

TUSCANY CULTURAL WALKING, A JOURNEY OF THE SENSES

13 DAYS DEPARTING 5TH JUNE EX ROME

DETAILED ITINERARY

Tuscany is one of the world's most fascinating travel destinations, attracting lovers of art, nature, food, wine & walkers. In the heart of the region you will find the sacred mountain of the Etruscans, Monte Amiata, surrounded by the beautiful valley 'Val D'Orcia' which UNESCO declared a world heritage area in 2004. Monte Amiata is a huge open air museum, where nature, art and culture meet and happily merge. Here you will be totally immersed in the natural and cultural experience of the true Tuscan country life.

Walk over and discover the "Tuscany Apart"!



DAY 1 - 5TH JUNE **ROME TO SANTA FIORA**

Arrival day

A private bus will be waiting for those arriving from Fiumicino Rome airport.

After a 2 hour bus trip, you will arrive in the medieval village of Santa Fiora. The town is set amongst rolling hills and was called the pearl of Amiata. In the middle ages it was known as the headquarter of the Aldobrandeschi counts and one of the main Tuscan Ghibelline centres. Here you can enjoy the real village life of Tuscany.

Upon arrival at Villa Narsi B&B you will be given a booklet with all the information regarding your tour program along with useful tips and 'surviving' information.

The friendly owners of Villa Narsi will offer tips for your dinner tonight (dinner not included).
Accommodation: Villa Narsi is a lovely family run B&B in Santa Fiora.

DAY 2 - 6TH JUNE

SANTA FIORA

Breakfast

New arrivals at Santa Fiora will find a spontaneous welcome from local people and the opportunity of experiencing the real village life. In the morning you will have time to relax and rest after the journey, enjoying breakfast until 11.00am.

In the afternoon the tour leader will meet you at the hotel for a city walking tour in the old town of Santa Fiora, discovering the narrow medieval streets. The tour last about 3 hours.

Santa Fiora boasts a choice of lovely restaurants where you will be able to take dinner on your own this evening.

Accommodation: Villa Narsi B&B



DAY 3 - 7TH JUNE

THE CHESTNUT ROAD

Breakfast

WALK - About 7 km tour, time 4 hours / easy

This morning you will be met by our local guide and a private bus at your accommodation. With a short trip and luggage transfer you will arrive at the beginning of the Chestnut Road for a beautiful day walk through the Amiata Chestnut wood passing pretty and hidden hamlets.

The chestnuts from Amiata

Favourable climatic conditions began a lively chestnut culture around Monte Amiata, until the nineteen-fifties chestnuts were an essential and sometimes sole food for the impoverished rural population during the harsh winter months. Detailed regulations for the better exploitation and conservation of this natural wealth as well as of timber had been laid down by the late 1300's.

On February 16th 2000, 43 members of the village of Arcidosso decided to give birth to an Association to give value to that fruit: that is called Association for the promotion of the Chestnut IGP from Amiata (Protected Geographical Indication).



The nuts are picked in autumn with great care, either manually or mechanically, allowed to ferment in water at room temperature for six to seven days, and spread out on a large paved area for swift drying-out under the sun -- in case if inclement weather they are dried in special ventilated containers. There follows selection, weighing, and packaging in small bags. Kept dry and cool, the product will keep for at least three years.

Three kinds of chestnuts are harvested: Marrone, Bastarda Rossa and Cecio. Those of the Monte Amiata area are reddish with darker stripes and oval with a low apex. Flavour is delicate and sweetish.

Today's tour end in the medieval village of Castel del Piano famous for the Palio horse race that takes place in September and involves all the village's inhabitants. In Castel del Piano there is the famous Corsini bakery, with a long history of breads and sweets since 1921.

The group will arrive in Castel del Piano in time for lunch on your own. You can choose from a variety of places to eat.

In the evening, the group can choose where have dinner on their own in one of the local restaurant in Castel del Piano (the guide will give you nice tips!)

Your accommodation in Castel del Piano will be the family Hotel Venerio, that lies in the village centre.

DAY 4 - 8TH JUNE

WINES AND OLIVES FROM AMIATA

Breakfast

WALK - About 9 km tour, time 4 hours / uphill and downhill medium difficulty

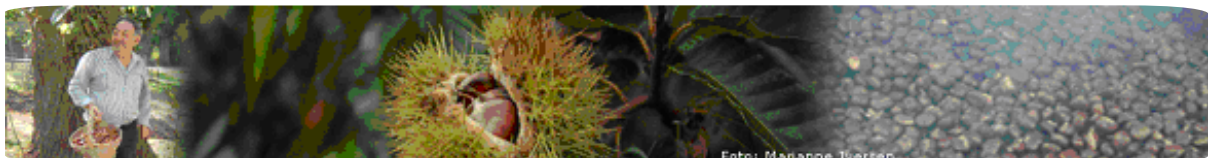
Your tour guide will meet you in the morning at your accommodation.

