

THE **TRAVEL CLUB**

Pre-Departure Itinerary

Classic Tuscany

The Cinque Terre, Florence, Lucca & Siena

9 DAYS: Saturday, April 20-Sunday, April 28, 2024

A GORGEOUS, SUN-DRENCHED CLIMATE; romantic landscapes; exquisite art and architecture and traditional delicious cuisine—experience the Italy of your dreams in Tuscany with The Travel Club. From accommodations at the beautiful Grand Hotel Plaza in the exclusive spa resort of Montecatini Terme, we'll enjoy excursions through the Tuscan countryside, visiting Florence—"The Cradle of the Renaissance"—and home to the Academy of Fine Arts and Michelangelo's David, the Duomo and Palazzo Vecchio—elegant Lucca with its Roman reminders, beautiful Siena with the most gorgeous scallop-shaped piazza and astonishing San Gimignano—the city of medieval towers and a visit to Carrara and Pietrasanta; associated with marble sculpture. We've set aside a full day to explore the Cinque Terre—some of the most dramatic coastal scenery on the planet. To these wondrous surroundings, we've added wine tastings and local lunches, wine with dinner and expert guides leading the way. The Travel Club's exclusive trip to Tuscany can't be beat!

INCLUDES

- Round-trip regularly scheduled ITA Airways flights from Boston to Rome and Florence to Boston, via Rome
- Private motorcoach transportation from Rome airport to hotel in Montecatini
- Seven nights' four-star accommodations: **The Grand Hotel Plaza, Montecatini Terme** (or similar)
- Fifteen meals: seven breakfasts, three lunches with wine, five dinners with wine
- Welcome beverage at the hotel
- Escorted round-trip, private airport/hotel transfers
- Services of professional local Tour Manager

RATES

\$3,599 per person double occupancy
Includes round-trip airfare, fuel surcharge and all air taxes and fees.
Single supplement is \$250. Triple accommodations may be available upon request.
Fuel surcharge, air taxes and fees subject to change.
Passport required. Per person deposit is \$300.

FEATURES

Full-day excursion to Siena and San Gimignano.
Full-day excursion by train to Florence with walking tour. Full-day excursion to Pisa and Lucca including walking tour and lunch. Full-day excursion to Carrara to visit a marble workshop and Pietrasanta with lunch. Full-day excursion to Cinque Terre including lunch with wine.

ACCOMMODATIONS...

Grand Hotel Plaza

Piazza del Popolo 7, 51016 Montecatini Terme

Tel: 011 39 0572 75831

Located on the main square, this small classic European-style **hotel** has 100 bedrooms with private bathrooms, air-conditioning, direct dial telephone, TV and hairdryer. There is a large

reception area off which there are a number of elegant lounges as well as the restaurant, bar & piano bar. There is also a terrace and a roof-top swimming pool. The centrally located, 100-room Grand Hotel Plaza in Montecatini is a traditional building and exudes the warmth of an earlier era. It is located next to the pedestrian district, facing the town's main square. The train station, with frequent service to Florence, is a 5 minute walk away. The hotel features a restaurant, bar, a terrace and garden, plus an outdoor swimming pool. In your air-conditioned room, you'll find a telephone, TV (with CNN), and private bathroom with shower.



DAILY ITINERARY

Day 1: Overnight Flight

Depart from Boston this evening on Alitalia Airlines. Dinner is served aloft along while crossing the Atlantic. Relax and enjoy in-flight entertainment.

Day 2: Arrive Rome – motorcoach transfer to Montecatini

Arrive Rome. Continental breakfast will be served on board before landing. In Rome, clear immigration and passport control and retrieve our luggage before we make our way into the arrivals hall. Here we'll meet our Tour Manager who will assist us to our private motorcoach for the transfer to **Montecatini Terme**. Upon arrival at the hotel enjoy a welcome drink during check in. This evening enjoy dinner, with wine, at the hotel. **(D)**





Day 3: Siena & San Gimignano

Today we'll enjoy a journey through southern Tuscany, travelling over rolling hills covered with olive groves and vineyards. Our first stop is Siena where we'll meet with a local guide for a walking tour. The highlight of Siena is the Piazza del Campo, the central square constructed in the shape of a seashell. There will be free time to have lunch on our own. Later we'll visit the UNESCO World Heritage site of San Gimignano, a small enchanting medieval town known worldwide for its forest of towers emerging from the ancient houses. Return to Montecatini for dinner, with wine, and overnight. **(B, D)**



