





## Suggested Itinerary:

### Day 1: Arrive Florence

Arrive in Florence mid-afternoon today. We stay in a modern 4-star hotel in an excellent location near Santa Maria Novella church and train station. At 5pm we meet in the hotel lobby for a guided walk around this capital of the Renaissance period. Afterward the evening is yours, with dinner at own arrangements. Meat eaters may like to seek out *bistecca alla fiorentina*, grilled T-bone served rare with olive oil and lemon, or *trippa alla fiorentina*, tripe sautéed in olive oil with onions and tomatoes, whilst vegetarians can look for *ribollita*, soup with cannellini beans, black cabbage, bread and tomatoes, or *zuppa di fagioli*, Tuscan bean soup.

### Day 2: Florence to Piazzano

**Cycling distance @ 30km**

On our journey to Piazzano we travel by train, bicycle and bus. We ride into the fertile Chiana Valley (Valdichiana) on quiet back roads, or take the bus when necessary to avoid traffic. We stop in Cortona, one of Tuscany's oldest and most beautiful settlements. The stone walls around the city date back to Etruscan times, and the town commands a panoramic view over the Valdichiana from its hilltop position. After lunch we descend to Piazzano, where we stay in a historic villa set within large gardens. The villa was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century as a hunting lodge but subsequently fell into disrepair. It has been lovingly restored to its former glory.

### Day 3: Piazzano to Perugia

**Cycling distance @ 34km**

At Lake Trasimeno we may discover what is reputed to be the battlefield on which the Romans were vanquished by Hannibal in 217 BC. We ride along the shoreline with views of the lake, its islands, the hilltop towns and the olive groves and vines surrounding the towns. We arrive at our hotel in the centre of Perugia, and in the afternoon there is a guided walk through the town. Free time before dinner in one of Perugia's many excellent restaurants. Perugian specialities include *torello alla perugina* (veal with a sauce of chicken livers, anchovies and capers) and *pappardelle* with a sauce of tomatoes and wild boar or hare.

### Day 4: Perugia to Montefalco

**Cycling distance @ 33km**

After breakfast we drive to Assisi where a local guide will show us the Church of St Francis with its magnificent frescoes. In the afternoon, we ride through the olive groves on the flanks of Mount Subasio to Spello, Bevagna with its beautiful village square, and past Montefalco to our accommodation for two nights, a 4-star country house hotel with swimming pool, set in extensive grounds. The pastel-pink manor house has its origins in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, and the gardens feature rare roses.

### Day 5: Montefalco circular tour

**Cycling distance @ 16km**

Today we visit Montefalco. This hilltop town, known as the 'balcony of Umbria', offers panoramic views and a sense of serenity. We visit an olive oil press and mill and have a tasting of the 'green gold' produced here. We also visit the church of St Francis which is home to a little museum with colourful frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli, a disciple of Fra Angelico. We stroll through the narrow streets before freewheeling downhill. In the afternoon, we taste some exquisite reds, fine examples of Sagrantino de Montefalco, in one of the area's many wineries.

### Day 6: Montefalco to Rieti

**Cycling distance @ 48km**

We cycle a mostly flat route towards Spoleto, and leave our bikes and take an escalator to the old town. We walk through a maze of narrow streets and piazzas to the cathedral and the Ponte delle Torri. From Spoleto we travel

by bus to the village of Piediluco, on the shores of Lago di Piediluco, where we have lunch (included) with views across the blue lake to low green mountains. We continue southwards to the border of Umbria and Lazio an area which is relatively untouristed with a landscape more rugged than Umbria. Our destination is Rieti on the Velino River. Dinner is at your own arrangements this evening; there are numerous excellent restaurants.

### Day 7: Rieti to Rome

**Cycling distance @ 30km**

This morning we travel by bus into the Sabine Hills to Lago del Turano. Craggy cliffs surround the lake; the rolling hills of Tuscany and Umbria seem a million miles away. We cycle along the lake, passing the isolated mountain village Castel di Tora, dominated by its namesake castle tower. We continue cycling along the bays and inlets of the lake, which was formed by damming the Turano River in the late 1930s to create hydroelectric power. In the afternoon we meet our bus and transfer to Rome. Here we stay in a 4-star hotel just 300 metres from the Colosseum, with wonderful views from the terrace and pool. There is enough time for a walk exploring the Colosseum and surrounding area, or for an aperitif before we meet for dinner.

### Day 8: Departure day

In the morning there is an optional guided city walk past the Colosseum and through the Roman Forum to the Campidoglio which offers extensive views over the city. Our city walk finishes at the hotel around noon.

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