



UMBRIA AND TUSCANY: ITALY'S GREEN HEART

Peaceful medieval hill towns, dense forests and a wholesome culture of foraging define Umbria, a landlocked region in central Italy.

Tailor-Made Journeys, Suggested Itineraries



Europe, Italy



10 days from AU\$22,120 pp



Private

Journey Overview

Peaceful medieval hill towns, dense forests and a wholesome culture of foraging define Umbria, a landlocked region in central Italy. Wine tasting, truffle hunting and scenic hikes are all fantastic options in this region known as Italy's green heart. In Tuscany, with its picturesque rolling hills lined with cypress, world-class art and superb wines and *cucina povera*, the Tuscan experience is perfectly in symbiosis with the land.

Journey Highlights

- See one of Italy's most striking Gothic cathedrals in Orvieto
- Soak up the scenery and serenity of Todi, a delightful town seemingly untouched by modern tourism
- Admire the mighty Roman bridge and majestic fortress that dominate Spoleto's skyline
- Search for truffles in the woods or unlock the secrets of Umbrian cuisine at a cooking class
- Hike wild landscapes in the Monte Sibilini National Park or cycle the gloriously lush Nera Valley
- Visit the UNESCO World Heritage-listed historic centre of Siena
- Tour the beautiful Tuscan towns of Pienza and Montepulciano
- Sample outstanding Umbrian and Tuscan wines at traditional local vineyards



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Orvieto

Welcome to Umbria! Meet your A&K Guardian Angel and driver upon arrival, for a private transfer to your hotel just outside Orvieto, where you're free to unwind.

Locanda Palazzone

Day 2: Orvieto

Visit Orvieto, a picturesque medieval town set apart by its impressive location atop a rocky plateau overlooking local vineyards and offering dazzling views of the surrounding area. Follow narrow cobbled streets to its captivating cathedral, a Gothic masterpiece both inside and out. Orvieto boasts the most ancient winemaking traditions in the region, with time-honoured viticultural practices include storage of wines in cellars dug out of the volcanic bedrock.

This afternoon after lunch (payable locally), enjoy a tour and tasting session at a traditional winery.

Locanda Palazzone / Meals: B

Day 3: Orvieto - Norcia

En route to Norcia, explore Todi and Spoleto, two sleepy hilltop towns that are small in size but big on monuments from the Etruscan and Roman civilisations to the Middle Ages. Climb the bell tower at the Church of San Fortunato for sweeping views over Todi's elegant medieval palaces and tranquil piazzas.

Spoleto's formidable fortress and spectacular ten-arch bridge are both unmissable, dominating its skyline.

Lunch is at leisure, continuing afterwards to your hotel.

Palazzo Seneca / Meals: B

Day 4: Norcia

Design your Day today, choosing one of the two activities below which showcase the gourmet delicacies of Umbria:

Truffle Hunting and Ricotta Cheese Making

Embark on an exciting truffle hunt this morning, in search of "black gold", the black truffle. Later, a trusted cheesemaker will show you all the secrets and the process of preparing ricotta cheese outdoors, surrounded by nature. Cap off this unique activity with a picnic in the forest, a chance to feast on delicious regional produce.

Cooking Class at the Michelin-starred Restaurant Vespasia

Join two celebrated chefs at an acclaimed restaurant, who will reveal the secrets of Umbrian and Italian cuisine. Learn how to recreate the dishes prepared at home, before sampling each mouth-watering creation.

Palazzo Seneca / Meals: BL

Day 5: Norcia

It's another opportunity to Design Your Day, with these two active options:

Hike in Monte Sibillini National Park

Experience wild nature on foot with an expert naturalist guide. Steeped in legends, this scenic mountainous reserve is home to quaint villages, dense forests and picturesque steep-sided gorges. Lunch is included at a local restaurant.

Discover the Valnerina

Cycle along an old rail trail on a guided e-bike excursion, which takes in the dramatic, verdant landscapes of the Nera Valley dotted with lonely monasteries and isolated forts. Forage for wild edible plants, some of which you'll enjoy for lunch at a farm.

