

NEW DEPARTURE DATE ADDED DUE TO POPULAR DEMAND

A WEEK IN TUSCANY

Seven nights staying at the charming Villa il Poggiale

8th to 15th October 2019

NOBLE CALEDONIA

Italy has more than its fair share of beautiful places, but few would argue that its central region of Tuscany is one of its finest assets. In fact, with its pea-green vineyards, Medieval hilltop villages and rows of silver olive groves, some would go as far to say that it embodies the very essence of Italy. During our week long stay we will explore its many wonders from our delightful base at Villa il Poggiale, a restored Renaissance villa nestled deep in the Chianti hills. Our programme will include comprehensive sightseeing excursions including a visit to art-filled Florence with its historic churches and monuments, Medieval Siena with its beautiful scallop-shaped piazza and the mighty Duomo monument and Vinci, birthplace of Leonardo. We will also see picturesque castles and villages, handsome villas and their gardens and of course, no trip to Tuscany would be complete without a visit to a vineyard for a wine tasting. We have devised the itinerary to ensure that, in addition to the guided excursions, there is ample time to explore independently as well as to relax and enjoy the villa and its idyllic setting.

OUR VIEW

“ I was fortunate enough to spend a few days at the wonderful Villa il Poggiale which is a fantastic base for a week in this fascinating part of Italy. Being a former manor house for a noble family, and built in the 15th century, it is a long way from the modern custom-built hotels but offers a charm that befits its setting. Located in the Chianti hills, the views are stunning and taking meals on the veranda whilst watching the sunset was one of the many highlights of my trip. The cuisine at the villa is tasty, fresh and full of Tuscan specialties and the owners take great pride that all of the ingredients are sourced locally, some from as close as their own organic vegetable garden. Despite enjoying a wonderful sense of isolation when at the property, whether relaxing by the pool or enjoying the view with a book in the courtyard, the villa is only a 40 minute drive from Florence and Siena making these fascinating cities easily accessible for a day of exploration. We will also visit some of the Chianti vineyards, private villas and beautiful gardens of the area. With the well balanced mix of planned excursions and free time, there will be opportunities to enjoy walks in the hills close to the villa and encounter the pretty villas, vineyards and olive groves.

Paul Mildon, Head of Planning
& Operations

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Castello del Trebbio



Boboli Gardens, Florence



Villa Poggio Torselli and gardens



Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence

The Itinerary

Day 1 London to Pisa, Italy. Fly by scheduled flight. On arrival transfer to Villa il Poggiale, the base for our week in the Chianti hills. Check in to your room and relax at the villa before we meet for dinner tonight.

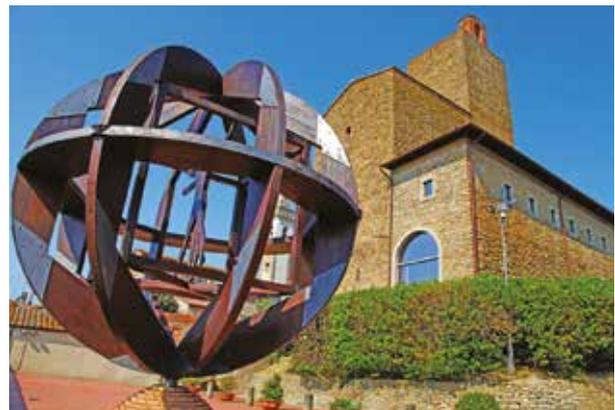
Day 2 Florence. This morning we will drive the short distance to discover the historical city of Florence which lies on the River Arno and is surrounded by gentle hills, olive groves and vineyards. Founded by the Romans, the city fell in the 15th century to the rule of the Medici family who later became the Grand Dukes of Tuscany. During this period the city achieved new heights of glory in art, culture, politics and economic power. It is considered the birthplace of the Renaissance and is possibly one of the most beautifully preserved and artistically rich cities in the world. Here, artistic treasures and architectural masterpieces of the past blend with ancient streets lined with elegant boutiques, peaceful parks, streetside cafes offering steaming hot espressos and pastry shops, with breathtaking views at every turn. During our walk we will see the Duomo, with its Brunelleschi's works of art, Giotto's Bell Tower and the Baptistery, with such beautiful doors that Michelangelo called them the Gates of Paradise. Also visit the Piazza Della Signoria, Palazzo Vecchio, Ponte Vecchio, the only bridge in Florence to survive the World War II bombings, and the Santa Croce Basilica. Enjoy free time for lunch and an afternoon to explore further at your own pace before we meet and transfer back to the villa for dinner.

