

Essential Tuscany

Tour Style: European Centre Based

Destination: Italy

Trip code: SNLCL

1 & 2



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Immerse yourself in the classic Tuscan scenery of red terracotta tiled roofs, green and gold rolling hills and sentinel-like cypress trees. There are hot springs to enjoy and a full guided sightseeing day in Siena with its magnificent Duomo and winding streets full of magnificent medieval brick buildings. Walks through the rural landscape lead up to sleepy, historic hilltop towns and villages including Pienza, Montepulciano and Montalcino which are a delight to explore.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- A full programme of guided walks with 2 options every walking day plus 1 full sightseeing day
- All transport to and from walks
- The services of experienced HF Holidays' leaders
- "With flight" holidays include return flights from the UK and hotel transfers
- 7 nights' accommodation in en-suite rooms
- Half board - continental breakfast and evening meal

HOLIDAYS HIGHLIGHTS

- Gentle countryside walks through classic Tuscan countryside crowned with historic towns
- The beautiful Renaissance city of Siena makes a fascinating sightseeing day
- Ridge walk to get a beautiful view of Rocca
- Sample the natural hot springs at Bagno Vignone
- Finish your walk with a coffee or ice cream in the enchanting hilltop villages

TRIP SUITABILITY

This is a level 1 and level 2 graded Activity, Easier walks: 4 to 7 miles (6½ to 11km) on good tracks and paths, with short but steep ascents. Up to 900 feet (270m) of ascent in a day. Harder walks: 6 to 10 miles (9½ to 16km) on good tracks and paths, with short but steep ascents. Up to 1,800 feet (540m) of ascent in a day.



ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival Day

Welcome to Hotel Albergo Palazzuolo. Unpack and settle in.

Day 2: Bagno Vignoni

The hot springs at Bagno Vignoni have been known since Etruscan times. Santa Caterina of Siena and Lorenzo the Magnificent were amongst those to have taken advantage of the therapeutic values of the waters. The Medici family built the splendid arcaded pool which sits in the middle of the village where you would expect to find the main square.

Option 1 - A New Route To The Spa

Distance: 4 miles (6½km)

Total ascent: 400 feet (120m)

In summary: We start our week with an exploration of San Quirico, a fascinating town in its own right with some spectacular views from the town walls. We then head south out of town through beautiful countryside to Vignoni Alta with its truncated tower. Our route continues descending towards Bagno Vignoni accompanied by great views to Rocca d'Orcia.

Highlight: Explore Bagno Vignone with its hot springs and interesting history.

Option 2 - A Castle And A Spa

Distance: 6 miles (9½km)

Total ascent: 700 feet (210m)

In summary: After exploring San Quirico with the easier group, we too head south, taking a loop out to the west via Forn del Chigi and Poggio Grande. We then head east past the ruins of the old bridge, swept away in 1929, and up the side of the calcite cliffs, past bathing pools, to arrive in Bagno Vignoni to join the easier group.

Highlight: Views to Monte Amiata, which forms the southern backdrop to the Val d'Orcia.

Day 3: Montalcino To Abbey Of San Antimo

Montalcino is a Tuscan hill town with a full circuit of walls. It was permanently settled in 1,000AD by fugitives from the Saracens and their family groups, the Borghetto, Pianello, Ruga and Travaglio. To this day you will see rival flags outside the houses and they compete against each other in an archery competition. The final destination of both walks is the Abbey of San Antimo with time to explore before enjoying refreshments in the village of Castelnuovo dell Abate.

Option 1 - From The Castle To The Abbey

Distance: 6 miles (9½km)

Total ascent: 600 feet (180m)

In summary: Our walk starts with a bus ride to Montalcino where we can explore the town and enjoy a drink before re-joining the coach to take us to the start of our walk a couple of miles south. Our route takes us through forests, vineyards and farmlands as we make our way to our objective of the day, the Abbey of San Antimo. Our coach then picks us up at the edge of Castelnuovo dell Abate.

Highlight: Visit the attractive town of Montalcino.

