

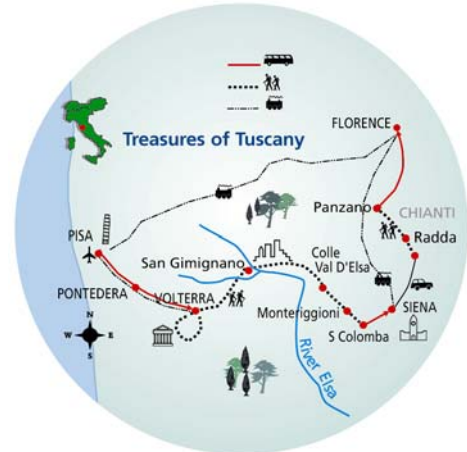
### Italy: Treasures of Tuscany 7-day tour

Tour code: JTT7

Revised: Nov 07

This walk threads together some of the most attractive towns and villages in Tuscany in an eloquent procession. It is a perfect introduction to the region and for people who love museums and galleries, Gothic and Romanesque architecture, there is plenty to see and do. You have plenty of time for attraction visits on most days. However the emphasis of the tour is to enjoy the countryside, the rolling vineyards, the poppies in spring and the wild cyclamen in autumn. Most of all, many of the views have changed little for hundreds of years.

This is a relatively gentle tour that is suitable for those who are new to walking tours. More experienced walkers will also enjoy the classic Tuscan landscape of small hills, olive groves and vineyards. We pass close to the classic wine-growing region of the Vernacchi and Chianti and visit the historic towns of Volterra, San Gimignano (with its famous towers), Colle Val d'Elsa and Siena. There is also an opportunity to visit Pisa with its famous attractions and if you decide to extend the tour by a day or two you can visit the celebrated city of Florence. The walking takes in classic Tuscan landscapes and as most days are not too long, you will have plenty of time to sightsee, or picnic.



#### Travel Information

**Arrival:** The tour starts in Volterra, which is reached by bus from Pisa, the nearest city with an international airport. The bus ride takes 2 and half hours, with a change en route at Pontedera. The bus service runs 4 times per day (not on Sundays). Details are given in our route notes.

Clients could also take the train from Pisa or Florence to Pontedera and continue their journey to Volterra by bus. On Sundays it is necessary *either* to take a taxi from Pontedera (or from Pisa) to Volterra – 2007 price for this was around AU\$270 for up to four people plus luggage *or* to travel by a different route, taking the train from Pisa or Rome to Cecina, then a branch line train (or railway bus) to Salinas de Volterra and finally a bus to Volterra itself.

The restaurant of our preferred hotel in San Gimignano is normally closed on Tuesdays, so this is another reason for not starting the tour on a Sunday. Land-only clients arriving via Rome airport should change trains at Roma Termini and continue by train to Cecina (on Sundays, for branch line to Salinas de Volterra) or to Pisa or Pontedera (for bus from Pontedera to Volterra). Seat reservations are advisable on trains between Rome and Cecina/Pisa. There is also a three times daily (including Sundays) bus service from Florence to Volterra via Colle Val d'Elsa where you change buses.

**As an extra service:** we can normally arrange an economical transfer to the start of the walk from either Pisa (70 Euros) directly to Volterra, or from Certaldo (65 Euros) that is on the railway via Pontedera. Please note that this transfer is an additional cost and should be pre booked.

**End of Tour:** The tour ends after breakfast on day 7 in Siena. Train, changing trains en route at Empoli to Pisa. The train fare from Siena to Pisa is around £6). For land only clients

who are flying out from Rome airport it is possible to travel by train from Siena to Rome (changing trains en route at Chiusi) without returning to Pisa. Seat reservations are available, but only essential on certain trains between Chiusi and Roma Termini.

**Season:** April to November

#### Level of Difficulty

**Grade:** Easy to Moderate. There are nonetheless some steep and quite long hills, some fairly steep but short descents and some paths with rough gravel, stony and occasionally muddy surfaces.

**Fitness:** High standard of fitness is not necessary but clients should be able to walk for up to 6 hours a day in hot sun on dusty or stony tracks.

**Waymarking:** Part of the route is waymarked with red and white or blue and yellow signs; elsewhere it is necessary to follow the route descriptions provided together with the maps. Most clients find the route finding quite straightforward.

#### General Information

**Baths:** it is not normal for your room to have a bath, the main reason being that it takes up a lot of space, some hotels/guesthouses may have a separate room in the house where a bath is available to guests, but in the main it is showers.

**Breakfasts:** in countries such as Italy usually consist of coffee and croissant; sometimes, bread rolls, yoghurts, ham and cheese as well. If you want more for breakfast then we

would suggest you purchase some food the night before. It is important for you to tell us if you have any dietary requirements when you book your holiday so that we can inform everyone that you are staying with.

