

Self-Guided Southern Tuscany Bike Tour

Duration: 7 Days/6 Nights

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hiking and cycling in italy

The Hilltowns of Southern Tuscany

Southern Tuscany is essentially postcard Tuscany. Peruse a stand of postcards in Florence and you will inevitably find image after image of this colorful paradise. This is the quintessential Tuscan landscape shaped by the esthetics of Renaissance planners. There is the full color palate here. Bright red poppies, yellow broom flowers, and silver leaf olive trees stand out against a lush green background. Ancient builders got it right. They built stone farmhouses on hilltops and surrounded them with cypress trees. They constructed the entire town of Pienza to be the highest representation of humanist urban design. Castles, churches, and shrines were folded into the landscape and woods were cleared to make way for vineyards and olive groves. On this bike tour you will see the best of this extraordinary region. You will stay in spectacular hilltowns including Montalcino, Pienza, Montepulciano, and Cortona. You will tour a Brunello winery, swim in a hot thermal pool, visit a cheese farm, and explore an ancient castle. Huge vistas will accompany every ride.

Route Rating

Moderate: 8-27 miles (13-44 km) per day cycling over hilly terrain.

Meet / Finish

Florence / Cortona

Highlights

- Winery visit with guided wine and oil tasting
- Swim at a thermal spa
- Tour a pecorino cheese farm
- 12th century castle visit
- 8th century abbey
- Tuscan hilltowns of Montalcino, Pienza, Montepulciano, and Cortona
- Beautiful Tuscan scenery



Day 1 Buonconvento

The abbey of Monteoliveto Maggiore *11 miles (18 kilometers) Optional Ride*

We meet in the center of Florence and shuttle together by private van to Buonconvento. The drive takes about two hours. You check into your hotel and walk to a small restaurant for lunch (included in the tour price). Over lunch your tour coordinator reviews your tour day by day and answers any questions. After lunch ride to the abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore. The abbey is surrounded by a spectacular landscape unique to Tuscany known as the Crete Senesi. Rich in clay, the soil is used to grow wheat and cereals. The colors are right out of a Tuscan color palette with earthy tones like terra cotta, olive green, blue and gold. Dinner in Buonconvento.



Hotel

Hotel Ghibellino

Buonconvento (1 night)
The Ghibellino is a small modern hotel located on the edge of the historic center of Buonconvento. The rooms are modern, quiet, and air-conditioned.
www.hotelghibellino.it

The Ride

Day 1: 11 miles (18 km).
Long gradual uphill to the abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore. Quick downhill back to Buonconvento. (optional ride)

Sites of Interest

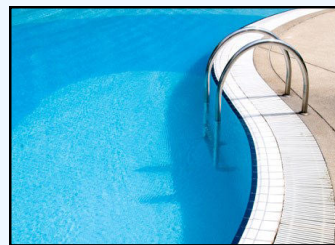
Brunello Winery Tour

Learn about Tuscany's most famous red and enjoy a guided wine tasting.



Hot Spring Spa

Swim or soak in thermal hot springs at Bagno Vignoni an ancient spa.





Day 2 Montalcino

Buonconvento to Montalcino

8 miles (13 kilometers)

Extra miles available

After a buffet breakfast at the hotel pedal 9 miles (15 km) to Montalcino, a spectacular hill town with stunning views of the surrounding emerald green countryside. Visit the Montalcino castle and its well-stocked enoteca. Enoteca is an Italian word which literally means “wine repository”. Be sure to climb the steps to the top of the castle walls for great views. Dinner in Montalcino.

Hotel

Dei Capitani

Montalcino (2 nights)

This hotel features incredible views, a swimming pool, and renovated rooms and bathrooms.

The hotel is located in an 18th century building in the historic center of Montalcino.

www.deicapitani.it

The Ride

Day 2: 8 miles (13 km). A short ride with a big up-hill to Montalcino.

Why Self-Guided?

Explore Tuscany at your own pace. We provide detailed route notes, a cell phone, luggage transfers, great accommodations, restaurant suggestions, and sightseeing notes. You choose the dates. We take care of the details.

Other Questions?

Toll free 1 888 421 2418

info@charnestours.com

Day 3 Montalcino

Montalcino to Sant'Angelo in Colle
20 miles (32 kilometers)
Extra miles available

After a buffet breakfast at the hotel roll downhill to Sant'Antimo, a beautiful Romanesque church set in a picture-perfect setting. Legend has it that the abbey was founded by Charlemagne in 781. Cycle through vineyards and olive groves to tiny Sant'Angelo in Colle, a perfectly preserved medieval village. The main piazza has two restaurants where you can enjoy some traditional Tuscan fare al fresco. Tour a winery that produces Italy's best red, the Brunello di Montalcino and enjoy a guided wine tasting. Dinner in Montalcino.



