



Italy – Tuscan Hills 2017 Self Guided Tour



Moderate 7 nights

On this walking tour you will have a chance to explore the less known part of Tuscany – its renaissance towns, rustic villages with sturdy brick farmhouses or imposing mansions, medieval abbeys such as Sant'Antimo Abbey or Monte Oliveto Maggiore Monastery. The landscape that has been inspiring artists since medieval times changes from rolling hills and oaks woods, through cypress lined alleys which create almost geometric patterns to olive orchards and vineyards of Montalcino where most famous olive oils and wines of Italy are produced. You will have a chance to enjoy some of them along with other specialists of Tuscan cuisine. Tuscany is a region well suited for walking and there is so much to absorb!

TOUR ITINERARY

Day 1 - Arrival in Chiusi

You are met by our representative who will spend a short time going over the tour with you answering any question you may have. He will then drive you to your hotel in Montepulciano.

Day 2 - Montepulciano/Pienza (6 hrs walking time; 15 km 490 m ascent)

From the San Biagio church (which is in the outskirts of town and certainly worth a visit) the road takes you to Montichiello - a nice little village immersed in the "Crete". You can stop there for a nice lunch or just for a cappuccino before continuing to Pienza which is one of the nicest Renaissance towns in Tuscany. Visit the town which is also an agricultural centre well known for pecorino cheese, and truffle production. Overnight in a nice hotel in the town.

Day 3 - Pienza/San Quirico d'Orcia/Bagno Vignoni (5 hrs walking time; 15 km 415 ascent)

The walking today crosses a beautiful region of rolling hills, oaks woods, quiet villages and ends in, or close by, a thermal bathing place where the main square is a basin of steaming hot water. It is possible to swim in the thermal pool (additional charge) if you do not get there too late; according to availability the night can be spent in Bagno Vignoni, or in an agriturismo 2 km from the town along the walking trail.

Day 4 - Bagno Vignoni/Sant'Antimo / Montalcino (6 hrs walking time, 13 km 585 elevation gain)

A longer walking day along dry river beds in the rather wild environment to reach St Antimo; a lovely abbey isolated in the middle of a pastoral landscape with grazing herds around which adds peacefulness to the scene. From there it is additional 10 km of a steep ascending trail to reach Montalcino, so the car with your luggage will pick you up in St Antimo to drive you to this nice medieval town. Accommodation in Hotel Montalcino.

Day 5 - Montalcino /Buonconvento (4 hrs walking time; 15 km / 255 m elevation gain)

As Montalcino is the country of Brunello - one of the most famous wines of this region - you will be walking through vineyards and olive trees. Then the route will lead you through the beautiful "Crete" landscape. You will spend the night in a nice agriturismo 3 km from Buonconvento.

Day 6 – Buonconvento / Buonconvento (4 hrs walking time)

A short day but full of ups and downs. The unpaved road will take you to Monte Oliveto Maggiore, one of the most impressive abbeys in Italy – a red bricks construction in a rugged landscape. The owner of the agriturismo can collect you if walking back feels too much (if you decide to walk back, it will take approx 3 hours). You can also skip today's walk and enjoy the Inn's swimming pool or its beauty farm Sauna.

Day 7 - Buonconvento/Monte Oliveto Maggiore/ Siena (3 hrs 30 mins walking time; 16 km / 285 m elevation gain)

You will start the day with a transfer to Monte Oliveto Maggiore – you can visit the abbey before the tourist rush hours and start walking back towards your accommodation. You can stop for a light snack at Chiusure, the first village on your way back. There is a small "Alimentari" where you can enjoy a freshly made panini. Pick up your luggage and get on a train to Siena for your last night (there is a possibility of a private transfer to Siena).

Day 8 – Siena - Visit the town of Siena before your departure for your next destination.

Or extend your holidays:

1st day: Siena/Villa Lecchi (15 km) – You will be transferred to Monteriggioni, the perfectly rounded walled town. After a short visit (Monteriggioni is very small), start your walk down hill from this ancient military post and then among vineyards to reach the main asphalt road to Castellina. After walking on this road for about 10 minutes (1km) you can head onto an unpaved road leading you through the vineyards. You will spend your night in Villa Lecchi, settled in a little hamlet.

