

TUSCAN GARDEN TOUR OCTOBER 2016

HIDDEN TREASURES TOURS

October 8, 2016 – October 16, 2016

Oct. 8 Arrive Florence (D)

- Private group transfer from Florence airport to the hotel, Hotel Privilege*
- Welcome dinner at the restaurant in Florence, walking distance from your hotel.
- Overnight in Florence

Oct. 9 Florence at leisure

- Overnight in Florence, Hotel Privilege

Oct. 10 City tour Florence (B) - Torrigiani Gardens

- Meet your guide at the hotel for a 3 hour guided walking tour through the historic center of Florence
- Private guided visit of Torrigiani Gardens recently open to the public. It's the largest privately owned garden in Europe and is located in the heart of Florence (Santo Spirito district). One of the owners, Marquise Malaspina Torrigiani, will lead the visit through the garden .
- Overnight in Florence, Hotel Privilege

Oct. 11 The Orcia Valley & Siena (B,L, D)

- We will drive through the Chianti area and reach the countryside around Siena where we will visit the Gardens of Villa Vico Bello
- Light lunch and olive oil tasting at the Villa
- Drive to Montalcino where we will visit a flagship winery, wine tasting will follow
- To the farmhouse Fattoria del Colle* for overnight stay
- Dinner at the farmhouse

Oct. 12 Castello di Celsa and Villa La Foce (B,L)

- Today we will have a full day excursion to the magnificent Gardens of Siena
- Pick up from the hotel and transfer by private bus to Villa La Foce
- Then we will reach Castello di Celsa where we will have a light lunch in the garden. The Villa and part of the gardens were designed by the 16th century Sienese architect Baldassare Peruzzi. The design of the main garden overlooking the spectacular Sienese countryside was originally laid out in 1500. The additions made to the garden during the Baroque period are the semicircular pool in the main garden and a large fishing on the edge of the holm oak wood. In more recent times, the parterres in the main garden and the cypress hedging leading to the fishing pool were added. The most recent additions to this gardens are the large conifers which reflect the English Landscape style of the 1800's.

Oct 13 Pienza and Palazzo Piccolomini - Montepulciano (B,L, D)

- Pick up from the farmhouse
- Drive to Pienza, where we will meet our guide for a visit of the historic center, then we will visit one of the Pienza gems: Palazzo Piccolomini and the gardens .
Palazzo Piccolomini, is one of the main architectural feats in Pienza built according to the humanist project of the "ideal city" imagined by Enea Silvio Piccolomini, also known as Pope Pius II. Built in 1459 as a summer home for the Pope, it is considered the first example of Renaissance architecture. The visit to this Palace will step you back in time, the Palace was built as a home and continued to be used as **one** throughout the centuries up until very recently. The Piccolomini family

lived here until 1962 and therefore contains its original furnishings. You get to see the dining room, the music room, the room used as an office and library, and several bedrooms, including Enea's. The loggia from the second floor offers an incredible view over the entire Val d'Orcia. Palazzo Piccolomini, like almost all Renaissance villas, aimed to integrate the Villa into the landscape via the medium of a formal garden. From the portico on the rear of the palazzo, there unfolds an extraordinary view of the Val d'Orcia and Monte Amiata. Placed within the foreground of this panorama, on the ground floor level of the palazzo, is a square garden bound by walls and with a well in the centre. These are the Piccolomini Gardens, the first "hanging garden" of the Renaissance, and an Italian garden almost without equal – only the garden of Villa Gamberaia comes near to it in terms of aesthetic value and pleasure.

- We will stop near Pienza for the visit of an organic cheese maker, we will visit the cheese dairy and we will have light lunch based on typical products such as Pecorino cheese and cold cuts (Podere Il Casale) .
- Transfer to Montepulciano , time at leisure to wander and shop ,
- Dinner at the restaurant in Montepulciano, transfer back to Farmhouse .

Oct. 14 to Florence Villa di Maiano, Villa Gamberaia (B,L)

