



A leaning tower may be its claim to fame, but Felicity Carter discovers Pisa is also propped up by a fine Tuscan food scene.

8am

LIGHT BREAKFAST

Although Pisa is a city of late risers, there is breakfast to be found at Lo Sfizio, in the heart of Pisa. Choose an outside seat and enjoy a pastry or some salumi as you watch pedestrians pass under the medieval archways. **Borgo Stretto 54, Santa Maria, + 39 050 580 281.**

10am

DESIGNER SHOPPING

Cross the Ponte di Mezzo over the Arno River to the left bank and you'll come to the Corso Italia, Pisa's main shopping street. The clothes are chic, but the attitude is friendlier than Florence or Milan.

12pm

CLIMB THE TOWER

Stroll back over the bridge to the Piazza del Duomo, the walled area enclosing four great buildings: the Duomo (cathedral),

Baptistry, Campo Santo (walled cemetery) and the wedding cake-like Leaning Tower. Entry to the tower is 15 Euro and the experience is odd; the eyes see the entrance as flat, but the body registers the strong angle, so it feels as though you're climbing a staircase that's pitching and tossing. Don't miss the cathedral with its impressive interior.

1.30pm

TIME FOR LUNCH

Avoid the cafes around the Duomo and retrace your steps to the Piazza delle Vettovaglie, a dusty Medici-era square off the Borgo Stretto. Locals come to sample the wares of the butcher, deli, bakery and spice shops, while the surrounding streets host fruit and vegetable markets. Enjoy a four Euro lunchtime pizza at the trendy Caffetteria delle Vettovaglie, which becomes a wine bar later in the day. **Piazza delle Vettovaglie 33, + 39 050 574 024.**

3pm

ARCHITECTURAL AFTERNOON

Pisa was once a maritime power and its architecture reflects its Roman, medieval and Renaissance heritage, from palaces to citadels to aqueducts. The old town can be explored in an afternoon. A must-visit is the Palazzo della Carovana on the Piazza dei Cavalieri, a 16th-century palace covered in *sgraffito* – murals etched into a plaster surface.

5.30pm

SIP AND SHOP

The right bank wakes late afternoon for coffee, wine and shopping. Visit Bar Pasticceria Salza, (**Borgo Stretto 44**) for chocolates and pastries. The newly opened Enoteca Borgo di Vino (**Borgo Stretto 63**), a wine shop and bar, offers a full Tuscan range, from Chianti to Brunello.

8pm

TRADITIONAL TUSCAN FARE

Be aware that restaurants that are empty at 7.59pm will be packed by 8.15pm. The menu of Osteria La Grotta (**Via San Francesco 103, +39 050 578 105**) varies with the seasons, but features expert renditions of Tuscan classics, such as a vegetable soup with the liquid soaked up by chunks of bread. Locals crowd into rustic Trattoria Sant'Omobono (**Piazza Sant'Omobono 6, +39 050 540 847**) for beef carpaccio, pork ribs and sausages, and rustic local wine served in tumblers.

9.30pm

NIGHTCAP AND A STROLL

At Pisa's wine bars the bottles – mostly Tuscan – are ranged on the counter, with a per-glass price tag around their neck. There are also usually plates of snacks laid out, so once you've chosen your drink, you can load up on antipasti or vegetable dips, at no charge. A classy place for a glass of something is Modus Bibendi (**Via Cavalca 18**) with lacquered gold surfaces, black crocodile trim and extensive wines and cocktails. To walk it off, stroll along the Arno and enjoy the lights and palaces reflected in the water. **d.**