

Hot Springs, Hill Towns, and More!

South of Siena lies a remote valley full of surprises, with rolling landscapes, ancient spas, a perfectly preserved Renaissance town, and most amazingly of all, few signs of tourism. Today, the Val D'Orcia is a destination in itself, and its expansive, sweeping landscape is wildly compelling. The Rome-Florence railway line and most of the road traffic passes well to the east, making the Val D'Orcia a paradise for hikers and cyclists. Its new-found vocation for tourism is reflected in a proliferation of boutique hotels, creative trattorias, and well-stocked wine bars. On this tour you hike quiet unpaved farm roads and footpaths. You climb the walls of a 14th Century castle and dip in the soothing waters at a thermal spa. You have lunch at a family-run pecorino cheese farm, tour a couple of wineries, and explore walled medieval villages. The walks will build up your appetite. Indulge in local dishes including T-bone steaks, wild boar ragu, spelt soups, and fried zucchini flowers. Pair the food with the wine that most critics cite as the best in Italy. Brunello di Montalcino is a wine made with 100% Sangiovese grapes in the hills surrounding Montalcino. The glorious landscapes, the villages, the food and the wine will all come together to make for an exceptional Tuscan experience.

Route Rating

Moderate: 4-8 miles (6-13 km) per day of hiking with some steep ascents/descents.

Meet / Finish

Florence / Chiusi

Highlights

- Pecorino farm visit with lunch
- Guided Brunello winery tour
- Swim in the thermal baths of Bagno Vignoni
- Vino Nobile winery visit
- The charming Tuscan hill towns of Montalcino, Pienza, and Montepulciano
- Scenic country walking trails



Day 1 **Montalcino**

Montalcino to Sant'Antimo *3.7 miles (6 kilometers)*

We meet in Florence and shuttle to Montalcino (2.5-hour drive). Lunch in a family-run trattoria is included on Day 1. After lunch we hike downhill through rolling farmland to a monastery in a picture perfect setting. The Sant'Antimo abbey is considered to be the most beautiful Romanesque church in Italy. Before dinner we visit the fortress of Montalcino (called *La Fortezza*). We climb the walls of this medieval castle for breathtaking 360 degree views. On the ground floor of the castle is an inviting *Enoteca* (wine bar). A sommelier leads a guided wine tasting, including the famous Brunello wine. The wine is paired with local cold cuts (*prosciutto* and *salame*) and cheeses. Group dinner in Montalcino.



The Hotel

Hotel Dei Capitani
Montalcino (1 night)
Perched on the edge of Montalcino's ancient walls, the Capitani has incredible views over the Orcia valley and an outdoor pool.
www.deicapitani.it

The Hike, Day 1

Downhill to Sant'Antimo
3.7 miles (6 km)
A beautiful downhill hike takes your through a stone village on your way to Tuscany's most beautiful Romanesque church.

Siena, Italy **Weather**

| <i>Mon</i> | <i>High °F</i> | <i>Low °F</i> |
|------------|----------------|---------------|
| Jan | 45 | 37 |
| Feb | 46 | 37 |
| Mar | 50 | 40 |
| Apr | 55 | 44 |
| May | 64 | 52 |
| Jun | 71 | 58 |
| Jul | 77 | 64 |
| Aug | 77 | 64 |
| Sep | 70 | 59 |
| Oct | 62 | 52 |
| Nov | 52 | 44 |
| Dec | 46 | 39 |

Other Questions?

Toll free 1 888 421 2418
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Day 2 **Bagno Vignoni**

Sant'Antimo to Bagno Vignoni

8.5 miles (13.6 kilometers)

Our day begins with a visit to a Brunello wine producer called Poggio Antico. This winery is one of Montalcino's most elevated estates, with vineyards averaging 1,476 feet (450 mt) above sea level. On a clear day you can catch a glimmer of the Tyrrhenian Sea, 32 miles (50 km) to the west. The proximity to the sea creates a unique terrior, offering constant ventilation, with lower humidity and temperatures. After our winery visit, we hike downhill through woods and wheat fields. We pass an abandoned stone quarry before arriving in Bagno Vignoni, a thermal spa. Travelers have been rejuvenating in these thermal waters since Roman times. The center of Bagno Vignoni is a giant thermal pool where hot water bubbles to the surface at 126 degrees Fahrenheit (52 degrees Celcius). Our hotel has two thermal pools that are filled directly from the hot springs. Italians believe the hot mineral baths are good for your health. Have a soak and find out! Dinner on your own in Bagno Vignoni.

