

EXPLORE!

A Taste of Tuscany
8 days

Italy - Trip code TOLT

A Taste of Tuscany

Tuscany's fantastic local produce and cuisine are the perfect accompaniment to the natural beauty of its landscapes. Enjoy hikes in the hidden gem of its Garfagnana Valley, in the hills outside Lucca and through the vineyards and rolling hills of Chianti country. See how regional specialties are produced, taste the local wines and stay on a family-run farm.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Garfagnana Valley** - Hike the picturesque trails of this hidden gem
- ★ **Lucca and Florence** - Tuscany's most beautiful Renaissance cities
- ★ **Agriturismo accommodation** - Traditional hospitality and home-cooked food
- ★ **Local produce** - See how local specialties are made and taste them!
- ★ **Chianti** - Ramble among the vineyards and taste the famous Chianti wine

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

WALKING GRADE:

Easy

Suitable for most people in good health, these easy walks are predominantly on good paths, at low altitude and on undemanding terrain. Previous walking or trekking experience is not necessary.

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip Pisa; drive to our agriturismo in the Garfagnana Valley

After joining at the airport we drive to northern Tuscany's Garfagnana Valley where we stay on an agriturismo, (accommodation on a small working farm) near the valley's main town, Castelnuovo di Garfagnana. On arrival we can enjoy an aperitif on the terrace taking in the great views of this hidden corner of Tuscany. Supper tonight is the first of several home-cooked meals of local flavours that we will enjoy here.



Accommodation: Agriturismo Le Casine di Braccicorti (or similar)



Standard Agriturismo



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Dinner

DAY 2 - Cheese factory visit; walk in the Apennines

After breakfast, we drive for around 20 minutes to the small locality of Verrucole and Vibbiana, where we visit a caseificio (cheese factory). We learn all about the cheese making process and enjoy a tasting of the local Tuscan cheeses include pecorino, cacciotta and ricotta. Our next destination is the Orecchiella Natural Park in the beautiful beech forests of the Apennine Mountains. Starting at around 1300m, we descend from the park on marked trails via the small shepherds' settlement of Pruno to the lovely village of Corfino at 850m. There's time to rest and relax in one of the local bars here before our bus comes to collect us. In the early evening we will be treated to a cookery demonstration by our hosts of some simple and easy regional recipes.

Today's eight kilometre walk is mostly downhill and should take approximately two-and-a-half hours with a total descent of 450 metres.



Accommodation: Agriturismo Le Casine di Braccicorti (or similar)



Standard Agriturismo



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 3 - Garfagnana Valley walk to Castelnuovo; slow food lunch, visit to Barga

After breakfast, we head into nearby Castiglione di Garfagnana, a lovely medieval walled town and the starting point for a walk through fields, forests of sweet chesnut and small villages, a great insight into life in the Garfagnana Valley. Following ancient trails, we arrive in Castelnuovo di Garfagnana, the region's main town, with time to explore the atmospheric back streets. Lunch today is a real treat - we eat at the Vecchio Mulino restaurant, run by Andrea, who shares his knowledge of the local slow food produce of the area. Our tasting dishes include local meats, cheeses and honey, flans and crostata, best accompanied by a glass of wine or two!

Later in the afternoon we drive south to visit the city of Barga, famed for its location, perched on the side of the valley with a splendid cathedral dominating the skyline.

Today's 10 kilometre valley walk is expected to take approximately three hours with a total descent of 480 metres and an ascent of 180 metres.



Accommodation: Agriturismo Le Casine di Braccicorti (or similar)



Standard Agriturismo



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 4 - Walk in Lucca Hills and wine tasting; drive to Lucca

Today we depart from the Garfagnana Valley to drive towards Lucca, a gem of a walled Renaissance city. En route we stop at the Devil's Bridge or 'Ponte di Madalena', a medieval bridge dating back to the 12th century that has become one of the icons of the Garfagnana. Amongst the rolling hills and vineyards of the countryside to the north-east of Lucca are a number of grand historic villas and gardens, once used by the rich as their summer retreats. There will be the option to visit to one of the most opulent, the 16th century Villa Torrigiani, known for its Baroque facade and almost kilometre long avenue of cypress trees, before setting out on a walk in the area of the villas of Lucca ending with a visit to the Colle di Bordocheo farm and vineyard to sample some of the wines made in the Colline Lucchese DOC (controlled designation of origin). Arriving in Lucca late afternoon, there should be time for a first wander in the streets of this fantastic walled city before dinner.

Today's walk in the hills of Lucca is around eight kilometres and will take us around four hours with a total ascent of 410 metres.



Accommodation: Hotel Rex (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 5 - Opportunity to visit Pisa or optional Lucca walk; wine tasting in Lucca

Today there is the option to take one of the frequent trains (approximately 20 minutes) to Pisa for some time in the city to explore. Its famous leaning tower and beautiful Campo del Miracoli are stunning testaments to a time when the city was one of the Mediterranean's major maritime powers. Alternatively one can stay and enjoy the delights of Lucca. A good option is to walk, or hire a bike and cycle, on the city walls which are up to 12 metres thick in parts and offer a great vantage point over the city. There will also be a short optional walk organised from the city in the shadow of the Nottolini Acqueduct that will head towards the Parole D'Oro of Lucca. We will then meet up in the afternoon in Lucca for a wine tasting in one of the cellars at an old Bottega.

