



TUSCANY CULTURAL WALKING, A JOURNEY OF THE SENSES

15 DAYS DEPARTING 1ST SEPTEMBER 2012 (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 where centuries old traditions permeate daily life.

Walk over and discover the "Tuscany Apart"!



DAY 1 - 1ST SEPTEMBER

ARRIVAL TO ROME

A private bus will be waiting for those arriving from Fiumicino Rome Airport. You will be transferred to your hotel in Rome.

Accommodation: 3 star city hotel

DAY 2 - 2ND SEPTEMBER

ROME TO PITIGLIANO

Breakfast

This morning at 11.00am a private bus will meet you at your accommodation in Rome. After a 2.5 hour bus trip, you will arrive in the Etruscan village of Pitigliano. Along the way the group will stop at Bolsena Lake where you will have time for lunch (not included) and enjoy a walk along the beautiful foreshore.

Dinner will be served at the Hotel restaurant

Accommodation: Hotel Pitigliano in the old town centre



The Etruscan area

Pitigliano, Sovana and Sorano are enchanting villages that date back to the Etruscan period and lie in the southern part of Tuscany, between the regions of Lazio and Maremma. These villages are called “Città del Tufo” (Tuff cities).

Travelling through the Maremma is like going back in time and plunging into remote eras when ancient peoples decided to settle here. Much of the area's original charm has remained intact.

The earliest archaeological finds in the Pitigliano district show that the area was already inhabited in prehistoric times. These first settlements were created by warring groups who raised animals and farmed. There are also many finds from the Bronze Age. During the Etruscan period there was a major population boom. Sovana soon became a prosperous and important town during the Etruscan civilisation's peak of splendour. From the III to II century B.C. Sovana truly flourished as we can see from the monumental rock-carved tombs that grace its necropolis. The presence of the Roman settlers is evident in the areas of Sorano and Pitigliano. In the middle age the area fell under control of the Aldobrandeschi family and then the family Orsini. In 1608 the area was annexed to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.

The Village of Pitigliano

The historic centre of Pitigliano is situated at the top of a cliff that overhangs the three rivers which flow below. The town arrangement is typically Medieval, with the tuff houses perched one on top of the other: part are built over the tuff rock and part are dug into it. In the village we can recognise the various phases and eras of construction: the most irregular and oldest parts, the southern portion (Ghetto) and the end of the town at Capisotto are countered by the broader and more even structure of the recent portions. You can enter the hamlet via Piazza Petruccioli and the two old gates: Porta Capisotto and Porta Becherini.

Sightseeing in Pitigliano:

- Orsini Palace & museum
- Duomo (cathedral)
- Etruscan museum
- Synagogue & Jewish museum



DAY 3 - 3RD SEPTEMBER

SANTA FIORA

Breakfast

WALK The "Vie Cave" and Natural Hot Springs - About 7 Km, 2 hours / easy

Check out of your hotel and meet your guide at 9:30am (luggage transfer).

From Pitigliano you will walk the old Etruscan paths "Vie Cave" reaching the village of Sovana where you will have time for lunch (not included) before a short transfer to the beautiful outdoor natural hot springs of Saturnia. Here you will enjoy a relaxing hot dip out in the open before continuing on to the Medieval village of Santa Fiora.

New arrivals to Santa Fiora will find a spontaneous welcome from local people and the opportunity of experiencing the real village life of Tuscany. The village 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.

Dinner tonight will be at the traditional restaurant Barilotto, situated in the old town centre.
Accommodation: family hotel, Hotel Fiora



DAY 4 - 4TH SEPTEMBER

CULTURE WALKING SANTA FIORA AND THE CHESTNUT ROAD

Breakfast

WALK - About 7 km tour, time 3 hours / easy

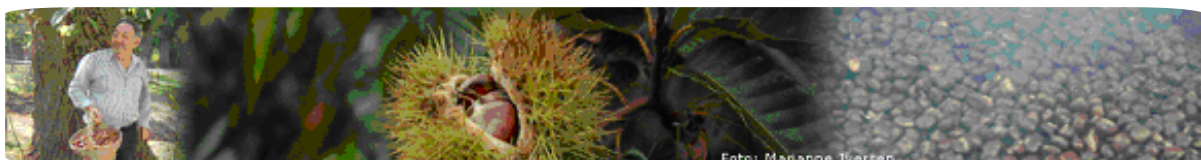
This morning you will be met by our local guide and a private bus for your luggage transfer. Today's tour starts with a lovely walk through Santa Fiora's narrow Medieval streets, continuing onto the Chestnut Road for a beautiful days walk through the Amiata Chestnut wood passing pretty and hidden hamlets, arriving at Angels Reort (Spa Hotel) where you will enjoy a light lunch.

This afternoon you will have time to enjoy the Angels Resort Spa centre; Turkish bath, sauna, chrome therapy, salt room, indoor bath, outdoor pool, herbal teas, relaxation area plus a 30 minute body massage is included.

Dinner at the Hotel restaurant Michelangelo

Accommodation: Angels Resort





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 5 - 5TH SEPTEMBER

FAUNA AND MONTE LABBRO

Breakfast

WALK - About 8 km tour, time 5 hours / medium difficulty

This morning you will meet your guide and take a short transfer to the Parco Faunistico (Wild Life Park) and Monte Labbro.



Monte Labbro (1193 metres above sea level) is a limestone ridge with little forest vegetation, rising to the south-east of the Amiata region. The walk to the top is well worth the effort as you enjoy spectacular views over the valley. Here you will enjoy a packed picnic lunch.

