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TRIP DETAILS

8 days ~ Italy

*6 days easy to moderate hiking
on hilly terrain*

*6 nights hotels, 1 night in
fattoria (country
farmhouse estate)*

2009 DATES

Jun 8–Jun 15

Sep 14–Sep 21

Oct 5–Oct 12

2009 LAND COST

*\$3,995 per person
(14-16 members)*

*\$4,495 per person
(9-13 members)*

*\$4,995 per person
(6-8 members)*

\$800 single supplement

CLASSIC TUSCANY

Experience the Heart (and Art) of Italy

TRIP LEVEL
EASY TO MODERATE

HIGHLIGHTS

- *Discover the seductive charms of medieval towns including Florence, Siena, and Montalcino*
- *Go beyond the classic Chianti region and explore the never ending hills of Val d'Orcia, picturesque Sorano built of golden tufa, and Sovana's Etruscan tombs*
- *Experience the warmth of Italian country life firsthand with a stay at an Italian fattoria—a country farmhouse estate*
- *Sip fine wines, taste handcrafted olive oils, and feast on regional culinary delights*



CLASSIC TUSCANY

Experience the Heart (and Art) of Italy

Any traveler can find a sublime glass of wine in Tuscany, but to experience the full bounty of *la dolce vita*, it helps to be accompanied by an expert. Silvia Giacon, an Italian architect by trade and passionate lover of art, will take you to the epicenter of the region where the Renaissance came to fruition. From the “must-see” cities of Florence and Siena to Val d’Orca, a UNESCO World Heritage Site renowned by painters and photographers worldwide, Giacon’s breadth and depth of historical and cultural knowledge will add an extra element of context and texture that makes you feel like you’ve plumbed the heart and soul of a place.

You’ll hike among rolling hills of vineyards, watch the slant of sunlight on silvery olive trees, meander down lanes flanked by tapering cypresses, and explore romantic fortified hilltop villages steeped in the spirit of bygone centuries. You’ll soak up the ambiance of country life as the guest at a *fattoria* (country farmhouse estate) in the Chianti region and drink a glass of Burnello di Montalcino while picnicking amongst Tuscan sunflowers and iconic cypress trees.

It’s nearly impossible not to be charmed by Tuscany, but with an expert and fun-loving guide like Giacon, you’ll also learn about Renaissance architecture, Etruscan history, slow food, and the other sweet elements of Italy. The ultimate goal: to transcend the label of tourist and weave yourself into the very fiber of this beautiful, rich, and historical landscape.



This trip is also available as a private adventure on a date of your choosing.

We recommend departures March through December.

Call us for details!



ITINERARY

☞ This trip begins with a rendezvous at the Classic Hotel in Florence, Italy at 2:30 p.m. on Day 1.

DAY 1 ~ Meet in Florence – San Casciano di Valpesa

Upon arrival in Florence, you'll meet with the trip leader and group at 2:30 p.m. at the Classic Hotel, about a six-mile taxi ride from the airport and a little over a mile from the Santa Maria Novella railway station. (Specific directions will be sent to you in your pre-departure information packet.) After a short briefing, we'll drive along the Via Cassia to beautiful San Casciano, along the River Pesa. Because of the town's proximity to Florence, some Florentine nobles and wealthy businessmen erected numerous imposing villas and castles, which we will enjoy seeing as we walk through olive orchards and rich vineyards belonging to the Chianti area.

Our two-hour hike leads us to the village of San Pancrazio and the 15th century home of a Tuscan gentleman, Silvio Toccafondi. Our host will introduce us to an olive oil tasting, followed by a delicious country dinner, cooked by his wife, Anna. After dinner we will return by van to Florence. (2 hours hiking.)

D...Classic Hotel, Florence

Note—Art lovers will find Florence's art and architecture simply irresistible. We encourage you to arrive a day early to explore this beautiful city on our Florence extension, led by an expert licensed guide (see page 4).

