



The Best of Tuscany and Umbria guided tour

*Cycling through enchanting landscapes along medieval
pilgrim routes and into the home country of Saint Francis of
Assisi*



TRIP NOTES 2016

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****GENIUS LOCI TRAVEL - The Real Spirit Of Italy****



INTRODUCTION

This 8-day tour is a true and full immersion into two beautiful regions that are considered among the greatest places for cycling holidays. You will see the very best of Central Tuscany and Umbria. These two regions are in themselves historically, culturally and climatically different. Tuscany is known for its hamlets and hill towns, terracotta rooftops, swaying cypresses and golden valleys, as well as being the birthplace of the Italian language, the Renaissance, and the cradle of Italian art. It was also the land of wars between hundreds of its towns and villages.

Here you will enjoy the countryside, the rolling vineyards, the poppies in spring and the wild cyclamen in autumn. Most of all, many of the views have barely changed for hundreds of years. On your tour you head off into a coffee table book Tuscan landscape of gentle hills, tipped by a lonely pine or oak tree while cypresses line the way leading to the distant farmhouses.

The holy Umbria was a land of peace, historically bound to the Church State. It is the land of St. Francis and known as the "Green Heart" of Italy - with its green fields, plains, forests and meadows of the Apennine Mountains. It is known not only for its precious liquid, olive oil, but also for its white and pink Umbrian limestone that was used to build many of its medieval villages.

Umbria is not as famous as the Tuscan landscape, but perhaps more genuine and at least as beautiful ! You will cycle from village to village, through forests and vineyards, then through the rolling hills between the spectacular hilltop towns of Spoleto, Spello and Assisi in a full immersion in the mythical Umbrian landscape.



Please note: this is a moderate tour which is suitable for all those who have some experience of bicycle touring and are in a good general physical condition. On some of the inland stretches you may encounter some steeper climbs. Average cycling times: approx 5-6 hours each day.



DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 1 Arrival at Montepulciano

On arrival at Chiusi train station you will be met by your guide and brought by private transfer to the charming hotel in Montepulciano. After checking in you attend a short bike-fitting session, and afterwards join an exploratory walk in the medieval town and its environs. Of course you will take your time to see some of the local wineries and why not have a taste of a good glass of local red wine?

Hotel in Montepulciano – HB

Day 2 Montepulciano to Pienza ride

Today you cycle from Montepulciano through the delightful Tuscan countryside, to the village of Pienza, a small, perfectly laid-out Renaissance town, completely re-built under the impulse of Pope Pius II. Pienza is often described as the "ideal city" or the "utopian city". It is certainly one of the best planned Renaissance towns, where a model of ideal living and government was attempted. It represented the so-called utopia of the "civitas", based on the concept of a town able to satisfy the needs of a peaceful and hardworking population. Pienza's location in the centre of the Val d'Orcia, a wonderfully harmonious valley, helps the town to embody the fundamental principle that humanistic architecture attempted to create: a balanced relationship between Man and Nature.

Distance : 40/70 km – Cycling time : 4/7 hours

Hotel in Montepulciano – BB

Day 3 Montepulciano to Cortona

After breakfast you say goodbye to Montepulciano and start cycling towards Lake Trasimeno, which is the biggest freshwater body in peninsular Italy. You will follow a quiet, easy cycling path around the lake, showing you the most beautiful spots in the area. Of course you need to get off your bikes and enjoy a picnic at the lakeside. At the end of the day you arrive in Cortona, an important Etruscan settlement with its nicely preserved medieval centre.

Distance : 42/70 km – Cycling time : 3- 4/7 hours

Hotel in Cortona–HB

Day 4 Cortona to Montone & Umbertide

Today's ride first takes you up into the hills of the pre-Apennine Mountains, and then down the gorgeous gradual descent again on minor asphalt roads towards the Upper Tiber Valley. Here you enjoy stupendous views of the rolling hills and shallow valleys of this part of Umbria. You visit the charming little village of Montone, perched on a low hilltop, and then check in at your nearby hotel.

Distance : 55/75 km – Cycling time :5-6/7 hours

Hotel in Montone/Umbertide – HB



Day 5 Monte & Umbertide to Assisi

Today you continue cycling through the Tiber Valley again, passing medieval castles and abbeys, on a road flanked with fields and forests to the slopes of Mt. Subasio. A final climb takes you to splendid medieval Assisi, the hometown of Saint Francis. Here you have ample time to explore the little town, full of highlights such as the Basilica of San Francesco d'Assisi (St. Francis) of course, with its wonderful frescos by Giotto, a World Heritage Site. But the other churches, the Greek temple of the central square and the underground Roman Forum are also worth a visit.

