

Culinary tour of Tuscany with a Rome Extension

May 12 - 23, 2019

\$ 5999 per person, based on double occupancy



Day 1: Sunday, May 12: Detroit Flight

Leave from Detroit Metro Airport for your overnight flight to Rome. Enjoy meals and movies in-flight.

Day 2: Monday, May 13: Arrival Florence ~

We meet our Guide and Driver upon arrival in Florence and set off on an exploratory walk of the city, focusing on the history and culture of the city through the eyes of a food lover. (If you wish to visit the David or any of the other impressive historical sites, you should plan on arriving to Florence a day early.) Your guide, Giovanni, is a wealth of knowledge about all things Tuscany – food, wine, history, and culture. In the late afternoon, we'll stop at B.Gallo, a "loungeaperitif" where we'll toast the waning day with a Prosecco, the famous Italian sparkling white wine. We'll then make our way to a quaint family-owned restaurant for a lovely welcome meal. After dinner, we head back to the hotel and rest up for tomorrow's adventures – our first full food and wine day in Tuscany. (L, D)

Day 3: Tuesday, May 14: Florence to Chianti ~ Food Market & Chianti

We check out of our hotel and begin our day by exploring the Saint Ambrogia Market. This diverse market is less touristy than say Mercato Central which means we get a glimpse of how everyday Tuscans shop for their daily meals. We'll have time to stop and sample the wares of the various merchants along the way. Next, we are off to one of the most famous wine regions with one of the most famous wine styles in Italy: Chianti. Our first stop is the picturesque city of San Gimignano, a small medieval walled town famous for its dozen or so towers sticking up into the sky. After exploring the town on foot, we'll head to the local Fattoria Poggio Alloro for a lunch of food products from this farm, such as the Chianina brand of beef and the saffron spice which has been locally grown since the 13th century, paired with the white wine Vernaccia di San Gimignano, also grown on site. Next on our agenda is the winery Castello di Volpaia, which is located in a fortified village of the same name and where we'll do a tasting of the famous Chianti Classico wine. We finally head to our hotel for the night. (B, L, D)

Day 4: Wednesday, May 15: Chianti to Sansepolcro ~ Chocolate, Coffee & Linen

We drive in the morning to Arezzo to visit Vestri Cioccolato, a chocolate maker that has been producing delicious chocolate for 30 years and which owns its own farm in the Dominican Republic. Not only do they make their own chocolate but they also roast their own coffee. We'll learn about the chocolate-making and roasting processes and, of course, sample a few of their creations. We then jump back in our vehicle to transfer to the center of town where you can explore the various cafes and restaurants for lunch. After lunch, we visit the nearby small town of Anghiari, famous as the site of the Battle of Anghiari in 1440 between the armies of Florence and Milan. This is also your guide Giovanni's home in Tuscany. Next, we'll visit the world-famous Busatti linen factory, sold in such outlets as William & Sonoma. This family-run business has been based in Anghiari since 1842. The factory tour is extremely interesting and you can purchase products to take home, although they are not cheap! We head to the walled town of Sansepolcro to check into our hotel for an hour's rest and then visit a local hotspot, Enoteca Guidi, which is a combination wine bar and restaurant that serves outstanding local cuisine in a casual setting. (B, D)

Day 5: Thursday, May 16: Sansepolcro ~ Truffle hunting and cooking class

Most tourists don't make it to the section of Tuscany called the Upper Tiber Valley. Even fewer travel to the hamlet of Badia Tedalda, 40 minutes up into the Apennine Mountains. But it is here we will travel this morning, specifically to visit Augusto Verando Tocci, a botanist famous for his pursuit of the equally famous truffle. Verando will take us into the forest with his trusted dog to look for truffles, which can be found in this area at any time of the year. Successful or not, we will return to his home to participate in a cooking class and lunch involving many of the edible plants and roots found in the forest, including the local liquor Spinello. After lunch, we'll return to Sansepolcro for walking tour of this adorable village with a stop at Pasticcera, a local bakery and artisanal gelateria. Many gelato stores in Italy do not make their own product but purchase it from a big manufacturer, so this will be a special visit. Our dinner tonight is at Relais Palazzo di Luglio, situated on 30 acres in the countryside outside Sansepolcro. The owner Giuliano previously

owned one of the most successful restaurants in town and produces an elegant, traditional Tuscan dinner featuring whatever is in season. (B, L, D)

