



of The University of Vermont®

Italy: The Art, Flavors & Landscapes of Tuscany

Dates: April 22-May 2, 2017

Number of Participants: 19 minimum

Travel Arrangements through Milne Educational Tours (dba Milne Travel)



Photo credit: Emily Martel

Apr 22 – Ground transport from BTV to Montreal for flight from Montreal to Rome

Apr 23 – Rome to Cortona

Arrival at Rome Fiumicino International Airport.

Our Meet & Greet will be waiting for us after passport control near the luggage belt (prior to going through customs).

Depart by coach to Cortona (2 hr. 20 min. drive).

Lunch in a typical restaurant.

Evening walking tour (approx. 1 hr. 30 min.).

Our first stop is Cortona, a beautiful medieval town that was already a very important village during the Etruscan period between the 8th and 7th Century BC. On this guided walking tour we will see the Romanic Church of St. Christopher and the Town Hall Square with its historic Town Hall building. We'll

stroll down the main street surrounded by medieval palaces with beautiful panoramas.

At the end of the walking tour, depart to Chianciano Terme (approx. 25 min. drive) and check in at the 4-star Grand Hotel Excelsior.

Dinner at the hotel (4-course meal and ½ bottle mineral water pp, ¼ bottle wine pp included).

Overnight.

Apr 24 – Val D’Orcia (Pienza, Montalcino & Chianciano)

Full Day Val D’Orcia (UNESCO Site) with Pienza, Montalcino & Visit to a Cheese Farmhouse

Depart from Chianciano Terme and after a 30-minute drive, arrive at Pienza, a very charming little town which dates back to the 15th century. Our private guide will be waiting for us to commence a walking tour around the narrow streets. We’ll visit the typical “botteghe” (small stores) where we can find and taste all sorts of Pecorino cheese (with pepper, truffle, nuts, etc.). Pienza also offers nice artisanal stores which sell handmade leather items. Some free time will be provided before driving on towards a farmhouse specializing in cheese production. There we will enjoy a cheese tasting and a light lunch that includes delicacies produced by the farmhouse.

After lunch we’ll drive towards Montalcino – one of the loveliest little wine villages in Italy – and home to the famed Brunello di Montalcino wine. The hill-topped village of Montalcino has been in existence since the time of the ancient Etruscans and the nearby Abbey of Sant’Antimo was founded in the 8th century! The village that we see today contains many reminders of medieval life with great views over the whole Orcia Valley, with its rolling hills and Cyprus-lined country roads.

Dinner in a very typical and centrally-located restaurant owned by one of the best wine makers in the area.

Return to Chianciano Terme at the end of the dinner.

Overnight.

Apr 25 – Assisi & Matelica

Full Day Assisi & Matelica

After breakfast depart from Chianciano Terme to Assisi (approx. 1 hr. 30 min. drive).

The pink stone town of Assisi is at the center of Umbrian spirituality. The compelling lives of the two local saints, Francis and Clare, intertwine with the art of the most famous painters of the Middle Ages.

It is convenient to start the tour from the upper part of the town so that the downhill itinerary is easier.

- **St. Clare Basilica:** *Clare is the founder of the order of the Poor Clares. She is buried in the crypt of this church where it is believed that the Crucifix that spoke to St. Francis is also preserved.*
- **Piazza del Comune:** *Here are the civic buildings dating to the medieval Commune, the People's Tower and an interesting Roman construction named the Temple of Minerva. Below the square there are the remains of a large Roman public area.*
- **St. Francis Basilica:** *The center of Franciscan spirituality and cradle of medieval European art, the Basilica was built upon the Saint's tomb. The double papal Basilica was founded by Pope Gregory IX and is an architectural masterpiece containing some of the finest paintings of medieval Italian art, from Cimabue to Giotto, Simone Martini, Pietro Lorenzetti, Jacopo Torriti and Pietro Cavallini. The variety and breadth of the artwork clearly demonstrates both the importance of art in Italy and its development during this period.*

Lunch.

In the afternoon depart to Matelica (approx. 1 hr. 15 min.).

