

The Best of Tuscany, Umbria & Le Marche

23 Sept – 4 Oct 2012
(12 days/11 nights) AUD \$5280



Vita Italian Tours

Vita Italian Tours are designed
for the traveller who wants
more than just a holiday

The tour will focus on the three regions: Tuscany, Umbria and Le Marche which make up the central part of Italy.

Each region has its own particular character offering spectacular scenery, authentic cuisine and romantic hilltowns. It is also a journey from the Medieval period to one of the most splendid eras of European civilization: the Renaissance. The experience starts in Rome where you will see works of the greatest masters of the period who were commissioned by the Bishops of Rome. The tour ends where it all started in Florence, the home of the Medici. Between these two highlights, there will be guided tours to explore the treasures and experience the life in centres such as Urbino, Gubbio, Loreto, Assisi, Perugia, Lucca and Siena. As usual, your tour leaders, Mario and Viny, complement the tour with their intimate knowledge of the history, culture and Italian way of life.

Mario and Viny will give you the opportunity to experience the excellent hospitality of the people of Central Italy with its abundance of traditional local food and wine. You will enjoy leisurely lunches and special dinners in traditional restaurants. There are also opportunities to shop at local markets and speciality shops.

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 Rome (D) Your tour leaders Mario and Viny will meet you at the Hotel in the centre of Rome at 3.00pm. Introductions and a short talk on the tour will precede an afternoon stroll through some of the famous '*piazze*' of Rome. The guided walking tour will include Piazza della Repubblica, Piazza Barberini, Piazza di Spagna, Fountain of Trevi, Piazza della Rotonda, Piazza Navona and finally Campo de' Fiori. The walk will end with an early dinner in a traditional Roman restaurant in Campo de' Fiori.

Day 2 Rome/Loreto/Pesaro (BLD) Today we leave the Eternal City for Pesaro. We will travel in air-conditioned comfort through some of the most beautiful countryside of the Central Apennines. Lunch will be at Loreto, a beautiful hill town second only to Assisi and Rome as a place of religious pilgrimage. The town is a showcase of some of Italy's greatest artists and architects. We then travel north to the City of Pesaro, which will be our home for the next 3 nights. After check in, an optional *passeggiata* of the historic centre of the city will precede a dinner at the hotel.

Day 3 Pesaro/Urbino (BLD) Today after breakfast we explore the land once ruled by the lords of Montefeltro. The day is devoted to visiting Urbino, one of Italy's most fascinating towns of the Renaissance. It is also the birthplace of Raphael. A conducted tour of the magnificent Ducal Palace, which houses the *Galleria Nazionale delle Marche* with its precious paintings by Piero della Francesca, Tiziano, Paolo Uccello and Raphael. Lunch is organised in Urbino in a traditional restaurant where we taste the local *casciotta* cheese with *crescia* bread. Free afternoon in Pesaro. Dinner at the hotel.

Day 4 Pesaro/San Marino/San Leo (BLD) Today after breakfast at the hotel, we travel just over the Le Marche border for a day visit to the tiny Republic of San Marino. It is a day for shopping as San Marino is jammed with duty free shops. Apart from souvenirs, you will be able to pick up perfume, watches and leather bags at very reasonable prices. San Marino is also worth a visit for its history and pageantry and its magnificent hilltop setting which offers excellent views of the countryside. In the afternoon we will visit San Leo with its ancient castle perched above sheer cliffs. We will have a rest in the beautiful town square where we will have lunch and taste the delicious *formaggio di fossa*: a cheese walled up in rock caves to mature for months. Dinner at the hotel.

Day 5 Pesaro/Gubbio/Assisi (BLD) After breakfast we travel across Le Marche to the beautiful preserved medieval town of Gubbio in Umbria. There will be ample time to wander through the streets of this seldom visited gem. After lunch, we make our way to the famous town of Assisi which will be our base for the next three days. Dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 6 Assisi (BLD) Today is dedicated to Assisi, the home of one of Italy's greatest, beloved saints, St. Francis. Assisi has always been an attraction for the great artists of Italy. In the Basilica of St Francis we will view many of these masterpieces culminating with Giotto's Fresco Cycle. The afternoon is devoted to exploring the streets of this mystical town. Dinner will be organised at a traditional local restaurant.

