

PEFT - Colours Of Tuscany



8 Days in Length

Starting at: \$2,050.00 CAD land only

Just \$256.25 per day.

Operated By:



Description:

This journey takes you into the heart of the 'real,' Tuscany. The image so often lauded in film and print of a bucolic Tuscan paradise still genuinely exists and is the essence of this week long experience - so put **on** your rose coloured glasses! Florence is the starting point of our tour, a treasure-trove of art, history and architecture that has captured the imagination of travellers for centuries. We also visit Siena, arguably Italy's most enchanting medieval city, with its splendid redbrick streets and elegant public square set in the shadow of the glorious Palazzo Pubblico. We then trade the grandeur of these Renaissance cities for the beautiful iconic Tuscan countryside. We base ourselves at our wonderful 'Agriturismo,' accommodation nestled on a farm estate in the rolling hills between Siena and Volterra, a location that delivers the true epitome of what Tuscany has to offer - peerless views, undulating landscapes speckled with rustic villas and a network of scenic trails. Highlights include a visit to the celebrated town and signature towers of San Gimignano and as a interesting counterpoint we explore the charming medieval walled village of Colle di Val d'Elsa all but unknown to mass tourism. We then move to our next base, the hilltop village of Volterra, an important Etruscan settlement rich in history possessing a relaxed ambiance and perfect marriage of ancient, medieval and contemporary attractions. From Volterra we enjoy walks that deliver both magnificent scenery and traditional way-of-life in equal measure. You may just feel as though you are caught in the cross-hairs of a cinematographers lens as we explore the true 'Colours of Tuscany.'

Map:



Activities:

- Walks & Rambles
- History & Culture
- Hiking & Trekking

Countries Visited:

- Italy

Itinerary:

Day 1 Florence Your trip starts today with your arrival in Florence, the cultural capital of Italy and the gem in Tuscany's crown. No activities are planned so you may arrive at any time. Please make your own way to the joining hotel that is centrally located (details are in your travel documents). Should you be arriving in the home of the Renaissance by rail, Florence's central Stazione di Santa Maria Novella is a hub for direct services from cities such as Rome (two hours), Milan (three hours), Venice (three hours) and Bologna (one hour). We suggest visiting www.trenitalia.com for exact timetable information. If arriving in Florence by air please make sure to be aware of which airport you will be arriving at. Amerigo Vespucci (airport code FLR) is only five kilometres from the centre of Florence and is used mainly for domestic arrivals and connections for long-haul international flights via Rome. Galileo Galilei (airport code PSA) is located nearer Pisa and is the more common arrival airport for flights originating in Europe. There are very regular train services to Florence from Galileo Galilei via Stazione Pisa Centrale - the journey time is approximately 45 minutes. Whilst at your discretion, Peregrine recommends arriving/ departing by train where possible within Europe due to this method of transports minimal carbon emissions. In the evening we meet our tour leader and our fellow travelling companions at a Welcome Meeting (this is usually at 6pm, but you will be advised as to the exact time and place on a notice, located near the reception of our hotel), where our leader will give us a briefing on what lies ahead on our tour. There is so much to see and do in Florence so if this is your first time to the city we strongly recommend booking some extra nights accommodation before the tour to make the most of your time here.

Day 2 Siena - Monteriggioni - Agriturismo This morning we travel by private minibus to Siena and have time to discover the best of this most celebrated medieval city. Its heart, in every sense, is the famed 'Piazza del Campo', a grand fan-shaped piazza built on the site of the old Roman forum. Bordering the southern flank of the square is the 14th-century Palazzo Pubblico, with some fine early Renaissance frescoes. Also of interest is the main church, the Duomo, a wonderful mixture of Gothic and Romanesque architecture, with a particularly splendid façade. A short round walk together with our guide shows you the most interesting monuments, and then there is some free time to explore. After lunch we meet again in the Piazza del Campo and we travel by minibus to Monteriggioni, a wonderful fortified small town mentioned by Dante. A short walk brings us along the town walls and we enjoy a drink in the town square. Towards the end of the afternoon we continue by private bus towards San Gimignano. Our bus leaves us at the ancient Via Francigena, which we follow along, passing many old watermills until we reach our 'feature stay' agriturismo - an idyllic farm estate. Set on a forested hillside, with stunning views overlooking San Gimignano, this is our base for the next two nights. We will enjoy a dip in the fabulous pool after our walks and are bound to be impressed by the properties regal sandstone refurbished buildings and delicious home cooked meals. Total walking: approx. 6 km (+ circa 4 km. in Siena). Total walking time: around 3.5 hours

