

EXPLORE!

BEST SELLER

Trails of Hidden Tuscany

8 days

Italy - Trip code TTY



Trails of Hidden Tuscany

This centre-based walking holiday explores the landscapes of Tuscany's hidden gem - the Garfagnana Valley. Nestled between the 'marble mountains' of the Alpi Apuane and the rolling Apennines, this is an area of outstanding natural beauty. There's also the opportunity to take a trip to the coast and hike along part of the celebrated Cinque Terre coastal path. Each evening return to our comfortable agriturismo (farm stay) for some typical home-cooked Tuscan cuisine.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Agriturismo accommodation** - enjoy traditional hospitality and home-cooked local cuisine at our farm-stay
- ★ **Garfagnana Valley** - Discover the picturesque landscapes of Tuscany's hidden gem
- ★ **Varied walking** - Hike trails in the Orecchiella National Park, Apennine Mountains and Serchio River Valley
- ★ **Cinque Terre** - Opportunity to walk the UNESCO World Heritage landscapes of the Tuscan Riviera
- ★ **Lucca and Pisa** - Optional visits to two of Tuscany's most beautiful cities
- ★ **Monte Forato** - Hike to this natural rock arch for views to the Mediterranean Sea

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:

Moderate

For those who are fit and active, these moderate walks are normally on good paths and tracks at low altitude. Days may include some fairly demanding ascents and descents, so previous experience is preferable but not essential.

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 at Pisa airport; drive to our agriturismo

Arriving in Pisa today, we drive to our agriturismo which will be our base for the next seven nights. This family-run working farm offers us traditional and comfortable accommodation and is surrounded by the magnificent scenery of the Apennines and the Alpi Apuane. We can look forward to enjoying good, local food and excellent hospitality in the magnificent setting of the Garfagnana Valley.



Accommodation: Agriturismo Le Casine di Braccicorti (or similar)



Standard Agriturismo



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Dinner

DAY 2 - Hike in Pania Corfino Orecchiella National Park

After breakfast this morning, we drive up into the Apennines to Pruno, at an altitude of 1000 metres in the Orecchiella National Park. From here, we will hike via the Sella de Campaiana Pass to the summit of Pania Corfino, at an altitude of 1609 metres. Our route takes us through a beautiful landscape of beech forests. After enjoying stunning views and a picnic lunch at the summit, we retrace our steps back to the bus for our return to the agriturismo.

Today's 12 kilometre hike is expected to take approximately six hours with a total ascent and descent of 610 metres.



Accommodation: Agriturismo Le Casine di Braccicorti (or similar)



Standard Agriturismo



Standard Agriturismo



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 3 - Trek in the Alpi Apuane Mountains

This morning we drive south into the Torrite Valley, where we will begin our walk near the small village of Fornovolasco at an altitude of 610 metres. From here, we will be able to see our destination, the impressive rock arch of Monte Forato at an altitude of 1220 metres. Ascending to the Petrociana Pass, we gain our first views of the coast and the surrounding marble quarries. Further on, there is a short ten-minute section that requires some easy scrambling, before continuing up towards the natural rock arch, resembling a huge window looking down on the coast. We plan to enjoy a picnic lunch, with fine views across to the Dead Man Formation and the Pania della Croce, before beginning our descent.

Today's 10 kilometre walk is expected to take approximately five hours with an ascent and descent of 795 metres.



Accommodation: Agriturismo Le Casine di Braccicorti (or similar)



Standard Agriturismo



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 4 - Optional walks on Cinque Terre Coast or in Garfagnana Valley

Today is left free with two options if you do wish to walk. The first option involves travelling by train to the stunning World Heritage coastline of the Cinque Terre region, where five tiny villages nestle among sheer cliffs to create one of the Riviera's most scenic delights. We take the train to Corniglia, the only one of the five villages not sitting directly at sea level. The station itself is below the village down a flight of several hundred steps. Luckily, there are some great views to enjoy during your rest stops on the way up! We spend some time in Corniglia before setting out on a walk of around an hour and a half to the neighbouring Cinque Terre village of Vernazza. We pass through a landscape of vineyards, olive groves and native plants including aloe and prickly pear. On arrival, there's time to enjoy lunch at one of the many restaurants - a plate of seafood perhaps? In the afternoon we continue for another hour and a half along the coast to Monterosso al Mare. For anyone not wishing to join the afternoon walk, there's the option to take a scenic boat ride to Monterosso. In Monterosso there's time to explore the side streets, known as the 'carrugi', before heading back to Garfagnana on the train.

