

THE BEST OF TUSCANY, UMBRIA & LE MARCHE

14 Sept - 26 Sept 2017
(13 days/12 nights) AUD \$6,285



The rolling hills of Tuscany, Umbria and Le Marche are dotted with vineyards and olive groves. This area of Italy is famous for being known as, the 'Green Heart' of the Peninsula.

Each region has its own particular character offering spectacular scenery, authentic cuisine and romantic hilltowns. It is also a journey from the Medieval period to one of the most splendid eras of European civilization: the Renaissance. The experience starts in Rome where you will see works by the greatest masters of the period who were commissioned by the Bishops of Rome. The tour ends where it all started in Florence, the home of the Medici. Between these two highlights, there will be guided tours to explore the treasures and experience the life in centres such as Urbino, Gubbio, Loreto, Assisi, Perugia, San Gimignano, Volterra and Siena. Your tour leaders, Mario, Viny and Gianni complement the tour with their intimate knowledge of the history, culture and Italian way of life.

We will give you the opportunity to experience the excellent hospitality of the people of Central Italy with its abundance of traditional local food and wine. You will enjoy leisurely lunches and special dinners in traditional restaurants and *osterie*. There are also opportunities to shop at local markets and speciality shops.

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 Rome (D) Your tour leaders will meet you at the Hotel in the centre of Rome at 4.00pm. Introductions and a small talk on the tour will precede an afternoon walk through some of the famous iconic areas of Rome. The guided walking tour will include Piazza della Repubblica, The Fountain of Trevi, The Spanish Steps, Piazza Barberini and Via Veneto. The walk will end with an early dinner in a traditional restaurant.

Day 2 Rome/Loreto/Pesaro (BD) Today we leave the Eternal City and travel in air-conditioned comfort through some of the most beautiful countryside of the Central Apennines to Pesaro on the Adriatic Coast. Before reaching Pesaro we make a stop at Loreto, a beautiful hill town second only to Assisi and Rome as a place of religious pilgrimage. The town is a showcase of some of Italy's greatest artists and architects. We then travel north to the City of Pesaro, which will be our home for the next 4 nights. After check in, an optional *passeggiata* of the historic centre of the city will precede a dinner at the hotel.

Day 3 Pesaro/Urbino (BL) Today after breakfast we explore the land once ruled by the lords of Montefeltro. The day is devoted to visiting Urbino, one of Italy's most fascinating towns of the Renaissance. It is also the birthplace of Raphael. A conducted tour of the magnificent Ducal Palace, which houses the *Galleria Nazionale delle Marche* with its precious paintings by Piero della Francesca, Tiziano, Paolo Uccello and Raphael. Lunch is organised in Urbino in a traditional restaurant where we taste the local *casciotta* cheese with *crescia* bread. Free evening in Pesaro.

Day 4 Pesaro/San Marino/San Leo (BL) Today after breakfast at the hotel, we travel just over the Le Marche border to the tiny Republic of San Marino. San Marino claims to be the oldest state and constitutional republic in the world and is also worth a visit for its history, pageantry and its magnificent hilltop setting, which offers excellent views of the surrounding countryside. After a walking tour of the historical centre there will be some free time to explore the small streets of this enchanting city state as San Marino is jammed with heavily discounted duty free shops. We then travel to San Leo with its ancient fortress perched on sheer cliffs. We will have a rest in the beautiful town square where we will have lunch and taste the delicious *formaggio di fossa*: a cheese walled up in rock caves to mature for months. Free evening in Pesaro.

Day 5 Pesaro/Urbania (BL) After breakfast the group will experience an unforgettable day. We travel to the historical city of Urbania where the group will be guests of Donatella and Giorgio from their award winning *osteria*. The morning will be taken up with a series of cooking lessons on local cuisine and you will prepare lunch using locally made products. You will then enjoy your fabulous lunch with local wines in a beautiful country setting. Free evening in Pesaro.

Day 6 Pesaro/Gubbio/Assisi (BD) After breakfast we travel across Le Marche to the beautiful preserved medieval town of Gubbio in Umbria. There will be ample time to wander through the streets of this seldom visited gem. After lunch, we make our way to the famous town of Assisi which will be our base for the next three days. Dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 7 Assisi (BD) Today is dedicated to Assisi, the home of one of Italy's greatest, beloved saints, St. Francis. Assisi has always been an attraction for the great artists of Italy. In the Basilica of St Francis we will view many of these masterpieces culminating with Giotto's Fresco Cycle. The afternoon is devoted to exploring the streets of this mystical town. Dinner will be organised at a traditional local restaurant.