Day 3 San Gimignano - Convent of Monte Oliveto - Agriturismo After breakfast we begin our walk to San Gimignano, directly from our agriturismo. As we leave our base behind us, we make our way up along the ridge to the small hamlets of Ciuciano and San Donato, passing by several old 'pievi' (countryside churches) and villa's and often with wonderful views of the skyline of San Gimignano. This town - sometimes referred to as having the only "skyscrapers" in Tuscany - is an absolute must, a wonderful medieval city with picturesque vineyards and olive and cypress groves on either side. We have the afternoon to explore this romantic old town with towers that remain from medieval times. The town once had 52 of these towers (today there are now less than a dozen). Wealthy, prominent families would use the height of these towers to distinguish themselves, and the towers also served to alert the inhabitants of this walled town of approaching friends and foes. We approach the town from the west side, and before entering through one of the main gates, we take a nice stroll along its impressive medieval town walls. In the town itself there are numerous places to enjoy lunch, and of course we take our time to explore. Towards the end of the afternoon, we follow Via Francigena back to our agriturismo: enroute we stop at the convent of Monte Oliveto, located on a wide ridge, then down towards a beautifully located winery. We enjoy a break here and may even enjoy a relaxed drink before heading on to our agriturismo. Total walking: approx. 14 km (+ circa 2 km. in San Gimignano). Total walking time: around 5 hours + sightseeing.

Day 4 Torracchia di Chiusi - Colle di Val d'Elsa - Volterra Today we enjoy some great walking through the Tuscan countryside finishing in the charming town of Colle Val d'Elsa. After breakfast we start walking in an easterly direction: along a ridge we walk through pleasant, mostly forested countryside. After Villa Il Convento we start to descend to the valley of the river Foci, past the water mill. We walk a short stretch through the river valley and then climb up to the charming hamlet of Bibbiano. Along the ridge we continue our walk and then descend to the quaint small town of Colle Val d'Elsa, not as famous as other Tuscan towns, but very charming and with a very interesting medieval town centre. We can have lunch here and have some time to relax and have a look around 'down town'. We then take the elevator up to the medieval walled town. We walk through the charming town centre, located along the ridge and end up at the other side of town, where we may choose to have a relaxed drink. We are picked up by our bus and we drive to the ancient town of Volterra, situated high on a plateau with sweeping views of the valleys below. After settling in to our rooms we have some time to relax or explore this gorgeous little

town. In the evening we dine together in a nice local restaurant and taste some authentic Tuscan cooking. Total walking: approx. 10km (+ 2 km. in Colle di Val d'Elsa). Total walking time: around 4 hours + sightseeing.

Day 5 Volterra - Prato d'Era Today's walk takes us through farmland and chestnut groves, around the town's old Etruscan walls before walking down the north western slopes, where we enjoy expansive views of the Era valley. Starting from our hotel, we see parts of the old Etruscan city walls as we look out over the ridge of the 'Balze', extraordinary limestone cliffs that dominate the surrounding landscape. Crossing the western section of the city we descend through farmland, passing ancient water mills before walking along an ancient Etruscan road, once used by mules transporting salt from Volterra to Florence. We arrive at the little hamlet of Prato d'Era, on the Era River. We then follow a picturesque trail, passing chestnut and oak trees as we climb back up towards Volterra. We walk past the Etruscan Acropolis and the Roman theatre as we make our way back to the hotel. The remainder of the day is free to explore. There are interesting museums to visit and cellars where you can taste the local wines. The town itself is worthy of exploration: perhaps visit the old fort, with its wonderful park, overlooking the entire town. Total walking: approx 10km. Total walking time: around 4 hours.

