EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Trails of Hidden Tuscany (TTY 2015 LA COSTA)

WALK & TREK

TOURDURAT
8
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Comfort: Standard
Tour Type: Centre Based
Trek Grade: Moderate
tour Code: TTY

Tour Highlights - Trails of Hidden Tuscany

- ✓ Agriturismo accommodation - enjoy traditional hospitality and home-cooked local cuisine at our farm-stay
- ✓ Garfagnana Valley - Discover the picturesque landscapes of Tuscany's hidden gem
- ✓ Varied walking - Hike trails in the Orecchiella National Park, Apennine Mountains and Serchio River Valley
- ✓ Cinque Terre - Walk the UNESCO World Heritage landscapes of the Tuscan Riviera
- ✓ Lucca and Pisa - Optional visits to two of Tuscany's most beautiful cities
- ✓ Monte Forato - Hike to this natural rock arch for views to the Mediterranean Sea

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	7 nights Standard Agriturismo
Included Meals:	7 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 4 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Pisa airport
End Point:	Tour ends: Pisa airport
Transport:	Train, Taxi, Minibus
Countries:	Italy

Trails of Hidden Tuscany

A centre based walking holiday exploring the landscapes of Tuscany's hidden gem - the Garfagnana Valley. Nestled between the 'marble mountains' of the Alpi Apuane and the rolling Apennines, this is an area of outstanding natural beauty. In a trip highlight we walk along the celebrated 'Cinque Terre' coastal path. Each evening we return to our comfortable agriturismo (farm stay) for some typical home-cooked Tuscan cuisine.

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.

Tour Comfort: 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: Moderate

For those who are fit and active, these moderate walks are normally on good paths and tracks at low altitude. Days may include some fairly demanding ascents and descents, so previous experience is preferable but not essential.

Your tour 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.

DAY 1 Join tour at Pisa airport; transfer to our agriturismo

Arriving in Pisa today, we transfer to our agriturismo which will be our base for the next seven nights. This family-run working farm offers us traditional and comfortable accommodation and is surrounded by the magnificent scenery of the Apennines and the Alpi Apuane. We can look forward to enjoying good, local food and excellent hospitality in the magnificent setting of the Garfagnana Valley.

Overnight: **Standard Agriturismo**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2 Hike in Pania Corfino Orecchiella National Park

After breakfast this morning, we drive up into the Apennines to Pruno, at an altitude of 1000 metres in the Orecchiella National Park. From here, we will hike via the Sella de Campaiana Pass to the summit of Pania Corfino, at an altitude of 1609 metres. Our route takes us through a beautiful landscape of beach forests. After enjoying stunning views and a picnic lunch at the summit, we retrace our steps back to the bus for our return to the agriturismo. Today's hike covers a distance of 12 kilometres in approximately six hours.

Overnight: **Standard Agriturismo**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3 Walk in the Garfagnana Valley

Much of the Garfagnana Valley is national parkland, a beautiful region of unspoilt wilderness that is home to deer, wild boar, martens and eagles. Sandwiched between the Alpi Apuane and the jagged spine of the Apennines, the Garfagnana is one of Tuscany's most visually impressive and staunchly traditional regions, where local customs and a love of fine food remain an important part of everyday life. Today we take a walk along the lower reaches of the valley, hiking through the villages and lush landscapes that line the banks of the Serchio River. We plan to cover a distance of 14 kilometres over approximately six hours.

Overnight: **Standard Agriturismo**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4 Free day to visit Lucca or Pisa by train or go mountain biking

Today has been left free for us to enjoy more of the highlights of this beautiful region at our own pace. Options include mountain biking and horse riding, or perhaps a day of gentle relaxation at our accommodation. Another alternative is to take a train ride across the Lucchese Plains to the picturesque city of Lucca, to explore its Romanesque churches and Renaissance architecture. A visit to Pisa is another possibility, with its famous leaning tower and beautiful Campo del Miracoli - stunning testaments to a time when the city was one of the Mediterranean's major maritime powers.

Overnight: **Standard Agriturismo**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Hike to the natural rock arch at Monte Forato

This morning we drive south into the Torrite Valley, where we will begin our walk near the small village of Fornovolasco at an altitude of 610 metres. From here, we will be able to see our destination, the impressive rock arch of Monte Forato at an altitude of 1220 metres. Ascending to the Petrociana Pass, we gain our first views of the coast and the surrounding marble quarries. Further on, there is a short ten-minute section that requires some easy scrambling, before continuing up towards the natural rock arch, resembling a huge window looking down on the coast. We plan to enjoy a picnic lunch, with fine views across to the Dead Man Formation and the Pania della Croce, before beginning our descent. At the end of the walk, there is the option to take a short tour of the Grotto del Vento (wind caves) before returning to our accommodation. Today's walk will take approximately five hours, covering a distance of 10 kilometres.

