a remarkable centre for commerce and transit. It was the capital of Chianti League before Gaiole turn. In the late XIVth c. it was burned out during the war between Florence and the Duke of Milan, allied to Siena. Later on Florence rebuilt and increased its military fortifications surrounded by walls and towers and nowadays one of these is the town hall. You can also admire a magnificent underground street belonging to the same period, made by houses leaning against the walls.

**Castellina Scalo:** Meleto Castle and much more.

**Castellina V.:** The castle on top of the hill, S. Caterina and the Castle belonging like most of the Etruscan Tuscan to the IVth c. b.c. The earliest written documents go back to XIII c., but only at the end of XIII c. the village had its independent identity. In the early 1300 the first water canalizations for mills and paper factories along the river Elsa began. Colle witnessed important battles for Tuscany like the one in 1269 and 1479. In XIVth c. Colle changed its aspect. The Usimbardi family changed the paper production into glass and then crystal production. Today the 15% of the worldwide crystal and the 95% of the Italian crystal comes from Colle. Colle Alto is a real architectural pearl.

**Colle Val d'Elsa:** City of the Crystal. There were 2 old hamlets on top of the hill, S. Caterina and the Castle belonging like most of the Etruscan Tuscan to the IVth c. b.c. The earliest written documents go back to XIII c., but only at the end of XIII c. the village had its independent identity. In the early 1300 the first water canalizations for mills and paper factories along the river Elsa began. Colle witnessed important battles for Tuscany like the one in 1269 and 1479. In XIVth c. Colle changed its aspect. The Usimbardi family changed the paper production into glass and then crystal production. Today the 15% of the worldwide crystal and the 95% of the Italian crystal comes from Colle. Colle Alto is a real architectural pearl.

**Gaiole:** From its origins and more clearly in the XIVth c. Gaiole was an important centre for commercial exchanges. Situated between Florence and Siena it was often victim of assaults till the 1555 when Siena lost against Florence. Later on in 1776 it became a town hall. The territory is rich of castles like Brolio owned by the Riccio family as well as Caocchiano. The last one was destroyed by the Argonesi in 1478 and rebuilt in 1530; Montelucco made of 2 buildings and located on top of a very panoramic hill. Worth visiting are Pieve S. Polo in Rosso, Pieve S. Giusto in Saicchio

**Greve in Chianti:** takes its name from the latin "Gruvis" and like all the villages built in down hill has a more recent history compared to those built on hill tops. Greve was the commercial centre of the S. Cresco a Montecatini district and after XIII c. had a relevant development as market place. With the institution of the "Chianti League" the territory was formed as follows. Panzano sided with Chianti League of Castellina. Greve became the capital of the League of Greve Valley and Chianti League. In XIVth c. Greve becomes town hall and slowly shows the present look. Many of the nearby Castles have become farms. A little bit more than 1 km from the famous triangular square you can still admire the Montefiore Castle. Don't miss to visit Markets in the square: Greve-Saturday morning, San Polo - Feasts: Greve for Monday or Easter; old antiques market; in May in Greve; pions and flowers market; San Polo: asking for miracles: in occasion of the baptisms of 1368, 1392, drought of 1534 or for the Spanish siege in 1529. Weekly market: Impruneta-Sat. morning; Tavarnuzze-Wed. morning; Holy Art Museum: Sat-Sun 9.30-12.30/15.30-19.

**Impruneta:** City of coils (baked clay); Impruneta (from latin "pruneti" or "pin pellets") originated between the VIII and VIII c. b.c. during the Etruscan period. In the 17th c. b.c. it became an important religious centre. In the middle age the local noble family Buondelmonti took the leadership of one of the 72 leagues of the Florentine territory. In XIII c. Florence destroyed all the nearby castles and on the 23/10/1130 also the Montebuoni Fortress fell down. In 1308 the first "corporation of terracotta masters" began, that is why many palaces and churches have been decorated with this material, as well as Brunelleschi cupola. In the 1722 the Grand Duke P. Leopoldo, in order to develop coal exportation, cancelled the taxes and encouraged its use. Here you have the sacred image of the Lady of the Waters, often brought in procession in Florence between Siena and Florence like those in 1244, 1254, 1269 (bottle of Colle). The deserted sheltered inside the walls. In 1380, the Montegonzi inhabitants and defenders became officially citizens of Siena. In 1383 a group of siennese exiles took the fortress but for short since they surrendered to Florentines soon after. In 1526 Florence besieged Montegonzi by bombing the walls, but the villagers resisted till the Carnovola battle of 23/07 when Siena definitely won the Florentine (Pope supporters). On the 27/04/1554 the betrayal captain Zeffi gave Montegonzi to the Marquis of Matigiana, destroying the defensive system of the Republic of Siena and causing its end. The Fortress became finally a Medical faculty property.