Palazzo Seneca / Meals: BL

Day 6: Norcia - Cortona

Travel to the Tuscan countryside by way of Assisi and Perugia.

In the peaceful Umbrian town of Assisi, enjoy a guided walking tour, visit the beautiful Basilica di San Francesco, built in the 13th century to house the body of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of Italy, and the Gothic Church of Santa Chiara.

Continue to Perugia and visit the Collegio del Cambio (Exchange Guild) where elaborate frescoes decorate the meeting room and chapel of the guild of bankers and money changers, as well as the imposing Palazzo dei Priori housing the National Gallery of Umbria with magnificent paintings, frescoes and sculptures.

In the afternoon, bid farewell to Umbria and travel to your hotel in Tuscany.

Relais Il Falconiere / Meals: B

Day 7: Cortona

This morning you may opt to start your day with an unforgettable birds-eye view over Tuscany from a private hot air balloon (additional cost). You'll ascend into the sky for a one-hour flight filled with awe-inspiring views as the sun rises over the rolling hills, vineyards, and medieval towns that dot the region. Afterwards, you'll enjoy a lavish breakfast showcasing the finest local produce and a toast with a glass of Prosecco.

Enjoy a day at leisure to wander the pretty cobblestone streets of Cortona. The epitome of a Tuscan hilltop town is immortalised in Frances Mayes memoir and film "Under The Tuscan Sun". Explore narrow shop-laden streets and hidden stone staircases, enjoy breathtaking views and spend some time in one of the local cafes.

Relais Il Falconiere / Meals: B

Day 8: Cortona

Visit what is likely *Italy's* loveliest medieval city, Siena, built on three hills and enclosed by an ancient set of walls and gates. See the Piazza del Campo, one of the finest squares in Italy, and the Palazzo Pubblico which has served as Siena's Town Hall since the 1300s. Then, step inside Siena's Duomo, considered to be one of the nation's finest Gothic cathedrals with its unforgettable frescoes.

There's free time for lunch, followed by a guided exploration of La Foce, a fabulous private garden restored and revived by the remarkable Origo family in the 1920s. Stroll the splendidly landscaped grounds to learn the estate's backstory and to appreciate the many design elements that enhance the classic Tuscan surrounding landscape.

Relais Il Falconiere / Meals: B

Day 9: Cortona

Enjoy a full day spent exploring some of the stunning Tuscan towns to the south-east of Siena. Highlights include Pienza, built by Pope Pius II as a perfect example of Renaissance Humanist urban design, and Montepulciano, an archetypal fortified hilltop town brimming with a wealth of Renaissance-style palaces and churches.

Enjoy lunch is at a dairy farm, where you'll get a taste of country life, before a private tour of renowned vineyards, *vin santaia* and *barricaia*, followed by a wine tasting at Avignonesi winery, a producer of Nobile di Montepulciano wine.

Relais Il Falconiere / Meals: BL

Day 10: Depart Cortona

Say goodbye to Tuscany after breakfast, with a private transfer to the airport in Florence or Rome.

Relais Il Falconiere / Meals: B

Map



Accommodation

Relais & Châteaux Il Falconiere, Cortona



This splendid 17th-century manor lies in a privileged position between Tuscany and Umbria, giving its guests the best of both worlds. The Relais & Châteaux property is nestled at the foot of the hill where the Etruscan Cortona rises, close to medieval villages ripe for exploration.

Each of the 34 rooms and suites is unique and enriched by the inspiration of local artisans. All rooms share the style of simple old-world Tuscany with picturesque views of olive groves, vineyards and the Cortona countryside. Guests can relax by the outdoor pool, with sun beds and deck chairs. The Thesan Etruscan Spa offers a sauna, sensory showers and a Turkish bath, as well as beauty treatments and massages.

Set in a converted orangery, the restaurant is Michelin-starred and serves traditional Tuscan dishes. Guests can sample the estate's own Baracchi wines or join one of the *Cooking under the Tuscan Sun* gourmet cooking courses. The Baracchi family who inhabit this three-hundred-year-old villa, welcome their guests with a passion and typical Tuscan warmth.

Abercrombie & Kent

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