

GUIDED BIKE TOUR: ESSENCE OF TUSCANY: CHIANTI HILLS & ORCIA VALLEY

Itinerary:

Day One: Pienza

Meet at Chiusi-Chianciano train station (a stop on all major Florence-Rome lines). Transfer to Pienza, the most perfect Renaissance town in the world. Check into your rooms at our hotel, which occupies a 15th-century convent in the center of town. Meet your guide during a bike-fitting session and Get to know the rest of the group.

First short ride to San Quirico: there are barely more than a dozen streets in this tiny town, but they are all actually paved with real terra cotta, and there's also a magical baptistry. Dinner in a wonderful local trattoria La botte Piena where you will taste the special Pici pasta. Overnight in Pienza hotel Relais Il chiostro.

Day Two: Montepulciano & Orcia valley Length: 66 km.

Circular bike ride into Orcia valley: is a completely country ride and for the first 20 km we will ride downhill and very easy gentle rolling hills. Then the gentle climb to reach Radicofani, a medieval and enchanting village with a 1200 dating Rocca. After a stroll around the stately old town, we'll head back into the country, along some of those winding cypress-lined roads.

We will go to Montepulciano, known as the Pearl of the Sixteenth Century, and visit ancient wine cellar and taste nobile wine for aperitif. Free dinner in town Overnight in Pienza hotel Relais Il chiostro.

Day Three: Montalcino Length: 46 km.

Special event: brunello wine tasting

Today we'll start out on a long descent into the rolling green pastures of the Val d'Orcia, followed by a hearty uphill stretch that takes us to our reward: picturesque Bagno Vignoni. It's probably the only town you've ever seen where the main square is actually a thermal pool! Refreshed, we continue on to a secluded country Sant' Antimo Abbey, where we might be in time to hear the monks sing vespers.

Five miles later we'll be pedaling through the fortress walls into Montalcino. Wine tasting at cellar of the famed Brunello at Altesino winery. Afterwards we'll have plenty of time to visit the town, and perhaps purchase a couple of bottles to take home. Dinner at il Leccio in the little hamlet –discript of Sant' Angelo in colle. Overnight in Montalcino hotel Vecchia Oliviera.

Day Four: Siena Length: 55 km.

Pedaling north, we'll whisk past a pair of typical southern Tuscany towns and make a stop at Monte Oliveto Maggiore, one of the most important Benedictine monasteries in Italy. We'll traverse the famous Crete region. This is Tuscany's answer to the Badlands, with strange rock formations and lone farmhouses flanked by twin cypress trees. In Siena, we'll check into our rooms at a lovely garden hotel. Free dinner Overnight in Siena at Palazzo Ravizza.

Day Five: Chianti Length: 50 km.

Special event: Chianti wine tasting

The previous days have prepped our legs for the famed hills of Chianti, which await us today! The first stretch crosses an almost impossibly scenic clutch of hills blanketed with vineyards and thick forests. It's breathtaking, and so is the ride! We'll rest our legs in Borgo San Felice and Castello di Brolio, where is possible also visit the castle's garden - home of Baron Ricasoli and his world-renowned wine. Back in the saddle, we continue along the same winding panoramic road to Radda in Chianti and then to Castellina in Chianti. In Castellina we'll check into our rooms at our hotel Palazzo squarcialupi, which occupies a historic palace with garden. Tonight Italian Pizza cooked in wood Owen. Overnight in Castellina at hotel Palazzo Squarcialupi

Day Six: San Gimignano Length: 60 km.

More vineyards await us today, but you'll be amazed at how different they look once we get into the district of San Gimignano. Our route includes two stellar hill towns. First there's Monteriggioni, literally a town-in-a-castle. Barely two hundred yards across, its eighty residents all reside within the picture-perfect round turreted walls that crown the hilltop visible for miles around. Also seen in the distance are the seventeen towers of San Gimignano.

We'll have plenty of time to wander through the cobblestoned streets, window shop and buy a few last-minute Tuscan mementos for our friends and...why not, for ourselves too! Shuttle back to Castellina in Chianti. Our dinner will be at Tenuta Casanova, an organic farm outside the town - a short cooking lesson and then farewell dinner. Overnight in Castellina at hotel Palazzo squarcialupi

Day Seven: after breakfast end of the tour

Difficulty : medium difficulty with some climbs

Price : Euro 2270 p/person based on double room
single supplement € 390

Inclusions:

Six nights in superior hotels with private bath and breakfast

Four dinners, one lunch & two wine tastings

Snacks and drinks along the way Bikes (race or hybrid) and all gear

All maps, trip notes and detailed route directions

All Shuttles and technical assistance

Support Van, all transfer baggage

Services experienced guide

Cicloposse water bottle

Sales taxes (21%)

Not included: Airfare to Italy, train to Chiusi, transfer from Castellina on Day 7, 5 lunches, 2 dinners, alcoholic/non-alcoholic beverages, gratuities, travel insurance, laundry expenses and items of a personal nature.