



DISCOVER SOUTHERN TUSCANY 2018 - 8 DAYS

*A rich and relaxing tour for those who want to see the best of southern Tuscany. Stay in beautiful Pienza, location for films such as the "English Patient" and explore the local area – its villages, cellars and markets. Stay in the hill top town of Cortona, setting for the book and film "Under the Tuscan Sun" and follow the footsteps of Saint Francis. Explore the medieval town of Siena home of the exciting bareback horserace – the Palio. If you wish, become an **artist for a while**. **Highlight: A cooking lesson in a local home.***

DEPARTURES 2018: Monday to Monday – 06 August 2018. Other dates can be requested.

MEETING POINT: Chiusi Railway station at 2.00 p.m. on Day 1. Chiusi is approx. 1.5 hours north of Rome and on the main north/south line from Rome and other major Italian cities.

DAY 1 Monday Arrive Chiusi & transfer to Pienza (D)

You will be met at Chiusi, a major stop on the main Italian North/South Railway Line. Transfer to your accommodation in Pienza, and make this historic town your own for five days. Perhaps take a relaxing walk along the high town walls looking over the great Val d'Orcia and the beautiful Mont Amiata beyond. Discover the exquisite Cathedral in its charming little square, the Palazzo Piccolomini and familiarise yourself with the range of shops specializing in linens, antiques, wrought iron and artisan crafts. This tiny early Renaissance town was created for Pope Pius II by famous architect Bernardo Rossellino and is also known for its Pecorino cheese, made from the milk of sheep which graze on the local herb-scented grasses. After meeting your fellow travellers, enjoy a welcome dinner in a characteristic restaurant.

ACCOMMODATION: PIENZA

DAY 2 Tuesday – Pienza-Siena (B, L)

Awake to bells. Siena calls. We travel through the famous 'crete' country with its stretches of rolling clay hills, cypress pines and white gravel roads. Photo stop anyone?

In Siena we join a local guide for a tour of this beautiful rose-gold city which is totally Medieval Gothic in character, visiting the fabulous square 'Il Campo' where an ancient bareback horse race runs twice a year, plus its extraordinary Cathedral and other sights. Siena is protected under international agreements as a unique town.

After a lunch of local specialties on the Campo you'll have time to further explore the town and perhaps take advantage of the excellent shopping opportunities it offers.

ACCOMMODATION: PIENZA

DAY 3 Wednesday Village Cooking Lesson (B, L)

Today we get to know the locals. After a slow start we take the back roads to the pretty village of Montisi, set among olive trees. Here we learn the secrets of 'pici', a local hand-made pasta. At lunch we enjoy the results of our own work 'pici con aglione' and other specialties. There will be time to explore the village itself and perhaps join the locals for a coffee in the bar.

For those who are interested there is the option, on request, to join a local artist in her studio. As an experienced teacher this artist can take you through the steps of creating your own masterpiece. This evening is free to enjoy Pienza.

ACCOMMODATION: PIENZA

DAY 4 Thursday Montepulciano Market Day (B)

It's Market Day in Montepulciano, the highest hilltop town of the region. Your chance to rub shoulders with local housewives as they choose their weekly provisions and household goods. You may wish to shop for a picnic to eat whilst watching the sunset from the town walls in Pienza.

Montepulciano is the highest town in southern Tuscany. We leave the market to drive to the top of the town and its impressive Cathedral set in a square of fine buildings, the location of many films. We take a walk through the square and down the little streets and alleys with their ancient wine cellars, artisans' workshops and linen stores to the charming Art-Deco Caffè Poliziano. The café makes its own exquisite cakes and pastries and serves fine aperitifs. Let's enjoy our aperitif and the splendid view over the valley its lakes of Chiusi, Montepulciano and Trasimeno.

You'll have time after our aperitif to continue your exploration of the town. Montepulciano has a range of interesting shops and little eating places. Evening free.

ACCOMMODATION: PIENZA

DAY 5 Friday Frescoes, Wines and an ancient Abbey (B, L)

We take the scenic road to the ancient and most unusual monastery Monte Oliveto Maggiore set in an extraordinary landscape in the Tuscan 'crete', the clay hills. Monte Oliveto is still run by the Benedictine order that produce wines, herbal oils and restore antique books. A particular feature of the monastery is a series of beautiful frescoes tracing the life and miracles of San Benedetto. The frescoes were painted by Luca Signorelli and Giovanni Bazzi better known as 'Sodoma'.

