

Traveling Matters

Treasures of Tuscany

October 5-17, 2010

Come explore the "Hidden Treasures" of Tuscany

This journey will introduce you to some of our favorite hill towns, art and architectural wonders, cathedrals, and the art of enjoying Italian cuisine. We will participate in cooking lessons, and taste and compare world-class wines. In this ancient country we will contrast and discuss the old and new, connecting, people, place and finding the soulful riches of Italy.

Depart USA: Monday, October 4

Day 1, Tuesday, October 5: Lucca

Welcome to Italy and Pisa. We cannot leave Pisa without seeing one of the wonders of the world, the Leaning Tower and its Miracle Square. We then make our way to the historical city of Lucca, nestled within its 16th century wall. Lucca is one of the most adored and less traveled Tuscany towns. It is also the birthplace of Giacomo Puccini. Settle into our hotel and then regroup for a pleasant historical walking tour of Lucca. This tour will also combine some tasting of local products and chocolate! Enjoy a welcome dinner at a traditional local restaurant. B, LL, D

Day 2, Wednesday, October 6: Lucca

Today is Lucca's market day, held inside the historic walls between two of the ancient entrance doors. A feast for all your senses. You can explore at your leisure, walk or rent bikes to explore the wall, shop Lucca's famous boutiques or just relax at a street side cafe. Lunch is on your own. We will give you options for sites to see as well. We meet mid-afternoon for a special cooking lesson. You can assist our chef, ask questions, or just relax and watch, while sipping wine from the Colline Lucchesi. We all dine together. B, D

Day 3, Thursday, October 7: Lucca

Enjoy a leisurely morning. We will head up into the Garfagnana, a dramatic landscape with history of pilgrimage and contemplative origins. On the way we will stop for lunch at a very special restaurant, and enjoy meeting three generations of an Italian family all still practicing cittaslow (slow town) life in a small town. After lunch we will visit the family's country home where the

vines and olive trees grow for the products used in the restaurant. We then continue up into the valley formed by the Serchio River and its tributaries. Traversing the road north of Lucca, further upstream we come to Borgo a Mozzano, with its wacky medieval Ponte del Diavolo (Devil's Bridge). Each of its five arches is different - and extraordinary. After a brief stop we continue on up the valley, to the exquisite small hill town of Barga, with its Scottish connection. Climb to the top of the town for panoramic views and the cathedral, built between the 10th and 14th centuries. Spread beneath the cathedral is the town, a lovely patchwork of narrow streets, archways, ancient walls and small piazzas. B,L

Day 4, Friday, October 8: Lucca

Visit the private estate and working vineyard and farm, Fabbrica di San Martino. The owner, Giuseppe, will give us a tour of his vineyard, antique villa, and a tasting of his handcrafted wines. Giuseppe is a man in love with his land and he will share knowledge about biodynamic farming. He will take us into his home where we will sample snacks along with his magnificent wine. Return to Lucca for your last chance for shopping and exploring. We will meet at 6:30 pm and walk to a concert in Lucca's oldest church, San Giovanni. Here you will hear the music of Puccini with arias, or perhaps Mozart and Verdi. End our leisurely time in Lucca enjoying an elegant meal at one of Tuscany's top restaurants. B, S, D

Day 5, Saturday, October 9: Pienza

Morning departure heading into verdant landscape to the town of Pienza, one of the "newest" towns in Italy. We also are delving deeper into designated wine growing regions. We have an extraordinary visit to Sant'Anna Winery near Montepulciano. The Villa S. Anna winery is part of a larger property owned for about two hundred years by the family of Simona Ruggeri Fabroni and the only winery completely in the hands of the women of the family! A memorable lunch is planned at the winery, paired with their wines. Late afternoon arrival to our hotel, in the center of Pienza, where Renaissance town-planning concepts were first put into practice. This is another hidden town in Tuscany just waiting for you to explore. B,L

Day 6, Sunday, October 10: Pienza

Enjoy a leisurely Sunday morning before our visit to the town of Cortona. Although it has been well known for over twenty-five years as a summer music center, most of us learned of Cortona when we read "Under the Tuscan Sun". With its spectacular setting high on the mountainside, the views are endless. Its steep streets lead to hidden treasures, Etruscan tombs and an important museum. We will have a guided tour that includes a visit to the Etruscan museum. Enjoy lunch on your own with time to wander before we head back to Pienza and dine together. B, D

Day 7, Monday, October 11: Pienza

A morning of surprise is planned... We then gear up for our walk uphill to the village of Montepulciano where you can explore this town set atop a narrow ridge of volcanic

rock. Montepulciano combines Tuscany's superb countryside with some of the region's finest wines, known throughout the world. We end our day with a stop at a nearby village of Bagno Vignoni. We can enjoy a gelato - a true Italian day! B,L

