

HeartCycle Bicycle Touring Club TUSCANY 2024

- Dates:** September 5 - September 18, 2024.
- Coordinator:** Cindy Dore
- Rating** Intermediate, 321 miles (516 km) over 12 riding days
- Riders:** 20 (Including coordinator)
- Price:** \$3550 (double occupancy), deposit \$800 with registration. Balance due June 5th. +\$900 single supplement.
- Cancellation:** Fee \$100 prior to June 5, June 5 to July 4, loss of deposit, July 5 - August 4, loss of deposit and 50% of final payment, after August 4, no refund unless a replacement can be secured from the waitlist. **Travel insurance is strongly recommended.**



OVERVIEW

Tuscany is renowned world over as a cyclist's paradise. Picture perfect landscapes, medieval villages, mouthwatering cuisine, exceptional wines, and warm friendly people. This tour starts with an overnight stay in Florence, birthplace of the Renaissance. In Florence you can marvel at Michelangelo's David, explore the Mercato Centrale, shop for handmade leather goods, or savor a Florentine steak over a glass of Chianti. On this tour you will cycle through Chianti, famous for its namesake wine. You will enter the spectacular Val D'Orcia with its sun-bathed wide-open landscapes. The Val D'Orcia, is so entrenched in Renaissance design and art that the valley is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. You will zig zag through the Tuscan countryside spending your nights in the region's most famous hill towns including, Radda, Volterra, San Gimignano, Siena, Montalcino, Pienza, Montepulciano and Cortona. We will ride through lush vineyards, stopping to tour three wineries. We will visit a cheese farm and learn how ewe's milk is lovingly transformed into savory pecorino cheese. We will explore three castles, climbing to the top of ancient walls for breathtaking views. In Bagno Vignoni you can soak in thermal waters in a spa village dating back to Roman times. This bike tour will combine the best of Tuscany; its natural beauty, its historic hilltowns, and its remarkable cuisine. The tour ends in the town of Cortona, on the border between southern Tuscany and Umbria.

INCLUDED IN TOUR PRICE

- 13 nights in hotels
- Buffet breakfasts in the hotels every morning
- 6 Lunches, a traditional Tuscan meal at the Le Corti Winery, a buffet at the San Donato winery, a barbecue at the Radicofani Castle, a farm to table lunch at the Il Casale pecorino cheese farm, and two picnics
- Dinner on last night. House wine is included. Pricier wines not included.
- Use of a bike (road bike or hybrid). Ebikes are available for 30 euro per day.
- Helmets and water bottles
- GPX files for each ride
- Handlebar bags and panniers are available upon request.
- 2 bilingual guides, one in the sag wagon (9-passenger van) and one on a bike
- All the luggage transfers
- Minibus shuttle from Florence to Chianti start on Day 1
- Minibus shuttle from the Cortona hotel to the Camucia-Cortona train station at the end of the tour
- 3 winery visits (Le Corti, Badia a Coltibuono, and Poggio Antico).
- 3 castle visits (Brolio, Fortezza di Montalcino, and Radicofani)
- 1 cheese farm visit (Il Casale outside of Pienza)
- 1 abbey visit (Sant'Antimo)
- 1 guided tour of an abandoned Medieval town

NOT INCLUDED IN TOUR PRICE

- 6 lunches (6 of the 12 lunches are included)
- All the dinners, except on the last night

Shimano SPD pedals are available. Flat, non-clip in, pedals are also available. If you use a different pedal system, please bring your own pedals. If you want to bring your own saddle, we will be happy to install it on your bike in Italy. You don't need to bring your helmet as they will be provided. You can bring your own bicycle, however there won't be a price discount if you bring your own bike. All of the bikes are high quality, low mileage, and well-maintained models with Shimano components. The road bikes have aluminum frames and Shimano Ultegra 11-speed mechanical groupsets. The hybrids have aluminum frames and Shimano Deore groupsets. Multiple frame sizes are available.





TOUR START, Florence hotel on September 5, 2024

The bike tour will begin at our Florence hotel on September 5, 2024. You can check in any time after 3:00 PM. The following morning a private bus will transport the group from Florence into the Chianti countryside where you will be fitted on your bike and begin riding.

