

TRANSATLANTIC COUNCIL BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

PISA AND ITS LEANING TOWER

HISTORICAL TRAIL

VISIT TO PISA, ITS TOWER AND MONUMENTS

What is the first image that comes to mind when you think of Italy? The Leaning Tower of Pisa, of course. This Historical Trail is designed to let you become better acquainted with the famous Tower, the monuments of *Piazza dei Miracoli* (the Cathedral Square) and with Pisa itself, one of the most powerful marine republics of its day, said to be even older than Rome. Before beginning the Trail, here are some of the practical aspects of a visit to this area.

1) **Where**

Pisa, Italy. The *Torre Pendente* (the Leaning Tower of Pisa), and the *Piazza dei Miracoli* (the Cathedral Square) where the Tower is located are found in the medieval town of Pisa. The Trail begins and ends at the *Piazza dei Miracoli*.

2) **When**

Any day of the year, but expect to find tourists from all over the world at the Tower so plan accordingly. Sundays however, are particularly crowded as local Italians visit the Tower as well.

3) **Who**

All registered BSA Scouts and Scouters are eligible to walk the Trail and get the Trail award. Everyone else is invited to walk the Trail and to enjoy Pisa and its Tower

4) **How to get there**

If you are staying at Camp Darby, turn from the front gate. Follow the signs for Pisa Centro, and once inside the city, follow the signs for *Piazza dei Miracoli* or the *Torre Pendente* (Leaning Tower) which has a picture of the Tower on it. If you are travelling on any of the national highways, take the Pisa Centro exit and follow the above signs.

5) **Where to stay**

TAC Scouts and Scouters who belong to the military can stay at the Camp Darby campsite or cabin facilities, only about 30 minutes by car to the Tower. For other Scouts and Scouters, there are numerous hotels, pensions, and youth hostels in and around Pisa. Contact the city's official hotel-booking service, "*Pisa è*", at Tel: 050.830.253, or on-line at www.pisae.com to make reservations or for general information.

6) **Tower Visit Reservations and Cost of Ticket**

Given the number of visitors to the Tower, it is advisable to book your visit ahead of time. The easiest way to do this is on Internet at www.OPAPISA.IT. As of 2005 (revised Historic Trail), the ticket purchased through Internet costs 17 Euros per person (about \$20.00). Tickets can also be purchased directly at *the Biglietteria Torre Pendente* (Tower Ticket Office) in *Piazza dei Miracoli*, Tel: 050.560.54, cost 15 Euros per person (about \$18.00). However, be prepared to stand in line for a considerable amount of time and to be given a ticket for a time later in the day or even the next day.

Group reservations can be made one day in advance at this Ticket Office however there are no discounts or group rates for admittance to the tower. Children under the age of 8 are not admitted in the Tower and children ages 8-12 must be accompanied by an adult. Visits are scheduled every 40 minutes from 9am to 4:20pm throughout the day, but the hours vary according to the season, so it's best to check beforehand. The APT Pisa Tourist Offices, Tel: 050.560.464 or 050.42.291 can give you additional information about visiting the Tower.

The other monuments in the *Piazza dei Miracoli*, the *Duomo* (Cathedral), the *Battistero* (Baptistry) and the *Camposanto* (Churchyard) are worth a visit for older Scouts. There is a student discount for these three monuments in the Piazza as well as for the museums. To obtain this discount, write a letter on Scout or school letterhead paper giving the names and ages of these students and present the letter to the above indicated ticket office when you buy your tickets.

7) **Equipment**

The following equipment is recommended:

- Comfortable shoes or hiking boots
 - Rain gear
 - Day pack
 - First Aid Kit
- Emergency phone number
Water, snacks
Money for souvenirs, etc
Camera and film

8) Tour permit

All Scouts and Scouters will need a Tour Permit for travelling in Italy plus permission slips, power of attorney and medical form as required by TAC

9) Uniform

All Scouts and Scouters are required to wear their full Scout uniform.

10) Leadership

Remember BSA two-deep leadership for adults accompanying the Scouts on the Trail. For Scouts from 8-12 years of age, adults will be required to accompany them to visit and climb up the Tower.

11) On the Trail

Make copies of the enclosed questionnaire and give one to each Scout on the Trail. They should be able to answer all the questions on it as the hike progresses.

12) Ordering the Award

Send the completed questionnaire to the Transatlantic Council office together with a check for the Pisa Historical Trail badge designed by Schuyler Orecchio of Troop 318, Milan

PISA – A BRIEF HISTORY

Pisa is remembered mainly for its ancient and noble past. It is said to be older than Rome and was once one of the most powerful marine Republics. Between the 5th and 7th centuries BC, Pisa came into being, first as a Greek colony and then as an Etruscan one. From 180 BC it became a Roman colony named "*Colonia Julia Pisana*". The fortune of Pisa was always the sea. The harbor at that time was just outside the city gates. Now the sea is probably 20 miles away!