Some believe the first human settlements in the area can be traced to the Umbri and Picentes and date back to the 1st millennium BC. Later, under Roman rule, Matelica became a municipium (70 BC). Starting from the 5th century AD, it was seat of a Bishop, who for a while remained the only authority, after the fall of the Roman Empire. The town was annexed to the Byzantine Empire in 552. Destroyed by Longobards in 578, it was subsequently joined to the bishopric of Camerino. From the 9th century, Matelica was under the indirect rule of the Holy Roman Empire (while belonging formally to the Papal States), then becoming a free municipality in 1160. In 1174, it was again obliterated, this time by the army of Christian I (Archbishop of Mainz). Since then, Matelica remained part of the Papal States (albeit at times under an independent Governor), until the Italian unification (1861), except for the brief Napoleonic occupation.

Upon arrival, we will meet our guide who will accompany us to Matelica's historical center, where we will view the amazing mosaics that were discovered under the roads during a recent excavation. We'll visit the Museo Piersanti, situated inside a 15th-century palace, and extremely interesting with many original pieces that belonged to the noble family that owned the palace. We'll then proceed toward the Teatro Piermarini, built by the same architect who designed La Scala in Milan. We will also have the opportunity to access the area under the stage where original Roman Baths are located and are still very well preserved.

We'll then drive to the hotel, a country house dated 1600 that was transformed into a summer residence in the 18th century. The villa has only 12 rooms and the owners still live there and will warmly welcome us as guests in their home.

Dinner and overnight.

Apr 26 – Macerata

Depart after breakfast to Macerata (approx. 1 hr. drive), the main town of the Marche Region.

Arrive at the Università di Macerata, considered one of the oldest in Italy and founded in 1290. Here, we will proceed to the Law Department for a one-hour lecture on Giacomo Leopardi, Italian poet, philosopher, and graduate of the university, considered one of the best thinkers of the 19th century.

The lecture will be taught by one of the Professors in the Aula Magna (Great Hall) of the university, a magnificent room, rich of frescoes and historical symbols.

At the end of the lecture we will enjoy a walking tour of the historical center of Macerata.

In the central Piazza della Libertà is the Loggia dei Mercanti with two-tier arcades dating from the Renaissance. There are a number of striking palazzi, mostly along Corso Matteotti, including Palazzo dei Diamanti. Next to the Loggia dei Mercanti, Corso della Repubblica leads to Piazza Vittorio Veneto where, in the Palazzo Ricci, there is a modern art gallery. Another museum that is definitely worth a visit is Palazzo Buonaccorsi where we can see the amazing Eneide Hall (a gallery with paintings and frescoes from the 18th century) and the Carriages Museum. Soon the building will host the city Art Gallery (now temporarily closed) with its most important work of art, the Madonna and Child by Carlo Crivelli. The cathedral was built in Neoclassical style in 1771–1790; it has the remains of a 15th-century Gothic bell tower. The interior was designed by Cosimo Morelli.

Lunch in a local restaurant.

In the afternoon, we will drive towards one of the most important wine makers of the region.

There are traces of the wine produced here 2,650 years ago, where a small group of Benedictine monks settled here about the year 900 AD, when they escaped the persecution of the Longobards. They decided to build a small church and a small monastery that are, to this day, perfectly restored and part of the entire property.

We will be welcomed by Dr. Potentini, one of the most important Italian enologists, who will show us the cellar and the wine productions.

At the end of the visit, transfer to the farmhouse seat of the Mountain Association of Beekeepers. We'll be welcomed by the President of the association, who has been a beekeeper for more than 50 years. Enjoy a small sensorial course on the honey.

Dinner will be served on the beekeeper's property with the menu combined with honey and the wine. This wine production still follows the same process narrated in the "Naturalis Historia" by Plinio il Vecchio in 77-79 AD.

Overnight in Matelica.

