

TREASURES OF TUSCANY

Adventures in Good Company's General Information Sheet

International travel takes some planning, but the rewards are well worth it! This information will answer many of your questions, but please don't hesitate to call Adventures in Good Company if we can be of assistance.

Passport: A valid passport is required for travel in Italy. You will need to present it at the airports before and after your flights. A visa is not required. Be sure to carry a photocopy of your passport in a separate location, for security's sake. It is also a good idea to leave one with somebody at home. If you already have a passport, check to make sure it is still current (they expire every 10 years). Passports can be renewed through the mail. If you are getting a passport for the first time, you must submit your application in person. For information on how to obtain a passport, download an application from travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html, ask your travel agent, or call the Passport Office at 202-647-0518. Allow at least 6 weeks.

Health: Italy is a very safe place to enjoy on vacation. There are few serious health concerns, and no immunizations are required. Adventures in Good Company and the Department of Health, however, recommend that you are current with your Tetanus vaccination.

Conditioning: No previous hiking experience is required, but all women should be in good physical condition, able to enjoy walking four to six hours each day on consecutive days, and should be free from significant knee or foot problems. The route includes a mixture of dirt roads, paved roads and some trail.

If you do not currently exercise regularly, we recommend that you start a conditioning program at least two months before the trip. This should consist of some sort of aerobic exercise 3 to 4 times a week, at a level sufficient to make you breathe deeply but not so vigorous as to make you pant. Walking and hiking, particularly up hills, is excellent exercise. Start with 30 minutes and gradually include some walks up to 2 to 3 hours long. The key is to be consistent and to increase your exercise level gradually. We will be glad to provide you with specific conditioning suggestions.

Mail & Phone: Because we will be staying in different hotels, it is difficult to receive mail during our trip. It is a simple process to make a phone call from Italy. Some phone cards may offer discounts; we suggest you check with your phone company. When it is 12:00 noon in Rome, it's 6:00 a.m. in New York and 3:00 a.m. in San Francisco.

Electrical Appliances: The electrical current in Italy is 220V, 50 Hz so travelers from the US need a three-tier standard travel converter. Make sure you bring a plug adapter for any electrical items you travel with - plugs have two round pins. Some specialty travel stores carry adapters and can help you choose the right one.

Spending Money: Italy is one of the members of the EU and has converted to the single European currency, the Euro. The current exchange rate is approximately 1 Euro to 1.45 US dollar, although this can fluctuate. Travelers cheques and foreign money can be changed at banks, railway stations and airports, and very often at major hotels (generally at a less attractive rate). Travelers cheques are less generally accepted than they used to be. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travelers are advised to take travelers cheques in Euros.

Credit & debit cards: MasterCard, Diners Club and Visa are widely accepted, but many small establishments - shops and restaurants only accept cash. It is advisable to ask merchants if they accept credit cards before trying to purchase items if they do not display the insignia in the window.

Many towns have ATM machines that accept these credit cards as well as Mastercard and debit cards. Cirrus and BankMate are the two most popular and widespread banking systems in the world so they are the best to have. If you are unsure about the compatibility or the banking systems, contact your credit card company or local bank before you leave.

You will need money for snacks, a few lunches, beverages, gratuities, personal excursions, gifts, and other items of a personal nature. In restaurants the law requires menu prices to include service charge, and tipping is a matter of personal choice - most people leave small change if satisfied.

Climate: In general the climate in Tuscany is very mild with small variations between the regions, due to the geography of the area. The average temperature in May is 72 and the average low is 55 degrees. While most days are sunny, there is also a significant chance of rain during May (9 days on average).

Tipping Guidelines

Tipping at the end of the trip is optional. If you feel your guide(s) did an outstanding job and would like to reward him or her for their efforts, a suggested rule of thumb is US \$5-\$10 per person, per day. Oftentimes, trip members organize a group envelope (this makes it anonymous) and present it to the guides at the last shared meal.

Getting there

You will be flying into Rome. The International airport in Rome - **Leonardo da Vinci (FCO)** - is accessible by many of the major airlines including: Delta, American, Continental, US Airways, Northwest, as well as British Airways, Air Canada, and Lufthansa.

Note: The trip ends in Florence (**FLR**), and you can fly out anytime on the 20th. Most of the major airlines above access the Florence airport as well.

Our meeting spot the first day is at our hotel – **Hotel Nord Nuova Roma**. We will send you the instructions about how to get there from the airport in our pre-trip letter.

Suggested Reading

In Tuscany, Under the Tuscan Sun, Bella Tuscany, by Frances Mayes
Frances Mayes trilogy of her years in Tuscany. Beautifully descriptive, and fun reading for anyone traveling to the region.

Lonely Planet Tuscany and Umbria, by Alex Leviton, Josephine Quintero, Racehl Suddart
The Lonely Planet is one of the most beloved travel guides. In this edition, attractions of Tuscany and Umbria are covered - Discover Leonardo da Vinci's hometown of Vinci and the breathtaking views of the Apuan Alps. Visit the gothic cathedral of Siena and see the Romanesque splendour of the gravity-defying leaning tower of Pisa. This guide to Tuscany also covers food, architecture and activities.. *Lonely Planet Rome* is also available.

The Tuscan Year - Life and Food in an Italian Valley In this book for Italian food lovers, Elizabeth Romer describes month by month a year in a Tuscan kitchen and the traditions of the villagers centered around food.

Vanilla Beans and Brodo - Real Life in the Hills of Tuscany. Isabella Dusi, an Australian, comes to live in the medieval village of Montalcino for a year. Her book details the daily events of village life and the traditions and history of Montalcino and Tuscany. This is a wonderful book for anyone interested in the Tuscan way of life.

War in Val D'orcina, published by David Godine Pub, This is the true story of Iris Origo and her husband, and their efforts to protect and rescue refugees and hide prisoners of war in the Italian countryside during WWII. A stirring document about basic humanitarianism and true courage, it is a classic of war literature.

Websites of interest

There are lots of websites to look at. Here are a few to get you started.

Tourism Bureau for Tuscany
<http://www.turismo.toscana.it>

Information and maps about the castles of Tuscany
<http://www.castellitoscani.com>

All about Tuscany food, wine, flora, fauna, history, and events. < <http://www.choose-tuscany.com>>