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Italy with Italians

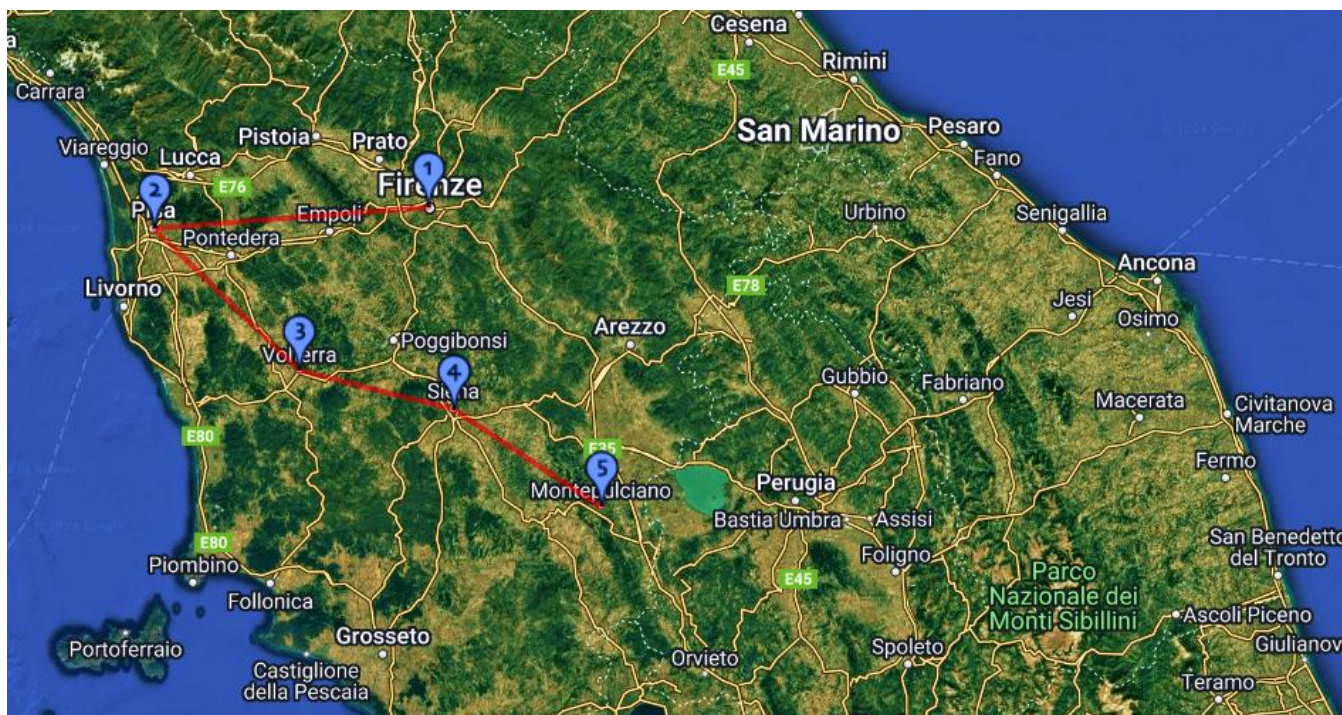
1 WEEK IN TUSCANY

Florence, Pisa, Siena & Val d'Orcia

PROGRAM



From Florence, the Cradle of Renaissance, to Pisa & Siena, the home of the Palio, then San Gimignano with its towers and Val d'Orcia with its fairytale landscapes. Explore Tuscany, the land of beauty!



TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Florence, an open-air museum
- Pisa, how can it stand?
- Siena and San Gimignano, power in the Middle Ages
- Val d'Orcia, where Man and Nature blend with harmony

