

## ***Cinque Terre Tuscany – September 2012***

14 Days/ 13 nights

Departing Florence – September 24, 2012

### **Day 1. Monday 24<sup>th</sup> September - Florence – Vinci – Lucca**

This morning we have an early departure from the wonderful renaissance city of Florence for the rolling hills of northern Tuscany; the intriguing and charming walled city of Lucca – our home for the next 3 nights.

However, there is much to see before we reach Lucca as we travel west for a short time along the highway before turning north to the small town of Vinci. Famous as the birthplace of Leonardo da Vinci this hilltop town celebrates his genius in the Museo Leonardiano and Museo Ideale. These Museums house wondrous working models of Leonardo's machines and inventions based on drawings from his notebooks. This includes a bicycle and car! It is a marvellous insight into the levels of genius and artistic freedom which were nurtured in renaissance Italy and in particular here in Tuscany.

From Vinci we weave our way into the medieval walled city of Lucca and our hotel within these historic walls. We begin our exploration of this Tuscan treasure with a short orientation tour of the centre of Lucca. The remainder of the afternoon is free for independent adventures – perhaps some shopping in the fabulous boutiques of Lucca.

Tonight we will sample the local cuisine in a typical ristorante and opportunities to get to know the other members of our group.

**D**

### **Day 2. Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> September – Lucca**

After breakfast we put on our walking shoes and join our specialist local guide for a more in depth walking tour of the town's attractions.

Lucca is the native town of some famous composers, (including Boccherini and Catalani) but shows greatest pride in Giacomo Puccini who was born here in 1858 and composed many of his best works in Lucca and the surrounding countryside. But Puccini is a recent citizen of this historic town and we will see the evidence of Etruscan and Roman civilisations in this important centre which for centuries was a stand alone republic.

During free time in the afternoon you may choose to cycle or walk the full length (4.5km) of the perfectly preserved 16<sup>th</sup> century walls (or part of it!). From the broad road which runs the full length of these walls you can see Lucca's gardens, churches and beauty.

This evening, in the true spirit of Puccini we will be treated to a selection of Arias in the historic church of San Giovanni. This beautiful basilica is one of the many churches of Lucca and is famous for its role in Puccini's life (he was baptised here and his father's funeral was held here). Also beneath the church are the archaeological roman and pre roman excavations which we can explore at our leisure. We may choose to dine "Italian style" after the concert. A truly magical way to end our first day in Lucca!

**B**

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### **Day 3. Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> September - Lucca – Torre Del Lago**

Following breakfast we leave to explore the glorious countryside outside of Lucca's walls. Our minicoach will take us the short distance to one of Lucca's most famous Villas, the Villa Torrigiani. The Villa was built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and shows off its Baroque facade, beautiful gardens and rich decorations. Torrigiani is an excellent example of the elaborate and picturesque dwellings of the Lucchese aristocracy which surround the town.

We lunch in a beautiful Fattoria in the nearby countryside. What a wonderful setting for our wine and olive tasting and relaxing lunch.

Lucca is located surprisingly close to the beautiful Ligurian coast and its seaside resorts such as Viareggio. On the outskirts of Viareggio is Puccini's Villa at Torre Del Lago on the shores of his beloved Lake Massaciuccoli. The villa has been transformed into a museum and a new theatre has been built on the shore nearby in his honour for concerts in the summer months.

This is our last stop before we return to our lovely hotel and some free time before dinner.

**B, L**

### **Day 4. Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> September - Portovenere – Cinque Terre**

As with all great destinations we depart Lucca with sadness but also excitement for the adventures ahead.

Our destination for lunch is the lovely seaside town of Portovenere with its outdoor cafes and beautiful harbour. This is an ideal stop before we board our ferry for for the trip along the coast via the Cinque Terre villages of Riomaggiore, Manarola, Corniglia, Vernazza and our destination base Monterosso.

This evening we will experience some local delights at our relaxed dinner in Monterosso in a typical Ligurian ristorante.

**B, D**

### **Day 5. Friday 28<sup>th</sup> September - Cinque Terre**

Today begins with a relaxed breakfast in our hotel and perhaps a stroll along the beachside boardwalk.