Apr 27 – Arezzo to Florence

Depart in the Morning to Arezzo (approx. 2 hr. 20 min. drive)

*Described by Roman historian, Livy, as one of the *Capitae Etruriae* (Etruscan capitals), Arezzo (Arim in Etruscan) is believed to have been one of the twelve most important Etruscan cities — the so-called Dodecapolis, part of the Etruscan League. Etruscan remains establish that the acropolis of San Cornelio, a small hill next to that of San Donatus, was occupied and fortified in the Etruscan period. There is other significant Etruscan evidence: parts of walls, an Etruscan necropolis on Poggio del Sole (still named "Hill of the Sun"), and most famously, the two bronzes, the "Chimera of Arezzo" (5th century BC) and the "Minerva" (4th century BC) which were discovered in the 16th century and taken to Florence. Increasing trade connections with Greece also brought some elite goods to the Etruscan nobles of Arezzo: the Euphronios krater (ca 510 BC) depicting a battle against the Amazons.*

Conquered by the Romans in 311 BC, Arretium became a military station on the via Cassia, the road to expansion by republican Rome into the basin of the Po. Arretium sided with Marius in the Roman Civil War, and the victorious Sulla planted a colony of his veterans in the half-demolished city, as Arretium Fidens ("Faithful Arretium"). The old Etruscan aristocracy was not extinguished: Gaius Cilnius Maecenas, whose name is eponymous with "patron of the arts", was of the noble Aretine Etruscan stock. The city continued to flourish as Arretium Vetus ("Old Arretium"), the third largest city in Italy in the Augustan period, well known in particular for its widely exported pottery.

Our guided tour of the historical center includes Piazza San Francesco, the Pieve di Santa Maria, the fascinating Piazza Grande that resembles the main square in Siena, and the Cathedral of SS. Pietro and Donato.

Lunch.

In the afternoon, we'll drive to Florence and spend the rest of the day at leisure.

Dinner and overnight in Florence.

Apr 28 – Florence

Full Day in Florence with Accademia Gallery & Uffizi Museum (7 hrs)

We will meet our official Florentine guide at the hotel to start a private, full-day walking tour of Florence including the famous Piazza Santa Croce, with the Church that is the burial place of some very illustrious Italians such as Galileo, Rossini and Michelangelo to name a few (exterior). We will visit the world-famous Accademia Gallery, home to one of Michelangelo's most treasured creations, the statue of *David*. From there we will go see the Piazza del Duomo, the renowned domed cathedral of Florence (exterior) and the Piazza della Signoria/Pallazo Vecchio which is still today considered to be a vibrant town hall and political center of Florence.

Lunch in a typical Florentine restaurant.

After lunch we'll be off to the renowned Uffizi Museum where we will see many of Leonardo Da Vinci's pieces on display. We will also see the Ponte Vecchio. This historic city bridge is lined with shops that were once occupied by butchers but are now tenanted by jewelers, cafes, and art dealers.

Rest of day at leisure. Dinner and overnight.

Apr 29 – Florence

Full Day Cooking Class at Castello di Meleto & Lunch (Chianti) (6 hrs. 30 min.)

Leave for the beautiful and famous 11th-century Castello Di Meleto (approx 1 hr drive) where the vineyard of Meleto produces approximately 6,000 kg of grapes per hectare (2.741 acres). These grapes are gathered by hand and destined for the three great lines produced in the Meleto wine cellars: 250,000 bottles of Chianti Classico DOCG, 50,000 bottles of Chianti Classico DOCG Reserve, and 50,000 bottles of Castello di Meleto Fiore. The Castle belonged to the Benedictine monks of the Coltibuono Abbey. The name "Meleto in Chianti" appeared for the first time in 1269, in the Florentine Guelphs' "Libro degli Estimi", as the property of the family of Rainerii de Ricasoli. The Ricasoli family extended and embellished the building over the centuries, and today the Castle still has its massive 15th-century fortifications with an imposing cylindrical tower built as protection against artillery fire. But there is also the aristocratic grace of the Villa Nobile, with its sequence of furnished and decorated rooms, and an unparalleled 18th-century theatre.

Enjoy a private, guided tour of the estate overlooking areas such as the guest cottage, rooms inside the castle and see 13th- and 14th- century art and frescoes, the 18th-century theatre on the premises that is very unique to the region, the castle's small jail, the cellar, and be given an explanation on the wine-making process. We'll participate in a cooking class and prepare typical Italian pasta such as tagliatelle, pappardelle and tortellini. Enjoy the lunch we have prepared together with a wine tasting of four excellent wines from Castello Di Meleto. After lunch, we will travel to the nearby beautiful village of Radda in Chianti, the little jewel of the Chianti classic area, where we are free to wander around prior to driving back toward the hotel.

