

# DISCOVERING VILLA MEDICI

The hill known as Trinità dei Monti has been the scene of legendary events. Here, Lucullus organised his famous banquets where the produce of his gardens, or Horti, were served. Messalina was murdered in his villa by the Emperor Claudius's henchmen. Claudius was furious over her numerous infidelities. Following the fall of the Roman Empire, all trace of the villa disappeared for nearly a thousand years, until Cardinal Ricci acquired a ruined building here, and land which in the meantime had become a relatively worthless farming asset. Thanks to the intervention of cardinals, a new period began. Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, in the second half of the sixteenth century, started work on the villa, near the Pincio, or Pincian Hill. Constructed in accordance with the model afforded by the Tuscan Medici villas, under architect Bartolomeo Ammannati, the complex came to host a number of ancient finds on the inner façade and in the garden. Napoleon Bonaparte fell in love with the place, and acquired it in 1803 as the premises for the Accademia di Francia, an institution which, since 1600, enabled French artists to reside in Rome as part of their training. Hidden away in a corner of the park, a group of sculptures of Niobids emerges from the ground (the original versions are in the Boboli Gardens in Florence). Here, Ramona takes a picture of Jep and Stefano with her smartphone. The two pose next to the sculptures. Among the most recondite of the villa's treasures we have the cardinal's study (the Studiolo del Cardinale), frescoed by Jacopo Zucchi with a faux aviary. We should also note the Mount Parnassus - an artificial hillock surmounted by a tempietto with a unique view of Rome.

## *For visitors*

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