

NEW ! Southern Tuscany Itinerary

General Hiking info-Hiking distances vary from 5 to 10 miles a day, depending on the option chosen. Options are offered each day and every effort is made to adapt choices to suit the group. Trails options listed below may be subject to changes due to weather or time of year.

Day One:-

Pickup time at Florence airport at 3 pm. Pickup is at the café located in the Arrivals building-our guides will be wearing NEHH tee-shirts.

We then drive the one hour to Siena, where we spend our first night. Alternatively you may meet us directly at The Hotel Chiostro del Carmine in Siena. Our charming Hotel, part of a restored medieval monastery, is right in the heart of Siena, which is all pedestrian inside the city walls (please see below for all website info for hotels) We will be able to visit the Medieval city our very first evening, and will dine right near the central Piazza del Campo.

Day Two:-

Our first morning hike will be on dirt paths around the beautiful environs of the Monastery of Monteoliveto, which we reach at the top of a cool glade of cypress woods high above the dramatic landscape of the "crete senesi", the eroded clay hills South of Siena. We'll visit the early 14th century Benedictine abbey with its amazing Renaissance fresco cycle by Signorelli and picnic on the grounds of the Abbey. In the afternoon we'll hike downhill from the Abbey on paths and dirt roads winding through the lunar landscape of the clay hills, punctuated by meadows and Tuscan farmhouses, towards the town of Buonconvento; from here we'll drive to Bagno Vignoni. Our destination for Nights 2, 3 and 4 is the Hotel Posta Marcucci. This is a wonderful family run traditional hotel with modern amenities, an excellent restaurant and its own hot spring-fed pools and spa, which are free of charge for guests.

Day Three:-

Our first hike in Bagno Vignoni starts right from the Hotel's front door and takes us downhill past the hot spring waterfall at the edge of the town and then through fields along the stream, climbing on a wooded trail up to the top of the ridge which runs from between Ripa d'Orcia and Montalcino. Our destination is the farm and agri-tourism Poggio al Vento where we will have a simple lunch of Tuscan cheeses, breads, prosciutto, bruschetta and other specialties prepared by our host Marisa. After lunch our options are to either to continue to hike along the dirt road leading to the Castle of Ripa d'Orcia or a shorter hike downhill back to Bagno Vignoni.

Day Four:-

This morning's hike also begins from the Hotel's door, but goes in the opposite direction, towards Pienza. The route winds through fields along old farm tracks, dirt roads and paths still lined in places with the squared off stones from the ancient Roman roads that once passed through this area, with the spires of Pienza in view in the distance. On our way we'll pass an eleventh century parish church with fantastic sculptures of dragons and sirens. We then reach Pienza itself, a Renaissance jewel crowning one of the most striking panoramas in all of Tuscany. We'll visit and lunch in Pienza (famed for its harmonious Renaissance monuments and delicious pecorino cheeses). Afternoon options include a beautiful hike to nearby Montepulciano and/or a visit to Montalcino, home to the famous Brunello wineries, and the nearby Romanesque Abbey of St. Antimo.

Day Five:-

Today we will drive to the foothills of Mt. Amiata, an extinct volcano, and at 5785 feet, the highest mountain in Southern Tuscany. Our hikes explore the fascinating region of the upper Maremma; in the afternoon we continue south to the heart of the Maremma and the village of Sovana.

Nights 5,6,7 will be spent at the Sovana Hotel Resort, a beautifully restored farm manor set in its own park of peaceful olive groves and rose gardens at one end of the tiny village. The two restaurants belonging to the Hotel offer both traditional and innovative Tuscan cuisine-we will definitely sample them both !

Days 6 and 7:-

Will be spent exploring the Medieval villages and Etruscan ruins in the area, starting with a visit to the Etruscan Necropolis just outside Sovana, where archeologists have recently unearthed newly discovered monumental tombs cut into the limestone hillside; here we'll hike our first, strikingly mysterious Etruscan "hollow road", cut directly into the soft moss-covered limestone. After a picnic lunch we have the option to hike or drive to Sorano, a village slightly larger than Sovana, dramatically set on the crest of a limestone ridge which plunges down into a ravine full of Etruscan ruins. We'll explore both the village and the surrounding countryside during the afternoon, and hike perhaps the most beautiful of the hollow roads of the area. The following morning we'll hike to the town of Pitigliano; the largest cliff-top Medieval town with its houses seeming to grow directly out of the limestone cliffs-after exploring the town and the surrounding countryside our afternoon options include a hike to Saturnia, one of our very favorite places in Italy, with a hot springs known since Roman times which runs along a stream and down over a series of waterfalls, forming warm pools where you can bathe. It's a really special place!

Day 8:-

On our last full day we drive to the coast and have a day hiking by the Mediterranean in another favorite spot, Populonia, which boasts a gorgeous beach, a medieval hilltop overlooking the sea and a fascinating Etruscan necropolis with a network of hiking trails through the woods. In the late afternoon we'll head back to Florence; our last night will be at the hotel Villa Villoresi, family owned and run for generations. This charming & elegant villa, located just 5 miles outside Florence, was originally a 12th century fortress and now listed on Italy's register of National Monuments. The Villa Villoresi is well known for its beautiful decor, its park with tennis courts and swimming pool, its fine cuisine and its hospitality!

Day 9:-

After a last breakfast we return to Florence Airport at 9 am.

The Inns

Night One

Hotel Chioistro del Carmine
Via della Diana 4 Siena
Tel: (0577) 223885
Fax: (0577) 222556
www.chiostrodelcarmine.com
info@chiostrodelcarmine.com

Nights Two, Three & Four

Hotel Posta Marcucci, Bagno Vignoni, Siena
Tel: (0577) 887112
Fax: (0577) 887119
www.hotelpostamarcucci.it

Nights Five, Six & Seven

Sovana Hotel Resort
www.sovanahotel.it
Tel: (0564) 616531
Fax: (0564) 614329

Night Eight

Hotel Villa Villoresi
Via Carlo Ciampi, 2- Colonnata
50019 Sesto Fiorentino- Firenze - Italia
T.+39 (0) 55 443212 F. +39 (0) 55 442063
E.mail: cvillor@tin.it - info@villavilloresi.it
www.villavilloresi.it

