

## San Gimignano, a Cooking Class, and More!

On this tour we see some of the most beautiful hill towns of Tuscany. Day one starts in Chianti with a ride to a spectacular Renaissance estate owned by an Italian royal family. The Corsini's purchased the property in 1427 and took on their royal title in 1730 when Lorenzo Corsini became Pope. Today the estate produces Chianti Classico wines and extra virgin olive oils. We tour the ageing cellars, oil mill, and the Renaissance gardens. Our first night is spent in the charming medieval town of Certaldo. Our 4-star hotel is set in a renovated 16th-century flour mill built over the Elsa river. On day two we pedal to the perfectly preserved medieval village of San Gimignano. We spend two nights here so you will have plenty of time to explore the town that has been called a medieval Manhattan due to its unique stone towers. Day three takes us to a family-run bed and breakfast where we spend the morning at a hands-on cooking class preparing a three-course Tuscan feast. On day four we ride through some of Tuscany's most spectacular scenery on our way to the walled town of Volterra. An out of the way location has kept the tourists masses away from Volterra giving the city a genuine feel. Walking the narrow stone streets of Volterra you will see how life unfolds in a small Italian town. Our hotel is in the historic center of Volterra close to all the main sights.

### Route Rating

Moderate: 9-21 miles  
(15-33 km) per day cycling  
over hilly terrain.

### Meet / Finish

Florence / Volterra

### Highlights

- Hands-on cooking class
- Winery visit with guided wine and oil tasting
- Towns of Certaldo, San Gimignano, and Volterra
- Beautiful Tuscan cycling (peaceful roads and van support)

### Our Dates Don't Work?

#### Consider Self-Guided

Consider one of our self-guided cycling trips. We can schedule a self-guided bike tour when you want.



## **Day 1** **Certaldo**

### **Faltignano to Certaldo** *19 miles (30 kilometres)*

Your tour begins with a morning pick up in the center of Florence. We transfer by van to our bicycle storage in the countryside and fit you on your bike. Our first stop is a winery in a 16th century villa. We tour the winery and sample their ruby red Chianti Classico wines and extra virgin olive oils. Lunch at the winery is included. The chef uses ingredients from the estate's gardens so the menu changes with the seasons. After lunch a quiet backroad leads through a rolling landscape of vineyards, olive groves, and country villages. Our destination is Certaldo, a medieval town on the Via Cassia, the ancient road to Rome. The oldest part of Certaldo sits high on a ridge. A short funicular rail takes you up to the old town. We encourage you to have dinner in Certaldo Alto. From the old town you can see the towers of San Gimignano.

#### **Hotel**

##### **Hotel Certaldo**

Certaldo (1 night)  
This 4-star hotel is housed in a converted 16th century flour mill. The hotel is equipped with a swimming pool and a wellness center offering a range of massages and spa therapies.

[www.hotelcertaldo.it](http://www.hotelcertaldo.it)

#### **The Ride**

**Day 1:** A hilly 19 mile (30 km) ride through Chianti. Two climbs before a long downhill to Certaldo.

#### **Other Questions?**

Toll free 1 888 421 2418  
[info@charnestours.com](mailto:info@charnestours.com)





## Day 2 San Gimignano

### Certaldo to San Gimignano *9 miles (15 kilometres)*

Two roads lead to San Gimignano. You can take a more scenic hilly road, or opt for a less challenging, but still beautiful lower route. Whichever way you go you will soon see the distinctive stone towers of San Gimignano in the distance. In this medieval Manhattan, 14 stone towers are still standing. Towers were typical of 13th Century Italian towns. However, most didn't survive. San Gimignano has the best medieval towers in Italy. Arrive in time for lunch. After lunch you can climb one of the towers, shop, or savour a cappuccino in a bustling piazza. For extra miles choose among three optional loop rides. Cycle to a nearby winery, ride to a town that specializes in crystal glassware production, or ride and hike into the woods to explore an abandoned medieval ghost town. Dinner on your own in San Gimignano.

#### Hotel

##### Hotel Leon Bianco

San Gimignano (2 nights)  
We stay in an 11th Century palace on San Gimignano's most beautiful piazza. The building has been carefully restored preserving its special character.

[www.leonbianco.com](http://www.leonbianco.com)

#### The Ride

##### Day 2, 9 mi (15 km)

Choose between a big hill with big views or a smaller gradual hill on your short ride to San Gimignano.

*Note: Optional rides for extra miles are available.*

## **Day 3** **San Gimignano**

### **San Gimignano to San Andrea** *6 miles (10 kilometres)*

A downhill ride leads to a family-run bed and breakfast. The B&B is located in a parish house dating from the 1300s and has a swimming pool with panoramic views. Be sure to bring your bathing suit. The Italian owners have lived in the area their entire lives and will charm you with their knowledge of Tuscan cuisine. The cooking class is a hands on experience. Fresh ingredients from the family garden are used to make an appetizer, followed by first and second courses. The dishes are unpretentious Tuscan plates that you can recreate at home. Gluten free and vegetarian recipes are available. After lunch cycle back to San Gimignano. If you are too full to ride we will be happy to give you a lift. Dinner on your own in San Gimignano.

#### **The Ride**

**Day 3, 6 miles (10 km)** A short downhill ride to the cooking class. Uphill back to San Gimignano.

*Note: If you want to ride more additional loop rides are available*

#### **Other Questions?**

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## **Day 4**

### **Volterra**

#### **San Gimignano to Volterra** *21 miles (33 kilometres)*

A stunning ride awaits you as you leave the Elsa river valley and climb to an elevation of 1,700 feet (520 meters). Finishing the climb you begin a long descent towards Volterra. After a morning in the shade of oak and cypress trees, you emerge from the woods to be greeted by the vast Era valley. Undulating green pastures are bordered in the distance by wooded hills. Beyond those hills lies the Mediterranean Sea. Coasting downhill you pass rustic stone farmhouses surrounded by clay slopes. Volterra appears on a ridge before you. It is a challenging 3-mile (5-kilometer) climb up a winding road to the center of town. The van will be there to give you a lift or take your bicycle if you want to walk. Volterra sits high above rich farmland. The town is a center for Etruscan and Roman art. In Volterra you can visit a Roman theater (100 BC) and an Etruscan gate (400 BC). Volterra is one of Tuscany's prettiest hilltowns. Small and genuine, it hasn't been transformed by mass tourism. Your guide will be leaving at the end of the ride on day four. Before leaving he will be happy to assist you with your travel planning for the following day. Dinner on your own in Volterra.

#### **Hotel**

##### **Hotel La Locanda**

Volterra (1 night)

This four-star hotel is located in a converted nunnery in the historic center of Volterra. The hotel is quiet, air-conditioned, and has a friendly staff.

[www.hotel-lalocanda.com](http://www.hotel-lalocanda.com)

#### **The Ride**

**Day 4**, 21 mi (33 km)

One of the prettiest rides in Tuscany takes you up through a forest and down a long hill to the open valleys surrounding Volterra. The last three miles into Volterra are challenging, but offer great views.

## **Day 5**

### **Bike Tour End**

After breakfast you check out of the hotel and continue your travels. We will be happy to help you with your travel planning.

#### **DEPARTURE ON LAST DAY OF TOUR**

There is no train station in Volterra. You can take a bus from Volterra or a taxi to the train station in nearby Cecina. Bus travel times are listed below:

Volterra to Florence: 4 per day, 2 hours

Volterra to Siena: 4 per day, 2 hours

Volterra to Pisa: 9 per day, 2 hours

Private shuttle service can be arranged if you prefer.



#### **Winery Visit**

We tour the winery of an Italian Prince. Prince Corsini is a descendent of Pope Clement XII. The family took on the ecclesiastical title in 1730. Today Prince Corsini makes Chianti Classico wine and extra virgin olive oil.



#### **Cooking Class**

This tour includes a cooking class. We spend the morning with an Italian chef preparing Tuscan specialities with the freshest local ingredients.



#### **Other Questions?**

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