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAY	ACTIVITIES INCLUDED IN THE PROGRAM
Day 1 Florence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arrival at Florence Airport / Florence Railway Station - Pick up and transfer to your accommodation in Florence <i>Overnight in Florence city centre</i>
Day 2 Florence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3-hour private walking tour of Florence city centre with an <u>Authorised Tourist Guide</u> - Admission to Galleria dell'Accademia (Michelangelo's David) - Free time in Florence – Optional 2-hour Tuscan Cooking Class in Florence <i>Overnight in Florence city centre</i>
Day 3 Pisa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Half-day excursion to Pisa - Admission to the Leaning Tower and other monuments in Piazza dei Miracoli - Free time in Florence – Optional Admission to Galleria degli Uffizi <i>Overnight in Florence city centre</i>
Day 4 San Gimignano & Monteriggioni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full-day excursion to San Gimignano and Monteriggioni – Free time - Drop off at your accommodation in Siena area <i>Overnight in Siena area</i>
Day 5 Siena, & Chiusdino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full-day excursion to Siena and Chiusdino - 2-hour private walking tour of Siena city centre with an <u>Authorised Tourist Guide</u> – Admission to the Duomo Cathedral in Siena - Admission to San Galgano Abbey in Chiusdino <i>Overnight in Siena area</i>
Day 6 Val d'Orcia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full-day private E-bike tour in Val d'Orcia area with a <u>local Guide</u>, including a picnic along the route <i>Overnight in Siena area</i>
Day 7 Val di Chiana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full-day excursion to Val di Chiana area - 3-hour private walking tour of Montepulciano city centre with a <u>Sommelier Guide</u>, with tastings of Vino Nobile, Pecorino cheese and truffle - Visit of a Supertuscan Brunello di Montalcino wine cellar with tastings <i>Overnight in Siena area</i>
Day 8 Florence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transfer to Florence Airport / Florence Railway Station - Departure from Florence Airport / Florence Railway Station

QUOTATION

March 1st to May 31st – October 1st to 31st (Shoulder Season): € 4,260.00 / pax (2-pax group) – € 3,035.00 / pax (4-pax group)

June 1st to September 30th (High Season): € 4,520.00 / pax (2-pax group) – € 3,295.00 / pax (4-pax group)

Larger Group, Single Occupancy, other options: price upon request

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- **Accommodations in Double Room with Continental Breakfast (*):**

- Days 1 to 3: 3* Hotel in Florence city centre
- Days 4 to 7: Relais in Siena area

(*) The Hotel list is available upon request

- **Transfers (**):**

- Day 1: Pick up and transfer to your accommodation in Florence
- Day 8: Transfer to Florence Airport / Florence Railway Station

(**) All transfers by private Sedan (2 pax) / Minivan (3 to 6 pax) / Minibus (7 to 15 pax)

- **Guided Visits / Tours (***)/ Activities:**

- Day 2: 3-hour private walking tour of Florence city centre with an Authorised Tourist Guide
- Day 3: Half-day excursion to Pisa
- Day 4: Full-day excursion to San Gimignano and Monteriggioni – Drop off at your accommodation in Siena area
- Day 5: Full-day excursion to Siena and Chiusdino - 2-hour private walking tour of Siena city centre with an Authorised Tourist Guide

- Day 6: Full-day private E-bike tour in Val d'Orcia area with a **local Guide**, including a picnic along the route
- Day 7: Full-day excursion to Val di Chiana area - 3-hour private walking tour of Montepulciano city centre with a Sommelier Guide, with tastings of Vino Nobile, Pecorino cheese and truffle - Visit of a Supertuscan Brunello di Montalcino wine cellar with tastings

(***) All tours by private Sedan (2 pax) / Minivan (3 to 6 pax) / Minibus (7 to 15 pax)

- **Admission tickets:**
 - Galleria dell'Accademia (Michelangelo's David) in Florence
 - Leaning Tower and other monuments in Piazza dei Miracoli in Pisa
 - Duomo Cathedral in Siena
 - San Galgano Abbey in Chiusdino
- **Full emergency assistance 24 hours/day by our Back Office**
- **List of recommended restaurants along the itinerary**
- **All taxes**

NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

- All transfers and other services not specifically mentioned in the above program
- Meals, wine and beverages
- Porterage fees at every accommodation
- Camera or Video fees
- Tipping for local guides and drivers
- Laundry, telephone calls and other expenditures of personal nature
- Travel / Vacation insurance

OPTIONS

- Day 2: 2-hour Tuscan Cooking Class in Florence
- Day 3: Admission to Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence
- Other options upon request

TOUR MAIN FEATURES

FLORENCE

Welcome to Florence, the land of Giotto and Dante!

Despite its international fame and greatness, Florence is also a small city whose history has been interwoven with that of its passionate citizens for more than one thousand years.

