



HEDONISTIC HIKING

Medieval Umbria
Abbeys and Art in the Apennines
22 May - 29 May 2017 | 8 days

This tour starts in Arezzo with a visit to the world-famous fresco cycle by Renaissance artist Piero della Francesca before continuing to a leisurely lunch and olive oil tasting at an organic farm near the charming town of Anghiari. We stay in the historic town of Sansepolcro, and cross from Tuscany into Umbria over the Apennines with beautiful views across both regions. We follow evocative pilgrim trails, once trodden by St Francis of Assisi, to remote churches, a dramatic fortress and a 13th century Benedictine monastery. We sleep in a beautifully restored abbey and finish the tour with three nights in the heart of the fascinating town of Gubbio, with its Etruscan, Roman and medieval history.

What is included?

- **7 nights' accommodation in 3 delightful hotels**
- **Two experienced, knowledgeable guides** to 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**
- **Museum visits and wine/food tastings** as per itinerary
- **Support vehicle**, enabling you to walk as little or as much of the trail as you please
- **Transport to/from Arezzo** 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.

Itinerary

The walking holiday starts and ends in Arezzo. This is on the train line from both Florence and Rome with regular trains from both cities. Journey time from Florence is approximately 1.5 hours and from Rome 2.5 hours.

Day 1

We will meet in Arezzo at 10.30 am at the [Hotel Continentale](#), which is on Piazza Guido Monaco, very close to the train station. We take a guided visit to the San Francesco church where we will see the world-famous fresco cycle "The Legend of the True Cross" by **Piero della Francesca**. This is followed by a leisurely lunch and olive oil tasting at an organic farm. We then continue the short distance to **Sansepolcro**. We stay for 2 nights in the heart of the town in the beautifully restored Renaissance palace **Palazzo Magi**. This evening there is a guided visit to the town's museum to see another renowned work by Piero della Francesca. After the visit we enjoy a glass of prosecco before dinner in a local restaurant.





Day 2

After breakfast stroll out of the hotel to experience the local market in the town before a short drive takes us to the evocative Franciscan convent and hermitage at **Monte Casale**. A beautiful hike follows a low ridge of the **Alpi della Luna** with views across the Tiber Valley. Picnic in the hills before returning to Sansepolcro. Time to explore the myriad of churches and some of the lesser known sites of the town before dinner in a local restaurant. (6km/4miles)

Day 3

A short drive takes us across the border into Umbria. We start our walk high above the town of Citta di Castello and hike through open farmland and woods, passing abandoned stone houses and a dramatic fort before arriving at the stunning Abbazia San Faustino, a beautiful small hotel converted from a former abbey. Dinner in the hotel restaurant. (16.5km/10.5miles)



Day 4



A leisurely walk in the remote farmland near the Abbey of San Faustino leads us to the historic cellars of a local winemaker. We visit their estate and taste their wines over a light lunch. Time to relax and enjoy the pool and the tranquil setting of Abbazia San Faustino in the afternoon. (10km/6miles)

Day 5

We depart San Faustino and a short drive takes us into the foothills of the Apennines from where we follow trails past hamlets and through woods to arrive at the Basilica of San Ubaldo, perched on a hill above the lovely medieval town of Gubbio. We walk down through the cobbled streets to arrive, on foot, at our delightful four star hotel in the heart of the town overlooking the square. We use this as our base for the final 3 nights of the holiday. Dinner in a local restaurant in Gubbio. (18km/11.3miles)



Day 6



A short drive takes us out of town for an exclusive guided tour of the thirteenth-century Benedictine abbey of Montelabate, formerly one of the most important abbeys in the region. Our picnic today includes wine, cheese and olive oil from the estate. Later in the day we visit Gubbio's principal museum with the precious Iguvine Tablets from the 3rd century B.C. This part of Umbria has important Etruscan heritage and bordered the lands of the Umbri tribes. Dinner this evening is in the centre of Gubbio.

Day 7

Our final hike takes us to Monte Cucco National Park, a short distance from Gubbio. Starting from a high alpine meadow at 1132m we climb up through beautiful beech woods to emerge above the tree line at just above 1400m. We circle the summit of Monte Cucco, enjoying spectacular views across the Umbrian hills and to Le Marche towards the coast. We picnic in the alpine meadow before returning, by van, to Gubbio. Free time in the afternoon before our final dinner in a local restaurant. (6.7km/4.2miles)



Day 8

Return to Arezzo train station for 11.00 am.

Walking

Shortest day: 6km/3.8miles

Longest day: 18km/11.3miles

There are 5 days of walking on the trip and one free day. We walk on strade bianche (gravel roads), on mountain trails, along woodland tracks and quiet tarmac roads. There are some long hiking days but there is always van support with the opportunity to walk a half-day. Most of this part of Umbria is one of rolling hills with some significant ups and downs. The walk on Day 7 is a rugged mountain trail with some exposed sections. Sturdy walking boots, with good ankle support, are recommended. Walking poles would be an advantage, especially on steeper sections.

Weather:

Springtime is a delightful time to walk in central Italy. We are quite high up at times so can take advantage of the cooler temperatures for walking. Max 24° Min 18°. Rainfall 55mm

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