**Poggibonsi:** originally was a castle on the Podium maritum, on the Francigena trail a few kms from S. Gimignano. It was attacked in 1115 and destroyed. In 1155 the Guidi Counts rebuilt the castle on top of Bontal Podium and maintained good relationships alternatively with Florence and Siena. In 1203 the Poggibonsi Podestà (the most important political figure) established for the first time the official borders between Florence and Siena. In 1267 the Guelfi (Pope supporters) came back to Florence, in 1269, after the Ghibellini lost Colle, they were interested in the village. In 1270 the

**Radda in Chianti:** The territory of Radda in Chianti is hilly located between the valley of the river Ressa and the one of Arbia in the heart of Chianti Classico. It was the main city of the "Chianti League" and political centre. Today the old castle keeps within its walls the old medieval village, very well kept. Here you can admire XIVth c. Podesta Palace with its beautiful fresco of 1500 by Florentine school. The outside armorial bearings of 1400 and 1700 are of great interest. Moreover the S. Niccolò Church, the square of the castle, the medieval wall, the grand ducal storage ice room, the walls walk, the Church of S. M. in Prato (ex-convent of Cappuccini monks) under restoration, it will be Chianti holy art museum. Worth visiting the Romanesque Chapel S.M. Novella from XIII c. and the Volpaia Castle a beautiful rural village.

**San Gimignano:** Located on a hill at 324 mt between the valleys Elsa and Arno. It has been populated by the Etruscans during the emperor period. Situated between the roman street Clodia and the famous and antique Francigena trail, San Gimignano always played an important role as military and strategic centre. Originally under the power of Volterra, it soon had a great development in XIII c. thanks to its commercial influence

and geographical position. The first nucleus were built on the Tower hill, previous residence of the bishop of Volterra and on the Montestaffoli hill, where later on the powerful fortress was built. The battles against Volterra began in 1130 and about 20 years later S. G. was practically independent. The city immediately allied with Florence against Poggibonsi and Colle Val d'Elsa. In 1207 the new town wall was built (including the hamlets of S. Matteo and S. Giovanni), and nowadays you can still admire 3 original doors: the Goro arch (N), the Beccari arch (E), S. Matteo stone arches (O). In 1229 the rich merchant town hall was still with Florence strengthening the alliance. It seemed that the towers, during this period, were 72, today you can see 14 perfectly complete. In 1251 S. G. built the second town hall including the new quarters of Montestaffoli with its 2 main doors on Francigena trail: S. Giovanni and S. Matteo (1262) and 2 secondary doors of Quarescochio and S. Jacopo. These high and heavy stone walls came from the Peville castle, had squared defensive towers. This town wall is still very well kept with all its original doors. Between XIII and XIVth c. the city reached its maximum splendour, then some internal fights between the families Saluocci and Acinghelli, made it totally surrender to Florence in 1353. Therefore the need of new fortifications: a new fortress, a high tower, 2 squared towers; later in 1470 they built 5 round and fortified towers. It didn't last long. After Siena lost against Florence in 1555, the fortress and many other structures had been destroyed. Worth visiting: Town hall palace, its Court, Danter's room, Civic Museum and Picture-gallery; Mayor's S. M. Assunta Basilica; S. Fina Chapel; Archeological Museum; S. Agostino Church; S. Bartolo Chapel, Holy Art Museum, Ornithological Museum and S. Francesco tower.

**San Casciano Val di Pesa:** In roman times it was a transit place located on a X as well as

that of S. Cecilia church. Located on a strategic position between the transit of goods and pilgrims, it officially began with the construction of the Church (1304) dedicated to S. M. al Prato. In 11/11/1312 the Emperor Arrigo VII, after raised the siege in Florence, occupied the village by destroying all the castles in Pesa and Greve valleys. In 1339, U. di Nerio, passing through Avignone, painted in the Church his last Italian piece. The village was burned again by Fra Molino d'Albano in 1354, later on Florence increased its fortifications in 1356 changing it into a fortified but prosperous village. In 1512 the exile Machiavelli stayed in Albergoccio and wrote from there some of his pieces. During the Medici period the state became strong that is why part of the defensive structures were destroyed and the city became a tourist place among art and nature. The Della Robbia family built the funerals and started their ceramic handicraft. Some of their works are in Chiesavecchia and S. Gioi. In S. Gusme, some others have been left in the original places and holy art museum.

**Tavarnelle V.P.:** offers a beautiful wave of various landscapes, from natural beauties, like woods and cultivated fields that have been greatly worked for centuries as vineyards and olive trees, to historical villas and old farms, old chapels and rural churches, castles and medieval hamlets. Worth visiting: the church of S. Lucia di Borghetto with XVIII-XVII c. s. frescos; the very old chapel of S. Pietro in Bossolo with Holy Art Museum; the Monastery and the church of S. Maria di Moracco (XIII c.); the fortified village of S. Donato in Poggio di XIII - XIVth c. with the beautiful Romanesque chapel of early XIII c.; the Sanctuary of S. Maria delle Grazie a Pietracupa (XVIII c.); the Badia valmontrosiana of Passignano, a fortified structure belonging to XIII c., with important pieces of art like the fresco of D. Ghilandalo "ultima cena" and many other relevant pieces of art in the church of the XIII c. In all the territory historically important eno-gastronomic traditions, wine, very good oil, fine specialities, artistic handicraft all in a professional and welcoming centre.

**Siena**