EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Active Tuscany! (TMA 2015)

MULTI-ACTIVITY

TOURDURAT
8
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Comfort: Standard
Tour Type: Centre Based
tour Code: TMA

Tour Highlights - Active Tuscany!

- ✓ Castelnuovo di Garfagnana - Seven nights at a traditional agriturismo
- ✓ Garfagnana Valley - Explore the stunning Tuscan countryside by bike, kayak, canyoning and on foot
- ✓ Lucca - A chance to visit one of Tuscany's most beautiful cities
- ✓ The Cinque Terre - Walk the UNESCO World Heritage landscapes of the Tuscan Riviera
- ✓ Orecchiella National Park - Cycle ascent of Pania del Corfino

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	7 nights Standard Agriturismo
Included Meals:	7 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 5 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Pisa airport
End Point:	Tour ends: Pisa airport
Transport:	Train, Minibus, Bicycle
Countries:	Italy

Active Tuscany!

This energetic trip explores Tuscany's hidden gem - the Garfagnana Valley. We combine varied outdoor activities with time to relax by the pool at our lovingly restored Tuscan villa. Walk the 'Cinque Terre' coastal path, kayak on a mountain lake, cycle on the ancient city walls of Lucca and don wetsuits for canyoning a mountain river. At the end of each day we return to our homely agriturismo and enjoy home-cooked Tuscan cuisine. All equipment is provided and no previous experience is necessary.

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.

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.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour Pisa. Drive to Castelnuovo di Garfagnana

On arrival in Pisa we drive on to our accommodation near Castelnuovo di Garfagnana, where we spend the next seven nights. Set in the beautiful and lush Serchio River Valley, we'll be staying in a converted agriturismo, surrounded by the magnificent scenery of the Apennines and the Alpi Apuane. We can expect to try some delicious local fare during our stay here and this evening we enjoy a traditional dinner, sampling for ourselves some of the food and wine for which this region is justifiably famous.

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

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2 Tree climbing and zip wire course. Kayak on Lake Vagli

This morning we head by bus to San Romano and Buffardello Park, to spend the morning climbing trees. Set amongst two and a half hectares of forest in the heart of the Garfagnana, this unique adventure park affords the opportunity to enjoy this woodland setting from the air, with a range of activities including swinging beams, suspension bridges, nets, ropes and obstacles. On arrival you will be kitted out with all the necessary safety equipment and instructed in its use by trained instructors. This afternoon we take a short bus ride to the beautiful Lake Vagli where we take to the water, in double seated kayaks, to explore the lovely setting. The lake is home to an abundance of blue herons and other birdlife and our kayaking adventure (2/3hrs) is an ideal opportunity to take in this serene setting from the unique perspective of its tranquil waters.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3 Canyoning in the Val di Torrite

Driving down to the Val di Torrite after breakfast, we spend the day discovering the rivers and canyons of Garfagnana with local expert guides. Kitted out in wet suits, we'll walk, scramble, swim and abseil through the canyons, taking in waterfalls and swimming holes. Full briefing and equipment will be provided and the day caters to all levels of expertise.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4 A chance to visit Pisa and Lucca by bike

Today is free to spend as you wish. You may decide to explore something of the area’s cultural highlights, with a trip to the cities of Lucca and Pisa. Travelling by bus or train you can head to the old Roman colony of Lucca, set on the Lucchese Plain and today a fascinating mixture of terracotta roofs, Romanesque churches, ancient Roman ruins and Renaissance architecture. Enclosed within city walls it is a delightful mix of narrow lanes and easy charm and there is the opportunity to hire bikes this morning to explore on two wheels. You may also decide to visit nearby Pisa, a city that is so much more than just its famous Leaning Tower. The Campo dei Miracoli (Field of Dreams), of which the Tower is but one part, also contains the Baptistry, Duomo and Camposanta. These, along with the churches and palazzi that make up the historic centre, belong to a period from the 11th to 13th centuries, 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 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. A coastal trail takes us through the villages of Manarola, Corniglia and Vernazza, where we will stop for lunch. There are options here to relax, perhaps take a walk through the olive groves, or even take the 40-minute boat ride to nearby Monterosso, our next port of call. Finishing our walk in Monterosso we then travel back to Garfagnana on the train.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6 Cycle ascent of Pania del Corfino

After breakfast we drive up into the Apennines to the Orecchiella National Park, where we begin the cycle ride up to the summit of Pania del Corfino (1,609 metres). Ascending from the start point at Foce di Terrarossa (1,000 metres) we begin by following a meandering track up Campaiana and then on to Bastardino (1,500 metres). On a good day the views from the peak stretch out across the entire Garfagnana Valley, whilst the scenic descent back down to our accommodation takes us through groves of chestnut forests. Total distance 42 kilometres, approximately six hours.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 7 Casone and Appenine Ridge walk

Weather permitting, the plan today is for us to walk from the ski station at Casone di Profecchia (1,300 metres), up along the main ridge of the Appenines to the summit of Monte Prado (2,054 metres), the highest peak in Tuscany. Set in the heart of the Appenines and the Tuscan Emiliano Park, this beautiful landscape provides us with beach forests and wonderful alpine views as we follow a circuitous route along the ridge and back down to Casone. Walking time will be approximately six hours (depending on stops).

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 8 Tour ends Pisa

This morning we depart Castelnuovo di Garfagnana and drive back to Pisa airport for the return flight.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Included Activities

By staying at the agriturismo, you not only get to enjoy an authentic rural Tuscany experience, but are also in a prime location for taking part in a range of activities. On this tour there should be something for everyone with activities ranging from the excitement of canyoning to the more sedate kayaking on Lake Vagli and walks through the Tuscan countryside.

