

"TUSCANY & PALIO" July/August 2009

spyns

Anyone can take you to Tuscany, but few do it like us: deeply, madly, passionately. Experience Chianti wine country from your own private villa. Then it's on to il Palio di Siena, the world's oldest horse race.

Day 1: After pick up in Florence, move from the bustling city to the lazy rolling hills of Chianti Classico. Sweep up the tree-lined drive into the castle courtyard, enjoy a welcoming drink and brief tour of the estate with our friend Penny, a no-nonsense Brit and expert manager. After unpacking, join the group for lunch on that perfect terrace in Gaiole's main square (and maybe a little gelato) before a private pre-dinner tasting with the irreplaceable Francesca at her family's 14th century estate.

Days 2-3: After hearty Italian breakfast, join your guides for a light hike from Meleto to nearby Badia a Coltibuono or simply sleep in taking a van transfer to join the group for lunch. This little village nestled in the Chianti hills hides a 10th century monestary - now a famous winery and restaurant. Whether you hike or drive back to Meleto, everyone will stop at a nearby fattoria in Radda for a lively wine tasting. Unpretentious yet delicious dinner at a Spyns favourite: the Osteria il Papavero ("poppy" in Italian) in Radda.

Days 4-5: Transfer by van from Meleto to medieval San Gimignano. The village, and its infamous 13 towers, is a UNESCO heritage site so we take the morning to explore its markets, museums and many shops. After lunch, saddle up your very own Vespa to explore the countryside (Italian-style) with stops in nearby Volterra for some shopping and a gelato before the gang heads back to Meleto castle. Free night for dinner. Transfer to Siena for the tour's main event: il Palio di Siena. A scarf from your district (or 'contrade') will be waiting in your room. After freshening up, join an afternoon walking tour of Siena's Duomo cathedral and square (Piazza del Campo). Free night for dinner. The following day, attend one of the many practice races before touring your contrade's museum. Learn the rich 700-year history of il Palio followed by a hearty lunch on Siena's main square. Enjoy an afternoon nap or some light shopping before spectacular outdoor contrade dinner and an evening of wine, food and song.

Day 6: Palio Race Day After a hearty breakfast, join in the endless processions & parades leading up to the afternoon race. Once settled in your balcony seat near the starting lines, watch a pre-Palio procession that hasn't changed for hundreds of years with our guides explaining the complex history of this Italian pagent. Then watch in awe as thousands of Siennese cheer, scream, and weep as their horses race around the medieval square.

Day 7: Departure Sleep in late, have breakfast in bed, or get in that last bit of shopping before transfer to the train station and your final destination.



TOUR AT A GLANCE

Dates

June 28-July 3/09
August 11-17/09
Start/Finish: Siena

Price

US\$3645 (pp/do)

What's Included

Palio Balcony
Hotel, Breakfasts,
Guides, Train
station Transfers, 1
dinner, 2 lunches

What You'll See

Tuscany, Chianti
Medieval Siena
Palio Horse Race
Pre-Palio Dinner
Siena's Duomo,
Piazza del Campo

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