

## Guided Southern Tuscany Bike Tour

Duration: 7 Days/6 Nights

**charnes tours**  
*hiking and cycling in italy*

### The Best of Southern Tuscany

The hill towns and valleys south of Siena comprise perhaps the most enchanting and picturesque part of the region. It's a land of medieval castles guarding hilltop villages, isolated farmhouses perched atop limestone ridges, and ancient thermal spas. Southern Tuscany's cities are textbook Italian hill towns. Roman settlements like Montalcino and Montepulciano grew into medieval cities and today produce two of Italy's top red wines, the powerhouse Brunello di Montalcino and the subtle Vino Nobile di Montepulciano. The gemlike village of Pienza, famed for its pecorino cheese, shelters within its tiny ring of walls a Renaissance core of the most perfect proportions and planning. Much of the area is occupied by the Val d'Orcia, an expansive valley that glows a bright emerald green in spring, and burns to golden-brown under the fierce summer sun. Souvenir-stand postcards and cover shots of coffee-table books are snapped right here. This tour shows you the best of Southern Tuscany with an emphasis on the local culture. We tour a Brunello winery, spend a morning at a cooking class, visit a cheese farm, and enjoy a guided wine tasting in a medieval castle. We cycle quiet backroads and stay in charming inns with spectacular valley views. We carefully weave exercise, sightseeing, slow food, and relaxation into an unforgettable vacation experience.

#### Route Rating

Moderate: 4-27 miles (6-44 km) per day cycling over hilly terrain.

#### Meet / Finish

Florence / Florence

#### Highlights

- Brunello winery tour and tasting
- Cheese farm tour and lunch
- Cooking class
- Swim at a thermal spa
- 12th century castle visit with guided wine tasting
- Lunch at a hilltop abbey
- Tuscan hilltowns of Montalcino, Pienza, Montepulciano, and Cortona

*Countryside near Pienza*





## Day 1 and 2 Montalcino

### Montalcino Loop Rides

*4 miles (6.3 km) and 18 miles (30 km)*

We meet in the center of Florence and shuttle to our hotel in Montalcino. After lunch in Montalcino (not included in tour price) you are fitted on your bike and we do a warm-up ride to the Biondi Santi winery. Brunello di Montalcino, one of the most celebrated wines in Italy, is synonymous with the Biondi Santi family. The winery has bottles of Brunello dating back to 1888. These bottles only survived due to quick thinking during WWII. In early 1942, as the front was approaching, the Biondi Santi family walled up a cantina to hide their most prized vintages. A group dinner (included) caps off our first day. The Re di Macchie restaurant specializes in Tuscan cuisine including hand-made pici pasta with wild boar ragù, truffle and porcini ravioli, and ribollita (a hearty potage made with bread and vegetables). On Day 2 a downhill ride leads to a cooking class in a stone farmhouse. We spend a couple of hours preparing traditional Tuscan dishes using seasonal produce. After our big lunch we cycle to the Sant'Antimo abbey. The ancient abbey stands among olive trees and wild flowers in a peaceful valley south of Montalcino. Well over 1,000 years old, Sant'Antimo is one of the most beautiful Romanesque churches in Italy.

### Hotel

#### Dei Capitani

Montalcino (2 nights)

This hotel features incredible views, a swimming pool, and renovated rooms and bathrooms.

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

### The Rides, Day 1 and 2 Montalcino to Biondi Santi Winery

*4 miles (6.3 km)*

Our warm-up ride leads to an ancient winery. Some climbing from winery back to Montalcino.

### Sant'Antimo Loop

*18 miles (30 km)*

A quick downhill leads to a farmhouse and cooking class. After a large lunch we continue downhill to an abbey.

## **Day 3**

### **Pienza**

#### **Monalcino to Pienza**

*22 miles (35 km)*

The ride to Pienza is one of those rides you never forget. You pedal through the Val d'Orcia, a picturesque agricultural valley and Unesco World Heritage site. This ancient valley of gently rolling hills and scenic villages can feel blissfully timeless, its rich history and natural splendor exquisitely preserved. We roll through San Quirico d'Orcia, a walled village of Etruscan origin. You will find few tourists here, but you will find a lovely park, a rose garden, and inviting piazzas. Back on the bikes we pedal to a thermal spa called Bagno Vignoni. Instead of a piazza, the center of the village is a giant thermal pool. While this pool is now closed to bathers, other pools are open. We soak in the soothing waters at nearby hotel pool. Rich in calcium, iron, and zinc, many believe the waters have medicinal effects, perhaps even reenergizing tired cyclists. The water bubbles out of the ground at a constant 49 degrees Celsius (120 Fahrenheit). By the time the water reaches the pool it has cooled to 38 degrees Celsius (100 Fahrenheit). After lunch an uphill ride leads to our hotel in Pienza. In 1458 a newly elected Pope (Pius II) decided to renovate his hometown. The town of Corsignano was demolished and in its place rose magnificent Pienza, the incarnation of a Renaissance utopia. Remarkably Pienza has been meticulously conserved. The streets, palaces, churches and piazzas are exactly as they were over 500 years ago.