Distance : 50/70 km – Cycling time : 4-5/7 hours

Hotel in Assisi – HB

Day 6 Asissi, Spello & Spoleto ride

Your day's ride starts in the Via degli Olivi (Olive Grove Way) and will take you all around the lower slopes of Monte Subasio. This road offers wonderful views over the plains below. It takes you to the very picturesque old Roman town of Spello, considered by many to be one of the most charming villages in the area. This is an ideal location for a lunch stop en route. From Spello you can then ride across the Umbra Valley to the foothills of the Montefalco territories, home to the superb Sagrantino red wine, and on to the Roman settlement of Bevagna (extension). Alternatively, you immediately head for the major artistic centre of Spoleto, with its famous Bridge of Towers (Ponte delle Torri).

Distance : 65/80 km – Cycling time : 6-7 hours

Hotel in Spoleto – BB

Day 7 Spoleto ride

After breakfast you head off for a short half-day ride taking you deep into Umbria. If you wish you can top your last cycling day off with a challenging and epic climb towards one of the most remote areas of Umbria.

Hotel in Spoleto -HB

Day 8 End of the tour

The tour ends at Spoleto after breakfast today. A private transfer takes you to the train station. By train you can get to Rome, Perugia or Florence rather easily.



TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

All nights are spent in beautiful, characteristic and excellent ***hotels. All rooms have en-suite facilities.

3 picnic lunches and 5 dinners are included in the tour price. Other picnic lunches can be prepared for you by the accommodation holders, or materials for picnics can be purchased in the villages where you'll be staying. The evenings that you are free from dinner you can go out and find a nice place to eat in the villages where you will be staying.

Nights 1& 2: The first two nights are spent in a nice 3-star hotel in the wonderful medieval hilltop town of Montepulciano. From the cosy hotel the whole village is within easy reach.

Night 3: Tonight you stay in a charming hotel in the historical centre of Cortona near Lake Trasimeno.

Night 4: The next night you stay in a charming hotel near the town of Montone or Umbertide.

Night 5: Tonight is spent in a nice hotel in the famous medieval town of Assisi, birthplace of Saint Francis. From the hotel you can easily reach the main attractions of the town.

Night 6 & 7: The last two nights you stay in a nice 3-star hotel in the medieval town of Spoleto, beneath Monte Subasio.

UPGRADE

It is possible to book an upgrade in some of the places en route. Details and prices on request.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderate (3): Mostly moderate rides but inevitably with several climbs, only a few of which are really strenuous. All roads are well paved and mostly quiet with little traffic. Extensions or shortcuts are possible on some days.

Fitness: Some experience of bicycle touring and a good general physical condition will certainly make your travel experience more enjoyable. You should be able to cycle for several hours a day even in hot dry weather conditions.



INCLUSIONS

On our GUIDED TOURS we include almost everything:

- Private English-speaking cycling guide for the duration of the tour (from 8 participants)
- Tour leader, support van & mechanical assistance for the duration of the tour
- Professional guiding service during the tour of Matera
- Accommodation: 2 nights Montepulciano, 1 night Cortona, 1 night Montone/Umbertide, 1 night Assisi, 2 nights Spoleto in good ***hotels and agriturismos
- Meals: 7 breakfasts, 3 lunches & 5 dinners; 2 wine tastings
- Transfers from Chiusi train station to Montepulciano and from the hotel to Spoleto train station
- Detailed maps & road book
- Luggage transport

Not Included:

- Departure taxes
- Visas
- Travel Insurance
- Drinks at dinners and meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional additional tours or activities
- Tips
- Items of personal nature
- Bicycle rental (Fully equipped touring or race bike - typical extra cost of 110 euros per person)

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in MONTEPULCIANO, which you reach after a short transfer from Chiusi train station.

Departure: The tour ends after breakfast in SPOLETO on day 8. A short transfer brings you from the hotel to the train station.

TOUR VARIATIONS

EXTRA NIGHTS

It is possible to extend your tour with a few days in Umbria or Tuscany. Details and prices on request. Extra cycling and/or sightseeing options can be provided!

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