



Let's go to Tuscany!

May 2012

Staying in a villa is one of the least expensive and perhaps most rewarding travel experiences. Join me with a small group of no more than 16, on a trip to Tuscany in May. A four-day extension to Cinque Terre is also planned. Take a look at what's being offered, and if you're interested give me a call or drop me an e-mail, and I will send you a sign-up package.

...Ihla (702-294-4365) or ihla@cox.net



THE VILLAS: **BORGO CORSIGNANO** (in Poppi, near Arezzo) & **SAN GIUSEPPE** (near Sienna)

The grounds of Corsignanano, a renovated medieval village are charming, and the views of the Tuscan countryside can't be beat. It is in the Casentino Valley, near the town of Poppi. San Giuseppe is in Chianti country, near Siena. In addition to their picturesque scenery, these villas are in good locations for day trips, by car, train, or bus to many wonderful Tuscan hill towns and villages.

DATES: May 5-19, 2012

COST PER PERSON: \$2,900* + best available airfare at time of booking

INCLUDED:

- 2 Weeks Lodging in Villas (one week each in two separate villas)
- Rental Car (including gas) - there will be enough cars to share among the group (3-4 to a car)
- Supply of Breakfast Items; plus Fruit, Bread, Cheese & Snacks (plus a little wine) for evenings
- Four group meals
- Train Tickets to Arezzo and Assisi/Bus Ticket to Siena

NOT INCLUDED:

- Train & Bus Tickets other than mentioned above
- Meals (mostly lunches while out and about - breakfast and light evening snacks are provided)
- Trip Insurance (Highly Recommended - ~5% of trip cost - Travel Guard available)

*Based on 10-person min, and Double Occupancy. Single Supplement: \$1,000

*This package is priced in accordance with exchange rates as of July 2011 (ratio 1.4 to 1). Should the rates of exchange fluctuate more than three (3) percent, a price adjustment *may* be made. Cancellation Policy: If you must cancel 120 days prior to departure (for any reason), you will receive a 100% refund of any monies you have paid to Drifter Sister. If a cancellation occurs between 119 and 75 days prior to departure, you will receive a 75% refund of any monies you have paid to Drifter Sister. In the case of a cancellation after 75 days prior to departure, a 50% refund of monies paid to Drifter Sister will be allowed only if a replacement can be found for you. Otherwise there will be no refund.

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Catch the wind... Taste the rain... and touch all of your tomorrows...

SOME DAY TRIPS we'll be choosing from (by car and/or train):



San Gimignano This "city of beautiful towers" is one of the best-preserved medieval towns in Tuscany. The movie *Tea with Mussolini* was filmed here.



Florence No description necessary. A must see. Our only optional excursion is a half-day guided tour that will include entrance to St. Croce church and the Accademie (where Michelangelo's David resides).

Siena

A city of steep medieval alleys surrounding the Piazza del Campo, location of the famous Palio. The palio is Tuscany's most celebrated festival, the bareback horse race in which neighborhood is pitted against neighborhood.



Pisa There is more to see than the famous leaning tower, but it can easily be done in a half day. Those on the extension will fly home out of Pisa.



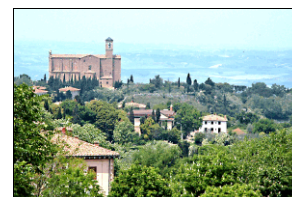
Chianti Region This driving day trip through Chianti wine country will be one of your most memorable. The scenery of rolling vineyards and hilltop vistas is unsurpassed. In May 2009, we discovered a very fun wine museum and tasting room in Greve, that quickly was put on our must-visit list.

Arezzo One of the wealthiest cities in Tuscany, it produces gold jewelry for shops all over Italy. Contains wonderful old-world treasures and an Etruscan Museum. The film *A Beautiful Life* was filmed here.

Cortona One of the oldest cities in Tuscany. It was founded by the Etruscans, whose work can still be seen in the foundations of the town's massive stone walls. Setting for the book, *Under the Tuscan Sun*.



Volterra Situated on a high plateau, Volterra offers uninterrupted views over the surrounding hills. In many places the ancient Etruscan walls still stand.



Stia Poppi's close neighbor, a bustling, attractive village on the Arno. There are two medieval Guidi family castles nearby, and a wool museum & shop 'to die for'.

Assisi A beautiful little city. It is not in Tuscany, but Umbria, and may be a little far south, but is well worth the journey. We will take the train from Poppi to Asissi. Another must see. I will never forget my first glimpse of this pink-stoned gem on the side of a hill. It is still a very religious city with several important churches and works of art.

Poppi Our 'home base,' so to speak. The older part of Poppi is located high on a hill. Its splendid castle, the imposing *Castello di Poppi*, can be seen from as far away as Bibbiena, many miles to the north (and Corsignano).

Perugia College town, and chocolate capital of Italy. Near Asissi, but will entail a train-day outing of its own. Full of wonderful marble carvings.