Kayaking:
Our kayaking experience is perfect for beginners as we use stable flat-bottomed two-person kayaks, and our paddling is on the tranquil waters of Lake Vagli. The setting is stunning with the peaks of the Alpi Apuane in the background and an abundance of birdlife including blue heron to try and spot. A full safety briefing and training are given before we set off on our guided paddle around the lake.

Aerial Adventure Course:
The Buffardello Adventure course is set in 2.5 hectares of forest in the Garfagnana and is home to an exciting and unique aerial adventure course in the trees. Make your way along beams, zip wires and ropes, across suspension bridges, nets and other obstacles - it's a real challenge! On arrival you will be kitted out with all the necessary safety equipment and advised how to use it by trained instructors who will be on hand to supervise your enjoyment.

Walking/Trekking:
One of the most immediate and absorbing ways to discover the beautiful Tuscan countryside is on foot. Taking the train, we journey to the breathtakingly stunning UNESCO World Heritage listed Cinque Terre coast where you can walk as much or as little as desired along the well-marked coastal path. There's the chance to stop off at beaches along the way or complete sections of the walk by small ferry boat.

Canyoning:
Canyoning is an exciting experience which involves scrambling and clambering over rocks, swimming down plunging waterfalls through pools and abseiling in canyons - all in the company of expert guides. We try out this exhilarating adventure sport at the Levigliese Park in the Turrite Valley, exploring five different waterfalls and various routes over around two and a half hours.

Cycling:
On two wheels is a thrilling way to enjoy the mountains. We drive up into the Apennines to the Orecchiella National Park, where we begin the cycle ride up to the summit of Pania del Corfino (1,609 metres). Ascending from the start point at Foce di Terrarossa (1,000 metres) we begin by following a meandering track up Campaiana and then on to Bastardino (1,500 metres). Total distance cycled is approximately 42 kilometres and takes around 6 hours. Bike and helmet will be provided.

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

Started in the 1950's as an initiative to reverse the closing down of small non-profitable farms, Italy's agriturismo movement encouraged farmers to redevelop their properties by converting parts of the farm such as old barns and outhouses into guest accommodation to supplement their agricultural income. Most agriturismo's tend to farm local products such as honey, corn, farro or pearl barley, as well as many vegetables and fruits. Often located in areas of outstanding beauty, they provide a great way to experience life in rural Italy. Usually there's the chance to enjoy some traditional Italian family cooking and eat the delicious produce from the farm.

Our family-run agriturismo (working farm guesthouse) is surrounded by vineyards, fields and woodland yet still close to the centre of the small village of Villetta San Romano, and just seven kilometres from the regional centre, Castelnuovo di Garfagnana. The property enjoys magnificent views of the surrounding Garfagnana landscape of oak and chestnut woods and has a great view of the mountains of the Alpi Apuane range.

Guests are accommodated in both the main farm building (a former barn) and independent chalets which have been converted from the farm outhouse buildings. There are also two newly built wooden chalets. The location offers easy access to some of Northern Tuscany's finest walking, including trails leading directly from the farm, which can be used as well as a short walk to the local village and bar.

There are plenty of open terraces and patios equipped with tables and chairs where you can relax, and a beautiful wood burning stove for chillier evenings. The outdoor swimming pool looks out over the surrounding countryside. Known as a 'black pool', it contains environmentally friendly salt water. Sustainability is important to the agriturismo's owners. Solar panels are also in use and most of the firewood supply comes from sustainable sources. The communal dining area is located in the main villa along with a lounge and relaxing reading area, where wine can be sipped gazing at the glorious view from the farm. There are also facilities for games, such as ping pong and table football, that are located in games areas by the pool and the main villa.

Due to the nature of the property all the rooms and chalets at Le Casine are different and have been simply furnished with Tuscan antique furniture and are tastefully decorated. The chalets accommodate guests in independent apartments, each for two people. Some have private bathrooms whilst others share a bathroom between two apartments. The two double rooms in the main villa have private bathrooms and are next to the communal lounge and dining room.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 breakfasts, 4 lunches,5 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

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly you should allow approximately £15.00 for tips. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

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

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 when shorts and T-shirts should be all you need on most days, 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. Padded cycling shorts are highly recommeded.

Equipment

For the kayaking and canyoning the use of a life jacket is mandatory and must be worn at all times during the activity. An ability to swim is never the less essential.

For the mountain biking, aerial adventure course, canyoning and kayaking the use of a helmet is also mandatory.

Our local supplier reserves the right to adapt any activity to a safe level or length to suit the group dynamics.

For all water based activities it is requested that you bring along appropriate swimwear as well as a towel. It is also recommended that you wear light shoes suitable for getting wet through and that you carry a water bottle. Strong sunscreen protection, hat and sunglasses will also be required for all outdoor activities.

Kayaking:
Two-person flat bottomed kayaks, paddle, life jacket and helmet will be provided.

Aerial Adventure Course:
Helmet and harness are provided. Wear comfortable walking shoes or trainers.

Walking/Trekking:
Comfortable walking boots/shoes. You will also need a small backpack to carry any essentials including a water bottle and snacks. You may also wish to bring walking poles if you have these.

Canyoning:
Wet suit, life jacket and helmets are all provided.

Cycling:
A mountain bike and helmet will be provided, although if you already have your own cycle helmet at home we recommend that you bring this to ensure a proper fit. You may wish to bring cycling shorts, and we also recommend bringing comfortable footwear that is suitable for cycling.
We strongly advise that you bring your own helmet with you. Helmets can be provided locally but we cannot guarantee that these helmets meet EU standards

Footwear

Comfortable walking boots, trainers and sandals.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece and a daypack.

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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