Day 3 Vinci. We have a free morning to relax in the villa, maybe sit by the pool or find a spot in the garden or lounge. In the early afternoon we will make our way to Vinci, the town where Leonardo da Vinci was born in 1452. Visit the Museo Leonardiano, Palazzina Uzielli and the Conti Guidi Castle which houses one of the broadest and most original collections devoted to Leonardo the engineer, the architect and the scientist, and to the history of Renaissance technology in general. We also visit the house where Leonardo was born surrounded by the centuries-old olive trees of Montalbano. After our visit we will make a stop at one of the local Chianti vineyards where we tour the ancient cellars and learn about the winemaking techniques. We will enjoy a tasting of some of the wines before being served a traditional Tuscan dinner.

Day 4 Siena & San Gimignano. Drive this morning to mystical Siena, located in the heart of the Chianti wine region. A walking tour will highlight the fascinating historical sites situated within the well preserved walled city. These include the exquisite marble cathedral, the beautiful Mangia Tower, the Town Hall and the Fonte Gaia. Continue to the Piazza del Campo, the site of the famous "Palio", a horse race with no rules and one of the most colourful Italian festivals. Enjoy free time for lunch and the chance to explore further at

your own pace before we meet and drive to San Gimignano. Here we walk back in time, exploring the well preserved Medieval village, the ancient squares and buildings, narrow and shady alleys and the soaring slender towers of this stunning town. In the centre of town we find the Cisterna, an elegant public fountain built in 1273. The square of the Duomo is the oldest part of San Gimignano and where we can marvel at the mighty towers of the Salviucci and simple, bare facade of the Collegiata, which is flanked by the Torre Grossa, and 13th century Palace of the Mayor. Together, these breathtaking sites combine to make this square one of the best preserved scenes of Medieval architecture. Return to the villa for dinner tonight.

Day 5 Villa Poggio Torselli. This morning is free to relax at the villa, visit the local town of San Casciano or maybe take the chance to explore the surrounding areas by foot or by bicycle. Later this afternoon we will drive the short distance to the charming Villa Poggio Torselli. This magnificent Tuscan villa, accessed by a long driveway flanked by Cypress trees, was once inhabited by the Machiavelli family and was known as the "queen of the villas". It is particularly famous for its gardens which date from the late 17th century, and consist of an Italianate garden divided into two terraces to the south and an English park area to the north. Dwarf fruit trees, old-fashioned roses, aromatic herbs and flowers were planted and act as a frame for the Baroque chapel and the architecture of the three-storey villa. When the weather is warm, the potted citrus trees are carried out from the splendid limonaia into the open air. Meanwhile the interiors are characterised by colour, tromp l'oeil and allegorical



Vitruvian Man Sculpture, Leonardo da Vinci museum, Vinci



Chianti grapes, San



Interior of Villa di Poggio a Caiano

paintings which were created at the end of the 17th century. After the visit to the villa and its gardens, we head to the cellar for a wine tasting.

Day 6 Florence & Villa di Poggio a Caiano. Today we return to Florence and spend the morning at Palazzo Pitti and Boboli Gardens. This enormous palace is one of Florence's largest architectural monuments. The original palazzo, designed by Filippo Brunelleschi was built for the Pitti family in 1457. The original construction consisted of only the middle cube of the present building; in 1549, the property was sold to the Medici and became the primary residence of the Grand Ducal family. Today, Palazzo Pitti houses some of the most important museums in Florence: on the first floor is the Palatine Gallery, containing a broad collection of 16th and 17th century paintings, and the Royal Apartment; on the ground floor and mezzanine the Silver Museum (Museo degli Argenti) displaying a vast collection of Medici household treasures; and the Gallery of Modern Art is on the top floor, holding a collection of mostly Tuscan 19th and 20th century paintings. Behind the palace we can stroll around the famous Boboli Gardens, one of the greatest open-air museums in Florence, and admire the Egyptian Obelisk that was brought from Luxor in 1789. The park hosts centuries-old oak trees, sculptures and Roman and Renaissance statues. We will have lunch in Piazzale Michelangelo with views overlooking Florence and the Arno Valley before continuing to the Villa Medici di Poggio a Caiano. Set on the slopes of Mount Albano, it was built by Lorenzo De' Medici as a summer residence. It hosts two important,

separate museums: one is the historical apartments and the other the Museum of Still Life. The Medici Villa at Poggio a Caiano is surrounded by lovely gardens which take the form of an English garden with shaded boulevards and picturesque views, while the other part mirrors the classic Italian garden with countless pots of lemons. Return to our villa for dinner.

