

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Wine Trails of Classic Tuscany (LTY 2017)



TRIPDURATION
8
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Accommodation
Grade: Standard

Tour Type: Small Groups
Trek Grade: Easy to Moderate

Trip Code: LTY

Trip Highlights - Wine Trails of Classic Tuscany

- ✓ Tuscan landscapes - Walks amongst vineyards, rolling fields and avenues of cypress trees
- ✓ Wine tastings - Sample some of Italy's finest wines from Chianti to Brunello
- ✓ Hill-top towns - Discover San Gimignano, Pienza, Montepulciano and Montalcino
- ✓ Siena and Florence - Explore these stunning medieval and renaissance cities
- ✓ Local cuisine - Enjoy the fresh produce and delicious flavours of Tuscany

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 3 nights Standard Guesthouse
4 nights Standard Hotel

Included Meals: 7 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 0 dinners

Start Point: Join trip: Pisa Airport
End Point: Trip ends: Florence

Maximum Altitude on Trek (m): 600

Transport: Train, Minibus

Countries: Italy

Wine Trails of Classic Tuscany

Rolling hills, medieval hill-top towns and enjoying great food and wine are all part of this walking holiday among the iconic landscapes of southern Tuscany. We ramble through the vineyards of Chianti, along avenues of cypress trees and on ancient pilgrimage trails. We also explore historic Montalcino and Montepulciano, take in the sights of marvellous Siena and soak up the atmosphere of Renaissance Florence.



Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Accommodation Grade: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Trek Grade: Easy to Moderate

This grade is ideal if you want to enjoy both easy and moderate level walks on the same tour. You'll be walking mainly on good paths and at low altitude, with occasional more demanding ascents or descents.

Your trip itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

The Leader is an integral part of any Explore trip and your trip will be led by one of our experienced Leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Leaders are the key to the success of our trips; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation



throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this trip fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join trip Pisa airport; drive to Castellina in Chianti

Joining the trip in Pisa today, we drive to our hotel in Castellina in Chianti, a country town with Etruscan and Roman origins. Castellina lies at an altitude of around 580m in the heart of the Chianti Hills, an area famous for its wine.

Overnight: **Standard Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 Walk in the heart of Chianti country; wine tasting

After breakfast we drive close to the town of Volpaia, near to Radda in Chianti. Our walk heads out from the small chapel of Santa Maria Novella and slowly climbs through vineyards and along marked trails up into the hills of Chianti to the picture perfect village of Volpaia. We then follow local village paths and old drovers' roads, cutting through the vineyards and fields of the villa of Castelvecchi. Finally, we descend back to Santa Maria Novella for a well-earned rest in the olive groves of the church and our picnic lunch. A short bus ride takes us to Radda for some time to explore and look around and perhaps have a gelato. On our way back to Castellina we will stop at the Rocca della Macie wine estate for a tour and tasting of the famous Chianti Classico. Today's seven kilometre walk is expected to take around four hours with a total ascent and descent of 150 metres.

Overnight: **Standard Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3 Walk to San Gimignano; wine tasting

This morning we drive towards San Gimignano before setting off on foot along part of the Via Francigena (an ancient pilgrimage route running all the way from Canterbury to Rome) along a wide gravel track past vineyards and rural houses. The thirteen medieval towers of San Gimignano are often in sight in the near distance. San Gimignano is a beautifully preserved example of a classic Tuscan medieval town. It prospered during the 12th and 13th centuries, until a combination of local aristocratic rivalry and the arrival of the Black death devastated trade. We will have some free time to explore the town, have a relaxing lunch in one of many cafes and perhaps walk up to the Torre Grossa, or visit the Duomo. After lunch we plan to visit the Sovestro winery for a tasting of some of the local San Gimignano white wine. We then continue to Monteriggioni, a beautifully preserved fortified hill-top village, where we can walk around the walls before driving back to Castellina later this afternoon. Today's gently undulating ten kilometre walk is expected to take around three-and-a-half hours.

Overnight: **Standard Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 4 Visit medieval Siena; drive to Pienza in southern Tuscany

Our final destination today is Pienza in southern Tuscany, but we will stop for most of the day in the fabulous medieval city of Siena where our time is free to explore the market and other sights. With its magnificent Gothic architecture, Siena was once a rival to Florence in power and trade, the city controlled the trade routes between France and Rome, as well as the southern Tuscan wool industry. Today it stands as a classic Italian city, with its magnificent central square, Il Campo, and the awe inspiring grandeur of the Duomo overlooking the Via di Citta. The city centre is traffic-free, making it ideal to wander around on foot, soaking up the many intriguing sights. The focal point is the Piazza del Campo, a semi-circular area surrounded by ancient buildings, and overlooked by a 100 metre bell tower, the Torre del Mangia. The Piazza is also used for a horse race twice a year - the famous Palio, when horses and their riders hurtle dangerously around the square to the delight of the crowds. Pienza, our base for the next three nights, is a classic hill-top town and jewel of Renaissance architecture that UNESCO declared a World Heritage Site in 1996.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 5 Walk to Montepulciano via Montichiello

