



## Spotlight on Tuscany



Highlights: Montecatini Terme, Florence, Lucca, Gothic Line, Pisa, Cooking Class, Siena, Choice on Tour, Winery Tour, Cheese Farm, San Gimignano

9 Days • 10 Meals: 7 Breakfasts, 3 Dinners

**Day 1: Overnight Flight** Rolling landscapes, savory wines, delicious food and stunning architecture...this can only be Tuscany. Unpack once on this journey among Italy's most charming towns.

**Day 2: Montecatini Terme, Italy** - Tour Begins Your tour opens in the famous spa resort town of Montecatini Terme, nestled in the heart of the rolling hills of Tuscany. This evening, get to know your fellow travelers during a welcome dinner where regional foods and Italian wines kick off your adventure. (D)

**Day 3: Florence** A cultural tour in the "Cradle of the Italian Renaissance" showcases the beautiful city of Florence. Start with a visit to the Academy Gallery\* to see Michelangelo's magnificent sculpture of *David*. Then, join a local Florentine guide who highlights many of the city's priceless treasures. At the Piazza del Duomo, the center of religious life in medieval Florence, see the impressive Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore and the gilded bronze doors of the Baptistery dedicated to St. John. Take the remainder of your time in Florence to explore this unparalleled city as you choose. Later, while en route to your hotel, visit a family-owned leather shop and learn about the traditional Italian techniques of leather making. (B)

**Day 4: Lucca - Borgo a Mozzano - Gothic Line** Set out on a guided visit to Lucca, Tuscany's best-kept secret. Renaissance walls, Romanesque churches, medieval streets flanked by towers, and delightful squares are just some of Lucca's charms. Visit the medieval Basilica di San Frediano. Its otherwise simple façade

is adorned with a colorful 13th-century mosaic. Enjoy some time to explore at your own pace. Then set off for Borgo a Mozzano to see the remarkable *Ponte del Diavolo* (Devil's Bridge). Continue on to the Gothic Line. Built by the Germans, it was one of their last lines of defense during WWII. You'll visit the Museum of Liberation and see the actual fortifications and bunkers. (B)

**Day 5: Pisa** Explore the many historic sites in the ancient maritime Republic of Pisa including the *Piazza dei Miracoli*, or "Field of Miracles" (UNESCO). Keep your camera handy during our stop at the famous Leaning Tower of Pisa. You probably won't be able to resist taking a picture that makes it appear as if you are holding this iconic structure up. Visit the Baptistery, the largest in all of Italy. This impressive building of Romanesque and Gothic architecture is known for its perfect acoustics. This evening, travel to the quiet countryside to learn the secrets of traditional Tuscan cuisine. Partake in a cooking class featuring a bounty of local ingredients and culinary techniques that have been passed down for generations. Then sit down and enjoy the fruits of your labor during dinner. (B, D)

**Day 6: Siena** Welcome to Siena. Discover this charming town with a local guide. Embark on a walking tour through its narrow Gothic streets. Take in stunning palaces, mansions and the historic Piazza del Campo along the way. Then, **it's your choice!** Explore Siena's beautiful Gothic cathedral at your own pace **-OR-** join your guide to get to know local life in a *contrada* (neighborhood). Next, make your

way to a Tuscan winery and meet the people behind some of Chianti's finest wines. Learn from experts as you savor a selection of the local varieties. You'll also learn about the art of winemaking and the process of making olive oil. (B)

**Day 7: Montecatini Terme** The day is yours to relax and experience the local flavor. Take this opportunity to shop at the local boutiques and dine at one of the many fine local restaurants. Or, perhaps you will choose an optional excursion to Cinque Terre with its rugged coastline dotted with terraced vineyards; explore its string of fishing villages nestled between the mountains and the Mediterranean. (B)

**Day 8: San Gimignano - Cheese Farm Visit** This morning make your way to a cheese farm. Learn how the famous pecorino cheese is made before sampling

it for yourself. Soak in breathtaking views of the Tuscan hills as you travel to the hilltop village of San Gimignano, one of the most picturesque places in Tuscany. Explore this enchanting medieval town, from its famous 14 towers to its magnificent vistas overlooking the vineyards of Tuscany. Enjoy free time and perhaps indulge in some gelato. A delightful experience awaits this evening when you attend a Tuscan feast featuring traditional cuisine and savory wines in the magical Tuscan countryside. (B, D)

**Day 9: Montecatini Terme - Tour Ends** Your journey comes to a close today. Depart with many fond memories of Tuscany. (B)