In the 11th century Pisa became a powerful marine Republic and fought against the Saracens to conquer Corsica, Sardinia and the Balearic Islands. During this time there were terrible struggles with Genoa, Amalfi and Venice to see which city would rule over the lands and sea, but after suffering a disastrous defeat by Genoa in 1284, Pisa's glory, prestige and rule of the sea came to an end. The city fell to the Medici family of Florence in 1405. The Florentines, to humiliate the Pisans, cut off the tops of the many towers that existed in Pisa at that time. Many old buildings today, were once towers. Under the Medici's however, Pisa developed as a cultural and intellectual center.

During the Renaissance, Pisa became well known for its architecture and sculpture in the grandiose "Pisa Romantic Style", examples of which are its Cathedral, Churchyard, Baptistry and Leaning Tower.

One of its most famous citizens was Galileo who exploited the overhang of the Tower in one of his experiments, dropping items of different mass off the top to demonstrate the constancy of gravity.

The city suffered its worst crisis in 1944 when it fell victim to Allied bombing. The Tower was somewhat pockmarked, but remained erect. It was thought that a German observation post was hidden in the Tower. In 1987, the Tower and the buildings around it were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Patrimony.

PIAZZA DEI MIRACOLI

Now that you know a little about the city of Pisa, take a closer look at the piazza where you are standing, the *Piazza dei Miracoli* (number 1 on the enclosed map), the city's ecclesiastical center which was first laid out in the mid 11th century. The four major buildings on this piazza, the *Duomo* or Cathedral (2), its *Campanile* or Bell tower (3) which became the Leaning Tower, the *Battistero* or Baptistry (4) and the *Camposanto* or Cemetery (5) were built on a wide grassy lawn that is still beautiful and green today. Right from the beginning there was a problem with the lawn however – it rested on top of very unstable sandy soil and because of this, soon after the construction of the four monuments was completed, all the buildings began to lean!

To help you understand more about each of the four monuments you are going to visit, read the descriptions given below. You will need to allow an entire morning to complete the Historical Trail if you intend to go inside all four monuments described below plus walk along the Arno River. In any case you'll have to factor in the amount of time you will have to wait in line for your turn to enter the various monuments. The exact number of hours required to complete the Historical Trail will depend on the number of tourists in Pisa and at the Tower on any given day.

THE TORRE PENDENTE (LEANING TOWER)

The Leaning Tower, or cathedral bell-tower, was the third building to be constructed at *Piazza dei Miracoli*. Work began on the Romanesque style Tower in 1173 and just 12 years later, it started to tilt but in the opposite direction from where it tilts now. Masons inserted stone wedges to correct the problem, and the Tower started leaning in the opposite direction! After building only 3 stories, construction was stopped. A century or so later, architects added another 3 lopsided stories to try to counterbalance the lean, but that didn't work. A bell-chamber was finally placed on top in 1350. Over the centuries many people came up with brilliant ideas to correct the lean but all they did was to make matters worse so that by 1990

the top leaned about 15 feet from vertical, and the Tower was closed to visitors. Many scientists and engineers joined together to save the Tower with a system of steel cables and counterweights which straightened the Tower to its 1870 position. In 2001 the Tower was once again opened to the public.

Some facts about the Tower:

- 1) The top of the Tower can be reached by climbing the 294 steps that spiral up the inner side of the walls.
- 2) The Tower is approx. 184 feet high.
- 3) The inside diameter at the base is about 23 feet.
- 4) The outer diameter at the base is approx. 50 feet.
- 5) There are 8 stories.
- 6) The Tower's foundations are less than 10 feet thick.
- 7) The Tower weighs about 14,500 tons.
- 8) There are 7 bells in the belfry and each one corresponds to a note of the musical scale.

THE DUOMO (CATHEDRAL)

In 1063 Pisa was an important and powerful marine Republic. To show off its wealth the huge cathedral at *Piazza dei Miracoli* was constructed. The *Duomo* or Cathedral, built of pure white stone, was the first monument to rise in the piazza. It measures 328 feet long and 177 feet high, and is designed in a Latin cross form in a Romanesque architectural style. Its façade has 5 orders of arches placed one on top of another and each order has fine, delicate stonework. The sides repeat the decorations of the façade so that the whole building is a wonderful work of architecture and sculpture. The dome shows influences of Islamic art. Of particular interest are the huge bronze doors of the *Portale di San Ranieri* cast in 1180 and showing scenes from the Bible.

Inside, make sure you stop near the inner wall of the façade to get the full view of the black and white stone interior and admire the numerous magnificent works of art found there such as the stone pulpit, the masterpiece carved by *Giovanni Pisano* in 1302. Strangely enough this pulpit was dismantled in 1599 and not discovered and rebuilt until 1926! Among other notable works is the tomb of Emperor Henry VII (1315) by *Tino da Camaino* and a mosaic of Christ in Majesty completed by *Cimabue* in 1302.

There is a bronze chandelier hanging from the ceiling in the middle of the church. It is called the lamp of Galileo because according to popular tradition, he established the principles of the pendulum while observing the oscillations of this lamp.