The area of the park covers about 200 ha and spreads over the Monte Labbro slopes and is part of the natural reserve which is dedicated to protecting several animal species.

After lunch the journey continues on white roads through rolling hills past the Buddhist Temple “Merigar” which was founded in 1981 as the first centre of the Dzogchen Community in Italy. In 1990, the XIV Dalai Lama inaugurated the building of the Gompa or Temple of Great Contemplation.

Dinner this evening will be in a local slow food restaurant where Ugo, the Chef, will delight you with a meal produced from locally grown ingredients in the true Slow Food tradition.

Accommodation: Angels Resort

DAY 6 - 6TH SEPTEMBER

WINES AND OLIVES FROM AMIATA

Breakfast

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



Your guide will meet you in the morning.

Today's walk will start in the village of 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 information about local wine and extra virgin olive oil production.

A short transfer by private bus will take you to your accommodation at the Olive Farm Casacce where you will experience a delicious dinner.
Accommodation: Olive Farm 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 7 - 7TH SEPTEMBER

COOKING CLASS

Breakfast.

Cooking class starting from 10 a.m. The restaurant chef at the Olive Farm Casacce will introduce you to Tuscan cuisine with the preparation of traditional dishes focusing on appetiser and first courses: bruschette, hand made pasta, sauces..

An English speaking guide will be with you during the course.

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

After a relaxing afternoon you will be treated to a 'Tuscan Night' at the farm's restaurant with Pizza and Italian tapas.

Accommodation:Olive Farm Casacce

DAY 8 - 8TH SEPTEMBER

COUNTRYSIDE WALKING - MODERN ART PARK DANIEL SPOERRI

Buffet breakfast.

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

Departure at 9:30am with your guide and 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 for lunch, 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 Farm Casacce.

Accommodation: Olive Farm Casacce

DAY 9 - 9TH SEPTEMBER

TUSCANY OF BRUNELLO DOCG & SAN ANTIMO ABBEY

Breakfast.

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

Departure at 8:45 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.

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 a short transfer you will arrive at your 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 dinner at the farm from local produce.

Accommodation: Wine farm Banditaccia



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 “giogliaio” 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: Moraiolo, Leccino and Frantoio.; these varieties are widespread throughout Tuscany.

DAY 10 - 10TH SEPTEMBER

RELAX AT THE FARM

Breakfast.

This morning is free for you to rest and enjoy the farm. At 2pm our driver will take you to the village of Montalconi where you will have time for lunch (not included) and some shopping.

Dinner at the farm this evening

Accommodation: Wine Farm Banditaccia



DAY 11 - 11TH SEPTEMBER

ROLLING HILLS AND HIDDEN VALLEYS

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). Hiking in the unspoiled and hidden part of the Orcia Valley while crossing the new DOC Montecucco vineyards, through open fields, small wine farms, olive groves and beautiful wild flowers. You will catch sight of the beautiful Velona Castle in this Tuscan landscape of rolling hills, castles and hamlets. The walk continues up to a little village of Montenero where a delicious lunch will be served with Montecucco wine at a small wine farm. Here you will also visit the cellars.

After lunch your walk continues back to La Banditaccia.
Dinner will be served at the wine farm.
Accommodation: Wine farm Banditaccia.



DAY 12 - 12TH SEPTEMBER

THE TUSCAN COAST

Breakfast.

Departing at 10.00am, your private driver will take you to the beautiful, ancient seaside village of Castiglione della Pescaia. Here you will have the day to relax on the coast and take a dip in the ocean. There are many options for your lunch today (not included). Castiglione boasts a gorgeous view of the islands of Elba and Giglio and the promontory of Argentario. The hills that back the city slope into beautiful beaches along the front.

You will return to the wine farm at 5.00pm where dinner will be served in the evening.
Accommodation: Wine farm Banditaccia.

DAY 13 - 13TH SEPTEMBER

SIENA AND FIRENZE (FLORENCE)

Breakfast.

Departure to Firenze (Florence) at 9:30 a.m. with a private bus. On the way to Firenze we will stop in the city of Siena where you will have time for lunch (not included), shopping and site seeing through the gorgeous cobblestone streets.

Siena, with its famous square Piazza del campo is really one the most beautiful cities in Italy.

The group will continue on to Firenze.
You can choose from a variety of wonderful restaurants for dinner this evening (not included)

Accommodation: 3 star city hotel





DAY 14 - 14TH SEPTEMBER

FIRENZE (FLORENCE)

Breakfast.

You will have time to discover this beautiful city on your own.

Florence is the capital city of Tuscany.

From 1865 to 1870 the city was also the capital of the Kingdom of Italy. A centre 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 15 - 15TH SEPTEMBER

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.



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 (1/4 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 friendly with an extensive knowledge of the area. They know every hidden corner and will give you the opportunity to experience all the unspoiled places and the real culture of Tuscany.

Transport

A private bus and driver will be available for the group for its everyday transfers and transportation of luggage.





INCLUDED WITH THIS TRIP

- 14 nights accommodation
- All breakfasts (intercontinental breakfast)
- Lunches and dinners listed in the itinerary (drinks included: 1/4 litre wine, water & coffee)
- 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.

ACCOMMODATION

Hotels / Logdes / Farms (14 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

- International Airfare
- Lunches and dinners not listed on the itinerary
- 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
- 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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