

HEDONISTIC HIKING

Parma, Tuscany and the Cinque Terre - 8 days

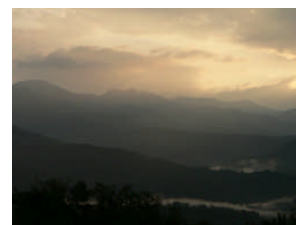


Prosciutto and Parmesan, Pilgrims and Poets

Walk the area immortalised by writers and poets over the centuries. Visit beautiful **Parma**, the undisputed gourmet capital of Emilia Romagna and experience the *Sagra del Fungo Porcini* (Porcini Mushroom Fair) at Borgotaro. Walk part of the **Via Francigena** pilgrim route and discover an **untouched area of Tuscany** before descending to the Gulf of Poets on the Ligurian coast to explore the quaint villages of the Cinque Terre. Opportunity to hike part of the **Cinque Terre** coastal path or travel the coast by boat.

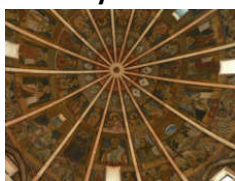
What is included?

- **7 nights beautiful accommodation** (3 different hotels)
- **Two experienced and knowledgeable guides** who will look after your every need and bring this stunning area to life
- **All meals including wine.**
- **Gourmet picnic lunches** each day and snacks en route
- Dinner in a variety of **superb restaurants.**
- **Support vehicle**, enabling you to walk as little or as much of the trail as you please
- **Transport** to/from Bologna (start) and Pisa (end) in air-conditioned minibus
- Comprehensive **pre-trip information.**
- Luggage transported for you so all you need to carry is a small backpack with water etc.



"Absolutely superb! Cheerful, knowledgeable and professional. Great sense of humour" E. Siviero, New York

Itinerary



In order to minimise transfer time the trip starts in Bologna (served by British Airways to London Gatwick and national carriers) and ends in Pisa from where there are flights to many destinations within Europe. Parma also has a small airport (served by Ryanair and national carriers) and is on a direct train line from Milan, Rome and Florence.

Day 1

Meet Bologna airport (12.15pm) or Parma train station (1.30pm). After a late lunch showcasing the famous cuisine of Parma we visit the cathedral and its fabulous marble baptistery. We continue (1hour) to Borgo Casale, our luxury hotel nestled in the Romagnola hills, encircled by the peaks of the Appenines. Time to settle in before dinner in the hotel restaurant.



Day 2

Today we learn how the famous parmesan cheese is produced when we meet a local producer. We then drive high into the hills, on the border between Liguria and Emilia Romagna, for a fabulous ridge walk. (5.4km/3.4miles). Time to relax in the afternoon before we visit the town of Borgotaro – awarded the accolade *Citta Slow* (Slow Food City) – to experience the Annual Porcini Mushroom fair before a relaxed dinner at a delightful organic farm.

Day 3



From the Passo della Cisa (1041m) we follow the Via Francigena through beech and chestnut woods, over ancient stone bridges and through charming villages before descending to Pontremoli. We stay in a beautiful agriturismo (with pool) converted from a 16th century hamlet, which overlooks the town. We use this as our base for 3 days whilst exploring the Lunigiana, an untouched part of Tuscany nestled between the Apennines and the Mediterranean. (20.5km/13miles)

Day 4

Making our way up from a peaceful village, through ancient chestnut groves, we emerge onto open pastures in a magnificent amphitheatre of Apennine peaks. Relaxing afternoon with the opportunity to explore Pontremoli. The town lies in a strategic position on the river Magra and it was an important stopping place on the Via Francigena. The 14th century castle houses a fascinating museum of menhirs found in the Lunigiana. (7.9km/5miles)



Day 5



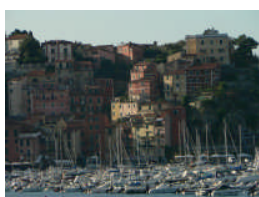
Starting above Pontremoli we climb up through beautiful open woods and wild moorland, passing an evocative hamlet, to reach a high pass (1363m) with spectacular mountain views on the border of Emilia Romagna. In the afternoon, a leisurely descent through beech woods crossing clear mountain streams to reach a characteristic village. (18km/11.3miles)

Day 6

Enjoy sweeping coastal views as we walk to Fosdinovo where we visit the imposing castle of the Malaspina family. After visiting a small wine producer in the village we descend through vineyards and olive groves, past rustic farms, to the fortified town of Sarzana. Continue to the pretty coastal town of Lerici, once home to Lord Byron, where we stay for two nights in a stunning new hotel with breathtaking sea views. (14.9km/9.4miles)



Day 7



Free day with a boat cruise across the Gulf of Poets to the Cinque Terre. Opportunity to walk some of the stunning coastal path, swim or explore the lovely town of Portovenere and the small island of Palmaria.

Day 8

Return to Pisa Airport for 10.30am.

Extend your trip

The Cinque Terre is one of the best areas in Italy for independent walking. The well-trodden paths are clearly marked and the villages are linked by train and boat. We will provide you with a trail map and suggestions for walking.

Walking

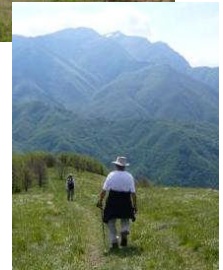


Moderate Walking

Shortest day: 7.9km/5miles

Longest day: 20.5km/13miles

There are 5 days of walking on the trip, totalling 72.6km (46 miles), and 1 free day. There is always the opportunity to walk a half-day with van support for those who wish to continue to the hotel earlier. We walk on paved pilgrim trails, farm and woodland tracks and quiet tarmac roads. The region is in the foothills of the Apennines and therefore hilly, but not mountainous. There are some stony descents so sturdy walking boots, with good ankle support, are recommended. Walking poles would be an advantage, especially on steeper sections.



Weather:

Average daily temperature: 13°-25°

Monthly rainfall average:50mm

Hours of sunshine:6½hours/day

Dates:

17th-24th September 2010

Price:

€2145

Single Supplement €250

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