Today's walk will start directly in Castel del Piano. You will walk through beautiful chestnut trees, vineyards, olive groves and other fruit trees, passing through many little medieval towns which are dotted through the hillsides. Each town has its own history and own local stories.

The group will stop at Castle of Potentino where the English family Green will give a warm welcome to everybody with a light lunch. After lunch you will be taken for a fascinating visit of the castle. Guests will also visit the manor's wine cellar and will be given all information about local wine and extra virgin olive oil production.

A short transfer by private bus will take you to your accommodation at the Country Resort Casacce where you will experience a delicious dinner in the resort restaurant. (water, 1/2 litre wine, coffee included with your meal).

Accommodation: Country Resort Casacce



A little more about the Castle of Potentino

Charlotte and Sally Green bought Potentino Castle in 1999, at which time it almost needed a complete reconstruction. During the restoration works, the Greens gave new life to the castle while maintaining the architecture and social history.

The Green family now produces Montecucco DOC Wine, Olive oil and Grappa. Their wine, Sacromonte Montecucco Doc won the awards in 2004 and 2005 as the best wine from the “Gambero Rosso”, one of the most famous Italian wine guides.

The land around Potentino is rich with minerals and limestone, the temperature is hot during the day and cool and windy at night, which permits a long and perfect process for the grapes maturation. The crushed grapes ferment in the Barriques (wooden French vats) where they remain for a maturation period of about two weeks.

When the grapes skins are racked off they are left to drain naturally without being pressed in a torque and are sent full of juice to the distillery of the Maestro Gioacchino Nannoni to be transformed into grappa.

The young wine ages in wooden vats until matured appropriately. After bottling it rests for several months refining in the castle cellars, before being presented to the consumer.

The olive groves consist mainly of century-old trees which belong to an indigenous variety - the “Olivastra Seggianese”. The olives are hand-picked in October to November: They are pressed immediately and the result is a really good value extra virgin olive oil.

Wine districts of Southern Tuscany

Southern Tuscany is a region of excellence in the area of food and wine. Its lands produce highly appreciated wines, such as Brunello di Montalcino DOCG and Nobile di Montepulciano DOCG that are known worldwide. The region produces many lesser-known wines such as Morellino di Scansano DOC and Rosso di Montecucco DOC.

Brunello di Montalcino is one of the very first DOCG (Denomination of Controlled and Guaranteed Origin) distinctions ever awarded in Italy. The same is for Nobile di Montepulciano. Montecucco gained the distinction of DOC (Denomination of Controlled Origin) in 1998.

DAY 5 - 9TH JUNE COOKING CLASS

Breakfast.

You will have your first cooking class starting from 10 a.m. The restaurant chef at the Resort Casacce will introduce you to Tuscan cuisine with the preparation of traditional dishes focusing on appetizer and first courses: bruschette, hand made pasta, sauces.. An English speaking guide will be with you during the course.



Foto: Marianne Iversen Taste Tours



You will then taste for lunch your own creations. You will also be given a recipe book for creating the Tuscan specialities at home.

After a relaxing afternoon you will enjoy your dinner at the resort restaurant. (water, 1/2 litre wine, coffee included with your meal).

Accommodation: Country Resort Casacce



DAY 6 - 10TH JUNE

COUNTRYSIDE WALKING - MODERN ART PARK DANIEL SPOERRI

Buffet breakfast.

WALK - About 15 km tour, time 5 hours/ medium difficulty

Departure at 9:30am with private driver.

This morning there will be a short transfer to the modern Art Park Daniel Spoerri. The Swiss Artist, Daniel Spoerri, established this sculpture garden at the beginning of the 90's. Modern sculptures are immersed in a breathtaking Olive tree park, in a special mixture of nature and art. On old maps this place is called "Il Paradiso". Thus it is a "Garden of Eden".

In the morning you will be able to walk from inside the park to the village of Seggiano, where you will have time for lunch (not included). In Seggiano there are 3 good local restaurant, but you can also choose to enjoy the atmosphere of the park having lunch there, in the park restaurant. After lunch the walk will continue toward Le Casacce, passing the beautiful countryside with its olive trees and vineyards.

