

## Italy: Tuscany & Umbria

### Tour-Only Itinerary

Far below Mount Subasio's high slopes glints Assisi's Basilica, where you recently stood before Giotto's frescoes of St. Francis preaching to the birds. Just downhill is the hermitage where Francis often meditated, subsisting on roots and sleeping in caves. Thankfully, your prospects today are less austere. In fact, a sumptuous home-cooked lunch awaits in nearby Collepinio. Bruschetta, grilled meats and veggies, local wine, and olive oil. This is the flavorful fare you've grown accustomed to after days of rambling on this walking tour through Tuscany and Umbria's hills and vineyards. Central Italy's beauty will stay with you forever—Siena's seashell-shaped piazza, Pienza's harmonious Renaissance architecture—but today's greatest gift is the blessed sense of peace.



### Highlights

With an expert guide, discover Giotto's 28-part fresco, The Life of St. Francis, which graces the walls of Assisi's iconic Basilica of St. Francis.

Savor an unforgettable meal of traditional cuisine as you peer through the glass bottom of a remarkable restaurant that sits atop excavated Roman ruins.

Trek a dramatic path through an isolated valley of wheat fields and olive groves to the 12th-century, Romanesque Abbey of Sant'Antimo.

Experience the architectural beauty of Siena's famous Piazza del Campo (home to the world-renowned Palio horse race), as your local guide regales you with stories.

## On all Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Flight + Tour Combos include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

## Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 4 to 8 miles per day, with shorter and longer options on some days. There are daily ascents and descents, with an average elevation gain of up to 500 feet. Most of the hills are gradual, as opposed to short and steep. The terrain includes cobblestone streets, narrow gravel roads, springy turf, packed dirt trails, and a few stretches of loose gravel. The pace on this tour is leisurely, to allow for stops en route to explore villages, or to visit cultural and historical sites.

## DAY 1

### Join your *Italy: Tuscany & Umbria* tour

City tour of Siena; 2 hours, easy

Your guide(s) meet you at 9:30 a.m. in the lobby of Hotel de la Ville, Piazza Antinori, 1, Florence. Your guide(s) will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt. Please be dressed for city walking. Comfortable walking shoes required. (Sneakers are acceptable.)

After meeting in Florence, you transfer to Siena. The week begins with a walking tour of the historical center of Siena, an atmospheric Tuscan city. With its mixture of Gothic and Romanesque architecture dramatically set on three hills, Siena rivals Florence not only in beauty but also in culture. Following a light lunch of Sienese specialties, you explore the world-famous Piazza del Campo, presided over by its impressive town hall and tower. The Campo is the setting of the celebrated Palio horse race. Your engaging local guide leads you to the Duomo, the town's main cathedral, to view its striking marble façade.

Later, you transfer to San Quirico d'Orcia, one of the pilgrimage routes that connected northern Europe to Rome, and your home for the next three nights. An important stop during medieval times along the Via Francigena, San Quirico is a charming, walled, hilltop town surrounded by vineyards that produce three great Tuscan wines: Montepulciano, Brunello, and the Orcia DOC. Magnificent medieval architecture adorns its streets, and your boutique hotel is located just outside one of the town gates. A warm, wood-beamed restaurant in the heart of town welcomes you to dinner. Here, a glass of Brunello paired with a *bistecca fiorentina* (local grilled beef) is the perfect start to the week's culinary delights.

**Accommodation:** Villa del Capitano, San Quirico d'Orcia

**Included Meals:** Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 2

### Torrenieri to Pienza and Bagno Vignoni

6 miles, easy to moderate; optional 2-3 miles, easy to moderate

Today's exploration begins on the outskirts of San Quirico. After an initial short drive to the village of

Torrenieri, step onto a dirt lane that meanders along rolling terrain between the Orcia Valley and the Crete Senesi (Sienese hills) toward Pienza, the morning's destination.

Lunch awaits at an old Tuscan farmhouse, where your hosts welcome you with an assortment of local *pecorino* (sheep's milk cheese), cold cuts, and homemade preserves and pickles accompanied by their house wine. After lunch, you are driven a few minutes away to Pienza, the birthplace of Enea Silvio Piccolomini, elected Pope Pius II in 1458. Envisioning the creation of the "ideal Renaissance town," Pius II had the village renamed and entirely redesigned by Florentine architect Bernardo Rossellino. The village's restructuring came to a halt following Pius II's death, and the only part of the urban plan that had been completed was the town center, Piazza Pio II. Here, the main monuments lie harmoniously along the town's central axis, with the town hall opposite a 15th-century cathedral.

An optional afternoon walk departs from the tiny spa village of Bagno Vignoni, where you can soak your feet in the warm waters flowing out of the town's picturesque main square. This pool is the only one in Italy that is, in fact, a thermal pool. After returning to the hotel in San Quirico, you have time to relax before stepping out for another delicious dinner on your own (with recommendations from your guides) featuring local specialties.