The Hotel

Hotel Posta Marcucci

Bagno Vignoni (1 night)
The hotel has its own thermal hot springs pool with breathtaking views of the countryside and the Rocca d'Orcia castle.
www.hotelpostamarcucci.it

The Hike, Day 2

Sant'Antimo to Bagno Vignoni

8.5 miles (13.6 km)

A downhill hike through woods and farmland leads to a secluded thermal spa.

Day 3 **Pienza**

Bagno Vignoni to Pienza *6.5 miles (10.5 kilometers)*

Leaving Bagno Vignoni the landscape opens up. Verdant wheat fields, yellow sunflowers, and brilliant red poppies create a collage of color across the rolling hills. Stone farmhouses with cypress lined driveways dot the top of every hillock. We ramble through gentle rolling hills on our way to Pienza. This charming town is widely known as the "ideal city of the Renaissance", the creation of the great humanist Piccolomini who later became Pope Pius II. Piccolomini had the money and influence to transform his birthplace village into this utopian town. Pienza is also known for its sheep cheese. Shops bursting with cheese fragrances line the main street. You can try many variations of the cheese known as pecorino, including fresh, aged, or even spicy! Dinner on your own in Pienza.

The Hotel

Hotel Corsignano

Pienza (1 night) The Corsignano has breathtaking views of the Orcia Valley and offers a terrace with a hot tub. Rooms are spacious and modern.

www.hotelcorsignano.it

The Hike, Day 3

Bagno Vignoni to Pienza

6.5 miles (10.5 km)

A rolling hike on farm trails and footpaths. The scenery is spectacular with views of the entire Orcia Valley.



Day 4 Montepulciano

Pienza to Montepulciano 8.3 miles (13.3 kilometers)

A peaceful unpaved road leads from Pienza to a family-run organic cheese farm. We tour the farm where big white sheep dogs protect the flocks. We see how the ewe's milk is transformed into artisanal pecorino cheese. The farm also produces its own vegetables, honeys, grains, and flours. We have a farm to table lunch, al fresco, on their splendid panoramic terrace. During lunch you can try raw milk cheeses and discover the flavors of the ancient grains used in their fresh pasta. You will enjoy the rich aroma of their slow rise bread, freshly baked every day in a wood-burning oven. After lunch we hike through a fortified village called Montechiello. Surrounded by an imposing wall, little Montechiello is a hodgepodge of stone homes lovingly decorated with colorful flowers. Our hike ends in the hill town of Montepulciano. Today Montepulciano retains an opulent Renaissance center with elaborate palaces and piazzas. Our hotel is in the historic center of town. While in Montepulciano we tour the Cantina Contucci, Montepulciano's oldest winery where they have been making wine for 41 generations!

The Hotel

Hotel Mueble il Riccio
Montepulciano (2 nights)
This small family-run inn has old world charm with all the modern accoutrements. The hotel is located in a historic building just steps from the main piazza.
www.ilriccio.net

The Hike, Day 4

Pienza to Montepulciano
8.3 miles (13.3 km)
A rolling hike on farm trails and footpaths takes us to a cheese farm. After the farm we hike to a medieval fortified village before arriving in Montepulciano.





Day 5 Montefollonico

Montepulciano to Montefollonico 4 miles (6.5 kilometers)

We drop down into the verdant valley just north of Montepulciano, passing carefully manicured vineyards where sangiovese grapes thrive under the Tuscan sun. We stroll past sprawling old farmhouses that have been transformed into beautiful vacation rental properties. Today's destination is Montefollonico. This little village is not in the tour guides. In Montefollonico you will find a Medieval wall with its imposing gates. A 13th century church dominates the center of town. We have lunch in a small trattoria before returning to Montepulciano by van.

Day 6 Hiking Tour Ends

Your walking tour ends in Montefollonico. After breakfast we will shuttle you to the Chiusi train station. Chiusi sits on a main north-south rail line with frequent trains for Florence and Rome. Train travel times from Chiusi are listed below:

Chiusi to Florence: 1 hr 30 min
Chiusi to Rome: 1 hr 50 min
Chiusi to Venice: 4 hr 30 min

The Hike, Day 5 Montepulciano to Montefollonico

4 miles (6.5 km)

We hike through a green valley passing vineyards and ancient farmhouses. The hike ends in a small hill top village. Return to Montepulciano by van

