



GUIDED WALKING HOLIDAYS IN EUROPE

2010

ITALY - THE TASTES OF UMBRIA

Monte Subasio, Norcia, Assisi, Monte Sibillini, Orvieto and Spoleto – small group walk with a mule

Departs: 29th May, 5th June, 12th June. Botanical Walk (ask for itinerary): 23rd - 30th June 2010
Walking: Moderate (with support) – from 7 to 17km per day
Cost: \$4170 per person (twin share) – Single rooms supplement on request
Includes: Airport transfers from / to Rome, quality hotel accommodation with en-suite bathrooms, all meals including wines and picnic lunches, expert guides and support crew including pack-mules or horses with muleteer, support vehicle, guided walking and excursions as shown.

This is a relaxing holiday of contrasts. Of guided walking with expert and knowledgeable guides, of slow-food and traditional regional cuisine – a chance to learn about Umbrian ingredients and cooking, of culture, history and art, and of sightseeing with time to explore some of the most fascinating towns and spectacular scenery in Europe.

These gentle ambles offer a moderate walking itinerary but they are far from strenuous. Pack animals carry the lavish picnics and plenty of refreshments. Our overnight stays are in small, charming hotel/restaurants, all with swimming pools and an emphasis on the very finest traditional regional cuisine. We take care choosing our walking trails; routes are neither too steep nor too arduous, threading through areas of spectacular beauty, history and tradition.



This is a week of guided walking through landscapes of great beauty and drama. The walking is stunning, healthy and moderately tiring. There are definitely hills but nothing that would make it too much of a task. The mules and horse are there to help on the tougher days and there is always the chance to take it easy and take an alternative or perhaps more challenging route.

Our hotels are carefully chosen to be the best available with the facilities we believe you need. You will stay for three-nights at Le Silve near Perugia and Monte Subasio; a charming sophisticated four-star hotel in its own 600-hectares of forest where pork and venison are reared. The bedrooms here are beautifully designed with fabulous views over the Subasian foothills. We then move to three-nights in the centre of the historic village of Norcia nestled at the foot of the Sibillini Mountains. The accommodation here is '*Felliniesque*' with a mass of action and a decor full of idiosyncrasies. Our last night is spent in four-star slightly modern splendour in Spoleto overlooking the 13th-century viaduct designed by Gattapone. The hotel's bedrooms offer spectacular view over the gorge.

Not only are good food, wine and walking on the week's menu but also some of the most beautiful works of Christian religious art that Italy has to offer. We visit Assisi and San Francesco to see the frescoes of Cimabue, Giotto, Simone Martini and Pietro Lorenzetti. We will also discover works by Perugino, Gozzoli and Pinturicchio.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

A relaxing holiday of contrasts, guided walking, slow-food, history, art, sightseeing, tradition



Suggested itinerary:

Day 1 We will meet you at the Fiumicino Airport in Rome at about 4.30pm and drive to the first hotel at Le Silve. Le Silve lies behind Assisi in the spectacular Monte Subasio woodlands overlooking Perugia.

The hotel has its own pigs and deer which it carefully nurtures much like an African nature park. With a beautiful marquee terrace and wonderfully placed swimming pool the hotel has a well deserved reputation for its cooking and wine cellar. We spend the first three nights here - in rural bliss - with a full program of guided walking planned.

Day 2 You awake to the beauty of the hillsides and a lovely breakfast. Our favourites are warm cornetti (croissants filled with a little *crema*), excellent coffee and of course orange juice from succulent local blood oranges. Our breakfast often include cheeses, salamis and cereals, biscotti and homemade jams and yoghurts at Le Silve.

After breakfast we move off on foot downhill through the oak forests with distant views of **Assisi** for the farmhouse of Ambrogio and Gentile. No mules yet as this is an easy gentle downhill walk (with just a few uphill sections). The farmhouse we arrive at is a totally rural **Slow Food** style affair with pigs, chickens, cows, sheep, and rabbits. It is all well ordered and totally self-sufficient. We will meet our local hosts Ambrogio and Gentile and picnic in the fields before having a demonstration by Gentile of how she makes traditional pasta with a rolling pin. In the afternoon there is a chance to relax in the beauty of Le Silve to read, swim or paint or a chance again to walk back through the valley below. *7km + optional 7km*

Day 3 After an early morning breakfast, we leave by car for Assisi and the great Christian masterwork: San Francesco. We will have a look at the outstanding fresco cycles attributed to Giotto of the beginning of 14th-century and then, in the lower church, spend some time on the magical chapel of San Martino painted by Simone Martini only ten years later. We will see instantly the difference between the Sienese and Florentine painting schools. Both majestically beautiful but one more concerned with a two dimensional surface and the beauty of line and expression and the other preoccupied with the sense of mass in space. We move on then by car for a walk to the pretty walled medieval village of Bevagna. Lunch here 'alla tavola'.