Option 2 - Montalcino To San Antimo

Distance: 8 miles (13km)

Total ascent: 700 feet (210m)

In summary: The harder walk begins at Montalcino where, after a chance to look around, we head off towards the Abbey of San Antimo through undulating countryside, woodland and farmland.

Highlight: Villa a Tolli, an ancient hamlet of Etruscan origin.

Day 4: Siena Sightseeing

The city of Siena is a magnet for visitors to this region of Italy. At the heart of the walled city lies the Campo, where the famous 'Palio' horse race takes place. The surrounding central core is entirely medieval in plan and

appearance. The 320 feet Torre del Mangia bell tower dominates the scene and you can ascend its many steps to get a bird's eye view over the city. The Museo Civico, in the Palazzo Publico, contains 13th century frescoes. In the Piazza del Duomo, the Museo dell Opera is worth a visit, housing elaborate frescoes and works by Simone Martini and an unusual work of art – the Maesta, a huge altar piece painted by Duccio in the 1270s. An additional bonus, if you go into the museum, is ascending the 'new nave', arguably a better viewpoint than the more famous Torre del Mangia. The Duomo itself is incredible both inside and out: the black and white marble decoration, the unique marble floor panels and sculptures are all breathtaking. While the Duomo will be crowded, a far quieter place to visit is the Ospedale di Santa Maria Della Scala, across the square, recently converted into a museum. The church itself is very airy and then inside the old hospital is a wonderful cycle of frescoes, which depict entirely secular scenes and are described in English. As well as visiting these principal sights there will also be opportunities to relax in the pavement cafés, or to wander through some of the city's quieter corners.

Day 5: Pienza/Montepulciano

Pienza was once a small village named Corsignano, where Pope Pius II was born. When he became Pope in 1459 he commissioned the most famous architect of his day, Bernardo Rossellini, to create a city fit for a Pope on the site of his birthplace. Pius died within three years of the completion of the city, which was largely ignored by future Popes, leaving us with a beautifully preserved renaissance city not much bigger than a village.

Option 1 - Monticchiello To Montepulciano

Distance: 6 miles (9½km)

Total ascent: 900 feet (270m)

In summary: After looking around the beautiful city of Pienza we reboard our coach for Monticchiello where our walk starts. We leave this beautiful walled hilltop town across rolling countryside past the pilgrimage church of San Biagio to Montepulciano for a well-earned drink.

Highlight: Monticchiello is a delightful walled village with a crooked watch tower and a 13th century parish church.

Option 2 - Pienza To Montepulciano

Distance: 10 miles (16km)

Total ascent: 1,600 feet (480m)

In summary: Our walk starts from Pienza. After a spot of sightseeing we head east out of town towards Monticchiello where we pick up the route of the easier walk to Montepulciano where we can join them for refreshments.

Highlight: Pienza is an historical town with Romanesque architecture.

Day 6: Free Day

Each week there is a free day when no guided walks are offered. This is an ideal opportunity to relax around the hotel, walk independently or visit local places of interest. If there is sufficient demand, leaders can organise a visit to San Gimignano.

San Gimignano: This is a fascinating hilltop town with a breathtaking skyline of towers. You can enter the town through the Porta San Giovanni and then head to the Piazza del Duomo. The Duomo has an exotic interior containing fresco cycles of the Old and New Testament stories. It is worthwhile visiting the Rocca and ramparts which offer extensive views across the countryside. The church of St. Augustine is well away from the crowds and has frescoes on the life of Saint Francis. On the return to San Quirico you could stop at the heavily fortified small town of Monteriggioni, once the border of the Florence and Siena republics.

Pienza: Pay a return visit to Pienza to visit the Piccolomini Palace, the Diocesan Museum and the medieval Pieve di Corsignano church where Pope Pius II was baptised.

Villa La Foce: Visit this villa and its gardens, made famous by Iris Origo's book War in the Val d'Orcia – An Italian Diary 1943-44.