Before arriving at our hotel enjoy approximately one hour of free time in San Gimignano, where we can try an ice cream at the gelateria that won two titles at the Ice Cream World Championship, or simply stroll around admiring the wonderful medieval towers and its small stores.

Check in at the four-star Villa san Paolo situated just outside San Gimignano.

Excellent dinner at the hotel – the owners are olive oil producers and part of the family produces organic pasta, wine, and have their own Chianina cows.

Overnight.

April 30 – Siena & Felsina

Full Day Siena & Felsina Experience

Upon arrival in Siena we will meet our guide to begin a guided walk to explore Siena, amazingly rich in artistic masterpieces and rising above three hills. We will walk to the Piazza del Campo, the square where the world-famous, folkloric Palio horse race takes place twice a year during the summer. Discover this fan-shaped, gently sloping square lined with marvelous buildings like the City Hall, erected in the 13th century, and the Torre del Mangia bell tower, rising 102 meters high. The Sansedoni Palace and the Gaia Fountain are also close by. We will also see the exterior views of the gothic-style Duomo of Siena dating back to the 12th century and the Battistero di San Giovanni, both adorned with a variety of frescoes, sculptures and painting masterpieces created by some of Italy's most famous artists.

Lunch in a typical restaurant in Siena followed by some free time.

In the afternoon drive to Castelnuovo Berardenga – considered the cradle of wine – and arrive at Felsina, a corner of Paradise!

*As soon as we set foot in this countryside, we'll feel its hospitality, along with a moral responsibility to the environment. The Romans also recognized it as a place blessed by nature, transforming **Felsina** into a post station, and a place to rest, refresh oneself and meet others along an important road. Still, the spirit remains the same: a place to meet others and take refreshment, then as it is today.*

*Once the farm of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany, **Felsina** was mostly olive groves, with just a few hectares dedicated to viticulture. The original wine cellar was small, but in early 900 had already begun bottling, under the direction of the noble Florentine family Busatti, who gave the current 18th-century appearance to the villa, the church and other buildings of the court.*

*Here one's gaze can roam freely over the hills as far as **Monte Amiata**, imposing and majestic above the horizon, and wander towards **Montalcino** and the **Maremma**, as far as the sea.*

Learn about the wine production and vineyards starting with a Jeep tour around the property. Visit the ancient and modern cellars and once the tour is over, dinner will follow. Each course will be accompanied by one of Felsina's excellent wines. This will be a memorable experience!

Drive back to Villa San Paolo at the end of the dinner and overnight.

May 1 – Rome

Departure to Orvieto (approx. 2 hr. drive).

Orvieto was the last Etruscan town to be conquered by the Romans in 264 BC by Consul Quinto Fabio Massimo. The conquer of Orvieto represents the end of the Etruscan federal state and the confirmation of Rome's power. Not long after that, Rome became the Capital of the entire Mediterranean and of the known world.

Free time to explore this very walkable hill-top village.

Lunch in a local restaurant.

After lunch, leisure time on own.

Departure to Rome.

Check in at the hotel.

Dinner in a local restaurant and overnight.

May 2 – Flight to the US

Depending on the flight schedule, transfer to Rome airport and return flight home.

End of services.

Price of Trip:

\$4095, per person, double occupancy; \$615 single supplement.

Note: if you are a single person who would like to request a roommate to avoid the single supplement, please choose that option on the registration form. We will do our best to fulfill this request but cannot guarantee it.

Price Includes:

- Nine nights 4-star lodging in country (Grand Hotel Excelsior or similar, Chianciano Terme; Villa Collepere or similar, Matelica; Cellai (or similar), Florence; Villa San Paolo or similar, San Gimignano; dei Mellini (or similar), Rome)
- Nine Breakfasts
- Nine Lunches
- Nine Dinners
- Milne Travel Group leader from day one
- Airport transfers
- All in-country group travel via private, air-conditioned coach buses
- Local guides (Cortona, Pienza, Montalcino, Assisi, Matelica, Arezzo, Florence, and Siena)
- Cheese farmhouse visit and light lunch
- Admissions/entry fees to museums and other planned activities as listed on itinerary