La Verna One of the most sacred sites in all of Christendom. This is where St. Francis of Assisi received the stigmata. This undiscovered gem is a fully functioning monastery, and one of my personal favorites, as well as for many of those whom I have taken.



SOME THOUGHTS & CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE YOU DECIDE

- This is NOT a tour, in that every day is planned out for you. A suggested itinerary is provided, which has been developed over several years in which I have lead many trips to the area. Usually the whole group goes to the same place, but sometimes little groups head out in different directions, some in cars, some on the train. The first week is usually the former, and the second week the latter, as everyone becomes familiar with the territory. Some may even want to hang out at the villas - they are very beautiful and relaxing, each with a nice pool, and the countryside is conducive to long, leisurely walks.
- Corsignano is not a fancy place. It is a converted medieval village, after all. It is, however, very comfortable, with BIG fireplaces, BIG tables for group meals, and decent beds. Each bedroom has its own bathroom. Each room has **one queen-sized bed**. The plumbing is modern. There are large kitchens for making meals 'at home' to save money. San Giuseppe is more modern, but also has the ambience of a country villa.
- If you are traveling as a single, you can be matched up with a single of the same sex. Keep in mind that all beds at Corsignano are queens, however. If you prefer to have your own bedroom, a single supplement will be charged.
- I have maps, English/Italian dictionaries, Italian driving rules/signs, and so on. If you have never been to Italy or done much traveling, don't worry, I will take care of you. If you are a seasoned traveler and wish to be more or less left alone, that's no problem, either. The only thing I hope for is a group of flexible, sociable individuals that can adapt to changes or glitches, turn them into adventures, and have a good time together. No matter how hard we try, one thing is certain: no trip is ever perfect. But I will do the best I can to make any bumps we encounter as smooth as possible.
- Keep in mind, we need people that can get around, 2 or 3 who can drive the (manual transmission) rental cars, and put them in their names, get on and off trains, take care of their own luggage, and walk a lot. Hill towns of Tuscany are just that - hill towns, and parking is often at the BOTTOM of the hill. The train stations have a LOT of steps. Some of the places to visit are nearby, and some take a couple of hours to get to. Most are less than an hour's drive, but Assisi, for instance, is a 2 hour train ride. When a trip is described as a day trip, it could mean 7am to 7pm, including a 1-hour drive time, or 2-hour train ride each way.
- Due to the small size of the rental cars, **it is extremely important to limit the amount of luggage you bring on this trip**. One medium bag and one small carry-on is all that is allowed. If you bring too much it will not just be hard on you; more importantly, you will be impacting your fellow travelers. You will get sick of me saying this, but it is really important for the enjoyment of all. There is a laundry room at each villa.

CINQUE TERRE/PISA EXTENSION

4 Nights/4 Days, All Inclusive - May 1-4

10-Person Maximum \$900*/person dbl

INCLUDED: Virtually Everything

- 3 Nights in Monterosso, Cinque Terre
- 3 Breakfasts & 3 Very Nice Dinners in Cinque Terre
- 3-Day Train/Park Pass for Cinque Terre
- 1 Night in Pisa (Hotel near train station - 15 minute walk to Tower, etc)
- 1 Dinner in Pisa, plus one breakfast at hotel
- Train Fare from Florence to Cinque Terre and Cinque Terre to Pisa

Cinque Terre is on the northwest coast of Italy, on the southern end of the Italian Riviera. It is breathtakingly gorgeous, and a totally different experience from Tuscany.



Cinque (five) Terre is a district of five ancient fishing villages that, until recently, have been hidden gems, possibly due to their inaccessibility. It is very difficult to reach them by car, so you must travel to and between them by train. Both Italian and American tourists flock there in abundance now, but in the spring, when we're there, it is a little less crowded.



Cinque Terre is a wonderful end to our journey in Italy. It is convenient to get there by train. The weather is great in May, when it is not too teeming with tourists. There are beaches to walk, trails to hike, and charming little churches to see. Three nights will give you time to see all the sights, and get a taste of the place, without totally breaking your wallet



or adding too many days away from home.

Cinque Terre (being on the cusp of the Italian Riviera), and Pisa (being the tourist mecca that it is), are not cheap. The price just covers expenses and is based on double occupancy (single roommates will be matched, or single supplement of \$250 will be charged). The park pass will be the least of our cost, but you will soon see how invaluable it is to our stay.



We will arrive in Pisa on Tuesday, May 1st, and immediately board the train to Cinque Terre. We arrive by early afternoon, and are settled into our rooms by early evening, in time for a welcome reception on the roof garden of our charming Albergo (hotel), and catch a dinner at the hotel. All day Wednesday and Thursday will be spent sightseeing, hiking, or strolling on one of the few public beaches. Early Friday morning



we head out by train to Pisa, arriving noon-ish. The afternoon is spent taking in the Leaning Tower and other highlights. Dinner that night, and then to the modest hotel near the train station. Saturday morning we will take the train to Florence, where we will pick up our rental cars and drive to the first villa.

*Based on Euro 1.4. Higher Euro or fewer participants will force a higher price. Single Supplement: \$250