



Stone Towers and a Castle

On this hiking tour you stay in two of Tuscany's most beautiful hill towns, San Gimignano and Volterra. While other ancient Italian towns were transformed by war and urban renewal, San Gimignano and Volterra have preserved their unique architectural heritage. Beginning in the middle ages the patrician families who controlled San Gimignano built 72 house-towers as symbols of their wealth and power. Although only 14 have survived, San Gimignano has retained its feudal atmosphere and appearance. Volterra is still almost wholly embraced by its medieval walls and has an intact center focused on the Piazza dei Priori. As you stroll the cobbled streets you will feel the history all around you. Your days will be spent hiking through vineyards and olive groves and experiencing the culture of Tuscany. We visit a family-run winery where we meet the owners and enjoy lunch and a tour. We walk to a small inn where we spend the morning in a cooking class using seasonal local ingredients. We wander around an abandoned 700 year old castle. Bring comfortable walking shoes, your curiosity, and your appetite – a Tuscan adventure awaits.

Route Rating

Moderate: 3-7 miles
(5-11 km) per day of hiking
with some steep ascents/
descents.

Meet / Finish

Florence / Volterra

Highlights

- Hands on cooking class
- Winery tour
- Abandoned castle archaeological site
- The hill towns of San Gimignano and Volterra
- Picturesque villages
- Country footpaths

Other Questions?

Toll free 1 888 421 2418
info@charnestours.com

Day 1 San Gimignano

San Gimignano to San Donato 5.6 miles (9 kilometers)

We meet in the center of Florence and shuttle by van to the Fattoria San Donato, a small family-run winery near San Gimignano. The Fenzi family has been producing wine on their hilltop farm since the 1930s. Today they host us for a buffet lunch which includes Tuscan staples such as spelt salad, *prosciutto crudo* (cured ham), and *bruschetta*. Umberto Fenzi gives us a guided tour of the winery. They also produce an extra-virgin olive oil with a buttery flavor and peppery finish. Energized from lunch we follow a farm road into the countryside. This is rural Tuscany at its best. We stroll past ancient stone farmhouses, vineyards, and olive groves. A winding up-hill leads to a ridge with spectacular views of San Gimignano. The landscape hasn't changed here in centuries. After our hike we check in to our hotel. The hotel sits on San Gimignano's most important piazza. Most rooms have views of the piazza or surrounding countryside. 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 it's special character.

www.leonbianco.com

The Hike, Day 1

San Donato Loop

5.6 miles (9 km)

This hike offers great views of San Gimignano. The hike is on dirt farm roads with virtually no traffic.

Siena, Italy

Weather

Mon	High °F	Low °F
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

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Day 2 San Gimignano

San Gimignano – San Andrea *2.8 miles (4.5 kilometers)*

Following a buffet breakfast in the hotel you begin your hike to San Andrea. The hike takes you downhill away from San Gimignano through quintessential Tuscan scenery: rolling hills, open valleys, vineyards and olive groves. Hopefully you will work up an appetite as we are heading to a cooking class in a small inn. This is not a cooking demonstration. This is a hands-on cooking class where you will make simple Tuscan dishes that can easily be recreated at home. Lunch is a three course extravaganza in the company of our charming hosts. After lunch you can hike back to the hotel or hop in the van for a quick ride back. The cooking school has an outdoor pool that you are welcome to use. Dinner on your own in San Gimignano

Cooking Class

San Gimignano

Today we hike to a family-run inn. We spend the morning creating Tuscan dishes using ingredients from the family garden and then enjoy a leisurely lunch accompanied by local wines. Bring a bathing suit if you would like to use the pool.

The Hike, Day 2 **San Gimignano to San Andrea**

2.8 miles (4.5 km)

An easy downhill hike leads to the cooking school.

Day 3 **Volterra**

San Gimignano – Pignano *5 miles (8.1 kilometers)*

Today's hike takes you through the peaceful woodlands west of San Gimignano. The woods are lush and isolated. In WWII Italian partisans hid in these hills. Our hike takes us to a secluded 13th Century castle. When built, the castle was one of 20 that formed a defensive ring around San Gimignano. Records show that by 1458 just seven families lived there and by the early 1600s the castle was definitively abandoned. Today the castle is in ruins, but you can still admire the high castle walls, the foundations of numerous houses, and an intact church with frescoes from 1275. Leaving the woods the landscape opens up and Volterra appears on a ridge ahead. We stop for a leisurely picnic lunch on a hillside with a view. Hiking on quiet farmroads we arrive at the perfectly preserved 18th century hamlet of Pignano. Van shuttle from Pignano to Volterra. Dinner on your own in Volterra.



Hotel

Hotel La Locanda

Volterra (2 nights)
This four-star hotel is located in a converted nunnery in the historic center of Volterra. The hotel is quiet with AC and WIFI.

www.hotel-lalocanda.com

The Hike, Day 3 **San Gimignano to Pignano**

5 miles (8.1 km)

Hike through woods to an abandoned castle. Emerge from woods into open valley with views of Volterra. Group picnic lunch.

Volterra Sites

Roman Amphitheater

Discovered in 1951, Volterra's Roman Amphitheater dates from the first century BC.



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Day 4 Volterra

Pignano – Volterra

7.3 miles (11.7 kilometers)

After breakfast we shuttle into the countryside. A peaceful farm road leads to the base of Monte Voltraio, a sandstone hill once dominated by a castle known as *La Rocca*. Only a few traces of the fortress remain, but it is worth the climb to enjoy the views. Volterra was originally settled by the Etruscans in 800 BC. In 400 BC the Etruscans built a 4-mile (7-km) wall around the town. Remains of the walls, including the Etruscan *Porta dell'Arco* still stand today. Volterra also has a Roman theater and baths (1st Century BC). While in Volterra you might want to visit the Guarnacci museum which has one of the world's best collections of Etruscan antiquities. If you go be sure to look for the *Ombra della Sera* (Shadow of the Evening) a bronze Etruscan statuette dating from the third century BC, and the museum's most important piece. Dinner on your own in Volterra.

Day 5 Hiking Tour Ends

After breakfast check out of the hotel and continue your travels. Volterra doesn't have a train station. Numerous busses depart from Volterra or you can take a taxi to the train station in the town of Cecina. Taxis to Florence can also be booked. We will be happy to assist you with your travel planning.

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

The Hike, Day 4 *Pignano to Volterra*

7.3 miles (11.7 km)

Walk through rolling farmland towards Volterra. For great views climb Monte Voltraio, a hill on the edge of Volterra. Hike ends in the center of Volterra.

Volterra Sites

Etruscan Gate 4 BC

Before the arrival of the Romans, Volterra was an Etruscan city. A 4th Century BC Etruscan gate still leads into the old city.

