

THE WALKING PARTY

ITINERARY FOR A TASTE OF ITALY: TUSCANY

Distance : 53 km approx

Walking : moderate +



This eight day trip takes you through the beauty of a well trodden Tuscany. Well trodden yes but we will be showing you this great region through our eyes and with our passion. Food, wine, culture and walking will lend itself to the success of a great week showing you just why there is much justification in the simile 'as proud as a Tuscan'. Numerous of the great City Republics of the early Renaissance were in this region and it is extraordinary not only to see how they could build such masterpieces of beauty and invention but also There are some outstanding wines made in Tuscany ... namely Brunello of Montalcino and the Vino Nobile of Montepulciano. These you will be sampling and comparing. James has always had a great love for the works of the Gothic sculptor Giovanni Pisano and as well as seeing some outstanding works of his, there will be much early and high Renaissance work of equal merit to see!

Day 1 ARRIVAL AND GARDENS You will be met in Rome at the Fiumicino airport for the BA morning flight arrival (scheduled at the moment for 11.30) by James and Diana and then be driven to the pretty village of Vignanello for a typical Italian lunch before visiting the garden and castello of Ruspoli with the owner, the contessa, After the visit we drive to the gardens of Bomarzo. This garden was saved from oblivion by Salvador Dali and Jean Cocteau. It is an extraordinary testament of the love of a husband to a wife. It is inspired by the epic C16th poem by Ariosto called *Orlando Furioso* and has the most extraordinary sculptures looming in its depths. A must see. We then continue to the tiny town of Pienza. Just outside Pienza is the Palazzo Massaini and we stay in two of the estate farmhouses overlooking the beauty of the Val d'Orcia. There is a swimming pool. It is a wonderful way to start 'A Taste of Tuscany'!

Day 2 CIRCUIT DAY AND MONTEPULCIANO After breakfast we will drive before dropping off for an amble through the Tuscan landscape before arriving for a picnic in the shade of an olive grove. After lunch we will drive to Montepulciano. It is famous for its Vino Nobile a sumptuous red wine of sangiovese grapes. We shall visit the Contucci winery and have some gelato and wander the Renaissance streets. We would finish at the extraordinary late Renaissance church of San Biagio designed by Sangallo the Elder. Dinner in a village restaurant where they toss the pasta in a huge cheese tome. *Walk: 8km*

Day 3 MONTALCINO DAY After breakfast we drive to a small castello to walk to the lovely hilltop town of Montalcino for lunch where we have a tasting of the fabulous wines coming from this area. For those not walking there is an opportunity to spend the morning in Montalcino relaxing and wandering around before we meet up for lunch in the small town centre. Montalcino is famous for its Brunello wine – another Sangiovese gem. We will be tasting the differences between Brunello and Vino Nobile all the great wines from this Siena area with various *bruschetti* and *salumi*. In the afternoon we set off again in the cars to walk through the woods for the abbey of San Antimo. Return by car to the hotel.

Walk: 7km morning 5km afternoon

Day 4 GARDENS DAY You awake for another lovely continental breakfast of fruits and *cornetti* and coffee. We then drive to La Foce for a private tour of this extraordinary garden built by one of the great Tuscan families in the 1920s. We then walk to a small hilltop village for a delicious light lunch with stunning views. After lunch we walk to Pienza. This ‘village’ was created by Pope Pius II in the mid fifteenth century as an ideal Renaissance town! It has immense charm and we will visit the palazzo and its small garden which has to have been an influence on Cecil Pinsent at La Foce. This region of Tuscany is beautifully romantic and dotted with lines of cypress trees along the undulating clay hills of ‘*le crete*’ beneath the backdrop of Monte Amiata. We then drive to Siena to stay at the Hotel Chiusarelli. This is nicely situated on the edge of the old town. The Palazzo Pubblico is five minutes walk. All bedrooms are nicely situated with bathrooms en suite. Dinner in the Piazza del Campo..

Walk: 3km morning 6km afternoon



Day 5 COOKING AND CULTURE DAY We start cooking in Siena at 10.30 so there is time after breakfast to wander the beautiful streets and soak in the atmosphere. We will then meet Julia who will be inviting us to cook a great Italian lunch with her including pastas and artichokes and salads. Italian cooking has always for me been the freshest and best in the world and here we will see why! We will all be joining in, getting our hands dirty and we will eat lunch here. In the afternoon we will be visiting three gems of Sieneese culture: the Duomo, the Opera del Duomo and the Baptistery. Here you will see stunning work by Giovanni Pisano as well as Duccio, Donatello and Pinturicchio. We will look especially at Duccio's Maesta and Pisano's sculptures. Return to the Chiusarelli. Dinner in Siena.

Day 6 **VOLTERRA** We leave Siena in the morning after breakfast by car and drive towards the Etruscan bastion of Volterra. For those not walking there is a chance to enjoy the beauty of Volterra one of the great Etruscan cities, and for those walking we start from the valley up a hill (!) and eventually arrive to be greeted by Diana and the non walkers with her usual wonderful picnic with stunning views. There is a chance here for non walkers to walk for half an hour before lunch. We will eat drink and enjoy the general beauty of bucolic Italy before continuing on foot to the famous towered hill top village of San Gimignano. Again for the 'less interested in walking' there is the vehicle option. You will stay in a charming hotel in the heart of this unforgettable village. Dinner in San Gimignano.

Walk: 15km

Day 7 **SAN GIMIGNANO** After breakfast we will visit the Colegiata with its wonderful frescoes and just a stone's throw away from our hotel. This is a saturation of Early Renaissance colour that really hits you as you walk in. Then we walk out of the village walls via the Benozzo Gozzoli cycle in San Francesco towards a vineyard for a wine-tasting to taste olive oil and the lovely dry white wine 'Vernaccia' of which the locals are so proud. We picnic with beautiful views of San Gimignano before returning to the village to relax for our last afternoon in Tuscany. Dinner in the village. *Walk: 9km*

Day 8 **HOME** We drive back to Rome.



Bomarzo



San Gimignano

Please also note that this itinerary is subject to change according to local conditions. All mileages shown are approximate.