For those not wishing to visit the Cinque Terre, a second walking option takes us from the town of Piazza al Serchio back to our agriturismo along sections of the Volto Santo, a medieval pilgrimage trail to Lucca where the cathedral is home to a cross and image of Jesus known as the Volto Santo. The route passes through fields, hamlets and villages and there's a chance to visit the 12th century castle of Verrucole along the way.

Please note that for logistical reasons a minimum of 4 participants is required to offer each of the optional walks.

Today's seven kilometre optional Cinque Terre walk is expected to take around four hours with plenty of time to explore the villages that we pass through. The 16 kilometre Volto Santo walk will take around five-and-a-half hours with a total ascent of 310 metres and descent of 250 metres.



Accommodation: Agriturismo Le Casine di Braccicorti (or similar)



Standard Agriturismo



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 5 - Free day to visit Lucca or Pisa by train

Today has been left free for us to enjoy more of the highlights of this beautiful region at our own pace. Options include mountain biking, or perhaps a day of gentle relaxation at our accommodation. Another popular alternative is to take a train ride across the Lucchese Plains to the picturesque city of Lucca, to explore its Romanesque churches and Renaissance architecture. A visit to Pisa is another possibility, with its famous leaning tower and beautiful Campo del Miracoli - stunning testaments to a time when the city was one of the Mediterranean's major maritime powers.



Accommodation: Agriturismo Le Casine di Braccicorti (or similar)



Standard Agriturismo



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Garfagnana Valley exploration walk

Much of the Garfagnana Valley is national parkland, a beautiful region of unspoilt wilderness that is home to deer, wild boar, martens and eagles. Sandwiched between the Alpi Apuane and the jagged spine of the Apennines, the Garfagnana is one of Tuscany's most visually impressive and staunchly traditional regions, where local customs and a love of fine food remain an important part of everyday life. Today we take a walk along the lower reaches of the valley, hiking through the villages and lush landscapes that line the banks of the Serchio River.

Today's 14 kilometre walk is expected to take approximately six hours with an ascent and descent of 350 metres.



Accommodation: Agriturismo Le Casine di Braccicorti (or similar)



Standard Agriturismo



Swimming pool available



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 7 - Apennine ridge walk to Tuscany's highest summit, Monte Prado (2054m)

Today, the plan is for us to enjoy a circular walk from the ski station at Casone, up along the main ridge of the Apennines, to the summit of Monte Prado. At an altitude of 2054 metres, this is the highest peak in Tuscany. On our circuitous route through the heart of the Apennines and Tuscan Emiliano Park, we will pass through beech forests and beautiful landscapes, offering wonderful alpine views.

Today's 14 kilometre walk is expected to take approximately six hours with a total ascent and descent of 750 metres.



Accommodation: Agriturismo Le Casine di Braccicorti (or similar)



Standard Agriturismo



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 8 - Trip ends at Pisa Airport

Today we depart Castelnuovo di Garfagnana and drive back to Pisa, a two hour journey that ends at the city's airport, where our trip finishes at 1100.

For those of you that have an afternoon or evening flight, there is the opportunity to travel into Pisa before returning to the airport for your flight. The airport has luggage storage facilities and there is a regular monorail service to the central station. This is at your own expense and unaccompanied but the leader will be able to assist with information and what better way to finish a trip to Tuscany than visiting Pisa!