Day 6 Montecatini and the Volterra Salt Mines Today we will walk to the West, partly through the forest, partly through open countryside, enjoying spectacular views of the soft rolling Tuscan hills down to Saline. We'll pass alongside the famous 'calanchi' of Volterra, eroded hills with spectacular shapes. Along the way we enjoy a nice picnic lunch, whilst contemplating the quiet Tuscan countryside. In the afternoon we'll arrive at the charming medieval village of Montecatini. Here we'll stroll around the medieval alleys, walk around the town walls with wonderful views over the whole area. We also have the option to visit the interesting Mineral & Mining Museum of the Val di Cecina area, and perhaps even go down into a copper mine. After a nice rest on a terrace with a drink we take the local bus back to Volterra. In the evening there is a large choice of restaurants to choose from. Total walking: approx 12km. Total walking time: around 4.5 hours.

Day 7 The Era Valley & Monte Voltraio Today we walk towards Monte Voltraio, a sandstone hill once dominated by a castle known as the Rocca di Monte Voltraio. At the foot of the hill stands the beautiful abandoned medieval building of the Casale Rocca. We pass through a pleasant landscape, meet with farmers, still cultivating their land like in ancient times and pass the small 13th-century church of San Lorenzo. The goal of our walk is the Villa Palagione It is an ancient country residence, built in 1598 by Geronimo Minucci, cupbearer of the Medici at the peak of the Florentine power and culture. In a setting that has seen four centuries of history, the villa still offers frescoed halls, a Gentility chapel and an Italian garden full of flowers and perfumes. Here we stop for a short break, and then for those who want there is the possibility to climb up to the ruins of the castle on the top of Mt Voltraio, which offers superb views over the Tuscan countryside. We then enjoy a picnic lunch at a picturesque spot from where we can enjoy a wonderful view of Volterra. In the afternoon we make our way back to Volterra on foot. There the possibility to relax in the gardens of Villa Palagione and dive into its panoramic swimming pool (and then travel back by bus) so pack your swimsuit! In the evening we all join together for the last evening dinner in a local restaurant. Total walking: approx 8/16km. Total walking time: from 3 hours to 6 hours.

Day 8 Volterra Our trip ends after breakfast this morning in Volterra. Those who want to extend their stay can book some extra days in Volterra, or in Florence - please enquire at time of booking. CPT buses connect Volterra to nearby Saline and its train station (9km) and from Saline there are train connections to Pisa, Cecina and other destinations. Alternatively, you can take a CPT bus to Colle di Val d'Elsa and connect with a bus to Sienna, Florence or San Gimignano. You can pre-book an optional transfer by private coach to Florence - please enquire at time of booking.

Group Size:

N/A

Type of Accommodation:

Hotels

Comments:

Highlights:

- Florence
- Siena
- Monteriggioni
- Agriturismo
- San Gimignano
- Colle di Val d'Elsa
- Volterra
- Montecatini
- Monte Voltraio

Grade:

Moderate walk - A reasonably good level of fitness is required for these trips. Walks are generally along well-defined paths

with plenty of 'ups' and 'downs'. Some walking days may be five or six hours in duration, however we will not ascend to high altitudes.

Included:

Peregrine tour leader, transport and sightseeing.

Not Included:

International flights, arrival and departure transfers, departure taxes, visa fees, insurance (compulsory on all trips), additional meals, drinks, optional additional tours/activities/entrance fees during free time, optional departure transfer by private coach from Volterra to Florence, tips and spending of a personal nature.

In person, by phone or online.

ALL TRAVEL PURCHASES APPLY TO YOUR ANNUAL PATRONAGE RETURN

www.calgarycoop.com



Richmond Road.. 403-299-4370
Oakridge..... 403-299-5316
Village Square ... 403-299-4401
Crowfoot..... 403-216-4500
Shawnessy 403-299-4130
Hamptons..... 403-299-5414

South Trail Crossing.. 403-257-7247
Call Centre403-299-4144
Toll Free.....1-800-360-3572



Visit a Calgary Co-op Travel office at any of these centre locations: