

## Exploring the Val d'Orcia on Foot: Women Winemakers, Local Artisans and Country Walks



**Date:** Oct 9 -Oct 14 (5 nights, 6 days)

**Activity:** Countryside walking; easy 10-14 km (6 – 8 miles) walks on a hard-packed gravel road and light walking trails - anyone with an average fitness level can enjoy.

**Difficulty:** Easy Active (level 2)

Arguably one of the most beautiful parts of Italy, the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Orcia Valley, has a multitude of layers to be discovered within this light adventure. As you walk along the famous "white roads/gravel roads" of Tuscany, you will be met with stunning views and warm greetings from the people working and living on the surrounding land. Along the way we'll meet female wine makers - a rarity in Italy, the largest family run saffron farm in the country, and second-generation leather makers. Cultural visits to the Monte Oliveto Maggiore Abbey and the towns of Montalcino, San Quirico d'Orcia and cheese making Pienza will round out this adventure that is sure to awaken your taste buds and relax the soul.

[Online Map](#)

**Includes:**

- 5 nights lodging in 3 and 4 star hotels, agriturismi or B&Bs,
- 5 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 5 dinners with local wine,
- Bilingual walking tour leader,
- all transfers as indicated in the itinerary,
- transfer to Montecatini Terme at tour end,
- culinary visits as listed in itinerary (saffron farm, 2 wineries, cheese tasting, cooking demonstrations), entrance to Monte Oliveto Maggiore.
- For the optional night in Montecatini: driver and shuttle service from Montecatini hotel to Florence airport

**Excludes:** Airfare or train to Florence airport or Montecatini Terme; personal expenses; drinks other than what is included in the meals; tips or gratuities; any activity that is not specified in this itinerary.

**Price:**

	Tour start from Florence airport Oct 9—9:00 am	Extra night in Montecatini Terme (Oct 8) and transfer service to Florence airport Oct 9 at 8 am if you are in Montecatini
Shared double, per person	950 euro	+120 euro per person
Single room supplement (pending availability and may be in a nearby property)	350 Euro (limited availability due to the property we use on day 2 and 3)	+160 euro

**Participants:** 6-16

**About Cycle Europe:** Family owned and operated by sisters - Monica and Maria Elena Malpezzi Price, and Monica's husband, Michele Boglioni - Cycle Europe's primary mission is to help others slow down and experience the world through active travel. Cycle Europe is a tour operator based in Tuscany and Emilia Romagna. Beyond offering self-guided bicycle tours, Cycle Europe outfits groups with bike tour equipment as well as providing other services (including non cycling trip support) such as: itinerary management, ground operations, and guiding services.

**Detailed Itinerary:**

**Optional: Oct 8:** for those arriving independently in Montecatini, we will book a hotel for you. Please confirm you will be arriving in Montecatini as soon as you know your travel plans.

**Oct 9:** From Montecatini: 8:00 departure

9 am: Meet at the Florence airport (a short taxi ride from the city center) for a 1 ½ hour transfer to the impressive Benedictine Abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, built in the 13th Century and still home to Benedictine monks. The cloister and its beautiful frescoes are a must-see before we head off on our walk through the Tuscan hills where gravel roads and ridge trails will lead us along scenic views to our B&B. Later this evening we'll visit Montalcino for a visit to the town famous for the Brunello wine.

Approximately 3 hours of walking on rolling country roads. Meals: L, D

**Oct 10:** A sumptuous breakfast prepares us for our walk this morning to a winery famous for its all-female cast, which began due to an intriguing inheritance and enologist-searching story. This winery has since become a powerful voice for female led companies all over Italy. After our visit and walk through the art installations at Casato Prime Donne, we'll continue walking to our next visit, a two-generation leather maker in the nearby town. Return to our B&B where we'll enjoy a wine tasting with a local wine maker and "apericena" later this evening.