Afterwards we visit the hilltop town of Montalcino, famous for its Brunello wines. A feature of Montalcino is 'La Rocca', an ancient fortress, which dominates the entrance to the town. Here we'll enjoy a light lunch including a tasting of some of the famous local wines.

After lunch there'll be time for you to visit this beautiful town before driving down to the valley below and the picturesque abbey of St Antimo where monks still worship using the Gregorian chant and have recently opened their ancient cloisters. Evening free in Pienza.

ACCOMMODATION: PIENZA

DAY 6 Saturday Cortona – “Under the Tuscan Sun” (B)

We leave Pienza today and travel to the famous hilltop town of Cortona. Set above Lake Trasimeno, at an impressive 500 metres, Cortona dominates the surrounding countryside: great views. It's an old town of Etruscan origins still cradled within walls dating from the 8th Century B.C. and more recently subject of Frances Mayes “Under the Tuscan Sun” and location for a film based on the book. Cortona is famous for its art, antiques and quality goods: shopping here is a delight. Cortona is also known for its high level of spirituality, evidenced by the number of important monasteries and delightful churches. The town now has an excellent Etruscan museum which is well worth a visit and is also the birthplace the famous Tuscan artist Luca Signorelli whose paintings are among other famous works in the small museum that you may also wish to visit in your free time. We recommend you don't miss “The Annunciation” of Beato Angelico.

San Francesco was a man of habit and we don't mean his brown sackcloth, corded belt and simple sandals. In Tuscany he habitually travelled two different routes to meet his followers: one from Assisi through the Tiber Valley to La Verna and the other past Lake Trasimeno to Cortona. During the day he was always in a crowd but at sunset he habitually sought an isolated place where he could re-find closeness to his God. So, he discovered a grotto among the rocks and founded the Celle di Cortona, his primitive retreat, his hermitage. The Celle remain a place of pilgrimage, cared for by a community of San Franciscan monks whose cells were built above the original one of San Francesco, which is open to everyone. Today we can follow his footsteps visit this important monastery, known locally as ‘Le Celle’.

You have the evening at leisure.

ACCOMMODATION: CORTONA

DAY 7 Sunday Cortona (B, D)

This morning we join our local guide who will lead us on an informative stroll through the town, ending in the square where we'll enjoy an aperitif. You have the remainder of the day free to enjoy the delights of Cortona before we meet for a delicious farewell dinner.

ACCOMMODATION: CORTONA

DAY 8 Monday Cortona-Terontola Railway Station (B)

Transfer to Terontola railway station, a major stop on the North/South railway line.

Inclusions:

- *Fully guided each day by Ugo or Barbara Mariotti*
- *Transfers in private air-conditioned vehicle.*
- *Accommodation in pensione & hotels with private facilities*
- *Meals with wine as indicated in the itinerary (B)=Italian continental breakfast (L)=lunch (D)=dinner*
- *Village cooking lesson with lunch and wine included*
- *Entries as indicated in the itinerary*
- **Optional** *Art Lesson in Montisi – One person 120; 2 persons 80 each; 3 persons 65 each; 4 or more 50 each.*

PRICE: EUROS 2140. 00 per person twin share/Single Supplement: EUROS172.00

Currency exchange rates available on www.oanda.com
Check out our website on www.tuscanyundertheskin.com
Price based on a minimum of 4 people

PRICES VALID TO 31 OCTOBER 2018

BOOKING CONDITIONS:

All due care will be taken to ensure inclusions will be delivered as agreed. In case of changes beyond our control, viable alternatives will be provided.

ENQUIRIES:

Please call 0414 398 450 or Email: enquiries@tuscanyundertheskin.com for a booking form.

TRANSPORTATION: 9-seater vehicle. Driver guide Ugo/Barbara Mariotti

**ALL COSTS ARE LAND ONLY. AIRFARES ARE *NOT* INCLUDED
TRAVEL INSURANCE IS A CONDITION OF TRAVEL.**

BOOKING CONDITIONS:

All due care will be taken to ensure inclusions will be delivered as agreed. In case of changes beyond our control, viable alternatives will be provided.