Siena



San Gimignano

Day 4: Florence

After breakfast we depart - by train - to Florence, "The Cradle of the Renaissance," that flourished under the rule of the Medici family – patrons of the arts. For this reason many great artists like Michelangelo and Brunelleschi lived and worked in Florence and left their mark here. A local guide will lead a walking tour to discover this great artistic heritage that features the Duomo, with its distinctly colored marble and topped by the "Cupola" (dome by Brunelleschi); the Bell tower by Giotto and the Baptistery with the famous "Gate of Paradise" by Lorenzo Ghiberti. From here we'll continue to Piazza della Signoria, dominated by Palazzo Vecchio, symbol of the might of the Medici. The afternoon is free to explore on our own. Later return to the hotel for dinner, with wine, at the hotel. **(B, D)**



Day 5: Carrara & Pietrasanta

Today we travel to Carrara, a town whose name we associate with marble. We'll visit a sculpture workshop and meet the artists and the tools they use for the carving of marble. Afterwards we'll visit the Quarry Museum, an open air exhibition of tools and machines used throughout 2000 years for the excavation and transportation of marble. Free time follows for those who want to visit the marble gift shops. Next we head back to Carrara and stroll through the medieval and Renaissance part of the town on our way to the restaurant where savor some local specialties, including dessert and wine. As we return to Montecatini we stop in Pietrasanta for a short visit to this lovely medieval town known as "Little Athens". **(B, L)**





Day 6: Pisa & Lucca

Today's full day excursion is a lovely treat. In the morning we'll head to Pisa and Piazza dei Miracoli where we'll admire the Leaning Tower, Baptistry and Cathedral. Next is beautiful Lucca, the only medieval town in Italy still surrounded by its original 14th century walls. Lucca is a town filled with ancient Roman ruins, as well as great furniture, jewelry and antique shops. We'll enjoy lunch before a guided walking tour. Return to Montecatini for overnight. **(B, L)**



Day 7: Cinque Terre

Today we'll travel to the Ligurian Seacoast to enjoy some of Italy's natural masterpieces. The Cinque Terre, or Five Villages, is located on eleven miles of rocky coastline with terraced hills and vineyards sloping steeply down to the sea. The villages are built into the rocks between the beach and the hills. Centuries-old footpaths, 500 to 1000 feet above the sea, lead through olive groves, vineyards, orchards and chestnut woods. Each village has its own distinct character. Nearly inaccessible by road, the villages are linked by railway. We'll transfer to La Spezia where we meet our local guide and have an orientation tour. We'll continue by coach and enjoy the breathtaking views of the coast with the terraced vineyards. We'll stop above Riomaggiore to take photos and continue to Manarola. After a visit we'll board the train and continue to Monterosso al Mare where we'll enjoy light lunch and wine tasting. In the afternoon we return by train to Levanto and coach return to Montecatini for dinner, with wine, and overnight at the hotel. **(B, L, D)**



Manarola



Monterosso al Mare

Day 8: Day at leisure in Montecatini

Today is a full day of leisure to enjoy on our own. Tonight we'll have a farewell dinner, with wine, at the hotel and overnight. **(B, D)**



Day 9: Return to Boston

Return to Florence airport for our flight to Rome and transatlantic flight to Boston. **(B)**

MONTECATINI

A summer resort, Montecatini is a wealthy and popular watering-hole lying at the foot of the Pistoian mountains. The baths and spas date back to the fourteenth century and nowadays there are nine fully-functioning 'terme' spread around the town. Elegant, peaceful and relaxing, they make for perfect resting places. Enjoy a glass of enriched water, or take the plunge for the full treatment ... you'll be in illustrious company. Previous visitors include Rossini, Verdi, Princess Grace, Orson Welles, Clark Gable, Douglas Fairbanks and assorted European royalty. The center and the Parco delle Terme are delightful while the Terme Tettuccio is perhaps the most famous and is typical of the town's belle-epoque ambience. Built in the style of Imperial Rome, it lies a few minutes walk from the delightful funicular railway that will take you up to Montecatini Alto. Montecatini Alto is the original Montecatini settlement, lying a few hundred meters

above the 'new' town. The views from here are splendid, and the delightful Piazza Giusti is home to some good bars and restaurants.