Day 7 Castello del Trebbio. After breakfast we drive through the Tuscan countryside reaching the hills surrounding Florence to enter a real Medieval castle, "Castello del Trebbio" which is immersed in an incredibly well preserved natural environment in the Chianti Rufina region. Built by the Pazzi family, an old noble Florentine family, it belongs nowadays to the Bai Mario family of winemakers. After a tour of the rooms and the cellars we will have a cooking lesson with the chef and learn how to prepare pasta dough and tomato sauce using fresh and local produce. Afterwards, we retire to the dining room to taste the hors d'oeuvre, pasta and sauce that we helped to prepare; all accompanied by the local wine. After lunch we return to our villa for an afternoon at leisure before meeting for our final dinner this evening.

Day 8 Pisa to London. Check out after breakfast and transfer to Pisa for our scheduled flight to London.

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

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| Country Classic Room | £2795 |
| Country Superior Room | £2995 |
| Junior Suite | £3295 |
| Country Classic Room for sole use | £3495 |
| Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants. | |

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • Seven nights accommodation at Villa Il Poggiale on a bed and breakfast basis • Dinner daily • Lunch on days 6 & 7 • Excursions • Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers • Taxes.

Not Included: Travel insurance, lunch on days 1 to 5 & day 8.

NB. Due to the layout of the villa, which is on multiple levels and does not have a lift, we do not recommend this holiday for those with walking difficulties as there are many stairs involved in accessing the rooms, courtyard and reception area. In addition, some of the excursions will involve extended periods of walking over uneven terrain.



Gimignano



Piazza del Campo square in Siena



Villa il Poggiale set amongst vineyards and olive groves

VILLA IL POGGIALE

Villa il Poggiale is a manor house hotel located in the heart of Tuscany, near San Casciano in Val di Pesa. Originally built in the 15th century, this Renaissance villa is listed as a 'Historical Residence' of Italy and has been tastefully restored by the current owners to provide all the modern comforts. The villa is surrounded by an estate of tall cypress trees which stand guard over the vineyards and olive groves, reminiscent of landscapes seen in Tuscan Renaissance paintings. It is the perfect base from which to explore the nearby lovely Tuscan cities and towns including Siena, San Gimignano and Florence and guests can enjoy either relaxing at the property or easy day trips to take in the art, history and culture of this famous region, known for its fine wines and olive oil. After a day exploring the surrounding area or simply relaxing at the villa you can take a dip in the pool or a drink in the rose garden before being treated to a candlelight dinner of local specialties in the restaurant.

Your Accommodation

As the villa has been transformed from the original 15th century family home the rooms all differ slightly from one another. The bedrooms are painted with light colours made of soil and natural pigments, typical in Tuscany, whilst the awnings and bed fabrics come from small Tuscan artisan weaving factories. Some rooms will have views to the Chianti hills whilst others overlook the courtyard. Each room offers a private bathroom, air-conditioning, mini-bar, telephone, tea and coffee making facilities, satellite television, safe deposit box and Wi-Fi. The Country Classic rooms range in size from 15 to 25 square metres and are located on the ground floor whilst the Superior Rooms are located on the higher floors and range in size from 20 to 30 square metres. The Junior Suites measure between 25 to 30 square metres and feature their own living room area.



Superior Room



Junior Suite



Country Classic Room



La Tinaia Restaurant

Your Dining

The villa is open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner and offers typical Tuscan cooking with Chianti specialties, all made from fresh, locally sourced ingredients. Meals can be taken in the indoor restaurant or, when weather permits, in the garden with views to the hills beyond. Start the day with a "Tuscan breakfast" consisting of sweet and savoury pastries, fresh ricotta, jams, honey, cold cuts from the nearby Chianti farms, and many other specialties. Lunch and dinner are served in La Tinaia Restaurant and consist of tasty buffets and served dishes made with organic and seasonal produce. The cuisine features traditional yet innovative dishes - starters of antipasti with meats, cheeses and vegetables are followed by freshly made pasta or meat dishes accompanied by freshly baked Tuscan breads and, of course, a selection of excellent Tuscan wines.

Your Space

In the beautiful gardens you will find the swimming pool, with sun loungers and umbrellas to enjoy either the sunshine or shade as you please. A shaded reprieve is also provided by the Renaissance portico and the central courtyard, both excellent places to relax with a book. An honesty bar is located in the main lounge if you wish to take a glass of wine to the gardens. There is also a wellness area with a sauna where a range of treatments, including massage, is available.



Breakfast in the hotel garden



Lounge



Local produce from Tuscany



Swimming Pool



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All special offers are subject to availability. Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.
 Cover image: Tuscany.