

ITALY - TUSCAN HIGHLIGHTS: PISA LUCCA MONTECATINI FLORENCE

8-days / 7-nights easy to moderate inn-to-inn self-guided cycling tour



Cycling from the spectacular leaning tower of Pisa to the Ponte Vecchio in the centre of Florence, this is the region of Leonardo da Vinci, of Puccini and the creator of the puppet Pinocchio. This itinerary offers a postcard-worthy landscape of terraced vineyards, silvery-green olive groves, hills topped with medieval villages, and roads lined with towering cypress trees. It offers a history that has inspired many artists, architects, composers, inventors and painters for centuries. A chance to see the well-preserved medieval city of Pistoia, the 2017 '*Italian city of culture*', with its large Piazza del Duomo, dominated by the 5th Century cathedral and old city walls.

Tuscany and cycling have gone hand in hand for decades and you will be amazed how enjoyable this independent inn-to-inn cycling holiday can be. The highlights of this route are some of the most famous and historical cities in Europe. The itinerary is over mostly flat to undulating terrain with some hilly roads interesting to both the weekend cyclist and those who are more enthusiastic. In six well-defined stages you cover between 225 - 280km (less if you decide not to cycle on the days where you stay two nights in the beautiful cities of Montecatini and Florence, more if you plan side trips or city tours along the routes each day). Most of the cycling is on sealed roads with light traffic (which can get heavier as you approach major towns), some sections are on unsealed tracks but generally the surface is good and they are not demanding.

All the cities are connected by trains (which can accommodate bicycles) so in case of bad weather or if you need a day of rest you can reach the next city without cycling. Those seeking longer rides can take some of the many cycling trails in and around your overnight accommodation and to nearby towns and villages. The accommodation provided is in carefully selected 3 and 4-star hotels. The rooms have ensuite bathroom facilities and almost always air-conditioning.

Cost from: \$1785 per person twin share Single room supplement from \$475
Optional upgrade to e-bike \$295 per person (limited – please book early)

Departs from Pisa: Every Saturday from 16th April to 1st October 2022.

Included: 7 nights' comfortable hotel accommodation with en-suite; breakfast buffet; multi-gear bike hire with bike insurance, cycle computer, pannier, tool kit & lock; luggage transportation; App with tour information, digital route descriptions and maps and GPS tracks; 7-days emergency hotline.

Not included: Lunches and dinners, drinks, personal expenses, optional local train transfers Montecatini to Pistoia, Florence to Empoli, Empoli to Pisa, local city hotel taxes. Helmet hire is available at extra cost when booking, but we recommend you take and wear your own.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details and reservations



Suggested itinerary:

Day 1 Arrive Pisa

Plan to arrive at your hotel in the afternoon of the first day. Pisa is a city famous all over the world for its magical Piazza dei Miracoli (Square of Miracles) with the leaning tower and the Bell Tower of the city's cathedral which are all UNESCO World Heritage listed. Pisa is a lively university city full of young people, life and energy and a very friendly atmosphere. It is accessed by train or through its international airport.

Day 2 Pisa to Lucca

cycling @ 30 - 45km

Cycling north along the River Serchio you arrive in Lucca. For those looking for a more challenging ride there is a longer route that detours to Lake Massaciuccoli before turning inland to Lucca.

Day 3 Lucca to Montecatini

cycling @ 45km

Following a road with panoramic views you reach the village of Collodi and the town of Pescia. Collodi is where the author of Pinocchio spent his childhood and there is a Pinocchio Park and also the aristocratic Villa Garzoni. In Pescia there are ancient churches, palaces, Renaissance mansions and a typical street market specialising, as does this whole region, in flowers and plants. You stay in wonderful Montecatini for two nights.

Day 4 Montecatini circular tour, or free day

optional cycling @ 60km

A choice today. You may like to relax in one of the most famous thermal cities in Europe with many parks, thermal baths and wellness centres nearby; perhaps take the historic cable-railway and enjoy a coffee in the square of the old town with views across the valley below. Alternatively a picturesque 60km cycling itinerary will lead you past ancient villas once owned by the Medici family, olive groves, vineyards and beautiful historical farms, passing Vinci, Leonardo da Vinci's birthplace, and the museum to his memory.

Day 5 Montecatini to Pistoia & Florence

cycling @ 50 - 65km

Again today you have a choice. Either cycle directly from Montecatini to Florence or shorten your cycling by taking a train to Pistoia, a small city rich in Romanesque and Renaissance monuments, churches and with one of the most picturesque squares in Italy: Piazza del Duomo (Cathedral Square). From Pistoia you cycle across the flat plains to the cradle of the Renaissance, the beautiful city of Florence where there is so much to see and do.

Day 6 Free day in Florence

You have today at leisure to explore Florence, cradle of the Renaissance, cherished by art lovers worldwide. Perhaps visit the Uffizi to view masterpieces such as Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and Michelangelo's *David*; wander through the city's old centre and across the Ponte Vecchio; or indulge in a spot of shopping.

Day 7 Florence to Pisa

cycling @ 40 - 65 - 90km

You may like to cycle the full route from Florence to Pisa (90km). Alternatively you can cycle from Florence to Empoli over undulating terrain (40km), then train from Empoli to Pisa; or do the opposite, by train to Empoli then cycle alongside the Arno River mostly on a flat cycle path to Pisa (65km). Trains not included, paid locally.

Day 8 Pisa

Tour ends after breakfast.

Outdoor Travel offers guided or self-guided cycling holidays in many regions of Italy & most areas of Europe.

Contact **Outdoor Travel** for reservations or further information:

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