



Art & Walking in Tuscany

October 11-20, 2010

Plan your arrival in Pisa for October 11

Plan your departure from Pisa for October 20

Join us as we explore the world-renowned landscapes and artistic heritage of Tuscany, one of the most recognized of Italy's regions. Begin your journey by immersing yourself in a treasury of Renaissance art and architecture in Florence and Siena. In the museums, gardens, and public squares of these cities you'll deepen your appreciation of the splendid artistic achievements of the region the Italians call Toscana. Outside the cities, explore quintessential landscapes of orderly olive grove and vineyards, cypress-lined lanes, and tile-roofed farm houses. Wander along segments of the Via Francigena (one of the pilgrimage paths to Rome) and visit classic hill towns like Colle di Val d'Elsa and San Gimignano, two of the finest medieval towns in Europe. In the north of Tuscany, the walled city of Lucca invites exploration and serves as the gateway to Tuscany's mountainous northern reaches. Sandwiched between the Apuan Alps and the Apennines, the lovely hill town of Barga will enchant you with its far-ranging vistas and quiet ambience. Then, to round out your Tuscan adventure, travel into the neighboring region of Liguria and sample the pleasures of coastal Italy. Here, colorful seaside towns abound, and inviting paths offer up memorable views as they wend their way along the dramatic coastline of the Riviera di Levante.

Day 1

Overnight in Florence

Arrive in Pisa. Transfer on your own to your hotel in Florence (Firenze). Meet for an afternoon orientation walk of the historic center of Florence including the Ponte Vecchio, the Piazza della Signoria, and the Palazzo Vecchio. Florence is renowned as the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance.

Day 2

Overnight in Florence

Breakfast and dinner included

After breakfast at the hotel, immerse yourself in the artistic treasures of Florence by exploring the city on foot with your local guide. This day's walks will introduce you to the major patrons of Renaissance art—the Church and the Medici family. Begin today at the Museo Nazionale del Bargello which houses the most comprehensive collection of Tuscan Renaissance sculpture in Italy but is often overlooked by visitors. Then walk to the Duomo begun in 1296 and the fourth largest cathedral in the world. The dome by Brunelleschi is a masterpiece of the Renaissance and the first dome of its kind constructed since antiquity. Hardy walkers can climb up the stairs inside the dome for one of Florence's best views. Continue your workout with the ascent of the stairs of the Duomo's bell tower begun by Giotto in 1334. The gilded doors of the Baptistery by Ghiberti are not to be missed, nor are the art treasures in the cathedral's museum which boast original works by Michelangelo and Donatello. Finally, end the day at the Basilica di San Lorenzo. Digest the visual richness of your day in conversation with your traveling companions during a welcome dinner in Florence.

Day 3

Overnight in Florence

Breakfast included

Continue your walking adventure in Florence by heading to two of the world's great treasure houses of Italian art—the Galleria degli Uffizi with its Medici collection, and the Galleria dell'Accademia which houses Michelangelo's masterpiece, the colossal statue of David carved out of a single block of marble by the artist when he was only 29 years old. After a thorough visit to each museum, stroll across the Ponte Vecchio to the Boboli Gardens (Giardino di Boboli) on the other side of the Arno River. Meander the garden's paths imagining the daily lives of the Medici

family who once called the nearby palace home. Or shop the fashionable boutiques of the Via de' Tornabuoni, or linger over a cappuccino or gelato in one of the many cafés. Enjoy the evening on your own in Florence perhaps attending an optional performance at one of the many concert halls in the historic city.

Day 4

Overnight in San Gimignano

Breakfast, lunch and dinner included

After breakfast, depart the stimulating bustle of intensely urban Florence for the quiet of the Tuscan countryside. Travel by vehicle about thirty-five miles south to the gem-like historic town of San Gimignano. Named a World Heritage Site in 1990, the lyrical full name of this town is San Gimignano delle belle Torri (“St. Gimignano of the Beautiful Towers”). The town is known for its 14th century towers built as status symbols by the town’s elite. There were once as many as 72 tower-houses (some as high as 165 feet); about fourteen have survived to this day. Perched above the Val d’Elsa—a lush valley filled with vineyards, olive groves and agricultural fields—San Gimignano was once an important stop for pilgrims walking from Rome to Canterbury, England on the Via Francigena. Today you will walk on the pilgrims’ path from San Gimignano to Colle di Val d’Elsa enjoying panoramic views, the quiet rural setting, and a picnic lunch along the way. Return to San Gimignano by vehicle, settle into the hotel for two nights, and enjoy a leisurely dinner together.

Day 5

Overnight in San Gimignano

Breakfast included

After breakfast, journey by vehicle to Siena, a historic town with a wealth of Gothic architecture. Smaller than Florence, Siena was a powerful rival of Florence in the 13th century. Its medieval wealth is evident in the rich collection of public and private buildings that have survived the centuries including the exquisite cathedral which is one of Italy’s great Gothic churches. On a walking tour of the historic core of the city with a local guide, you will also visit the Pinacoteca Nazionale in a 15th century palace with masterpieces by Siena’s artists. Return to San Gimignano for a second overnight. Dinner is on your own tonight so you can sample the town’s trattorias and restaurants.