The group will enjoy dinner at the resort restaurant.

Accommodation: Country Resort Casacce



DAY 7 - 11TH JUNE

SAN ANTIMO

Breakfast.

WALK - About 10 km tour, time 4 hours / uphill medium difficulty

Departure at 9:15 with private driver after breakfast (luggage transfer). Today's walk starts at San Antimo with a short visit to this fascinating Abbey which dates back to 781: The San Antimo Abbey is one of the most breathtaking and mystic places of the area. Life here is simple as always and the monks who live in the Abbey carry on with their duties every day in the same way they have centuries ago. Entering Saint Antimo feels like time has stopped and the silence is broken only by the beautiful Gregorian Chant.

After the visit our walk continues on a stone path passing through the famous Brunello vineyards and crossing many typically stone built wine farms and open fields.

After about 2 hours walk the group arrives at "Tinki", an organic winery where guests will have a short stop and enjoy wine and a local food picnic in the farm garden.

The walk then continues on towards Montalcino, crossing some of the most famous wine farms such as Barbi and Biondi Santi. After check-in at Montalcino, you will have the late afternoon and evening to discover the beauty of the old village of Montalcino and enjoy dinner on your own in one of the many restaurants on offer.

Accommodation: Il Rifugio B&B



DAY 8 - 12TH JUNE

MONTALCINO'S VILLAGE LIFE

Breakfast.

Today is free for you to rest and enjoy the village life of Montalcino. You have time for some shopping or you can visit one of the Brunello producers of the area.

Accommodation: Il Rifugio B&B

Olive Oil "Olivastra Seggianese D.O.P."

Italy, which produces nearly a third of the world's olive oil, boasts a superior class of its extra virgin, made in all regions of the centre and south and in a few places in the north. The most flavourful and wholesome of edible oils is used raw in dressings or as a condiment



for salads, vegetables, pastas, soups, seafood and meats. The best oils show distinct character due to terrain and climate, the varieties of olives they come from and methods of harvesting. Hand picking of under-ripe olives renders oil of deep green colour, fruity aroma and full flavour (sometimes a touch piquant). Mature olives make oil of paler colour and subtler flavour.

Olio extra vergine di oliva comes from the first pressing of olives by mechanical (not chemical) means and must contain less than 1 percent of oleic acid (the key measure: the lower the acidity the better). Olio extra vergine di oliva may have a maximum of 2 percent acidity.

In the western part of Monte Amiata (Arcidosso, Castel del Piano, Seggiano) the olive cultivation has become deeply-rooted through a multi secular process. The presence of this plant, limited by climatic and altitude factors, is due to the on site existence of a special cultivation the “Olivastra Seggianese” and of its pollinator, the “giogliario” which is not to be found in any other Italian olive environment, a cultivation that is characterized by its considerable resistance at low temperatures. The oil obtained by the Amiata Olivastra is special for its yield and its low acidity content. “Olivastra Seggianese” has gained the distinction of DOP (Denomination of Protected Origin).

In other areas of Amiata territory other olive varieties can be found, such as: Moraiole, Leccino and Frantoio.; these varieties are widespread throughout Tuscany.

DAY 9 - 13TH JUNE

ROLLING HILLS AND CASTLES

Breakfast.

WALK - About 12 km tour, time 4 hours / uphill just at the end, medium difficulty

Departure at 9:15 with private driver after breakfast (luggage transfer).

You will set off down the hilly town on a solitary road enjoying the Tuscan landscape of rolling hills with castles and hamlets on top. Arriving at the famous and world renown Brunelo producer Castello Banfi, you will enjoy a wine tasting in the castle ‘Enoteca’.

A private driver will be waiting for you in Banfi for a short transfer to the new Accommodation: Wine farm Banditaccia.

Wine farm Banditaccia lies in the hills of the MONTECUCCO D.O.C. (controlled denomination of origin) & the OLIVASTRA SEGGIANESE D.O.P. (protected denomination of origin) areas in between Mountain Amiata and Montalcino .

You will enjoy your dinner at the farm. The Wine farm restaurant prepares a cuisine that uses local products and herbs of the area. (water, 1/2 litre wine, coffee included with your meal).



DAY 10 - 14TH JUNE

WORKING AT THE FARM AND COOKING CLASS

Breakfast.

Starting from 10 a.m. you will enjoy your second cooking class at La Banditaccia. Following the philosophy of the farm restaurant our guests will prepare dishes with the local products and herbs of the area. They will then taste for their own creations.

