

TUSCANY – SIENNA, SAN GIMIGNANO, MONTALCINO & MONTEPULCIANO 8-day / 7-night moderate to challenging small group guided cycling for those who enjoy wine



In the company of a small group of like-minded cyclists explore the region of Tuscany south of Florence on a cycling holiday that includes some of the finest wine regions of Italy as well as the fabulous Renaissance architecture. Cycle along a well-chosen route away from the maddening crowds and busy roads to see the wine region of Chianti where we can visit the top wine growers in Panzano, Greve and Radda in Chianti.

We also visit Brunello di Montalcino, and the Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, both granted DOCG (Dinominazione di origini controllata garantita) status. See San Gimignano, Montalcino and Montepulciano all stunning hill top towns and Siena with it's amazing scallop-shaped piazza del Campo, home to the world's most ridiculous horse-race, the Palio, wonder at the amazing cathedral, the Duomo and the huge di Medici tower overlooking the Campo, Siena.

We offer well-maintained bikes suitable for the terrain; carefully selected accommodation with a focus on regional cuisine; good wine and knowledgeable, experienced professional cycling guides. Our small groups of cyclists usually appreciate not just lots of fast kilometres – although the cycling is important - but in the scenery, the culture, the history and the wine and cuisine of some of the most spectacular cycling regions in Europe. And Italians welcome cyclists with respect and enthusiasm.

A guide is with you on the road and detailed route maps are provided. All baggage is carried from hotel to hotel, leaving you free to enjoy each day. These tours are recommended for anyone who is reasonably fit and they are ideal for more experienced cyclists, as our guides are often happy to accompany those who wish to do a few extra kilometres during free time.

Cost per person: AU\$2675 (including return local transfers as shown) Single room supplement AU\$535

Departs: 1st, 15th & 29th September 2012

Tours Includes: 7-nights in carefully selected hotels, 7-breakfasts & dinners, route notes, sightseeing, daily luggage transfers, support vehicle, cycle tour guide, quality multi-gearred bicycle hire and return transfers, from and back to Florence Santa Maria Novella railway station.

Cycling: Moderate to challenging routes - 39 to 60km per day - Tuscany offers some challenging hills with long climbs and fast descents. Inexperienced or beginner cyclist and week-end cyclist not used to multi-day rides with some steep hills are encouraged to train specifically for this terrain to enjoy this holiday. Extra rides (extensions and loop rides) may be available each day. Ask our staff for easier riding suggestions.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1. Saturday Arrival

Plan to arrive in Florence in the afternoon for the transfer to our first hotel near San Gimignano. In the evening we have the chance to meet and enjoy dinner and to relax out over a glass or two of local wine.

Day 2. Sunday - San Gimignano

Cycle 39 Km

We start our cycling holiday with a 5-km ride into San Gimignano for a look round before we head off into Chianti itself. Tonight's destination is the Villa le Barone in Panzano. During the afternoon we'll visit Tenuta Fontodi, one of Chianti's top producers, and we'll get our first introduction to the idea of the 'super-Tuscan' wines. These are a complicated result of Italian wine regulation and the national obsession with the flouting of rules.

Day 3. Monday - Chianti

Cycle 50 Km

Explore the heart of Chianti Classico, visiting its two beautiful and important wine towns, Greve-in-Chianti and Radda-in-Chianti. We visit vineyards in Greve before lunch and Radda after lunch before we arrive at the Casali della Aiola in the tiny hamlet of Vagliagli. Tonight we eat in the village restaurant.

Day 4. Tuesday - Siena

Cycle 44 Km

Leaving Chianti we visit Monteriggioni, a beautifully-preserved walled town that served as an advance warning outpost to alert Siena when Florence was on the warpath. After lunch we spend the afternoon cycling the main attraction, Siena! Siena itself is a delightful labyrinth built across three ridges and surrounded by a gargantuan wall. We have to be very cunning to approach the town avoiding traffic. This evening we stay at the Antica Torre.

Day 5. Wednesday - Tuscan Countryside

Cycle 44 Km.

We leave Siena by a similarly crafty route, and today we're cycling through the green and tranquil countryside of le Crete. This region is characterised by rolling hills, much less severe than we've been used to, and an unending blanket of vivid green. Our destination is Asciano where we'll stay at the Hotel Il Bersagliere. This quiet little town perfectly sums up this part of Italy. Once ruled by the Scialenghi counts, it was captured by Siena which then destroyed its fortress. It was then taken by Florence, before being taken once more by Siena.

Day 6. Thursday - Montalcino

Cycle 42 Km

A challenging ride today but a spectacular one. Leaving Asciano we cycle to the Abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore. A spectacular set of buildings in their own right, and a working monastery, the abbey houses important frescoes that tell the story of St Benedict. His life story, particularly his part in fighting the barbarian invaders under Totila in the 6th Century, is well worth the telling, and the key scenes are captured beautifully in these famous frescoes. Descending from the Abbey, we then face another climb to one of the most revered wine towns in Tuscany, Montalcino, home of the famous 'Brunello'. We'll visit the stunning 15th Century estate of Tenuta Argiano before arriving in Montalcino itself, where we will stay at the Hotel Il Giglio in the heart of the old town.

Day 7. Friday - Montepulciano

Cycle 60 Km

Another difficult but spectacular day. From Montalcino a relatively easy hop to the Abbey at Saint Antimo, where tarragon was first introduced into Europe by French monks. The least we can do is stop by to say thank you. We then visit Pienza, said to be the most perfectly-proportioned town in Tuscany, before our final destination, Montepulciano, the other famous wine town and home to the 'Vin Nobile'. We'll be introduced to these rich red wines by Elena Falvo at Avignonesi - one of the legends of Tuscan wine, the most prestigious estate we'll visit this week, and a real treat. Tonight we stay at the Hotel Il Marzocco, inside the old city walls.

Day 8. Saturday – Departure to Florence

Tour ends after breakfast in Montepulciano. Those with transfers will return to Florence Santa Maria Station.

These are just a few of the many small group guided or self-guided inn-to-inn cycling tours **Outdoor Travel** offer in Europe - including river rides from Passau to Vienna along the Danube or from Vienna to Budapest. Other cycling holiday destinations include several areas of Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Holland, Ireland, England and Scotland, Hungary, in the Czech Republic, New Zealand & Australia.

We also offer guided Bike & Barge cruises in many destinations including France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Italy, the Dalmation Coast of Croatia, the islands of Greece, the Lycian coast of Turkey, and Vietnam.

Contact Outdoor Travel direct for more details and reservations

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