TOUR END, Cortona on September 18, 2024

Your bicycle tour will end in the town of Cortona. Frequent trains make for easy departures. The Camucia-Cortona station is 5 km from our Cortona hotel. After breakfast we will shuttle you to the train station.

Travel times are listed below:

Camucia-Cortona to Rome: 2 hr 30 min (10 per day)

Camucia-Cortona to Florence: 1 hr 30 min (hourly)

Note: The Camucia-Cortona station is on a main north-south train line so you can travel to Rome or Florence without changing trains.

ITINERARY

DAY 1, September 5, 2024

Check into your Florence hotel. Before dinner we will have an aperitivo poolside on the rooftop bar. This rooftop pool/bar has the best view of Florence. Dinner on your own.

HOTEL: The Social Hub <https://www.thesocialhub.co/florence-lavagnini/>

Day 2, September 6, 2024

Chiesanuova to Radda, 46 km

We will depart the hotel by bus and drive 15 km (9 miles) into the countryside. You will be fitted on your bike and begin the first ride. Our first stop will be a 16th century winery. www.principecorsini.com/en/content/tours-and-tastings The area between Florence and Siena is called Chianti and is known for its traditional red wine, the Chianti Classico. The winery also produces its own peppery extra virgin olive oil. A winery tour and lunch are included today. After lunch you will cycle through the ancient villages of Greve and Panzano. In Radda our 4-star hotel is on the main pedestrian thoroughfare. The hotel is in a 500-year old building that has been impeccably renovated, preserving its Renaissance charm.

HOTEL: Palazzo San Niccolò www.rosshotels.it/en/palazzo-san-niccolo/index

Day 3, September 7, 2024

Radda loop ride to Gaiole and the Badia a Coltibuono, 50 km

Day 3 offers a beautiful loop ride. In the morning a downhill ride takes us to the Brolio Castle www.ricasoli.com/en/castle/ This castle is right out of a fairy tale. It has been owned by the same family for 900 years and is surrounded by sprawling vineyards. We tour the castle grounds, stopping for many photo-ops. Leaving the castle we cycle to the village of Gaiole in Chianti before a climb to the Badia a Coltibuono (Abbey of the Good Harvest) www.coltibuono.com/en/ The abbey has one of the best restaurants in Chianti where traditional Tuscan staples are embellished with modern touches. We enjoy a leisurely lunch, al fresco (not included in the tour price). After lunch we will have a guided tour of the abbey's beautiful gardens, common rooms, and their ancient wine cellars and "wine library" www.coltibuono.com/en/restaurant/

HOTEL: Palazzo San Niccolò www.rosshotels.it/en/palazzo-san-niccolo/index

Day 4, September 8, 2024

Radda to Volterra, 42 km

A curvy road and gentle climb lead to Castellina in Chianti. Castellina is a small hilltown built around a 15th century castle called *La Rocca* ("The Rock" in English). On the edge of Castellina you can visit an Etruscan necropolis dating from the 6th century BC. The tomb's artifacts are in the town museum, but the tombs are open to the public. Later we stop for a picnic lunch in quiet Colle Val D'Elsa.

Largely ignored by tourists, Colle Val D'Elsa has an impressive medieval center with bastions and formidable gates. Colle is also a center for crystal glass production. Leaving Colle you will begin a steady climb towards Volterra. Volterra sits high on a ridge surrounded by verdant fields. In Volterra you can visit a Roman theater from 100 BC and an Etruscan gate dating from 400 BC www.volterratur.it/en/poi/roman-theatre/ www.visittuscany.com/en/attractions/porta-allarco-volterra/ Colle, Volterra hasn't been transformed by mass tourism, giving the town a genuine, small-town vibe.

HOTEL: Albergo Etruria, Volterra <https://albergoetruria.it/en/>



Day 5, September 9, 2024

Volterra to San Gimignano, 32 or 46 km

A big downhill followed by a short uphill leads to the town of Certaldo.

www.visittuscany.com/en/ideas/certaldo-a-medieval-corner-of-tuscany/

Surrounded by its more famous neighbors, San Gimignano and Volterra, Certaldo is largely untouched by tourism. Certaldo's original settlement was built on a high steep ridge. This small village has been carefully conserved and is delightfully car free. We stop for snacks and drinks in Certaldo's main piazza. From Certaldo we will be able to see our final destination, San Gimignano.