DAY 2 ~ La Fattoria

After leaving Florence, we'll drive to the hills and stop in Greve, the wine capital of Chianti. From Greve, we will hike through vineyards and up shady hills to the charming fortified village of Lamole, overlooking the Greve Valley. After a gourmet lunch of ravioli seasoned with sliced pears and pecorino cheese, we will take a short drive to the medieval village of Volpaia. From here we continue on foot to a beautiful country farmhouse estate set among the vineyards and surrounded by a lovely garden. *Fattoria* means "farm" in Italian; this one has a wonderful atmosphere and ambiance, and we'll get a firsthand taste of Italian country life. We'll then head back to Volpaia for a tasting of Chianti wines, and follow it up with a wonderful dinner at Chez Carla. (3-4 hours hiking.)

B,L,D...Fattoria TBA

DAY 3 ~ Siena

Transfer to Siena for a guided walking tour of the city that has been the centuries-long rival of Florence. We will see how the traditional "neighborhood" affiliations dating back to ancient times are still an important part of contemporary life. We'll tour the main sites, ending the visit in the central piazza, *Il Campo*, for lunch on your own. After lunch, we'll have a little free time for shopping, then drive a few miles to Castello di Leonina, a 13th century fortress and the summer residence of Cardinal Fabio Chigi, who later became Pope Alexander VII. Enjoy views to the rolling countryside known as "Le Crete Senesi," a wellness center that offers massage, and the world-class cuisine served by the hotel's restaurant, *Il Balcone di Leonina*.

B,D...Castello di Leonina, Siena

DAY 4~ The Val d'Orcia and Montalcino

After a spectacular drive along the Val D'Orcia, a region dotted with towns that were built to live up to the 15th century Tuscan ideal by Pope Pius II, we'll visit the Abbazi di Monte Oliveto Maggiore, one of the most important

Benedictine monasteries in Italy. The abbey is renowned for its beautiful frescoes by Sodoma and Signorelli, depicting the life of Saint Benedict. After the visit to the monastery, we'll hike and picnic our way toward the walled city of Montalcino to enjoy a glass of the famous Brunello di Montalcino. Our final destination for the evening is the town of Pienza, rebuilt by Pope Pius II as an ideal Renaissance town, intended to be a retreat from Rome. (3-4 hours hiking.)

B,L...Il Chiostro di Pienza, Pienza

DAY 5 ~ Pienza – Monticchiello – Bagno Vignoni

To fully understand the meaning of renaissance architecture, we'll visit Palazzo Piccolomini, built as the private residence of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, who later became Pope Pius II. After lunch, we'll take an optional walk to the charming town of Monticchiello, which dates back to the 12th century. Walking the alleyways of this fortified town will give you a true sense of medieval Tuscany. In the evening, we'll drive to Bagno Vignoni, a unique town built around a thermal water pool, where we will enjoy a delicious gourmet dinner. (3-4 hours hiking.)

B,D... Il Chiostro di Pienza, Pienza

DAY 6 ~ Sovana and Vie Cave

We begin with an early morning drive, a few hours south, to the rock carved necropolis of Sovana. This was once a medieval capital for the powerful Aldobrandeschi family, who ruled southern Tuscany for centuries. The town hangs from a tuff stone over the Lente River, and its Etruscan origin makes Sovana even more fascinating. After lunch, we'll walk from the medieval cathedral to the opposite side of the valley along one of the famous *Vie Cave* (roads carved in Tufa stone) that were hollowed out by the Etruscans. In the evening, we'll have a farewell feast in Sorano, another shrine to Etruscan ingenuity. (3-4 hours hiking.)

B,L...Scilla Hotel, Sovana

DAY 7 ~ Castello di Vitozza

Our morning hike will take us to the famous medieval castle of Vitozza, which was controlled by numerous powerful families over the centuries, including the Orsini, who came from nearby Sorano. Most unique are the 200-plus caves that were used as homes up until the 1700s, in one of the most important cliff settlements in Italy, the Rocca di Vitozza. After a tour of this "city of Tufa", we'll have a picnic lunch on castle grounds. Your last afternoon in Italy is yours to enjoy. Later in the evening, we will rejoin the group and enjoy a final Tuscan meal together. (3-4 hours hiking.)