**Single Supplements:** are payable on most of our tours. 1) The single supplement guarantees the privacy of your own room, however, rooms can at times be small and in some places may not enjoy the same facilities as double/twin rooms. 2) You are not just paying a supplement on the room but the luggage transfer costs you are paying in full. The cost of moving 1 bag or 2 bags etc remains the same. On some of our trips it is possible to reduce the cost of the single supplement if you happen to be a 3<sup>rd</sup> person travelling, or have chosen a date when other clients are booked.

**Language:** Note that you will not necessarily come across people speaking English. Remember you have left home to find things different bring a phrase book, try to learn a bit of Italian!

**Luggage:** When staying in hotels, sometimes your luggage may have been taken to your room awaiting your arrival. However don't be surprised if your luggage is waiting for you to take it up to your room please politely ask someone if you need assistance.

## Accommodation & Meals

Accommodation is on a bed and breakfast basis in 2-3 star hotels, and at an Agriturismo or guesthouse with en suite facilities when available. Two evening meals are included: Normally one in Volterra and the other in San Gimignano. The other four evening meals can readily be obtained locally without pre-booking. Night 5 (in or near Monteriggioni) is normally spent either at a small unclassified guesthouse with private facilities or at an unclassified agriturismo (farm guest house). Picnic lunches are not included in the tour price, but materials for picnics can be purchased in each of the towns and villages where you stay or pass through. As the walking days are quite short clients may on some occasions reach their destination in time for a late lunch. According to Italian Law, all hotels must close their restaurants on one night each week, so it is not uncommon for clients to be given a voucher to eat dinner at a nearby restaurant, or be given the equivalent amount of money to eat in a restaurant of their own choice.

*(Subject to variation. This is a very popular route and we sometimes have to use alternatives to the hotels listed below. The alternatives are however of a comparable standard).*

□ **Nights 1 & 2:** These are spent at Volterra, one of the oldest cities in Italy, in a welcoming and comfortable 3 star hotel, which is in fact a restored villa from the late 17th. It is situated in a peaceful area near the medieval town-wall. The hotel commands a magnificent panoramic view. All rooms have their own shower and toilet. The hotel also boasts an outdoor swimming pool (often closed early and late in the season).

□ **Night 3:** We stay at San Gimignano where our first choice is a 3-star hotel set in the pulsating heart of this town of towers, little changed for 600 years.

□ **Night 4:** This night is spent in the town of Colle di Val d'Elsa, normally in an historic building dating from the 15th century in the old Upper Town (Colle Alta). It is a 3-star hotel with 32 en suite rooms.

□ **Night 5:** Either a small guesthouse/room rental within the mediaeval walled village of Monteriggioni; once the day-visitors have gone it is a haven of peace; the rooms (limited in number) are simply furnished, but all have private facilities; or (if all the rooms in the guesthouse within the walls are fully booked) at an *agriturismo* (farm guesthouse) 2km away from the walled village along a white road. We

provide full instructions on how to walk from the walled village to the *agriturismo* and back.

□ **Night 6:** In the lively and sophisticated city of Siena we stay at a small, comfortable town hotel (3 stars) in rooms with en suite facilities, telephone, and TV

## Outline Itinerary

□ **Day 1:** Arrive Volterra via Pisa. Either a bus or train is taken from Pisa to Pontedera, where you change onto a local bus service (not Sundays) to Volterra. Journey from the airport to the first hotel is not included in the tour price. The combined train and bus fare is around 13 Euro (£8) per person. It is possible to reach Volterra by public transport on Sundays, but by a more circuitous and expensive route.

□ **Day 2:** By road to Pignano, walk back to Volterra. (8.75 miles/14 km) 5 hours. One option for today, involving about four hours walking, is a short bus or taxi ride (1 Euro approx by bus, not included in tour price) to the hamlet of Pignano, from where it is an easy walk back to Volterra, mostly along white roads which follow a broad winding and panoramic ridge. Halfway through the walk there is normally the opportunity to stop for a welcome drink at a retreat centre, from where you can contemplate exploring the steep and somewhat overgrown Monte Voltraio- a mysterious attraction on account of its peculiar truncated cone shape. A paleontologist's dream as the ground appears to be scattered with fossils. On a hot day the less adventurous will be more inclined to continue on to Volterra. Overnight Volterra.