- Pick up and transfer by bus to our first garden where we will meet our guide
- You will visit Villa di Maiano Gardens and the ground floor of the Villa (Fiesole).
Built in 1400 by the Pazzi family, in the 18C it became the property of the Tolomei family and in the second half of the 19C it was purchased by Sir Temple Leader, a rich Englishman with a passion for Tuscany. Temple Leader became owner of all the artwork belonging to the previous owners and decided to renovate the house, making significant changes but leaving its artistic heritage and artwork intact. The Villa has 5 halls on the ground floor, splendidly furnished with original 17C and 18C furniture and a panoramic garden overlooking all of Florence. James Ivory, the director, chose the villa, as the location for the "Italian" interior and country scenes for the famous film "A Room with a View".
- The Maiano estate includes also Fattoria di Maiano, which origins back to the 15th century, covers an area of nearly 300 hectares mainly used for growing olives (20.000 olive trees on 110 hectares) and it's a *completely organic agricultural estate* . Frantoio and Moraiolo olives, are picked entirely by hand in the months of November and December, then pressed in the estate mill. The premium product is Laudemio , an excellent extra virgin oil with a high nutritional value. We will have olive oil tasting and lunch at the Fattoria.
- Then, your visit at Villa Gamberaia in Settignano will start. Edith Wharton wrote of Gamberaia: 'Probably the most perfect example of the art of producing a great effect on a small scale...' The history of this garden dates back to the 16th century yet most of the garden as it is now laid out was designed by the Capponi family who bought the property in the 18th century. Many modifications, including the famous water parterre were commissioned in the 1920's by the then-owner Hungarian princess Ghyka whose head gardener, Martino, was the father of one of Italy's leading landscape designers, Pietro Porcinai.
- You will leave Villa Gamberaia and you will drive to your hotel on the hills around Florence, Villa Olmi Resort *. Dinner on your own, a great Tuscan Trattoria is just 200 meters from the hotel

Oct 15 Florence Gardens (B, D)

- Full day excursion for the visit of the Florence Gardens
- Pick up from the Farmhouse and transfer to Villa Medici di Castello where we will meet our guide.
- Villa Medici di Castello
The Castello garden commissioned by Cosimo I de' Medici in 1535, is one of the most magnificent and symbolic of the Medici Villas The garden, with its grottoes, sculptures and water features is meant to be an homage to the good and fair governing of the Medici from the Arno to the Apennines. The many statues, commissioned from famous artists of the time and the numerous citrus trees in pots adorn this garden beautifully.

- **Villa Medici di Petraia**

Next door to the Villa di Castello is Villa Petraia. The gardens of Villa Petraia have changed quite significantly since they were commissioned by Ferdinando de' Medici in 1568. The original terraces have remained but many of the beds have been redesigned through the ages creating a more gentle and colorful style. Behind the villa we find the park which is a perfect example of middle European landscape design.

- *Time at leisure for lunch* in a local restaurant

- **Giardino di Boboli**

If one had time to see only one garden in Florence, this should be it. The Boboli gardens are a living history course in Italian garden design from the Renaissance to the 19th century. This garden contains every element essential to the Italian garden from the amphitheater to the island garden, citrus trees, long winding avenues through the woods. The gardens have recently been restored with many thousands of shrubs being replanted, bringing it back to the magnificent park that it once was.

- Transfer back and Farewell dinner at the gourmet restaurant of the hotel .

Oct. 16 Florence at leisure

Oct. 17 Depart

- Pick up from your hotel and private group transfer to Florence airport

PRICES

- Per person (double room): +\$3,725
- Single supplement: +\$720

***Prices include**

- 3 night accommodation at the 3 star Hotel Privilege in Florence
- 3 night accommodation at the Farmhouse in Montalcino (Fattoria del Colle in Trequanda), breakfast included
- 2 night accommodation at the 4 star Villa Olmi Resort in Florence, breakfast included
- 1 night accommodation at the 4 star hotel Cavour in Florence, breakfast included
- Private transfers and excursions by luxury minibus (16 seats Mercedes 518)
- *Private expert botanical guide for the visits as follows:* Oct 10 (full day Florence), Oct 11 (half day visit of Villa and gardens at Villa Vicobello and Siena), Oct 12 (full day visit of Villa La Foce and Castello di Celsa) , Oct 13 full day visit of Pienza and Palazzo Piccolomini , Oct 14 (full day Villa di Maiano and Villa Gamberaia), Oct 15 (full day Villa Medici Castello OR Villa Corsi Salviati , Villa Medici Petraia and Boboli gardens)
- 4 dinners: Drinks not included
- 4 lunches (Drinks included) on Oct 11 (Vicobello), Oct 12 (Castello di Celsa), Oct 13 (Podere il Casale) and Oct 14 (Fattoria di Maiano)
- Wine and olive oil tasting (Oct 11) , cheese tasting (Oct 13) , wine tasting Montalcino (Oct 11) , olive oil tasting Fattoria di Maiano (Oct. 14)
- Entrance fees for the gardens: Villa Torrigiani, Villa Vico Bello, Villa Celsa, Villa La Foce, Palazzo Piccolomini in Pienza, Villa Maiano, Villa Gamberaia, Villa Corsi Salviati, and Boboli Gardens.

Prices DO NOT include

- Flights
- Travel insurance