B,L,D...Scilla Hotel, Sovana

DAY 8 ~ Florence – Depart

Drive about 2½ hours north to Florence and transfer to the airport or train station for departure, or join our post-trip extension to Cinque Terre and Portofino.

B...

EXTEND YOUR ADVENTURE!

Florence is a perfect addition to your trip to Tuscany! We offer a one-day pre-trip extension that takes in the art and architectural highlights of the city, the cradle of the Renaissance. A "must-do" for anyone who has always dreamed of exploring this beautiful place. *2 days. From \$595 (per person, double occupancy).*

You can also join us after your trip for our extension to **Cinque Terre** and **Portofino**! You'll hike scenic trails drenched with views of the Mediterranean and wander steep cobblestone streets lined with ice-cream-colored houses in this dramatic coastal setting. *4 days. From \$2,095 (per person, double occupancy).*

Please call us for details for these extensions or visit our website (www.mtsobek.com).

2009 LAND COST

\$3,995 per person (14-16 members)

\$4,495 per person (9-13 members)

\$4,995 per person (6-8 members)

Rates quoted are per person, based on sharing double accommodations.

Single Supplement—\$800 for “requested” singles; \$400 for “forced” singles. If you prefer single accommodations, you must pay the Single Supplement Fee. If you're traveling alone and wish to share accommodations, we'll try our best to find you a roommate. If that's not possible, we will only charge you half of the single supplement.

Tier Pricing

Adventure travel works best with a small group of people. In order to operate these small groups, our trips are priced according to the number of full-price passengers on the trip. (Mountain Travel Sobek staff, trip doctors, and other discounted travelers are excluded from the count for this purpose.) We initially invoice you at the highest tier level price (the smallest group size we can operate). If the price drops due to an increase in group size, you will be refunded the difference.

What's Included

- ◆ expert leadership
- ◆ accommodations
- ◆ meals as noted (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- ◆ wine at welcome and farewell dinners
- ◆ group airport transfers
- ◆ sightseeing as noted in the itinerary
- ◆ ground transportation by van
- ◆ basic medical and evacuation insurance

What's Not

International airfare; meals not noted on itinerary; insurance other than basic medical and evacuation insurance noted above (we strongly recommend you purchase the supplementary trip insurance offered by Mountain Travel Sobek, which includes trip cancellation insurance); optional tipping to leader, guides and local staff; excess baggage charges; items of a personal nature (sodas, alcoholic and non alcoholic beverages, such as coffee and teas, laundry, etc.).

Air Travel

Airfare is not included in the land cost of our trips. For air reservations, we recommend you contact the airlines directly, either by phone or the Internet. In addition, many travelers elect to use their “frequent flyer” miles when traveling with us. **But please check with our staff before purchasing or obtaining your tickets.** We need to verify your arrival and departure schedule and ensure we have enough participants to operate the trip.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Expert Leadership

Expert leadership is the key to an exciting, unforgettable experience. Our trips feature gifted leaders for whom leading trips is a true vocation. Besides showing you wonders you’d never find on your own, they make sure everything runs smoothly and safely without a hitch. They are knowledgeable about all aspects of your trip, and take great pleasure in sharing their insights with you. More than just guides, they positively elevate your experience by being teachers, companions, and the best of friends.

Although leader assignments are subject to change, **Silvia Giacon** regularly leads this trip. Silvia is a native Italian who lives in Venice. Her unique breadth of historical, cultural, and local knowledge, and her lively passion for her work, brings Tuscany and Cinque Terre to life for you! Silvia is an architect by trade, an ardent traveler, and has led groups through France and Italy for more than 20 years. You’ll be in good hands with her every step of the way.

Leader assignments will be confirmed in the Final Bulletin sent to you three weeks prior to departure.

Activity Level

Mountain Travel Sobek trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active and intellectually involved, and have a spirit of adventure and a flexible, positive attitude. Most days you’ll be hiking 3-5 hours on hilly terrain; some of the trails can be rocky with some steep ascents and descents. Since there is a support van, you’ll be walking with only a light daypack.

