



*Where our tour of Tuscany takes place...*

## **Val d'Orcia**

The Val d'Orcia region of Tuscany extends from the hills south of Siena to Monte Amiata. Gentle, carefully cultivated hills are occasionally broken by valleys and picturesque towns and villages such as Pienza (rebuilt as an "ideal town" in the fifteenth-century under the patronage of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini), Radicofani (home to the notorious brigand-hero Ghino di Tacco) and Montalcino (the Brunello di Montalcino is counted among the most prestigious of Italian wines). Tuscan landscapes have become familiar to us through works of art from Renaissance paintings to modern photographs. In 2004 the Val d'Orcia was added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

## **Monte Amiata**

Approximately two-thirds of the Italian boot is covered with mountains. The Alps run across its northern borders and the Apennines down its centre to the toe. Only two of the most important peaks stand-alone: Mount Etna in Sicily and Monte Amiata in the Tuscan provinces of Grosseto and Siena. Although Tuscany is certainly one of Italy's most popular tourist destinations, Monte Amiata, unlike Chianti to the north and the Maremma to the south, remains off the beaten path. This extinct volcano is 1,738 meters at its summit. It provides enough geothermal activity to heat the baths of little known, but bijoux spas at Bagno Vignoni and Bagni San Filippo. It is a worthwhile discovery for Tuscany explorers and Italophiles in search of unspoiled nature, hospitable people, and genuine traditional cuisine. It is a perfect place to unwind after a great day of cycling!

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## Maremma

Maremma amara - "bitter Maremma" - the area in the province of Grosseto that makes up the southernmost part of the region.

It was traditionally populated by the *Butteri*, cattle-breeders, who used horses until recently, with a distinctive style of saddle.



### Day 1 “Arrival day”



You will be picked up at the airport and transferred to the first hotel in Pienza, close to the historical centre. The transfer will take 2.5 hours. Check in and dinner with local Tuscan dishes.

(Photo at left: main square of Pienza)

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## Day 2 “The Nobile di Montepulciano Wine Road”

Level:

Distance:



75 km/44 miles



After breakfast you will have a briefing of the entire tour and bike testing. The first ride takes you through the smooth hills and medieval towns of the Val D’Orcia, reaching Montepulciano, which is famous for its two excellent wines, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano and Rosso di Montepulciano.

(Photo at left: Wine cellar of Montepulciano).

Montepulciano is packed with interest and charm. There is a final climb to reach its medieval centre. After Montepulciano the rest of your ride will take you through the rolling hills of Monticchiello. The castle and walled town of Monticchiello was the fiefdom of the local family of the Lombardi. The village within the fortifications remains intact, with medieval characteristics. Walking along its alley-like streets is like ‘breathing’ Tuscan medieval life. Bagno Vignoni contains the ruins of a famed Roman bath and San Quirico d’Orcia is the quintessential heart of Tuscan’s typical landscape. You will stay in Pienza for the night.

## Day 3 “The Orcia Valley”

Level:

Distance:



60km/43 miles

After breakfast the group leaves Pienza, riding in the direction of Montalcino, starting with a smooth and long descent of 6 km, followed by a climb of 9 km, reaching

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Montalcino with its breathtaking view from the castle ([Photo below](#)).

Montalcino is known for the highly qualified Brunello wine. In Tuscany there are only 6 D.O.C.G wines. The wine has the denomination of verified and guaranteed origin. (D.O.C.G. is the highest classification level for Italian Wines). **Sightseeing in Montalcino:** from the ramparts of the fortress (*fortezza*) take a look at the beautiful view. Visit of the old historical centre, the square with its small cafés and wine shops.



After a strong Italian Espresso the group will ride to the Abbey of Sant'Antimo ([Photo below left](#)). The route is mostly flat/downhill and after 9 km you reach the old abbey, which is wonderful to visit. Afterwards enjoy a light lunch in one of the local restaurants. In the middle Ages this was the site of one of the richest cloisters in Tuscany. By the end of the 13th century the Benedictine abbey had begun to decline. Today, only the church remains. Many architectural



details of the church are atypical of Tuscany and reveal influences of the French Romanesque style.

This is due to the connection of the Benedictine order with France. Leaving the abbey the route keeps on for 10 km mostly flat and downhill, enjoying curves and rolling hills until you reach Monte Amiata Scalo, an old train station of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From here your climbing skills will be tested again. You will climb for 8 km reaching Castiglione d'Orcia at 520 meters.

From Castiglione D'Orcia you can enjoy the view to the Orcia valley and the descent of 6 km riding to the final stop of Bagno Vignoni.

([Photo at right: Bagno Vignoni](#)).

The unique character of Bagno Vignoni, besides the thermal waters, is its unchanged structure.

The main square (*piazza*) of this town is unlike any other. It is centred by boiling water that flows at 52° Celsius! The thermal water basin is in the middle of the square, closed on three sides by the town walls, 1.5 meters high. Your cycling for the day ends here and you transfer to the next hotel.

