

Holiday: Hills of Southern Tuscany

Rating:  level

Holiday type: Independent Walking

- Classic Tuscan countryside; stunning unspoilt views
- Hilltop wine towns of Montepulciano and Pienza
- Friendly hotels - swimming pools at all - great local cuisine
- Bathing in hot natural springs too
- Cypress trees, sunflowers and olive groves
- Lovely friendly people; excellent value-for-money holiday



Italy

This holiday takes in the best walks in the southern part of Tuscany, from Monte Amiata to the hidden Orcia valley, and from Etruscan hot soda baths to the mediaeval hilltop town of Montepulciano. It uses the excellent Siena Province footpaths. Some are forest trails, others *strade bianche* (unsurfaced “white” roads) criss-crossing the countryside among the vineyards.

The area is richly historical too, with the celebrated hilltop towns of mediaeval Montepulciano and Pienza, Pope Pius II’s perfectly preserved Renaissance “new town”. But there are also lesser known gems: the tranquil square of Roman baths at Bagno Vignoni; the proud hill village of Rocca d’Orcia dominated by its 11C fortress, and the untouched charm of Montichiello, a mediaeval hill village left behind by the 21st century. Our hotels offer traditional Tuscan country cooking, and there are opportunities for tasting the famous *Vino Nobile* of Montepulciano.



4 Corners Images

“Tuscany’s flora is Mediterranean. Expect to see silver fir, beech and oak trees alongside meadows bright with irises, crocuses, orchids and lilies. You may also find rare mushrooms, ferns and lichen.”



World Pictures

Hills of Southern Tuscany: Day by day



Day 1 Arrive in Montepulciano

You arrive at Sig. Pagliai's friendly hotel - with indoor pool - overlooking the magnificent church of San Biagio. Dinner is taken in one of our favourite local restaurants.

Day 2 Montepulciano/Campiglia d'Orcia 16km/10mi/4.5hr

You begin your holiday with a scenic transfer through the hills surrounding Montepulciano. Then, crossing little streams and rivers, your walking route takes you through archetypal Tuscan countryside: sunflowers, smooth hills and cypress trees. A final climb takes you up through woodland to the hamlet of Campiglia d'Orcia nestling in the shadow of Monte Amiata where a warm welcome awaits.

Day 3 At Campiglia d'Orcia

Why not take a leisurely stroll down to the hot springs at Bagni San Filippo (6km each way), with a picnic and bathe in the natural rock pools underneath petrified waterfalls of bright limestone? Nadia, your hotelier, knows a good route. Horse riding is available at the hotel for those with some experience. Or explore the pretty hamlet of Campiglia d'Orcia, or further afield to neighbouring Vivo d'Orcia enjoying stunning views over towards Pienza along the way.

Day 4 Campiglia d'Orcia/Bagno Vignoni 15km/9mi/4hr

A woodland track leads you past stunning views all the way across the broad Orcia valley to the Sienese Crete and the hills beyond. Up to Rocca d'Orcia, one of the last Sienese bastions against Florentine expansion. Take time here to explore the maze of mediaeval streets before joining the lazy Orcia river, which leads you to the Osteria dell'Orcia opposite Bagno Vignoni.

Day 5 At Bagno Vignoni

The hot spring basin here was an important Etruscan site, and consecrated to the Nymphs by the Romans. It's marvellously peaceful here too as the centre is closed to cars - explore the antiques shops or savour a cappuccino in one of the cafés near the thermal baths. For those wanting to venture further afield, mediaeval Siena, with one of the most beautiful squares in Europe, can be reached on the local bus.

Day 6 Bagno Vignoni/San Quirico 18km/11mi/4.5hr

Following the Orcia westwards, you really feel you're entering a secret place, with Rocca d'Orcia dominating the valley and herons fishing in the clear river. Time to admire the picturesque fortress at Ripa d'Orcia before turning north to San Quirico - great views of Montalcino - magnificently outlined on its hillside.

Day 7 At San Quirico

Our stylish hotel here has a park and a large heated outdoor pool with panoramic views. Mediaeval San Quirico is charming (12C collegiate church and Renaissance formal gardens), or a bus will take you to hilltop Montalcino for wine tasting in its mediaeval fortress.

Day 8 San Quirico/Pienza/Montepulciano 18km/11mi/5.5hr

We give you a lift to Pienza, a 15C Papal city with quintessential Renaissance architecture. Then it's along the aptly-named "Strada Panoramica" to Monticchiello, a mediaeval hill village where time seems to have stood still. Shortly, you approach Montepulciano from the west - its most impressive side - via the magnificent Church of San Biagio, standing alone outside the city walls in a classic and prominent setting.

Day 9 Leave Montepulciano



For departure dates,
prices and travel
options please visit
our website at:
www.headwater.com

Walking Details

This walking holiday follows *strade bianche* (white roads) and partly shaded forest and valley paths. There are no dizzy heights.

