

the pressure of air coming out of the birds' beaks. The fountain was recently restored to working order.

The Proserpina Fountain (13)

Four barley-sugar columns with stucco vine-shoots twining round them form a structure containing three niches. The middle niche contains a shell-shaped boat drawn by horses and, in the boat, you can see Proserpina being carried to the underworld after being abducted by Pluto.

The "Rometta" Fountain (14)

This fountain was meant to represent ancient Rome and contains miniature versions of many of the city's buildings and symbols, including the she-wolf suckling the twins Romulus and Remus, and a personification of Rome in the shape of a helmeted female figure carrying a lance and with a canal (the Tiber) flowing at her feet. The boat on the canal represents the Tiber Island (Isola Tiberina). The Rometta is yet another example of Pirro Ligorio's talent but, unfortunately, the fountain today is not as it was originally because it was partially demolished in the nineteenth century. The statues are the work of Pierre de la Motte.

The Hundred Fountains Avenue (15)

The Avenue is lined with trees on one side and three tiers of fountains on the other. Gurgling water spouts from a hundred or so

carved fountainheads in various shapes and forms, including lilies, eagles, obelisks and sailing boats. The water falls into long troughs, forming streams which flow along the three levels and symbolize three rivers: the Albuneo, the Aniene and the Ercolano. These same "rivers" flow down from the rocks on the upper level of the Oval Fountain and converge in the "Rometta" Fountain, which has a canal symbolizing the Tiber.

The Oval or Tivoli Fountain (16)

The Oval Fountain, so named because of its shape, has a semicircular exedra (portico) at the back of it. Water cascades from the raised oval basin in front of the exedra into a pool below. The fountain has statues representing mythological heroes glorifying the Este dynasty and the greatness of Tivoli. It symbolizes the Tivoli Falls at Villa Gregoriana, while the rocks of the upper part of the fountain represent the rocks above the falls.

The Great Chalice ("Bicchierone") Fountain (17)

Cardinal Rinaldo d'Este commissioned Gian Lorenzo Bernini to design a fountain to be placed under Pandora's Loggia. The fountain was inaugurated in March 1661 in the presence of some illustrious members of the Este family. Bernini subsequently reduced the height of the water jet because it partially obscured the view of Pandora's Loggia.

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Villa d'Este

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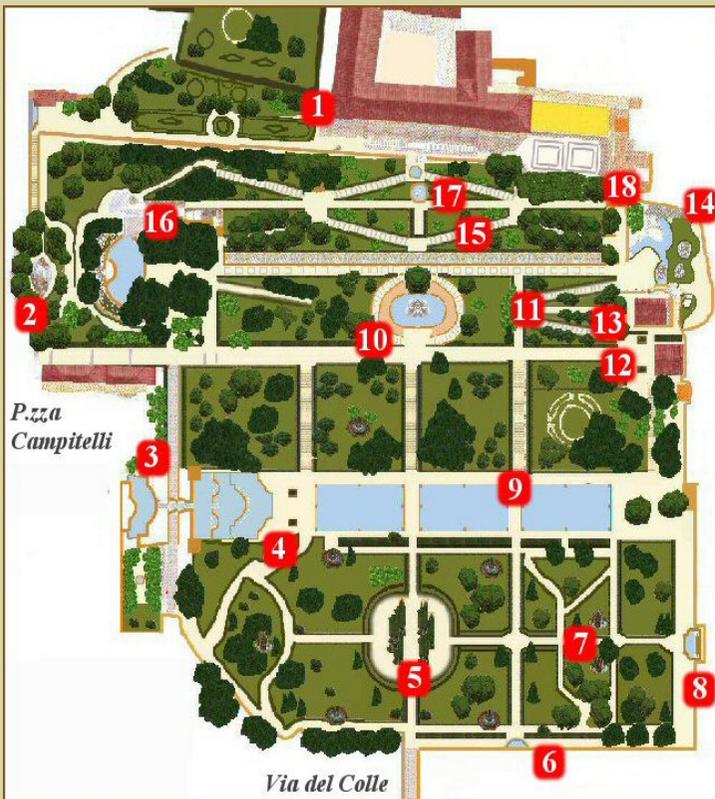
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How to get there

Villa d'Este is near Piazza Garibaldi, in the centre of Tivoli. Tivoli is situated approximately 30 km (20 miles) from Rome and can be reached by motorway A24 or by bus and/or train.

Opening Hours and tickets

All the information can be read on <http://www.villadestetivoli.info>



1. Villa
2. Pegasus fountain
3. Water Organ fountain
4. Neptune fountain
5. Cypress rotunda
6. Goddess of Nature fountain
7. Mete fountains
8. Ariadne fountain
9. Fish ponds
10. Dragon fountain
11. Bollori steps
12. Owl fountain
13. Proserpina fountain
14. Rometta fountain
15. One Hundred Fountains avenue
16. Oval fountain
17. Great chalice fountain
18. Diana's grotto

The sounding fountains

The hydraulic organ of the Water Organ fountain is activated daily at:

10.30am - 12.30pm -
2.30 pm - 4.30 pm -
6.30 pm

The Owl Fountain sounds daily at: 10am - 12 noon -
2pm - 4pm - 6pm.

The Villa d'Este was built for Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este (1509-72). It is renowned for its magnificent frescoes and, more particularly, for the stunning effect of the countless cascades and fountains in its gardens. It has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2001.