In Piazza Duomo, you will be astonished by the **Duomo** with the incredible Brunelleschi's dome, a masterpiece of art and architecture whose building techniques are still covered by a veil of mystery. Beside it, Giotto's Campanile (Belltower) and the Baptistry, one of the oldest buildings in the city, with its famous bronze doors made by



Giambellino and Ghiberti in the 14th and 15th centuries. In Piazza della Signoria, you will walk in the middle of bronze and marble masterpieces by Giambologna and Cellini inside the marvellous **Loggia dei Lanzi**, and will admire the imposing **Palazzo Vecchio**, one of the symbols of Florence and still the seat of government of the city. You may also spare some time to relax, visiting a typical market for shopping, strolling through the city's pedestrian streets, and crossing the oldest bridge in Florence, "**Ponte Vecchio**" (Old Bridge), rich in jewellery shops.

Your itinerary will include **Galleria dell'Accademia**, hosting Michelangelo's David, the most famous sculpture in the world. The

David was uncovered and shown to the Florentines on September 8, 1504, and with its height of 4 meters, the impeccable physical features and the political significance that the iconography of David had taken over the previous century left the Florentines of the time speechless and has done the same ever since with visitors from all over the world. And you should not miss the **Uffizi Gallery**, one of the most famous museums in the world for its extraordinary collections of paintings. Here, you will admire works by Botticelli, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Caravaggio and a lot more.

Florence is also the main Italian centre for the production of **high-quality leather goods**. Florentine artisans are so famous that many fashion brands have opened factories in the city or close to it due to their high skill and the continuous inspiration designers take from the town's masterpieces. The area around Piazza Santa Croce, in particular, hosts numerous leather shops and workshops.

Thanks to the tradition of Tuscan tanneries, there is no better place to find **shoes for all tastes** than Florence: from the creations, designed and produced by hand by skilled craftsmen, to the extensive collections available in stores, renewed every season. Above all, Ferragamo (also worth seeing the museum), Gucci and Prada for refinement and elegance. If you prefer a simpler style, many shops across the river Arno specialise in handmade shoes and sandals.

At lunch, you may enjoy "**Panino con Lampredotto**" in a typical Florentine market. At dinner, taste the simple yet unforgettable recipes of the Tuscan tradition, such as "**Crostini**", "**Panzanella**", and "**Peposo**". And remember, Florence is the home of "**Fiorentina**" steak! In case you are a vegetarian, don't worry: Tuscan cuisine offers tasty alternatives like "**Pappa al Pomodoro**" or "**Ribollita**" (read the article in our BLOG to know more about Tuscan Cuisine).

PISA

Pisa is famous worldwide for its "**Torre Pendente**" (Leaning Tower), but its wonderful square, **Piazza dei Miracoli**, set over an ample greenfield, hosts three other whiter-than-white masterpieces of exquisite Medieval art: the Cathedral, the Baptistry and the "Camposanto" (Graveyard). They are so unique that their creation originated a new style, "Pisan Romanesque".

This area was chosen to construct the **Duomo of Santa Maria Assunta** strictly for its centrality; founded in 1064, it was intended to celebrate the grandeur of Pisa during the Marine Republic's epoch of power. "The temple of marble white as the snow"; that's how the structure is described on the gravestone of its architect, Buscheto di Giovanni Giudice. Consisting of five naves with its transept divided into three naves, it is surmounted by a splendid dome encircled by a loggia. The Duomo's façade and exterior lateral sections feature elaborate decoration in marble (which can also be seen on its interior), mosaics, and bronze.



In front of the Cathedral stands the **Baptistry**, also in a particular version of the Romanesque style. Initiated in 1152 by Diotisalvi, the Baptistry was finally completed in the 14th century; Gothic elements were added then. Of cylindrical form and circled by arcades of columns, this structure in white marble even boasts impressive acoustics.

The **Camposanto** closes the northern end of the complex's piazza. This monumental cemetery, begun in 1278, is bordered by a marble fence and houses a cloister at its centre. Unfortunately, most frescoes that once coloured its walls were destroyed in a fire in 1944 during the battle for Pisa.

Ultimately, the true symbol of Pisa is the **Campanile**, the Leaning Tower, which completes the image of this city. Because of land sinkage beneath it, the Tower stands at a significant incline. Its construction started in 1173, but the Tower was not completed until the second half of the 1300s. In cylindrical form, the blind arcades of its lower part mutate into six floors of loggias, repeating motifs from the Duomo. Inside, a spiral staircase of 294 steps leads to the heights of one of the most famous towers in the world, where the lovely belfry and a spectacular view of the surrounding landscape await.