Includes 3 hours cooking class with a private chef, lunch with drinks included.

In the afternoon you will have time to rest or look at the Farm activities. The owner will be happy to show you the cellar and the wine yards.

At 8:00 p.m. the group will enjoy a delightful dinner directly at the farm (drinks included).

Accommodation: Wine farm Banditaccia.

DAY 11 - 15TH JUNE

SIENA AND FIRENZE

Breakfast.

Departure to Firenze (Florence) at 9:30 a.m. with a private bus. On the way to Firenze our guests will stop in the city of Siena where you will have time for lunch and wandering in the city's streets.

Siena, with its famous square Piazza del campo is really one the most beautiful cities in Tuscany and Italy. It's really a pleasure walking in the city's streets, looking at the shop window and at the same time feel the past.

The group will continue towards Firenze, the bus will accompany the participants directly to the Hotel in the city centre.

The accommodation in Firenze can change depending of the number of persons and availabilities. Consider the standard of a 3 star Hotel in the city centre.

DAYS 12 & 13 - 16TH & 17TH JUNE

FIRENZE (FLORENCE)

Breakfast.

These 2 days you will have time to discover this beautiful city by yourselves.

Florence is the capital city of Tuscany.

From 1865 to 1870 the city was also the capital of the Kingdom of Italy. A center of medieval European trade and finance, the city is often considered the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance and was long ruled by the Medici family. Florence is also famous for its magnificent art and architecture.



It is said that, of the 1,000 most important European artists of the second millennium, 350 lived or worked in Florence. The city has also been called the Athens of the Middle Ages. The historic Centre of Florence was declared a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO in 1982.

Accommodation: 3 star city hotel

DAY 14 - 18TH JUNE

DEPARTING DAY

Breakfast.

You will be departing for your own destinations with memories of an unforgettable experience through the heartland of Italy.

Direct transfer with private bus to the airport in Rome (optional at extra cost). Alternatively you can transfer to Rome on the fast Intercity Train from Florence which passes through beautiful countryside. (Optional at extra cost - approx. 4 hours).

IMPORTANT NOTES

Food & drinks

All food quality is carefully selected following the true local Tuscan tradition.

During the stay, guests will enjoy:

- * Continental Breakfast.
- * Light lunch with starter, first or second course, dessert and coffee where detailed in the itinerary.
- * Full dinner with starter, first course, second course with vegetables, dessert and coffee where detailed in the itinerary.
- * Water and home wine (1/2 Lt. per person) are also included and will be served either in a pitcher or in a bottle where detailed in the itinerary.

Local Guide

The group will be accompanied by a local English speaking guide where detailed in the itinerary. Our guides are highly professional, very nice with an extensive knowledge of the territory. They know every hidden corner of the area and will give you the opportunity to experience all the unspoiled places and the real cultural of Tuscany.

Transport

A private bus will follow the group for its everyday transfers and transportation of luggage.





INCLUDED WITH THIS TRIP

- 13 nights accommodation
- All breakfasts (intercontinental breakfast)
- Lunches and dinners listed in the itinerary
- All transfers listed in the itinerary
- All taxes and service charges at the hotels
- All paid admissions & wine tastings during the tour listed in the itinerary.
- Guided walks listed in the itinerary
- Services of a fully experienced bi-lingual guide as detailed in the itinerary.
- Map with all the itineraries and program's booklet (one per person).

ACCOMMODATION

Hotels / Logdes (13 nights)

MEALS

Meals included as detailed on the itinerary.

While travelling with us you will experience the vast array of wonderful food available in the world. Generally, to give you the maximum flexibility in deciding where, what and with whom to eat, not all meals are included in the trip price. This also gives you more budgeting flexibility. As a rule our groups tend to eat together to enable you to taste a larger variety of dishes and enjoy each other's company. There is no obligation to do this though.

TRANSPORT

Minibus, walking as outlined in itinerary

ACTIVITIES

Sightseeing, activities and entry fees as outlined on the itinerary



NOT INCLUDED WITH THIS TRIP

- Visa fees - each member of the group must carry a valid passport (valid for at least 6 months beyond the duration of your trip) and have obtained the appropriate visas
- Tips, personal telephone charges...
- Travel Insurance (compulsory) - You will need to give the policy number prior to departure
- Items of a personal nature; postage, drinks and souvenirs
- Entrance fees during free time
- Other meals not mentioned on the itinerary
- Additional optional activities
- Medical Advice - Please refer to your GP or local travel clinic for up to date travel health advice for the area(s) you are visiting.



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