LUCCA

Imagine a beautiful little Tuscan town protected by massively thick 16th-century walls, featuring some of Italy's finest medieval and Renaissance architecture, superb dining, antique markets, classical and rock music festivals, easy access to stunning nearby villas in the surrounding hills and with endless beaches less than half an hour away. Lucca is one of Tuscany's best-kept secrets. A wealthy and colorful town that draws a more discerning tourist than Florence or Pisa, it is sufficiently off the beaten track to have kept its civility and reserve. Lucca has one particularly stunning feature - ancient ramparts that ring the old city. The inhabitants built these brick walls in the 16th century for defense. Today, walk (or bike) around the city on the wide shaded walkways atop the walls. If that doesn't tire you out, climb up the Torre Guinigi - the 130 ft. tower has an ancient oak tree on top!

THE CINQUE TERRE

The stretch of coast north of La Spezia is known as "Five Lands," due to the five small fishing villages perched on its coast. The isolation of these villages -- up to 50 years ago you could only reach them by boat -- has allowed them to preserve their authentic fishing village charm, with virtually no change in appearance since they were first built.

FLORENCE

It is impossible to mention all the countless important monuments and works of artistic attraction, however, limiting the list to the really outstanding, Piazza del Duomo and Piazza della Signoria draw the attention of all tourists. Piazza del Duomo is the site of the principal palaces of religious interest: the Baptistry, a Romanesque building (11th-12th century) perhaps over an older structure, with beautiful bronze doors (14th-15th century by A. Pisano and L. Ghiberti) and mosaics; the Giotto campanile (14th century, 84.7 m high) and the Duomo, in Gothic style (14th-15th century), surmounted by the famous Brunelleschi cupola (15th century), housing works, among others, by Paolo Uccello, Luca della Robbia, Andrea del Castagno, Michelangelo (the Pieta sculpture). In Piazza della Signoria stand the Loggia della Signoria (14th century), decorated with 16th century statues, and Palazzo Vecchio (early 14th century), dominated by the Torre d'Arnolfo (94 m.), with an interesting Renaissance interior. Further attractions are the stupendous Italian gardens at Boboli, created in the 16th and 17th centuries, and the inspiring Ponte Vecchio (14th century).



SAN GIMIGNANO

On a hilltop in the heart of Tuscany stands a majestic medieval walled town, its profile bristling with tall towers. Standing astride the pilgrim route from Northern Europe to Rome it prospered in the thirteenth century. San Gimignano has retained all its old streets, its walls, gates, palaces, strongholds and thirteen towers. Dante came here in 1300 and the room in the Town Museum named after him is decorated with unique frescos of his age. San Gimignano is famous all over the world for its medieval towers and when you walk through the ancient gates, you'll think the time had stopped many centuries ago. In San Gimignano, every street leads to its 15 towers.

SIENA

In the heart of Tuscany, this town is built on three hills, maintaining intact its medieval appearance characterized by narrow winding streets and noble buildings. The Palazzo Pubblico is the most monumental building surrounding the Campo, the most important public space in Siena. The Campo was paved in 1333-34, signalling its importance in civic life. The Campo is also famous as the site for the Palio (horse race) as well as other yearly events. The Cappella di Piazza, a small chapel, is to the left, above which rises the Torre del Mangia, a tall bell-tower--102M to the tip of the ironwork, built between 1325-44. The tallest tower in the city, and taller than the one on the Palazzo Vecchio built somewhat earlier in Florence, it rang the time and announced curfews, as well as calling the Council to meetings.



Proof of Citizenship: *US citizens require a passport with at least six months' validity for entry into Ireland. Passports are the responsibility of the traveler.*

PLEASE NOTE: *This pre-departure itinerary is designed to give you an idea of how this itinerary is structured. We reserve the right to make any changes to your final itinerary if deemed necessary, at any time prior to departure.*

PLEASE NOTE: *This is not your final itinerary. You will receive final documents (itinerary, tickets (if applicable), etc.) approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure. Although we try our best to ensure that information is accurate at the time of publication, we are not responsible for any error, omission, misprint or liability that results from the use (or misuse) of this information.*