THE BATTISTERO (BAPTISTRY)

The second monument to be built in the piazza was the Baptistry. Construction on it started in 1153, but due to many interruptions, it wasn't completed until the 14th century. The Baptistry is the imposing building on the opposite side of the Cathedral from the Tower. It has a circular base whose diameter is about 115 feet, and its three stories, topped by a dome, rise about 180 feet above the lawn. The sheer size of the building isn't apparent until you go inside and get a sense of its huge proportions.

Inside, in the middle of the temple, is found the Baptismal Font, an octagonal basin for baptism by immersion. Another notable work of art is the pulpit sculpted by *Nicola Pisano* in 1260. If you ask, one of the guards might let you hear the echo in the Baptistry. Music played there re-echoes so many times through the vault that it sounds like you are listening to thundering organ music.

THE CAMPOSANTO (CHURCHYARD)

The long marble walls form the rectangular cathedral churchyard. Its architectural style is like that of the other 3 monuments in the piazza. Tradition says that the churchyard contains earth brought back from Golgotha in the Holy Land during the Crusades. Sculptures, sarcophagi and works of art scattered around Pisa were brought to the churchyard building so it became one of the greatest and richest galleries of medieval painting and sculpture. Unfortunately during World War II, this artistic patrimony was severely damaged by the

bombing raids in 1944 that caused the lead roof to melt and collapse on the treasures inside. Many works of art found there are still being restored.

In the piazza you can also visit an additional two museums (if you have the energy to do so) which contain works of art that once adorned the monuments of the piazza and which were moved to protect them from further deterioration after the war.

MEDIEVAL PISA

To see more of medieval Pisa, walk along the Historical Trail from *Piazza dei Miracoli*. Take *Via Santa Maria* to a cross street, *Via dei Mille*. Turn left on it and follow it to *Piazza dei Cavalieri* or Knights' Piazza (6), Pisa's second most beautiful and important piazza. This is a lovely square with a group of magnificent palaces facing it; the Palace of the Knights' Caravan, The Clock Palace and the Council Palace of the Order of the Knights of St. Stephen. In front of this last palace is a statue of Cosimo the First de' Medici who founded the order of the Knights of St. Stephen.

It is worth seeing all of Pisa's antique squares and ancient streets, but of particular interest is the *Lungarni* area (7) along the Arno River, with its Roman bridge, the *Ponte di Mezzo* (8), and many beautiful palaces such as the Gambacorti Palace, the Agostini Palace and the Medici Palace, now all occupied by city administrative offices. Also along the river is the *Cittadella*, the old city Fortress (9). To reach the Arno River areas from *Piazza dei Cavalieri*, take *Via San Frediano*, which becomes *Via 29 Maggio*. At the end of this short street is the river. Turn either left or right and walk along the river to admire the *Lungarni* area. To return to *Piazza dei Miracoli*, retrace your steps or if you are adventuresome, follow a different street back. You have completed the Historical Trail.

If you and your Scouts get hungry while hiking the Trail and want to stop for a meal, Pisa has many snack bars, pizzerias and restaurants whose prices range from the very cheap to the very expensive! There are numerous shops and stalls especially around the Tower where you can buy postcards, replicas of the Tower in all sizes, pins, badges and other treasures to take home as a souvenir of the Pisa Historical Trail.

Sources for the information on Pisa and its monuments:

- 1) Belford, Ros; Dunford, Martin; Woolfrey, Cecelia: The Rough Guide to Italy, Rough Guides, London, 2001;
- 2) *Corriere della Sera*, City Book - Firenze, Mondadori, Milan;
- 3) Kindersley, Dorling, Inc. Travel Guides – Italy, London, 2000;
- 4) Pisa, monuments, works of art of the Cathedral and of the city, Italcards, Bologna.

Marilee Bisoni

NE-II-120

Revised October 2005

QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

SCOUT TROOP/PACK _____

- 1) What is the name of the most famous Tower in Italy?
- 2) Where is it found?
- 3) Where was the harbor of Pîsa in Roman times?
- 4) Name some of the cities Pisa had to fight against in the 11th century to rule the sea?
- 5) Who was the most famous citizen of Pisa?
- 6) What are the four monuments in Piazza dei Miracoli?
- 7) How tall is the Tower?
- 8) Why did it start to lean?
- 9) What is special about the bells in the Tower belfry?
- 10) What happened to the Tower in 1990?

Send the completed questionnaire together with a check for the cost of the Historical Merit Badge to:

Transatlantic Council offices
Stem Kaserne, Bldg. 1002
68232 Mannheim, Germany

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1) The Leaning Tower
- 2) Pisa
- 3) Outside the city gates
- 4) Genoa, Amalfi and Venice
- 5) Galileo
- 6) The Tower, the Cathedral, the Baptistry and the Churchyard
- 7) Approximately 184 feet
- 8) It was built on unstable sandy soil
- 9) There are 7 of them and each one corresponds to a note of the musical scale
- 10) The top of the Tower leaned 15 feet from vertical and was in danger of collapsing. It was closed to the public so it could be partially straightened.