The spot chosen by the Cardinal bore the fortunate name of "Valle Gaudente" meaning "Vale of Pleasures". The valley sloped down between vineyards and olive groves crisscrossed by country paths. There were humble white cottages with red roofs dotted about and a little church.

The Neapolitan antiquarian and architect

The Cardinal who would be Pope

The Villa was the brainchild of Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este, son of the famous Lucrezia Borgia and Duke Alfonso d'Este of Ferrara. The Cardinal was appointed Governor of Tivoli by Pope Julius III as compensation for beating him in the race for the papacy. His intention was to use the magnificent residence for lavish receptions, with a view to fostering valuable friendships.

Pirro Ligorio (1500-83) was commissioned to design and direct the project. Work on the Villa began in 1550 and took about 20 years to complete. Ligorio dug a 600 metre conduit under the town of Tivoli to bring water from the river Aniene to the basin above the Oval fountain. From there, using the natural gravity caused by the garden's different levels, he created the fantastic water displays you can still admire today. Ligorio's canal continues to supply the Villa's fountains at a rate of about 300 litres of water per second.

The Villa (1)

The Villa, which is in fact a converted Benedictine convent (previously a Franciscan monastery), was given a sober façade with simple lines, its distinctive feature being a large central loggia. The upper, residential floor (the "Appartamento vecchio") was reserved for the Cardinal's private use. It consists of rooms on the same level as the courtyard, featuring vaulted ceilings frescoed by Livio Agresti and his workshop. The central room, known as the Throne Room, opens on to the terrace, from where there is

a breathtaking view of the gardens. The ceiling of the Throne Room is divided into four parts containing two views of the Aniene river, one of the "Tosse" temple and one of the tiny Vesta temple. At the far end of this floor, after the Cardinal's library and his bedchamber, there is a delightful little Chapel, decorated by Federico Zuccari.

The nine ground-floor rooms ("Appartamento nobile") overlook the gardens, with the largest room, (the "Salone") giving directly on to Pirro Ligorio's Gran Loggia. With its nine reception rooms, the Appartamento nobile constitutes the most notable part of the building because of the frescoes by Muziano and Zuccari. On this floor you can also admire the two "Tivoli rooms" decorated by Cesare Nebbia, a pupil of Muziano. The frescoes glorify historical events and legends linked with the foundation of the town.

Pegasus fountain (2)

The fountain is dominated by a statue representing Pegasus, the famous mythical winged horse which sprang from Medusa's blood when Perseus beheaded her. The newborn horse flew to Olympus where he was tamed by Athena or Poseidon. Pegasus bore Perseus to the rescue of Andromeda. In the fountain, the horse is represented with outspread wings as if he is about to fly off.

The Water Organ Fountain (3)

Work on the fountain began in 1568 and was completed in 1611 under Cardinal Alessandro d'Este. It is clearly of baroque inspiration, so quite different from the Renaissance style of the rest of the Villa. The fountain was built around and owes its name to a magnificent hydraulic organ, which produced melodious airs thanks to a complex mechanism invented by the Frenchman Claude Venard.

The central courtyard

The present entrance at Piazza Trento (originally the secondary one, because the main entrance used to be at the bottom of the garden) leads to the central courtyard, the reconverted former cloister (1566-67) embellished with the Fountain of Venus.

The Neptune fountain (4)

This is the only fountain created during the 20th century, transforming the Bernini waterfall which was irreparably damaged by almost two centuries of neglect. Around 1930, Attilio Rossi was given the task of carrying out substantial restoration work.

With the help of engineer Emo Salvati, Rossi restructured the gradient between the Organ Fountain and the fish ponds below, creating the spectacular fountain you can still admire today. The bust of Neptune, to which the fountain owes its name, can just be glimpsed between the soaring jets, behind a veil of water.

The Cypress Rotunda (5)

Sixteenth-century visitors entering the gardens by the gate in Via del Colle, would have been struck by the circular exedra (portico with seats) and by the sight of the Villa up above, just visible amidst the greenery and the fountains. The ancient cypress trees here may be among the oldest in Italy.

The Este Stables

The huge stable building dominates Piazza Garibaldi. It was commissioned in 1621 by Cardinal Alessandro d'Este for the ducal family's horses and could accommodate more than a hundred animals. The stables stood outside the town walls on land ceded by the town close to the Rocca Pia, the Villa d'Este and the Santa Croce Gate, which was demolished in the twentieth century to facilitate the flow of traffic. New bishops, governors and other dignitaries made their formal entry into the town through this gate.

The Goddess of Nature fountain (6)

The fountain is situated near the former entrance to the Villa in Via del Colle. It is a copy in the local travertine stone of the famous statue of Diana of Ephesus.

The Dragon Fountain (10)

The large oval basin of this fountain is flanked on either side by a pair of curving oval ramps. Water spouts from the gaping jaws of a group of four winged dragons, which give the fountain its name. The idea was to remind visitors of the slaying of Ladon (the dragon with a hundred heads) by Hercules in the course of his eleventh labour. Ippolito II and his family had a particular attachment to the demigod.

The Owl Fountain (12)

Like the Organ Fountain, the Owl Fountain was equipped with a hydraulic device which harnessed the power of cascading water to propel an artificial owl towards some little bronze birds perched on bronze branches, "frightening" them and causing them to stop twittering. The twittering was produced by