

Tuscany – undulating Hills, Mellow Towns and a Wealth of Arts

Florence's skyline must be one of the most famous vistas in the world, with the gracious dome of its duomo rising above the surrounding terracotta roofs. A stroll through the city is a must if you are in Tuscany and the list of cultural sights is endless: the Pitti Palace, the Boboli Gardens, the Uffizi Gallery, the Ponte Vecchio, and of course, Michelangelo's 'David'. But if you're looking for a different take on Florence, then wander down the back streets, where you'll find a treasure chest of small boutiques, including an apothecary where monks still make herbal potions and perfumes. Bargain hunters should head out of town to the Prada, Gucci and Armani outlets in the environs. Alternatively, make for Via Maggio where you'll find a good selection of crafts and antiques shops, and round off the evening with a theatre performance.

A great way to escape the bustle of Florence is to head for Fiesole, the dignified district in the hills above the City. Here, elegant villas are set amongst scented woods and Etruscan monuments. This is the setting of one of our most luxurious hotels, The Monastery, which enjoys fabulous panoramas of Florence below. Other towns of note in northern Tuscany are medieval San Gimignano with its famous towers, showcased in many film productions, Lucca and Montecatini.

Siena, to the south of Tuscany is very different in feel to its larger cousin, Florence. Often at war with each other, the two towns have developed their own characters. Siena's wide open central piazza seems much less frenetic than Florence, although that is disputable during the 'Palio' – the furious horse race held here every year.

Surrounding Siena is the undulating Chianti region, which gives its name to the fine wine produced here. Every inch of land seems to be covered in vines and olive groves, so visitors will not be disappointed with the delicious food and wine. It is probably here, rather than the better known places, where you will form your enduring memories of Tuscany; chancing upon a tiny village or grape harvest in progress. Gaiole, Greve, Cortona, Radda, Arezzo, Volterra, Montepulciano - these are just some of the evocative names that you will find in Chianti and we are sure that you will return home with your own stories of many more.

Getting There

Fly direct from the UK to Florence or Pisa with Ryanair, BA or Meridiana.

Combine With

Umbria, Le Marche and Abruzzo, or the Lakes to the north, or citybreaks in Venice or Rome to the south, and the Amalfi Coast beyond.

For more images & hotel details see www.c-boutiquehotels.com

To book call **08717 500070**

Tuscany is perhaps the most visited holiday region of Italy and needs no introduction. Its glorious undulating countryside, with verdant hills punctuated by poplars and cypresses, mellow towns and wealth of art and culture are familiar even to those who have never visited. The renaissance towns of Florence and Siena are on everyone's 'must visit' list, and with good reason. They are stuffed with palaces, piazzas, sculptures and paintings which are all achingly beautiful. However, there is more to Tuscany than this very public facade. The Chianti region is still home to some fabulous hilltop towns, which are still undiscovered and even in the more well-trodden places, there are hidden treasures if you know where to look.

Our Recommended Hotels in Tuscany

The Abbey
The Merchants' Cross Spa Hotel
The Hill Lodge
The Hamlet
The Hill Cottages
The Summer House
The Winery
The Monastery
Florence Town Houses

