

# Hidden Italy Tuscany 1 self-guided walking tour-

## Montalcino to Montepulciano: 6 days / 5 nights:

Starting in Montalcino, four days later this walking tour finishes in Montepulciano. It is an area as famous for its rolling hills, wheat fields dotted with red brick farmhouses, stands of deep green cypress pines and endless views as it is famous for its wines and food. The Via Francigena was the medieval road that bisected the valley and was for several centuries the principal way linking Papal Rome with northern Europe, carrying pilgrims, traders, Crusader armies, emperors and popes. It is lined with castles, monasteries and villages that date from this period. Most of the paths and thoroughfares that you follow also date from the era.

Along the way you stay in some of the cultural treasures of southern Tuscany: a beautifully restored pilgrim town with a large pedestrian centre; a magnificent papal town and Montepulciano, 'pearl of the Renaissance'.

### **The walks**

This is a Grade 1 walk. The walks are from 10 to 12 kilometres and take between 3 to 4 hours. They are well marked and generally follow good, unsealed country roads through undulating hills. There are several rougher sections but the trails are easy to follow. The walk is suitable throughout the year.

### **The accommodation**

Hidden Italy uses the best accommodation available. On this tour all the accommodation is in family-run, three star hotels which are based in centrally located, restored heritage buildings which themselves are part of the local history except on Day 2 where you'll stay in a private serviced apartment in the centre of a medieval village (as there are no hotels).

### **The food**

Generous breakfasts are included each day (you'll need them for your walks). With notice, the hotels will be able to prepare a cut lunch for the walk. Dinners are not included in the standard however, if you select the 'Dinners option' (which we recommend) this will include 3 course meals alla carte (ie free choice) in some of the finest restaurants in the area. The dinner option also means you'll have a guaranteed booking each night.

### **What's included in this walk?**

- Five nights' accommodation
- all breakfasts
- lunch and dinner recommendations
- reading lists and historical and cultural notes
- maps and detailed walking instructions
- daily transfers of baggage between hotels
- pick up at either Siena or Chiusi (on the Rome/Florence rail line) and drop-off at the end in Chiusi
- 24 hour backup from local manager

# Tuscany 1 self-guided walk Itinerary

## Day 1

You will be picked up at either Siena or Chiusi and taken to Montalcino, a perfectly preserved walled hilltop town, famous for both its views and its red wine, Brunello di Montalcino. Included in your notes is a short walk around the outside of the town's walls.

## Day 2

The first walk takes you down through forests to a Romanesque abbey isolated in fields of wheat and vineyards, which is one of the most beautiful in Tuscany. Your accommodation for the night is in very comfortable apartment (with a home-cooked dinner) in the small village that overlooks the abbey. (12 kms, 2.5 hrs)

## Day 3

Today you climb up through vineyards and olive groves, to a beautifully restored medieval pilgrim town, a key point on the road to Rome, which is now a peaceful agricultural town and one of the most charming in the area. Despite its pedestrian centre, two beautiful Romanesque churches and several beautiful gardens, which still remains relatively unvisited. (12 kms, 3 hrs).

## Day 4

Today you follow parts of the medieval road down into the bare, rolling hills of the Val d'Orcia, with sweeping views across the valley to the forests and peaks of Mount Amiata before a short climb up to your base for the evening. This enchanting little town was the birth place of one of the more important 15th century popes, who had the modest village razed and then rebuilt in his honour, creating one of the gems of southern Tuscany, a fine example early Renaissance architecture. (12 kms, 4 hrs)

## Day 5

The last walk takes you through forests to Montepulciano. On the way you pass a tiny fortified village, perfect for lunch. Perched on a hill between the Orcia and Chianina valleys, Montepulciano was an ally of Florence in their relentless war against Siena, and was amply rewarded and has an extraordinary architectural heritage from this period. (13 kms, 4 hrs).

## Day 6

After breakfast at 9.00 you'll be transferred to nearby Chiusi on the main Rome/Florence railway line.

# Tuscany Wine and Cooking Option

## 3 days / 2 nights

### Day 1:

Morning: Pick up from Chiusi or Siena and transfer for a guided visit to the 'monastery of the moon', a magnificent 14th century monastery with famous frescos followed by a wine tasting in the monastery's medieval cellars. Lunch: Lunch will be at a small family vineyard near Montalcino.

Afternoon: visit to another excellent producer of Brunello di Montalcino, one of Italy's great wines, and a visit to a local honey producer. Evening: Your accommodation is in a very good family-run 3 star hotel in the heart of Montalcino. The evening is free.

### Day 2:

Morning: Cooking lesson: you will be driven to a nearby farm, where you'll be taken through five courses (including home made pasta) by a local cook, with your English guide translating. Lunch: Lunch will be your morning's work, accompanied by local wines.

Afternoon: After lunch (around 2.30pm) you'll have a number of options, that can be decided at the time, including: visit to a cheese maker; an easy walk through forest to a neighbouring town; and/or a visit to a local thermal springs that have been used since Etruscan times. Evening: the evening is free in lovely Montalcino.

### Day 3:

Morning: This morning you can either start the first day of your Tuscany 1 itinerary or finish your visit and be transferred to either Siena or Chiusi.

### Inclusions of wine/cooking option:

- two nights' accommodation
- breakfast and two lunches
- private English-speaking guide and private vehicle throughout your visit
- 3 three wine tasting/vineyard visits
- transfer to and from Siena/Chiusi (on the main Rome-Florence train line)