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Italy: Tuscany & Umbria

Travel Style - Guided Walking Tour

This small-group Guided Walking Adventure offers an authentic travel experience, one that takes you away from the crowds and deep into the fabric of local life. On it, you'll enjoy 24/7 expert guides, premium accommodations, delicious meals, effortless transportation, and local wine or beer with dinner. Rest assured that every trip detail has been anticipated so you're free to enjoy an adventure that exceeds your expectations.



As you cross the lavish inlaid mosaic floor of the Duomo di Siena, vaulted by striped marble columns and surrounded by the brilliance of inlaid gold, you'll see why Tuscany and Umbria are called the cradle of the Renaissance. From the glorious cathedrals and stonework piazzas of medieval cities to the stately rows of sun-dappled olive trees, the region boasts a refinement and pastoral splendor that is quintessentially Italian. In this spectacular setting, you'll walk a landscape of grape arbors, swaying wheat fields, and rustic farmhouses, stopping to explore Etruscan ruins along the way. You'll savor a bounty of sophisticated cuisine in renowned restaurants and family-run trattorias: fine cured meats, exquisite wine, shaved black truffles, traditionally pressed olive oil, and handmade pasta. Climbing to the summit of Mount Subasio—where St. Francis once preached to the birds—you'll pass through open meadows and wild oak forest, drinking in views of the surrounding valley beyond. Like the tang of aged pecorino cheese, the region's delectable essence will linger with you long after you've departed.

Tour Only Itinerary - 2019

Day 1

Join your Country Walkers *Italy: Tuscany & Umbria* tour

2 hours, easy

After meeting in Florence, you transfer to Siena. The week begins with a walking tour of the historic 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 Siennese specialties, you explore the world-famous Piazza del Campo, presided over by the 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 main cathedral, with its striking marble façade.



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Later, you transfer to San Quirico d'Orcia, and your home for the next two nights. An important stop during medieval times along the Via Francigena—one of the pilgrimage routes that connected northern Europe to Rome—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 adorn its streets, and your boutique hotel is located just outside one of the town gates. You are welcomed with dinner in a warm, wood-beamed restaurant in the heart of town; a glass of Brunello may be paired with a *bistecca fiorentina* (local grilled beef), a perfect start to the week's culinary delights.

Accommodation: Villa del Capitano, San Quirico d'Orcia

Breathtaking views of the Val d'Orcia await you at the renovated Villa del Capitano. Located near San Quirico's medieval walls, the hotel features bright rooms and contemporary design. Part of a family-owned collection of properties, this historic property prides itself on its authentic cuisine, from hearty breakfast buffets to a duo of restaurants serving traditional and innovative dishes that feature fresh local ingredients. Enjoy access to the outdoor pool and spa at a nearby sister property, and perhaps raise a glass of Brunello in the cozy bar.

Day 2

Torrenieri to Pienza and Bagno Vignoni

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

Today's exploration begins in 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. While the village's restructuring came to a halt following Pius II's death, the vision of Humanist urban space and planning was superbly realized in the town center, Piazza Pio II, where the main monuments lie harmoniously along the town's main axis, the town hall opposite the 15th-century cathedral.

An optional afternoon walk departs from the tiny spa town of Bagno Vignoni, where you can soak your feet in the warm waters flowing out of the town's picturesque main square—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 another delicious dinner featuring local specialties.

Accommodation: Villa del Capitano, San Quirico d'Orcia

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Day 3

Montalcino to Sant'Antimo Abbey

4-7 miles, easy to moderate

Today you depart San Quirico to walk through gentle hills, in the shade of old-growth woods, and skirt vineyards where the famous Sangiovese Grosso grape is grown for Brunello wine. You might stop to visit an ancient Etruscan settlement, still under excavation, before continuing through farmland, ancient dwellings, wineries, and olive groves to make the dramatic descent to the isolated Romanesque Abbey of Sant'Antimo.

After a truly authentic lunch of pink risotto and wild boar stew, you leave southern Tuscany; the drive winds through the rolling hills and medieval hilltop villages of the Crete Senesi, then descends on the plains surrounding Lake Trasimeno and enters the main valley of Umbria, a region known as the "Green Heart of Italy."

Your home for the next four nights—an elegant, centrally located, 16th-century property—is in Spello, a walled Roman and medieval town. Time permitting upon check-in, a short introductory walking tour provides an orienteering overview. This evening, an independent dinner awaits with your guides' advice; perhaps a lively local trattoria or a glass of Sagrantino red wine, Umbria's answer to Brunello, served alfresco on the terrace of your hotel.

Accommodation: Hotel La Bastiglia, Spello

Located in a former 16th-century grain mill in the walled medieval town of Spello, this elegant hotel boasts a wide terrace with panoramic views overlooking the Chiona Valley, an on-site restaurant, prestigious wine cellar, and outdoor swimming pool.

Day 4

Gubbio

5-7 miles, easy to moderate

Gubbio, the medieval masterpiece of Umbria, 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 end point of the annual "Race of the *Ceri*," a colorful historic



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festival where locals race *ceri* (giant heavy wooden structures that resemble candlesticks). The walking route passes by limestone outcrops and a tiny chapel, meandering 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 down to 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; the restaurant or trattoria menu may offer chickpea soup drizzled with olive oil, bruschetta, or *strangozzi*, the regional square-shaped ribbon pasta (literally *shoestring-like*).

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Day 5

Assisi city tour and Spello countryside

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

The 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. You tour its multifaceted historical center and the Basilica of St. Francis with interpretation from your guide. Afterward, enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.

The afternoon offers several options. You may return to Spello to stroll its picturesque alleys or to relax by the hotel pool. Alternatively, an easy walking option is offered—this time, venturing 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.

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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



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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, all 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 Collepinno. 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 to descend on foot, continuing through olive groves and alongside the ancient Roman aqueduct that once brought drinking water into town along the eastern side of the mountain.

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

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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 and view from the impressive Ponte delle Torri (Tower Bridge). 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.