



Information Sheet

Tuscany and Venice Trip

September 6 – 18, 2019

Trip Leader: Maureen Hills hillsmaur@gmail.com

Travel Agent: Cathy Kinloch (Teacher's Travel) 1-800-268 7229

Travel Plan: This is a combination of two HF Holidays, a guided hiking holiday to Tuscany and 4 nights in Venice (city break). In Venice, although most of the day will be spent sightseeing by foot, water buses will also be used during the programme. We fly direct from Toronto to Rome by Air Canada on Friday, September 6 at 21:10, arriving in Rome on September 7 at 11:20. We will travel by private coach from Rome Airport to San Quirico. There we will stay for 7 nights at the Hotel Albergo Palazzuolo. On September 14 we will depart from San Quirico by private coach to Venice. We will arrange to meet the HF leader at the Venice Parking Terminal. They will assist in the purchase of the water taxi tickets, which we will use to get to our hotel. We will be staying at Hotel Malibrán in Venice. On September 18 the group will fly directly from Venice to Toronto at 12:45 and will arrive in Toronto at 16:10.

Meals: In San Quirico, a self selected continental breakfast and a 5 course dinner is included every day. Ordering the night before, you can buy picnic lunches from the hotel. Alternatively, ingredients can be bought from nearby shops. Some days it will be possible to eat in a cafe during a walk or excursion. HF leader will advise. In Venice, only a continental buffet breakfast is included every day. Lunches can be bought in local cafes or if you prefer you can make up a packed lunch. HF leader will advise on lunch options each day, as well as provide suggestions and advice regarding where to have dinner.

Preliminary Costs and Booking Details

Note: The HF Holiday city break in Venice is designed for small groups, so the entire trip is limited to a **total of 16 people.**

Flight \$ 1256 includes taxes and 1 checked bag

Two bus transfers (based on 15 paying passengers) approximately \$190. Plus, estimated cost of 2nd bus driver at Rome airport \$15.

HF Tuscany holiday 949 UK (approximately \$1660 Cdn) (current exchange rate 1.75)

HF Venice holiday 550 UK (approximately \$962 Cdn)

Transfer to Venice Airport \$20
Tips to Bus Drivers \$10
Total: \$4113 based on double
Single supplement **\$535**

Not included: Water taxi ticket in Venice approx. 40 euros
All Lunches.
Dinners in Venice
Entrances to museums.

(As a general guide, you should allow around €150 if you visit every single attraction on the itinerary, although reductions on admission costs are often available for students and senior citizens.)

Registration opens February 2, 2019

RESERVE YOUR SPOT: **Complete steps one, two and three**

Step one: make sure you login to our website first. Check to see if your name appears in this window on the top right corner. If you see only the word "login" you need to click that and login. Test this login procedure well before the time you are ready to register. Registration opens after 11:59 pm on Feb 1 – in the first minute of Feb 2.

- **login to our website**
- **know your emergency contact : name and phone number**
- **know the name of a preferred roommate**
- have your **credit card** ready - note expiry date and the 3 digit CVV/CVC code on the back of your card. On the final payment screen, you'll need to type in your address including postal code.

Step two: On the HOC website, open the **Schedules menu** and then the *Extended Trips* List OR go to September 6 2019 on the **Events Calendar**. Click on *Hike Tuscany and Venice*. Choose "Register". Fill in the required information online and make your \$25 non-refundable payment online.

Step three: Contact Cathy Kinloch at Teacher's Travel. (1-800-268-7229) A deposit of \$ 625 is required immediately. Please also provide her with passport information, as it is required by the airline. The following is needed: issuing country; the full name on your passport, your passport number, your date of birth, and the passport date of expiration. Also please advise her of any dietary needs.

Step four: The Halton Outdoor Club strongly recommends that you have adequate cancellation and medical insurance for your trip. If you don't already have existing coverage, it may be purchased through Cathy at Teacher's Travel or you may purchase it elsewhere.

Step five: The balance is due on June 14, 2019 . The final amount could change as noted. Cathy will have the final figure.

CANCELLATION POLICY: There are no refunds, but participant replacements can be made. Name changes on the air fare can be made up until May 14 at no charge. After that point there is a \$100 charge.

Holiday Highlights for San Quirico d'Orcia (Sept. 7 to 14, 2019)

- Gentle undulating hikes through classic Tuscan countryside crowned with historic towns, including Montepulciano and Pienza.
- Explore the beautiful Renaissance city of Siena with a local guide
- Ridge walk to get a beautiful view of Rocca
- Sample the natural hot springs at Bagno Vignone
- Finish your walk with a coffee or ice cream in the enchanting hilltop villages
- One free day. Options include a day at San Gimignano, with its skyline of towers; a longer visit to Pienza, a wonderful Vatican hilltop town or enjoy a visit to a nearby winery.

