

The Florentine Aprile 2015

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Places



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The Comune di Pistoia is one of the few city councils in Tuscany that has an active Instagram account, which it opened in 2014.

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Spring in Pistoia

Piazza life, innovative museums and more

GET OUT OF TOWN by Molly McIlwrath

People often think of the towns beyond Florence as sleepy places with nothing much to offer. Just a 35-minute train ride away, Pistoia is anything but sleepy. Since *The Florentine's* last articles about this small city (see theflr.net/pistoia1 and theflr.net/pistoia2), there is even more to do there, with new design and concept stores, restaurants, food shops and innovative museum programs. If you head to Pistoia in the coming months, you will find not only art, culture and piazza life but two festivals that Pistoia proudly puts on each spring.

SOCIAL

Piazza della Sala is hang-out central in Pistoia. In the morning, the locals flock to the piazza to stock up at the daily farmers' market. At night, people gather to socialize and chat. Pistoia's civic hub is piazza del Duomo: the town hall, courthouse, bell tower, cathedral, civic museum and the bishopric museum are all here. It also hosts the city's cultural festivals with marquees for lectures and the famous **Pistoia Blues Festival** in June (pistoiaiblues.com).

ACTIVIST

A visitor might notice that three of the city's parks are named for historical women. Pistoia boasts strong civic activism and a vocal feminist presence with the **Rete 13 Febbraio** network, which in 2013 mobilised and worked with the city's schools and local government to name three new small parks after women. See more on 13 Febbraio Pistoia Facebook page.

ARTISTIC

Running until June 7, 2015, is **Vediamoci al museo** ('See you at the museum'). Created by the Artemisia cultural association, whose art laboratory space is just off Pistoia's piazza del Duomo, the multi-venue program includes a family-focused activity in English. Called 'Let's play with Marino's riding horse,' it teaches children about twentieth-century Pistoia-born artist Marino Marini and his passion for horses. For more information, see the Vediamoci al Museo-Pistoia Facebook page.

INTERCULTURAL

Dialoghi Nuovi at Pistoia's civic museum uses hands-on educational activities to draw connections between East and West and the cultural exchanges between Christianity and Islam using the museum's collection as a focal point. Headed by archaeologist Cristina Taddei, the exhibition includes histories of pigments and foods, a world map carpet based on work of medieval Arabic geographer Al-Idrisi, with information leaflets in Arabic, Romanian, Albanian and English. For more information, see the Facebook page of Dialoghi Nuovi or comune.pistoia.it/museocivico.

THEATRICAL

Il Funaro, an internationally renowned cultural centre, includes a theatre, cafe, library/archive and dinner venue. Programs for children include the monthly **Raccontamerende** ('storytelling and snacks') in the coffeehouse, a program offered in collaboration with Slow Food (third Thursday of the month; 5 euro). Il Funaro's special claim to fame is the smallest cinema in the world: the Cinetandum, consisting of two seats in a booth. For more information, in English, see ilfunaro.org.

BOOKISH

From April 9 to 12, Pistoia will be a hub of all things booking during the annual **Leggere la città** ('Reading the city'). Readings, workshops and seminars will focus on the theme of public space (more information at leggerelacitta.it). On May 22 to 24, the theme moves indoors, with a lecture series focused on humans and their homes during the city's annual **Dialoghi sull'uomo** ('Dialogues on Man'), anthropology festival (more information at dialoghi-sulluomo.it). Featuring talks and other events around town, local bookshops are involved in both festivals. Among them is Lo Spazio di Via dell'Ospizio, with its children's section, tea room, art gallery, frequent lectures and Friday literary lunches featuring menus inspired by authors.