Day 7: A View From The Rocca

Today we travel south to the castle keep of Tentennano, known locally as Rocca d'Orcia. The harder walk is circular, starting and finishing at the Rocca and taking in three castles. The easier walk takes in a beautiful stretch of the Via Francigena heading for the little village of Gallina which sits on the 43rd Parallel. Both groups walk through undulating farmland and woodland where wild game, such as deer and boar have been seen. At the end of both walks there will be the opportunity to climb the tower of the castle keep and/or take refreshments at the café nearby before we return to the hotel.

Option 1 - From The Rocca To The 43rd Parallel Along The Via Francigena

Distance: 7 miles (11km)

Total ascent: 400 feet (120m)

In summary: Today's walk begins with a circuit of the beautiful village of Castiglione d'Orcia before walking through Rocca d'Orcia village and picking up the Via Francigena which we walk almost all the way to Gallina. After a short refreshment stop we will board the coach to return to our starting point and meet up with the harder walkers at Rocca d'Orcia.

Highlight: Castiglione d'Orcia is an ancient settlement first referenced in 714AD.

Option 2 - Rocca D'Orcia Circular – A Three Castles Walk

Distance: 9 miles (14½km)

Total ascent: 1,600 feet (480m)

In summary: The walk starts by wandering through the medieval streets of Rocca d'Orcia village. An old road, now just a track takes us down to the Orcia River with views of Ripa d'Orcia. We follow the river for a while before gaining height to join a ridge with stunning views of Monte Amiata to the south. The return allows us to explore the village of Castiglione d'Orcia and its castle – the Rocca Aldobrandesca. Finally we return to Rocca d'Orcia to join the easier party with time to explore the castle and/or take refreshments.

Highlight: Take in views of three medieval castles.

Day 8: Departure Day

We hope to see you again soon.

ACCOMMODATION

Hotel Albergo Palazzuolo - Tuscany

The 3-star Hotel Albergo Palazzuolo is set in a peaceful location in the countryside surrounding the village of San Quirico, and is very convenient for the local amenities. This family-owned hotel was originally an attractive farmhouse, extended on both sides to incorporate the bedrooms. The property has excellent views to the rolling hills of Montalcino and offers good standards of service and comfort with a relaxing atmosphere after your days out walking.

Accommodation Info

Rooms

The hotel has 42 comfortable bedrooms, all en-suite with shower.

All bedrooms also have:

- TV
- Telephone
- Air conditioning
- Fridge
- Hairdryer

Facilities

Hotel Albergo Palazzuolo facilities consists of:

- Lounge
- Bar
- Terrace
- Attractive gardens
- Outdoor swimming pool (swimming hat is required)

Food & Drink

Our holidays at Hotel Albergo Palazzuolo are on a Half Board basis and include breakfast and evening meal.

Breakfast

The self-select continental breakfast includes cereal, cheese and cooked meats, bread, croissants and home-produced honey. Tea and coffee is available.

Lunch (Payable Locally)

You can buy a picnic lunch from the hotel (order the night before). Alternatively ingredients can be bought in local shops, including a supermarket five minutes' walk away. On some days it may be possible to eat in a café during a walk or excursion; your leaders will advise you of all the options.

Evening Meal

The five course set menu features many Tuscan specialities, using homemade pasta and locally-produced oil, meat and cheese. An alternative is available for vegetarians; however we recommend that those with special diets discuss their requirements with the manager or chef.

Drinks

There is a well-stocked bar serving beer, wine and spirits.

Your Evenings

The friendly atmosphere of our holidays continues into the evening.

Enjoy a glass of wine or local beer before hearing about the next day's activities, then join your fellow guests for a leisurely meal.

One evening our guests can learn more about olive oil and take part in a tasting session, very popular with our guests.

Your leader will be checking out for other local events going on nearby, or you may prefer to relax on the terrace enjoying the panoramic view or in the bar with a drink.

TRAVEL DETAILS

THE HASSLE FREE OPTION

Book your holiday 'with flight' and choose between Heathrow or Manchester flights to Pisa airport. For flight times and prices please see the Dates & Prices tab.