Approximately 4-5 hours of gentle country road walking, with options for transfers at any point. Meals: B, L, D

**Oct 11:** We'll transfer this morning farther south into the Val d'Orcia. Visit the intriguing town of Bagno Vignoni--whose piazza is filled with a thermal pool with warm waters running through canals built by the Romans, who enjoyed this hot water like we do today. We'll overnight in Pienza tonight, home of Pope Pius II. Pope Pius turned this tiny village into a showpiece of Renaissance town planning in the 16th century. Today, the aroma of pecorino cheese overwhelms the town as it is also well known for its cheese production. Approximately 3 hours of walking on gentle country roads. Meals: B, L, D



**Oct 12:** We'll leave Pienza today to walk to the nearby town of San Quirico, enjoying sweeping vistas across the Orcia Valley and its clay hills lined with cypress trees bordering the roads. We'll visit a family saffron farm and learn how the crocus flower is gently cared for (every year each flower bulb is uprooted, washed and replanted!) to create the "golden" saffron we use in cooking. A demonstration and tasting completes the visit. Transfer to our rural country house in time for dinner together. Approximately 4 hours of walking on gentle country roads. Meals: B, L, D

**Oct 13:** Climate conditions permitting, we'll walk in the nearby forested hills as we search for truffles or mushrooms; otherwise, we'll have a walk through the vineyards to learn about the local grapes and wine-making along the way. From the Farm, we'll then walk to lunch together along a forest trail leading us to the heart of the small, but charming village of Trequanda where we'll have lunch. After an afternoon siesta back at our lodging, we'll enjoy a guided walk around the property – the vineyards, the herb garden, but also its buildings, including interiors and a small chapel that will allow us to know more about our hostess' family, followed by a demo/short cooking class using locally grown ingredients and herbs, for a celebratory dinner tonight! Meals: B, L, D  
Approximately 2 - 4 hours of walking on forested trails

**Oct 14:** We'll leave this corner of the region today to head to Cortona, another fascinating hilltop town, which offers new, amazing views and the possibility to walk around. We will be learning about the art of bread-baking today – from pizza to focaccia, baguette and much more – as well as making the typical local pasta, the *pici*, inside a local trattoria. For those who'd rather just enjoy the final products, it is possible to walk around town and hike to the top of the hill or sit for a morning aperitivo before our final lunch together, which some of us will have prepared. We'll transfer back to Montecatini Terme by late afternoon. Meals: B, L



**Cancellation Policy:** full payment is due 60 days before the trip. If cancellation happens within 29 – 0 days before trip start no refunds will be given.

**Packing List – this is to inform you on what clothes to bring for this walking tour.**

- Passport (required: check it now for expiration)
- Insurance information - health and travel information including policy numbers and phone numbers.

**General Tips for Clothing & Shoes:** October is shoulder season and rain is always a possibility and days and evenings can be cool. Therefore, lightweight, fast drying clothes are best, as are clothes you can layer.

**City Clothes:**

- 1-2 pair casual pants and/or skirts
- 2-3 wash and wear shirts
- 1-2 pair shorts or capris (depending upon season of travel)
- 1 light to medium weight long-sleeve/fleece top for layering
- 3 pair socks
- undergarments
- swimsuit for swimming or saunas
- hat (scrunchable)

**Footwear: (Do not bring new shoes, break them in now.)**

- Comfortable sandals or casual shoes, your tour may involve walking on cobbles.
- Comfortable hiking/walking shoes. You do not need heavy duty alpine hiking shoes although if the roads are muddy thicker soles will be better. Strong but lightweight trail shoes should work well.
- If you use only one all-purpose shoe, then bring a second pair of sandals or shoes to give your feet a rest, or in case one pair of shoes get wet.

**Hiking/walking clothes**

- Comfortable Daypack for water and an extra jacket and layers.
- 1-2 pair comfortable hiking pants or capris – zip off pants work well.
- 1-2 short sleeve or lightweight tops, comfortable for hiking and walking in.
- 1 – 2 thicker long-sleeved, performance-type fabric shirt for layering

- 3-4 pairs hiking socks
- Water-resistant wind breaker/shell
- Walking stick if you like to walk with one

**You should also plan to bring some cooler weather gear for chilly mornings and rainy days:**

- Rain jacket and pants,
- Head warmer (hat and/or headband or buff),

Other personal items as you would normally on any other trip such as cosmetics and toiletries that you may need.