

图书基本信息

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内容概要

Tuscany and Umbria harbour the classic landscapes of Italy, familiar from a thousand Renaissance paintings, with their backdrop of medieval hill-towns, rows of cypress trees, vineyards and olive groves, and artfully sited villas and farmhouses. It 's a stereotype that has long held an irresistible attraction for northern Europeans. Shelley referred to Tuscany as a "paradise of exiles", and ever since his time the English, in particular, have seen the region as an ideal refuge from a sun-starved and overcrowded homeland. The expatriate 's perspective may be distorted, but the central provinces – and especially Tuscany – are indeed the essence of Italy in many ways. The national language evolved from Tuscan dialect, a supremacy ensured by Dante, who wrote the Divine Comedy in the vernacular of his birthplace, Florence. Other great Tuscan writers of the period – Petrarch and Boccaccio – reinforced its status, and in the nineteenth century Manzoni came to Tuscany to purge his vocabulary of any impurities while working on *The Betrothed*, the most famous of all Italian novels. But what makes this area pivotal to the culture not just of Italy but of all Europe is, of course, the Renaissance period, whose masterpieces of painting, sculpture and architecture are an intrinsic part of any tour. The very name by which we refer to this extraordinarily creative era was coined by a Tuscan, Giorgio Vasari, who wrote in the sixteenth century of the "rebirth" of the arts with the humanism of Giotto and his successors. Nowadays Tuscany and Umbria are among the wealthiest regions of the modern Italian state, a prosperity founded partly on agriculture and tourism, but largely on their industrial centres, which are especially conspicuous in the Arno valley. Nonetheless, both Tuscany and Umbria are predominantly rural provinces, with great tracts of land still looking much as they did half a millennium ago. Just as the hill-towns mould themselves to the summits, the terraces of vines follow the lower contours of the hills and open fields spread across the broader valleys, forming a distinctive balance between the natural and human world.

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