If you choose this option we automatically include return transfers between the airport and the hotel. The coach transfer takes approx 2 hours 30 minutes to the Hotel Albergo Palazzuolo.

Please note guests travelling to Bonassola and Chianti will also fly in to Pisa. Leaders will be available at the airport to direct guests to the correct transfer coach.

THE FLEXIBLE TRAVEL OPTION

Alternatively, tailor your journey to suit you by booking your holiday 'without flight' allowing you the freedom to book your own flights from your local airport.

If you choose this option, transfers are not included in the price. However, below are some suggestions to help you reach your destination:

- We can book you a seat on the **HF Holidays' transfer coach** from Pisa airport. This is timed to meet the HF Holidays' flights* (provisional flight times can be found on the dates and prices tab or you can call us on 020 8732 1220 for more information). Cost per single journey is £39. **Please note** guests travelling to Bonassola will also fly in to Pisa. Leaders will be available at the airport to direct guests to the correct transfer coach.
- Why not let us book you a **private taxi transfer** - price on request.

Transfers must be pre-booked. Please call 020 8732 1220 for more details

* Please note that HF Holidays is not responsible for your onward travel if you fail to meet the transfer coach

USEFUL HOLIDAY INFORMATION

Essential Information

Passport Requirements

You may need to renew your British passport if you're travelling from 1 January 2021.

On the day you travel, you'll need your passport to both:

- have at least 3 months left
- be less than 10 years old (even if it has 6 months or more left)

Use the [government website](#) to see if your passport is valid for this holiday

EHIC Cards

The UK government has officially launched the Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC), which will replace the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). UK residents can now apply for one of the GHIC cards, which will gradually replace the EHIC cards as they reach their expiry dates. Every family member travelling requires a GHIC. You can make an application for yourself and on behalf of your partner and any dependent children under the age of 16. Both cards will offer equivalent protection for emergency and medically necessary healthcare needs when in the EU on a temporary stay, which includes holiday, study and business travel. Necessary healthcare includes things like

- emergency treatment and visits to A&E
- treatment for long-term or pre-existing medical conditions
- routine medical care for pre-existing conditions that need monitoring
- oxygen and kidney dialysis

The public only need to apply for their free GHIC cards when their current EHIC expires. The process is likely to take two weeks. For more information visit <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/>.

The GHIC is not an alternative to travel insurance. We advise all holidaymakers to also invest in travel insurance that covers healthcare, so they are covered for other issues that may arise, as well as cancellations and lost luggage.

Essential Equipment

To enjoy walking/hiking comfortably and safely, footwear, clothing and equipment needs to be suitable for the conditions. Safety and comfort are our priorities, so our advice is to come prepared for all eventualities.

- Footwear with a good grip on the sole (e.g. Vibram sole) is the key to avoiding accidents.
- Walking/hiking boots providing ankle support and good grip are recommended (ideally worn in), and specialist walking socks to avoid blisters.
- Several layers of clothing, which can be added or removed, are better than a single layer (include spares).
- Fabrics (lightweight and fast drying) designed for the outdoors are recommended.
- Waterproof jacket and waterproof over trousers.
- Warm hat and gloves.
- Denim jeans and capes are not suitable on any walks.
- Rucksack with a waterproof liner.
- Thermos flask for hot drink.
- Water bottle (at least 2 litre).
- Spare high-energy food such as a chocolate bar.
- Small torch.
- First aid kit – your leader's first aid kit doesn't contain any medication or blister kits (such as Compeed).
- Sun hat and sunglasses
- Sun cream.

Optional Equipment

- Walking poles are useful, particularly for descents.
- Insect repellent.
- Camera.
- Gaiters.

Useful Information

The language of Tuscany is Italian.

Is considered safe to drink, but if you prefer, bottled mineral water can be purchased from the hotel or local

supermarkets.

If the international number you wish to call starts with a 0, you must drop the starting digit when dialling the number.

To dial a UK number 0044

To dial a Italian number 0039

Local Currency

The currency of Italy is the Euro.