In Siena, the city of the Palio, you will walk on the famous **Piazza del Campo**, the concave square where horses run twice a year in a dangerous race that symbolizes the city's freedom. On the days of the Palio, the whole town goes crazy; read about it in our [BLOG](#).

Indeed, you will not forget the colour of frontages and roofs, the renowned colour "Sienna", a pigment first produced during the Renaissance, that makes the city lovely and warm. And don't forget to taste the Senese sweets: "*cantucci*" (biscuits with toasted almonds), "*ricciarelli*" (soft biscuits with icing sugar), "*panforte*" (cake with fruit nuts and spices) and "*cavallucci*" (biscuits with honey, walnut, candied fruits and spices). Travellers who love dessert will be delighted!

In the afternoon, you will stroll with your head upwards along the streets of one of the most beautiful cities in Tuscany, San Gimignano, also known as the "Medieval Manhattan", thanks to its old and impressive 14 towers that dominate the town skyline. Originally, the towers were 72, built by patrician families probably to demonstrate their wealth and power. Seven of San Gimignano's towers are around Piazza del Duomo; the tallest one is **Torre Grossa**, 54 meters high, dating back to 1298.

From Siena, you will move to **Monteriggioni**, the famous Senese fortress which guarded the boundary between the Senese Republic and the Florentine "Signoria". A step back to medieval times that will impress you. All around are Chianti vineyards and pasturelands; it's fantastic! The village can only evoke the Middle Ages with its 13th-century walls and 14 quadrilateral towers. Towers that Dante compared to the Giants of Hell, in the time when this fortified site was an outpost of the Senese against the Florentines, passing several times from one to the other.

SAN GALGANO

On the way to Val d'Orcia, we will take a diversion to one of the most fascinating spots in Tuscany. Here we are in **Chiusdino**, to visit the famous Abbey of San Galgano. What a stunning place! Dating back to 1218, the Abbey was considerably wealthy until the 14th century, so much as to be disputed between the Papacy and the Republic of Siena. Unfortunately, a remarkable decline followed so much splendour: local people used it as a warehouse of building materials, even selling the roof of lead to make ammunition and transforming it into what we see today. For those who see it for the first time, it is awe-inspiring due to its isolation and the absence of a roof. Finding yourself inside a church and having the sky as a cover is not usual, and when the evening comes, the stars offer a fantastic show. But why did the Cistercians Monks decide to build such an imposing complex in that secluded valley? The answer is simple. Very close to it, a church, the hermitage of Montesiepi, whose first nucleus is due to the same saint (and his direct followers), already existed. In its Chapel, also called "Rotonda" because of the circular shape of the central structure, an old iron sword is encased in stone, a clear reference to the legend of Excalibur, the mythic sword of King Arthur!



Val d'Orcia is one of the most fascinating places in Italy, included by UNESCO in the list of World Heritage Sites. Its landscape is a part of the agricultural hinterland of Siena, redrawn and developed when it was integrated into the city-state's territory in the 14th and 15th centuries to reflect an idealized model of good governance and create an



aesthetically pleasing picture. The landscape's distinctive aesthetics, flat chalk plains with almost conical hills and fortified settlements on top, inspired many artists. Their images have come to exemplify the beauty of well-managed Renaissance agricultural landscapes.

In **Montepulciano**, our friend Francesca will lead you to discover this beautiful town full of stories, legends and thousand flavours, introducing you to the excellent products of this unique land: olive oil, pecorino cheese and Vino Nobile di Montepulciano.

Then, you will get to **Montalcino**, one of the prettiest hill towns in Tuscany. Around the village, rows of olive trees, precious grapevines and yellow fields create an enchanting landscape. Here, you will visit a Brunello winery to taste the most famous Supertuscan wine, probably the best Italian red!

Then, you will stop in **Bagno Vignoni**, a tiny and charming village where the main square is a pool 49 meters long and 29 wide. Several hot springs, whose therapeutic qualities have been renowned since antiquity, bubble up from its bottom! All this creates a pleasant sensation; leaving will be hard!

The tour is over, but the memories of a fantastic journey will accompany you for a lifetime!

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Ciao da Vitor



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