San Gimignano is a UNESCO World Heritage site because of its exceptional stone towers. In this 13th century Manhattan, 14 of the original 72 towers are still standing. Towers were typical of medieval Tuscan villages. However, most were lowered or knocked down. San Gimignano has the best towers in Italy. Historians attribute the survival of these towers to an economic slump following the black plague of 1348. Your hotel is located in a 15th century building in the center of town. San Gimignano offers great shopping and a multitude of restaurants.

HOTEL: Hotel Leon Bianco <https://www.leonbianco.com/>



Day 6, September 10, 2024

San Gimignano loop ride and hike to Castelvechio, 12 km bike, 2 hr hike

Today you can take a day off from the bikes or you can join us for a cycling and hiking excursion which leads to the ruins of an abandoned medieval village. If you prefer to stay in San Gimignano, you will find plenty to do, climb the Torre Grossa for 360-degree views, peruse the Galleria Gagliardi which has an eclectic collection of contemporary Italian art, or try a gelato at the famous Dondoli Gelateria. Sergio Dondoli is a proud member of Italy's World Champion Gelato team and among his most famous creations are Crema di Santa Fina (saffron cream) and Vernaccia wine sorbet. If you choose to cycle, we will ride to the Fenzi farm for lunch.

www.sandonato.it/en/ The Fenzis have been making Vernaccia white wine on a hill outside of town since 1932.

After lunch we will hike to an abandoned medieval village called Castelvecchio, where will have a guided tour. www.visitworldheritage.com/en/eu/castle-ruins-in-the-castelvecchio-nature-reserve/a662a930-8224-42c9-bc0a-ea55ba1659c1 Deep in the woods Castelvecchio was once one of 20 castles that protected San Gimignano. The town was abandoned in the 1500s and fell into disrepair. Inside the fortified village are the remains of the castle, houses, mills, and a Romanesque church.

HOTEL: Hotel Leon Bianco <https://www.leonbianco.com/>

Day 7, September 11, 2024

San Gimignano to Siena, 54 km

Today's ride takes you through the 13th century castle of Monteriggioni, one of the best preserved hilltowns in Italy. www.lovefromtuscan.com/where-to-go/small-towns-in-tuscany/monteriggioni/ Monteriggioni boasts an almost perfectly circular wall surrounding the entire village. This whimsical town has been inspiring creators for centuries. In 1320 Dante Alighieri described Monteriggioni in his *Divine Comedy*. Seven centuries later the creators of the video game Assassins Creed included the historic village in their action-adventure video game. Today's ride ends in Siena. Siena attracts great numbers of visitors year-round, but it hasn't sold its soul to tourism. The town's thriving historic center, with red brick lanes cascading every which way, offers Italy's best Gothic city experience. The town's Piazza del Campo is considered by many to be Italy's most beautiful piazza.

HOTEL: Hotel NH Siena <https://www.nh-hotels.com/hotel/nh-siena>

Day 8, September 12, 2024

Siena to Montalcino, 60 km

Cycling south out of Siena the landscape quickly changes. This area is known as the Crete Senesi. The countryside is wide open with unending vistas over gentle rolling hills. Centuries ago artists flocked here to paint Renaissance landscapes. More recently movie scenes from the *The English Patient* and *The Gladiator* were filmed here. We cycle through Asciano, a sleepy walled village alongside a river. Our final destination is Montalcino, home to one of the stars of Italian wine, the Brunello di Montalcino. Just 3,000 acres of venerated rolling hills around Montalcino can be used to produce this sublime red. We will visit the Fortezza di Montalcino (Montalcino Castle) where we have a guided Brunello wine tasting with snacks. www.enotecalaforzezza.com/GB/web/history-2 From the top of the castle walls you will have views across the stunning Val d'Orcia below.