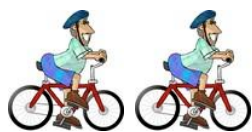


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## Day 4 “The Etruscan Route”

Level:



Distance:

89 km/53 miles

Depart after breakfast for the town of Sorano. First part of the ride is mostly downhill. This route is the longest of the tour. First stop of the day is Sorano, the oldest Etruscan town in the area. Do some sightseeing.

The tour moves on in the direction of Pitigliano and is mostly flat for 9 km. Pitigliano and its area were inhabited in Etruscan times, but the first extant written mention of Pitigliano is dated 1061. In the early 13th century it belonged to the Aldobrandeschi family, and by the middle of the century it had become the capital of the surrounding county.

The group rides on 4 km to Sovana (mostly flat) a suitable spot for a relaxing light lunch. Next and last stop: the hot spring of Saturnia (Photo at right) after 33 km rolling hills through the Maremma landscape. The legend regarding the birth of Saturnia tells that the god Saturn, angry with the people who were always at war with each other, sent a thunderbolt to earth, giving life to a magic spring of warm waters, which contain sulphur, said to be able to pacify man. The group will be transferred back to the hotel by bus.



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## Day 5 “The Bolsena Lake Tour”

Level:



Distance:

75 km/44 miles

The first 20 km of today’s ride is mostly downhill, biking through the castle town of Piancastagnaio and reaching the Cassia highway SS2 (the old Roman road which connected Rome to Northern Europe). You will enjoy a lot of curves and the panoramic views of the last part of the Orcia valley. Following the main road you will cross a small bridge, which is the boundary between Tuscany and Latium (the popes region). After biking upward for 5 km you reach the first town of Latium: Acquapendente. Follow the well-marked sign for Orvieto and you will enjoy the hills and landscape of the Latium area. After some effort you reach the top of Orvieto, the capital of Etruscan culture and a wonderful town for sightseeing by bike. Outstanding view of the Province of Umbria. You leave Orvieto for the isolated town of Bagnoregio and after 10 km you will reach the tiny lakeside town of Bolsena where the bus will pick you up.

**Orvieto:** The origins of Orvieto go back to the Etruscan civilization: the first Etruscan settlements, going back to the 9th Century B.C., (Photo below) were found inside the tufaceous caves in the bedrock upon which today rises the city. Annexed in the 3rd Century B.C. to the territories of Rome, it remained under the Roman domination until the decline of the Western Roman Empire after which it became a free municipality. During the struggles between the Guelphs and Ghibellines, the city was a valiant opponent of Barbarossa, remaining faithful to the Pope. Riding on the support of the Papal State, it was allowed to prosper through the entire Medieval Period, reaching the top of its development in the 13th Century with the constitution of the General Council of the 400 and the election of the Captain of the People.



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**Bagnoregio:** (Photo at left) the origins of Bagnoregio go back to the pre-Etruscan era. However, due to the large number of earthquakes it has suffered, very little has remained of its past. Civita di Bagnoregio is also known as the dying town. The tuffaceous hill upon which Civita stands is undermined by the continuous erosion caused by two streams flowing in the valleys below and by the action of rain and wind: thus it is crumbling away, slowly but inexorably.

Today Civita is an enchanted place, where time seems to have stopped. From Civita, you can take a wonderful view over the lunar landscape created by the Calanchi (big clay formations rising all around Civita). The complete absence of cars makes the atmosphere inside Civita even more unreal. Across from the Belvedere, linked to the world by a single, narrow bridge 300 meters long, stands Civita, set gently upon its summit, with its tuft of medieval houses.

**Bolsena:** Lake Bolsena, 114 sq. Km, with a perimeter of 43 Km, is the largest lake in Lazio and the fifth largest in Italy. It is the largest Italian lake formed from the crater of an extinct volcano. Sixty kilometers of panoramic road skirt the lake, at times down by the shore, at times up to the surrounding ridges. The lake has two islets where the typical Mediterranean scrub vegetation thrives. Around the edge of the lake, oak and chestnut woods are interspersed with vine and olive cultivation.

## **Day 6** “The Maremma”



**Level:**

**Distance:**

**47 km/28 miles**

After breakfast, you depart by bus to Paganico. The luggage will be transferred to the next hotel in the Maremma area of Tuscany. Today the riding is mostly flat. Check In; relax on the grounds with dinner at the hotel.

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## **Day 7** “The Tuscan’s Coast”



**Level:**

**Distance:**

**59 km/35 miles**

The route is mostly flat, riding through rolling hills covered with fields of sunflowers in season.

The quaint village of Castiglione della Pescaia stands out like a jewel. It is a unique and charming tourist town, characterized by its impressive medieval castle dominating the seaside village, where the song of the seagulls welcoming the return of the fishing boats measures time. While its history is mainly connected to the Etruscan people, whose traces you can find everywhere, nowadays its main property is the pureness of its unspoiled surroundings, extending from the clean beaches to places of great naturalistic importance, like the nearby Parco Naturale dell'Uccellina.

For lunch fresh caught fish is recommended. After your ride back to the hotel, relax on the grounds with a Gala Dinner at the Agriturismo to cap off the tour.

## **Day 8** “Departure Day”

After Breakfast, check out and depart by bus to the airport.

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