Day 7 Assisi/Perugia/Deruta (BLD) After breakfast we travel by bus to the magnificent university City of Perugia: a centre of art and culture. Perugia is striking for having retained much of its medieval appearance. The morning will be spent visiting the National Gallery of Umbria. In the afternoon we travel to the beautiful town of Deruta: famous for its Majolica ceramics. Dinner in a traditional restaurant.

Day 8 Assisi/Greve/Florence (BLD) After breakfast we will travel to Florence, the Renaissance jewel and city of the Medici. On the way we will stop in Greve in the heart of the Chianti Region. A special lunch is organised at one of the oldest wineries in the area for you to experience the atmosphere of this part of Tuscany which is full of small villages and hundreds of vineyards dotting the countryside. We then travel to Florence and after check in at the hotel in the centre of Florence we will take a leisurely walk, which features Piazza del Duomo and its cathedral with the Giotto Campanile and the magnificent East Door of the Baptistery known as the 'Gates of Paradise'. Dinner in a restaurant famous for its local cuisine in the centre of Florence.

Day 9 Florence/San Gimignano/Siena (BLD) Today we will travel through the beautiful Tuscan countryside to San Gimignano. A tiny historical city perched on a hill, famous for its numerous towers and art treasures. There will wine tasting and the opportunity to buy a bottle or two of *Vernaccia*, the area's famous white wine. In the afternoon we visit Siena to admire the Cathedral, the Piazza del Campo, one of the most beautiful squares in Europe and learn about the famous race: *Il Palio*. Dinner will be in Florence in a traditional restaurant.

Day 10 Florence (BD) Today is devoted to the jewel in the Renaissance art crown - the Uffizi Gallery, which contains the greatest Renaissance masterpieces. You will experience the

benevolent patronage of the Medici at the height of their power and influence and the legacy they have left the world. Then we proceed to the Accademia Gallery and admire the original David by Michelangelo and other masterpieces by this great artist. In the afternoon you are free to wander through the famous markets shopping for leather and gold goods or leisurely explore this beautiful city. In the evening dinner is organized in a local restaurant.

Day 11 Florence/Lucca (BLD) Today we travel to Lucca: a most beautiful city in northern Tuscany. The city is rich in history dating from the Roman times to the power and wealth of the medieval and Renaissance times. A local guide will walk us through these eras and we will explore the walls and fortifications, the *piazze* and *palazzi* which make up this truly beautiful city. Then it is back to Florence for dinner.

Day 12 Florence (B) Mario and Viny farewell the group after breakfast at the hotel.

Items included in the Tour

- All land travel in an air-conditioned mini buses
- Accommodation for 11 nights in 3/4 star hotels in Rome/Pesaro/Assisi/ Florence
- **11** breakfasts
- **11** dinners
- **9** lunches (the meals includes special lunches and dinners in traditional local restaurants as detailed in the itinerary)
- Admission to all galleries, museums, wineries and historical sites included in the itinerary
- Personally guided tours to all towns mentioned in the tour
- Services of the tour leaders throughout the tour

Items not included

- Airfares
- Travel insurance (we strongly recommend you take travel insurance during your travels)
- Admission fees to places other than those specifically itemised in the itinerary
- Meals on tour except when specifically mentioned in the itinerary
- Drinks outside normal meal times or additional wine in restaurants
- Personal transport costs, phone calls and other personal needs

Cost

The cost of the tour, land content only, is **AUD \$5280** per person in twin share accommodation. **A deposit of AUD \$400** is required to reserve a place on the tour which is not refundable unless the tour is cancelled. **Single** supplements are available at an additional cost of AUD \$680. **The full balance** is due 60 days before departure. **The tour** is costed on a minimum of 6 people travelling on the tour with the maximum number of 14.

We recommend that you read carefully the conditions applying to Vita Italian Tours

Additional information

The weather: it is the beginning of autumn. It can still get warm during the day however the evenings are cool. We recommend light, conformable clothing, a light jacket with your favourite walking shoes. The countryside is undulating and hilly. Many of the hill towns have their historical centres closed to traffic and therefore lots of walking is required. You should expect to stroll leisurely for up to an hour with many breaks for sightseeing, coffee and a taste of the local produce. **The program** appears to be full; however it is mixed with long restful lunches and leisure time for your enjoyment and comfort. **If you need to, you can always take time off from the organised program.**

For further information

Visit the web site **www.vitaitaliantours.com** for the full list of tours.

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