The Ride

Day 3: 20 miles (32 km)
A long downhill. A ride through vineyards and a long uphill.

Siena, Italy Weather

<i>Mon</i>	<i>High °F</i>	<i>Low°F</i>
Jan	45	37
Feb	46	37
Mar	50	40
Apr	55	44
May	64	52
Jun	71	58
Jul	77	64
Aug	77	64
Sep	70	59
Oct	62	52
Nov	52	44
Dec	46	39

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Bagno Vignoni thermal pool

Day 4 Bagno Vignoni and Pienza

Montalcino to Pienza

23 miles (37 kilometers)

Extra miles available

Your ride takes you through open countryside where cypress trees line the roads to stone farmhouses. In mid-morning stop in the town of San Quirico. Encircled by fortified walls, San Quirico is a perfect place for a cappuccino break. Be sure to visit the sublime Horti Leonini, a 15th century Italian garden. Look carefully and you can find a rose garden. After your break it is a short ride to a thermal spa. Bagno Vignoni was first used by the Romans two thousand years ago. Instead of a piazza the centerpiece of the village is a large thermal pool. Swim or soak in the soothing thermal waters. Rich in minerals, the water is said to have medicinal effects. From Bagno Vignoni cycle to Pienza. Pienza was the hometown of Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405-1464). When Piccolomini became Pope Pius II he decided to refurbish his poor hometown and turn it into his summer papal resort. What was built is the earliest example of a Renaissance "ideal town". The town has been perfectly preserved and is pleasantly car-free. Pienza features a couple of extraordinary family-run restaurants with mothers in kitchens making old family recipes. Dinner in Pienza.

Hotel

Hotel Corsignano

Pienza (1 night)

The Corsignano has breathtaking views of the Orcia Valley and offers a terrace with a hot tub.

Rooms are spacious and modern.

www.hotelcorsignano.it

The Ride

Day 4: 23 miles (37 km)

Mostly downhill to Bagno Vignoni. Gradual climb to Pienza (with one steep kilometer before town).

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Day 5 Montepulciano

Pienza to Montepulciano

17 miles (28 kilometers)

Extra miles available

Ride to a family-run cheese farm just outside of Pienza and learn how full cream sheep's milk is lovingly transformed into pecorino cheese. Lunch on a sunny terrace at the cheese farm is included today. After lunch pedal to Montepulciano. Off the beaten tourist trail, Montepulciano is a picturesque hilltown rich with Renaissance architecture. Along the way visit medieval Montechiello, a tiny hamlet with ancient walls and towers. Montepulciano is home to a fantastic red wine called the Vino Nobile. Tour the cellars of the Cantina Contucci winery. Dinner in Montepulciano.

Day 6 Cortona

Montepulciano to Cortona

27 miles (44 kilometers)

Cortona is folded into a hillside 600 meters (2,000 feet) above sea level and offers majestic Tuscan and Umbrian views. Francis Mayes presented Cortona to the world in her book, *Under the Tuscan Sun*. Despite the book's great popularity Cortona retains its small town charm. Cortona is one of the most charming hilltowns in Tuscany.



Hotel

Mueble il Riccio

Montepulciano (1 night)

This small inn is located on the oldest street in Montepulciano steps away from the town's main piazza. The hotel has a roof top terrace with majestic views. Rooms feature air-conditioning and WIFI.

www.ilriccio.net

Hotel San Michele

Cortona (1 night)

The Hotel San Michele is the nicest hotel in the center of Cortona. The hotel is located in a 15th century mansion. The building has been completely renovated, but retains its Renaissance charm.

www.hotelsanmichele.net

The Rides

Day 5, 17 mi (28 km)

Rolling countryside with no substantial climbs.

Day 6: 27 mi (44 km)

We saved the longest for last. Long downhill, followed by some rolling countryside with a climb up into Cortona.

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Day 7 Bike Tour End

After breakfast in the hotel you check out and continue your travels. The hotel desk can help you with your travel plans.

DEPARTURE ON LAST DAY OF TOUR

Your bicycle tour will end in the town of Cortona. Frequent trains make for easy departures. Travel times are listed below:

Cortona to Rome: 2 hr 30 min (10 per day)

Cortona to Florence: 1 hr 30 min (hourly)

Note: Cortona is on a main north-south train line. You can travel to Rome or Florence without changing trains.

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