



HEDONISTIC HIKING

Parma, Tuscany and the Ligurian Sea - 8 days Prosciutto and Parmesan, Pilgrims and Poets

This tour starts in Parma, one of the gastronomic capitals of Emilia-Romagna, and home to some of Italy's most iconic gourmet specialities. We stay close to the Slow Food town of Borgotaro and tour a local parmesan factory to see how this iconic cheese is made. We hike one of the most beautiful sections of the ancient pilgrim route to Rome, known as the Via Francigena, and discover Tuscany's untouched Lunigiana region. We continue towards the crystal-clear waters of the blue Ligurian Sea and the famous "Gulf of Poets" which was immortalised by Lord Byron and the Romantic poets. The final day is free to explore the quaint coastal town of Lerici or take a boat trip across the bay to Portovenere and the charming villages of the Cinque Terre.

What is included?

- **7 nights beautiful accommodation** (3 different hotels)
- **Two experienced and knowledgeable guides** to 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 Parma (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

Tour Highlights

Visit a parmesan cheese producer and learn what it takes to make a wheel of the famous cheese
Hike one of the prettiest sections of the Via Francigena pilgrim trail, complete with medieval stone bridges
Lazy day on the coast with boat trip to Portovenere or the Cinque Terre

Accommodation

Borgo Casale: Boutique hotel nestled in the Romagnola hills, tastefully converted from a 15th century village

Costa d'Orsola Agriturismo: Cosy country hotel near Pontremoli with breathtaking views of the Apennines and Apuan Alps. Swimming pool

Piccolo Hotel del Lido: Spectacular four-star hotel situated on its own private beach in the lovely town of Lerici



Itinerary

The tour starts in [Parma](#) (train connections to major Italian cities) 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. There are also airports at the nearby cities of Bologna, Florence and Milan.



Day 1

We meet at 11 am in the lobby area of the NH Parma Hotel, Viale Paolo Borsellino, 31 at Parma train station. You can reach the hotel on foot in about 1 minute from the train station. Before our lunch showcasing the famous cuisine of Parma, we visit the city's fabulous marble Baptistery, with time to see the cathedral and the Diocesan museum. We continue (1hour) to Borgo Casale, our luxury hotel nestled in the Romagnola hills, encircled by the peaks of the Apennines. 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. We then head to 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. **(23km/14.3miles)**

Day 4

Today a more leisurely hike takes us into the hills above our agriturismo to a remote hamlet suspended in time with lovely views over the Magra valley. 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. **(5.5km/3.4miles)**



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, where we have our picnic. In the afternoon, a leisurely descent through beech woods crossing clear mountain streams to reach a characteristic village. **(15.5km/9.6miles)**



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 hotel on the beach with breathtaking sea views. **(16km/10miles)**

Day 7

Free day with a boat cruise across the Gulf of Poets to Portovenere, or continue further to see the famous villages of the Cinque Terre. 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 self-guided walking, as the well-trodden paths are clearly marked and the villages are linked by train and boat. Visitor numbers in peak season are high and you are advised to book ahead if you plan to do the trails. Visit www.cinqueterre.com for more details.



Walking

Shortest day: 5.4km/3.4miles

Longest day: 23km/14.3miles



There are 5 days of walking on the trip and 1 free day. We walk on paved pilgrim trails – specifically on day 3 (which can become slippery after rain), farm and woodland tracks and quiet tarmac roads. The region is in the foothills of the Apennines and therefore hilly, but not mountainous. There is always the opportunity to walk a half-day with van support for those who prefer not to hike the full day. There are some stony descents so sturdy walking boots, with good ankle support, are highly recommended. Walking poles would be a great advantage, especially on steeper sections.

Weather:

Average daily temperature: 13°-25°

Monthly rainfall average:50mm

Hours of sunshine:6½hours/day

Useful links to our website:

[Parma](#) City Page

[Pisa](#) City Page

[Cinque Terre](#) City Page

[Parma](#) Blog Post

[Gulf of Poets](#) Blog Post

See all our [Tour Dates](#) for this and other tours

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