



## Middle Age Tuscany and gastronomic delights



**Tuscany** is a world-renowned region because it was the birthplace of the **modern Italian language** (thanks to the literary works of **Dante Alighieri**, especially in **"the Divine Comedy"**, and others) and the cradle of the **Italian Renaissance**. The region was home to some of history's most influential artists, writers, and thinkers, such as **Leonardo da Vinci**, **Michelangelo Buonarroti**, and **Niccolò Machiavelli**, all of whom contributed to the thriving of the Renaissance era. The city of **Florence** was the epicenter of this artistic and cultural explosion. However, there are many other famous cities and historic towns, each with its own unique character and attractions which have given luster to Tuscany: **Pisa**, **Lucca**, **San Gimignano**, **Volterra** and **Siena**. Tuscany artistic heritage is arguably one of the most significant in the world.

The region's iconic rolling hills, lined with cypress trees, vineyards, and olive groves, are a visual trademark, and seem to have been painted by a master artist. This pastoral beauty, particularly in areas like the Val d'Orcia, has become a symbol of Italy itself.

A defining feature of the Tuscan landscape is its numerous medieval hilltop towns. These fortified villages, like **San Gimignano**, offer incredible views and a chance to step back in time, with their winding streets, stone towers, and ancient churches.

**Tuscan cuisine is celebrated for its simplicity and focuses on high-quality**, fresh ingredients. The food is rooted in "cucina povera" (peasant cooking), which emphasizes the hearty flavors. Here are some of Tuscany's most typical and iconic dishes: **Pappardelle al Cinghiale** (classical Tuscan pasta dish, with a sauce made from wild boar), **Pici** (thick handmade pasta), **Ribollita** (a hearty vegetable soup), **Panzanella** (a summer salad), and **Bistecca alla Fiorentina** (it is a Chianina steak coked over a wooden fire and served medium-rare).

The region is also a major wine producer, famous for world-renowned wines like **Chianti**, **Brunello di Montalcino**, and **Vino Nobile di Montepulciano**.

## An Amazing 10-Day Experiential Tour in Search of Beauty, History, and Gastronomic Delights

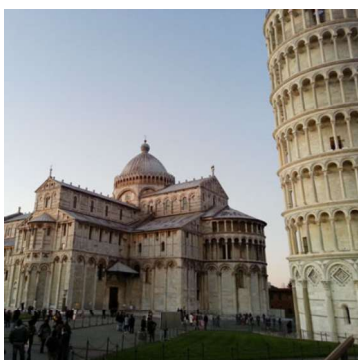
**D01: FLORENCE**

Upon arrival at the airport, we will meet our guide and board our bus, then head for the capital of Tuscany. We are ready to visit the **Uffizi Museum, Ponte Vecchio, the Accademia Gallery**, and the marvelous churches of the historic center: **Santa Maria del Fiore, Giotto's Bell Tower and the Baptistery, Santa Maria Novella, and Santa Croce**.

**Dinner in a local trattoria, served with a Fiorentina steak (a must-try for meat lovers), and a selection of wines of your choice: Gallo Nero, Chianti Classico, and Montalbano wines.** Overnight in Florence.

**D02: FLORENCE**

We will dedicate the whole day to exploring the wonders of **Florence**. In the morning, our journey takes us uphill to the renowned **Piazzale Michelangelo** and the stunning terrace of the **San Miniato al Monte Abbey**. From these vantage points, you will be treated to enchanting panoramic views of the entire city, stretching across the River Arno. After soaking in the vistas, we will stroll down to **Piazza della Signoria** and delve into **Palazzo Vecchio**. This historic building, once the heart of the **Medici Government**, now serves as the seat of the **Florentine municipality**. The afternoon is yours to enjoy at leisure, offering ample time for leisurely walks, shopping, and further exploration of the historic city center. We will conclude our day with an overnight stay in Florence.

**D03: FLORENCE - PISA**

Enjoy a free morning in Florence before we head to Pisa. Our visit will include **Piazza dei Miracoli, the Leaning Tower, and the Baptistery**, followed by a visit to the medieval **San Piero a Grado Abbey**. We will then have free time in the late afternoon and evening to walk among Pisa's streets and enjoy an aperitivo. Dinner and overnight stay will be at the **San Rossore Natural Park resort**.

**D04: PISA - PIETRASANTA - LUCCA**

Our day will begin with an early start as we make our way to **Forte dei Marmi**. There, we will immerse ourselves in the vibrant atmosphere of its renowned traditional Sunday market, a place where high-quality items can often be discovered at surprisingly low prices. Following our market visit, we will take a short drive to **Pietrasanta**. This town is a significant hub for marble sculpture and was proudly the home of both the world-famous **Michelangelo Buonarroti** and the celebrated painter **Botero**.

The afternoon will be dedicated to exploring the charming city of **Lucca**. This city is famous for its remarkably well-preserved Renaissance-era city walls, which remain entirely intact and provide a truly unique vantage point of the city. Our stroll through Lucca will include visits to the distinctive, oval-shaped **Piazza dell'Anfiteatro**, the stunning **Lucca Cathedral**, and the historic **Basilica of San Frediano**. Beyond the specific sights, we will also take ample time to simply soak in the relaxed and inviting atmosphere that this city emanates. To conclude our day, we will enjoy dinner at a local trattoria before settling in for an overnight stay in Lucca.



