

## **Versilia** (Textbook: Travel Mate)

**Forte dei Marmi**, **Marina di Pietrasanta** and **Viareggio** are pretty, cosmopolitan seaside resorts situated along the striking coastline of Tuscany. In this area the promenade is flanked by ancient pine groves, where elegant private villas and hotels stand shoulder to shoulder, surrounded by their own luxuriant gardens and immersed in cool tranquillity.

**Forte dei Marmi**, built around a fort commissioned by Archduke Leopold I in 1788 and still standing, is one of the most elegant seaside resorts on the Tyrrhenian coast.

**Marina di Pietrasanta** has the unique attribute of being divided into four charming areas, **Focette**, **Tonfano**, **Motrone** and **Fiumetto**, each with its own bustling, picturesque centre.

**Viareggio**, characterised by art nouveau façades all along the seafront, is a typically Italian resort with a lovely promenade lined with cafés and restaurants.

**Marina di Pietrasanta**, which has 10 kilometres of coastline, does not lack scope for brisk morning walks along the sea, or for more languid afternoon strolls along the promenade itself. The elegant tree-lined avenues of the residential area provide a quiet, cool spot for evening walks, and the centres of each of the four villages are traffic-free at this time.

Approximately three kilometres inland, the historic town of **Pietrasanta** can be reached by bicycle for those with energy to spare, or by bus for those who are content just to wander through the cobbled streets of the town.

Giacomo Puccini's villa in **Torre del Lago** is worth a visit. Bicycles can be hired, and this flat area lends itself particularly well to cycling, whether along the wide beach promenade or through the cool roads of the pine woods where traffic is limited.

Many beaches have sports facilities such as beach volleyball, Italian bowls or table tennis, which are usually free to customers paying for the hire of sunbeds. (Two deckchairs and a beach umbrella can cost anything between 30 € to 40 € a day depending on the season). Some people also hire out paddleboats and windsurf. Further afield, there is an 18-hole golf course in Forte dei Marmi and water-skiing in Torre del Lago, a little further up the coast.