

Italy Self Guided Cycle Tour – 8 Days From Pisa to Florence



Self-guided lifestyle tour of Tuscany and Chianti

To experience the landscapes of Tuscany and Chianti and immerse yourself in the cultural heritage whilst on a bicycle tour is an unforgettable experience. Discover wonderful historical monuments and regions that lie off the beaten tourists paths on a self-guided bicycle tour from Siena to Florence. Let us set the scene... you are sitting in a traditional trattoria as the cycling day eases to a close. You truly deserve the spaghetti al pesto accompanied by a glass of chianti. You're in the cultural jewel of Tuscany, which has always been a magic place for people from all over the world. To bike through this landscape is an unforgettable experience. Wonderful historical monuments are often discovered or a castle or Tuscan villa emerges from out of nowhere. The typical landscape with its many olive groves suggests a feeling of tranquillity as you bike away from the main roads. Tuscany has a mainly hilly landscape, so during your tour our accompanying mini bus is always within easy reach if you wish to take a break from your bike. We cycle on side roads, cycle ways and sleepy country roads from one famous village, town or city to another. On entering or leaving a city, you may encounter more traffic or we will take you on a public bus or train 'experience'. Our tour will take you to all the famous places of Tuscany: Siena, San Gimignano, Pisa, Lucca, Montecatini and Florence.

Experience the beauty of Tuscany & Chianti: Cycle through Tuscany's lush green mountains, past vineyards, and visit castles in Sienna, Pisa and Florence.

A little bit of cycling and a whole lot of fun Each ride offered on this self-guided tour is short (about 10 - 40km per day). Riding is at your own pace equipped with detailed cycling guide and maps for a great cycling experience. Much of the journey follows cycle routes, has no demanding climbs and presents no technical difficulties. We have electro bikes available on this tour.

Beautiful accommodation We've selected small hotels and lodges with 2-4 star ambience, and include 3 gourmet meals each day during the 8 day lifestyle cycling tour of Tuscany and Chianti.

Tour Itinerary:

Day 1. Arrive Pisa

Arrival in Pisa, the city famous all over the world for its magic Piazza dei Miracoli (Square of Miracles) with the characteristic leaning tower, the bell tower of the city cathedral. It has been part of the UNESCO World Heritage since 1987 and as well as a large number of monuments, Pisa, also offers the friendly and lively atmosphere that is synonymous with a university city. At 6.00 pm you will meet the tour leader in the hotel reception for the initial tour introduction.

Accommodation: Hotel Pisa

Meals: Dinner

No cycling

Day 2. Pisa to Lucca

Today we start pedaling northwards along the river Serchio, across the Pisan countryside all the way to Lucca. For those 'keener' cyclists there is an alternative, more strenuous and longer route that runs along the Monti Pisani (Pisa mountains – that is a must when you come from Central Otago) on their Eastern side. The medieval city of Lucca welcomes you with its historic atmosphere. Not to be missed is a tour inside the perimeter of the wonderful Renaissance walls, completely intact and considered to be the best-preserved city wall in all of Europe, as well as a visit to the Roman amphitheatre (II century A.D.).

Accommodation: Hotel Lucca **Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner **Cycling:** option easy 30km/ option harder 45km

Day 3. Lucca to Lucca

Today's itinerary entails a loop-ride following pathways through the surrounding countryside and along the shores of Lake Massaciuccoli. You can, of course, take a rest from cycling and enjoy the extra time visiting the innumerable palaces, churches and towers of this enchanting Tuscan city. There are many richly built medieval basilica-form churches in Lucca with ornately arcaded facades and campaniles, a few as old as the 8th century. In summary, there is plenty to enjoy and explore on a leisurely day of sightseeing.

Accommodation: Hotel Lucca **Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner **Cycling:** approx 40km

Day 4. Lucca to Montecatini

On panoramic roads we travel through the countryside until we reach the little village of Collodi and the town of Pescia. In Collodi, where the author of Pinocchio spent his childhood, we have allowed time for a visit to the famous Pinocchio's Park (created in 1962) and the aristocratic Villa Garzoni. In Pescia you could enjoy a quiet stroll among churches, palaces, Renaissance mansions and the typical flower street market. Today's cycle itinerary offers great sightseeing for the non-cyclists as well with the two night stop over giving the entire group the opportunity to meet throughout the day for a cappuccino or cultural visits. Once we have arrived in Montecatini and have checked into the hotel, a visit to one of the thermal spas might be a nice end to the day.

Accommodation: Hotel Montecatini (2 nights) **Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner **Cycling:** approx 45km

Day 5. Montecatini to Montecatini

Today's route offers you again two possibilities. You can relax in one of the most famous thermal cities in Europe and stroll down the narrow lanes of the old city, which is situated on a hill and can be reached by a characteristic cable-railway. Otherwise a picturesque itinerary will lead you among villas of the Medici family, olive groves, vineyards and beautiful historical farms, going past Vinci, Leonardo da Vinci's birthplace (visit to the museum possible).

Accommodation: Hotel Montecatini **Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner **Cycling:** approx 58km

Day 6. Montecatini to Florence

A leg by train will take you to Pistoia, rich in Romanesque and Renaissance monuments (in particular churches) and having one of the most beautiful squares in Italy, Piazza del Duomo (Cathedral Square). From here we are back on the bike and cycling across the Tuscan flatland to reach the cradle of the Renaissance, Florence. This evening, it will be up to you to choose how to spend your time in one of the world's most beautiful cities!

Accommodation: Hotel Florence **Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner **Cycling:** approx 50km (20 km by train)

Day 7. Florence via Empoli to Pisa

A one hour train trip will take us from Siena to Empoli, where we will start to follow the river Arno's flow by bike. We are pedalling along the water's edge without any hills as far as Pisa for our next overnight stay. (Pisa is the only one night stop on this itinerary.) After your arrival in Pisa, you will have some time to visit the sights of the city famous all over the world for its 'magic' Piazza dei Miracoli (Square of Miracles) with the characteristic leaning tower, which actually is the bell tower of the city's cathedral. The Piazza is part of the UNESCO World Heritage since 1987; and apart from its famous monuments, the square also offers the friendly and lively atmosphere of a university city.

Accommodation: Hotel Pisa **Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner **Cycling:** 65km (40km by train)

Day 8. Pisa and Departure

After breakfast, it is "Ciao" and we hope you will have good memories of our 'Tour of Tuscany'.

Accommodation: end of service **Meals:** Breakfast **Cycling:** none

Tour Information

Included in the tour price:

- 7 nights accommodation in double or twin share rooms (3 - 4 star)
- Breakfast daily & three-course (at least) evening meals, often in trattorias (restaurants)
- Support vehicle in the area (not following the riders)
- Bike hire
- Luggage transport from hotel to hotel
- Tour documentation: route descriptions & maps
- 'Public' train transfers as per itinerary: Montecatini – Pistola and Florence – Empoli
- Tour guide on bike
- Entry fees at Leonardo da Vinci museum

Not included in the tour price

- International flights and/or Travel visas (where applicable)
- Single Supplement
- Drinks & snacks during cycling
- Travel Insurance
- Tips for guides and restaurant / hotel staff

Tour Grade

This tour is graded 1/2 easy (on a scale of 1-10 with 9/10 being extreme).

Fitness Required:

A low level of fitness is required, exercising at least once a week prior to the tour.

2011 Departure Dates