

Tuscany under the Spring Sunshine!

May 23- 30 and October 17- 24, 2009

Sample

7 Nights, 8 Days

Day 1, Saturday, May 20

Florence

D

Pick up from your arrival point in the area of Florence - normally after lunch according to your arrival by air or train. We will take you to your comfortable hotel in the heart of Florence where you have time to unpack and relax, or begin to explore the streets of this historic town. We will meet later in the afternoon when everybody has arrived, and over aperitifs your escort will go over the plan for the rest of the week. We move on to dinner together, which for this first night is reasonably light and early, to accommodate those of you who are recovering from your journey.

Day 2, Sunday, May 21

Florence

BLD

Today is really supposed to be dedicated to art and culture in Florence, but no doubt everyone's anxious to get a taste of the local grape juice, so we start off with a tasting at a local Enoteca. Here we sample wines from the various districts of Tuscany, with commentary from your escort. A short walking tour follows, before we lunch together at one of Florence's great trattorias. You will have free time this afternoon to enjoy Florence, then later on we will meet to drive out to the estate of Selvapiana, in the Ruffina region to the north of the city. Here we will enjoy a visit of the winery with Federico Giuntini, followed by a tasting dinner at the estate.

Day 3, Monday, May 22

Chianti

BLD

Leaving the city to head into the heart of Chianti Classico, we visit first with our friends at Castello di Fonterutoli. Fonterutoli is a small hamlet just south of Castellina in Chianti, owned by the Mazzei family since 1435, where they have been producing fine wines for the last 500 years - Hugh Johnson describes them as a "modest but wholly convincing champion of true Chianti". We enjoy a visit of the winery with Francesco Mazzei, then lunch with him at the winery with a tasting of his superb wines. While you're enjoying lunch your bags will be taken to your hotel.

After lunch we'll venture a little further afield, all the way to Panzano in Chianti (all of 15 km up the road!) where we will visit and taste at Fontodi, one of my favorites in Chianti. A little further up the trail and we stop at Vecchie Terre di Montefili, before heading back through Greve in Chianti through the Tuscan hills to our accommodations at the lovely villa-hotel of Casafrassi, just outside the village of Castellina in Chianti. This is a family-owned small deluxe hotel, and also a working winery, set in it's own tranquil park in the heart of the Tuscan vineyards. Dinner in the comfort of your hotel's fine dining room.

Day 4, Tuesday, May 23

Chianti

BL

Another day in the heart of Chianti, this time starting with a visit to a local village market before going to Fattoria Vignale in Radda. OPTION: if the group prefers, we can do a cooking class at a wonderful relaxed, very entertaining farmhouse cooking school this morning. We enjoy a traditional Tuscan lunch together, and then continuing to Riecine in Gaiole. Here we are received by the owner Séan O'Callaghan, who took over the property after working for years with John Dunkley. Dunkley amazed the Italian wine world by his outstanding work in this vineyard since he came here from England. He came here with no knowledge but tremendous enthusiasm, which resulted very quickly in some outstanding wine that outshone the local produce to become a benchmark for the improved quality of Chianti. Since we normally find our visit here is quite involved we don't plan anything else for the afternoon, but if the group wishes we can slip in a visit to one of Tuscany's famous ceramics studios to see how their beautiful pieces are created. After a short stop to freshen up at our hotel we take you into Siena in the late afternoon for a little sightseeing and then stay on into the evening for dinner at your leisure (with our helpful suggestions of course). We can provide transportation for anyone who prefers to return to the hotel for dinner instead of staying in Siena.

Avalon Wine Tours PO Box 3004, Newport Beach CA 92659-0528

Tel: (949) 673 7376 Fax: (949) 673 6533 Website: www.avalon-tours.com Email: office@avalon-tours.com

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Day 5, Wednesday, May 24 ChiantiBD

Today we combine some tourism with our wine activities. We'll head up through the country roads to San Gimignano for a look at this famous city of towers, with a stop en route at one of Tuscany's top crystal producers. We enjoy a private tour through the workshops where the finest glasses, carafes and ornaments are hand-blown, and of course you are able to purchase if you wish. Continuing to San Gimignano through the Tuscan lanes we have time to walk around this historic city of towers (and climb one or two if you are so inclined). Lunch is open to discover your own café as you wander around the ancient city. After lunch we will visit one of the top producers of Vernaccia, the white that is so unique to San Gimignano. The late afternoon is spent viewing the historic medieval villages of Chianti as we head back to our hotel to freshen up. Dinner tonight is in the local's favorite restaurant in Castellina, where you will have the chance to sample some of the most authentic Tuscan cuisine in the bustling, happy atmosphere of the Italian countryside.

Day 6, Thursday, May 25 Montalcino/Montepulciano

BL

We pack our bags and head south to Montepulciano and Montalcino today, with a fairly early start. Our first stop to break the journey is at Avignonesi's winery about half-way to our destination. This is a very complete visit, and is followed by lunch in front of the open fire looking out over the winery's horses grazing in their paddock. Continuing after lunch we make a short stop at Poliziano in Montepulciano, then on to our accommodations at the lovely hotel of Vecchia Oliviera, situated at the gates of the town of Montalcino. Since we have indulged in a rather extensive lunch, tonight we leave you free to enjoy the lighter fare of a simple bistro in the local village, or if you prefer at the hotel.

Day 7, Friday, May 26

Montalcino/Montepulciano

BD

A day touring the world-renowned vineyards of the pretty hilltop wine town of Montalcino, where we take in the Costanti family's hilltop estate dating back to the 8th century (with their hillside gravity-fed bottling plant), and then continue to the famous Biondi-Santi estate. You are free for lunch in the village, then we'll taste the wonderful wines of Altesino and possibly squeeze in a visit to Pieve S. Restituita, the Brunello winery that Angelo Gaja took over a few years ago. Our final dinner is in the fine dining room of our hotel, overlooking the beautiful Tuscan landscape.

Day 8, Saturday, May 27

Departure

B

Today we bid you a fond farewell at the end of a wonderful week in Tuscany. We take the expressway back up to Florence, where we arrive by mid-day. We will co-ordinate your outward transportation, or you may wish to stay in Florence to explore the culture and art of this extraordinary city. We can arrange expert guide services if you wish. Extensions to Rome or other parts of Italy are also possible.

Note:

We are happy to help you arrange transportation within Italy. The tour will start and end in Tuscany; we will arrange to pick you up at either the rail station or airport - normally the rail station - in Florence. There are opportunities for extensions to this tour either before or after, if you wish to visit other parts of Italy - such as Rome, Piemonte, Venice, Verona etc. Call us to make arrangements.

Price per person, double occupancy \$5795.00

Single Supplement \$990.00

Travel Insurance is not included in the price of the tour.

Includes ground transportation, accommodation, visits, all meals with fine wines as indicated in the itinerary (7 breakfasts, 5 dinners and 4 lunches).

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