Price includes:

- 4 guided walks with 2 options offered. Easier hikes (6.5 to 11 km) and Harder Hikes (9.5 to 16km). Hiking on good tracks and paths. Plus 1 full sightseeing day to Siena.
- All transport to and from walks
- The services of experienced HF Holidays' leaders
- 7 nights' accommodation in en-suite rooms
- Half board - continental breakfast and evening meal

Itinerary:

Day 1: Arrival day

You should arrive at the hotel with time to settle into your room. On the first evening your leaders will explain more about the organisation of the week and the walks and there will be plenty of time to meet with your fellow guests.

Day 2: Bagno Vignoni

The hot springs at Bagno Vignoni have been known since Etruscan times. Santa Caterina of Siena and Lorenzo the Magnificent were amongst those to have taken advantage of the therapeutic values of the waters. The Medici family built the splendid arcaded pool which sits in the middle of the village where you would expect to find the main square.

Easier Walk: We start our week with an exploration of San Quirico, a fascinating town in its own right with some spectacular views from the town walls. We then head south out of town through beautiful countryside to Vignoni Alta with its truncated tower. Our route continues descending towards Bagno Vignoni accompanied by great views to Rocca d'Orcia. We end our walk with time to explore the village and hot springs before meeting our

coach. 4 miles (6.5km) with 400ft (120m) of ascent.

Harder Walk: After exploring San Quirico with the easier group, we too head south, taking a loop out to the west via Forn del Chigi and Poggio Grande. We then head east past the ruins of the old bridge, swept away in 1929, and up the side of the calcite cliffs, past bathing pools, to arrive in Bagno Vignone to join the easier group. 6 miles (9.5km) with 700ft (210m) of ascent.

Day 3: Montalcino to Abbey of San Antimo

Montalcino is a Tuscan hill town with a full circuit of walls. It was permanently settled in 1,000AD by fugitives from the Saracens and their family groups, the Borghetto, Pianello, Ruga and Travaglio. To this day you will see rival flags outside the houses and they compete against each other in an archery competition. The final destination of both walks is the Abbey of San Antimo with time to explore the village of Castelnuovo dell Abate.

Easier Walk: Our walk starts with a bus ride to Montalcino where we can explore the town and enjoy a drink before rejoining the coach to take us to the start of our walk a couple of miles south. Our route takes us through forests, vineyards and farmlands as we make our way to our objective of the day, the Abbey of San Antimo. Our coach then picks us up at the edge of Castelnuovo dell Abate. 6 miles (9.5km) with 600ft (180m) of ascent.

Harder Walk: The harder walk begins at Montalcino where, after a chance to look around, we head off towards the Abbey of San Antimo through undulating countryside, woodland and farmland. 8 miles (13km) with 700ft (210m) of ascent.

Day 4: Siena - full day excursion

We will make the one hour journey by coach from San Quirico to the city of Siena, a magnet for visitors to this region of Italy. At the heart of the walled city lies the Campo, where the famous 'Palio' horse race takes place. The surrounding central core is entirely medieval in plan and appearance. The 320ft Torre del Mangia bell tower dominates the scene and you can ascend its many steps to get a bird's eye view over the city. The Museo Civico, in the Palazzo Pubblico, contains 13th century frescoes. In the Piazza del Duomo, the Museo dell Opera is worth a visit, housing elaborate frescoes and works by Simone Martini and an unusual work of art – the Maesta, a huge altar piece painted by Duccio in the 1270s. An additional bonus, if you go into the museum, is ascending the 'new nave', arguably a better viewpoint than the more famous Torre del Mangia. The Duomo itself is incredible both inside and out: the black and white marble decoration, the unique marble floor panels and sculptures are all breathtaking. While the Duomo will be crowded, a far quieter place to visit is the Ospedale of Santa Maria Della Scala, across the square, recently converted into a museum. The church itself is very airy and then inside the old hospital is a wonderful cycle of frescoes, which depict entirely secular scenes and are described in English. As well as visiting these principal sights there will also be opportunities to relax in the pavement cafés, or to wander through some of the city's quieter corners before the return to San Quirico.

Day 5: Pienza/Montepulciano

Pienza was once a small village named Corsignano, where Pope Pius II was born. When he became Pope in 1459 he commissioned the most famous architect of his day, Bernardo Rossellini, to create a city fit for a Pope on the site of his birthplace. Pius died within three years of the completion of the city, which was largely ignored by future Popes, leaving us with a beautifully preserved renaissance city not much bigger than a village.

Easier Walk: After looking around the beautiful city of Pienza we reboard our coach for Monticchiello where our walk starts. We leave this beautiful walled hilltop town across rolling countryside past the pilgrimage church of San Biagio to Montepulciano for a well-earned drink. 6 miles (9.5km) with 900ft (270m) of ascent.

Harder Walk: Our walk starts from Pienza. After a spot of sightseeing we head east out of town towards Monticchiello where we pick up the route of the easier walk to Montepulciano where we can join them for refreshments. 10 miles (16km) with 1,600ft (480m) of ascent.