□ **Day 3:** Pignano to San Gimignano. 4 - 5 hours' walking (8 miles/12km). The hotel arranges for a taxi to take you to the starting point of the walk at Bivio di Castelvecchio (taxi fare included in price of holiday). Alternatively the taxi at yesterday's starting point, Pignano, can drop you off from where it is about 30 minutes' pleasant walking to Bivio di Castelvecchio. This extra half hour would enable you to cover the whole distance between Volterra and San Gimignano on foot in the course of days 2 and 3. You walk between vineyards and through oak woods with wild cyclamen in flower in autumn and fine views of the old ruined fortifications of Castelvecchio. You continue to the pretty village of San Donato and the small hamlet of Montauto with fine views of San Gimignano, before continuing by farm track and / or road to San Gimignano, known as the town of the beautiful towers and has dominated the hills south of the Elsa Valley since Etruscan times. There is much to explore in this small town, in particular the narrow streets and squares of the medieval quarter. Overnight San Gimignano.

□ **Day 4:** San Gimignano to Colle Val d'Elsa. 3.5 hours walking (10 miles/ 16km). You follow a white road along a broad panoramic ridge with fine views back to the towers of San Gimignano. On either side are vineyards (source of the local dry white Vernaccia), olive groves and cypress avenues. Later we climb up through shady woods to the small village of Montecchio and across level fields to Borgatello, and on into Colle Val d'Elsa, where the fascinating old town occupies the crest of a ridge high above the valley of the Elsa. Overnight Colle Val d'Elsa.

□ **Day 5:** Colle Val d'Elsa to Monteriggioni. 6 hours' walk (14 miles / 23km). After walking out of Colle through the suburbs, and then through attractive undulating woodland following at one point a beautiful clear stream, you cross a broad and mostly treeless agricultural plain, with farming hamlets such as Scarna and Acquaviva. As you approach the base of the densely wooded Montagnola Hills you reach the attractive village of Strove, with the nearby manor house of Castel Petraia. At the village of Abbadia a Isola you should stop to see the abbey church. Eventually you arrive at the

base of the little hill, clad with vineyards, on which is built the mediaeval walled village of Monteriggioni with its famous watchtowers. Overnight *either* within the walled village Monteriggioni *or, if* the very limited accommodation in the village itself is fully booked, at an agriturismo (farm guest house) 2km away along a white road. In the latter case we provide full directions on how to reach the agriturismo.

□ **Note that on escorted departures** due to the limited accommodation in the village and depending on reservations, you may, but not necessarily, have two nights in Siena instead. In this case you will be transferred to Monteriggioni directly and do tomorrow's walk today, giving you a whole extra day in Siena compared to the self guided programme. For those who do not want to spend a whole day in the city there is the opportunity to have a good escorted half day walk to the south of Siena..

□ **Day 6:** Monteriggioni to S. Columba. 4 hours' walk (8 miles /12.8km). From Monteriggioni we walk uphill past farmland and descend through woods to the small village of Funghaia. We continue on small peaceful farm tracks through farms to the village of San Colomba. A magnificent villa, now almost derelict and a beautifully frescoed church, is situated here. From here we can take a taxi or bus into Siena (not included in the tour price). After setting in to the hotel you will find all the famous places of this city within walking distance, with the Palazza IL Campo being the famous centre of this medieval city. There are many

## Escorted departures 2008

Please note as mentioned in the text: on the escorted departures, night: 5 will be spent either at Monteriggioni or in Siena, this depends on the group size.

The walking itinerary will be the same as on the self-guided tour, except if you are staying in Siena

**EJTT 14** Wed 14 May – Tue 20 May

**EJTT08** Mon 8 Sep – Sun 14 Sept

**EJTT06** Mon 6 Oct – Sun 12 Oct

These 3 departures are 7 days guided trips terminating in Siena with the possibility of adding on the 4-night Chianti (Siena - Florence) extension self-guided as per JTT11. Many customers have chosen this combination. The extension starts with a transfer from the hotel in Siena on the morning of Day 7.

museums, churches, and the huge Pisan Romanesque and Gothic cathedral. You can easily get lost in the warren of streets, all arranged into areas called 'Contrada', as they have done for hundreds of years and where the Siense population gain their group loyalties and rivalries. Overnight Siena.

□ **Day 7:** Return to Pisa by train, changing at Empoli (fare around £6 per person, not included in price).

## Extra nights

Siena is certainly a beautiful city, yet despite its size, it has something of a village feel to it. There is so much to see and so many good places to eat that it is worth an extra day. We can arrange extra nights here or in Florence which is only about an hour away by bus.

It is possible to include extra nights in any of the towns en route or in Florence or Lucca or Pisa. If you would like to do more walking, then go to the "Cinque Terre" a beautiful coastal region centred at Monterosso. Details and prices on request.

**On Self Guided Tour we provide you with Route notes, maps at 1:25,000 scale.**