2nd day: Villa Lecchi/Castellina (15 km) – The walk starts right on the doorstep of Villa from where you take a ridge road that has beautiful views of vineyards and amazing properties on both sides. The last part is steep and you have a couple of kms on an asphalt road before you reach one of the most famous towns of the Chianti area – Castellina in Chianti. Visit the town, have a lunch and call Luciana to drive you back to Villa Lecchi.

3rd day – transfer to Poggibonsi train station where you can catch a train to Florence

2017 PRICES AND DATES

€940 per person sharing

€140 single room supplement

€210 per person sharing – optional tour extension in Villa Lecchi

The tour is based on a minimum of 2 people participation and you can start at any day.

PRICE INCLUDES

- 7 nights B&B - All breakfasts
- Needed transfers
- Luggage transfer at each change of accommodation
- Transfer to Montepulciano from Chiusi train station
- Detailed road book and maps
- One of our assistants will meet you on the first day (or the next morning if biking or hiking are not in the program for the first day) to explain the tour and answer your questions

Optional tour extension in Villa Lecchi includes:

2 nights accommodation with breakfasts and dinners, transfers as per the itinerary, maps and route notes

WHAT TO BRING

Your enjoyment of your walking holiday will be greatly helped by having the right gear. The following list should help you in planning your packing for your trip.

Footwear: Good footwear is vital for a happy walking holiday! We recommend waterproof, breathable, walking boots with good ankle support. Boots which are “broken in” (i.e. not brand new), teamed with **well fitting hiking socks** will keep your feet snug and dry and help to avoid blisters.

Hiking Clothes

We recommend the “onion look” of layering clothing as the best protection against heat/cold:

- Base Layer –this layer should not retain moisture but transport it away from the skin (there are lots of “wick away” fabrics now on the market.
- Insulation layer – this layer should stop you from losing body heat – fleece is ideal
- Outer Layer – this layer should keep you dry even in a downpour! A **waterproof**, breathable jacket and over-trousers are as important as your comfy boots. You should bear in mind that clothing tends to lose its “waterproofness” over time so if you have had your gear for many years it might be time to treat yourself with a trip to an outdoor store!
- Walking trousers/ shorts (avoid denim)
- Warm hat and gloves for chilly mornings or high mountains
- Sun hat
- Walking stick/pole (a great help on uneven terrain)
- Swimwear

Daypack - a small comfortable rucksack to carry the bits and pieces you will need during the day:

- Water bottle/flask
- Moleskin/plasters/"second skin" – ward off any impending blisters before they become a problem!
- Sun screen
- Camera
- Binoculars
- Mobile phone

GENERAL INFORMATION

Accommodation

You can have a look at these websites for more information on accommodation provided:

www.albergoilmarzocco.it/

www.sangregorioresidencehotel.it/

www.albergoletterme.it/

www.locandasantantimo.it/camere.html

www.gigliohotel.com/it/

www.pieveasalti.it/

www.chiusarelli.com/

We do reserve the right to change the accommodation around during the week, but we will always endeavor to provide a high standard.

Money - The unit of currency is the Euro (€), 100 cent = € 1.

Travel Insurance - It is essential to take out holiday insurance to cover cancellation, personal accident, illness, or loss of possessions. This can be obtained from travel agents, airlines; we can also offer you a week long package for €35.00.

Travel

Nearest airports: Rome, Pisa or Florence, then you take the train to Chiusi from where you will be transferred to Montepulciano.

When checking the flights for this trip, consider that it is quite convenient traveling from Pisa airport (the train station is at the front of the airport) to Chiusi; it takes approximately 3 hours and from Siena to Pisa airport it is a 2 hour trip. Web site on trains in Italy: www.trenitalia.it

Smoking

A no smoking ban has been operated in Italy. You are not allowed to smoke in public places (i.e. pubs, hotels, restaurants, shops, trains and buses etc.). However, you may smoke outside in the open air.