HOTEL: Hotel Dei Capitani <https://www.deicapitani.it/en/>

Day 9, September 13, 2024

Montalcino to Sant'Antimo loop ride, 32 km

A fast scenic downhill will lead to a magnificent church. www.visittuscany.com/en/attractions/abbey-of-santantimo/

The Abbey of Sant'Antimo is nestled into a hillside and surrounded by secular olive trees. According to ancient legend the abbey was founded by Charlemagne in the 9th century. A backroad through vineyards will then take us to tiny Sant'Angelo in Colle, a sleepy stone village. We stop for a picnic lunch in the shade of oak trees next to the old church. Before returning to Montalcino we visit the family-run Poggio Antico winery. We have a guided tour and learn the history of the Brunello di Montalcino wine. Our visit ends with a guided wine tasting.

www.poggioantico.com/

HOTEL: Hotel Dei Capitani <https://www.deicapitani.it/en/>

Day 10, September 14, 2024

Montalcino to Pienza, 37 km

We will ride through open countryside where stately cypress trees lead to rustic stone farmhouses. In mid-morning will stop in the town of San Quirico. Encircled by fortified walls, San Quirico is a perfect place for a cappuccino break. Before leaving town, you should stroll the Horti Leonini, a 15th century Italian garden. From San Quirico it is a short ride to a thermal spa town. Bagno Vignoni was first used by the Romans 2,000 years ago. Instead of a piazza the centerpiece of the village is a large thermal pool. Rich in minerals, the water is said to have medicinal effects. After lunch you can dip your feet, or your whole body, in the soothing waters. Our final stop is Pienza. Pienza was the hometown of Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405-1464). When Piccolomini became Pope Pius II he decided to refurbish his poor hometown and turn it into his summer papal resort. What was built is the earliest example of a Renaissance "ideal town". The original buildings are in extraordinary condition. Admiring the palaces of Pienza you will feel like you have stepped back in time.

HOTEL: Hotel Corsignano <https://www.hotelcorsignano.it/en/>

Day 11, September 15, 2024

Pienza to the Radicofani Castle loop ride, approximately 66 km

A panoramic road winds slowly through open countryside to the Radicofani Castle, one of the most scenic fortresses in Italy. www.fortezzadiradicofani.it/eng/index.html
For centuries, the imposing Radicofani Castle has been the symbol of defense and control over the Via Francigena, the ancient road to Rome. It had great military importance, being a compulsory stopover for pilgrims and travelers alike. We have a big barbeque lunch, before touring the ancient castle. From the top of the castle tower you can see for miles.

HOTEL: Hotel Corsignano <https://www.hotelcorsignano.it/en/>

Day 12, September 16, 2024

Pienza to Montepulciano, 24 km

In the morning we visit a family-run pecorino cheese farm called Il Casale.

www.podereilcasale.com/en/ In 1992 a Swiss couple bought the property and became pioneers of organic agriculture in the Val d'Orcia. Today the family has sheep for pecorino cheese, olives for oil, bees for honey, and wheat for pasta. The farm is a veritable zoo with donkeys, pigs, goats, and even a peacock. After a tour of their production facilities we enjoy an organic lunch on a shady terrace. In the afternoon we ride to Montepulciano, a picturesque hill town rich with Renaissance architecture. Montepulciano is home to a fantastic red wine called the VINO Nobile. Before dinner you can explore the wine cellars of the Cantina Contucci winery just steps from our hotel (not included in the tour price).

HOTEL: Hotel Duomo <https://albergoduomomontepulciano.it/?lang=en>

Day 13, September 17, 2024

Montepulciano to Cortona, 44 km

Meandering through open countryside we make our way to Cortona. Cortona is layered into a hillside 600 meters (2,000 feet) above sea level and offers majestic Tuscan and Umbrian views. The town enjoyed considerable publicity some years ago due to a popular book and film titled, *Under a Tuscan Sun*. Cortona is not lacking for bustling piazzas and pedestrian promenades. Our tour will end with a group dinner at a local restaurant.

HOTEL: Hotel San Michele www.cortonaluxuryaccommodation.com/sanmichele/index_eng.php

Day 14, September 18, 2024

Tour ends. After the buffet breakfast we will shuttle you to the Camucia-Cortona train station where you can make easy connections to Florence or Rome.

For more information contact:

Cindy Dore

cdorecycle@gmail.com