- Lecture by University professor and guided tour in Macerata
- Wine tasting
- Beekeepers visit and dinner
- Cooking class, lunch and castle visit
- Felsina experience (Jeep tour, wine cellars visit and dinner)
- Whisper headsets for the entire tour duration

Price Does Not Include:

- Normal and customary tips to drivers, tour guide, hotel staff, restaurant staff (estimated \$10-15 per person, per day)
- International airfare (arranged through Milne Educational Tours)*
- City Tax which has to be paid at the checkout in each hotel portorage (estimated €4-6 Euro per person, per night)

*Roundtrip group air travel out of Montreal will be arranged through Milne Educational Tours after group minimum is met and will include round trip ground transportation from Burlington to Montreal airport. Group travel insurance (required and quoted by age) will be provided along with the group air reservation. Current group air rates starting from \$720 per person. The lowest group air rates available for your itinerary will be provided.

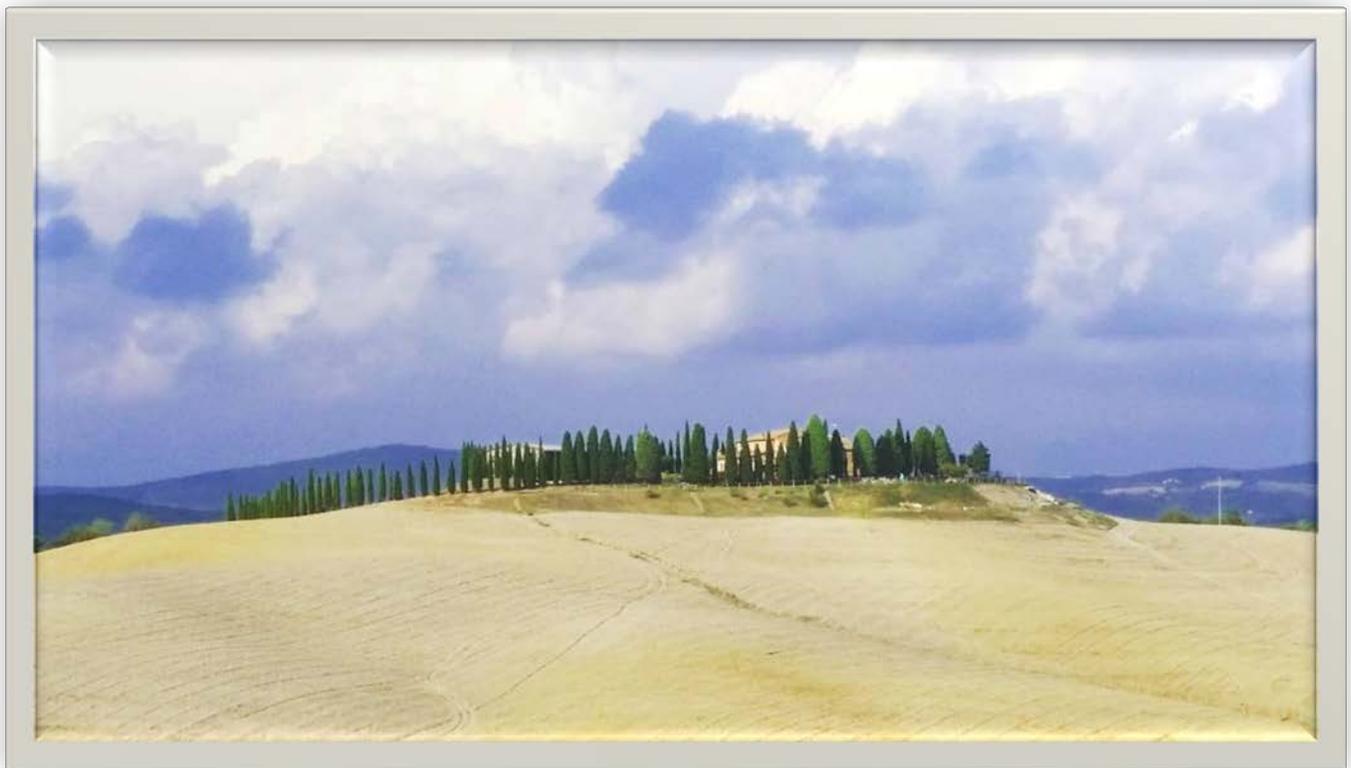


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