



HEDONISTIC HIKING

Florence and Eastern Tuscany – 8 Days In the Footsteps of the Saints

See the **Piero della Francesca frescoes in Arezzo**, beautifully portrayed in the film “The English Patient”. Discover the magical **Casentino National Park** in northeast Tuscany with beautiful off the beaten track hikes. Visit the sights, experience the majestic views and explore the countryside that inspired **St Francis of Assisi** in the 13th century. Walk in the vineyards of **Chianti Rufina**, dotted with medieval castles and experience the lesser-known gems of the **Renaissance city of Florence** with an **exclusive guided tour** with a local guide.

What is included?

- **7 nights’ accommodation in 2 delightful hotels**
- **Two experienced and knowledgeable guides** who will look after your every need and bring this stunning area to life
- **All meals including wine.**
- **Gourmet picnic lunches** each day and snacks en route
- Dinner in a variety of **superb restaurants.**
- **Museum visits and wine tastings as per itinerary**
- **Support vehicle**, enabling you to walk as little or as much of the trail as you please
- **Transport to/from Florence** in air-conditioned minibus
- **Comprehensive pre-trip information.**
- **Luggage transported for you** so all you need to carry is a small backpack with water etc.
- **Hands-on cookery class with local chef**
- **Private tour of Florence with local guide**

Itinerary

The walking holiday starts and ends in **Florence**, the cradle of the Renaissance. There are daily flights from the UK to Florence airport and the city is on a main train line. The nearest intercontinental airport is Pisa and we can help you to arrange airport transfers from there if required. You can also join the tour in Arezzo which is on the train line from Rome. The first days of the tour are spent in the Casentino National Park in the beautiful wooded upper valley of the Arno, and area of superb scenery and charming villages. The final days of the tour are spent in the vineyard-clad hills near Florence and include an exclusive guided tour of Florence with a fabulous local guide.



Day 1

Meet Florence Airport at 11am or Florence Santa Maria Train station at 1145am. We drive to Arezzo (1hr) where we have lunch in a local Trattoria before visiting the beautiful fresco cycle of the Legend of the True Cross by the Renaissance artist Piero della Francesca. Continue to Poppi (1hr), a small village in eastern Tuscany with a 12th century castle. We stay for the next 4 nights in the delightful family-run I Tre Baroni hotel in the Casentino National Park. Time to settle in before a welcome drink followed by dinner in a local restaurant.



Day 2



Start the day with a visit to the evocative Hermitage of Camadoli in its peaceful position amongst the trees at 1100m. We hike along woodland trails in the Casentino National Park which open up to afford delightful views to the small villages in the upper Arno Valley. Picnic near the pretty village of Stia, residence of the powerful Guidi family in medieval times and an important centre for hand-made textiles.

In the afternoon we continue our walk, passing the 11th century castle of Romena and the enchanting Romanesque church of the same name. (14km).

Day 3

We walk through a thousand-year-old forest in the Tusco-Romagnola Appennines to the monastery of Camaldoli, founded by the Benedictine monk St Romuald in the 11th century. Picnic in the woods before returning to the hotel. This afternoon we join the chef to learn how to make fresh pasta with plenty of opportunity for hands-on involvement. Relaxed dinner where we can enjoy the fruits of our labours. (6.5km)



Day 4



Starting above Poppi we climb up through chestnut and beech woods to 1200m, passing small villages with beautiful views to the valley. We stop for a delicious picnic en route and, in the afternoon, a steady climb brings us to La Verna, the site of the cave where St Francis was once a hermit. Visit the sanctuary before returning to Poppi by van. Dinner in the excellent hotel restaurant this evening. (16.5km)



Day 5



Today we depart Poppi and drive to the Passo della Consuma. We walk through the woods, vineyards and hills of Tuscany to the 13th century Castello di Pomino. The castle has been owned by the Frescobaldi family for 700years. Visit the castle and wine-cellar and enjoy a tasting of the Frescobaldi wines before we continue to Fattoria Lavacchio, a delightful farm where we stay in very comfortable accommodation with lovely views for three nights. Dinner in a local Trattoria. (12km)

Day 6

We start our walk at the pretty village of Santa Brigida. Walk through the largely unspoilt countryside surrounding Florence, past vineyards and through woods to arrive at Fiesole. The former Etruscan settlement on the hill which affords one of the most stunning views of the lovely city of Florence in the valley below. Dinner in the farmhouse restaurant. 16.5km



Day 7



Drive to Florence where we are met by renowned local guide Freya Middleton who shares her passion and knowledge during a private tour including some of the lesser-known treasures of the city. Time to visit some of the Florence museums and do some shopping before we return to our hotel. Memorable final dinner in the medieval Nipozzano Castle, home to the noble Frescobaldi family for seven hundred years.

Day 8

Return to Florence for 1030am



Walking

Shortest day: 6.5km

Longest day: 16.5km

There are 5 days of walking on the trip. We walk on strade bianche (gravel roads), through vineyards, along woodland tracks and quiet tarmac roads. There is always van support with the opportunity to walk a half-day and spend the afternoon relaxing. This area of Tuscany is one of rolling hills with some significant ups and downs on a couple of days. Sturdy walking boots, with good ankle support, are recommended. Walking poles would be an advantage, especially on steeper sections.



Weather:

Spring and autumn are delightful times to walk in central Italy. We are quite high up at times so can take advantage of the cooler temperatures for walking.

May: Max 25° Min 18°. Rainfall 55mm

Sept: Max 24° Min 18°. Rainfall 55mm

Dates:

24th-31st May 2012

Cost:

€2455

Single supplement (double room for single use): €245

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