Our walk today heads downhill from Pienza on typical 'strade bianche', the white gravel roads of Tuscany. We head towards the village of Montichiello, a lovely medieval walled village where we will have a well earned break and admire one of the most famous cypress tree avenues in the whole of Tuscany (and the one on most of the postcards!) Retracing our steps a little way downhill, we pick up our trail heading past vineyards, enjoying some enchanting views across the surrounding countryside as we make our way towards the temple of San Biagio on the hillside below the town of Montepulciano. Founded by Antonio Sangallo the Elder in the 16th century, this

glorious church was, at the time, the largest outside of Rome and is considered by many to be one of the finest Renaissance buildings in Italy. Continuing up the hill into the town, we head via the Piazza Grande, Montepulciano's flamboyant main square. Perched on a 605 m high limestone ridge and encircled by Renaissance-era walls and fortifications, Montepulciano is a major producer of food and drink; renowned for its pork, cheese, 'pici' pasta, lentils, and honey and not least its wine. Connoisseurs consider its Vino Nobile among Italy's best. Before heading back to Pienza by local bus, we will have time to explore some of the underground cellars of Montepulciano with the option of enjoying a wine tasting. Today's 12 kilometre walk is expected to take around four-and-a-half hours with a total ascent of 350 metres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 6 Hike in the Val D'Orcia to hill-top Montalcino

Today we drive from Pienza to San Quirico along a panoramic road where some of the scenes from the film 'Gladiator' were filmed. San Quirico D'Orcia is a beautiful town that lies along the Via Francigena pilgrimage route and we will have some time here, before we set out on our walk. Descending from the town we cross the Asso river and follow undulating trails with wide open views of the classic Val D'Orcia. Vineyards surround us and the towers of Siena are visible on the Horizon. Our final destination is the hill-top town of Montalcino located at just over 500m. We have some free time to explore and the chance to enjoy a wine tasting of the famous Brunello di Montalcino wine. Today's 12 kilometre walk is expected to take around five hours with a total ascent of 450 metres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 7 Drive to Florence; orientation walk

Leaving the rolling hills of southern Tuscany behind we head for our final destination of the holiday, the fabulous city of Florence. The spiritual home of the Renaissance, Florence is considered by many to be one of the most beautiful cities in Italy. On arrival our leader will take us out on an orientation walk with the rest of the day left free to explore further. Highlights include the Ponte Vecchio, the oldest and most famous bridge in Florence and the only one that was not demolished during the German retreat of 1944 and the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore with its giant dome that dominates the city skyline. Early evening is the perfect time to walk up to the Piazzale Michaelangelo for a great view over the city.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 8 Trip ends in Florence

The trip ends this morning after breakfast in Florence. If you are flying from Pisa Airport today, Explore will organise for your transfer direct to the airport by public shuttle bus with a journey time of around 70 minutes.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 0 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Italy

Lunch £: 6.00 - 10.00

Dinner £: 10.00 - 14.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Italy

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00 - 4.00

Water £: 1.00 - 2.00

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Montalcino - Wine tasting €10.

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you may wish to tip your trip Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Foreign Exchange

Italy

ATM Availability: Major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance: Larger hotels and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques: Only in major towns. Please note, the exchange rate for cash and Travellers Cheques is poor.

Local Currency: Euro.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: GBP.

Where to Exchange: We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

Joining your Trip

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

EXPLORE!
The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

Explore Worldwide is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Travel Aware

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

Italy: Visas are not required by UK, E.U Nationals, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Vaccinations & Protection

Italy

Nothing required. Tetanus recommended. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Preparing for your Trip

DAILY DISTANCES

Day 2	7km	4hrs
Day 3	10km	3.5hrs
Day 4		
Day 5	12m	4.5hrs
Day 6	12km	5hrs

Maximum Altitude on Trek (m)

600

Trekking Details

Walks on 4 days for between 3.5 to 5 hours. You will be walking on a mix of 'strade bianche', compacted gravel roads typical of Tuscany, as well as farm trails and mule tracks on undulating hilly terrain.

Climate

Italy

April/May and October/November are pleasantly warm. June/September are the hottest months. Showers are common in Autumn.

Clothing

Take light and comfortable clothing that can be layered according to the temperature. July and August are the hottest months whilst early and late in the season go prepared with clothing to suit drops in temperature and possible showers. Light rainwear may be needed at any time of year, and a warm fleece/jacket is recommended for cooler evenings and nights.

Equipment

Bring walking poles if you use them, a water bottle, insect repellent, sunglasses and sunscreen. A torch is useful in case of powercuts and navigating dimly lit streets at night.

Footwear

Walking boots or shoes and comfortable trainers and/or sandals for sightseeing and relaxing.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Italy

Population: 60,681,514

Size of Country: 301,338 Sq KM

Major Language: Italian

Religion: Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Electric Supply & Plugs

Italy

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award-winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family-run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

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