

Self-Guided San Gimignano Bike Tour
Duration: 5 Days/4 Nights (optional extra night)

charnes tours
hiking and cycling in italy

Beautiful Tuscan Hill Towns

On this tour you see some of the most beautiful hill towns of Tuscany. Day one starts in Chianti with a ride to a 16th century villa. You visit the villa's winery, olive mill, and gardens. Lunch with your tour coordinator is included on the first day. After lunch you pedal to Certaldo, a small medieval town undiscovered by tourists. On day two you ride to San Gimignano. San Gimignano has Italy's best collection of stone towers. The towers will come into view halfway through your bike ride. You will want to stop for the incredible photo opps. We like San Gimignano so much we have you stay for two nights. On day three you have your choice among loop rides. You can pedal to an abandoned castle, cycle to a winery, or ride to a town famous for its crystal glassware. Leaving San Gimignano you ride through some of Tuscany's most spectacular scenery on your way to the Etruscan city of Volterra. High up on a ridge near the sea, Volterra is well off the beaten tourist trail. Within its Roman walls you will find elegant streets and shops. Volterra is known for its alabaster, wander into a workshop and see skilled artisans transforming this translucent stone into works of art. The town also has a Roman amphitheater and Etruscan museum.

Route Rating

Moderate: 10-20 miles per day cycling over hilly terrain.

Meet / Finish

Florence / Volterra

Highlights

- Winery visit with guided wine and oil tasting
- Towers of San Gimignano
- Roman amphitheater of Volterra
- Beautiful Tuscan scenery and peaceful country roads
- The town of Volterra

Other Questions?

Toll free 1 888 491 2760
info@charnestours.com





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 where your tour coordinator fits you on your bike. Our first stop is a winery in a 16th century villa. You tour the winery and enjoy a guided wine tasting. They make the rich ruby red Chianti Classico as well as a flavorful extra virgin olive oil. We have lunch together at the winery where we review the route notes and discuss your tour day by day. After lunch you are on your own as you pedal through rolling countryside on your way to Certaldo. There will be a short steep uphill which you may prefer to walk rather than ride. In the afternoon you arrive in the town of Certaldo, a small village set along the Via Cassia, the ancient road to Rome. Certaldo is divided into a lower and upper town. The upper town is well preserved with its original city walls, medieval streets, and red brick palaces. Walk up to the old town or ride a funicular up the hillside.

Hotel

Hotel Certaldo

Certaldo (1 night)
Located in former watermill, the Hotel Certaldo features beautiful modern rooms in a historic setting. The hotel has air-conditioning, a large garden, and a swimming pool.

www.hotelcertaldo.it

The Ride

Day 1: A hilly 19 mile (30 km) ride through Chianti with two challenging climbs. You may need to walk part of the second hill.

Day 2 San Gimignano

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

After a buffet breakfast you pack and leave your luggage in the lobby. During your ride your bags will be moved to San Gimignano. You have two cycling options today. You can take an easier, but less scenic ride, or opt for a big hill that leads to beautiful vistas of the valley below. Either way you will be treated to magnificent views of San Gimignano's towers. Towers were typical of medieval Tuscan villages, however, most were lowered or knocked down over the centuries. 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 savor a cold gelato in a bustling piazza. We highly recommend the Gelateria della Piazza, close to your hotel. You can't miss it. It is the one with the sign that says, "Gelato World Champion".

Note: You will be in San Gimignano for two nights. Tomorrow you can choose among three optional rides. If you want to ride more on Day 2 you can do one of the optional rides a day early.

Hotel

Hotel Leon Bianco
San Gimignano (2 nights)
You 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

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.
Extra miles available.



Day 3 San Gimignano

San Gimignano Loop Ride

*Choose from three different rides
6, 13, or 24 miles (10, 21, or 39 kilometres)*

Today you can choose from different riding options. You can cycle to a small country inn for a hands-on cooking class (see website for current price). If wine is more your style pedal to a winery and try their crisp *vernaccia* white or a full-bodied Chianti red. If you prefer to explore a beautiful medieval village ride to Colle Val d'Elsa, famous for crystal glassware production. If you would like to mix cycling and hiking head to Castelvecchio, an abandoned 13th century castle. All rides offer spectacular views of San Gimignano. The rolling countryside provides the perfect emerald background for the fairy tale towers of San Gimignano.



Sites of Interest

Torciano Winery

Visit the Giachi family who have been making wine on this farm for 300 years. Note: Wine tasting only, no tours.

www.torciano.com

Colle di Val D'Elsa

Famous for its crystal glassware production this small town features a perfectly preserved medieval center.

Castelvecchio

In the woods outside San Gimignano lies an abandoned 13th century castle. You can ride and then hike 2 km (roundtrip) to visit this amazing archaeological site.

The Ride

Day 3, With four riding options you can do as much or as little as you like. Do one or two of these loop rides depending on your interests.

Why Self-Guided?

Explore Tuscany at your own pace. We provide detailed route notes, a cell phone, luggage transfers, great accommodations, restaurant suggestions, and sightseeing notes. You choose the dates. We take care of the details.

Day 4 Volterra

San Gimignano to Volterra *21 miles (34 kilometres)*

After a buffet breakfast pack your bags and leave them in the lobby. You bags will be transported to your Volterra hotel. In the morning you gradually climb out of the Elsa river valley as you head west towards the sea. Finishing the climb you begin the long descent towards Volterra. After a morning in the shade of oak, pine and cypress trees, you soon emerge from the forest to be greeted with views of the vast Era valley. Rolling downhill you pass small stone farmhouses surrounded by clay slopes. As your downhill ride finishes Volterra appears high on a ridge before you. It is a challenging 3 mile (5 km) climb up a winding road to the center of town. 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). Many call Volterra Tuscany's best hill town. It is small and genuine, and hasn't yet been transformed by mass tourism.

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 has air-conditioning and free WIFI.

www.hotel-lalocanda.com

The Ride

Day 4, 21 mi (34 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 3 miles (5 km) 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. Feel free to ask us for assistance with your post tour travel plans.

DEPARTURE ON LAST DAY OF TOUR

There is no train station in Volterra so you will have to take a public 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 shuttles can be arranged.

Optional cooking class?

Spend half a day with an Italian family at their country house. Learn to make traditional Tuscan cuisine with produce from the family garden.