**Accommodation:** Villa del Capitano, San Quirico d'Orcia

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 3

### Montalcino to Sant'Antimo Abbey and Castiglione d'Orcia

4 miles, easy to moderate

Today you depart San Quirico for a short drive to the trailhead for a walk through gentle hills in the shade of old-growth woods, skirting vineyards where the famous Sangiovese Grosso grape is grown for Brunello wine. Traverse farmland, ancient dwellings, wineries, and olive groves before making the dramatic descent to the isolated Romanesque Abbey of Sant'Antimo.

After, continue to the hilltop a truly authentic lunch of pink risotto and wild boar stew at one of our favorite trattorias, you return to San Quirico. You have an independent afternoon of exploring or relaxing (or perhaps indulging in a spa treatment at your hotel's nearby sister property). You may want to step out for a

pre-dinner stroll and a visit to the Horti Leonini—a wonderful example of classic Italian-style gardens, built by Diomedes Leoni in 1540. This evening, enjoy dinner on your own, with restaurant recommendations from your guides.

**Accommodation:** Villa del Capitano, San Quirico d'Orcia

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 4

### Transfer to Umbria: Assisi city tour and Spello countryside

3 miles, easy; 3-4 miles, easy to moderate

This morning you bid farewell to southern Tuscany as your drive winds through the rolling hills and medieval hilltop villages of the Crete Senesi, descends on the plains surrounding Lake Trasimeno, and enters the central valley of Umbria, a region known as the “Green Heart of Italy.”

Your morning is devoted to an exploration of Assisi. This stunning town sits in a commanding position on the slopes of Mount Subasio and has retained its charming medieval qualities and strong associations with St. Francis. The intriguing history of Assisi’s city center and the Basilica of St. Francis come to life with interpretation from your guide. Afterward, enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.

The afternoon offers several options. You may transfer to Spello, your home for the next three nights, to stroll its picturesque alleys or relax by the hotel pool. Alternatively, an easy walking option is offered—leading out of Assisi into the lush, surrounding countryside and olive groves all the way back to Spello. Dinner this evening is at an intimate restaurant, where you are welcomed with a glass of crisp Prosecco on a panoramic terrace overlooking the Umbrian plain.

**Accommodation:** Hotel La Bastiglia, Spello

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 5

### Gubbio

5-7 miles, easy to moderate

After breakfast, depart for Gubbio, the medieval masterpiece of Umbria that charms with its intimate alleys and surprisingly spacious panoramic piazza, flanked by the stunning *palazzo comunale*. Following a scenic drive, the morning walk's destination is the Church of Saint Ubaldo, perched high on the mountainside overlooking Gubbio. The church is the endpoint of the annual "Race of the *Ceri*," a colorful historical festival where locals race *ceri* (giant heavy wooden structures that resemble candlesticks). The walking route passes by limestone outcrops and a tiny chapel, then meanders through woods, along a creek, and up a narrow gorge. After visiting the church and admiring the three *ceri* contained within, enjoy a scenic funicular ride descending into town, where a lunch of regional specialties awaits. After lunch, you return to Spello, with an optional walk en route that traces ancient oak-lined farm roads leading all the way to the hotel. Your guides provide ideas for dinner on your own in town; many restaurant and trattoria menus offer chickpea soup drizzled with olive oil, bruschetta, or *strangozzi*, the regional square-shaped ribbon pasta (literally *shoestring-like*).

**Accommodation:** Hotel La Bastiglia, Spello

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 6

### Assisi to Spello via the Natural Park of Mount Subasio

5-9 miles, easy to moderate

After breakfast, you embark on a short transfer to the Natural Park of Mount Subasio, a protected area with serene paths meandering through open meadows and oak and pine woods. Mount Subasio is the sprawling mountain on whose flank Assisi is built. A haven of subtle beauty and spirituality, it was here that St. Francis preached to the birds as they gathered on tree branches. Hiking in the meadows along the summit of the mountain, you are likely to see grazing herds of sheep, white Chianina cows, and semi-wild horses before descending to lunch in the small, charming hamlet of Collepinò. The waiting table is spread with an ample antipasto of assorted bruschetta, followed by grilled meats and vegetables.

After lunch, you may choose to return to Spello by van or descend on foot, continuing through olive groves and alongside an ancient Roman aqueduct. This aqueduct once brought drinking water into town along the eastern side of the mountain.

This evening's farewell dinner is at an extraordinary venue in Assisi: a restaurant built on top of a glassed-in site of remarkable Roman ruins. You dine on the finest local cuisine and toast your week's adventures with a glass from the restaurant's world-class wine cellar.

**Accommodation:** Hotel La Bastiglia, Spello

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 7

### **Your *Italy: Tuscany & Umbria* tour concludes**

After a leisurely breakfast, you depart Spello for Rome. Time and weather permitting, a brief stop en route in the walled medieval hill town of Spoleto may allow for a walk in this stunning city, a former strategic Roman colony.. You arrive at Roma Termini (Rome's central train station) at approximately 1:30 p.m. Here, you bid farewell to your guides and make connections for onward travels.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## What's Included

### Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓
All on-tour meals except 2 dinners	✓
Local guides with you throughout tour	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓
Travel assistance available 24/7 provided by Allianz	✓