Day 6

Overnight in Lucca

Breakfast and dinner included

Over breakfast, savor your last morning in San Gimignano, and then travel by vehicle north to Lucca. Founded by the Etruscans, Lucca became a Roman colony by 180 BC. By the mid-twelfth century, Lucca established itself as an independent comune, and it soon developed into an independent republic and remained so until the early 19th century when the city was taken by Napoleon. Lucca was finally incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy in 1861. Enjoy a walking tour of this historic city still completely surrounded by intact defensive walls. Stroll the Via Fillungo, the main street in the medieval center, passing the ornate facade of the Chiesa di San Michele in Foro, a Romanesque church begun in the 11th century. Across the street from the church is the house where the composer Giacomo Puccini was born. The Romanesque cathedral (Duomo) is also noteworthy. For a longer leg-stretcher, you can circumnavigate the city on the four-kilometer path along the top of the city walls enjoying panoramic views along the way. Settle into your hotel for a two-night stay and dine together on local specialties.

Day 7

Overnight in Lucca

Breakfast & lunch included

Today, head north along the Serchio River into Tuscany’s mountainous Garfagnana region sandwiched between the Apuan Alps (source of Carrara marble) and the Apennine mountain range. The landscapes of this area offer a delightful visual contrast to the more stereotypical Tuscan scenes that you’ve enjoyed around Florence and Siena. Enjoy a day trip to the lovely medieval hill village of Barga which originally developed as a fortified settlement with lines of defensive walls. Two of the gates in the defensive walls survive to this day. Established as early as the eighth century, Barga rose to prominence in the Middle Ages as a center for silk production. Barga is dominated by its 12th century cathedral consecrated to St. Christopher (San Cristofano); it boasts a noteworthy twelfth century pulpit. The town is laced by narrow flag-stoned streets lined with stuccoed palazzi and punctuated by shaded piazze.

From Barga, set off on a short hike through the luxuriant surrounding countryside. The walk will take you past small hamlets and chapels and through fragrant woodlands of oak, pine and chestnut to reach the site of the old walled settlement of Tiglio Alto. From this point, panoramic views extend over Barga, the Serchio Valley and the peaks of the Alpi Apuane. Return to Lucca for a second overnight.

Day 8

Overnight in Santa Margherita Ligure

Breakfast & lunch included

Depart Lucca by vehicle and travel north into the region of Liguria bound for the picturesque port town of Camogli known for the colorful, tightly clustered houses that line its seafront. Many of these houses are decorated with trompe l'oeil windows, columns and balustrades, more so than in other Ligurian towns. Sample the local focaccia made with Stracchino cheese! Camogli is a fishing town and the large frying pans you may see hanging about town are used in the town's annual "fish fry" in May. From the southern edge of Camogli, set off on the well-marked path that heads south toward the bulky Portofino headland. The route ascends to the small village of San Rocco di Camogli passing several villas and gardens along the way. The landscape becomes wilder as you head south from San Rocco. Strawberry trees (*Arbutus unedo*)—known as corbezzoli in Italian—line the trail, their red fruits providing a splash of color in the fall. From the trail, you'll enjoy spectacular views over the Ligurian Sea back toward Camogli. Below you, the cobalt sea crashes into rocky coves and the distinctive promontory of Punta Chiappa. Return to Camogli from where you'll travel by vehicle to the port town of Santa Margherita Ligure. Enjoy a short orientation walk and stretch your legs along palm-lined streets that will lead you to the eye-catching seventeenth century Villa Durazzo and its lovely surrounding gardens. Overnight in a comfortable hotel.

Day 9

Overnight in Santa Margherita Ligure

Breakfast, lunch and dinner included

This morning travel the short distance to the famous and picturesque port village of Portofino made famous beginning in the 1950s by movie stars, royals, and jet-setters. From here, begin a memorable hike along a scenic trail that winds its way above the sea to the small settlement of San Fruttuoso tucked into a tiny, rocky cove. San Fruttuoso is known in particular for the medieval Benedictine abbey of San Fruttuoso di Capodimonte named for a saint who was martyred in Spain in the third century. After lunch in San Fruttuoso, travel by boat along the coast back to Portofino where you can enjoy a leisurely exploration of the village or set off on the well-known, hour-long Portofino "lighthouse walk." Don't miss the "classic views" of Portofino from either the church of San Giorgio or from the terrace of the Castello Brown (Brown Castle). Originally built by the Genoese as a coastal fortification in the 15th and 16th centuries Brown Castle was purchased in 1867 by Montague Yeats Brown who was then the English consul in Genoa, hence its name. The castle is now owned by the city of Portofino. Travel back to Santa Margherita Ligure for a farewell dinner and celebrate the conclusion of your Italian adventure!

Day 10

Departure from Pisa

Breakfast included

Group transfers to Pisa for departure. Depending on flight departure times, we may be able to make a stop to see the Leaning Tower of Pisa which is only about three miles from the terminal building at Pisa Airport. Breakfast this morning included.

Other Details about this Trip

Trip dates: October 11-20, 2010

Price: \$3,595

Single room for entire trip: \$375

Lodging: 9 nights in 3 star hotels and inns. All rooms with private bath.

Meals: 9 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 4 dinners included

Trip Begins at hotel in Florence, Italy on October 11, 2010

Trip Ends at Pisa Airport on October 20, 2010