#### D05: LUCCA - VOLTERRA

Our journey will take us along a scenic country road to the ancient walled city of **Volterra**. This remarkable city boasts a rich history, having been an **Etruscan capital**, then a **Roman city**, and later a **significant medieval center**. Afterwards, we will head to **San Gimignano**, famously known as the "**Manhattan of the Middle Ages**." Here, the Guelfs and Ghibellines historically challenged each other to build the town's tallest towers, which were essentially **medieval skyscrapers**. We will spend the night in a charming **agriturismo**. An **agriturismo** is a unique type of farm stay predominantly found in Italy. It is a working farm that offers accommodation and serves its own local, genuine food to guests.



#### D06: SIENA

Today, we are diving deep into **Siena**, a city whose rich history is woven with the tales of the **Guelf and Ghibelline factions**. **Siena is, of course, famously known for the renowned Palio horse race**. We will explore some of its most important sites, including the magnificent **Siena Cathedral (Duomo)** and the **Santa Maria della Scala Museum Complex (Spedale)**. We will also have a unique opportunity to meet with members of the **Contrade**, Siena's historic city quarters. They will illuminate the rules of the Palio, offering us a deep dive into the culture and rivalries that fuel this enduring and passionate race. Later, **we will enjoy dinner in a Contrada club**, perfectly paired with our fine **Chianti Senese**. After dinner, before heading back to the hotel, we will take a leisurely walk to explore Siena by night.



#### D07: SIENA - VAL D'ORCIA (UNESCO HERITAGE)

Today, we are heading south to the **Val d'Orcia**, a region rich with history and home to numerous medieval monastic orders. Our visits include **Monte Oliveto Maggiore**, a serene home to Benedictine monks, and the pristine **Abbey of Sant'Antimo**, a Cistercian monastery famously said to have been founded by Charlemagne.

Next, we will make our way to **Montalcino**, the birthplace of the world-renowned **Brunello di Montalcino wine**. A **wine and olive oil tasting** will undoubtedly be a highlight of our visit there. We will spend the night in a charming **agriturismo** within the picturesque Val d'Orcia.



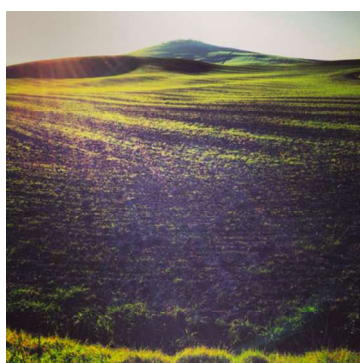
#### D08: VAL D'ORCIA ROLLING HILLS LAND

Today is dedicated to exploring the charming towns, rich culture, and distinctive tastes of the **Val d'Orcia** and the **Crete Senesi**. We will journey through several picturesque hamlets and stunning medieval cities, each immersed in history. Our stops include **Montepulciano**, **Pienza** (known as the city of Pope Pius II Piccolomini and celebrated for its delicious **Pecorino Toscano cheese**), and **San Quirico d'Orcia**.

The latter part of our day will offer a chance to unwind at the **thermal baths in Bagno Vignoni**. To cap off our cultural and culinary journey, we will savor a delightful dish of **Pici**, a typical Siennese thick, handmade spaghetti. Overnight nearby San Quirico d'Orcia.

**D09: TOWARDS TO THE SEA**

Our day begins with a visit to the magnificent **San Galgano Cistercian Abbey**, famed for the legend of Galgano Guidotti and his sword in the rock, a tale that beautifully depicts a nobleman's journey from the battlefield to a life of hermitage. This story inspired the famous animated cartoons known worldwide. Later, we will journey to **Massa Marittima**. Here, beside its remarkable Duomo, we can enjoy an outstanding panorama that stretches across the Tyrrhenian Sea to Elba Island and the Gulf. Finally, we will continue to the **Templar Church of San Salvatore in Campiglia Marittima** before settling in for the night in the **Val Cornia area**.



**D10:** Today, we will head back to northern Tuscany to catch our flight (from Florence or Pisa) and return home.

**NOTE: if you are interested in knowing more about our local wine and food please feel free to contact us and we will give you more detailed information!**

**The individual participation fee includes:**

- All the transfers by private bus + driver
- Hotels 3-4 stars or typical tuscan Agriturismo (Double Occupancy B&B)
- Half Board (dinner in typical restaurants or hotel)
- English speaking professional guide, other languages as requested
- Medical/baggage insurance

**It does not include:**

- Entrance charges for museums, churches or other places.
- Single Room supplement 40€ per night.
- Tips, beverages, or any extras
- Supplement Full Board 140€
- International/domestic flights (can be provided - ask for quotation)

*All dietary requirements will be catered for.*

*All our tours are provided with Medical and Luggage insurance and call center for assistance.*

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