We take a walk after lunch to Montefalco visiting the fresco cycle of Benozzi Gozzoli hidden away in a tiny-whitewashed church. Return by car to Le Silve. Dinner in the beauty of floodlit Assisi. *13km*

Day 4 We travel to Spello prettily perched on the side of the whale back **Monte Subasio**. We will take a quick look at the delightful Pinturicchio frescoes in Santa Maria Maggiore before a wine tasting with one of the top wine agents of Italy Roberto Angelini. Here we will taste some absolutely delicious Italian wines with some regional delicacies and spend a wonderful time idling into lunch in the street sunshine. We will then continue by car after lunch to the drama of the **Sibillini Mountains** famous for truffles, pork and nefarious necromancy!

Today we will walk into the 13th-century walled village of Norcia nestled at the foot of the mountains. There will be time in the evening to wander in the peaceful piazza before dining at the Grotta Azzurra. We stay for the next three-nights at the Grotta Azzurra Hotel in the centre of this tiny town. It is a wonderful ancient hotel with true Fellini character: lots of action, "Mama mia!" and "Madonna!" and doors flapping to and fro. We have a great welcome from Anna and Carlo Bianconi. This, in our view is the perfect place to start the Sibillini experience! *9km*

Day 5 You awake to the peel of the church bells. After breakfast delights we leave behind the curtain wall of Norcia and meet Roberto our muleteer and the mules to set off for the mornings walk through the beautiful beech woods to Sant' Eutizio. This small abbey was a founding stone of the Benedictine movement and we will eat lunch in the tiny *ristorante* opposite. After lunch we follow an easy long walk downhill with beautiful views towards the charming village of Visso. We will hopefully see many butterflies before we arrive for the joys of Visso gelato. In **Norcia** dinner is at the Beccofino restaurant in the Piazza where Signora Benafica has been cooking excellent Umbrian cuisine for forty years. 17km

Day 6 Our last breakfast at the Grotta Azzurra and a wonderful day of walking to the glacial crater of Castelluccio. This is indeed a marvellous sight. We are quite high here at about 1450-metres but the climbing is stunning and not too steep. The scrub hugs the hills like baize to a billiard table and spinneys of beech are scattered like sporadic limpets on a rock. The wild flowers here in season are amazing; indeed the glacial crater can be turned into one of the great flower wonders of the world with a plethora of stunning colour hitting you as you walk over the top of the peak. Poppies, lentil flowers, meadow clary, orchids and peonies are high on the list of favourites even the flowering thistles are lovely!

We will walk up with Roberto and the mules, before a well-earned drink in Castelluccio. Then a delicious Italian picnic and a walk on another circuit to perhaps through the stunning carpets of ox-eye daisies, poppies, cornflowers and innumerable other flowers. Next is a lesson on how to make tortellini in the stone vaulted kitchen with the head chef of the Grotta Azzurra. Dinner tonight is at the Grotta Azzurra. 17km

Day 7 We leave the beauty of the Sibillini mountains and drive to the beautiful abbey of San Pietro in Valle built by a Lombard Emperor who saw the light. We visit the abbey before driving into **Spoletto**, the ancient city republic which Shelley called '*the most romantic city ever*'.

We will lunch in one of the squares of Spoleto and take an afternoon stroll or a siesta or shopping before dinner.

Day 8 Today we visit the magnificent city of **Orvieto**, which sits like the Acropolis in Athens in majesty on a dramatic rock outcrop dominated by its towering Gothic cathedral. This is the way to finish the week and we lunch opposite the cathedral before continuing to Rome in the vehicles. .



For those who prefer of course there is always the option to stay a couple of days in Rome and we would be delighted to help with that itinerary.

Please note: This itinerary is subject to change according to local conditions. All walking distances shown are approximate and if necessary shorter or longer can be arranged depending on the group's interest. Other Walking Party tours are available walking in the Lot or Dordogne Valleys or Pyrenees in France or in Suffolk in England. Cooking weeks and truffle weekends are also available in spring or autumn in 2009.

Contact OUTDOOR TRAVEL for more details, brochures and reservations

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