This morning we cruise along the coast to view these "five Villages" up close with our specialist local guide. As we saw yesterday, viewing these villages from the sea gives a wonderful perspective. It is truly amazing how many buildings appear to hang from the clifftops almost to the sea. We also have our first opportunity to visit some of the villages and learn more of their history.

Depending on fitness and desire, you may choose to walk part of the famous track back to Monterosso ( instead of returning by boat). The remainder of the day is at your leisure.

**B**

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### **Day 6. Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> September - Portofino, Rapallo, Santa Margherita**

This morning we travel north with our guide from Monterosso to the seaside towns of the Italian Riviera - Rapallo, Portofino and Santa Margherita Ligure. Each town has its own attractions. The jetset and their beautiful yachts moored in the small harbour of Portofino, visiting the castle and gardens or enjoying some upmarket shopping. Santa Margherita may be more to your liking with its garden villas and grand hotels - a lovely seaside resort with beautiful and interesting shopping areas.

**B**

### **Day 7. Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> September - Cinque Terre - Day at Leisure**

After breakfast this morning we have the option of meeting our guide to walk some of the lesser known tracks of the hinterland. (Additional cost). Some of these tracks meander through the famous grape vines which cling to the cliffs above the villages.

For those who feel a little less energetic there is the option of walking at your own pace between the villages or trying the efficient and frequent train service.

There is plenty of time to wander the small lanes of these enchanting Villages.

Follow this with a relaxed lunch of local seafood and perhaps a glass of the local wine as you sit gazing at the blue Ligurian Sea. Walk, train or ferry back to our hotel in Monterosso – the choice is yours.

Seafood is naturally a specialty of this area especially the Ligurian anchovies which are highly prized served charcoal grilled with potatoes. This may not be your first choice but there is much from which to choose in the many restaurants in the villages of the Cinque Terre.

**B**

### **Day 8. Monday 1<sup>st</sup> October - Pisa – San Gimignano**

Sadly we leave this colourful and special part of Italy this morning. We travel south east to the historic town of Pisa, one of the famous maritime republics, where we will visit the mysterious Leaning Tower and the "Square of Miracles" in which it stands.

We relax for lunch in Pisa after our morning of walking, viewing and exploring.

Returning to our coach we journey into the rolling hills of Tuscany and our home for the next few days, San Gimignano.

We enjoy a casual dinner this evening, at a local Trattoria, within walking distance of our amazing accommodation in the heart of this Tuscan jewel.

**B, D**

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### **Day 9. Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October - San Gimignano – Volterra**

After breakfast we meet our specialist guide for a walking tour of San Gimignano. As we walk through the ancient gates of this amazing town it feels like time had stopped many centuries ago. Originally there were more than 70 towers along the city walls; the remaining 13 still provide a glimpse of the power and wealth of the city's medieval families. No wonder it has been declared by UNESCO on the world's Architectural Heritage listing.

Our walking tour assists with our understanding of the history and significance of this wonderful town; its Duomo, the Basilica di Santa Maria and much more. We will have lots of time to explore the small lanes and alleyways to find our own treasures and adventures. We can choose to lunch together in one of the many Trattorias or if you prefer find your own special place for lunch - perhaps followed by gelati?

Close by San Gimignano is the ancient Etruscan walled city of Volterra situated on a plateau with its magnificent vistas across the Apennines.

Volterra presents an imposing face to the world but is a wonderful example of an Italian hill town - with fewer tourists than nearby San Gimignano.

Volterra is famous for its alabaster and there are bargains to be investigated further. Our tour is designed so that if we see something we want to explore as we are driving through the countryside we can consider stopping and exploring - perhaps a stop at a local winery for some tastings on our way home and a chance to buy a bottle or two for later in the day. There are some beautiful smaller villages and hilltop towns in this area that are well worth a look.