Overnight: **Standard Agriturismo**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 6 Cinque Terre coastal walk

Travelling by train this morning, we head to the stunning World Heritage coastline of the Cinque Terre region, where five tiny villages nestle amongst sheer cliffs to create one of the Riviera's most scenic delights. Starting in Rio Maggiore, a coastal trail takes us through the villages of Manarola, Corniglia and Vernazza, where we will stop for lunch. Here, we also have the opportunity to relax, perhaps enjoying a swim in the bay, or a stroll through the olive groves. For those who would prefer to opt-out of the two-and-a-half-hour walk between Corniglia and Vernazza, there is the option of a 40-minute boat ride between these two villages. Finishing our walk in Monterosso, we then travel back to Garfagnana on the train. Today, we will cover a distance of seven kilometres over a very sedate five hours, with plenty of time to explore the villages that we pass through.

Overnight: **Standard Agriturismo**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7 Appenine ridge walk to Tuscany's highest summit, Monte Prado (2054m)

Today, the plan is for us to enjoy a circular walk from the ski station at Casone, up along the main ridge of the Apennines, to the summit of Monte Prado. At an altitude of 2054 metres, this is the highest peak in Tuscany. On our circuitous route through the heart of the Apennines and Tuscan Emiliano Park, we will pass through beach forests and beautiful landscapes, offering wonderful alpine views. Should weather conditions prevent us from doing this walk, an alternative hike will be arranged to the 1858 metre summit of Pania della Croce in the Alpi Apuane Nature Reserve. Today's walking will cover a distance of approximately 14 kilometres over six hours.

Overnight: **Standard Agriturismo**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 8 Tour ends at Pisa Airport

Today, we depart the Garfagnana Valley and drive back to Pisa, a two-hour journey that ends at the city's airport, where our tour finishes.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

This tour stays at an agriturismo, where guesthouse accommodation is located on a working farm. Started in the 1950s as an initiative to reverse the closing down of small non-profitable farms, Italy's agriturismo movement encouraged farmers to redevelop their properties for paying guests by converting parts of the farm such as old barns and outhouses, into guest accommodation to supplement their agricultural income.

'La Costa' is located in the centre of the small medieval village of La Villa. The property dates back to medieval times and is said to have origins back to the 12th century as an Ospedale or rest stop on one of the area's trade route. The main house later became a convent. This property enjoys magnificent views of the surrounding oak and chestnut woods and across to the mountains of the Alpi Apuane and is surrounded by lovely gardens with plenty of quiet areas to sit and read. The outdoor swimming pool overlooks the village and surrounding countryside. In the main building, there's a communal area with a lounge to relax in as well as the main dining area where WiFi can be accessed. The 11 rooms at La Costa are all different and have been simply furnished in the traditional Tuscan style with antique furniture and tastefully decorated in pastel tones. Rooms are set up in the style of an apartment, with each accommodating two people in a double/twin bedroom with TV, en suite bathroom and private kitchen.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 breakfasts, 4 lunches,4 dinners included in the price of this tour. 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 Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour 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 £: 8 - 10

Dinner £: 15.00 - 20.00

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

Water £: 1.00

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

Bike Hire - €20 adults, €15 childrens bikes
Horse Trekking - €20 p.p. an hour for guided horse treks.
Day Trip to Lucca/Pisa - Train from €12 return, Leaning tower €15, Pisa cathedral €3.50, bike hire in Lucca €2.50 per hour.
Day Trip to Florence - €8 each way on train, 2.5hrs each way.

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 Tour

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.

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.

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

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 joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip from 01 January 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit www.explore.co.uk/insurance. Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited. who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the the FCA's website www.fca.gov.uk or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

Visa Information

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.
All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

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 Tour

Trekking Details

This is a 5-day trek with individual day-walks of between 5 and 6 hours. We have graded this trip as moderate.

Climate

Italy

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

Clothing

July and August are the hottest months, but early and late in the season go prepared with clothing to suit drops in temperature and the showers. You'll need your swimming gear, light rainwear may be needed at any time of year, and a warm fleece/jacket is recommended for cooler evenings and nights.

Equipment

A water bottle, sunhat and high factor sunscreen are all essential. You may also wish to bring cycle helmets with you for the mountain biking. A torch is useful in case of powercuts/ emergencies.

Footwear

Comfortable walking boots, trainers and sandals.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece and a daysac.

Luggage allowance on tour: 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 & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one 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, elephant, 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.

Our commitment to the environment

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 and traditional, 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), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

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

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

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

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 LicenceÂ granted by the Civil Aviation Authority.Â 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 2014 and 31st December 2015.

Tour 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: 2015 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2015. 2016/17 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2016.

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