#### **Hotel**

##### **Hotel Corsignano**

Pienza (1 night)  
The Corsignano has breathtaking views of the Orcia Valley. This family-run hotel offers quiet modern rooms and a terrace with a hot tub.  
[www.hotelcorsignano.it](http://www.hotelcorsignano.it)

#### **The Ride, Day 3**

##### **Montalcino to Pienza**

*22 miles (35 km)*

A beautiful ride through the gorgeous Val d'Orcia. Big downhill at the start and big uphill at the end to Pienza.

#### **Other Questions?**

Toll free 1 888 421 2418

[info@charnestours.com](mailto:info@charnestours.com)



## **Day 4** **Pienza**

### **Pienza to Cheese Farm Loop** *9 miles (14 km)*

This area offers more than great architecture, thermal waters, and landscapes. The Val d'Orcia is also known for its cheeses, in particular a goat's cheese called pecorino. On Day 4 we cycle to a *caseificio* or cheese farm, where 700 ewes roam 200 acres. The sheep are milked twice a day, the milk is immediately pasteurized, rennet is added and the cheese is born. We tour the farm seeing sheep, pigs and goats. We enjoy lunch at the farm on a spectacular scenic terrace. The lunch includes a selection of pecorino cheeses, pasta made with their own grains, meats from their livestock and vegetables from their gardens. Return to Pienza by bike after lunch.

### **The Ride, Day 4** **Cheese Farm Loop** *9 miles (14 km)*

A short ride leads to a cheese farm. Ride directly back to Pienza or do a longer loop in the countryside.

### **Other Questions?**

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## Day 5 Montepulciano

**Pienza to Montepulciano**  
*19 miles (30 km)*

This morning a backroad leads to Montefollonico, a tiny medieval hilltop village with 150 residents. The village has a wall, a couple of gates, and a family-run restaurant. Lunch at the restaurant is included. Today's ride ends in Montepulciano. High on a tufa ridge, Montepulciano seems to have been positioned by a landscape painter and laid out by a designer of Renaissance opera sets. It has one of the most intact and architecturally unified historic centers of any Italian town. The main piazza, surrounded by elaborate Renaissance palaces is breathtaking. In most Tuscan hilltowns you won't find a wineries in the historic center. The wineries tend to be located next to the vineyards below town. Montepulciano is an exception. Built on volcanic tufa stone, enormous ageing caves were dug under historic palaces. Today you can explore three different wineries located just steps from the town's main piazza.

### **Hotel**

**Mueble il Riccio**  
Montepulciano (1 night)  
The Mueble Il Riccio is a small family-run inn just steps away from the town's main piazza. The hotel has a roof top terrace with majestic views.  
[www.ilriccio.net/en/](http://www.ilriccio.net/en/)

**The Ride, Day 5**  
**Pienza to Montepulciano**  
*19 miles (30 km)*

Ride to a small hilltop village for lunch. After lunch a rolling ride to Montepulciano.

### **Other Questions?**

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## **Day 6** **Cortona**

### **Montepulciano to Cortona** 27 miles (44 km)

A rolling ride through farmland and old villages leads to Cortona. More of a hillside town than a hilltop town, Cortona is endowed with beautiful Medieval and Renaissance architecture as the medieval street plan was never changed. Narrow streets climb steeply up the hillside. The main drag, called Via Nazionale, is the only flat street in town. Wandering the historic center you'll be rewarded with fabulous views of the countryside along the medieval town walls. From the end of town you have a beautiful view of Trasimeno Lake. On our last night we indulge in 4-course dinner with plenty of local wines.

## **Day 7** **Shuttle to Florence**

To keep things simple we shuttle you back to Florence. By 12 noon you will be dropped off at the Florence train station. Florence has excellent train connections north and south.

### **Hotel**

#### **Hotel San Michele**

Cortona (1 night)

The Hotel San Michele is the nicest hotel in the center of Cortona. The hotel is located in a 15th century mansion. The building has been completely renovated, but retains its Renaissance charm.

[www.relaisilchiostrodi pie nza.com](http://www.relaisilchiostrodi pie nza.com)

### **The Ride, Day 6** **Montepulciano to Cortona**

27 miles (44 km)

We saved the longest ride for last. Long downhill, followed by some rolling countryside with a climb up into Cortona.