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Walking and Trekking information

DAILY DISTANCE

Day 2	12km
Day 3	10km
Day 4	7km
Day 5	
Day 6	14km
Day 7	14km

Optional Walks

Walking grade

Moderate

Trek details

Five day walks of between four to six hours. Terrain varies from wide forest trails to narrower and sometimes rocky mountain paths that can be uneven under foot. Three of the walks involve ascents/descents of more than 600 metres, the Garfagnana Valley walks and Cinque Terre optional walk are less demanding.

Max walking altitude (m)

2054



Why book this trip

This trip stays in an agriturismo - accommodation on a working farm. We use two different properties, both enjoy stunning views of the surrounding mountains and offer comfortable, rustically furnished en-suite rooms and have outdoor swimming pools.

Five reasons to choose an agriturismo holiday in Tuscany with Explore:-

- Staying off the beaten track, you'll experience authentic rural Italy
- In the heart of the beautiful Tuscan countryside, there's fantastic walking on your doorstep
- Staying alongside the owning family makes for a more immersive experience than staying in a hotel
- Enjoy fresh and often organic produce from the farm and delicious regional cuisine
- Support Italy's agriturismo movement and help to halt the abandonment of farms and depopulation of the countryside

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7
Lunch: 4
Dinner: 4



Transport

Minibus
Taxi
Train



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Driver



Accommodation

7 nights standard agriturismo

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.

Cinque Terre optional walk - Total €28.50 (Train €21 return journey, National Park trek pass €7.50)

Cinque Terre boat trip - €5

Bike Hire - Mountain Bike - €20 adults, Road Bike - €25 , €15 childrens bikes

Horse Trekking - €30 p.p. an hour and a half for guided horse treks.

Day Trip to Lucca/Pisa - Train from €12 return, Leaning tower €18, Pisa cathedral €3.50, bike hire in Lucca €3 per hour.

Day Trip to Florence - €9 each way on train, 2.5hrs each way.

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. Light rainwear may be needed at any time of year, and a warm fleece/jacket is recommended for cooler evenings and nights. Take your swimming gear as our accommodation has a pool.

Footwear

We recommend you bring walking boots with ankle support- leather or fabric are both fine. Some of the paths are a bit rocky underfoot and so you could twist an ankle if not wearing 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 daysac.

Equipment

You will need a water bottle (preferably 1-2 litres), and high factor sun cream. You may like to bring trekking poles, particularly as some of the descents can be long and a bit tough on the knees. A torch is useful in case of power cuts/emergencies.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Trip 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

Minibus, Taxi, 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.

This tour stays at 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.

We use two different properties, both enjoy stunning views of the surrounding mountains, offer comfortable, rustically furnished en-suite rooms and have outdoor swimming pools. They provide home-cooked, traditional Italian meals, often using produce from the farm.

'Le Casine di Braccicorti' is surrounded by vineyards, fields and woodland, yet is still close to the centre of the small village of Villetta San Romano. Guests are accommodated in both the main farm building (a former barn) and independent chalets which have been converted from the farm outhouse buildings. There are plenty of open terraces and patios equipped with tables and chairs where you can relax, and a beautiful wood burning stove for chillier evenings. The communal dining area is located in the main villa along with a lounge and relaxing reading area, where WiFi can also be accessed. The chalets accommodate guests in independent apartments, each for two people. Some have private bathrooms whilst others share a bathroom between the two apartments. No more than three people will share one bathroom. The two double rooms in the main villa have en suite bathrooms and are next to the communal lounge and dining room.

'La Costa' is located in the centre of the small medieval village of La Villa. The property dates back to medieval times and is said to have origins back to the 12th century as an Ospedale or rest stop on one of the area's trade route. The main house later became a convent. In the main building, there's a communal area with a lounge to relax in as well as the main dining area where WiFi can be accessed. The 11 rooms at La Costa are all different and have been simply furnished in the traditional Tuscan style with antique furniture and tastefully decorated in pastel tones. Rooms are set up in the style of an apartment, with each accommodating two people in a double/twin bedroom with TV, en suite bathroom and private kitchen.

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)

2054

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.