**B**

### **Day 10. Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October - San Gimignano - At Leisure**

Today is a free day for you to discover San Gimignano yourself or consult your guide for a day excursion to other parts of Tuscany. Perhaps you would like to return to one of the villages we have seen in the previous days,

Alternatively – a leisurely lunch on the town square with a glass of wine followed by some good Italian coffee – and watch the passing parade! (many consider the gelati in San Gimignano the best in Italy!)

In the early evening we leave in our trusty mini coach for the delightful walled village of Monteriggioni for dinner.

**B, D**

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### **Day 11. Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> October - Siena – Chianti Hills**

Today we must leave beautiful San Gimignano but for another delightful destination; this time in the Chianti Hills.

But a true treat along the way is a visit to the historic city of Siena – a great treasure of Tuscany. This is a magnificent city with its Gothic Cathedral, wonderful architecture and rich art works including those of artists Donatello, Bernini and Michelangelo.

A visit to the Piazza del Campo is a must. This is famous for the annual horse race (Palio) which brings tourists from far and wide and totally takes over the town. We have also allowed time for shopping here as Siena has some fabulous boutiques.

We lunch at leisure in Siena before the short drive to our new home village in the Chianti hills.

**B**

### **Day 12. Friday 5<sup>th</sup> October - Chianti hill towns.**

This morning you have time to wander the streets of our new village home in the Chianti Hills. From here we can immerse ourselves in the beauty of Chianti.

We have a special date later at a stunning rustic farmhouse deep in these famous hills. This is the home of our gracious host. We have come to her home to learn traditional Tuscan cooking and the role of food in Italian life. Food in Italy not only sustains life but is a reason for living - all this from a cooking lesson!!!!

A further reward for our time in the kitchen is to sit at the table overlooking the surrounding olive groves, enjoying the wines from the local vineyards and the fruits of our labours and "la dolce vita" – the good life of Italy!

**B, L**

### **Day 13. Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October - Chianti hills.**

For our last day in Chianti and indeed Tuscany we tour some of the local wineries and olive producers. Of course along the way we stop at a selection of two of the oldest wine producers in this area with their proud family tradition and heritage.

In the late afternoon we return to our village and prepare for our farewell dinner!

**B, D**

### **Day 14. Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> October - Return to Florence.**

Unfortunately all good things must come to an end and we have an early departure for our journey back to Florence.

This is a sad time when we say goodbye to our new friends and move on to new adventures. Travel Journeys' Tours are travelling with friends to meet new friends!

**B**

**Abbreviations** (When these abbreviations appear after each day it denotes that these meals are included in the cost of the Tour)

**B** Breakfast, **L** Lunch, **D** Dinner

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### **Pricing and Additional Details**

Price	\$AUD 5,950 per person Share twin. \$AUD 6,850 per person Single. Ex Florence. Pricing subject to change.
Departs	24 <sup>th</sup> September 2012, Florence
Finishes:	7 <sup>th</sup> October 2012, Florence – ask us about options for extending your stay in Italy or other European countries
Group Size:	Costs are based on a minimum group size of 12 people. (Max 14)
Please Note:	Limited single room accommodation available on request.
Accommodation	Accommodation is 3.5 and 4 stars
Stopover	Stopovers available on return journey to Australia – please ask us for a Costing

### **Tour Inclusions**

Meals	As listed in Itinerary - All Breakfasts, Two Lunches, Five Dinners.
Services	English speaking fully licensed Italian Guide. Professional driver. Local specialist guides. Australian Tour Manager
Transport	Guide and Driver travel with us throughout the tour Air Conditioned Mini Coach
Fees	Excursions and Tours All Entrance Fees Tuscan Cooking Class <u>All of the above - as per Itinerary.</u>

### **Tour Exclusions**

Meals	Other than those listed in Itinerary
Tips	It is custom to tip both the Guide and the Driver. Guidelines will be advised with departure documents.
Airfares	We can assist with the airfare most suited to your needs.
Option	Stopover available on forward or return journey - please ask for costing.
Misc.	Items of a personal nature such as laundry, dry cleaning, personal accident and medical expenses, incidental expenses, taxi fares where not part of a regular transfer, telephone and internet communication charges, excess baggage.

(Please refer to Travel Journeys Terms and Conditions for further information)