Day 8, Tuesday, October 12: Siena

Today we head to Siena. Every Italian will commit to seeing Siena and the glorious towering Duomo. On the way we will go off the beaten path to visit the Sant'Antimo Abbey, best visited in the morning when the sun shines through the east windows to create an almost surreal atmosphere. We continue to Castello Banfi where you will stop for a special wine tasting and snacks at the winery's enoteca. Then to Montalcino, home of world famous Brunello wine, where you will be free to explore the town and stroll into the fortress that defines the city. Late afternoon you will arrive in one of Tuscany's most picturesque cities, Siena! Meander its narrow streets and steep alleys, a stunning Gothic Duomo, a bounty of early Renaissance art, and the glorious Palazzo Pubblico overlooking the famous del Campo. Early evening will meet for a short orientation walk as we head to a special dining experience. B, LL, D

Day 9, Wednesday, October 13: Siena

Put on your walking shoes. We are taking in the city! After breakfast we will meet for a guided walking tour that will take us up to the Duomo and then the museum where you have the option to climb the walkway for the view of the city. With knowledge and maps in-hand you can explore easily the rest of the day. Enjoy looking at the kaleidoscope of ceramics and the abundance of elegant stores for shopping. Option to meet up for Pizza this evening. B

Day 10, Thursday, October 14: Florence

Farewell to Siena as we make our way to spend our last three nights in the crown jewel of Renaissance Italy, magnificent Florence. A very special day planned en-route. We visit Greve, in the heart of the Chianti wine region. Greve is the sister city of Sonoma, California, the home of your tour guide Margarita Ramirez and Traveling Matters. A group picture here...You will have some time to explore the piazza and then we will stop in an incredible wine bar where a sommelier will talk to us about the wines of the region. Then you can sample wines from the entire region including Montalcino's world famous Brunello and grappa and sparkling wines. You can also sample olive oil. Your tasting will be accompanied by local salami, cheese and bread. After settling into our hotel in Florence, we will take a brief orientation walk on the way to dinner at one of the favorite local casual restaurants. B, LL, D

Day 11, Friday, October 15: Florence

We will start our tour with our guide in the political center of Florence and then walk to the world-famous Uffizi Gallery, one of the most important art galleries in the world. Its collection of Primitive and Renaissance paintings comprises several universally acclaimed masterpieces of all time. Close by is the celebrated Ponte Vecchio, the oldest bridge spanning the Arno River, lined with picturesque

jewelry shops. After our tour we will stop for a traditional Italian lunch. Plenty of free time to explore and have lunch on your own. The rest of your afternoon and evening is free. There is so much to see - the beauty of Florence will have your eyes dancing with every step! B, LL

Day 12, Saturday, October 16: Florence

Our last day together in Italy. This morning we will meet at our hotel for a guided walking tour of Florence with entrance tickets for Santa Croce and the Accademia. Our first stop will be at the Accademia where you will see Michelangelo's magnificent David. Then we will continue on to the Religious center, see the beautiful Duomo, the first of its kind; the doors of the Baptistery and Santa Croce, built in the early 14th-century and known as much for the celebrities buried here as for its captivating artistic treasures. Lunch on your own with afternoon free to shop and explore the Oltrarno - with its art studios, the Santa Maria Novella Pharmacy, the Straw market and more. We will meet in the evening for our farewell dinner together. B, D

Day 13, Sunday, October 17: Depart Home

Airport transfer to Pisa International Airport.

INCLUDED:

- ▶ Roundtrip ground transportation to and from airport and throughout the journey
- ▶ Twelve (12) nights 3&4* hotel accommodations
- ▶ Daily full breakfast; many lunches, dinners; winery tours and food tastings
- ▶ Cooking demonstrations, lessons with meals and wine included
- ▶ English speaking guides, and reservation to all museums & historical sites paid
- ▶ Two (2) Trip Guides/ Management throughout tour
- ▶ Bottled water on coach during travel days
- ▶ All required gratuities to guides, driver, portering and other staff
- ▶ Pre-trip materials, packing lists, luggage tags

NOT INCLUDED:

International air; trip cancellation insurance, personal items, alcohol and other beverages; laundry service; discretionary tips and personal spending money.

COST: \$4,650

Note: The price is calculated on the prevailing euro rate as of March, 2010. We reserve the right to adjust should the rate change significantly. The price of \$4,650.00 is based on 20 enrolled travelers. Occupying a hotel room on your is available with an additional cost calculated by each hotel property. The total cost will be added to the journey price.