



A TUSCAN AUTUMN ADVENTURE

25 OCTOBER–4 NOVEMBER 2010

A gastronomic adventure meeting the locals and artisans and sharing their culinary treasures from the northern to the southern tips of Tuscany.

Exquisite accommodation, personalised small group travel.

ITINERARY

Monday 25 October

Transfer from meeting point to Albergo Pietrasanta in the beautiful sculptors' town of Pietrasanta, which will be our base for the next six nights.

Welcome dinner at Osteria alla Giudea, traditional Tuscan cooking at its best.

Tuesday 26 October

Olive oil is fast food. In ideal circumstances the olive gets from the tree to the oil drum in a single day. In the morning we help pick olives at Azienda Antico Uliveto, an organic estate which grows a rare variety of olives called *quercetano*. After lunch at the estate's restaurant in the middle of the olive grove, we take our olives to the modern press where we watch as our extra-virgin oil pours out. We also visit a traditional press and find out why the modern one is better.

Wednesday 27 October

Everyone agrees that the Cinque Terre — the Five Lands — is one of the most beautiful stretches of Italian coastline. The best view of the vertiginous cultivated terraces and rocky cliffs is from the sea. We travel by boat which stops at each of the picturesque villages, giving you time to explore. You can choose to walk between one or two on the well-marked trails and get back on the boat when you're tired.

On our return Gabriella, a magnificent cook, welcomes us to her home for a seafood dinner fresh from Viareggio market.

Thursday 28 October

We join Chef Roberto Sabadini in his kitchen at the Antico Uliveto for a cooking lesson preparing typical Tuscan dishes based on our new olive oil. We have a tutored tasting of several distinctly different oils from the province of Lucca. You learn how to compare oils, how to recognise good ones in shops at home and how to store them. For lunch we have the satisfaction of eating the results of our labours.

Five minutes' walk from our hotel is Studio Sem, a sculpture studio with the distinction of being one of the few that carries on the tradition of marble artisans, having realised from models many works by celebrated sculptors such as Henry Moore and Joan Miró. We have a private tour meeting the sculptors and viewing their works.

Dinner at La Dogana, Capezzano Pianore.



Mount Amiata



Friday 29 October

We spend today in the wild, rugged mountains of the Garfagnana because it's the beginning of the chestnut season. We visit a chestnut-drying hut and a water mill. On the way we visit an eerily beautiful abandoned marble quarry, stop at a woollen mill that weaves cashmere scarves on traditional handlooms for international fashion houses with the opportunity to buy at factory outlet prices. Lunch is at Il Vecchio Mulino in Castelnuovo, where the tasting menu allows you to feast on an extraordinary array of the best produce the Garfagnana has to offer.

Saturday 30 October

A free day to explore the exquisite walled town of Lucca. Among its treasures are its landscaped Renaissance walls, the amphitheatre still bearing traces of its Roman and mediaeval origins, many churches, paintings and sculptures. In the evening a Puccini concert followed by dinner in the intimate dining room of All'Olivo restaurant.

Sunday 31 October

A lazy start and an unhurried journey through Tuscany, stopping for a special lunch, brings us to agriturismo 'La Palazzina', Radicofani, our accommodation in the beautiful Val d'Orcia for the rest of the tour.

Monday 1 November

This morning we visit a family dairy where the owners Sandra and Ulisse show us how to make pecorino cheese and ricotta. We meet their family and flocks and then settle down to taste their delicious produce.

Montepulciano is our next stop, where you are free to have lunch and explore. You can visit some of the



historical wine cellars or sit and admire the Renaissance magnificence of the Piazza Grande. Next to the Piazza is a coppersmith, one of the last in Tuscany. Our next indulgence will be a tasting of the famed Nobile di Montepulciano wine at a nearby vineyard. Then we head home for dinner along 'la Foce', a panoramic route on which many car commercials have been shot.

Tuesday 2 November

Today our destination is Mount Amiata — a majestic, extinct volcano that still generates the hot springs at Bagno Vignoni and Bagni San Filippo. The mountain is renowned for its wild mushrooms, truffles, chestnuts, olive oil, game and wild berries. It is also home to the Cinta Senese pig, a breed going back to at least the 14th century, that had almost disappeared 20 years ago. After a visit to the farm, we have lunch in the nature reserve where you can taste the Cinta and find out for yourselves how lucky it is that it was saved from extinction.

After lunch we return to 'La Palazzina' for a cooking lesson with Eliana and then relax with a glass of wine and enjoy what we cooked.

Wednesday 3 November

The delightful Gianni and his dog take us truffle hunting on his estate, after which we taste his extra-virgin olive oil and the truffles you've found (we hope). The afternoon is free to visit the spa in San Casciano dei Bagni or relax at 'La Palazzina'.

Thursday 4 November

Departure. Transport provided to Rome Fiumicino airport.



ACCOMMODATION

Agriturismo 'La Palazzina'

An 18th-century hunting lodge, set in oak and cypress parkland, has been sensitively restored retaining period features while incorporating modern conveniences. Today it possesses the qualities of a fine country house to which owners Silvano and Eliana give guests a warm welcome.

www.fattorialapalazzina.net

Albergo Pietrasanta

A 4-star luxurious boutique hotel in the historic centre of the mediaeval town of Pietrasanta. In addition to its beautifully appointed rooms, it has an ample garden and hosts an exceptional collection of contemporary art.

<http://albergopietrasanta.qntdev.com/>

PRICE PER PERSON: €3250 (Euros) SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: €395 (Euros)

The itinerary is subject to change if necessary due to weather or agricultural conditions or other events outside our control.

INCLUDES

- Luxury accommodation for 10 nights
- Local ground transportation for 11 days
- Daily continental breakfast, 6 lunches, 6 dinners
- Entrance to wine tasting, cheese tasting, truffle hunt, concert, sculpture studio, cooking lessons, guided visits with producers

DOES NOT INCLUDE

- Airfares
- Travel and cancellation insurance
- Spa treatments
- Wines and beverages, other than those served with meals, additional meals
- Personal expenses such as telephone, mini-bar, *etc.*



BOOKINGS

Contact Heather at

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USEFUL INFORMATION

Meeting points

Pisa airport (Galileo Galilei) or Viareggio train station

Attire

Informal. Jeans or smart trousers are acceptable everywhere.

Weather in October & November

Val d'Orcia: 9°–15°C, precipitation 69 mm

Lucca: 11°–21°C, precipitation 119 mm

Slow Food Salone del Gusto, Turin

21–25 October

Transport from Turin to Lucca can be arranged if enough people request it.

Recommended 4-star hotel: Hotel Victoria

www.hotelvictoria-torino.com



Inger Sannes, Studio Sem