Day 6: Friday, May 17: Cortona ~ Assisi, Olive Oil & Winery

Yes, this is a food and wine tour of Tuscany but nearby Umbria is well worth a visit. We'll start out with a visit to the very small and local olive oil mill of Emanuele Ragani and his family. Emanuele will not only show us how the mill, with an actual grist stone, operates but will fire up a wood oven, heat up bread, and pour delicious olive oil on top for a tasting. We then head to Assisi, the city made famous by St. Francis, for a tour of the city and the church where he is buried. Assisi is a great town to walk around on your own, with many shops and restaurants, and we are on our own here for lunch. After lunch, we'll head to Arnaldo Caprai winery, a leading producer of the wine Sagrantino di Montefalco. If you have never had Umbrian wine before, you will be impressed. After our wine tasting, our time in Umbria is ended and it is back to Tuscany as we drive to Cortona, made famous by the book *Under the Tuscan Sun* our home for the evening. We'll check into our hotel and then walk to dinner at La Bucaccia, rated the top restaurant in Cortona on Trip Advisor (out of 84 restaurants) serving, as one recent reviewer wrote, "wild boar ragu with tagliatelle, pici with an intense tomato sauce, a pecorino flan, seasonal vegetable soup, and bruschetta to die for." (B, D)

Day 7: Saturday, May 18: Cortona ~ Montepulciano, Sheep & more wine

The Val d'Orcia is one of the most beautiful sections of Tuscany, which is one of the most beautiful provinces of Italy, which is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. We are in a good place! We'll start our tour by visiting the city of Pienza, perched high above the valley and designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. (The entire valley is designated a World Cultural Landscape.) After a quick historical walking tour of the city, we'll head to a local farm that specializes in making pecorino, the ubiquitous local sheep's cheese. We'll learn about the process, have a taste of the fresh cheese, and eat a nice picnic lunch right on the farm. It is then on to Montepulciano, another famous hilltop town, where you will have an hour to wander the streets on your own. We then gather together again to visit Cantine Gattavecchi for a tour of their barrel room and tasting of the local wine, the outstanding *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano*. Heading back to Cortona, we'll share a final meal together at the *Locanda al Pozzo Antico*, a fine dining establishment run by the owner Paola where we'll try to outdo our previous successes with Tuscan cuisine. (B, L, D)

Day 8: Sunday, May 19: Cortona to Florence airport or to ROME ~ ROME Extension ~ additional \$2999.00

We'll take a post-breakfast walk of Cortona, as Giovanni will point out some of the important sites that featured in *Under the Tuscan Sun*. You are then free to take the train or a shuttle onwards to Florence or Rome. Or perhaps you'll follow the theme of the book and decide to stay in Tuscany? (B, D)

Day 9: Monday, May 20: Rome ~ Campo De' Fiori, Tiber Island, Santa Maria in Cosmedin & Jewish Ghetto

Imagine sampling local fare from restaurants to delicatessens. And, while strolling from one to the next, you'll admire celebrated sites such as Piazza Navona, Campo de' Fiori, and Piazza Farnese. You'll see the Jewish Ghetto and the renowned location of Julius Caesar's death, as well. Gourmet food, fine wine and fascinating corners of the city you've never dreamed of await the guests on this informative and fun-filled tour. Your guide has stories to tell about the sites you'll see, and will introduce you to local vendors and makers of the fine foods and beverages you'll enjoy. Italy is not all pizza and pasta. Rome offers a savory extravaganza of customary meat, fish, vegetable dishes, and beverages. Enjoy new taste sensations at each dining stop on this exhilarating tour. (B, D)

Day 10: Tuesday, May 21: Rome ~ Monti, Esquiline Hill & Trastevere

Monti is one of Rome's best kept secrets, let us reveal it to you through this three and a half hour itinerary. We will sample our way through some of Rome's best up and coming restaurants, street food stops and wineries. This quarter is a perfect example of the Italian contemporary food scene where 4th generation restaurateurs now cook next to innovative chefs and ideas. Monti is renowned for being an almost exclusively Roman neighborhood, lacking the usual masses of tourists despite being only a few steps from the Colosseum. Riddled through with magnificent basilicas and picturesque photo opportunities your expert guide will be taking you on a journey of art and food in order to better understand the essence of this neighborhood. (B, D)

Day 11: Wednesday, May 22: Rome ~ Papal Audience & Montecelio

Papal audience or free morning. Late afternoon depart from the hotel for a Bountiful Farewell Dinner in the quaint town of Montecelio at La Spadaro

Day 12: Thursday, May 23: Rome ~ Rome/Detroit

Transfer to the airport to take your flight home. (B)