Day 6: Free day

Each week there is a free day when no guided walks are offered. This is an ideal opportunity to relax around the hotel, walk independently or visit local places of interest.

Day 7: A View from the Rocca

Today we travel south to the castle keep of Tentennano, known locally as Rocca d'Orcia. The harder walk is circular, starting and finishing at the Rocca and taking in three castles. The easier walk takes in a beautiful stretch of the Via Francigena heading for the little village of Gallina which sits on the 43rd Parallel. Both groups walk through undulating farmland and woodland where wild game, such as deer and boar have been seen. At the end of both walks there will be the opportunity to climb the tower of the castle keep and/or take refreshments at the café nearby before we return to the hotel.

Easier Walk: Today's walk begins with a circuit of the beautiful village of Castiglione d'Orcia before walking through Rocca d'Orcia village and picking up the Via Francigena which we walk almost all the way to Gallina. After a short refreshment stop we will board the coach to return to our starting point and meet up with the harder walkers at Rocca d'Orcia. 7 miles (11 km) with 400ft (120m) of ascent

Harder Walk: The walk starts by wandering through the medieval streets of Rocca d'Orcia village. An old road, now just a track takes us down to the Orcia River with views of Ripa d'Orcia. We follow the river for a while before gaining height to join a ridge with stunning views of Monte Amiata to the south. The return allows us to explore the village of Castiglione d'Orcia and its castle – the Rocca Aldobrandesca. Finally we return to Rocca d'Orcia to join the easier party with time to explore the castle and/or take refreshments. 9 miles (14.5km) with 1,600ft (480m) of ascent.

Day 8 :Departure day

Guided City Break to Venice (September 14 to 18,2019)

Holiday Highlights for Venice

- Stunning Rialto Bridge, the oldest bridge across the Grand Canal
- Visit St Marks Square with its Basilica and Doge's Palace
- Enjoy the islands of Murano, Burano and Torcello
- Small, sociable groups of up to 14 guests

Price includes

- A full programme of sightseeing
- The services of an experienced HF Holidays' leader
- Good quality and centrally located accommodation in en-suite rooms
- Bed & breakfast
- Pre-payment for fast-track entry to Doges' Palace

Each day our experienced leader will lead you on a sightseeing walk of Venice, exploring the different areas of the city. Although you should expect to spend most of the day sightseeing by foot, water buses will also be used during the programme.

Highlights of the sightseeing programme include:

An introduction to Venice

Once called 'the finest street in all the world' Canal Grande is Venice's main thoroughfare. Spanning the Grand Canal, is the Rialto Bridge - perhaps one of the city's most famous sites and within a stone's throw of our hotel. Many of the main façades of the palaces that line the Canal are only properly visible from the water. But we can enjoy these on our vaporetto ride down St Mark's Square. Famous all over the world, the Square is Venice's central landmark with its imposing basilica, one of Europe's most exotic. It forms a great marble saloon surrounded by galleries sheltering famous cafes and luxury shops, and opens onto the Grand Canal through the delightful Piazzetta.

We take in the Doge's Palace or *Palazzo Ducale*, a symbol of Venetian power and glory and the most exotic of Europe's cathedrals, the Basilica di San Marco. A short ferry ride from St Mark's takes us to the little atmospheric island of San Giorgio Maggiore, where we find a church and monastery. It is possible to take the lift to the top of the campanile for a superb view over Venice and the lagoon.

A Trio of Islands

Our opportunity to escape from the city centre comes as we take a ferry to a number of the most interesting islands in the lagoon. Murano consists of a number of tiny islands connected by bridges; the island has gained worldwide recognition for glass-making and it's possible to visit the glass workshops and see glass-blowing in action. Burano is the most colourful of the islands and is famed for its brightly painted houses. The tall, tilted tower of its church makes it easily identifiable from across the lagoon. Traditionally Burano was noted for its lace-making. The main attraction of the little, sleepy island of Torcello is its Byzantine cathedral and monastery.

Dorsoduro

The Dorsoduro area lies on the western side of the Grand Canal to the south of St Mark's Square and is home to a number of important galleries. Our tour begins at the wooden Accademia Bridge, one of only three bridges across the Grand Canal, and leads us to the Gallerie dell'Accademia, the largest and most important gallery in Venice. We see the Santa Maria della Salute, the huge Baroque church built in white stone - its domed roof is one of Venice's most imposing landmarks. Standing on the tip of the promontory, at the entrance to the Grand Canal, is the Dogana di Mare or customs post which offers us a good place to view the boats in the canal and the lagoon. For those who want to enjoy a superb collection of modern art including works by Picasso, Magritte, Kandinsky and Jackson Pollock, there is the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. To view five centuries of Venetian art from the medieval Byzantine era through Renaissance, Baroque and Rococo, you can visit Gallerie dell'Accademia, the largest and most important gallery in Venice. Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari is the largest and possibly most important church in Venice, with Titian's painting of the *Assumption of the Virgin*.