Day 8 Assisi/Perugia (BL) After breakfast we travel by bus to the magnificent university City of Perugia: a centre of art and culture. Perugia is striking for having retained much of its medieval appearance. The day will be spent enjoying a leisurely walking tour of the historical centre and its many sites before lunch in a traditional Umbrian *osteria*. Free evening in Assisi.

Day 9 Assisi/Siena/Florence (BD) Today our journey takes us through some of the richest parts of the Italian countryside and on to Florence, the city of the Medici. On the way to Florence there will be a special visit to Siena to admire the Cathedral and the Piazza del Campo, one of the most beautiful squares in Europe and learn about the famous race the Palio. After our arrival in Florence, the group will check in at the hotel and the rest of the day will include a walking tour, which features the Piazza del Duomo and its cathedral, the Giotto Campanile and the magnificent East Door of the Baptistery known as the 'Gates of Paradise'. Dinner at a restaurant in the centre of Florence.

Day 10 Florence (BD) This morning is devoted to the Santa Croce district on the eastern edge of the *centro storico* of Florence. There will be a guided tour of the impressive Basilica of Santa Croce, a Franciscan church with the tombs of some of Italy's most famous artists and thinkers such as Michelangelo, Galileo, Machiavelli and Ghiberti. There will also be a visit to the famous leather school of Santa Croce to view authentic Florentine leather production. The rest of the day will be free to explore

this beautiful city and wander through the famous markets shopping for leather and gold goods. In the evening dinner is organised in a local restaurant.

Day 11 Florence/San Gimignano/Volterra (BD) Today we travel south from Florence through some of the most picturesque areas of the Tuscan countryside to visit the medieval hill town of San Gimignano. Housed within its historical 13th Century walls this beautiful town is renowned for its famous medieval towers and exquisite local white wine. There will also be an afternoon visit to nearby Volterra, considered one of the most beautiful towns in all of Tuscany and renowned for their long history of artistic works made with local alabaster. Dinner back in Florence.

Day 12 Florence/Chianti Region/Greve (BLD) Today we take a picturesque drive through the Chianti region, quintessential Tuscany. You will experience the atmosphere of this part of Italy which is full of small villages and hundreds of vineyards and olive groves dotting the countryside. We will stop for morning tea in the beautiful town square of Greve in Chianti followed by a special wine tour and lunch at one of the oldest wineries in the area. Final dinner in Florence at a local *pizzeria*.

Day 13 Florence (B) Mario, Viny and Gianni farewell the group after breakfast at the hotel.

Items included in the Tour

- All land travel in an air-conditioned mini buses
- Accommodation for 12 nights in 3/4 star hotels in Rome/Pesaro/Assisi/Florence
- 12 breakfasts
- 8 dinners
- 5 lunches (Meals include special lunches and dinners in traditional local restaurants and *osterie* as detailed in the itinerary)
- Regional wines and mineral water served with meals
- Admission to all galleries, museums, wineries and historical sites included in the itinerary
- Personally guided tours to all towns mentioned in the tour
- Services of the tour leaders throughout the tour

Items not included

- Airfares
- Travel insurance (we strongly recommend you take travel insurance during your travels) Vita Italian Tours can arrange airfares, travel insurance, pre and post tour accommodation and transfers for you if needed.
- Admission fees to places other than those specifically itemised in the itinerary
- Meals on tour except when specifically mentioned in the itinerary
- Drinks outside normal meal times or additional wine or other drinks in restaurants
- Personal transport costs, phone calls and other personal needs
- Accommodation Tax

Cost

The cost of the tour, land content only, is **AUD \$6,285** per person in twin share accommodation. A **deposit** of **AUD \$500** is required to reserve a place on the tour which is not refundable unless the tour is cancelled. **Single** supplements are available at an additional cost of **AUD \$680**. **The full balance** is due 90 days before departure. **The tour** is costed on a minimum of 6 people travelling on the tour with the maximum number of 14 people.

We recommend that you carefully read the conditions applying to Vita Italian Tours

Additional information

The weather: it is the beginning of autumn. It can still get warm during the day however the evenings are cool. We recommend light, conformable clothing, a light jacket with your favourite walking shoes. The countryside is undulating and hilly. Many of the hill towns have their historical centres closed to traffic and therefore lots of walking is required. You should expect to stroll leisurely for up to an hour with many breaks for sightseeing, coffee and a taste of the local produce. **The program** appears to be full; however it is mixed with long restful lunches and leisure time for your enjoyment and comfort.

If you need to, you can always take time off from the organised program.

For further information

Visit the web site **www.vitaitaliantours.com** for the full list of tours.

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