Today's 9 kilometre optional walk is along the flat and is expected to take approximately three hours.



Accommodation: Hotel Rex (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Drive to Florence; orientation walk around the city

This morning we drive to Florence and will drop off our luggage at our hotel before heading into the city for an orientation tour on foot with the tour leader. The rest of the day has been left free so you can explore at your own pace and according to your own interests. Florence is the spiritual home of the Renaissance and considered to be one of the most beautiful cities in Italy. During your visit you may wish to visit the Ponte Vecchio, the oldest and most famous bridge in Florence and the only one that was not demolished during the German retreat of 1944. The present construction dates back to 1345 and is now cluttered with goldsmiths' shops. The religious centre of the city is, of course, the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore with its giant dome or duomo. It took 14 years to build and dominates the city skyline. Close by are other artistic wonders, including the Baptistery, the East Door, which was called the Gate of Paradise by Michelangelo, and Giotto's famous bell tower as well as the Piazza della Signoria.



Accommodation: Hotel Privilege (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Walk in Chianti country with wine tasting included

The Chianti region stretches from Florence to Siena and is one of Italy's best-known and photographed landscapes with green, gentle hills covered with vineyards and olive groves and small stone villages. Today we drive into the heart of Chianti to Panzano from where we enjoy a walk through the beautiful Chianti countryside to the main town of the region, Greve in Chianti, which has a lovely piazza (market square). En route we will stop at the Cantina of Lamole for a tour of the vineyard and tasting of the famous

Chianti Classico wine. After some time to explore the town, we return to Florence for the evening.

Today's 13 kilometre walk is expected to take us approximately four to five hours with a total ascent of 220 metres.



Accommodation: Hotel Privilege (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Trip ends in Florence

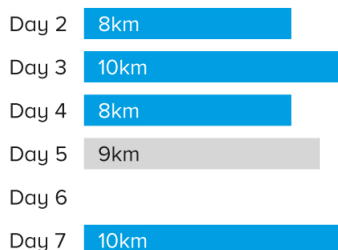
The trip ends this morning after breakfast in Florence. If you are flying from Pisa Airport today, Explore will organise for your transfer direct to the airport by public shuttle bus with a journey time of around 70 minutes.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Walking and Trekking information

DAILY DISTANCE



Optional Walks

Walking grade

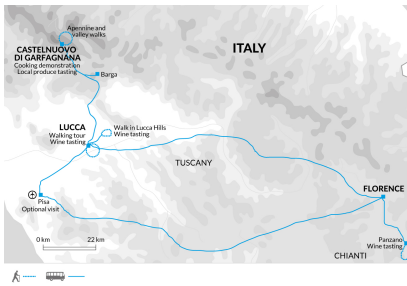
Easy

Trek details

Walks on 4 days for between 2.5 and 4 hours with an additional optional 3 hour walk from Lucca. Walking is on generally on well-maintained trails, although there may be some rocky sections underfoot. Our hike in the Appenine Mountains is primarily downhill. We have graded the walking on this trip as Easy.

Max walking altitude (m)

1380



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7
Lunch: 3
Dinner: 3



Transport

Bus
Train



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Driver



Accommodation

3 nights standard agriturismo
4 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Italy

Climate

April/May and October/November are pleasantly warm. June/September are the hottest months. Showers are common in Autumn.

Time difference to GMT

+1

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Roman Catholic

Language

Italian

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for

guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Lucca Hills - Villa Torrigiani; garden only €7 pp, villa and gardens - €11 pp

Clothing

Take light and comfortable clothing that can be layered according to the temperature. July and August are the hottest months whilst early and late in the season go prepared with clothing to suit drops in temperature and possible showers. Take your swimming gear, light rainwear may be needed at any time of year, and a warm fleece/jacket is recommended for cooler evenings and nights.

Footwear

We recommend you bring lightweight walking boots, make sure that your boots are worn-in and comfortable before the start of the trip. Also trainers or sandals for relaxing and general wear. We suggest that on international flights you either carry your walking boots in your hand luggage or wear them - should your luggage be lost or delayed, your own boots are the one thing that will be irreplaceable.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece and a daypack.

Equipment

A water bottle, sunhat and high factor sunscreen are all essential. A torch is useful in case of power cuts or emergencies. Trekking poles are not essential but can be useful on the ascents and descents.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Country Information

Italy

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£5.00 - 10.00

Dinner price

£15.00 - 20.00

Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

Water price

£1.00 - 2.00

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Euro.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

GBP.

Where To Exchange

We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in

major cities and large airports.

ATM Availability

Major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance

Larger hotels and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques

Only in major towns. Please note, the exchange rate for cash and Travellers Cheques is poor.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Train

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

In the Garfagnana Valley we stay on an agriturismo, where guesthouse accommodation is located on a working farm. Started in the 1950s as an initiative to reverse the closing down of small non-profitable farms, Italy's agriturismo movement encouraged farmers to redevelop their properties for paying guests by converting parts of the farm such as old barns and outhouses, into guest accommodation to supplement their agricultural income.

Essential Information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

Italy: Visas are not required by UK, E.U Nationals, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions

relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Maximum altitude (m)

1380

Italy

Vaccinations

Nothing required. Tetanus recommended. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