Electricity

220 Volt AC with round two pin plugs; you will need an adaptor for any appliances brought from the UK.

ATM Availability

There are several ATM machines in San Quirico where you can obtain money.

HOW TO BOOK

When you're ready to book, you can choose to **book online** or book **over the phone**. Our website offers secure online booking for our holidays, is available 24/7, and offers more in-depth information about all our holidays. If you prefer to call us, our experienced and knowledgeable team are available to answer any specific questions you have and can offer guidance as to which holiday is best suited to your needs.

Our office is open: Monday to Friday: 9am – 5.30pm, Saturday: 9am – 1pm, Sunday & Bank Holiday Monday: closed

PAYING YOUR DEPOSIT

To secure the holiday of your choice, you will need to pay a deposit: UK & European Holidays: £150 per person and Worldwide Holidays: £250 per person. You can pay your deposit by debit or credit card with no additional card fees charged or make an online BACS payment directly into HF's bank account, please see details under BACS payments. You can also pay your deposit by cheque within seven days of booking. Cheques should be made payable to 'HF Holidays Ltd' with your booking reference / Order ID on the back.

NON-MEMBER FEE

Non-members can join our holidays by paying a Non-Member's fee of £30 per person per holiday. Alternatively, full membership is available from £100 – visit hfholidays.co.uk/membership for details.

BACS PAYMENTS

Please quote your booking reference / Order ID when you make your payment online: Bank Name: National Westminster Bank, Account Name: HF Holidays Limited, Account Number: 48904805, Sort Code: 60-00-01, IBAN: GB90NWBK60000148904805

Once we have received your booking and deposit, we will send a confirmation invoice to the lead name. Please check this carefully. For bookings 'with flights' it is essential that the names on your booking confirmation invoice match those on your passport for bookings overseas. Please advise us immediately of any errors. Any name changes after the balance of your holiday has been paid will be subject to a fee levied by the airline.

MANAGE MY BOOKINGS

Payments can also be made through the [Manage My Booking](#) function on our website. Click on the link at the

top of our homepage. This is available to all customers who provide an email address at the time of booking.

YOUR FINAL BALANCE

Your final balance payment is due 6 weeks before departure if you are staying in an HF Holidays UK country house, 8 weeks before departure if you are travelling on one of our holidays in Europe and 10 weeks before departure if you are on a Guided Trail staying in one of our partner hotels or are travelling on a Worldwide holiday. As with paying your deposit, you can pay your final balance by debit or credit card, make an online BACS payment directly into HF's bank account or pay by cheque.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is an important part of any booking and essential for one of our holidays. HF Holidays works with specialist. Insurance Brokers Campbell Irvine Direct. For more information or to obtain a quote call them on [01702 427 236](tel:01702427236) or visit hfholidays.co.uk/insurance

PEACE OF MIND

ATOL:

The air holidays and flights in this brochure are ATOL-protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 710. In the unlikely event of our insolvency, the CAA will ensure that you are not stranded abroad and will arrange to refund any money you have paid us for advance bookings. For further information visit the ATOL website atol.org.uk

MEMBER OF ABTOT:

HF Holidays is a member of ABTOT (The Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited) which provides financial protection under the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992 for HF Holidays Ltd and in the event of their insolvency, protection is provided for the following: 1. non-flight packages commencing in and returning to the UK; 2. non-flight packages commencing and returning to a country other than the UK; 3. flight inclusive packages that commence outside of the UK and Republic of Ireland, which are sold to customers outside of the UK and Republic of Ireland. 1, 2 and 3 provides for a refund in the event you have not yet travelled. 1 and 3 provides for repatriation. Please note that bookings made outside the UK and Republic of Ireland are only protected by ABTOT when purchased directly with HF Holidays Ltd.

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY

These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred.

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

PRICE GUARANTEE

We promise that our earliest published prices will always be the best and if we reduce our holiday price after your booking has been confirmed, we will pass this reduction on to you. Our price promise applies if any subsequent offer price is for an identical holiday, duration, location and date and does not cover any optional extras, flights or additional services.

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