

**OUTDOOR TRAVEL**

THE ACTIVE HOLIDAY COMPANY

# EUROPEAN CYCLING HOLIDAYS

## TUSCANY – SIENA SAN GIMIGNANO MONTALCINO & MONTEPULCIANO

8-day / 7-night moderate to challenging small group guided cycling for those who enjoy good 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-growing regions of Italy as well as fabulous Renaissance architecture. Cycle along a well-chosen route away from the maddening crowds and busy roads to see the wine region of Chianti and the wine villages of 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 its amazing scallop-shaped Piazza del Campo, home to the world's most ridiculous horse-race, the Palio; 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 cycling guides. Our small groups of cyclists usually appreciate not just lots of kilometres – although the cycling is important – but the scenery, the culture, the history and the wine and cuisine of some of the most spectacular cycling regions in Europe. And you will be surprised how Italian drivers welcome cyclists with respect and enthusiasm.

A guide is with you on the road and detailed route maps are provided. Your 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 from:** \$3265 per person twin-share

Single room supplement from \$735

**Departs:** Ask for details

**Includes:** 7 nights' accommodation in carefully selected hotels, 7 breakfasts, 7 dinners, route notes, sightseeing, daily luggage transfers, cycle tour guide, quality bikes, and return transfers, from Florence train station, and back to Chiusi train station.

**Not included:** Lunches, drinks, entrance fees at local attractions, personal expenses

**Grading:** Moderate to challenging routes - 40 to 60km per day. Tuscany offers some challenging hills with long climbs and fast descents. Inexperienced, beginner and week-ender cyclists 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:** *please note the weather and road conditions, group interests and the decision of the tour guide will influence the final route taken each day*

### **Day 1: Arrive Florence & transfer to San Gimignano**

Plan to arrive in Florence in the afternoon for the transfer to our first hotel in San Gimignano. We aim to leave Florence train station at 4.00pm for the 1-hour drive. In the evening we have the chance to meet, explore this beautiful town, enjoy dinner, and relax over a glass or two of the local wine, Vernaccia di San Gimignano.

### **Day 2: San Gimignano to Panzano**

**cycling @ 40km**

We set off from San Gimignano into the heart of Chianti itself. Tonight's destination is Panzano, where we stay in a boutique family-run hotel in a former winery. On our way into Chianti we begin to discover how beautiful Tuscany really is, especially when we stop for lunch in the charming hamlet of Barberino Val d'Elsa.

### **Day 3: Chianti**

**cycling @ 51km**

We explore the heart of Chianti Classico, visiting its two beautiful and important wine towns, Greve-in-Chianti and Radda-in-Chianti. After a beautiful descent to Greve, where we lunch in a *cantine*, we ride onwards to Radda then have an exhilarating ride to Vagliagli and the Certosa di Pontignano, a magnificent old Abbey, now owned by the University of Siena. We stay tonight in a villa surrounded by vines and olive groves.

### **Day 4: Siena**

**cycling @ 45km**

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 to the main attraction, Siena! Siena itself is a delightful labyrinth built across three ridges and surrounded by a gargantuan wall. We have a cunning route that avoids traffic as we approach town. This evening we stay in another villa, this one with a garden courtyard, just outside the Porta Romana.

### **Day 5: Tuscan Countryside**

**cycling @ 45km**

We leave Siena by a similarly crafty route, and we cycle through the green and tranquil countryside of le Crete. This region is characterised by rolling hills, and an unending blanket of vivid green. Our destination is Asciano where we stay in a simple, comfortable guesthouse. 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. Luckily it's more peaceful now!

### **Day 6: Montalcino**

**cycling @ 42km**

A challenging but spectacular ride today. Leaving Asciano we cycle to the Abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore. A spectacular set of buildings, and a working monastery, the abbey houses important frescoes that tell the story of St Benedict. The key scenes of his life story, particularly his part in fighting the barbarian invaders under Totila in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, are depicted beautifully in these famous frescoes. We descend from the abbey then face another climb to one of the most revered wine towns in Tuscany, Montalcino, home of the famous *Brunello di Montalcino*. We visit the stunning 15<sup>th</sup> Century estate of Tenuta Argiano before arriving in Montalcino itself, where we stay in the heart of the old town in an old palazzo which has been a hotel since 1898.

### **Day 7: Montepulciano**

**cycling @ 60km**

Another ambitious but rewarding ride today. From Montalcino a magnificent downhill ride into the Val d'Orcia. We lunch in Pienza, said to be the most perfectly-proportioned town in Tuscany. Our final leg, still on deserted roads, takes us to Montepulciano, home to the *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano*, but on our way we hope to have an opportunity to taste these rich red wines at Avignonesi in Monticchiello. Tonight we stay inside the old city walls in a 3-star hotel where many rooms have a balcony or terrace.

### **Day 8: Departure day**

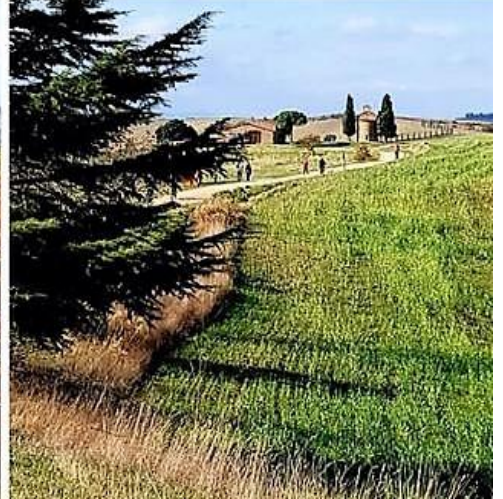
After breakfast transfer to Chiusi-Chianciano Terme, for morning departures to Florence or Rome.

**Outdoor Travel** offer group guided or self-guided inn-to-inn cycling tours in many areas of Europe including rides from Passau to Vienna along the Danube or from Vienna to Budapest, also in several areas of Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Holland, Ireland, England and Scotland, Hungary, Switzerland, Austria, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, in the Czech Republic, Vietnam, USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

We also offer guided **Bike & Barge** cycling cruises in many destinations including France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Italy, Austria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Romania, Greece and Vietnam.

### **Contact Outdoor Travel for details and reservations:**

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