Is this Trip Appropriate for Me?

You need to be in good health and physical condition to enjoy the trip, with adequate muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, and good balance. The level of fitness and endurance needed for this trip requires regular aerobic exercise at least one hour 3-4 times per week, performing moderate intensity walking, cycling, swimming, or other forms of aerobic exercise. You must be able to hike four to five hours a day for at least two consecutive days and must be comfortable walking on rough trails.

If you are not optimally conditioned, we recommend that you start a training program *at least three months* before departure, gradually increasing the intensity and duration. If your health is questionable or your physical capacity is limited, please discuss other trip options with us.

Accommodations

We have selected the finest accommodations that fit our itinerary. Each accommodation reflects the authentic experience we are sure you will enjoy. We will stay in family-run, local three-star hotels and inns offering a variety of amenities for your comfort. You can occasionally expect to have to carry your luggage to your room on some nights, as a number of our hotels do not employ additional staff for this purpose.

Meals

We think the best way to enjoy Italy is to emphasize its traditional local and seasonal gastronomic specialties. Though not all dishes are known or common here at home, we encourage you to try them as they represent an authentic side of the country (vegetarian needs can be accommodated, as well as special dietary requirements). We would like to remind you that in Italy dinners are generally not served until 8:00 p.m. and meals typically last for a minimum of two hours.

Embracing the Difference

As with any Mountain Travel Sobek trip, we seek to promote the uniqueness of the country we are visiting. This means the experiences we have may be new, and enrich our lives and open our minds to a different way of life in a foreign country. We are anxious for you to participate in our passion for the country you are visiting, and to enjoy these experiences with an open mind.

THE NEXT STEP

Ready to go? Signing up is easy!

Just call us at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) and reserve your spot! You can also book a reservation online at our website (www.mtsobek.com). If you prefer to use a travel agent, he or she can book your trip at no extra cost and provide other helpful assistance.

Then Leave the Rest to Us

Before you go, we provide you with extensive pre-departure information, including clothing recommendations, suggested reading lists, and other details.

Why Mountain Travel Sobek is Your First Choice for Adventure

Mountain Travel Sobek is the pioneer in active adventure travel. No other adventure travel company can lay claim to that title. We were the first to take Americans trekking in Nepal, raft the wild rivers of Africa, and open up many previously inaccessible corners of the world to curious travelers. We set the standard for adventure travel and have a strong reputation for excellence that we do everything we can to maintain. Since we are the leading adventure company, we have a lot to live up to, so we make sure we provide safe, quality trips and the best customer service to our passengers.

With Mountain Travel Sobek, you'll see Italy as only an insider can, with friendly, hospitable guides who know the region intimately. They'll accompany you throughout the day, lending support and insights about where you are and what you see. Their close familiarity with the local geography, history, culture and traditions (plus their entertaining stories and great jokes) are the key to a superb, informative experience—one you just can't get on your own.

References

Don't take our word for how great our trips are. We'll be happy to provide you with references of satisfied past travelers.

Questions?

Feel free to call us at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) if you still have any questions or concerns. We're here to help you. You can also check out our award-winning website at www.mtsobek.com.

Note on Itinerary

Although we will do our best to adhere to the itinerary schedule as listed, it is subject to change. Please read the Limitation of Liability and Booking Conditions in the four-page Participant Information Form. You can find all this information on our website at www.mtsobek.com/faq and the form itself at www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf.

Terms & Conditions

Once you have made a deposit for a trip, you agree to be bound by all our terms and conditions including the Limitation of Liability Clause. The full Terms and Conditions can be found at www.mtsobek.com/faq/#liability or call 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) for a copy. These are partial conditions. Your participation is contingent on your signature on the full list of terms specified in the four-page Participant Information Form (www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf). Any dispute concerning, relating or referring to the Terms and Conditions, to any literature concerning this trip, or the trip itself, shall be resolved exclusively by binding arbitration in San Francisco, California, according to the then existing commercial rules of the American Arbitration Association. Such proceedings will be governed by substantive California law (but not procedural law) without regard to the California Arbitration Act.

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